



# Report on Sustainable

# Competitiveness of Cities Worldwide

(2018-2019)

■ Ni Pengfei, Marco Kamiya, Guo Jing, Xu Haidong, Zhang Yi, etc



中国社会科学院财经战略研究院  
National Academy of Economic Strategy, CASS

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## Introduction of GUCR

The Global Urban Competitiveness Report (GUCR) is a cooperative research conducted by the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS) and UN-Habitat focusing on sustainable urban competitiveness, urban land and urban finance. Led by Prof. Ni Pengfei and Mr. Marco Kamiya, the project is participated by experts from CASS, UN-Habitat and well-known scholars in relevant fields. Through theoretical research and empirical investigation, the report establishes an indicator system to measure the economic competitiveness and sustainable competitiveness of more

than 1,000 cities in the world. Meanwhile, it selects important issues of global urban development as the themes for in-depth studies, aiming to promote the implementation of the UN 2030 agenda through the assessment of urban competitiveness. Currently, five annual reports have been published successively, among which GUCR (2018-2019) was launched at the UN headquarters in New York City during the 74th session of the UN General Assembly, and the GUCR (2019-2020) was released in Abu Dhabi during the 10th World Urban Forum.

## About the Authors



**Ni Pengfei**, Director of Center for City and Competitiveness, CASS; Assistant to the Director of National Academy of Economic Strategy, CASS; PhD in economics, doctoral supervisor. Leader and Chief Urban Economist of the CASS-UN-Habitat joint research group. Specialized in theoretical and applied studies in urban economics, urban competitiveness and real estate economics.



**Marco Kamiya** is a Senior Economist of Knowledge & Innovation Branch of UN-HABITAT, and his research interests include development economics and public economics. Mr. Marco leads global operational work on urban economy and finance and conducts research on municipal finance, the economics of urban expansion and local infrastructure-investment policy.



## Introduction

Since 2016, while innovation's contribution to global economic growth has significantly increased, innovations have also become more widespread in the world with multiple poles and the impact of Asian countries on the global pattern of innovations has been growing. With the transfer of some R&D and innovation activities to developing countries such as China, Brazil and India, the sustainable competitiveness of emerging economies improved significantly. It is worth noting, though, that while the global innovation landscape will continue to be dominated

by developed countries in North America and West Europe, but a new global landscape of innovation offers opportunities for China, India and other emerging countries to bring in advanced economic factors and pool resources from across the world for innovation. It also lays an important foundation for the transformation and development of Chinese and Indian cities and for the overall improvement of their sustainable competitiveness, changing the overall structure of the sustainable competitiveness of cities worldwide.



## 1

# Overall structure: a tripod is taking shape

## 1.1 Global Top 20: Fewer European and U.S. entries, more East Asian new-comers

As we can see in the global rankings by sustainable competitiveness provided in this report, the Top 20 cities of the world have changed slightly from the previous report. The rankings of five long-time leaders, i.e. Munich, Stuttgart, Stockholm, Frankfurt and Boston and Philadelphia dropped

slightly, while East Asian cities such as Seoul, Shenzhen and Taipei continued to rise. The world rankings by high-income population increment generally remained stable, yet the overall economic density of U.S. cities dropped significantly.

**Table 1 Top 20 cities of the world and changes in their world rankings**

City	Country	Continent	Sustainable competitiveness		High-income population density		High-income population increment	
			Ranking	Change	Ranking	Change	Ranking	Change
Tokyo	Japan	Asia	1	0	1	0	11	0
Singapore	Singapore	Asia	2	0	10	0	1	0
New York	U.S.A.	N. America	3	0	2	0	46	-5
London	U.K.	Europe	4	0	6	0	21	0
Paris	France	Europe	5	0	4	0	39	0
Hong Kong	China	Asia	6	0	22	-1	3	0
San Francisco	U.S.A.	N. America	7	0	8	0	33	1
Osaka	Japan	Asia	8	0	5	0	85	0
Barcelona	Spain	Europe	9	0	24	0	10	-1
Chicago	U.S.A.	N. America	10	0	7	0	91	-3
Seoul	Republic of Korea	Asia	11	8	11	3	66	2
Madrid	Spain	Europe	12	2	15	2	42	1
Munich	Germany	Europe	13	-2	59	-6	2	0
Stuttgart	Germany	Europe	14	-2	51	-8	4	0
Shenzhen	China	Asia	15	2	37	1	9	1
Stockholm	Sweden	Europe	15	-2	25	0	19	0
Moscow	Russia	Europe	16	1	23	3	23	-1
Los Angeles	U.S.A.	N. America	17	3	3	0	205	-2
Frankfurt am Main	Germany	Europe	18	-2	48	1	7	0
Boston	U.S.A.	N. America	19	-4	14	-2	65	0
Philadelphia	U.S.A.	N. America	20	-2	13	0	68	-1

Source: Urban and Competitiveness Research Center, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences

## 1.2 Global Top 200: Asia has the most entries for the first time and a tripod pattern has taken shape

As a result of the overall improvement in the rankings by sustainable competitiveness of Asian cities, Asia had 71 entries in the world's Top 200 cities, which is higher than North America, Oceania and Africa combined. Up

to 94 Asian cities are among the global Top 200 by high-income population increment, nearly half of the total, but there is still much room for improvement in terms of high-income population density.

**Table 2 Distribution of Top 200 cities of the world by continent**

	N. America	Oceania	Africa	S. America	Europe	Asia
Sustainable competitiveness	56	6	2	9	56	71
High-income population increment	52	6	2	9	37	94
High-income population density	52	6	1	11	67	63

Source: Urban and Competitiveness Research Center, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences

## 1.3 On the global level, West Asian cities see clear clustering effect in development and their sustainable competitiveness began to rise

For the year 2018, the sustainable competitiveness of cities worldwide as a whole declines slightly and the general trend is a diverging one. The growth of high-income population increment sped up, while the

increase in high-income population density is seen in some clusters. Table 3 gives descriptive statistics on the sustainable competitiveness of 1,006 cities worldwide.

**Table 3 Descriptive statistics of sustainable competitiveness of 1,006 cities worldwide**

Parameter	Sustainable competitiveness 2018	Sustainable competitiveness 2017	Ranking change	High-income population increment 2018	High-income population increment 2017	Ranking change	High-income population density 2018	High-income population density 2017	Ranking change
Mean	0.432	0.434	-10.7	0.31	0.313	-10.1	0.486	0.488	-10.8
Standard deviation	0.083	0.083	10.177	0.125	0.124	7.81	0.058	0.059	5.35
Coefficient of variation	0.193	0.192	-0.951	0.402	0.397	-0.773	0.119	0.12	-0.495
Sample size	1,006	1,006	1,006	1,006	1,006	1,006	1,006	1,006	1,006

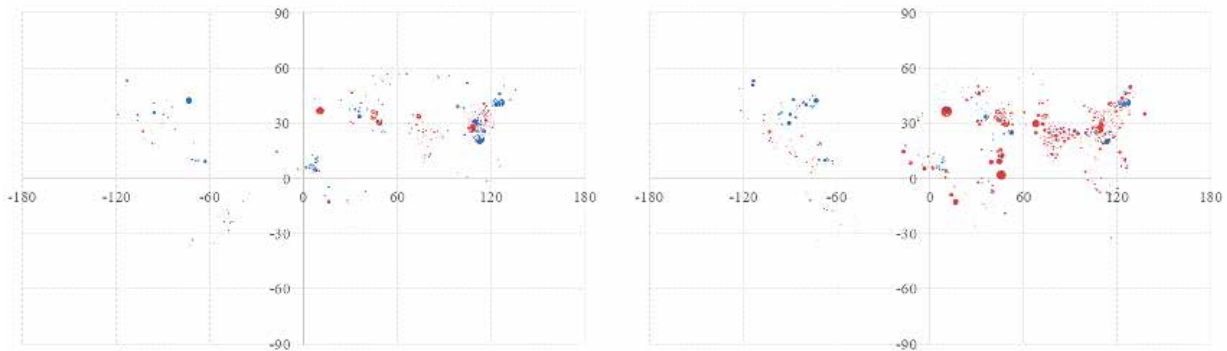
Source: Urban and Competitiveness Research Center, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences

Table 3 shows that the average sustainable competitiveness score of cities worldwide decreased slightly from the 0.434 of 2017 to the 0.432 of 2018, the average high-income population increment score decreased from the 0.313 of 2017 to the 0.31 of 2018, and the average high-income population density score fell from the 0.488 of 2017 to the 0.486 of 2018. Meanwhile, the coefficients of variation for sustainable competitiveness was up from the 0.192 of 2017 to the 0.193 of 2018, that for high-income population increment was up from the 0.397 of 2017 to the 0.402 of 2018, and that for high-income population density fell slightly from the 0.12 of 2017 to the 0.119 of 2018.

Figure 1 is given below to present a more intuitive picture of changes in the global rankings by sustainable competitiveness and changes in the standardization index.

It can be seen that the rankings of cities worldwide by sustainable competitiveness changed very mildly from the previous report. North and South American cities remained relatively stable on the list, while West Asian cities moved up slightly. At the same time, in terms of the cities' standardization index, the rankings of Asian cities improved significantly, while cities in most other regions of the world remained stable in their rankings.

**Figure 1 Changes in the global rankings of cities worldwide by sustainable competitiveness (left) and the corresponding standardization index (right)**



Note: Red indicates positive change in ranking while blue indicates negative change, and the bigger the dot the greater the change of ranking. The same below

Figure 2 shows changes in global rankings by high-income population increment and the corresponding standardization index. It can be seen that the changes in the rankings by high-income population increment remained relatively stable, with upward moves seen only in parts of China

and a few cities in West Asia and East Europe. As for changes in the standardization index, North American cities largely maintained their positions, while the sustainable competitiveness of cities in the eastern and central regions has improved significantly.

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