



Benchmarking Sydney's Performance 2021

December 2021



Committee
for
Sydney



Acknowledgements

The Business of Cities

We would like to thank co-authors Dr Tim Moonen (Co-Founder and Managing Director), Jake Nunley (Head of Research) and Borane Gille (Head of Cities, Innovation and Research) for their contribution to this report.



Table of contents

Foreward	3
Introduction	6
Australia's role in Sydney's competitiveness	8
Business and finance	16
Knowledge economy	22
Lifestyle and environment	32
Culture and destination appeal	44
Appendix	54
Endnotes	55

Foreword

One of the Committee for Sydney's major roles is to help connect Sydney to other great world cities. We pay close attention to what they are doing, we bring people to Sydney to share what they have learnt, and we visit other cities to share our insights.

The Committee's annual benchmarking report is an essential part of our work to help make Sydney the best city in the world. It helps us spot trends and learn from what other cities are doing well, and put our achievements and challenges in a global context.

The benchmarking report draws on a wealth of data about many aspects of life in Sydney. Some benchmarks measure objective performance – the percentage of trips taken on public transport or how much of the energy mix is renewable. Other benchmarks measure perceptions, and these can be just as interesting.

This year, the impact of Covid-19 on Sydney's reputation is a major theme, and that impact is complicated. Australia faced the pandemic very differently to other countries, and that has impacted our reputation – for good and for bad.

We open this year's benchmarking report with a look at the tension between the local and the national, in terms of reputation. On issues like Covid-19, climate change, and the overall business environment, what Australia does has an enormous impact on how Sydney is perceived. Even when NSW tries to move in a very different direction to the federal government, as has happened on climate action, the rest of the world may not notice the difference. Sydney cannot separate its global brand from the nation.

As we write these words, our hope is Sydney and the rest of the world are moving firmly toward full reopening and 'living with Covid,' but the truth is this pandemic may still have surprises in store. What we can see is that the parameters of what makes a city successful are changing. This report offers an opportunity to put that in context as we spur the city towards reopening and recovery.

Gabriel Metcalf
CEO, Committee for Sydney





The findings

Benchmarks indicate that despite the protracted pandemic struggles, Sydney remains a reassuringly strong proposition for investors, students, researchers and visitors. While the reported wellbeing and quality of life experience in most cities declined, on balance Sydney's remained more stable. Looking at the medium-term horizon, the cycle of improvements to public transport has started to register and close the gap with the leaders. Importantly, innovation success stories are growing in number, with Sydney steadily building its fintech reputation and its potential for life sciences.

Yet the benchmarks also reveal big questions about whether Sydney is able and willing to adapt fast enough to the changes ahead. In a context where all top global cities have experienced house price inflation, unaffordability here continues to exceed most popular global cities. The air pollution threat is eroding our performance and perception as a clean, green city. There are signs that Sydney has shifted more to the car than most other cities during the pandemic. Digital infrastructure and micromobility capacity are behind where they can be. Despite the repatriation of talent, the challenge remains of how we grow the pool of experienced science and tech workers, and turn more promising companies into major producers of high value jobs and local opportunity.

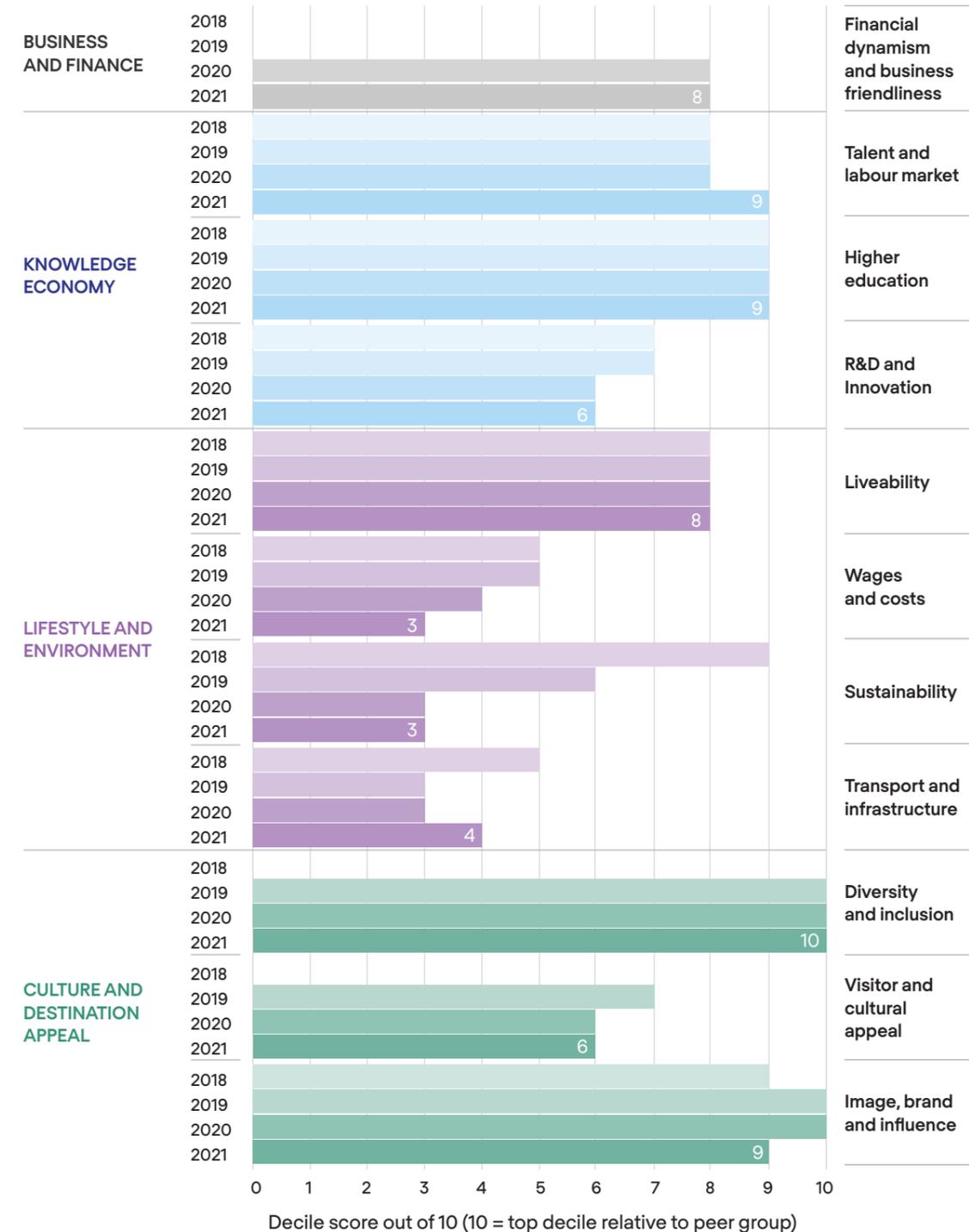
Two things stand out from these findings

First, we have to move faster to deliver the city-shaping infrastructure platforms – rail, bicycle, digital, housing – that will create the flexibility and experience emerging as a key competitive advantage for cities. The cities taking the lead are being bold, making temporary improvements permanent, and bringing forward high quality work/life/play precincts as they do so.

Second, we have to pay more attention to how our competitive advantage is shaped by what happens nationally. While last year Sydney had begun to gain credit on the global stage for Australia's safety-first approach to Covid-19, the national pandemic response in 2021 has affected both performance and perceptions of Sydney as a welcoming and inviting city of opportunity. There is also now more impetus for cities to really take much bigger steps to mitigate climate change, an imperative where Australia is not seen a world leader. We are home to many forward-thinking and ambitious institutions, yet the overall policy mix means our green energy and infrastructure challenge is high and gaps are growing.

For Sydney to succeed, and to address the risks and weaknesses revealed by Covid-19, we need more sustained federal attention on tax policy, immigration rules, climate action, R&D spending, and support for higher education and housing, among other things. More broadly, as one of the most urbanised countries in the world, we need a federal approach that sees the success of Australia's capital cities as integral to the success of the country.

Figure 1: Sydney's performance ranking by decile relative to 33 peer cities



*Source: The Business of Cities research, based on ELO algorithm. 2020 data for financial dynamism and business friendliness assessed retrospectively due to amalgamation of these categories in 2021.





Introduction

Benchmarking in an age of Covid-19

Global benchmarks matter for talent attraction and in-bound foreign investment, which are essential to Sydney's economic health and recovery. They also matter to those within Sydney, by showing that the city continues to take the steps to stay competitive as other places improve. And they also help Sydney learn from other cities. In the spirit of our continuing ambition to make Sydney the best city in the world, we want to know which cities are the global leaders on a given topic, and how we compare.

Some of the benchmarks in this report rely on objective measures such as GDP per capita or median housing costs; others measure how Sydney is perceived by various global audiences. We think both objective measures and measures of perception are important.

There are now well over 700 comparative city benchmark studies around the world. This 'science' of city measurement is shifting in light of the shock of Covid-19 and what it has revealed about how cities work for us all. Comparisons now span everything from intergovernmental studies of public health, to talent index reports produced by business schools, to large social media perception surveys, multi-annual statistical databases, and so much more.

The approach of this paper over the last five years has been to situate Sydney among a peer group of cities with similar characteristics. We review all the comparative studies, not just a select few, in order to capture pertinent indicators as well as broader trends in how Sydney is both performing and perceived.

In the current moment, after such a hiatus in global travel, benchmarks also exert extra influence and shape impressions. They provide a powerful lens through which to observe how cities are recovering, changing and adapting to prosper in the next period.

Benchmarking Sydney allows us to understand how resilient Sydney is, spot new dynamics of competition, and build a clear picture of what the next sequence of priorities will need to be for Sydney to emerge stronger from the pandemic and achieve its long-term goals and aspirations.

The data underlying this report

For each of the 12 topic areas, Sydney has been evaluated in multiple comparative benchmarks. In each category, Sydney is graded on a 10-point scale, based on its aggregate scores across all performance and perception benchmarks relative to the group of 33 peer cities. This is the same peer group as used since 2017 for consistency and comparability. Decile position is based on position among the 33 city group, e.g. 3rd/33 = 1st Decile, 7th = 2nd Decile, 17th = 6th Decile, and so on.

Explaining Sydney's change

Benchmarks are continuing to catch up to the profound effects of Covid-19 – which has upended conventional ways of capturing performance and perception. The benchmarks in this year's report draw on data produced since the first lockdowns of 2020, but the different scale and timings of impacts have altered the landscape for comparing cities. As is expected, there is more volatility to much of the data.

There are six common reasons why a score changes from one year to the next, and we try to observe which are decisive in different areas:

1. Real, absolute improvements or declines
2. Relative speed of change compared to other cities that are also changing quickly
3. A shift in methods or focus within a topic
4. Data time-lags between real improvement and measured performance
5. Changing values or perceptions among surveyed audiences
6. Impacts relating to the Covid-19 pandemic

These different factors are worth considering when weighing up why Sydney's outlook has changed, and what levers can be pulled to improve Sydney's performance and perception. In many cases, it may mean Sydney is strongly shaped by factors outside its immediate control.



REAL IMPROVEMENT



OTHERS IMPROVING MORE RAPIDLY



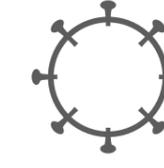
NEW METHODS



DATA TIME-LAG



CHANGING PERCEPTIONS



COVID-ALTERED APPRAISAL



DECLINING PERFORMANCE

Table 1: Sydney's peer group

Amsterdam	London	Seoul
Barcelona	Madrid	Singapore
Berlin	Melbourne	Stockholm
Boston	Miami	Sydney
Brisbane	Milan	Tel Aviv
Brussels	Montréal	Toronto
Buenos Aires	Munich	Vancouver
Chicago	Osaka	Vienna
Frankfurt	Paris	Washington DC
Hamburg	San Francisco	Warsaw
Hong Kong	Seattle	Zürich

In this year's report, we also examine national performance in a number of areas that shape Sydney's performance and perception. A feature below illustrates a spectrum of national indexes where Australia-wide performance is influential, while each of the 12 thematic sections this year also includes a small subset of national data points for context.



Australia's role in Sydney's competitiveness



Australia's role in Sydney's competitiveness

Does Sydney need to establish its own global reputation, independent from the reputation of Australia? For example, in the ways that Barcelona, Dubai, Istanbul, San Francisco, Seoul or Tel Aviv, have done with respect to their sovereign entities. This is a question many successful cities think about.

One of the most striking dynamics of the 21st century so far has been the push and pull relationship between nation states and their main hubs of population and business.

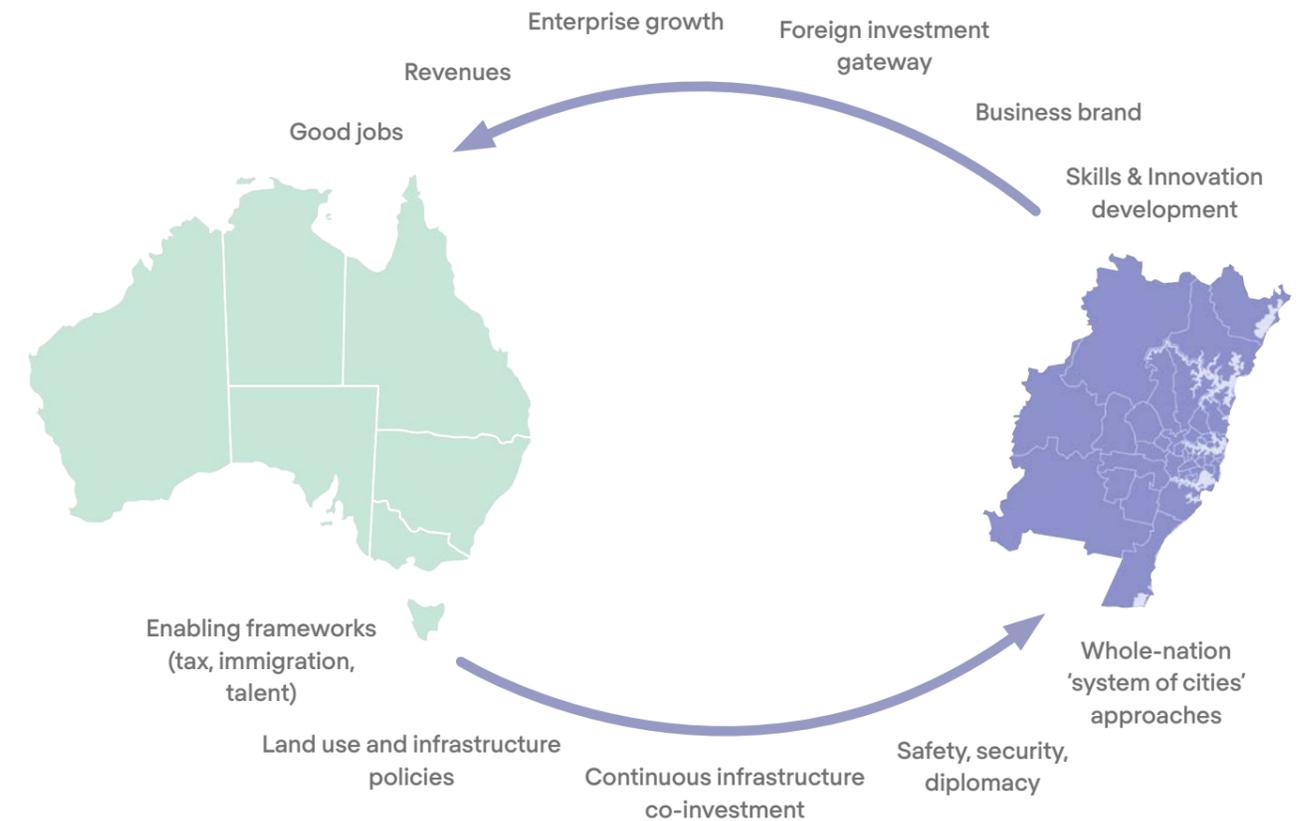
For much of the last two decades, and especially in prosperous OECD countries like Australia, national governments have recognised that if they did not develop and promote their most open gateway cities, they would likely miss out on a whole cycle of globally mobile jobs, cross-border investments, trade partners, talent, innovations, visitors, events, and the tax revenues that

come with them. They broadly understood that these cities generate 'global reach' that has clear financial advantages, as well as skills, productivity and brand benefits that the whole nation benefits from.

Nation states have mostly fostered and invested in these advantages, even though it is often expensive and difficult to do. Sydney is like all other so-called 'global cities' in that it continually relies on federal government to provide an enabling framework for everything from trade agreements, business climate, immigration rules, R&D investment, the soft power of diplomacy, to the design of the health care system.



Figure 2: The basis for reciprocity between Sydney and Australia



When the relationship between global cities and their host countries is healthy, the success of each level of governance is mutually reinforcing and achieves outcomes that benefit all tiers. Yet over the last five years, emerging concerns have seen this reciprocal dynamic come under strain.

Many global cities, especially in Western democracies, have become so expensive and so unequal that they are now seen as having negative effects on wider housing and labour markets. Some voters outside the big cities believe the cities are unfairly favoured for national government investment. Many see them as 'dark stars' that suck in all the jobs and opportunities at the expense of everywhere else. One result is that some countries – including Australia, the US, the UK, Italy, Netherlands and others – have elected majorities who in some sense stand opposed to the 'global city' model.

Over the course of the past 18 months, Covid-19 has shone a spotlight on these relationships. It has become more obvious and visible that city performance only tells part of the story, and that big cities are hugely reliant on their nation states to compete.

Here the Sydney-Australia dynamic has been especially significant, given Australia's idiosyncratic response to Covid-19, and the need to decarbonise the global economy.

Of course, on the critical issues of climate action and Covid-19 management, Sydney's performance is a complicated mix of federal, state and local policy-making and implementation. Yet more than most, nation states like Australia now find themselves lagging behind their major cities quite significantly on major issues – first in terms of Covid-19 management, and then in terms of climate change response, innovation climate and approaches to immigration.



Sydney and Australia through Covid-19

The data surrounding the Covid-19 pandemic has, in particular, highlighted this relationship.

Australia began with an advantage. When the pandemic first hit, Australia's robust response to testing and tracing, and rapid monitoring of community transmission, helped underpin high levels of citizen compliance and confidence, and less severe public health impacts. As a result, Australia still has the second lowest case rate on average among OECD countries since the pandemic began (see chart).¹

Australia's initial response meant its major cities could operate closer to normality for longer. From March to December 2020, Greater Sydney had the fifth lowest average reduction in footfall across workplaces, transport stations and retail facilities, compared to the pre-pandemic baseline, although this fell to the 18th lowest in 2021 as a result of the fresh wave of restrictions.²

Sydney earned early praise for its speed and efficiency. In early 2021, Sydney was rated second among 25 leading global cities for the efficiency of its all-round approach to quarantine and tracing, breaking transmission chains, and communicating risk, falling to 10th among 50 cities by September; and fifth for its use of digital innovation to track, govern, communicate and lead on the pandemic, falling to 13th among 50 cities by September.³

However, as the pandemic has evolved, more gaps in Australia's response have been exposed. In particular, it has become apparent that:

- **Australia's vaccination rollout was initially much slower.** By August 2021, Australia had the second lowest vaccination rate in the OECD, although by mid-November Australia was 15th among this group.⁴
- **Australia relied much more on frequent lockdowns** to curb the spread of the virus. There have been more short 'circuit breaker' lockdowns (less than five weeks) than anywhere else in the OECD.⁵
- Time will tell whether Australia's early success in managing Covid-19, and its later success in achieving high vaccination levels, can stand larger in the world's imagination than its initially slow vaccine rollout, long border closures and repeated lockdowns.

Longer term effects of national performance on Sydney

Looking more broadly, there are many areas where Australia's performance reflects positively on Sydney's reputation and competitiveness. For example, Australia's status as one of the world's most advanced social democracies has helped buoy Sydney's reputation for openness and diversity, while its exceptional natural assets, tourism icons and more stable political climate all improve Sydney's appeal to residents, visitors and investors alike. Australia's macroeconomic fundamentals, track record of more transparent governance, and protection of property and IP rights, help to establish Sydney as one of the most business-friendly cities in Asia-Pacific.

But there are also areas where national deficits are visibly constraining Sydney's performance and exposing weaknesses. As global attention shifts to focus more decisively on openness to different kinds of talent, action on climate change, and the transition to more sustainable infrastructure, the danger is that Australia's deficits inhibit Sydney's potential to address its long-term issues.

Figure 3: Australia's low Covid count vs. OECD countries

Covid-19 cases per million people, weekly average

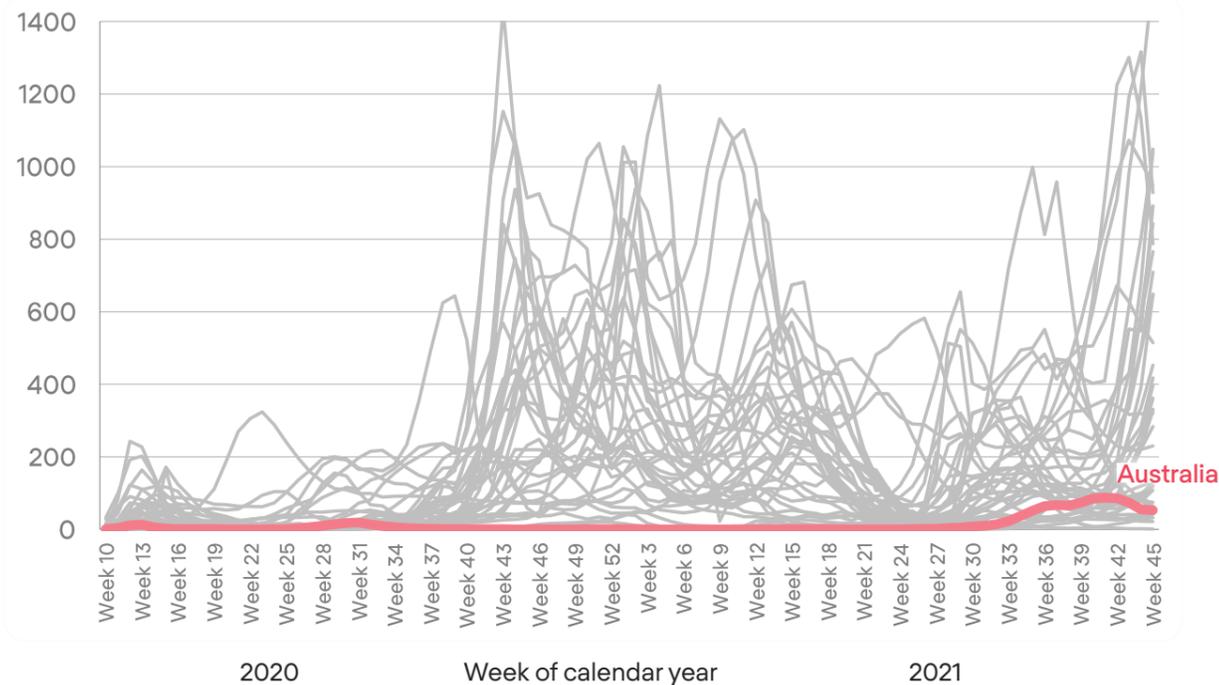


Table 2: Case rates and lockdown restrictions across the OECD

	Australia	OECD average	Rank in OECD	
Containment and quarantine	Average case rate (per m)	11	144	2nd
	Average death rate (per m)	0.01	2.24	3rd
Lockdown restrictions	No. of lockdown events (post 1st wave)	29	19	37th
	No. of circuit breakers (post 1st wave)	15	7	38th

Source: Our World in Data. *No. of lockdown events = no. of times average stringency of restrictions at national level have been tightened following a period of stability or easing, since the initial easing in 2020. No. of circuit breakers = no. of times increases in the average stringency of national restrictions following initial easing in 2020 have lasted fewer than 5 weeks.



Table 3: Australia's performance in a sample spread of 25 high profile national indexes

Index	Theme	Percentile score
Council on Foreign Relations Women's Workplace Equality Index	Diversity & inclusion	0.99
Heritage Foundation Financial Freedom Index (Trade freedom)	Business & investment friendliness	0.98
Henley & Partners Global Passport Index	Brand, image & influence	0.93
WEF Global Urban Competitiveness Report – Transparency	Business & investment friendliness	0.91
GOOD Country Index	Brand, image & influence	0.91
Yale Environmental Performance Index - Biodiversity and habitat	Sustainability	0.86
WEF Global Urban Competitiveness Report - Entrepreneurial culture	Innovation & R&D	0.84
WEF Global Urban Competitiveness Report - Skills of current workforce	Talent & labour market	0.82
Cambridge Sustainable Development Report: Progress Towards the SDGs	Sustainability	0.78
WEF Global Urban Competitiveness Report - Transport infrastructure	Transport & infrastructure	0.73
WEF Transformation Readiness Performance Index - Public institutions	Business & investment friendliness	0.73
WIPO Global Innovation Index: Knowledge and technology outputs	Innovation & R&D	0.69
SpeedTest Fixed Broadband Index	Transport and infrastructure	0.68
WEF Transformation Readiness - Rethink labour laws and social protection	Talent & labour market	0.65
WEF Global Urban Competitiveness Report - Labour market flexibility	Talent & labour market	0.60
WEF Transformation Readiness - Incentivising innovation and research	Innovation & R&D	0.57
WEF Transformation Readiness - Market access and 4th Industrial Revolution	Transport & infrastructure	0.46
WEF Transformation Readiness Performance Index - PPPs and New Markets	Transport & infrastructure	0.38
Harvard Economic Complexity Index	Finance & corporate dynamism	0.35
Yale Environmental Performance Index - Ecosystem services	Sustainability	0.33
WEF Transformation Readiness Performance Index - Upgrade infrastructure	Transport & infrastructure	0.24
Climate Change Performance Index - Renewable Energy	Sustainability	0.17
Climate Change Performance Index - Energy Use	Sustainability	0.16
Climate Change Performance Index - GHG emissions	Sustainability	0.13
Yale Environmental Performance Index - GHG emissions per capita	Sustainability	0.04
Climate Change Performance Index - Climate Policy	Sustainability	0.00

1 = highest in the world
0 = lowest

In three areas in particular, Australia's national performance and policy is impacting negatively on Sydney's competitiveness:

Sustainability

In recent years, it has become more visible that **Australia is one of the least progressive OECD nations for climate action, planning and progress.** Australia is now in the bottom 20% of measured countries globally for energy use, greenhouse gas emissions and climate action.⁶ At COP26, Australia was one of only four nations that chose to resubmit the same 2030 emissions target as previously. Since 2015 annual per person carbon emissions from burning coal have been higher in Australia than in any other G20 country. As attention on the journey of cities and countries to 'net zero' continues to grow, and measures continue to shift away from inherited green space towards sustainable policy and practice, it is becoming more apparent that this national level inaction is beginning to negatively impact on Sydney's performance and reputation.

Innovation and R&D

Sydney's slower adaptation to the innovation economy relative to other globally leading cities can in part be explained by gaps at the national level. In 2021, Australia does not have as well-established a culture of entrepreneurship and risk taking, and continues to be constrained by lower levels of commitment at the national level to commercialising knowledge, science and discovery, and to promoting innovation. Partly as a result,

Australia generates less impact from its knowledge and technology, creates fewer incentives for innovation and research, and is seen as less ready to embrace the fourth industrial revolution. All of these carry through to Sydney's own innovation performance.

Talent and labour market

Sydney's status as one of the world's pre-eminent talent hubs is in no small part due to Australia's own talent strengths: its efficient education system, its high concentration of globally leading universities, and its broad-based approach to skills development and training. But, like other major Australian cities, Sydney's talent competitiveness also relies a great deal on an influx of international talent to fuel its global activities, reinforce its cosmopolitan appeal and increase its diversity. The federal government controls immigration policies in Australia, which have (partly due to the emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic) been highly restrictive. **These national level restrictions, together with increasing attention on labour market flexibility and protection of minority and informal workers, pose questions about Sydney's capacity to compete in an intensified war for talent.**

For Sydney to succeed, it needs supportive national policy on tax, immigration rules, climate action, R&D spending and support for higher education, among other things. Australia is one of the most urbanised countries in the world. This should set the stage for a federal approach that sees the success of Australia's capital cities as being integral to the success of the country.

Table 4: The approximate net impact of Australia on Sydney's competitiveness across different themes

	Role of National Performance/ Policy on Sydney's Performance	Impact		Role of National Performance/ Policy on Sydney's Performance	Impact
Business & Investment Friendliness	***	++	Sustainability	***	--
Visitor & Destination Appeal	**	+	Innovation & R&D	**	--
Finance & Corporate Dynamism	**	+	Talent & Labour Market	***	-
Brand Image & Influence	**	+	Transport & Infrastructure	*	-
Diversity & Inclusion	**	+	Higher Education	*	neutral
Liveability	*	+	Wages & Costs	**	neutral

*Based on review of all indicators where Sydney and Australia are measured, relative to their respective OECD peer groups, and then observing the presence of national indicators and dynamics in informing city performance.

Business and finance





Financial dynamism and business friendliness



Score across all measures: **8/10**

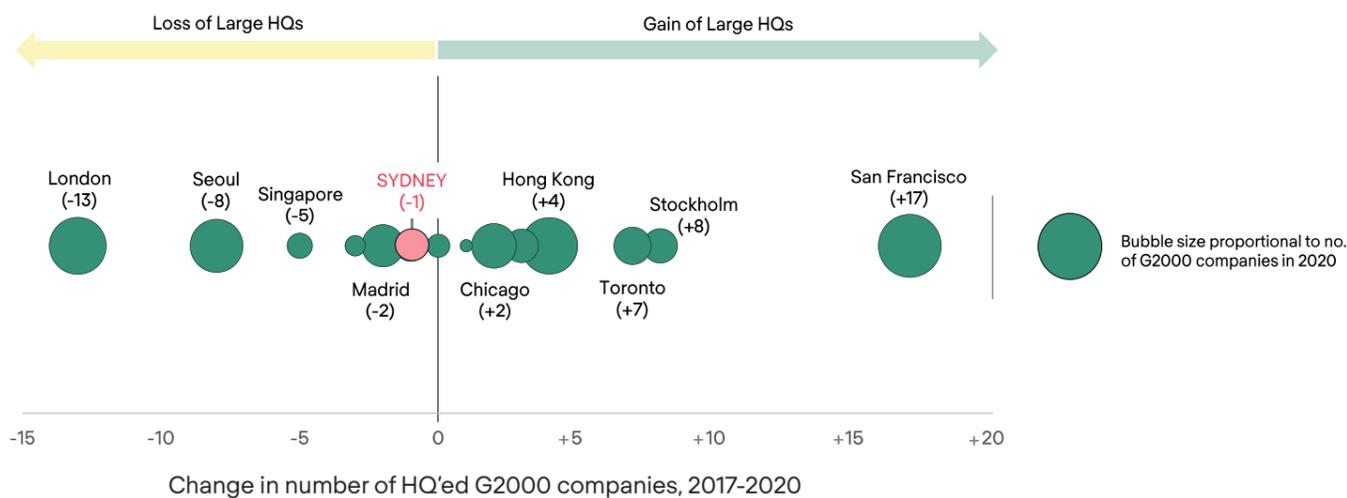
Highlights

Performance

- Sydney has the fifth highest forecast growth in office sector jobs between 2019 and 2022, out of 21 top global cities – higher than in all leading global cities outside of China and Japan.⁷
- The real impact to Sydney's GDP in 2020 was the sixth least severe among 21 leading global cities, falling to the 10th least severe by 2022, in part due to slower recovery.⁸
- For the share of jobs in high value business sectors, Sydney has held steady at eighth of 48 cities.⁹
- The market capitalisation of the city's stock exchanges is stable at 12th of 48 cities.¹⁰
- Sydney is up three places to 30th of 48 cities for presence of top global corporate HQs (Fortune 500), and 26th globally when looking across a wider spread of global firms (Forbes Top 2000).¹¹
- For the combined value of its wider HQ corporate base (Forbes 2000), the city rates 40th globally.¹²
- Sydney places 51st out of 155 cities for the number of FDI projects compared to population size, but 29th for total jobs created by FDI.¹³

Figure 4: Competition to host globally successful corporate HQs is growing

No. of G2000 companies in Sydney and selected peer cities, and change since 2017



Source: Hudson's Global Residence Index: Economic Power Index.¹⁴

Perception

- Since Autumn 2020, Sydney has held relatively steady at 21st of 109 cities for perceived strength in fintech, among global finance experts.¹⁵
- In a new survey of preferred cities for international investors, the city ranks eighth in Asia-Pacific.¹⁶

Influential composite indices

- Sydney ranks fourth worldwide for ease of getting credit, and second for all-round business friendliness.¹⁷
- After a brief period of instability in Sydney's financial sector, the city now rates 25th for all-round financial sector strength, a similar position as in Autumn 2020 after a fall in the Spring. However, Sydney now appears to have more competitors in Asia-Pacific, with 13 cities within 30 rating points of Sydney, compared to seven in 2019.¹⁸

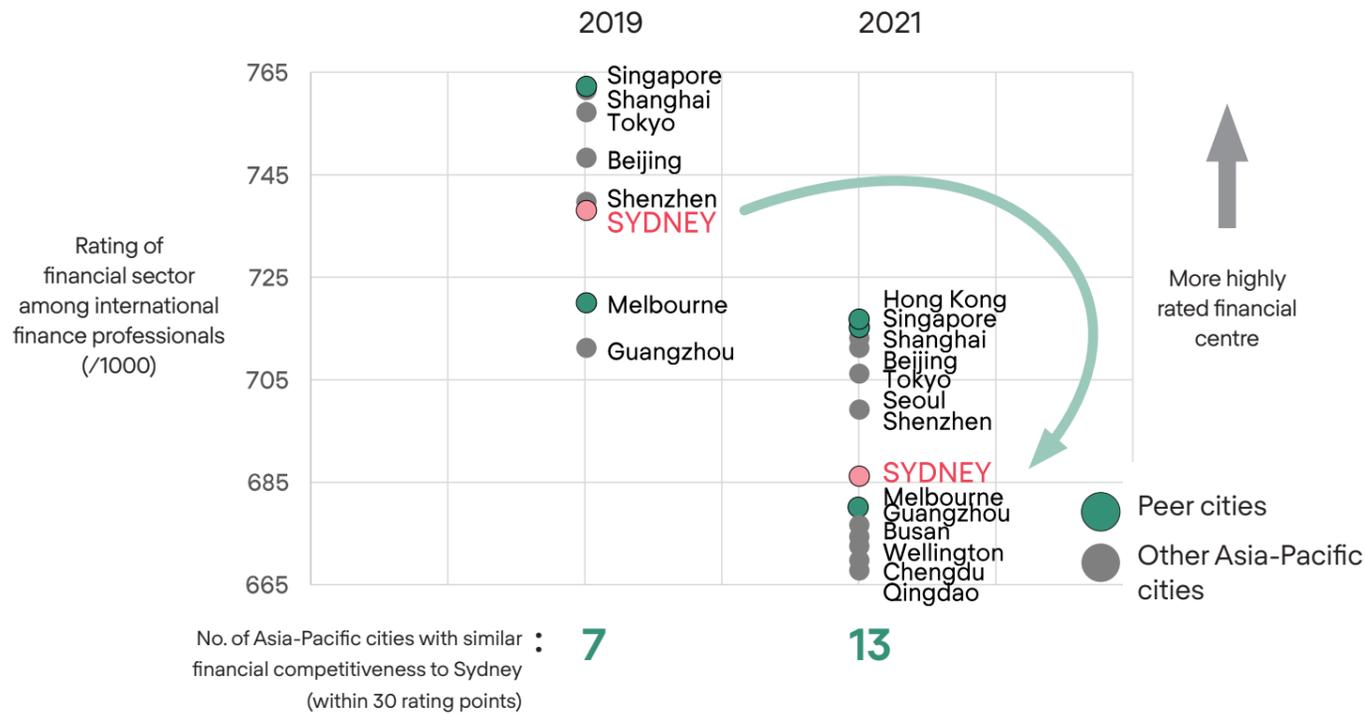
- Sydney has climbed two places to 11th among more than 250 cities for the overall size, scale and growth trajectory of its fintech ecosystem.¹⁹
- The city is 37th of 80 global cities for the efficiency and reliability of its logistics infrastructure.²⁰
- Sydney has fallen one place to 72nd among 100 cities globally for construction costs.²¹
- The city has fallen out of the top 15 cities for how business-friendly its financial sector is.²²
- For all-round capital market liquidity (based on number of assets and transaction volumes), Sydney places 27th out of 150 cities – or 12th among 30 peers – mainly due to smaller domestic market.²³





Figure 5: Sydney's financial sector now has more competitors in Asia-Pacific

Asia-Pacific cities with a similar financial sector reputation among global experts, 2019 and 2021



Sources: Z/Yen Global Financial Centres Index, editions 26 and 30.²⁴

IMPORTANT NATIONAL RESULTS

- Australia is the most macroeconomically stable country in the world, as measured by inflation and debt dynamics.²⁵
- Australia ranks third globally for trade freedom.²⁶
- For administrative hurdles to doing business, Australia is 12th globally.²⁷

ANALYSIS

Sydney's finance and business reputation and reach remain strong, and its status as the Southern Hemisphere's most connected corporate centre and leading fintech hub is secure. The underlying data suggests its global position is stable and so far no adverse implications on its business friendliness have been registered compared to other cities.

Asia-Pacific has outperformed other regions through the pandemic and more cities are now serious financial centres – including second tier cities in China such as Guangzhou and Chengdu, as well as improving medium-sized hubs such as Busan.

The benchmarking approach in this area is quite stable – a mix of industry-wide performance and professional perception – although some studies have been paused during Covid. The efficiency and reliability of infrastructure is a growing differentiator of cities' business environments. Those with smoother supply chain management, trade relationships, efficient logistics, and ability to control costs, appear to have more of an advantage.



Knowledge economy





Talent and labour market



Score across all measures:

9/10

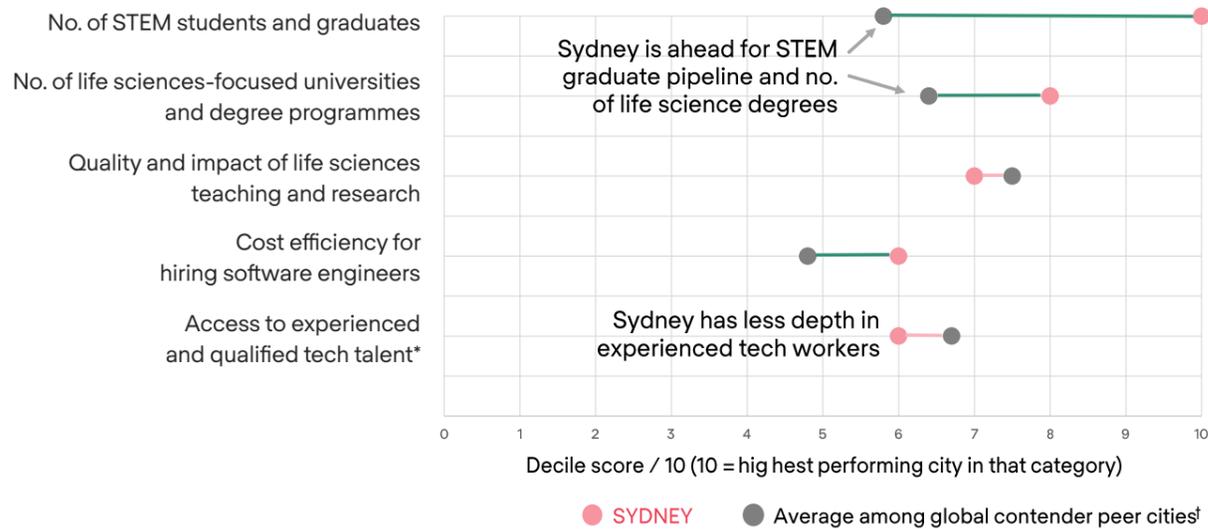
Highlights

Performance

- For higher education attainment, Sydney is sixth out of 155 cities (measures the proportion of adults with at least a degree level qualification).²⁸
- The city is seventh globally for retention of digitally skilled talent.²⁹
- Sydney ranks 11th for its number of universities that provide high-quality and innovative digital teaching and support towards entrepreneurship.³⁰

Figure 6: Sydney excels for STEM talent production line, but applied science and tech experience is lower

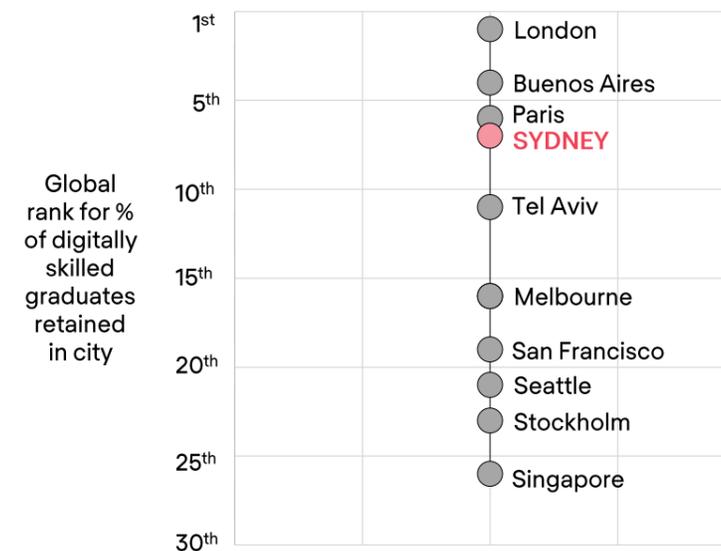
Sydney's performance across talent measures compared to other global contender peer cities



Source: StartupGenome Global Start-up Ecosystem Report 2021. *Measures % of tech engineers and employees with at least two years of experience, plus no. and density of top developers on GitHub and track record of exit activity. †Includes: Amsterdam, Berlin, Boston, Chicago, Munich, San Francisco, Stockholm, Sydney, Toronto, Washington DC.³¹

Figure 7: Sydney retains a significant share of its tech talent

Percentage of digitally skilled graduates retained, Sydney and selected peer cities ranking in the global top 30.



Influential composite indices

- For all-round talent availability and capability, Sydney is sixth out of 100 cities.³³
- In the major all-round measure of cities' talent production, the city is up two places to second in its size category, and 13th among 30 top global cities, due to its density of high quality universities and large pool of graduates.³⁴
- For ease of recruiting skilled talent, Sydney is up four places to ninth among 48 top global cities.³⁵
- Sydney rates 27th out of 155 cities for ingredients to attract talent, but 36th for ingredients to retain it.³⁶

IMPORTANT NATIONAL RESULTS

- Australia ranks third globally for appeal to talent, in terms of the percentage of global skilled workers willing to relocate to the country for work.³⁷
- Australia is in the top 20% for current and future workforce skills.³⁸
- The country is 57th globally for the flexibility of its labour market (labour mobility, redundancy costs, hiring and firing flexibility, and so on.)³⁹

ANALYSIS

Sydney's broad appeal to talent remains strong through the pandemic, as does the production line of graduates. There are also signs Sydney is doing better at retaining more of its high skilled population, at least compared to other cities, although overall access to experienced and entrepreneurial software talent is still viewed as a relative gap.

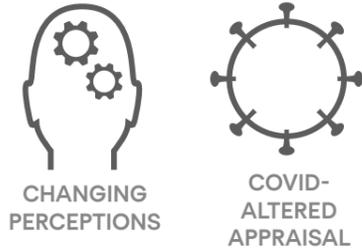
Due to labour mobility constraints and the rise of remote work, this year's talent benchmarks are more focused on attainment and capability of the workforce as a whole, with fewer reliable studies on talent flows and attraction. Flexibility of the labour market is becoming more of a differentiator – not least as demand grows to work and to live in more than one location.

This area is, for now, stable for Sydney but it is likely that opening up in 2022 will reveal significant changes in talent demand and a renewed war for scarce talent in high growth industries.

Source: Times Higher Education Digital Leaders Ranking.³²



Higher education



Score across all measures:
9/10

Highlights

Performance

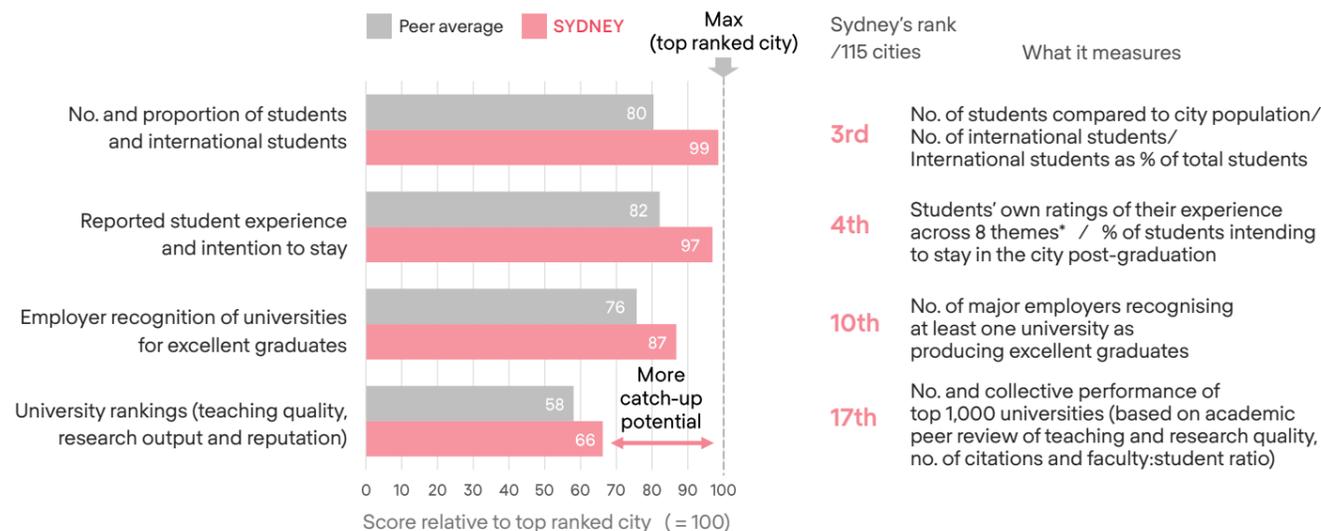
- Pre-Covid, Sydney held steady at third for the number of registered international students, among 48 top global cities.⁴⁰
- For the aggregate performance of its universities, the city is up one place to 17th, among 48 top global cities.⁴¹
- Sydney places sixth among 50 global cities in its size category for the number of highly ranked universities for computer science and engineering.⁴²

Perception

- Sydney is now fourth globally for student experience, up from 21st in 2019, reflecting the fact that the city's diverse and inclusive community and all-round high quality of life continue to outweigh high tuition and living costs for international students.⁴³

Figure 8: Sydney's universities collectively have room to catch up in areas of teaching and research

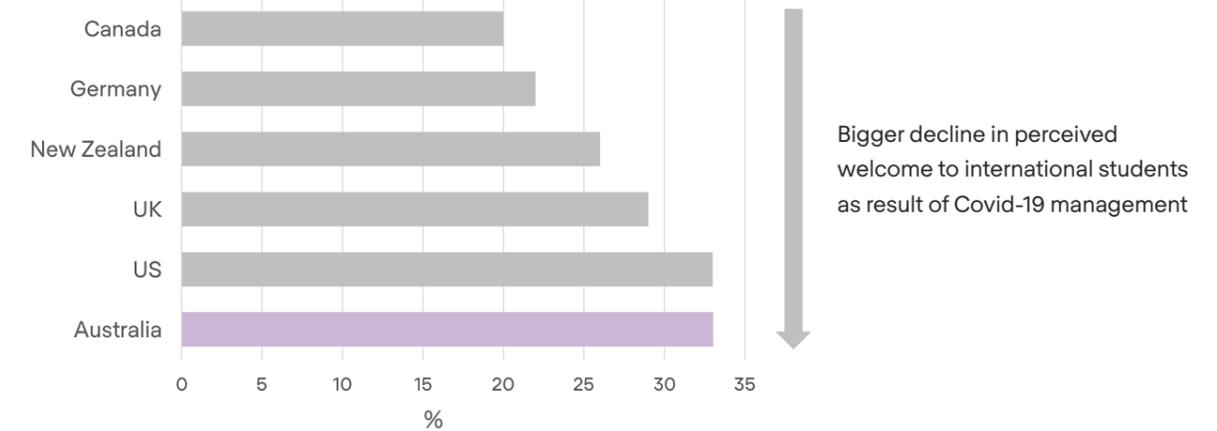
Sydney's performance compared to the top ranked city globally across the different elements that make for competitive student cities.



Source: QS Best Student Cities (2021). *Student experience measures students' own ratings of their experience with respect to tolerance and inclusion, diversity, friendliness, ease of getting around, affordability, nightlife, employment opportunities, arts and sustainability.⁴⁴

Figure 9: Australia's perceived welcome to international students has declined

Percentage of prospective international students of the view that the country has become less welcoming to international students as a result of the handling of the Covid-19 pandemic – Australia and other major student markets



Influential composite indices

- Sydney is down one place to 10th out of 115 cities for how desirable its university graduates are among leading employers.⁴⁶
- The city has also fallen one place to third globally for student mix (volume of students, international students, and tolerance and inclusion).⁴⁷
- For all-round performance of its advanced education sector, including presence of leading universities, R&D organisations and business schools, Sydney places 11th among 36 leading global cities.⁴⁸

IMPORTANT NATIONAL RESULTS

- 33% of respondents from a survey of 115,000 prospective international students feel that Australia has become less welcoming to international students as a result of how they have handled the coronavirus – the joint largest proportion among six major international student destinations (Canada, UK, US, NZ, Germany).⁴⁹
- Among these six countries, Australia also had the second lowest proportion of prospective international students feeling the country had become more attractive as a place to study as a result of how they have handled the distribution of the vaccine – at 47%.⁵⁰

ANALYSIS

In 2021, it is national policy frameworks that tend to most clearly influence the student perception of universities and cities. Sydney's hard-earned reputation as a leading city for international students is enduring, but surveys suggest lockdowns, overseas arrivals caps and limits on student working hours have had an effect.

Ensuring international students are able to come and go easily, and perceive themselves as valued members of the community is a growing differentiator of cities' attractiveness. The commercialisation and innovation accomplishments of universities are also a focus, as are successful integration into the local job market.

The higher education landscape continues to change quickly, and there is a lot to play for in terms of Sydney's evolving position in the next two to three years. More of Sydney's performance will depend on national border and student visa policies, as well as continuing to deliver teaching and research excellence and wider impact.



Innovation and R&D



Score across all measures:

6/10

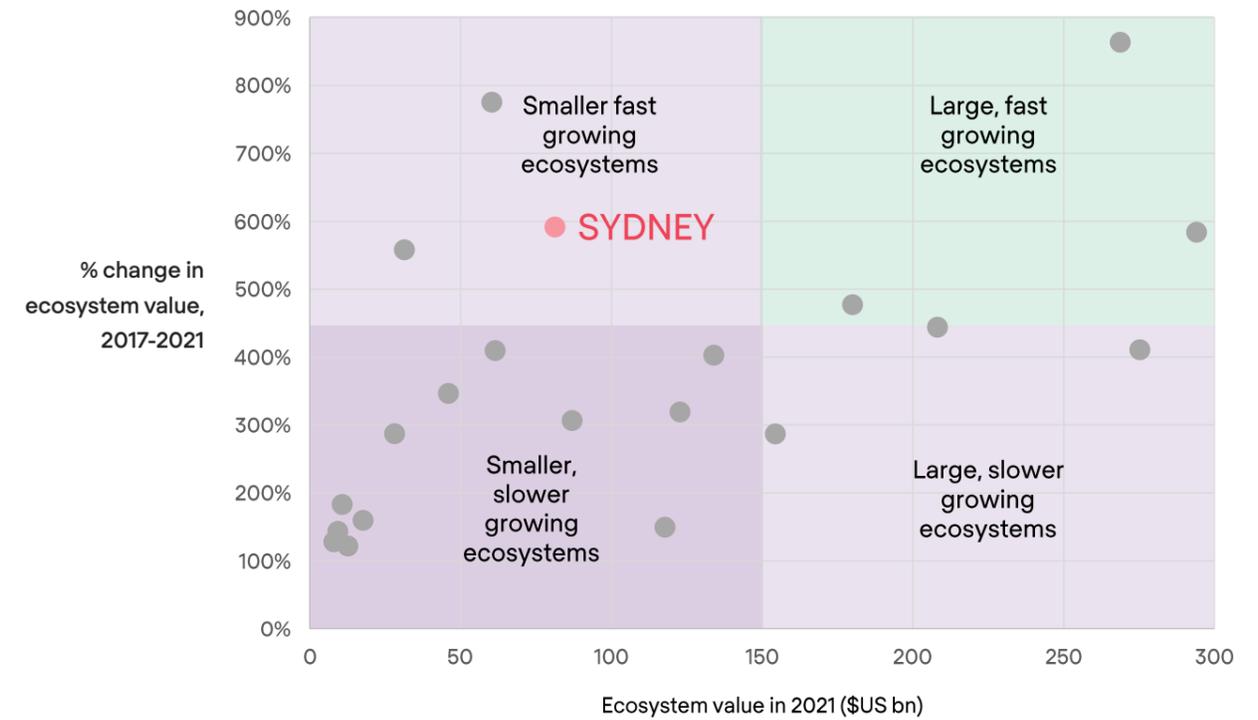
Highlights

Performance

- For potential to become a leading life sciences destination, Sydney is 18th globally – ahead of Stockholm, Tel Aviv and Toronto (measures human capital, investment into health and R&D, flows of life sciences funding, openness to life science businesses, lifestyle indicators and the cost of property).⁵¹
- The number of tech-enabled companies in Sydney has grown by over 500% since 2017, among the fastest growing of its peers. Sydney now has the 10th largest innovation ecosystem compared to its population size among its 33 peers.⁵²
- The city rates 12th among 75 global cities for the number of start-ups established since 2010, illustrating a positive cycle of enterprise growth since the last financial crisis.⁵³
- Sydney is down one to 15th out of 48 top global cities for patents registration.⁵⁴
- The city ranks 35th out of 100 cities for cumulative VC investment since 2010.⁵⁵
- For recent start-up creation (start-ups founded since 2018), Sydney is 13th of 48 cities.⁵⁶
- There is more success in growing major companies, but it remains a challenge – Sydney is 25th among 33 peers for the number of unicorns per person. However, the city places 16th among the same group for companies (per capita) valued between \$250m and \$1bn, indicating a high number of future potential unicorns.⁵⁷
- Sydney ranks just 39th among 48 leading global cities for variety of workplace options, including co-working facilities.⁵⁸
- The city is not yet in the global top 10 for the last five years of VC investment (2016-2020).⁵⁹

Figure 10: Sydney's innovation ecosystem has been growing faster than most

Ecosystem value in 2021 and change from 2017, Sydney and selected cities



Source: Dealroom. *Ecosystem values includes the value of all innovative companies within the ecosystem: start-ups, scaled firms and large corporate anchors.⁶⁰

Perception

- Sydney is 22nd among 36 cities for public attitudes towards innovation and science.⁶¹

Influential composite indices

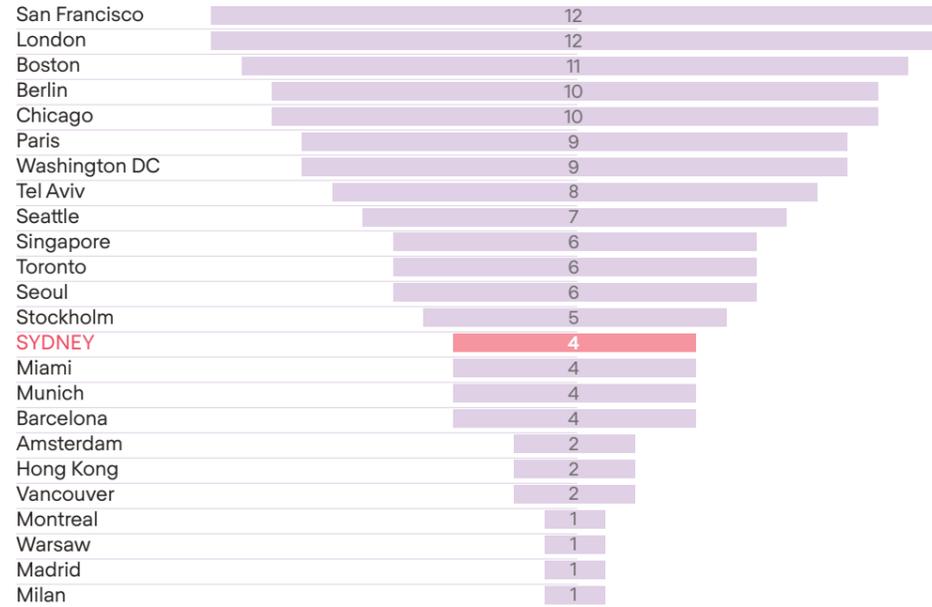
- With rising competition from Asia-Pacific cities, Sydney has fallen a further five places to 36th globally in the major annual study of all-round ecosystem strength, as more attention is paid to innovation infrastructure to support entrepreneurs and start-ups through their growth journey.⁶²
- The city is up three places in Asia Pacific for innovation inputs and outputs (R&D expenditure, investment in high tech sectors, VC investment, patent applications etc.), from sixth to third.⁶³
- Sydney now ranks as a global top 25 ecosystem in four areas: fintech, software, leisure tech, and energy tech.⁶⁴
- Sydney is 21st for the depth of its venture capital ecosystem (business angels, number of innovation support funds, number of start-ups and unicorns, level of VC investment).⁶⁵
- For the size, scale and funding performance of its start-ups, Sydney rates 39th globally – or 19th among 33 peers.⁶⁶
- The city places 48th out of 100 cities for the willingness and ability of businesses and start-ups to embrace digital technologies and platforms.⁶⁷





Figure 11: Sydney currently has a narrower set of specialisations

Number of sectors in which Sydney and peer cities are ranked as a globally leading ecosystem



Source: StartupBlink.⁶⁸

IMPORTANT NATIONAL RESULTS

- Australia ranks fifth among 37 countries for the level of incentive for firms to embrace diversity, equity and inclusion to enhance creativity.⁶⁹
- Australia is 29th out of 141 countries for innovation commercialisation, as measured by buyer sophistication and trademark application rate.⁷⁰
- For knowledge and technology outputs (patents, trademarks, highly cited scientific publications), Australia is outside the top 30% globally.⁷¹
- Australia's culture of entrepreneurialism is not as established as in other OECD countries, putting it 23rd among 141 countries. The track record of firms embracing disruptive ideas, and its willingness to delegate authority and take entrepreneurial risks, are not as visible as elsewhere.⁷²

ANALYSIS

The last five year cycle has seen significant improvement in Sydney's entrepreneurship rates, unicorn companies and ecosystem size. This is also an area where there is a great deal of competition from other cities.

Benchmarks focus increasingly on capital access and acquisition, as well as number of fast-growing business success stories, in particular science and technology sectors. There is also a recognition that national framework conditions and cultural barriers are important. Among global top 20 cities, Sydney is one of the few where the national track record for knowledge commercialisation, entrepreneurial culture and public attitudes towards innovation are below the OECD average.

For Sydney to close the gap further with leading innovation cities, it will likely require more focus on the innovation and commercialisation environment, and supporting infrastructure for growth firms, as well attention to public investment in R&D, priority innovation precincts and wider economic strategies.

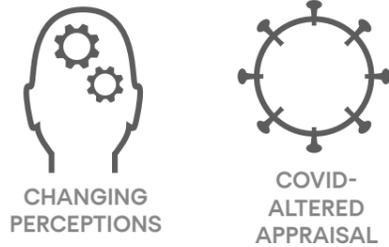


Lifestyle and environment





Liveability



Score across all measures: **8/10**

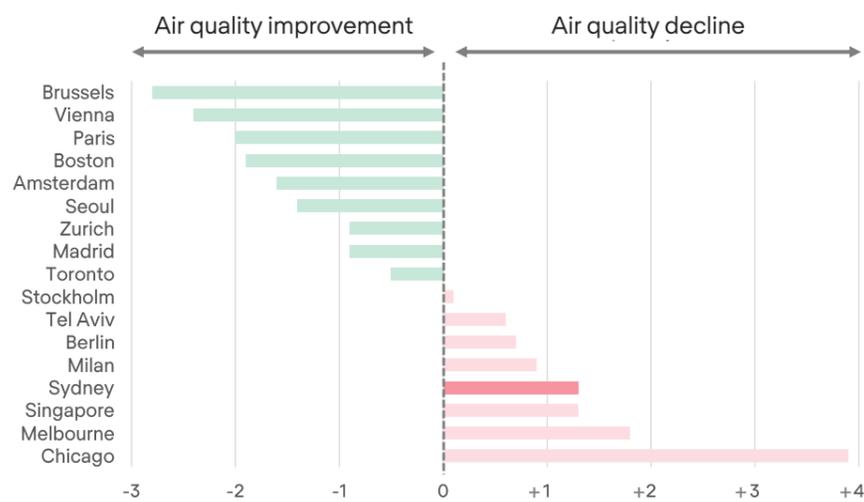
Highlights

Performance

- Sydney has fallen 13 places to 15th of 48 leading global cities for annual average exposure to air pollution, as the data catches up to the impacts of the 2019-2020 bushfires.⁷³
- The city ranks 10th among 48 global cities for its urban green coverage and residents' satisfaction with quality of green spaces and parks.⁷⁴
- However, Sydney is in the middle of the pack for residents' proximity to car-free public open space, ranking 12th out of 20 peers.⁷⁵
- Sydney has also climbed six places to 22nd out of 48 cities for low average commute times, due to congestion relief during the pandemic.⁷⁶

Figure 12: The lasting impact of the Sydney bushfires on the city's year-on-year air quality

Change in average annual exposure to PM2.5, 2017-18 to 2019-20, Sydney and selected peers

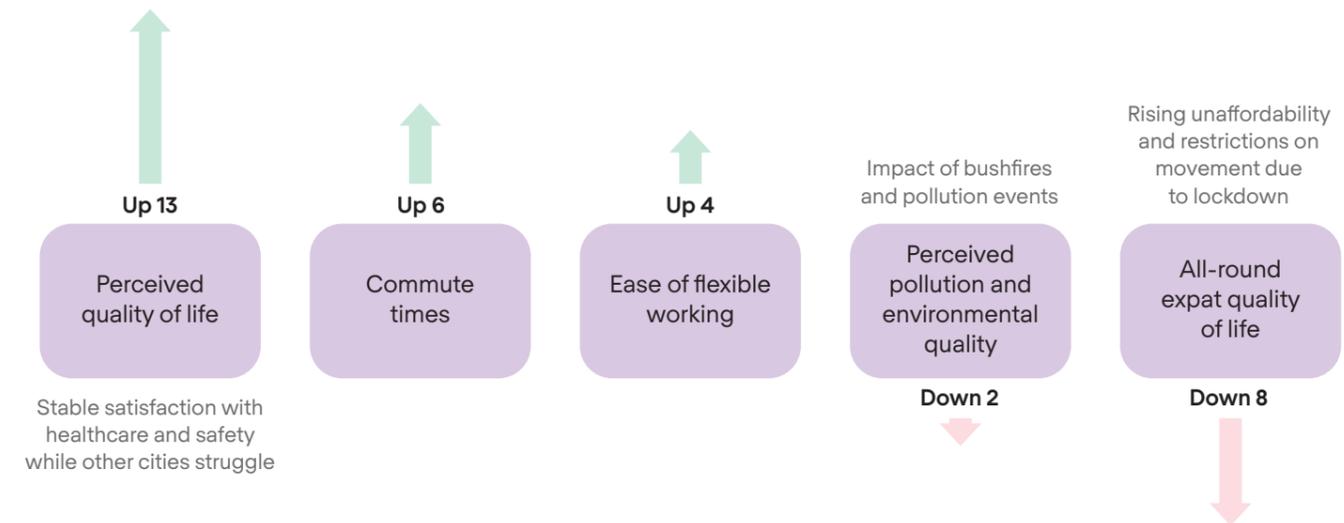


Change in average annual exposure to PM2.5, 2017/18 to 2019/20 (ug/m3)

Source: IQAir World's Most Polluted Cities 2020⁷⁷

Figure 13: Covid-19 amplified strengths and weaknesses in Sydney's liveability

Sydney's year-on-year change across various liveability metrics



Perception

- Sydney is down two to 44th globally for perceived pollution and environmental quality, which is likely a knock-on effect of the recent bushfires.⁷⁸
- For local perceptions of quality of life, the city has climbed 13 places to 29th globally. Satisfaction with healthcare and safety have remained high, while they have fallen in other cities as the Covid-19 pandemic exposed gaps in coverage and access.⁷⁹
- Out of 31 peer cities, Sydney has the 15th lowest share of residents for whom air quality is viewed as a serious problem.⁸⁰
- The city ranks 10th out of 140 cities for expert perceptions of quality of life, which focused this year on cities' ability to support their cultural scene and their perceived willingness to build back better.⁸¹
- In a new study of perceived cleanliness, Sydney is 14th – in the top quartile of its peer group.⁸²
- For resident satisfaction with green space, Sydney places 20th out of 31 peer cities.⁸³
- The city has climbed four places to 18th for ease of flexible working (number of flexible workspaces and willingness among employers to support flexible working arrangements).⁸⁵
- For air, noise and light pollution, Sydney rates 14th among 75 top global cities – or fourth among 26 peers.⁸⁶

Influential composite indices

- Sydney has fallen eight places to 11th in the major study of all-round expat lifestyle. This is the first time Sydney has ranked outside the global top 10 since 2017, and reflects restrictions on movement and growing unaffordability in the city.⁸⁴

ANALYSIS

A more broad-based approach to liveability is seeing Sydney's long-standing advantage come into some question. Access to clean air, affordable housing, nearby jobs and walkable services and amenities are all points where Sydney's performance is below the brand promise. The city does, however, continue to edge others in terms of healthcare, safety and leisure. Perceptions both locally and internationally have been resilient.

Through the pandemic, local perceptions have been key to comparing life and wellbeing in the world's cities. And more generally, over time benchmarks are focusing as much on the metropolitan 'externalities' as the eastern CBD lifestyle. While the fundamentals in place do suggest that Sydney's quality of life will remain highly competitive, there is downward pressure on its scores given increased focus on areas where Sydney's relative performance has been slipping.

See Appendix for sources



Wages and costs



Score across all measures:

3/10

Highlights

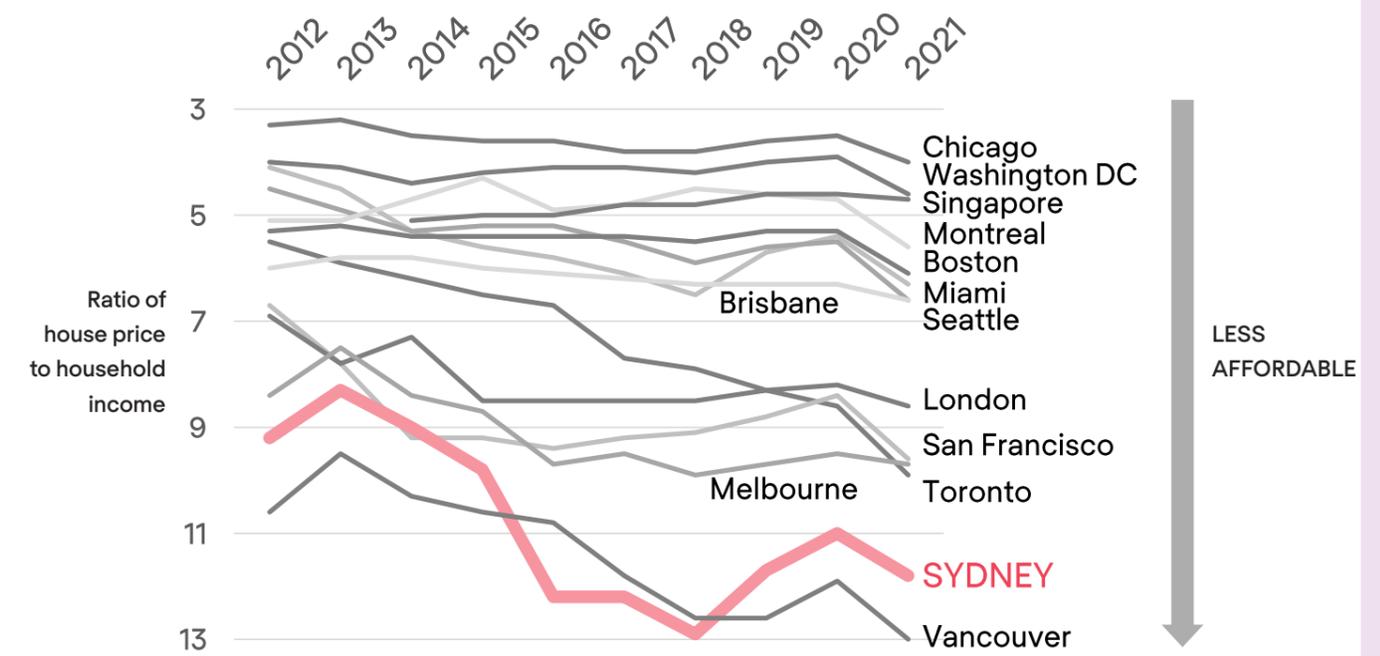
Performance

- For all round purchasing power, Sydney ranks 95th globally - or 9th among 33 peers.⁸⁷
- Sydney's low housing affordability puts it 90th out of 92 cities in the English-speaking world, or 13th among its 15 measured peers.⁸⁸
- The city is in the bottom third for rental affordability.⁸⁹
- Sydney places 15th out of 25 top global cities for housing affordability for skilled workers (measured by the number of years a skilled worker would need to work for to be able to buy a small flat near the city centre).⁹⁰
- The city is 51st out of 155 cities for GDP per capita.⁹¹
- Sydney's wage levels remain relatively high, at 15th among 48 leading global cities.⁹²
- For average pay for engineers, Sydney places 18th among 48 cities.⁹³



Figure 14: Already bad, housing unaffordability has grown faster than other cities during Covid-19

Change in housing affordability over time, Sydney and English-speaking peer cities



Source: Demographia Housing Affordability Survey.⁹⁴

Influential composite indices

- For all-round cost of living for expats, Sydney is down 36 places to 179th out of 209 cities. This is due partly to the appreciation of the Australian dollar and an initially strong economic recovery from Covid-19.⁹⁵
- The city is 101st out of 115 for student affordability - or 24th among 30 peers.⁹⁶

ANALYSIS

There is some Covid-related volatility in the number and focus of benchmarks in 2021, especially on business costs. In general, issues of housing unaffordability and modestly competitive pay for specialist talent are areas that have seen Sydney's overall performance drop.

The perceptions of renters, students, first-time buyers and mobile talent loom large in several studies. Although the housing challenge is widely shared in other cities, the overall direction is that more people associate Sydney with a systemically high cost of living and housing.





Sustainability



Score across all measures:

3/10

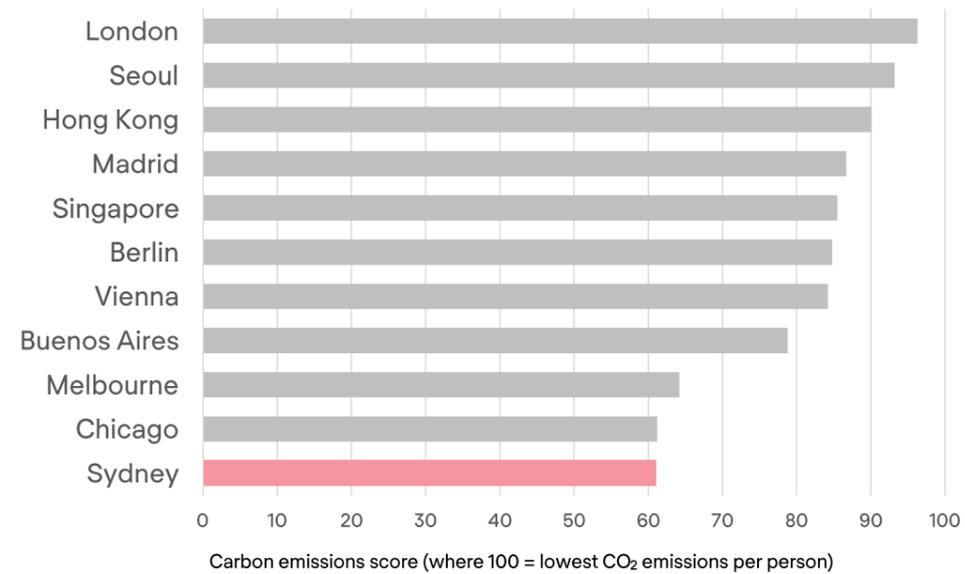
Highlights

Performance

- Sydney ranks 38th out of 48 leading global cities for per capita CO2 emissions – a fall of one place since last year.⁹⁷
- The city places 13th among 27 peers for the concentration of green buildings.⁹⁸
- Sydney is outside the global top 25 for adoption of electric vehicles, and 35th out of 60 cities for EV market share.⁹⁹
- For number of firms specialising in cleantech, Sydney rates 17th out of 29 peers.¹⁰⁰
- The city is 14th out of 20 peers for the proportion of energy supplied by renewable sources.¹⁰¹

Figure 15: Sydney is behind for climate change performance

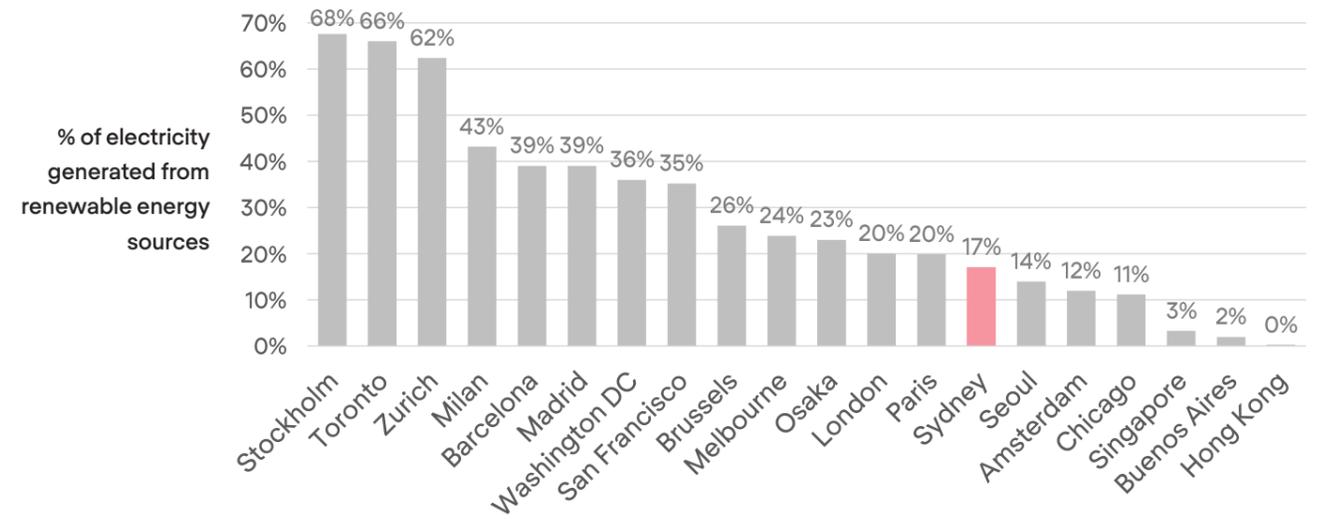
CO2 emissions per capita, Sydney and selected peer cities



Source: Mori Memorial Foundation Global Power City Index.¹⁰²

Figure 16: Sydney is behind on renewable energy adoption

% of electricity generated from renewables, Sydney and selected peer cities



Source: Economist Intelligence Unit Safe Cities Index 2021.¹⁰³





Influential composite indices

- Sydney ranks first among 10 peers for university progress in promoting clean and affordable energy.¹⁰⁴
- For all-round environmental impacts (exposure to environmental risk, maturity and clarity of environmental policy, and level of heat/water stress), Sydney is 10th out of 18 peers.¹⁰⁵
- The city is down seven places to 15th in a study of MICE tourism sustainable policy and practice.¹⁰⁶

IMPORTANT NATIONAL RESULTS

- Australia is now bottom out of 64 countries for national and international climate policy.¹⁰⁷
- Australia ranks 172nd out of 180 countries for average greenhouse gas emissions per person since 2017.¹⁰⁸
- The country is 52nd out of 63 countries for the current renewable energy share and how quickly this is progressing in line with Paris Agreement targets.¹⁰⁹
- Australia is 56th out of 64 countries for current greenhouse gas emissions and how quickly these are declining in line with Paris Agreement targets.¹¹⁰
- Australia's recycling rate puts it eighth among more than 30 countries.¹¹¹
- For sustainable nitrogen management in agriculture, Australia rates 56th globally.¹¹²
- Australia places in the bottom third globally for protection of natural ecosystem services (coverage of trees, wetlands and grasslands).¹¹³

ANALYSIS

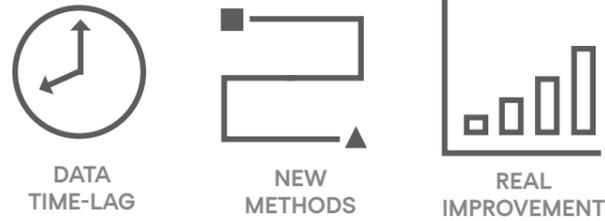
Largely national factors have caused the sustainability performance and perception gap in Sydney to grow. There are lots of reasons for optimism in Sydney itself – city universities and institutions largely perform well in sustainability policy and adoption metrics, and there is more utilisation of the financial system to support decarbonisation. But citywide performance is affected by wider issues related to the national policy and energy mix. As more slower-moving nations pick up speed, including in Asia-Pacific, the trend of Sydney's recent decline in these benchmarks continues.

The shift has continued towards measuring cities based on energy and emissions performance, as well as policy ambition. Sustainability is so far being assessed much more through absolute progress and performance indicators, many of which are highly shaped by aggregate national factors. In effect, Sydney is dragged down by Australia's inaction on climate change and potential to improve will depend on higher tiers of government as well as local and state initiatives.





Transport and infrastructure



Score across all measures:
4/10

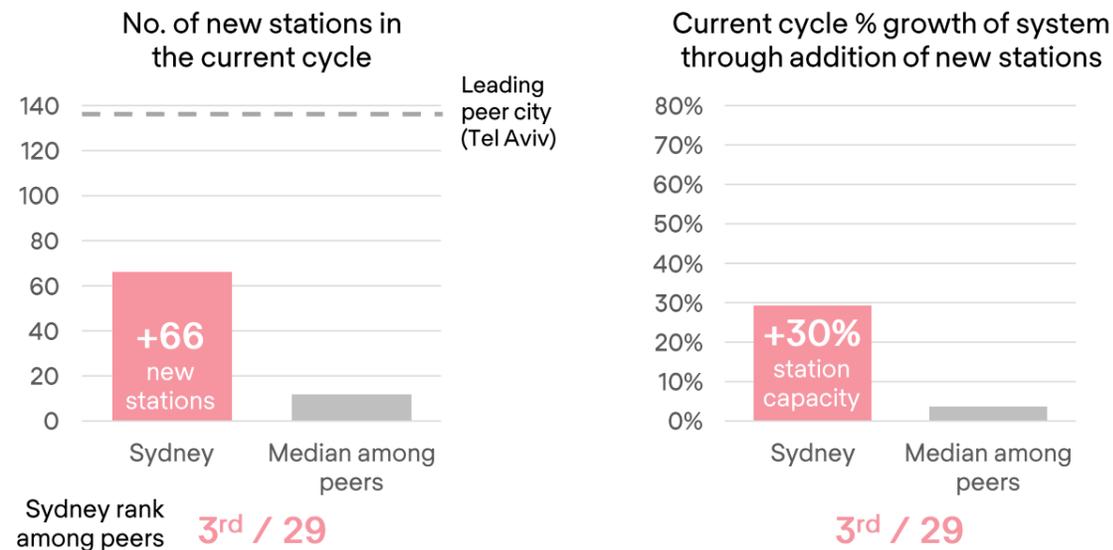
Highlights

Performance

- Sydney has climbed five places to 34th out of 48 leading global cities for the metropolitan-wide density of rail stations, reflecting investment in the Sydney Metro.¹¹⁴
- The city is 13th out of 48 leading global cities for the efficiency of the public transport connection between the city centre and airport.¹¹⁵
- Sydney rates 19th among 22 peers for uptake of micromobility (e-scooters, shared bicycles, and so on).¹¹⁶
- The city ranks 42nd out of 60 cities for penetration of shared mobility services.¹¹⁷
- For internet speed and capacity, Sydney is 32nd globally – in the middle of the pack among its peers.¹¹⁸
- Sydney places 30th out of 50 cities in its size category for the uptake of low carbon driving technologies (measures EV uptake and sales, concentration of EV charging points and traffic-based CO2 emissions).¹¹⁹

Figure 17: Sydney's public transport system is expanding much faster than in other cities

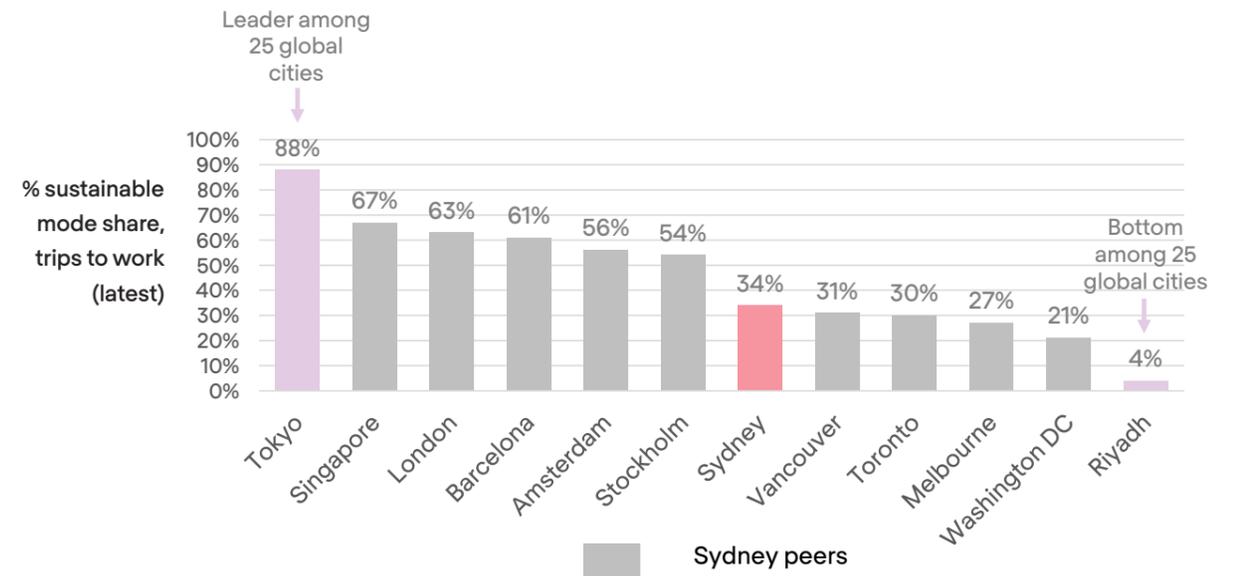
Investment in new public transport stations in Sydney compared to peer cities



Source: The Business of Cities research. Peer average refers to all peer cities except Berlin, Osaka, Hong Kong and Seoul. Leading peer city for % growth – Tel Aviv – not shown due to system growing from 0 stations currently. *Measures the number of new stations as a way to capture the amount of additional capacity capable of unlocking new location and development opportunities. Does not include refurbishment of existing stations or the expansion of additional capacity that comes from new lines going through existing stations, unless they act as new stations in their own right (new station infrastructure e.g. new concourses, new ticket halls, new entry/exit points etc.). Where new stations cater to multiple 'lines' (e.g. a commuter rail part and a metro part), the station is only counted once.

Figure 18: The big gap Sydney has to bridge to achieve a sustainable mode share

Sustainable transport mode share in Sydney compared to selected peer cities



Source: Deloitte City Mobility Index 2020.¹²⁰

Perception

- Sydney is up 10 places to 45th out of 66 cities for expat satisfaction with public transport in the city.¹²¹

Influential composite indices

- Sydney is down four to 21st out of 60 cities for its all-round transport network (quality and accessibility of public transport, enabling conditions for micromobility and regional road connectivity).¹²²

ANALYSIS

Sydney's transport system improvements have finally started to register. The public transport network is now beginning to be seen as catching up to more established leading cities, and this should continue as the wider cycle of investment is completed and overall ridership grows. This is a long-term process – overall it is still an area of disadvantage for Sydney due to many decades of relying on a development model oriented around the car. The shift to higher car use during Covid-19 – something most cities experienced to some degree – makes it even more essential for Sydney to drive high uptake of public transport.

In 2021, there is a lot of focus in global benchmarks on how ready cities are to support flexible digitised work, safe citywide cycling, e-scooters and convenient EVs. These are assessed via measures of system speed and length, and rollout of relevant technologies. Typically these are also areas where Sydney is behind compared to other comparable cities.

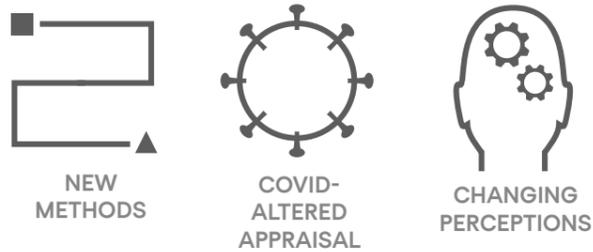
Sydney's position has potential to improve again over the next two to three years, but ensuring it is not a 'high car, low public transport' recovery is essential, as is scaling the size and reach of new kinds of safe micro-mobility and shared mobility, along with continued expansion of the Metro network.

Culture and destination appeal





Diversity and inclusion



Score across all measures:
10/10

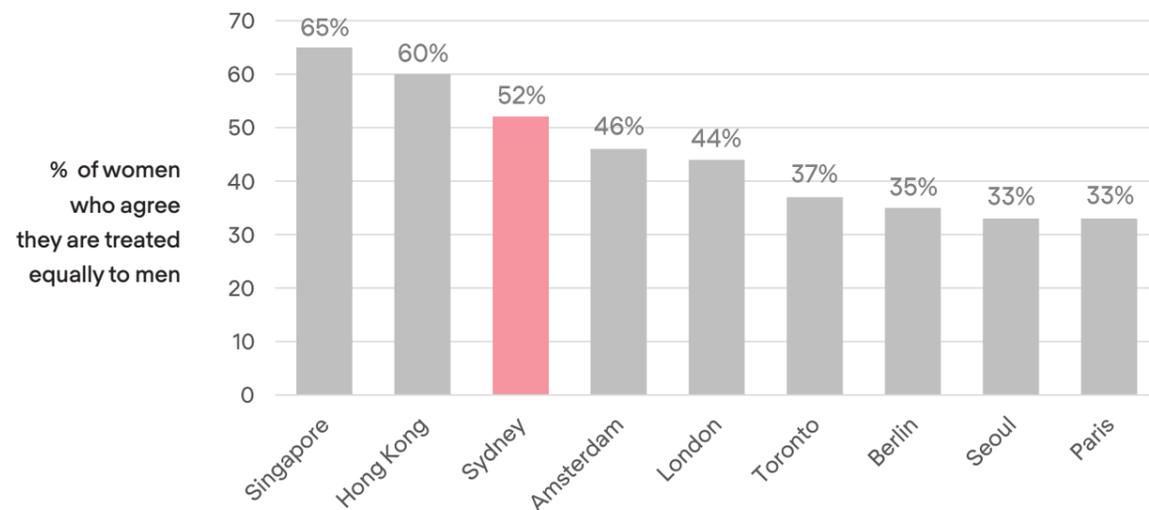
Highlights

Performance

- Sydney is first among 15 top global cities for gender pay equality.¹²³
- For income equality, Sydney is in the middle of the pack, ranking approximately 23rd out of 45 global cities.¹²⁴
- The city ranks seventh for the percentage of people born overseas.¹²⁵
- Sydney is the seventh most multicultural city out of a leading group of 36, based on ethnic diversity, foreign-born residents, presence of international schools and track record of hosting international business events.¹²⁶

Figure 19: Sydney is one of the world's most gender equal cities globally

% of women who agree they are treated equally to men in Sydney and selected peer cities



Source: Bloomberg Best Business Cities for Women 2021.¹²⁷

Figure 20: Sydney is more inclusive than many cities but spatial divides are affecting social capital

Sydney's position across various dimensions of diversity and inclusion, compared to 45 global cities



Source: Boston Consulting Group Cities of Choice 2021.¹²⁸

Perception

- Sydney is fifth among 15 top global cities or third among nine peers for perceived equality of opportunity for women (based on percentage of women surveyed believing they have equality of opportunity).¹²⁹
- The city holds steady at eighth for perceived welcome and ease of getting used to the local culture among expat communities, out of 66 cities.¹³⁰
- Out of 31 peers, Sydney has the 11th highest share of surveyed residents who agree that minorities feel welcome in the city.¹³¹

Influential composite indices

- Sydney is fourth among 15 top global cities for all-round equality of opportunity for women.¹³²
- Sydney is in the top 20% of global cities for promoting economic inclusion for women and disabled people.¹³³
- For university progress in promoting gender equality, the city rates fourth of 12 peers.¹³⁴
- Sydney ranks 14th out of 36 leading global cities for all-round gender balance (based on share of women CEOs, university heads, architects, fashion designers, media influencers and others).¹³⁵
- For university progress in reducing inequalities, Sydney is fourth out of nine peers.¹³⁶
- The city places in the bottom 40% for social cohesion, tolerance and trust (as measured by reported feelings of loneliness, community participation, neighbourliness and trust in other people).¹³⁷



IMPORTANT NATIONAL RESULTS

- Australia has the joint lowest level of restrictions on the empowerment of women out of all countries in the world (e.g. barriers to women accessing institutions, using property, building credit, getting a job.)¹³⁸
- For LGBTQI+ equality, in terms of incidence of discrimination and hate crimes, legislation to protect LGBT rights, and perceived safety, Australia is 10th globally.¹³⁹
- Australia ranks 25th globally for the protection of women from violence (e.g. incidence of violence against women and legislative safeguards against it).¹⁴⁰

ANALYSIS

Sydney's accumulated diversity and its commitment to inclusivity are advantages to promote after Covid-19. The city's scores benefit from the sense of welcome people perceive.

National frameworks for supporting and integrating marginalised groups are mixed in terms of how they rate internationally. There are signs that spatial and income divides across metropolitan Sydney are eroding social capital in some communities.

Metrics and monitoring around cities' inclusiveness are likely to expand, and are likely to explore racial and Indigenous dimensions as well as issues of people affected by exclusion, climate change and industrial transition. While Sydney is stable overall in this area, it will be important to consider future priorities that drive reputation.





Visitor and cultural appeal



Highlights

Performance

- Sydney holds steady at second among 48 top global cities for the number of high-capacity stadia and event spaces.¹⁴¹
- For the number of high-level rotating conferences hosted up to and into the start of Covid-19, Sydney was up one place to 17th out of 48 cities.¹⁴²
- In a new study of the quality and variety of cities' cultural offer, Sydney ranks 15th out of 80 cities.¹⁴³
- The city is steady at 24th out of 48 cities for the availability of hotel rooms.¹⁴⁴
- Sydney is 41st out of 48 global cities for the number of museums and in the bottom third of its peer group for number of theatres (26th).¹⁴⁵
- Sydney has fallen 10 places to 45th out of 48 cities for its track record of hosting world-class cultural events, as other cities have gained a larger share of the market in recent years.¹⁴⁶
- The city's fast food chain restaurants are less favourably reviewed than in any other city in a new study assessing average ratings of five major fast food outlets in 84 cities.¹⁴⁷
- Sydney does not feature in the top 20 premium city destinations globally, based on the number and concentration of five star hotels, designer shops and Michelin-starred restaurants.¹⁴⁸

Score across all measures:

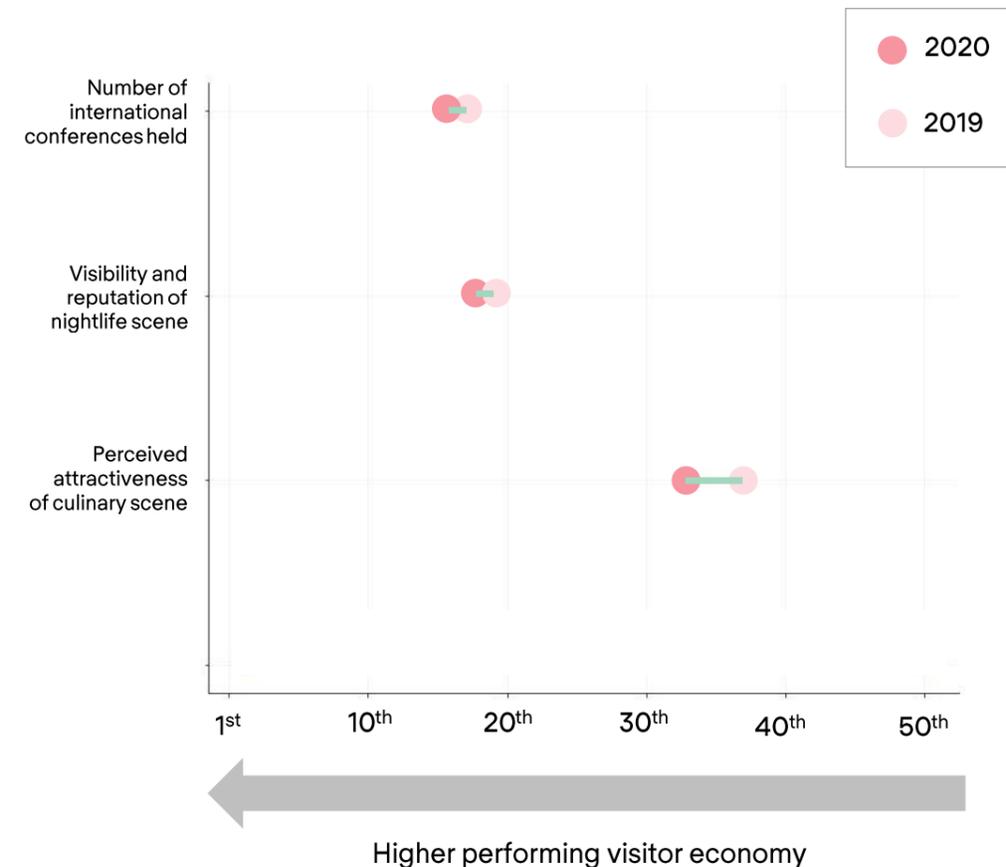
6/10

Perception

- In 2021, for the first time since at least 2019, Sydney did not feature in the top 20 cities to visit in the world, based on a major global survey.¹⁴⁹
- Surry Hills has recently been voted the 19th coolest neighbourhood in the world, due to its culinary and coffee reputation.¹⁵⁰
- Sydney is up 12 places to 39th globally for the number of highly rated culinary, cultural and entertainment experiences.¹⁵¹
- Sydney still has the second lowest level of resident satisfaction with nightlife among 37 leading global cities, with just 32% of residents rating the nightlife scene highly.¹⁵²
- The city has climbed four places to 33rd out of 48 cities for the appeal of its dining scene among global analysts.¹⁵³
- For global expert perceptions of the city's shopping scene, Sydney has fallen two places to 41st.¹⁵⁴

Figure 21: Sydney can improve the reputation of its culinary, nightlife and convention scenes

Sydney's performance across various measures of visitor economy strength compared to 48 leading global cities.



Source: Mori Memorial Foundation Global Power City Index 2020.¹⁵⁵

Influential composite indices

- For the visibility and reputation of its nightlife scene, Sydney has fallen one place to 19th out of 48 cities, and now ranks 12th among 26 peers.¹⁵⁶

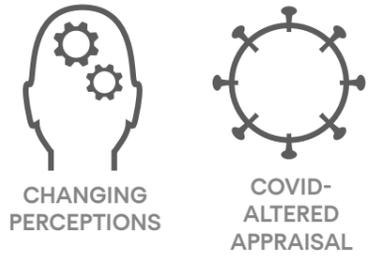
ANALYSIS

Appetite to visit, enjoy and consume Sydney remains high. Sydney performs well although it is still held back by studies that don't fully account for Sydney's smaller size and distance from many global markets.

The main observable shift among benchmarks is a rise in focus on cities' art, culture, neighbourhoods and iconic experiences as drivers of visitation. There is also more effort to draw on user reviews to measure perception and appeal. Sydney's culinary and artistic reputations are quite limited among those less familiar with the city, while the decline of nightlife during the lockdown laws hurt Sydney's reputation globally. Ensuring that the post-Covid visitor product matches the reputation will be a key task.



Brand, image and influence



Score across all measures:
9/10

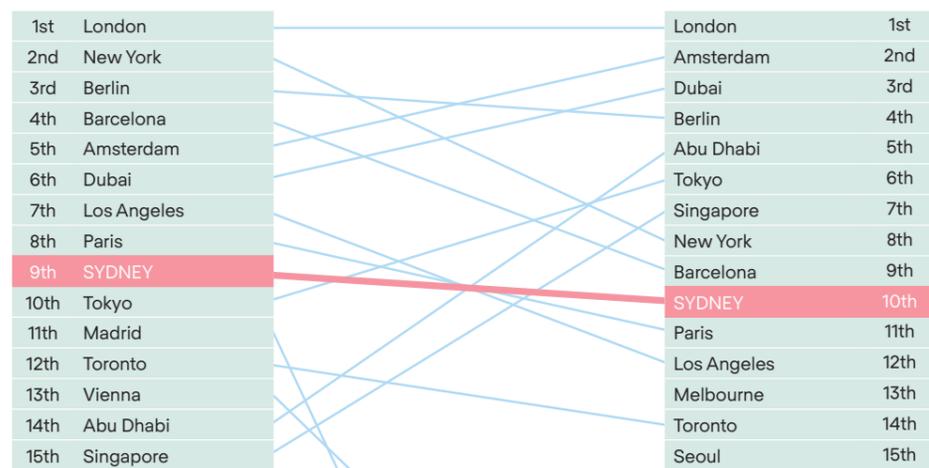
Highlights

Perception

- For overall reputation and admiration among the global public, Sydney is fifth globally.¹⁵⁷
- The city is sixth out of 21 top global cities for the all-round strength of its business brand.¹⁵⁸
- For all-round global appeal to talent, Sydney has remained broadly stable at 10th globally.¹⁵⁹
- Sydney rates seventh as a destination worth investing in, according to everyday global citizens (based on percentage that identify it as one of the world's most investable cities), but remains outside the global top 10 for attractiveness to global investors and companies looking to set up a business.¹⁶⁰
- The city has climbed two more places to 24th globally for the number of online mentions, recommendations and stories shared about the city.¹⁶¹
- Recently, Sydney has been voted the 13th most beautiful city in the world.¹⁶²
- Sydney is not yet in the global top 10 for its reputation as one of the world's foremost modern cities.¹⁶³

Figure 22: Sydney's appeal to global talent is fairly stable but Asia-Pacific rivals improve

Top 15 cities where most global citizens are willing to relocate for work, 2018-19 vs. 2020-21



Source: Boston Consulting Group Decoding Talent in a Virtual World.¹⁶⁴

Figure 23: Sydney and Australia remain popular places to move to post-Covid

Aggregate recognition and visibility of Sydney and peer cities in global 'top' lists for places to move to post-Covid, since mid-2020



Source: The Business of Cities research. *Max = city or country appears in all top lists and is consistently rated in the top 5. See Appendix for full scoring system.

Influential composite indices

- Sydney has fallen at least three places for the reputation of its financial sector among global industry professionals, placing outside the top 15 among more than 100 global cities.¹⁶⁵
- The city has fallen at least two places for all-round reputation and is now outside the global top 15 among more than 100 global cities.¹⁶⁶

ANALYSIS

As cities have grappled with other priorities, the benchmarking of city brands has taken a back seat to nation brands. Yet overall it is clear the global opinion of Sydney as a place to visit or invest remains very high by global standards. Sydney continues to have a reputation as one of the world's most investable locations.

The benchmark surveys are heavily influenced by the views of real and aspiring visitors rather than by mobile talent or business. Sydney's beauty and friendliness again features strongly. It is again striking that Sydney's strongest image scores are among audiences who have more transactional rather than long term aims.

Many cities are now looking to tell their recovery and future story powerfully, including the story of the city centre, the long term shifts underway and the jobs, innovation and changemaking potential for new arrivals. Integrating and coordinating this story will be a priority for many cities like Sydney.



Appendix

Figure 13

Sources (from left to right):

Numbeo Quality of Life Index by City 2021 Mid-Year: <https://www.numbeo.com/quality-of-life/rankings.jsp>

Mori Memorial Foundation Global Power City Index Yearbook 2020 – Commuting Time: <https://mori-m-foundation.or.jp/wordpress/english/publications2>

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Figure 23

Includes the following studies/articles: MoveHub Where to Move after Coronavirus; ExpatNetwork Top Cities for Expats to Move to post-Covid-19; Global Finance Magazine Best Cities to Live; The Street Best Places to Live if you Can Work from Anywhere; Forbes World's Top 10 Places to Move; Shiplt Best 10 Places for Digital Nomads After Covid.

Scoring system as follows:

If city is mentioned: top 5 = 5 points; top 10 = 4 points; top 15 = 3 points; top 20 = 2 points; top 25 = 1 point; top 30 = 0.5 points

If the home country is mentioned: top 5 = 2.5 points; top 10 = 2 points; top 15 = 1.5 points; top 20 = 1 point; top 25 = 0.5 points



Endnotes

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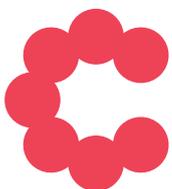
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