

MIDLANDS ENGINE OBSERVATORY ACADEMIC INSIGHTS

What is the future of commuting to work?



This summary comes from [this article](#) in the Economic Observatory.

Theme:

Impacts of working from home and their effects on patterns of consumption.

Area of Focus:

The article particularly focuses on employees' reactions to working from home using the authors' survey.

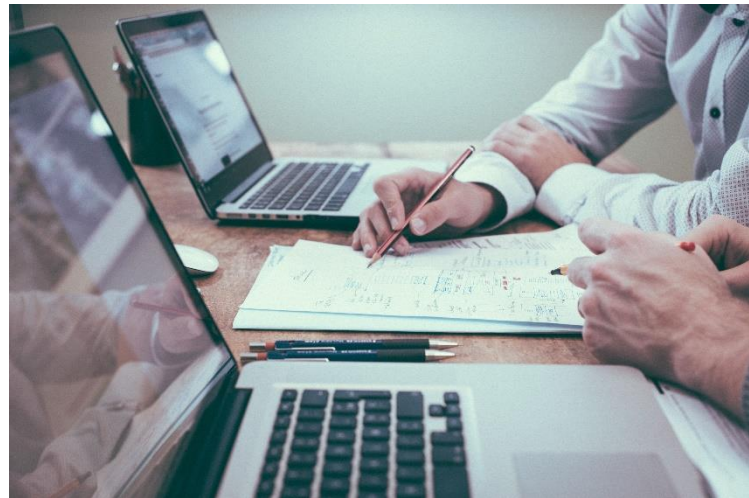
Key Findings:

Drawing on new evidence, there are indications that employees like the new arrangements of remote working. ONS data from its [Coronavirus and the social impacts on Great Britain](#) indicate that it was common for more than 40% of the population to have worked from home during the pandemic, with two to three days a week at home being the most expected working pattern post-COVID-19. Only one in seven are expected to return to five days a week commuting.

Equally, the authors' own survey of full-time workers, during March and April 2021 found that:

- 47% of respondents are working from home, 40% from an office and 13% are not working at all.
- 20% and 23% of respondent would like all working days or no working days at home respectively, but 40% would prefer two or three days per week in the office.
- 61% of respondents felt positive about working two to three days a week from home post-pandemic.
- 61% commuted five + days a week pre-pandemic.
- On average it took 29 minutes of commuting to work before COVID-19.
- On average commuters spent £5.50 per day on travel and parking costs.
- Over 60% commuted by private vehicle and 34% by public transport.

Changing attitudes about working from home may thus drive changes such as commuting patterns, urban design, and the nature of cities.



Midlands Engine Impact:

- Reduction in transport for the Midlands could mean a faster and greener transition towards net-zero through lower levels of congestion and fewer emissions of greenhouse gasses and particulates.
- Workers in the Midlands could lead more balanced lives, spending less time commuting and improving mental health which in turn could increase productivity.
- Taken at face value, changing in commuting patterns may be devastating for cities such as Birmingham or Nottingham, particularly hurting hospitality, retail, and food sectors, which have already been hurt by the pandemic; but if local authorities respond by adapting city centers for residential use and tourism the businesses could thrive.
- Considering the size of the advanced manufacturing sector in the Midlands, one impact could be no impact at all, as many skilled jobs cannot be done from home.

For Further Information Contact:

Shivani Taneja, Jonathan Haskel, Paul Mizen, Nick Bloom, Jonathan Dingel, Henry Overman

[What is the future of commuting to work? - Economics Observatory](#)

