*Headline finding: In 2024, exposure to urban greenspace remained practically unchanged from the 2015-2020 average (+0.2%), with individual city changes ranging from -34% to +69%.*

Green spaces can provide local cooling by reducing the intensity of heat islands,​119,120​ and they can also reduce flood risk.​121,122​ Exposure to urban green spaces can also have substantial positive effects on physical and mental health.​123–126​ Similarly, ~~U~~ruban blue spaces (rivers, lakes, and coastlines) are also linked to improved mental and physical health (ref). This indicator uses population-weighted Normalized Difference Vegetation Index (NDVI) from Landsat satellite data to estimate green ~~and blue~~ space exposure for 1041 urban centres across 174 countries (Figure 6A). New this year, this indicator includes a calculation of the percentage of each city that is considered blue space using satellite-derived landcover data. While substantial changes were recorded in green space exposure in individual cities (from 69% increase to 34% decrease), global and regional population-weighted peak-season NDVI has remained largely unchanged since 2015. On average, cities with Very High and High HDI experienced slight increases in NDVI in 2024 (+1.6%), while those with Medium and Low HDI experienced slight decreases (-2.1% and -1.7%, respectively). ~~Given the potential health benefits of urban green spaces, increasing access, while preventing gentrification and managing risk of infectious disease transmission, could represent a key adaptation tool. Urban blue spaces (rivers, lakes, and coastlines) are also linked to improved mental and physical health (ref). We calculated the percentage of each city that is considered blue space (Figure 6B, see Appendix for methods).~~

On average across the 1,041 cities, blue spaces made up 2.9% of the urban area. Blue spaces were more abundant in more developed cities, accounting for 4.2% of the urban area in “Very High”, 3.1% in “High”, 1.8% in “Medium” and 1.8% in “Low” HDI  cities.

FINDING ABOUT BLUE SPACES ON THEIR OWN.

Using combined green and blue space landcover percentages, low HDI cities had a higher proportion of combined green space and blue space (0.42) than cities classified as “High” (0.29) or “Very High” (0.20, Figure 6B).

Given the potential health benefits of urban green spaces, increasing access, while preventing gentrification and managing risk of infectious disease transmission, could represent a key adaptation tool.