



ST. MAARTEN HOSPITALITY  
& TRADE ASSOCIATION

**SHTA**

**Restaurant**

**Survey 2022**

Monday, April 25, 2022



# Management Summary

Sint Maarten is facing a serious labor force challenge when it pertains to remaining the "Culinary Capital of the Caribbean". This finding stems from a survey held amongst Dutch side Sint Maarten restaurants and/or restaurant groups.

The 2022 SHTA restaurant survey was conducted amongst restaurants of varying cuisines and locations throughout Dutch side Sint Maarten. Participating restaurants jointly represent a labor force of 586 Sint Maarten jobs.

One of the most important challenges restaurants face, is that of finding suitable candidates for filling vacancies. At the time of the survey 78,6% of the participating restaurants were searching for new employees. Restaurants looking for personnel are especially looking for Chefs (64%), service personnel (56%), managers (52%), mixologists (44%), dishwashers (20%) and Baristas (8%). Within the kitchen specifically, sous chefs are most sought after (47.6%), executive chef (23.8%), commis chef (19%), chef de partie, kitchen manager, specialties chefs (all 14.3%).

8% is explicitly looking for Sint Maarteners they can train on the job, but are apparently unable to find this supply. Hiring locally is always preferred, but applicants need degrees and experience to safeguard the quality of Sint Maarten's famed cuisine. "Sundial school brought us a great cook, but for the finesses of our ethnic cuisine he still needs a specialized coaching".

Also, other responses show there is a mismatch in supply and demand. 62% of the restaurants are not aware what job seekers are presently available in the labor market. However, when the labor department presented candidates, 66% of respondents stated the employee did not meet the requirements initially requested.

It is no secret that Sint Maarten faces serious challenges when it comes to matching employer needs with job seekers. This challenge is heightened when it comes to the culinary industry, especially when trying to compete at the same top level with our partners on the northern side of the island.

In an open comment section box of the survey requesting to describe labor force challenges in the sector. Common elements were too little availability of seasoned professionalism, lack of education and qualifications of candidates offered, and limited experience.

The lack of supply of seasoned kitchen personnel also has similar repercussions on other Sint Maarten employment sectors e.g. construction, housekeeping, security just to name a few.

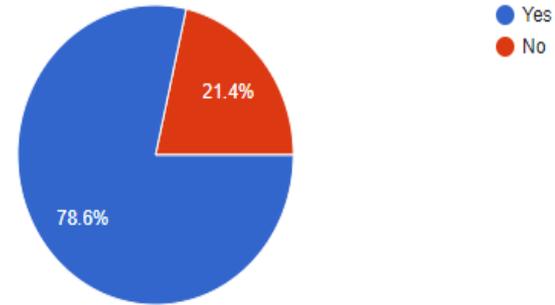
As one manager stated: "Good kitchen staff are more essential to my business than I am. I can be sick. A kitchen worker however makes or breaks my business; if I have none or need to wait for one via the labor office, I need to close. This in turn threatens the jobs of other fellow Sint Maarteners I hire".

Whether it is the labor force bottle neck or other reasons is unclear, but the outcomes of the survey show that more than 60% of the participating restaurants expect that this year's revenue will be down compared to revenue of pre-pandemic, but post hurricane Irma 2019. This is in contrast to a more positive outlook for other sectors of the hospitality industry.

In a 2016 SHTA research, culinary diversity stood out as one of destination Sint Maarten's seven key strengths, SHTA worries about the loss of brand value implicated in this development and warns that without specialized education or secondary labor supply, Sint Maarten's self-proclaimed claim of the "Culinary Capital of the Caribbean" would be under pressure. SHTA calls on the Ministries of TEATT and VSA, also the Sint Maarten Tourism Bureau to open a constructive dialogue where challenges and solutions with the private sector how to safeguard the well-known culinary reputation of Sint Maarten, with a realistic and pragmatic approach.

#### Q4: Are you looking for new employees?

Answered: 28 Skipped: 1



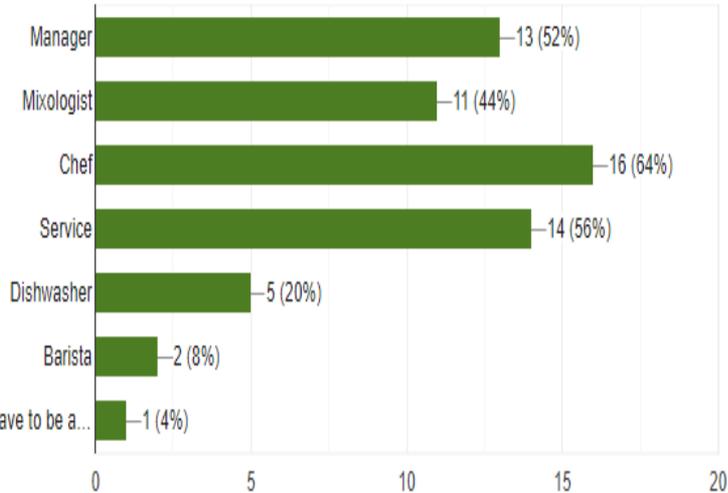
#### Q5: How many employees are you looking for?

Answered: 26 Skipped: 3

- Total amount of employees looked for in survey: 81
- Average amount of employees looked for per restaurant: 2,8
- Range of employee amounts looked for amongst respondents to this question: 1 - 10

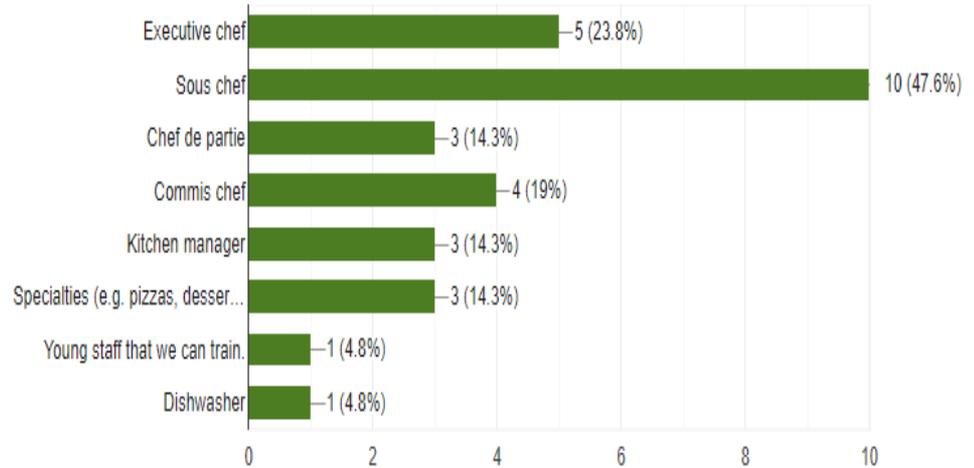
### Q6: What skill of employee are you looking for?

Answered: 25 Skipped: 4



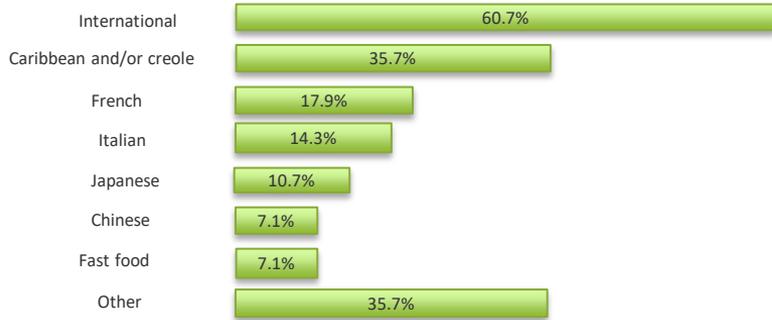
### Q7: If you are looking for kitchen staff, what positions are you looking to fill?

Answered: 21 Skipped: 8



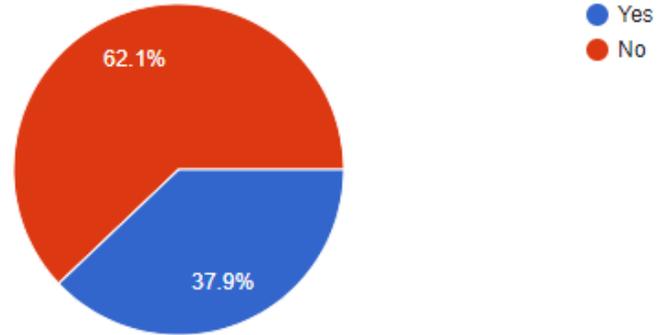
### Q8: What type of cuisine do you offer?

Answered: 28 Skipped: 1



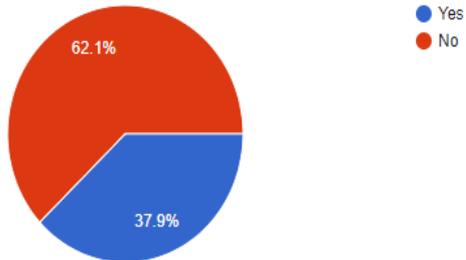
### Q9: Are you aware what job seekers are presently available at the labor department?

Answered: 29 Skipped: 0



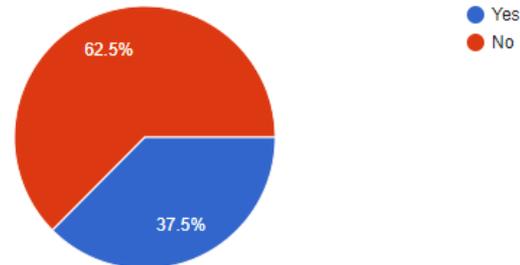
### Q10: Have you ever contacted the labor department looking for available job seekers? (if no, go on to question 13)

Answered: 29 Skipped: 0



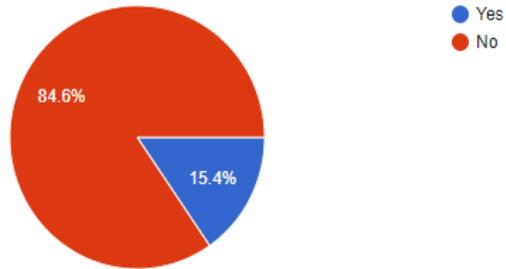
### Q11: If yes, did they ever submit any candidates?

Answered: 19 Skipped: 13



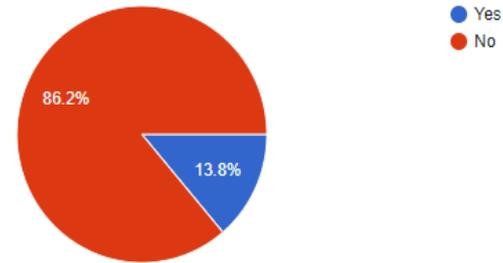
**Q12: If yes, did they meet your requirements e.g. qualification, willing to work hours needed, experience?**

Answered: 13 Skipped: 16



**Q13: Are you presently waiting for a work permit for any of your employees? (if no, go on to question 16)**

Answered: 19 Skipped: 13



**Q15: If yes, how long has it been since you applied for the work permits?**

Answered: 7 Skipped: 22

On average, companies wait 1,8 years for a work permit

**Q16: Do you have any comments about the availability of the employees in the marketplace?**

Answered: 23 Skipped: 6

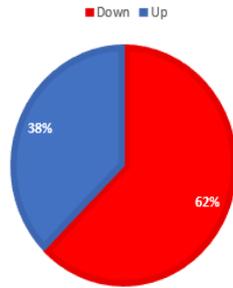
Multiple comments were about the shortage of:

- Professionality (5)
- Work experience (4)
- Education qualifications (3)

**Q17: As a percentage, what do you estimate to be this year's revenue compared to 2019? E.g. Down 10%, Up 20% etc.**

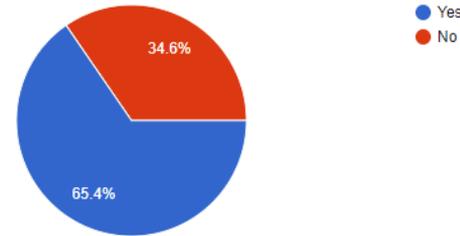
Answered: 27 Skipped: 2

THIS YEAR'S REVENUE COMPARED TO 2019



**Q18: Based on the needs of your business, is it probable your company is looking for specialized personnel in the near future?**

Answered: 26 Skipped: 3



**Q19: If yes, which one e.g. Pizza chef, Sushi chef, Indian cuisine cook?**

Answered: 27 Skipped: 2

- Sushi (3)
- Cook (3)
- Waiter (2)
- Bartender (1)
- Sommelier (1)
- Gourmet Chef (1)
- Baker (1)
- Teppanyaki Chef (1)
- Mixologist (1)
- Pizza (1)
- Lebanese chef (1)
- Manager (1)