WHAT THE FUTURE: CITIES

+ **Experts on technology, urban planning, architecture and restaurants explore how commuting, live/work spaces, return-to-office and virtual spaces will shape how we live in the future**

GAME CHANGERS

Ipsos

What the changing role of cities means for citizens and businesses

Imagine it's 2035. Hybridization of work, of digital experiences and more has changed how we work and how we live. But who can afford this evolving reality?

Jason Pargin, author of "Futuristic Violence and Fancy Suits," says that, "Cities are always living in the future. Trends always start in the cities and not all of them are good."

The dual disruptions of soaring cost of living and hybrid work are the reasons the future of cities is even a question. This issue looks at how that plays out in two tension points, neither of which look good for the future of cities: We neither want to live in cities nor work in them.

Regardless, millions of us *rely* on cities and live *near* them, if not in them. Between 2000 and 2050, the share of Americans who live in urban areas is projected to increase from 80% to 90%. That figure was just 5% when the nation was founded and most of the constitutional rules were written. And 90% of our GDP is generated in urban areas.

For corporations, this has broad implications for their workforces but also for the kinds of products they need to innovate. That's true across industries as auto companies,

office supplies, tech and equipment, packaged goods, retailers and even restaurants will have to factor what hybrid life or changing commuting mean for our buying habits and the occasions in which we shop and dine.

Cities are facing a dispersed workforce, aging infrastructure, homelessness, crime and a lack of affordable urban housing. Each of those trends can be unpacked further. For instance, affordability is affected by rising rents due partially to a commercial buying spree from private equity and venture money when interest rates were low. Now that those rates have doubled, there's an enormous bubble of financing hanging out there. That's a huge problem to solve.

This issue also contains a lot of ideas that are hopeful about the future of cities, including ideas from prior What the Future issues. Not surprisingly, much of the discussion focuses on the other disruption of hybridization, which might be easier to work with than the affordability issues.

39%

of U.S. workers say they are commuting to their workplace five days a week, compared to 52% who said they did so before the pandemic.

(Ipsos Consumer Tracker conducted Aug. 1-2, 2023, among 623 employed U.S. adults.)

Hybridization is often enabled by the digital disruption happening all around us. In What the Future: Play, we talked about how gaming has moved from tabletop to electronic to online, and in some cases, back again. Play has moved from outdoors to indoors and might do more of that as our climate changes. Play was social. Then some of it became isolated as we played video games alone. Now it's often physically isolated but virtually social as we play online with friends and stream to a broader audience. Play didn't say, "Stop. Come back to the playground or ballfield." It said, "Digital is here to stay. Let's enable that with games that are social as well as tailored for the home experience." And everyone made a ton of money and had a lot of fun.

Cities accelerated changes during the pandemic. Streets in downtowns and residential areas alike were closed overnight to cars and opened to outdoor dining, walking and biking spaces. Ideas that used to take years of planning and red tape were executed overnight to great success. Some of that has been dialed back since lockdowns ended.

Work, on the other hand, hasn't been reinvented to the same extent. Sure, we started doing meetings online but we have yet to make changes discussed in What the Future: Work of thinking through new processes and ways of doing things in our hybrid worlds. But the long evolution of play and the sudden acceleration of trends in our downtowns show that work can get there if we do the research to understand the ways in which hybrid can be a benefit to employees, employers and cities alike.

If we can truly make hybrid work, future cities could look very different than they did in the past.

There are three other plausible directions we see in the signals. One is that the future of our cities will look much more like the distant past when we built cities more for humans than cars. Think of the livable models in Madrid and Copenhagen.

Or, those with money and power build new cities from scratch. Several tech titans have that in mind as they buy up land in California. In Saudi Arabia, a group of investors are developing an ambitious city project called The Line. Sustainability is a stated goal of both projects. But cautionary tales abound in China, which has ghost megacities dotting its vast landscape.

Or, while many experts say that hybrid is here to stay, companies are also calling people back to the office with greater urgency. We have to acknowledge that there's a possible future that looks very much like 2019. Changing something as central to our being as "where we work" takes a huge push like a pandemic. The counter-push will also be strong. To paraphrase urbanist Joel Kotkin who was interviewed in What the Future: Transportation, never underestimate the power of inertia.

Matt Carmichael is editor of What the Future and head of the Ipsos Trends & Foresight Lab.

49%

of employed Americans have at least some flexibility in where and/or when they work between remote or office.

(Source: Ipsos Consumer Tracker conducted Aug. 29-30, 2023, among 586 employed U.S. adults.)

Contents

1. Territory map

The future of cities will be driven by forces coming from six directions. We map them out.

2. By the numbers

We start with the state of cities today with new Ipsos data that reveals how Americans and global citizens feel about living and working in a changing urban landscape.

3. The lay of the land

We talk with experts on technology, urban planning, automobiles, architecture and restaurants about how the ways we live and work are changing and what it will mean for residents, employers and workers.

4. Tensions

Work from home or the office? Live in the city or outside of it? Trade affordability for an easier commute? Where people's opinions land on these could shape whether cities thrive or die in the future.
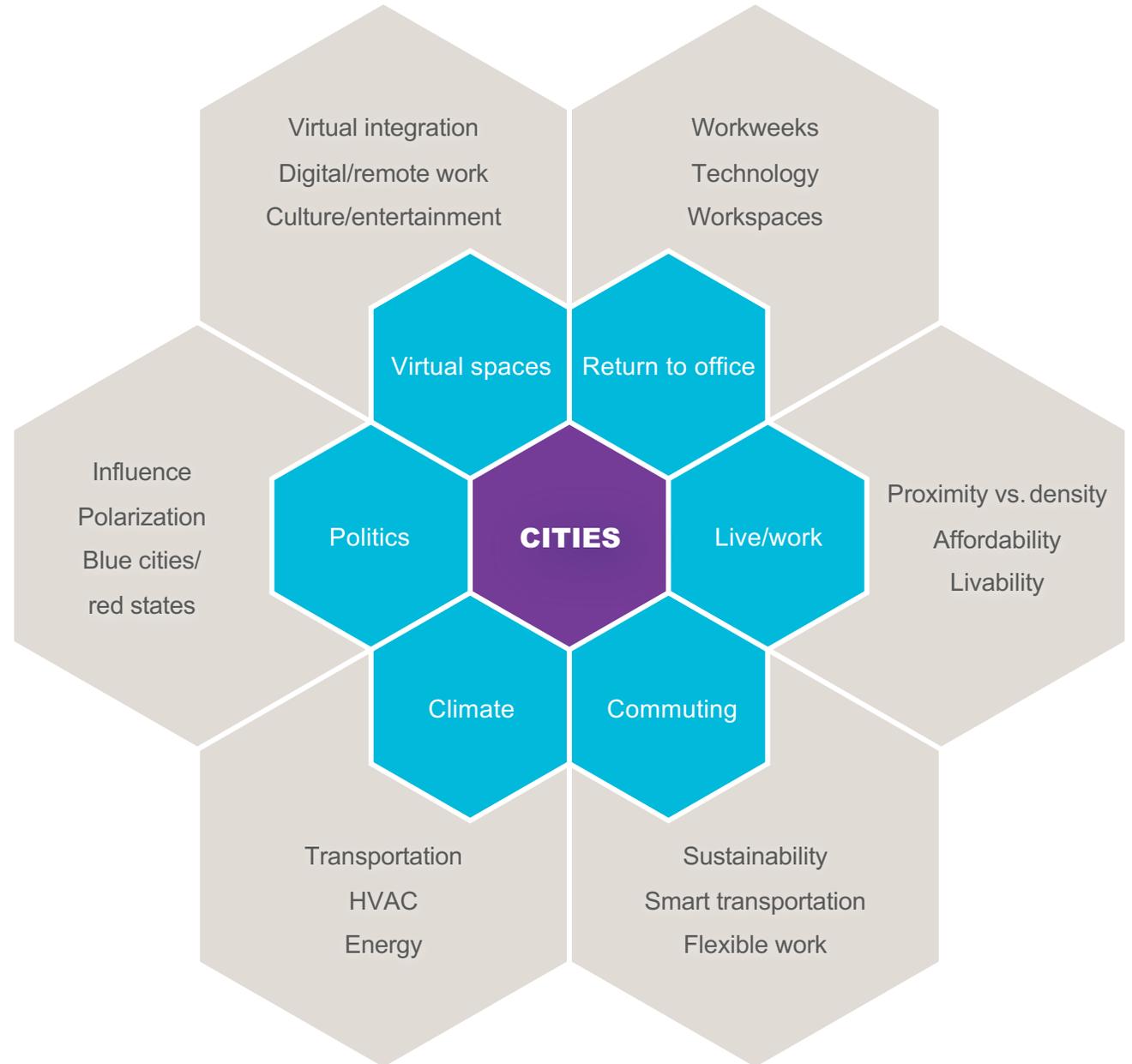
5. Future destinations

Based on our data and interviews with experts, we plot out a potential future — a plausible port in our future journey. Then, thinking of our tensions, we consider what happens if one of them shifts. We use that as a waypoint to ponder how that might send us to a different scenario, plausible port two. Then, we outline the future Jobs to Be Done, giving you a new way to think about the future. Finally, we explore the optimism gap between what we hope to see in the future versus what we expect to see in the future.

6. Appendix

Want more? We show our work, including the full text of our expert interviews, plus our contributors and links to what we're reading today that has us thinking about tomorrow.

Territory: What will drive the future of cities?

The future of cities will greatly depend on where people work and live, how resilient and ready these metropolises are for climate change and how government leaders navigate increasing partisanship.

Virtual integration
Digital/remote work
Culture/entertainment

Workweeks
Technology
Workspaces

Influence
Polarization
Blue cities/
red states

Proximity vs. density
Affordability
Livability

Virtual spaces

Return to office

Politics

CITIES

Live/work

Climate

Commuting

Transportation
HVAC
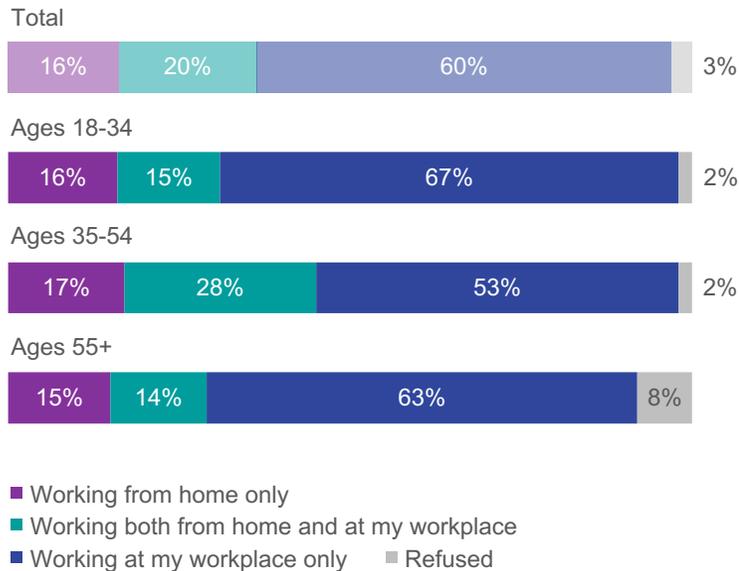Energy

Sustainability
Smart transportation
Flexible work

Cities by the numbers
Where we work

More midlife workers are flex workers

Q. Are you currently working from home, at your workplace or both a majority of the time?

Total

| 16% | 20% | 60% | 3% |

Ages 18-34

| 16% | 15% | 67% | 2% |

Ages 35-54

| 17% | 28% | 53% | 2% |

Ages 55+

| 15% | 14% | 63% | 8% |

- ■ Working from home only
- ■ Working both from home and at my workplace
- ■ Working at my workplace only   ■ Refused

(Source: Ipsos Knowledge Panel survey conducted Aug. 11-13, 2023, among 607 employed U.S. adults.)

What shapes our flex desires

Q. In your opinion, what is closest to the right mix of working from home versus working in an office?

Total

| 35% | 15% | 41% | 9% |

Male

| 31% | 18% | 45% | 6% |

Female

| 39% | 11% | 38% | 12% |

Rural

| 25% | 9% | 51% | 14% |

Suburban

| 38% | 12% | 43% | 7% |

Urban

| 37% | 25% | 29% | 9% |

- ■ At home   ■ Evenly split at home and at the office   ■ At office
- ■ Don't know/Not applicable
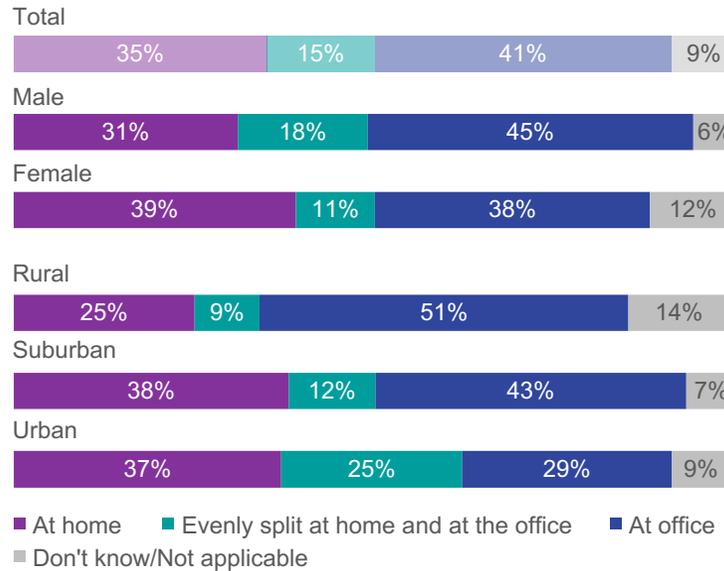
(Source: Ipsos Consumer Tracker conducted Mar. 14-15, 2023, among 623 employed U.S. adults.)

Urban commutes changed the most

Q. Before the pandemic, how many days a week did you commute to your workplace? / Currently, how many days a week are you commuting to your workplace? (Mean)

	Total	Rural	Suburban	Urban
Currently	4.4	4.6	4.3	4.3
Before the pandemic	4.8	4.9	4.7	5

- ■ Currently   ■ Before the pandemic
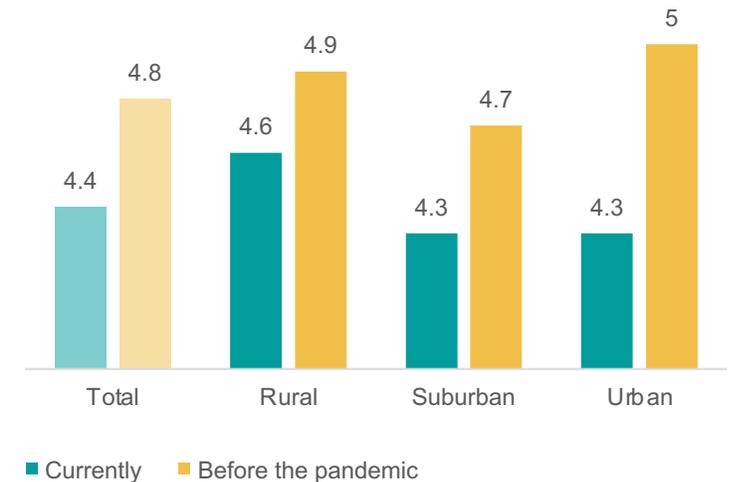
(Source: Ipsos Consumer Tracker conducted Aug. 1-2, 2023, among 623 employed U.S. adults.)

Cities by the numbers

What we expect in our commutes

Urban workers expect more change than others see in their commutes

Q. In the next 3 to 5 years, do you expect your work commute to change?

Total

| 24% | 60% | 16% |

Rural

| 21% | 59% | 20% |

Suburban

| 21% | 65% | 13% |

Urban

| 33% | 50% | 17% |

■ Yes   ■ No   ■ Don't know

(Source: Ipsos Consumer Tracker conducted Aug. 1-2, 2023, among 623 employed U.S. adults.)

Most commuters expect to drive more

Q. How do you expect your work commute to change?

46%
I expect to drive to work more often

26%
I expect to commute less, in any form, because I will be working from home more frequently

9%
I expect to walk or bike more often

8%
I expect to take public transportation (bus or rail) more often

17%
Don't know / doesn't apply

(Source: Ipsos Consumer Tracker conducted Aug. 1-2, 2023, among 167 employed U.S. adults who expect their commute to change.)

Cities by the numbers
What drives where we want to live

Affordability and crime have become more important factors in where we live

Q. Regardless of your current plans to move, when thinking generally of a place you would be willing to move to, how would you rate each of the following in terms of their importance in making that place a great place to live? (Mean)
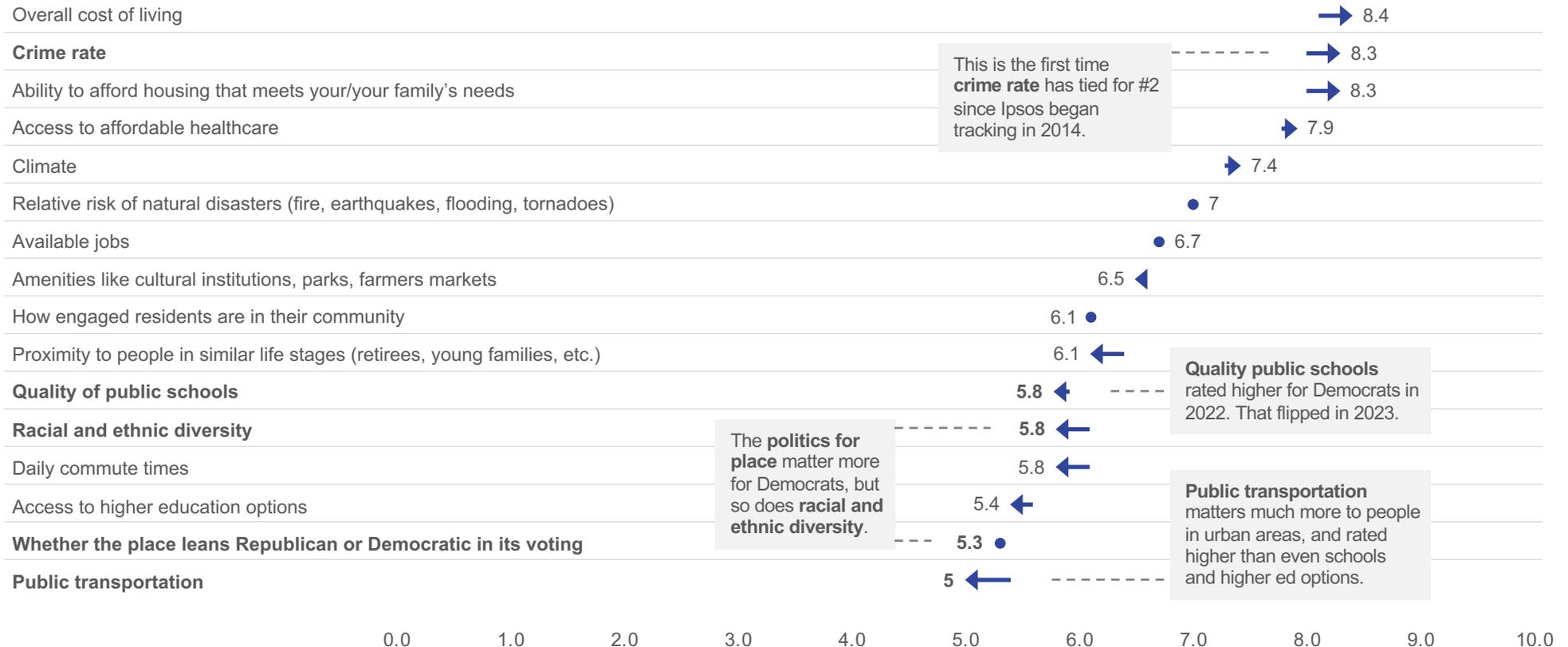
(Sources: Ipsos Coronavirus Consumer Tracker conducted Mar. 1–2, 2022, among 1,154 U.S. adults; and July 18-19, 2023, among 557 U.S. adults.)

Factor	Score
Overall cost of living	8.4
Crime rate	8.3
Ability to afford housing that meets your/your family's needs	8.3
Access to affordable healthcare	7.9
Climate	7.4
Relative risk of natural disasters (fire, earthquakes, flooding, tornadoes)	7
Available jobs	6.7
Amenities like cultural institutions, parks, farmers markets	6.5
How engaged residents are in their community	6.1
Proximity to people in similar life stages (retirees, young families, etc.)	6.1
Quality of public schools	5.8
Racial and ethnic diversity	5.8
Daily commute times	5.8
Access to higher education options	5.4
Whether the place leans Republican or Democratic in its voting	5.3
Public transportation	5

This is the first time **crime rate** has tied for #2 since Ipsos began tracking in 2014.

Quality public schools rated higher for Democrats in 2022. That flipped in 2023.

The **politics for place** matter more for Democrats, but so does **racial and ethnic diversity**.

Public transportation matters much more to people in urban areas, and rated higher than even schools and higher ed options.

Axis: 0.0 1.0 2.0 3.0 4.0 5.0 6.0 7.0 8.0 9.0 10.0

Emerging global trends

Why policymakers should consider local views on infrastructure

Infrastructure projects exist on long-term horizons both in planning and expected use.
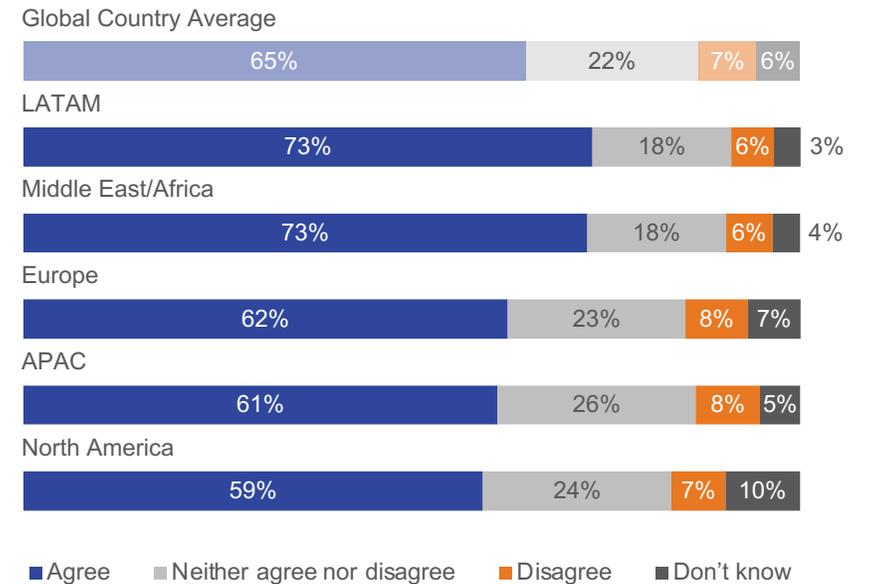
They require significant investment and collaboration from multiple stakeholders over several years.

Accordingly, the taxpayers who fund and rely on infrastructure projects hold strong opinions about it. When asked to think about infrastructure — the things we rely on like roads, rail and air networks, utilities such as energy and water, and broadband and other communications — 65% of the global average agree that local communities' views on infrastructure should be given proper consideration, even if it causes delays. Those in Latin America and the Middle East/Africa regions have the highest level of agreement at 73%, while those in North America have the lowest at 59%.

What's more, people's dissatisfaction with infrastructure correlates with their belief that more needs to be done.

Most people want opportunities for local communities to shape plans

Q. To what extent do you agree or disagree: Local communities' views on plans for infrastructure should be heard properly, even if it means delays (% Selected)

	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Don't know
Global Country Average	65%	22%	7%	6%
LATAM	73%	18%	6%	3%
Middle East/Africa	73%	18%	6%	4%
Europe	62%	23%	8%	7%
APAC	61%	26%	8%	5%
North America	59%	24%	7%	10%

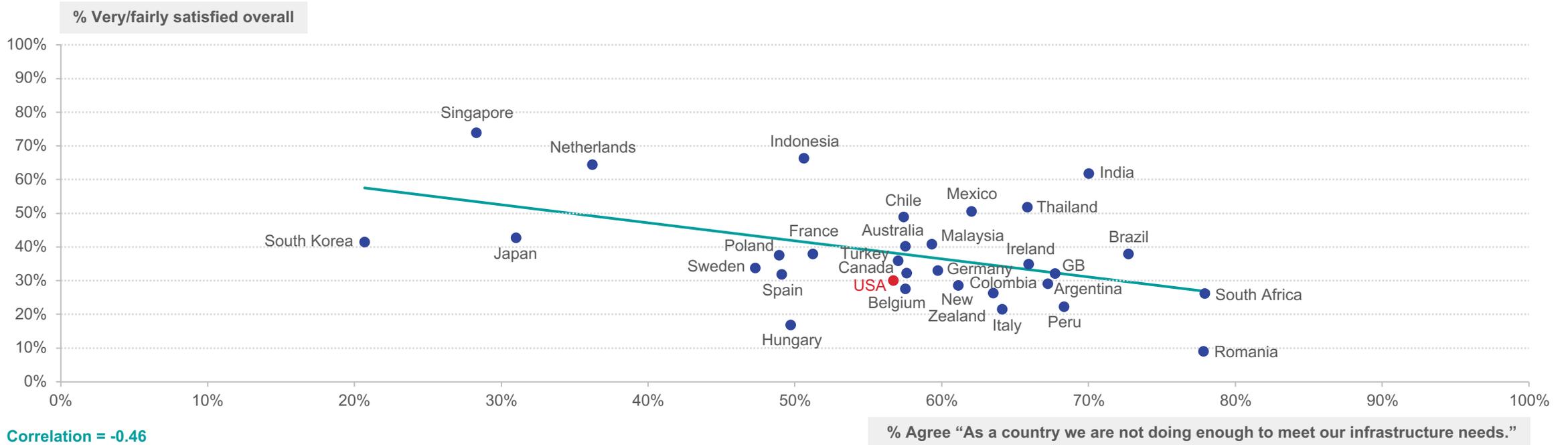■ Agree ■ Neither agree nor disagree ■ Disagree ■ Don't know

(Source: Ipsos Global Infrastructure Index series in partnership with the Global Infrastructure Investor Association (GIIA); survey conducted May 26-June 9, 2023, among 22,816 online adults in 31 countries.)

What drives people's views on infrastructure

People who are less satisfied with infrastructure tend to believe not enough is being done

Q. Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the ... national infrastructure? (% Very/fairly satisfied overall) / Q. Thinking about infrastructure; the things we rely on like road, rail and air networks, utilities such as energy and water, and broadband and other communications; to what extent do you agree or disagree:

% Very/fairly satisfied overall

% Agree "As a country we are not doing enough to meet our infrastructure needs."

Correlation = -0.46

(Source: Ipsos Global Infrastructure Index series in partnership with the Global Infrastructure Investor Association (GIIA); survey conducted May 26-June 9, 2023, among 22,816 online adults in 31 countries.)

Return to office

CITIES

Why flexibility will drive the future of work and cities

Martin Schwarz

Global solutions architect, Future of Work, HP

One of the biggest debates about the future of cities is whether they can thrive if people don't return to offices five days a week. The implications for central business districts and tax bases as well as employers and workers are huge. Martin Schwarz, global solution architect on computer and technology provider HP's Future of Work team, says flexibility and mobility will be key for workers to be productive from anywhere, including the office.

89%

of working adults who work from home or both home and their workplace say they have the office equipment they need.

(Source: Ipsos Knowledge Panel survey conducted Aug. 11-13, 2023, among 223 employed U.S. adults working either from home or both from home and at workplace.)

This shift means we need to build both technology and cities to allow people to move seamlessly between places at home and work.

The places that enable their mobility must do so in a way that cities can thrive, even without a full return of the workforce.

The arrangements companies choose could have far-reaching implications for products and services that rely on downtown office workers, including restaurants, automobiles and even virtual spaces.

Still, Schwarz challenges the notion that many companies will force full return-to-office policies. But even if they do, two things will drive the future, he says.

"The companies that get hybrid right and get flexible work right are going to be the most successful."

You could say the same for cities.

Read the full Q&A on page 38.

Most workers are outfitted for home or hybrid work

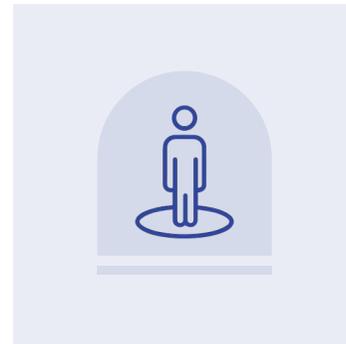Q. Do the following statements accurately describe your working-from-home set-up, or not? (% Yes)
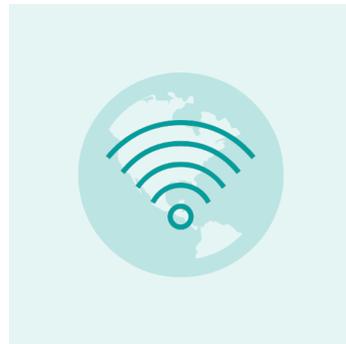
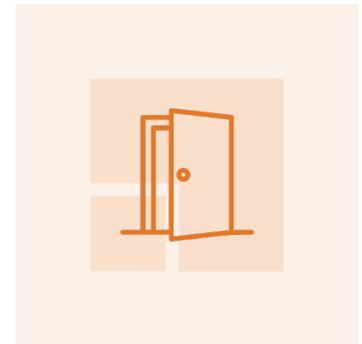**94**%
I have a stable internet connection
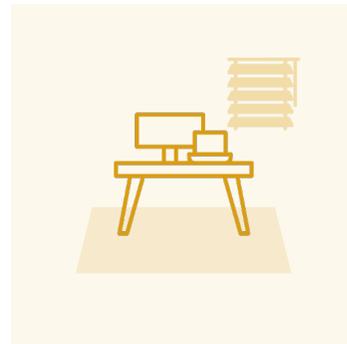
89%
I have the office equipment I need

88%
I have enough privacy

69%
I have a dedicated office space

(Source: Ipsos Knowledge Panel survey conducted Aug. 11-13, 2023, among 223 employed U.S. adults working either from home or both from home and at workplace.)

How shifts in work and life will change how people shop

**Where people work and live are in flux — which means how they shop will shift, too.**

What people decide to buy has long been driven by familiar factors like price, quality and convenience. But there is no standard definition of "convenience" at a time when some Americans are commuting to the office and others are working from home. Meanwhile, the e-commerce boom has changed peoples' habits and expectations of in-person and online shopping. And these changes are happening in a new era of personalization, fulfilment flexibility, sourcing transparency, and zero-click/predictive ordering.

As work and schedules change, understanding the "who, what, where, why and how" of shopping decisions will become more complex, says Neil Ellefsen, senior vice president in Ipsos' U.S. Channel Performance team.

"The winners will be the brands who get a deep understanding of shoppers' needs and motivations, and embrace these changes."

How people's commuting days vary

Q. Currently, how many days a week are you commuting to your workplace?

	Rural	Suburban	Urban
0	29%	31%	13%
1-4	19%	23%	38%
5	38%	41%	35%
6-7	13%	5%	15%
Mean days	4.6	4.3	4.3
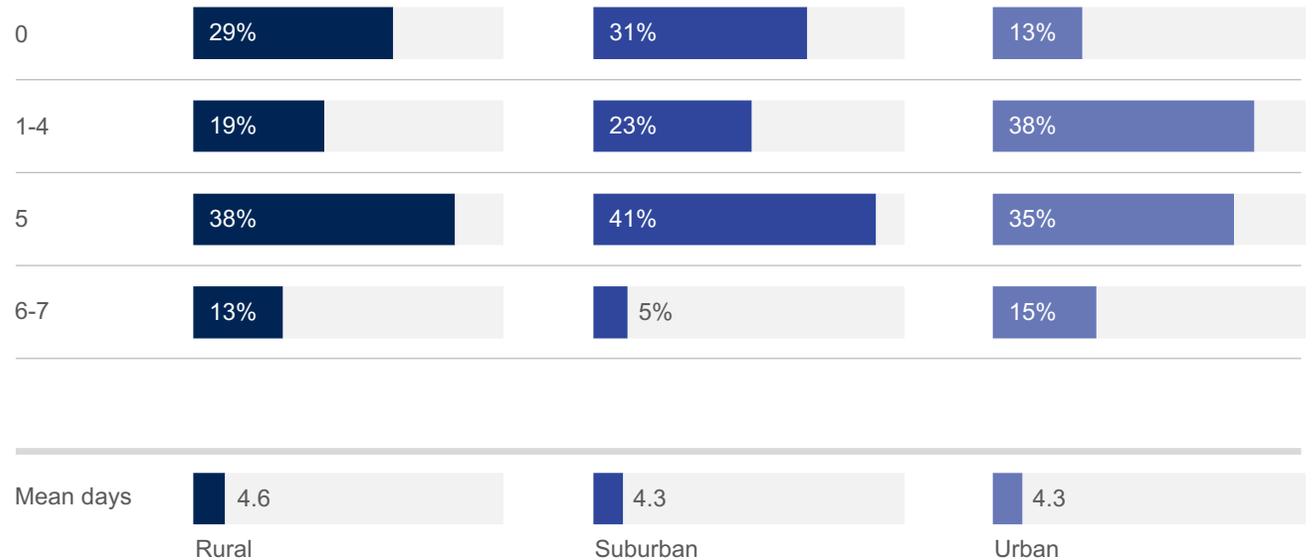
(Source: Ipsos Consumer Tracker conducted Aug. 1-2, 2023, among 623 employed U.S. adults.)

Why all-ages urbanism makes for better cities

CITIES Live/work

Gil Penalosa

Urbanist

Sometimes the simplest ideas are the most revolutionary. What if you design a city for an 8-year-old and an 80-year-old? Turns out, it will work pretty well for everyone in between. Urbanist Gil Penalosa heads an organization aiming to steer cities away from designing places that mostly only work for 20- and 30-somethings. If you're thinking that's relevant for your business, too, you're right. But here's why it matters for the future of cities.

79%

of U.S. adults want to live in the suburbs. However, 72% of Gen Z adults and 68% of Millennials are interested in living in urban areas, much higher than older generations.

(Source: Ipsos survey conducted Aug. 11-14, 2023, among 1,111 U.S. adults.)

The COVID-19 pandemic showed us a lot of things regarding work and cities. It showed us that many can work hybrid. It showed us that if you want to turn a street into a pedestrian walkway or bike lane or outdoor seating for restaurants, you can literally just do it overnight. And it showed us that we're likely going to need to rethink cities. Because a lot of what we have doesn't work. Penalosa doesn't mince words:
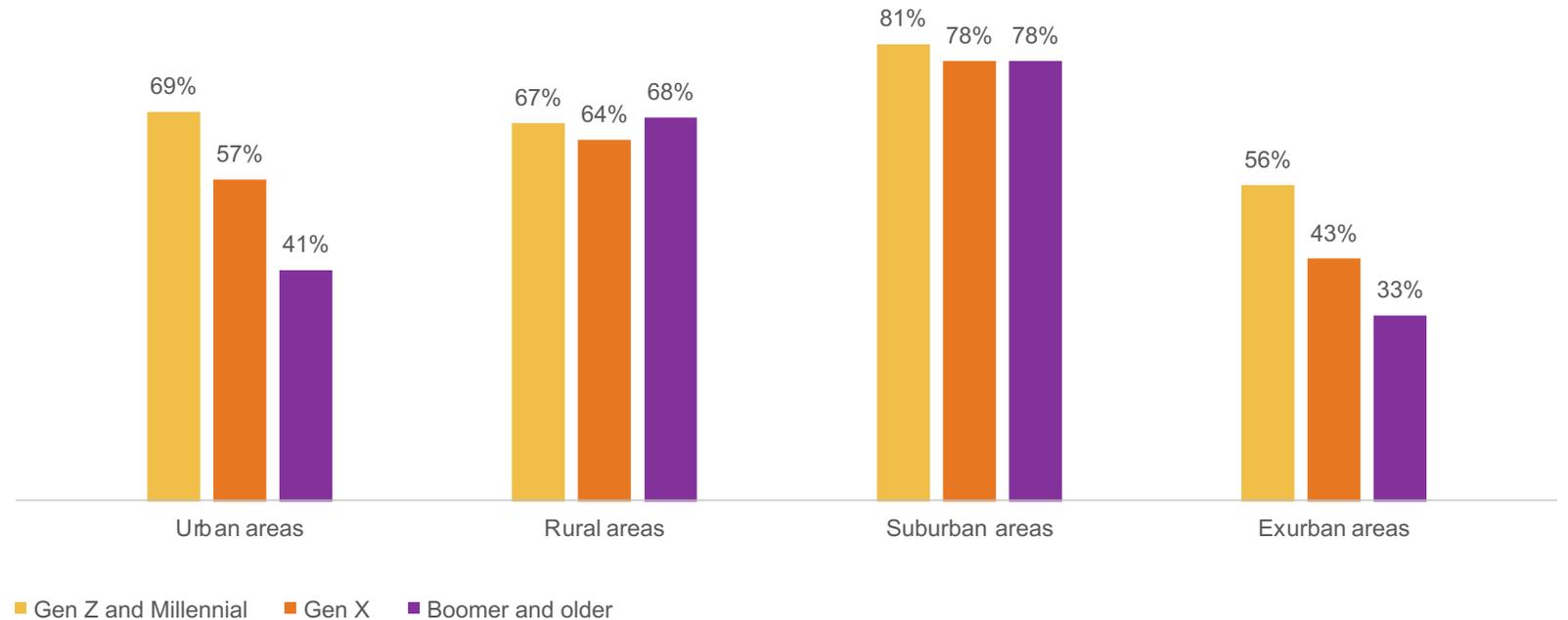
"Most of what we have done in the last 30 or 40 years is mediocre. Much is very bad. Why? Well, because it's bad for climate change. It's bad for mental health, for physical health, even for economic development."

He sees both potential and also responsibility in doing the planning work. But the stakes are high to get it right. The good thing is, we now know what works and what doesn't.

Read the full Q&A on page 40.

Most everyone wants to live in the suburbs

Q. If finances and circumstances allowed, how interested, if at all, would you be in living in the following places? (% Interested)

	Urban areas	Rural areas	Suburban areas	Exurban areas
Gen Z and Millennial	69%	67%	81%	56%
Gen X	57%	64%	78%	43%
Boomer and older	41%	68%	78%	33%

■ Gen Z and Millennial   ■ Gen X   ■ Boomer and older

(Source: Ipsos survey conducted Aug. 11-14, 2023, among 1,111 U.S. adults.)

CITIES   Live/work

The benefits of cross-generational design

Ipsos research shows that older Americans feel overlooked not just in their cities, but also at the store. Only 19% of consumers over age 55 feel that most new products are being created with their needs in mind, compared to 41% of consumers aged 18-34.

The Census Bureau expects that nearly a quarter of Americans will be aged 65 or older by 2030, making this an increasingly expensive oversight. But the aging of America isn't just a demographic inevitability — it's an opportunity for brands to center inclusive design across their products and services, says Alyson Heffernan, a senior vice president in Ipsos' Innovation practice.

"By centering inclusion and accessibility, brands can build trust with shoppers across generations."

These principles can have unexpected benefits, too. Packaging that's designed to be easier to open, for instance, isn't just more accessible, but less wasteful and less frustrating for all who use it.

As the "8 to 80" city philosophy illustrates, planning for youth *and* older adults tends to work better for everyone in between. The brands that keep older Americans' needs in mind will develop products that work better for all ages.

Far fewer older adults than younger peers feel new products are created for them

Q. Thinking about any new products you may have seen recently, even if you haven't purchased them, how much do you agree or disagree with the following statements? – Most new products are being created with my needs in mind (% Agree)

Total
31%

Ages 18-34
41%

Ages 35-54
35%

Ages 55+
19%
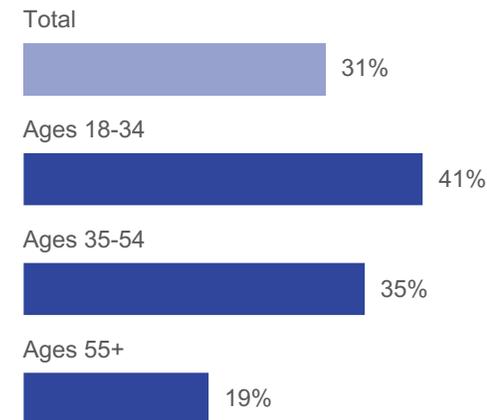
(Source: The Ipsos Consumer Tracker, conducted Apr. 11–12, 2023, among 1,120 U.S. adults.)

How restaurants can adapt to a future in flux

Hudson Riehle

Senior vice president, Research and Knowledge Group, National Restaurant Association

Cities draw people from workers to tourists who rely on restaurants for meals and entertaining while restaurants are often destinations in themselves. But the remote work era has disrupted this symbiotic relationship and neither can thrive on one mealtime or occasion. Hudson Riehle, senior vice president of research at the National Restaurant Association, says the ultimate fate of these establishments and business districts depends on their ability to adapt, embrace change and cater to the evolving needs of patrons.

27%

of employed U.S. adults have total flexibility in where they work.

(Source: Ipsos Consumer Tracker conducted Aug. 29-30, 2023, among 586 employed U.S. adults)

CITIES

Commuting

When workers flocked to cities, restaurants from fast food to fine dining thrived from morning to late night. Now that this customer base is flowing to the suburbs and beyond cities, it is unlikely to return, at least like it was, says Riehle.

"For the decade before the pandemic hit, much of the growth and employment was in the city center areas. As a result, the restaurant community followed that employment growth and developed a lot of smaller independent operations in these city center areas. Now you have the opposite occurring."

For now, the communities that surround the cities are booming, but can they survive without the center core being strong? What happens if employers succeed in forcing workers back to the office five days a week? In the future, where will this pendulum land?

Workers are split between having flexibility or not in where they work

Q. What degree of flexibility, if any, do you have in where you work?

13%
I am required to be onsite at my office or workplace 100% of the time, even though I could work remotely

14%
I am required to be onsite at my office or workplace some days, but I can pick which days

38%
My job can only be done at an office or workplace

8% I am required to be onsite at my office or workplace some days, but my employer selects the days

27%
I can work from anywhere or be fully remote 100% of the time

(Source: Ipsos Consumer Tracker conducted Aug. 29-30, 2023, among 586 employed U.S. adults.)

CITIES

Commuting

How automakers can shift gears for tomorrow's cities

Hoss Hassani

Vice president, Charging & Energy, General Motors

You can see America's car culture just by looking at how most of its cities are designed. When people stopped commuting en masse to cities for work during the COVID-19 pandemic, it gave people a different view of how cities could look if we relied less on automobiles for getting around. At the same time, automakers like General Motors are working toward an electric future that offers a new role for them as energy providers. This is the focus for Hoss Hassani, who leads GM's energy organization as vice president of Charging & Energy.

20.3

minutes is what U.S. workers say is the ideal one-way commute.

(Source: Ipsos Consumer Tracker conducted Aug. 1–2, 2023, among 623 employed U.S. adults.)

CITIES

Commuting

Two problems facing our cities relate to power and transportation. How do we prop up our aging grid and how do we move around in cities of the future? Electric vehicles can provide a solution to both.

Rather than be a drain to the energy grid as some people might fear, EVs can be a supplement to it, says Hassani.
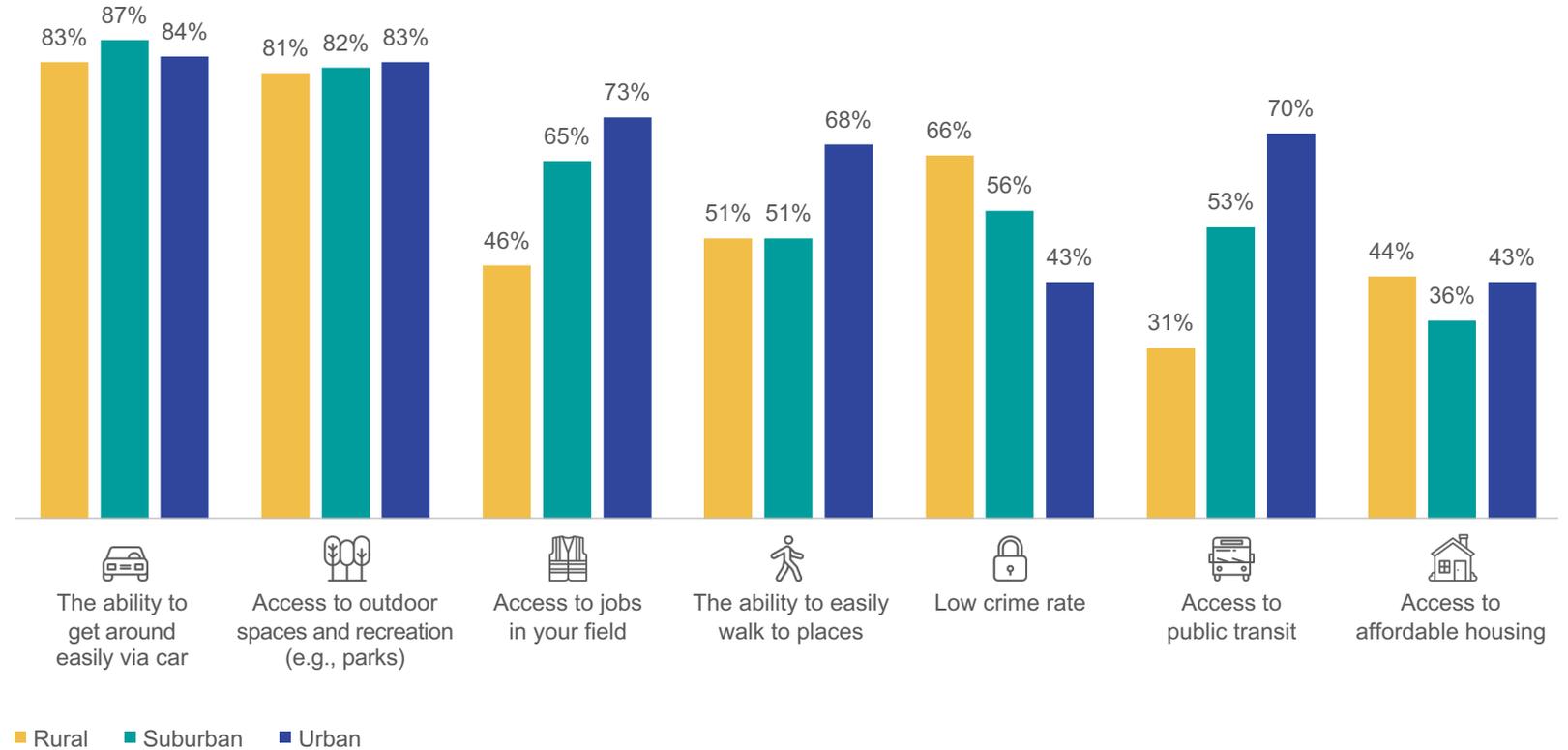
"When people ask that question, 'How can the grid support all these electric vehicles,' we flip this paradigm by saying, 'How can all these electric vehicles support the grid?'"

GM is taking an ecosystem-based approach to future transportation by rapidly moving into electrification. Later this year, the company will roll out its Ultium battery platform that offers bidirectional charging between your home and your electric vehicle or vice versa, giving EVs a new role beyond transportation.

Most places where people live are car-oriented

Q. Thinking about the city or town that you live in, how much do you agree or disagree that it has the following characteristics? (% Agree)

Characteristic	Rural	Suburban	Urban
The ability to get around easily via car	83%	87%	84%
Access to outdoor spaces and recreation (e.g., parks)	81%	82%	83%
Access to jobs in your field	46%	65%	73%
The ability to easily walk to places	51%	51%	68%
Low crime rate	66%	56%	43%
Access to public transit	31%	53%	70%
Access to affordable housing	44%	36%	43%

■ Rural   ■ Suburban   ■ Urban

(Ipsos survey conducted Aug. 11-14, 2023, among 1,111 U.S. adults.)

How climate change will make it harder to stay where we live

According to a new USA Today/Ipsos survey, many Americans think climate change won't just change how they live, but *where* they'll live.

From rising temperatures to rising sea levels, more than two in three Americans think extreme weather events will become more frequent in the near future. And now, about one in four say it will get more difficult to stay in the area they currently live in due to climate change.
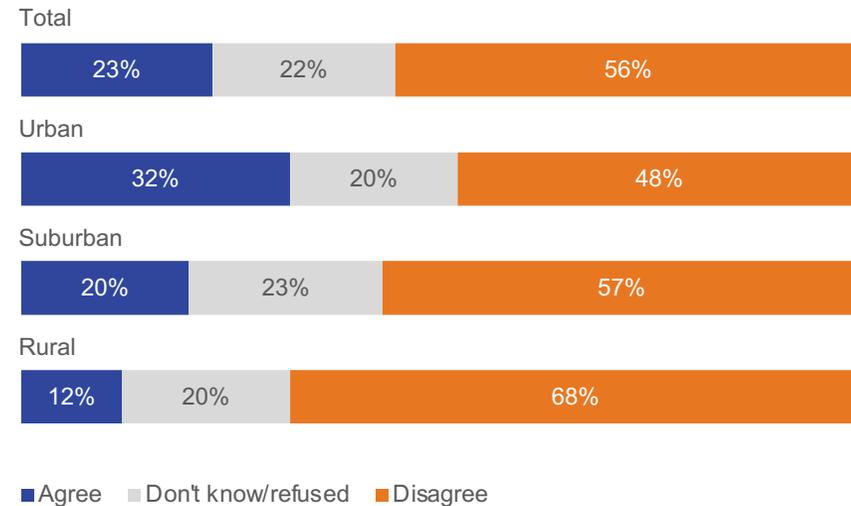
Americans who live in urban areas are particularly worried, with 32% agreeing that it will get more difficult to stay where they are. In rural areas, on the other hand, only one in ten agrees with the statement.

But no matter how you slice it, "climate migration" could have a dramatic impact on the nation's economy, culture and demography, says Mallory Newall, a vice president in Ipsos' Public Affairs team. And as extreme weather becomes more severe and frequent, those who can't afford to move, or are otherwise unable to relocate — such as lower-income or disabled Americans — will be disproportionately vulnerable to the worst effects.

"The clock is ticking to prepare for and mitigate the effects of a changing environment."

The closer that people live to cities, the worse they expect climate change to affect them

Q. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? It will get more difficult to stay in the area I currently live due to climate change. (% Total)

Total

Agree	Don't know/refused	Disagree
23%	22%	56%

Urban

Agree	Don't know/refused	Disagree
32%	20%	48%

Suburban

Agree	Don't know/refused	Disagree
20%	23%	57%

Rural

Agree	Don't know/refused	Disagree
12%	20%	68%

■ Agree ■ Don't know/refused ■ Disagree

(Source: USA Today/Ipsos survey conducted July 21-23, 2023, among 1,024 U.S. adults.)

How to build resilience in a climate crisis

Keith A. James

Mayor, West Palm Beach, Florida

The future of many cities is being threatened by climate change, whether by long-term effects or extreme weather catastrophes. It makes running a city all the more challenging, especially when navigating infrastructure plans, urban planning, housing affordability and inequality. West Palm Beach, Florida, is one of the U.S. cities most vulnerable to climate change. For Mayor Keith A. James, it takes a sense of urgency, action and diplomacy to ensure the city remains resilient.

73%

of U.S. adults have not considered moving to an area with less risk of natural disasters in response to climate change.

(Source: Ipsos Knowledge Panel survey conducted Aug. 11-13, 2023, among 1,020 U.S. adults.)

CITIES

Climate

CITIES

Climate
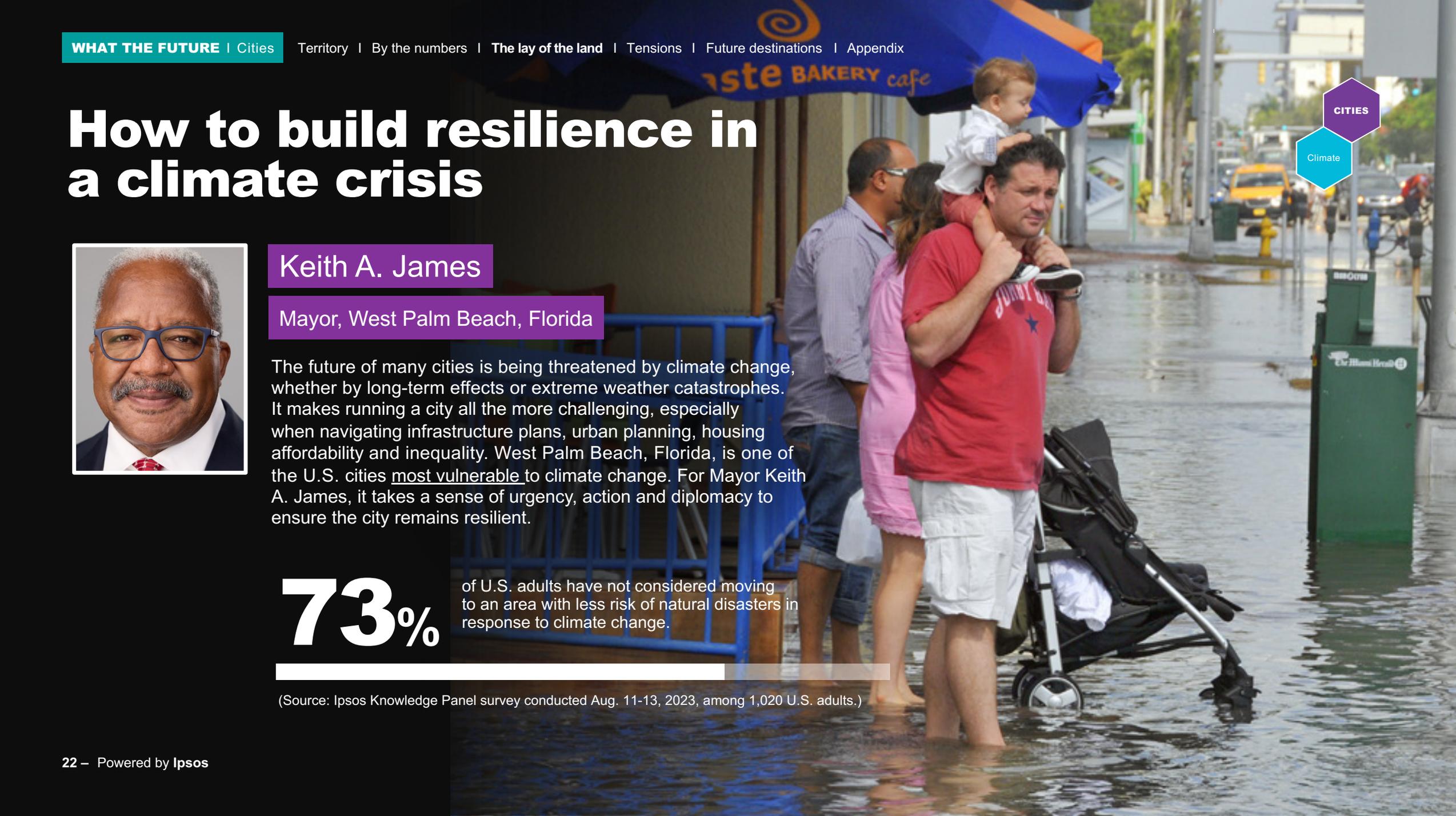
West Palm Beach is separated from the ocean by the town of Palm Beach and sits on the Intracoastal Waterway. That still puts it on the front line of vulnerability.

As a Democrat running a city in a blue county in a red state, Mayor James faces an additional hurdle of partisan debate about climate while trying to shore up the city's resiliency to it.

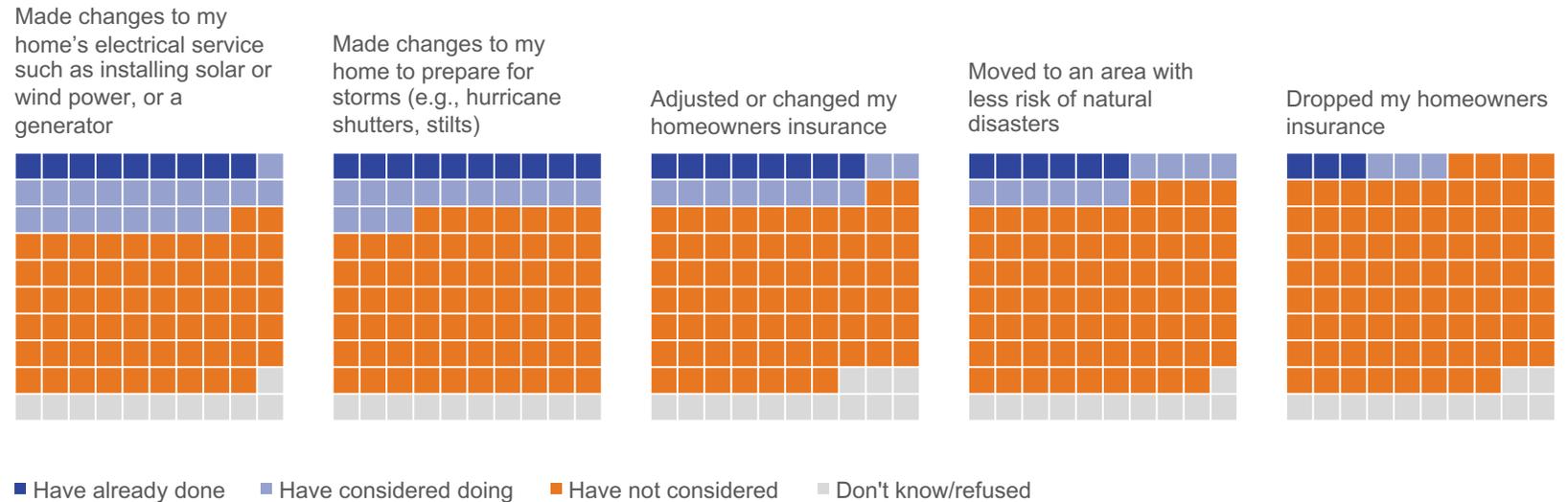Regardless, the urgency of climate change is a priority in everything he does because climate change isn't coming, it's here, he says.

"I don't think we have any choice. We have to act, right? Is the window closing? Yes, it is. But that does not mean that we can't do everything we can in the moment that we are faced with."

Among the things he's doing is a vulnerability assessment study to understand what parts of the city are at most risk, which is something everyone, including business leaders, can do.

Few people have made changes in their lives due to climate change

Q. Now, thinking about something different. Have you done, or considered doing, any of the following specifically as a response to climate change?

Made changes to my home's electrical service such as installing solar or wind power, or a generator

Made changes to my home to prepare for storms (e.g., hurricane shutters, stilts)

Adjusted or changed my homeowners insurance

Moved to an area with less risk of natural disasters

Dropped my homeowners insurance

■ Have already done   ■ Have considered doing   ■ Have not considered   ▫ Don't know/refused

(Source: Ipsos Knowledge Panel survey conducted Aug. 11-13, 2023, among 1,020 U.S. adults.)

Why living where the politics differ from yours could make a difference

Fewer than one in four Americans say that politics is top of mind when they are thinking about the areas they would choose to live. But perhaps we should.

"The idea wouldn't be to live near people like you," says Chris Jackson, who leads Ipsos' public polling practice, "but to move to places where people think less like you." That could make more swing districts.

The political sorting of where we live has contributed to bad knock-on effects from impossible cost-of-living challenges in cities to weak job prospects and "deaths of despair" in rural areas. It has also turbo-charged a political system with lopsided districts.

If more urban professional workers chose to move out of the expensive major cities and move to smaller towns across the country, it could have multiple positive impacts. For the individual, lower cost of living and a quieter environment. For the community, the income these high-paying knowledge economy jobs bring, which would flow out into the rest of the town. And for the country, more "purple" districts.

Politics are not the priority when people are choosing where to live

Q. For each of the following pairs of statements, please select the one that comes closest to your view, even if neither statement is exactly right. (% Total)

Republican

| 73% | 27% |

Democrat

| 70% | 30% |

Independent

| 82% | 18% |
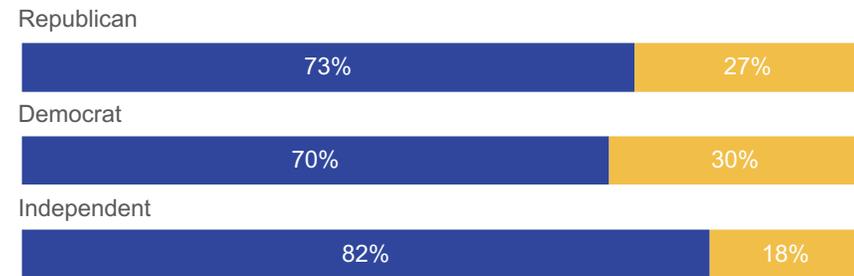
■ I prioritize living in an area I love, regardless of political beliefs
■ I prioritize living near people with the same political views as me

(Ipsos survey conducted Aug. 11-14, 2023, among 1,111 U.S. adults.)

Virtual spaces

CITIES

How physical and digital will meet at the office

Kay Sargent

Senior principal, director of WorkPlace, HOK

Cities, as they currently function, rely on a steady diet of office workers to survive. Those workers pay rent, and buy lunches and other things and keep buildings and businesses afloat. Kay Sargent is the Director of WorkPlace at HOK, a leading global architecture, design and engineering firm. She thinks two things will continue to upset that ecosystem: hybrid work and virtual spaces. So how do we design cities for the future? And what can virtual spaces learn from physical design?

63%

of U.S. adults would be interested in watching a concert, show or movie in a virtual immersive experience or metaverse.

(Ipsos survey conducted Aug. 11-14, 2023, among 1,111 U.S. adults.)

Virtual spaces
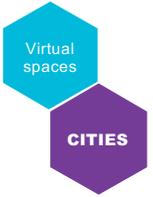
CITIES

Sargent thinks that in the future it won't be "hybrid work" anymore. It'll just be "work." And she thinks that cities need to evolve to make that happen. As more people have virtual meetings, Sargent thinks that designers from both the physical and digital worlds can learn a lot from each other. But, she says, we're not there yet.
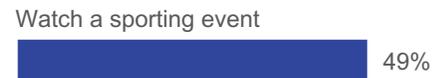
"Right now, there are a lot of people designing spaces virtually or in the metaverse that don't have that same type of sensitivity about sensory processing."

The usefulness of a virtual or physical space is partially dependent on how the humans react to it and process information in it. She says we need to be able to read each other and read the (literal) room. Architects have studied this for centuries and we need to apply that thinking for virtual spaces to thrive and be thrived in.

Read the full Q&A on page 48.

How people want to play and work in the metaverse

Q. If you could do each of the following, how interested, if at all, would you be in doing this in a virtual immersive experience or metaverse? (% Interested)

Watch a concert, show or movie
63%

Spend time with friends
58%

Purchase real items such as clothing or shoes
55%

Participate in fitness
52%

Watch a sporting event
49%

(Source: Ipsos survey conducted Aug. 11-14, 2023, among 1,111 U.S. adults.)

46%
Collaborate with coworkers

45%
Attend a work or professional meeting

44%
Attend a public meeting

Five tensions that will drive change:

1. WFH or RTO?

Given the choice, we would rather work from home (WFH) than return to the office (RTO). In reality, most people can't make that choice unilaterally. For those who can, most experts think our future is hybrid. That's an issue for the future of cities, but it's going to take more than adjustments to the cities themselves. Office equipment will have to enable hybrid. HP's Martin Schwarz says that's a potential pain point for B2B customers that software and hardware makers need to address. "We design many of our products for hybrid where we're workspace-aware or spatial-aware or we allow for seamless transitions between workspaces," he says. "Many of these workers still need to collaborate, still need to connect with their coworkers through collaboration sessions and through conferencing."

Most people would rather work from home

I want to work from home | 64% | 36% | I want to work in an office setting

Q. For each of the pairs of statements, please select the statement that comes closest to your view, even if neither statement is exactly right. (% Total)

(Source: Ipsos survey conducted Aug. 11-14, 2023, among 579 employed U.S. adults.)

Five tensions that will drive change:

2. City dweller or no?

Today our opinions and actions show that we don't want to live downtown. We are largely a suburban and exurban nation in population (and rural in land use.) But is that sustainable? Probably not. Few people, if any, signal that the future is adding sprawl to our urban metros, or density in far-flung rural communities.

So, if we are to continue commuting, how do we make that more sustainable? Electric vehicles have to be part of that solution. General Motors' Hoss Hassani says that EVs can be part of the solution for sustainable transit as well as helping to prop up our aging electric grid. "Utilities and states are going be very motivated to have people driving electric vehicles because it's a solution to the problems plaguing the grid in the United States," he says.

People overwhelmingly would be happier living outside of a big city

I would be happier living outside of a big city | 74% | 26% | I would be happier living in a big city

Q. For each of the pairs of statements, please select the statement that comes closest to your view, even if neither statement is exactly right. (% Total)

(Source: Ipsos survey conducted Aug. 11-14, 2023, among 1,111 U.S. adults.)

Five tensions that will drive change:

3. More house or shorter commute?

This tension is about two macro forces driving change: Inequality and climate change. Typically the farther from the city you go, the cheaper the housing is. Which also means the longer the commute. That essentially ties affordable housing to vehicle emissions. That won't lead to a good future for anyone. We accept the longer commutes because that's the world we've built for ourselves. But what if we built a better world with more "precincts," as HOK's Kay Sargent suggests? Or more density, as urbanist Gil Penalosa (and pretty much every other urbanist) says we need? "When people talk about density, they think about Manhattan. When people talk about 'no density,' they think about Houston," says Penalosa. "There are better options than Manhattan or than Houston. Somewhere in the middle."

Most people are willing to trade a long commute for a more affordable home

I would accept a longer commute if it meant being able to afford a better place to live

| 64% | 36% |

I will generally prioritize living somewhere with a shorter commute, regardless of housing prices

Q. For each of the pairs of statements, please select the statement that comes closest to your view, even if neither statement is exactly right. (% Total)

(Source: Ipsos survey conducted Aug. 11-14, 2023, among 579 employed U.S. adults.)

Five tensions that will drive change:

4. Climate will affect me or it won't?

In order to act on something, you have to believe in that something. Today we see all kinds of worrying signals about cities and climate: Areas pushing for more development even without access to an assured water supply; insurers pulling out of cities and states due to rising risks of extreme weather; building booms in areas that are projected to be underwater in coming decades. Today we're split on whether we think climate change is going to change where we live. But until we see those effects closer to home, we're unlikely to change policies and behaviors. West Palm Beach, Florida's Mayor Keith A. James is on the forefront of dealing with this every day. He says resiliency will be key. "We have to make sure that we're doing everything we can to respond to climate change and understand the data, based where some of the hotspots are and where we are most vulnerable."

People are fairly split on whether the climate will change over their lives

I expect the climate to stay similar to how it is now in my lifetime

| 53% | 47% |

I expect the climate where I live to change significantly in my lifetime

Q. For each of the pairs of statements, please select the statement that comes closest to your view, even if neither statement is exactly right. (% Total)

(Source: Ipsos survey conducted Aug. 11-14, 2023, among 1,111 U.S. adults.)

Five tensions that will drive change:

5. Virtual or reality?

Today most people don't want to spend more time in virtual spaces like the metaverse. There are any number of reasons why that might be the case, like expensive hardware and not enough use cases for a lot of folks. But one thing that could shift that is if our physical and digital spaces worked together better and their designers learned from each other. When HOK's Kay Sargent thinks of design, she's thinking of the practical function a space serves as well as the effects the experience can have on people. She thinks both physical and digital spaces need to rethink to meet future needs. "We need to understand that in the virtual realm, we are impacted by what we are seeing and experiencing in those spaces, just like we do physically," she says.

**Few people want to spend more time
in virtual spaces**

I want to spend more time in 3D virtual spaces like the metaverse   28%   72%   I do not want to spend more time in 3D virtual spaces like the metaverse

Q. For each of the pairs of statements, please select the statement that comes closest to your view, even if neither statement is exactly right. (% Total)

(Source: Ipsos survey conducted Aug. 11-14, 2023, among 1,111 U.S. adults.)

Plausible port one:

City centers become more livable close to work

Imagine a world where cities become more residential and suburbs become more dense. The ways we live and work have become more fluid. So shall the places.

In the early part of the century, most experts agreed that increased density is needed to address two key challenges: climate change and affordable housing shortages nationwide. The COVID-19 pandemic showed us what is possible. Now it's just matter of (re)building cities that work for today.

In this future, underutilized offices are retrofitted into housing where possible — some building types are better for this than others. Surface parking gets a major rethink. Public transit becomes less about regional movement and more about infilling short runs. Older adult living communities flourish downtown as an aging population wants easier access to culture and activities.

The suburbs also densify, adding more kinds of office spaces near where people live. The 20th century office parks surrounded by acres of parking continue to transform into warehousing and data centers. Zoning and tax incentives help developers build other types of housing than the current dominant high-end units with all the luxury finishes and tech upgrades. Accessory dwelling units (aka nanny/granny flats) are allowed in more areas, enabling multigenerational caregiving, affordable spaces and a way for homeowners to offset rising mortgage costs as interest rates remain well higher than their pandemic lows. This evolution also has an impact on the climate by reducing the number of people with lengthy commutes. In many ways, this is the future we need. Will we get there?

Waypoints

Today 64% of people choose longer commutes over more expensive housing. What if we didn't have to make that choice?

Many solutions exist. Think of some of the world's most-loved cities: Paris, Copenhagen, Lisbon, Tokyo or many of America's small- to mid-sized college towns. In different ways, these cities have density *and* mixed-use spaces. American cities used to be like that, too. And they can be again. If we can make it more affordable to live closer to where we work, and expand the definitions of "where we work," we can get to a future where more people prioritize their time — and can afford to.

Plausible port two:

City centers fall into a perpetuating cycle of decline

Now imagine a world where we don't get this right. Inequality makes the struggle for affordable housing more acute. Crime becomes a rising problem after declining for decades. Climate change gets worse as we can't cut our emissions fast enough. States use infrastructure bill funds to build new highways instead of promoting sustainable options.

In this future, downtowns continue to struggle with office occupancy sufficient to maintain restaurants and businesses downtown. As the core of the apple rots, the suburbs around them also suffer. Think Detroit in the '80s. People are forced out of cities due to rising costs, compounded by higher interest rates. Where do they go? For some, it's more rural or off the grid. For others, it's a retreat to smaller towns or farther from the city centers.

But cities are our economic engines that have driven the nation's economy and filled its tax coffers since New York was actually new. If cities struggle, so does everything else. Do those engines need to be so centralized in cities? Or can a virtual distributed workforce make the idea of small-town resurgence a reality? It's hard to say and history doesn't have a lot of good lessons to offer. It's one thing to have a regional economic anchor tied to a place like a hospital system or a college. But to ramp up the next global tech superpower? That still takes people. Lots of people.

Virtual spaces and metaverses could help by creating more spaces where we can congregate and collaborate, but they need to be thoughtfully designed, building on things we know about humans from the realms of designing physical spaces. And not everyone thinks a virtual future is any less dystopian than one where our physical cities go through a prolonged (or rapid) decline.

Future Jobs to Be Done

Ipsos spins the traditional "Jobs to Be Done" framework forward with *future* **Jobs to Be Done (fJTBD).** This builds on the theory that people buy products and services to fulfill certain needs or accomplish specific tasks. For example, we don't buy an apartment; we hire it to nurture us and our loved ones, give us shelter, and create a space of our own in a busy world.

To bring it into the future, we envision powerful and plausible scenarios through strategic foresight. While many needs are enduring and do not change over time, the context of that job will change along with the potential solutions and alternatives. These scenarios help us define the circumstances in which people may find themselves, like considering whether to stay in a city that depletes our savings or retreat to more suburban pastures that offer less immediate proximity to our communities.

We use fJTBD to tie these scenarios to actions that organizations can take to help people meet future needs. While it's typical in foresight to create fJTBD clusters, we're sharing one scenario here as an example.

Sophie Washington is a senior consultant at Ipsos Strategy3.

Help me enjoy, thrive in, and connect to others in urban spaces

In a world where many are being priced out of their neighborhoods and prefer hybrid lifestyles, people will need resources and motivation to continue living in cities.

Potential fJTBD:

- Help me be part of and contribute to an inclusive urban community

- Provide me with the mobility resources I need to navigate around efficiently (for both cost and time)

- Help me thrive financially and find affordable housing

- Give me access to culture and new experiences that broaden my horizons

Imagine a world where … A governmental environmental justice task force is rolled out across all U.S. metro areas to improve health and wellbeing for city dwellers.

Future optimism gaps

People mostly agree on how they want to experience city life. More often than not, they don't expect to get the life they hope for.

Overwhelming majorities want our cities to be safe and affordable, where climate change doesn't affect where they live, where local politics are united and where people shape their community to their values.

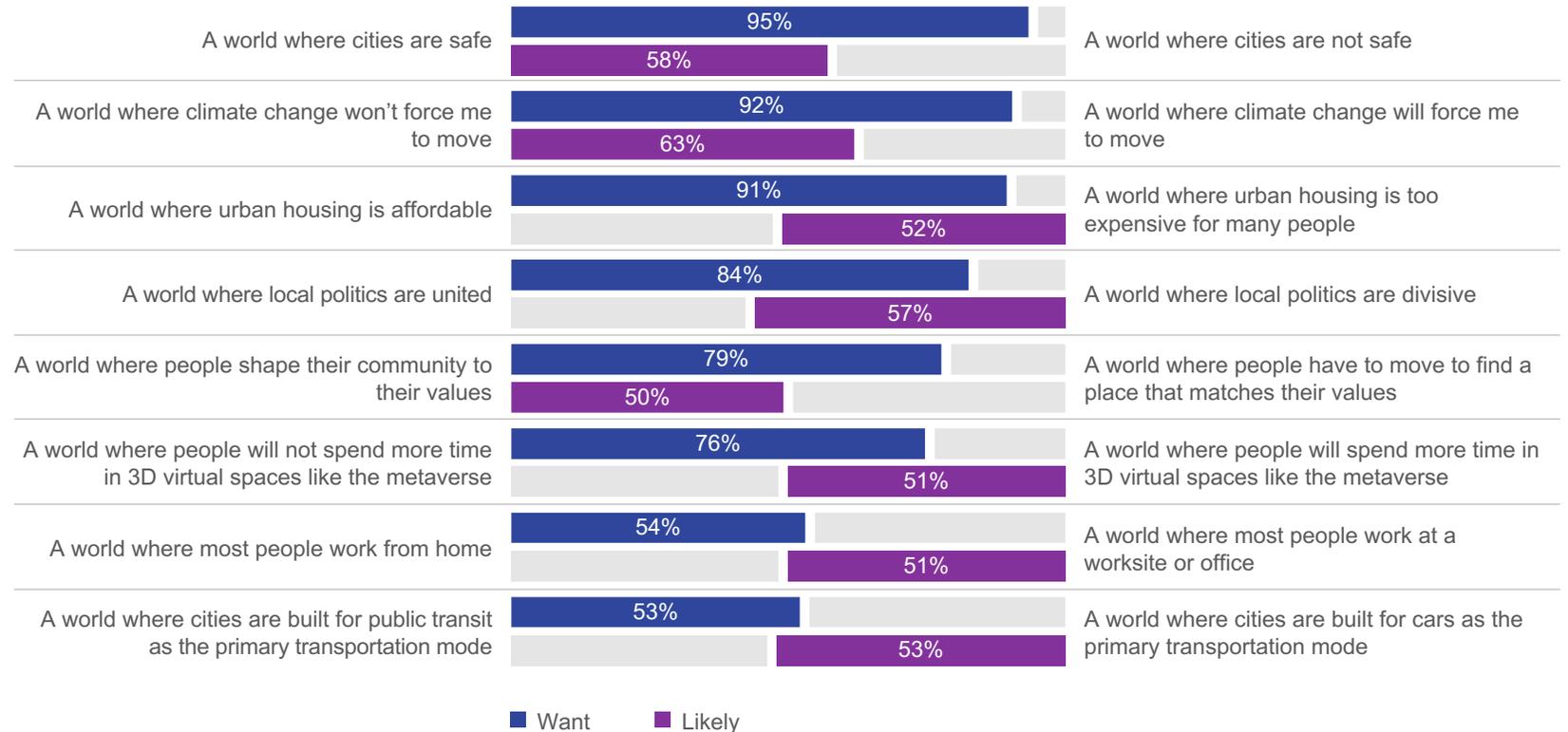Yet we're split on whether we want to work from home or at the worksite or office and whether cities are built for public transit or cars.

The gaps on many of these dimensions are significant. We expect housing to be expensive, communities to be divided and people to commute to the office in their cars. These gaps offer opportunities for change.

The future we want   vs.   the future we want less

Q. For each of these future scenario pairs, select the one that [you most want/seems most likely] to happen. (% Total)

Want / Likely		
A world where cities are safe	**95%** / **58%**	A world where cities are not safe
A world where climate change won't force me to move	**92%** / **63%**	A world where climate change will force me to move
A world where urban housing is affordable	**91%** / 52%	A world where urban housing is too expensive for many people
A world where local politics are united	**84%** / 57%	A world where local politics are divisive
A world where people shape their community to their values	**79%** / **50%**	A world where people have to move to find a place that matches their values
A world where people will not spend more time in 3D virtual spaces like the metaverse	**76%** / 51%	A world where people will spend more time in 3D virtual spaces like the metaverse
A world where most people work from home	**54%** / 51%	A world where most people work at a worksite or office
A world where cities are built for public transit as the primary transportation mode	**53%** / 53%	A world where cities are built for cars as the primary transportation mode

■ Want   ■ Likely

(Source: Ipsos surveys conducted Aug. 11-14, 2023, among 1,111 U.S. adults.)

Appendix

**In this section,
we show our work
and our workers**

1. Full Q&As

2. Signals

3. Contributors
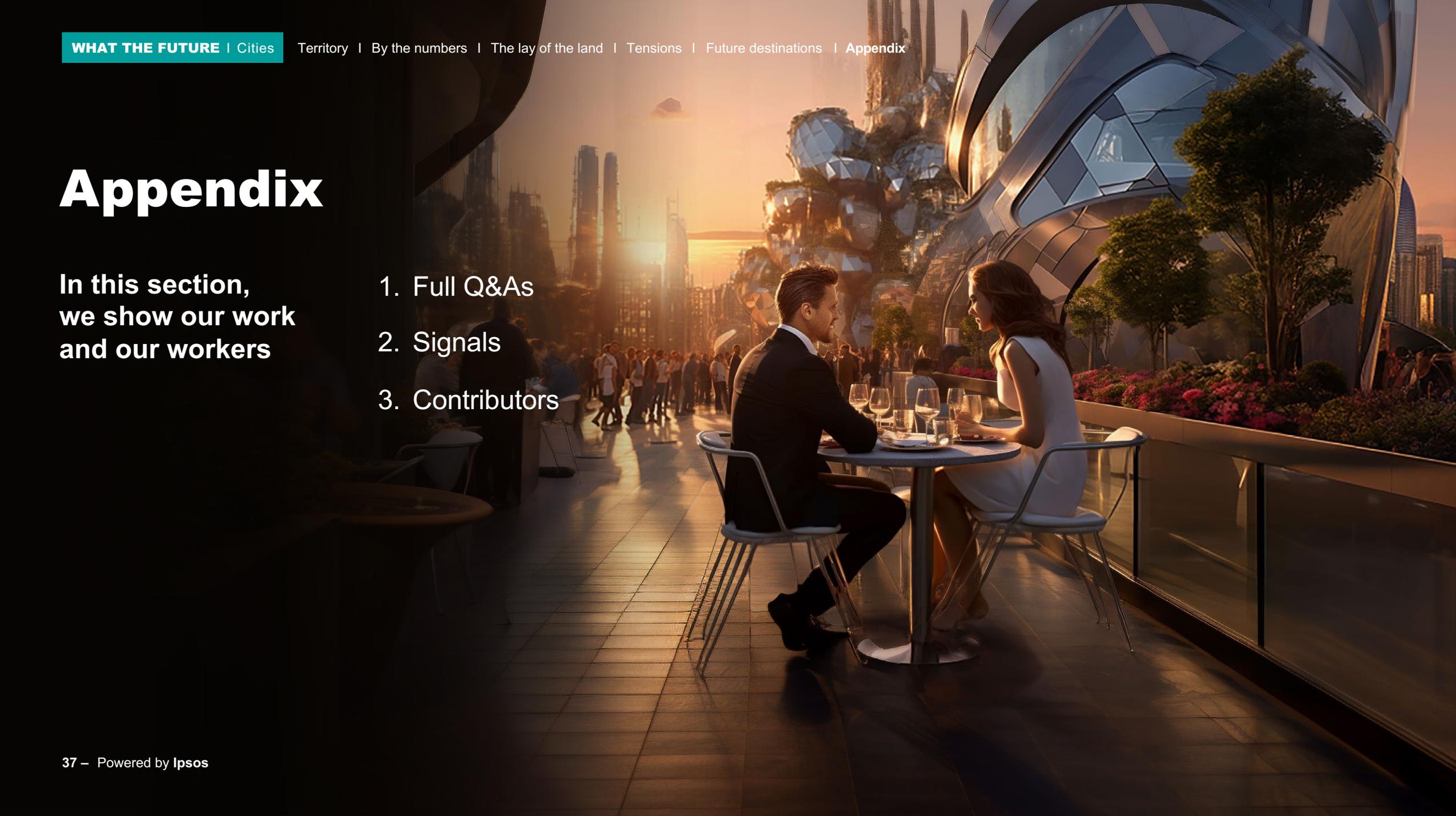
Why flexibility will drive the future of work and cities

Martin Schwarz

Global solutions architect, Future of Work, HP

One of the biggest debates about the future of cities is whether they can thrive if people don't return to offices most days a week. The implications for central business districts and tax bases as well as employers and workers are huge. Martin Schwarz, global solution architect on computer maker HP's Future of Work team, says flexibility and mobility will be key for workers to be productive from anywhere, including the office.

Kate MacArthur: How will evolving work styles shape how teams work in the future?

Martin Schwarz: To me it's really two words: hybrid and flexible. The companies that get hybrid right and get flexible work right are going to be the most successful.

MacArthur: How will workspaces need to adapt to accommodate workers' needs?

Schwarz: Companies should have a balance between the employer and employee objectives and needs. So, hybrid and flexible has time in the office, measurable success factors to create people-time, face-to-face social interactions, create that cultural or culture behavior within the company and emphasize that. But there's also measurable success factors for time at home to do focused productivity, focused work, to support life balance, to support wellness initiatives for the employee.

MacArthur: What happens if everything goes back to five days a week at the office?

Schwarz: I'm not sure we'll ever go back to that. Let's just say it happens, and yes, we're all back to the office. What changes? Not a lot. Then is it going to be a full five days back at the office? Well, if it is and it's going to be long term, there might be a change in the type of device you use. It would just be an adaptation and in the future, companies like HP will build out services to be able to accommodate that.

MacArthur: Will platforms influence how people manage teams or will it really start with the worker?

Schwarz: We're going to find AI is going to drastically change the situation. It will be less of a platform and a place argument. It's going to be how and what does the work itself. We're building AI directly in the computer.

MacArthur: Some people are predicting generative AI's demise due to intellectual property lawsuits. So how can companies prepare for their teams to work with AI well versus if some or all of it goes away?

Schwarz: As gen AI and additional AI resources and tools become available, because it's a personal computer device, it won't all happen in the cloud. Some of it will happen at the edge or at the device itself. Your question touches on what part of the work is being done by the machine [versus] what part of the work is being done by the user, and all that's still being played out. We're going to continue optimizing our devices to do it better than others and do it responsively going forward as well.

MacArthur: Our research found that most workers are outfitted for home or hybrid work. What does that signal to you about the way people may want to work?

Schwarz: We design many of our products for hybrid where we're workspace-aware or spatial-aware or we allow for seamless transitions between workspaces. Many of these workers still need to collaborate, still need to connect with their coworkers through collaboration sessions, through conferencing, for instance. Well, that means we need to be aware of the audio and video experiences that they're going to have.

Another thing is the type of devices we build. We build X360-type design laptops where they can become a two-in-one type of device. In some modes it's a PC mode, other modes it's more of a tablet to allow for those changing environments and changing scenarios that users are in, based off of what type of productivity and what kind of application those users want to use.

MacArthur: Connectivity is an issue for people spending part of their commute in the transit. What are the questions to think about to help people maintain access to the devices while they're in motion?

Schwarz: We make sure our devices are enabled with Wi-Fi and other technologies like Bluetooth, etc. Also, we've got capabilities in our mobile laptop devices to do 5G connectivity. We'll have 6G probably many years out that's promising more capabilities, more bandwidth, and different types of connectivity capabilities. And we plan to be right at the forefront of being able to support those technologies and those spectrums as well.

Kate MacArthur is managing editor of What the Future.

> "Let's just say it happens, and yes, we're all back to the office. What changes? Not a lot. You're still going to have some people with mobility requirements."

Why all-ages urbanism makes for better cities

Gil Penalosa
Urbanist

Sometimes the simplest ideas are the most revolutionary. What if you design a city for an 8-year-old and an 80-year-old? Turns out, it will work pretty well for everyone in between. Urbanist Gil Penalosa heads an organization aiming to steer cities away from designing cities that mostly only work for 20- and 30-somethings. If you're thinking that's relevant for your business, too, you're right. But here's why it matters for the future of cities.

Matt Carmichael: What are some of the characteristics of the cities that we all agree on?

Gil Penalosa: Well, one is cities for people. People are social beings. For thousands of years people have gone to cities because they want to be with others. When you go to a neighborhood and you see people of all ages and backgrounds, usually it's a good sign. Cities that are walkable, bikeable, have public transit and good public places are good cities. A good city is where we have proximity, where we can actually walk to all the basic needs that we have.

Carmichael: Can you have proximity without density?

Penalosa: No. Impossible. But people have a misconception of density. When people talk about density, they think about Manhattan. When people talk about "no density," they think about Houston. There are better options than Manhattan or than Houston.

Somewhere in the middle. For example, people are doing 40-, 50-, 80-story buildings. Once you go above certain floors you start having more in common with birds and planes than with people. We can have the same density in five- or six-story buildings next to each other like Paris or like Copenhagen or Barcelona.

Carmichael: What does density enable?

Penalosa: You can have public transit. For public transit to work, you need to have frequency and you need to have connectivity, and it needs to be fast. You cannot have any of those if you don't have the density. So you are going to lose lots and lots of money, and people are not going to use it. Then people are going to say, "Oh, no, we love cars." Well, you haven't given them any other option. That's what they're using the car. But if you gave them the option to walk or bike or use public transit, then people might use it.

Carmichael: In order for cities to work for 8- and 80-year-olds, they must be affordable. How do we do that?

Penalosa: Half of the homes that will be around within the life of today's children have not been built yet. Today, we have about 3.5 billion people living in cities. In 40 years, we're going to double the amount of people living in cities. Some people think it's only Africa or Latin America or Asia. No. The U.S. is going to build like 50 million homes in the next 40 years. We have a huge opportunity to do it right. It is also a huge responsibility because whatever we do or don't do is going to be there for hundreds of years.

Carmichael: How do we get there?

Penalosa: We need to engage everybody: sociologists, anthropologists, dentists, lawyers, people with no education. We need to ask the children what do they want? We need to ask the older people. City making is not really just for planners. The successful planners are the ones that honestly listen to as many people as possible.

Carmichael: How is hybrid work changing cities?

Penalosa: The reality is that today, anyone that is good at anything can live anywhere. If you are good at making coffee or you are good at repairing cars, or a good engineer or reporter or nurse or teacher or doctor, you can live anywhere in the world. So where would you live? Well, you are going to live wherever you have the best quality of life. That is something that city leaders in the private and public sector must be thinking about.

Carmichael: As someone who lives in the suburbs, how do we make cities work better for parents of 8-year-olds?

Penalosa: I hear of parents referred to as soccer moms or dads. I think that's, by definition, a bad community. In a civilized world, a 10-, 12-, 14-year-old should be able to go from anywhere to anywhere on their own. I love when parents go see their children play or do music or perform concert because they want to be with the children, not because they are their driver.

Carmichael: If you were an employer with a large office downtown, what would you be advocating for?

Penalosa: A city that would be safe and enjoyable, where my workers can actually walk to the places where they live or bike there, or to take public transit where they would have parks and trees, where there would be equity there. And we need to solve homelessness.

Matt Carmichael is editor of What the Future and head of the Ipsos Trends & Foresight Lab.

"Half of the homes that will be around within the life of today's children have not been built yet. Today we have about 3.5 billion people living in cities. In 40 years, we're going to double the amount of people living in cities."

How restaurants can adapt to a future in flux
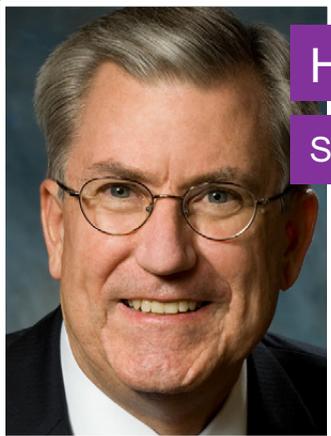
Hudson Riehle

Senior vice president, Research and Knowledge Group, National Restaurant Association

Cities draw people from workers to tourists who rely on restaurants for meals and entertaining while restaurants are often destinations in themselves. But the remote work era has disrupted this symbiotic relationship and neither can thrive on one meal-time or occasion. Hudson Riehle, senior vice president of research at the National Restaurant Association, says the ultimate fate of these establishments and business districts depends on their ability to adapt, embrace change and cater to the evolving needs of patrons.

Kate MacArthur: What's the biggest issue you are anticipating for commuting and restaurants?

Hudson Riehle: Even if the hybrid model is sustained and in-office workers come in three, maybe four days a week, it still has and will continue to result in lower levels of traffic potential for these restaurant operators in the city center areas. However, some of these lost meal occasions in the city center areas are displaced out to the more suburban and rural locations because these individuals are resident and remote. It is a demographic shift which has and will continue to play out over the years ahead and have substantial implications for both restaurant operators as well as restaurant patrons.

MacArthur: How has remote work reshaped the restaurant economy?

Riehle: Pre-pandemic, 61% of restaurant traffic was off-premises, and the industry defines that as being take-out, delivery, drive-thru and curbside. The pandemic hits and that 61% escalates to close to 90% as the depths

of the pandemic come on. Currently, that proportion has moved back to 74%. Is it going back to 61%? Extremely unlikely. There has been a fundamental shift in how consumers use restaurants and part of that shift is a greater patronage of these off-premises options, and these are what we call convenience-driven.

MacArthur: To what extent do city restaurants rely on office workers?

Riehle: The most important driver of restaurant sales in the end is personal income growth and the most important driver of income growth is employment growth. So the restaurant industry closely monitors what goes on with employment patterns. For the decade before the pandemic hit, much of the growth and employment was in the city center areas. As a result, the restaurant community followed that employment growth and developed a lot of smaller independent operations in these city center areas. Now you have the opposite occurring.

MacArthur: And looking ahead?

Riehle: With the income growth and employment growth having changed historical patterns, it means that future restaurant growth and where it occurs is going to be different. Because even if in that hybrid work model people come back three to four days a week, you're looking at a 20% to 40% decline in potential traffic.

MacArthur: Can city centers survive if the hybrid work mode continues in the foreseeable future?

Riehle: Obviously, yes. But in many ways the industry could be a leading indicator for how the city centers have to adapt. In D.C., some of the office buildings are being converted to residential and that that can help. If that is a megatrend for the future, and with what you see going on with occupancy rates in these commercial buildings three-and-a-half years out, and you look at what's going on with the valuation of many of these commercial properties, it's a dramatically changed landscape now. So as the city centers reconfigure and reestablish a new order, it's certainly logical that there will be new restaurant operations that establish themselves to deal with not only the changed demographic, but fundamentally how the city centers operate, who is in them and who is traveling to them, and their needs for food away from home.

MacArthur: How can cities support new business models for lower traffic or frequency in the city?

Riehle: Thursday has, in essence, become the new Friday. And Tuesday, from what the data shows, is the highest-traffic day commuting into these city center areas. But if you look at office employee occupancy rates, the best they've really come to is roughly 50%. So that commuting is a very important determinant from these employees' perspectives.

MacArthur: So, what changes going forward?

Riehle: Ultimately, how this migration settles down. The consensus is that it will never, ever go back to the extremely high levels that it was pre-pandemic. But if the office space is converted to new utilization and part of that is residential, then you have additional populations moving into these city center areas which may not be as focused on business-centric restaurant solutions, but more on socialization restaurant experiences. It still is and will continue to be in flux for several years to come. Through history, the restaurant industry has really demonstrated an extreme flexibility and innovation to respond to rapidly changing consumer wants and needs.

Kate MacArthur is managing editor of What the Future.

> **"Even if the hybrid model is sustained and in-office workers come in three, maybe four days a week, it still has and will continue to result in lower levels of traffic potential for these restaurant operators in the city center areas."**

How automakers can shift gears for tomorrow's cities

Hoss Hassani

Vice president, Charging & Energy, General Motors

You can see America's car culture just by looking at how most of its cities are designed. When people stopped commuting en masse to cities for work during the COVID-19 pandemic, it gave people a different view of how cities could look if we relied less on automobiles for getting around. At the same time, automakers like General Motors are working toward an electric future that offers a new role for them as energy providers. This is the focus for Hoss Hassani, who leads GM's energy organization as vice president of Charging & Energy.

Kate MacArthur: How does the future of work influence the future of transportation?

Hoss Hassani: I don't think we've landed on what post-pandemic work life is. But in commuting, the fact that there's so much happening in multimodality across the world in how people travel, whether it's commuting to work or just traveling, period — the prevalence of e-scooters and e-bikes, the clear emergence of autonomous driving, both the lower-level autonomy like driver assistance systems, like our incredible Super Cruise — there is a complete transformation of what that in-vehicle experience is, regardless of what your origin point or destination point is.

MacArthur: How does the tension between in-office and remote work shape that future?

Hassani: Let's think about it in the context of what's happening in the auto industry and transportation in general as we pursue lower-carbon solutions.

General Motors is envisioning this world of zero crashes, zero congestion and zero emissions, three things that are very consequential to this future of commuting and transportation. Imagining a future state where there are no accidents, where traffic is moving so seamlessly that there is no congested traffic, there's no rush hour anymore, things are just moving and flowing as they should. GM is taking an ecosystem-based approach to that future.

MacArthur: What does this mean for cities?

Hassani: Everybody's been talking about electric vehicles for the last 10 years. What we're starting to uncover is how electric vehicles plug into an economy. What I mean is with the bidirectional charging capability that we're unlocking at the end of this year with Ultium Home [vehicle-to-home system] and how a vehicle can support a facility. That starts to create some incentives, where you want to have electric vehicles parked and plugged in to provide resiliency not just to a facility, but to a grid utility.

MacArthur: How would that affect the energy grid?

Hassani: When people ask that question, "How can the grid support all these electric vehicles," we flip this paradigm by saying, "How can all these electric vehicles support the grid?"

MacArthur: How would that work?

Hassani: If we've now integrated that energy in that vehicle into the grid, PG&E doesn't need to have a brownout or blackout. We have plenty of electricity generation in the country. It's about the distribution. And when you have EVs that are everywhere, at workplaces, at shopping destinations, at hotels, at rural areas and so forth, you're now talking about a very real benefit to EVs that has nothing to do with transportation.

MacArthur: Urban planners promote walkable cities or 15-minute cities and our data shows that we have a car society. What changes if we cut the amount of driving?

Hassani: It's the transformation of walkable cities creating no-car zones. These things can coexist with a flourishing and thriving auto industry, particularly an auto industry that has electrification at the center of its approach.

MacArthur: How so?

Hassani: Because whether you're going on a road trip or whether you're doing whatever you need to do, that necessitates having a car. You also have this benefit of this vehicle plugging into the grid. So utilities and states are going be very motivated to have people driving electric vehicles because it's a solution to the problems plaguing the grid in the United States.

MacArthur: How does the math and the model for financing infrastructure change when it's not based on miles driven and gas taxes?

Hassani: One of the challenges we're facing with EV infrastructure buildout is that there hasn't been a shift in the framework. It still feels very status quo in how money is dispersed and how and when infrastructure can be built out and utility upgrades can be planned. We're working with utility partners and utilities and companies that support utilities to have them help them think differently about how they should be planning for electrification. This coming together of private industry, public industries, utilities, and so forth is itself going to lead to some new innovations in how all of it gets financed and paid for and supported, while at the same time ensuring customers are always getting maximum value out of a vehicle that they're purchasing or a service that they're purchasing from us.

Kate MacArthur is managing editor of What the Future.

> "It's the transformation of walkable cities creating no-car zones. These things can coexist with a flourishing and thriving auto industry, particularly an auto industry that has electrification at the center of its approach."

How to build resilience in a climate crisis

Keith A. James

Mayor, West Palm Beach, Florida

The future of many cities is being threatened by climate change, whether by long-term effects or extreme weather catastrophes. It makes running a city all the more challenging, especially when navigating infrastructure plans, urban planning, housing affordability, and inequality. West Palm Beach, Florida, is one of the U.S. cities most vulnerable to climate change. For Mayor Keith A. James, it takes a sense of urgency, action and diplomacy to ensure the city remains resilient.

Kate MacArthur: What's the most important element in how climate change is shaping the future of your city and how you run it?

Mayor Keith A. James: Resiliency. We are undergoing a vulnerability assessment study as we speak to have consultants advise us as to where we are and what parts of our city are most at risk to climate change. The most important thing is we know it is here. I won't say it's coming. It is here. We have to make sure that we're doing everything we can to respond to it and understand the data, based where some of the hotspots are and where we are most vulnerable.

MacArthur: How is climate change affecting the future of your city?

James: We have something that's called king tide flooding [the highest tides caused by the gravitational forces of the sun and moon]. That causes some surface street flooding. We also need to work to make sure that we have tree canopies because there is

a tremendous warming effect and our streets can become heat islands.

MacArthur: Climate experts argue that the option to combat climate change is closing rapidly. Do you think there's still time to act?

James: Well, I don't think we have any choice. We have to act, right? Is the window closing? Yes, it is. But that does not mean that we can't do everything we can in the moment that we are faced with.

MacArthur: Where does climate fit into all the other priorities that you have?

James: It's an integral part of everything that we do, and it goes back to your question earlier about the window closing. Hence, we want to have the data from this resiliency study so we can make sure that we understand where the hotspots are and as we are establishing priorities for infrastructure projects, for instance, we take that data into account.

MacArthur: How do you ensure that your city benefits from state and federal mandates?

James: We try to be as proactive as possible, working with our state and federal legislatures and taking advantage of the opportunities, whether it's grants, funding opportunities that are there. We use our lobbyists to work with both sides of the aisle, whether it's in Tallahassee or Washington, D.C., to get as many resources as possible to benefit our city.

MacArthur: That's a good point about red and blue states.

James: My job is to serve the public. Potholes are not Republican or Democratic. When someone turns on their water faucet, they expect clean water, whether they're a Democrat or a Republican.

MacArthur: Does partisanship increase the degree of difficulty for getting those things done?

James: It makes getting resources out of our state more challenging because you've got to kind of walk a line. It makes me more judicious in any criticism I have of our leadership at the state level, because I have to recognize the big picture and they still hold the purse strings.

MacArthur: How do you prioritize projects that might not be completed until after you are mayor?

James: If you're a true leader, you can't let the timeline dictate the priority of the decisions. So yes, I may say, "We need to build a road here." Which, once you get through planning and design, etc., I may be out of office by the time it's built. But if it's the right thing to do, you have to start the process.

MacArthur: We understand that density helps with climate. How can cities and the whole ecosystem work to make housing accessible for people?

James: We've taken a look at our zoning code to see if we can fold in some incentives to that. If you're seeking more density, then you've got to commit to a certain percentage of that going to workforce or housing that is affordable, based upon the average median income. You have to look for creative ways in which to do that. Our state has issued some laws, which basically say in certain areas, whether it's commercial warehouse areas, you could do residential housing there, provided that there's a certain percentage that goes to workforce housing. So, the alarm has gone off that we need to address this problem as best we can.

Kate MacArthur is managing editor of What the Future.

"I don't think we have any choice. We have to act, right? Is the window closing? Yes, it is. But that does not mean that we can't do everything we can in the moment that we are faced with."

How physical and digital will meet at the office

Kay Sargent

Senior principal, director of WorkPlace, HOK

Cities, as they currently function, rely on a steady diet of office workers to survive. Those workers pay rent, and buy lunches and other things and keep buildings and businesses afloat. Kay Sargent is the Director of WorkPlace at HOK, a leading global architecture, design and engineering firm. She thinks two things will continue to upset that ecosystem: hybrid work and virtual spaces. So how do we design cities for the future? And what can virtual spaces learn from physical design?

Matt Carmichael: Can cities survive without offices and office workers?

Kay Sargent: Some cities maybe, but I doubt it. A lot of the cities west of the Mississippi were less than 150 years old and were built around a central business district. That is the entire model. All of the businesses in that central business district are thriving or dying based on whether people are coming in or not.

Carmichael: Cities will take time to change. If someone is building a new skyscraper, what time horizon does a design firm work with?

Sargent: Three years typically, but I think that's too long.

Carmichael: How so?

Sargent: The real estate model needs to evolve to be more responsive to meet the needs of people today.

A lot of our clients need to get in and out of spaces fairly quickly because their needs are evolving and changing. Yet, in North America, we have some of the longest lease times. The average life cycle of a company is seven years, yet leases are 10 years and furniture is a 20-year or lifetime warranty.

Carmichael: How should cities be thinking about hybrid work?

Sargent: We're going to lose the word "hybrid" and it's just going to be "work."

I think we need to stop designing in silos. We need to create more precincts that are blended and mixed. Before, you went to school here, you shopped there, you worked there, you lived there. Now those things are blurring and we're blending those lines.

Carmichael: What do we need to change in our physical spaces?

Sargent: Most conference rooms are the biggest rectangular table you can shove in a room with a maximum number of chairs, a teeny screen at the end where the lead of the call is at the farthest end — farthest away from the microphone and the camera. They're the smallest and the hardest to see. That isn't a good experience. We have to rethink what are the purposes of all these rooms, then design specifically to enable that type of experience.

Carmichael: Like what?

Sargent: They say at the conservative side, 55% of communication is nonverbal. There are some people that say it's as high as 70%. If you can't read somebody's face, if you can't read the room, so you probably aren't as being as effective as you could or should be.

Carmichael: What can virtual space designers learn from physical design and architecture?

Sargent: When you hire an architect to design your space, you're hiring them for their expertise about how to put that space together in a way that will lead to the best experience for the user. Right now, there are a lot of people that are designing spaces virtually or in the metaverse that don't have that same type of sensitivity about sensory processing.

The majority of these spaces that you're going into are just sensory assaults. Because you *can* do so much, people tend to just do it all in ridiculously overblown, cartoonish, chaotic type of worlds with all kinds of crazy things going on. Most people can't process that very well.

Carmichael: That goes for 2D as well as 3D, yes?

Sargent: We need to understand that in the virtual realm, we are impacted by what we are seeing and experiencing in those spaces, just like we do physically. You can physically get nauseous, you can get dizzy, you can lose your focus. You can be totally distracted by the monkey bouncing with a banana in the background because somebody thought it was funny. We have to have some sensitivity to what is the primary focus here? What are we trying to achieve and how can we best do that?

Carmichael: How so?

Sargent: There are all kinds of things that we don't understand about how distracting our backgrounds are to other people, but they are. When you're in a real-world environment, you can tune some of those things out. But when you're staring at something, it's like you're looking at a picture. It's a different experience.

Matt Carmichael is editor of What the Future and head of the Ipsos Trends & Foresight Lab.

"We need to understand that in the virtual realm, we are impacted by what we are seeing and experiencing in those spaces, just like we do physically."

Signals

What we're reading today that has us thinking about tomorrow

The future of cities, according to the experts via Vox. The future of cities is hotly debated — but urban planners, economists and others posit that their demise (like Mark Twain's in his day) has been greatly exaggerated.

Can San Francisco save itself from the doom loop? via The Wall Street Journal. Amidst a tech exodus, downtown San Francisco is struggling. Is this doom loop an inevitability, or have naysayers created a self-fulfilling prophecy? Other cities are paying close attention.

What would it take to turn more offices into housing? via The New York Times. Millions of square feet of office space currently sit vacant in the U.S. Meanwhile, most cities are experiencing a housing shortage. Could converting offices to condos solve both problems?

Americans are returning to cities after remote-work exodus, data shows via The Washington Post. For all the fears of downtowns on the decline, recent Census Bureau data suggests many have rebounded to pre-pandemic rates of activity.

In pursuit of the climate-proof city via The New Republic. As extreme weather events get more frequent and severe, countless Americans are thinking of skipping town. But wherever they move, they're unlikely to outrun the broader effects of climate change.

Return to office? How COVID-19 and remote work reshaped the economy via Princeton University Press. Between work-from-home and a tight labor market, the pandemic had a silver lining for many American workers. Now, as companies and workers battle over calls to return to the office, we'll see whether the new conditions stick around.

Why brands need to innovate for older Americans via Ipsos. The aging U.S. population represents a significant (and underserved) consumer segment that requires innovative products and services tailored to their needs.

Climate concerns via Ipsos. Over the past few decades, climate change was not top of mind for many Americans. But after a summer of smoke and soaring temperatures, many are taking notice.

What the Future: Work via Ipsos. Our November 2022 issue explored how changes to the ways we work could change the ways we live through exclusive interviews with senior leaders at Amazon Web Services, Gensler, Darden Restaurants, and more.

Remote workers value access to good services and proximity to family in the communities they live in via Ipsos. For employed Americans who worked remotely during the pandemic or who currently WFH, access to good services, like schools and hospitals, are a priority when determining where to live.

Could a summer of extreme weather affect EV acceptance? via Ipsos. Amid concerns over climate change and calls for electrification, Ipsos looks at where consumers stand on sustainability in the automotive market.

Ipsos Global Trends via Ipsos. Ipsos' groundbreaking survey of 48,000 people across 50 markets offers exclusive insights on urbanization, work-life balance, and more from a global perspective.

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