



National Restaurant Association

Restaurant Performance Index – December 2008

Restaurant Industry Outlook Softens as the Restaurant Performance Index Fell to a Record Low in December

The outlook for the restaurant industry continued to weaken in December, as the National Restaurant Association's comprehensive index of restaurant activity fell to another record low. The Association's *Restaurant Performance Index (RPI)* – a monthly composite index that tracks the health of and outlook for the U.S. restaurant industry – stood at 96.4 in December, down 0.2 percent from November and its 14th consecutive month below 100.

The December decline in the *Restaurant Performance Index* was the result of a drop in the current situation component. Same-store sales results were the softest in the history of the *Restaurant Performance Index*, with nearly two-thirds of restaurant operators reporting lower sales in December. The weak economy continues to weigh on the minds of restaurant operators, as 45 percent of restaurant operators said the economy is the number-one challenge currently facing their business.

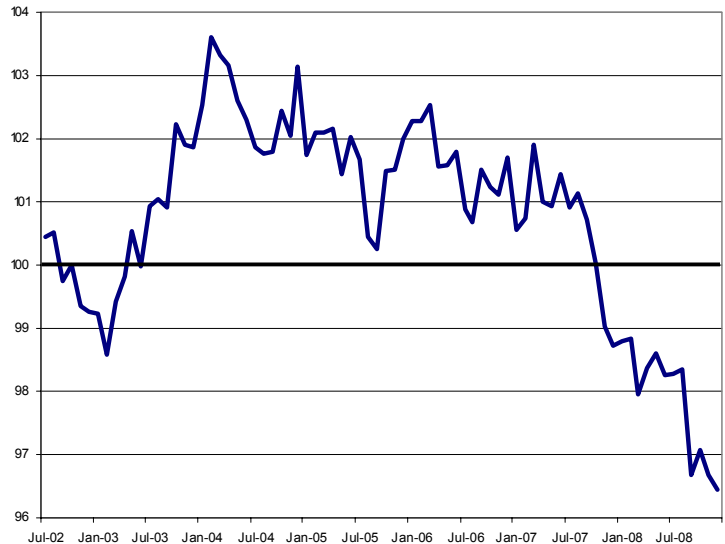
The *Restaurant Performance Index* is based on the responses to the Association's Restaurant Industry Tracking Survey, which is fielded monthly among restaurant operators nationwide. The index consists of two components – the Current Situation Index and the Expectations Index.

The *Restaurant Performance Index* is constructed so that the health of the restaurant industry is measured in relation to a steady-state 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 for key industry indicators.

Current Situation Index Fell 0.5 Percent in December to a Record-Low Level of 95.7

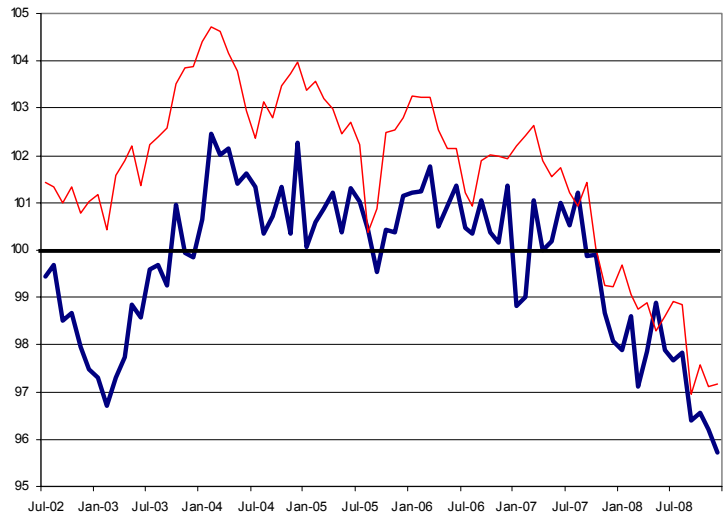
The Current Situation Index, which measures current trends in four industry indicators (same-store sales, traffic, labor and capital expenditures), stood at 95.7 in December – down 0.5 percent from November and its lowest level on record. In addition, December marked the 16th consecutive month below 100, which signifies contraction in the current situation component.

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 negative same-store sales for the seventh consecutive month in December. Only 23 percent of restaurant operators reported a same-store sales gain between December 2007 and December 2008, down from 26 percent who reported a sales gain in November. Sixty-six percent of operators reported a same-store sales decline in December, up from 60 who reported negative sales in the previous three months and the highest level on record.

Customer traffic levels also dropped off in December. Sixteen percent of restaurant operators reported an increase in customer traffic between December 2007 and December 2008, down from 18 percent who reported similarly in November. Sixty-eight percent of operators reported a traffic decline in December, the highest level on record.

Capital spending activity in the restaurant industry deteriorated along with sales and traffic in recent months. Thirty-four percent of operators said they made a capital expenditure for equipment, expansion or remodeling during the last three months, the lowest level on record.

Expectations Index Edged Up 0.1 Percent to a Level of 97.2 in December

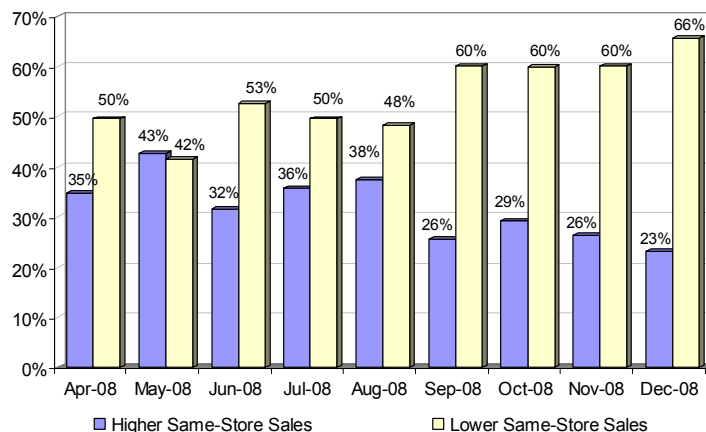
The Expectations Index, which measures restaurant operators' six-month outlook for four industry indicators (same-store sales, employees, capital expenditures and business conditions), stood at 97.2 in December – up slightly from November's level of 97.1. In addition, December represented the 14th consecutive month in which the Expectations Index stood below 100.

Restaurant operators are more pessimistic about sales growth in coming months. Only 18 percent of restaurant operators expect to have higher sales in six months (compared to the same period in the previous year), down from 21 percent who reported similarly last month. Forty-eight percent of restaurant operators expect their sales volume in six months to be lower than it was during the same period in the previous year, matching the proportion who reported similarly last month.

Restaurant operators also remain uncertain about the direction of the economy. Seventeen percent of operators expect economic conditions to improve in six months, matching the proportion who reported similarly last month. Forty-one percent of operators said they expect economic conditions to worsen in six months, down from 49 percent who reported similarly last month.

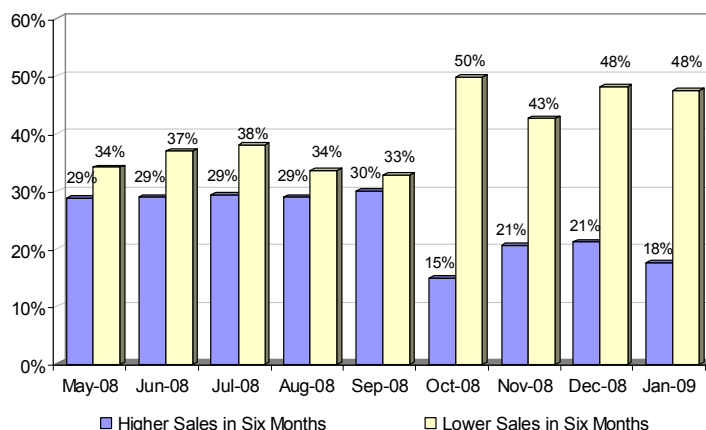
Restaurant operators continue to cut back on plans for capital spending. Thirty-seven percent of restaurant operators plan to make a capital expenditure for equipment, expansion or remodeling in the next six months, down from 40 percent who reported similarly last month and matching the lowest level on record.

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



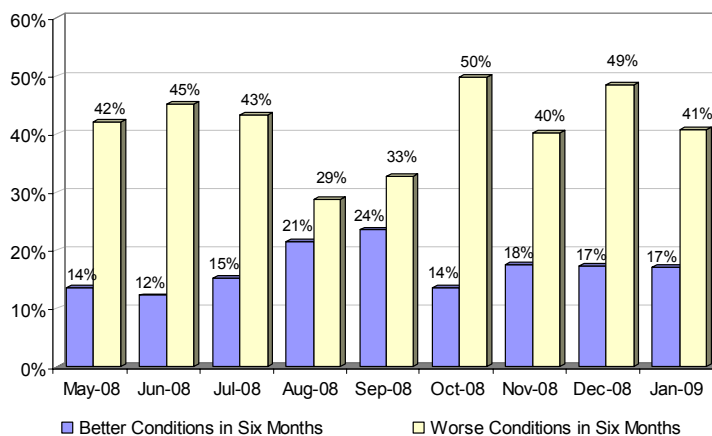
Source: National Restaurant Association, Restaurant Industry Tracking Survey

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 Industry Performance Index and Its Components

	August 2008	September 2008	October 2008	November 2008	December 2008	Dec-08 over Nov-08
Restaurant Performance Index	98.3	96.7	97.1	96.7	96.4	-0.2%
Current Situation Index	97.8	96.4	96.6	96.2	95.7	-0.5%
<i>Current Situation Indicators:</i>						
Same-Store Sales	98.9	96.6	97.0	96.6	95.8	-0.9%
Customer Traffic	97.0	94.8	95.6	95.3	94.8	-0.6%
Labor	97.2	96.2	96.0	95.2	95.5	0.3%
Capital Expenditures	98.2	98.0	97.7	97.7	96.8	-1.0%
Expectations Index	98.8	97.0	97.6	97.1	97.2	0.1%
<i>Expectations Indicators:</i>						
Same-Store Sales	99.7	96.5	97.8	97.3	97.0	-0.3%
Staffing	98.1	96.8	97.4	96.4	96.7	0.3%
Capital Expenditures	98.5	98.2	97.4	97.9	97.4	-0.5%
Business Conditions	99.1	96.4	97.7	96.9	97.6	0.8%

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 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

For a complete analysis of the National Restaurant Association's Restaurant Industry Tracking Survey including data broken out by industry segment, as well as a host of other economic indicators that impact the restaurant industry, log on to *Restaurant TrendMapper* at www.restaurant.org/trendmapper (subscription required).