DEMOS

Legal & General

POST PANDEMIC PLACES

FROM
RENEW NORMAL:
THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSION
ON LIFE AFTER COVID-19

MARCH 2021

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All errors and omissions are the authors' own.

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FOREWORD

Covid-19 has driven major change to people's lives and global economies. Perceptions have been altered, and our ideas around what we need from our homes, work, and communities have been challenged. What is less clear is which dynamics are here to stay and which are temporary, becoming the new war-stories we tell our grandchildren of how we lived during an exceptional and unique time.

As business and government look to respond to these new challenges, and support the UK in Building Back Better, we will need to be increasingly creative. Regions need to evaluate how they successfully deliver 'place' through a new lens, meeting evolving social needs and the very real impacts of the climate crisis.

At Legal & General, we have practiced Inclusive Capitalism for well over a decade now, but we know that our long-held mission to 'level up' and 'building back better' has never been more important. The consequence of the pandemic has been more inequality and an increased probability of a K-shaped recovery. This has added new urgency. With the prospect of economic uncertainty, it is now imperative not just to set out a clear vision and policy framework, to support areas and sectors which could be left further behind, but also to deliver it for our towns and cities.

As one of the UK's leading financial services groups, stewarding over £1.2 trillion of society's pensions and savings, Legal & General is dedicated to playing our part in supporting the UK bounce back. As a business, we are investing to deliver positive social impact through some of the UK's most strategically important regeneration schemes, such as those in Cardiff, Sunderland, Newcastle, Oxford, and Salford. These are fast transforming and reshaping Britain's landscape; bringing jobs and housing back into the centre of cities and better utilising our existing infrastructure.

Good quality places that are intra- and inter-connected are critical to supporting the UK's economic position, fuelling future growth and making sure that it's inclusive. This research, which has surveyed over 20,000 people across the country, seeks to establish a clear people-centred benchmark of local and national needs. It has looked at how to boost jobs, reinvigorate our retail sector, re-evaluate office requirements, re-think place-making, support growth businesses and digital infrastructure and tackle the ever-growing crises in housing and climate change. The findings show that major changes in daily routine have resulted in a new focus on local areas, with more people wanting to spend time and money in their locality. Long-term working from home remains popular and support for new local shops and local desk space is widespread. Lack of affordable housing remains a key issue.

Our built environments, especially in our great towns and cities, are complex, and over-simplification of changing needs and dynamics may amplify inequalities further. Our experience from investing £29 billion across the UK tells us that rapid progress will require a new approach that mobilises communities through partnerships between local government, universities, schools, health trusts, employers, and property developers. City and regional deals play an important role in fostering localism: levelling up cannot be organised top-down from Whitehall alone. Local communities need to be given the right powers and necessary funding to ensure that investment is being put to use where it is most required.

In the 1850s and 1860s, significant investments in the built environment dragged millions of people out of poverty. From railways, to the Manchester Ship Canal and the London sewerage system; these inventions changed the way we lived and propelled the UK into a global leadership position. We now have a once-in-a-life-time opportunity to do this again, taking advantage of the new urban and suburban landscape, changes in living and migration patterns and the opportunities around digital transformation which have accelerated overnight. With the roadmap set for our emergence from Covid-19, we are committed to playing our role in creating this economic and social resurgence. We trust that this research will provide valuable insights to help inform this vision.

Nigel Wilson
Chief Executive of Legal & General Group

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

KEY FINDINGS

- Instead of worrying about the effect of remote working on urban centres, the government should embrace its potential to spread spending power over a wider geographic area and so contribute to 'levelling up'.
- Government should spur the market for remote working desk spaces by introducing tax incentives for 'remote working vouchers', similar in design to the current childcare voucher scheme, that could be redeemed at premises of an employee's choice for firms that participate.
- In contrast to some media reports, we find that most people who have moved home explicitly because of the pandemic are young, on low incomes, and are moving *within* urban areas.
- Government should fulfil its commitment made in the Queen's Speech of December 2019 to make flexible working the default unless employers have good reason not to; this should explicitly include flexibility of location.
- Local authorities should be required to provide all tenants and residents who request it, a modest outdoor space for their own use within a reasonable travel distance of their home.

The pandemic has placed 'local' in the spotlight. As our horizons have narrowed, we have a greater awareness, and in many cases, appreciation of our local areas and communities.

We conducted a large, representative poll of 20,000 adults in Britain during December 2020 that was designed to capture how people were feeling about their local area. Our results therefore reflect a particular moment in the pandemic, in between the second and third lockdowns, when cases were rising but there was also news of effective vaccines. That poll was then supplemented by focus groups undertaken in the middle of the third lockdown, in February 2021.

Our main conclusion is that people's relationship with 'place' appears to have become stronger, and that there is evidence this will cause a change of behaviour, including spending, into the medium-term. This in turn has implications for regional policy, company organisation and the way that land is used in urban areas.

The first result is that people's perception of 'place' has changed because of the pandemic: most people think that what is on offer to them locally has become more important. This is particularly true for people who have had no choice but to spend more time in their local area than before, due to being furloughed or required to work from home because of the pandemic. Areas with higher worklessness have experienced less of a *change* in terms of how their population is connecting with their local place.

We find that two-thirds of the working population (65%) had their daily location forcibly altered as a result of the pandemic at some stage during 2020, either through working from home or furlough.

As a proportion of the total adult population, including retired people and those who do not work for other reasons, this means 37% of the population were either furloughed or required to work from home at some stage during 2020 because of the pandemic. Around one in ten (9%) of the total population experienced both changes over the course of the year.

Being more aware about the importance of 'place' is, however, a different thing from being satisfied with it. By the end of 2020, 5% of the population - around 2.5 million people - told us they had moved for reasons explicitly relating to the pandemic, with another 5.5 million saying they planned to do so or were considering it. This represents a doubling of the number of people reconsidering their living arrangements.

Younger adults, living in households with incomes under £20,000, are particularly likely to have moved during 2020 as a result of the pandemic. The reasons for moving are complex and may be personal as well as driven by perceptions of 'place': seeking more suitable housing and wanting to be nearer family or in a more supportive community are the most commonly cited reasons for having moved. There are also signs of economic distress: being 'unable to afford' the original location and 'looking for better job opportunities' are both also cited in the top five reasons.

Despite headlines about affluent households escaping to the countryside, our data suggests the bigger relocation effect is among low-paid young urban workers moving *within* densely built-up areas. There are also important implications for equality: around 1 in 10 of all people from an ethnic minority moved for reasons relating to the pandemic during 2020 (9.5%), over double the proportion of people who stated their ethnicity was white (4.2%).

The new focus on locality seems here to stay: more people (36%) thought they would spend more time in their local area after the pandemic than thought they would spend less (10%), with younger adults, people in work, those on higher incomes and people living in larger families all more likely to say they will spend more time in their local area than before the pandemic.

The forced change in daily routines has kindled a familiarity with local places that people intend to maintain: regardless of location, people who have been furloughed or required to work from home were more likely to say that they planned to spend more time locally after the pandemic than they had before.

Working from home is popular: A full 79% of people who were required to work from home want to continue doing so, at least part (57%), if not all (22%) of the time.

There is support for having more local desk space for remote office workers, particularly among young people and those required to work from home during the pandemic.

Considering spending patterns, people are looking forward to spending more money in their local neighbourhoods and town centres when the restrictions are lifted than they did before the pandemic, with those who were required to work from home being even more likely to do so. This effect is positive in all parts of the country but particularly so in the most urban areas, that have higher proportions of people who were required to work from home.

The more affluent are also particularly likely to say they will spend more money online after the pandemic than they had before, although some of this may still be to order from local outlets.

Our policy recommendations that arise from these results are listed on the next page.

LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS

1. A move to more remote working, flexible in location, should be actively pursued by the Government as an explicit tool for the regeneration of all types of residential area, and to widen economic participation.
2. The Government should take urgent action to fulfil its stated intention of making all jobs flexible by default, with location flexibility explicitly included. This would shift the legal balance in favour of remote working, with the burden of proof lying on employers to demonstrate why a specified location is required in their particular circumstances, which can then be challenged at a tribunal.
3. The government should spur the market for remote-working desk spaces by introducing tax incentives for 'remote-working vouchers', similar in design to the current childcare voucher scheme, that could be redeemed at premises of an employee's choice for firms that participate.
4. The government's regional regeneration policy should urgently pivot towards the very specific geographic locations where there are less homeworkers, to prevent them falling further behind. One option might be to convert local civic buildings to remote working spaces that could be used by any civil servant, whether living locally or wishing to relocate from elsewhere, to help push spending power out across the country.
5. The pandemic, and shift to homeworking, presents a challenge to the concept of high population-density urban accommodation. Demos has previously argued for future homes to be built with a mix of local amenities. Recent experience accentuates the need for '15 minute neighbourhoods' with places to meet and work - including remote working - as well as outdoor public spaces for leisure and recreation.
6. All urban centre tenants and residents should have a new right to a modest outdoor space for their own use should they want it, whether to garden, play or simply relax. This does not necessarily need to adjoin their home but, like an allotment, should be within a reasonable travel distance. Local authorities should be given the responsibility for fulfilling requests, with different solutions possible in different parts of the country.

INTRODUCTION

The idea for this research project emerged from a prior piece of work that was conducted towards the end of the first national lockdown, in May-June 2020.

At that time, Demos conducted an open access survey that collected and mapped the stories and insights from nearly 12,000 people of how they had been affected by the initial stage of pandemic in every area of their lives - from health, education, employment and finances to their relationships with their family and friends and their local communities. Under the banner of Renew Normal, these insights were then used to map the practical and policy changes that had been most influential during this period.[1]

1 Demos. *Britain under Lockdown*. 28 August 2020. Available at: https://demos.co.uk/project/britain-under-lockdown/ [Accessed 8 March 2021]

As part of this, we found that people's relationship with 'place' was a central theme of their lockdown experience.

> *Because I live near the sea and the South Downs National Park exercise and nature were readily available. It also gave me a sense of place and reminded me of the ole [sic] expression from my Yorkshire childhood "Where do you belong?"*
>
> Male, 70+, white, South East England

> *Using our local pocket park more for walking and becoming more familiar with our surroundings as doing things on foot.*
>
> Female 50-59, Asian/Asian British, East of England

Some enjoyed spending more time outdoors in their locality, seeing their parks and rural spaces as a life-line. For others, their amenities were found lacking, just at the time when they were needed the most.

> *My local park and having dogs [is] key to my sanity.*
>
> **Female, 70+, white, London**
>
> *Normally we are out at local parks and attractions a lot ... however it doesn't feel safe to do so as when we did a lot of people are not distancing at all. So our walks are in an urban environment which affects our mental health with 2 kids having to be entertained a lot. [Female 30-39, Mixed/multiple ethnic groups, North West England]*
>
> *Increased litter in parks, need more bins!*
>
> **Male 30-39, white, London**

Similarly, whereas some people could see the potential to capitalise on the opportunities provided by change, for others there was a wistfulness for what they felt had been lost.

> *Moving to remote working could leave potential 'greening up' of spaces in city centres as the need for office space reduces.*
>
> Male 30-39, white, South West England

> *I still think it is incredibly important to have an office where colleagues can work together in close proximity… I also like to go for that after work drink and still be based in a vibrant, city centre location.*
>
> Male 30-39, Mixed/multiple ethnic groups, London

> *I have enjoyed nature far more than previously. The reduction in grass verge cutting has been great for wildlife and should inform future policy decisions.*
>
> Man, 50s, Yorkshire & Humberside

And, as well as re-evaluating their relationship with 'place', some people had deep concerns about returning to previous levels of mobility, suggesting that the focus on local is here to stay.

> *I don't want to use buses or Underground in London now. I am not sure if I would use the train….I do not have a car and haven't had one for over 25 years. I do not have enough income to afford one even if I could still drive safely and wanted to.*
>
> Woman, 50s, East of England

> *I value the simpler things in life more - a BBQ, a game of golf, a run in the park. I don't like busy cities and don't want to return to commuting.*
>
> Male 30-39, white, London[2]

In the second phase of that project, in September 2020, we conducted a large-scale nationally representative poll of over 10,000 people that enabled us to identify how experiences of all types had affected people across a range of demographics. Our resulting report What Next: Priorities for Britain laid out some of the key areas where opinions are shifting and where the greatest opportunities arise for positive change in our lives and the way we are governed.[3]

Since then, Demos has moved onto exploring the policies that we now need as a society to address the challenges - and take advantage of the opportunities - that the pandemic has offered. This has been done in two ways. First, using the public participation and consensus-building tool Polis, we crowdsourced

2 Demos. *Britain under Lockdown*. 28 August 2020. Available at: https://demos.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Britain-under-Lockdown.pdf [Accessed 10 March 2021]

3 Atay, A., Carr, H., Mackenzie, P., Lasko-Skinner, R. *What's Next? Priorities for Britain*. Demos, 11 September 2020. Available at: https://demos.co.uk/project/what-next-priorities-for-britain/ [Accessed 8 March 2021]

policy solutions capable of commanding widespread popular support across the main themes that our initial analysis identified as important. The results from that exercise were published in early March 2021.[4]

Second, we worked in partnership with other organisations that share our aims to explore aspects of these core themes in more detail. This report, kindly sponsored by Legal & General, forms part of that process, and focuses specifically on how people's relationship with 'place' has changed as a result of the pandemic.

OUR AIMS

We set out to understand how our relationship with location has shifted, and the extent to which this has altered our behaviour and needs, as individuals and as wider society. We then extrapolated what this might mean for future spending patterns as we come out of the pandemic, and the implications for regeneration policy in general, and the government's 'levelling up agenda' in particular. The overarching purpose is to ensure that senior leaders in business, government and society who are making decisions that affect local communities, are able to do so in the full knowledge of what these communities now say they want and need.

We accordingly prioritised the following research questions for this strand of the work:

- How has people's relationship with 'place' changed as a result of the pandemic?
- How do people ideally want to work and travel in future?
- What are the implications for the UK's towns and cities and how does this vary between different types of locations?
- What are the implications for policymakers and business leaders?

This research is the first of two interrelated outputs that form part of our project on 'place'. The second, to be published in the next few weeks, measures in more general terms how people rate the provision of the things in their local area that they themselves say are most important. It then uses this to construct a place satisfaction index that can be analysed by location and different demographic groups and monitored over a longer period of time.

4 Demos. *Build Back Stronger*. 9 March 2021. Available at: https://demos.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Build-Back-Stronger.pdf [Accessed 10 March 2021]

METHODOLOGY

For this project, Demos conducted a nationally representative survey of 20,022 UK adults aged 18+ online between 4-30 December 2020. Data were weighted, as is standard, to the profile of the population by age, gender, region, education, 2016 EU referendum vote and 2019 General Election vote.

Our results therefore represent views in the run up to and including Christmas 2020, a time when the country was not experiencing a national lockdown and the immunisation process was just beginning but there were nevertheless significant Covid-19 restrictions in place, which were increasing over the period that the poll was in the field.

We asked a series of questions, informed by the first phase of the Renew Normal project, probing people's relationship with their place, how it had changed as a result of the pandemic, whether they had moved house because of the pandemic and why, and their intentions in terms of where they planned to spend their time - and their money - once the pandemic restrictions were relaxed.

Segmentation questions were asked in order to be able to analyse the results not only by standard demographic variables and geographic region, but also by type of location and according to our existing typology of towns.[5] A question on whether people had moved house because of the pandemic was also reported by parliamentary constituency using the statistical technique of multilevel regression with post stratification (MRP). These will be made available on a dedicated microsite at the conclusion of the second part of the project along with the full tabulated results of the poll.

Our headline findings were presented at three roundtable seminars in late January 2021, with attendees from academia, industry, NGOs and government including national civil servants and professionals working in local and regional development. We are very grateful to all those who gave freely of their time to help us place this project in context and provided useful feedback as to which themes would be most fruitful to explore in the next stage.

These insights were then used to decide the priority areas for a more detailed analysis of the data, as well as the composition and themes to explore in four focus groups that were conducted over Zoom on 8-9 February 2021. These groups were composed of people who lived in towns; two groups comprising people from towns in the North of England, and two from towns in the South of England. In each location type, one group then consisted of people who had been required to work from home because of the pandemic, and the other of people of working age but either out of work or on low incomes.

The write-up and development of the policy implications was then undertaken over the course of February and into March 2021.

5 Glover, B., Carr, H., Smith, J., Phillipson-Brown, S. *The Future of Towns*. Demos, 15 December 2020. Available at: https://demos.co.uk/project/the-future-of-towns/ [Accessed 8 March 2021]. Our town typology clusters towns by postcode into one of five types based on the ONS 2011 Area Classification for local authorities: Affluent, Coastal, Industrial, Hub-and-spoke (commuter) and Rural.

SECTION 1: THE INCREASED IMPORTANCE OF PLACE

With the introduction of 'stay at home orders', and a new legal offence of 'leaving home for work unless it was not reasonably possible for that work to be done at home' applying for part of 2020, we know that one of the main impacts of the pandemic has been drastically to reduce our personal mobility.[6]

6 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (England) Regulations 2020. Available at: https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2020/350/made [Accessed 8 March 2021]

Modern geolocation data sources such as those provided by the Google mobility reports, combined with new, regular, coronavirus surveys undertaken by the Office of National Statistics and government reports on the take-up of furlough schemes provide a sense of the scale of the physical impact on the population from these restrictions.[7] At the time of writing, in early March 2021, for example, data from Google shows that visits to parks in the UK were up 48% on pre-pandemic levels, whereas use of public transport was down by 55%.[8]

It is perhaps unsurprising that this enforced horizon-shrinking should lead to an increased awareness of our immediate location, and our research, in line with that of other organisations, bears this out.[9] Both in our focus groups and also in the polling, a strong sense comes through of people clocking and appraising what is available nearby to a far greater extent.

> *It's made me appreciate what's more on my doorstep. You know, places I hadn't been since I was a kid. I also have found myself thinking how lucky I am in lockdown to be in a place where I have so much outside space that's accessible and on my doorstep.*
>
> Focus group of non-working people during the pandemic, South

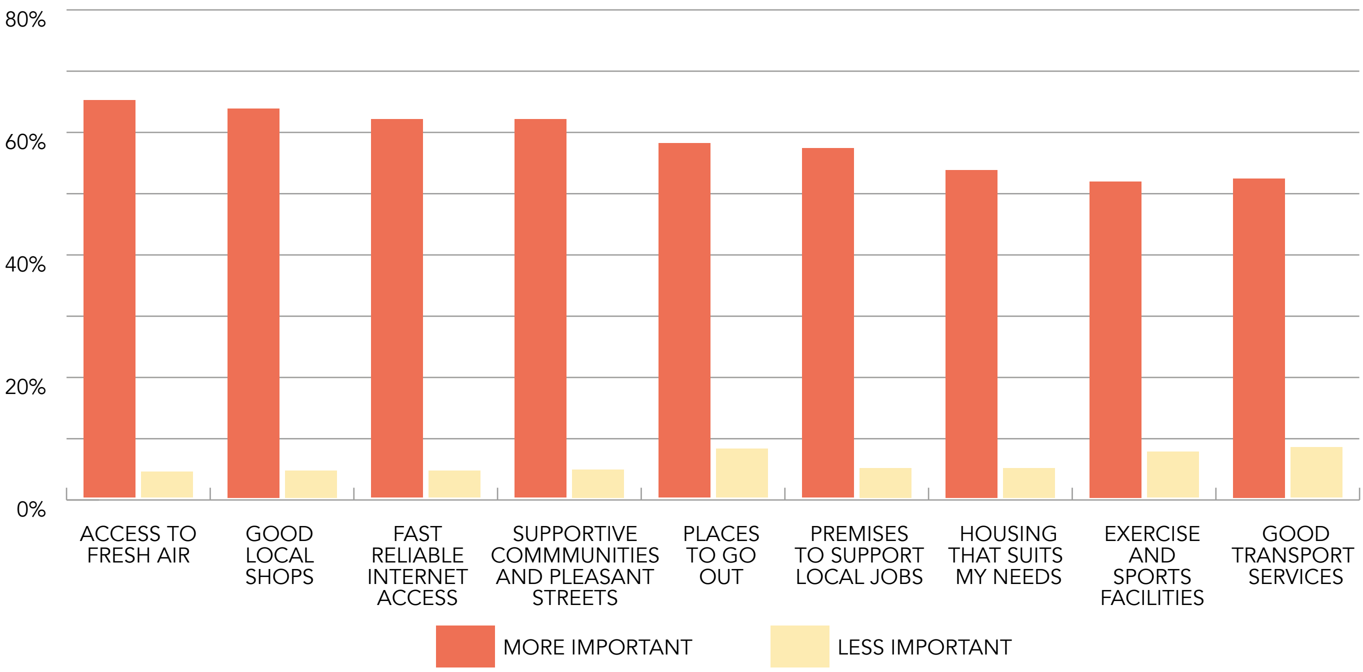
In our poll we asked people to tell us whether their local 'offering' - including for example good local shops, suitable housing, places to go out, access to fresh air - had become more or less important to them as a result of the pandemic.

THE LOCAL OFFERING HAS BECOME FAR MORE IMPORTANT

The findings were very clear: a majority of people thought that each of their local facilities - from access to fresh air and good local shops through to transport services - had become more important to them because of the pandemic. Only a very small proportion (between 4-8%) stated that what was on offer locally had become less important.

Strikingly, even amenities and services that have been less accessible during the pandemic because of government restrictions, such as 'places to go out', 'premises to support local jobs' and 'good transport facilities', are cited as 'more important' as a result of the pandemic; possibly people now value more highly things they had previously taken for granted. This suggests a heightened awareness on the part of the population as to whether the places they live in will continue to be suitable for their needs as we move out of lockdown.

CHART 1. THINKING ABOUT HOW YOUR ATTITUDES HAVE CHANGED BECAUSE OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC, WOULD YOU SAY THAT YOU THINK THE FOLLOWING HAVE BECOME MORE OR LESS IMPORTANT TO YOU?



7 See: Google. *COVID-19 Community Mobility Report*. 4 March 2021. Available at:. https://www.google.com/covid19/mobility/ [Accessed 4 March 2021]; Office for National Statistics. *Coronavirus and the latest indicators for the UK economy and society*. 4 March 2021. Available at: https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/conditionsanddiseases/bulletins/coronavirustheukeconomyandsocietyfasterindicators/4march2021 [Accessed 4 March 2021]; *HMRC coronavirus (COVID-19) statistics*. HM Revenue and Customs., 25 February 2021. Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/hmrc-coronavirus-covid-19-statistics [Accessed 9 March 2021].

8 Google. *COVID-19 Community Mobility Report*.

9 See: Mosteanu, O. and others. *Quality of life at home: Exploring people's perceptions of where they live before and during lockdown*. Quality of Life Foundation, August 2020, p.6. Available at: https://www.qolf.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/QOL_QualityOfLifeAtHome_August2020_5MB.pdf [Accessed 8 March 2021].

Unlike the government and geolocational data sources which are snapshot views enabling trends to be monitored over time, our research tells us the proportion of the total population who, at some point in the year, have gone through a forced change to their working location. We can then explore what effect this has had on their sense of 'place'.

We did this by first asking working people - both employed and self-employed - whether at any point since the start of the pandemic they had been required to work from home because of the pandemic. Separately we asked employees whether they had at any point been furloughed by their employer.

We found that 51% of the working population were at some stage required to work from home, just under a third of whom - 16% of the working population - also had the experience of being furloughed. An additional 14% of the working population experienced furlough but were not required to work from home over the course of 2020. Taken together, this means two-thirds of the working population (65%) had their daily location forcibly altered as a result of the pandemic at some stage during 2020.

TABLE 1. EXPERIENCE OF FURLOUGH AND BEING REQUIRED TO WORK FROM HOME, 2020

	Furloughed	Not furloughed	Total
Required to work from home due to pandemic	16%	35%	**51%**
Not required to work from home due to pandemic	14%	35%	**49%**
Total	**30%**	**70%**	**100%**

Base: % of working population (including self-employed)

As a proportion of the total adult population, including retired people and those who do not work for other reasons, this means 38% of the population were either furloughed or required to work from home at some stage during 2020 because of the pandemic, with 9% falling into both categories.

An alternative way of describing the situation is that only one in five of the total adult population continued with something similar to their normal mobility patterns throughout the pandemic.[10] For everyone else (apart from those already immobile) mobility was constrained in some way, as a result of stay at home orders, restrictions on travel, and, for many, changes to their working arrangements.

PEOPLE WHO HAD THEIR WORKING PATTERNS DISRUPTED HAD A HEIGHTENED SENSE OF 'PLACE'

In fact, it appears that people who had their working arrangements disrupted were the most likely to experience a change in their relationship with their local area, possibly because the magnitude of the change to their lives was greater. People who were furloughed or required to work from home were even more likely to say that each of our categories had become 'more important' to them than people who were not.[11]

It seems, therefore, that while everyone's relationship with 'place' has become more important, this is particularly the case for people whose everyday working patterns were altered because of the pandemic.

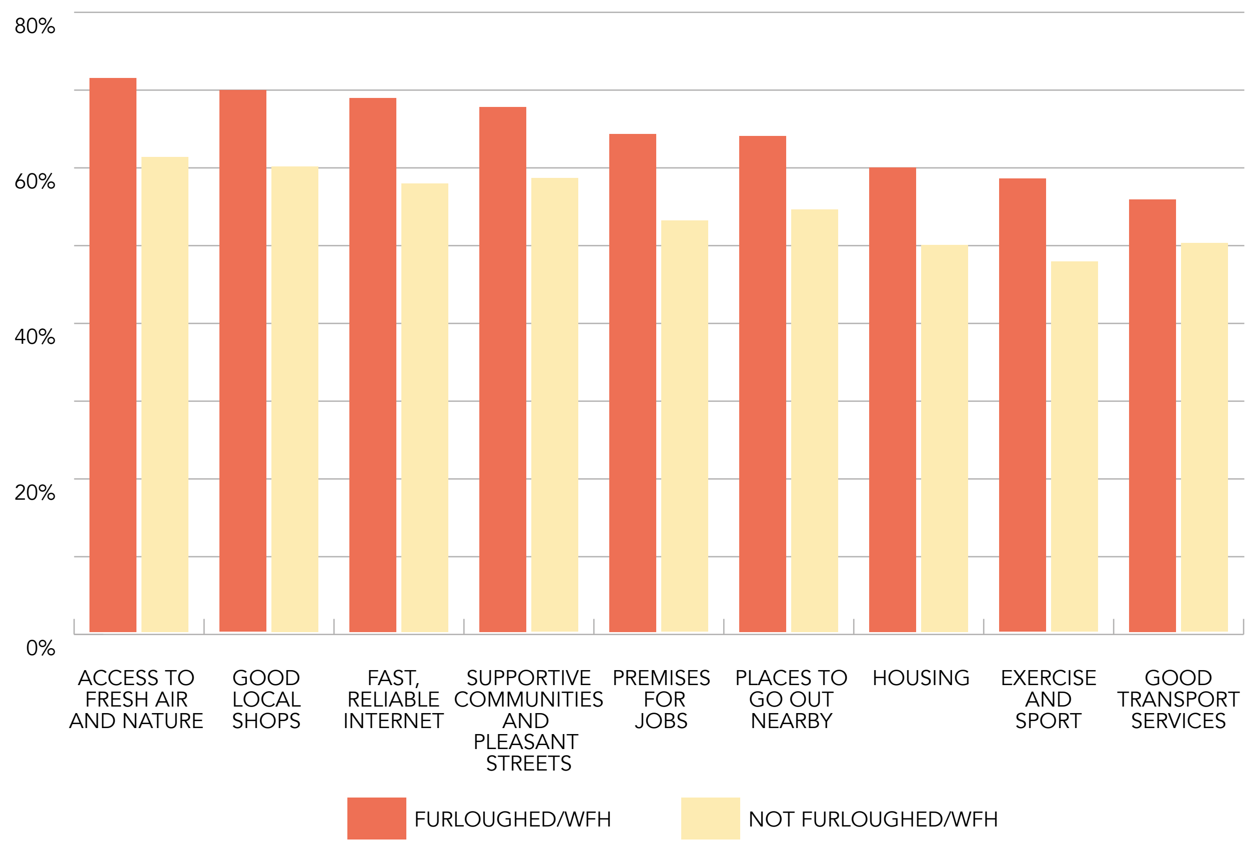
> *Certainly for me. It was just somewhere I lived and travelled from to work. And now I'm at home more, you can't really go anywhere, so your local area is more important.*
>
> Focus group of people who worked from home during the pandemic, North

These people are also likely to be more affluent and urban dwelling, as a result of their work status, and so are more likely to rate all local amenities as important due to them getting more exposure to, and benefit from, these amenities. Younger adults (under 40) were also far more likely to say they now attached greater importance to what was available locally, perhaps because they are more likely to have experienced constraints on their mobility as a result of the restrictions. Taken together, this means that this change in relationship with 'place' is greater in

10 This figure of one in five of the population represents working people who were neither furloughed nor required to work from home, a figure that makes up 21% of the total population.

11 An exception is the category of 'fast, reliable internet access' where those required to work from home were more likely to say it had become more important to them than those who were not required to work from home (70% compared to 62%) but there was no difference in the rankings between those who were furloughed and not furloughed (equal at 67%).

CHART 2. THINKING ABOUT HOW YOUR ATTITUDES HAVE CHANGED BECAUSE OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC, WOULD YOU SAY THAT YOU THINK THE FOLLOWING HAVE BECOME MORE OR LESS IMPORTANT TO YOU, OR HAS THERE BEEN NO CHANGE?



London than any other region of Britain. In particular, Londoners are more likely to say that having housing that suits their needs is now more important to them because of the pandemic (61%) than the country as a whole (54%).

Conversely, it also follows that areas with higher worklessness, whether due to a greater proportion of people who are retired (such as rural areas), lower economic activity (such as coastal towns), or places that have lower proportions of the population with office-based jobs (such as less affluent suburbs), have experienced less of a change in terms of how their population is connecting with their local place - although, of course, they may have already been more connected to their locality in the first place.

We also found an even stronger result among women, despite the fact that women were no more likely to have had their working lives disrupted than men, suggesting that, in general, women are appraising and assessing the extent to which their location is fit for purpose particularly acutely.[12] And across the board, adults living with children - particularly in larger families - were more likely to say that the local offer had become more important to them, across all categories.

THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE THINKING OF MOVING HAS DOUBLED

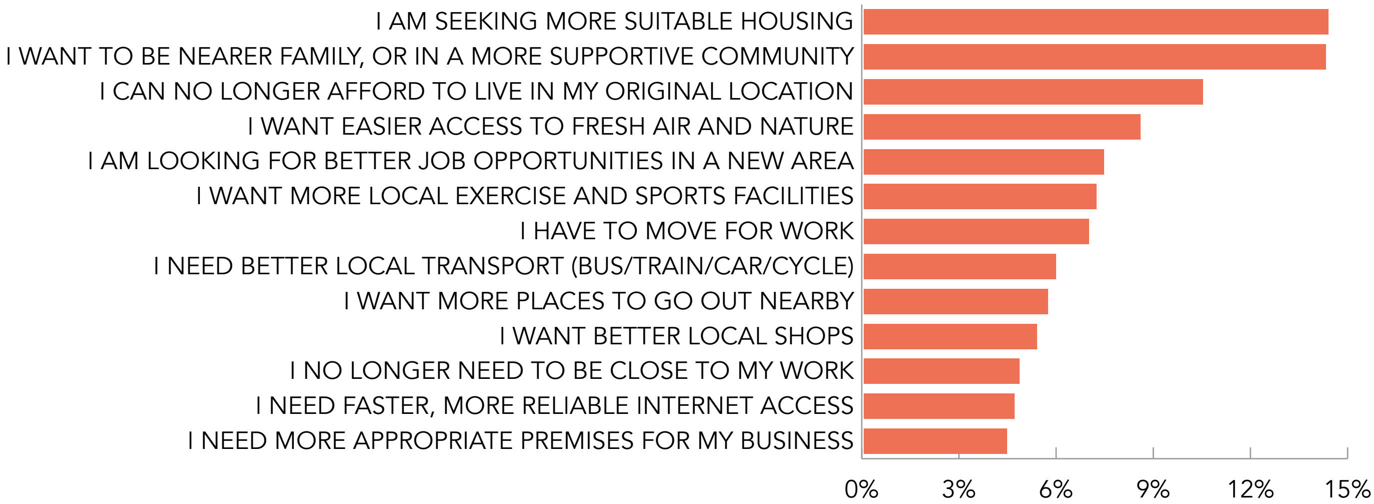
Being more aware about the importance of 'place' is, however, a different thing from being satisfied with it. We asked whether people had moved house or were planning or thinking about doing so for reasons relating to the pandemic. For those who said they were, we then asked the reasons why.

We found that, as of December 2020, 4.8% of the population had already moved for reasons relating to the pandemic, with a further 4.6% planning to do so. On top of that, an additional 6% are thinking about moving for reasons relating to the pandemic, but with no solid plans.

This means that, in total, the pandemic has caused around 15% of the adult population to reconsider their location, of which at the time of conducting the poll around a third had actually moved. Extrapolating this across the population gives a figure of around 2.5 million people who have already moved because of Covid-19 as of December 2020, with a further 5.5 million either planning to, or who are thinking about it.

12 We discuss the implications of our findings on gender in the concluding sections of this report.

CHART 3. I HAVE RECENTLY MOVED HOUSE FOR REASONS RELATING TO THE PANDEMIC: MAIN REASON



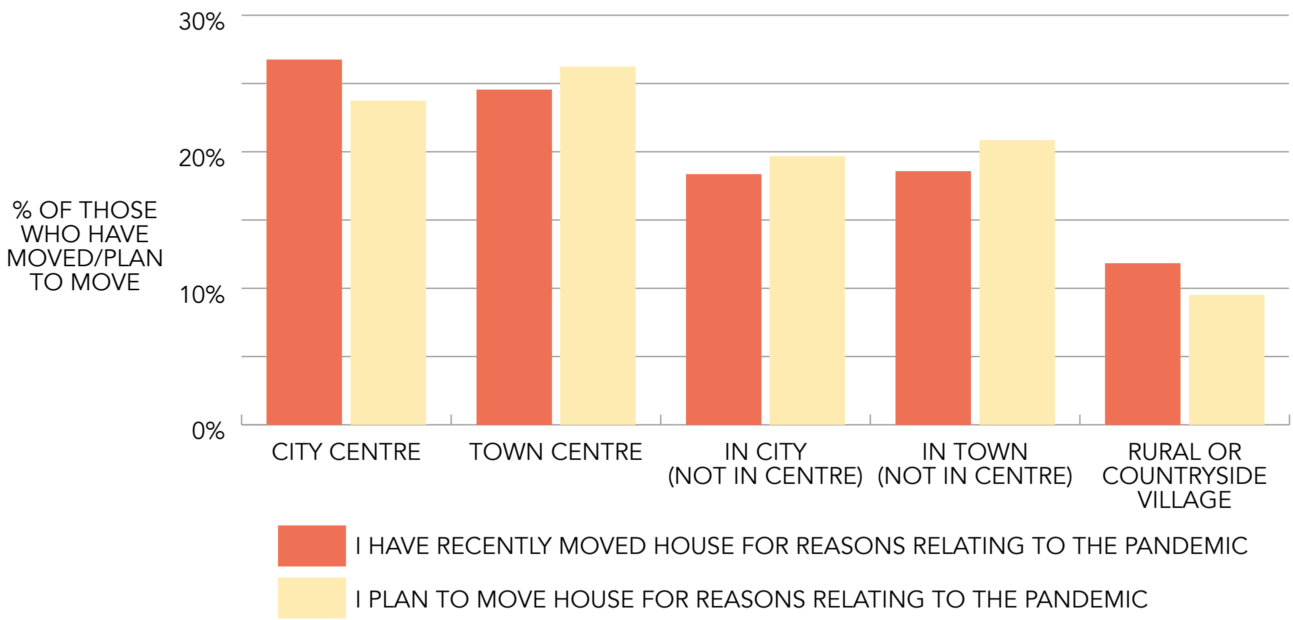
For context, we also provided an option for people to tell us if they were moving or thinking about moving for reasons unrelated to the pandemic, and found that an additional 16% of the adult population fell into this category. The effect of the pandemic can therefore be thought of as roughly doubling the number of people who have reconsidered their location.

There has been much talk in the media of people moving out of cities to the countryside as a result of the pandemic.[13] Exploring our data in a little more detail does not, however, support this conclusion

Although 'easier access to fresh air and nature' was the fourth most popular reason cited by those who had moved because of the pandemic, the category of 'I no longer need to be close to my work' came near the bottom. Instead, the most commonly cited reasons for moving were 'seeking more suitable housing' and wanting to be 'nearer family or in a more supportive community'. There was also some evidence of economic distress, with 'I can no longer afford to live in my original location' and 'I am looking for better job opportunities' both scoring relatively strongly.

Moreover, we could not see a large difference between the type of location people resided in after they had moved, compared to the location of people who were planning to move. Instead, most of the dislocation appears to be taking place *within* urban centres.

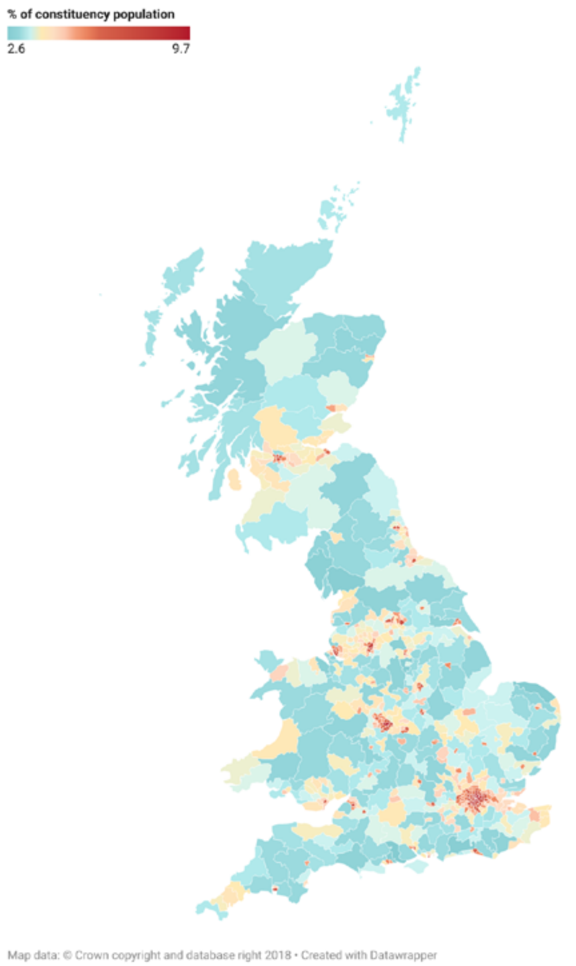
CHART 4. LOCATION OF THOSE WHO MOVED OR PLAN TO MOVE BECAUSE OF THE PANDEMIC



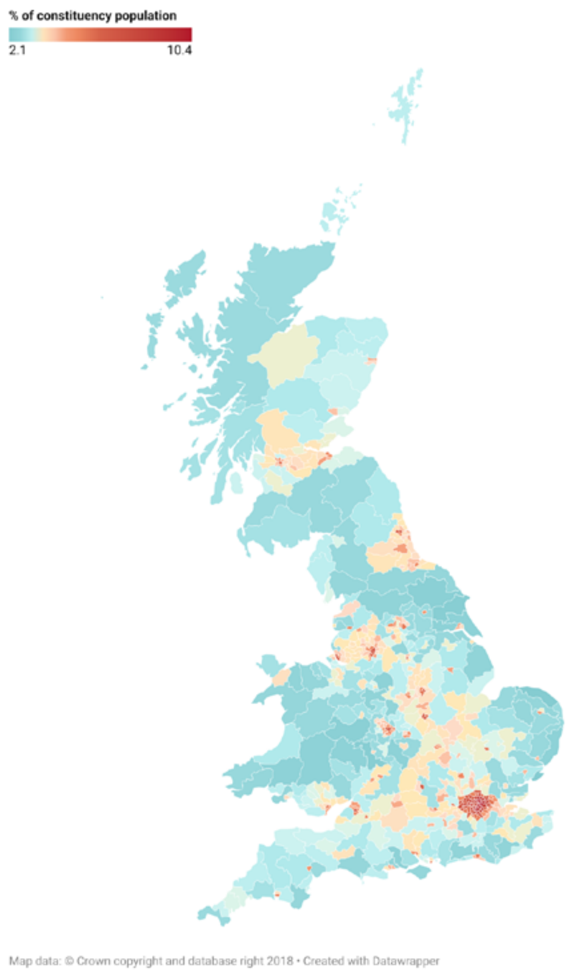
13 See, for example: Butcher, A. 'Moving to the country: History repeats itself as urbanites flee virus-hit cities for rural retreats'. *The Daily Telegraph*, 26 May 2020. Available at: https://www.telegraph.co.uk/global-health/science-and-disease/moving-country-history-repeats-urbanites-flee-virus-hit-cities/ [Accessed 8 March 2021]

FIGURE 1. LOCATION OF THOSE WHO HAVE MOVED BECAUSE OF THE PANDEMIC OR PLAN TO DO SO

"I have recently moved house for reasons relating to the pandemic"



"I plan to move house for reasons relating to the pandemic"



We explored this question further by constituency using the technique of multilevel regression with post-stratification and found that the largest effects were within the most urban areas, and in particular London.

If there had been an exodus out of cities to the countryside, we would expect to see a higher proportion of people living in rural areas at the time of our poll saying that they had already moved than saying they planned to move. Our evidence, shown by the poll and the maps above, is that if this is an effect, it is comparatively slight.

Our data shows that the demographic groups that are most likely to have moved as a result of the pandemic are young adults, particularly those in their mid-20s.

As is common for this age group, household incomes are low: we find the largest effect is among adults in households earning under £20,000 per year, then rising with income for higher-earning groups.

CHART 5. I HAVE RECENTLY MOVED HOUSE FOR REASONS RELATING TO THE PANDEMIC BY AGE

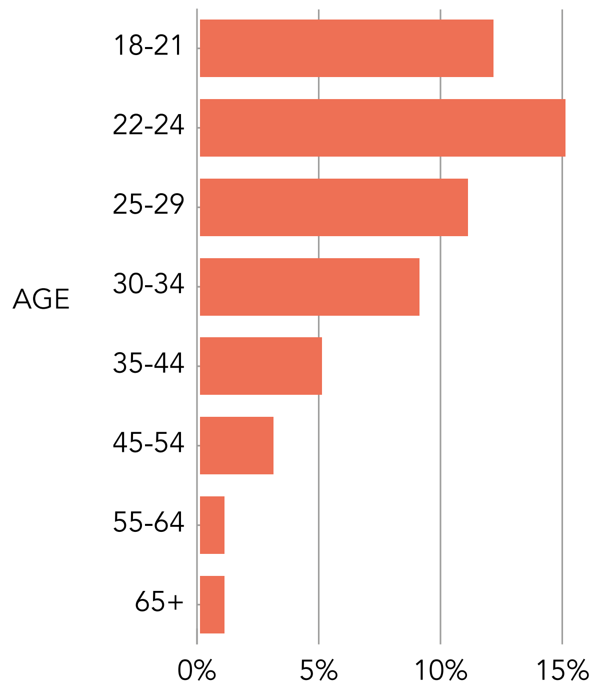


CHART 6. I HAVE RECENTLY MOVED HOUSE FOR REASONS RELATING TO THE PANDEMIC BY HOUSEHOLD INCOME

While part of this effect is possibly due to students returning home from university prematurely, particularly in the 18-21 age bracket, the overall sense from the data is that these are low-paid young urban workers who were attempting to start their careers when the pandemic hit. Looking at the group as a whole, they are no more likely to be out of work than the general population, but more likely to have been furloughed (51% of employees who moved compared to 34% of employees nationally) and to belong to socioeconomic group DE (43% compared to 38% nationally).

They are also more likely to be from ethnic minority groups, even after taking account of the type of area they live in. For example, while 26% of people in our survey living in city centres stated that they were from an ethnic minority, 31% of people living in city centres who said they had moved because of the pandemic stated they were from an ethnic minority. For the country as a whole, we found that 12% of the population were from an ethnic minority, but 23% of those who moved because of the pandemic were from an ethnic minority. Put another way, 9.5% of people who are from an ethnic minority moved house for reasons relating to the pandemic during the pandemic compared to 4.2% of people who stated their ethnicity was white.

SECTION 2: HOW DO PEOPLE WANT TO LIVE AND WORK IN FUTURE?

As we saw in the previous section, the pandemic-enforced localism experienced by most of the population appears to be linked to a heightened awareness of what is on offer in local neighbourhoods. For a small but significant proportion of the population, this has also led to a change in location.

This section explores the extent to which this increased attention to local place is expected to persist, and what it means for how people want to live and work in future.

THE NEW FOCUS ON LOCALITY WILL CONTINUE

We asked people whether "after the pandemic, when the restrictions are over" they planned to spend more time in their local area than they had done before the Covid-19 pandemic. Around half the population (51%) said that they didn't think their movement patterns would be any different from before, but over a third (36%) expected that they would spend more time locally than they had done before, with only one in ten (10%) saying they thought they would spend less. On balance, therefore, this suggests that local neighbourhoods will experience more footfall after the easing of restrictions than before.

I don't think it'll ever go back to how it was before. I think people now appreciate their local area a lot more. And I think that's why people are so impassioned about the high streets being revived and green spaces and local areas, having lots of different things to do. I think there's much more room for it now...I want to see more local shops, and, you know, I want to be able to appreciate it more than ever I've done. The pandemic has certainly made me more aware of what's important and it's not just commuting to work.

Focus group with people who worked from home during the pandemic, North

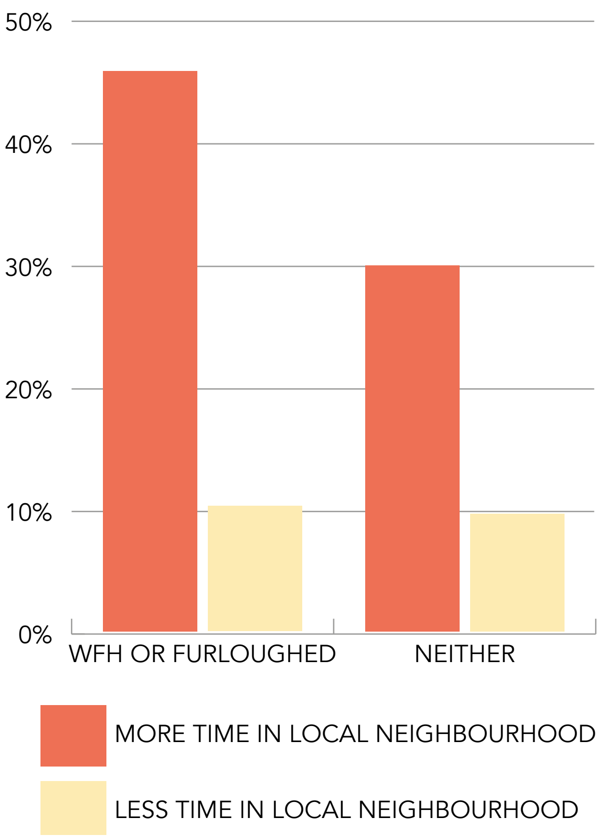
CHART 7. AFTER THE PANDEMIC, WHEN THE RESTRICTIONS ARE OVER, DO YOU THINK YOU WILL SPEND MORE TIME IN YOUR LOCAL AREA OR NEIGHBOURHOOD THAN YOU DID BEFORE THE PANDEMIC?

CHART 8. AFTER THE PANDEMIC, WHEN THE RESTRICTIONS ARE OVER, DO YOU THINK YOU WILL SPEND MORE TIME IN YOUR LOCAL AREA OR NEIGHBOURHOOD THAN YOU DID BEFORE THE PANDEMIC?

Younger adults, people in work, those on higher incomes and people living in larger families were all more likely to say they will spend more time in their local areas than before the pandemic. Taken together, this suggests that people in more built-up areas, and more affluent towns are particularly likely to be looking forward to spending more time locally than other parts of the country.

Regardless of location, people who have been furloughed or required to work from home were also more likely to say that they planned to spend more time locally after the pandemic than they had before. An effect of a forced change in location seems to have been to kindle a familiarity with local place that - at least for now - people say they want to maintain. This is aligned with other recent research: a survey by JLL for example demonstrated that "A conscious, local and healthy lifestyle has become as important to employees as finding a sense of purpose at work". [14]

CHART 9. AFTER THE PANDEMIC, WHEN THE RESTRICTIONS ARE OVER, DO YOU THINK YOU WILL SPEND MORE TIME IN YOUR LOCAL AREA OR NEIGHBOURHOOD THAN YOU DID BEFORE THE PANDEMIC?



Base: Whole population

WORKING FROM HOME IS POPULAR, BUT NOT ALL THE TIME

We also specifically asked people who had been required by the pandemic to work from home whether they would like to continue and found strong support, with 57% saying that they would like to work from home 'more than they did before, but not all of the time' and a further 22% saying they would like to work from home 'all of the time'. Taken together, this is a full 79% of people who were required to work from home who want to continue doing so, at least part of the time.[15]

Support for this was highest in professional services, ICT, civil service and administrative and support jobs and - unsurprisingly - lowest in accommodation and food service occupations, and those who had been furloughed. However, even accounting for these variations, a majority of people in all socio-economic groupings who had been required to work from home still wanted to continue doing so at least some of the time.

CHART 10. WOULD YOU LIKE TO CONTINUE WORKING AT HOME ONCE THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC IS OVER?

14 Jll. *Reimagining Human Experience: How to embrace the new work-life priorities and expectations of a liquid workforce.* November 2020. Available at: https://www.us.jll.com/content/dam/jll-com/documents/pdf/research/jll-reimagining-human-experience-11-2020.pdf [Accessed 8 March 2021]

15 Separately, as part of our Renew Normal project we asked a nationally representative sample of 1,000 people in November 2020 whether they wanted to work from home more or less than they had before, and found 51% of people who worked and thought their work could be done from home wanted to work more from home than they had before the pandemic (13% less).

That said, the desire to work remotely is not necessarily the same as wanting to actually work in the home. Separately, as part of our forthcoming parallel project on place satisfaction, we found significant interest in 'local desk space for remote office workers' particularly amongst younger people: around one in five (19%) of people in their twenties rated it as their top priority when asked a broader question around their preferences for investment in local premises for jobs.

Working people who had been required to work from home were also more likely to include local desk space for remote office workers in their top three priorities for premises to support local jobs (63%) than those who were not required to work from home (55%). The same view came out strongly in the focus groups: as one participant explained: having 'somewhere I can go and sit for an hour or two' for work would be very helpful; another suggested 'why not have independent shops that can host meetings?'

> *Well, I personally am doing more remote working and I really like it. So I'm thinking, I'd like to carry on after lockdown. And obviously, I don't want to be sat in the house all day, by myself doing this. So I would like to go somewhere, or a few different places, whereby I can work via Zoom and other things, and do my work, which is reasonably cheap, and sort of inspiring and welcoming. I mean, I can go to the local coffee shop, but you can't spend on too many coffees. Somewhere I can go and sit for an hour or two, would be really, be really good, for me.*
>
> Focus group with people who worked from home during the pandemic, North

> *You need touch-down space. If you want to have a meeting, or a hub, why not have independent shops that can host meetings, work there, chat with friends, or rent a table? Why can't you have a hub in a central you know? More people are now working from home and needing those office spaces to be revitalised and reused.*
>
> Focus group with people who worked from home during the pandemic, South

SECTION 3: SHIFTING SPENDING PATTERNS

The question for policymakers, retailers, planners and developers alike is whether this new-found interest in locality and working from home will translate into a permanent shift in spending patterns.

To explore this we asked an additional series of questions around the extent to which people expected they would spend more money (as opposed to time) in various locations once the pandemic restrictions had been lifted, and explicitly whether people thought their spending patterns would change compared to before the pandemic.

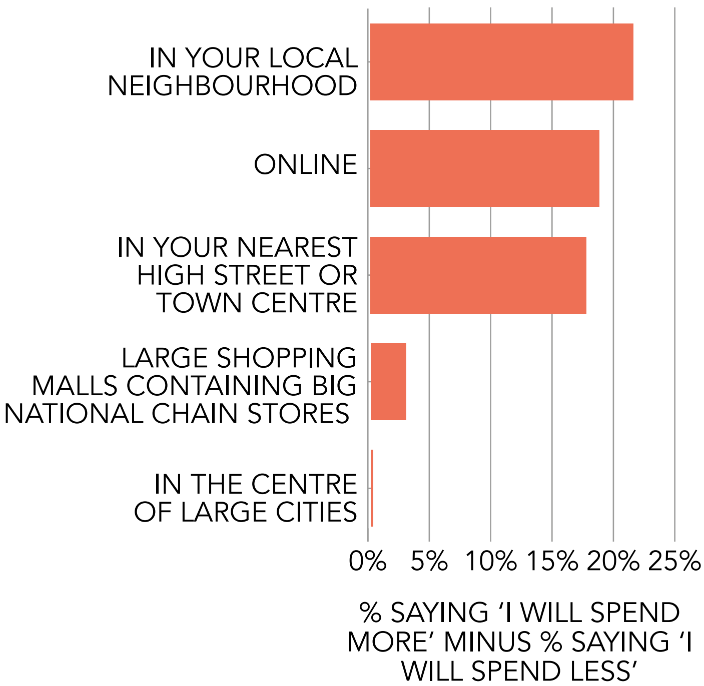
PEOPLE ARE LOOKING FORWARD TO SPENDING MORE MONEY LOCALLY THAN THEY PREVIOUSLY DID

We found a large pent-up demand to spend more money in local neighbourhoods (36% said they would spend more, 14% less), as well as high streets and town centres (35% more, 17% less), and also a recognition that one of the effects of the pandemic was to shift spending patterns online (again, 36% more compared to 17% less).

In contrast, we found less demand for large shopping malls, and we also found evidence of shrinking horizons: more people who lived on the edge of towns and in rural areas said that they were now less likely than more likely to travel to city centres to spend money than they had before the pandemic.

It's important to note that these polling results do not necessarily add up: overall, far more people say they will spend more money than spend less, regardless of location. While it is true that a large proportion of the population have built up savings, so some net increase in overall spending is not implausible, we also interpret this result as people simply looking forward to getting out and about once restrictions are lifted. It is the relative attractiveness of spending locally that is therefore potentially more interesting than the actual amount of money spent.

CHART 11. AFTER THE PANDEMIC, WHEN RESTRICTIONS ARE OVER, DO YOU THINK YOU WILL SPEND MORE OR LESS MONEY IN THE FOLLOWING AREAS THAN YOU DID BEFORE THE PANDEMIC, OR DO YOU THINK THERE WILL BE NO CHANGE?



When looking at how the intentions to spend locally varied across different locations, we found that people living in urban areas were significantly more likely to report an increased desire to spend more money locally when restrictions were lifted than they had done before, and that this decreased as locations became more rural, although in all areas there was an overall desire to spend more.

Looking at where the increased desire to spend locally is coming from, as before, there seems to be a particular desire to do so amongst people who were required to work from home (47%) compared to workers who weren't required to work from home (36%).

> *I've not always been the best person to shop local. But seeing the load of local businesses and people I actually know who have suffered during the pandemic. It's made me realise that, actually, I should be putting my money into their pockets rather than some of these global companies. And I know they need the money as well, because obviously, we've seen evidence of them going out of business, too.*
>
> Focus group with people who worked from home during the pandemic, North

And, as Chart 12 shows, there appears to be a connection between the proportion of people who say they would like to continue to work from home (some of the time), and those who intend to spend more money in their local area than they did before the pandemic. There is a geographic element to this: in more urban areas a higher proportion of the population were required to change their working patterns, and a higher proportion is expressing a desire to shop more locally.

This is important to bear in mind in the context of concerns that city centres will hollow out if working from home is encouraged: city centres are themselves residential areas, so for those who live there, spending locally means spending in the centre.[16]

But even if the effect is muted in less urban areas, it is still positive and significant. Looking specifically at the effect in towns, for example, we find a large positive difference between the proportion of the population that say they will spend more money in their local area compared to those that say they will spend less. Even in the less prosperous towns in our typology, such as coastal towns, far more people say they will spend more (33%) than say they will spend less (15%).

16 Our poll, which asked people to state subjectively what type of location they lived in, showed that 10% of the population lived in a city centre, and 13% in a town centre.

CHART 12. INTENTIONS TO WORK AND SPEND LOCALLY WHEN THE PANDEMIC IS OVER

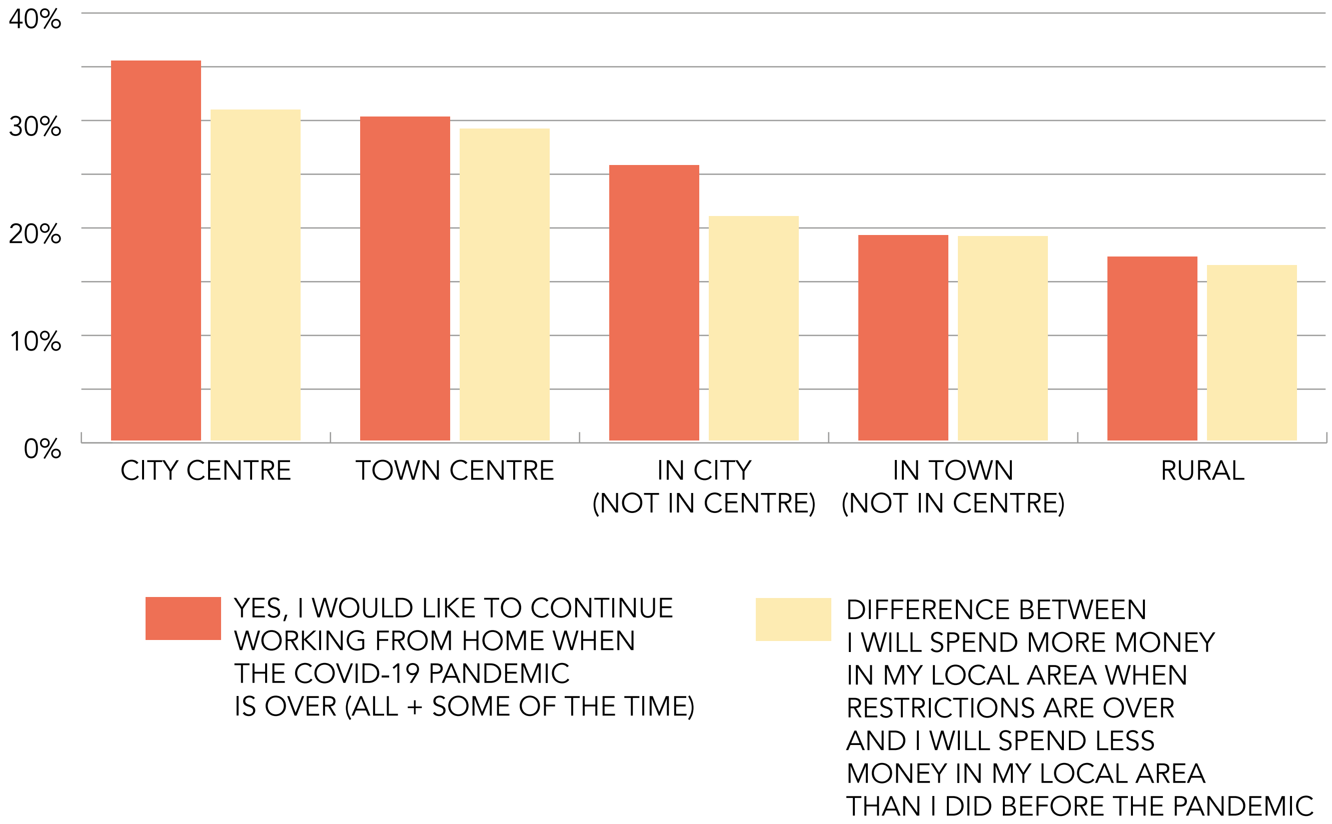
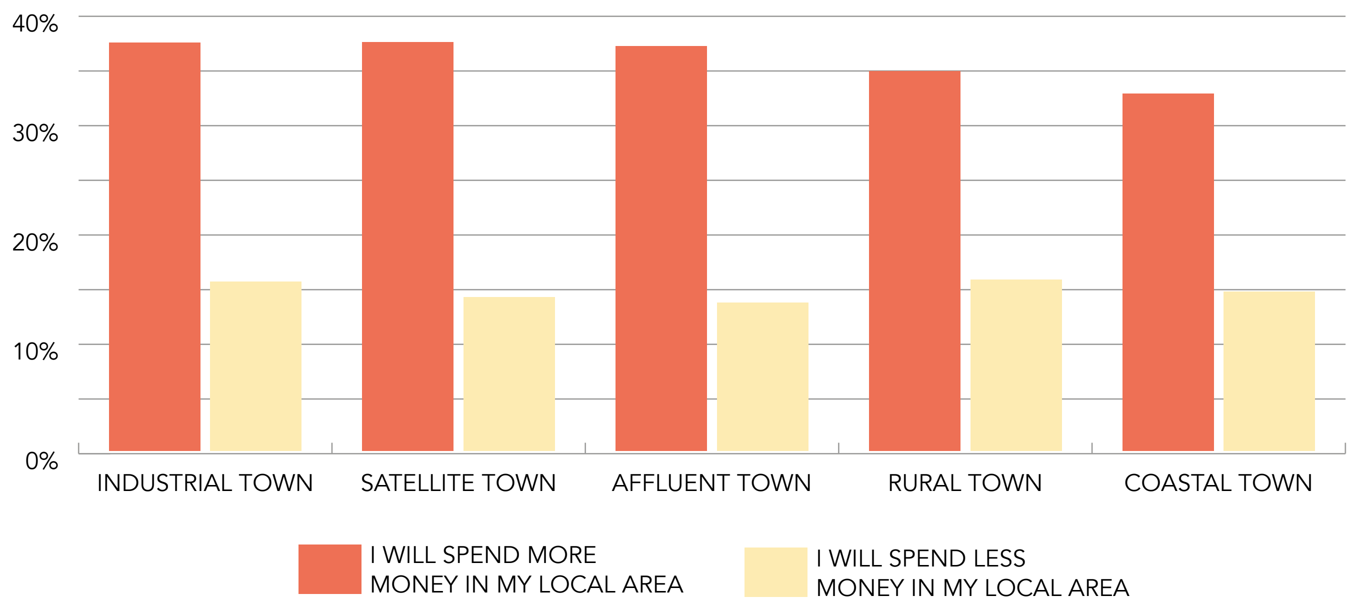


CHART 13. AFTER THE PANDEMIC, WHEN RESTRICTIONS ARE OVER, DO YOU THINK YOU WILL SPEND MORE OR LESS MONEY IN THE FOLLOWING AREAS THAN YOU DID BEFORE THE PANDEMIC, OR DO YOU THINK THERE WILL BE NO CHANGE? ... IN YOUR LOCAL NEIGHBOURHOOD



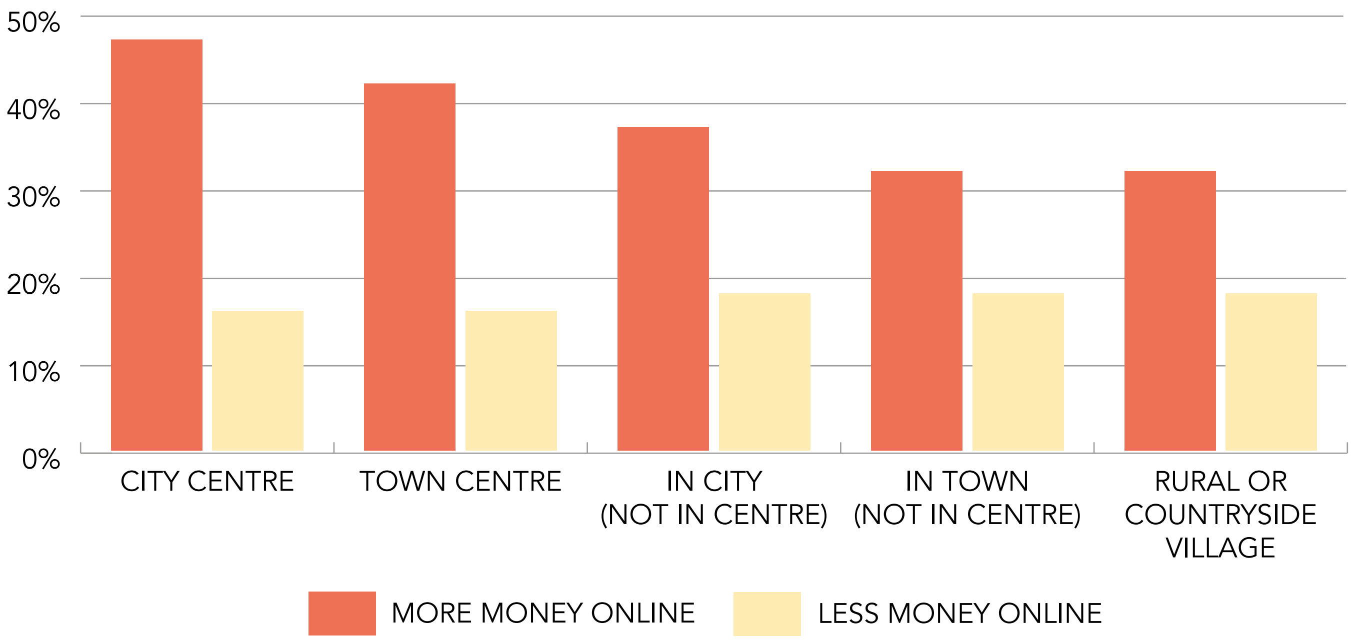
PEOPLE HAVE TAKEN TO SHOPPING ONLINE

Having said that, there is also a recognition amongst those surveyed that at least some of the shift to shopping online is permanent. Overall, considerably more people thought they would spend more than less money online (+19% difference) as a result of the pandemic. Exploring this in a little more depth shows that the greatest desire for online shopping also comes from the already-affluent areas; as Chart 14 below shows, the gap between spending more and less online is twice as large in city centres (+31%) compared to rural areas (+14%). There was also a suggestion in the focus groups that some of this increased online activity had been to order from local outlets.

This appears to be a function primarily of income and age: those on household incomes above £60,000 are particularly likely to say they will spend more money online than before the pandemic, as are people under the age of 45; both of these demographics are disproportionately represented in urban centres. A possible explanation is that online shopping is now seen as the best option for higher value purchases, or for those who are more time-poor.

Geographically, those in rural areas and coastal towns are less likely to think their switch online is permanent, with enthusiasm for online shopping being lowest in the East of England region, where the gap between 'more' and 'less' is only +12%.

CHART 14. AFTER THE PANDEMIC, WHEN RESTRICTIONS ARE OVER, DO YOU THINK YOU WILL SPEND MORE OR LESS MONEY ONLINE THAN YOU DID BEFORE THE PANDEMIC, OR DO YOU THINK THERE WILL BE NO CHANGE?



CONCLUSIONS AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

In mid-2020, as Britain emerged from the first lockdown, the government spoke out in favour of people returning to their workplaces, partly in an attempt to revive urban centres.[17]

What our research demonstrates is that there may be public policy advantages from doing the opposite, and supporting people in their desire to stay local. It appears that work that is flexible in location may of itself be a tool for regeneration.

17 Shrimsley, R. 'For Boris Johnson, Covid-19 is now an economic not a health crisis'. *Financial Times*, 1 June 2020. Available at: https://www.ft.com/content/4a803fd4-a3e6-11ea-81ac-4854aed294e5 [Accessed 9 March 2021]

HOMEWORKING AS A REGENERATION TOOL

First, as we have seen, increased local working is linked to greater spending power in local areas. Although in some ways, this effect could be seen as regressive in that the impact is greatest in areas that have higher proportions of higher-paid office workers, on balance we see it as positive for all residential areas, the question instead being one of scale. By definition it disproportionately benefits areas where more commuters live, but it is still an important economic force to inject activity into different and potentially new parts of the country, and is therefore one of the tools in the government's armoury as it considers how to implement its levelling up agenda.

If spending power moves out of commercial centres, there is a corresponding concern that the inner cities will suffer. Of course, if fewer people are commuting into the centres every day to work in offices, there will be less demand for support activities that service those markets (demand for which may shift elsewhere) not to mention adjustments in the commercial real estate sector, that will be different in different locations.

However, there will still be activity. For a start, our data shows that 23% of the population already live in urban centres now: for them the centre is already local. For others, it's a hybrid model: a very clear result from our research is that most people who have been required to work from home, only want to continue doing so part of the time; less than one in four (22%) want to do so exclusively. Finally, urban centres still have a cultural draw, for both residents and tourists alike, that local and regional policymakers may choose to retain; this was not a focus of our research.

In the short-term, however, there is a dislocation that sadly has a human cost, as the number of service jobs that rely on corporate footfall reduces. For many, this economic 'zoomshock' that was experienced at the beginning of the pandemic may prove permanent. However, once things have settled, there is no reason to think that there won't be more opportunities elsewhere, and perhaps ones that don't require a costly and time-consuming commute.[18]

Recent econometric analysis in the US on the spatial implications of telecommuting, for example, provides evidence that remote working, as long as it doesn't reduce overall productivity, over time leads to more jobs both in urban centres **and** in the periphery.[19] Empirical evidence from Los Angeles also suggests that both worker categories - those who are able to 'telecommute' and those who aren't - benefit overall from a readjustment in property prices and reduced congestion.[20] Overall, the modelling that has been done to date suggests that there are more areas that win than lose from 'zoomshock'.[21]

Second, in time it could improve economic participation. It will start to shade to grey the previously black-and-white choice between being at work or being with family that has required women disproportionately to seek part-time work, exacerbating the gender pay gap. Research by the charity Working Families undertaken during the pandemic demonstrated that over nine in ten working parents and carers wanted their workplace to retain flexible working after the pandemic.[22] There will still be important issues to overcome around the relative status of people who choose to be location-flexible in firms that don't standardise the arrangements for everyone, but the potential prize of making it easier for parents of young children to work the same number of hours as their colleagues could be a transformational first step.

But the benefits are not purely felt by those with caring responsibilities. By lowering the premium on commuting, more jobs will be available to those with mobility disabilities and indeed to all people who for reasons of health or stamina prefer to work near to where they live.[23] It will also chip away at the stark choice between career and community for people whose homes are further away from economic centres, and provide a solution for the cohort of people we discovered during the course of our research who needed to move because of the pandemic to be nearer to family or community support.

18 De Fraja, G., Matheson, J., Rockey, J. 'Zoomshock: The Geography and Local Labour Market Consequences of Working from Home'. *Covid Economics* (64),13 January 2021. Available at: https://ssrn.com/abstract=3752977 [Accessed 9 March 2021].
19 Delventhal, M., Parkhomenko, A. 'Spatial Implications of Telecommuting'. SSRN, 9 December 2020. Available at: https://ssrn.com/abstract=3746555 [Accessed 9 March 2021]
20 Delventhal, M., Kwon, E, Parkhomenko, A. 'How Do Cities Change When We Work from Home?'. SSRN, 4 December 2020. Available at: https://ssrn.com/abstract=3746549 [Accessed 9 March 2021].
21 Matheson, J., De Fraja, G., Rockey, J. 'Five charts that reveal how remote working could change the UK'. *The Conversation*, 2 February 2021. Available at: https://theconversation.com/five-charts-that-reveal-how-remote-working-could-change-the-uk-154418 {Accessed 9 March 2021]
22 Rebecca Jones. *COVID-19 and flexible working: the perspective from working parents and carers*. Working Families, June 2020. Available at: https://workingfamilies.org.uk/publications/covid-19-and-flexible-working/ [Accessed 9 March 2021]
23 Ussher, K. *Improving pay, productivity and progression in the retail sector*. Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 9 November 2016. Available at: https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/improving-pay-progression-and-productivity-retail-sector [Accessed 9 March 2021]

Third, and possibly more importantly, it is what people say they want. We found around eight in ten people who currently work from home want to continue doing so at least part of the time. Put simply, it makes the everyday business of life easier if the commute is cut and location is flexible. Of course, not all work can be done remotely, and even if only a small proportion of those jobs that can change do change, it is still a big shift for the economy as a whole: prior to the pandemic only 5% of the workforce reported that they worked mainly from home.[24]

If, for these reasons, location-flexible working is seen as a policy tool in itself, the question then becomes what the government should do to enable it as we come out of the pandemic restrictions.

A LEGAL RIGHT TO LOCATION-FLEXIBLE WORKING

Most urgent is to clarify and strengthen the legal right of employees to location-flexible work. At present there is a longstanding right to request flexible working, which does include location flexibility within the definition of 'flexible' as one of a number of options, the rest of which are around flexibility of hours including the right to work part-time. It is up to individual employees to make the request and employers must consider it but can refuse for business reasons, which can then be challenged at tribunal.

Following a campaign in 2019 by Conservative MP Helen Whately the government committed to consulting on changing the law to make all jobs 'flexible by default'. At the same time they committed to legislating to require employers to publish their flexible working policies in such a way as to enable comparisons to be made, as well as advertising jobs as potentially flexible. These commitments were included in the December 2019 Queen's Speech, but with the Covid-19 pandemic emerging soon after, no legislation or consultation documents have subsequently been forthcoming.[25]

Meanwhile, as we come out of the pandemic, individual employers are balancing the cost savings from reducing their office footprint against the intangible benefits that come from in-person team building, networking and face-to-face collaboration.[26] As part of this, as research by JLL has demonstrated, many organisations are aware that the expectations of their employees have changed and they now expect to be supported to work from home.[27] The danger that needs to be averted is situations when the desires of employees and the requirements of their employers do not align: at what point should a team member be *legally required* to be physically present under the terms of a contract that was signed before the pandemic?[28]

Given the potential advantages of any increase in distributed working even for just some of the working week, we recommend that the government take urgent action to fulfil its stated intention of making all jobs location-flexible by default. This would require shifting the legal balance in favour of location-flexible working: all employees should have the right to work remotely for part or all of the time if that is what they wish, with the burden of proof lying with employers to demonstrate why a specified location is required in their particular circumstances, which can then be challenged at a tribunal.

We expect there will be many situations where this burden of proof is easily met - key worker roles, customer-centric and site-specific jobs, as well as strategy, team or client meetings being obvious examples - but even in these cases there may be far greater flexibility of location in practice than was previously the norm. We hope, for example, that our recommendation will lead to the end of teachers being required to stay in school for 'directed time', or make it easier for healthcare professionals to conduct remote appointments for suitable categories of patients from home if that is what they wish.

For those who live in inappropriate accommodation, however, or simply prefer a change of scene, an important option is the ability to work remotely outside the home but still nearby.[29] This could be particularly attractive in urban areas: research by the Centre for Cities, for example, shows that people in urban areas have less square metres per person on average (33.1 square metres) in comparison to those living in non-urban areas (43 square metres) and our

24 'Approved: Remote and flexible working'. Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology, 26 January 2021. Available at: https://post.parliament.uk/approved-remote-and-flexible-working/. [Accessed 9 March 2021]
25 Elizabeth II. *The Queen's Speech 2019*. Prime Minister's Office, 19 December 2019, p.44. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/853886/Queen_s_Speech_December_2019_-_background_briefing_notes.pdf [Accessed 9 March 2021]
26 Boland, B. and others. *Reimagining the office and work life after COVID-19*. McKinsey & Company, June 2020. Available at: https://www.mckinsey.com/~/media/McKinsey/Business%20Functions/Organization/Our%20Insights/Reimagining%20the%20office%20and%20work%20life%20after%20COVID%2019/Reimagining-the-office-and-work-life-after-COVID-19-final.pdf [Accessed 9 March 2021]
27 Jll. *Reimagining Human Experience: How to embrace the new work-life priorities and expectations of a liquid workforce.*
28 Clark, P. 'The ticking time-bomb inside the new world of work'. *Financial Times*, 14 February 2021. Available at: https://www.ft.com/content/da683644-5de3-4ef6-852c-1f714ffdb2b7 [Accessed 9 March 2021]
29 For a fuller discussion of the implications of the changing nature of office work, see Hobsbawm, J. *The Nowhere Office*. Demos, 8 March 2021. Available at: https://demos.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/The-Nowhere-Office.pdf [Accessed 10 March 2021]

research showed that unsuitable housing was a major factor in driving people in urban areas to move home because of the pandemic.[30]

TAX INCENTIVES FOR REMOTE WORK DESKS

For some employers, a shift to supporting individuals to work from workspaces near where they live for part of the working week may well be far less costly than maintaining a central hub large enough for everyone who wants to be there. The local economy also benefits, not only from increased demand for office space and, as we have seen, greater spending power coming into local communities, but also through the more nebulous serendipitous connections that are made between people who live near each other, but work for different employers, coming together under the same roof to work remotely.

Some firms will want to make their own arrangements to provide suitable local accommodation. For others, we recommend the government encourage the market by providing tax incentives for remote working vouchers to be provided by workplaces, based on salary sacrifice, along the model of childcare vouchers. Like their childcare counterpart, these remote working vouchers could then be redeemed at premises of the employee's choice, enabling them to find a place that suits them.

This would provide a huge spur to developers and property companies to provide appropriate facilities, as well as potentially providing an income stream for town centre landlords wondering how to put unwanted retail spaces to good use. Our research should give the private sector confidence that demand already exists, as it showed that around one in five younger workers viewed desk space for remote workers as their top priority when considering premises to support jobs.

TARGETED REGENERATION ON LOW HOMEWORKING AREAS

This project has also demonstrated that while all residential areas are expected to benefit from a shift to homeworking, those that are already more affluent are expected to benefit disproportionately. This is because more affluent areas are more likely to contain people who worked from home during the pandemic, a large proportion of whom wish to continue doing so at least some of the time, thereby keeping spending power local. As a result, we recommend that the government urgently pivots regional and regeneration policy to the particular needs of areas where there are lower proportions of homeworkers, in order to ensure they do not fall further behind, and in particular those parts of the country that have proved least resilient in the face of the crisis, such as coastal towns.[31]

One option, as we argued in the final report of our Renew Normal project, is that the civil service could lead the way by increasing remote working opportunities in areas where the labour market is weaker.[32] A way to do this might be to spur the market for remote working in those areas by adapting (or acquiring) public buildings to create remote working spaces where any civil service worker could be based regardless of which Whitehall department, local authority or agency they worked for, or in which part of the country they were previously located. This would go further than the existing Government Hub programme which has focused on regional cities, and instead create resources in targeted smaller areas with specific regeneration needs.[33] By pushing spending power out across the country, this measure alone could start to counteract the unequal socioeconomic impact of the pandemic in different geographic areas.[34]

30 Breach, A. 'How easy is it for people to stay at home during the coronavirus pandemic?'. *Centre for Cities*, 7 April 2020. Available at: https://www.centreforcities.org/blog/how-easy-is-it-for-people-to-stay-at-home-during-the-coronavirus-pandemic/ [Accessed 9 March 2021]
31 *The effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on our towns and cities.* Centre for Towns, 23 April 2020. Available at: https://www.coalfields-regen.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/COVID_19-and-Towns.pdf [Accessed 9 March 2021].
32 *Build Back Stronger The final report on Renew Normal: the people's commission on life after Covid-19.* Demos, 9 March 2021. Available at: https://demos.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Build-Back-Stronger.pdf [Accessed 9 March 2021]
33 *The Government Hub Network brochure.* Government Property Agency, 29 July 2020. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/941686/The_Government_Hub_Network_Brochure.pdf [Accessed 9 March 2021]
34 Davenport, A. and others. The geography of the COVID-19 crisis in England. Institute for Fiscal Studies, 15 June 2020. Available at: https://www.ifs.org.uk/publications/14888 [Accessed 9 March 2021]

15 MINUTE NEIGHBOURHOODS

The implications of the new importance of 'place' for planning authorities and developers are also profound. The expected increase in permanent home working post-pandemic, presents a challenge to the concept of high population-density urban accommodation: research by the Place Alliance on how well housing and the immediate neighbourhood supported us during the coronavirus lockdown concluded that those living in houses (of any type) were more comfortable than those living in apartments, with those living in mid- (5-10 storey) or high-rise blocks (over 11 storeys) being the least comfortable of all.[35] This fits with our finding that 'seeking more suitable housing' was one of the main drivers behind younger, less affluent urban dwellers being forced to move because of the pandemic.[36]

In 2019, Demos argued that future homes should be built in ways that, among other things, are ready for homeworkers, and close to local amenities.[37] The experience of the pandemic only accentuates this need: research in Denmark, for example, on changes in the way that people are using their urban spaces coming out of lockdown suggests that neighbourhoods offering a mix and diversity of amenities seemed to be more popular.[38] In line with the principles of the '15 minute neighbourhood' developed by Carlos Moreno this will include places to meet and work - including remote working - as well as outdoor public spaces for leisure and recreation.[39, 40]

A NEW RIGHT TO A PLOT OF LAND

Additionally, the imperative of providing access to fresh air, which comes through clearly in our research, should be incorporated not only into the design of housing but also into the policy response of local authorities. This is particularly urgent in our most built-up areas. The Place Alliance research mentioned above also concluded that access to private open space from the home was "the strongest design-based predictor of comfort" yet one in five Londoners has no access to a garden according to the ONS.[41] Although parks are more likely to be situated in more deprived areas, only 46% of adults with a household income of under £15,000 live within 5 minutes walk of a park, compared to 63% of those with a household income over £35,000 and 70% of those with a household income of over £70,000. Only 39% of people from an ethnic minority background live within 5 minutes of a park.[42]

Yet, prior to the pandemic, research from Natural England showed that if everyone in England has equal access to good green space, the NHS could save over £2 billion in treatment costs.[43] And, as research from the Southern Policy Centre has shown, when asked about the key characteristics of a successful city, people demonstrate considerable sophistication in describing the importance of the natural environment.[44]

We have previously called for a 'green space standard' for all new homes, designating the amount of green space that should be provided for a new dwelling in proportion to floor space - either through communal or private gardens, at ground or roof level.[45] This would be a 21st century reinterpretation of the Victorian garden city initiative, and also takes inspiration from the futuristic incorporation

35 Carmona, M. and others. 'Home Comforts During The Covid-19 Lockdown'. Place Alliance, October 2020. Available at: http://placealliance.org.uk/research/research-home-comforts/ [Accessed 9 March 2021]
36 Hubbard, P. 'How COVID-19 might change the way we live and work for good'. King's College London, 4 May 2021. Available at: https://www.kcl.ac.uk/how-covid-19-might-change-the-way-we-live-and-work-for-good [Accessed 9 March 2021]
37 Glover, B. *Future Homes.* Demos, June 2019. Available at: https://demos.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/J460233_AXA-Demos_Future-of-UK-Housing-Report-FINAL_web.pdf [Accessed 9 March 2021]
38 *Public Space, Public Life, and COVID-19 In the first phases of the reopening in Denmark*. Gehl, 12 June 2020. Available at: https://covid19.gehlpeople.com/files/report_phase2.pdf [Accessed 9 March 2021]
39 *UN-Habitat key message on Covid-19 and public space*. UN-Habitat, May 2020. https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/2020/05/unh_covid-19_ps_key_message.pdf [Accessed 9 March 2021]
40 Carlos, M. 'The 15 minutes-city: for a new chrono-urbanism!' Moreno-web.net.Available at: http://www.moreno-web.net/the-15-minutes-city-for-a-new-chrono-urbanism-pr-carlos-moreno/ [Accessed 9 March 2021]
41 'One in eight British households has no garden'. Office for National Statistics, 14 May 2020. Available at: https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/environmentalaccounts/articles/oneineightbritishhouseholdshasnogarden/2020-05-14 [Accessed 9 March 2021]
42 *The grass isn't greener for everyone: why access to green space matters*. Ramblers Association, 17 September 2020. Available at: https://www.ramblers.org.uk/walkinnature [Accessed 9 March 2021]
43 *An estimate of the value and cost effectiveness of the expanded Walking the Way to Health Initiative scheme 2009 (TIN055).* Natural England, 10 July 2009. Available at: http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/35009 [Accessed 9 March 2021]
44 Eden, S. *Re-imagining Tomorrow's City Centre*. The Southern Policy Centre November 2020. Available at: http://southernpolicycentre.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Re-imagining-Tomorrows-City-Centre-1.pdf [Accessed 9 March 2021]
45 Glover, B. *Future Homes*, Demos.

of forests into the design of high-rise buildings in the Singapore city of Tengah.[46, 47] However, it does nothing for the existing building stock.

In addition, therefore, we propose that all existing tenants and residents should have a new right to a modest outdoor space for their own use should they want it, whether to garden, play or simply relax. This does not necessarily need to adjoin their home but, like an allotment, should be within a reasonable travel distance. Local authorities should be given the responsibility for fulfilling requests and we would expect the solutions to vary widely depending on the type of location. Options might include the transfer of municipally-maintained landscaped areas to resident control, the greening of town centre brownfield and/or rooftop sites, commercial arrangements with agricultural businesses and in some cases partnerships between local authorities.

Taken together, these recommendations will ensure that, as a country, we can use the newfound connection between person and place that has been a by-product of the pandemic to redesign public policy for the better.

46 *New Towns And Garden Cities: Lessons For Tomorrow*. TCPA, December 2014. Available at: https://www.tcpa.org.uk/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=1bcdbbe3-f4c9-49b4-892e-2d85b5be6b87 [Accessed 9 March 2021]
47 Holland, O. 'Singapore is building a 42,000-home eco 'smart' city'. *CNN*. Available at: https://edition.cnn.com/style/article/singapore-tengah-eco-town/index.html {Accessed 9 March 2021]

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