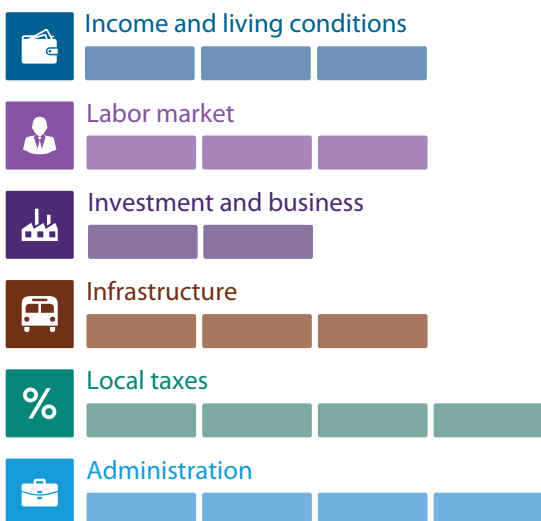# Vratsa district

- ▶ Population (2023) — 147,619
- ▶ Territory (sq. km) — 3,620
- ▶ Number of settlements — 123
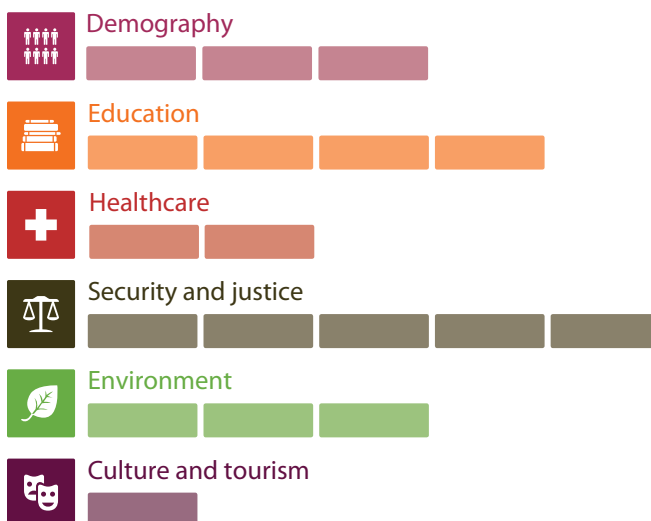- ▶ Share of urban population (%) — 59.1

GDP per capita in Vratsa district continues to grow. The average gross annual salary of employees is the third highest in the country. Employment and unemployment rates have been going down simultaneously. Vratsa is among the districts with a strong industrial profile and the share of the workforce with secondary education is relatively high. Economic and investment activity in the district remains relatively limited. Road quality is not improving. Local taxes are low. The transparency in the work of municipal administrations remains low.

The natural population increase rate remains considerably lower than the national average. The indicators in the field of primary and secondary education remain relatively good, but students' results are relatively low. Healthcare suffers from a shortage of specialist physicians and hospital beds. Vratsa is the district with the highest relative share of police officers. The number of registered crimes against the person and property relative to the population in Vratsa district is among the highest in the country. The share of forest areas is low. Culture and tourism are insufficiently developed.

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 Vratsa district continues to grow. Although its rate of increase is lower than average, in 2022 Vratsa registered the fifth highest GDP in the country – 21,800 BGN/person. Salaries and pensions are also increasing at a rate similar to the national average, and remain among the relatively high ones. The gross annual salary of employed persons has reached 19,400 BGN and is the third highest in the country (after those in the capital and Varna district), mainly on account of the employees in the Kozloduy nuclear power station. The average monthly pension is 786 BGN, which is also higher than in most districts. However, income inequality remains high – the Gini coefficient is 39.0, compared 37.2 in the country. The poverty level has dropped considerably and for the first time has fallen below the national average. In 2023, the share of the population living below the national poverty line was 19.2%, versus 20.6% countrywide.

👤 Labor market ▪▪▪

The share of the working-age population in the district has been decreasing and in 2022 it remained lower than the national average – 57.2%, compared to 58.5% in the country. At the same time, there has been a simultaneous decrease in employment and unemployment, both of whose figures are again significantly less favorable than the respective national averages. The employment rate in Vratsa district is 61.8%, against 76.2% in the country, while the unemployment rate is 10.4%, against 5.3% in the country.

Vratsa is among the districts with a pronounced industrial profile and the share of the workforce with secondary education is relatively high – 62%, compared to 55% in the country. The share of the population aged between 25 and 64 with a university degree has gone up to 22%, versus 31% in the country, while that of people with primary or lower education has decreased to 16%, compared to 15% in the country.

🏭 Investment and business ▪▪

Economic and investment activity in Vratsa district again remained relatively limited in 2022. The relative number of non-financial enterprises was the lowest in the country – 43 per 1,000 population, against 70 per 1,000 population as the national average. TFA acquisition expenditure has doubled, but FDI has shrunk considerably to 745 EUR per 1,000 population, against 4,544 EUR per 1,000 population countrywide.

For the second year in a row, production value in Vratsa district has reached a record increase. Its value relative to the population is now the second highest in the country (after Sofia district). At the same time, the share of export earnings in net sales revenues has decreased and is the lowest in the country – 4%, versus 29% nationally. Research and development expenditures are also relatively low.

Vratsa also remains among the top-ranking districts as regards utilization of EU funding. By 30 June 2024, payments made to beneficiaries of EU operational programs reached 3,796 BGN/person, versus 3,175 BGN/person nationally. Within the district, the municipality of Vratsa city takes the top place with over 5,500 BGN/person.

🚌 Infrastructure ▪▪▪

The density of the road and rail network in Vratsa district nearly equals the respective national averages but road quality remains low. The share of highways and first-class roads in the district is 10%, against 19% in the country. In 2023, the share of roads with surfaces in good condition was 34%, compared to the national average of 40%.

Households' internet access in Vratsa district also lags behind the country's average.

The relatively low share of population living in urban settlements and the low population density in Vratsa district can account for the limited access of the households to a public sewerage system – 57%, compared to the national average of 75%. Access to public sewerage networks connected to wastewater treatment plants is also low – available to 53% of the population, compared to the average of 67% countrywide.

% Local taxes ▪▪▪▪

In 2024, the average rate of the local taxes in the district's municipalities again remained relatively low. The average retail trade tax rate in the district was almost half the national average – 6.84 BGN/sq. m, against 13.09 BGN/sq. m nationally. Also lower are the rates for the motor vehicle tax and for non-gratuitous acquisition of property.

Of the monitored tax rates, in 2024 only the average one on non-residential immovable property of legal entities remained higher than the national average.

Within the district, the highest local taxes are levied by Kozloduy municipality, and the lowest ones – by Mizia municipality.

💼 Administration ▪▪▪▪

The average share of own revenues in the total revenues of the district's municipalities is relatively low – 21%, compared to 27% in the country. The coverage of municipal expenditures with local revenues is also lower than the national average – 63% in the district, against 74% in the country.

In 2024, the self-assessments of Vratsa district's local municipalities regarding the development of e-government and the provision of one-stop shop services went up and exceeded the respective national averages. The transparency ratings of the local administration have also increased but remain relatively low.

👥 SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ▬▬▬

🏫 Demography ▬▬▬

In 2023, the natural population increase rate in the district remained considerably lower than the national average, with –10.9‰ in Vratsa, against –6.8‰ in the country. At the same time, the net migration rate rose to 2.4‰. The share of children under 4 years is 4.3%, versus 4.5% in the country. The share of the population aged 65 and over is 25.0%, against 23.8% in the country.

The density of the population living in urbanized settlements is almost half the national average – 657 persons/sq. km in the district, compared to 1,221 persons/sq. km in the country.

📖 Education ▬▬▬▬

The indicators of Vratsa district in the field of primary and secondary education remain relatively good, but the results are relatively low. The share of children attending kindergarten is high – 92%, compared to 88% in the country. In 2023, Vratsa again remained among the districts with the highest net enrolment rate in 5th–7th grade – 91%, compared to 90% in the country. The share of school year repeaters has decreased slightly to equal the national average of 1.2%. The alignment between vocational education and the profile of the economy in the district is close to, but below the national average.

Students' results in 2024 were again relatively poor. The average score in the NEA in mathematics after 7th grade was 31.4 p., compared to 42.9 p. nationally, thus ranking Vratsa district the second worst in this indicator, only after Vidin. The average score in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature was "Good" 4.10, versus "Good" 4.30 nationally. The share of "fail" (below 3.00) grades was 8.9%, compared to 8.7% in the country.

The number of university students in the district is 8.6 per 1,000 population, compared to 29.6 per 1,000 population countrywide in 2023.

➕ Healthcare ▬▬

The average life expectancy in Vratsa district has risen to 70.9 years, compared to 73.5 years nationally, and is the second lowest in the country (after Vidin district). The share of the health-insured population is traditionally higher than the national average – 96%, versus 95% in the country. Healthcare in the district suffers from a shortage of specialist physicians and of hospital beds. In 2023, the number of beds in the local general hospitals was 4.8 per 1,000 population, while the national average was 6.1 beds per 1,000 population. Hospital bed occupancy remains relatively low – 58% in the district, against 56% nationally.

The infant mortality rate has decreased and is now below the national average. The number of pharmacies relative to the population is similar to the national average.

⚖️ Security and justice ▬▬▬▬▬▬

In 2023, the workloads of the judges in Vratsa district remained similar to the average ones in the country, but the speed of delivery of justice was relatively high. The proportion of criminal cases closed within 3 months was 96%, against the national average of 91%, the share of administrative cases – 79%, against 72% in the country, and that of civil cases – 68%, compared to 65% nationally.

Vratsa is the district with the highest relative number of police officers – 6.5 per 1,000 population, against 4.2 per 1,000 population in the country. The number of registered crimes against the person and property has continued to fall but Vratsa remains among the three districts with the highest relative number in the country (after Vidin and Varna) – 13.8 per 1,000 population in Vratsa, versus 11.3 per 1,000 population nationwide. The share of cleared crimes has been rising and remains higher than the national average – 60% in the district, versus 53% nationally.

🌿 Environment ▬▬▬

In 2022, the amounts of waste generated by the district's households remained relatively small – 344 kg/person per annum, versus 488 kg/person in the country. At the same time, the share handed over for treatment and recycling was again lower than the national average – 57%, versus 76% respectively.

The installed RES capacities relative to the population in the district are above the national average. The share of forest areas is low – 16%, versus 33% in the country, while disturbed area makes up 0.2% of the district's territory, compared to 0.4% in the country in 2023.

🎭 Culture and tourism ▬

Cultural life and tourism are not strongly represented in Vratsa and in 2023 the district continued to lag behind the national average. Cinema visits increased but remained relatively low at 321 per 1,000 population, compared to 684 per 1,000 population nationally. Visits to local museums even registered a slight decrease to 138 per 1,000 population, compared to 770 per 1,000 population nationally. Visits to the theater numbered 107 per 1,000 population, compared to 349 per 1,000 population in the country, and those libraries – 610 per 1,000 population, compared to 679 per 1,000 population in the country.

The number of beds in accommodation establishments relative to the population in the district is extremely low at 9 per 1,000 population, compared to 56 per 1,000 population nationally in 2023. Overnight stays are also relatively low, though they have gone up to reach 748 per 1,000 population, against 4,167 per 1,000 population nationally. Guest nights booked via online sharing economy platforms amount to 25 per 1,000 population, compared to 500 per 1,000 population countrywide.

Key indicators for the district of Vratsa

Economic Development Indicators	2021	2022	2023	National average
Gross domestic product (GDP) per capita (BGN, current prices)	17,781	21,818	n.a.	25,956
Average gross annual salary of people employed under labour contract (BGN)	17,324	19,441	n.a.	21,242
Share of people living below the national poverty line (%)	33.5	31.5	19.2	20.6
Share of the working-age population (%)	57.6	57.3	57.2	58.5
Average annual employment rate of the population aged 15–64 (%)	63.5	65.6	61.8	76.2
Average annual unemployment rate of the population aged 15+ (%)	10.3	10.7	10.4	5.3
Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with primary or lower education (%)	24.1	22.5	15.6	14.8
Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with higher education (%)	18.8	15.6	22.3	30.5
Production value (BGN/employed person)	121,054	216,011	n.a.	122,377
Expenditures on the acquisition of tangible fixed assets (BGN/person)	1,788	3,450	n.a.	4,257
Foreign direct investment in non-financial enterprises (cumulative) (EUR/person)	1,240	745	n.a.	4,544
Share of the population living in settlements with public sewerage networks (%)	55.7	57.0	n.a.	75.0
Share of road surfaces in good condition (%)	27.2	34.3	34.3	40.4
Coverage of municipal expenditures with local revenues (%)	72.5	80.7	62.6	74.1
Active Transparency Rating of local government bodies (%)*	64.7	64.6	65.9	69.3

Social Development Indicators	2021	2022	2023	National average
Natural population increase rate (‰)	n.a.	−14.5	−10.9	−6.8
Net migration rate (‰)	n.a.	0.0	2.4	6.4
Average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature**	3.75	3.58	4.10	4.30
Average grade in the National external assessment in mathematics after 7th grade (points)**	26.4	26.7	31.4	42.9
Net enrolment rate of the population (5th to 7th grade) (%)	92.3	91.7	91.0	89.9
Average life expectancy (years)***	71.4	70.5	70.9	73.5
Share of people with health insurance (%)	93.8	95.2	95.9	95.0
Population per one GP (persons)	1,727	1,724	1,724	1,701
Registered crimes against the person and property per 1,000 population	13.0	16.4	13.8	11.3
Share of criminal cases closed within 3 months	97	97	96	91
Households' consumption of municipally supplied drinking water (liter/person/day)	101	93	n.a.	103
Generated household waste of serviced population (kg/person/year)	332	344	n.a.	488
Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%)	54	57	n.a.	76
Visits to cinemas (number/1,000 population)	228	303	321	684
Overnight stays in accommodation establishments (number/1,000 population)	473	731	748	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.