



STOCKTON
UNIVERSITY

LLOYD D. LEVENSON INSTITUTE
OF GAMING, HOSPITALITY & TOURISM

Atlantic City Restaurant Week 2021 Executive Report – November 2021

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Atlantic City Restaurant Week 2021

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**Commissioned by: Casino Reinvestment Development Authority
and Atlantic City Restaurant Week Committee**

Table of Contents

1. Overview & Key Findings	Page 3
2. Methodology	Page 3
3. Demographic Characteristics.....	Page 4
4. Geographic Characteristics	Page 6
5. Advertising & Notoriety.....	Page 8
6. Customer Experience	Page 10
7. Economic Impact	Page 11
8. Discussion & Recommendations	Page 12

Overview

Atlantic City Restaurant Week, historically held in March, was postponed to October in 2021. The fall date was a response to the continuing COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on the Atlantic City community. The change in date, and the lingering effects of the pandemic, especially with respect to labor and supply chain challenges, likely had an impact on patron attendance and experience.

As in previous years, patrons of Atlantic City Restaurant Week were surveyed regarding their personal characteristics and experience of the event. A total 143 survey responses were collected over the course of two weeks, October 3 through October 17, utilizing an exclusively online survey. Compared to previous years, survey respondents trended older and a greater proportion were first-time restaurant week patrons. Overall, patrons were pleased with their Restaurant Week experience and the majority intend to return for next year's event.

As Restaurant Week 2020 (March 8 through March 13) was cut short by the statewide declaration of a Public Health Emergency on March 9th ([Executive Order 103](#)) and the closure of indoor dining on March 16 ([Executive Order 104](#)), data for that year is only reported for the period March 8 through March 15 (the date of the last patron survey). Data for all prior years represents a full two-week period starting March 3, 2019 and March 4, 2018 respectively.

Key Findings

- Six out of 10 respondents were returning Restaurant Week patrons.
- 35% of respondents who were first-time patrons heard about Restaurant Week from social media.
- Three quarters of respondents indicated that Restaurant Week factored into their decision to visit the resort.
- Nearly half of respondents indicated that they were of the Baby Boomer generation (age 56-75)
- 17% of respondents traveled more than 50 miles to attend Restaurant Week
- 54% of respondents were from Atlantic County, 89% from New Jersey.
- Among Restaurant Week patrons who were not residents of Atlantic City, 3 out of 10 said they were staying in the Atlantic City area overnight.
- 62% of respondents rated Restaurant Week 5 out of 5 for value.
- 86% of 2021 respondents said they would return in 2022.

Methodology

Restaurant Week patrons were asked to answer a series of questions regarding their experience of the event. A 12-question online survey was administered via Qualtrics. A link to the survey was provided on the Atlantic City Restaurant Week website and distributed to restaurant patrons via business cards printed with a QR code. Out of an abundance of caution, it was decided that the survey would be administered in a ‘contactless’ manner without the use of hard copy survey cards.

A total 143 respondents participated in the 2021 online survey between October 3 and October 17, however only 91 finished the survey and not all answered every question.

As established in prior Restaurant Week Surveys, notably 2019, there has been little difference between patron samples collected online or via survey card except in the oldest age bracket. The choice to go ‘contactless’ should have little to no effect on the overall sample.

Demographics Characteristics: Who is the Atlantic City Restaurant Week visitor?

Age

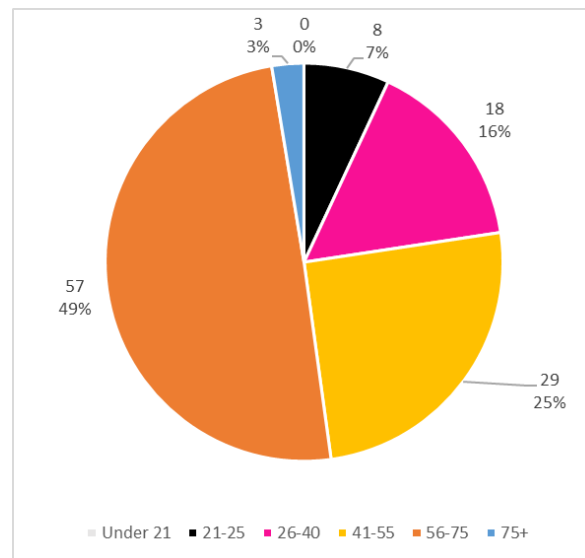
In a slight deviation from previous years, 2021 Restaurant Week patrons trended older overall with nearly half (49%) identifying in the 56-75 (Baby Boomer) age range compared to 36% in 2020 and 35% (age 52-70) in 2018.

Millennials (age 26-40) represented 16% of respondents compared to 25% in 2020 and 28% (age 20-35) in 2018. Representation among the oldest (75+) and youngest visitors (under 21 and “Gen Z” 21-25) was consistent with prior years.

As in the past, first-time patrons trended younger than return patrons. However, the Gen X and Baby Boomer age ranges represented the largest share of first-time patrons (29% and 44% respectively). Gen Z

and Millennial respondents each represented 12% of first-time patrons in 2021, a decline from 2020 when Gen Z represented 7% and Millennial nearly 29% of this segment.

Please select your age group. All Patrons
(115 responses)



Party Size

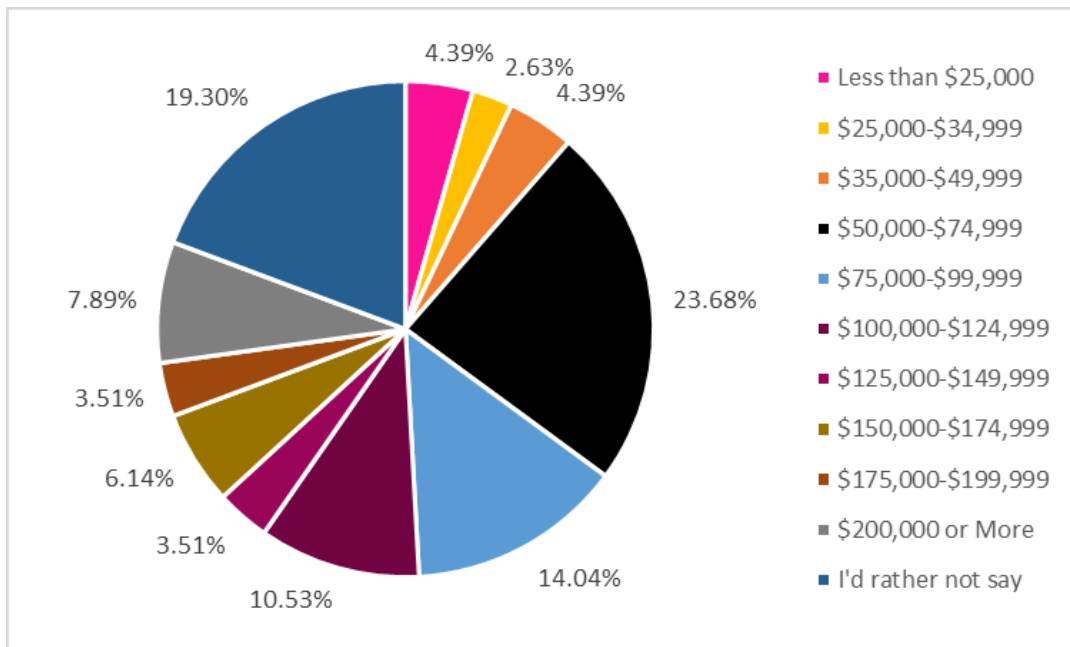
Restaurant Week continues to be an event particularly attractive to couples – 59.5% percent of respondents indicated they were traveling in a party of two and 15.5% indicated they were traveling in a party of four.

Restaurant Week was attractive to couples across the age spectrum 61.1% of Millennial, 57.9% of Baby Boomer and 58.6% of Gen X respondents were traveling in parties of two. Baby Boomer and Gen X respondents were more likely to travel in groups of four than Millennial respondents, 14% and 24% respectively compared to 5.5% of Millennial respondents.

Income

As in previous years, patrons indicated a wide range of household incomes with most patrons falling within the \$50,000 to \$124,999 range. This is consistent with median incomes for the state of New Jersey (\$82,545) and Atlantic County (\$62,110) and higher than the median income for Atlantic City (\$29,232) (Bureau, United States Census, 2021).

Which of the following best represents your household income last year before taxes?
(114 responses)



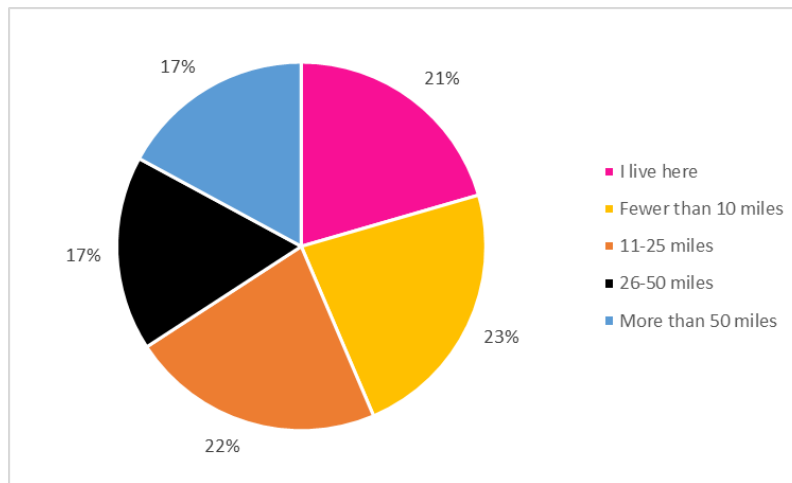
Geographic Characteristics: Where did Restaurant Week patrons come from?

Distance

Restaurant Week succeeded in attracting a mix of local and more distant visitors, with nearly even distribution among residents, and visitors traveling fewer than ten miles, 11-25 miles, 26-50 miles, and more than 50 miles to participate.

How far did you travel to participate in Restaurant Week? (all respondents)

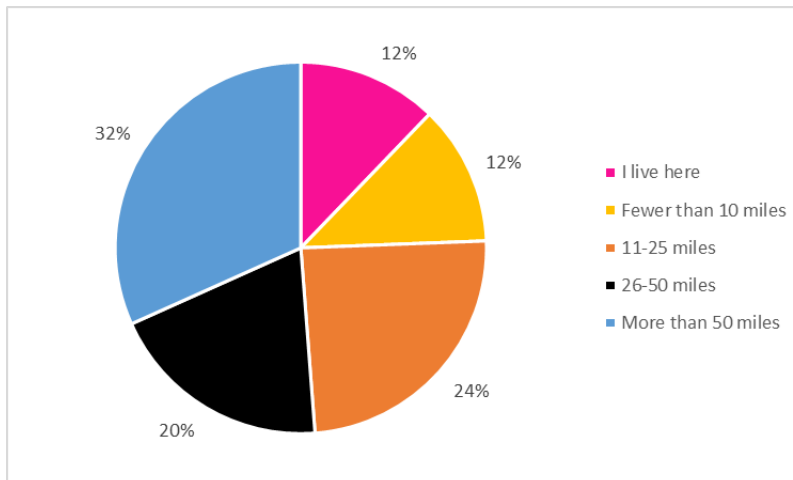
(117 responses)



First-time Restaurant Week patrons traveled further than return patrons with 32% traveling more than 50 miles compared to 17% of return patrons. However, a smaller percentage of patrons traveled more than 50 miles in 2021 (32%) than in 2020 (50%) with a greater proportion traveling 11-25 miles in 2021 (24%) compared to 2020 (10%).

How far did you travel to participate in Restaurant Week? (First-time patrons)

(41 responses)

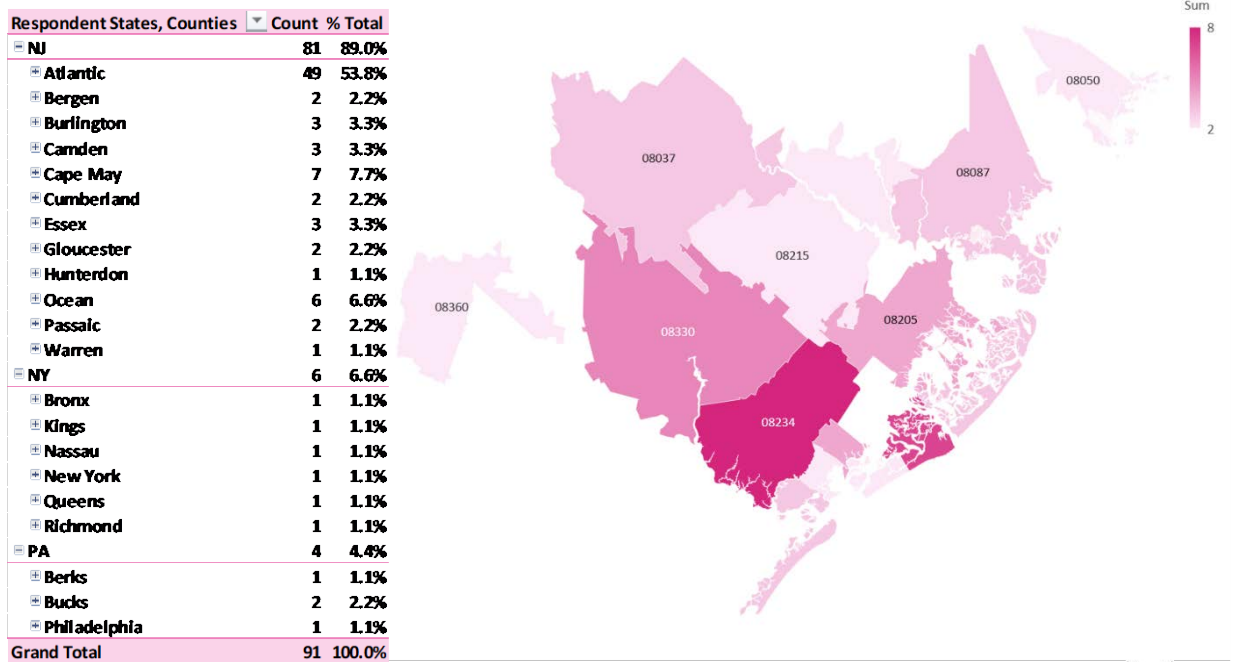


Zip Code

Reported zip codes for 2021 Restaurant Week patrons clustered in Southern New Jersey, with 54% of respondents indicating a zip code in Atlantic County, New Jersey. The two most popular zip codes 08234 (Egg Harbor Township) and 08401 (Atlantic City) represented 9% and 8% of the total respectively. Patrons reporting out of state zip codes represented 11% of the total. The map below shows the geographic origins of Restaurant Week Patrons organized by zip code. Only zip codes with 2 or more patrons are shown (91 total respondents)

Where are you from?

(91 responses)



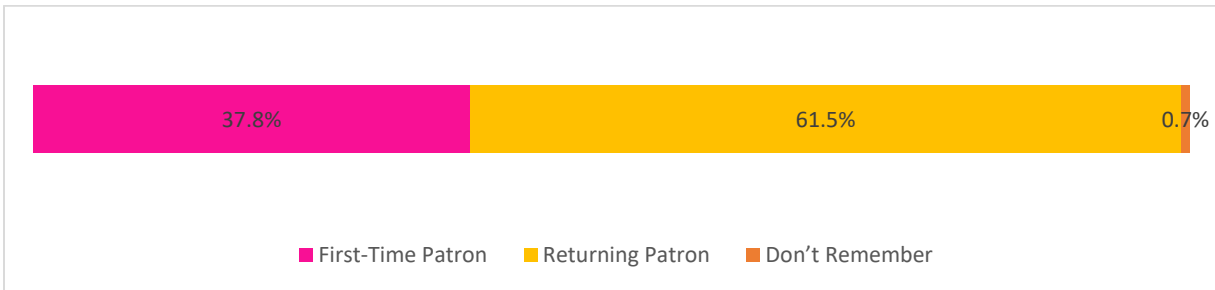
Advertising & Notoriety: How did patrons hear about Restaurant Week?

Advertising & Notoriety

A history of delivering quality experiences for patrons continues to be the best endorsement for Restaurant Week and a significant factor in the event’s popularity. Over half of respondents (61.5%) in 2021 were return guests compared to 72.6% in 2020, 68.4% in 2019, and 58.66% in 2018.

Is (was) this the first time you attended Restaurant Week?

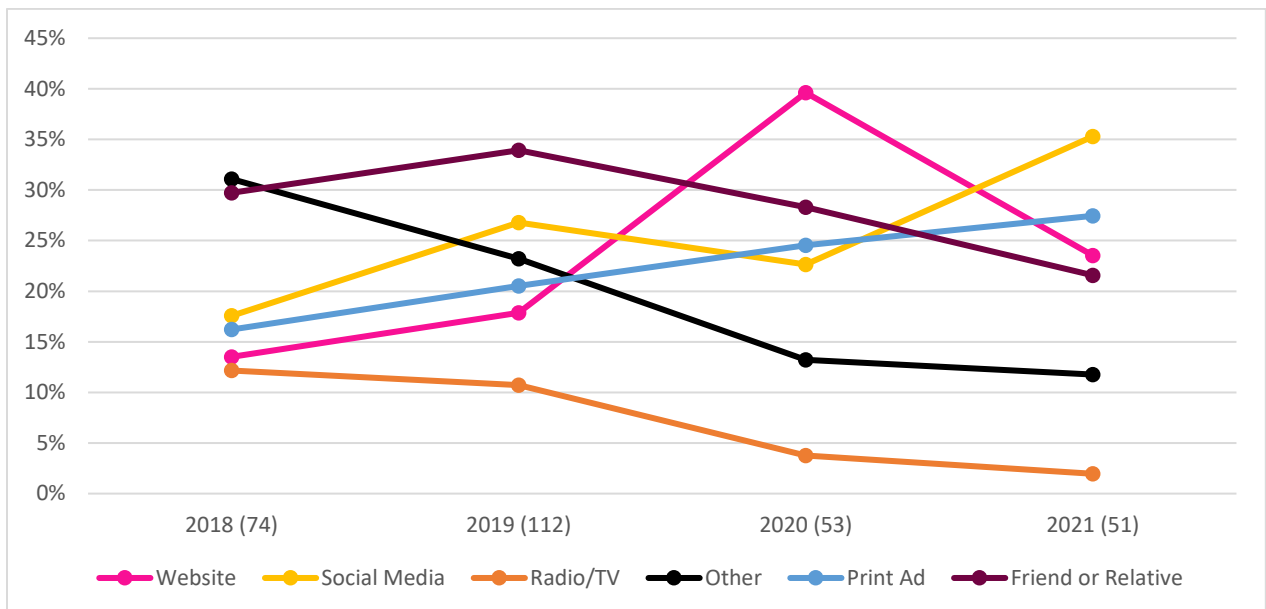
(135 responses)



Among all patrons, Print Advertising (34.1%), Social Media (28.1%), the event website (23.7%) and Friends/Relatives (20.7%) were the most common ways to hear about Restaurant Week. First-time patrons were most likely to have heard about the event from Social Media (35.3%), Print Advertising (27.5%), the event website (23.5%) and a Friend or Relative (21.6%).

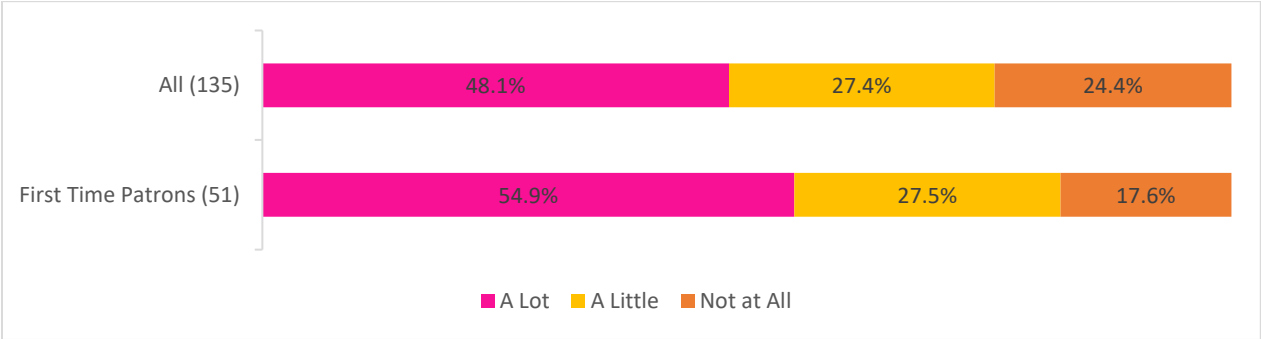
How did you hear about Restaurant Week?

(# first-time respondents per year, respondents were instructed to choose all that apply)



Patrons were also asked whether Restaurant Week was a factor in their decision to visit Atlantic City. A little less than half of all respondents (48.1%) said that Restaurant Week factored ‘A Lot’ in their decision to visit the city, nearly a third (27.4%) said that Restaurant Week had ‘A Little’ effect on their decision, and about a quarter (24.4%) said that Restaurant Week did not factor into their decision. Among first time patrons, most (82.4%) said Restaurant Week at least factored ‘A Little’ if not ‘A Lot’ in their decision to come to Atlantic City.

*Did Restaurant Week factor in your decision to visit Atlantic City this week?
(135 responses)*

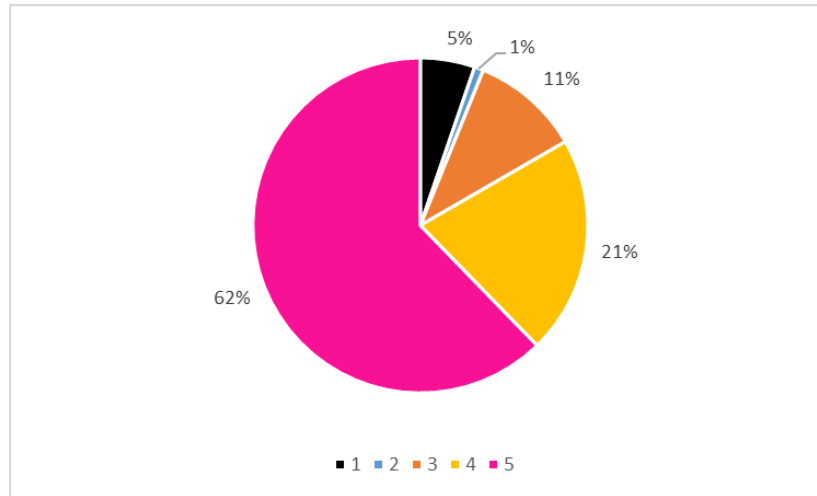


Customer Experience: Does Restaurant Week provide value for patrons?

Atlantic City Restaurant Week continues to provide value for patrons with more than half of respondents (62%) rating the event 5 out of 5 for value.

On a scale of 1-5 (5 being the highest) please tell us if Atlantic City Restaurant Week provided a value for your group.

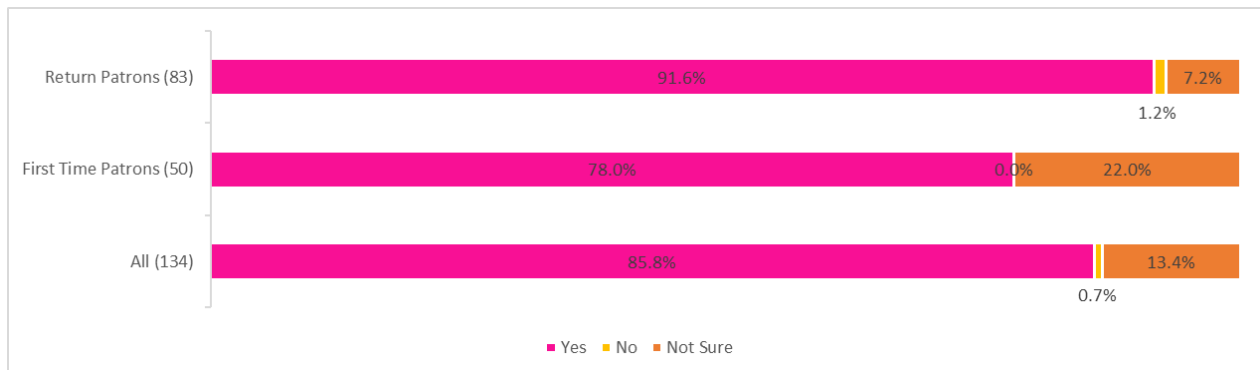
(114 responses)



It is this value that keeps bringing patrons back each year. Both first-time and return patrons said they plan to return next year. After just one experience with Restaurant Week, 78% of first-time patrons said that they plan to return next year.

Do you plan to return for Restaurant Week next year?

(# responses)

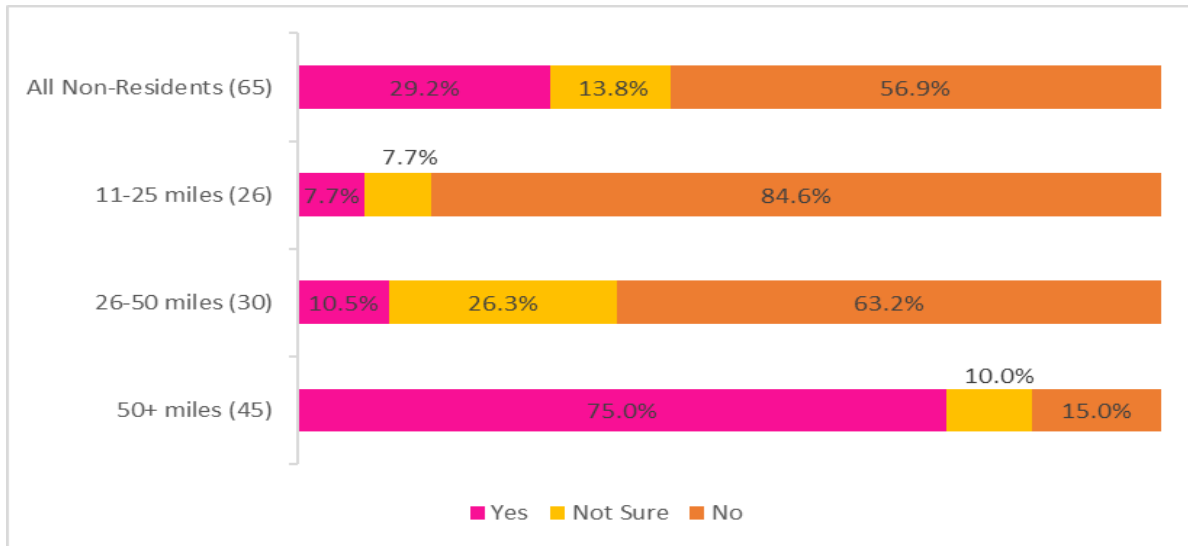


Economic Impact: What other activities did Restaurant Week patrons participate in?

Restaurant Week patrons included both visitors and Atlantic City residents with 29% of all non-residents saying that they would be staying in the Atlantic City area overnight. The greater distance traveled to the resort, the more likely the respondent was staying overnight in the city. Three quarters of respondents who traveled more than 50 miles to take part in Restaurant Week indicated that they would be staying locally overnight. This was comparable to 2020 when 73% of this group indicated that they would be staying overnight.

Notably, compared to 2020, fewer respondents traveling from a 26-50-mile radius chose to stay in the city overnight. In 2020 a third of respondents from this group stayed overnight compared to 10.5% in 2021.

Will you be staying in the Atlantic City area overnight?
(# responses)



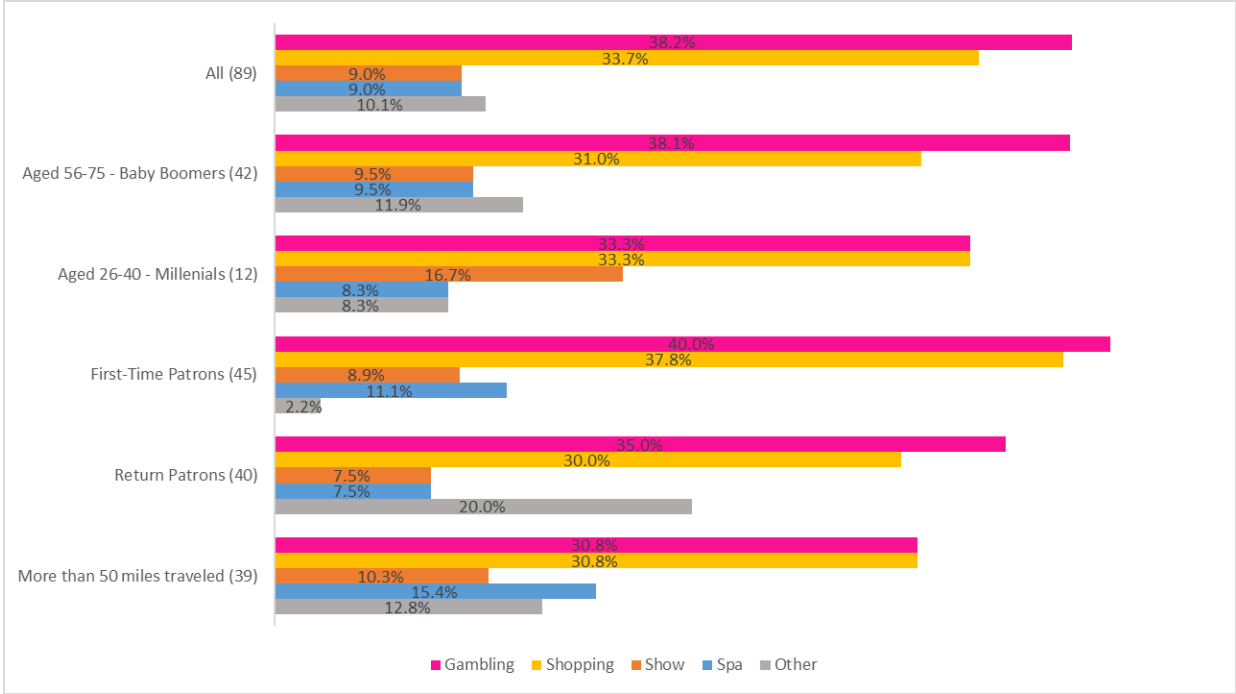
Restaurant Week patrons not only dined at area restaurants and stayed at local hotels, but also participated in other activities throughout the city. Gambling was the most popular activity for Restaurant Week patrons followed by shopping and shows.

Millennials (age 26-40), like their Baby Boomer counterparts, shopped and gambled while visiting the city for Restaurant Week but they were equally likely to shop as gamble and were more likely to take in a show.

First-time Restaurant Week patrons took advantage of Atlantic City’s other amenities including gambling and shopping, 9% attended a show and 11% visited a spa.

Patrons that traveled more than 50 miles likely stayed in Atlantic City longer than other patrons and had the opportunity to take advantage of more of the resort’s amenities. In addition to gambling and shopping, 10% attended a show, and 15% received a spa service during their trip.

*What other activities will you be participating in while here for Restaurant Week?
 (# of respondents, respondents were instructed to choose all that apply)*



Discussion & Recommendations

In 2021, the Restaurant Week Committee and the Lloyd D. Levenson Institute of Gaming, Hospitality and Tourism (LIGHT), Stockton University School of Business collected data from Restaurant Week patrons using an online survey. The survey was administered online for a period of two weeks and 143 patrons responded.

On average these respondents visited 2.5 of the 58 participating restaurants and planned to visit an additional 2.5 restaurants during Restaurant Week. The number of restaurants visited in 2021 was slightly less than 2020 when respondents visited 2.6 restaurants on average, but greater than the number of restaurants visited in 2019 (1.99), 2018 (2.43), 2017 (1.96) and 2016 (1.69). This may suggest that survey respondents are among the most dedicated of Restaurant Week attendees and not casual patrons. Average group sizes were slightly smaller in 2021 with respondents traveling with 2.65 members in their party compared to 2.87 members in 2020, 2.94 members in 2019, 2.97 members in 2018, 3.24 members in 2017 and 3.08 members in 2016. It should be noted that group sizes reported by respondents in prior years may have been skewed higher by an over representation of respondents who were dining as members of large groups and banquets at the Stockton Seaview Hotel and similar venues. In 2021 less than 2% of respondents traveled in a group of 8 or more.

Using the average group size and the fixed meal price for each respective year, an average spend per visit, per respondent can be calculated. In 2021, respondents spent an average \$93.31 per

restaurant visited, not including additional purchases such as wine and or cocktails to accompany the meal. This is significantly less than the average per-visit spend by respondents in 2020 (\$101.02), 2019 (\$103.46), 2018 (\$104.51), 2017 (\$113.95), and 2016 (\$102.13) in part due to the smaller average party size.

By multiplying this per-visit spend with the average number of visits per respondent; a picture of Restaurant Week's economic impact on local restaurants begins to emerge. With an average group size of 2.65 and an estimated 2.5 restaurants visited, each respondent in 2021 spent approximately \$233.27 total at participating restaurants during Restaurant Week. This is less than 2020 and 2018 when respondents spent \$265.68 and \$253.96 respectively on average, but outperforms 2019 (\$205.89), 2017 (\$223.34) and 2016 (\$172.60). This estimate does not account for any additional purchases (i.e. wine and cocktails) which patrons may have made at the restaurants during their visit.

The event's postponement and non-traditional offering in fall rather than spring 2021 likely had an impact on participation, as reflected in the relatively small sample size. The lingering effects of the COVID-19 pandemic including labor and supply chain issues as well as reductions in group and long-range travel, may also have influenced patron behavior and impacted their experience.

Without knowing the total number of Restaurant Week attendees, or to what extent the unique circumstances of this particular year impacted their behavior, it is impossible to accurately gauge the total economic impact of the event on Atlantic City restaurants and the resort community. With an average total spend of \$233.27 the 143 survey respondents alone contributed \$33,357.61 to the local economy. Their additional purchases and participation in other activities while visiting for Restaurant Week, such as gambling and shopping, also represent contributions to economic activity locally.

The economic impact is only part of Restaurant Week's contribution to Atlantic City and the region. The committee's efforts to promote the event have the added effect of positioning Atlantic City as a year-round destination for fine dining and demonstrating that local businesses are open and ready for patrons after the challenges of the past year. Restaurant Week patrons, who enjoyed their experience at local restaurants, are likely to become return customers for these businesses. Even those who are unable to visit Atlantic City during Restaurant Week itself may be encouraged to visit at another time based on the positive exposure and visitor testimonials generated by the event.

Works Cited

Bureau, United States Census. (2021, November 16). *Quick Facts*. Retrieved from www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/atlanticcitycitynewjersey,atlanticcountynewjersey,NJ,US/INC110219