

Eat Out

— TO —

HELP OUT

THE
TICKER

HOW THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT GOT CITIZENS TO DINE OUT AGAIN

With COVID-19 restrictions lifted in the United Kingdom, the way was cleared for 1.8 million hospitality industry workers to return to their jobs and welcome people back to restaurants. There was just one problem: Most Britons were still uncomfortable eating out. To get the public spending again, the British government presented **Eat Out to Help Out**. Throughout August 2020, meals eaten in restaurants, cafés or pubs Monday through Wednesday were half off, with the government picking up the rest of the tab.

It was a first-of-its-kind offer, and it was a resounding success. Nearly **85,000 restaurants** signed up. The population of the U.K. is about 67 million, yet the British people ate more than 100 million discounted meals and helped save nearly 2 million hospitality jobs. The U.K.'s inflation rate fell to 0.02% in August, from 1% in July. On the program's final day, the Treasury cited figures showing bookings up by 216% compared to the same day last year.

But the program did have its drawbacks. Prime Minister Boris Johnson admitted the fall surge in COVID-19 cases in the U.K. may have been due in part to more citizens dining out. As a result, restaurants were given a 10 p.m. shutdown time and tighter restrictions regarding mask-wearing.

The government still wants to keep the program, however. "It was very important to keep those jobs going," Johnson said. "Insofar as that scheme may have helped to spread the virus, then obviously we need to counteract that." **IQ** —*Karen Sommerfeld*



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