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In Pursuit of Fair Work:

Taking a closer look at the Norwegian hospitality industry

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REPORT NO. 128, UNIVERSITY OF STAVANGER SEPTEMBER 2023



Reports from UiS

Report no. 128
Publisher University of Stavanger
ISBN 978-82-8439-184-7
ISSN (online) 2387-6662
DOI <https://doi.org/10.31265/USPS.269>



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Executive Summary

This report highlights the findings and implications of research conducted in the Norwegian hospitality sector during the Covid-19 pandemic. The report focuses on workers' experiences in the industry, using the Fair Work Principles: fair contracts, fair pay, fair conditions, fair management, and fair representation. Similar surveys have been conducted among hospitality workers in Ireland, Scotland, Greece, Australia, and New Zealand.

The Norwegian survey was conducted between September 2021 – March 2022 and generated 853 responses of which 585 were complete from workers in the Norwegian hospitality sector. The respondents varied in gender, age, nationality, role within the sector, contract type and length of service.

The results, based on the five key Fair Work Principles, show that the Norwegian hospitality sector still has some work to do to ensure that all workers in the industry experience fair work. Employees in the Norwegian worklife have a strong formal employment protection due to the Working Environment Act (Working Environment Act, 2005), in addition to other laws and regulations. Over 90 % of the participants reported that they were on permanent contracts, either full-time or part-time. However, although Norway has strong rules and regulations concerning employee rights, the survey reveals shortcomings concerning the greyer areas such as a lack of opportunities for pay rise or promotion, workplace training, not getting the rest breaks that workers are entitled to, and uncertainty whether the workers received the correct overtime pay.

Some of the most concerning findings in the Norwegian hospitality sector were related to fair conditions, where an alarmingly high number participants reported that they had either experienced or witnessed harassment, abuse and bullying in their workplaces. Most of the abuse came from customers, but many of the respondents also mentioned colleagues and supervisors/managers as perpetrators of abuse, harassment and bullying. Furthermore, over 40 percent of those who stated that they had experienced or witnessed abuse, harassment or bullying in the workplace declared that they did not report it further due to different reasons such as that they did not know where to report, did not think that anything would be done, or that they were afraid of losing their job.





Concerning fair management, a third of the participants stated that they did not feel as though they were treated with dignity and respect, or that they received supportive feedback from their managers. Only half of the participants reported that they had received some kind of training in their job. The findings indicate that the types of training and development opportunities offered to employees were largely dependent on the specific workplace.

Ultimately, the findings highlight the following key areas for improvement in the Norwegian hospitality industry:

- Opportunities for pay rise and promotion
- Opportunities for training
- Cultural change: Working to change the industry specific culture of tolerating abuse and harassment among employees in the hospitality industry
- Management of staff: Increased respect and perceptions of being listened to and making a difference

Introduction

The aim of this study is to examine the experiences of Norwegian hospitality workers during the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2019, before the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, there were 182,900 people employed in the Norwegian tourism industry, and about 100,000 of these were employed in accommodation and catering businesses. ([table here](#))

The total economic turnover in the Norwegian tourism industry was NOK 206 billion in 2019 (Jakobsen et al., 2021, p. 4). The accommodation and catering businesses contributed with over NOK 80 billion the same year (ibid., p. 8).

The COVID-19 pandemic had a devastating impact on the hospitality industry. From February to April 2020, the number of guest nights at Norwegian hotels fell by 88 per cent. The economic turnover in catering businesses was reduced by 50 percent the week after the governmental restrictions were introduced, and the total turnover for the week following the first restrictions was only 20 percent of the same week in 2019. (Jakobsen et al., 2021, p. 11). During the weeks following the introduction of pandemic restrictions, most of the tourism industry shut down. According to surveys conducted by the Norwegian Hospitality Association, in April 2020 9 out of 10 tourism companies had laid off employees, and 78 per cent of these companies had laid off between 76 and 100 percent of their employees (Jakobsen et al, 2021, p. 11).

Thus, a large number of hospitality workers were laid off temporarily or permanently, resulting in many finding work in other industries. This has resulted in an acute labour shortage in the hospitality industry. Thus, one of the main problems facing the Norwegian hospitality industry today is labour shortage, with restaurants and hotels struggling to recruit enough staff. There is especially a lack of cooks, waiters, and other staff in the meal industry. According to a report issued by NAV- the Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration in May, 2022 (NAV, 2022), the industry lacked 2150 cooks and 1400 waiters, which is critical for large parts of the food and restaurant industry. The same report shows that the accommodation and restaurant/catering business in total lacked 6050 employees in 2022 (up from



2200 the previous year), and every fourth company reported serious recruitment problems. Recent study has called for research that catches the actual voices of the hospitality workers (Gjerald, Dagsland & Furunes, 2021).

In order to improve recruitment and retain qualified personnel, it is necessary to increase knowledge about working conditions and workers' experiences and to analyse the way employment relationship problems are managed in the Norwegian hospitality sector. The present study aims to fill this knowledge gap through a survey of hospitality workers' experiences related to employment rights, COVID-19, experienced and/or witnessed harassment, HR-practices, and opportunities for employee voice. This research is conducted as a part of the strategic program area WITH (Work Inclusiveness in Tourism and Hospitality) at the Norwegian School of Hotel Management, University of Stavanger. The survey is part of a broader comparative study on the same topic in Ireland, Scotland, Greece, Australia, and New Zealand.



Background: Fair Work Principles

This report describes workers' experiences in the hospitality industry, using the Fair Work Principles.

The Fair Work Principles were originally designed for fairness in the employment standards for gig workers (Fair Work Convention, 2023; Fredman et al., 2020). There are a number of issues, however, that makes these principles universal (Hadjisolomou et al., 2022), and useful for analysing the experiences of Norwegian hospitality workers during the second wave of the COVID19 pandemic.

The five principles are:



FAIR PAY is concerned with the ability of workers to earn a decent income.



FAIR CONDITIONS relates to workers having their health and safety protected.



FAIR CONTRACTS are about ensuring that terms and conditions for workers are transparent.



FAIR MANAGEMENT refers to communication and decision-making.



FAIR REPRESENTATION is concerned with worker voice.

The hospitality and tourism workforce consists of a high percentage of low-paid and part-time workers on non-permanent labour contracts with high turnover rates. In Norway, statistics from 2019 show that 43 % of the total workforce in accommodation and foodservice had immigrant background, while 34 % consisted of young workers under the age of 24 (The Norwegian Hospitality Association). Many are employed in jobs requiring low host language competence, and little formal education or vocational training (Baum, 2018; Linge, Furunes, Baum & Duncan, 2020). Hence, a large part of the hospitality workforce consists of vulnerable groups of employees such as women,

migrant workers, young people, and informal workers. Several of these have limited access to social protection due to informal or casual employment and are among those who have been most affected by the impact of COVID-19 on the hospitality and tourism industry.

International labour mobility and changing demographics have contributed to an increasingly diverse workforce, presenting both opportunities and challenges for the hospitality and tourism industry. However, according to Robinson, Martins, Solnet and Baum (2019), tourism research has largely ignored the complexity and contribution of the hospitality and tourism workforce. Employment conditions in the hospitality and tourism sector are characterized by social division, economic inequality, poor working conditions, and a general lack of respect in comparison with employment in other sectors (Robinson et al., 2019). According to Baum et al. (2020), the results of the COVID-19 pandemic amplified already existing workforce challenges such as precarious work conditions and low pay.

This report examines the conditions for decent and sustainable employment in the hospitality industry in Norway as expressed in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 8 which promotes “inclusive and sustainable economic growth, employment and decent work for all” (United Nations, 2020). The concept of “decent work” generally includes aspects such as respect, fair, productive, safe, and meaningful work (Baum, 2018). According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), decent work includes employment creation, social protection, rights at work, and social dialogue (Winchenbach, 2019). Decent work in the hospitality and tourism industry is also closely related to the value of dignity in employment. Dignity at work has been associated with terms such as “value, worth, recognition, respect, self-respect, autonomy, freedom, rank and equality” (Winchenbach et al, 2019, p. 1030), or with “economic security, fair treatment, and satisfying work” (ibid.). Examples of undignified work may include issues such as racism, gender discrimination, low wages, and low occupational standings. Thus, there is a need for a stronger conceptual grounding on the value of workplace dignity in hospitality and tourism employment seen in relation to the concept of fair and decent work.



Methods and Sample

Data collection and procedures

A cross-sectional survey was conducted using self-report surveys. The survey was distributed September 2021 to March 2022 (second phase of the COVID-19 pandemic) through relevant industry contacts; mainly the United Federation of Trade Unions which is the largest trade union organising the private sector in Norway, and the Norwegian Hospitality Association which is the largest trade and employers' organisation in Norway. In addition, the survey was distributed through social media platforms (Facebook, LinkedIn). Respondents were asked to identify as persons having worked in hospitality in Norway over the past two years.

Measures

The survey consisted of 58 questions addressing the following topics:

- Bio details of respondents (age, gender, nationality, length of service in the sector and in current post, number of establishments worked in, hospitality-related qualifications)
- Employment rights (contract terms, minimum wage, payslips, hours worked, breaks, paid leave)
- Experience of verbal, psychological, physical abuse
- Witnessing or experiencing harassment or bullying
- Reporting of incidents, actions taken and outcomes
- Opportunities for voice
- Employee and management responses to incidents of unwanted behaviours
- HR practices (training, opportunities for promotions, benefits beyond basis pay)
- COVID 19 working conditions
- Suggestions for change

The survey consisted of both closed- and open-ended questions: 15 of the 58 questions were open-ended questions which included a text box inviting the respondent to provide further details.

Data analysis

The statistical package SPSS was used for the descriptive statistics, while the qualitative data from the open-ended questions were analysed through NVivo software program.

Sample

The survey yielded 585 fully completed and 268 partially completed questionnaires, resulting in 853 usable questionnaires which were subject to analysis.

Demographic Profile

Most of the survey respondents were experienced workers.

Age

The largest group of respondents was from 26-35 years (30%), while 24% were from 36-45 years, 19% were from 46-55 years, and 13% were from 56-65 years, and 1 % was from 66-70 years. Only 12% of the respondents were younger workers from 16-25 years.

Age (n=755)	Count	%
16-25 years	93	12.3
26-35 years	228	30.2
36-45 years	181	24.0
46-55 years	145	19.2
56-65 years	96	12.7
66-70 years	10	1.3
Prefer not to say	2	.3
Total	755	100

Gender

About 66 % of the respondents identified as female, 32 % identified as male, and 1 respondent identified as transgender male. 3 respondents reported that their gender identification was not listed, and 9 respondents preferred not to state which gender they identified with.

Gender (n=756)	Count	%
Male	242	32.0
Female	501	66.3
Transgender male	1	.1
Not listed	3	.4
Prefer not to say	9	1.2
Total	756	100

Origin

The demographic data show that most of the informants identified as Norwegian (n=382). The other geographical areas were divided into Asian countries including Turkey (n=30), EU-countries in Eastern Europe (n=30), West Europe except the Nordic countries (n=24), one of the Nordic countries except Norway (n=17), Eastern-Europe except EU-countries (n=16), South and Central America (n=10), Africa (n=3) and North America and Oceania (n=2). 14 respondents reported double nationality, and one reported "White".

Tenure /Length of service

The largest group of respondents (38 %) had worked in the Norwegian hospitality sector between 3-10 years, while 29 % had worked there between 10-20 years. 25% had worked there more than 25 years, while 9 % had worked there less than 3 years. Thus, most of the respondents had extensive work experience, and from varying types of hospitality workplaces and job roles. This corresponds well with the picture of experienced respondents.

Years in hospitality (n=757)	Count	%
Less than 3 years	65	8.6
Between 3 and up to 10 years	286	37.8
Between 10 and 20 years	217	28.7
More than 20 Years	189	25
Total	757	100

Type of work

The respondents were employed in a wide range of hospitality work types including bars and pubs, restaurants, hotels including front-office (receptionists) and back of house (housekeeping, kitchen, food and beverages) positions.

Union membership

It is interesting to note that 90% of the respondents who chose to answer the question about union membership (n=525) were members of trade unions, which is a much higher number than the general rate of union membership among hospitality workers in Norway. According to arbeidslivet.no, about 2 of 3 hospitality employees do not have a collective agreement with their employers (Bergsli, 2017). The reason for the high number of unionized members among the respondents is likely that the United Federation of Trade Unions actively distributed the survey to their members, in addition to that unionized members could have more interest in answering the survey.

Thus it could be reasonable to reflect on whether the findings in this report are actually underreported, and whether a more representative sample would have painted an even bleaker picture.

Union membership (n=556)	Count	%
Yes	525	89.6
No	57	9.7
Not sure	4	.7
Total	586	100

It is important to acknowledge that the survey may have been attractive to those with negative experiences (Curran, 2020). Further, 853 respondents represent a small fraction of the estimated 77,713 workers (age 20-66 years) employed in hospitality (hotels and restaurants) in Norway during the fourth quarter of 2021 (Statistics Norway, 2023).

Fair Work Principles

Fair Pay





Fair Pay

Fair pay is concerned with the ability of workers to earn a decent income. Our research found that:

- 51% of the respondents reported not getting any benefits at work besides basic pay, while 9% of the respondents were unsure.
- 40% of the participants reported not having opportunities to get a pay rise or promotion at work and further 22% of the participants were unsure.
- 31% of the respondents did not get the rest breaks they are entitled to by law and further 8% were unsure.

When asked to provide examples of opportunities for pay raises and promotion, respondents mentioned collective bargaining agreements [Norwegian: tariffavtale, tabell] and seniority [Norwegian: ansiennitet], the most. They also mentioned the possibility of participating in local and central wage negotiations [Norwegian: lønnsforhandling], getting an education (either a vocational diploma or a higher education diploma), and the possibility of becoming a manager.

In Norwegian working life, there are long traditions for cooperation between employers, unions, and the government. “The tripartite collaboration” is a structured system built on three pillars: the employees’ unions, the employers’ associations, and the government, and is important for the cooperation within Norwegian work life as such, and especially important when it comes to salary formation. The individual trade unions and the employers’ associations negotiate collective agreements. The State, by the government, acts as a neutral party, providing laws and regulations to ensure co-determination rights, employee representation, and regulation of disputes and agreements. The State acts as a neutral part and mediates only in events of dispute. There are annual central negotiations, collective negotiations, and in addition there can be different types of local negotiations.



Although 39 percent of the respondents (n=272) reported that they had opportunities for pay rise or promotions, many of these responses referred to annual pay rises that are regulated by the Norwegian law (collective bargaining agreements).

Some mentioned that the pay rise is not substantial or that there are not many opportunities for promotion, for example:

“Salaries are fixed and there are no positions to promote to”

“After 10 years in the industry, there are no more pay rises to get, so I guess I’ve reached the top.”

“Not until my child is old enough to be left alone in the evenings and weekends, I was told.”

“They stick to the collective agreement [Norwegian: tariff] for the most.”

One pointed out the importance of unions and elective representatives:

“Got the right salary after I spoke to the shop steward [Norwegian: tillitsvalgt]”



Fair pay questions	Yes	No	Unsure
Do/did you get any benefits at work besides basic pay (last workplace)? (n=701)	40.5%	50.9%	8.6%
Are /were there opportunities for you to get a pay rise or promotion at work (last workplace)? (n=702)	38.7%	39.7%	21.5%
Do/did you get the rest breaks you are entitled to by law (last workplace)? (n=700)	60.6%	31.4%	8%
Do/did you get overtime pay (or time off) for working during statutory/public holidays (last workplace)? (n=700)	71.7%	21.3%	7%
Are/were you paid at least the current legal minimum hourly wage (last workplace)? (n=702)	87.6%	4.1%	8.3%

When asked what benefits they received, respondents mentioned discounted hotel stays, free or discounted meals, Christmas bonuses, free public transportation, paid telephone bills, uniform, free concert tickets, free parking, and tips.

Fair Work Principles Fair Conditions





Fair Conditions

Fair conditions relates to workers having their health and safety protected.

COVID19

The COVID-19 employment impacts are shown in the table below (last quarter of 2021, second wave of the pandemic). Most of the participants have been on furlough throughout the pandemic, while 28% continued to work through lock-down. About 5% of respondents reported that it is unlikely they will return to hospitality work in the foreseeable future.

The effects of COVID19 on employment (n=853)	% of sample
I am/have been on furlough	52.2%
I have returned to work	39.4%
I continued to work through lock-down	28.0%
It is unlikely that I will return to hospitality work in the foreseeable future	5.2%
I have been retrenched/laid off	4.8%
Unsure	1.1%
I am not working at present, but look to start working again in a couple of months	.6%

Respondents were asked whether they felt safe to return to work in hospitality. Out of 853 participants, 660 respondents chose to answer this question. About 8% of these respondents (n=68) declared not feeling safe to get back to work, while 59.3% (n=506) were willing to do so given proper safety measures. The rest 10.1% (n=86) remained undecided. The following table presents perceptions of safety associated with different strategies.



Perceptions of safety associated with strategies (n=853)	% of sample
Availability of antibacterial products	58.6%
Employees wash their hands	51.5%
Customers wash their hands	44.7%
Daily disinfection of the workplace	39.3%
Social distancing	31.7%
Limiting the number of customers	20.3%
Customers wearing masks	14.9%
Employees wearing masks	13.7%
None of the above	6.1%
Other	4.1%

When asked about what other measures would make them feel safe to get back to work, participants mentioned vaccination for staff and customers, more staff at work, clear guidelines from management regarding the safety measures and procedures, plastic shields separating workers from guests, and predictable government regulations. One respondent highlighted “unconditional support from the state and the union to protect workers from losing their jobs”.

“My job disappeared, so I have to do other things in the hotel, few employees, more to do in a limited time.”

«Management [needs to be] clear about what measures we should follow in the event of illness and sets clear guidelines. I felt that this was something we as employees had to discuss, and as a loyal employee it is difficult to stay at home.”

“Get more staff at work. We are understaffed all the time”



Psychological strain at work

A large number of the respondents reported that they experienced psychological strain at work*:

- 72% felt used up at the end of a workday
- 65% felt that they were working too hard
- 62% felt fatigued when they got up in the morning and had to face another day on the job
- 49% felt burned out from work
- 29% reported that working with people all day was a strain

(*the respondents reported that they strongly or somewhat agreed with the statements)

Workplace harassment and abuse

Our findings indicate that various forms of abuse are present in the hospitality workplace. Overall, 71% of the respondents in the study reported having experienced some form of abuse (verbal/psychological, physical, racial, ethnic, sexual abuse, harassment or bullying), and 41% of the respondents reported having witnessed some form of abuse. About 623 respondents chose to answer questions about experiencing different forms of abuse, and about 617 chose to answer questions about witnessing different forms of abuse.

Have you experienced/witnessed any of the following types of workplace abuse in the hospitality sector? (n=623/617)

Experienced abuse (n=623) ● Witnessed abuse (n=617) ●

Data in %	Never	Sometimes	About ½ the time	Most of the time	Always
Verbal psychological abuse	44.3	48.0	3.7	3.0	1.0
	39.9	48.9	3.9	3.7	3.6
Physical abuse	88.1	9.1	0.8	0.6	1.3
	81.4	13.1	0.6	1.0	3.9
Racial and ethnic abuse	80.7	15.0	1.4	1.3	1.6
	57.8	28.9	1.6	1.8	3.4
Sexual abuse and harassment	73.3	24.3	1.0	5	1.0
	65.6	28.9	1.6	0.8	3.1
Bullying	62.9	31.1	3.2	1.1	1.6
	49.1	40.6	4.6	3.3	2.4



When asked to elaborate on the abuse they experienced or witnessed, 93 respondents shared stories that relate to verbal and sexual abuse that is done by customers; bullying, harassment and exclusion that is done by colleagues; and bullying and exclusion done by leaders. Here are just a few examples:

“Being scolded by guests who are having a bad day is unfortunately quite normal.”

“There is a lot of talking behind people’s backs. Employees complain about each other every day. Big problem. I’m just there to work, but I don’t feel comfortable knowing that people are chatting shit behind my back without knowing what they are talking about”

“Comments, catcalling and whistling by mainly (often drunk) older men. Asked if I, for example, “don’t want to come and sit down on my lap”. Have also experienced being held around the waist or pulled closer by the shoulder.”

«While working in a hotel, you get to deal with the drunks that sleep over night and we get asked so many times when we finish the shift to come join his room... things like that. Also hotels use as less staff as possible, so the current employees are overwhelmed with the job and the management keeps push by that. People get serious sickness with their back or joints like the arms and knees due to the overload at work. And there’s no remuneration after that. Working with the fix minimum wage salary. And we are being told that this is how it is, this is the service industry. If we don’t like it, we can go somewhere else!»

“Because of the hijab”

“Comments on my weight”

“It’s about my sexual orientation, plus we have a couple of bullies”

“Being ostracised by management if you speak up about things. Suspicion that you are not doing your job and you have to convince them by asking them to check surveillance cameras.”



The reported main perpetrators are customers; however, co-workers and managers contribute to the overall picture of harassment and abuse in the hospitality workplace.

Perpetrators (n=452)	Count	%
Customers	260	57.5
Colleague/ co-worker	228	50.4
Supervisor/manager	203	44.9
Owner	32	7.1
Others	34	7.5

Among respondents who chose to answer the question about reporting of incidents (n=477), about 42.3% declared that abuses they witnessed were reported; 34.4% stated that no reports were made, the remainder 23.3% being unsure. Most reports were sent internally to HR or higher management. Several stated having reported issues to the health and safety representative, a colleague, shop steward, or trade union representative in the workplace. A few reported to the police, and some also reported to the Labour Inspection Authority [Norwegian: Arbeidstilsynet].

“To the nearest manager who took care of the issue and always had our back.”

“Harassment from guests was reported to management/internal report sometimes, bullying from management was reported to the Labour Inspection Authority [Norwegian: Arbeidstilsynet] but we never got proper help as management was sitting in the room when they came to have a conversation with the staff.”



Reasons for not reporting fall into five categories:

1. Not reporting due to a fear of losing job

- Didn't dare
- It is difficult to report harassment from manager
- I feel I would create problems for myself or lose my job

2. Not reporting due to a culture or industry norm

- It is expected to endure such
- The industry norm is that one doesn't see such
- It is what it is, normalizing in the industry
- No culture to report. This is what it has always been like.

3. Not reporting due to a feeling that nothing would be done with the issue

- They don't want to listen to what we employees have to say
- Nothing is done anyway
- Nobody cared about it

4. Not reporting due to lack of knowledge about the reporting process

- I don't know where to report it, and no one does it
- Didn't know we could

5. Not reporting due to lack of knowledge about harassment

- Did not think it was serious enough



Reporting the abuses led to actions in 9% of cases. Reporting improved the situation in 8% of cases, and some improvements were made in 5% of cases. About 4% of those who reported abuse, answered that problems escalated or got worse after the incidents were reported. Most often, in 10% of cases, staff were not informed whether their report led to any action.

“Difficult to take action when guests have left. Really bad episodes have led to guests being told that they are not wanted.”

“Management held a meeting with relevant employees. Together they found out that the night shift was alone for a few hours with drunk guests at closing time. The routine was changed so that no one was alone until all the guests had left the premises.”

“[The harasser] quit his job after the incident. I didn’t get any information.”

Fair Work Principles Fair Contracts





Fair Contracts

Fair contracts are about ensuring that terms and conditions for workers are transparent. Our findings highlight some key issues with respect to fair contracts for workers in the Norwegian hospitality industry:

Employment status

First, 91.9% of respondents reported being on permanent contracts, either full-time or part-time. Only 3.7% reported working on-call, and about 4.4% were employed on temporary contracts or other contingent arrangements.

Norwegian employees have a strong employment protection due to The Working Environment Act and other laws and regulations. The Working Environment Act confirms employment with permanent contracts as the main principle but allows for temporary employment/contracts when the work itself is of temporary character or when working in a position where the employee in this position is on a leave. If an employee in a temporary employment/contract has been working continuously in the same position for 4 (3) years, the employment is to be considered as permanent, and she/he is entitled to a permanent contract.

Employment Status	Count	%
Permanent full-time with employer	470	67.0
Permanent part-time with employer	175	24.9
Zero-hour contract (casual/ on-call workers)	26	3.7
Temporary full-time with employer	15	2.1
Other	11	1.6
Temporary part-time with employer	5	.7
Total	702	100.0



Regarding contracts, about 13% of respondents admitted to not having written terms, and 2.8% were unsure.

Fair contracts questions	Yes	No	Unsure
Did you sign a contract of employment agreement with your employer before starting your current or most recent job? (n=702)	84.0%	13.1%	2.8%
Are/were you paid at least the current legal minimum hourly wage (last workplace)? (n=702)	87.6%	4.1%	8.3%
Were you given written terms of your employment before commencement of your most recent or current hospitality job? (n=700)	88.4%	9.1%	2.4%
Does your employer give you a pay slip on a regular basis showing gross pay and all deductions? (n=700)	96.7%	1.6%	1.7%

“I started working there at the same time as other colleagues who were promoted to a permanent contract because they knew the manager from a previous job. Others who have come after me have gotten permanent jobs while I have stayed as an extra. I have 3 colleagues who have been with the same employer for 3 years and after all of that service they have not been promoted or given contracts which would take care of their visas. It is highly demotivating”

Fair Work Principles Fair Management





Fair Management

Fair management refers to communication and decision-making. The results from our survey show the following key findings.

Fair management questions	Yes	No	Unsure
In your current or previous job, do you feel that you are/were treated with dignity and respect (last workplace)? (n=570) 56%	56% n=322	27% n=153	17% n=95

Treated with dignity and respect

Over half of the participants (57 %) reported that they felt that they were treated with dignity and respect at their last workplace (n=322). However almost a third of the participants (27%) stated that they did not feel as though they were treated with dignity and respect and 17% (n=52) were unsure.

When asked to elaborate, 126 provided further comments on this question. In the following are some examples from those who said that they felt respected at work. Several of the participants pointed out that they had been in the industry for a long time and had gained experience which contributed to that they felt respected:

“ Many years in the industry means that others approach me about everything at work, and the manager allows me to make my own decisions.”

“I have worked 40 years in the same company and feel that I am respected.”

Some stated that respect is not necessarily something that came automatically, but that they had to make an effort to attain it:

“I feel looked after and listened to at work. The director works with us and is good at listening to us and he takes responsibility. More than that, our opinions are taken into account, and we have the freedom to decide for ourselves.”



“You have to work to get respect.”

Other participants stated that they felt that their managers listened to them and gave them a certain degree of freedom at work:

“I feel looked after and listened to at work. The director works with us and is good at listening to us and he takes responsibility. More than that, our opinions are considered, and we have the freedom to decide for ourselves.”

“In my current workplace, I feel fairly treated, with respect. Therefore, the difference of a few kroner in wages doesn’t matter so much to me.”

For participants who reported that they did not feel respected and treated with dignity at work, the following quotes present some examples of this:

“The management doesn’t care about people, just about saving money + squeeze as much as possible out of the workers”.

“Again, there are some guests who think you can behave badly towards people in the service industry.”

Several participants reported that they felt that they could be replaced any time and treated as something disposable. Others pointed out that good work was something that was expected, and thus not seen or valued by their managers:

“Don’t feel that they see the good work that I and my colleagues do. Think they expect it to be a matter of course! But it’s not a matter of course to be there!”

Furthermore, many pointed out that foreigners and older workers were undervalued and treated with less respect than others:

“Norwegians are treated differently, with more respect and understanding than foreigners.”



“I often feel undervalued and disrespected because I am a foreigner and a cleaner.”

“When you get older, you are often not seen as a resource on an equal footing with young aspiring. Unfortunately, this is probably the case in many professions.”

A recurring theme was that although they felt treated with respect and listened to, this did not result in any real change or improvement. Some examples of comments are:

“Leaders listen, but don’t do much with things.”

“I was listened to, but nothing ever changed. I once sent a list of remarks on how to improve the situation after a specific incident. My message was simply ignored (literally “left unseen”). I never got any reply.”

“Basic aspects of respect are fulfilled. I do feel lack of appreciation for the contribution though and repeated complaints/suggestions have not been taken seriously, even when more members of staff were involved.”

“Treated with respect yes, but not appreciated at all. A couple of times we have heard that there are many others who could work if you don’t want to. And when there are hectic periods, there is no special rest time between shifts.”



Managerial support and feedback

Fair management questions	Yes	No	Unsure
Are/were you given supportive feedback on the work you do by your manager (last workplace)? (n=569)	59% n=335	32% n=182	9% n=52

On the question of managerial support and feedback, 59% stated that they did receive supportive feedback from their managers or supervisors, while 32% did not feel that they received supportive feedback and 9% were unsure.

Those participants who provided more detailed explanations on lack of managerial support and feedback often pointed out that their managers would only comment when something was wrong or negative. One participant commented that: “My manager only tells me if something is done wrong. I measure my success in how long I go without receiving such feedback.” Others commented that they would get positive feedback from colleagues and middle managers, but not from their top managers.

Opportunities for development from management

A little more than half of the participants stated that they had received some kind of training in their job, while the other half had not received any kind of training. Types of training received involved routines necessary to do their jobs in addition to safety courses related to fire, HES, first aid, and so forth. Some had received specialized training related to for example food, wine and liquor laws, or computer systems. Several of the informants had participated in online courses, some had received training through their trade union, and some had received certificates of apprenticeships through their work. Some of those who stated that they had not received specific training, commented that they were self-taught through “learning by doing”, and “trial and error method”. Others commented that they had learned by watching others: “Had to learn things myself through asking questions. No one was responsible for training.”

There appeared to be a large variation in the responses to this question, with answers varying from “My workplace and my department has extremely good routines for training” to “None”. This may indicate that the types training and development opportunities employees receive largely depends on the workplace.

Fair Work Principles Fair Representation





Fair Representation

Fair representation is concerned with worker voice.

Opportunities to express (n=...) Tick all that apply	Count (number of answers)	% of sample
Views	369	75%
Opinions	373	76%
Issues	288	59%
Employment Relationship problems	300	61%
Concerns	285	58%
Health & safety risks	316	64%
Stressors	287	58%
Complaints	339	69%

Three fourths of the participants stated that they felt they could express views and opinions, and well over half felt that they could express concerns, complaints, employment relationship problems and health and safety risks to their employers. 90 % (n=525) of the participants stated that they were members of a trade union. This is a much higher number than the general rate of union membership among hospitality employees in Norway and is probably due to that the United Federation of Trade Unions actively helped to distribute the survey to their members. Thus, the answers in this report concerning voice reflect that most of the participants were trade union members. Of the 10% (n=57) who stated that they were not members of a trade union, some reported that they had left the union because they felt they did not get enough value for their money. Other responses were that they knew it would be smart, but they hadn't done it yet, that they did not see the need since they did not have permanent employment contracts, or that they were unaware about any trade unions for the hospitality industry. One participant expressed concern that it would lead to problems with employers:

"I have a focus on career growth and feel that this can have a negative impact on an employer, especially when looking for management positions."

In pursuit of fair work: What changes would make hospitality a better place to work?

The participants were asked about what changes they believed would make the Norwegian hospitality industry a better place to work. Increased wages and more staff at work were the most frequent answers to what would make hospitality a better place to work, followed by a better regulated worklife, more focus on training, better work hours, and more respect and communication

Increased salary

“Higher wages. The job is great but should be much better compensated. It is frustrating when you read in the news that the tourism industry has had another recordbreaking year with mega profits and you’re still working with a wage that can barely cover rent. It makes you feel not appreciated while we do all the hard work that makes these hotels earn so much money in the first place.”

“Raise the salary level, clearer rules on overtime. There are a lot of short shifts and percentage contracts. Without help from trade unions, many people are overruled by management when it comes to interpreting overtime regulations.”

“Also take care of the staff, not just the guests. Increased salary because this job is harder than it seems. Bring in more permanent employees and not just “extras”.”



Increased staff

“End the time pressure, bring in as many employees as are needed to give the guests the good experience they deserve and relieve the employees so that it does not lead to major psychological and physical problems.”

“More people are needed in kitchens so that people can stay at work longer. The whole industry needs to professionalize so that 21-year-olds are not allowed to be managers and burn themselves and colleagues out too quickly.”

“Recruitment is failing, more money is the main factor. Not enough skilled people, and those who are are getting old. Too many part-time employees and on-call helpers who mean that there is little professional pride left. In large companies, there is a big difference between employees and management, poor management training.”

Better regulated worklife

“To give security to employees with proper contracts (there are too many who are extra help or have 20%, even if they work 110%). “

“Stronger laws and make sure they are followed. We get treated like animals, not humans. I thought coming to Norway would be different, but it’s not.”

“The employers do not respect the National Agreement and the Working Environment Act and there is no consequence. So they know they can do whatever they want. I think there must be consequences for the employers who do not respect the law, so the solution is political. Must have fines for employers who repeatedly break the law. And there must be controls, the trust system does not work in this industry.”



More respect and communication

“Appreciate employees more, during the pandemic there was a big focus on the guests, we employees were forgotten. The pay is far too poor in relation to the work you do. Managers get a bonus.”

“More focus on the employees as a resource. Attitude change in guests, who probably think we are their personal servants and live only to make their lives better.”

“Must listen more to those who work at the front and their experiences.”

“More focus on work life balance.”

“We are in the process of centralizing and modernizing the industry too much, we are in the process of distancing ourselves from the customers. Applies to the hotel industry.”

“Listening and hearing employees, having an open communication, investing in employees.”

“Respect from the manager.”

Conclusions and Recommendations

The results of the survey suggest that the Norwegian hospitality industry still has some work to do to ensure that all workers in the industry experience fair work. Even though Norway has strong laws and regulations connected to work life and employee rights, the results referred to in the principle of “Fair pay” show that a high percentage report not having opportunities for pay rise or promotion, almost 1/3 report that they did not get or were uncertain whether they got, overtime pay or time off for work on statutory/public holidays, and around 1/3 of the respondents report not getting the rest breaks they are entitled to. Furthermore, a large number of employees have experienced or witnessed harassment, abuse, and bullying in the workplace.

The fact that 90% of the respondents were organized in a trade union and a high number identified as Norwegian indicates that it has been challenging to reach unorganized workers with non-Norwegian backgrounds. A more representative sample might have presented another picture. However, the high number of reported harassment, abuse and bullying raise important concerns in terms of decent work and dignity. The results show that customer abuse and harassment is especially prevalent, which resonates with other studies of harassment in the hospitality industry (Nimri et al., 2021; Madera et al., 2018). Customer abuse and harassment may be related to a belief that the customer is always right (Madera et al., 2018). Furthermore, it reflects a tendency to normalize and accept such negative behaviours in hospitality work, illustrated through comments such as “It is expected to endure such” or “This is what it has always been like”.

In the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, the hospitality industry faces serious challenges in terms of recruiting and retaining staff. Poor working conditions and lack of decent work have given as result that staff may be unwilling to return to the industry after the pandemic. In order to meet the needs of the industry, it is thus vital to address questions of decent work and dignity in hospitality work. The results from this survey shed light on problematic work conditions that should be of great concern to hospitality managers, owners, and policy makers. Examining hospitality workers’ own experiences of central work life challenges and (lack of) opportunities and benefits in hospitality work in Norway may contribute to a better understanding and knowledge of what is needed in order to improve working conditions and attract and retain qualified staff.

The issues pointed out in this report are not new to the hospitality industry but were rather amplified during the COVID-19 pandemic (Baum et al., 2020). Based on the ‘Fair Work Principles’, this report provides the following recommendations in order to

address pressing issues and contribute to fair work for all employees and employers in the hospitality industry.



Fair pay: Hospitality organisations should be encouraged to develop policies and mechanisms for employees to be able to gain pay rises and promotion opportunities, (for instance based on seniority). Managers must also ensure that workers are able to take the rest breaks that they are entitled to through existing employment legislation.



Fair conditions: Hospitality organisations must ensure that workers have a safe workplace and decent work conditions. All forms of harassment, abuse and bullying are unacceptable, and organisations need to build organizational and occupational cultures that promote psychological and physical safety in the workplace. Policies and routines for reporting and handling adverse events must be communicated clearly to all employees. Victims of harassment, abuse and bullying must be supported and provided with necessary help and assistance.



Fair contracts: Both government and other sectoral bodies must monitor closely that employment law is followed and that minimum requirements for issuing employment contracts are followed by all employers. Provision of full-time contracts should be encouraged whenever possible in order to provide employees with job security.



Fair management: All positive transformation of worklife practices must be rooted in management. Managers and supervisors must work continuously to ensure that employees have fair and decent work conditions. This includes treating employees with dignity and respect, giving support and feedback, and providing employees with opportunities for adequate training and development.



Fair representation: Employee voice and participation is central to creating and sustaining a positive and safe work environment. Thus, employees should be encouraged to use their voice through amongst other trade union membership and through encouraging a culture of collectivism, openness, and security in hospitality workplaces.

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Notes

This research is conducted as a part of the strategic program area WITH (Work Inclusiveness in Tourism and Hospitality) at the Norwegian School of Hotel Management, University of Stavanger.

An international group of colleagues involved in a wider network, Global Hospitality Research Alliance (GHRA), have distributed the same survey in Ireland, Scotland, Australia, Greece, New Zealand and Norway. These international findings have highlighted similarities in the issues faced by hospitality workers across the globe.

Other reports from this international collaboration:

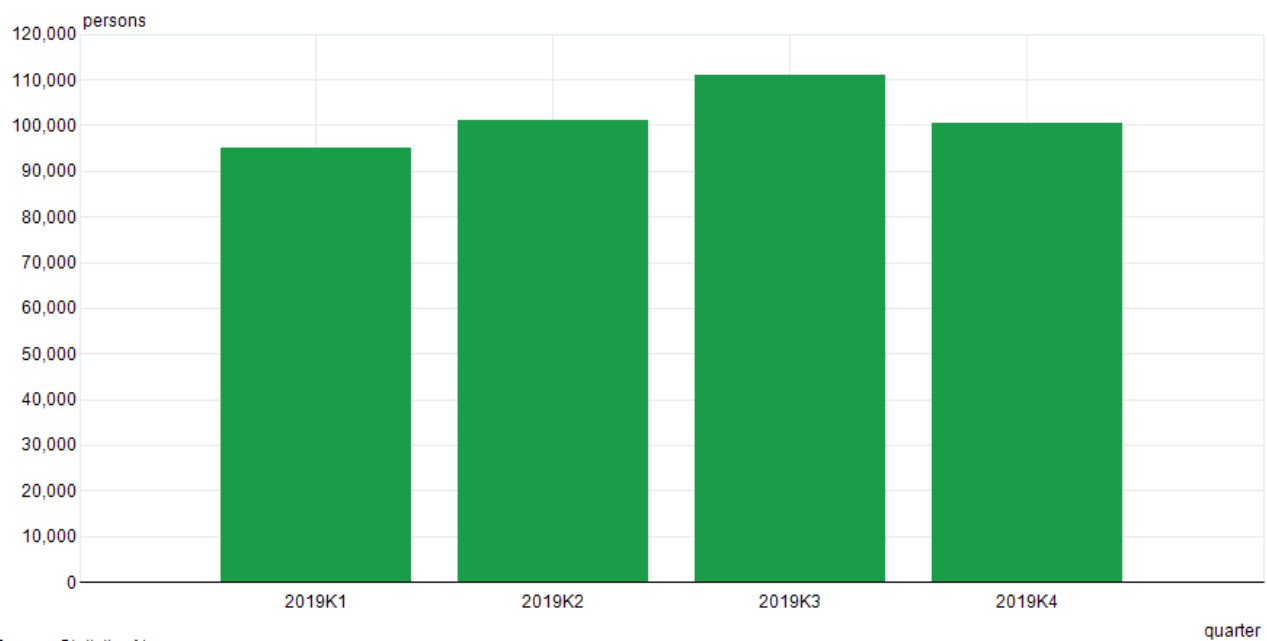
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Source: Statistics Norway

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REPORT NO. 128, UNIVERSITY OF STAVANGER SEPTEMBER 2023

ISBN: 978-82-8439-184-7

ISSN: 2387-6662

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