

Global research by International Workplace Group reveals the best towns for hybrid workers to live, work and play.

“Technology and the rapid adoption of AI are rapidly reshaping how we work and where we live, turning commuter towns, or so-called dormitory towns, into vibrant hubs for working and living. The idea that every morning, office workers wake early, jump into polluting cars or overcrowded trains, and travel many miles to their place of work will very soon be a crazy thing people only did in the past. Hybrid working improves our lives. And it makes us significantly better off, too.”

Mark Dixon, Founder & CEO, International Workplace Group



Introduction

New research by International Workplace Group (IWG) has revealed the best commuter towns around the world for hybrid workers to live. From the plentiful green spaces of Edison, US to the golden beaches of Wollongong, Australia, and from a shiny new suburb of Shanghai, China to the historic streets of St Albans, UK, these are the locations where residents can best balance work and a high quality of life.

IWG's inaugural Commuter Town Index – the first global ranking of its kind – was drawn up using a number of criteria, including transport links, amenities and flexible workspace accessibility. It reflects a growing shift in the geography of work, resulting from the increase in platform working and the growing adoption of AI.

“The way that people work and live is being redefined,” says Mark Dixon, Founder and CEO of IWG. “Workers are now prioritising towns that offer access to high-quality workspaces on their doorstep, but also with strong transport links for occasional trips to a city-centre HQ.”

As companies increasingly enable their teams to work where and when they feel happiest and

most productive, professionals are turning their backs on long and expensive daily commutes. Their focus is now on flexibility: finding a location that allows them to build their careers without sacrificing community, convenience or quality of life. As a result, towns that were once dormant between morning and evening rush hours are being re-energised.

“We’re talking about a major economic realignment that will bring greater prosperity and greater opportunities to formerly sleepy satellite towns,” says Dixon. “No longer places to escape from, these are communities on the up, transformed by the greatest shift in working practices to have taken place in more than a century.”



A new work paradigm

Empowered by their employers, younger workers are among those most eagerly embracing the shift to a new work paradigm that foregoes long daily commutes to a faraway office in favour of enjoying the benefits of working close to home. IWG research reveals that 75% of Millennials and 72% of Gen Z are willing to live further away from city centres if flexible workspaces or good transport links are available.

The research also shows that only 4% of people globally are willing to commute for more than an hour to their workplace on a daily basis, while 88% say the ability to work close to home in a professional space is important when choosing where to live.

Companies are increasingly recognising the desire of their employees to avoid the long daily commute and are therefore adopting platform working policies that allow them to work in a number of locations, choosing wherever they feel happiest and most productive.

Real estate firm Colliers recently announced that it was leaving its Uptown Dallas office in favour of a new location further north, which is “closer to where our employees live, reducing commute times”, and which “will better align with where our employees and clients are today”.

In a similar move, AT&T is planning to relocate its Downtown Dallas HQ to a northern suburb in a move it says will reduce commute times for the majority of its employees.

“It’s a paradigm shift,” says Dixon. “People simply don’t want the stress and expense of travelling long distances every day when they could work just as effectively from a location closer to home.”

The Hybrid Bonus

Cutting down on the daily commute boosts wellbeing – and brings considerable financial savings, too.

51% of workers say their health and wellbeing have improved since working in a hybrid way.

43% say they are able to spend more time with their friends and family.

\$30k How much hybrid workers could save by working locally four days a week.



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Mark Dixon

Driving down costs



while boosting productivity

The new work paradigm also brings considerable advantages for companies, in the shape of a much-reduced real estate spend, together with greater productivity.

Research by IWG has found that flexible working can reduce organisations' real estate costs by as much as 55%. More than a third (36%) of CEOs say the cost-savings enabled by more flexible real estate options are a main driver of their decision to allow their employees to work from more than one office location. More than three-quarters of executives also say that flexible working policies allow them to more easily navigate economic pressures and headwinds such as tariffs and policy changes.



Other research by IWG and Arup found that by 2030, flexible working could increase productivity by more than 10% in both the US and the UK, boosting the countries' respective economies by a staggering \$129 billion and £24 billion each year. And IWG's latest State of the C-Suite Report found that for the vast majority of company leaders flexible work has improved business productivity, driving growth and profitability.

The world's best commuter towns



Which of the world's commuter towns offer hybrid workers the best mix of transport links, local amenities and access to flexible workspaces?

IWG's index assessed towns across a number of factors, with each scored out of 10. Figures were then totalled to provide a final ranking.

The factors considered when ranking the world's best commuter towns:

1. Transport links
2. Travel time to major cities
3. Access to green spaces
4. Walkability
5. Amenities
6. Wi-fi speed
7. Housing costs
8. Culture
9. Availability of flexible workspaces

Best Commuter Town: Wollongong, New South Wales



Affectionately known as 'The Gong', this coastal hub of more than 300,000 residents is renowned for its numerous beaches, its surf culture and the stunning Illawarra mountain range, which provides the town's dramatic backdrop. Other pluses include great weather, a relatively low cost of living compared to Sydney, 50 miles to the north, and a thriving café culture. Wollongong also boasts a walkable CBD, strong digital infrastructure and a thriving local economy – making it particularly well-suited to hybrid workers seeking balance without sacrificing career opportunities.

Runner-up: Geelong, Victoria



Also listed:

Mandurah, Western Australia
Gold Coast, Queensland
Port Adelaide, South Australia

A postcard-pretty port city 40 miles southwest of Melbourne, Geelong was recently voted Australia's most popular regional town, ending a two-year winning streak for Queensland's Sunshine Coast. Geelong is home to a growing arts scene and an impressive restaurant culture. Above all, it's also a convenient gateway to the scenic Bellarine Peninsula and the Great Ocean Road beyond. Hybrid workers benefit from regular rail services to Melbourne's CBD.

BELGIUM

Best Commuter Town: Jambes, Namur



Just across the river from Walloon capital Namur's historic city centre, Jambes offers a blend of suburban peace and urban convenience. The area offers a '15-Minute City' lifestyle with ample green spaces, cafés and a nearby cinema. Its weekly flea market offers the opportunity for a gentle stroll along the riverbank, overlooking the impressive Citadel of Namur. The centre of Namur is easily accessible by foot, supported by frequent bus and train connections.

Runner-up: Nivelles, Walloon Brabant



Also listed:

Herentals, Antwerp
Temse, East Flanders
Brecht, Antwerp

Roughly 30 minutes by train from Brussels, Nivelles is a popular commuter town for families and professionals looking for the quieter, more affordable atmosphere of a historic Walloon city. Local sights include the historic Collegiate Church of St Gertrude, while the Dodaine Park provides a central hub for relaxation. Gastronomes can enjoy the local speciality of tarte al d'jote, a cheese and chard savoury flan.

CANADA

Best Commuter Town: Burnaby, British Columbia



This former suburb of Vancouver is now a thriving city in its own right and a major hub for education, technology and film production. It offers a range of different housing, from high-rise urban condos to luxury estates, matched by a diverse and inclusive population of nearly a quarter of a million. Burnaby's attractions include British Columbia's largest mall, while a quarter of the city is given over to green space, including the scenic Deer Lake Park, home to an award-winning community arts facility. Downtown Vancouver is just 20–30 minutes away by SkyTrain.

Runner-up: Hamilton, Ontario



Also listed:

Richmond, British Columbia
Mississauga, Ontario
Laval, Quebec

The port city of Hamilton sits at the western tip of Lake Ontario, with Toronto 50 miles away along the northern shore, and Niagara Falls a similar distance along the southern shore. Hamilton's affordability is a major draw for a growing number of youthful Toronto emigrés, with housing costing as much as 40% less. They are also attracted by a vibrant, evolving downtown and a growing food scene.

CHINA

Best Commuter Town: Hongqiao, Shanghai



Hongqiao means 'rainbow bridge', and this western suburb of Shanghai is considered a gateway to the prosperous Yangtze River Delta economic zone. First established in the 1990s, the neighbourhood is home to spacious villas and luxury apartments, and is particularly popular with international residents, who like its good schools, amenities and convenient transport options – there is a high-speed rail station, plus Shanghai Hongqiao international airport. The local business district, established just a few years ago, is thriving, with nearly 300 companies now in residence.

Runner-up: Qianjiang Century City, Hangzhou



Also listed:

Tianfu New Area, Chengdu
Foshan Nanhai, Guangdong
Optics Valley, Wuhan

Just across the Qiantang River from the centre of Hangzhou, Qianjiang Century City offers an ultra-convenient urban lifestyle within a major business district. The area is a hub for young professionals, entrepreneurs and internet influencers, and is best known for its massive Regent International apartment complex, home to more than 20,000 residents as well as schools, shops and fitness centres.

FRANCE

Best Commuter Town: Rueil-Malmaison, Hauts-de-Seine



One of the wealthiest suburbs of Paris, Rueil-Malmaison is famous as the location of the former residence of Napoleon Bonaparte's first wife, the Empress Josephine. Today's 82,000 inhabitants enjoy the place's friendly, villagey feel and its ample green spaces. The leading business district of La Défense is just four stops away on the RER, although the trip is increasingly becoming redundant: more and more large companies are decamping from the centre to Rueil-Malmaison in search of lower rental costs, modern office spaces and a better quality of life for their employees.

Runner-up: Lambersart, Nord



Also listed:

Levallois-Perret, Hauts-de-Seine
Suresnes, Hauts-de-Seine
Échirolles, Isère

This charming town nestling on the northwestern border of Lille is known for its architectural heritage, in particular its many Art Deco villas. A quiet and leafy alternative to the bustling city centre, Lambersart has been called one of the coolest neighbourhoods to live in Lille and is well-served with attractive shops, cafés and restaurants. The centre of Lille is just a 20-minute train or cycle ride away.

GERMANY

Best Commuter Town: Leverkusen, North Rhine-Westphalia



A city of 163,000 inhabitants to the north of Cologne, Leverkusen is best known for two things: its football team and the headquarters of the pharmaceutical giant Bayer, which is a major employer in the area. The city's attractions include its serene Japanese Gardens and a baroque castle that houses a modern art collection. The cost of living is relatively low and the city is a perfect residential base for occasional commutes to both Cologne and Dusseldorf, which are within easy reach thanks to rapid rail connections.

Runner-up: Bonn, North Rhine-Westphalia



Also listed:

Augsburg, Bavaria
Potsdam, Brandenburg
Offenbach, Hesse

A historic city on the Rhine to the south of Cologne, Bonn is the birthplace of Ludwig van Beethoven and served as the capital of West Germany from 1949 until reunification in 1990. It is still home to more than 20 UN secretariats, while the confectionery brand Haribo is also headquartered here. A high standard of living, a vibrant cultural scene and a prestigious university all add to Bonn's attractions for hybrid workers.

INDIA

Best Commuter Town: Pune, Maharashtra



This city of more than seven million residents offers a glimpse of the 15-Minute City of the future. Ongoing infrastructure development and connectivity improvements are increasingly enabling the city's inhabitants to work and access amenities such as shops, education and healthcare close to where they live. The 'Oxford of the East' is considered one of India's most liveable cities, offering a unique blend of heritage, a thriving tech scene and a pleasant climate. A proposed new high-speed rail link will shrink the 100-mile journey to Mumbai to just 48 minutes.

Runner-up: Navi Mumbai, Maharashtra



Also listed:

Hyderabad, Telangana
Thane, Maharashtra
Tirupati, Andhra Pradesh

A strategically planned satellite city of Mumbai, Navi Mumbai is a thriving commercial hub in its own right, offering affordable housing for families and a robust infrastructure. Better air quality and a quieter environment than Mumbai add to its attractions. The city provides convenient, seamless transport links, highlighted by the Atal Setu bridge for rapid connectivity to central Mumbai and the upcoming international airport for global access.

Best Commuter Town: Amersfoort, Utrecht



Amersfoort's blend of medieval charm and innovative sustainable urban planning helped to make it European City of the Year for 2023. It was praised in particular for putting resident well-being and happiness at the centre of planning. The city's 160,000 residents also benefit from excellent train connectivity: a major railway hub boasting three stations, it offers swift access to Utrecht, Amsterdam and Schiphol airport. Amersfoort's affordable housing and proximity to the countryside are other factors that add to its attractions.

Runner-up: Almere, Flevoland



Also listed:

Roermond, Limburg
Nieuwegein, Utrecht
Hoofddorp, North Holland

Almere is the newest city in the Netherlands, its first house constructed in 1976, but it has grown quickly to accommodate a population of more than 200,000. Its spacious, affordable housing, family-friendly infrastructure, abundance of green spaces and coastal charm make it a popular choice for those seeking modern living close to Amsterdam, which is just 20-30 minutes away by train.

Best Commuter Province: The Western Cape



The southernmost region of the African continent, with Cape Town as its capital, the Western Cape offers an abundance of first-rate locations for those looking to combine work with a high standard of living. These range from Cape Town suburbs such as Gardens, Green Point, Sea Point and De Waterkant to towns in the Cape Winelands such as Stellenbosch, Paarl and Franschhoek. The latter offer a quieter pace of life with scenic vineyard views, world-class food and a wide choice of outdoor activities, including hiking, cycling and trail running.

Runner-up: KwaZulu-Natal



Also listed:

Gauteng

Located on South Africa's Indian Ocean coast, KwaZulu-Natal is known for its beaches, mountains and savannah populated by big game. It is currently experiencing a notable 'semigration' trend, with increasing numbers of South Africans relocating from big cities to enjoy its superior quality of life. Leading hotspots include Ballito, Underberg, Howick and Hilton.

SPAIN

Best Commuter Town: Sant Cugat del Vallès, Catalonia



Sant Cugat del Vallès is a growing town of nearly 100,000 inhabitants located just nine miles northwest of Barcelona. Its traditional village feel and plentiful green spaces have made it a highly sought after residential area for young families and international professionals seeking a slower pace of life than that to be found in the nearby metropolis. At the same time, the town is emerging as a thriving commercial centre: major businesses such as HP, Adidas and Roche can be found here, making it a significant regional economic hub.

Runner-up: L'Hospitalet de Llobregat, Catalonia



Also listed:

Alcobendas, Madrid
Pozuelo de Alarcón, Madrid
Cornellà de Llobregat, Catalonia

The second-largest city in Catalonia, L'Hospitalet de Llobregat is part of the Barcelona metropolitan area but offers a considerably lower cost of living compared to its neighbour. The city has been likened to New York's Brooklyn: a place with energy and life where young hipsters are attracted by cheap, post-industrial properties. Barcelona city centre is just 15 minutes away on public transport.

UK

Best Commuter Town: St Albans, Hertfordshire



Just 20 minutes by train from central London, the Hertfordshire cathedral city of St Albans blends peaceful, leafy surroundings with a bustling small-town feel. Its 150,000 inhabitants are spoilt when it comes to history and culture, with two main museums to choose from and a number of theatres. The pint-sized city is also served by an abundance of historic pubs and a twice-weekly market offering an eclectic mix of fresh produce, artisan goods and homeware. The nearby Chiltern Hills offer plenty of opportunities for weekend communing with nature.

Runner-up: Reading, Berkshire



Also listed:

Guildford, Surrey
Altrincham, Trafford
Sevenoaks, Kent

Situated 40 miles to the west of London, Reading is a major commercial centre in its own right. Home to global giants such as Microsoft, Oracle, Cisco and Huawei, the town has earned the nickname of 'the UK's Silicon Valley'. Locals can enjoy tranquil riverside walks and a number of peaceful parks. For those who prefer it noisy, the annual Reading Festival is a draw. Trains to the capital are both fast and frequent.

USA

Best Commuter Town: Edison, New Jersey



A diverse, bustling New Jersey township of more than 100,000 residents, Edison is famous as the home of Thomas Edison's Menlo Park laboratory. A self-proclaimed "great place to live, work and play", the town offers many attractions, including the extensive, centrally located Roosevelt Park, where locals hike, fish, picnic and take part in a wide variety of sports. The town is home to the state's largest private convention centre, and major local employers include Amazon, FedEx and UPS. Trips to the Big Apple, just 30 miles away, are swift via NJ Transit.

Runner-up: Abington, Pennsylvania



Also listed:

Westmost, California
Indian Creek, Illinois
Mission Bend, Texas

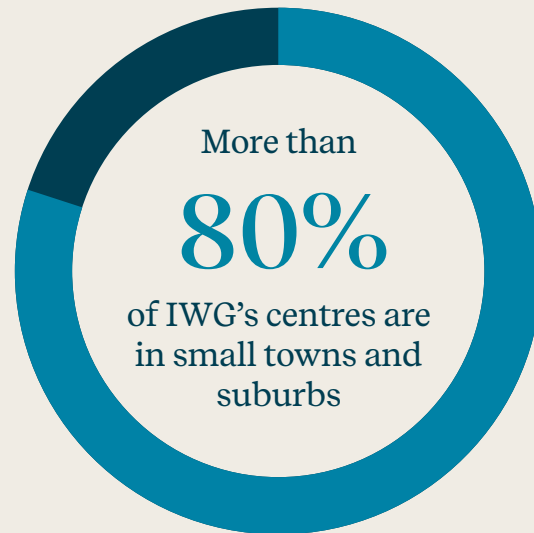
This Pennsylvania suburb of around 60,000 inhabitants provides "affordable housing, a highly regarded school system and easy access to the culture and entertainment of Philly," noted Money magazine when naming Abington one of the best places to live in the US. Outdoor markets, museums and many excellent restaurants add to its appeal. Walkability is seen as a major plus for residents, as are good transport links to Philadelphia.

Meeting the rapidly growing demand for flexible workspace

As workers increasingly favour the work-life balance and affordability offered by suburban hubs and commuter towns in comparison to more central locations, developers and workspace operators are focusing on those areas to attract more of this mobile and digitally enabled workforce.

In 2025, IWG, the world's largest platform for work, signed 1,132 new centres to its network and opened 782 – exceeding the total opened and signed in its first 20 years. An overwhelming 95% of these locations are being delivered via managed partnership agreements, delivering on IWG's capital-light strategy. With unrivalled capacity to convert any building in any location into a commercially successful operation, IWG can provide a brand to suit any type of concept and building.

More than 80% of IWG's centres are in small towns and suburbs that are enjoying a weekday renaissance as locals choose to work closer to where they live. Many are in the vanguard of new artistic and entrepreneurial communities springing up outside of major urban areas.



"We're expanding our network locations deep into the heart of the communities where they are needed," says Dixon. "And what all these towns and suburbs have in common is that they are great places to live, raise families and socialise."



Conclusion

The locations listed in IWG's first ever Commuter Town Index are situated in countries all over the world, yet they all have something in common: they are great places to live that at the same time provide a perfect base for the modern world of work. And all of them are thriving thanks to a new work paradigm that prizes flexibility and wellbeing over proximity to a single, central office building.

“You'll often see listings of ‘great places to work’ and ‘great places to live,’” says Dixon. “Why separate them? With more flexible ways of working, it's increasingly possible for white-collar workers to enjoy the best of both worlds.”

We support more than eight million workers through our network of 5,000+ flexible workspaces in 130 countries. Find out more about what we do at [iwgplc.com](https://www.iwgplc.com).

