



*"I HAVE HAD TO CLEAN
**URINE,
BLOOD** AND
EXCREMENT*

*IN FRONT OF THE SINK,
IN THE SHOWER AND ON THE BED SHEETS"*

THE STORY OF

VIRGIN HOTEL CHICAGO WORKERS



ABOUT VIRGIN HOTEL CHICAGO

The Virgin Hotel Chicago is a 250-room hotel located in Chicago's Loop in the Old Dearborn Bank Building. ¹ The Virgin Hotel Chicago was the first hotel in the Virgin Hotels portfolio when it opened in January 2015 following a \$90 million conversion.^{2,3} In 2012, the City of Chicago passed an ordinance authorizing Class L tax status for the Virgin Hotel, which a city press release stated would result in an estimated property tax savings of \$6.5 million over 12 years.^{4,5} The property also received Federal Historic Tax Credits in 2015. ⁶

In May 2024, workers at the Virgin Hotel Chicago housekeeping department (which includes room attendants, house attendants, public area attendants, turndown attendants, uniform room attendants, attendants, housekeeping-linen runners and floor supervisors) voted to join UNITE HERE Local 1, Chicago's hospitality workers' union. ⁷



WHO ARE VIRGIN CHICAGO WORKERS?

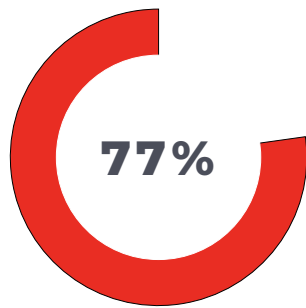
UNITE HERE Local 1 received survey responses from 35 of the 45 housekeeping workers who were working at the hotel in August and September 2024.

The mean age of surveyed workers who reported their age was 42 years old.

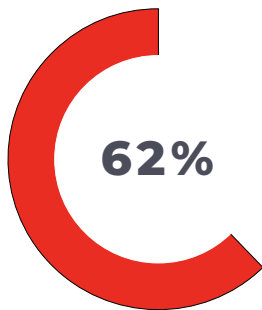
77% of surveyed workers are women.

97% of the surveyed workers who reported their race/ethnicity are people of color, with 62% Latinx and 29% Black or African American.

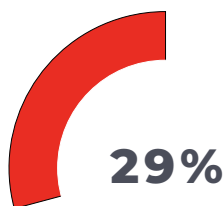
62% of surveyed workers who reported their country of origin immigrated or moved to the mainland United States from Mexico, Ecuador, Puerto Rico, Jamaica, Honduras or Bosnia.



OF SURVEYED WORKERS ARE
WOMEN

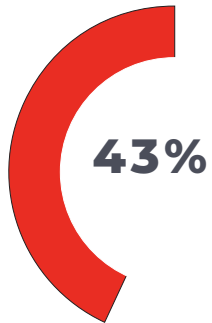


OF SURVEYED WORKERS ARE
LATINX

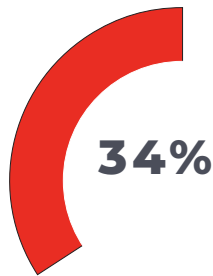


OF SURVEYED WORKERS ARE
**BLACK OR
AFRICAN AMERICAN**

THE VIRGIN CHICAGO'S WORK ENVIRONMENT FOR HOUSEKEEPERS



OF WORKERS REPORTED THAT A GUEST HAS MADE THEM FEEL **UNCOMFORTABLE**



OF WORKERS REPORTED THAT THEY HAVE INTENTIONALLY PRESSED THEIR **PANIC BUTTON**



ADRIANA GOMEZ
PUBLIC AREAS
ATTENDANT

*"I work cleaning the public areas and have to clean bathrooms during large parties and events. I was sexually harassed by a guest while I was holding the door open for the men's bathroom. He said to me and a coworker: 'I see you are not happy with your husbands. If you want, I can fuck you both.' **I felt mad and embarrassed like I wasn't being respected.** I wanted to hit him with the squeegee I was holding, but I didn't want to get in trouble."*

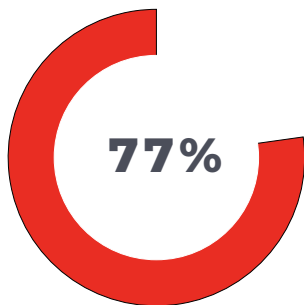
VIRGIN CHICAGO WORKERS FIND DRUGS AND BODILY FLUIDS AT WORK



OF SURVEYED WORKERS REPORTED FINDING
SYRINGES OUTSIDE THE TRASH WHILE
WORKING IN THE PAST YEAR

51% of surveyed workers reported finding pills (not in prescription bottles or the trash) while working in the past year.


31% of surveyed workers reported finding powders outside of the trash while working in the past year.



OF SURVEYED WORKERS REPORTED FINDING
BLOOD WHILE WORKING IN THE PAST YEAR


77% of surveyed workers reported finding vomit while working in the past year.

77% of surveyed workers reported finding urine (more than splashes on the toilet) while working in the past year.

A portrait of Antoinette Metcalf, a Black woman with her hair styled in a bun and wearing a black headband and a blue denim jacket over a black shirt. She is looking slightly to the left of the camera with a neutral expression. The background is a blurred city street with buildings and a sign that says "SNO" visible.

*“Working as a housekeeper, I have had to clean urine, blood, and excrement in front of the sink, in the shower, and on the bed sheets. **I have cleaned up after a needle, powders, and a cut belt, which I assumed was for dope.** I cleaned a room with a gun bullet on the nightstand. Cleaning this stuff makes me feel horrible, like I want to quit on the spot. **I don’t quit because I have to take care of my son.** It feels like there isn’t an easy day at work.”*

ANTOINETTE METCALF
ROOM ATTENDANT

A close-up portrait of Bertha Rosales, a woman with grey hair pulled back, wearing a dark blue V-neck shirt. She has a serious expression. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with a building and a car.

*“I pay more than \$400 every month for healthcare for myself and my husband. Even more, **every time that I go to the doctor I am afraid of the bills that are going to arrive.** I have chronic stomach pain. I feel that I am working to pay for my healthcare.”*

BERTHA ROSALES
ROOM ATTENDANT

VIRGIN CHICAGO WORKERS FACE BARRIERS TO HEALTHCARE



AS OF SEPTEMBER 2024, 53% OF BARGAINING UNIT MEMBERS WERE **NOT ENROLLED** IN THE HEALTH PLAN OFFERED BY THE COMPANY. ⁸



OF SURVEYED WORKERS REPORTED THAT THEY HAVE **MEDICAL DEBT**

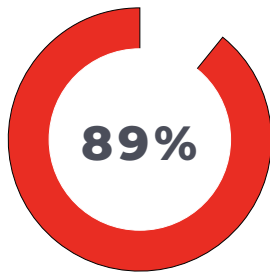


OF SURVEYED WORKERS REPORTED THAT THEY ARE EITHER ON **MEDICAID, COUNTY CARE** OR ARE **UNINSURED**

*"I regularly have to mop the stairs because people pee in the stairwell. A while ago, I was dusting a very high surface with a rag, and I knocked an **exposed syringe** on the ground. Luckily, the needle hit the rag without hitting my hand. I reported to management who told me that as long as it didn't puncture my hand everything was OK. Cleaning vomit and blood is not uncommon either. I feel really uncomfortable about cleaning all this stuff, but **I do it to have a job to support my family.**"*

PABLO ZAVALA GARCIA
HOUSEKEEPING
LINEN RUNNER

VIRGIN CHICAGO WORKERS EXPERIENCE PAIN AND INJURY AT WORK



OF SURVEYED WORKERS REPORTED
THAT THEY EXPERIENCE
PAIN AT WORK

Pain in the lower back and right shoulder were the most commonly reported symptoms.

63% of surveyed workers reported taking over the counter medicines for pain.

69% of surveyed workers reported having trouble sleeping because of pain.



OF SURVEYED WORKERS REPORTED THAT THEY
OR A MEMBER OF THEIR HOUSEHOLD HAVE
SKIPPED SOME KIND OF
MEDICAL SERVICES BECAUSE THEY
COULDN'T AFFORD IT



"I have chronic pain in my back, foot, and leg, that started after I began to work at the Virgin. I have the Virgin health insurance.

*I went to three specialists and many other doctors visits. I have more than \$800 of medical debt that I cannot pay. **If I pay off that debt, I wouldn't be able to pay for food or rent.** Doing the rooms daily causes me pain, and at night I cannot sleep well because of that pain."*

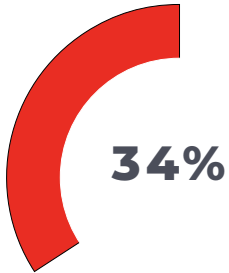
YOLANDA RODRIGUEZ
ROOM ATTENDANT



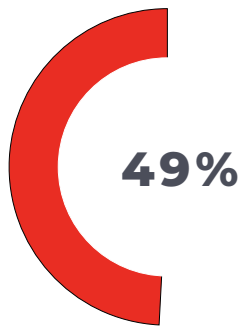
*"I am a single mother with two sons, 14 and 4 years old. Every month, **I go to a food pantry** to supplement my necessities. Every year before the union arrived they promised us raises, but it was always a few cents. I have been working at the Virgin for 9 years and they pay me \$22.87.⁹ If we were to earn more, it would be a great help. I would like to put my kids in sports clubs, and right now it's very hard for me to do that economically."*

JUDITH CARCHI
ROOM ATTENDANT

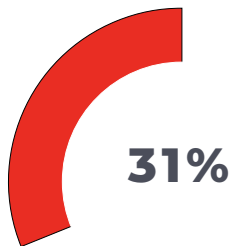
VIRGIN CHICAGO WORKERS HAVE DIFFICULTY AFFORDING BASIC NECESSITIES



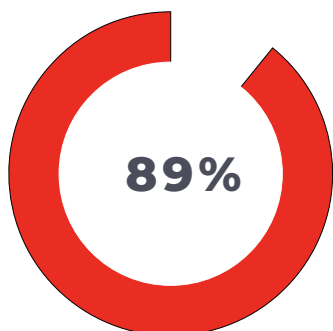
OF SURVEYED WORKERS REPORTED THAT THEY HAVE **TAKEN OUT A LOAN** TO PAY THEIR BILLS OR OTHER EXPENSES IN THE LAST SIX MONTHS



OF SURVEYED WORKERS REPORTED THAT THEY OR THEIR FAMILY HAVE GONE TO A **FOOD PANTRY** IN THE PAST SIX MONTHS



OF SURVEYED WORKERS REPORTED THAT THEY HAVE **LACKED MONEY TO PAY FOR RENT OR THEIR MORTGAGE** IN THE LAST SIX MONTHS



OF SURVEYED WORKERS **DO NOT THINK THEY WILL BE ABLE** TO SAVE ENOUGH MONEY TO RETIRE

ABOUT UNITE HERE LOCAL 1



UNITE HERE Local 1 is a labor union representing hospitality workers in the Chicago area that work in hotels, restaurants, airline catering facilities, casinos, universities, stadiums, sports arenas, convention centers and airports.

Please direct any inquiries to Duncan Nakajima at dnakajima@unitehere1.org.

ENDNOTES

- 1** Virgin Hotels Chicago Fact Sheet, Virgin Hotels, accessed February 3, 2025. <https://development.virginhotels.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/FactSheetVirginHotelsChicago.pdf>
- 2** Virgin Hotels Chicago Fact Sheet, Virgin Hotels, accessed February 3, 2025. <https://development.virginhotels.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/FactSheetVirginHotelsChicago.pdf>
- 3** Virgin Hotel, City of Chicago Department of Planning and Development, accessed February 3, 2025. https://www.chicago.gov/city/en/depts/dcd/supp_info/virgin-hotel.html
- 4** O2012-3311 Support of Class L tax incentive for property at 203 N Wabash Ave, Chicago City Clerk, June 6, 2012. <https://occprodstorageevl.blob.core.usgovcloudapi.net/lsmatterattachmentspublic/e7ad243c-b5b7-4a30-b768-f91db9915978.pdf>
- 5** “Council Approves Tax Incentive for High-Rise Renovation as Virgin Hotel”, City of Chicago Department of Planning and Development, June 6, 2012. https://www.chicago.gov/city/en/depts/dcd/provdrs/ec_dev/news/2012/jun/council_approvestaxincentiveforhigh-rise-renovationasvirginhotel.html
- 6** Illinois Federal Historic Tax Credit Investment, National Trust for Historic Preservation, accessed February 3, 2025. https://cdn.savingplaces.org/2024/09/04/13/54/02/94b6e4d0-620f-4a43-98da-02c612a06e6e/IL_HTC_FY01-23.pdf
- 7** Virgin Hotels Chicago LLC d/b/a Virgin Hotels Chicago, National Labor Relations Board, accessed February 3, 2025. <https://www.nlr.gov/case/13-RC-340904>
- 8** Employee enrollment data provided by the company as of September 23, 2024. As of the date of this report, Local 1 has not received updated enrollment data from the Virgin Chicago.
- 9** Wage rates provided by company.

UNITE**HERE!**

