

# Parisians vote in anti-SUV parking price referendum

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Cars weighing more than 1.6 tonnes would be slapped with swingeing parking charges if the vote passes.

Paris voters on Sunday backed a proposal from the capital's socialist mayor Anne Hidalgo to triple parking charges on hefty SUV-style cars,

according to official results from city hall.

Parisians voted 54.55 percent in favor of charging cars weighing 1.6 tons or more 18 euros (\$19.50) per hour for parking in the city center, or 12 euros further out.

But only 78,000, or 5.7 percent, of the 1.3 million eligible voters bothered to vote at the 39 voting stations set up around the French capital.

Hidalgo hailed a "clear choice of Parisians" in favor of a measure that is "good for our health and good for the planet".

Fully [electric cars](#) will have to top two tons to be affected, while people living or working in Paris, [taxi drivers](#), tradespeople, health workers and people with disabilities will all be exempt.

"It's an ecological issue, but it's also a societal issue, and it's about how cities need to evolve in a changing environment," said Gregoire Marchal, a 43-year-old cinema distributor, after voting in favor of the measure at a polling station in Paris's 10th district.

"I do have a car, but I think it's great that we can ask ourselves the question and change our behavior," he added.

Not all voters were happy.

"I'm sick of all these diktaks from Mrs. Hidalgo," said Jeannine, 75, in the wealthier 8th district, where more of the cars appear to be SUVs.

## **SUVs an 'aberration'**

Hidalgo herself voted at a school in the city's 15th district a little before

6:00 pm local time.

On Hidalgo's watch, the capital city has pedestrianized many streets, including the banks of the river Seine, and built a network of cycle lanes in an effort to discourage driving and reduce harmful transport emissions.

Environmental group WWF has dubbed SUVs an "aberration", saying they burn 15 percent more fuel than a classic coupe and cost more to build and purchase.

City hall has further pointed to safety concerns about taller, heavier SUVs, which it says are "twice as deadly for pedestrians as a standard car" in an accident.

The vehicles are also singled out for taking up more public space—whether on the road or while parked—than others.

Paris officials say the average car has put on 250 kilograms (550 pounds) since 1990.

Hidalgo, whose city will this summer host the 2024 Olympics, rarely misses a chance to boast of the environmental credentials of the town hall and its drive to drastically reduce car use in the center.

## **35 mn euros a year**

But drivers' groups attacked the scheme, Yves Carra of Mobilite Club France dismissing the "SUV" classification as "a marketing term" that "means nothing".

He argued that compact SUVs would not be covered by the measures, which would however hit family-sized coupes and estate cars.

Conservative opposition figures on the Paris council say this imprecise targeting of the referendum "shows the extent of the manipulation by the city government".

Even among fuel-burning cars, "a new, modern SUV... does not pollute more, or even pollutes less, than a small diesel vehicle built before 2011", said drivers' group 40 millions d'automobilistes.

France's Environment Minister Christophe Bechu told broadcaster RTL the SUV surcharge amounted to "a kind of punitive environmentalism"—even if drivers should "opt for lighter vehicles".

Hidalgo's transport chief David Belliard, of the Green party, says around 10 percent of vehicles in Paris would be hit by the higher parking fees, which could bring in up to 35 million euros per year.

Paris's anti-SUV push has not gone unnoticed elsewhere in France, with the Green party mayor in Lyon planning a three-tier parking fee for both residents and visitors from June.

The last city referendum in Paris, on banning hop-on, hop-off rental scooters from the capital's streets, passed in an April 2023 vote—but only drew a turnout of seven percent.

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