



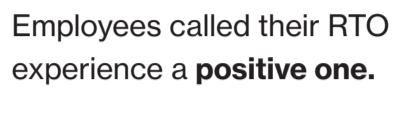
Industry Insights

## Return-to-office strategies employees truly value

The journey back to the office isn't a one-size-fits-all experience. It's a careful balance between what businesses need and what matters most to employees. As more companies encourage in-office work to foster connection, collaboration, and innovation, employee reactions have been varied. Interestingly, full-time in-office work is now the second most common setup, right behind structured hybrid schedules.<sup>1</sup>

To better understand this shift, HealthEquity surveyed over 600 full-time employees who transitioned from fully remote work to regular in-office attendance within the last year. Their insights reveal what works – and what doesn't – when implementing a return-to-office experience that benefits everyone.

### Most employees surveyed had a positive return to office (RTO) experience.



**3 out of 4**

Employees called their RTO experience a **positive one**.

**Men report a more positive RTO experience than women.**

It's worth noting that 38% of men surveyed reported their return-to-office experience as "extremely positive" vs just 28% of women.

**38%** **28%**

What played a key role? Very clear and open communication from employers about their RTO policies and expectations.

When asked about aspects that helped them excel at their current role, respondents also emphasized the **importance of flexibility (87%)** and **access to technology resources (85%)** as critical to their success in the office.

### A successful RTO can have a meaningful impact on employees' performance and workplace success.

Employees who had an extremely positive RTO experience **reported significant increases** to their personal productivity and the quality of their work.

**83%** Reported improved quality of work after returning to the office.



Plus, employees returning to the office described improvements in both their **relationships with coworkers** and **their ability to collaborate**.

**75%** Saw better workplace relationships.

**74%** Experienced enhanced collaboration.

### What draws employees back to the office?

Building an environment that eliminates common barriers and supports employees creates a strong incentive for more in-office attendance.

#### Top motivators for office attendance

When asked what factors would encourage them to come into the office more frequently, the employees' top responses reflected development and social interaction.

**50%** Professional development opportunities

**47%** Collaborative working sessions

**47%** Team building events

**47%** Having friends or teammates in the office

### The roadblocks keeping employees at home

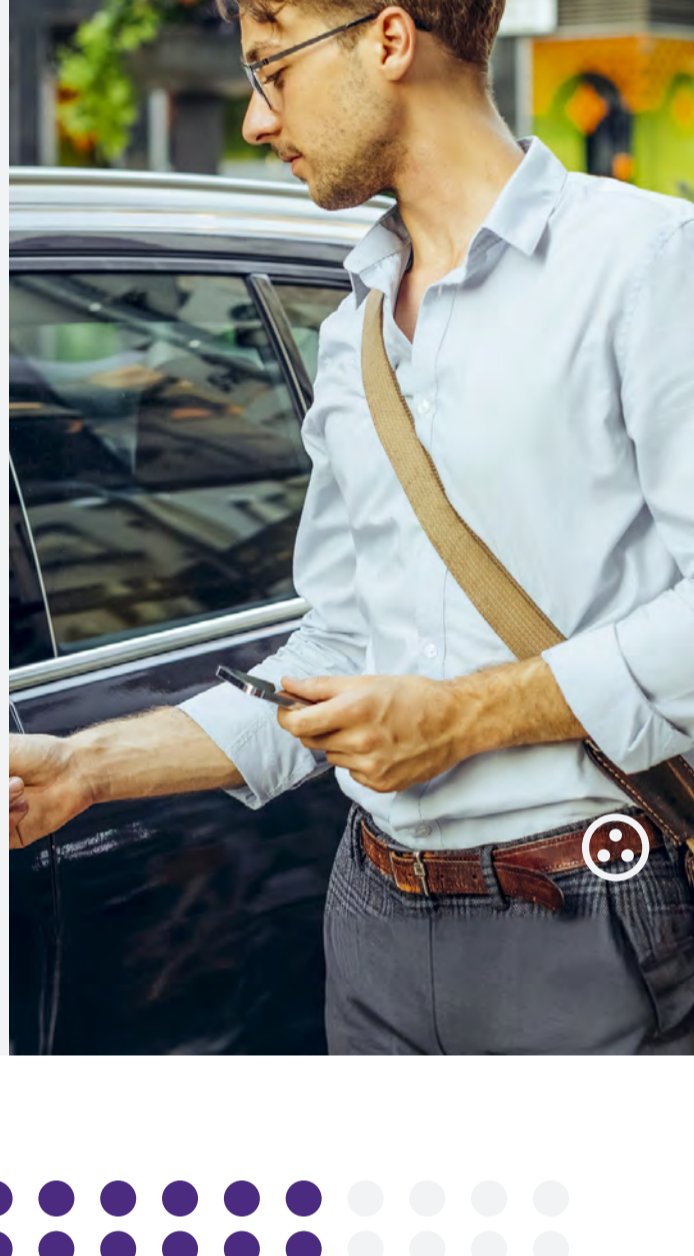
When asked what prevents them from coming into the office more often, employees identified a few major obstacles.

**54%** Commuting costs

**45%** Family and home obligations

**31%** Lack of a dedicated personal space

**31%** Not enough social value to justify the trip



### Notably, employees worried about costs see commuter benefits as their main motivator.

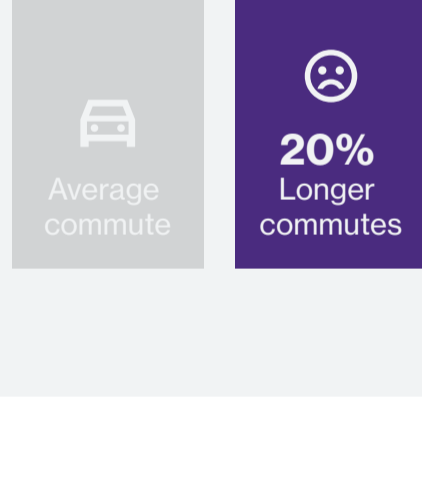
**59%** Selected commuter benefits – more than any other factor – for encouraging more frequent office attendance.



### Employees worried about costs had longer commutes.

Employees concerned about commuting costs reported almost **20% longer average one-way commutes** than those with an extremely positive RTO experience.

What's more, 10% of employees concerned about commuting costs face **46-60-minute** one-way commutes – **double** the rate of those with extremely positive RTO experiences.

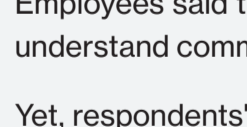


### Employees who use public transit are more likely to cite commuting costs as a barrier.

A majority of employees commute by car, but public transit users were **33% more likely** to identify commuting costs as an obstacle to coming into the office more often compared to non-transit users.

### Commuter benefits may lower out-of-pocket expenses and make office returns more appealing.

**However, there's still a need to educate employees on how these benefits actually work.**



**2 in 3**

Employees said they fully understand commuter benefits.

Yet, respondents' answers to True/False questions about commuter benefits reveal many have misconceptions about how to use them.

**You must use commuter benefit dollars in your plan year, or you lose them.**

**59% True**

**41% False**  Correct answer

**You can only activate your commuter benefits during open enrollment.**

**55% True**

**45% False**  Correct answer

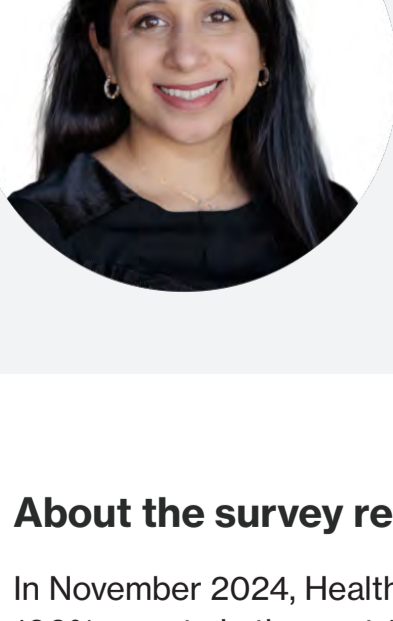
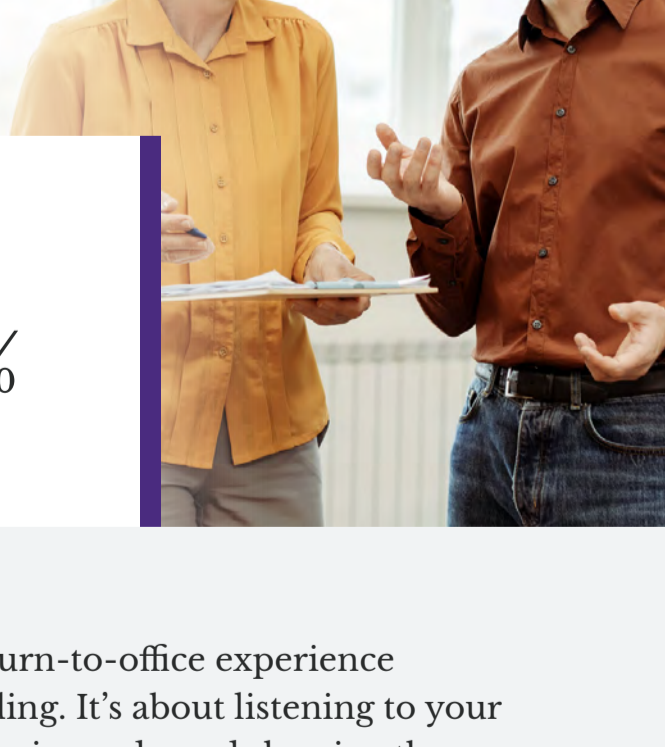
### Commuter benefits can make it easier for employees to support regular office attendance.

**More than half** of respondents using tax-free commuter benefits said these benefits have made returning to the office more convenient or cost effective.

**60%** More affordable

**60%** More convenient

**51%** Easier



“Creating a positive return-to-office experience begins with understanding. It's about listening to your team, acknowledging their needs, and showing them they're valued. When employees feel supported, the workplace becomes a space where they can thrive.”

**Kalpi Desai,**  
General Manager Product Management

#### About the survey respondents

In November 2024, HealthEquity surveyed over 600 full-time employees who had worked 100% remote in the past 12 months and returned to a regular in-office schedule.

Current work environment: **86 % hybrid | 14% full in-office**

##### Top 5 metro areas

**15%** Los Angeles, CA

**14%** New York, NY

**12%** Houston, TX

**10%** Chicago, IL

##### Top industries

**IT** Information Technology **25%**

**Finance** Finance **14%**

**Manufacturing** Manufacturing **12%**

**Healthcare** Healthcare **10%**

**Hospitality** Hospitality **5%**

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