

COVID-19

report 34: **BACK IN THE GAME**

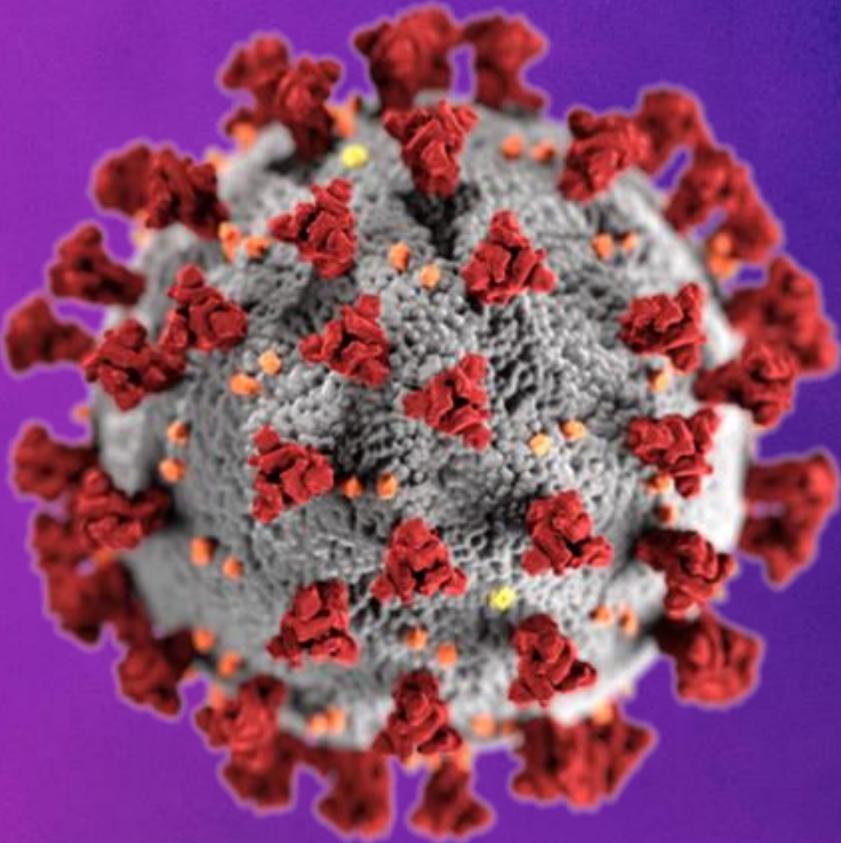
9.18.20



Like all other things 2020, the return of professional and collegiate sports has its own strange “new normal.” Pandemic safety measures like sports bubbles, no in-person attendance, and shorter seasons have been implemented to keep COVID spread to a minimum. While sports aren't quite what we're used to, after months in lockdown, Americans are excited to watch again. They offer a welcome distraction and a connection back to better times. While home is the safest place to watch these days, some are ready to return to small in-home gatherings. One thing that hasn't changed is the desire to make a few hours in front of the TV more of a festive event, complete with game day foods and alcohol. Fans are pre-planning, pre-shopping, and even treating themselves to restaurant food to celebrate their favorite sporting events.

How can restaurants and bars benefit from the return of sports, whether for carry-out occasions or bringing back fans to watch on premise?

Here are highlights from Datassential's latest wave of Coronavirus research, fielded September 11 with 500 US consumers.



RECENT KEY EVENTS



September 12

MLB mulls a "postseason bubble"
Unhealthy air from wildfires makes people more susceptible to COVID-19, report says
Prominent vaccine researchers say pausing a trial is unusual

September 13

WHO reports highest single-day increase in COVID-19 infections since pandemic began
Pfizer CEO says there is "a good chance" company will know if a vaccine works by end of October
MLB's Giants and Padres to resume play after false COVID-19 positive test

September 14

Genetics company says new study strengthens idea that blood type affects COVID-19 risk
Thousands of people received erroneous messages saying they tested positive for COVID-19
Coronavirus pandemic has worsened mental-health issues, expert says

September 15

The World Series will be played at a neutral site due to health concerns
Fauci says a national mask mandate "probably would not work"

September 16

Big Ten Conference reverses decision to postpone season and will play football in October
CDC study finds coronavirus rarely kills children, but minorities at higher risk
Study says Covid-19 may have arrived in US in December — earlier than previously thought

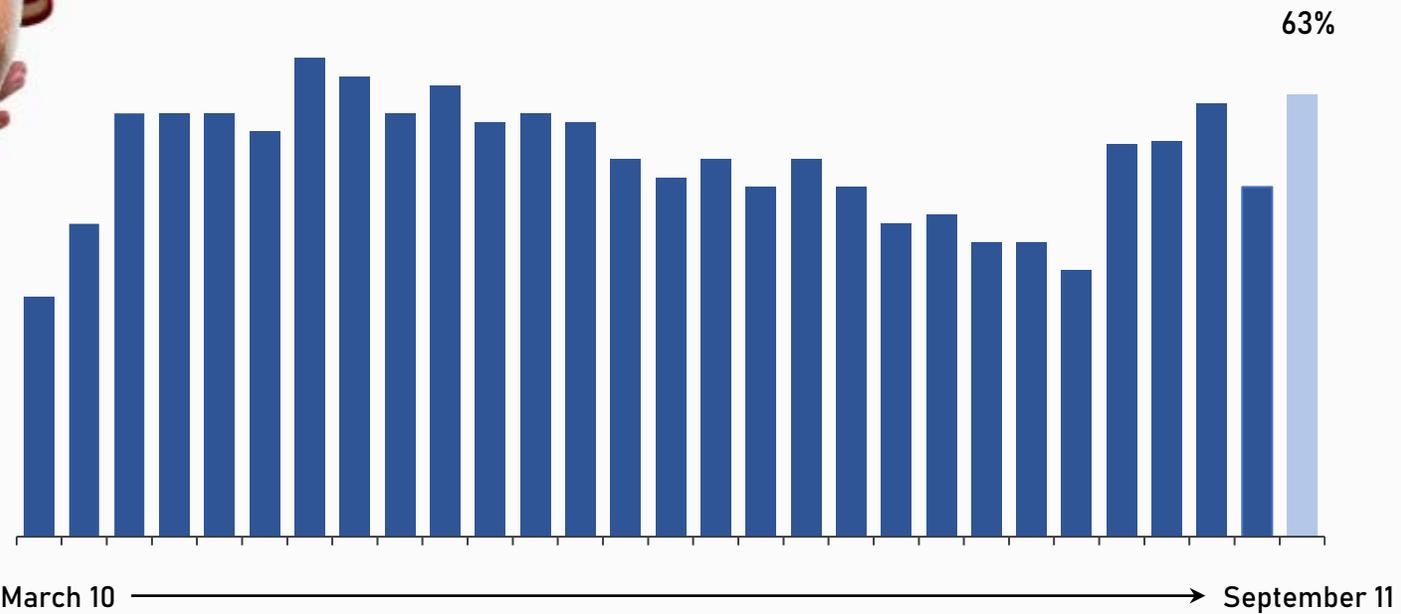
September 17

Another 860,000 Americans filed for unemployment benefits in previous week
World Health Organization warns of "alarming rates of transmission" across Europe
It will take up to nine months to get the American public vaccinated, CDC director says

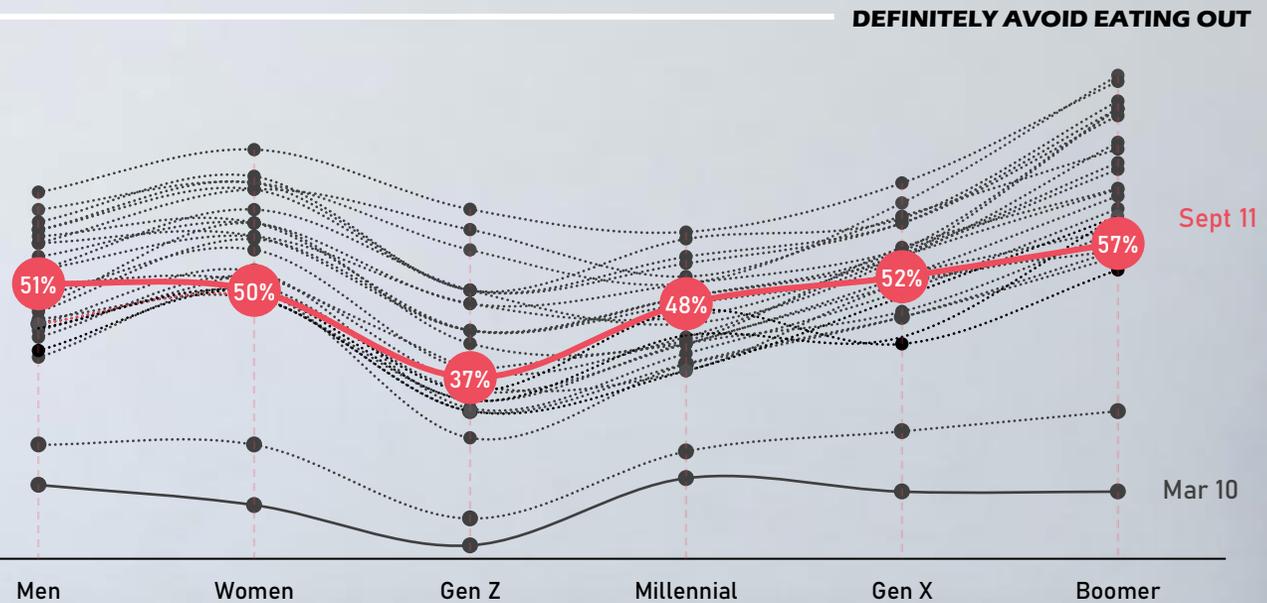


With cases rising in at least half of states, public concern has risen over the past month.

	May					June					July		Aug.		Sept.
	1	7	14	19	22	1	3	5	9	15	17	23	14	18	11
Very concerned	54%	56%	53%	56%	53%	49%	50%	47%	47%	44%	58%	58%	62%	53%	63%
Somewhat concerned	37%	35%	38%	37%	37%	40%	38%	41%	39%	42%	33%	35%	31%	35%	30%
Not concerned	9%	10%	9%	7%	11%	11%	11%	13%	14%	14%	10%	7%	7%	12%	7%

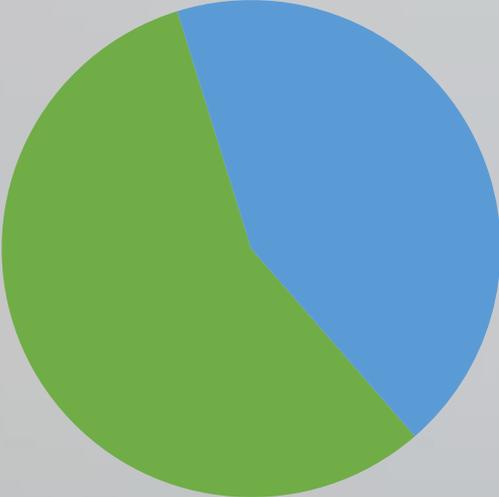


Avoidance of eating out has remained steady over the past month, but is growing among male consumers and Gen X.



Health concerns remain top priority.

which are you more concerned about?



57%
PUBLIC-HEALTH CRISIS
-4% since August 18
-6% since April 7

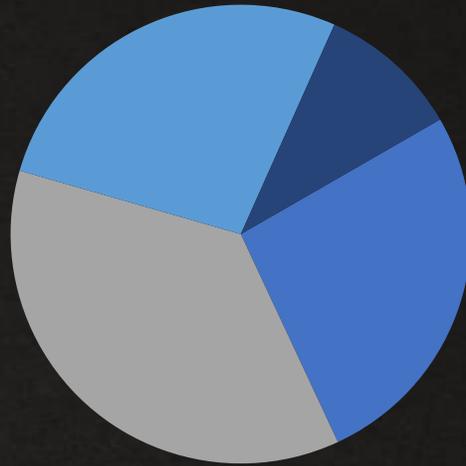
43%
ECONOMIC CRISIS
+4% since August 18
+6% since April 7



With flu season threatening a “twindemic,” Americans are still at home.

which of the following best
describes your current situation?

27%
STILL GOING TO
SCHOOL/WORK AS NORMAL



10%
LAID OFF /
FURLOUGHED

36%
WORKING OR ATTENDING
SCHOOL REMOTELY

26%
NOT WORKING
OVERALL

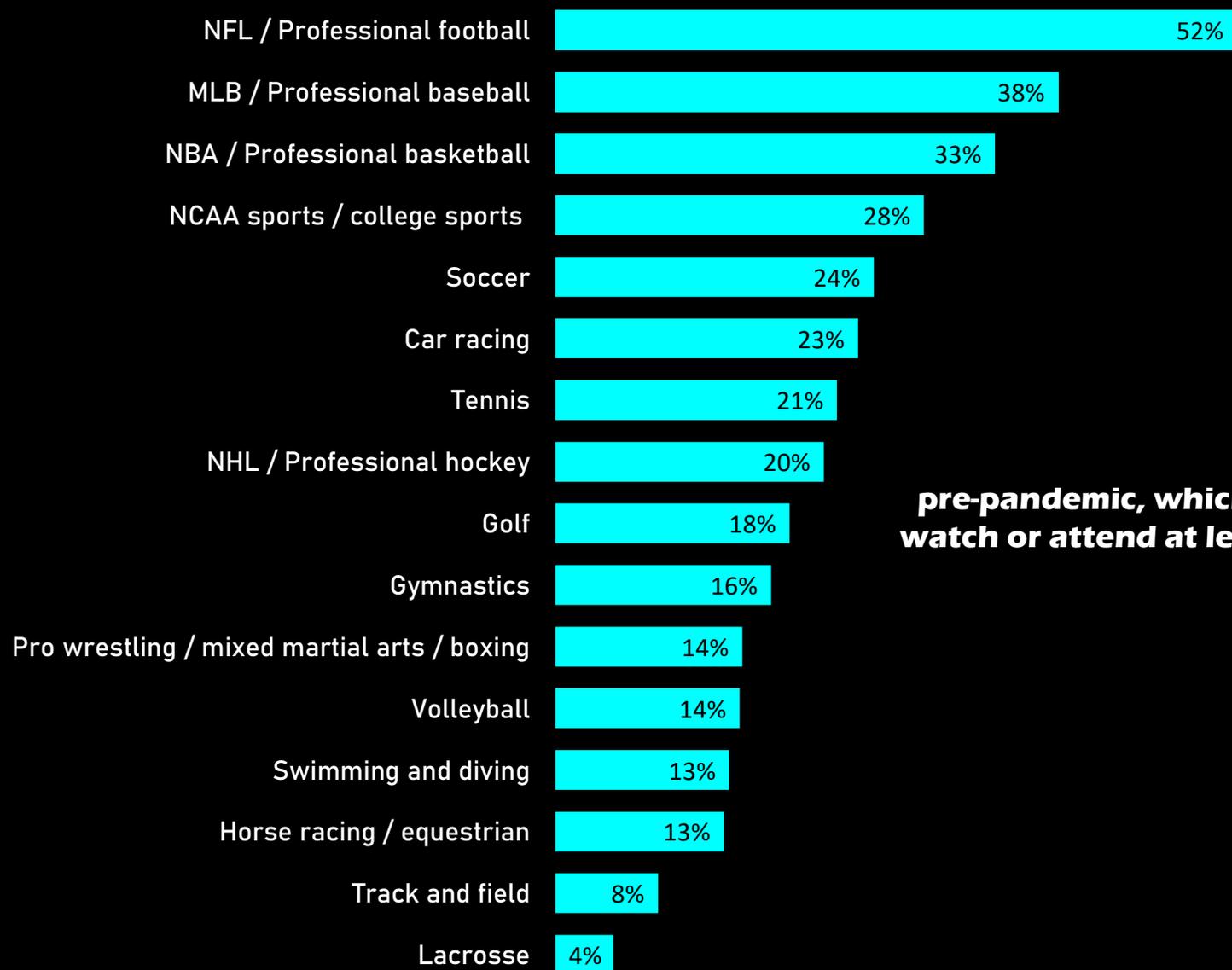


Activities like sports help us feel back on our game.

As the pandemic lingers on, lockdown has left our worlds feeling very small. Completely shutting in is not realistic over the long term. As we slowly learn to navigate this new way of living, we are grateful for activities we can get back: Shopping for non-essentials. Eating in restaurants. Our beloved sports. Most aren't the same and that's okay. Their return helps our worlds start to feel whole again.

In a time when fans are ready to celebrate more than ever, restaurants and bars have an opportunity to be part of game day meal rituals with sports-themed meals and promotions.



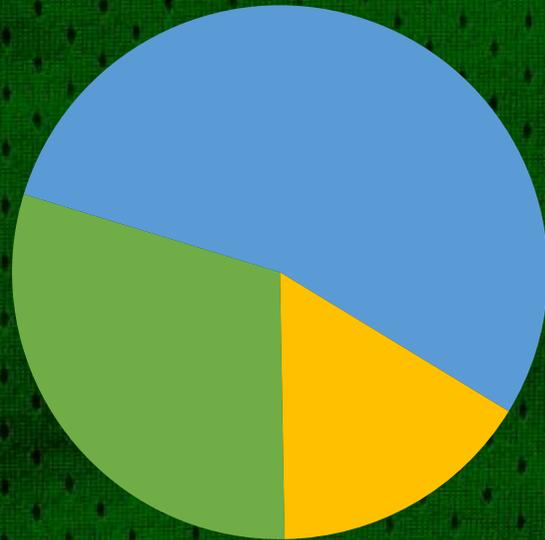


pre-pandemic, which sports did you watch or attend at least occasionally?



Americans are ready for sports, even if they're a little different.

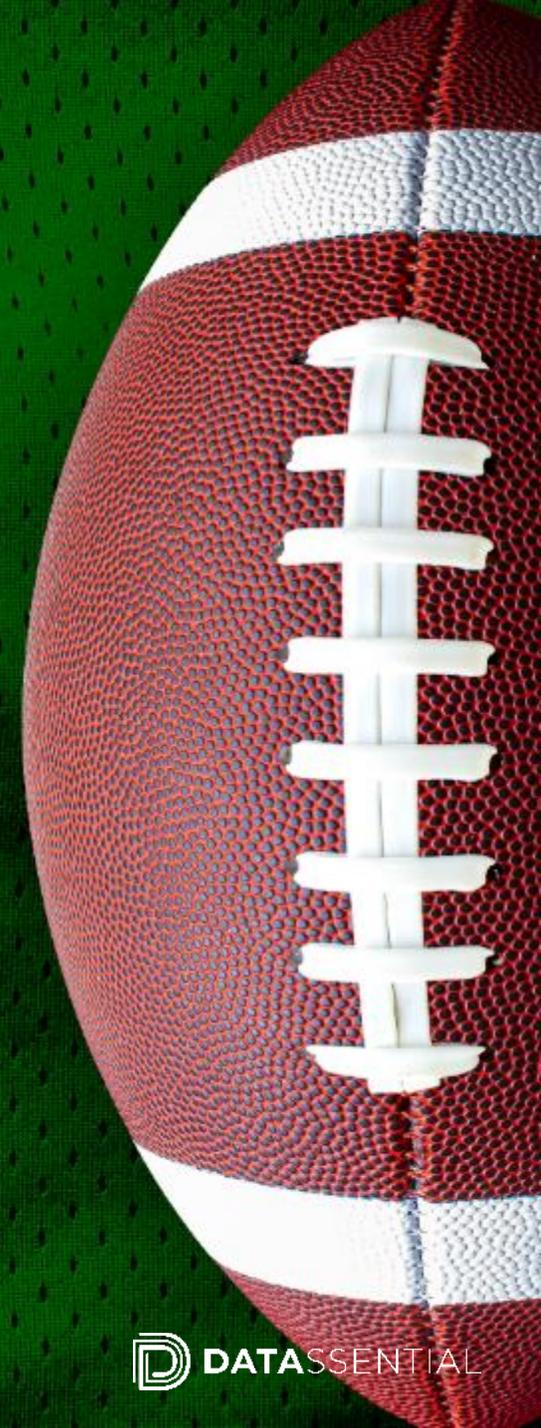
how do you feel about the restarting of sports with the new pandemic safety rules?



54%
Sports aren't the same, but I'll watch them

30%
I don't care, I'm just excited to have sports back

16%
I'll stop watching sports until things are back to normal



WHAT HAS THE RETURN OF SPORTS MEANT TO YOU DURING THE CORONAVIRUS / COVID-19 PANDEMIC?

"I like being able to really be immersed in the games and still enjoy watching in this crazy time."
- a 23-year old woman in Cary, NC

"Helps to alleviate boredom, provides much needed entertainment and feeling of normalcy."
- a 48-year old woman in Montgomery, TX

"I can spend some quality time with my family and friends at home while watching the game."
- a 29-year old woman in Richmond, TX

"I can actually place myself in the state of mind as if COVID-19 never happened."
- a 47-year old man in Muncie, IN

"It has become more exciting and fun to watch in an unprecedented time."
- a 28-year old man in Brooklyn, NY

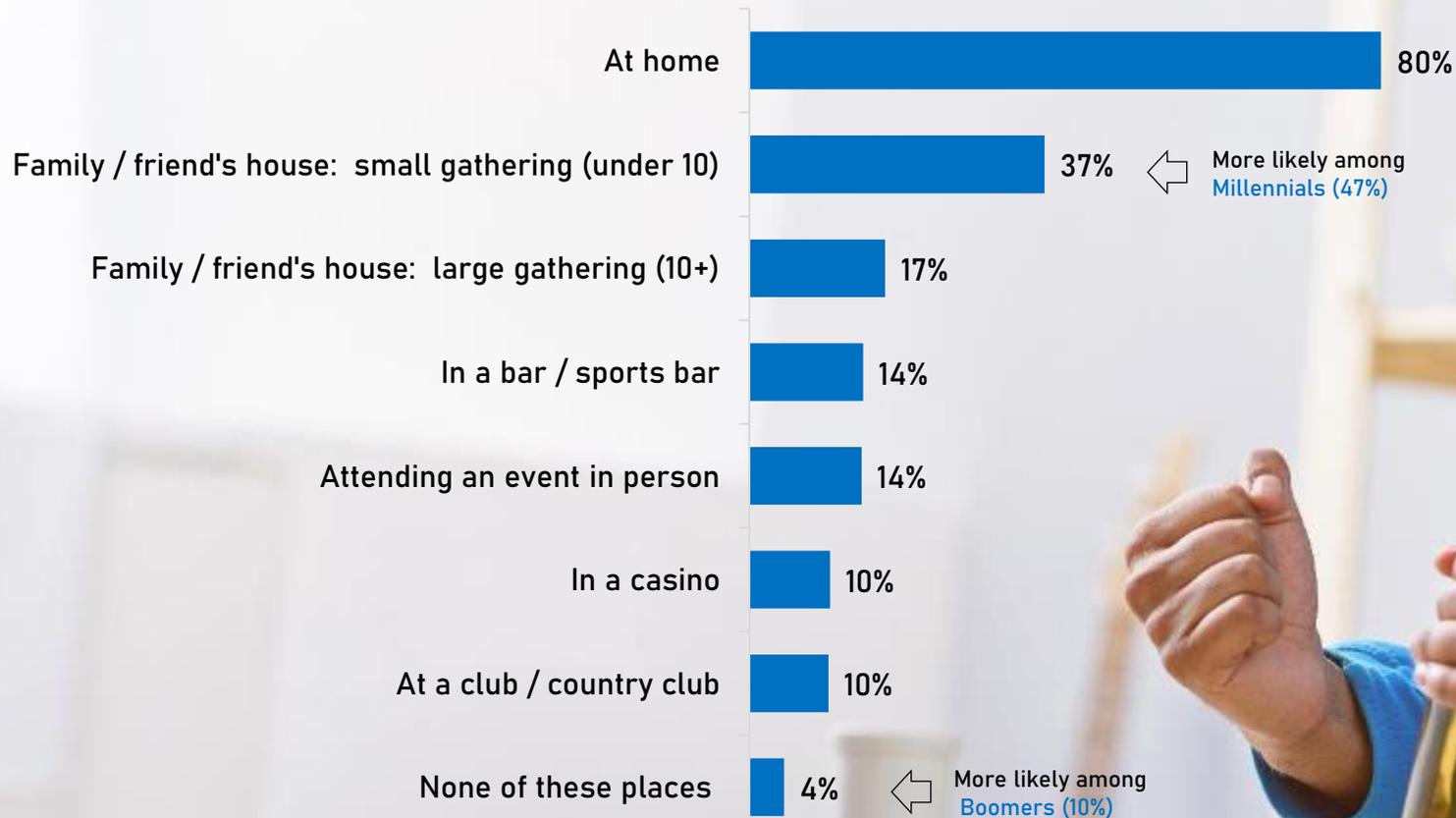
"We need the fans back. It's just not the same."
- a 68-year old man in Chicago, IL

"It's a reason to go out to a bar or restaurant."
- a 25-year old woman in Appleton, WI



Almost half of Millennials are comfortable watching sports in small gatherings.

where would you be comfortable watching sports during the COVID pandemic?



Simple safety precautions may help ease some people back to restaurants and bars for games.

While the pandemic still has many hesitant to return to bars and restaurants to watch sporting events, most haven't completely ruled it out. Following CDC recommendations around social distancing, sanitation, and protective gear will help boost comfort levels for some. Outdoor seating and restricting opportunities for shared food and drinks can also help to alleviate concerns.

what would a bar / restaurant need to do to make you feel comfortable watching a sporting event on premise during the pandemic?

Social distancing of tables and common areas	44%	
Perform extra cleaning / sanitation	40%	
Restrict the number of customers	38%	
Restaurant employees wear protective masks and gloves	36%	
Require customers to wear masks when not eating or drinking	36%	
Offer outside seating with outdoor TVs	33%	
Use disposable cups / plates / utensils for beverages and food served	26%	← More likely among Hispanics (42%)
Restrict usage of self-serve equipment like a popcorn machine	24%	
Restrict shared drink equipment (beer pitchers, water carafes)	22%	
Restrict shared appetizers and snacks	21%	← More likely among African Americans (33%) and Gen Z (37%)
Nothing, I am comfortable now / have already gone into bars	6%	← More likely among Midwest (13%)
Nothing, under no circumstances would I go into these places right now	24%	← More likely among Boomers (40%)



Game day meals while watching at home are much more than a random trip to the fridge.

Watching sports at home is more than just a few hours of TV. For sports fans, it's an event. Game day meals are an important part of the festivities, and not just any food will do. More than half of sports fans are preplanning, pre-shopping, and making special meals. Close to two-thirds are cooking homemade food, preparing special snacks, or even replicating what they might get at a stadium. Good news for restaurants: Most fans see it as a special game day treat.

thinking about food and alcoholic beverages you consume at home while watching sports, please rate the following....

	TRUE	
I use whatever food I have in the house for meals / snacks	73%	
I like to cook homemade food	68%	
I like to eat food / snacks similar to what I would get at a stadium	64%	← More likely among African Americans (88%) and Gen Z (79%)
I like to prepare special game-time snacks	63%	← More likely among Millennials (73%) and Northeast (74%)
I like to order restaurant food as a special treat	61%	← More likely among Millennials (74%)
I preplan and make special trips to the store for food or alcohol	57%	
I prefer to drink alcoholic beverages	54%	← More likely among Millennials (67%)
I usually make a special trip to purchase alcohol	44%	← More likely among Millennials (53%) and Northeast (60%)



Restaurants and bars can be more competitive with sports-themed meals and promotions.

Most fans express some interest in sports-themed meals and promotions from restaurants and bars. Meal kits/"take and bakes" and themed family meals are most popular among Gen Z and Millennials.



how interested are you in the following special "game day" meals or promotions for carry-out or delivery?

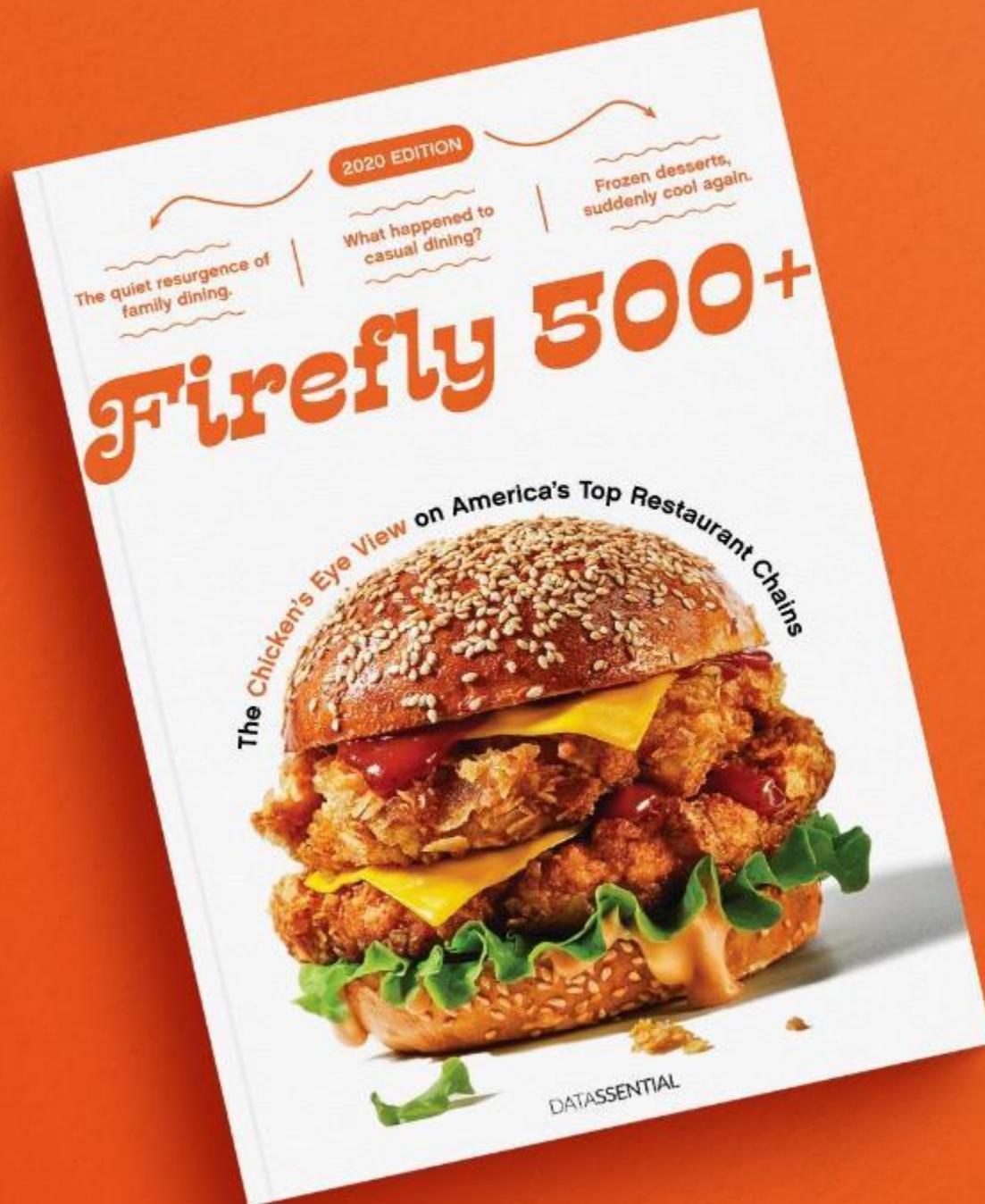
	DEFINITELY Try	MIGHT Try	Would NOT Try
Free food or drinks if the home team scores a certain number of points	46%	38%	17%
Sports-themed family meals: large-sized entrée + choice of sides	40%	43%	17%
Sports packages : choose from multiple hot snacks + alcoholic beverages	38%	37%	25%
Meal kits or "take and bakes" to prepare restaurant meals at home	36%	44%	20%
"To go" cocktail kits	33%	32%	34%



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.





America's chain restaurant landscape, reframed in the age of COVID-19.

Datassential's recently-released Firefly 500+ Report dives deep into the metrics of chain restaurant success: annual sales, unit counts, and AUVs; year-over-year growth numbers; and consumer insights from SCORES and BrandFingerprints. This year, the report also includes custom research about COVID-19's impact on the chain restaurant landscape, compiled from March to early May.

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.

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