

Almost 3 out of 4 regular pub goers plan on returning during first month of reopening – LVA and VFI

Representative bodies urge publicans across the country to follow the guidelines and put the health of customers and staff first

Research shows clear hygiene and safety measures will be vital for public with 61% wanting glasses/ cutlery deep cleaned

Going for food most popular occasion for returning to pub

7 out of 10 concerned other customers will not take safety measures seriously

Almost 3 out of every 4 regular pub goers plan on returning during the first month of reopening, according to new research commissioned by the Licensed Vintners Association (LVA), the Vintners Federation of Ireland (VFI) as well as alcohol suppliers Heineken, Diageo, Irish Distillers and C&C Group. The research showed that 74% of people who visited pubs once a month or more pre-restrictions plan on visiting a pub within one month of them reopening, while 3 out of every 5 members of the general public (59%) plan on returning to pubs within the same period.

The research also suggested that there will be a cautious initial return from the public and the two representative bodies have urged publicans across the country to behave responsibly by closely following the guidelines, or they risk long term reputational damage to their individual businesses – up to possibly losing their licence.

Clear hygiene and safety measures will have the strongest impact on encouraging the public to return to pubs. According to the research, 61% of the public said knowing that all glasses and cutlery will be deep cleaned will impact on their plans to return. This was followed by hand sanitiser being available at the door and throughout the venue (57%), the use of outdoor spaces and seating (55%), employing dedicated cleaning staff to regularly sanitise tables and surfaces (53%), clear signs and guidelines on rules to maintain safety (48%) and bar staff adopting a strict policy on those who break safety rules (48%).

Going for food is the occasion most likely to prompt people to return to pubs post the reopening with almost 3 out of 5 people citing this reason (58%). The next most popular occasions are to socialise with a partner (34%) and celebrations (28%).

The research also highlighted concerns that the public have about returning to pubs, with almost 7 out of 10 people worried that other customers will not take safety measures seriously (68%). This was followed by people becoming a risk when they get drunk (54%), queuing to get into the pub (43%) and managing safety in the toilets (42%).

Speaking about the research, Pdraig Cribben, Chief Executive of the VFI said, "It is very encouraging to see that the vast majority of regular pub goers plan on returning to pubs within the first month of reopening. However, for that to happen pubs will have to clearly follow the guidelines and ensure they are providing a safe and comfortable environment for their customers and staff. The public will be closely watching to see how each individual pub goes about reopening. Those that flout the regulations will see the public vote with their feet. We are strongly calling for all pubs throughout the country to behave responsibly and ensure that the guidelines are closely followed on their premises."

"All pubs reopening next week have a serious responsibility to do so safely and to clearly follow the guidelines," said Donall O'Keeffe, Chief Executive of the LVA. "More than 1,700 people have died in this country as a result of this pandemic and over 25,000 people have contracted the virus. The seriousness of this crisis is what led to pubs closing all over Ireland – the first sector to do so."

"The vast majority of our industry behaved responsibly at the beginning of the lockdown, it is now absolutely vital that we continue to behave responsibly as we reopen and resume trade. Those pubs that don't follow the guidelines will deservedly suffer serious damage to their reputations which will impact on their level of business as well as customer and staff attitudes to their establishments. They also risk losing their licence when it comes up for renewal in September. A blatant disregard for public health would certainly be grounds for an objection from the Gardaí, a matter which we have discussed with the authorities and we will support their enforcement action against any rogue operators. This is too important for the country and for the trade. Anyone who endangers it will reap what they sow," Mr. O'Keeffe concluded.

More than 1,000 people participated in the nationally representative survey, with participants aged 18+ and spread across age, income level, region, socialising frequency and bar type. The research was conducted by MCCP, a leading market research and strategy agency based in Dublin. The research is a collaboration between the LVA, the VFI and alcohol suppliers Heineken, Diageo, Irish Distillers and C&C Group.