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Despite Decline, Chick-fil-A Leads Customer Satisfaction in Restaurants for 6th Straight Year While Domino's Is the New Pizza King, ACSI Data Show

ANN ARBOR, Mich., (June 30, 2020) – Restaurants lost \$120 billion from March to May 2020 as social distancing and mandatory lockdowns upended the industry during the global pandemic. Leading up to that point, customer satisfaction with both full-service and limited-service restaurants was already declining.

According to surveys conducted from April 2019 to March 2020 – the month when the first U.S. stay-at-home policies began – customer satisfaction with the Accommodation and Food Services sector retreats 1.3% overall to a score of 77.9 (out of 100), according to the [American Customer Satisfaction Index \(ACSI®\) Restaurant Report 2019-2020](#).

The pandemic hit the fast-forward button on some trends already happening.

“Even before COVID-19, delivery was fast becoming the name of the game with consumers increasingly looking for alternative delivery options,” says David VanAmburg, Managing Director at the ACSI. “Millennials drove the ship, and the rise of third-party delivery services like Grubhub, DoorDash, Postmates, and Uber Eats offered consumers more choices and convenience. But the pandemic has since hammered the point home: Tech innovation remains a key to success for both fast food and full-service chains, and engaging with customers digitally, especially through reliable mobile apps, is critical.”

LongHorn Steakhouse stakes claim among full-service restaurants

Customer satisfaction with full-service restaurants dips below 80 for just the second time in ACSI history, tumbling 2.5% to 79.

Among 12 major full-service chains, seven post customer satisfaction declines and only one chain improves, indicating that sit-down chains overall were struggling to please customers leading up to the pandemic.

Even more troubling: The full-service restaurant industry is less satisfying when it comes to the now-critical components of takeout and delivery. Customers are the happiest when dining in (78)

over carryout (75) or delivery (77).

LongHorn Steakhouse – stable for a third straight year – becomes the new leader with an ACSI score of 81.

Meanwhile, last year's industry leader Texas Roadhouse tumbles 4% to 80, tying the group of smaller restaurants (down 1%) for second place.

After holding second place in 2019, Cracker Barrel falters 4% to 79. Both Texas Roadhouse and Cracker Barrel now sit at their lowest ACSI scores. Two full-service chains tie Cracker Barrel for the industry average: Olive Garden (unchanged) and Red Lobster (up 1%), the only full-service restaurant to improve.

The remaining full-service restaurants all score below the industry average. Outback Steakhouse (down 1%) and TGI Fridays (unchanged) both score 78. Applebee's is flat at 77.

At the low end of the industry, Denny's (down 1%), Red Robin (down 4%), and Ruby Tuesday (down 3%) all meet at 76. Chili's comes in last place, tumbling 4% to 75.

Chick-fil-A's reign over fast-food chains continues; Domino's seizes pizza crown from Papa John's

Customer satisfaction with the limited-service (fast food) restaurant industry dips 1.3% to 78, its lowest ACSI score since 2015.

Among the 18 brands measured a year ago, 11 experience slides in customer satisfaction, but most of these changes are 2% or less. That said, the fast food segment is positioned to fare better than sit-down restaurants in a COVID-19-impacted market thanks to a business model that already includes low-contact drive-thru lanes and delivery.

Despite a 2% drop, Chick-fil-A remains the industry leader at 84. This is the sixth straight year Chick-fil-A has been number one across both restaurant segments.

The group of smaller fast food outlets slides 2% to 80, tying with Chipotle Mexican Grill (unchanged). Six chains tie for third place with an ACSI score of 79: Panera Bread (down 2%), Arby's (down 1%), Domino's (unchanged), Subway (unchanged), Dunkin' (up 1%), and KFC (up 1%).

As Domino's becomes the new pizza segment leader, three other major pizza competitors lose ground. For the first time since 2009, Domino's beats Papa John's, which retreats 3% to 78. This marks Papa John's lowest ACSI score since 2015. Pizza Hut drops even further, plummeting 4% to 77. Little Caesars slips just 1% but remains in last place among the pizza chains at 76.

Coffee specialists stay close but swap places, as Dunkin' moves just ahead of Starbucks, which

falls 1% to 78.

Taco Bell falls 1% to 74, significantly worse than sister brand KFC. ACSI newcomer Popeyes Louisiana Kitchen premieres with a score of 74, placing it in the bottom five for customer satisfaction.

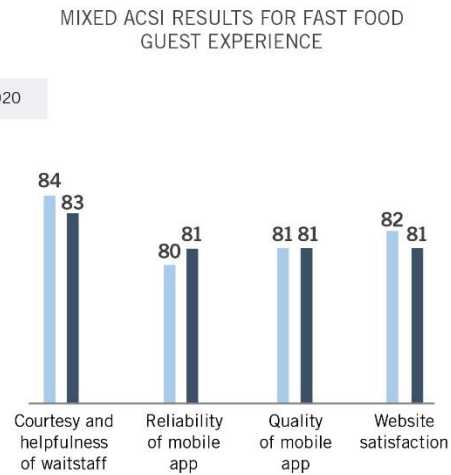
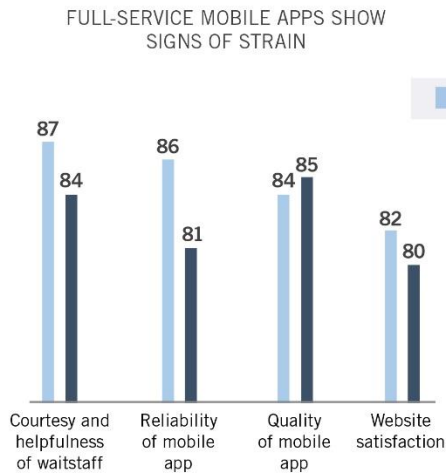
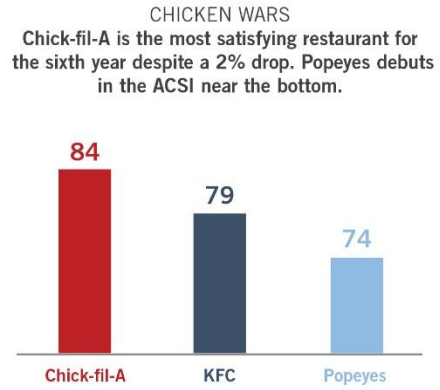
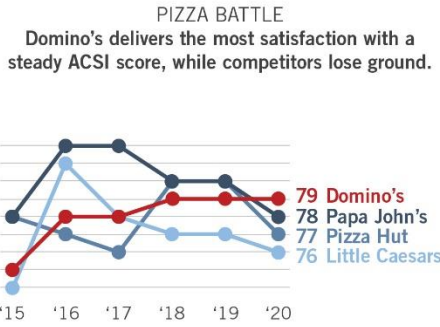
Among burger chains, Wendy's drops 1% to tie with a stable Burger King at 76. Sonic Drive-In loses ground, fading 3% to 74. Jack in the Box scores worse, declining 3% to 73.

McDonald's anchors the bottom of the fast food category with an ACSI score of 70. Yet, with its 1% climb, the chain breaks out of the 60s – a rare occurrence.

The ACSI Restaurant Report 2019-2020 on full-service and limited-service (fast food) dining chains is based on interviews with 23,312 customers. [Download the full report](#), and follow the ACSI on [LinkedIn](#) and Twitter at [@theACSI](#).

AMERICAN CUSTOMER SATISFACTION INDEX: RESTAURANTS 2019-2020

SATISFACTION DOWN ACROSS THE BOARD



0-100 Scale

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The [American Customer Satisfaction Index](http://www.theacsi.org) (ACSI®) has been a national economic indicator for 25 years. It measures and analyzes customer satisfaction with more than 400 companies in 46 industries and 10 economic sectors, including various services of federal and local government agencies. Reported on a scale of 0 to 100, scores are based on data from interviews with roughly 500,000 customers annually. For more information, visit www.theacsi.org.

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