

3 out of 4 Dublin pubs opposed to restaurants reopening but pubs staying shut

Almost 7 out of 10 willing to reopen with restricted capacity, following strict public health and social distancing guidelines

6 out of 10 say they will go out of business if asked to stay closed into 2021

50% 'appalled' by insurance sector, further 33% dissatisfied

3 out of 4 satisfied with Government response to crisis

The vast majority of Dublin pubs are opposed to restaurants reopening but pubs staying shut, according to a survey conducted by the Licensed Vintners Association (LVA).

Three out of every four Dublin pubs believe that all food providers should be treated equally, with 76% saying they would not support a scenario where restaurants were allowed to reopen while pubs must remain closed. According to Bord Bia*, 16% of all 'out of home' food service consumption was in pubs last year, with full service restaurants accounting for 12%.

Almost 7 out of 10 Dublin pubs are willing to reopen with restricted capacities, following strict public health and social distancing guidelines, if and when such measures were approved by the Government and the Expert Group. 68% of Dublin pubs would prefer to try to reopen under those requirements rather than have to wait additional months until a vaccine is found for normal unrestricted trading. This is despite the clear concerns about the commercial viability of trading with capacity restrictions.

The survey also revealed that six out of 10 Dublin pubs believe their business will not survive if they are asked to stay closed for a period into 2021.

Dublin pubs also expressed their levels of satisfaction with how various sectors they interact with have acted during the current COVID-19 crisis. So far, almost three out of four Dublin pubs are satisfied with how the banks have acted, while a massive 95% are satisfied with their main suppliers.

However, the opposite was true for insurers, with 50% of Dublin pubs saying they are "appalled" by how the insurance sector has behaved and a further 33% saying they are dissatisfied.

Three out of four Dublin publicans also expressed their satisfaction with the Government handling of the crisis to date.

In response to a question asking them about their greatest concerns, the health and wellbeing of publicans, staff and customers was the most common response listed by Dublin publicans, followed by the uncertainty around when they may be able to reopen and the future viability of their business.

The pubs were also asked to comment on what support they will need in order to reopen. The vast majority believe they will need Government support on measures like rates, excise and taxation as well as further assistance from the banking sector.

Sadly, several pubs indicated they are already unlikely to reopen after the current crisis.

Speaking about the survey results, LVA Chief Executive Donall O'Keefe said, "What this survey makes clear is that there is a strong feeling amongst Dublin publicans that all food providers should be treated the same. More than 3 out of 4 pubs are against the suggestion that restaurants could reopen while pubs remain shut.

"Most Dublin pubs have restaurant licenses and believe they will be able to implement the same approach to the guidelines as adopted by the wider food service sector. They would also be deeply opposed to a

scenario where restaurants were permitted to reopen but pubs who serve food had to stay shut. That would be discriminatory and we are already starting to see a massive outcry across the Irish pub sector about different rules potentially being applied to restaurants and pubs.

"The survey also shows that when the Government and the Expert Group give the go ahead, most Dublin pubs would like to reopen on a restricted basis with stringent public health and social distancing requirements in place. Pubs across Ireland are deeply conscious of the need to protect the public health and will abide by any guidelines that are put in place by the Government.

"We acknowledge that the restricted trading could be challenging. Any restricted opening along these lines will involve a significantly reduced capacity and a dramatic change to the pub experience as we know it. However, if this can be implemented in other hospitality businesses, then Dublin publicans can adopt a similar approach and want to have that option.

"A really startling statistic to emerge from the survey was that as many as 6 out of 10 Dublin pubs believe they will go out of business if the closure period is extended into 2021. We were also massively concerned to see some Dublin pubs indicate it is already too late for them and they will never recover. That is a sad and scary prospect for the entire pub sector operating in Ireland.

"Since this crisis began, we have been speaking broadly about the effect this pandemic is having on the pub sector. This survey captures the reality in stark terms. From the outset of this crisis, pubs have supported the public health measures which were introduced, but we can't ignore the human and economic impact this is having on the licensed trade.

"The LVA has noted the strong support provided by suppliers and banks since this crisis began and this is reflected in the views of pubs across Dublin. The reverse is true for the insurance sector with more than half the industry appalled by their behaviour. With insurance companies putting forward excuse after excuse and acting in bad faith when it comes to honouring policies, we are continuing to press the Government and the Central Bank to hold them to account. So far all we've had is lip service from some of the insurance companies.

"Dublin publicans are fully aware of the gravity of this crisis and the many different aspects of society being impacted by this pandemic. Our members have been strongly supportive of the Government response to date. However, as this survey shows, the pub sector is also facing up to the massive economic implications of this crisis and further substantial Government support of the businesses themselves will be needed if we are to come through it," Mr. O'Keeffe concluded.

**Taken from Bord Bia's 2019 Irish Foodservice Market Insights Report*

Survey Results

Please see below details of the statistical questions included in this survey. The survey was issued to members of the LVA on Monday 20th April 2020, a day after comments made by Minister for Health Simon Harris appeared in a Sunday newspaper. In those comments Minister Harris suggested that pubs may not fully reopen until after a vaccine is found and that this may not happen in 2020. Responses were collected on an anonymous, aggregate basis over a 3 day period (Monday 20th to Wednesday 22nd April 2020).

QUESTION – Pubs will only be reopened on the direction of the Expert Group and the Minister for Health, based on public health advice. It now appears that pubs will be one of the last business sectors to reopen, and could potentially be closed for a very extended period. However there are two potential scenarios which could emerge. Which of these two options would be your preference?

Response:

- 68% – Restricted opening with low capacity limits and strict public health guidelines and social distancing required, food oriented business but possibly available sooner than the full reopening scenario

- 32% – Normal, unrestricted trading but delayed by several/ many additional months compared to the restricted scenario

QUESTION – Would you support a scenario where restaurants are allowed to reopen but pubs must stay shut due to public health concerns?

Response:

- 24% – Yes
- 76% – No

QUESTION – Will your business survive if you are asked to close for a period into 2021?

Response:

- 40% – Yes
- 60% – No

QUESTION – What is your level of satisfaction with the banks to date?

Response:

- 19% – Very satisfied
- 55% – Moderately satisfied
- 17% – Dissatisfied
- 9% – Appalled

QUESTION – What is your level of satisfaction with the main suppliers to date?

Response:

- 60% – Very satisfied
- 35% – Moderately satisfied
- 5% – Dissatisfied
- 0% – Appalled

QUESTION – What is your level of satisfaction with the insurers to date?

Response:

- 1% – Very satisfied
- 16% – Moderately satisfied
- 33% – Dissatisfied
- 50% – Appalled

QUESTION – Are you satisfied with how the Government has been handling this crisis to date?

Response:

- 75% – Yes
- 25% – No