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First-Time Buyers Returning to Cities, With Dundee Leading Demand Surge

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Despite the rise of remote working and a pandemic-era shift toward rural and coastal living, cities across Great Britain have seen a resurgence in popularity among first-time homebuyers. New analysis reveals that interest in city living has increased significantly over the past decade, with Dundee topping the list of urban hotspots.

According to property website Rightmove, the number of inquiries from would-be first-time buyers for city homes in the first five months of 2025 is up 16% compared to the same period in 2015. The data, which examined inquiries for typical first-time buyer properties, homes with up to two bedrooms, across the 50 largest cities in Great Britain (excluding London), suggests that the long-assumed “exodus from cities” may have been overstated.

Dundee, Scotland’s fourth-largest city, recorded the largest increase, with first-time buyer demand rising by 176% over the decade. The city, known for its growing arts and culture scene, waterfront development, and plentiful urban green space, also benefits from relatively low house prices. In April 2025, the average home purchased by a first-time buyer in Dundee cost just under £121,000, well below Scotland’s average of £156,800 and Great Britain’s average of £223,400.

Edinburgh followed Dundee as the second most in-demand city for first-time buyers, while Doncaster, Liverpool, and Plymouth rounded out the top five. The findings suggest that many aspiring homeowners are favouring cities over coastal and rural areas, despite earlier trends during the pandemic that pointed to rising interest in quieter regions.

Rightmove contrasted the growth in city demand with stagnant interest in coastal towns, where first-time buyer inquiries have remained flat compared to a decade ago. While locations such as Port Isaac, Margate, and Rhos-on-Sea topped buyer interest lists in recent years, they no longer appear to dominate market trends. The data shows a clear pivot back to urban living, driven by a combination of affordability, access to amenities, and employment opportunities.

London, however, bucks the trend. First-time buyer interest in the capital is down 7% compared to 10 years ago, largely due to its high property prices, which continue to place home ownership out of reach for many.

The return to cities, particularly more affordable ones like Dundee, signals that urban life remains a strong draw for those entering the housing market for the first time.