Sofia (Capital City)

|	
▸ Population (2016)	1,321,721
▸ Area (sq. km)	1,348.9
▸ Number of settlements	38
▸ Share of urban population (%)	95.5

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Overview

Sofia (capital city) is the district with the highest income and living standard, the highest investment activity and the most favorable indicators of the labor market. The capital is situated close to several highways and the importance of the central rail station entails high density of the railroad network. The capital also has the highest Internet access and the highest share of population using it. It is still characterized by the highest local tax and fee burden, though that burden has not been raised during the last few years contrary to the general tendency in the country. Cadastral map coverage keeps increasing and is the highest in the country. The transparency of the local administration was evaluated as relatively high in 2017.

Sofia (capital city) is one of the few districts in which the population age structure has been improving if we take into account the ratio of people aged 65+ to those aged 0–14. The capital is still the district with the highest rates of natural increase and net migration. High-school students from Sofia get the highest grades at matriculation exams but the ability of the educational system to enroll all children in the school system is below average. Access to medical establishments and specialists explains the traditionally high number of hospitalizations. In terms of security and justice the capital has performed worse than any other Bulgarian districts. The intensity of cultural life is the highest among all districts.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good

Income and Living Conditions

Labor Market

Investment

Infrastructure

Taxes and Fees

Administration

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

	Weak	Unsatisfactory	Average	Good	Very good

Demography

Education

Healthcare

Security and Justice

Environment

Culture
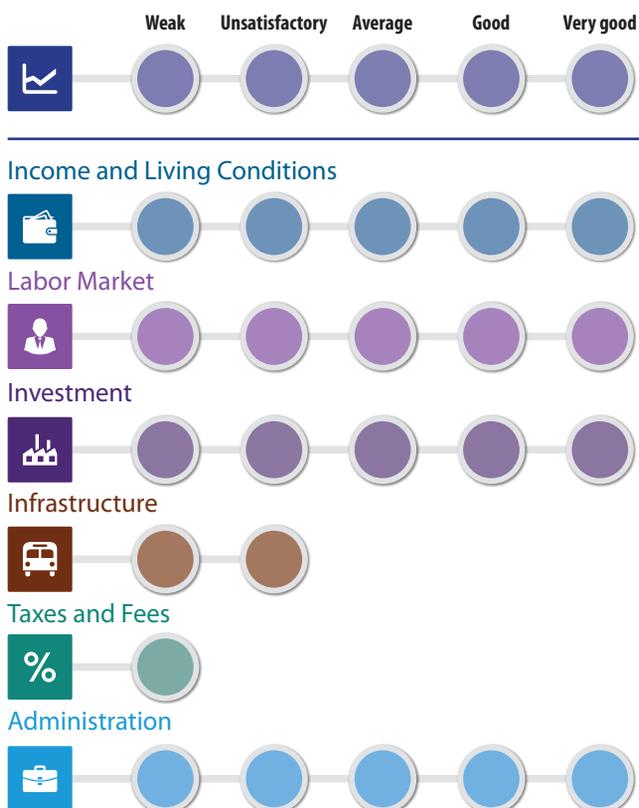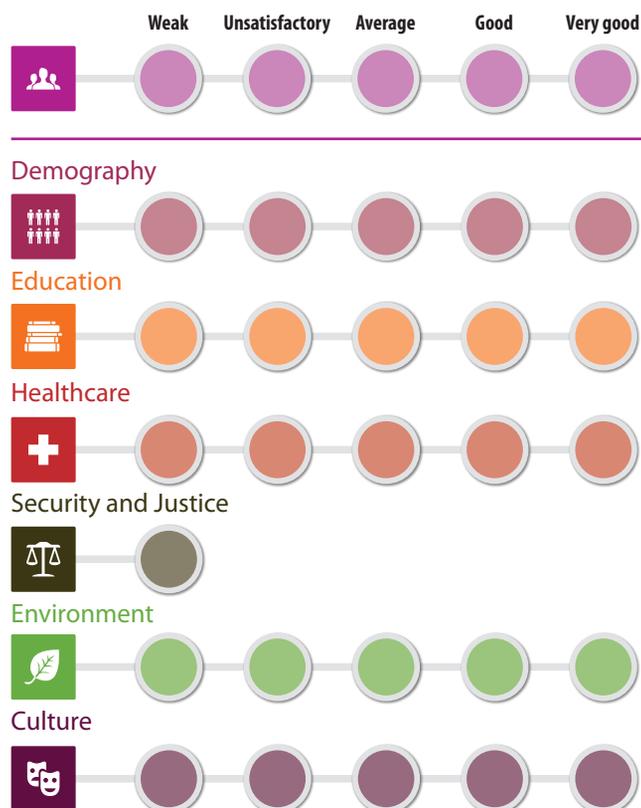
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ●●●●●

Income and Living Conditions ●●●●●

Sofia (capital city) is the district with the highest income and living standard. In 2015 GDP in the capital went into stable growth after several years of hesitant increase to reach 26,690 BGN/person or over twice the national average level of 12,339 BGN/person. Income and salaries in Sofia (capital city) have kept growing as well. The gross annual salary in the capital rose rapidly in 2015 to reach 14,531 BGN annually when the national average salary was 10,535 BGN.

The same year Sofia had the lowest shares of population living in material deprivation (19% vs. 32% nationally) and that living below the national poverty line (8% vs. 23% nationally).

Infrastructure ●●

Though there are no roads from the national road network on Sofia's territory, it borders directly on several highways: the "Hemus", "Trakiya", Struma" and the future "Kalotina" highway. The importance of the central railway station accounts for the considerably higher density of the railway network: 12.8 km per 100 sq. km (vs. 3.6 km per 100 sq. km in the country).

The capital is also the district with the highest access to the Internet and the highest share of people using it. In 2016 households with Internet access in Sofia were 69.4% (vs. 63.5% in the country) while the share of those who used it was 75.8% (vs. 62.5% nationally).

Labor Market ●●●●●

The capital has the best indicators of the labor market. During the last few years, economic activity was growing fast in it to reach 75.4% in 2016, compared with the national average of 68.7%. Employment in Sofia (capital city) also grew to reach 72.5% (vs. 63.4% in the country) while unemployment declined to 3.9% (vs. 7.7% nationally).

The district's high employment and low unemployment are connected with the exceptionally favorable educational structure of the population. The share of people between 25 and 64 years of age with primary and lower education (3%) was six times lower in the capital than that in the country (18%) in 2016. The share of university graduates reached 51% (vs. 28% in the country).

Taxes and Fees ●

In 2017, the capital was still the district with the highest burden of the basic local taxes and fees. Nevertheless, contrary to the national tendency, the tax burden was not raised in the last few years which provided a stable and predictable tax environment. The most drastic difference from national average levels was in the annual license tax for retailers. In Sofia (capital city) it was 20 BGN/sq. m of sales space while the national average rates remained below 13 BGN/sq. m. The other more striking difference was in the size of the annual tax on taxi transport: 850 BGN in the capital vs. 525 BGN on average in the country. Yet, Sofia City municipality did not have the highest rate for this tax – in the municipality of Sozopol it was 1,000 BGN.

After some Bulgarian municipalities raised their tax on property transfer in 2017, the national average rate overtook that in the capital. The other tax with a rate slightly below the national average in the capital was the immovable property tax.

Investment ●●●●●

Sofia was the district with the highest investment activity in 2015. The relative number of working enterprises reached 85 per 1,000 people (vs. 55 per 1,000 people in the country). At the same time investment in FTA (6,000 BGN/person) declined slightly but remained twice the national average rate of under 3,000 BGN/person. The difference in the relative amount of attracted FDI up to this moment was triple: 9,164 euro/person in the capital as of the end of 2015 vs. 3,250 euro/person nationally.

The capital kept its leading position in utilized EU funds thanks to several large-scale projects, such as the underground and Sofia Tech Park. As of 30th June 2017 sums paid from operational programs reached 2,509 BGN/person (vs. 1,344 BGN/person in the country).

Administration ●●●●●

Cadastral map coverage in the capital increased once again in 2016 to reach 98% when the national average rate was 23%. The local administration's self-evaluation for development of electronic government in 2017 remained unchanged and higher than average; that for offered one-stop shop services rose to a level above national average as well.

The local administration's transparency was also rated relatively high in 2017, though it declined compared with 2016, and reached 69% (vs. 59% nationally).

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ●●●●●

Demography ●●●●●

Contrary to the general tendency of population ageing, one of the indicators for population age structure in the capital has been improving in recent years. Sofia was one of the three districts (alongside Pleven and Plovdiv) where the age dependency ratio as a ratio of the population aged 65+ to that aged 0–14 declined in 2016 to reach 120% (vs. 147% in the country). The capital was still the district with the highest natural growth despite its negative value (−1.5‰ vs. −6.0‰ in the country) and the highest net migration growth (4.4‰). It remained one of the few districts to attract people settling in it.

In 2016 once again Sofia (capital city) was the district with the highest share of urban population (96% vs. 73% in the country) and the highest population density of 4,973 people/sq. km (vs. 1,548 people/sq. km in the country).

Security and Justice ●

The capital's performance in terms of security and justice has been the worst in the country. Judges' workloads remained the highest once again in 2016. A criminal judge at the Sofia City court saw an average of 14 cases a month (vs. 9 cases on average in the country). High workloads affected the speed of justice: the capital is the district where the fewest cases get closed within 3 months (79% vs. 89% nationally) and the share of pending cases is the highest (13% vs. 8% nationally).

The capital has remained among the districts with the highest relative number of registered crimes. In 2016 a decline was registered for the third year in a row, but the rate was still among the highest in the country. Apart from a high registered crime rate the capital is also characterized by exceptionally low clearance rates: 32% (vs. 48% nationally) in 2016.

Education ●●●●●

The capital's performance in this category was considerably above the national average level, the only district with a better rating being Smolyan. The net enrolment rate in 5th–8th grade increased, though it remained below the national average rate in 2016. However, the shares of repeaters and dropouts from primary and secondary education remained considerably below national average figures.

Students from the capital got the highest grades at matriculation exams. In 2017 the average grade at the exam in BLL was 4.61 (vs. 4.22 in the country) and the share of fail grades was four times lower (2% in Sofia vs. 8% in the country). The concentration of the largest universities and the numerous students in them also improved the capital's grade in this category despite the fact that in 2016 their number declined following the general trend in the country.

Environment ●●●●●

Due to its high level of urbanization, the capital has the highest rate of population with public sewerage (96.1% while the national average was 75.5% in 2015). The entire sewerage network was serviced by wastewater treatment plants. That explains the capital's high rating in this category, though it is still among the districts with the highest generated waste and the most polluted air. Carbon dioxide emissions into the atmosphere are three times higher than the national average and the amount of generated household waste keeps increasing to reach 480 kg/person annually compared with the national average of 422 kg/person.

Healthcare ●●●●●

The concentration of some leading healthcare establishments in the capital has been a prerequisite for the ensured availability of doctors. There are 1,587 people per GP in the capital (vs. 1,611 people per GP in the country) and 389 people per specialist (vs. 530 nationally). The number of beds in general hospitals in the capital is slightly below average (4.8 beds per 1,000 people vs. 5.1 beds per 1,000 people nationally); however, many of the specialized hospitals are located in Sofia.

The access to healthcare establishments and specialists comes to account for the traditionally high number of hospitalizations in local general hospitals. The infant mortality rate remains much lower than the national average.

Culture ●●●●●

The intensity of cultural life in the capital is the highest compared to other districts. In 2016 the relative number of cinema visits was almost three times higher than the national average rate (2,161 per 1,000 people vs. 778 per 1,000 people nationally) and that of library visits was over two times higher (1,241 per 1,000 people vs. 605 per 1,000 people nationally), both indicators maintaining high rates in the last few years.

Local theaters and museums also continued to attract audiences and interest increased in 2016 to reach 603 visits per 1,000 people (vs. 322 per 1,000 people in the country) and 821 per 1,000 people in museums (vs. 734 per 1,000 people in the country).

Key Indicators for the District of Sofia (Capital City)

Indicators of economic development	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
GDP per capita (BGN, current prices)	24,726	24,608	24,642	24,890	26,690	n.a.
Average annual income per household member (BGN)	5,438	6,403	7,441	6,890	7,061	7,349
Average annual gross salary (BGN)	11,249	12,059	12,851	13,542	14,531	n.a.
Relative share of people living below the national poverty line (%)	7.3	5.7	7.3	7.4	8.0	n.a.
Annual average economic activity rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	71.6	72.2	73.5	74.0	75.0	75.4
Annual average employment rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	67.2	66.9	67.5	69.2	71.7	72.5
Annual average unemployment rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	6.1	7.3	8.2	6.3	4.3	3.9
Relative share of the population aged 25 to 64 with tertiary education (%)	42.7	42.9	45.8	48.6	49.6	51.4
Number of non-financial enterprises per 1,000 people	78	79	81	83	85	n.a.
Expenditure on the acquisition of fixed tangible assets per capita (BGN)	6,554	6,143	5,468	6,234	6,052	n.a.
Cumulative FDI to non-financial enterprises per capita (EUR)	8,953	9,009	9,245	8,891	9,164	n.a.
Relative share of households with internet access (%)	67.0	66.2	70.9	69.3	75.3	69.4
Share of roads in good condition (%)	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Share of territory included in cadastral maps (%)	60.7	95.8	95.8	95.8	96.3	97.9

Indicators of social development	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Rate of natural increase (‰)	−1.1	−1.4	−1.5	−1.2	−1.7	−1.5
Net migration rate (‰)	4.8	5.4	7.1	6.5	4.2	4.4
Average grades at state matriculation exams	4.60	4.32	4.55	4.60	4.63	4.58
Percent of failed students at state matriculation exams ("average" 3.00)	1.62	3.66	2.19	1.89	1.79	2.07
Net enrolment rate of the population in 5th–8th grade (%)	79.0	78.4	76.0	74.8	74.5	75.4
Health insured persons as share of the population (%)	87.5	86.8	85.2	85.9	87.1	86.2
Cases of hospitalization in general hospitals per 1,000 people	139.9	238.1	223.6	152.5	253.1	257.5
Registered crimes against the person and property per 1,000 people	20.3	18.7	20.5	20.2	18.6	16.6
Clearance rates for crimes against the person and property registered during the year (%)	36.1	38.1	32.9	33.1	30.4	32.2
Share of pending criminal cases (%)	12.1	12.8	10.6	14.4	15.4	13.0
Share of the population living in settlements with public sewerage systems, connected to WWTP (%)	95.5	95.4	96.1	96.1	96.1	n.a.
Carbon dioxide emissions into the atmosphere (t/sq. km)	1,239.0	1,205.3	1,073.5	1,073.5	1,073.5	n.a.
Number of visits to cinemas per 1,000 people	2,099	1,813	2,000	2,061	2,126	2,161
Number of visits to theatres per 1,000 people	614	600	641	649	547	603