

A man with short dark hair and a goatee, wearing a bright red tank top, is looking directly at the camera with a serious expression. He is positioned in the foreground, slightly to the left. The background is a hazy, high-angle view of a city skyline, likely New York City, with numerous skyscrapers visible under a clear sky.

2026 Ranking of Sports Cities

SEPTEMBER 2026

Burson

New York Rises to No. 1 in Burson's 2026 Ranking of Sports Cities

Burson, the global communications leader purpose-built to create value through reputation, today unveils its **2026 Ranking of Sports Cities, revealing New York City as the world's leading sports city.** Paris moves to second place after topping the ranking for three consecutive years, while **Los Angeles, London** and **Madrid** complete the global top five.

The ranking identifies the 100 cities most strongly associated with sport worldwide, combining stakeholder perceptions with media, social and reputation analysis to understand how cities build influence through sport.

WHAT THE 2026 RANKING OF SPORTS CITIES REVEALS

#1

Co-hosting
creates new
winners

#2

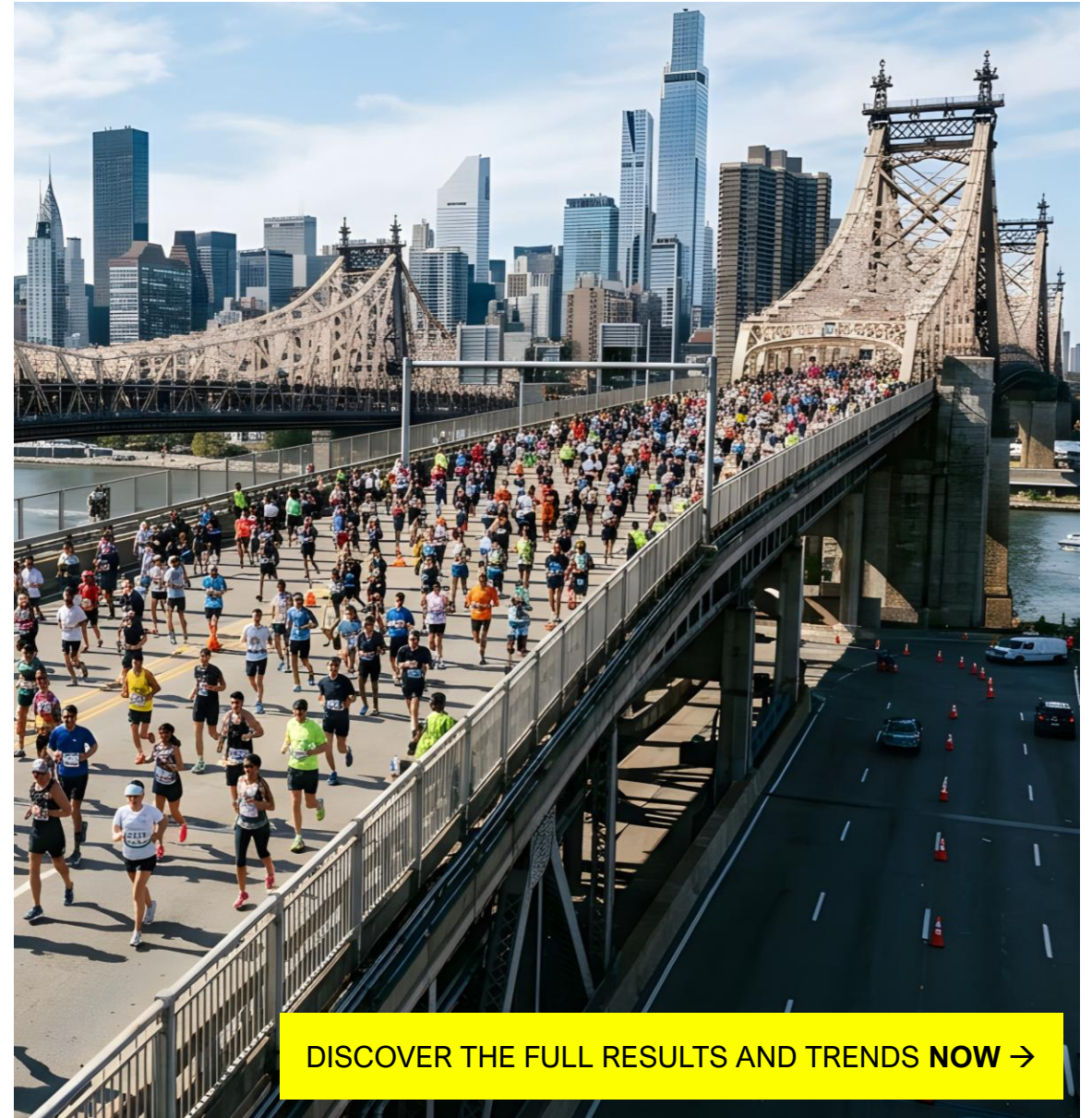
Few cities
combine both
visibility and
influence

#3

Women sport
and emerging
disciplines
create new
opportunities

#4

Reputation
needs an
ecosystem



2026 RANKING OF SPORTS CITIES

2026 Ranking of Sports Cities



The 2026 Top Five

	1. New York (USA) ▲2 This year, New York rises to No. 1, overtaking Paris after three consecutive years at the top. A landmark year featuring the Knicks' NBA Championship and the FIFA World Cup Final at New York New Jersey Stadium has reinforced the city's global profile. More importantly, New York's strength lies in a year-round sports ecosystem that combines major professional franchises, international events and sustained global media attention.
	2. Paris (FRA) ▼1 Paris remains at the forefront of global sport, continuing to benefit from the legacy and international profile of the Paris 2024 Games.
	3. Los Angeles (USA) ▼1 Momentum continues to build as Los Angeles prepares to host the next Olympic and Paralympic Games in 2028.
	4. London (GBR) (-) London's strength lies in diversification. Major events, global leagues and a constant flow of international competition keep the city relevant year after year.
	5. Madrid (ESP) (-) Home to one of the world's most iconic football clubs and a regular host of major international events, Madrid continues to strengthen its global sports profile.

2026 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 2027 edition of the Ranking are: Astana (KAZ), Helsinki (FIN), Nice (FRA), Valencia (ESP), Warsaw (POL).

26'	City	25'	24'
1	New York (USA)	3	3
2	Paris (FRA)	1	1
3	Los Angeles (USA)	2	2
4	London (GBR)	4	4
5	Madrid (ESP)	5	5
6	Barcelona (ESP)	6	8
7	Milan (ITA)	9	27
8	Lausanne (SUI)	11	6
9	Munich (GER)	7	16
10	Manchester (GBR)	10	7
11	Washington (USA)	12	10
12	Miami (USA)	8	9
13	Beijing (CHN)	14	11
14	Chicago (USA)	15	12
15	Budapest (HUN)	42	14
16	Tokyo (JPN)	13	13
17	Toronto (CAN)	24	20
18	Mexico City (MEX)	18	30
19	Boston (USA)	17	26
20	Las Vegas (USA)	16	15
21	Rome (ITA)	29	17
22	Liverpool (GBR)	19	22
23	Rio de Janeiro (BRA)	33	61
24	Sydney (AUS)	28	18
25	Monaco (MON)	30	Not Included

26'	City	25'	24'
26	Melbourne (AUS)	32	32
27	Doha (QAT)	25	34
28	Atlanta (USA)	40	29
29	Dubai (UAE)	21	21
30	Salt Lake City (USA)	31	33
31	Brisbane (AUS)	20	25
32	Houston (USA)	41	24
33	San Francisco (USA)	45	41
34	Berlin (GER)	35	38
35	Vancouver (CAN)	49	19
36	Philadelphia (USA)	26	28
37	Cortina d'Ampezzo (ITA)	47	82
38	Abu Dhabi (UAE)	23	46
39	Dallas (USA)	34	23
40	Singapore (SGP)	52	47
41	Shanghai (CHN)	63	60
42	Innsbruck (AUT)	60	43
43	Detroit (USA)	44	39
44	Edmonton (CAN)	22	35
45	Denver (USA)	54	36
46	Cleveland (USA)	53	50
47	Dakar (SEN)	80	73
48	Indianapolis (USA)	36	48
49	Zurich (SUI)	70	70
50	Glasgow (GBR)	51	49

26'	City	25'	24'
51	Mumbai (IND)	39	64
52	Montreal (CAN)	27	58
53	Hong Kong (CHN)	50	77
54	Oslo (NOR)	71	66
55	Athens (GRE)	43	54
56	Lyon (FRA)	75	Not Included
57	Birmingham (GBR)	64	31
58	Buenos Aires (ARG)	58	71
59	Baku (AZE)	81	40
60	Istanbul (TUR)	46	65
61	Chengdu (CHN)	72	44
62	Tampa (USA)	66	Not Included
63	Lisbon (POR)	78	69
64	Orlando (USA)	Not Included	Not Included
65	New Delhi (IND)	76	75
66	Ahmedabad (IND)	Not Included	Not Included
67	Geneva (SUI)	Not Included	Not Included
68	Riyadh (KSA)	38	42
69	Cairo (EGY)	67	95
70	Lima (PER)	65	55
71	Ottawa (CAN)	77	83
72	Copenhagen (DEN)	61	37
73	Gold Coast (AUS)	57	57
74	Amsterdam (NED)	37	53
75	Turin (ITA)	59	68

26'	City	25'	24'
76	Marseille (FRA)	86	76
77	Calgary (CAN)	55	72
78	Hamburg (GER)	79	84
79	Guadalajara (MEX)	85	90
80	Seoul (KOR)	68	67
81	Quebec City (CAN)	95	86
82	Lillehammer (NOR)	73	51
83	Stockholm (SWE)	90	52
84	Cali (COL)	93	80
85	Cape Town (RSA)	69	81
86	Oklahoma City (USA)	Not Included	Not Included
87	Dublin (IRL)	Not Included	Not Included
88	Antalya (TUR)	48	62
89	Edinburgh (GBR)	56	91
90	Lagos (NGR)	87	78
91	Auckland (NZL)	84	88
92	Gothenburg (SWE)	88	63
93	Guangzhou (CHN)	74	79
94	Rabat (MAR)	92	92
95	Colorado Springs (USA)	62	45
96	Perth (AUS)	82	Not Included
97	Belgrade (SRB)	89	59
98	Jeddah (KSA)	91	56
99	Sapporo (JPN)	94	89
100	Santiago de Chile (CHI)	83	87

Cities Making the Biggest Moves

▲ Biggest climbs of the year

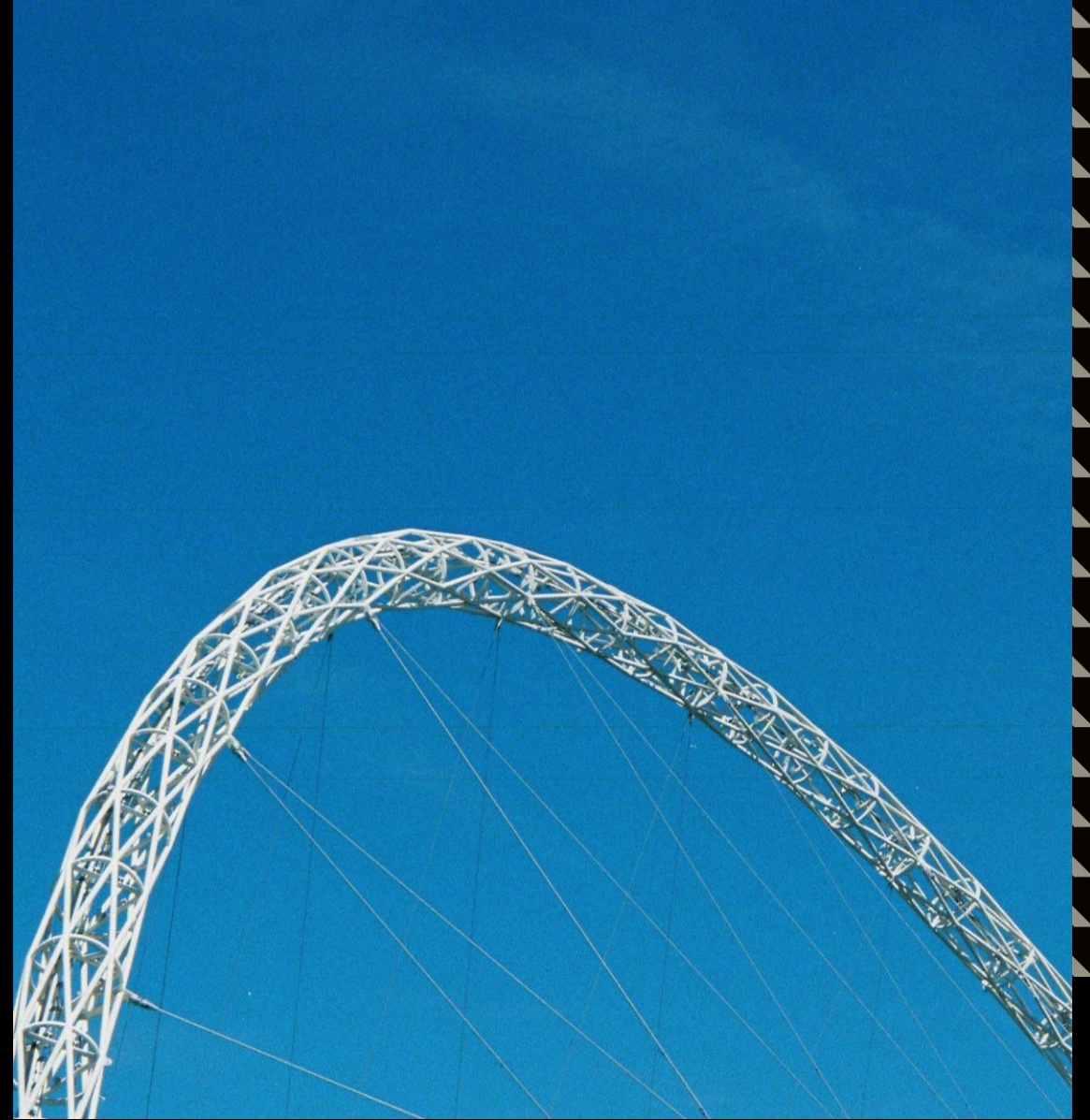
▲ 33 – Dakar From #80 to #47	Preparing to host the Dakar 2026 Youth Olympic Games, the first Olympic sporting event ever held in Africa, has placed Dakar at the centre of international attention ahead of the Games.
▲ 27 – Budapest From #42 to #15	From the 2026 UEFA Champions League Final to international athletics and aquatics championships, Budapest's steady cadence of major sporting events reinforced its reputation as a proven multi-sport.
▲ 22 – Shanghai From #63 to #41	A year-round calendar spanning Formula 1, ATP tennis, rowing, archery, equestrian sport and endurance events continues to expand Shanghai's international sports profile.
▲ 22 – Baku From #81 to #59	Formula 1, a strong gymnastics calendar, the SportAccord Convention 2027 and the award of the World Judo Championships have renewed attention around Baku's major-event ambitions.
▲ 21 – Zurich From #70 to #49	FIFA's global headquarters, UEFA Women's EURO 2025 matches and the 2026 IIHF Ice Hockey World Championship reinforce Zurich's influence both on and beyond the field of play.

▼ Biggest declines of the year

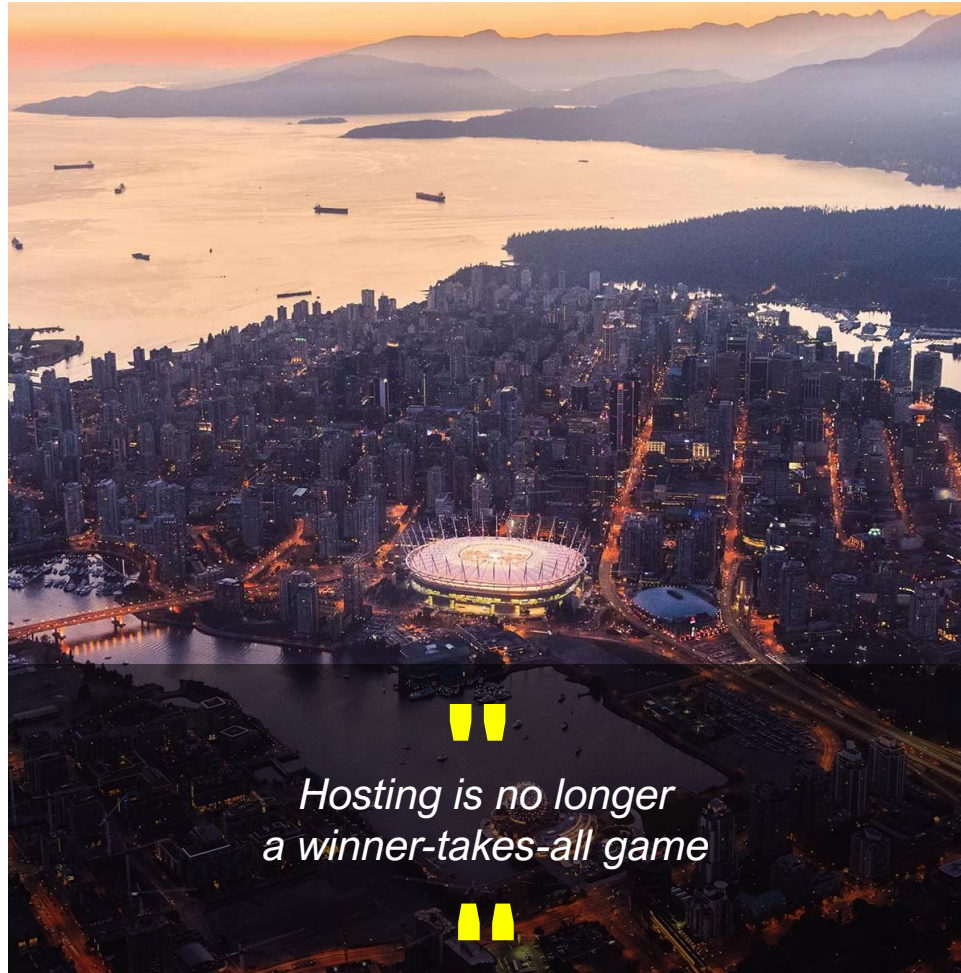
▼ 40 – Antalya From #48 to #88	After benefiting from the UCI Gran Fondo World Series and World Rowing Beach Sprint Championships in 2025, Antalya generated less international visibility during this year's measurement period.
▼ 37 – Amsterdam From #37 to #74	Amsterdam remains a leading sports destination, but a quieter event calendar allowed faster-rising cities to gain ground this year.
▼ 33 – Edinburgh From #56 to #89	After benefiting from a strong international rugby calendar in 2025, including the Men's Six Nations Championship, Edinburgh returned closer to its historical position in the rankings.
▼ 33 – Colorado Springs From #62 to #95	Despite its central role within the U.S. Olympic and Paralympic movement, Colorado Springs generated less international visibility than faster-rising cities this year.
▼ 30 – Riyadh From #38 to #68	The global attention generated by the Esports World Cup 2025, amplified by Cristiano Ronaldo's ambassador role, proved difficult to replicate during this year's measurement period.

2026 RANKING OF SPORTS CITIES

2026 Key Findings



Co-hosting creates new winners



Hosting is no longer
a winner-takes-all game

FINDING 01

Multi-host events are redistributing reputational value. Instead of concentrating attention in one destination, major events now lift several cities at once and the largest gains go to the hosts with the most room to grow.

WHAT THE RANKING SHOWS

MILAN & CORTINA D'AMPEZZO

Both hosts gained, but the sharper move came from Cortina (#37, +10 this year and +45 since 2024) against Milan (#7, +2 and +20 since 2024). Co-hosting turned a resort destination into a recognised sports city.

FIFA WORLD CUP 2026

Sixteen hosts, sixteen different outcomes. Vancouver (#35, +14), San Francisco (#33, +12), Atlanta (#28, +12) and Houston (#32, +9) gained most, while New York (#1, +2) and Los Angeles (#3, -1) largely consolidated positions they already held.

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR CITIES

Co-hosting lowers the price of entry, but it does not guarantee a return. Secondary hosts have the most headroom. Their task is to turn a shared event into a distinct story of their own.

What Two of 2026's Biggest Sporting Events Tell Us About Hosting and Reputation

2026 is defined by two of the world's biggest sporting events, offering a rare side-by-side view of how shared hosting shapes city reputation. Data runs from 1 July 2025 to 30 June 2026 — capturing the full build-up and Games period for Milano Cortina, but only the build-up and opening two weeks of the FIFA World Cup, which was still in its early stages when the measurement window closed.

DEEP DIVE - FINDING 01

MILANO CORTINA 2026

MILAN

▲ 20 places

CORTINA D'AMPEZZO

▲ 45 places

#27

→

#9

→

#7

2024

2025

2026

#82

→

#47

→

#37

2024

2025

2026

FIFA WORLD CUP 2026

LARGEST GAINS

Vancouver → #35 ▲ 14

Atlanta → #28 ▲ 12

San Francisco → #33 ▲ 12

Houston → #32 ▲ 9

Toronto → #17 ▲ 7

Guadalajara → #79 ▲ 6

ESTABLISHED / NON-GAINERS

Philadelphia → #36 ▼ 10

Dallas → #39 ▼ 5

Miami → #12 ▼ 4

Boston → #19 ▼ 2

Los Angeles → #3 ▼ 1

New York → #1 ▲ 2

THREE FACTORS THAT SHAPE THE RETURN

01 STARTING POINT

The same event produces greater movement where it changes what a city is known for. Established sports capitals tend to reinforce existing reputations, while lower-profile hosts have greater room to gain recognition and climb the ranking.

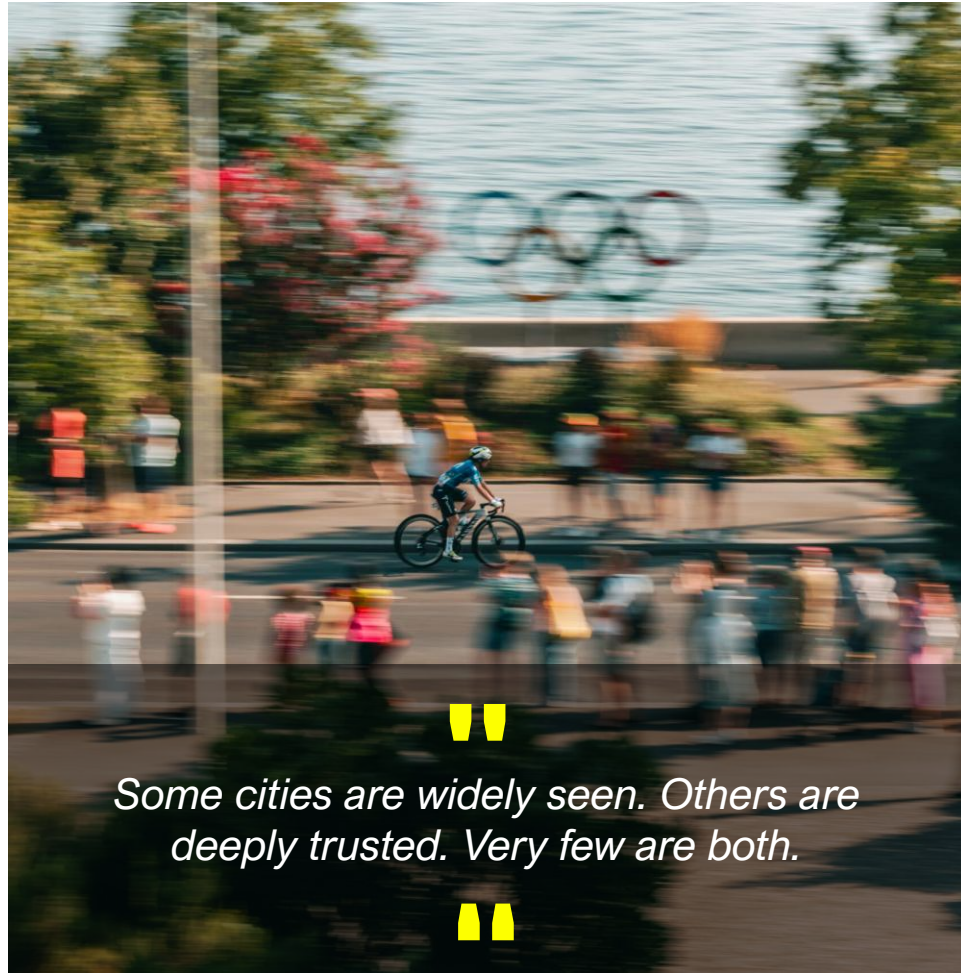
02 DISTINCTIVE ROLE

Host cities benefit most when they create a clear and memorable identity around the event. The strongest reputational gains come from destinations that stand for something specific, rather than simply appearing on the host list.

03 ACTIVATION BEFORE THE EVENT

Reputation starts moving long before competition begins. Cities that use the build-up phase to engage stakeholders, generate visibility and expand their sports offer are better positioned to convert hosting into lasting reputational value.

Few cities combine both visibility and influence



FINDING 02

Not all sports reputation is earned in public. Increasingly, cities are gaining competitive advantage through recognition among federations, governing bodies and rights holders rather than media attention alone.

WHAT THE RANKING SHOWS

BUILT ON PUBLIC ATTENTION

Washington (#11, +1) owes much of its position to the scale of its public and media presence. Miami (#12, -4) and Mexico City (#18, stable) sit in similar territory: widely followed, with room to grow inside the international sports community.

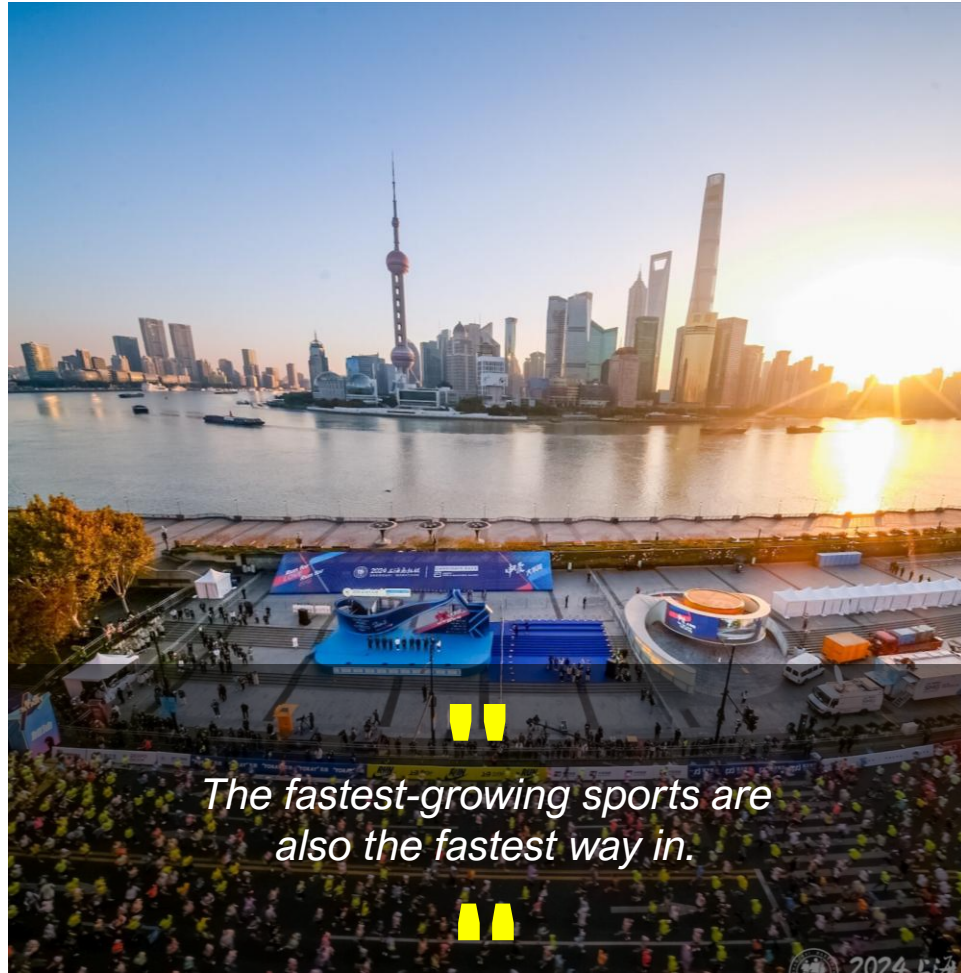
BUILT ON STAKEHOLDER STANDING

Lausanne (#8, +3) reflects the opposite balance: comparatively little public conversation, but strong recognition among federations, experts and specialist media. Monaco (#25, +5) holds a similar position.

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR CITIES

The two are not interchangeable. Visibility can be won with a single event; standing inside the sports ecosystem takes years to build, and is far more durable once earned.

Women sport and emerging disciplines create new opportunities



FINDING 03

Cities no longer need a mega-event to strengthen their sporting reputation. A changing global sports landscape, driven by the growth of women's sport, new audiences, emerging disciplines and innovative event formats, is creating new opportunities for cities to build visibility, differentiate themselves and gain international recognition.

WHAT THE RANKING SHOWS

URBAN & EMERGING DISCIPLINES

Innsbruck (#42, +18) has built its rise on sport climbing, hosting the discipline's leading annual competition. Shanghai (#41, +22) is climbing through esports, sustaining a year-round competitive calendar rather than a single event.

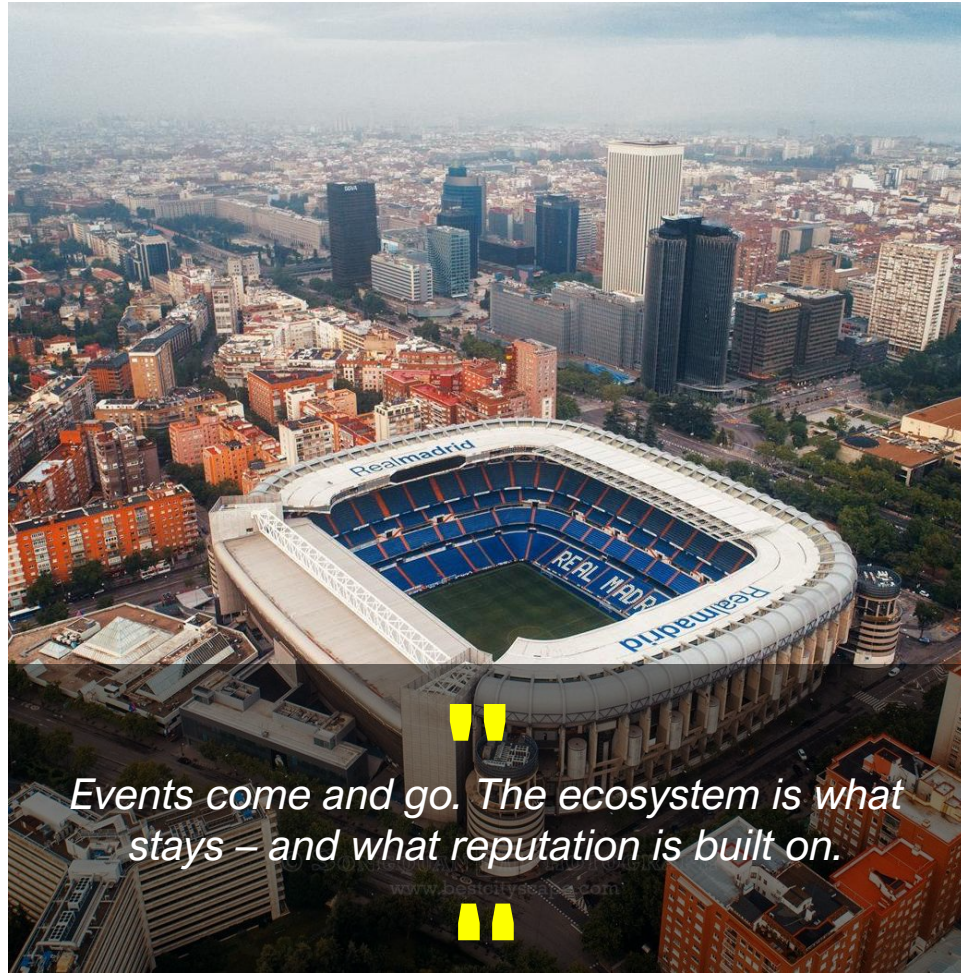
WOMEN'S SPORT

UEFA Women's EURO 2025 lifted its Swiss hosts: Zurich (#49, +21) and Geneva (#67, new entry). Rio de Janeiro (#23, +10) continues to climb ahead of the FIFA Women's World Cup 2027.

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR CITIES

For cities without mega-event budgets, emerging disciplines are the most accessible entry point into the global sports conversation, and the space where a distinctive position can still be claimed.

Reputation needs an ecosystem



FINDING 04

A major event – or the award of one – can lift a city's profile quickly, but the ranking shows that a moment of attention rarely holds on its own. What holds is an ecosystem: resident clubs and federations, a year-round calendar and continuous engagement with governing bodies.

WHAT THE RANKING SHOWS

WHEN THE SPOTLIGHT MOVES ON

Despite preparing to host the 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games, Brisbane (#31, -11) fell eleven places this year. The award of a major event can generate visibility, but visibility alone does not automatically translate into lasting reputational standing.

WHEN THE CALENDAR NEVER STOPS

Madrid (#5, stable) has held its position for three consecutive editions without hosting a mega-event. Resident clubs with global reach and a year-round calendar keep it present. Barcelona (#6, stable) and Manchester (#10, stable) hold ground the same way.

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR CITIES

A bid win or a hosting slot buys a moment of attention. Only an ecosystem turns it into reputation, which is why the strongest cities invest between events, not only around them.

What these findings mean for international sports federations and organisations

The ranking highlights that federations influence city reputation in more ways than simply awarding events. Through host selection, stakeholder engagement, competition formats and year-round event portfolios, they help shape which cities gain visibility, credibility and long-term standing within global sport.

FROM FINDING 01 — CO-HOSTING

The rise of co-hosting shows that federations increasingly influence not just which event is hosted, but how reputational benefits are shared across multiple destinations. Cities that might previously have sat outside the spotlight are now becoming part of the global sports conversation.

FROM FINDING 02 — VISIBILITY & INFLUENCE

Not every city enters the sports ecosystem through hosting rights. Congresses, stakeholder programmes, observer opportunities and institutional relationships can be equally important in building long-term connections between cities and organised sport.

FROM FINDING 03 — EMERGING DISCIPLINES

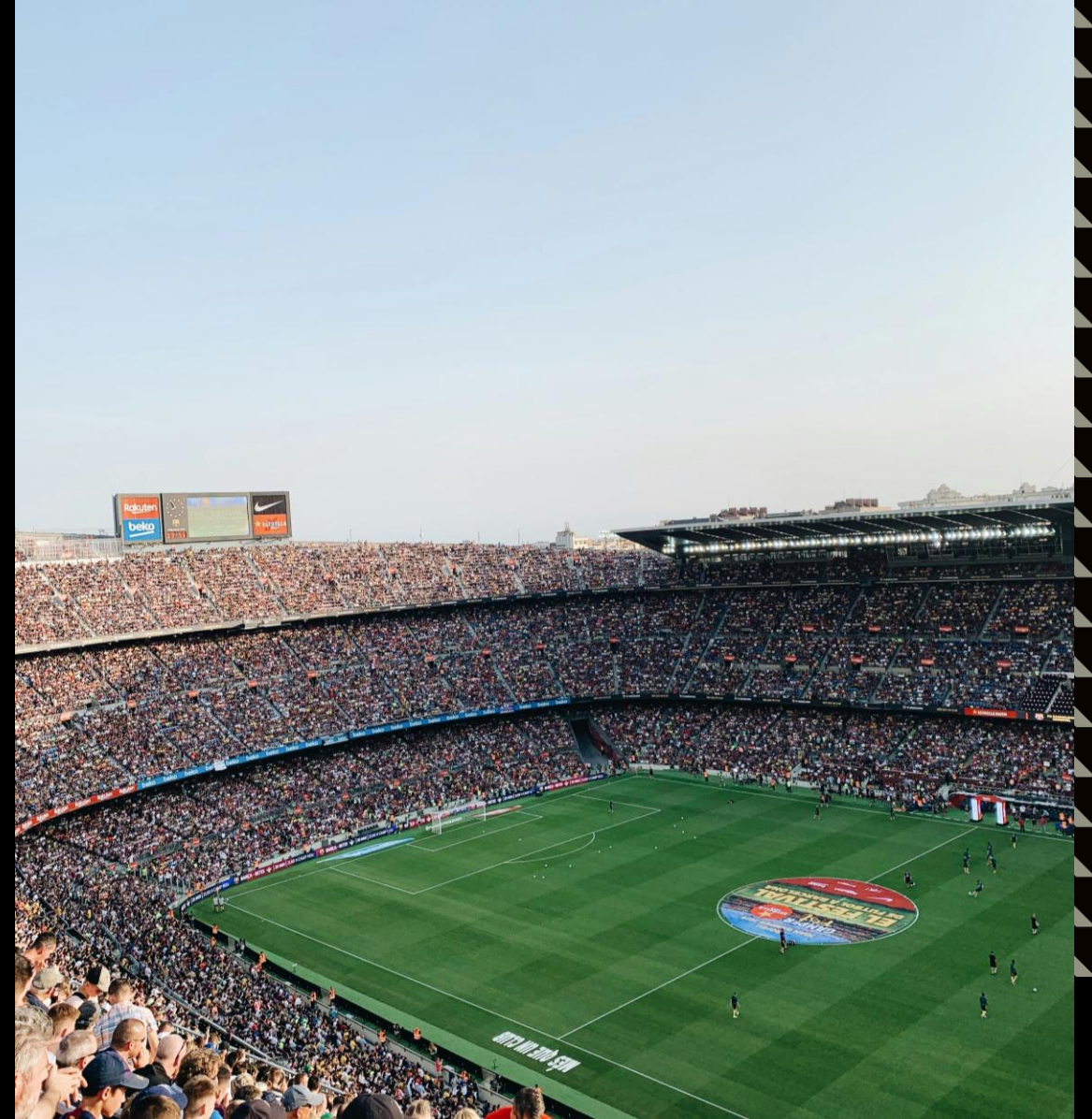
The emergence of new disciplines, formats and competition models is expanding the range of cities able to participate in international sport. These events often require different assets, attract different audiences and allow destinations to tell different stories about themselves.

FROM FINDING 04 — ECOSYSTEMS

Reputational value is not confined to flagship events. Continental championships, annual circuits and recurring competitions keep cities present across the calendar, and the ranking shows that this continuity is what sustains a position over time.

2026 RANKING OF SPORTS CITIES

Methodology



How the Ranking of Sports Cities is built

The 2026 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.

WHO SHAPES THE RANKING

GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES

The ranking reflects the views of International Sports Organisations (ISO) and Ifs Presidents, Secretaries General, Heads of Events, sports industry experts and more than 1,000 sports media representatives worldwide.

DIGITAL + EDITORIAL ANALYSIS

Media and social media coverage were measured from 1 July 2025 to 30 June 2026. Brandwatch tracked sport-related mentions of each city across X, Instagram, Facebook, Reddit, blogs and websites, while Muck Rack monitored media articles associating sport with each city.

SEARCH LANGUAGES

ENGLISH

FRENCH

SPANISH

GERMAN

Searches include spelling variations of "sport" and city names.

HOW THE SCORE IS WEIGHTED

Digital presence carries the highest weight, reflecting its growing role in shaping sports reputation.

QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS - 50%

40%

DIGITAL ATTENTION

Conversation across digital, social and online channels.

10%

EDITORIAL VISIBILITY

Presence in sports news coverage.

STAKEHOLDER PERCEPTIONS - 50%

25%

INTERNATIONAL SPORTS ORGANISATIONS (ISO) & IFS

Recognition among international federations and sports organisations.

15%

SPORTS INDUSTRY EXPERTS

Recognition among sports industry experts.

10%

SPORTS MEDIA

Recognition among specialist sports journalists.

KEEPING THE TOP 100 CURRENT

Each edition removes the five lowest-ranked cities and adds the five highest-mentioned cities not already on the list.

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

Should you have any questions, please contact us:



Héloïse Signe

Director

heloise.signe@bursonglobal.com

[Sports & Entertainment | Burson](#)



Stefany Chatelain Cardenas

Account Manager

stefany.cardenas@bursonglobal.com

[Sports & Entertainment | Burson](#)