

London, the smartest city in the world in spite of Brexit

Despite the uncertainty surrounding Brexit, the capital of the United Kingdom reigns as the world's "smartest" city, according to the IESE Cities in Motion Index 2019.



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English is the common language uniting the two "smartest" cities in the world, according to the sixth edition of IESE's Cities in Motion Index, although an ocean and many miles divide them.

London tops the ranking, thanks to its excellent results in almost all areas analyzed by [IESE's Center for Globalization and Strategy](#). Of course, it remains to be seen how Brexit will affect

this city's future. Meanwhile, New York occupies the second spot, due mainly to its economic might.

European hegemony

According to the report, led by IESE professors [Pascual Berrone](#) and [Joan Enric Ricart](#), European cities are scoring the most points for their quality of life and sustainability provisions, with Amsterdam (3), Paris (4), Reykjavík (5), Copenhagen (8), Berlin (9) and Vienna (10) all accompanying London in the top 10. Just two Asian cities make the cut this year: Tokyo (6) and Singapore (7).

Looking at the top 50 positions, Europe's dominance is still evident, with more than half of the cities (28) hailing from this continent. After Europe comes North America with 13, Asia with five, and Oceania with four.

Within Oceania, the top ranked city is Sydney (19). Trailing behind are the leaders of Latin America and Africa, which are Santiago de Chile (66) and Casablanca (155), respectively.

Notable moves

Although the ranking remained relatively stable between 2016 and 2018, there are some notable advances — and stumbles — that stand out.

Big gains can be seen in Dallas (45), which climbed 11 places in just two years. Hong Kong (11) and San Diego (49) both rose eight positions over the same period. Some of the most striking setbacks are seen in San Francisco, which fell 10 places to land at 21st, and Brussels, which retreated seven rungs to land at 48th.

Reykjavík's presence among the five smartest cities shows that size isn't everything. Although megacities — namely London, New York, Paris and Tokyo — dominate the top of the ranking, medium-sized cities — such as Amsterdam, Vienna and Copenhagen — and smaller ones -- such as the Icelandic capital — are also performing well.

How to improve

The perfect city does not exist, as the index clearly shows. Only an elite group — London, Amsterdam, Seoul and Vienna among them — manages to score relatively well in almost all the nine dimensions of city life evaluated.

Many others are notably unbalanced. For example, New York's economy is booming, but its social cohesion leaves much to be desired. To generalize a bit, North American cities tend to stand out for their economic and human capital strengths, while European cities shine for their social cohesion, transportation (mobility) and public management.

The authors stress that city managers should have a long-term view in order to set the right priorities for a sustainable future. They also advise that collaboration is the cornerstone of success, with civic participation as a power tool for transformation. Without citizens' involvement, any strategy, no matter how smart or global it may be, will be destined for failure.

Methodology, very briefly

The sixth edition of the IESE Cities in Motion Index (CIMI) analyzes the level of development of 174 cities — nine more than the previous year — along nine dimensions considered keys to progress: human capital, social cohesion, economy, environment, governance, urban planning, international outreach, technology, and mobility and transportation.

In addition to expanding to include new cities, additional variables have been analyzed. They include the average hourly wage, purchasing power, mortgages (as a percentage of income) and whether or not women are empowered.

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