

US hospitality industry often reluctant to hire people with disabilities

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People with disabilities trying to find employment in the U.S. hospitality industry face employers who are often reluctant to hire them because of preconceived notions that they cannot do the job and that they are more costly to employ than people without disabilities, according to new research from the University of New Hampshire.

UNH researchers Andrew Houtenville, associate professor of economics and research director of the UNH Institute on Disability, and Valentini Kalargyrou, assistant professor of [hospitality management](#), analyzed data from 320 hospitality companies in the United States, and found similar concerns and challenges regarding employment of people with disabilities. The researchers used the Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) Employer's Survey as their [data source](#).

The research is presented in the journal *Cornell Hospitality Quarterly* in the article "People with Disabilities: Employers' Perspectives on Recruitment Practices, Strategies, and Challenges in Leisure and Hospitality."

"We found prejudice, stereotyping, and limited choices in employment as [employment barriers](#) for people with disabilities, but the chief concern among those in this survey involved the bottom line," said the researchers, who are both professors at the UNH Whittemore School of Business and Economics.

"The most frequently cited challenge or concern among hospitality and leisure companies is that the nature of the work is such that it cannot be effectively performed by people with disabilities, even though workplace accommodations are a tried-and-true method for addressing the nature of the work," the researchers said. "The cost of accommodation is the second most frequently cited challenge or concern, even among companies that are proactive in employing people with disabilities."

Employers also cited the cost of workers' compensation, the nature of work, coworkers' attitudes, discomfort and unfamiliarity, and lack of knowledge of the effectiveness of people with disabilities as employment barriers.

The researchers said offering tax credits to offset accommodation costs and productivity differences may encourage companies to employ people with disabilities.

"In addition, disability awareness training is frequently cited as a useful tool to facilitate the [employment](#) of people with disabilities. Such training would address and correct misconceptions such as the concern that those with disabilities lack the appropriate competencies to be effective in their jobs, are less productive, and are more accident-prone," the researchers said.

"Preconceived notions about the nature of the work that people with disabilities can do and how to accommodate workers with disabilities is a major challenge, even among companies that actively recruit people with disabilities. Creating a disability-friendly culture that is favorable and supportive of employees with disabilities is paramount in overcoming biases and stereotypes. Leadership must invest in managerial training to improve the workplace culture and inform the workforce on benefits when working with people with [disabilities](#)," they said.

Provided by University of New Hampshire

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