



SURVEY

Member feedback on coronavirus impact

25 MAY, 2020

restaurant
association
of new zealand

As the Country moved to Level 2 our industry was back open for business to hungry diners enthusiastic to get back into their favourite establishments. However, level 2 restrictions and last minute changes to rules created further complexity for the industry which is doing its best to keep up to speed with its responsibilities.

The Public Health Order that came into force the night before we went into Level 2 indicated that our industry is now no longer able to offer counter service unless it is for a takeaway order. Single server was previously stated as 'where possible' but has since become mandated. This rule is particularly challenging, given the changeover of staff between shifts, rest breaks and serving larger groups. The additional costs required to lay on more staff is increasing wage bills and with fewer tables to serve, for many it's making the cost of reopening too high.

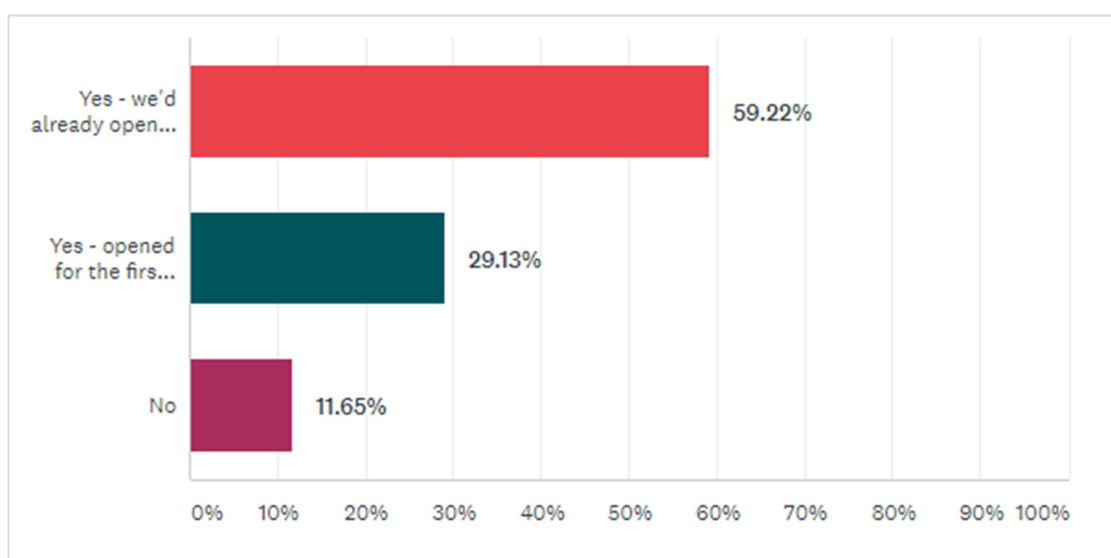
Feedback from our businesses has shown that these two rule changes are proving extremely restrictive. Many cafes are just not set up for full seated table service and this is restricting their revenues.

A last minute rule change around contact tracing also means it appears that restaurants do not have to collect details of takeaway customers and a variation in the distancing of rules for takeaway has also not been made clear. This is confusing for both businesses and diners, many of whom have expectations of our businesses that in some cases are not correct. Again, we seek further clarification on this.

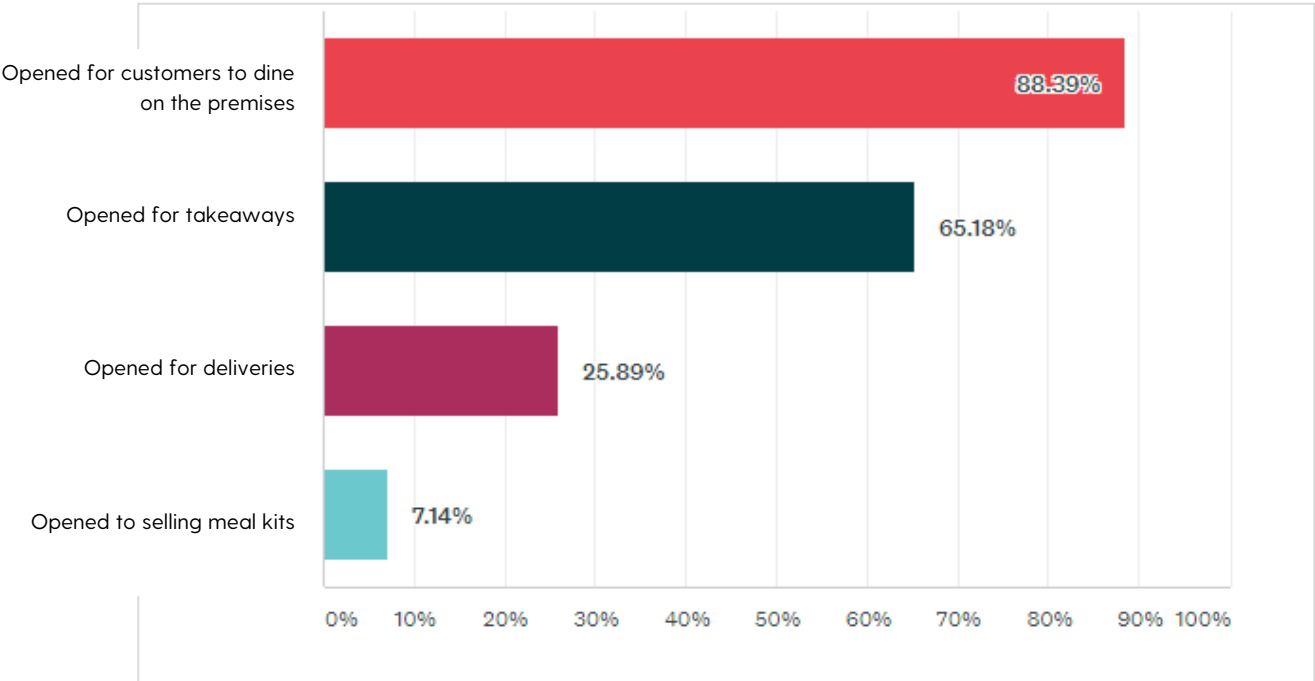
The industry is committed to doing its part to make sure we keep this virus under control but we cannot do this with constant rule changes.

Q1. When New Zealand moved to Level 2 last Thursday, did you open your business at this Level (choose ONE)?

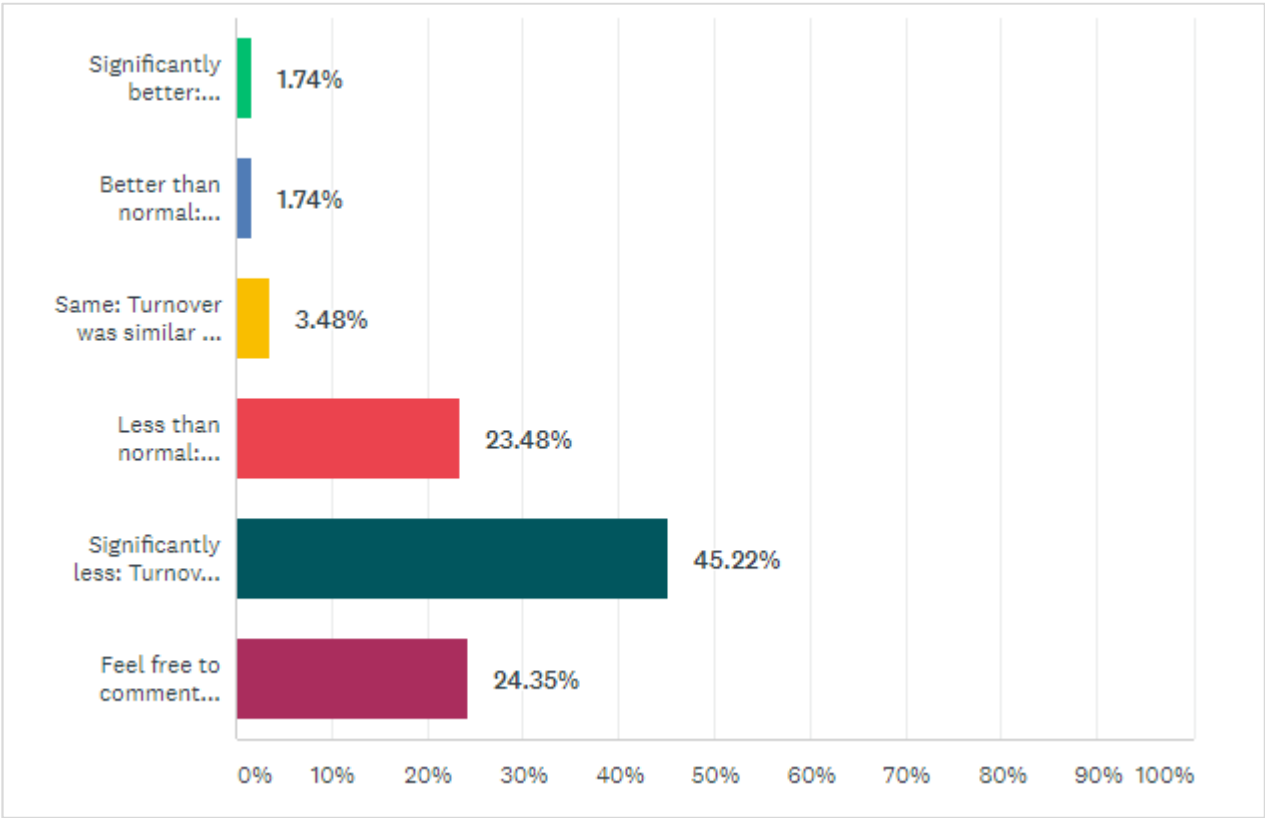
89% reopened.



Q2 In what capacity did you reopen your business last week (choose ALL that apply)?



Q3 How was your first few days of trading (compare to the same time last year)? Skip this question if you're not open yet.



Q3 How you are finding managing the current, changing, requirements?

Single server - difficult to do breaks, causes delays in the order of service - compromising the guest experience Have less hours to offer my team currently.

Pretty easy cos we have enormous unused capacity and far too many staff

The social distancing put in place has severely limited the amount of guests we can accommodate.

It's extremely hard keeping up the required level of positivity, and putting on a brave face for all our wonderful staff, when we can all see a huge reduction in numbers. Now we're terrified they'll get disheartened and jump ship.

We are coping with the increased work load but it's a challenge.

Hard, we just go day by day, only ever order if needed.

The biggest stress for us has been customers trying to get away with ordering minimal or no food at all. In terms of most of the other requirements they actually work well for our operations. Sometimes having 1 server can be difficult though. But the team are using their best efforts.

Hard. Every day is different. Full restaurant, how do you make sure 110% you comply as you cannot control people. Empty restaurant, how do you pay the bills? We've had both on one weekend.

Stressful. Completely uncertain.

We are responding well and staff are coping with the changes well.

Wait and watch.

Try to do must sale we can and try to save the expense and negotiate with the landlord.

Customers are reluctant to fill in the guest register with so much details. Older customers don't want and don't know how to use the online register.

Customers are nervous coming out after the lockdown. Our cafe looks so different with safety signage and big spaces. It's proving difficult to recreate the hub bub.

Ok. But more expense when 1 server in place

Very Challenging.

Really hard, more staff required, people don't want to listen re seating etc, we are not letting them to our counter,

Fine, although identifying who has to contact trace a bit opaque.

Policing some customers is hard as some of the public are carefree and others are paranoid and fearful. Some people have left when asked to sanitise and fill in register.

Difficult but manageable - more staff are required for reduced trade.

OK - people annoyed signing in but they are the rules.

Managing the current change & requirements are fine, but I can't manage people's expectations or the impact those changes have on my customers mentality.

Difficult - no large groups is the hardest part and actually where the \$ really came from. Trying to make up for lost profits / yet have to have more staff being used to deliver the guidelines.

Extremely difficult. Takes the same amount of staff to do half the amount of tables. Single server system is inefficient. Ate somewhere else today and three people serve my table. Frustrating.

A bit of a nightmare

Easy to manage with hardly any customers.

We are finding the one server requirement extremely difficult. It takes away from the team work that is so vital to hospitality and also puts enormous pressure on our FOH to not provide the hospitality we pride ourselves on as we simply cannot engage with our guests to the same level.

We have it sorted but it took a few days to get the system in place and train everyone.

We've had to significantly change our way of operating, which requires more staff per number of customers. Fortunately we have staff who have worked in other places where having a maitre d, seating people and table service, etc have been the norm, so their skills have come to the fore. Most of our customers have been aware of requirements and been more than happy to adhere. Managing locals wanting to greet each other and move around has been tricky too. Keeping up with the changes and what rules apply in which situation has been stressful - really wanting to get it right but also making the workplace workable.

Moving goal posts are always difficult. the public hear a small bit of info and that drives their whole approach, so the time spent hosting is extended. Minor issues in the scheme of things but might have been better for Govt to say "cafes open, rules apply, cafes will give you guidance when you arrive, keep spacing and avoid queues" Then industry creates a requirement list for operators to follow. Once you say something in public it is very hard to take back, e.g original message 3 S's one was table service, but next day saying if you are small/med size cafe, counter service ok. Result everyone comes in, straight to a table and waits = extra staff needed to manage.

Frustrated by lack of consistency in operating regulations between Govt departments, PM and final legislation changes. For example "what is counter service" we feel nobody can answer that right now.

Relatively easy - people are mostly sticking to the rules. Will be happy when we can put water stations, sugars, salt & peppers etc. out again as it slows down service not to have these readily available. But VERY grateful not to have to do table service as that would have been a nightmare

Can manage level 2 requirements quite easily.
Awkward.
They are fine because we do not have the customers to actually have to apply them anyway.
Really stressful Have 8-9 staff at the front trying to manage 80% wage bill, rules keep changing, hard to manage breaks.
Lack of consistency doesn't help, restrictions are having huge impact on customer confidence more than mine.
Extremely difficult to manage social distancing and constricted trading under Level 2 rules.
Challenging but getting used to it & having a small fine dining restaurant we have been able to adapt to the social distancing requirements
It's a handful but it's fine, except the single server law. Also customers take up more space - we've removed 6 tables but people then don't tuck their chairs in so the 1m distance disappears and they ignore the rules themselves chatting to all tables..
Government Rules are fine, we can embrace it with restaurant associations guidelines, we just need customers on the door. Our cafe is relying on business customers and office staff are not back.
As a cafe, we are struggling with the single server concept. We have also removed about 30% of our tables and seating to get the 1 m distancing.
Hard. More to do less revenue. Sometimes hard to get clarification of rules.
We are struggling with the way information is released. We needed more than 2 days notice from announcement to moving into Level 2. It is a huge undertaking reopening, - the announcement with confirmed the date could have been made earlier.
Like running through a forest blindfolded.
A lot more time consuming - almost twice as much effort.
Difficult and confusing, but glad to be open and generating some income.
Double the staff so double wages for less turnover
The policies and procedures are just overwhelming - business can't survive in increased Covid 19 procedures
Difficult with reduced seating, and complacent customers. and also seeing other cafes around you not changing anything, still have the same seating and they are packing ppl in and no-one seems to care.
Difficult. Challenging. Time consuming. Restaurant set up looks terrible as not allowed tables set up. Unable to have full capacity due to distancing rules.

GENERAL MEMBER COMMENTS

Guests are not always open to the current restrictions and this can create tension.

We look forward to the weeks ahead to ascertain whether this is a newly reopened honeymoon period. We are quietly confident.

Great support from regulars and people conscious of hospitality situation. Not a sustainable model though.

We need the ability to serve larger groups and have more tables in the spaces available.....at some point soon!

We are finding that the public do not have an understanding of the contact tracing requirements. Some hospo businesses are not doing what is required with the 3 'S' and this is causing confusion. I think local councils should take time to check in with each business to ensure that they are operating under the guidelines.

One server per table is impossible and not something that we have been able to do. It also is taking a lot more staff to have someone only on the door taking all the numbers and names and seating people which we don't normally do during the day.

Our staff have been fantastic - all very keen to come back to work and come up with solutions as to how best to manage the situation. The weather has been glorious, so we've had a lot of 'out of towners' here over the weekend. A surprising amount of young international travellers too. Because of the 'bubble burst' effect we've been very busy. We expect that numbers will drop off, maybe back to 'normal', or potentially less, maybe much less. I see it as a bit like when someone dies and lots of people come around to attend the funeral and offer condolences, and one is well supported. Then the weeks and months to come are when one really notices the loss.... We are constantly looking at all costs versus income (or lack of!) to assess operation and continuation. So far, so good, but continuing with the current staffing requirements and no subsidy won't be viable, unless business model is modified.

Clearly tracking people will be key until a vaccine is found. It would have made sense for Govt to create a gps based login service. Instead we all have different QR code data providers, old folks can't work a smart phone, then its pen and paper. A standard system would have been preferred - even if uptake was only 60%

The trade is terribly low. Very worrying time.. Never been so bad.

I as the owner of the business need to pursue other employment so that we as a family have enough to live on. Restaurant will therefore have to take a backseat and become secondary income.

I need that wage extension to survive.

Keeping staff working is the key for us but it is difficult with Level 2 rules on Restaurants.

We hire 16 FT & PT staff, many new to the industry & some with us for 10+ years. We want to continue so our staff have still have jobs and so we can make back our losses, but comes down to risk/reward.

Government really need to help severely suffered owners by extending wage subsidy much longer period. We paid out almost all wage subsidy we received. If we don't receive further, we won't survive. It's a very difficult time for us.

Just have to remind people to sign in, distance and sanitise hands. Also don't understand about booking! however not had to turn anyone away yet.

Clarity of rules /restrictions has been vague.

It is International tourism revenue that provided that back bone of our revenue and enabled so many and varied Dining/Wine Tastig options to be open for locals.

We are doing our very best to do the one server but when possible. We are doing counter service at a distance and controlling the guests social distancing. Had to turn people away with less tables.

Early days but for us it seems guests lack confidence in eating out. Not sure if they are put off by us wearing masks - it's for their safety! Pickup and deliveries are at about the same levels as previous years.

Some customers are really concerned about their separation while others please themselves.

I think contact tracing details are the most important issue to focus on. We are extending our hours to include some evening dining due to 2 local places not reopening. Others are doing reduced hours. I've made the decision to be available more not less to try and capture more customers at times that suit them

Was extra bad timing as wages changed during lockdown

Rent seems to be the biggest issue now, if turnover is still low and costs are going up, (\$18.9 minimum wage), how businesses are managing to pay the rent? The Government doesn't seem to care/provide any actual help.

Single server is the biggest challenge. It's adding 30% to FOH labour cost. Unsustainable when turnover is down by 50%+

It's clunky and confusing however we are doing the best we can. The team are still only working to 80% capacity and really this needs to continue until we get close to normal turnover or even to 80%
