

Varna district

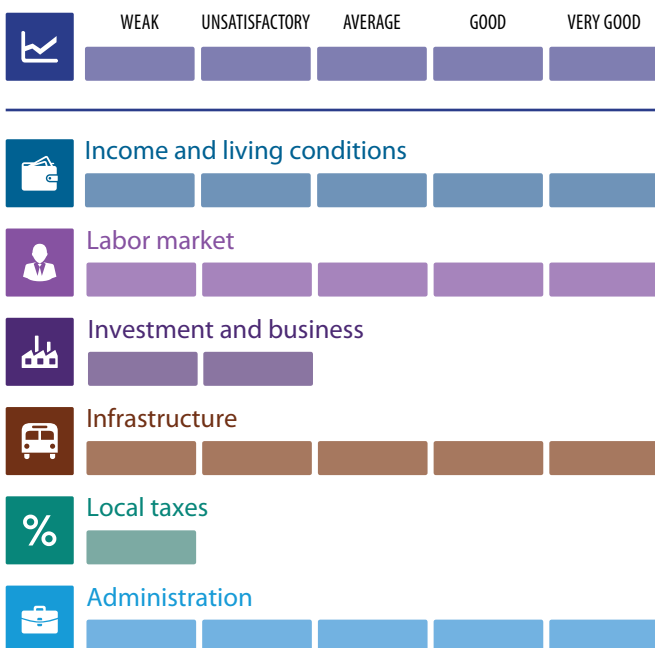
▶ Population (2023)	434,191
▶ Territory (sq. km)	3,819
▶ Number of settlements	159
▶ Share of urban population (%)	84.3vv



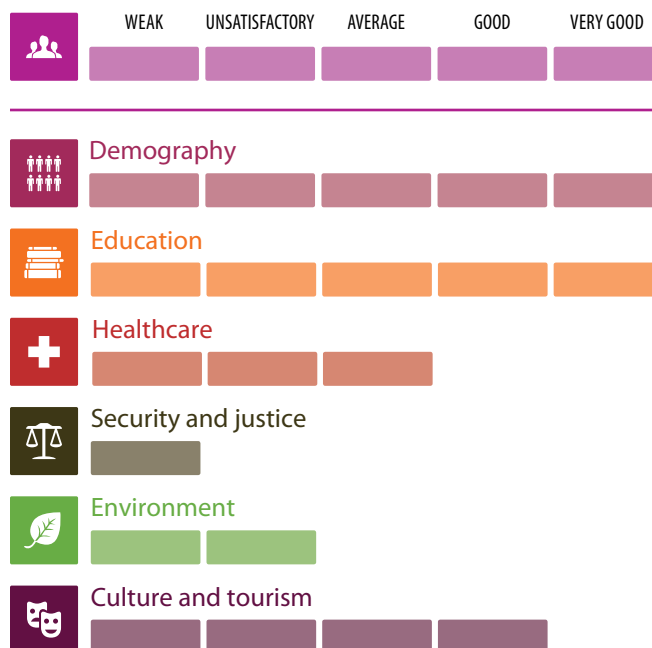
Varna again remains among the top-ranking districts as regards GDP per capita. Salaries and incomes have continued to grow. Income inequality and poverty remain at relatively low levels. Varna is the district with the highest employment rates, while unemployment is the second lowest in the country. Investment and business activity is relatively high. Utilization of European funding is lagging behind. The district's infrastructure is well developed. The average levels of local taxes remain high. The administration's work is evaluated as good.

Varna is among the districts with a relatively favorable demographic development. In the field of education, the trends are moving in a positive direction. Students' performance is very good. Compared to the national average values, Varna district has more doctors but insufficient numbers of hospital beds. The crime rate is relatively high, and the detection rate relatively low. Varna is among the districts with a high volume of generated household waste, but the share of waste handed over for treatment and recycling remains high. Cultural life in the district is intensive, and tourism – well developed.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Income and living conditions

GDP in Varna has been rising and in 2022 it again ranked the district immediately below the top three (the capital and the districts of Stara Zagora and Sofia). Salaries and pensions have been increasing at a rate close to the national average and are relatively high. The average annual gross salary of persons employed under labor contract reached 19,400 BGN in 2022, and in 2023 the average monthly pension was 830 BGN, versus 784 BGN nationally.

Inequality and poverty in the district again remained at relatively low levels in 2023. The Gini coefficient for income inequality is 33.1, compared to 37.2 nationally. The share of the population living below the national poverty line was 14.6%, versus 20.6% nationally, and remained the second lowest in the country, below that of the capital.

Labor market

In this category, Varna's score is again among the highest in the country. The share of the working-age population remains high at 60.4%, compared to 58.5% in the country. In 2023, Varna was the district with the highest employment rate – 82.9%, versus 76.2% in the country. For its part, unemployment was the second lowest in the country (after the capital) – 3.3%, against 5.3% in the country.

The educational status of the workforce in the district is also relatively favorable. The share of university graduates among the population aged 25–64 has increased to 37%, against the national average of 31%. At the same time, the share of the workforce with primary or lower education has decreased to 15%, equaling that in the country.

Investment and business

Investment and business activity in Varna district remains relatively good. The number of non-financial enterprises continues to be high – 78 per 1,000 population, compared to 70 per 1,000 population in the country. Domestic and foreign investment is growing. The amount of TFA acquisition expenditures has reached 3,600 BGN/person, and FDI – 4,000 EUR/person. Production value in the district has also increased to 108,500 BGN per employed person in 2022. The share of export earnings in net sales revenues in the district is below the national average.

Utilization of European funding nevertheless remains relatively low. By 30 June 2024, payments made in the district under EU operational programs amounted to 2,165 BGN/person,

compared to 3,175 BGN/person nationally. Within the district, the highest amounts were utilized in Byala municipality, and the lowest – in Dalgopol.

Expenditure on research and development is relatively high.

Infrastructure

The infrastructure of Varna district remains relatively well developed. The density of the road and rail network is high. The share of highways and first-class roads is also considerable – 28%, compared to 19% in the country. The quality of the road surface again remained high in 2023. 56% of the roads in the district are in good condition, versus 40% countrywide.

The share of households with internet access is close to the national average – 87%, against 89% in the country.

The share of the population with access to a public sewerage network is among the highest in the country – 87%, compared to 75% nationwide, and practically the whole of that system in the district is connected to waste water treatment plants – 86%, against the national average of 67%.

Local taxes

Within Varna district, the average level of the monitored local taxes levied by the municipalities again remained high in 2024. The margin is particularly large as regards the taxation on non-gratuitous acquisition of property, retail trade and motor vehicles. The average tax rates on immovable non-residential property for legal entities are also relatively high. Within the district, Varna city is the municipality levying the highest local taxes, and the municipality of Dolni Chiflik – the lowest.

Administration

Varna district continues to be among the leaders in this category. In 2024, the self-assessments of the local administrations of the development of e-government and the provision of one-stop shop services again went up and were among the highest in the country. The AIP Active transparency rating of the local administration has gone down but also remains among the best in the country

The relatively high share of own revenues in the total revenues of the district's municipalities in 2023 ranks Varna fourth in the country, with an average of 32%, versus 27% nationally. The district takes the third place as regards the coverage of municipal expenditures with local revenues – 85%, compared to 74% on average in the country.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Demography

In 2023, Varna remained among the districts with a very good demographic development, ranking third after the capital city and Sliven in this indicator. The rate of natural increase is -4.7% , which is among the highest in the country and far above the national average of -6.8% . Varna continues to attract population and at 12.4% , the net migration rate retains its positive value, with the district ranking third in the country, below only Kardzhali and Burgas.

The share of children under 4 years remains higher than the national average – 4.7% in the district, against 4.5% in the country. The share of people aged 65 and over is lower – 21.5% , compared to 23.8% in the country.

Varna is among the districts with a relatively high population density in the urbanized areas – $1,623$ persons/sq. km, versus $1,221$ persons/sq. km in the country.

Education

Varna is among the districts with the best performance in the field of education, again coming second in the country and is outranked only by Sofia (capital city). The share of children attending kindergarten was 91% in 2023, against 88% nationally, and the enrolment rate in 5th–7th grade – 92% , compared to 90% countrywide. The percentage of school year repeaters remains relatively low – 0.8% , versus 1.2% nationally. The alignment between vocational education and the profile of the economy in the district is relatively high.

In 2024, the performance of the students in Varna district in the NEA in mathematics at the end of 7th grade was the second best in the country, after the capital – an average of 51.3 p., compared to 42.9 p. in the country. For its part, the average result in the Matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature was “Good” 4.36 – very close to, yet also above the average grade of “Good” 4.30 nationwide. The share of “fail” (below 3.00) grades was 8.7% , equaling the national average.

The number of university students remains relatively high.

Healthcare

In 2023, Varna again remained among the districts with a relatively low share of people with health insurance – 91% , against 95% nationwide. Compared to the nationwide averages, the district has more doctors (both GPs and specialist physicians) but it suffers from a shortage of hospital beds in the local general hospitals – 4.7 beds per $1,000$ population, against 6.1 per $1,000$ population countrywide. Hospital bed occupancy is also relatively lower – 52% , compared to 56% nationally. The number of pharmacies relative to the population is similar to the national average.

The infant mortality rate remains relatively low. The average life expectancy of the district’s residents is among the highest in the country at 74.4 years, compared to 73.5 years nationally.

Security and justice

Though the workloads of the criminal judges in Varna district remain relatively low, this does not affect the speed of delivery of justice. In 2023, there were 13.8 cases a month per one District Court judge, compared to 14.4 per judge nationally, and in the Administrative Court – 12.8 cases per judge, versus 14.8 nationally. At the same time, the share of criminal cases closed within 3 months is 90% , compared to 91% as the national average, the share of civil cases – 63% , versus 65% nationally, and that of administrative cases – 71% , against 72% countrywide.

The crime rate in the district went up in 2023 and is among the highest in the country, second only to Vidin district relative to the population. At the same time, the detection rate has also been increasing, though still remaining low. Registered crimes against the person and property in Varna district amount to 14.9 per $1,000$ population, versus 11.3 per $1,000$ population nationally. The detection rate of 42% is below the national average of 53% and is the second lowest in the country, after that of the capital. The proportion of police officers in the district is also relatively small – 3.9 per $1,000$ population, versus the national figure of 4.2 per $1,000$ population.

Environment

Varna remains among the districts with a high volume of generated household waste – 524 kg/person in 2022, compared to 488 kg/person nationally. However, the share of that waste handed over for treatment and recycling remains relatively high – 92% , versus 76% countrywide.

The share of forest areas in Varna district is lower than the national average, and the share of disturbed area is higher. The installed RES capacities relative to the population are significantly lower than the average in the other districts.

Culture and tourism

In 2023, Varna remained among the districts with highly developed culture and tourism. The availability of beds in accommodation establishments is among the highest in the country – 149 per $1,000$ population, compared to 56 per $1,000$ population nationally. The relative number of overnight stays reached $10,555$ per $1,000$ population, compared to $4,167$ per $1,000$ population nationally, and guest nights booked via online sharing economy platforms numbered $1,148$ per $1,000$ population, compared to 500 per $1,000$ population nationally.

Cinema visits have increased to $1,114$ per $1,000$ population, against 684 per $1,000$ population nationally. Visits to the local theatres, museums and libraries have also gone up, though remaining below the respective national averages relative to the population.

Key indicators for the district of Varna

Economic Development Indicators	2021	2022	2023	National average
Gross domestic product (GDP) per capita (BGN, current prices)	17,872	24,007	n.a.	25,956
Average gross annual salary of people employed under labour contract (BGN)	17,201	19,448	n.a.	21,242
Share of people living below the national poverty line (%)	17.3	14.2	14.6	20.6
Share of the working-age population (%)	62.0	60.3	60.4	58.5
Average annual employment rate of the population aged 15–64 (%)	78.8	82.9	82.9	76.2
Average annual unemployment rate of the population aged 15+ (%)	3.9	3.2	3.3	5.3
Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with primary or lower education (%)	15.8	16.2	15.2	14.8
Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with higher education (%)	30.2	34.4	36.6	30.5
Production value (BGN/employed person)	86,046	108,496	n.a.	122,377
Expenditures on the acquisition of tangible fixed assets (BGN/person)	2,692	3,562	n.a.	4,257
Foreign direct investment in non-financial enterprises (cumulative) (EUR/person)	3,299	3,979	n.a.	4,544
Share of the population living in settlements with public sewerage networks (%)	85.8	86.6	n.a.	75.0
Share of road surfaces in good condition (%)	56.5	56.8	56.1	40.4
Coverage of municipal expenditures with local revenues (%)	100.0	101.2	85.4	74.1
Active Transparency Rating of local government bodies (%)*	76.5	76.8	71.1	69.3

Social Development Indicators	2021	2022	2023	National average
Natural population increase rate (‰)	n.a.	-6.9	-4.7	-6.8
Net migration rate (‰)	n.a.	6.1	12.4	6.4
Average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature**	4.11	3.94	4.36	4.30
Average grade in the National external assessment in mathematics after 7th grade (points)**	43.3	42.6	51.3	42.9
Net enrolment rate of the population (5th to 7th grade) (%)	83.0	92.8	91.9	89.9
Average life expectancy (years)***	74.2	73.6	74.4	73.5
Share of people with health insurance (%)	83.8	91.2	91.3	95.0
Population per one GP (persons)	1,710	1,567	1,602	1,701
Registered crimes against the person and property per 1,000 population	11.8	14.5	14.9	11.3
Share of criminal cases closed within 3 months	92	91	90	91
Households' consumption of municipally supplied drinking water (liter/person/day)	99	105	n.a.	103
Generated household waste of serviced population (kg/person/year)	512	524	n.a.	488
Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%)	85	92	n.a.	76
Visits to cinemas (number/1,000 population)	568	963	1,114	684
Overnight stays in accommodation establishments (number/1,000 population)	7,106	9,451	10,555	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.