

RETAIL

## Mall visits increasing as US restrictions lift

June 9, 2021



*Foot traffic for malls is steadily increasing. Image credit: BDO*

By KATIE TAMOLA

With mask mandates being lifted, continued vaccination rollouts and consumer ease increasing, in-person shopping could be poised for another bounce in the United States.

Subscribe to **Luxury Daily**  
Plus: Just released  
State of Luxury 2019 **Save \$246 ▶**

While the COVID-19 pandemic brought innumerable restrictions, including store closures, pent-up excitement to return to in-person shopping has steadily increased. According to the May 2021 mall index analysis from analytics platform Placer.ai, the mall sector continues to see foot traffic improve.

"The resurgence of mall visits is another testament to the resiliency of consumer demand," said Ethan Chernofsky, vice president of marketing at [Placer.ai](#), Los Altos, CA. "The latest data is a further sign that when consumers are allowed to return to top-tier malls, they will.

"It speaks to the continued value these locations offer to retailers, and the exciting evolution the sector is likely to experience," he said.

The Placer.ai Mall Index analyzes data from 52 malls from across the United States in both urban and suburban areas.

### In-store surges

With many states across the country reopening, foot traffic at malls is expected to increase steadily.

Considering 2020 data reflects the mainly harsh and distorting effects of massive mall closures due to the pandemic, comparing this year's foot traffic to 2019 indicates hope for growth.



*May 2021 saw a big jump in mall visits, with a 14.6 percent increase in foot traffic from April 2021. Image credit: Shutterstock*

When compared to the equivalent months in January and February 2019, mall visits were down 26.8 percent and 32.4 percent in January and February 2021. Since then, however, each month has shown improvement.

Compared to March, April and May of 2019, mall visits were down 23.4 percent, 17.6 percent and 12.8 percent, respectively, reflecting the gradual month-to-month improvement.

Month-over-month, March 2021 saw a 44 percent increase in foot traffic from February. The surge largely reflects pent-up demand, as the spring saw loosening restrictions and warmer weather.

April 2021 recorded a similar breadth of visits, only seeing a 2.8 decrease in visits compared to March.

May 2021 saw another big jump, with a 14.6 percent increase in foot traffic from April 2021.



*Consumers have varying perceptions of health and financial risks during the pandemic. Image credit: Unsplash*

With big-ticket shopping events on the horizon, including back-to-school shopping and popular holidays, mall visits will likely continue to grow.

"With further reopenings in key states like California and New York on the horizon, the sector could be poised for another push forward ahead of a critical Back to School season," Mr. Chernofsky said. "The rapid and continued return is a further testament to the ongoing consumer demand for mall based retail and experiences and the unique potential of top tier models to enjoy a resurgence in the coming months and years."

#### Gradual push to return

Consumers and experts alike are cautiously optimistic, citing excitement but also believing a return to normalcy that includes things like a crowded mall, may take some time.

Many consumers recognize societal conditions improving with vaccination rollouts and re-openings while simultaneously recognizing that there is a long way to go.

About 22.7 percent of consumers from the recent Recent Events Connected Flash Study report being concerned about health-related consequences of COVID-19 "to a moderate extent" compared to 23.3 percent noting the same sentiment from April 1 to April 14 ([see story](#)).

Although ecommerce saw momentous growth throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, the in-person shopping experience is arguably irreplaceable. According to a recent whitepaper from Placer.ai, brands want to continue expanding offline offerings in an attempt to provide unique shopping experiences that will foster consumer loyalty

and a mutually beneficial relationship ([see story](#)).

With a sense of normalcy on the horizon, people will continue to flock to malls as the desire for in-person shopping and experiences is not expected to cease.

"The value of top tier malls is being put on display, and the impact is going to drive the continued evolution of the space," Mr.Chernofsky said. "This will only be deepened by an ever diversifying retail mix and widening perception of what malls can and should be."

---

© 2021 Napean LLC. All rights reserved.

Luxury Daily is published each business day. Thank you for reading us. Your [feedback](#) is welcome.