

# MOHSS

## Montana Occupational Health & Safety Surveillance

September 2025

### Eat, Drink, and Stay Safe

#### *Workplace Safety in the Food and Beverage Service Industries*

In Montana, food and drink are more than just necessities for living; they play a vital role in the economic and cultural framework of every community in the state. Food and beverage service establishments employ tens of thousands of Montanans while serving millions of residents and visitors every year. This newsletter will examine the workplaces within the food and beverage service industry, describe the prevalent hazards and injuries for workers in these industries, and provide guidance on improving worker safety.



#### **Overview of Food and Beverage Service**

Food and Beverage Service is the largest industry subsector in Montana, with nearly 45,000 employees in 2024, representing about 9% of the entire workforce. Within this group, most employees work in restaurants or beverage bars. Workers are employed in food and beverage service establishments in every county in the state, with higher concentrations in urban areas.<sup>1</sup> Demographic observations are limited, but national data suggests workers in this subsector are much younger on average (~30 years old) compared to the average age of the general workforce (~42 years old). Data also suggests the food and beverage services industry has high workforce turnover, with an industry median tenure for employment of 2 years compared to a general median of 4 years.<sup>2</sup>



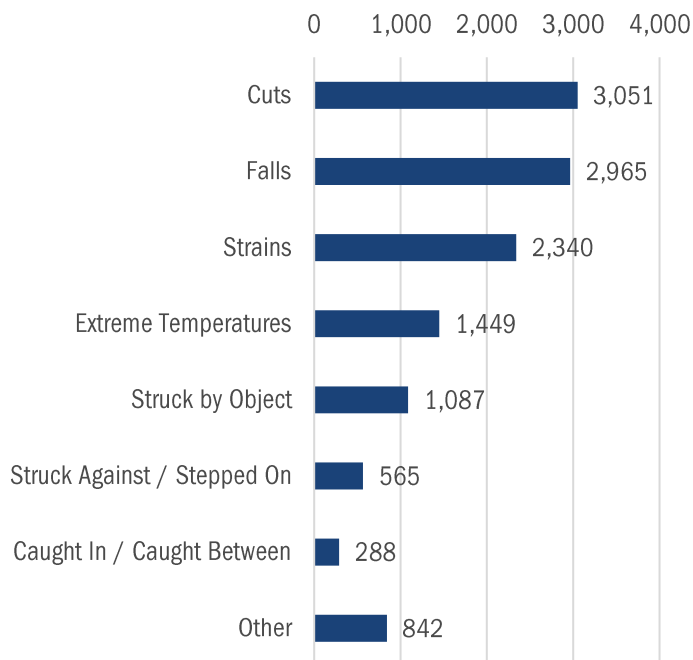
Montana Department of  
**LABOR & INDUSTRY**

## Classifying Hazards and Injuries

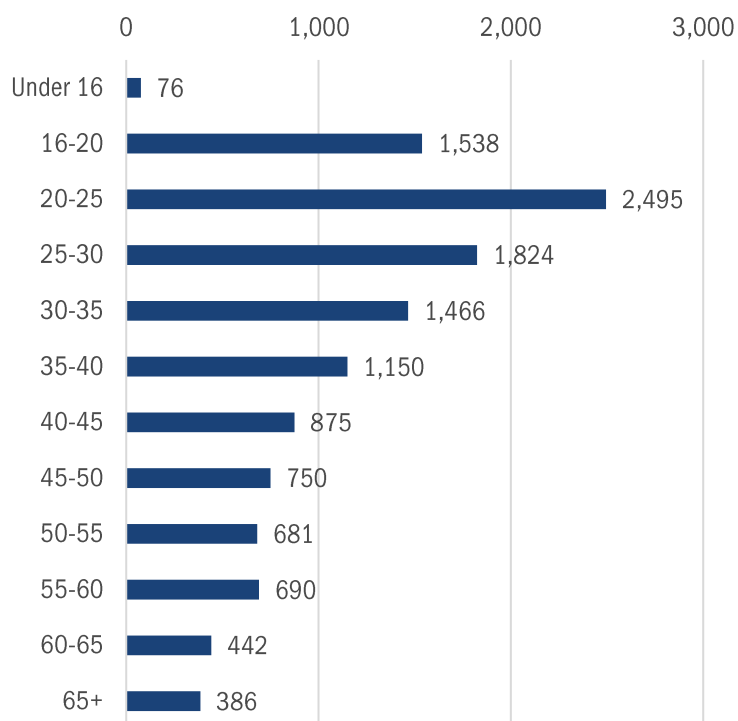
From 2015 to 2024, workers in the food and beverage service industry reported about 12,600 injuries on the job, about 5.3% of all workplace injuries reported during this period.<sup>3</sup> The injury reports provide noteworthy insights on the hazards impacting workers in food and beverage services, including:

- Cuts (including punctures or scrapes) were the most common cause of injury for workers in food and beverage services, accounting for 24% of all injuries reported. This is roughly triple the proportion of injuries from cuts across all industries.<sup>4</sup> Injury narratives indicate many of these resulted from contact with knives, cooking utensils or machinery, or broken dishes or glasses.
- The leading causes of injury for the state workforce as a whole, falls and strains, were prevalent hazards in food and beverage service workplaces.
- Contact with hot objects or steam also was a comparatively significant source of injury, accounting for 9% of all injuries to food and beverage service workers, or roughly six times the proportion of all industries.
- Nearly half of all injuries were reported by workers under the age of 30, with workers aged 19-20 reporting the highest number of injuries.

Workplace Injuries by Source



Workplace Injuries by Age of Injured Worker



- Workers were most likely to be injured in their first year of employment, supporting prior findings of the Montana Department of Labor & Industry.<sup>5</sup>
- Workers were slightly more likely to be injured during the summer months. When accounting for age, younger workers played a significant role in influencing this trend, but workers over the age of 30 also saw an increase in summertime injuries.

## Reducing Risks for Workers in Food and Beverage Service

Examining the workplace injury data from the food and beverage service industry suggests two unique hazards: the activity of food preparation and the contributing factor of experience level. Fortunately, both hazards can be reduced through proper training and precautions, which include:

- Prohibit all untrained personnel from entering food preparation or storage spaces
- Train all staff in the proper use of all powered and unpowered food preparation tools and equipment
- Train staff on proper cooking techniques and avoiding thermal and electrical burns
- Store all food preparation equipment not actively in use
- Ensure all food preparation equipment is off and unplugged prior to cleaning or maintenance
- Provide staff with appropriate protective equipment, such as steel mesh gloves for cutting or sharpening knives
- Maintain clean and dry floors, and install high-traction surfaces to prevent slips, trips, or falls
- Train workers on proper lifting and handling of food, equipment, and other heavy objects
- Conduct regular safety assessments and emphasize continuous improvement of safety practices

Employers of food and beverage service establishments are encouraged to use the free restaurant training available through the Occupational Health and Safety Administration. The Montana Department of Labor & Industry also encourages employers to use resources available through their workers' compensation insurer to provide their workers with the safest workplace possible.

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<sup>1</sup> [U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages](#)

<sup>2</sup> [U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics Current Population Survey](#)

<sup>3</sup> Montana Department of Labor & Industry Workers' Compensation Administrative Network (Internal Data)

<sup>4</sup> [Montana Department of Labor & Industry Workers' Compensation Annual Report](#)

<sup>5</sup> [Montana Department of Labor & Industry, "Injuries in the First Year" by Kristine Ediger](#)

