

# Need a job? Get a tattoo

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Tattoos in the workplace are here to stay and may even give job candidates an advantage in competitive labor markets, according to new research from faculty at the University of Miami Business School and the University of Western Australia. Published in *Human Relations*, one of the Financial Times Top 50 business outlets, the study provides a much-needed update to research that showed the contrary, especially

given how prevalent tattoos are today. About 20 percent of all American adults and 40 percent of millennials have tattoos, according to the Pew Research Center.

More than 2,000 subjects from all 50 states were surveyed for the study, with roughly half of the respondents coming from urban areas with a population over 1 million. The study authors, who began collecting data during the summer of 2016, found that the perception of tattoos in the workplace has changed so much that even a visible [tattoo](#) is not linked to individual employment, wages, or earnings discrimination. Specifically, the study found wages and annual earnings of tattooed employees were statistically indistinguishable from those without them. In the hiring market, tattooed job seekers are also just as likely, and in some instances even more likely, to gain employment.

The lead author, Michael French, professor of health economics in the Miami Business School's Department of Health Sector Management and Policy, says hiring managers who continue to discriminate against job candidates with tattoos may be settling for a less-qualified pool of applicants.

"The long-held stigmas associated with having tattoos, and particularly visible ones, may be eroding, especially among younger individuals who view body art as a natural and common form of personal expression," French said. "Given the increasing prevalence of tattoos in society—around 40 percent for young adults—hiring managers and supervisors who discriminate against tattooed workers will likely find themselves at a competitive disadvantage for the most qualified employees."

Previous research found that hiring managers widely perceived tattooed people as less employable than people without tattoos. This was especially the case for those with visible or even offensive tattoos that

are difficult to conceal at work.

**More information:** Michael T French et al, Are tattoos associated with employment and wage discrimination? Analyzing the relationships between body art and labor market outcomes, *Human Relations* (2018). DOI: [10.1177/0018726718782597](https://doi.org/10.1177/0018726718782597)

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