



# The 'FUTURE OF WORK' - prepare for 40% UK homeworking

Smart Growth Analytics have undertaken the **deepest dive** into the **Future of Work** in the UK that has **ever been undertaken** - commissioned by Summix Ltd, 2022. The research involved in-depth analysis of the key and often inter-related drivers of work and working patterns. These included the rise of the Creative & Knowledge-Based Industries, the ongoing 'professionalisation' of the UK workforce and the unprecedented rises in remote working, homeworking and flexible working (which were rapidly accelerated as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic). We investigated how these drivers have changed over time and how they are likely to change further in the future.

The work established the evidence base which shows how, **almost overnight**, the pandemic was the catalyst that led to the greatest long-term shift in working patterns and the location of work that has ever been seen in the UK.

- **31%** of the UK's 32 million workers (approaching 10 million workers), in the post-pandemic period, were now working predominantly at home (3 days a week or more).
- The **5 million** rise in workers who switched to working predominantly at home during the pandemic were almost exclusively professionals, many of whom were employed in the UK's burgeoning Creative & Knowledge-Based Industries.
- **1 in 6 of all the UK's total workforce** is now a professional person working predominantly at home, effectively creating '**Hidden Business Parks**' in many residential areas.
- There are substantial opportunities to reduce harmful emissions and respond to the climate crisis. If everyone worldwide that **can work from home, did so for one day a week**, the annual global carbon emissions would **decline by 24 million tonnes**. This is equivalent to the majority of Greater London's annual CO<sup>2</sup> emissions.

We predicted **why we can expect these trends to continue** into the short, medium and longer-terms, driven by hugely powerful forces, which, when combined, have led to a cultural shift in our approach to work and the location of work. Such forces include the legacy of the pandemic, commuting cost and difficulties, environmental responsibility, job flexibility, quality of life, industrial and occupational change.

The work has demonstrated that many local areas will need to prepare for homeworking rates of more than **35- 40% of their workforce to 2050**, compared with traditional pre-pandemic planning allowance of **14%**.

As well as vast increases in homeworking, the study identified further characteristics of the Future of Work in the UK, such as flexibility and inclusivity, professional and/ or higher skilled, creative, collaborative, lower cost, higher value-added, higher paid, social and community driven. When combined, such characteristics mean that the Future of Work in the UK will be **increasingly economically, socially and environmentally sustainable**.

This starts to shape how we grow places. We provided an exploration of the implications of the **Future of Work for local area planning** and sustainable development across the UK, and addressed the extensive and far-reaching implications for sustainable placemaking, namely:

- **Reduced demand** for traditional office space and the repurposing of excess space for coworking, housing, and social care;
- New mixed-use development, including residential dwelling design, local workplaces, the provision of formal and informal coworking opportunities and the **increased requirement for local 'every day' services**;
- Regeneration of existing town centres and high streets through **increased footfall** and more regular use of local amenities;
- Reduced traditional commuting in favour of the **15- 20 minute neighbourhood commute** on foot or cycling to local workplaces and the benefits on mental and physical health that this can bring, and;
- **Reduced traffic levels**, congestion, localised air pollution and the **increased awareness** and appreciation of local greenspace and natural landscapes.

To find out more about how research and analysis of **changing patterns of work** will provide you with underpinning knowledge and evidence to enhance decision making related to your development or area, visit [www.sga-ltd.co.uk](http://www.sga-ltd.co.uk)

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