

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

- Almost half of New Zealanders refuse to travel over 20 minutes to get to work
- Three in 10 millennials unwilling to return to pre-pandemic commute routines
- One quarter of Kiwis willing to switch to public transport, cycling or walking for part of their journey to reduce commute times

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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 Kiwi commuters' attitudes and found that over one quarter (27%) aged 35-44 are no longer willing to commute for as long, while just (18%) of 18-24 year olds felt the same. In contrast, over one third (36%) of Gen Z Kiwis no longer resent commuting at all.

In fact, almost half (47%) of workers said they would reduce their days in the office to cut down wasted work-travel time, while almost a third (31%) said they would change jobs. One in five (19%) commuters are even willing to switch career paths in pursuit of a shorter commute.

One in four kiwis (24%) want to avoiding sitting in traffic, saying they would switch to cycling, walking or public transport for at least part of their commute, while one in five (19%) would make the switch their mode of commute for the entire journey if it meant reducing commute times.

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 a similar number 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 precious family time."



## **Travel time expectations a challenge for infrastructure planners**

The report found almost half (49%) of commuters now expect a commute of under 20 minutes compared to pre-pandemic (43%), with only 3% 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 City Rail Link and the Tamaki Drive resurfacing, commuter volumes and choices post-pandemic may need to be remodeled.”

### **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 New Zealand 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 data***



The research by Pollfish was conducted in September 2021, surveyed 400 New Zealand residents aged between 18 and 54.

Generational index:

- Gen Z classified as 18 - 24
- Millennial classified as 35 - 54

**1. Do you feel different 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	18%	36%	45%
25-34	24%	34%	41%
35-44	27%	36%	38%
45-54	27%	23%	50%
Cyclist / Walk Commuters	24%	22%	54%
Car Commuters	23%	22%	55%
Public Transport Commuters	22%	30%	48%

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

Time	Pre-pandemic	Post-pandemic
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0-20 minutes	43%	49%
20-40 minutes	40%	38%
40-60 minutes	11%	9%
Over an hour	5%	3%

**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 **(47%)**
- b. Where I work, I'd consider changing the location of my current job to reduce my commute **(31%)**
- c. Switch to a mixed mode of transport e.g., cycling or walking part of the route, then switching to public transport **(24%)**
- d. My career, I'd consider changing jobs entirely to reduce my commute **(19%)**
- e. Mode of travel e.g., switching to or from public transport, or alternative options such as cycling **(19%)**
- f. Where I live, I'd move house to reduce my commute **(17%)**

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

- a. Car (driving or carpooling) **(79%)**
- b. Public transport **(18%)**
- c. Walking **(25%)**
- d. Cycling **(11%)**

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

- a. It helps separate work and leisure time **(31%)**
- b. It's worth it to collaborate with others **(26%)**
- c. It takes away from time with loved ones **(24%)**
  - a. **35%** of 35-44s
- d. It can afford people downtime **(23%)**
  - a. **36%** of 18-24s



- e. It's a waste of time (21%)
  - a. 31% of 35-44s
- f. It can negatively impact your health (18%)

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