

PORTLAND RESTAURANT WORKERS SURVEY

DOES YOUR JOB WORK FOR YOU?



Key Findings from the Portland Metro Restaurant Workers Survey

Data suggests employees are highly satisfied at work; do not want to see major changes to scheduling practices

In a recent Portland Metro area survey, restaurant workers across the region reported high levels of job satisfaction and a preference for maintaining or making minor adjustments to current policies over any major changes.

The findings come from the Portland Metro Restaurant Workers Survey, conducted between Nov. 18, 2016 and March 27, 2017. The Oregon Restaurant & Lodging Association (ORLA) sponsored the survey to collect feedback about restaurant work and the work environment from employees themselves. Little year-to-year data about working in Portland Metro area restaurants exists, and as a result, most discussions about the sector are based on anecdotal evidence. The survey provided the opportunity to collect current, inclusive and reliable data about what is working well for restaurant employees, what isn't and what changes are most important to the diverse restaurant workforce.

Non-management employees working in all types of Portland Metro area restaurants were invited to participate. The survey was available online and was publicized to the restaurant industry, on social media, in Poachedjobs.com's monthly e-newsletter and through direct outreach to restaurant owners and managers. Participation was anonymous and voluntary. More than 400 people started the survey and N=226 completed the survey to the end. The margin of error related to the completed data set is +/- 6.4%.

ORLA will use the results of the survey to inform future advocacy efforts and share the results with its membership to help identify specific, employee-driven areas for improvement.

Findings

Survey findings suggest scheduling practices are working well for most employees. Sixty percent of survey takers say they are happy with their weekly hours, while around a third (34%) would like to work more. Most workers who want to work more can do so—69% of respondents say they are able to get more hours if they want them.

This flexibility around scheduling is viewed as a positive attribute of restaurant work. A significant majority of respondents—85%—say their schedule gives them the opportunity to choose how they spend their time and enjoy life. Over two-thirds of survey takers (68%) indicate that they work in a restaurant because of the flexibility to pursue other work or activities. Responses to these questions were consistent among “front of the house” and “back of house” staff, quick service workers and full-service restaurant workers and those from different demographic groups. This suggests that flexibility is a shared, appreciated value among employees in this industry.

Respondent Profile

- **35** = median age
- Experience in restaurants
 - **49%** - 10 years or more
 - **33%** - 3-9 years
 - **18%** - 2 years or less
- Job type
 - **70%** “front of house”
 - **15%** “back of house”
 - **10%** supervising or administrative roles
 - **5%** other
- Hours per week
 - **59%** - 30+ hours
 - **14%** - < 20 hours
- **74%** have completed some college
- **\$11.13** - Average hourly wage
- **\$22.13** - Average including tips
- **36%** receive health insurance from their employer
- **16%** have dependent children

Satisfaction levels around existing scheduling practices and hourly compensation are high. On a scale from 1-10, with 10 being extremely satisfied, 71% selected a rating of 7 or higher when asked how satisfied they are with their ability to manage their work schedule to fit their needs. In addition, three out of five survey takers feel highly satisfied (7 or higher) with the amount of notice they are given by their employer about their weekly schedule.

Around two-thirds of workers (65%) rate their satisfaction with their hourly compensation, including tips, at 7 or above. While these results were mostly consistent across subgroups, “back of house” employees, those who don’t earn tips and relative newcomers to the industry who have worked in restaurants for three years or less reported slightly lower levels of satisfaction with wages. As such, access to tips seems to be a difference in attitudes. There were no significant differences in satisfaction among QSR and full-service workers.

In addition to high job satisfaction, most respondents (88%) say they take pride in working in the restaurant industry and 78% feel it is good training for other jobs they may have later in life. The data also suggests that relationships between employees and managers are strong. Most respondents (84%) feel they can

talk to their employer or manager and give input about the work environment, scheduling needs and what they need to do a good job at work. A similar proportion (82%) say they feel their employer cares about them, values their work and they have respect for each other. All of these results suggest that workers view their work environment in a positive light and do not see a need for major changes.

When it comes to policy changes affecting the industry, a majority of survey respondents support maintaining existing practices or making minor tweaks over any major changes across a number of different topics, including scheduling. If policy changes are being considered, more than two-thirds (68%) say **employers**, not government, should make these decisions.

However, the survey was able to identify areas for improvement and priorities for change. While satisfaction with compensation was high, 62% of survey takers rated their satisfaction with benefits provided by their employer 5 or lower on a 10-point scale. Approximately 40% say they would like to see major changes concerning benefits and types of compensation provided. Another area employers can focus on is opportunities for advancement. Respondents were split 50/50 as to whether they feel they have opportunities for promotion or to earn more money at their job. Dissatisfaction with benefits and the desire for more opportunities was especially apparent among relatively new workers to the industry. More than three-quarters (77%) of these respondents rated their satisfaction with workplace benefits 5 or lower on a 10-point scale, and 64% did the same concerning opportunities for promotion. Addressing this feedback may encourage newer workers to stay in the industry and help them establish longer-term careers.

Overall, the survey data suggest high levels of job satisfaction and little appetite for major policy changes among workers. Restaurant employees take pride in their work, communicate with their employers and appreciate the flexibility their job offers.