

Silistra district

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

94,739
2,846
118
44.5



Salaries and pensions in Silistra district continue to increase, but are still relatively low. The poverty rate in the district is shrinking but remains high. The development of the local labor market is unsatisfactory. Domestic investment has increased significantly, but foreign investment is lagging behind. Due to the low level of urbanization, a relatively small share of the population lives in settlements with a public sewerage network. The average level of local taxes in Silistra district is relatively low. The share of own revenues in the total revenues of the district's municipalities is extremely low.

Silistra is among the districts with the worst demographic profile. Students' results are relatively low. The alignment between vocational education and the profile of the local economy is high. Healthcare in Silistra district suffers from a shortage of doctors. The workloads of criminal judges in Silistra district are significantly lower than the national average. Crime numbers have risen, but remain relatively low and the detection rate is high. Silistra is also among the districts with the worst performance as regards the environment indicators. Tourism in the district is not well developed.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Income and living conditions

Silistra is again the district with the lowest rating in this category. The growth rate of GDP per capita is slowing down despite the low baseline, reaching 12,100 BGN/person, compared to the national average of 26,000 BGN/person in 2022. Salaries and pensions also continue to increase, but are still relatively low. The average gross annual salary of people employed under labor contract is 14,800 BGN, compared to 21,200 BGN in the country. The average monthly pension for 2023 is 654 BGN, against 784 BGN countrywide.

The Gini coefficient, which measures income inequality, is rising but remains relatively low. The poverty level in the district remains high but has shrunk significantly, which is probably related to the rapid growth of pensions over the past few years. The share of the population living below the national poverty line has reached 25.6%, compared to 20.6% nationally.

Labor market

In 2023, the development of the local labor market again remained unsatisfactory, ranking Silistra in the second lowest place (only above Montana). The share of the working-age population has dropped to 55.3%, against 58.5% in the country.

There has been a parallel rise in both employment and unemployment. The employment rate has reached 63.6%, against the national average of 76.2%. For its part, the unemployment rate is up to 10.7%, compared to 5.3% nationwide.

The educational structure of the workforce continues to be a major challenge facing the labor market. In 2023, the share of the population aged 25–64 with primary or lower education was 27%, compared to 15% nationwide, while the share of those with a university degree went down to 20%, versus 31% countrywide.

Investment and business

Silistra is among the country's districts with low investment and business activity. In 2022, the number of nonfinancial enterprises was 54 per 1,000 population, compared to 70 per 1,000 population countrywide. Domestic investment has increased significantly, but foreign investment is lagging behind. TFA expenditures have reached 2,800 BGN/person. Against the national average of 4,544 EUR/person, FDI in Silistra has shrunk to 266 EUR/person, which is the lowest value nationally.

Production value has increased to 81,400 BGN per employed person, but remains relatively low. The share of export earnings in net sales revenues is also low – 16%, compared to 29% in the country.

Spending on research and development relative to the population has grown considerably but remains below the country's averages.

Utilization of European funds in Silistra district's municipalities is also lagging behind. By 30 June 2024, payments made

in the district to beneficiaries under EU operational programs amounted to 2,904 BGN/person, versus 3,175 BGN/person nationally. Within the district, the highest amounts were utilized by the municipality of Tutrakan.

Infrastructure

The density of the road network in Silistra district is almost identical to the average one in the country – 18 km/100 sq. m of territory. At the same time, the share of first-class roads in the district is considerably below average – 11% in 2021, against 19% countrywide. Nevertheless, the quality of the road surface is relatively high – 43% of the roads are in good condition, versus 40% in the country.

In most northern Bulgarian districts, railroad density is typically lower, and in Silistra district it is 2.5 km/100 sq. km of territory, compared to 3.6 km/100 sq. km in the country.

Access to the internet is available to 83% of the households in the district, compared to the average of 89% nationwide.

Due to the low level of urbanization, a relatively small proportion of the population lives in settlements with a public sewerage network – 52%, compared to 75% in the country. Nevertheless, by 2022, all of the district's sewerage networks were connected to wastewater treatment plants, compared to 67% nationally.

Local taxes

As is typical of the less economically developed districts, the average level of local taxes in Silistra is relatively low. In 2024, all monitored local taxes were lower than the respective national averages. The biggest margin occurred in the rates for retail trade and motor vehicles.

Within the district, Sitovo municipality levies the lowest local taxes, and Tutrakan municipality – the highest.

Administration

In 2024, the local authorities' self-assessment of the development of e-government registered a slight decrease but remained above the national average. The local authorities' self-assessment of the provision of one-stop shop services has shrunk more significantly and to a level below the national average.

The average AIP Active transparency rating of the local administration has improved but is still lagging behind the national average – 65.9% in Silistra district, versus 69.3% in the country.

In 2023, the share of own revenues in the district's municipalities was 15%, against 27% nationally, which is one of the lowest figures nationally, only above that of Montana. For its part, the coverage of municipal expenditures with local revenues has fallen considerably to 57%, versus 74% countrywide.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ■

Demography ■■■

The demographic profile of Silistra district continued its deterioration in 2023. The natural population increase rate in Silistra district was -10.1% , compared to -6.8% in the country. The net migration rate was positive but relatively low -0.9% .

These developments have their impact on the age structure of the district's population. The share of children under 4 years is 4.0% , versus 4.5% in the country, and that of people aged 65 and over -27.7% , versus the national average of 23.8% . Population density is almost half the national average -680 persons/sq. km in the urbanized settlements, against $1,221$ persons/sq. km countrywide.

Education ■■■■

The share of children attending kindergarten in the district continued to rise and in 2022 it already exceeded the national average. The rate of enrolment in 5th to 7th grade, however, registered a slight decrease and remained below the national average -88% in Silistra district, compared to 90% nationally. The alignment between vocational education and the profile of the local economy is relatively high due to the relatively high share of agriculture in the economy, which is also linked to the higher share of admissions into specialized agricultural programs in vocational education. At the same time, the ICT sector is not represented in either employment or education.

Students' results in Silistra district were again relatively poor in 2024. The average score in the NEA in mathematics after 7th grade was 34.2 p., versus 42.9 p. nationally, and was the third lowest in the country. The average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature was "Good" 3.99 , compared to "Good" 4.30 in the country, while the share of "fail" grades (below 3.00) was 12.8% , against the national average of 8.7% .

The single provider of higher education in Silistra is a branch of Ruse University, which explains the very small number of university students in the district $-$ just 3 students per $1,000$ persons, compared to 30 students per $1,000$ population nationally.

Healthcare ■■■

Life expectancy in the district is increasing but remains relatively low.

The healthcare system in Silistra district continues to suffer from a shortage of doctors, both GPs and specialist physicians, and in 2023 the number of beds in the local general hospitals was again below the national average. One local GP cares for $2,069$ persons on average, compared to $1,701$ persons per doctor in the country. The number of beds in the local general hospitals has increased in the past few years, but compared to other districts, their proportion to the population remains relatively low -5.0 beds per $1,000$ population, compared to 6.1 beds per $1,000$ population in the country. At the same time, hospital bed occupancy exceeds the country's average.

The density of the pharmacy network in the district is relatively limited.

Security and justice ■■■■

The workloads of the local judges in 2023 were considerably lower than the national average, but this had no significant impact on the speed of delivery of justice in the district. One District Court judge heard an average of 10.6 cases a month, compared to 14.4 cases per judge nationally, and in the Administrative Court the monthly workload was 10.7 cases, versus 14.8 cases nationally. The share of criminal cases closed within 3 months was 93% , against the national average of 91% , that of cases heard in the Administrative Court was 67% , against 72% nationally, and of civil cases heard in the District Court -77% , versus 65% in the country.

The crime rate has been going up but remains relatively low, while the detection rate is high. In 2023, registered crimes against the person and property in the district amounted to 9.1 per $1,000$ population, versus the average of 11.3 per $1,000$ population nationwide. The detection rate stood at 64% , compared to the national average of 53% . The number of police officers in relation to the population is equal to the national average -4.2 per $1,000$ population.

Environment ■■

Silistra is also among the worst performing districts as regards the environmental indicators, ranking only above Stara Zagora, which occupies the bottom place. One major factor for the low figures is the extremely small amount of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling $-$ a bare 13% , versus 76% nationally for 2022. At the same time, the amount of generated household waste is similar to the national average $-$ an annual of 457 kg/person in the district, versus 488 kg/person in the country.

The share of forest areas in Silistra district is low -15% , versus 33% countrywide in 2023. The share of disturbed area, however, is close to the national average -0.4% . The relative volume of installed RES capacities has doubled but remains relatively low. Silistra is among the districts with a high cooling degree days index.

Culture and tourism ■■

Cinema visits have gone up but remain low -121 per $1,000$ population, against 684 per $1,000$ population nationally. Visits to the local museums number 394 per $1,000$ population, against 770 per $1,000$ population in the country. Visits to the local theatres and libraries are also relatively few.

Tourism in the district is not well developed. The number of beds in accommodation establishments for 2023 is 8 per $1,000$ population, versus 56 per $1,000$ population, and the number of overnight stays is 449 per $1,000$ population, against $4,167$ 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 Silistra

| Economic Development Indicators | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 | National average |
|--|--------|--------|------|------------------|
| Gross domestic product (GDP) per capita (BGN, current prices) | 9,975 | 12,087 | n.a. | 25,956 |
| Average gross annual salary of people employed under labour contract (BGN) | 13,272 | 14,813 | n.a. | 21,242 |
| Share of people living below the national poverty line (%) | 23.4 | 34.4 | 25.6 | 20.6 |
| Share of the working-age population (%) | 57.6 | 55.6 | 55.3 | 58.5 |
| Average annual employment rate of the population aged 15–64 (%) | 60.5 | 61.2 | 63.6 | 76.2 |
| Average annual unemployment rate of the population aged 15+ (%) | 9.4 | 10.4 | 10.7 | 5.3 |
| Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with primary or lower education (%) | 28.2 | 26.5 | 27.1 | 14.8 |
| Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with higher education (%) | 22.6 | 21.6 | 20.4 | 30.5 |
| Production value (BGN/employed person) | 65,661 | 81,369 | n.a. | 122,377 |
| Expenditures on the acquisition of tangible fixed assets (BGN/person) | 2,078 | 2,828 | n.a. | 4,257 |
| Foreign direct investment in non-financial enterprises (cumulative) (EUR/person) | 400 | 266 | n.a. | 4,544 |
| Share of the population living in settlements with public sewerage networks (%) | 51.0 | 51.6 | n.a. | 75.0 |
| Share of road surfaces in good condition (%) | 59.6 | 44.0 | 43.3 | 40.4 |
| Coverage of municipal expenditures with local revenues (%) | 63.2 | 74.2 | 57.5 | 74.1 |
| Active Transparency Rating of local government bodies (%)* | 58.6 | 58.8 | 65.9 | 69.3 |

| Social Development Indicators | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 | National average |
|---|-------|-------|-------|------------------|
| Natural population increase rate (‰) | n.a. | -14.0 | -10.1 | -6.8 |
| Net migration rate (‰) | n.a. | 1.3 | 0.9 | 6.4 |
| Average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature** | 3.65 | 3.69 | 3.99 | 4.30 |
| Average grade in the National external assessment in mathematics after 7th grade (points)** | 26.9 | 26.8 | 34.2 | 42.9 |
| Net enrolment rate of the population (5th to 7th grade) (%) | 77.8 | 88.8 | 88.2 | 89.9 |
| Average life expectancy (years)*** | 71.0 | 70.2 | 71.2 | 73.5 |
| Share of people with health insurance (%) | 88.3 | 95.4 | 96.1 | 95.0 |
| Population per one GP (persons) | 2,097 | 1,964 | 2,069 | 1,701 |
| Registered crimes against the person and property per 1,000 population | 7.4 | 8.5 | 9.1 | 11.3 |
| Share of criminal cases closed within 3 months | 89 | 96 | 93 | 91 |
| Households' consumption of municipally supplied drinking water (liter/person/day) | 87 | 93 | n.a. | 103 |
| Generated household waste of serviced population (kg/person/year) | 413 | 457 | n.a. | 488 |
| Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%) | 19 | 13 | n.a. | 76 |
| Visits to cinemas (number/1,000 population) | 80 | 110 | 121 | 684 |
| Overnight stays in accommodation establishments (number/1,000 population) | 297 | 495 | 449 | 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.