



CONSUMER PERCEPTIONS ON FOODSERVICE PACKAGING



2021 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



FOODSERVICE PACKAGING
INSTITUTE®

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INTRODUCTION

The spotlight has grown and remains focused on single-use foodservice packaging, particularly throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. The Foodservice Packaging Institute sought to better understand consumer perceptions around these packaging products. To achieve this goal, FPI conducted its first survey of consumers in the United States and Canada in April 2019 and followed up with another survey to a similar audience in March 2021.

Participants were asked questions about how frequently they use single-use foodservice packaging; their beliefs about the importance of performance attributes in single-use foodservice packaging; benefits and concerns they have about single-use foodservice packaging and their reusable counterparts; their behavior choices related to foodservice packaging; environmental issues; and, new in 2021, the influence of the COVID-19 pandemic. Each question was analyzed looking for significant differences in responses across demographic groups and frequency of using single-use foodservice packaging, and from the 2019 survey.

To achieve a diverse sampling of the population that could be accurately extrapolated, U.S. and Canadian residents between the ages of 18 and 60+ were surveyed. The 800 respondents were balanced across income, education level, gender and region, and approximately evenly split between U.S. and Canadian residents. This sample provides a statistically representative view of the beliefs of the U.S. and Canadian populations with a 95% confidence rate with a plus/minus 5% margin of error.

The results of this survey were compiled to create FPI's second Consumer Perceptions on Foodservice Packaging. The full results are available for FPI members only. This Executive Summary contains publicly available highlights from the survey.

Please contact FPI's Natha Dempsey, ndempsey@fpi.org, with any questions.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

There are a myriad of thoughts and opinions on single-use foodservice packaging and its importance from consumers, particularly in the face of a global pandemic. In 2019, to better understand the general consumer's use and perception of single-use foodservice packaging, FPI commissioned a third-party entity to conduct its inaugural survey to find out how frequently people use single-use packaging and their perceptions and behavior choice related to food packaging. As the spotlight on single-use packaging has grown, and the foodservice industry irrevocably changed due to COVID-19, FPI commissioned a follow-up survey in 2021. The majority of questions remained the same and a few new questions were added to directly address the impact of the pandemic. For each question asked, analysis was performed to identify significant differences in response across demographics and frequency of use, as well as between the 2019 and 2021 surveys.

Survey results showed that more than 50% of adults in the U.S. and Canada use single-use foodservice packaging at least once a week. This represents a slight decrease from 2019 results for U.S. and Canadian respondents. Within U.S. respondents, survey results in both 2021 and 2019 show that those with the highest income remain the most likely to use single-use foodservice packaging every day, and higher education appeared to correlate to higher use.

Performance attributes of single-use foodservice packaging were found to be of varying importance for different types of respondents. In both the U.S. and Canada, being leak- or spill-proof and stopping oil or grease from soaking through and staining clothes, car seats, etc. remain the most important attributes, with the ability to see the food inside the packaging the least important performance attribute.

Respondents in the U.S. and Canada continue to agree on the most important benefits of single-use foodservice packaging items. The cleanliness and sanitary nature of single-use foodservice packaging was seen as the most important benefit, followed closely by the convenience of being able to take food on the go, a reversal of the two most important benefits in 2019. Although respondents maintain the most concerning issue with single-use packaging is the possibility of it ending up as litter on land or in waterways, the level of concern has slightly decreased compared to 2019.

When asked about the benefits and concerns they see in reusable options, the environmental attributes, along with the sturdy nature of reusables were seen as the top benefits by respondents in the U.S. and Canada, however sturdiness was rated as the most important benefit in the U.S. Respondents also indicated their top concern regarding reusables is that they're not clean and sanitary, which is a significant change from 2019 when respondents had only limited concerns about the cleanliness of reusables.

Respondents were asked if the COVID-19 pandemic influenced their perception of potential benefits, concerns or attributes of single-use foodservice packaging items. In both the U.S. and Canada, the clean and sanitary nature of single-use foodservice packaging items increased in importance for the highest percentage of

respondents, followed by the protective/tamper-proof properties, although less than 40% said this would continue after the pandemic.

Additional opinions on consumer behavior and purchasing decisions are included in the full survey available to FPI members.