

# The Global Liveability Index 2023

## Optimism amid instability



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# The findings of the latest liveability survey: optimism amid instability

- EIU's Liveability Index has risen significantly in the 2023 survey, reaching a 15-year high as the world moves on from the covid-19 pandemic and **healthcare and education scores improve** in many cities in Asia and the Middle East and Africa. However, **scores for stability have slipped backwards** since last year, amid several instances of civil unrest around the world.
- **Vienna** (Austria) **tops the rankings** for 2023, owing to its winning combination of stability, good culture and entertainment, reliable infrastructure, and exemplary education and health services. It has occupied this position regularly over the past several years, with only the covid-19 pandemic causing the city to vacate its place at the top spot.
- Copenhagen (Denmark) takes second place, while a shift towards normality after the pandemic has helped the Australian cities of **Melbourne and Sydney to bounce back up the rankings** to third and fourth place, following a sharp tumble in 2022. Three cities in Canada, two in Switzerland, and two in Asia (a New Zealand and a Japanese city are joint tenth) make up the rest of the top ten positions.
- **Asia-Pacific cities have made some of the biggest gains**, accounting for eight of top ten movers up the rankings as economies recover from the pandemic. Wellington (New Zealand) has soared by 35 places to 23rd place, Auckland (New Zealand) by 25, while Hanoi (Vietnam) has moved up 20 spots, as their covid restrictions were lifted.
- **Western European cities have slipped down the rankings in the 2023 survey**. Increased instances of workers' strikes and civil unrest have hurt their stability ratings and they have failed to match gains made by cities in Asia and the Middle East.
- **Kiev is back in our survey**, having been forced out by Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. However, the city ranks a lowly 165th out of the 173 cities in our survey, with its stability and infrastructure damaged by the war. Moscow (Russia), which fell to 96th place in 2022, has remained stable this year.
- **Damascus (Syria) and Tripoli (Libya) are still at the bottom of the list**, held back by social unrest, terrorism and conflict. However, while Damascus has seen no improvement since last year, scores for Tripoli and other cities in the bottom ten have improved as the pandemic has receded.

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### Top 10 positions

City	Location	Rank	Index	Stability	Healthcare	Culture & environment	Education	Infrastructure
Vienna	Austria	1	98.4	100.0	100.0	93.5	100.0	100.0
Copenhagen	Denmark	2	98.0	100.0	95.8	95.4	100.0	100.0
Melbourne	Australia	3	97.7	95.0	100.0	95.8	100.0	100.0
Sydney	Australia	4	97.4	95.0	100.0	94.4	100.0	100.0
Vancouver	Canada	5	97.3	95.0	100.0	97.2	100.0	96.4
Zurich	Switzerland	6	97.1	95.0	100.0	96.3	100.0	96.4
Calgary	Canada	7	96.8	100.0	100.0	87.3	100.0	100.0
Geneva	Switzerland	7	96.8	95.0	100.0	94.9	100.0	96.4
Toronto	Canada	9	96.5	100.0	100.0	94.4	100.0	89.3
Osaka	Japan	10	96.0	100.0	100.0	86.8	100.0	96.4
Auckland	New Zealand	10	96.0	95.0	95.8	97.9	100.0	92.9

Source: EIU.

### Overview

A shift back towards normality after the covid-19 pandemic and incremental improvements in liveability made by many developing countries have been the biggest drivers of changes in EIU's global liveability rankings. With covid restrictions diminished, the 2023 survey (conducted between February 13th and March 12th) shows a noticeable improvement across the world. The average index score across all 172 cities (excluding Kiev) in our survey has now reached 76.2 out of 100, up from 73.2 a year ago. This is the highest score in 15 years for the original comparable list of 140 cities. Healthcare scores have improved the most, with smaller gains for education, culture and environment, and infrastructure. Only stability has seen a small decline, reflecting increasing perceptions of corruption and civil unrest in many cities amid a cost-of-living crisis, as well as an uptick in crime in some cities.

This return to relative normality means that frequent winner **Vienna retains its position as the world's most liveable city** in the 2023 survey. The Austrian capital slipped down our rankings in 2021, when its famous museums and restaurants faced restrictions to contain the pandemic, but this was a rare slip-up for a city that has now ranked top in eight of the past ten six-monthly surveys. The city continues to offer an unsurpassed combination of stability, good infrastructure, strong education and healthcare services, and plenty of culture and entertainment, with one of its few downsides being a relative lack of major sporting events. The same is true of Copenhagen, another frequent high performer that has kept its position in second place from last year.

Melbourne and Sydney have moved up to fill spots claimed last year by western European cities such as Frankfurt and Amsterdam. The Australian cities, which bounced up and down the rankings during the pandemic, are now in third and fourth place. They have seen their scores in the healthcare category improve since last year, when they were still affected by covid waves that stressed their healthcare systems. Further down the top ten, in the Swiss cities of Zurich (6th place) and Geneva (joint 7th), education category scores have risen since last year. In the Canadian cities of Vancouver (5th), Calgary (joint 7th) and Toronto (9th), scores for stability are up compared with last year, when these cities were impacted by anti-vaccine protests. The end of covid-related restrictions has given a small boost to the culture and environment ratings of the Japanese city of Osaka (10th).

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### Bottom 10 positions

City	Location	Rank	Index	Stability	Healthcare	Culture & environment	Education	Infrastructure
Douala	Cameroon	164	46.4	60.0	29.2	51.2	41.7	42.9
Kiev	Ukraine	165	44.0	40.0	41.7	54.2	75.0	23.2
Harare	Zimbabwe	166	43.8	40.0	29.2	56.7	66.7	35.7
Dhaka	Bangladesh	166	43.8	50.0	41.7	40.5	75.0	26.8
Port Moresby	Papua New Guinea	168	43.4	30.0	41.7	49.8	58.3	46.4
Karachi	Pakistan	169	42.5	20.0	50.0	38.7	75.0	51.8
Lagos	Nigeria	170	42.2	25.0	37.5	54.4	41.7	53.6
Algiers	Algeria	171	42.0	35.0	50.0	45.4	58.3	30.4
Tripoli	Libya	172	40.1	30.0	45.8	37.5	58.3	41.1
Damascus	Syria	173	30.7	20.0	29.2	40.5	33.3	32.1

Source: EIU.

Even at the bottom of our rankings, cities such as Lagos (Nigeria) and Algiers (Algeria) have gained ground, with some improvements in their healthcare and education systems. Both are in countries that are energy exporters and have to some extent benefited from higher global oil and gas prices. Although corruption continues to be an issue, some additional public funding has been made available for infrastructure and public services, which have also benefited from the decline in covid cases. However, war-ravaged **Damascus (Syria), the lowest-ranked city in our survey, has seen no improvement in its liveability scores** despite the regional political comeback of its president, Bashar al-Assad.

Contrary to these improvements, the war in Ukraine and the resulting economic and political disruption are affecting liveability in many European cities. Unsurprisingly, this is most noticeable in Ukraine's capital, Kiev, which re-joins the survey this year (we were forced to exclude it following Russia's invasion in 2022). However, the city's score has fallen by 5.9 percentage points since 2021 owing to the damage the war has done to its stability, infrastructure and general liveability. It has now become one of the bottom ten cities in our liveability index.

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### **Bigest movers up the ranking in the past 12 months**

City	Location		Rank	Index	Rank move	Index move
Wellington	New Zealand	🇳🇿	23	93.7	35	8.0
Auckland	New Zealand	🇳🇿	10	96.0	25	6.8
Perth	Australia	🇦🇺	12	95.9	21	5.9
Bucharest	Romania	🇷🇴	99	73.7	21	8.7
Hanoi	Vietnam	🇻🇳	129	63.0	20	9.9
Adelaide	Australia	🇦🇺	12	95.9	19	5.2
Kuala Lumpur	Malaysia	🇲🇾	94	74.3	19	6.8
Jakarta	Indonesia	🇮🇩	139	60.4	14	9.3
Stuttgart	Germany	🇩🇪	25	93.4	13	4.6
Hong Kong	Hong Kong	🇭🇰	61	88.1	13	9.4

Source: EIU.

### **Bigest movers down the ranking in the past 12 months**

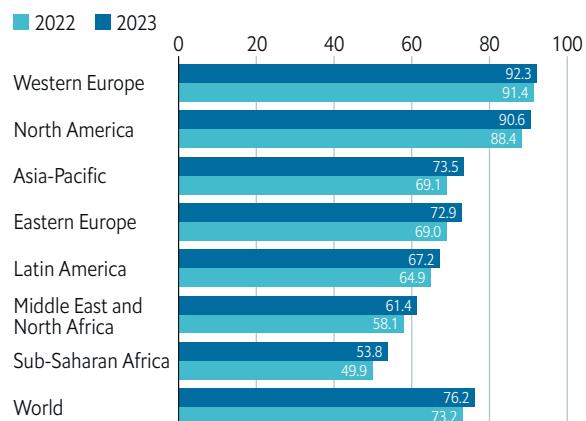
City	Location		Rank	Index	Rank move	Index move
Edinburgh	UK	🇬🇧	58	88.5	-23	-0.7
Stockholm	Sweden	🇸🇪	43	90.8	-22	-2.5
Los Angeles	US	🇺🇸	57	88.6	-17	0.0
San Diego	US	🇺🇸	61	88.1	-17	0.0
Manchester	UK	🇬🇧	44	90.6	-16	-0.7
Rotterdam	Netherlands	🇳🇱	44	90.6	-16	-0.7
Saipan	Northern Mariana Islands	🇲🇵	83	78.2	-13	-2.5
Tashkent	Uzbekistan	🇺🇿	157	53.9	-13	-0.8
Lyon	France	🇫🇷	37	91.3	-12	-1.2
London	UK	🇬🇧	46	90.5	-12	0.6

Kiev (Ukraine) not included in rank movements.

Source: EIU.

**European cities dominate the list of the top ten fallers** down the rankings, which also includes two US cities—San Diego and Los Angeles. Edinburgh (UK), which entered our liveability survey for the first time in 2022 in a respectable 35th position, has now tumbled to 58th. Other UK cities have done poorly in the rankings this year, too, with Manchester down by 16 places and London down by 12. None of these cities has seen a particularly sharp decline in their index scores, but they have failed to make the gains that many other cities—particularly those in Asia—have made in the past year.

### **Liveability improves in every region** (average index score out of 100\*)



\* The scores do not include Kiev (Ukraine)

Source: EIU.

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However, all regions have benefited from the increase in average scores, even western Europe (see chart above). The Asia-Pacific region, which has done away with the last of its covid restrictions, leads the gains. While Melbourne and Sydney have re-joined the top ten most liveable cities, the biggest climber is the New Zealand city of Wellington, which has leapt a remarkable 35 places in our survey, to 23rd position. The second biggest climber is nearby Auckland, while the third is Perth, in Australia. In all, eight of the top ten climbers in our rankings are from the Asia-Pacific region, with cities such as Hanoi (Vietnam) and Kuala Lumpur (Malaysia) also bouncing upwards. The biggest two non-Asian climbers are Romania's capital, Bucharest, and Stuttgart in Germany, which both saw improvements in the healthcare category following the removal of their last covid-related restrictions.

Our survey now covers 173 cities (including Kiev), after we expanded our coverage from 140 cities in 2022. Many of the newer cities are in China, and these now dominate the middle of our rankings. Their liveability scores have moved up in categories like healthcare, helped by attempts at equitable healthcare reforms. Many cities in the Middle East, which have benefited from the recent oil price rally, are also well-placed to pump extra funding into public services and infrastructure. In fact, several cities across the developing world have registered higher scores for healthcare and education owing to incremental structural improvements in the availability of physicians and hospital beds, and school completion rates, among others. As the world's political and economic axis continues to shift eastwards, we expect the cities in these regions to move slowly up our liveability rankings.

### Declines in stability are putting liveability at risk

Of the five categories covered by our liveability index, only stability has seen a decline in its ratings since last year. In many cities, such as Athens (Greece), stability scores have fallen this year because of greater civil unrest. Elsewhere, inflation, dissatisfaction with working conditions and occasional shortages of goods have sparked wage strikes and protests. In France, for example, protests over pension reforms have dented its cities' ranks. Other countries, from Israel and South Africa to Bangladesh and Peru, have also seen waves of protests fuelled by high petrol and food prices or allegations of government corruption.

Despite such instances across many cities, the drop in our overall stability ratings has been

modest, as upward revisions in many eastern European cities (which were at increased threat of military conflict in 2022) and Canada (which faced anti-vaccine protests last year) have nearly offset declines elsewhere. Even so, we do not expect the bubbling anger to die down soon. Still-high global commodity prices, continued supply-chain disruptions, high food prices and currency weakness against the US dollar for some countries will continue to fuel discontent in 2023. Higher interest rates in the US and Europe have raised the risk of an increase in bankruptcies, bank failures and economic distress. Strains on public order and economic headwinds have also increased instances of crime in some cities, and these will continue to be a risk for the future. All of this suggests that stability scores in our Liveability Index are unlikely to recover quickly.

## About EIU's liveability survey

### How does it work?

The concept of liveability is simple: it assesses which locations around the world provide the best or worst living conditions. Assessing liveability has a broad range of uses, from benchmarking perceptions of development levels to assigning a hardship allowance as part of expatriate relocation packages. Our liveability rating quantifies the challenges that might be presented to an individual's lifestyle in any given location, and allows for direct comparison between locations.

Every city is assigned a rating of relative comfort for over 30 qualitative and quantitative factors across five broad categories: stability, healthcare, culture and environment, education and infrastructure. Each factor in a city is rated as acceptable, tolerable, uncomfortable, undesirable or intolerable. For qualitative indicators, a rating is awarded based on the judgement of in-house analysts and in-city contributors. For quantitative indicators, a rating is calculated based on the relative performance of a number of external data points.

The covid-19 pandemic has affected living conditions in many cities, owing to its impact on the healthcare infrastructure and restrictions and lockdown measures imposed by governments, which have put the healthcare, culture and environment, and education categories under stress. The impact of the pandemic has been incorporated into our overall liveability score, with the introduction of new indicators to assess these stress and restriction levels for each city.

- Stress on healthcare resources
- Restrictions on local sporting events
- Restrictions on theatre
- Restrictions on classic and modern music concerts
- Restrictions on restaurants, bars, coffee shops and nightclubs
- Restrictions on educational institutes

The scores for these new indicators and its effect are incorporated in our existing healthcare, culture and environment, and education ratings.

The scores are then compiled and weighted to provide a score of 1-100, where 1 is considered intolerable and 100 is considered ideal. The liveability rating is provided both as an overall score and as a score for each category. To provide points of reference, the score is also given for each category relative to New York, and an overall position in the ranking of 173 cities is provided.

### The suggested liveability scale:

Companies pay a premium (usually a percentage of a salary) to employees who move to cities where living conditions are particularly difficult and there is excessive physical hardship or a notably unhealthy environment.

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EIU has given a suggested allowance to correspond with the rating. However, the actual level of the allowance is often a matter of company policy. It is not uncommon, for example, for companies to pay higher allowances—perhaps up to double EIU's suggested level.

### Rating description

Rating	Description	Suggested allowance (%)
80-100	There are few, if any, challenges to living standards	0
70-80	Day-to-day living is fine in general, but some aspects of life may entail problems	5
60-70	Negative factors have an impact on day-to-day living	10
50-60	Liveability is substantially constrained	15
50 or less	Most aspects of living are severely restricted	20

### How is the rating calculated?

The liveability score is reached through category weights, which are equally divided into relevant subcategories to ensure that the score covers as many indicators as possible. Indicators are scored as acceptable, tolerable, uncomfortable, undesirable or intolerable. These are then weighted to produce a rating, where 100 means that liveability in a city is ideal and 1 means that it is intolerable.

For qualitative variables, an “EIU rating” is awarded based on the judgement of in-house expert country analysts and a field correspondent based in each city. For quantitative variables, a rating is calculated based on the relative performance of a location using external data sources.

### Category 1: Stability (weight: 25% of total)

Indicator	Source
Prevalence of petty crime	EIU rating
Prevalence of violent crime	EIU rating
Threat of terror	EIU rating
Threat of military conflict	EIU rating
Threat of civil unrest/conflict	EIU rating

### Category 2: Healthcare (weight: 20% of total)

Indicator	Source
Availability of private healthcare	EIU rating
Quality of private healthcare	EIU rating
Availability of public healthcare	EIU rating
Quality of public healthcare	EIU rating
Availability of over-the-counter drugs	EIU rating
General healthcare indicators	Adapted from World Bank

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### Category 3: Culture & Environment (weight: 25% of total)

Indicator	Source
Humidity/temperature rating	Adapted from average weather conditions
Discomfort of climate to travellers	EIU rating
Level of corruption	Adapted from Transparency International
Social or religious restrictions	EIU rating
Level of censorship	EIU rating
Sporting availability	EIU field rating of 3 sport indicators
Cultural availability	EIU field rating of 4 cultural indicators
Food & drink	EIU field rating of 3 cultural indicators
Consumer goods & services	EIU rating of product availability

### Category 4: Education (weight: 10% of total)

Indicator	Source
Availability of private education	EIU rating
Quality of private education	EIU rating
Public education indicators	Adapted from World Bank

### Category 5: Infrastructure (weight: 20% of total)

Indicator	Source
Quality of road network	EIU rating
Quality of public transport	EIU rating
Quality of international links	EIU rating
Availability of good quality housing	EIU rating
Quality of energy provision	EIU rating
Quality of water provision	EIU rating
Quality of telecommunications	EIU rating

### Liveability Ranking and Overview

View EIU's complete liveability ranking and average scores for all 173 cities across five broad categories: stability, healthcare, culture and environment, education and infrastructure.

#### What's included?

- EIU's liveability rankings for 173 cities
- Summary of findings and a description of the methodology used
- Ranking position and overall liveability scores for all cities across each of the five categories

[Find out more](#)

### Global Liveability Survey

The liveability survey quantifies the challenges that might be presented to an individual's lifestyle in 173 cities worldwide and provides a profile for each city. Appraise each city through its individual city profile and review regional trends.

#### What's included?

- EIU's liveability rankings for 173 cities
- Overall liveability scores for all cities across five broad categories: stability, healthcare, culture and environment, education and infrastructure
- Individual city profiles for each city within the survey

[Find out more](#)

### Global Liveability Matrix

Our complete dataset ranks the challenges to an individual's lifestyle in 173 cities worldwide. Build your own models and evaluate key trends that might affect the development of cities in the future.

#### What's included?

- EIU's liveability rankings for 173 cities
- Overall liveability scores for all cities across five broad categories: stability, healthcare, culture and environment, education and infrastructure
- Customisable dataset with city ratings across 30 qualitative and quantitative factors

[Find out more](#)

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