

New research suggests tattoos are not a turnoff for customers

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Thinking of getting a tattoo but worried about consequences on the job? Maybe you shouldn't be so concerned: New research from Rice University and the University of Houston finds that customers don't

necessarily look down on employees with tattoos—and in some settings, ink is seen as a plus.

The study "Do employees' [tattoos](#) leave a mark on customers' reactions to products and organizations?" appears in a recent edition of the *Journal of Organizational Behavior*. It is authored by Enrica Ruggs, an associate professor of management in the C.T. Bauer College of Business at the University of Houston, and Mikki Hebl, the Martha and Henry Malcolm Lovett Chair of Psychology and professor in Rice's Jones Graduate School of Business.

The researchers surveyed the way customers viewed not only workers with tattoos, but also the businesses that employ them. They compared that to the way customers viewed workers and businesses in workplaces where employees had no tattoos.

They found that in some professional settings, such as white-collar jobs that involve artistic skills, customers see tattooed employees and the companies they work for just as positively—or even more positively than—companies and employees in [workplaces](#) without tattoos. In a field experiment assessing purchasing behavior, employees with tattoos sold just as many products as employees who did not have them.

"Although some previous research has shown that hiring managers are hesitant to hire employees with visible tattoos in part because they fear customers will view these employees as less professional, which may be harmful to business, our findings suggest that at least in some industries, customers are not that bothered by tattooed [employees](#)," Ruggs said.

Ruggs and Hebl hope the research will help organizations make better-informed decisions when developing policies about appearance in the workplace.

More information: Enrica N. Ruggs et al, Do employees' tattoos leave a mark on customers' reactions to products and organizations?, *Journal of Organizational Behavior* (2022). [DOI: 10.1002/job.2616](https://doi.org/10.1002/job.2616)

Provided by Rice University

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