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Restaurants power more than dining

Restaurants are at the heart of local neighbourhoods. Over a third (37%) of Canadian diners visits a local restaurant, pub, bar or cafe at least once a week, and 98% say these businesses are important to their communities.¹ With dining up 13% year-over-year in Canada, that role is only growing in importance.²

OpenTable's *Restaurant Impact Report* combines proprietary insights with research from the consumer and hospitality industries to show the industry's broader impact. It explores how local restaurants

fuel economies, strengthen communities, and help support wellbeing—and why tackling challenges like no-shows is essential to helping restaurants thrive.

“Restaurants are woven into the fabric of communities across Canada - the setting for milestone celebrations, everyday meals, and the local economies and neighbourhoods they help sustain,” said Eric Kemppi, Director of Restaurant Sales and Services at OpenTable Canada. “OpenTable’s first-ever Canadian Restaurant Impact Report puts that impact into focus and reflects our commitment to advocating for the restaurants that make it all possible.”



At a Glance: The Power of Hospitality

Behind every great meal is a business that helps power its local economy, brings the community together, and enhances daily life for its patrons. Here are the numbers behind that impact.

+2.7%

In Canada, real commercial foodservice sales increased by 2.7% in the first quarter of 2026.³

+13%

increase in Canada dining at OpenTable restaurants in the last 12 months year-over-year.²

91%

of restaurants in Canada agree they play an important role in their local economy.⁴

89%

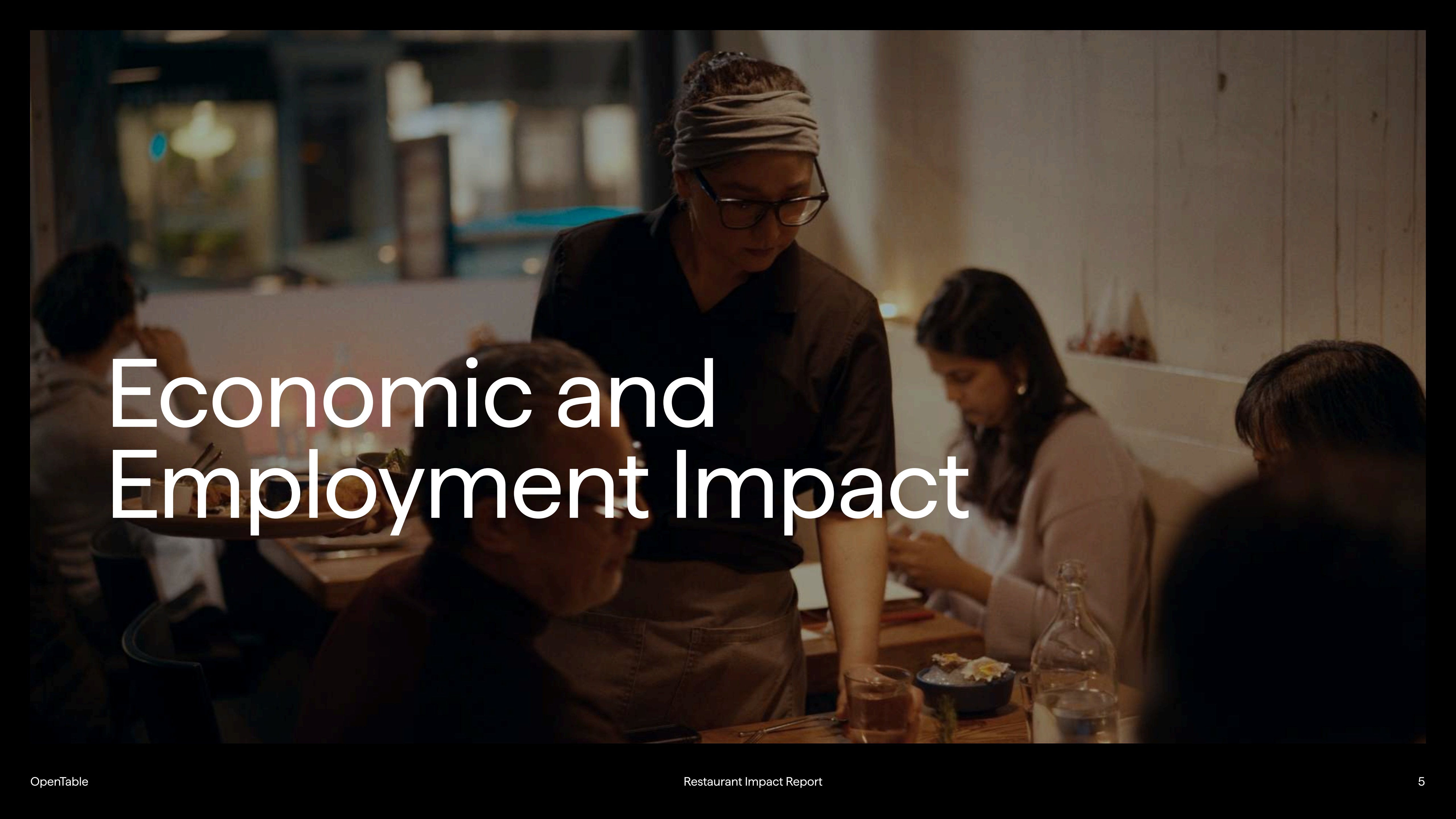
of Canadians say local restaurants, pubs and cafes are key to building a sense of community.¹

83%

of Canadian diners say dining out locally boosts their personal and social wellbeing.¹

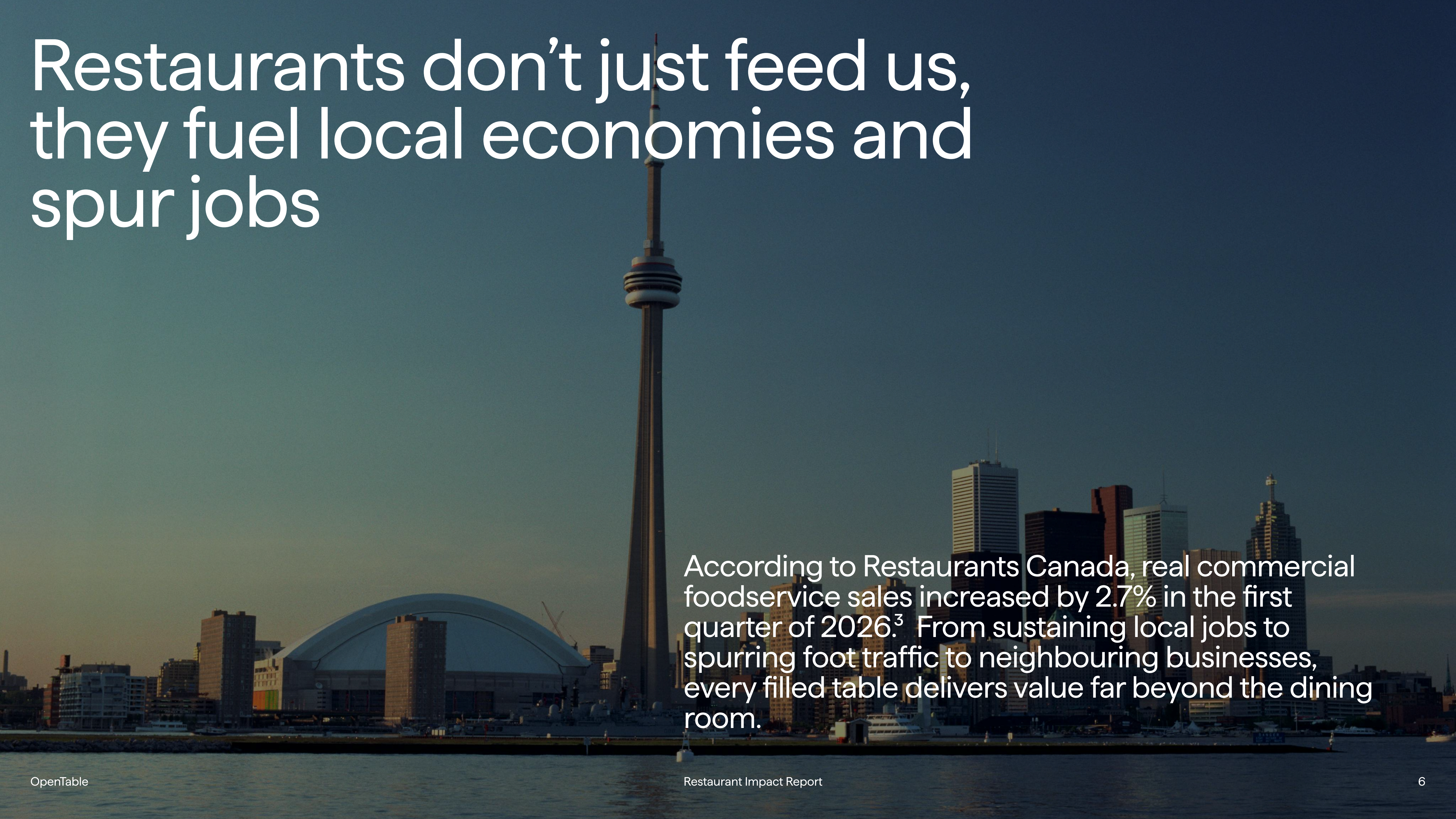
71%

of Canadian diners agree a no-show has a real impact on a restaurant's business.¹



Economic and Employment Impact

Restaurants don't just feed us, they fuel local economies and spur jobs



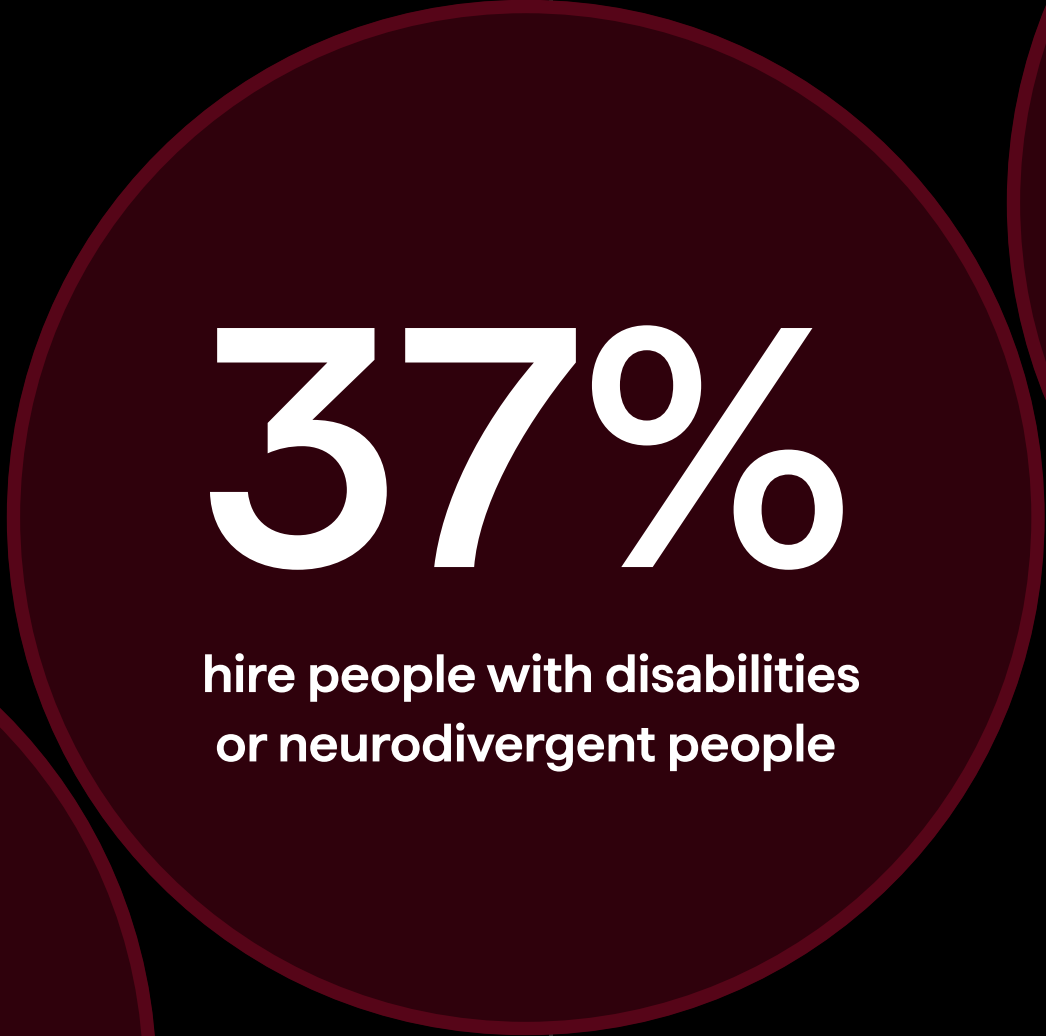
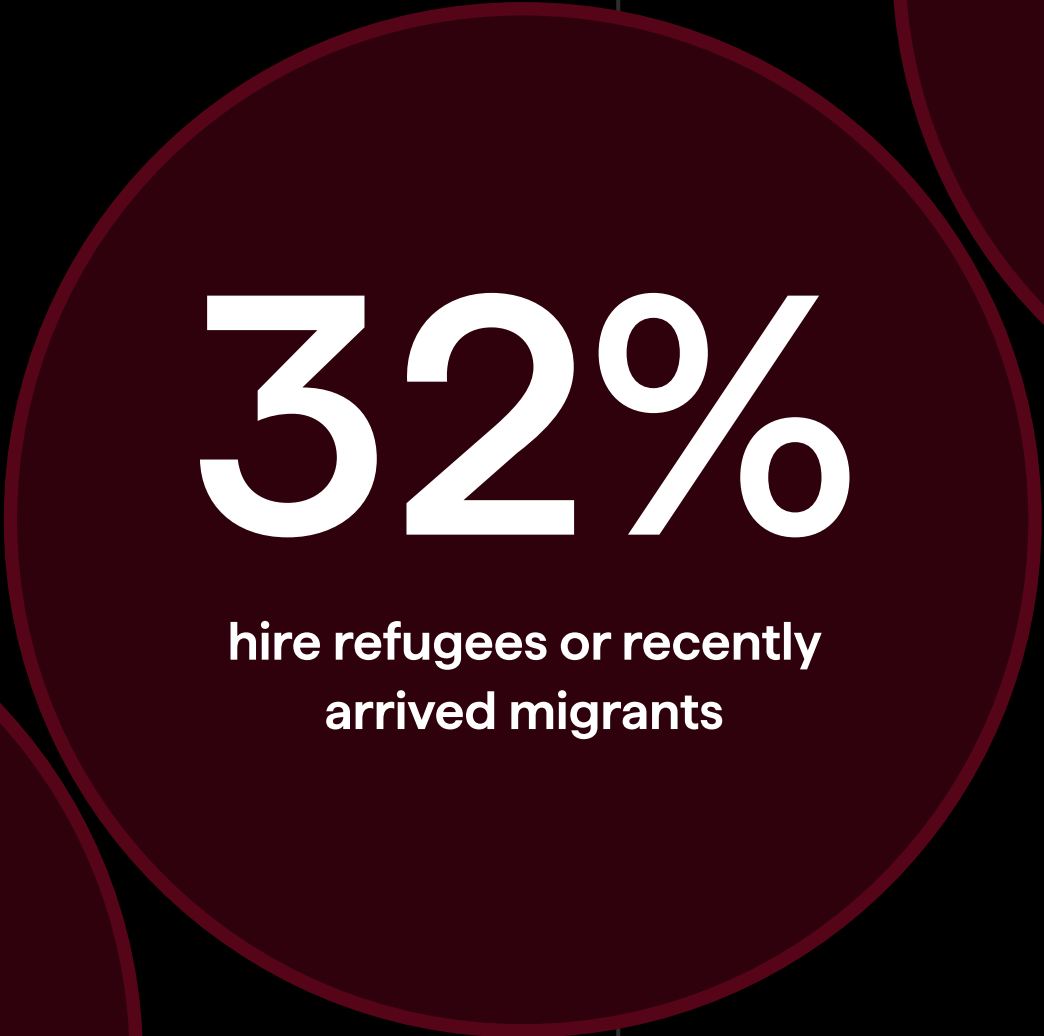
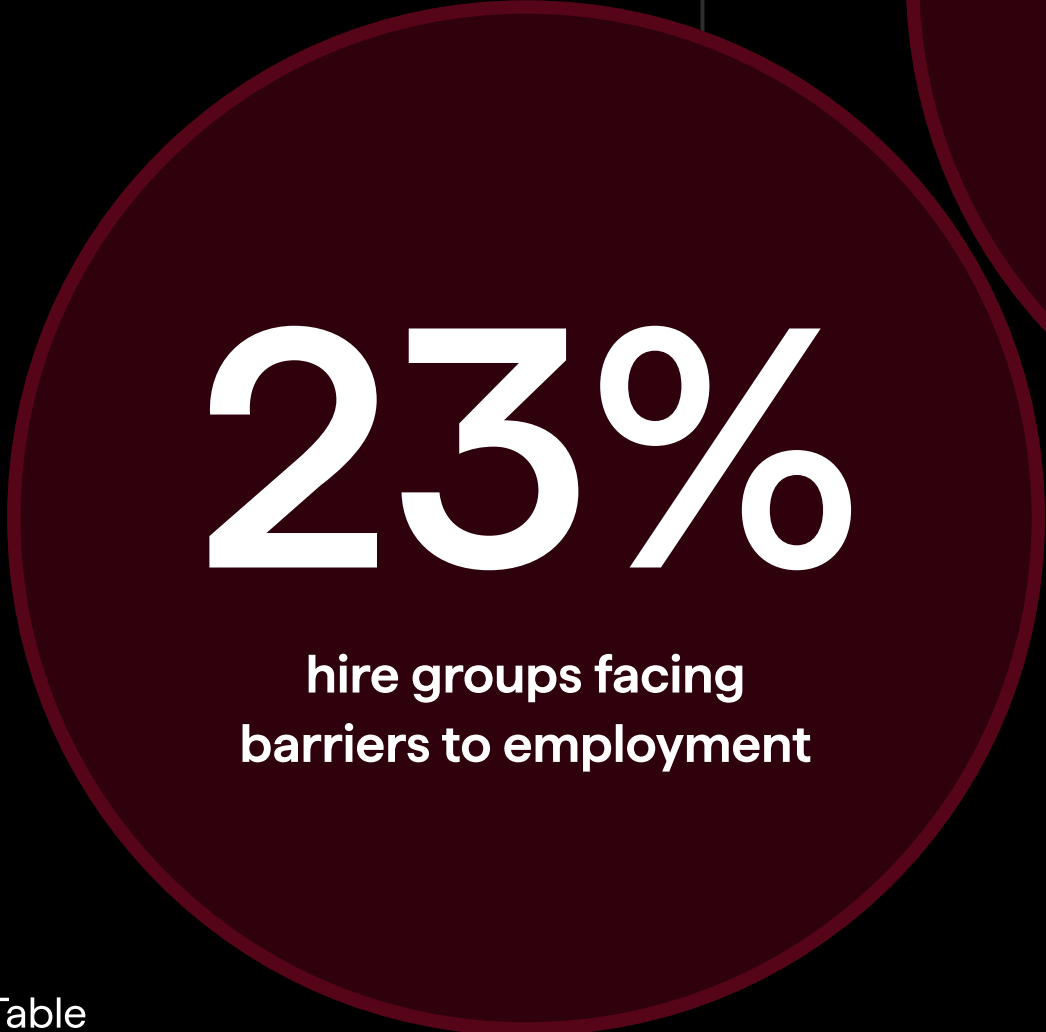
According to Restaurants Canada, real commercial foodservice sales increased by 2.7% in the first quarter of 2026.³ From sustaining local jobs to spurring foot traffic to neighbouring businesses, every filled table delivers value far beyond the dining room.

How full tables power neighbourhoods

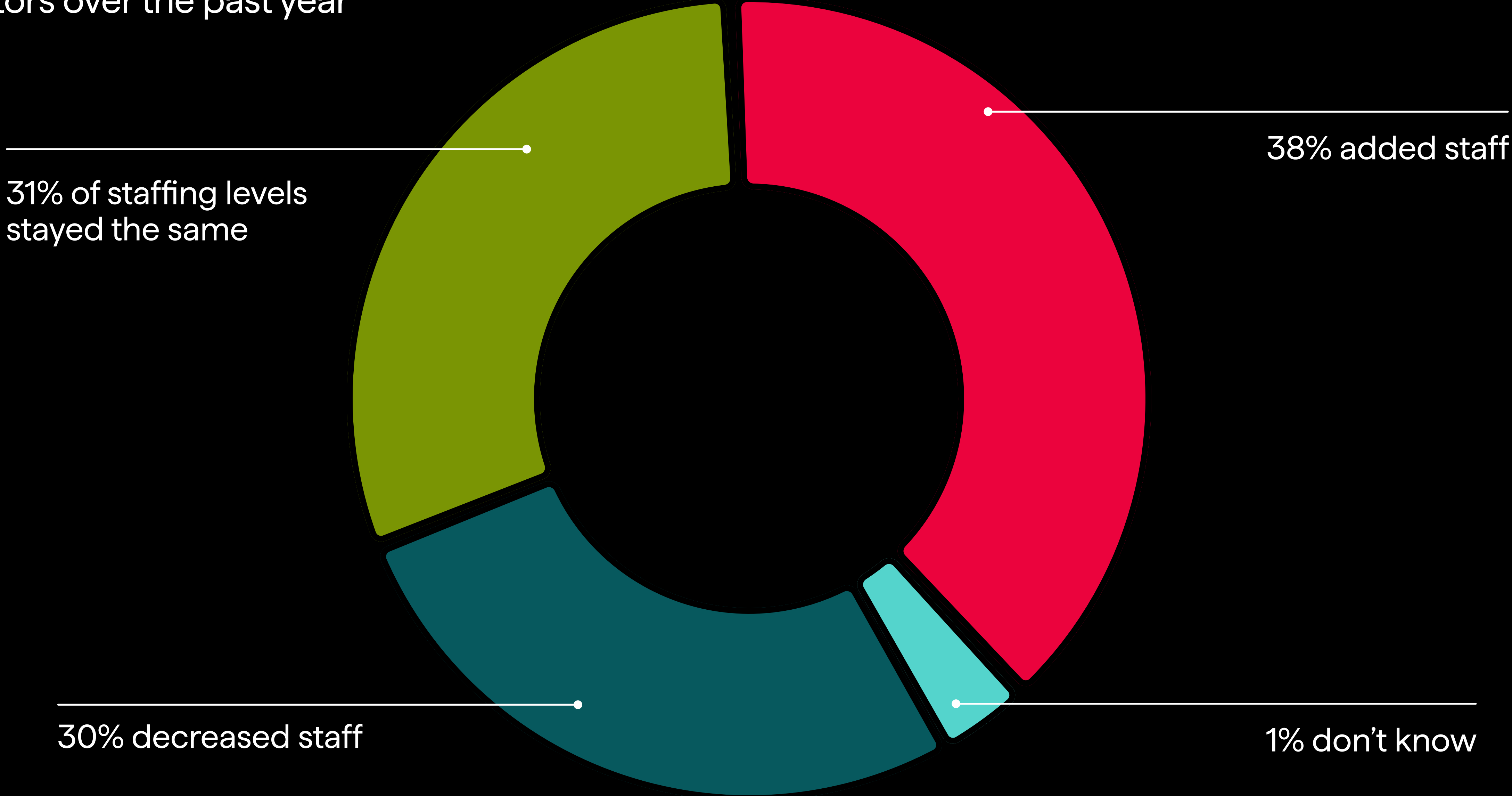
50% of Canadian diners spend money at neighbouring businesses before or after their meal, spending an average of \$133.¹



Canadian operators often hire groups that may face barriers to employment:⁴



Net staffing change among Canadian operators over the past year



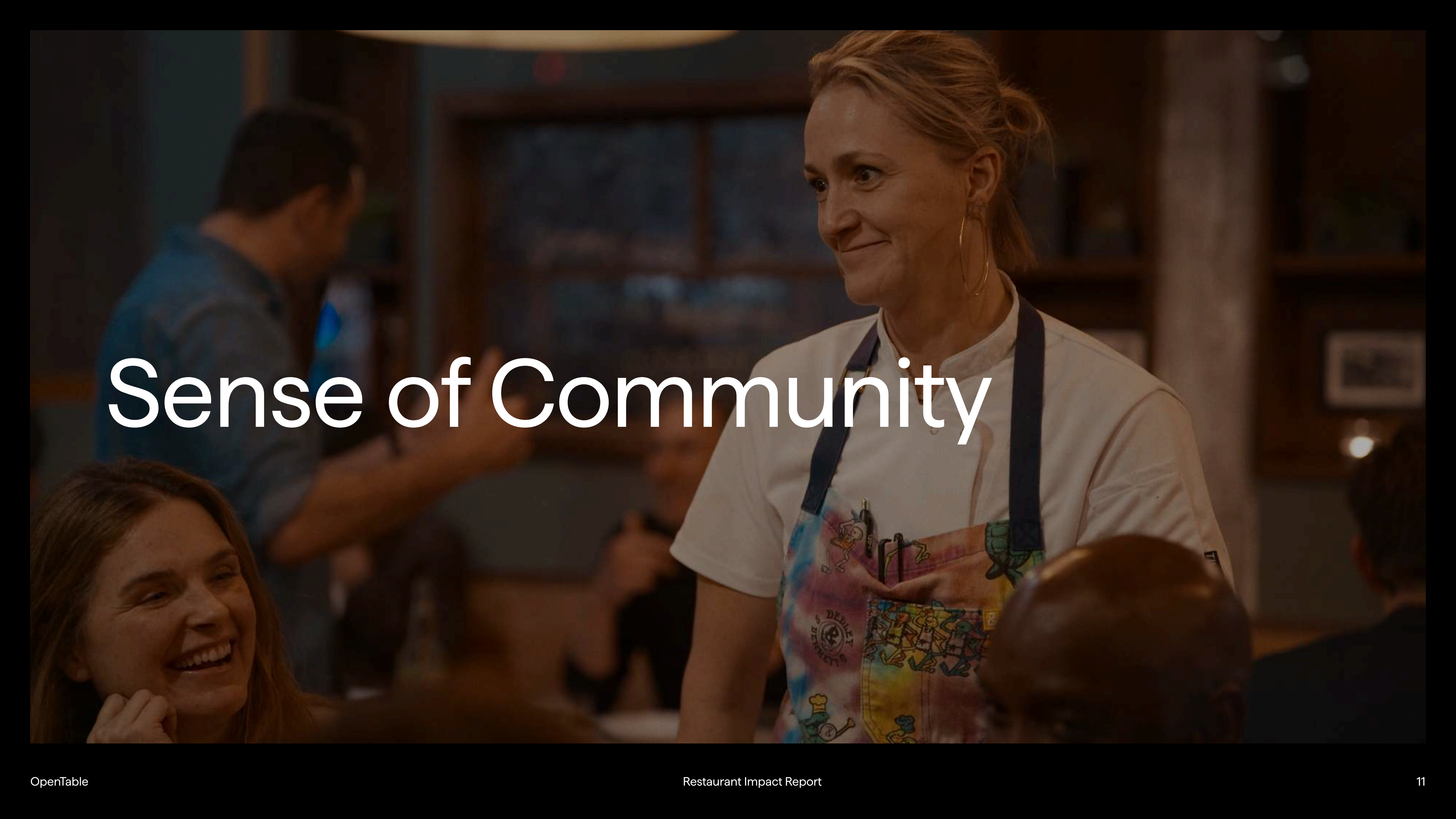


91%

of operators in Canada say their restaurants play an important role in the local economy e.g. creating jobs, encouraging spending in the area and supporting local purveyors.⁴

\$59

The average restaurant spend per person over the last 12 months in Canada.²

A photograph of a restaurant interior. In the foreground, a woman with long brown hair is smiling and looking towards the right. In the background, a woman with blonde hair tied back, wearing a white shirt and a colorful apron with cartoon characters, is smiling and looking towards the left. The background is slightly blurred, showing other people and restaurant decor.

Sense of Community

A man in a blue button-down shirt is standing and talking to two women seated at a restaurant table. The woman on the left has blonde hair and is holding a menu. The woman on the right has dark hair and is looking up at the man. The background shows a warm, dimly lit restaurant interior with framed artwork on the wall and other patrons in the distance.

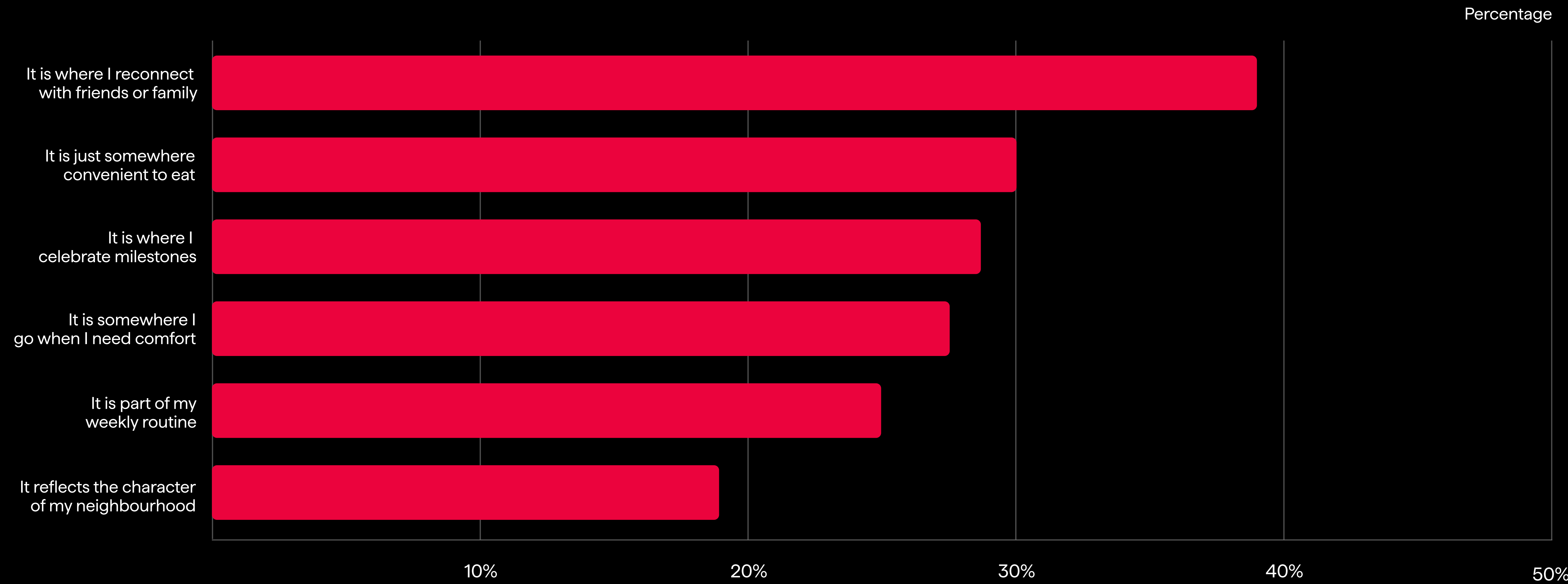
The best seat in the house is the one that brings communities together.

Long before it's a business, a restaurant is a gathering place. It's where first dates turn into anniversaries, birthdays become traditions, and a familiar face behind the counter makes a new neighbourhood feel like home. These “*third spaces*” bridge life between home and work, providing the human connection that ties a community together.

In fact, 89% of Canadian diners agree local venues are essential for creating community spirit, whilst 25% of Gen Z call their local restaurant their “*third place*”¹.

How diners experience their local restaurants

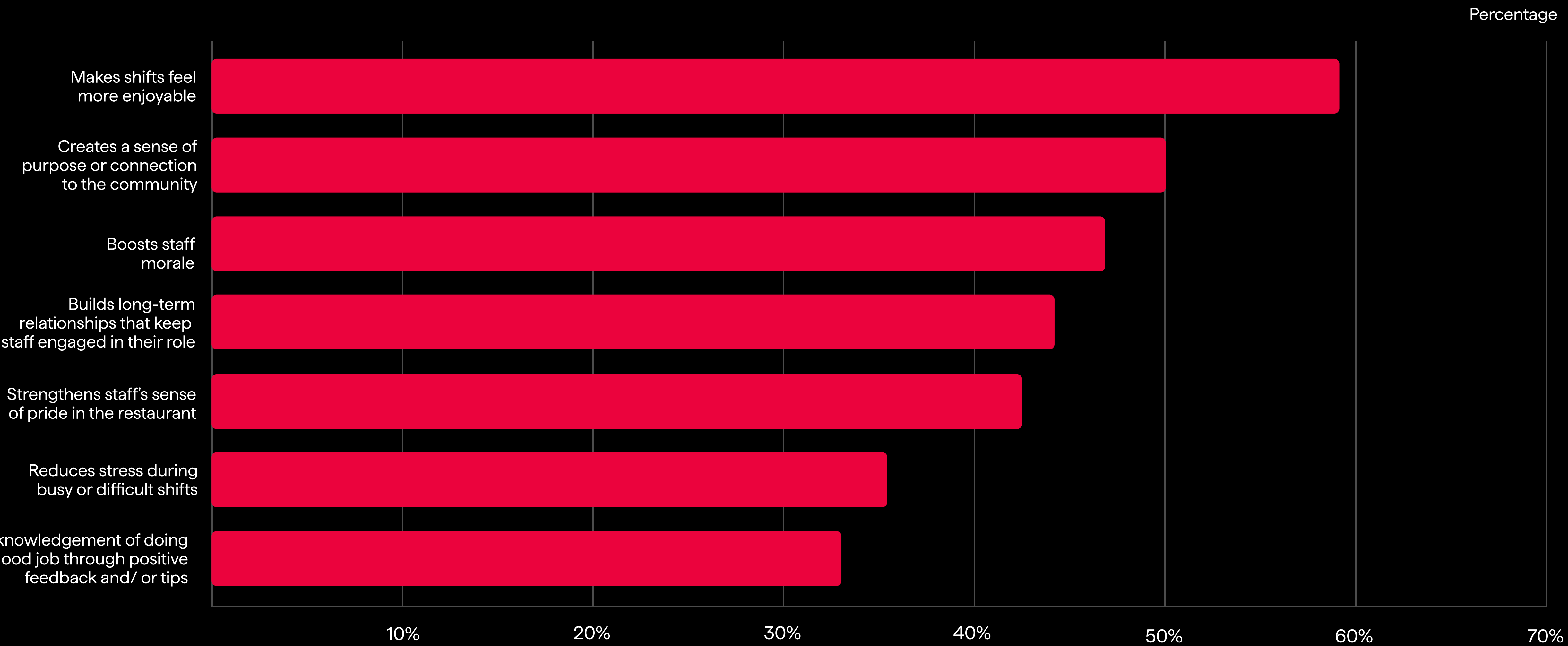
Which of the following describes the role your local restaurant, cafe, pub or bar plays in your life?¹



¹*excludes respondents who selected "none of the above"

The ‘regular’ effect

The connection goes both ways. These are the ways that regular guests have a positive impact on Canadian operators.⁴



*excludes respondents who selected "none of the above"

“At Gusto 54, we strongly believe that good hospitality fosters connection and strengthens neighbourhoods by creating spaces where everyone feels they belong. A restaurant’s true value goes far beyond what’s on the plate. Diners come for the feeling they experience when they walk through our doors - a warm welcome, good energy, and the opportunity to share a table with the people they care about. At its heart, hospitality is about connection.”

Janet Zuccarini CEO and Founder of Gusto 54 Hospitality Group



Personal Wellbeing

A little joy, one table at a time.



There's something about sitting down for a meal that makes the rest of the world feel a little quieter.

A dinner with friends can turn a hard week around—in fact, 58% of Canadian diners say they're likely to book a meal out specifically to lift their spirits or reconnect with others when feeling stressed.¹ Restaurants give us permission to pause and be fully present, with 83% of diners saying dining out locally directly boosts their personal and social wellbeing.¹

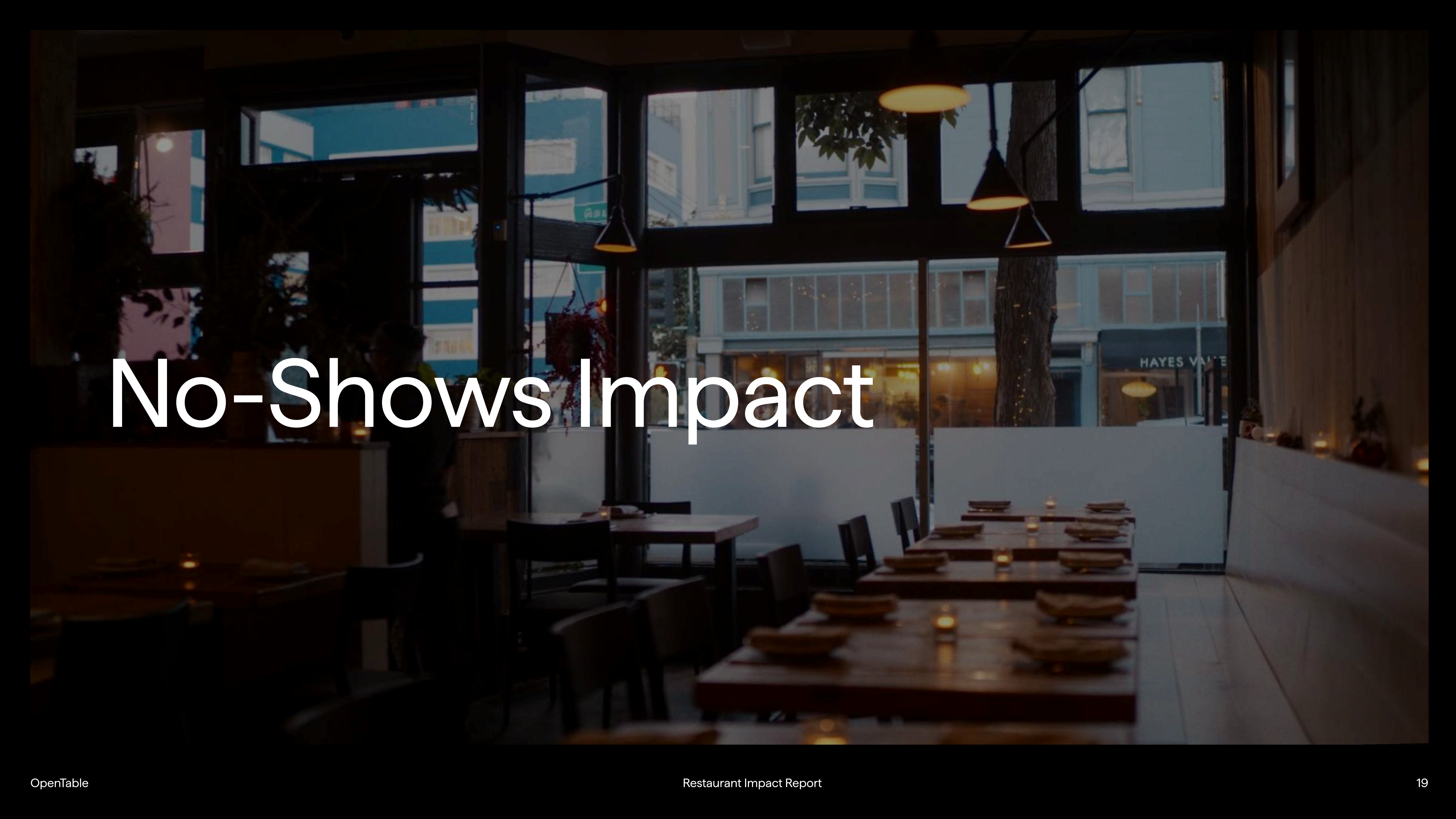
It's a vital role that operators see firsthand, with all Canadian restaurants (100%) recognising that their doors do more than feed people: they are important to their guests' social lives and wellbeing.⁴

“The 2025 World Happiness Report found that sharing meals is strongly associated with greater life satisfaction and more positive emotions. In fact, the frequency of shared meals was as useful an indicator of well-being as income and employment status.”

“Dining out can create the conditions where happiness is more likely to occur, and it begins before the meal itself. Choosing a restaurant and looking forward to it can generate anticipation, while remembering it afterward extends the enjoyment.”

Dr Gillian Mandich,
Assistant Professor in the Department of Psychiatry
at the University of Manitoba.



A photograph of a restaurant interior at dusk. The room is dimly lit, with warm light from pendant lamps hanging over the tables. Large windows on the right side of the frame offer a view of a city street with buildings and a tree. The text "No-Shows Impact" is overlaid in a large, white, sans-serif font across the center of the image.

No-Shows Impact

Every empty table has a real cost.

Restaurants power local economies, host our communities, and nurture our wellbeing—but they do that best when their seats are filled.

With tight margins, an unhonoured booking isn't just a missed dinner—it can impact a restaurant's bottomline. Yet despite 71% of Canadian diners agreeing that failing to honour a booking can harm a restaurant's business,¹ no-shows remain a challenge for restaurants. The great news is that Canadian diners are stepping up, with overall no-show rates down 4% year-over-year.⁵

The true cost of a no-show (table for two)



When a table sits empty, the chain reaction can be immediate: food is wasted, shifts are overstaffed, and other guests are turned away. On average, Canadian restaurant operators say a no-show table for two costs restaurants \$91.⁴

Beyond revenue loss, restaurants identify and agree other potential consequences of no-shows:⁴

- Turned away other bookings, impacting relationship-building (53 %)
- Staff costs (56 %)
- Wasted food & stock (56 %)

When and where empty tables happen

While No-Shows remain an issue, Canadian data points to precisely when restaurants are most vulnerable—and where online bookings are turning the tide.

10:00 pm

The most common time slot for no-shows.⁵

Halloween week

The week of October 26 saw the highest rate of no-shows in the last 12 months.⁵

Online Reservations

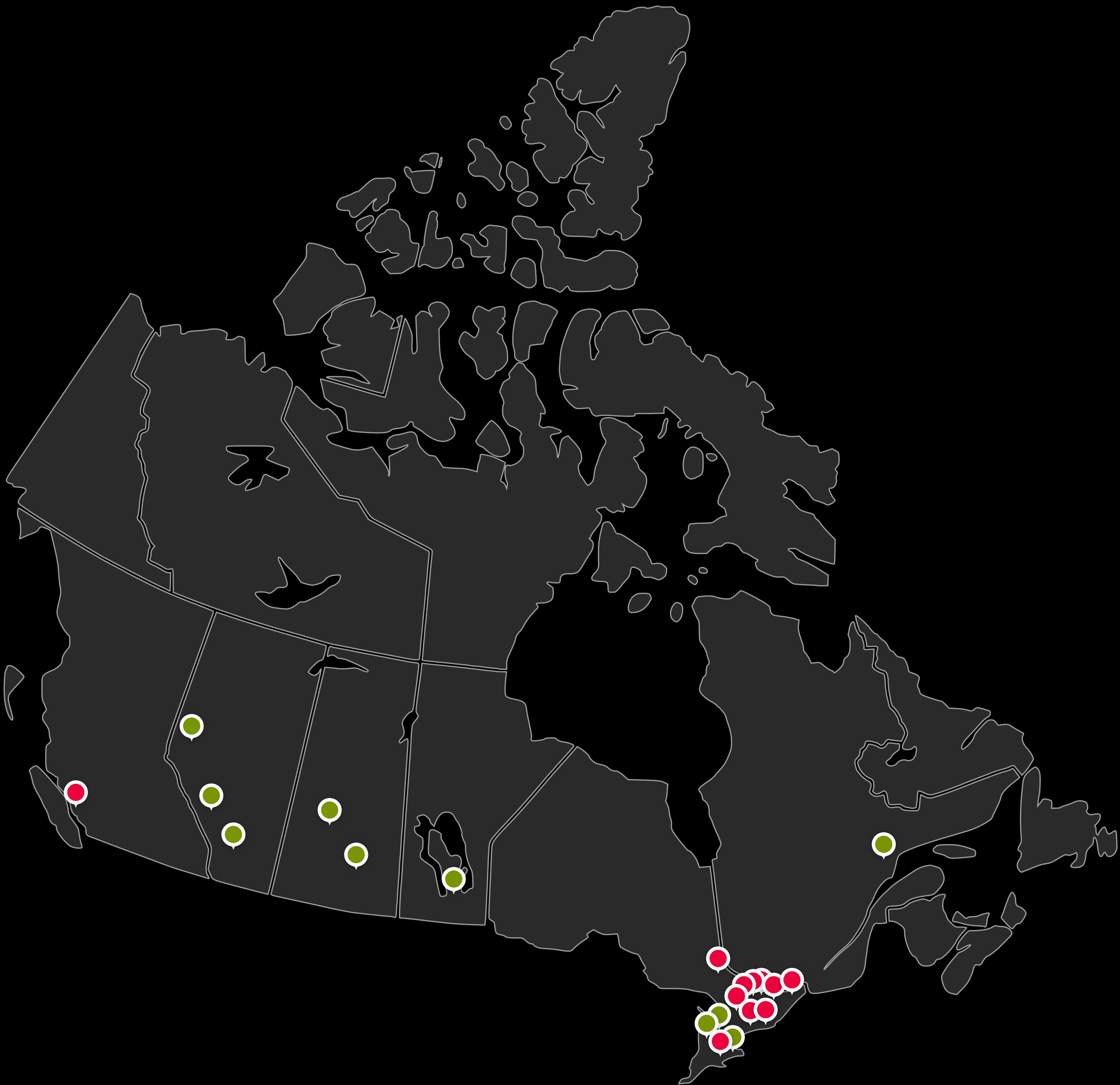
Reservations made online saw a 3% decrease in no show rates in the last 12 months, year-over-over.⁶

Tuesdays

The day that saw the biggest improvement in no show rates in the last 12 months, year-over-year (-7 YoY).⁵



Who Shows Up, Who Doesn't



The top 10 cities with the lowest proportion of no-shows include:⁵

- Quebec City
- Calgary
- Lethbridge
- Regina
- St. Catharines
- St. Albert
- Saskatoon
- Guelph
- Winnipeg
- Cambridge

The top 10 cities with the highest proportion of no-shows include:⁵

- Niagara Falls
- Mississauga
- Brampton
- Toronto
- Vaughan
- Richmond Hill
- Burnaby
- Oshawa
- Markham
- Barrie



How to Be a Great Diner

Small habits, big impact.

A reservation is more than a note in your calendar—it's a promise to a team that has ordered ingredients and scheduled staff specifically for your arrival.

Here's how you can help keep that positive momentum going:

- Only book what you plan to honour: Avoid double-booking multiple restaurants for the same occasion.
- Cancel early if plans change: Giving even a few hours' notice allows a restaurant to fill your seat from their waitlist.
- Manage bookings online: Modify or cancel your reservation with a single tap in your booking app.
- Remember the team behind the table: Recognise that staffing and fresh food are aligned around your booking time.



For Restaurants: Tools to Protect Your Revenue

Avoiding empty seats with technology.

Diner awareness is crucial, but restaurants shouldn't have to rely on good intentions alone. OpenTable equips restaurants with tools built to help reduce no-shows and protect the bottom line. →

Deposits, credit card holds, custom policies

Require card details, deposits, or late-cancellation fees for high-demand shifts to help reduce the risk of no-shows and late cancellations. Restaurants using deposits see a 60% reduction in no-shows globally.⁷

Prepaid Experiences

Secure upfront payment for special events, set menus, and more to give restaurants greater planning certainty. Prepaid Experiences help reduce no-shows by up to 45% and late cancellations by up to 66% compared to non-Prepaid Experiences globally.⁸

Automated confirmations & reminders

Send branded SMS and email confirmations upon booking and reminders 24–48 hours before the reservation, making it easy for guests to confirm or release their table.

Online waitlist & Notify Me

Fill last-minute cancellations by offering freed-up tables directly to eager guests waiting in line.



Final Thoughts

A table for two is never just a table for two.

A table for two is never just a table for two. It is a team at work, a local business contributing to the economy, and a place where neighbours become friends, celebrations begin and difficult weeks feel a little lighter.

And there's real momentum to build on. Canada's commercial foodservice industry is projected to reach \$108.9 billion by 2027, according to Restaurants Canada.³ Dining out isn't just something we do for ourselves; it's an active investment in the places that bring our communities to life.

"Canadian restaurants don't get a season off. From the first patio table sat in April to the last table before the snow falls, someone's kitchen is lit and a server is on the floor. By combining diner awareness with smart technology, we can help Canadian restaurants continue to thrive and remain an important part of communities across the country for years to come."

*– Eric Kemppi,
Director of Restaurant Sales and Services,
OpenTable Canada.*



Methodologies and Sources

¹ Diner Consumer Research: An online survey was conducted by Ripple Research among 1503 CA general consumers who dine out, with a quota of 200 for major cities. Fieldwork was carried out between 28 July 2026 and 4 August 2026. All data was collected in accordance with MRS (Market Research Society) and ESOMAR guidelines, ensuring ethical standards and robust data quality.

² OpenTable CA Data: OpenTable looked at seated diners and average spend per person from online reservations for same store restaurants on the OpenTable platform in Canada from 1 July 2025 - 30 June 2026 and compared it to the same time period in 2024/2025 (2 July 2024 - 1 July 2025).

³ Restaurants Canada Data: Canadian Restaurant Intelligence Report: The Quarterly, Q2 2026 (published June 2026).

⁴ Restaurant Consumer Research: An online survey was conducted by Ripple Research among 305 CA restaurant workers. Fieldwork was carried out between 28 July 2026 and 4 August 2026. All data was collected in accordance with MRS (Market Research Society) and ESOMAR guidelines, ensuring ethical standards and robust data quality.

⁵ OpenTable CA Data: OpenTable looked at no show diner rates per day of week, time slot, week of the year and per city from online reservations for same store restaurants on the OpenTable platform in Canada from 1 July 2025 - 30 June 2026 and compared it to the same time period in 2024/25 (2 July 2024 - 1 July 2025).

⁶ OpenTable CA Data: OpenTable looked at no show rates per reservation method for same store restaurants on the OpenTable platform in Canada from 1 July 2025 - 30 June 2026 and compared it to the same time period in 2024/25 (2 July 2024 - 1 July 2025).

⁷ OpenTable Global Data: OpenTable looked at no show rates for all active restaurants on the OpenTable platform globally with and without deposits from 1 July 2025 - 30 June 2026.

⁸ OpenTable Global Data: OpenTable looked at no show and late cancellation rates for all active restaurants on the OpenTable platform globally with and without prepaid experiences from 1 January 2025 - 31 December 2025.

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