

Office Attendance Returns to Pre-Pandemic Levels in Some Cities

HR Brew | Mikaela Cohen | August 14, 2025

Just when you thought the RTO debate was over...

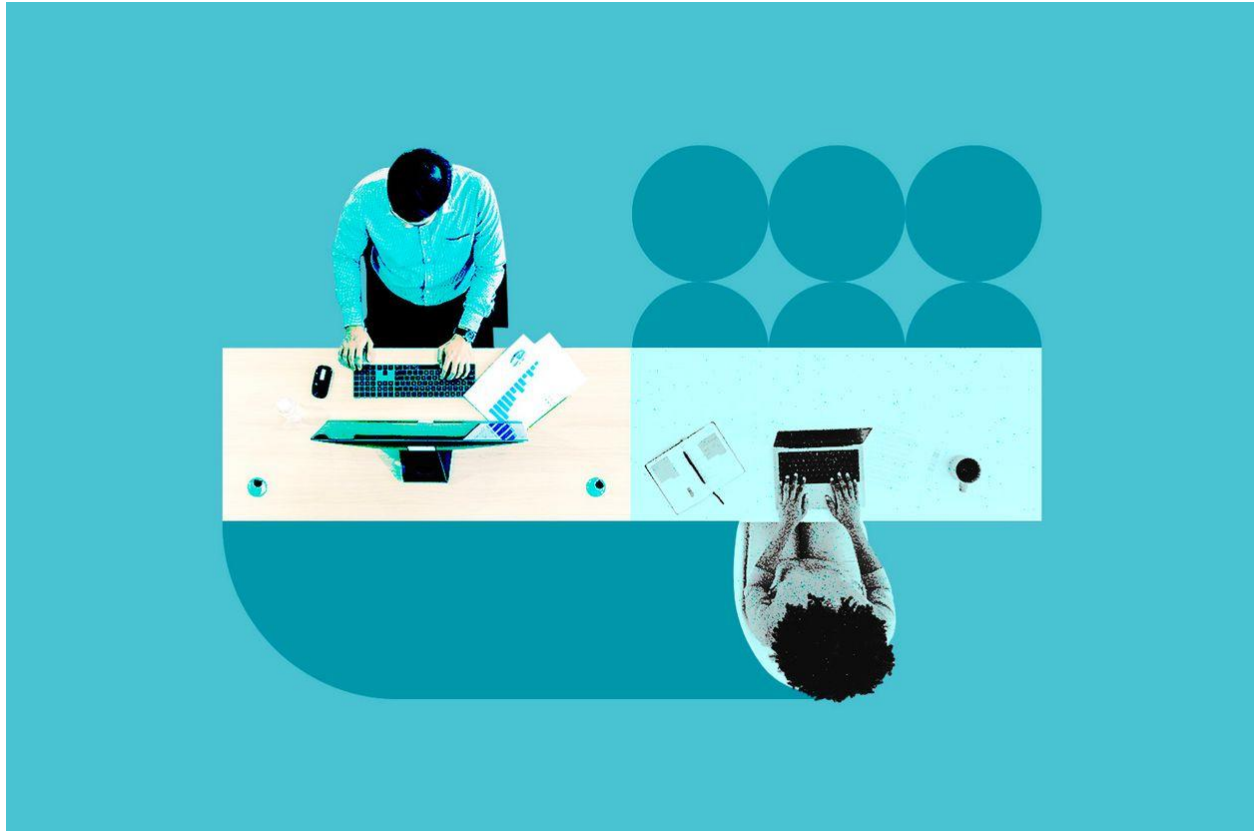


Illustration: Anna Kim, Photos: Adobe Stock

The return-to-office (RTO) conversation is a lot like Russian nesting dolls: seemingly never-ending. Now, it appears the number of RTO holdouts is, like the dolls, getting smaller and smaller.

In March, visits to US offices were down 32.2% compared to March 2019, a slight improvement from 35.9% in March 2024 and 37.9% in March 2023, according to data from location analytics platform Placer.ai. But last month, office visits reached new heights nationwide, and even more so in a few cities.

In July, visits to US offices were down 21.8% compared to July 2019. Office visits in New York City exceeded 2019 levels by 1.3%, while those in Miami were down 0.1% from its pre-pandemic norm, recent Placer.ai data found. Office traffic in Atlanta and Dallas were down just 14.8% and 18.3%, respectively.

“There’s certainly some seasonality at play here,” said R.J. Hottovy, head of analytical research at Placer.ai.

The change from March to July could be related to a tendency to go into the office more often in the warmer months, Hottovy told HR Brew. But there may be some larger trends at play unrelated to the weather.

Nationwide office trends. The cities that have seen office traffic improve, Hottovy said, have also seen RTO mandates. Many New York City CEOs in industries like tech and finance have pushed for an RTO, he said, as have some in cities like Atlanta and Dallas.

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“Whether it’s tech, whether it’s consumer...office mandates have started to pick up. That’s probably what’s driving Atlanta and Dallas,” he said. “Those are two cities that have seen an increase in population in the last couple years too.”

Are we going back to 2019? While office visits have rebounded in Miami and New York City, they’ve lagged in Denver, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Chicago. Office traffic in Denver is down 40%, while that in Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Chicago is down 34.6%, 34.2%, and 34.1%, respectively.

“It’s interesting looking at all the different markets. It really feels like there’s different dynamics in each city driving return to office,” Hottovy said.

He does, however, suspect that some cities may see the same rebounds currently in Miami and New York City.

“I don’t think we’re going to get there nationwide,” he said. “But it’s possible some of these other markets that have seen big population increases could get back or above what we were pre-pandemic.”