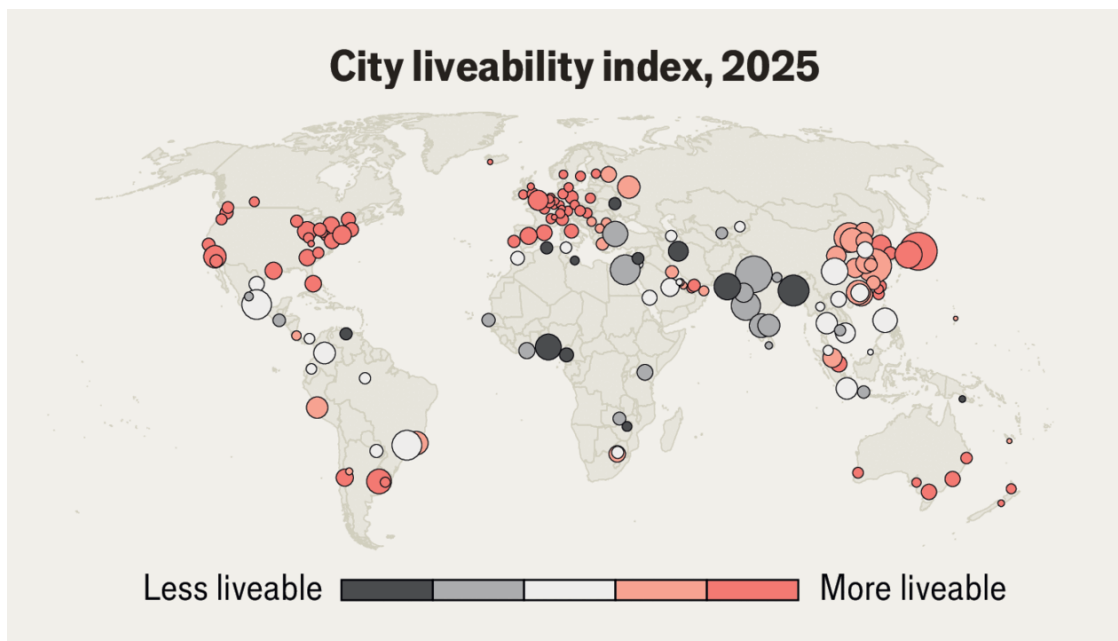


JUNE 21ST 2025



The Economist this weekend

A special edition on liveable cities



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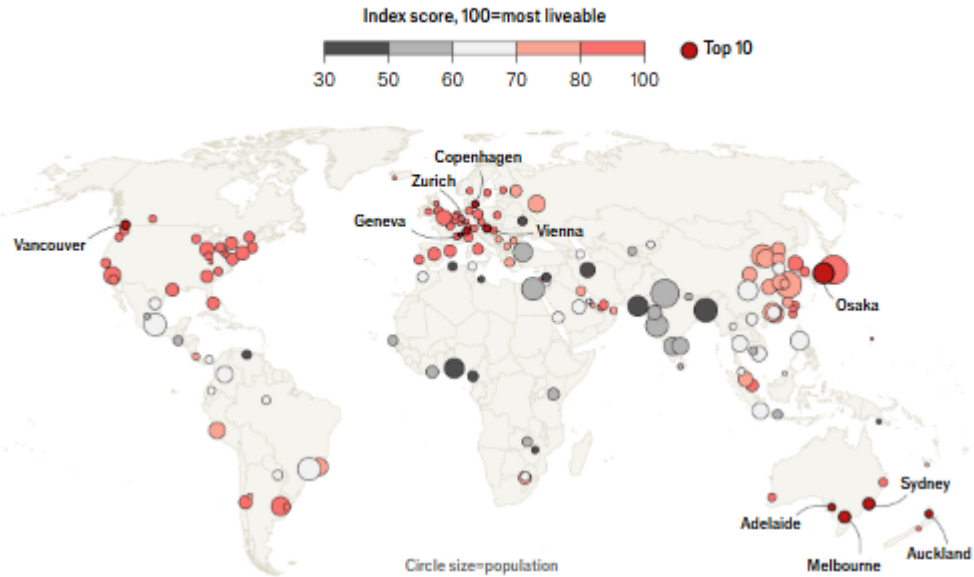
If EIU's liveable-cities index has had a theme song in recent years it would be Ultravox's hit "Vienna". Austria's capital has been ranked the world's most liveable city five times since 2018. Not this year. Vienna lost out because two thwarted terrorist attacks dragged down its stability score, which covers the threat of terrorism as well as civil unrest and military conflict. The average liveability score of the world's cities didn't change much in this year's index. Challenges to stability in many offset improvements to education and health care elsewhere. The world has become even less stable since May, when EIU (our sister company) finished its survey. It will be a relief if the index in 2026 shows that the world remains as liveable as it is now.

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FOR THE second year running living conditions have not improved in cities around the world, according to the latest [liveability index](#) from EIU, our sister company. The annual survey, designed to help companies calculate hardship allowances when they relocate staff, rates 173 cities across five categories: health care, culture and environment, education, infrastructure and stability. While scores in the first four categories have mostly remained constant or improved, gains have been offset by declines in stability.

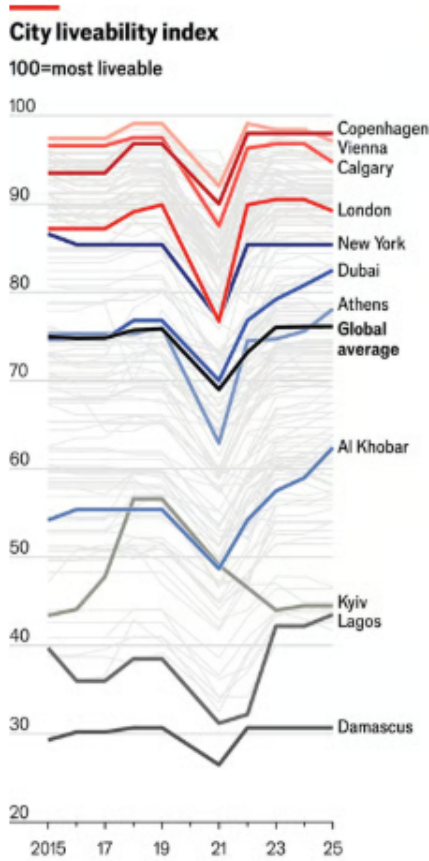
City liveability index, Apr-May 2025



Most liveable			Least liveable		
1	Copenhagen	98.0	164	Caracas	44.9
2=	Vienna	97.1	165	Kyiv	44.5
2=	Zurich	97.1	166	Port Moresby	44.1
4	Melbourne	97.0	167	Harare	43.8
5	Geneva	96.8	168	Lagos	43.5
6	Sydney	96.6	169	Algiers	42.8
7=	Osaka	96.0	170	Karachi	42.7
7=	Auckland	96.0	171	Dhaka	41.7
9	Adelaide	95.9	172	Tripoli	40.1
10	Vancouver	95.8	173	Damascus	30.7

Sources: EIU; UN Population Division

Vienna is a case in point. The Austrian capital was the world's most liveable city from 2022 to 2024. But this year it lost its place because two foiled terrorist attacks —on a Taylor Swift concert and on a train station—brought down its stability score, which quantifies the threat of military conflict, civil unrest and terrorism. Vienna now shares second place with Zurich. Copenhagen, one of only six cities to achieve a perfect score in the stability category, tops the overall ranking this year. Melbourne and Geneva round out the top five.



Source: EIU
CHART: THE ECONOMIST

Smaller places generally do well on the index. Only three cities in the top 20 have more than 6m residents. London and New York are in 54th and 69th place respectively. Crime levels and the threat of terrorism are high in those cities. Their roads are also congested. Tokyo, the world's largest city, ranks 13th.

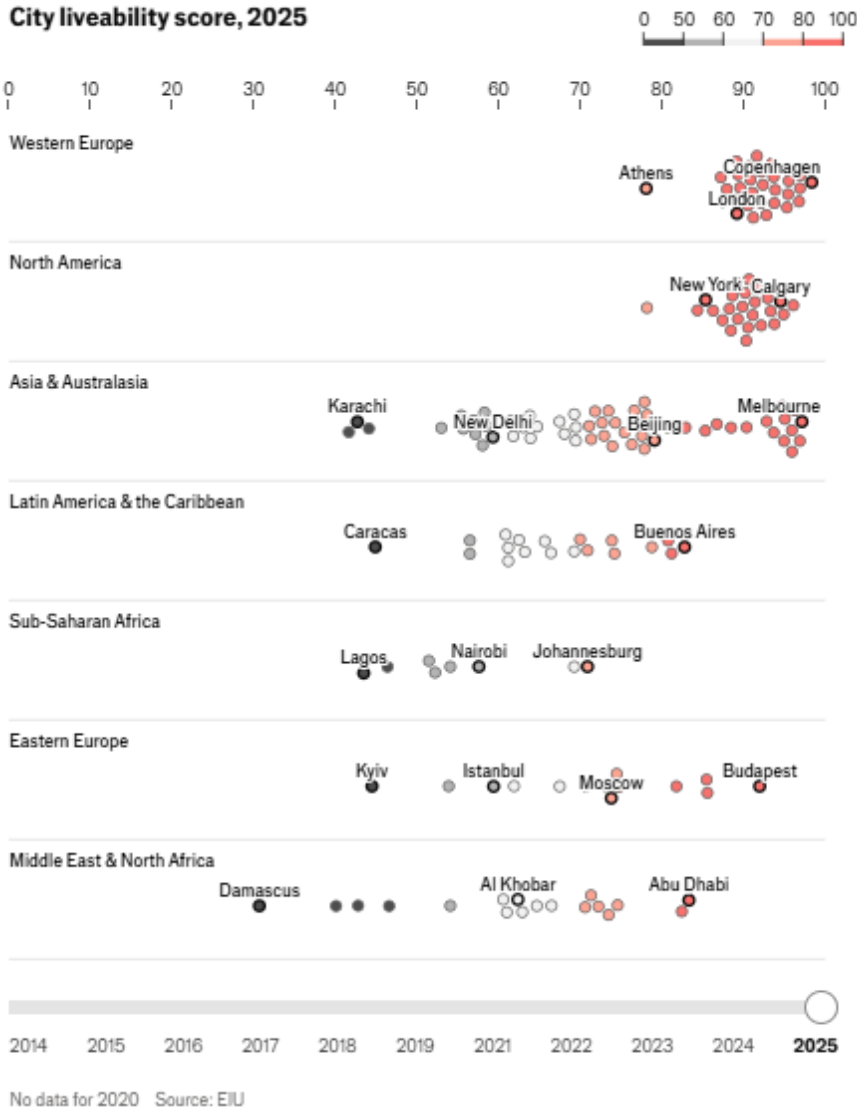
Instability hurts liveability at the other end of the table, too. Damascus remains at the bottom of the ranking (but the toppling of Bashar al-Assad in December and America's subsequent decision to lift economic sanctions on Syria bode well for the capital in the next edition of the ranking). Kyiv is in the bottom ten for the third year in a row. Tehran, just outside the bottom ten, is now being bombed by Israel and so is unlikely to rise. Military confrontation on the Kashmir border was one factor that reduced stability scores for the five Indian cities in the index. (Karachi, the only Pakistani entry, already scored badly in this category.)

The outlook is mixed. Inflation, which has hurt living standards over the past few years, seems to be falling. But geopolitical tensions are increasing, threatening stability and quality of life everywhere



Calgary, in western Canada, recorded the biggest tumble in this year's ranking, dropping from fifth place to 18th. Two of the three other Canadian cities in the index also fell. This reflects long waiting lists for health care in Canada and a shortage of housing. [Mark Carney](#), Canada's prime minister since March, has his work cut out. Conversely, Saudi Arabia's *Vision 2030*, a programme intended to reduce the economy's reliance on oil, helped Al Khobar, a resort town famed for its shops and malls, record the biggest improvement over the past year. The city jumped 13 places to 135th.

Among the 30 rated cities in western Europe and 25 in North America, only one—Athens—fails to achieve the highest tier of liveability, defined as a score of 80 or above. Asia is the third-best region for liveability, although its cities have a much wider range of living conditions. Almost half of the top 20 places are located in East Asia and Australasia. Many South Asian cities rank far lower, partly due to [high pollution](#) and temperatures.



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