

UNITEHERE!

Landmark Study Raises Serious Questions about Hotel Workers' Risk of Injury

STUDY SUMMARY

A landmark article published in 2009 in the *American Journal of Industrial Medicine* by a team of researchers from four universities and Unite Here studied the difference in hotel workers' injury rates by sex, race/ethnicity, job title and hotel employer. **Here's what the study found about worker injuries in those hotels:**

Hotel Workers Had Higher Injury Rates than Service Workers

- Hotel workers had an injury rate 25% higher than all service workers *5.2 for hotel workers compared to 4.2 for all service sector workers (2004 Bureau of Labor Statistics)*

Female Workers Had Highest Rates of Injury

- Women hotel workers were 50% *more* likely to be injured than men (6.3 vs. 4.3).
- Women workers had higher rates of injury than males consistently across all types of injuries, including musculoskeletal disorders and acute trauma.

Housekeeping is the Most Dangerous Job

- Housekeepers had the highest rate of injury of 7.9, 50% higher than all hotel workers.
- Housekeepers had the highest rate of musculoskeletal disorders, followed by dishwashers.
- Housekeepers and kitchen workers tied for the highest rate of acute trauma injuries.

"Cleaning between 25 and 30 rooms a day demands working fast and this is how I hurt my body. I am permanently injured in my lower back and shoulder and I can no longer work as a housekeeper. I have pain every day."

— **Celia Alvarez**, a Room

Attendant who worked at a non-union Hyatt Regency in Long Beach for 19 years before becoming permanently injured.

Study Background

This study analyzed injury records from 2003-2005 at 50 hotels operated by the top five hotel companies. Jobs studied include housekeepers, dishwashers, kitchen workers and banquet servers, representing 46% of the study population. Hotel employer records of work-related injuries and employee hiring lists were from full service hotels that had collective bargaining contracts with Unite Here, the hospitality workers union. Over 55,000 worker-years of observation (number of workers times number of years employed) and 2,865 injuries were included. Some workers had up to three injuries during the study period and many were employed for multiple years.

"Housekeeping is hard work that gets harder every year at the Hyatt. In 2004, I had carpal tunnel in both hands, which required weeks of physical therapy and surgery. I live with chronic pain in my back and knees from all the heavy lifting and bending I do to change beds, scrub floors and toilets, and push heavy furniture around to vacuum."

— **Francine Jones**, Room

Attendant at a union Hyatt Regency in Chicago, 15 years of service

Hyatt Housekeepers Had Highest Risk of Injury by Company

- Housekeepers working at Hyatt hotels in this study had the highest injury rate at 10.4 with a risk of injury twice that of the company with the lowest rates (called the referent company).

Workers of Color Had Increased Risk of Injury

- Hispanic women had almost double the risk of injury than white female co-workers.
- Hispanic and Asian males were about 50% more likely to be injured than white males.

Hispanic Housekeepers Had Highest Risk of Injury

- With an injury rate of 10.6, Hispanic housekeepers had the highest injury rate of all race/ethnicity groups, making them almost twice as likely to be injured as white housekeepers.

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