



State Restaurant Association Survey: Vaccine Mandate Forcing New York City Restaurants to Lose Customers, Face Staffing Challenges

Recent survey finds more than 90% of restaurants have customer-facing challenges; 75% are having challenges with staff

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NEW YORK, NY – New York City’s vaccine mandate has generated widespread and overwhelming hardship for restaurants across all five boroughs, causing a majority of operators to lose customers and have increased staffing challenges. A recent survey conducted by the New York State Restaurant Association found that more than 90% of restaurants have customer-facing challenges, with the most common being customers refusing to dine after the vaccine mandate is enforced. More than 75% have staff-facing challenges, with the most common being staff refusing to get vaccinated, resulting in significant reduction in available workforce at a time when virtually no restaurant is fully staffed. These results come as New York prepares to usher in the colder months and outdoor dining options will be limited, cutting off a revenue stream for restaurants.

“Restaurants have been forced to serve as conduits of public health and are paying the price. Operators are losing business and staff. Employees are now subject to undue harassment and hostility. The mandate is a burden on an industry that cannot bear anymore. New York City must find alternatives instead of relying on already taxed business owners and their staffs,” said Melissa Fleischut, President & CEO of NYSRA.

The survey found that an overwhelming majority of New York City restaurants have experienced increased challenges since the vaccine mandate went into effect. A total of 125 restaurateurs responded to the survey. Here is a full summary of the survey’s findings:

- Over 90% of respondents are having customer-facing challenges, with the most common being:
 - customers refusing to dine at a restaurant after seeing they are enforcing the vaccine mandate (67.2%);
 - customers taking extra time at check in, and must be persuaded to present proof of vaccine (66.4%);
 - customers canceling future events at an establishment because of the vaccine mandate (61.6%);
 - and customers who are hostile towards, or yell and scream at, the host (59.2%)
- Over 75% of respondents are dealing with problems from the mandate that are impacting their staff, with the most common being:
 - staff refused to get vaccinated and had to be placed on leave (44%);
 - staff had to be reassigned to monitor the door to enforce the mandate (42.4%);
 - and staff are spread too thin to easily enforce the mandate (39.2%)
- Respondents overwhelmingly (76.8%) report that business has been negatively impacted by the vaccine mandate, with 57.6% reporting business has worsened



- significantly and another 19.2% saying business has worsened a little. Less than 7% reported business improvement and 16.8% said it was the same.
- For restaurants who have been inspected, about 1 in 5 had an inspector who asked for improper documents, like records of staff vaccination or records of indoor dining customers.

“The industry continues to grapple with lingering repercussions of the pandemic. Changes in consumer behavior, record high equipment prices, supply chain shortages, an increase in food prices and a declining workforce are all serious challenges operators have to face each day their doors are open. City government should work to support restaurants during this time, not continue to add to their plight,” added Fleischut.

The New York State Restaurant Association conducted this survey to gain a clear understanding on the impacts of the vaccine mandate on New York City restaurants. A total of 125 restaurant operators, across all five boroughs, responded to this survey in mid-October 2021.

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