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National Office Report

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Remote Work's Varied Impact on Markets

- Office utilization and work-from-home rates are uneven between markets, indicating that the pain felt in the office sector will be worse in some places than others.
- Unfortunately, no data source that tracks remote work paints a complete picture. After the pandemic began in the spring of 2020, Kastle Systems started releasing a widely followed survey that tracks office utilization in 10 markets. Kastle data shows Texas metros such as Austin, Dallas and Houston lead in utilization rates, while large coastal markets have lower rates. Austin's rate was more than 20 percentage points higher than San Francisco's during the first week of March 2024.
- The Census Bureau's American Community Survey (ACS) provides detail about the percentage of the working population that primarily works from home. According to the most recent data available, the share of U.S. workers primarily working from home fell to 15.2% in 2022, down from 17.9% in 2021 but nearly three times higher than in 2019. Boulder, Colo., had the highest rate, with 32.0% primarily working from home. Austin (28.0%) was second, followed by San Francisco (27.0%), Raleigh (26.1%) and Washington, D.C. (25.4%). Austin may come as a surprise given its place atop Kastle's metric, which reports office entry card swipes relative to pre-pandemic levels. The metro's high levels of growth in office employment (up 32% since 2020) allow it to simultaneously have a large share of remote workers and a relatively strong recovery in office utilization.
- The Census Bureau's Household Pulse Survey is an experimental dataset that began during the pandemic in an effort to quickly deploy data for emerging issues. The most recent survey was conducted from Jan. 9 through Feb. 5 of this year. While the survey provides results about households (not individuals) and only tracks the 15 largest cities, it offers another snapshot of remote work. Among the metros tracked, Washington, D.C., had the highest share of households (52.5%) where at least one member worked from home at least one day a week, with San Francisco (46.1%), Boston (43.2%), Seattle (38.6%) and Atlanta (37.3%) rounding out the top five. Unsurprisingly, Riverside, Calif., a metro with a small portion of its labor force in office-using sectors, had the lowest share of households with someone working from home at least one day a week (17.7%), according to the Pulse Survey. Detroit (23.6%), Miami (27.6%) and Houston (29.8%) were the only other metros in the dataset with fewer than 30% of households including someone working from home.

