

# Future Cities

Survey 2021

Austria, Denmark, Finland,  
Germany, Norway, Sweden,  
Switzerland



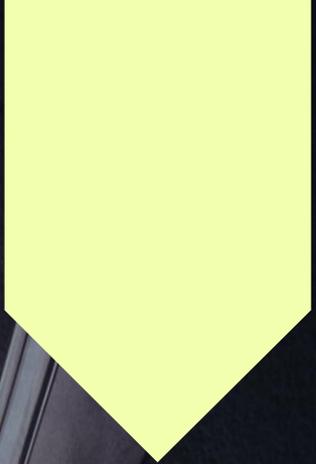
# Background

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Global trends and challenges, such as urbanisation, digitalisation and climate change, will affect how we live in the future.

To build cities that the young people of today want to live in, we need to know what their preferences are.

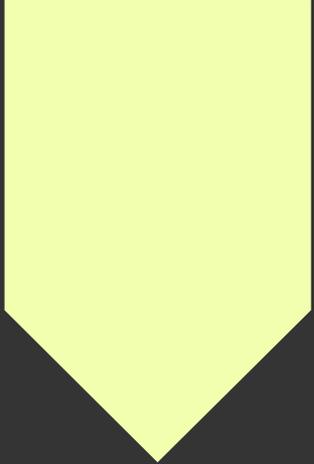
That is why AFRY has conducted a survey of young people in seven European countries: Austria, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland



A woman with long brown hair, wearing a dark blue t-shirt and blue jeans, is watering a variety of green plants on a rooftop garden. She is holding a green watering can. In the background, there are buildings and a clear sky. The text 'The survey' is overlaid in white on the left side of the image.

# The survey

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A yellow downward-pointing arrow shape is located in the top right corner of the page.

Just over 6 000 young Europeans (aged 18-35) responded to our survey in August – September 2021, where we asked them about their attitudes and preferences about life in the city.

## **Main findings**

The pandemic has had some impact on the young generation's attitude towards living in a city.

What comes across is a sustainability-aware generation, with a wish to live in a small- to mid-sized community where there is affordable housing, work opportunities, family and friends and access to nature.

The respondents state that climate change is the biggest challenge future cities are facing, followed by overpopulation and social inequality and segregation.

# Attitude shift towards cities since pandemic

54%

say it's unchanged

24%

state that their attitude towards living in a city has changed negatively as a result of the covid-19 pandemic

11%

has become more positive

*"This pandemic has had a huge impact on how we view our lives in the cities.*

*It has been a time for reflection where people have reconsidered what type of life they are seeking, in combination with completely new patterns of travelling, working, shopping etc in the public space."*

Helena Paulsson, Head of Architecture & Design, AFRY

QUESTION: Has your attitude towards living in a city changed as a result of the covid-19 pandemic?

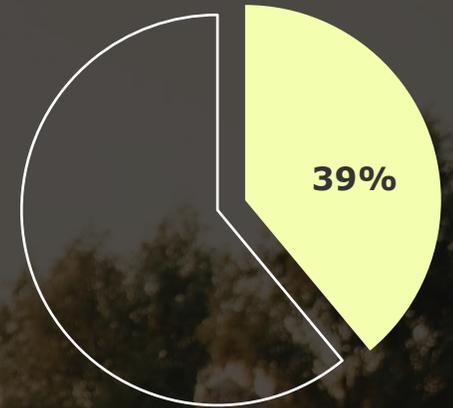
# Future cities are key in the sustainable transition

The next generation is aware of the impact cities can have in creating a more sustainable future, both regarding climate change and social inequality.

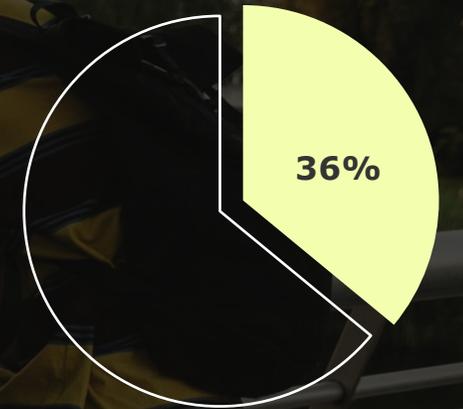
Developing attractive cities must cater to the needs and demands of many different groups.

Can a city afford not to scale up their sustainability work to ensure a safe and accessible life for every citizen – now and in the future?

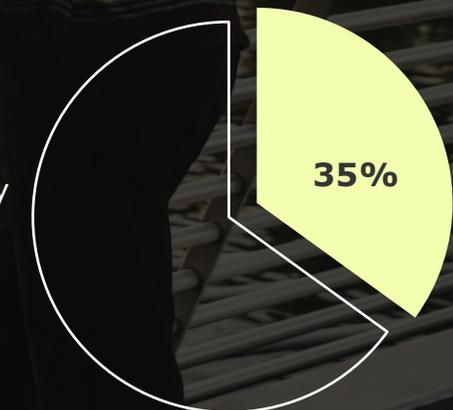
Climate change



Overpopulation



Social inequality

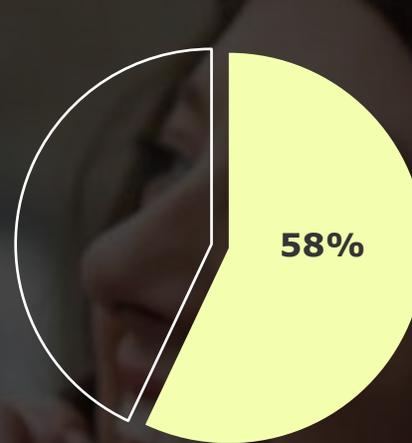


# Confirmed trend towards the smaller and mid-sized cities

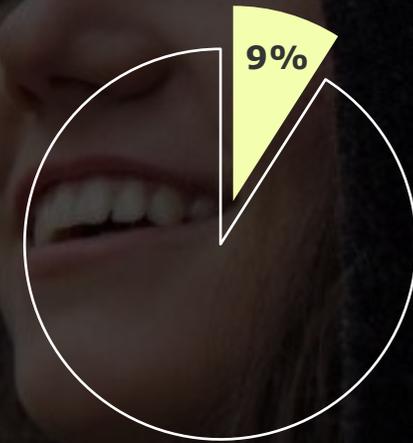
## Are megacities losing their appeal?

A mere tenth wish to live in larger cities, with over 900 000 inhabitants, while the majority in fact prefer to live in cities with less than 100 000 inhabitants.

One third (31 %) want to live in communities with no more than 20,000 inhabitants, this being especially true for Austria and Switzerland, while young adults living in the Nordic countries prefer a mid-sized city.



58% prefer communities with less than 100 000 inhabitants.

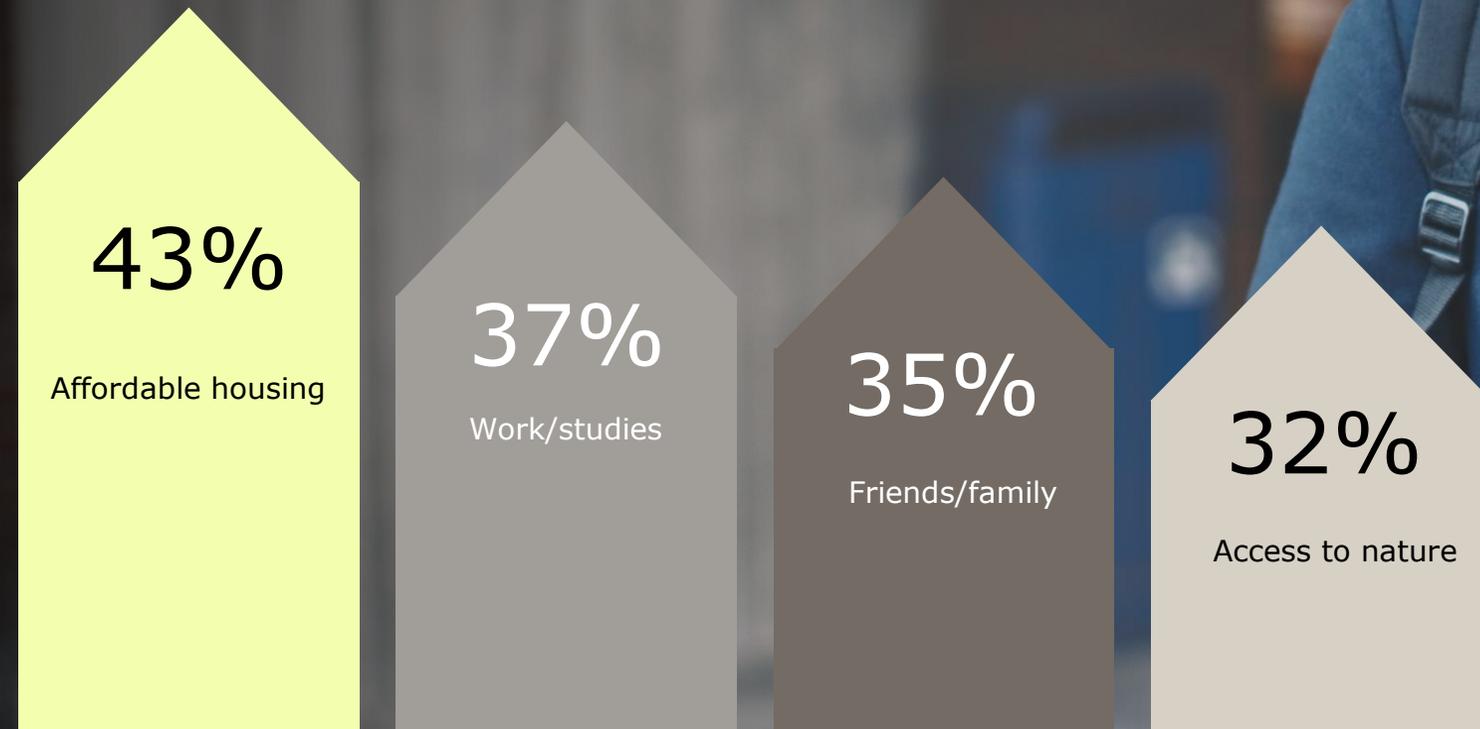


9% want to live in a community with over 900 000 inhabitants.

QUESTION: What size of community would you prefer to live in, i.e. how big would you like your local population to be?

# A generation with basic needs and priorities

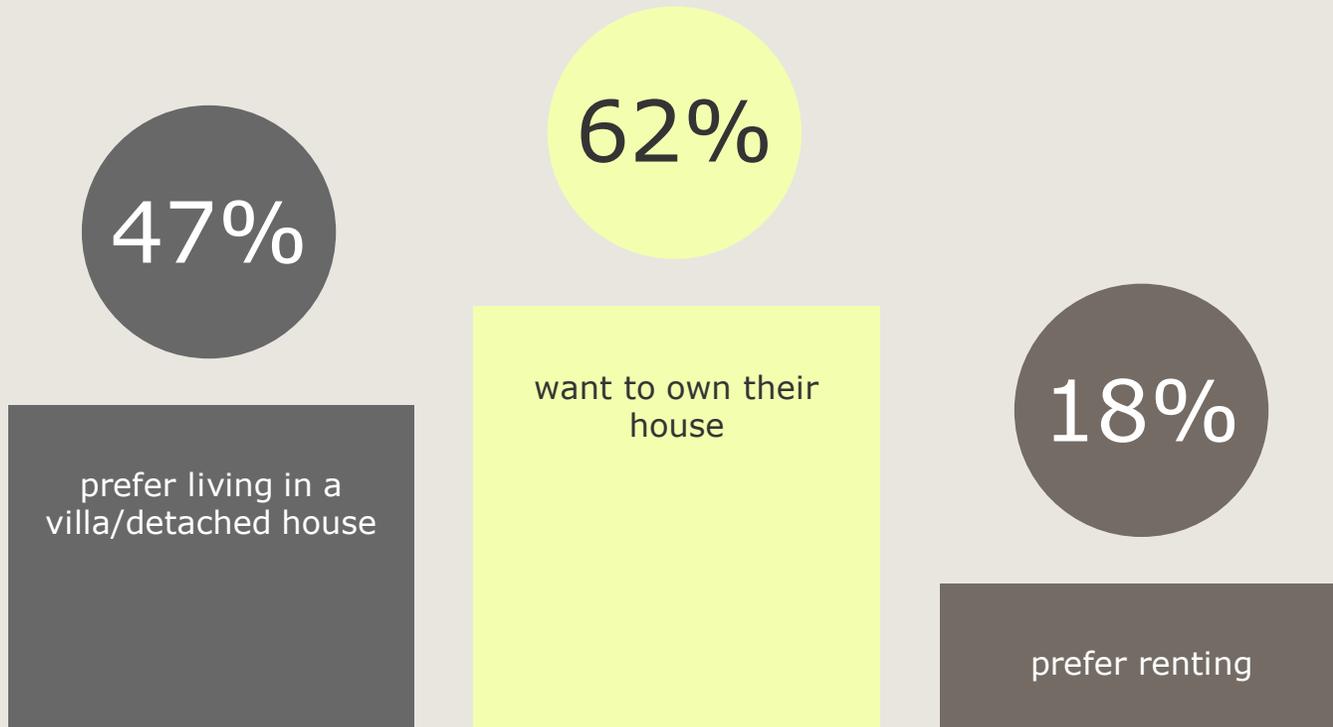
The identified main drivers for choosing where to live, point outside of the larger cities, as affordable housing and access to nature rate highly.



QUESTION: Which considerations are the most important to you when choosing where to live? Choose up to 3 options.



# The future generation wants to be home-owners



We know that the young prefer the smaller sized cities, and that affordable housing is a big factor in choosing where to live.

Another piece of the puzzle that describes what life they are seeking could be added here: almost half of the respondents (47 %) prefer to live in a villa/detached house.

Furthermore, the preferred form of residence is owning their home, while no more than 18 % prefer renting.

# Young people value social inclusion and affordable housing

42%

Affordable housing

32%

people feeling safe  
in public spaces

32%

efficient public  
transport and bike  
lanes

To achieve long-term sustainability, many different areas in society need to work together to improve and ensure the quality of life for the inhabitants.

The young Europeans we asked highlight the inclusive aspects of a future city – stating affordable housing, safety in public spaces, and efficient public transport systems as the most important themes for achieving a sustainable community.

This indicates that their view of a sustainable city is an accessible and inclusive place to live.

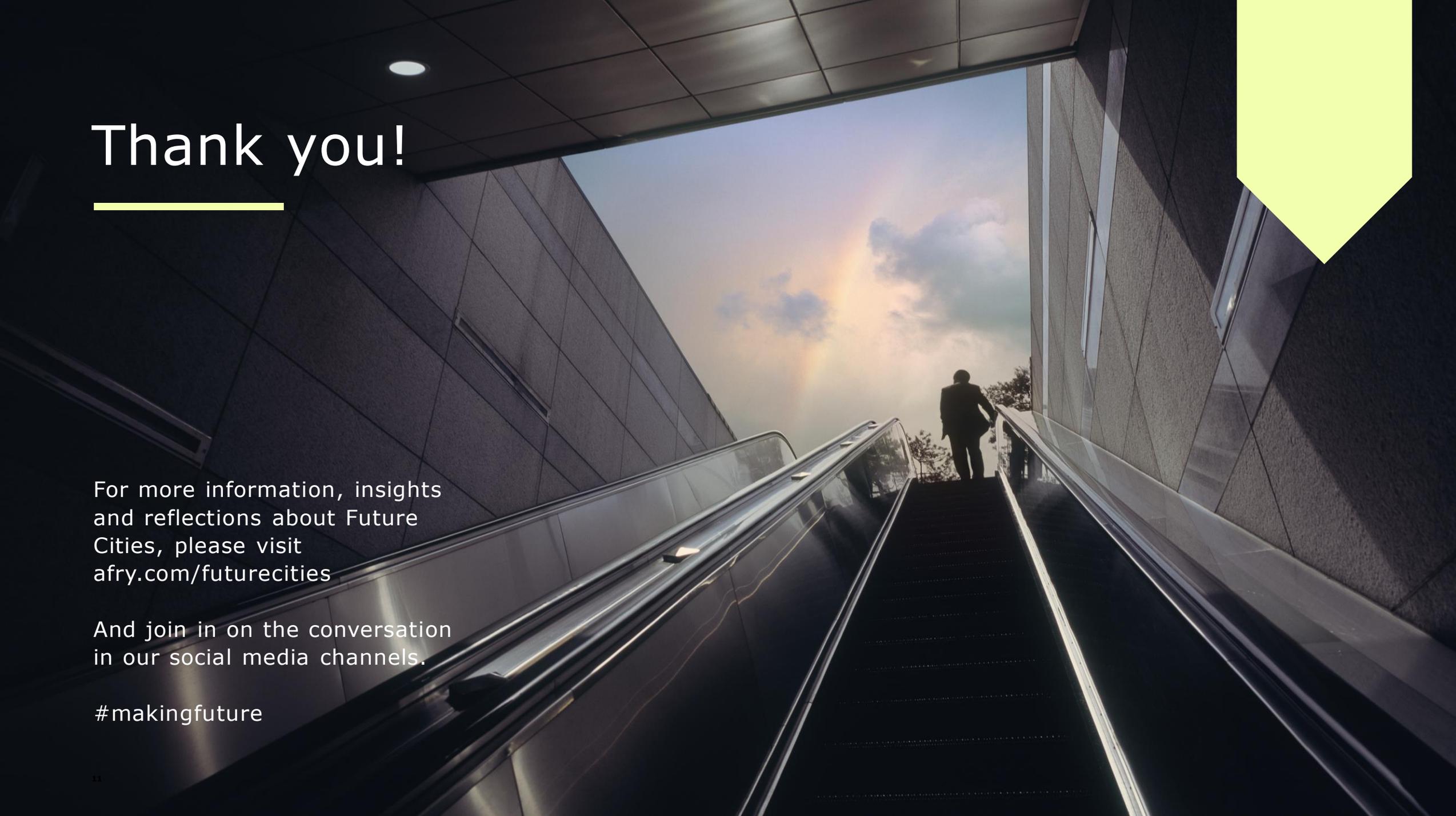
**QUESTION:** Which of the following do you consider the most important in order to achieve a financially, socially and environmentally sustainable community?

# Sustainability clearly matters to young people

Not only do young people see climate change as the biggest challenge for future cities. Almost half of the respondents (47 percent) state that it's important, or very important that their local decision makers have an ambitious sustainability agenda, and 44 percent say that sustainability is important, or very important, when choosing where to live.

47%

state that it's important, or very important, that their local decision-makers have an ambitious sustainability agenda.

A low-angle shot of a person walking up a modern, metallic escalator. The person is silhouetted against a bright sunset sky with scattered clouds. The escalator is flanked by dark, textured walls. A bright yellow decorative shape is in the top right corner.

# Thank you!

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For more information, insights and reflections about Future Cities, please visit [afry.com/futurecities](https://afry.com/futurecities)

And join in on the conversation in our social media channels.

#makingfuture