

# Pleven district

- ▶ Population (2023)
- ▶ Territory (sq. km)
- ▶ Number of settlements
- ▶ Share of urban population (%)

217,881  
4,653  
123  
67.3



**G**DP per capita in Pleven district has slowed down its growth and is lagging behind the national average. Employment is rising and unemployment is falling, though both indicators remain relatively unfavorable. Production value and the share of export earnings in the district have registered a considerable rise. The share of households with internet access has increased but remains relatively low. The average tax rate on non-residential immovable property for legal entities is the highest in the country. The coverage of municipal expenses with local

revenues is higher than in the country on average. The natural increase rate remains strongly negative. The district is also failing to attract new residents. Student performance remains poor. Pleven is a district with strong traditions in the field of healthcare and is the leader in this category. The workloads of the local criminal judges are relatively low, which impacts the speed of delivery of justice. Pleven is the district with the lowest share of forest area, though the share of disturbed area is also small. Cultural life and tourism are characterized by their low intensity.

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



### Income and living conditions



### Labor market



### Investment and business



### Infrastructure



### Local taxes



### Administration



## SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



### Demography



### Education



### Healthcare



### Security and justice



### Environment



### Culture and tourism



## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

### Income and living conditions

In 2022, GDP per capita in Pleven district continued to slow down its growth rate and remained below the national average – 15,600 BGN, compared to 26,000 BGN in the country. At the same time, salaries in Pleven registered the highest growth rate in the country, though they too remained below the national average. The average annual salary of people employed under labor contract reached 17,000 BGN. The average monthly pension for 2023 was 734 BGN.

The Gini coefficient for income inequality is relatively low. A decrease is discernible in the poverty level in the district, though it too remains above the national average. In 2023, the proportion of the population living below the national poverty line was 26.4%, compared to 20.6% nationally.

### Labor market

The share of the working-age population in Pleven district has continued to decline and remains relatively low – 54.7%, compared to 58.5% in the country in 2023. Employment has increased and unemployment has declined, but both indicators are less favorable than the country's average. The employment rate has reached 72.9%, against 76.2% nationally, and the unemployment rate – 7.3%, compared to 5.3% countrywide.

The educational structure of the population shows some improvement. In 2023, the share of university graduates among the population aged 25–64 rose to 25%, against 31% in the country, while the share of those with primary or lower education decreased to 17%, compared to 15% nationally.

### Investment and business

The relative number of non-financial enterprises is relatively low – 49 per 1,000 population, versus 70 per 1,000 population nationally. TFA acquisition expenditures have increased but remain relatively low. At the same time, in 2022 there was an outflow of FDI – it came down to 1,477 EUR/person, against 4,544 EUR/person.

Production value in the district has continued its considerable rise, reaching 107,400 BGN per employed person, compared to 122,400 BGN per employed person nationally. Also, a considerable increase has been registered in the share of export earnings in net sales revenues – 41%, against 29% countrywide.

Expenditure on research and development is 102 BGN per capita, higher than that in most districts.

Utilization of European funds in Pleven district remains below the national average. By 30 June 2024, payments made in the district to beneficiaries under EU operational programs amounted to 2,791 BGN/person, compared to 3,175 BGN/person in the country. Within the district, the highest figures for utilization of EU funding were recorded in Belene municipality.

### Infrastructure

Pleven district is characterized by a higher than average density of the rail network, while that of the road network is below the country's average. The share of highways and first-class roads is also lower – 12%, versus 19% in the country in 2023. Road surface quality is also deteriorating and lagging behind the national average – 34% of the roads are in good condition, compared to 40% countrywide.

The share of households with internet access is rising but remains relatively low – 85% in the district, against the average of 89% nationally.

The share of population living in settlements with access to a public sewerage network amounted to 60% in 2022, compared to 75% nationally, while connectivity to wastewater treatment plants was available to 56% of the households, against 67% in the country.

### Local taxes

In 2024, the level of the local taxes in Pleven district's municipalities was close to the national average, though significantly higher than the average ones in northwestern Bulgaria. The average tax on non-residential immovable property for legal entities in the district's municipalities is the highest in the whole country – 3.05‰, against 2.15‰ nationwide. The tax on non-gratuitous acquisition of property is also above the national average, albeit by a small margin.

For their part, the average local taxes on motor vehicles and retail trade are relatively low.

Within the district, Pleven city municipality levies the highest local taxes, while the lowest rates are in Iskar municipality.

### Administration

In 2024, the local administrations' self-assessments of e-government development and the provision of one-stop shop services went down and were below the respective national averages.

The AIP Active transparency rating of the local administration has also been lagging behind and it is again lower, albeit slightly, than the national average – 67.3% in Pleven district, versus 69.3% nationally.

The share of own revenues in the total revenues of the district's municipalities is relatively low – 20%, compared to 27% in the country, but the coverage of municipal expenditures with local revenues is higher than average – 81%, compared to 74% in the country.

## SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

### Demography

The natural population increase rate in Pleven district remains strongly negative at -11.1%, against the national average of -6.8%. Pleven also fails to attract new residents and the net migration rate is also negative (-0.1%).

These processes are the main prerequisite for the high level of population aging in the district. The share of children under 4 years is 4.1%, versus 4.5% nationally, and that of people aged 65 and over is 28.2%, compared to 23.8% nationwide.

Population density also remains relatively low – 864 persons/sq. km in the district's urbanized areas, versus 1,221 persons/sq. km nationwide.

### Education

The enrolment ratio in 5th–7th grade in Pleven district has continued to rise, reaching 91% in 2023 and exceeding the national average. The percentage of school year repeaters remains relatively high. The alignment between vocational education and the profile of the local economy is improving and is relatively high. Pleven is one of the districts with the lowest share of students in ICT-oriented programs and people employed in that sector. At the same time, the number of students and employees in the agricultural sector is relatively low.

Students' performance in Pleven district again remained poor in 2024. The average score in the NEA in mathematics at the end of 7th grade was 36.3 p., compared to 42.9 p. nationally. The average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature was among the lowest in the country – "Good" 3.90, versus "Good" 4.30 in the country, while "fail" grades (below 3.00) made up 17.8%, which was the highest share nationwide, where the average was 8.7%.

### Healthcare

Pleven district has strong traditions in the sphere of healthcare and is the country's leader in this category. Indeed, Pleven is the district with the highest number of both GPs and specialist physicians. One local GP cares for 1,197 persons on average, compared to 1,701 persons per doctor in the country. The presence of a medical university in the city of Pleven is one of the prerequisites for the large number of doctors and the well-developed network of healthcare facilities in the district.

Pleven is also the district best provided with hospital beds. In 2023, their number continued to increase, reaching the unprecedented 12.7 beds per 1,000 population, compared to 6.1 beds per 1,000 population in the country. Hospital bed occupancy equals the country's average – 56%. Less favorable than the respective national averages remain the indicators for life expectancy in the district, the infant mortality rate and the number of pharmacies relative to the population.

### Security and justice

The workloads of the local criminal judges in Pleven district are relatively small, which impacts the speed of delivery of justice. In 2023, one District Court judge heard an average of 9.9 cases a month, compared to 14.4 cases nationally, while in the Administrative Court the average workload was 11.5 cases a month, compared to 14.8 cases per judge nationally. The proportion of criminal cases closed within 3 months was 95%, against the national average of 91%; that of administrative cases was 83%, versus 72% nationally, and that of civil cases – 78%, against 65% countrywide.

The number of crimes in Pleven district, as well as their detection rate, was comparable to the national average in 2023. The number of registered crimes against the person and property was 10.8 per 1,000 population, versus the average of 11.3 per 1,000 population nationwide, while the detection rate was 55%, against 53% in the country. The number of police officers relative to the population is fairly small.

### Environment

The average amount of household waste generated in the district in 2022 is comparable to the national average, while the share of that waste handed over for treatment and recycling remains relatively high – 89%, versus 76% nationally.

Pleven is the district with the lowest share of forest areas – 7%, compared to 33% nationally in 2023. However, the share of disturbed area is also low – 0.2%, versus 0.4% nationally. The installed RES capacities are close to the national average per person. Pleven is among the districts with very hot days and a high cooling degree days index.

### Culture and tourism

In 2023, Pleven district's cultural life again remained characterized by a relatively low intensity. There was a significant increase in the number of visits to the local theaters and their number relative to the population exceeded the national average. A relatively high number of visits to museums was registered as well, while that of visits to cinemas and libraries remained relatively low.

The tourism sector has a weak presence in the district. The number of beds in accommodation establishments is 6 per 1,000 population (compared to 56 per 1,000 population in the country) and the number of overnight stays is 716 per 1,000 population (compared to 4,167 per 1,000 population in the country). The number of guest nights booked via online sharing economy platforms is also low.

## Key indicators for the district of Pleven

Economic Development Indicators	2021	2022	2023	National average
Gross domestic product (GDP) per capita (BGN, current prices)	12,889	15,562	n.a.	<b>25,956</b>
Average gross annual salary of people employed under labour contract (BGN)	14,608	17,030	n.a.	<b>21,242</b>
Share of people living below the national poverty line (%)	21.6	31.4	26.4	<b>20.6</b>
Share of the working-age population (%)	55.6	54.9	54.7	<b>58.5</b>
Average annual employment rate of the population aged 15–64 (%)	66.6	67.8	72.9	<b>76.2</b>
Average annual unemployment rate of the population aged 15+ (%)	7.8	7.6	7.3	<b>5.3</b>
Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with primary or lower education (%)	19.9	19.7	17.1	<b>14.8</b>
Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with higher education (%)	24.7	22.8	25.1	<b>30.5</b>
Production value (BGN/employed person)	78,372	107,381	n.a.	<b>122,377</b>
Expenditures on the acquisition of tangible fixed assets (BGN/person)	2,201	2,624	n.a.	<b>4,257</b>
Foreign direct investment in non-financial enterprises (cumulative) (EUR/person)	1,508	1,477	n.a.	<b>4,544</b>
Share of the population living in settlements with public sewerage networks (%)	57.3	59.8	n.a.	<b>75.0</b>
Share of road surfaces in good condition (%)	41.3	40.0	33.7	<b>40.4</b>
Coverage of municipal expenditures with local revenues (%)	89.8	84.9	81.1	<b>74.1</b>
Active Transparency Rating of local government bodies (%)*	69.8	70.0	67.3	<b>69.3</b>

Social Development Indicators	2021	2022	2023	National average
Natural population increase rate (‰)	n.a.	-13.9	-11.1	<b>-6.8</b>
Net migration rate (‰)	n.a.	-0.5	-0.1	<b>6.4</b>
Average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature**	3.61	3.51	3.90	<b>4.30</b>
Average grade in the National external assessment in mathematics after 7th grade (points)**	28.0	28.0	36.3	<b>42.9</b>
Net enrolment rate of the population (5th to 7th grade) (%)	85.6	90.4	90.6	<b>89.9</b>
Average life expectancy (years)***	72.6	72.3	72.7	<b>73.5</b>
Share of people with health insurance (%)	92.0	93.8	94.5	<b>95.0</b>
Population per one GP (persons)	1,214	1,233	1,197	<b>1,701</b>
Registered crimes against the person and property per 1,000 population	10.9	11.5	10.8	<b>11.3</b>
Share of criminal cases closed within 3 months	89	93	95	<b>91</b>
Households' consumption of municipally supplied drinking water (liter/person/day)	102	101	n.a.	<b>103</b>
Generated household waste of serviced population (kg/person/year)	438	485	n.a.	<b>488</b>
Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%)	83	89	n.a.	<b>76</b>
Visits to cinemas (number/1,000 population)	247	392	445	<b>684</b>
Overnight stays in accommodation establishments (number/1,000 population)	322	529	716	<b>4,167</b>

\* The 2023 data are included in the 2024 study. The same is valid for the previous years.

\*\* The data refer to the 2023-24 academic year, while the State matriculation exams took place in 2024. The same is valid for the previous years.

\*\*\* Data are for three-year periods and are updated annually.