

Lovech district

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

112,225
4,129
110
61.6



GDP per capita in Lovech district is slowing down its rate of increase. Poverty is declining but remains relatively high. The labor market in the district is further suffering the negative impact of rising unemployment and declining employment. Business and investment activity is increasing but remains relatively weak. The utilization of EU funds is close to the national average. Road surface quality remains high. Local taxes in the district are among the lowest in the country. Transparency in the work of the local administration gets good ratings. Due to the strongly negative natural population in-

crease rate, Lovech is among the districts with a high rate of population aging. Students' results are relatively low and vocational education fails to meet the demands of the economy. The number of GPs remains higher than the national average. The availability of beds in the local general hospitals again remains relatively low. The crime detection rate is relatively high. The amount of generated household waste is not considerable, but the share of waste handed over for treatment and recycling remains extremely small. Cultural life in Lovech district is not particularly active.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



Income and living conditions



Labor market



Investment and business



Infrastructure



Local taxes



Administration



SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



Demography



Education



Healthcare



Security and justice



Environment



Culture and tourism



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Income and living conditions

After the sharp rise in 2021, in 2022 the rate of increase of GDP per capita in Lovech slowed down considerably and left the district in the middle of the ranking in this indicator. Salaries and pensions have also grown at a relatively slow rate. The average gross annual salary of people employed under labor contract is 15,700 BGN, compared to 21,200 BGN nationwide. For its part, the average monthly pension is 709 BGN, against 784 BGN in the country.

Poverty in the district is on the decrease but remains relatively high. In 2023, the share of the population living below the poverty line was 26.9%, versus 20.6% in the country. However, income inequality is relatively low and the Gini coefficient has shrunk to 30.9, compared to 37.2 nationally.

Labor market

The proportion of the working age population continues to decline, falling to 54.7%, against 58.5% nationally in 2023. At the same time, the labor market in the district is further suffering the negative impact of rising unemployment and declining employment. The employment rate has shrunk to 70.4%, versus 76.2% nationally, and the unemployment rate has risen to 9.6%, against 5.3% countrywide.

A relatively high share of the population aged 25–64 in the district has secondary education – 69%, compared to 55% in the country, while the shares of both university graduates and those with primary or lower education are lower than the national averages – 18%, against 31% in the country, and 14%, against 15% in the country respectively.

Investment and business

Business and investment activity in the district grew in 2022 but remained relatively slack. The relative number of enterprises reached 53 per 1,000 population, versus the national average of 70 per 1,000 population. Domestic investment and FDI grew considerably. TFA expenditures relative to the population reached 2,100 BGN/person, against 4,300 BGN/person nationally, and FDI in the district went up to 1,200 EUR/person, versus 4,300 EUR/person on a national level. Production value increased to 82,000 BGN per employed person, compared to 122,400 BGN in the country. However, the share of export earnings in net sales revenues has decreased and also remains below the national average – 22%, against 29% in the country. Utilization of EU funds is close to the national average. By 30 June 2024, payments made in the district to beneficiaries under EU operational programs reached 3,151 BGN/person, compared to 3,175 BGN/person countrywide. Within the district, the highest amounts were utilized by the municipalities of Apriltsi, Troyan and Yablanitsa – over 3,500 BGN/person.

Spending on research and development is increasing and is above that in most districts – 74 BGN/person.

Infrastructure

In 2023, the rail network density in Lovech district again remained below the country's average. The road network density is above the national average, albeit slightly, but the share of highways and first-class roads is still relatively limited – 16%, versus 19% in the country. Road surface quality continues to improve settling above the average one in the country – 49% in the district, versus 40% in the country.

The share of households with internet access has decreased to a level below the national average. Households' access to public sewerage networks is also below average, as is the connectivity of public sewerage networks to waste water treatment plants.

Local taxes

The average level of local taxes in the municipalities of Lovech district again remains low and the district now ranks second in this category, where it is outranked only by Montana district. The only exception is the tax rate on non-residential immovable property of legal entities, which in Lovech district is 2.20‰ on average, compared to 2.15‰ in the country. Considerably lower than the national averages are the tax rates for motor vehicles – 1.28 BGN/kW, versus 1.56 BGN/kW in the country, and for non-gratuitous acquisition of property – 2.35%, compared to 2.82% nationally.

Within the district, the lowest local taxes are levied by Letnitsa municipality, and the highest – by Apriltsi municipality.

Administration

In 2024, the local administrations' self-assessment of the development of e-government was comparable to the national average, while that of one-stop shop service provision settled above the national average, though registering a slight decrease.

The AIP transparency rating of the local administrations remains above the national average – 73.6% in the district, against 69.3% nationally.

The share of own revenues in the total revenues of the district's municipalities is decreasing and remains relatively low at 18%, compared to 27% in the country. The coverage of municipal expenditures by local revenues has also shrunk to 61%, which indicates a relatively high dependence of local finances on transfers from the state budget.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ■■

Demography ■■■

The natural population increase rate in Lovech district for 2023 is -11.8‰, remaining considerably lower than the national average of -6.8‰. However, the net migration rate has gone up and is positive, though relatively low - 1.7‰.

These developments are the prerequisite for a further worsening of the trend toward population aging in the district, which is clearly visible in its age structure. The share of children under 4 years is 4.2%, compared to 4.5% in the country, and of people aged 65 and over - 28.0%, versus 23.8% nationally.

Population density in the district is relatively low - in 2023 it was 757 persons/sq. km in the urbanized settlements, compared to 1,221 persons/sq. km nationally.

Education ■■■

The district's performance in the education category is unsatisfactory and for yet another year the district holds the second lowest place in this category, only above Sliven district.

The share of children attending kindergarten is increasing but in 2023 it again remained below average. The enrolment ratio in 5th-7th grade registered a slight increase to 87% in 2023 but also failed to reach the national average of 90%. The percentage of school year repeaters continues to be considerably higher than the national average.

Lovech is also the district with the lowest alignment between vocational education and the profile of the economy, which is mainly due to the fact that it has the highest share of trainees in the hospitality and catering sector (almost double the national average) and at the same time a relatively low share of persons employed in this particular economic activity.

Students' results in the district are low. The average score in the NAE in mathematics after 7th grade is 34.9 p., versus 42.9 p. in the country on average. The average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature is "Good" 4.10, compared to "Good" 4.30 in the country, while the share of "fail" grades (below 3.00) is 10.1%, against the national average of 8.7%.

The number of university students in Lovech district again remained extremely low in 2023, with only Lovech Technical College, which is a branch of Gabrovo Technical University, on its territory.

Healthcare ■■■

The average life expectancy in Lovech district has increased but remains below the national average.

In 2023, the number of GPs relative to the population again remained higher than the national average. Specialist physicians, however, are relatively scarce. The share of people with health insurance remains around the national average. The number of pharmacies is close to, though below the average one in the country.

The number of beds in the local general hospitals remains relatively low - 4.5 beds per 1,000 population in the district, versus

6.1 beds per 1,000 population in the country. Hospital bed occupancy, however, like that in Pernik district, is among the lowest countrywide - 40%, against 56% nationally, which is probably due to their proximity to other districts with traditionally strong healthcare - the capital and Pleven respectively.

Security and justice ■■■■■

The workloads of the District Court judges remain relatively low, while those in the Administrative Court are above the national average. This accounts for the relatively low speed of delivery of justice as regards administrative cases, while the number of criminal and civil cases closed within 3 months is above the national average - 93%, versus 91% in the country, and 86%, versus 65% in the country respectively for 2023.

In 2023, the number of registered crimes against the person and property in Lovech district went slightly down but remained relatively high - 11.8 per 1,000 population, compared to the national average of 11.3 per 1,000 population. However, the detection rate was higher than the national average - 57%, against 53% in the country. Also higher than the national average is the number of police officers in the district - 4.8 per 1,000 population, against 4.2 per 1,000 population in the country.

Environment ■■■

The amounts of waste generated by the households in Lovech district are relatively low - 434 kg/person per annum, compared to 488 kg/person nationally, but the share of this waste handed over for treatment and recycling remains extremely low - 12%, compared to the national average of 76% for 2022.

In 2023, the share of forest areas remained close to the national average, while that of disturbed area was relatively limited.

The installed RES capacities in relation to the population are above the national average, with a threefold increase in the past year. Cooling degree days in the district is relatively low. Households' drinking water consumption is also relatively limited.

Culture and tourism ■■■

Cultural life in Lovech district again showed little intensity in 2023. Only visits to museums relative to the population exceeded the national average - 1,125 per 1,000 population in the district, compared to 770 per 1,000 population nationally. The relative number of cinema, theater and library visits remains considerably below the respective national averages.

The number of beds in accommodation establishments has gone up, reaching 43 per 1,000 population, against 53 per 1,000 population in the country. There has also been an increase in the number of overnight stays, which have reached 2,720 per 1,000 population, versus 4,167 per 1,000 population countrywide. An increase has also been registered in the number of guest nights booked via online sharing economy platforms.

Key indicators for the district of Lovech

Economic Development Indicators	2021	2022	2023	National average
Gross domestic product (GDP) per capita (BGN, current prices)	13,963	15,890	n.a.	25,956
Average gross annual salary of people employed under labour contract (BGN)	14,244	15,704	n.a.	21,242
Share of people living below the national poverty line (%)	28.1	30.3	26.9	20.6
Share of the working-age population (%)	55.5	54.8	54.7	58.5
Average annual employment rate of the population aged 15–64 (%)	69.2	74.1	70.4	76.2
Average annual unemployment rate of the population aged 15+ (%)	8.3	9.1	9.6	5.3
Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with primary or lower education (%)	15.2	12.9	13.7	14.8
Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with higher education (%)	17.5	13.8	17.6	30.5
Production value (BGN/employed person)	66,432	82,123	n.a.	122,377
Expenditures on the acquisition of tangible fixed assets (BGN/person)	1,407	2,144	n.a.	4,257
Foreign direct investment in non-financial enterprises (cumulative) (EUR/person)	1,073	1,246	n.a.	4,544
Share of the population living in settlements with public sewerage networks (%)	59.9	60.0	n.a.	75.0
Share of road surfaces in good condition (%)	40.1	46.7	49.5	40.4
Coverage of municipal expenditures with local revenues (%)	68.1	69.9	60.6	74.1
Active Transparency Rating of local government bodies (%)*	74.3	74.2	73.6	69.3

Social Development Indicators	2021	2022	2023	National average
Natural population increase rate (‰)	n.a.	-14.7	-11.8	-6.8
Net migration rate (‰)	n.a.	-1.1	1.7	6.4
Average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature**	3.82	3.63	4.10	4.30
Average grade in the National external assessment in mathematics after 7th grade (points)**	26.1	27.5	34.9	42.9
Net enrolment rate of the population (5th to 7th grade) (%)	87.1	86.3	86.8	89.9
Average life expectancy (years)***	72.1	71.3	72.3	73.5
Share of people with health insurance (%)	90.6	93.9	94.4	95.0
Population per one GP (persons)	1,556	1,523	1,524	1,701
Registered crimes against the person and property per 1,000 population	10.8	11.9	11.8	11.3
Share of criminal cases closed within 3 months	95	89	93	91
Households' consumption of municipally supplied drinking water (liter/person/day)	98	98	n.a.	103
Generated household waste of serviced population (kg/person/year)	379	434	n.a.	488
Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%)	7	12	n.a.	76
Visits to cinemas (number/1,000 population)	145	192	186	684
Overnight stays in accommodation establishments (number/1,000 population)	2,122	2,605	2,720	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.