

Sliven district

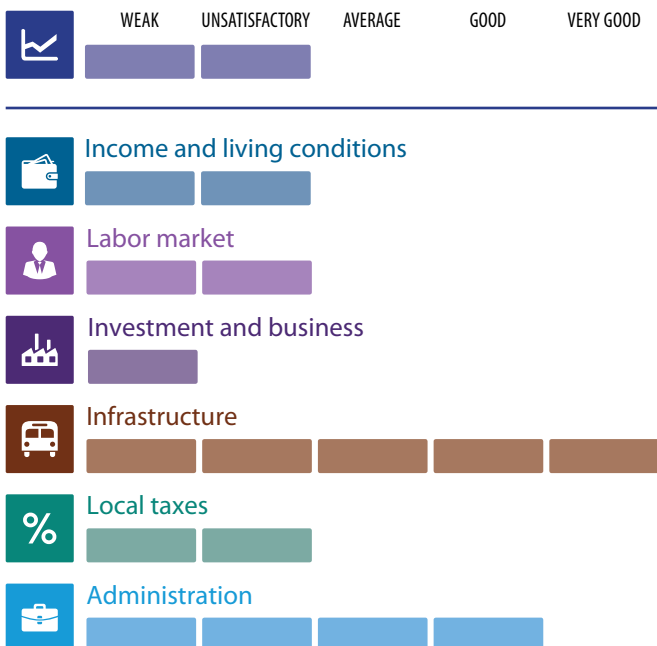


▶ Population (2023)	170,051
▶ Territory (sq. km)	3,544
▶ Number of settlements	110
▶ Share of urban population (%)	65.0

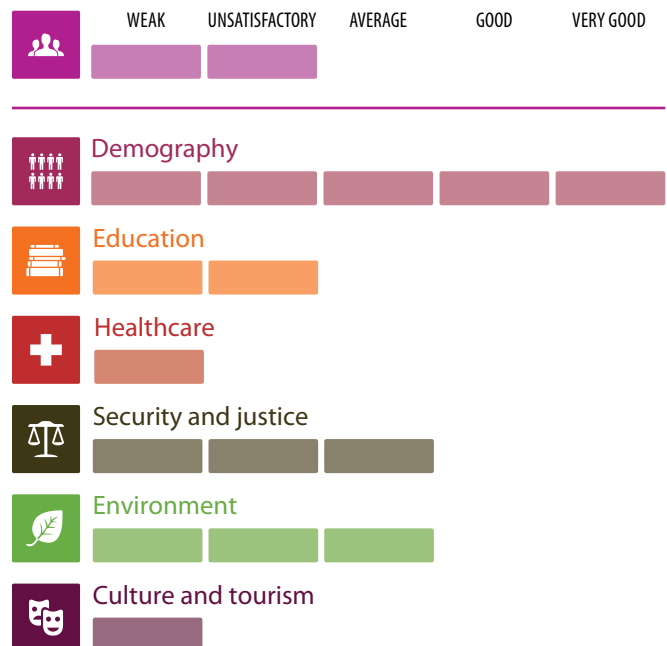
Although GDP per capita in Sliven district has been growing, it is among the lowest in the country. There has been a parallel rise in employment and unemployment. The labor market continues to face the challenge posed by the educational structure of the workforce. Investment activity is extremely slack. The basic physical infrastructure retains its relatively good level. The tax rates on retail trade are significantly lower than the national average. The transparency in the work of the district's local administration remains high. The demographic picture of the district ranks it

among the country's leaders in this indicator. At the same time, Sliven is among the districts with the lowest performance as regards the indicators for education and healthcare. Most notably, there is an acute shortage of both GPs and specialist physicians. The relative number of crimes in the district is close to the average one in the country, while the detection rate remains considerably higher. The relative volume of the consumed drinking water is the lowest in the country. The culture and tourism sectors show relatively low intensity.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ■■■

Income and living conditions ■■■

Although GDP per capita in Sliven district has been growing, its rate of increase is below average and its volume remains extremely low – 12,600 BGN/person, compared to the national average of 26,000 BGN/person. The increase in salaries and pensions in the district is also relatively modest and they both remain low as well.

The Gini coefficient for income inequality has been decreasing and in 2023 it was relatively low. At the same time, there has been a huge decrease in the poverty level – the share of the population living below the national poverty line has come quite close to the national average, reaching 21.4% in the district, compared to 20.6% in the country.

Labor market ■■■

The share of the working-age population in the district is relatively low – 55.0% in 2023, compared to 58.5% nationally. There has been a parallel rise in employment and unemployment. The employment rate has gone up considerably, reaching 70.1%, although it remains below the national average of 76.2%. For its part, the unemployment rate has gone up to 8.1%, compared to 5.3% nationally.

The labor market continues to face the challenge posed by the educational structure of the workforce, although some improvement was recorded in 2023. The share of the population aged 25–64 with primary or lower education went down to 34%, against 15% nationally, though for the third consecutive year it was the highest one countrywide. However, the share of those with higher education went up to 23%, versus the national average of 31%.

Investment and business ■■

Investment activity in Sliven is extremely slack and the district's ranking in this category is the second worst in the whole country, only above Vidin. The number of non-financial enterprises in the district for 2022 is 55 per 1,000 population and remains relatively low, compared to the national average of 70 per 1,000 population. Domestic and foreign investment flows also remain small, though they have registered some increase. TFA acquisition expenditure has gone up to 2,300 BGN/person, versus the average of 4,300 BGN/person nationally. FDI in the district amounts to 783 EUR/person, remaining significantly below that in the country, where the average is 4,544 EUR/person.

Production in the district is worth 94,400 BGN per employed person, compared to the national average of 122,400 BGN.

Sliven is also the district with the lowest utilization rate of European funds. By 30 June 2024, payments made in the district to beneficiaries under EU operational programs amounted to

1,893 BGN/person, against 3,175 BGN/person countrywide. Within the district, the highest amounts were utilized by Sliven city municipality, though even those payments were far below the national average.

Infrastructure ■■■■■

The basic physical infrastructure in Sliven district retains its very good level. The density of the road and railroad networks is comparable to the national average. In 2023, the share of highways and first-class roads again remained relatively high – 22%, compared to 19% in the country.

Sliven continues to be the district with the largest share of road surfaces in good condition – 88% in 2023, against 40% in the country. The share of households with internet access has increased, but remains below the national average.

A persisting challenge facing the district is the low share of population with access to a public sewerage network – only 63%, compared to 75% countrywide, and to a sewerage network connected to wastewater treatment plants – 56% in Sliven district, against the national average of 67%.

Local taxes ■■■

Of all monitored taxes, only the average rates for non-residential immovable property of legal entities were higher than the country's average in 2024. At the same time, the rates of the taxes on retail trade were considerably lower than the respective national averages. The rates for the tax on motor vehicles and on non-gratuitous transfer of property were comparable to the average ones in the country.

Within the district, the highest average taxes are levied by Sliven city municipality and the lowest ones – by Tvarditsa municipality.

Administration ■■■■■

Sliven is among the districts with a relatively good performance in the category assessing the work of the administration. The transparency in the work of the municipalities has continued to improve and its average rating for 2024 places Sliven district at the top, with 84.0%, versus 69.3% countrywide.

The local administrations' self-assessments of the development of e-government and the provision of one-stop shop services were below the national average in 2024.

The share of own revenues in the total revenues of the district's municipalities for 2023 was 19%, compared to 27% in the country, and the coverage of municipal expenditures with local revenues was 69%, against 74% nationally.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Demography

Sliven's demographic picture for 2023 again places the district among the country's leaders in this category. The natural population increase rate is the second highest in the country (after the capital), with -3.0% , versus -6.8% nationally. At the same time, the net migration rate is nil.

Sliven district has the highest share of children under 4 years – 6.1% , versus 4.5% nationwide. It is also the district with the lowest share of people aged 65 and over – 22.4% , compared to 23.8% in the country.

The population density is relatively low – 987 persons/sq. km in the urbanized settlements, against 1,221 persons/sq. km countrywide.

Education

In this year's issue, Sliven again features as the district with the lowest score as regards the indicators for education.

Both the share of children attending kindergartens and the rate of enrolment in 5th–7th grade are the lowest in the country – 75% in the district, against 88% nationally, and 79% , against 90% nationally, respectively. For its part, the share of school year repeaters is the highest in the whole country – 3.6% , which is three times higher than the national average of 1.2% .

The alignment between vocational education and the profile of the local economy is high – 61.9% , compared to 53.6% nationally, which is due to the high share of admissions to programs and employment figures in manufacturing and their low share in the ICT and construction sectors.

Students' performance in 2024 again remained poor. The average score in the NEA in mathematics after 7th grade was 31.7 p., compared to the average of 42.9 p. nationally, and was the third lowest in the whole country, above only those of Vidin and Vratsa. The average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature was also relatively low – "Good" 4.12, versus the national average of "Good" 4.30, and the share of "fail" grades (below 3.00) was 11.5% , compared to the national average of 8.7% .

The relative number of university students in the district rose to 8.7 per 1,000 population, but remained relatively low.

Healthcare

In 2023, Sliven again recorded an acute shortage of both GPs and specialist physicians. There were on average 1,872 persons per one local GP, compared to 1,701 persons per doctor countrywide. The number of beds in the local general hospitals continues to be relatively low – 5.0 beds per 1,000 population, compared to 6.1 beds per 1,000 population in the country, though hospital bed occupancy is close to the national average – 53% , compared to 56% nationally.

Sliven is also among the districts with the lowest number of pharmacies relative to the population – one pharmacy per 2,937 population, versus one pharmacy per 1,982 population in the country. The average life expectancy is also relatively low.

Security and justice

The workloads of judges in the District and Administrative courts were relatively low in 2023, and the speed of delivery of justice – relatively high. The share of criminal cases closed within 3 months was 94% , against the national average of 91% , of administrative cases – 78% , versus 72% in the country, and of civil cases – 88% , against 65% nationally.

The relative number of crimes in the district is close to the average one in the country, but the detection rate is considerably higher. In 2023, registered crimes against the person and property in Sliven district amounted to 11.5 per 1,000 population, against 11.3 per 1,000 population nationwide. The detection rate was 64% , versus the average of 53% in the country.

The number of police officers is relatively low – 3.9 per 1,000 population, compared to 4.2 per 1,000 population in the country.

Environment

The relative volume of generated household waste is close to, but below the national average – 464 kg/person per year in the district, compared to 488 kg/person in the country for 2022. The share of waste handed over for treatment and recycling is almost equal to the national average – 75% in the district, compared to 76% nationally.

The share of forest areas is relatively high – 42% , compared to 33% in the country, and that of disturbed area is around the national average. The installed RES capacities are increasing and significantly surpassing the national average relative to the population.

The cooling degree days in the area is relatively high. The relative volume of consumed drinking water is the lowest in the country (alongside Targovishte district) – 72 liters per person per day, compared to 103 liters in the country.

Culture and tourism

Cultural life and tourism in Sliven district show relatively low intensity. The number of cinema visits has gone up to 71 per 1,000 population but it is the lowest in the country relative to the population and many times lower than the national average of 684 per 1,000 population. Visits to the local theatres and museums are also lagging significantly behind. Only visits to the local libraries are close to, though again below the national average – 668 per 1,000 population in the district, against 679 per 1,000 population in the country.

The tourism sector also continued to underperform in 2023. The number of beds in accommodation establishments was 12 per 1,000 population, compared to 56 per 1,000 population in the country, and the number of overnight stays – 588 per 1,000 population, versus 4,167 per 1,000 population nationally. The number of guest nights booked via online sharing economy platforms was also limited.

Key indicators for the district of Sliven

Economic Development Indicators	2021	2022	2023	National average
Gross domestic product (GDP) per capita (BGN, current prices)	10,439	12,586	n.a.	25,956
Average gross annual salary of people employed under labour contract (BGN)	14,033	15,312	n.a.	21,242
Share of people living below the national poverty line (%)	32.0	29.2	21.4	20.6
Share of the working-age population (%)	57.2	55.0	55.0	58.5
Average annual employment rate of the population aged 15–64 (%)	66.6	65.8	70.1	76.2
Average annual unemployment rate of the population aged 15+ (%)	8.4	7.9	8.1	5.3
Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with primary or lower education (%)	38.2	37.8	34.3	14.8
Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with higher education (%)	20.1	21.1	23.2	30.5
Production value (BGN/employed person)	71,626	94,356	n.a.	122,377
Expenditures on the acquisition of tangible fixed assets (BGN/person)	1,234	2,276	n.a.	4,257
Foreign direct investment in non-financial enterprises (cumulative) (EUR/person)	726	783	n.a.	4,544
Share of the population living in settlements with public sewerage networks (%)	62.6	62.5	n.a.	75.0
Share of road surfaces in good condition (%)	68.0	68.0	87.9	40.4
Coverage of municipal expenditures with local revenues (%)	83.8	87.4	68.5	74.1
Active Transparency Rating of local government bodies (%)*	80.1	80.5	84.0	69.3

Social Development Indicators	2021	2022	2023	National average
Natural population increase rate (‰)	n.a.	–5.9	–3.0	–6.8
Net migration rate (‰)	n.a.	0.6	0.0	6.4
Average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature**	3.79	3.65	4.12	4.30
Average grade in the National external assessment in mathematics after 7th grade (points)**	25.8	25.3	31.7	42.9
Net enrolment rate of the population (5th to 7th grade) (%)	85.3	82.1	78.7	89.9
Average life expectancy (years)***	71.2	70.8	71.7	73.5
Share of people with health insurance (%)	86.7	90.3	90.6	95.0
Population per one GP (persons)	1,916	1,859	1,872	1,701
Registered crimes against the person and property per 1,000 population	9.5	11.3	11.5	11.3
Share of criminal cases closed within 3 months	92	93	94	91
Households' consumption of municipally supplied drinking water (liter/person/day)	71	72	n.a.	103
Generated household waste of serviced population (kg/person/year)	403	464	n.a.	488
Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%)	73	75	n.a.	76
Visits to cinemas (number/1,000 population)	53	70	71	684
Overnight stays in accommodation establishments (number/1,000 population)	419	527	588	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.