

Changes in Consumer Habits: A Closer Look at Restaurants and Food Service Establishments



Introduction

At **Intouch Insight**, we provide experiential and operational expertise to businesses around the world. We are on a mission to better understand how consumer habits are changing due to **COVID-19**.

In May, we leveraged our platform LiaCX™, to learn about the experiences of thousands of individuals across North America.

The **restaurant industry** has been one of the hardest hit by COVID-19. With virtually no foot-traffic, restaurants have been forced to change how they operate, reducing the size of their workforce, and using technology — in many cases for the first time, to help automate and streamline their operations.

In this report, we will look at the implications that COVID-19 has had on **consumer habits** as they pertain to the consumption of **take-out** and **dine-in food** and **beverages**, and how the restaurant industry will need to adapt in order to meet **new health and safety guidelines** as well as **consumer expectations**.

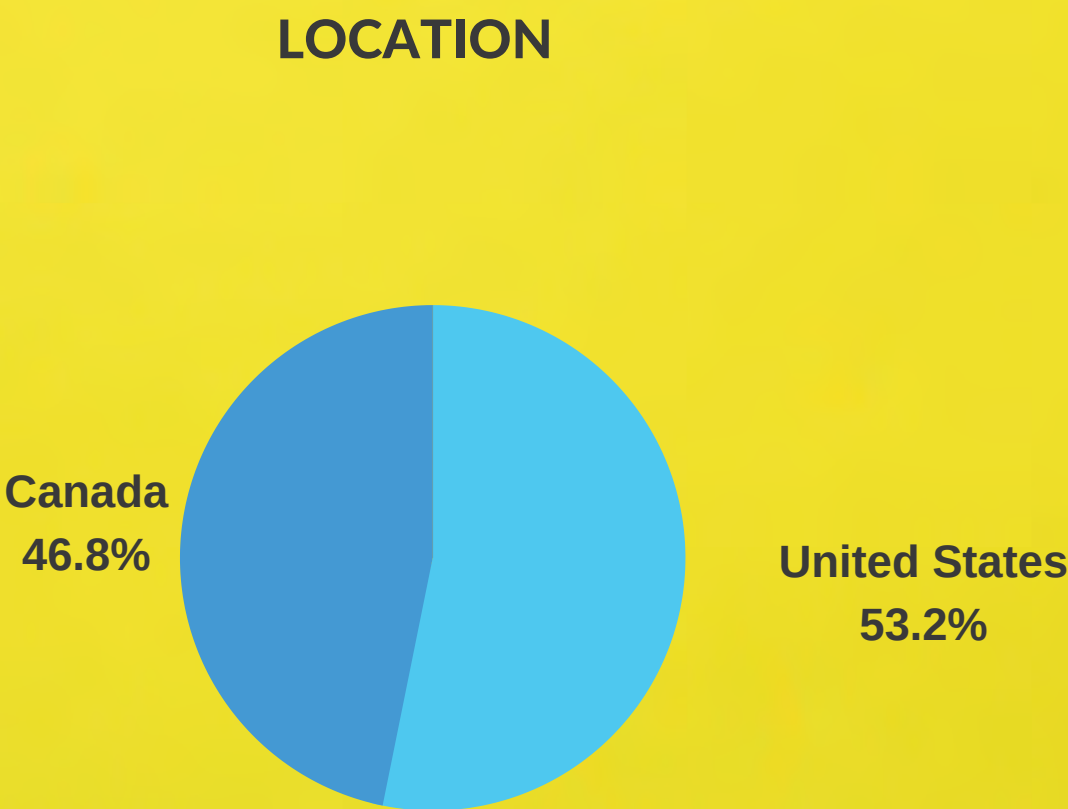
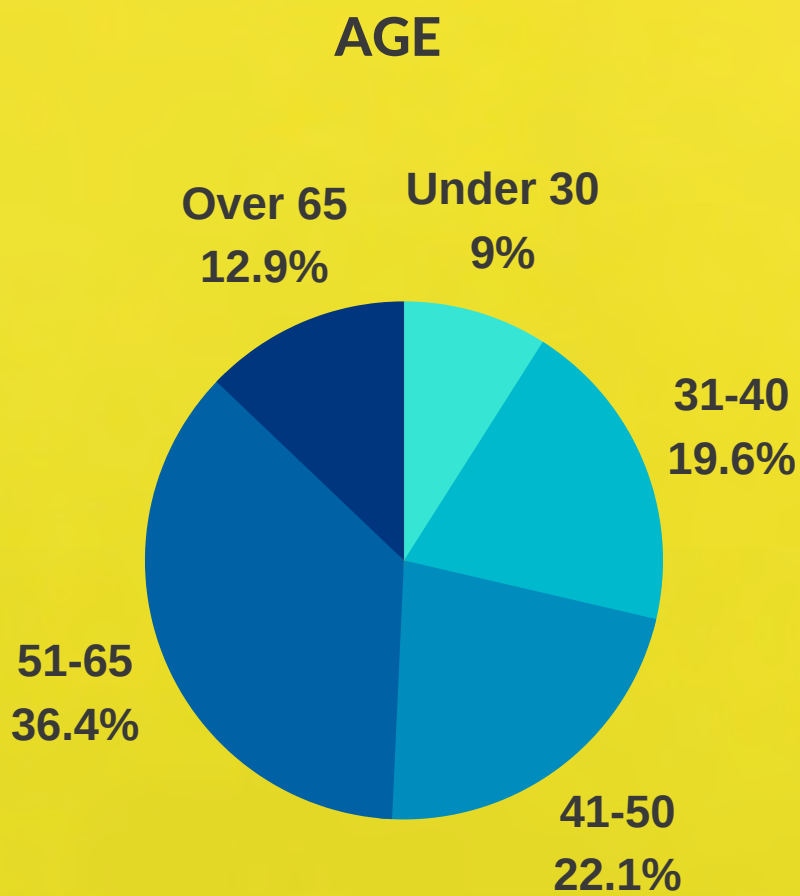


Our survey received over **2000 responses** from across North America (see survey respondent demographics below).

The survey included three primary areas of focus:

- How consumer habits have changed when engaging with food service establishments?
- What do patrons expect?
- How do food service establishments need to adapt to meet new guidelines and expectations?

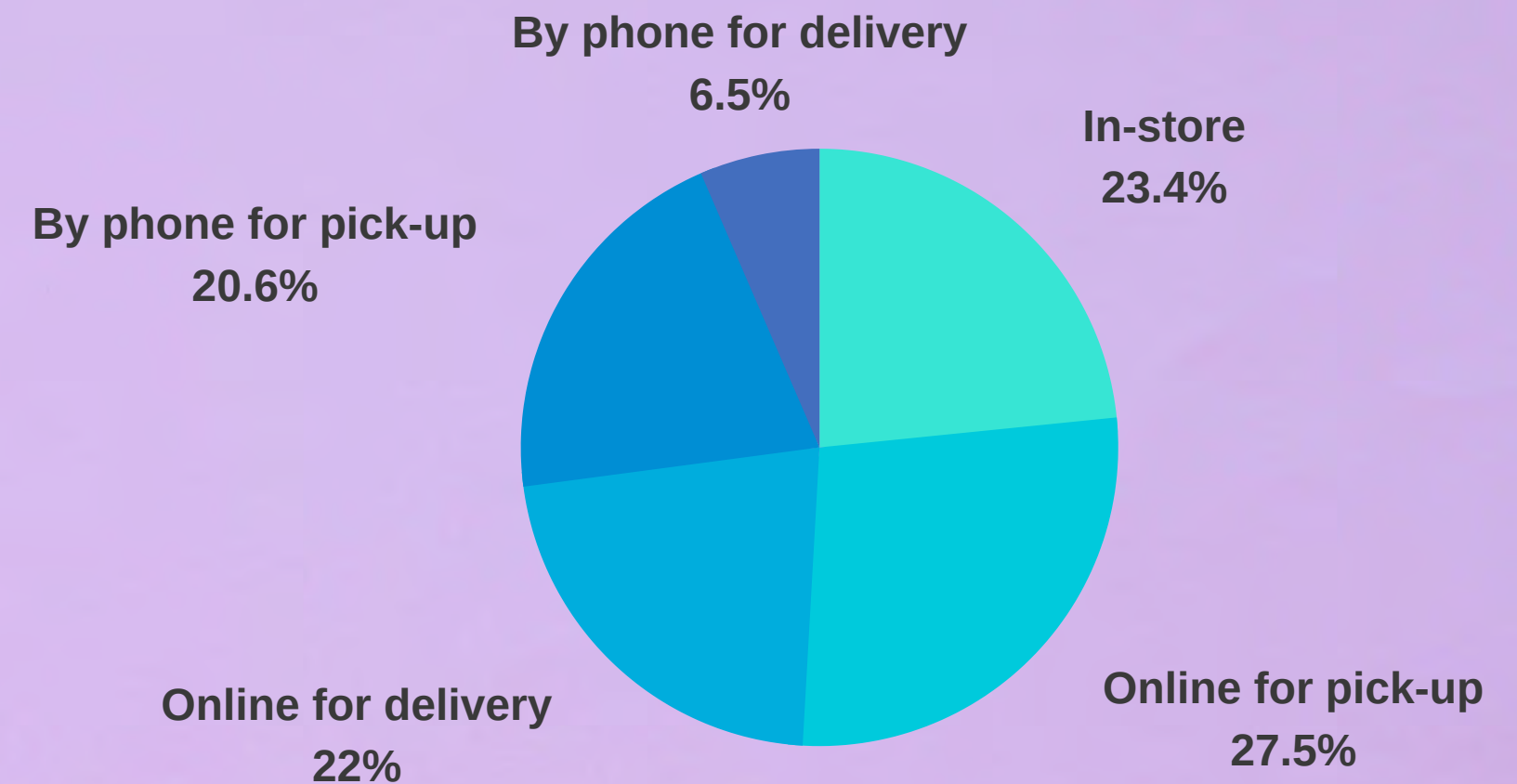
In this report, we examine how consumer habits and expectations have shifted, and what that means for customer-facing businesses that handle and serve food and drinks, everyday.



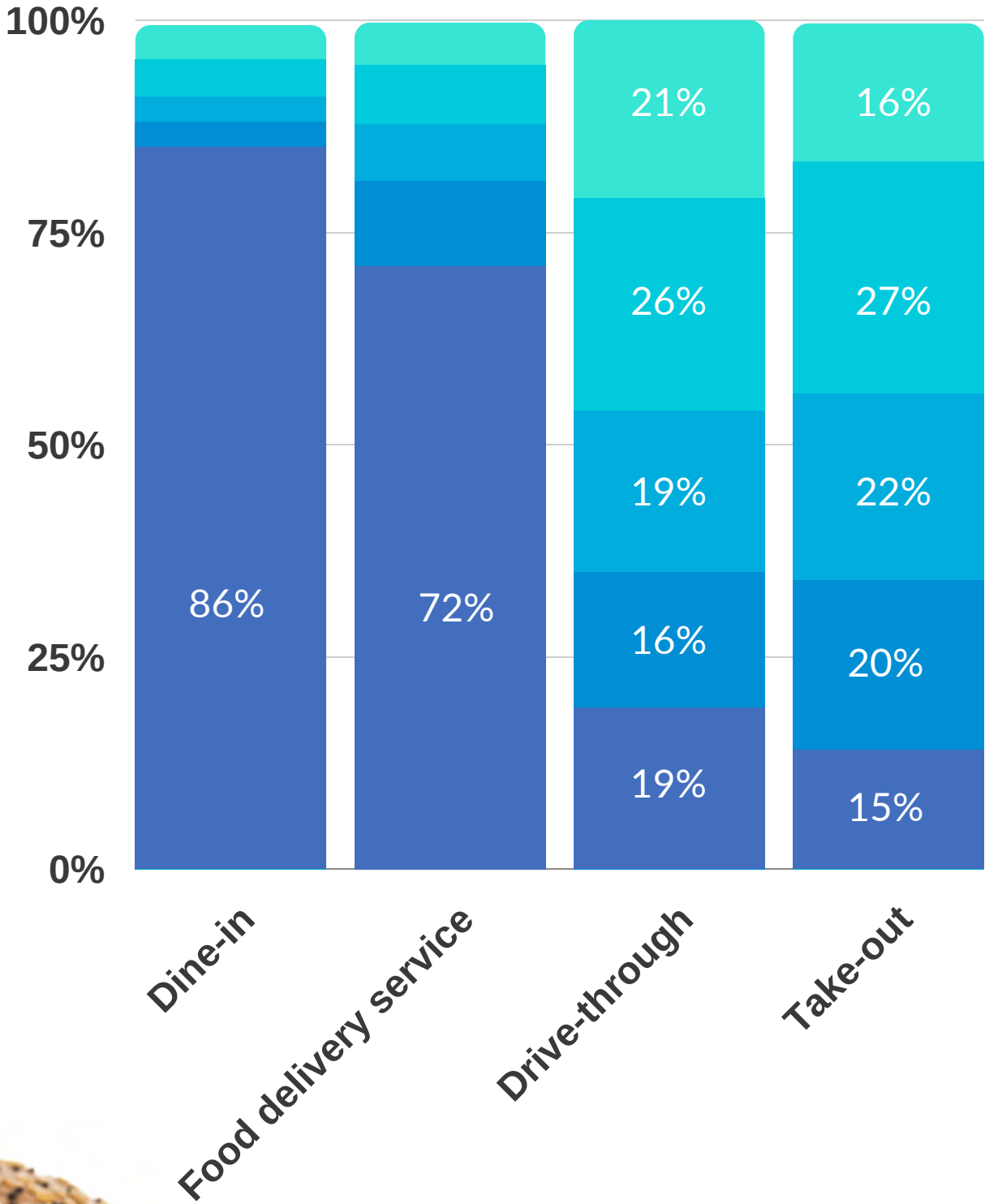
Initial Findings

Over **2/3 of our respondents** said that they have continued to engage with **food service establishments** throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

The ways in which they have been purchasing prepared food is quite varied, with **online for pick-up** leading the pack at almost **28%**, according to our respondents.



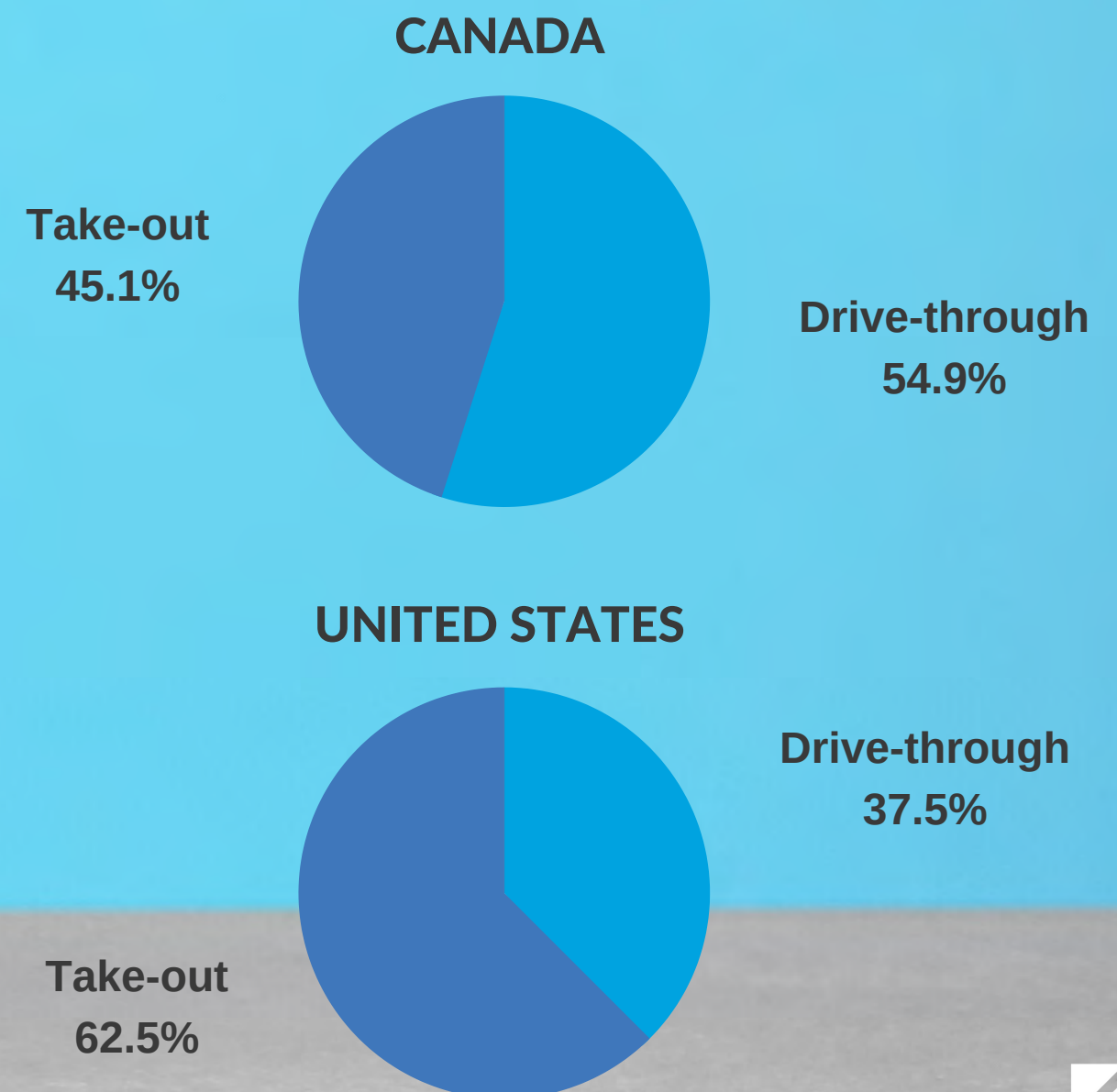
86% of our respondents have had absolutely zero **dine-in** interaction with restaurants in recent weeks, though we still see frequent weekly activity in **drive-through** and **take-out** traffic.





We also observed that those who are making **drive-through** or **take-out** purchases on a **weekly basis**, are doing so consistently across all **age demographics**.

Though this number did vary slightly between **Canada** and the **United States**.



Key Findings

1# Cleanliness & quality are a top priority

If you read our first report, you'll know that the number one priority for today's consumer is **cleanliness**. That said, unlike in retail, **quality**, **service**, and **convenience** are also critical in informing consumer habits.

We found that **half of our respondents** felt that **quality of food** was extremely important when making the decision to order prepared food, right after **cleanliness of the establishment** which is believed to be extremely important to **60% of our respondents**.



Key Findings

#2 Embrace online payment and ordering

Our survey also showed that respondents prefer to **pay online in advance** when **ordering prepared food** for **pick-up** and **delivery**.

If you are new to selling online and looking to introduce **curb-side** or **in-store pick-up**, **78% of our respondents** said they would **prefer to pay in-advance, online**, as opposed to paying at the door at the time of pick-up.



Key Findings

#3 Crew-service over self-service

Our respondents shared that they feel more **comfortable** purchasing **coffee** and **prepared food** via **crew-service**, as opposed to **self-service**.

60% of respondents would prefer **crew-service** when purchasing **coffee**, and **64% of respondents** said the same when purchasing **prepared food**.



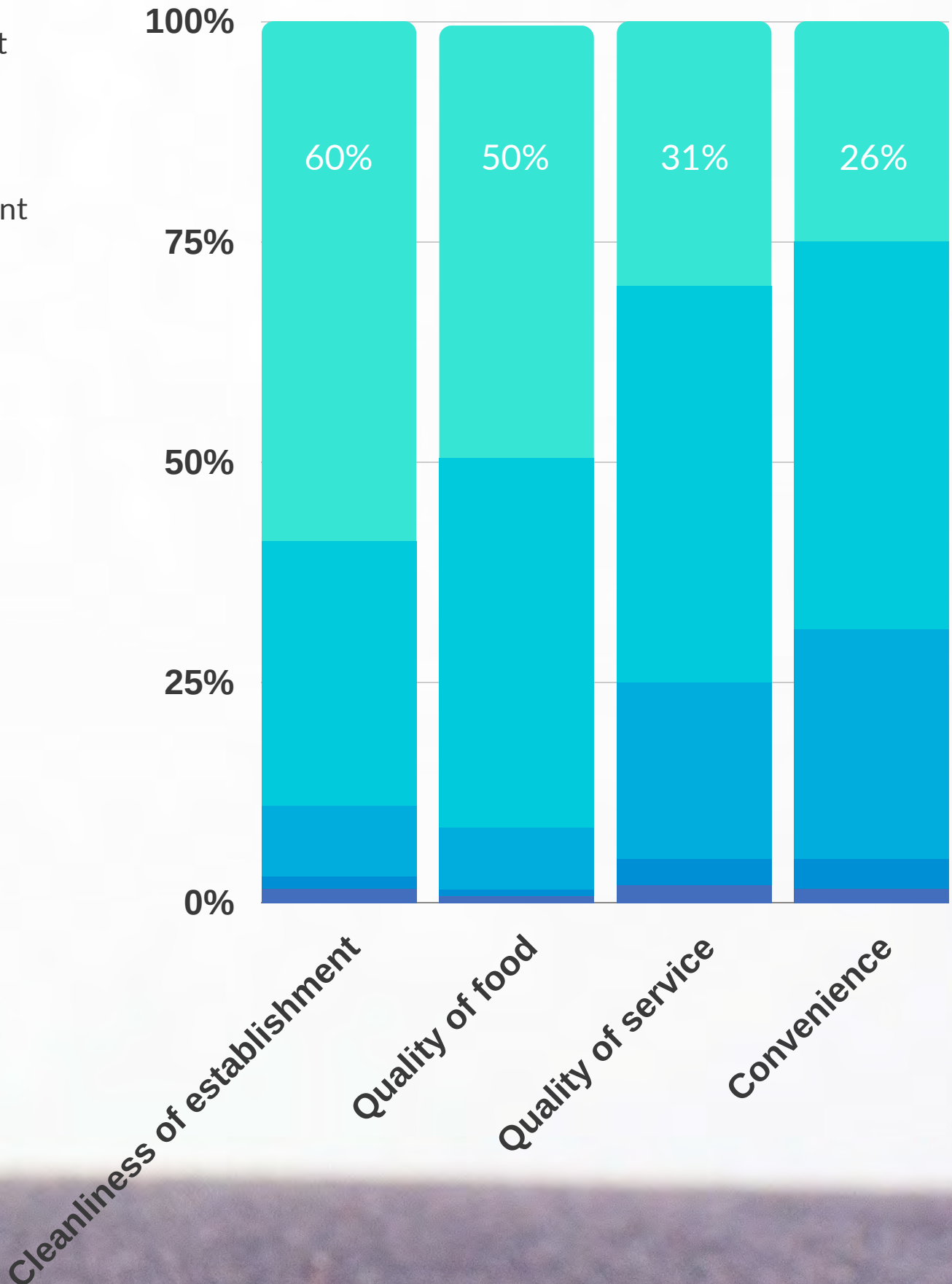


**Cleanliness and
quality matter
most when it
comes to food.**

When it comes to ordering **prepared food**, these are the most important factors, according to our respondents...



- Extremely important
- Very important
- Moderately important
- Slightly important
- Not important



In retail, quality of products is only identified as being **extremely important** to **23%** of our respondents.

When it comes to **prepared food** we see that number jump to being extremely important to **50%** of respondents. Closely followed by **quality of service** and **convenience**.

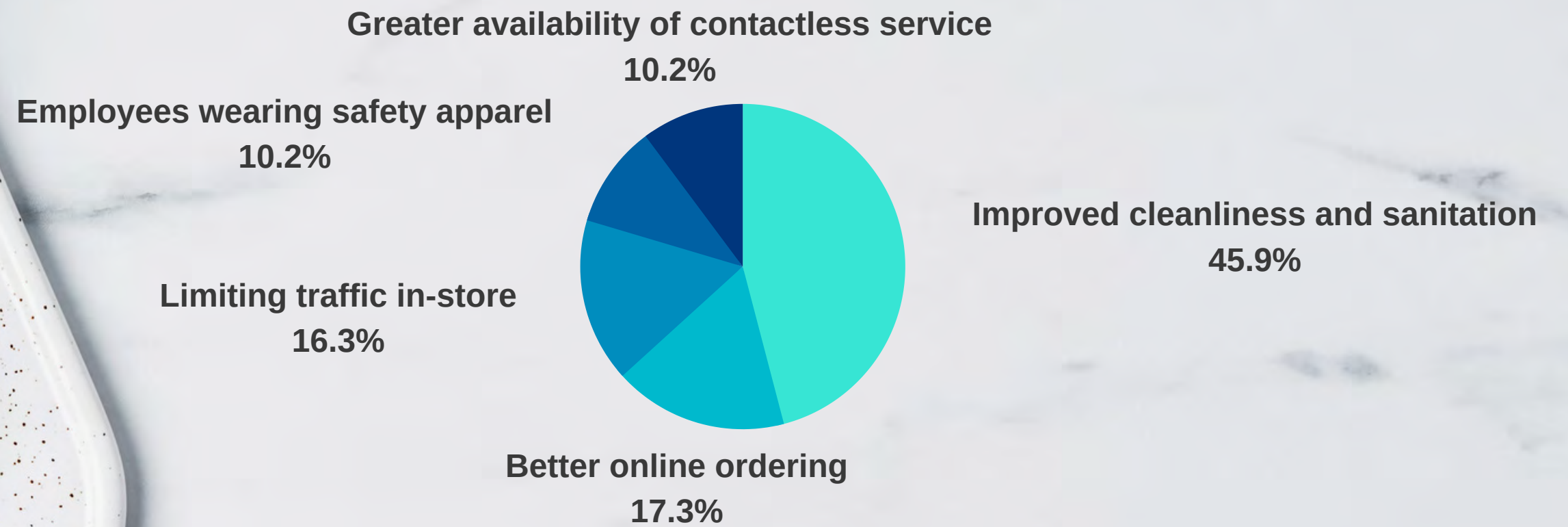





When shelter-in-place and social distancing measures are relaxed, **52% of respondents** shared that **improved cleanliness and sanitization** would make them feel more comfortable entering a **restaurant**.



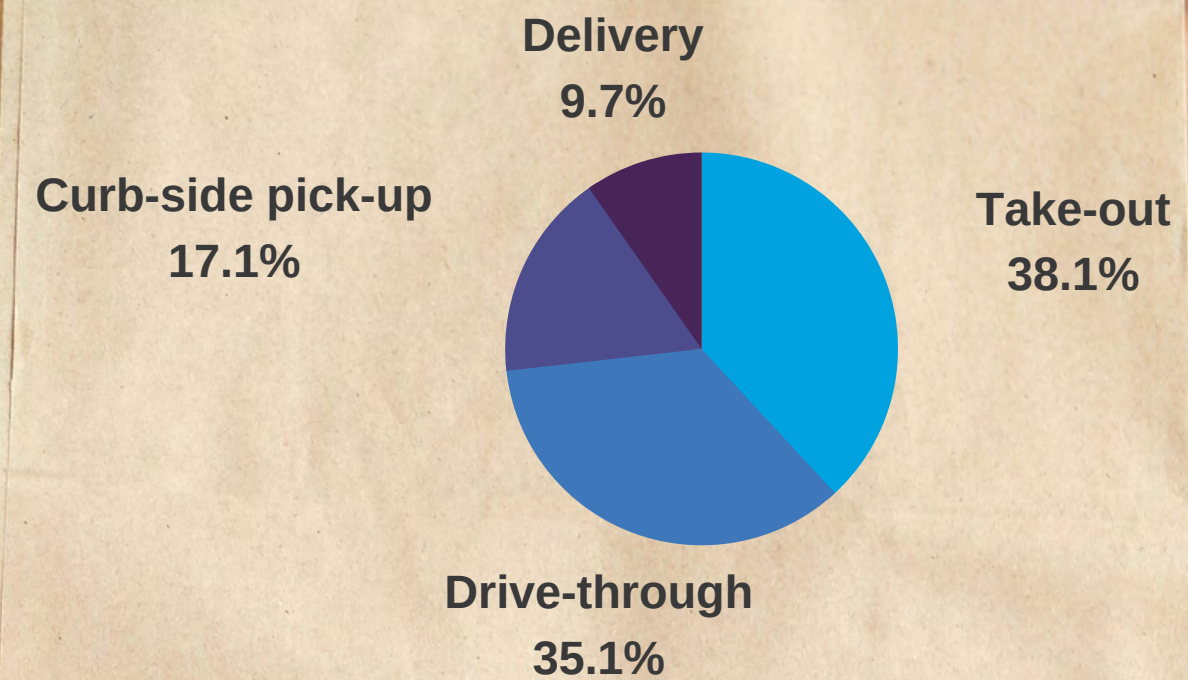
As we look ahead, **46% of respondents** said that the **number one change** they hope to see businesses make in the face of future potential waves of COVID-19 is **improved cleanliness and sanitation.**



Four slices of pepperoni pizza are arranged in a circle on a purple surface. The pizza has a thick crust, melted cheese, and several slices of pepperoni. There are some crumbs scattered around the pizza.

Making it **easier**
for consumers to
shop **where,**
when, and **how**
they want.

Take-out has been the most popular way to engage with a food service establishment, with **85% of respondents** engaging in this activity, and **27% of respondents** doing it on a **weekly basis**.



Above is the breakdown of respondents purchasing from restaurants or food service establishments **once a week or more**.



To succeed, restaurants and food service establishments will need to be more multi-pronged.


These businesses should think about how to optimize their digital properties to supplement the reduction of foot-traffic in their physical locations.

Only **28%** of our respondents ordered food using a **third-party delivery service**.

This speaks to the importance of ensuring your business has autonomy over its own **online presence** and **ordering capability**, so you can supplement the services of third-party providers.

You can see them as a nice to have, not a need to have in order to continue doing business.



A white robotic arm is shown from the side, holding a black tray. On the tray is a wine glass filled with red wine. The background is a light blue gradient.

Crew-Service
adds an added
layer of **comfort.**

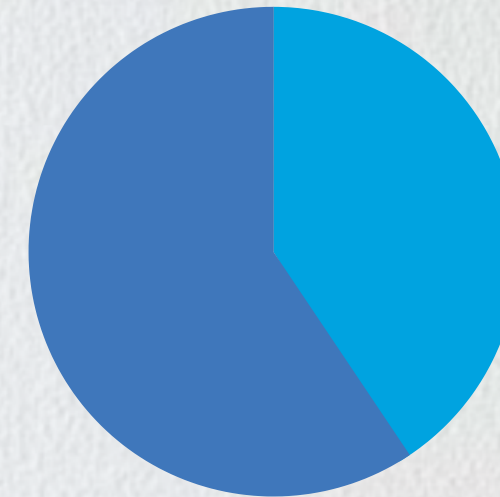


Unlike with **self-service**, **crew service** means you are being serviced by a customer-facing employee of the business, restaurant, or food service establishment. This individual will often take your order, and deliver goods in real-time.

When it comes to purchasing **coffee** and **prepared food**, the majority of respondents stated that they would feel more comfortable with **crew-service** as opposed to **self-service**.

COFFEE

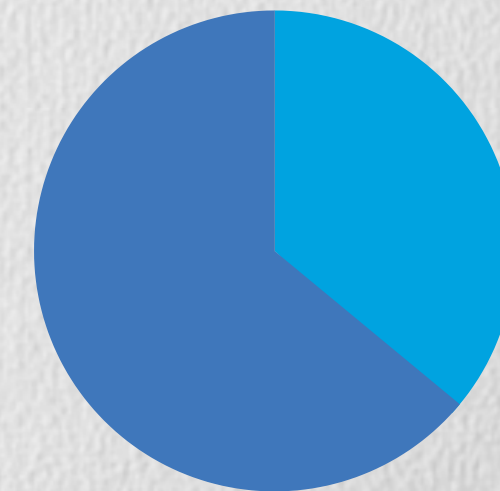
Crew-service
59.4%



Self-dispensed
40.6%

FOOD

Crew-service
64%



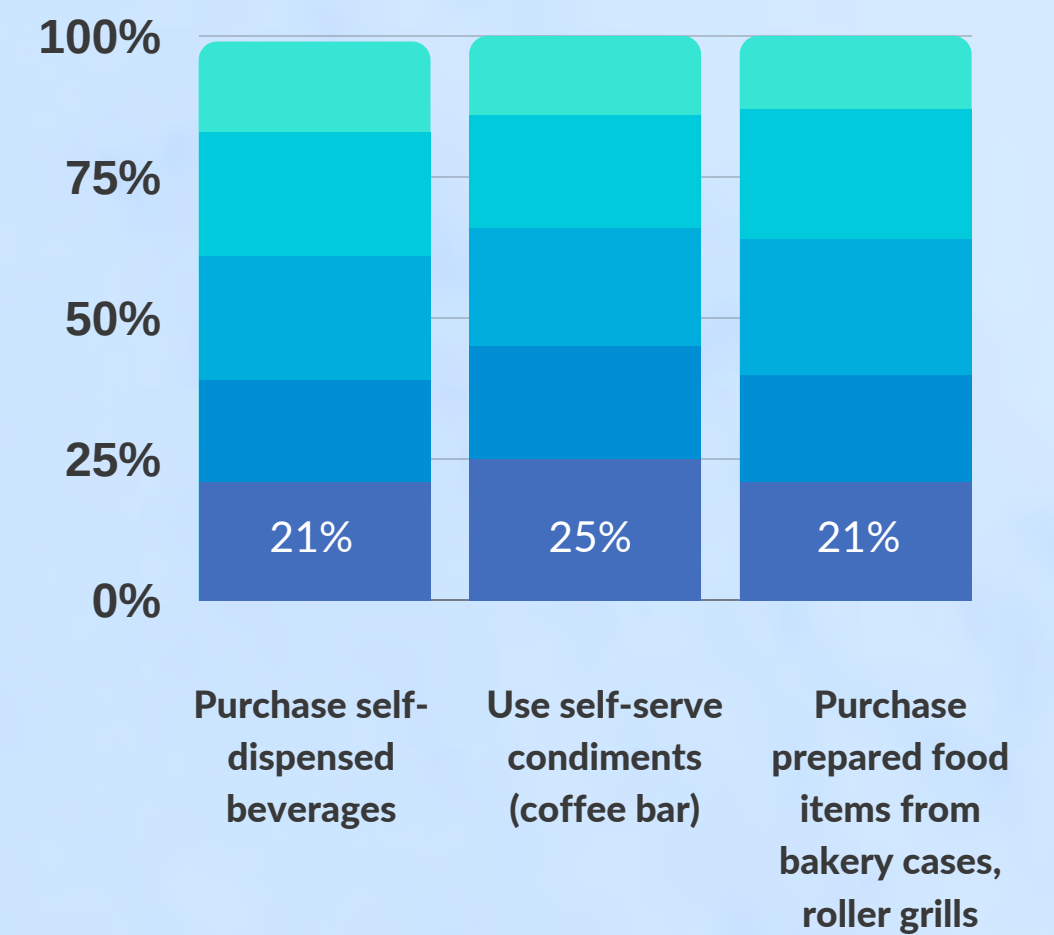
Self-dispensed
36%





- Extremely likely
- Somewhat likely
- Neither likely or unlikely
- Somewhat unlikely
- Extremely unlikely

When shelter-in-place and social distancing measures are relaxed, how likely will you be to engage in the following activities?



And, according to our respondents, we are seeing some reluctance towards using communal condiments, self-serve coffee stations, roller grills and bakery cases.

The time to act is **now**.

Take a step back and objectively look at your infrastructure.

As a business, you need to learn the pain points that your customers are experiencing and identify the areas that will drive repeat business.

It has never been more important to **listen to your customers**. You need to be able to anticipate consumer needs, and understand that things may never go back to the way they were.



Key Takeaways

- **Cleanliness** and **security** are still a number one priority, but when it comes to food and drinks, **quality** and **convenience** can make or break a transaction.
- Make sure your **online ordering capabilities** are optimized, and remember that today's consumer prefers to **pay in advance online**.
- Embrace **crew-service** and rebuild your work force. Self-service as it pertains to prepared food and beverages is not something consumers are interested in at this time.

If your customers find it easy to shop with you, and feel safe and comfortable doing so, they'll keep coming back.



About Us

At Intouch Insight, our focus is on enabling businesses to collect insights that drive improvement and influence outcomes. Though a lot has changed over our past 40 years in business, our focus remains the same.

We are on a mission to be the leading software and services provider, offering an integrated solution that enables our clients listen to their customers, interpret the results, and create actionable plans to align operations with customer expectations.

By leveraging our deep expertise and flexible software platform, our clients are empowered to delight their customers and improve their bottom line.



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