

Targovishte district

▶ Population (2023)	95,609
▶ Territory (sq. km)	2,710
▶ Number of settlements	194
▶ Share of urban population (%)	55.9



In 2022, GDP in Targovishte district recorded a considerable increase. Salaries and pensions also continue to rise. Employment and unemployment are increasing simultaneously, but both indicators are significantly less favorable than the national average. The utilization of EU funds in the district remains low. The share of highways and first-class roads is relatively low, but the quality of road surfaces is high. Local taxes have sustained their relatively low levels. The municipalities' self-assessment of the development

of e-government remains above the national average. The district's population is aging at a faster rate than in the country on average. Targovishte is among the districts with the lowest coverage of the education system. Hospital bed occupancy is low. Court workloads are among the lowest in the country and this impacts the speed of delivery of justice. The share of forest area is lower than nationally, but so is the share of disturbed area. Cultural life in the district retains its low intensity and tourism is poorly represented.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



Income and living conditions



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ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Income and living conditions

In 2022, GDP per capita in Targovishte district recorded a considerable growth, and its rate of increase was the second highest after that in Stara Zagora. This puts the district just outside the top ten in this indicator. Salaries are also rising significantly. The annual gross salary of people employed under labor contract has reached 17,300 BGN. Pensions also continue to rise, but remain among the lowest in the country. Their average monthly amount for 2023 was 659 BGN, compared to 784 BGN in the country.

The low level of pensions has a strong negative impact on the poverty level in the district – it continues to rise and in 2023 the share of the population living below the national poverty line reached 36.5%, compared to 20.6% nationally.

Labor market

The share of the working age population in the district has registered a decline and is moving away from the 2023 national average. Employment and unemployment are rising simultaneously, with both indicators remaining considerably less favorable than the respective country's averages. The employment rate has reached 68.9%, compared to 76.2% in the country, and the unemployment rate – 9.5%, versus 5.3% countrywide.

A huge challenge for the labor market in the district is the deteriorating educational structure of the workforce, even though 2023 again saw some improvement. The share of the population aged 25–64 with primary or lower education dropped by 3 p.p. to 27%, compared to 15% in the country. The share of university graduates is 21%, against 31% nationally.

Investment and business

Due to the markedly industrial profile of the local economy and the significant role played by big business, Targovishte has a relatively small number of enterprises – 51 per 1,000 population, compared to 70 per 1,000 population in the country. In 2022, there was again an increase in investment and production. TFA acquisition expenditures per person reached 2,600 BGN/person, against 4,300 BGN/person in the country. FDI amounted to 3,500 EUR/person, compared to 4,500 EUR/person in the country, and production value to 114,800 BGN per employed person, against 122,400 BGN in the country.

Utilization of European funds in the district remains low, surpassing only that in Sliven. By 30 June 2024, payments made in the district to beneficiaries of EU operational programs amounted to 1,971 BGN/person, versus 3,175 BGN/person in the country. Within the district, the highest amounts were utilized by Popovo municipality, but even they failed to reach the national average.

Relative research and development expenditures in the district have grown considerably, though still ranking Targovishte last in this indicator.

Infrastructure

The density of the railway network again remained relatively low in 2023. The density of the road network is generally above the country's average, but the share of highways and first-class roads is relatively low – 16%, compared to the national average of 19%. Nevertheless, the quality of road surfaces is high. In 2023, 48% of the roads in the district were in good condition, compared to 40% in the country.

Households' access to the internet has been decreasing and has fallen below the national average – 84%, compared to 89% in the country in 2023.

The share of households connected to a public sewerage network remains low – 53%, compared to 75% in the country. A bare 46% of the sewerage networks are connected to a wastewater treatment plant, which is considerably below the national average of 67%.

Local taxes

In 2024, local taxes in the municipalities of Targovishte district again retained their relatively low levels. Only the average rate of the tax on non-gratuitous acquisition of property was higher in the district's municipalities than in the country on average. Relatively low were the taxes on immovable non-residential properties of legal entities – 1.91‰, versus 2.15‰ in the country.

Within the district, the average local taxes are lowest in the municipality of Antonovo, and highest – in the municipality of Omurtag.

Administration

The municipalities' average self-assessment of the development of e-government remains above the national average. However, the 2024 self-assessment of the provision of one-stop shop services is again below the national average. The AIP active transparency rating of the local administrations has gone down and is now below the national average.

The share of own revenues in the total revenues of the municipalities in the district again remained relatively low in 2023 – 17%, compared to 27% nationally. The coverage of municipal expenditures with local revenues in the district is the lowest in the whole country – 44%, versus 74% respectively.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Demography

In 2023, natural population increase remained relatively low at -9.3‰ , compared to -6.8‰ nationally. At the same time, net migration was positive at 3.1‰ .

The population in the district is aging faster than in the country on average. The share of children under 4 years is 4.0% , compared to 4.5% in the country, and that of people aged 65 and over is 25.4% , against 23.8% nationally.

The degree of urbanization in the district remains among the lowest in the country. Population density in the urban settlements is half that in the country – 614 persons/sq. km, compared to $1,221$ people nationally.

Education

Targovishte is among the districts with the lowest coverage of the education system. In 2023, the net enrolment in 5th–7th grade was 84% , versus 90% nationally. The share of school year repeaters has registered a slight increase and is close to the average one in the country. The alignment between vocational education and the profile of the local economy is above the national average.

The performance of Targovishte district's students improved significantly in 2024, though remaining relatively low. The average score in the NEA in mathematics after 7th grade was 41.4 p., versus the average of 42.9 p. in the country. The average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature was "Good" 4.02 , against "Good" 4.30 nationally, and the share of "fail" grades (below 3.00) was 10.0% , against 8.7% countrywide.

There are no universities or university branches on the district's territory.

Healthcare

The average life expectancy in Targovishte district is about a year lower than the national average – 72.3 years, compared to 73.5 years in the country. The number of people cared for by one GP remained high in 2023 – $2,230$ people per one GP, compared to $1,701$ people per one GP in the country. The relative number of specialist physicians remains lower. The number of beds in the district's general hospitals has decreased slightly to equal the national average of 6.1 beds per $1,000$ population. At the same time, hospital bed occupancy remains relatively low – 49% , compared to 56% nationwide.

The healthcare system coverage in the district went up to 98% in 2023, and for the second year in a row exceeded the national average of 95% . The pharmacy network is relatively limited. There is one pharmacy per $2,297$ population in the district, versus one pharmacy per $1,892$ population in the country.

Security and justice

In 2023, the courts in Targovishte district again remained among the least busy in the country and this impacted the speed of delivery of justice. The average workload in the District Court was 8.7 cases per month per judge, compared to 14.4 cases in the country, and in the Administrative Court – 10.1 cases per month per judge, compared to 14.8 cases in the country. At the same time, the share of criminal cases closed within 3 months in the district was 95% , against 91% in the country, of administrative cases – 89% , versus 72% in the country, and of civil cases – 90% , compared to 65% in the country.

The crime rate in Targovishte has been increasing but remains below the country's average. In 2023, registered crimes against the person and property amounted to 10.4 per $1,000$ population, compared to 11.3 per $1,000$ population nationally. The detection rate is increasing and is now the highest in the country – 72% , against 53% nationally. The relative number of police officers is close to but above the national average relative to the population.

Environment

The volumes of waste generated by the households in Targovishte district are considerably smaller than in the country on average – 370 kg/person per year, compared to the national average of 488 kg/person. At the same time, the share of waste handed over for treatment and recycling is high – 84% in 2022, versus 76% countrywide.

The share of forest areas is lower than the country's average – 27% in the district, against 33% in the country, but the share of disturbed area is also small – 0.1% , against 0.4% in the country. The installed RES capacities per capita are increasing but remain below average.

The cooling degree days index is relatively high. The amounts of drinking water consumed by the households are the lowest in the country (together with Sliven district) – 72 liters per person per day, compared to 103 liters in the country.

Culture and tourism

Cultural life in Targovishte district retains its low intensity, though in 2023 it continued to improve after the sharp decline caused by the pandemic-induced restrictions. Cinema visits reached 219 per $1,000$ population, against 684 per $1,000$ population nationally, and visits to museums numbered 226 per $1,000$ population, against 770 per $1,000$ population in the country. Visits to the theatre and to libraries relative to the population in the district are higher than the national average.

Tourism is not particularly well represented in the district. The number of beds in accommodation establishments is 7 per $1,000$ population, against 56 per $1,000$ population in the country. The number of overnight stays reached 381 per $1,000$ population in 2023, versus $4,167$ per $1,000$ population nationwide and was the lowest in the whole country.

Key indicators for the district of Targovishte

Economic Development Indicators	2021	2022	2023	National average
Gross domestic product (GDP) per capita (BGN, current prices)	12,536	17,195	n.a.	25,956
Average gross annual salary of people employed under labour contract (BGN)	15,110	17,343	n.a.	21,242
Share of people living below the national poverty line (%)	21.4	24.7	36.5	20.6
Share of the working-age population (%)	59.5	57.4	57.1	58.5
Average annual employment rate of the population aged 15–64 (%)	60.5	67.4	68.9	76.2
Average annual unemployment rate of the population aged 15+ (%)	8.3	8.7	9.5	5.3
Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with primary or lower education (%)	32.2	30.3	27.0	14.8
Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with higher education (%)	17.1	21.3	21.0	30.5
Production value (BGN/employed person)	86,468	114,775	n.a.	122,377
Expenditures on the acquisition of tangible fixed assets (BGN/person)	1,795	2,630	n.a.	4,257
Foreign direct investment in non-financial enterprises (cumulative) (EUR/person)	2,690	3,544	n.a.	4,544
Share of the population living in settlements with public sewerage networks (%)	52.7	53.4	n.a.	75.0
Share of road surfaces in good condition (%)	60.0	47.9	48.0	40.4
Coverage of municipal expenditures with local revenues (%)	62.0	57.4	43.7	74.1
Active Transparency Rating of local government bodies (%)*	70.1	70.7	68.9	69.3

Social Development Indicators	2021	2022	2023	National average
Natural population increase rate (‰)	n.a.	–12.4	–9.3	–6.8
Net migration rate (‰)	n.a.	3.9	3.1	6.4
Average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature**	3.63	3.58	4.02	4.30
Average grade in the National external assessment in mathematics after 7th grade (points)**	30.2	31.3	41.4	42.9
Net enrolment rate of the population (5th to 7th grade) (%)	74.4	85.0	83.9	89.9
Average life expectancy (years)***	71.8	70.8	72.3	73.5
Share of people with health insurance (%)	87.5	97.3	98.0	95.0
Population per one GP (persons)	2,300	2,056	2,230	1,701
Registered crimes against the person and property per 1,000 population	9.1	8.6	10.4	11.3
Share of criminal cases closed within 3 months	95	92	95	91
Households' consumption of municipally supplied drinking water (liter/person/day)	64	72	n.a.	103
Generated household waste of serviced population (kg/person/year)	319	370	n.a.	488
Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%)	83	84	n.a.	76
Visits to cinemas (number/1,000 population)	19	134	219	684
Overnight stays in accommodation establishments (number/1,000 population)	260	360	381	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.