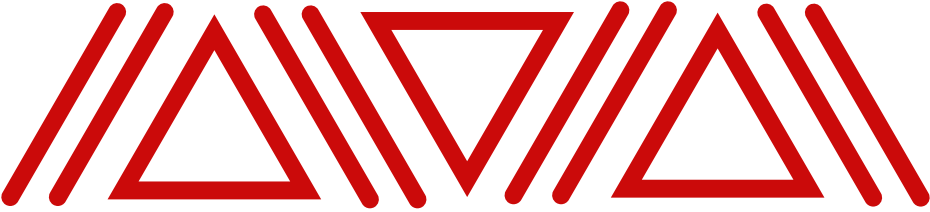


"Doing the Best That I Can and Still Falling Behind"

The Story of the Workers at the Hilton Madison Monona Terrace



A Report by UNITE HERE Local 1
December 2025



About The Hilton Madison Monona Terrace

The Hilton Madison Monona Terrace is a 240-room full-service hotel steps away from the Wisconsin State Capitol building and connected via skywalk to the Monona Terrace Convention Center. The hotel opened in 2001 with the help of a \$10.8 million tax increment financing loan from the City of Madison.[1]

The Hilton Madison Monona Terrace has been named the best hotel by Madison Magazine, among other recognitions. [2] The hotel is owned and operated by a division of Milwaukee-based Marcus Corporation, a publicly-traded hotel and movie theater operator with over \$1 billion in assets. Governor Tony Evers proclaimed “Marcus Corporation Day” on November 1, 2025 in recognition of the 90th anniversary of the company’s founding. [3]

Despite these accolades, room attendants, servers, cooks, front desk agents, and other workers at the Hilton Madison Monona Terrace struggle to afford basic necessities and work in pain. On August 20, 2025, workers at the Hilton Madison Monona Terrace voted to join UNITE HERE Local 1, the hospitality workers union. UNITE HERE Local 1 surveyed workers at the Hilton Madison Monona Terrace.



Who Are We?

[4]

The **mean age** of workers surveyed is **36.7**.

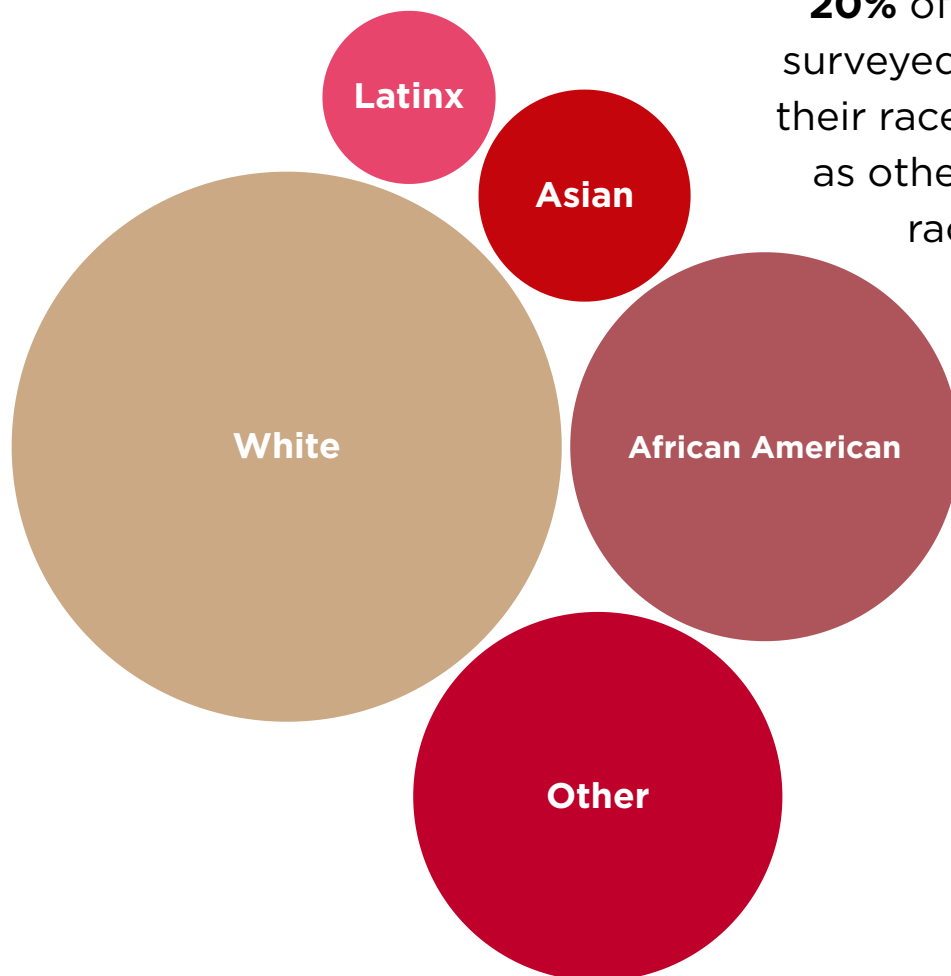
6.6% of workers surveyed reported their race/ethnicity as Asian.

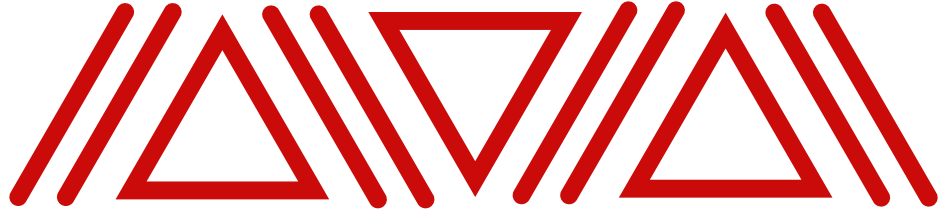
4.4% of workers surveyed reported their race/ethnicity as Latinx.

22.2% of workers surveyed reported their race/ethnicity as Black or African American.

44.4% of workers surveyed reported their race/ethnicity as white.

20% of workers surveyed reported their race/ethnicity as other or two races.

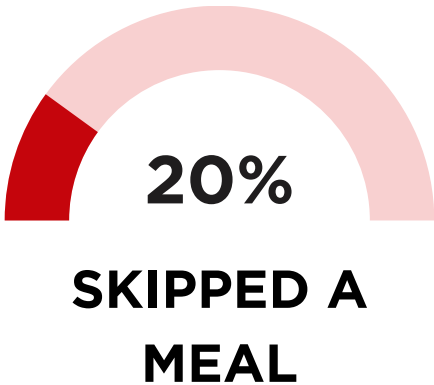




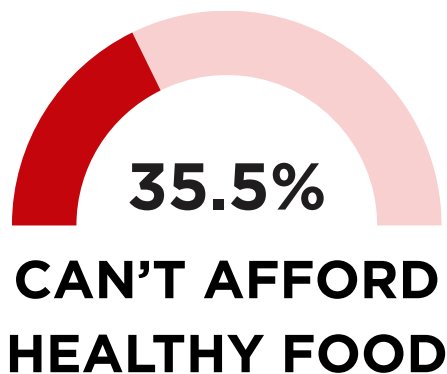
Workers who completed the survey were born in **Chile, China, Congo, Germany, Guinea, India, Japan, Philippines, Uganda, and the USA.**



Workers at the Hilton Monona Terrace Struggle With Food Insecurity



20% of surveyed workers reported that they or someone in their household skipped a meal because there wasn't enough money for food in the last six months.

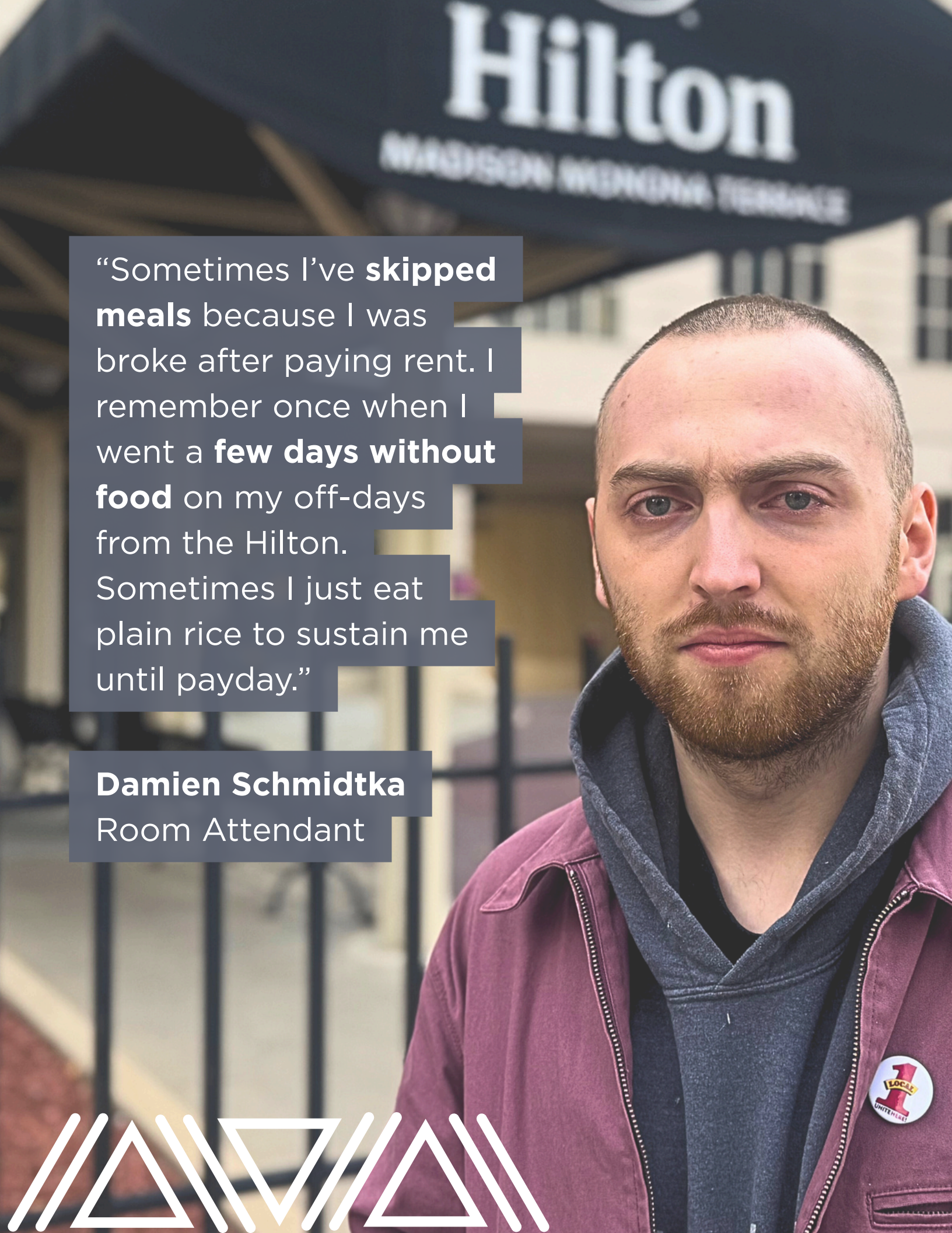


35.5% of surveyed workers reported that they can't afford to buy healthy food for their family.



13.3% of surveyed workers reported that they or their family have gone to a food pantry in the last six months.





“Sometimes I’ve **skipped meals** because I was broke after paying rent. I remember once when I went a **few days without food** on my off-days from the Hilton. Sometimes I just eat plain rice to sustain me until payday.”

Damien Schmidtka
Room Attendant



Workers at the Hilton Monona Terrace Struggle to Afford Basic Necessities



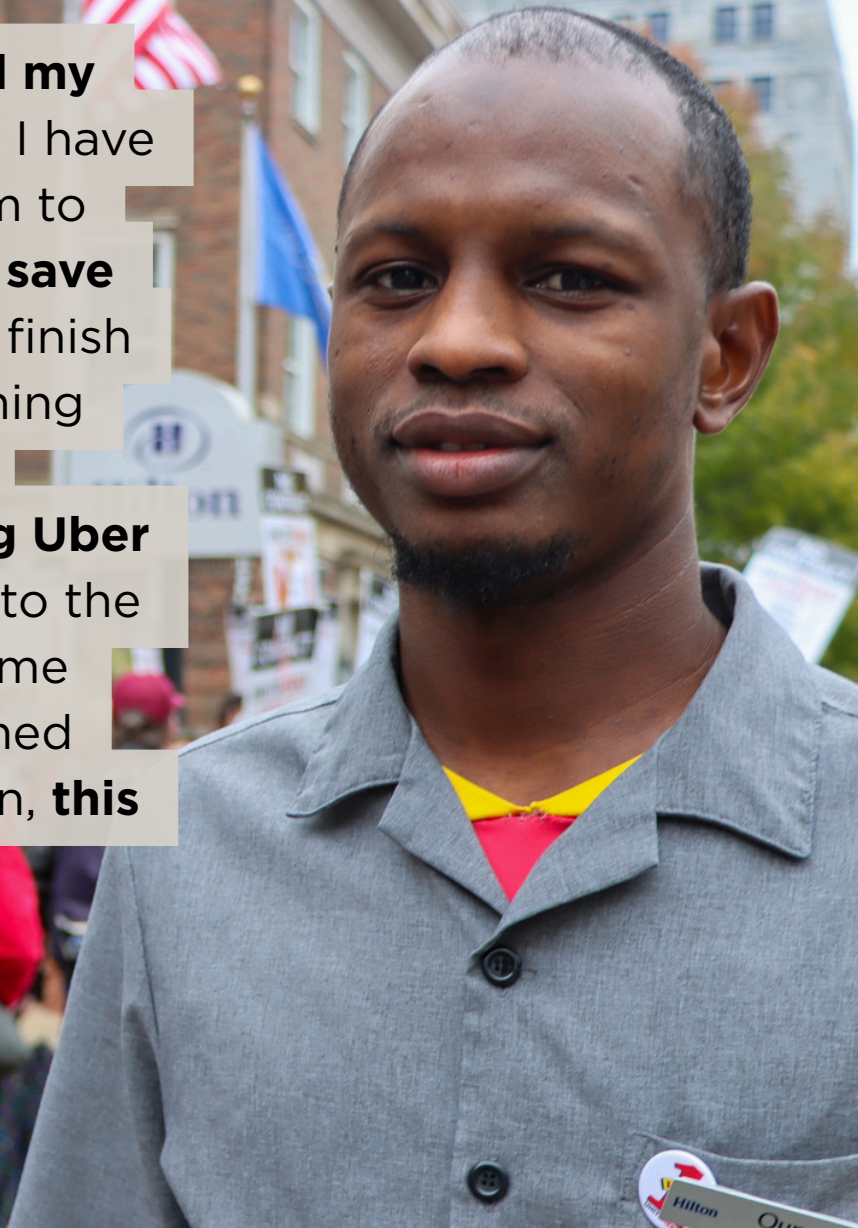
of surveyed workers reported that they work a **second job**.



of surveyed workers reported that they work a **third job**.

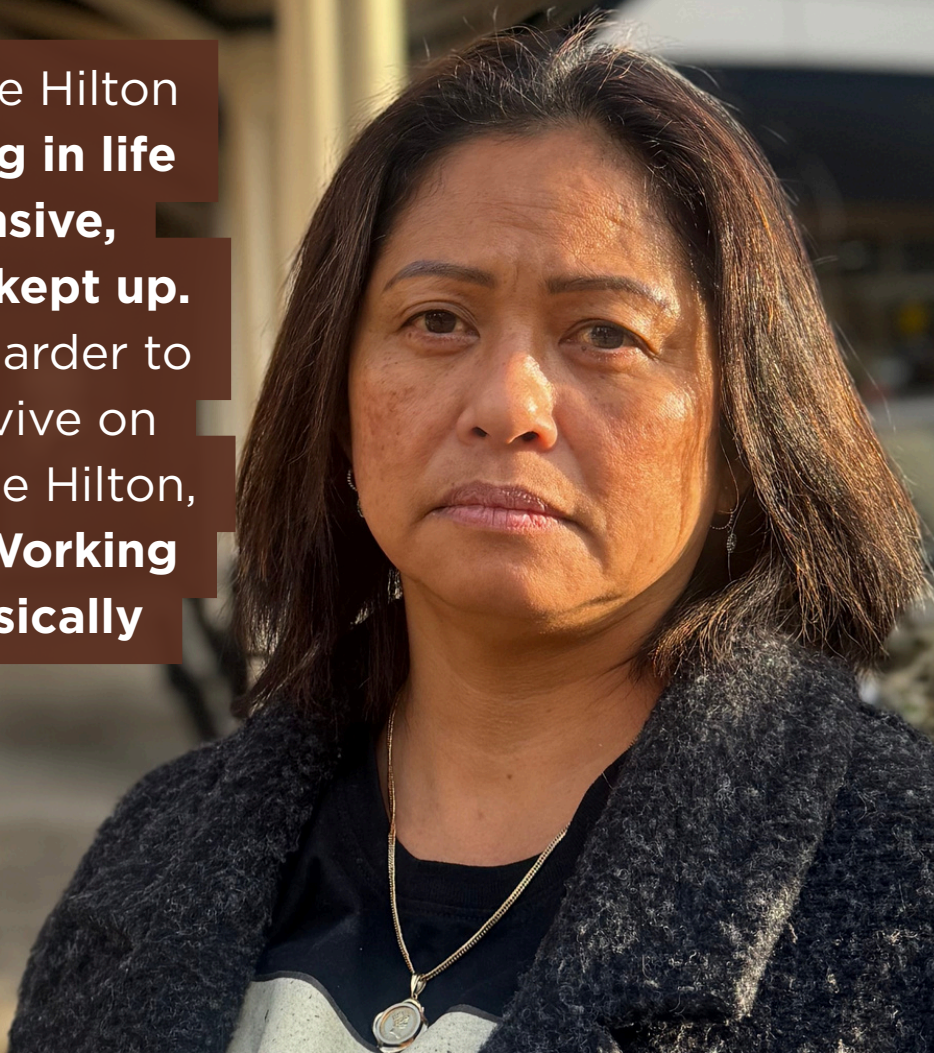
“My two young sons and my wife still live in Senegal. I have a dream of bringing them to America, but it’s **hard to save any money. Some days I finish my eight-hour shift cleaning rooms at the Hilton and immediately start **driving Uber for more money**. I came to the USA for a **better life** for me and my family, but I learned that working at the Hilton, **this is hard to achieve**.”**

Oumar Bah
Room Attendant



“I started working at the Hilton 12 years ago. **Everything in life has gotten more expensive, but my wages haven’t kept up.** Year after year it gets harder to pay my bills. I can’t survive on just the income from the Hilton, so I have another job. **Working two jobs has been physically taxing on my body.**”

Zenaida May
Bartender



of surveyed workers reported taking out a **loan to pay their bills or other expenses** in the last six months.



of surveyed workers reported that they are **behind or owe money on utility bills.**



Workers at the Hilton Monona Terrace Struggle to Afford Housing

37.7%

of surveyed workers reported that they **lacked money to cover their rent or mortgage in the last six months.**

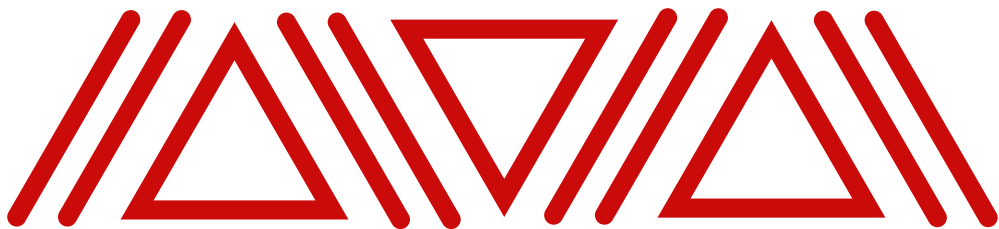
71.1%


of surveyed workers reported that **they rent.**

The National Low Income Housing Coalition calculates that the **hourly wage necessary to afford a one-bedroom apartment in Madison at fair market rate is \$24.65.**

[5]

As of October 2025, **workers at the Hilton Monona Terrace earn a median wage of \$18.00** per hour, according to documents provided by the company.



A close-up portrait of Timothy Farland, an older Black man with glasses and a grey beanie, looking directly at the camera with a somber expression. He is wearing a dark jacket. In the background, a black sign with the Hilton logo and 'MADISON MONROE TERRACE' is visible, along with a white sign that says 'TERACE'.

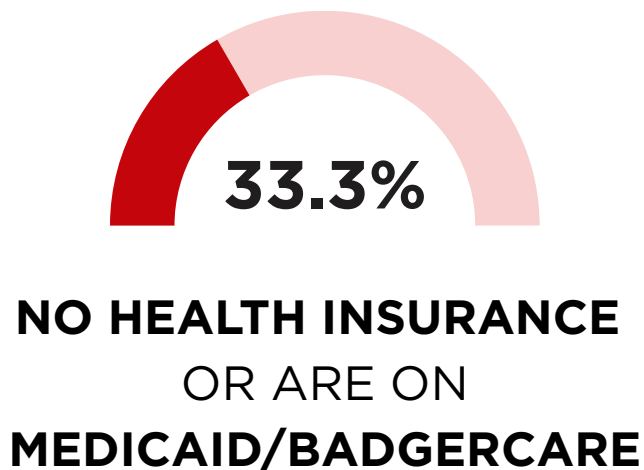
“I work full time as a dishwasher and I’m homeless. I moved out of my last apartment after the sheriff posted an eviction notice on my door. I’m trying to save enough to get my own place but it’s been hard. I feel so angry, because I am doing the best that I can and still falling behind.”

Timothy Farland
Dishwasher

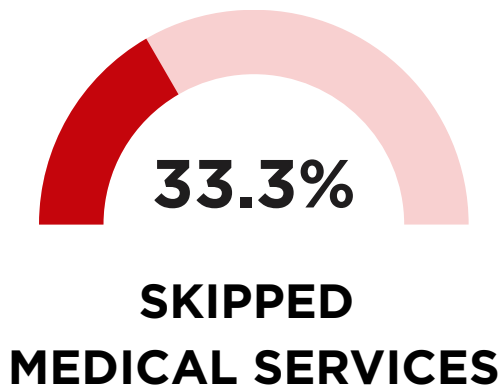
Workers at the Hilton Monona Terrace Struggle to Afford Healthcare

The premium for health insurance for one employee and their family on the company offered “Surest Copay Plan” would be **\$691.36 per month** in 2025, according to documents provided by the company.

As of October 2025, **84.4% of workers at the Hilton Monona Terrace are not enrolled in a health plan offered by the company**, according to documents provided by the company.



33.3% of surveyed workers reported that, in response to the question “If you don’t have the company’s health care, how do you get your health insurance?” that they don’t have health insurance or are on Medicaid/Badgercare.



33.3% of surveyed workers report that they or someone in their household has skipped medical services because they couldn’t afford it.



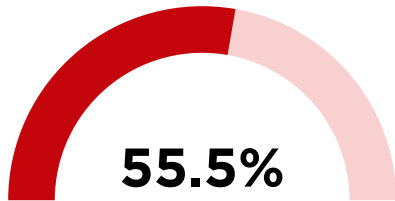


“I know that women my age need regular mammogram screenings, but I haven’t gotten an appointment because **I’m so scared of the bill that will come.** I’m a single mother taking care of three kids. **What will my kids do if something happens to me?**”

Gina Boscia
Room Attendant



Workers at The Hilton Monona Terrace Work in Pain



of surveyed workers reported that their **workload has increased** since they were hired.

92.8% of surveyed **housekeeping workers** reported that they **experience pain at work.**




75.5% of surveyed workers reported that **they feel pain at the end of the day.**

75.5% of all surveyed workers reported that they have **experienced pain at work.**

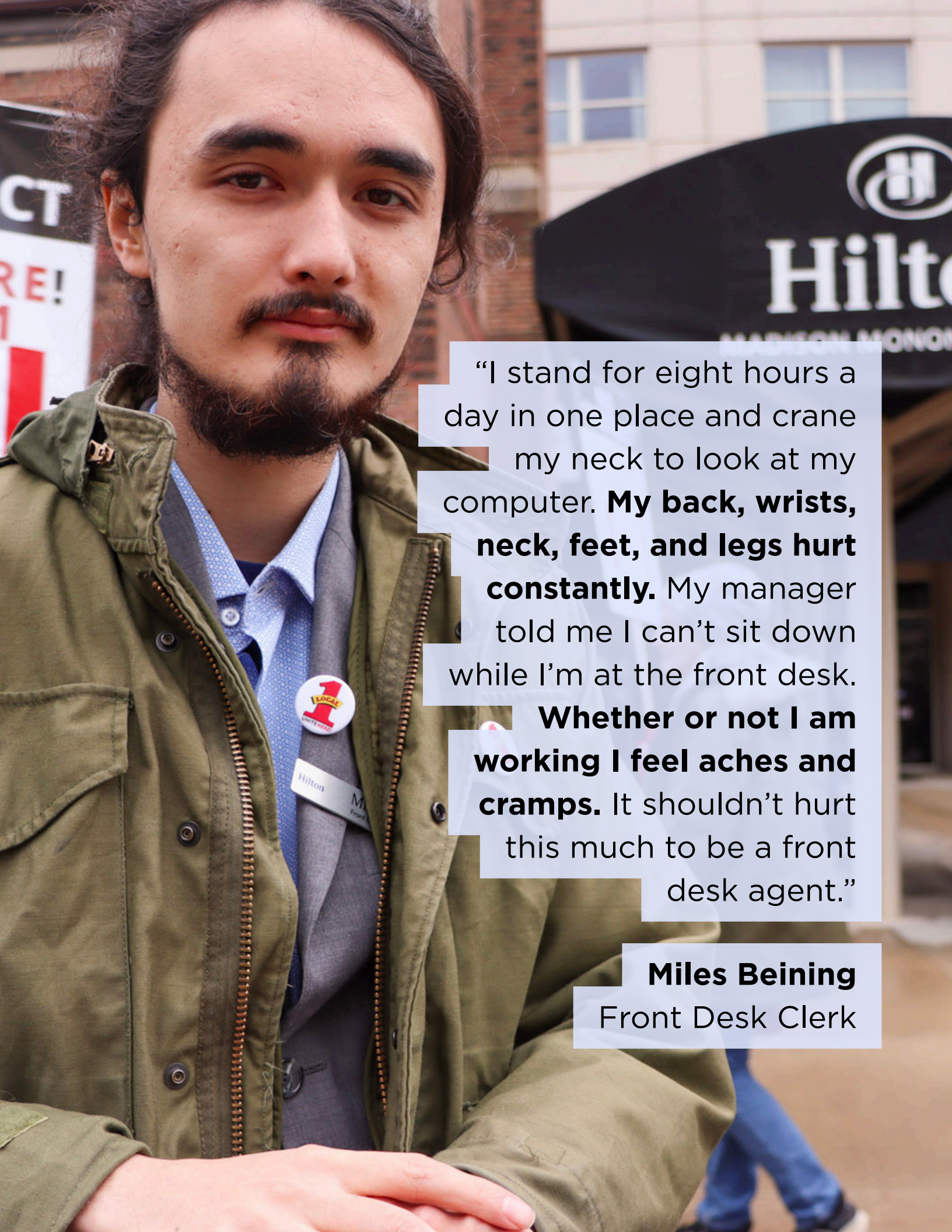
51.1% of surveyed workers reported **pain in their lower back.**

40% of surveyed workers reported **pain in their neck.**



“Cleaning 15 or more rooms a day at the Hilton, especially pulling the sheets off the bed and tucking them in, hurts my chest, neck and back. Sometimes after a long day at work I have a hard time breathing because of this pain. I often come home and apply balms on my chest to help with my chest pain. I used to work at an orphanage in Congo, and that was easier than my job cleaning rooms at the Hilton.”

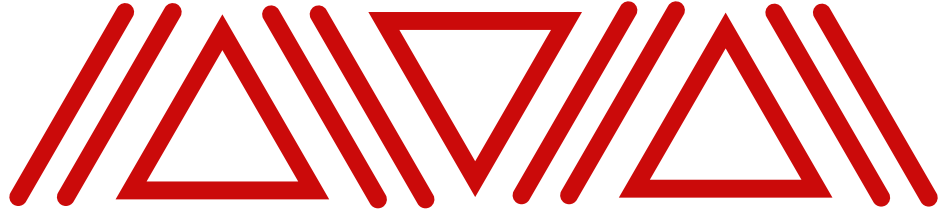
Mahono Tamari
Room Attendant



“I stand for eight hours a day in one place and crane my neck to look at my computer. **My back, wrists, neck, feet, and legs hurt constantly.** My manager told me I can’t sit down while I’m at the front desk.

Whether or not I am working I feel aches and cramps. It shouldn’t hurt this much to be a front desk agent.”

Miles Beining
Front Desk Clerk



Endnotes

[1] Ivey, Mike, “New downtown hotel could require \$50 million public subsidy,” Wisconsin State Journal (Madison, Wisconsin), January 9, 2013, https://madison.com/news/local/writers/mike_ivey/new-downtown-hotel-could-require-million-public-subsidy/article_a04a4e52-59f0-11e2-a09c-001a4bcf887a.html#ixzz2HVHKKQ9Z

[2] “Best of Madison 2011,” Madison Magazine, June 15, 2011, https://www.channel3000.com/madison-magazine/best-of-madison/best-of-madison-2011/article_fc506b07-b568-5400-a73c-3c8b6d910590.html

[3]https://evers.wi.gov/Documents/110125_Accessible%20Proclamation_Marcus%20Corporation%20Day.pdf

[4] UNITE HERE Local 1 received 45 survey responses from 67 of the van-limo drivers, front desk agents, night auditors, restaurant bartenders, restaurant servers, club lounge servers, banquet captains, banquet servers, banquet extras, cooks, stewards, room attendants, housepersons, public area attendants, housekeeping night cleaners, engineers, front desk supervisors, restaurant supervisors, and housekeeping supervisors at the Hilton Madison Monona Terrace on the schedule published for the week of October 24th, 2025.

[5] National Low Income Housing Coalition, Madison HMFA, accessed on 11/19/25 <https://nlihc.org/or/state/wi>



