

## Contract catering sector sales still below pre-COVID-19 levels despite fourth quarter rise year-on-year

3 years ago



Contract catering sales saw a modest recovery in the last quarter of 2021, new CGA research reveals—but COVID-19 concerns continue to hold them well below pre-pandemic levels.

The latest edition of CGA's Contract Caterer Tracker shows sales from October to December 2021 were up by 37% on the same three months in 2020—a period when many venues served by caterers faced heavy restrictions.

However, the Tracker also indicates that sales were 26% below the fourth quarter of 2019, when businesses were trading as normal—though this marks an improvement on a shortfall of 36% in the third quarter of 2021.

The figures show how contract caterers have suffered from lingering concerns about COVID-19, and from a drop in visits to the venues they serve. The Tracker shows that the number of outlets open in the fourth quarter of 2021 was 13% lower than in the last three months of 2019. Trading was also hit by the spread of the Omicron variant and Plan B restrictions that were introduced in England in December.

CGA's Contract Catering Tracker aggregates sales from leading operators to provide quarterly reports with year-on-year analysis. It offers businesses a valuable benchmarking tool to measure performance across various metrics and market groupings, and participants in the Tracker receive additional analysis in return for their contributions.

Karl Chessell, CGA's director – hospitality operators and food, said: "It has been a hugely challenging two

years for contract caterers, and with sales still well below pre-COVID-19 norms the sector is clearly going to take a long time to recover. The phasing out of restrictions should pull more people back to workplaces and the many other spaces served by caterers as 2022 goes on. However, with some businesses severely weakened by the effects of COVID-19, supply and staffing problems continuing, and inflation hitting both caterers' costs and people's spending, more challenges lie ahead."

The Contract Catering Tracker complements CGA's suite of market measurement services, which include the Coffey CGA Business Tracker, which monitors sales at the UK's leading managed restaurant, pub and bar groups; and the Hospitality at Home Tracker, which reports data from the delivery and takeaway sector.

CGA's partners on the Contract Catering Tracker include: ABM Catering, Artizian Catering Services, Bartlett Mitchell, BaxterStorey, Blue Apple Contract Catering, CH&CO, Compass UK, Elior UK, The Genuine Dining Co., Graysons, Harrison Catering Services and Sodexo UK.

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