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PRESS RELEASE

Sustainable Cities Index tracks leading performance and large remaining gaps

Corporate Knights' Sustainable Cities Index measures and compares environmental sustainability performance in 70 cities around the globe

Toronto, Canada, April 20, 2023 – Nordic and other Northern European cities registered top-ranked performance again in the second annual and expanded *Corporate Knights Sustainable Cities Index (CKSCI)*. Stockholm, Oslo and Copenhagen retained the top three spots respectively, with the rest of the top ten rounded out by Lahti (Finland), London, Berlin, and two cities from each of Oceania and Canada.

That regional skew reflects in part strong commitments and capacities to advance systems-level sustainability initiatives in areas such as transit and district energy systems. But among the 70 global cities assessed, leading metric-specific performance is found in urban areas that are both mega- and mid-sized, high- and middle-income, and located in the global north and south.

The CKSCI methodology compares public spaces, air pollution, and solid waste generation; as well as multiple metrics relating to each of climate change, water, and transportation. In addition to this quantitative analysis, it assesses for five specific energy- and emissions-related municipal policies.

Targets defined within the index reflect performance that would be consistent with sustainable urban environments. No one city is fully performing at these levels across the indicators and for the large majority considerable gaps remain to be closed.

The CKSCI is distinguished by its inclusion not just of direct greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, but of broader “consumption based” GHGs. These account for emissions occurring elsewhere but embedded in products and services consumed within a city. On average in 2023, consumption emissions exceeded the direct emissions of cities in the sample by a factor of almost 3.5 (with wide variance across regions and cities).

Insights from the analysis underscore the unequal nature of both contributions to climate change and vulnerability to its impacts. Cities in high-income countries in the sample averaged consumption-based emissions of 17 tonnes of carbon equivalency annually – while enjoying comparatively strong resilience to the resulting climate change – while cities in middle-income countries averaged only 6.5 tonnes.

Quotes

“The CKSCI reveals interesting variances and regional trends. Canadian cities by and large outperform American peers, for example. But what’s more instructive is the widely diverging performance across individual indicators, often even for similar cities. If Berlin and its Nordic neighbours can consume less than 120 litres of water per capita daily there’s no reason North American cities can’t improve a current average of over 300 litres.” – Corporate Knights Director of Research Ralph Torrie

“Cities are complex systems, and countless factors drive their comparative sustainability performance. One of the most important sets of influences is the attitudes and behaviours of residents. And results on metrics like consumption-based GHGs make it clear that we can achieve a lot by focusing on our individual carbon footprints, especially in high-income countries.” – Corporate Knights CEO Toby Heaps

Targeting Ideal Outcomes

Corporate Knights has identified targeted performance for each of the 12 CKSCI indicators. These reflect both best performance on a metric-specific basis within this year’s sample of 70 cities, and what a literature review suggests would constitute sustainable outcomes. Significant gaps remain to be closed.

Sustainable Cities Index Indicator	Target	Units	2023 Average for Cities in High-Income Countries	2023 Average for Cities in Middle-Income Countries
Scope 1 GHG Emissions	Net-Zero	tonnes CO ² e/capita	4.51	2.34
Consumption-Based Emissions	Net-Zero	tonnes CO ₂ e/capita	17.1	6.36
Particulate Air Pollution (PM _{2.5})	< 5	µg/m ³	10.5	27.8
Open Public Space	45	%	12	14.5
Water Access	100	%	100	95
Water Consumption	100-150	litres/capita/day	254	182
Road Infrastructure Efficiency	< 1	km/km ²	3.9	2.2
Sustainable Transport Mode Share	75	%	42	60
Vehicle Dependence	< 1	vehicles/household	1.03	0.73
Solid Waste Generated	< 0.3	tonnes/capita/year	0.44	0.37
Climate Change Resilience	3	ratio	2.1	1
Sustainable Policies	5	/5	3.7	2.2

A digital version of the ranking and further contextual and methodological information is available at <https://www.corporateknights.com/rankings/sustainable-cities-rankings/2023-sustainable-cities-index/sustainable-cities-index-2023/>

About the Sustainable Cities Index

The **CKSCI** is a quantitative, outcome-based annual rating of cities' sustainability performance, with data for each indicator collected from the most credible publicly available source. Cities are scored out of 1.0, where 1.0 represents the best performance among the 70 cities on a given indicator, and scores are then translated into letter grades for ease of comparison. Notably, the CKSCI focuses on quantifiable outcomes, as opposed to policies or programs, and includes consumption-based greenhouse gas inventory estimates. A Socio-Economic Adjustment Factor was incorporated into the ranking in 2023, and discounts scores on specific environmental metrics based on the extent to which they coincide with unsustainable social and economic conditions (for example, low water consumption due to low access to potable water).

About Corporate Knights

Corporate Knights Inc. is an independent media and research B Corp. Its media division publishes the award-winning sustainable-economy magazine *Corporate Knights*, circulated in *The Globe and Mail*, *The Washington Post* and *The Wall Street Journal*. Its research division produces sustainability rankings, research reports and financial product ratings based on corporate sustainability performance. Learn more at [corporateknights.com](https://www.corporateknights.com).