



BALTIMORE MARYLAND SMART CITIES

Building a healthier, smarter, more connected Baltimore
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What Is the Smart City Index?

A resident-perception survey, not a technology inventory

The WCC defines a Smart City as one that strikes a good balance between its economic prowess, applied technology, environmental concerns, and inclusiveness — to deliver a high quality of life for its citizens.


148

Cities ranked worldwide


120

Residents surveyed per city


5

Key areas assessed per city


37+

Years of IMD competitiveness research

How the Index Is Built

Two pillars, assessed across five key areas

Structures

The existing infrastructure available to residents — roads, housing, hospitals, public spaces.

Technology

The technological provisions and digital services available to residents.

Each pillar is evaluated across five key areas:

- Health & Safety
- Mobility
- Activities
- Opportunities (Work & School)
- Governance

120 residents are surveyed per city each year. Final 2026 scores use a three-year weighted moving average — weighted 3 : 2 : 1 for 2026 : 2025 : 2024 — to smooth out short-term outliers.

Rankings are published two ways: an overall position (1–148), and a letter rating (AAA to D) for each pillar and overall.



2026's Headline Theme

A Three-Way Alignment: Institutions, Trust, and Infrastructure

“No technical sophistication can compensate for a fundamental lack of confidence in how cities collect, store, and use data about their residents.”

Cities with stronger institutions and infrastructure tend to report higher citizen trust. Technology alone does not produce better outcomes — it generates real value only when embedded in credible institutions and aligned with citizens' expectations.

The Top 20 Cities — 2026

Zurich retains first place for a second year running

1	Zurich
2	Oslo
3	Geneva
4	London
5	Copenhagen
6	Dubai
7	Lausanne
8	Canberra
9	Singapore
10	Abu Dhabi

11	Helsinki
12	Seoul
13	Prague
14	Stockholm
15	Hamburg
16	Beijing
17	Amsterdam
18	Ljubljana
19	Munich
20	Shanghai

The Biggest Movers of 2026

148 cities now ranked — five newcomers joined this year



Biggest Gainers

AlUla	+27
Washington D.C.	+23
Bratislava	+19
Manchester	+18
Los Angeles	+18
Toronto	+15
Seattle	+15



Biggest Decliners

Bordeaux	-19
Lyon	-19
Ottawa	-18
Shenzhen	-18
Manama	-17
Melbourne	-16
Muscat	-16

New to the 2026 Index: Tianjin & Zhuhai (China), Hafar Al Batin & Hail (Saudi Arabia), and San Salvador (El Salvador) — bringing the total to 148 cities.

The Gulf Model: State-Led Investment, High Trust

#6

Dubai — up 2 places from 2025

#10

Abu Dhabi — highest-ranked in the Gulf's second wave

#85

AIUla — this year's biggest riser, +27 places

Dubai (6th) and Abu Dhabi (10th) show that state-directed digital investment can generate real civic confidence — when service delivery is consistently high-quality.

Regional Spotlight

Southeast Asia: High Trust, Modest Rank

Hanoi

Rank #97 overall

Ho Chi Minh City

Rank #105 overall

Both cities post technology scores comparable to many European capitals — and rank among the highest in the world for trust in online government.

Overall rank isn't the whole story

A city can sit in the middle of the pack overall while leading the world on specific, high-value trust indicators. Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City show that digital-government trust can develop faster than a city's broader infrastructure and rating — a signal worth tracking for the years ahead.

Wealth Doesn't Guarantee Institutional Trust

The cautionary cases: Athens and Rome

Athens

Ranked 139th of 148

Anti-corruption score below 0.25; citizen participation lower than many Sub-Saharan African cities.

Rome

Ranked 143rd of 148

Anti-corruption score below 0.25; citizen participation lower than many Sub-Saharan African cities.

Both are high-income, high human-development cities — yet their weak scores reflect a gap between residents' expectations and public-service delivery, not poor quality of life. Southern Europe as a region averages rank 100, with structural scores weaker than Southeast Asia's.

Calibrating for Fair Comparison

Cities are grouped before they're rated

Because 148 cities span very different economic and development contexts, responses are calibrated using the region-level Sub-national Human Development Index (SHDI) from the Global Data Lab. Cities are split into four groups by SHDI quartile — and rated against peers in their own group.



Inside a City Profile

What each of the 148 individual profiles contains

Smart City Ranking

Overall position out of 148, plus year-over-year change and the prior year's rank.

Background information

Population, country, SHDI, and a five-year trend in HDI, life expectancy, schooling, and income.

Structures & Technology ratings

A letter rating and indicator-level scores for each pillar, benchmarked against the city's peer group.

Priority areas & attitudes

What residents say is most urgent for their city, plus views on data privacy, facial recognition, and trust in authorities.

Four takeaways from the 2026 Index



Lead with trust, not just tech

Digital investment only pays off in citizen confidence when it sits inside credible, transparent institutions.



Treat connectivity as a public good

Unequal digital access is becoming a new form of urban inequality — universal access should not be left purely to market forces.



Respect local identity

Cities that build on local culture and heritage tend to see stronger civic loyalty than those pursuing generic modernization.



Wealth is not a substitute for governance

High-income cities can still score poorly on trust and participation — institutional quality has to be built deliberately.



Thank You

Questions and discussion welcome.

Sources

IMD Smart City Index 2026, IMD World Competitiveness Center • Sub-national Human Development Index, Global Data Lab • Population data: UN World Urbanization Prospects, Eurostat, World Cities Database, citypopulation.de