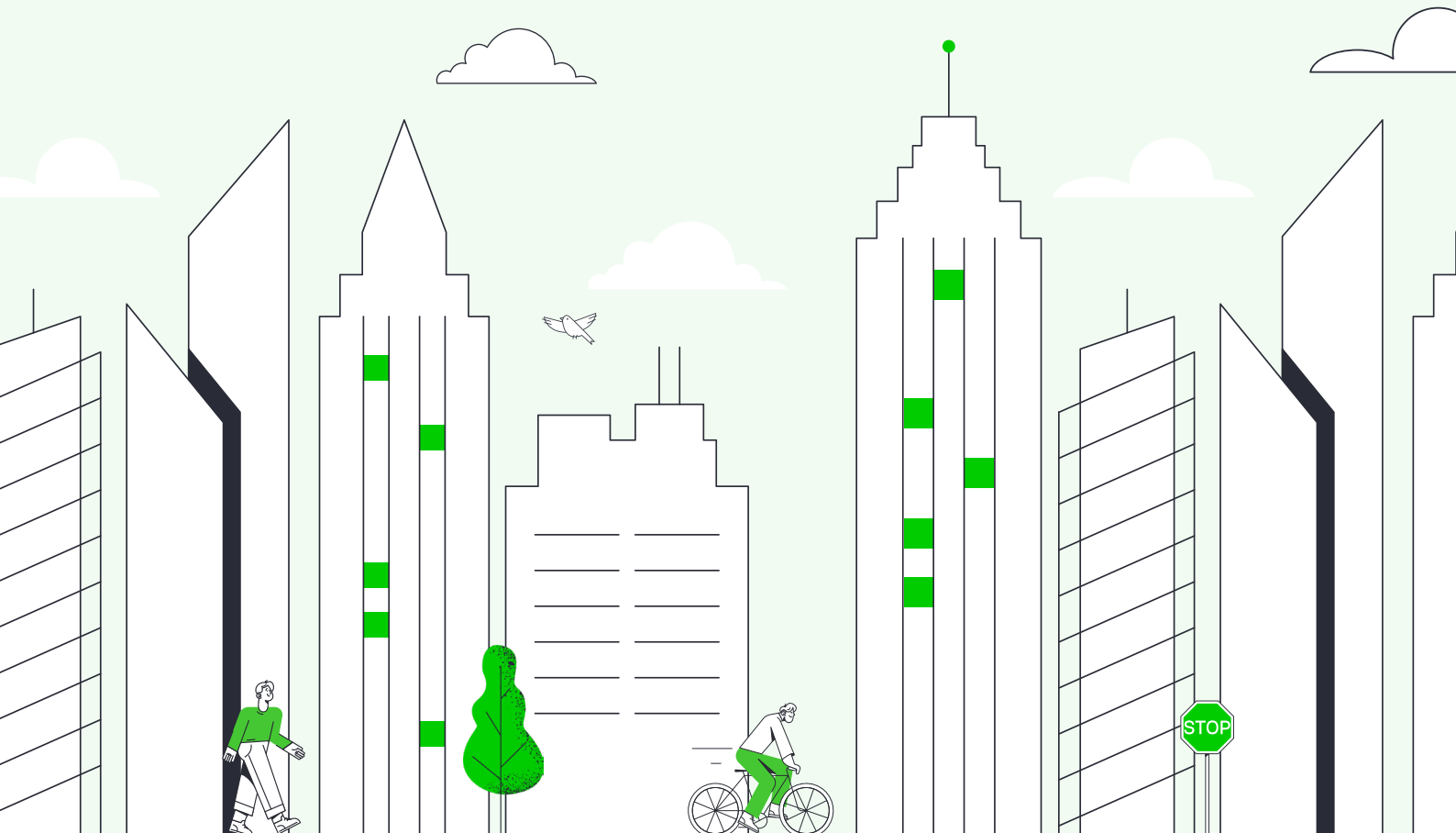


Healthy Commutes



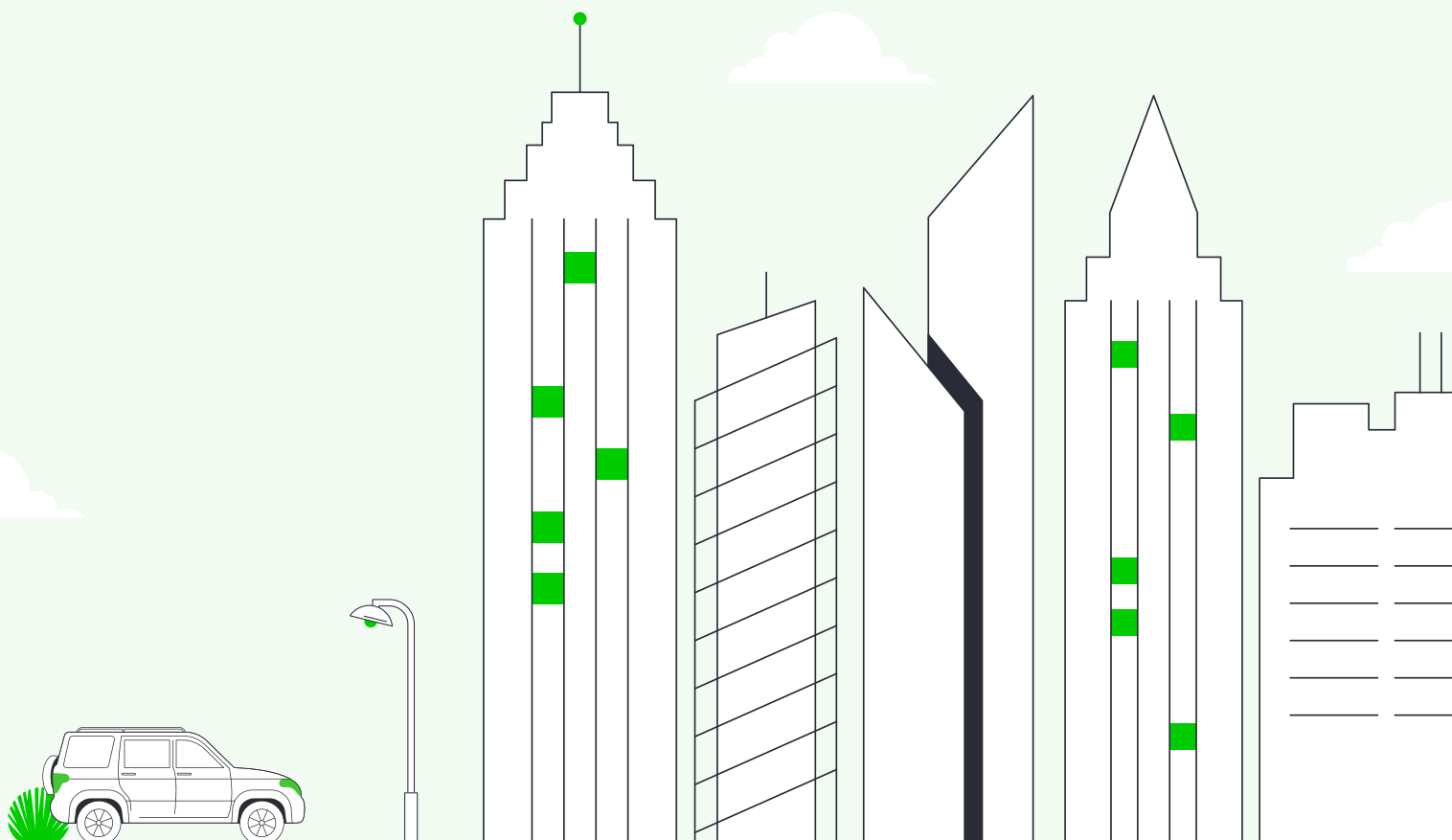
Which UK Cities Have the Healthiest Commutes?

Now that many of us are back in the office, the morning commute has again become a daily activity we're all familiar with.

But while commuting to the workplace might be necessary, it's not always the best for our health. From the stress of sitting in traffic to breathing in polluted air, there are lots of reasons our daily commute could hinder rather than help.

At Bike2Work, we decided to investigate which UK cities have the healthiest commutes. Looking at the UK's 50 most populated cities, we analysed various factors such as air pollution, number of green spaces, number of bike routes, amount of congestion, yearly sunlight hours and how many people cycle or walk to work to determine the cities with the healthiest commutes.

Here's what we found...



Ranking

	Air Pollution	Green Space	Cycle Routes	% Cycle to Work	% Walk to Work	Hrs of Congestion	Hrs of Sunlight Per Year	Total Score
1. Southampton	35	44	38	46	46	34	43	286
2. Peterborough	49	46	44	44	13	48	38	282
3. Norwich	42	50	49	44	18	38	35	276
4. Oxford	45	48	47	48	20	24	36	268
5. Portsmouth	32	39	41	49	13	43	46	263
6. Cambridge	38	45	50	50	26	23	26	258
7. Reading	40	38	45	39	17	40	33	252
8. Newcastle upon Tyne	46	24	35	34	44	41	28	252
9. Ipswich	43	47	23	31	21	38	45	248
10. Dundee	50	35	11	44	43	47	17	247
11. Bristol	26	32	46	35	41	25	39	244
12. Cardiff	33	30	26	36	45	30	42	242
13. Sheffield	44	37	15	31	50	45	18	240
14. Nottingham	38	34	42	45	26	28	20	233
15. Southend-on-Sea	36	49	12	44	13	24	49	227
16. Plymouth	30	42	21	42	16	32	44	227
17. Northampton	26	33	22	31	46	42	25	225
18. Luton	33	9	25	31	46	43	37	224
19. Bournemouth	27	29	39	31	13	37	47	223
20. Leicester	50	25	29	31	40	31	16	222
21. Blackpool	34	19	20	31	40	43	34	221
22. Liverpool	30	41	27	33	23	35	32	221
23. Warrington	33	43	40	31	13	49	10	219
24. Leeds	47	40	30	31	28	33	9	218
25. Coventry	41	15	18	31	48	42	23	218

What factors make for a healthy commute?

While every commute looks different, the pressure it can put on both our physical and mental health have been known for a while. According to the Royal Society for Public Health, many non-active methods of travel (such as driving or sitting on public transport) are synonymous with stress, anxiety and frustration...not to mention being bad for our physical health.

The mode of transport and length of a commute are two obvious factors that can determine its health credentials. But here's what else we looked at when creating our ranking:

Air pollution

Most commuters are at risk of exposure to common pollutants at least at some point in their day. The main pollutant in the UK is PM2.5, the average yearly concentration of which should not exceed $5 \mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$, according to the WHO.

We therefore looked at each city's average yearly concentration of PM2.5 to see which ones offer a less polluted commute.

Top 10 least polluted cities in the UK (2022)

Ranking	Air Pollution (PM2.5 Rating in $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$)	Points
1. Aberdeen	0	50
2. Dundee	0	50
3. Leicester	0	50
4. Swansea	0	50
5. Peterborough	0.1	49
6. Bradford	0.4	48
7. Leeds	1.2	47
8. Newcastle upon Tyne	1.3	46
9. Oxford	1.7	45
10. Sheffield	1.9	44

Top 10 most polluted cities in the UK (2022)

Ranking	Air Pollution (PM2.5 Rating in $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$)	Points
1. Bolton	11	23
2. York	8.3	24
3. Wolverhampton	8.3	24
4. Poole	8.3	24
5. Huddersfield	8.3	24
6. Gloucester	8.3	24
7. Manchester	8	25
8. Sunderland	7	26
9. Northampton	7	26
10. Bristol	7	26

Amount of green space

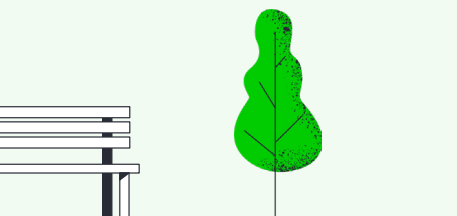
Whether you're cycling, walking, taking the train or driving to work, few could argue that every journey is so much better with a scenic view. Green spaces are not just good at boosting our mood, but also tend to be less polluted and less congested than built-up areas.

Top 10 cities with the most green space in the UK (2022)

Ranking	No. of Green Spaces	Sq Km	No. of Green Spaces per Sq km (in%)	Points
1. Norwich	37	39.02	94.82%	50
2. Southend-on-Sea	26	41.75	62.28%	49
3. Oxford	26	45.59	57.03%	48
4. Ipswich	20	39.42	50.74%	47
5. Peterborough	22	43.77	50.26%	46
6. Cambridge	19	40.7	46.68%	45
7. Southampton	24	51.47	46.63%	44
8. Warrington	19	44.89	42.33%	43
9. Plymouth	30	79.83	37.58%	42
10. Liverpool	41	111.8	36.67%	41

Top 10 cities with the least green space in the UK (2022)

Ranking	No. of Green Spaces	Sq Km	No. of Green Spaces per Sq km (in%)	Points
1. Telford	7	290.31	2.41%	1
2. Sunderland	9	137.5	6.55%	2
3. Bolton	10	139.8	7.15%	3
4. Swansea	32	380	8.42%	4
5. Swindon	8	88.84	9.00%	5
6. Kingston upon Hull	7	71.45	9.80%	6
7. Slough	3	30.32	9.89%	7
8. York	28	271.9	10.30%	8
9. Luton	5	43.45	11.53%	9
10. Edinburgh	32	264	12.12%	10



No. of cycle routes

The benefits of cycling to work have long been widely known, but sadly there are still many cities lacking the relevant infrastructure. By looking at which cities have the most cycle routes per square km available, we can see which cities offer the most opportunities for their commuters to cycle to work.



Top 10 cities with the most cycle routes in the UK (2022)

Ranking	No. of Cycle Routes	Sq Km	No. of Green Spaces per Sq km (in%)	Points
1. Cambridge	1,745	40.7	42.87	50
2. Norwich	1,574	39.02	40.34	49
3. Slough	887	30.32	29.25	48
4. Oxford	1,287	45.59	28.23	47
5. Bristol	3,084	110	28.04	46
6. Reading	1,096	40.4	27.13	45
7. Peterborough	1,144	43.77	26.14	44
8. London	40,587	1572	25.82	43
9. Nottingham	1,585	74.61	21.24	42
10. Portsmouth	834	40.25	20.72	41

Top 10 cities with the least cycle routes in the UK (2022)

Ranking	No. of Cycle Routes	Sq Km	No. of Green Spaces per Sq km (in%)	Points
1. Swansea	475	380	1.25	1
2. Telford	369	290.31	1.27	2
3. Sunderland	357	137.5	2.60	3
4. Bolton	368	139.8	2.63	4
5. Aberdeen	567	186	3.05	5
6. Stoke-on-Trent	374	93.45	4.00	6
7. Bradford	287	64.4	4.46	7
8. Birmingham	1,298	267.8	4.85	8
9. Huddersfield	270	46.75	5.78	9
10. Belfast	675	115	5.87	10

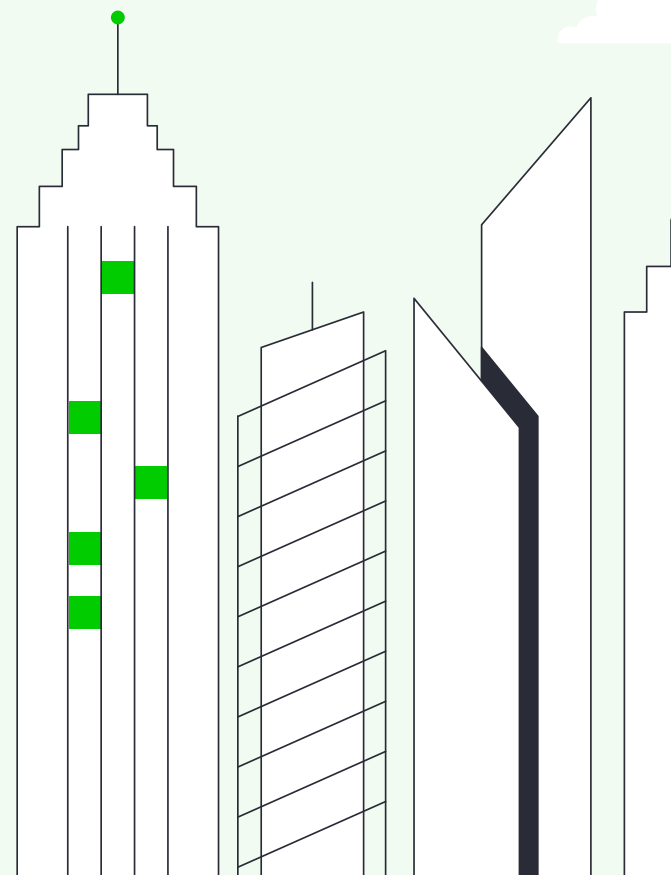


% of commuters who cycle or walk to work/school

By looking at the percentage of commuters who already cycle or walk to work or school, we can get a good idea of which cities make it easy to get about without resorting to the bus, train or car.

Top 10 UK cities with the most people cycling to work (2022)

Ranking	% of commuters cycling to work	Points
1. Cambridge	36%	50
2. Portsmouth	28.6%	49
3. Oxford	26.9%	48
4. York	25%	47
5. Southampton	22.2%	46
6. Nottingham	15%	45
7. Dundee	14.3%	44
8. Norwich	14.3%	44
9. Peterborough	14.3%	44
10. Southend-on-sea	14.3%	44



Hours of congestion per year

Sitting in traffic for long hours not only has a negative effect on our mood and increases our stress levels, it also extends the time spent being sedentary.

Looking at which cities have the fewest hours of congestion per year lets us know where commuting stress is likely to be lower.

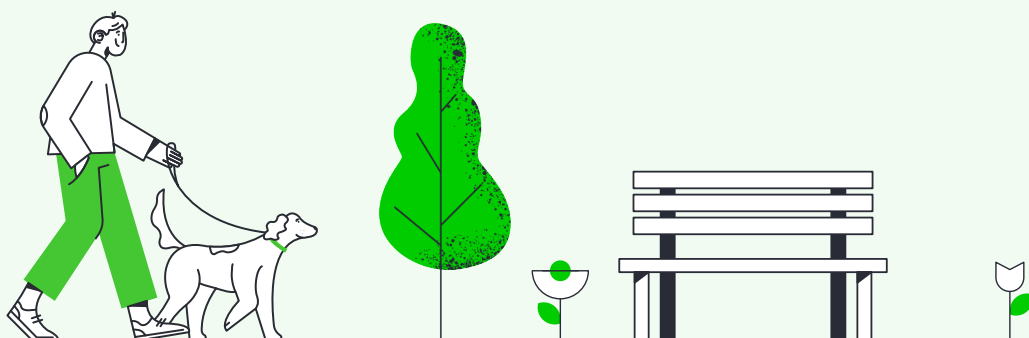


Top 10 least congested cities in the UK (2022)

Ranking	Hours of Congestion/ Traffic Per Year	Points
1. Middlesbrough	16	50
2. Warrington	17	49
3. Peterborough	21	48
4. Telford	21	48
5. Dundee	22	47
6. Swindon	23	46
7. Sheffield	25	45
8. Glasgow	28	44
9. Swansea	28	44
10. Blackpool	29	43

Top 10 most congested cities in the UK (2022)

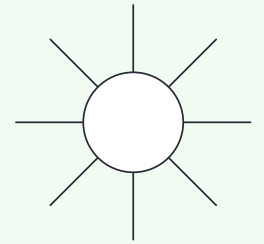
Ranking	Hours of Congestion/ Traffic Per Year	Points
1. London	148	22
2. Cambridge	76	23
3. York	73	24
4. Southend-on-Sea	73	24
5. Slough	73	24
6. Poole	73	24
7. Oxford	73	24
8. Milton Keynes	73	24
9. Huddersfield	73	24
10. Brighton	73	24



Hours of sunlight per year

We can all attest that waking up on those dark mornings is incredibly difficult. But it also reduces our ability to synthesise vitamin D and makes it harder for us to feel alert.

Cities that have the most annual sunlight hours are likely to have overall longer days throughout the year, meaning more exposure to vitamin D-rich sunlight, improved mood and more energy.

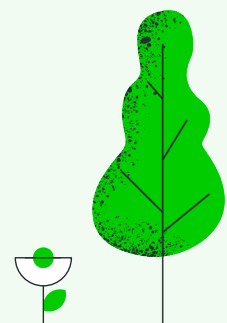
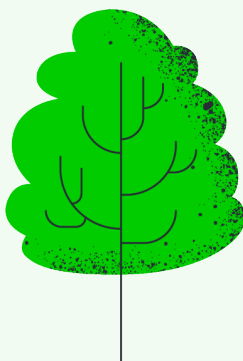


Top 10 UK cities with the most hours of sunlight per year (2022)

Ranking	Air Pollution (PM2.5 Rating in $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$)	Points
1. Brighton	1891.75	50
2. Southend-on-Sea	1884.31	49
3. Poole	1805.5	48
4. Bournemouth	1778.78	47
5. Portsmouth	1771.74	46
6. Ipswich	1741.56	45
7. Plymouth	1732.24	44
8. Southampton	1705.71	43
9. Cardiff	1691.8	42
10. Slough	1674.81	41

Top 10 UK cities with the least hours of sunlight per year (2022)

Ranking	Air Pollution (PM2.5 Rating in $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$)	Points
1. Glasgow	1233.96	6
2. Manchester	1265.48	7
3. Bolton	1265.48	7
4. Belfast	1277.04	8
5. Leeds	1384.13	9
6. Huddersfield	1384.13	9
7. Bradford	1384.13	9
8. Warrington	1385.1	10
9. Wolverhampton	1386.16	11
10. Middlesbrough	1395.33	12



The UK's top 5 healthiest commuting cities

1. Southampton

It's official – Southampton takes the top spot as having the UK's healthiest commute. With its air pollution safely within the WHO's annual limit at $3.2 \mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$, it has a decent percentage of people who already cycle to work (22.2%) or walk (33%), and has nearly 19 cycle routes available per sq km.

Nearly half of Southampton is made up of green space (46.6%), meaning a scenic commute is almost guaranteed no matter which way you choose to travel. And it also ranks eighth for the number of sunlight hours (1705.71 per year), promising an uplifting start whatever the season.

2. Peterborough

Next up is Peterborough, already squeaky clean with its mere $0.1 \mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ of air pollution. Over half of the city is green space (50.6%) and it offers a good number of cycling opportunities, with just over 26 cycle routes per sq km.

Around 14% of Peterborough's population cycles to work and the city ranks fourth for its congestion, with the average driver wasting no more than a modest 21 hours per year. With 1645.14 annual sunlight hours, it may not be the sunniest city to wake up in, but it's also far from the gloomiest.



3. Norwich

Norwich slides in third, also boasting low air pollution levels ($2.3 \mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$). But where it really stands out is its scenery – with almost 95% of the city being green space, who wouldn't want to get up early to enjoy this view?

It also ranks second for cycle routes (beaten only by Cambridge) with just over 40 per sq km, and over 14% of its population regularly cycle to work or school.

4. Oxford

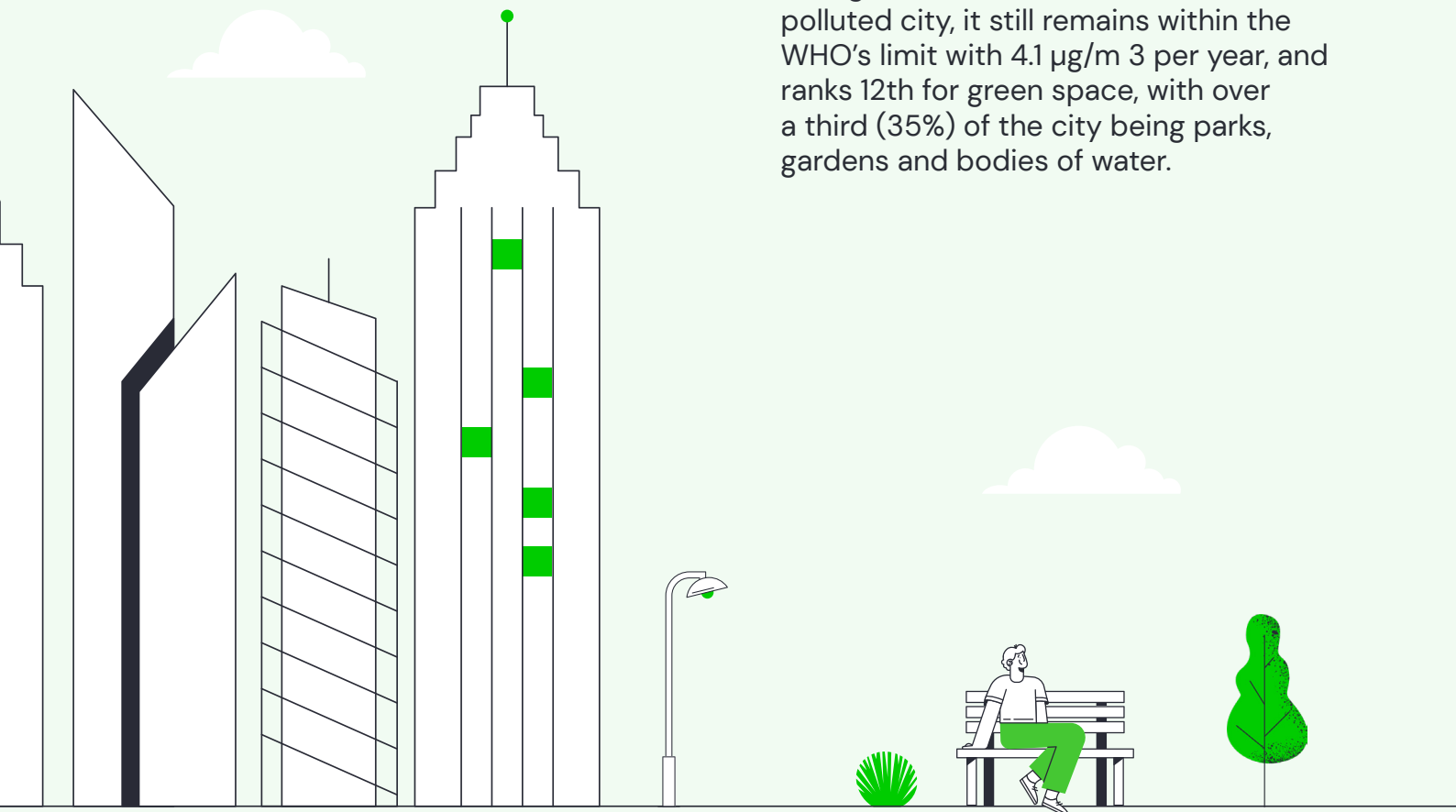
It's perhaps no surprise that one of the UK's cycling capitals also has one of the healthiest commutes. With a low air pollution level of $1.7 \mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$, it also ranks third for green space (57%) and benefits from over 28 cycle routes per sq km of space.

With 27% of Oxford's population already cycling to work/school and 15% walking, it's no wonder this quaint and peaceful city makes commuting a stroll in the park.

5. Portsmouth

Rounding out the top five is Portsmouth, which also ranks fifth for annual sunlight hours (1771.74 per year). It's also a relatively low-congestion area, with drivers spending an average of 29 hours per year in traffic, and 29% of its population already cycle to work, with 21 cycle routes per square km.

Though Portsmouth is far from the least polluted city, it still remains within the WHO's limit with $4.1 \mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ per year, and ranks 12th for green space, with over a third (35%) of the city being parks, gardens and bodies of water.





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