**COVID-19 RESTAURANRT CLOSURES IN NYC CHINATOWNS: EXAMINING CHAIN VS. NON-CHAIN VENDORS**

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**BACKGROUND:** It has been speculated that the COVID-19 pandemic will result in a survival of chain restaurants and closures of non-chain vendors, possibly due to lack of infrastructure for loan application and smaller cash reserves. This analysis sought to examine whether chain and non-chain restaurants were differentially affected by COVID-19 with respect to open/closed status in two Chinese ethnic neighborhoods in New York City (NYC).

**METHODS:** Data on closures was derived from the COVID Closures project. Restaurant data, including the name, location and phone number, were extracted from NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene Restaurant Inspection database. Manhattan Chinatown (Chinatown) and Sunset Park (SP) restaurants were isolated using Neighborhood Tabulation Areas modified by local resident input. Vendors were verified as open, temporarily closed, or indefinitely closed using internet evidence, phone calls, and in-person visits. For this analysis, vendors were categorized by service type using the North American Industry Classification System; vendors closed in 2019, located inside other establishments, with buffet/cafeteria service, or primarily serving alcohol were excluded. Restaurants were further classified as chain (10+ locations nationally or regionally) or non-chain. Proportions of vendors open throughout the study period, stratified by subgroups, were calculated.

**RESULTS:** In Chinatown, of 572 identified restaurants, 43 were chain and 529 were non-chain restaurants. Chains were more likely to remain open compared to non-chain vendors (86% vs. 74%, p=0.11). Though the results were not statistically different, the number of businesses affected differed (135 non-chain vs. 6 chain vendors closed). SP results forthcoming.

**CONCLUSIONS:** A greater number of Chinatown’s non-chain restaurants were affected by COVID-19 than chains, though the difference was not statistically significant. The small number of chain restaurants in Chinatown may explain these results. Results may differ across other neighborhoods and future comparisons will further illuminate its potential to worsen existing health disparities.

**CONTENT CATEGORY:** Epidemiology

**KEYWORDS:** *Social determinants of health, food retail environment, Chinatowns, COVID-19*