

GLOBAL
**DESTINATION
SUSTAINABILITY
MOVEMENT**

GDS-Index : Learning for
Development
Jennifer Jensen
27 January 2026



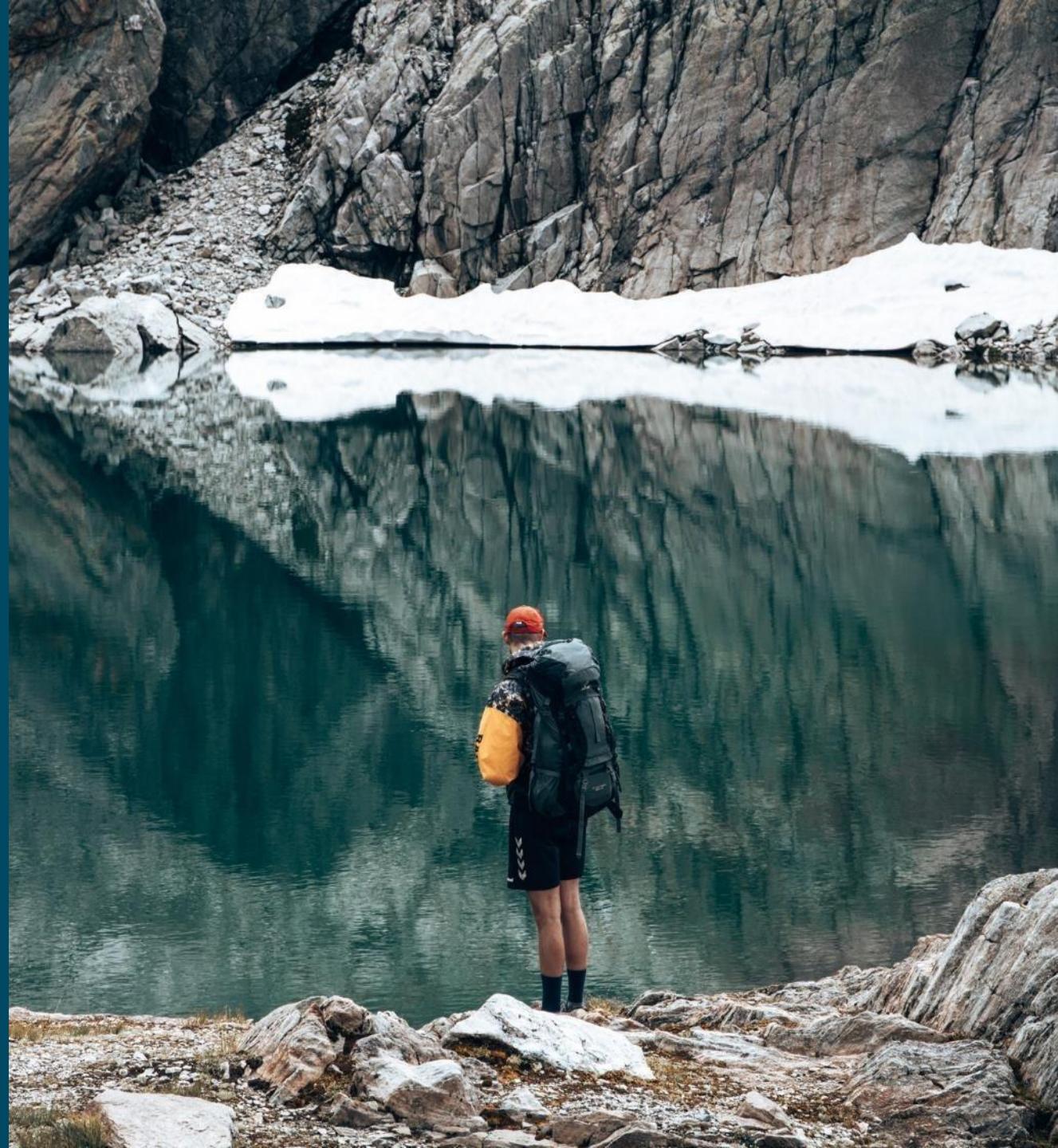
Content

- 1 Introduction to The GDS-Movement
- 2 The GDS-Index
- 3 UK Performance & Benchmarking
- 4 VisitWest Recommendations



Welcome to the GDS-Movement

Our purpose is to empower people with the mindsets, skillsets and toolsets to create regenerative events, destinations and organisations.





The GDS-Movement is a data-driven international change agency that acts to catalyse socio-economic and environmental transformation in events, cities and regions across the world.



Our Services



GDS-Index

Benchmarking destinations and leveraging data to drive performance and impact



GDS-Consulting

Facilitating strategies, narratives, and innovation for destinations & events (for the visitor economy)



GDS-Academy

Educating and developing changemakers



GDS-Forum

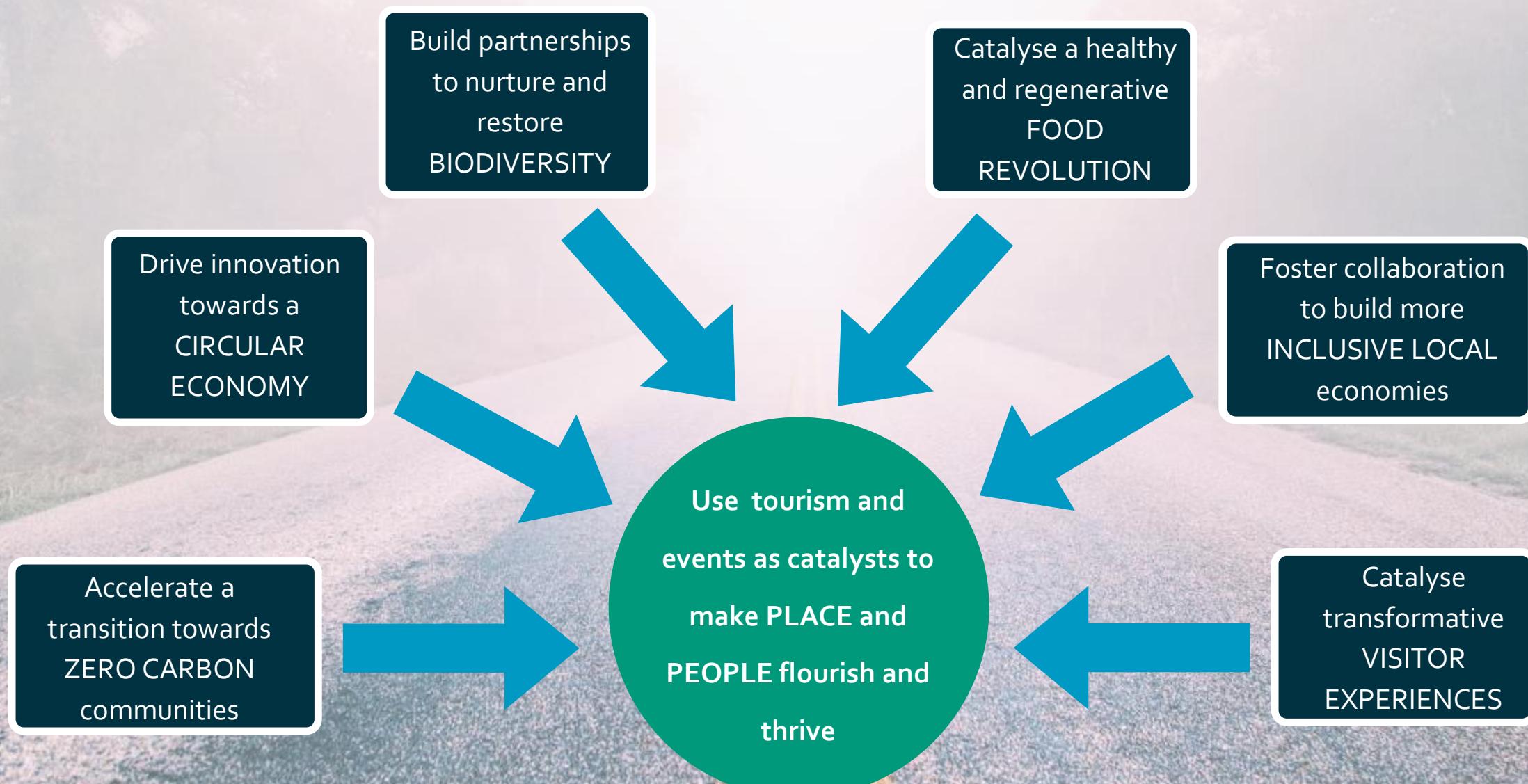
Building a dynamic, collaborative global community



GDS-Insights

Researching trends to uncover and define next practices

GDS-Movement helps cities and countries accelerate their path towards Regenerative Destination Management and Stewardship





GDS-Index

How do we help DMOs to
benchmark and improve
sustainability performance?





GLOBAL DESTINATION SUSTAINABILITY INDEX

Launched in 2016, the GDS-Index is the leading global programme for benchmarking and accelerating sustainability performance of urban destinations.



10 YEARS DRIVING CHANGE

151

destinations have completed a
benchmarking submission since 2016

201

— **231 MILLION***

residents have been affected by destination
sustainability contributions since 2016

— **2-3 BILLION****

visitors have been affected by participating destinations'
tourism and events' sustainability efforts since 2016

626

benchmarking assessments
completed since 2016

35

countries have been
represented on the
GDS-Index since 2016

738

users have logged into the
Omni platform since 2016

56

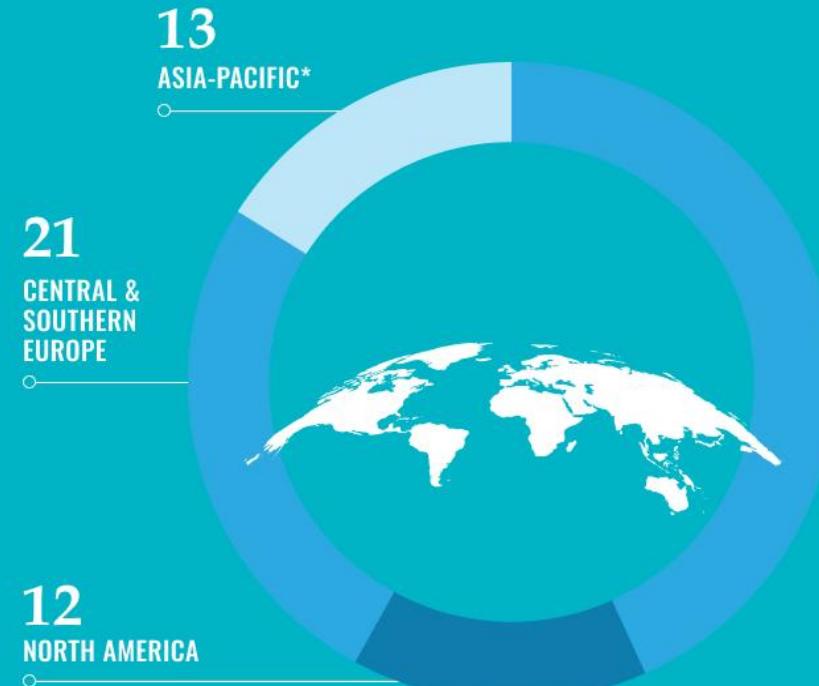
destinations have completed
5 or more benchmarking
submissions since 2016

* Calculations were supported by AI-assisted modelling, using publicly available data
and conservative assumptions. The margin of error is approximately ±10-20%.

**This is a low- to medium-conservative estimate of annual visitors, calculated for
each of the 151 destinations, using city size or available public data, and multiplied by
the number of years they have participated in the GDS-Index. Estimates based on
modelling and available data.

WHICH DESTINATIONS ARE IN THE GDS-INDEX?

REGIONAL BREAKDOWN



81
DESTINATIONS

CITY SIZE BREAKDOWN



The GDS-Index has 81 cities committed to continually improving the social, economic, and environmental well-being of their destinations through tourism and events benchmarking. They are spread across the earth that sustains us and are co-creating the global journey towards regeneration through measurement and management.

Benchmarking cities of all sizes and in all regions

GDS-Index: What Do We Benchmark?



Co-created by destinations for destinations

76 qualitative and quantitative criteria

Informed and closely-aligned to UN Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs) and to the GSTC Destination Criteria.

For more detail visit: www.gds.earth/index

GDS-Index: The Performance Improvement Journey



1 | Collect Data

Destination builds a team, and collects data and evidence from city, suppliers and DMO



2 | Submit Data

DMO uploads the data into the online portal. GDS review and provide feedback



3 | Benchmark

GDS assess responses. After extensive QA, results are scored



4 | Results Launch

Top 40 ranking is published (September 2026)



5 | Report

In-depth Performance Improvement Report is presented to each destination team



6 | Action!

DMO develops improvement plan and implements. Quarterly follow up with GDS

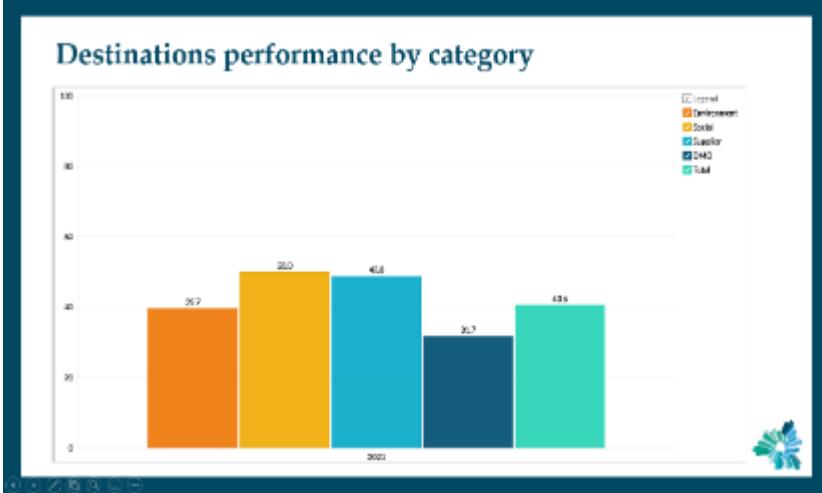


Performance Improvement Report

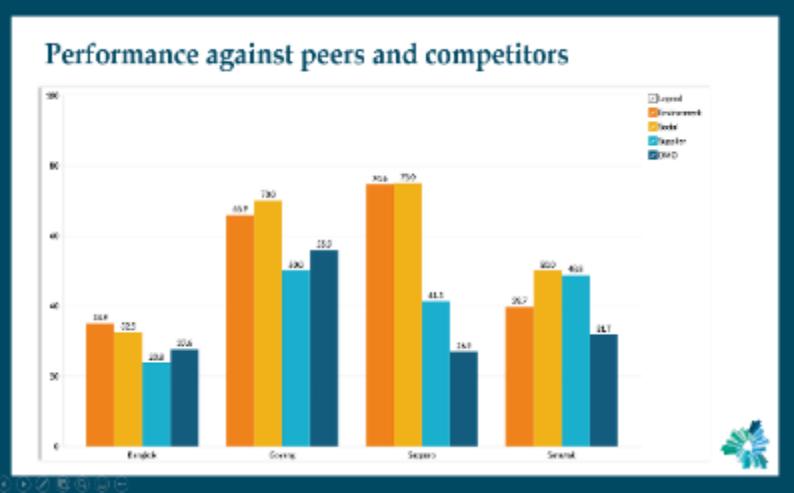
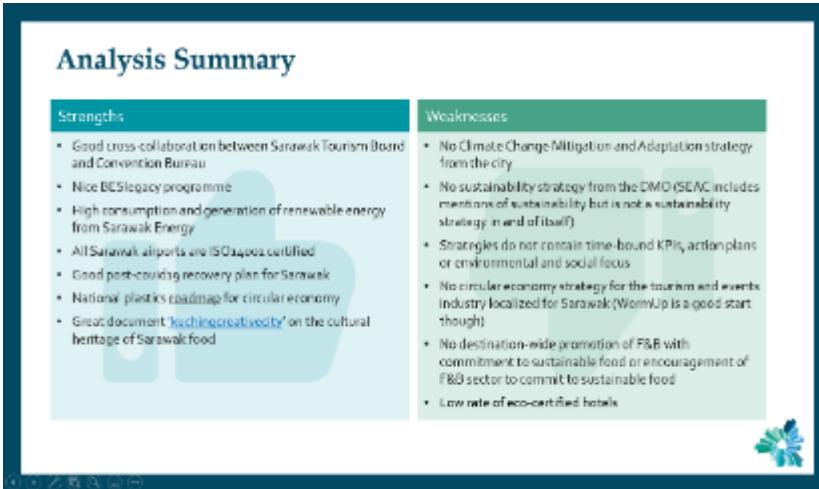
- Insights and Data



Detailed report on
your performance
across 4 categories



Identification of
your strengths and
opportunities



Comparison with
neighbours in
your region



A list of
recommendations
based on the
opportunities

THE GDS-INDEX 2025 TOP 40

	2025	2024		2025	2024		2025	2024		2025	2024
Helsinki* 1	93.52	92.43	Melbourne 11	83.03	76.61	Bilbao 21	79.82	80.27	Luzern 31	75.69	72.82
Gothenburg 2	91.51	90.83	Kerry 12	82.80	77.65	Basel 22	79.59	71.40	Marseille 32	75.00	
Copenhagen* 3	88.76	88.19	Singapore* 13	82.34	83.37	Quebec 23	79.13	73.74	Kumamoto 33	74.54	63.42
Aalborg 4	87.06	82.98	Barcelona 14	81.88	75.57	Stockholm* 24	79.13	75.57	Milan 34	74.31	70.18
Glasgow 5	86.00	81.88	Goyang 15	81.65	78.90	Sydney 25	78.56	83.13	Manchester 35	73.79	63.27
Tampere 6	85.76	76.96	Brisbane 16	81.19	75.23	Clare 26	77.24	75.77	Ostersund 36	72.71	65.71
Aarhus 7	85.15	85.68	Berlin* 17	80.50	75.92	Victoria 27	77.06	77.17	Strasbourg 37	71.79	66.97
Lyon 8	84.40	80.16	Cork 18	80.08	77.18	Songkhla 28	76.84	74.89	Limerick 38	71.34	73.51
Belfast 9	84.40	83.14	Dublin* 19	80.05	75.69	Galway 29	76.84	76.0	Ljubljana* 39	70.76	64.16
Reykjavik* 10	83.72	78.28	Montreal 20	79.82	74.77	Faroe Islands 30	75.92	74.88	Amsterdam* 40	69.72	61.81

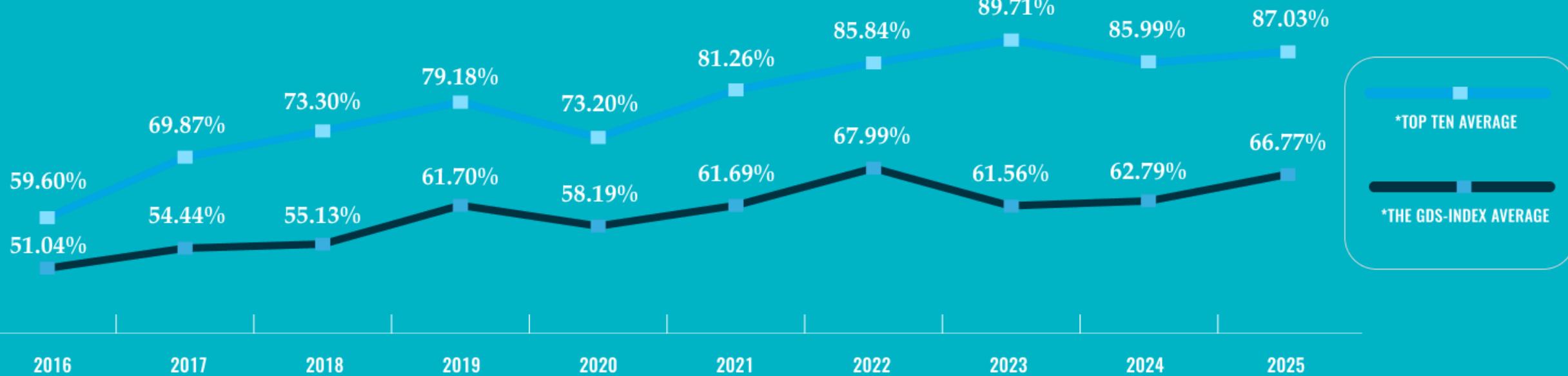
*Capital Cities

Driving performance



Over the past ten years, we've observed a 31% increase in average performance across all participating destinations, with a remarkable 46% rise in the Top 10.

AVERAGE PERFORMANCE EVOLUTION BY YEAR



GDS-Index: The Benchmarking Journey



Timeline for GDS-Index



Timeline for Destinations

Why do DMOs and CVBs participate in the GDS-Index?

- 1** Benchmark to understand performance in relation to other destinations
- 2** Improve strategy and drive performance by using gap analysis and recommendations
- 3** Catalyse collaboration and innovation within the destination
- 4** Build capacity and increase knowledge in the DMO and CVB
- 5** Communicate and promote their destination's unique sustainability story



Please download and read the 2025 GDS-Index Report

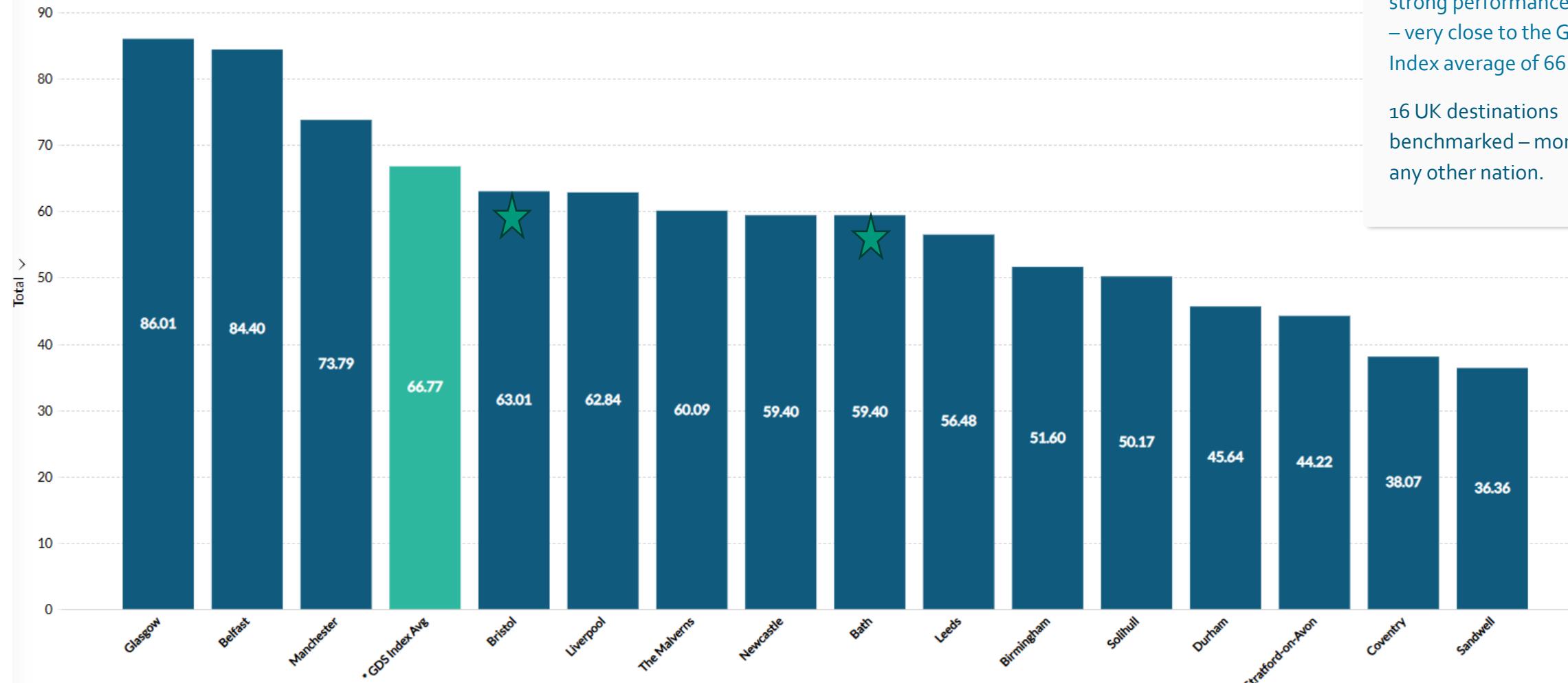


www.gds.earth/reports/

UK GDS-Index Performance



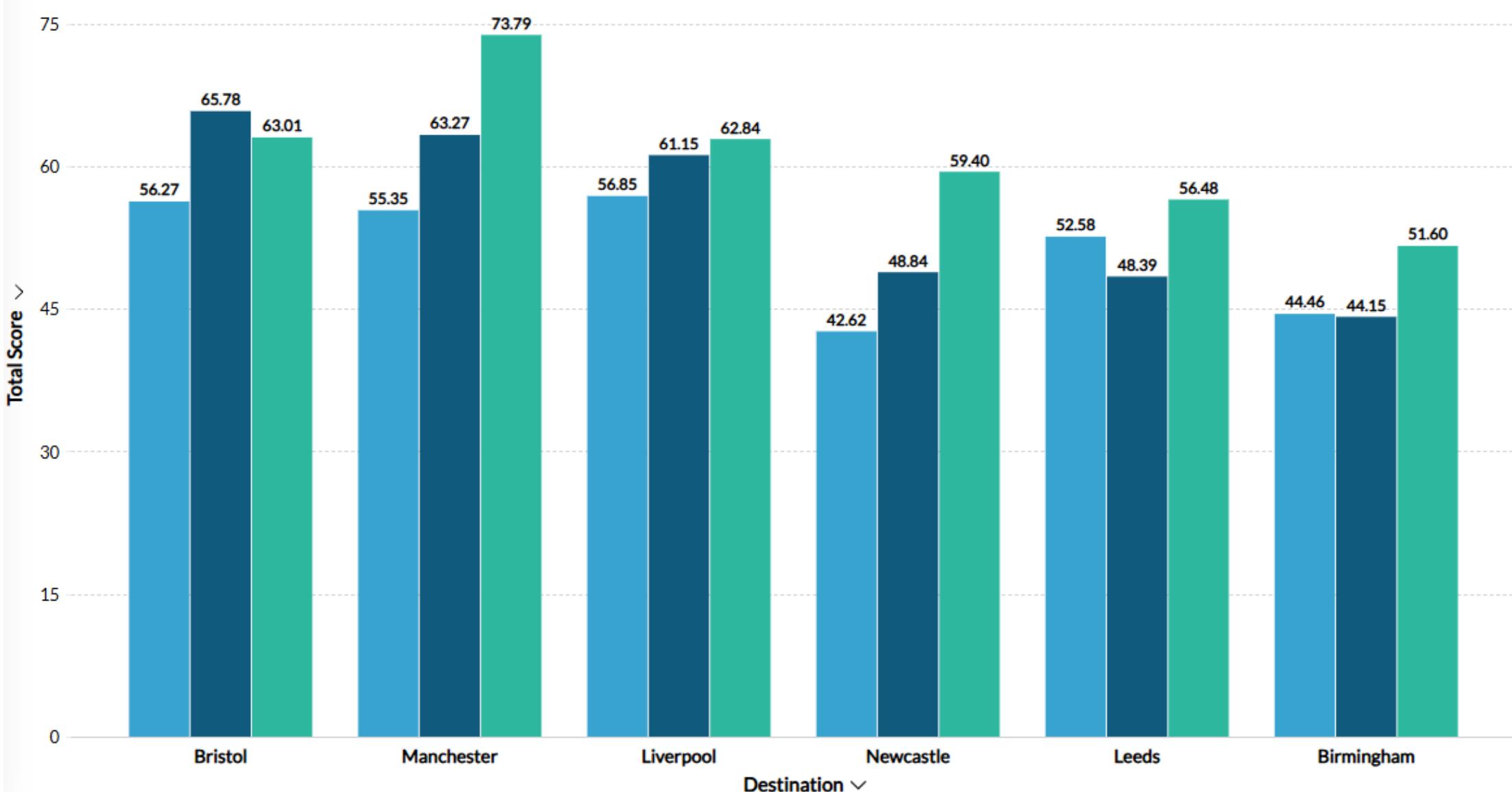
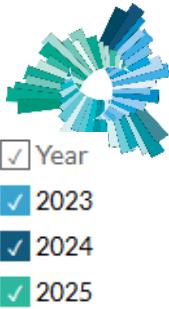
UK Cities- Performance by destination 2025



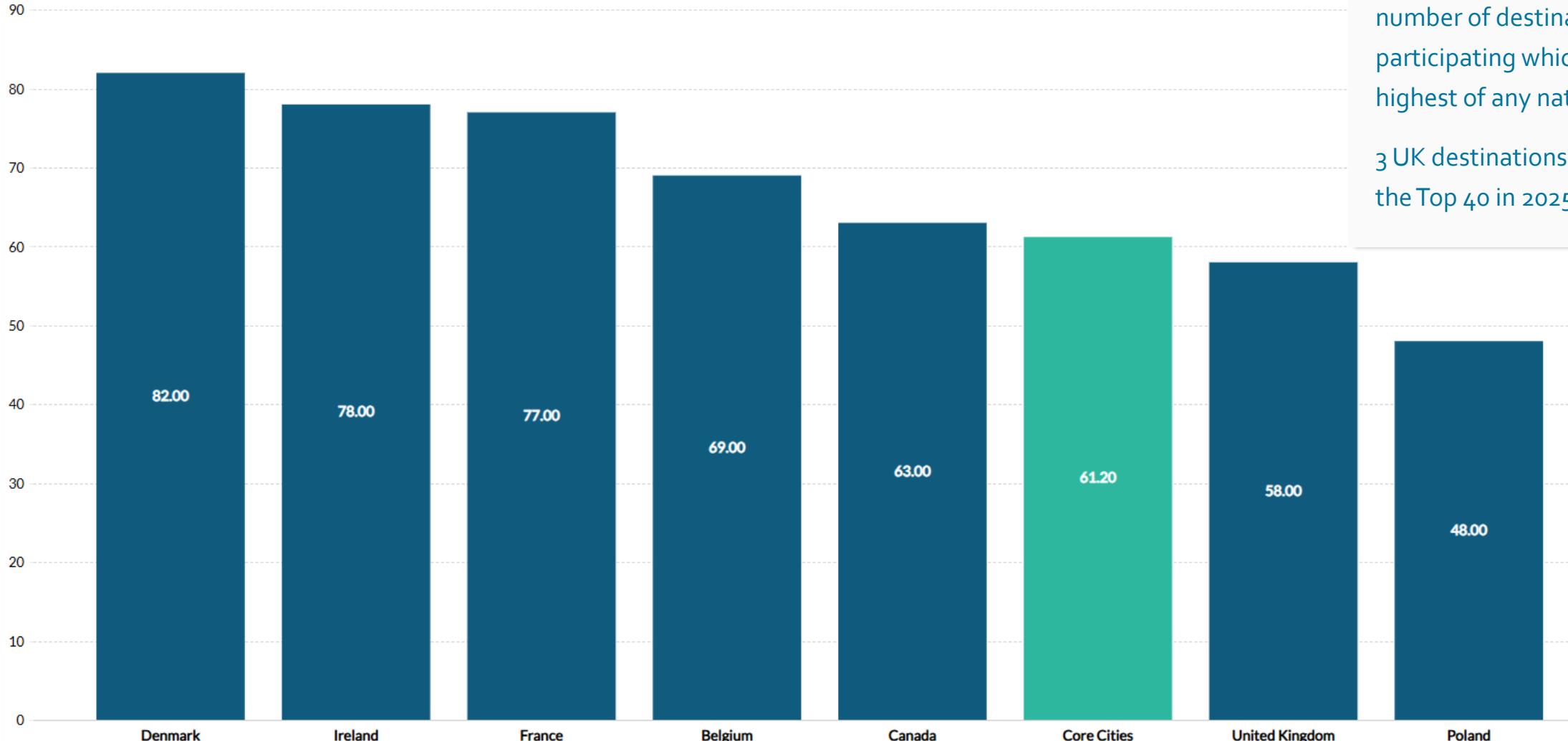
Bristol and Bath both had a strong performance in 2025 – very close to the GDS-Index average of 66.7

16 UK destinations benchmarked – more than any other nation.

Performance 2025 : Core Cities



2025 National Performance



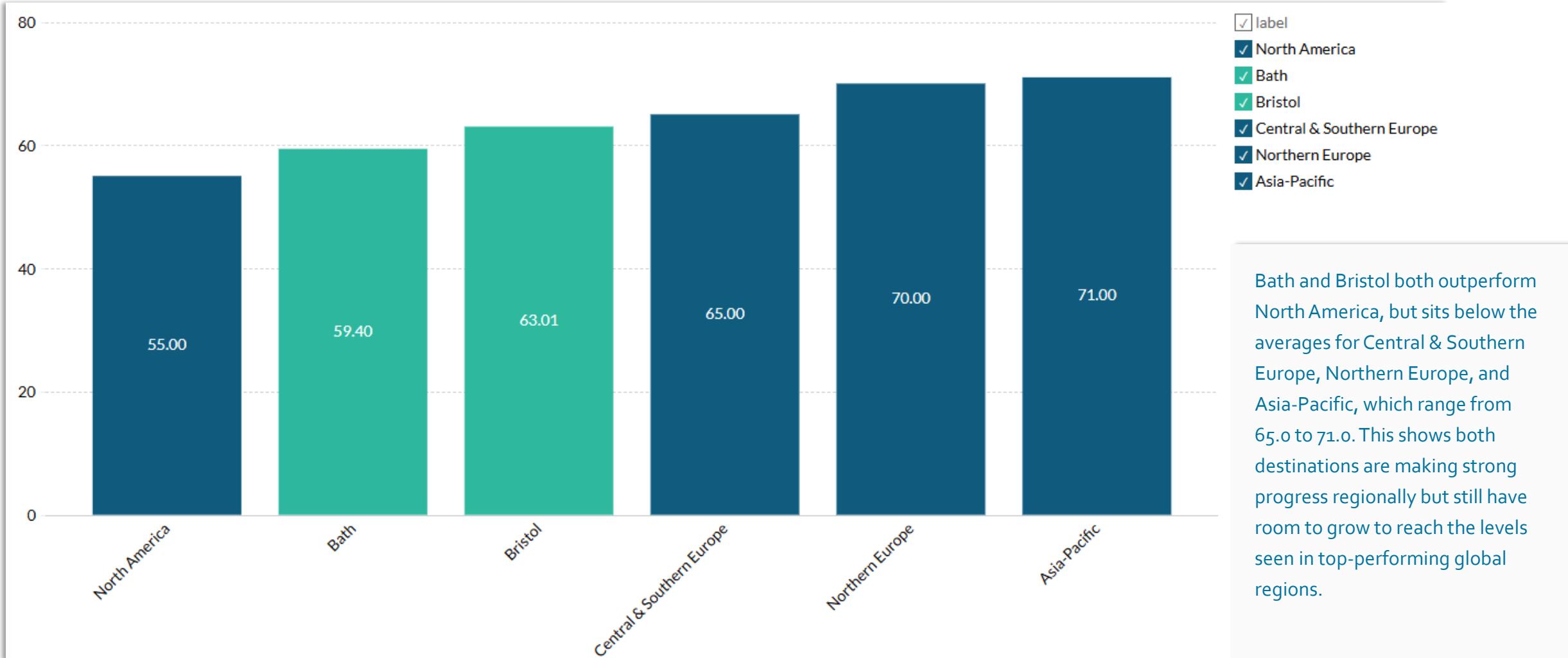
UK average impacted by the number of destinations participating which was the highest of any nation.

3 UK destinations were in the Top 40 in 2025

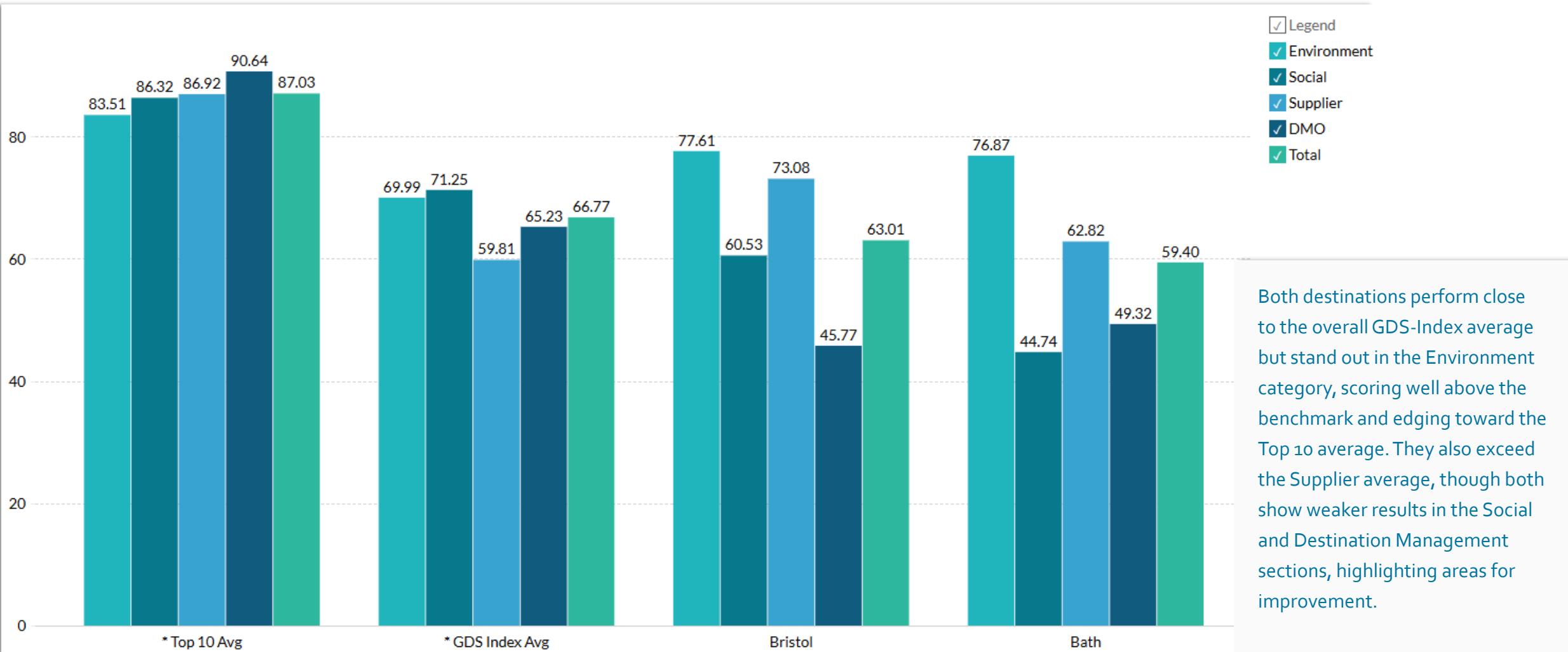
VisitWest Performance & Recommendations



Comparison against regions



Performance against 2025 average



Strong performance



**Very strong score in
the Environmental
Section**

**Bristol Airport – ISO
Certification and
Carbon Neutral for
direct emissions**

**Increase in percentage
of hotels with
certifications**

**More event agencies
with sustainability
policies**

**Signatories of the
Glasgow Declaration –
public commitment**

**Lots of training
opportunities
available on a wide
range of topics incl.
DEI / climate action**

**Tools and support in
place to support
businesses**



Improving Performance

Certification

- Increase the number of hotels, attractions, event agencies, convention centres with 3rd party sustainability certifications

Education

- Participate in sustainability training offered by VisitWest or partner organisations
- Share / use any tools or guidance that is relevant for other businesses
- (Learn from each other!)

Communications

- Share case studies or blogs to showcase best practise
- Promote VisitWest activities through your channels
- Engage with visitors to change behaviours

Join a dynamic community of
changemakers

Email: info@gds.earth

Web: www.gds.earth

LinkedIn: [bit.ly/GDSM_LinkedIn](https://www.linkedin.com/company/global-destination-sustainability-movement/)

YouTube: [@GDS-Movement](https://www.youtube.com/@GDS-Movement)



GLOBAL
**DESTINATION
SUSTAINABILITY
MOVEMENT**

