

# COVID-19 Research Series

## Do Diners Want to Return to Restaurants? It's Complicated.

Study by Feedback Loop, December 2020

Younger consumers are more open to dining at restaurants, regardless of table location, than older consumers during the COVID-19 Crisis.

Though the pandemic continues to negatively affect the restaurant industry, the majority of consumers say they would be open to dining at a restaurant.

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### Background

In order to understand the preferences and behaviors around restaurant dining during the Coronavirus pandemic, Feedback Loop asked 300 adult Americans, ranging in age from 18-75 years old, a series of questions related to their current perspective on dining in restaurants.

The survey was conducted via Feedback Loop's rapid consumer feedback platform, which accesses consumer panels from leading providers across the country to deliver insights within 72 hours.

Since May of 2020, Feedback Loop has been dedicating research resources to informing the public and media about people's concerns and behaviors related to the coronavirus pandemic. This research is part of Feedback Loop's [ongoing COVID-19 research series](#).

All research is led by globally-recognized research veteran Roddy Knowles, who serves as VP of Research at Feedback Loop.



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(Questions are linked for easy reference.)

### Key Findings

Question 1: Which of the following best describes your current mindset regarding dining at a restaurant?

Chart: Overall Responses

Question 2: When asked to elaborate on their mindset around eating at restaurants and whether they preferred indoor or outdoor seating, here's what respondents shared.

Word Cloud: I am not ready to dine in at a restaurant regardless of table placement Responses

Word Cloud: I am open to dining at a restaurant but prefer an outdoor table Responses

Word Cloud: I don't have a preference of indoor vs outdoor seating Responses

Question 3: Which of the following best describes your current mindset regarding dining at a restaurant?

Chart: Segmented by Age

Question 4: Which of the following best describes your mindset regarding dining at a restaurant?

Chart: Segmented by Household Income

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Word Cloud: Responses

About Feedback Loop



## Key Findings

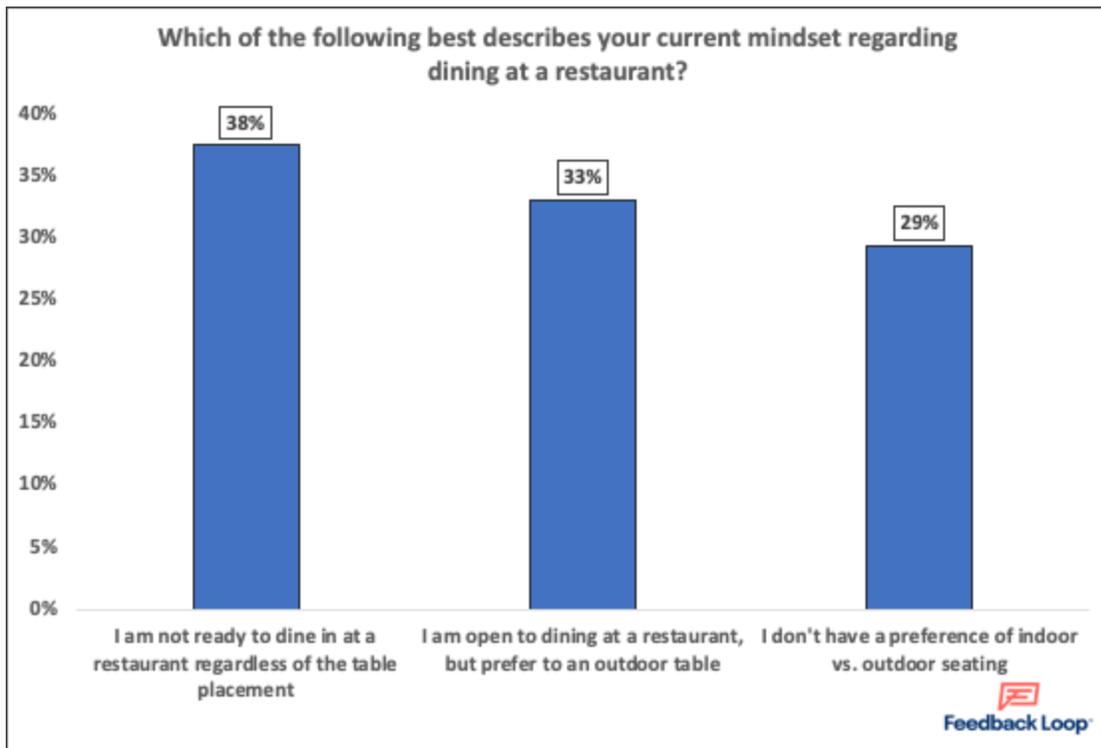
- Approximately two-thirds of respondents (62%) are open to dining at a restaurant - with nearly half of them being open to eating indoors (29%).
  - Respondents ages 55-64 report being opposed to dining indoors at a restaurant (91%)
  - Fifty-nine percent (59%) of these folks are not ready to dine in a restaurant at all. In open-ended responses, some shared their reasoning:
    - “I just don't feel comfortable. There has been a big surge in Covid cases where I live.”
    - “I won't eat out or take out until there is a covid-19 vaccine”
    - “I am high-risk and do not dine out.”
- Respondents with lower household incomes are more likely to eat indoors at restaurants than those with higher household incomes.
  - Twenty-one percent (21%) of respondents with household incomes of more than \$100K don't mind eating indoors, whereas 37% of respondents with household incomes below \$25K don't mind eating indoors.
- Thirty-eight percent (38%) of people are not ready to eat at a restaurant regardless of table placement. When asked when they will be ready to eat at a restaurant, many shared free-form responses to the effect that they will return to restaurant dining when there is a vaccine and the virus is under control.



## Question 1: Which of the following best describes your current mindset regarding dining at a restaurant?

**Nearly 40% of respondents aren't willing to dine at restaurants at all right now, while approximately two-thirds (62%) are.**

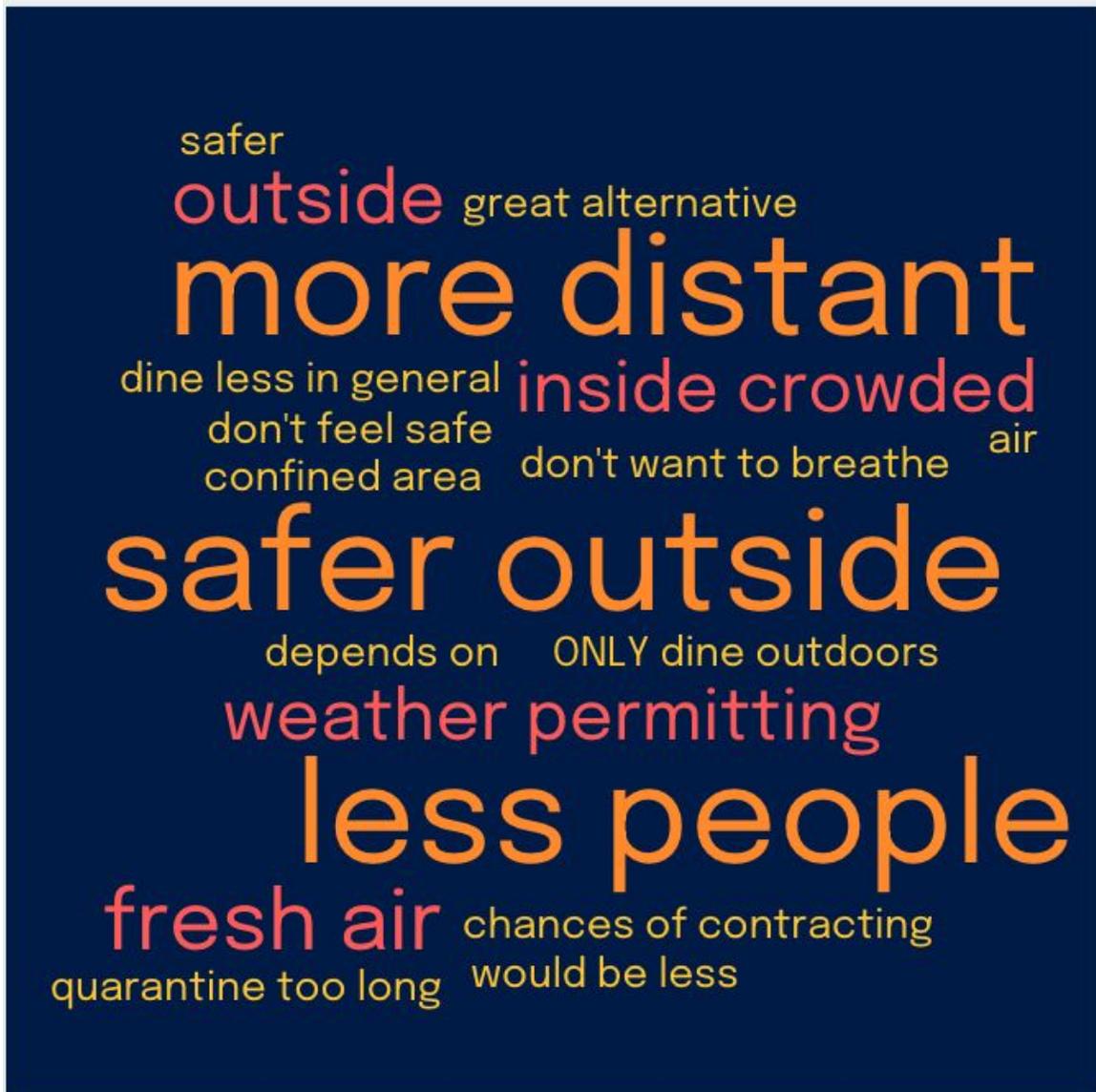
Only **29%** of respondents open to dining at restaurants are willing to dine indoors, however.







“I am open to dining in a restaurant but prefer an outdoor table.”





“I don't have a preference of indoor vs outdoor seating.”

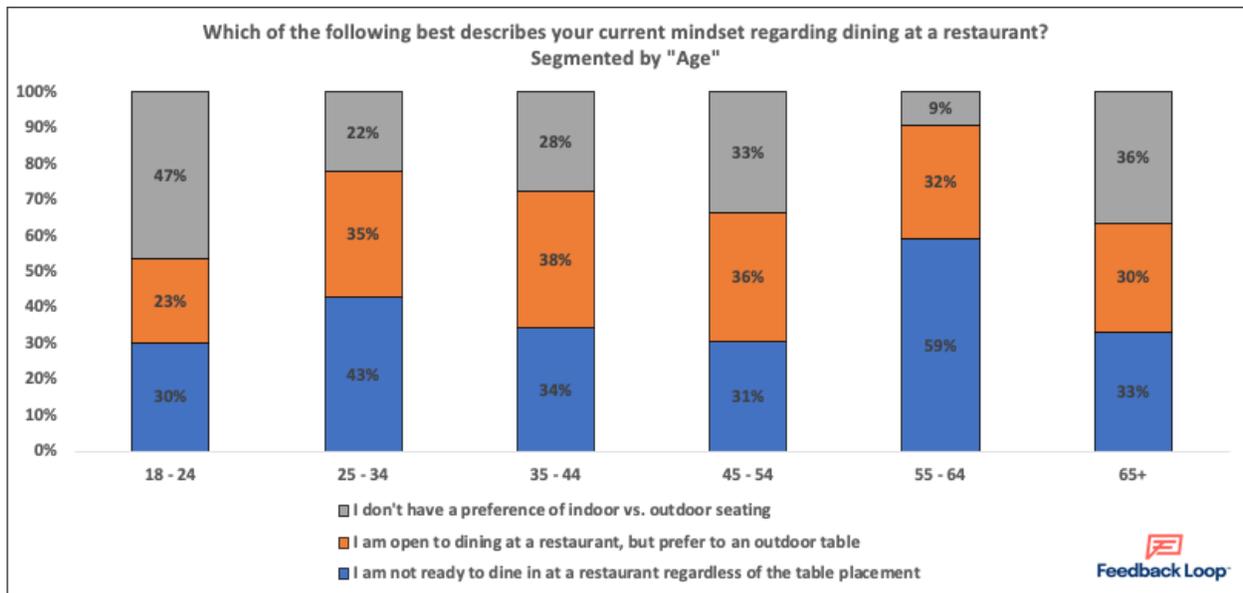
I'M NOT SCARED  
protocols have been strictly followed  
not overly concerned revised procedures  
don't mind not wearing masks.  
politically weaponized  
I'm not worried **hoax** it's cold outside  
live my life perfectly fine  
doesn't make a difference  
added safety precautions following CDC guidelines  
following all the guidelines  
getting colder  
6 feet apart



### Question 3: Which of the following best describes your current mindset regarding dining at a restaurant?

**Younger people are significantly more likely to dine at restaurants than older respondents.**

Seventy-percent (70%) of respondents ages 18-24 are open to going to a restaurant, compared to 41% of respondents ages 55-64.

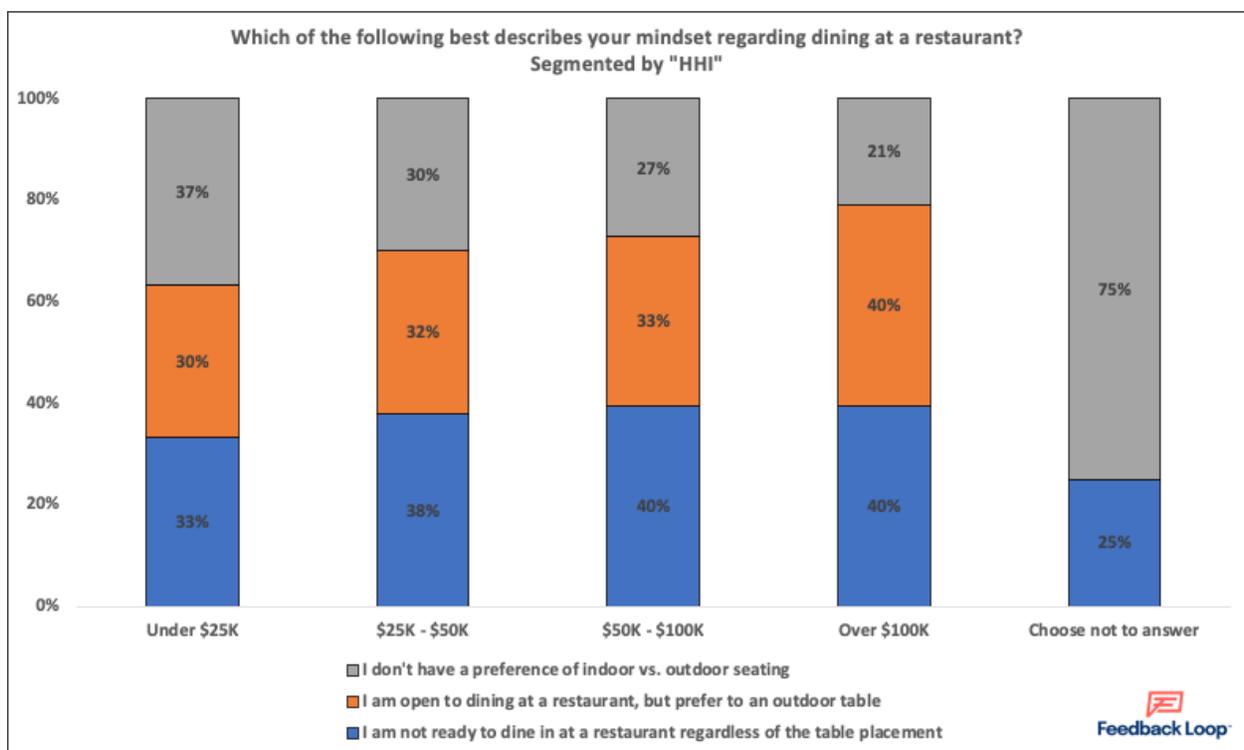




## Question 4: Which of the following best describes your mindset regarding dining at a restaurant?

**As income goes down, willingness to eat indoors increases.**

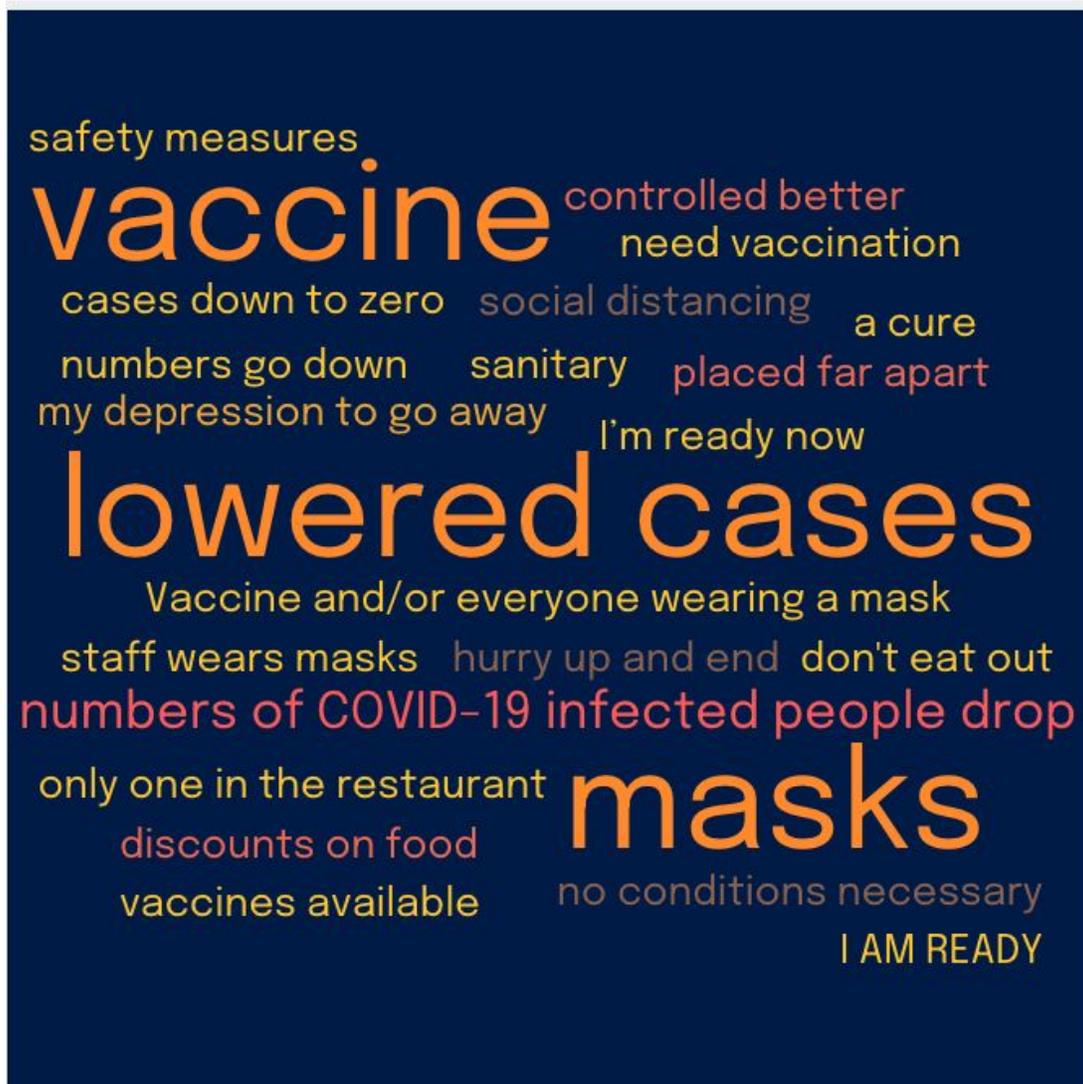
- Nearly 70% of full-time working respondents are ready to go to restaurants, compared to 53% of unemployed respondents that are ready to go to restaurants.
- As income goes down, willingness to eat indoors increases (21% of \$100K+ don't mind eating indoors, whereas 37% of < \$25K don't mind eating indoors)





## Question 5: What would it take for you to be ready to dine at a restaurant?

Here's what respondents shared.





## About Feedback Loop

Feedback Loop is the agile research platform for rapid consumer feedback. Leading companies including Farmers Insurance, Humana, and Lending Tree trust Feedback Loop to bring the voice of the consumer into critical market decisions. Learn how agile research makes getting consumer input fast, easy and reliable for researchers and product managers alike at [www.feedbackloop.com](http://www.feedbackloop.com).

### Note

The survey is not based on a probability sample and as such, an estimate of theoretical sampling error cannot be calculated.