

Dignity for Hotel housekeepers?

The Swedish Hotel- and restaurant worker's trade union (HRF) survey in hotel housekeepers working environment 2016

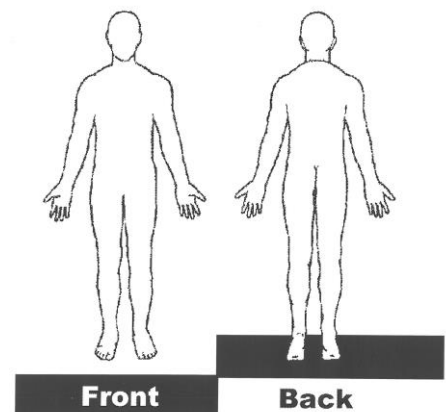


Preface

The hotel- and restaurant worker's trade union (HRF) in Sweden sent out a survey to hundreds of employees in hotel housekeeping about their working environment. The result is very alarming. It shows that 72 percent of the hotel housekeepers are experiencing a lot of stress at work, 85 percent are suffering from pain that they believe to be work-related and 7 percent of all women have experienced sexual harassment.

Who did we meet?

The hotel- and restaurant worker's trade union (HRF) conducted a campaign week during autumn 2016 where we sought out and visited hotel housekeepers all over Sweden. 294 workers responded to our survey about their working environment. 249 out of the respondents are women, 27 are men and 18 have chosen not to claim any gender. The ages run between 19-82 years. Most of the respondents are born outside of Sweden and have Swedish as a second language. Many also have several years of working experience and long period of employment. In average the respondents have worked within housekeeping for nine years or more. The average employed has been working in the housekeeping department for about seven years. 59 percent of the respondents replied that they work part time.



What questions did we ask?

The survey contained 30 questions and a body-map. The body-map (picture to the right) was used to mark places or zones of pain on the respondent's body where they feel work-related pain. You can see the survey attached as Annex 1, following this report.

Stress and work rate

We asked to what extent the hotel housekeepers are experiencing stress and if they feel that they have a reasonable work rate. 72 percent replied YES to the question on experiencing a lot of stress at their workplace. On what extent the hotel housekeepers agree with the statement “the work rate is reasonable” they answered on a scale of 1-5. Most of the respondents do not feel that their work rate is reasonable. Additionally, 44 percent say they have problems concerning their sleep.

Ja= YES Ej Uppgett = No answer Nej = NO

CHART 1. Do you experience a lot of stress at your workplace?

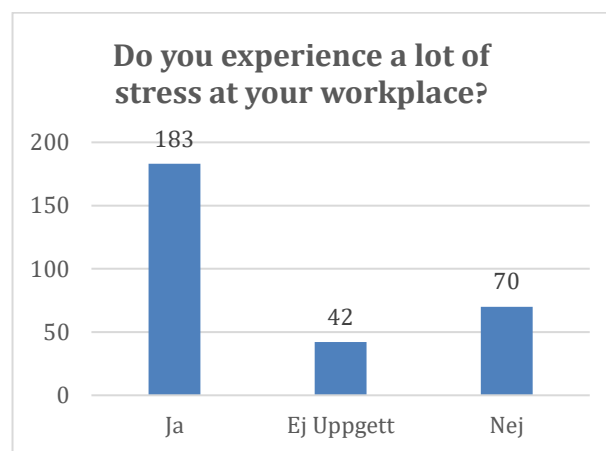
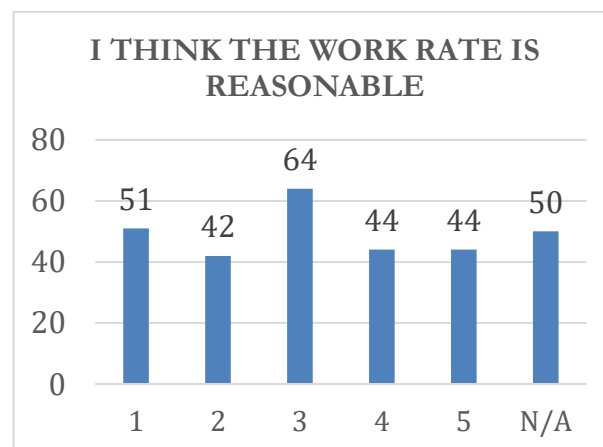


CHART 2. I think the work rate is reasonable. 1 stands for “I absolutely do not agree” and 5 for “I fully agree”.



How many rooms should be cleaned on a shift?

We asked how many rooms that is usually to be cleaned on a workday. The pace is often high but there are wide variations. The respondents say that they clean between three and up to fifty rooms per day. On average, respondents clean 19 rooms per day. 65 percent of the responding hotel housekeepers say that they have such a high room rate that they cannot keep up with cleaning all the rooms during a shift. We asked if employees allow the housekeepers to leave the rooms untidy if there isn't enough time to finish during their ordinary working shift. An overwhelming majority cannot leave any rooms untidy, even though their shift is over. As many as 62 percent of the hotel housekeepers say that they may not leave rooms untidy. This means that many are constantly forced to work overtime, or even to work without pay, to perform their regular duties.

CHART 3. I have time to achieve my responsibilities during ordinary working hours. 1 stands for "I absolutely do not agree" and 5 for "I fully agree".

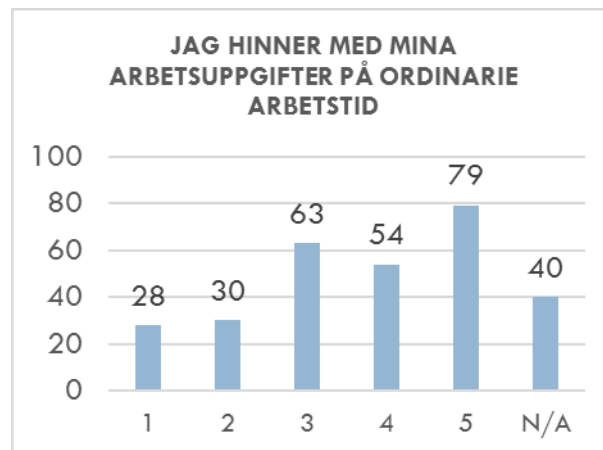
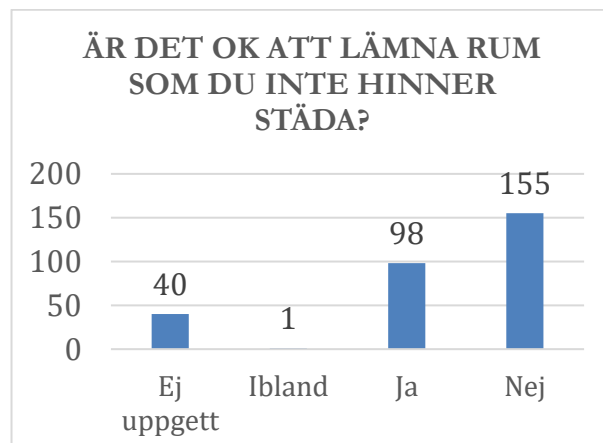


CHART 4. Is it OK to leave a room untidy if you do not have the time to clean it during your ordinary working hours? Response options are:

Ja= YES Ej Uppgett = No answer Nej = NO

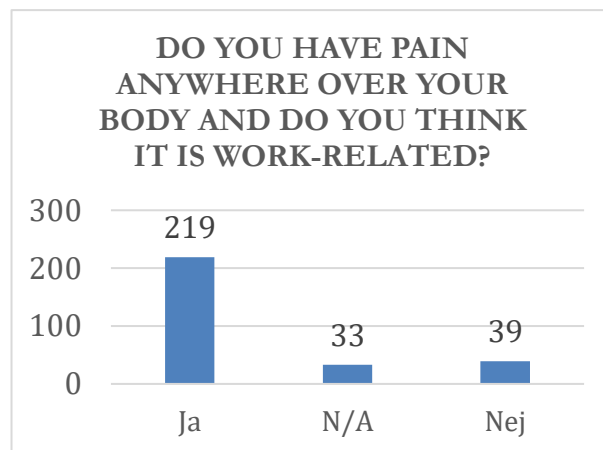


Pain and work-related disorders

We asked if the hotel housekeepers have pain in the body due to causes that they believe are work-related. 85 percent of respondents have pain in the body and especially in their shoulders and backs. There is a big difference between the sexes on this question. Among men, 55 percent responded that they have pain in the body because of the work. Among the women, 87 per cent of the work gives them a sore body.

CHART 5. Do you have pain anywhere over your body and do you think it is work-related? Response options are:

Ja= YES Ej Uppgett = No answer Nej = NO



Sexual harassment and threats and violence

Over seven percent of respondent women answered yes when asked if they experienced some form of sexual harassment during the past twelve months. The figure is frighteningly high and the fact that it is so common makes it a structural problem. Only one man says that he has been exposed. Every twelfth hotel housekeeper is subjected to sexual harassment and that is certainly not okay. In addition, there is an equally remarkable proportion, six percent, who has been subjected to violence or threats at work in the last twelve months.

The typical hotel housekeeper

So, who is the typical hotel housekeeper in our survey? It is a woman who does not have Swedish as their mother tongue. She is 43 years old and has worked with housekeeping for ten years or more. She is permanently employed but do not work full time. Most often she cleans 19 rooms per shift, but on weekends there will be slightly fewer rooms. She can almost never finish cleaning all the rooms, giving a tangible feeling of stress throughout the working day. She feels pain in her body. Mainly it hurts in the back and over her shoulders.

56 percent of the respondents have other problems that they believe is work-related. What these symptoms consists of we do not know fully, but this also shows that hotel housekeepers work needs to be reviewed and improved significantly.

What does the survey tell us on hotel housekeepers working environment?

Hotel housekeeping is a hard and physical work. Yet many workers stay long in their profession and are proud of the job they do. 80 percent of respondents enjoy well or very well working with their colleagues. But a few things are very remarkable.

Most the hotel housekeepers have such a high work rate that they did not have time to clean all the rooms during their shifts. In addition, there is a high percentage that say they must not leave any room untidy when their workday is over.

It is therefore difficult to understand that such a large share of the hotel housekeepers working part time. Too high work rate, where the housekeepers are forced to pay through the stress, discomfort or pain in the body, should the urge to work better. The positions of hotel housekeepers need to be full-time or have more colleagues to be able to do their job well and not under stress. Today there are too many who are forced to work extra hours or even do the cleaning work for free. The hotel housekeepers are putting the work in front of their own health. There is no plausibility for the hotels housekeeping departments to be understaffed when the hotels are almost constantly fully booked.

Only a quarter of those who replied to our survey are painless. Having work-related pain in the body is more of a rule than an exception. It should not be tolerated at a workplace in Sweden in 2017.

And in addition, every twelfth respondent experienced some form of sexual harassment. It is a frightening high percentage. Here, employers must take preventive and follow-up actions. Guests who commit sexual harassments or other abuses must be notified and rejected as guests. There must be zero tolerance for harassment. It is the employer's duty to take this issue more seriously.

How will the trade union HRF follow up this survey?

The hotel- and restaurant worker's trade union (HRF) will continue to organize and highlight hotel housekeepers every day. The results of the survey will be of great benefit in this spring's collective agreement negotiations. We will demand employers to take real responsibility for employees' physical and psychosocial work environment. There are good opportunities to improve hotel housekeepers working situation with the support of our collective agreement.

Our efforts to organize hotel housekeepers, and give them influence over the organization of work and their working environment will continue. Also during 2017, HRF will perform another week of activities aimed towards hotel housekeepers. We pursue this work globally, together with our sister organizations in the world. HRF will continue to visit hotel housekeepers and pay attention to their working environment.

Annex 1, Survey

How do you feel as a hotel housekeeper?

Workingplace:

Age:

Date:

Sex:

The purpose of this survey is to obtain a general insight into hotel housekeepers working conditions. It is completely confidential, and the employer will not see individual replies.

	<i>Some questions your working conditions</i>	
1	How many years have you worked with hotel housekeeping or similar work?	years
2	How long have you been with your current employer?	years
3	What type of job do you have (fixed / part-time / extra)?	
4	How many hours do you work (usually) a day?	hours
5	How many rooms do you clean every day (usually) on weekdays ?	rooms
6	How many rooms you clean every day (usually) on weekends ?	rooms
7	Is it OK to leave the room untidy that you do not have time to clean up?	Yes 98 No 156
8	How many breaks do you get per shift?	raster
9	Have you received any training for your work?	Ja 118 Nej 148

	<i>Some allegations regarding work and work content.</i>	5=I fully agree 1=I absolutely do not agree				
		5 □	4	3 □	2	1 □
10	I feel good when I'm at work	97	59	67	17	20
11	My work is interesting and meaningful?	65	58	85	25	25
12	I feel exhausted when I come home from work	86	48	68	25	29
13	I'm happy about my working conditions (wages, other working conditions)	44	37	69	56	49
14	I enjoy working with my colleagues	159	45	34	10	8
15	I get on well with my supervisor	122	49	38	19	30
16	I sleep well at night	80	48	65	37	31
17	I think the work rate is reasonable	44	44	64	42	51
18	I can keep up with my work on regular working hours	79	54	63	31	28
19	I get enough time to take a break at work	96	43	54	33	28
20	I always have time to take my break	101	46	50	23	36
21	I have an opportunity to influence the work rate?	52	48	78	32	42
22	I get stressed when I think of my work	65	52	62	32	44
23	I think my work is monotonous	63	56	72	36	23
24	I get all the resources necessary to do my job	101	43	61	29	25

	<i>Some questions about your health and wellbeing.</i>	Yes	No
25	Do you have pain somewhere on your body, that you think is work-related?	220	42
26	Do you have other symptoms, that you think is work-related?	140	114
27	Have you experienced any form of sexual harassment at work over the last 12 months?	18	238
28	Have you experienced any kind of threats or violence at work over the last 12 months?	17	239
29	Do you experience a lot of stress at work?	183	70
30	Have you been on sick leave for something that you believe is work-related?	109	150