

Poll highlights top diner concerns

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A survey has identified the top 10 grievances of diners and the differences in priorities between male and female customers.

Across both sexes disappointing food was the biggest bugbear, although a breakdown of the results showed it was a far bigger concern for women, of whom 19% said it was their biggest grievance compared to 14% for men.

Generally, men were far more annoyed by the speed of service, with 27% citing speed in some capacity as a concern, compared to 19% of women.

The Top 10:

1. Disappointing food
2. Having to ask for service
3. Taking too long to bring drinks or food
4. An unclean table from previous occupant
5. Being ignored on arrival
6. Dishes arriving at different times
7. Slowness bringing the bill and taking payment
8. Incorrect order arriving
9. Being ignored at the bar
10. Slow taking of food order

Other differing factors along gender lines included cleanliness, with 12% of women being bothered by an unclean table, compared to just 8%. Women (11%) were also more likely to dislike being 'ignored on arrival' compared with men (8%), and were more troubled by 'disappointing food' as their biggest grievance (19%), but only men's second biggest (14%).

Patience when waiting for the bill increases with age, with the percentage of those citing it their biggest guest grievance steadily dropping from 8% for 18-25 year olds to 0% of those over 66. This is the same when waiting for food, as it bothers 10% of 18-25 year olds but 0% of 66 year olds.

Steven Pike, managing director of HospitalityGEM, which carried out the poll, said: "Pinpointing the biggest grievances in hospitality has helped us to better identify priorities and provide advice to our clients to optimise the experience of their guests. Each of the top 10 can be isolated to a key stage of the guest journey. Having a clear and achievable framework to set standards at each of these stages, and an effective way of measuring performance, will help operators to manage consistency and identify weak points.

"With disappointing food at the top of the pile, it shows that evaluation should include the kitchen output. We can help with this by providing dish-specific feedback, with imagery, so operators can easily identify issues with dish specification or consistency."