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New index ranks global cities' sustainability performance and finds greenest cities led by women; North American cities missing out on green transition opportunities

The Sustainable Cities Index published by Corporate Knights measures environmental sustainability performance in 50 cities around the globe

On June 15, Corporate Knights, known since 2002 for its pioneering corporate rankings, publishes its inaugural global cities ranking: the Sustainable Cities Index.

Three of the most eye-opening findings:

1. **50% of the top 10 cities are led by women mayors.** The three highest-ranking cities (Stockholm, Oslo, Copenhagen) all have female mayors.
2. **Even the greenest cities have a hidden greenhouse gas problem – they are outsourcing as much as 80% of their carbon footprints in all the** food, electricity and other goods they import. Stockholm, for example, the most sustainable city in the index, has direct greenhouse gas emissions of 0.83 tonnes per capita, but this rises to 9 tonnes per capita when imported emissions are included.
3. **The environmental performance of American cities falls well short of European cities,** with Scandinavian cities claiming five of the top 10 positions overall. Within North America, Canadian cities make up six of nine North American cities in the top half of the Sustainable Cities Index.

ABOUT THE INDEX: The Sustainable Cities Index is a quantitative, outcome-based annual rating of cities' sustainability performance, to be released each summer in *Corporate Knights* magazine. Drawing primarily on publicly disclosed data, **the index is based on 12 indicators related to climate change, emissions and resilience, air quality, land use, transportation, water, waste and sustainable policies.** Unlike many urban sustainability rankings, the Sustainable Cities Index focuses on quantifiable outcomes, as opposed to policies or programs, while also including consumption-based greenhouse gas inventory estimates to reflect cities' footprints beyond their geographical boundaries.

While the perfect city doesn't yet exist, the **top-scoring cities in the index have some common characteristics:**

- Within the top 10 cities, about 60% of trips are made by public transportation, cycling or walking. To put that into perspective, Copenhagen aims to see that number hit 75%. Meanwhile, about 80% of residents in these 10 cities own fewer than one vehicle per household.
- Citizens in the most sustainable cities are breathing easier: nine of the top 10 have fine particulate air pollution below the World Health Organization recommended maximum.
- Open public space comprises about 22% of space within city limits (the UN Sustainable Development Goals target is 45%) in the 10 leading cities.

The world's first Sustainable Cities Data Hub:

The Sustainable Cities Index will become the world's first crowd-sourced sustainability index for cities. Starting June 15, any city can add itself to the database by logging in to the Corporate Knights website and entering information for the 12 metrics that comprise the Sustainable Cities Index.

QUOTES

"Clearly, changing our climate trajectory is no small feat. Cities must continue to evolve by planning, designing and investing innovatively," writes Corporate Knights research analyst Nadia Morson. "However, with a diversity of sustainability leaders and tools like the Sustainable Cities Index, cities can begin to establish visionary urban sustainability benchmarks while collaborating on a global scale."

"As with most challenges," writes Don Iveson, former mayor of Edmonton and guest editor of the Sustainable Cities section in the summer issue of Corporate Knights, "the first step is admitting we have a problem." Mayors and municipal leaders have been tracking how climate change will affect cities since the 1990s and have been sounding alarm bells along the way.

"For a long time, acquiring budgetary support for urban sustainability efforts was a significant barrier," says Ralph Torrie, director of research at Corporate Knights. "But the world is changing and so are its cities. They are now investing capital to deal with climate

change. Luckily, cities have also become exceptional learners, trading insights and sharing solutions on the path to net-zero.”

Download the report [HERE](#).

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