

New survey on COVID-19 suggests 52% of Canadians intend to avoid restaurants for the foreseeable future

HALIFAX, NS. (June 9, 2020) – Since the beginning of the COVID-19 crisis, the food service industry has been struggling to survive, trying to serve customers through food delivery apps and take out service. As provinces loosen regulations in the coming weeks to allow restaurants and other food service establishments to open, many people wonder whether Canadians will return to businesses that have been all but abandoned for three months.

A recent survey conducted by **Angus Reid** sheds light on the question. A total of 1,505 Canadians were surveyed in early June and asked if they had been ordering food from restaurants during the pandemic, and if they intended to return to their old habits afterwards. The survey also measured consumer expectations over the next few months.

Results suggest many Canadians kept ordering food regularly from restaurants during the pandemic. A total of 64% of Canadians have ordered food at least every two weeks from a restaurant (**Figure 1**). **Saskatchewan** has the highest rate of respondents who ordered during the pandemic, at 76%. The **Atlantic** region has the lowest, at 58%. Younger people were more likely to order out from a restaurant. A total of 81% of respondents between the ages of **18 to 34 years old** had ordered from restaurants, the highest rate among age groups. About 29% of Canadians ordered from restaurants at least once a week, and 9% have ordered food once a week since the beginning of the pandemic.

Sylvain Charlebois, the lead author of the report mentions that “Canadians appear to have never given up on restaurants, but when you’re at home, there are limitations to enjoying food prepared by a restaurant.” Canadians clearly did not forgo the privilege of consuming food from restaurants while staying at home. A total of 83% of Canadians ordered from their favourite restaurant during the pandemic (**Figure 2**).

When Canadians were asked whether they were planning to avoid some restaurants because they consider some to be of higher risks to their own health, results were also interesting. A total of 52% of Canadians intend to avoid restaurants to protect their own health (**Figure 3**). Physical layout appears to be the most important issue for people. A total of 26% of Canadians intend to avoid restaurants for this reason. About 10% of Canadians say they will avoid establishments due to their food safety reputation. And about one fifth, or 22% of Canadians will avoid establishments for an **undisclosed reason**. This shows that even when businesses reopen, they will need to work hard to gain back the confidence of customers. **British Columbia**, at 56%, has the highest rate of respondents who intend to avoid restaurants due to public health concerns, followed by **Ontario** at 55%. The lowest rate is in **Saskatchewan**, at 37%.

Howard Ramos, Professor of Sociology and one of the report's collaborators, notes that "people say they won't rush back to restaurants, but almost everyone plans to go back eventually. This will be hard for SMEs who may already be on the brink of failing, and it means gift cards or other means of supporting them in the reboot is needed."

The survey also asked when Canadians intend to go out and visit restaurants (**Figure 4**). Just 18% of Canadians intend to visit a restaurant as soon as possible. However, 33% of Canadians are planning to wait until the **second COVID-19 wave** is over. This means that businesses will continue to suffer a lag in business for some time to come. **Quebec** has the highest rate of respondents wanting to go to a restaurant as soon as possible, at 26%. Respondents in **Ontario** appear to be most concerned about a potential second COVID-19 wave, as 43% of Ontarians plan to wait until such a second wave has occurred. Alberta ranks second in being most concerned by a second wave, at 33%.

When Canadians were asked what they expect to see when they visit a restaurant as they reopen, 78% said they expect to see more personal protective equipment worn by staff, 60% expect to see more plexiglass. At the same time, 36% of Canadians expect **slower service** and 29% expect **menu changes** or fewer choices. Interestingly, a total of 12% expect to see **mannequins and dolls** to fill seats to make an establishment look full.

Most respondents, 64% of Canadians, intend to visit an **independent restaurant** when things reopen (**Figure 5**). While 39% intend to visit a well-known franchise or an outlet which is part of a franchise, 33% are planning to go to a bar or a pub. The survey also asked what Canadians miss the most about not going out to a restaurant (**Figure 6**). Lastly, spending time with family and friends was the most popular answer, at 37%. A total of 22% of Canadians believe just being outside the house is something they have missed during the pandemic.

End of report.

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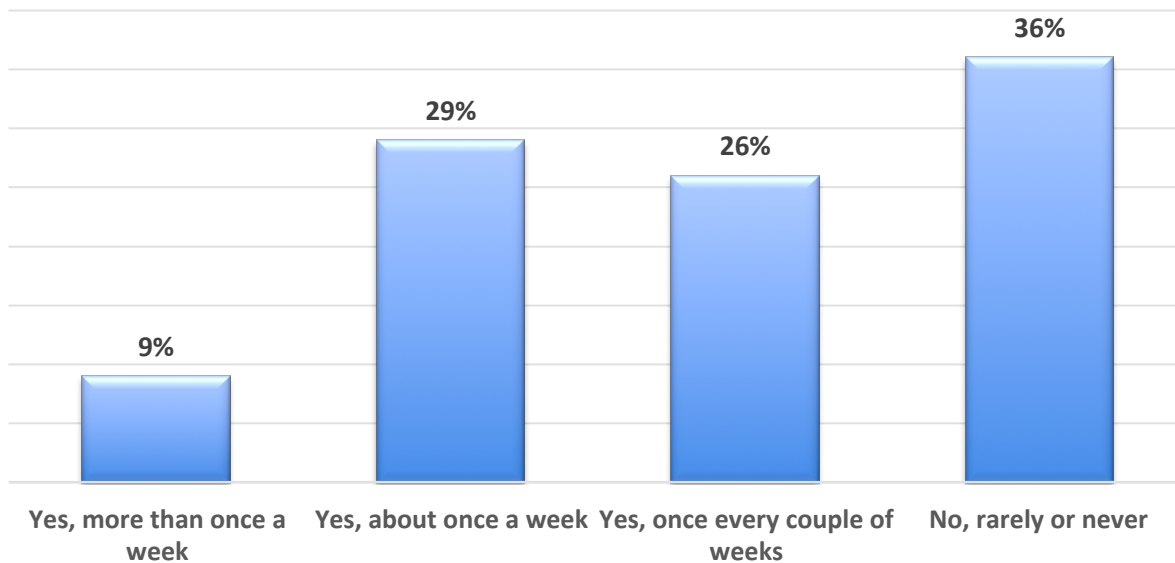
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**Figure 1: Have you been ordering from restaurants
since quarantine began?**
(Angus Reid (2020))



**Figure 2: Have you ordered from your favourite
restaurant(s)?**
(Angus Reid (2020))

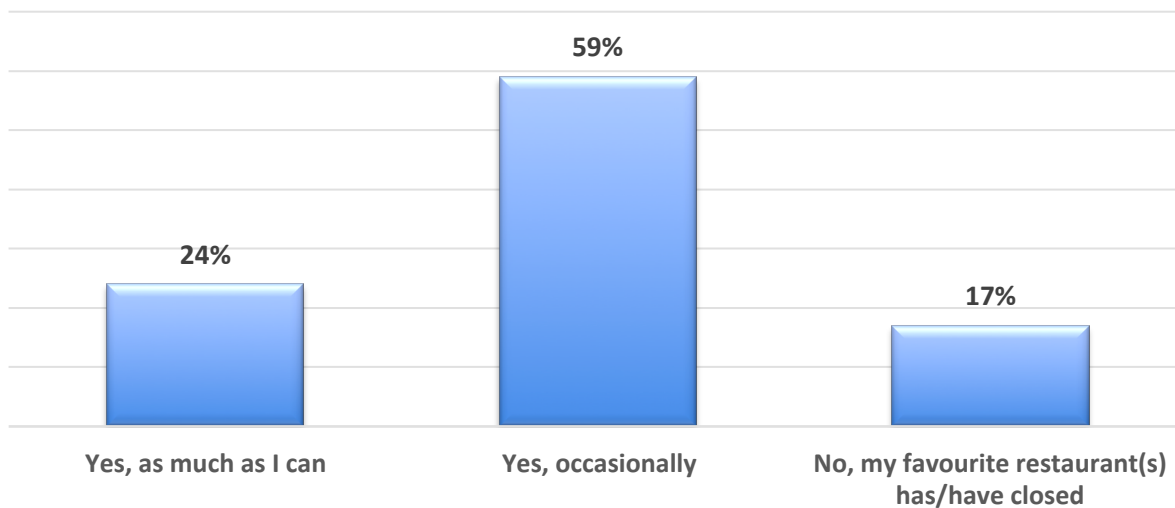


Figure 3: As provinces work to open their economies, including food service, are you planning to avoid some restaurants because you consider some to be of higher risks to your own health?
(Angus Reid (2020))

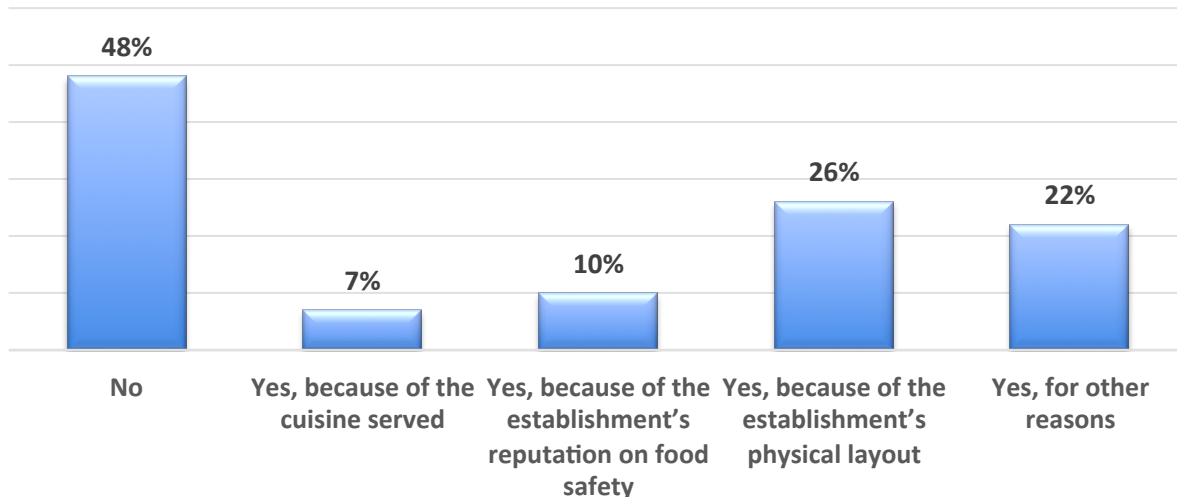


Figure 4: When do you plan to go out and eat at a restaurant?
(Angus Reid (2020))

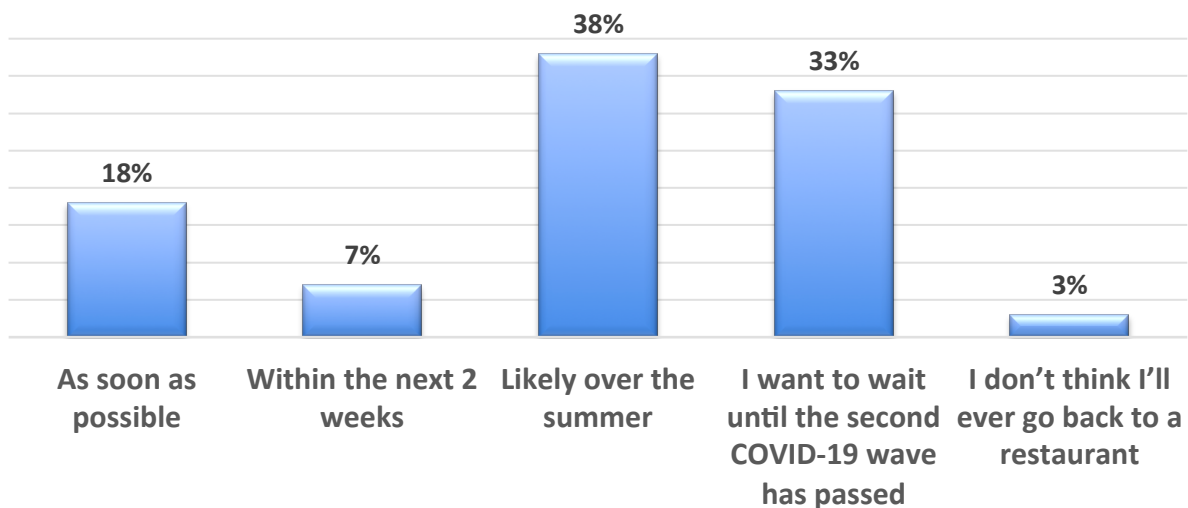


Figure 5: What kind of restaurant(s) are you planning to visit during your first outing(s)?
(Angus Reid (2020))

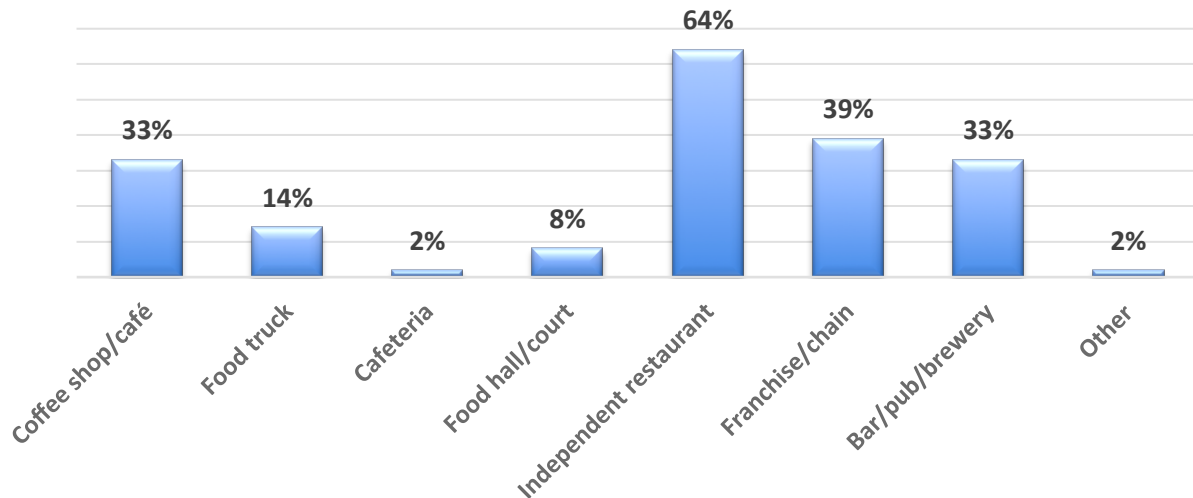
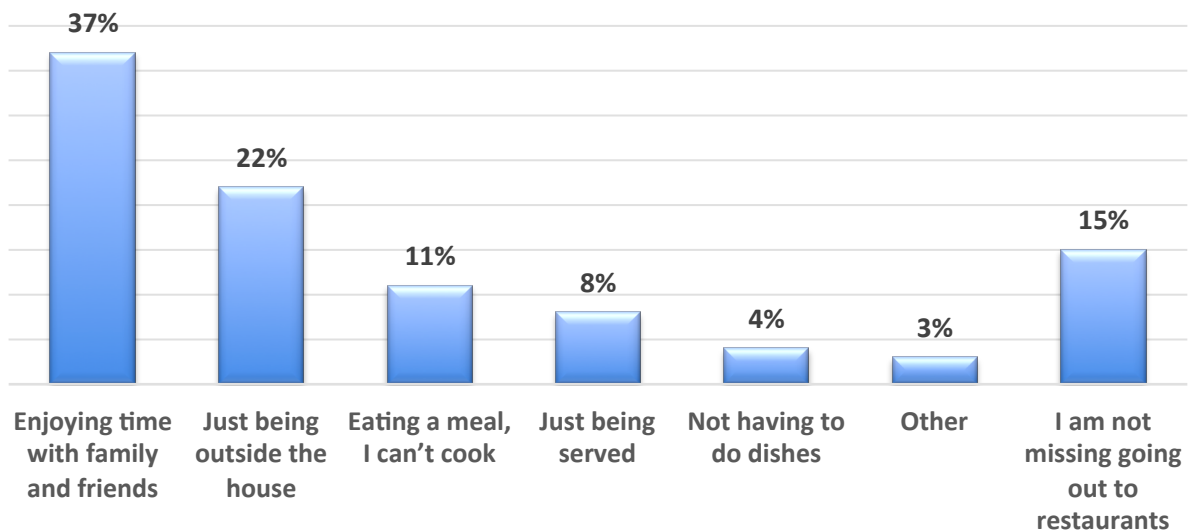


Figure 6: What are you missing the most about going out to restaurants?
(Angus Reid (2020))



Methodology: A total of 1,505 Canadians were surveyed in June 2020. National Omni, Angus Reid, June 2, 2020. The sample carries a margin of error of +/- 3.1 percentage points, 19 times out of 20. Margin of error does not apply to regional results. Discrepancies in or between totals are due to rounding. More data is available upon request.

Disclosure: Funding for this survey was provided by Angus Reid and Dalhousie University. Data is owned by Angus Reid.