

# Gabrovo district

- ▶ Population (2023)
- ▶ Territory (sq. km)
- ▶ Number of settlements
- ▶ Share of urban population (%)

94,862  
2,023  
349  
79.5



**G**DP, salaries and incomes in Gabrovo district have continued to grow, while the poverty level remains relatively low. The share of the working-age population has declined for yet another year. Business and investment activity in the area is high. Gabrovo remains among the districts with the highest amount of utilized EU funds per person. Despite the high density of the road network, the share of highways and first-class roads is relatively small. The level of the local taxes is close to the national average. The local administrations' self-assessments of the development of e-government are high.

Gabrovo is one of the districts with the most unfavorable demographic picture. Educational results are good. The indicators evaluating healthcare place the district among the top performers in the country. Gabrovo is among the districts with the highest share of health-insured persons. The share of cleared crimes has decreased but remains among the highest in the country. The installed RES capacities have gone up considerably to exceed the national average per capita. Cultural life and tourism in Gabrovo district remain among the most active in the country.

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



## SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

### Income and living conditions

In 2022, GDP in Gabrovo continued to grow, reaching 21,400 BGN per capita, but the district dropped a place to become the seventh highest in the country. Salaries and pensions have also gone up, though at a lower rate than the national average. The average gross annual salary of employed people reached 17,100 BGN, and the average monthly pension – 748 BGN in 2023.

The Gini coefficient for income inequality again went down and in 2023 was the lowest in the country – 24.3, versus 37.2 nationally. The share of the population living below the national poverty line has also decreased and continues to be relatively low – 15.7%, against 20.6% in the country.

### Labor market

The share of the working-age population remains the third lowest in the country (after Vidin and Yambol). In 2023, employment went down and unemployment went up. The employment rate reached 74.3%, compared to 76.2% in the country, and the unemployment rate – 4.2%, compared to 5.3% in the country.

Gabrovo is among the districts with a relatively high share of employed people with secondary education – 61%, compared to 55% in the country – which corresponds to its industrial profile. At the same time, the share of university graduates is relatively low, while that of people with primary or lower education is comparable to the country's average.

### Investment and business

Business and investment activity in the district again remained high in 2022. The number of non-financial enterprises relative to the population was 64 per 1,000 population, against the national average of 70 per 1,000 population. TFA acquisition expenditures went up considerably to reach 3,700 BGN/person. FDI also increased and reached 4,400 EUR/person, thus placing the district among the top four in the country in this indicator. Production value also increased to 103,600 BGN per employed person. The share of export earnings in net sales revenues remains high – 40%, against 29% nationally.

The capital again outstripped Gabrovo in the utilization of EU funds per capita and the latter district now ranks second in this category. By 30 June 2024, payments made in it to beneficiaries under EU operational programs amounted to 4,698 BGN/person, versus 3,175 BGN/person nationally. The top place in the district was held by Gabrovo city municipality.

### Infrastructure

Gabrovo is the district with the highest road network density in the country – 25.6 km/100 sq. km of territory, compared to 18.0 km/100 sq. km in the country, although in 2023 the share of highways and first-class roads was lower than the national average – 17%, compared to 19% in the country. The share of road surfaces in good condition is also lower. Households' access to the internet has continued to increase and already exceeds the national average.

Gabrovo is also among the districts with the best access of the population to public sewerage networks – 83%, compared to 75% in the country, and to sewerage networks connected to wastewater treatment plants – 73%, versus 67% nationwide.

### Local taxes

Although Gabrovo is among the districts with a relatively highly developed economy, in 2024 the level of local taxes again remained close to the national average. A particularly big margin is observed as regards the tax on non-gratuitous acquisition of property, where the average rate in the district's municipalities is 2.64%, versus 2.82% nationally. The retail trade tax rate is also considerably lower compared to that in the country – 9.70 BGN/sq. m, compared to 13.09 BGN/sq. m in the country.

Within the district, Gabrovo city municipality levies the highest local taxes, while the lowest rates are those in Tryavna municipality.

### Administration

In 2024, the self-assessments of the local authorities of the development of e-government and the provision of one-stop shop administrative services continued to rise but while the self-assessment on e-government continues to be relatively high, that on the provision of one-stop shop administrative services still lags behind the average ones in the country.

In 2024, the AIP active transparency ratings of the local administration in Gabrovo district registered a slight decrease but remained relatively high at 71.4%, compared to the national average of 69.3%.

The share of own revenues in the total revenues of the municipalities in the district is relatively low – 21%, compared to 27% in the country. The coverage of municipal expenditures with local revenues is also low but in 2023 it went up to 63%, versus 74% nationally.

## SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

### Demography

Gabrovo is among the districts whose demographic picture in 2023 was once again among the most unfavorable ones in the country, ranking the district only one place above the bottom, which is occupied by the district of Vidin. The natural population increase rate of  $-15.1\%$  is the second worst in the country, after that of Vidin, against the national average of  $-6.8\%$ . The net migration rate is positive ( $3.6\%$ ) but it cannot compensate for the low rate of natural population increase.

The trend towards population aging is clearly discernible in the age structure of the population. The share of children under 4 years is  $3.5\%$ , against  $4.5\%$  nationally, and that of the population aged 65 and over –  $30.3\%$ , compared to  $23.8\%$  in the country.

The density of the population in the district's urbanized settlements remains relatively low – 914 persons/sq. km, compared to 1,221 persons/sq. km countywide.

### Education

Gabrovo's performance in the education category is among the good ones. In 2023, it was once again among the districts with a very high rate of enrolment in 5th–7th grade. The percentage of school year repeaters has gone up but remains relatively low. The alignment between vocational education and the profile of the economy is low –  $39.2\%$ , against  $53.1\%$  in the country for 2023.

In 2024, the average score of the district's students in the NEA in mathematics at the end of 7th grade was 38.6 p., compared to 42.9 p. in the country. The average result in the State matriculation exams in Bulgarian language and literature was below the national average – "Good" 4.25, versus "Good" 4.30 nationally, but the share of "fail" (below 3.00) grades continues to be lower than average –  $8.1\%$ , against  $8.7\%$  countrywide.

The number of university students relative to the population in Gabrovo has been falling but the district ranks immediately below the top four in this category.

### Healthcare

Gabrovo district is among the top three performers in the country in this category, where it is preceded only by the districts of Pleven and the capital.

The average life expectancy of the district's residents has increased and is now very close to the national average. In 2023, Gabrovo again remained among the districts with the highest share of health-insured persons. The relative number of GPs is higher than the national average, but specialist physicians are scarce. The number of beds in the local general hospitals has continued to rise but it still fails to reach the national average. Hospital bed occupancy also remains slightly lower.

The infant mortality rate in the district remains considerably below the national average. Access to pharmaceuticals, measured through the number of pharmacies relative to the population, is high.

### Security and justice

Court workloads in Gabrovo district again remained relatively low in 2023, which impacts the speed of delivery of justice. The average actual workload of the District Court judges is 9.9 cases per month, compared to 14.4 cases per judge in the country and that of the judges in the Administrative Court is 11.8 cases per month. Around 91% of the criminal cases were closed within 3 months, equaling the national average. For Administrative court cases, this share is 84%, versus 72% nationally, and for civil cases heard in the District Court – 79%, against 65% in the country.

In 2023, the relative number of registered crimes increased and for the first time exceeded the national average. Registered crimes against the person and property reached 11.7 per 1,000 population, compared to 11.3 per 1,000 people in the country. At the same time, the crime detection rate in Gabrovo has gone down, though still remaining among the highest in the country – 69%, versus 53% on average in the country. The number of police officers is close to, though below the national average – 4.1 per 1,000 population, compared to 4.2 per 1,000 population countrywide.

### Environment

In 2022, the relative volume of generated household waste in the district registered a slight decrease and remained below the national average – an annual of 421 kg/person, against 488 kg/person in the country. At the same time, however, the share of waste handed over for treatment and recycling is high at 87%, compared to 76% in the country.

The share of forest areas is above the national average (40%, compared to 33% in the country), and that of disturbed area – considerably lower – 0.1%, against 0.4% countrywide. The installed RES capacities have increased considerably and exceed the national average per capita.

### Culture and tourism

Gabrovo's cultural and tourist activity remains among the most intensive in the country and ranks the district among the top five performers in this category for 2023. The main reason for this is the extremely high number of visits to museums – 3,544 per 1,000 population, against the national average of 770 per 1,000 population. The number of theatre visits is also relatively high. Visits to libraries and cinemas have increased in number but have not yet reached the respective national averages.

The number of beds in accommodation establishments in the district is 38 per 1,000 population, against 56 per 1,000 population in the country, and the number of overnight stays has reached 2,192 per 1,000 population, against 4,167 per 1,000 population in the country. Guest nights booked via online sharing economy platforms amount to 165 per 1,000 population, compared to 500 per 1,000 population in the country.

## Key indicators for the district of Gabrovo

Economic Development Indicators	2021	2022	2023	National average
Gross domestic product (GDP) per capita (BGN, current prices)	16,549	21,351	n.a.	<b>25,956</b>
Average gross annual salary of people employed under labour contract (BGN)	15,771	17,118	n.a.	<b>21,242</b>
Share of people living below the national poverty line (%)	12.3	21.9	15.7	<b>20.6</b>
Share of the working-age population (%)	55.4	54.3	54.4	<b>58.5</b>
Average annual employment rate of the population aged 15–64 (%)	73.4	76.4	74.3	<b>76.2</b>
Average annual unemployment rate of the population aged 15+ (%)	3.9	4.1	4.2	<b>5.3</b>
Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with primary or lower education (%)	11.7	13.5	16.1	<b>14.8</b>
Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with higher education (%)	24.6	23.5	23.4	<b>30.5</b>
Production value (BGN/employed person)	83,086	103,610	n.a.	<b>122,377</b>
Expenditures on the acquisition of tangible fixed assets (BGN/person)	2,460	3,702	n.a.	<b>4,257</b>
Foreign direct investment in non-financial enterprises (cumulative) (EUR/person)	3,382	4,404	n.a.	<b>4,544</b>
Share of the population living in settlements with public sewerage networks (%)	83.3	83.1	n.a.	<b>75.0</b>
Share of road surfaces in good condition (%)	26.5	33.7	23.3	<b>40.4</b>
Coverage of municipal expenditures with local revenues (%)	57.4	61.0	63.3	<b>74.1</b>
Active Transparency Rating of local government bodies (%)*	72.9	72.9	71.4	<b>69.3</b>

Social Development Indicators	2021	2022	2023	National average
Natural population increase rate (‰)	n.a.	-18.0	-15.1	<b>-6.8</b>
Net migration rate (‰)	n.a.	2.8	3.6	<b>6.4</b>
Average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature**	3.87	3.80	4.25	<b>4.30</b>
Average grade in the National external assessment in mathematics after 7th grade (points)**	30.9	31.3	38.6	<b>42.9</b>
Net enrolment rate of the population (5th to 7th grade) (%)	90.5	92.9	92.9	<b>89.9</b>
Average life expectancy (years)***	73.2	72.1	73.2	<b>73.5</b>
Share of people with health insurance (%)	96.9	100.0	100.0	<b>95.0</b>
Population per one GP (persons)	1,567	1,535	1,539	<b>1,701</b>
Registered crimes against the person and property per 1,000 population	10.1	9.6	11.7	<b>11.3</b>
Share of criminal cases closed within 3 months	86	88	91	<b>91</b>
Households' consumption of municipally supplied drinking water (liter/person/day)	100	104	n.a.	<b>103</b>
Generated household waste of serviced population (kg/person/year)	427	421	n.a.	<b>488</b>
Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%)	87	87	n.a.	<b>76</b>
Visits to cinemas (number/1,000 population)	209	336	387	<b>684</b>
Overnight stays in accommodation establishments (number/1,000 population)	1,406	2,152	2,192	<b>4,167</b>

\* 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.