

FUTURE CITY INDEX 2025

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A benchmark of the future preparedness of global cities in talent, innovation, and environment.



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The **Future City Index** is a city-level benchmarking framework that evaluates urban preparedness for the future. Developed by the **Global Talent Flow Data Hub at City University of Hong Kong**, the index employs a data-driven methodology based on high-resolution, near-real-time datasets and transparent, reproducible analytics to assess the capacity of cities for long-term development and transformation.

The FCI defines a future city as an urban system that is prepared for future opportunities and challenges through the integrated development of **education, technology, talents and finance**. To measure this concept, the index adopts a three-pillar framework: **Future Talent, Future Innovation and Future Environment**. These three pillars reflect the key foundations of future competitiveness: the capacity to cultivate, attract, and retain talent, the capacity to generate knowledge and technological innovation, and the capacity to provide a globally connected and resilient environment for long-term growth.

Based on this framework, the index evaluates 100 major cities and metropolitan areas worldwide using 39 indicators across six strategic dimensions: Talent Hub, Knowledge Production, Technological Innovation, Future-Positioning, Global Connectivity and Urban Resilience. These dimensions are grouped into the three broader pillars of Talent, Innovation and Environment.

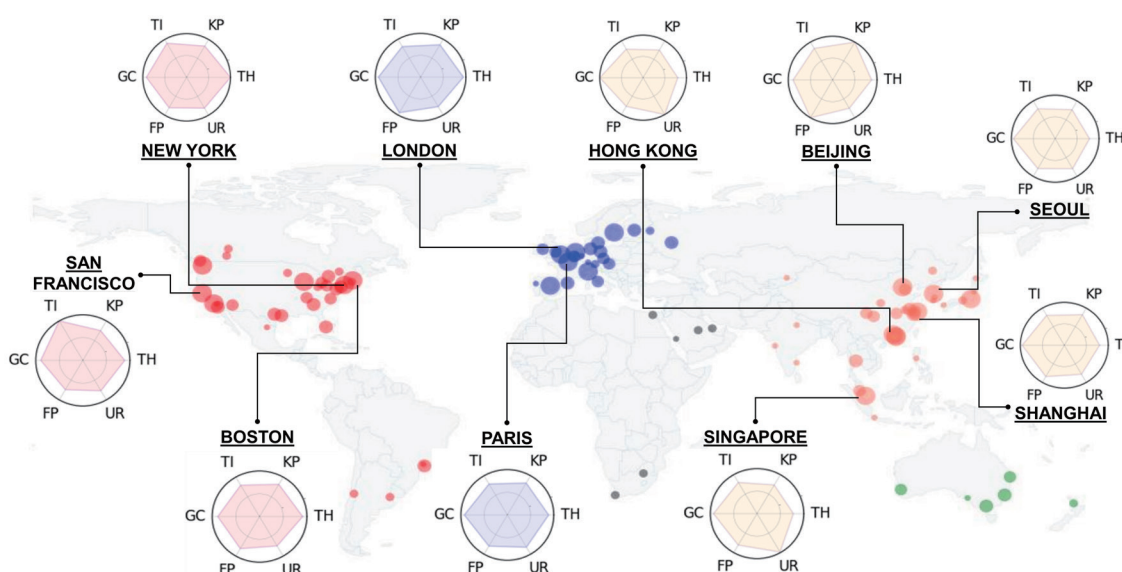
The FCI is designed as a forward-looking benchmark for policymakers, researchers, industry leaders, and public institutions. It offers a systematic framework for understanding how cities build talent pipelines, strengthen innovation ecosystems, position themselves in frontier technologies, embed themselves within global networks, and enhance resilience while sustaining inclusive and long-term growth.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- The **Future City Index** is the world's first city-level benchmark dedicated to evaluating future competitiveness in **education, technology, talents, and finance**.
- The index evaluates 100 major cities/metropolitan areas globally through three major pillars: Future Talent, Future Innovation, and Future Environment.
- The project is supported by an international advisory committee and cross-sector collaborations involving academia, industry, public institutions, and global organisations.
- The **leading future cities** in 2025 are (in alphabetical order): **Beijing, Boston, Hong Kong, London, New York, Paris, San Francisco, Seoul, Shanghai** and **Singapore**.
- Hong Kong ranks among the world's leading future cities and demonstrates top performance in **Talent Hub, Connection Hub, Resilience** and **Future-Positioning**.

THE GLOBAL LANDSCAPE

The global distribution of future competitiveness remains concentrated among major innovation ecosystems. The 10 leading future cities (in alphabetical order)—**Beijing, Boston, Hong Kong, London, New York, Paris, San Francisco, Seoul, Shanghai, and Singapore**—combine strong education systems, vibrant innovation economies, leading financial infrastructure and globally connected talent networks. Overall, North America, Europe, and East Asia form the core clusters of future-ready urban regions, supported by strong university systems, technological entrepreneurship, and advanced infrastructure. During the period, East Asian cities, particularly those in China, have significantly narrowed the gap with traditionally leading cities, driven by sustained investment in education, technology development, and urban innovation ecosystems.



Note: TH = Talent Hub; KP = Knowledge Production; TI = Technological Innovation; FP = Future-Positioning; GC = Global Connectivity; UR = Urban Resilience.

The FCI indicates that, over the past decade, **Beijing, Boston, Hong Kong, London, New York, Paris, San Francisco, Seoul, Shanghai, and Singapore** (in alphabetical order) have consistently ranked among the leading cities in the index. Notably, Chinese cities, particularly Beijing and Shanghai, have experienced remarkable growth, especially during the pandemic period, and are playing an increasingly influential role in shaping global research, technological development, and industrial transformation.

HONG KONG: A GLOBAL CONNECTOR OF TALENT AND INNOVATION

To better capture the diversity of urban development trajectories, this report identifies four strategic features that reflect different pathways to future readiness. **Talent Hub** measures a city's ability to attract, cultivate, and retain highly skilled professionals and researchers. **Connection Hub** reflects a city's positions within global economic, knowledge and mobility networks. **Resilience** measures a city's capacity to withstand and adapt to disruptions, such as economic shocks, pandemics and geopolitical uncertainty. **Future-Positioning** reflects strategic foresight in emerging technologies and long-term development planning.



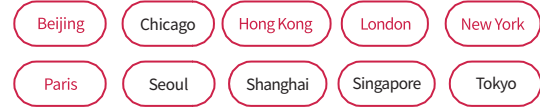
Talent Hub

Cities that attract, cultivate, and retain highly skilled professionals and researchers.



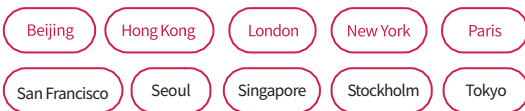
Connection Hub

Key nodes in global economic, knowledge and mobility networks.



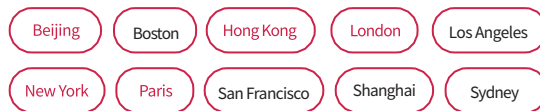
Resilience

Cities with strong adaptive capacity amid economic, pandemic and geopolitical disruptions.



Future-Positioning

Cities demonstrating strategic foresight in emerging technologies and long-term development planning.



Note: Five cities ranked in the top-ten across all four strategic categories, marked in red. Cities are listed in alphabetical order.

Hong Kong stands out as a highly future-oriented global city, distinguished by its strong international talent base, global connectivity, and capacity to adapt in a changing innovation landscape. In the 2025 Future City Index, Hong Kong performed particularly strongly in Talent Hub, Connection Hub, Resilience and Future-Positioning, highlighting its strategic role in linking talent, research, and innovation across regions.

A key strength of Hong Kong lies in its ability to attract, retain and nurture innovative talent. Its universities continue to train highly skilled researchers and professionals, while its international environment, leading financial infrastructure, and vibrant innovation economy enhance its appeal to global talent. Hong Kong also performs strongly in international collaboration, researcher mobility, and network connectivity, reinforcing its role as a bridge between the Chinese Mainland and the wider global innovation system.

Hong Kong's recent trajectory also demonstrates a notable capacity to navigate uncertainty and recover from disruption. From 2015 to 2024, despite the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic and broader global instability, the city maintained its international research partnerships and sustained research productivity. The number of leading researchers in emerging fields such as artificial intelligence, biotechnology, financial technology, and semiconductors increased by 269% (from 536 to 1,978), while inbound talent expanded by 133% (from 3,237 to 7,528). High-impact publications rose by 31% (from 10,069 to 13,154), international collaboration increased by 15% (from 77.8 to 89.8), and the number of high-technology companies grew by 20% (from 2,202 to 2,635). Hong Kong also achieved a post-pandemic bounce-back rate of +38%, ranking as one of the leading performers among the future cities. These trends indicate not only resilience in weathering disruption, but also a strong recovery that has repositioned the city for the next wave of global innovation.

Developed by
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