Will other cities copy Paris decision to hike parking charges for SUVs?

Level 3: Advanced

1 Warmer

a. Match the capital cities with the countries.

1.	Turkey	a.	Seoul
2.	Egypt	b.	Bucharest
3.	Canada	c.	Wellington
4.	Norway	d.	Ankara
5.	Peru	e.	Ottawa
6.	South Korea	f.	Lima
7.	New Zealand	g.	Oslo
8.	Romania	h.	Cairo

2 Key words

a. Fill the gaps in the sentences using these key words from the text.

> absurdity   apathy   demagoguery   hail   infringement   lobby
> polarising   referendum   ripple   SUV   tabloid   turnout

1. A(n) _____ is a four-wheel drive vehicle originally designed for off-road driving.

2. A(n) _____ is an occasion when everyone in a country can vote to decide on one particular subject.

3. If people _____ a policy or a decision, they say publicly how good or important it is.

4. A(n) _____ is an emotion that spreads gradually through a group of people.

5. _____ is a feeling of having no interest or enthusiasm about a particular subject.

6. In an election, the _____ is the number of people who actually vote.

7. A(n) _____ is a stupid action or situation.

8. _____ is political activity that appeals to the prejudices of people rather than using logical arguments.

9. A(n) _____ policy is one that causes people to form two opposite groups.

10. A(n) _____ is an organised group of people who represent a particular business and try to influence politicians.

11. A(n) _____ is like a newspaper but smaller in size and not containing much serious news.

12. A(n) _____ of people's rights is an action that limits or affects those rights in a negative way.

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Very low turnout in vote to penalise owners of large cars suggests public still needs to be won over

Ajit Niranjan

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1 Pushing a pram as they walked out of a voting station, Joanna and Louis agreed that SUVs were not suitable for a compact city like Paris. "We have a young child and we would like there to be less traffic and more space," said Joanna, a 34-year-old consultant.

2 Like tens of thousands of other Parisians, the couple took part in a referendum recently about whether owners of big cars should pay more to park in a city that has quickly become one of the most bike-friendly capitals in the world.

3 The vote came down in favour of tripling payments and has been hailed by many as an inspiration for cities across Europe trying to make their streets safer and their air cleaner as sales of heavy vehicles soar.

4 "Cities such as London, Amsterdam and Copenhagen are all leading the way in improving urban environments, putting human welfare and clean air first," said Barbara Stoll, the director of the campaign group Clean Cities.

5 "With this in mind, the vote in Paris will surely send a ripple to encourage bold measures to prioritise people over cars." Big cars, the evidence shows, are more likely to kill people than small ones. They also pump more dirt into people's lungs and planet-heating gas into the atmosphere.

6 But cities seeking to cut the numbers of SUVs on their streets face resistance from owners and apathy from others. The result of the vote in Paris, which passed by a narrow margin and with a low turnout of just 5% of the city, was that 55% threw their support behind the plan. Turnout was even lower than a previous referendum to ban electric scooters, said Brian Caulfield, a transport professor at Trinity College Dublin. "Parisians over the past decade have seen much bigger changes in transport than this new SUV measure and this could be linked to the low turnout."

7 Outside a polling station in the wealthy ninth district of Paris, where 40% of cars are SUVs, even supporters of the proposal said they felt uncomfortable with the symbolism of the vote.

8 Marie-Claire Polo, a 30-year-old journalist, said the rise of SUVs was an "ecological absurdity" but added that parking charges were too high for some people who needed a car.

9 Joanne Boulenger, a 33-year-old marketer, said she wanted to send a signal to make Paris greener but also worried that the referendum turned people against each other. Her boyfriend, she added, saw the referendum as "demagoguery" and had not gone to vote.

10 Sandra Weigand, 70, said she had chosen not to vote because she found it polarising. "To be a bit more green, to be a bit more environmentally responsible, I say yes. But to stop people from living, from parking … that's not reasonable."

11 New cars in the EU and UK have grown 1cm wider every two years and sales of large luxury cars have increased. The International Energy Agency has warned that the global rise of SUVs is hurting efforts to cut emissions but politicians have made little effort to reduce their popularity.

12 One challenge is that attempts have been met with fierce resistance from the automobile lobby and in countries from the UK to Germany the issue has been dragged into a culture war.

13 In Germany, efforts to put a general speed limit on motorways have been criticised by its most powerful tabloid and senior ministers as an infringement of civil liberties. In the UK, some people have spread the idea that "15-minute cities" are government efforts to control the population.

14 Bernard, 82, coming out of the voting station, said the Parisian proposal amounted to "discrimination". He added that it was a myth that big cars were more dangerous than small ones despite research showing the opposite.

15 Paris is on track to become the first capital to charge heavy cars more than lighter ones, though a similar scheme has been announced in Lyon, the third-largest city in France. The association of German cities has also come out in favour of such a scheme.

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16 Anne Hidalgo, the Mayor of Paris, has said she hopes to inspire other cities. The vote could also send a signal to carmakers to stop making bigger cars. Arthur, a 27-year-old working in logistics, said he wanted the vote to reverse the trend in size. "In the city centre, you see more and more SUVs and fewer and fewer small cars. I hope this can push us to move back to smaller cars."

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3 Comprehension check

a. Answer the questions using information from the article.

1. How much more than drivers of smaller cars will SUV drivers have to pay to park in Paris if the proposal becomes law?

2. What is currently happening to sales of SUVs?

3. What are the three main negative features of SUVs mentioned in paragraph five?

4. Why was the result of the referendum rather unconvincing?

5. What was marketer Joanne Boulenger worried about?

6. Why didn't Sandra Weigand vote?

7. Which 'war' has the SUV issue become part of?

8. What do many Germans consider a threat to civil liberties?

9. What do some people in the UK think the purpose of "15-minute cities" is?

10. What does the Mayor of Paris hope to do?

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4 Key language

a. Match the verbs in the left-hand column with the nouns or noun phrases in the right-hand column to make expressions from the text.

A	B
1. face	an effort
2. send	a trend
3. make	the way
4. reverse	resistance
5. take	a signal
6. lead	part

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b.   **Use five phrases from task A to complete the sentences.**

1.   The authorities in major cities need to _____ to reduce pollution.

2.   Cities like Copenhagen and London are continuing to in _____ cutting emissions.

3.   Environmental policies constantly _____ from politicians and companies.

4.   Some manufacturers want to _____ in discussions to reduce emissions in their vehicles.

5.   It is difficult to _____ such as people using SUVs in small cities; they have become very popular over the last few years.

5   Discussion

a.   **Discuss these statements.**

• "SUVs are not designed for use in cities."

• "Only selfish people own large cars."

• "All city centres should be pedestrian-only zones."

6   In your own words

a.   **Use an internet search engine to find information about 15-minute cities, what they are, and the rationale behind them. Make a list of the advantages and disadvantages.**

Report your findings to the class.