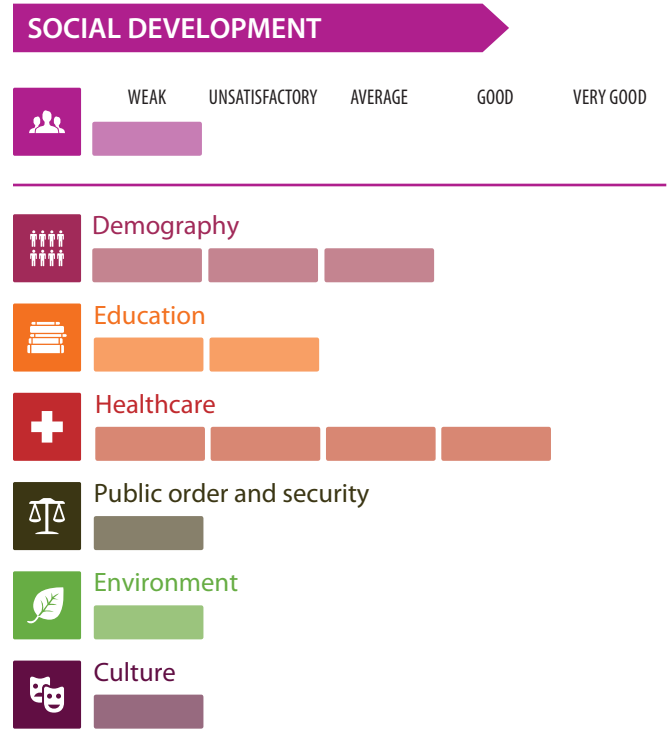# Sofia District

- ▶ Population (2019) — 226,671
- ▶ Territory (sq. km) — 7,062.3
- ▶ Number of settlements — 284
- ▶ Share of urban population (%) — 61.6

Map labels: GODECH, SVOGE, DRAGOMAN, SLIVNITSA, KOSTINBROD, Bozhurishte, BOTEVGRAD, PRAVETS, ETROPOLE, ANTON, Mirkovo, ZLATITSA, Gorna Malina, Chelopech, PIRDOP, KOPRIVSHTITSA, ELIN PELIN, Chavdar, Petrich, IHTIMAN, SAMOKOV, DOLNA BANYA, KOSTENETS

GDP per capita in Sofia district remains the third highest in the whole country. Salaries are rising, which is a precondition for relatively low poverty levels. The development of the local labor market is very good, with the employment and unemployment rates both reaching record levels for the district. The good economic development is also manifested in the local investment activity. Sofia district reports the second highest figures in the country for FTA acquisition expenditure and foreign investment. The district has a relatively well-developed infrastructure. The average level of local taxes in the municipalities of Sofia district is generally close to, but lower than the national average. The performance of the administration in the district is extremely poor.

The rate of natural growth in Sofia district remains among the lowest in the country. Sofia is among the districts with relatively low urbanization. The share of repeaters is twice as high as the national average. Student performance is also relatively poor. The district has specialist physicians similar in number to the national average, but there are fewer GPs. The performance of Sofia district in the field of public order and security is weak, the reason for this being the relatively slow delivery of justice. The indicators for security and justice in the district are close to the country's averages. The amounts of generated waste are relatively large, with a small part of it handed over for treatment and recycling. The cultural life in the district is not active.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

WEAK — UNSATISFACTORY — AVERAGE — GOOD — VERY GOOD

- Income and living standard
- Labor market
- Investment and economy
- Infrastructure
- Local taxes
- Administration

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

WEAK — UNSATISFACTORY — AVERAGE — GOOD — VERY GOOD

- Demography
- Education
- Healthcare
- Public order and security
- Environment
- Culture

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Income and living standard

Although GDP per capita in Sofia district recorded an extremely low growth rate in 2018 – 0.8% compared to 9.3% for the national economy, its value remained the third highest in the country after that of the capital and Stara Zagora district. The average annual gross salary increased by 10.5% – similar to the national average – and reached 13,400 BGN, which almost equals the average one for Bulgaria as a whole. However, incomes declined slightly and in 2019 the average gross annual income per household member was 4,844 BGN, compared to 6,013 BGN in the country.

Irrespective of this unfavorable development in 2019, the relatively high values of GDP and salaries in the district have kept poverty levels relatively low. In 2019, the share of the population living with material deprivation was 14.5%, compared to 19.9% for the country, and those living below the national poverty line made up 17.6%, versus 22.6% nationwide.

Labor market

The development of the local labor market in 2019 continued to be very good, which once again shows the deep connection between the economies of the capital and of Sofia district. The economic activity in the district increased significantly and for the second consecutive year exceeded the national average, with a figure of 78.1%, compared to 74.3% for the country. Its growth was accompanied by a simultaneous increase in employment and a reduction of unemployment, both reaching record levels for the district. The employment rate went up to 77.7%, compared to 70.1% in the country, and that of unemployment fell to 0.4%, versus 4.2% nationwide.

The profile of the workforce in Sofia district is characterized by a large number of people with secondary education – 77%, compared to 54% for the country, while the shares of people with tertiary degrees and of those with primary or lower education are relatively low. This structure can be accounted for by the proximity of most settlements in the district to the capital which attracts university graduates and naturally leaves the processing industry to develop in its geographical periphery.

Investment and economy

The good economic development of the district is associated with high investment activity. In 2018, the district reported the second highest average figures in the country for FTA acquisition expenditure and FDI per capita, preceded only by the capital. The figure for acquisition of FTA reached 3,140 BGN/person, compared to 2,750 BGN/person nationally. The amount of cumulative FDI in 2018 was 6,064 EUR/person, versus 3,560 EUR/person countrywide.

Production value for 2018 ranks the district second in the country, with 48,100 BGN/person, compared to 50,400 BGN/person in the capital and the national average of 25,900 BGN/person.

The number of enterprises in the district remains relatively low, but at the same time the share of large enterprises among them is relatively high.

The rate of utilization of EU funds slowed down in the past year compared to the national one, but their amounts still remained slightly higher than the country's average. Within the district, the leader in the utilization of EU funds was the municipality of Kostinbrod.

Infrastructure

Sofia district has a relatively well-developed infrastructure. The density of the road network is higher than the national average, and the share of highways and first-class roads is the second largest in the country after that in Shumen district, with 30.2%, compared to the national average of 18.6%. At the same time, however, the quality of the roads remains relatively low, with only 31.7% of the road surfaces in good condition, versus 41.4% in the country in 2019.

The railroad network density is also relatively high.

In 2019, access to the Internet in the district was again relatively limited, with 67.3% of the households compared to 75.1% on average in the country.

Local taxes

In 2020, the average level of local taxation in Sofia district remained generally close to, yet lower than the average one for all Bulgarian municipalities. The one exception is the tax on the non-residential immovable property of legal entities, which was higher in the district compared to the average levels in the country. By contrast, significantly lower than the average rates – by about 20% – were the taxes on taxi transportation and retail trade.

Administration

The performance of the municipal administrations in Sofia district is extremely weak. While almost the entire territory of the country is already covered by the cadastral map (91.4%), the coverage of the cadastre in the district in 2019 was only 75.3%. The self-assessment of the municipal authorities for the development of e-government and the provision of one-stop-shop administrative services in 2020 also remained lower than the national average.

In 2020, Sofia continued to be among the districts with the lowest Active transparency assessment of its local administrations, with a rating of 57% compared to 71% on average for the country. Within the district the most transparent municipalities were those of Chelopech, Bozhurishte, Chavdar and Pirdop.

🧑‍🤝‍🧑 SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ▪

🏛 Demography ▪▪▪

In 2019, the natural population growth in Sofia district rose for the second year in a row, but it remained among the lowest in the country with a value of –9.3‰, compared to –6.7‰ nationwide. At the same time, the net migration rate remained relatively high, although negative, which can be attributed to the district's proximity to the capital and the possibility of daily commuting.

These processes are reflected in the deteriorating age dependency ratios in the district. In 2019 the ratio of people aged 65+ to those aged 0-14 reached 170%, compared to 150% nationally, and to those aged 15-64 it was 38%, versus 34% nationwide.

Sofia is among Bulgaria's districts with a low level of urbanization – 62% of its population is urban, against 74% countrywide, and with low population density of 727 persons/sq.km, compared to the national average of 1,510 persons/sq.km.

📖 Education ▪▪

The net enrolment rate in 5th to 8th grade in Sofia district remained relatively high in 2019 at 92%, compared to 87% on average for the country. In 2019, the number of teachers in primary and secondary education in the district was 87 per 1,000 students, versus 89 per 1,000 students nationally. In recent years, however, there has been a gradual increase in this figure and the gap with the national average teacher-student ratio has narrowed.

The shares of repeaters and dropouts from primary and secondary education rose in 2019 to reach figures double those of the country's averages. Students' performance was also relatively poor. In the external assessment in mathematics after 7th grade in 2020, they achieved an average score of 31 p., versus 36 p. nationally. The average grade in the matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature was 4.00, compared to the average of 4.20 countrywide, and the share of "fail" grades (below 3.00) reached 10%, against the national average of 8%.

The number of university students in Sofia district is relatively small – 8 students per 1,000 persons, compared to the national average of 32 students per 1,000 persons in 2019.

➕ Healthcare ▪▪▪▪

The district has a number of specialist physicians similar to the national average, but there are fewer GPs. In 2019, a general practitioner cared for an average of 1,771 people in the population, compared to 1,688 people per GP in the country. The share of the health-insured rose to 87%, which was still below the national average of 89%.

The number of hospital beds in the local general hospitals relative to the population of the district was on the rise and remained, as always, higher than the national average. At the same time, the number of hospitalizations was considerably smaller than in the country on average – 176 per 1,000 persons, compared to 254 per 1,000 persons nationally.

Infant mortality rates dropped in 2019 and reached levels below the national average.

⚖ Public order and security ▪

The results for Sofia district regarding the provision of security and justice in 2019 continued to be poor. That was mostly a consequence of the slow delivery of justice – only 80% of criminal cases closed within 3 months, compared to the average of 90% nationwide, and pending cases made up a whole 20%, versus 10% countrywide. At the same time, the workloads of the local criminal judges were not significantly larger than the national average – one criminal judge in Sofia district heard an average of 9.5 cases a month, compared to 9.1 cases per judge in the country.

The indicator values for public order and security in Sofia district are close to the national average. The number of registered crimes against the person and property was 11.2 per 1,000 persons, compared to the national average of 11.1 per 1,000 persons. The detection rate was 54.7%, versus 52.1% for the country.

🌿 Environment ▪

The annual volume of generated household waste rose to 487 kg/person in 2018 and its rate was among the highest in the country. However, an exceptionally small share of it was handed over for treatment and recycling – 19%, compared to 71% for the country, but the figure has been rising fast over the past three years.

In recent years, there has also been a significant improvement in the share of households that have access to sewerage networks connected to wastewater treatment plants. Within a decade it increased from 28% to 43% in 2018, but the amounts remain significantly below the average share of 64% for country. On the other hand, in 2018 the share of households with access to public sewerage networks again remained similar to the national average of 77%.

Carbon dioxide emissions into the atmosphere in 2018 amounted to 36 t/sq.km and remained considerably lower than the national average of 275 t/sq.km.

🎭 Culture ▪

In 2019, cultural life in Sofia district still sustained its low intensity, which can probably be attributed to the region's proximity to the capital and the relatively fast and easy access to the biggest city in the country for a large part of the population. No visits to libraries and theaters have been reported for the district, and cinema visits are quite few in number – only 78 per 1,000 persons, compared to 659 per 1,000 persons nationwide.

Visits to museums rose considerably in 2019 to reach 1,430 per 1,000 persons, compared to the national average of 770 per 1,000 persons.

Key indicators for the district of Sofia

Indicators of economic development	2017	2018	2019	National average
GDP per capita (BGN, current prices)	15,527	15,654	n.a.	15,615
Average annual income per household member (BGN)	4,853	4,853	4,844	6,013
Average annual gross salary per employed person (BGN)	12,149	13,425	n.a.	13,775
Share of the poor relative to the national poverty line (%)	n.a.	20.4	17.6	22.6
Employment rate of the population aged 15-64 (%)	66.4	73.3	77.7	70.1
Unemployment rate of the population aged 15-64 (%)	2.6	0.7	0.4	4.2
Share of the population aged 25-64 with primary or lower education (%)	19.9	12.3	10.9	17.6
Share of the population aged 25-64 with tertiary education (%)	13.1	13.6	12.0	28.0
Production value (BGN/person)	45,443	48,092	n.a.	25,855
Expenditure on fixed tangible asset acquisition (BGN/person)	2,697	3,140	n.a.	2,750
Cumulative foreign direct investment in non-financial enterprises (EUR/person)	6,287	6,064	n.a.	3,560
Share of households with Internet (%)	52.3	51.3	67.3	75.1
Share of roads in good condition (%)	28.8	30.8	31.7	41.4
Density of the road network (km/100 sq.km territory)	21.4	21.4	21.4	17.9
AIP active transparency rating of the local self-government (%)*	57.9	58.0	57.3	70.7

Indicators of social development	2017	2018	2019	National average
Natural population growth rate (‰)	−9.9	−9.8	−9.3	−6.7
Net migration rate (‰)	−1.3	−1.1	−1.2	−0.3
Average grade in the matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature**	3.72	3.92	4.00	4.20
Average grade in the external exam in mathematics at the end of 7th grade (points)**	25.4	28.4	31.0	36.3
Number of teachers in primary and secondary schools per 1,000 students	76	84	87	89
Net enrolment of the population in 5th-8th grade (%)	91.3	91.3	91.6	86.6
Share of people with health insurance (%)	86.3	86.3	87.3	88.8
Population per one GP (number of people)	1,751	1,758	1,771	1,688
Registered crimes against the person and property per 1,000 people	13.9	13.5	11.2	11.1
Workload of criminal judges in office (cases/month)	7.7	9.6	9.5	9.1
Share of the population with access to public sewerage networks (%)	77.1	77.2	n.a.	76.2
Generated household waste per capita (kg/person/year)	479	487	n.a.	409
Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%)	3.4	18.9	n.a.	70.9
Visits to the cinema per 1,000 persons	79	67	78	659
Visits to the theater per 1,000 persons	0	0	0	362

*   The data for 2019 are included in the 2020 study. The same also applies for the previous years.
** The data refer to the 2019-2020 academic year while the matriculation exam was held in 2020. The same also applies for the previous years.