



Has COVID-19 ended the commute? Depends if you ask Gen Z or Millennials, new research finds

- Two in five Australians refuse to travel over 20 minutes to get to work
- Four in 10 millennials unwilling to return to pre-pandemic commute routines
- Almost half of Gen Zs no longer resent their commute and are raring for office return

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As millions of workers emerge from lockdowns and begin a return to city offices across Melbourne and Sydney, new research from [HERE Technologies](#), the leading location data and technology platform, has revealed major generational shifts in commuting preferences and desire for new-found flexibility.

The research by HERE surveyed 1,200 Australian and Kiwi commuters' attitudes and found that 43% of Australians aged 18-24 used to resent commuting but no longer do. While in contrast almost the same portion (39%) of Australians aged between 35-44 are fed up with the long commute and are unwilling to accept wasted travel time to and from work.

In fact, half (50%) of workers said they would reduce their days in the office to cut down wasted work-travel time, while almost a third (29%) said they would change jobs. One in five (21%) commuters are even willing to switch career paths in pursuit of shorter commute times.

In contrast, only a fifth (19%) would consider moving house or changing modes of transport (21%) to cut travel times, while even less would mix transport modes



(15%) like cycling to public transport. Gen Zs were the most willing to switch to multi-modal commutes with older Australians the least open to change.

Daniel Antonello, Director and Head of Business for Oceania at HERE Technologies said the pandemic-induced behavior change was driven by a desire for more work-life balance.

“We are seeing a clear generational divide in commuter attitudes as the pandemic forced many workers to reassess their morning and evening routines,” Antonello said. “Two thirds of millennials said they want to cut their commute to spend more time with family and friends, while just over half of Gen Z workers said they would use their saved commuting time catching up on sleep.

“It seems while many younger workers are happy to commute into the office to get their professional social fix, older workers are more reluctant to give up their precious family time and are more likely to change jobs than get back in the car or train.”

Travel time expectations a challenge for infrastructure planners

The report found two in five (39%) commuters now expect a commute of under 20 minutes compared to a third pre-pandemic (29%), with only 6% now finding an hour or more commute acceptable. These convenience expectations are placing a greater focus on the [15-minute city](#) phenomenon, where all the essential needs can be accessed in 15 minutes or less by foot or by bike from home.

According to James Hodgson, principal analyst, ABI Research, “The events of the last two years are driving permanent changes in worker behavior and preferences. While there are notable differences between the generations in their shifting attitudes towards commuting, the aggregate picture is one of workers either wanting no commute or a shorter commute. In order to accommodate these new commuting preferences, city governments have a mixture of short term and long term tools and their disposal.

“In the long term, the concept of a 15-minute city will require a radical rethink of how cities are designed and built, ensuring that all of the different spaces that



make up everyday life are within the radius of a 15-minute walk. In the meantime, location intelligence services can play an important role in reducing congestion, improving traffic throughput and optimizing public transit schedules, in order to reduce the travel times for those still wanting to commute to the workplace.”

Antonello added, “With large-scale congestion-busting infrastructure projects under varying stages of completion like the Sydney Metro, Melbourne level crossing removals, Monash Freeway, and M80 upgrades, commuter volumes and choices post-pandemic may need to be remodeled.”

HERE’s research found that while car travel made up the vast majority of worker trips (80%), the 31% of commuters who regularly use public transport to get to work are now having the biggest rethink of their post-pandemic travel options.

Almost a third of Public Transport commuters (32%) said they no longer resent their daily commute while another third (29%) are seeking a shorter bus, train, tram or ferry ride, compared to the one in four drivers (25%) who are rethinking their travel options.

Gen Z office worker, Grace Feldgen, said she cannot wait to get back into the office, “I finished my university degree at the start of the pandemic, and commenced my first full-time role remotely. The few days I spent working in person only reinforced the importance of face-to-face contact and the loneliness associated with remote work.

“I’m excited to get back to the office, not only to form connections with my colleagues but to differentiate my work and home environment. It can be difficult to switch off and commit to no screen-time when you hear a string of notifications from your bedroom. I’m looking forward to the extra downtime the commute will provide as a no laptop, no work zone.”

Notes to the editor



15-minute cities

To help showcase the rise of the 15-minute city phenomenon, HERE has developed a [bespoke map](#) showing which suburbs throughout Australia can be considered 15-minute cities. The map lets you check whether an address meets the criteria for such a city. Input an address, and see whether you can access medical care, grocery stores, cultural attractions, transit stops, education facilities and leisure spots within 15 or 20 minutes of walking.

Further breakdown of research findings

The research by Pollfish was conducted in September 2021, surveyed 1,200 Australian and New Zealand residents aged between 18 and 54.

Generational index:

- Gen Z classified as 18 - 24
- Millennial classified as 35 - 44

1. Do you feel differently about commuting since the pandemic hit?

	Yes, I am no longer willing to commute for as long	Yes, I used to resent commuting but no longer do	No, I don't feel differently about commuting now vs. pre-pandemic
18-24	28%	43%	28%
25-34	30%	30%	40%
35-44	39%	28%	32%
45-54	30%	18%	50%
Cyclist / Walk Commuters	32%	28%	41%

Car Commuters	25%	25%	50%
Public Transport Commuters	29%	32%	39%

2. Pre-pandemic / post pandemic which of the following commute durations did you see as acceptable?

Time	Pre-pandemic	Post-pandemic
0-20 mins	29%	39%
20-40 mins	44%	39%
40-60 mins	17%	16%
Over an hour	9%	6%

3. Which of the following would you be willing to change to reduce your overall commute time?

- a. The number of days I work in the office vs. working from home **(50%)**
- b. Where I work, I'd consider changing the location of my current job to reduce my commute **(29%)**
- c. My career, I'd consider changing jobs entirely to reduce my commute **(21%)**
- d. Mode of travel e.g., switching to or from public transport, or alternative options such as cycling **(21%)**
- e. Where I live, I'd move house to reduce my commute **(19%)**
- f. Switch to a mixed mode of transport e.g., cycling or walking part of the route, then switching to public transport **(15%)**

4. Which of the following transport method(s) does your current or usual commute include?

- a. Car (driving or carpooling) **(80%)**
- b. Public transport **(31%)**
- c. Walking **(24%)**
- d. Cycling **(4%)**

5. Which of the following opinions of commuting do you share?

- a. It takes away from time with loved ones **(30%)**
- b. It helps separate work and leisure time **(30%)**
- c. It can afford people downtime **(24%)**
 - i. **36%** for 18-24s vs. **22%** for 35-44s
- d. It's worth it to collaborate with others **(22%)**
- e. It's a waste of time **(21%)**
 - i. **32%** of 35-44s believe this
- f. It can negatively impact your health **(15%)**

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About HERE Technologies

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