

DERRIÈRE LES APPARÉNCES

#6

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The unexpected consensus of **mobility**

HOW WOULD CITIZENS INVEST 10 € IN MOBILITY?

We believed French society to be fragmented, riddled with divisions and irreconcilable in its expectations. And yet, when asked how it would allocate a budget of €10 billion for mobility, the answer was clear and almost unanimous. The survey conducted by Keolis with a Harris Interactive panel of 2,020 French people proposed an unusual exercise: playing the role of mobility policy planners. Not by debating abstract guidelines, but by distributing a specific budget across several options. A hierarchy of priorities emerged—but above all, there was surprising consistency in the choices made, regardless of political affiliation or place of residence.



KEO
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IMAGINING THE MOBILITY OF
TOMORROW

The French people surveyed would allocate around \$4.5 billion to public transport, \$2.5 billion to reducing fuel costs, and \$3 billion each to cycling, switching to electric vehicles, and helping those with limited mobility to move house. This balance of solutions may come as a surprise, but it is not the lack of preferences that is surprising, it is the similarity of views, despite the diversity of profiles. Far from the binary oppositions between right and left, between urban and rural, it is a

A shared demand is being heard, diverse in its means but unified in its principle.

Far from an ideological clash between two opposing visions of mobility—that of rail and road, that of the collective and the individual — the results show a reasonable combination of means, where priorities are not mutually exclusive but reinforce each other. Are the French wiser than the heated debates suggest, or is this balance merely a synthesis of visions?

Are they antagonistic?

No, when these responses are cross-referenced with the traditional variables of public debate — age, place of residence, political affiliation — nothing is reversed. Differences exist, but they remain small. Territories are not opposed to each other. Political trends do not lead to wholesale rejection. Despite the constraints faced by rural residents, voters do not base their vote on a single issue.

A silent convergence between electorates

From a political point of view, this is one of the most striking lessons. One might have expected a clear divide between left-wing and right-wing voters, particularly on issues such as cycling, free transport, or fuel costs. This is not the case.

Yes, left-wing voters are more strongly in favor of developing public transportation. public transportation. Yes, far-right voters give clear priority to lowering fuel prices (31% compared to 21% of left-wing voters). But that doesn't mean that everyone excludes the rest. All political segments recognize, to varying degrees, the need for a range of measures. No one rejects the idea of a plurality of tools.

In other words, political preferences play a role, but they do not dictate the overall architecture.

31%

OF FAR-RIGHT SUPPORTERS WANT MORE SPENDING TO HELP REDUCE FUEL COSTS

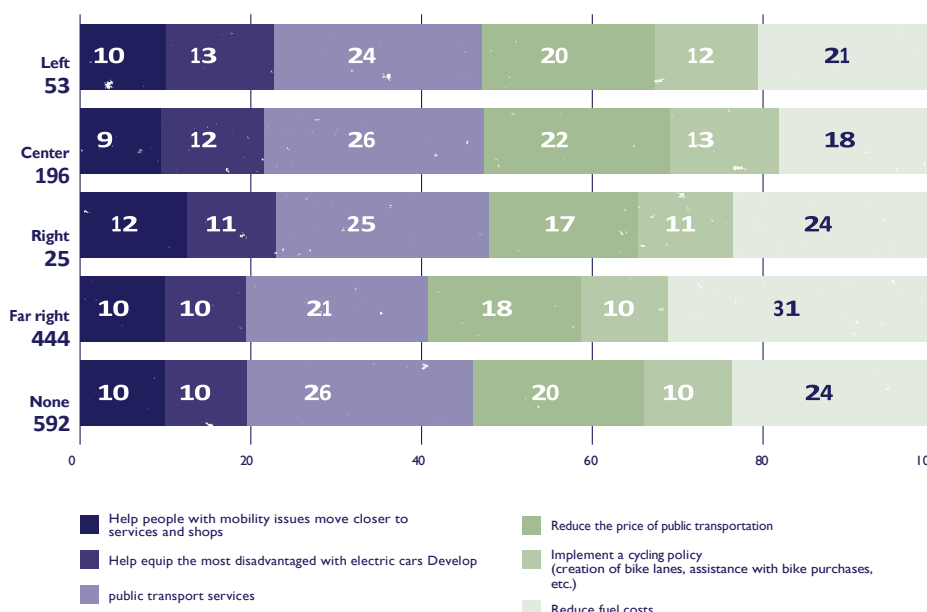
They adjust priorities without rigidly defining them. They shift without causing divisions. This survey does not reveal any archetypal supporters of mobility.

Political debate in the media tends to essentialize these differences: right-wing voters are said to be attached to cars, while left-wing voters are said to be attached to bicycles and rail. Yet here, all voters express a form of openness and balance.

One could even say that politics is lagging behind public opinion on this issue. The French seem already convinced that a combination of responses will be necessary and that solutions cannot be universal or exclusive. This shared realism poses a challenge for politicians: if they want to

To be convincing, they will have to offer practical solutions. mobility policies that are not aimed at pitting one part of France against another, but rather at the country as a whole.

You have €10 billion to help French people get around, how much are you spending on...?



The lack of radicalism in the vision of mobility

In public debates on mobility, radicalism seems omnipresent. In the media, on social networks, and in certain editorials, the space is saturated with caricatures pitting "bicycle ayatollahs" against "SUV addicts," "punitive environmentalists" against "selfish motorists."

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After the tragic death of Paul Verri in April 2024, killed by a reckless driver on a bike path still under construction, online comments illustrated

this polarization: some saw it as proof of an "anti-car war," while others denounced it as "urban planning madness" serving the interests of a militant minority. In *Le Monde*, journalist Solène Cordier referred to the "underground violence" of these ideological clashes over the sharing of the street.

And yet, when French people are asked calmly, they favor

A completely different picture is emerging. The Keoscope survey on the distribution of €10 billion for mobility shows that the vast majority of respondents want a mix of solutions: less than 1% of respondents allocate more than 7 billion (out of 10) to a single option: lower fuel prices or increased public transportation. common. 99% of the population opts for a mix of credits across several complementary mobility policies. The French view is therefore fairly balanced, even though a third of the panel did not answer this question. Society is much less radical than those who claim to speak on its behalf.



The regions, without resentment

Another surprise: places of residence — city center, suburbs, rural areas — do not imply fundamentally different hierarchies. Admittedly, public transport development is more widespread in city centers, while fuel price reductions are more important in rural areas. But these differences are relative. While public debate seems to pit city center mobility against that of isolated areas, the real

expectations expressed here are remarkably consistent.

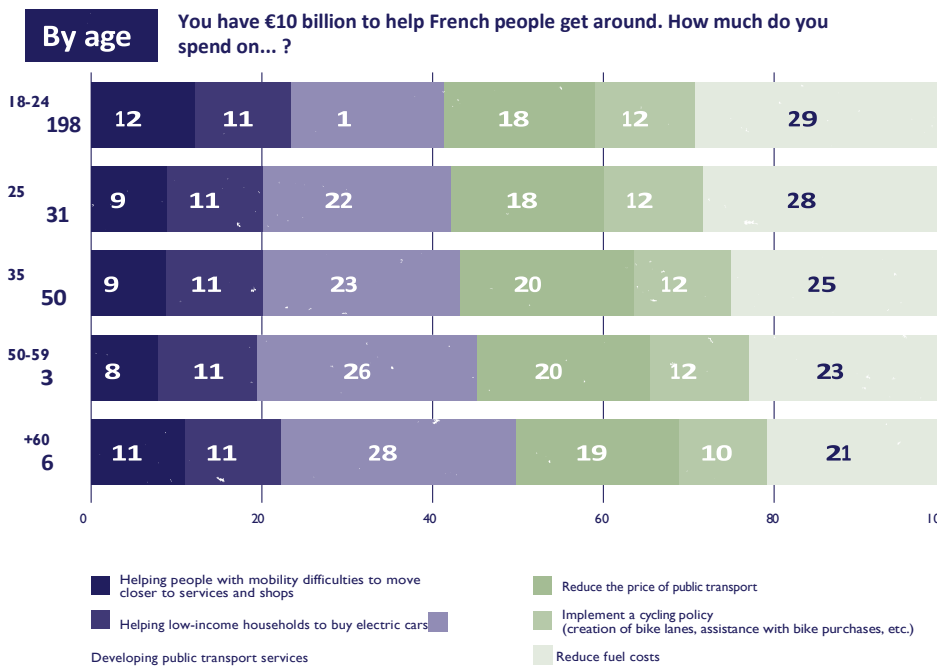
The question posed to respondents was simple: how would you allocate public funds between different measures to support mobility? The responses were then cross-referenced with their place of residence, divided into seven categories: from the heart of the city to isolated rural areas. And the findings are clear: priorities vary only marginally. Everywhere, we find the same core issues: support for public transportation (service and prices), fuel assistance, incentives cycling, support for electric vehicles, and a minority but constant focus on the issue of relocation for the most vulnerable groups.

In city centers, 26% of points are allocated to developing public transport services, 20% to reducing their cost, and 22% to reducing fuel

consumption. This distribution remains virtually unchanged in social housing areas, suburban areas, and even in rural town centers. The only real difference is in isolated rural areas, where the share of points allocated to reducing fuel costs reaches 30%, compared with 22% to 24% elsewhere. But even there, demand for public transportation remains high (24%), refuting the idea that isolated areas are hostile to any kind of collective action.

What the study reveals is therefore a shared commitment to a multi-instrumental mobility policy, where the challenge is not to choose sides, but to find a balance. It's that their residents aren't demanding exclusivity for their solution, but rather its integration into a comprehensive policy. Everyone knows what they need, without denying what others need. The result is a France that is geographically diverse but politically aligned toward the same goal of mobility equity.

Age paradoxically influences citizens' views



There is a clear paradox: **older people are in favor of developing public transport**, while **younger people would prefer to see fuel prices fall**. This finding is all the more surprising given that, in other areas of the survey, people over 60 are also the most opposed to reducing the number of cars on the road, particularly in city centers. How can we understand that the same social group is both in favor of improving public transportation and maintaining the car-centric model?

This priority increases steadily with age, rising from 18% among 18–24-year-olds to 26% among 50–59-year-olds. Conversely, the share allocated to reducing fuel costs declines progressively, reaching 29% among 18–24-year-olds and falling to 21% among seniors, which is probably due to purchasing power.

In other words, **those who drive the least want to maintain car access, while those who should want to get out of cars are in favor of public transportation**. This apparent reversal of usage logic actually reflects different perceptions of the role of public policy. For older people, public transportation represents **a safety net**, a right to mobility in the event of frailty, loss of independence, or limited income. It is less an alternative to the car than a **marker of solidarity**.

Where costs are skyrocketing (fuel, insurance, repairs), **asking for lower fuel prices is not an ideological choice, but a measure of economic survival**. Public transportation is seen as useful, but not always available or compatible with lives spread across multiple territories. Where seniors think "safety net," young people think "access."

This paradox should also be

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Among younger people, cars remain a **means of social integration**: employment, housing, leisure activities. In a context seen as a result of the context. The over-60s generation grew up with a dense rail network, intercity buses, and small-town stations. Their demand for public transport is **also a demand for historical continuity**, sometimes nostalgic, sometimes political. For young people, this past does not exist. The car, even if expensive, often remains **the only reliable means of transport available**.

Thus, **the paradox is only apparent**. It does not refer to contradictions, but to **different uses of the language of mobility**. Older people want a service that is available, but do not want to give up their independence on the road. Young people want to maintain real accessibility where public services are often lacking or fragmented.

The only persistent divide is the place of the car.



In a survey marked by surprising convergences—between social classes, generations, places of residence, and political affiliations—one topic resists unanimity: reducing the role of cars. Unlike the other questions asked (distribution of aid, development of public transport, cycling policy), this one reveals real divisions that are clear, consistent, and rooted in different perceptions of space, lifestyle, and public action.

REDUCING CAR USE
IN CITY CENTERS IS
SUPPORTED BY

45

OF RESPONDENTS

People over 60
express
a widespread
reluctance

Of the total population, **37% of respondents believe that the space allocated to cars should not be reduced further**, compared with 39% who agree to reduce the space allocated to cars in city centers or busy neighborhoods to make them more pleasant, and 29% on congested roads. The remaining proposals—dedicated lanes, parking, country roads—garners less support. This result, which is already close, becomes starkly contrasting when we look at the subgroups.

First divide: territorial. While only 29% of urban residents reject reducing the role of cars, this figure rises to 50% in rural areas. Rejection also rises to 47% in residential neighborhoods and 43% in rural town centers, confirming that density, alternative options, and access to services strongly shape opinions. On the other hand, **the reduction in city centers is supported by 42% to 46% of urban respondents**, much more than in peripheral areas.

Second divide: politics. The divide is clear. Fifty-two percent of far-right supporters oppose reducing the role of cars, compared with 22% of left-wing voters. Between these two poles, centrists, abstainers, and right-wing voters occupy a middle ground, but are still closer to rejection than acceptance. The left overwhelmingly supports reducing cars in city centers (46%) and on congested roads (38%), where other voters remain cautious or even openly opposed.

Finally, a subtle generational divide emerges: while 18-34 year olds are the most likely to accept car reduction policies in certain contexts, **those over 60 express a form of diffuse reluctance**, particularly on congested roads and in sparsely populated areas. Their attachment to the car as a symbol of independence, their distrust of rapid urban change, and their fear of exclusion partly explain this caution.

What these data reveal is a **fundamental disagreement about the role of the car in everyday life**. For some, it embodies the obstacle to good urban living, for others, the last bastion against house arrest. Where we thought dis-

When it comes to urban planning actually touch on deep-rooted social beliefs about freedom, dignity, and autonomy.

The car is not just a mode of transport. It is a revealing indicator. Perhaps the only one that still divides France on mobility issues.

Collective maturity in the face of complexity



This survey reveals a society that no longer believes in single solutions. Mobility policies are not expected to be ideological totems, but rather engineering compromises. Lower gas prices do not contradict the development of the tramway. Bicycles are not the enemy of electric cars. What matters is the ability of public policy to offer a coherent, flexible, and understandable ecosystem. The development of the tramway. Bicycles are not the enemy of electric cars. What matters is the ability of public policies to offer a coherent, flexible, and understandable ecosystem that responds to the diversity of uses and territorial constraints.

A France that asks that we not rank modes of transport according to a moral code

The implicit message from respondents is clear: don't choose for us. Give us the means to choose for ourselves. And this demand does not come from an enlightened segment or specific group, but from the entire country. — young and old, urban and rural, left-wing and right-wing voters. This is not a call for indifference, but for the recognition of differences within a logic of practical justice. A France that demands that not to rank lifestyles according to a moral code, but to articulate solutions according to needs.

This silent maturity, this reasoned convergence, is all the more remarkable given that it is manifesting itself in a climate of general mistrust, where support for major public policies is becoming increasingly rare. Contrary to caricatures—whether political, editorial, or militant—this survey suggests that there is still room for action that is both possible and legitimate, provided that it respects the balance that has been expressed.

And if reducing the place of the car is now the only real dividing line, it is perhaps because it touches on what other measures manage to avoid: the feeling of an imposed choice. Where the rest of mobility policy is based on a logic of accumulation

Public policies capable of turning this into a strength rather than a problem

and flexibility, the issue of cars triggers a deeper fear — that of being left behind.

It is therefore not a question of one model versus another, but rather a relationship with the power to act. A France that does not demand spectacular compromises, but rather systems capable of reconciling several different rationales. A France that accepts complexity and, in return, expects public policies capable of turning it into a strength rather than a problem. In this landscape, the challenge is no longer to convince people of an ideal, but to build a realistic, robust, and evolving mobilitarian contract. And above all: one that is shared.