Global Cities: divergent prospects and new imperatives in the global recovery

2021 Global Cities Report

KEARNEY

In the wake of a year of devastation and uncertainty, global cities proved their resilience. Now, as they seek to lead the global recovery, cities must define a new approach to globalism with resilience and urban well-being at the core.

Executive summary

The *2021 Global Cities Report* captures the impact of COVID-19 and the related lockdown measures on cities and, for some, the beginnings of an uneven recovery. While historically leading global cities were by many measures hit hardest by the pandemic, they also demonstrated their resilience and adaptive capacity. Our analysis indicates they are now best positioned for recovery, with their enduring global connectivity serving as a foundation for rebuilding and adapting to a changed world.

The resilience of reigning global cities

In this year's Global Cities Index (GCI) results, we saw clear divergences in the trajectories of global cities. Those that were most globally connected, and often most dependent on their global connectivity and international character, unsurprisingly were first to be struck by COVID-19. The impact of the pandemic is reflected in the overall decline in the absolute scores of these leading cities in this year's results. In contrast, in cities that were more limited in their global connectivity and cross-border interdependence, the impacts of the pandemic were less severe. In many cases, these cities even showed improved scores and rankings. Our analysis suggests that this relative improvement in rankings is primarily a function of the delayed impact of the pandemic in many of these cities.

Despite the outsized impact of the pandemic on reigning cities in this year's results, they demonstrated their resilience. New York, London, Paris, and Tokyo retained the top four positions in the Index—once again demonstrating the robustness of their diversity of global strengths (see figure 1). Yet there were changes at the top of the Index. Los Angeles broke into the top five, benefiting from Beijing's decline in the face of both the pandemic and the complex shifts in the global trade landscape.

Figure 1
Top 10 in the 2021 Global Cities Index

City	2021 rank	2020 rank	Δ 2020–2021
New York	1	1	—
London	2	2	—
Paris	3	3	—
Tokyo	4	4	—
Los Angeles	5	7	+2
Beijing	6	5	–1
Hong Kong	7	6	–1
Chicago	8	8	—
Singapore	9	9	—
Shanghai	10	12	+2

Source: Kearney 2021 Global Cities Report

In the coming year, we expect the divergence among global cities to widen. While global cities that are already showing signs of economic recovery are likely to continue their upward trends, lower-scoring and less-connected global cities will likely drop in our rankings next year as the full effect of the pandemic is reflected in the metrics used for measurement, particularly given the uneven distribution of vaccines around the world.

A crisis of personal well-being

This year's forward-looking Global Cities Outlook (GCO) highlights the strong knock-on effects that healthcare quality has on the future viability of a global city. Reflecting the overwhelming impact of the pandemic, the personal well-being metrics are the biggest predictors of change in overall GCO scores and rankings. Despite an overall drop in scores as a result of the pandemic, the cities holding the top 10 spots stand largely unchanged. London retains its top spot, with Paris, Munich, and Abu Dhabi each rising three places to come in at second, third, and fourth respectively and Dublin rounding out the top five (see figure 2). Regionally, we continue to see Chinese cities on the rise, as North American cities decline— overtaken for the first time by European cities.

Global cities leading in recovery

Global cities are now leading the global recovery from COVID-19. They are doing so in the context of a transformed world that is opening historic opportunities for them create a next-generation realization of urban living—one centered on well-being and oriented by resilience. To realize that future, city leaders must proactively address five strategic imperatives:

— Win in the competition for global talent.

— Embrace the rapidly growing digital economy.

— Ensure economic resilience by balancing global and local resources.

— Adapt in the face of climate change.

— Invest in individual and community well-being.

For each of these, we present evidence and examples of how they are driving progress in enterprising cities around the world.

Figure 2
Top 10 in the 2021 Global Cities Outlook

City	2021 rank	2020 rank	Δ 2020–2021
London	1	1	—
Paris	2	5	+3
Munich	3	6	+3
Abu Dhabi	4	7	+3
Dublin	5	10	+5
Stockholm	6	8	+2
Tokyo	7	4	–3
Toronto	8	2	–6
Sydney	9	12	+3
Singapore	10	3	–7

Source: Kearney 2021 Global Cities Report

The 2021 GCI and GCO: the rocky road to urban recovery

This year's *Global Cities Report* reflects the dynamics of a tumultuous year in which city life—temporarily frozen across the globe—returned in fits and starts. Though we hope the eerily quiet city streets that characterized the early weeks and months of the pandemic are behind us, the COVID-19 virus has proven adaptive and resilient. Cities and their residents continue to struggle with new variants and the deep uncertainty of those that may emerge in the future. Restrictions on movement, social distancing practices, and the related economic disarray are still with us, although they are distributed unevenly. Nevertheless, the unprecedented global efforts in vaccine development and production have hastened a return to some form of normalcy, partial and fragmented as it is. As cities enter this new phase, they are armed with real-world experience and better science, enabling leaders to better to navigate the ongoing turmoil.

In this context, we again focus on global cities: the microcosms of the world that serve as centers of social, political, and economic vibrancy and reflect the ever-changing dynamics of the global environment. Each year, we analyze a continually expanding set of global cities as they chart their unique paths in creating value through the agglomeration of diverse commercial activities, talent, knowledge, and cultures. In this 2021 edition of our annual *Global Cities Report*, we again aim to track the evolution of cities as they progress and grow—all the while navigating both global challenges and unique local complexities.

To paint a picture of how the coronavirus and other international events have impacted global cities— both what has changed and what has remained the same, we compare the 2021 Global Cities results to those of last year. The 2020 report provided a perspective on where the world was **just before** the impact of COVID-19 was felt. In this year's report, the data used—largely collected from 2020 and early 2021 publications—provides a view of the impact of the first year of the pandemic. It also sheds light on the different recovery trajectories across the world's global cities.

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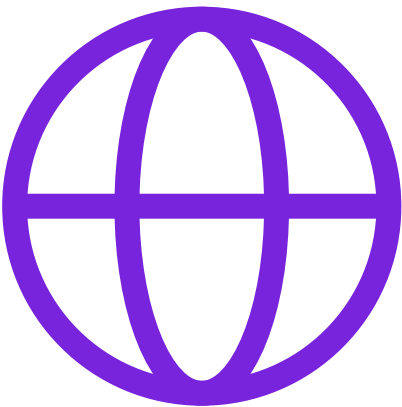
About the Global Cities Index and the Global Cities Outlook

A truly global city, by our definition, is measured by its ability to attract and retain global capital, people, and ideas and to sustain this performance in the long term. Its abundant and constant connectivity with the rest of the globe contributes to a vibrant microcosm, where individuals, businesses, and communities can thrive with global resources applied to local contexts.

The **Global Cities Index** (GCI) measures how globally engaged cities are across five dimensions: business activity, human capital, information exchange, cultural experience, and political engagement. The Index seeks to quantify the global connectedness of a city and assess the competitiveness of 156 cities across these five dimensions by considering factors such as the city's market dynamics, education levels, information access, culture and entertainment options, and presence of international civic organizations.

The **Global Cities Outlook** (GCO) is a forward-looking evaluation of how the same cities are creating conditions for their future status as global hubs. This is measured across four dimensions: personal well-being, economics, innovation, and governance. We use 13 indicators to evaluate the city's potential for long-term success, such as healthcare, inequality, ease of doing business, infrastructure development, and investment.

This year, in light of the ever-increasing global importance of Asian economies, we have added five cities to our index: four in China and one in Japan.

Together, the Index and Outlook provide a unique perspective on the influence these diverse cities have today, what their strengths and differences are, and what this might look like in the future. Our hope is that this is a useful guide for city leaders on how they can lead their cities in recovery from a year of devastation and uncertainty, enhancing their competitiveness and attractiveness by leveraging and reinforcing their global connections.

The complete rankings and more details on the indicators used in the GCI and GCO can be found in the appendix.
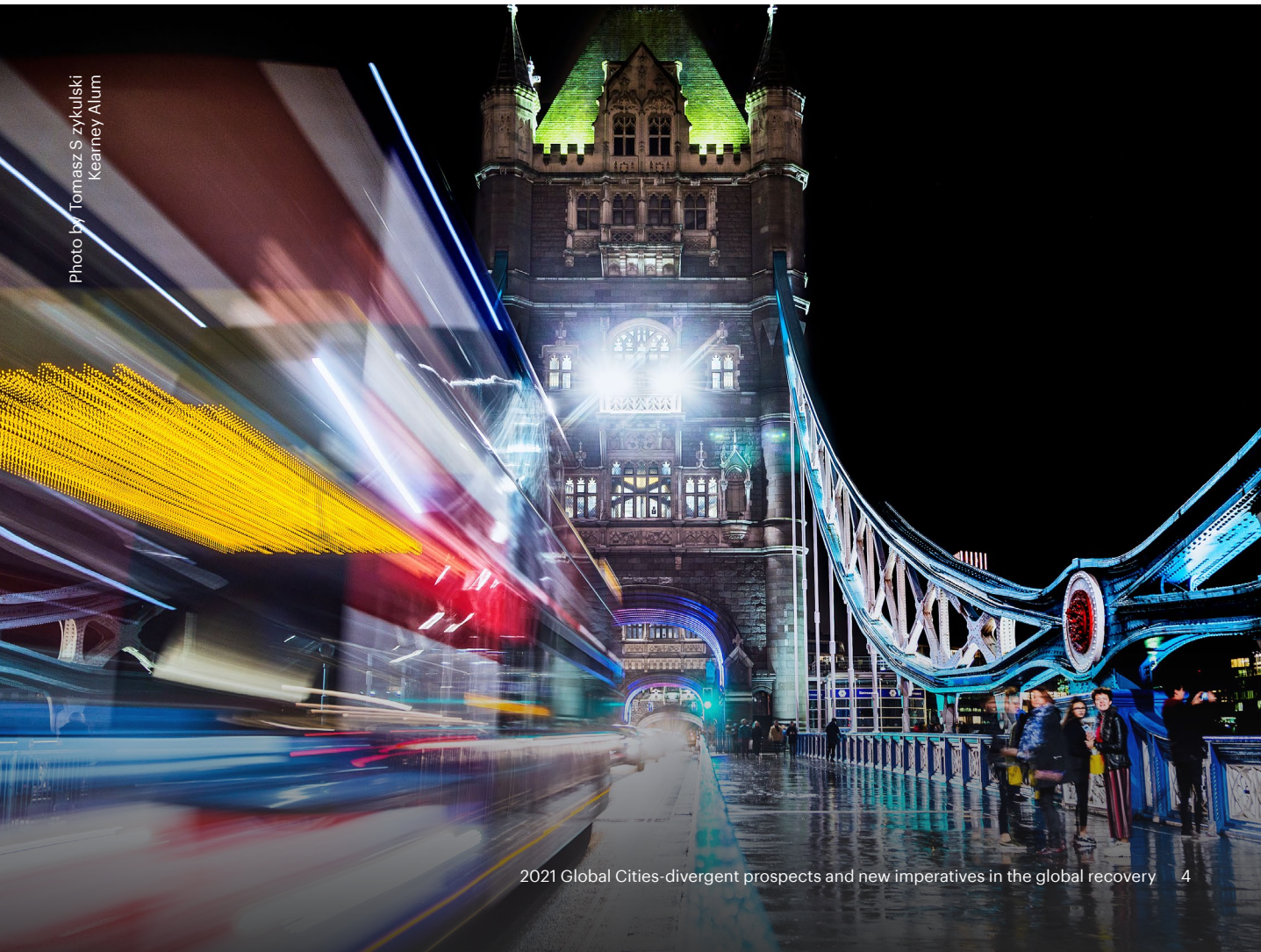

Photo by Tomasz S zykulski
Kearney Alum

Global connectivity and exposure: the vulnerability and resilience of leading cities

This year's results make it clear that the most globally connected cities were also the most vulnerable to COVID impacts. The repercussions of their greater connectivity were twofold. First, these urban centers were among the first to register coronavirus cases outside of Wuhan, given their multitudes of international travel links. This meant that medical professionals and policymakers in these cities were up against a fast-moving virus with little understanding of the public health implications and no evidence of effective policies. Second, by definition, the most global cities are those that have more (and depend on more) international connections—from trade routes to international migration. As the measures implemented to counter the pandemic closed borders and paralyzed movement between cities, these hubs had more to lose and further to fall.

This is borne out in our data. Though the decline in connectivity of global cities was observed across all facets of the Index—from economic activity to social interactions, those with a relatively heavier weight toward the *physically* global dimensions of the Index, such as international visitors, global trade volumes, and public events, were those that suffered most. Conversely, less-connected global cities, predominately in developing and emerging regions including Africa, Latin America, and the Middle East, showed fewer impacts of the pandemic and in many cases rose on the Index. However, we posit that the improvements in ranking for many cities in developing economies in this year's GCI does not yet reflect the full reality, given the delayed impact of the pandemic in many of these cities.

Throughout the pandemic, cities have faced a fundamental trade-off: how to balance reopening for economic benefit versus remaining closed to reduce the exposure to risk. Already, we have seen how national and even local decisions have created divergent realities for cities around the world. Australia's decision to isolate itself from the rest of the world by shutting its borders, enabled by its relative geographic isolation and paired with strict lockdowns, has allowed for a semblance of in-country normalcy. This is reflected in our metrics that measure cultural experience in Melbourne and Sydney. In another example, Dubai reopened to international travelers relatively early, bolstered by strict testing requirements, Bluetooth-enabled contact tracing, and a rapid rollout of vaccines. Reducing mobility restrictions and lifting lockdowns has provided economic advantages to these cities and others that have opened sooner rather than later. In addition, given the documented correlation between COVID-19 lockdowns and poor mental health, removing restrictions has been expected to contribute to improved social and emotional well-being of citizens. However, the possibility of COVID breakouts if cities reopen too quickly is high, and studies of interventions around the world have documented the greater efficacy of the most extreme non-pharmaceutical interventions of lockdowns, curfews, and restriction of gatherings in countering the virus. And thus, cities around the world find themselves in a perpetual dance—gingerly opening and then backtracking, attempting to balance a scale with impossibly grave consequences if imbalance goes too far in either direction.

In the coming year, we expect to see a greater divergence in cities globally, as we anticipate that the top-performing global cities will bounce back much faster than less engaged cities. Already, business activity is picking up, albeit shakily, with the global economic rebound. Even with a plethora of uncertainties related to the virus, most importantly the continued emergence of highly transmissible and deadly mutations, reigning global cities have more resources from which to draw to address these and other challenges.

Global Cities Index results

The four leading cities on the GCI remain the same for the fifth year in a row. New York, London, Paris, and Tokyo once again demonstrate their resilience even in the face of global upheaval (see figure 3 on page 7). From there, however, similarities to last year's results are limited, as differing strengths pushed cities both up and down on the Index and shuffled cities across the ranks. Los Angeles took the fifth spot this year, displacing both Beijing and Hong Kong as each city fell one place—a continued decline for Hong Kong.

Chicago and Singapore held strong at 8th and 9th place, and Shanghai just beat out San Francisco to claim the 10th spot, while Washington, D.C. dropped from this previously held rank to 14th. Shanghai and San Francisco each saw dramatic improvement in the GCI last year with the addition of a metric on the number of unicorn companies (see sidebar: The year of the unicorn). As the pandemic bolstered the growth of the digital economy and advanced tech, these cities have continued to see improvement.

The four leading cities on the GCI remain the same for the fifth year in a row: New York, London, Paris, and Tokyo.

The year of the unicorn

This year looks like it may be the year of the unicorn (privately held start-ups valued at more than $1 billion) with an incredible 246 companies joining the club by June—more than the number of new unicorns from 2019 and 2020 combined. Unicorns, a rare and mythical species only 10 years ago, are becoming far more commonplace. The accelerated transition to the digital economy, development of technology, and propagation of knowledge on how to build start-ups is making it easier than ever to launch and scale companies and to acquire funding. In the past year, the soaring valuations have been attributed to two underlying factors. First, venture-capital funds (VCs) are cashing out, with exits through public listings and acquisitions having more than doubled globally, leaving VCs with a lot of cash to burn on new investments. Second, there is greater competition among more investors, many of whom have been enticed by the success of the start-up scene.

Figure 3
The top 30 cities in the Global Cities Index

City	2021 rank	2020 rank	2019 rank	2018 rank	2017 rank	2016 rank	Δ '20–'21	
New York	1	1	1	1	1	2	0	
London	2	2	2	2	2	1	0	
Paris	3	3	3	3	3	3	0	
Tokyo	4	4	4	4	4	4	0	
Los Angeles	5	7	7	6	8	6	+2	↑
Beijing	6	5	9	9	9	9	−1	↓
Hong Kong	7	6	5	5	5	5	−1	↓
Chicago	8	8	8	8	7	7	0	
Singapore	9	9	6	7	6	8	0	
Shanghai	10	12	19	19	19	20	+2	↑
San Francisco	11	13	22	20	23	23	+2	↑
Melbourne	12	18	16	17	15	15	+6	↑
Berlin	13	15	14	16	14	16	+2	↑
Washington, D.C.	14	10	10	11	10	10	−4	↓
Sydney	15	11	11	15	17	14	−4	↓
Brussels	16	14	12	10	11	12	−2	↓
Seoul	17	17	13	12	12	11	0	
Moscow	18	20	18	14	18	18	+2	↑
Madrid	19	16	15	13	13	13	−3	↓
Toronto	20	19	17	18	16	17	−1	↓
Boston	21	21	21	24	21	24	0	
Amsterdam	22	23	20	22	22	22	+1	↑
Dubai	23	27	27	28	28	28	+4	↑
Frankfurt	24	28	28	29	29	29	+4	↑
Vienna	25	22	25	21	20	19	−3	↓
Munich	26	24	32	32	36	33	−2	↓
Istanbul	27	34	26	26	25	25	+7	↑
Barcelona	28	26	23	23	24	26	−2	↓
Montreal	29	29	29	27	27	27	0	
Zurich	30	31	30	33	32	31	+1	↑

Reigning global cities prove their resilience

Despite being a COVID epicenter in the United States and one of the world's hardest hit cities, **New York** keeps its top spot on the Index. Supported by its historic strengths, it also improved in the two dimensions it leads: business activity and human capital. New York's improved performance in business activity is mostly driven by the growing number of unicorn companies headquartered in the city, second globally only to San Francisco. The latest unicorns in New York are mostly in the fintech, Internet, and software, cybersecurity, e-commerce, and health sectors. The emergence of these digital and health-focused start-ups reflects both the health crisis we are facing and the explosion of the digital economy that resulted.

London, in contrast to the past four years, edges closer to the top spot it once held. Despite a decline in business activity, particularly the capital markets and trade metrics, it sees marked improvement in its human capital indicators, most notably its educational institution performance.

Perhaps one of the steadiest performers in the highest ranked cities, **Paris** holds firm across all dimensions. The City of Light once again maintains its top spot in information exchange and also sees a marked improvement in its human capital performance. One of the primary drivers of this was the creation of the Paris-Saclay University in 2020. The university integrates several grandes écoles (higher education institutes), universities, and research organizations under a parent entity, with the aim of becoming a top-ranking multidisciplinary academic and research institute.

Tokyo continues to close the gap on the leading trio, despite a challenging year that saw it postponing the Olympics and subsequently prohibiting spectators in its stadiums. Tokyo continues to perform well across all dimensions, in particular in human capital and cultural experience. This year, it once again boasts the most inhabitants with tertiary degrees.

Los Angeles jumps two spots, breaking into the ranks of the top five global cities for the first time. Already a strong performer when it comes to human capital, LA saw slight improvements in the share of tertiary degrees as well as the number of international students. This comes after a drop in the previous year, driven by pandemic-related travel restrictions. California, and specifically Los Angeles, has historically been the top US destination for foreign students. The substantial number of foreign and out-of-state students admitted to the University of California, who pay much higher fees than state residents, have helped offset the state's higher education budget. This, however, may change in the years to come as California increases funding of incoming freshmen and as universities reduce their intake of international students.

Despite being a COVID epicenter and one of the world's hardest hit cities, New York keeps its top spot on the Index.

Fastest risers

Twenty-one cities rose six or more positions in the GCI compared with last year—six of which are in the Middle East. The remaining 15 cities are distributed across all other regions, except North America. We explore some of the "most improved" cities that caught our eye in more detail below.

Doha saw the most dramatic jump, rocketing up 15 places following the restoration of diplomatic relations between Qatar and its Gulf neighbors. This leap was supported by considerable gains in three dimensions: human capital, information exchange, and cultural experience. Doha is also the top global city when it comes to access to televised news.

We hypothesize that Doha's major gains are a result of the compounded benefits of their strengthened economy and the newly restored regional ties—reflecting the importance of a balance between self-sufficiency and global connectivity. Following the implementation of the Qatar blockade in 2017, Doha intensified its international connectivity and doubled down on the drive toward self-sufficiency. As a result, we did not see a significant impact on its ranking in the 2018 Global Cities Index, as was also the case for London post-Brexit. Now, with relations in the Gulf Cooperation Council on the mend, we see immediate impact in Doha's performance across all dimensions on the Index, highlighting the importance of fostering regional relationships in addition to global ones.

Istanbul climbs seven spots to once again land in the top 30. The cross-continental city saw a drop of a similar scale last year, falling behind where others rose thanks to the addition of new unicorn companies and medical universities metrics. This year, while still affected by pandemic restrictions, the city's improved performance was driven by a smaller decline in its cultural experience dimension than many others globally. The biggest contributing factor? The number of international travelers passing through Istanbul's two international airports. Although dampened, the performance relative to other cities raises two points. First, the decision to open borders for international travelers following the global lockdown, even given the inherent risks, has significant capacity to support a city's global influence, particularly when other cities remain closed off. Second, if the numbers from this past year are anything to go by, Istanbul's concerted efforts to become a travel hub have been successful. The 2020 opening of Istanbul Airport's third independent runway allows for more hourly takeoffs and landings than any other airport in Europe, with expansion plans set to make it the world's biggest airport by 2028.

This year, **Melbourne** rises six places, landing just outside the top 10, in contrast to **Sydney**, which fell four spots. These dynamics demonstrate the differences that city-level policies and decision-making can make, even during a time of heightened national control and regulation across the world. Compared with Sydney and other cities in the top 15, Melbourne does not perform well in the business activity dimension. However, it had a strong showing in human capital, claiming the global top spot this year in the international student population metric from Sydney. In fact, Melbourne has historically performed better in the human capital dimension than Sydney, and this year widens the gap.

Improvements in cultural experience further supported the city's rise. Australia's rapid lockdowns, strict restrictions, and ability to isolate from the rest of the world helped limit its coronavirus caseload. This, in turn, facilitated the country's return to a sense of normalcy far quicker than most. In February, local fans—albeit much smaller crowds than prior years—were able to attend the Australian Open in Melbourne under a set of COVID safety regulations. In April, the city hosted the biggest crowd at a sports stadium since the pandemic began: more than 78,000 people—for an Aussie rules game. The opening of these sporting events, paired with the resumption of other cultural activities such as concerts and plays, have enhanced Melbourne's livability this year. Improvements in the business activity dimension may well boost the city into the top 10 in years to come.

Addis Ababa, capital of one of the fastest growing countries in the world, moved up eight places. This positive change was propelled by Ethiopia's improved freedom of expression (part of the information exchange dimension). The metric reflects the media censorship reforms that took place soon after the recent regime change in Ethiopia, including the release of detained journalists, the unblocking of more than 200 websites, and the restoration of access to media outlets. However, since the publication of the metric, there have been reports of renewed muzzling of the press, particularly in the wake of the ongoing crisis in Ethiopia's Tigray region.

Addis Ababa has experienced extraordinary urbanization thanks to Ethiopia's [rapid economic growth](#). The city is home to an estimated 25 percent of the country's urban population and contributes roughly 50 percent of its GDP. In response, Addis Ababa has invested heavily in infrastructure over the past decade. Much of the focus has been on low-cost housing, efficient mobility (ranging from light rail transit to footpaths), real estate, and aviation expansion. These developments support the city's drive to become a more livable, sustainable, and connected city—factors that are core to urban well-being—and we look forward to seeing how this will impact its future ranking on both the Global Cities Index and the Outlook.

Top cities with diverse strengths

No single city dominates the top spot in the metrics used in our Index. Across each of the GCI's 29 metrics, 21 cities rank first—demonstrating that there is no perfect global city, with each having comparative advantages as well as areas of improvement and insight in which they can learn from other cities (see figure 4).

The top cities rank highly across each dimension and metric. Unsurprisingly, the top two global cities, New York and London, stand out. New York achieves the highest rating across four metrics and London across three. Interesting to note is that each of these top spots spans different dimensions, further cementing the fact that, to be a global city, a broad range of strengths is essential.

Across each of the GCI's 29 metrics, 21 cities rank first—demonstrating that there is no perfect global city.

Figure 4

Leading cities across the GCI metrics

2021 Global City Index leaders by dimensions				
Business activity **New York**	Human capital **New York**	Information exchange **Paris**	Cultural experience **London**	Political engagement **Brussels**
Global Cities Index leaders by metric				
— Fortune 500 **Beijing** — Top global services firms **London** — Capital markets **New York** — Air freight **Hong Kong** — Sea freight **Shanghai** — ICCA conferences **Paris** — Unicorn Companies **San Francisco**	— Foreign-born population **New York** — Top universities **Boston** — Population with tertiary degree **Tokyo** — International student population **Melbourne*** — Number of international schools **Hong Kong** — Medical Universities **London**	— Access to TV news **Doha*** — News agency bureaus **New York** — Broadband subscribers **Zurich, Geneva** — Freedom of expression **Oslo** — Online presence **Singapore**	— Museums **Moscow** — Visual and performing arts **New York*** — Sporting events **Los Angeles** — International travelers **Dubai*** — Culinary offerings **London*** — Sister cities **Saint Petersburg**	— Embassies and consulates **Brussels** — Think tanks **Washington, D.C.** — International organizations **Geneva** — Political conferences **Brussels** — Local institutions with global reach **Paris**

*Indicates new leaders in 2021.

Source: Kearney 2021 Global Cities Report

Global Cities Outlook results

The Global Cities Outlook assesses the potential for cities to become global hubs in the future based on their current conditions and policies. This year, reflecting the overwhelming impact of the pandemic, the personal well-being metrics are the biggest predictors of change in overall Outlook scores and rankings. This highlights the strong knock-on effects that healthcare quality has on other indicators—if a city's residents are not well, it cannot thrive. Even as many global cities see improvement in their coronavirus caseload, their health systems remain under pressure as they confront the backlog of medical issues unrelated to COVID-19 that have been put off as all resources went to addressing the pandemic. In the short term, the recovery and restoration of quality of life in cities will depend on the effectiveness of controlling the virus through vaccinations, testing, tracing, and quarantines. In the long-term, leading cities will need to rebuild their healthcare systems to ensure resilience in the wake of inevitable future crises.

This year, reflecting the overwhelming impact of the pandemic, the personal well-being metrics are the biggest predictors of change in overall Outlook scores and rankings.

Despite an overall drop in scores due to the pandemic, the cities holding the top 10 spots stand largely unchanged (see figure 5 on page 12). As in the previous two years, London retains its top spot. It is one of the four cities that rank in the top 10 for both the Index and the Outlook. The other three cities that fall into this category are Paris, Tokyo, and Singapore. This is an indicator of which cities are likely to maintain their standing as global leaders in the years to come based on the enabling conditions they are doubling down on or creating anew.

The most significant change in the top-ranked cities was Amsterdam, crashing out of the top 10 and dropping 11 places. In the city's place is Sydney, ranked 9th after moving up three places. Amsterdam's decline was driven by a drop in personal well-being metrics, more specifically, and unsurprisingly, the decline in healthcare indicators. This is a trend seen across many European and North American cities, as the healthcare systems of many leading cities were severely challenged by the pandemic.

Paris, Munich, and Abu Dhabi each climbed three spots, landing second, third, and fourth on the leaderboard, respectively. Following last year's 13-spot jump, Abu Dhabi shows further progress, with this year's change predominantly driven by its continued focus on providing accessible, high-quality healthcare and a commitment to reducing its environmental impact, which is core to the personal well-being dimension. After its impressive climb in last year's Outlook, Toronto slips six spots to 8th, with the key reasons being subdued economic performance and investment in innovation.

San Francisco, a former GCO leader, dropped a whopping 14 spots and landed outside of the top 25. This comes after the city dropped eight places in 2020 following the hit to its healthcare system in the wake of the pandemic. Other top-ranked big movers include Shenzhen (climbing 15 places) and Beijing, Zurich, and New York (each moving up nine positions). The top 10, however, remain out of arm's reach of these cities for now.

Figure 5
The top 10 cities in the Global Cities Outlook remain largely unchanged

City	2021 rank	2020 rank	2019 rank	2018 rank	2017 rank	2016 rank	Δ '20–'21	
London	1	1	1	3	4	3	0	
Paris	2	5	5	4	3	11	+3	↑
Munich	3	6	8	7	7	6	+3	↑
Abu Dhabi	4	7	20	50	52	52	+3	↑
Dublin	5	10	9	33	40	33	+5	↑
Stockholm	6	8	10	11	9	7	+2	↑
Tokyo	7	4	6	14	23	18	−3	↓
Toronto	8	2	11	12	20	22	−6	↓
Sydney	9	12	13	19	13	9	+3	↑
Singapore	10	3	2	5	11	16	−7	↓
Luxembourg	11	17	—	—	—	—	+6	↑
Montreal	12	13	23	21	32	26	+1	↑
Zurich	13	22	15	13	12	8	+9	↑
Melbourne	14	19	14	10	6	10	+5	↑
Dubai	15	18	32	42	46	37	+3	↑
Geneva	16	16	12	16	14	13	0	
Perth	17	24	—	—	—	—	+7	↑
New York	18	27	24	2	2	2	+9	↑
Vienna	19	21	18	25	29	32	+2	↑
Amsterdam	20	9	4	6	16	14	−11	↓
Copenhagen	21	20	17	23	21	20	−1	↓
Berlin	22	14	16	18	18	17	−8	↓
Beijing	23	32	39	47	45	51	+9	↑
Taipei	24	26	25	38	44	28	+2	↑
San Francisco	25	11	3	1	1	1	−14	↓
Shenzhen	26	41	49	52	47	49	+15	↑
Düsseldorf	27	28	26	27	22	27	+1	↑
Vancouver	28	25	19	17	24	25	−3	↓
Frankfurt	29	33	30	29	30	30	+4	↑
Shanghai	30	45	51	64	61	75	+15	↑

Source: Kearney 2021 Global Cities Report

Regional trends: China on the ascent

European cities fared far better than those in North America this year, overtaking it to become the region with the best outlook. This comes after healthcare indicators in the United States, particularly the availability of high-quality healthcare, took a nosedive in the face of the pandemic.
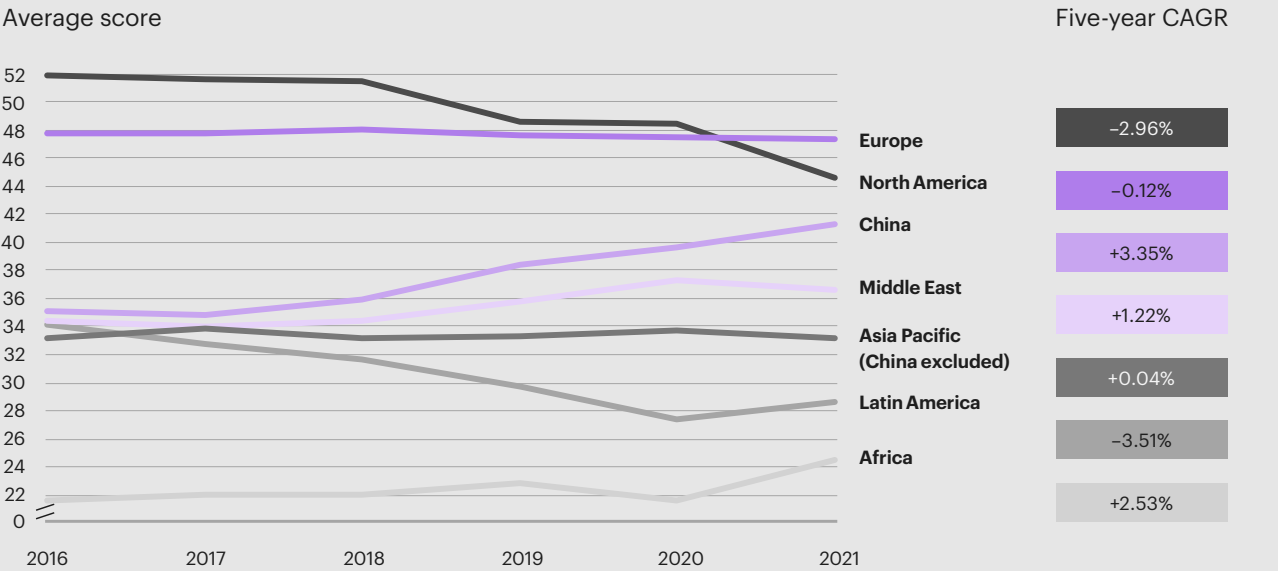
However, the region to watch, in keeping with the trend over the past five years, is China (see figure 6). In fact, of the eight cities that moved more than 10 spots up in the ranking, five are Chinese: Guangzhou (+20), Shanghai (+15), Shenzhen (+15), Chongqing (+12), and Suzhou (+10). This serves as a testament to China's continued investment in the long-term success of its cities, creating increasingly favorable conditions for future status as global cities.

Nevertheless, cities in China were not immune to the impact of the pandemic on rankings. City-level GDP and long-term investment indicators took a hit. Though this was offset by the comparatively strong performance of the city healthcare systems in managing the pandemic. Hospitals in Chinese cities were overwhelmed early in the pandemic, particularly those in Wuhan. However, decisive and innovative action helped keep the caseloads under control. The conversion of public places such as stadiums or conference centers into "Fangcang" hospitals and the rapid construction of prefabricated field hospitals in Wuhan provided additional, much-needed beds. Internet hospitals also gained significant traction, reducing the strain on brick-and-mortar medical centers. Sophisticated technology has been central to the Chinese approach to controlling the spread of the virus and has included the use of AI diagnostic systems, big data for mapping migration, and robots in hospitals to deliver food and medicine while limiting human contact.

This innovative use of new-generation technologies demonstrates the advantages Chinese cities have and the future role that technology will play in city healthcare systems.

Figure 6
China is the region to watch in the Global Cities Outlook

Global Cities Outlook regional score trends

Average score

Five-year CAGR

Region	Five-year CAGR
Europe	−2.96%
North America	−0.12%
China	+3.35%
Middle East	+1.22%
Asia Pacific (China excluded)	+0.04%
Latin America	−3.51%
Africa	+2.53%

Notes: To be able to compare values over years, all scores were adjusted to the 2016 overall average. Included cities in the analysis are the same from 2016 to 2021.
Source: Kearney 2021 Global Cities Report

Dimension leaders

With several ties across cities within the same country, there are 18 leaders across the 13 indicators that comprise the Index for cities on the rise (see figure 7). Not altogether surprisingly, San Francisco has taken the lead in private investments, London has improved in equality and taken the lead in the Gini Coefficient Index, and Singapore reigns with respect to transparency. At the level of dimensions, New York is the only new leading city—taking the lead in economics as it drives a strong rebound from the economic devastation of the pandemic.

Taken together, this year's GCI and GCO results clarify the enduring and changing requirements of resilience for global cities. It is to these changes and imperatives they imply for city leaders that we now turn.

This year's GCI and GCO clarify the enduring and changing requirements of resilience for global cities.

Figure 7
Leading cities across the GCO metrics

2021 Global Cities Outlook leaders

Global City Outlook leaders by dimensions			
Personal well-being **Nagoya**	Economics **New York***	Innovation **Beijing**	Governance **Stockholm**
Global Cities Outlook leaders by metric			
—Stability and security **Tokyo, Nagoya, Osaka, Yokohama*** —Healthcare evolution **Moscow** —GINI coefficient index **London*** —Environmental performance **Luxembourg**	—Infrastructure **Dubai, Abu Dhabi** —GDP per capita **Abu Dhabi** —FDI inflow **Warsaw***	—Patents per capita **Minneapolis** —Private investments **San Francisco*** —University-sponsored incubators **Moscow**	—Quality of bureaucracy **Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver** —Ease of doing business **Nur-Sultan, Almaty** —Transparency **Singapore***

*Indicates new leaders in 2021.
Source: Kearney 2021 Global Cities Report

Toward global recovery and urban well-being

The pandemic and the stunningly rapid advance of virtual interaction in response to it have brought into question the relevance of cities and the agglomeration economies on which their traditional value proposition is founded. For global cities, the challenge has been even existential as the perceived risks of global connectivity came to overshadow the benefits in the eyes of many. The impact of the pandemic varied across cities, across factors such as timing of the pandemic's hit, the strength of existing social safety nets, pre-existing structure of local economies, public policy decisions, and even individual behaviors. However, by several measures, global cities were among the first and the hardest hit.

In July of 2020, while the nation-wide rate of unemployment in the United States was already recovering (if still shockingly high) at 10.2 percent, New York City continued to suffer a 19.8 percent unemployment rate. The strict lockdown measures and movement restrictions imposed by cities for the sake of public safety caused many residents to reconsider the value of living in a city at all. If one couldn't go out and enjoy all that a city had traditionally offered, was it worth the high rent, cramped apartment living, and limited access to green space? The meteoric rise of remote working and explosion of the digital economy allowed some—particularly those who already worked in the high-earning creative and knowledge economies—to imagine a future in which living outside the city was more viable, made possible by a less frequent need to commute. And of course, the attractiveness of a life outside the city limits only grew as cities also suffered several non-COVID-related crises, from extreme weather events to continued egregious acts of social injustice.

Yet, just as they led the medical response to COVID-19, cities are now on the front lines in leading the global recovery from the pandemic, rebuilding individual lives and communities in the process. As the economic and social hubs of the world, global cities have the opportunity to lead in creating what's next, by addressing issues of economic resilience and systemic inequalities to create greater prosperity for all. While leaders around the world are struggling to address many difficult issues, in addition to a pandemic that is unfortunately as of this writing still very much under way, city leaders are facing three fundamental challenges that most clearly characterize the current moment:

— **Economic recession.** The pandemic sent an unprecedented shock wave through the global economy, with an estimated GDP contraction of 3.5 percent. Across the globe, we saw record highs in unemployment, idiosyncratic supply chain bottlenecks and disruptions from plummeting oil prices to microchip shortages, and large-scale emergency government spending to prop up economies. Now, as nations and cities look to recover economically, the enduring scars of this disruption have begun to show. How will cities reconstruct local and regional economies in the face of large-scale labor market disruption, changed composition of the global economy, and perhaps fundamentally altered human behavior?

— **Climate change and extreme weather.** Though the pandemic-induced slowdown of the global flow of goods and people contributed to a 2 billion ton decrease of gas emissions (about 6 percent) in 2020, the good news for the climate was short-lived. A strong global economic rebound at the end of 2020 saw December emissions exceed those of the previous year, and the newest report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) states with high confidence that global warming is likely to reach 1.5°C between 2030 and 2052 if it continues to increase at the current rate. Slowing this and limiting warming beyond that point will require radical change at all levels of society and across the globe. In the meantime, extreme temperatures and weather disasters will become more common and devastating—the most recent example: within two weeks, storms Henri and Ida set and then broke new records for rainfall in New York City. The human-driven climate crisis is well under way. For global cities, the challenge is two-pronged: how can they both address their own contributions to the problem, lowering emissions generated by their own activity, while also investing in resilience to withstand the disasters and changes that are already upon them?

— **Threats to individual well-being.** The worry, fear, and loss that swept the globe as the coronavirus spread took a serious toll on individual well-being, especially mental health. The virus and the measures implemented to "flatten the curve" heightened conditions that can contribute to poor mental health. Many people experienced financial insecurity and fear of unemployment, but nearly all also experienced isolation, lack of a daily routine, and limited access to physical exercise. Just as economic scars have begun to show, so too have the enduring mental and emotional scars of this experience. For healthcare workers in particular, the lingering effects are stark. One study of nurses exposed to COVID-19 in China found a post-traumatic stress disorder incidence of 16.83 percent. And while the global experience with COVID-19 has heightened awareness of the reality of mental health issues, it has also highlighted the severe underfunding and neglect that many mental health services worldwide have faced for years, as well as the myriad ways in which city living can be detrimental to mental health—especially for the poor. As cities continue to grow, tipping the world's population ever-more toward the urban, how can they do so in ways that not only drive economic growth, innovation, and cultural creativity, but also advance human well-being?

Cities are now on the front lines of the global recovery from the pandemic, rebuilding individual lives and communities.

Global cities as drivers of a global recovery

In the face of these daunting challenges, cities are and will remain our most important centers of economic activity, while providing more economic opportunities and a better quality of life to individuals. Even with the explosion of the digital economy, cities continue to offer unique benefits that drive increased productivity and economic growth. The labor market pooling, input sharing, and knowledge spillovers that occur with co-location simply cannot be replicated without physical proximity. Further, the supposed benefits of working from home (WFH) have increasingly come into question. Though early-pandemic news headlines celebrated the greater flexibility offered by WFH arrangements and employers proclaimed a likely increase in productivity, a July study from the Becker Freidman Institute at the University of Chicago found that WFH during the pandemic has merely served to increase the hours worked, with an estimated productivity *decline* of 8 to 19 percent. Additionally, multiple studies have shown that permanent telework, even if feasible, is not preferable. Most have found the complete transition to working from home to be isolating and a recipe for loneliness. Given this wealth of evidence, even as we expect some form of remote work to persist into a so-called new normal, the productivity of companies, happiness of employees, and growth of the global economy will still depend on most employees going into the office at least a few times a week. Therefore, even if it perhaps bleeds a bit more into the suburbs, the city will persist. The question is, in this new environment, what must cities now do to not just survive, but to thrive?

Despite the outsized impacts of the pandemic on global cities, we see evidence that they are uniquely well-positioned to drive global recovery. This is thanks to the very same global connections and nature that, in some cases, served as sources of vulnerability during the height of the pandemic. The diversity of their economic composition provides a more complex and multifaceted base upon which a more resilient economy can be constructed. With large-scale infrastructure, large and diverse pools of talent, and digital and physical links to the rest of the planet, global cities can facilitate the needs of businesses large and small. As several sectors continue to struggle with the lasting effects of the pandemic, well-positioned global cities have already been able to show increased economic activity driven by other strengths. For example, even as it suffers from the ramifications of enduring WFH and a still-closed Broadway (and the implications for tourism), New York City has seen a spike in economic activity in recent months, including pre-pandemic levels of business formation, greater-than-expected tax revenue, and near pre-pandemic levels of domestic migration. Meanwhile, less-connected cities, particularly those relying on one or two industries to drive a recovery, are expected to struggle.

Nevertheless, and despite the good news about rising business activity from many cities with high vaccination rates, global cities find themselves with the herculean task of driving global recovery at a time when many are under severe fiscal constraints. Initial estimates indicate that cities will have to navigate a 25 percent drop in tax revenue, with African cities facing an even worse reality of 30 to 65 percent less revenue. This will put even more pressure on municipal services, public programs, social safety nets, and city budgets that are already under strain from unexpected pandemic demands. All this amounts to the reality that city leaders need innovative tools, strategies, and approaches to generate accelerated impact in economic and urban recovery—and they need them on a shoestring budget.

Five strategic imperatives for city leaders

As global cities continue to grapple with both the ongoing pandemic and a shift toward recovery, we outline five strategic imperatives for city leaders and identify a range of specific examples of the ways in which city leaders around the world are driving public policy and designing new programs to address the challenges global cities share. For all cities, economic recovery will be a function of their comparative advantage—which, for many, may have been deeply disrupted or even permanently altered in the past 18 months. Those that have traditionally relied on the movement of people, particularly in the leisure and tourism industries, have been hit hardest by the coronavirus recession. Las Vegas, for example, saw unemployment grow by 8 percent in November 2020, five percentage points above the US national average. Meanwhile, tech hubs have fared relatively well. During the same period, Seattle saw unemployment grow by only 2 percent. These unequal impacts are expected to have long-term consequences for sectoral performance. Given this reality, some global cities may be faced with the daunting challenge of redefining and reconstructing their sources of comparative advantage, ensuring they are making the most of their cities' unique resources and offerings. Nevertheless, the imperatives discussed below apply to *all* global cities—as we see a set of disruptions, rising trends, and new opportunities upon which they all must capitalize if they are to thrive. We offer these as ways to both leverage and enhance the global connectivity of global cities—as these connections are both assets for and requirements in rebuilding. In offering local citizens global benefits, cities can not only drive an economic recovery, but also lead toward a next-generation realization of urban living, centered on well-being and defined by resilience.

1. Win in the competition for global talent

Human capital is the driving force behind a city's economic activity—and its competitiveness. As the urban studies theorist Richard Florida puts it, "What drives innovation and startup entrepreneurship is not the density of jobs or offices but the density of talent." Crucially, for global cities in particular, this talent must be globally sourced. One detailed study using US county data over 35 years showed a positive correlation between immigration and local innovation, economic dynamism, and wages. In fact, half of all engineering and technology start-ups in Silicon Valley are headed by immigrants. Yet the COVID-19 pandemic has challenged the ability of cities to source global talent like never before. The number of new visas and residence permits issued in Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries fell by 46 percent in the first half of 2020, largely because of border restrictions. At the same time, cities around the world showed ugly occurrences of anti-immigrant and xenophobic prejudice, with distressing and violent instances of COVID-related racism reported across the globe. Meanwhile, a renewed emphasis on the livability of cities—and attention paid during the pandemic to somewhat idyllic small and mid-size cities—has expanded the playing field in the competition for talent.

Even as they lack the centralized power to manipulate several of the policy levers most associated with sourcing global talent—namely, immigration policy and the issuance of visas—global cities still have a powerful ability to influence immigration and draw talent. Particularly in today's competitive environment, cities that can build and project a brand as immigrant-friendly, with high quality of life in addition to economic opportunities, are those that will win out.

Around the world, we see several ways in which global cities are specifically addressing this competition and aiming to get ahead:

— **Offering trial periods to skilled would-be immigrants.** While San Francisco is recognized the world over as the preeminent tech epicenter, it is of course by no means the only city where tech innovation thrives. The city of Helsinki recently ran a campaign to show that the city not only has a thriving tech sector, but also offers excellent amenities and a high quality of life—for Finns and expats alike. The city's 90 Day Finn campaign offered foreign tech professionals and their families the opportunity to live in the city for three months to help them decide whether they want to relocate there permanently. Although the campaign selected only 14 applicants (out of more than 5,000), the city hopes the publicity helps attract more people to fill the local talent gap and has created a database of the candidate profiles for local executives to access.

— **Supporting immigrant integration.** While attracting residents may be the first major hurdle for global cities in talent development, retaining and effectively integrating individuals into a city is crucial for ensuring longevity of the benefits they bring. In **New York City**, leaders recognize that the successful integration of immigrants and protection of their rights are essential for maintaining the city's vibrancy. As such, New York has one of the most extensive city-based programs in the United States to support immigrant integration through the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs (MOIA). One of the successful initiatives provided by MOIA is We Speak NYC, an English language learning program that help immigrants learn about city services. Informational flyers and videos are also available in multiple languages to ensure accessibility to the wide range of nationalities in the city.

— **Incentivizing "brain circulation."** In contrast to the oft-discussed phenomenon of brain drain, brain circulation refers to the luring back of residents who have gone abroad and acquired education, knowledge, and skills in the meantime. The city of **Shenzhen's** Peacock Talent Program, established in 2011, attracts overseas talent, including Chinese nationals and foreign citizens, and has helped to turn the city into China's Silicon Valley. The three-tier, high talent-attraction initiative includes financial incentives for globally recognized intellectuals, executives, and athletes and aims to draw professors who taught at world-renowned universities to help grow the local education and innovation ecosystem. Buoyed by its reputation as a city with a welcoming and tolerant city culture, Shenzhen's attraction program drew 1,219 highly skilled individuals in its first five years, only 74 of whom were not Chinese nationals.

For individuals, a job alone is no longer reason enough to move to a new city. As economic competition intensifies and more cities develop into hubs of fast-moving and high-earning industries, potential employees will continue to enjoy a wider range of choice when it comes to city living. Therefore, global cities must center their identities and economic growth plans on the human individuals who they want to attract and retain as residents, offering an improved city-living experience.

Tapping into the global digital economy as a channel for economic growth will require much more than offering fast Wi-Fi and smart services.

2. Embrace the rapidly growing global digital economy

An undisputed permanent change brought on by the pandemic has been the explosion of the global digital economy. Internet traffic is up, online shopping is the new norm, and our own recent study of the transatlantic economy show that trade in digital services was responsible for 78 percent of the United States' service exports to Europe. This dramatic expansion of the digital economy has direct implications for cities—from the heightened importance of quality digital infrastructure to the potential for loss of city tax revenue accompanying a decline in brick-and-mortar shopping. While many cite the rise of the digital economy as a reason for distress in urban centers, some cities are recognizing it as a means by which to accelerate economic growth and drive recovery.

Tapping into the global digital economy as a channel for economic growth will require much more than simply ensuring fast Wi-Fi connections and the availability of smart services. These amenities can be found in any advanced city (and at this point, many remote corners of the world). Instead, what cities must focus on is creating and providing unique, location-specific resources with respect to engagement in the global digital economy. We see evidence of this already under way in some enterprising cities, with investments in digital talent and resources that seek to take greatest advantage of the global shift online. Moving forward, cities that thrive will be those in which the digital economy is not merely a component of the economy, but a central driving force of economic growth and development.

Global cities getting a jump on the digital economy are focusing on people, public–private partnerships, and long-term planning:

— **Inclusively preparing for the digital future of work.** To propel its status as an economic powerhouse into the future, the city–state of **Singapore** is investing in the skills of residents, with an eye toward fully capitalizing on the digital economy. A central program in this effort is called [Skills Ignition SG](#)—a partnership between Google and three Singapore government agencies: the Economic Development Board, Infocomm & Media Development Authority, and SkillsFuture Singapore. The program offers two training tracks to permanent residents: an upskilling program for mid-career professionals and a training and job placement program for fresh grads. Job placements happen at Google, which has had its Southeast Asia headquarters in Singapore since 2007, as well as at other large multinationals. For private companies, the program offers direct access to talent; many participants in the program are offered full-time jobs after their training is complete. For the city, the partnership with the private sector helps improve skills matching, employment outcomes, and innovation—helping employers meet the exact skills needed to capitalize on the constantly emerging opportunities of the digital economy.

— **Building win–win data partnerships.** As part of its sweeping COVID-19 economic recovery plan, **London** is piloting a new citywide data partnership to both democratize access to data and better support evidence-based policymaking. The [High Streets Data Service and Partnership](#) functions through a subscription model, in which the Greater London Authority uses its collective purchasing power to buy large data sets from private-sector companies, including Mastercard and O2/Telefonica, and then provides access to a range of actors involved in the city's economic recovery. Partners in the data service include London boroughs, business improvement districts, and ex officio partners such as the London Office of Technology and Innovation and industry representatives. Through this partnership, the city is tapping into one of the greatest resources generated by the digital economy—data—to fuel recovery on high streets and beyond.

— **Harnessing digital as a resilient engine of economic growth.** In line with its stated objective of transforming itself into an international technology hub with world-class digital infrastructure, **Dubai** has recently doubled down on its commitment to centering economic growth in the digital economy with the establishment of the [Dubai Chamber of Digital Economy](#). In coordination with the Dubai Chamber of Commerce and the Dubai International Chamber, the Chamber of Digital Economy will focus on developing and implementing a digital-centric comprehensive economic growth plan that includes priorities such as attracting investments into e-commerce and emerging digital technologies, ensuring adequate digital infrastructure is in place to enable developments, incentivizing global talent and entrepreneurs, proposing digital economy friendly policies and legislation, and accelerating technology adoption.

The global digital economy is undoubtedly changing the calculus of location for individuals and businesses alike. While it threatens to contribute to an emptying of cities and relocation of business headquarters, it can also be a key differentiator and strength for cities that embrace it. Offering a range of new tools and opportunities, the global digital economy need not be feared—if, that is, cities can harness its benefits to drive enhanced quality of life and accelerated forms of economic growth.

3. Ensure economic resilience by balancing global and local resources

Economic resilience is defined by a city or region's ability to avoid, endure, and quickly recover from major economic shocks. The pandemic has highlighted the fragility of our global economy and the vulnerability of key economic sectors as cross-border trade has faced severe disruption. While many of the world's transnational supply chains have been on the mend over the past year, there have been lasting changes to the global flows of goods and services. In the face of several pressure factors—rising economic competition between the great powers of China and the United States in key strategic sectors, increasingly emphatic consumer voice and activism for greener and more transparent production, and heightened awareness of the benefits of self-sufficiency after high-profile shortages of goods in major developed economies—global trade may never look the same as it did pre-pandemic.

While the fragility of global trade may point toward the benefits of a strategy based on localization, cities and countries must also consider the risks of remaining too insular. As the slew of recent climate disasters in populated areas around the world has shown all too well, betting on self-sufficiency has its own perils. Thus, cities find themselves seeking a balance between globally sourcing the goods and services their citizens desire and remaining resilient to global trade shocks and local disasters. Global connectivity in trade and economic relationships is a cornerstone of the economic success of global cities and will remain so even as cities must become more innovative in building and balancing those global connections.

Though trade policy is set at a national level and global supply chains manipulated largely by private-sector choices, cities have several ways to steer toward resilience across the broad range of uncertainties we face today:

— **Building global economic alliances.** In 2014, **Auckland**, **Los Angeles**, and **Guangzhou** established the mayoral-driven Tripartite Economic Alliance to boost economic, trade, and investment opportunities between the three global cities. An annual summit provides a platform for businesses and investors in key sectors to engage in and take advantage of potential commercial opportunities. Through this, city leaders have entered into trilateral agreements to enhance cooperation between ports, share best practices on Pacific Rim emergency preparedness, and develop and share expertise in advancing sustainability measures through urban design and technology. The alliance has facilitated deals worth millions of dollars and provided a mechanism for the cities to collaborate for mutual benefit.

— **Growing national competitiveness through city networks.** In New Zealand, local governments recognized that the relatively small size of many of the nation's cities, their isolated geographic locations, and an unintegrated approach to trade were undermining national resilience and creating inefficiencies for each city individually. To support better development at both the city and national levels, the capital city of **Wellington** and nine other cities across the small country established the New Zealand Core Cities Network. The partnership set out to facilitate collaboration in areas of trade, information sharing, tourism, and economic development and in doing so demonstrated the power of city governments to drive national resilience and better economic outcomes.
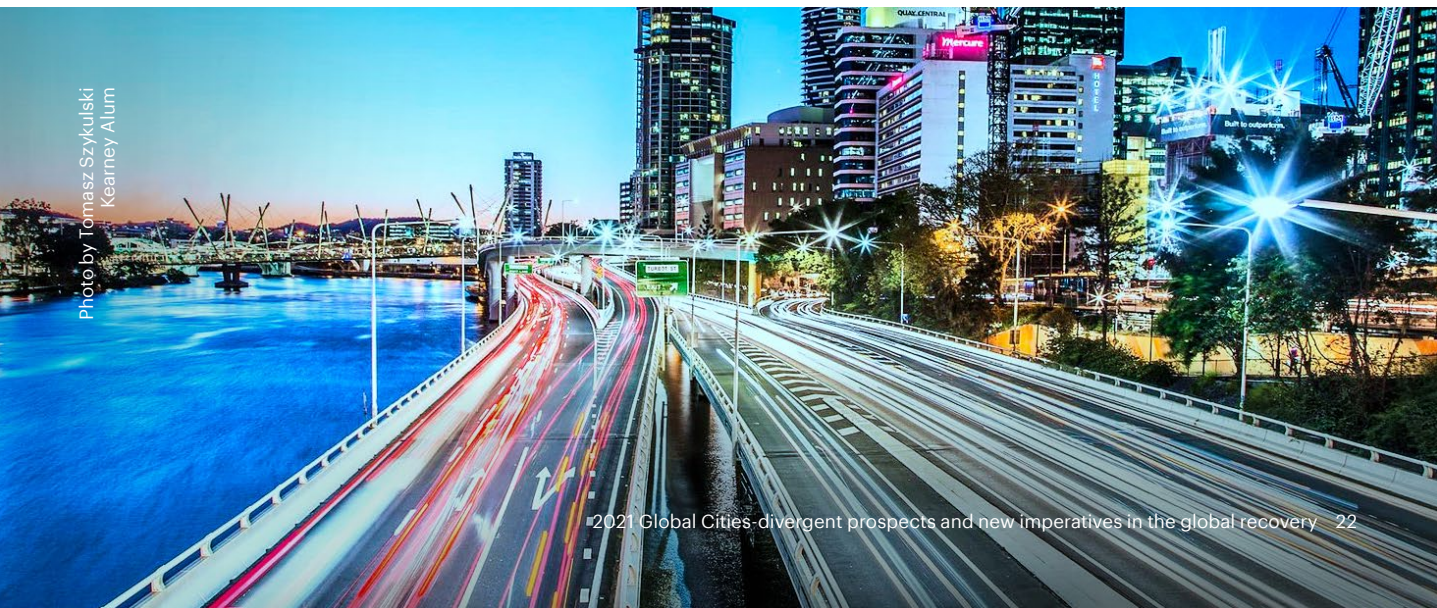
— **Regionalizing resilience.** The severe shortages of medical equipment, food, and everyday goods that accompanied the COVID-induced global supply chain disruption awakened many cities to the value of developing relations with their immediate neighbors. As such, the **mega-region** has begun to emerge as particularly advantageous. Particularly in the United States, sub-national governments formed small-group alliances to share protective equipment and vital supplies at the height of the pandemic. While this occurred at the state level in this instance—for example, one multi-state compact was comprised of seven midwestern states surrounding Chicago—the logic of a regionalized approach to resilience applies just as well at the city level. Further, by establishing such relations *before* a crisis rather than in the thick of it, cities across regions can be better prepared to respond more quickly and more comprehensively to disruptions at the global and local levels.

The events of the past 18 months have caused many of globalization's most ardent proponents to reconsider the risks of a hyper-globalized world. The linkages that have given us greater access to globally sourced goods at better prices in shorter time spans have also, at times, weakened our connections with our own neighbors. Thus, moving forward, while cities must remain globally engaged, benefiting from the best the world has to offer, they must also make a concerted effort to balance those global connections with ones closer to home.

4. Adapt in the face of climate change

Climate change is a twofold issue for cities. First, cities are physically, economically, and socially vulnerable to the ravages of climate disasters because of their high density and common locations in places that are at higher risk, such as islands or coastlines. As reported by the IPCC, the impact of climate change-induced natural disasters is continuing to grow more severe as storms and weather events rise in frequency and unpredictability. Second, cities must grapple with the ways in which they themselves contribute to climate change— and urgently act to curb emissions and increase efficiency. The UN estimates that cities consume more than 75 percent of the world's energy and are responsible for more than 60 percent of global greenhouse gas emissions despite making up only 2 percent of the Earth's surface.

While the statistics, science, and lived reality can be overwhelming—and the IPCC report indicates that climate change is inevitable—there remains hope for our ability to limit its impact. Given the unassailable evidence that CO_2 emissions are the main driver of climate change, it is still within global cities' collective power to slow global warming through strong, rapid, and sustained reduction in greenhouse gas emissions. In the meantime, cities must also take on a range of actions in climate adaptation to protect themselves from unavoidable climate risks such as much hotter temperatures, rising sea levels, intense rainfall and flooding, and more frequent droughts.

The past 18 months have caused many of globalization's most ardent proponents to reconsider the risks of a hyper-globalized world.

Around the world, cities are leading in the green revolution, with the cooperation of citizens, businesses, and neighbors:

— **Going circular.** The ultimate way that cities can cut their emissions and contribute to a dramatic slowing of the pace of climate change is by applying the concept of a circular economy at the scale of a municipality. Circular cities are those that, to the greatest extent possible, decouple resource use and economic activity—stretching the value and utility of materials to their full capacity, and then efficiently reusing and recycling to generate new materials. The aim of a circular economy is to become a self-sufficient, closed loop of generation and use. The European Commission's New Circular Economy Action Plan is a cornerstone of the EU's Green Deal, but cities were innovating in circular economics long before the plan was adopted in 2020. **Copenhagen**, for example, embarked on a mission in 2009 to become the world's first carbon neutral city by 2025. Circular Copenhagen, an initiative of the Copenhagen Solutions Lab, has a key role in contributing to this goal, with links to the city's ambitious waste and resource management plan, the Climate Action Plan. The platform focuses on developing cross-cutting partnerships between the city government, academia, and industry to solve specific challenges and move toward a circular economy. More cities around the world are following suit, many in cooperative and collaborative groups such as CityLoops, sharing best practices, piloting programs, and innovating to address shared challenges.

— **Building resilient systems.** Adapting a city's built environment to reinforce it against the impact of climate change is essential. One city that has already been doing this out of necessity is **Rotterdam**. The city is mostly below sea level and, as such, has developed a robust system to defend against inland and coastal flooding: by turning itself "into a sponge." The city has turned every possible area into water storage, from underground parking garages to a recreational public square that stores rainwater, developed more green areas that help in absorbing rainwater runoff, and built floating neighborhoods and offices. It also makes use of a series of dikes along the rivers, permanent sandbags along the coast, and a flexible storm surge barrier to help protect it.

— **Collaborating for regional preparation.** The two small cities of **Oakland Park** and **Wilton Manors** in coastal Florida have combined their resources to jointly plan for a shared future. Together, the cities published the *Two Cities, One Sustainable Future Climate Action Plan* in 2019, citing their shared water infrastructure and transportation systems as resources to face the threat of sea level rise in particular. The bilateral planning effort made efficient use of the cities' municipal budgets and offered a new template for cooperation to neighboring and regional cities facing the same climate challenges.

Climate change is without a doubt the existential challenge of our time. Fortunately, cities around the world are rolling out inspiring and revolutionary programs and innovations that aim to make cities better—directly benefiting their residents and the global population. Having any sort of viable future, however, will require *all* cities to commit to the sort of radical action we see in cities leading the sustainability charge around the world. Particularly in the absence of globally unified leadership on the topic, global cities can—and must—lead the way toward a greener future.

Particularly in the absence of globally unified leadership on the topic, global cities can— and must—lead the way toward a greener future.

5. Invest in individual and community well-being

Finally, it is no exaggeration to say we are in a state of crisis with respect to human well-being—particularly in urban centers. The World Health Organization defines health as "a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity," where "well-being" refers to a positive, rather than neutral state. The immediate symptoms of the virus aside, the fear it instilled across the globe, the restrictive measures implemented to combat its spread, and the near collapse of health systems in cities around the world have all contributed to a stark absence of well-being. Further, the uneven distribution of this condition, particularly within cities, has been exacerbated and highlighted by the pandemic. Now, a focus on inequality in urban centers has come to the forefront. The impacts of the lived environment on quality of life—and even lifespan—have been empirically proven; one study of 97 of the most populous US cities found that in more than three-quarters of those cities, lower-income neighborhoods are hotter—with higher temperatures linked to a greater prevalence of chronic health conditions.

If we consider once again that the driving force of a city's economic activity is its human capital, then a central requirement for cities is that they be places people like to live. The experience with COVID-19 has shown so many that a job alone is no reason to live in a city. We require safe and clean living conditions, access to green space, and the social support of a community. At the same time, the economic devastation of COVID-19 has, in many places, carved out elements that form the unique character of a place. Many of the small restaurants, shops, and events that together comprise the unique buzz of a city or neighborhood have permanently closed— local news sites are even keeping running lists of restaurant closures. Yet it is these uniquely local but globally diverse components of cities that define them as microcosms of the world. Without them, cities lose their allure. In this context, as city leaders seek to rebuild so much of what was lost during the pandemic, they must do so with citizens and communities at the core. Moving forward, global cities that are able to demonstrate a high quality of life for a wide diversity of residents will be the ones to thrive.

Prioritizing quality of life will take many forms in the diverse global cities we study, but central components across all will be environment, community, and culture:

— **Rebuilding the natural environment. Los Angeles** is one of the many cities globally that have committed to growing their urban forest to lower city temperatures, particularly in the hottest and most vulnerable neighborhoods. In addition to helping reduce peak temperatures by providing shade and via evapotranspiration, green space and vegetation have been proven to boost mental and physical health. The city has hired a city forest officer to oversee the planting of more than 90,000 trees by the end of 2021, and Los Angeles is also piloting Google's new AI-powered Tree Canopy Lab technology. The tool uses AI and aerial imagery to assess the tree canopy coverage at a neighborhood level, which will provide insights into where tree planting should take place to have the greatest impact in the places of greatest need.

— **Connecting communities. London's** COVID-19 recovery program is oriented around nine recovery "missions," including one explicitly focused on Building Strong Communities. Under this mission, the program aims to provide all Londoners with access to a community hub by 2025, where they can "volunteer, get support, and build strong community networks." By providing support to mutual aid, faith, and grassroots groups and by promoting the implementation of community-led solutions, the city aims to decrease loneliness and social isolation and build greater feelings of belonging. The program places specific emphasis on communities that have been disproportionately impacted by COVID and people who have historically been marginalized.

— **Supporting unique global–local cultures.** Finally, it is vital that cities support the re-emergence of what could be referred to as global–local cultures, by bolstering the diverse components that together form the microcosm that fundamentally makes them global cities. At the level of individuals, across neighborhoods, and even across the globe, cities are finding and making ways to supplant what may otherwise be a catastrophic loss of local cultures built on global diversity. For example, the city of **Pavlograd**, Ukraine has brought the gastronomic diversity of a global city into family kitchens, launching the "Intercultural Cuisine on-line" which hosts step-by-step videos and recipes of dishes from different cultures. Other cities have sought to foster continued artistic events and dialogues that contribute to their global-local culture, even in the absence of in-person exchange. For example, in the Cuidad(es) Cultura program, **Barcelona**, **Buenos Aires**, **Bogota**, **Lima**, and **Lisbon** have come together to share a range of cultural and creative activities and events online.

In these cases and so many more, cities are centering their recoveries on the well-being of their populations. This choice recognizes that cities are not autonomous entities, but collections of individual human beings who choose to come together in a specific space. Still, citizen-centric policymaking is no handout or soft approach to difficult choices. Rather, it is an investment in the future of a city—in which a diversity of healthy individuals can support one another, drive innovation, and contribute to economic vibrancy.

Conclusion

The task at hand for global cities is daunting. Battles with the pandemic seem long from over, but people around the world have collectively shown their desire to return to some form of a normal life. How cities navigate this shifting landscape and drive toward recovery requires a set of choices that have grave consequences if outcomes are not as desired or expected. Yet, around the world we see hope for global cities—not just in recovering from the pandemic, but also as testing grounds for policy and innovation that can address some of the world's greatest challenges. We look forward to watching these cities as they continue to create new approaches and solutions to our shared challenges and move forward in the uncertain context in which we all find ourselves.

Around the world we see hope for global cities—not just in recovering from the pandemic, but also as testing grounds for policy and innovation that can address some of the world's greatest challenges.

Authors
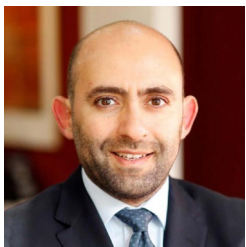
Antoine Nasr
Partner, Dubai
antoine.nasr@kearney.com

Rudolph Lohmeyer
Partner, Dubai
rudolph.lohmeyer@kearney.com

Abdo Al Habr
Principal, Dubai
abdo.alhabr@kearney.com

Brenna Buckstaff
Consultant, Dubai
brenna.buckstaff@kearney.com

Appendix

Appendix A
Global Cities methodology

Global Cities Index: current performance

Measures 29 metrics across five dimensions:

— **Business activity** (30%): capital flow, market dynamics, and major companies present

— **Human capital** (30%): education levels

— **Information exchange** (15%): access to information through Internet and other media sources

— **Cultural experience** (15%): access to major sporting events, museums, and other expos

— **Political engagement** (10%): political events, think tanks, and embassies

Rank and score are determined by totaling the weighted averages of each dimension to yield a score on the scale of 0 to 100, with 100 being perfect.

Sources are derived from publicly available city-level data.

Global Cities Outlook: future potential

Measures 13 leading indicators across four dimensions:

— **Personal well-being** (25%): safety, healthcare, inequality, and environmental performance

— **Economics** (25%): long-term investments and GDP

— **Innovation** (25%): entrepreneurship through patents, private investments, and incubators

— **Governance** (25%): proxy for long-term stability through transparency, quality of bureaucracy, and ease of doing business

Rank and score are determined by averaging the rate of change across each metric using data from the past five years, then projecting out to 2031. Weighted averages are applied to each dimension to yield a score on a scale of 0 to 100, with 100 being perfect.

Sources are derived from publicly available city-level data.

The 2021 Global Cities Index and Outlook analyze 156 cities—five more than in 2020

North America

Atlanta	Miami	San Francisco
Boston	Minneapolis	Seattle
Chicago	Montreal	Toronto
Dallas	New York	Vancouver
Houston	Philadelphia	Washington, D.C.
Los Angeles	Phoenix	

Latin America

Belo Horizonte	Lima	Recife
Bogota	Mexico City	Rio de Janeiro
Buenos Aires	Monterrey	Salvador
Caracas	Porto Alegre	Santiago
Guadalajara	Puebla	São Paulo

Africa

Abidjan	Casablanca	Luanda
Accra	Johannesburg	Nairobi
Addis Ababa	Khartoum	Tunis
Alexandria	Kinshasa	
Cape Town	Lagos	

Middle East

Abha	Dammam	Medina
Abu Dhabi	Doha	Muscat
Amman	Dubai	Riyadh
Ankara	Jeddah	Tehran
Baghdad	Kuwait City	Tel Aviv
Beirut	Makkah	
Cairo	Manama	

Europe

Amsterdam	Helsinki	Oslo
Barcelona	Istanbul	Paris
Berlin	Kyiv	Prague
Brussels	Lisbon	Rome
Budapest	London	Stockholm
Copenhagen	Luxembourg	Saint Petersburg
Dublin	Madrid	Vienna
Düsseldorf	Milan	Warsaw
Frankfurt	Moscow	Zagreb
Geneva	Munich	Zurich

Asia Pacific

Ahmedabad	Jakarta	Seoul
Almaty	**Jinan**	Shanghai
Bandung	**Kaohsiung**	Shenyang
Bangalore	Karachi	Shenzhen
Bangkok	Kolkata	Singapore
Beijing	Kuala Lumpur	Surabaya
Changsha	**Kunming**	Surat
Chengdu	Lahore	Suzhou
Chennai	Manila	Sydney
Chongqing	Melbourne	Taipei
Dalian	Mumbai	Tangshan
Dhaka	Nagoya	Tianjin
Dongguan	Nanjing	Tokyo
Foshan	New Delhi	Wuhan
Guangzhou	Ningbo	Wuxi
Hangzhou	Nur-Sultan	Xi'an
Harbin	Osaka	Yangon
Hefei	Perth	Yantai
Ho Chi Minh	Pune	**Yokohama**
Hong Kong	Qingdao	Zhengzhou
Hyderabad	Quanzhou	

● New cities

Global Cities Index results, 2016–2021 (1/2)

City	Rank 2021	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016	Δ '20-'21
New York	1	1	1	1	1	2	0
London	2	2	2	2	2	1	0
Paris	3	3	3	3	3	3	0
Tokyo	4	4	4	4	4	4	0
Los Angeles	5	7	7	6	8	6	+2
Beijing	6	5	9	9	9	9	−1
Hong Kong	7	6	5	5	5	5	−1
Chicago	8	8	8	8	7	7	0
Singapore	9	9	6	7	6	8	0
Shanghai	10	12	19	19	19	20	+2
San Francisco	11	13	22	20	23	23	+2
Melbourne	12	18	16	17	15	15	+6
Berlin	13	15	14	16	14	16	+2
Washington, D.C.	14	10	10	11	10	10	−4
Sydney	15	11	11	15	17	14	−4
Brussels	16	14	12	10	11	12	−2
Seoul	17	17	13	12	12	11	0
Moscow	18	20	18	14	18	18	+2
Madrid	19	16	15	13	13	13	−3
Toronto	20	19	17	18	16	17	−1
Boston	21	21	21	24	21	24	0
Amsterdam	22	23	20	22	22	22	+1
Dubai	23	27	27	28	28	28	+4
Frankfurt	24	28	28	29	29	29	+4
Vienna	25	22	25	21	20	19	−3
Munich	26	24	32	32	36	33	−2
Istanbul	27	34	26	26	25	25	+7
Barcelona	28	26	23	23	24	26	−2
Montreal	29	29	29	27	27	27	0
Zurich	30	31	30	33	32	31	+1
Mexico City	31	38	40	38	34	39	+7
Buenos Aires	32	25	24	25	26	21	−7
Miami	33	30	31	30	30	30	−3
Atlanta	34	33	34	35	38	40	−1
Bangkok	35	36	42	43	41	41	+1
Geneva	36	40	37	36	37	36	+4
Houston	37	32	35	41	40	38	−5
Rome	38	37	36	34	33	35	−1
Vancouver	39	41	38	37	35	37	+2
Sao Paulo	40	42	33	31	31	34	+2

City	Rank 2021	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016	Δ '20-'21
Stockholm	41	39	39	39	39	32	−2
Seattle	42	45	47	48			+3
Copenhagen	43	49	45	42	42	42	+6
Milan	44	48	41	40	43	45	+4
Dublin	45	46	46	44	46	48	+1
Lisbon	46	52					+6
Dallas	47	47	43	46	48	51	0
Osaka	48	35	50	50	51	52	−13
Taipei	49	44	44	45	47	43	−5
Philadelphia	50	43	51	51	50	47	−7
Tel Aviv	51	51	53	57	57	62	0
Prague	52	50	48	47	45	46	−2
Doha	53	68	61	63	63	65	+15
Oslo	54	54					0
Johannesburg	55	55	52	53	53	60	0
Perth	56	57					+1
Kuala Lumpur	57	58	49	49	49	49	+1
Santiago	58	62	60	60	60	58	+4
Cairo	59	64	66	65	62	53	+5
Guangzhou	60	63	71	71	71	71	+3
Helsinki	61	60					−1
Mumbai	62	53	54	52	44	44	−9
Bogota	63	59	58	55	55	57	−4
Warsaw	64	61	55	54	58	55	−3
Lima	65	69	63	61	61	63	+4
New Delhi	66	56	56	58	54	61	−10
Jakarta	67	70	59	59	56	56	+3
Düsseldorf	68	65	64	67	68	67	−3
Manila	69	67	65	64	66	59	−2
Minneapolis	70	66					−4
Budapest	71	71	62	62	59	54	0
Shenzhen	72	75	79	79	80	83	+3
Luxembourg	73	74					+1
Riyadh	74	73	67	66	65	66	−1
Beirut	75	81					+6
Rio de Janeiro	76	72	57	56	52	50	−4
Abu Dhabi	77	76	69	68	64	64	−1
Saint Petersburg	78	80	68	69	67	68	+2
Nagoya	79	78	70	70	70	69	−1
Hangzhou	80	82	91	117	116	115	+2

Source: Kearney Global Cities Report

Global Cities Index results, 2016–2021 (2/2)

City	Rank 2021	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016	Δ '20-'21
Cape Town	81	77	73	73	69	70	−4
Jeddah	82	85	75	74	83		+3
Zagreb	83	92					+9
Phoenix	84	79	72	72	72	72	−5
Amman	85	83					−2
Ankara	86	84	74	75	74	74	−2
Kuwait City	87	95	76	77	82	82	+8
Chengdu	88	87	89	89	88	96	−1
Nairobi	89	90	77	76	73	73	+1
Nanjing	90	86	86	88	87	86	−4
Kyiv	91	89					−2
Suzhou	92	98	96	115	112	109	+6
Tianjin	93	94	88	87	92	94	+1
Wuhan	94	93	105	102	100	107	−1
Dhaka	95	91	82	85	84	81	−4
Xi'an	96	100	111	113	114	114	+4
Ho Chi Minh	97	97	81	80	76	76	0
Bangalore	98	88	78	78	75	75	−10
Yokohama	99						
Casablanca	100	107	94	97	101	90	+7
Chennai	101	96	80	82	81	77	−5
Changsha	102	103	116	124			+1
Caracas	103	99	83	81	79	79	−4
Belo Horizonte	104	113	98	95	90	97	+9
Tehran	105	108	97	94	98	93	+3
Addis Ababa	106	114	101	107	96	100	+8
Chongqing	107	102	107	114	115	113	−5
Porto Alegre	108	116	95	93	89	89	+8
Kaohsiung	109						
Qingdao	110	105	113	110	109	110	−5
Tunis	111	111	103	96	99	91	0
Monterrey	112	104	90	99	95	98	−8
Lagos	113	112	84	83	78	80	−1
Abidjan	114	109	92	90	106	103	−5
Guadalajara	115	106	99	98	94	99	−9
Hyderabad	116	101	85	84	77	78	−15
Accra	117	110	93	92	91	88	−7
Almaty	118	124					+6
Muscat	119	115	100	109	119		−4
Dalian	120	118	110	106	107	108	−2
Zhengzhou	121	121	123	128	123	121	0

City	Rank 2021	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016	Δ '20-'21
Jinan	122						
Karachi	123	117	87	86	86	85	−6
Salvador	124	120	106	101	93	95	−4
Recife	125	125	112	112	105	102	0
Ningbo	126	122	119	123			−4
Lahore	127	127	109	103	111	106	0
Nur-Sultan	128	132					+4
Baghdad	129	134	126	121	118	116	+5
Manama	130	129	115	100	102	87	−1
Shenyang	131	128	121	120	124	122	−3
Harbin	132	126	117	118	117	117	−6
Hefei	133						
Kunming	134						
Pune	135	123	114	111	97	92	−12
Kinshasa	136	130	102	104	108	112	−6
Puebla	137	133	122	122	120		−4
Kolkata	138	119	104	91	85	84	−19
Ahmedabad	139	131	120	108	103	101	−8
Surabaya	140	135	108	105	104	104	−5
Alexandria	141	148	130	119	113	111	+7
Khartoum	142	140	124	129	126	123	−2
Yangon (Rangoon)	143	137	127	127	122	118	−6
Wuxi	144	138	128	130			−6
Bandung	145	136	118	116	110	105	−9
Luanda	146	147	125	126	125	120	+1
Dammam	147	139					−8
Foshan	148	142	129	131			−6
Yantai	149	141	131	132			−8
Dongguan	150	143	132	133	127	124	−7
Abha	151	151					0
Quanzhou	152	144	134	135	128	125	−8
Makkah	153	150					−3
Medina	154	149					−5
Tangshan	155	145	135	134			−10
Surat	156	146	133	125	121	119	−10

◯ New cities

Global Cities Outlook results, 2016–2021 (1/2)

City	Rank 2021	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016	Δ '20-'21
London	1	1	1	3	4	3	0
Paris	2	5	5	4	3	11	+3
Munich	3	6	8	7	7	6	+3
Abu Dhabi	4	7	20	50	52	52	+3
Dublin	5	10	9	33	40	33	+5
Stockholm	6	8	10	11	9	7	+2
Tokyo	7	4	6	14	23	18	−3
Toronto	8	2	11	12	20	22	−6
Sydney	9	12	13	19	13	9	+3
Singapore	10	3	2	5	11	16	−7
Luxembourg	11	17					+6
Montreal	12	13	23	21	32	26	+1
Zurich	13	22	15	13	12	8	+9
Melbourne	14	19	14	10	6	10	+5
Dubai	15	18	32	42	46	37	+3
Geneva	16	16	12	16	14	13	0
Perth	17	24					+7
New York	18	27	24	2	2	2	+9
Vienna	19	21	18	25	29	32	+2
Amsterdam	20	9	4	6	16	14	−11
Copenhagen	21	20	17	23	21	20	−1
Berlin	22	14	16	18	18	17	−8
Beijing	23	32	39	47	45	51	+9
Taipei	24	26	25	38	44	28	+2
San Francisco	25	11	3	1	1	1	−14
Shenzhen	26	41	49	52	47	49	+15
Düsseldorf	27	28	26	27	22	27	+1
Vancouver	28	25	19	17	24	25	−3
Frankfurt	29	33	30	29	30	30	+4
Shanghai	30	45	51	64	61	75	+15
Seoul	31	42	44	45	38	34	+11
Warsaw	32	40	41	37	31	31	+8
Moscow	33	48	22	20	10	42	+15
Guangzhou	34	54	65	59	56	76	+20
Nagoya	35	37	31	34	42	44	+2
Osaka	36	43	37	39	41	29	+7
Madrid	37	31	45	49	48	46	−6
Minneapolis	38	30					−8
Barcelona	39	36	40	40	37	39	−3
Boston	40	15	7	8	5	4	−25

City	Rank 2021	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016	Δ '20-'21
Yokohama	41						
Brussels	42	29	27	22	28	21	−13
Helsinki	43	38					−5
Milan	44	50	36	35	33	36	+6
Suzhou	45	55	54	55	57	59	+10
Oslo	46	53					+7
Atlanta	47	34	35	26	17	12	−13
Tel Aviv	48	49	50	43	43	48	+1
Rome	49	58	47	48	49	47	+9
Dallas	50	47	33	31	26	19	−3
Prague	51	51	28	28	27	35	+0
Seattle	52	35	34	32			−17
Kaohsiung	53						
Hong Kong	54	62	52	54	54	57	+8
Houston	55	44	21	9	8	5	−11
Budapest	56	59	53	53	51	50	+3
Chicago	57	23	38	15	15	15	−34
Washington, D.C.	58	39	29	24	19	23	−19
Wuxi	59	63	64	57			+4
Phoenix	60	46	42	36	34	38	−14
Philadelphia	61	56	46	41	36	41	−5
Los Angeles	62	52	43	30	25	24	−10
Nanjing	63	60	57	56	62	58	−3
Hangzhou	64	68	59	70	60	70	+4
Santiago	65	66	56	51	50	43	+1
Wuhan	66	69	63	71	67	63	+3
Tianjin	67	65	60	65	63	60	−2
Quanzhou	68	70	67	72	70	72	+2
Dongguan	69	71	69	81	84	79	+2
Miami	70	57	48	44	39	40	−13
Changsha	71	73	81	67			+2
Foshan	72	72	76	69			0
Lisbon	73	61					−12
Ningbo	74	74	73	62			0
Chongqing	75	87	79	88	89	85	+12
Hefei	76						
Saint Petersburg	77	84	55	46	35	45	+7
Xi'an	78	80	61	66	82	82	+2
Dalian	79	76	70	74	72	74	−3
Shenyang	80	77	71	77	71	65	−3

⬤ New cities

Source: Kearney 2021 Global Cities Report

Global Cities Outlook results, 2016–2021 (2/2)

City	Rank 2021	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016	Δ '20-'21
Yantai	81	78	82	73			−3
Chengdu	82	82	74	76	77	71	0
Harbin	83	79	72	80	78	77	−4
Jinan	84						
Tangshan	85	81	78	75			−4
Buenos Aires	86	67	62	60	55	61	−19
Qingdao	87	83	80	90	92	88	−4
Zhengzhou	88	85	75	84	85	83	−3
Kuala Lumpur	89	92	77	61	53	53	+3
Kunming	90						
Amman	91	88					−3
Almaty	92	93					+1
Zagreb	93	86					−7
Kyiv	94	94					0
Kuwait City	95	75	68	58	58	54	−20
Nur-Sultan	96	102					+6
Riyadh	97	91	86	91	66	68	−6
Jeddah	98	97	85	87	94		−1
Makkah	99	99					0
Dammam	100	98					−2
Medina	101	100					−1
Abha	102	101					−1
Manama	103	89	96	100	91	80	−14
Muscat	104	64	58	99	106		−40
Bangkok	105	103	87	82	83	86	−2
Ho Chi Minh	106	90	83	83	74	97	−16
Doha	107	95	66	63	65	62	−12
Jakarta	108	110	101	114	109	108	+2
Istanbul	109	106	92	96	88	81	−3
Mumbai	110	96	91	92	80	95	−14
Yangon (Rangoon)	111	112	114	112	108	113	+1
Nairobi	112	135	124	121	115	107	+23
Ankara	113	115	112	101	98	84	+2
Guadalajara	114	120	95	86	76	73	+6
Sao Paulo	115	123	99	93	73	78	+8
Mexico City	116	119	88	68	59	56	+3
Manila	117	117	90	85	75	67	0
Bandung	118	113	104	116	111	109	−5
Surabaya	119	114	108	120	110	106	−5
Bogota	120	111	89	78	64	55	−9
Chennai	121	105	102	108	97	101	−16

City	Rank 2021	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016	Δ '20-'21
Cape Town	122	116	103	113	107	110	−6
Lima	123	107	84	79	69	64	−16
Hyderabad	124	104	94	98	87	94	−20
Tunis	125	130	109	118	114	114	+5
Johannesburg	126	129	107	109	104	104	+3
Abidjan	127	131	118	117	113	105	+4
Baghdad	128	126	125	126	122	119	−2
Belo Horizonte	129	133	106	102	96	89	+4
New Delhi	130	109	100	95	79	87	−21
Porto Alegre	131	134	111	107	99	91	+3
Casablanca	132	127	98	103	105	99	−5
Bangalore	133	108	93	94	90	93	−25
Monterrey	134	132	105	97	81	66	−2
Salvador	135	138	116	119	103	96	+3
Recife	136	137	115	110	100	90	+1
Beirut	137	122					−15
Rio de Janeiro	138	125	97	89	68	69	−13
Puebla	139	139	117	106	93		0
Addis Ababa	140	143	128	131	124	121	+3
Pune	141	118	113	105	102	102	−23
Lahore	142	136	126	127	120	116	−6
Ahmedabad	143	121	110	104	95	92	−22
Luanda	144	146	132	132	126	124	+2
Cairo	145	141	119	122	112	112	−4
Accra	146	145	127	125	119	111	−1
Surat	147	128	121	115	101	100	−19
Kolkata	148	124	120	111	86	103	−24
Alexandria	149	142	122	124	116	115	−7
Tehran	150	140	123	123	118	118	−10
Karachi	151	144	129	128	117	98	−7
Khartoum	152	147	131	134	128	125	−5
Kinshasa	153	149	130	129	121	120	−4
Lagos	154	150	134	133	125	122	−4
Dhaka	155	148	135	135	127	123	−7
Caracas	156	151	133	130	123	117	−5

◯ New cities

Source: Kearney 2021 Global Cities Report

About Kearney

As a global consulting partnership in more than 40 countries, our people make us who we are. We're individuals who take as much joy from those we work with as the work itself. Driven to be the difference between a big idea and making it happen, we help our clients break through.

kearney.com

About the National Transformations Institute

Kearney's National Transformations Institute is dedicated to helping senior government and business leaders anticipate and drive the diverse and accelerating transformations underway globally. The Institute's work centers on the application of the formal techniques of strategic foresight, policy design and analysis, and economic modeling.

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