

World Cities Day 2025

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31 October 2025

Overview

World Cities Day brings Urban October to an end on 31 October each year and was first celebrated in 2014. As with World Habitat Day, a global observance is held in a different city each year and the day focuses on a specific theme. It aims to raise international awareness of urbanization trends, challenges, and visions for sustainable urban development, promote international cooperation, and contribute to global efforts to build equitable, prosperous, sustainable, and inclusive cities that provide their communities with better living environments and quality of life.

On 31 October 2025, the Global Observance of World Cities Day will take place in Bogotá, Colombia, under the topic of people-centred smart cities. This theme reflects the growing recognition that the transformative power of digital technologies is reshaping urban life globally, offering profound opportunities to enhance how cities and human settlements are designed, planned, managed and governed. In an era marked by both urban and digital transitions, cities are increasingly adopting digital technology solutions and data to deliver better services for residents and address critical urban challenges and opportunities.

People-centred smart cities harness digital innovation while ensuring that the design and implementation of technologies are driven by the needs of people and communities and full consideration of broader societal and environmental impacts. This is essential to accelerate progress in the implementation of the New Urban Agenda and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.



The 2025 World Cities Day will serve as a dynamic catalyst to promote innovation and digital transformation for sustainable urbanization while putting people at the centre. In particular, it serves to demonstrate how digital technology is a necessary vehicle to tackle some of the most pressing challenges of our time. One of the most urgent of these is the global housing crisis, with 2.8 billion people lacking access to adequate housing, 1.1 billion living in informal settlements and slums, and over 300 million experiencing homelessness.

Despite being recognised as a human right, the right to adequate housing remains largely unfulfilled impacting individuals, communities, and societies at their very core. Given the scale of this crisis, digitally enabled solutions are essential to drive impact at scale towards promoting access to housing, land and basic services globally. This also aligns with the commitment of world leaders in the Pact for the Future¹ to Ensure access for all to adequate, safe and affordable housing.

UN-Habitat's new strategic plan 2026-2029² which has a central focus on housing, land and basic services, will also serve as a major vehicle for advancing progress towards adequate housing and sustainable urbanization globally. It is grounded in the understanding that the failure to provide adequate housing and to address informal settlements and slums in a timely manner has cascading negative effects that undermine sustainable development and exacerbate existing inequalities. Through the implementation of this plan, UN-Habitat seeks to deliver impact by addressing the global housing crisis alongside other pressing challenges including poverty, climate change and humanitarian crises.

The official global observance ceremony will be followed by two moderated roundtables to explore the topic of people-centred smart cities in depth. Additionally, this year's global observance of World Cities Day will be preceded by several in-depth workshops organized by the city of Bogotá, inaugurating on 30 October.

Objectives

The aim is to promote people-centred smart cities and demonstrate how crucial it is for smart cities to prioritize human needs, inclusivity, and accessibility. Second, the observance will provide a platform for cities to exchange best practices, experiences and strategies in implementing people-centred smart city initiatives globally, especially in addressing key challenges such as the global housing crisis. Lastly, by increasing global awareness about the role of technology and innovation in advancing improved access to adequate housing and achieving urban development, the goal is to foster and encourage international cooperation and collaboration among all societal sectors on People-Centred Smart Cities.

Expected outcomes

- 1 Enhanced understanding of the relevance and need for people-centred smart cities worldwide and the opportunities to accelerate urban digital transformation.
- 2 Improved exchange on existing practices and the potential of innovation and digital technology to transform urban living including through the delivery of adequate housing, land and urban basic services for all.
- 3 Agreed action and partnerships to leverage the potential of digital technology for promoting adequate housing and sustainable urbanization.

¹ <https://www.un.org/en/summit-of-the-future/pact-for-the-future>

² <https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/2025/04/2503795e.pdf>