

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

Level 2: Intermediate

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. Find the words in the text that match the descriptions below. Paragraph numbers are given to help you. Then, use the words to complete the example sentences. You may have to change the form of the word.

- a noun meaning *an occasion when everyone in a country can vote to decide on one particular subject* _____ (paragraph 1)
There will be a _____ to decide on this year's budget priorities.
- a verb meaning *increase something so that it is three times bigger than before* _____ (paragraph 2)
After James's video went viral, his social media followers _____.
- a verb meaning *increase quickly to a high level* _____ (paragraph 2)
Prices of essential items have been _____ lately due to inflation.
- an adjective meaning *not frightened of the danger involved* _____ (paragraph 4)
Martha made a _____ move when she decided to quit her steady job and start her own business. She's now a millionaire!
- a noun meaning *the number of voters in an election* _____ (paragraph 5)
The government expects this election's _____ to be higher than the last one.
Many young people are excited about voting for the first time.

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6. a two-word noun meaning *a building where people go to vote in an election*
_____ (paragraph 6)
There will be 100 temporary _____ installed in different locations around the city.
7. an adjective meaning *very rich* _____ (paragraph 6)
That restaurant is clearly for _____ people; their prices are too steep!
8. a noun meaning *a newspaper with fairly small pages that does not contain much serious news*
_____ (paragraph 11)
Paparazzi make money selling celebrity pictures to gossip _____ and websites.
9. a noun meaning *something that many people wrongly believe to be true*
_____ (paragraph 12)
Do you think it's true that fast-food restaurants use fake meat, or is it an urban _____?
10. a noun meaning *a gradual change or development* _____ (paragraph 14)
I can't keep up with all the new fashion _____. There seems to be a new one every week!

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5 February, 2024

- 1 Tens of thousands of people in Paris recently voted in a referendum about whether owners of big cars should pay more to park in the city.
- 2 The vote was in favour of tripling payments, and many people see it as an inspiration for cities across Europe to try to make their streets safer and their air cleaner as sales of heavy vehicles soar.
- 3 “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 from the campaign group Clean Cities.
- 4 “The vote in Paris will surely 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.
- 5 But cities seeking to cut the number of SUVs on their streets face opposition from owners. 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% supported the plan. Turnout was even lower than a previous referendum to ban electric scooters, said Brian Caulfield of Trinity College Dublin. “Parisians over the past decade have seen much bigger changes in transport than this new SUV measure, which could be linked to the low turnout.”
- 6 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.
- 7 Marie-Claire Polo, a 30-year-old journalist, said the rise of SUVs was an “ecological stupidity” but added that parking charges were too high for some people who needed a car.
- 8 Joanne Boulenger, a 33-year-old marketer, said she wanted to send a signal to make Paris greener, but also worried that the referendum would turn people against each other.
- 9 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 damaging efforts to cut emissions, but politicians have made little effort to reduce their popularity.
- 10 One problem is that the car industry is against such efforts, and in countries from the UK to Germany, the issue has become part of a culture war.
- 11 In Germany, attempts to put a general speed limit on motorways have been criticised by its most powerful tabloid newspaper and senior ministers as an attack on civil liberties. In the UK, some people have spread the idea that “15-minute cities” are government efforts to control the population.
- 12 Bernard, 82, who was coming from the voting station, said the Parisian proposal was “discrimination.” He added that it was a myth that big cars were more dangerous than small ones, despite research showing the opposite.
- 13 Paris may become the first capital city 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 is also in favour of such a scheme.
- 14 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. Are these statements True (T) or False (F) according to the article? Correct any that are false.

1. Owners of SUVs will have to pay three times more to park in Paris than owners of smaller cars.
2. Small cars are more likely to kill people than large cars.
3. Large cars create more pollution than small cars.
4. The turnout in the Paris referendum was very large.
5. Most cars in the 9th district are SUVs.
6. New cars have increased in size every two years in the EU and the UK.
7. The car industry favours efforts to make SUVs less popular.
8. London is the first capital city to charge SUVs more than smaller cars.

4 Key language

a. Complete the following phrases from the text with prepositions.

1. in favour _____ higher payments
2. prioritise people _____ cars
3. pump gas _____ the atmosphere
4. opposition _____ SUV owners
5. turn people _____ each other
6. an attack _____ civil liberties

b. Choose three phrases from task A and write personalised sentences.

5 Discussion

a. Discuss these statements.

- "People should not be able to drive SUVs into city centres."
- "All city centres should be for pedestrians only."
- "It's unfair for SUV owners to pay extra to drive into or park at city centres."

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6 In your own words

- a. Use an internet search engine to find more information about different types of cars or vehicles used in your town or city (bicycles, motorbikes, cars, SUVs, etc.) Find out about:
- general information (manufacturer, size, weight, etc.)
 - their costs (including purchase, maintenance, petrol (gasoline), etc.)
 - how easy it is to use this type of transport in your city
 - what have other cities/countries done around this type of vehicle
- b. Present your findings to the class.