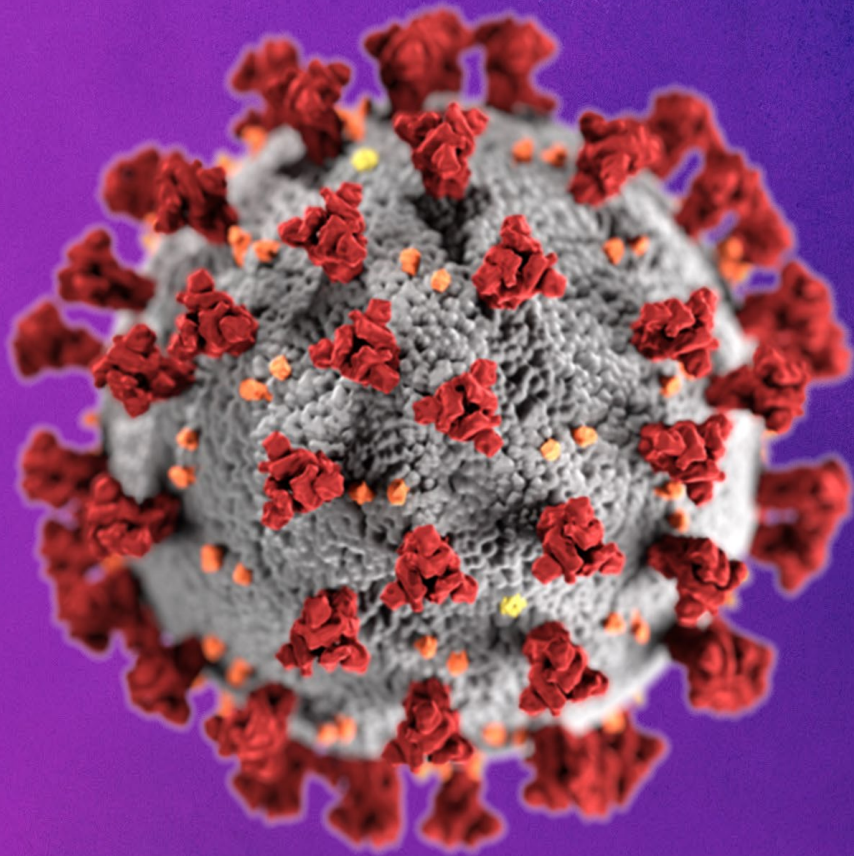




COVID-19

report 14: **THE TRUST ISSUE**

4.20.20



More than ever, it's a time of mixed messages for the US. Some states are turning corners, while those without stay at home orders are experiencing huge spikes in COVID-19 cases. President Trump has announced plans for a phased reopening, tentatively targeting May 1, while governors are saying, "We'll do it when we are ready." Once-touted hydroxychloroquine is causing some fatalities when used as a Coronavirus treatment, while Gilead's experimental treatment is showing promise. Even with a plateau in sight for some states, health experts say a new wave of COVID may arrive in the fall. While Americans are, in theory, more than ready to return to life as usual, the reality is that they are fearful. The conflicting information and political infighting have only left consumers less trusting. People see governments' role in COVID food-related issues as limited and will take their strongest cues as to when it's safe to return to "normal" eating activities from the medical experts. Even then, as we have been seeing in our research throughout the crisis, consumers will take precautions, since they don't feel they can trust their safety to others, whether businesses or fellow diners and shoppers.

As we speed toward a reopening, what can restaurants do to foster an even greater trust with their customers and encourage dining out again?

Here are highlights from Datassential's latest wave of Coronavirus research, fielded April 15 with 1,000 US consumers.



KEY EVENTS SINCE THE LAST FIELDING ON APRIL 13

April 14

30 food and grocery store workers have died from Coronavirus, union says
American Medical Association calls Trump's move to put a hold on WHO funding "dangerous"
More people are leaving New York hospitals than arriving, doctor says
US surpasses 600,000 Coronavirus cases

April 15

PA Senate passes a bill to allow businesses to reopen if they meet CDC guidelines
27 New York Police Department staff have died from Covid-19
Los Angeles mayor unveils plan to reopen the city
Trump threatens to adjourn Congress during pandemic if judicial nominees aren't approved

April 16

California will offer paid sick leave for food workers
White House gives governors guidelines on reopening economy
New York state reports an additional 8,505 Coronavirus cases
Midwest governors will work in coordination to reopen the region's economy

April 17

US stocks log second straight week of gains
Illinois reports largest number of new Coronavirus cases in past 24 hours
California is in "pandemic-induced recession," governor says
Chef Wolfgang Puck says testing is key to reviving restaurant industry

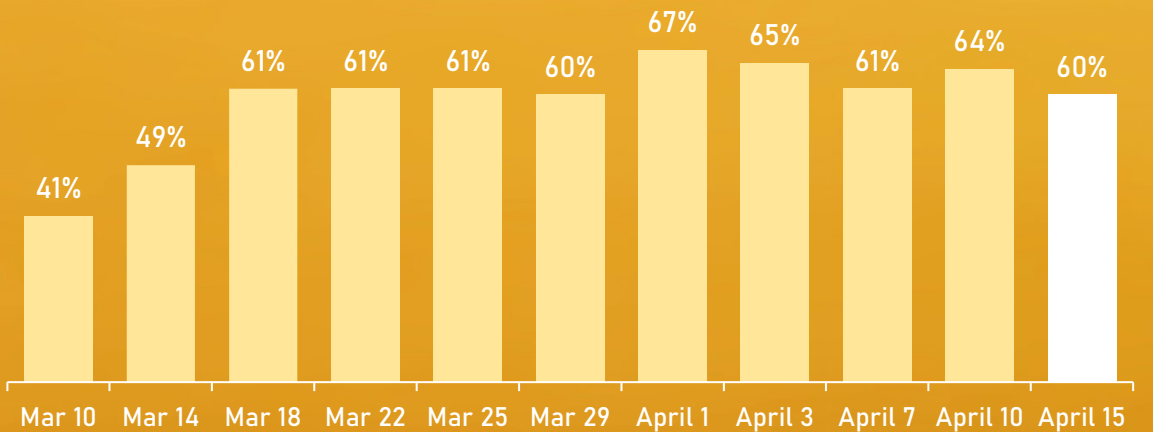


Concern is consistent with March levels.

Despite some talk about reopening the economy, concern levels are still high. Consistent with March and early April levels, two-thirds of Americans remain very concerned and hugely worried about their own personal health.

very concerned with Coronavirus

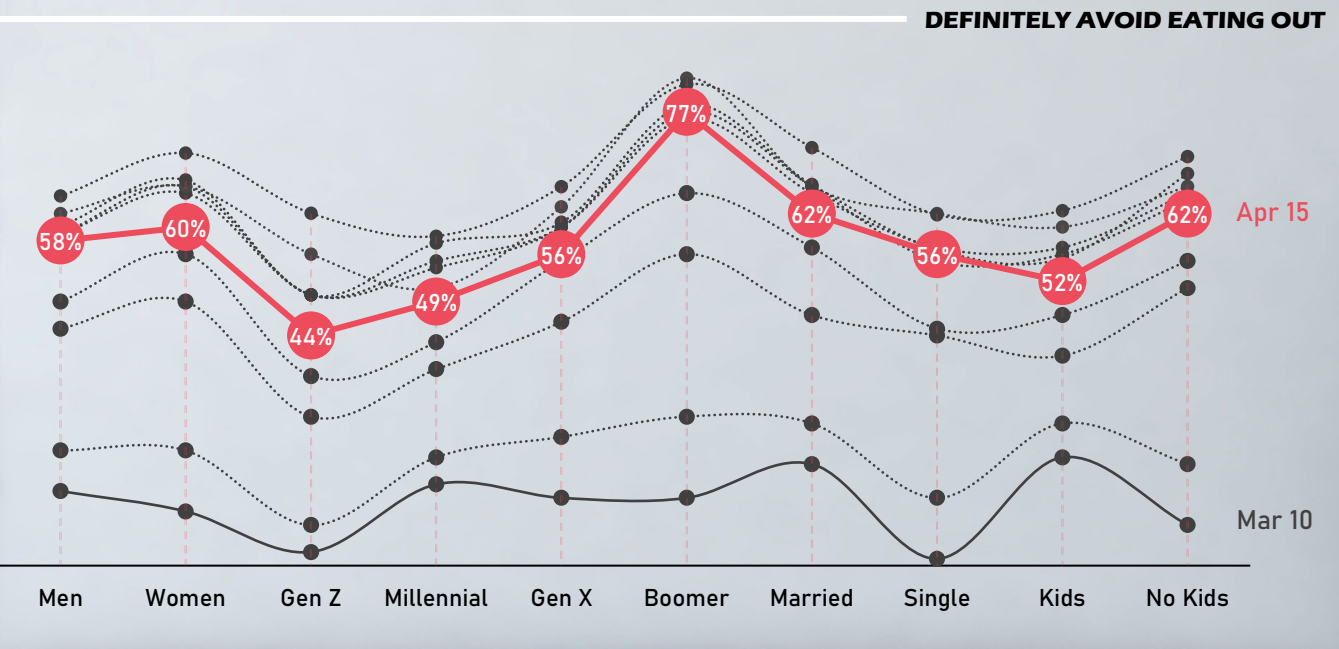
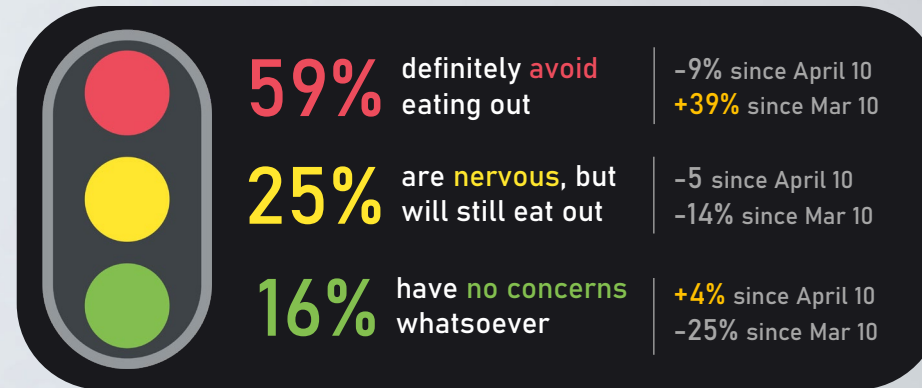
	Mar 10	Mar 14	Mar 18	Mar 22	Mar 25	Mar 29	Apr 1	Apr 3	Apr 7	Apr 10	Apr 15
Very concerned	41%	49%	61%	61%	61%	60%	67%	65%	61%	64%	60%
Somewhat concerned	49%	42%	34%	35%	34%	33%	28%	28%	34%	31%	35%
Not concerned	10%	8%	5%	4%	5%	7%	5%	7%	6%	5%	5%





Avoidance of eating out trending down for the first time.

Even though dining in restaurants is still banned across almost all of the US, consumer fear and avoidance is trending down for the first time since the pandemic began. Talk of reopening the country and leveling the curve in some states may be helping to alleviate concerns. Significant decreases in avoidance can be seen across all demographics.



Consumers will also take a phased approach toward getting back to “normal.”

For as excited as Americans are to get back to the life they knew, it is not without some trepidation. It will take time to rebuild comfort and trust that every day life can be safe again. So, not unlike plans to reopen the country, consumers will progress through their own comfort phases to move back toward life pre-COVID. Some Americans are ready to jump back in today, while others will need the comfort of continuing COVID precautions. And while most will look to the medical experts for the go-ahead, they will also look for cues and milestones to trust that it's OK to move forward. It could mean no new cases locally, seeing others out socially with no repercussions, or even a promising cure or vaccine.

Operators will need to follow guidelines to reassure customers, but tactics that go beyond sanitation and social distancing will also help rebuild trust and may even speed up the “comfort timeline.” Acknowledge that customers have different needs with tactics like special senior seating or designated hours. Continuing carryout options even after dining rooms reopen may be a way to re-engage with those who have been wary of eating out.



Americans will take their cues from trusted health sources.

People will look to trusted health sources to determine when it's safe to return to normal eating activities like going out to restaurants and bars and grocery shopping regularly. While there is some trust in government, especially on the local level, almost half do not trust President Trump as a resource. Mainstream news media also ranks low as an authority. Men are more trusting of the federal government, President Trump, physicians and the mainstream news. Boomers are more likely to trust their primary care doctors.

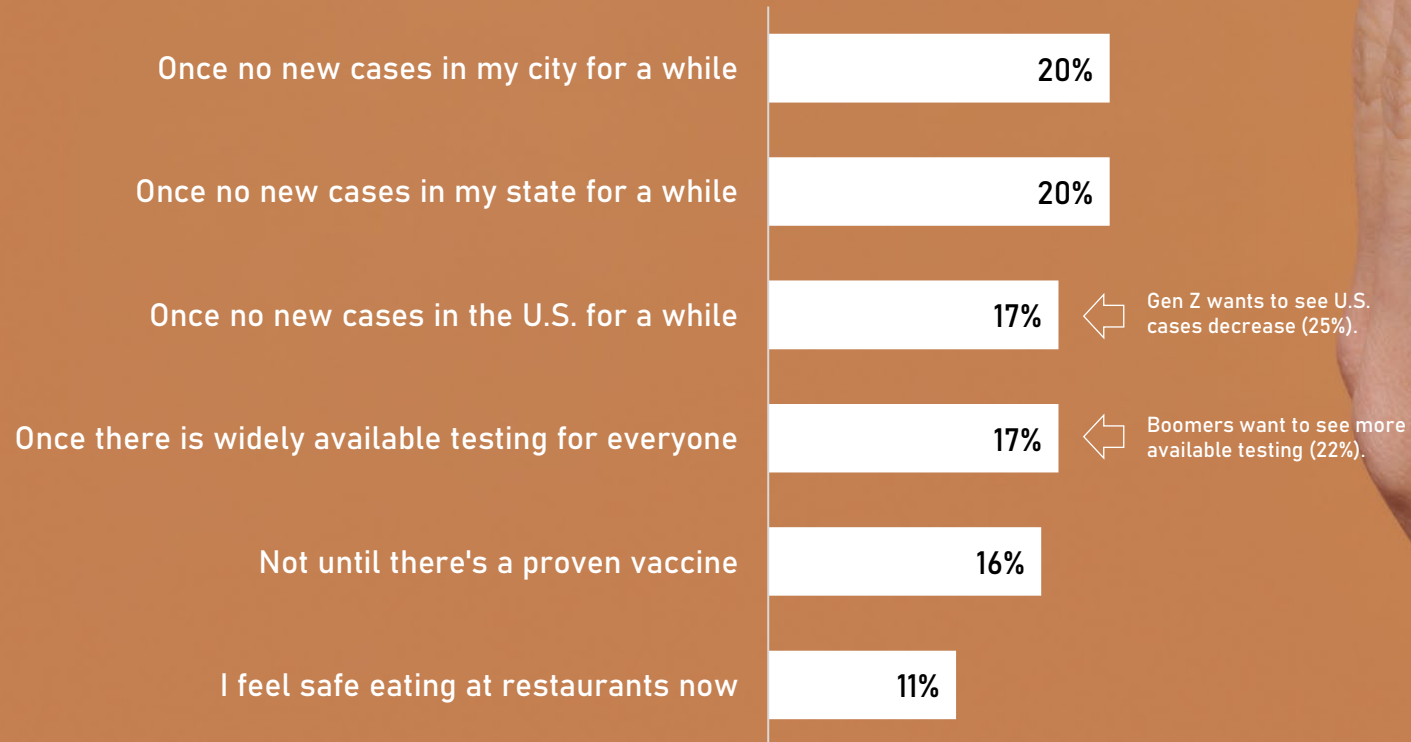
	Trust COMPLETELY	Trust SOMEWHAT	DO NOT Trust
Primary care doctor	52%	43%	5%
Scientists and public health experts	51%	42%	7%
Centers for Disease Control	45%	46%	9%
World Health Organization	31%	44%	25%
Food and Drug Administration	30%	58%	12%
State government	28%	55%	18%
Local/town/city governments	26%	61%	13%
President Trump	21%	33%	46%
Federal government (excluding president)	19%	54%	27%
Mainstream news media	17%	48%	35%

how much do you trust the following source to determine when it's safe to return to normal eating activities?



They need to see it to believe it.

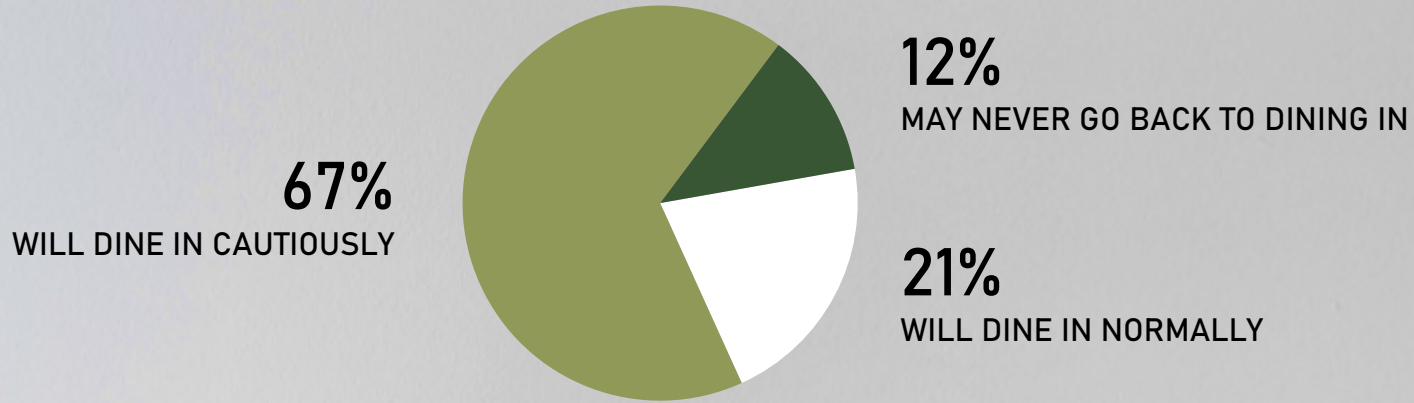
Americans are split on the cues they would use to determine that it's safe to dine out again. Seeing no new cases on more of a local level — city or state — is slightly more important than more widespread testing or having a vaccine. More available testing is most important to Boomers, while Gen Z prefers to see no new cases on a nationwide level.



how would you determine that it is safe to open up restaurants and eat out "normally"?

Americans will dine in, taking precautions

Most consumers will go back to eating in restaurants but will want to take safety measures like social distancing and increased handwashing. Boomers, who are generally more at risk, will want these reassurances. One-third of Millennials will go back to “life as usual.” Interestingly, Gen Z who are generally less at risk, are most likely to feel they would avoid dining in.



how do you feel about going back to dining in at restaurants and bars when COVID eases?

Consumers trust restaurants more than they trust other people.

It's no surprise that Americans will carry forward their COVID behaviors as the world starts to reopen, as they don't have complete faith in people or establishments to take necessary precautions. Most have at least some trust in dine-in options but are a little more wary of cafeterias where there is more traffic and open food options. Younger generations are more trusting of restaurants, fellow diners and some retailers. Females are also less confident in people they don't know. Restaurants can help mitigate concern by making sure increased sanitation and social distancing efforts are obvious to diners. Tactics like reducing seating capacity for more space between tables and making it easy to social distance in waiting areas are easy to carry out operationally.



	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?

Food-related issues are considered a collective responsibility.

Consumers believe government should have a role in issues related to COVID and food, but in most cases, they see it as a shared responsibility between federal and state governments. When there is ownership, people see states taking on a more active role for dining-related issues like deciding when to re-open restaurants, getting essential workers protective gear, or giving food advice around COVID. Younger generations are most likely to see restaurant re-opening as a federal-government responsibility.

	Federal Government	State Government	Both	Neither
Decide when to open restaurants for dine in	11%	39%	41%	9%
Keep our food supply at necessary levels	20%	19%	53%	8%
Keep our food supply safe	21%	17%	56%	6%
Provide personal protective gear to essential workers	14%	24%	50%	12%
Provide health coverage for essential workers	20%	20%	48%	12%
Give food-related guidance to businesses and restaurants	15%	25%	52%	8%
Fund and supply food banks to help the homeless and needy	15%	31%	45%	9%
Help families who rely on subsidized meals like school lunches	13%	32%	48%	7%

who do you think should oversee the following issues related to COVID and food?



WHAT COULD THE GOVERNMENT DO TO ENCOURAGE YOU TO EAT OUT AT RESTAURANTS MORE?

“Making gift cards tax deductible so I could benefit, I could help those that need meals, and support restaurants all at the same time.”

- a 38-year-old woman in Tampa, FL

“Subsidized restaurant credits.”

- a 57-year-old woman in Roswell, NM

“Give a stimulus check monthly until this ends.”

- a 33-year-old woman in VA

“Make it tax deductible and make food stamps a choice.”

- a 23-year-old woman in Stephenville, TX

“Any sort of subsidy would help. If a tax deduction is offered it would only be helpful to me if there was no business requirement and it was not an itemized deduction.”

- a 62-year-old man in McKees Rock, PA

“Discount coupon and voucher to be spent in restaurants.”

- a 23-year-old man in Dallas, TX

“Reassurance that the virus is under control.”

- a 35-year-old man in Douglas, AZ

“I don't need a reward for eating out. I just need to know it's safe. We're still supporting local businesses by ordering take-out.”

- a 43-year-old woman in Mesa, AZ

“Follow the data, and only open when it is safe and decrease exposure to the pathogen, instead of worrying about the almighty dollar.”

- a 57-year-old woman Lexington, KY

“Show statistics and data proving that there is no risk.”

- a 25-year-old man in San Jose, CA





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](#)