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Working from home and post-pandemic travel behaviour

Evidence from the TRANSAS longitudinal panel (2020–2025)

Dr. Llinos Brown and Professor Jillian Anable
University of Leeds

September 2026

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About the authors

Dr Llinos Brown is a Senior Research Fellow at the Institute for Transport Studies, University of Leeds. Her research focuses on travel behaviour, demand change, and the social dimensions of low-carbon mobility, with particular attention to how individuals and households adapt their travel in response to structural shifts such as remote and hybrid working.

Since 2020, Dr Brown has worked on the TRANSAS project, a longitudinal study examining how transport behaviours evolve over time. She previously held a ClimateXChange Fellowship (2020–2023), funded by the Scottish Government, where she explored public perceptions of future mobility and attitudes towards reducing car kilometres. She applies both quantitative and qualitative approaches to understand behavioural change and its policy implications. Alongside this, she contributes to research funded by the Energy Demand Research Centre, examining the role of community groups in reducing energy demand. Her work aims to inform evidence-based policy and support more sustainable transport systems.

Professor Jillian Anable Chair in Transport and Energy at the Institute for Transport Studies, University of Leeds. Her research focuses on the intersection of mobility, energy demand, and climate policy, with particular emphasis on the future of car use and the transition to low-carbon transport systems.

Professor Anable applies socio-psychological theories and a range of research methods to understand travel behaviour, car ownership, and the effectiveness of policy interventions. She has led major research programmes funded by UKRI, the Department for Transport, and the European Union. She is a recognised expert in demand-side solutions for transport decarbonisation and has played a leading role in major research initiatives, including the current INFUZE project, which explores pathways to accelerate the transition to low-carbon transport futures. She has also contributed to national policy through advisory roles, and her work continues to shape debates on sustainable mobility in the UK and beyond.

Disclaimer

This report has been prepared for the RAC Foundation by Dr. Llinos Brown and Professor Jillian Anable, University of Leeds. Any errors or omissions are the author's sole responsibility. The report content reflects the views of the author and not necessarily those of the RAC Foundation.

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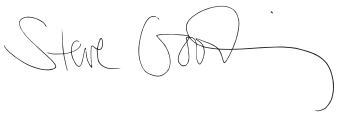
Foreword

COVID 19 and associated lockdowns came as a huge shock to the system begging the question of whether one result might be a substantial and lasting change to our travel patterns, including car use. Might a revolution in the acceptability of remote working, forced by lockdowns, radically reduce our need to travel and so help address problems such as peak-hour congestion and carbon emissions? The longitudinal data from the Transport, Travel and Social Adaptation Study (TRANSAS) analysed in this report enables us to track changes over time to see what's really different about our new, post-COVID, normal.

The picture that emerges from the latest analysis suggests that for many people whose jobs aren't tied to their place of employment, and for their employers, working from home for at least part of the week has become an accepted 'hybrid' pattern. But the implications for travel arising specifically from this change are harder to distinguish from other factors such as the wider context of job changes, residential relocation and longer-term lifestyle adaptations. The option of working from home might mean an individual is willing to live further from their employment, trading a longer commute for fewer commuting days, and in doing so might look for a location that makes rail a viable option rather than driving. But that decision will also be influenced by the availability of the right job, the housing market and family responsibilities, particularly where school-age children are involved.

Working from home looks like an employment pattern that is here to stay for many jobs, but that of itself isn't going to address our transport challenges.

Steve Gooding



Director, RAC Foundation

Executive summary

This report draws on five years of longitudinal data from the Transport, Travel and Social Adaptation Study (TRANSAS) to understand how the rise and stabilisation of working from home (WFH) has shaped commuting, wider travel behaviour, household activities and car ownership in the UK since the COVID-19 pandemic. Unlike most existing research, TRANSAS follows the same individuals across seven survey waves, allowing the examination of general post-pandemic changes including those specifically associated with shifts in WFH.

Together, the findings show that WFH continues to play an important – though selective – role in shaping travel behaviour. The most consistent effects of WFH are seen in the commute: how often people travel to work, the distance of their commutes and the modes they use. Beyond the commute, however, changes in shopping, exercise, social activities and car ownership appear to reflect broader structural or lifestyle factors, rather than WFH alone. This highlights the importance of interpreting WFH within the wider context of job changes, residential relocation and longer-term lifestyle adaptations.

Patterns of Working from Home

Across the UK workforce sampled, the proportion of workers WFH has stabilised rather than continued expanding. After a rapid rise during 2020–2021, the proportion of people WFH has remained at around 50% since mid-2022. Hybrid working (working some days in the office and some days at home) is now strongly embedded as a norm for some workers, yet policies and expectations vary widely: only one-third of hybrid workers report a clear, consistently implemented workplace policy.

Among those who hybrid work, commuting is highly concentrated on Tuesdays to Thursdays, mirroring national transport demand patterns. A substantial minority (30%) of hybrid workers report having no full office days at all, instead splitting their workday between home and workplace.

WFH and commute behaviour

Across all survey waves, WFH is strongly associated with both commute distance and mode:

- Those who WFH tend to live further from their workplaces and have longer commute times.
- Higher-frequency WFHers rely less on car commuting and more on rail and other public transport on the days they do travel.
- These differences have grown more pronounced over the five-year period.

Wider travel behaviour beyond the commute

Across the whole panel, regardless of WFH changes, nearly all transport modes show reductions in frequency between 2020 (pre-pandemic baseline) and 2025. This includes car driving, using a car as a passenger, bus use, rail travel, cycling and visits made by taxi, while walking is the only mode with an overall increase. These patterns align with broader national travel trends. Importantly, the overall direction of change looks similar whether people increased, decreased or maintained their WFH levels, indicating that WFH is not the main driver of widespread reductions in everyday travel.

Once job stability and residential stability are accounted for, WFH is not a major determinant of these wider reductions in everyday travel. This suggests that falling trip rates reflect broader post–pandemic behavioural shifts, rather than substitution effects caused by WFH.

However, the longitudinal analysis–comparing the same people over time–identifies a small set of overall mode-use changes that are specifically associated with changes in WFH intensity. These are not limited to the commute and apply across all trip purposes:

- Reduced car driving among WFH Increasers.
- Reduced tram/metro/underground use among WFH Increasers.
- A slight rise in motorbike use among WFH Decreasers.

These effects remain consistent even after applying filters for job stability and residential stability, indicating that they are genuine behavioural links to changes in WFH intensity, rather than the products of home moves, job changes or job location changes.

Food shopping, exercise and social activities

Food shopping in physical stores has decreased, indoor and outdoor exercise has reduced, and in-person socialising has fallen below pre-pandemic levels. Digital behaviours–home delivery, videocalling, exercising at home–remain more common than before the pandemic. These trends broadly match national data and wider evidence from mobility studies.

Again, WFH plays only a minor role here. The only consistent association was an initial indication that WFH Increasers walked more for pleasure/exercise and No-changers (those who didn't change the amount they WFH) walked less, but these differences were not significant once job and residential stability were controlled for. Under these stricter filters, isolated differences emerged (e.g. foodbank use, frequency of seeing friends or family), but these statistically significant patterns almost certainly reflect underlying changes in jobs, incomes or locations, rather than WFH itself.

The overall picture is that post-pandemic lifestyle shifts are broad and not strongly shaped by homeworking patterns.

Car ownership

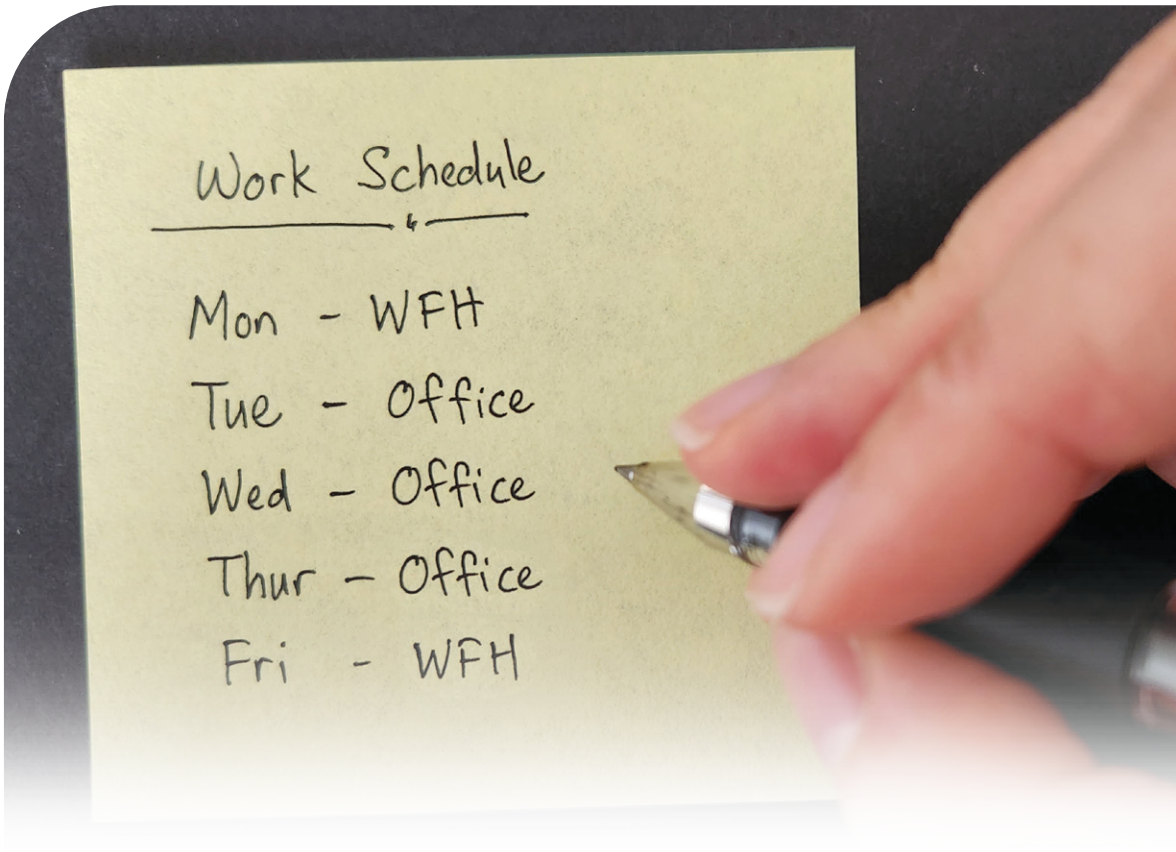
Across the full sample–including working and non-working respondents–average household car ownership fell by 7% between 2020 and 2025. This decline is driven mainly by households moving from two cars to one, with smaller counter-movements in the opposite direction.

However, among the subsample who were working at both timepoints, car ownership remained highly stable, with no significant differences between WFH change groups. This suggests that household car decisions are more influenced by life-stage transitions, changes in employment status and residential moves than by WFH.

Overall summary of insights

1. WFH is now a stable feature of the UK labour market, with hybrid working firmly embedded.
2. WFH's most consistent impacts are on commuting, being strongly associated with commute distance, time and commute mode (specifically train usage).
3. WFH Increasers reduced their overall car use and tram/metro use more than other workers.
4. WFH does not substantially influence wider travel, shopping, exercise or social activities, once life-stage and residential/job changes are accounted for.
5. Car ownership has declined since 2020 but this is unrelated to WFH among those continuously in work.
6. Job changes and home moves play a crucial explanatory role in shaping post-pandemic behaviour and should be considered alongside WFH in policy development.

1. Introduction



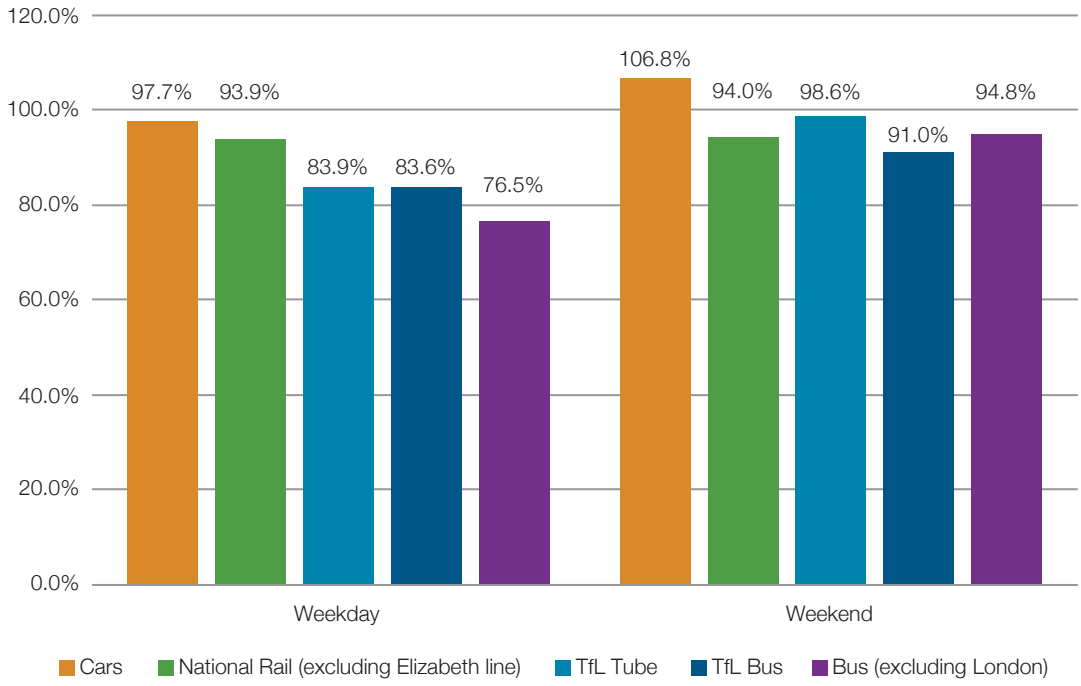
The COVID-19 pandemic triggered one of the most significant disruptions to work and travel patterns in recent decades. While many of the immediate effects, such as national lockdowns and travel restrictions, were relatively short-lived, the rapid expansion of working from home (WFH) has persisted well beyond the acute pandemic period. The pandemic enabled many people who had not previously been able to work remotely to do so for the first time. For many workers, WFH has now become a routine aspect of work, embedded within workplace culture and personal lifestyle preferences.

These changes have important implications for the transport system. Much early evidence focused on reduced peak-time commuting, falling public transport patronage and flattening weekday travel demand. However, the influence of WFH extends well beyond the commute. WFH can shape when and where people shop, patterns of social and leisure activities, residential relocation decisions, and household vehicle ownership. Five years on from the start of the pandemic and three years since most COVID-19 travel restrictions were lifted, there remains a need to understand these wider consequences of increases in WFH.

1.1 What we know so far

UK travel statistics show sustained reductions in weekday transport across both car and public transport use. Department for Transport (DfT) data indicates that average weekday car traffic in July 2025 was 97.7% of pre–pandemic levels (Figure 1). Public transport usage has recovered more slowly, with national rail at 93.9% of pre-pandemic levels and bus use outside London the lowest at 76.5%. Weekend usage is higher across all modes, with car traffic exceeding pre-pandemic levels at 106.8%.

Figure 1: Average weekday and weekend transport use levels in England, for July 2025, relative to pre–pandemic levels (data from DfT, 2026[1])



Recent research emphasises that the impacts of WFH on travel and emissions are complex and highly uncertain. Evidence from National Travel Survey data shows that those who WFH often have longer commute distances, take more non-work trips and are frequently more car-dependent than non-WFHers[2]. However, longitudinal evidence using the Netherlands Mobility Panel study suggests that WFH tends to reduce car use while increasing the frequency of walking, cycling, train and local public transport trips overall[3]. The UK Transport, Travel and Social Adaption Study (TRANSAS) also found people who WFH use

1 DfT (Department for Transport) (2026). *Daily domestic transport use by mode*. Available from: https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/transport-use-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-pandemic. Accessed: 16/02/26.
2 Shi, Y., Sorrel, S. & Foxon, T. (2026). *How can we maximize the environmental benefits of teleworking? – A simulation and global sensitivity analysis of English teleworkers*. Transport Policy 175.
3 Qi, C., Li, S., Guo, X. (2026). *Examining the causal effects of teleworking on mode-specific travel frequencies: A double machine learning analysis using panel data*. Transportation Research Part A 203.

their car less frequently than those who did not WFH[4,5]. At the same time, studies also show that the impacts of WFH vary substantially across workers, with clear sub-groups emerging within the working population who respond differently to WFH in terms of both travel behaviour and future intentions[6].

Given these mixed and sometimes contradictory findings, the overall impact of WFH on transport remains highly uncertain. Existing studies often rely heavily on cross-sectional or short-term data, often capturing intentions rather than sustained behavioural change, and very few examine within-person shifts over multiple years. In the UK, such evidence is particularly limited. TRANSAS therefore provides a rare opportunity to track the same individuals across a five-year period, allowing robust assessment of how changes in WFH behaviour relate to changes in commuting, car use and wider travel. By providing longitudinal evidence at the individual level, rather than comparing different people at single points in time, this study offers new insights into the long-term implications of WFH in the UK and helps to clarify how WFH is reshaping transport demand.

1.2 Purpose of the report

The central aim of this report is to examine:

How has the widespread adoption of WFH impacted our wider travel patterns, not just the commute?

To answer this, four questions were addressed:

1. **How have commuting patterns changed**, in terms of frequency, mode choice, hybrid working patterns and satisfaction rates, as levels of WFH have fluctuated over the past five years?
2. **Are changes in the amount of WFH associated with wider changes in transport use**, across all journey purposes and modes?
3. **How have shopping, leisure, social and exercise activities changed** for those who have increased or decreased the amount they WFH?
4. **Is WFH associated with changes in household car ownership**, once job stability (continuity) and location stability (workplace and home location) are accounted for?

4 Anable, J., Brown, L., Docherty, I. & Marsden, G. (2022). *Less is more: Changing travel in a post-pandemic society*. Centre for Research into Energy Demand Solutions. Oxford, UK. Available from: https://www.creds.ac.uk/publications/less-is-more-changing-travel-in-a-post-pandemic-society/.

5 Marsden, G., Anable, J., Docherty, I. & Brown, L. (2021). *At a crossroads: Travel adaptations during Covid-19 restrictions and where next*. Centre for Research on Energy Demand Solutions. Oxford, UK. Available from: https://www.creds.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/CREDS-Decarbon8-covid-transas-briefing.pdf.

6 Ton, D., Arendsen,K., de Bruyn, M., Severens, V., van Hagen, M., van Oort, N., Duives, D.. (2022). *Teleworking during COVID-19 in the Netherlands: Understanding behaviour, attitudes, and future intensions of train travellers*. Transportation Research Part A 159.

2. Methods

2.1 Study design and data source

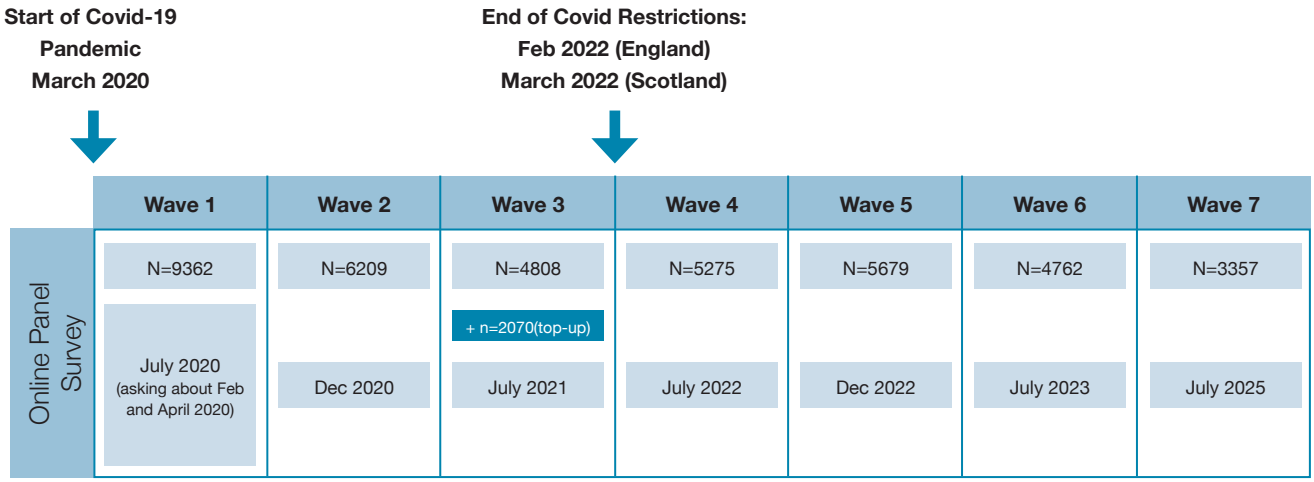
This report uses data from TRANSAS, a large–scale longitudinal panel survey that has followed individuals since 2020, to examine how transport, travel and lifestyles have evolved after the pandemic. The same individuals were recontacted at multiple timepoints ('waves'), enabling both cross–sectional snapshots and within–person longitudinal change analyses. Hence, unlike most existing analysis, TRANSAS allows both cross–sectional and within–person longitudinal comparisons, capturing how the same individuals' behaviours have changed over five years.

Seven main survey waves have been completed to date. Wave 1 (July 2020) captured both retrospective pre-pandemic behaviour and activities, and behaviours and activities during the first lockdown, providing a benchmark against which subsequent changes can be measured. Subsequent waves were conducted at approximately 6–12 month intervals up to July 2023 (Wave 6), and respondents were re-approached in July 2025 for Wave 7, providing a five-year post-pandemic perspective (Figure 2). The panel focused on residents of ten UK city-regions across England and Scotland (Bristol, Lancashire, Liverpool, London, Manchester, Newcastle, Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Ayrshire).

Each survey wave contained a **core set of questions** that remained consistent. These covered topics such as household and demographic characteristics, employment and working arrangements, driving licence and car access, general transport mode use, travel attitudes, shopping behaviour, lifestyle factors, and neighbourhood perceptions. This stable set of questions provides a snapshot of how individuals travelled at the time of the survey and, when comparing across the different survey waves, enabled us to examine changes over time.

Alongside these core questions, **each survey wave included topical or time-specific questions**. These covered issues of emerging research or policy interest, such as holiday travel or festive-season travel. Wave 7 included a suite of additional questions focusing on work practices and employment-related behaviours. Throughout all the survey waves, some of these additional questions appeared only in a single wave, while others were repeated intermittently. This flexible structure enabled the study to capture evolving transport behaviours and broader contextual influences over time.

Figure 2: Overview of panel survey methodology



2.2 Survey samples used

Given the unique nature of the panel study and the ability to examine cross-sectional and within-person changes, this report used three main approaches and sample sizes:

1. Cross-sectional working cohort (Wave 7): All respondents working[7] at Wave 7 (n=1443). This data was used for current commute patterns, expected future working schedules, current satisfaction levels and employer policies.
2. Longitudinal total sample: All respondents who answered both Wave 1 and Wave 7 (n=2692). This data was used to characterise overall changes in travel/activity frequencies, irrespective of working status.

7 'Working' refers to anyone in full-time, part-time or casual/sporadic work (including self-employed).

3. Longitudinal working cohort: Respondents in employment at both Wave 1 (pre–pandemic) and Wave 7 (n=1026). Two additional filters were also applied to distinguish the influence of WFH from broader contextual changes, such as changing jobs and/or job location and moving house:
    a. Filter 1 – Working at both timepoints, job and workplace stability plus 'same job since 2020' and 'same workplace location' (n=681).
    b. Filter 2 – Working at both timepoints, workplace and residential (home) stability. 'Same workplace location' and 'individual has not moved house' (n=586).

Interpretation guidance: Results that persist across the filters are less likely to be explained by job or residential changes. Results that attenuate or disappear as filters tighten may be partly driven by the contextual changes of each filter.

Sample sizes (n values) are reported in all figures, tables and graph captions; any caveats relating to small sample sizes are also flagged where relevant.

2.3 Limitations and caveats

Several limitations should be considered when interpreting the findings presented in this report.

First, as with most longitudinal panel studies, the number of respondents declined over time as some participants did not respond to later survey waves. Figure 2 shows that the sample reduced from 9,362 in Wave 1 to 3,357 in Wave 7. Checks were carried out to understand the extent to which participants who remained engaged in later waves may differ systematically from those who dropped out. It was found that the remaining sample was slightly older and had slightly lower car ownership than the original sample. Some of this effect is because the sample did indeed age over the five-year study period and also made changes to their car owning (the latter trend is explored later).

No weighting adjustments were applied to account for attrition between survey waves. The results therefore reflect the characteristics and behaviours of respondents who participated in each wave of the panel. This approach allows the analysis to describe observed patterns within the cohort who remained engaged over time without introducing the additional assumptions required to construct attrition weights. In longitudinal studies, weighting to compensate for non-response can require strong assumptions about those who drop out and may obscure observed within-person changes. However, differential attrition may influence the composition of the sample in later waves and should be considered when interpreting the findings.

Second, the study focuses on residents of ten UK city-regions across England and Scotland. While these areas represent a range of urban contexts, the sample is not designed to be nationally representative. Consequently, the results should be interpreted as reflecting trends among residents of these city-regions rather than the UK population as a whole.

Third, all survey waves were conducted online. While this approach enables efficient longitudinal data collection, it may under-represent individuals with limited digital access or those less likely to participate in online surveys. Although recruitment aimed to include a broad cross-section of respondents, some population groups may therefore be less represented.

Finally, the survey relies on self-reported behaviours and attitudes, which may be subject to recall error or social desirability bias. In addition, the survey period spans a time of significant social, economic and policy change following the COVID-19 pandemic, meaning that observed changes may reflect wider contextual factors that cannot always be fully disentangled within the survey data.

2.4 Key variables

2.4.1 WFH variables

There are several measures of WFH used in this report that have been taken directly from the survey or derived from a combination of variables:

1. WFH yes/no: whether WFH ever, even if only occasionally.
2. WFH frequency category: WFH at a given frequency (e.g. at least 1 day per week (DPW); at least 3 DPW).
3. WFH intensity: measured as a ratio of days WFH divided by total days worked per week for each worker at each wave[8]. This normalisation accounts for changes in the total working days over time.
4. WFH change segments: grouping workers according to whether they had increased, decreased or not changed the proportion of their workdays WFH. This was calculated by subtracting the WFH intensity at Wave 7 from the baseline (Wave 1 pre-pandemic). A positive value shows an 'increase' in WFH intensity, while a negative value shows a 'decrease'. A value of 0 indicates no change, thus creating the *Increasers*, *No-Changers* and *Decreasers* segments (see section 4.3.1)

Figure 3: Worked example showing how the WFH change categories have been created; please see footnote 8 for an explanation of the figures

Worked example:

Pre-pandemic, a worker has a typical working week of five DPW, of which one to two days are WFH. This means they have a WFH intensity pre-pandemic of 0.3 (1.5 divided by 5).

In 2025, their typical working week has reduced to three DPW, but they still work one to two days from home. The WFH intensity is now 0.43 (1.5 divided by 3.5).

Even though the number of WFH days has not changed, the WFH intensity has changed, with a larger proportion of this worker's working week being WFH.

8 TRANSAS WFH survey questions provided participants with categories to select the frequency they WFH in DPW. To calculate the frequency, numerical values have been assigned to the categories: 5 DPW = 5, 3–4 DPW = 3.5, 1–2 DPW =1.5.

2.4.2 Travel, commute characteristics, activity and car ownership variables

Changes in transport mode frequency and activities (food shopping, exercise and social)

For transport modes and activities (food shopping, exercise and social), respondents chose from ordered categories relating to DPW (e.g. 5 DPW, 2—3 DPW, 1—2 DPW, at least once a month, less often than once a month, never). All responses were converted to ordinal scores and change scores computed by subtracting Wave 7 from Wave 1, which typically provided a range of–5 to +5.

Similar to the WFH change categories, a positive value shows an increase in intensity, whereas a negative value shows a decrease and zero is no change.

Commute characteristics

Four facets of the commute were examined at each wave and longitudinally between Wave 1 and Wave 7. Measures were captured in harmonised bands and, where relevant, reported cross-sectionally at Wave 7 and as within-person change across waves:

1. Commute distance (home to workplace, one way) in categorical variable (0–-5, 6–-10, 11–-15, 16-–50, 51-–100 and 100+ miles). These were used to profile WFH groups at Wave 7 and to track average distance by WFH frequency (never, at least 1 DPW, at least 3 DPW) across waves.
2. Commute time (home to workplace, one way) in categorical variable (0–-15, 16–-30, 31–-45, 46-–60, 61-–90 and 90+ minutes). Wave 7 distributions were analysed split by the WFH frequency categories mentioned previously and trends in average time across waves.
3. Main commute mode. Mode split by WFH frequency is reported at each wave.
4. Commute experience is reported on a seven–point bipolar rating of cost, difficulty, safety, stress and overall satisfaction.

Related working-pattern measurements

Used to interpret commute results. These include expected office days among WFHers, split–day working prevalence and reasons for split days, and workplace policy clarity and discretion for WFH.

Household car ownership

Car ownership was treated as ordinal categorical variables (0, 1, 2, 3+ vehicles). The transitions between categories from Wave 1 to Wave 7 were examined and tested for overall distribution change and directional asymmetry–the churn of car ownership over time.

2.5 Statistical analysis

The analyses in this report draw on both cross-sectional and longitudinal components of the TRANSAS panel, enabling the assessment of a) overall changes between Wave 1 and Wave 7, and b) whether the magnitude or direction of these changes differs across the three WFH change categories (*Increasers/No–Changers/Decreasers*). Because many of the key variables were ordinal, skewed or not normally distributed, non-parametric methods were used throughout. Please note, in the interest of brevity and clarity, the specific statistical test used is not reported each time results are presented; however, all assessments of statistical significance were based on appropriate underlying analyses as follows.

2.5.1 Within-person longitudinal change tests

To assess whether individuals' behaviours changed between Wave 1 and Wave 7, a set of paired (repeated-measures) non-parametric tests were used as appropriate for ordinal outcomes and categorical changes:

- Wilcoxon signed-rank test (paired) to identify whether there was a statistically significant within-person change in ordinal frequency measures (e.g. frequency of bus use, cycling, shopping or leisure activities). Wave 1 and Wave 7 responses were compared using individual-level change scores for all transport and activity variables.
- Stuart-Maxwell test of marginal homogeneity to assess whether the overall distribution of multi-category variables (e.g. household car-ownership categories) changed significantly between Wave 1 and Wave 7. This tests whether the set of response probabilities has shifted at the population level, irrespective of the direction of change.
- Bowker test of symmetry used alongside Stuart–-Maxwell test to examine whether category-to-category transitions were directionally symmetric; for example, whether movement from 0 to 1 car was as common as movement from 1 to 0 cars. This provides insights into whether households were, on balance, increasing or decreasing the number of cars in their household.

Together, these tests characterise the magnitude, direction and distribution of longitudinal change across the sample.

2.5.2 Between-group comparisons (WFH change groups)

To assess whether levels of change differed for individuals who increased, decreased or did not change their amount of WFH between Wave 1 and Wave 7, the three WFH change categories were compared using non-parametric between-group tests:

- Kruskal–-Wallis test to determine whether the distribution of change scores differed between the three WFH groups.
- Post-hoc pairwise Dunn tests (Holm correction) to identify which groups differed (*Increasers* vs *No-Changers*, *Increasers* vs *Decreasers*, *No-Changers* vs *Decreasers*) when a Kruskal–-Wallis test indicated a significant group difference.

2.5.3 Robustness checks using filters

All between-group analyses were repeated under the two longitudinal filters described in section 3.2. This allowed evaluation of the influence of workplace stability and location stability on WFH–-travel relationships:

- Results that remained significant across all filters are more likely to represent behaviour changes associated with WFH differences.
- Results that weakened or disappeared under strict filters may be partially driven by changes in job stability (length of employment), workplace relocation or change in residential location.

This analysis allows us to differentiate WFH-related behavioural change from other structural changes that can affect transport choices.

3. Results

First, WFH patterns at each of the seven survey timepoints are compared (section 4.1). Second, the relationship between WFH frequency and commute characteristics is examined (section 4.2). This is followed by an examination of longitudinal WFH change segments and how these relate to commute behaviour, overall travel frequency, food shopping, exercise and leisure activities, and car ownership (sections 4.3 to 4.5).

3.1 Patterns of WFH

3.1.1 Levels of WFH

Participants were asked how frequently they WFH instead of physically travelling to work on any given day. This question provided participants with the option to select 'N/A my job could not be conducted at home'.

WFH ranged from 36% of workers before the pandemic, to 70% when it was at its most intense. Since Wave 4 (July 2022), the proportion of workers WFH stabilised at around 50%. The proportion of workers whose job could not be conducted at home remained relatively stable between 24% and 28% at all survey points, except during the height of the pandemic when it dropped to 20% (Figure 4).

Figure 5 shows the changes over time according to the number of DPW that were WFH. By Wave 7 (July 2025), approximately 43% of respondents WFH for at least 1 DPW. However, this goes down to 27% if only including those who work 3 DPW and to 9% if only including those who work 5 DPW.

It is notable that, from July 2022 onwards, the trend stabilises with only small fluctuations in subsequent waves, suggesting that WFH rates have largely plateaued after the initial post-pandemic drop. This means there has potentially been around three years for WFH to become embedded in lifestyles and to potentially have knock-on impacts on other individual or household practices. This is examined further in subsequent sections.

Figure 4: Proportion of working sample at each timepoint who never WFH, had a job which could not be conducted at home or WFH some of the time

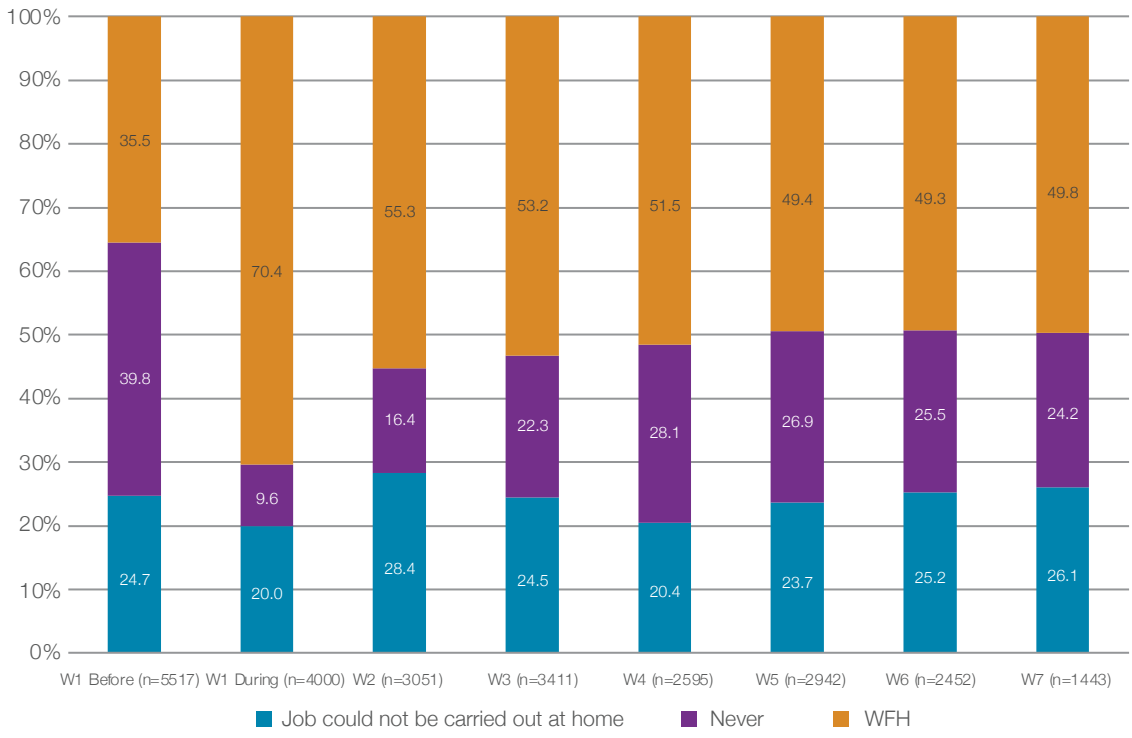
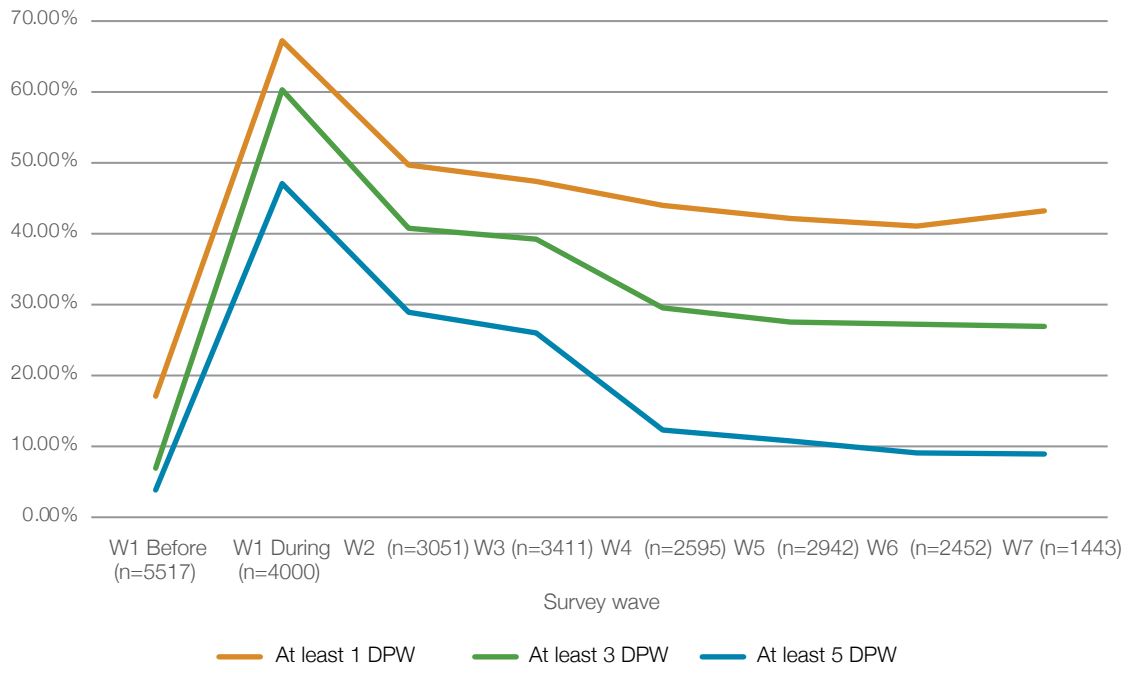


Figure 5: Proportion of workers at each survey who WFH at least 1, 3 or 5 DPW across all seven survey waves. Categories are cumulative: individuals reporting ≥5 DPW are also counted in the ≥3 and ≥1 DPW categories.



3.1.2 Frequency of WFH

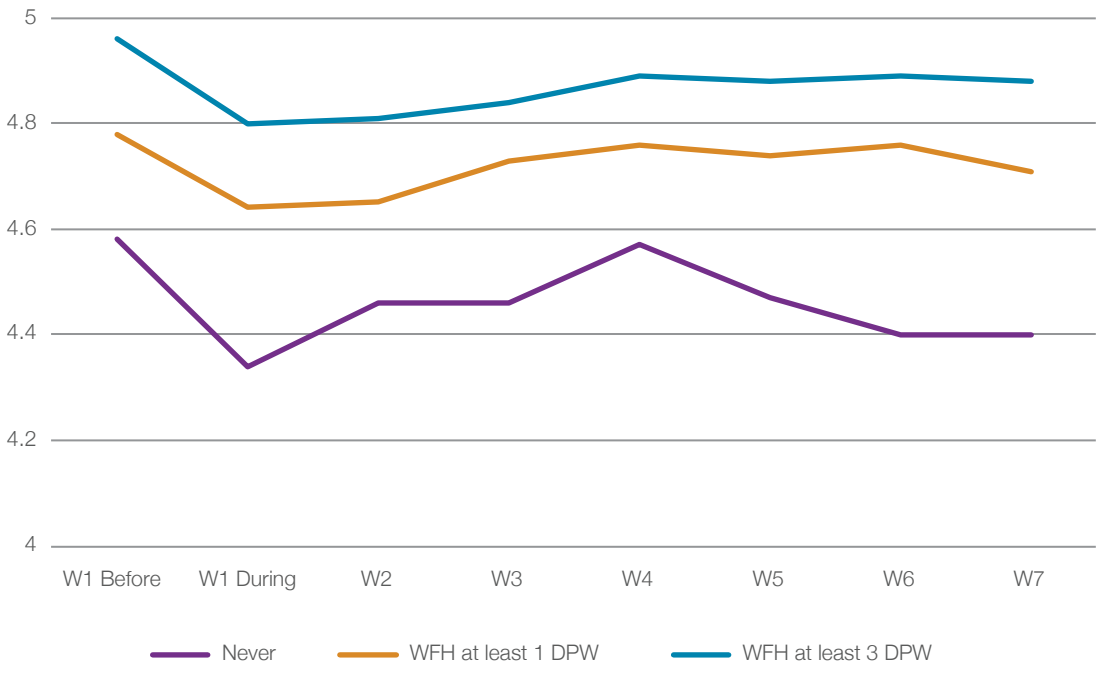
Those who WFH for at least part of the week were most likely to have a standard five-day working pattern. Among those who WFH at least 3 DPW, 77.5% reported a typical five-day week, and this is similarly high among those who WFH at least 1 DPW (70.6%) (Table 1). In contrast, non-WFH workers were more likely to report shorter working weeks. These findings are supported by Office of National Statistics data[9] that show WFHers are more likely to be full-time workers.

9 Office of National Statistics (2025). *Who has access to hybrid work in Great Britain?* Office for National Statistics. Available from: https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/articles/whohasaccesstohybridworkingreatbritain/2025-06-11. Accessed: 16/02/26.

Table 1: Proportion of workers with a five-day working week, by frequency of WFH (WFH at least 1 DPW and at least 3 DPW) at Wave 7

Typical length of working week	WFH at least 1 DPW		WFH at least 3 DPW	
	Yes (n=623)	No (n=820)	Yes (n=387)	No (n=1056)
1 day	1.4%	4.4%	n/a	n/a
2 days	3.0%	5.6%	n/a	n/a
3 days	8.2%	11.3%	6.5%	11.3%
4 days	9.0%	15.9%	7.5%	14.9%
5 days	70.6%	54.6%	77.5%	55.7%
6 or 7 days	7.7%	8.2%	7.5%	8.1%

Figure 6: Average total number of DPW worked at each survey split by whether WFH never, at least 1 DPW or at least 3 DPW



The trend over time also supports these patterns in working hours. As shown in Figure 6, those who WFH at least 3 DPW consistently reported the longest average working week across all survey waves (ranging from 4.8 to 5.0 DPW). Their typical week has remained relatively stable since Wave 4, averaging close to 5 DPW throughout. This aligns with the earlier finding that workers who WFH at least 3 DPW were most likely to report a typical five–day working week (77.5%).

Before the pandemic (Wave 1 Before), employees who WFH tended to have noticeably longer typical working weeks than other groups (mean of 4.96 DPW compared with 4.78 respectively, and 4.58 for those who never WFH). However, these days dipped during the first lockdown period (Wave 1 During), when WFH became available to far more workers and working patterns. Since then, the typical working weeks among hybrid workers have stabilised at slightly lower levels than pre-pandemic (4.88 for those who WFH at least 3 DPW, and 4.71 for those who WFH at least 1 DPW at Wave 7).

3.1.3 Typical office days for hybrid workers

Most people who WFH at least once a week (n=623) in Wave 7 expected to commute mid-week, rather than on Mondays or Fridays. Tuesday (31%) and Wednesday (29%) were the most common expected commute days. Friday (15%) and Monday (22%) were much less common (Figure 7). Around 26% said their pattern varies, and 20% did not know what their commute days would be. These findings suggest that peak demand for office space and peak commuter days are likely to be concentrated between Tuesday and Thursday, although there remains a significant degree of unpredictability for some workers.

These mid-week commuting expectations closely mirror wider transport evidence. Transport for London[10] data shows that Monday and Friday are consistently the quietest commute days, with substantially lower peak-time passenger volumes than mid-week travel. National rail data from DfT[11] aligns with this pattern: rail travel is busiest during the morning peak on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays, which have become the most common commuting days for office-based workers across the network. Together, these datasets reinforce the survey's finding that commuting demand is now concentrated primarily in the middle of the week.

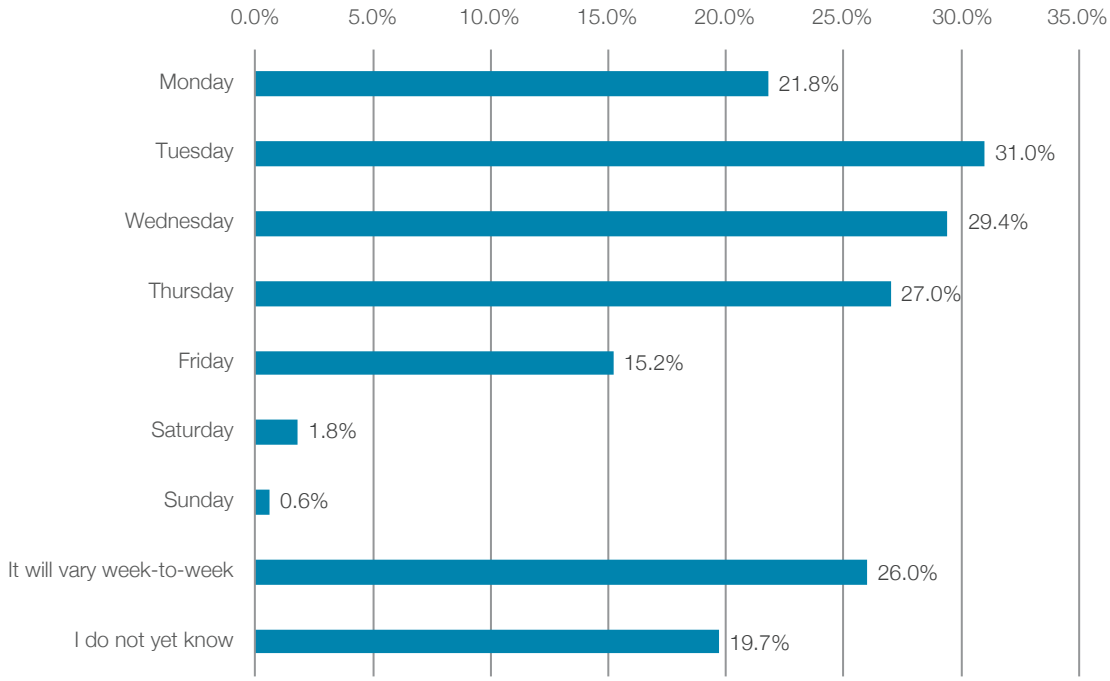
In addition to this, a substantial proportion of those who WFH at least 1 DPW did not expect to have any days where they worked exclusively from their workplace[12]. Around 30% (n=187) reported that they would not have a full working day in the office/workplace. This group is likely to add further variation to workplace demand, and contribute to more fluid and less predictable commute patterns with potential split-working days.

10 Transport for London (2025). *Quieter times to travel*. Available from: https://tfl.gov.uk/status-updates/busiest-times-to-travel. Accessed: 16/02/26.

11 DfT (2025). *Rail passenger numbers and crowding on weekdays in major cities in England and Wales*. Available from: https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/rail-passenger-numbers-and-crowding-on-weekdays-in-major-cities-in-england-and-wales-2024/rail-passenger-numbers-and-crowding-on-weekdays-in-major-cities-in-england-and-wales. Accessed: 16/02/26.

12 Participants were asked: 'Over the next 6 months, how many days a week on average do you think you will work your set hours of work only in your workplace?' They were also asked the same question for WFH and split-days.

Figure 7: The days that people who WFH at least 1 DPW expected to travel to work; timepoint: Wave 7



3.1.4 Split working day

Those who stated they WFH at least some of the time in July 2025 (Wave 7) were asked whether they ever split their workday, with some hours both WFH and from their workplace[13], and, if so, how often they did this and why[14].

Of those who WFH at least 1 DPW, 35.5% stated they work some hours from home and some from work on the same day. Of those who did this, most did it 1–-2 DPW (37.1%), or a few times a month (30.8%).

There were a wide range of reasons why respondents work split days. The most frequently mentioned reasons (from common to less common) were:

- Attending in-person meetings, client appointments, site visits or other tasks that required physical presence.
- Transport and travel-related considerations, such as avoiding rush–hour congestion, reducing unnecessary commuting, or timing office visits around travel delays or peak fares.
- Childcare and other caring responsibilities, including school runs, caring for relatives or pets, and managing household commitments.
- Workplace limitations or constraints, such as lack of desk space, unavailable meeting rooms, or needing access to office-based equipment.

13 These survey questions specifically asked respondents not to include tasks such as overtime or after-hours work tasks, such as checking emails at home.
14 Participants were provided with an open-ended question where they could freely type why they worked split-workdays.

- Convenience and flexibility, including improving productivity (at home), structuring the day efficiently or fitting work around personal commitments.
- Nature of the job, for roles that require multiple locations.

These findings highlight the flexibility inherent in hybrid working works for some and the practical factors, such as commute flexibility, office space and childcare/caring responsibilities, shaping work routines.

3.1.5 Workplace policies and future stability

Workplaces vary considerably in their WFH policies and the implementation of any policies they have. Just over a third of people who WFH at least 1 DPW reported having a clearly defined policy that specified how many DPW they were expected to be in the office (Figure 8). However, a further 20% said that while a policy existed, it was not consistently implemented, and 6% reported that their manager did not follow the stated policy. Around 18% indicated that their workplace did not have a formal WFH policy at all, even though they were still able to WFH. This spread suggests that hybrid working arrangements remained uneven across employees, with many workers navigating polices that were either unclear or inconsistently applied.

Looking ahead, those who WFH at least 1 DPW also anticipated considerable variability in how any hybrid working would be organised. Nearly half (47%) expected the days they WFH or go into their workplace to vary from week- to-week, and 41% said the number of days they attended the workplace would also fluctuate (Figure 9). Despite this variability, a large majority felt they had agency over their schedules, with 66% believing they were able to choose which days they WFH or go into the workplace, and 54% expected to decide how many days they attended overall.

These findings suggest that while formal organisational WFH policies were mixed, many hybrid workers anticipated significant personal control and flexibility in shaping their future working patterns.

Figure 8: Workplace WFH policies for those who WFH at least 1 DPW in Wave 7 (n=623)

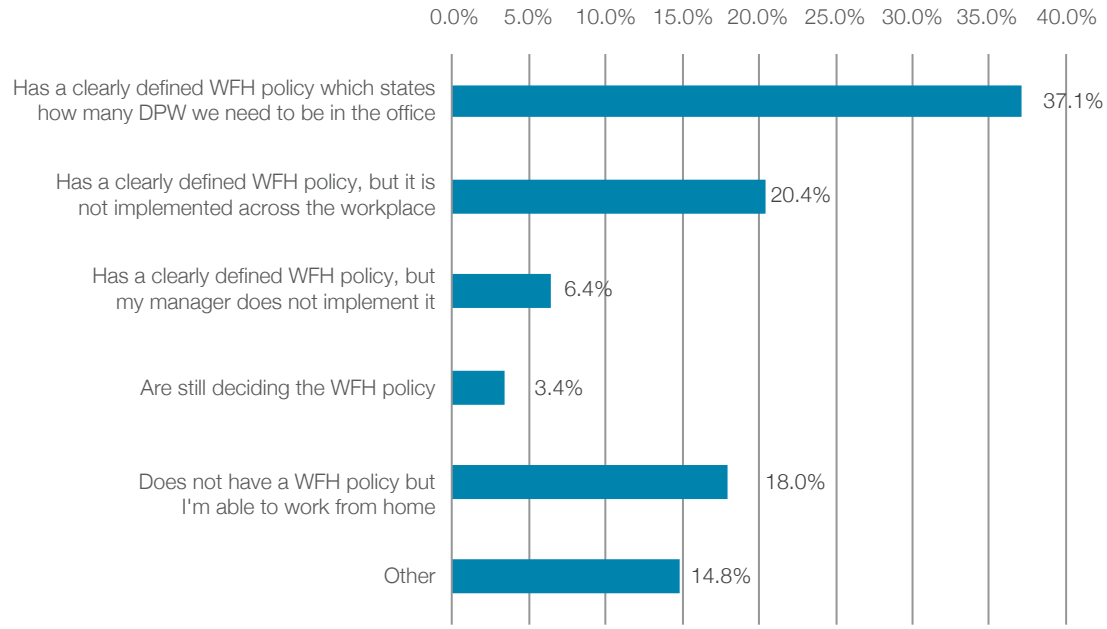
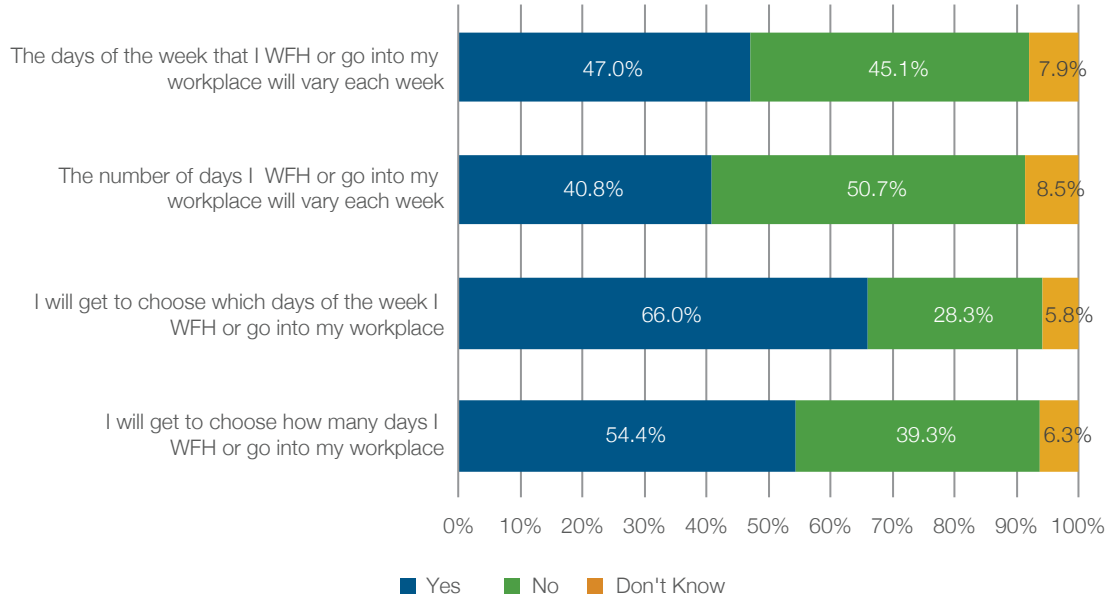


Figure 9: Future WFH and travel to work decisions for those that WFH at least 1 DPW in Wave 7



3.2 WFH and the commute

3.2.1 Distance from work

The relationship between the amount of WFH and commute distance is clear: those that WFH, regardless of the amount that they do so, tend to work further away from their workplace than those who do not (Figure 10). Also, the more days that are WFH, the greater the distance tends to be (Table 2).

Figure 10: Commute distance band split by whether someone WFH at least 1 DPW and at least 3 DPW at Wave 7 (n=1401)[15]

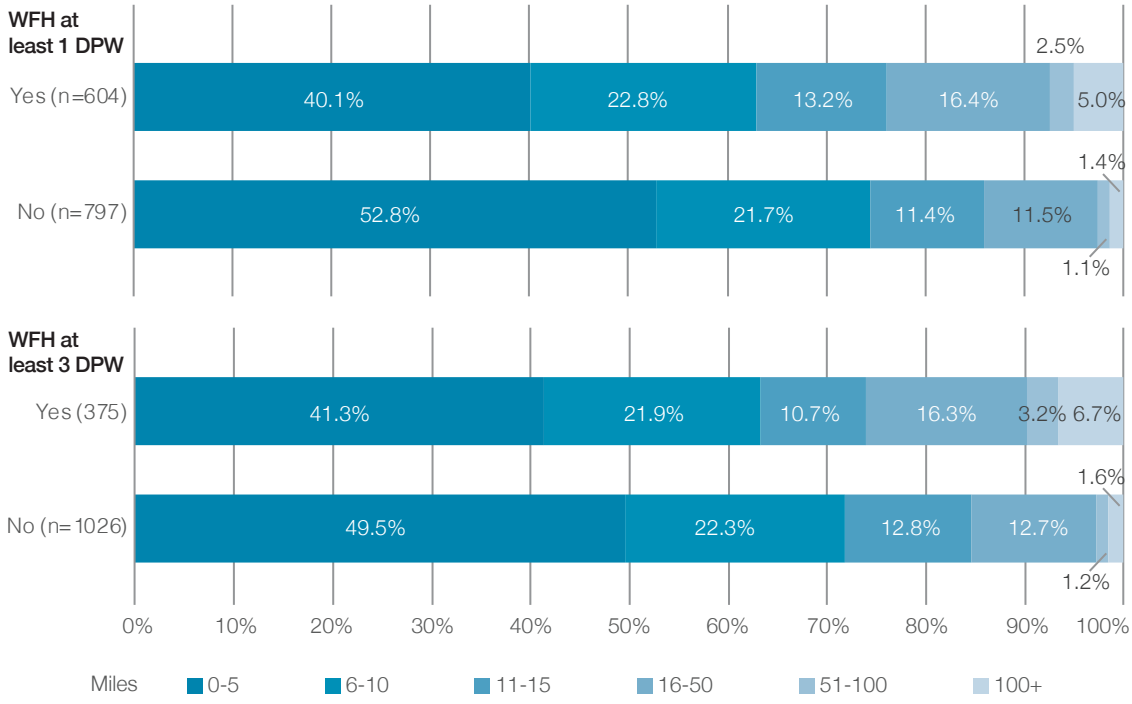


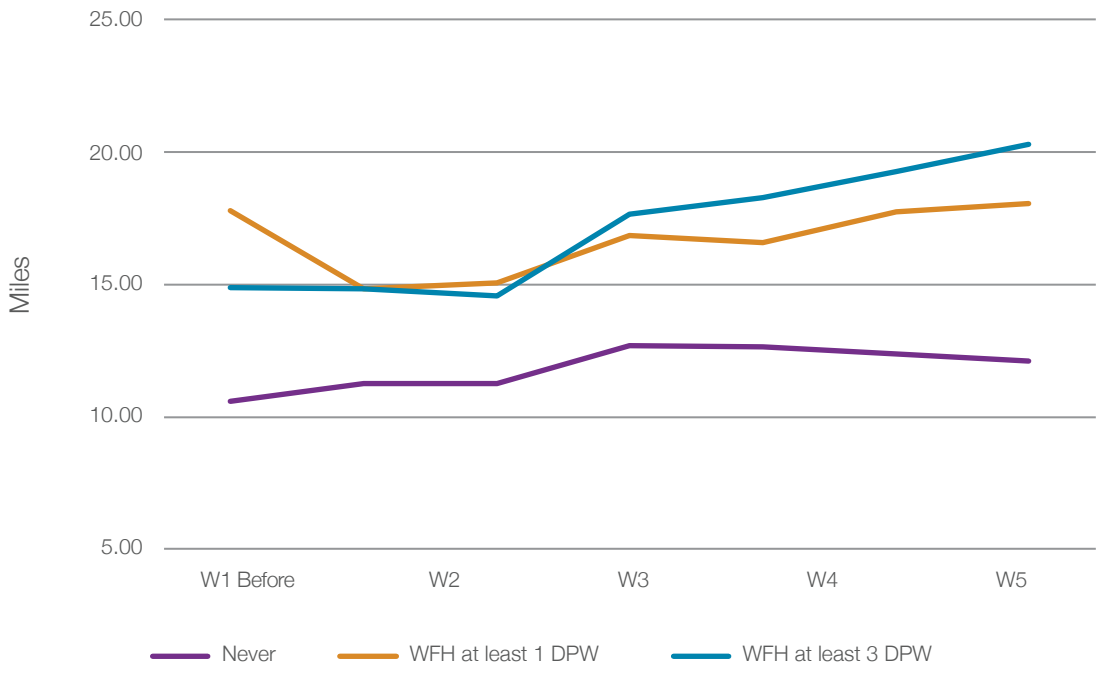
Table 2: Average number of days WFH according to commute distance bands (Wave 7)

Commute distance	Average number of days WFH
0—5 miles	1.15
6—10 miles	1.29
11—15 miles	1.21
16—50 miles	1.52
51—100 miles	2.13
100+ miles	2.90

15 There is a slight variation in sample sizes when compared with other Wave 7 graphs due to 3% of sample (n=42) answering 'don't know'

Over time, average commute distances vary by WFH frequency (Figure 11). Workers who never WFH maintained the shortest and relatively stable commute across all waves. Those who WFH at least 1 DPW had returned to approximately their pre-baseline commute distance (Wave 1 Before) by Wave 7, indicating little net change over time. Although, the at least 1 DPW group appeared to have returned to baseline distances, this masks substantial divergence within the more frequent WFHers, i.e. those with at least 3 WFH days. This group showed a sustained increase in commute distances, with figures in 2025 being higher than pre-pandemic baselines. This suggest that the most frequent WFHers exhibited the most notable shift towards longer-distance commuting.

Figure 11: Average commute distance at each survey wave. Graph shows people who never WFH, WFH at least 1 DPW and WFH at least 3 DPW at each survey timepoint. Sample sizes vary based on number of people answering each survey, and people working at least 1 DPW and at least 3 DPW at each survey.



3.2.2 Commute time

Consistent with the commute-distance findings, commute times were also longer among WFHers (Figure 12), increasing on average according to the number of days WFH (Table 3).

Figure 12: Commute time split by whether someone WFH at least 1 DPW and at least 3 DPW at Wave 7

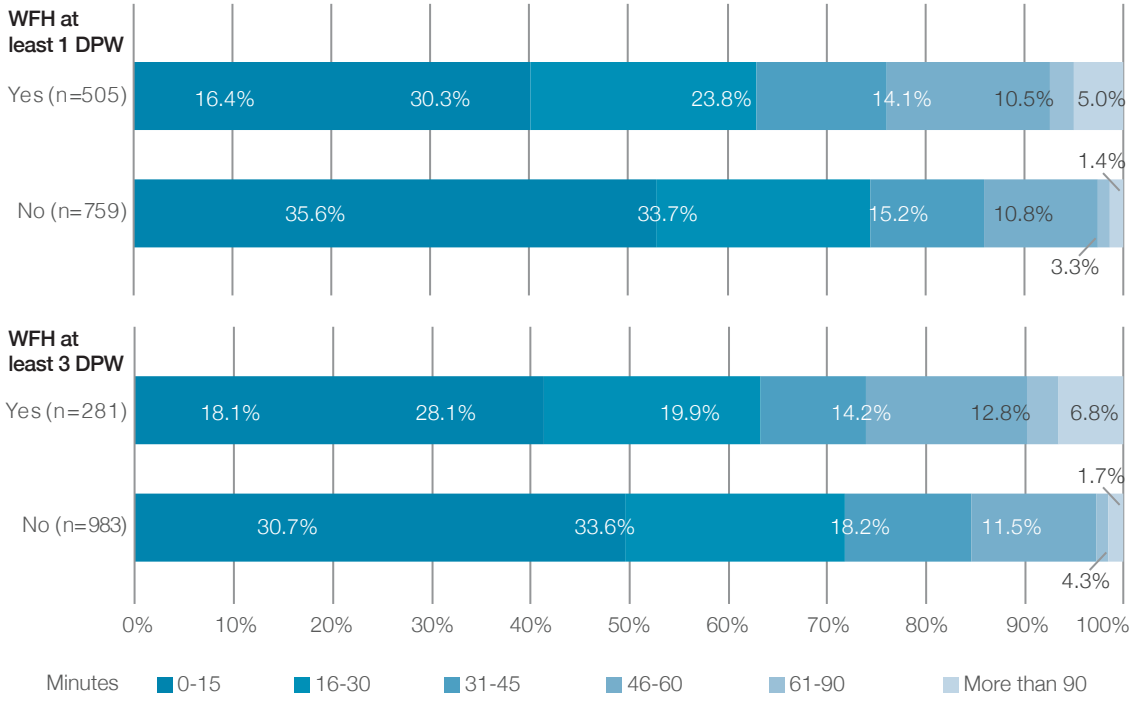
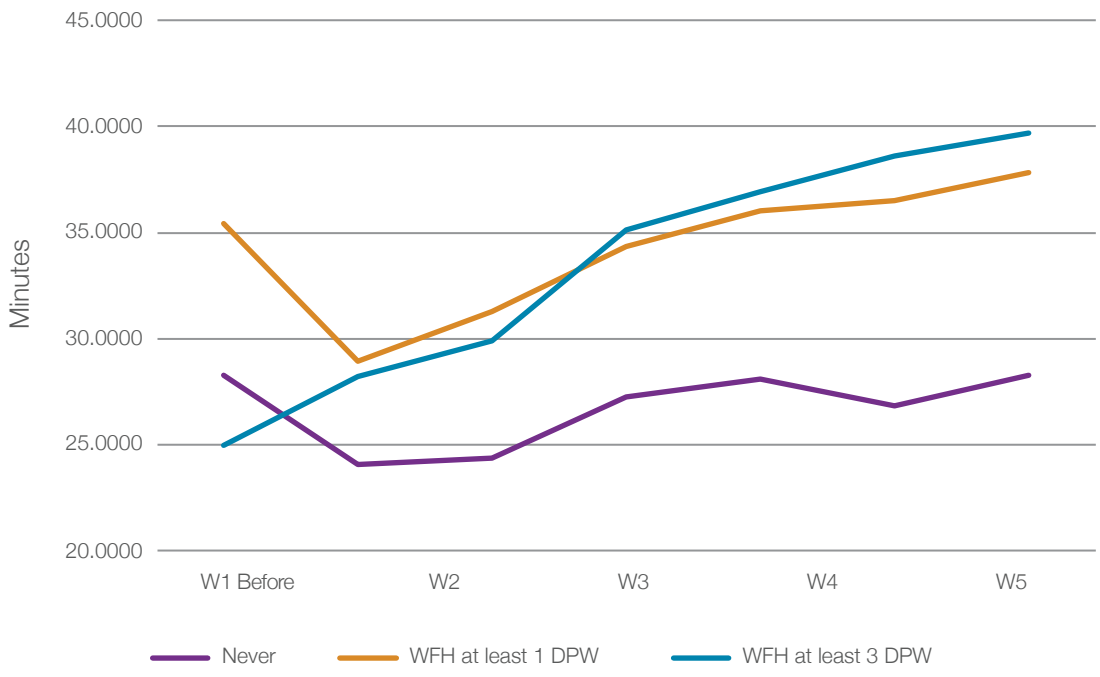


Table 3: Average number of days WFH according to commute time bands (Wave 7, n=1291)

Commute time	Average number of days WFH
0–-15 minutes	1.41
16–-30 minutes	1.44
31–-45 minutes	1.49
46–-60 minutes	1.61
61–-90 minutes	1.63
More than 90 minutes	1.93

Similar to commute distance, average commute times increased over the survey waves for home-workers, with the steepest rise among those who WFH at least 3 DPW, from approximately 25 minutes pre-pandemic, to nearly 40 minutes in July 2025 (Wave 7) (Figure 13). Those who WFH at least 1 DPW had a slight increase in commute time, even though their commute distance was similar to baseline figures (Figure 11). In contrast, the never WFH group maintained the shortest and comparatively stable commute time, dipping to approximately 24 minutes at Waves 2 and 3, and ending near 28 minutes at Wave 7, indicating only a modest change relative to the upward trend in commute time of the regular home-workers.

Figure 13: Average commute time at each survey wave. Graph shows people who never WFH, WFH at least 1 DPW and WFH at least 3 DPW at each survey timepoint. Sample sizes vary based on number of people answering each survey, and people working at least 1 DPW and at least 3 DPW at each survey.

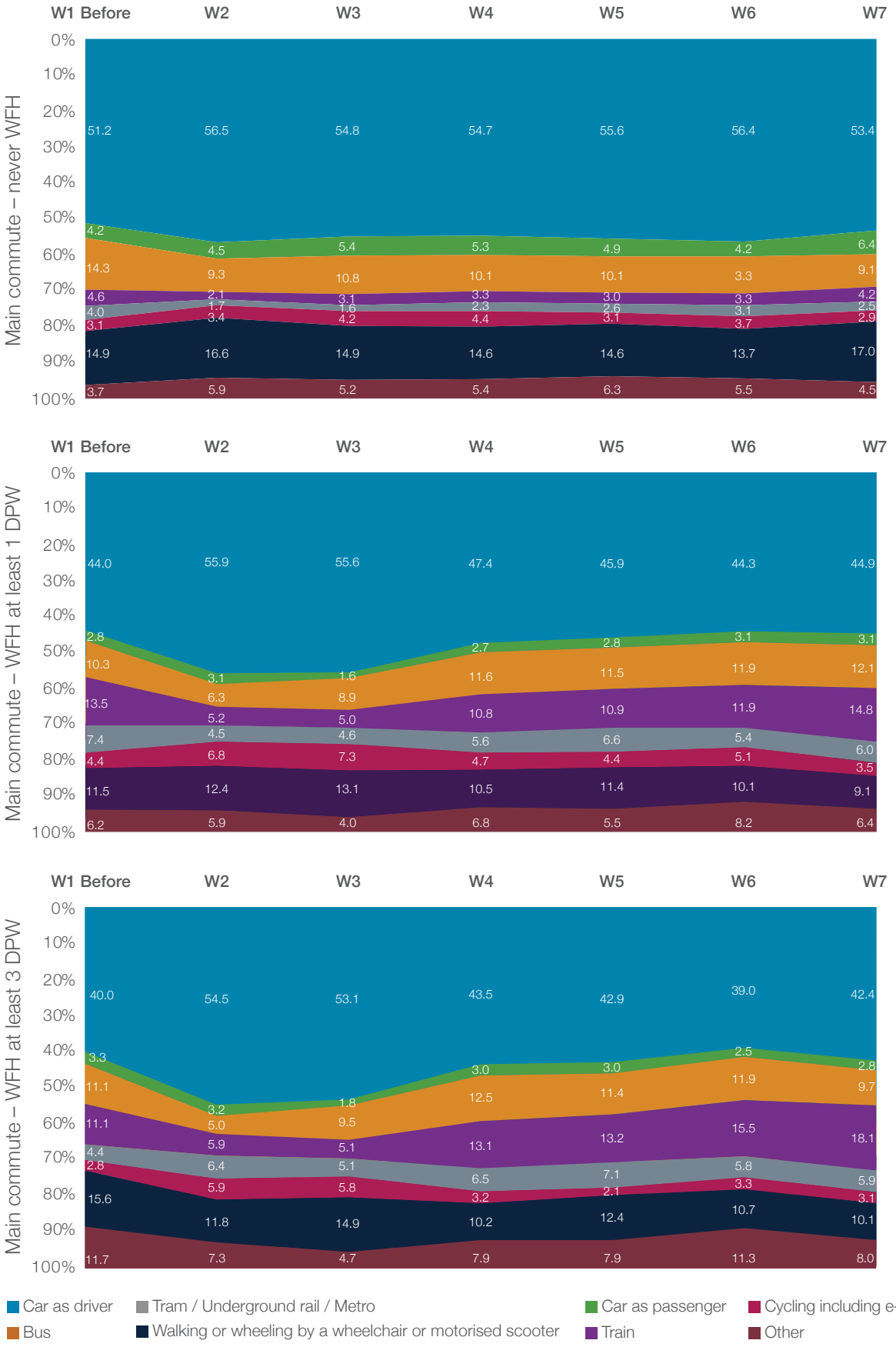


3.2.3 Commute mode

Mode of travel to work was strongly associated with the frequency of WFH. Across all survey waves, people who WFH regularly were less likely to rely on the car as their main mode of commuting and more likely to use public transport than those who never WFH (Figure 14). For example, at Wave 7 around one-third of respondents who WFH at least 3 DPW used either the bus, train or tram/underground/metro as the longest part of their commute, compared with only approximately 15% of those who never WFH. The largest difference was in train use: 18% of those WFH at least 3 DPW travelled mainly by train at Wave 7, compared with just 4% among those who never WFH.

Looking across time, the modal split for those who never WFH remained relatively stable, whereas the commute modes used by regular home-workers showed greater variation. This greater variation does not necessarily imply that WFH causes mode instability, but could reflect both the longer average commute distances among WFHers and the greater scheduling flexibility available under hybrid or split-day arrangements, which together may contribute to more variable mode choices.

Figure 14: Main commute mode at each timepoint split by those that either never WFH, WFH at least 1 DPW, or WFH at least 3 DPW.



3.2.4 Commute satisfaction

All those who travelled to/from work were asked to rate their journey on a seven-point bipolar scale with the following anchors: cost (cheap/expensive), difficulty (difficult/easy), safety (safe/dangerous), stressful/relaxing and overall satisfaction level (satisfactory/unsatisfactory).

Overall, cost was the only attribute where notable differences between the WFH frequency categories were found (Figure 15). In other words, those who WFH were no more satisfied with their commute with respect to how easy or relaxing it was, or in terms of overall satisfaction (Figure 16). With respect to cost, people who WFH tended to rate their commute as more expensive, with more of those who WFH choosing the higher cost ratings.

One explanation for this pattern, as shown earlier, is that people who WFH regularly (at least 1 DPW or at least 3 DPW) typically had longer commute distances and greater reliance on public transport, particularly train travel.

Figure 15: Perceived cost of the commute split by whether someone WFH at least 1 DPW or not at Wave 7

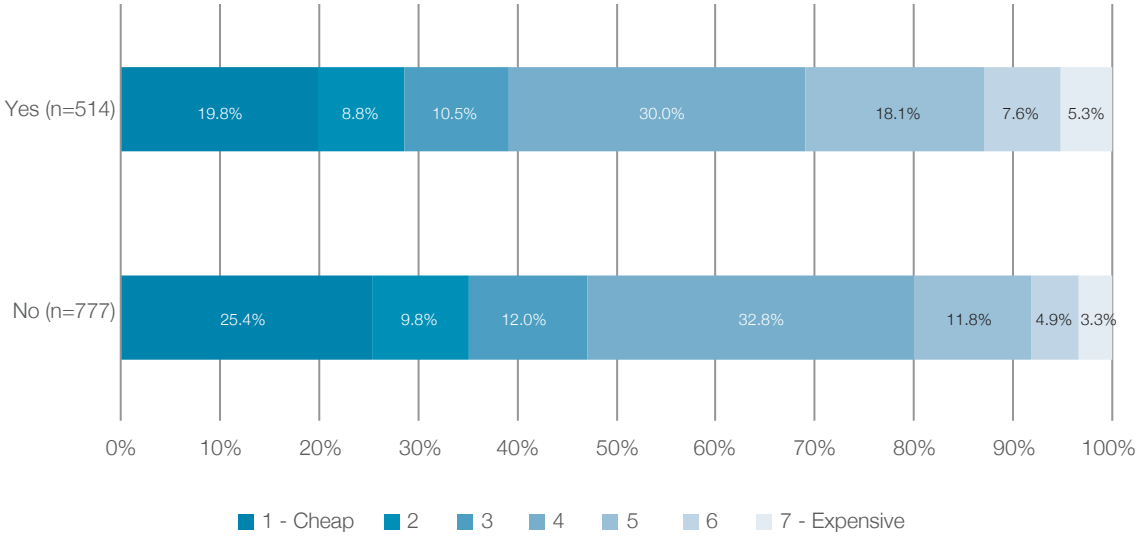
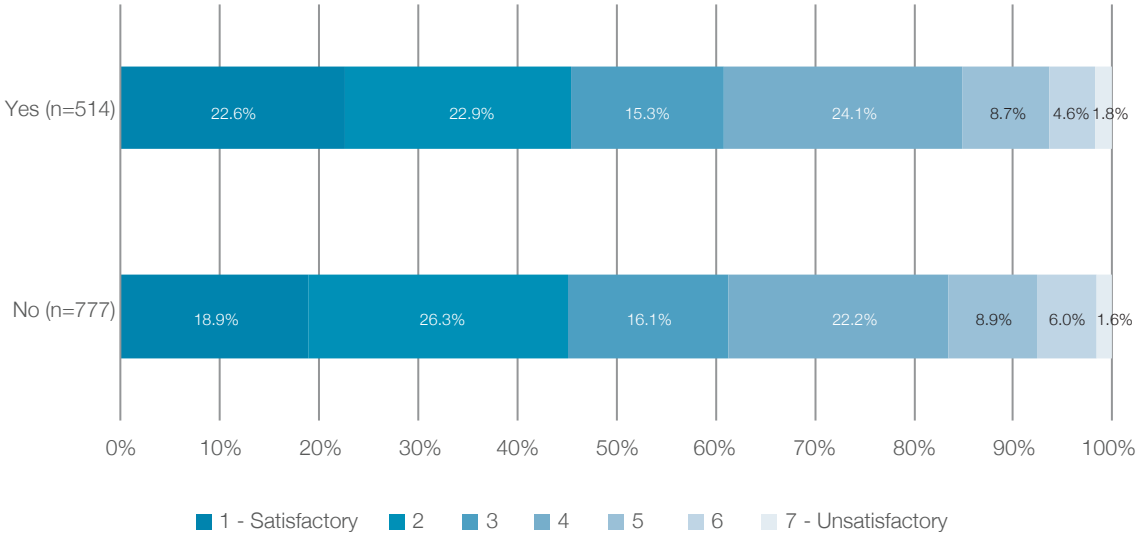


Figure 16: Satisfaction with the commute split by whether someone WFH at least 1 DPW or not at Wave 7



3.3 Longitudinal WFH change

This section follows individual workers from before the pandemic until July 2025, to understand the degree to which those individuals who underwent a change in their levels of WFH since before the pandemic also exhibited any changes in other aspects of their activity or travel patterns. This contrasts to the results considered above as it follows individuals over time as opposed to providing snapshots of behaviour on average at each timepoint.

3.3.1 WFH change segments

To examine the relationship between individual change in levels of WFH and changes in various other travel and activity habits, workers were first grouped according to whether or not they had changed their level of WFH and, if so, in which direction.

To create the segments, those who were working in both Wave 1 and Wave 7 were grouped according to those who were still undertaking more WFH in Wave 7 than before the pandemic ('*Increasers*'), those doing less ('*Decreasers*') and those doing the same amount (including none at all) ('*No-Changers*'). The change was based on the intensity of WFH (i.e. the proportion of days they worked that were WFH) and not the absolute number of days (see section 3.4.1 for a more detailed explanation).

Figure 17: Distribution of WFH frequency at Wave 7 split by the three WFH change segments (Decrease, No Change and Increase)

A large proportion of the *No-Changers* are workers who never WFH in July 2025 (Wave 7). As they are in the 'No Change' category, this also means they never WFH before the pandemic. The 'No Change' group is also composed of a small share of people who did WFH pre-pandemic, with 12.2% reporting they WFH at least 1 DPW (Figure 17).

For the *Decreasers*, just over 60% reported never WFH in Wave 7. This indicates that before the pandemic, most of this group WFH at least occasionally and then reduced the amount they WFH over time.

Before exploring what else has changed for the WFH change segments other than the amount of WFH itself, their responses to a set of questions pertaining to their employment and commute were analysed. Table 4 displays this information in summary form and allows each group to be characterised as follows:

- *Increasers*: These tended to be full-time workers concentrated in IT, legal, finance and local government sectors, and relatively unlikely to be self-employed. Most (85%) travelled into their workplace at least 1 DPW and the majority (75%) were satisfied with the amount of homeworking they did. When they travelled into their workplace, they had the longest commute in terms of distance and time, mainly carrying out these journeys by public transport even though 20% of this group had given up a public transport season ticket since the pandemic. Their commute modes were the least stable/predictable and the most multimodal. However, *Increasers* were more stressed and less satisfied with their commute than the other segments. *Increasers* travelled more for business meetings than those in the other groups.

- *No-Changers*: Over a third of this group had never WFH (39.6%) and even more said they could not do so (43.2%). Of those that did, there was a mixture of WFH satisfaction levels. Their commute mode was the most stable, with 76% stating they used the same mode of transport as pre-pandemic. They were also the most car-dependent commute group. They perceived their commute to be relatively low cost, with relatively high satisfaction. In this group, 6% had stopped buying public transport season tickets.
- *Decreasers*: This group was made up of the highest proportion of self–employed workers and a high share of part-time workers. This group tended to say they had the cheapest and shortest commutes, with the highest proportion of multi–modal journeys. Nevertheless, most of this group would have liked to WFH more, as only around a third of this group still did some form of homeworking. However, a quarter said their job was not conducive to WFH at all. In this group, 10% had stopped buying public transport season tickets.

Table 4: Job and commute characteristics of the WFH segments

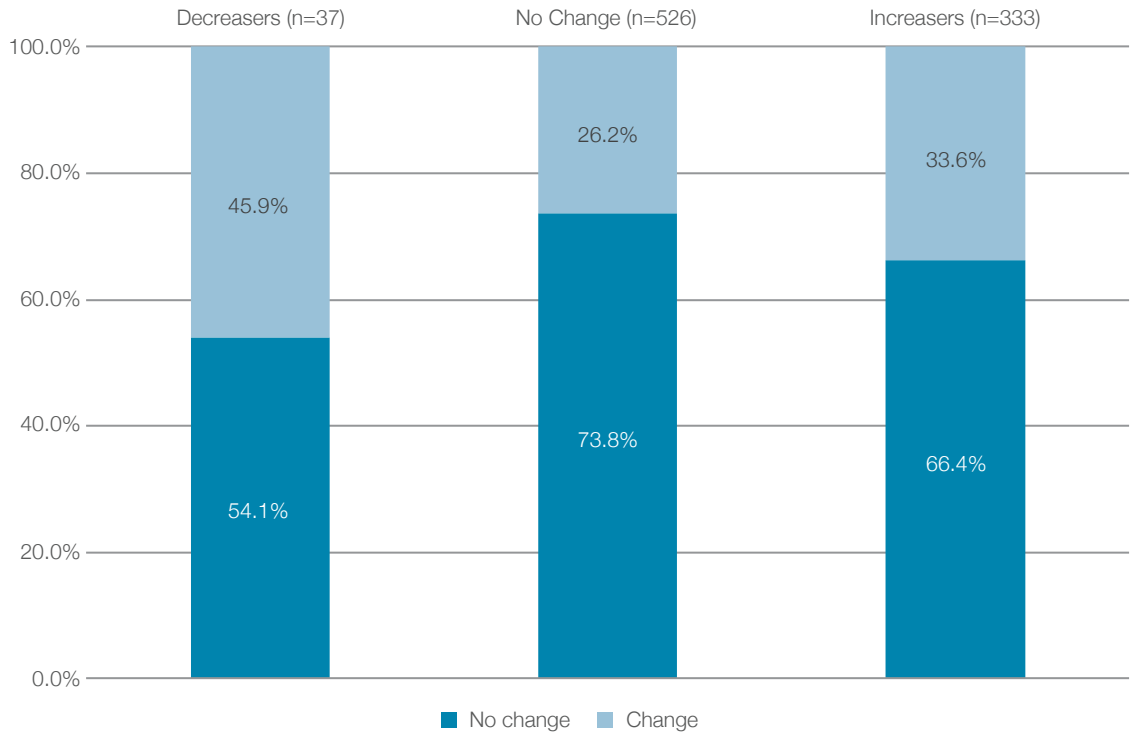
	Decreasers (n=55)	**No-Changers (n=576)**	**Increasers (n=395)**
Employment type	High part-time (34.5%); highest self-employment (27.3%)	Mixed employment types	Mostly full-time (85.3%); low self-employment (6.3%)
Job sectors	Strong presence now in education (27.3%)	Concentrated in education (18.4%), health (15.5%), transport/ distribution (8.2%)	IT (11.6%), legal (4.6%), finance (9.9%), local govt. (12.9%), health (11.9%), education (10.4%)
WFH frequency / workplace days	Most never WFH (36.4%) or can't WFH (25.2%)	Most never WFH (39.6%) or can't WFH (43.2%)	65.1% attend 1–4 days/ week; 14.7% never go into work
WFH satisfaction	Most dissatisfied; want to WFH more	Of the small number that WFH (n=99), there was mixed satisfaction overall; WFH amount is "about right" but nearly a quarter stated they want to WFH more.	72% say the amount they WFH amount is "about right"; highest productivity (80% agree)
Commute distance	65.5% within 0–5 miles	50.9% within 0–5 miles	Live furthest away: only 35.4% within 0–5 miles
Commute time	<15 min = 32.6%; 61+min = 8.7%	<15 min = 33.6%; 61+min = 4.7%	<15 min = 14.8% (lowest); 61+ min = 17.3% (highest)
Main travel mode to work	Mixed	Mostly car-dependent (55.9%)	Higher public transport use (30.3%); lower car use (48.1%)
Multimodal travel to work	Highest multimodal share (21.7%)	Most predictable (76.4% same mode); less multimodal (11.5%)	Least predictable; often multimodal (16.3%); most likely to combine with car use (23.6%)

	Decreasers (n=55)	No-Changers (n=576)	Increasers (n=395)
Commute cost/ease/ satisfaction	Lowest costs; easier commutes	Lower cost; easier; higher satisfaction	Highest costs; least easy commute; most stress; lowest satisfaction
Travel for meetings & video use	Lower use	Lower use	Travel more for meetings; use phone/video more
Season tickets	10% stopped buying a season ticket	6% stopped buying a season ticket	20% stopped buying a season ticket

3.3.2 Impact of changes in WFH on the commute

Over time among people working at both timepoints, those who increased or decreased the amount they WFH were more likely to have changed commute mode since 2020 than those with no change in WFH (Figure 18). However, when the sample is restricted by applying the different filters for job stability and location stability, the difference between the segments reduces and is no longer statistically significant. This implies that commute mode change was related more to changing home or job than changes in WFH per se.

Figure 18: Commute mode change split by the three WFH categories, for people working before the pandemic and at Wave 7[16]



16 Working subsample is reduced slightly due to the commute mode question only being asked to those who commuted to work at least 1 DPW in Wave 1 (pre-pandemic). People who commuted less frequently were not asked how they commuted to work.

3.3.3 Overall changes in mode frequency

Before returning to the workers sub-sample, this section provides an overview of how the use of individual modes have changed overall across all the individuals who answered in both Wave 1 (pre-pandemic) and Wave 7 (July 2025).

Table 5 shows a clear overall reduction in travel frequency across almost all transport modes. With the exception of walking, all modes show negative mean change values, indicating that people were travelling less frequently for almost all modes and purposes than before the pandemic. Walking was the only mode to show an increase in use.

These findings are consistent with national-level evidence showing a decline in trip rates: the National Travel Survey[17] shows a 3.25% reduction in trips since 2019 (953 trips per person to 922 trips in 2024) and a 7% increase in walking trips, reinforcing the broader trend of reducing personal travel activity.

Table 5: Descriptive statistics of the change in frequency of using each transport mode for those who answered in both Wave 1 and Wave 7, irrespective of working status (n=2692).

↑ Positive value (Increase), ↓ Negative value (Decrease)

	Change in frequency (Wave 7 – Wave 1)						
General travel	**Mean**	**Median**	**Std. deviation**	**Range**	**Min**	**Max**	
Car as a driver	–0.21	0	1.24	10	–5	5	↓
Car as a passenger	–0.08	0	1.30	10	–5	5	↓
Van/lorry	–0.06	0	0.80	10	–5	5	↓
Motorbike/moped	–0.01	0	0.37	10	–5	5	↓
Bus	–0.20	0	1.26	10	–5	5	↓
Train	–0.24	0	1.0	10	–5	5	↓
Tram/underground	–0.18	0	0.93	10	–5	5	↓
Cycling	–0.21	0	0.95	10	–5	5	↓
Taxi (black cab/ minicab/Uber/Gett)	–0.24	0	0.89	9	–4	5	↓
Walking or wheeling (wheelchair or motorised scooter)	1.20	0	2.33	10	–5	5	↑

3.3.4 Impact of changes in WFH on changes in overall mode frequency

The changes in overall mode choice are now examined in relation to changes in WFH, to understand whether the reductions observed across the sample in most travel modes in Table 5 are different for the three WFH segments (*Decreasers, No-Changers* and *Increasers*).

17 DfT (2025). *NTS 2024: Introduction and main findings*. Available from: https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/national-travel-survey-2024/nts-2024-introduction-and-main-findings. Accessed: 16/02/26.

Changes before and after the pandemic in the frequency of use of each travel mode across all journey purposes were compared across the three WFH groups introduced previously, with statistical tests performed to understand whether the change undertaken by each group differed significantly from the changes undertaken by any other group (Table 6).

Table 6 shows that those who increased their WFH reduced their car driving, tram/metro use and taxi use more than those who had no WFH change. Given results in section 4.2.3, this can of course be explained at least in part by reduced use of these modes on the commute. The only other statistically significant result was found for the *Decreasers* who increased their motorcycle use against a backdrop of reduced motorcycle use overall. This suggests motorbike use could be sensitive to increases in workplace attendance after a period of WFH. But it is important to note, the *Decreasers* group sample size is much smaller than the *No-Changers* and *Increasers* groups.

For travelling by car as a passenger, van/lorry, bus, train, cycling and walking, despite some changes in mean values with most groups reducing their frequency of use (with the exception of walking), there are no statistically significant differences between the WFH change groups. These results suggest that levels of WFH did not appear to be a determining factor in the general reduction in most transport modes reported in section 4.3.3.

Table 6: Descriptive statistics (mean and median) of the change in frequency of using each transport mode for those working in both Wave 1 and Wave 7 (n=1026). Shaded rows indicate at least one group is statistically significantly different to another group. The superscript numbers identify which group that group is different to.

	WFH change					
	Group 1 Decreasers (n=55)		Group 2 No–Changers (n=576)		Group 3 Increasers (n=395)	
General travel	**Mean**	**Median**	**Mean**	**Median**	**Mean**	**Median**
Car as a driver	–0.42	0	[3] 0.03	0	[2]–0.26	0
Car as a passenger	0.04	0	–0.05	0	–0.12	0
Van/lorry	0.02	0	–0.03	0	–0.02	0
Motorbike/moped	[2,3] 0.09	0	[1]0.01	0	[1]–0.02	0
Bus	0.2	0	–0.17	0	–0.30	0
Train	–0.11	0	–0.15	0	–0.22	0
Tram/underground	0.22	0	[3]–0.10	0	[2]–0.33	0
Cycling	–0.35	0	–0.20	0	–0.32	0
Taxi (black cab/ minicab/Uber/Gett)	–0.15	0	[3]–0.21	0	[2]–0.35	0
Walking or wheeling (wheelchair or motorised scooter)	1.01	0	1.32	1	1.43	0

When the filters were applied, some different results were found, which once again highlights the need to account for wider changes in job and housing location stability before assuming any causal link between WFH and the travel changes. When those who had also moved job/location were removed (Filter 1), those who decreased their WFH were now shown to increase their tram/metro use and thus become significantly different from the *Increasers* group. In other words, when a reduction in WFH did not coincide with changing job or workplace, it seemed more likely to involve an uptake of more public transport.

When those who had moved house were also removed (Filter 2), the only change was that taxi use was no longer different between any of the groups. Therefore, the previous finding that *Increasers* reduced their taxi use more than others appears to only hold true if they moved house at the same time, rather than being due to increases in WFH per se. This would be consistent with people moving to locations further from the centre of towns where more taxi use is prevalent.

However, the fact that the additional reductions in car driving and tram/underground/metro use by the *Increasers* remain consistent across all filters suggests they cannot be put down to changes in job, workplace or residential location that may have occurred at the same time as the increase in WFH.

3.4 Changes in WFH and food shopping, socialising and exercising

To examine whether the changes in shopping, socialising and exercising differ according to any changes in the amount of WFH, changes in participation levels of these activities between pre–pandemic and July 2025 were examined. As these activities are influenced by many factors in addition to working patterns, these changes were once again analysed in two ways:

1. Overall, across all panel respondents who answered in both Wave 1 and Wave 7, irrespective of working status.
2. Within the working cohort, using the two filtering strategies mentioned in section 3.4.1, separating respondents into WFH *Increasers*, *No-Changers* and *Decreasers* groups.

This structure allowed us to assess whether changes in WFH were associated with changes in activity levels.

3.4.1 Overall changes in food shopping, socialising and exercise frequency

Analysis of respondents who completed surveys in both Wave 1 (pre-pandemic) and Wave 7 (July 2025), irrespective of working status, indicated notable shifts in everyday activity patterns, with consistent evidence of behavioural change since the pandemic. Overall, individuals were engaging less frequently in physical shopping, exercise and in-person social activities than they did pre–pandemic, with a small number of exceptions (Table 7).

Change in shopping behaviour

The data shows a decline in frequency of shopping in physical stores, both in supermarkets and smaller food shops. In contrast, home delivery use increased slightly, while click-and-

collect remained broadly unchanged. These patterns reflect the continued embeddedness of pandemic-era digital shopping behaviour. Visits to foodbanks, although low frequency, showed a small but notable increase.

Changes in exercise behaviour

Respondents reported being less physically active overall compared with pre-pandemic levels. Most forms of exercise, including outdoor sport, indoor sports, running, jogging, cycling, walking for exercise and visiting local parks, showed small reductions in frequency. The one exception was exercise at home, which increased slightly.

Changes in social activities

In-person socialising has not bounced back to pre-pandemic levels. Respondents reported less in-person contact with friends and family, both as visitors and hosts. Phone contact was also reduced. However, videocalling was more frequent than before the pandemic, reflecting sustained adoption of digital communication tools that became widespread during lockdown periods.

Table 7: Descriptive statistics of the change in frequency of shopping, exercise and leisure activity for those that answered in both Wave 1 and Wave 7, irrespective of working status (n=2692)

→ Value of 0 (No Change), ↑ Positive value (Increase), ↓ Negative value (Decrease)

		Change in frequency (Wave 7 – Wave 1)						
		Mean	Median	Std. deviation	Range	Min	Max	
Food shopping	Large supermarket	–0.31	0	1.11	10	–5	5	↓
	Smaller food shop	–0.34	0	1.28	10	–5	5	↓
	Home delivery	0.10	0	0.97	10	–5	5	↑
	Click and collect	–0.01	0	0.56	10	–5	5	↓
	Delivery from friends/family/ neighbourhood	0	0	0.60	10	–5	5	→
	Foodbank	0.02	0	0.31	9	–4	5	↑
Exercise frequency	Outdoor sport (other than running/jogging/cycling)	–0.52	1	1.31	10	–5	5	↓
	Indoor sport	–0.39	1	1.44	10	–5	5	↓
	Exercise at home	0.01	1	1.69	10	–5	5	↑
	Ran/jogged outside	–0.17	1	0.83	10	–5	5	↓
	Cycled for pleasure/exercise	–0.19	1	0.83	10	–5	5	↓
	Walked for pleasure/exercise	–0.25	0	1.72	10	–5	5	↓
	Visited a local park	–0.44	0	1.42	10	–5	5	↓

		Change in frequency (Wave 7 – Wave 1)						
		Mean	Median	Std. deviation	Range	Min	Max	
Social frequency	Visited friends and family at their homes	–0.58	0	1.24	10	–5	5	↓
	Friends/family visited you at home	–0.58	0	1.18	10	–5	5	↓
	By phone	–0.43	0	1.48	9	–5	4	↓
	Videocalling	0.08	1	1.34	10	–5	5	↑

3.4.2 Impact of changes in WFH on food shopping, exercise and socialising frequency

To understand how WFH patterns relate to changes in everyday activities, frequency changes were compared across the three WFH groups. Statistical tests were undertaken to understand whether the change undertaken by each group differed significantly from the changes undertaken by any other group (Table 8).

Table 8: Descriptive statistics (mean and median) of the change in frequency of different food shopping, exercise and social activities for those working in both Wave 1 and Wave 7 (n=1026). Shaded rows indicate at least one group is statistically significantly different to another group. The superscript numbers identify which group that group is different to.

	WFH change					
	Decreasers (n=55)		No–Changers (n=576)		Increasers (n=395)	
	Mean	Median	Mean	Median	Mean	Median
Food shopping frequency						
Large supermarket	–0.31	0	–0.31	0	–0.25	0
Smaller food shop	–0.15	0	–0.32	0	–0.40	0
Home delivery	0.16	0	0.03	0	0.16	0
Click and collect	0.07	0	0.00	0	–0.02	0
Delivery from friends/family/ neighbourhood	0.15	0	0.00	0	–0.02	0
Foodbank	0.09	0	0.02	0	0.00	0
Exercise frequency						
Outdoor sport (other than running/jogging/cycling)	–0.71	0	–0.65	0	–0.52	0
Indoor sport	–0.56	0	–0.48	0	–0.41	0
Exercise at home	–0.44	0	–0.13	0	–0.05	0

	WFH change					
	Decreasers (n=55)		No–Changers (n=576)		Increasers (n=395)	
	Mean	Median	Mean	Median	Mean	Median
Ran/jogged outside	–0.31	0	–0.23	0	–0.21	0
Cycled for pleasure/exercise	–0.40	0	–0.21	0	–0.22	0
Walked for pleasure/exercise	–0.27	0	[3]–0.12	0	[2]0.10	0
Visited a local park	–0.36	0	–0.38	0	–0.26	0
Social frequency						
Visited friends/family at their homes	–0.27	0	–0.55	–1	–0.43	0
Friends/family visited you at home	–0.15	0	–0.56	–1	–0.63	–1
Contact friends/family by phone	–0.33	0	–0.42	0	–0.51	–1
Contact friends/family by videocalling	0.11	0	0.13	0	0.09	0

The key finding is that the only change in activity levels that differed between the WFH segments was 'walked for pleasure or exercise'. Those who increased their WFH walked more for pleasure/exercise, while the *No-Changers* walked less. However, when additional filters were applied, and when restricting samples to individuals who maintained the same job and/or workplace location or did not move house (Filters 1 and 2), this significant difference disappeared, suggesting the effect was not purely related to changes in WFH. In other words, it could be that those who increased WFH and also changed their home location may have moved to a location that encouraged more walking for pleasure.

Under the strictest filter (Filter 2), which controls for workplace and residential location stability, additional significant differences emerged:

- Foodbank visits increased more for those who decreased their amount of WFH compared with both the increased and no-change groups. Although this cannot be fully explained, it could be that some of the changes in job or house incurred extra costs (or lower wages), which resulted in affordability challenges.
- Visits to friends and family declined less among those who increased WFH than among those who reported no change. Again, without knowing for sure, one hypothesis could be that those who moved house while also increasing their WFH moved closer to friends and family, thus explaining the more frequent visits.

Together, these findings indicate that WFH has some association with activity-frequency changes, but these relationships may interact with other changes in respondents' circumstances, such as job stability, workplace location and residential location.

3.5 Changes in WFH and car ownership

To examine whether the changes in car ownership are associated with changes in WFH, changes in household car-ownership levels between pre-pandemic and July 2025 were split by the three WFH change categories. The analysis was undertaken in two ways as before: first, by looking across everyone who answered in both Wave 1 and Wave 7, irrespective of working status, then by looking at the working populations and applying both Filter 1 and 2.

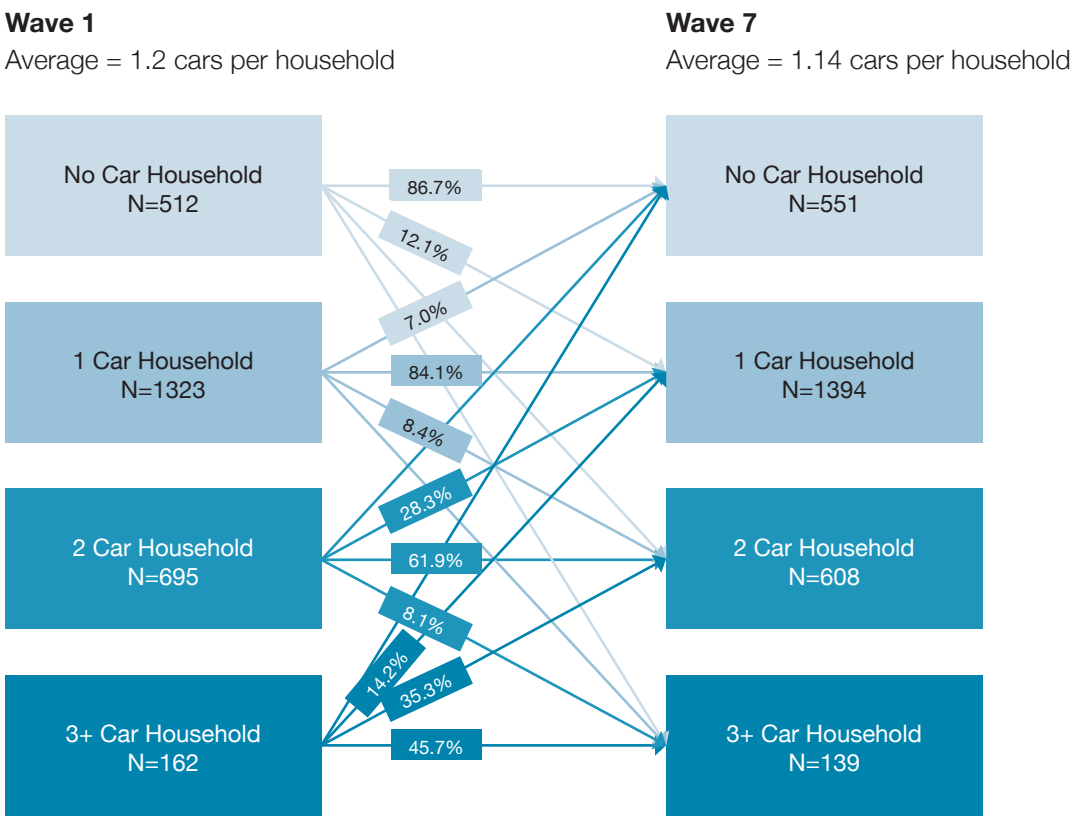
3.5.1 Overall changes in car ownership

Across the full sample (those that answered in both Wave 1 and Wave 7), irrespective of working status, there was an overall statistically significant net decline of 7% in the average number of cars per household (Figure 19). This translates into a reduction in average number of cars per household from 1.30 to 1.14. However, by tracking individual households throughout the five-year period, it can be seen that these overall average figures are made up of 77% of households who did not change the number of cars in their household, 14% of households that reduced it and 9% of households that increased it. The extent to which 'No car' households became car owners, or to what extent households became 'car-free', can also be determined. Figure 19 shows that 13% of 'No car' households became car owners and, overall, 4% of households became car-free. The reduction in cars was mainly composed of households that moved from 2+ cars to 1 car, whereby 28% of 2-car households made this shift in contrast to 8% of them adding at least one vehicle.

These findings align closely with wider national data. The National Travel Survey[18] reports a similar downward trajectory, with average household car ownership falling from 1.24 vehicles in 2020 to 1.21 in 2024. This external evidence reinforces the conclusion that the decline seen in TRANSAS reflects a broader national shift in car ownership, rather than being specific to this dataset.

18 DfT (2025). *Driving licence holding and vehicle availability*. Available from: https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/nts02-driving-licence-holders#vehicle-availability. Accessed: 16/02/26.

Figure 19: Car ownership churn for all participants (working or non–working) that answered in both Wave 1 and Wave 7 (n=2692)



Percentages less than 2% not shown

3.5.2 Impact of changes in WFH on changes in car ownership

In contrast to the net reduction in car ownership found in the whole survey sample between Wave 1 and Wave 7, there was no evidence of any change in household car ownership among the subsample that had been in employment at both timepoints. All tests of significance consistently supported the conclusion that car ownership remained highly stable within this group. Although small individual transitions occurred, they were directionally balanced, producing no net shifts in the distribution.

These results held across all WFH change categories and all filters, thus indicating that neither changes in levels of WFH, nor changes in job or residential location, had an impact once people are in work. This suggests that car ownership is more influenced by wider structural factors, such as household composition, income and life stages, including moving into or out of employment (e.g. retirement, rather than changes that happen once employment has begun).

4. Conclusions

This report provides one of the most detailed examinations to date of how changes in WFH have shaped travel behaviour, activities and car ownership in the post-pandemic period. By tracking the same individuals over five years, and by applying filters for job stability and residential stability, the analysis isolates those changes directly associated with WFH from those linked to job moves, workplace relocations or wider lifestyle transitions.

Overall, the findings show that WFH has had a meaningful impact on commuting behaviour but far less influence on wider travel, household activities or car ownership once concurrent life changes are taken into account. The following conclusions summarise the key insights emerging from the analysis.

1. WFH has stabilised as a long-term working pattern

WFH levels rose sharply during the pandemic and have remained stable since mid-2022. Approximately half of all workers now WFH at least occasionally, and those who WFH are more likely to work a standard five-day week than those who do not. Hybrid working is typically anchored around Tuesday-to-Thursday commute days, although nearly a third of hybrid workers report they

will not have even a single a full office day in the future. Split-day working is expected to become common, with around a third of WFHers anticipating working part of the day at home and part in the workplace. This pattern clearly dampens the degree to which WFH reduces travel demand, given that travel is undertaken on these days in any case, albeit at different times of day when compared to more conventional peak-time work patterns.

Despite this stabilisation, WFH policies remain mixed, with many organisations offering workers flexibility even when formal policies are unclear or inconsistently applied. This flexible environment has allowed WFH to become embedded in household routines, particularly for those managing childcare or other caring responsibilities.

2. WFH is strongly associated with commute distance, time and mode

Across all workers, those who WFH–regardless of frequency–tend to live further away from their workplaces and have longer commute times. These patterns have strengthened over the five-year period. The higher the frequency of WFH, the less reliance there is on car commuting and more on public transport, especially rail. Consistent with this, those who WFH report higher perceived commuting costs than those who do not WFH, which is likely to reflect their longer travel distances and greater use of rail. However, these perceptions may also be influenced by how commuting costs are experienced and evaluated. Individuals who WFH often have greater flexibility in deciding whether to travel on any given day and therefore face the marginal cost of commuting more directly when making that decision. As a result, commuting costs may be more salient for this group, as they more frequently weigh up the option of travelling to the workplace against staying at home and avoiding the cost altogether.

3. The impacts of WFH on travel behaviour are largely confined to the commute

Once job changes and residential relocation are accounted for, WFH continues to show consistent effects on commute-related travel but not on broader mobility patterns. Three findings are especially robust across all analytical filters:

a) INCREASED WFH IS ASSOCIATED WITH REDUCED DRIVING OVERALL

People who increased their WFH were also found to reduce car driving more than those with no change in WFH. This reduction reflects both fewer commute trips and fewer non-commute car journeys. Those who increased WFH also showed greater reductions in taxi/black cab use and tram/metro travel than those who had no change in their frequency of WFH.

b) REDUCED WFH IS ASSOCIATED WITH A SLIGHT INCREASE IN MOTORCYCLE USE

Workers who reduced the amount of time they WFH reported a small increase in motorcycle use. Although sample sizes are small, this may reflect a return to more frequent commuting.

c) INCREASED WFH IS ASSOCIATED WITH A REDUCTION IN TRAM/ UNDERGROUND/METRO USE

Across all filters, those who increased WFH reported consistent reductions in tram/metro use, again reflecting the strong link between these modes and commute trips.

4. WFH levels do not meaningfully influence wider modal use

Across most travel modes (i.e. car passenger, van/lorry, bus, train, cycling, and walking or wheeling), changes from 2020 to 2025 are similar regardless of whether people increased, decreased or maintained their level of WFH. Although overall travel has fallen, this appears to reflect broader post-pandemic behaviour rather than WFH specifically.

5. Household car ownership has changed since 2020 but not due to WFH

Across all households in the panel, average car ownership decreased by 7% between 2020 and 2025, mostly due to reductions from two cars to one. However, for people who were working both before the pandemic and in 2025, car ownership remained highly stable, with no differences between the WFH change groups. This indicates that car-ownership changes are more closely tied to life stage, employment status and residential moves than to WFH.

6. Shopping, exercise and social activities have changed–but not due to WFH

Relative to pre-pandemic levels, physical shopping, exercise frequency and in-person socialising have all fallen, while home deliveries and videocalling have increased. These broad declines are consistent across all WFH change groups, once job and residential stability are controlled for. This suggests that post-pandemic lifestyle restructuring is widespread and not strongly driven by changes in working arrangements.

7. Wider interpretation: WFH interacts with–but does not independently drive–post-pandemic lifestyle change

Together, the findings indicate that WFH influences some of the most predictable aspects of behaviour–particularly commuting patterns–but that job moves, workplace relocations and residential mobility explain far more of the observed long–term changes in travel and daily activities. WFH is a contributing factor but not the central driver of wider lifestyle shifts.

In summary, WFH has become a stable and significant feature of working life, and it has reshaped commuting behaviour in clear and measurable ways. However, once other life changes are accounted for, WFH has limited influence on wider travel, activities and car ownership. The pandemic has triggered broader lifestyle shifts that extend beyond working arrangements, and transport policy must therefore consider WFH alongside the wider dynamics of employment, housing and daily living.

4.1 Implications for transport planning and policy

The findings suggest that post-pandemic travel demand patterns are likely to remain structurally different from those observed before COVID-19. Peak-time demand has become more concentrated in the middle of the week, with flatter peaks on Mondays and Fridays. This pattern appears closely linked to hybrid working arrangements and is likely to persist, meaning transport operators, particularly rail and metro systems, may need to continue to plan for more uneven demand across the week and greater sensitivity to changes in workplace practices among long-distance commuters. Additionally, workplace planning and transport demand management should take account of the growing prevalence of split-day working, where employees move between home and the workplace within the same day. This may contribute to more fluid and less predictable patterns of office attendance and travel demand. It may also increase the sensitivity of some working segments to price increases and any demand management initiatives aimed at peak travel demand.

Hybrid working may also offer opportunities to improve the resilience and adaptability of transport systems. The ability for some workers to adjust when and where they work can reduce pressure on transport networks during periods of disruption or stress. For example, flexible working arrangements may allow individuals to shift or reduce travel during extreme weather events, transport disruptions or periods of sharply rising travel costs. In this sense, hybrid working can provide a form of behavioural flexibility that helps both households and transport systems respond to external shocks. While not all occupations allow this level of flexibility, supporting hybrid working where appropriate could form part of wider strategies aimed at improving the resilience of urban transport systems.

At the same time, the results indicate that increases in WFH alone are unlikely to deliver substantial reductions in car travel. While WFH is associated with lower levels of car commuting, it does not appear to be linked to lower levels of car ownership. This is somewhat unexpected, as reduced commuting might be expected to reduce the need to own a car. Instead, households appear to retain vehicles even when commuting becomes less frequent, highlighting the role of non-work travel needs in car ownership and use. This highlights how transport policy aimed primarily at reducing commuting travel may have limited impact on overall car dependency.

The findings also highlight potential distributional implications. Individuals who frequently WFH tend to have longer and more expensive commutes on the days they travel and are more likely to work in sectors that offer flexible working arrangements. In contrast, those who do not WFH, often because their jobs do not permit it, tend to be more reliant on the car. As a result, increases in the cost of motoring, whether through policy or market changes, may disproportionately affect certain groups of workers who have little flexibility in how or where they work. In this context, measures such as congestion charging may be perceived by some as a cost or tax associated with going out to work.

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