

MONTANA: Workers quit jobs over stress, housing costs

High housing costs, stress, COVID and a shortage of childcare options are among the factors causing workers in Montana’s service and hospitality industry to leave their jobs in droves, according to University of Montana researchers.

Among those who left that industry during the pandemic and didn’t return to the workforce, nearly 17% cited mental health and stress as the reason they stayed away. That’s per a recent report from the Institute for Tourism and Recreation Research at UM.

The study also found that women in Montana were far more likely than men to report leaving their job in the service industry during the pandemic.

Researchers surveyed a total of 4,820 Montana residents this past



Photo: Antonio Ibarra, Missoulian

Service workers like this waitress are leaving their jobs at high rates.

winter about several aspects of their current and past work status. When asked if they had left a job in the service/hospitality industry at any

point since the beginning of COVID, 54% of women responded that they had, compared with 35% of men.

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FLORIDA: State’s tourism sector pays lowest wages in U.S.

Miami has long been a wildly unequal place. It’s a city where wages don’t come close to keeping up with local rent costs, a place where a staggering number of millennials still live with their parents, and a town where hospitality and tourism workers are often forced to trek miles on hours-long bus rides to and from wealthier areas such as Miami Beach. Similar inequality issues persist statewide.

Now a new study from Florida State University warns that the issues might simply be endemic to the state’s tourism industry. In a study published in the peer-reviewed journal *Tourism Management*, FSU

researchers confirmed workers in the hospitality and leisure industries — the top ones in Miami and Florida as a whole — are paid the lowest average wages compared to any other industry in the nation. And, most troubling, researchers found that workers in the hospitality sector — everyone from servers to housekeepers — see the smallest annual wage gains of every major industry studied.

“That was very shocking,” Tarik Dogru, the FSU professor who co-wrote the study, said in a recent media release. “Nationally, wages are rising more in other industries than the hospitality industry.”

Dogru and his team compared base salaries for workers across ten major labor sectors, including construction, utilities, finance, mining, manufacturing, information technology, education, and a few others. For obvious reasons — tips aren’t included in the base pay of many leisure-industry workers’ salaries — the tourism industry came in dead last by a huge margin:

Without tips included, leisure workers were all but destined to come in dead last in those rankings. But the study revealed that wages for hospitality workers aren’t rising

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File photo

Customer service in travel industry gets poor rating

A survey of 1,000 people found they had a poor or extremely poor view of the reputation of the travel sector's customer service, based on their experiences and those of others.

The research found that the travel sector was one of the most likely to be rated poor or extremely poor (29% vs. average of 20%), second only to the utilities sector (32%).

The business sectors in the survey were utilities, travel, banking, insurance, hospitality, logistics, fashion retail and grocery retail.

Respondents were also asked to rate the quality of customer service delivery based on their own experience.

The travel sector was again one of the most likely to be rated poor or extremely poor (21% vs. average of 17%)

The report has found that these negative customer service interactions are having a detrimental effect on a brand as 86% of consumers agreed it has had a negative impact on their relationships with a business. Notably, nearly a third (31%) of consumers have told friends or family to avoid a brand following a negative customer service interaction, and 26% have left a critical review online.

(Research comes from the Make Every Conversation Count report by FM Outsource)

– traveldailynews.com

Montana hospitality turnover is greater

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Women were also more likely to report employment in the service/hospitality industry than men, 40% to 24% respectively.

Some respondents who reported quitting may have returned to their same employer or a new employer within the same industry, but the survey aimed to capture the upheaval in the tourism industry in the state.

“Results from this survey indicate that the service and hospitality industry of Montana experienced greater turnover within their ranks when compared to other industries,” wrote the authors, Carter Bermingham, Matthew

Pettigrew, Megan Schultz and Josh Martin.

In fact, they say the hospitality industry in Montana has experienced 20%-25% more turnover than the average of all other industries.

Respondents who said they chose not to return to work or who were still looking for work were asked why they've not yet returned to the workforce. Overall, 18% indicated they there were too few options available for the type of work they looking for. Another 18% of respondents explained that concerns about COVID in the workplace was a reason they haven't returned.

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Florida law prevents localities from raising wage

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the same way salaries for other workers are increasing. For every dollar the average American worker gains in wage raises, the typical hospitality and tourism worker gains just 81 cents, the FSU researchers found.

They noted tourism is central to five states: Nevada, Hawaii, Vermont, Florida, and Montana. Hospitality remains Florida's top industry — about 1.5 million people work in the state's tourism sector, which generates about \$86 billion annually, per the study's numbers.

The findings again illustrate that state and local governments have essentially failed to ensure Florida remains affordable for its largest class of workers, who tend bars, scrub hotel rooms, and serve meals to millions of visitors flocking to the Sunshine State every year. Yet state law prevents local municipalities from setting their own minimum wages, and the state-level minimum wage is a paltry \$8.46 per hour. That rate is even lower for tipped workers, who can be legally paid as little as \$5.44 per hour in base pay statewide.

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