



# Helsinki Destination Sustainability Report 2024

Helsinki

# Helsinki Destination Sustainability 2024

## Social and cultural sustainability

Visitor Satisfaction Sentiment Scoring (scale 0-100)

**86** (+1%)

Likelihood to Return Summer (scale 1-5)

**4** (+5%)

Likelihood to Return Winter (scale 1-5)

**3.7** (+16%)

Resident Satisfaction

The proportion of residents who feel that tourism has an overall positive impact on Helsinki (scale 1-5, 5 = Strongly Agree, 1 = Strongly Disagree)

**69%** (+3%)

**27%**

**4%**

Strongly Agree

Neither Agree nor Disagree

Strongly Disagree

Perception of Helsinki as Safe and Equal to All

**53%** (-2%)

I think Helsinki is a safe travel destination (scale 1-7, 7 = Strongly Agree, 1 = Strongly Disagree)

**5,8**

## Economical sustainability

Number of Registered arrivals  
**2 646 651** (+9%)

Number of Registered overnights  
**4 552 814** (+10%)

Average annual room occupancy rate  
**54.8%** (4%)

Overnight stays of Foreign Travelers  
**2 203 335** (+17%)

Direct Tourism Income  
**1 415 Million Euros** (-6%)

Direct Tourism Income Per Resident  
**2 069 Euros** (-8%)

Full-Time Jobs Generated by Tourism  
**6 246** (-7%)

Foreign tourist arriving by  
plane **57%** ferry **43%**

## General sustainability

Annual average of length of stay per nights  
**1,7** (0%)

Tourism Density – Annual Average  
**58** (+10%)

Seasonality – The Gini Index  
**0.13** (+8%)

Number of companies taking part in Sustainable Travel Finland program  
**159** (+20%)

Number of Sustainable Travel Finland certified companies  
**72** (+20%)

Helsinki ranked **1st place** in the Global Destination Sustainability (GDS) Index.

Achievement in 2024

Helsinki is aiming to be **certified** by Green Destinations by 2025.

Target in 2025

Travel to and from destinations remains **a major contributor** to carbon emissions.

Key challenge

## Environmental sustainability

Total Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Emissions of Helsinki (scope 1 and 2)  
**1 632 kt CO2-eq.** (-16%)

Total Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Emissions of Helsinki Tourism  
**2 600 kt CO2-eq.** (N/A)

The Share of Nature Reserves in Helsinki's Land Area  
**4.6%** (+4.5%)

Sources of the data can be found in the Helsinki Destination Sustainability full report.

Numbers are compared to the year 2023.

Helsinki

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# Helsinki Destination Sustainability Report 2024

## 1. Background

### 1.1. Introduction

Tourism significantly impacts nature, people and the economy globally. Environmentally, tourism contributes to emissions, resource use, and pressures on natural ecosystems. Socially and culturally, tourism fosters cultural exchange and community engagement. On the other hand, visitor flows that exceed local carrying capacity can create stress on local communities, living conditions, and cultural heritage. Economically, tourism creates jobs, generates income, and supports regional development. However, the distribution of benefits is often uneven. A proactive management approach and systematic indicator development are central in guiding tourism growth towards environmental and social balance.

This first-ever **Helsinki Destination Sustainability Report** provides a structured and data-based overview of the sustainability performance of Helsinki as a tourism destination. The report describes how sustainability management is embedded in the destination's management structures, policies, and monitoring processes, and presents achievements and development needs from 2024.

Internationally recognised frameworks of sustainability, sustainable tourism, and sustainability reporting have guided the development of the report and the selection of relevant data points. Destination sustainability reporting aims to support informed decision-making, strengthen stakeholder collaboration, and provide a reliable basis for the future development of Helsinki as a sustainable destination. It can also enable learning at both local and global levels.

The report begins with an overview of Helsinki as a destination as well as the reporting principles and frameworks. The sustainability governance of Helsinki tourism is described by presenting Helsinki Tourism and the Destination Management Unit as well as the key strategies, commitments and sustainability assessment tools, policies, programmes and working groups around the theme. Sustainability performance in destination management section covers central information describing the nature of tourism in 2024. The sustainability performance of tourism in Helsinki is evaluated using social, cultural, environmental and economic data. The final chapter contains overall conclusion and key points for improvement.

The report was developed in close collaboration between experts from the Helsinki Tourism and Destination Management Unit and Sitowise Ltd.

### 1.2. Helsinki as a destination

Helsinki is the capital of Finland and a Nordic city that combines urban functions with close access to nature and the sea. Helsinki has a high number of design institutions, museums, and examples of Nordic architecture, ranging from historic buildings to contemporary urban development. The city hosts a wide variety of international and



local events throughout the year, including business congresses, design, music, and cultural events.

Helsinki is located on the Baltic coast and surrounded by islands. The city's coastal identity is reflected in its harbours, coastal neighbourhoods, connections to the archipelago, and seasonal activities such as seaside services. The city's food culture is rooted in Nordic culinary traditions, emphasising local ingredients and contemporary restaurant concepts. Public sauna culture is a part of everyday life in Helsinki and includes both traditional saunas and modern seaside facilities, accessible to both residents and visitors.

Helsinki is characterised by a high level of safety, a compact urban structure and a Nordic city vibe. The following key factors and figures characterize Helsinki as a travel destination:

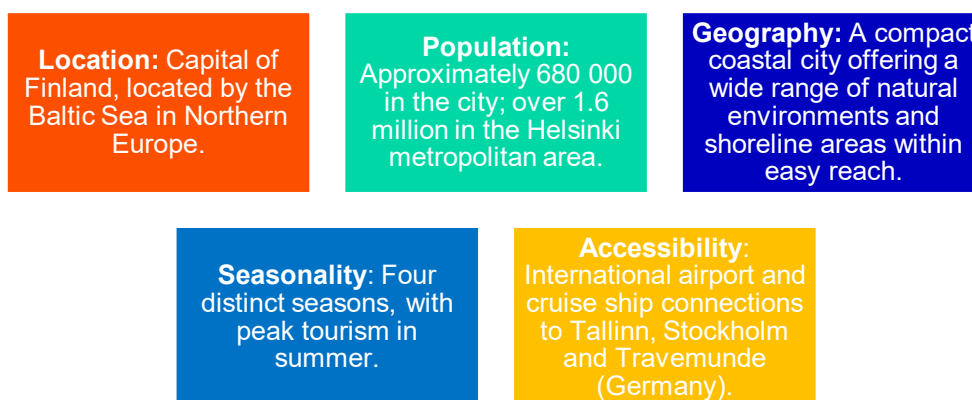


Figure 1. An overview of Helsinki as a travel destination

Key Tourism Figures of Helsinki	2024
Registered overnight stays	4 552 814
Tourist arrivals (overnight) per year	2 646 651
Share of foreign arrivals	42%
Total impact of tourism (direct and secondary effect)	2 410 M€
Direct tourism income	1 415 M€
Tourism's share of employment	2.16%

### 1.3. Reporting principles and frameworks

Global sustainability efforts are guided by the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Tourism can support the achievement of all 17 SDGs either directly or indirectly. In particular, tourism contributes to the achievement of Goals 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) and 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production). Tourism income and tourism-related employment are key drivers of Goal 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth)<sup>1</sup>. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) work as the sustainability framework of the report.

To assess the sustainability of Helsinki tourism, a comprehensive set of environmental, social, and economic indicators has been compiled. The selection of indicators has been guided by the United Nations' Statistical Framework for Measuring the Sustainability of Tourism (SF-MST) and the European Tourism Indicators System (ETIS). Some of measurements themes in SF-MST have been excluded when suitable statistics, specifically about tourism industry, have not been available. Excluded measurement themes are Tourism investment, Government tourism-related

<sup>1</sup> UN Tourism. (2026). [Tourism in the 2030 Agenda](#)

transactions, Water flows and Water resources, Ecosystem services flows for tourism areas, and Decent work.

The primary reporting framework of the sustainability report is the Voluntary Sustainability Reporting Standard for SMEs (VSME), applying both Basic and Comprehensive Modules. The VSME metrics have been complemented with sustainable tourism indicators, as well as contextual information on tourism in Helsinki and the broader impacts of tourism. The diagram below illustrates the overall reporting framework applied in the report.

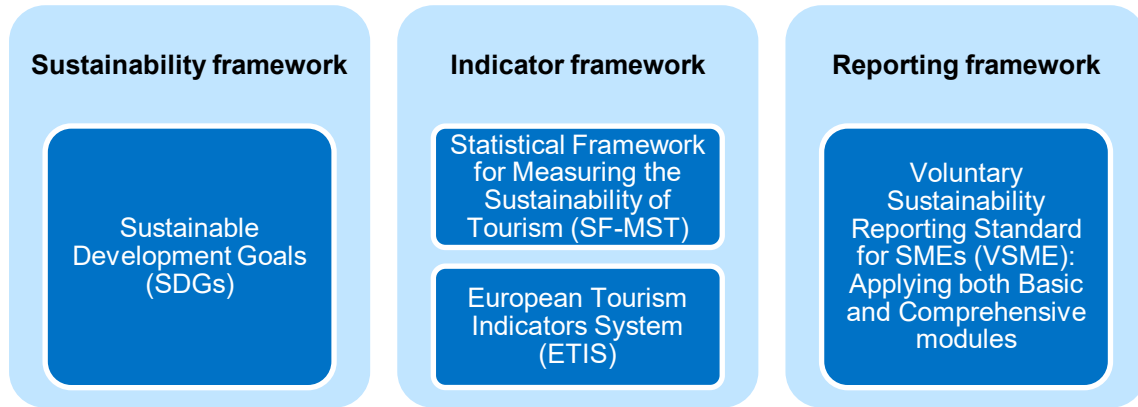


Figure 2. Reporting framework of the Helsinki Destination Sustainability Report 2024

The sustainability report includes information on both the destination management unit (the DMO) and Helsinki tourism, supplemented by data from the City of Helsinki in cases where tourism-specific data is unavailable or cannot be disaggregated.

The information presented in the report has been derived from strategies, programmes, and action plans prepared by the City of Helsinki and the DMO. Data has been collected from platforms such as Tourist Meter (Visit Finland)<sup>2</sup>, DataLokki – Helsinki Destination Insights<sup>3</sup>, Sustainable Tourism in Helsinki Power BI report<sup>4</sup>, resident survey<sup>5</sup>, and Helsinki facts and figures 2025 report<sup>6</sup>.

The sustainability report has been audited by xxx. The auditor's report is included in the attachments. Tourism Director Nina Vesterinen has approved the report.

<sup>2</sup> Visit Finland. [Border Survey: Tourist Meter](#)

<sup>3</sup> City of Helsinki. [Key Indicators about Helsinki Tourism and Events](#)

<sup>4</sup> City of Helsinki. [Sustainable Tourism in Helsinki](#)

<sup>5</sup> Helsingin Matkailusäätiö & Visitory. (2025). [Helsingin matkailu – asukaskysely 2025](#) (in Finnish)

<sup>6</sup> City of Helsinki. (2024). [Helsinki facts and figures 2025](#)

## 2. Governance of sustainable tourism in Helsinki

### 2.1. Helsinki Tourism and Destination Management Unit

In Helsinki, tourism development measures are led by Helsinki Tourism and Destination Management Unit (DMO). The DMO's goal is to develop Helsinki into the most sustainable tourism destination in the world. The DMO's responsibilities include providing Tourist Information services, increasing international cooperation, and driving innovation and digitalisation.<sup>7</sup>

The DMO is part of the public services of the City of Helsinki (NACE Code 799, Other reservation services and related activities). The DMO is overseen by the Helsinki City Council, and it operates under Business Helsinki. The DMO's office is in Kamppi, Helsinki.

#### Geolocation of sites

##### Helsinki Tourism and Destination Management Unit office

Address	Kansakoulukatu 3
Postal code	00100
City	Helsinki
Country	Finland
Coordinates (geolocation)	60° 10' 05.27166" N, 24° 56' 00.82859" E

### 2.2. Helsinki's vision and key strategic goals for tourism

Helsinki tourism builds on the core values of the City of Helsinki: resident orientation, ecology, justice and equality, economy, safety, involvement and participation, and entrepreneurial spirit<sup>8</sup>. The City of Helsinki's strategy for 2021–2025, **A Place of Growth**, sets the ambition to develop Helsinki into the smartest and most sustainable travel destination in the world<sup>9</sup>. The **Economic Policy Priorities** for 2022–2025 also emphasised making Helsinki more attractive as a sustainable city for tourism, culture, and events<sup>10</sup>.

The most important document guiding the development of tourism in Helsinki is **the Helsinki Tourism and Events Programme 2022-2026**<sup>11</sup>. The programme is reviewed annually, and progress is reported to the Economic Development Sub-committee of the City of Helsinki. The programme is based on the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, and it has three strategic goals:

<sup>7</sup> City of Helsinki. [Helsinki Tourism and Destination Management](#)

<sup>8</sup> City of Helsinki. (2023). [Helsinki Tourism Sustainability Policy](#)

<sup>9</sup> City of Helsinki. (2021). [A Place for Growth – Helsinki City Strategy 2021–2025](#)

<sup>10</sup> City of Helsinki. (2022). [Economic Policy Priorities 2022-2025](#)

<sup>11</sup> City of Helsinki. (2022). [Helsinki Tourism and Events Programme 2022–2026](#)



## Helsinki Tourism and Events Programme 2022-2026

<b>A. Helsinki is a vibrant and internationally attractive city for tourism and events</b>	<b>B. Helsinki is an international pioneer and provider of solutions in sustainable tourism and events</b>	<b>C. Helsinki is a smart destination and a functional event city</b>
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### Strategic choices

A.1 International visitors will generate the growth in tourism	B.1 Environmental sustainability and carbon neutrality at the forefront of development	C.1 Smart development of tourism and events is based on knowledge
A.2 Events strengthen the liveliness and vitality of Helsinki	B.2 Helsinki residents, inclusiveness and social and cultural sustainability at the core development	C.2 City space-related decisions support tourism and events
A.3 International congresses and major events as drivers of growth	B.3 Helsinki is a world leader in sustainability, verified by indices and certifications	C.3 Helsinki is a functioning platform for events

### Prerequisites for the development

A.4 Distinctive urban culture, food and unique nature enhance the city's appeal	B.4 The availability of skilled labor is vital for the sectors	C.4 Promoting companies' digital capabilities to increase their competitiveness
A.5 Good transport links and smooth customer paths prerequisites for competitiveness	B.5 Focusing on comprehensive safety is a prerequisite for the city's appeal	C.5 Growth and renewal through accelerating innovation in the tourism and event sectors

**The City of Helsinki's Climate Action Plan for Tourism 2023-26** sets goals for emission reductions. Helsinki aims to halve the emissions from tourism by 2030, including halving the emissions of each tourism sector in the period of 2022–2030. After 2030, the goal is to achieve zero emissions as soon as possible - at the latest before 2050.<sup>12</sup>

The Action Plan outlines four key objectives (presented below), as well as concrete measures, responsible bodies for each measure, and indicators for the monitoring of progress.

<b>Eliminating emissions</b>	<b>Regenerative tourism</b>	<b>Cooperation</b>	<b>Resources</b>
<p><b>•Objective:</b></p> <p>Helsinki wants to be a pioneer in climate-friendly tourism and measuring the climate impact of tourism</p>	<p><b>•Objective:</b></p> <p>Helsinki aims to be the world's most sustainable tourist destination</p>	<p><b>•Objective:</b></p> <p>The world's most sustainable travel destination is built together</p>	<p><b>•Objective:</b></p> <p>Helsinki makes tourism part of green transition</p>

Figure 3. The City of Helsinki's Climate Action Plan for Tourism 2023-26

<sup>12</sup> City of Helsinki. (2023). [City of Helsinki's Climate Action Plan for Tourism 2023–26](#)

Furthermore, **Helsinki Tourism Action Plan for Extending the Length of Stay 2024–2026** presents measures to extend the tourist stay in Helsinki<sup>13</sup>.

Besides the vision and strategic goals mentioned above, **the Ethical Principles of the City of Helsinki**, a code of conduct covering child labour, forced labour (via reference to international standards), discrimination and safety (accident prevention), also guide the operations of the DMO<sup>14</sup>.

## 2.3. Key commitments, indexes and certifications

The City of Helsinki is committed to the following sustainability declarations:

- The United Nations’s Sustainable Development Goals<sup>15</sup>
- Glasgow Declaration on Climate Action in Tourism<sup>16</sup>
- Lisbon Declaration on Cities for all: Building Cities for Citizens and Visitors<sup>17</sup>
- The Nur-Sultan Declaration on ‘Smart Cities, Smart Destinations’<sup>18</sup>

Helsinki delivers an SDG report to the UN every two years.

Helsinki is part of the **Sustainable Travel Finland (STF) programme** that offers companies and tourism destinations a seven-step development path with criteria that comply with international standards. Destinations and companies that undergo the programme and meet the criteria are awarded the Sustainable Travel Finland label.<sup>19</sup> The DMO is actively working towards achieving the label.

Moreover, the DMO strives to comply with the **Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) Standards**, and in 2024 it worked towards achieving the **Green Destination GSTC certificate**. This certificate requires compliance with all GSTC criteria for sustainable travel destinations.<sup>20</sup>

In 2024, Helsinki achieved one of its key targets: ranking first place in **the Global Destination Sustainability (GDS) Index** with a score of 94%<sup>21</sup> (the ranking was published on 16 October 2024). The achievement was a result of long and persistent work<sup>22</sup>. The GDS-Index assesses and benchmarks the sustainability strategy and performance of destinations across four categories: environmental, social, supplier, and Destination Management Organisation. The assessment is carried out by the GDS-Movement<sup>23</sup>. The Index is aligned with international standards such as the UN SDGs, GSTC Destination Criteria, and UNWTO guidelines.

In 2023, the Helsinki City Executive Office, which includes the DMO, was granted **the EcoCompass Environmental Management System Certificate** for the management and development of environmental matters in accordance with EcoCompass criteria.

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<sup>13</sup> City of Helsinki. (2024). [Helsinki Tourism Action Plan for extending the length of stay 2024–2026](#)

<sup>14</sup> City of Helsinki. [Ethical principles of the City of Helsinki](#)

<sup>15</sup> United Nations. [The 17 goals](#)

<sup>16</sup> UN Tourism. [The Glasgow Declaration on Climate Action in Tourism](#)

<sup>17</sup> UNWTO. (2019). [Lisbon Declaration on Cities for all: building cities for citizens and visitors](#)

<sup>18</sup> UNWTO. (2019). [Nur-Sultan Declaration on ‘Smart Cities, Smart Destinations’](#)

<sup>19</sup> Visit Finland. [Sustainable Travel Finland](#)

<sup>20</sup> GSTC. [About the Global Sustainable Tourism Council \(GSTC\)](#)

<sup>21</sup> Global Destination Sustainability Movement. [Design a thriving future for people and place](#)

<sup>22</sup> City of Helsinki. (2024). [Helsinki on the top position in the Global Destination Sustainability index](#)

<sup>23</sup> Global Destination Sustainability Movement. [Design a thriving future for people and place](#)

The certificate was granted on 12 May 2023 by the Finnish Association for Nature Conservation Kinos Oy and is valid until 2026.<sup>24</sup>

## 2.4. Sustainable destination policies and programmes

The operations and development of sustainable tourism is guided and managed through various policies, strategies and programmes. These include the following key policies and programmes:

### On the city-level:

- **City of Helsinki Procurement Strategy**<sup>25</sup> that places a strong emphasis on the responsibility and impact of procurements. Its three main themes are: 1. Functional markets and innovation promotion; 2. Impact and responsibility; and 3. Procurement management and procurement skills. The city aims to develop procurement policies across the entire tourism ecosystem also through the Sustainable Tourism Finland programme.
- **The Equality and Non-Discrimination Plan for the Personnel of the City of Helsinki 2022–2025**<sup>26</sup> guides, for example, the recruitment, salary and career practices of the DMO.
- **The Development Programme of Circular Economy and Sharing Economy of the City Of Helsinki**, prepared in 2020 and extending until 2035. In terms of tourism, the programme sets targets for providing travel organisations training on the circular economy, for the use of circular economy services, and for implementing a circular economy programme for tourism and events, with a particular focus on hotels and restaurants. In the long run, the programme aims to support the efficient use of resources and the reduction of waste.<sup>27</sup>

Besides these, environmental sustainability in Helsinki is addressed through a number of other plans and programmes, which are presented in the appendix (Appendix 1).

### Tourism-specifically:

- **Tourism Sustainability Policy**<sup>28</sup>, developed in 2023, states that Helsinki is committed to sustainability in all its activities. The policy is regularly updated.
- **Helsinki Visitor Pressure – Analysis and Management Plan 2024–2026**<sup>29</sup> describes the present state of visitor pressure in Helsinki and the ways visitor pressure is measured and managed.
- **The 2023 Analysis of the Current State of Inclusivity in the Tourism and Event Sectors of the City of Helsinki**<sup>30</sup> highlights three key areas for development: the representation of diversity in marketing, development of internal inclusivity and diversity, and engagement of tourism and service companies as well as event organisers.

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<sup>24</sup> City of Helsinki. [The EcoCompass Environmental Management System Certificate](#)

<sup>25</sup> City of Helsinki. (2020). [City of Helsinki Procurement Strategy 2020](#)

<sup>26</sup> City of Helsinki. (2022). [Equality and Non-Discrimination Plan for the Personnel of the City of Helsinki 2022-2025](#)

<sup>27</sup> City of Helsinki. (2020). [Helsingin kierto- ja jakamistalouden toimenpideohjelma](#) (in Finnish)

<sup>28</sup> City of Helsinki. (2023). [Helsinki Tourism Sustainability Policy](#)

<sup>29</sup> City of Helsinki. (2024). [Helsinki Visitor Pressure – Analysis and Management Plan 2024–2026](#)

<sup>30</sup> Ellare Oy, City of Helsinki & Business Helsinki. (2023). [The 2023 Analysis of the Current State of Inclusivity in the Tourism and Event Sectors of the City of Helsinki](#)

- **Internal Training for Sustainability – Helsinki Tourism and Destination Management Unit**<sup>31</sup> report presents the plans for the sustainability-related training of the DMO's personnel as well as trainings already taken place.
- **Helsinki Tourism and Events Preparedness and Adaptation to Climate Change 2024**<sup>32</sup> report presents the effects of climate change, opportunities and risks, as well possible measures to prepare for climate change (see more in 5.1).

## 2.5. Collaboration and working groups

Operators in the tourism industry have showed strong commitment to sustainability. In a 2024 survey of event industry organisations respondents rated the importance of sustainability very high, giving it an average score of 9.2 out of 10 (62 respondents). In addition, 86% of event industry operators said it was important for the city to require concrete sustainability and responsibility measures from its event partners. This is an excellent ground to develop sustainability in collaboration.

In 2024, collaboration strengthened as companies operating in tourism and events worked together more closely and the commitment to the Helsinki Tourism and Events Programme grew. Collaboration developed also between city units as the cooperation between the DMO and the Helsinki Brand and Events Unit deepened during the year. In addition, many other city sectors, departments, and units contributed to the Helsinki Tourism and Events Programme implementation.

There are multiple working groups and committees contributing to the goals of Helsinki tourism as well as providing important insights for development. The working groups and committees include:

- **Internal Tourism Working Group** that consists of representation from relevant units and city owned subsidiaries.
- **Internal Events Development Groups:**
  - **Major Event Steering Group** that accelerates and aligns the decision-making process for large-scale events and ensures the flow of information internally. The group ensures that events comply with the City Strategy goals and monitors the implementation of the Helsinki tourism and events programme.
  - **Event Steering Group** that brings together experts from the City of Helsinki and its subsidiary organisations to develop events. The group agrees on practical policies and ensures that the organisation of events in Helsinki goes smoothly. The group also ensures the implementation and progress of the goals in the action programme.
  - **On-site Group Organisation** that resolves practical problems, identifies practical development needs and ensures that the city is a good partner to event organisers. The group promotes cooperation between city divisions.
- **Internal Tourism and Events Sustainability Group** that serves all tourism and events sustainability development. This group has several sub-groups, which are: GDS-index group, Climate Action Plan group, Inclusivity group, Think Sustainably service development group, Residents involvement group, and Tourism safety group. The groups include representatives from the city as well as external members.
- **Tourism Advisory Board** which is an official external tourism working group. The group consists of major tourism and events companies, tourism universities and other relevant partners.

<sup>31</sup> City of Helsinki. (2025). [Internal training for sustainability - Helsinki Tourism and Destination Management Unit](#)

<sup>32</sup> City of Helsinki. (2024). [Helsinki Tourism and Events Preparedness and Adaptation to Climate Change 2024](#)

- **Helsinki Sustainable Tourism Forum** is a committee with external non-industry stakeholders. The group includes representatives from e.g. International Centre for Responsible Tourism, Helsinki Pride, Finnish Paralympic Committee, Finnish Association of People with Physical Disabilities, The Finnish Environment Institute, Helsinki University, WWF, Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences, Visit Finland, Finnish Hospitality Association MaRa, Association of Finnish Travel Industry and Finnish event industry association Tapahtumateollisuus ry.
- **Urban Climate Leaders in Tourism** is a collaboration between the City of Helsinki, the City of Tampere and a group of major tourism companies. The focus of the group is to accelerate climate action in tourism.
- **Tourism and Events Safety Management Board** that includes representatives from healthcare services, Helsinki City Rescue Department, Helsinki Police Department, City's environmental services, Communications Department, Finnish Safety and Chemicals Agency, tourism companies' representative and other relevant city units.

In addition, the DMO manages and leads the City Group's membership-based partnership network, **Makers of Helsinki (Helsingin tekijät)**, which brings together actors from the tourism, events, and restaurant sectors. The network serves as a key development platform, offering extensive networking opportunities for both large and small operators. Members of the network receive up-to-date information on industry news, events, statistics, training opportunities and tools to develop their operations. In addition, members are given priority in Helsinki's international B2B sales and marketing activities. Sustainability topics are regularly addressed within the network. In 2024, the Makers of Helsinki network expanded, including now over 140 members. Also, the number of participants at the network's events grew in 2024, and more services were delivered through joint efforts.

## 2.6. Data-driven management

To become the most sustainable tourism destination, Helsinki needs transparent, fact-based understanding of tourism impacts. In 2024, the DMO published **the Sustainable Tourism in Helsinki Data Platform** (a Power BI analytics platform) that is used for reporting purposes as well as for sharing information with citizens, visitors and the media on how sustainable tourism is being developed in Helsinki. The platform data is divided into five categories: visitor perception, environment, social, index and certifications, and safety. The platform is actively developed to meet changing needs.<sup>33</sup>

## 3. General indicators of sustainable tourism

General sustainability indicators presented in this chapter describe the nature of tourism in a destination, providing a baseline for the development of sustainability. Average stay, tourism intensity and density, and seasonality have effects on the environmental, social, cultural, and economic sustainability of tourism. Certification of companies in the sector signal the level of expertise and commitment to sustainability.

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<sup>33</sup> City of Helsinki. [Sustainable Tourism in Helsinki](#)

## 3.1. Average stay

In 2024, the annual average length of stay was 1.7 nights. The average length of stay remained unchanged from 2023. The target is to grow the average length of stay to 1.9 nights by 2026<sup>34</sup>.

Longer stays tend to generate greater positive impacts on the local economy through increased use of local services. In addition, the environmental impact of one longer stay is lower than the impacts from several short visits. Longer visits can be encouraged through measures, such as offering additional activities and discounts. A wide range of measures have been outlined in **the Helsinki Tourism Action Plan for Extending the Length of Stay 2024–2026**<sup>35</sup>.

## 3.2. Tourism intensity and density

Tourism intensity and density in Helsinki are measured using several indicators. Tourism intensity, which describes number of overnights stays in accommodation per 100 permanent residents per day, increased by 9% from 2023 to 2024 during summertime but remained low overall. During the summer high season, there were only 2.19 overnight stays in accommodation establishments per 100 permanent residents per day, and even fewer during the winter season (1.48). For comparison, the average annual intensity indicator in Barcelona was 6.01<sup>36</sup> and 7.00 in Reykjavik<sup>37</sup>.

Tourism density, defined as the number of registered overnight stays in relation to land area (km<sup>2</sup>) averaged 58 for the whole year and peaked to 82 during the most popular month, July 2024. Lowest density was 40 in January 2024<sup>38</sup>.

Tourism intensity and density provide indication on the balance of tourism pressures between seasons and destinations. These indicators are critical in understanding overtourism, which can be a result of unbalanced or uneven tourism in which the pressure increases during peak seasons and in popular hotspots, while other seasons and destinations remain relatively quiet.

Overall, tourism intensity and density in Helsinki remains low. However, visitor pressure and the side effects associated with growing tourism need to be assessed and managed more carefully in the coming years. Recent years have shown that the growing global tourism industry has created social tension and resistance in many European capitals and cities.

## 3.3. Seasonality

Helsinki has a strong year-round tourism flow with a good balance across seasons, although summertime is the most popular season. In 2024, Helsinki's Gini Index, a measure of the seasonality of tourism, was 0.13. The closer the value is to zero, the more evenly overnight stays are distributed throughout the year. Nevertheless, further balancing tourism flows across seasons and maintaining low seasonal dependency remain key priorities, as it is known that destinations that are dependent on short

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<sup>34</sup> City of Helsinki. (2022). [Helsinki Tourism and Events Programme 2022–2026](#)

<sup>35</sup> City of Helsinki. (2024). [Helsinki Tourism Action Plan for Extending the Length of Stay 2024–2026](#)

<sup>36</sup> [Barcelona Tourism Activity Data dashboard](#)

<sup>37</sup> [Statistics Iceland](#)

<sup>38</sup> Tourism density was calculated based on monthly registered accommodation (City of Helsinki. [Key Indicators about Helsinki Tourism and Events](#)) divided by the area of the City of Helsinki (213,8 km<sup>2</sup>)



seasons are more fragile and generate less year-round positive economic and employment impacts.

### 3.4. Sustainability certification

Sustainability certification schemes are an important way to encourage sustainability of tourism companies, while making it easier for tourists to recognize sustainable services. The DMO actively encourages tourism companies to take part in the national Sustainable Travel Finland programme. In 2024, the number of companies taking part in the programme was 159 which is 21% higher than the year before. The number of companies that have received the Sustainable Travel Finland certificate was 72 which also increased by 20%. Target is that 200 companies will achieve the certificate by 2026<sup>39</sup>.

In 2024, a growing number of tourism operators had achieved sustainability certification:

- 40% (4 out of 10) of event agencies (employing 6 or more people) (in 2023, 29%).
- 86% (48 out of 56) of hotels (50 rooms or more) (in 2023, 67%).
- 100% (4 out of 4) of convention centres/ venues (in 2023, 100%).
- 100% (10 out of 10) of top attractions (in 2023, 100%).<sup>40</sup>
- Approximately 60–70% of Helsinki's partner events<sup>41</sup>.

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<sup>39</sup> City of Helsinki. (2022). [Helsinki Tourism and Events Programme 2022 – 2026](#)

<sup>40</sup> City of Helsinki. [Sustainable Tourism in Helsinki](#)

<sup>41</sup> City of Helsinki. (2025.) [Final report of the Helsinki Tourism and Events Programme](#)

## 3.5. Indicators and data tables of general indicators of sustainable tourism

General sustainable tourism indicators							
Indicator	Explanation	Result 2024	Result 2023	Change from 2023	SF-MST	ETIS	Data source
<b>Average stay</b>	Annual average of length of stay per nights	<b>1.7</b>	1.7	No change from 2023	Length of stay	B.1 Tourism flow (volume and value) at destination	<a href="#">Rudolf Statistical Database</a>
<b>Tourism Intensity - Summer Season (05-10)</b>	Number of overnight stays in accommodation establishments per 100 permanent residents per day	<b>2.19</b>	2.01	9% growth from 2023	Tourism concentration	C.1 Community/ social impact	<a href="#">Visit Finland Border Survey</a>
<b>Tourism Intensity - Winter Season (11-04)</b>	Number of overnight stays in accommodation establishments per 100 permanent residents per day	<b>1.48</b>	1.40	5.7% growth from 2023	Tourism concentration	C.1 Community/ social impact	<a href="#">Visit Finland Border Survey</a>
<b>Tourist Density - Annual Average</b>	Number of registered overnight stays in relation to the area (km <sup>2</sup> ). The area of the Helsinki area is 213.8 km <sup>2</sup> . Calculated as average overnight stays per day / area	<b>58.34</b>	53.11	9.9% growth from 2023	Tourism concentration	C.1 Community/ social impact	<a href="#">DataLokki</a>
<b>Tourist Density - Highest Month</b>	Number of registered overnight stays in relation to the area (km <sup>2</sup> ). The area of the Helsinki area is 213.8 km <sup>2</sup> . Calculated as average overnight stays per day / area	<b>82.36</b>	75.65	8.9% growth from 2023 (highest month July in 2024)	Tourism concentration	C.1 Community/ social impact	<a href="#">Rudolf Statistical Database</a>
<b>Tourist Density - Lowest Month</b>	Number of registered overnight stays in relation to the area (km <sup>2</sup> ). The area of the Helsinki area is 213.8 km <sup>2</sup> . Calculated as average overnight stays per day / area	<b>39.73</b>	38.50	3.2% growth from 2023 (lowest month January 2024)	Tourism concentration	C.1 Community/ social impact	<a href="#">Rudolf Statistical Database</a>
<b>Tourism seasonality - Seasonal dependence - 2 seasons</b>	The proportion of overnight stays in the summer season (May-October, 6 months) versus the whole year. A result of 0.5 would mean a complete balance between the summer and winter seasons.	<b>0.60</b>	0.59	1.7% growth from 2023	Tourism seasonality	B.1 Tourism flow (volume and value) at destination	<a href="#">Sustainable Tourism in Helsinki</a>
<b>Tourism seasonality - Seasonal dependence - 4 seasons</b>	The proportion of overnight stays in the summer (June-August, 3 months) versus the whole year. A result of 0.25 would mean that Helsinki receives a quarter of the visitors of the whole year in the summer, meaning that there would be a good balance in the number of visitors at different times of the year.	<b>0.34</b>	0.33	3% growth from 2023	Tourism seasonality	B.1 Tourism flow (volume and value) at destination	<a href="#">Sustainable Tourism in Helsinki</a>
<b>Seasonality - Gini Index</b>	The Gini Index describes the year-round nature of tourism in terms of registered overnight stays. Its value ranges from 0 to 1. The closer the number is to zero, the more evenly the overnight stays are distributed across the different months.	<b>0.13</b>	0.12	8.3% growth from 2023	Tourism seasonality	B.1 Tourism flow (volume and value) at destination	<a href="#">Rudolf Statistical Database</a>
<b>Number of companies taking part in Sustainable Travel Finland -program</b>	Number of companies taking part in Sustainable Travel Finland -program. Number by the end of year.	<b>159</b>	132	20.5% growth from 2023	Governance	A.1 Sustainable tourism public policy	<a href="#">Sustainable Tourism in Helsinki</a>
<b>Number of Sustainable Travel Finland certified companies</b>	Number of companies that have received Sustainable Travel Finland certificate. Number by the end of year.	<b>72</b>	60	20% growth from 2024	Governance	A.1 Sustainable tourism public policy	<a href="#">Sustainable Tourism in Helsinki</a>

## Existing sustainability practices/ policies/ future initiatives of the DMO and/or the City of Helsinki (VSME Data points)

<u>Sustainability issue</u>	<u>Sustainability practice/ policy/ future initiative</u>	<u>Publicly available</u>	<u>Targets</u>	<u>Covering of suppliers/ clients</u>
<b>Environmental issues</b>	Helsinki Tourism Sustainability Policy	YES	YES	YES
	City of Helsinki Procurement Strategy	YES	YES	YES
	Helsinki Tourism and Events Programme 2022–2026	YES	YES	YES
	The City of Helsinki's Climate Action Plan for Tourism 2023–26	YES	YES	YES
	Helsinki Tourism and Events Preparedness and Adaptation to Climate Change 2024	YES	YES	YES
<b>Circular Economy</b>	The Development Programme of Circular Economy and Sharing Economy of the City of Helsinki	YES	YES	YES
<b>Own Workforce</b>	The Equality and Non-Discrimination Plan for the Personnel of the City of Helsinki 2022-2025	YES	YES	NO
	Internal Training for Sustainability Helsinki Tourism and Destination Management Unit	YES	NO	NO
	The 2023 Analysis of the Current State of Inclusivity in the Tourism and Event Sectors of the City of Helsinki	YES	YES	YES
	The City of Helsinki's Climate Action Plan for Tourism 2023–26	YES	YES	YES
<b>Workers in the Value Chain</b>	The 2023 Analysis of the Current State of Inclusivity in the Tourism and Event Sectors of the City of Helsinki	YES	YES	YES
<b>Affected communities</b>	Helsinki Visitor Pressure – Analysis and Management Plan 2024–2026	YES	NO	YES

**Note: The City of Helsinki has a wide range of policies and programmes. This table includes practices/ policies/ future initiatives that have been published by the DMO, affect its operations directly or consider tourism operations in Helsinki. The practices/ policies/ future initiatives listed have been described in more detail in 2.2 and 2.4.**

## 4. Social and cultural sustainability

Tourism affects different groups of people whose needs, expectations, and experiences must be considered to ensure social sustainability. The employees of the DMO are one key stakeholder to take into account. Workforce composition, personnel training, and ethical labour practices provide an overview of the DMO's performance as an employer. The satisfaction of both residents and visitors, on the other hand, are crucial indicators for understanding a destination's social carrying capacity. In addition, cultural heritage protection, the safety of the destination, and the accessibility of tourism products are important considerations to make when assessing social and cultural sustainability in tourism.

### 4.1. The DMO as an employer

The key stakeholder group of the DMO is naturally its employees. Key figures and notions on the DMO's workforce are summarised below:

- In 2024, the DMO employed 41 people. 14 of them had a permanent contract and 27 a temporary contract. 8 of the employees were males and 33 females.
- The DMO's employees receive pay above the applicable minimum wage in Finland. All employees (100%) are covered by a collective bargaining agreement.
- On average, 10 hours of training was organised per employee in 2024 (for both female and male employees). In 2024, the DMO's personnel participated in the following sustainability-related trainings<sup>42</sup>:
  - Crisis Management in tourism (18 participants; January 2024)
  - Green Destinations (June 2024)
  - Sustainability work (August 2024)
  - GDS results (55 participants; October 2024)
  - Global Destination Sustainability Index – Performance Improvement Report meeting (23 participants; November 2024)
  - A city-wide Sustainable Helsinki training (approx. 30 participants; December 2024)
- In 2024, no confirmed incidents related to child labour, forced labour, human trafficking or discrimination occurred.

### 4.2. Safety

Safety is widely recognised as one of Helsinki's key strengths both by residents and visitors. In the congress delegate survey, 53% of respondents perceived Helsinki as a destination that is safe and inclusive for all. In 2024, crimes committed in public spaces in relation to the population decreased by 12%. In addition, Finland's score for "personal security" in the Social Progress Index, as measured by the GDS Index, remained high at 94 out of 100.

In Helsinki, a highly proactive approach is taken to event safety. All event organisers must submit a detailed safety plan and assessment already at the permit stage. For each major event, a separate coordination meeting is held with the authorities, covering all aspects of safety, from crisis communication to crowd management.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> City of Helsinki. (2025). [Internal training for sustainability - Helsinki Tourism and Destination Management Unit](#)

<sup>43</sup> City of Helsinki. (2025). [Final report of the Helsinki Tourism and Events Programme](#)

The event industry collaborates with each other, with authorities and with other stakeholders through various working groups (presented in Working groups and committees chapter). In the DMO, safety management is actively monitored using selected safety indicators, visitor experience feedback, and feedback collected from members of the Makers of Helsinki network.<sup>43</sup>

The DMO, developed the safety and security of tourism in the following ways in 2024:

- **The Tourism and Event Safety Management Plan**, completed in February 2022, was updated and further refined through Helsinki's participation in the EU Crisis Management programme.
- The DMO-coordinated **Tourism and Events Safety Management Board** operated actively and brought together representatives from the City's external communications, the preparedness team, Helsinki Partners, the Brand and Events Unit, food safety authorities, HUS, the Rescue Department, Tukes, Visit Finland, and a representative of the tourism industry from a hotel chain. The steering group has, for example:
  - Defined minimum criteria for safety management and selected the safety indices to be monitored in **the public Sustainable Tourism in Helsinki data platform**<sup>44</sup>.
  - Produced safety-related materials for companies, such as **Compass – The Handbook for Safety of Tourism and Events in Helsinki**<sup>45</sup>, **The Logbook (a digital safety guide)**<sup>46</sup>, **the Safe Path for Tourists guidelines**<sup>47</sup>, and **safety information pages** on the Makers of Helsinki network platform (in Howspace, password-protected).
- **The Tourism and Event Safety Communication Guidelines** were prepared jointly with industry operators and the city's crisis communication team. The guidelines cover themes such as safe taxi use, prevention of pickpocketing, and general safety conditions. The guidelines are utilised on websites, in hotels, in tourist information services, and on Visit Finland's webpages.
- A new role of a city-level event safety coordinator was established.

Finland continues to rank among the safest countries in the world to travel to, as measured by international safety indices. However, since spring 2022, Finland's changed geopolitical situation has further emphasised the importance of measures relating to general safety, preparedness for exceptional situations, and safety communications.<sup>48</sup>

### 4.3. Residents' satisfaction

Helsinki assesses residents' views on tourism every two years through a resident survey. The last two surveys were conducted in 2023 and 2025, and the next survey will be conducted in 2027. In the most recent survey, 69% of respondents felt that tourism has a positive impact on the city, and 71% said Helsinki should attract more tourists.

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<sup>44</sup> City of Helsinki. [Sustainable Tourism in Helsinki](#)

<sup>45</sup> City of Helsinki. (2023). [Compass – A handbook for Safety in Tourism and events in Helsinki](#)

<sup>46</sup> City of Helsinki, Uudenmaan liitto, Varsinais-Suomen liitto, Forum Virium Helsinki, Enter Espoo & Turku Business Region. (2023). [Lokikirja – Digityökälu turvallisuuden kehittämiseen matkailuyrityksissä](#) (in Finnish)

<sup>47</sup> City of Helsinki, Uudenmaan liitto, Varsinais-Suomen liitto, Forum Virium Helsinki, Enter Espoo & Turku Business Region. (2023). [Safe Path – Kansainvälisen matkailijan palvelupolku](#) (in Finnish)

<sup>48</sup> City of Helsinki. (2025). [Final report of the Helsinki Tourism and Events Programme](#)

Although attitudes remain mostly positive, the survey shows a small rise in negative views. The share of respondents who felt that Helsinki has developed negatively as a tourist city grew from 10% in 2023 to 13% in 2025. The share of residents who felt that tourism causes significant or constant harm also doubled from 5% in 2023 to 10% in 2025.

## 4.4. Visitors' satisfaction

Visitor satisfaction declined in 2024. The Net Promoter Score (NPS), which measures how likely visitors are to recommend, fell from 37 to 23. However, sentiment scoring, an analysis of customer satisfaction based on digital feedback, remains at a good level. The likelihood of visitors returning for a leisure trip remained strong: on a scale from 1 to 5, the likelihood of returning was 4 in summer and 3.7 in winter. The likelihood of return visits grew by 5% in summer and by 16% in winter.

## 4.5. Perception of sustainable tourism

86% of the visitor survey respondents feel that responsible and sustainable tourism is important during their stay. However, the percentage of visitors who think sustainable choices are very or somewhat important in travel planning decreased by 16%. People's view of how easy it is to make sustainable choices in Helsinki stayed about the same, with 67% rating it between 5 and 7 on a 7-point scale.

49% of visitors answering the congress delegate survey feel that sustainable services are easy to find in Helsinki. The number decreased from the 56% in 2023.

## 4.6. Protection of cultural heritage

Important cultural issue in tourism is protecting the rights of the Sámi people. In 2024, concerns about souvenir shops selling replicas of Sámi products were addressed. The DMO prepared a guide for souvenir shops<sup>49</sup>, and the Sámi Parliament and Sámi Duodji Association were consulted in the making of guidelines.

## 4.7. Inclusivity

Helsinki aims to keep inclusiveness at the core of city development<sup>50</sup>. This means considering the diversity of people like age, gender, sexual orientation, religion, language, special needs and socio-economic status in operations. The LGBTQ community has also been recognized as a significant tourist target group for Helsinki.

In 2023, Helsinki conducted an analysis on the current state of inclusivity in the city's tourism and event sectors<sup>51</sup>. Some of the existing strengths of the city include a growing number of residents with a foreign background and existing programmes that support inclusivity development (Think Sustainably and Sustainable Travel Finland). Besides, Helsinki has invested in the city's material bank and the MyHelsinki website to diversify used imagery and has also developed both structural accessibility and information related accessibility within the city. Based on the analysis, three key focus areas for further development were identified:

- representation of diversity in marketing,

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<sup>49</sup> City of Helsinki. (2024). [Opas matkamuistoja myyville toimijoille: Saamelaisen kulttuuriperinnön suojelu ja saamelaistuotteiden myynti](#) (in Finnish)

<sup>50</sup> City of Helsinki. (2022). [Helsinki Tourism and Events Programme 2022 – 2026](#)

<sup>51</sup> Ellare Oy, City of Helsinki & Business Helsinki. (2023). [The 2023 Analysis of the Current State of Inclusivity in the Tourism and Event Sectors of the City of Helsinki](#)



- development of internal inclusivity, and
- diversity and engagement of tourism and service companies as well as event organisers.

In 2024, the DMO began measuring the number and share of accessible tourism products listed on **the Sustainable Tourism in Helsinki data platform**. A total of 155 accessible products were identified, representing 34% of all listed products. This indicator will enable measuring the accessibility development in the coming years.

## 4.8. Modern slavery

Modern slavery is a growing concern also in Finland. Typically, modern slavery is linked with industries with lower wages and seasonal work. In terms of tourism, the risk sectors include especially the following: restaurants, cleaning services, laundry services, construction sector (e.g., hotels, attractions, infrastructure), berry picking, taxis, and guiding services.

## 4.9. Indicators and data tables of social and cultural sustainability

Social and cultural indicators							
Indicator	Explanation	Result 2024	Result 2023	Change from 2023	SF-MST	ETIS	Data source
<b>Visitor satisfaction - NPS</b>	Net Promoter Score, i.e. how likely visitors would recommend Helsinki as a travel destination to their friends or colleagues. The number ranges from -100 to +100.	<b>23</b>	37	38% decrease (half-year result only, 1 Dec – 31 Dec)	Visitor satisfaction	A.2 Customer satisfaction	<a href="#">Visitor experience survey</a>
<b>Visitor satisfaction - Sentiment scoring</b>	Sentiment analysis describes the level of customer satisfaction based on feedback given on digital platforms	<b>86.2</b>	85.5	0.8% increase, small growth in a positive direction	Visitor satisfaction	A.2 Customer satisfaction	<a href="#">DataAppeal (not public)</a>
<b>Likely to return to Helsinki on a leisure trip - summer</b>	Likely to return to Helsinki on a leisure trip - summer (scale 1–5)	<b>4</b>	3.8	5% growth	Visitor satisfaction	A.2 Customer satisfaction	<a href="#">Visit Finland Border Survey</a>
<b>Likely to return to Helsinki on a leisure trip - winter</b>	Likely to return to Helsinki on a leisure trip - winter (scale 1–5)	<b>3.7</b>	3.2	16% growth	Visitor satisfaction	A.2 Customer satisfaction	<a href="#">Visit Finland Border Survey</a>
<b>How many visitors selected responsible and sustainable tourism as an important factor during stay</b>	How many visitors selected responsible and sustainable tourism as an important factor during stay when answering visitor survey	<b>86%</b>	84%	2% growth	Visitor satisfaction	A.2 Customer satisfaction	<a href="#">Sustainable Tourism in Helsinki</a>
<b>Importance of Sustainable Choices in Travel Planning - Very or Somewhat Important</b>	Importance of Sustainable Choices in Travel Planning. Percentage of visitors that answered very OR somewhat important. All answers: Very important = 27%, Somewhat important = 26%, Not quite important = 4%, No answer = 20% and Neutral = 20%	<b>53%</b>	63%	16% decrease	Visitor satisfaction	A.2 Customer satisfaction	<a href="#">Sustainable Tourism in Helsinki</a>
<b>Ease of Making Responsible Choices in Helsinki - answers 7-5 on scale 7-1</b>	Ease of Making Responsible Choices in Helsinki, scale 1-7. Percentage visitors answering 7-5. All answers 7 = 27%, 6 = 25%, 5 = 15%, 4 = 12%, 3 = 5%, 2 = 4% and 1 = 1%	<b>67%</b>	68%	1% decrease	Visitor satisfaction	A.2 Customer satisfaction	<a href="#">Sustainable Tourism in Helsinki</a>
<b>Perception of easiness to find sustainable services</b>	Share of respondents to the congress delegate survey that who perceive that sustainable services are easy to find (e.g., hotels, restaurants, shopping, tours)	<b>49%</b>	56%	13% decrease	Visitor satisfaction	A.2 Customer satisfaction	<a href="#">Sustainable Tourism in Helsinki</a>
<b>A - Overall social impact of tourism on residents</b>	The proportion of residents who feel that tourism has an overall positive impact on Helsinki	<b>69%</b>	67%	3% growth	Host community perception	C.1 Community/ social impact	<a href="#">Resident Survey (in finnish)</a>
<b>B - Overall social impact of tourism on residents</b>	The proportion of residents who feel that tourism has an overall negative impact on Helsinki	<b>4%</b>	5%	20% decrease	Host community perception	C.1 Community/ social impact	<a href="#">Resident Survey (in finnish)</a>
<b>A - The city's development as a tourist city</b>	The proportion of respondents to the Helsinki resident survey who feel that the city has developed in a positive direction as a tourist city	<b>63%</b>	66%	4.5% decrease	Host community perception	C.1 Community/ social impact	<a href="#">Resident Survey (in finnish)</a>
<b>B - The city's development as a tourist city</b>	The proportion of respondents to the Helsinki resident survey who feel that the city has developed in a negative direction as a tourist city	<b>13%</b>	10%	30% growth	Host community perception	C.1 Community/ social impact	<a href="#">Resident Survey (in finnish)</a>

<b>A - Willingness to attract more tourists</b>	The proportion of respondents to the Helsinki resident survey who feel that the city should attract more tourists	<b>71%</b>	69%	2.9% growth	Host community perception	C.1 Community/social impact	<a href="#">Resident Survey (in Finnish)</a>
<b>B - Willingness to attract more tourists</b>	The proportion of respondents to the Helsinki resident survey who feel that the city should NOT attract more tourists	<b>10%</b>	10%	No change	Host community perception	C.1 Community/social impact	<a href="#">Resident Survey (in Finnish)</a>
<b>Harm caused by tourism</b>	Share of respondents to the resident survey who feel that tourism causes a lot or constantly harm in Helsinki	<b>10%</b>	5%	100% growth	Governance	C.1 Community/social impact	<a href="#">Resident Survey (in Finnish)</a>
<b>Number of accessible products</b>	Number of accessible products in Datahub	<b>155</b>	N/A	N/A	Governance	C.4 Inclusion/accessibility	<a href="#">Sustainable Tourism in Helsinki</a>
<b>Share of accessible products</b>	Share of accessible products in Datahub	<b>34%</b>	N/A	N/A	Governance	C.4 Inclusion/accessibility	<a href="#">Sustainable Tourism in Helsinki</a>
<b>Perception of Helsinki as safe and equal to all</b>	Share of respondents to the congress delegate survey that who perceive Helsinki as safe and equal to all	<b>53%</b>	54%	2% decrease	Governance	C.4 Inclusion/accessibility	<a href="#">Sustainable Tourism in Helsinki</a>
<b>Disturbance Index GDS Index -</b>	Crimes committed in public places in relation to the population	<b>218</b>	247	11.7% decrease	Governance	C.2 Health and safety	<a href="#">Sustainable Tourism in Helsinki</a>
<b>Personal Security</b>	GDS Index: A country's score on "personal security" in the Social Progress Index, ranging from 0–100	<b>94</b>	N/A	2.2% increase from the previous review in 2022. 7.7% increase from the 2021 review	Governance	C.2 Health and safety	<a href="#">Sustainable Tourism in Helsinki</a>

<b>Social metrics (VSME)</b>	<b>Result 2024</b>	<b>Result 2023</b>	<b>Change from 2023</b>	<b>VSME Data point</b>
Number of employees in headcount	<b>41</b>	41	No change	B1 – Basis for preparation
The number of employees in headcount per type of employment contract (temporary or permanent)	<b>27 temporary, 14 permanent</b>	27 temporary, 14 permanent	No change	B8 – Workforce – General characteristics
The number of employees in headcount per gender	<b>8 male, 33 female</b>	8 male, 33 female	No change	B8 – Workforce – General characteristics
The number and rate of recordable work-related accidents	<b>No work-related accidents</b>	No work-related accidents	No change	B9 - Workforce – Health and safety
The number of fatalities	<b>No fatalities</b>	No fatalities	No change	B9 - Workforce – Health and safety
The percentage of employees covered by collective bargaining agreements	<b>100%</b>	100%	No change	B10 – Workforce – Remuneration, collective bargaining and training
The average number of annual training hours per employee, broken down by gender	<b>10 hours (both female and male employees)</b>	10 hours (both female and male employees)	No change	B10 – Workforce – Remuneration, collective bargaining and training
Cases of convictions or fines for corruption or bribery	<b>None</b>	None	No change	B11 – Convictions and fines for corruption and bribery
Gender diversity ratio in the governance body	<b>56% female, 44% male</b>	56% female, 44% male	No change	C9 – Gender diversity ratio in the governance body

## 5. Environmental sustainability

Tourism-related environmental sustainability refers to minimizing negative local environmental impacts, such as energy consumption, waste generation, water use, and pressures on nature. The most significant environmental impact of tourism comes from the emissions of international travel.

Besides lowering negative impacts, tourism can also generate positive impacts through regenerative activities. For example, tourism can help improve the state local nature through coastal clean-up efforts.

### 5.1. Climate risks

The DMO has addressed climate-related risks, opportunities and possible effects in **the Helsinki Tourism and Events Preparedness and Adaptation to Climate Change 2024 report**<sup>52</sup>. The DMO's analysis of climate risks is based on the report by the city of Helsinki<sup>53</sup> on the weather- and climate change-related risks affecting Helsinki, which provides comprehensive information, including e.g. temperature and rainfall scenarios up to 2050 and an assessment of social vulnerability to flooding. Furthermore, the DMO's Helsinki Tourism and Events Preparedness and Adaptation to Climate Change 2024 report utilizes information on climate risks for the tourism sector provided by the Finnish Meteorological Institute, the Finnish Environment Institute, the Natural Resources Institute Finland, and the National Climate Unit of the ELY Centres<sup>54</sup>.

The main climate risks in Helsinki in the near future are urban flooding from heavy rain and health risks from hot weather. The city also needs to prepare for slower changes, such as rising sea levels. Weather and climate shape the visitor experience in many ways. For example, climate change directly influences activities like winter sports, and indirectly it changes landscapes, wildlife, and the quality of waterways. Climate change also offers new opportunities for tourism in Helsinki. Warmer weather may lengthen the tourist season, encourage more outdoor and marine activities, and help keep visitor numbers steadier year-round. In the future, travel patterns may shift northwards, making Helsinki an attractive alternative to warmer countries.<sup>55</sup>

The city has identified many measures to prepare for climate change, including flood risk management, development of climate-adaptive tourism services, and weather unpredictability management. However, there is a need for a more extensive action plan for preparedness and adaptation.<sup>52</sup>

### 5.2. Climate impact

Total greenhouse gas emissions of Helsinki were 1 632 kt CO<sub>2</sub> eq. in 2024, which was 16% less than in 2023. When compared to 1990 levels, the total emissions of Helsinki have decreased 54%.

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<sup>52</sup> City of Helsinki. (2024). [Helsinki Tourism and Events Preparedness and Adaptation to Climate Change 2024](#)

<sup>53</sup> Pilli-Sihvola, K., Haavisto, R., Leijala, U., Luhtala, S., Mäkelä, A., Ruuhela, R. & Votsis, A. [Sään ja ilmastomuutoksen aiheuttamat riskit Helsingissä](#). Kaupunkiympäristön julkaisuja 2018:6. Ilmatieteen laitos (in Finnish)

<sup>54</sup> Finnish Meteorological Institute, Finnish Environment Institute & Luke. [Climateguide.fi, Climate change information through a single address](#)

<sup>55</sup> City of Helsinki. (2024). [Helsinki Tourism and Events Preparedness and Adaptation to Climate Change 2024](#)

According to border survey statistics, the total emissions of foreign tourism in Helsinki are 1 181 kt CO<sub>2</sub> per year, 495 kg CO<sub>2</sub> per trip and 79 kg CO<sub>2</sub> per day. Foreign tourism in Helsinki represented 38% of the total carbon footprint of foreign tourism in Finland in 2024 (3 081 782 tons CO<sub>2</sub>). The average carbon footprint per trip to Helsinki was 27% lower than the national average (631 kg CO<sub>2</sub>) and carbon footprint per day was 25% bigger than the national average (63 kg CO<sub>2</sub>).<sup>56</sup>

The carbon footprint of Helsinki tourism has been calculated twice: for 2021 and 2024. Results between the two years are not fully comparable since the methods varied. The study using 2024 data showed that travel to destination generates by far the largest share of emissions. Based on the study, the total emissions of Helsinki's tourism were 2 600 kt of CO<sub>2</sub> of which travel to destination was 92%, consumption 5%, accommodation 2% and travel in destination only 1%.<sup>57</sup>

The carbon footprint of Helsinki tourism	2 600 kt CO <sub>2</sub> eq.	100%
Travel to destination	2 388 kt CO <sub>2</sub> eq.	92%
Consumption	129 kt CO <sub>2</sub> eq.	5%
Accommodation	58 kt CO <sub>2</sub> eq.	2%
Travel in destination	25 kt CO <sub>2</sub> eq.	1%

International travel is unsustainable when emissions from travel to and from the destination are considered. Flying, in particular, has a very large carbon footprint. Because Helsinki is located by the Baltic Sea with no easy land connection to mainland Europe, most international tourists arrive by plane (57%) or boat (43%).

Traveling by land is the most environmentally sustainable way to travel, given today's technology and infrastructure. At the moment, there are no rapid and large-scale solutions for reducing emissions from flying. Interestingly, the climate impact of tourism in Helsinki (2 600 kt CO<sub>2</sub> eq.) is higher than the city's own total greenhouse gas emissions (1 632 kt CO<sub>2</sub> eq., scopes 1 and 2).

### 5.3. Energy use

Helsinki's total energy use was 14 673 MWh in 2024, which is 11% more than in 2023. Energy use per person also grew by 9% to 21 433 kWh. Helsinki tourism has benefited from the city's shift to cleaner energy, especially with the shutting down of the coal-fired power plants in Hanasaari (2023) and Salmisaari (2025). Overall, electricity generation and district heating have become much less emission-intensive in both Helsinki and across Finland. Today, up to 95% of Finland's electricity is produced fossil-free<sup>58</sup>.

### 5.4. Transportation

One of the strengths of Helsinki is its compact layout, efficient public transport, and good walking and cycling routes. Public transport statistics show that walking, cycling, and public transport are very popular. According to the congress delegate survey, 81% of respondents said they can move around the city in an environmentally friendly way. Transportation data shows that in Helsinki, 41% of all trips are made by foot, 11% by bike, 25% by public transport and only 20% by cars. Of all public transport journeys, 11% are by bus, 6% by metro, 5% by tram, and 3% by train. Walking is also a common way for tourists to move around the city.

<sup>56</sup> Visit Finland. [Border Survey: Tourist Meter 2024](#)

<sup>57</sup> City of Helsinki. (2025). [Municipal tourism emissions in 2024](#)

<sup>58</sup> Statistics Finland. (2025). [Altogether 95 per cent of Finland's electricity production was based on fossil-free energy in 2024](#)

## **5.5. Water, waste and recycling**

The sustainability of water flows and waste management is good and improving in Helsinki:

- Waste produced by private services in Helsinki decreased by 25% from 2023 to 2024, being 230 831 tons in 2024.
- The recycling rate of waste produced by private services was 98% in 2024. 49% was recycled as materials and 49% was used as energy.
- 90% of all wastewaters are safely treated in Finland.

The DMO or Helsinki tourism do not operate in high water-stress areas.

## **5.6. Natural environment**

Nature plays a vital role in recreation, biodiversity, and the overall liveability of the city. Currently, nature reserves take up 4.6% of Helsinki's land area, while natural areas as a whole cover 39%. Recreational areas make up 17% of the total area designated in Helsinki's zoning plan.



## 5.7. Indicators and data tables of environmental sustainability

Environmental sustainability indicators								
Indicator	Explanation	Result 2024	Results 2023	Change from 2023	SF-MST	ETIS	VSME	Data source
Foreign travellers arriving by plane	Share of foreign travellers arriving by plane	57%	61%	7% decrease	GHG emissions	D.1 Reducing transport impact		<a href="#">Visit Finland Border Survey</a>
Foreign travellers arriving by ferry	Share of foreign travellers arriving by ferry	43%	39%	10% growth	GHG emissions	D.1 Reducing transport impact		<a href="#">Visit Finland Border Survey</a>
Transportation within Helsinki - Walking	Share of walking of all journeys in Helsinki	41%	44%	7% decrease	GHG emissions	D.1 Reducing transport impact		<a href="#">Helsinki facts and figures 2025</a>
Transportation within Helsinki - Cycling	Share of cycling of all journeys in Helsinki	11%	11%	No change	GHG emissions	D.1 Reducing transport impact		<a href="#">Helsinki facts and figures 2025</a>
Transportation within Helsinki - Public Transport	Share of public transport of all journeys in Helsinki (11% bus, 6% metro, 5% tram and 3% train)	25%	24%	4% growth	GHG emissions	D.1 Reducing transport impact		<a href="#">Helsinki facts and figures 2025</a>
Transportation within Helsinki - Passenger Car	Share of passenger cars of all journeys in Helsinki	20%	20%	No change	GHG emissions	D.1 Reducing transport impact		<a href="#">Helsinki facts and figures 2025</a>
Perception of easiness to move around Helsinki in environmentally friendly way	Share of respondents to the congress delegate survey that who agree that they can get around the city in an environmentally friendly way (e.g., walking, by bike, using public transportation)	81%	83%	2% decrease	GHG emissions	D.1 Reducing transport impact		<a href="#">Sustainable Tourism in Helsinki</a>
Total greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions of Helsinki	Total greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions of Helsinki in total per year	1 632 kt CO <sub>2</sub> -eq.	1 953 kt CO <sub>2</sub> -eq.	16% decrease (compared to 1990, the total emissions were 54% lower)	GHG emissions	D.2 Climate change		<a href="#">City of Helsinki Environmental Report 2024</a>
Total greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions of Helsinki tourism	Total emissions of tourism in Helsinki, including travel to destination per year	2 600 kt CO <sub>2</sub> -eq.	N/A	N/A	GHG emissions	D.2 Climate change	B3 Estimated gross greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in tons of CO <sub>2</sub> equivalent	<a href="#">Municipal tourism emissions in 2024 (in Finnish)</a>
CO <sub>2</sub> emissions of foreign tourists in total per year	Total amount of CO <sub>2</sub> emissions of foreign tourism per year	1 181 026 tons CO <sub>2</sub>	1 039 837 tons CO <sub>2</sub>	14% growth	GHG emissions	D.2 Climate change		<a href="#">Visit Finland Border Survey</a>
CO <sub>2</sub> emission of foreign tourists per trip	CO <sub>2</sub> emissions of foreign tourists per trip	495 kilos CO <sub>2</sub>	568 76 kilos CO <sub>2</sub>	13% decrease	GHG emissions	D.2 Climate change		<a href="#">Visit Finland Border Survey</a>
Carbon emissions of foreign tourists per day	CO <sub>2</sub> emissions of foreign tourists per day	79 kilos CO <sub>2</sub>	76 kilos CO <sub>2</sub>	4% growth	GHG emissions	D.2 Climate change		<a href="#">Visit Finland Border Survey</a>
Total energy use in Helsinki	Total energy use in Helsinki	14 673 MWh	13 248 MWh	11% growth	Energy flows	D.6 Energy usage	B3 Total energy consumption in MWh	<a href="#">Helsinki Environmental Statistics (in Finnish)</a>
Energy consumption per capita	Energy consumption in the Helsinki per year (kWh) divided by number of residents	21 433 kWh	19 628 kWh	9% growth	Energy flows	D.6 Energy usage		<a href="#">Helsinki Environmental Statistics (in Finnish)</a>
Share of services in total electricity consumption	Share of services in total electricity consumption in Helsinki	37%	41%	9% decrease	Energy flows	D.6 Energy usage		<a href="#">Helsinki Environmental Statistics (in Finnish)</a>

<b>Electricity produced fossil free</b>	Share of electricity produced fossil free (renewable energy and nuclear power)	<b>95%</b>	94%	1% growth	GHG emissions	D.6 Energy usage	B3 A breakdown between renewables and non-renewables	<a href="#">Statistics Finland</a>
<b>Waste generated by all private services in Helsinki in a year</b>	Waste generated by all private services in Helsinki in a year	<b>230 831 t</b>	307 779 t	25% decrease	Solid waste flows	D.3 Solid waste management	B7 The total annual generation of waste (broken down by type (non-hazardous and hazardous: N/A)	Waste generated in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area by sector (not public)
<b>Recycling rate of waste generated by private services</b>	Percentage of waste (generated by private services) recycled as material and used for energy production in total	<b>98%</b> (49% recycled and 49% to energy use)	99% (52% recycled and 47% to energy use)	1% decrease	Solid waste flows	D.3 Solid waste management	B7 The annual waste diverted to recycling or reuse	Waste generated in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area by sector (not public)
<b>Share of wastewater flow treated</b>	Share of wastewater that is safely treated in Finland	<b>90%</b>	N/A	N/A	Wastewater	D.5 Water management		<a href="#">SDG data Finland</a>
<b>Share protected natural area in Helsinki</b>	The share of nature reserves in Helsinki's land area	<b>4.6%</b>	4.4%	4.5% growth	Ecosystem extent (for tourism areas)	D.7 Landscape and biodiversity protection		<a href="#">City of Helsinki Environmental Report 2024</a>
<b>Share of natural areas in total land area</b>	Share of natural areas in total land area	<b>39%</b>	39%	N/A	Ecosystem extent (for tourism areas)	D.7 Landscape and biodiversity protection		<a href="#">City of Helsinki Environmental Report 2024</a>
<b>Proportion of recreational areas in the Helsinki zoning plan area</b>	Proportion of recreational areas in the Helsinki zoning plan area	<b>17.35%</b>	N/A	N/A	Ecosystem extent (for tourism areas)	D.7 Landscape and biodiversity protection		<a href="#">Helsinki Environmental Statistics (in Finnish)</a>

## 6. Economic sustainability

Economic sustainability in tourism means creating long-term economic value without harming local communities or overusing natural or social resources. It includes providing stable jobs, supporting local businesses, keeping prices balanced, and ensuring the long-term economic viability of the destination. Although tourism in Helsinki has faced many challenges in the 2020s, the sector has adapted well to changing conditions, reinforcing its importance for the city's economy.

### 6.1. Arrivals and overnight stays

Helsinki recorded 2.64 million overnight tourist arrivals in 2024, which is 9.3% higher than in the previous year. Overnight stays by foreign travellers grew by 17%, reaching 2.2 million. Overall, the share of international visitors rose to 42%, increasing by 7.5% from 2023.

Despite geopolitical challenges, Helsinki has attracted increasing demand. In 2024, domestic arrivals grew by 4% from 1 473 746 to 1 533 443. Arrivals from Europe also grew by 4% from 582 126 to 608 868.

The number of nights spent in registered accommodation also grew by 9.9%, reaching a new record of 4.55 million overnight stays. One of the strengths of Helsinki tourism is that the market is so diverse. However, especially strong growth from long-haul markets is not favourable and it is in contradiction with the climate targets.

### 6.2. Hotel occupancy

Hotel performance in 2024 was mixed. The average annual occupancy rate was 55%. Peak occupancy rose by 8% to 75% in June, while the lowest rate in January increased only slightly to 43%.

Hotel capacity in Helsinki has grown in recent years, but improving occupancy rates, especially during the low season, is essential for long-term profitability and sustainability. Increasing visitor numbers outside peak periods would help tourism businesses achieve more stable, year-round economic performance and strengthen the overall economic sustainability of the sector.

### 6.3. Price levels

Average room prices remained stable. The annual average hotel room price was 124€ in 2024. The highest average room price was recorded in July (142 euros) and the lowest in March (113 euros). According to the cost barometer, the total cost of services in Helsinki decreased by 20%, mainly due to declining accommodation prices.

### 6.4. Economic impact of tourism and employment

The total economic impact of tourism, including direct and indirect effects, was 2.41 billion euros in 2024. Direct tourism income was 1.41 billion euros. Despite growing visitor numbers, tourism-related income fell by 5.5%. Tourism accounted for 1.3% of total revenue across all industries in Helsinki, a 3% drop from the previous year. One of the reasons why tourism income has decreased is because of the weak domestic demand.

Direct tourism income per resident decreased by 8% to 2 069 euros. In comparison to other Finnish destinations, the direct tourism income per resident in 2024 was 510 euros in Espoo, 1 936 euros in Tampere and 27 317 euros in Enontekiö<sup>59</sup>.

An identified challenge in the tourism industry in Helsinki is the leakage of tourism revenues to companies that are based outside the destination. For example, in case of accommodation and travel, revenues go to international actors such as international hotel chains, digital platform actors (e.g. Airbnb, Booking.com), international travel agencies, as well as international cruises and ferry company owners. Also, global brands dominate in the retail sector.

Tourism accounted for 2.6% of all employment, generating approximately 6,246 full-time equivalent (FTE) jobs. Tourism's share of total employment fell by 8.1% from 2023 and the number of full-time jobs in tourism decreased by 7.3%.

Overall, tourism-related income and employment in Helsinki declined in 2024, although tourist arrivals and registered overnight stays increased. Further analysis is needed to understand how tourism growth could generate greater local value and jobs, and to identify potential structural issues in the sector and visitor consumption patterns that may be limiting economic impacts.

The tourism sector faces a challenge of finding experienced employees. The Tourism Advisory Board has worked together with major companies in the sectors and educational institutions to address the challenge. For example, in 2024, the Helsinki Employment Services organised two large recruitment events and several smaller, tailored recruitment events for the operators in the tourism, restaurant and event sectors. Five short training programmes were also organised in cooperation with the Employment Services and the Helsinki Vocational College (Stadin AO).

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<sup>59</sup> Visitory. [Tourism Income and Employment Statistics](#)

## 6.5. Indicators and data tables of economic sustainability

Economical sustainability indicators							
Indicator	Explanation	Result 2024	Result 2023	Change from 2023	SF-MST	ETIS	Data source
<b>Tourist arrivals</b>	Tourist arrivals (overnight) per year	<b>2 646 651</b>	2 420 612	9.3% growth	Tourism economic performance	B.1 Tourism flow (volume and value) at destination	<a href="#">DataLokki</a>
<b>Share of foreign arrivals</b>	Share of foreign arrivals of all arrival per year	<b>42.06%</b>	39.12%	7.5% growth	Tourism economic structure	C.1 Community/ social impact	<a href="#">DataLokki</a>
<b>Registered overnight stays</b>	Number of registered accommodations per year	<b>4 552 814</b>	4 144 322	9.9% growth	Tourism economic performance	B.1 Tourism flow (volume and value) at destination	<a href="#">DataLokki</a>
<b>Overnight stays of foreign travellers</b>	Overnight stays by foreign travellers per year	<b>2 203 335</b>	1 883 038	17% growth	Tourism economic performance	B.1 Tourism flow (volume and value) at destination	<a href="#">DataLokki</a>
<b>Average annual room occupancy rate %</b>	Average annual room occupancy rate %	<b>54.8%</b>	52.5%	4.4 % growth	Tourism economic performance	B.2 Tourism enterprise(s) performance	<a href="#">Rudolf Statistical Database</a>
<b>Hotel occupancy rate % - highest month</b>	Hotel room capacity occupancy rate monthly - the result of the highest month – June 2024 - of the year	<b>75.6%</b>	69.8%	8.3% growth	Tourism economic performance	B.2 Tourism enterprise(s) performance	<a href="#">Rudolf Statistical Database</a>
<b>Hotel occupancy rate % - lowest month</b>	Hotel room capacity occupancy rate monthly - the result of the lowest month – January 2024 - of the year	<b>43.5%</b>	42.4%	2.6% growth	Tourism economic performance	B.2 Tourism enterprise(s) performance	<a href="#">Rudolf Statistical Database</a>
<b>Total Impact of Tourism (Direct and Secondary Effect)</b>	The total impact of tourism (direct + secondary effects)	<b>2 410 M €</b>	2 550 M €	5.5% decrease	Distribution of economic benefits	B.2 Tourism enterprise(s) performance	<a href="#">Visitory. Tourism Income and Employment in Helsinki study</a>
<b>Direct Tourism Income</b>	Direct Tourism Income	<b>1 415 M €</b>	1 497 M €	5.5% decrease	Tourism economic performance	B.2 Tourism enterprise(s) performance	<a href="#">Visitory. Tourism Income and Employment in Helsinki study</a>
<b>Direct tourism income per resident</b>	Direct tourism income per resident	<b>2 069 €</b>	2 255 €	8.2% decrease	Tourism economic performance	B.1 Tourism flow (volume and value) at destination	<a href="#">Visitory. Tourism Income and Employment in Helsinki study</a>
<b>Tourism's share of all revenue</b>	Tourism's share of revenue in all industries	<b>1.30%</b>	1.34 %	3% decrease	Tourism economic performance	B.1 Tourism flow (volume and value) at destination	<a href="#">Visitory. Tourism Income and Employment in Helsinki study</a>
<b>Average annual hotel room price</b>	Average annual hotel room price	<b>124.48 €</b>	122.58 €	1.5 % growth	Visitor expenditure	B.2 Tourism enterprise(s) performance	<a href="#">Rudolf Statistical Database</a>
<b>Average hotel room price - highest month</b>	Average hotel room price in Helsinki - average hotel room price for the highest month July 2024	<b>142.48 €</b>		1.7% growth	Visitor expenditure	B.2 Tourism enterprise(s) performance	<a href="#">Rudolf Statistical Database</a>
<b>Average hotel room price - lowest month</b>	Average hotel room price in Helsinki - average hotel room price in the lowest month March 2024	<b>113.72 €</b>	140.06 €	0.4% decrease	Visitor expenditure	B.2 Tourism enterprise(s) performance	<a href="#">Rudolf Statistical Database</a>
<b>City travel cost barometer - total costs</b>	Total costs of all services in the city's cost barometer	<b>550 €, source: £468.14</b>	114.12 €	20.2% decrease	Visitor expenditure	B.2 Tourism enterprise(s) performance	<a href="#">Post Office: City Costs Barometer</a>
<b>Tourism's share of employment</b>	Tourism's share of employment in all industries	<b>2.16%</b>	2.35%	8.1% decrease	Employment in tourism	B.3 Quantity and quality of employment	<a href="#">Visitory. Tourism Income and Employment in Helsinki study</a>
<b>Direct Tourism Employment</b>	Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) generated by tourism	<b>6 246 Full-Time Equivalent (FTE)</b>	6 739 Full-Time Equivalent (FTE)	7.3% decrease	Employment in tourism	B.3 Quantity and quality of employment	<a href="#">Visitory. Tourism Income and Employment in Helsinki study</a>

## 7. Conclusions and steps forward

### 7.1. State of destination sustainability in a nutshell

Helsinki Tourism and Destination Management Unit has worked ambitiously to make Helsinki the most sustainable travel destination. This work was acknowledged in 2024, when Helsinki ranked first in the Global Destination Sustainability Index.

The development of sustainable tourism in Helsinki is supported by sector-wide commitment and collaboration between the DMO, other divisions and units of the City of Helsinki, authorities, the private-sector, and various national and international networks. Positive resident attitudes towards tourism and events, along with the city's good public transport, safety and cleanliness, form a solid basis for the sustainability work of the DMO.

However, Helsinki's tourism sector also faces significant sustainability challenges. The sector generates significant carbon emissions, especially because many visitors travel long distances to reach Finland.

Social sustainability concerns such as fair working conditions, decent wages, and the risks of forced labour in supply chains, add to the complexity of managing social sustainability. The growth of tourism usually generates new business opportunities but also puts pressure on local communities and the environment.

In 2024, tourism related income and job creation declined compared to the previous year, even though registered overnight stays hit a new record (4,5 million)<sup>60</sup>. As tourism grows, it is important to examine the structure of the sector and leakage of tourism revenue to companies based outside the destination, when international intermediaries take a large share of revenues. The future of economic sustainability depends on the sector's ability to turn growing demand into stable and balanced economic benefits.

Finland's reputation as the happiest country in world and Helsinki's first place in the Global Destination Sustainability Index have created positive visibility. Helsinki's growth potential is also supported by increasing global travel demand and Helsinki is aiming for five million registered overnight stays by 2026.

Helsinki continues to have ambitious sustainability targets and is well-positioned to advance sustainable and regenerative tourism and to offer more sustainable experiences for its visitors. In 2025, the city will study how tourism could help improve the state of the Baltic Sea.

### 7.2. Key points for improvement

The key areas for improvement based on the current state of sustainability in Helsinki tourism, are presented below.

In terms of **destination management, tourism governance and economic sustainability**:

- Encourage longer stays to increase economic impact and improve occupancy rates.

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<sup>60</sup> Helsinki & Visitory. (2024). [Matkailun tulo- ja työllisyysvaikutukset](#) (in Finnish)



- Build better understanding of how growing arrivals can create more local income and jobs. Reducing revenue leakage to companies outside the destination is important for long-term profitability.
- Monitor visitor flows more closely, as rising numbers may create pressure on popular areas. Maintaining resident support and high visitor satisfaction is essential for future growth.
- Integrate tourism and event needs more consistently into city planning.
- Stronger coordination and clearer assessment of tourism impacts are needed.

In terms of **social and cultural sustainability**:

- Equality and non-discrimination measures need further development. Concerns such as modern slavery, informal work, and working conditions require better understanding and targeted action.
- The rights of the Sámi people must be carefully safeguarded in all tourism-related contexts.
- Develop tools and indicators to manage visitor pressure. This includes measures that reduce crowding in the most popular places and creating a broader plan for managing visitor flows.

In terms of **environmental sustainability**:

- Improve data- and science-based understanding of future tourism scenarios, including the links between visitor flows, travel modes, accessibility, and emissions. Clear pathways are needed to align tourism growth with climate targets. The scenarios should consider the development of low-emission technologies in aviation and passenger maritime transport, planned investments in rail infrastructure, and changing travel trends.
- Strengthen climate adaptation measures, including broader cooperation, training, and investments to improve preparedness and resilience.
- Develop regenerative tourism by exploring how tourism can help restore ecosystems and support local communities, including initiatives to improve the state of the Baltic Sea.

## 7.3. Development of sustainability reporting

The DMO will continue to improve how it produces and uses sustainability data. Especially the social and cultural impacts of tourism need to be measured and understood more comprehensively.

A key challenge in tourism related environmental impact reporting is the difficulty of distinguishing the environmental impacts caused by tourism from other activities taking place in the destination. For example, it is difficult, if not impossible, to separate the water consumption and waste generation of tourism services from the overall environmental figures of a city. One clearly distinguishable environmental impact of tourism is the emissions generated by travel to the destination.

In this first destination sustainability report of Helsinki, existing destination-level indicator frameworks as well as the Voluntary Sustainability Reporting Standard for SMEs have been used. VSME is originally designed for small and medium-sized enterprises and is therefore not tailored for destination management organizations. There is a clear need for sustainability reporting standards specifically designed for destinations. An ideal sustainability reporting standard for destinations would cover both the operations of the DMO and the broader impacts of tourism.

The reporting practices of the DMO will be developed in line with the evolution of international sustainability reporting standards. This was the first Helsinki Destination

Sustainability Report, it includes limitations and challenges, and the reporting will need to be further developed in the future.

# 8. Appendices

## Appendix 1. Ecological sustainability overview of the city of Helsinki

### Ecological sustainability overview

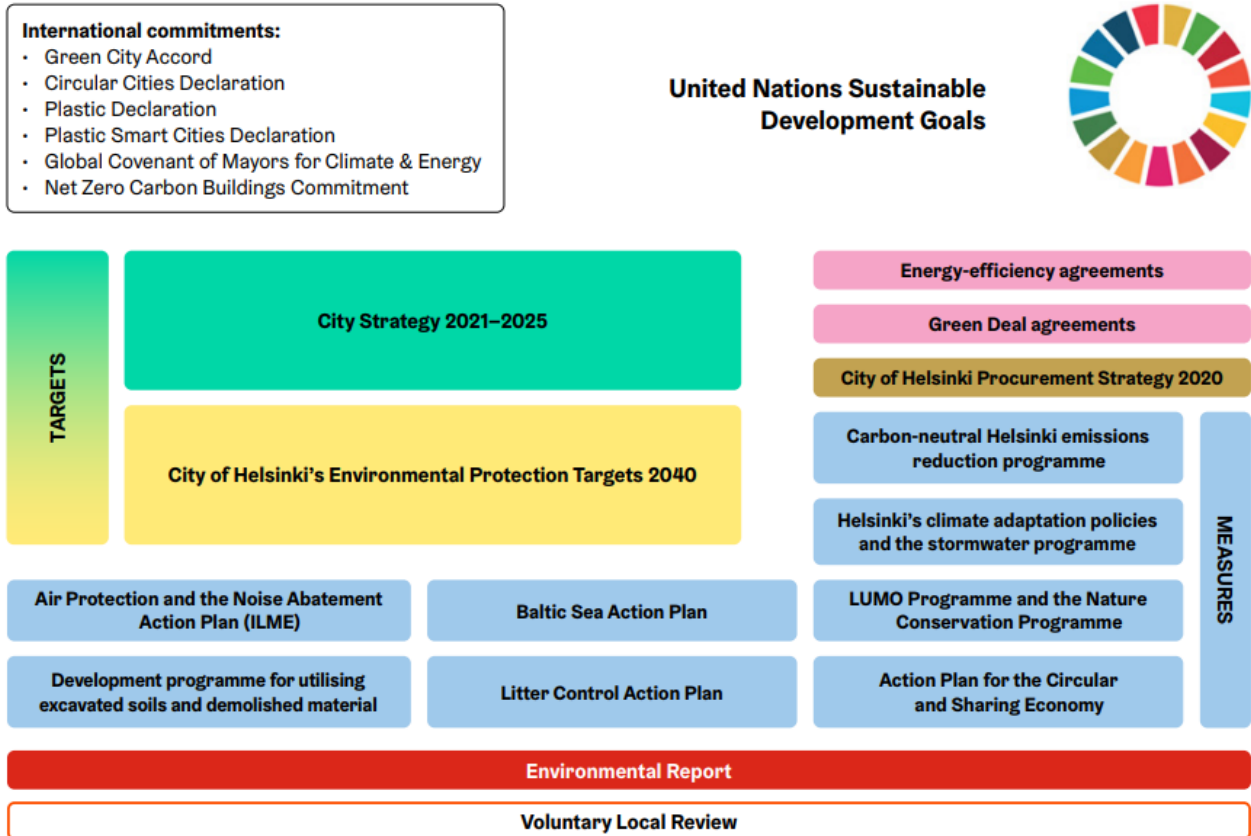


Figure 4. Ecological sustainability overview of the city of Helsinki

## Appendix 2. VSME Content Index

VSME Basic Module datapoints		Section/Chapter	Page (onwards)	Additional information
<b>Basic information</b>				
B1	Module used in report (Basic/ basic and comprehensive)	1.3 Reporting principles and frameworks	5	
B1	Disclosures omitted from the report (classified or sensitive)			N/A
B1	Reporting boundary (prepared on an individual basis (i.e. the report is limited to the undertaking's information only) or on a consolidated basis (i.e. the report includes information about the undertaking and its subsidiaries))	1.3 Reporting principles and frameworks	5	
B1	In case of a consolidated sustainability report, the list of the subsidiaries, including their registered address, covered in the report			N/A
B1	The undertaking's legal form	2.1 Helsinki Tourism and Destination Management Unit	7	
B1	NACE sector classification code(s)	2.1 Helsinki Tourism and Destination Management Unit	7	
B1	Size of the balance sheet (total assets in monetary units)			N/A
B1	Turnover (in monetary units)			N/A
B1	Number of employees in headcount or full-time equivalents	4.1 The DMO as an employer	17	
B1	Country of primary operations and location of significant asset(s)	2.1 Helsinki Tourism and Destination Management Unit	7	
B1	Geolocation of sites owned, leased or managed	2.1 Helsinki Tourism and Destination Management Unit	7	
B1	Description of sustainability-related certifications or labels	2.3 Key commitments, indexes and certifications	9	
B1	Cooperative-specific information			N/A
<b>Practices, policies and future initiatives for transitioning towards a more sustainable economy</b>				
B2	Practices towards sustainable economy	2 Governance of sustainable tourism in Helsinki	7	
B2	Policies on sustainability issues	2 Governance of sustainable tourism in Helsinki	7	
B2	Future initiatives or forward-looking plans that are being implemented on sustainability issues	2 Governance of sustainable tourism in Helsinki	7	
B2	Targets to monitor the implementation of the policies and the progress achieved towards meeting such targets	2 Governance of sustainable tourism in Helsinki	7	
<b>Energy and greenhouse gas emissions</b>				
B3	Total energy consumption	5.3 Energy use	24	
B3	Total GHG emissions	5.2 Climate impact	23	
B3	Scope 1 GHG emissions			N/A
B3	Location-based Scope 2 emissions			N/A
B3	GHG intensity			N/A
<b>Pollution of air, water and soil</b>				
B4	Legally required pollution emissions information			N/A
<b>Biodiversity</b>				
B5	Number and area of sites owned, leased, or managed in or near a biodiversity sensitive area			N/A
B5	Total use of land			N/A
B5	Total sealed area			N/A
B5	Total nature-oriented area on-site			N/A

B5	Total nature-oriented area off-site			N/A
<b>Water</b>				
B6	Total water withdrawal			N/A
B6	Water withdrawal on sites located in high water -stress area			N/A
B6	The amount of water withdrawn at sites located in areas of high water-stress			N/A
<b>Resource use, circular economy and waste management</b>				
B7	Circular economy principles	2.4 Sustainable destination policies and programmes	10	
B7	Total annual generation of waste broken down by type (non-hazardous and hazardous)	5.5 Water, waste and recycling	25	
B7	Total annual waste diverted to recycling or reuse	5.5 Water, waste and recycling	25	
B7	Annual mass-flow of materials used in a sector using significant material flows (for example manufacturing, construction, packaging or others)			N/A
<b>Workforce – General characteristics</b>				
B8	Number of employees in headcount or full-time equivalent for type of employment contract (temporary or permanent)	4.1 The DMO as an employer	17	
B8	Number of employees in headcount or full-time equivalent for gender	4.1 The DMO as an employer	17	
B8	Number of employees in headcount or full-time equivalent for country of the employment contract, if the undertaking operates in more than one country			N/A
B8	Employee turnover rate for the reporting period, if the undertaking employs 50 or more employees			N/A
<b>Workforce – Health and safety</b>				
B9	Number and rate of recordable work-related accidents	Social metrics (VSME) table	22	
B9	Number of fatalities as a result of work-related injuries and work-related ill health	Social metrics (VSME) table	22	
<b>Workforce – Remuneration, collective bargaining and training</b>				
B10	Information on whether the employees receive pay that is equal or above applicable minimum wage for the country it reports on	4.1 The DMO as an employer	17	
B10	Percentage gap in pay between its female and male employees, if the undertaking employs more than 150 employees			N/A
B10	Percentage of employees covered by collective bargaining agreements	4.1 The DMO as an employer	17	
B10	Average number of annual training hours per employee, broken down by gender	4.1 The DMO as an employer	17	
<b>Convictions and fines for corruption and bribery</b>				
B11	Number of convictions, and the total amount of fines incurred for the violation of anti-corruption and anti-bribery laws	Social metrics (VSME) table	22	

VSME Comprehensive Module datapoints		Section/Chapter	Page	Additional information
<b>Strategy: Business Model and Sustainability – Related Initiatives</b>				
C1	Description of the key elements of undertaking's business model and strategy	2.1 Helsinki Tourism and Destination Management Unit	7	
<b>Description of practices, policies and future initiatives for transitioning towards a more sustainable economy</b>				
C2	Description of practices, policies or future initiatives for transitioning towards a more sustainable economy.	2 Governance of sustainable tourism in Helsinki	7	
<b>GHG reduction targets and climate transition</b>				
C3	Scope 3 emissions			N/A
C3	GHG reduction targets (Scope 1, 2, and 3), if set, and measures to achieve them			N/A
C3	Transition plan for climate change mitigation, for undertakings operating in high climate impact sector			N/A
<b>Climate risks</b>				
C4	Identified climate-related hazards and transition events	5.1 Climate risks	23	
C4	Potential adverse effects of climate risks on business or financial performance – short, medium, long term, and risk level	5.1 Climate risks	23	
<b>Additional (general) workforce characteristics</b>				
C5	Female-to-male ratio at management level, if the undertaking employs 50 or more employees			N/A
C5	Number of self-employed without personnel and temporary workers, if the undertaking employs 50 or more employees			N/A
<b>Additional own workforce information - Human rights policies and processes</b>				
C6	Code of conduct / human rights policy for the undertaking's own workforce, and its coverage	2.2 Helsinki's vision and key strategic goals for tourism	7	
<b>Severe negative human rights incidents</b>				
C7	Confirmed incidents in own workforce/ value chain, affected communities, consumers and end-users, and actions taken	4.1 The DMO as an employer	17	
<b>Revenues from certain activities and exclusion from EU reference benchmarks</b>				
C8	Revenues from controversial weapons, tobacco, fossil fuels, and pesticide/agrochemical production			N/A
C8	Exclusion from any EU Paris Agreement -aligned reference benchmarks			N/A
<b>Gender diversity ratio in the governance body</b>				
C9	Gender diversity ratio of the governance body	Social metrics (VSME) table	22	



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# Sustainability Report Audit Findings

*The auditing process aims to attain an understanding of the reporting process, materiality (sustainability priorities), adherence to the used frameworks, link to strategy, stakeholder inclusiveness, governance and management (responsibilities and controls in different phases), reliability of data and usability of the report.*

TAIGAWISE

# Independent Audit Report

## Helsinki Destination Sustainability Report 2024

### Findings and Recommendations

**April 26, 2026**

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## 1. Engagement overview

This independent audit covered the Helsinki Destination Sustainability Report 2024, the organisation's first sustainability report. The engagement was conducted as a limited assurance audit, comprising of preparation and planning, evidence review, interviews with key personnel, and reporting of findings and recommendations.

The audit assessed the report's materiality and links to strategy, the application of the selected reporting frameworks (VSME, SDGs, ETIS, SF-MST), governance and stakeholder inclusiveness, the reliability of underlying data, and the report's readability and usability. Approximately 75% of reported data was reviewed through risk-based sample testing.

Given that VSME was applied to a complex destination/DMO structure for which it was not originally designed, and that the reporting process was set up on short notice, the audit team adopted a deliberately consultative and forward-looking approach. The findings below are intended both to assure the 2024 report and to support the development of future reporting cycles.

## 2. Overall conclusion

Helsinki Destination has produced an ambitious and content-rich first sustainability report demonstrating the clear organisational commitment to becoming the world's most sustainable travel destination. The report draws on reliable data sources, reflects the realities of the tourism industry, and brings together a wide range of policies, programmes, and stakeholders supporting sustainability.

Based on limited assurance procedures, the audit team did not identify material misstatements that would undermine the credibility of the report. However, the audit identified significant structural and methodological weaknesses that should be addressed to strengthen the reporting process and following reporting cycles. The most consequential of these relate to the unclear reporting boundary between the City of Helsinki, Helsinki as a destination, and the DMO; the absence of a documented materiality process; the parallel use of multiple frameworks; and absence of clearly defined roles and responsibilities in reporting.

Subject to the limitations described in the full report the report can be considered a credible starting point. With recommended improvements the report provides a sound basis for further reporting.



### 3. Key strengths

The audit team specifically commends the following:

- **Ambition and breadth.** An ambitious first report that compiles information across destination, DMO, and city levels and balances the perspectives of multiple entities.
- **Reliable data sources.** The data sources drawn upon are reliable, and industry-specific information is used where available.
- **Commitment to sustainability.** The report demonstrates that sustainability is a core value in developing Helsinki as a destination, with numerous policies, programmes, and stakeholders engaged in the work.
- **Industry relevance.** The content genuinely reflects the tourism sector and the destination context.
- **Solid content foundation.** The content provides a sound basis for future use and further improvement.

### 4. Priority recommendations

Ten key recommendations for positive impact on the credibility, comparability, and usefulness of future reports to be addressed when developing the reporting process and the sustainability work supporting the process:

1. Clear definition of the reporting entity and boundary. Distinguish the City of Helsinki, Helsinki as a destination, and the DMO.
2. Conduct a materiality analysis. Even a light materiality analysis would identify the most significant sustainability impacts of tourism in Helsinki to justify what is reported.
3. Anchor the report in strategy. Make the link between the future strategy and selected KPIs, and action plans explicit.
4. Clarify the role of each framework. Either reduce the number of frameworks or clearly state each framework's scope, which entity it applies to, and which data answers to it. If SDGs are retained as a framework, define key SDGs and sub-targets through a documented process and set measurable goals. Apply VSME only to DMO (entity) data, and use ETIS and SF-MST for destination-level reporting. State explicitly when city-wide data is used and why.
5. Develop reporting roles and responsibilities.
6. Strengthen governance and accountability disclosures. Add an organisational description, separate management from governance, describe reporting roles and responsibilities, and disclose anti-corruption, anti-bribery, whistleblowing and other relevant policies.
7. Improve data controls. Adopt the four-eyes rule consistently, document calculation methods, address specific data corrections identified in the data audit, include DMO financial figures.
8. Map and describe stakeholders. List key stakeholders for the DMO, destination, and city, describe engagement processes, provide a clear list of key stakeholders together with the engagement processes used.

9. Acknowledge the report user and improve readability for example with use of infographics and add an info-box explaining indicator choice. Plan structure around key themes/frameworks/entities, add definitions.
10. Use the report as a foundation for future improvements and include forward-looking perspectives; where is Helsinki as a destination and the DMO headed.

A complete list of findings and recommendations is provided in the detailed sections of this report.

## 5. Audit statement

This audit has been performed as a limited assurance engagement. The procedures undertaken — sample-based data testing covering approximately 75% of reported data, document review, framework comparison, and interviews with key personnel — are less extensive than those required for reasonable assurance, and the level of assurance obtained is correspondingly lower.

The audit was based on the report as provided and on information made available during the engagement. Findings rely on selective sampling, and there is therefore a residual risk that the audit evidence examined is not fully representative of all reported information. No double materiality analysis was available; the materiality of the report's content was assessed by the audit team to the extent possible.

Subject to the matters described above and the detailed findings in the body of this report, nothing has come to the audit team's attention that would indicate that the Helsinki Destination Sustainability Report 2024 fails to provide a fair representation of the destination's sustainability work for a first reporting cycle. The recommendations set out in this report should be addressed to strengthen the credibility and comparability of future reports.

Helsinki, April 26, 2026

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

The audit team wishes to congratulate the Helsinki Destination for preparing its very first sustainability report. It is one of the signals of the commitment the organisation has for becoming the world's most sustainable travel destination.

It was recognised that VSME as the reporting framework may pose challenges as well as the complexity of the reporting organisation (Helsinki as a destination and the DMO). Due to lack of better options it was well understood that the selected framework and indicators were used to gather as much information on the sustainability of the destination as possible. It is also noted that GDS requires the use of a formal sustainability reporting framework.

For these reasons, during the audit it was kept in mind to take a somewhat consultative and future looking role for auditing the report and give suggestions for developing the reporting process in the future. This was initially also one of the aims for the assignment, as the the reporting process was initiated on a fairly short notice and with shallow understanding about the process and its requirements.

## **Description of the audit process**

The audit plan was formed based on familiarisation of the report, the operating environment and organisation, and selected reporting and indicator frameworks. The Helsinki Destination guidelines and objectives related to sustainability and reporting were reviewed (including the Global Destination Sustainability Index, Green Destinations certification, and the STF program), as well as the laws, regulations, and other standards relevant to the industry.

In the starting meeting an understanding of the sustainability reporting process and its internal controls, as well as the intended users of the report was formed. In the absence of a double materiality analysis, it was agreed to also assess to some extent the materiality of the report's content.

The evaluation included the scope and decision-making process related to the sustainability report, focusing on the choices made regarding the sustainability work and the content included in the report. We approached this by evaluating the scope and boundaries, governance, and principles of materiality and stakeholder inclusiveness while also assessing the readability and usability of the report.

The reported information was compared against the requirements of the chosen reporting frameworks, including VSME and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), as well as sector-specific frameworks ETIS and SF-MST, to determine if material information was included in the report.

The accuracy and reliability of the reported data was checked by reviewing the processes on how sustainability data was collected, aggregated, and reported. The data verification and approval process was also examined, including the application of principles such as the “two sets of eyes” rule.

Eventually almost 75% of the reported data was reviewed, involving selective sampling and spot checks. (The process will ensure that the data collection, verification, and documentation are robust, and that the reported figures—such as emissions and staff numbers—accurately reflect the underlying source materials.)

This was further affirmed with an interview with the DMO representative and some detailed questions answered by the (external) reporting team.

The findings were gathered to form an understanding of whether the report meets the needs of its users and provides an accurate overall picture of the state of sustainability of Helsinki as a destination as well as on the state of the work of the DMO, whether the information presented is accurate and not misleading, that the data sources are reliable, and that the information is clearly and sufficiently communicated. Additionally, findings were collected to understand if the reporting process was adequately documented and if roles and responsibilities were clearly defined, including who is accountable for the overall process.

The evidence was evaluated against the established criteria to identify key observations. Based on this assessment, conclusions were drawn and potential recommendations for improvement were proposed.

## **2. STRENGTHS NOTED**

Ambitious first report compiling a large amount of reliable data across destination, DMO, and city levels, drawing on reliable data sources.

The report shows that sustainability is a core value and issue in developing Helsinki as a tourist destination, supported by multiple policies, programmes, and engaged stakeholders.

Content reflects the destination and industry well, and the Tourism & Events Programme 2022–2026 sets a strong strategic foundation for the sustainability work.

The content of the report provides a solid foundation for future use and improvement of sustainability reporting.

## **3. REVIEW OF THE SELECTED REPORTING PRINCIPLES**

### 3.1 Reporting Scope and Boundaries

The report blended information about the sustainability work of three separate entities, shifting inconsistently between the City of Helsinki, Helsinki as a destination, and the DMO. Because both data and narrative moved between these perspectives without clear boundaries, the overall scope became blurred, making it difficult for the reader to understand which organisation each insight, metric, or statement referred to.

#### Key recommendation

Clear definition of the reporting entity and boundary. Distinguish the City of Helsinki, Helsinki as a destination, and the DMO.

Finding / observation	Recommendation
<p>The scope and purpose of the report remain unclear. Why was the report created and to whom is it written?</p>	<p>Describe who the report is for and provide a more strict/clear definition of reporting scope in the beginning.</p>
<p>There are multiple frameworks and no clear sustainability key topics / focus areas.</p> <p><i>Based on the interview(s) it is clear that the choice of using multiple frameworks stems from the nature of the business (travel industry) as well as the organisation (City of Helsinki). It was a compromise to use and combine several frameworks and their data requirements to be able to respond to the reporting requirements of Helsinki as a destination and the DMO as an organisation.</i></p> <p><i>The email interview stated that the report drew on existing standards, but due to their inconsistent logic, structure was developed together with the Client. The structure was seen by client to align closely with the sustainable tourism strategy.</i></p>	<p>Clarify the chosen frameworks and their role and significance. Clarify which data refers to which framework</p>



Finding / observation	Recommendation
<p>Information and data are mixed between different levels and entities: Helsinki City, Helsinki as a tourist destination and DMO.</p> <p><i>Based on email interview, decisions on reporting scope were made case by case based on data availability and materiality. Reporting solely at DMO level was considered insufficiently meaningful, while isolating tourism from broader city statistics proved difficult. Where tourism-specific data was unavailable, city-level data was used to provide context for the environment in which tourism operates.</i></p>	<p>Clarify the different levels by distinguishing DMO, destination and city scopes clearly both in text and in tables. Consider dividing the report to Helsinki as a destination and DMO level.</p> <p>Use Helsinki City data only when it can be clearly explained (reason for use and scope of data).</p>

### 3.3 Governance and Accountability

The VSME reporting framework does not require governance reporting, but transparency is good practice, especially for a publicly-funded organisation.

In the report the organisational description and its lines of responsibility remain unclear to the reader. Also many committees and steering groups are mentioned but their decision-making processes and responsibilities are not described. Anti-corruption, anti-bribery and whistleblowing policies exist, but are not described in the report.

**Key recommendations:**

Develop reporting roles and responsibilities.

Strengthen governance and accountability disclosures. Add an organisational description, separate management from governance, describe reporting roles and responsibilities, and disclose anti-corruption, anti-bribery, whistleblowing and other relevant policies.

<b>Finding / observation</b>	<b>Recommendation</b>
<p>Reporting on the organisation and governance as well as responsibilities is fairly thin (chapter 2.1):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Brief description on how the DMO sits in the Helsinki City organisation.</li> <li>- No organisation description or chart for DMO</li> <li>- No description of the reporting organisation nor responsibilities.</li> </ul> <p>Many committees and working groups are mentioned (chapter 2.5). What are the decision-making processes and how are responsibilities defined in these groups?</p>	<p>Describe the organisational big picture (DMO in the Helsinki City organisation) and the DMO organisation.</p> <p>Describe the reporting responsibilities briefly: who takes part in reporting, who is responsible for the overall outcome. Having a clear reporting process and defining the roles and responsibilities brings accountability to the process by engaging the people who do the sustainability work as well as relevant data owners (to the reporting). At the same time it is an opportunity to define how the sustainability work of the DMO is linked to the overall sustainability work of the city.</p> <p>The VSME does not require reporting on governance bodies, their roles and responsibilities, but it is good corporate practice to be transparent, especially for a publicly-funded organisation.</p>

Finding / observation	Recommendation
<p>Ethical principles and code of conduct are mentioned (chapter 2.2.), which covers <i>child labour, forced labour (via reference to international standards), discrimination and safety (accident prevention)</i>.</p> <p>A whistleblowing channel is not mentioned in the report.</p> <p>VSME-required disclosure on convictions and fines related to corruption and bribery cases is reported.</p> <p>A description of policies, processes and activities regarding anti-corruption, anti-bribery and whistleblowing are not included in the report.</p> <p><i>The interview revealed that the city has appropriate principles and operating models for its employees, but they have not been reported. For example, a whistleblowing channel is in place.</i></p>	<p>Mention or include descriptions of policies, processes and activities regarding anti-corruption, anti-bribery and whistleblowing channels as well as other relevant issues.</p>
<p>No clear separation of management and governance (and social responsibility).</p> <p><b>Note:</b> Governance is a tricky word as it doesn't have one, clear definition and it overlaps with management and social responsibility (and human rights) (compare chapter 2 and SF-MST indicators p. 15 and 22).</p> <p><i>"The governance is the system of rules, practices and processes by which a company is directed and controlled." (VSME standard)</i></p>	<p>Separate disclosure of management (policies, responsibilities, organisation) and governance (<i>convictions and fines for corruption and bribery and Gender diversity ratio in the governance body</i>).</p> <p>Now VSME governance disclosures are in the VSME social metrics table (p. 22, chapter 4.9).</p>

### 3.4 Materiality and Strategy

As documented, the materiality basis and process are not shown, and the selection and prioritisation of sustainability topics, including their links to risk and impact assessments, are not described. As a result, the report lacks a common thread and information is left scattered. The links to strategy are not clear: the Tourism & Events Programme 2022–2026 sustainability goals nor the SDGs visibly run through the report.

The City of Helsinki's strategic ambition to be the world's most sustainable destination is stated but not strategically and analytically connected to the reported indicators. Strategy and materiality are lost in the myriad of indicators. Sustainability impacts of the chosen general indicators (average stay, intensity, seasonality, certifications) are not analysed.

#### **Key recommendations:**

Conduct a materiality analysis. Even a light materiality analysis would identify the most significant sustainability impacts of tourism in Helsinki to justify what is reported.

Anchor the report in strategy. Make the link between the future strategy and selected KPIs, and action plans explicit.

Include forward-looking aspects: where Helsinki as a destination and the DMO are heading.

<b>Finding / observation</b>	<b>Recommendation</b>
<p>The report does not show materiality methodology. It is not clear how the topics have been selected as the basis for sustainability management and report.</p> <p>As the materiality of impacts and therefore reporting topics are not clear, the common thread for reporting seems to be missing and information is scattered.</p> <p>With no clear strategic approach and no material topics selected, the document reads more like a broad study of Helsinki's destination sustainability landscape, rather than a sustainability report of the DMO.</p> <p><i>The interview(s) confirm the lack of materiality methodology. During the reporting there was discussion about materiality and VSME topics and data available were used to guide the process.</i></p>	<p>The VSME does not require materiality analysis of the sustainability impacts or risks. Even in this case some kind of evaluation and justification should be done on</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What are the biggest sustainability impacts of tourism in Helsinki</li> <li>- Including justification for this selection.</li> </ul> <p>Concept/principle of materiality should guide reporting. This will give structure and lead the process of what is being reported and highlighted instead of reporting about everything with the same effort.</p> <p>In the future, it is recommended to conclude even a light materiality analysis, as it will help to define the sustainability goals and actions and guide the work for defining the KPIs for sustainability performance.</p>
<p>Values, commitments, strategies are described vastly. Their level and importance is in some parts vague.</p>	<p>Be more precise on which strategies and commitments, policies and programmes affect Helsinki, which Helsinki as a tourist destination and which the DMO. How do they interact / what is their relationship with the DMO?</p>

Finding / observation	Recommendation
<p>Tourism&amp;Event Programme 2022-2026 sets goals for the sustainability work of Helsinki as a destination as well as the DMO. The strategic choices under goal B: <i>Helsinki is an international pioneer and provider of solutions in sustainable tourism and events</i> set clear goals for the sustainability work. These choices/goals cannot be seen throughout the report.</p> <p><i>Based on the interview with JP the sustainability goals are:</i></p> <p><i>1) Helsinki to be the most sustainable travel destination in the world.</i></p> <p><i>KPIs:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Nr. spot 1 in GDS: being successful with all 78 criteria including climate, work against modern slavery</i></li> <li>- <i>A lot effort has been put into climate issues</i></li> </ul> <p><i>2) Getting the most out of certifications. The rate of certified travel industry companies is probably the highest in the world.</i></p> <p><i>3) Climate: Helsinki as a city does great work on climate. Also many companies are working on climate targets. The biggest challenge is Helsinki as a location and the emissions for travelling to Helsinki are greater than the emissions of Helsinki as a city.</i></p>	<p>No matter what frameworks are used, the starting point for reporting should be who uses the report, what are the sustainability goals, what are the biggest impacts of the work and can these impacts be mitigated.</p> <p>These questions should lay the ground for the report and they should be kept in mind throughout the report.</p> <p>Make strategic objectives explicit, clearly state the sustainability goals and use them to drive the structure of the report.</p> <p>Provide clear explanation and analysis how the reported information supports the set goals.</p>

Finding / observation	Recommendation
<p>The general indicators of sustainable tourism are presented and progress reported in chapter 3 (Average stay, Tourism intensity and density, Seasonality and Sustainability certification). Reporting these is well in line with the KPIs in the Helsinki Tourism and Events Programme 2022-2026.</p> <p>There is no analysis/explanation how these KPIs are linked to the ESG structure of the report, also the sustainability impacts of these KPIs remains unclear. No linking to destination or DMO related KPIs has been done.</p>	<p>Provide justification for the use of selected KPIs and explain why they are reported by analysing how the KPIs impact the sustainability goals.</p> <p>Provide a clear assessment of the sustainability impacts that the selected KPIs have.</p>

### 3.4.2 Stakeholder Inclusiveness

Engagement with stakeholders is active and abundant, but not reported in a structured way. Although VSME does not require stakeholder mapping, it is fundamental for credible sustainability management with reference for example to the UNGP, OECD guidelines. Clear identification or list of Helsinki DMO's key stakeholders is missing, references to stakeholders are scattered throughout the report and some stakeholder groups appear to be missing entirely.

No formal, strategic stakeholder engagement method is described, despite biennial resident surveys and continuous visitor satisfaction tracking.

#### Key recommendations:

Map and describe stakeholders. List key stakeholders for the DMO, destination, and city, describe engagement processes, provide a clear list of key stakeholders together with the engagement processes used.

State explicitly who the report is for.

<b>Finding / observation</b>	<b>Recommendation</b>
<p>Helsinki DMO participates in many different councils and committees regarding sustainability. Helsinki assesses residents' views on tourism every two years through a resident survey. Visitor satisfaction is followed constantly.</p> <p>There is no clear identification and list of Helsinki DMO's key stakeholders. Referrals to stakeholders are scattered throughout the report. No formal and strategic stakeholder engagement method targeting key stakeholders is described.</p>	<p>Although the VSME does not explicitly require stakeholder mapping and dialogue as separate disclosures, these practices remain fundamental to credible sustainability management and are therefore highly recommended. They are embedded in internationally recognised due diligence frameworks, including the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises on Responsible Business Conduct.</p> <p>In addition to stakeholder mapping, describe the engagement processes used with different stakeholder groups, outlining for example how councils, committees and other relevant bodies were involved, and specify what consultation inputs or evidence informed the assessment.</p>
<p>Many stakeholders of the DMO are mentioned, but they are not reported consistently. Some stakeholders seem to be missing, too.</p>	<p>List and describe the main stakeholders. They can be listed separately when necessary and appropriate for the DMO, Helsinki destination and Helsinki City.</p>
<p>The stakeholders of the report are not mentioned.</p>	<p>Consider who the report is intended for, articulate the primary audience clearly, and show how their needs have shaped the report's structure and content</p>



### 3.4.3 Readability and Usability

The report includes strong content, which is held back by structure. The wide framework and indicator coverage makes it difficult for the reader to identify Helsinki DMO's sustainability focus areas, reinforced by partly inconsistent heading logic in some parts of the report. Use of infographics or images to support large text masses with embedded numbers is lacking as well as definitions of key terms.

#### Key recommendations:

Acknowledge the report user and improve readability for example with use of infographics and add an info-box explaining indicator choice. Plan structure around themes/frameworks/entities, add definitions.

Finding / observation	Recommendation
<p>The structure is not very clear and consistent. The lay-out does not fully support a smooth reading experience.</p> <p>The report covers a wide range of frameworks, data, indicators, policies, councils, plans and programs. It is difficult to form an understanding where Helsinki DMO sustainability key focus areas lie.</p>	<p>Plan structure according to sustainability themes, frameworks or reporting entities (Helsinki destination, DMO etc.).</p> <p>Include more analyses and also forward-looking aspects: where is Helsinki destination and DMO heading.</p>
<p>There are very few infographics and pictures in the report. Large text masses, sometimes with numbers, make the report hard to read.</p>	<p>Use of infographics, tables and pictures to support the text is recommended to make it easier to understand the message. Especially in parts where a lot of numbers appear in the text.</p> <p>Also deliberate use of headings could be used to elaborate structure.</p>
<p>Definitions of key terms are missing.</p>	<p>Add definitions of key terms to help the reader understand unfamiliar concepts and abbreviations.</p>

Finding / observation	Recommendation
The content (text) is articulate and thus provides a sound basis for future use and further improvement.	-

#### 4. CONSISTENCY WITH SELECTED FRAMEWORKS

The report applies two indicator frameworks (SF-MST, ETIS) alongside VSME as the primary reporting standard and the UN SDG's as sustainability framework. The frameworks have been applied selectively rather than prescriptively, which is acknowledged in the report itself. Neither SF-MST nor ETIS requires full compliance, and both explicitly encourage partial reporting as a starting point. For this reason, the audit assessed framework consistency with a consultative approach, focusing on transparency of application rather than strict adherence.

The most significant structural challenge identified relates to the scope of reporting. VSME is designed for a single reporting entity, whereas the report combines information from three distinct sources: the DMO as an organisation, the City of Helsinki, and Helsinki as a tourism destination. In some instances, national Finnish data has also been used. This mixing of reporting entities is partly unavoidable given the nature of destination-level sustainability reporting, for which no fully suitable reporting standard currently exists. However, this weakens alignment with the VSME Standard, as it becomes unclear which entity each datapoint refers to. The lack of clarity creates ambiguity and increases the risk of the reader misinterpreting the information.

The SDGs are presented as the overarching sustainability framework but function more as a thematic reference than an operational framework. The selection criteria for the highlighted SDGs are not explained, and SDG sub-targets have not been examined. The application of SF-MST and ETIS is broadly consistent with the frameworks' own guidance, though several themes and core indicators are omitted, primarily due to the unavailability of tourism-specific data. The rationale for omissions is not always stated explicitly in the report.

## Voluntary Sustainability Reporting Standard for SMEs, VSME (reporting standard)

Finding / observation	Recommendation
<p><b>Scope</b></p> <p>Both the Basic and Comprehensive modules have been selected for reporting.</p> <p>VSME has been identified as the primary reporting framework. As recognised in the report, VSME is not fully suitable for destination-level reporting as it is developed for non-listed SMEs. On the other hand, since VSME reporting is voluntary, it also offers flexibility in applying the framework.</p> <p>The report combines data originating from the DMO, the City of Helsinki, and Helsinki as a tourism destination. Consequently, the VSME report cannot be interpreted as representing only the named reporting organisation. This in turn may lead to misinterpretation of the datapoints, as their organisational context is not uniform.</p> <p>Indicators from different frameworks were presented in the same table as if they were equivalent, even though the underlying metrics are not aligned. This reduces clarity and increases the risk of misinterpretation.</p> <p><i>Based on the email interview, GDS requires a sustainability reporting standard to be used. Other standards, such as GRI and ESRS, were not applied because their scope was considered more appropriate for large businesses and organisations, while the VSME standard was determined to be the best fit for the report's needs.</i></p>	<p>Limit the use of the VSME standard to the organisation's own data where relevant, and rely on other indicator frameworks for reporting related to the destination. A report prepared in accordance with the VSME standard should clearly describe the reporting entity.</p> <p>Regardless of the chosen approach, provide a comprehensive explanation of how different frameworks have been used and how the resulting choices are reflected in the report.</p> <p>State openly if a particular section cannot be completed rather than fill it with information that does not fit the purpose and may mislead the reader.</p>

## Structure

The majority of the information presented does not rely solely on VSME requirements but has been substantially supplemented with additional content. Consequently, the structure of the report does not directly follow the VSME framework, although individual sections align with it either fully or partially.

The structural ambiguity is further compounded by the fact that for environmental indicators, VSME has been included in the table with other indicators, while for social indicators, VSME data points have been separated into a separate table.

The report does not state on what basis the indicator tables have been compiled. It is therefore unclear why, for example, numerical data related to own workforce is divided into the section of DMO as an employer and the social indicator table. Consequently, the data from the VSME data points cannot be said to be structured in a completely consistent manner. However, Appendix 2. VSME Context Index clearly describes where the data is located, so it is easy to find, even if the classification criteria are not clear.

*It was mentioned in the email interview that the social sustainability information required by the VSME standard was generally more accessible than the environmental data. Because the social indicators relate specifically to the DMO as an organisation rather than to tourism impacts, it was reasonable to present them in a separate table. In contrast, the environmental data points (B3–B7) for which relevant information was available aligned with the requirements of the SF-MTS and ETIS frameworks.*

The structure should be clarified as stated in previous sections.

Stronger adherence to the VSME structure would help the document read more clearly as a sustainability report rather than as a study.

It is understandable that compromises have to be made regarding structure in the absence of a suitable framework, but that is precisely why it is important to present the use of different frameworks clearly and with justification.

<b>Finding / observation</b>	<b>Recommendation</b>
<p><b>Data / Content</b></p> <p>Most sections of the VSME have been included in the report, with the exception of sections B5 (Biodiversity) and B6 (Water) from the basic module. However, the topics have been briefly discussed in the report, even though reporting in accordance with VSME has not been implemented. Furthermore, sections C3, C5 and C8 from the comprehensive module have not been reported.</p> <p>The majority of datapoints according to VSME have been reported. However, some VSME datapoints that should be “always to be reported” are not reported (B3 partly for scope 1 and 2, B6). There is no disclosure why such a decision is made. When data points are not answered, disclosure is also missing.</p> <p><i>In the email interview, it was stated that DMO- or tourism-specific data - was prioritised wherever available. City-level data was used as contextual information where tourism-specific figures could not be sourced. Several VSME data requirements were considered not applicable to a DMO or destination context, as the standard was designed for SMEs rather than destinations.</i></p>	<p>Disclose missing data points and use of mixed information clearly.</p>

## The UN Sustainable Development Goals, SDGs (sustainability framework)

Finding / observation	Recommendation
<p><b>SDGs as framework</b></p> <p>The UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are presented as the sustainability framework of the report, but the report does not clarify what it means in practice. The SDGs do not guide the structure of the report and do not run through it, so it remains unclear how they function as a framework. As noted in the “Materiality” section, the report cannot be said to be based on the selected criteria.</p> <p>In addition, the report does not contain goals set based on the SDGs or progress monitoring, only a link to the City of Helsinki’s SDG report.</p> <p><i>According to the email interview, the SDGs are reflected in the report by considering all aspects of sustainability. It is also mentioned that SF-MST framework concretes the SDGs (SF-MST is based on different reference frameworks, such as the SDGs).</i></p> <p><b>SDG selection process</b></p> <p>It is unclear whether the key SDGs for the reporting entity have been defined. The report highlights SDGs linked to tourism, but it remains unclear whether they are also the most central for Helsinki as a destination.</p>	<p>If the SDGs are continued as a sustainability framework for the report, clarify which SDGs are actually being contributed to and which are central to the destination’s operations. In this process of identifying and selecting key SDGs, (sub)targets should also be considered. Without examining them, a comprehensive understanding of SDGs is lacking as the SDGs without targets remain very high-level. Therefore, when selecting the key SDGs, key targets should be selected as well.</p> <p>In addition, when SDGs are used as a framework, set measurable goals related to SDGs so that the achievement of the goals can be monitored.</p>

Finding / observation	Recommendation
<p>The report does not specify the criteria or process on which the key SDGs were selected. Therefore, it remains unclear how the SDGs have been selected and whether local specificities have been taken into account in the selection process. The SDG targets, which are an essential part of the selection and application of the SDGs, are also not discussed in the report, leaving it unclear whether they were considered in the process of selecting the SDGs.</p> <p><i>The interview supported the finding that the SDG targets have not been examined to determine the key SDGs, at least not for this report</i></p>	
<p>The report states that tourism contributes particularly to the achievement of Goals 11 and 12, yet no source or justification is provided for this claim. This statement is also absent from the UN's <i>Tourism in the Agenda 2030</i> review, indicating that it is not a case of an incorrect citation.</p>	<p>Add a more comprehensive justification for the claim, as the information cannot be considered general knowledge.</p>

## The European Tourism Indicator System, ETIS (indicator framework)

Finding / observation	Recommendation
<p>ETIS has been applied as described. Several core indicators are left out from or only partially covered in reporting. Indicators are not always lined with tourism. For example D.6 indicator is answered with core indicators (eg. D.6.1.1 energy consumption per tourist night compared to general population energy). The report states that tourism-specific statistics were not available at the required level of detail, which is why destination-level aggregates have been used instead.</p> <p>It is worth noting, however, that ETIS does not require full compliance at the outset and explicitly encourages partial reporting as a starting point and does not set rules for calculation methods.</p> <p><i>Email interview assesses this, as tourism-specific data for energy, waste and water could not be isolated from broader city or sector statistics. Calculating figures per tourist night was not feasible because available data covers all private services, not tourism alone, which would have produced misleadingly high per-night figures. The authors acknowledge that ETIS environmental indicators may be somewhat idealistic in this regard, as comparable destination-level data does not appear to be widely available in practice.</i></p>	<p>Even though ETIS encourages data collection, even when data is not available and is not as strict with data, it should be evaluated if information is relevant. Additionally, data should be calculated to match ETIS indicators. The report would benefit from a brief summary table listing which ETIS core indicators have been fully reported, which partially, and which omitted, along with the reason in each case.</p>



## Statistical Framework for Measuring the Sustainability of Tourism, SF-MST (indicator framework)

Finding / observation	Recommendation
<p>SF-MST has been applied as described. The framework has been used as a reference structure rather than followed prescriptively, which is consistent with SF-MST's own modular and phased approach. Tourism investment, Government tourism-related transactions, Water flows and Water resources, Ecosystem services flows for tourism areas, and Decent work are themes left out from reporting. The report states that statistics were not available, especially from the perspective of tourism, which is why these themes were not reported.</p> <p>In the SDGs, goal 8 has been highlighted as a key goal, so it remains somewhat unclear why it has been decided not to report on Decent work. Since the report combines data from different sources and entities (DMO, the City of Helsinki and even Finland), it is unclear why the same approach has not been utilised here.</p>	<p>It might be worth reconsidering whether decent work can still be included in the report to some extent, so that the indicator choices better support the goals. Furthermore, the topic has already been partly addressed from the DMO perspective, so the wording might be worth considering.</p>

## 5. DATA AUDIT

The data underpinning the report is extensive, and the sources used are generally reliable and well-established. However, two major challenges affect the overall data quality. First, the inconsistent use of reporting entities makes it difficult to form a clear and coherent picture of the organisation responsible for the reported results. Second, the combination of multiple frameworks and an exceptionally broad set of indicators reduces coherence and complicates the interpretation. In addition, minor errors, omissions and areas requiring further clarification were identified.

## Data in general

Finding / observation	Recommendation
<p>The report states that it describes Helsinki as a tourist destination, but the data is a mix from the destination, the DMO, and the City of Helsinki. Additionally, data for the whole Finland has been used in some cases. Data from different reporting entities has also been combined in the indicator tables.</p> <p>The report does not clearly distinguish from which entity's perspective the information is being reported, leaving this unclear for the reader and potentially leading to misinterpretation. The report also does not explain why such a combination has been chosen.</p> <p><i>The email interview supports the conclusion that no clear demarcation exists and that reporting has been guided by the available data. Challenges have been identified during the reporting process.</i></p>	<p>Data should be more clearly divided between reporting units so that it is clear to the reader where the data is from and at what scope it was measured. Alternatively, one could consider when it makes the most sense to state that no suitable data can be found at the moment.</p>
<p>The main platforms from which data was collected are clearly stated in the report: "Tourist Meter (Visit Finland), DataLokki – Helsinki Destination Insights, Sustainable Tourism in Helsinki Power BI report, resident survey, and Helsinki facts and figures 2025 report." Other data sources are also clearly marked.</p>	<p>-</p>
<p>The report emphasises data-driven management, with Sustainable Tourism in Helsinki Power BI being a key focus. Some of the data in the report has been collected through that platform, but otherwise its utilisation and role remain somewhat unclear.</p>	<p>If the platform in question is specifically to be promoted with a report, it would be advisable to consider its real role and wider utilisation.</p>

Finding / observation	Recommendation
<p>In the case of a voluntary sustainability report based on a voluntary reporting framework, the audit follows a limited assessment level. For data, limited assessment has been carried out through sample testing covering approximately 75% of the data.</p> <p>Data is from reliable sources and uses industry specific information when available. Data is mostly utilised correctly, but there are some minor flaws and inconsistencies, also mistakes. Link to Visit Finland border survey seems not to lead to correct information (information regarding 2024, 2023). Calculation methods presented when needed. Some materiality issues regarding reflected indicators.</p> <p><i>The email interview states that data quality verification was not within the project scope. Quality assurance relied on the use of recognised and trusted sources such as Statistics Finland and Visit Finland. The majority of data was sourced from publicly available city publications.</i></p>	<p>Data should be more carefully checked, e.g. with the “four-eyes method”. Used data should be valued based on materiality regarding the indicator that data is supposed to reflect. Links should be checked that they lead into correct information.</p>
<p>The data has been collected consistently from 2024 data.</p>	<p>-</p>
<p>The division between general tourism indicators and economic indicators is somewhat unclear.</p>	<p>The division could be reconsidered so that the logic is better understood by readers.</p>

## General indicators of sustainable tourism

Finding / observation	Recommendation
No data errors found during sample testing.	-

## Social and cultural indicators

Finding / observation	Recommendation
A list of social and cultural indicators with a possible incorrect value, data source, unit or other minor error detected during sample testing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Visitor satisfaction - NPS (data source does not lead to value)</li><li>- Ease of Making Responsible Choices in Helsinki (value differs from source ("I don't know" answer left out)</li></ul>	It is recommended to double check the data.

## Environmental indicators

Finding / observation	Recommendation
<p>A list of environmental indicators with a possible incorrect value, data source, unit, or other minor error detected during sample testing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Total energy use in Helsinki (unit)</li> <li>- Share of services in total electricity consumption (source; refers to energy use, not just electricity)</li> <li>- Share of natural areas in total land area (year; should be 2023)</li> </ul>	<p>It is recommended to double check the data.</p>
<p>The report highlights that the carbon footprint of tourism in Helsinki is larger than that of the city of Helsinki. However, this has not been explained in more detail.</p>	<p>The claim should be explained in more detail so that even those unfamiliar with the topic can understand the claim.</p>

## Economic indicators

Finding / observation	Recommendation
<p>Financial data of the DMO is missing from the economic data.</p>	<p>Include financial figures for the DMO. Aligning sustainability metrics with economic performance increases transparency and credibility. As Helsinki wants to position itself as the world's most sustainable travel destination, it makes sense to also show the financial investment for achieving this goal.</p>

<b>Finding / observation</b>	<b>Recommendation</b>
<p>A list of economic indicators with a possible incorrect value, data source, unit or other minor error detected during sample testing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Average annual room occupancy rate % (value might be calculated incorrectly)</li> <li>- Total impact of tourism (direct and secondary effect) (value couldn't be found via link)</li> <li>- Average hotel room price - lowest month (refers to wrong month, result 2023 missing)</li> <li>- City travel cost barometer - total costs (values for 2023 and change probably incorrect, unclear if the source data is for 2025 or 2024)</li> </ul>	<p>Double check the data of the indicators.</p>