

## Nitriansky kraj - Characteristic of the region

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### Location, area, geographical conditions

Nitriansky kraj, with an area of 6,343.7 km<sup>2</sup>, covers 12.9% of the territory of the Slovak Republic. It is located in the southwestern part of the Slovak Republic, bordering the Republic of Hungary to the south, Banskobystrický kraj to the east, the Trenčiansky kraj to the north, and the Trnavský kraj to the west. The southernmost point of the Slovak Republic is located in Patince municipality in the Komárno district (47°43'52" N).

The region's relief is predominantly flat and lowland, interrupted by hills. Almost the entire region lies on the pahorkatina hills and Podunajská rovina plain, which are part of the Podunajská nížina lowland. To the north of its territory stretches the Tribeč mountain range, and the northeastern part is bordered by the extensions of the Štiavnické vrchy mountain and partially by Pohronský Inovec mountain. The highest point in the region is Panská Javorina hill at 943.4 m above sea level in the Považský Inovec mountain range. The lowest point is the bank of the Dunaj river (Danube) at the exit of the region at the state border with Hungary (101.5 m above sea level). A significant portion of the south and southeast of the region is occupied by high-quality agricultural land. The region belongs to the warmest areas and the most productive agricultural centres of Slovakia. Especially in its southern areas, it is rich in water resources. Several rivers flow through the region – the longest Slovak river, the Váh, as well as rivers Danube, Nitra, Hron, Ipeľ, and Žitava. The rivers Danube and Ipeľ forming the natural state border with Hungary.

Nitriansky kraj is rich in deposits of minerals, such as gravel, building stone, and clay raw materials. The region includes protected landscape areas Dunajské luhy floodplains (Komárno district), Štiavnické vrchy mountains (Levice district) and Ponitrie area (districts Nitra, Topoľčany, and Zlaté Moravce). Other small-scale protected areas include 11 national nature reserves, 37 nature reserves, 19 natural monuments, 57 protected areas, and 9 bird protection areas.

According to the administrative division according to Act No. 221/1996 Coll. of the National Council of the Slovak Republic, it is divided into 7 districts: Komárno, Levice, Nitra, Nové Zámky, Šaľa, Topoľčany, and Zlaté Moravce. The smallest district in the region is the Šaľa district (355.9 km<sup>2</sup>), while the largest is the Levice district (1,551.1 km<sup>2</sup>), which is also the largest district in Slovakia.

There are 354 municipalities in the Nitriansky kraj, of which 16 have town status. Most of the region's population lives in rural areas, the urban population not exceeding 45%. The dominant

town is the regional capital, Nitra, which had a population of 77 thous. as of December 31, 2023. Other towns with more than 30 thous. inhabitants include Nové Zámky, Komárno, and Levice.

## Demographic background

Nitriansky kraj had 668,301 inhabitants as of December 31, 2023, which accounted for 12.3% of the total population of Slovakia. The population density was 106 inhabitants per square kilometer. The most densely populated district was Nitra, where 189 inhabitants lived per square kilometer, while the least densely populated district was Levice with a density of 70 inhabitants per square kilometer.

In Nitriansky kraj, the reproduction of the population has been slowing down for a long time. Since 1996, there has been registered a natural decrease in population every year. In 2023, the number of deaths exceeded the number of live births by 2,388, and the region also lost 7 inhabitants due to migration.

The region's population is aging. From 2014 to 2023, the proportion of seniors was higher and grew faster than the proportion of children under 14 years old. In 2023, seniors made up 20.1% of the population, which was 6.2 percentage points more than children. The working-age population has been steadily declining and, in 2023, accounted for just under two-thirds of the region's population. The mean age of the population in 2023 reached 44 years.

In 2023, 3,136 couples got married, and 1,051 marriages were divorced. The number of marriages decreased by 9% compared to the previous year, marking the third lowest level since 2014. The number of divorces decreased by 11% year-on-year and was the second lowest since 2014.

## Economic and social specifics

Highly productive agriculture and the presence of numerous industrial enterprises create demand for quality labour. In 2023, economically active inhabitants, i.e., those employed and unemployed aged 15 and over, made up nearly 53% of the population. The economic activity rate, which represents the ratio of economically active people to the population aged 15 and over, was 61.6%. The employment rate (the proportion of working individuals aged 20 to 64 to the entire population in the same age group) reached 79.3%, while the unemployment rate meaning the share of unemployed among the economically active population was 3.5%. The average monthly wage reached 1,469 EUR, which was 159 EUR lower than the national average.

At the end of 2023, there were 32.6 thous. legal entities operating in Nitriansky kraj, of which enterprises made up 87.1% of them, and 49.2 thous. natural persons, of which self-employed persons accounting for 93.4%. Enterprises primarily operated in trade, professional, scientific, and technical activities, as well as in industry. Self-employed persons were mostly active in construction, industrial production, and trade.

In 2023, the regional gross domestic product (GDP) in current prices for Nitriansky kraj was 13,492 mill. EUR, which accounted for 11% of the national GDP. Per capita, it amounted to 20,031 EUR, which was 11% lower than the national average.

In 2023, industry was the largest contributor to the regional gross added value, making up 40.6%. Trade, transport, accommodation, and food services contributed 17.3%, while public administration, defence, compulsory social security, healthcare, and social assistance accounted for 11.5%.

Nitriansky kraj is the most productive agricultural region, cultivating the largest area of agricultural land among all Slovak regions (464 thous. hectares). It is one of the most significant producers of crops such as wheat, barley, maize, edible peas, technical sugar beet, rapeseed, sunflower seeds, and grapes in Slovakia. Animal production focuses on poultry and pig farming.

The region has a diverse industrial base. Nitra town has a dominant position, it is the seat of the significant Jaguar Land Rover plant. Key industries in the region include automotive, electronics, mechanical engineering, food processing, chemicals, and rubber. In Šaľa, there is an important chemical plant, Duslo, a. s., which produces nitrogen fertilizers and rubber chemicals. In 2023, industrial companies in Nitriansky kraj employed 65.8 thous. persons, and their turnover amounted to 10.6 bill. EUR.

From the perspective of construction production, the region is relatively weak. Construction companies based in Nitriansky kraj generated production worth 766.5 mill. EUR with their own employees. The construction production based on supplier contracts amounted to 934.4 mill. EUR. Residential construction in the region slowed down compared to the previous two years. In 2023, only 2,091 apartments were completed, with more than a third of them being built in Nitra district.

Nitriansky kraj has good road connectivity between districts and international road routes. Its road network covers 2,593 km, of which only 66 km are expressways. The region had 497 thous. motor vehicles in 2023, with personal vehicles making up over 69%. The international railway transit corridor also runs through the region. The city of Komárno is home to a significant river port on the Danube, which is connected to the European waterway corridor Rhine – Main – Danube. Important pipelines also pass through the region, with the most significant being the Transit and International gas pipelines, as well as the Družba and Adria oil pipelines.

The region has a well-developed and dense network of educational institutions. Almost every larger municipality has a primary school to ensure compulsory schooling. In 2023, the region had 430 kindergartens, 287 primary schools, 22 grammar schools, 55 secondary vocational schools, and 2 conservatories. Nitra the town is the seat of two universities: the Slovak University of Agriculture, University of Constantine the Philosopher in Nitra and J. Selye University in Komárno, while the Faculty of Health and Social Work of the University of Health and Social Work St. Elizabeth operates in Nové Zámky.

Healthcare in 2023 was mainly provided by 11 hospitals, 1,256 outpatient healthcare units, and 6 institutes for treatment. The region had a total of 1,572 healthcare facilities.

Cultural development in the region dates back to the early settlement of the ancient Slavs and continued during the first state formation in the Pribinove Nitrianske kniežatstvo principality, through Veľká Morava Great Moravia, the middle ages, and into modern times. The regional capital, Nitra, has a long-standing tradition in culture as one of the most important centres of Slavic education, culture, and Christian life. Nitra is the oldest town in Slovakia with a written mention from the year 826.

In 2023, the region had 9 theatres, including small and independent ones, 12 cinemas with 19 screening halls, 3 galleries including branches, 18 museums, and 211 active libraries. Notable cultural institutions include Divadlo Andreja Bagara theatre, Ponitrianske múzeum museum and Nitrianska galéria gallery.

The region is rich in historical and cultural monuments, with significant castles and fortresses such as the Levický hrad castle, hrad Gýmeš castle (above the Jelenec municipality), Nitriansky hrad castle, Oponický hrad castle, Topoľčiansky hrad castle, Hrušovský hrad castle (above the Hostie municipality), and Čierny hrad castle (above the Zlatno municipality). The region also features a historic town conservation area in Nitra. In Levice district, there is a folk architecture heritage site – rock dwellings in the Brhlovce. Other heritage zones include Šahy, Komárno, Nitra – Old Town, Topoľčany, Zlaté Moravce, and Bátovce (in Levice district). Popular tourist destinations include the Mlyňany Arboretum and the National Stud Farm in Topoľčianky. The region is also renowned for its thermal springs in Podhájska, Patince, Komárno, Poľný Kesov, and Štúrovo, which have led to the development of popular thermal baths and waterparks. In 2023, nearly 209 thous. visitors came to Nitriansky kraj, staying in 386 accommodation facilities.