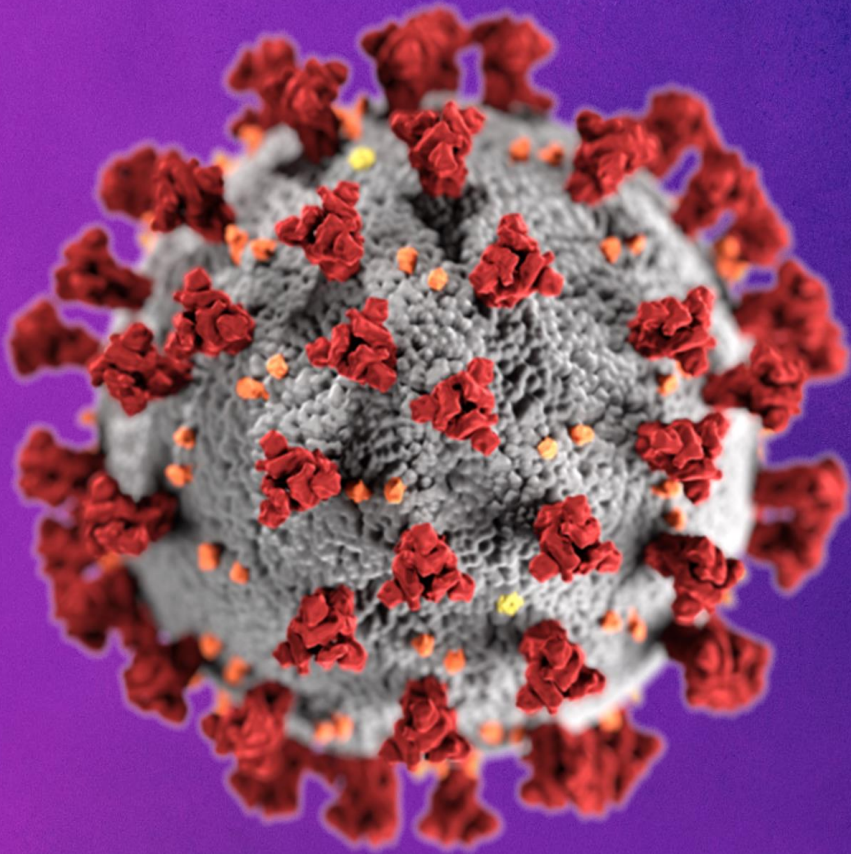


COVID-19

report 7: PENT-UP DEMAND

4.01.20





In just one short month (which, for many, feels like forever), the US has outpaced all other countries with the most COVID-19 cases. Coastal states have suffered the worst, and the Midwest is predicted to be the next epicenter. The healthcare system is overloaded, and protective gear and ventilators are still coming in at a trickle. While many of the grassroots efforts were started to save local eateries, they have now expanded to healthcare, whether it be hand-sewn masks or sending pizzas to doctors and nurses on call. While officials are telling us the worst is yet to come, consumers can still imagine a light at the end of the tunnel. In a recent Datassential survey, 66% of consumers believe it will be safe to dine in restaurants within the next three months.

While Americans are getting antsy to return to life as usual, don't expect their anxiety and hypervigilance to go away any time soon. When restrictions start to lift, how will Americans ease back into everyday food and social habits, and how can restaurants keep them reassured enough to come back in?

Here are highlights from Datassential's latest wave of Coronavirus research, fielded March 27 with 1,000 US consumers.

KEY EVENTS SINCE THE LAST FIELDING ON MARCH 25



March 26

More than 3 million people in the US apply for unemployment benefits the prior week
New York state says social restrictions are slowing hospital admissions
Panera Bread implements emergency sick leave and contactless delivery
Chipotle Mexican Grill gives 10% pay increase to hourly workers

March 27

Infections worldwide top 590,000
President Trump signs CARES Act into law
The Cheesecake Factory furloughs 41,000 hourly workers

March 28

The United States becomes the first country to exceed 100,000 confirmed coronavirus cases.
China's Wuhan, Where the Coronavirus emerged, begins to lift its lockdown
Instacart shoppers plan strike

March 29

President Trump extends social distancing guidance until end of April
U.S. could face 200,000 coronavirus deaths, millions of cases, Dr. Anthony Fauci warns
New York passes grim milestone: Over 1,000 killed by virus
Coronavirus fears spur Amazon workers in NY to walk off job until building is cleaned

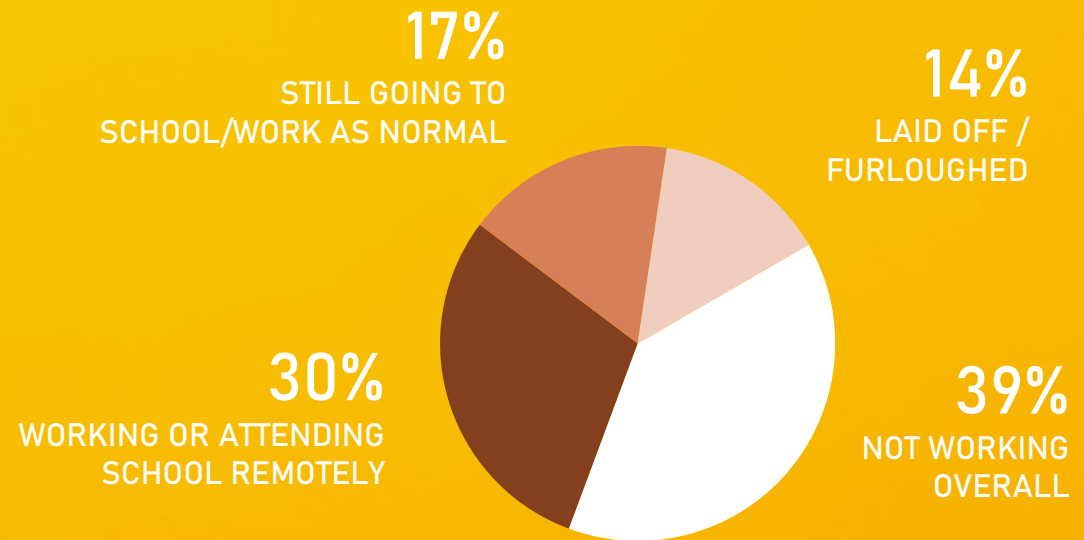
March 30

Yum Brands CEO David Gibbs forgoes salary for 2020, grants bonuses to GMs
New York City welcomes a hospital ship to its harbor and builds field hospital in Central Park

Most are sheltering at home.

Whether working from home, e-learning or retired, most Americans are currently based in their home. Only 17% still leave to go to their jobs or school.

which of the following best describes your current situation?



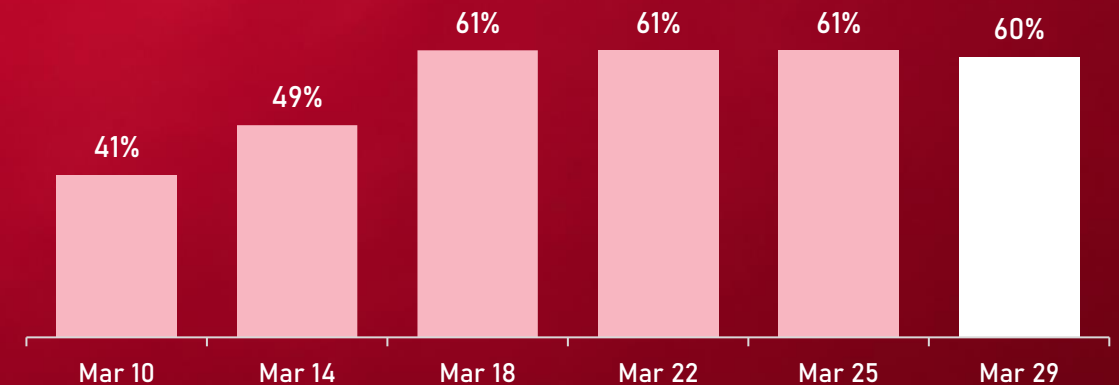


Concern has stabilized but remains high.

While the US now has the most confirmed cases globally, America's concern around COVID-19 has remained steady over the past 11 days, with most Americans very concerned and hugely worried about their own personal health.

very concerned with Coronavirus

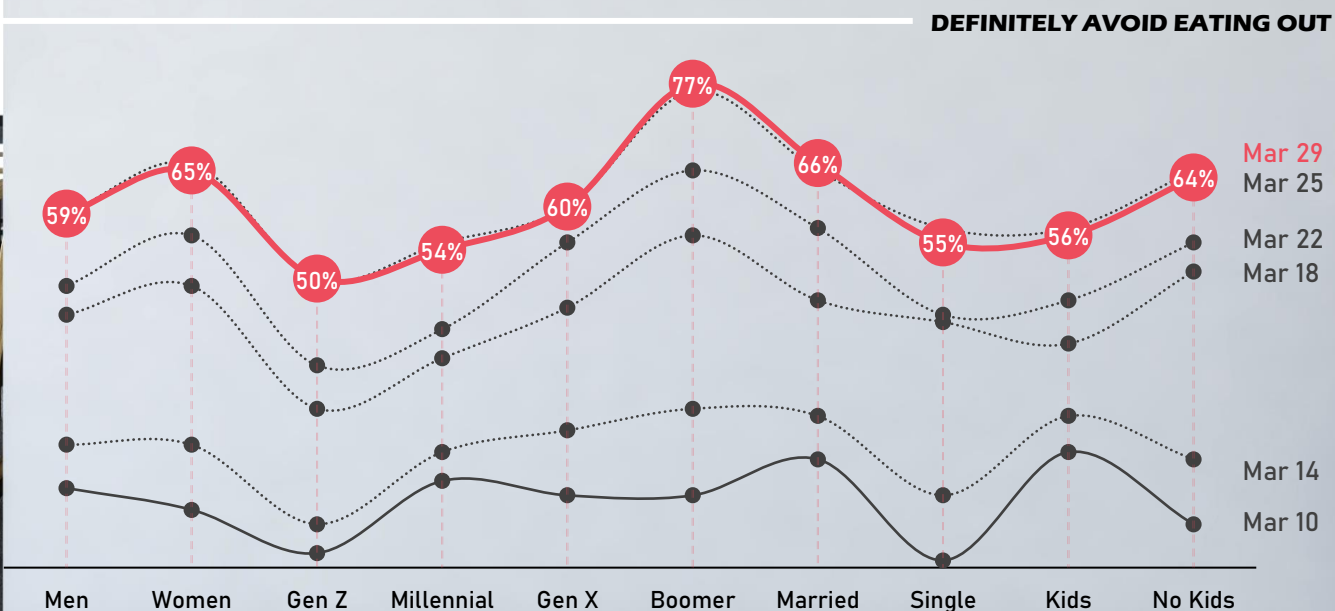
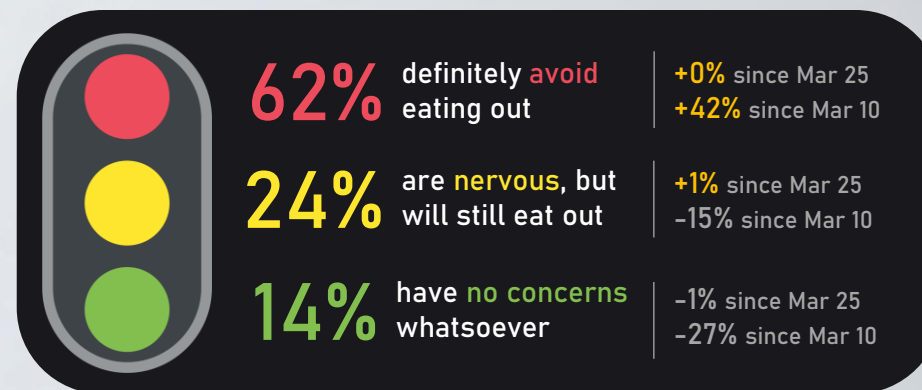
	Mar 10	Mar 14	Mar 18	Mar 22	Mar 25	Mar 29
Very concerned	41%	49%	61%	61%	61%	60%
Somewhat concerned	49%	42%	34%	35%	34%	33%
Not concerned	10%	8%	5%	4%	5%	7%





Avoidance of dining in remains steady at two-thirds of consumers.

With most states now mandating the transition to delivery and takeout only, consumer avoidance of dining at restaurants remains steady, but high. Concern has also stabilized across all demographics versus four days ago, with Gen Z still trailing in degree of concern compared to older generations.



As people emerge from the COVID-19 crisis, they will ease into environments that provide a comfort zone.

While our homes have always been a safe place, the COVID era has given this a whole new, and sometimes scary, meaning. Sheltering in place has left us clamoring to get back to normal life, while at the same time, feeling trepidatious to walk out the front door. Consumers are excited at the prospect of re-engaging with friends over food, but not ready for big crowds that make it impossible to keep your distance. While there is still a lot of uncertainty, consumers will gravitate toward environments that allow them to self-protect.

Restaurants can help ease this transition, by providing a balance of levity along with COVID safety precautions.



New habits die hard.

“Social distance” and “wash your hands” have been our mantras for the past month. We are barraged daily with PSAs that remind us of why it’s important and the alarming consequences of not complying. So it’s no surprise that consumers are reluctant to go back to their old ways. Two-thirds or more of Americans will continue to be vigilant when it comes to disinfecting and keeping their distance, even when the situation improves. Yet when it comes to restaurant food, consumers are a bit more forgiving. Slightly higher numbers predict they will stop taking extra precautions like avoiding buffets and raw foods, ordering out instead of dining in, or worrying about contamination of carryout packaging and utensils. In many of these scenarios, at least one in four people never felt it necessary to adopt these behaviors.

	Probably Continue	Probably Stop	N/A
Wash my hands more than I would have before coronavirus	77%	14%	9%
Disinfect shopping carts / baskets at stores	68%	19%	13%
Carry hand sanitizer with me wherever I go	66%	17%	17%
Maintain my distance from others out in public	64%	28%	8%
Avoid open / multi-person foods (buffets, salad bars, etc.)	52%	31%	17%
Order for delivery or takeout (instead of eating at the restaurant)	50%	28%	22%
Disinfect takeout / delivery packaging and any surfaces I eat on	49%	26%	26%
Use my own dishes to eat takeout / delivery food	47%	22%	31%
Shopping for food online (groceries, restaurant delivery, etc.)	41%	24%	35%
Avoid raw foods if ordering from restaurants	41%	25%	34%

when the COVID-19 situation improves and social distancing recommendations are eased, will you....



Consumers will test the waters.

Even when given the okay, Americans will need to ease back into their normal activities. Larger crowds and situations where people are tightly packed together will make social distancing difficult and cause greater angst. Outdoor activities or places that allow people to keep some distance, like dine-in restaurants, zoos and hotels, will offer consumers an opportunity to get used to being around others again. Today consumers predict they will err on the side of caution. In a month or two, it may be a different story. Once a sense of normalcy kicks in from going to work or attending family functions, their comfort curve may ease up for what are now considered very risky situations.

	Very Comfortable	Somewhat Comfortable	Not Comfortable
Attending social events, celebrations, etc. with friends or family	16%	38%	46%
Shopping for fun (non-essential items)	16%	36%	49%
Visiting public places (parks, museums, zoos, etc.)	15%	37%	48%
Staying at hotels, Airbnb / vrbo, etc.	15%	31%	55%
Eating inside restaurant dining areas	13%	35%	52%
Shopping during crowded times	10%	27%	63%
Taking planes / air travel	10%	27%	64%
Going to bars, nightclubs, etc.	9%	22%	69%
Attending events with large crowds (concerts, sporting events, etc.)	9%	22%	70%
Taking mass transit (buses, trains, etc.)	9%	20%	71%

when the COVID-19 starts to improve and social distancing is eased, how will you feel about....

WHAT DO CONSUMERS MISS THE MOST ABOUT THEIR SOCIAL LIFE BEFORE COVID-19 AND SOCIAL DISTANCING?

"I miss partying with my friends and going out to eat. Since everyone around me is worried about the virus, they all stay cooped up at home and try not to step outside their homes."

-a 30-year-old man in Tucker, GA

"Just the freedom to go out in public and socialize. Eating out at restaurants, going shopping, going to casinos, taking my grandchildren to the zoo and other events, going to the show and to see live performances."

-a 62-year-old woman in Erin, TN

"Eating in fine-dining restaurants, shopping for food and other necessities without concern for unavailability, spending time with friends at our or their house."

- an 80-year-old man in Dripping Springs, TX

"Having what I need at the store not competing with hoarders"

- a 39-year-old woman in Normal, IL

"I miss being able to go out. Also to go outside and go eat or get groceries without having to wear mask and stuff like that."

-a 26-year-old woman in New York, NY

"Eating at restaurants with friends and family. Not ordering takeout for pizza or grinders."

-A 59-year-old woman in New York, NY

"I hadn't missed a Friday night in the neighborhood pub in years. Neither have my close friends. We WILL sacrifice for the good of the world."

-A 57-year-old man in Racine, WI





T.G.I.M(onday).

In a society where we live for the weekends, the COVID lockdown has left many anxious to get back in the office, to socialize with co-workers and re-up productivity. But as is the case with most other activities, the first week won't be business as usual. Asked to picture their first week back in the office, Americans project that they would ease back into work or school-related activities with some caution. While about half would have no concerns dining in a restaurant, just as many would be brown-bagging it more than they did pre-pandemic. Spending long hours working in a coffee shop or eating in crowded restaurants still pose a risk. Whether the daily commute or a flight for business, work-related travel tops Americans' concerns. Operators would enjoy the benefits of the return to the office — whenever that happens — but should consider maintaining COVID best practices in the short term, to provide reassurance to customers.

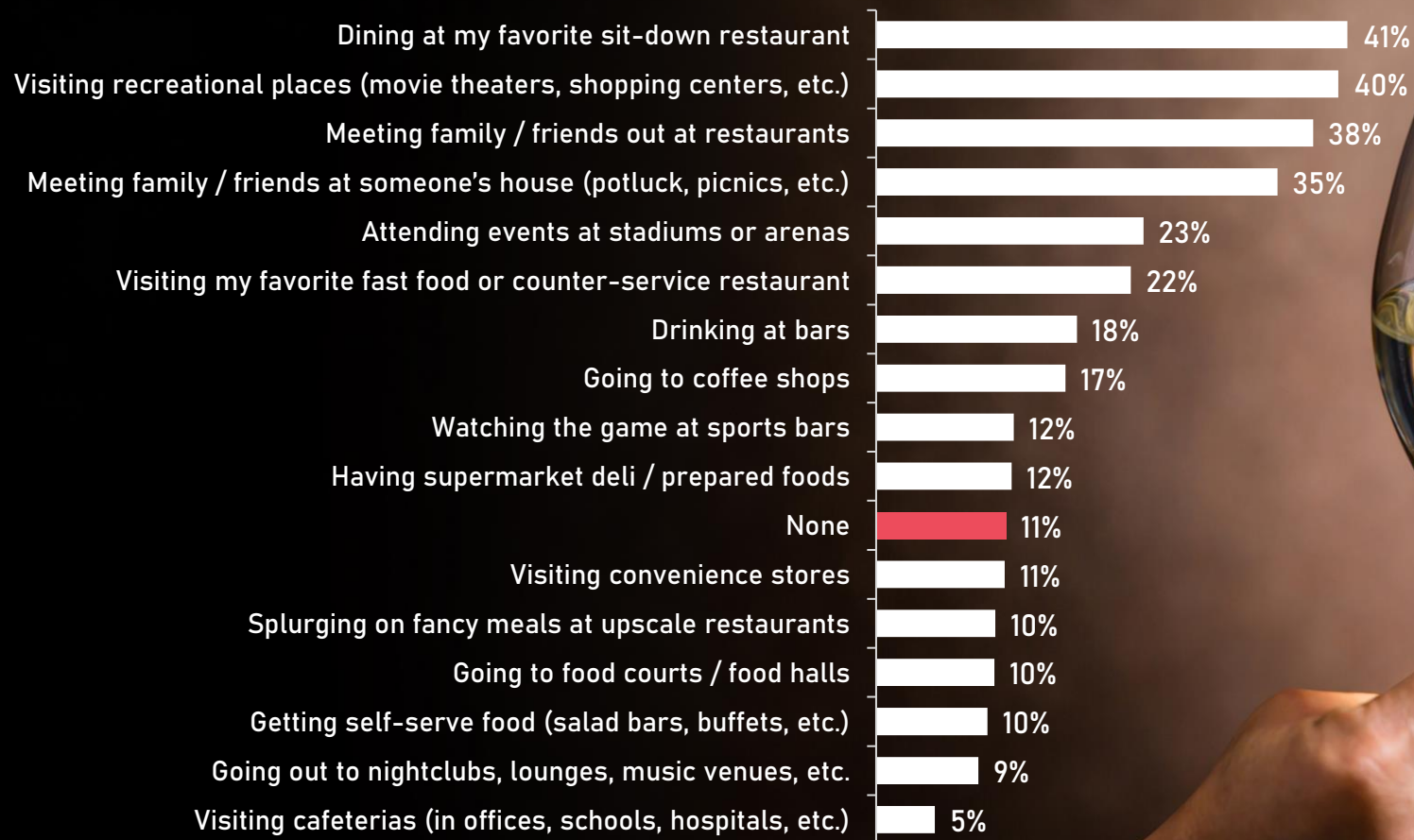
imagine it's your first week back at work, which of the following statements will be true?

	True	False
I would be excited to get back to the office / classroom (outside my house)	64%	36%
I would pack a lunch from home (to take to work / school) more than I did before	57%	43%
I would have absolutely no concerns socializing with co-workers / classmates	52%	48%
I would have absolutely no concerns about sitting down to dine at a restaurant	48%	52%
I would have absolutely no concerns about working / studying in a coffee shop	44%	56%
I've been more productive working / taking classes from home	44%	56%
I would have absolutely no concerns about traveling by plane	41%	59%
I hope I get to work / take classes from home (remotely) forever	41%	59%
I would have absolutely no concerns about going to a crowded restaurant	39%	61%
I would have absolutely no concerns about commuting by bus / train	32%	68%

Food is better when we eat together.

The (almost) nationwide move to carryout and temporary closings of recreational venues have left Americans craving activities where they can socialize and be entertained. When it comes to food and drink, people are most excited to get back to dining in with family and friends, whether at restaurants or family gatherings, as well as to entertainment venues like movie theaters and shopping centers. Baby Boomers have the strongest preference for dining in with family and friends, while food courts and music venues are bigger with Generation Z.

which of the following food and drink places are you most excited to get back to?



Restaurants will provide a sense of normalcy.

Pre-COVID conversations around restaurants more than likely started with the food — favorite go-to spots or the next trendy place to try. Too much time “sheltering in place” has shifted the role of restaurants for housebound Americans. More than anything, the ability to dine in again will provide some emotional relief that life is returning to normal. Not to mention, a much-needed change of scenery for the masses with cabin fever. This is especially true among Baby Boomers, who are more adherent to social-distancing orders.

Needing to feel normal again	45%	⏪ Greater among Boomers (58%)
Cabin fever - I've been stuck inside too long	38%	⏪ Greater among Boomers (46%)
Change of scenery – tired of being in my house	35%	⏪ Greater among Boomers (43%)
Needing to socialize in person and be around other people	34%	⏪ Greater among Boomers (42%)
Supporting restaurants in my community	33%	
Getting foods I can't make at home or easily get delivered	30%	
I'm tired of cooking at home	26%	
For special occasions I wouldn't normally celebrate at home	25%	
Need a date night / romantic night out	20%	
None of these – still nervous about restaurants and bars	13%	
Need a night out away from the kids	9%	

if dining rooms re-open, what are your top reasons for wanting to visit restaurants and bars again?



Actions speak louder than words.

As restaurant dining rooms reopen, consumers will come back, but they will want some reassurance. Sanitation and social distancing are key, but don't just talk about it, demonstrate it. They need to see everything from frequent cleaning of high-touch areas to employees in safety apparel to making sure food is covered for protection. The good news? Most of this should be business as usual, pandemic or not. Extra precautionary measures, like serving all items individually wrapped or providing contactless ordering and payment, fall lower on the importance scale, yet may provide operators with an opportunity to offer extra reassurance as customers rebuild their comfort with dining in.

	Absolutely Required	Helpful, But Not Required	Not That Important
Regularly / visibly wiping down tables, kiosks, other things people touch	71%	21%	9%
More food covers / sneeze guards / enclosed cold cases, etc.	57%	32%	11%
Providing disinfectant wipes for me to use	54%	35%	11%
Employees visibly wearing food safety apparel (masks, gloves, hairnets)	54%	33%	13%
Visible food safety inspection results	53%	34%	13%
More space in between tables / no communal seating	50%	38%	12%
No open containers of food	46%	38%	17%
If restaurants made it so you don't have to touch door handles	38%	48%	14%
Enabling mobile ordering for contactless payment	38%	42%	20%
Serving everything individually wrapped	33%	43%	24%

if dining rooms re-open, what can restaurants make you do to feel safe?



REGISTER HERE!

A DATASSENTIAL WEBINAR:

Refusing to Shut Down: FOOD + CORONAVIRUS

Consumers have formed new routines and shifted attitudes in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, but the foodservice industry has responded actively too.

This webinar from Datassential and IFMA connects the data points from Datassential's ongoing coronavirus research to tell the story of how consumers and operators are coping, how the supplier and manufacturer community can help, and how much of this "new normal" might persist in people's approach to food.

Register with [this link](#) and tune in **FRIDAY, APRIL 3, 3:00 EST**.





HOTSHOT REPORT

Visit Datassential's Coronavirus Resource Library at datassential.com/coronavirus, your one-stop shop for all COVID-19 research reports, video interviews, restaurant closure maps, and Traffic Briefings, all updated daily as new data come out of the field.



Help us help you.

As the Coronavirus situation continues to evolve rapidly, just tell us what you want to know. If it's something that benefits the food industry, we'll do our best to incorporate it into an upcoming report and provide the results to everyone for free.

And if you have a need that's specific to your company or brand, we would love to design a custom research solution for you.

[click me](#)