Burson

2025 Ranking of Sports Cities

September 2025

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Paris tops the 2025 ranking of sports cities

Burson, the global communications leader purpose-built to create value for clients through reputation, shares its highly anticipated 2025 Ranking of Sport Cities, revealing Paris as the world's top sports city for the third consecutive year. Los Angeles maintains second place with New York City securing third. London remains in fourth position, while Madrid completes the top five.

This ranking identifies the top 100 cities from around the world with the strongest association with sport. It is based on both perception and in-depth quantitative analysis, including feedback from international sports leaders, sports media representatives, and industry experts, as well as enhanced social media and media coverage analytics.

The report reveals five key trends reshaping the global sports landscape: the Olympic lifecycle effect demonstrating predictable patterns of rise and decline; major international events boosting the profile of America's sports cities; investments in women's sports delivering accelerated ranking improvements; diversification of sports offerings outperforming one-off events; and AI's role in reshaping the sports landscape, enabling new competitive advantages.

Find out more about these trends in the full 2025 Ranking of Sport Cities!

2025 Ranking of Sports Cities

2025 Ranking of Sports Cities

1. Paris (FRA)

2. Los Angeles (USA)

3. New York (USA)

4. London (GRB)

5. Madrid (ESP)

6. Barcelona (ESP)

See the complete ranking on next page ➡

2025 Ranking of Sports Cities

With each edition of the Ranking, **the five lowest ranked cities drop** off the list and the top five non-listed cities named by the survey respondents are added. New cities that will be added to the 2026 edition of the Ranking are: Oklahoma City (USA), Orlando (USA), Ahmedabad (IND), Dublin (IRL) and Geneva (SUI).

'25	City	'24	'23
1	Paris (FRA)	1	1
2	Los Angeles (USA)	2	2
3	New York (USA)	3	4
4	London (GBR)	4	3
5	Madrid (ESP)	5	6
6	Barcelona (ESP)	8	7
7	Munich (GER)	16	13
8	Miami (USA)	9	16
9	Milan (ITA)	27	12
10	Manchester (GBR)	7	5
11	Lausanne (SUI)	6	9
12	Washington (USA)	10	17
13	Tokyo (JPN)	13	8
14	Beijing (CHN)	11	24
15	Chicago (USA)	12	14
16	Las Vegas (USA)	15	28
17	Boston (USA)	26	22
18	Mexico City (MEX)	30	18
19	Liverpool (GBR)	22	20
20	Brisbane (AUS)	25	15
21	Dubai (UAE)	21	19
22	Edmonton (CAN)	35	38
23	Abu Dhabi (UAE)	46	21
24	Toronto (CAN)	20	27
25	Doha (QAT)	34	11

'25	City	'24	'23
26	Philadelphia (USA)	28	32
27	Montreal (CAN)	58	43
28	Sydney (AUS)	18	44
29	Rome (ITA)	17	25
30	Monaco (MON)	Not included	Not included
31	Salt Lake City (USA)	33	63
32	Melbourne (AUS)	32	23
33	Rio de Janeiro (BRA)	61	74
34	Dallas (USA)	23	34
35	Berlin (GER)	38	26
36	Indianapolis (USA)	48	56
37	Amsterdam (NED)	53	40
38	Riyadh (KSA)	42	65
39	Mumbai (IND)	64	68
40	Atlanta (USA)	29	35
41	Houston (USA)	24	31
42	Budapest (HUN)	14	10
43	Athens (GRC)	54	57
44	Detroit (USA)	39	39
45	San Francisco (USA)	41	50
46	Istanbul (TUR)	65	52
47	Cortina d'Ampezzo (ITA)	82	Not included
48	Antalya (TUR)	62	82
49	Vancouver (CAN)	19	45
50	Hong Kong (HKG)	77	61

'25	City	'24	'23
51	Glasgow (GBR)	49	30
52	Singapore (SIN)	47	36
53	Cleveland (USA)	50	49
54	Denver (USA)	36	47
55	Calgary (CAN)	72	75
56	Edinburgh (GBR)	91	Not included
57	Gold Coast (AUS)	57	86
58	Buenos Aires (ARG)	71	77
59	Turin (ITA)	68	48
60	Innsbruck (AUT)	43	53
61	Copenhagen (DEN)	37	37
62	Colorado Springs (USA)	45	54
63	Shanghai (CHN)	60	55
64	Birmingham (GBR)	31	33
65	Lima (PER)	55	69
66	Tampa (USA)	Not included	Not included
67	Cairo (EGY)	95	79
68	Seoul (KOR)	67	72
69	Cape Town (RSA)	81	62
70	Zurich (SUI)	70	71
71	Oslo (NOR)	66	58
72	Chengdu (CHN)	44	41
73	Lillehammer (NOR)	51	70
74	Guangzhou (CHN)	79	81
75	Lyon (FRA)	Not included	Not included

'25	City	'24	'23
76	New Delhi (IND)	75	88
77	Ottawa (CAN)	83	85
78	Lisbon (POR)	69	83
79	Hamburg (GER)	84	51
80	Dakar (SEN)	73	76
81	Baku (AZE)	40	29
82	Perth (AUS)	Not included	Not included
83	Santiago de Chile (CHL)	87	73
84	Auckland (NZL)	88	66
85	Guadalajara (MEX)	90	92
86	Marseille (FRA)	76	59
87	Lagos (NGR)	78	90
88	Gothenburg (SWE)	63	60
89	Belgrade (SRB)	59	46
90	Stockholm (SWE)	52	64
91	Jeddah (KSA)	56	67
92	Rabat (MAR)	92	Not included
93	Cali (COL)	80	84
94	Sapporo (JPN)	89	89
95	Quebec City (CAN)	86	Not included
96	Jakarta (INA)	85	91
97	Bangkok (THA)	74	93
98	Rotterdam (NED)	93	94
99	Brussels (BEL)	Not included	Not included
100	Johannesburg (RSA)	94	95

Which cities are making the biggest moves in global sports?

The 2025 Ranking of Sports Cities reveals remarkable shifts across the sports landscape. Looking over the **past three years (2023-2025)**, which destinations are gaining momentum, losing ground or maintaining their elite status in the world of sports hosting ?

MAJOR RISERS

1. **Rio de Janeiro (BRA)**
   +41 positions (#74 → #33)
   Reinvested in major sports event hosting, including the future 2027 FIFA Women's World Cup, following the 2016 Rio Games.

2. **Abu Dhabi (UAE)**
   +23 positions (#46 → #23)
   Diversified its sports hosting strategy significantly beyond its traditional Formula 1 events.

3. **Milan (ITA)**
   +18 positions (#27 → #9)
   Gained momentum as a co-host for the 2026 Winter Olympic Games.

4. **Edmonton (CAN)**
   +16 positions (#38 → #22)
   Strong international relations strategy within the sports world.

5. **Monaco (MON)**
   New entry at #30
   Host of annual prestigious events such as Monaco Grand Prix and the Monte-Carlo Rolex Tennis Masters.

MAJOR DROPPERS

1. **Baku (AZE)**
   -52 positions (#29 → #81)
   Reduced international event hosting and global visibility.

2. **Stockholm (SWE)**
   -38 positions (#52 → #90)
   Diminished event acquisition success and regional competition.

3. **Birmingham (GBR)**
   -33 positions (#31 → #64)
   Overshadowed by stronger UK destinations; limited major events.

4. **Budapest (HUN)**
   -32 positions (#10 → #42)
   Despite aggressive strategy to bring international federations HQ, hosted fewer major events than previous years.

5. **Vancouver (CAN)**
   -30 positions (#19 → #49)
   Faced increased competition from other Canadian cities and a shift in focus towards smaller, regional events.

STABLE LEADERS

1. **Paris (FRA)**
   Maintained #1 (2023-2025)
   Host of the 2024 Summer Olympic Games, it successfully drew the world's attention before, during and after the Games.

2. **Los Angeles (USA)**
   Maintained #2 (2023-2025)
   Future host of the 2028 Summer Olympic Games and home to leading sports franchises.

3. **New York (USA), London (GBR), Madrid (ESP)**
   Maintained #3-6 (2023-2025)
   Strong diversification beyond event hosting, leveraging their world-known clubs and leagues.
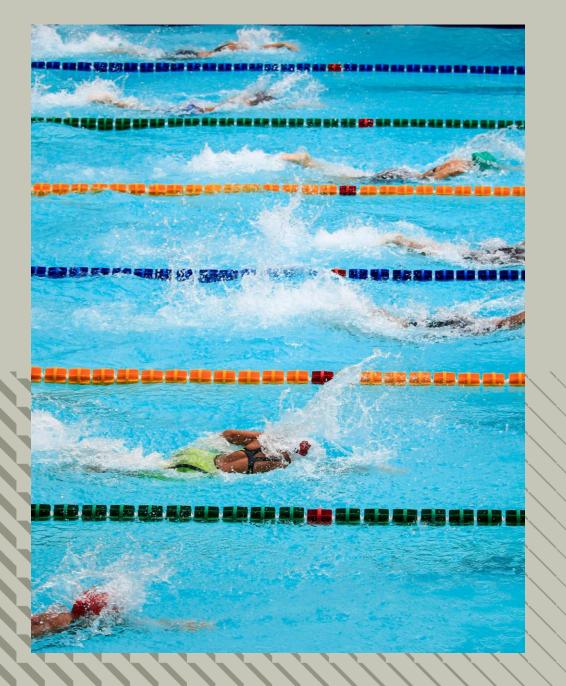
4. **Tokyo (JPN)**
   Maintained #8-#13 (2023-2025)
   Still surfing on its 2021 Games legacy, planning to be back with the hosting of the World Athletics Championships in Sept 2025.

5. **Dubai (UAE)**
   Maintained #19-#21 (2023-2025)
   Successful strategy of combining both elite and mass participation events for the locals.

Key sports city trends

#1 **KEY SPORT TRENDS**

The Olympic lifecycle effect: rise, peak, decline, recovery

The data reveals a predictable pattern in how Olympic and Paralympic hosting impacts a city's standing in the sports world. Rather than providing permanent elevation, Olympic and Paralympic hosting creates a distinct cycle of visibility and influence.

Cities experience dramatic pre-Games momentum (Milan rising 18 positions to #9 ahead of 2026), peak visibility during the Olympic year (Paris maintaining #1), followed by a post-Games decline (Tokyo dropping from #8 in 2023 to #13 in 2025 post-2021 Games). However, strategic cities can achieve recovery, rather quickly or later, through legacy activation, as demonstrated by Rio de Janeiro's remarkable 41-position improvement (#74 to #33) following its post-2016 decline, now leveraging Olympic venues for the 2027 FIFA Women's World Cup.

This pattern suggests cities must plan for the full Olympic lifecycle, not just the Games themselves. Barcelona (#6) exemplifies successful long-term Olympic legacy management, maintaining elite status decades after hosting backed by strong football

presence, while other former hosts have struggled with the post-Olympic transition.

Based on this trend, several predictable movements are expected: Brisbane (#20) should rise significantly approaching its 2032 Games, while Los Angeles (#2) will likely strengthen ahead of 2028, potentially challenging Paris which will maintain #1 through 2025 before an expected decline. Milan (#9) and Cortina d'Ampezzo (#47) will continue upward through 2026, while Salt Lake City (#31) should improve as it prepares for the 2034 Winter Olympics. Cities bidding for 2036 will see ranking improvements during the bidding process, creating strategic opportunities for timing investments to maximise global sports positioning.

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#2 **KEY SPORT TRENDS**

Major international events boost profiles of North America's sports cities

North American cities, while still significantly benefiting from their powerful professional sports franchises and leagues, alongside robust college sports tournaments, have recently heavily invested in attracting the world's biggest sports events. This strategic pivot is clearly paying off, as the hosting of these major events has provided the impetus for even greater jumps in their global sports rankings.

The USA is set to host an unprecedented series of major international competitions between 2025 and 2033, including the FIFA Club World Cup 2025 (recently hosted), the FIFA World Cup 2026, the 2028 Olympic Games, and for the first time, the Rugby World Cup (men's in 2031, women's in 2033). This concerted effort has significantly elevated the profile of US cities in the global sports landscape.

Los Angeles remains strong at #2, hosting both the Club World Cup and upcoming World Cup matches, alongside preparations for the 2028 Olympics. New York stays at #3, benefiting from hosting the FIFA Club World Cup final and future FIFA World Cup games. Miami has climbed to #8 (from #16 in 2023), boosted by both FIFA tournaments establishing it

as a year-round football destination. Boston jumped nine spots to #17, demonstrating the rapid impact of World Cup selection on a city's profile.

This trend extends beyond the US: Mexico City (#18) rose 12 spots in anticipation of 2026. Canadian cities are also seeing a rise in their ranking, especially Montreal (#27 – gaining 31 positions) and Edmonton (#22 – gaining 13 positions). However, this is due to hosting other major events and outreach strategies, as they are not FIFA World Cup 2026 hosts.

As 2026 approaches, these cities are likely to climb further, with the greatest gains seen by those that convert World Cup attention into lasting improvements for sports tourism.

#3 KEY SPORT TRENDS

Investing in women's sports is a strategy that pays off

Results of the 2025 Ranking of Sports Cities reveal a direct correlation between strategic investment in women's sports and a city's accelerated rise in sports prominence and overall profile. This trend is becoming increasingly visible across continents, with global revenues in women's elite sports are expected to surpass US$1.8 billion in 2025.

The upcoming 2027 FIFA Women's World Cup is already reshaping this landscape. Rio de Janeiro, one of the host cities, is reactivating its 2016 Olympic venues for the tournament, part of a revitalisation strategy that aligns with its reported jump in sports profile.

Mid-sized cities are finding particular success through this strategy. A good example is Lyon entering the rankings at the 75th position largely on the strength of its dominant women's football team, which has won eight Champions League titles.

The trend also extends beyond football. New York has been active in promoting women's sports, including the WNBA's New York Liberty and a renewed format the Mixed Doubles at the US Open Tennis, both drivers of widespread attention.

London, though already a major sports city, further consolidated its women's sports leadership with the return of a WTA 500 tournament to Queen's Club (after 50+ years) and hosting the Women's Rugby World Cup finals in 2025.

Looking ahead, cities actively bidding for or hosting women's sports events, such as Zurich (stable at rank 70), may see a jump in the 2026 Ranking, as it was one of the 2025 UEFA Women's Euro host cities. Other Swiss cities, including Geneva, a host city of the same event, will make their debut in the Ranking in 2026 – and Lausanne, which will host the Grand Départ of the Women's Tour de France, should also see a jump in the Ranking. Indianapolis, which recently hosted the WNBA All-Star Game and will host the 2028 NCAA Women's Final Four, is also poised for further gains.

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#4 KEY SPORT TRENDS

Diversification beats one-off events for sports tourism

The global sports tourism landscape is evolving, moving beyond isolated events to embrace year-round sports ecosystems. This shift fosters more resilient economies, as cities that balance prestigious events, regular league fixtures, and daily sports attractions rise in the rankings.
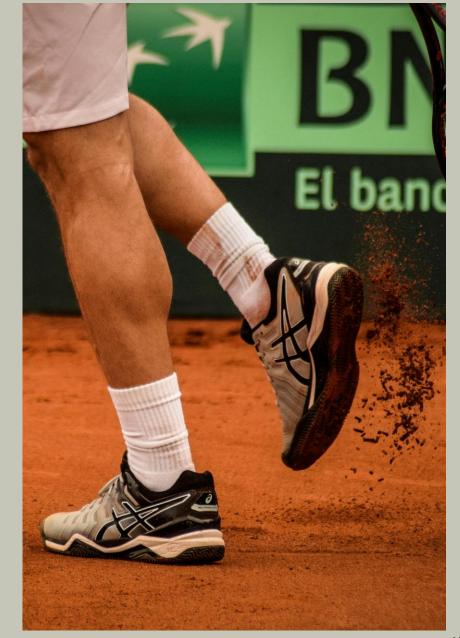
Top-performing cities strategically diversify their sports portfolios. Madrid (#5) secures its position by balancing two elite football clubs and major tennis events like the Madrid Open. Miami (#8) has similarly elevated its global sports destination status through a diverse mix, including Lionel Messi's presence with Inter Miami, the annual Formula 1 Miami Grand Prix and the Miami Open tennis tournament.
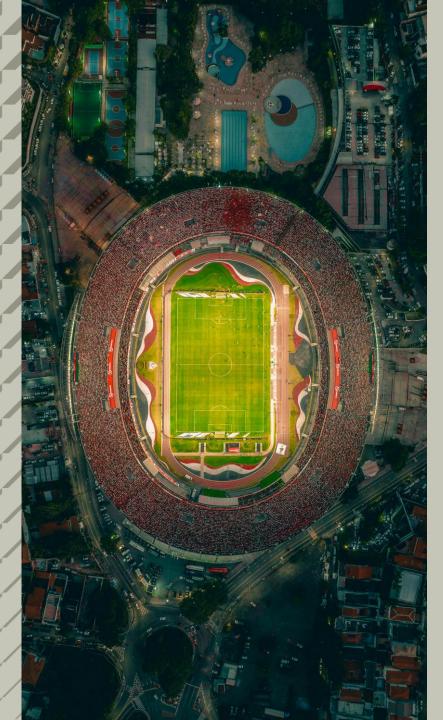
Lausanne (#11), the Olympic Capital, showcases a perfect example of diversification, playing a dual role as both the epicentre of international sports governance – home to over 60 International Sports Federations and Organisations (IFs) and their associated meetings or conferences (IF Forum, FIM Awards, Olympism 365 Summit) – and a prominent host of major sporting

events, such as the FIBA U19 Basketball World Cup 2025.

In the Middle East, cities like Dubai (#21), Abu Dhabi (#23) and Riyadh (#38) leverage sports to boost tourism and global appeal. Abu Dhabi's remarkable jump from #46 to #23 is anchored by consistent hosting of major international events like the Formula 1 Abu Dhabi Grand Prix and prominent golf and tennis tournaments. Riyadh's rising rank reflects Saudi Arabia's growing investment across many sports, from golf (LIV Golf) and football (Spanish Soccer Cup) to mixed martial arts (UFC Fight Night).

Looking ahead, Jeddah (#91), having hosted numerous significant events such as the F1 H2O and the Next Gen ATP Finals, is poised for a potential jump in the rankings.

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#5 **KEY SPORT TRENDS**

AI is reshaping the sports landscape

Technology and sport have long been intertwined, a partnership that has consistently pushed the boundaries of innovation. In recent years, this collaboration has delivered myriad advancements, from the immersive experiences of virtual reality and the precision of wearable technology to the sophisticated infrastructure of smart stadiums. Yet, amidst this wave of progress, one particular frontier, artificial intelligence (AI), stands poised at the cusp of a true explosion.

Cities, in their pursuit of leveraging sport for reputational gain, can significantly benefit from AI. This extends not only to enhancing their own communication efforts around sports initiatives but also, crucially, to how the events and leagues they host utilise AI to amplify the very voice and reach of sport itself.

Real Madrid is cementing its status as a sports tech leader, bolstering Madrid's #5 ranking. This has in part been achieved through its Madrid Innovation District (MID) and a pivotal partnership with Adobe. The latter leverages AI and real-time data to deliver hyper-personalised fan engagement to over 600 million global fans, optimising content and marketing across all channels. Munich's jump from #16 to #7 partially

reflects FC Bayern Munich's digital initiatives, leveraging AI to improve operational efficiency and fan engagement workflows.

Similarly, Boston's significant jump from #26 to #17 reflects not just its strong base of successful sports teams but its adoption of cutting-edge digital engagement strategies.

Looking ahead, continued digital acceleration is expected from cities investing in next-generation fan experiences. Given the pace of AI development, it would be hard to predict which cities will take the lead and benefit from increased visibility thanks to AI investment.

Methodology

Methodology

The 2025 Ranking of Sports Cities ranks the top 100 cities worldwide that are most strongly associated with sport. The ranking is based on a combination of perception-based insights and in-depth quantitative analysis.

Specifically, the ranking reflects the views of International Federation Presidents, Secretaries General, Heads of Events, sports industry experts, and over 1,000 sports media representatives from across the globe.

In addition to survey responses, a comprehensive digital analysis was conducted using the social media analytics tool Brandwatch. This analysis measures the total number of mentions of the word "sport" associated with each city across platforms such as X, Instagram, Facebook, Reddit, blogs and websites. Search terms were used in English, French, Spanish and German, covering various spellings of both "sport" and city names. The same analysis was carried out using the PR and communication platform Muck Rack,

which tracked the number of articles mentioning the word "sport" in association with each city.

To emphasise the growing significance of digital presence, the digital Brandwatch analysis component was given the highest weighting (0.40) in the overall score. This was followed by the views of International Sports Federations (0.25), sports industry experts (0.15), and media (0.20 – equally split between journalist opinions and Muck Rack article counts).

With each new edition of the ranking, the five lowest-ranked cities are removed, and the five highest-ranked cities mentioned by survey respondents that are not yet on the list are added.

What's new?

The 2025 edition of the Ranking introduces several methodological enhancements to provide more comprehensive insights into global sports city performance. The main change, in addition to some weighting adjustments, is the integration of:

Media Coverage Analysis:
For the first time, the ranking incorporates quantitative analysis of media coverage through the Muck Rack platform, tracking the volume of articles mentioning sport in association with each city.

Data range:
To better align with the sports calendar, data (from Brandwatch and Muckrack) now covers the period from July 1, 2024, to June 30, 2025, instead of January to December of each year as in previous editions.

2024 Ranking of Sports Cities

About Burson

Burson is the global communications leader built to create value for clients through reputation. With highly specialised teams, industry-leading technologies and breakthrough creative, we help brands and businesses redefine reputation as a competitive advantage so they can lead today and into the future. Burson is part of WPP (LSE/NYSE: WPP), the creative transformation company. Learn more at www.bursonglobal.com.

This ranking is an initiative from Burson's

Lausanne office, a regional excellence centre in sport, and based in the Olympic Capital – where over 60 International Sports Federations and organisations are based.

Burson, a leading global partner, collaborates with cities, regions, countries and sports stakeholders to maximise the reputational benefits of hosting major events.

A true believer in the power of sport, Burson helps its clients realise their full potential in the sector; whether by identifying the right events, securing competitive bids, or significantly activating the communications and PR for major sporting events.

For more information

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