

Working from the office versus work from home: which is more energy efficient?

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New analysis from Savills reveals that for European office workers who commute by public transport, over the course of a whole year, it is generally more energy efficient to travel into the office than to work from home despite there being a lot of variables at play, such as domestic energy efficiency, commute distance and type of transport.

Mike Barnes, associate director in Savills European research team, comments: “While there are many debates around returning to the office in terms of well-being, corporate culture and productivity, the environmental impact will be increasingly important given that many occupiers are beginning to consider ‘scope 3’ carbon emissions generated by employee commutes.

Our analysis shows there is a big swing between where is most energy efficient to work from between winter and summer: in the winter, instead of heating thousands of homes individually during the day, unless you have a long car commute, it’s more energy efficient to be in the office, however during the summer, when household heating is not required, it’s largely more sustainable to work from home.”

Dan Jestico, director in Savills Earth, adds: “There are a lot of variables at play here, and the results will be highly dependent on the type and efficiency of the home, efficiency of vehicle as well as distance travelled. Yet it is fair to say that hybrid working has changed the way we think about the office.

“We’re now drawn back by the desire to collaborate and to inhabit inspiring buildings. Offices with sustainable design features that promote health and wellbeing are more attractive to tenants. Additionally, the rising cost of heating homes using domestic energy will also be a factor in coming winter months.”

Matthew Fitzgerald, Director, Savills Cross Border Tenant Advisory EMEA, says: “To comply with

forthcoming regulations, multinational companies will need to quickly develop the systems and capabilities to accurately calculate their total global Greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. This includes reporting on employee commuting emissions, but very few companies currently take account of this when undertaking site selection, despite new data analysis technology making this much easier.

In terms of impact on the office market, this may heighten the demand for buildings in close proximity to large public transport hubs, across larger cities as occupiers seek to reduce their net carbon impact and encourage workers to commute using more sustainable means.”