



2022 Complaints Survey

FACILITYCLEANING
DECISIONS™

Results of a study conducted by *Facility Cleaning Decisions* magazine • August 2022



Methodology

This research report provides insights into how often facility cleaning managers receive cleaning complaints and specific requests as they transition to a post-pandemic society.

Sample

The survey audience was drawn from subscribers to *Facility Cleaning Decisions* magazine (facility cleaning managers in nonresidential buildings). The sample consisted of the following organizations: Educational, Government, Commercial Office, Medical/Healthcare, industrial, retail, and hospitality.

Survey

The survey was sent out via e-mail to 16,835 subscribers on August 2, 2022. Follow-up survey reminders were e-mailed to non-respondents on August 8th, August 11th, and August 16th, 2022. A total of 884 chose to opt out.

Response

The survey closed for responses on August 22, 2022. A total of 192 questionnaires were returned by the deadline.

Statistical confidence

The overall estimated margin of error for this study is $\pm .55$ percent at the 95 percent confidence level.

More Occupants, Same Complaints

2022 survey shows that despite facility upheaval, the top cleaning complaints hold steady

By James DeGraff Associate Editor

There's little need to discuss just how unusual things have been for facility cleaning managers during these past couple of years. Amid all the differing opinions on re-opening, vaccinations, personal protective equipment (PPE) and more, there will always be one constant: occupants will complain about cleanliness.

From a birds-eye view, it would seem unreasonable to compare responses from over 130 facility cleaning managers compared to two years ago. Yet it was determined that while occupancy levels in facilities may vary, many of the same types of gripes hold firm.

The bi-annual *Facility Cleaning Decisions* Complaints Survey never fails to bring up the most relatable and ridiculous responses out of all the studies conducted by the publication. Some front runners to take this year's crown include, "an angered employee with their direct supervisor decided to smear feces all over a restroom. And by that, I mean everywhere: walls, partitions, ceiling, sinks"; or perhaps "please find my missing snake."

Yet in the midst of some head-scratching revelations, the survey reveals some valuable trends that managers can take to heart and use to improve overall approval among occupants and cleaning staff alike.

Combing Through the Complaints

When it comes to the areas of the facilities that garner the most complaints, the usual suspects rose to the occasion again in 2022. Leading the way among respondents was 'Restrooms' at a commanding 41 percent, followed by 'Classrooms/Offices/Patient Rooms' at 26 percent. Rounding out the podium was Hallways/Elevators/Common/Waiting Areas at 13 percent.

While most complaints within the restroom were for malfunctioning/insufficient soap and paper dispensers, or dirty mirrors (on par with years past) there were some statistical improvements to note. For example, complaints of excess water surrounding sinks, or on floors and walls decreased over years past. Only 22 percent of cleaning teams hear such complaints in a two-week timeframe, down from almost 30 percent in 2020. Fewer gripes were made about restroom odors as well, albeit by a more modest margin (21 percent in

2022 compared to 26 percent in 2020).

Although it is impressive that complaints about many specific cleaning tasks are down, what departments should be celebrating is that occupants are overall more pleased with how custodial teams are responding to cleaning concerns. Eighty-nine percent of cleaning managers report that frustrations about poor response to cleaning requests come more than three weeks apart — 70 percent are only every few months.

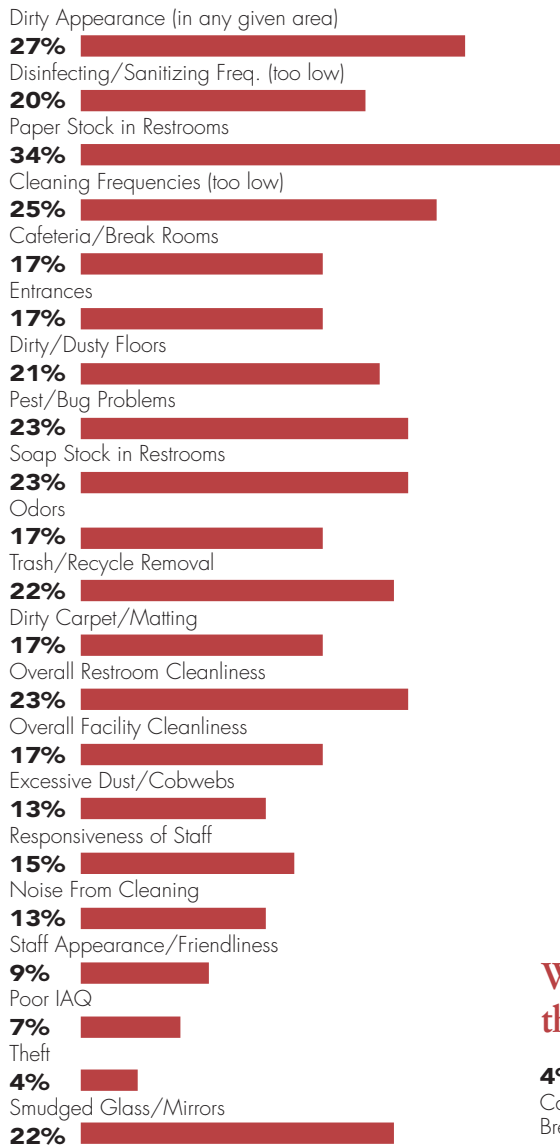
Those 11 percent of departmental managers who hear gripes about response time more often are likely the same that are dealing with what are considered more frivolous or subjective complaints. These complaints that have been described as purely frivolous or subjective have actually jumped up noticeably. Compared to 10 percent in 2020, 17 percent of respondents said that more than half of the complaints they receive are frivolous.

That said, 78 percent reported that less than one quarter of their total time is spent responding to frivolous complaints — the same as 2020. This indicates that while the average complaint has become more absurd, many cleaning staffs are standing their ground when it comes to determining what is worth spending time on.

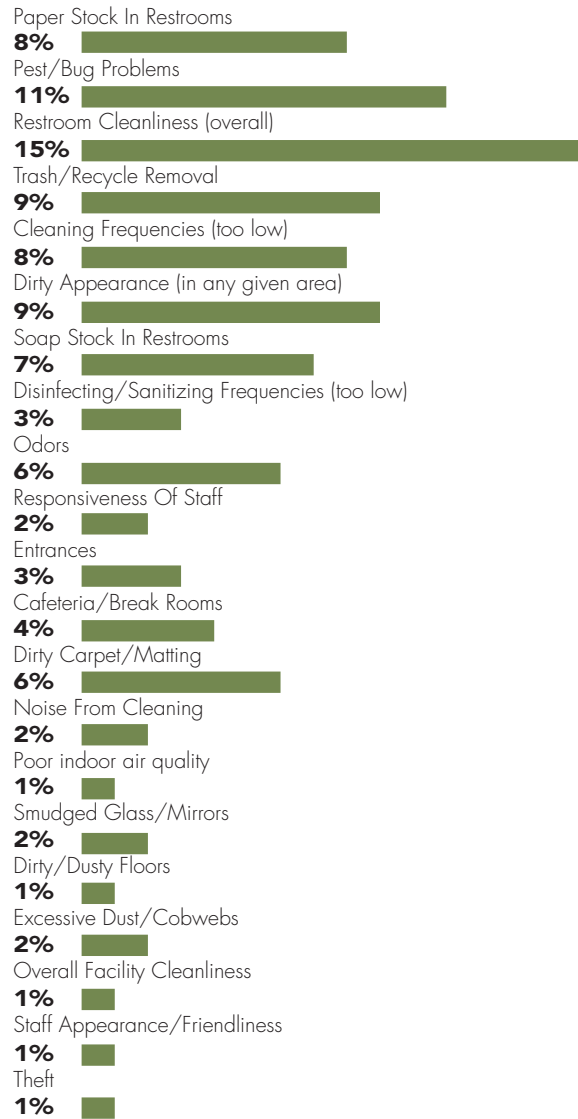
One such target area is personal workspaces. The number of departments focused on cleaning personal spaces has stayed nearly the same as years past — something that 69 percent of respondents noted doing in 2022. The feedback from building occupants regarding this practice was overwhelmingly positive again overall, with many of the most common responses being appreciative of the extra effort and it helps them feel safer being in the facility.

This is just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to the results from this *Facility Cleaning Decisions* Complaints Survey. Enjoy nearly 20 questions of memorable complaints and responses — some of which include valuable insight from facility cleaning managers on how they've been able to stop some complaints at the source. **FCD**

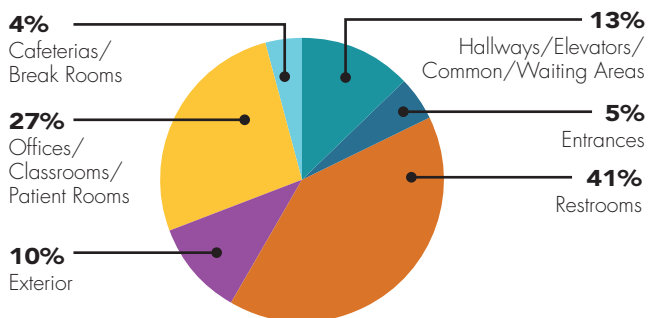
How many cleaning managers receive these complaints at least once every two weeks?



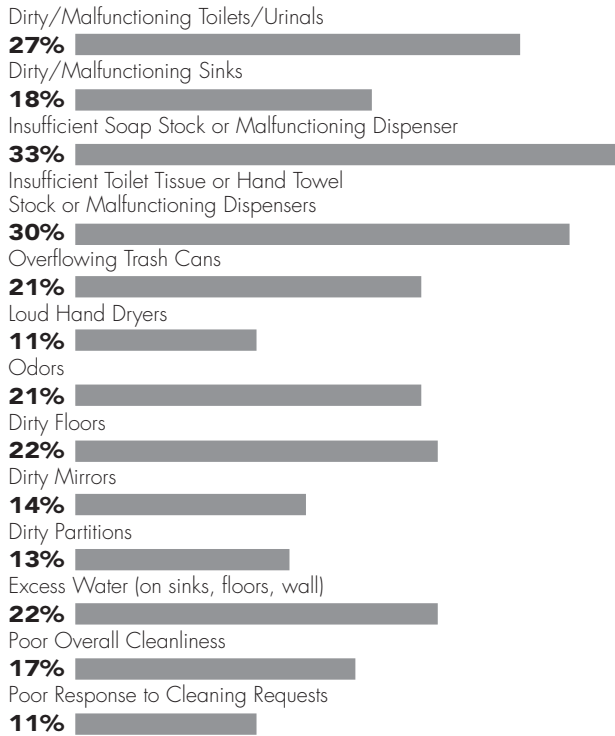
What is the single biggest complaint or request you get from occupants within your facility?



What area of the facility receives the most cleaning complaints?



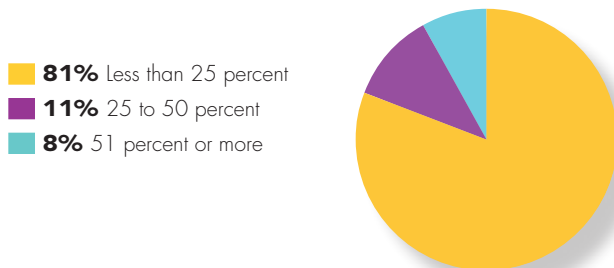
Restrooms are often the source of complaints. In a two-week span, how many managers receive complaints regarding these restroom services?



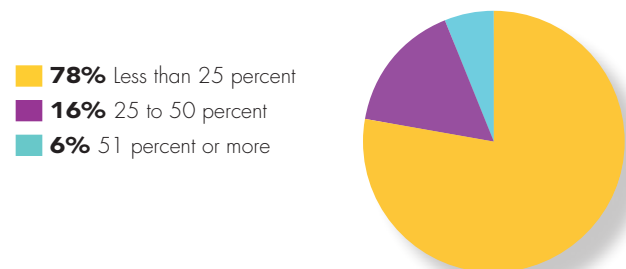
What are some of the most common cleaning-related complaints you receive regularly from your cleaning staff?

- Teachers are not having students pick up items on floors, and food/drinks being left on floors to be tracked over
- Too many different people telling them what to do
- The previous shift did not do their work
- Garbage bags being too thin
- Not enough help (they're right)
- Equipment being abused by occupants. Damaged soap dispensers, damaged hand towel dispensers, and damaged toilet paper dispensers
- Mixing trash
- They are being underpaid
- They can't work when employees are working late
- Not having the proper tools and equipment. Often this results in retraining to overcome objectives
- They don't have enough time
- Sloppy cleaning procedures
- Not a balanced workload amongst the ranks

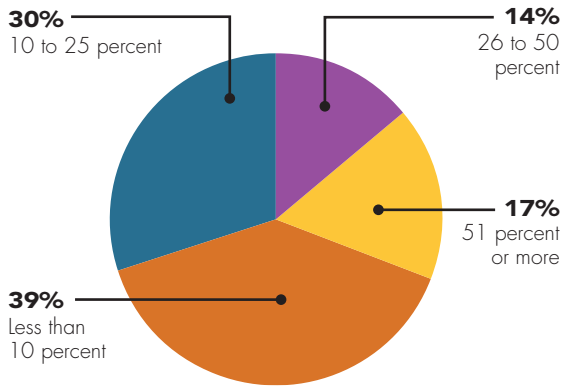
How much departmental time is spent responding to legitimate cleaning complaints or requests every month?



How much time of your own (management) time is typically spent responding to complaints or requests every month?



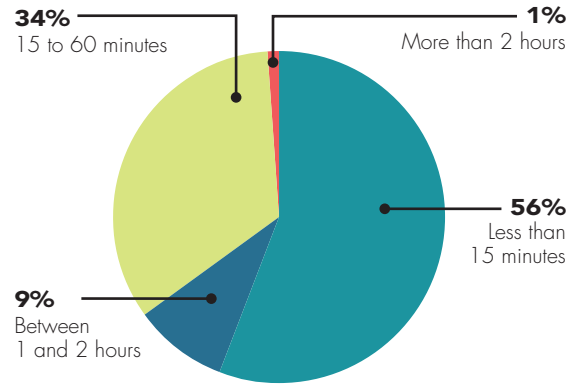
What percentage of complaints or requests would you describe as purely subjective or frivolous?



Managers have been very or somewhat successful at minimizing the number of subjective or frivolous complaints using these methods.



How much management time is spent on subjective or frivolous complaints in an average day?



Can you share a story or pet peeve about occupants' subjective/frivolous complaints or requests?

- Occupants qwev moving furniture around and not moving it back into place. Takes time away from housekeepers
- The floors don't look shiny enough
- Had a staff member say that they left a penny on the floor to see if it would be swept up
- Some kids don't flush and others run to let staff know
- Building occupants leave little stacks of coins on interior window sills to see if cleaning staff will take it
- Eating in offices and storing open food in desks then complaining about bugs and pests
- Lights too bright, and air conditioning too hot or too cold
- Stairs! We always get complaints about our stairs. Dust bunnies and shine of the stairs
- An employee was trying to use odors or smells from chemicals as a reason to go home on with paid time off
- Spill ice and/or beverage on the floor and walk away to tell their supervisor without cleaning up their own mess expecting cleaner to handle it. That's if they tell anyone at all
- Campus started a compost program with the intention of students being part of the program. Then they didn't enforce student involvement, putting all responsibilities on custodians

How have you reduced the amount of time spent on frivolous complaints?

- Require that they put it in writing
- Installed auto flushers
- Changed the cleaning time of bathrooms to when the housekeeper can be seen
- Having cleaning staff focus on being more visible has had a positive impact
- Having the custodial crew and maintenance crew take time to talk to staff
- Transparency with staff about expectations
- Shared budget, training, and staffing information with customers
- Quick response to the complaint, followed by addressing the issue
- Went to cleaning restrooms twice per day
- Hand dryers instead of paper towel dispensers meant less paper on the floor or stuck to walls and ceilings



What are some of the most outrageous complaints your department has received from building occupants?

- Find my missing snake
- Why can't we do all the housekeeping at night so we don't bother them
- Wants their classroom carpet or rugs wet extracted weekly
- Response time was not less than 5 minutes
- Poop on the floor and walls
- Clogged drains in unused areas of building
- The AC is too cold
- Asking us to crawl under a desk and clean up the sunflower seeds from behind their trash can amongst the cords — seeds they threw there
- Pick up dead birds on the playground
- Sugar ants present — found lots of food trapped in and under their own desk
- Removing a live raccoon from exterior trash cans
- Someone lost their pet pig in the dining room
- Fleas. Found out occupant was bringing them in with her from her dog
- Saying it was cold when they had a window open
- Wanting us to spot clean every few hours

What is the most bizarre complaint you have received from someone on your cleaning staff?

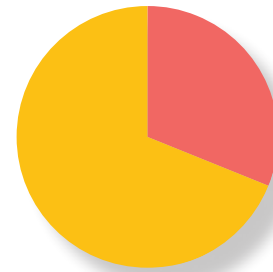
- Children writing on stall walls
- Asking for a \$10,000 machine that might be used once a month
- A janitor once was mad because we didn't hire a temporary worker to help her because she had a headache and didn't feel like working very hard that day
- Wanting the occupants to clean their own space
- Cleaning nasty toilets
- It is too far to the trash dumpster
- Cleaning up after students is not part of their job
- While they are cleaning, there is a naked man in front of them
- Employees are pigs and don't care
- Can we get rid of the kids?
- That I was too "nice"
- From the night cleaner: "Please have the PE teacher leave the toy access area unlocked so my child can access the toys while I am cleaning their rooms."
- Went on workers comp because the 10-pound backpack vacuum hurt their back and blew hot air on their butt

What complaints have you received as a direct result of the pandemic?

- Workload went up, and staff numbers went down
- Not enough sanitizing
- Teachers would like to have access to EPA-registered cleaning chemicals.
- Being confined to their rooms and not being able to understand staff or hear staff due to the masks
- Custodians do not clean up after students move from their desk
- Building occupants think that their rooms or offices are not being sanitized
- Wanting daily "fogging" of their workspace
- The occupants didn't like the glass partitions on the lunch table
- Staffing availability, supply chain issues
- Masks
- Fear of other building occupants
- Students that were supposed to be quarantined did not isolate

Because of the pandemic, is your cleaning staff tasked with cleaning and disinfecting personal spaces (desks, offices, cubicles, etc.)?

69% Yes
31% No



What feedback have you heard from building occupants and cleaning staff as a result of the added cleaning/disinfection of personal spaces?

- Should be paid more
- The extra cleaning is helping
- Hard to clean with personal items in the way
- Occupants have a particular preference to sanitizers
- They liked it, but still felt uneasy with all the people that came in and out of the building
- They want us to prove that they are doing this
- It takes a lot more time than before
- It required adding staff to accomplish