

TECH CITIES 7

Dublin is safe, vibrant and affordable

FIG. 1: Dublin at a glance, composite rankings



Categories are weighted
Source: Savills World Research



Above: Dublin's iconic Ha'penny Bridge leading from south to north

Dublin is living proof that 'urban buzz' is important to the tech industry and has contributed directly to the city's real estate out-performance in 2014. A business-friendly, low tax environment may have drawn big players to the city, but it is the city's legendary social scene that cemented its position as a major global tech player.

Ireland's corporate tax rate of just 12.5% made it attractive to large US tech firms, who have set up their European headquarters in Dublin. Google, Facebook and LinkedIn are among the best known domiciled in the city. These major tech firms, based in Dublin Docklands, or 'Silicon Docks', have been a catalyst for the wider industry, building confidence among local start-ups.

But it is the quality of life that Dublin can offer its tech staff that really gives it the edge. The city ranks fourth among our top 12 for this, ahead of the mega cities of New York, London and Hong Kong. Safe, vibrant and (comparatively) affordable, Dublin offers an especially high ratio of bars and restaurants per head of population, which has proven integral for networking and business development. →



“Dublin’s annual Web Summit is Europe’s largest tech conference and is recognised as one of tech’s most important annual networking events”



Above: Trinity College attracting young talent to the city

FIG. 2: Tech Cities: overall rankings

1	AUSTIN	7	SINGAPORE
2	SAN FRANCISCO	8	DUBLIN
3	TEL AVIV	9	BERLIN
4	NEW YORK	10	HONG KONG
5	STOCKHOLM	11	SEOUL
6	LONDON	12	MUMBAI

Talent pool

Dublin offers many of the attractions of larger centres but on a smaller footprint. Because of its compact size, tech employees benefit from a short commute to work, averaging 18 minutes in our survey, 13 minutes less than our tech city average. Dublin may be small – the city population is 528,000, while the metro area 1.8 million – but it is still growing. The metro area’s population is forecast to increase by 9.5% over the next ten years to 2024.

It is not only population numbers that matter but also population characteristics. Ireland boasts one of Western Europe’s most youthful populations. The workforce is very well educated and Dublin is home to several highly regarded institutions, including Trinity College, University College Dublin and Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT), which produce skilled graduates, ripe for the burgeoning digital economy.

Of equal importance, when firms can’t hire locally, is that they have the flexibility to recruit from abroad thanks to Ireland’s work-visa laws, the best for business of any of our twelve tech cities. This puts Ireland at an advantage in industries whose trade is intellectual property.

Ireland’s youth are highly footloose and the country as a whole has experienced periods of so called ‘brain drain’, although those who return do so with a wealth of experience which brings wider benefits to the industry.

Business environment

Within Dublin’s business environment, the availability of finance is growing. Enterprise Ireland runs one of Europe’s largest venture funds and a number of venture capitalists have offices in the city. Tech infrastructure is also distinctly superior to Dublin’s major tech competitors in Europe. Average broadband speeds, at 41mbps, while well below those in Asia (in Singapore and Hong Kong they exceed 100mbps), are faster than those in London and Berlin (both at 26 mbps).

The global reach of the city is also important. Dublin is an historic, well-established and even famous city. The international language of business (English) is spoken and internationally recognised legal and business practices prevail. Dublin’s annual Web Summit is Europe’s largest tech conference and is recognised as one of tech’s most important annual networking events. It played host to more than 20,000 attendees from over 100 countries in 2014

Property costs

The spectacular fall in residential and commercial values in the city have also helped to make it more competitive in terms of property costs. For an employee living in the city, rental costs have remained largely flat since 2008. For those looking to buy, prices are still 39% below

their 2006 peak and rank second lowest per square foot (after Mumbai) of all twelve Tech Cities. Capital values for a representative group of employees are approximately a third of those in London and less than a quarter of the values in Hong Kong.

For commercial occupiers, office rents, although rising, still stand 25% below their 2008 levels. Demand in this sector is for smaller premises in the city centre so take-up of smaller, more flexible workspaces above shops and ‘on the street’ is increasing. This space, in the heart of an old city, cannot be created easily except in circumstances where underused buildings can be regenerated or where infill sites can be redeveloped so we expect more rental growth.◆