Plovdiv district

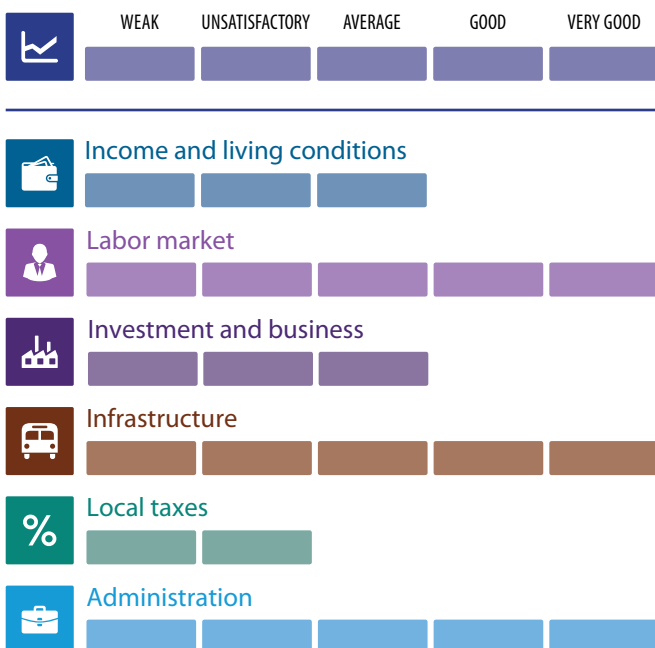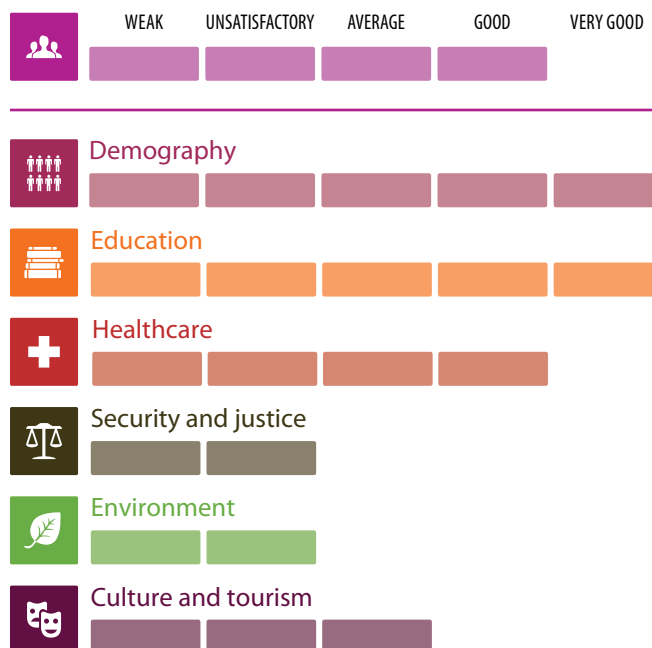|	
▶ Population (2023)	633,586
▶ Territory (sq. km)	5,973
▶ Number of settlements	212
▶ Share of urban population (%)	74.5

GDP per capita in Plovdiv district has continued to grow at a rate that is considerably higher than the country's average. Employment is rising and unemployment remains low. TFA acquisition expenditures and FDI have grown considerably. Road quality is relatively good. The average rates of all monitored taxes in the district's municipalities are higher than the respective national averages. For the first time, the coverage of municipal expenses with local revenues is below the country's average. Against the general trend in the country towards population aging, Plovdiv performs relatively well. Students' results are good. Plovdiv is also among the districts with well-established traditions in higher education. The numbers of doctors and hospital beds relative to the population are among the highest in the country. Crime numbers in Plovdiv district remain relatively high but the detection rate is below the national average. The installed RES capacities are above the country's average. The intensity of cultural and tourist life in the district is among the highest in the whole country.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

	WEAK	UNSATISFACTORY	AVERAGE	GOOD	VERY GOOD

Income and living conditions

Labor market

Investment and business

Infrastructure

Local taxes

Administration

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

	WEAK	UNSATISFACTORY	AVERAGE	GOOD	VERY GOOD

Demography

Education

Healthcare

Security and justice

Environment

Culture and tourism

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ▪▪▪▪▪

Income and living conditions ▪▪▪

GDP per capita in Plovdiv district has continued to grow and in 2022 its rate of increase was so much higher than in the country that it raised the district to the 6th place in the ranking for this category. Salaries and pensions in the district have also been increasing. In 2022, the average gross annual salary of people employed under labor contract reached 17,900 BGN per year, and the average monthly pension for 2023 – 763 BGN.

The poverty level and income inequality in the district remain above the respective national averages. The share of the population living below the national poverty line was 26.6% in 2023, versus 20.6% countrywide.

Labor market ▪▪▪▪▪

Plovdiv's performance in this category places the district among the top four in the country. In 2023, the share of the working-age population in Plovdiv district remained relatively high – 59.1%, compared to 58.5% countrywide. Employment went up and unemployment remained low. The employment rate reached 75.0, compared to 76.2% in the country, and the unemployment rate – 4.2%, versus 5.3% in the country.

The educational structure of the workforce has seen a considerable improvement. The share of the population with university degrees has risen to 31%, while that of people with primary or lower education has decreased to 15%, with both indicators now equal to the respective national averages.

Investment and business ▪▪▪

In 2022, investment and business activity in Plovdiv district again continued to grow. The number of non-financial enterprises came close to the national average. TFA acquisition expenditures improved considerably to reach 4,600 BGN/person, which is the second highest figure in the country, below only that of the capital. FDI also registered an increase, up to 3,900 EUR/person. Production value went up to 128,700 BGN per employed person. Research and development expenditure per capita in the district remains second to that in the capital.

However, Plovdiv district has been lagging behind in the utilization of European funds. By 30 June 2024, payments made in the district to beneficiaries under EU operational programs amounted to 2,368 BGN/person, compared to 3,175 BGN/person in the country. Within the district, the highest figures for utilization of EU funding were registered in the municipalities of Hissarya and Krichim.

Infrastructure ▪▪▪▪▪

The development of the district's infrastructure can be assessed as very good, ranking Plovdiv second only to Varna in this category. The density of its road network is close to the average one in the country, but the density of its railroads is considerably higher, with 5.4 km/100 sq. km of territory, versus 3.6 km/100 sq. km nationally. The share of highways and first-class roads is 17%, compared to the national average of 19%. The quality of the roads in the district is relatively good – in 2023, 53% of the road surface were in good condition, compared to the average of 40% countrywide.

The relative share of households with internet access went up again in 2023 and remained above the average one nationwide – 92%, versus 89% respectively.

The share of households with access to a public sewerage network equals the country's average of 75%, but the share of people with access to a public sewerage network connected to a wastewater treatment plant is higher – 74%, against the national average of 67%.

Local taxes ▪▪

In 2024, the average rate of the monitored local taxes levied by the district's municipalities was higher than in the country, though the differences are not considerable. The average rate for non-residential immovable property for legal entities was 2.17‰, against 2.5‰ nationwide, and that for retail trade – 13.03 BGN/sq. m, versus 13.08 BGN sq. m in the country.

The average tax rate for motor vehicles was 1.59 BGN/kW, versus 1.56 BGN/kW countrywide, and for non-gratuitous acquisition of property – 2.85%, compared to the average of 2.81% in the country.

Within the district, the municipalities of Saedinenie and Kaloyanovo levy the lowest local taxes, while the highest average rates are in Laki and Sopot.

Administration ▪▪▪▪▪

The local authorities' self-assessments of the development of e-government and the provision of one-stop shop services went further up in 2024 and settled above the respective national averages.

The AIP Active transparency rating of the local administration has decreased slightly but it too remains relatively high – 70.2% in the district, versus 69.3% in the country.

The share of own revenues in the total revenues of the district's municipalities has decreased to equal the national average of 27%, while in 2023 for the first time the coverage of municipal expenditures with local revenues fell below average – 70% in the district, versus 74% nationally.

⚒ SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ▪▪▪▪

▦ Demography ▪▪▪▪▪

Contrary to the nationwide trend towards population aging, Plovdiv district has been performing relatively well in this category. The natural population increase rate continues to exceed the national average, with –4.8‰ in the district, versus –6.8‰ in the country for 2023. Plovdiv continues to attract new residents and its net migration rate of 8.1‰ is among the highest in the country.

The share of children under 4 years is 4.8%, against 4.5% nationally, and that of people aged 65 and over – 22.5%, versus 23.8% nationwide.

Population density is relatively high, with 1,846 persons/sq. km in its urbanized settlements, against 1,221 persons/sq. km nationally.

▤ Education ▪▪▪▪▪

The net enrolment rate in 5th–7th grade in Plovdiv district went slightly down in 2023, though it remained above the national average. Worse figures, however, have been recorded for the share of school year repeaters, while the alignment between vocational education and the profile of the local economy is lower than average.

In 2024, students' results in Plovdiv district again remained good. The average score in the NEA in mathematics after 7th grade was 42.5 p., which was slightly below the national average of 42.9 p. For its part, the average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature was "Good" 4.43, versus the average of "Good" 4.30 in the country. "Fail" grades (below 3.00) made up 7.3%, against the national average of 8.7%.

Plovdiv is among the districts with long and stable traditions in higher education. The number of university students relative to the population is the third highest in the country, outranked only by that in Veliko Tarnovo and the capital.

✚ Healthcare ▪▪▪▪

Plovdiv is among the districts with the largest relative number of doctors and hospital beds. In 2023, one local GP cared for 1,626 persons on average, compared to 1,701 persons per doctor in the country. The index for access to specialist physicians is also more favorable than the national average. The local general hospitals provide 8.6 beds per 1,000 population, compared to 6.1 per 1,000 population in the country, which ranks Plovdiv second in the country after Pleven district. Hospital bed occupancy is also relatively high. Plovdiv is also among the districts with a relatively good network of pharmacies – 1,733 persons per pharmacy, versus 1,982 persons per pharmacy countrywide.

Life expectancy also remains significantly higher than the national average – 74.4 years, compared to 73.5 years in the country.

⚖ Security and justice ▪▪▪

The average workloads of the judges in Plovdiv's District Court are relatively low, while those in the Administrative Court are among the heaviest in the country for 2023. This impacts the speed of delivery of justice. The proportion of criminal cases closed within 3 months is 93%, compared to the average of 91% nationwide, of civil cases it is 73%, against 65% in the country, while the share of administrative cases is 56%, which is the lowest in the country, where the average is 72%.

The number of crimes registered in Plovdiv district remains relatively low, but the crime detection rate is below the national average. In 2023, registered crimes against the person and property in the district amounted to 8.4 per 1,000 population, versus the average of 11.3 per 1,000 population nationwide, while the detection rate was 52%, compared to 53% in the country. Plovdiv is the district with the lowest number of police officers relative to the population – 3.2 per 1,000 population, against 4.2 per 1,000 population countrywide.

🍃 Environment ▪▪

The amounts of household waste generated in the district have remained high and in 2022 they increased to 541 kg/person per annum, against an average of 488 kg/person nationally. At the same time, the amounts of this waste handed over for treatment and recycling made up 63%, which is below the national average of 76%.

The share of forest areas in Plovdiv district is slightly below the national average, though the share of disturbed area is also considerably lower. The installed RES capacities have registered an increase of 18% and are above the national average.

The cooling degree days index in the district is relatively high due to its geographical location. The relative volume of drinking water consumed by households is lower than the national average, albeit slightly.

🎭 Culture and tourism ▪▪▪

In 2023, cinema visits recorded a considerable increase, reaching 783 per 1,000 population, against 684 per 1,000 population nationally. Visits to the local libraries, theaters and museums also recorded an increase, though their relative number remained below the national average.

The number of beds in accommodation establishments in Plovdiv district was 21 per 1,000 population in 2023, and the number of overnight stays – 2,166 per 1,000 population; both of these values are relatively high, outranked only by the seaside districts. The use of online sharing economy platforms is also relatively widespread.

Key indicators for the district of Plovdiv

Economic Development Indicators	2021	2022	2023	National average
Gross domestic product (GDP) per capita (BGN, current prices)	15,547	21,638	n.a.	25,956
Average gross annual salary of people employed under labour contract (BGN)	15,937	17,931	n.a.	21,242
Share of people living below the national poverty line (%)	26.8	29.4	26.6	20.6
Share of the working-age population (%)	60.6	59.2	59.1	58.5
Average annual employment rate of the population aged 15–64 (%)	70.2	71.4	75.0	76.2
Average annual unemployment rate of the population aged 15+ (%)	4.6	4.1	4.2	5.3
Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with primary or lower education (%)	19.2	17.8	15.2	14.8
Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with higher education (%)	26.0	26.9	30.9	30.5
Production value (BGN/employed person)	99,268	128,737	n.a.	122,377
Expenditures on the acquisition of tangible fixed assets (BGN/person)	3,379	4,631	n.a.	4,257
Foreign direct investment in non-financial enterprises (cumulative) (EUR/person)	3,228	3,894	n.a.	4,544
Share of the population living in settlements with public sewerage networks (%)	75.9	75.2	n.a.	75.0
Share of road surfaces in good condition (%)	46.5	54.7	53.2	40.4
Coverage of municipal expenditures with local revenues (%)	103.1	85.4	70.2	74.1
Active Transparency Rating of local government bodies (%)*	72.4	72.4	70.2	69.3

Social Development Indicators	2021	2022	2023	National average
Natural population increase rate (‰)	n.a.	–7.4	–4.8	–6.8
Net migration rate (‰)	n.a.	7.0	8.1	6.4
Average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature**	4.10	3.95	4.43	4.30
Average grade in the National external assessment in mathematics after 7th grade (points)**	35.0	35.3	42.5	42.9
Net enrolment rate of the population (5th to 7th grade) (%)	87.6	91.8	90.8	89.9
Average life expectancy (years)***	73.9	73.6	74.4	73.5
Share of people with health insurance (%)	87.1	91.5	91.8	95.0
Population per one GP (persons)	1,637	1,599	1,626	1,701
Registered crimes against the person and property per 1,000 population	7.5	8.1	8.4	11.3
Share of criminal cases closed within 3 months	93	90	93	91
Households' consumption of municipally supplied drinking water (liter/person/day)	99	101	n.a.	103
Generated household waste of serviced population (kg/person/year)	495	541	n.a.	488
Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%)	61	63	n.a.	76
Visits to cinemas (number/1,000 population)	438	705	783	684
Overnight stays in accommodation establishments (number/1,000 population)	1,385	1,965	2,166	4,167

* 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.