



**2022**

**RANKING OF SPORTS CITIES**

**bcw**



## Major events are back, as is their major impact on the global image of sports cities – Tokyo tops the BCW 2022 Ranking of Sports Cities

In search of the city with the strongest association to sport, the sports practice of leading global communications agency, BCW, is delighted to publish the 2022 Ranking of Sport Cities. This annual ranking lists the top 50 cities from around the world that are perceived to be most associated with sport.

The ranking is based on the views of International Federations (IFs) and sports industry experts, combined with an analysis of the association between sport and a city in the digital space. The latter consists of the total number of mentions of the word 'sport' associated with the name of the city on social media platforms, blogs, and websites.

For the first time in the 10-year history of the Ranking, a city from Asia has ranked first. Tokyo jumped to the top of the 2022 Ranking of Sports Cities, edging out Paris and London, which ranked second and third, respectively. Los Angeles sits at fourth place and last year's winner, New York, takes fifth place.

Following almost two years of postponement, rescheduling, relocation, and modifications of sports events, it is now time to rediscover the impact major sports events have on the perception and image of cities around the world. The pandemic created chaos, the organisation of events became uncertain, and tourism and spectators were often banned. It was certainly not business as usual and so cities were definitely not benefiting from the same international exposure that they are used to from hosting major events.

So, to what extent did this impact the perceived association of a city to sport? Our 2022 Ranking of Sports Cities has the answer!

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# RESULTS

## Of the 2022 Ranking of Sports Cities

2022	CITY	21'	20'	2022	CITY	21'	20'
1	Tokyo (JPN)	9	6	26	Gold Coast (AUS)	35	46
2	Paris (FRA)	5	3	27	Istanbul (TUR)	40	44
3	London (GBR)	2	2	28	Montreal (CAN)	24	29
4	Los Angeles (USA)	3	4	29	Amsterdam (NED)	39	39
5	New York (USA)	1	1	30	Dubai (UAE)	23	28
6	Madrid (ESP)	10	10	31	Vancouver (CAN)	17	27
7	Barcelona (ESP)	4	7	32	Baku (AZE)	47	35
8	Manchester (GBR)	7	8	33	Torino (ITA)	38	31
9	Lausanne (SUI)	6	5	34	Birmingham (GBR)	-	-
10	Melbourne (AUS)	11	20	35	Copenhagen (DEN)	42	12
11	Munich (GER)	8	22	36	San Francisco (USA)	28	21
12	Milan (ITA)	15	-	37	Stockholm (SWE)	34	37
13	Budapest (HUN)	18	32	38	Salt Lake City (USA)	30	45
14	Beijing (CHN)	14	16	39	Buenos Aires (ARG)	44	15
15	Rome (ITA)	21	38	40	Moscow (RUS)	45	24
16	Toronto (CAN)	20	9	41	Edmonton (CAN)	33	33
17	Berlin (GER)	12	14	42	Calgary (CAN)	31	43
18	Atlanta (USA)	25	18	43	Singapore (SIN)	41	26
19	Doha (QAT)	32	25	44	Seoul (KOR)	43	42
20	Boston (USA)	19	11	45	Rio de Janeiro (BRA)	27	34
21	Chicago (USA)	13	13	46	Indianapolis (USA)	29	40
22	Sydney (AUS)	16	17	47	Pyeongchang (KOR)	37	30
23	Glasgow (GBR)	26	19	48	Marseille (FRA)	46	-
24	Dallas (USA)	22	23	49	Jeddah (KSA)	-	-
25	Abu Dhabi (UAE)	-	-	50	Sochi (RUS)	36	36

With each edition of the Ranking, the three lowest ranked cities drop off the list and the top three non-listed cities named by the survey respondents are added. New cities that will be added to the 2023 edition of the Ranking are:

**Cairo (EGY)**

**Mexico City (MEX)**

**Las Vegas (USA)**

More detailed results of the ranking are available upon request.

# THREE KEY LEARNINGS

## From the results of the 2022 Ranking of Sports Cities

### 1 THE OLYMPIC RINGS CONTINUE TO SHINE BRIGHTLY FOR THEIR HOSTS

The Summer Olympic Games in Tokyo did their part in bumping the Asian city to the top of the 2022 Ranking. This underlines the strong association that hosting the Summer Olympic Games has with being recognised as a sports city. The delay and chaos caused by the COVID-19 pandemic didn't seem to affect the impact that the biggest global sport events had on the Japanese city. Similarly, the top positions in the Ranking of Paris and Los Angeles - set to host the 2024 and 2028 Summer Games respectively - also showcase how Olympic hosts start to benefit long before the actual event even takes place. It seems, however, that the positive impact of the rings only extends to the biggest Olympic event, the Summer Games, as we didn't see the same results for the most recent winter host. Beijing, which hosted the most recent Winter Olympic Games, unfortunately did not realize a positive jump in the ranking.

And what about past Olympic hosts? While London is still holding strong in the top five of the Ranking a decade after it last hosted the Olympics, this might be the exception as we see other past hosts falling in the Ranking. Most notably, Rio de Janeiro dropped 18 spots, the largest decline of any city in the Ranking. With the positive boost that hosting the Olympic Games gives, cities often lose steam following the event. Tokyo, a vibrant, modern, and cosmopolitan city, is known for many things. Hosting the Games certainly gave the city a boost in terms of its association with sport, but it is now up to the city to continue to build on its new sport city image in order to keep it. Tokyo doesn't have a natural connection to sport, nor does it have the internationally known professional sports teams that add to its image, like Paris and Los Angeles do. So, it will be interesting to see what Tokyo does now if it wants to defend its new title moving forward.

### 2 SPORTS CITIES DON'T FACE THE SAME POLITICAL SCRUTINY THAT COUNTRIES DO

It isn't too surprising that when a huge event lands in a small country that the impact on the major capital city of that country gets a huge boost to its image as a sports city. Such is the case with the FIFA World Cup™ heading to Qatar. The city of Doha is reaping the benefits and jumped an impressive 13 spots in this year's ranking. Interestingly, despite somewhat negative coverage of Qatar by international media, Doha, the capital city, is seemingly improving its image as a sports city. This is especially interesting given that Qatar is so small and the overlap in terms of FIFA World Cup hosting between the city and country is significant. Moving forward, could other countries that risk negative international attention be better off focusing on promoting their major cities rather than the country as a whole?

This probably works, however, more so for small countries that have one main host city to promote internationally. Thinking back to the FIFA World Cup in Brazil, we didn't see any of the lesser-known Brazilian cities being recognised. Rio de Janeiro is the only Brazilian city on the ranking, and that is much more due to other factors, including its role as an Olympic host city, than because of the World Cup. It will be interesting to see what happens in the future for the 16 cities across Canada, Mexico and the USA that will play host to the FIFA World Cup in 2026.

More than half of these cities are already included in the ranking. It can be predicted that already starting next year these cities rise in the ranking and the others will most likely be part of the new cities added over the years leading up to 2026.

### 3 JOINING A HIGH-PROFILED GLOBAL EVENT SERIES WILL BENEFIT ALL THE INVOLVED HOST CITIES

In addition to hosting large one-off events, like the Olympic Games or FIFA World Cup joining a high-profile event series is proving to be a quick way to increase a city's recognition as a sports city. We see Abu Dhabi, which just joined the ranking last year, jump up to 25th position – most likely a direct result of it joining the Formula 1 series. Budapest, Istanbul and Melbourne are all other examples of cities benefiting from the Formula 1 brand and rising in the Ranking.

These cities have joined an elite club, and when one of them is shining as the host of the moment, the others are being recognised as a previous or upcoming stop in the same series. They all benefit and increase their image as a sports city with every stop on the circuit. Being part of this elite club costs a lot though, and the contract is only secured for a short time. So, how can these cities use their inclusion in this club when the tires stop turning and continue to leverage the international profile left by the Formula 1?

## Three newcomers to watch!

**The new cities on the list are examples of a perfect mix of old tradition and new ambition.**

**Cairo (EGY):** The Egyptian capital will be the only African city in the ranking in 2023. Cairo is home to several top-level football teams and has launched ambitious plans for future international events.

**Mexico City (MEX):** The city will be back in the Top 50 ranking next year after a few years of absence. The city is active on many fronts and will play a major role in the FIFA World Cup 2026™ in Canada, Mexico and the USA.

**Las Vegas (USA):** Probably more known internationally for gambling and entertainment, the city has invested heavily in sports in recent years and is now playing an increasing role in American pro leagues.



## METHODOLOGY

### Of the 2022 Ranking of Sports Cities

The 2022 Ranking of Sports Cities ranks the top 50 cities that are most strongly associated with sport from around the world based on a combination of perception-based analysis and in-depth quantitative analysis.

More precisely, it focuses on the views of International Federation Presidents, Secretaries General, sports industry experts (such as Heads of Events) and more than 300 sports media representatives from around the world.

In addition, an in-depth analysis of the association between sport and a city in the digital space is conducted using the social media analytics tool Brandwatch. The analysis consists of the total number of mentions of the word “sport” associated with the name of the city on social media platforms such as Twitter, Instagram and Facebook, as well as Reddit, blogs and websites. As it was the case for the 2021 Ranking, the search terms used in the analysis have been expanded by using French, Spanish and German, in addition to English, for the spelling of the term “sport” and the cities’ names. By doing so, the research became more extensive and has a stronger international representation. For example, in Spanish, people refer often to ‘deporte’ when talking about sports and the city of Beijing can be referred to as ‘Pékin’ or ‘Peking’ in other languages.

With the intention to illustrate the undeniable power and importance of being digitally present, the results of the digital analysis (0.50) were weighted higher compared to the opinions of International Sports Federations (0.25) and media representatives (0.25).

With each edition of the ranking, the three lowest ranked cities drop off the list, and the three top-named cities mentioned by survey respondents that are not on the list are added.

## About BCW

BCW is the global communications agency built to move people. BCW partners with clients in the B2B, consumer, corporate, crisis management, healthcare, public affairs, purpose and technology sectors to set strategic direction for all communications and create powerful and unexpected ideas that earn attention. Through an “earned-plus” offer – earned media plus paid media, creative technology, data, AI and an expanding suite of innovative capabilities – BCW moves people with power and precision to move its clients forward. BCW is a part of WPP (NYSE: WPP), a creative transformation company. For more information, visit [www.bcw-global.com](http://www.bcw-global.com).

Based on extensive experiences, BCW Sports Practice has launched BCW Eventus™, a tool designed for attracting, activating and assessing sporting events – and therefore supporting cities in moving up to the next level.

## For more information

Should you have any questions about the Ranking of Sports Cities please contact us:



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