



CONSUMER SURVEY INSIGHTS

# PREPARING FOR XMAS



H G E M

# About HGEM

HGEM works closely with hospitality companies to measure and improve their guests' experience.

Their core services include mystery guest audits, building highly customisable feedback sites, tracking online reviews and product ratings, and bringing all the data together into one, award-winning Guest Experience Management platform – **The Hub**.

## ABOUT THIS REPORT

It's difficult for hospitality operators to make predictions on what Xmas 2021 is going to be like. There can be no comparison to last year, when Christmas season was effectively cancelled due to the pandemic, but will it be quite like 2019 season?

We've approached our panel of Mystery Diners with questions related to consumer Christmas behaviours and expectations for 2021 in order to help operators prepare as best they can.

## TOPICS COVERED

- Workplace Xmas party plans
- Personal safety concerning Xmas parties
- Expected group sizes for parties
- Dining out with family over Xmas
- Top factors for choosing a Xmas venue
- Service expectations





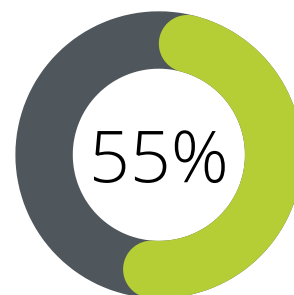
## Work Do's

Less than a quarter (**21%**) of consumers report that their workplace is planning a Xmas party this year (however, *it is* a **17%** increase from 2020). Shockingly, more customers are saying they're not having work Christmas parties than there were last year (**24%** vs. **20%** in 2020), whilst the majority (**55%**) are yet unsure whether their workplaces are organising anything this year.

This could indicate that offices and workplaces are adopting the 'wait and see' approach and are intending to book something relatively last-minute, which could mean a surge of Christmas bookings is on its way.



**HAVING A WORK DO**



**STILL UNSURE**



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# Feeling Safer?

Our consumer report confirms what we can feel instinctively, that consumers feel much more confident in taking part in Xmas parties in 2021 than they did last year.

9 out of 10 (**89%**) feel safe enough to take part in a (work or personal) Christmas party; that figure was only **72%** in September 2020. Within the group of consumers who are ready to party, there are varying levels of confidence. Almost half of consumers (**49%**) are happy to go to any venue, as long as safety measures are in place and the prevalence of that sentiment hasn't changed much in a year (**47%** in 2020). Over a quarter of respondents (**28%**) are not worried about Covid safety at all, (an increase of **11%** from last year), and a small number of customers (**12%**) don't mind taking part, as long as they know the venue well (a **4%** increase from last year).

Sadly, **11%** of consumers still don't feel safe enough to take part in any social gatherings, though that figure, unsurprisingly was much higher last year, when more than a quarter (**28%**) expressed they wouldn't feel comfortable going to a Xmas party.

The most fearless age group is Gen-Z (18-25) as 2 out of 3 (**63%**) don't feel worried at all about taking part in social gatherings. That confidence decreases with age in a linear trend to only **8%** of those aged over 56 'don't feel worried at all'.

**Consumer confidence levels in taking part of a Xmas party 2021 vs 2020**





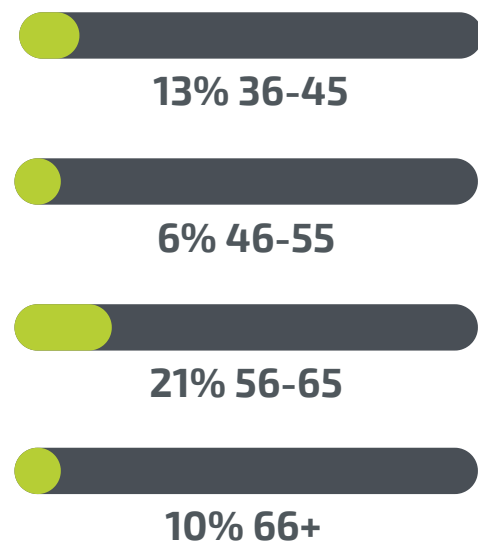


## Feeling safe... continued

Over half (**54%**) of the respondents aged between 36-65 take a sensible approach and report that they're 'happy to take part in social events as long as safety measures are in place. The largest percentage of consumers who don't feel safe enough to take part in social events (**21%**) is within the 56-65 age group, and second largest (**13%**), surprisingly, is within the 36-45 age group.

As with our previous surveys, the results show that men are less cautious than women, as respectively **30%** vs. **27%** are 'not worried at all'; **45%** vs **51%** would want to know 'safety measures were in place', and finally **10%** vs. **12%** would not feel safe taking part in a Xmas party this year.

### % UNCOMFORTABLE TAKING PART OF EVENTS BY AGE



# Group sizes

Last year Christmas parties were limited to 6 people, whereas this year there are no restrictions, however almost a fifth of respondents (**18.2%**) still prefer to go out in groups of up to 10 people. A quarter (**25.9%**) of consumers are feeling more confident and will be going out in groups of up to 20 people. **16.5%** of customers are happy to take part in groups of up to 30 people, and it's great to see that for **39.2%** customers, there is no upper limit to group sizes, in regards to feeling safe.

Gen-Z (18-25) and Millennials (26-35) want big parties, data seems to suggest, as respectively **47%** and **60%** say there's no upper limit to a party size, from a safety perspective. Conversely, people aged over 56 are more likely to keep group sizes down to no more than 20 people.

Women, again, are more safety-aware, and a fifth (**21%**) would like to limit their Xmas party for up to 10 people, whereas that figure is only **11%** in men. **43%** of men have no upper limit on group numbers, whereas that figure is **38%** with women.



**NO UPPER LIMIT TO  
GROUPS**



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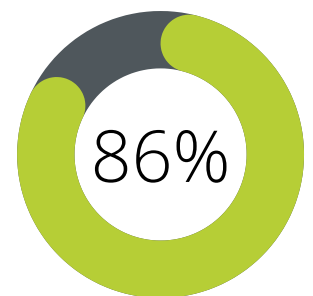
## Christmas with Family

The number of people who always celebrate Christmas at home hasn't changed since last year and is still at **86%** of all survey respondents; however the number of people who dine out at Xmas has increased by **3%** in contrast to last year (**9%** vs **6%**). A small percentage of people (**5%**) who normally would dine out are opting to stay home this year due to safety concerns.

The age group most likely to enjoy their Xmas meal out are the 36–45-year-olds, whereas the least likely are customers aged 56–65. Men appear to dine out (**13%**) more than women (**8%**), according to the survey results.

# 3%

**INCREASE IN FAMILY XMAS PARTIES IN 2021**



**DINE AT HOME OVER XMAS**



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# Choosing a venue - top factors

Have you ever wondered what the key considerations are that make customers choose one venue over another for their Xmas party? Now you know!

- 1 Meal quality**  
Weighted ranking of 4.25 out of 5. Half (**50%**) of all respondents said meal quality was the most important factor in making their decision. In 2020, 'meal quality' was ranked second, right after...
- 2 Safety**  
Safety being the second most important factor in decision making, goes to show that the pandemic is still very much an issue for British consumers. This factor got a ranking of 3.32 out of 5 and was chosen as the most important factor by a third of respondents. As mentioned above, unsurprisingly, in 2020, feeling safe was consumers' top factor in choosing a venue.
- 3 Location, location, location**  
Ranking of 3.03 out of 5, so just slightly less important than 'safety'; it was considered top priority by **8.6%** of customers. Interestingly, last year, 'location' was the least important factor in decision making, perhaps because people were determined to stay close to home.
- 4 New and exciting place**  
With a ranking of 2.25, and having been selected as the primary factor by **4.8%**, 'new and exciting' isn't really a priority for the majority of consumers this year. In 2020, 'new and exciting' was ahead of 'entertainment' as well, as it is this year.
- 5 Entertainment factor**  
It appears entertainment for a Xmas party is a 'nice to have' but certainly not a key factor in decision making for consumers this year, with a ranking of 2.15 out of 5, and only **3.4%** respondents selected 'entertainment' as their most important factor.

## Service expectations

4 out of 5 consumers (**82%**) expect table service for their Xmas party, so venues with Order & Pay apps may want to consider their service strategy for Christmas parties and to manage customer expectations. In one of our previous surveys, shortly after hospitality was allowed to reopen, customers made it clear that they felt there were no excuses for substandard service – they certainly will not be more forgiving during Christmas season.

That said, almost a fifth (**18%**) of customers don't actually expect customer service, so it may be useful to find out your clientele's preferences, and, where possible, to provide an option.

In terms of age, unsurprisingly, Gen-Z are least bothered about needing table service (**63%**) than other age groups, while 46-55 age group were most adamant (**89%**) to have table service, however opinions didn't differ from a gender perspective.

### EXPECTING TABLE SERVICE:



**82% ACROSS AGE GROUPS**



**63% GEN-Z**



**89% 46-55**



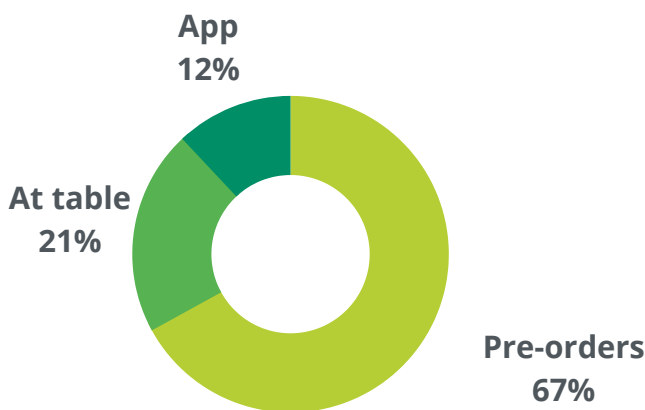
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# Pre-orders

To avoid hassle during the Christmas party, a vast majority (**67%**) would like the option to pre-order food / drinks. Out of those **33%** who don't want to pre-order, **21%** would like to order from waiting staff, whilst **12%** would prefer to order through an app.

Only **53%** Gen-Z respondents want to pre-order, whereas that figure increases steadily with age, peaking at **72%** wanting pre-orders within the 46-55 age group. The highest uptake for ordering through an app is for the 26-35 age group (**15%**), and shockingly, the lowest for Gen-Z (**5%**). Apart from Gen-Z bucking the trend, app adoption gradually seems to decline with age at **14%** for 36-45; **13%** for 46-55, etc.

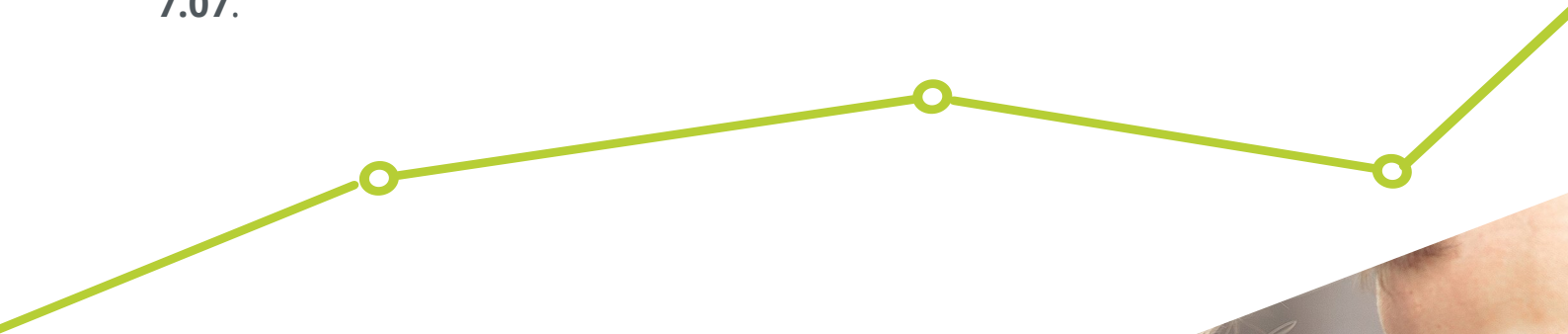
From a gender perspective, women are **5%** more likely to want to pre-order, and a larger percentage of men (**16%**) opt for an app than women (**10%**).





# Perceived Covid-19 safety

We have been keeping track how safe our panel of consumers feel at the idea of going out into hospitality venues and our most recent survey results reveal that the average figure is now **7.9** out of 10, the highest it's been since we started tracking safety sentiment in October 2020. This figure was **7.19** in July; **7.88** in June, and has been slowly increasing since October 2020, when that number was only **7.07**.



# HGEM Products

Mystery Guest Audits  
Guest Feedback Sites  
Review Streams  
Product Ratings

## SUMMARY

Although most workplaces are yet to commit to booking Christmas parties, perhaps due to uncertainty around any possible restrictions being reinforced due to Covid cases going up, it looks like consumer confidence and feeling safe within hospitality venues is the highest it's been for a year. Vast majority of customers aren't afraid to take part in Xmas parties or other social events for that matter, and they are happy to go out in increasingly larger numbers. Most parties will want to pre-order and to have table service available, but there are now customers that prefer ordering via an app too, even for Xmas parties. In order to keep all different customer types happy, it's worth considering whether you can provide different options according to preferences, and if not - it will be important to manage group expectations.

