

Office Attendance Drivers in 2026: The New Rules of Showing Up

Dive into the data to learn how convenience-driven behaviors are impacting the office recovery – and how stakeholders from employers to office owners and local retailers can best adapt.



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Key Takeaways:

To optimize office utilization and surrounding activity in 2026, stakeholders should:

1. **Plan for continued, but slower, office recovery.** Attendance continues to rise and has reached a post-pandemic high, but moderating growth suggests the return-to-office may progress at a more gradual and incremental pace than in prior years.
2. **Account for growing seasonality in office staffing, local retail operations, and municipal services.** As office visitation becomes increasingly concentrated in late spring and summer, offices, downtown retailers, and cities may need to plan for more predictable peaks and troughs by adjusting hours, staffing levels, and local services accordingly, rather than relying on annual averages.
3. **Align leasing strategies with seasonal demand.** Stronger attendance in Q2 and Q3 suggests these quarters are best suited for leasing activity, while softer Q1 and Q4 periods may be better used for renovations, repositioning, and targeted activation efforts designed to draw workers in.
4. **Design hybrid policies around midweek anchor days.** With Tuesdays and Wednesdays consistently driving the highest office attendance, employers can maximize collaboration and space utilization by concentrating meetings, programming, and in-office expectations midweek.
5. **Reduce early-week commute friction to support attendance.** Monday office attendance appears closely correlated with commute ease, suggesting that reliable and efficient transportation may be an important factor in early-week office recovery.
6. **Prioritize proximity in leasing and development decisions.** Visits from employees traveling less than five miles to work have increased steadily since 2019, reinforcing the value of centrally located offices and housing near employment hubs.

When Policy Isn't Enough

2025 was the year of the return-to-office (RTO) [mandate](#). Employers across industries – from Amazon to JPMorgan Chase – instituted full-time on-site requirements and sought to rein in remote work. But the year also underscored the limits of policy. As employee [pushback](#) and enforcement [challenges](#) mounted, many organizations turned to quieter tactics such as “[hybrid creep](#)” to gradually expand in-office expectations without triggering outright resistance.

For employers seeking to boost attendance, as well as office owners, retailers, and cities looking to maximize today's visitation patterns, understanding what actually drives employee behavior has become more critical than ever. This report dives into the data to examine office visitation patterns in 2025 – and explore how structural factors such as weather, commute convenience, and workplace proximity have emerged as key differentiators shaping how and when, and how often workers come into the office.

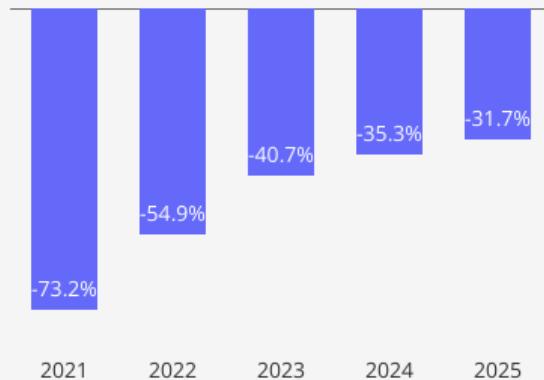
Office Attendance Reaches a New High, But Momentum Slows

National office visits rose 5.6% year over year in 2025, bringing attendance to just 31.7% below pre-pandemic levels and marking the highest point since COVID disrupted workplace routines. At the same time, the pace of growth slowed compared to 2024, signaling a possible transition into a steadier phase of recovery.

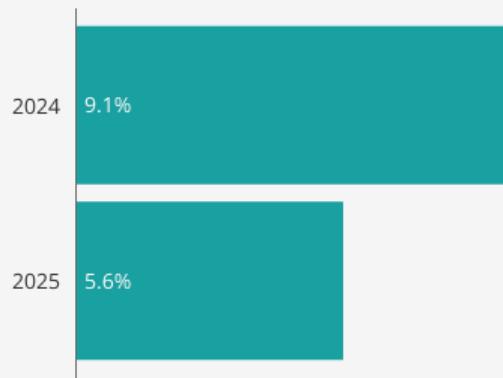
With new return-to-office mandates [expected](#) in 2026, and the balance of power quietly [shifting](#) towards employers, additional gains remain likely. But the trajectory suggested by the data points toward gradual progress rather than a return to the more rapid rebounds seen in 2023 or 2024.

Office Attendance Reaches Post-Pandemic High in 2025

Office Visits Compared to 2019 (Yo6Y)



Office Visits Compared to Previous Year (YoY)



Weather, Workations, and a New Kind of Seasonality

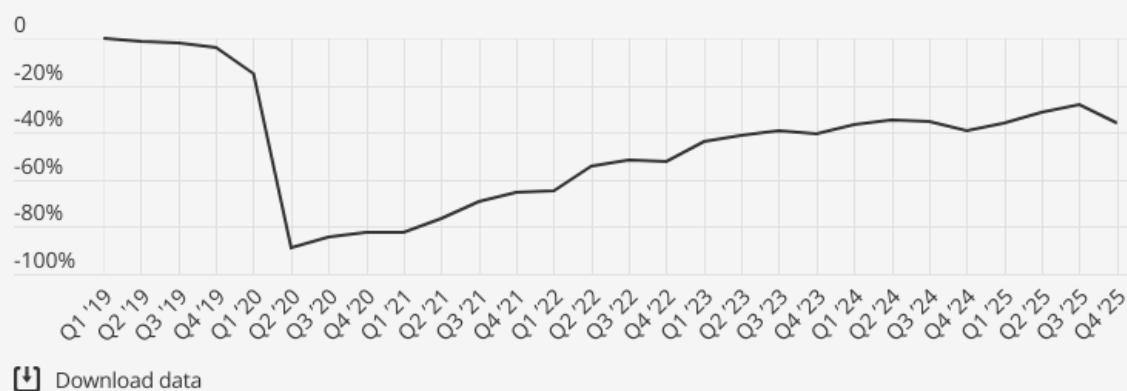
Before COVID, “I couldn’t come in, it was raining” would have sounded like a flimsy excuse to most bosses. But today, weather, travel, and individual scheduling are widely accepted reasons to stay home, reflecting a broader assumption that face time should flex around convenience.

This shift is visible in the growing seasonality of office visitation, which has intensified even as overall attendance continues to rise. In 2019, office life followed a relatively steady year-round cadence, with only modest quarterly variation after adjusting for the number of working days. In recent years, however, greater seasonality has emerged. Since 2024, Q1 and Q4 have consistently underperformed while Q2 and Q3 have posted meaningfully stronger attendance – a pattern that became even more pronounced in 2025. Winter weather disruptions, extended holiday travel, and the growing normalization of [“workations”](#) appear to be pulling some visits out of the colder, holiday-heavy months and concentrating them into late spring and summer.

For employers, office owners, downtown retailers, and city planners, this emerging seasonality matters. Staffing, operating budgets, and programming decisions increasingly need to account for predictable soft quarters and peak periods, making quarterly planning a more useful lens than annual averages. Leasing activity may also convert best in Q2 and Q3, when districts feel most active. Slower quarters, meanwhile, may be better suited for renovations, construction, or employer- and city-led programming designed to give workers a reason to show up.

Office Visitation Shows Greater Seasonal Variation Post-COVID

Average Visits Per Working Day Compared to Q1 2019 Baseline



[Download data](#)

Average Visits Per Working Day Compared to Equivalent Quarter of 2019



[Download data](#)

*Average visits to the Placer.ai Nationwide Office Index per working day, excluding Federal holidays (based on Calendar-12.com).



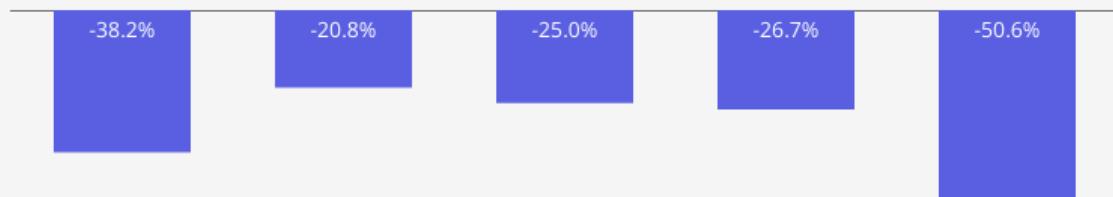
The Quest for Convenience and the TGIF Workweek

The growing premium placed on convenience is also evident in the persistence of the TGIF workweek – and in the factors shaping its regional variability.

Before COVID, Mondays were typically the busiest day of the week, followed by relatively steady attendance through Thursday and a modest drop-off on Fridays. Today, Tuesdays and Wednesdays have firmly established themselves as the primary anchor days, while Mondays and Fridays see consistently lower activity. And notably, this pattern has remained essentially stable over the past three years – despite minor fluctuations – as workers continue to cluster their in-office time around the days that offer the most perceived value while preserving flexibility at the edges of the week.

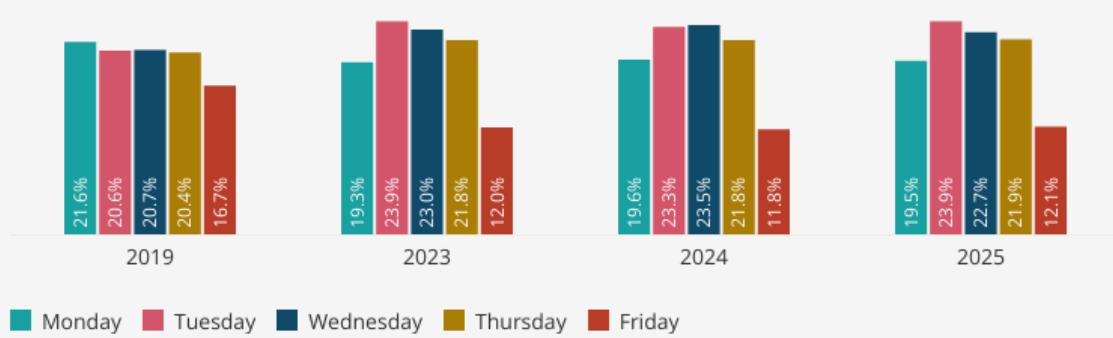
Tuesday Office Visits Nearly 80% of 2019 Levels; Post-Pandemic Hybrid Workweek Remains Largely Stable

Average Visits Per Working Day,* 2025 Compared to 2019



[Download data](#)

Distribution of Office Visits Across Working Weekdays*



[Download data](#)

*Number of working weekdays, excluding Federal Holidays, based on Calendar-12.com.



Commute Friction Shaping the Start of the Week

At the same time, while the hybrid workweek remains firmly entrenched nationwide, its contours vary significantly across regions – and the data suggests that convenience is once again a key differentiator.

Across major markets, a clear pattern emerges: Cities with higher reliance on public transportation tend to see weaker Monday office attendance, while markets where more workers drive alone show stronger early-week presence. While industry mix and

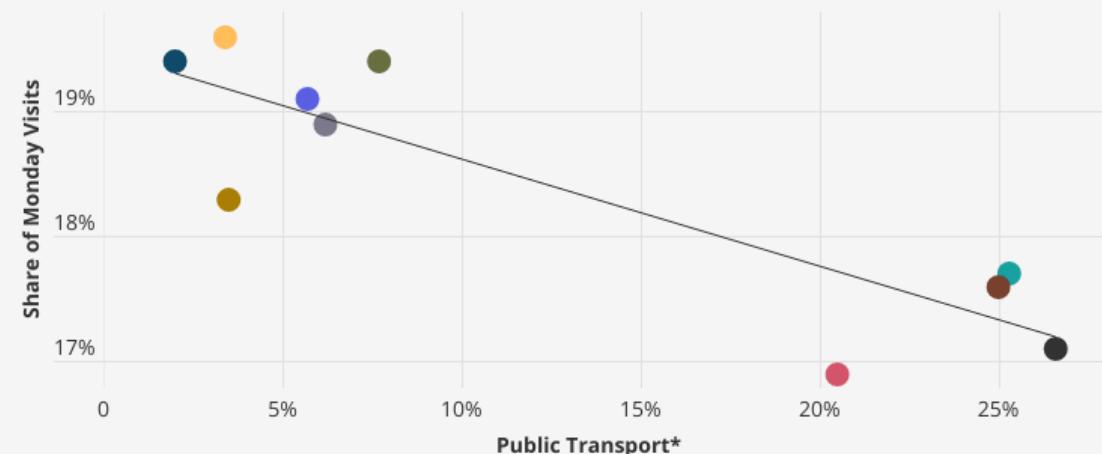
local office culture still matter, the data points to commute hassle as another factor potentially shaping Monday attendance.

New York City, excluded from the chart below as a clear outlier, stands as the exception that proves the rule. Despite nearly half of local employees relying on public transportation (48.7% according to the Census 2024 (ACS)), the city's extensive and deeply embedded transit system appears to reduce perceived friction. In 2025, Mondays accounted for 18.4% of weekly office visits in the city, even with heavy transit usage.

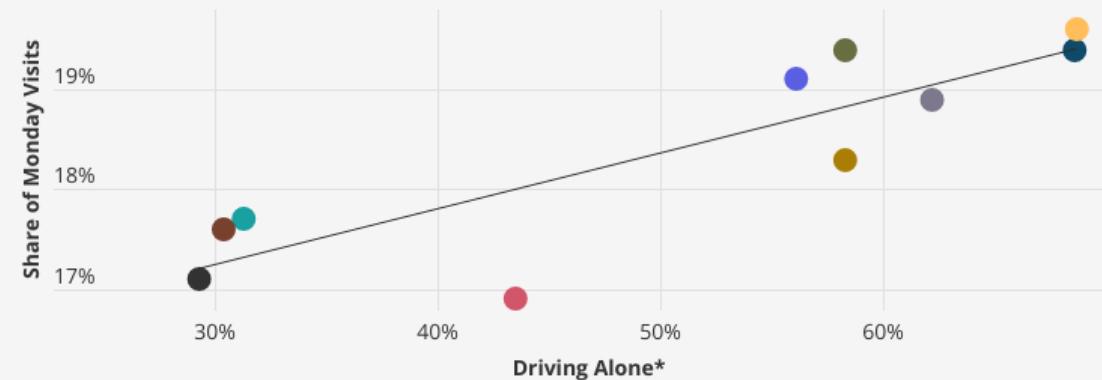
The contrast highlights an important nuance: Where transit is fast, frequent, and integrated into daily routines, it can support office recovery, offering a potential roadmap for other dense urban markets seeking to rebuild early-week momentum.

Ease of Commute Correlated With Higher Monday Office Attendance

Share of Monday Visits v. Share of Local Population Either Driving Alone or Using Public Transportation to Travel to Work*



[Download data](#)



[Download data](#)

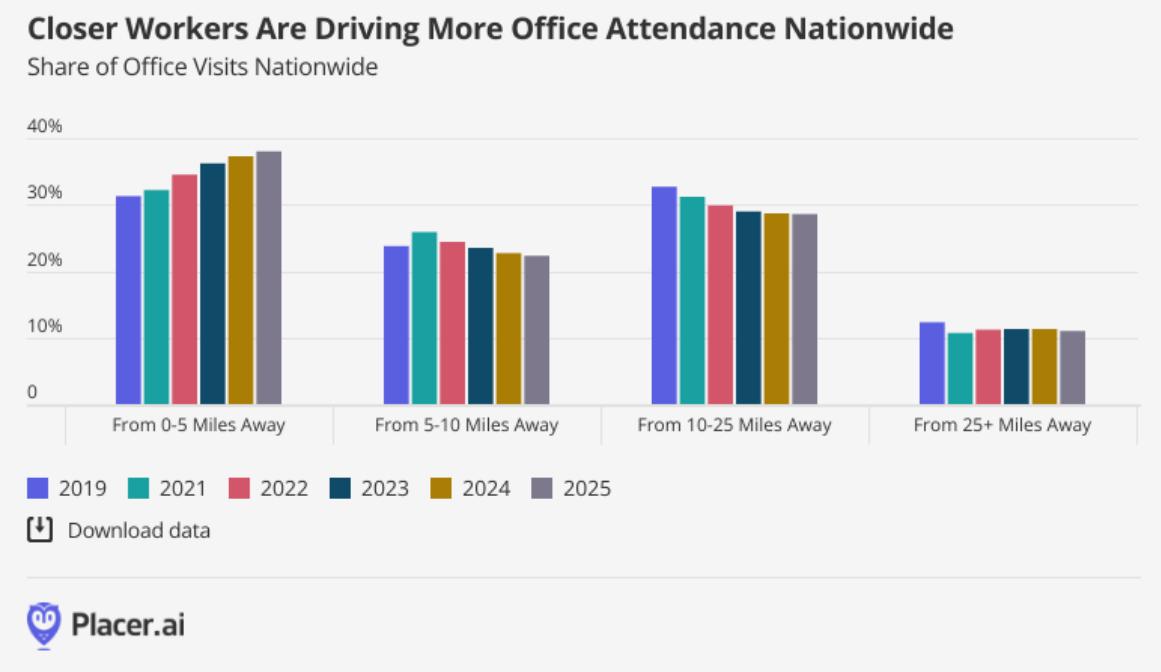
*Based on Census 2024 (ACS) data for analyzed cities.

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Proximity as a Key Attendance Driver

Another powerful signal of today's convenience-first mindset shows up in commute distances. Since 2019, the share of office visits generated by employees traveling less than five miles has steadily increased, largely at the expense of mid-distance commuters traveling 10 to 25 miles.

To be sure, this metric reflects total visits rather than unique visitors, so the shift may be driven by increased visit frequency among workers with shorter, simpler commutes rather than a change in where employees live overall. Still, the pattern is telling: Workers with shorter commutes appear more likely to generate repeat in-person visits, while longer and more complex commutes correspond with fewer trips. Over time, this dynamic could shape office leasing decisions, residential demand near employment centers – whether in urban cores or in nearby suburbs – and the geography of the workforce.



Friction in Focus

Taken together, the data paints a clear picture of the modern return-to-office landscape. Attendance is rising, but behavior is no longer driven by mandates alone. Instead, workers are making rational, convenience-based decisions about when coming in is worth the effort.

For cities, the implication is straightforward: Ease of access matters. Investments in transit reliability, last-mile connectivity, and housing near employment centers can all play a meaningful role in shaping how consistently people show up. For employers, too, the lesson is that the path back to the office runs through convenience, not just compulsion, as attendance gains are increasingly driven by how effectively organizations reduce friction and increase the perceived value of being on-site.