When sustainability takes the field

16 July 2026, 17:25 UTC, written by Tiffany Agard, Sustainable and Impact Investing Strategist, UBS GWM CIO Global Investment Management, Sebastian van Winkel, CFA, Sustainable and Impact Investing Strategist, UBS GWM CIO Global Investment Management

Global sporting events can bring great excitement and great waste as millions of people flock to stadiums around the world over a finite period. However, these events can also encourage organizations, companies, and governments to adopt more sustainable practices and reduce their environmental footprint, leading to more resilient and cost-effective infrastructure.

When sustainability takes the field

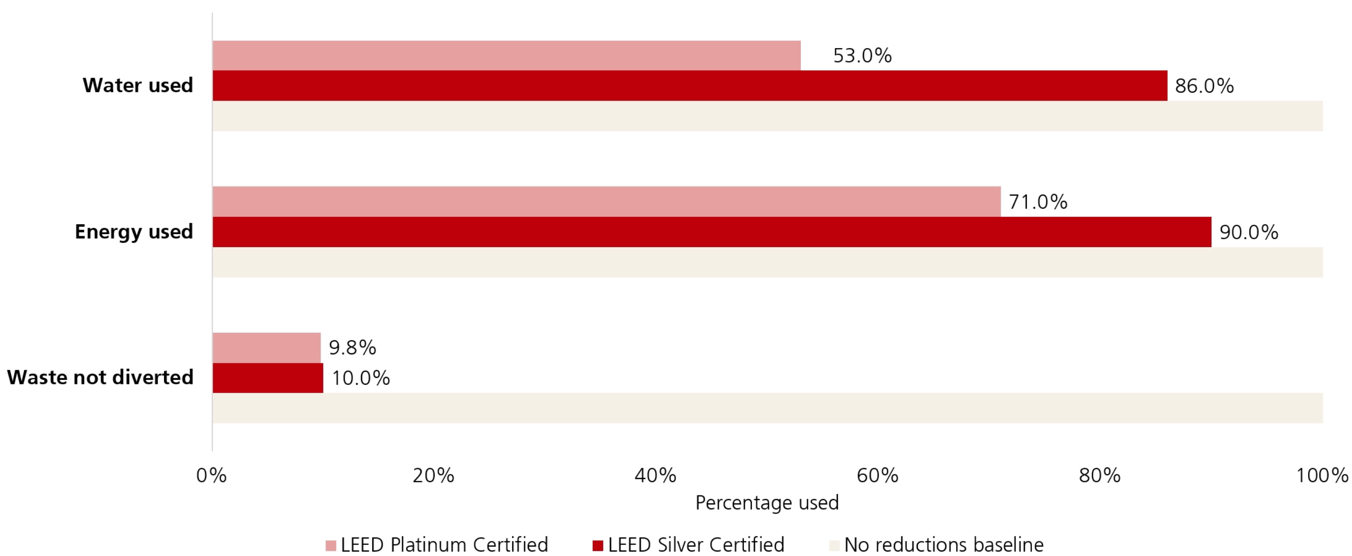
Each year, global sporting events draw the attention of millions to stadiums around the world. That concentration of people, resources, and waste over a short period creates a unique environmental challenge. For example, researchers estimate the 2026 World Cup tournament could generate 7.8-9.0 million tons of CO_2 emissions, more than in past editions.[1] Despite these concerns, major sporting events can also encourage organizations, companies, and governments to adopt more sustainable practices and reduce their environmental footprint.

[Click here for 3min video]

Venues: Where sustainability becomes practical
Venues present an opportunity to reduce environmental impact because they require large amounts of energy, water, and materials. Unlike the previous World Cup, where seven of eight stadiums were newly built, the 2026 tournament will rely on existing stadiums. During the 2018 bid process, host countries also emphasized sustainable certifications and environmentally neutral construction, helping shift the focus from new construction to more efficient use of existing infrastructure.[2]

Sustainable venues can also create measurable savings. LEED certification, the leading rating system for sustainable buildings in the US, ranges from Silver to Platinum. One of the first LEED Platinum sports venues in the US has reduced water use by 47%, diverted more than 90% of waste from landfills, and cut electricity use by 29%.[3] More broadly, LEED-certified buildings use about 25% less energy and 10% less water than conventional buildings.[4] As venues move adopt stronger sustainability standards, they can reduce water use, energy demand, and waste in ways that are both visible and measurable (Figure 1).[5]

Chart 1 - Figure 1: Leed Resource Use Compared to Baseline



Mercedes-Benz Stadium

Policy Shifts: Government investment and transportation
Beyond stadiums, major sporting events can push governments to improve transportation systems. With millions of visitors expected for the 2026 World Cup across 16 host cities, including 11 in the United States, US host cities received USD 100mn in congressional funding to prepare public transit.[6] These investments can help update infrastructure beyond the event itself. Sporting events can also shift consumer behavior. During the 2018 Special Olympics USA Games, Seattle offered free light rail rides and promoted public transportation, reducing planned car rentals from 78% of participants to 7%.[7] In this way, sporting events can lower emissions while encouraging longer-term habits and supporting public investment.

Consumer demand: Plastic reduction and refill infrastructure
Large sporting events create enormous consumer demand for food, beverages, and merchandise, which can quickly lead to high levels of waste and single-use plastic consumption. That demand gives organizers and vendors an opportunity to reset expectations for how food and beverages are served. Many stadiums have begun taking initiatives

such as allowing refillable water bottles into stadiums and expanding refill infrastructure. The 2024 Olympics expanded refill infrastructure, and when compared with the 2012 Games, the 2024 Games used 52% less single-use plastic (by weight) in supplied drinks and reduced the number of single-use plastic bottles used to serve beverages by 70%.[8] These initiatives can reinforce sustainable habits and set new standards for waste reduction.

Investor takeaways: Sustainability as long-term value

For investors, mega-sporting events demonstrate how sustainability can be applied in practice and contribute to long-term value creation. By setting sustainability commitments, global organizations encourage improved practices among their stakeholders, much like how corporations shape behavior across their supply chains. Over time, these changes can shift consumer habits, reduce costs, and contribute to more resilient infrastructure.

[1]Reuters, "Climate Cost of Expanded World Cup Under Scrutiny as Emissions Set to Soar," Reuters, June 9, 2026.

[2]Canada, Mexico, and the United States United Bid Committee, *Unity. Certainty. Opportunity: Canada, Mexico, and the United States United Bid to Host the 2026 FIFA World Cup*, United 2026 Bid Book, 2018.

[3]Mercedes-Benz Stadium, "Mercedes-Benz Stadium Becomes First Professional Sports Stadium to Receive LEED Platinum Certification.

[4]McDermott, Jennifer. "World Cup Stadiums Earn Prestigious Certifications as Green Buildings Before Matches Begin." *Yahoo Sports*. June 6, 2026.

[5]Kansas City Chiefs, "GEHA Field at Arrowhead Stadium Earns Gold-Level LEED Certification from the U.S. Green Building Council.

[6]Surendran, Shwetha. "FTA Set to Distribute $100M in WC Transit Funds." ESPN. March 3, 2026.

[7]Ramer, Holly. "World Cup Host Cities Bet on Transit Improvements That Outlast the Tournament." *Grist*, 10 June 2024.

[8]Oceana, "Reusable Packaging at Paris Olympics Dramatically Reduced Single-Use Plastic,"Dec 12, 2024.

Information About Sustainable Investing Strategies

Sustainable investing strategies aim to incorporate environmental, social and governance (ESG) considerations into investment process and portfolio construction. Strategies across geographies and styles approach ESG analysis and incorporate the findings in a variety of ways. The returns on portfolios consisting primarily of sustainable investments may be lower or higher than portfolios where ESG factors, exclusions, or other sustainability issues are not considered, and the investment opportunities available to such portfolios may also differ.

Sustainable investing strategies aim to consider and incorporate environmental, social and governance (ESG) factors into investment process and portfolio construction. Strategies across geographies and styles approach ESG analysis and incorporate the findings in a variety of ways. Incorporating ESG factors or Sustainable Investing considerations may inhibit the portfolio manager's ability to participate in certain investment opportunities that otherwise would be consistent with its investment objective and other principal investment strategies. The returns on a portfolio consisting primarily of sustainable investments may be lower or higher than portfolios where ESG factors, exclusions, or other sustainability issues are not considered by the portfolio manager, and the investment opportunities available to such portfolios may also differ. Companies may not necessarily meet high performance standards on all aspects of ESG or sustainable investing issues; there is also no guarantee that any company will meet expectations in connection with corporate responsibility, sustainability, and/or impact performance.

The ability to implement the approaches to sustainable investing will depend on the product or service selected; they are not available for all products, services or accounts offered through UBS.

Disclaimer

Hong Kong / Singapore: For Global Wealth Management clients of UBS AG Singapore / Hong Kong branch, please refer to the HK/SG Marketing Material Disclaimer .

This document is prepared and published by the Global Wealth Management business of UBS Switzerland AG (regulated by FINMA in Switzerland), its subsidiaries or its affiliates ("UBS"), part of UBS Group AG ("UBS Group"). UBS Group includes former Credit Suisse AG, its subsidiaries, branches and affiliates. In the USA, UBS Financial Services Inc. is a subsidiary of UBS AG and a member of FINRA/SIPC.

This document and the information contained herein are provided solely for your information and UBS marketing purposes. Nothing in this document constitutes investment research, investment advice, a sales prospectus, or an offer or solicitation to engage in any investment activities. This document is not a recommendation to buy or sell any security, investment instrument, or product, and does not recommend any specific investment program or service.

Information contained in this document has not been tailored to the specific investment objectives, personal and financial circumstances, or particular needs of any individual client. Certain investments referred to in this document may not be suitable or appropriate for all investors. In addition, certain services and products referred to in the document may be subject to legal restrictions and/or license or permission requirements and cannot therefore be offered worldwide on an unrestricted basis. No offer of any product will be made in any jurisdiction in which the offer, solicitation, or sale is not permitted, or to any person to whom it is unlawful to make such offer, solicitation, or sale.

Although all information and opinions expressed in this document were obtained in good faith from sources believed to be reliable, no representation or warranty, express or implied, is made as to the document's accuracy, sufficiency, completeness or reliability. All information and opinions expressed in this document are subject to change without notice and may differ from opinions expressed by other business areas or divisions of UBS Group. UBS is under no obligation to update or keep current the information contained herein. **The views and opinions expressed in this material by third parties are not those of UBS**. Accordingly, UBS does not accept any liability over the content shared by third parties or any claims, losses or damages arising from the use or reliance of all or any part thereof.

All pictures or images ("images") herein are for illustrative, informative or documentary purposes only and may depict objects or elements which are protected by third party copyright, trademarks and other intellectual property rights. Unless expressly stated, no relationship, association, sponsorship or endorsement is suggested or implied between UBS and these third parties.

Any charts and scenarios contained in the document are for illustrative purposes only. Some charts and/or performance figures may not be based on complete 12-month periods which may reduce their comparability and significance. Historical performance is no guarantee for, and is not an indication of future performance.

Nothing in this document constitutes legal or tax advice. UBS and its employees do not provide legal or tax advice. This document may not be redistributed or reproduced in whole or in part without the prior written permission of UBS. To the extent permitted by the law, neither UBS, nor any of it its directors, officers, employees or agents accepts or assumes any liability, responsibility or duty of care for any consequences, including any loss or damage, of you or anyone else acting, or refraining to act, in reliance on the information contained in this document or for any decision based on it.

Important Information About Sustainable Investing Strategies: This terminology refers to definitions in the UBS Sustainable Investing Framework and does not refer or relate to any product-specific regulatory labelling regime or naming conventions. Sustainable investing strategies aim to consider and incorporate environmental, social and governance (ESG) factors into investment process and portfolio construction. Strategies across geographies approach ESG analysis and incorporate the findings in a variety of ways. Incorporating ESG factors or sustainable investing considerations may inhibit UBS's ability to participate in or to advise on certain investment opportunities that otherwise would be consistent with the Client's investment objectives. The returns on a portfolio incorporating ESG factors or sustainable investing considerations may be lower or higher than portfolios where ESG factors, exclusions, or other sustainability issues are not considered by UBS, and the investment opportunities available to such portfolios may differ.

Except as otherwise specified herein and/or depending on the local entity from which you are receiving this document, this document is distributed by UBS Switzerland AG, authorised and regulated by the Swiss Financial Market Supervisory Authority (FINMA).

Please visit https://secure.ubs.com/global/en/wealthmanagement/insights/chief-investment-office/disclaimers/marketing-material-disclaimer.html to read the full legal disclaimer applicable to this document.