

Housekeeping Can Be Dangerous Work

Hotel workers have a 40% higher injury rate than all service sector workers. Of all hotel workers, housekeepers experience the highest injury rates.

Nearly every hotel housekeeper is a woman, and she is most likely an immigrant or woman of color. Each day, she may lift the corners of 100-pound mattresses, push heavy supply carts across carpeted floors, climb to clean high surfaces, or drop to her hands and knees to scrub floors. She may do these tasks dozens of times each day, taking a toll on her body simply to earn her daily bread.



In a survey of more than 600 hotel housekeepers in the U.S. and Canada, 91% said that they have suffered work-related pain. Of those who reported workplace pain:

- 77% said their workplace pain interfered with routine activities.
- Two out of every three workers visited their doctor to deal with workplace pain.
- 66% took pain medication just to get through their daily work quota.

A 2010 study in the *American Journal of Industrial Medicine* compared the difference in hotel workers' injury rates by sex, race/ethnicity, job title, and hotel employer. The results of this study found that among hotel workers:

- Housekeepers had the highest injury rate of 7.9, which is 50% higher than all hotel workers.
- Women hotel workers were 50% more likely to be injured than men.
- Hispanic housekeepers had the highest injury rate of 10.6. Hispanic housekeepers had the highest injury rate of all race/ethnicity groups, making them almost two times more likely to be injured than White housekeepers.

Here's why:

- **Heavy Workloads:** In most hotels, a housekeeper must clean 14 or more rooms per day. To meet this quota, she often skips breaks and works off the clock. It also is increasingly common for her to have luxury beds with heavier mattresses and linens, triple-sheeting, duvets, and extra pillows than in years past. Other upgrades, like large mirrors, wide-screen TVs, floor-to-ceiling glass showers, can make a housekeeper's job of cleaning a room even more difficult and time-consuming.
- **Speedups:** With booming business and high room rates, housekeepers face increasing time pressure to maintain a quality guest experience. Many housekeepers report that their hotels are understaffed and that they must work at unsafe speeds, which increases their risk of injury.

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