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NEWS RELEASE

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Post-pandemic 'escape to the country' an urban myth, new research reveals

- City and towns have been comfortable places to live during lockdown say inhabitants
- Building garden offices and 'de-open-planning' homes more popular options than moving
- Nearly a quarter of urbanites and suburbanites like their homes even more since lockdown

Will cities empty in the wake of COVID-19? Will people place a premium on extra living and outdoor space as working from home becomes more usual? Not according to new research from **Just Group**.

Speculation about a mass exodus from cities to more rural locations appears unfounded with urbanites generally content with their homes and not keen to move.

Over half (51%) of people in urban areas – cities or towns – are happy where they are, saying their home is a comfortable place to be: happier than in the suburbs, where only four in ten (41%) agreed.

In London, which has been the focus of speculation that high population density and housing costs would trigger a mass exodus post COVID-19, over half (54%) feel their homes are comfortable places to be, and three in 10 like their homes more since lockdown.

Even if working from home becomes more common after lockdown – which half (50%) of urban residents expect – very few of them want to upsize. When asked if coronavirus had made them re-consider where they would like to live, fewer than one-in-ten (8%) replied 'I plan to buy a bigger house with more garden and commute less'. More popular options include adapting their home to become less open-plan (16%) and building a garden office (22%). Nearly half (46%) would not consider making changes at all, signalling the status quo may simply resume.

"Lockdown has spawned a narrative of urban discontent and claustrophobia," said **Stephen Lowe, group communications director at Just Group**. "This doesn't seem to be true for everyone. Just because shops and offices have been closed it does not mean that people aren't happy in those towns and cities where they've put down roots."

In fact, the majority of urban residents are very content where they are. When asked if lockdown had made them think about where they might like to live in the future, six in ten urban residents (61%) replied that they hadn't even considered it or, if they had, they are happy in situ. Four-in-ten Londoners (40%) answered the same. "We have to re-think any assumption that people live in cities only out of necessity, or that it is some kind of sacrifice, because it is clear from these figures that many people are very happy living where they are," said Stephen Lowe

"There have been many predictions of a mass exodus from cities to rural locations, but this research suggests it less likely than we may have thought. Fantasy house hunting online for that 'escape to the country' is all very well but it's quite a different matter to make it a reality."

Has lockdown made you and your family think about where you might like to live in the future in any of the following ways?

Yes, I plan to buy a bigger house with more garden and commute less	8%
Yes, I am considering how to move closer to/accommodate parents	9%
Yes, but I cannot move because of work commitments	4%
Yes, but I cannot move because my children are in schools in this area	4%
No, I'm happy where I am/not thought about it	76%

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Notes to Editors:**Footnotes**

1. Research conducted by Opinium via a survey of 1,293 UK homeowners aged 18+ between 19th and 21st May 2020

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