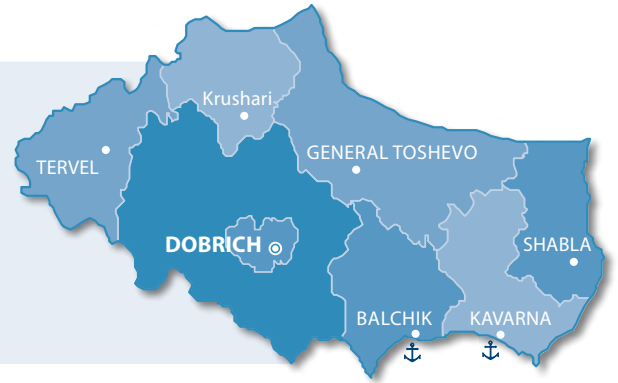


Dobrich district

▶ Population (2023)	146,635
▶ Territory (sq. km)	4,720
▶ Number of settlements	216
▶ Share of urban population (%)	69.9



GDP per capita in Dobrich district continues to grow but its value remains relatively low. At the same time, the relative poverty rate remains high. The low educational status of the workforce continues to be a major challenge facing the labor market. Business and investment activity in the district has registered a serious increase. Road surface quality is extremely high. The level of local taxes in the district's municipalities is relatively low. The transparency rating of the local administration remains high. Dobrich is among the districts with the lowest popu-

lation density. The alignment of vocational education and the economy is high. Students' results are relatively low. Healthcare suffers from a shortage of specialist physicians and hospital beds. The number of registered crimes in the district is low and the detection rate – relatively high. The share of forest areas is relatively low, but at the same time, that of disturbed area is relatively limited. Dobrich is one of the districts with the highest number of beds in places of accommodation, which signals good opportunities for the development of tourism.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Income and living conditions

GDP per capita in Dobrich district has continued to grow but in 2022 its rate of increase was lower than the national average; in this indicator the district ranks in the lower half. The growth of salaries and pensions is also relatively slow. The average gross annual salary of people employed under labor contract in the district has reached 15,800 BGN, against 21,200 BGN nationwide, while the average monthly pension is relatively low – 699 BGN, compared to 784 BGN in the country.

These indicators account for the relatively high poverty level in Dobrich district. In 2023, the share of the people living below the poverty line went up to 32.1%, compared to the national average of 20.6%. Income inequality is also high, with the Gini coefficient being the highest in the country – 41.2, versus 37.2 in the country for 2023.

Labor market

The share of the working-age population in Dobrich district is relatively low and in 2023 it dropped to 56.4%, compared to 58.5% in the country. Employment is declining as well and remains relatively limited, but unemployment is also low. The employment rate for 2023 was 68.9%, compared to 76.2% in the country, and that of unemployment – 4.8%, versus the national average of 5.3%.

In 2023, the relatively low educational status of the workforce continued to be a major challenge facing the labor market in the district. The share of employed people aged 25–64 with a university degree went up to 19%, against the national average of 31%, while that of people with primary or lower education also went up, reaching 28%, versus 15% nationally.

Investment and business

Business and investment activity in the district registered a serious increase in 2022. The number of non-financial enterprises per capita almost reached the national average. For its part, domestic and foreign investment places the district in the upper half of the ranking. TFA acquisition expenditure reached 3,300 BGN per capita, and foreign investment – 2,300 EUR per person. Production value has also increased significantly, reaching 112,200 BGN per person. However, the share of export earnings in net sales revenues remains low at 13%, compared to 29% in the country.

Utilization of European funds in the district has continued to grow but both its increase and its volume remain below the national average relative to the population. By 30 June 2024, payments made in the district to beneficiaries of EU operational programs amounted to 2,452 BGN/person, compared to the national average of 3,175 BGN/person. Within the district,

the highest figures were recorded in Dobrich city municipality, while the lowest ones were in the municipality of Tervel.

Infrastructure

The density of the infrastructure in Dobrich district, and especially that of its rail network, remains low. In 2023, the share of highways and first-class roads remained nearly half the national average – 10%, against 19% in the country. Road surface is of poor quality.

Access to the internet has increased but remains below the national average – it was available to 86% of the households, versus 89% nationwide in 2023.

The share of the population living in settlements with access to a public sewerage system is still below the national average – 71%, versus 75% countrywide, though in 2022 all sewerage systems in the district were connected to wastewater treatment plants.

Local taxes

In 2024, local tax rates in Dobrich district again remained below the national average. The margin with the national average rates was especially significant as regards the average local rates on immovable non-residential property for legal entities – 1.60‰ in the district, which is the lowest rate countrywide, where the average was 2.15‰. However, the tax on non-gratuitous transfer of property remained higher than the national average and among the highest in the country.

Within the district, tax rates are lowest in the municipality of Tervel, and highest in the municipality of Shabla.

Administration

The indicators for the functioning of the local administration rank the municipalities in Dobrich district among the good performers in the country. The major reason for this is the high AIP Active transparency rating of the local administration – 81.3% in 2024, against 69.3% on average nationwide, which was the second highest rating for that year, after that of Sliven.

The 2024 district municipalities' self-assessments of the development of e-government and the provision of one-stop shop services are close to the national average.

The share of own revenues in the district's total revenues decreased in 2023 to 24%, compared to 27% in the country, and the coverage of municipal expenditures with local revenues was 63%, compared to 74% in the country.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Demography

The natural population increase rate again remained relatively low in 2023 at -10.7% , compared to -6.8% as the national average. The net migration rate has increased and its value is positive at 6.8% , but it cannot compensate for the population decline in the district, which is a persistent trend. In addition, population aging is visible in the age dependency ratios. The share of children under 4 years is 3.9% , versus 4.5% nationwide, and that of the people aged 65 and over – 26.8% , compared to 23.8% in the country.

Dobrich is among the districts with the lowest population density in its urbanized settlements, ranking only before Vidin district – 565 persons/sq. km, versus 1,221 persons/sq. km in the country.

Education

In 2023, the enrolment rate in 5th–7th grade went down and remained relatively low – 83% , compared to 90% countrywide. At the same time, in 2022 the shares of school year repeaters went up to become the second highest in the country, after that of Sliven district. The alignment between vocational education and the profile of the economy remained high in 2024, especially in the agricultural sector, with a high number of students enrolled in specialized agricultural programs, and a relatively high number of people employed in the sector, as also observed in other districts, Dobrudja, Silistra and Razgrad in particular.

In 2024, students' results for the district remained relatively low. The average score in the NEA in mathematics at the end of 7th grade was 33.8 p., compared to 42.9 p. in the country on average. The average score in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature was "Good" 4.12, compared to the national average of "Good" 4.30. The share of "fail" grades (below 3.00) was 9.9% , versus 8.7% nationwide.

Higher education in the district is poorly represented, only by branches of Shumen University and Varna Technical University. The share of university students is 3.4 per 1,000 population, against 29.6 per 1,000 population nationwide.

Healthcare

The share of people with health insurance in Dobrich district continued to increase in 2023 and remained higher than the national average. The healthcare system in the district suffers from an acute shortage of specialist physicians, although the proportion of GPs to the district's population is relatively high. Dobrich is also among the districts with the lowest number of beds in the local general hospitals – 3.1 beds per 1,000 population, against the national average of 6.1 beds per 1,000 population. At the same time, hospital bed occupancy is below the national average. There is a relative insufficiency of pharmacies in the district. The infant mortality rate in the district went down and in 2023 remained relatively low. At the same time, the average life ex-

pectancy went up to reach 72 years, though it remained below the national average.

Security and justice

Court workloads in Dobrich district again continue to be relatively low. In 2023, there were on average 10.2 cases a month per one District Court judge, compared to 14.4 cases per judge nationally, and 14.4 cases a month per one Administrative Court judge, compared to 14.8 cases per judge in the country. At the same time, the proportion of criminal and civil cases closed within 3 months remained higher than the national average, but delivery of justice for administrative cases is slower than the average.

The number of registered crimes against the person and property has been rising but remains lower than the national average – 10.1 per 1,000 population in the district, versus 11.3 per 1,000 population nationwide. At the same time, the detection rate is also increasing, reaching 61% , versus the national figure of 53% . The relative number of police officers is identical to the national average relative to the population.

Environment

The average annual amount of waste generated by the district's households has been going up and exceeds the national average by a considerable margin – 540 kg/person, compared to the national average of 488 kg/person. At the same time, however, the share of waste handed over for treatment and recycling remains among the highest in the country – 97% , versus 76% nationwide.

The share of forest areas is relatively low – 12% , compared to the national average of 33% , but at the same time, the share of disturbed area is relatively limited – 0.1% , versus 0.4% nationally. Dobrich is among the leaders in installed RES capacities per capita.

Culture and tourism

Museum and library visits went up in 2023 and exceeded the national average relative to the population – 1,070 museum visits per 1,000 population, versus 770 per 1,000 population nationwide, and 827 library visits per 1,000 population, versus 679 per 1,000 population in the country. At the same time, visits to the cinema and the theater lagged behind, even though they, too, registered an increase in 2023.

Dobrich is among the districts with the highest number of beds in accommodation establishments relative to the population (outranked only by the district of Burgas) – 193 per 1,000 population, compared to 56 per 1,000 population in the country. The number of overnight stays is also high – 10,890 per 1,000 population, against 4,167 per 1,000 population in the country – and so is the number of guest nights booked via online sharing economy platforms. What largely accounts for the development of tourism is that the territory of the northern Black Sea coastal region is part of the district.

Key indicators for the district of Dobrich

Economic Development Indicators	2021	2022	2023	National average
Gross domestic product (GDP) per capita (BGN, current prices)	12,385	15,642	n.a.	25,956
Average gross annual salary of people employed under labour contract (BGN)	14,099	15,837	n.a.	21,242
Share of people living below the national poverty line (%)	26.0	31.0	32.1	20.6
Share of the working-age population (%)	59.3	56.5	56.4	58.5
Average annual employment rate of the population aged 15–64 (%)	66.3	70.2	68.9	76.2
Average annual unemployment rate of the population aged 15+ (%)	4.9	4.8	4.8	5.3
Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with primary or lower education (%)	25.6	26.7	28.4	14.8
Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with higher education (%)	20.3	17.6	18.7	30.5
Production value (BGN/employed person)	84,452	112,152	n.a.	122,377
Expenditures on the acquisition of tangible fixed assets (BGN/person)	1,822	3,267	n.a.	4,257
Foreign direct investment in non-financial enterprises (cumulative) (EUR/person)	1,816	2,270	n.a.	4,544
Share of the population living in settlements with public sewerage networks (%)	70.6	71.5	n.a.	75.0
Share of road surfaces in good condition (%)	40.3	5.9	25.3	40.4
Coverage of municipal expenditures with local revenues (%)	83.0	75.2	63.4	74.1
Active Transparency Rating of local government bodies (%)*	81.2	81.3	81.3	69.3

Social Development Indicators	2021	2022	2023	National average
Natural population increase rate (‰)	n.a.	–14.0	–10.7	–6.8
Net migration rate (‰)	n.a.	1.7	6.8	6.4
Average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature**	3.68	3.72	4.12	4.30
Average grade in the National external assessment in mathematics after 7th grade (points)**	29.2	29.0	33.8	42.9
Net enrolment rate of the population (5th to 7th grade) (%)	70.6	84.5	83.4	89.9
Average life expectancy (years)***	71.6	70.8	72.0	73.5
Share of people with health insurance (%)	86.0	96.3	96.9	95.0
Population per one GP (persons)	1,507	1,411	1,455	1,701
Registered crimes against the person and property per 1,000 population	8.1	9.9	10.1	11.3
Share of criminal cases closed within 3 months	94	91	93	91
Households' consumption of municipally supplied drinking water (liter/person/day)	83	90	n.a.	103
Generated household waste of serviced population (kg/person/year)	450	540	n.a.	488
Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%)	95	97	n.a.	76
Visits to cinemas (number/1,000 population)	70	118	141	684
Overnight stays in accommodation establishments (number/1,000 population)	7,205	9,449	10,890	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.