

Sofia (capital) district

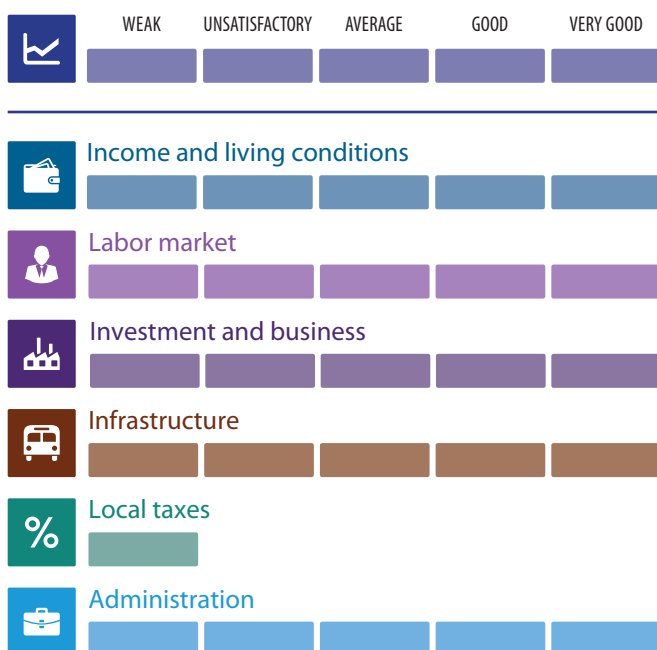


▶ Population (2021)	1,274,290
▶ Territory (sq. km)	1,341
▶ Number of settlements	54
▶ Share of urban population (%)	95.1

Sofia (capital) has the highest GDP per capita, with a value of more than double the national average and double that of the district ranking second in this indicator – Sofia district. Its labor market is well developed. Sofia is also the undisputed leader in investment activity. The share of households with access to high-speed internet continues to increase. The capital is the district with the highest local taxes in the country. It is the district with the highest share of own revenues in the total revenues, as well as with the highest coverage of municipal expenditures with local revenues.

Sofia is the district with the most favorable demographic conditions. The capital is once again the leader in the education indicators, with a high rate of enrolment in 5th–7th grade, a low share of repeaters, good student performance and a high number of university students. The number of specialist physicians is among the highest in the country. Delivery of justice is relatively slow, and the crime detection rate – low. The district’s high level of urbanization accounts for the large share of population with access to public sewerage networks. Sofia remains the district with the most intensive cultural life.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Income and living conditions

The capital is the district with the highest GDP per capita, with a volume more than twice larger than both the national average and that of Sofia district, the second-ranking district in this category. In 2021, GDP per capita in Sofia reached 45,200 BGN, against 20,200 BGN in the country.

Salaries and pensions have also been growing and their amounts are significantly higher. The average annual gross salary or people employed in a labor or service contract has reached 25,700 BGN, against 18,700 BGN in the country, and the average monthly pension – 650 BGN, versus 537 BGN in the country.

The capital is also the district with the lowest poverty level. The share of population living below the national poverty line is 11.7%, compared to 22.9% nationally for 2022.

Labor market

The capital's good performance in the indicators for economic development is again manifested in the favorable dynamics of the local labor market in 2022. Although declining, the share of the working-age population remains the highest in the country at 62.9%, compared to 58.5% nationally. Economic activity has registered a considerable increase and the capital heads the ranking in this category with a rate of 79.9%, compared to 73.6% nationally. Parallel to this increase there has been an increase in employment and a decrease in unemployment. The employment rate has reached 77.9%, against 70.4% nationally, and the unemployment rate – 1.6%, versus 5.2% nationally.

The capital is once again the district with the best educational structure of its workforce. The share of the population aged 25–64 with a university degree is 57.6%, against 29.8% in the country, while employed people with primary or lower education make up 4.0%, compared to 16.0% nationally.

Sofia has the second highest (after Sliven) population replacement ratio as a ratio of people aged 15–19 to those aged 60–64 – 80.3%, compared to 65.7% nationwide. This means that for every 100 people who are about to leave the labor market in the next few years, there will be 80 young people joining the workforce.

Investment and business

In 2021, Sofia remained the undisputed leader in investment activity. The district has the largest number of enterprises relative to its population – 95 per 1,000 population, compared to an average of 60 per 1,000 population in the country. After the huge rise of the previous year in FTA acquisition expenditures, in 2021 they recorded a decrease but nevertheless remained the highest in the country and far ahead of the district ranked second in this category (Plovdiv). The increase in production value is below the average rate and the margin with the second-ranking district (Sofia district) is narrowing. Significantly

higher than the average national figures is also cumulative FDI – 11,200 EUR/person, against 4,100 EUR/person in the country.

The capital's dominance in research and development expenditure is massive – in 2021 it was 618 BGN/person. By comparison, there is no other district in the country where it exceeds 100 BGN/person.

By 30 June 2023, the capital occupied the top place as regards utilization of EU funds. Payments made in Sofia (capital) district to beneficiaries under EU operational programs amounted to 4,264 BGN/person, versus 2,836 BGN/person in the country.

Infrastructure

There are no roads from the national road network within Sofia (capital) district, but its territory is bordered directly by several highways. In addition, Sofia Central Railway Station is one of the main railway hubs in the country and the capital district's density of the railway network of 12.7 km/100 sq. km territory significantly exceeds the national average of 3.6 km/100 sq. km.

The share of households with access to high-speed internet is very high, reaching 94.7% in 2022, compared to 87.3% in the country.

Local taxes

The level of local taxation in Sofia (capital) district in 2023 again remained the highest in the whole country. The biggest differences in comparison to the national figures were recorded in the retail trade tax (20.00 BGN/sq. m, compared to 13.04 BGN/sq. m in the country), the tax on non-gratuitous acquisition of property (3.00% versus 2.76% in the country), and on taxi transportation (850 BGN annually against 471 BGN in the country).

Of all the monitored taxes, the only one that remained below the average nationwide rate was the tax on immovable non-residential property for legal entities (1.88‰, against 2.08‰ in the country).

Administration

Sofia has ceded to Varna the top place in this category. The provision of one-stop shop administrative services received the maximum points in 2023. There has been a decline in the self-assessment on the development of e-government. The AIP active transparency rating of the district's local administration bodies has sustained its value and remains higher than the national average –74.8%, against the national average of 70.3%.

The capital is the district with the highest share of own revenues in the total revenues (44.7% versus 29.0% in the country), as well as the highest coverage of municipal expenditures with local revenues (113.3% versus 84.2% in the country) in 2022, despite a slight deterioration in both indicators.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Demography

In 2022, Sofia (capital) was once again the district with the most favorable demographic conditions in the country. Although even in the capital the natural population growth rate is negative, it still occupies the top place nationwide with a value of -3.4% , compared to the national average of -9.7% . Sofia (capital) continues to attract new residents and the net migration rate is 7.9% .

The age dependency ratios in Sofia remain significantly more favorable than the average ones for the country. The ratio of the population aged 65+ to those aged 0–14 is 130.4% , compared to 165.9% nationally, with the capital being outranked only by Sliven district. At the same time, Sofia is the leader in attracting working-age population and the ratio of people aged 65+ to those aged 15–64 is 29.1% , compared to 37.7% in the country.

The district's specificity accounts for the almost total urbanization of its territory, and its population density is three times the country's average.

Education

The capital remains the country's leader in the education category, with a high rate of enrolment in 5th–7th grade, a low share of repeaters, good student performance and a high number of university students.

The share of school year repeaters is 0.5% – the third lowest in the country (after the districts of Smolyan and Ruse). The capital is the district with the best alignment between vocational education and the profile of the local economy, mainly because of the high numbers of students and employees with vocational qualifications in the ICT sector and the low numbers in agriculture.

The students from the capital achieved an average score of 46.6 points in the 2023 NEA in mathematics after 7th grade, which is far above the national average of 35.3 points. The average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature was "Good" 4.24, compared to the average of "Good" 3.93 countrywide, while the share of "fail" grades (below 3.00) was a bare 7.9% , against the national average of 17.9% .

Healthcare

In 2022, the capital remained among the country's districts with good healthcare, characterized by easy access to specialist physicians, high life expectancy and low infant mortality.

The average life expectancy in the capital is the highest in the country, although in the last two years it has been falling (mainly due to the pandemic and increased mortality rates after 2020) – 74.8 years, compared to 71.9 years in the country.

The indicator for access to GPs is less favorable than the national average. However, the number of specialist physicians relative to the population is the second highest in the country, after that in Pleven district. The hospital bed capacity is slightly more limited than the country's average. The number of hospitalizations is 308 per 1,000 people, against 235 per 1,000 people countrywide. The infant mortality rate is almost half the national average.

Security and justice

The capital's poor results and its bottom place in the whole country in the indicator for security and justice is a consequence of the heavy workloads of the local judges and the low detection rates.

In 2022, one criminal judge in Sofia (capital) heard an average of 12.4 cases a month (with only Kyustendil recording a higher number), compared to 10.1 cases per judge nationally. These heavy workloads have a negative impact on the speed of delivery of justice. The proportion of criminal cases closed within 3 months is 85% , compared to the average of 89% nationwide, and pending cases constitute 19% , versus less than 12% countrywide.

The number of crimes against the person and property registered in the capital district increased in 2021 to reach 11.7 per 1,000 population and almost equaled the national average of 11.6 per 1,000 population. This does not, however, provide an adequate explanation for the exceptionally low share of cleared crimes – a bare 33% , versus 49% in the country.

Environment

The capital remained among the districts with the highest annual volume of generated household waste in 2021, with 522 kg/person, compared to 445 kg for the country. However, almost all waste was handed over for treatment and recycling, compared to 74% on average in the country.

The high degree of urbanization in the district also accounts for the high share of population with access to a public sewerage network – 96.6% of the population, versus 74.8% nationally, while practically the whole sewerage network is connected to a waste water treatment plant – 96.4% compared to 66.8% on average countrywide.

The share of degraded land is high – 1.43% , versus 0.43% nationally, while the figures for installed RES capacities relative to the population are among the lowest in the country.

Culture and tourism

In 2022, the capital was once again the district with the second most active cultural life after Burgas. Visits to cinemas, theaters and museums grew fast, though their numbers failed to reach their 2019 levels. With the exception of the relative number of museum visits, the values recorded for the other indicators were considerably above the average ones nationwide. Cinema visits were over twice the national average.

Tourism in the capital is less well represented. In 2022, the number of beds in accommodation facilities was 12 per 1,000 people, versus 55 per 1,000 people in the country, and the number of overnight stays was 1,614 per 1,000 people, versus 3,739 per 1,000 people in the country.

Key indicators for the district of Sofia (capital city)

Economic Development Indicators	2020	2021	2022	National average
Gross domestic product (GDP) per capita (BGN, current prices)	38,891	45,241	n.a.	20,212
Average gross annual salary of people employed in a labor or service contract (BGN)	22,950	25,724	n.a.	18,733
Share of people living below the national poverty line (%)	9.2	11.3	11.7	22.9
Share of the working-age population (%)	64.0	64.4	62.9	58.5
Average annual employment rate of the population aged 15–64 (%)	74.4	74.8	77.9	70.4
Average annual unemployment rate of the population aged 15+ (%)	3.3	2.0	1.6	5.2
Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with primary or lower education (%)	3.9	4.2	4.0	16.0
Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with higher education (%)	56.8	57.7	57.6	29.8
Production value per capita (BGN)	57,800	61,866	n.a.	31,242
Expenditures on the acquisition of fixed tangible assets per capita (BGN)	9,214	7,757	n.a.	3,097
Foreign direct investment in non-financial enterprises per capita (cumulative) (EUR)	10,604	11,235	n.a.	4,098
Share of households with broadband internet access (%)	90.8	90.3	94.7	87.3
Share of road surfaces in good condition (%)	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	41.1
Coverage of municipal expenditures with local revenues (%)	97.8	114.5	113.3	84.2
Active Transparency Rating of local government bodies (%)*	78.3	74.8	74.8	70.3

Social Development Indicators	2020	2021	2022	National average
Natural population growth rate (‰)	n.a.	n.a.	–3.4	–9.7
Net migration rate (‰)	n.a.	n.a.	7.9	4.2
Average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature**	4.58	4.42	4.24	3.93
Average grade in the National external assessment in mathematics after 7th grade (points)**	50.1	47.3	46.6	35.3
Net enrolment rate of the population (5th to 7th grade) (%)	88.8	89.1	93.4	90.7
Average life expectancy (years)***	76.3	74.9	74.8	71.9
Share of people with health insurance (%)	87.1	89.0	91.6	93.5
Population per one GP (persons)	1,728	1,755	1,767	1,678
Crimes against the person and property per 1,000 population	11.3	10.3	11.7	11.6
Share of pending criminal cases (%)	17.2	20.7	18.7	11.6
Share of the population living in settlements with a public sewerage network (%)	96.3	96.6	n.a.	74.8
Generated household waste per capita of serviced population (kg/person/year)	524	522	n.a.	445
Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%)	95.9	99.7	n.a.	74.0
Visits to cinemas (number/1,000 population)	473	814	1,315	590
Overnight stays in accommodation facilities (number/1,000 population)	573	896	1,614	3,739

* The 2022 data are included in the 2023 study. The same is valid for the previous years.

** The data refer to the 2022-23 academic year, while the State matriculation exams took place in 2023. The same is valid for the previous years.

*** Data are for three-year periods and are updated annually.