



State Restaurant Association Survey: Majority of Operators Report Delivery and Take-Out Sales Make Up Less Than One-Third of Lost Sales

Restaurants continue to face devastating future without financial support

March 4, 2021

ALBANY, NY — Despite expanded off-premise capabilities, more than 67 percent of restaurants report that revenue from increased off-premise sales have made up less than 30 percent of their lost on-premise sales, according to the most recent surveys released by the New York State Restaurant Association (NYSRA). Year-over-year, restaurant sales are down 44 percent in New York State, and most restaurant operators do not expect business conditions to improve during the next several weeks.

“Despite recovery and reopening efforts, the restaurant industry continues to struggle. The effects of the past year will undoubtedly have a lasting impact, and we continue to hear the tough circumstances facing New York operators. New York has taken steps to reopen the economy, a welcomed and encouraging effort, but that alone cannot supplant financial assistance,” said Melissa Fleischut, president and CEO of NYSRA.

The survey found that the New York State restaurant industry continues to face dire economic circumstances without some form of state or federal financial assistance, despite reopening the economy. Here is a full summary of the survey’s findings:

- Overall, 92 percent of restaurant operators say their total dollar sales volume in January was lower than it was in January 2020. Only 6 percent of operators reported higher sales in January. Overall, sales were down 44 percent between January 2020 and January 2021.
- Among New York operators who say their off-premises business increased compared to pre-COVID levels, 67 percent say their higher off-premises sales have made up less than 30 percent of their lost on-premises sales.
- Most restaurant operators do not expect business conditions to improve during the next several weeks. Only 19 percent of New York operators expect their sales in February and March to be higher than it was in January. A total of 46 percent of operators think their sales will decline in February and March from January's levels.
- About one-third, or 30 percent, of operators think it will be 7-12 months before business conditions return to normal for their restaurant, while 35 percent think it will be more than a year. An additional 14 percent of operators say business conditions will never return to normal for their restaurant.



- 27 percent of New York operators say they will 'probably' or 'definitely' be closed within 3 months if there are no additional relief packages from the federal government.

Despite these challenging circumstances, New York's restaurants have also continued to give back to the communities they serve: 77 percent of restaurant businesses reported having made a charitable contribution, whether in the form of cash, food, space, in-kind or volunteering, since the COVID-19 outbreak began in March 2020.

"New York restaurants are embedded in the fabric of their communities and are integral to local economies. They have opened their spaces to others struggling during the pandemic and continue to charge ahead in the face of perilous circumstances. We must take action to ensure restaurant businesses are able to survive the next year," added Fleischut.

Additionally, the survey found employment throughout the industry remain far below normal levels:

- Deteriorating business conditions led to additional job losses in recent weeks, with 54 percent of New York operators saying they laid off or furloughed employees in December or January.
- Ninety-two percent of New York operators say their current staffing level is lower than what it would normally be in the absence of COVID-19. Sixty-four percent of operators are currently more than 20 percent below normal staffing levels.
- Only 17 percent of New York operators expect their restaurant's staffing levels to be higher in February and March than it was in January. Fourteen percent of operators expect their staffing levels to decline in February and March.

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. The survey was completed in February.

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