

**Can we
expect a
commuter
reboot?**



Remember when working from home was a guilty pleasure and Zoom was just an ice lolly? The pandemic has changed our working lives beyond recognition - or at least put turbochargers under trends that were already under way.

If digital meetings and remote working are here to stay, is this the end of the traditional commute? If you're one of those predicting a grand exodus from cities and suburbs, prepare for disappointment. Our research suggests that workers won't be rushing to swap the standard 60-minute maximum daily commute for a longer journey once or twice a week - even if it means they can afford a bigger house or a more lavish lifestyle.

A home close to both work and transport remains a key priority for a majority of the home-movers we surveyed. Almost two thirds (64%) said that access to public transport was important, and 55% wanted to live close to work. Almost half (49%) said they want to live within 10 miles of work.

At the other end of the journey, the largest proportion of respondents (26%) said they wanted to be no more than two miles from the nearest transport hub.

"The new commuter science will look very much like the old commuter science," says [Stephanie McMahon](#), head of research at BNP Paribas Real Estate.

“ THE PANDEMIC HAS SPEEDED UP THE TREND TOWARDS PART-TIME WORKING FROM HOME, BUT WORKERS WILL STILL BE MAKING REGULAR TRIPS TO THE OFFICE ”

And where those workers live and where those offices are isn't likely going to change for the majority. Big employers still need to be close to public-transport hubs and commuters will still want their journey to be as short and simple as possible.

"After what we've been through who wouldn't want a bit more space? But with the vaccinations continuing to be rolled out on a mass scale, and bars, restaurants and theatres re-opening, big cities such as London, Leeds



and Edinburgh will continue to exert a strong gravitational pull, especially for younger buyers and renters. And that's even before factoring in the high cost of a longer train journey, even if it's not every day," she says.

What the pandemic has changed - for now at least - is how we make those journeys. Our survey shows that we have never been more reliant on the car. It is the primary mode of travel for 57% of respondents. Just 16% cited walking/running, 11% public transport and 5% cycling.

If this trend continues, it could have serious implications both for the environment, thanks to increased pollution and carbon emissions, and for the future of our cities. Will buses, local trains and tubes remain a last resort used only by those who can't avoid it - usually those on the lowest incomes? If so, the long-term effect will be increased congestion on the roads and financial crises for providers of public transport.

Happily, [Stephanie McMahon](#) predicts a gradual return to public transport over the course of this year. "Traffic jams are a hassle, parking is difficult and expensive and the cost of driving in cities is rising, so I expect a slow return to buses and trains once we start to feel safe. Some habits may remain - we'll still see masks and there will probably be some degree of social distancing, which may actually make us healthier overall," she says.

What will be your primary form of travel?

Car	57%
By Foot (Walk/Run)	16%
Bus/Train	11%
Bicycle/Electric Bicycle	5%
Car share (Car with others)	5%
Motorbike/Scooter	3%

The long-term effect of the pandemic on commuting is unlikely to be any greater in Europe than it is in Britain, according to [Benoit Lefebvre](#), Economist Europe at BNP Paribas Real Estate.

"In France, Paris will still be the most attractive place to live. The best jobs are there, but it's not just work: Paris also has the best schools, the best transport and the best culture, so even if there is an increase in the number of days working at home, everybody will want to remain close to all that," he says. The next decade's Grand Paris transport project - improving links between outer districts - and the 2024 Olympics will only add to its dominance.

Commuter life in Germany is unlikely to change much, either - though for different reasons. "Commuting in Germany has never been that difficult. The cities are smaller - Berlin has a population of just 3.5 million, compared with the 12 million who live in the Paris region - so journeys are shorter. Public transport is very efficient and traffic congestion is less of a problem," says [Benoit Lefebvre](#). In addition, he says, German corporations would be reluctant to encourage working from home after the pandemic, partly because the country never experienced a total lockdown.

