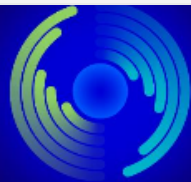


# 10 key lessons to rethink cities & urban policies in the COVID-19 era





## Cities policy responses

This note is developed by the OECD Centre for Entrepreneurship, SMEs, Regions and Cities (CFE) in collaboration with the OECD Working Party for Urban Policy and the OECD Champion Mayors Initiative for Inclusive Growth. The note provides examples of measures taken by cities to respond to the current coronavirus epidemic, clustered around six categories: i) communication and awareness raising, ii) workplace and commuting; iii) social distance; iv) vulnerable groups; v) local service delivery; and vi) support to business. Annex A provides more detailed information on these city initiatives. This is a working document, which will be updated every 2-3 weeks<sup>1</sup>. Future versions of this note will feature policy analysis and recommendations.

<sup>1</sup> For more information please contact: [Aziza.Akhmouch@oecd.org](mailto:Aziza.Akhmouch@oecd.org) | Media: [Alexandra.Taylor@oecd.org](mailto:Alexandra.Taylor@oecd.org). More information is available: [www.oecd.org/coronavirus](http://www.oecd.org/coronavirus).

## Examples & analysis on 100+ cities since March 2020:

- Short & long term actions
- Policy recommendations

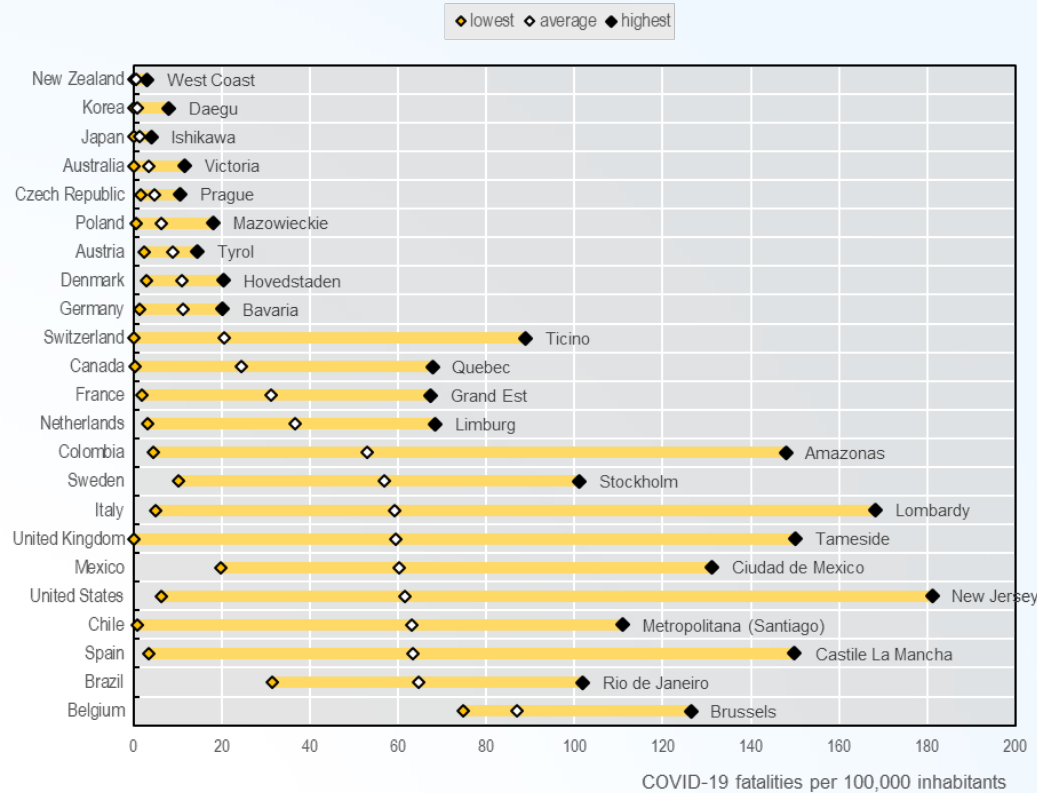
## Available in 4 languages:

- English – <http://oe.cd/covid-cities-en>
- French – <http://oe.cd/covid-cities-fr>
- Spanish – <http://oe.cd/covid-cities-es>
- Portuguese – <http://oe.cd/covid-cities-pt>

**Among top 15 most viewed notes on OECD hub**

# While COVID-19 has had asymmetrical impacts across territories, initial policy responses have often been place-blind & uniform

Regional variation in COVID-19 related fatalities, September 2020



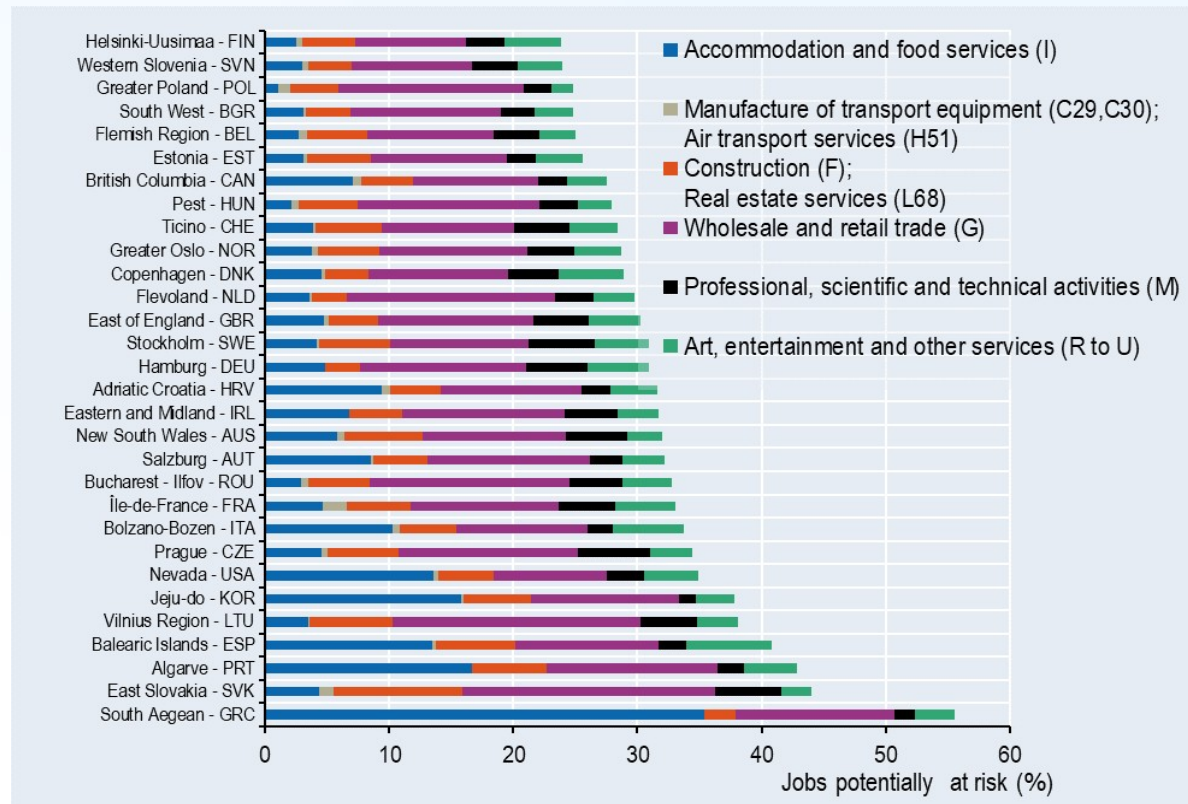
Cities & regions implemented both nation-wide measures & developed bottom-up, innovative and experimental initiatives



Recovering from this crisis means a **SHARED RESPONSIBILITY** across levels of government, public, private and non-profit sectors

# COVID-19 started as a health crisis & turned into an unprecedented economic & social shock, suffered mostly by cities

Regions with the highest share of jobs potentially at risk, by country



Industrial composition (e.g. tourism)



Trade openness



Labour market breakdown (e.g. SMEs)

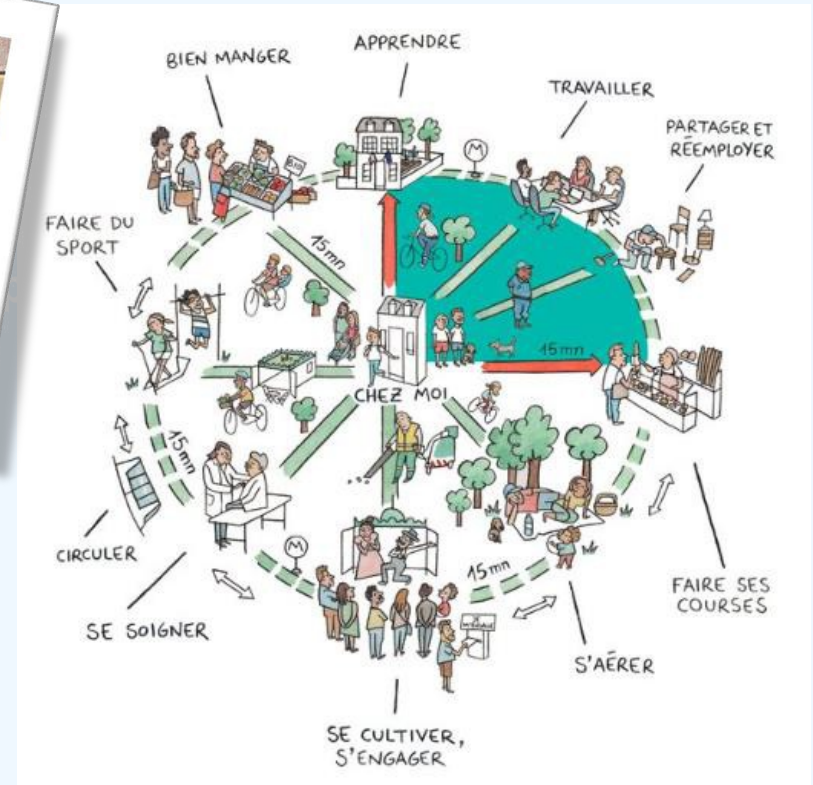
Most people work & live in cities, thus we need a **CO-PRODUCTION** of recovery strategies and packages

## While most of the world was in lockdown, we rediscovered the need to shift from *mobility* to *accessibility* – with implications on urban planning & housing needs

- ✓ Cycling paths
- ✓ Widening of sidewalks
- ✓ Terraces for restaurants
- ✓ Balconies
- ✓ Green spaces
- ✓ Amenities



“15-minute city concept” by C. Moreno  
(applied to Paris)



**Tactical urbanism allowed for great flexibility, which now needs to turn into lasting, long-term solutions. Caution with elitism and inequality!**



# COVID-19 was an eye opener to all forms of inequality across people and places, especially in large cities

## Elderly

Highest mortality group



## Homeless

Challenges for self-isolation



## Disabled

Require specific care



## Women

at risk of income loss and violence

## Refugees & migrants

at higher risk of contracting disease due to living conditions



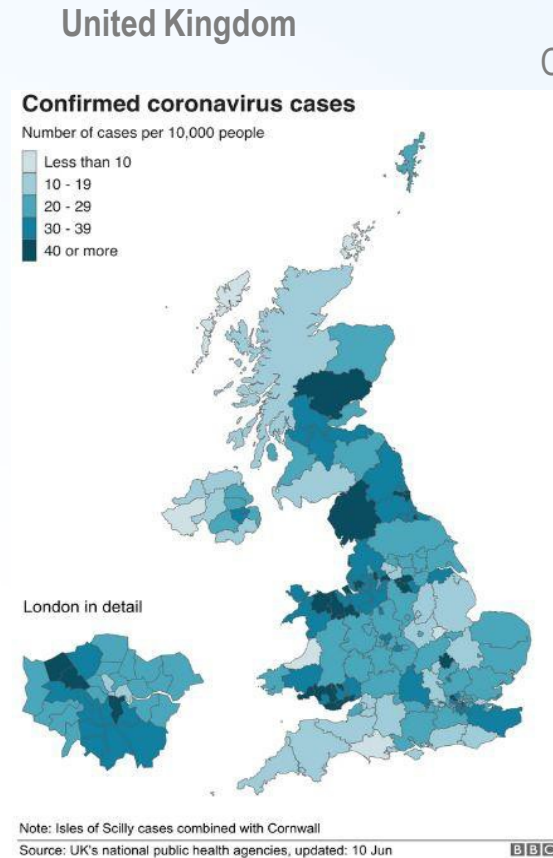
## Youth

Prone to unemployment

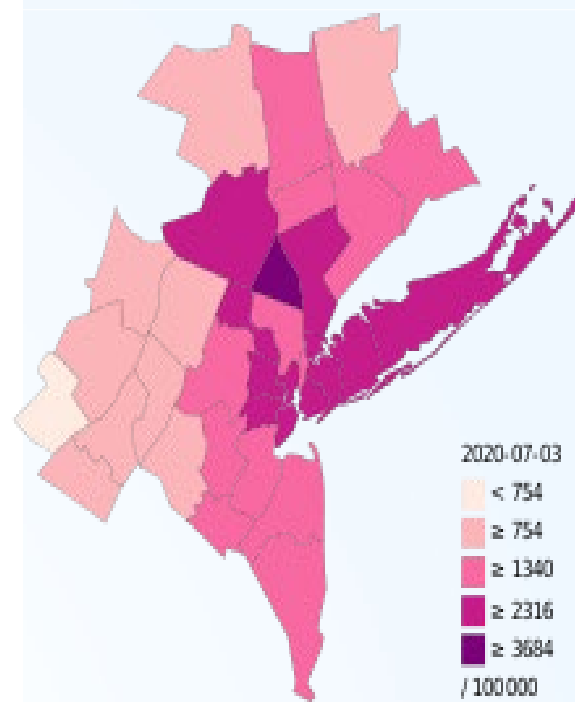
**We need to document & tackle territorial, digital, inter-generational & well-being DIVIDES across and within cities**

5

Density is not the problem – the urban *premium* will likely not turn into an urban *penalty*



New York City Area (US)  
Confirmed cases per 100 000 residents



Globally, cities have **continuously become denser** over the past 40 years

**Mid-size cities** may gain traction in some countries

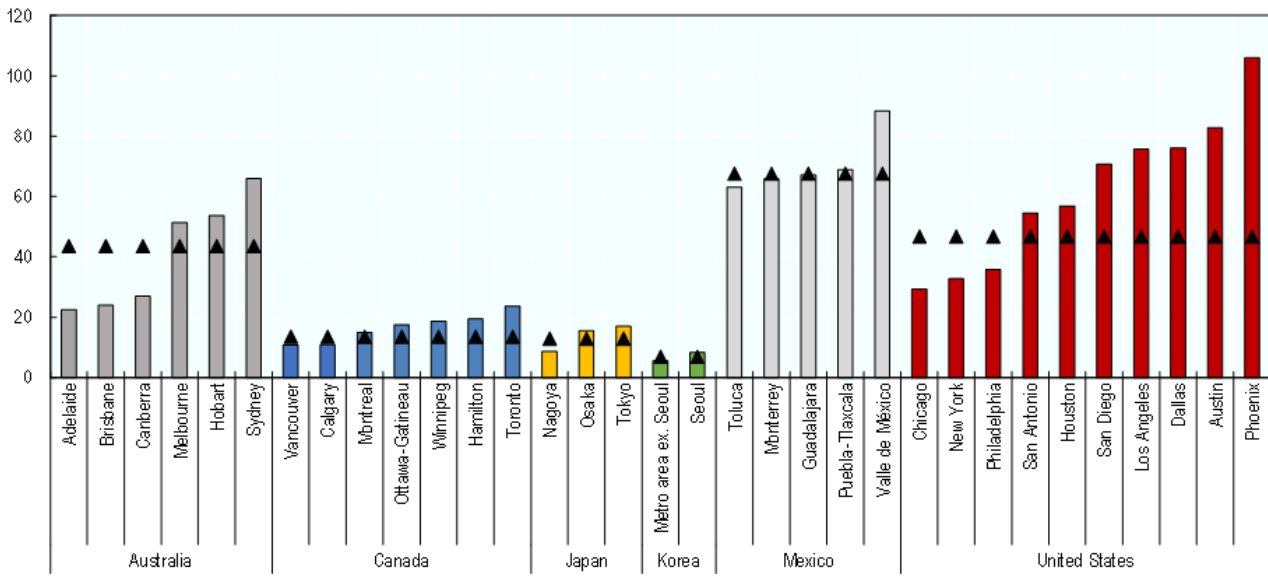
People agglomerate in cities not just for work, but also for **services**

**We need quality urbanisation processes, relying on a “SYSTEM” of cities of all sizes to deliver inclusive growth outcomes**

# COVID-19 has revealed pre-pandemic housing challenges in cities -- both in terms of affordability & quality

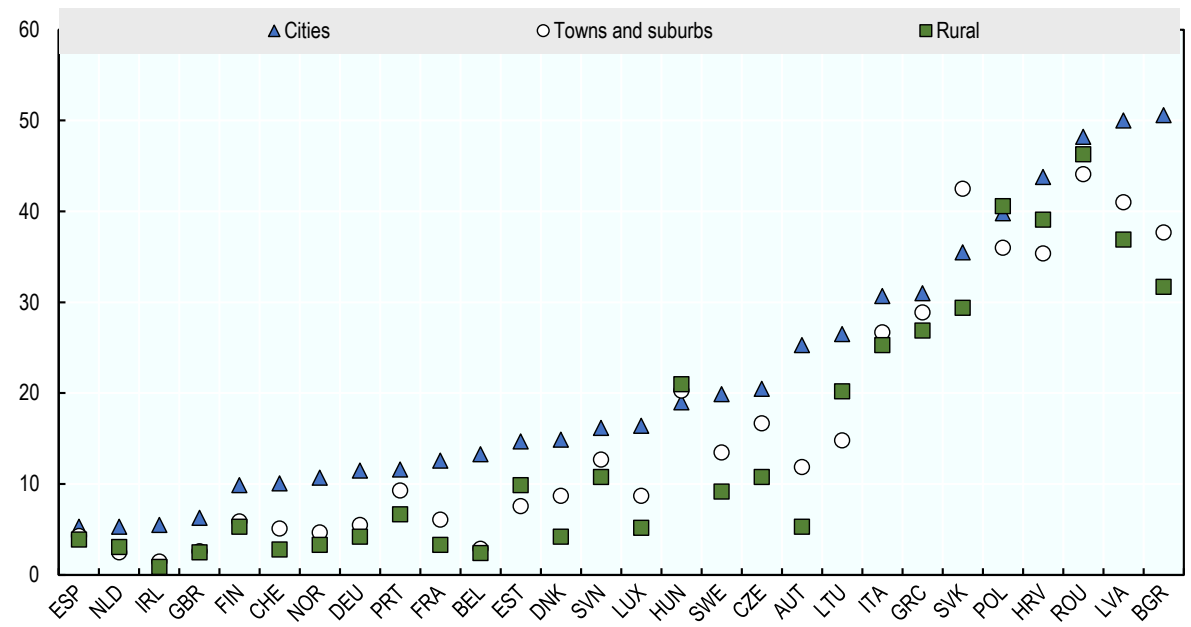
House prices in cities have generally increased faster than national averages

% change of house prices (from Q1 2012 to Q4 2019)



More people live in overcrowded housing in cities

% of total population living in overcrowded housing in Europe, by degree of urbanisation





# **Governments have deployed many emergency measures to secure shelter but such measures need to be complemented by long-term action**

**Many cities deployed emergency measures, e.g.:**

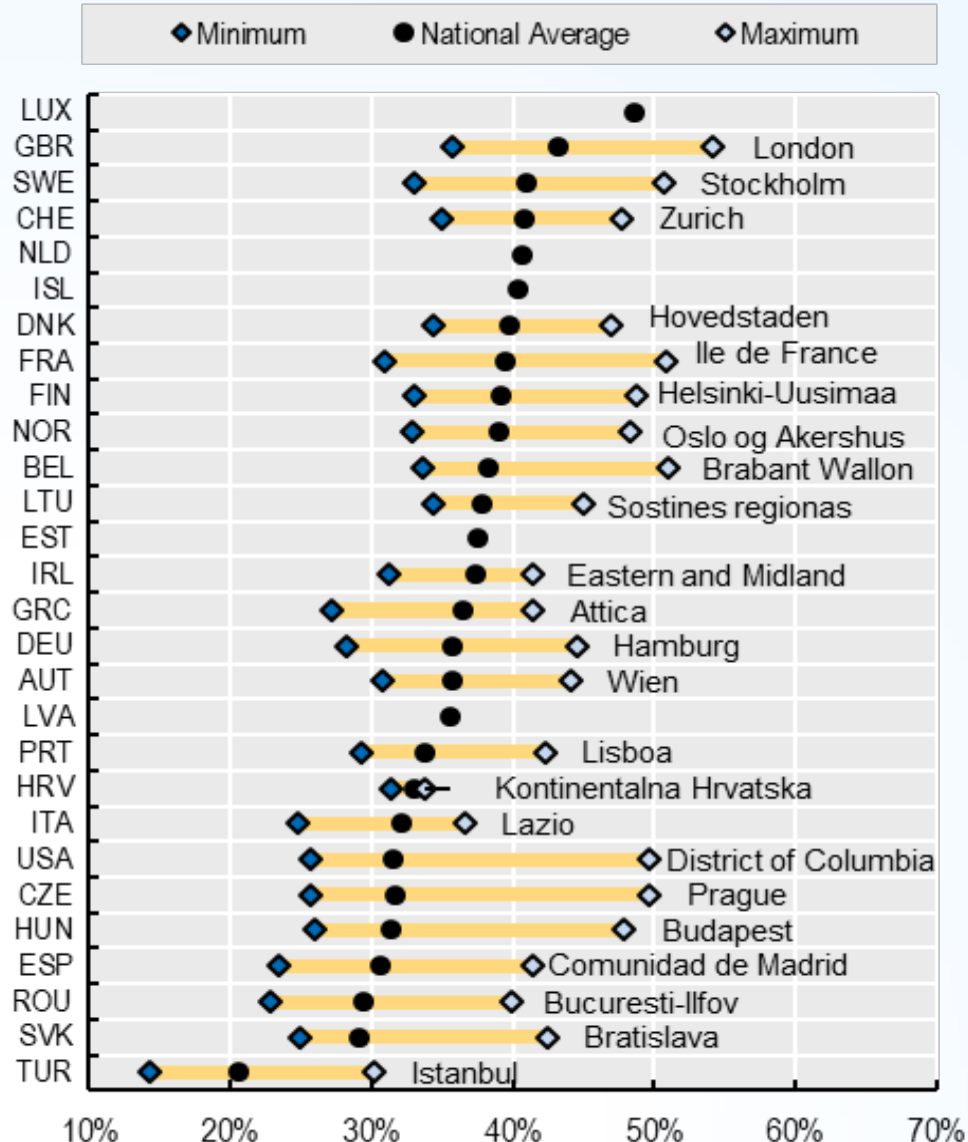
- In Lisbon and Sintra (Portugal), rents for social housing were suspended for several months
- In New York City, the mayor announced that 6 000 people would be relocated to hotel rooms.
- In Bilbao, dedicated spaces have been organised for the care of the homeless, migrants or unaccompanied minors

**Cities need to strengthen the supply of affordable housing in the long term, e.g.:**

- Easing land-use restrictions
- Removing barriers to densification
- Increasing public capital spending on social & affordable housing
- Introducing inclusionary zoning
- Implementing tax instruments to better reflect the real costs of urban sprawl
- Adopting clear tenant-landlord regulations

# Digitalisation has started to change the future of work in cities and our relationship to productivity, democracy, mobility and social interactions

Share of jobs amenable to teleworking



- Within a country, “teleworkability” **varies by 15 percentage points** on average between the regions with the highest and lowest rates
- In 17 out of 23 OECD countries, the **capital region** has the highest share of occupations that can potentially be performed through teleworking

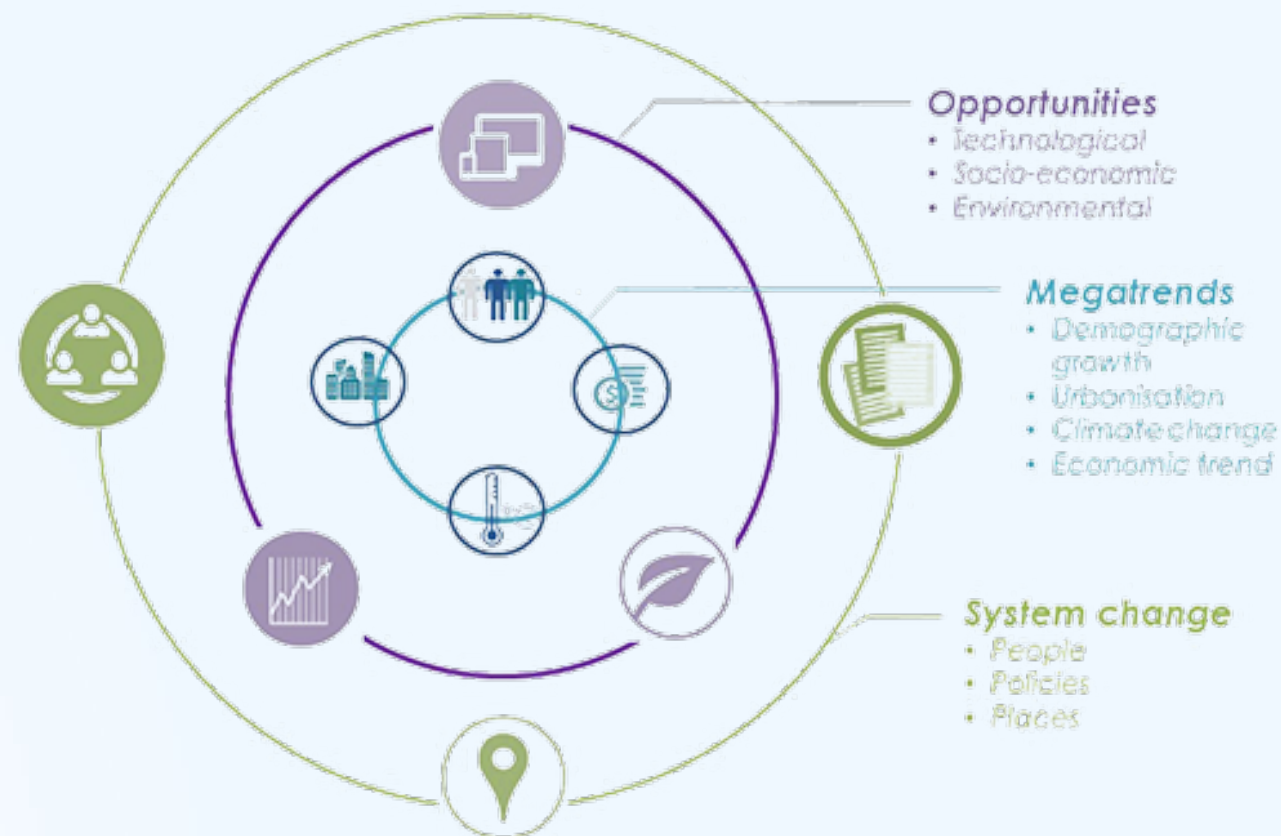
[OECD \(2020\), Capacity for remote working can affect lockdown costs differently across places](#)

**Recovery strategies are a great opportunity to address the digital divides that may hamper the “SMART” cities of the future**

## The “Zoom effect” and the “Greta effect” have accelerated citizens’ environmental awarenesss

The transition from a “linear” to a “circular” economy may now be politically & socially more acceptable

### The concept of Circular Economy

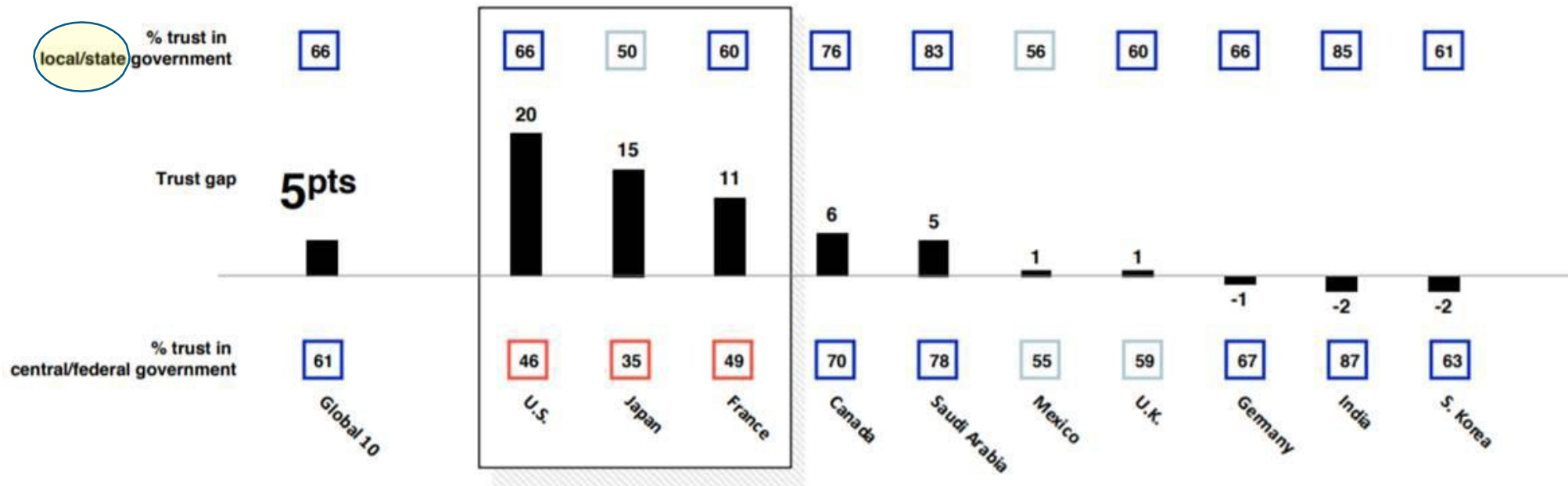


**There should be NO return to normal in terms of how we move, produce, consume and interact in cities**



## COVID-19 holds implications for governance & citizens' trust in their governments

Trust in government increased in some countries during the crisis, but citizens usually trust more **local** than **national** politicians

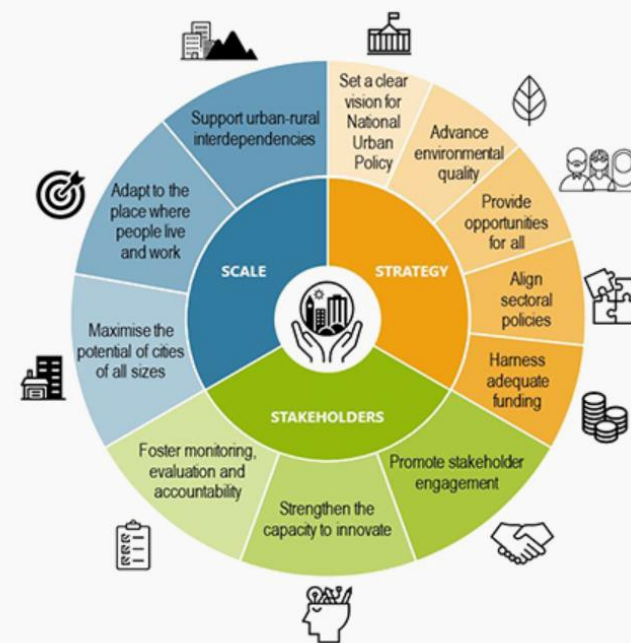


[Edelman Trust Barometer Spring Update](#)

There should be NO return to normal in terms of how decisions are taken, citizens are consulted, and policies are designed to fit for places

## While COVID-19 is new, resilience is not a new concept at all

Building smart, green and inclusive cities for resilience and preparedness to future shocks



OECD (2019)

Source: OECD (2018), [Building Resilient Cities](https://www.oecd.org/cfe/urban-principles.htm)

<https://www.oecd.org/cfe/urban-principles.htm>

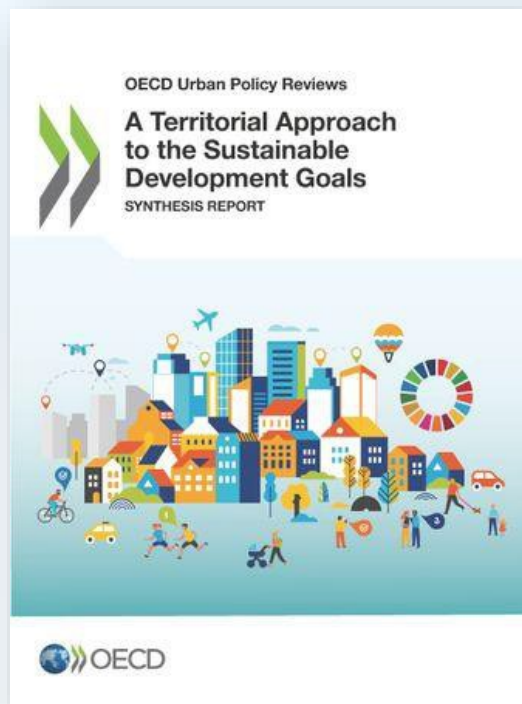
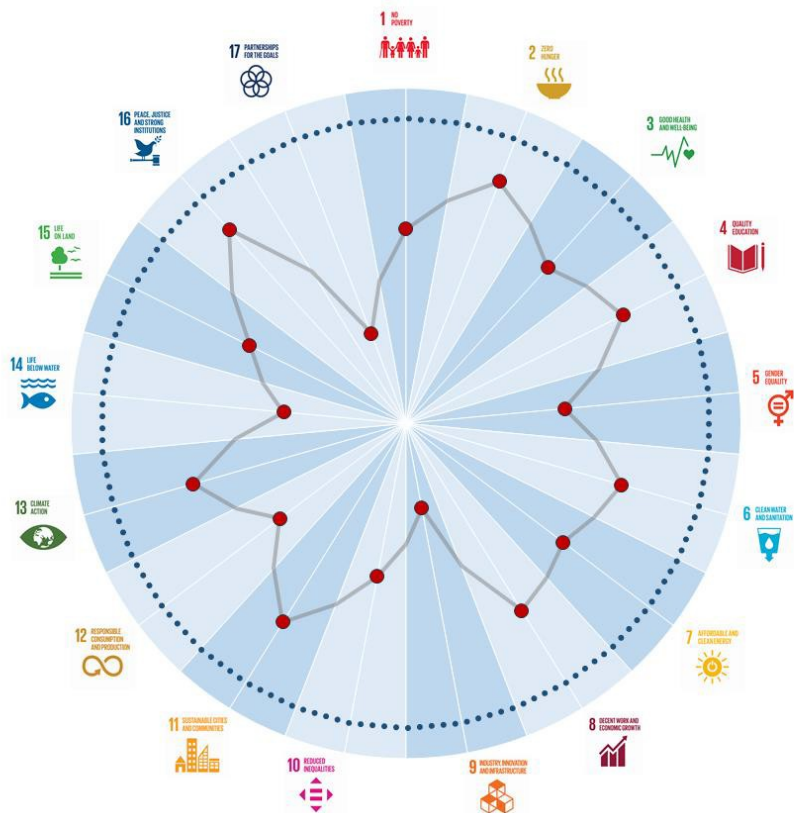
**Most countries know what they have to do to be future-proof.  
The big question is WHO does WHAT at WHICH scale and HOW**

# Never have global agendas been so timely and relevant for cities to fit for the future

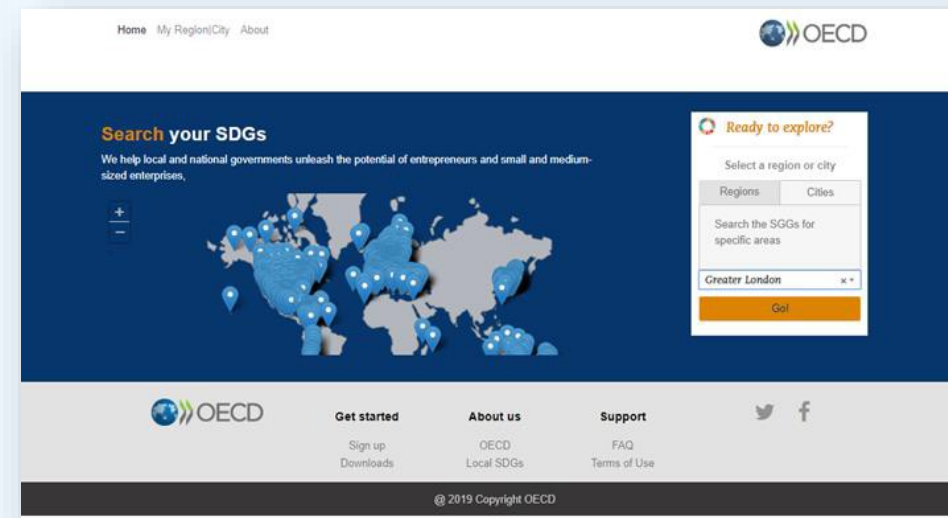
Most cities and regions in the world are **not** on track to meet the SDGs

Distance of OECD Cities to the end values for 2030, by Goal

..... End-value for 2030      —●— OECD Regions, average of Index by Goal (from 0 to 100)



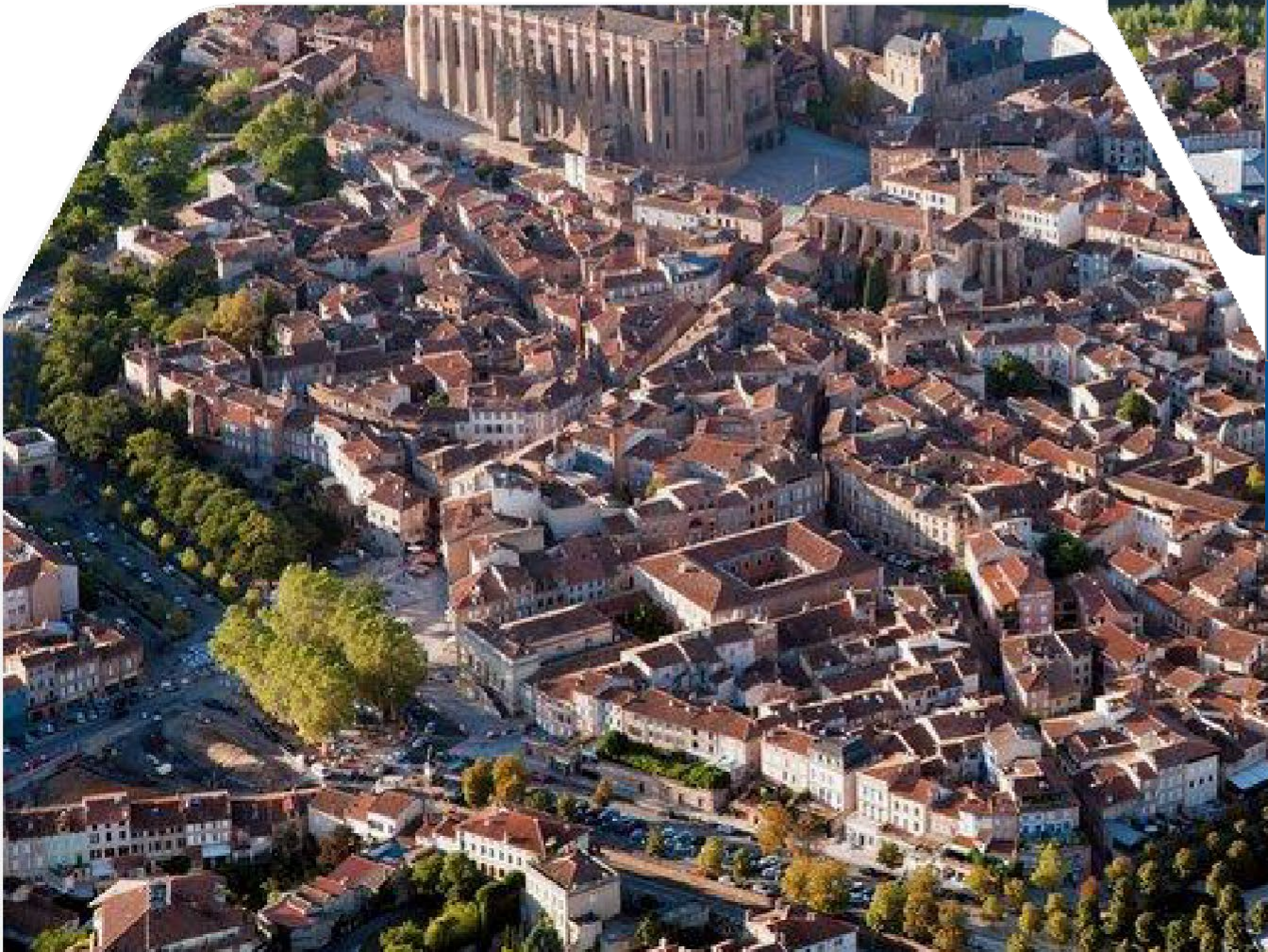
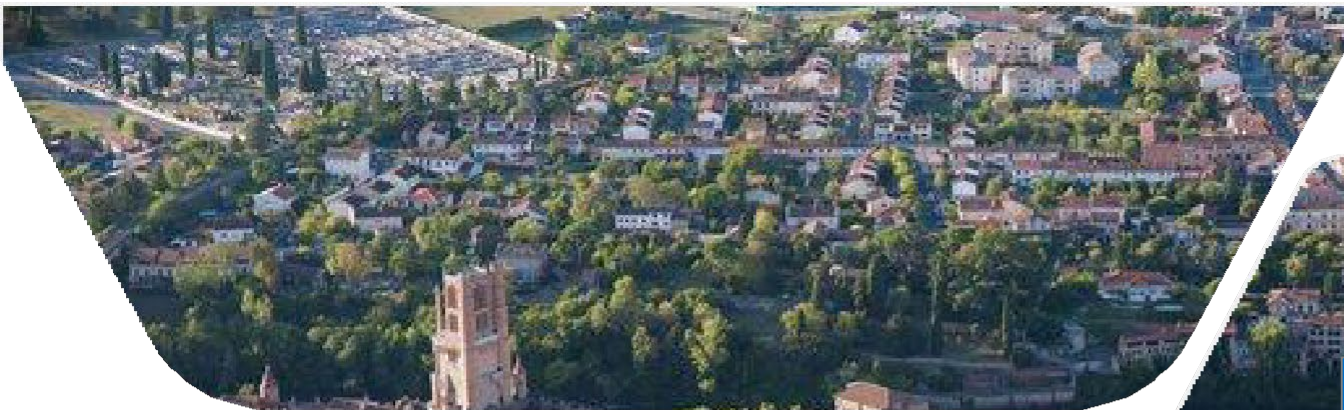
OECD (2020), [A Territorial Approach to the SDGs](#)



OECD visualisation tool for SDGs in regions & cities  
<https://www.oecd-local-sdgs.org/>

To deliver sustainable growth at all scales, these agendas should be used as a **POLICY MAKING** tool, and not (only) as a **COMPLIANCE** agenda





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