

Benchmarking Melbourne 2023

Shaping Melbourne's Future



2 March 2023

About this report

This 2nd edition of Benchmarking Melbourne is based upon a review of more than 100 global city benchmark studies, which together span more than 500 discrete comparative metrics. These constitute all the global studies published in the last 12 months in which Melbourne features, and they compare both how cities are performing and how they are perceived. They are complemented by 20 publicly available real-time datasets.

The report assesses Melbourne among the same group of 20 cities. Scores in each category reflect its overall position among this group of 20. Where possible, we track year-on-year performance against this consistent group of cities, and see how Melbourne's scores are changing over time.

Benchmark studies are typically annual. They are based on the latest available data in each city, which may be gathered up to two years prior. Therefore, the data underlying this 2023 edition includes data obtained during the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic as well as subsequently. Where possible, we observe which factors are especially likely to be subject to volatility related to COVID-19 or other shocks. Benchmarks are best used to understand Melbourne's relative performance over a medium term time frame – most reflect the impacts of decisions, policies and characteristics built up over several years.

Benchmarks mostly measure Greater Melbourne – the recognised metropolitan area of Melbourne or the 31 local councils which comprise it. Benchmarks referenced in this document that refer to “Melbourne” or “the city” are referring to metropolitan Melbourne, unless it is otherwise specified that they are referring to the City of Melbourne, the CBD, or some other scale of analysis.

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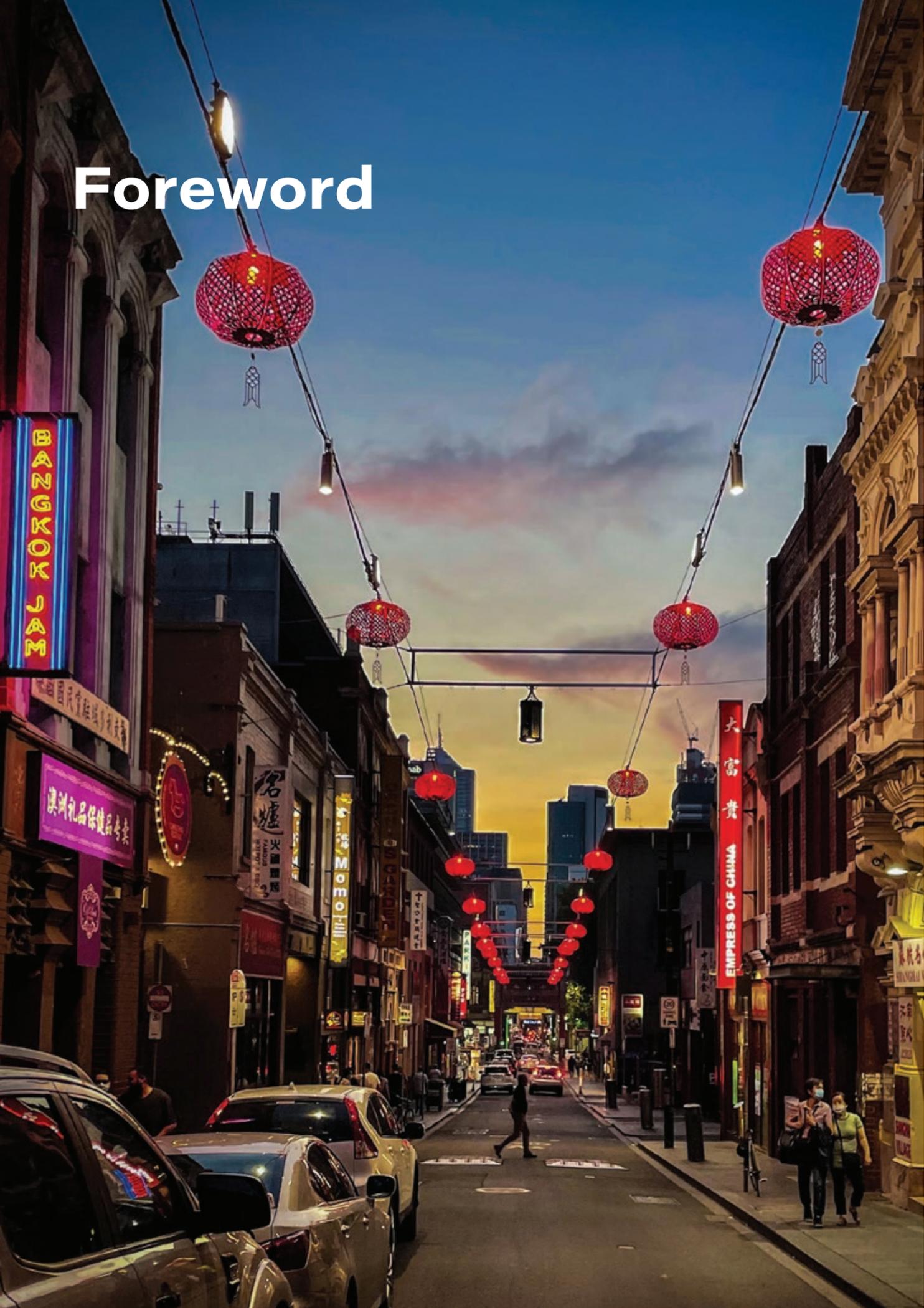
The Business of Cities is an urban intelligence firm providing data and advice to 100 global cities and companies. Based principally in London, the firm has worked with more than 10 local, state and federal governments in Australia since 2014 as well as peak leadership groups and planning commissions, on agendas surrounding the future of Australian cities' governance, built form and economy. We thank David Edwards for the front cover image and Visit Victoria Content Hub, David Edwards and Unsplash for their photography contributions to this report.

Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners

Committee for Melbourne acknowledges the Traditional Owners of Country of the lands and waterways on which we rely. We pay respect to Elders past and present. We acknowledge and respect the unbroken spiritual, cultural and political connection the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have to this unique place for more than 2000 generations.



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Foreword

A unified approach for Melbourne

Greater Melbourne's resilience has been tested over the last few years and its fundamentals have proven to be robust. Melbourne's great strengths continue to shine across the visitor economy, research and innovation, future jobs, business investment and a friendly community.

But even as we celebrate the strengths of the city, questions about Melbourne's long-term direction must be faced. As the population is set to reach six million and become Australia's largest by 2031, we have an excellent opportunity to envision what we want the city to deliver for *all* Melburnians.

Committee for Melbourne and JLL have again engaged The Business of Cities to produce the *Benchmarking Melbourne 2023* report, to understand the nature of Melbourne's performance among a peer group of 20 global cities.

The 2023 report highlights that Melbourne continues to offer residents and visitors compelling experiences. Kicking off the year with the record-breaking crowds at the Australian Open, we have the Fashion Festival, Food and Wine Festival, Flower and Garden Show, Grand Prix, Spring Racing, and the AFL amongst many others, to look forward to in 2023!

Of course, the ratings in the report reflect that Melbourne was impacted by the pandemic. Our lock-downs meant that events were closed and detrimental economic impacts experienced. But, with so many leading cities also affected, Melbourne's relative position has stayed fairly stable. In fact, Melbourne has shown a relative improvement in its social resilience compared to other cities, some of which have become more divided.

However, the prosperity of the city in the long-term requires grappling with Melbourne's structural model. Over the last 20 years Melbourne's success has relied on consistent population growth, expanding suburbs and the gravitational pull of a successful CBD. The unequal distribution of green spaces, access to public transport, walkable restaurants and amenities, risks undermining the liveability and reputation of the city. More needs to be done to ensure everyone in Melbourne is connected to what they want and need. Just like an elastic band, if you stretch the suburbs too far, there comes a point where they may snap.

The benchmarks in this report measure both objective performance and perceptions. Leading cities around the world strive to achieve a strong balance between them, but this report shows that Melbourne's perceptions outrate performance. Whilst temporary visitors on the one hand tend to have a very positive experience of Melbourne, the realities of living in the city as a permanent resident expose a performance gap. On average Melbourne's performance gap is one of the largest of all peer cities surveyed.

Failing to live up to what people expect of Melbourne, may erode confidence among future generations of people, businesses and investors. It might also mean a missed opportunity to retain immigrants, visitors, international students and Melburnians. It is therefore important that we are able to understand the components of the city that make up its brand, to ensure we are better able to *articulate* and *deliver* upon this proposition.

Many of our peer cities have grappled with how to develop and promote themselves to ensure that their strengths can be capitalised upon and reinvested in. The cities featured in this report, such as Stockholm, Miami, Tel Aviv and Manchester have found public-public and public-private collaboration essential to developing a consistent identity that diversifies and modernises with the needs of the times.

Of course, improving and investing in Melbourne is being actioned by all levels of government. The Victorian State Government and councils like City of Melbourne have significant programs of work to address infrastructure, sustainability, skills, jobs and social housing. These initiatives continue to underpin Melbourne's success, and with consistent prioritising and co-ordination should be reflected in improved ratings over time.

Developing and articulating an agreed vision for the city requires further collaboration and a unifying voice with government, departments, statutory agencies, the private sector and community. Only if there is singularity of *message and action*, will Melbourne's perception and the reality of its product offering be aligned.

We look forward to the ongoing discussions and collaboration on a unified approach for the metropolis and thank The Business of Cities for their research in this report.



Mark Melvin

CEO,
Committee for Melbourne



Craig Shute

Managing Director, JLL,
Victoria

Board Member,
Committee for Melbourne

Executive Summary

Summary

Greater Melbourne has gone through a profound reset

The global benchmarks of cities tell us that Melbourne's performance, patterns, and profile have shown a high level of resilience to the events of the last three years.

After longer lockdowns, a larger swing to work/live/play-from-home, and more exposure to industries that rely on global mobility, Melbourne has held fairly firm against its peer cities internationally. In fact the largest year-on-year change has been a positive jump. In a world of polarised cities where more people are priced out or feel unwelcome, Melbourne's enduring friendliness, work-life balance, and acceptance of many lifestyle choices, have seen it overtake many others for inclusivity and wellbeing.

Yet Melbourne faces questions about its growth model long-term. Over the last 20 years Melbourne's success has relied on consistent population growth, the magnetic gravitational pull of a single CBD, and the continual flow of visitors, talent, and cross-border commerce. This helped Melbourne establish itself as a Top 30 city globally all told, and by some definitions the world's most liveable city.

Even before the pandemic, this model was under stress. The externalities of low-amenity low-connectivity suburbia were growing. Now as changes to the global and domestic economy play out, and new economic and spatial patterns take hold, Melbourne needs to be even more wary of the risks that its 'tale of two cities' constrains its ambitions and potential.

The drivers of city performance make it clear that for Melbourne to re-emerge it will have to:

1. Continue developing the sharp edges of its innovation economy.
2. Enrich and extend the urban experience.
3. Ensure the whole city really is liveable, joined up, resilient and sustainable.



The picture in 2023

The data in 2023 indicates that Melbourne’s fundamentals are intact. The city is an enduringly popular location for corporate and property investment. It is still recognised as an international capital of sport, music, entertainment, gastronomy and expressive culture. Digital nomads and transients remain more tempted to sample Melbourne than most other cities.

The challenge is sustaining and deepening these advantageous traits as Melbourne grows towards Australia’s largest city. Competition for skills and talent is growing, including in many of Melbourne’s priority sectors (such as health, education and logistics). The universe of liveable cities and places has also grown.

On innovation, Melbourne has some momentum in diverse sectors, which need accelerating and joining up. Melbourne is establishing itself in more discrete industry niches. Its talent pool in data and AI-impacted sectors is deepening, which keeps it on the radar for business investment. More of those in the know are aware of Melbourne’s strengths in areas like enterprise tech, sports and health and wellness. Yet if we see innovation as a global race, Melbourne’s progress relies on continuing to close the investment, integration and co-ordination gap.

For experience, Melbourne’s image is strong and international demand remains loyal. While the perceived liveability of other cities has declined when they have not re-invested in the quintessential appeal of city life, there is higher affection for Melbourne’s streets, public spaces, scenery and parks.

Yet as a whole city, the competitive costs of Melbourne’s divergence appear to be rising. The ‘tale of two cities’ - the inner-city and the rest - is viewed even more starkly in terms of the ease with which people can get around, get on, reach services, get online, and live healthy lives. These gaps are holding back Melbourne’s collective potential.

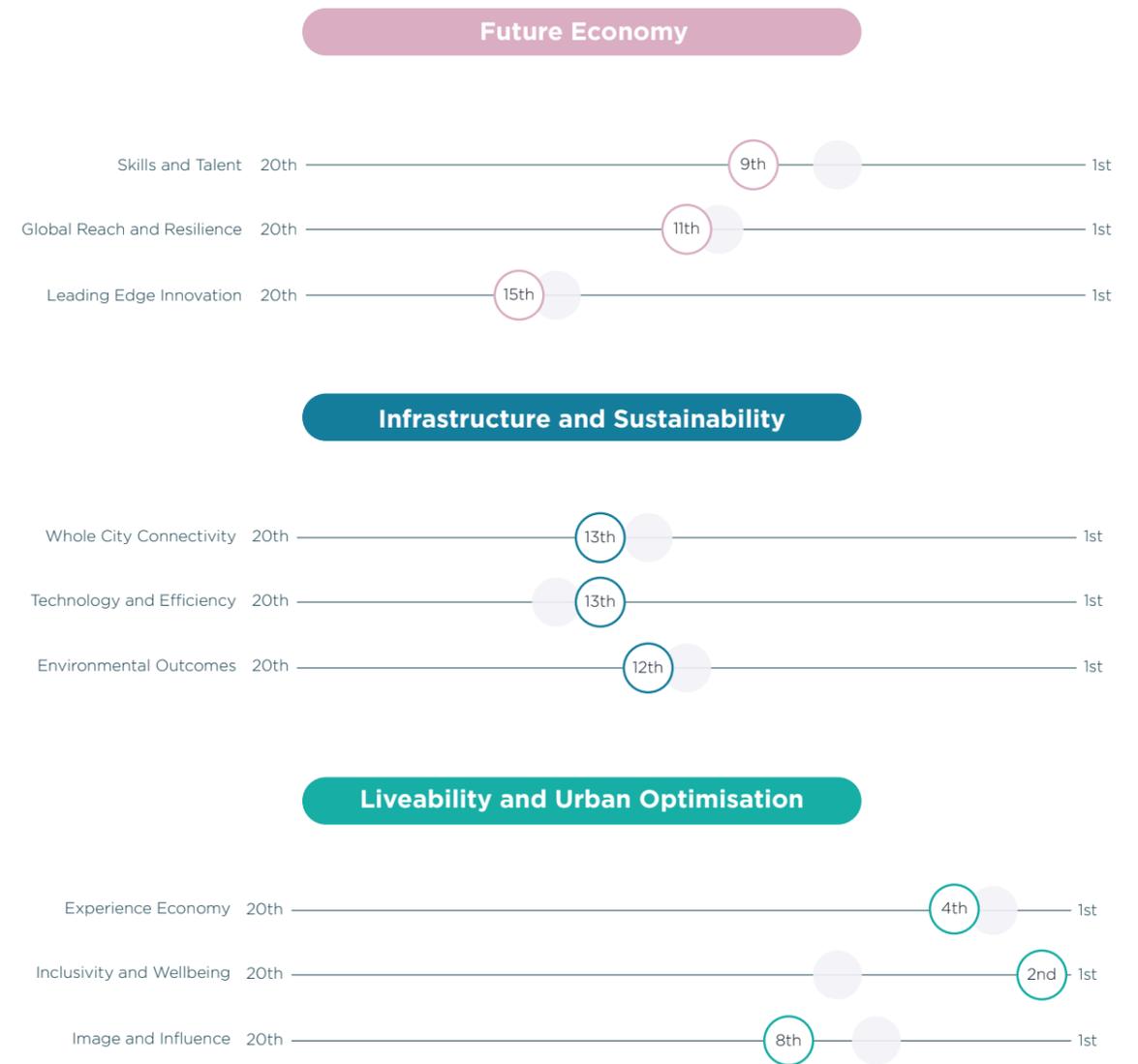
In the next cycle the premium on suburbs to provide amenity and connection to opportunity looks to be growing strongly. The world’s most productive, healthy, fair and sustainable metropolitan cities will adjust. Melbourne’s peer group also includes some of the world’s fastest decarbonising cities. Many are making more wide-ranging progress.

The benchmarks point to a need to speed up the spatial and climate transition across more of metropolitan Melbourne’s key industries, transport systems, natural and built environment. Progress in these areas requires what has worked in other cities: successive cycles of effective metropolitan investment, densification in newly connected precincts, a high level of systems co-ordination and common purpose across government and with business.

Melbourne’s ratings in 2023

Melbourne has experienced small declines in most areas since the 2022 report. This is mainly due to the ‘lag effect’ - in many cases, the full impact of the city’s lockdowns is only now beginning to be revealed in the data.

However, there are many reasons for longer-term optimism - including relative improvements for inclusivity and wellbeing as other cities have emerged from COVID-19 with greater damage to their liveability equations, and also technology and efficiency, driven mainly by ongoing improvements to mobile broadband and efforts to ensure the ‘digital landing pad’ for talent is seamless and efficient.



For each of the 9 categories, Melbourne has been evaluated in multiple comparative benchmarks. Its aggregate scores across all performance and perception benchmarks among the group of 20 peer cities informs its final position among the 20 city group.

● Aggregate rating in 2022

Where Melbourne Stands



The rebound challenge

Melbourne is certainly rebounding strongly as a destination for consumers and event goers. Yet relative to global cities it is charting quite a distinct recovery. The benchmarks point to three kinds of performance effect in the most recent period (see Chart):

1. Short-term cyclical effects that are more likely to have been driven by the pandemic and other global shocks, and are likely to return to normal.
2. Short-term impacts that are more likely to have longer-term residual effects, linked in part to Melbourne's distinctive economic and spatial model.
3. Medium-to-longer term structural trends for all cities that have been amplified or accelerated by the pandemic.

What this all shows is that relative to other cities, Melbourne has endured a deeper set of immediate demand shocks, and more knock-on effects so far on working and travel habits. And while other cities have experienced even larger increases in house prices and energy prices, overall costs in Melbourne remain very high by global standards.

Like other cities Melbourne has therefore experienced an uptick in demand for suburbs and some 'regionalising' of its workforce. This exposes issues of whether the full spectrum of suburbs have adequate quality, variety and affordability, and whether they can sustain the productivity ambitions of a world-leading metropolis.

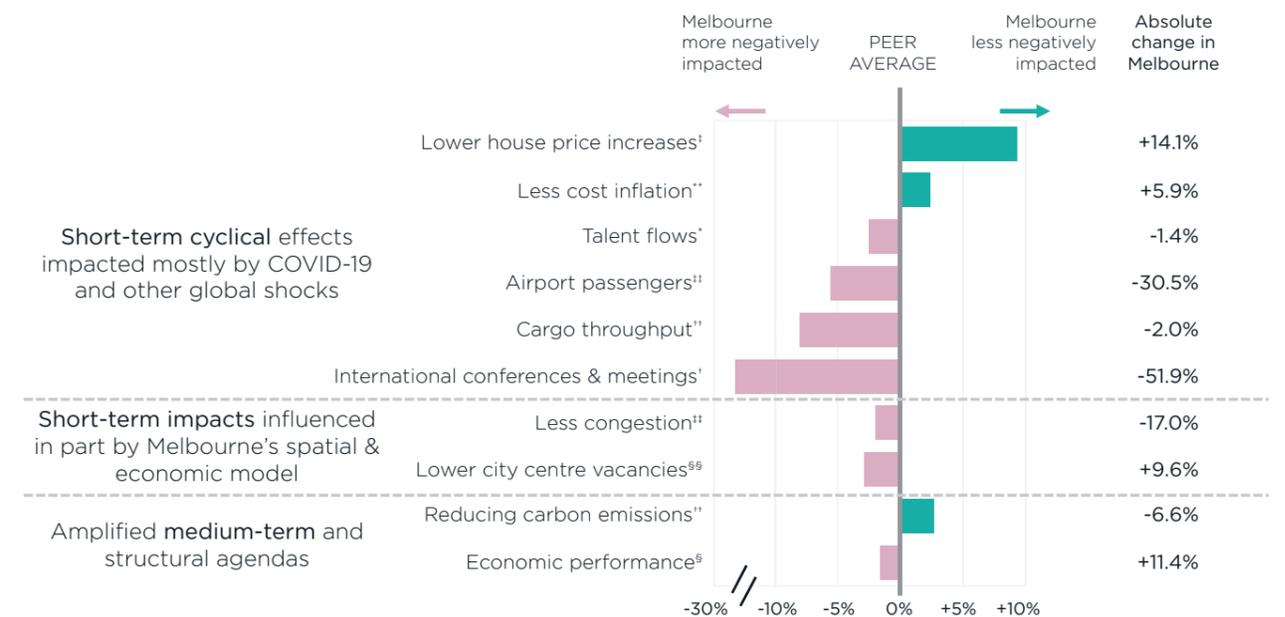
In terms of longer-term shifts, Melbourne is catching up on clean energy production (50% faster progress than peer average), green start-up creation, and sustainability in the tourism and hospitality sectors.

The medium to longer-run effects create imperatives to:

- Translate Melbourne's image as the world's most liveable city into broad-based metropolitan success.
- Re-focus on what will make the city centre one of the world's most compelling destinations over the next 10-20 years, within a re-wired metropolis.
- Increase investment in renewables production, transmission and grid improvements.
- Reacquaint people with Melbourne's enduring strengths and underlying DNA.

Melbourne revised, short-term and long-term

How impacted Melbourne has been compared to its peers across 10 metrics*



[†]Q3 2019-Q3 2020 vs. Q3 2021-Q3 2022; [§]2020 vs. 2022; ^{**}Q4 2021 vs. Q4 2022; ^{‡‡}2019 vs. 2021; ^{§§}Q4 2019 vs. Q4 2022; ^{††}2019 vs 2022.
 * Average net migration across the 2020-2022 period. [†] No. of high-level rotating meetings and conferences that went ahead as planned in 2021 compared to how many were planned.

Sources (from top to bottom): KnightFrank, Numbeo, JLL, Airport Statistics Agencies, Lloyd's, ICCA, INRIX, Cushman & Wakefield Office Market Beat Reports, CarbonMonitor, JLL.
 Note: not all cities are included in all measures. See Appendix for cities included in each measure.

The ‘tale of two cities’ in 2023

Over the past 15 years Melbourne became well known the world over as one of an exclusive handful of the world's most liveable cities. However this perspective has tended to prioritise viewing city success primarily through the lens of visitors, tourists and expats. It did not fully account for the experiences of people who are looking to purchase or rent a home, raise a family, grow a business, or invest in the long term. The benchmarks demonstrate a divergence between the experiences of those living and working in inner Melbourne compared to outer Melbourne. In 2023, the available evidence compared to other cities suggests that this divergence has widened.

There is growing evidence in 2023 of the disadvantages of a deepening divergence between a world class central city and a fragmented metropolis. In Melbourne, the performance gap among benchmarks that look at both is bigger than in all other peer cities except Abu Dhabi.

In 2023, Melbourne's ‘tale of two cities’ shows up most in Melbourne's whole-city connectivity, its experience economy, and its environmental outcomes. The gaps are at least as large overall compared to 2022 and in some cases more stark.

A widening rift

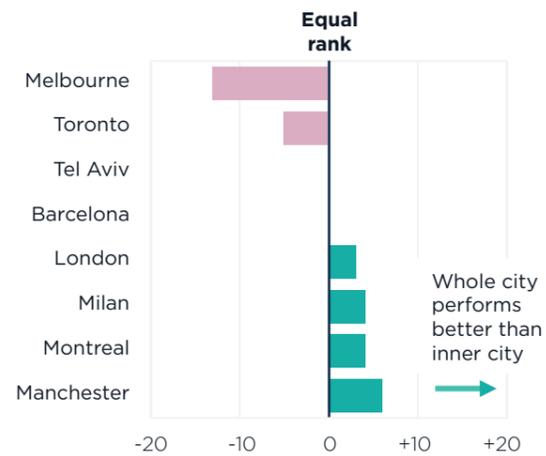
Average position across measures of inner-city vs. outer-city performance in 2023



Source: The Business of Cities research. Based on Melbourne's aggregate scores, calculated using an ELO algorithm.
*Across all available benchmarks

Mind the gap

Difference in rank, whole city performance vs. inner-city performance*

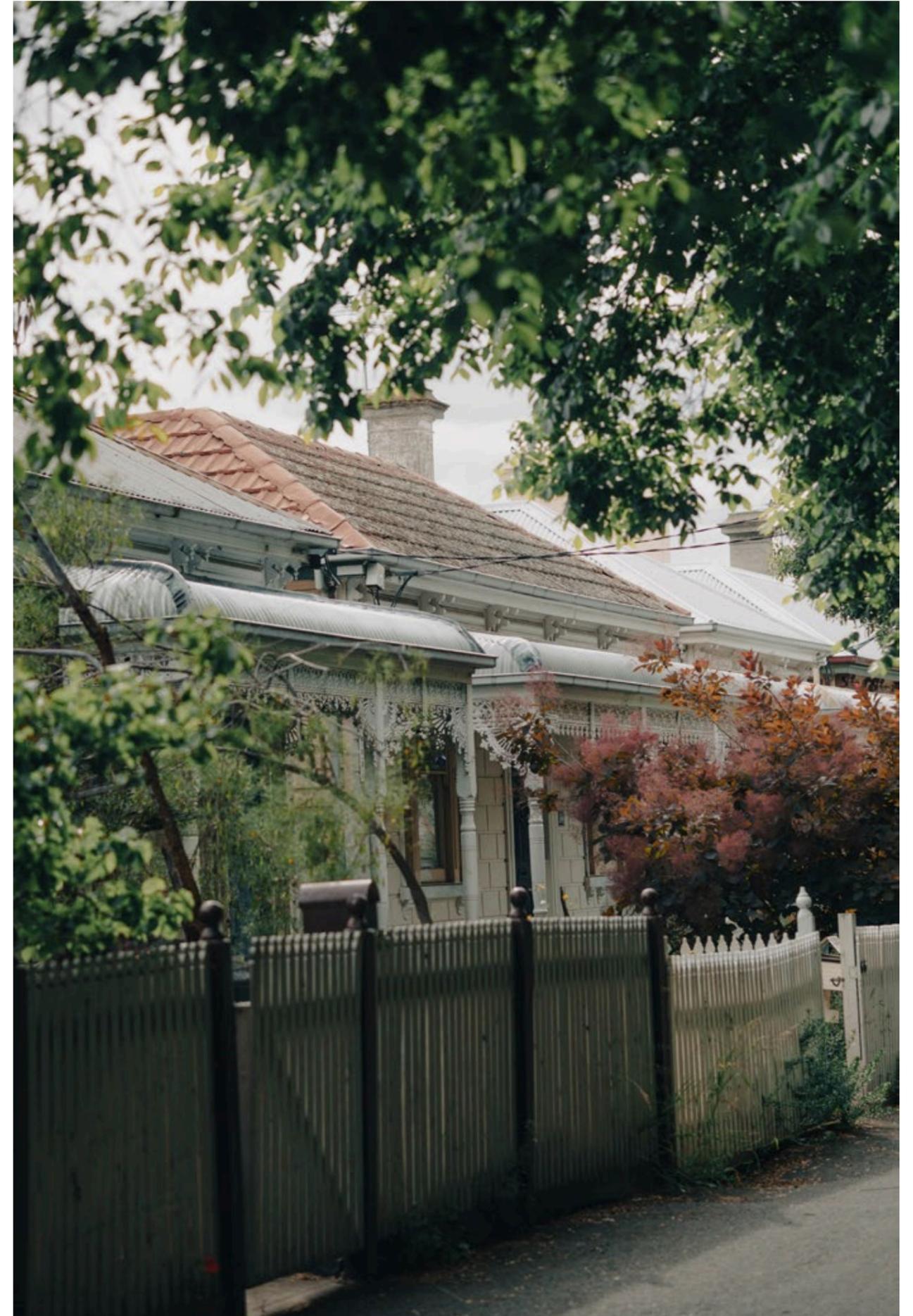


Many of Melbourne's tale of two cities features are baked in to its economic and urban form geared around a single high performing CBD. Melbourne:

- Has the 3rd most sustainable transport mode share within the City of Melbourne out of 13 peers (61%), but is in the bottom half at the wider scale (27%) (Census/Deloitte)²
- Is 4th out of nine North American and Australian cities for city centre walkability, but 8th out of nine when looking across the whole city (WalkScore)³
- Has the 4th highest centre-suburbs difference in access to EV charging points of all peers, after Berlin, Abu Dhabi and Singapore (Open Charge Map).⁴
- Is 3rd among peers for commitment to climate action at the City of Melbourne level, but in the bottom half for total metropolitan-wide carbon emissions (MMF, CarbonMonitor).⁵
- Has one of the most centrally concentrated innovation economies in the world, with four-fifths (81%) of its top-tier innovation firms HQed within 3km of the city centre (Crunchbase)⁶
- Has the highest city-suburbs divergence on green buildings among any of its peers. The density of green buildings within Melbourne's inner ring is 50x higher than further out (Green Buildings Information Gateway).⁷
- Places 6th among peers for city centre population, but 16th for population density as a metropolis (WorldPop, Demographia).⁸

These gaps are not likely to be conducive to Melbourne's ability either to sell or to build a business model around innovation, inspiration and environmental leadership.

*Data available only for American, Canadian and Australian cities



The gaps between performance and perception

Benchmarks measure both objective performance and also perceptions – whether of visitors, short and long-term residents, talent, investors and other audiences. Both performance and perception are important. Leading cities around the world usually strive to achieve a strong balance between them.

For some time Melbourne's perceptions have been outrunning performance. Strong perceptions of Melbourne – especially among those who know the best of the city – are important advantages that continue to drive demand to Melbourne.

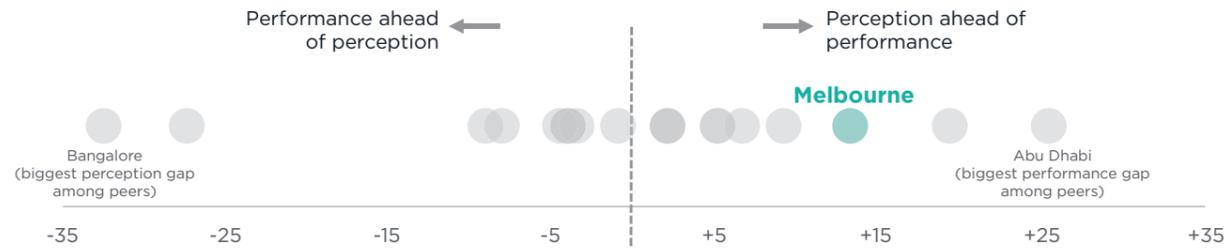
On average in 2023 Melbourne places 16th across all benchmarks that are based on reputation and perception (down slightly from 13th in 2022), but only 25th in benchmarks that measure actual performance and delivery (down from 24th in 2022).

This means that although Melbourne's 'performance gap' has narrowed slightly (now nine places), it is still one of the very largest among Melbourne's peers (see Chart).

Perceptions ahead of performance present a risk for a city. Firstly it suggests a city is not as often reproducing the strengths that made it admired. Secondly it invites scrutiny or disappointment. This can manifest in not remaining as attractive as other cities to the next generation of workforce, investors and visitors.

Melbourne's performance gap

Difference between median rank in Perception studies vs. Performance studies, Melbourne vs. peers



Source: The Business of Cities research, based on all global benchmarks (city and metropolitan). Measures median position.

The drivers of Melbourne's performance gap continue to relate to whole-city issues of congestion, affordability, connectivity, and access to the conditions for enterprise. By contrast there is much less of a performance gap when it comes to students, visitors, and expats, who much more typically rely on the assets and amenity of the inner city.

Melbourne's average position in indices that are oriented to different audiences

Students	12th
Visitors	18th
Expats	19th
Investors	25th
Entrepreneurs	26th
Citizens	26th

Source: The Business of Cities research. Measures median position across 313 benchmarks and sub measures, including those based on performance and perception and those which look at the City of Melbourne and Greater Melbourne. This does not just refer to benchmarks that directly canvass the opinions of these audiences. It also includes performance benchmarks that calibrate against the preferences of different audience groups (e.g. what digital nomads and entrepreneurs need.)

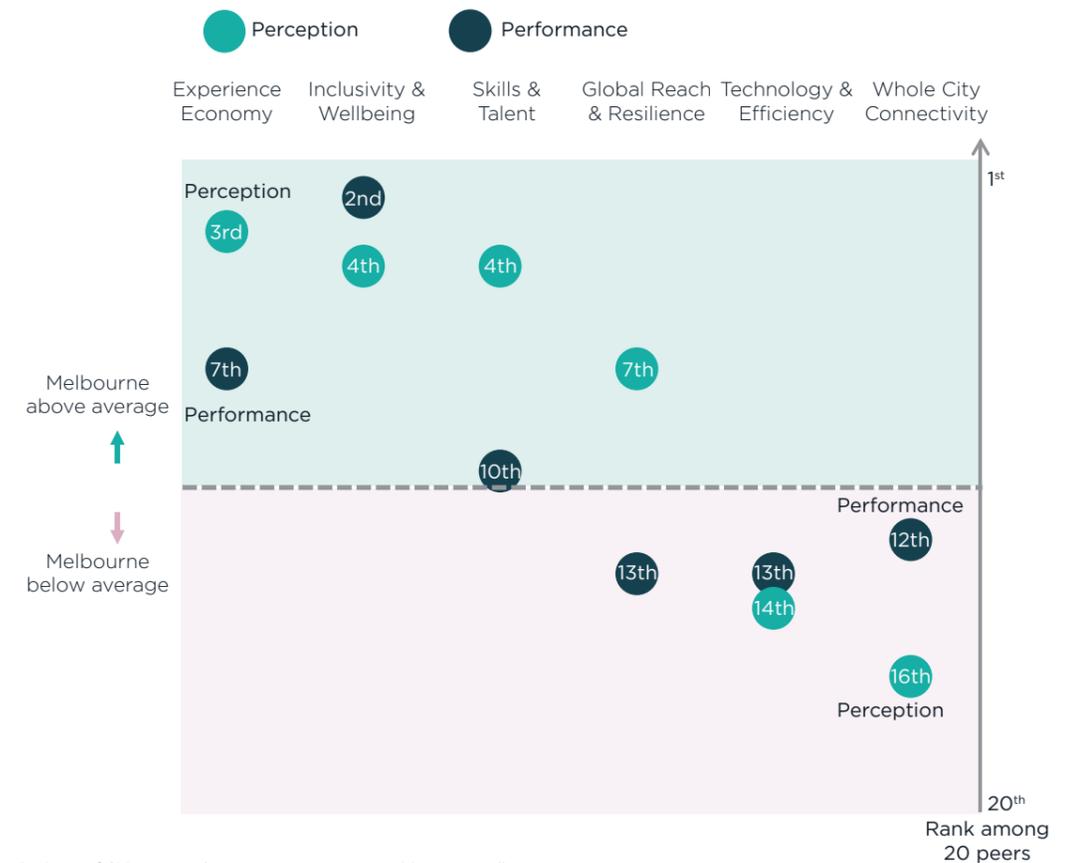
A closer look at the data helps to reveal in which specific areas the performance gap is most noticeable, and what the underlying drivers and potential implications of these gaps might be.

In 2023, the evidence from hundreds of benchmarks suggests that the 'performance gap' holds across most areas: favourable perceptions of Melbourne contrast with ongoing performance challenges, that are deeper in Melbourne compared to others internationally. This is most visible in terms of access to skills, fostering the growth of high-tech companies, and the depth of urban experience. In all of these areas, perceptions remain ahead of performance, but the longer-term risk is that lagging performance starts to drag down perceptions.

The efficiency and reliability of the whole city infrastructure platform – both in terms of public transport connectivity and technology and digital – emerges as an area where both raw performance and perceptions are below average (see Chart).

On the other hand, there are some indications in the perception benchmarks of concerns about congestion, high costs, and public transport reliability becoming reputational deterrents, even compared to other expensive high-demand cities.

Difference between Melbourne's aggregate rank for Perception and Performance by theme



Source: The Business of Cities research. Measures aggregate position across all benchmarks compared to peers, as calculated by an ELO algorithm.

Developing wider brand reach

Audience perceptions of Melbourne in 2023

It is also helpful to gauge among which audiences *perceptions* of Melbourne have been more or less resilient through the pandemic.

Here the evidence from hundreds of benchmarks suggests that perceptions have held strong so far among those who know the best of Melbourne – in particular recent graduates, footloose expats and visitors and students, who continue to have very high levels of affection for the city relative to others and particularly enjoy what the central city has to offer. The people who know Melbourne tend to view it favourably.

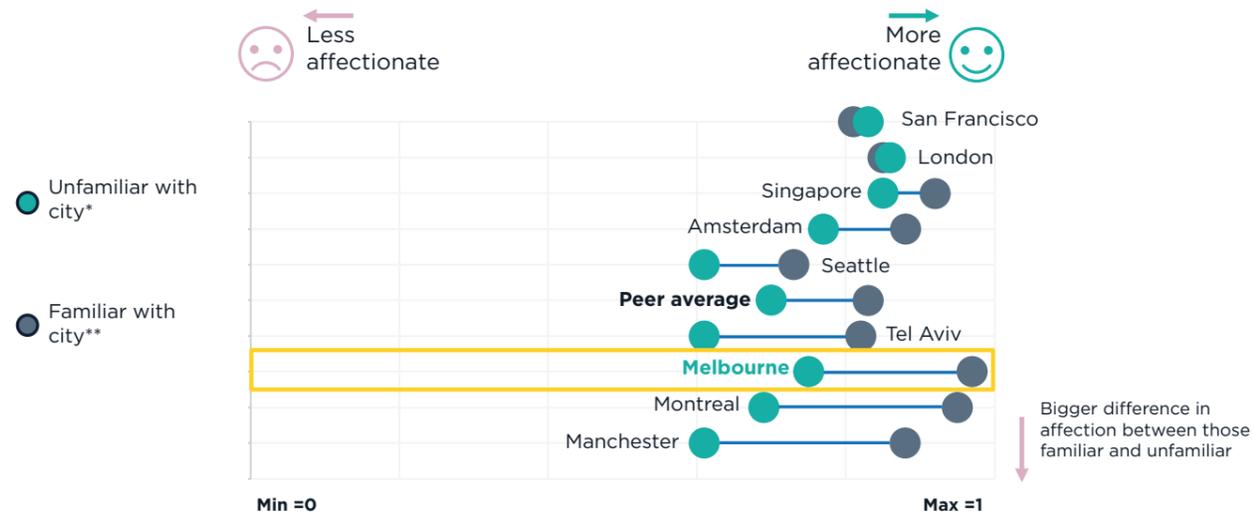
Yet perceptions of Melbourne are not as strong among those who adjudicate from afar. Global businesses, entrepreneurs and opinion-shapers tend to feel less affection or affinity. There are three main dimensions to this:

1. Although Melbourne's reputation among global corporate and real estate investors is catching up, especially as a result of growing awareness of the city's fintech and green finance progress and strong belief in the city's stable and favourable long-term outlook, this progress has been from a lower base.
2. People who are not directly familiar do not tend to automatically think of the city as a top place to innovate, experience, or be green.
3. The likelihood of the general global public, industry-specific talent, and external specialists in areas like food or urbanism, of judging Melbourne to be one of the world's great cities is much lower than the opinions of visitors, students and expats might predict.

What this all means is that the gap between familiar fans and those unpersuaded from afar appears larger than in most of Melbourne's peers (see Chart).

Familiarity is key

Difference in aggregate affection scores between people familiar and unfamiliar with the city



*Unfamiliar = general global public, prospective visitors/residents who do not yet know the city, global experts
 **Familiar = visitors, students, residents, expats, etc.
 Source: The Business of Cities research

Implications for Melbourne

This all suggests that there is scope for Melbourne to build upon its strong consumer and culture brand and deepen and diversify its connection with the world. This requires a more fully developed and transmitted metropolitan DNA. These issues are explored in the special feature and case studies (see page 56).

Untapped potential

Overall, Melbourne's deeper set of demand shifts, and gaps between perceptions and performance, places more onus on reconnecting with the city's underlying DNA and translating it to more parts of a re-wired metropolis. Doing so will be much more conducive to Melbourne's ambitions to innovate, inspire and show environmental leadership.

Overall, the benchmarks over the last 12 months confirm three essential messages for Melbourne:

1. **Bold solutions need delivering not dilution.** For Melbourne's overall city performance to improve, there will be a need not just to plan but to deliver bigger, bolder responses. This includes essential infrastructure – rail, digital, trade and freight – that is then properly sequenced with the services, density, reliability and quality of place experience. Working on the hardware and software over two to three cycles will lift Melbourne into a higher overall performing division of cities.
2. **Mind the magnetism.** The experience brand appears to be strong for the demographics Melbourne already appeals to. The jury of city benchmarks is out as to whether post-pandemic Melbourne can continue to deliver best-in-class year-round experience to suit new living and working patterns. There is also a choice as to whether Melbourne now needs to develop a wider offer that caters to more ages, needs, incomes, locations and tastes.
3. **Reinvention relies on DNA.** As Melbourne rebounds from successive shocks and grows towards nine million people, it will have to continually take care of its business model and resilience. Along the way is the task to retain, reproduce and reconnect with Melbourne's deep identity and sense of self. The city is loved by many locals and admired by fans, but many of its assets and attributes are hidden and do not resonate in all markets. Melbourne's enduring traits, deep back stories, and unique capabilities, will need amplifying to sustain a metropolis of its future scale and ambition.



Background To Benchmarking

Global benchmarks provide a valuable set of lenses to view how Greater Melbourne is now positioned.

In 2023 the world has a revised set of asks and expectations of cities. High costs, altered work patterns, and the race to decarbonise all feature more prominently.

What benchmarking can do (and what it can't)

Benchmarking Melbourne across a broad range of metrics offers several advantages compared to looking at a single ranking or a select handful of studies.

By reviewing all the emerging comparative data, it can capture telling individual indicators that come to light, as well as broader trends in how Melbourne is performing and is perceived. The reasons that cities succeed or fail are not set in stone - they evolve - and benchmarks reflect the changing priorities of citizens, companies, visitors and investors.

Benchmarks also have influence - they can change how mobile people and businesses look at cities. In 2023, benchmarks help us observe which cities are prospering and why, and the factors that will shape success over the next five to 10 years.

This methodology has been developed and applied in more than 30 cities around the world over the past decade, including London, Milan, Oslo, Helsinki, Brussels, Philadelphia, San Diego and Sydney.

Outside-in benchmarking is not a substitute for inside-out analysis. Each benchmark has its own aims, perspectives, strengths and limitations. Data is improving but not all the issues that matter to Melbourne are yet covered by international data.

Benchmarking allows us to look at Melbourne as the world currently sees it - understand where the city remains strong, spot new competitors, and observe some of the drivers that Melbourne will have to respond to for long-run success.

How many benchmarks?

This work draws on a review of all of the international benchmarks produced since January 2022, of which Melbourne features in 120. This adds up to more than 500 distinct indicators measuring Melbourne.

These recent benchmarks encompass a mix of datasets including:

- Some short-term data that reflects Melbourne's post-COVID-19 recovery path.
- Longer term performance data that is less volatile to the impacts of the pandemic or energy shocks.
- Original data collected around the start of the pandemic that has been published recently.
- Performance studies and perception studies.
- Large studies produced by teams of academics, researchers, government analysts, and consultancies.

Benchmarking: a reminder

It's all relative. Cities can improve while falling behind its peers. The opposite can also happen.

Ingredients change. How sustainable a city is, say, is now much more about carbon and resilience, not just air pollution and green spaces. Cities are also affected by changing values or perceptions among surveyed audiences.

Time lags. Data time-lags between real improvement and measured performance can mean that scores lag 'real' performance by anything from six months to two years. Wherever possible we have articulated whether each point is based on data from before the arrival of COVID-19, or after.

City (and State) Governments can't control everything. Melbourne's performance in many areas is strongly shaped by factors outside immediate public control, including market demand. Benchmarks do not assign blame or responsibility.

The framework: a reminder

Global attention is focused on cities' well-being, resilience, connectivity and how prepared they are for the future of skills, urban lifestyle and climate change.

As cities welcome back visitors, talent and opportunity, many studies are assessing the welcome and lifestyle on offer.

Some of the benchmarks in this report rely on 'hard' measures such as GDP per capita or median housing costs; others measure how Melbourne is perceived by various global audiences. We think both objective measures and measures of perception are important.

This work also benefits from additional customised metrics on issues germane to Melbourne: how the city is growing, its talent pool, infrastructure setup and others, drawn from established data providers and compilation of public city sources.

Around a quarter of all measures used capture dynamics taking place at the inner city or City of Melbourne level, while the rest examine data at the whole city or Greater Melbourne level. Where possible we take account of these variations in the paper.

Introducing the framework

We review Melbourne's performance across three pillars:

- 1. Future Economy:** Melbourne's success will depend on its appeal in established industries, its position in fast-growing industries, and a conducive climate for skills, business and enterprise.
- 2. Infrastructure & Sustainability:** With people now permanently using cities in very different ways, cities have to decarbonise, connect people to jobs families and services, and ensure communities are cohesive.
- 3. Liveability & Urban Optimisation:** The foundations of liveability were up-ended by COVID-19. Melbourne has to deliver a quintessential urban experience, provide broader access to opportunity, and provide a lifestyle suitable for more ages, incomes and locations.



This year, we look closely at how Melbourne performs and how it is perceived.

We spot differences overall and within individual pillars and themes.

Benchmarks measure both objective performance and also perceptions – whether of visitors, short and long-term residents, talent, investors and other audiences.

Both performance and perception matter. Leading cities around the world have to be vigilant to avoid one falling behind the other for a sustained period of time.

Some cities perform well but perceptions are weak or narrow. Their focus is on communication, sampling, and awareness-raising.

Other cities are well-liked but do not deliver the kind of urban functions and opportunities for the people that use it to thrive. This can erode confidence in the city, damage its business model, and fracture social consensus.

This year, each of the nine core sections of the report organises metrics into those based on objective performance indicators ('performance'), those based on what people think ('perception'), and those that include elements of both ('all-round measures').

This year, the *Image and Influence* section only includes metrics that track Melbourne's overall online traction and visibility, as well as what people think of the city generally. Metrics that track what people think of more specific areas have been moved.

For example, last year the *Image and Influence* section included observations on Melbourne's graduate reputation among businesses. This is now in the *Skills and Talent* section.

In this year's report, we also split each section into strengths (indicated by ★) and opportunities (indicated by ⚠).



Recapping Melbourne's peers

Melbourne is one of 10,000 cities in the world and it would not make sense to benchmark against all of them. Instead it is more logical to see Melbourne as part of a distinctive global cohort of liveable cities which share many ambitions and directions. These cities are 'peers', comparators and, sometimes, competitors.

To most usefully calibrate a city's path in its proper context, benchmarking relies on choosing suitable 'peer' cities. These are cities either that share similar characteristics, are competitors for certain types of mobile-traded activity such as investment, talent or visitors, or are cities that a fast-growing metropolis like Melbourne can aspire to and look towards in the next cycle.

This peer group – replicated from 2022 for consistency – makes it possible to spot at a high level where Melbourne is performing in different areas, and to make annual comparisons. It helps to spot areas of relative improvement and decline and set meaningful yardsticks for the upcoming years.

Melbourne's peer group consists of:

- **High-performing 2nd cities** within their nation or region, including cities that are established cultural and sporting hubs and which have in recent years strongly pivoted their economies towards tech and innovation. These include Manchester, Montreal, Barcelona and San Francisco.
- **Established world cities** with a critical mass of strengths Melbourne can usefully learn from as it becomes Australia's largest city – such as London, Singapore, Toronto and Berlin.
- **Liveable beacons** in their wider region, which benefit from appetite of talent and established quality of life advantages relative to other cities in their region, such as Abu Dhabi and Vancouver.
- **Innovative and car-oriented metropolises** which inherit a similar spatial form and development model to Melbourne – such as Seattle, San Francisco, Tel Aviv and Boston.
- **Neighbours and competitors in the Indo-Pacific** with whom Melbourne collaborates and competes for different kinds of traded mobile activity – Sydney and Brisbane of course, and also Kuala Lumpur and Bangalore.



This group includes:

- Half of the most successful cities at attracting cross-border direct investment (JLL).⁹
- 10 of the world's top 20 start-up ecosystems (Startup Genome).¹⁰
- Some of the cities most severely affected by COVID-19 – due either to lockdown effects or major new work-from-home patterns.
- Shared growth management challenges that relate to higher-than-average congestion and lower or declining affordability.



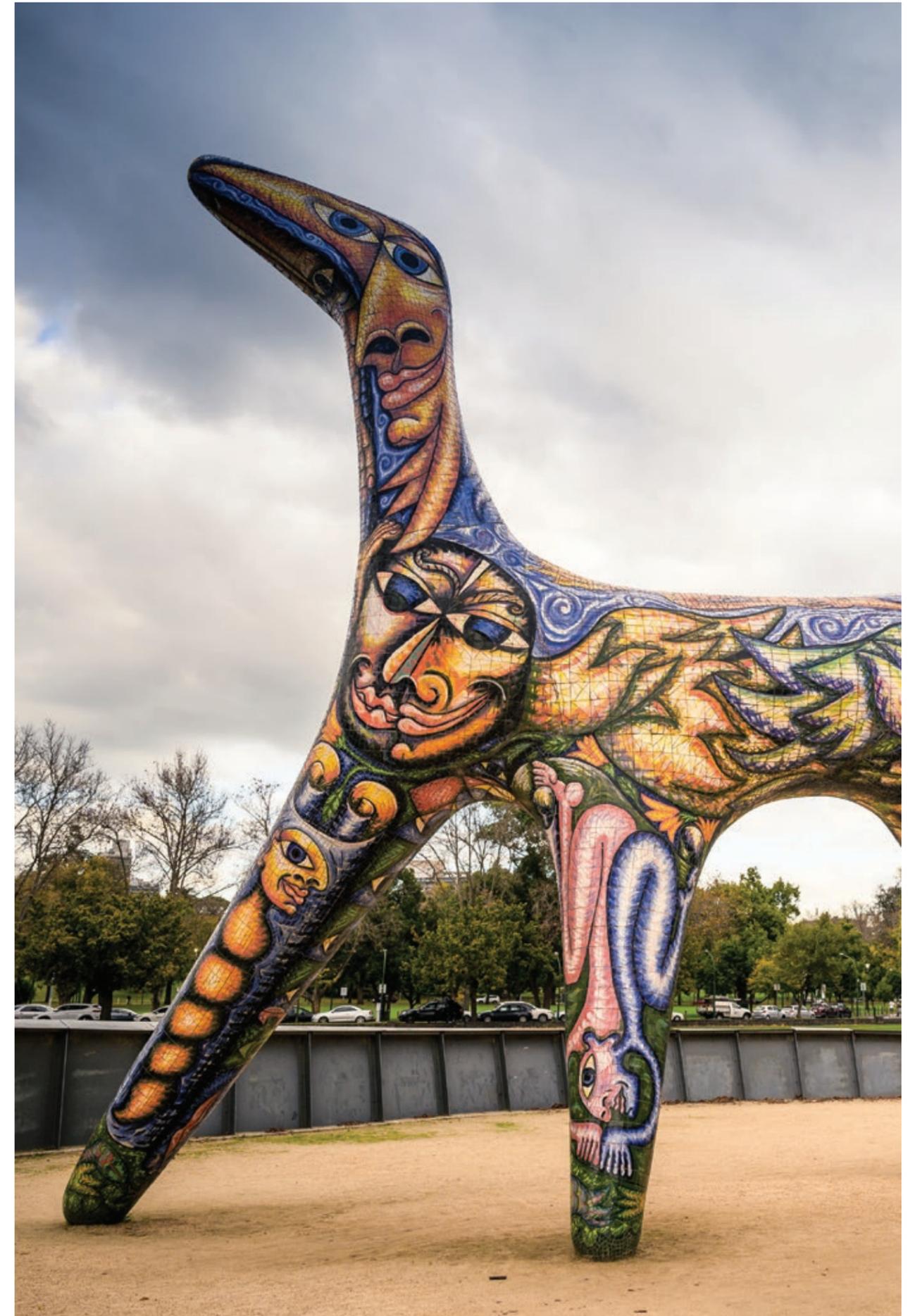
What's new in 2023

Each year, new benchmarks and datasets are produced and released based on the latest data.

They assess a wider range of themes and enable more comparisons over time. For this new edition, all data points have been updated to the most recent available post-COVID-19 data enabling us to provide a clearer picture of the whole impact of the pandemic and the trends now emerging.

This year, a sample of the new data produced includes data on:

Future Economy	Skills and Talent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How well cities are retaining talent, and attracting new talent. The changing jobs landscape in tech, data, and AI.
	Global Reach and Resilience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The cities attracting new investment into businesses and property. The return to meetings conferences and events.
	Leading Edge Innovation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Which cities are succeeding in fast-growth sectors. Access to alternative investments as capital availability squeezes.
Infrastructure & Sustainability	Whole City Connectivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New commuting patterns. The changing effective scale of the city.
	Technology and Efficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The changing digital landscape in the WFH-friendly metropolis. Efficiency of setting up in the city.
	Environmental Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sustainability of the visitor economy. Land-use for biodiversity and flood resilience.
Liveability & Urban Optimisation	Experience Economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Walkable access to amenities. Opportunities to get involved in sports and recreation.
	Inclusivity and Wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Severity of cost of living pressures, housing and rental affordability. Access to healthy food.
	Image and Influence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Digital impressions of cities. Cities in the social media conversation.



Future Economy



Summary and key observations

Relative to other peer cities the outlook for Melbourne's metropolitan economy is being shaped by deeper changes to working patterns, and imperatives to rebound on talent and trade.

Melbourne's role as a gateway to trade and production is an enduring area of strength. The city is one of the biggest cities for logistics take up, like for like, and the Port is a critical enabler of long-term capacity growth, including by rail. With the right co-ordination this advantage can deliver a whole cycle of impacts on metropolitan jobs, sustainability, mobility and district development.

More investors and founders find Melbourne appealing, and many technology and life sciences companies have opened offices or research labs in Melbourne, attracted by access to talent and research.

Although fewer Melbourne-HQ'ed firms are rapidly scaling or gaining global reach, there is some good news in the propensity to set up new and growing companies in enterprise software, healthtech and cleantech economies.

Confidence in Melbourne's universities to produce graduates with the right skills remains high. On paper more people have skills in data and AI-driven sectors which is welcome. But the overall talent picture is more challenging than in most peer cities. Talent is also becoming more demanding about work location, flexibility and preferences.

Performance & perception

Generally perceptions are running ahead of overall economic performance. Despite the real disruption to Melbourne's role in global flows of trade, investment and people, there is faith in the city's long-term fundamentals and ability to bounce back.

Perceptions of the quality of Melbourne's talent pool and pipeline tend to be very favourable, although data points to challenges meeting the demand for jobs in a variety of sectors. And through recent turbulence the city retains its appeal among finance executives and investors in real estate.

The data points to confidence in Melbourne among those already in its global circuits, but there remain challenges to recruit a wider base of demand among a range of talent, new economy businesses and impact investors.

Surprises

- ★ Among graduates from top universities, Melbourne appears to have the 4th highest retention rate among peers (LinkedIn)¹¹
- ★ 4th in the world for the success of energy and environment start-ups at achieving real scale (e.g. GreenSync, Relectrify, Amber Electric) (StartupBlink).¹²
- ★ 3rd among 18 peers for rate of new start-up creation since the pandemic (Dealroom).¹³
- ⚠ Net out-migration was higher than in 90% of other cities over the COVID-19 period (JLL, 2020-22).¹⁴
- ⚠ 8th biggest year-on-year drop in FDI among 19 peers (INSEAD).¹⁵
- ⚠ Home to half as many local HQs of the 10,000 globally most promising tech-related companies, compared to peers (Crunchbase).¹⁶

Skills and Talent

20th

9th

1st

Aggregate position vs. peers



Skills and talent are the lifeblood of an urban economy dependent on advanced knowledge and on the full spectrum of services.

The war for scarce talent remains acute in fast-growing industries where technology and science converge. Many cities also face profound risks of a chronic absence of key workers that can affect infrastructure, education, quality of life and much more.

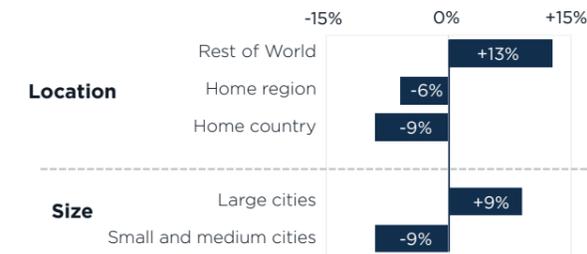
Performance metrics

- ★ Growing pool of software, data and AI talent.
 - ★ 15th out of 50 top cities for how many data scientists and analytics jobs there are - more than in Boston, Paris and Berlin (Cushman & Wakefield).¹⁷
 - ★ 22nd out of 50 cities with the biggest AI talent pools for ingredients for AI talent to thrive (Harvard Business Review).¹⁸
- ★ Melbourne relies on high talent retention, but this is fragile.
 - ★ Melbourne's distance from competitors and domestic importance means it enjoys the 4th highest retention rate of top graduates among peers, on par with Seattle and Vancouver (LinkedIn).¹⁹
 - ⚠ Among those graduates who do choose to leave the city to work elsewhere, more seem to head to global destinations outside of Australia and the Asia-Pacific (+13%), and to major innovation and career capitals (+9%), than on average among peers (LinkedIn).²⁰
- ★ Population growth is driving the pipeline of future workers.
 - ★ Melbourne still also has the joint 3rd youngest demographics among its majority-English speaking peers (Census data).²¹
 - ★ It now has the 10th highest decade forecast growth in working age people, out of 109 cities globally (JLL).²²
- ★ Responsive to changing labour market preferences.
 - ★ Melbourne has the 2nd highest offering of flexible jobs among English-speaking peers (Indeed).²³
 - ★ The city is among the top 20 most diverse co-working markets in the world, ahead of Paris and Los Angeles (Coworking Insights).²⁴

- ⚠ Melbourne's GDP per capita increase since 2020 has been 2% lower than peers (+11% vs +13% across peers) (JLL).²⁵
- ⚠ Attracting talent requires a sustained rebound.
 - ⚠ The last multi-city data showed net out-migration was higher than in nearly all other cities since the start of COVID-19 (JLL). Melbourne is among the top five most affected peer cities in terms of the overall size of its top-tier graduate talent pool since 2020 (LinkedIn). The share of people aged 20-39 has fallen slightly faster in Melbourne (-0.3%) compared to majority English-speaking peers (-0.2%) since 2016, though much less rapidly than in London (-1.2%) and San Francisco (-1.3%) (Census data).²⁶
 - ⚠ Melbourne is still an extremely diverse city. However its overseas born population share has fallen. It is in a small minority (two of 11) majority English-speaking peers where the share of overseas-born people has fallen since 2016 (to 40.1%). Other cities have seen big increases in this period - Manchester (+2.5%), Seattle (+2.5%) and Boston (+1.8%). It remains to be seen how much the pandemic has affected this (Census data).²⁷
- ⚠ The tech-driven economy has a lot of room to grow.
 - ⚠ Melbourne is only just in the top half among 50 cities for the total size of the tech talent pool (Cushman & Wakefield).²⁸
 - ⚠ Currently demand for tech jobs like for like vs. other cities is 66% lower in Melbourne than across English-speaking peer cities. (Based on per capita job vacancies in tech) (Indeed).²⁹
 - ⚠ During the pandemic period there were on average fewer job openings for software engineers than in any other peer city (Arc.Dev).³⁰

Big city, bright lights

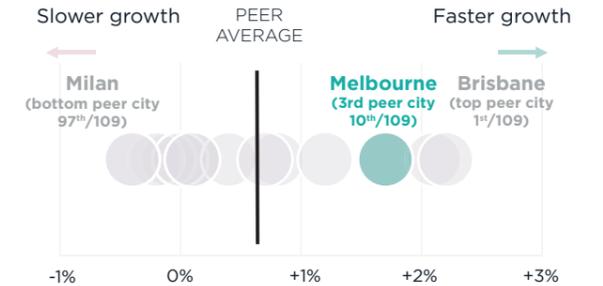
Work destinations of Melbourne's top graduates who have left the city, compared to peers*



*Among the top 50 cities moved to. Source: LinkedIn.³⁴

Still got it

10 year forecast annual growth in working-age population



Source: JLL.³⁵

Perception metrics

- ★ Quality of higher-level business-ready skills. Melbourne is 8th out of 140 cities globally for what local employers think about the quality of the city's graduates (QS).³¹

All-round measures

- ⚠ Bigger hit to labour force participation. In the major measure of educational attainment and labour force participation, Melbourne has dropped slightly, from 8th out of 300 cities globally, to 19th (Resonance).³²
- ★ Competitive all-round skills base. Melbourne is in the world top 20 for the strength of its all-round human capital base, or 4th among peers (IESE).³³

What this means for Melbourne

Now talent flows are resuming Melbourne's appeal remains, but overall Melbourne's skills and talent situation emerges as more precarious than most.

The population and education fundamentals are strong and the tech talent pool is viewed as deep enough to attract major offices from APAC companies. But building the overall size of high wage and high growth industries remains a bigger challenge than in many cities Melbourne regards as peers, briefly hampered by reduced ability to attract talent from overseas. The pull of the world's business capitals still appears very strong after COVID-19. More rests on metropolitan Melbourne developing the places and partnerships that will foster jobs hubs and pathways at scale.



Global Reach and Resilience



Global reach is about consistent openness to trade, business, talent and opportunity. The resilience of cities is in large part defined by their ability to adapt to changing economic and geopolitical circumstances. This means effective contingency, building influence and soft power, ensuring a diversified workforce, and making sure infrastructure is ready for shocks and stresses.

Performance metrics

- ★ **An attractive market for global businesses and investment.**
 - ★ Cumulatively over the last two decades, Melbourne has now attracted more FDI in regional HQs than Madrid and Beijing, placing 11th globally (fDi Magazine).³⁶
 - ★ Global top 40 for cross-border real estate investment (JLL). 2nd biggest jump among peers for post-COVID-19 versus pre-COVID-19 investment.³⁷
 - ★ Up 2 places as home to top global companies (MMF).³⁸
- ★ **Better protected than most from cost-of-living crisis,** which has seen the share of household income going to utilities and transport in cities like Berlin, London and San Francisco increase by 10% year-on-year, compared to only 6% in Melbourne (Numbeo).
- ★ **More resilient city centre population.** Melbourne is 5th out of peers for the number of people living in the city centre (WorldPop).
- ★ **Favourable medium-term outlook for external investment into CBD.**
 - ★ 4th among peers for share of office space coming online (Cushman & Wakefield).³⁹
 - ★ Forecast office five-year rental growth is higher than in any other major city in APAC. Forecast 6th lowest vacancy rate among these 28 APAC cities in 2023.⁴⁰
- ⚠ **Attracting tourists and visitors once again.** Melbourne was more affected than nearly all others for flows of tourists and visitors. Among 48 top cities, it fell 15 places to 45th for foreign visitors and 22 places to 47th for international flight connections, from 2020 to 2021 (MMF).⁴¹
- ⚠ **Need to ensure office demand to underpin investment.**
 - ⚠ Across all of 2022, office occupancy in Melbourne's CBD was around 12% lower than global average. It is only just ahead of some of the biggest impacted US tech hubs, and behind London and Kuala Lumpur (PCA, Remit, Relogix).⁴²
- ⚠ **Pressure for global trade and traffic to bounce back.**
 - ⚠ Melbourne slipped six places to 70th in the world for overall FDI – the 8th biggest year-on-year drop among its peers (INSEAD).⁴³
 - ⚠ Important to reverse peak-COVID-19 trend of more planned high-level meetings and conferences being cancelled in Melbourne (52%) than on average among peers (28%). A fifth fewer conferences (47%) went ahead virtually or in hybrid format (ICCA).⁴⁴
 - ⚠ The drop in airport passengers between 2019 and 2022 was more pronounced in Melbourne than on average (-31% compared to -25% on average) (Local sources).⁴⁵

On pause?

Change in rank for no. of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) projects, 2020-21 to 2021-22



*Compared to city size. Source: INSEAD.⁵³

★ Great momentum in logistics.

- ★ Total take up in the industrial and logistics sector is now more than 3x higher in Melbourne than across peer cities, at more than four million m2 since start of COVID-19 (JLL).⁴⁶
- ★ Melbourne has the 5th largest cluster of locally HQ'ed firms in mobility and logistics, with recognised innovation niches in warehousing and freight services (Crunchbase).⁴⁷

★ Clear opportunity for long-term freight advantage.

- ★ The Port of Melbourne is one of the most important ports to its nation of any peer city, and the most efficient of Australia's ports. Current forecasts suggest that containerised freight throughput will nearly triple by 2050, creating huge growth opportunities for industrial and logistics. Vacancy rates at the port were at an all-time-low of 1.1% as of Q2 2022 (VCCI, Australian Government Productivity Commission, CBRE).⁴⁸
- ⚠ In the most recent measured year, the Port fell from 63rd to 71st among global ports by throughput. Partly this reflects the physical location of Melbourne's port, and differences in container sizes compared to global peers. Greater focus on capitalising on the Port's considerable advantages is welcome. This includes investment to enhance speeds, improve capacity management, foster collaboration between private operators and government, and deliver real progress in shifting freight onto rail – all of which are being worked on by the Port and State Government (Lloyd's).⁴⁹

Perception metrics

- ★ **Enduring appeal to investors and asset allocators.** Now close to the top 30 most highly rated centres by finance professionals, and in the global top 20 for popularity among real estate investors (or 6th in APAC among Asia-Pacific investors) (Z/Yen, Colliers, CBRE).⁵⁰
- ⚠ **Other cities becoming more known for flexible working.** For residents' perceived ease of working flexibly in the city, Melbourne has fallen four places to 13th out of 48 top cities (MMF).⁵¹

All-round measures

- ★ **Longer-term reasons for optimism.** While Melbourne fell to 85th in the world for its short-term economic drivers which relate to its relative global reach, business environment and innovation, it is up to 27th for its long-term potential to succeed. In effect Melbourne has the essential economic ingredients on its side - demographics and consistent skills production. The gap between the short and long-term is bigger in Melbourne than in all other peers except for Montreal and Kuala Lumpur. It broadly indicates that Melbourne has every opportunity to convert its growth into long-run prosperity and innovation with the right investments and policies (UN Habitat).⁵²

What this means for Melbourne

Melbourne's position here is broadly stable, but in a context where more cities are gaining global reach all the time. The city remains on many shortlists for corporate and property investment, and its trading and distribution functions remain critical. But the system-wide disruptions on workforce, location choices, visitor demand, and trade have still to fully play out. New metropolitan hubs for growth and investment, and responding to the 'flight to quality' trend in all areas, will both be key.



Leading Edge Innovation



Forging a decisive position in leading-edge innovation remains essential to the next cycle of liveable cities like Melbourne.

The aim is to combine research acumen, innovation-hungry institutions, and empowered enterprise, into a larger pool of good jobs, scalable opportunities in new and converged industries, and a securely diversified economy. Innovation produced locally also drives improvements to local infrastructure and services.

Hosting the innovation economy usually succeeds when cities are able to foster tight cluster relationships, incentivise partners to share risks, connect to a variety of capital, and adapt the physical character of more parts of the city for the purposes of co-location and critical mass.

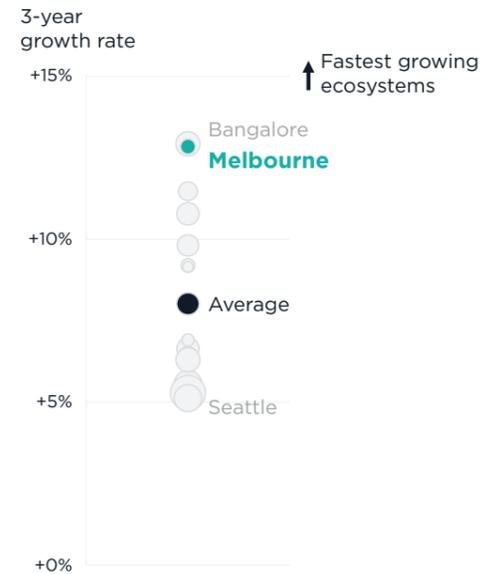
Performance metrics

- ★ An aspiring hub for energy and environment innovation. Melbourne has reached 4th in the world for the success of energy and environment start-ups at achieving real scale (StartupBlink).⁵⁴
- ★ Catch-up happening in the software, data and AI start-up ecosystem is creating impact and demand from businesses to invest.
 - ★ 12th in the world for how many AI FDI projects it attracted in last five years (fDi Magazine).⁵⁵
 - ★ In the top 20% of cities globally for its contribution to the largest online crowd-sourced code base (INSEAD, GitHub).⁵⁶
 - ★ 7th among 18 peers for the share of its start-ups and scale-ups that use frontier technologies (Dealroom).⁵⁷

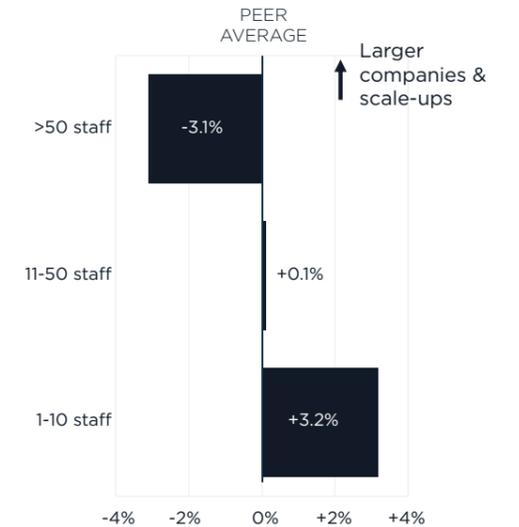
- ★ Momentum in the start-up economy is translating into momentum in the wider innovation economy.
 - ★ From 2018 to 2022, the cumulative value of Melbourne's start-up ecosystem doubled. It is now worth more than that of Barcelona (Dealroom, LaunchVic).⁵⁸
 - ★ Melbourne is 3rd among 18 peers for the rate of new start-up creation since the pandemic. While still 15th in this group for how many start-ups and scale-ups there are, the total number has grown by more than 12% since 2020 (Dealroom).⁵⁹
 - ★ The rate of patent applications increased nearly 4x faster in Melbourne than peers in the most recent year (+36% vs. +9% on average). Melbourne is now 45th out of 109 cities, up from 53rd (JLL).⁶⁰
- ⚠️ Buoyant healthcare sector amid growing competition in life sciences.
 - ★ Melbourne is in the top half of its peers for the share of start-ups and scale-ups specialising in health tech, biotech and pharma (Dealroom). Its health sector continues to drive the ecosystem, with 16% of its start-ups. 4 health unicorns have emerged since 2017 (LaunchVic).⁶¹
 - ⚠️ But Melbourne is among the bottom half of cities for how often it attracts FDI into life sciences R&D facilities like for like vs. other cities (JLL).⁶²

Growing up

Size and growth of start-up ecosystem, 2019 vs. 2022



% of start-ups and scale-ups by no. of employees, Melbourne compared to peer average



Bubble size proportional to no. of start-ups & scale-ups. Includes all active start-ups and scale-ups, excluding service providers, gov. non-profits and firms with no or low technology quotient in traditional industries. San Francisco and London not shown on chart due to their outsized scale. Source: Dealroom.⁵⁹

⚠️ Opportunities to scale many more companies.

- ⚠️ Melbourne has begun to produce more unicorn companies. Yet among a sample group of the 10,000 globally most promising tech-related companies, only 31 are HQ'ed in Melbourne, compared to a median of 64 among peers (Crunchbase).⁶³
- ⚠️ The share of larger start-ups and scale-ups (>10 staff) has grown to 34% in the past 5 years. Yet this share is still 12th among 18 peers. Scaling up enterprises remains a key task. (Dealroom, LaunchVic).⁶⁴
- ⚠️ The share of total funding raised by start-ups and scale-ups in mid to late stage rounds has doubled state-wide since 2017. But at the Melbourne level the city is still 17th out of 18 peers for the share of funding coming from post-seed rounds, and 16th out of 18 for the share of start-ups and scale-ups in the late stages of growth (Dealroom).⁶⁵

⚠️ Thirst for more VC investment in growth industries. Other than in the jobs recruitment sector, Melbourne is behind its peers for how much VC investment its start-ups and scale-ups have attracted in the fastest-growing sectors since COVID-19. This includes sectors where Melbourne has tended to hold some comparative advantage, such as biotech and logistics (Dealroom).⁶⁶

Perception metrics

★ Improving reputation for fintech. Up four places to 27th for what experts think of the city's fintech prospects, now ahead of Milan, Stockholm and Dubai (Z/Yen).⁶⁷

All-round measures

★ Improving innovation competitiveness in APAC. In 2022, Melbourne is APAC's 3rd most promising innovation ecosystem, up from 5th in 2021, underpinned by the research and skills promise the region possesses (Hickey & Associates).⁶⁸

What this means for Melbourne

The outlook here is stable and has the potential to be more positive with the right interventions. The sum effort by government, universities and investors to accelerate Melbourne's innovation ecosystem is bearing some fruit, especially in industries like software, AI, robotics and health. But the picture is not static and other cities' ecosystems are in many cases growing at least as fast.

The quality and reputation of Melbourne's knowledge assets, and access to labs in high potential precincts is a big selling point for advanced companies. But the task of commercialising and scaling more of Melbourne's many small ventures, and plugging them in to dynamic local ecosystems, is a long-term one. Other innovative peer cities have moved to connect and convene the whole innovation ecosystem, and build critical mass in more future-facing sectors.

Infrastructure & Sustainability



Summary and key observations

Melbourne has a long-term infrastructure imperative that relies on successive cycles of effective metropolitan investment.

The global benchmarks highlight that improving the range, frequency and reliability of travel across the whole city is what will drive future connectivity. They also highlight the importance of raising fixed digital speeds and access to jobs throughout Greater Melbourne. These are issues of competitiveness as well as fairness.

Melbourne has some infrastructure momentum and this is starting to register in some areas. But in order to translate into wider liveability and productivity benefits, individual projects and infrastructure items will need to be fully joined up. Some will be seen as redefining the shape and feel of the city.

Shared commitment to densifying and improving access to transport and amenities in existing suburbs, as well as in large precinct developments (like Fishermans Bend), is essential to deliver for new homes, more innovation and a higher calibre of urban experience.

Melbourne is showing more potential to finance green infrastructure. Banks are responding to higher demand for green and sustainability-linked loans. This is welcome, as green infrastructure and climate resilience are areas where up to now, Melbourne's competitors have been making earlier and faster progress.

Performance & perception

How metropolitan Melbourne is connecting people on paper matches up to what people think of it – and neither are especially favourable.

Overall, Melbourne is about as green, connected and efficient as people think it is or expect it to be. In general there are more concerns about the speed and reliability of commuting and going online than in cities of similar size internationally.

Internationally Melbourne is not yet widely viewed as one of the world's most environmentally forward-thinking metropolises. The legacy of the national brand on climate change plays a role here. Melbourne is making progress for example on clean energy, and will need to show progress in areas like mode share, green systems and built form to forge a stronger reputation.

Surprises

- ★ Biggest year-on-year jump for reputation for green finance in the world (Z/Yen)⁷⁰
- ★ Global top 25 for mobile broadband speeds (Ookla).⁷¹
- ★ Melbourne emits 21% less CO2 per GWh of electricity produced than the average among peers (OECD).⁷²
- ⚠️ 2nd longest average public transport commute time among 15 peer cities (Moovit).⁷³
- ⚠️ 10th out of 14 peers for share of people who can reach the city centre within a one hour public transport commute (TravelTime).⁷⁴
- ⚠️ Greater Melbourne is last among its 12 peers, and near the very mid point among 195 global cities, for uptake of super-fast fixed broadband (Ookla).⁷⁵



Whole City Connectivity

20th

13th

1st

Aggregate position vs. peers



Whole-city connectivity is essential for a fast-growing city like Melbourne, whose agglomeration advantages rest on speed, reliability and flexibility for people, goods, clients, customers and services.

It matters not just because it is a major influence on the efficiency, productivity, health and relationships for the majority who live in suburbs. It also provides the basis through which the Melbourne CBD and its business and amenity clusters perform by allowing them to draw on a larger labour pool and customer base. And it also fosters the cohesion and shared identity that a city doubling in population in less than 50 years relies on.

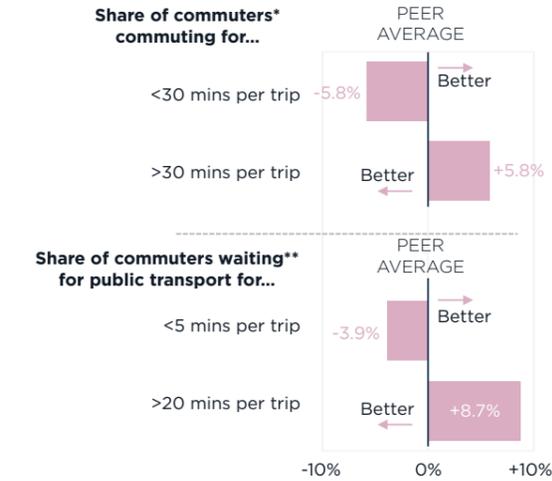
Performance metrics

- ⚠️ A public transport commute in Melbourne in 2023 usually means a longer trip than other cities.
 - ⚠️ Among those who choose to commute via public transport:
 - ⚠️ Melbourne has the joint 2nd longest average commute time among 15 peer cities. Those who use public transport to commute to work spend on average five minutes longer per trip (Moovit).⁷⁶
 - ⚠️ Melburnians spend longer waiting for public transport and making connections than in other cities. 10% more people spend an average of over 20 minutes waiting and transferring than in other cities (Moovit).⁷⁷
 - ⚠️ Fewer people can get to work within 30 minutes. The share of public transport commuters who regularly get to work in less than half an hour is more than 5% lower than Melbourne's peer average (Moovit).⁷⁸

- ⚠️ Fewer people can quickly get into the centre using public transport. The share of people living in Greater Melbourne who can reach the city centre within a one hour public transport commute is 14% lower than on average among peers, putting Melbourne 10th out of the 14 peers for which comparable up-to-date data is available (TravelTime).⁷⁹
- ★ Melbourne has been less congested than other cities in 2022, but it remains to be seen whether this is a temporary COVID-19 effect.
 - ★ Melbourne is now the 7th least congested city among 17 peers, with the number of hours lost to congestion nearly 25% lower than the average (INRIX).⁸⁰
 - ★ Congestion has fallen relative to pre-pandemic levels, with the 2022 average 17% lower than in 2019. This contrasts with cities such as London and Berlin which are more congested than on the eve of the pandemic but may be because of the longer lockdowns in Melbourne (INRIX).⁸¹
 - ⚠️ Other cities have seen much lower demand for car-based commuting, like Amsterdam (-40%), Singapore (-34%) and Vancouver (-32%) (INRIX).⁸²
 - ⚠️ Uptake of micro mobility is growing, but still in the middle of the pack. Melbourne is now 8th out of 15 peers for reported usage of publicly available micromobility options (scooters, bikes, eBikes and electric mopeds), up from 12th out of 16 in 2020 (Moovit).⁸³

Hard graft

Share of people community by public transport by time spent commuting and average wait and transfer time, compared to peers



Source: Moovit.
 *Commuters commuting by public transport only
 **Waiting and transfer time per trip - if a trip includes transfers, the value is the sum of the waiting time at the different stops/stations.⁸⁴

Perception metrics

- ⚠️ Harder to get around the city.
 - ⚠️ Melbourne is in the bottom quarter of 50 global cities for what expats think of the quality and affordability of the city's public transport and how walkable it is (10th / 12 peers) (ExpatsInsider).⁸⁵
 - ⚠️ Melbourne is in the middle of the pack for how much locals think public transport is an issue that needs addressing (IMD).⁸⁶

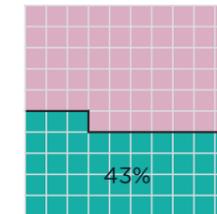
All-round measures

- ★ Progress in connecting up more of the city, but from a lower base. Melbourne is up eight places for the all-round efficiency of the city's mobility platform, but is still in the bottom third of all global cities (IESE).⁸⁷

Hard to reach

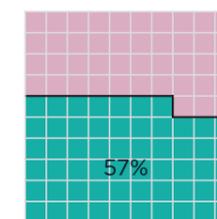
Share of people who can get into the city centre within a one hour public transport commute

Melbourne



Share of people who can get into the centre with one hour

PEER AVERAGE



Source: TravelTime. See Appendix for methodology.⁸⁸

What this means for Melbourne

The uptick in infrastructure investment is slowly starting to register in some measures of momentum and progress. Melbourne benefits from the largest tram network in the world and a well established train network servicing Greater Melbourne. And over time major projects like the Suburban Rail Loop will further diversify the network and choices.

But for the time being ongoing relative disadvantage of public versus private transport in most parts of the city continues to drive down Melbourne's scores.

More city competitiveness metrics are focusing on the real set of choices and opportunities in suburbs as well as city centres -i.e. how far people live away from jobs, amenities, services and each other. This implies that for Melbourne to rise up the global charts over the coming years it will need more than just new infrastructure - it will also need mixed use, scale and quality around newly connected precincts so that more people can enjoy flexible and efficient commutes and other benefits of connectivity.



Technology and Efficiency

20th

13th

1st

Aggregate position vs. peers



Technology is an increasing differentiator among liveable cities. High-speed and wide coverage digital infrastructure attract mobile talent, sustain larger businesses, and enable high uptake of services.

The effective deployment and use of technology in government-to-public and business-to-business relationships shapes how organisations perform, whether decisions are made transparently, and if the urban experience of working, commuting and recreation can be made more seamless.

Whether cities lead or lag here is influenced by public appetite, trust, and whether providers can establish platforms at the kind of scale to make a difference. Increasingly technology will be defined by whether it enables a co-created and cohesive city instead of an automated and divided city.

Performance metrics

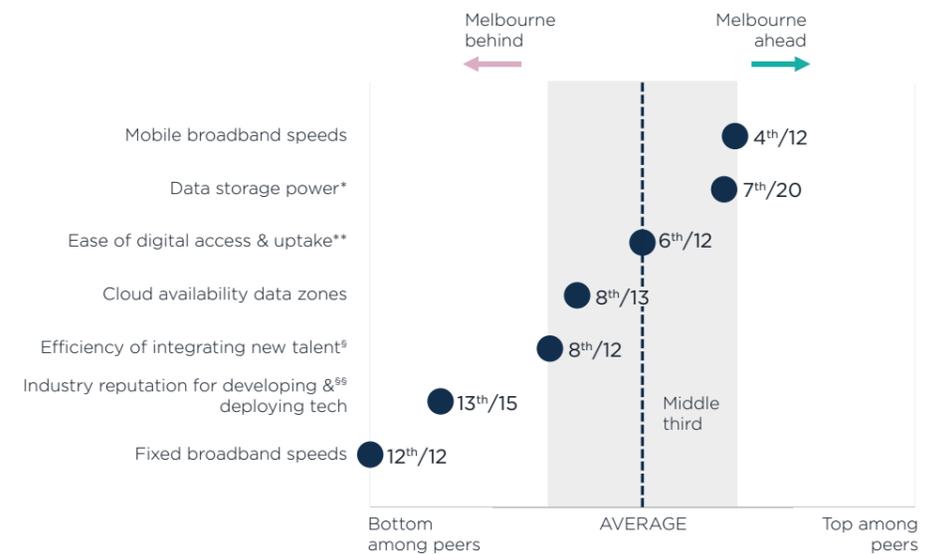
★ **Catching up to demand for data storage.** With three new data centres planned, Melbourne has jumped into the top 25 cities globally for cloud availability data zones, and is nearly in the top third of its peers for the power output of its data centres. As the data boom continues, there is an increase in the size of the facilities with NEXTDC opening up its largest facility in Melbourne. However, Melbourne lags behind APAC peers for competitiveness in terms of cost and quality of centres (fDi data, Cushman & Wakefield).⁸⁹

★ Melbourne benefits from excellent mobile broadband, keeping people connected 'on the move'. Melbourne is 21st out of 171 top global cities in latest average mobile download speeds, with speeds nearly 40% higher than average competitors. Its advantage is conferred by earlier adoption of 5G, and phasing out of older networks (Ookla).⁹⁰

⚠ **Other cities have a higher take up of super-fast fixed broadband.** Metropolitan Melbourne's median fixed broadband speeds are more than 50% below the peer average, down from 42% lower last year (Melbourne is bottom among 12 measured peers). This partly reflects subscriber choices, since the availability of ultra-fast high speed fixed services to residents and businesses is growing. NBN Co and State Government investment up to 2025, targeted at providing higher speeds for up to 10 million premises across the nation, will help to close this gap in the coming years.⁹¹

Middle of the pack

Melbourne across the different measures of technology and efficiency, vs. peers



*Total MW of power across data centres/data storage facilities. **How easy talent finds it to go cashless, access the internet, and take advantage of digital public services. §How easy workers from overseas find it to open a bank account, get a visa, and interact with local authorities. §§Perceptions among global industry experts of Melbourne's ability to create, develop and deploy technology. Sources (from top to bottom): Ookla, Cushman & Wakefield, ExpatInsider, fDi Magazine, ExpatInsider, Z/Yen, Ookla.⁹²

Perception metrics

★ **Viewed as easier to "go digital" in life and work.** In a new measure of how easy overseas talent finds it to go cashless, access the internet, and take advantage of digital public services, Melbourne is 16th out of 50 cities (Expatrier).⁹³

★ **Engaged citizens.** Top 20% of cities in the world for share of residents who think that citizen engagement is not a major challenge facing the city (IMD).⁹⁴

⚠ **Incoming overseas talent find it harder to navigate.** Melbourne is 8th out of 12 peers for how easy workers from overseas perceive it to open a bank account, get a visa, and interact with local authorities (Expatrier).⁹⁵

⚠ **Not yet seen as a leading city for technology deployment and development.** In a major survey of industry experts, Melbourne is only perceived to be 13th among 15 peers as a place to create, develop and deploy technology (Z/Yen).⁹⁶

What this means for Melbourne

This area increasingly spans 'hard' and 'soft' aspects of technology, including the experience of navigating, consuming, starting up and mobilising large business operations. Melburnians and digital nomads still report a reasonable level of satisfaction and engagement, and mobile connectivity remains very strong by global standards. New measures point to the ease of the city's 'digital landing pad', which partly explains Melbourne's improvement this year.

However, the current framework for comparing cities' digital systems looks set to continue to penalise Melbourne. With other cities continuing to move ahead, especially on recorded fixed speeds, the overall data picture suggests this area may see declines in the short-to-medium term. Ongoing investment in service provision will be key. Other practical ways to catch up and progress will be in the co-ordination of existing assets and systems to improve efficiency in areas such as freight, user charging, or emissions zoning.



Environmental Outcomes

20th

12th

1st

Aggregate position vs. peers



Custodianship of the urban environment and global ecology shapes decisions of residents, governments, big capital and institutions.

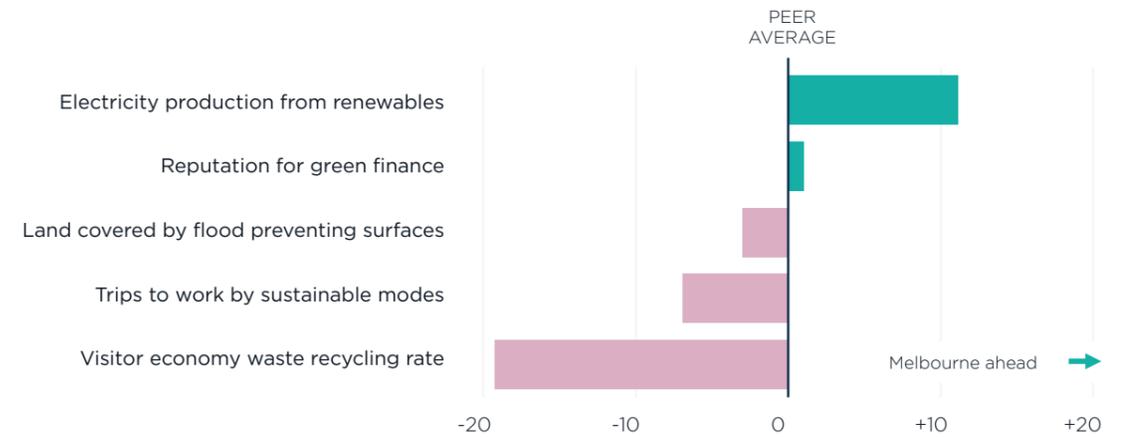
Cities that have long competed on quality of life increasingly have to demonstrate they are committed to this in the long run, through meaningful quests to decarbonise, rethink how growth can enhance not erode the environment, and make serious efforts to produce a habitat fit for everyone who lives and enjoys the city.

Performance metrics

- ★ **Cleaner electricity production.** Melbourne emits 21% less CO2 per GWh of electricity produced than the average among peers - lower than Manchester and Boston despite a similar share of electricity coming from fossil fuels. One third of the city's electricity production comes from renewable sources - the 3rd highest share among peers (OECD).⁹⁷
- ⚠️ **Stubbornly high emissions from transport and industry.**
 - ⚠️ Despite a sharp lockdown decline, Melbourne still has the 3rd highest carbon emissions from ground transport and industry among 10 peers. A fifth of Melbourne's carbon emissions come from transport - vs. 12% on average across peers outside the U.S. (Carbon Monitor).⁹⁸
 - ⚠️ Melbourne is down three places to 35th out of 48 cities for overall greenhouse gas emissions per person (MMF).⁹⁹
- ⚠️ **Minimising waste is a challenge.** Only around 25% of waste in Melbourne's visitor economy is recycled, the 2nd lowest share among the six peers for which data is available (Global Destination Sustainability Movement).¹⁰⁰
- ⚠️ **Car-dependence demands innovation.**
 - ⚠️ With an active and public transport mode share of 27%, Melbourne is 8th / 14 peers and far behind cities like Berlin and London (both above 60%). (Deloitte).¹⁰¹
 - ⚠️ 87% of Melburnians own a car - the 2nd highest rate among 20 cities (local sources).¹⁰²
- ⚠️ **Catch up agenda on green buildings.**
 - ⚠️ Asia Pacific is a relatively under-performing region in this area, and Melbourne is only 6th among 28 Asia-Pacific cities for the share of office buildings considered "green", at around 60% (CBRE).¹⁰³
 - ⚠️ The city's CBD has more un-rated or less than top-rated green building office stock than other major Australian CBDs (JLL).¹⁰⁴
 - ⚠️ Melbourne is 8th out of 11 peers for readiness to shift to net zero emissions in the office sector, based on factors such as investor and occupier demand, stock and regulation (Nuveen).¹⁰⁵
- ⚠️ **Viewed as more vulnerable on biodiversity and flood resilience.**
 - ⚠️ The share of Melbourne's land area that is set aside as protected area for biodiversity is nearly half that of its peers (10% compared to 19% on average) (OECD).¹⁰⁶
 - ⚠️ More of Melbourne's land area is covered by highly flood prone artificial surfaces (20% compared to 17% on average), putting it among the top fifth of OECD cities (OECD).¹⁰⁷

Small steps

Melbourne compared to peer average across sustainability metrics



Sources (from top to bottom): OECD, Z/Yen, OECD, Deloitte, Global Destination Sustainability Movement.¹⁰⁸

Perception metrics

- ★ **Clear momentum in green finance.** Higher demand for green and sustainability-linked loans and a more diversified offer from banks has helped Melbourne to climb 19 places for its reputation for green finance since Q3 2021, to 18th globally. This is the largest year-on-year jump in the world (Z/Yen).¹⁰⁹
- ★ **Pleasant environment.** Four-fifths of expats are happy with the quality of the environment, compared to two-thirds on average in other cities globally (Expatrier).¹¹⁰

All-round measures

- ⚠️ **Other cities moving ahead for mobilising partners on sustainability.** Melbourne has slipped from 11th to 20th for adoption of sustainable policy and practice in the visitor economy. Major conference venues are sustainability certified, but it is currently rated the 2nd lowest among peers for the share of hotels certified (Global Destination Sustainability Movement).¹¹¹
- ⚠️ **Need for alignment on climate ambition.** Melbourne is one of only seven peer cities to be rated as having different levels of climate ambition across levels of government (The Business of Cities research).¹¹²

What this means for Melbourne

Across Australia, APAC and the Southern Hemisphere, Melbourne is doing well. The City of Melbourne's bold Net Zero strategy and green buildings agenda adds momentum in key sectors, as do the commitments of large universities. But in a global context metropolitan Melbourne is not yet excelling for mitigation, adaptation or resilience. Green finance and a cottage industry of green economy start-ups are two bright spots to build on, and over time state investment in renewables is likely to register on citywide performance.

But for Melbourne to stand out in a wider world of decarbonising cities, and as other cities move faster on incentivising all types of stakeholder to sign up to the sustainability imperative, it will need a more sustainable transport and logistics mix, more leadership in high carbon industries, and a built environment conducive to lower emissions. Otherwise the slight declining trend in this area is set to continue.

Liveability & Urban Optimisation



Summary and key observations

Much of Melbourne's liveability equation has emerged from the pandemic strongly intact.

The benchmarks testify to enduring affection and affiliation for the city's streets, public spaces, greenery, food, conviviality and work-life balance.

Melbourne's quality of life reputation has long rested on its advantages in terms of climate, leisure and public services. But more attention on wellbeing and fairness reveals some areas where Melbourne is weaker. Nearly all of these relate to the failure to reproduce the Melbourne success story across the expanding metropolis. Issues of food deserts, services gaps, and unaffordability, are all raised in this year's benchmarks.

Over time, the risk is that the disadvantages of low-liveability suburbia multiply and affect demand and reputation.

Attention is shifting to how well cities can stage memorable and high-quality experiences. This is good news for the Melbourne that is adapting to the 'flight to quality'. But it also challenges the Melbourne for whom it is hard to reach many of the comforts and conveniences that comprise the Australian dream.

Performance & perception

There are important gaps here between Melbourne's reputation and the product it delivers for the metropolitan majority.

There is now performance scrutiny of how the whole city works for the young and old, rich and poor, incomers and long-established. Outer suburbs especially are revealed as operating at a deficit in terms of opportunities, experiences and attractions.

There tends to be praise for and pride in Melbourne's lifestyle, sport, nightlife and dining, among those who are asked. However among those far away, Melbourne after the pandemic is not quite as often or positively thought of as a 'top city' either to visit, admire or be influenced by. Many are also concerned about whether they can afford Melbourne or get around the city. Perceptions are volatile after COVID-19 so this should be watched over the next one to two years.

Surprises

- ★ The three year rate of house price increase has been 30%+ smaller in Melbourne than across peers - although Melbourne's ranking has deteriorated overall to become the 5th most unaffordable housing market in the English-speaking world (Knight Frank, Demographia).¹³
- ★ Less than half as many "high heat stress" days compared to OECD average over past five years - as other cities also suffer (OECD).¹⁴
- ★ 22nd globally for search interest in moving to the city for work (Holidu).¹⁵
- ⚠ Fallen out of the global top 10 for public admiration and trust for first time in more than a decade (Anholt).¹⁶
- ⚠ Only 13th out of 28 APAC cities for growth in average household income since 2016 (ULI).¹⁷
- ⚠ 18th out of 25 global cities for access to healthy food (The Lancet).¹⁸



Experience Economy

20th _____ 4th _____ 1st

Aggregate position vs. peers



As the cost of living rises steeply in many global cities, consumers are becoming even more careful, concerned and discerning. Demand is shifting towards fewer, higher quality experiences. Cities have to deliver more in terms of the events they host, where in the city they stage them, and the audiences they target.

Leading cities are looking to succeed through gaining new reach and diversifying their offer to meet the demands of people of all ages, all backgrounds and all incomes.

Performance metrics

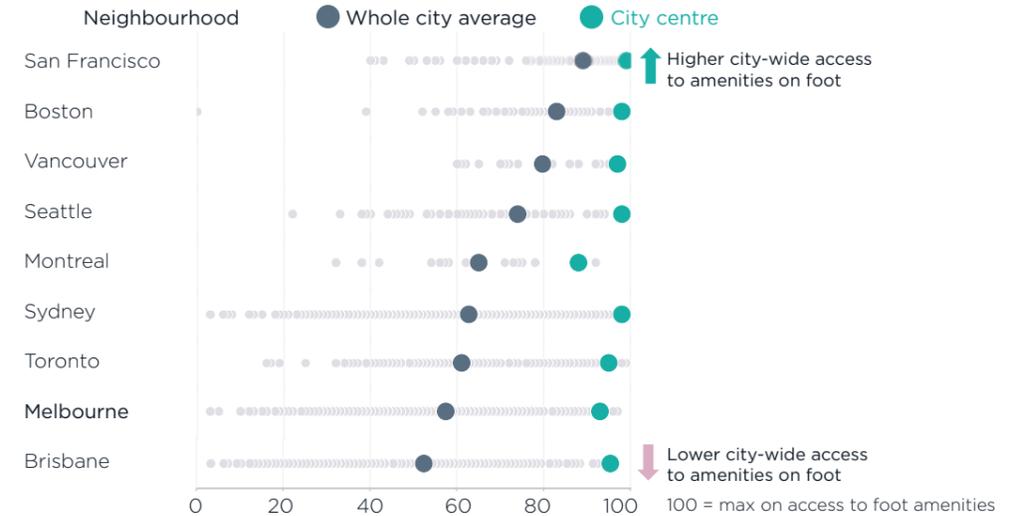
- ★ **Vibrant public realm.** Despite being less walkable as a metropolis, Melbourne's streets and public spaces are becoming a big part of its perceived appeal as travel resumes after COVID-19.
 - ★ Top 20% of cities in the world for share of urban space given over to streets and public spaces (UN-Habitat).¹¹⁹
- ⚠ **Competition is high for cultural and culinary depth.**
 - ⚠ Surprisingly Melbourne is among the bottom 15% of similarly sized peer cities for how many mid-range and fine dining restaurants to enjoy (Veolar, similarly sized = 4-6m people).¹²⁰
 - ⚠ Despite Melbourne's well known cultural strengths, it is also in the bottom quarter of peers for the number of internationally recognised museums compared to its peers (MMF).¹²¹
- ★ **Hub for sports and wellness innovation.** Melbourne has the 4th largest cluster of locally HQ'ed firms in sports, fitness and wellness among 18 peers (Crunchbase).¹²²

All-round measures

- ⚠ **Melbourne's is not as 'unmissable' to family-age and older generations.**
 - ⚠ Melbourne is 62nd out of 162 global cities for appeal to Gen X (born 1965-1980) and 35th for appeal to Baby Boomers (born 1946 to 1964), compared to 25th on average for appeal to Gen Z and Millennials (born after 1981) (Holidu).¹²³
 - ⚠ It is rated 65th out of 69 global tourism destinations for the availability of child-friendly restaurants (based on density of restaurants coded "child friendly" on TripAdvisor per sq. km).¹²⁴
- ⚠ **Other cities have become competitive visitor hotspots, despite strong bounce back in Melbourne.**
 - ⚠ Given pandemic-related shifts, Melbourne fell out of the global top 10 destinations for Airbnb rentals. The city was overtaken by Dubai, Mexico City and Istanbul since 2019 (Inkifi, based on AirDNA).¹²⁵
 - ★ However, the number of listings has not decreased as sharply as on average (-25% in Melbourne compared to -31% globally) (Inkifi, based on AirDNA).¹²⁶
 - ★ Melbourne is 3rd out of all cities globally for resurgent search interest in travelling to the city from 2021-22 to 2022-23, and as of February 2023 has the joint highest occupancy rate of vacation rentals among its 20 peers, at 79% occupied (Airbnb, SeeTransparent).¹²⁷
- ⚠ **Access to amenities at the edges is low.** For easy access to amenities and experiences on foot, the City of Melbourne is 4th out of the nine North American and Australian peers for which data is available. But Greater Melbourne is 8th (Walkscore).¹²⁸

A step behind

On foot access to retail, hospitality, sports & culture venues*, city centre vs suburbs



Source: Walkscore. *E.g. retail outlets, coffee shops, restaurants, bars, cinemas and theatres, libraries, parks and fitness centres. Note: data only available for American, Canadian and Australian cities.¹²⁹

Perception metrics

- ★ **Growing reputation for 5* quality.**
 - ★ Melbourne places in the top third among mid-sized cities for high rated visitor experiences, ahead of Milan, Toronto and Tel Aviv (no. of 5* rated things to do on TripAdvisor, 2-6m people).¹³⁰
 - ★ The city is up to 43rd in the world for the number of highly rated culinary, cultural and entertainment experiences (Resonance).¹³¹
- ★ **Gem for cuisine.**
 - ★ 92% of locals are satisfied with the city's food and drink scene - one of the highest in the world (TimeOut).¹³²
 - ★ Melbourne is now 10th out of 48 top global cities - or 2nd among 14 peers - for what locals think about how attractive the local dining scene is, up nine places on last year (MMF).¹³³
- ★ **Improving nightlife reputation.** In the major measure of how often people review the city's nightlife attractions and city nightlife as a reason for having visited the city, Melbourne is up five places to 22nd out of 48 top global cities (MMF).¹³⁴
- ★ **Places and spaces that inspire.**
 - ★ The city is 18th for sights and landmarks based on points of interest, neighbourhoods and landmarks recommended by locals and visitors (Resonance).¹³⁵
 - ★ Among Melbourne's outdoor spaces is the world's 37th most retweeted park (Fitzroy Gardens, based on no. of Twitter hashtags, among world's 100 largest cities).¹³⁶
- ★ **Sporting reputation on the up.**
 - ★ Melbourne is the 10th most recognised sporting city globally, up from 20th in 2020 (BCW, as rated by global sporting experts and how often the global public talk about the city in relation to sport online).¹³⁷
 - ★ 86% of expats think there are lots of opportunities to get involved in local sports and recreation, 11% more than on average globally (ExpatsInsider).¹³⁸
- ⚠ **Not yet a first-choice city for unique experiences.** Melbourne is not yet in the top 20 cities globally for unique, "hidden gem" or more obscure things to do (William Russell).¹³⁹

What this means for Melbourne

While visitors are won over by its friendly people, its sports culture, the vibrancy of its art and music scene, and the local food options available, a closer look at Melbourne's scores suggests that compared to other cities, there is a bigger gap between what residents, visitors and other 'consumers' of the city such as students perceive on the one hand, and what the city offers on the other.

Amid a 'flight to quality', cities will be competing more on unique opportunities to see, hear and taste, and more access to child-friendly activities and other experiences across the whole of the week.

Melbourne has an opportunity to build on its reputation and enrich the real-life experience of the city for the full range of audiences that it seeks to serve. The trend to reclaim public spaces for outdoor and pop-up events is promising - spreading it to more of the metropolis and ensuring that walkable access to a full-spectrum urban lifestyle is more equal across the city can help ensure that Melbourne remains at the very top of the league table in the years to come.



Inclusivity and Wellbeing

20th

2nd

1st

Aggregate position vs. peers



Inclusivity and wellbeing underpin the long-term sustainability and cohesion of all fast growing cities.

The strength of the social contract between different income groups, and between long-time residents and new arrivals, differentiates the cities that are able to adapt to crisis, build consensus around future changes, and combat economic and cultural polarisation, from those that are not.

Liveable cities like Melbourne have a profound duty to continually renew the widely shared sense of welcome and wellbeing. To do so often requires new tools to deliver the services and co-ordination at a larger scale, on digital as well as physical platforms, and given new kinds of threat that emerge to open societies in a global system.

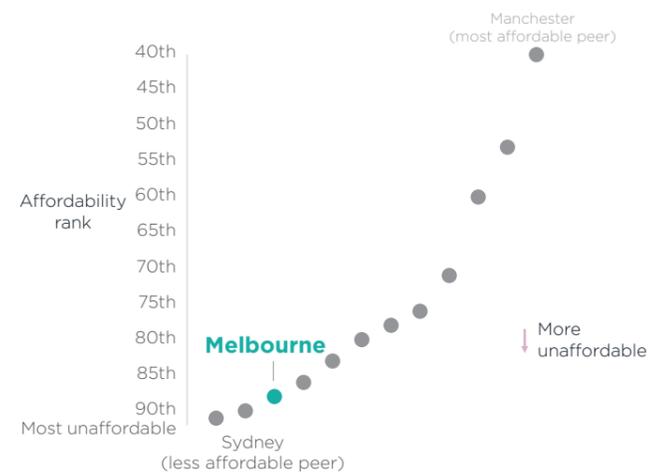
Performance metrics

- ★ An enabler for all kinds of lifestyles.
 - ★ Melbourne is the 4th most vegan-friendly city globally (HappyCow).¹⁴⁰
 - ★ Melbourne places in the top 25% among top global cities for how many people live within easy walking distance of large open spaces and is among the top five in its peer group for amount of green space per person (UNHabitat, OECD).¹⁴¹
 - ★ It is publicly rated as among the top three best cities for running, out of 40 top global cities, and is home to the 4th fastest marathon runners out of the world's 12 most active cities (HOKA, Strava).¹⁴²
- ★ Better protected work-life balance through the pandemic, in terms of number of hours worked and level of overwork.
 - ★ 3rd least overworked population globally (based on share of people who regularly work overtime / more than 49h per week) (Kisi).¹⁴³
- ★ Inclusive transport system. Melbourne has the 5th lowest gender difference in uptake of public and active transport among 20 top global cities, with men and women walking, cycling and using public transport in similar proportions (Transportation).¹⁴⁴
- ★ Despite still being unaffordable by overall global standards, Melbourne has been rated as better insulated than other peer cities from recent global spikes in the cost of energy and utilities.
 - ★ Melbourne has improved from 11th to 9th for the affordability of utilities and bills, and from 14th to 12th for affordability of public transport, since 2021, partly due to lower cost inflation compared to European and North American cities (Numbeo).¹⁴⁵
 - ★ The share of monthly income spent on utilities and bills is now nearly one third lower than on average among peers (3.6% in Melbourne compared to 5.5% among peers), partly due to better insulation from rising energy costs compared especially to European peers (Numbeo).¹⁴⁶
 - ⚠ House and rental prices remain very high but prices in other cities have risen quicker.
 - ⚠ The three-year rate of house price increase has been more than a third lower in Melbourne than across peers (+14% in Melbourne compared to +23%), after significant falls in the past year, but in 2021 Melbourne's performance has declined to become the 5th most unaffordable housing market in the English-speaking world (Knight Frank, Demographia).¹⁴⁷
 - ⚠ For average housing rents, Melbourne is up six places as other cities have seen bigger increases, but is still more expensive than nearly half of a group of 48 top global cities (MMF).¹⁴⁸
 - ⚠ Access to healthy food is more unequal in Melbourne. Outside of the city of Melbourne especially, more people live in areas with lower access to healthy food options than in other cities both in Australia and globally (Melbourne is 18th out of 25 cities globally) (The Lancet, based on % of people city-wide who live within a 500m walk of a healthy food store).¹⁴⁹



Turning tides?

Housing affordability (prices relative to income), rank among major English-speaking markets, Melbourne vs. peers, Q3 2021*



*Latest available
Sources: Demographia (left), Knight Frank (right).¹⁵⁰

Total compound % change in house prices, Q3 2019 to Q3 2022

City	Change
Vancouver	9%
London	14%
Melbourne	14%
Singapore	23%
Sydney	26%
Brisbane	30%
Toronto	33%
San Francisco	34%
Manchester	35%
Boston	40%
Montreal	47%
Seattle	49%

↓ Faster house price growth



Perception metrics

- ★ **Easier to access core services.** Only one in six local people think access to basic amenities is a major challenge facing the city, significantly lower than elsewhere (24th lowest share among 120 cities globally) (IMD).¹⁵¹
- ★ **Perceptions about Melbourne's liveability are improving.** In the major survey of what residents think about how liveable the city is, Melbourne has risen 19 places since COVID-19. This partly reflects better protection from higher costs of living, more satisfaction with healthcare, and potentially higher appreciation for the city's outdoors and nature (Numbeo).¹⁵²
- ⚠️ **More entrenched perception gaps around affordable housing and congestion, despite progress.**
 - ⚠️ Four in five residents still think that finding affordable housing is one of the most important challenges facing the city (9th highest share among 120 cities globally) (IMD).¹⁵³
 - ⚠️ More than half of residents still identify congestion as one of the major challenges for the city (37th highest share among 120 cities globally) (IMD).¹⁵⁴
- ⚠️ **Residents' safety concerns have not eased.** Melbourne places in the bottom third of 150 cities globally for resident perceptions of how fast crime is rising. 67% of residents think that crime has increased over the past three years, although Melbourne's objective scores have mostly improved since 2019 (Numbeo).¹⁵⁵
- ★ **Melbourne is seen as a tolerant and open city.**
 - ★ The city is among the top five most LGBTQ-friendly cities in the world (Big 7 Travel).¹⁵⁶
 - ★ Melbourne is in the top 25% among peers for how easy recent newcomers find it to make friends (Expatrier).¹⁵⁷

All-round measures

- ★ **Melbourne's social cohesion has been better protected through the pandemic.** The city is now 2nd among peers for ingredients for and outcomes of social equality, up from 7th before the pandemic (IESE).¹⁵⁸
- ★ **Melbourne has so far been better able to protect its citizens from the worst effects of climate change.**
 - ★ Over the past five years, Melbourne has experienced less than half as many "high heat stress" days compared to the average across OECD cities (27 in Melbourne compared to 60 on average) (OECD).¹⁵⁹
 - ★ The urban heat island effect in Melbourne is not as strong: the peak summer temperature difference between the city and its surrounds over the past five years has been lower than in all peer cities except for Brisbane, partly reflecting the positive impacts of the ongoing City of Melbourne-led tree-planting initiative that started in 2014 (OECD).¹⁶⁰
- ⚠️ **Raw living standards have not increased as fast in Melbourne.** Melbourne is only 13th out of 28 APAC cities for growth in average household income since 2016 (ULI).¹⁶¹

What this means for Melbourne

Much of Melbourne's liveability endures. The city has become much more expensive and congested, but in a world where inflation in major cities is the norm, Melbourne still gets rated as more inclusive and accommodating than most. The effects of climate change have also not yet registered on performance and perception as much as they are likely to in future.

The pandemic has triggered a focus on areas where Melbourne has tended to do well, and where there is now more data: work life balance, access to outdoors, and dietary options. This has more than outweighed the other more negative impacts the pandemic has exposed, such as uneven wellbeing outcomes and concerns for the silent majority.

In 2023, inclusivity and wellbeing is about more than just whether or not people feel their quality of life has improved (or even whether the level of public service available to citizens says it has). It is also about how well cities nurture a sense of belonging, how tolerant its citizens are, and how intact the civic contract is in the face of challenges. In all of these areas, Melbourne has proven more resilient. Preserving this and staying near the top of the charts will likely require concerted efforts to continue to invest in social infrastructure in all parts of the city, and to address emerging spatial imbalances in access to amenities, transport and wellbeing outcomes.



Image and Influence

20th

8th

1st

Aggregate position vs. peers



Image and influence matter hugely for cities in a crowded global marketplace.

The demand to live, work, study, visit, invest and do business in a city is inspired by its visibility, reputation and credibility, which can vary greatly even for cities that appear similar on paper.

Leading cities aim to achieve global reach and resonance for a broad base of users and markets, because this can create an enduring magnetism to trade, investment and talent. Increasingly they look to fine-tune their reputations as places to discover, innovate and be part of something bigger, as well as being somewhere to enjoy and consume.

The image and identity of cities takes time to accumulate but can also be damaged by short termism. Cities face unprecedented scrutiny for how they handle a crisis like a pandemic or cyber-attack, how they manage the large events they host, and how they treat high-profile individuals and communities.

Performance metrics

- ★ **Strong image as a base to work from.** 22nd globally for search interest in moving to the city for work. This seems to be higher than the rate of actual talent flow, indicating some of the constraints or challenges of relocation (Google Trends, Holidu).¹⁶²
- ★ **Widely shared and communicated by digital savvy younger generations.**
 - ★ Melbourne is among the top 15% globally for social media hashtags (Holidu, based on Instagram hashtags).¹⁶³
 - ★ The city is also just outside the top 25% for Gen Z influencer activity (those born after 1997 or up to 26 years old) (Holidu, based on TikTok views).¹⁶⁴

⚠ **More limited online traction overall.** Still outside the global top 30 for how widely the city is talked about online (overtaken by Manchester since last year) (Resonance, based on number of stories, recommendations and articles shared about the city online).¹⁶⁵

A positive surprise?

Ratio of “under-rated” comments to “over-rated” comments on TripAdvisor



Source: Radical Storage, based on TripAdvisor reviews.¹⁶⁶

Perception metrics

★ **More often seen as an ‘under-rated’ city,** based on reviews of the city online. This suggests that certain elements are not widely known or understood (Radical Storage, based on TripAdvisor reviews).¹⁶⁷

★ **A warm welcome.** Melbourne is publicly rated as the friendliest city in the world, and has the 12th highest share of reviews of main attractions mentioning “friendly” out of 27 cities. 72% of expats think that locals are friendly, compared to 66% globally (William Russell, ExpatInsider).¹⁶⁸

⚠ **Other cities establishing themselves as influential and trend-setting.** In a major survey Melbourne has fallen out of the global top 10 for how much it is admired by the global public for the first time since at least 2011. These figures seem to reflect a lack of sense that Melbourne is ‘where the action is’ (Anholt).¹⁶⁹

What this means for Melbourne

Benchmarking of city brand is back after COVID-19. Melbourne is loved locally and gains some credit globally, for its iconic river, coast, nature, outdoors, laneways and street markets, as well as among younger generations, students and social media users who praise the city’s music and culture scene.

But on balance Melbourne’s wider global appeal and identity seems to have taken a harder knock than other cities. The various impacts of the pandemic have had more effect on global admiration and visibility, and have also given other cities the chance to demonstrate their roles as open hubs or policy leaders.

Melbourne’s improvement in this area is likely to rely on renewing its magnetism. Cities are thriving in these metrics when they invoke a sense of awe, inspiration, variety and novelty – and an impression of readiness for the upcoming challenges facing cities and the world.

Melbourne's DNA



Every great city's communication with the world and with itself is underpinned by a unifying story about where it comes from, what it stands for and stands out for.

This deep identity is the foundation of a liveable city. It commands wonder and enthusiasm globally; locally it promotes growth, contributes to urban change, and strengthens the position in growth industries.

In a fast growing city it also fosters social cohesion, and helps the city to reproduce its strengths as circumstances and centres of gravity change.

This identity is sometimes called a city's DNA. It harnesses the accumulated culture of a city, its trade, education and creativity, and nurtures a sense of belonging and inspiration from which many kinds of value are drawn.¹⁷⁰

The ingredients of Melbourne's DNA

Melbourne already has many advantages that are internationally recognised after 25 years of successful marketing. These have been projected through its sport, its outdoors, its spirit of celebration and congregation, its creative industries, its exceptional universities, its energetic multi-culturalism, its smash-hit exports such as the 'flat white', its 'global yet edgy' feel. This is not just a brand idea - it has been a consensus on many of the city's core traits and is part of what still drives a high level of participation and belonging in Melbourne.

Yet after the disruption of the pandemic, it is apparent from the global benchmarks that although Melbourne retains plenty of appeal, some of its magnetism may have waned. The things Melbourne is known for are not always connected in the global mind to the city's deep track record for example in trade, invention, production and leadership.

After all, in its 40,000-year history Melbourne has been a place of sacred meaning, and a cultural meeting place.

In its recent history it has been the richest city in the world, the interim capital of Australia, the Southern Hemisphere's first Olympic host and oldest Chinatown, an inventor of black boxes and feature films, and a home to successive waves of immigration and refuge, including the largest Greek population outside of Athens.

In 2023 Melbourne is again growing fast and this requires it a clear sense of self that is properly reached for or communicated. The growing size and scale of Melbourne is a strength to develop greater reach and magnetism. Yet it also presents the possibility of fragmentation in the cohesion and communication of Melbourne's DNA, and how its past connects to the future in the present.

Cities that grow fast have to re-invest in their DNA in order to attract the kinds of opportunity that a larger jobs-hungry city relies on. Otherwise they can lose some of their spirit and dynamism, find their business clusters become disconnected, and lose the willingness to take risks. Clear identity helps a city diversify its appeal as it grows, and attract resources and people that it needs to succeed. It can also inform the way future Team Melbourne comes together, develops narrative, and engages with the rest of the world.

How do other cities do it?

Distilling and reconnecting with a city's DNA requires leadership, investment and tactics. For the cities that have successfully done so at different stages of their development, there are lessons from 'what' they have done and 'how' they have done it.

Common features of the approach other peers have taken as they become mature metropolitan cities.

The what

1. **Truly differentiating traits** (no other city could combine them) that are translated into a recognised global relevance and leadership that can apply to many spheres and sectors.
2. **Ancestor stories** – including indigenous histories – that are highly visible and authentically empowering of those communities who can speak to them.
3. **The diversity of migrant cultures**, and the spirit of openness, tenacity and dynamism that today shapes its propensity for innovation.
4. **More depth to the business and innovation brand**, including the capabilities of the trading city, the ingenuity lying in the city, and stronger propositions about what makes the city so conducive for enterprise.
5. **Shedding myths and celebrating authentic achievements** that speak to the people of the city first - across different platforms and mediums and in everyday settings like public transport.
6. **Making more of its environment, history and personality** – including its location, its vibrant and diverse urban and suburban neighbourhoods, and its calendar of diverse events.
7. **Comfortable with the convergence and interplay** between corporates, grunge, innovation, art and science, rather than seeing them as discrete activities.

The how

1. **The broader value of identity as a differentiator** is fully recognised, and organised around. Fair and balanced 'air time' is given to different strands of the city.
2. **Willingness to showcase the city as a partner**, one that does not just compete but collaborates, shares and leads.
3. **More priority to dedicated organisations** operating in the international marketplace. This activity is viewed as a personal and global invitation not as a "government service".
4. **Key players work together** – from government, business, philanthropy, science, the cultural and enterprise sectors. No story is tightly 'owned' or 'run' by single stakeholders.
5. **Identity is wrestled with not created in a vacuum.** A process of participation that recruits a city's best ambassadors, bold incomers, and creative writers.
6. **The diaspora is harnessed.** More of the diaspora of innovators and influencers are harnessed for both creative and tactical purposes.
7. **Curation of city content and stories** becomes an art form appealing directly to people and their interests. This is informed by a sophisticated use of data that values intangibles and demonstrates a city's real areas of global excellence.

Case study: Stockholm – redefining the identity of 'Greater Stockholm'

Stockholm has evolved over the past 20 years into a city of international renown, character and distinctiveness. In 2000 the Stockholm metropolitan region lacked a shared perspective on its future. It was facing new kinds of technology competition. Talent and capital was becoming more mobile. Its established reputation for reliability, coherence, and consensus did not hold the same obvious logic.

Stockholm's business, civic, and institutional leaders took note, recognising strategic communication as a key weapon. They successfully re-organised the region around a common message – *Stockholm: The Capital of Scandinavia*. This was launched to capture the city's new size and relevance, while reaching back into its historic roles. This platform became the major vehicle for addressing the regional leadership deficit through coordinated story telling rather than major institutional reforms.

The partnership became the natural arena for local cooperation, especially around the promotion and development of fast-growth industries. The Stockholm Business Region became the major driver for local governments to cooperate, partly because it possesses cross-party leadership, driving broad consensus on the decisions made. It also helped to bring forward a joint framework for how 'Team Stockholm' would raise targeted FDI, give entrepreneurs the right support, and develop the city as a unified travel and business destination.

The result, a decade later, was that Stockholm became widely recognised as one of the world's leading 'unicorn factories' with world renowned success stories such as Spotify and Klarna. Stockholm's effective harnessing of its DNA has helped to guide the character of district development in the suburbs, more integrated regional plans, bold demonstration projects, making density desirable, and the quest for sustainability leadership. All of this has been underpinned by the drive to be more distinctive and 'Stockholm-like'.



Case study: Miami – one community embracing its trade and culture roots

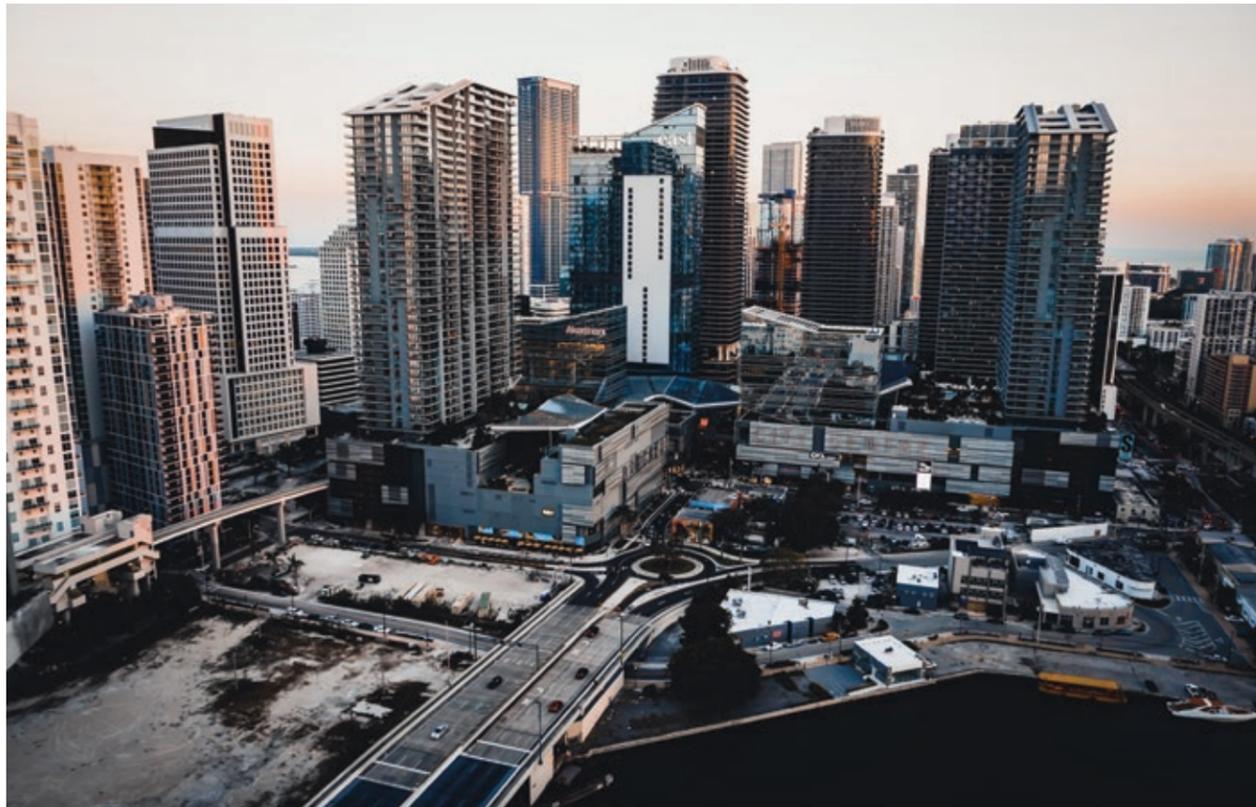
Over the last 15 years, Miami's shift to a higher value economy has rested on a deliberate re-engagement with its culture and trade DNA.

In the 1980s and 1990s, the city was motivated by the risk of brain drain, a peripheral location, a comparatively undiversified economy, and 'trashy' brand image. It wanted to reposition itself as a high value gateway to Latin America and the Caribbean.

One Community One Goal brought together 42 public and private partners to jointly pursue a citizen owned agenda around diversification, trade, cosmopolitanism and entrepreneurship. The new identity focused on higher value sectors, investment in culture and Art Basel to promote a new kind of visitation and philanthropy, substantially improved inter-continental connectivity, and the re-purposing of ex-industrial districts into contemporary arts neighbourhoods.

Over a 10 year period this achieved great success establishing Miami as a hub of contemporary art, fashion and architecture, encouraging creative talent to return to the city, and more importantly, providing them with a reason to stay. These improvements have been underpinned by a visionary group of developers and investors, as well as enhanced financial and district management tools.

The result is that Miami has shifted from its 'sun and fun' reputation towards one of design, culture, trade and innovation, with the sum effect of retaining a larger number of long-term residents rather than for retirement or seasonal enjoyment. Today, there is a strong link between Miami's cultural revival and its resurgent reputation as a city region in which to conduct business, innovate, and raise families.



Case study: Manchester – a newfound metropolis locates its enduring ethos

As Manchester has evolved into Greater Manchester, its identity has become about place making as much as place marketing, harnessing the power of civic and planetary responsibility.

After a long period scarred by deindustrialisation, economic malaise, bombing and failed Olympic bids, Manchester has successfully embarked on a 25 year process of public-private partnership to simultaneously build a viable metropolitan governance and tell a more diversified message to the world.

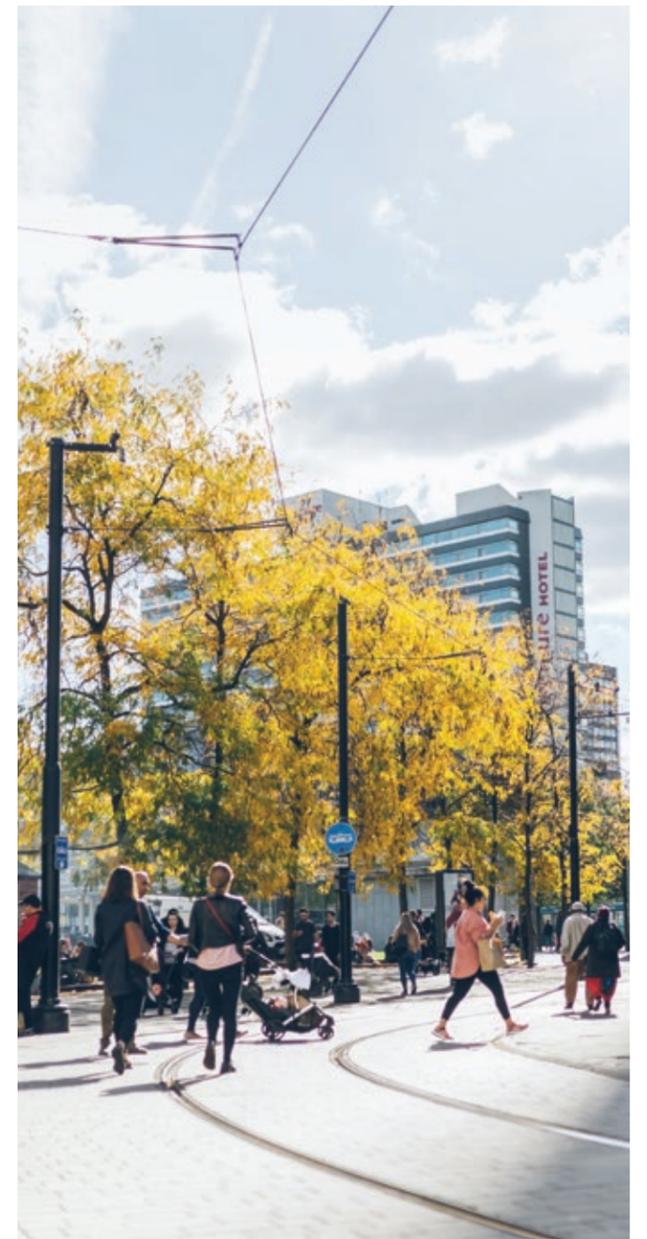
Like Melbourne, Manchester has a small core city acting as the centripetal hub for the region and a base for the most visible assets - universities, sport and culture.

Collaboration has worked hard to understand how the world saw the city and how a growing metropolis of Greater Manchester saw itself. So the city's core idea of "Original Modern" became the basis for a deeper identity, linking the city-region to the great urban, industrial and inventive challenges of every age, where "great minds meet".

In this age those challenges relate to our digital lives, cutting edge new materials, social inclusion and healthy aging. These have gained much sharper storytelling prominence, as has the city-region's social, scientific and creative history, without diluting established narratives about art, design, music and sport.

This also has provided a route to a wider set of stories and opportunities to be told about the more deprived fringes of the city-region. And it has also revealed more strongly the binding values and principles that are shared across Greater Manchester.

Manchester has a very high performing mixed revenue system for building identity into all interactions, that reflects its mature culture of shared leadership among politicians, business leaders and university Vice-Chancellors. Much is oriented around MIDAS, which astutely leverages its institutions' capacity and partnership working know-how. The umbrella Growth Company- a non-profit economic development agency - also helps to ensure strong and consistent messaging surrounding a diverse set of opportunities.



Case study: Tel Aviv – Reaching into the city's core values to achieve long-term goals

Tel Aviv is a powerful example of how a city can communicate its core values and its commercial DNA to drive the next chapter of its economy.

Over the past 30 years, venture capital firms, startup companies, and senior mentors, have combined to make Tel Aviv a major exporter of tech innovation. Since 1989, Tel Aviv has marketed itself as the 'non-stop city' to develop its lifestyle edge and its tolerance to young talented workers and innovative firms. The 'non-stop city' was both a promise and an active policy to promote its urban vibe.

In 2010 Tel Aviv set up 'Tel Aviv Global' to promote the city to the world, co-ordinate its branding efforts, promote investment and tourism, and attract key entrepreneurs in target sectors. The aim was to engage investors, entrepreneurs and creative tourists around the notion that Tel Aviv was about more than its nightlife and beach culture, by revealing more of the city's deep spirit of risk-taking, tolerance and commercial acumen.

The city has found that a stronger focus on liveability and enterprise rather than tourism has ensured a more balanced development. Tourism is typically promoted in ways that complement (and are synchronised with) the wider agendas to foster the innovation economy.

A range of messages, events and initiatives sustained over a 15 year period have helped to position Tel Aviv both as a highly innovative city and as a leader in the application of smart technologies to urban life. These have enabled Tel Aviv to communicate the entrepreneurial and pioneering strands of its DNA and to renew its identity as a modern, vibrant and cosmopolitan city. The city works hard to ensure there is a direct connection between its brand promise and real initiatives.



All four case study cities demonstrate that:

- At the heart of any embrace of a city's DNA is coordinated political vision, an enterprising public sector, and committed civic leadership in business and institutions.
- A city's success at telling the world its story is linked to matching improvements in quality of place, experience and business friendliness, all of which builds demand for more locations in the city and wider region.

Summary and implications

DNA is what helps a city define its path and implement it. Over time Melbourne as a city has implicitly grasped this. Now it may be very important once again for Melbourne as it matures into a seven million person metropolis. Others have found it helps to develop more common purpose, shape the big choices that are made, and provide more mechanisms for joint venture among those who lead and promote the whole city.

The task of revisiting and enriching the city narrative is usually an opportunity for civic and business leaders, and for local and higher level governments.

The rewards are shared - more people who take risks to be part of the city; more companies think of the city first when they plan to move, and are reluctant to leave; more stakeholders choose to work together for the greater good; more people stay interested in the city even when there is a shock like a pandemic or a great flood; a wider swathe of people are confident in what it stands for, and trust it will stick to it.

The relationship between city identity and city performance is clear, and grows over time. Melbourne is a city that knows this better than most. How it collectively chooses to express itself, deepen and diversify its story, is a great area to explore in the future.

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167. Radical Storage - The Paris Syndrome Report - Which Cities Underwhelm Tourists the Most? <https://travel.radicalstorage.com/paris-syndrome/>
168. William Russell - The Friendliest Cities in the World: www.william-russell.com/blog/worlds-friendliest-cities/; ExpatInsider Expat City Ranking: https://cms.in-cdn.net/cdn/file/cms-media/public/2022-11/Expat-Insider_City-Ranking-Report-2022_0.pdf
169. Anholt-IPSOS City Brands Index: www.ipsos.com/sites/default/files/ct/news/documents/2022-04/CBI%202022_Press%20Release.pdf
170. See for example <https://www.thednaofcities.com/> and the work of Greg Clark and Caitlin Morrissey

About Committee for Melbourne

Committee for Melbourne is relentless in its pursuit of positive and enduring change for all Melburnians. With more than 150 members from major corporations, small and medium business, academic institutions, local government and not-for-profit entities and through embracing three key pillars, Future Economy, Infrastructure & Sustainability, and Liveability & Urban Optimisation, the Committee exists to ensure Melbourne's challenges and opportunities are addressed to keep our city vital, inclusive, progressive and sustainable.

The Committee is a not-for-profit, member funded entity that is politically independent and impartial allowing us to freely and purposefully raise important issues.

To learn more about membership and our agenda please visit: www.melbourne.org.au

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