

Talking Points: Stanford Study

The recent Stanford/Northwestern study rightfully concludes that disadvantage groups are experiencing worse outcomes from COVID-19 and that policymakers should address this disparate impact. However, the New Jersey Restaurant & Hospitality Association (NJRHA) has very serious concerns about the research methodology and the conclusions it drives regarding the risk of reopening different businesses, including restaurants.

For example:

- The Stanford/Northwestern study is a computer model that predicts trends based on location data. This is very different than doctors and epidemiologists studying actual cases of COVID-19. In fact, when you read the [fine print](#) of the study, the authors admit they relied on assumptions about risk rather than contact tracing data, which would have been better.
 - In addition, the study focuses on what it calls “non-residential location visits,” but we know a significant source of COVID-19 spread is home gatherings. Just this week, the CDC published [guidelines](#) stating, “small household gatherings are an important contributor to the rise in COVID-19 cases.” How can a model that discounts this significant source of spread be reliable?
 - Also, the study seemingly ignores factors that scientists tell us are critical to reducing transmission, including compliance with COVID-19 safety protocols like social distancing, wearing a mask, and increased sanitation, and precautions many restaurants are taking to mitigate risk in enclosed spaces like installing plexiglass barriers, improving air circulation, and serving people outside.
 - Finally, the timeline of the study is concerning because it relies on data collected from March 1 - May 2, 2020. New Jersey required restaurant dining rooms to close completely during this period, and since then, much has changed, including statewide mask mandates and stronger compliance from businesses, consumers, and the general public.
- The NJRHA continues to call for health data, not assumptions, to inform our collective response to COVID-19.
 - Restaurants will continue to implement all of the evidence-based strategies doctors advise so we can provide a safe alternative to the unregulated, in home gatherings that we know are driving the spread of COVID-19.

