



State Restaurant Association Survey: No Expectation of Return to Normalcy Any Time Soon Among Restaurant Operators

85% of restaurants experienced decline in customer demand for indoor dining in recent weeks due to rise of Delta variant

ALBANY, NY – New York’s restaurant industry continues to face an uncertain future with new COVID-19 variant mutations coinciding with the onset of cooler temperatures. As a result, the demand for outdoor dining is shrinking and 49% of New York restaurants do not believe that business conditions will return to normal for at least another year. Moreover, an additional 18% do not anticipate conditions ever returning to normal for their restaurants. This reality, combined with supply chain shortages and record high prices for supplies, will lead to continued challenges for the industry in the new year.

This information comes from the latest survey conducted by the National Restaurant Association in partnership with the New York State Restaurant Association (NYSRA).

“The statewide restaurant industry remains far from fully recovered due to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. The results of this survey illustrate the growing sentiment among restaurant operators that business conditions will likely worsen as we head into the colder winter months,” said Melissa Fleischut, President & CEO of NYSRA.

The survey found that the New York State restaurant industry’s future remains gloomy. A total of 206 restaurateurs responded to the survey. Here is a full summary of the survey’s findings:

- 67% of restaurants do not expect business conditions to return to normal for at least another year, if not more
- 85% of restaurants experienced a decline in customer demand for indoor dining in recent weeks due to the increase in Delta variant COVID-19 cases
- 62% of restaurants saw a deterioration of business conditions in the previous three months alone
- 71% of restaurants recorded a lower volume in sales in August 2021 than during August 2019, prior to the onset of the pandemic
- Staffing shortages remain an issue as well. 78% of restaurants currently do not have enough employees to support existing customer demand
- While sales lag, costs have also increased:
 - 92% reported that total food costs remain higher than they were prior to the COVID-19 outbreak



- 89% reported that total labor costs remain above pre-pandemic levels
- 67% reported that total occupancy costs remain higher than pre-pandemic levels
- 93% of New York operators have a lower profit margin than prior to the pandemic

“As we head into the colder months, New York State officials must keep restaurant operators in mind or risk the further decline of the statewide restaurant industry. By supporting our members and reinstating highly effective programs like ‘Alcohol-to-Go,’ we believe that the restaurant industry will have a chance at making a successful recovery. But that opportunity remains dependent on Albany’s willingness to fight for our restaurants, all of whom play a key role in supporting New York’s vibrant culture and economy,” added Fleischut.

NYSRA and the National Restaurant Association conducted this survey to gain a clear understanding of the current and ongoing impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on New York restaurants. More than 200 New York restaurant operators completed this survey that was conducted in September 2021.

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