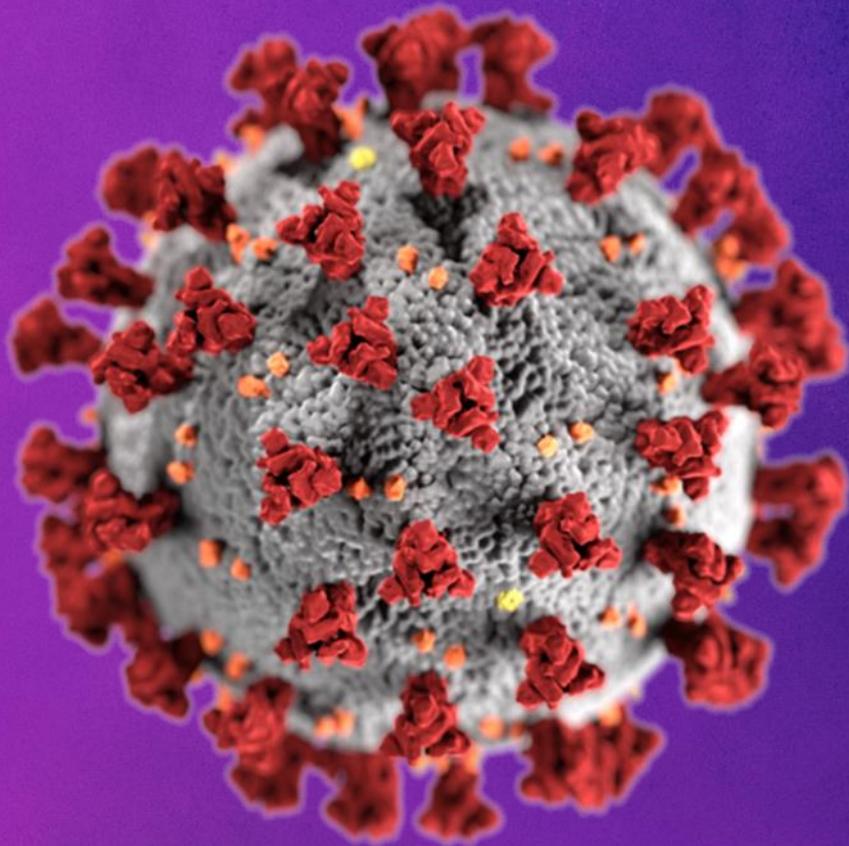


COVID-19

report 27: FINDING OUR WAY

6.26.20





It's been four long months since the Coronavirus pandemic began. To say "life as we know it" has changed is a considerable understatement. We have learned a lot in a short period of time, but many questions are still unanswered, and everyday we continue to learn as we go. The pandemic has managed to impact nearly every aspect of our lives, and food has been hit particularly hard. We have lived through grocery hoarding, threats to our food supply, and restaurant closings, yet still managed to put food on our tables. It is now late June and most of the country is in some phase of reopening. For restaurants, it is a crucial time as they figure out how to thrive with new guidelines and limited resources. While eating out has its own "new normal," diners are more excited than ever to find their way back.

As restaurants hit the reset button to get back up and running, we thought it would be helpful to take stock in what we've learned to date. Here are five key lessons and potential opportunities to help restaurants successfully navigate this new era of eating out.

Here are highlights from Datassential's Coronavirus research, fielded from March through June with more than 65,000 consumers and operators.



5

the five lessons
of a pandemic



ONE

keep it human

COVID has created a struggle between self-preservation and the need for community.

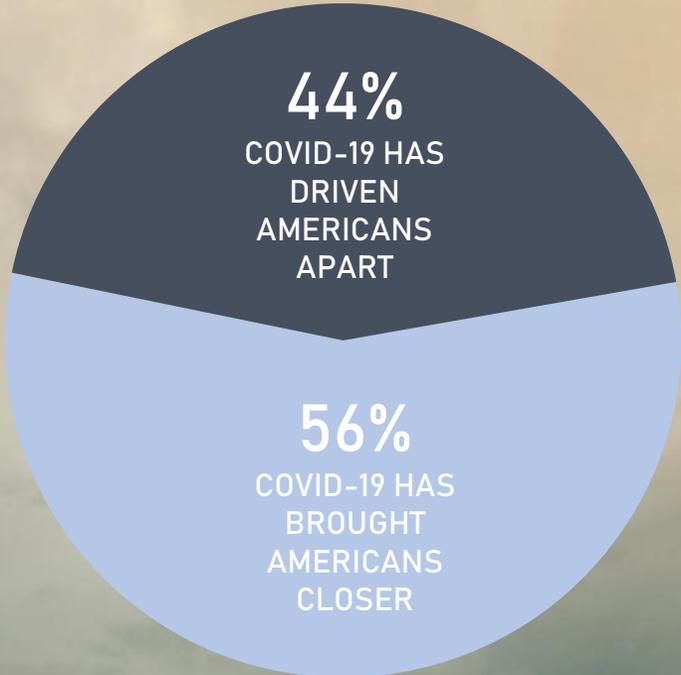
Normal actions we took for granted, like gathering with other people, now have the potential to be fatal. As the country reopens on a broader scale, it is now more important than ever to maintain precautionary safety behaviors. At the same time, we long to be socially connected to our communities again after months of isolation. As we navigate these new waters, we'll be driven by the excitement to celebrate a return to everyday life, tempered by a deep-seated need to stay safe.

Restaurants can help ease this tension for diners in several ways. This could mean providing a safe, yet fun socially-distanced meal. Or on a more emotional, human level, it could be letting diners know that their patronage ultimately helps others, as restaurants assist their communities, whether through supporting staff, feeding first responders, or generally restarting the local economy.





COVID-19 is a human moment that has brought some Americans closer to one another.



which statement do you agree with more?

Moving past “emergency mode” and becoming more accustomed to pandemic life has made Americans more resilient.

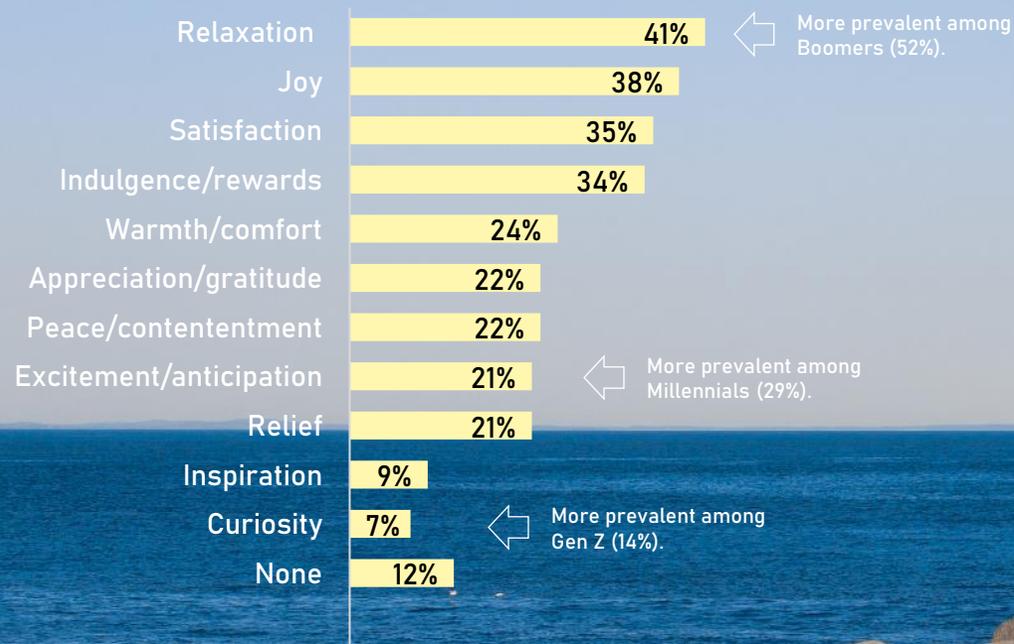
compared to before the pandemic, which of the following do you see yourself doing more of?

	June 10	April 24	CHANGE
More grateful for things I took for granted	35%	43%	-8%
More prepared in case this happens again	31%	32%	-1%
Supporting independent restaurants	24%	25%	-1%
Supporting grocery store and restaurant workers	24%	26%	-2%
More empathy for others who are struggling	23%	25%	-2%
Making more effort to spend time with family	21%	24%	-3%
Supporting local food resources	20%	18%	+2%
Supporting “made in the USA” food producers	19%	21%	-2%
Being more considerate with strangers	16%	18%	-2%
Having more faith in humanity	14%	14%	-
Being more charitable	13%	14%	-1%
Going out to socialize with people	13%	14%	-
None	15%	8%	+7%



Restaurants will be a light in the darkness.

which are you most looking forward to regarding the emotional benefit you get from eating at restaurants?



Restaurants also help us to feel like ourselves again.

how do you feel about the following regarding restaurants in light of the COVID pandemic?

	Agree	
Restaurant food is a treat/escape from worrying about COVID	62%	More likely among Millennials (69%)
Dining in restaurants has helped me feel normal again, even if it's just the patio	56%	More likely among Millennials (63%)
Eating at restaurants makes me feel connected to the community again	54%	
Dining in restaurants feels more special now	54%	More likely among Millennials (62%)
I've been waiting to celebrate milestones until restaurants open back up	45%	More likely among Millennials (55%)



People are most excited to reconnect over food.

More likely among women (45%)



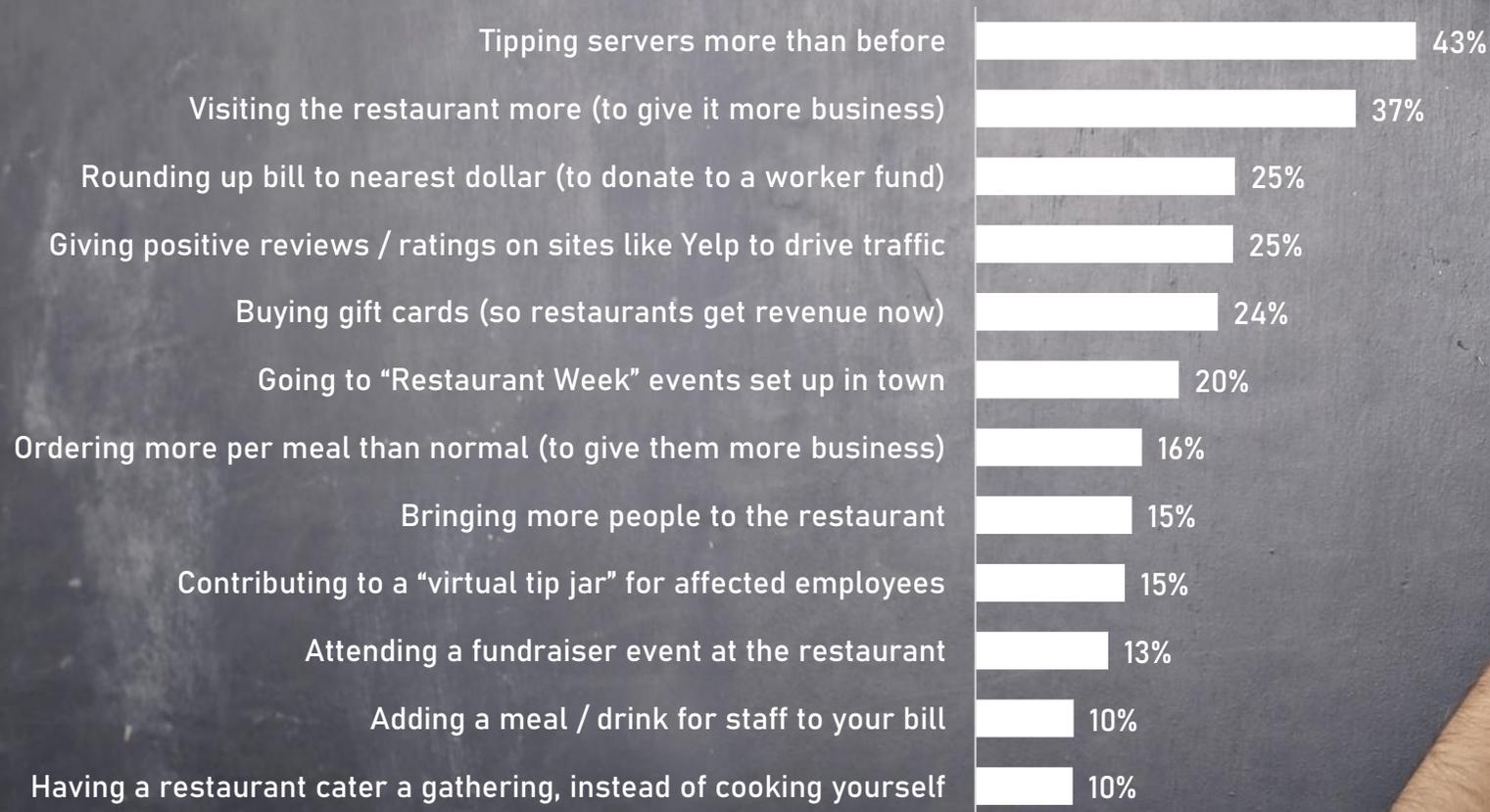
which aspects of dine-in service are you most excited to get back to once your favorite places fully reopen?

More likely among Boomers (28%)



Socializing with friends/family	39%
Variety (different from what I normally cook)	30%
Convenience	28%
Food that's freshly made	28%
Food that's hard to make at home	26%
The atmosphere/scenery	24%
Service (someone cooks for me/waits on me)	22%
Food is more flavorful	20%
Meeting/socializing with new people	13%
Getting dressed up to go out	12%
Seeing what foods are new and trendy	10%
Being part of a crowd/people watching	10%
Staff recommendations/expertise	6%
None	11%

Diners will show their support in little ways to help restaurants in their recovery efforts.



how would you be most willing to support restaurants and their staff as they recover from COVID-19?



TWO

goodbye fear,
hello caution

As people prove to themselves that they can rise to COVID-related challenges, they'll panic a little less.

Humans are hardwired to be most fearful of the unknown. When the novel Coronavirus emerged, panic ensued. Grocery store shelves were depleted, and everyday necessities were nowhere to be found. Since the pandemic began, COVID precautionary steps have become second nature, and people have found ways to solve for everyday problems. This newfound confidence is empowering Americans to venture back into restaurants.

Restaurants still need to do their part by providing a safe and sanitary environment, but diners will take care of the rest with the typical precautionary safety steps. Extra efforts on the part of restaurants will help differentiate them among all the businesses competing to regain loyal patrons.



Americans are quickly adapting to the “new normal.”

82%

I know which precautions to take and how to stay safe from COVID exposure

60%

COVID safety precautions have become second nature



Safety concerns are softening as reopening the economy gains momentum across the nation.

	June 10	April 24	CHANGE
I don't trust others to act safely once "non-essential" services can reopen	65%	72%	-6%
I wish we had one unified national response to Coronavirus	63%	62%	+1%
Reopening is worth the public-health risk; if we don't, we'll suffer in worse ways	56%	38%	+18%
I'm concerned about COVID'S impact on privacy, data protection, and civil liberties	55%	52%	+3%
I'm concerned about the damage to the environment from COVID	54%	51%	+3%
People should refrain from using "non-essential" services, even once allowed	52%	60%	-7%
I worry more about infecting others than I do about getting infected myself	45%	44%	+1%
I feel guilty using delivery services because it puts others in danger	36%	39%	-2%
This COVID crisis has been blown out of proportion; it's no different than the flu	36%	29%	+7%
I believe I have already had Coronavirus	26%	21%	+5%

thinking about how COVID has shaped how you feel, do you agree/disagree with the following?



Restaurants top the list of safe places to go



% who feel safe going there after shelter restrictions are lifted

Consumers trust restaurants more than they trust other people.



	Trust COMPLETELY	Trust SOMEWHAT	DO NOT Trust
Our own dining companions (friends and family)	40%	47%	12%
Traditional grocery stores/supermarkets	26%	62%	13%
Supercenters (Walmart, Target)	22%	61%	17%
Cafeterias (schools, offices, hospitals)	18%	49%	33%
Counter service/Fast food restaurants	17%	55%	28%
Sit-down restaurants	16%	55%	28%
Convenience stores	15%	55%	30%
Fellow diners in a restaurant	12%	43%	46%
Fellow shoppers in a grocery store	11%	45%	44%

when businesses reopen, how much do you trust the following to take necessary precautions to keep you safe?

Sanitation will remain a top consideration beyond the pandemic.



Restaurant is clean and sanitary	50%
Great taste	43%
Value	35%
Good service / friendly staff	33%
Convenient location	28%
Locally / independently owned	23%
Supporting restaurants that need help	22%
Health / healthy offerings	19%
Variety	17%
Restaurant puts effort into sustainability	11%
Speed	8%

which THREE of the following will be your top considerations when selecting a restaurant to visit AFTER the time of Coronavirus?

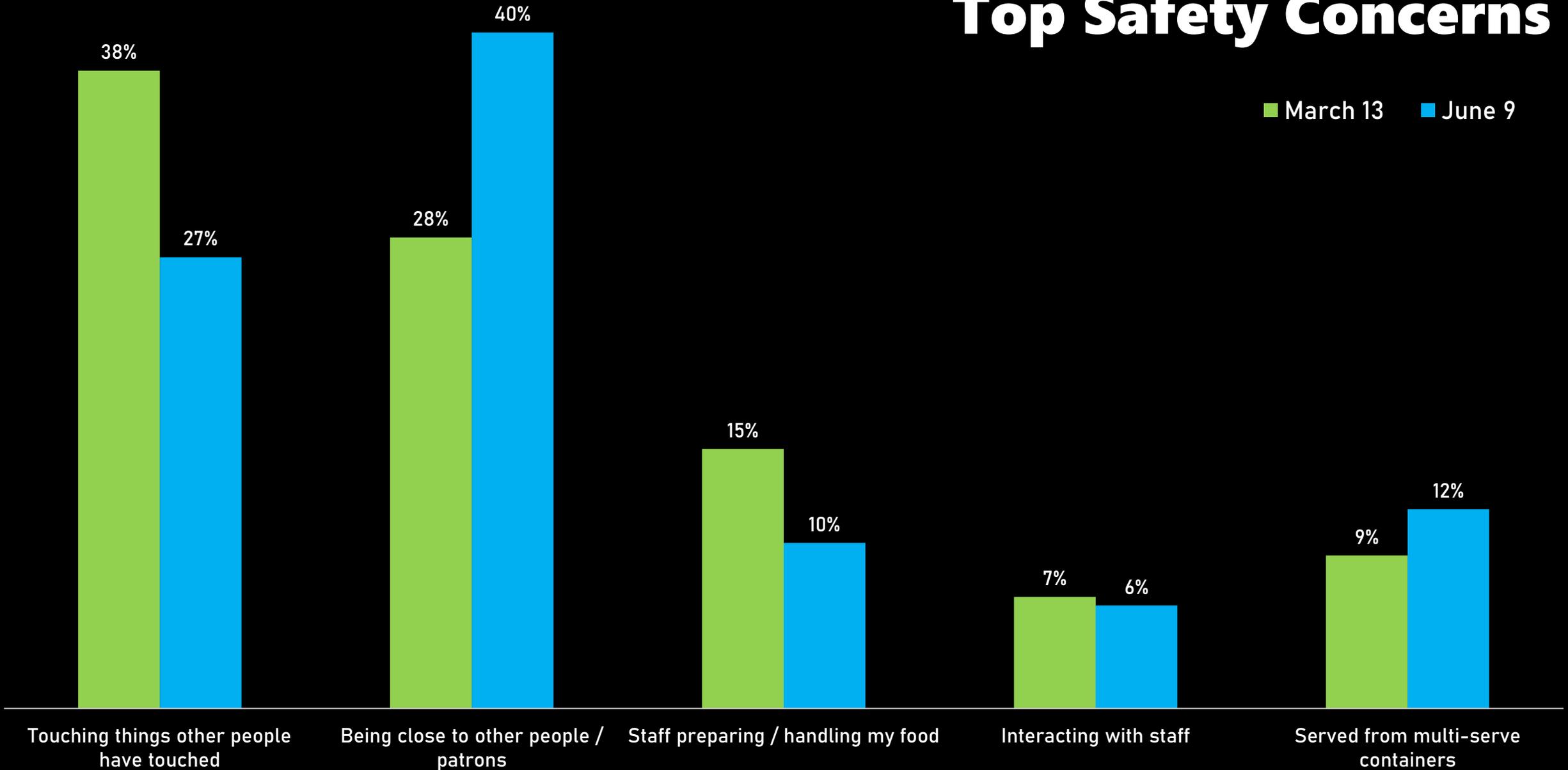
76%

“a restaurant’s cleanliness & food safety procedures will always matter more to me now than it did before.”

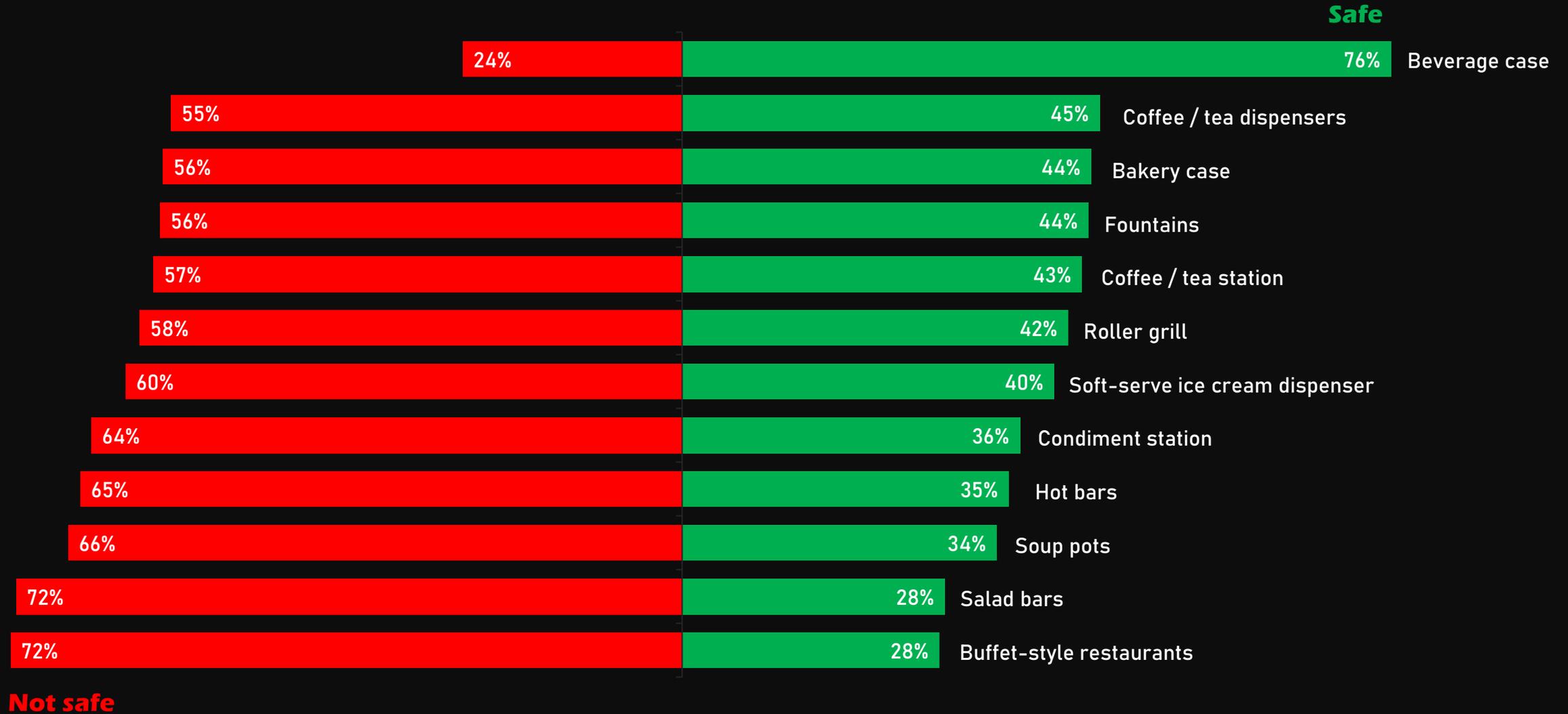


Top Safety Concerns

■ March 13 ■ June 9

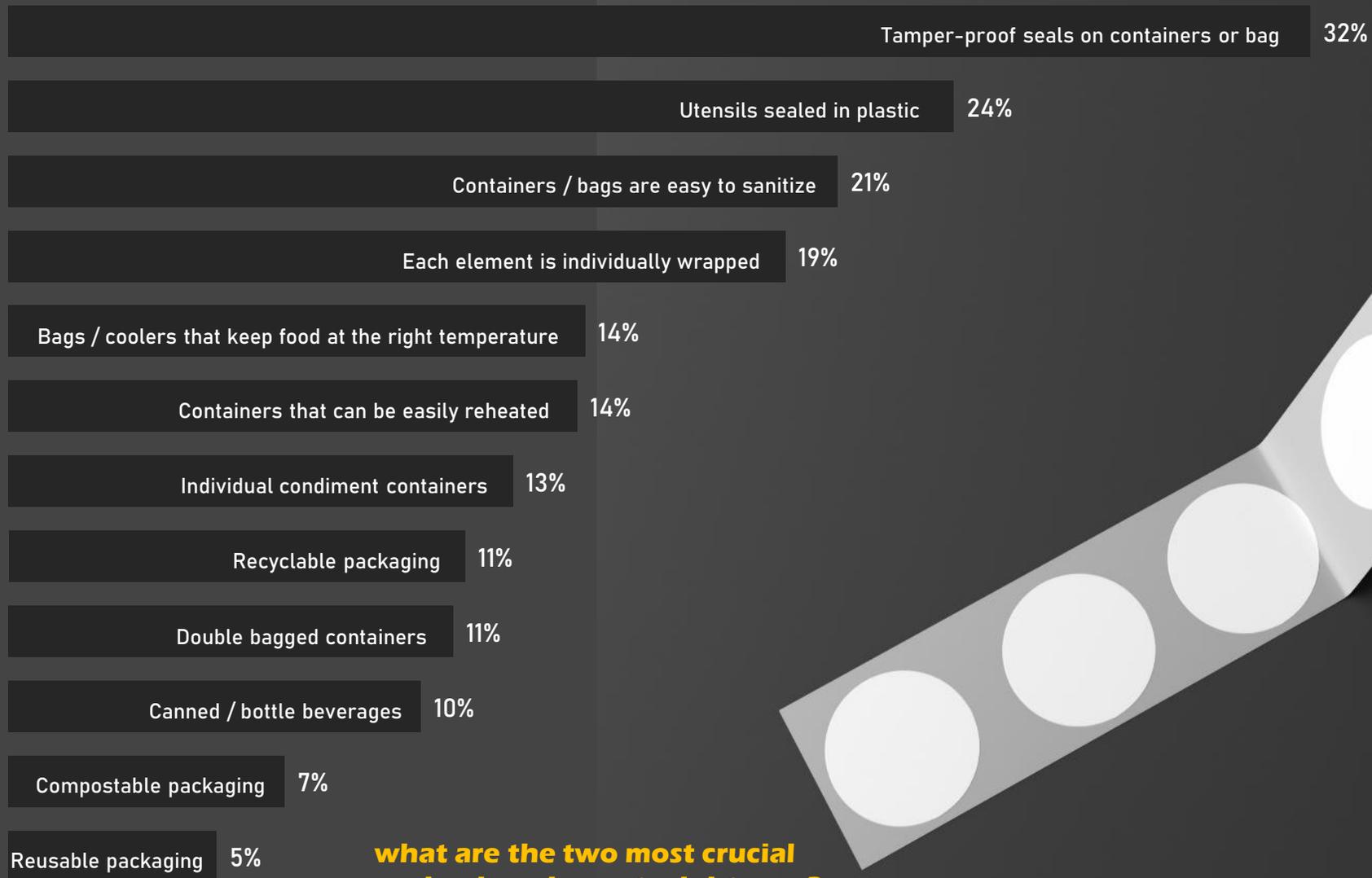


Self-serve areas may need to be reworked.

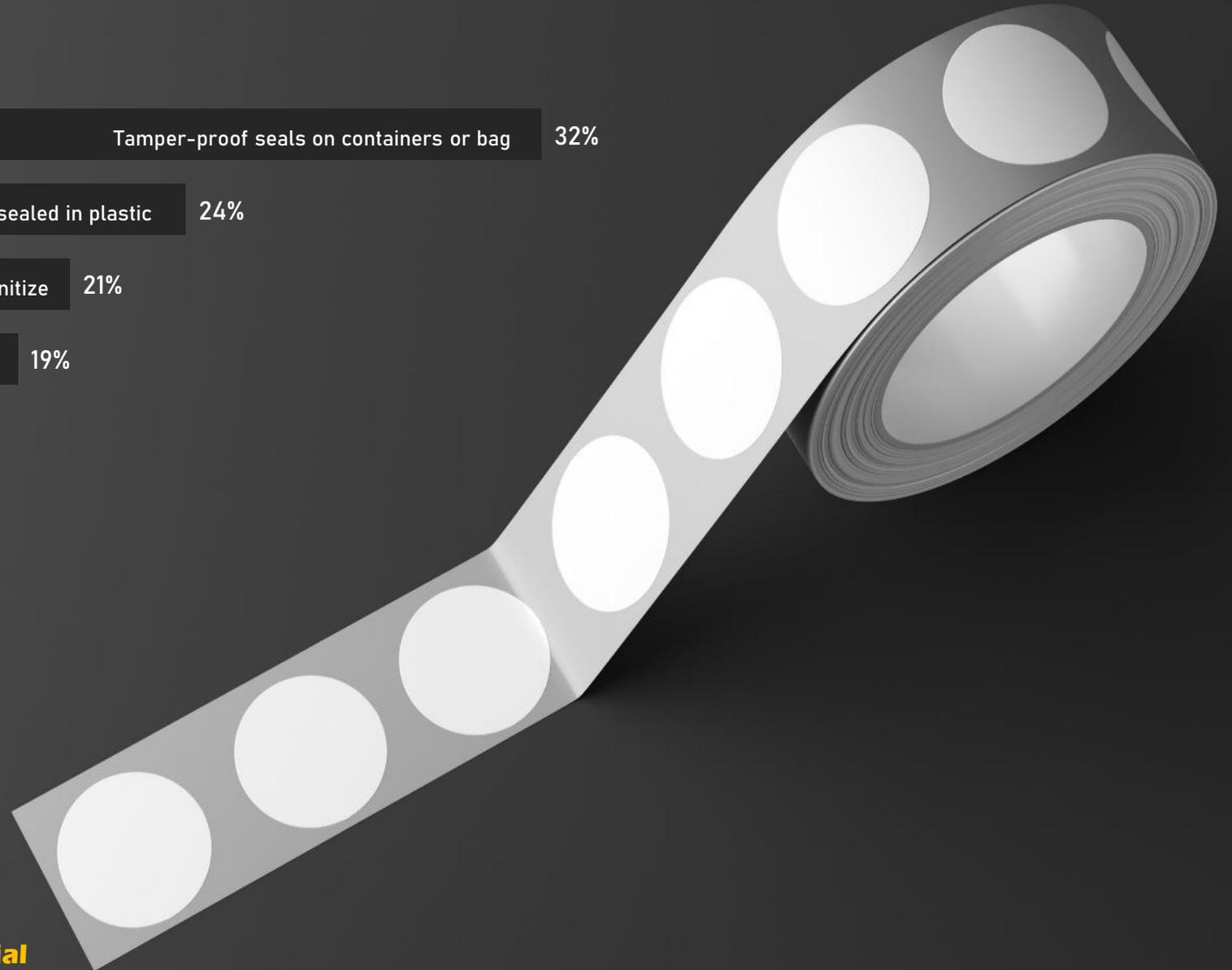


Which self-serve areas will you consider safe once shelter-in-place restrictions have lifted?

Secure packaging provides some reassurance.



what are the two most crucial packaging elements right now?





THREE

the future is **accelerated**



Temporary solutions offer benefits for the long run.

Necessity is the mother of invention, and COVID definitely forced us to get creative, with product shortages, excess restaurant inventory and the need to keep things contactless. Services early in their adoption curve like contactless payment were suddenly mandatory for consumers hanging onto the old way of doing things. Restaurants in desperate need of new revenue found ways to solve consumer problems like “pop-up provisioning” and family meals. In the end, things that seemed like a point-in-time solution ended up giving consumers a taste of innovative and easy solutions, that will now have staying power over the long term.

Restaurants can take advantage of this “window of opportunity” when consumers are actively seeking solutions and are quicker to adopt new ideas and technology, which normally would take much longer to catch on.

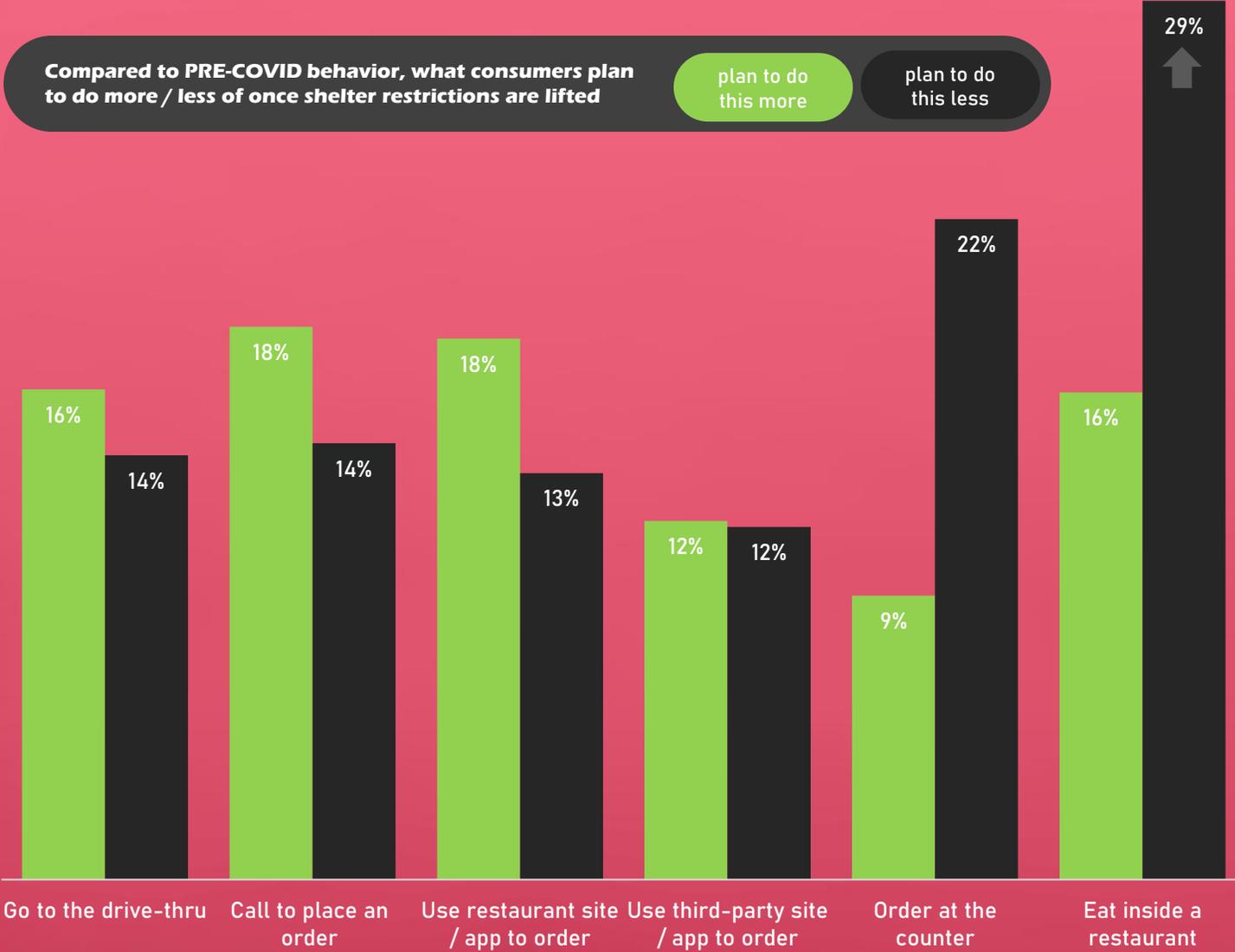
Diners will continue to opt for “contactless” takeout options, which are more convenient.



Compared to PRE-COVID behavior, what consumers plan to do more / less of once shelter restrictions are lifted

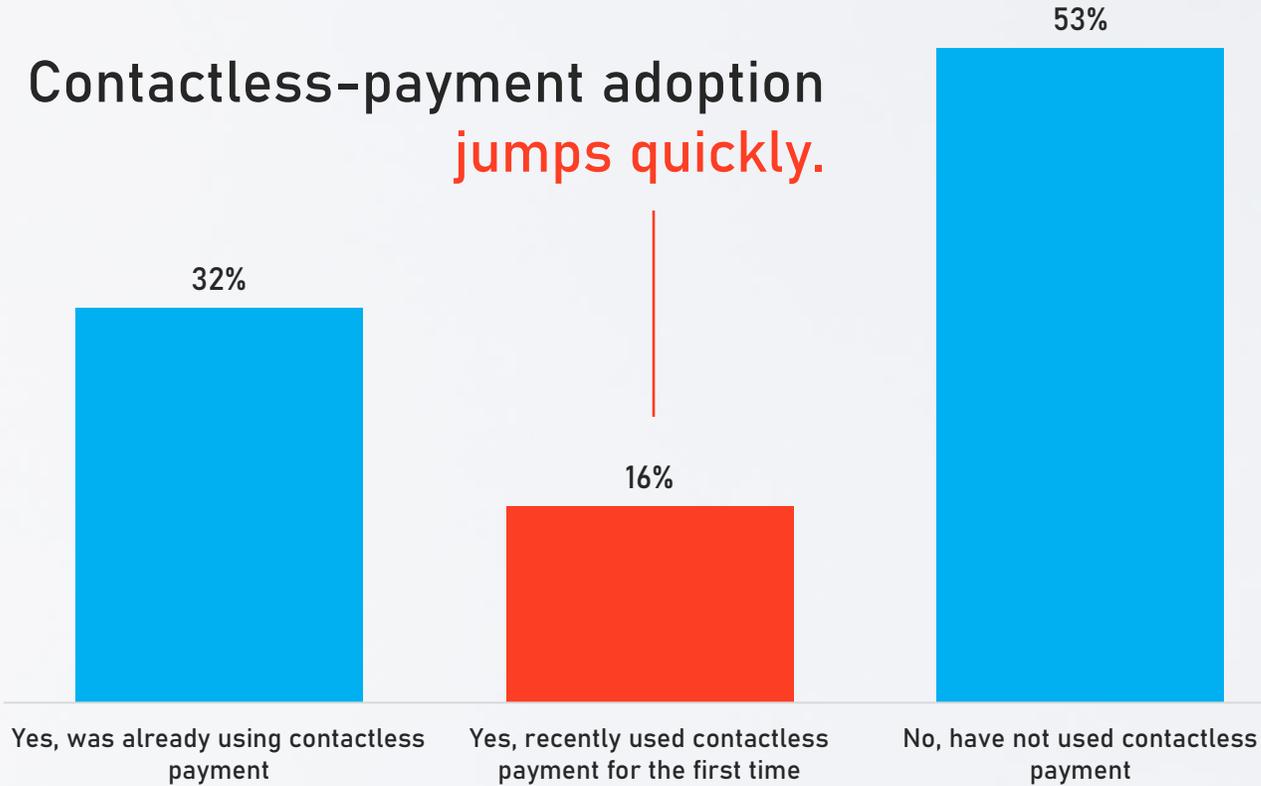
plan to do this more

plan to do this less



during shelter-in-place restrictions, have you tried any contactless payment methods?

Contactless-payment adoption jumps quickly.



Family meals have staying power.

42%

Have ordered a family meal bundle at least once during COVID

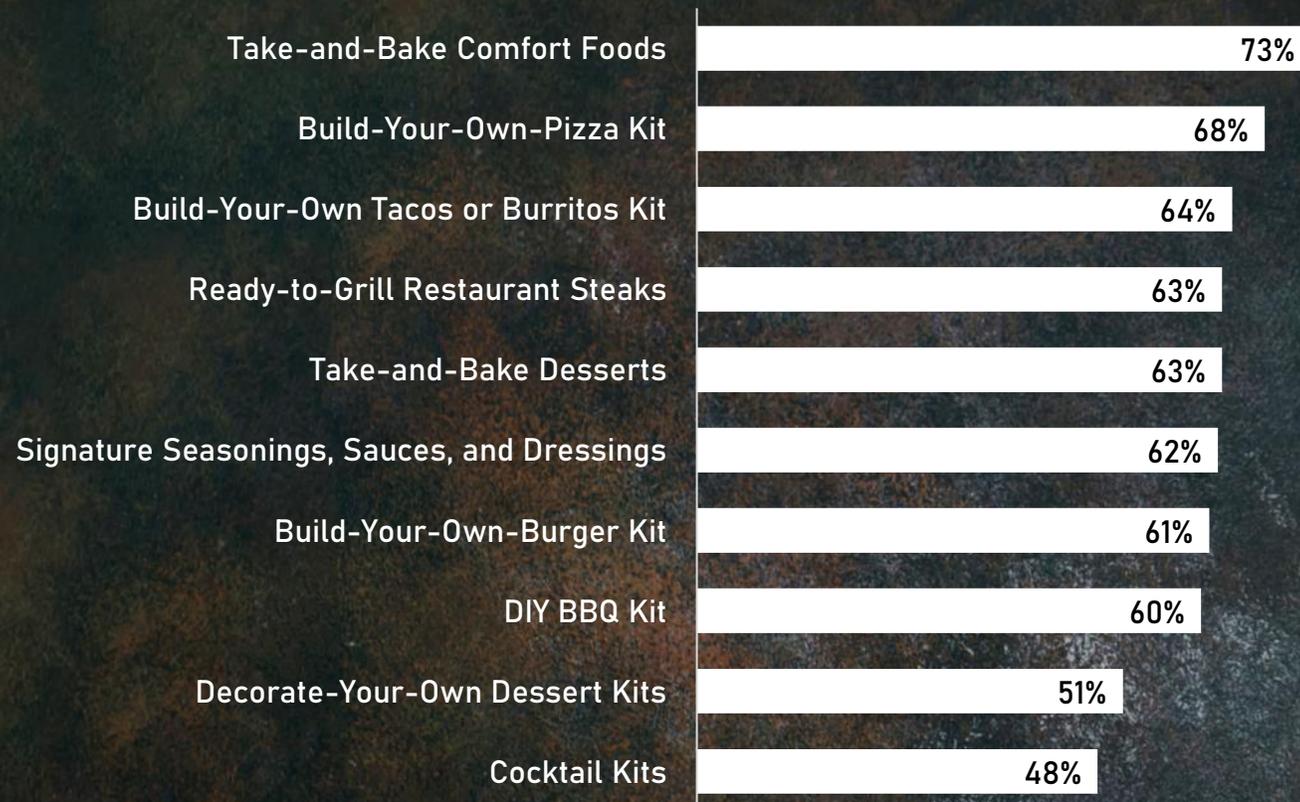
38%

Will likely continue ordering family meal bundles after COVID



DIY and “take and bake” restaurant meals offer a convenient way to prepare home-cooked fare.

(Top-2 box: “Very interested” or “somewhat interested”)



how interested are you in ordering these DIY/take and bake options from restaurants during COVID?

FOUR

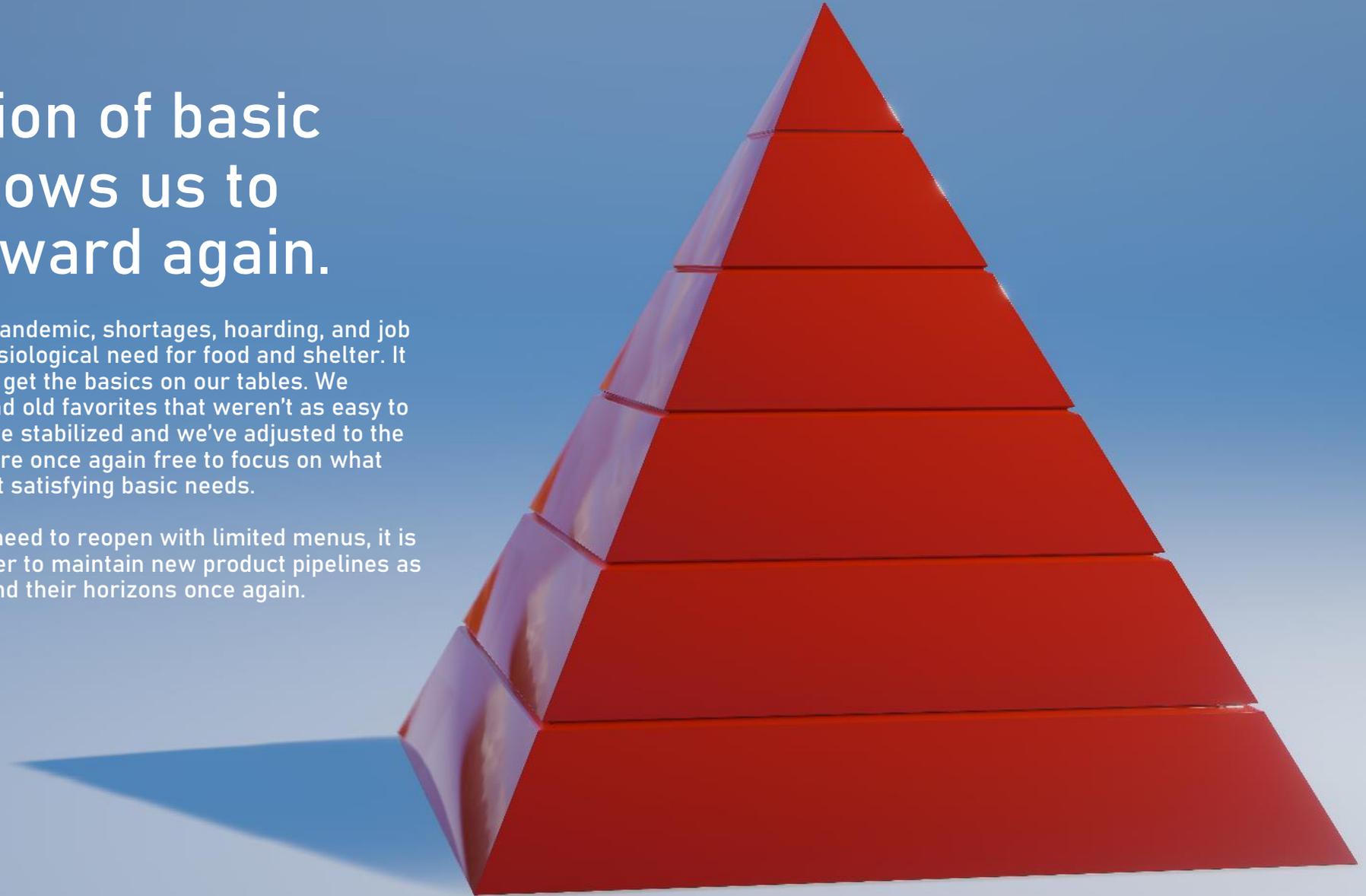
trends will continue to
blast ahead with speed



Satisfaction of basic needs allows us to move forward again.

In the beginning of the pandemic, shortages, hoarding, and job loss threatened our physiological need for food and shelter. It became an effort just to get the basics on our tables. We craved comfort foods and old favorites that weren't as easy to get. As these issues have stabilized and we've adjusted to the new "food normal," we are once again free to focus on what interests us, beyond just satisfying basic needs.

While restaurants may need to reopen with limited menus, it is more important than ever to maintain new product pipelines as customers look to expand their horizons once again.

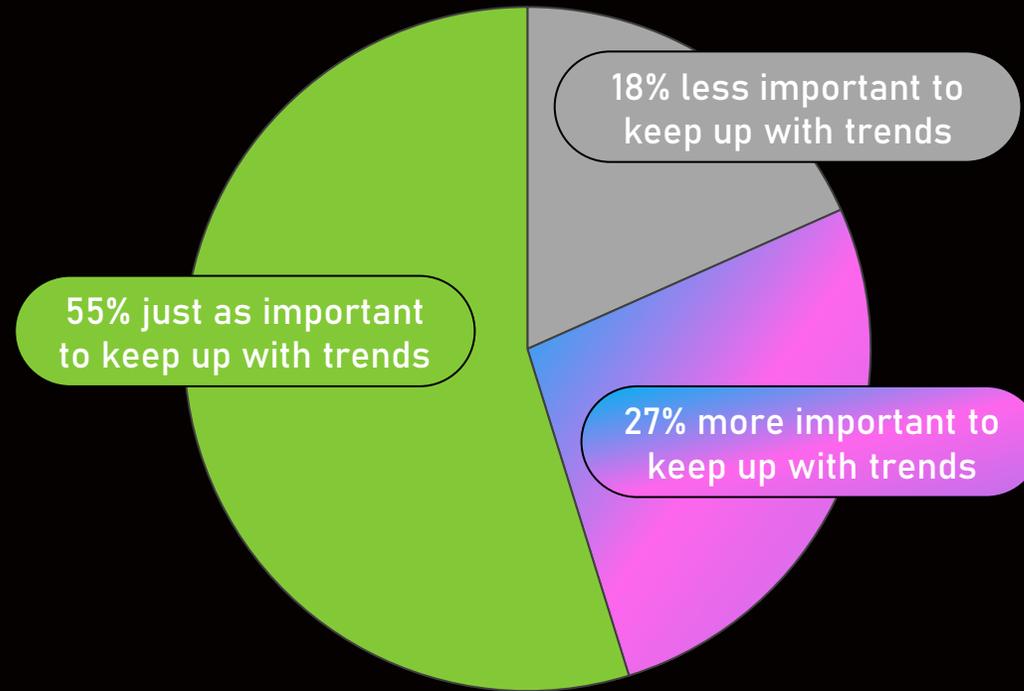


Pre-COVID food trends haven't lost their appeal.

of those interested in that trend PRIOR to Coronavirus,
% who think they'll still be interested after the pandemic



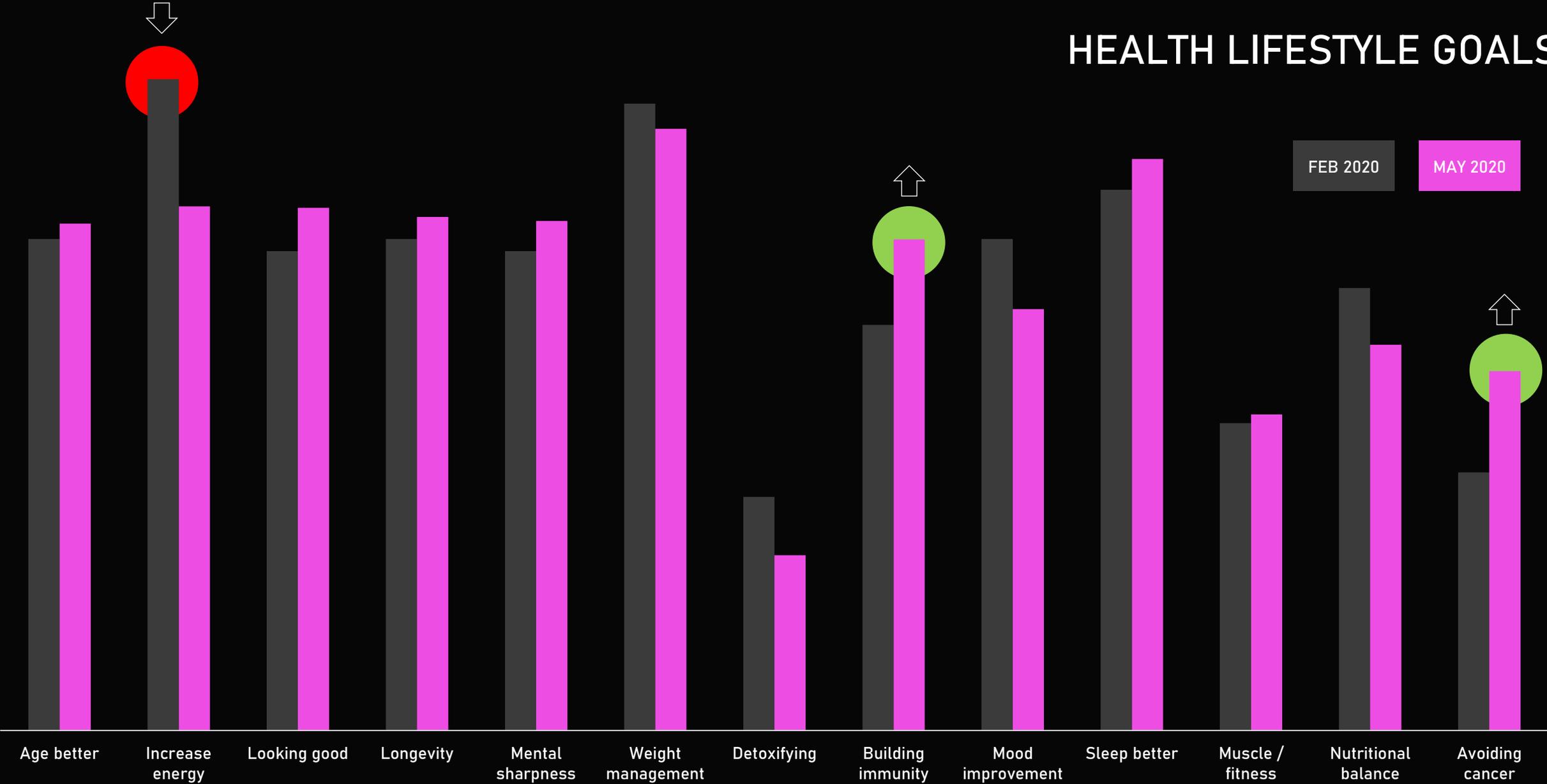
Operators are not slowing down with trends.



importance of trends post COVID-19

COVID-19 has boosted the importance of building immunity.

HEALTH LIFESTYLE GOALS



Restaurants can be an ally with disease-busting meal offerings.

do you agree with the following statements about immunity-boosting elements in your food?

I wish immunity-boosting foods/ingredients were an option at all the places I go out to eat	51%
I would only consider ordering immunity-boosting items from places that are known for healthy foods.	51%
I want immunity-boosting ingredients in everything I eat (burgers, burritos, pastas, pizza, etc.)	48%
I wish there was an option to add “immunity boosters” to foods or dishes that I order from a restaurant	47%
I wish there was an option to add “immunity boosters” to beverages that I order from a restaurant	45%
I would only consider ordering immunity-boosting items from places where I've seen them before	44%
I only want immunity-boosting ingredients in healthy foods or dishes (smoothies, salads, etc.)	43%
I only want immunity-boosting ingredients in drinks (smoothies, shakes, juice blends, etc.)	41%
I only want immunity-boosting ingredients in cold foods (smoothies, salads, raw foods, etc.)	36%



FIVE

an unprecedented
mindset of change





Flexibility is our best weapon to rise above pandemic challenges.

The pandemic has brought uncertainty into just about every aspect of our lives, and food has been front and center in this chaos. People have dealt with a multitude of new challenges, whether at the grocery store or when ordering take out. We've learned to settle for different brands than we are used to, to find alternate meal plans during shortages, and that restaurant meals now take some preplanning. Restaurant operators have taken extreme hits as well, with constant fluctuations in supplies, staff and sales. They have had to figure out new business models on the fly or risk shutting their doors for good. Through it all, we have learned that flexibility will make us more resilient to endure through these challenging times.

The need to be flexible has left diners more empathetic to restaurant challenges. Initially, their excitement to get back to eating in will outweigh any necessary sacrifices in their dining experience.

Restaurant meals have lost some of their spontaneity.

rate the following statements regarding any changes you've made with eating and living in response to COVID-19.

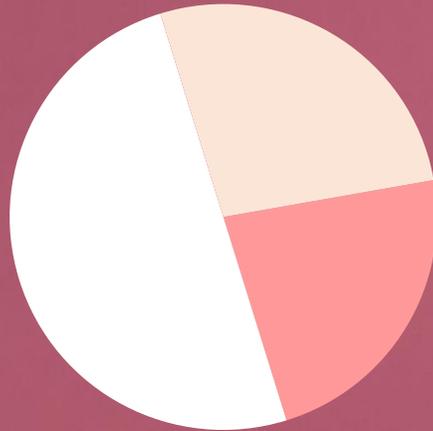


Find
Open
Restaurant!

But they're still worth the extra effort.

how do you feel about getting food from restaurants since the COVID shelter-in-place guidance began?

50%
WILLING TO TAKE
EXTRA STEPS
More likely among
HH's with kids (57%)



27%
TOO MUCH WORK
More likely among
HH income < \$50K (33%)

23%
JUST AS EASY AS
ALWAYS
More likely among
Millennials (31%)



Diners are empathetic to restaurant operators' COVID challenges.

Limited / reduced menu options	22%
Having to research which restaurants are open during coronavirus	19%
Long lines / waiting (in drive-thrus, for pickup, etc.)	18%
Food arrives cold / needs to be reheated	16%
Reduced or changed hours	16%
Prices seem higher than before coronavirus	16%
Foods you want that don't taste good for delivery / pickup	13%
Having to use third-party services (GrubHub, Uber Eats, Postmates, etc.)	12%
If no option for delivery (pick up only)	11%
Portions seem smaller than before coronavirus	10%
If no option to order online (have to make a phone call)	8%
Skimping on expensive ingredients (less meat, seafood, etc. in each dish)	7%
If no option for ordering ahead / pre-ordering	7%

which have been the most inconvenient aspects of ordering restaurant food?





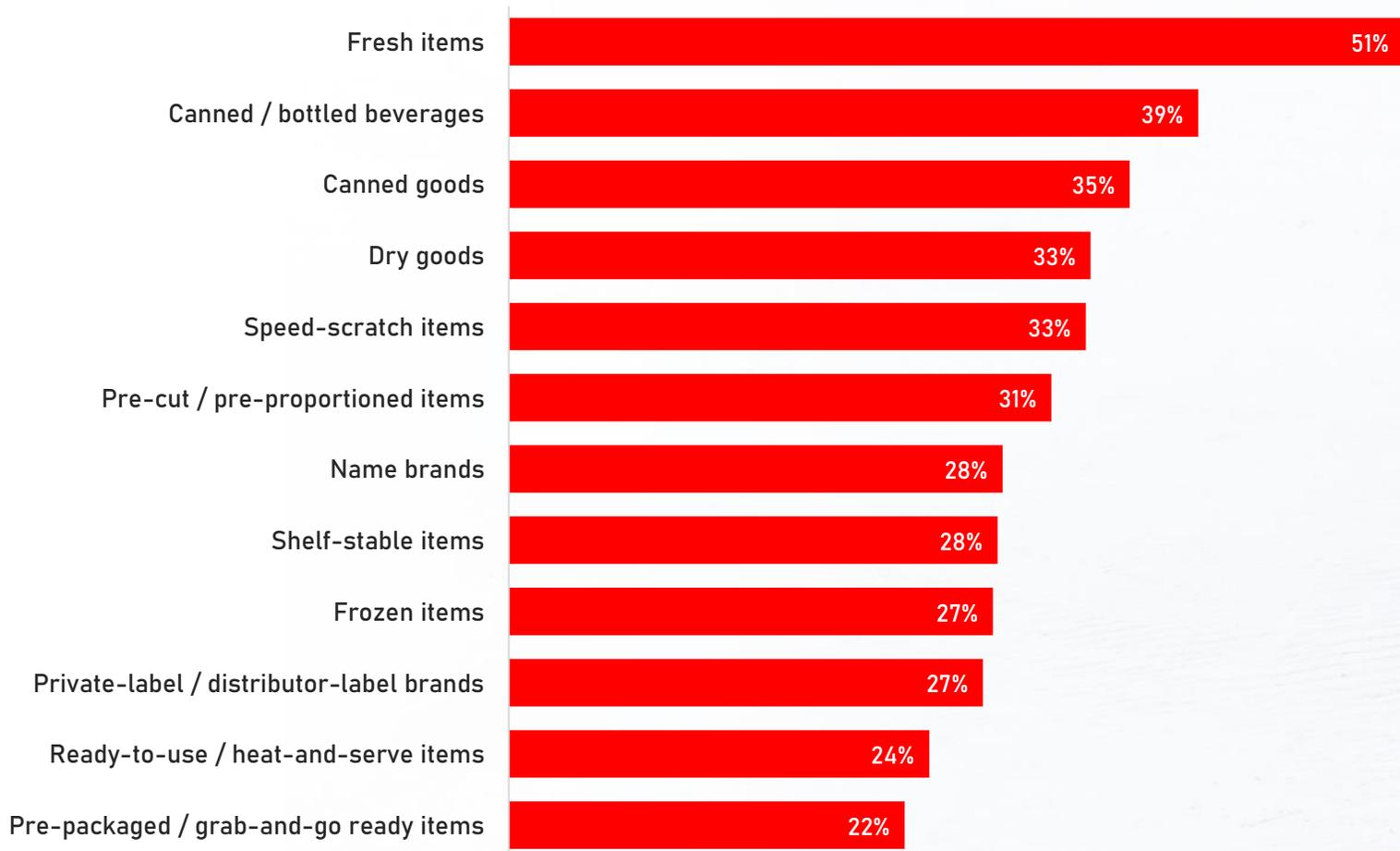
People will make sacrifices to dine in, even if it detracts from the experience.

How do you feel about these new precautions at restaurants?

	Agree	
Seeing precautions at restaurants makes me feel they take my safety seriously	78%	← More likely among Boomers (87%)
I'll do what's necessary because it is important to support restaurants in my community	72%	← More likely among Boomers (80%)
I don't mind new precautions - I'll make some sacrifices to eat in restaurants again	68%	
I wouldn't feel comfortable eating in restaurants without these new precautions	68%	← More likely among Boomers (77%)
I'd rather wait until things are more normal to enjoy a regular restaurant experience	62%	
I worry that precautions won't go away for a long time - eating out will never be like it was	58%	
Eating out just isn't the same - new precautions take most of the fun out of eating in restaurants	56%	
Precautions at restaurants remind me that we are in bad times and takes away from the joy	54%	
New precautions make it hard to socialize and be part of the community	54%	
Dealing with safety precautions makes it too much trouble to eat out in restaurants	52%	

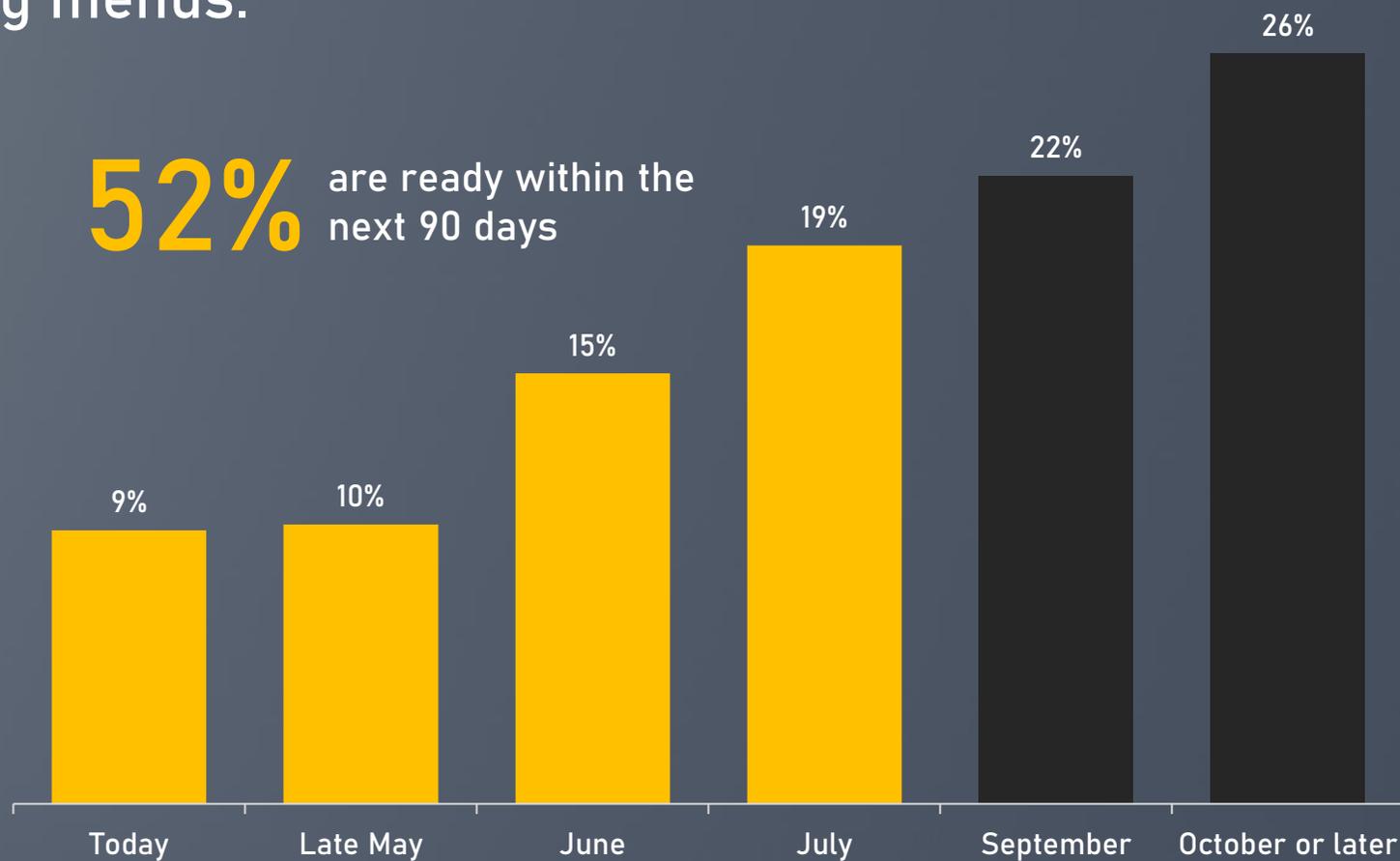
Operators seek options that provide more leeway as they figure out how best to reopen.

currently, during the covid-19 / coronavirus restrictions, which of the following product formats are you buying **LESS** of?

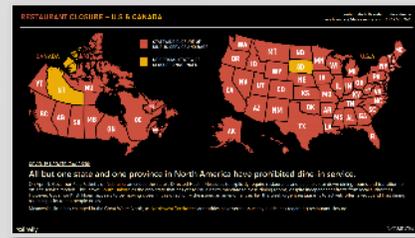


Suppliers have a role to play in enabling their clients to keep innovating menus.

52% are ready within the next 90 days



When will you be ready to talk to foodservice manufacturers about new products & innovation?



datassential.com/coronavirus

27 reports
19 interviews, videos & webinars
38 traffic briefings, maps, and more

