

March 2026

Restaurant Performance Index Declined 0.9% in March

The National Restaurant Association’s Restaurant Performance Index (RPI) registered a moderate decline in March, after rising to a 13-month high in February. The RPI – a monthly composite index that tracks the health of the U.S. restaurant industry – stood at 100.0 in March, down 0.9% from a level of 100.9 in February.

The RPI decline was primarily the result of softer same-store sales and customer traffic in March compared to February. February’s readings were bolstered by weak year-ago levels, and March represented a return to the previous trend of modest same-store sales growth and dampened customer traffic.

The RPI is constructed so that the health of the restaurant industry is measured in relation to a neutral level of 100. Index values above 100 indicate that key industry indicators are in a period of expansion, while index values below 100 represent a period of contraction. The Restaurant Performance Index consists of two components – the Current Situation Index and the Expectations Index.

Current Situation Index Fell 1.4% to a Level of 99.4 in March; Expectations Index Declined 0.3% to a Level of 100.6

The Current Situation Index, which measures current trends in four industry indicators (same-store sales, traffic, labor and capital expenditures), stood at 99.4 in March – down 1.4% from a level of 100.8 in February. March represented the 8th time in the last nine months that the current situation component stood below 100 in contraction territory.

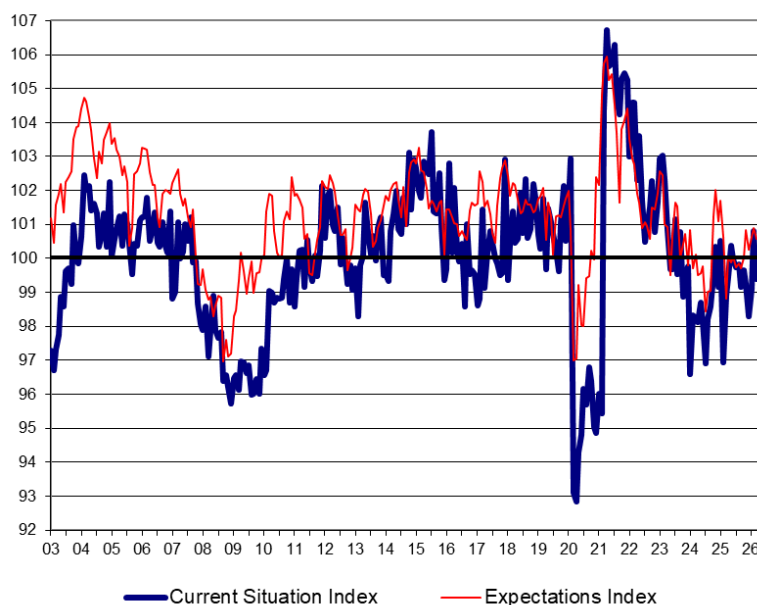
The Expectations Index, which measures restaurant operators’ six-month outlook for four industry indicators (same-store sales, employees, capital expenditures and business conditions), stood at 100.6, down 0.3% from the previous month. Restaurant operators remain generally optimistic about sales growth in the months ahead, but are much less bullish about the direction of the overall economy.

Restaurant Performance Index



Source: NRA; Values Greater than 100 = Expansion; Values Less than 100 = Contraction

Current Situation & Expectations Indices



Source: NRA; Values Greater than 100 = Expansion; Values Less than 100 = Contraction

Restaurant Operators Reported Mixed Sales and Traffic Results in March

Restaurant operators reported mixed same-store sales results in March, following the elevated readings registered in February. Forty-five percent of restaurant operators said their same-store sales rose between March 2025 and March 2026, down from 61% of operators who reported higher sales in February. Thirty-nine percent of restaurant operators said their sales declined in March, up from 27% in February.

Restaurant operators reported a net decline in customer traffic in March, after registering positive results in February for the first time in 13 months. Thirty-one percent of operators said their customer traffic rose between March 2025 and March 2026, down from 43% in February. Forty-six percent of restaurant operators reported lower traffic in March, compared to 30% in February.

Fifty-one percent of operators said they made a capital expenditure for equipment, expansion or remodeling during the last three months. That represented the 10th consecutive month in which at least half of operators reported expenditures.

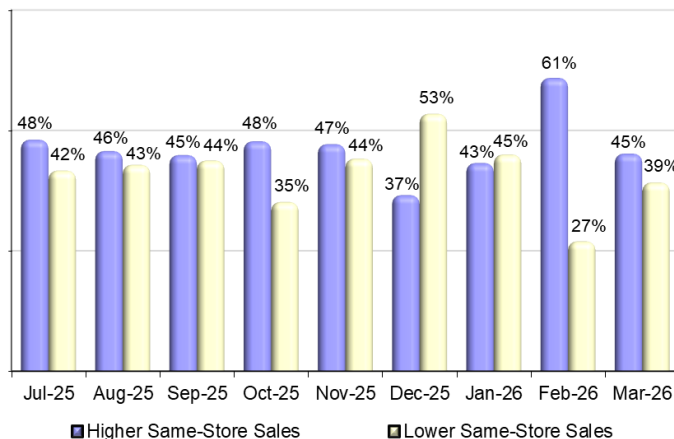
Restaurant Operators Are Cautiously Optimistic About Sales Growth

A solid majority of restaurant operators expect their sales to increase or remain flat in the next six months. Forty percent of operators expect their sales volume in six months to be higher than it was during the same period in the previous year. That was essentially unchanged from 42% last month. Only 14% of operators expect their sales to be lower in six months, while the remaining 46% of operators think their sales will remain about the same.

In contrast, restaurant operators remain uncertain about the direction of the overall economy. Only 13% of operators said they expect economic conditions to improve in six months – the lowest reading since October 2025. Thirty-five percent of operators think economic conditions will worsen during the next six months, while 52% think conditions will remain about the same as they are now. That represented the 14th consecutive month in which restaurant operators had a net negative outlook for the economy.

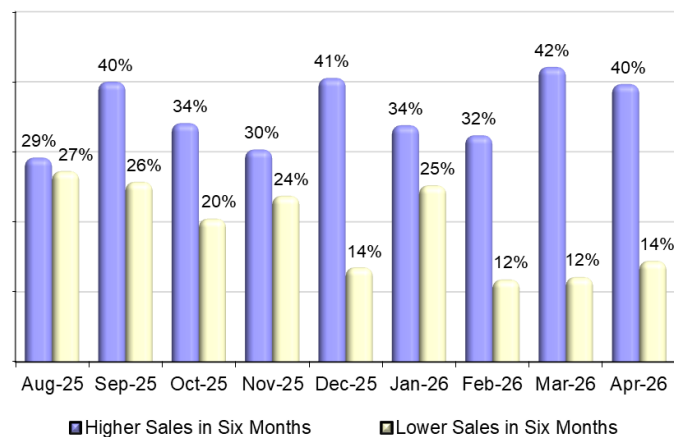
Despite the mixed signals, restaurant operators continue to plan for capital expenditures. Fifty-six percent of restaurant operators said they plan to make a capital expenditure for equipment, expansion or remodeling during the next six months. That represented the 12th consecutive month in which a majority of operators reported plans for capital spending.

Restaurant Operators' Reporting of Same-Store Sales versus Same Month in Previous Year



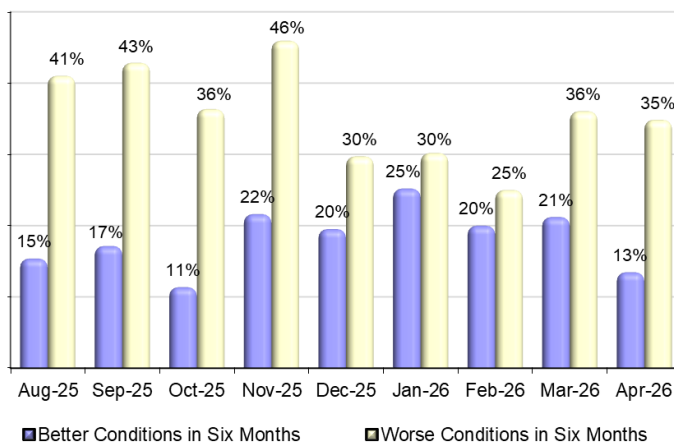
Source: National Restaurant Association, Restaurant Industry Tracking Survey

Restaurant Operators' Outlook for Sales Volume in Six Months versus Same Period in Previous Year



Source: National Restaurant Association, Restaurant Industry Tracking Survey

Restaurant Operators' Outlook for General Economic Conditions in Six Months



Source: National Restaurant Association, Restaurant Industry Tracking Survey

National Restaurant Association Restaurant Performance Index and Its Components

	November 2025	December 2025	January 2025	February 2026	March 2026	Feb-26 to Mar-26
Restaurant Performance Index	100.0	99.3	99.9	100.9	100.0	-0.9%
Current Situation Index	99.2	98.3	99.1	100.8	99.4	-1.4%
<i>Current Situation Indicators:</i>						
Same-Store Sales	100.3	98.3	99.8	103.4	100.6	-2.7%
Customer Traffic	98.0	96.8	98.1	101.3	98.5	-2.8%
Labor	98.3	97.8	98.4	98.2	98.3	0.1%
Capital Expenditures	100.4	100.2	100.1	100.3	100.2	-0.1%
Expectations Index	100.8	100.2	100.6	100.9	100.6	-0.3%
<i>Expectations Indicators:</i>						
Same-Store Sales	102.7	100.9	102.1	103.0	102.5	-0.5%
Staffing	100.7	100.1	100.4	101.2	100.8	-0.4%
Capital Expenditures	100.9	100.6	100.6	100.8	101.1	0.3%
Business Conditions	99.0	99.5	99.5	98.5	97.9	-0.7%

Note: For each of the Indices and Indicators, a value above 100 signals a period of expansion while a value below 100 signals a period of contraction.

Definitions

The National Restaurant Association's *Restaurant Performance Index* is a statistical barometer that measures the overall health of the U.S. Restaurant Industry. This monthly composite index is based on the responses to the National Restaurant Association's monthly Restaurant Industry Tracking Survey, which is fielded among restaurant operators nationwide on a variety of indicators including sales, traffic, labor and capital expenditures. The *Restaurant Performance Index* is composed of two equally-weighted components: the Current Situation Index and the Expectations Index. For each of the Indices and Indicators, a value above 100 signals a period of expansion while a value below 100 signals a period of contraction. The distance from 100 signifies the magnitude of the expansion or contraction.

The Current Situation Index is a composite index based on four 'recent-period' restaurant industry indicators:

Same-Store Sales: Compares same-store sales volume in the reference month versus the same month in the previous year

Customer Traffic: Compares customer traffic in the reference month versus the same month in the previous year

Labor: Compares the number of employees and the average employee hours in the reference month versus the same month in the previous year

Capital Expenditures: Measures capital expenditure activity during the three most recent months

The Expectations Index is a composite index based on four 'forward-looking' restaurant industry indicators:

Same-Store Sales: Restaurant operators' outlook for same-store sales in six months, compared to the same period in the previous year

Staffing: Restaurant operators' expectations for their number of employees in six months, compared to the same period in the previous year

Capital Expenditures: Restaurant operators' capital expenditure plans during the next six months

Business Conditions: Restaurant operators' outlook for general business conditions during the next six months