

WORLD CITIES CULTURE REPORT 5TH EDITION

OUR CITIES:

ABU DHABI

ACCRA

ADELAIDE

AMSTERDAM

AUSTIN

BARCELONA

BEIJING

BENGALURU

BOSTON

BRASÍLIA

BRUSSELS

BUENOS AIRES

CHENGDU

CHICAGO

COLOGNE

DUBAI

DUBLIN

EDINBURGH

GUANGZHOU

HAMBURG

HELSINKI

HONG KONG

ISTANBUL

JAKARTA

KYIV

LISBON

LONDON

LOS ANGELES

MELBOURNE

MILAN

MONTREAL

NANJING

NEW YORK

OSLO

PARIS

RIO DE JANEIRO

SAN FRANCISCO

SÃO PAULO

SEOUL

SHENZHEN

STOCKHOLM

SYDNEY

TAIPEI CITY

TOKYO

TORONTO

VANCOUVER

VIENNA

WARSAW

ZÜRICH

**WORLD
CITIES
CULTURE
REPORT**
5TH EDITION

World Cities Culture Forum

World Cities Culture Forum is the leading global network of civic leaders from over 45 creative cities from across six continents. Our leaders share ideas and solutions to build a world where culture is at the heart of thriving cities. We have established the principle that culture is a golden thread in cities: supporting communities, improving health and wellbeing, attracting tourists and boosting economies.

World Cities Culture Report 5th Edition

The *World Cities Culture Report* is our flagship research publication, released every three years. First published in 2012 with data from 12 cities, it now brings together insights from more than 40 global cities. Combining quantitative data, qualitative analysis and case studies, it offers the most comprehensive global snapshot of culture's role in urban life. It is widely used by policymakers, researchers, and media as a key reference for cultural data and trends in cities.

Not all cities in the network are featured with profiles in this edition, and some data was not available at the time of publication. For the most up to date city profiles and data, please visit our website www.worldcitiescultureforum.com.

Copyright

© 2025 World Cities Culture Forum.
All rights reserved.

Apart from any fair dealing for the purposes of study, research, criticism, review, or as otherwise permitted under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 (UK), no part of this publication may be reproduced, stored, or transmitted in any form or by any means without prior written permission. Inquiries should be directed to info@worldcitiescultureforum.com.

This Report is published by the World Cities Culture Forum for educational purposes. Every effort has been made to credit images and source information accurately.

Citation

When citing this Report, please use:
World Cities Culture Report 5th Edition
(World Cities Culture Forum, 2025)

The Report as well as additional content including detailed city profiles, case studies and full dataset is available on our website:
www.worldcitiescultureforum.com

WORLD CITIES CULTURE REPORT 5TH EDITION



Venice Beach, Los Angeles © Photo by Bobby Drew on Unsplash

WITH THANKS TO OUR SUPPORTERS

SUPPORTERS

**Bloomberg
Philanthropies**



MAYOR OF LONDON

DATA PARTNERS



SMU DataArts

Bloomberg Associates

CONTENT PARTNERS



**Left
Bank
Co.**



COMMUNICA- TION PARTNERS

ing.



BERGEN CONSULTING GROUP

CONTENTS

FOREWORDS 8

Sir Sadiq Khan	8
Ernesto Ottone	10
Justine Simons, OBE	12

INTRODUCTION AND KEY FINDINGS 22

Key Findings	24
Context: The Global Data	26
World Cities Culture Forum Data	30
The Power of Data	40

This section sets the scene for the 5th Edition of the *World Cities Culture Report*, outlining our key findings and what has been happening in our cities since 2022. It also highlights how data can strengthen cultural policies and engagement with citizens. One of our priorities is to encourage all cities to use the scope and depth of the data they collect to make the case for culture. To support this, we showcase our cities’ data, and illustrate the power of data to expand the evidence for cultural policy.

POLICY INSIGHTS 44

A Blueprint for Cultural Policy	46
New Perspectives on Current Challenges	48
Creative Workspace	50
Climate and Culture	58
Night-time Economy	66
Youth and Education	72
Ideas for Changing Times	78
Health and Wellbeing	80
Public Realm	82
AI and Technology	84
Tourism	86

This section has insights that cities can adapt to strengthen their strategies. It explores policy trends shaping world cities today and shares practical ideas. It proposes a blueprint for cultural policies and looks at how cities are tackling major challenges - such as protecting creative workspaces, responding to climate change, growing the night-time economy and creating policies for and with the next generation. It also outlines emerging challenges - from supporting citizens’ health and wellbeing, to more inclusive representation in the public realm, the impact of AI and the need for sustainable tourism.

REGIONAL INSIGHTS 88

Regional Trends at a Glance	90
Focus on Africa	94
Focus on Latin America	98
More Regional Trends	102

This section offers a global view of how cultural trends are unfolding across different regions. It takes an in-depth look at urban expansion in Africa, where young people are bringing new creative ideas and new challenges to the continent’s rapidly growing cities, and at Latin America, where capital cities are driving new developments. Brief regional snapshots and a global trends overview provide quick comparisons and inspiration, helping cities see their own challenges and opportunities in a wider international context.

CITY PROFILES 104

Abu Dhabi	106
Amsterdam	108
Austin	110
Barcelona	112
Beijing	114
Bengaluru	116
Boston	118
Brasília	120
Brussels	122
Chengdu	124
Chicago	126
Cologne	128
Dubai	130
Dublin	132
Edinburgh	134
Guangzhou	136
Hamburg	138
Helsinki	140
Hong Kong	142
Istanbul	144
Jakarta	146
Kyiv	148
Lisbon	150
London	152
Los Angeles	154
Melbourne	156
Milan	158
Montréal	160
Nanjing	162
New York	164
Oslo	166
Paris	168
Rio de Janeiro	170
San Francisco	172
São Paulo	174
Seoul	176
Stockholm	178
Sydney	180
Taipei	182
Tokyo	184
Toronto	186
Vancouver	188
Vienna	190
Warsaw	192
Zürich	194

This section of the Report gets down to ‘street level’ with information, key data and case studies from 45 cities in the World Cities Culture Forum. It shows how cities are responding to cultural challenges and opportunities in practice, offering ideas that other cities can adapt or build on.

METHODOLOGY 196

Methodology	198
CREATIVE Data Framework	199
Unique Data Indicators	200
International Steering Group	202

This section sets out how the evidence in the *World Cities Culture Report* was gathered and analysed. It outlines the *CREATIVE Data Framework* - developed with cities to strengthen how cultural data is captured and compared. It showcases unique city indicators from a few cities that reflect their local context, and lists our International Steering Group who guided the Report with expert feedback and global perspectives.

CREDITS 204

Credits	204
Endnotes	206



Illuminated River artwork on Southwark Bridge
© Photo by Nick Fewings on Unsplash

SIR SADIQ KHAN

Mayor of London and Patron of
World Cities Culture Forum

Culture is a city's DNA. It's the thing that binds us together - both in times of crisis and celebration. It's what makes the daytime thrive and the night-time come alive.

Culture and the creative industries are vital to our cities' success. That's why it's so important that the world's greatest cities continue to share ideas and work together to promote the importance of culture around the globe.

Our cities face similar pressures - from creating good economic growth to improving the health and wellbeing of our citizens. These are big, shared challenges, which culture can help to address because it not only brings people together but creates jobs and new opportunities, sparking innovation and boosting tourism. In London, it's a vital element of our economy, as well as being one of the things that make Londoners proud to be Londoners.

Culture doesn't just reflect who we are; it shapes us. It has the power to inspire and help people reach their full potential. We know that children who get involved in music, the arts and culture do better at school and live happier, healthier, more fulfilling lives. We also know that it can help to tackle loneliness and forge stronger communities. That's why it's so important that we continue our work to unlock the potential of culture and ensure everyone can access it in every corner of our cities.

This 5th Edition of the *World Cities Culture Report* captures bold, inspiring work led by cities across the globe, from linking culture and climate action to creating more space for the next generation of artists. Driven by data and case studies, it showcases creative ways to keep our cities thriving in the decades to come.

At a time when some are tempted to treat culture as a luxury, I'm prouder than ever to be the patron of the World Cities Culture Forum: a network that understands that culture is the foundation of our cities and works tirelessly to champion it for the benefit of everyone.



Sadiq Khan © Photo courtesy of the Mayor of London

WORLD CITIES CULTURE FORUM IS THE LEADING GLOBAL NETWORK OF CIVIC LEADERS FROM OVER 45 CREATIVE CITIES.



Folklorico dance performance in Mexico City
© Photo courtesy of UCCI

ERNESTO OTTONE

Assistant Director-General for Culture, UNESCO

Culture is fundamental to sustainable development. It shapes identities, strengthens social cohesion, drives innovation, and builds resilience. The *World Cities Culture Report* 5th Edition reaffirms the essential role of culture in shaping inclusive, sustainable, and resilient urban futures.

With over half of the world's population living in cities - a figure that continues to rise - urban centres are at the forefront of global challenges: climate change, social inequalities and digital transformation. Culture offers critical pathways for addressing these challenges, enabling cities to become spaces of creativity, shared purpose, and collective progress.

At UNESCO, we continue to advocate for the recognition of culture as a stand alone goal in the post-2030 international development agenda. Cities are key to this effort. They are where cultural life flourishes, where policies are implemented, and where communities build their futures together. Like World Cities Culture Forum, we believe that cities can achieve more by working together. The UNESCO Creative Cities Network, with over 350 member cities across eight creative fields, embodies this commitment. Through cooperation and knowledge-sharing, the Network supports cities in placing culture at the heart of local development strategies. The Braga Manifesto, endorsed by Mayors of UNESCO Creative Cities, sets out key priorities for cities, including cultural rights, digital transformation, climate action, the economic dimension of culture, cultural heritage protection, and the link between culture and education. These priorities align with the global vision emphasised in the MONDIACULT 2022 Declaration and guided discussions at MONDIACULT 2025 in Barcelona.

This year also marks the 20th anniversary of the 2005 UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, a milestone that invites reflection on progress made and a renewed commitment to cultural diversity, equity, and access for all.

The *World Cities Culture Report* 5th Edition, drawing on data, insights, and case studies from over 40 cities across six continents, offers a valuable resource for policymakers, researchers, and cultural professionals. It demonstrates how integrating culture into urban strategies contributes to more equitable, innovative, and resilient cities.

I commend the World Cities Culture Forum for its leadership in producing this flagship Report.



Ernesto Ottone © UNESCO, Photo by Christelle ALIX

By convening civic leaders from across the globe, the Forum fosters dialogue, knowledge exchange, and collaboration that place culture at the heart of urban development. Through the Global Summit, leadership programmes, and research, they empower city leaders to build thriving communities and economies where culture flourishes.

Looking forward, it is essential to strengthen partnerships across networks, sectors, levels of government, and regions alike. Our challenges are interconnected, and our responses must reflect that. By placing culture at the core of urban development, we can unlock the full potential of cities as engines of sustainability, inclusion and innovation.

I encourage cities everywhere to join us - through the World Cities Culture Forum, the UNESCO Creative Cities Network, and other platforms - to build cities where culture thrives, diversity is celebrated, and everyone has the opportunity to participate fully in cultural life.

Thank you.



Winter Lights Festival, Night-time Enterprize Zone event, Bromley, London © Photo courtesy of the Greater London Authority

JUSTINE SIMONS, OBE

Deputy Mayor for Culture and Creative Industries, London and Founder, World Cities Culture Forum

I'm delighted to introduce the 5th Edition of the *World Cities Culture Report* - our flagship publication and the most comprehensive global dataset on culture in cities. Since our first edition in 2012, with 12 pioneering cities, our network has grown to over 40 global cities representing more than 260 million people.

At the World Cities Culture Forum, we are united by a shared belief that culture is an essential ingredient in cities. We describe it as is the golden thread - connecting communities, sparking innovation, and shaping the future of urban life. As the world's largest leadership network for culture and cities, we champion the idea that when culture is woven into every part of city life - from economic growth and tourism to health and wellbeing - it transforms both lives and places.

That collective vision was powerfully affirmed at the 2023 World Cities Culture Summit in São Paulo, where 29 cities signed the São Paulo Manifesto. It calls for culture to be recognised as a standalone UN Sustainable Development Goal.

Central to our work is the principle of generosity - the open exchange of ideas, data, and research. The more we collaborate as global peers, the more effective we will be at building thriving cities.

Data is one the most important tools we have as city leaders, and this edition of the Report introduces a new comprehensive *CREATIVE Data Framework*. It has been developed in partnership with the OECD and is designed to support our cities in measuring cultural provision, participation, and impact to inform future policymaking.

Our network continues to gather momentum and since our last report in 2022, we have welcomed nine new cities: Adelaide, Beijing, Bengaluru, Boston, Chicago, Cologne, Jakarta, Kyiv, and Rio de Janeiro. Each new city bringing fresh perspectives, ideas and opportunities for collaboration.

Our Leadership Exchange Programme facilitates global collaboration at a deeper level. Generously supported by Bloomberg Philanthropies, it allows us to share our best ideas and solve the pressing common issues we face, from protecting cultural spaces at risk to delivering inclusive Cultural Olympiads. It has fast-tracked policy development among 22 cities and 185 cultural leaders since 2018 and is now in its third round.



Justine Simons © Photo by Rankin

In recent years, we've also expanded our insights through several key publications that deepen our understanding of culture's role in cities globally:

- *Creative Recovery? The Role of Cultural Policy in Shaping Post-COVID Urban Futures* (2023)
- *African Alternatives: The Future of Creative Cities* (2024)
- *Nothing About Us Without Us: Youth and Culture in Global Cities Today* (2024)
- *Creative Land Trusts: A Practical Guide* (2025)
- *World Cities Culture Trends* (2024, 2025)

We are deeply grateful to all those who made this Report possible. We thank our supporters - Bloomberg Philanthropies, the British Council, Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, Fundação Itaú, and the Union of Ibero-American Capital Cities (UCCI) - and partners including Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), SMU DataArts, VibeLab, Julie's Bicycle, and Left Bank Co, whose expertise has strengthened this Report and our wider work.

Most of all, we thank the cities in our network for their openness and commitment. The data and insights in this Report come directly from teams working on the ground, generously sharing solutions, challenges and ideas.

In uncertain times, cities must lead with creativity, courage, and care. Culture is not just the outcome of thriving cities - it is the catalyst that connects, inspires, and helps us build a better future.

Justine Simons

AVANT-PROPOS

J’ai le plaisir de vous présenter la cinquième édition du Rapport sur la culture dans les villes du monde (World Cities Culture Forum), notre publication phare regroupant les données les plus complètes sur la culture dans les villes. Depuis notre première édition en 2012, avec 12 villes pionnières, notre réseau s’est étendu à plus de 40 villes dans le monde représentant plus de 260 millions de personnes.

Au World Cities Culture Forum, nous sommes unis par la conviction commune que la culture est un ingrédient essentiel des villes. Nous la décrivons comme le fil conducteur qui relie les communautés, stimule l’innovation et façonne l’avenir de la vie urbaine. En tant que plus grand réseau mondial de dirigeants pour la culture et les villes, nous défendons l’idée que lorsque la culture est intégrée à tous les aspects de la vie urbaine, de la croissance économique au tourisme en passant par la santé et le bien-être, elle transforme à la fois les vies et les lieux. Cette vision collective a été affirmée avec force à São Paulo lors du World Cities Culture Summit (Sommet sur la culture dans les villes du monde) de 2023, où 29 villes ont signé le Manifeste de São Paulo. Il prévoit que la culture soit reconnue comme un objectif de développement durable à part entière des Nations unies.

Le principe de générosité (l’échange ouvert d’idées, de données et de recherches) est au cœur de notre travail. Plus nous collaborerons entre pairs au niveau mondial, plus nous serons efficaces dans la construction de villes prospères.

Les données sont l’un des outils les plus importants dont nous disposons en tant que responsables municipaux et cette édition du rapport présente un nouveau cadre de données appelé CREATIVE. Il a été développé en partenariat avec l’OCDE et est conçu pour aider nos villes à mesurer l’offre, la participation et l’impact culturels afin de nourrir l’élaboration des politiques futures.

Notre réseau continue de prendre de l’ampleur et, depuis notre dernier rapport en 2022, nous avons accueilli neuf nouvelles villes : Adélaïde, Pékin, Bangalore, Boston, Chicago, Cologne, Jakarta, Kyiv et Rio de Janeiro. Chaque ville en plus apporte de nouvelles perspectives, idées et possibilités de collaboration.

Notre Leadership Exchange Programme est un programme d’échange au niveau de dirigeants. Il facilite la collaboration mondiale à un niveau plus profond. Généreusement soutenu par Bloomberg Philanthropies, il nous permet de partager nos meilleures idées et de résoudre les problèmes communs urgents auxquels nous sommes confrontés, qu’il s’agisse de protéger les espaces culturels en

التعافي الإبداعي؟ دور السياسات الثقافية في تشكيل مستقبل المدن بعد جائحة كوفيد (2023): بحث قامت كلية كينغز في لندن بإعداده وسعت فيه إلى تحليل 270 إجراءً سياسياً جديداً على المستوى العالمي لرصد كيفية تسخير الثقافة لدفع جهود التعافي من الجائحة.

البدائل الأفريقية: مستقبل المدن الإبداعية (2024), تم تطوير الإصدار بالشراكة مع المجلس الثقافي البريطاني وفريق من الباحثين في وكالة «أنداني أفريقيا» (Andani.Africa), بهدف استكشاف موضوع القيادة الثقافية في 11 عاصمة أفريقية جنوب الصحراء.

لا شيء يخصنا بدوننا: الشباب والثقافة في المدن العالمية اليوم (2024): تم إنجاز التقرير بالتعاون مع مجموعة من المساهمين الشباب, وأطلق خلال «قمة المدن الثقافية العالمية 2024» في دبي, ويتناول سبل تمكين المدن من دعم الشباب بصورة أفضل من خلال السياسات العامة.

صناديق الأراضي الإبداعية: دليل عملي (2025): صدر هذا التقرير بالشراكة مع مؤسسة كينيث راينن وشركة «ليفث بانك كو» (Left Bank Co), وذلك بعد انعقاد القمة الافتتاحية لصناديق الأراضي الإبداعية التي أقيمت في سان فرانسيسكو, ويقدم إرشادات عملية لضمان توفير مساحات ميسورة التكلفة وطويلة الأجل للفنانين والمبدعين.

اتجاهات الثقافة في المدن العالمية (2024, 2025): تقرير سنوي يسلط الضوء على أبرز التطورات في السياسات الثقافية التي تسهم في تشكيل المدن حول العالم.

وختاماً, أعبر عن تقديري لكل من أسهم في إنجاز هذا التقرير, وأتوجه بجزيل الشكر إلى الجهات الداعمة لنا, وهي: مؤسسة بلومبرغ للأعمال الخيرية, والمجلس الثقافي البريطاني, ومؤسسة كالوست غولبنكيان, ومؤسسة إيتاو, واتحاد عواصر الإيبيرو-أمريكية. كما أتوجه بالشكر إلى شركائنا, ومنهم منظمة التعاون الاقتصادي والتنمية (OECD), وSMU DataArts, VibeLab, و Julie’s Bicycle, Left Bank Co, الذين أسهمتم خبراتهم في إثراء هذا التقرير وتعزيز أثر أعمالنا على نطاق واسع.

كما أخص بالشكر المدن الأعضاء في شبكتنا على انفتاحها والتزامها, حيث تستند جميع البيانات والرؤى الواردة في هذا التقرير مباشرة إلى فرق العمل الميدانية التي أسهمت في عرض الحلول والتحديات وطرح الأفكار.

وفي أوقات عدم اليقين, يتعيّن على المدن أن تمضي في مسيرتها بروح الإبداع والقوة والرعاية, فالثقافة ليست مجرد ثمرة لازدهار المدن, بل هي المحقّر الذي يوحّدنا ويلهمنا ويمكننا من بناء مستقبل أفضل.

جوستين سيمونز الحاصلة على وسام الإمبراطورية البريطانية نائب عمدة لندن لشؤون الثقافة والصناعات الإبداعية المؤسس لمنتدى ثقافة المدن العالمية

كلمة

جوستين سيمونز الحاصلة على وسام الإمبراطورية البريطانية نائب عمدة لندن لشؤون الثقافة والصناعات الإبداعية المؤسس لمنتدى ثقافة المدن العالمية

يسعدني أن أقدم الإصدار الخامس من تقرير المدن العالمية للثقافة, الذي يوفر قاعدة بيانات عالمية شاملة حول أوضاع الثقافة في المدن, فمنذ إصدار نسخته الأولى عام 2012, الذي شمل آنذاك 12 مدينة رائدة, شهدت شبكتنا توسعاً ملحوظاً, حيث تضم حالياً أكثر من 40 مدينة عالمية يعيش فيها أكثر من 260 مليون نسمة.

في «منتدى المدن الثقافية العالمية» يجتمعنا إيمان مشترك بأن الثقافة تمثل محوراً أساسياً في بناء المدن, وخيطاً ذهبياً يربط المجتمعات, كما تعد الثقافة محركاً للابتكار ومساهماً في تشكيل ملامح مستقبل الحياة الحضرية. وبصفتنا أكبر شبكة عالمية معنية بالثقافة, ندرك أهمية دمج الثقافة في جميع جوانب الحياة الحضرية, بدءاً من النمو الاقتصادي والسياحة والصحة والرعاية, ما يسهم في إحداث تحولات إيجابية في حياة الأفراد والبيئات الحضرية.

وقد تجسّد هذا الطموح في «قمة المدن الثقافية العالمية 2023» التي استضافتها مدينة ساو باولو, حيث وقّعت 29 مدينة على «إعلان ساو باولو» الذي يدعو إلى الاعتراف بالثقافة كهدف مستقل ضمن أهداف التنمية المستدامة للأمم المتحدة.

ونستند في عملنا إلى مبدأ الانفتاح وتبادل الأفكار والبيانات والبحوث, ما يسهم في توطيد علاقات التعاون بيننا كشركاء عالميين ويعزز تفاعلنا وقدرتنا على بناء مدن مزدهرة.

ويقدم هذا الإصدار من التقرير إطاراً شاملاً جديداً للبيانات الإبداعية التي تعد من أهم الأدوات المتاحة التي نمتلكها كقادة للمدن, حيث تم تطوير هذا الإطار بالشراكة مع منظمة التعاون الاقتصادي والتنمية, بهدف دعم مددنا في قياس مستوى توفير الثقافة, ومعدلات المشاركة, والأثر الناتج عنها, ما يسهم في منح صناعات السياسات ما يحتاجونه من معلومات تمكنهم من التخطيط للمستقبل.

ومنذ صدور تقريرنا الأخير في عام 2022, تواصل شبكتنا توسّعها, حيث شهدنا انضمام 9 مدن جديدة هي: أديلابيد, وبكين, وبنغالورو, وبوسطن, وشيكاغو, وكولونيا, وجاكرتا, وكيبف, وريو دي جانيرو, إذ تضيف كل مدينة جديدة رؤى وأفكاراً وفرصاً مبتكرة للتعاون المشترك.

ويسهم برنامج تبادل الخبرات القيادية, المدعوم من مؤسسة بلومبرغ للأعمال الخيرية, في تعزيز التعاون العالمي, إذ يتيح لنا فرصة تبادل أفضل الأفكار ومعالجة القضايا المشتركة التي نواجهها, بدءاً من حماية المساحات الثقافية المهددة, ووصولاً إلى تنظيم أولمبيادات ثقافية شاملة. وقد أسهم هذا البرنامج, منذ عام 2018, في تسريع وتيرة تطوير السياسات بين 22 مدينة و185 قائداً ثقافياً, وها هو اليوم في دورته الثالثة.

قمنا في السنوات الأخيرة بتوسيع نطاق معارفنا من خلال عدد من الإصدارات والتقارير التي تسهم في تعزيز فهمنا لدور الثقافة في المدن على المستوى العالمي, وهي:

péril ou d’organiser des Olympiades culturelles inclusives. Depuis 2018, il a permis d’accélérer l’élaboration de politiques dans 22 villes et auprès de 185 responsables culturels, et en est désormais à son troisième cycle.

Ces dernières années, nous avons également approfondi nos connaissances grâce à plusieurs publications clés nous permettant de mieux comprendre le rôle de la culture dans les villes du monde entier:

- *Creative Recovery? The Role of Cultural Policy in Shaping Post-COVID Urban Futures* (Relance créatif ? Le rôle de la politique culturelle dans la conception de l’avenir urbain post-COVID) (2023)
- *African Alternatives: The Future of Creative Cities* (Alternatives africaines: l’avenir des villes créatives) (2024)
- *Nothing About Us Without Us: Youth and Culture in Global Cities Today* (Rien sur nous sans nous: jeunesse et culture dans les villes du monde aujourd’hui) (2024)
- *Creative Land Trusts: A Practical Guide* (Les fiducies foncières créatives: guide pratique) (2025)
- *World Cities Culture Trends* (Tendances des politiques culturelles dans les villes du monde) (2024, 2025)

Nous sommes profondément reconnaissants envers tous ceux qui ont rendu le présent rapport possible. Nous remercions nos donateurs: Bloomberg Philanthropies, le British Council, la Fondation Calouste Gulbenkian, la Fundação Itaú et l’Union des capitales ibéro-américaines. Nous remercions également nos partenaires, notamment l’OCDE, SMU DataArts, VibeLab, Julie’s Bicycle et Left Bank Co, dont l’expertise a permis de renforcer ce rapport et notre travail en général.

Et surtout, nous remercions les villes de notre réseau pour leur ouverture et leur engagement. Les données et les réflexions contenues dans ce rapport proviennent directement des équipes travaillant sur le terrain, qui partagent généreusement leurs solutions, leurs défis et leurs idées.

En ces temps incertains, les villes se doivent d’être créatives, courageuses et attentionnées. La culture n’est pas seulement le résultat de villes prospères: c’est le moteur qui relie, inspire et nous aide à construire un avenir meilleur.

Justine Simons OBE
Ajointe au maire pour la culture et les industries créatives, Londres, Fondatrice du World Cities Culture Forum

PREFACIO

Me complace presentar la quinta edición del *World Cities Culture Report*, nuestro informe más emblemático, que reúne el conjunto de datos más completo a nivel global sobre la cultura en las ciudades. Desde nuestra primera edición en 2012, donde contamos con 12 ciudades pioneras, nuestra red ha crecido a más de 40 ciudades de todo el mundo que representan a más de 260 millones de personas.

En el World Cities Culture Forum nos une la creencia compartida de que la cultura es un ingrediente esencial en las ciudades. Lo describimos como el hilo de oro, capaz de conectar a las comunidades, fomentar la innovación y trazar el futuro de la vida urbana. Desde nuestra posición como la red de liderazgo más grande del mundo en lo referente a la cultura y las ciudades, defendemos la idea de que, cuando la cultura entreteje todas las costuras de la vida urbana –desde el crecimiento económico y el turismo hasta la salud y el bienestar– tiene la capacidad de transformar la vida de las personas y sus entornos.

La World Cities Culture Summit de 2023 sirvió como un poderoso alegato a favor esa visión colectiva, ya que 29 ciudades firmaron el Manifiesto de São Paulo, en honor a la ciudad donde se celebró la cumbre. En él se hace un llamamiento para que la cultura pase a ser en sí misma un Objetivo de Desarrollo Sostenible de la ONU.

Un elemento central de nuestro trabajo es el principio de generosidad: el intercambio abierto de ideas, datos e investigaciones. Cuanto más profunda sea nuestra colaboración a nivel global, más eficaces seremos a la hora de construir ciudades prósperas.

Como líderes urbanos, los datos son una de las herramientas más importantes de las que disponemos, y esta edición del informe presenta un nuevo marco de trabajo integral de datos CREATIVE. Se ha desarrollado en asociación con la OCDE y está diseñado para ayudar a nuestras ciudades a evaluar la oferta cultural, así como su participación e impacto, lo que servirá de base para adoptar nuevas políticas en el futuro.

Nuestra red continúa cobrando impulso y, desde nuestro último informe en 2022, hemos dado la bienvenida a nueve nuevas ciudades: Adelaida, Pekín, Bangalore, Boston, Chicago, Colonia, Yakarta, Kiev y Río de Janeiro. Cada nueva incorporación aporta nuevas perspectivas, ideas y oportunidades de colaboración.

Nuestro Leadership Exchange Programme (Programa de Intercambio de Liderazgo) lleva la colaboración global un paso más allá. Nos permite compartir nuestras mejores ideas y resolver los

urgentes problemas comunes a los que nos enfrentamos, desde la protección de espacios culturales en riesgo hasta la realización de Olimpiadas Culturales inclusivas, todo con el generoso apoyo de Bloomberg Philanthropies. El programa ha acelerado el desarrollo de políticas entre 22 ciudades y 185 líderes culturales desde 2018 y se encuentra ahora en su tercera ronda.

En los últimos años, también hemos ampliado nuestras ideas a través de varias publicaciones clave que profundizan nuestra comprensión del papel de la cultura en ciudades de todo el mundo:

- *Creative Recovery? The Role of Cultural Policy in Shaping Post-COVID Urban Futures* (¿Recuperación creativa? El papel de la política cultural en la configuración de los futuros urbanos post-COVID) (2023)
- *African Alternatives: The Future of Creative Cities* (Alternativas africanas: El futuro de las ciudades creativas) (2024)
- *Nothing About Us Without Us: Youth and Culture in Global Cities Today* (Nada sobre nosotros sin nosotros: Juventud y cultura en las ciudades globales de la actualidad) (2024)
- *Creative Land Trusts: A Practical Guide* (Nuevos modelos creativos de propiedad: Una guía práctica) (2025)
- *World Cities Culture Trends* (Tendencias culturales de las ciudades del mundo) (2024, 2025)

Estamos profundamente agradecidos a todos los que han hecho posible este informe. Le damos las gracias a todos aquellos que nos brindan su apoyo (Bloomberg Philanthropies, el British Council, la Fundación Calouste Gulbenkian, la Fundación Itaú y la Unión de Ciudades Capitales Iberoamericanas), así como a nuestros socios, incluyendo la OCDE, SMU DataArts, VibeLab, Julie’s Bicycle y Left Bank Co, cuya experiencia ha fortalecido este informe y nuestra labor en general.

Por encima de todo, agradecemos a las ciudades de nuestra red su disposición y su compromiso. Los datos y las ideas de este informe provienen directamente de equipos que trabajan sobre el terreno y que comparten generosamente soluciones, desafíos e ideas.

En tiempos inciertos, las ciudades deben liderar con creatividad, coraje y empatía. La cultura no es solo el resultado de ciudades prósperas, es el catalizador que nos conecta, nos inspira y nos ayuda a construir un futuro mejor.

Justine Simons, OBE
Teniente de Alcalde de Cultura e Industrias Creativas,
Londres, Fundadora del World Cities Culture Forum



Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras 2023
© Photo courtesy of the City of Sydney

PREFÁCIO

É com enorme prazer que apresento a quinta edição do *World Cities Culture Report* (Relatório Mundial de Cultura das Cidades), a nossa principal publicação e o conjunto de dados mais abrangente sobre a cultura nas cidades a nível global. Desde a primeira edição, que fizemos em 2012, com 12 cidades pioneiras, a nossa rede cresceu para mais de 40 cidades em todo o mundo, o que representa mais de 260 milhões de pessoas.

No World Cities Culture Forum (Fórum Mundial de Cultura das Cidades), partilhamos a convicção de que a cultura é um elemento indispensável nas cidades. Na verdade, é o fio condutor que une as comunidades, estimula a inovação e molda o futuro da vida urbana. Na qualidade de maior rede mundial de liderança para a cultura e as cidades, defendemos a ideia de que, quando a cultura está presente em todas as vertentes da vida urbana - desde o crescimento económico e o turismo até à saúde e ao bem-estar -, transforma tanto as vidas como os lugares.

Essa visão coletiva ficou bem consolidada na 2023 World Cities Culture Summit (Cimeira Mundial de Cultura das Cidades de 2023), em São Paulo, onde 29 cidades subscreveram o São Paulo Manifesto (Manifesto de São Paulo), um documento que apela a que a cultura seja reconhecida como um Objetivo de Desenvolvimento Sustentável autónomo da ONU.

Fundamental para o nosso trabalho é o princípio da generosidade - a troca aberta de ideias, dados e investigação. Quanto mais colaborarmos como parceiros globais, mais eficazes seremos na construção de cidades prósperas.

Os dados são uma das ferramentas mais importantes de que dispomos enquanto dirigentes nas cidades. Esta edição do relatório apresenta um novo quadro abrangente de dados CREATIVE, desenvolvido em parceria com a OCDE e que se destina a apoiar as nossas cidades a medir a oferta cultural, a participação e o impacto, com vista a informar a elaboração de políticas futuras.

A nossa rede continua a ganhar força e, desde o nosso último relatório, em 2022, acolhemos nove novas cidades: Adelaide, Pequim, Bengaluru, Boston, Chicago, Colónia, Jacarta, Kiev e Rio de Janeiro. Cada nova cidade traz novas perspetivas, ideias e oportunidades de colaboração.

O nosso Leadership Exchange Programme (Programa de Intercâmbio de Liderança) promove a colaboração global a um nível mais aprofundado. Com o generoso apoio da Bloomberg Philanthropies, permite-nos partilhar as nossas melhores ideias e resolver questões comuns urgentes que enfrentamos, desde a proteção de espaços culturais em risco até à realização de Olimpíadas Culturais inclusivas.

Foreword: Justine Simons, OBE



Artillery Gallery: attendee at an exhibition opening in March 2023 © Photo by Tami Zizhou (Opus Fotografi)

Desde 2018, a iniciativa tem acelerado o desenvolvimento de políticas em 22 cidades e entre 185 líderes culturais, encontrando-se agora na sua terceira fase.

Nos últimos anos, também expandimos os nossos conhecimentos através de várias publicações importantes que aprofundam a nossa compreensão do papel da cultura nas cidades em todo o mundo:

- *Creative Recovery? The Role of Cultural Policy in Shaping Post-COVID Urban Futures* (2023)
- *African Alternatives: The Future of Creative Cities* (2024)
- *Nothing About Us Without Us: Youth and Culture in Global Cities Today* (2024)
- *Creative Land Trusts: A Practical Guide* (2025)
- *World Cities Culture Trends* (2024, 2025)

É com profunda gratidão que nos dirigimos a todos aqueles que tornaram este relatório possível. Agradecemos aos nossos apoiantes – Bloomberg Philanthropies, British Council, Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, Fundação Itaú e União das Capitais Ibero-Americanas – e aos nossos parceiros, entre os quais a OCDE, SMU DataArts, VibeLab, Julie’s Bicycle e Left Bank Co, cuja experiência contribuiu para enriquecer este relatório e o nosso trabalho em geral.

Acima de tudo, agradecemos às cidades da nossa rede pela sua abertura e empenho. Os dados e insights deste relatório provêm diretamente das equipas que trabalham no terreno, que generosamente partilharam soluções, desafios e ideias.

Em tempos de incerteza, as cidades devem liderar com criatividade, coragem e empatia . A cultura não é apenas o resultado de cidades prósperas, mas também o catalisador que nos use, que nos inspira e que nos ajuda a construir um futuro melhor.

Justine Simons OBE
Vice-Presidente para a Cultura e Indústrias Criativas, Londres, Fundadora do World Cities Culture Forum (Fórum Mundial de Cultura nas Cidades)

20

머리말

저희의 대표 간행물이자 도시의 문화에 대한 포괄적 글로벌 데이터세트인 World Cities Culture Report 제5판을 발간하게 되어 기쁘게 생각합니다. 2012년 초판에서 12곳의 개척적인 도시로 시작했던 우리의 네트워크가 이제 2억 6천만 명 이상을 대표하는 40개 이상의 글로벌 도시로 성장했습니다.

World Cities Culture Forum에서 우리는 도시에 있어 문화가 필수적인 성분이라는 공통된 믿음으로 하나가 되었습니다. 공동체를 하나로 묶고, 혁신의 불꽃을 일으키며, 도시 생활의 미래를 그려내는 문화를 우리는 황금실이라 부릅니다. 저희는 문화와 도시를 위한 세계 최대의 리더십 네트워크로서, 문화가 경제 성장과 관광부터 건강과 웰빙에 이르기까지 도시 생활의 모든 분야에 녹아들 때, 삶과 공간을 모두 변화시킬 수 있다고 믿습니다.

이러한 공통의 비전은 29개 도시가 상파울루 선언(São Paulo Manifesto)에 서명했던 2023년 세계도시문화서밋(World Cities Culture Summit)을 통해 강력하게 재확인되었습니다. 해당 선언문은 문화가 UN 지속가능발전목표의 독립적인 항목으로 인정받아야 한다고 촉구합니다.

저희 활동의 중심에는 관대함의 원칙이 있습니다. 즉, 열린 자세로 아이디어와 데이터, 연구를 교환하는 것을 말합니다. 글로벌 동료로서 더 적극적으로 협력할 때, 더욱 효과적으로 번영하는 도시를 만들 수 있습니다.

데이터는 도시 리더들에게 가장 중요한 도구 중 하나이며, 따라서 이번 보고서에서는 새롭고 포괄적인 CREATIVE 데이터 프레임워크를 소개합니다. 이는 OECD와의 협력을 통해 개발된 프레임워크로, 도시의 문화적 공급과 참여, 영향력을 측정해 이를 향후 정책 결정에 활용하는 데 도움을 주기 위한 목적으로 고안되었습니다.

저희 네트워크는 꾸준한 성장세를 이어가고 있으며, 2022년 마지막 보고서 이후로 9개의 새로운 도시인 애틀레이드, 베이징, 뱅갈루루, 보스턴, 시카고, 퀘벡, 자카르타, 키이우, 리우데자네이루가 새롭게 추가되었습니다. 이들 도시는 제각기 새로운 관점과 아이디어, 협업을 위한 기회를 제공합니다.

저희의 ‘리더십 교류 프로그램’은 더욱 깊은 수준의 글로벌 협력을 촉진합니다. 블룸버그 필란트로피스(Bloomberg Philanthropies)의 아낌없는 후원을 받는 이 프로그램을 통해, 저희는 최고의 아이디어를 공유하고, ‘위기에 처한 문화 공간 보호’부터 ‘포용적인 문화 올림피아드 개최’에 이르기까지 당면한 공통의 문제를 해결할 수 있습니다. 2018년부터 본 프로그램은 22개 도시와 185명의 문화 리더들 사이에서 정책 개발을 가속화했으며, 현재 3회차를 운영 중입니다.

또한 저희는 최근 몇 년간 전 세계 도시에서 문화의 역할에 대한 이해를 심화하는 다음과 같은 주요 발간물을 통해 통찰력을 확장해 왔습니다.

창의적 회복? 포스트 코로나 시대 도시의 미래를 만드는 문화 정책의 역할(Creative Recovery? The Role of Cultural Policy in Shaping Post-COVID Urban Futures, 2023)은 킹스 칼리지 런던(King’s College London)이 수행한 연구로, 팬데믹으로부터 회복하기 위해 어떻게 문화가 동원되었는지 파악하기 위해 전 세계 270개의 새로운 정책 조치를 분석했습니다.

Foreword: Justine Simons, OBE

아프리카적 대안: 창의적 도시의 미래(African Alternatives: The Future of Creative Cities, 2024)는 영국문화원(British Council) 및 연구기관 Andani.Africa와 협력하여 진행한 연구로, 사하라 사막 이남의 11개 수도에서 문화 리더십을 탐구합니다.

당사자 없는 정책은 없다: 현대 글로벌 도시의 청년과 문화(Nothing About Us Without Us: Youth and Culture in Global Cities Today, 2024)는 청년 기고자들과 공동으로 제작해 2024년 두바이 세계도시문화서밋에서 발표했으며, 도시가 정책을 통해 청년들을 어떻게 더 잘 지원할 수 있는지를 모색하고 있습니다.

창의적 토지 신탁: 실용 가이드(Creative Land Trusts: A Practical Guide, 2025)는 케네스 레이닌 재단(Kenneth Rainin Foundation)과 레프트 뱅크(Left Bank Co.)와 함께 샌프란시스코에서 개최한 제1회 창의적 토지 신탁 서밋(Creative Land Trust Summit)의 후속으로 발간되었습니다. 예술가와 창작자를 위한 장기적이고 저렴한 공간 확보에 대한 실용적인 지침을 제공합니다.

세계 도시 문화 트렌드(World Cities Culture Trends, 2024, 2025)는 전 세계 도시에 영향을 미치는 주요 문화 정책의 발전상을 조명하는 연례 개요 보고서입니다.

본 보고서의 발간을 지원해주신 모든 분들께 깊이 감사드립니다. 본 보고서와 저희의 폭넓은 활동에 전문성을 더하여 큰 힘이 되어주신 후원 및 협력 기관에 깊은 감사를 드립니다. 후원 기관으로는 블룸버그 필란트로피스, 영국문화원, 칼루스테 굴베키안 재단(Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation), 이타우 재단(Fundação Itaú), 이베로-아메리카 수도 연합(Union of Ibero-American Capital Cities)이, 협력 기관으로는 OECD, SMU 데이터아트스(SMU DataArts), 바이브랩(VibeLab), 줄리스 바이시클(Julie’s Bicycle), 레프트 뱅크 등이 함께해 주셨습니다.

무엇보다도, 저희 네트워크에 속한 도시들의 개방성과 헌신에 감사드립니다. 본 보고서에 담긴 데이터와 통찰은 해결책과 어려운 과제, 아이디어를 아낌없이 공유해 주신 현장 실무팀들로부터 직접 얻은 것입니다.

불확실성의 시대에 도시는 창의성과 용기, 배려라는 가치로 앞장서야 합니다. 문화는 단지 번영하는 도시의 결과물일 뿐만 아니라, 우리를 연결하고, 영감을 주며, 더 나은 미래를 만들어 가도록 돕는 촉매제입니다.

저스틴 시몬스 대영제국훈장 수훈자(Justine Simons OBE)
런던 문화 및 창조 산업 담당 부시장
World Cities Culture Forum 창립자

21

序文

このたび、当団体の代表的な出版物『World Cities Culture Report』(都市の文化に関する最も包括的なグローバルデータの集約)第5版を発表できることを嬉しく思います。2012年発行の第1版では先駆的な12の都市をご紹介しましたが、現在では40を超えるグローバル都市を網羅し、2億6,000万人を超える人々を代表するネットワークに成長しました。

World Cities Culture Forumでは、文化が都市の不可欠な要素であるという一つの共通の信念で結ばれています。文化はコミュニティを結びつけ、イノベーションを刺激し、都市生活の未来を形作る黄金の糸と言えます。世界最大の文化と都市に関するリーダーシップネットワークとして、文化が経済成長から観光、健康からウェルビーイングまで、都市生活のあらゆる側面に取り入れられるとき、人々の生活と場所の両方を変革すると考えているからです。

この共通のビジョンはサンパウロで開催された2023年世界都市文化サミットにおいて、29の都市が「サンパウロ宣言」に署名することで強く支持されました。この宣言では、文化を国連の持続可能な開発目標の独立した目標として認めることを求めています。

当団体の活動の中心にあるのは寛容の原則、つまりアイデア、データ、研究をオープンに共有することです。グローバルな仲間として協力するほど、都市を繁栄させる効果が高まります。

データは都市のリーダーが持つ最重要ツールの一つです。このレポートの最新版では、新たな包括的で「クリエイティブ」なデータの枠組みを紹介しています。OECDとの協力のもと開発されたこの枠組みは、都市における文化の供給、参画、影響を測定し、今後の政策決定を方向付けることが目的です。

当団体のネットワークは拡大を続けており、前回の2022年のレポート以後、9つの都市(アデレード、北京、バンガロール、ボストン、シカゴ、ケルン、ジャカルタ、キウ、リオデジャネイロ)が新たに加わりました。新しい都市が加わることで、新たな視点、アイデア、そして協力の機会がもたらされています。

当団体のリーダー交流プログラムでは、さらに深く掘り下げたグローバルな協力を促進します。ブルームバーグ・フィランソロピーズの多大なる支援により、最高のアイデアを共有し、文化空間の保護から包括的な文化オリンピックの実現まで、直面している緊急の課題解決に取り組むことができます。2018年から、22の都市と185人の文化的リーダーの間で政策策定を迅速に進めており、現在、第3回目を迎えました。

近年、当団体は数多くの重要な出版物(下記参照)を通じて知識を拡大し、世界中の都市における文化の役割に関する理解を深めてきました。

クリエイティブな回復とは?ポストコロナの都市の未来を形作る文化政策の役割(2023年)キングス・カレッジ・ロンドンが実施したこの研究は、パンデミック後の回復を促進するために文化がどのように活用されたかを理解するため、世界中で実施された270の新たな政策措置を分析しています。

アフリカの代替案:創造的な都市の未来(2024年)は、ブリティッシュ・カウンシルとAndani.Africaの研究者との協力のもとで作成され、サハラ以南のアフリカの11の首都における文化リーダーシップを考察しています。

私たち抜きで私たちのことは決めない:現代のグローバル都市における若者と文化(2024年)は、若年者の寄稿者と



© Photo by Billetto on Unsplash

共に作成され、ドバイで開催された「世界都市文化サミット2024」で発表されました。このレポートでは、都市が政策を通じて若年者をより効果的に支援する方法を考察しています。

Creative Land Trusts:実践ガイド(2025年)は、サンフランシスコで開催された当団体の第1回のCreative Land Trust Summitにおいて、ケネス・レイニン財団とLeft Bank Coと共同で発表されました。アーティストとクリエイターが長期的に利用可能な手頃な価格のスペースを確保するための実践的なガイドを提供しています。

World Cities Culture Trends(2024年、2025年)は、世界中の都市を形成する主要な文化政策の動向を取り上げている年次概要です。

本レポートを作成するにあたり、ご協力いただいたすべての方々に心より感謝申し上げます。支援団体の皆さま(ブルームバーグ・フィランソロピーズ、ブリティッシュ・カウンシル、カルースト・グルベンキアン財団、Fundação Itaú、イベロアメリカ首都連合)、またパートナー支援団体の皆さま(OECD、SMU DataArts、VibeLab、Julie’s Bicycle、Left Bank Co)の専門知識のご提供により、本レポートおよび当団体の活動全般のご支援を賜り、感謝申し上げます。

まず何よりも、当ネットワークに参加している各都市の皆さまに、情報公開のご協力およびご尽力に心より感謝申し上げます。本レポートに記載されているデータおよび情報は、現場で活動するチームから直接提供されたものであり、彼らが惜しみなく共有してくれた解決策、課題、アイデアを基に作成されています。

不確実な時代において、都市は創造性、勇気、そして配慮をもって模範を示す必要があります。文化は単に繁栄した都市の産物ではなく、人々を結びつけ、刺激し、より良い未来を築くための触媒となるものです。

Justine Simons OBE

ロンドン市副市長(文化・クリエイティブ産業担当)
World Cities Culture Forum創設者

前言

謹此荣幸向您推介《世界城市文化报告》第五版。作为本机构的旗舰出版物，本报告创建了全球城市文化领域最为全面的数据集。自2012年首版报告问世以来，我们的网络已从最初的12座先锋城市拓展至全球40余座城市，辐射人口逾2.6亿。

世界城市文化论坛联盟成员秉持共同信念：文化是城市之魂。我们将其喻为“金线”——串联社区纽带、激发新动能、塑造都市未来。作为全球最大的文化与城市领导力网络，我们倡导将文化基因植入城市肌理：从经济增长到旅游开发，从公共卫生到社会福祉，文化赋能力量正在重塑人文生态与城市空间。

这一共同愿景在2023圣保罗世界城市文化峰会上迎来里程碑时刻——29座城市共同签署了《圣保罗宣言》，郑重倡议将文化提升为独立的联合国可持续发展目标。

开放共享理念是我们工作中恪守的核心价值，即通过思想、数据和研究的公开交流，在全球城市伙伴之间构建更为紧密的协作网络，共同推动城市文明的繁荣发展。

数据是城市领导者的战略利器。本版报告首次推出创新性综合数据框架“CREATIVE”，该框架由我们与经合组织合作开发，旨在协助各城市科学评估文化供给、参与度与影响力水平，从而为今后的政策制定提供实证支撑。

我们的全球网络蓬勃发展，动能持续攀升。自2022年上一版报告发布以来，我们又迎来了九座新成员城市：阿德莱德、北京、班加罗尔、波士顿、芝加哥、科隆、雅加达、基辅和里约热内卢。每座新加入的城市都为网络引入了独特视角、创新思路和协同机遇。在彭博慈善基金会的鼎力支持下，我们的“领导力交流计划”持续深化全球协作。通过该计划，我们得以共享城市治理最佳理念，协力解决从濒危文化空间保育到包容性文化奥林匹克举办等共性紧迫议题。自2018年以来，已助力22座城市和185位文化领袖加速政策创新进程，现已进入第三轮实施阶段。

近年来，我们通过发布一系列重磅研究出版物，持续拓展对全球城市文化战略价值的认知边界：

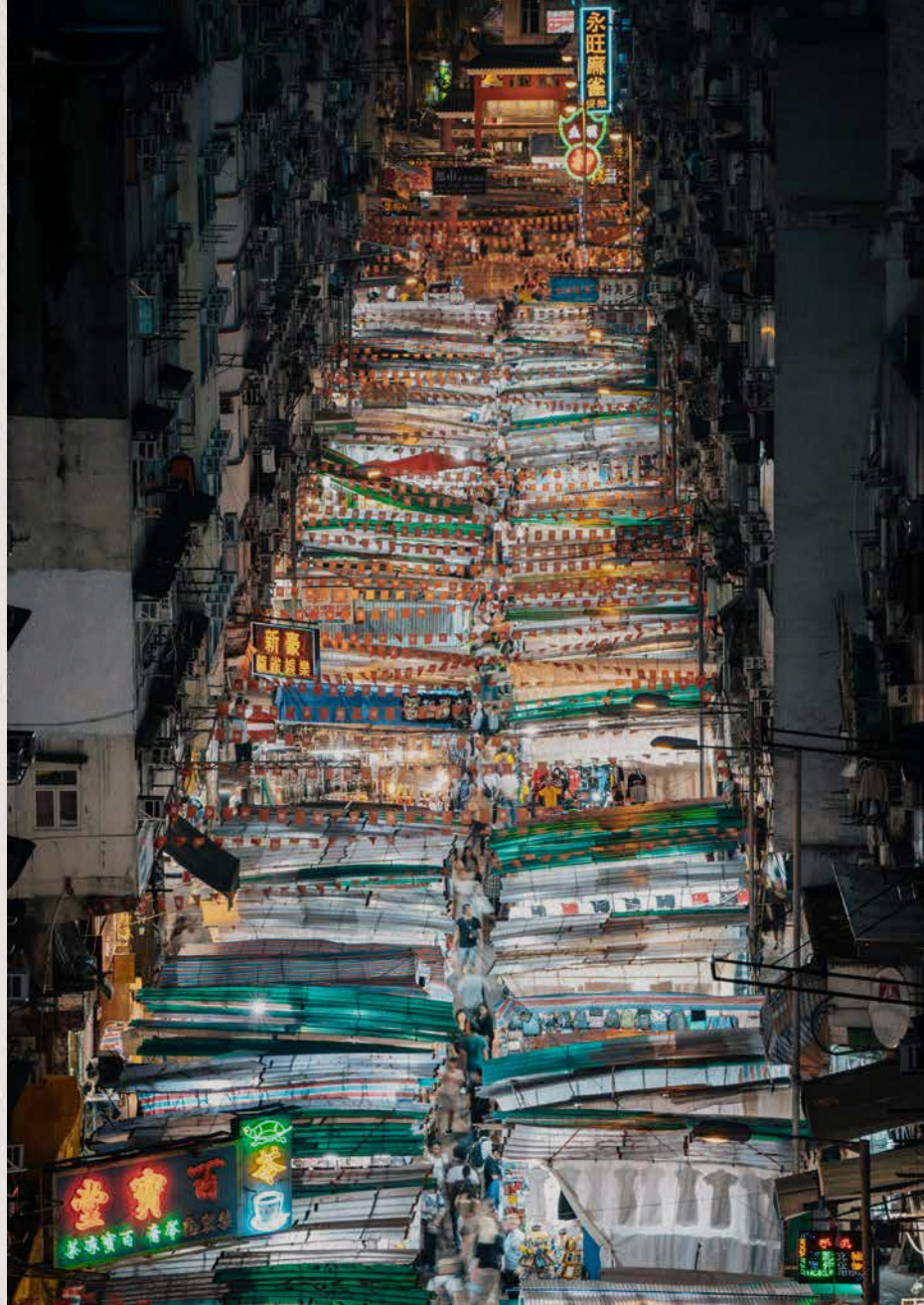
《创意复苏?后疫情时代文化政策在塑造城市未来中的作用》(2023年)：来自伦敦国王学院的研究系统梳理了全球范围内实施的270项新政策措施，探讨了文化要素在推动城市疫后复兴进程中的作用。

《非洲新思维：创意城市的未来图景》(2024年)：该报告系与英国文化教育协会及Andani.Africa的研究人员合作编撰，探寻了撒哈拉以南非洲地区十一座首都城市的文化领导力创新实践。

《无我即无未来：全球城市青年与文化现状报告》(2024年)：这份与全球青年代表共同完成的专题报告于2024年迪拜世界城市文化峰会期间发布，探讨了城市如何通过政策创新赋能青年文化发展。《创意土地信托：实践指南》(2025年)：继我们与Kenneth Rainin Foundation及Left Bank Co. 共同举办的旧金山首届创意土地信托峰会后发布。该指南为保障艺术家和创作者获取可负担的长期创作空间提供了实践指引。

《世界城市文化趋势报告》(2024、2025年)：该年度综览报告聚焦于塑造全球城市发展的核心文化政策演进。

我们谨向为本报告倾注心血的相关各方致以最诚挚的谢意。特别鸣谢彭博慈善基金会、英国文化教育协会、卡洛斯特·古本江基金会、Fundação Itaú 和伊比利亚美洲首都城市联盟的大力支持以及经济合作与发展组织(OECD)、



Night market in Hong Kong

© Photo by Jet Dela Cruz on Unsplash

SMU DataArts、VibeLab、Julie’s Bicycle 和 Left Bank Co 等合作伙伴的鼎力相助，他们的专业见解为本报告和我们的工作注入了澎湃动力。

我们尤其感谢网络内各成员城市所展现的开放胸襟与坚定承诺。本报告中的每一项数据、每一处洞见皆源自各城市一线工作团队的无私分享，涵盖了解决方案、发展挑战与前瞻理念。

在这个充满变数的时代，城市当以创造精神、勇毅担当与人文关怀开创未来。文化不仅是城市繁荣的硕果，更是凝聚共识、激发创想、构建美好未来的催化力量。

Justine Simons, 大英帝国官佐勋章(OBE)获得者
伦敦副市长(主管文化与创意产业)
世界城市文化论坛联盟创始人

This section sets the scene for the 5th Edition of the *World Cities Culture Report*, outlining our key findings and what has been happening in our cities since 2022. It also highlights how data can strengthen cultural policies and engagement with citizens. One of our priorities is to encourage all cities to use the scope and depth of the data they collect to make the case for culture. To support this, we showcase our cities' data, and illustrate the power of data to expand the evidence for cultural policy.

INTRODUCTION AND KEY FINDINGS

KEY FINDINGS

John Newbiggin, OBE

As the last *World Cities Culture Report* was published in 2022, the COVID-19 pandemic appeared to be nearing its end. It seemed possible, once again, to feel optimistic about the future as cities slowly came back to life. The research we commissioned showed how our cities had responded to the crisis with a wealth of imaginative ideas; engaging citizens, changing work practices and demonstrating the extent to which the cultural life of communities was more essential than ever as economic life ground to a halt.

However, three years later it seems that the pandemic only opened the door to new but equally demanding challenges. Misinformation and a mistrust of politics and expertise has intensified. The rules-based global order that has underpinned much of the world's trade and diplomacy is fragmenting. The global economy, though growing again, feels fragile and unpredictable, making investors and planners uncertain of how to prepare for the future. The rapid development of AI is creating unprecedented opportunities and challenges. If there is one aspect of the future that does seem clear it is that the consequences of climate change will become ever more apparent. All these elements have contributed to a sense of instability and insecurity that has, in turn, contributed to a growing crisis of stress and anxiety that seems to have equal impact on young and old in almost every region of the world.

As trust between nations breaks down, the role of cities as connectors and partners between people and cultures becomes more significant. And as individual anxiety and isolation increases, the value of vibrant and inclusive communities grows. The great cities of the world now find themselves, unmistakably, in a leadership role – culture is the key. It is culture that gives cities their unique distinctiveness and is the foundation of mutual respect between cities and nations. It is culture that makes the city liveable and it is culture that contributes to prosperity, not only as a generator of jobs and growth but as a source of the pride and confidence that are themselves the real foundation of economic growth. Cities shape culture and culture shapes cities.

All this brings the role of World Cities Culture Forum into sharp focus. The COVID-19 pandemic showed that the rapid exchange of information and ideas between our cities sparked effective responses to an evolving crisis and enabled city administrations to give each other confidence and support. In preparing this 5th Edition of the *World Cities Culture Report* we have once again, asked cities to share some of their most successful initiatives. We have integrated these with short essays from experts on topics that cities have told us give them present concern – climate, the night-time economy, the need for affordable workspace for artists and creatives, the accelerating impact of tourism on city residents, the impact of AI, and much more.

We have gone big on data in this Report, because big data is becoming an essential tool for all urban management and planning. Data provides solid evidence of trends that might otherwise be invisible. Our data shows that cultural engagement and activity is recovering from the crisis of the pandemic, but in some key areas is not yet back to its pre-pandemic levels. In 2022 we reported an 8% decline in the number of theatres; this year our data shows an increase, but it is just under 1%. Live music venues have fared a little better; the 3.5% drop we recorded in 2022 has been turned round by 3.2% growth this year. The number of cinemas has grown overall, but by a small margin.

**THE GREAT
CITIES OF
THE WORLD
NOW FIND
THEMSELVES,
UNMISTAKABLY,
IN A LEADERSHIP
ROLE – CULTURE
IS THE KEY**

The more encouraging news is that levels of participation have unmistakably bounced back. Figures in our 2022 Report showed that visits to museums, and live performance events, including music, had dropped by half – or more – compared to pre-pandemic levels. This year our cities are able to report that 40% of their residents have visited a museum, with 35% attending live music events and 46% going to other kinds of live performance. Our cities hosted an astonishing 1.3 billion tourists, emphasising the close links between culture and tourism but an indicator, too, that the growth of tourism can pose a threat to the quality of life of a city's residents and can overwhelm its infrastructure. To explore this, we have included a section on initiatives that promote sustainable tourism.

As well as cultural activity, our data provides evidence of recovering growth in creative and cultural businesses, but while the number of businesses and workers may be growing, the size of creative businesses is not. The creative industry has always been dominated by micro-businesses and freelancers, so it is not surprise that our data shows that the average number of employees in creative companies is just seven, highlighting the continuing and growing need for affordable and flexible workspaces in urban areas. 94% of our cities say they have active policies for this purpose, and elsewhere in this Report you can read about some of the imaginative ideas now taking shape around the world.

This Report reflects the shared challenges our cities face and the energy and diversity of responses they are generating to meet them. We have included perspectives on the growing night-time economy (97% of our cities have active policies), on initiatives related to young people and education (97% have policies) and on culture-related climate action (88% of our cities have policies in place or in development).

Good data not only illuminates what's happening in the present, it is essential for planning and assessing future cultural policies, just as it for any other aspect of good city administration. That's why we have partnered with the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), drawing on their long-established expertise to ask cities for more detailed information about their cultural provision, its impact, and how that impact is measured and analysed to inform policy going forwards. As with our guiding mission, this is about collaboration not competition. We want to encourage cultural planners everywhere to build robust databases and use the best analytical tools.



Park Güell, Antoni Gaudí's iconic UNESCO World Heritage site in Barcelona, blends vibrant mosaics, organic architecture, and sweeping city views
© Photo on Unsplash

That makes sense at a time when culture budgets in many parts of the world are under pressure, sometimes because of challenges in the wider economy, but sometimes because city administrations find themselves at odds with national governments and national priorities. Collecting reliable data is not easy. As major cities continue to expand and become city regions, even defining what a city is can become a difficult question to answer, so quantifying cultural provision and activity may be challenging. To measure the quality and true impact of culture can be even more demanding, but new data tools and analytics offer all cities a long-term opportunity not only to spend their budgets wisely, but also to build a better understanding of the relationship with the citizens that a cultural strategy is intended to serve.

We hope that cities everywhere find this Report a valuable resource to share good ideas, expand their evidence base, and continue to make the case for culture as a vital component of urban policy.

CONTEXT: THE GLOBAL DATA

7 OUT OF 10 PEOPLE WILL LIVE IN URBAN AREAS BY 2050¹
80% OF GLOBAL GDP IS GENERATED BY CITIES²
70% OF GLOBAL CO2 EMISSIONS ARE PRODUCED BY CITIES³

Economic Impact Data

3.1% OF GLOBAL GDP COMES FROM CULTURE AND CREATIVITY⁴
6.2% OF ALL EMPLOYMENT COMES FROM CULTURE AND CREATIVITY⁵
20% OF YOUNG PEOPLE WORK IN CULTURE AND THE CREATIVE INDUSTRIES⁶
1 CREATIVE JOB CREATES 1.7 NON-CREATIVE JOBS⁷
40% OF GLOBAL TOURISM IS CULTURAL TOURISM⁸
99.9% OF CULTURAL AND CREATIVE BUSINESSES ARE SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES OR MICRO-ENTERPRISES⁹

Social Impact Evidence

CULTURE BOOSTS SOCIAL INCLUSION, CIVIC ENGAGEMENT, AND HEALTH¹⁰
48.1% OF WORK IN CULTURE AND ENTERTAINMENT IS DONE BY WOMEN – BUT THEY REMAIN UNDER-REPRESENTED IN LEADERSHIP¹¹
MUSIC IS ONE OF THE FASTEST WAYS TO SHIFT YOUR MOOD¹²
DANCE THERAPY IMPROVES HEALTH FOR PEOPLE WITH DEMENTIA¹³



Crowds gather to view Leonardo da Vinci's Mona Lisa at the Louvre Museum, Paris © Photo by Alicia Steels on Unsplash

WORLD CITIES
CULTURE FORUM
DATA

Numbers and average percentages
for our cities

260M

World Cities Culture Forum cities
represents 260M people

40%

Visited a museum or historical site

46,574

Bars

35%

Attended live music

32

1.3B

Tourists visited our cities

638,133

Restaurants

46%

Attended a live performance (excluding music)

89

UNESCO World Heritage Sites

120,329

Heritage and historical sites

6,184

Music festivals

33

WORLD CITIES
CULTURE FORUM
DATA

Number of culture venues and
events in our cities

Museums

Film festival events

Design week events

Public libraries

Night clubs, discos and dance halls

Live music venues

Cultural centres

Cinemas

Multi-arts venues

Theatres

Higher education providers

Fashion week events

Music festival events

34

35



Visitors exploring the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam
© Photo by Charles van Rooy on Unsplash

WORLD CITIES CULTURE FORUM DATA

Average percentages for our cities
comparing 2022 and 2025 data

2022

DOWN 8%
AVERAGE FALL
IN NUMBER
OF THEATRES

DOWN 3.5%
AVERAGE FALL
IN NUMBER
OF LIVE MUSIC
VENUES

DOWN 48%
AVERAGE FALL
IN VISITS
TO MUSEUMS

2025

UP 1%
AVERAGE
INCREASE IN
NUMBER
OF THEATRES

UP 3.2%
AVERAGE
INCREASE IN
NUMBER OF
LIVE MUSIC
VENUES

40%
AVERAGE
PERCENTAGE
OF CITIZENS
VISITING
A MUSEUM OR
HISTORICAL
SITE

WORLD CITIES CULTURE FORUM POLICY DATA

Percentage of our cities with
dedicated policies

94%

**CREATIVE
WORKSPACES**
94% OF CITIES
ARE ACTIVELY
WORKING TO
SUPPORT AND
SECURE SPACES
FOR CREATIVES
AND 41% HAVE
POLICIES
SUPPORTING
CULTURAL AND
CREATIVE
DISTRICTS

88%

**CLIMATE AND
CULTURE**
88% OF CITIES'
CULTURE
DEPARTMENTS
COLLABORATE
WITH THE
ENVIRONMENT
OR CLIMATE
DEPARTMENT
AND 21% HAVE
A DESIGNATED
CLIMATE ROLE
IN THE CULTURE
DEPARTMENT

97%

**NIGHT-TIME
ECONOMY**
97% OF CITIES
ARE WORKING
TO SUPPORT
THE NIGHT-TIME
ECONOMY
AND 59% HAVE
A NIGHT-TIME
ECONOMY
STRATEGY

66%

**YOUTH AND
EDUCATION**
66% OF CITIES
ENGAGE
YOUNG PEOPLE
IN SHAPING
CULTURAL
POLICY AND
97% HAVE
INITIATIVES
TO SUPPORT
CREATIVE
EDUCATION
AND YOUTH
PARTICIPATION

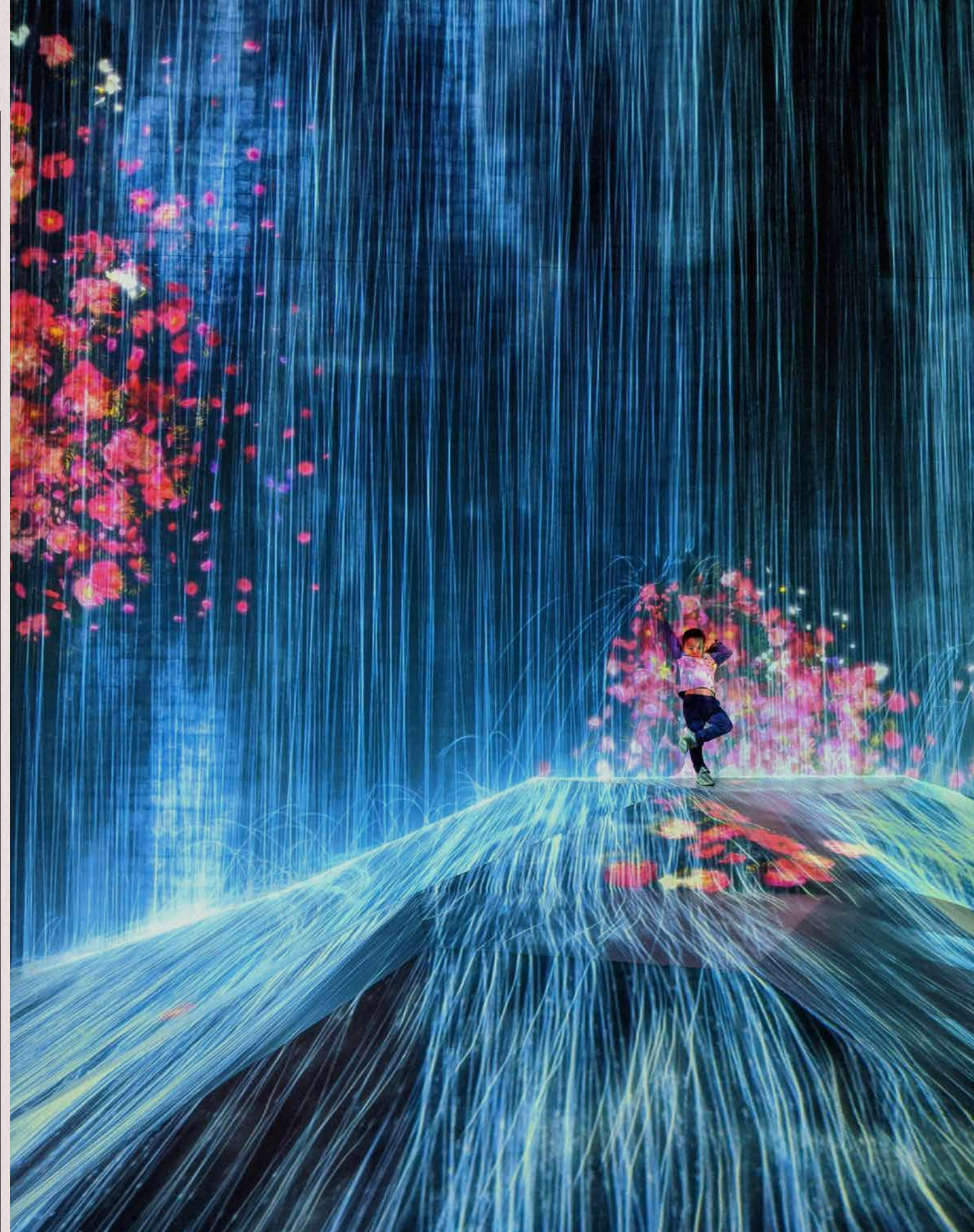
THE POWER OF DATA

A GOOD DATA STRATEGY SHOULD BE ABOUT MEASURING WHAT'S OF VALUE – NOT JUST VALUING WHAT IS EASILY MEASURED

World Cities Culture Forum is encouraging all of its cities to broaden and deepen the range of data they collect. This is about much more than finding out how many museums or bars a city has, or how many people go to the theatre, although such statistics are essential for tracking trends and planning future provision. But good data goes further than that; it helps build a better picture of what people want, what information they look for and how they use it. It enables cities to set well-informed and realistic goals, interact more effectively with citizens, use limited budgets to maximum effect and learn from the experience of others. Every city has its own priorities, resources and ways of measuring, which can make it difficult to capture the global picture accurately. Cities with systematic data strategies and imaginative deployment of data tools are finding that the value of good data is about much more than the numbers on a spreadsheet. On the following pages we outline just a few of the benefits.

IT CAN GIVE CITIZENS A ROLE IN POLICYMAKING

A city that can present clear information about its cultural provision and plans can invite citizens to contribute ideas as well as comment on what's available. Many cities are mapping their cultural assets in an effort to ensure all its people, from the city centre to those in the outer suburbs, have equal access to cultural and leisure opportunities. For example, **Amsterdam** hosts an interactive online map that pinpoints all the arts and culture-focused buildings and facilities in the city, with a key that divides them into a dozen categories, including maker spaces and studios. Clicking on any one of the facilities links to its website, providing more detailed information about what it is and the programmes it runs. Users can also comment on what's available and suggest changes or additions, giving city planners valuable insights into what residents value and what they want. The city of **Buenos Aires** has created *Data Cultura*, dedicated to the production, analysis and dissemination of information related to the cultural dynamics of the city. Amongst other reports it published *Cultural Employment in the City of Buenos Aires: Data 2022* with estimation of employment and socio-demographics in the cultural sector and *Buenos Aires: Cultural Consumption and Perceptions*, tracking the cultural habits and expectations of residents to help plan future provision.



Borderless TeamLab, Tokyo
© Photo by Note Thanun on Unsplash

IT CAN IDENTIFY TRENDS AND FLAG UP PROBLEMS

Gathering data for this Report has revealed that many cities have more bars and nightclubs than a few years ago, while others have fewer museums or theatres. Regular data collection highlights these trends, making the case for targeted support and evidence informed policy. For example, good data collection in **London** gave early warning that the number of live music venues, especially performance spaces in small and independent clubs and bars, was dropping fast. Some of this was a consequence of planning pressures and local taxes which allowed the city's Culture-at-Risk team to intervene and stop or reverse many of the closures. Similarly, in **Sydney**, research including analysis of census, employment floorspace and longitudinal creative employment research data, secured seed funding for a new Creative Land Trust to acquire affordable space for creatives. In **Barcelona**, the *Barcelona Cultural Data Observatory* was created for the purpose of disseminating data on the city's cultural life. Their digital platform offers information in an accessible and easy to understand way. It publishes reports including the annual update on Culture and Gender which shows data on gender participation, the creative workforce as well as grants and awards, and tracks progress across the years. In **Chicago**, a 2021 study by SMU DataArts compared Chicago's arts funding with four other major US cities and found the city underperformed on local government support (0.4% of expense coverage compared to an average of 3% across the other cities). The evidence from this study helped Chicago successfully make the case for a USD 26 million budget increase to cultural grantmaking.



Beijing Lantern Festival 2024
© Photo by Gryffin Bit on Unsplash

IT HELPS THE ARTS SECTOR

Many community-based arts and creative organisations collect little or no data about what they do and what impact they have. But data tools are becoming cheaper and easier to use all the time and data collected at community level helps ensure that policy at city-level really does reflect what communities do, and what they need. The **Los Angeles County** runs an annual *Arts Datathon* attended by more than a hundred arts workers and community activists each year who come to learn about the tools that are available, how to use them and how the data they collect contributes to the city and county-wide strategy. It also helps the city and county culture teams get a better picture of the kind of data these community-level workers feel is important and relevant to what they do.

IT SUPPORTS VALUES-DRIVEN BUDGETING, NOT COST-DRIVEN BUDGETING

Good data collection does more than record what facilities are available or how many people visit them. It can identify where those visitors come from, what they value and why. It can find out where a particular programme or event has had real positive impact on a community, so that planners can focus resources on where the need and impact is greatest. That information is not just important for the culture department, it may have value for every department in City Hall, from community services to public transport, and so helps ensure that when budgets are under pressure, the culture team has a good story to tell and the importance of access to culture is more evident. For example, in **Warsaw** this includes measuring dedicated funding for non-governmental organisations to meet citizen's needs, including access to culture. Having a clear picture of how people feel they benefit from their engagement with culture helps build city strategies that are about values, not just numbers. One city data analyst, talking about how culture was regarded by their city finance director, told us "We're training our decision makers to ask the right questions."



Photo courtesy of the Ministry of Culture of the City of Buenos Aires

IT ENABLES RAPID RESPONSE TO EMERGENCIES

Extreme weather events and other sudden climate-related calamities are becoming more frequent. When cities have to respond to these events, they rarely think about the arts and culture, but cultural provision may have a crucial role in helping people come to terms with the catastrophe. Having a clear and up to date idea of all the resources and people that are available, and what buildings or artefacts are most at risk, means the culture teams don't have to be left behind when the priority of city administrations may be elsewhere. The Covid-19 pandemic highlighted the importance of mapping to be able to identify and help the creative ecosystem amid a global crisis, as highlighted in World Cities Culture Forum's 2022 research into pandemic recovery. For example, while the catastrophic wild fires were still raging in **Los Angeles** earlier this year, the county culture team was able to identify where help was needed, where artefacts needed to be rescued and how provision could be restored as rapidly as possible to help people feel their lives were returning to normality.

From identifying trends to responding to emergencies, a strong data strategy turns insight into action. It gives cities and citizens the tools and evidence to embed culture across the city, plan effectively, respond quickly, and direct resources where they are needed most.

This section has insights that cities can adapt to strengthen their strategies. It explores policy trends shaping world cities today and shares practical ideas. It proposes a blueprint for cultural policies and looks at how cities are tackling major challenges - such as protecting creative workspaces, responding to climate change, growing the night-time economy and creating policies for and with the next generation. It also outlines emerging challenges - from supporting citizens' health and wellbeing, to more inclusive representation in the public realm, the impact of AI and the need for sustainable tourism.

POLICY

INSIGHTS

A BLUEPRINT FOR CULTURAL POLICY

This matrix outlines the key challenges and policies that cities are addressing in 2025 and beyond. Based on research from World Cities Culture Forum.¹⁴

CHALLENGES

- Unequal access to opportunities
- Limited youth engagement
- Precarious working conditions
- Skills and digital gap
- AI and future jobs

POLICIES

- Widen participation
- Amplify youth voice
- Integrate culture and education
- Inclusive growth of talent
- Support freelancers
- Improve digital access
- Scale culture in health
- Develop AI policies
- Co-design policy with citizens

GOALS

More citizens experience, create and work in culture across the city.

PEOPLE

Equity, skills, opportunity

PLACE

Space, planning, infrastructure

- Cultural infrastructure at risk
- Lack of urban planning for culture
- Displacement and affordability
- Limited policy for night-time economy
- Public realm does not reflect citizens

- Map cultural assets
- Improve planning to support culture
- Address affordability
- Develop land ownership and community stewardship
- Create inclusive night-time policies
- Diversify representation in the public realm
- Ensure quality design in urban planning

Creative and cultural spaces are protected, visible, and rooted in communities.

PLANET

Climate, tourism, sustainability

- Limited role of culture in climate strategies
- Sustainability of culture and creative industries
- Limited scale of successful pilots
- Lack of Indigenous and grassroots recognition
- Negative impacts from tourism

- Scale culture-led climate plans
- Establish dedicated culture climate roles
- Invest in data and evidence on impact
- Support grassroots and Indigenous initiatives
- Support circular economy and networks
- Create policies for sustainable tourism
- Incentivise low-impact tourism experiences

Culture drives a sustainable future for the city.

**NEW
PERSPECTIVES
ON CURRENT
CHALLENGES**

CREATIVE WORKSPACE CLIMATE AND CULTURE NIGHT-TIME ECONOMY YOUTH AND EDUCATION

CREATIVE WORKSPACE

RECLAIMING SPACE FOR CULTURE: A GLOBAL MOVEMENT GAINS GROUND

Supported by Kenneth Rainin Foundation



Left
Bank
Co.

Artists, creative makers and cultural organisations are being squeezed out of cities by rising rents, short-term leases, and the pressure that rapid urbanisation imposes on property markets. Yet culture is central to civic life and one of the reasons people are attracted to live and work in cities. Solutions are urgently needed and, encouragingly, 94% of cities in the World Cities Culture Forum's global survey are actively working to secure space for creatives.

Policy Insights: Creative Workspace

But with 66% still reporting the loss of creative workspace as a current or looming crisis, it's clear that new long-term models are required. From cooperatives to bespoke mission-driven ownership structures, cities are testing new approaches with Creative Land Trusts emerging as one of the most practical and effective models. In some cities, initiatives include living as well as working environments for creative and cultural workers, but in this section we focus exclusively on creative workspaces.

The *Creative Land Trust Summit*, held in San Francisco in May 2025 brought together practitioners, policymakers, funders, and advocates from seven countries. Hosted by the Kenneth Rainin Foundation and convened by Left Bank Co with support from the World Cities Culture Forum, there were representatives from over 15 cities including **London, Sydney, Calgary, Helsinki, and Austin**. The goal was not to establish one single model but rather understand how to design and adapt models to suit different contexts. The event allowed cities to compare strategies and begin to build a global community of shared practice. Following the Summit, World Cities Culture Forum launched *Creative Land Trusts: A Practical Guide*.¹⁵

The Summit revealed a diversity of approaches. In North America, new models of community-owned cultural spaces are being pioneered by CAST in **San Francisco**, the Artist Space Trust in San Francisco's wider Bay Area, the Cultural Land Trust in **British Columbia** and Rally Austin in **Texas**. In the United Kingdom, **London's** Creative Land Trust is securing long-term studio and workspace, while the Music Venues Trust is trialling a community-led investment model. In Australia, the **City of Sydney's** 10-year cultural strategy commits to investigating the feasibility of a local version of the Creative Land Trust.

Despite the wide variety of models discussed at the Summit, some common themes emerged:

- Permanent cultural space requires long-term investment and strong partnerships across sectors.
- Stewardship models must be grounded in local needs and inclusive governance.
- It's not just about buildings, it's about confidence in the organisations that secure deals, and confidence in the stability of the cultural partners they serve.

City governments have a vital role in creating the conditions in which these new ownership models can thrive. They can make public land available at discounted prices, embed cultural infrastructure into zoning and planning frameworks, or partner with philanthropists and ethical finance providers to make capital more readily available. But they don't need to own or directly manage the results. In fact, it is

52



(From left to right) Michelle Tabet, Left Bank Co, Justine Simons OBE, Founder of World Cities Culture Forum, Julie Phelps, Artistic Director of CounterPulse, and Shelley Trott, Executive Director of Kenneth Rainin Foundation at the *Creative Land*

important that ownership is entrusted to independent bodies that are not tied to the uncertainties of the political and electoral cycle of city politics.

There are many examples of good practice. In **Dublin**, planners have introduced a 5% cultural space requirement for major developments. In **Boston**, city leaders are seeking to redirect land use toward more inclusive civic and cultural outcomes. In **Melbourne**, cross-departmental coalitions between planning, legal, and economic development teams are demonstrating the value of joined-up thinking. City governments can also lead in developing a clear picture of what exists,

Policy Insights: Creative Workspace

Trust Summit 2025, San Francisco hosted by the Kenneth Rainin Foundation in collaboration with Left Bank Co and World Cities Culture Forum © Photo by Cesar Rubio

what's needed and what's at risk by investing in surveys and audits of cultural assets. Solid data helps build the case for action and can shape better policy, stronger partnerships and more targeted investment.

Written by Michelle Tabet, Founder and Director, Left Bank Co

53



Dance performance by FACT/SF at the inaugural *Creative Land Trust Summit* in San Francisco, May 2025 © Photo by Cesar Rubio, courtesy of the Kenneth Rainin Foundation



Session at the inaugural *Creative Land Trust Summit* in San Francisco, May 2025 © Photo by Cesar Rubio, courtesy of the Kenneth Rainin Foundation

KEY TRENDS AND INSIGHTS

- 1. Creative land stewardship is gaining global traction - but there's a long way to go**
Interest in creative land trusts and stewardship models is growing worldwide. 30% of our cities surveyed, are actively delivering or developing dedicated land trusts or real estate agencies to acquire property for creative use. The *Creative Land Trust Summit* highlighted the need to develop basic legal and financial structures that are more universally applicable, but always with enough flexibility to adapt to local circumstances.
- 2. Philanthropy is evolving - from project-based giving to systemic change**
Funders are beginning to shift their attention from one-off capital projects to long-term investment, leadership development, and permanent affordability mechanisms. There is a need for longer-term funding models and for better co-ordination between funders through initiatives such as a pooled “fund of funders” which could reduce risk and build institutional strength.
- 3. Cities are recognising their enabling role - but should be more active in their approach**
Planners and policymakers are beginning to incorporate the need for secure cultural spaces into their planning strategies, offering land at reduced cost, and coordinating cross-departmental responses. 50% of our cities collect formal data to identify creative space supply and need but further evidence is needed. City governments can be more than just regulators - they can act as conveners, brokers and champions.
- 4. New governance models are emerging - adapted to the local context**
As land stewardship models evolve, organisations are addressing questions of governance - how to manage risk, distribute power, and remain accountable to communities by exploring cooperative structures, or by sharing governance with Indigenous and local stakeholders.
- 5. Culture is being reimagined as part of the basic urban infrastructure**
The conversation is moving from “finding space for the arts” to seeing culture as a core element the city's infrastructure that delivers wider public value through circular economy practices, housing co-location, or civic outcomes. This framing is unlocking partnerships and funding.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Map your creative space ecosystem

Build a clear evidence base by surveying, mapping, and auditing creative spaces. Understanding what exists, what's missing, and what's vulnerable is essential to shaping an informed policy.

Address affordability pressures

Understanding the costs and constraints facing creative spaces - rent, tenure, and compliance- can help inform a city's approach to wider planning and regeneration issues of accessibility and affordability.

Collaborate with community leaders

Partner with trusted creative practitioners and space operators. Their knowledge, networks, and leadership are essential for designing effective, locally grounded stewardship models.

Additional Policy Recommendations are available in *Creative Land Trusts: A Practical Guide* (2025) published by World Cities Culture Forum.



Front cover of *Creative Land Trusts: A Practical Guide*, published by World Cities Culture Forum, June 2025. Illustration by Jeffrey Phillips.



World Cities Culture Forum Leadership Exchange: Representatives from London and New York share strategies to protect culture at risk during a visit to Somerset House Studios, London

“IT'S ESSENTIAL TO BUILD A GLOBAL COALITION AND COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE DEDICATED TO SUSTAINING STRONG, DIVERSE AND VIBRANT ARTS AND CULTURE ECOSYSTEMS”

Shelley Trott, Executive Director of the Kenneth Rainin Foundation



CounterPulse, San Francisco. The building provides space and resources for emerging artists and cultural innovators, serving as an incubator for the creation of socially relevant, community-based art and culture.
© Photo by Cesar Rubio, courtesy of the Kenneth Rainin Foundation



© Getty Images

CITY PROJECTS

Amsterdam’s Data-Led Cultural Mapping
Amsterdam’s rapid population growth strained its cultural infrastructure, with unevenly distributed facilities and declining availability of affordable creative workspaces. In response, the City of Amsterdam mapped all cultural spaces to identify gaps and inform strategic investment. This data-driven approach leads to targeted development across districts - such as a proposed music street, new exhibition spaces, and theatres - enhancing cultural infrastructure and increasing cultural participation citywide.

Reviving City Centres in Cologne
Cologne’s city centre is undergoing major change due to shifting retail patterns and their impact on central urban spaces. Launched in 2024, an innovative research project will transform vacant retail units into vibrant meanwhile spaces through cultural participation. A collaboration between Cultural Space Management and TH Köln University, the project explores how culture can drive city centre revival by developing mixed-use spaces.

Dublin’s Space to Create
Dublin City Council’s *Space to Create* programme responds to a critical shortage of artist workspaces by refurbishing vacant buildings into long-term, affordable studios. With EUR 9.5 million in funding from the City Council, the National Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media, and philanthropy, the initiative will deliver 40 workspaces by 2027. The first site at Artane Place highlights a model of cultural infrastructure driven by local engagement, sustainability, and inclusive cultural policy.

London’s Creative Enterprise Zones
Launched in 2017 by the Mayor of London, *Creative Enterprise Zones (CEZs)* safeguard affordable creative workspaces, foster cultural infrastructure, and expand access to creative careers. With 12 zones across 13 boroughs, the programme has supported over 1,000 training placements and helped grow creative businesses despite economic pressures. By embedding equity, sustainability, and economic strategy into cultural policy, *Creative Enterprise Zones* are shaping a more inclusive and resilient future for London’s creative economy.

Johannesburg Creative Hubs¹⁶
Johannesburg’s inner city is experiencing an increase in creative hub development, with more than 20 creative hubs being mapped in the past year. Mostly independently run, these spaces share a commitment to nurturing talent and delivering community impact. Hubs like Victoria Yards and Asisebenze Art Atelier offer affordable studios, gallery spaces and business support, acting as incubators of small businesses and drivers of urban renewal in the inner city.

NYC Create in Place
NYC Create in Place is a cross-agency initiative launched in 2024 to address the affordability crisis threatening the city’s cultural and creative sectors. Led by the NYC Department of Cultural Affairs, the programme supports organisations at risk of losing space or seeking to expand. Through casework, a resource hub, and interagency collaboration, the initiative has reached over 50 organisations, safeguarding and strengthening New York’s creative infrastructure. The initiative grew out of a World Cities Culture Forum *Leadership Exchange* that sent delegates from New York to London to learn about London’s Culture and Creative Spaces at Risk office.

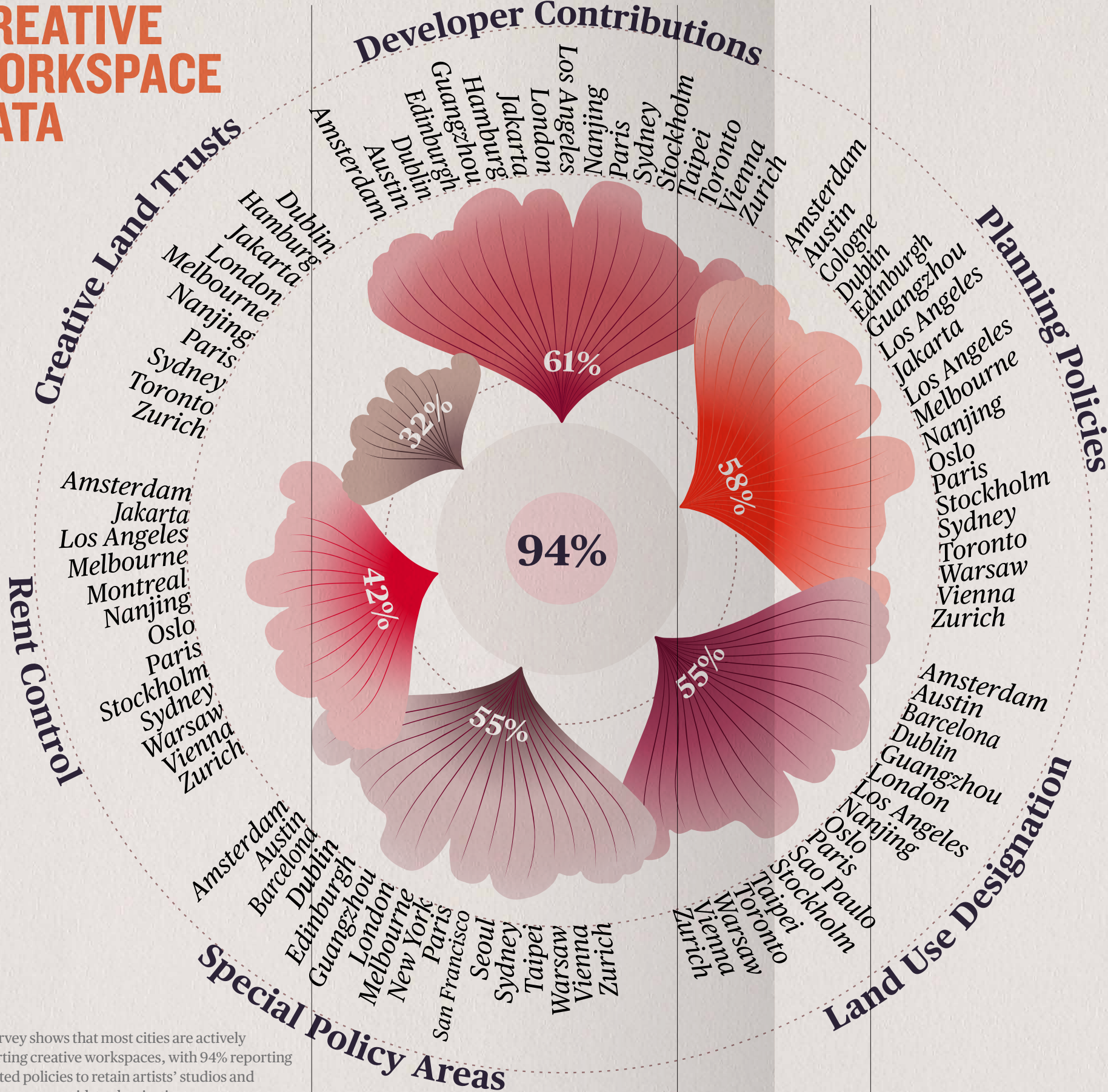
Stockholm Culture Pilots
Since 2016, Stockholm’s *Culture Pilots* have supported cultural actors and property owners in transforming underused spaces into vibrant cultural venues. Acting as matchmakers and advisors, the Pilots guide projects from idea to opening, offering coaching, funding advice, and help navigating city processes. From industrial sites turned into stages to former shops reimaged as music studios, the initiative has activated spaces citywide, proving that cultural infrastructure needs both vision and practical support to thrive.

Taipei’s Artists and Residents at Treasure Hill
Treasure Hill, once a self-built military settlement in Taipei, has been transformed into a model of living preservation through the *Artists and Residents Co-Habitation* policy. Since 2010, the site has blended historic housing, low-rent residences, and an artist village to foster community care and creative exchange. New residents apply through community-based proposals, contributing to education, arts, and stewardship. The model preserves cultural identity while building a sustainable, intergenerational community rooted in collaboration.

Tokyo’s START Box
Launched in 2023 by the Tokyo Metropolitan Government, *START Box* provides young artists with affordable studio spaces in repurposed public housing. Located in neighbourhoods like Sasazuka, Hatagaya, and Odaiba, the initiative offers more than just space, it creates opportunities for artists to engage with residents through open studios and workshops, and to showcase their work at city-led cultural events. With 45 artists supported so far, *START Box* is fostering new networks and launching international careers.

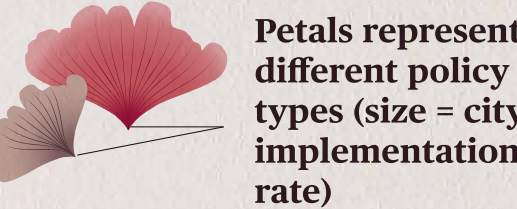
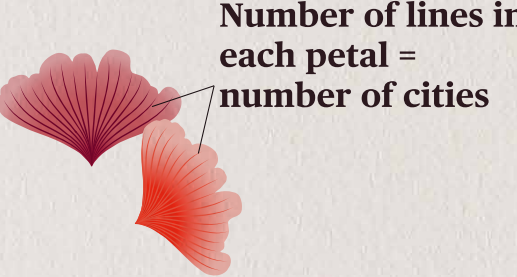
Protecting Creative Space in Toronto
In 2023, the collapse of non-profit developer Artscape threatened 14 affordable cultural properties and nearly 400 tenancies. The City of Toronto responded with swift legal, operational, and financial action - securing a court ruling to protect 91% of tenancies from sale and providing emergency property management. Working with community partners, the City mobilised to save the remaining 9% of tenancies, enabling tenant-led ownership of key sites and backing Canada’s first cultural land trust. The intervention preserved critical infrastructure and created a new model for cultural resilience.

CREATIVE
WORKSPACE
DATA



Our survey shows that most cities are actively supporting creative workspaces, with 94% reporting dedicated policies to retain artists' studios and creative spaces amidst urbanisation pressures. Data visualisation by Niharika Srivastava.

Legend



Percentage of cities with creative workspace policies

- 61% of cities with contributions from real estate developers
- 58% of cities with dedicated planning policies
- 55% of cities with land use designation policies
- 55% of cities with special policy areas to support cultural activities
- 42% of cities with rent control measures
- 32% of cities with creative land trusts or similar

CLIMATE AND CULTURE

FROM CLIMATE ANXIETY TO CLIMATE ACTION: CITIES TAKE THE LEAD

Supported by Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation



Global climate action is entering a new phase that recognises the essential role of people, values and imagination. Culture has moved from the margins of the climate debate to be a powerful driver of community action, policy change and regenerative solutions. Cities are hubs of creativity and innovation, and culture-based solutions to climate change are already in abundance.

From air pollution to climate migration, cities face urgent challenges and are developing practical

solutions. Cities are where climate policy becomes reality, translated into infrastructure, services and citizen engagement. Cities have kept the Paris Climate Agreement alive, which aims to hold global temperature rise to 1.5 degrees, in spite of national political u-turns. When national governments retreat, cities often step forward. Cities are creating strong global and local networks, sharing expertise, policies and solutions.

But cities face significant barriers, lacking funding for climate mitigation, adaptation and pathways that ensure justice and fairness – the just-transition. Cities have also experienced public resistance or slow-moving institutions. This is where culture has power, by building social support for change, influencing lifestyle choices, and connecting citizens with what matters most to them. Culture is the foundation of the city and society, so culture should be the foundation for urban climate action.

Efforts to integrate culture into global discussions on climate solutions are gaining traction. At the time of publication (2025), the COP30 Climate summit in Brazil is approaching amid intense pressure on our planet and increasingly fragile multilateral commitments. In a context where climate summits have become places of intense scrutiny and public interest, the Brazilian Presidency has established the *Global Ethical Stocktake*¹⁷ and the *Global Mutirão (shared responsibility)*¹⁸ to highlight citizen participation and ethics at the heart of the process. COP President, Ambassador André Corrêa do Lago, has called on cultural actors to help in a ‘planetary renaissance’ and appointed the first Special Envoy for Culture and Creative Industries, Magut Etline.

The COP30 Presidency recognises that culture – arts, heritage and creative industries – are economic and social engines, protectors of heritage and Indigenous knowledge, and powerful community-building forces. In a world facing conflict, rapid technological change, and growing social divides, cultural voices are being invited to help re-centre people, values and imaginative visions for a better future. To paraphrase the human rights and climate justice activist, Kumi Naidoo, it might not be enough, but without culture we will fail.

A powerful global creative climate movement is emerging through advocacy, practical tools, research and data, content and climate governance. As recently as 2021, very few national cultural policies referenced climate change.¹⁹ Since then, there has been rapid progress: the COP Group of Friends of Culture-based Climate Action includes 50 national representatives²⁰ and UNESCO, G20, and national governments are referencing culture in strategies for climate resilience, circular design, and mitigation. The ideation of culture and creative industries is also beginning to take shape within national climate action plans



Young people at a climate protest in New York © Photo by Katie Rodriguez on Unsplash

(Nationally Determined Contributions) submitted under the terms of the 2015 Paris Agreement.

This progress is the result of a long advocacy campaign, led by the cultural sector which has demonstrated that tested, real-world solutions already exist, with minimal risk and major opportunities for bold policymakers. While the recognition of culture-based solutions is increasing, policy development is still emerging and culture’s rich potential might take some years to translate into comprehensive climate policy support. In the meantime, cities need to keep ahead and take on through culture, new ideas and mediation between citizens, national governments and international agreements.

World Cities Culture Forum was an early champion of culture-based climate solutions. In 2018 World Cities Culture Forum partnered with Julie’s Bicycle and C40 Cities²¹ to showcase innovative culture-based solutions driving change including:

- **Melbourne’s** six-year project *Refuge* that uses art, community and collaboration to explore how to prepare for and respond to climate disasters
- **London, Amsterdam and Sydney’s** tools and capacity-building including funding and

grants for energy efficiency and sustainable venue and event guides;

- **Cape Town’s** commitment to innovation and sustainable city design, recognising economic resilience was dependent on creative innovation and cultural adaptation.

Seven years on and this Report shows how much further these cities have come. From **Tokyo** to **Dublin**, 82% of cities surveyed have increased cultural engagement with climate and the environment since 2020 and in 88% of cities, the culture teams now collaborate with environment teams. However, limited policy alignment means many opportunities are still being missed. Culture has a unique ability to reframe climate narratives, by helping communities process loss, build connection and create positive alternatives. Despite strong commitment from culture departments, much of this work remains siloed and under-resourced.

Now is the moment to lead with ambition, bridging gaps, supporting and enabling green creative economies, and inspiring regenerative futures in cities around the world.

Written by Alison Tickell, Director, Julie’s Bicycle

KEY TRENDS AND INSIGHTS

1. Advancing decarbonisation in culture

Cities are making meaningful progress in reducing emissions across cultural buildings, events, and creative industries. From **Warsaw** to **Guangzhou**, 70% of cities are addressing energy efficiency in cultural infrastructure through initiatives such as retrofitting venues and switching to renewables, while 76% of cities including **Amsterdam** and **Hamburg** are exploring low emission travel options associated with cultural activities. In addition, 73% of cities support creative industries in reducing their carbon footprints, as seen in **Cologne's** *Action Network for Sustainability in Culture and Media*. Building culture programmes into wider city climate plans can enhance their impact and reach.

2. Growing creative circularity

70% of cities, including **Paris**, **London**, and **New York**, are embracing circular economy initiatives within culture, from shared materials libraries to repair workshops. These initiatives help reshape how resources are consumed in the creative sector and promote sustainability. To scale their impact and unlock environmental and economic benefits, culture teams need to embed circular practices into procurement, funding, and infrastructure development through dedicated policies and investments.

3. Strengthening climate engagement and storytelling

Culture plays an important role in connecting communities to climate and nature challenges on both an emotional and practical level. 79% of cities are using culture to deepen people's relationships to nature, and 67% are drawing on creative work to communicate the climate emergency. **Bengaluru's** *Wake the Lake* campaign revives the city's dying lakes through community-led events, transforming them into shared public spaces and restoring local ecosystems. In addition, 64% of cities engage residents in climate policy through cultural initiatives, and 48% report incorporating Indigenous knowledge into climate planning - showing how culture can drive inclusive and locally grounded climate action. Culture's unique ability to inspire hope, process emotions, and sustain citizen engagement is key to positive climate futures.

4. Enhancing resilience and adaptation

More cities are exploring how culture and arts can contribute to urban resilience and climate adaptation. From 73% redesigning public spaces through initiatives such as pedestrian zones and green infrastructure as seen in **Barcelona**, to 61% of cities improving cultural infrastructure to better withstand climate impacts by adding sustainable drainage and cooling and shading strategies. Artists also contribute to resilience and adaptation through leading community initiatives and helping prepare for climate disasters, as seen in **Melbourne's** *Refuge* project. Stronger collaboration across city departments can help integrate culture into resilience planning, boosting social cohesion and community wellbeing during crises, and supporting recovery.

5. Unlocking innovation in policy and funding

Cities are finding new ways to fund and support culture-driven climate action. In **Helsinki** and **Oslo**, this includes creating climate roles within cultural teams, while **Austin's** *Climate Equity Plan* connects social and environmental justice as part of its 2040 net-zero target. Encouragingly, 21% of cities now have a dedicated climate role within their culture departments, showing increasing investment and policy prioritisation. This is an area with potential for growth across cities, which will accelerate progress. The expanding green creative economy, supported by public funding, subsidies and cross-sector partnerships, offers real potential for fair and sustainable economic transitions. Although 88% of cities report that their culture and climate departments work together, we can expect increased policy alignment in the future. Making climate a priority in cultural planning can unlock support, increase impact and highlight culture's role in building a sustainable future.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Build strong cross-sector collaboration

Achieving climate and nature goals through culture requires intentional, sustained investment in cross-departmental relationships, especially between culture, climate, and environment teams. Many environmental colleagues may not yet fully recognise the role culture plays in citizen engagement, storytelling, innovation, and equitable climate action. Cities should use local and global networks to share expertise, integrate culture into climate strategies, and ensure climate considerations are embedded within cultural policies. This governance alignment will help overcome silos, maximize impact, and elevate the role of cities as key partners in shaping national and international climate policies. Sharing learnings and expertise within networks such as the World Cities Culture Forum will accelerate progress and enable cities worldwide to benefit from tried and tested approaches.

Resource and evidence culture's role in climate action

Cities must dedicate funding, establish skilled leadership roles, and improve data collection and evaluation of cultural climate initiatives to unlock the potential of culture in addressing climate and nature challenges. Building an evidence base will strengthen advocacy, inform policy, and attract investment. Dedicated staff within city governments can embed culture-climate strategies into planning cycles, ensuring long-term commitment and accountability.

Support, scale, and elevate existing projects and knowledge

Cities should connect to and map grassroots cultural climate initiatives - such as creative reuse projects, local food initiatives, and Indigenous community knowledge - and back them by providing funding, capacity building, and developing policy support. These efforts increase citizen engagement by involving communities directly in climate and nature solutions. National and international governments must recognise this creativity and embed culture-driven solutions into broader climate and sustainability decision-making. Elevating local innovations can make policies more inclusive, effective, and reflective of diverse community needs, creating replicable models for equitable climate action.



Representatives from New York City showcase the *Materials for the Arts* programme to London representatives as part of the World Cities Culture Forum's Leadership Exchange Programme 2023. © Photo courtesy of the Department of Cultural Affairs, New York City.

“CULTURE CONNECTS US TO THE LAND, AND OFFERS NEW WAYS OF LOOKING AT HOW WE LIVE ON THESE LANDS, AND WITH EACH OTHER”

Ken Sim, Mayor of Vancouver



A traditional tea shop in Chengdu © Photo by Andrea Sun on Unsplash

CITY PROJECTS

Bengaluru's Wake the Lake

Wake the Lake is a civic campaign led by United Way Bengaluru to restore the city's endangered lakes through community action. Bringing together citizens, civic bodies, and corporate partners, the initiative promotes sustainability, ecosystem preservation, and community ownership. Through clean-up drives, volunteer programmes, and environmental education, the project has revitalised multiple bodies of water and green spaces. Thousands of flowering and medicinal plants have been planted, strengthening biodiversity and reconnecting neighbourhoods with their natural environment.

Chengdu's Greenway²²

As part of its vision to become a 'Park City', Chengdu has developed the world's largest greenway networks - 20,000km of walking and cycling trails across the city. The project has transformed Chengdu's urban landscape, promoting low-carbon activities and transport, and enhancing access to nature and cultural activities. By connecting parks, neighbourhoods, and cultural sites, the greenway provides residents with more inclusive public spaces, supports environmental goals, and showcases Chengdu as a model for sustainable urban living.

Edinburgh's Carbon Reporting Programme

To support the city's 2030 net zero goal, the City of Edinburgh partnered with Culture for Climate Scotland to deliver a sector-wide environmental reporting programme. Since 2019, all grant-funded cultural organisations have submitted annual Carbon Management Plans, covering emissions, biodiversity, adaptation, and governance. Energy and waste emissions are already falling, and multiple organisations are on track for net zero. The initiative positions Edinburgh's cultural sector as a driver of climate leadership and sustainable innovation.

Architecture and Design Museum Helsinki

The Architecture and Design Museum in Helsinki will open in 2030 and will be a new sustainable, inclusive, and globally significant cultural destination. Located in the city's historic South Harbour, the museum will showcase Nordic design, support professional development, and foster public engagement. It reflects Helsinki's strategic investment in cultural infrastructure and positions the city as a global leader in sustainable architecture and creative placemaking.

Sustainable Development in Jakarta

Jakarta's *Museum for Local Economic Development for Social Changes (MLEADS)* is a pioneering programme at Museum Bahari Jakarta, turning heritage into a tool for social and economic development. Through creative training, youth engagement, and cultural activities, the programme showcases and supports the Penjarangan community and aligns with the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Backed by government and private partners, *MLEADS* repositions the museum as a living resource for inclusive urban development.

Melbourne's Refuge Initiative²³

Melbourne's *Refuge* project brings together artists, scientists, emergency services, and local residents to prepare for climate-related disasters such as floods, heatwaves and displacement. Running since 2016, the initiative uses creativity to spark conversations about collective resilience and individual agency in times of disaster. Centred on values of equity, access, hope, and dignity, *Refuge* reimagines disaster preparedness as a shared civic responsibility and a catalyst for connection, healing, and systemic change.

Stockholm's Material Magasinet²⁴

Stockholm's Material Magasinet (Material Storehouse) tackles cultural sector waste by creating a shared storage facility for discarded props, sets, and materials. Aimed at reducing landfill waste, the initiative enables cultural organisations to donate materials and encourages reuse and upcycling. Arts students and set designers can rent or purchase items at low-cost, supporting sustainable production. The project champions circular economy practices in the arts while also promoting resource-sharing and environmental responsibility.

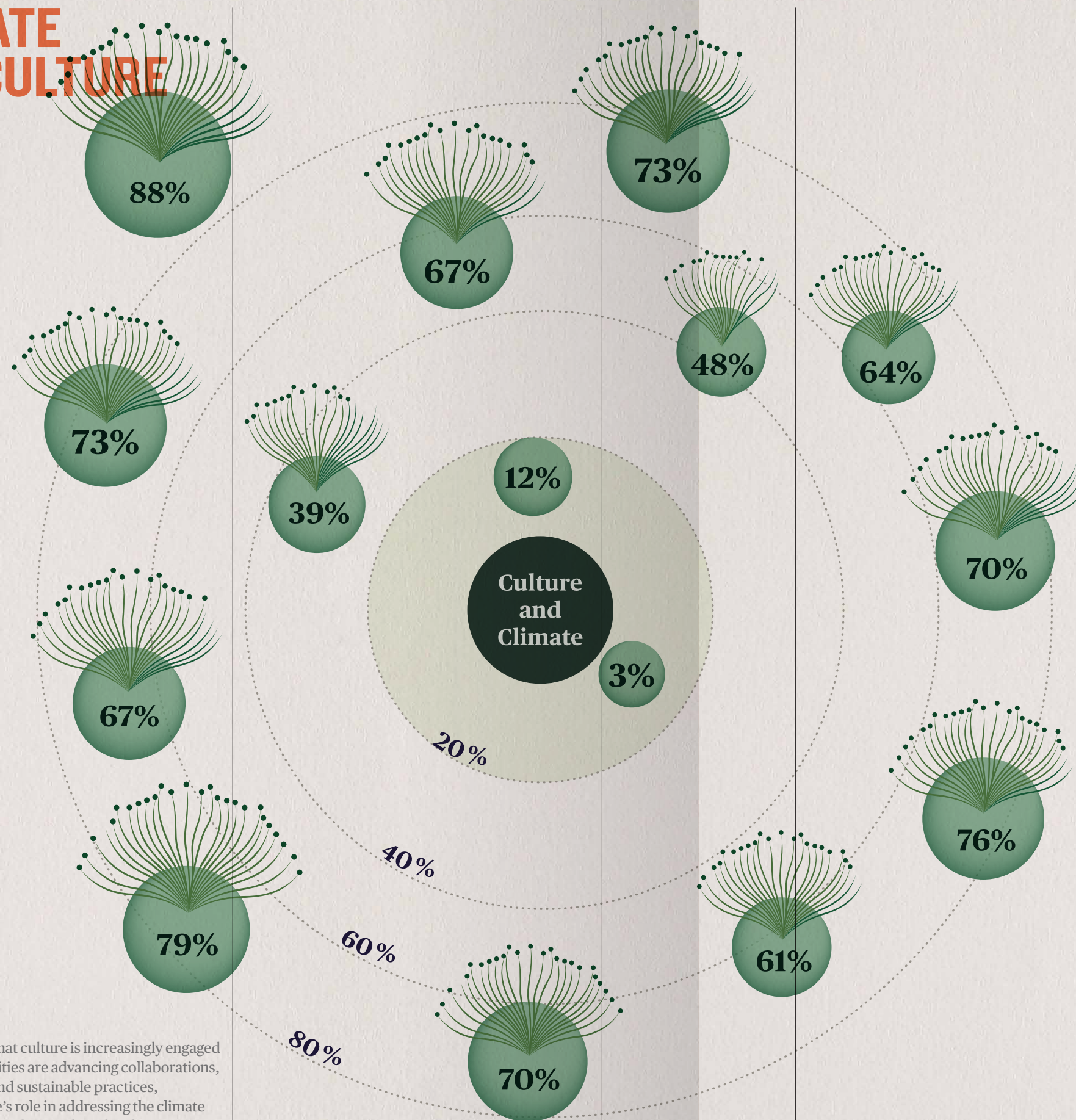
A Goal for Culture²⁵

City leaders from the World Cities Culture Forum united to call for culture to be recognised as a standalone United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) post 2030. *A Goal for Culture: The São Paulo Manifesto* calls for the formal acknowledgement of culture's value in global development. It states that adding culture as a goal will empower cities to unleash culture as a driver of sustainable cities. It will unlock investment in creativity and cultural organisations who are leading inclusive and resilient programmes.



© Photo by Yulia Agnis on Unsplash

CLIMATE AND CULTURE DATA



Our survey shows that culture is increasingly engaged in climate action. Cities are advancing collaborations, creative projects, and sustainable practices, highlighting culture's role in addressing the climate emergency. Data visualisation by Niharika Srivastava.

Legend

petals with buds are active cities
petals without buds are cities developing policies
% area of the cities

Percentage of cities with culture policies addressing climate emergency

- 88% culture departments collaborating with environment departments
- 79% connecting residents to nature, biodiversity and green spaces
- 76% reducing travel and transport impacts
- 73% have projects supporting culture and creative industries to reduce carbon footprint
- 73% have cultural activations in the public realm/town planning
- 70% reducing the energy impacts of cultural infrastructure
- 70% supporting the circular economy in culture and creative industries
- 67% publicly communicating the climate emergency through creative projects
- 67% developing green skills and capacity building for those working in culture
- 64% adapting city food systems
- 61% improving the resilience and adaptation of cultural infrastructure
- 48% supporting indigenous and traditional knowledge
- 39% collaborating with cultural organisations
- 12% collaborating with national governments
- 3% collaborating with international intergovernmental organisations

NIGHT-TIME ECONOMY

TOWARDS 24-HOUR CITIES: REFLECTION ON THE POLICY ACCELERATOR

In collaboration with VibeLab



From **Nanjing** to **Melbourne** and from **Barcelona** to **Montréal**, cities are recognising that what happens after dark is an integral part of their identity, culture and economy.

Governments are rethinking licensing, safety, and spatial planning regulations in response to growing demands for night-time activities, spaces and security. However, they face significant challenges including inadequate data, outmoded legislation and conflicting lines of administrative responsibility.

At the *World Cities Culture Summit 2024* in **Dubai**, a Night-time Policy Accelerator brought together 40 policymakers from global cities including **San Francisco**, **London**, **Guangzhou** and **Cologne** to explore these challenges and share promising approaches.

1. Cultural infrastructure and talent

A clear vision: Successful strategies require stakeholder engagement, political support, and practical implementation plans. They must be inclusive, accessible, and responsive to diverse needs. In **Sydney**, an industry-led campaign, *Vote Music* stimulated AUD 103 million in night-time investment and led to the establishment of a government office for contemporary music.

A functioning economy: A 24-hour economy calls for special licensing strategies, response to local climate conditions, support for night-time workers’ rights, and access to safe and affordable transport. To achieve this cross-departmental collaboration is essential. 50% of cities have dedicated roles to support the night-time economy (21% in culture departments) establishing initiatives like extended licensing hours (50%) and dedicated support for night-time workers (30%). Wage disparity based on gender and ethnicity is as great, if not greater, a problem in the night-time economy than it is in the economy at large.

A secure environment: Safeguarding night-time cultural spaces, their users and their workers is essential to success. This requires working with stakeholders, reviewing outmoded regulations and creating new policies. Cities such as **Montréal** and **Cologne** are already taking this approach, with 50% conducting stakeholder mapping of their night-time economies. In **London**, the *Agent of Change* policy ensures that established music and night-time venues cannot be shut down because of their proximity to new developments.

2. Sustainability

Social sustainability: Night-time strategies must reflect the needs and expectations of diverse citizens. Tailored approaches are needed that emphasise inclusivity, sensitivity and wellbeing, from enabling older citizens to enjoy **Tokyo** at night, to **Dubai**’s shifting rhythm during Ramadan.



Said the Sky, performance at SXSW, Austin © Photo by Ryan Loughlin on Unsplash

Environmental sustainability: Night-time strategies should prioritise energy efficiency, waste reduction and responsible sourcing, collaborating widely to ensure understanding and adoption. In **Edinburgh**, Culture for Climate Scotland helps arts and cultural organisations to measure and manage their impact through environmental reporting tools. Similarly, Green Music Australia offers sustainability training and assessments for music businesses and venues through its *Green Action Plan* and a *Green Music Venue Certification Scheme*. While these initiatives serve the broader cultural and arts sector, there is potential for cities to expand sustainability training and awareness specifically within the night-time economy.

Economic sustainability: The night-time economy depends heavily on small and micro businesses. Cities should consider providing microgrants, tax relief, low interest loans and specialised business support. Over half of cities surveyed from **São Paulo** to **Stockholm** and **Guangzhou**, are delivering or developing support for cultural venues, such as business tax relief and dedicated funding.

3. Night-time safety and security

Avoiding conflict: Community engagement is crucial to building vibrant, safe and accessible neighbourhoods. Cities must learn how to balance the needs of night workers, late-night audiences and local residents. Inclusive solutions call for intergenerational dialogue and local mediation.

Safety for women: Culturally aware safety strategies need to go beyond conventional security measures to give real confidence to different communities and user groups. In **Dublin**, initiatives for policy and awareness-building such as the *Safe and Sound Campaign* are the product of close collaboration between the city administration, transport agencies and community safety networks.

Developing the right strategies: Effective safety strategies depend on good data but also social and cultural sensitivity. Designing environments that feel safe and welcoming requires clear safety standards, community insight, staff training and an inclusive approach. 69% of cities surveyed from **Amsterdam** to **Jakarta**, **Taipei** and **Sydney** are developing or implementing safety at night policies and strategies.

Written by Mirk Milan and Jane Slingo, VibeLab
With data from World Cities Culture Forum survey

KEY TRENDS AND INSIGHTS

- 1. Supporting young people in night-time culture**
82% of our cities are supporting young people through culture. This extends to new programmes to expand education, accessibility, youth-led programming and jobs in night-time businesses. These include grassroots initiatives from VibeLab's EU-wide *NightSchool* for young nightlife producers to **Mumbai's** *The Dharavi Dream Project* for underprivileged hip-hop artists. Cities can develop and support such programmes that enable youth access to nightlife through funding and other measures.
- 2. Towards a greener and sustainable nightlife**
Live events and festivals have brought environmental impact into focus, from Eurosonic Noorderslag Festival's *Green Touring Support* to **Thailand's** Wonderfruit Festival's zero food waste initiatives and circular economy practices. To build sustainable night-time ecosystems in cities, these innovations need to move beyond events and into city planning and regulation frameworks.
- 3. Supporting night-time creative ecosystems**
Cities are actively protecting and growing creative infrastructure under pressure from rising costs and gentrification. More than 60% of our cities are working to enhance their night-time ecosystems through funding for events and activations and delivering cultural activities such as museum lates and light festivals. **Nanjing's** *Changjiang Road Historical and Cultural District* is a popular site of Nanjing's night-time cultural tourism - with night museum tours and night-time cultural programmes combining retail, cultural and business travel with the night-time economy. While many cities are leading the way, the night-time economy is still an emerging trend and policy area for many global cities. In regions such as Africa and Latin America, the formalisation of the night-time economy is likely to take bold and innovative directions - shaped by local approaches to urban life after dark.

- 4. Night-time culture for all**
Cities are working to ensure that night-time cultural life is accessible, inclusive and decentralised - especially for marginalised communities. **San Francisco's** *Drag Laureate Programme* exemplifies how cities can elevate LGBTQI+ voices and diversify the night. However, more progress is needed: currently, only three cities in our network actively track the number of LGBTQI+ cultural spaces, highlighting a significant gap in data and support.
- 5. Safety at night**
Safety and security are key priorities for cities managing the night-time economy. Over 60% of our cities have existing or developing safety at night policies such as the *Brussels by Night City Safety Strategy* which addresses this through venue training and coordinated volunteer care teams.

CITIES ARE RECOGNISING THAT WHAT HAPPENS AFTER DARK IS AN INTEGRAL PART OF THEIR IDENTITY, CULTURE AND ECONOMY

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Night-time culture is a multi-sectoral and dynamic concept. Here are three broad policy recommendations, but each city needs to adapt policies to its own citizens needs and social contexts.

Protect night-time cultural spaces through urban planning

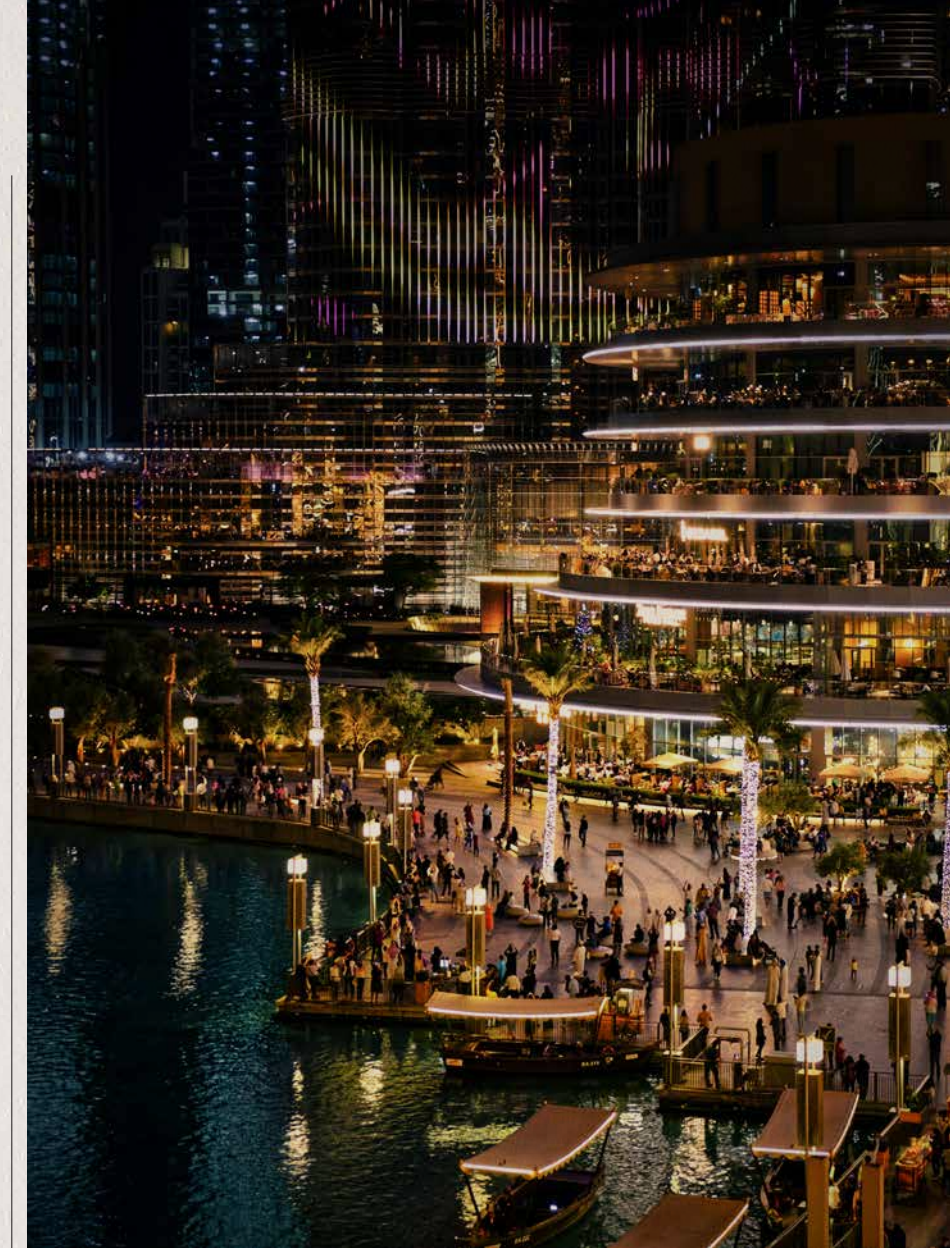
Policies, including planning regulations, should protect venues and cultural spaces from displacement and gentrification. Solutions can include designating night-time creative enterprise zones, and integrating culture into urban planning through zoning, licensing, and infrastructure policies, alongside data collection.

Implement inclusive night-time safety strategies

Safety strategies should prioritise young people, women and marginalised groups with better street lighting, safe transport, inclusive training, and community-designed 'last mile' (i.e. the final segment of a person's journey from a public space such as a music venue or workplace to their home) solutions that go beyond policing to create safe, reliable and welcoming night-time environments.

Support night-time entrepreneurs

Cultural venues, businesses, and informal operators can be supported by microgrant schemes, tax exemptions or reductions and mentorship. Capacity-building programmes and peer networks build a more resilient and inclusive night-time economy.



Downtown Dubai at night © Photo by Kent Tupas on Unsplash

CITY PROJECTS

Amsterdam’s Agenda for Night Culture

Amsterdam’s *Implementation Agenda for Night Culture 2023-2026* is a strategic plan to strengthen the city’s night-time economy through 15 targeted measures. It addresses key challenges like noise complaints, lack of affordable space, and barriers for emerging creatives. With initiatives including a noise reduction fund, talent subsidies, and feasibility studies for new venues, the agenda supports a vibrant, inclusive nightlife while aligning with broader cultural and community goals.

Barcelona’s Night Commissioner

In early 2025, Barcelona City Council appointed its first *Alcaldessa de Nit* (Night Commissioner), aligning the city with international best practice in night-time governance and positioning it as the first municipality in Spain to adopt this model. The role was created to elevate the city’s night-time strategy by developing an integrated 24-hour urban management approach. Carmen Zapata, a respected cultural leader, was chosen to signal political commitment to balancing cultural vitality with the wellbeing of residents. Her remit encompasses safety, inclusion, economic development, and cultural sustainability, ensuring that Barcelona’s nightlife is recognised as a part of the city’s cultural strategy.

Brussels by Night

Launched in 2022, *Brussels By Night* demonstrates how city governments can transform nightlife safety through strategic partnerships with venue operators and city partners. Deploying incident response care teams at night-time events, open air festivals and in nightlife districts has also helped prevent and manage gender-based and sexual violence, as well as drug and alcohol related incidents - while preserving vibrant nightlife culture and creating a safer night-time economy.

Take a Seat in Cologne

Cologne’s central square, Neumarkt, was revitalised in 2023 through *Take a Seat*, a cultural activation project using temporary architecture and community-led programming. A public gathering point since the Medieval period, the square had become known for antisocial behaviour. This initiative used culture, placemaking, and collaboration with artists, institutions, and citizens to reclaim the space. Over two summer months, it hosted daily open-air cultural events, contributing to broader citywide public space renewal.

Dubai’s Night Beaches

Dubai’s night-time activation of its beaches highlights how infrastructure investments in public space usability can drive new growth in the tourism, entertainment and nightlife sectors for wider audiences. In May 2023, Dubai’s municipality designated three beaches for night swimming, equipping them with lifeguards, ambient lighting, electronic safety systems, and amenities like restrooms, food vendors, and phone charging stations.²⁶ Events like full moon swims, aqua fitness classes, and beachside festivals foster intergenerational social interaction and make the night more accessible for family-friendly activities. This initiative demonstrates how night-time infrastructure can balance public leisure, safety, and community engagement while highlighting that nightlife goes well beyond nightclubs.

Dublin Night-Time Economy Strategy

In 2024, Dublin launched a new *Night-Time Economy Strategy* to reimagine nightlife as a key pillar of civic and cultural life. Led by the city’s first Night-time Economy Adviser, the plan expands late-night cultural programming, enhances transport, and improves safety. With flagship events like *Dublin By Night Fest* and *St. Patrick’s After Dark*, the strategy promotes inclusive and vibrant after-dark engagement while piloting welfare services and safer city experiences.

London’s Night-Time Enterprise Zones

In 2022, Bromley became one of the first boroughs to join the Mayor of London’s *Night-Time Enterprise Zone* programme. Using strategic cultural programming and evening activation - like *Library Lates* and a *Winter Lights Festival* - the initiative significantly reversed high street decline, boosted footfall and positioned the town centre as a safe, welcoming, and culturally vibrant destination after dark by providing experiences for all.

Nanjing’s Confucius Temple²⁷

Nanjing’s Confucius Temple in the Qinhuai Scenic Area demonstrates how heritage sites can be revitalised into vibrant night-time destinations through cultural programming, technology, and design. The heritage site has been transformed into a “three streets, one district” experience, featuring museum exhibits, local brands, and a food street, all designed to blend tradition with modern consumer appeal. With over 50 million annual visitors, the site has become a key night tourism attraction. Recent innovations include smart boat tours on the Qinhuai River with immersive VR storytelling, themed cultural hotels, and plans for a new experiential theatre complex. These developments highlight how blending immersive media, creative placemaking, and heritage can drive both economic and cultural value in the night-time economy.

São Paulo’s Spcine Circuit

Launched in 2016, the *Spcine Circuit* has become one of Brazil’s most significant public cinema networks, transforming São Paulo’s cultural infrastructure and making access to film a civic right. With 32 public cinema rooms across 27 educational and cultural centres, the initiative brings free or low-cost cinema to underserved regions of the city - strengthening local identity, stimulating the audiovisual economy, and advancing cultural inclusion.

Stockholm’s Nobel Week Lights

Held each December during the Nobel Prize celebrations, *Nobel Week Lights* invites artists to create large-scale light installations inspired by Nobel-winning discoveries. The free festival reimagines Stockholm’s public spaces during its darkest month, with artworks designed to engage all ages and backgrounds. In 2024, 1.7 million people experienced 16 installations including student works, multilingual tours, and interactive events. The festival boosts civic pride, cultural access, and Stockholm’s global visibility through light and science.



Dancers in the street, Lisbon © Photo by Ardian Lumi on Unsplash



Gaming Arcade, Seoul © Photo by Ciaran O’Brien on Unsplash

YOUTH AND EDUCATION

ART, CULTURE AND EDUCATION: A PILLAR FOR THE FUTURE

Supported by Itaú Foundation



Digital technologies, especially AI, are reshaping the skills we need to thrive. Simultaneously, employers say adaptability, creativity and critical thinking are the qualities they want most in their workers. Arts and cultural education are proven to nurture these abilities but remain undervalued in many systems. Even though half the world’s population is under 30, young people are often excluded from decision-making. Culture can help redress this. As shown in the World Cities Culture Forum’s 2024 research *Nothing About Us Without Us*²⁸, cities are using culture to empower young people, not just as participants, but as co-creators of more inclusive, resilient and dynamic futures. If we acknowledge culture as the key to vibrant and prosperous communities, then cultural education must be its foundation, not just in childhood but throughout life as Eduardo Saron, the President of Brazil’s pioneering Itaú Foundation argues here.

A View From Brazil

In Brazil, education, as enshrined in the 1988 Federal Constitution, is a right of every citizen and a responsibility shared between the State, the family and society. Similarly, access to and participation in art and culture are also fundamental rights.

Brazil has made significant progress since the 1980s - most notably with the universalisation of compulsory basic education for children and young people aged 4 to 17- but challenges remain in ensuring the full development of individuals, preparing them for active citizenship and cultural rights, and providing quality training for the labour market.

In a world undergoing constant transformation, where technological innovation is advancing daily and reshaping every sector of the economy and society, it is essential to adopt a systemic view of education - one that begins in early childhood and continues throughout a person’s educational and professional life.

Recent reports on Artificial Intelligence highlight how it will structurally reshape the ways societies build collective memory and produce and disseminate knowledge - at a scale never seen before.

This scenario calls for public education to foster individual potential from childhood through to higher education.

To keep pace with technological change, education must go beyond cognitive knowledge, ensuring the development of socio-emotional skills. Skills for the future include adaptability, collaboration, critical thinking, problem-solving, effective communication, creativity, imagination, digital literacy, and a culture of peace.

Brazil’s legal framework for education and culture supports rights and aspirations that align society’s needs. However, major challenges remain in implementation - particularly in educational performance indicators and access to cultural activities.

The OECD’s latest *Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA)* introduced a new evaluation of creative thinking, challenging traditional views of education based solely on content delivery.²⁹ The PISA assessment now considers the ability to plan, evaluate, and improve ideas leading to original and effective solutions to real-world problems - vital competencies in all areas of life.

Unfortunately, Brazil’s performance was disappointing: 54 per cent of students scored below Level 3 (considered insufficient), compared to developed countries at 22 per cent. Similarly, in financial literacy, 45 per cent of Brazilian students were unable to apply their knowledge to real-life financial decisions. Integrating art, culture, and science into school curricula may reverse this reality.

Brazil’s *National Education Plan (PNE)*, particularly goals 6 and 7 (expanding full-time education and improving quality), emphasises the importance of

linking art, culture and education to foster the holistic development of students.

In 2024, Brazil lost 6.7 million readers, with only 47 per cent of the population reading at least part of a book in the last three months.³⁰ Alongside this, only 48.4 per cent of public schools have libraries, and many municipalities lack public libraries or reading rooms.³¹

Itaú Foundation’s research *Arts and Sports: Their Relationship to Holistic Human Development*, highlights how arts education improves young people’s motivation and engagement.³² It also supports the development of various skills: listening to and learning music enhances spatial-temporal reasoning; engaging in theatre and reading plays deepens understanding of human behaviour; practising dance fosters persistence and boosts self-confidence; and appreciating or creating visual art encourages a more diverse and plural interpretation of the world.

Given this context, local leadership has the potential to innovate by proposing cross-sectoral agendas and policies that bring together art, culture and education. This is key to preparing young people for a world and a technological landscape in constant transformation.

About Itaú Foundation

With its three pillars - culture, social impact, and education and work - Itaú Foundation aims to inspire good initiatives and create the conditions for every Brazilian to develop as an active and socially engaged citizen.

In practice, this principle translates into efforts to strengthen education and culture by producing knowledge through evidence-based studies, research, and methodologies; supporting and promoting cultural initiatives; and implementing programmes and actions that connect art, culture and education.

The Foundation’s strategies are guided by the goal of generating impact in an innovative and public-spirited way, aiming to reduce inequalities. They do not seek - nor intend - to replace the State or public policies. Instead, the Foundation works under the guiding principle of “Nothing about them without them.” The ability to act critically and collaboratively, giving voice to everyone involved, and respecting and connecting individual and collective forms of knowledge through listening and cooperation, forms the foundation of the Itaú Foundation’s purpose as a civil society organisation.

Written by Eduardo Saron, President of Itaú Foundation



Child at school in Beijing © Photo by Jerry Wang on Unsplash



Bordless TeamLab, Tokyo © Photo by Karsten Gohm on Unsplash



Young woman in front of an artwork, Melbourne © Photo by Thomas Pavitte on Unsplash

KEY TRENDS AND INSIGHTS

1. Cities are embedding culture and creativity throughout the education system
The majority of our cities (97%) now have policies or programmes supporting creative education and youth engagement, with 78% integrating arts and creativity into primary and secondary schools. Early years provision is also growing in cities like **Helsinki** and **Nanjing**, with 72% supporting arts for pre-school children, while partnerships with higher education are increasing in cities like **Zürich** and **New York** (56%).

2. Demand is rising for future-ready skills
Cities increasingly recognise the need to cultivate creativity, digital fluency, and socio-emotional intelligence alongside academic achievement. From our research on Sub Saharan African cities, such as **Addis Ababa**, **Kigali** and **Freetown**, access to education and skills development was identified as a key trend for 61% of policymakers and cultural stakeholders.³³ Of the cities surveyed, 84% including **São Paulo** and **Beijing** are supporting creative career pathways, youth entrepreneurship and training. In addition, 66% of cities including **Chengdu** and **Warsaw** have focused programmes on digital and media literacy. This reflects global momentum towards human-centred, future-oriented education, aligned with OECD's emphasis on creative competencies and AI-readiness.

3. Youth are shaping the cultural policy agenda
66% of cities, from **Stockholm** and **Taipei** to **Dubai** and **Melbourne**, actively engage young people in shaping programmes and policies. This includes youth advisory councils, youth summits and co-creation frameworks. Across Sub Saharan Africa, youth and education is an important driver of cultural policy, including in **Kampala** where youth involvement in creative and cultural sector is on the rise.³⁴ However, this area requires further investment and systematic implementation to move beyond consultation toward long-term youth partnership.

4. Persistent inequity in access to cultural and educational infrastructure
Despite strong frameworks, many cities face structural challenges around inclusion. Barriers include cost, housing pressures, lack of transport, digital divides, or programmes being overly centralised. Cities such as **Toronto** and **Paris** are working to decentralise cultural access and improve representation of marginalised communities, but consistent funding remains a major concern globally.

5. Public space and informal settings are being reimagined for cultural learning
81% of cities support informal youth engagement, from recreational classes to youth clubs and creative drop-ins. Urban interventions like **Seoul's Outdoor Libraries** demonstrate how public space can become a site for inclusive, intergenerational cultural exchange. The wellbeing benefits of culture for young people are also being integrated by 40% of our cities from **Nanjing** to **Los Angeles**.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Adopt a whole-system approach to culture and education

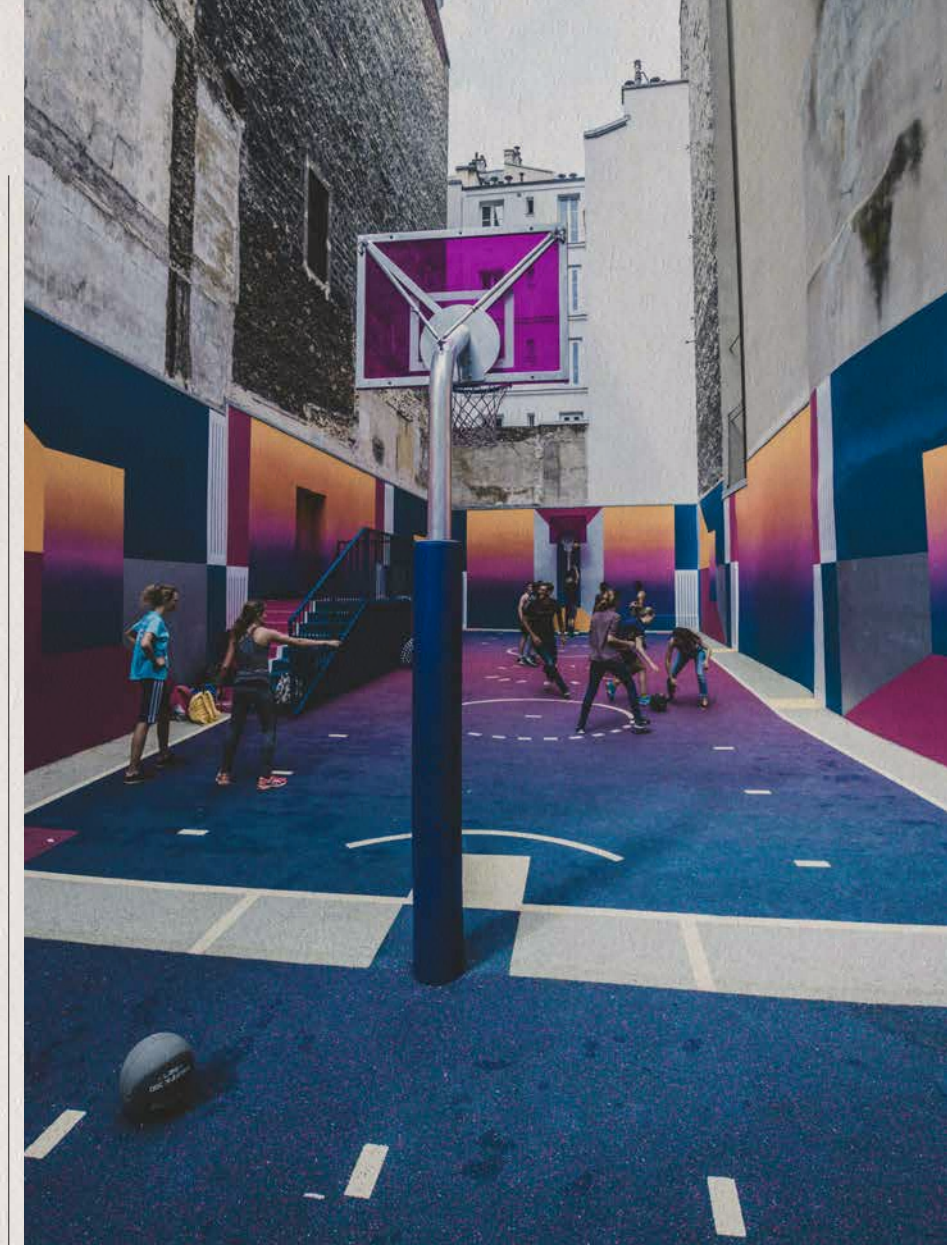
Integrate culture into the full continuum of education, from early childhood to lifelong learning, through curriculum reform, teacher training, and partnerships with cultural institutions. Encourage collaborative policymaking between departments of education, culture, and social development.

Ensure equitable access to infrastructure, participation, and opportunity

Address spatial, financial, and digital inequalities by decentralising provision, investing in neighbourhood-level programmes, and removing cost barriers. Strategies include mobile libraries, youth culture passes, and prioritising underserved groups. Cities should also support talent development through creative career programmes and mentorship.

Empower youth as cultural citizens and co-creators

Develop policies and structures that enable youth participation in cultural governance, from advisory councils to youth-led cultural programming. Embed these voices not as one-off consultations but as long-term partners in shaping the city's cultural future.



Young people playing basketball in Paris © Photo by Paul Wallez on Unsplash

“YOUNG PEOPLE SHOULD BE AT THE FOREFRONT OF GLOBAL CHANGE AND INNOVATION”

Kofi Annan, Former Secretary General of the United Nations



SESC Pompéia, São Paulo © Photo by Carol Vidal

CITY PROJECTS

Buenos Aires Youth Culture Pass³⁵
Buenos Aires launched the *Culture Pass* for students aged 16-19, offering a monthly credit card for access to theatres, museums, bookshops, and more. Designed as a physical card to include those without phones, it aimed to foster lasting cultural habits rather than serve as a welfare benefit. Within two months of its 2018 launch, 10,000 students enrolled. Public and private institutions offered extra discounts, and future integration with the city’s transport system is planned.

Chendgu’s Esports Infrastructure
Chengdu’s three-part policy supports esports events, venues and local clubs, with up to RMB 1 million available for infrastructure and major tournaments. Clubs competing under the “Chengdu” name also receive support for national success. This strategy has helped establish the city as a leading esports destination in China, elevating its cultural profile and integrating gaming into its broader urban and night-time economy strategy.

Dakar en Jeux³⁶
Dakar will host the 2026 Summer Youth Olympic Games, the first Olympic event in Africa. To mark this milestone, the city launched *Dakar en Jeux*, an annual festival blending arts and sport across three cities and schools nationwide. Created by and for young people, it features free events like concerts, workshops, and street art. Led by Amadou Fall Ba and 100 students from Senegal Talents Campus, the festival aims to inspire lasting impact across Senegal and beyond.

One Dublin, One Book
Every April since 2005, Dublin residents have been encouraged to read the same book either written by a Dubliner or connected with the capital city, through the *One Dublin, One Book* campaign. This initiative promotes literacy and also supports connection among residents. To mark the 20th year of this mass cultural participation event, Dublin City Council and Dublin UNESCO City of Literature commissioned an anthology of 22 poets and writers to capture Dublin in the first quarter of the century.

Youth Led Policy in Hamburg
Hamburg’s *Framework for Children and Youth Culture* redefines cultural policy by centring youth participation. Developed through a multidimensional participatory culture strategy, it reflects the real needs and desires of the city’s children and young people. With tools like the *Hamburg Children’s Manifesto* and a newly forming Council of Culture for Children and Young People, the city is embedding inclusive culture into its institutions and setting a new benchmark for long-term youth engagement in cultural policy.

A Voice for Youth in Montréal
Montréal is embedding youth perspectives into cultural policymaking through two initiatives: *A Library That Looks Like Me* and the *Manifesto of Montréal Youth for the Arts and Culture*. These programmes invite children and teens to co-design library services and contribute ideas to cultural policy. By giving young people a stronger voice, the city is fostering inclusive participation and ensuring that cultural strategies reflect the needs and aspirations of the next generation.

Nanjing’s Immersive Dream of the Red Chamber
Nanjing’s immersive adaptation of *Dream of the Red Chamber* redefines how traditional literary IP can engage modern audiences. Debuting in July 2024, this digitally driven exhibition attracted over 10,000 visitors and generated more than one million RMB, while sparking renewed interest in Chinese literary heritage among youth. By blending immersive tech with cultural storytelling, the project exemplifies how cities can make classical literature relevant for new generations.



SESC Pompéia, São Paulo © Photo by Carol Vidal

Valorização de Iniciativas Culturais in São Paulo
2025 marks the 20th anniversary of the *Programa para a Valorização de Iniciativas Culturais* (Valuation of Cultural Initiatives) (VAI) in São Paulo, one of Brazil’s most influential municipal cultural policies. Created in 2005, the *VAI Programme* has funded over 3,200 cultural projects by low-income youth and collectives in peripheral areas of the city - democratising access to funding, stimulating local cultural activity, and addressing structural inequalities in São Paulo’s cultural landscape.

Seoul Outdoor Library
Seoul’s *Outdoor Library* initiative, launched in 2022, redefines urban public spaces by transforming them into open-air reading environments. With installations in Seoul Plaza, Gwanghwamun Square, and Cheonggyecheon Stream, the programme offers diverse literary and cultural experiences. Attracting over five million visitors by 2024, it has revitalised reading habits, inspired nationwide adoption, and earned international recognition, showcasing the power of innovative cultural policy in urban settings.

Zürich’s Cinematic Campus
Launched in 2023 by Filmpodium and the University of Zürich, *The Cinematic Campus* brings film studies students and the wider public back into the cinema. Through live lectures followed by screenings in a professional theatre, the project bridges academic learning and cinematic experience, countering the isolating effects of digital streaming. Free and open to all, the programme revitalises Zürich’s film culture while encouraging dialogue, critical thinking, and cross-generational learning through the power of cinema.

**IDEAS
FOR CHANGING
TIMES**

HEALTH AND WELLBEING

PUBLIC REALM

AI AND TECHNOLOGY

TOURISM

HEALTH AND WELLBEING

PRESCRIBING CULTURE FOR HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Cities are increasingly recognising the role of culture to support public health and wellbeing. Across our network, cities are expanding the scope of culture programmes that address health challenges, reduce isolation and improve quality of life. Although still an emerging area of policy, momentum is growing - driven by a deeper understanding of culture's power to shape healthy and resilient communities.

From **Helsinki** to **Tokyo** and **São Paulo**, 64% of our cities are already supporting or actively developing cultural initiatives to improve wellbeing for their citizens, with ten cities identifying health as one of the top five city-wide priorities.

Some cities are embedding culture directly into health systems through engagement with the arts. **Brussels** and **Montréal** have introduced 'social prescribing' where doctors prescribe museum visits to improve mental wellbeing. London is increasing data collection on creative health to build the evidence base for policy and investment. International partnerships like the Jameel Arts and Health Lab are scaling this work through Healing Arts initiatives, including *Healing Arts Scotland 2024*, and ongoing programmes in cities like **Barcelona** and

New York. In **Brasília**, the Claudio Santoro National Theatre Symphonic Orchestra has delivered orchestral and small ensemble performances across every public hospital in the city, uplifting patients and staff in the process and establishing strong collaboration between the city's health and culture departments.

Targeted creative health interventions and partnerships are improving the lives of older citizens. In **Edinburgh** the *Dementia-Friendly Communities Project* is making performing arts and theatre more accessible and inclusive for people living with dementia.

More than 40% of cities are using arts-based approaches to support the wellbeing of young people, exploring creative health initiatives such as art therapy, social prescribing and mental health support through the arts. From **Stockholm**'s social dance programme supporting young girls' mental health, to **Los Angeles**' programme of arts and creative activities for young people in state systems including welfare, justice or foster care to support their mental health and wellbeing. In **Kyiv**, art therapy programmes help young people and communities aid recovery of trauma caused by war.

Cities are also looking at the wellbeing and health of cultural workers. In **Jakarta**, new employment policies are directly supporting the wellbeing of cultural practitioners in the city, many of whom are freelancers, by giving them access to Indonesia's public health and social security systems. Similarly, **Warsaw**'s *Programme for Strengthening Employees of Cultural Centres* supports the wellbeing and professional growth of cultural workers through training, mentoring and psychological support.

Engagement with cultural and creative activities is a powerful tool for improving health and wellbeing. Over half of our cities report collaboration between cultural and health departments. Yet, most interventions remain small-scale or pilot-based. The opportunity now is for cities to move beyond short-term initiatives and embed culture as a core, long-term component of health and wellbeing policies.



RESULTS FROM OVER 3,000 STUDIES SHOW THE ARTS HELP PREVENT ILLNESS, PROMOTE HEALTH, AND SUPPORT TREATMENT ACROSS ALL AGES³⁷



From top: Stockholm Public Library © Photo by Mitya Ivanov on Unsplash; Ceramics workshop, Istanbul © Photo by Yunus Tug on Unsplash

PUBLIC REALM

INCLUSION AND REPRESENTATION IN THE PUBLIC REALM

Global cities are shaped by diverse communities, complex histories, and multiple perspectives. Across World Cities Culture Forum, cities are increasingly committed to transforming public spaces to better reflect the identities, stories, and lived experiences of citizens.

All surveyed cities are actively implementing policies or programmes to improve representation and inclusion in public spaces. Representation in cities is both physical and systemic - visible in monuments, murals and civic spaces, and also embedded in policies, funding and programming. This work is especially urgent in cities with legacies of colonisation, migration and systemic inequalities. While some initiatives focus on historical reckoning, cities are also looking forward, reimagining the public realm as a space of shared identity, participation and healing.

Several cities are confronting their colonial legacies through public education and community consultation. **Amsterdam** is undertaking extensive community engagement in the city and former colonies like Suriname in the development of a new National Slavery Museum. **Hamburg's** *Decolonise Hamburg!* strategy, co-designed with civil society, redefines the city's relationship with its past but also promotes inclusive dialogue and forward-looking action. **San Francisco's** *Shaping Legacy* initiative reassesses monuments and memorials to address inequities and reshape how collective memory is represented in civic spaces.

Cities are also breaking down structural barriers by empowering underrepresented groups to create public art. **Los Angeles'** *Public Artists in Development* programme is supporting underrepresented artists through training, mentorship, and funding to complete a public art commission. **Austin's** *Art for All* initiatives empowers unhoused individuals through paid creative work, using community-driven murals to improve public spaces, promote inclusion and connect people to social services.

Others are investing in strategies to elevate historically excluded voices. **Melbourne's** longstanding *Aboriginal Arts Grant* has supported First Nations creatives for over 25 years, advancing equity and cultural justice for Aboriginal communities in the city.

By embedding representation and inclusion into public art and policy, cities are reshaping the public realm into a space for collective memory, cultural justice, and civic participation, ensuring communities can see their histories acknowledged and their voices reflected in everyday spaces across the city.

CITIES ARE REIMAGINING THE PUBLIC REALM AS A SPACE OF SHARED IDENTITY, PARTICIPATION AND HEALING



“WE NEED CULTURE BECAUSE IT FUELS OUR IMAGINATION, HELPING US BUILD A NEW REALITY TOGETHER”

Rafał Trzaskowski, Mayor of Warsaw



From top: Politics of Memory with Joshua Bennett and Imani Perry, 2024, Un-monument. Photo by Malakhai Pearson, courtesy of the City of Boston; Statue of Millicent Fawcett, London © Photo courtesy of the Greater London Authority

AI AND TECHNOLOGY

NAVIGATING AI AND THE DIGITAL TRANSITION

Cities around the world are adapting to rapid technological change and reshaping cultural policy and practice. As digital innovation accelerates, cultural policymakers and practitioners are navigating both the potential and the complex challenges of emerging technologies, data governance and artificial intelligence (AI).

Currently, 55% of our cities from **Milan** to **Toronto**, are developing or implementing policies and projects related to digital technology. This trend is particularly strong in East Asia, where cities are using technology to support the cultural sector, alongside broader urban development goals. **Guangzhou** places digital innovation at the heart of its ambition to become a global technology hub, with culture driving economic transformation. **Chengdu** has established a digital creative start-ups incubator, alongside investing in gaming and esports. **Nanjing** is using immersive digital technology to bring to life classic Chinese literature, connecting new and younger audiences with literary heritage.

New cultural infrastructure is reimagining how cities support digital innovation and creativity. *The Latin American Centre for Experimental Hypermedia (CheLA)* in **Buenos Aires** is a pioneering research centre supporting cross-disciplinary projects that unite technology, arts, and community.³⁸

In **Bengaluru**, India's first *Museum of Innovation, Start-Up and Technology* will use immersive 'phygital' experiences to celebrate the city's role as a global tech hub.

For many cities, however, digitalisation and AI remains a challenge. Cultural teams across several cities highlight a need for expertise to help the cultural sector adapt effectively and sustainably to new technologies and digital trends, in particular AI.

The integration of emerging technologies - especially AI - into cultural policies remains in its early stages. This is partly due to the rapid rate of change but also because of the need for greater knowledge and relevant skills within cultural policy teams.

Despite this, several cities are leading the way and are exploring AI's creative and civic potential.

Barcelona's *Synthetic Memories* public programme explores data and memory through AI-driven artistic projects. In **Los Angeles**, the *2025 Arts Datathon* helped artists and cultural organisations build practical, ethical knowledge and understanding of generative AI tools. **Bogotá** has also begun using AI in policymaking to analyse interviews with residents and identify common themes.³⁹ These initiatives reflect a growing awareness of AI's potential as a creative tool and in the role of cultural policy.

Innovation in technology and AI is advancing rapidly but many cities have yet to fully explore how technology can be integrated into policymaking and programming. The ethics of AI and technology in cultural policymaking and the creative industries is still relatively unexplored. Key concerns include growing digital divides, intellectual property rights, the ethical use of data, and algorithmic bias. Cities must ensure that innovation remains inclusive, and that citizens and cities have a voice in shaping future national and international AI legislation.

CULTURE IS REIMAGINING HOW CITIES SUPPORT DIGITAL INNOVATION



Artist Songwen Chung sets up installation at the World Economic Forum Annual Meeting 2025 in Davos-Klosters, Switzerland © World Economic Forum, photo by Pascal Bitz

TOURISM

SUSTAINABLE GLOBAL TOURISM

Culture is a key driver of tourism, with cities around the world offering cultural initiatives to shape distinctive visitor experiences. As post-pandemic tourism rebounds, more cities are placing sustainability at the heart of their cultural tourism strategies. 66% of our cities, including **Paris** and **Zürich**, see sustainable tourism as a key priority. Tourism plays a vital role in urban economies but as visitor numbers grow, cities are increasingly aware of the pressures tourism places on local ecosystems, infrastructure and communities.

Overtourism is a concern in 18% of our cities, especially in Europe where space is limited and infrastructure is under pressure. In response, cities like **Barcelona** have capped short-term holiday rentals and promoted off-peak travel.

Many cities are leveraging cultural tourism and programming to showcase the full diversity of their city and heritage on both the local and global stages. In **Helsinki**, the city-wide *Helsinki Biennial*, staged across parks, neighbourhoods and the city's 300 islands, is transforming Helsinki's international image as a cultural destination while distributing tourism investment more evenly. In **Beijing**, the *International Week of Intangible Cultural Heritage* and a new cultural experience centre promote Chinese cultural heritage and global exchange. **Guangzhou's** vibrant Flower Market links tradition and innovation, activating the night-time economy in the city and reinforcing cultural tourism. **Jakarta's Cultural Village** initiative preserves Betawi heritage through community-led tourism and participatory cultural policymaking. As part of our *African Alternatives* research, policymakers from cities including **Lagos** and **Kigali**, ranked cultural tourism as one of their top five policy drivers.⁴⁰

Culture is a source of identity and inclusive development, with tourism providing a platform for storytelling and a way of sharing cultural heritage. Domestic as well as international tourism plays a vital role in urban economies. One of the most promising trends across our cities is the use of tourism-generated revenue to fund cultural infrastructure and programming. **Edinburgh** and **San Francisco** are amongst the 27% of our cities to have a tourism tax in place and are demonstrating its potential to support culture. At least two other member cities are developing tax proposals. In **Austin**, hotel occupancy taxes fund cultural programmes and also support venue maintenance and staffing. **Montréal** channels approximately CAD 9 million of tourist tax revenues annually into festivals, exhibitions and public events. These examples show how well-designed tourism levies can help to diversify funding models and increase support for culture.

As tourism numbers rise, cities are increasingly recognising the importance of managing growth responsibly. Cities must ensure tourism supports economic, social and environmental sustainability, by placing community, creativity, and long-term planning at its core.

A PROMISING TREND IS THE USE OF TOURISM GENERATED REVENUE TO FUND CULTURE



A tourist takes a photo at the Shibuya Crossing, Tokyo, one of the world's busiest intersections
© Photo by Jose Figueroa

This section offers a global view of how cultural trends are unfolding across different regions. It takes an in-depth look at urban expansion in Africa, where young people are bringing new creative ideas and new challenges to the continent's rapidly growing cities, and at Latin America, where capital cities are driving new developments. Brief regional snapshots and a global trends overview provide quick comparisons and inspiration, helping cities see their own challenges and opportunities in a wider international context.

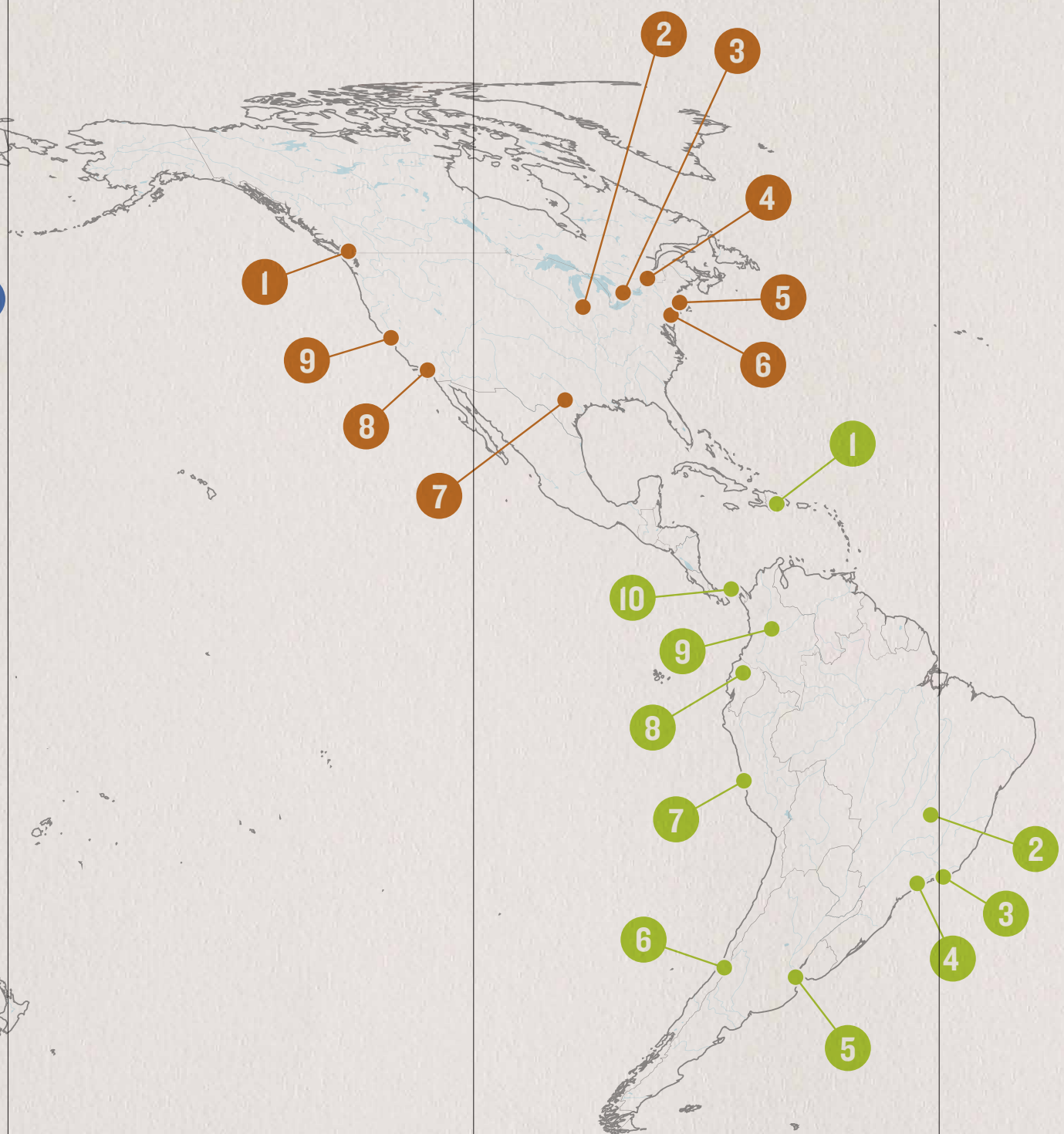
REGIONAL INSIGHTS

WORLD CITIES CULTURE FORUM GLOBAL CONNECTIONS



(Natural Earth projection)

Map of cities engaged with World Cities Culture Forum, including policy research and collaborations. See next page for legend and policy trends. Map with natural earth projection by Sonja Kuijpers, STUDIO TERP.



REGIONAL TRENDS AT A GLANCE

WORLD CITIES CULTURE FORUM GLOBAL CONNECTIONS

● EUROPE

- Culture Policy Trends
- Inclusive Participation
 - Sustainable Culture
 - Cultural Infrastructure and Space
 - Night-Time Culture
 - Equity and Decolonisation

Dublin	1
Brussels	2
Edinburgh	3
Amsterdam	4
Hamburg	5
Oslo	6
Stockholm	7
Helsinki	8
Warsaw	9
Kyiv	10
Vienna	11
Istanbul	12
Cologne	13
Milan	14
Barcelona	15
Lisbon	16
Zürich	17
Paris	18
London	19

● AFRICA

Based on research from World Cities Culture Forum, Andani.Africa and British Council

- Culture Policy Trends
- Reliable data to advocate for cultural policies
 - Local knowledge must shape policy
 - Funding models need to change
 - Cities can lead the way in defining policy models
 - Peer networks are critical

Dakar	1
Addis Ababa	2
Kampala	3
Nairobi	4
Harare	5
Johannesburg	6
Cape Town	7
Kigali	8
Lagos	9
Accra	10
Freetown	11

● EAST ASIA

- Culture Policy Trends
- Public Art and Placemaking
 - Cultural Heritage Conservation
 - Creative Districts and Urban Regeneration
 - Cultural Infrastructure Development
 - Creative Economy and Opportunities

Chengdu	1
Beijing	2
Seoul	3
Tokyo	4
Nanjing	5
Taipei	6
Hong Kong	7
Guangzhou	8

● MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA

- Culture Policy Trends
- Public Art and Placemaking
 - Cultural Heritage Conservation
 - Creative Districts and Urban Regeneration
 - Cultural Infrastructure Development
 - Creative Economy and Opportunities

Dubai	1
Abu Dhabi	2

● SOUTH AND SOUTH EAST ASIA

Further research in 2026 with British Council in Jakarta, Bangkok, Hanoi, Kuala Lumpur and Manila

- Culture Policy Trends
- Conserving Natural and Cultural Heritage
 - Culture for Economic and Social Change
 - Technology and Culture
 - Festivals and Experimental Practice
 - Design-Driven Cities

Hanoi	1
Manila	2
Jakarta	3
Kuala Lumpur	4
Bangkok	5
Bengaluru	6

● AUSTRALASIA

- Culture Policy Trends
- First Nations First
 - Creative Space Protection
 - Climate and Culture
 - Youth and Talent Development
 - Inclusive Streets

Sydney	1
Melbourne	2
Adelaide	3

● LATIN AMERICA

Based on research from World Cities Culture Forum and Union of Ibero-American Capital Cities (UCCI)

- Culture Policy Trends
- Identity, Cohesion and Building Citizenship
 - Creativity, Employment and Urban Development
 - Cultural Governance and Data Informed Policy
 - Toward a Common Horizon

Santo Domingo	1
Brasília	2
Rio de Janeiro	3
São Paulo	4
Buenos Aires	5
Santiago	6
Lima	7
Quito	8
Bogotá	9
Panamá City	10

● NORTH AMERICA

- Culture Policy Trends
- Securing Funding
 - Artists in Governance
 - Space as Infrastructure
 - Equity in the Public Realm
 - Citizen Voice

Vancouver	1
Chicago	2
Toronto	3
Montréal	4
Boston	5
New York	6
Austin	7
Los Angeles	8
San Francisco	9

FOCUS ON AFRICA

In partnership with British Council and Andani.Africa



African cities are poised for dramatic transformation, with the expectation that they will double in size by 2050.⁴¹ More than 60% of Africa's population is under the age of twenty-five⁴² and young people are flocking to cities looking for work and a better life.

City administrators face multiple challenges, often complicated by overlaps in geography, resources and responsibilities between city and regional administrations, so that even the definition of a 'city' becomes problematic as they spread relentlessly outwards. It would be easy to assume that facing the need for every kind of basic service, concern for culture might be low on the priority list of city administrations, but the boom in urban growth is accompanied by an equal boom in creative and cultural activity. Africa's entertainment sector is experiencing massive expansion and it boasts the fastest growing music market in the world.⁴³ The success of the Nollywood (Nigeria's film industry) is triggering new investment and encouraging new talent across the continent. The magazine 'African Leadership' predicts the continent's fashion market will be worth USD 50 billion by 2030.⁴⁴

This creative and cultural revolution has obvious resonance beyond its ability to generate jobs and wealth. Africa's creative leaders are addressing the legacy of colonialism that still shapes much of the official cultural landscape. So, as well as the future-facing possibilities of digitally driven cultural forms, there is the urgent need to preserve, protect and re-evaluate traditional cultures and practices - the tangible and intangible heritage that is easily lost in an urban environment.

This scale and pace of change presents real challenges for conventional ideas about cultural policy. How should city planners engage with activity that is overwhelmingly informal, grassroots or commercial? This is often at odds with government's ideas about what the remit of public policy is and the boundaries of freedom of expression.

The *African Alternatives* research commissioned by the World Cities Culture Forum and British Council and led by Andani.Africa, explored how 11 cities across Sub-Saharan Africa are developing Afrocentric approaches to cultural development, policy and governance.⁴⁵

The research revealed how cities are using culture not only to shape identity but to address inequality, support jobs, and build more liveable futures. Dakar's influential music scene, **Nairobi's** fusion of tech and creative industries, and **Kigali** and **Accra's** support for female entrepreneurship are reshaping city economies and urban life. Cities like **Cape Town**, **Lagos**, and **Dakar** are investing in growing film industries. **Kampala** and **Johannesburg** are rich in cultural institutions, theatres, and venues, while festivals play a critical role, from **Harare's International Festival of the Arts** to **SLACfest** in **Freetown** and fashion weeks in **Addis Ababa**.

Cultural Policy and Governance

Yet this momentum sits alongside deep structural challenges. 75% of respondents to our research survey cited governance and institutional structures as the main barriers to policy development. Cultural policy is typically a national rather than local responsibility and often lacks the information and sensitivity necessary for effective local delivery. Where policies do exist, support for implementation may be limited, and the policies themselves are often outdated, with more than half only updated once per decade. One-third of cities surveyed reported having only national cultural policies. However, another third including **Cape Town**, **Dakar**, **Kampala**, and **Nairobi** are leading the way, implementing their own cultural strategies.

AFRICA'S URBAN LANDSCAPES ARE DYNAMIC CENTRES OF INNOVATION, AWAITING THE RIGHT POLICIES TO UNLOCK THEIR FULL POTENTIAL⁴⁷

The survey pointed to a need for more consistent leadership models. Ministers or mayors often provide political oversight, but there is no formal city-level leadership for culture in at least three of the eleven capital cities. This creates gaps in coordination and weakens policy delivery. Crucially, 84% of respondents felt that culture's potential in urban development was poorly understood by other policymakers.

This lack of understanding is compounded by a shortage of reliable data. Without strong evidence, cities struggle to advocate for culture as a strategic priority to rank alongside the core issues of housing, transport, education and healthcare. As a result, culture is often sidelined despite its proven contribution to social inclusion, mental health, job creation, and youth engagement.

Underinvestment is another recurring theme. More than 80% of policymakers cited funding as a major challenge, with most cities lacking sustainable models for supporting culture. Even where infrastructure exists, broader systems, like transport and digital access, are often missing, limiting reach and inclusivity. While cultural activity is widespread, it is frequently informal and under-recognised, meaning creatives often lack stable incomes, visibility, or protection.

Despite these barriers, culture continues to offer accessible pathways into employment and enterprise. But without recognition or targeted support, many creatives remain economically vulnerable. Building trust between policymakers and creative communities is essential, alongside improved governance, institutional coordination, and sustainable funding.

Key Findings from *African Alternatives*:

Cities need data to advocate for culture

Reliable data and tools like the *Creative Vibrancy Index for Africa* can shift perceptions of culture from 'nice to have' to a strategic priority, particularly when linked to identity, tourism, and youth opportunities.⁴⁶

African knowledge must shape policy

Policymakers are calling for postcolonial African and South-South frameworks that value Indigenous knowledge, community creativity, and locally defined success. These frameworks can help cities respond to rapid modernisation whilst celebrating tradition and identity.



Vuyisile Mshudulu, City of Johannesburg's Director of Arts, Culture and Heritage, speaking at the World Cities Culture Summit 2023. Image courtesy of the City of São Paulo.

Policy implementation is a challenge

Even well-crafted policy fails without institutional buy-in. Dedicated city-level cultural departments and cross-sector governance models are needed to prioritise delivery and align efforts across government tiers.

Funding models need to change

Cities are seeking new partnerships with philanthropic, private, and civic actors. But power dynamics must be addressed: funders need to invest on equal terms, and cities must trust and support creative communities.

Cities can lead the way in new policy models

Cultural policy cannot be a one-size-fits-all. Identifying the drivers of cultural policies will create needs-led policies for the unique context of different cities. These may be major cross departmental strategies, or micro-interventions that support existing cultural activities.

Peer networks are critical

Policymakers and leaders expressed a need for a space to collaborate, exchange with peers and collectively learn. By sharing best practices, adapting successful policies, and accessing research, cities can enhance their cultural ecosystems, and create evidence-based policies.

CITY DATA AND PROFILES

This summary is based on findings from *African Alternatives: The Future of Creative Cities*, research by Andani.Africa for World Cities Culture Forum and British Council (2024). For detailed city profiles, please see the full research on our website.

ACCRA

Geographical area: 225.7 km²
Total population: 2.67 million (2023 estimate)
GDP per capita: USD 2,374 (2021 figure for Ghana)
Main industries: Accra is a centre for manufacturing, marketing, finance, insurance, and transportation.

Languages spoken: English is the city’s official language. Other languages such as Akan (Fante/Twi), Ghanaian Pidgin English, Ewe and Hausa are popular within the city.

ADDIS ABABA

Geographical area: 527 km²
Total population: 5.47 million (2023 estimate)
GDP per capita: USD 1,475 (2023 figure for Ethiopia)
Main industries: The economy is largely driven by infrastructure development, manufacturing, agriculture and the service industry.
Languages spoken: Several languages are spoken in the city, with Amharic being the primary and official language spoken, and English the principal foreign language that is also widely understood.

CAPE TOWN

Geographical area: 2,455 km²
Total population: 4.89 million (2023 estimate)
GDP per capita: USD 4,836.85 (2021); national is USD 6,776.50 (2022)
Main industries: The city’s economy is driven by five main sectors: manufacturing, finance, tourism, agriculture and construction.
Languages spoken: The most common languages in the city, also national official languages, are Afrikaans, Xhosa and English. Afrikaans is the most spoken home language in Cape Town, but with the city being a melting pot of cultures and nationalities, a common language is essential in bridging the language barrier, and most people are able to converse in English.

DAKAR

Geographical area: 110 km²
Total population: 1.5 million (2022 estimate)
GDP per capita: USD 1,438 (2019), national is USD 1,606 (2023 estimate)
Main industries: Dakar concentrates 80% of the economic activities of Senegal and is a hub for shipping and transport in the region. Dakar also houses headquarters of large companies and major financial and banking institutions.
Languages spoken: French is the official language in Senegal. Wolof is widely spoken as a first or second language and as the lingua franca in Dakar. Other recognised languages include Serer, Mandinka, Pulaar, Diola and Soninke.

FREETOWN

Geographical area: 82 km²
Total population: 1.3 million (2023 estimate)
GDP per capita: USD 1,079 (2018), national is USD 670 (2023 estimate)
Main industries: Freetown is Sierra Leone’s commercial and transportation centre, and its economy revolves largely around its natural harbour, the largest on the African continent. Main industries include food and beverage processing, fish packing, rice milling, petroleum refining, diamond cutting, and the manufacture of cigarettes, paint, textile, and beer. Exports include palm oil and kernels, cocoa, coffee and ginger.
Languages spoken: The Krio language (derived from English and a variety of African languages) of the Sierra Leone Creole people is Freetown’s primary language of communication and is by far the most widely spoken language in the city.

HARARE

Geographical area: 940 km²
Total population: 1.578 million (2023 estimate)
GDP per capita: USD 2,901 (2022); national is USD 1,376 (2023 estimate)
Main industries: The economy is largely driven by finance, manufacturing, mining, agriculture, and tourism. Harare is the international trade centre for tobacco, maize, cotton, and citrus fruits.
Languages spoken: The main native language groupings in Harare are Shona, Ndebele, and English. Shona is the most popular, spoken by over 70% of the city’s population, followed by Ndebele spoken by at least 20% of the city. As a former British colony, English is also popular and is used in schools and for official business.

JOHANNESBURG

Geographical area: 1,645 km²
Total population: 5.77 million (2023 estimate)
GDP per capita: USD 20,100 (2014); national is USD 6,776 (2022)
Main industries: Johannesburg’s economy is dominated by four sectors: financial and business services, retail and wholesale trade, community and social services, and the manufacturing sector.
Languages spoken: The official language of Johannesburg is English, and since the city is home to a large number of people from all over the world, a number of other languages are also spoken in the city, including Xhosa, Zulu, Tswana, Sotho, and Afrikaans.

KAMPALA

Geographical area: 189 km²
Total population: 3.8 million (2023 estimate)
GDP per capita: USD 2,655 (2017); national is USD 964 (2022)
Main industries: The financial sector drives Uganda’s economy, and Kampala is its financial and economic centre. Due to its thriving agricultural position, Kampala is responsible for the country’s export of coffee, cotton, tea, tobacco and sugar. It also has businesses specialising in food, metal products and furniture. Kampala has a flourishing informal economy in the areas of transportation, trade, and recycling.
Languages spoken: English is the first official language of Uganda, and Kiswahili is the second. Luganda and English are the most widely used languages in Kampala, though given that the city’s residents use their ethnicity as a means of self-identification, languages are also specific to Ugandan ethnic groups, including Baganda, Banyankole, Basoga, Bafumbira, Batoro, Bakiga, Alur, Bagisu (more popularly known as Bamasaba), Banyoro, Iteso, Langi and Acholi.

KIGALI

Geographical area: 732 km²
Total population: 1.25 million (2023 estimate)
GDP per capita: USD 2,865 (2017); national is USD 940 (2022)
Main industries: Main sectors driving the economy within the city are agriculture, fishing and forestry. Other sectors that contribute to the city’s overall economy are government, transportation, communication, manufacturing, finance and microfinance. Tourism currently provides an important input to the economy as well.
Languages spoken: Rwanda has four official languages, the first being Kinyarwanda, and then French, English, and Swahili / Kiswahili.

LAGOS

Geographical area: 1,007 km²
Total population: 15.9 million (2023 estimate)
GDP per capita: USD 2,174 (2018); national is USD 2,513 (2023 estimate)
Main industries: Lagos is Nigeria’s economic and financial nerve, with industry primarily led by manufacturing, financial institutions, and information technology.
Languages spoken: English is the official language of Nigeria, and Hausa, Yoruba, Igbo and English Creole are also widely used. Lagos is dominated by the Niger-Congo linguistic group, comprising Kwa; Ijoid; Atlantic (Fula); Benue-Congo (Tiv, Jukun, Edo, Igbo, Igala, Idoma, Nupe, Gwari and Yoruba).

NAIROBI

Geographical area: 703.9 km²
Total population: 5.3 million (2023 estimate)
GDP per capita: national is USD 2,099 (2022)
Main industries: Kenya’s economy is mainly driven by the finance, tourism, construction and agriculture sectors, with the services industries establishing themselves as another key driver of growth. Nairobi city and its metropolitan region are at the heart of these developments, serving as a major regional commercial and service hub, with the regional headquarters of several African and international companies and organisations headquartered in Nairobi.
Languages spoken: There are two official languages, English and Kiswahili, though Nairobi is a multilingual city with residents usually speaking their mother tongues (such as Kikuyu or Maa) within their communities.

FOCUS ON LATIN AMERICA

In collaboration with the Union of Ibero-America Capital Cities (UCCI)

Culture is a transformative force at the heart of Latin American cities, capable of revitalising districts, supporting social cohesion, and imagining new futures. Faced with social, economic, and political challenges, the region's cities are placing culture at the centre of their development agendas, recognising both its symbolic and economic value.

Cultural policies address multiple urban priorities from building citizenship, generating employment and supporting inclusion and equity. And in most cases align with UN Sustainable Development Goals.

Symbolic Value: Identity, Cohesion, and Building Citizenship

The Latin America and the Caribbean region is the most unequal region in the world⁴⁸, where crime and violence remain obstacles to sustainable development. In this context, strengthening cultural policies has emerged as a strategic tool to bridge divides, expand opportunities, and strengthen citizenship. The city of **Medellín** dramatically reduced violence through a policy that combined social and cultural investment with the creation of Library Parks in the most vulnerable areas. In **Buenos Aires**, the *Cultural Neighbourhood Programme* supports access to culture through cultural centres in different parts of the city. One of the most successful elements of this programme, *Barrios Creativos*, was inspired through World Cities Culture Forum's *Leadership Exchange Programme*. In **Bogotá**, the city's public reading policy promotes participation in cultural life as a human right, working to reduce unequal access.

Culture is also a powerful way to promote diversity and combat discrimination. Latin America is a region proud of its ancestral roots, while remaining open to new identities emerging from contemporary migration processes. Peru has 48 recognised Indigenous languages, and Ecuador counts Kichwa and Aymara amongst its official languages - demonstrating the region's great cultural diversity, shaped by internal migration and displacement.⁴⁹ One policy designed to preserve historic diversity in a dynamically changing city is **Quito's** *Quitú Cara*

Award, which recognises and supports individuals and communities that safeguard heritage in the city's historically rural districts. Likewise, **Lima's** *Pascalles* - street parades that utilise participatory programming through networks of cultural institutions - celebrate the diverse communities present within the city. Across the region, the integration of migrants is recognised as a political and cultural priority, with local governments increasingly recognise that culture can build bridges, build community, and break down prejudices.

These policies are also sustained by the powerful regional inspiration from the *Cultura Viva Comunitaria* programme, launched nationally in Brazil in 2004 under the leadership of Célio Turino. Since then, it has expanded to Argentina, Peru, Uruguay, Paraguay, and Chile, recognising and celebrating culture that grows from within communities. In **Panamá City**, initiatives such as the *Casco Peatonal*, where sections of the inner city are temporarily pedestrianised, are creating organic space for artisans, street performers, tours and community gatherings. In contrast to top-down policy, this approach values the collective processes of building citizenship and identity, promoting culture that comes from the grassroots and transforms communities from within.

Economic Value: Creativity, Employment, and Urban Development

Across the region the creative economy is increasingly viewed as an engine of growth, innovation, and employment, and a way of promoting international recognition. For more than a decade, it has been part of government plans and country branding strategies, including Colombia's *National Development Plan 2022 - 2026*, Chile's roadmap for creative industries and Panamá's *Creative Economy Strategy 2030*. Cities in the region are already seeing returns on their cultural strategies, such as **Santo Domingo**, where the *Programa Integral de Desarrollo Turístico y Urbano* has expanded public space by 137%, rehabilitated 2.8 km of streets and restored more than 120 building facades.

From music, audiovisual, performing arts, and publishing, to emerging industries such as gaming, animation, and digital services, the creative economy is gaining ground in the urban environment and acting as a catalyst for innovation. Cities across the region are introducing policies to support the creative economy and remove barriers to participation. In **Buenos Aires**, *Impulso Cultural* is a centralised online platform where citizens can submit funding applications and access digital education and tools. These policies aim to promote cultural entrepreneurship, expand access to finance and improve long-term sustainability.

The region's flagship cultural festivals and events have a symbolic impact as well as generating

significant economic benefits. Culture is deeply connected to tourism, gastronomy, hospitality, transportation, and other service sectors. Outstanding examples include *Virada Cultural* in **São Paulo**, one of the most important cultural events in Brazil and Latin America, recognised for its ability to mobilise millions of people in 24 non-stop hours of free artistic programming. This event is just one of many, including international book, film, and visual arts fairs, and the **Rio de Janeiro** Carnival that are transforming the region's cities.

Cultural Governance and Data Informed Policy

More cities are designating specific public spaces and dedicated teams for cultural activity, helping to raise the profile of culture within city structures. Some examples include the public-private study, *Cultura nas Capitais*, which uses innovative methods to measure access to cultural services across all 27 Brazilian capital cities.⁵⁰ Despite limited budgets and frequent political transitions, these teams are recognised for their professionalism, commitment, and vision - promoting inclusive and diverse cultural policies deeply rooted in local realities.

At the same time, the importance of strong cultural information systems is growing. Although gaps in data collection and a lack of consistent methodologies persist, there is growing recognition of the need to establish cultural indicators that can measure the impact of culture on economic development, social cohesion, and citizen wellbeing. In **Bogotá**, for example, a cultural AI strategy combines technology with civic participation. By using AI language models to analyse qualitative insights from citizen interviews, the city is improving its cultural planning and strengthening the connection between people, place and participation.

Toward a Common Horizon

Looking to the future, many cities are beginning a new digital transition that is transforming the relationship between culture, citizenship and technology. Cities are incorporating new technologies into cultural policies, as tools for both creation and for access. In **Santiago de Chile**, the *Centre for Technological Revolution in Creative Industries (CRTIC)*, connects research, development, and technological innovation with the creative sector through collaborative public-private initiatives which combine art and emerging technologies. Digital platforms, artificial intelligence, augmented reality, and immersive experiences are beginning to be integrated into museums, cultural centres, and festivals, opening up new possibilities for innovation, participation, and audience expansion. Meanwhile, video games, animation, and digital content are becoming emerging drivers within Latin America's cultural and creative industries, primarily driven



Easter Parade in Panamá © Photo courtesy of UCCI

by the private sector but with growing, through fragmented, public support.

Culture is reaffirming its place as a strategic public good with both symbolic and economic value, and the region's cities are moving forward, navigating challenges with determination, resilience, and a vision for the future. The key challenge now is to consolidate this progress, by building solid institutional frameworks, robust information systems, and participatory governance that can support culture in reaching its full potential as a real driver of social and economic transformation.

CULTURE IS A TRANSFORM- ATIVE FORCE AT THE HEART OF LATIN AMERICAN CITIES

CITY DATA AND PROFILES

This summary is based on findings from *Creatividad, Cultura e Innovación en Ciudades Iberoamericanas* (2025), research undertaken by UCCI and World Cities Culture Forum. For detailed city profiles, including further exploration of creative industries please see the full research on our website.

BOGOTÁ

Geographical area: 1.636 km²
Total population: 8.034.649
Main industries: Colombia’s main economic engine. The city accounts for approximately 25% of the national GDP and has a diversified production structure, with a strong presence in the service, creative industries, trade, and technology sectors.

Languages: Spanish

BRASÍLIA

Geographical area: 5,760 km²
Total population: 2,817,381
Main industries: Public administration, financial and professional services, commerce, construction and infrastructure, technology and innovation. To a lesser extent, agricultural activities and light industries such as processed foods, furniture, and construction materials.

Languages: Portuguese

BUENOS AIRES

Geographical area: 203 km²
Total population: 3,121,707
Main industries: Public administration, commerce, manufacturing, services, information and communication technologies, audiovisual, design, tourism, and real estate development.

Languages: Spanish

LIMA

Geographical area: 2,672 km²
Total population: 10.292.408
Main industries: Financial services, education, commercial activities, food and beverages, textiles, and clothing, along with growing markets in technology, tourism, and gastronomy.

Languages: Spanish

PANAMÁ CITY

Geographical area: 86.6 km²
Total population: 1,367,767
Main industries: The privileged geostrategic position has facilitated its positioning as an international center for goods, services, and capital, and therefore, for trade, banking, and logistics.

Languages: Spanish

QUITO

Geographical area: 4.200 km²
Total population: 2.700.000
Main industries: Trade, transport, construction, public administration, tourism, and services.

Languages: The official language is Spanish. Kichwa and other Indigenous languages are also spoken, especially in the historical center and rural parishes areas.

RIO DE JANEIRO

Geographical area: 1,200 km2
Total Population: 6,211,223
Main Industries: The service sector dominates the city’s economy, along with public administration, commerce, transportation, industry, and construction, although with lesser relative importance.

Languages: Portuguese



Masked performer in Quito © Photo courtesy of UCCI

SANTIAGO

Geographical area: 23 km²
Total population: 2.700.000
Main industries: Trade, transport, construction, public administration, tourism, and services.

Languages: The official language is Spanish. Kichwa and other Indigenous languages are also spoken, especially in the historical center and rural parishes areas.

SANTO DOMINGO

Geographical area: 91 km²
Total population: National District: 1,029,110 people, composed of 490,052 men (48%) and 539,058 women (52%).
Main industries: Cultural and urban tourism: Approximately 1 million annual visitors to the Historic Center; the city is a hub for cultural tourism, conventions, and cruises. Commerce and services: Large concentration of wholesale and retail businesses. Financial services, telecommunications, and BPO: Home to banks, insurance companies, and technology companies. Manufacturing and light industry: Presence of processed food, cement, tobacco, beverage, and textile industries in the city and its metropolitan area. Free trade zones and exports: Although their epicenter is in surrounding areas, many exporting companies operate from the capital under the free trade zone regime, which represents more than 67% of national exports.

Languages: Spanish

SÃO PAULO

Geographical area: 1.521 km²
Total population: 11.451.245
Main industries: Major sectors include finance, technology, health and education. The city also maintains a solid industrial base in sectors such as machinery, chemicals, and automotive manufacturing.

Languages: Portuguese.

REGIONAL DATA

- Economic contribution of the cultural sector in Latin America: between 2% and 3% of each country’s GDP.
- Cultural and creative industries contribute 2.2% of Latin America’s GDP—over USD 124 billion annually.
- The region generates 1.9 million jobs in cultural and creative industries (CCI), representing 7% of global employment in these industries.
- High rate of informal employment: 24% of those working in the cultural and creative sector do so under informal conditions, and 18% work intermittently.
- Service exports: USD 17.7 billion (1% of the global total)
- Goods exports: USD 9.5 billion (1.4% of the global total)
- There are 131 sites listed on the World Heritage List across the continent, of which 91 are ‘cultural’ locations. All 33 countries in the region have ratified the UNESCO Convention on the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage.
- 29 cities are part of the UNESCO Creative Cities Network, spanning various fields such as music, design, gastronomy, literature, film, and folk arts.

MORE REGIONAL TRENDS

From Indigenous knowledge in Australasia to digital innovation in East Asia, cities are using culture to shape more inclusive, sustainable, and creative futures. Drawing on recent survey data and case study submissions from our cities, this section offers a snapshot of emerging cultural policy trends across regions. While each region has its own distinctive priorities, common themes such as access to space, climate action, youth engagement, and equity, highlight the extent to which all major cities share similar challenges in defining tomorrow’s cultural landscape.

AUSTRALASIA

Adelaide, Melbourne, Sydney

First Nations First: Cities are embedding Indigenous knowledge and leadership into policy and public space through initiatives like Melbourne’s *Aboriginal Arts Grants*.

Creative Space Protection: Rising land costs are driving innovative solutions to secure affordable cultural infrastructure and artist workspaces in Sydney.⁵¹

Climate and Culture: Growing use of the arts in climate action through sustainable festivals, artist residencies, and public engagement, including Melbourne’s *Refuge* programme.

Youth and Talent Development: Ensuring support for young and underrepresented creatives such as Melbourne’s *Warehouse Residency* for deaf and disabled artists.

Inclusive Streetscapes: Partnering with private organisations and developers to embed public art that represents the cities communities from Sydney’s *Creative Hoardings* to new development partnerships.

EAST ASIA

Beijing, Chengdu, Guangzhou, Hong Kong, Nanjing, Seoul, Taipei, Tokyo

Digital Culture as Urban Infrastructure: Nanjing’s immersive exhibitions and Tokyo’s *Civic Creative Base* embed digital tools in culture, while Chengdu supports creative tech startups and gaming industries.

Heritage Protection and Promotion: Cities revitalise tangible and intangible heritage from Beijing’s Central Axis to Guangzhou’s markets, and Taipei’s corporate investment in heritage initiatives.

Expanding Creative Space: Cities including Taipei, Hong Kong, and Tokyo expand innovative creative space schemes to support artists and counter land scarcity.

Citizen-Centred Access: Widening participation through initiatives from Seoul’s *Outdoor Libraries*, to Nanjing’s participatory arts activities.

Internationalisation and Tourism: Cities are boosting international profiles and visitor engagement from major global events in Tokyo, to Nanjing’s literary tourism, and Guangzhou’s design week.

EUROPE

Amsterdam, Barcelona, Brussels, Cologne, Dublin, Edinburgh, Hamburg, Helsinki, Istanbul, Kyiv, Lisbon, London, Milan, Oslo, Paris, Stockholm, Vienna, Warsaw, Zürich

Inclusive Participation: Decentralised programming in Vienna and Milan and participatory programming in Paris, Lisbon and Zürich are supporting citizen engagement.

Sustainable Culture: Cities are embedding climate action within cultural policy from Edinburgh’s *Carbon Management Initiative* to the *Helsinki Biennial*.

Cultural Infrastructure and Space: From supporting affordable access creative spaces in London and Cologne, to grant schemes in Oslo and Stockholm, new venues in Warsaw and heritage revitalisation in Istanbul.

Night-time Culture: From night-time strategies in cities like Amsterdam and Dublin, to ensuring safety in Brussels, and Barcelona’s Night-Time Commissioner.

Equity and Decolonisation: From Amsterdam’s National Slavery Museum to decolonisation initiatives in Hamburg, and street renaming in Kyiv, cities are prioritising confronting colonial legacies.



Sikka mural project © Photo courtesy of Dubai Culture & Arts Authority

NORTH AMERICA

Austin, Boston, Chicago, Los Angeles, Montréal, New York, San Francisco, Toronto, Vancouver

Securing Funding: From income through hotel taxes in San Francisco, to securing major decentralising funding in New York, diversifying funding uplifts in Toronto, Vancouver’s investment in community organisations and sports groups, cities are working to ensure financial stability and sustainability.

Artists in Governance: Los Angeles and New York are recognising the value of creativity by embedding artists within public agencies to co-create equitable policies and community engagement.

Space as Infrastructure: Protecting vulnerable creative space is an increasing priority from Rally Austin’s *Cultural Trust* for affordable space, to New York’s *NYC Create in Place* programme for culture at risk, Boston’s *Making Space for Creative Enterprise* transforming underutilised office and retail spaces and Toronto’s stabilisation of Artscape’s assets.

Equity in the Public Realm: Chicago and San Francisco are leading major community initiatives to rebalance the stories and perspectives memorialised in public space.

Citizen Voice: From including young people’s voices in Montréal’s cultural policy, to city wide consultation in Chicago, cities are increasing citizen voice in policymaking.

MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA

Abu Dhabi, Dubai

Public Art and Placemaking: Abu Dhabi’s *Public Art Biennial* and Dubai’s *Sikka Festival* activate public spaces.

Cultural Heritage Conservation: A key policy area from conserving modern heritage in Abu Dhabi and supporting intangible cultural heritage.

Creative Districts and Urban Regeneration: Dubai’s Al Quoz Creative Zone is fostering a vibrant creative ecosystem.

Cultural Infrastructure Development: Saadiyat Cultural District in Abu Dhabi is establishing a world class cultural destination.

Creative Economy and Opportunities: Evidence is being captured in Dubai’s *Creative Dubai 2024 Impact Report*.

SOUTH AND SOUTH EAST ASIA

Bengaluru, Jakarta

Conserving Natural and Cultural Heritage: Campaigns like Bengaluru’s *Wake the Lake* and Jakarta’s heritage restoration projects turn conservation into community-building.

Culture for Economic and Social Change: Jakarta’s *Museum for Local Economic Development for Social Changes* and Betawi cultural villages link heritage with local development and wellbeing.

Technology and Culture: As regional tech hubs, Bengaluru celebrates its recent innovation legacy through a new Museum of Innovation, while Jakarta expands support for creative industries.

Festivals and Experimental Practice: Cities promote intergenerational creativity and inclusive participation through initiatives like *Unboxing Bengaluru* and Jakarta’s *Canal Theatre*.

Design-Driven Cities: Bengaluru’s policy applies design thinking across urban policy to improve liveability and foster creative solutions.

CITY PROFILES DATA

This section of the Report gets down to ‘street level’ with information, key data and case studies from 45 cities in the World Cities Culture Forum. It shows how cities are responding to cultural challenges and opportunities in practice, offering ideas that other cities can adapt or build on.

It also introduces the new *CREATIVE Data Framework*. Developed by World Cities Culture Forum and building on the OECD data framework, it organises cultural and creative data into eight thematic categories: Context, Related Sectors, Economy and Employment, Access and Participation, Talent, Infrastructure and Heritage, Value of Investment, and Enabling Policies.

In the following pages, key city data is presented using the *CREATIVE Data Framework*. By bringing together all the available data from our cities, the *CREATIVE Data Framework* supports a global overview of the contribution of culture to cities. The full dataset is available on our website.

CONTEXT

Focuses on demographic and geographical data, including population, area size, age distribution and employment to provide a foundational understanding of the city.

RELATED SECTORS

Highlights industries closely tied to culture, such as tourism and hospitality. Data points include number of tourists, nightlife venues, and dining establishments.

ECONOMY AND EMPLOYMENT

Captures economic and employment data specific to the cultural and creative sectors, including businesses, occupations, and consumer spending.

ACCESS AND PARTICIPATION

Explores cultural engagement through activities such as attending performances, visiting museums, and using libraries, noting demographic variations.

TALENT

Focuses on the development and retention of creative professionals. This includes specialised education, student enrolment in cultural disciplines and resources for training.

INFRASTRUCTURE AND HERITAGE

Examines cultural assets such as museums, theatres, libraries, and heritage sites. It also includes data on event venues and spaces for artistic creation.

VALUE OF INVESTMENT

Tracks financial inputs into culture, such as city budgets, grants, and investments individual artists, events and organisations.

ENABLING POLICIES

Outlines policies that support the cultural and creative sectors, from tax reliefs and funding mechanisms to strategies for education, sustainability and collaboration.

ABU DHABI

With a population of nearly 3 million, Abu Dhabi is the capital of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and a city where heritage and ambition combine to shape a bold cultural vision. As a fast-growing metropolis, it balances deep-rooted traditions with global cultural exchange.

Abu Dhabi’s cultural heritage is richly expressed through practices such as Al Sadu weaving and the Al-Ayyala performance, both recognised by UNESCO. The annual *Al Hosn Festival* brings this heritage to life at Qasr Al Hosn, blending traditional crafts, music, and food with contemporary cultural programming.

The development of the Saadiyat Cultural District and the establishment of major institutions such as the Louvre Abu Dhabi and the upcoming Zayed National Museum anchor the city’s expanding cultural infrastructure. Through initiatives like *Abu Dhabi Art* and the *Culture Summit Abu Dhabi*, the city fosters dialogue and creativity on a global scale.

Abu Dhabi’s cultural governance is guided by a long-term vision. Aligned with the *UAE Centennial 2071* plan, it emphasises sustainability, innovation, and inclusive growth as core priorities.

Public Art Abu Dhabi Biennial

From November 2024 to April 2025, the inaugural *Public Art Abu Dhabi Biennial* ‘Place Matters’ explored the evolving concept of public space in Abu Dhabi through the lens of four main factors: environment, community, urbanity, and indigeneity. Featuring over 70 site-specific art installations by UAE and international artists, this public art strategy transformed Abu Dhabi into an emirate-wide celebration of art, culture, and community, while encouraging cultural participation.

Modern Heritage Initiative

Launched in 2023, Abu Dhabi’s *Modern Heritage Initiative* identifies, safeguards, and maintains sites that have shaped Abu Dhabi’s cultural identity in the last 50 years. These sites are safeguarded for future generations due to their architectural, historical, societal, or scientific importance. The first 64 buildings conserved include a school, sports centre, hotels, and markets that have become culturally significant landmarks, serving as paradigms of architectural design and urban planning.



From top: Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque, Abu Dhabi © Canva; United Arab Emirates National Day Celebrations in Abu Dhabi © Photo by 86 Media on Unsplash

Saadiyat Cultural District

To solidify its role as a nexus of cultural innovation and attract 39.3 million visitors by 2030, Abu Dhabi has developed the Saadiyat Cultural District, which is home to world-class museums - including the Louvre Abu Dhabi and Guggenheim Abu Dhabi - cultural institutions, arts schools, and other facilities. In addition to significantly increasing the city’s cultural infrastructure, the district will promote cultural exchange, harness the power of creativity, and foster cultural diversity among visitors and residents alike.

Context

Total area (km²): City	67,340
Total resident population: City	2,908,173

Related Sectors

Annual no. of tourists	4,800,000
------------------------	-----------

Economy and Employment

Creative industries employment (% of total employment)	1.00%
--	-------

Access and Participation

Carnival or festival: % of total population who attended a carnival or festival	5.50%
---	-------

Talent

Total no. of higher education students	73,487
% of female higher education students	64%



The Louvre, Abu Dhabi © Photo by Agnieszka Stankiewicz on Unsplash

Infrastructure and Heritage

No. of UNESCO World Heritage Sites within city boundaries	1
No. of museums	7
No. of heritage/historical sites (excluding museums)	221
No. of public libraries	12
No. of cinemas	27
No. of theatres	24
No. of live music venues	200

Value of Investment

Value of new projects approved	66,000,000,000
Value of Zayed National Museum Research Fund	1,000,000

Enabling Policies

Tourism strategy	Yes
------------------	-----

AMSTERDAM

Amsterdam, the capital of the Netherlands, is a historic and forward-looking cultural hub. The City of Amsterdam is home to over 900,000 people and is one of Europe’s most diverse cities, with a third of residents born abroad. In 2025, Amsterdam marks its 750th anniversary, celebrating a rich legacy shaped by global influences.

The city boasts over 1,000 cultural institutions, from world-renowned museums to experimental art spaces and a dynamic nightlife scene. Cultural exports from Amsterdam account for half of the national total, and more than 40% of visitors come specifically for its cultural offer.

Recent cultural policy focuses on equity, accessibility, and long-term sustainability of cultural support and investment. Initiatives include expanded cultural education in underserved areas, new investment in inclusive nightlife, and advancing plans for the National Slavery Museum through a participatory process with local communities. Guided by a strong public mission, Amsterdam continues to lead with creativity, inclusion, and innovation at the heart of its cultural identity.

Data-led Cultural Mapping

Amsterdam’s rapid population growth strained its cultural infrastructure, with unevenly distributed facilities and declining availability of affordable creative workspaces. In response, the City of Amsterdam mapped all cultural spaces to identify gaps and inform strategic investment. This data-driven approach leads to targeted development across districts - such as a proposed music street, new exhibition spaces, and theatres - enhancing cultural infrastructure and increasing cultural participation citywide.

National Slavery Museum

The City of Amsterdam has played a leading role in initiating a new National Slavery Museum which is due to open in 2030. The EUR 115 million project - jointly funded by the City of Amsterdam and the Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture & Science - aims to tell the whole Dutch slavery story, and involve grassroots communities to bring about reconciliation, social change, healing and recovery by facing, acknowledging and processing the past.



All images: Photo courtesy of the City of Amsterdam

Implementation Agenda for Night Culture

Amsterdam’s *Implementation Agenda for Night Culture 2023-2026* is a strategic plan to strengthen the city’s night-time economy through 15 targeted measures. It addresses key challenges like noise complaints, lack of affordable space, and barriers for emerging creatives. With initiatives including a noise reduction fund, talent subsidies, and feasibility studies for new venues, the agenda supports a vibrant, inclusive nightlife while aligning with broader cultural and community goals.

Context

Total area (km²): City	243.65
Total resident population: City	931,298
Population Female	470,532
Population Male	460,766
Employment rate	95%
Self-employment rate	20%

Related Sectors

Annual no. of tourists	24,500,000
No. of night clubs, discos and dance halls	541
No. of bars	905
No. of restaurants	1,861

Economy and Employment

No. of businesses in cultural and creative sectors	50,267
No. of people employed in cultural and creative sectors	87,470

Access and Participation

Artistic activities: % of total population who engaged in artistic activity	57%
Cinema: % of total population who went to the cinema at least once in the last year	66%
Live performance: % of total population who attended a live performance (excluding music) at least once in the last year	32%
Live music: % of total population who attended a live music event (including indoor and outdoor venues) at least once in the last year	37%
Museums: % of total population who visited a museum or historical site	67%
Cultural centres: % of total population who visited a cultural centre	72%

Talent

No. of higher education providers in the city	6
No. of specialist arts higher education providers in the city	4

Infrastructure and Heritage

No. of UNESCO World Heritage Sites within city boundaries	2
No. of museums	73
No. of heritage/historical sites (excluding museums)	9,796
No. of public libraries	28
No. of cinemas	20
No. of multi-arts venues	220
No. of theatres	31
No. of live music venues	62
No. of film festivals	4
No. of music festivals	155
No. of fashion week events	1

Value of Investment

Total city budget (current prices)	7,056,300,000
Total culture department budget (current prices)	186,300,000
Value of grants made to arts and cultural organisations (current prices)	160,300,000
Value of grants made to individual artists (current prices)	9,700,000
Value of grants and funding for cultural events (current prices)	1,400,000

Enabling Policies

Cultural strategy	Yes
Creative industries strategy	Yes
Night-time economy strategy	Yes
Tourism strategy	Yes
Regular data collection/mapping of CCS businesses and employment numbers	Yes
Regular mapping of heritage at risk	Yes
Subsidised access to culture for certain groups (e.g. young people, older people, etc)	Yes
Policies for arts education in schools	Yes
Affordable workspace policies targeted towards artists	Yes
Policies to promote diversity, equality and inclusion in cultural and creative sectors	Yes
Policies to promote environmental sustainability within cultural and creative sectors	Yes
Policies promoting international cultural exchange and collaboration	Yes

AUSTIN

Austin, Texas, known as the ‘Live Music Capital of the World’, has evolved from a relaxed college town into one of the fastest-growing metropolitan areas in the United States. With nearly a million residents, the city is now a hub for technology, creativity, and cultural innovation.

Its heritage is rooted in music, counterculture and progressive values. Home to major festivals like SXSW and *Austin City Limits*, a vibrant nightlife and over 100,000 creative workers, Austin is also the only UNESCO Creative City of Media Arts in the U.S. Institutions like the University of Texas at Austin and iconic districts like Red River Cultural District and African American Cultural Heritage District reflect its diverse cultural makeup.

Cultural policy is driven by the Austin Arts, Culture, Music and Entertainment (AACME) Department and the Arts Commission. Recent initiatives, including the *Creative Reset*, aim to protect cultural spaces and ensure Austin’s creative communities thrive amidst rapid development.

Art for All

Art for All is a public art initiative in Austin led by Raasin in the Sun and the City of Austin, offering paid creative opportunities to unhoused individuals. By transforming public spaces with community-driven murals, the programme promotes an inclusive culture and supports access to social services. Through mentorship, workshops, and storytelling, it fosters connection, skill-building, and financial stability – making public art more accessible for all while enriching Austin’s public realm strategy.

Economic and Cultural District Framework Policy

The City of Austin’s *Economic and Cultural District Framework Policy* was developed in 2024 to formalise and support the sustainability of cultural districts across the city. Focused on preserving cultural identity while fostering economic vitality, the policy provides a structured approach for designating and resourcing cultural and economic districts. It aligns with Austin’s broader cultural policy goals - emphasising equity, authenticity, and community engagement in place-based development.



From top: © Photo by Mitchell Kmetz on Unsplash; Lou Neff Point, Austin © Photo by Tomek Baginski on Unsplash; Photo courtesy of the City of Austin

Rally Austin

Launched in 2020, Rally Austin (formerly AEDC) protects Austin’s cultural identity by creating affordable cultural spaces through public real estate tools. Its Cultural Trust supports venues in key districts, including The Hole in the Wall and The Broken Spoke. With USD 152 million in active projects, Rally Austin is pioneering a model of artist-led stewardship, ensuring long-term affordability and sustainability for the city’s creative infrastructure.

Context

Total area (km²): City	846
Total resident population: City	993,588
Population Female	474,767
Population Male	504,933
Employment rate	97%
Self-employment rate	7%
% of foreign-born population	18%
Median annual wage (current prices)	91,501
% working age population (15-64 year olds) with tertiary degree or higher	62%

Related Sectors

Annual no. of tourists	27,400,000
No. of night clubs, discos and dance halls	280
No. of bars	308
No. of restaurants	4,755

Economy and Employment

No. of people employed in cultural and creative sectors	42,053
---	--------

Access and Participation

Museums: % of total population who visited a museum or historical site	20%
Cultural centres: % of total population who visited a cultural centre	14%

Talent

No. of higher education providers in the city	6
No. of specialist arts higher education providers in the city	6

Infrastructure and Heritage

No. of museums	25
No. of heritage/historical sites (excluding museums)	10
No. of public libraries	22
No. of cinemas	23
No. of multi-arts venues	679
No. of cultural centres	11
No. of theatres	33
No. of live music venues	158
No. of film festivals	25
No. of music festivals	39
No. of fashion week events	2
No. of books lent per year	7,760,000
No. of book and literary festivals	2
No. of book fairs	1
No. of theatre festivals	3
No. of dance festivals	1
No. of comedy festivals	2
No. of E-sports tournaments	1
No. of art and crafts fairs/markets	2

Value of Investment

Total city budget (current prices)	6,150,000,000
Total culture department budget (current prices)	11,257,000

Enabling Policies

Tourism strategy	Yes
Regular mapping of heritage at risk	Yes
Regular mapping of heritage at risk from climate change	Yes
Tax reliefs for film, TV, video games and other screen sectors	Yes
Special economic zones (SEZ) targeted towards cultural and creative businesses (e.g. creative enterprise zones)	Yes
Policies for arts education in schools	Yes
Government backed low-interest loans or microloans for cultural and creative sector businesses	Yes
Affordable workspace policies targeted towards artists	Yes
Policies supporting cultural and/or creative districts	Yes
Policies to promote diversity, equality and inclusion in cultural and creative sectors	Yes

BARCELONA

Barcelona is one of the most densely populated urban areas in Western Europe. With over 20% of its residents born abroad and more than 200 languages spoken, it is a truly global city with a strong regional identity.

Barcelona is home to eight UNESCO World Heritage Sites, seven by Gaudí, and has long inspired artists like Miró, Dalí, and Tàpies. The city also holds *UNESCO Creative City of Literature* status, with 40 public libraries. Its vibrant cultural life includes 55 theatres and 61 museums.

Barcelona sees culture as a universal right and a cornerstone of sustainable urban development. The City Council leads on cultural policy, supported by initiatives like Art Factories and the Barcelona Cultural District. With creative hubs like DHUB and regeneration projects like District 22@, Barcelona is protecting cultural heritage while embracing inclusive, innovation-led growth.

Night Commissioner

In early 2025, Barcelona City Council appointed its first *Alcaldeessa de Nit* (Night Commissioner), aligning the city with international best practice in night-time governance and positioning it as the first municipality in Spain to adopt this model. The role was created to elevate the city’s night-time strategy by developing an integrated 24-hour urban management approach. Carmen Zapata, a respected cultural leader, was chosen to signal political commitment to balancing cultural vitality with the wellbeing of residents. Her remit encompasses safety, inclusion, economic development, and cultural sustainability, ensuring that Barcelona’s nightlife is recognised as a part of the city’s cultural strategy.

Creative Factories

The *Fàbriques de Creació* programme transforms disused industrial buildings across Barcelona into inclusive hubs for artistic production, research and public engagement. These spaces support multidisciplinary work while anchoring culture in neighbourhoods under pressure from tourist-led gentrification. The vision is to scale the *Creative Factories* model globally - through artist residencies, strategic international partnerships, and satellite hubs.



From top: © Photo by Anna Murzilon on Unsplash;
© Photo by Richard Hewat on Unsplash

Context

Total area (km²): City	101
Total area (km²): Other geographies	636
Total resident population: City	1,702,547
Total resident population:	3,415,104
Other geographies	
Population Female	890,003
Population Male	812,544
Employment rate	76%
Self-employment rate	10%
% of foreign-born population	25%

Related Sectors

Annual no. of tourists	15,600,000
No. of night clubs, discos and dance halls	97
No. of bars	429
No. of restaurants	3,054

Economy and Employment

Creative industries employment (% of total employment)	13.10%
---	--------

Access and Participation

Cinema: % of total population who went to the cinema at least once in the last year	54%
Live performance: % of total population who attended a live performance (excluding music) at least once in the last year	37%
Live music: % of total population who attended a live music event (including indoor and outdoor venues) at least once in the last year	49%
Museums: % of total population who visited a museum or historical site	69%
Libraries: % of total population who visited a library	47%
Cultural centres: % of total population who visited a cultural centre	27%

Talent

No. of higher education providers in the city	8
No. of specialist arts higher education providers in the city	16

Infrastructure and Heritage

No. of UNESCO World Heritage Sites within city boundaries	8
No. of museums	61
No. of heritage/historical sites (excluding museums)	1,492
No. of public libraries	40
No. of cinemas	21
No. of cultural centres	52
No. of theatres	55
No. of live music venues	52
No. of film festivals	51
No. of music festivals	61
No. of fashion week events	2
No. of design week events	8
No. of museum admissions per year	24,685,918
No. of commercial art galleries	229
No. of library members	721,669
No. of books lent per year	3,516,307
No. of cinema screens	152
No. of theatre admissions per year	3,120,296
No. of bars, restaurants, and cafes licenced to play live music	102
No. of bookshops	253
No. of book and literary festivals	16
No. of book fairs	7
No. of theatre festivals	24
No. of dance festivals	3

Value of Investment

Total city budget (current prices)	3,806,970,370
Total culture department budget (current prices)	227,654,294
Value of grants made to arts and cultural organisations (current prices)	65,478,799
Value of grants made to individual artists (current prices)	744,000

Enabling Policies

Cultural strategy	Yes
Creative industries strategy	Yes
Night-time economy strategy	Yes
Tourism strategy	Yes
Regular data collection/mapping of CCS businesses and employment numbers	Yes
Regular mapping of heritage at risk	Yes
Subsidised access to culture for certain groups (e.g. young people, older people, etc)	Yes
Tax reliefs for cultural and creative sector organisations	Yes
Government supported creative hub(s) or co-working spaces	Yes
Government supported incubators and accelerators for cultural and creative sector startups	Yes

BEIJING

Beijing, capital of the People’s Republic of China, is a city of extraordinary depth and dynamism. With over 3,000 years of urban history and nearly 900 years as the national capital, it blends ancient legacy with forward-looking innovation. Home to over 21 million residents, Beijing remains a global centre of politics, heritage and creativity.

The city is rich in tangible and intangible cultural heritage, hosting eight UNESCO World Heritage Sites including the Forbidden City, the Temple of Heaven and the Great Wall. New cultural infrastructure includes the Beijing ICH Experience Centre and vibrant creative districts in Wangfujing and Sanlitun. In 2024, Beijing staged over 65,000 performances and welcomed 372 million cultural tourists.

Cultural governance is shaped by preservation, innovation and access. The 15-minute cultural service circle ensures facilities across 99% of the city. Beijing’s cultural policy is underpinned by grassroots engagement, major festivals and a strategic focus on safeguarding heritage while inspiring global cultural exchange.

Beijing’s Central Axis

In 2024, Beijing’s Central Axis was inscribed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. This historic urban spine showcases imperial planning traditions and blends conservation science, regulatory reform, digital innovation, and civic participation. From volunteer patrols to interactive technology, the project has preserved centuries-old heritage while improving the districts along the Axis - reinforcing community engagement and promoting international cultural dialogue.

Intangible Cultural Heritage

The city has established a three-tier system of representative intangible cultural heritage projects at the national, municipal, and district levels. Up to now, 14 projects in Beijing, including Peking Opera, Kunqu Opera, and Taijiquan, have been inscribed on *UNESCO’s Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity*, ranking first in China in terms of quantity. Beijing has 144 national-level representative Intangible Cultural Heritage projects and 303 municipal-level representative projects. Leveraging these unique cultural assets, Beijing launched its first *International Week of Intangible Cultural Heritage* in 2023; and opened the Intangible Cultural Heritage Experience Centre in 2024. Both have enabled Beijing to increase public engagement and boost inbound tourism.



From top: © Photo by Christian Lue on Unsplash; Beijing Lantern Festival 2024 © Photo by Gryffin Bit on Unsplash

Shougang Park

On the outskirts of the capital, Beijing’s cultural strategy has transformed a vast 863 hectares steel production site into a unique visitor destination, positioning Shougang Park as a model for urban development, and industrial heritage revitalisation. Following the 2022 Winter Olympics, Beijing repurposed Shougang Park’s industry structures - like blast furnaces and cooling towers - into thriving ecological, cultural and recreational spaces that boosted tourism and the night-time economy.

Context

Total area (km²): City	16,410
Total resident population: City	21,832,000
Population Female	10,719,000
Population Male	11,113,000

Related Sectors

Annual no. of tourists	371,529,000
No. of restaurants	5,675

Economy and Employment

No. of businesses in cultural and creative sectors	178,134
No. of people employed in cultural and creative sectors	1,091,093

Access and Participation

Libraries: No. of visitors	18,825,000
----------------------------	------------

Talent

No. of higher education providers in the city	110
No. of specialist arts higher education providers in the city	12



Photo courtesy of the City of Beijing

Infrastructure and Heritage

No. of UNESCO world heritage sites within city boundaries	8
No. of museums	241
No. of public libraries	20
No. of cinemas	332
No. of theatres	352
No. of books lent per year	14,050,000
No. of cinema screens	2,313

Value of Investment

Total city budget (current prices)	8,370,000,000
------------------------------------	---------------

Enabling Policies

Night-time economy strategy	Yes
Tourism strategy	Yes
Special economic zones (SEZ) targeted towards cultural and creative businesses (e.g. creative enterprise zones)	Yes

BENGALURU

Bengaluru, the capital of Karnataka, is one of India's fastest-growing cities and a leading hub of technology, creativity, and cultural innovation. Known for its green spaces and dynamic nightlife, the city is also home to a diverse population and a thriving arts scene.

Over 30 museums and numerous cultural institutions, including the Museum of Art and Photography, Indian Music Experience, and the upcoming Museum of Innovation, Start-up and Tech (MIST), highlight the city's commitment to both heritage and innovation. Festivals like the *Bangalore Literature Festival*, *UnboxingBLR Hubba*, and *Bengaluru Design Festival* reflect its creative energy.

Independent spaces such as the Bangalore Creative Circus, Rangashankara, IShantiRoad, and Shoonya support experimentation, residencies, and public dialogue. Policymakers are increasingly recognising the role of culture in shaping Bengaluru's identity and future.

Museum of Innovation, Start-Up and Technology

Bengaluru is set to host India's first Museum of Innovation, Start-Up and Technology, a 'phygital' institution honouring its journey as a global tech hub. Backed by an INR 1 billion public-private partnership, the museum will feature immersive, interactive exhibits on past, present, and future breakthroughs in biotech, fintech, and edtech. Combining physical and digital experiences, it will engage diverse audiences and celebrate India's technological pioneers, positioning Bengaluru as a beacon of innovation and entrepreneurship.

UnboxingBLR Festival

UnboxingBLR Hubba (UBH) is a citywide festival designed to ignite a cultural renaissance by bringing together artists, institutions, and stakeholders from across sectors. Aiming to elevate Bengaluru's global cultural standing, the festival spans diverse creative disciplines. The initiative harnesses public-private partnerships and digital platforms to maximise reach and participation, setting the stage for Bengaluru to grow not only as a tech capital, but also a thriving cultural powerhouse.



From top: © Photo by Arif Khan on Unsplash; Photo courtesy of the City of Bengaluru

Wake the Lake

Wake the Lake is a civic campaign led by United Way Bengaluru to restore the city's endangered lakes through community action. Bringing together citizens, civic bodies, and corporate partners, the initiative promotes sustainability, ecosystem preservation, and community ownership. Through clean-up drives, volunteer programmes, and environmental education, the project has revitalised multiple bodies of water and green spaces. Thousands of flowering and medicinal plants have been planted, strengthening biodiversity and reconnecting neighbourhoods with their natural environment.



© Photo by Gayatri Malhotra on Unsplash

BOSTON

Boston is a city where arts, technology, and education converge to power innovation. Home to world-renowned universities, a thriving creative economy, and the highest proportion of foreign-born residents among major U.S. cities, Boston’s diversity is a driving force for its cultural and civic life.

Boston’s legacy of civic firsts - bringing the United States its first public park, library, and school - continues today through ambitious public art initiatives like the *Un-monument Programme* and the new *Public Art Triennial*. The Mayor’s Office of Arts and Culture supports a thriving creative sector through grant making, infrastructure investment, and partnerships across housing, education, and sustainability.

From the Boston Arts Academy to the Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston cultivates the next generation of creatives, with over 70,000 creative jobs. It’s also a global hub for sneaker design, housing brands like New Balance, Reebok, and Puma.

Public Housing and Music Rehearsal Facility

Boston’s Mayor’s Office of Arts and Culture, in collaboration with Boston Planning and Development Agency, plans to transform 290 North Beacon Street into a co-location of deeply affordable housing and 40,000-square-foot music rehearsal facility campus. Designed for the local artist community, the space will also offer affordable housing, rehearsal and recording studios. Through a public participatory design and planning process, the project aims to bring stability for artists, deepen community connection, and integrate arts and music into daily life.

Boston Arts Academy

Opened in 2022, Boston Arts Academy is the city’s first and only public high school for visual and performing arts and Boston’s first full-inclusion high school, fully integrating students with disabilities into its programmes. The USD 137 million facility, supported by the City of Boston and Massachusetts School Building Authority, features studios, a 500-seat theatre, and recital hall. Specialising in theatre, dance, music, visual arts, and fashion technology, it nurtures creative talent and reflects Boston’s commitment to world-class learning environments.



Boston Public Library © Photo by MK.S on Unsplash

Making Space for Creative Enterprise

In response to an increase in empty office and retail spaces post-pandemic, Boston’s *Making Space for Creative Enterprises* initiative aims to turn underused areas in Downtown Boston into affordable hubs for artistic creation, performance, and community engagement. Launched in 2025 by the Downtown Business Alliance and the Mayor’s Office of Arts and Culture, the project aims to revitalise the neighbourhood, attract and support talent and investment, and put arts and culture at the heart of downtown’s renewal.

Context

Total area (km²): City	126
Total resident population: City	711,625
Population Female	375,417
Population Male	336,212
Employment rate	64%
Self-employment rate	6%
Population 15-64 years old	538,840
% of foreign-born population	27%
Income inequality (Gini coefficient)	0.5325
% working age population (15-64 year olds) with tertiary degree or higher	56%

Related Sectors

Annual no. of tourists	40,800,000
No. of night clubs, discos and dance halls	118
No. of bars	118
No. of restaurants	975
Area of free, publicly accessible parks and gardens as % of total city area	16%

Economy and Employment

No. of people employed in cultural and creative occupations	15,419
No. of people employed in cultural and creative sectors	20,450

Access and Participation

Libraries: No. of visitors	2,264,592
----------------------------	-----------

Talent

No. of higher education providers in the city	27
---	----



Audience at Future Fest, 2024, City Hall Plaza

© Photo by Annielly Camargo

Infrastructure and Heritage

No. of museums	18
No. of public libraries	9
No. of cinemas	4
No. of theatres	17

Value of Investment

Total city budget (current prices)	4,640,000,000
Total culture department budget (current prices)	4,521,712

Enabling Policies

Cultural strategy	Yes
-------------------	-----

BRASÍLIA

Brasília, Brazil’s modernist capital, was founded in 1960 to bring the country’s political centre to its heartland. Designed by Lucio Costa and Oscar Niemeyer, the city is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and home to around three million residents across the Federal District.

Its cultural identity is rooted in diversity. Built by workers from across Brazil, Brasília reflects a rich blend of traditions. Major landmarks include the Indigenous Peoples Memorial, Praça dos Orixás, and Casa do Cantador. The city has a proud history of mass gatherings and was named *Ibero-American Capital of Culture* in 2022.

Cultural policy is led by the Secretariat of Culture and Creative Economy, with a focus on heritage, equity and innovation. Programmes like the *Cultural Support Fund*, *Culture Incentive Law*, and *Culture Connection Programme* support artists and global exchange. Through micro-libraries, health concerts and strategic investment, Brasília is democratising culture and strengthening its vibrant creative economy.

Music and Healthcare

Launched in 2018, Brasília’s Claudio Santoro National Theatre Symphonic Orchestra began performing in hospitals while its main venue was closed for refurbishment. The programme evolved into a city-backed initiative uniting health and culture departments to improve wellbeing in healthcare settings. With full orchestral and small ensemble performances across every public hospital, the project reduced stress, uplifted patients and staff, and even improved clinical outcomes, building new audiences and developing interdepartmental collaboration.

Conexão Cultura

Launched in 2016, *Conexão Cultura* is a flagship programme supporting creative professionals in Brasília through grants, training, and international exchange. Led by the Secretariat of Culture and Creative Economy, it offers financial and strategic support across art forms including theatre, film, music, and circus. In 2019 alone, 491 entrepreneurs reached 28 countries. The programme strengthens global networks, fosters cultural excellence, and drives inclusive creative sector development.



© Photo by J. Balla Photography on Unsplash

Mala do Livro

Since 1990, Brasília’s *Mala do Livro* (‘Book Bag’) project has brought micro-libraries to neighbourhoods across the Federal District, boosting literacy and access to culture. Backed by the Secretariat of Culture and the National Library, each site offers 150 locally tailored books, managed by trained community agents who also lead storytelling and creative activities. With 193 libraries now active and new funding for expansion, the programme is deepening cultural participation citywide through reading and connection.

Context

Total area (km²): City	5,760
Total resident population: City	2,817,318
Population Female	48%
Population Male	52%
Employment rate	51%

Related Sectors

Annual no. of tourists	68,000
No. of bars and restaurants	10,987

Economy and Employment

Creative industries employment (% of total employment)	2.1%
--	------

Access and Participation

Artistic activities: % of total population who engaged in artistic activity	25%
Cinema: % of total population who went to the cinema at least once in the last year	50%
Live music: % of total population who attended a live music event (including indoor and outdoor venues) at least once in the last year	8%
Museums: % of total population who visited a museum or historical site	22%
Libraries: % of total population who visited a library	27%

Talent

No. of higher education providers in the city	72
---	----



© Photo by Anita Monteiro on Unsplash

Infrastructure and Heritage

No. of UNESCO World Heritage Sites within city boundaries	1
No. of museums	20
No. of heritage/historical sites (excluding museums)	20
No. of public libraries	24
No. of cinemas	25
No. of theatres	27
No. of film festivals	4
No. of music festivals	10
No. of fashion week events	1
No. of commercial art galleries	12
No. of cinema screens	88
No. of book fairs	3
No. of carnivals	62

Value of Investment

Total city budget (current prices)	66,600,000,000
Total culture department budget (current prices)	295,000,000

Enabling Policies

Tourism strategy	Yes
------------------	-----

BRUSSELS

Brussels is the capital of Belgium and de facto capital of the European Union. Its multilingual, multi-ethnic identity is shaped by a long history of shifting rulers and cultural exchange.

The city’s cultural landscape blends heritage and innovation. UNESCO-recognised architecture, sites like La Grand Place, and emerging institutions such as MAD Brussels and the Kanal Project anchor a diverse infrastructure. Private art collectors have also transformed the scene, establishing galleries like Garage Cosmos and ThalieLab.

Brussels’ cultural governance is complex, with responsibilities shared across 19 municipalities and linguistic communities. Yet its *Culture Plan for Brussels* and the City’s *2024-2030 General Policy Programme* prioritise accessibility, inclusion, and decentralised cultural programming. With a renewed energy for participation, Brussels is embracing culture as a tool for social connection and civic life.

Carte de Visite

Launched in 2014, Brussels’ collaborative, free and participatory art exhibition *Carte de Visite ArtOpenkunst* has been showcasing hundreds of amateur and established artists every year. It has made art creation, exhibition and appreciation accessible to all. Since 2020, artists have competed for the *Prix de la CENTRALE* to exhibit their work together at CENTRALE, one of Brussels’ most important venues for international and local contemporary art.

Día de Muertos in Marolles

Día de Muertos in Marolles is a community-driven festival in Brussels that blends Mexican tradition with local creativity to honour the dead through inclusive public rituals. Supported by the City of Brussels, it features workshops, concerts, and a large public altar, fostering cultural participation and social cohesion. The event exemplifies how cultural infrastructure can support access for all and strengthen collective memory through vibrant, community-led cultural exchange.



From top: Poechenellekelder Tavern, Brussels
© Photo by J Torres on Unsplash; Photo courtesy of the City of Brussels

Brussels by Night

Launched in 2022, *Brussels By Night* demonstrates how city governments can transform nightlife safety through strategic partnerships with venue operators and city partners. Deploying incident response care teams at night-time events, open air festivals and in nightlife districts has also helped prevent and manage gender-based and sexual violence, as well as drug and alcohol related incidents – while preserving vibrant nightlife culture and creating a safer night-time economy.



© Photo by David Bruyndonckx on Unsplash

Context

Total area (km²): City	162
Total resident population: City	196,828
Population Female	96,446
Population Male	100,382
Employment rate	57%
Self-employment rate	6%
Population 15-64 years old	67%
% of foreign-born population	36%
Estimate % of working age population (15-64 year olds) working in informal employment	57%
Median annual wage (current prices)	21,542

Related Sectors

Annual no. of tourists	3,600,000
------------------------	-----------

Economy and Employment

Creative industries employment (% of total employment)	6.5%
--	------

Access and Participation

Artistic activities: % of total population who engaged in artistic activity	69%
Cinema: % of total population who went to the cinema at least once in the last year	33%
Live performance: % of total population who attended a live performance (excluding music) at least once in the last year	38%
Cultural centres: % of total population who visited a cultural centre	39%

Talent

Education: Degree level and higher (% of working population)	42%
--	-----

Infrastructure and Heritage

No. of museums	45
No. of public libraries	29
No. of cinemas	14
No. of cultural centres	29
No. of theatres	19
No. of live music venues	17

Value of Investment

Total city budget (current prices)	1,083,000,000
Value of grants made to arts and cultural organisations (current prices)	11,000,000

Enabling Policies

Cultural strategy	Yes
Creative industries strategy	Yes
Night-time economy strategy	Yes
Tourism strategy	Yes
Subsidised access to culture for certain groups (e.g. young people, older people, etc)	Yes
Affordable workspace policies targeted towards artists	Yes
Policies to promote diversity, equality and inclusion in cultural and creative sectors	Yes
Policies to promote environmental sustainability within cultural and creative sectors	Yes
Policies to promote networking and collaboration between CCS and other sectors of the economy	Yes
Policies promoting culture’s role in health and wellbeing	Yes

CHENGDU

Chengdu, the capital of Sichuan and China’s fourth-largest city, blends ancient heritage with a bold cultural vision. Known as the ‘Land of Abundance’ for its fertile plains, it is also one of China’s most liveable cities, recognised as the Happiest City in China for 12 consecutive years.

A UNESCO City of Gastronomy and home to giant pandas, Chengdu boasts a World Heritage Site, 196 museums, and a thriving nightlife. Cultural landmarks like Tianfu Art Park and a growing music and fashion scene reflect its creative ambitions.

Chengdu’s cultural policy is shaped by the *Western Cultural Creativity Centre* plan, investing in museums, bookstores, and a RMB 10 billion fund for creative industries. The city prioritises culture in everyday life through a 15-minute city model and park-city planning. With initiatives spanning creative industries, gaming and e-sports, public art, and library nights, Chengdu is crafting a future where culture and innovation go hand in hand.

Sci-Fi Strategy

Chengdu’s science fiction policy is the first of its kind in China, supporting literature, film, gaming and immersive tourism. It includes direct funding for creative works, startup investment, and international promotion - all aimed at turning Chengdu into the country’s sci-fi capital. The policy has unlocked a new cultural economy by embedding science fiction into public space, tourism and tech, linking creativity and innovation across sectors.

Digital Innovation

Chengdu launched China’s first policy focused on early-stage digital cultural startups, offering funding, rent-free spaces, R&D subsidies, and talent incentives. Tailored support includes legal help, IP advice, and mentorship. By combining infrastructure, capital and skills development, the city has built a startup-friendly environment that is boosting entrepreneurship and creative innovation, positioning Chengdu as a national hub for digital culture.

Esports Infrastructure

Chengdu’s three-part policy supports esports events, venues and local clubs, with up to RMB 1 million available for infrastructure and major tournaments. Clubs competing under the ‘Chengdu’ name also receive support for national success. This strategy has helped establish the city as a leading esports destination in China, elevating its cultural profile and integrating gaming into its broader urban and night-time economy strategy.



From top: Dufu Caotang Museum, Qingyang District, Chengdu © Photo by I. Zhang Lnu on Unsplash. Middle and bottom: © Photo by Andrea Sun on Unsplash

Context

Total area (km²): City	14,335
Total resident population: City	21,403,000

Related Sectors

Annual no. of tourists	306,000,000
No. of bars	5,000
No. of restaurants	300,000
Area of free, publicly accessible parks and gardens as % of total city area	1,400

Economy and Employment

No. of people employed in film/TV, gaming, design, etc.	100,000
No. of above scale cultural firms	2,798
No. of digital creative firms	680
No. of film/TV production companies	1,300

Access and Participation

Citywide event attendance	10,000,000
Libraries: No. of public library visitors	11,510,000

Talent

No. of higher education providers in the city	57
---	----



© Anshun Bridge, Chengdu © Photo by Pengfei Jin Num on Unsplash

Infrastructure and Heritage

No. of UNESCO World Heritage Sites within city boundaries	1
No. of museums	196
No. of heritage/historical sites (excluding museums)	165
No. of public libraries	23
No. of theatres	40
No. of live music venues	108

Value of Investment

Sci-Fi and Future Industry Fund	3,000,000,000
---------------------------------	---------------

Enabling Policies

Cultural strategy	Yes
-------------------	-----

CHICAGO

Chicago is the most populous city in Illinois and the third-largest in the United States. Incorporated in 1837, between the Great Lakes and Mississippi River, Chicago has long been a crossroads of culture and commerce. Its influence on global urbanism is profound, from the steel-framed skyscraper and the City Beautiful Movement to pioneering architecture and civic planning.

The city’s culture spans jazz, blues, gospel, hip-hop, literature, visual arts, and cutting-edge theatre, rooted in a legacy of Black creativity and immigrant contributions. With over 8,800 acres of green space and 600 parks, Chicago’s Park District is the largest municipal park system in the U.S., welcoming more than 86 million visitors annually.

Chicago is investing in cultural accessibility, affordable housing, and inclusive infrastructure. Today, its 77 neighbourhoods reflect a dynamic, diverse, and forward-thinking city, one where culture is both a mirror of community life and a driver of equitable urban change.

Art-Led Regeneration: P.A.R.T.Y.

As part of the INVEST South/West initiative, Chicago launched *P.A.R.T.Y. (Public Art Reimagining Tour with You)* to embed public art into the revitalisation of ten historically disinvested neighbourhoods. Led by local artists with support from Borderless Studio and PORT, the campaign gathered community input to shape tailored *Public Art Visions* for each area. By aligning creative expression with infrastructure upgrades, the project aims to foster pride, identity, and vibrant public spaces across the city’s south and west sides.

Chicago Monuments Project

Launched in 2020, the *Chicago Monuments Project (CMP)* is a citywide review of monuments to address who is commemorated, and who is left out. Led by a diverse advisory committee and supported by Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events, Chicago Public Schools, and the Chicago Park District, the project challenges traditional ideas of permanence in public memory. With USD 6.8 million in Mellon Foundation funding, CMP will implement new, inclusive approaches to how Chicago’s histories are acknowledged in public space.



From top: © Photo by Avedibya Dey on Unsplash; © Photo by Sawyer Bengtson on Unsplash; The Chicago Theatre © Photo by Jake Blucker on Unsplash

We Will Chicago

We Will Chicago is a 10-year citywide plan focused on building equity and resilience through 150 objectives spanning public health, housing, education, and more. From the outset, artists played a key role in shaping engagement. Honey Pot Performance led the cultural strategy, aligning creatives with seven thematic areas. Artist-led projects, from medicinal herb gardens to photography series, connected residents to policy goals. The initiative positions culture as a driving force in reimagining Chicago’s future.

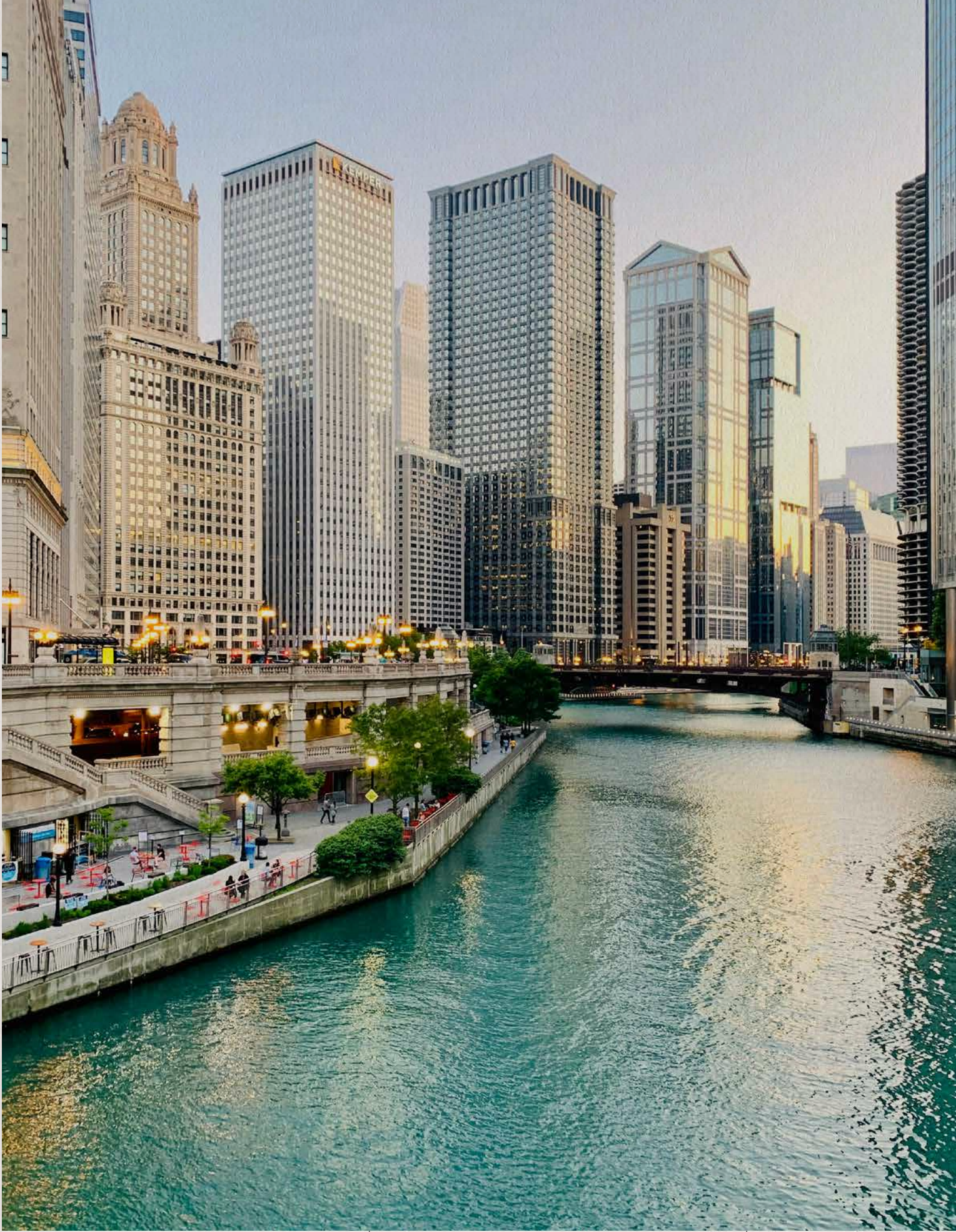


Photo courtesy of the City of Chicago

COLOGNE

Cologne, a 2,000-year-old city on the Rhine, blends Roman heritage with a future-facing creative economy. With over one million residents, it is a cultural and media powerhouse, home to thousands of creative companies and a thriving arts scene.

The city’s cultural richness is shaped by its resilience. Cologne Cathedral, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, towers above a city rebuilt after WWII. The city is now home to collections including the Museum Ludwig and the Museum of East Asian Art. Renowned artists and writers, from Gerhard Richter to Heinrich Böll, have called it home.

Cologne’s *Cultural Development Plan and Urban Strategy 2.0* focus on supporting creative industries and preserving cultural infrastructure. Programmes include restitution of looted art, expansion of the *German Dance Archive*, and sustainability training through *Köln hoch 3*. As a centre for broadcasting, gaming and design, Cologne is shaping a creative, inclusive and climate-conscious cultural future.

Reviving City Centres

Cologne’s city centre is undergoing major change due to shifting retail patterns and their impact on central urban spaces. Launched in 2024, an innovative research project will transform vacant retail units into vibrant meanwhile spaces through cultural participation. A collaboration between Cultural Space Management and TH Köln University, the project explores how culture can drive city centre revival by developing mixed-use spaces.

Art Pillars

Cologne transformed obsolete advertising pillars into permanent public art sites, creating an open-air museum across the city. This innovative initiative addresses infrastructure reuse while expanding cultural participation through free, accessible art. Launched in 2019 with partners including the Academy of Media Arts, the project reflects Cologne’s city cultural policy focus on inclusive culture and urban regeneration. Today, *27 Art Pillars* foster creative dialogue and activate everyday public spaces with cultural meaning.



From top: ©Photo by Dieter Jacobi; Museum Ludwig
® Photo by Dieter Jacobi

Take a Seat

Cologne’s central square, Neumarkt, was revitalised in 2023 through *Take a Seat*, a cultural activation project using temporary architecture and community-led programming. A public gathering point since the Medieval period, the square had become known for antisocial behaviour. This initiative used culture, placemaking, and collaboration with artists, institutions, and citizens to reclaim the space. Over two summer months, it hosted daily open-air cultural events, contributing to broader citywide public space renewal.

Context

Total area (km²): City	405
Total resident population: City	1,095,520
Population Female	560,480
Population Male	535,040
Employment rate	91%
Self-employment rate	12%
Population 15-64 years old	627,664
% of foreign-born population	21%
Median annual wage (current prices)	25,428
Income inequality (Gini coefficient)	0.33
% working age population (15-64 year olds) with tertiary degree or higher	41%

Related Sectors

Annual no. of tourists	3,847,307
No. of night clubs, discos and dance halls	21
No. of bars	101
No. of restaurants	2,494
Area of free, publicly accessible parks and gardens as % of total city area	33%

Economy and Employment

Unemployment rate (% of working population)	7.6%
---	------

Access and Participation

Artistic activities: % of total population who engaged in artistic activity	65%
Cinema: % of total population who went to the cinema at least once in the last year	74%
Live performance: % of total population who attended a live performance (excluding music) at least once in the last year	47%
Museums: % of total population who visited a museum or historical site	64%
Libraries: % of total population who visited a library	9%
Average consumption expenditure of private households on cultural goods and services (current prices)	304

Talent

No. of higher education providers in the city	22
No. of specialist arts higher education providers in the city	2



© Photo by Dieter Jacobi

Infrastructure and Heritage

No. of UNESCO world heritage sites within city boundaries	2
No. of museums	55
No. of heritage/historical sites (excluding museums)	8,681
No. of public libraries	31
No. of cinemas	15
No. of multi-arts venues	48
No. of cultural centres	7
No. of theatres	49
No. of live music venues	27
No. of film festivals	10
No. of music festivals	15
No. of fashion week events	1
No. of design week events	2
No. of museum admissions per year	660,332
No., of theatre admissions per year	236,877
No. of bookshops	75
No. of book and literary festivals	6
No. of E-sports tournaments	1
No. of art and crafts fairs/markets	4
No. of carnivals	58

Value of Investment

Total city budget (current prices)	5,631,685,334
Total culture department budget (current prices)	270,283,530

Enabling Policies

Cultural strategy	Yes
Creative industries strategy	Yes
Tourism strategy	Yes
Government supported creative hub(s) or co-working spaces	Yes
Government supported incubators and accelerators for cultural and creative sector startups	Yes
Affordable workspace policies targeted towards artists	Yes
Policies to promote diversity, equality and inclusion in cultural and creative sectors	Yes
Policies to promote environmental sustainability within cultural and creative sectors	Yes

DUBAI

Dubai, the most populous city in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), is one of the world’s fastest-growing urban centres. Known for its ambition and diversity, home to over 200 nationalities, it is rapidly emerging as a leading cultural destination in the region.

From the historic creek, to the cutting-edge Museum of the Future, Dubai blends heritage and innovation. Landmark projects like Al Shindagha Museum and the revitalised Al Fahidi Historical Neighbourhood celebrate the city’s past, while its position as a *UNESCO City of Design* and initiatives like *Sikka Art Festival* and *Dubai Design Week* showcase its creative energy.

Governance is led by the Dubai Culture and Arts Authority. The city’s Creative Economy Strategy aims to enable 15,000 creative businesses and generate 140,000 jobs. With sustained investment in cultural infrastructure, local talent, and global exchange, Dubai is building a vibrant, inclusive ecosystem where creativity shapes the future.

Sikka Festival
Launched in 2011, the *Sikka Art and Design Festival* has grown from an annual event into a year-round incubator for emerging creatives across the region. Operated by Dubai Culture, Sikka supports over 700 artists annually through exhibitions, workshops, and mentorship in heritage sites like Al Fahidi. With 450,000 visitors since 2020, it plays a central role in Dubai’s cultural infrastructure, bridging tradition and innovation while advancing the city’s *Creative Economy Strategy*.

Al Quoz Creative Zone
Launched in 2021, the Al Quoz Creative Zone is reimagining a former industrial area as an integrated creative district supporting artists, entrepreneurs, and cultural producers. Through licensing reforms, affordable workspaces, and infrastructure upgrades, the initiative is enabling public engagement and cultural innovation. Anchored by events like *Al Quoz Arts Fest* and *Alserkal Art Week*, and backed by a citywide masterplan, it is a flagship of Dubai’s *Creative Economy Strategy* and a model for urban cultural regeneration.



All images: Photo courtesy of Dubai Arts & Culture Authority

Creative Dubai 2024 Impact Report
In 2024, Dubai Culture launched the *Creative Dubai Impact Report*, a landmark assessment of the city’s cultural and creative industries. The foresight report revealed that in 2022, the sector contributed AED 21.9 billion to GDP and supported 175,000 jobs, with micro and small enterprises making up 80% of activity. Highlighting Dubai’s top global FDI ranking in creative industries, the report guides future data informed strategy and cements the city’s role as a creative economy capital.

Context	
Total area (km²): City	4,114
Total resident population: City	3,759,864

Related Sectors	
Annual no. of tourists	17,150,000

Economy and Employment	
No. of businesses in cultural and creative sectors	26,838
No. of people employed in cultural and creative sectors	142,688

Access and Participation	
Artistic activities: % of total population who engaged in artistic activity	5%
Museums: % of total population who visited a museum or historical site	5%
Libraries: % of total population who visited a library	14%

Talent	
No. of higher education providers in the city	41



© Photo by Ondrej Bocek on Unsplash

Infrastructure and Heritage	
No. of public libraries	15
No. of cinemas	26
No. of multi-arts venues	7
No. of cultural centres	12
No. of theatres	10
No. of film festivals	2
No. of music festivals	28
No. of fashion week events	2
No. of design week events	1

Value of Investment	
Total city budget (current prices)	86,260,000,000

Enabling Policies	
Cultural strategy	Yes

DUBLIN

Ireland's capital, Dublin, is a city of nearly 600,000 people with a global reputation for culture, creativity and community. With Viking origins and a rich literary legacy, from Joyce and Beckett to Heaney and Enright, Dublin continues to attract millions of visitors drawn to its heritage, hospitality and humour.

The city is home to vibrant museums, libraries and seven National Cultural Institutions, including the Irish Museum of Modern Art and the National Concert Hall. Initiatives like *Culture Night* and the Dublin Tenement Museum reflect a strong commitment to inclusive, place-based cultural experiences.

Dublin City Council sees culture as a driver of wellbeing and social cohesion. Its cultural policies prioritise creativity, participation and belonging. The Dublin City Culture Company leads on community-led programming, connecting residents through culture and conversation. Dublin's cultural vibrancy, combined with global connectivity and neighbourhood resilience, is shaping a city for the future.

One Dublin, One Book

Every April since 2005, Dublin residents have been encouraged to read the same book either written by a Dubliner or connected with the capital city, through the *One Dublin, One Book* campaign. This initiative promotes literacy and also supports connection among residents. To mark the 20th year of this mass cultural participation event, Dublin City Council and Dublin UNESCO City of Literature commissioned an anthology of 22 poets and writers to capture Dublin in the first quarter of the century.

Space to Create

Dublin City Council's *Space to Create* programme responds to a critical shortage of artist workspaces by refurbishing vacant buildings into long-term, affordable studios. With EUR 9.5 million in funding from the City Council, the National Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media, and philanthropy, the initiative will deliver 40 workspaces by 2027. The first site at Artane Place highlights a model of cultural infrastructure driven by local engagement, sustainability, and inclusive cultural policy.



From top: © Photo by Anna Church on Unsplash;
© Photo by Richard von Pfeil on Unsplash

Night-Time Economy Strategy

In 2024, Dublin launched a new *Night-time Economy Strategy* to reimagine nightlife as a key pillar of civic and cultural life. Led by the city's first Night-Time Economy Adviser, the plan expands late-night cultural programming, enhances transport, and improves safety. With flagship events like *Dublin By Night Fest* and *St. Patrick's After Dark*, the strategy promotes inclusive and vibrant after-dark engagement while piloting welfare services and safer city experiences.

Context

Total area (km²): City	115
Total area (km²): Other geographies	345
Total resident population: City	592,713
Total resident population: Other geographies	1,458,154
Population Female	744,548
Population Male	713,606
Employment rate	76%
Self-employment rate	14%
Population 15-64 years old	993,547
% of foreign-born population	25%
Estimate % of working age population (15-64 year olds) working in informal employment	59%
Median annual wage (current prices)	47,873
Income inequality (Gini coefficient)	0.269
% working age population (15-64 year olds) with tertiary degree or higher	55%

Related Sectors

Annual no. of tourists	6,600,000
No. of night clubs, discos and dance halls	23
No. of bars	746
No. of restaurants	475
Area of free, publicly accessible parks and gardens as % of total city area	17%

Economy and Employment

No. of businesses in cultural and creative sectors	11,757
No. of people employed in cultural and creative sectors	40,801

Access and Participation

Artistic activities: % of total population who engaged in artistic activity	83%
Cinema: % of total population who went to the cinema at least once in the last year	56%
Live performance: % of total population who attended a live performance (excluding music) at least once in the last year	67%
Live music: % of total population who attended a live music event (including indoor and outdoor venues) at least once in the last year	83%
Average consumption expenditure of private households on cultural goods and services (current prices)	1,000

Talent

No. of higher education providers in the city	10
No. of specialist arts higher education providers in the city	2
No. of students studying at specialist arts higher education providers in the city	3,720
No. of students studying arts and humanities at higher education providers in the city	15,160
No. of students studying arts subjects at higher education providers in the city	4,905

Infrastructure and Heritage

No. of UNESCO World Heritage Sites within city boundaries	1
No. of museums	9
No. of heritage/historical sites (excluding museums)	4,400
No. of public libraries	27
No. of cinemas	20
No. of cultural centres	76
No. of theatres	12
No. of live music venues	7
No. of gaming arcades and permanent e-sports venues	15
No. of bookshops	67

Value of Investment

Total city budget (current prices)	1,480,000,000
Total culture department budget (current prices)	53,160,318
Value of grants made to arts and cultural organisations (current prices)	306,000
Value of grants made to individual artists (current prices)	51,000
Value of grants and funding for cultural events (current prices)	1,113,000

Enabling Policies

Cultural strategy	Yes
Night-time economy strategy	Yes
Tourism strategy	Yes
Regular mapping of heritage at risk from climate change	Yes
Special economic zones (SEZ) targeted towards cultural and creative businesses (e.g. creative enterprise zones)	Yes
Policies for arts education in schools	Yes
Affordable workspace policies targeted towards artists	Yes
Policies to promote diversity, equality and inclusion in cultural and creative sectors	Yes
Policies to promote environmental sustainability within cultural and creative sectors	Yes

EDINBURGH

Edinburgh, Scotland's capital and second most populous city, is renowned for its historic architecture, rich literary tradition, and world-famous festivals. With over 500,000 residents, it is a compact but influential hub for business, politics, and culture.

The city's UNESCO-listed Old and New Towns, overlooked by the iconic Edinburgh Castle, are central to its cultural identity. It is a *UNESCO City of Literature*, home to literary greats like Sir Walter Scott and Robert Louis Stevenson, and hosts the acclaimed *Edinburgh International Book Festival*. Its festival calendar, led by the Fringe, brings in millions of visitors annually and has a local heart - 39% of 2022 Fringe tickets were bought by residents.

Cultural policy in Edinburgh is focused on managing tourism, supporting local voices, and addressing investment gaps. A *Visitor Levy* will be introduced to fund public services, infrastructure and culture. As the city grows, investment in venues is vital to sustain Edinburgh's place on the global cultural map.

Carbon Reporting Programme

To support the city's 2030 net zero goal, the City of Edinburgh partnered with Culture for Climate Scotland to deliver a sector-wide environmental reporting programme. Since 2019, all grant-funded cultural organisations have submitted annual Carbon Management Plans, covering emissions, biodiversity, adaptation, and governance. Energy and waste emissions are already falling, and multiple organisations are on track for net zero. The initiative positions Edinburgh's cultural sector as a driver of climate leadership and sustainable innovation.

Creative Community Hubs Network

Launched citywide in 2021, Edinburgh's *Creative Community Hubs* project connects eight grassroots organisations to foster collaboration, share learning, and advocate for equitable cultural development. Led by WHALE Arts, the network supports community-based hubs across the city with regular meetings, peer exchanges, and targeted collaboration support. It addresses power imbalances and funding inequalities, embedding culture into local wellbeing and empowering residents to shape meaningful, place-based creative activity aligned with *Edinburgh's Culture Strategy*.



From top: © Photo by Sean Mullen on Unsplash; © Photo by Clement Proust on Unsplash

Visitor Levy

Edinburgh will be the first UK city to introduce a *Visitor Levy*, launching in July 2026. A 5% tax on short-term accommodation stays will raise an estimated GBP 118 million over three years to manage tourism's impact and invest in the city's infrastructure and cultural life. With 35% allocated to culture, heritage and events, the scheme will deliver Edinburgh's largest cultural investment since lottery funding, supporting net zero targets, venue upgrades and community-based cultural access.

Context

Total area (km²): City	264
Total resident population: City	540,281

Related Sectors

Annual no. of tourists	2,324,000
No. of night clubs, discos and dance halls	45
No. of bars	411
No. of restaurants	725

Economy and Employment

Creative industries employment (% of total employment)	5.5%
---	------

Access and Participation

Carnival or festival: % of total population who attended a carnival or festival	36%
Museums and galleries: % of working age population who attended a museum or gallery	33%

Talent

No. of specialist arts higher education providers in the city	1
--	---



© Photo by Cajeo Zhang on Unsplash

Infrastructure and Heritage

No. of UNESCO World Heritage Sites within city boundaries	2
No. of museums	39
No. of heritage/historical sites (excluding museums)	200
No. of public libraries	28
No. of cinemas	11
No. of theatres	9
No. of live music venues	88
No. of film festivals	5

Value of Investment

Total city budget (current prices)	1,360,589,000
Total culture department budget (current prices)	35,785,000

Enabling Policies

Cultural strategy	Yes
-------------------	-----

GUANGZHOU

With over 2,200 years of history, Guangzhou is China’s oldest port and a symbol of global commerce and cultural exchange. Known as the ‘millennium commercial capital’, it continues to blend economic dynamism with rich Lingnan cultural heritage.

Cantonese opera, music, and historic sites like the Thirteen Hongs of Canton sit alongside contemporary spaces such as cultural tourism centres and book bars. With 44% green space, Guangzhou is also a UN-recognised *International Garden City* and winner of the *Best Practice Award for Improving Human Settlements*.

Cultural policy is guided by the Guangzhou Administration of Culture and the Development and Reform Commission, aligning with China’s *15th Five-Year Plan*. Key priorities include expanding access to culture, safeguarding heritage, and developing digital and tourism infrastructure. Initiatives like Yongqingfang’s micro-renovation and the Summer in the *City of Rams Festival* show how innovation and tradition are shaping a modern cultural identity for a global city on the rise.

Guangzhou Flower Market

Recognised as a national intangible cultural heritage in 2021, Guangzhou’s 2,000-year-old Spring Festival Flower Market attracts visitors to the ‘City of Flowers’, while driving economic growth through a thriving Chinese and international flower industry. Recent innovations - including street food, drone light shows, and the Water Flower Market - have extended its impact on the nighttime economy, turning heritage into a powerful tool for urban innovation.

Intangible Heritage

Recommended Gifts from the Bay Area is a cultural innovation initiative from Guangzhou that transforms Lingnan intangible heritage - like food, opera, and folk festivals - into modern design products. Through creative reinterpretation of traditions such as the ‘Pantang’s Five Treasures’ and lion dance, the initiative promotes cultural identity, stimulates the creative economy, and shows how urban policy can integrate heritage into everyday life for global audiences.



From top: Guangzhou Opera House © Photo by Sam Balye on Unsplash; © Photo by Cindy Hwang on Unsplash

Design Week

Founded in 2006, *Guangzhou Design Week* is one of Asia’s most comprehensive annual design events. Since 2020, its focus has shifted from industrial upgrading to embedding design in public life and urban regeneration. Through partnerships with over 30 countries and global events like *Milan Design Week*, it plays a key role in cultural diplomacy - positioning Guangzhou as a creative capital and model for cities integrating design into policy and international exchange.

Context	
Total area (km²): City	7,434
Total resident population: City	1,898
Population Female	881
Population Male	987
Employment rate	97%

Related Sectors	
Annual no. of tourists	5,545
Area of free, publicly accessible parks and gardens as % of total city area	44%

Economy and Employment	
No. of businesses in cultural and creative sectors	3,069
No. of people employed in cultural and creative occupations	100,984
No. of people employed in cultural and creative sectors	114,812

Access and Participation	
Artistic activities: % of total population who engaged in artistic activity	4%

Talent	
No. of higher education providers in the city	84
No. of students studying arts and humanities at higher education providers in the city	106,383
No. of students studying arts subjects at higher education providers in the city	71,174
No. of students studying architecture and town planning at higher education providers in the city	231,303

Infrastructure and Heritage	
No. of museums	45
No. of heritage/historical sites (excluding museums)	828
No. of public libraries	14
No. of cinemas	255
No. of cultural centres	13
No. of theatres	8
No. of museum admissions per year	20,860
No. of bookshops	734

Value of Investment	
Total city budget (current prices)	277,740,000,000
Total culture department budget (current prices)	1,775,401,600
Value of grants made to arts and cultural organisations (current prices)	690,756,900

Enabling Policies	
Cultural strategy	Yes
Creative industries strategy	Yes
Night-time economy strategy	Yes
Tourism strategy	Yes
Regular data collection/mapping of CCS businesses and employment numbers	Yes
Regular mapping of heritage at risk	Yes
Subsidised access to culture for certain groups (e.g. young people, older people, etc)	Yes
Tax reliefs for cultural and creative sector organisations	Yes
Tax reliefs for film, TV, video games and other screen sectors	Yes
Tax reliefs for small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs)	Yes
Special economic zones (SEZ) targeted towards cultural and creative businesses (e.g. creative enterprise zones)	Yes
Policies for arts education in schools	Yes
Government supported incubators and accelerators for cultural and creative sector startups	Yes
Government backed low-interest loans or microloans for cultural and creative sector businesses	Yes
Policies supporting cultural and/or creative districts	Yes
Policies to promote diversity, equality and inclusion in cultural and creative sectors	Yes

HAMBURG

Germany’s second-largest city and a thriving city-state, Hamburg is a global port, media powerhouse, and cultural capital. With over five million people in the metropolitan area, it blends rich maritime heritage with world-class infrastructure and a vibrant creative economy.

Hamburg’s cultural landscape spans 300 institutions, from the iconic Elbphilharmonie concert hall to the dynamic Kunstmeile art district. The city’s musical legacy stretches from composers like Brahms to The Beatles, who launched their careers on the Reeperbahn, now home to Europe’s largest club festival.

Cultural governance is led by the Department for Culture and Media, which funds institutions, protects historic monuments, and champions access through initiatives like Kultur für alle. Hamburg’s strategy supports remembrance, decolonisation, and participation. With its UNESCO-listed Speicherstadt, commitment to sustainability, and thriving creative sectors, Hamburg continues to evolve, connecting heritage with innovation in one of Europe’s most liveable and culturally rich cities.

INTRO Programme

Launched in 2019 by Hamburg’s Ministry of Culture and Media, the *INTRO* programme supports refugee artists through institutional partnerships, workshops, and funding. The initiative aims to foster cultural inclusion, challenge restrictive institutional norms, and promote mutual learning and cultural exchange. By enabling 12-month collaborations, it helps artists build networks and visibility, while supporting cultural institutions in evolving toward more inclusive, anti-discriminatory practices rooted in global dialogue.

Decolonise Hamburg!

In 2024, Hamburg launched *Decolonise Hamburg!*, a citywide decolonisation strategy involving civil society, institutions, and government. It reappraises colonial history through research, education, and cultural participation, empowering black, Indigenous and ethnic minority communities and establishing postcolonial remembrance in public space. Initiatives include renaming colonial street names, restituting looted artefacts, and creating transnational networks. The strategy serves as a model for cities seeking inclusive, historically grounded, and participatory cultural transformation.



All images: Photo courtesy of the City of Hamburg

Youth Led Policy

Hamburg’s *Framework for Children and Youth Culture* redefines cultural policy by centring youth participation. Developed through a multidimensional participatory culture strategy, it reflects the real needs and desires of the city’s children and young people. With tools like the *Hamburg Children’s Manifesto* and a newly forming *Council of Culture for Children and Young People*, the city is embedding inclusive culture into its institutions and setting a new benchmark for long-term youth engagement in cultural policy.



© Photo by Julia Solonina on Unsplash

HELSINKI

Helsinki, Finland’s capital and fastest-growing city, is celebrated for its high quality of life, sustainability, and deep connection to nature. With over 680,000 residents, it blends cultural richness with urban innovation on the Baltic coast.

The city’s cultural landscape is anchored by venues like the Central Library Oodi, Amos Rex art museum, and the Dance House Helsinki. Events such as the *Helsinki Biennale* and the forthcoming Museum of Architecture and Design reflect its growing global presence.

Guided by the Culture Unit, priorities include inclusion, digitalisation, and youth engagement. From waterfront districts to forests and island coastlines, Helsinki fosters a deep civic connection through accessible, lifelong culture. As the world’s happiest capital, it is shaping a sustainable cultural future grounded in equity and creativity.

Creative Economy Strategy

Helsinki is strengthening its role in the creative economy in line with the city strategy, through the *9 Growth Actions* report co-developed with industry professionals. It proposes targeted steps to strengthen cultural entrepreneurship, remove administrative barriers, activate underused spaces, and support urban creative ecosystems. With global creative sectors growing rapidly, Helsinki’s long-term competitiveness hinges on how effectively it fosters creative sector growth and supports inclusive, innovation-driven cultural business models.

Helsinki Biennale

Since 2021, *Helsinki Biennial* has been held on Vallisaari, one of Helsinki’s 300 islands, as well as in other locations across the city. This cultural festival by the City of Helsinki embodies their ambitious cultural vision to develop the city’s art scene through inclusive public art; and combine art with the beauty of Helsinki’s natural spaces and islands. 2025 will mark the *Helsinki Biennial*’s third edition, attracting new visitors to the city and boosting the local economy.

Architecture and Design Museum

The Architecture and Design Museum in Helsinki will open in 2030 and will be a new sustainable, inclusive, and globally significant cultural destination. Located in the city’s historic South Harbour, the museum will showcase Nordic design, support professional development, and foster public engagement. It reflects Helsinki’s strategic investment in cultural infrastructure and positions the city as a global leader in sustainable architecture and creative placemaking.



From top: © Photo by Tapio Haaja on Unsplash; Exterior of Central Library Oodi, Helsinki © Photo by Vadim Morozov on Unsplash

Context	
Total area (km²): City	217
Total area (km²): Other geographies	719
Total resident population: City	684,018
Population Female	357,057
Population Male	48%
Employment rate	73%
% of foreign-born population	17%

Related Sectors	
Annual no. of tourists	13,300,000
No. of night clubs, discos and dance halls	90
No. of restaurants	1,928

Economy and Employment	
No. of people employed in cultural and creative sectors	35,548

Access and Participation	
Museums: % of total population who visited a museum or historical site	23%

Talent	
No. of specialist arts higher education providers in the city	1
No. of students studying at specialist arts higher education providers in the city	1,968
Education: Degree level and higher (% of working population)	49%

Infrastructure and Heritage	
No. of UNESCO World Heritage Sites within city boundaries	1
No. of museums	56
No. of heritage/historical sites (excluding museums)	91
No. of public libraries	39
No. of cinemas	20
No. of cultural centres	8
No. of theatres	69
No. of live music venues	63
No. of books lent per year	9,200,000
No. of cinema screens	65
No. of cultural centre admissions per year	670,000
No. of bars, restaurants, and cafes licenced to play live music	1,928
No. of bookshops	20

Value of Investment	
Total city budget (current prices)	3,195,000,000
Total culture department budget (current prices)	58,000,000

Enabling Policies	
Cultural strategy	Yes
Creative industries strategy	Yes
Tourism strategy	Yes
Subsidised access to culture for certain groups (e.g. young people, older people, etc)	Yes
Policies for arts education in schools	Yes
Government supported creative hub(s) or co-working spaces	Yes
Government supported incubators and accelerators for cultural and creative sector startups	Yes
Affordable workspace policies targeted towards artists	Yes
Policies supporting cultural and / or creative districts	Yes
Policies to promote diversity, equality and inclusion in cultural and creative sectors	Yes
Policies to promote environmental sustainability within cultural and creative sectors	Yes
Policies promoting international cultural exchange and collaboration	Yes
Policies promoting culture’s role in health and wellbeing	Yes

HONG KONG

With over 7.5 million residents, Hong Kong is one of the world's most densely populated cities and a dynamic centre of cultural convergence. As Asia's art trading capital and a city shaped by migration, tradition and innovation, it continues to build on its role as a global cultural hub.

The West Kowloon Cultural District exemplifies Hong Kong's ambition, home to world-class venues like M+, the Xiqu Centre, and the Hong Kong Palace Museum. Initiatives like Design District Hong Kong (#ddHK) extend culture into public life, while a growing inventory of intangible cultural heritage celebrates local traditions.

Cultural policy is led by the Culture, Sports and Tourism Bureau and guided by the *2024 Blueprint for Arts and Culture and Creative Industries*. The Culture Commission and Hong Kong Arts and Development Council (HKADC) shape long-term development and global partnerships. With a focus on digital innovation, inclusivity, and international exchange, Hong Kong is defining its future as a leading cultural city of the 21st century.

StART Up Community Arts Project

Since 2017, the Hong Kong Youth Arts Foundation's *stART Up Community Arts Project* has used the arts to engage thousands of young people on social issues. Through performing and visual arts, from songwriting to spoken word, students have explored topics such as climate change, ageing, and disability inclusion. Partnering with local community groups, the project combines artistic expression with education, fostering creativity, awareness, and action toward a more sustainable future.

Arts in Schools

Launched by the Hong Kong Arts Development Council, the *Arts-in-School Partnership Scheme* connects local arts organisations and artists with schools, enabling them to lease facilities for rehearsals, exhibitions, and performances. Since its launch in 2018, the scheme has continued to grow - enhancing collaboration between the arts sector and education. Activities range from workshops to community events, enriching students' artistic experiences, encouraging cultural exchange, and strengthening ties between artists, schools, families, and neighbourhoods, while making the arts a more visible and integral part of school life.



From top: © Photo by Oskar Kadaksoo on Unsplash;
© Photo by Felix Lannoo on Unsplash

Context

Total area (km ²): City	1,115
Total resident population: City	7,534,200
Population Female	4,117,000
Population Male	3,417,200
Employment rate	97%
Self-employment rate	6%

Related Sectors

Annual no. of tourists	22,000,000
No. of restaurants	17,154

Economy and Employment

No. of businesses in cultural and creative sectors	24,678
No. of people employed in cultural and creative occupations	33,035
No. of people employed in cultural and creative sectors	136,240

Access and Participation

Artistic activities: % of total population who engaged in artistic activity	78%
Live performance: % of total population who attended a live performance (excluding music) at least once in the last year	28%
Live music: % of total population who attended a live music event (including indoor and outdoor venues) at least once in the last year	11%
Average consumption expenditure of private households on cultural goods and services (current prices)	1,381

Talent

No. of higher education providers in the city	22
No. of specialist arts higher education providers in the city	9



© Getty Images

Infrastructure and Heritage

No. of UNESCO World Heritage Sites within city boundaries	22
No. of museums	19
No. of heritage/historical sites (excluding museums)	1,580
No. of public libraries	83
No. of cinemas	58
No. of multi-arts venues	28
No. of cultural centres	109
No. of theatres	73
No. of film festivals	31
No. of music festivals	9
No. of museum admissions per year	10,672,309
No. of library members	4,874,000
No. of cinema screens	280
No. of multi-arts performing arts venue admissions per year	3,336,200
No. of theatre admissions per year	1,978,000

Value of Investment

Total city budget (current prices)	727,900,000,000
Total culture department budget (current prices)	2,294,000,000
Value of grants made to arts and cultural organisations (current prices)	5,914,100,000

Enabling Policies

Affordable workspace policies targeted towards artists	Yes
--	-----

ISTANBUL

Europe’s most populous metropolitan area, Istanbul is home to over 15 million residents and a layered cultural identity shaped by millennia of history. Once the capital of Roman, Byzantine and Ottoman empires, it remains a vital cultural and economic meeting point.

The city’s historic peninsula is a UNESCO World Heritage site, home to iconic landmarks like Hagia Sophi Mosque, Topkapi Palace and the Blue Mosque and Süleymaniye Mosque Complex. Today, Istanbul’s cultural life thrives across centuries-old heritage and museums, as well as contemporary institutions like Istanbul Modern and the annual *Istanbul Biennial*.

Public policy balances preservation and innovation, with major urban projects like Galataport and Tersane Istanbul shaping a new cultural landscape. Amid rapid growth, Istanbul is redefining itself as a modern, multifaceted global city.

AI and Hittite Cultural Heritage

In Türkiye, artificial intelligence and image processing is deciphering 3,500-year-old cuneiform tablets from the Hittite civilisation for the first time. Led by Ankara University with the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, high-resolution photography and 3D scanning have digitised thousands of fragile artefacts. The use of AI accelerates syllable recognition while reducing physical handling, preserving the tablets and enabling the creation of a Hittite Digital Library to safeguard and share this unique cultural heritage.

Rami Library

Opened in January 2023, Istanbul’s Rami Library has transformed the historic 19th-century Rami Barracks into one of Türkiye’s largest library complexes. The restored site offers 24/7 reading rooms, thematic sections for all ages, and innovative facilities such as a podcast studio, audio library and book restoration ‘hospital’. With landscaped gardens, cultural spaces, and a national archive, the Rami Library blends preservation of heritage with modern learning, creating a vibrant social and cultural destination in the Eyüpsultan district of the city.



Both images: © Photo by Fatih Yürür on Unsplash



© Photo by Emire Egricesu on Unsplash

JAKARTA

Jakarta is home to over 10.6 million residents and serves as the Indonesia’s financial, creative and cultural heart. A melting pot of cultures, it is rapidly emerging as a global destination for art, literature, and innovation.

The city’s rich history stretches back to the 4th century CE, from its origins as Sunda Kelapa to a global trading port. Today, over 79 museums and diverse heritage sites preserve its legacy, from the maritime stories of Museum Bahari to UNESCO-recognised Wayang puppetry.

Jakarta’s cultural policy emphasises inclusivity, citizen engagement and creativity. Recent initiatives support climate goals, youth participation, and creative industries including film, publishing, and tech. Jakarta became a *UNESCO City of Literature* in 2021 and boasts the tallest library in the world.

With a growing network of art spaces, a focus on heritage, and bold ambitions for 2027’s 500th anniversary, Jakarta is redefining culture for the next generation.

Sustainable Development

Jakarta’s *Museum for Local Economic Development for Social Changes (MLEADS)* is a pioneering programme at Museum Bahari Jakarta, turning heritage into a tool for social and economic development. Through creative training, youth engagement, and cultural activities, the programme showcases and supports the Penjaringan community and aligns with the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Backed by government and private partners, *MLEADS* repositions the museum as a living resource for inclusive urban development.

Preserving Betawi Heritage

Launched in 2022, Jakarta’s cultural village initiative supports five Betawi communities - Petukangan, Rawa Belong, Marunda, Condet, and Tanah Abang - to preserve heritage and improve welfare. Through community empowerment, cultural tourism, and traditional arts promotion, the programme strengthens local identity and enhances economic sustainability. Led by the Jakarta Culture Office and ADKI, this policy framework promotes inclusive cultural development while positioning Jakarta as a culturally grounded global city.



From top: Image courtesy of the City of Jakarta;
© Photo by Rohim Ari Iz on Unsplash

Canal Programme

Jakarta’s *Canal Programme* builds on the 50-year legacy of the initially youth focused Jakarta Theatre Festival by offering non-competitive, experimental theatre opportunities to actors over 40. As part of the city’s inclusive cultural policy, Canal enables mature performers to explore creative expression while fostering exchange with actors from across Indonesia. The programme sustains long-term engagement in the performing arts and supports a more inclusive, age-diverse cultural landscape.

Context

Total area (km²): City	661
Total resident population: City	10,670,000
Population Female	5,317,148
Population Male	5,360,827
Employment rate	65%
Population 15-64 years old	7,609,545
Median annual wage (current prices)	4,149

Related Sectors

Area of free, publicly accessible parks and gardens as % of total city area	5%
---	----

Economy and Employment

No. of businesses in cultural and creative sectors	311
--	-----

Access and Participation

Museums: No. of museum visits	11,092,256
-------------------------------	------------

Talent

Literacy rate (% of population 15-24 years old)	99.91%
---	--------



© Getty Images

Infrastructure and Heritage

No. of museums	79
No. of cinemas	72
No. of multi-arts venues	24
No. of cultural centres	20
No. of theatres	24
No. of live music venues	134
No. of museum admissions per year	1,773,919
No. of commercial art galleries	10
No. of theatre admissions per year	96,274
No. of bars, restaurants, and cafes licensed to play live music	8,099
No. of gaming arcades and permanent e-sports venues	34

Value of Investment

Total city budget (current prices)	81,710,000,000,000
------------------------------------	--------------------

Enabling Policies

Cultural strategy	Yes
-------------------	-----

KYIV

Kyiv joined the World Cities Culture Forum in 2023, supported by Bloomberg Philanthropies, the Mayor of London and the City of Edinburgh Council. Despite the ongoing conflict, diverse cultural life remains at the heart of the city.

The ongoing full-scale invasion has had a significant impact on the country’s cultural infrastructure and heritage. As of May 2025, 1,482 heritage sites and 2,302 cultural institutions across the country have been damaged or destroyed. In Kyiv, major losses include museum collections, libraries, and performance venues.

In response, cultural communities have come together to establish a ‘cultural front’, alongside the military front, defending Ukraine’s right to self-determination and culture. Through collective action, cultural institutions have become hubs of resistance - organising relief efforts, preserving cultural collections and protecting Ukrainian monuments.

Storytelling has become a crucial way for Ukrainians to ensure their experiences are documented and remembered with museums across the city collecting thousands of objects from the Ukrainian resistance. Digital tools and archives are also playing an important role in recording the war’s impact on Ukrainian culture.

Kyiv Biennial

The *Kyiv Biennial* has been held every two years since 2015, expanding internationally since 2023. The 6th edition in Autumn 2025 will feature exhibitions in Ukraine (Kyiv and Dnipro) as well as Warsaw, Antwerp, and Linz. Titled *Near East, Far West*, it showcases new commissions and archival works, reflecting on historical trauma, resistance, and cultural memory. Extending into 2026, it fosters international dialogue and awareness, highlights political and social challenges, and promotes Ukrainian creativity and solidarity through art.

Reclaiming Public Space

Kyiv is actively decolonising its public realm. Since 2022, citizens have selected new names for hundreds of streets and Soviet Russian monuments have been removed through public consultation via the *Kyiv Digital* app. This is part of a broader effort to reassert Ukrainian identity, reclaim urban space, amplify Ukrainian heritage, and symbolically resist Russian imperial legacy.



From top: © Photo by Zhan Zhang on Unsplash; © Canva

Heritage Preservation and Digital Tools

Digital tools and archives are playing an important role in recording the war’s impact on Ukranian culture. The *Ukrainian Fund of Digitised Art (UFDA)* has digitally preserved over 5,000 artworks using high-resolution imaging and blockchain technology. Kyiv’s *VR Tourism Platform* hosts virtual tours of buildings before the invasion and has been adapted to record evidence of their destruction. Similarly, the *Backup Ukraine* app has enabled citizens to create over 35,000 3D scans of heritage sites, creating a lasting record and ensuring Ukraine’s cultural heritage is protected despite the devastation of war.

Context

Total area (km²): City	826
Total resident population: City	3,000,000
Employment rate	67%

Related Sectors

Annual no. of tourists	1,850,000
------------------------	-----------

Economy and Employment

No. of people employed in arts, sports, entertainment and recreation	4,320
--	-------

Access and Participation

Visits to Temporary Exhibitions	400,000
Visits to Municipal Theatres	585,000

Talent

Education: Degree level and higher (% of working population)	73%
--	-----

Infrastructure and Heritage

No. of UNESCO world heritage sites within city boundaries	8
No. of museums	22
No. of public libraries	139
No. of cinemas	12
No. of theatres	21



© Kyiv Opera

Value of Investment

Income across museums	27,000,000
-----------------------	------------

Enabling Policies

Cultural strategy	Yes
-------------------	-----

LISBON

Lisbon, one of Europe’s oldest cities, blends centuries of global exchange with a lively 21st-century cultural scene. With its Atlantic location, layered history, and diverse neighbourhoods, it has become a creative hub attracting artists, entrepreneurs and visitors alike.

Cultural heritage is woven into the fabric of daily life, from Fado music, now UNESCO-recognised, to Lisbon’s distinctive tilework and historic architecture. The city manages five municipal galleries and the Museu de Lisboa, while neighbourhoods like Alfama and Bairro Alto pulse with local energy and cultural character.

Culture is central to Lisbon’s City Council strategy. Initiatives like the *Culture Pass* and proximity cultural centres aim to broaden access and decentralise cultural participation. The city also supports emerging artists with space, grants, and networks. To support affordability pressures, policies such as the *Historical Shops Programme* and increased investment in creative infrastructure reflect a commitment to inclusive cultural growth.

Memórias de Lisboa

Memórias de Lisbon is an oral history programme that collects, maps and shares citizens’ personal memories to document Lisbon’s urban, social and cultural transformations through the eyes of those who witnessed them. The project fosters local identity, fights social isolation among older populations and strengthens connections across generations. It also reinforces the role of public libraries as centres for memory, research and community engagement.

Library Network Strategy

The *Lisbon Library Network’s Strategic Programme 2025 - 2035* sets out a long-term vision for the city’s libraries. The Lisbon Library Network functions as an integrated municipal system connecting libraries across the city’s neighbourhoods. The network’s *Strategic Programme 2025 - 2035* ensures that this ecosystem continues to thrive, adapting to technological, social and urban transformations while reinforcing the library’s role at the heart of Lisbon’s cultural policy. Inspired by both national and international best practices, the four-pronged strategy positions libraries as essential cultural facilities, meeting places and engines of community building in an evolving urban landscape.



All images: © Photo by Aayush Gupta on Unsplash;
View of MAAT Museum, Santa Maria de Belém,
Lisbon © Photo by Pim de Boer on Unsplash

Reopening of Teatro Variedades

Following 30 years of closure, Lisbon’s historic Teatro Variedades reopened in 2024 as part of a major renovation project. The theatre reopening was celebrated with two-days of free performances, including theatre, dance, music, film and urban art. The reopening marks a milestone in Lisbon’s cultural revival, reinforcing the symbolic and civic value of heritage spaces in fostering vibrant public life.

Context

Total area (km²): City	100
Total resident population: City	545,796
Total resident population:	10,343,066
Other geographies	
Population Female	291,617
Population Male	254,179
Employment rate	76%

Related Sectors

Annual no. of tourists	265,000,000
------------------------	-------------

Economy and Employment

Creative industries employment (% of total employment)	4%
---	----

Access and Participation

Cinema: % of total population who went to the cinema at least once in the last year	41%
Live performance: % of total population who attended a live performance (excluding music) at least once in the last year	53%
Museums: % of total population who visited a museum or historical site	36%
Libraries: % of total population who visited a library	67%

Talent

No. of students studying at specialist arts higher education providers in the city	2,962
No. of students studying arts subjects at higher education providers in the city	1,438
Specialist higher education institutes: private	2
Specialist higher education institutes: public	5

Infrastructure and Heritage

No. of UNESCO World Heritage Sites within city boundaries	1
No. of museums	45
No. of heritage/historical sites (excluding museums)	241
No. of public libraries	18
No. of cinemas	14
No. of multi-arts venues	155
No. of cultural centres	27
No. of theatres	44
No. of museum admissions per year	1,018,054
No. of commercial art galleries	93

Value of Investment

Total city budget (current prices)	1,251,786,947
Total culture department budget (current prices)	23,241,107
Value of grants made to arts and cultural organisations (current prices)	1,618,904
Value of grants made to individual artists (current prices)	6,000
Value of grants and funding for cultural events (current prices)	3,563,460

Enabling Policies

Tax reliefs for donations and/or sponsorship to cultural organisations	Yes
Tax reliefs for cultural and creative sector organisations	Yes
Tax reliefs for film, TV, video games and other screen sectors	Yes
Tax reliefs for small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs)	Yes
Specific tax arrangements for artists	Yes

LONDON

London is the capital of the United Kingdom and Europe’s most visited city. With a population of nearly 9 million - more than a third born outside the UK and over 300 languages spoken - its diversity remains central to its global identity.

Since the Covid-19 pandemic, tourism has rebounded strongly: visitor numbers to London’s leading cultural venues have now surpassed pre-Covid levels, fuelled by new attractions and upcoming projects such as the pedestrianisation of Oxford Street and major infrastructure openings at East Bank, Eastbrook Studios - the capital’s largest new film studio in 25 years - and the relocation of the London Museum in 2026. Alongside world-renowned institutions like the Victoria and Albert Museum and Tate Modern, these developments are reshaping London’s cultural offer.

New innovations are drawing global audiences, from the long-running success of ABBA Voyage and London’s growing profile as a host city for major esports tournaments such as *League of Legends*, to international festivals including *SXSW London*.

At the same time, challenges remain in sustaining a vibrant night-time economy. In response, the Mayor has convened a *Night-Time Taskforce* and is launching a licensing devolution pilot to strengthen local management of nightlife, ensuring London’s after-dark culture remains safe, diverse and sustainable. Together with borough-led initiatives such as the *London Borough of Culture*, and investment in *Creative and Night-Time Enterprise Zones*, these measures underline London’s commitment to inclusive, resilient cultural growth.

London Borough of Culture

The Mayor’s *London Borough of Culture* programme offers a borough of the capital GBP 1.35 million to stage a year of cultural initiatives and better integrate culture in their borough. Waltham Forest was the first ever *London Borough of Culture* in 2019. After 1,000 events that attracted 500,000 people and GBP 4.1 million locally, the borough has created a new *Creative Enterprise Zone* for artists and a new *Cultural Quarter* for visitors.



All images: Photo by James O Jenkins

Creative Enterprise Zones

Launched in 2017 by the Mayor of London, *Creative Enterprise Zones* safeguard affordable creative workspaces, foster cultural infrastructure, and expand access to creative careers. With 12 zones across 13 boroughs, the programme has supported over 1,000 training placements and helped grow creative businesses despite economic pressures. By embedding equity, sustainability, and economic strategy into cultural policy, *Creative Enterprise Zones* are shaping a more inclusive and resilient future for London’s creative economy.

Night-Time Enterprise Zones

In 2022, Bromley became one of the first boroughs to join the Mayor of London’s *Night-Time Enterprise Zone* programme. Using strategic cultural programming and evening activation - like *Library Lates* and a *Winter Lights Festival* - the initiative significantly reversed high street decline, boosted footfall and positioned the town centre as a safe, welcoming, and culturally vibrant destination after dark by providing experiences for all.

Context

Total area (km²): City	1,572
Total resident population: City	8,945,309
Population Female	4,602,064
Population Male	4,343,245
Employment rate	75%
Self-employment rate	15%
Population 15-64 years old	6,272,850
% of foreign-born population	41%
Median annual wage (current prices)	41,581
% working age population (15-64 year olds) with tertiary degree or higher	61%

Related Sectors

Annual no. of tourists	20,277,082
No. of night clubs, discos and dance halls	515
No. of bars	3,535
No. of restaurants	8,975

Economy and Employment

No. of businesses in cultural and creative sectors	59,115
No. of people employed in cultural and creative occupations	279,800
No. of people employed in cultural and creative sectors	338,000

Access and Participation

Artistic activities: % of total population who engaged in artistic activity	76%
Cinema: % of total population who went to the cinema at least once in the last year	59%
Live performance: % of total population who attended a live performance (excluding music) at least once in the last year	67%
Live music: % of total population who attended a live music event (including indoor and outdoor venues) at least once in the last year	41%
Museums: % of total population who visited a museum or historical site	68%
Libraries: % of total population who visited a library	28%

Talent

No. of higher education providers in the city	114
No. of students studying arts and humanities at higher education providers in the city	52,885
No. of students studying arts subjects at higher education providers in the city	52,745
No. of students studying journalism and reporting at higher education providers in the city	9,065
No. of students studying marketing and advertising at higher education providers in the city	8,995
No. of students studying architecture and town planning at higher education providers in the city	9,215

Infrastructure and Heritage

No. of UNESCO World Heritage Sites within city boundaries	4
No. of museums	253
No. of heritage/historical sites (excluding museums)	20,442
No. of public libraries	347
No. of cinemas	123
No. of multi-arts venues	371
No. of cultural centres	26
No. of theatres	266
No. of film festivals	147
No. of music festivals	77
No. of museum admissions per year	51,812,131
No. of commercial art galleries	300

Value of Investment

Total city budget (current prices)	20,700,000,000
Value of city creative economy	51,700,000

Enabling Policies

Cultural strategy	Yes
Night-time economy strategy	Yes
Tourism strategy	Yes
Regular data collection/mapping of CCS businesses and employment numbers	Yes
Special economic zones (SEZ) targeted towards cultural and creative businesses (e.g. creative enterprise zones)	Yes
Affordable workspace policies targeted towards artists	Yes
Policies promoting culture’s role in health and wellbeing	Yes

LOS ANGELES

The city of Los Angeles is one of the most diverse and creative municipalities in the world. As the entertainment capital of the United States, it is also a global hub for visual arts, music, design, and performance. It’s the most populous city in the larger Los Angeles County, which is home to 88 cities in all, nearly 10 million people, and over 200 spoken languages. Los Angeles cultural richness is rooted in its communities.

The city’s cultural infrastructure ranges from world-renowned institutions including the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, The Getty, and Walt Disney Concert Hall to deeply rooted community-based organisations and ethnic arts hubs across neighbourhoods such as Leimert Park, Koreatown, and Boyle Heights.

Cultural policy is co-led by the Los Angeles City Department of Cultural Affairs and the Los Angeles County Department of Arts and Culture, prioritising access, equity, and inclusion. Programmes like artist residencies in government departments and agencies, and the *LA Arts Recovery Fund* and *FireAid* support exemplify this. Amid challenges around affordability and recovery, Los Angeles is shaping a more inclusive, community-driven cultural future.

Public Artists in Development

In 2023, Los Angeles County’s Civic Art Division launched *Public Artists in Development (PAiD)*, an initiative funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. Through funding, apprenticeships and professional development, it directly addresses the lack of equitable representation in public art by investing in the participation of underrepresented artists - including BIPOC, LGBTQ+, disabled, self-taught, and emerging artists. It offers a replicable model to diversify and democratise access to public commissions.

Cultural Olympiad Poster Competition

The 2024 *Paris Cultural Olympiad Poster Competition* connected art students from Paris and Los Angeles in a cross-city collaboration that celebrates Olympic values, civic engagement, and cultural diplomacy. Organised by the City of Paris and LA County’s Department of Arts and Culture, the project supported emerging artists, created international exposure, and informed cultural programming for the 2028 LA Olympic Games through poster and animation design exhibited globally.



All images: Photo courtesy of Los Angeles County

Creative Strategists

Los Angeles County’s *Creative Strategist Programme* embeds artists within government departments to address civic challenges through creative strategies. Since 2018, 12 artists have collaborated with various departments, enhancing public engagement, cultural participation, and equity. Their work demonstrates the value of integrating arts into governance, fostering innovation, and promoting inclusive policies that reflect the diverse communities of Los Angeles County.

Context

Total area (km²): City	10,512
Total resident population: City	9,663,345
Population Female	4,881,856
Population Male	4,781,489
Employment rate	65%
Self-employment rate	9%

Related Sectors

Annual no. of tourists	49,100,000
No. of bars	723
No. of restaurants	21,228

Economy and Employment

No. of businesses in cultural and creative sectors	50,863
--	--------

Access and Participation

Artistic activities: % of total population who engaged in artistic activity	55%
Cinema: % of total population who went to the cinema at least once in the last year	76%
Live music: % of total population who attended a live music event at least once in the last year	35%
Museums: % of total population who visited a museum or historical site	126%
Cultural centres: % of total population who visited a cultural centre	14%

Talent

No. of higher education providers in the city	197
No. of specialist arts higher education providers in the city	19



© Getty images

Infrastructure and Heritage

No. of UNESCO World Heritage Sites within city boundaries	1
No. of museums	121
No. of heritage/historical sites (excluding museums)	581
No. of public libraries	245
No. of cinemas	158
No. of cultural centres	19
No. of theatres	8
No. of film festivals	77
No. of music festivals	23
No. of fashion week events	1
No. of design week events	2
No. of book and literary festivals	21

Value of Investment

Total city budget (current prices)	62,097,408,329
Total culture department budget (current prices)	39,382,041
Value of grants made to arts and cultural organisations (current prices)	4,518,000

Enabling Policies

Cultural strategy	Yes
Tourism strategy	Yes
Regular data collection/mapping of CCS businesses and employment numbers	Yes
Subsidised access to culture for certain groups (e.g. young people, older people, etc)	Yes
Tax reliefs for film, TV, video games and other screen sectors	Yes
Policies to promote diversity, equality and inclusion in cultural and creative sectors	Yes

MELBOURNE

Melbourne, often ranked among the world’s most liveable cities, is home to over 200 nationalities and more than 260 languages. The Yarra River, or Birrarung, holds profound significance for the Eastern Kulin Nation, who are the traditional custodians of Melbourne (narrm).

The city’s arts precinct, home to the National Gallery of Victoria, Arts House, and Melbourne Recital Centre, is undergoing a major transformation, with bold investments in public art, new institutions, and inclusive design. Events like *YIRRAMBOI*, the *Melbourne Comedy Festival*, and *RISING* showcase its global and local reach.

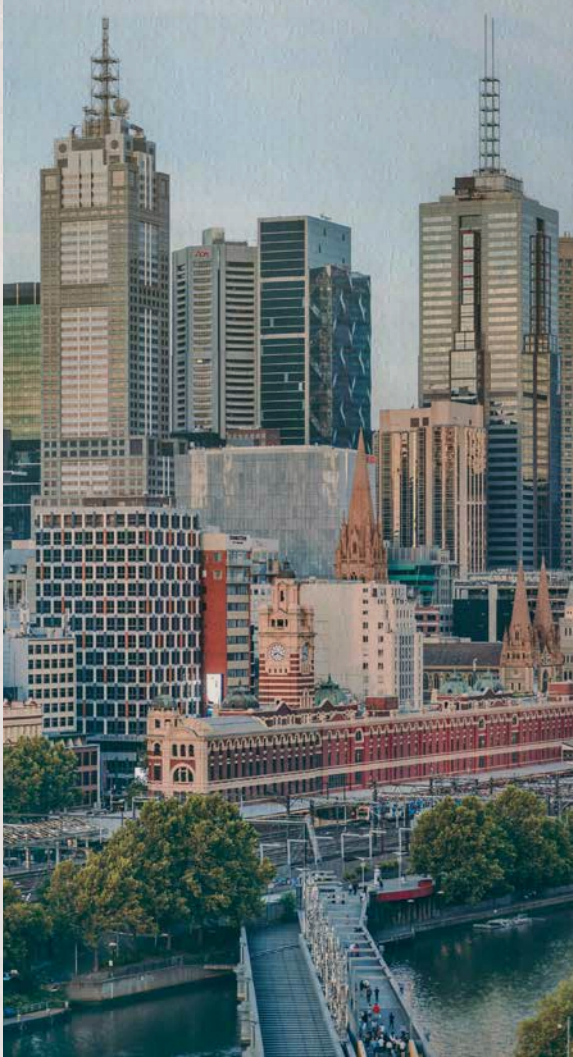
Cultural strategy is shaped by the City of Melbourne and the Victorian State Government. The *Creative Strategy 2018 - 2028* focuses on inclusion, public access, and support for Aboriginal artists. From revitalising laneways to funding new work, Melbourne is committed to culture as a driver of social and economic possibility.

Aboriginal Arts Grants

For 25 years, Melbourne’s *Aboriginal Arts Grants* have supported First Nations artists through flexible, culturally responsive funding. Led by Aboriginal creatives and grounded in long-term investment, the programme has transformed the city’s cultural sector and launched national careers. It remains a model of equity in local cultural policy, celebrating Aboriginal voices and advancing self-determination through creative expression.

The Warehouse Residency

The Warehouse Residency is City of Melbourne’s flagship programme for d/Deaf and Disabled artists, offering access-led support, funding, and leadership opportunities. Designed with artists and grounded in disability justice, it supports bold, interdisciplinary work while challenging structural barriers in the arts. Since 2021, the programme has supported 40+ creatives, with plans to expand into producing, digital formats, and enhanced access to budgets through 2028.



From top: City of Melbourne, view from Crown Tower © Photo by Hendo Wang on Unsplash; © Photo by Pat Whelen on Unsplash

Context

Total area (km²): City	2,453
Total area (km²): Other geographies	9,992
Total resident population: City	189,381
Total resident population: Other geographies	5,350,705
% of foreign-born population	34%
% working age population (15-64 year olds) with tertiary degree or higher	61%

Related Sectors

Annual no. of tourists	3,000,000
No. of night clubs, discos and dance halls	112
No. of bars	291
No. of restaurants	3,066
Area of free, publicly accessible parks and gardens as % of total city area	9%

Economy and Employment

Creative industries employment (% of total employment)	2.1%
--	------

Access and Participation

Museums: % of total population who visited a museum or historical site	40%
--	-----

Talent

No. of students studying arts subjects at higher education providers in the city	19,466
Specialist high education institutes: private	17



© Getty Images

Infrastructure and Heritage

No. of UNESCO World Heritage Sites within city boundaries	1
No. of museums	44
No. of heritage/historical sites (excluding museums)	2,952
No. of public libraries	7
No. of cinemas	70
No. of theatres	40
No. of live music venues	167
No. of film festivals	62
No. of commercial art galleries	162
No. of books lent per year	29,100,000
No. of cinema screens	400
No. of theatre admissions per year	5,431,066
No. of gaming arcades and permanent e-sports venues	13

Value of Investment

Total city budget (current prices)	732,400,000
Value of grants made to arts and cultural organisations (current prices)	15,224,000

Enabling Policies

Cultural strategy	Yes
-------------------	-----

MILAN

Milan, Italy’s northern powerhouse, is internationally known for fashion, design, and finance. With 1.4 million residents, it is one of Europe’s most densely populated and diverse cultural hubs. Rooted in Roman heritage and home to icons like the Duomo and Da Vinci’s Last Supper, Milan also hosts over 90 museums and more than 50 theatres. The city blends history with innovation, supporting nearly 15,000 creative firms and 189,000 cultural workers.

Cultural strategy is shaped by the Municipality of Milan, with strong private-sector support and recent investments in libraries, green cultural spaces like the Library of Trees, and new infrastructure including Italy’s first Museum of Digital Arts, the Museum of the Resistance and the European Library of Information and Culture (BEIC).

Projects like *A Name in Every Neighbourhood* and initiatives involving disabled people in public arts show Milan’s growing commitment to inclusion as it rebuilds post-pandemic. Milan is focusing on access, sustainability, and cultural equity, reimagining the city from the centre to the outskirts.

A Name in Every Neighborhood

Since 2021, the City of Milan and YesMilano have commissioned a series of community-designed murals in peripheral districts to foster local identity and creative inclusion through *Un Nome in Ogni Quartiere* (*A Name in Every Neighborhood*). Through workshops with artists, residents and students, each mural reflects the neighbourhood’s name and story, transforming areas like Bovisa, Baggio and Quarto Oggiaro into vibrant cultural markers. With over a dozen murals created and 300+ participants engaged, the initiative is redefining Milan’s outer districts as spaces of cultural value and pride.

ArtLine Public Art

Launched by the City of Milan, *ArtLine* is a permanent public art programme bringing contemporary sculpture to CityLife Park - an urban redevelopment zone once lacking cultural presence. Co-curated with MUDEC, the project commissioned works by international artists such as Kiki Smith, Alfredo Jaar, and Otobong Nkanga. With over 20 installations added between 2021-2023, the park now hosts a dynamic cultural destination that integrates daily urban life with global contemporary art.



All images: © Canva

Milano è Viva

To decentralise cultural access, *Milano è Viva* launched eight district-based summer festivals across Milan’s outer neighbourhoods, addressing long-standing centralisation of events. Co-funded by the Ministry of Culture, the programme worked with local associations to deliver concerts, theatre, and family programming in each zone. Complemented by Estate al Castello at Castello Sforzesco in the city centre, the initiative staged over 900 events from 2022-2024, offering professional platforms for emerging talent and cultural connection citywide.

Context

Total area (km²): City	182
Total resident population: City	1,404,431

Related Sectors

Annual no. of tourists	4,032,213
No. of night clubs, discos and dance halls	316
No. of bars	4,878
No. of restaurants	5,856

Economy and Employment

Creative industries employment (% of total employment)	7.5%
--	------

Access and Participation

Carnival or festival: % of total population who attended a carnival or festival	7.00%
Museums and galleries: % of working age population who attended a museum or gallery	8.50%

Talent

Specialist higher education institutes: private	6
Specialist higher education institutes: public	6

Infrastructure and Heritage

No. of UNESCO World Heritage Sites within city boundaries	1
No. of museums	90
No. of heritage/historical sites (excluding museums)	800
No. of public libraries	75
No. of cinemas	35
No. of theatres	56
No. of live music venues	53

Value of Investment

Total city budget (current prices)	3,712,000,000
------------------------------------	---------------

Enabling Policies

Cultural strategy	Yes
Night-time economy strategy	Yes
Tourism strategy	Yes
Subsidised access to culture for certain groups (e.g. young people, older people, etc)	Yes
Tax reliefs for cultural and creative sector organisations	Yes
Tax reliefs for film, TV, video games and other screen sectors	Yes
Policies for arts education in schools	Yes
Government supported creative hub(s) or co-working spaces	Yes
Government supported incubators and accelerators for cultural and creative sector startups	Yes
Affordable workspace policies targeted towards artists	Yes
Policies supporting cultural and/or creative districts	Yes
Policies to promote diversity, equality and inclusion in cultural and creative sectors	Yes
Policies to promote environmental sustainability within cultural and creative sectors	Yes
Policies for digital transformation and use of emerging technologies in culture	Yes
Policies promoting international cultural exchange and collaboration	Yes
Policies promoting culture’s role in health and wellbeing	Yes

MONTREAL

Montréal, the largest city in Québec, is home to more than 2 million residents and over 120 ethnic communities. Known globally for its creative energy, Montréal is a *UNESCO City of Design* and a magnet for cultural talent and festivals all year round.

From the Festival International de Jazz to the circus hub Cité des Arts du Cirque, Montréal’s cultural life pulses across seasons and sectors. The *Quartier des Spectacles* anchors the downtown scene, while the *Maisons de la Culture* network and *Cultural Neighbourhoods* programme ensure access citywide.

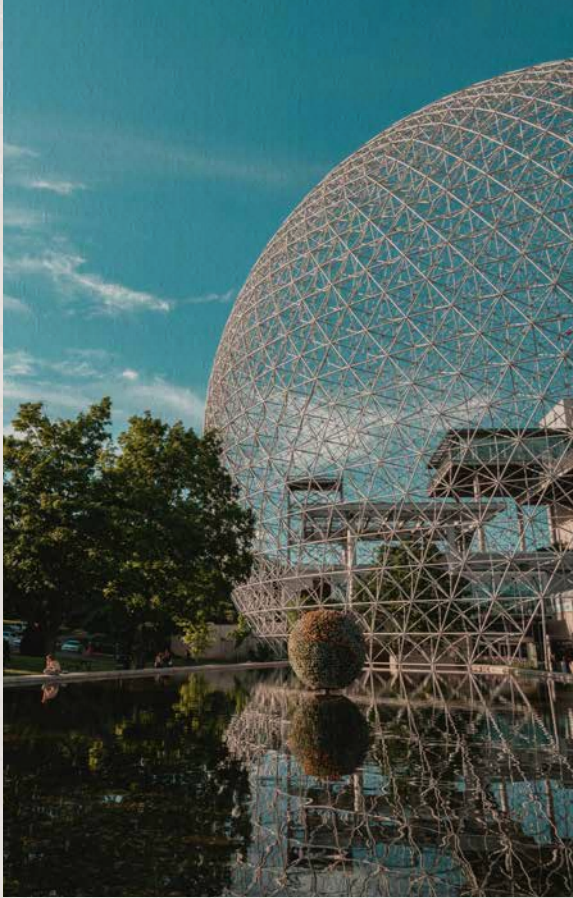
In 2025, Montréal adopted its new *Cultural Development Policy 2025-2030*. With ‘Create, Transform, Unify’, the City commits to ensuring that the arts, culture and heritage reinforce Montréal’s social fabric, improve quality of life for the public, and play a direct role in developing and bringing together communities. The policy is structured around three key commitments and four guidelines. Respectively: Commitments for Indigenous peoples, Commitments for the French language and Commitments for young people. And: A city marked by its culture and heritage; Montréalers at the heart of a rich and engaging cultural life; A city partnered with its creative heart; A culturally strong and vibrant metropolis.

Preserving Chinatown

Like many Chinatowns in cities, Montréal’s Chinatown - the only French-speaking Chinatown in the Americas - faces pressures from gentrification and redevelopment. Since 2019, the City of Montréal has implemented a coordinated strategy to preserve the neighbourhood’s culture and reflect a broader North American trend of protecting ethnic enclaves from displacement through inclusive urban planning and community-led preservation.

A Voice for Youth

Montréal is embedding youth perspectives into cultural policymaking through two initiatives: *A Library That Looks Like Me* and the *Manifesto of Montréal Youth for the Arts and Culture*. These programmes invite children and teens to co-design library services and contribute ideas to cultural policy. By giving young people a stronger voice, the city is fostering inclusive participation and ensuring that cultural strategies reflect the needs and aspirations of the next generation.



From top: © Photo by Steven Wright on Unsplash; Photo courtesy of the City of Montréal

Museum Co-creation

Between 2019 and 2024, Montréal transformed its city museum into *Centre des Mémoires Montréalaises (MEM)*. Now located in the *Quartier des Spectacles*, *MEM* tripled in size and was co-designed with over 75 citizens through a participatory planning process. With exhibitions co-created by community groups and inclusive governance at its core, *MEM* redefines the city museum as a civic space rooted in memory, diversity, and belonging.

Context	
Total area (km²): City	365
Total area (km²): Other geographies	499
Total resident population: City	1,762,949
Total resident population:	2,200,807
Other geographies	
Population Female	1,020,465
Population Male	983,805
Employment rate	61%
Self-employment rate	8%
Population 15-64 years old	1,197,045
% of foreign-born population	33%
Median annual wage (current prices)	32,400
Income inequality (Gini coefficient)	0.374
% working age population (15-64 year olds) with tertiary degree or higher	65%

Related Sectors	
Annual no. of tourists	11,700,000
No. of restaurants	4,200
Area of free, publicly accessible parks and gardens as % of total city area	13%

Economy and Employment	
No. of businesses in cultural and creative sectors	3,518

Access and Participation	
Artistic activities: % of total population who engaged in artistic activity	82%
Cinema: % of total population who went to the cinema at least once in the last year	68%
Live music: % of total population who attended a live music event (including indoor and outdoor venues) at least once in the last year	64%
Libraries: % of total population who visited a library	29%
Cultural centres: % of total population who visited a cultural centre	42%
Average consumption expenditure of private households on cultural goods and services (current prices)	3,259

Talent	
No. of higher education providers in the city	249
No. of specialist arts higher education providers in the city	11
No. of students studying at specialist art higher education providers in the city	3,971

Infrastructure and Heritage	
No. of museums	69
No. of heritage/historical sites (excluding museums)	213
No. of public libraries	62
No. of cinemas	20
No. of multi-arts venues	19
No. of cultural centres	18
No. of theatres	46
No. of live music venues	219
No. of film festivals	24
No. of music festivals	28
No. of fashion week events	5
No. of design week events	3
No. of museum admissions per year	6,301,523
No. of theatre admissions per year	671,373
No. of gaming arcades and permanent e-sports venues	6
No. of bookshops	109
No. of book and literary festivals	12
No. of theatre festivals	3
No. of comedy festivals	6
No. of art and crafts fairs/markets	6
No. of carnivals	5

Value of Investment	
Total city budget (current prices)	6,990,000,000
Value of grants made to arts and cultural organisations (current prices)	26,474,130
Value of grants made to individual artists (current prices)	16,354,654
Value of grants and funding for cultural event (current prices)	8,347,500

Enabling Policies	
Cultural strategy	Yes
Creative industries strategy	Yes
Night-time economy strategy	Yes
Tourism strategy	Yes
Regular data collection/mapping of CCS businesses and employment numbers	Yes
Subsidised access to culture for certain groups	Yes
Special economic zones (SEZ) targeted towards cultural and creative businesses	Yes
Government supported creative hub(s) or co-working spaces	Yes
Policies to promote diversity, equality and inclusion in cultural and creative sectors	Yes

NANJING

Nanjing, a former capital of China and now a 24-hour cultural metropolis, is blending ancient heritage with a bold, future-focused strategy. Home to over 2,400 heritage sites and a UNESCO World Heritage Site, it is also China’s only *UNESCO City of Literature*.

The city’s rich cultural legacy includes sites like the Ming Tomb, Sun Yat-sen Mausoleum, and the artistry of Yunjin brocade. Its night-time economy is thriving, with major investments in theatre infrastructure, immersive literary programming, and vibrant night tourism.

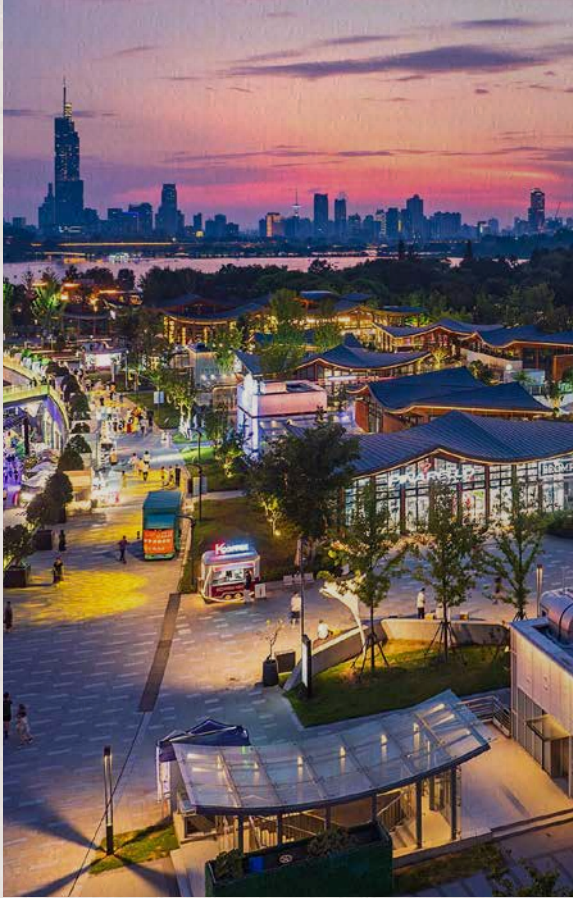
Cultural policy is coordinated by the Nanjing Municipal People’s Government and supported by research from the Nanjing Academy of Social Sciences. A 2024 strategy focuses on revitalising public spaces and promoting humanistic values, while 100 new or upgraded studio theatres are planned citywide. With over 500,000 cultural practitioners and a strong culture of volunteerism, Nanjing is reimagining itself as a global cultural and tourist centre, rooted in heritage and powered by creativity.

Dream of the Red Chamber

Nanjing’s immersive adaptation of Dream of the Red Chamber redefines how traditional literary intellectual property can engage modern audiences. Debuting in July 2024, this digitally driven exhibition attracted over 10,000 visitors and generated more than one million RMB, while sparking renewed interest in Chinese literary heritage among youth. By blending immersive tech with cultural storytelling, the project exemplifies how cities can make classical literature relevant for new generations.

City of Literature Digital Spatial Network

Nanjing, with its 1,800-year literary heritage, transformed its cultural narrative through digital innovation. By leveraging big data, artificial intelligence, virtual reality, and augmented reality, the City of Literature’s heritage has been enriched. The network of over 1,000 QR codes on cultural landmarks has generated more than 40 curated literary routes, provided infrastructure for over 100 cultural and tourism enterprises, and enhanced smart tourism services across the city.



All images: © Canva

Aesthetic Education and Appreciation

In 2024, Nanjing launched a cultural strategy focused on three areas: revitalising public spaces, nurturing humanistic aesthetic values, and promoting city-wide aesthetic awareness. 53 projects were piloted to engage citizens with art and beauty through public space revitalization, evening classes, and cultural programming. Supported by digital campaigns and volunteer networks, the initiative enhances cultural wellbeing and offers a replicable model for embedding aesthetic education into urban policy and city planning.

Context	
Total area (km²): City	6,587
Total resident population: City	9,547,000
Population Female	3,734,390
Population Male	3,659,214
Related Sectors	
Annual no. of tourists	103,290,000
No. of night clubs, discos and dance halls	217
No. of bars	292
Economy and Employment	
No. of people employed in cultural and creative sectors	688,294
No. of people employed in cultural institutions	488,596
Access and Participation	
Museums: % of total population who visited a museum or historical site	49%
Talent	
No. of higher education providers in the city	57

Infrastructure and Heritage	
No. of UNESCO world heritage sites within city boundaries	1
No. of museums	72
No. of heritage/historical sites (excluding museums)	651
No. of public libraries	15
No. of cinemas	159
No. of multi-arts venues	8
No. of cultural centres	115
No. of theatres	39
No. of live music venues	26
No. of film festivals	1
No. of music festivals	10
No. of design week events	1
Value of Investment	
Total city budget (current prices)	183,870,000,000
Total culture department budget (current prices)	2,890,000,000
Enabling Policies	
Night-time economy strategy	Yes
Tourism strategy	Yes

NEW YORK

New York, the most populous city in the United States, is a global leader in finance, fashion, and culture. With over 8 million residents and a legacy shaped by immigration and innovation, each borough offers a distinct contribution to the city’s creative identity.

From Harlem’s jazz clubs to the Bronx’s hip hop origins, the Lower East Side’s Yiddish theatre to the East Village’s punk scene, New York’s neighbourhoods have defined global cultural movements. Today, hundreds of cultural organisations and countless artists keep that creative energy alive.

The City’s Department of Cultural Affairs is the largest municipal arts funder in the U.S. Each year through its *Cultural Development Fund*, it supports more than 1,000 cultural non-profits across New York City. In 2025, the agency distributed a record-breaking amount of funding to the largest-ever group of organisations: USD 59.3 million to 1,078 cultural groups across the city. With a focus on arts education, equitable funding, and cultural access in underserved communities, the city is integrating culture into its long-term recovery and future growth, ensuring creativity continues to thrive in every corner.

Greater New York Arts Development Fund
To address cultural inequities and affordability challenges, NYC’s Department of Cultural Affairs increased funding for local arts councils through the Greater New York Arts Development Fund. By distributing USD 3.4 million to local arts councils in 2024, the fund has supported over 650 artists and arts organizations across the five boroughs. This investment expands access to the arts in underserved communities and reinforces NYC’s identity as a hub of inclusive cultural creation. As NYC continues to face an affordability crisis that poses huge challenges for its creative community, this increased investment represents a critical source of support for the artists who continue to live and work in the city.



From top: © Photo by Leon JL on Unsplash

NYC Create in Place
NYC Create in Place is a cross-agency initiative launched in 2024 to address the affordability crisis threatening the city’s cultural and creative sectors. Led by the NYC Department of Cultural Affairs, the programme supports organisations at risk of losing space or seeking to expand. Through casework, a resource hub, and interagency collaboration, the initiative has reached over 50 organisations, safeguarding and strengthening New York’s creative infrastructure. The initiative grew out of a World Cities Culture Forum *Leadership Exchange* that sent delegates from New York to London to learn about London’s Culture and Creative Spaces at Risk office.

Public Artists in Residence
New York City’s *Public Artists in Residence (PAIR)* programme embeds artists within city agencies to address urgent civic issues through creative collaboration. Launched in 2015, the initiative has placed 24 artists with 15 agencies and tackled challenges such as discrimination, gun violence prevention, and youth detention by integrating artistic thinking into public policy. With residencies spanning city departments, *PAIR* helps generate innovative solutions, strengthen community engagement, and reimagine the role of art in public service and city governance.

Context	
Total area (km²): City	1,214
Total area (km²): Other geographies	141,297
Total resident population: City	8,478,000
Total resident population:	19,571,216
Other geographies	
Population Female	4,277,662
Population Male	48%
Employment rate	60%
Self-employment rate	6%

Related Sectors	
Annual no. of tourists	62,200,000
No. of night clubs, discos and dance halls	2,400
No. of bars	2,100
No. of restaurants	19,400
Area of free, publicly accessible parks and gardens as % of total city area	27%

Economy and Employment	
No. of businesses in cultural and creative sectors	11,090
No. of people employed in cultural and creative occupations	42,759
No. of people employed in cultural and creative sectors	126,704

Access and Participation	
Live performance: % of total population who attended a live performance (excluding music) at least once in the last year	22%
Museums: % of total population who visited a museum or historical site	65%
Libraries: % of total population who visited a library	31%

Talent	
Specialist higher education institutes: private	12
Education: Degree level and higher (% of working population)	36.2%



© Photo by Vidar Nordli-Mathisen on Unsplash

Infrastructure and Heritage	
No. of UNESCO World Heritage Sites within city boundaries	2
No. of museums	153
No. of heritage/historical sites (excluding museums)	38,000
No. of public libraries	219
No. of cinemas	110
No. of multi-arts venues	209
No. of cultural centres	176
No. of theatres	748
No. of live music venues	442
No. of film festivals	20
No. of commercial art galleries	917

Value of Investment	
Total city budget (current prices)	107,000,000,000
Total culture department budget (current prices)	224,000,000
Value of grants made to arts and cultural organisations (current prices)	52,200,000
Value of grants made to individual artists (current prices)	2,930,000

Enabling Policies	
Cultural strategy	Yes
Creative industries strategy	Yes
Night-time economy strategy	Yes
Tourism strategy	Yes
Subsidised access to culture for certain groups (e.g. young people, older people, etc)	Yes
Special economic zones (SEZ) targeted towards cultural and creative businesses	Yes
Affordable workspace policies targeted towards artists	Yes
Policies to promote environmental sustainability within cultural and creative sectors	Yes

OSLO

Oslo, Norway’s capital, is a fast-growing and vibrant cultural hub shaped by its proximity to nature and its commitment to environmental and social sustainability. With over 720,000 residents in the municipality and more than a million in the wider urban area, Oslo is a political, economic and creative centre.

A long-standing cultural city with roots dating to 1000 CE, Oslo’s landscape is defined by green space, and 68% is publicly accessible. Recent years have seen major new institutions, including the Deichman Library, the MUNCH Museum, and the National Museum, transform the waterfront. Cultural spaces in schools, libraries and studios extend access across communities.

The City of Oslo’s policy agenda is focused on equity, youth participation and climate action. Through grants, studio provision, and the Oslo School of Art, the city empowers artists and young people alike to shape a sustainable, inclusive and imaginative cultural life.

Diversifying Municipal Grant Schemes

To strengthen cultural vibrancy and inclusivity, Oslo has expanded its municipal grant schemes, supporting grassroots creativity, public space activation, and cultural innovation. In 2025, NOK 399 million will be distributed across arts and culture, in addition to initiatives like the *Bylivstilskudd* urban life grants funding both large festivals and small-scale projects. Innovation grants also back experimental work, including collaborations with business and tech sectors. These schemes place culture at the centre of Oslo’s evolving urban identity.

Oslo Booking and The Oslo Key App

To support community life and volunteer engagement, Oslo is opening up municipal buildings through *Oslo Booking* and *The Oslo Key* - digital solutions for reserving and accessing schools and civic venues for culture and the community. The initiative addresses the growing need for free and flexible indoor spaces, removes bureaucratic barriers, and extends access beyond regular opening hours. In 2024 alone, 4.5 million hours of volunteer activity were booked at municipal venues, revitalising underused infrastructure to support inclusive cultural life citywide.



From top: © Canva; Oslo Skaperfestival
© Photo by Gorm K.Gaare; Last Station Mortensrud
© Photo by Trond A Isaksen

Public Art Strategy

As Oslo grows rapidly, the city’s public art strategy ensures new developments reflect the identity and voices of existing communities. In Mortensrud, for instance, artists collaborated with residents to embed local histories into redevelopment. Projects such as *Last Station Mortensrud* and *Together We Can Move Mountains* use photography, performance, and digital art to honour everyday life and lost landmarks. The approach fosters dialogue, preserves memory, and places cultural heritage at the centre of urban change.

Context

Total area (km²): City	481
Total resident population: City	723,196
Population Female	360,190
Population Male	357,520
Employment rate	97%

Related Sectors

Annual no. of tourists	3,491,236
------------------------	-----------

Economy and Employment

No. of businesses in cultural and creative sectors	26,482
No. of people employed in cultural and creative occupations	12,863
No. of people employed in cultural and creative sectors	22,448

Access and Participation

Cinema: % of total population who went to the cinema at least once in the last year	65%
Live music: % of total population who attended a live music event (including indoor and outdoor venues) at least once in the last year	58%
Museums: % of total population who visited a museum or historical site	45%
Libraries: % of total population who visited a library	44%

Talent

Specialist higher education institutes: public	8
--	---

Infrastructure and Heritage

No. of museums	22
No. of public libraries	22
No. of cinemas	9
No. of theatres	17
No. of live music venues	310
No. of film festivals	15
No. of music festivals	10

Value of Investment

Total city budget (current prices)	5,200,000,000
Total culture department budget (current prices)	162,000,000

Enabling Policies

Cultural strategy	Yes
Creative industries strategy	Yes
Night-time economy strategy	Yes
Tourism strategy	Yes
Regular data collection/mapping of CCS businesses and employment numbers	Yes
Regular mapping of heritage at risk	Yes
Regular mapping of heritage at risk from climate change	Yes
Subsidised access to culture for certain groups (e.g. young people, older people, etc)	Yes
Policies for arts education in schools	Yes
Government supported creative hub(s) or co-working spaces	Yes
Government supported incubators and accelerators for cultural and creative sector startups	Yes
Government backed loan guarantee for cultural and creative sector businesses	Yes
Affordable workspace policies targeted towards artists	Yes
Policies to promote diversity, equality and inclusion in cultural and creative sectors	Yes
Policies to promote environmental sustainability within cultural and creative sectors	Yes
Policies promoting international cultural exchange and collaboration	Yes

PARIS

Paris, the capital of France and Europe’s most populous city, is globally renowned for its architectural grandeur, culinary excellence, fashion leadership and deep cultural heritage. It remains a magnet for millions of visitors each year, drawn to its museums, cinemas, nightlife and rich artistic life.

Artists have long found Paris a place of freedom and inspiration. Today, the city and its wider Île-de-France region are evolving rapidly, with major urban transformations and a *Cultural Olympiad* put in place for the 2024 Olympic and Paralympic Games. The new regional master plan to 2040 places culture at the heart of environmental action and social equity.

The City and Region are focused on decentralising access to culture, especially for children and young people, while embedding sustainability and inclusivity into cultural policy. From repurposed industrial sites to neighbourhood-based arts hubs, a dynamic network of cultural spaces is emerging.

James-Baldwin Media Library and the Refugee House

Launched in July 2024, the James-Baldwin Media Library and the Refugee House form a pioneering dual institution located in the former Jean-Quarré High School in Paris’s 19th arrondissement. Designed to serve both local residents and newcomers, this collaborative cultural and social hub fosters community integration, mutual understanding, and inclusive access to public services. The two facilities represent a bold response to contemporary urban challenges through innovative use of public space.

Cultural Olympiad

The Paris 2024 Olympic and Paralympic Games served as a turning point for the city’s cultural strategy. *The Cultural Olympiad*, launched in advance of the Games, significantly expanded the presence of art in public spaces and opened new avenues for civic participation. By merging cultural practice with the spirit of sport, the city activated public space and invited Parisians into a reimagined relationship with culture.



From top: © Photo by Vik Molina on Unsplash
© Photo by Dustin Bowdige on Unsplash

Théâtre de la Concorde

Opened in 2024, the Théâtre de la Concorde is Paris’s first municipal theatre dedicated to using the arts to explore urgent democratic and social issues. Located near the Champs-Élysées, it offers accessible programming, from performances to workshops and debates, rooted in monthly civic themes like freedom, care, and populism. With over 220 events and 20,000 visitors in its first months, the theatre empowers critical thinking and citizen participation through culture in the heart of the city.

Context

Total area (km²): City	105
Total area (km²): Other geographies	12,012
Total resident population: City	2,100,000
Total resident population:	12,450,000
Other geographies	
Population Female	6,367,059
Population Male	5,950,220
Employment rate	68%
Self-employment rate	12%

Related Sectors

Annual no. of tourists	48,700,000
No. of night clubs, discos and dance halls	125
No. of bars	4,855
No. of restaurants	33,782

Economy and Employment

No. of businesses in cultural and creative sectors	17,328
No. of people employed in cultural and creative sectors	235,099

Access and Participation

Cinema: % of total population who went to the cinema at least once in the last year	71%
Live performance: % of total population who attended a live performance (excluding music) at least once in the last year	37%
Live music: % of total population who attended a live music event	43%
Museums: % of total population who visited a museum or historical site	44%
Libraries: % of total population who visited a library	35%

Talent

No. of higher education providers in the city	86
No. of specialist arts higher education providers in the city	46



© Photo by Arnaud Mariat on Unsplash

Infrastructure and Heritage

No. of UNESCO World Heritage Sites within city boundaries	5
No. of museums	228
No. of heritage/historical sites (excluding museums)	4,013
No. of public libraries	1,031
No. of cinemas	311
No. of multi-arts venues	392
No. of cultural centres	276
No. of theatres	376
No. of live music venues	450
No. of film festivals	89
No. of music festivals	271
No. of fashion week events	6
No. of design week events	2
No. of book and literary festivals	43
No. of theatre festivals	122

Value of Investment

Total culture department budget (current prices)	103,800,000
--	-------------

Enabling Policies

Cultural strategy	Yes
Night-time economy strategy	Yes
Tourism strategy	Yes
Regular data collection/mapping of CCS businesses and employment numbers	Yes
Regular mapping of heritage at risk	Yes
Subsidised access to culture for certain groups (e.g. young people, older people, etc)	Yes

RIO DE JANEIRO

Rio de Janeiro, Brazil's 'Marvellous City', is a global cultural icon framed by rainforest, ocean, and landmark architecture. From the samba beats of Carnival to the majesty of Christ the Redeemer, Rio's cultural spirit pulses through every street, beach and hillside.

As a hub for Brazilian music, cinema, and literature, the city nurtures creativity at all levels, from grassroots rodas de samba in Lapa to large-scale festivals like *Rock in Rio* and the Olympics. In 2025, Rio became the first Portuguese-speaking city named *UNESCO World Book Capital*.

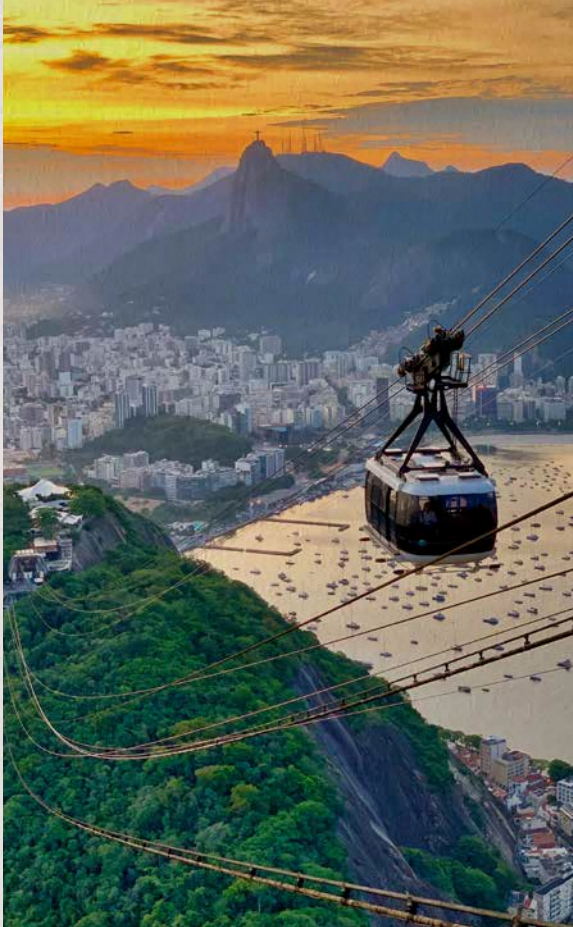
Cultural policy is shaped by the Prefeitura and Secretaria Municipal de Cultura, with a strong focus on equity and innovation. Through the *Municipal Law of Incentive to Culture*, companies invest part of their taxes in city-approved cultural projects, channelling resources to underserved areas. By prioritising diversity, redistributing funding, and empowering independent creators, Rio is building a cultural future rooted in inclusion, creativity, and community pride.

Zonas de Cultura

Launched in 2021, Rio de Janeiro's *Zonas de Cultura* programme decentralises cultural resources, directing funding and activity to underrepresented areas across the city by recognising and amplifying the work of local artists. Through mapping cultural activity and funding new spaces, it aims to diversify artistic production, expand access to cultural spaces, and attract visitors from across the city. Each zone reflects the unique character of its community, strengthening Rio's cultural mosaic while ensuring that creativity thrives beyond the traditional city centre.

CineCarioca

CineCarioca is a community programme which uses cinema to break down boundaries, revitalise underserved urban areas and improve social inclusion throughout the city. The programme provides access to cinema and movie theatres at affordable prices in areas of the city currently lacking in cultural spaces. *CineCarioca Nova Brasília* is Rio de Janeiro's first neighbourhood cinema built inside a favela. Located in Complexo do Alemão, it provides daily film sessions, school screenings, and community programming.



From top: © Photo by Davi Costa on Unsplash; Photo courtesy of the City of Rio de Janeiro

Context

Total area (km²): City	1,200
Total resident population: City	6,211,223

Related Sectors

Annual no. of tourists	1,528,133
No. of bars	618
No. of restaurants	9,692

Economy and Employment

No. of people employed in cultural and creative sectors	124,000
---	---------

Access and Participation

Cinema: % of total population who went to the cinema at least once in the last year	57%
Live performance: % of total population who attended a live performance (excluding music) at least once in the last year	72%
Live music: % of total population who attended a live music event (including indoor and outdoor venues) at least once in the last year	53%
Museums: % of total population who visited a museum or historical site	35%

Talent

No. of higher education providers in the city	69
---	----

Infrastructure and Heritage

No. of museums	86
No. of public libraries	48
No. of cinemas	185
No. of cultural centres	10
No. of theatres	15
No. of film festivals	5

Value of Investment

Total culture department budget (current prices)	151,500,000
--	-------------

Enabling Policies

Cultural strategy	Yes
-------------------	-----

SAN FRANCISCO

San Francisco is a city where innovation and resistance have long shared the same streets. From its early Indigenous history and colonial past to the Gold Rush and countercultural revolutions, the city has shaped, and been shaped by, movements that reimagine society. Today, it remains one of the most artistically vibrant and diverse cities in the United States.

Neighbourhoods like the Castro, Haight-Ashbury, Chinatown and the Mission have given rise to powerful cultural legacies, from LGBTQ+ rights to Chicano murals and Beat poetry. Anchored by artistic institutions like the de Young, Legion of Honor, Asian Art Museum, SFMoMA, and the War Memorial and Performing Arts Center, and grassroots arts spaces, City owned cultural centres and cultural districts, San Francisco’s cultural life is both globally acclaimed and deeply local.

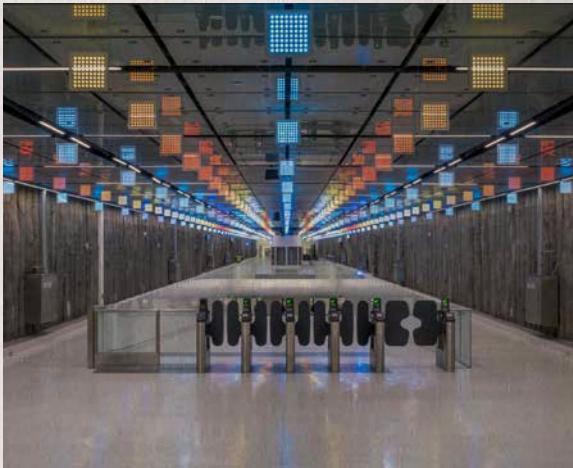
Cultural governance is facing new pressures. Rising housing and workspace costs, the tech boom, and reduced public funding threaten the city’s creative fabric. But through public policy, stewardship of cultural assets, initiatives like the Creative Land Trust, and a commitment to equity, San Francisco continues to fight for a future where creativity belongs to everyone.

Shaping Legacy

Launched by the San Francisco Arts Commission in 2023 and funded by the Mellon Foundation, *Shaping Legacy* is a groundbreaking initiative reimagining the city’s monuments to reflect more inclusive public histories. Centred on community engagement and a comprehensive monument and memorial audit, the programme critically examines existing representations and commissions new temporary artworks. It marks a major step in equitable cultural policy, ensuring public space honours San Francisco’s full diversity of voices and experiences.

Public Art

The San Francisco Arts Commission (SFAC) established the *2%-for-Art Programme* to integrate public art into the city’s public facilities and civic spaces. From permanent site-specific installations to the purchase of two-dimensional works of art, these projects reflect neighbourhood identity and promote cultural inclusion. The *Central Subway Public Art Programme* is a key example, featuring artist commissions in four new stations. SFAC’s approach shows how policy-driven cultural investment can transform infrastructure into spaces of creativity, memory, and community connection.



Both images: © Photo by Ethan Kaplan

Hotel Tax

Approved by voters in November 2018, San Francisco’s *Proposition E* law restored a portion of the city’s hotel tax to directly fund arts and culture. This voter-backed initiative created a virtuous circle: since 2023 marketing San Francisco as a vibrant cultural destination attracted more culturally engaged visitors who contribute to the hotel tax. In turn, this revenue sustains grant funding, cultural programming, fosters equity, and strengthens the city’s identity as a global creative capital.

Context

Total area (km²): City	121
Total resident population: City	827,526

Related Sectors

Annual no. of tourists	23,100,000
No. of bars	378
No. of restaurants	3,751
Area of free, publicly accessible parks and gardens as % of total city area	21%

Economy and Employment

No. of businesses in cultural and creative sectors	3,495
No. of people employed in cultural and creative sectors	60,858

Access and Participation

Carnival or festival: % of total population who attended a carnival or festival	90.5%
Carnival or festival: Attendance to largest festival funded by Grants for the Arts (Pride Parade)	1,300,000

Talent

No. of higher education providers in the city	23
---	----



© Photo by Hulleah Tsinhnahjinnie

Infrastructure and Heritage

No. of museums	54
No. of heritage/historical sites (excluding museums)	320
No. of public libraries	28
No. of cinemas	24
No. of theatres	71
No. of live music venues	324

Value of Investment

Total city budget (current prices)	15,917,870,147
Value of grants made to arts and cultural organisations (current prices)	25,056,603

Enabling Policies

Cultural strategy	Yes
Tourism strategy	Yes

SÃO PAULO

São Paulo, the largest city in Latin America, is Brazil’s economic engine and a cultural force defined by its diversity. Home to more than 11 million people, its energy comes from a rich mix of immigrant histories, grassroots creativity, and bold cultural ambition.

From samba and hip hop to the avant-garde Vanguarda Paulista, São Paulo’s music scene is globally influential. Iconic institutions such as MASP, the Municipal Theatre, and the Pinacoteca sit alongside vibrant street art and a thriving public realm. The city’s architecture, ranging from Neo-Gothic churches to Lina Bo Bardi’s modernism, makes it an open-air museum.

Cultural policy is led by the Municipal Culture Secretariat, working across sectors and in collaboration with public and private actors. With a 10-year plan and investment in cultural data and decentralised planning, São Paulo is reshaping cultural access and infrastructure. Its vision: a sustainable, inclusive cultural ecosystem that empowers communities and champions creativity.

Valorização de Iniciativas Culturais
2025 marks the 20th anniversary of the *Programa para a Valorização de Iniciativas Culturais (Valuation of Cultural Initiatives) (VAI)* in São Paulo, one of Brazil’s most influential municipal cultural policies. Created in 2005, the VAI Programme has funded over 3,200 cultural projects by low-income youth and collectives in peripheral areas of the city - democratising access to funding, stimulating local cultural activity, and addressing structural inequalities in São Paulo’s cultural landscape.

Spcine Circuit
Launched in 2016, the *Spcine Circuit* has become one of Brazil’s most significant public cinema networks, transforming São Paulo’s cultural infrastructure and making access to film a civic right. With 32 public cinema rooms across 27 educational and cultural centres, the initiative brings free or low-cost cinema to underserved regions of the city—strengthening local identity, stimulating the audiovisual economy, and advancing cultural inclusion.



From top: © Photo by Renato Parada; Photo courtesy of the Municipal Culture and Creative Economy Secretariat of the City of São Paulo

Context	
Total area (km²): City	1,523
Total resident population: City	11,451,999
Population Female	6,023,751
Population Male	47%
Employment rate	59%

Related Sectors	
Annual no. of tourists	2,200,000
No. of bars	33,810

Economy and Employment	
Creative industries employment (% of total employment)	8.99%

Access and Participation	
Artistic activities: % of total population who engaged in artistic activity	37%
Cinema: % of total population who went to the cinema at least once in the last year	61%
Live performance: % of total population who attended a live performance (excluding music) at least once in the last year	75%
Live music: % of total population who attended a live music event (including indoor and outdoor venues) at least once in the last year	12%
Museums: % of total population who visited a museum or historical site	29%
Libraries: % of total population who visited a library	36%

Talent	
No. of higher education providers in the city	42

Infrastructure and Heritage	
No. of museums	124
No. of public libraries	54
No. of cinemas	366
No. of cultural centres	53
No. of theatres	119
No. of music festivals	50
No. of commercial art galleries	80
No. of bars, restaurants, and cafes licenced to play live music	33,810
No. of art and crafts fairs/markets	17
No. of carnivals	1

Value of Investment	
Total city budget (current prices)	111,800,000,000
Total culture department budget (current prices)	818,050,000

Enabling Policies	
Cultural strategy	Yes

SEOUL

Seoul, South Korea’s capital and home to nearly 9.6 million people, is a dynamic city where ancient heritage meets cutting-edge innovation. As a global centre of technology and creativity, Seoul places cultural participation and citizen happiness at the heart of its urban vision.

The city is home to three UNESCO World Heritage Sites and a vast network of cultural venues. While national institutions remain central, Seoul is actively expanding access beyond the city centre, developing local museums and arts spaces in its outer districts to reduce cultural inequalities.

The Seoul Metropolitan Government leads policy through collaborative planning and public consultation. Supported by the Seoul Foundation for Arts and Culture, initiatives focus on digital innovation, sustainability, and inclusive growth. In a city famous for K-pop, and Korean dramas, Seoul is also investing in heritage, traditional arts and infrastructure, from youth education centres to prop-sharing schemes, all to build a thriving cultural ecosystem for the future.

Outdoor Libraries

Seoul’s *Outdoor Library* initiative, launched in 2022, redefines urban public spaces by transforming them into open-air reading environments. With installations in Seoul Plaza, Gwanghwamun Square, and Cheonggyecheon Stream, the programme offers diverse literary and cultural experiences. Attracting over five million visitors by 2024, it has revitalised reading habits, inspired nationwide adoption, and earned international recognition, showcasing the power of innovative cultural policy in urban settings.

Youth Culture Pass

Launched in 2023, the *Seoul Youth Culture Pass* provides KRW 200,000 annually to youth aged 20-23, enabling them to attend theatre, exhibitions, and more. The programme supported over 32,000 young people in 2024, promoting cultural access while stimulating Seoul’s post-COVID arts and culture scene. With high uptake and plans for future expansion, it sets a new benchmark for equitable, youth-focused cultural policy in global cities



From top: © Photo by Tobias Reich on Unsplash; Photo courtesy of the City of Seoul

Art Festival Seoul

Art Festival _ Seoul merges seven arts festivals into a continuous seasonal format across the year, hosted in central public spaces like Nodeul Island and Seoul Plaza. With expanded programming and improved accessibility services, attendance more than doubled from 2022 to 2024. The festival supports a wider range of artists and offers citizens diverse opportunities to experience culture in everyday life, contributing to Seoul’s post-pandemic cultural renewal.

Context

Total area (km²): City	605
Total resident population: City	9,597,372
Population Female	4,977,409
Population Male	4,619,963
Employment rate	62%
Population 15-64 years old	6,921,627

Related Sectors

Annual no. of tourists	16,370,000
------------------------	------------

Economy and Employment

No. of businesses in cultural and creative sectors	91,802
No. of people employed in cultural and creative sectors	498,275

Access and Participation

Artistic activities: % of total population who engaged in artistic activity	27%
Cinema: % of total population who went to the cinema at least once in the last year	48%
Live performance: % of total population who attended a live performance (excluding music) at least once in the last year	34%
Live music: % of total population who attended a live music event (including indoor and outdoor venues) at least once in the last year	8%
Museums: % of total population who visited a museum or historical site	56%
Libraries: % of total population who visited a library	26%
Cultural centres: % of total population who visited a cultural centre	35%

Talent

No. of students studying arts subjects at higher education providers in the city	108,903
Specialist higher education institutes: private	53
Specialist higher education institutes: public	7



© Photo by Louie Nicolo Nimor on Unsplash

Infrastructure and Heritage

No. of UNESCO World Heritage Sites within city boundaries	3
No. of museums	77
No. of heritage/historical sites (excluding museums)	2,519
No. of public libraries	172
No. of cinemas	91
No. of multi-arts venues	438
No. of cultural centres	25
No. of film festivals	51
No. of fashion week events	5
No. of museum admissions per year	15,846,104
No. of bookshops	65
No. of art and crafts fairs/markets	33

Value of Investment

Total city budget (current prices)	4,570,000,000,000
Total culture department budget (current prices)	637,600,000,000
Value of grants made to arts and cultural organisations (current prices)	300,000,000
Value of grants and funding for cultural events (current prices)	24,900,000,000

Enabling Policies

Cultural strategy	Yes
Creative industries strategy	Yes
Night-time economy strategy	Yes
Tourism strategy	Yes
Policies for arts education in schools	Yes
Government supported creative hub(s) or co-working spaces	Yes
Policies supporting cultural and/or creative districts	Yes
Policies to promote diversity, equality and inclusion in cultural and creative sectors	Yes

STOCKHOLM

Stockholm, the capital of Sweden and the largest urban area in the Nordic region, is a city defined by contrast, historic yet future-facing, serene yet entrepreneurial. Built across 14 islands and connected by 57 bridges, the City of Stockholm is home to 51 museums, dozens of theatres and libraries, and the annual Nobel Prize awards.

Stockholm is a globally renowned ideas factory and a hotbed of groundbreaking innovations. It has emerged as one of Europe’s most successful startup and cultural entrepreneurship hubs. Urban redevelopment projects like Gasometer and Slakthusområdet integrate culture into everyday life, while new nightlife strategies and *Culture Pilots* help creators find space to thrive.

The City of Stockholm works across city departments to improve access to culture to tackle social inequality and to create a more attractive city for Stockholmers and visitors. Guided by the city’s strategies, Stockholm prioritises inclusive cultural infrastructure, local engagement, and collaboration. The result is a culture-rich, climate-smart city where innovation and equity go hand in hand.

Culture Pilots

Since 2016, Stockholm’s *Culture Pilots* have supported cultural actors and property owners in transforming underused spaces into vibrant cultural venues. Acting as matchmakers and advisors, the Pilots guide projects from idea to opening, offering coaching, funding advice, and help navigating city processes. From industrial sites turned into stages to former shops reimagined as music studios, the initiative has activated spaces citywide, proving that cultural infrastructure needs both vision and practical support to thrive.

Nobel Week Lights

Held each December during the Nobel Prize celebrations, *Nobel Week Lights* invites artists to create large-scale light installations inspired by Nobel-winning discoveries. The free festival reimagines Stockholm’s public spaces during its darkest month, with artworks designed to engage all ages and backgrounds. In 2024, 1.7 million people experienced 16 installations including student works, multilingual tours, and interactive events. The festival boosts civic pride, cultural access, and Stockholm’s global visibility through light and science.



From top: © Photo by Ana Borquez on Unsplash; Photo courtesy of the City of Stockholm

Library Lab

To deepen cultural participation, Stockholm City Library has embedded user experience (UX) methods into daily practice across its 40 branches. At the Library Lab in Liljeholmen, launched in 2024 as a four-year experiment, staff use agile, user-led sprints to co-design future library services with local residents. From parent breakfasts to youth-led space redesigns, the Lab gathers insights to inform a major new library. The initiative has become a model for inclusive, needs-driven cultural infrastructure.

Context	
Total area (km²): City	187
Total area (km²): Other geographies	6,514
Total resident population: City	995,574
Total resident population:	2,473,307
Other geographies	
Population Female	503,246
Population Male	492,328
Employment rate	75%
Self-employment rate	11%

Related Sectors	
Annual no. of tourists	9,600,000
No. of night clubs, discos and dance halls	102
No. of bars	624
No. of restaurants	7,300

Economy and Employment	
No. of businesses in cultural and creative sectors	39,532
No. of people employed in cultural and creative occupations	18,364
No. of people employed in cultural and creative sectors	66,587

Access and Participation	
Artistic activities: % of total population who engaged in artistic activity	48%
Cinema: % of total population who went to the cinema at least once in the last year	62%
Live performance: % of total population who attended a live performance (excluding music) at least once in the last year	49%
Live music: % of total population who attended a live music event (including indoor and outdoor venues) at least once in the last year	46%
Museums: % of total population who visited a museum or historical site	72%
Libraries: % of total population who visited a library	57%

Talent	
No. of higher education providers in the city	14
No. of specialist arts higher education providers in the city	6

Infrastructure and Heritage	
No. of UNESCO World Heritage Sites within city boundaries	1
No. of museums	51
No. of heritage/historical sites (excluding museums)	190
No. of public libraries	40
No. of cinemas	56
No. of cultural centres	9
No. of theatres	40
No. of live music venues	53
No. of film festivals	26
No. of music festivals	15
No. of fashion week events	1
No. of design week events	3
No. of books lent per year	3,664,572
No. of book and literary festivals	3
No. of theatre festivals	1
No. of dance festivals	10
No. of theatre festivals	1
No. of dance festivals	10

Value of Investment	
Total city budget (current prices)	61,300,000,000
Total culture department budget (current prices)	1,210,000,000
Value of grants made to arts and cultural organisations (current prices)	230,000,000
Value of grants made to individual artists (current prices)	12,000,000

Enabling Policies	
Cultural strategy	Yes
Night-time economy strategy	Yes
Regular data collection/mapping of CCS businesses and employment numbers	Yes
Regular mapping of heritage at risk	Yes
Regular mapping of heritage at risk from climate change	Yes
Subsidised access to culture for certain groups (e.g. young people, older people, etc)	Yes
Policies for arts education in schools	Yes
Government supported creative hub(s) or co-working spaces	Yes
Affordable workspace policies targeted towards artists	Yes
Policies to promote environmental sustainability within cultural and creative sectors	Yes
Policies to promote networking and collaboration between CCS and other sectors of the economy	Yes

SYDNEY

Sydney, Australia’s largest city and a major South Pacific port, is home to some of the country’s most iconic cultural institutions. Situated on the land of the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation, Sydney is committed to embedding First Nations culture into the fabric of city life.

The Sydney Opera House, Bangarra Dance Theatre, and a thriving network of museums, galleries and festivals reflect the city’s multicultural identity and creative energy. Major new projects like Yananurala Walking On Country aim to honour Aboriginal culture across Sydney’s shoreline, while WorldPride 2023 highlighted the city’s role as a global LGBTQ+ cultural hub.

Cultural policy is guided by the City of Sydney’s long-term vision, *Sustainable Sydney 2030 -2050*, which combines sustainability and urban planning with social equity, innovation, public art and creativity. With new investments in affordable cultural spaces, inclusive programming, outdoor arts and a 24-Hour Economy Commissioner to guide nightlife renewal, Sydney is redefining what a creative city looks like.

Cultural Strategy 2025-2035

Launched in 2025, *Cultural Strategy 2025-2035* is Sydney’s roadmap to rebuild and reimagine its cultural life post-pandemic and amid rising living costs. Backed by an additional AUD 2 million annually in new grants programmes, the strategy provides direct income support for artists, secures creative workspaces, and expands leadership opportunities for underrepresented groups. With plans for a Creative Land Trust and a strong equity focus, the strategy aims to grow cultural participation, retain talent, and ensure culture thrives across every part of the city.

Creative Hoardings

Since 2016, Sydney’s *Creative Hoardings* programme has transformed over 320 construction sites into outdoor galleries, showcasing the work of contemporary Australian artists. Introduced as part of the *Creative City Action Plan*, it mandates creative graphics on hoardings, enhancing public space while regulating advertising. Artists are paid above-industry rates for licensed designs, offered to developers free of charge. The initiative has boosted artist visibility, reduced graffiti, and become a model for cultural integration in urban development.



All images: Photo courtesy of the City of Sydney

City Art Strategy

Since 2011, Sydney’s *City Art Strategy* has embedded high-quality public art into new private developments, guided by the city’s planning system and its *Sustainable Sydney 2030-2050* vision. Developments over AUD 10 million are required to incorporate public art and encouraged to allocate a minimum budget of 1% of construction costs, with support from a dedicated public art team and advisory panel. Over 750 public art plans have been submitted, enabling hundreds of artists to contribute to Sydney’s cultural landscape through collaborative, site-specific works.

Context

Total area (km²): City	12,372
Total resident population: City	5,450,496
Population Female	2,645,912
Population Male	2,585,238
Population 15-64 years old	2,835,385
Median annual wage (current prices)	45,812

Related Sectors

Annual no. of tourists	14,870,000
------------------------	------------

Economy and Employment

Creative industries employment (% of total employment)	4.60%
--	-------

Access and Participation

Artistic activities: % of total population who engaged in artistic activity	32%
Cinema: % of total population who went to the cinema at least once in the last year	46%
Live performance: % of total population who attended a live performance (excluding music) at least once in the last year	10%
Live music: % of total population who attended a live music event (including indoor and outdoor venues) at least once in the last year	15%
Museums: % of total population who visited a museum or historical site	17%
Libraries: % of total population who visited a library	19%

Talent

No. of higher education providers in the city	18
---	----



© Photo by Caleb on Unsplash

Infrastructure and Heritage

No. of UNESCO World Heritage Sites within city boundaries	2
No. of public libraries	140
No. of cinemas	50
No. of cultural centres	19
No. of theatres	30
No. of live music venues	190
No. of library members	1,678,200

Value of Investment

Total city budget (current prices)	746,656,000
Investment in arts and culture	34,000,000

Enabling Policies

Cultural strategy	Yes
-------------------	-----

TAIPEI

Taipei, the capital of Taiwan and home to nearly 2.5 million people, is a leading cultural, political and technological centre in Asia. With a reputation of creativity and innovation, it is one of the region’s most connected cities.

Taipei blends tradition and modernity, with over 200 heritage sites and landmark institutions like the Taipei Fine Arts Museum and Taipei Performing Arts Centre. The city’s dynamic cultural infrastructure includes smart libraries, earth-sheltered museums, and reimagined historic buildings brought back to life through public-private collaboration.

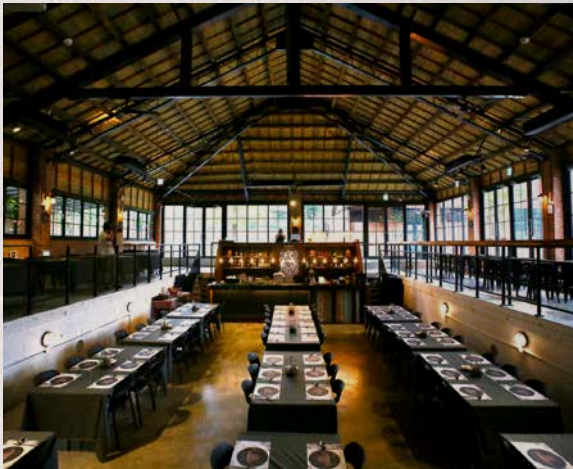
Cultural policy is shaped by the Taipei City Government’s Department of Cultural Affairs, which promotes community engagement, transparency and integration of culture into daily life. Programmes like *Culture in the Alley* and *Nuit Blanche Taipei* bring art into public spaces, while public art and festivals reflect a city alive with participation.

Taipei’s Old House Cultural Movement

Launched in 2013, Taipei’s *Old House Cultural Movement Project* is a pioneering public-private platform revitalising derelict cultural heritage sites through corporate investment and creative reuse. By offering rent discounts and tax exemptions linked to restoration work, the city incentivises long-term stewardship. With over USD 21 million in private investment by 2024, restored sites now house bookstores, theatres, creative hubs, and wellness centres, preserving heritage while integrating it into vibrant contemporary life.

Artists and Residents at Treasure Hill

Treasure Hill, once a self-built military settlement in Taipei, has been transformed into a model of living preservation through the *Artists and Residents Co-Habitation* policy. Since 2010, the site has combined historic housing, low-rent residences, and an artist village to foster community care and creative exchange. New residents apply through community-based proposals, contributing to education, arts, and stewardship. The model preserves cultural identity while building a sustainable, intergenerational community rooted in collaboration.



All images: Photo courtesy of the City of Taipei

Songshan Cultural and Creative Park

Once the Songshan Tobacco Factory, Songshan Cultural and Creative Park (SCCP) has become one of Taipei’s most significant creative workspaces since its reopening in 2011. Dedicated to preserving industrial heritage and promoting creative industries, the park has established itself as Taipei City’s *Hub for Originality*. Not only is it boosting cultural offerings for city residents and visitors, SCCP also successfully incubates Taiwanese fashion brands for international markets.

Context

Total area (km²): City	272
Total resident population: City	2,490,869
Population Female	1,316,332
Population Male	1,174,537
Employment rate	96%
Self-employment rate	13%
Population 15-64 years old	1,613,386
% working age population (15-64 year olds) with tertiary degree or higher	74%

Related Sectors

Annual no. of tourists	5,761,710
No. of night clubs, discos and dance halls	23
No. of bars	51
No. of restaurants	23,079

Economy and Employment

No. of businesses in cultural and creative sectors	12,609
--	--------

Access and Participation

Artistic activities: % of total population who engaged in artistic activity	2%
---	----

Talent

No. of higher education providers in the city	24
No. of specialist arts higher education providers in the city	1



© Getty Images

Infrastructure and Heritage

No. of museums	21
No. of heritage/historical sites (excluding museums)	205
No. of public libraries	78
No. of cinemas	29
No. of multi-arts venues	5
No. of theatres	4
No. of film festivals	4
No. of music festivals	5
No. of fashion week events	2
No. of design week events	3
No. of library members	3,099,112
No. of books lent per year	12,871,611

Value of Investment

Total city budget (current prices)	204,982,091,000
Total culture department budget (current prices)	10,580,727,000
Value of grants made to arts and cultural organisations (current prices)	925,337,000
Value of grants made to individual artists (current prices)	12,515,000
Value of grants and funding for cultural events (current prices)	104,752,000

Enabling Policies

Cultural strategy	Yes
Creative industries strategy	Yes
Night-time economy strategy	Yes
Tourism strategy	Yes
Policies for arts education in schools	Yes
Government supported incubators and accelerators for cultural and creative sector startups	Yes
Affordable workspace policies targeted towards artists	Yes

TOKYO

Tokyo, Japan’s capital and the world’s most populous metropolis, is a city where centuries-old traditions meet cutting-edge innovation. Once known as Edo, Tokyo became Japan’s capital in 1869 and has since evolved into a global cultural and creative powerhouse, with over 32 million people in its metropolitan area.

From the refined performances of Noh and Kabuki to vibrant anime, design, and technology scenes, Tokyo celebrates culture at every scale. Major institutions like the Kabukiza Theatre and National Noh Theatre sit alongside fashion-forward districts and creative hubs for global talent.

The Tokyo Metropolitan Government plays a leading role in shaping cultural life. Its *Tokyo Tokyo FESTIVAL* reached nearly 39 million people and reaffirmed culture’s central role in city life. Looking to 2030 and beyond, Tokyo’s strategy prioritises inclusion, digital innovation, and resilience, creating a city where culture thrives both on the streets and online.

Accessibility and Major Events

As host of the 2025 World Athletics Championships and Deaflympics, Tokyo is expanding inclusive cultural programmes to celebrate diversity and strengthen social ties. Building on the legacy of Tokyo 2020, the city is subsidising accessibility improvements in public and private cultural facilities, tripling funding by FY2025. Involving over 2,000 cultural organisations, 1,300 venues, and 62 municipalities, this citywide effort promotes Tokyo as an inclusive cultural capital where everyone can experience and enjoy the arts.

Civic Creative Base Tokyo

Civic Creative Base Tokyo (CCBT) is a city-run platform connecting citizens, artists, and technologists to explore how creativity can shape a better Tokyo. Through open programmes like *Art Incubation* and *CCBTx*, creators develop civic-oriented digital artworks and social prototypes in public. Since its launch, *CCBT* has hosted 288 events, engaged 322 creators, and attracted nearly 38,000 participants, building an international network and inspiring a more collaborative, creative urban future for Tokyo.



From top: Bon Odori Festival, Funabori, Edogawa City © Photo by Ryunosuke Kikuno on Unsplash; Photo courtesy of the City of Tokyo; © Photo by Timo Volz on Unsplash

START Box

Launched in 2023 by the Tokyo Metropolitan Government, *START Box* provides young artists with affordable studio spaces in repurposed public housing. Located in neighbourhoods like Sasazuka, Hatagaya, and Odaiba, the initiative offers more than just space, it creates opportunities for artists to engage with residents through open studios and workshops, and to showcase their work at city-led cultural events. With 45 artists supported so far, *START Box* is fostering new networks and launching international careers.

Context

Total area (km²): City	2,199
Total resident population: City	13,911,902
Population Female	7,080,984
Population Male	6,830,918
Self-employment rate	7%

Related Sectors

Annual no. of tourists	36,870,148
No. of night clubs, discos and dance halls	9,879
No. of bars	19,497
No. of restaurants	71,884

Economy and Employment

No. of businesses in cultural and creative sectors	46,187
No. of people employed in cultural and creative occupations	1,290,468

Access and Participation

Artistic activities: % of total population who engaged in artistic activity	30%
Cinema: % of total population who went to the cinema at least once in the last year	58%
Museums: % of total population who visited a museum or historical site	14%
Libraries: % of total population who visited a library	3%

Talent

No. of higher education providers in the city	181
No. of specialist arts higher education providers in the city	14



Photo courtesy of the City of Tokyo

Infrastructure and Heritage

No. of UNESCO World Heritage Sites within city boundaries	2
No. of museums	300
No. of heritage/historical sites (excluding museums)	3,665
No. of public libraries	393
No. of cinemas	83
No. of theatres	1,139
No. of live music venues	731

Value of Investment

Total city budget (current prices)	8,500,000,000,000
Total culture department budget (current prices)	5,958,200,000
Value of grants made to individual artists (current prices)	72,553,000
Value of grants and funding for cultural events (current prices)	1,946,216,000,000

Enabling Policies

Cultural strategy	Yes
Night-time economy strategy	Yes
Tourism strategy	Yes
Government supported creative hub(s) or co-working spaces	Yes
Government supported incubators and accelerators for cultural and creative sector startups	Yes
Affordable workspace policies targeted towards artists	Yes
Policies to promote diversity, equality and inclusion in cultural and creative sectors	Yes
Policies to promote environmental sustainability within cultural and creative sectors	Yes
Policies for digital transformation and use of emerging technologies in culture	Yes
Policies promoting culture’s role in health and wellbeing	Yes

TORONTO

Toronto, the capital of Ontario, is one of the most culturally diverse cities in the world and a national leader in film, television, and digital media. Built on the ancestral lands of Indigenous peoples and named from the Mohawk word Tkaronto, the city is home to a rich blend of histories, languages, and communities.

Toronto’s cultural life spans everything from symphonies and science museums to global festivals like Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF) and Caribbean Carnival. It also hosts more artists than any other Canadian city, contributing over CAD 2.5 billion to its economy through screen industries alone.

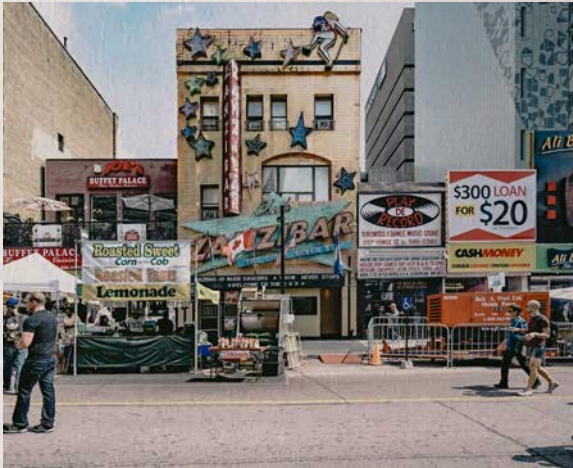
Cultural policy is shaped by a commitment to equity, affordability, and representation. The City is expanding arts funding, safeguarding creative spaces, and diversifying leadership across the sector. Initiatives like the inaugural Mayor’s Culture Summit mark a broader shift towards cultural engagement and renewal. Looking ahead, Toronto’s *Culture Connects* action plan places creativity at the heart of a fairer, more inclusive city.

Protecting Creative Space

In 2023, the collapse of non-profit developer Artscape threatened 14 affordable cultural properties and nearly 400 tenancies. The City of Toronto responded with swift legal, operational, and financial action - securing a court ruling to protect 91% of tenancies from sale and providing emergency property management. Working with community partners, the City mobilised to save the remaining 9% of tenancies, enabling tenant-led ownership of key sites and backing Canada’s first cultural land trust. The intervention preserved critical infrastructure and created a new model for cultural resilience.

Catalyst and Transformation Fund

Launched in response to growing precarity in the cultural sector, Toronto’s *Catalyst and Transformation (CAT) Fund* helps arts and culture organizations reimagine their futures and business models. Delivered by Work In Culture, the fund supports strategic risk-taking, from shared governance models to thoughtful wind-downs, prioritising equity, sustainability, and collaboration. By offering anonymity and structural support, CAT has empowered organizations across the sector to embrace meaningful, long-deferred change and reshape their role in community life.



From top: © Photo by Abhinna Patel on Unsplash;
© Photo by Scott Webb on Unsplash

Culture Connects: An Action Plan for Culture

In 2024, the City of Toronto launched *Culture Connects: An Action Plan for Culture (2025-2035)* to redefine how culture is supported, experienced, and valued across the city. Developed in response to significant shifts in Toronto’s social and cultural landscape, the plan sets out a 10-year vision to ensure that everyone in Toronto has the opportunity to create, engage with, and feel a sense of belonging in the city’s cultural life.

Context

Total area (km²): City	630
Total resident population: City	3,273,119
Population 15-64 years old	2,347,068

Related Sectors

Annual no. of tourists	2,700,000
No. of night clubs, discos and dance halls	483
No. of bars	160
No. of restaurants	6,072

Economy and Employment

Creative industries employment (% of total employment)	3.80%
---	-------

Access and Participation

Carnival or festival: % of total population who attended a carnival or festival	53.20%
Museums and galleries: % of working age population who attended a museum or gallery	41.00%

Talent

No. of specialist arts higher education providers in the city	12
--	----



© Photo by Andre Frueh on Unsplash

Infrastructure and Heritage

No. of museums	117
No. of heritage/historical sites (excluding museums)	57
No. of public libraries	100
No. of cinemas	29
No. of theatres	89
No. of live music venues	60
No. of film festivals	130
No. of gaming arcades and permanent e-sports venues	17

Value of Investment

Total city budget (current prices)	18,800,000,000
Total culture department budget (current prices)	108,193,000

Enabling Policies

Cultural policy	Yes
-----------------	-----

VANCOUVER

Vancouver is a dynamic, fast-growing city encompassed by the unceded traditional territories of the Musqueam Indian Band, Squamish Nation, and Tsleil-Waututh Nation. These lands have been stewarded by Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh Peoples since time immemorial. Vancouver is home to the largest Chinatown in Canada and the second largest in North America. The city’s diverse communities contribute to a vibrant mix of cultures, languages, and traditions.

Now a hub for film, technology innovation, and the creative economy, Vancouver is projected to grow significantly by 2050. As a result, city leaders are focused on managing development while preserving cultural identity, expanding affordable housing, and ensuring sustainable growth.

Arts and culture are integral to Vancouver’s approach to city-building. Policymakers are championing cultural equity, supporting Indigenous knowledge through decolonising practices, and strengthening community-led spaces.

825 Pacific Arts and Cultural Hub

A certified Passive House zero emissions building - 825 Pacific is a 21,000-square-foot arts and culture hub that provides much-needed space for artists and non-profits in Vancouver’s Downtown South. This stand-alone seven storey city-owned cultural facility is operated by 221A Artist Society, a Vancouver non-profit cultural organisation, as a shared artist production, presentation, and administrative facility for more than 40 artists and non-profit organisations.

UNDRIP Action Plan

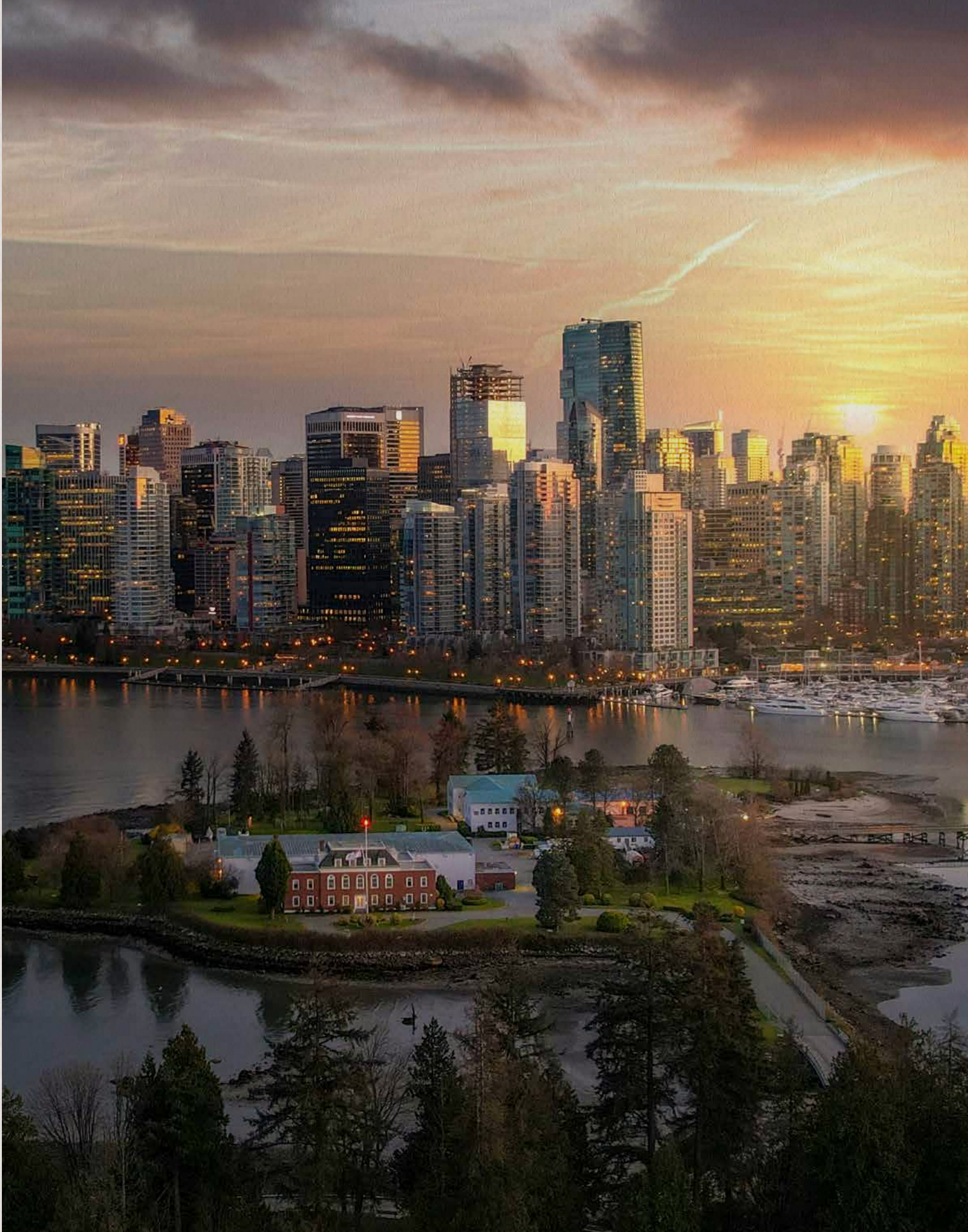
In October 2022, Musqueam Indian Band, Squamish Nation, Tsleil-Waututh Nation and the City of Vancouver became the first intergovernmental partners in the world to jointly approve a strategy implementing *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People (UNDRIP)* at the municipal level. This goes beyond acknowledgement and commits to putting reconciliation in action. The strategy upholds Indigenous Peoples’ rights and enjoyment of these rights across City policies and services. The four intergovernmental partners’ shared mission is centered on: respectful and reciprocal relationships, economic prosperity, Nations’ cultural presence, and environmental stewardship. The *UNDRIP Action Plan* includes 79 Calls to Action between 2024 - 2028 delivered by 18 Action Groups comprised of Musqueam, Squamish, Tsleil-Waututh and City of Vancouver staff.



From top: © Photo by Mathijs Deerenberg on Unsplash; © Photo by Phaditya Chinchure on Unsplash; © Photo by Albert Stoyinov on Unsplash

Grants for Culture

In 2025, Vancouver provided CAD 17.4 million to support 502 cultural organisations through grants for projects, capacity building, access and engagement, and cultural spaces. Recipients included *Carousel Theatre Society*, offering inclusive theatre for young audiences, and *Holy Crow Arts Society*, an Indigenous-led performance company. These grants supported diverse disciplines, new works, and public programmes, while also creating jobs, engaging volunteers, and investing in affordable spaces.



© Photo by Prince Deol on Unsplash

VIENNA

Vienna, Austria’s capital and most populous city, is globally celebrated for its elegance, rich musical legacy, and progressive urban vision. Home to over two million residents from 180 nationalities, Vienna continues to evolve as a cosmopolitan cultural hub at the heart of Europe.

The city’s heritage lives in its grand concert halls, art nouveau cafés, and landmarks shaped by icons like Mozart, Klimt, and Schiele. Yet Vienna’s cultural landscape is also shaped by bold contemporary voices, with new performance spaces and socially engaged collectives pushing for greater access and inclusion.

Guided by long-term cultural strategies and smart city policies, Vienna is addressing rapid urbanisation, demographic change, and climate resilience through inovative policies. Its green belt, extensive cycle networks, and liveability rankings reflect a deep integration of culture with sustainability and wellbeing. Looking ahead, Vienna’s cultural vision champions universal access, diversity, and a commitment to culture as a tool for global and local transformation.

Kultursommer Wien

Launched in 2020, *Kultursommer Wien* (‘Culture Summer Vienna’) is a city-funded open-air festival offering free, high-quality performances across Vienna’s neighbourhoods. With a EUR 4 million annual budget, it supports fair pay for artists and promotes inclusion through sign language interpreters, induction loops, and decentralised venues—particularly in outer districts. Attracting over 86,000 visitors in 2024, the festival fosters community connection and cultural diversity, becoming a summer staple that brings the city’s creative spirit into public space.

Foto Arsenal Wien

Opened in 2025, Foto Arsenal Wien is a publicly funded institution dedicated to contemporary photography and lens-based media. Following a EUR 3 million renovation of a historic building in the Arsenal complex, it offers exhibitions, workshops, and education programmes for all ages. With state-of-the-art facilities and up to 12 shows annually, it has quickly become a cornerstone of Vienna’s cultural infrastructure and a leading venue for photographic innovation and public engagement.



From top: © Photo by Kollektiv Fisch. Middle and bottom: © Photo by Judith Stehlik

Wien Museum’s Transformation

Reopened in 2023 after a major city-funded renovation, the Wien Museum blends architectural preservation with bold expansion. A ‘floating’ concrete cube adds two new floors of exhibition space, while geothermal systems, solar panels, and inclusive design signal a commitment to sustainability and access. Operated by the Museums of the City of Vienna, the project drew on over a decade of public dialogue. Since reopening, the museum has become one of Vienna’s most popular cultural destinations, also earning the Austrian *Eco-Label* for sustainability.



© Canva

Context

Total area (km²): City	415
Total resident population: City	2,005,760

Related Sectors

Annual no. of tourists	7,394,023
No. of bars	6,973

Economy and Employment

No. of people employed in cultural and creative sectors	78,791
---	--------

Access and Participation

Carnival or festival: No. of people who attended a carnival or festival (estimate)	2,700,000
Cinema: No. of people who attended a cinema	1,375,613

Talent

No. of higher education providers in the city	25
---	----

Infrastructure and Heritage

No. of UNESCO World Heritage Sites within city boundaries	2
No. of museums	100
No. of heritage/historical sites (excluding museums)	1,700
No. of public libraries	76
No. of theatres	70
No. of live music venues	187

Value of Investment

Total city budget (current prices)	20,200,000,000
------------------------------------	----------------

Enabling Policies

Cultural policy	Yes
-----------------	-----

WARSAW

Warsaw, the capital and largest city of Poland, is home to 1.8 million people and a growing, multicultural population. Marked by centuries of reinvention, including its post-war reconstruction, Warsaw continues to champion diversity, openness, and inclusion as pillars of its cultural identity.

Today, Warsaw is a vibrant cultural centre. Its infrastructure includes thriving municipal institutions, such as the POLIN Museum, the Museum of Modern Art and the Sinfonia Varsovia Orchestra whose modern concert hall is currently under construction, alongside multiple theatres and a growing network of independent arts organisations. The city fosters a welcoming environment for development of creative industries, from film and music to gaming. Culture is increasingly decentralised, bringing events closer to residents and embracing the “15-minute city” model.

Guided by values of freedom, responsibility, and cultural grounding, the city’s policies support participation, co-creation, and access for all. In response to recent global crises, including the arrival of Ukrainian refugees, Warsaw’s cultural sector has mobilised rapidly, affirming the city’s belief that culture is both a civic tool and a space for connection, care and imagination.

New Museum of Modern Art Warsaw

In October 2024, after nearly 20 years as a nomadic institution, the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw (MSN Warsaw) opened its first permanent home in the heart of the city, next to the Palace of Culture and Science. Designed by Thomas Phifer, the minimalist, light-filled building offers 4,500m² of exhibition space, a theatre, and public forums. Already drawing international acclaim and thousands of visitors, the museum is revitalising central Warsaw as a cultural hub and cementing the city’s status as a centre for contemporary art.

Pavilion of Dance and Other Performing Arts

Responding to a long-standing gap in infrastructure, the City of Warsaw is establishing the Pavilion of Dance and Other Performing Arts - a dedicated venue for contemporary dance and performance. Housed in the repurposed Pavilion on the Vistula - a former temporary Museum of Modern Art space - the initiative was shaped through deep consultation with the dance community and participatory architectural design. Set to launch a one-year pilot in 2025, the Pavilion marks a milestone in Warsaw’s cultural development, fostering visibility, creation, and connection for the performing arts.



All images: Photo courtesy of the City of Warsaw

Programme for Strengthening Employees of Cultural Centers

Launched by the City of Warsaw and led by Staromiejski Dom Kultury, the *Programme for Strengthening Employees of Cultural Centers* supports the professional development and wellbeing of cultural staff across the city. Through workshops, supervision sessions, personalised tutoring, and free psychological consultations, the initiative addresses burnout, builds soft skills, and fosters collaboration. By investing in the people behind local culture, Warsaw is creating a more resilient, innovative, and connected cultural ecosystem.

Context

Total area (km²): City	517
Total resident population: City	1,863,845
Population Female	1,002,505
Population Male	861,340
Employment rate	67%
Self-employment rate	34%
Population 0-14 years old	279,431
Population 15-24 years old	150,185
Population 15-64 years old	1,211,731
Population 65 years old or above	370,437
Median annual wage (current prices)	8,800
Income inequality (Gini coefficient)	0.267

Related Sectors

Annual no. of tourists	12,200,000
Area of free, publicly accessible parks and gardens as % of total city area	19

Economy and Employment

No. of businesses in cultural and creative sectors	51,491
--	--------

Access and Participation

Carnival or festival: % of total population who attended a carnival or festival	6.8%
Museums and galleries: % of working age population who attended a museum or gallery	35%

Talent

No. of higher education providers in the city	60
No. of specialist arts higher education providers in the city	4

Infrastructure and Heritage

No. of UNESCO World Heritage Sites within city boundaries	1
No. of museums	58
No. of heritage/historical sites (excluding museums)	11,595
No. of public libraries	206
No. of cinemas	34
No. of cultural centres	63
No. of theatres	17
No. of film festivals	16
No. of music festivals	26
Average museum ticket price (current prices)	29
No. of commercial art galleries	50
No. of library members	432,077
No. of books lent per year	6,764,555
No. of theatre admissions per year	911,654
No. of bookshops	203
No. of book and literary festivals	10
No. of theatre festivals	6
No. of dance festivals	5

Value of Investment

Total city budget (current prices)	24,721,508,802
Total culture department budget (current prices)	344,249,000
Value of grants made to arts and cultural organisations (current prices)	37,174,913
Value of grants made to individual artists (current prices)	2,280,000

Enabling Policies

Cultural strategy	Yes
Tourism strategy	Yes
Subsidised access to culture for certain groups (e.g. young people, older people, etc)	Yes
Government supported creative hub(s) or co-working spaces	Yes
Government supported incubators and accelerators for cultural and creative sector startups	Yes

ZÜRICH

Zürich, Switzerland’s largest city, blends deep historical roots with a spirit of experimentation. Once a Roman settlement and a centre of the European Reformation, today it is recognised globally for its high quality of life and cultural vibrancy. From the cobbled Altstadt to the industrial-chic Zürich West, the city fuses tradition with bold artistic expression.

Zürich is home to prestigious institutions like Kunsthaus Zürich, Schauspielhaus, and Tonhalle, while also championing independent art spaces and festivals such as *Zürich Film Festival* and *Theater Spektakel*. It’s where Dadaism was born, and where techno culture is now UNESCO-listed.

The city’s Cultural Affairs Office is reviewing policy to reflect a more diverse, youthful population and ensure equitable access. Through initiatives like Kultur Labor Zürich and new freelance funding models, Zürich is adapting to global pressures from affordability to climate and social justice. Its cultural future is one of shared spaces, creative risk-taking, and civic connection.

Hecht Jetzt Festival

Launched in 2023 by Theater am Hechtplatz, *Hecht Jetzt* is Zürich’s annual try-out festival for emerging Swiss theatre artists. Held over 3-4 days each summer, it gives artists one rehearsal, one performance, and a moderated feedback session with a diverse audience, followed by informal exchange and networking. Participants are paid, and many report valuable insights and new bookings as a result. The festival offers an honest, inclusive space for experimentation and artistic development.

Zürich’s Cinematic Campus

Launched in 2023 by Filmpodium and the University of Zürich, *The Cinematic Campus* brings film studies students and the wider public back into the cinema. Through live lectures followed by screenings in a professional theatre, the project bridges academic learning and cinematic experience, countering the isolating effects of digital streaming. Free and open to all, the programme revitalises Zürich’s film culture while encouraging dialogue, critical thinking, and cross-generational learning through the power of cinema.



From top: Zürich Botanical Garden © Photo by Maryna Zanov on Unsplash; Swiss National Museum, Zürich © Photo by Ricardo Gomez Angel on Unsplash

Transformation Grants for Cultural Participation

Launched in 2024, Zürich’s *Transformation Grants for Cultural Participation* support cultural institutions in removing barriers to access and embedding diversity in their structures. Funded jointly by the City and Canton, the CHF 5 million programme offers phased support, from analysis to implementation, and requires partnerships with civil society organisations to ensure authentic inclusion. By focusing on organisational change rather than artistic output, the initiative aims to create long-term, sustainable cultural spaces that reflect and serve Zürich’s diverse population.

Context

Total area (km²): City	88
Total resident population: City	448,664
Total resident population:	1,539,275
Other geographies	
Population Female	225,652
Population Male	223,012
Employment rate	74%
Self-employment rate	9%

Related Sectors

Annual no. of tourists	371,580
------------------------	---------

Economy and Employment

No. of businesses in cultural and creative sectors	5,763
No. of people employed in cultural and creative sectors	29,079

Access and Participation

Libraries: No. of visitors	754,376
No. of visitors to Zürich National Museum	269,384

Talent

Specialist higher education institutes: public	1
--	---

Infrastructure and Heritage

No. of museums	25
No. of heritage/historical sites (excluding museums)	4,701
No. of public libraries	27
No. of cinemas	15
No. of multi-arts venues	45
No. of cultural centres	108
No. of theatres	35
No. of live music venues	22



© Photo by Ilia Bronskiy

Value of Investment

Total city budget (current prices)	10,631,000,000
Total culture department budget (current prices)	155,248,400

Enabling Policies

Cultural strategy	Yes
Special economic zones (SEZ) targeted towards cultural and creative businesses (e.g. creative enterprise zones)	Yes
Policies for arts education in schools	Yes
Government supported creative hub(s) or co-working spaces	Yes
Government supported incubators and accelerators for cultural and creative sector startups	Yes
Affordable workspace policies targeted towards artists	Yes
Policies supporting cultural and/or creative districts	Yes
Policies to promote diversity, equality and inclusion in cultural and creative sectors	Yes
Policies to promote environmental sustainability within cultural and creative sectors	Yes

This section sets out how the evidence in the *World Cities Culture Report* was gathered and analysed. It outlines the *CREATIVE Data Framework* - developed with cities to strengthen how cultural data is captured and compared. We showcase unique city indicators from a few cities that reflect their local context, and lists our International Steering Group who guided the Report with expert feedback and global perspectives.

METHODOLOGY AND CREATIVE FRAMEWORK

METHODOLOGY

The 5th Edition of the *World Cities Culture Report* brings together quantitative and qualitative evidence from 45 cities to create the most comprehensive data report on cities and culture. Building on previous editions (2012, 2015, 2018, 2022), this edition combines city data, city surveys, and city projects as well as policy and regional insights to support cultural policymaking and make the case for investment in culture. The *World Cities Culture Report* compiles evidence for the vital contribution that culture makes to cities.

City Consultation

The foundations of this Report were shaped by extensive consultation across the World Cities Culture Forum network, including individual interviews with a sample of 13 cities conducted by Bloomberg Associates, and group consultations with our cities and international experts led by the Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD).

These consultations:

- Reflected on how cities have used previous editions of the Report.
- Identified datasets most valuable for policymaking.
- Shared local approaches to cultural data that informed survey design and the pilot *CREATIVE Data Framework*.

In addition, dedicated sessions about data and measuring culture were held at the annual World Cities Culture Summit in São Paulo (2023) and Dubai (2024). Over 40 cities participated at these Summits. The sessions informed the development and implementation of the city surveys and the design of the new data framework.

City Survey

A policy survey was developed in consultation with our cities as well as policy experts including Julie’s Bicycle (a non-profit mobilising arts and culture to act on the climate and nature crisis), and VibeLab (a research and advocacy agency supporting night-time culture and creatives). The survey collected qualitative information such as funding structures, city priorities and questions about each of the thematic areas that are highlighted under the Policy Insights section of the Report. A total of 33 cities responded to the City Survey. Responses to the survey were analysed and used to track trends across the network, while also capturing narratives about challenges, priorities and innovations in each city.

City Projects

Each city was invited to submit at least three projects or programmes that demonstrate best practice in cultural policy or delivery. Guidance was provided to ensure these city projects covered a diverse range of themes, giving a rounded picture of how culture is shaping urban life across different global contexts.

Data Collection and Analysis

Following the city consultation, an updated and expanded set of indicators was developed with the OECD’s Centre for Entrepreneurship, SMEs, Regions and Cities.

It resulted in a pilot framework that:

- Captures key contextual and cultural indicators.
- Uses OECD’s internationally recognised sectoral definitions for consistency.
- Supports the use of existing data sources or open-source datasets.
- Allows cities to include additional, locally relevant indicators.

This approach enabled trend analysis where data was comparable, while still reflecting each city’s unique cultural profile. The pilot framework also provided the opportunity to update longitudinal data from previous *World Cities Culture Reports* where definition or methodology has changed, and also to include data at different geographic scales.

Data collection tutorials created by the OECD’s Centre for Entrepreneurship, SMEs, Regions and Cities was provided to cities and made available in the *Partners Hub* section of the World Cities Culture Forum website. In addition, individual support was provided where appropriate by World Cities Culture Forum.

Data analysis was led by SMU DataArts in collaboration with World Cities Culture Forum, with support from Bloomberg Associates. SMU DataArts undertook data cleaning, and analysis including exploring correlations, regressions, and aggregated longitudinal trends. Additional data insights and analysis will be published by the World Cities Culture Forum throughout 2026.

CREATIVE Data Framework – Pilot Phase

The *CREATIVE Data Framework* was developed by World Cities Culture Forum, building on the OECD data framework and organises cultural and creative data into eight thematic categories: Context, Related Sectors, Economy and Employment, Access and Participation, Talent, Infrastructure and Heritage, Value of Investment, and Enabling Policies.

Insights and Literature Review

This drew on academic and policy literature reviews to contextualise data and trends including World Cities Culture Forum’s recent research, *Nothing About Us Without Us*, *African Alternatives*, and the *Creative Land Trusts: A Practical Guide*.

In addition, this Report uses insights from wider World Cities Culture Forum activity such as the annual *World Cities Culture Summit*, the *Leadership Exchange Programme* and the *Night-time Policy Accelerator*. It also draws insights from related events including the *Creative Land Trust Summit* as well as research, webinars and stakeholder interviews.

A review and analysis of these supported the process to identify priority policy areas and thematic trends relevant to our cities. The insights also directly influenced the questions in the city survey and the selection of key indicators for the data framework.

International Report Steering Group

Our International Report Steering Group provided expert feedback on content and emerging insights, identifying gaps and supporting analysis from a global perspective.

Caveats

The findings of this research reflect the diversity of approaches in how cities define and collect cultural data, as well as gaps where data is less commonly available. In some cases, not every city reported on every data point - the analysis therefore only draws on the subset of cities that provided data. Additionally, as interest in cultural data grows, methodologies, definitions, and priorities continue to evolve, meaning some figures are not directly comparable with previous editions. The findings in this Report should be read as indicative of trends rather than as definitive, fully comparable measures of cultural activity across cities.

CREATIVE DATA FRAMEWORK

The lack of reliable data collection and measurement systems still represents a significant obstacle to making the case for culture in cities.

The fragmentation of cultural data, the range of sources and lack of common definitions, results in gaps in quantitative evidence. This can limit culture’s visibility in development strategies and policies, while in others it is addressed through different approaches to data collection and policy design.

This is why, since 2012, the World Cities Culture Forum has brought together the most comprehensive global data set for culture and cities in the *World Cities Culture Report*, published every three years. Our cities undertake the most ambitious data research for culture, collating existing data and open source data sets.

Cultural data in cities is evolving. Some cities are pioneering evidence collection approaches and have dedicated cultural data expertise. For the *5th Edition of the World Cities Culture Report*, a new data framework was developed and piloted: The *CREATIVE Data Framework*.

This new framework is adaptable to different cities’ statistical capacities. It includes a recommended set of indicators and relies on existing data sources, using quantitative data to assess the contribution of culture to cities. It allows cities to add locally relevant measures that reflect their unique context. This flexibility acknowledges that a creative city can be represented by diverse datasets across the eight categories, depending on local priorities and available sources.

The *CREATIVE Data Framework* is a tool for cities everywhere, it offers a ready-made structure that cities can use to:

- Map and interpret existing data.
- Identify data gaps and new sources.
- Inform evidence-based policy making.
- Make the case for investment in culture in cities.
- Communicate and visualise culture’s contribution to a city.
- Benchmark international city data.

In the *City Profiles* featured in this Report, key data for each city is displayed using the *CREATIVE Data Framework* and an expanded data set is available on our website www.worldcitiescultureforum.com/data.

UNIQUE DATA INDICATORS

The *CREATIVE Data Framework* is designed to be flexible, giving cities the space to include their own measures that capture and reflect what matters most in their local context. In this section, five cities are spotlighted that have developed their own unique cultural data indicators. These examples show how innovative and localised approaches to data collection can capture culture’s impact in different ways, shaped by each city’s priorities and context.

ABU DHABI

Data Indicator: International Cultural Interaction

Measure: Number of foreign residents registered in Abu Dhabi

The data: 1.9 million foreign residents from over 200 nationalities (2023)

Methodology: The National Cultural Interaction Index, supported by the MORI Memorial Foundation in Japan, is a comparative framework that evaluates cities based on their cultural diversity and global influence. The methodology developed by the MORI Memorial Foundation relies on data provided by the Statistics Center - Abu Dhabi (SCAD).

Why: This indicator evidences Abu Dhabi’s cultural diversity and global influence as a unique and continuing international meeting point. For millennia, the UAE has been a hub for cultural exchange, from early archaeological findings showing its role as a bridge between the Indian Ocean, Mediterranean, and Levant, to its modern-day cultural dynamism. The measure highlights the city’s sustained commitment to fostering international cooperation and exchange.

AUSTIN

Data Indicator: Creative Use of City Spaces

Measure: Use of space owned or supported by the City of Austin by the creative ecosystem

The data: Currently collecting data

Methodology: This indicator will measure the total annual uses of spaces owned or supported by the City of Austin for arts, culture, music, and entertainment. It covers buildings and cultural venues as well as parks, public rights-of-way, and transport-related spaces, A “utilisation” is counted when a space is used at least once in a fiscal year, with multiple uses recorded separately. Data is drawn from departmental records, facility inventories, and funding programme reports, aligning with Austin’s strategic plan.

Why: Tracking utilisation of available spaces will indicate how well the City is supporting this critical resource for Austin’s creative ecosystem. Related strategies focus on increasing community awareness and utilization of available spaces. The City could also support requirements for the inclusion of publicly accessible creative spaces in new or renovated developments and City facilities. The goal of this indicator is to increase public awareness and use of City owned and supported spaces for arts, culture, music and entertainment programmes.

STOCKHOLM

Data Indicator: Satisfaction of Young People’s Access to Culture

Measure: Satisfaction rates of young people and their parents about opportunities to participate in cultural activities in their city

The data: 77% young people are satisfied with access to cultural activities in the city

Methodology: Every year the City of Stockholm carries out a survey to ask students and their parents about the city’s schools, after-school care centers and after-school clubs. The survey includes questions about the children’s spare time and their access to, and satisfaction with, opportunities to participate in cultural activities.

Why: Cultural habits are formed at an early age, and children and young people are a priority group for the City of Stockholm. The city recently adopted a new strategy to ensure children’s right to culture in line with the UN Conventions on the Rights of the Child. The City of Stockholm works to ensure that all children and young people, regardless of their circumstances, have equal opportunities to discover, experience and create many different forms of culture.

SEOUL

Data Indicator: Festival and Events Activity

Measure: Number of music festivals or festival related events organised by either public or private sectors

The data: 5,274 festival activities

Methodology: Collected from research institute reports and official news across all 25 city districts, the indicator showcases artistic talent, community spirit, and local character.

Why: It reflects Seoul’s dynamic cultural life and measures increased demand for in-person and community connections. Post-COVID-19 demand has boosted attendance, with an increase in events from both public and private sectors. The high frequency of music concerts, reinforces the city’s unique appeal, especially as an international hub of K-pop. From 2025, Seoul will launch seasonal branded festivals, offering year-round opportunities for locals and international visitors to connect through culture.

WARSAW

Data Indicator: Support to Independent-led Culture

Measure: Percentage of city budget allocated to support non-governmental organisations in the field of culture

The data: 10.7 % of total city budget for non-governmental organisations (2024) goes to independent cultural and heritage protection organisations

Methodology: The data in this area is systematically collected in the annual reports submitted by all city units responsible for agreements with non-governmental organisations. The consolidated figures are presented in the *Annual Report on the Implementation of the Cooperation Program of the Capital City of Warsaw with Non-Governmental Organizations and Entities*.

Why: Independent cultural organisations, communities, and creators are central to Warsaw’s cultural and civic life. The city provides systematic financial support to strengthen civil society, foster local initiatives, and increase cultural access. This includes regular open calls for public cultural projects, coordinated both by the central Culture Office and the city’s 18 districts, each with its own autonomous budget.

INTERNATIONAL REPORT STEERING GROUP

JOHN NEWBIGIN
BRONWYN
MAULDIN
BRUNO TRUZZI
JO BEALL
OJOMA OCHAI
TITA LARASATI

Chair: John Newbigin, OBE
World Cities Culture Forum Associate
John Newbigin OBE has worked in the film, television and theatre industries. As Special Advisor to the UK Minister for Culture he was a key member of the team that developed the world’s first definition and valuation of the creative industries, adopted by the UK government in 1998. He was co-founder and first Chair of Creative England. Mr Newbigin is the Mayor of London’s Ambassador for Creative Industries and Chair of the Global Creative Economy Council.

Bronwyn Mauldin
Director of Research and Evaluation, Los Angeles County Department of Arts and Culture
Bronwyn Mauldin is Director of Research and Evaluation at the Los Angeles County Department of Arts and Culture where she leads a team that utilises a wide range of research methods to strengthen the arts ecology. She is co-founder of the annual *Arts Datathon*, which brings the arts community together to explore how to use data to improve access to the arts for everyone. She is also a novelist and zine-maker.

Bruno Truzzi
Senior Data Analyst, Itaú Foundation
Bruno Truzzi is an economist (PUC-Campinas) and social scientist (UNICAMP), Master in Applied Economics (UFV) and Ph.D. student in Economics (UNICAMP). Bruno is a data analyst at the Itaú Foundation Observatory, working on the prospecting, systematisation and management of data and evidence on the Economy of Culture and Creative Industries. Truzzi volunteers as a researcher at Unicamp’s Institute of Economics, UFV’s IPPDS, and the COVID-19 Socioeconomic Observatory at UFSM.

Jo Beall
Professor and Distinguished Policy Fellow, London School of Economics
Jo Beall is an Emeritus Professor and Distinguished Policy Fellow at the LSE and has conducted research across sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia on urban development and governance. as well as cities in situations of conflict. Beall was formerly the Global Director of Education and Cultural Engagement for the British Council, and Deputy Vice-Chancellor at the University of Cape Town. Beall is currently working as the Editor of Oxford Development Studies journal on international development.

Ojoma Ochai
Managing Director, CcHUB
Ojoma Ochai is the Managing Director of CcHUB, Africa’s leading creative and innovation ecosystem enabler that supports and invests in tech and creative entrepreneurs to drive African prosperity. She co-founded CcHUB’s Creative Economy Practice and serves on global panels, including UNESCO’s Expert Panel on Cultural Expressions, where she advises on the development of global creative industries, AI and emerging technologies in the creative industries. Ms Ochai has nearly 20 years’ experience leading international cultural and creative projects.

Tita Larasati
Indonesian Creative Cities Network
Dwinita (Tita) Larasati is a lecturer/researcher at the Faculty of Art and Design, Institut Teknologi Bandung, Indonesia. She is the Focal Point of Bandung City of Design, UNESCO Creative Cities Network; Executive Committee of Indonesia Creative Cities Network; research fellow at the Creative Industries Policy and Evidence Centre, Climate Leader at The Climate Reality Project Indonesia and member of Global Creative Economy Council. In her spare time, she creates and publishes graphic diaries.



Riley B. King Mural, Chicago
© Photo by Steve Sharp on Unsplash

EDITORIAL TEAM

Editorial Directors: John Newbiggin and Laia Gasch
Managing Editor: Ella Kenny
Project Manager: Allie Lester
Design Director: Katherine Thornton
Digital Consultant: Tom Gill
Digital Publishing: Danique Bailey
Communications: Hannah Reid

EXTERNAL WRITERS

Andani.Africa: Lonwabo Mavuso and Madeleine Lambert
Fundação Itaú: Eduardo Sauron, Ana De Fatima Oliveira De Sousa and Alan Albuquerque Ribeiro Correia
Julie's Bicycle: Alison Tickell and Chiara Badiali
Left Bank Co: Michelle Tabet
VibeLab: Mirik Milan, Jane Slingo and Rahul Murdeshwar
Latin America: Magdalena Suarez and Ana Marasas
Creatives Input: Skinder Hundal

CITY CONSULTATION AND DATA SUPPORT

Bloomberg Associates
Kate D. Levin
Tracey Knuckles
David Andersson

DATA FRAMEWORK

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Centre for Entrepreneurship, SMEs, Regions and Cities
Ekaterina Travkina
Martha Bloom

DATA ANALYSIS

SMU DataArts
Jennifer Benoit-Bryan
Daniel Fonner
Rebecca Roscoe
Liz Quinn
Data Analytics Consultant
Tom Kanchanatheera

DATA VISUALISATION

Studio Terp (Sonja Kuijpers)
Niharika Srivastava

DESIGN

Micha Weidmann Studio
Micha Weidmann
Viktor Mihalev
Rich Holman
Anja Wohlstorm

COMMUNICATIONS

ING Media
Cas Facey
Elaine Yeung
Bergen Consulting
Danai Pointer

WORLD CITIES CULTURE FORUM

Justine Simons OBE, Founder
Alasdair Heselgrave, City Partnerships Manager
Allie Lester, Senior Research Officer
Anika Ali, Programme Officer
Bingbing Zhao, Chief Representative Greater China
Danique Bailey, Digital Publishing Intern
Ella Kenny, Programme and Research Manager
Hannah Reid, Communications and Content Intern
Isabella Valentini, Deputy Director
Katherine Thornton, Communications and Digital Content Manager
Laia Gasch, Director
Magdalena Suarez, Regional Director Latin America
Maryam Ja'far Shariff, Project Officer
Rose Abdollahzadeh, Consultant
Tom Gill, Associate and Bloomberg Digital Accelerator Fellow

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Jeff Jacobs
Kevin Austin
Lynne Halfpenny

ENDNOTES

1 United Nations, The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2022 (UN, 2022)

2 United Nations, The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2022 (UN, 2022)

3 United Nations, The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2022 (UN, 2022)

4 UNESCO, Re-Shaping Policies for Creativity Addressing Culture as a Global Public Good (UNESCO, 2022)

5 UNESCO, Re-Shaping Policies for Creativity Addressing Culture as a Global Public Good (UNESCO, 2022)

6 UNESCO, Cities, Culture, Creativity Leveraging Culture and Creativity for Sustainable Urban Development and Inclusive Growth (UNESCO, 2021)

7 UNESCO, Cities, Culture, Creativity Leveraging Culture and Creativity for Sustainable Urban Development and Inclusive Growth (UNESCO, 2021)

8 UNESCO, Cities, Culture, Creativity Leveraging Culture and Creativity for Sustainable Urban Development and Inclusive Growth (UNESCO, 2021)

9 OECD, Boosting Innovation and Productivity Through Cultural and Creative Sectors (OECD, 2023)

10 OECD, The Culture Fix, Creative People, Places and Industries (OECD, 2022)

11 UNESCO, Re-Shaping Policies for Creativity Addressing Culture as a Global Public Good (UNESCO, 2022)

12 Koelsch, Stefan et al, Predictive Processes and the Peculiar Case of Music, (Trends in Cognitive Sciences, 2019)

13 Klimova, B et al. Dancing as an Intervention Tool for People with Dementia: A Mini-Review Dancing and Dementia (Current Alzheimer Research, 2017)

14 World Cities Culture Trends Report 2024 and World Cities Culture Trends Report 2025 (World Cities Culture Forum, 2024 and 2025)

15 World Cities Culture Forum, Creative Land Trusts: A Practical Guide (World Cities Culture Forum, 2025)

16 Mariapaola McGurk, Johannesburg’s creative hubs are booming: how artists are rejuvenating a failing inner city (The Conversation, 21 July 2025)

17 COP30 Brazilian Presidency, Brazil and the UN launch Global Ethical Stocktake: a worldwide call to climate action ahead of COP30 (18 December 2024)

18 COP30 Brazilian Presidency, Global Mutirão: the COP30 aims to go beyond negotiations to heal the planet (5 June 2024)

19 Julie’s Bicycle and British Council, Culture: The Missing Link to Climate Action, (Julie’s Bicycle, 2021)

20 Ministério da Cultura do Brasil, Grupo de Amigos da Ação Climática (2 June 2025)

21 World Cities Culture Forum, Culture and Climate Change 14 World Cities Tackling Climate Change Through Culture (World Cities Culture Forum, 2018)

22 World Cities Culture Forum, Chengdu Park City: building the world’s largest greenway (1 July 2019)

23 World Cities Culture Forum, Culture and Climate Change 14 World Cities Tackling Climate Change Through Culture (World Cities Culture Forum, 2018)

24 World Cities Culture Forum, Stockholm - Material Magasinet: reducing cultural sector waste through reuse (2022)

25 World Cities Culture Forum, The São Paulo Manifesto: Goal for Culture (28 November 2023)

26 Time Out Dubai, Three new beaches are officially open for night swimming in Dubai (15 May 2023)

27 BOP Consulting, Creating a Healthy Night-time Economy - Key Culture Indicators for World Cities, (BOP Consulting, 2020)

28 World Cities Culture Forum, Nothing About Us Without Us: Youth and Culture in Global Cities Today (World Cities Culture Forum, 2024)

29 OECD, PISA 2022 Results (Volume III): Creative Minds, Creative Schools, (OECD Publishing, 2024)

30 Instituto Pró-Livro, 6ª Edição - Retratos da Leitura no Brasil (Instituto Pró-Livro, 2024)

31 Ministério da Educação (MEC) & Instituto Nacional de Estudos e Pesquisas Educacionais Anísio Teixeira (Inep), Censo Escolar 2023 (Ministério da Educação, 2024)

32 Flavio Comim, Artes e esportes: relação com desenvolvimento humano integral (Fundação Itaú Social, 2019)

33 World Cities Culture Forum, African Alternatives (World Cities Culture Forum, 2024)

34 World Cities Culture Forum, African Alternatives (World Cities Culture Forum, 2024)

35 World Cities Culture Forum, Nothing About Us Without Us: Youth and Culture in Global Cities Today (World Cities Culture Forum, 2024)

36 World Cities Culture Forum, Nothing About Us Without Us: Youth and Culture in Global Cities Today (World Cities Culture Forum, 2024)

37 Fancourt D, Finn S. What is the evidence on the role of the arts in improving health and wellbeing? A scoping review (WHO Regional Office for Europe; 2019)

38 World Cities Culture Forum, Bridging the gap: how a research centre in Buenos Aires is connecting technology and artists (World Cities Culture Forum Website, 1 May 2024)

39 World Cities Culture Forum, Creatividad, Cultura e Innovación en Ciudades Iberoamericanas (World Cities Culture Forum, 2025)

40 World Cities Culture Forum, African Alternatives (World Cities Culture Forum, 2024)

41 OECD, Africa’s Urbanisation Dynamics 2025: Planning for Urban Expansion (OECD, 2025)

42 World Economic Forum, Why Africa’s Youth Hold the Key to its Development Potential (World Economic Forum, 2022)

43 International Federation of the Phonographic Industry (IFPI), Global Music Report 2024 State of the Industry (IFPI, 2024)

44 African Leadership Magazine, The Global Impact of African Fashion: Can It Become a \$50 Billion Industry? (2 June 2023)

45 World Cities Culture Forum, African Alternatives (World Cities Culture Forum, 2024)

46 The Creative Vibrancy Index for Africa (n.d.) Creative Vibrancy Index for Africa Website

47 World Cities Culture Forum, African Alternatives (World Cities Culture Forum, 2024)

48 Inter-American Development Bank, The Complexities of Inequality in Latin America and the Caribbean, (IADB, 2023)

49 Inter-American Development Bank (IABD), What Is the Situation of Migrants in Latin America and the Caribbean? Mapping Socioeconomic Integration, (IADB, 2022)

50 Cultura nas Capitais (n.d.) Cultura nas Capitais Website

51 World Cities Culture Forum, Sydney Launches cultural strategy with plans for a new Creative Land Trust to boost affordable artist workspace (World Cities Culture Forum, June 2024)

**“THAT’S THE
MAGIC OF WORLD
CITIES CULTURE
FORUM: WE HELP
EACH OTHER
MAKE OUR CITIES
A BETTER PLACE
THROUGH ART
AND CULTURE”**

*Touria Meliani, Deputy Mayor for Arts and Culture,
Amsterdam*

**WORLD CITIES
CULTURE
FORUM IS
THE LEADING
GLOBAL
NETWORK OF
CIVIC LEADERS
FROM OVER
45 CREATIVE
CITIES.**