

Hospitality Job Market 2025: Recovery and Workforce Trends

Published January 14, 2025 80 min read



**Hospitality Industry Job Market in 2025:
Recovery, Trends and Workforce
Transformation**

Introduction

The hospitality industry in 2025 is navigating a complex labor market landscape shaped by strong post-pandemic recovery and significant structural changes. Global travel demand has roared back to near-record levels, fueling job growth in [hotels](#), restaurants, events, and tourism services [wttc.org](#). At the same time, hospitality employers face persistent workforce challenges – from labor shortages and rising wages to evolving skill requirements and new expectations around work conditions. Economic headwinds such as inflation and higher operating costs are testing profit margins even as consumer appetite for travel remains robust [ahla.com](#). On a micro level, shifts in traveler behavior (e.g. “bleisure” business-leisure trips, demand for experiential and sustainable tourism) are altering service models and labor needs [ahla.com](#). Meanwhile, the pandemic’s workforce fallout – many experienced workers left the sector, and fewer young people are entering hospitality careers due to concerns over pay, hours, and limited remote-work options [pcma.org](#) – continues to impact talent availability and recruitment strategies.

This research report provides an in-depth analysis of the hospitality job market in 2025 for industry professionals and decision-makers. It examines macro- and microeconomic influences on labor, the state of post-COVID employment recovery across key sub-sectors, ongoing talent shortages and recruitment responses, the changing skillsets driven by technology and sustainability, regional employment differences, wage and mobility trends, the rise of gig and hybrid work models, regulatory and immigration developments, and advances in diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in hiring. Throughout, data from credible industry reports, government publications, and expert commentary are cited to offer a comprehensive, up-to-date picture. The goal is to equip hospitality leaders with a thorough understanding of current workforce dynamics and emerging trends as they strategize for a sustainable talent pipeline and resilient operations.

1. Macro and Microeconomic Trends Influencing the Hospitality Labor Market in 2025

Global Travel Rebound vs Economic Headwinds: On the macroeconomic front, 2025 marks a strong rebound for travel and tourism, which underpins much of the hospitality labor market. The World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) projects the sector’s global economic contribution to reach an all-time high of **\$11.7 trillion (10.3% of global GDP) in 2025**, with international tourism spending surpassing pre-pandemic records [wttc.org](#). Worldwide hospitality employment is rising accordingly: travel and tourism jobs are expected to grow by **14 million in 2025 to reach 371**

million jobs globally, exceeding 2019 levels and accounting for about 1 in 9 jobs on the planet [wttc.org](https://www.wttc.org). This broad recovery has been buoyed by consumers' enduring appetite for travel – WTTC notes that people continue to prioritize travel spending as a “vote of confidence” in the sector [wttc.org](https://www.wttc.org). However, growth is not evenly distributed. **Economic headwinds such as high inflation, rising interest rates, and slowing GDP growth in major economies are tempering the recovery in some markets.** For instance, hospitality demand in the **U.S., China, and Germany has plateaued in early 2025**, even as other regions hit record highs [wttc.org](https://www.wttc.org). Persistently elevated food and energy costs put pressure on both travelers' discretionary spending and on hospitality operators' profit margins. Hoteliers in many cities face **rising operating costs and new wage mandates from local governments**, squeezing budgets for labor even as they seek to staff up [ahla.com](https://www.ahla.com).

Shifting Traveler Behavior and Micro Trends: At a microeconomic level, changes in consumer behavior and demographics are influencing labor needs. **Travel patterns have evolved** in the wake of the pandemic – travelers are taking more “work-from-anywhere” trips and **“bleisure” travel (combining business trips with leisure)**, leading to longer average stays and mid-week demand that requires more flexible staffing schedules [pcma.org](https://www.pcma.org). Leisure travelers are also gravitating toward unique, personalized experiences: the U.S. hospitality industry reports surging interest in immersive and sustainable travel offerings over generic packages [ahla.com](https://www.ahla.com). This experiential trend means hospitality employers must staff new roles such as experience curators, tour guides, and sustainability coordinators, and ensure employees have local knowledge and soft skills to deliver authentic experiences. Furthermore, **customer expectations for service remain high even as technology automates many touchpoints** – striking the right balance of tech and human service is a key challenge shaping staffing models (discussed further in Section 4).

Another important micro trend is the **changing labor supply and workforce attitudes**. The pandemic triggered a major workforce disruption in hospitality: many seasoned employees left during lockdowns and have not returned, exacerbating an already high turnover industry. A **“hospitality talent crisis”** has emerged where the sector struggles to attract replacements, in part because potential workers perceive hospitality jobs as **low-paying, with unsocial hours and little flexibility or remote work options** [pcma.org](https://www.pcma.org). Industry research finds that fewer young people are enrolling in hospitality programs or seeking hospitality careers, citing concerns about long hours and limited career progression [pcma.org](https://www.pcma.org). At the same time, a significant portion of the remaining hospitality workforce is disengaged – a Gallup poll in North America found only **31% of hospitality employees are fully engaged** in their jobs, with many “quiet quitting” or expressing burnout [americas.hsmi.org](https://www.americas.hsmi.org). These dynamics are forcing employers to rethink labor practices, leading to trends like higher wages, improved benefits, and flexible scheduling to compete for talent

(elaborated in Section 3 and Section 6). In summary, macro-level economic forces are driving a vigorous recovery in travel demand and jobs, but micro-level labor market frictions – from worker shortages to shifting worker expectations – are influencing how the hospitality industry adapts and allocates its human resources in 2025.

2. Post-Pandemic Recovery in Key Subsectors of Hospitality

More than three years after the height of the COVID-19 crisis, hospitality employment has rebounded across all major subsectors – though to varying degrees. This section examines the recovery status and employment trends in **hotels/accommodations**, **food and beverage (restaurants)**, **events and meetings**, and **travel and tourism services**, highlighting how each subsector has bounced back and where they stand relative to pre-pandemic levels.

Hotels and Accommodation

The hotel industry suffered one of the deepest contractions in 2020 but is now climbing back steadily. Global hotel occupancy and revenues have approached normalcy: in the U.S., **average hotel occupancy is projected at 63.4% in 2025, just a few points shy of the 65.8% rate in 2019** [ahla.com](#). Hotel employment, however, remains a step behind full recovery. In the United States – one of the largest lodging markets – [hotels](#) lost 680,000 direct jobs between 2019 and 2020**, and despite rehiring over 467,000 workers since then, the sector is **still below its pre-pandemic staffing levels in 2025** [ahla.com](#)[ahla.com](#). U.S. hotels are expected to employ about **2.17 million people in 2025, which is 9% fewer workers than in 2019 (2.37 million)** [ahla.com](#). This gap illustrates that while travel demand has returned, hotels have not fully rebuilt their workforce – partly due to recruitment challenges and efficiency gains through technology. Notably, even with fewer employees, labor expenses are higher than ever. U.S. hotels' total wage payouts in 2024 reached **\$125.8 billion**, exceeding 2019 levels, and are forecast to rise to **\$128.5 billion in 2025** [ahla.com](#). This reflects higher pay rates and more hours for the employees who *are* working, as hotels boost wages to attract staff (explored further in Section 6).

! [image](#)

Figure 1: U.S. Hotel Industry Average Employment, 2018–2025. The COVID-19 pandemic caused a sharp drop in hotel jobs in 2020, from about 2.37 million in 2019 to 1.69 million in 2020. A steady recovery followed, with U.S. hotel employment rising back above 2.1 million by 2023. However,

projections show 2025 staffing (2.17 million) still slightly below pre-pandemic levels [ahla.com](#). Despite hotels hiring back thousands of workers since 2021, the industry has not yet filled all the positions lost in 2020, indicating a continued shortfall in labor supply.

! [image](#)

Figure 2: U.S. Hotel Industry Total Annual Wages Paid, 2018–2025. While hotel employment remains below 2019 levels, **total wages and salaries paid have surged above pre-pandemic highs** [ahla.com](#). After dipping in 2020, total payroll costs in U.S. hotels rebounded rapidly – by 2022 they exceeded 2019's figure, and they are forecast to reach \$128.5 billion in 2025 (about 25% higher than in 2019). This trend reflects significant wage inflation and more overtime or hours per worker, as hoteliers raise pay to tackle staff shortages and accommodate recovered demand [ahla.com](#). In short, hotels are spending more on labor than ever, even with slightly leaner workforces.

Worldwide, a similar pattern is observed. Many popular destinations in Europe and Asia report hotel employment still catching up to guest demand. For example, **Greek hoteliers in 2025 face an acute staff shortfall** – with record tourist arrivals expected, an estimated 80,000 jobs (in hotels and restaurants) remained unfilled going into the summer season [theguardian.comtheguardian.com](#). Hotel operators in Greece and other Southern European markets have had to delay opening some properties or reduce services due to lack of staff, even as bookings boom. By contrast, in regions like the Middle East, hotel development is expanding the workforce beyond pre-2020 levels (see regional section below). Overall, the accommodation sector's employment is recovering in line with – but slightly lagging – the travel resurgence, and the struggle to hire enough workers is a defining feature of this recovery phase.

Food & Beverage (Restaurants and Catering)

The food service segment has rebounded rapidly from pandemic closures, with many restaurants not only reopening but expanding their payrolls. In the United States, the restaurant industry's workforce **reached a record high in mid-2025**, finally surpassing the pre-pandemic headcount. As of May 2025, U.S. eating and drinking places employed **105,300 more people than in February 2020 (a 0.9% increase)** [nrn.com](#). This milestone came after a year of steady monthly gains – for example, restaurants added 30,200 jobs in May 2025 alone, ahead of the busy summer season [nrn.comnrn.com](#). Total industry employment is expected to hit **15.9 million by the end of 2025**, up from 15.7 million in 2019, according to the National Restaurant Association's forecast [restaurant.orgrestaurant.org](#). Importantly, the recovery has been uneven across restaurant segments. **Quick-service and fast-casual restaurants (limited-service)** have grown their workforce beyond pre-pandemic levels – employment in those segments is **2.6% above 2019**, with

certain niches (like coffee and snack shops) over **20% above pre-pandemic staffing** [nrn.com](https://www.nrn.com). This growth is driven by high demand for takeout, delivery, and convenient dining, trends that accelerated during COVID. In contrast, **full-service restaurants (casual and fine dining)** are still **4–5% below their 2019 employment levels**, with about 237,000 fewer jobs than pre-pandemic in the U.S. [nrn.com](https://www.nrn.com). Many full-service establishments have struggled to rehire enough waitstaff and kitchen crew, reflecting both worker shortages and efficiency improvements (e.g. streamlined menus or more digital ordering reducing labor needs).

Globally, similar trends appear: countries that reopened earlier or have strong domestic demand have seen the foodservice workforce bounce back robustly. For instance, Spain's hospitality workforce (which includes restaurants) grew 5.4% in 2024 to reach an **all-time high in employment**, thanks in part to aggressive hiring of foreign workers and return of tourists etias.comstaffingindustry.com. In Asia, markets like Singapore report a significant surge in hospitality job postings – **up 14.6% from April 2024 to April 2025** – signaling confidence in the restaurant and tourism recovery and an active effort to staff up to meet demand hcamag.com. Restaurant operators across regions are also adjusting their service models learned during the pandemic: the continued popularity of delivery and drive-thru has led to more hiring of drivers and expeditors (often gig workers), and some establishments have adopted technology (QR-code menus, self-order kiosks) to reduce front-of-house staffing needs. Nonetheless, with global foodservice sales expected to hit new heights in 2025 (e.g. **\$1.5 trillion in the U.S., a record** restaurant.org), the F&B sector is once again a major engine of job creation. The key challenge remains finding sufficient staff willing to work in a high-pressure, customer-facing environment that still offers relatively modest pay in many locales – an issue explored in Section 3.

Events, Meetings, and Entertainment

The events industry – encompassing conferences, trade shows (MICE: meetings, incentives, conferences, exhibitions), concerts, festivals, and other live events – experienced one of the slowest recoveries, as large gatherings were restricted longer than other activities. By 2025, however, the sector is **rebounding strongly**, with in-person events returning and even exceeding pre-pandemic scale in some cases. Industry indicators show clear improvements: by late 2024, **attendance at nearly 49% of in-person meetings had surpassed pre-2020 levels**, and event RFP (request for proposal) volumes were up 12%, pointing to more meetings being planned aboutdci.comaboutdci.com. Nearly **40% of event planners expect to host more meetings in 2025 than in 2024**, reflecting renewed confidence and pent-up demand for face-to-face gatherings aboutdci.com. Correspondingly, event venues, convention centers, and production companies have been rehiring. Large conventions and festivals scheduled for 2025 (from

international summits to the return of major music festivals) are staffing up in logistics, A/V, catering, security, and other roles. For example, in the U.S., cities known as convention hubs (Las Vegas, Orlando, etc.) report rising employment in convention services and a need for thousands of temporary staff for major trade shows [workstaff.app](#).

However, the events sector's labor market also faces *unique challenges*. Many skilled event professionals (planners, technicians, venue staff) left the industry during the pandemic-induced shutdown and have since settled in other careers. This "brain drain" means **talent shortages and skills gaps** are acute just as demand surges. A *Futures* report by the Events Industry Council described the situation: **burnout and talent shortages, combined with financial pressures, threaten the industry's long-term health**, and there is a call for new strategies to invest in and retain event talent [tsnn.com](#). Surveys confirm that event organizers are struggling to fill positions – **78% of event professionals say there is a personnel shortage** in the sector [eventplanner.net](#). This has led to increased competition for the limited pool of experienced workers and a growing reliance on freelance and agency staff for events. Many **event venues are turning to staffing agencies and gig workers** to fill roles on event days [peopleready.com](#)[peopleready.com](#). Flexible staffing is now a core part of the events labor model (see Section 7), allowing organizers to scale labor up and down for each event. To attract people back, some venues have offered premium pay rates, signing bonuses, and perks for event staff [peopleready.com](#). There is also a push to improve working conditions – long, irregular hours and high stress have historically been the norm in events, contributing to worker burnout. Industry groups are advocating for better training, clear career pathways, and focus on well-being to make event management a more sustainable career [tsnn.com](#). In summary, the events and entertainment segment is in recovery and hiring mode, but it is essentially having to rebuild its workforce and skills pipeline from a smaller base, with innovative staffing approaches needed to meet the comeback of live events.

Travel and Tourism Services (Airlines, Tours, Cruises, etc.)

Beyond hotels, restaurants, and events, the broader travel and tourism ecosystem – including airlines, cruise lines, tour operators, travel agencies, and attractions – has also seen a significant employment resurgence with some sector-specific nuances. **Airlines** are a critical component: after catastrophic layoffs in 2020, airlines began recalling furloughed staff and hiring new employees en masse once travel demand returned. By 2025, many airlines are *staffing above 2019 levels* in customer service and ground operations to accommodate record passenger volumes. For example, U.S. passenger airlines added tens of thousands of workers from 2021–2024, including pilots, flight attendants, and maintenance crew. However, **certain roles like pilots and aircraft mechanics remain in shortage** due to lengthy training requirements and a wave of retirements. This shortage

contributed to flight disruptions in 2022–2023 and forced airlines to raise wages and offer bonuses to recruit (e.g. regional airlines significantly increased pilot pay). In 2025, airlines are continuing aggressive hiring and training programs; the situation is improving but not fully resolved, with industry estimates of a global pilot shortfall persisting through the decade. Meanwhile, **cruise lines** went from zero operations in 2020 to full fleets sailing by 2022–2023. Cruise companies report that staffing ships has been challenging but manageable – many crew from developing countries eagerly returned when ships relaunched, though some lines faced delays getting visas and medical clearances for crew in 2021. By 2025, cruise employment is largely back, and new ships launching in Asia and Europe are creating additional jobs (crew recruitment is ongoing in countries like the Philippines, Indonesia, India, which supply a large portion of cruise staff). A complicating factor has been new health and safety roles (e.g. more medical staff on board, sanitization teams) which slightly increased overall crew counts per ship.

Tour operators and **travel agencies** have also rebounded. After a deep slump, **travel agencies are hiring again**, especially as travelers seek help navigating complex post-COVID rules or rebook trips. The American Society of Travel Advisors noted that many agencies have more clients in 2023–2024 than pre-pandemic, spurring hiring of travel consultants. Similarly, tour companies in popular destinations (safari operators, adventure travel guides, city tour providers) are seeing demand surge; they are recruiting multilingual guides, drivers, and support staff to expand tour offerings. The **attractions and theme park** segment likewise has recovered strongly – major theme parks report returning to full staffing levels by 2023, though with ongoing recruitment to backfill turnover. For example, in Orlando's theme parks, employment in spring 2025 was near its all-time high as parks run at capacity. One trend is that parks and attractions have raised starting wages to attract workers (Disney World, for instance, negotiated a minimum wage increase to \$18/hour by 2023 for its unionized workers, aiding recruitment).

Overall, the travel and tourism services subsector is largely in growth mode, adding jobs as international and domestic travel thrives in 2025. The WTTC reports that travel and tourism employment worldwide reached **330 million in 2024** (up ~27 million from 2023) and is on track to **fully recover to 2019 levels in 2025** hospitalityinsights.ehl.eduhospitalityinsights.ehl.edu. Certain countries stand out: for example, **Vietnam's travel sector is projected to employ about 5.96 million people in 2024 (roughly 1 in 9 jobs nationally) as tourism booms**, contributing significantly to job creation especially in rural areas via community-based tourism aseanbriefing.comaseanbriefing.com. Destinations in the Middle East, like Saudi Arabia, are investing heavily in tourism and hospitality projects, directly generating new jobs (see Section 5). The main issue across many travel service employers is **finding workers with the right skills and**

willingness – whether pilots, tour guides with language skills, or agents adept with new digital booking tools – to support the industry's rapid resurgence. In many cases, the recovery has outpaced the labor supply, leading to the talent shortages discussed in the next section.

3. Talent Shortages vs. Surpluses, and Changing Recruitment Strategies

One of the most pressing stories of 2025's hospitality job market is the prevalence of **talent shortages**. Virtually every region and subsector is grappling with a shortfall of workers relative to demand, although a few pockets have seen labor supply catch up (or even modest surpluses in certain roles). This section explores where the gaps are most acute and how employers are adjusting their recruitment and hiring strategies in response.

Widespread Staff Shortages: As travel came roaring back, many hospitality businesses found themselves understaffed. In mid-2024, a survey by the American Hotel & Lodging Association found **76% of hotels were experiencing staffing shortages**, with 13% reporting "severe" shortages – a worsening situation compared to earlier in the year [pcma.org](https://www.pcma.org). By late 2024, **nearly 65% of U.S. hoteliers still said they couldn't find enough workers** despite a year of active hiring [ahla.com](https://www.ahla.com). The problem spans front-line positions (housekeepers, servers, cooks, front desk agents) up through skilled roles (sales managers, chefs). Europe faces a similar challenge: the summer of 2025 saw **major tourist destinations in Europe scrambling to fill hospitality jobs** – for instance, Greece had ~80,000 open roles in hotels and restaurants that were unfilled as peak season approached [theguardian.com](https://www.theguardian.com). In Spain and Italy, thousands of waiter and cook positions went vacant even with high general unemployment, pointing to a mismatch between available workers and job conditions [theguardian.com](https://www.theguardian.com). Labor shortages are not limited to Western markets; Asian countries that rely on tourism (Thailand, Vietnam, Japan, etc.) also report difficulty luring workers back to hospitality, especially in resort areas, after many shifted to other sectors during the pandemic. An Asia-Pacific tourism workforce study highlighted **"difficulty attracting new talent" and high turnover as key challenges across the region's hospitality sector** [pata.org](https://www.pata.org).

Contributing to these shortages are several factors: (1) **Workers permanently left the industry** during COVID (e.g. event staff who found day jobs elsewhere, or older workers who retired); (2) Hospitality jobs have reputational challenges – many potential employees are hesitant to accept jobs historically seen as offering **low pay, demanding hours, limited career growth, and even health risks**, leading them to seek work in other industries [pcma.org](https://www.pcma.org); (3) **Demographic trends** such as

aging populations in Europe/Japan mean fewer young workers to fill traditionally youth-heavy hospitality roles, and migration patterns have shifted (for example, Brexit curtailed the flow of European hospitality workers into the UK, causing staffing woes in pubs, hotels, and restaurants there). These factors have created a tight labor market where **the number of job openings often exceeds applicants** in hospitality. For instance, in the U.S., as of early 2024 there were roughly 1.5 million job openings in leisure and hospitality – well above the number of unemployed persons with recent experience in the industry [uschamber.com](https://www.uschamber.com). Employers now view the talent shortage as a bigger constraint on business growth than even access to capital americas.hsmi.org.

It's worth noting a few exceptions: some regions with slower tourism recovery or higher unemployment do have available hospitality labor. In parts of Latin America and Africa, where the travel rebound has been more gradual, there is a pool of workers eager for hospitality jobs (leading to increased international recruitment from these areas, see Section 8). Additionally, certain job categories have surplus candidates – for example, in late 2020/2021, there was briefly a surplus of hotel managers available (due to hotel closures) and some savvy companies hired those displaced managers. But by 2025, these surpluses have largely evaporated with the global rebound. For most operational roles, *shortage* is the dominant narrative.

Recruitment and Hiring Strategies: To confront labor shortages, hospitality employers and recruiters have radically shifted their strategies and tactics in 2024–2025. A central approach has been **making jobs more attractive to candidates** through better compensation and incentives. According to an AHLA survey, **47.5% of hotels said they raised wages** in an effort to attract and retain staff, making pay the top tactic by far [ahla.com](https://www.ahla.com). Wage increases in the range of 10–30% have been common for front-line roles since 2021, and many companies continue to implement annual raises above inflation to stay competitive. For example, U.S. hotels in many markets are offering starting hourly wages well above minimum wage (in some cases 20-30% higher than pre-pandemic rates) to fill housekeeping and kitchen positions [ahla.com](https://www.ahla.com). In Europe, hoteliers on Greek islands have started providing not just higher pay but also free accommodation and meals to lure staff from the mainland [theguardian.com](https://www.theguardian.com). Restaurants in Spain have offered referral bonuses (e.g. a hotel in Ibiza paying €200 to staff who refer a new hire) [theguardian.com](https://www.theguardian.com). Beyond pay, **other incentives have proliferated**: signing bonuses for hard-to-fill jobs (one U.S. theme park offered \$1,000 sign-on bonuses for lifeguards in 2022), retention bonuses for staying through the season, and even creative perks. Some U.S. restaurant chains are experimenting with **same-day pay** – allowing employees to get paid at the end of each shift – to entice workers who value instant access to wages [peopleready.com](https://www.peopleready.com).

Another major strategy is emphasizing **work-life balance and flexibility** in an industry infamous for unpredictable schedules. In a late-2024 survey, nearly **20% of hotel operators said they have started offering more flexible work hours** or scheduling as a key retention and recruitment tool [ahla.com](https://www.ahla.com). For instance, employers are more willing to accommodate students' class schedules or parents' needs by offering split shifts or set days off. The events sector, where gig work is common, has found that **87% of workers want control over their schedules**, so venues are partnering with apps that let staff choose which events to work [peopleready.com](https://www.peopleready.com). Flexibility is a win-win in such cases: workers appreciate the autonomy, and employers can tap a larger pool of people who might not commit to full-time but will work occasionally. **Part-time opportunities and gig roles** (discussed further in Section 7) are increasingly highlighted in job postings to attract individuals who cannot or do not want full-time jobs. Additionally, some hospitality firms are touting quality-of-life improvements like predictable shifts (e.g. posting schedules further in advance), limiting very late/early hours, or introducing “no clopen” policies (preventing staff from closing late and opening early next day).

Expanding the Talent Pool: To find candidates, companies are broadening their recruitment outreach. This includes tapping into non-traditional labor sources: *older workers* and retirees are being wooed back in certain markets (for example, theme parks hosting “55+ job fairs” to hire active seniors for guest service roles), and some hotels are hiring people with disabilities in appropriate roles as part of inclusive hiring drives. Many businesses are also leaning on **immigrant and international labor programs** (detailed in Section 8) – such as seasonal work visas, cross-border recruitment agreements, and refugee workforce integration – to fill roles that locals are not filling. For example, **Greece’s hotel association began training asylum seekers for hotel jobs in 2025**, and the government moved to legalize thousands of undocumented migrants specifically to alleviate hospitality staffing shortages [theguardian.com](https://www.theguardian.com). In the U.S., restaurants and resorts have pressed for expanded H-2B seasonal work visa quotas to bring in cooks, servers, and housekeepers from abroad, and agencies report strong uptake of J-1 visa students for summer hospitality jobs in 2023–2025. **Recruiting internationally** has become a necessary strategy in many countries; as one Spanish hospitality executive bluntly stated, “We don’t have enough locals willing to do these jobs, so we need people from abroad” [gpa.netetias.com](https://www.gpa.netetias.com).

At the same time, hospitality HR teams are **leveraging technology and professionalized recruitment practices** more than before. The desperation of 2021–2022, when many operators simply hung “Now Hiring” signs and offered cash to anyone who applied, has matured into a more data-driven approach in 2025. Companies are using **AI-powered recruitment tools** and social media campaigns to source talent, screening candidates quickly at scale. Online job postings have been turbocharged: for example, Hilton launched an “automated interview” system that lets

applicants submit a video or answers via text AI, speeding up hiring decisions to mere days, to avoid losing candidates to competitors. Many employers also highlight the **career advancement opportunities in hospitality** to attract ambitious workers. The AHLA notes that several hotel chains now advertise clear promotion pathways – e.g. **entry-level hotel jobs are among the top careers for upward mobility**, where an employee can rise to a manager role within a few years ahla.com. This messaging is an attempt to shed the industry's image as "dead-end jobs" and instead pitch it as an exciting, global career. Additionally, companies are boosting **training and apprenticeship programs**. For example, Marriott and Hilton expanded their management training programs in 2024 to enroll more candidates fresh out of school (including those without hospitality degrees), to build a pipeline of future managers and chefs. In Asia-Pacific, the PATA report recommends exactly this: closer collaboration between industry and academia to prepare youth with **"future-ready skills"** and realistic expectations, in order to draw more young talent into tourism careers pata.orgpata.org.

Retention as Recruitment: Finally, companies recognize that retaining the employees they have is critical so they aren't constantly refilling the same positions. Thus, many recruitment strategies overlap with **retention strategies**. These include improving workplace culture, offering referral bonuses (to let current staff help recruit friends, lowering hiring costs), and investing in employee well-being (discussed in Section 6 and Section 9 on DEI). For instance, a survey of restaurant operators found that **retention (27%) is nearly as big a concern as recruiting (30%)** in the current tight labor market 7shifts.com. Employers are responding by creating mentorship programs, offering more training (to give employees a sense of progression), and recognizing and rewarding tenure (e.g. bonuses at 6-month or 1-year marks, which in a high-turnover sector can significantly improve retention). By reducing the revolving door of turnover, businesses effectively increase their available staffing without new hires.

In summary, hospitality in 2025 is in an aggressive recruitment mode to tackle talent shortages. Strategies center on **paying more, being more flexible, casting a wider net for candidates, and improving job quality and career appeal**. The industry is reinventing how it markets itself to workers – adopting a "hospitality is back open for careers" mindset – which is a marked change from the pre-pandemic status quo. These recruitment adaptations are closely tied to the evolution in required skillsets and roles, which we turn to next.

4. Skillset Transformations Driven by Technology, Automation, and Sustainability

As the hospitality industry evolves in the mid-2020s, so do the skills and competencies required of its workforce. Technology adoption, automation, and the push for sustainable operations are transforming how work is done in hospitality, leading to both the creation of new roles and the upskilling (or reskilling) of existing employees. This section examines how tech and sustainability trends are reshaping the skillset landscape.

Technology as a Catalyst for New Skills: The pandemic dramatically accelerated **technology integration** in hospitality – from contactless check-ins and mobile ordering to AI-powered chatbots handling guest inquiries. In 2025, this tech transformation continues at full throttle. The American Hotel & Lodging Association observes that *“technology is the single most powerful force driving the future of hospitality,”* with advances like **generative AI, cloud-based systems, and smart hotel devices** fundamentally changing operations [ahla.com](https://www.ahla.com). As a result, hospitality employees at all levels are expected to be more tech-savvy. **Digital literacy** is now a baseline requirement even for traditionally low-tech roles: front-desk agents must navigate cloud-based property management systems and mobile key platforms; restaurant servers often handle tableside tablets or mobile POS systems; and event coordinators use sophisticated event management software. The industry has seen the emergence of positions like **Hotel IT Specialist, Digital Concierge, and Data Analyst** – roles that barely existed a decade ago. For example, some larger hotels now employ a “guest experience analyst” who crunches data on guest preferences and feedback to personalize services, requiring analytical and software skills alongside hospitality knowledge.

Crucially, technology is not replacing the human touch but **augmenting it**, which means staff need to learn to work *alongside* automation. Consider the rise of **automation and robotics** in hospitality: some hotels deploy service robots for room deliveries or cleaning, and restaurants experiment with robotic kitchen equipment or automated beverage dispensers. These innovations shift the skill focus of certain jobs. Housekeepers, for instance, might need to learn to operate and troubleshoot an autonomous vacuum or linen delivery robot. Kitchen staff may need to oversee robotic fryers or use tablets that monitor cooking processes. Essentially, the workforce must develop the skills to manage and maintain automated systems. A report by Oracle Hospitality envisions a 2025 hotel where AI and IoT handle many routine tasks, but **humans are needed for oversight, interpretation of data, and personalized interactions** [oracle.com](https://www.oracle.com). This calls for hybrid skillsets: a concierge might also be a “tech concierge” capable of helping guests with the mobile app or smart room features. Training

programs are increasingly incorporating IT modules – for example, **hospitality schools are teaching students about AI, data analytics, and even basic coding**, on top of classic hospitality curriculum hospitalityinsights.ehl.eduhospitalityinsights.ehl.edu.

Another facet is **AI and machine learning** applications. Hotels and travel companies use AI for revenue management (dynamic pricing), forecasting demand, and customer service chatbots. Employees in revenue management or marketing now need to interpret AI-driven insights and make strategic decisions – a skillset blending tech fluency with business acumen. In customer-facing areas, staff must handle edge cases that AI can't, requiring higher problem-solving skills. For instance, if an AI chatbot fails to answer a complex guest request, a human agent steps in and needs both the interpersonal skill to appease the guest and the technical skill to quickly pull up information across systems. The net effect is that **critical thinking, adaptability, and digital comfort** have become much more important competencies in hospitality roles.

New Roles and Skills in Sustainability: Concurrently, the hospitality industry's drive toward sustainability and social responsibility is spawning new roles and skill requirements. Travel and hospitality businesses are under pressure to reduce their environmental footprint – through energy efficiency, waste reduction, sustainable sourcing, and community engagement – and this has direct implications for jobs. Many companies, especially large hotel chains and tourism operators, have created positions like **Sustainability Manager, Environmental Officer, or CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) Coordinator**. These roles require knowledge of sustainable practices (energy management, green building, recycling programs, etc.) and often project management skills to implement initiatives. For example, a **Sustainability Coordinator in a hotel** might be responsible for analyzing water and energy usage data, training staff on eco-friendly practices, and coordinating with departments to reduce waste hospitalityinsights.ehl.eduhospitalityinsights.ehl.edu. EHL (a leading hospitality management university) noted the growing demand for such professionals by launching a Sustainable Hospitality Management specialization, recognizing that graduates with sustainability expertise have **a wealth of career opportunities** as hotels strive to go green hospitalityinsights.ehl.eduhospitalityinsights.ehl.edu.

Even for roles not dedicated to sustainability, there is an increasing expectation that employees understand and support environmental initiatives. **Line-level staff are being trained in sustainable operations** – for instance, housekeepers are taught about using green cleaning products and linen reuse programs, kitchen staff learn about food waste separation and composting, and tour guides are educated on conservation principles to communicate to tourists. Thus, a general “sustainability literacy” is becoming part of the skillset. A report on Asia-Pacific's tourism workforce highlights a **skills gap in digital literacy and sustainability** – meaning many current workers lack training in

these areas, and bridging this gap is crucial pata.org. This has prompted collaborations between industry and educators to incorporate sustainability modules in vocational training. Additionally, knowledge of **local culture and community engagement** can be considered part of the broader shift in skillset, as sustainable tourism emphasizes benefiting local communities. For example, staff may need to have cultural sensitivity and the ability to communicate a destination's heritage to guests as part of responsible tourism.

Adaptability and Multi-Skilling: A general trend is that hospitality employers value **adaptability and multi-skilling more than ever**. The pandemic taught businesses to be lean and flexible, and many are retaining cross-functional roles. For instance, a single employee might be trained to handle reception and also assist in the reservations department remotely, or a restaurant server might also be the social media ambassador for the outlet on slower days. This requires workers to develop a broader skill range beyond a single specialty. Many job postings in 2025 explicitly mention looking for “adaptive team players” who can wear multiple hats. On the flip side, employees with specialized tech or sustainability skills can stand out – there is rising demand for talent who can drive innovation, such as chefs proficient in plant-based cuisine (addressing sustainability and new food trends), or marketing managers skilled in data analytics for personalized guest targeting.

Human Skills Still Paramount: While tech and automation are crucial, hospitality remains a people-centric industry. Thus, **soft skills – communication, empathy, problem-solving, cultural awareness – are as important as ever**, arguably even more so in an era where guests expect high-touch experiences after years of restricted travel. The infusion of tech means the human interactions that do occur are often for more complex or high-value situations. Employees must excel at resolving unusual problems and making genuine connections with guests. A hotel might automate basic requests (extra towels via an app), but when a guest has a nuanced issue or special occasion, staff need emotional intelligence and creativity to respond in a memorable way. In essence, technology is taking over routine transactions, **freeing staff to focus on higher-level service** – but only if staff are trained and empowered to do so. Leading companies are thus training their teams not just on tech systems but also on **elevating the guest experience** in tandem with those systems. As one hospitality tech report put it, successful adoption of automation “*must go hand in hand with sustaining trust with both guests and employees*” ahla.com, underscoring that building soft skills and a culture of trust is part of the transformation.

In summary, the hospitality workforce of 2025 is expected to be **more technologically proficient, environmentally conscious, and versatile**. Upskilling and reskilling efforts are widespread – through a combination of formal training programs and on-the-job learning – to ensure employees can operate new tools (from AI software to automated equipment) and implement sustainability

initiatives. This trend not only improves efficiency and meets guest expectations, but also can enhance job attractiveness (workers gain valuable new skills) which feeds back into tackling the talent shortage. Still, the core of hospitality – delivering warm, attentive service – remains rooted in human skills, so the challenge for employers is to blend high-tech with “high-touch” skillsets in their teams.

5. Regional Differences in Hospitality Employment Opportunities

The hospitality labor market in 2025 is not monolithic worldwide – it varies significantly by region due to different recovery timelines, economic conditions, and local labor dynamics. This section highlights the regional nuances in employment opportunities and workforce trends across **North America, Europe, Asia-Pacific**, and the **Middle East** (with mention of other regions as relevant).

North America (U.S. and Canada)

North America’s hospitality job market has largely rebounded, with the United States leading the way. As detailed earlier, the U.S. leisure and hospitality sector is *almost* back to its pre-pandemic employment size – by mid-2025 it even exceeded it in the restaurant segment [nrn.com](#). **Travel demand in the U.S. has normalized or grown in most segments** (leisure travel is very strong, though business travel is still recovering), translating to abundant job openings in hotels, food service, attractions, and casinos. The American hospitality sector also benefited from substantial government support during the pandemic (like grants to restaurants and hotels), which helped many businesses survive and now ramp back up hiring. By 2025, **employment opportunities are plentiful across the country**, though the ease of hiring varies. Major urban and resort destinations (e.g. Orlando, Las Vegas, New York) have high demand for hospitality workers, sometimes outstripping local supply. In contrast, some rural areas with smaller tourism activity have fewer openings, and a handful of states still haven’t fully regained their 2019 hospitality employment levels – e.g. West Virginia, Massachusetts, and some Northeastern states are a few percent below pre-pandemic restaurant employment as of 2024 [nrn.com](#). But these gaps are closing as travel redistributes and workers relocate.

Canada mirrors many U.S. trends, with strong recovery in hotel occupancy and record demand for domestic tourism. Canadian hotels and restaurants have reported labor shortages similar to the U.S., especially in resort areas (e.g. the Rocky Mountain parks region struggled to find seasonal staff in 2022–2023). The Canadian government increased temporary foreign worker allowances for

hospitality to help alleviate shortages. By 2025, **Canada's hospitality job market is robust**, with employment in accommodation and food services nearing or exceeding pre-pandemic numbers, and a focus on improving job quality to attract workers (some provinces raised minimum wages and funded tourism workforce initiatives).

A distinctive aspect in North America is the **competition for workers from other sectors**. With low unemployment overall (the U.S. jobless rate hovered around 4–5% through 2024), hospitality employers find themselves competing with sectors like retail, warehouses, and gig economy jobs (e.g. rideshare or delivery) for entry-level labor. This competition drives wages up – for example, large employers like Amazon or Walmart offering \$15–20/hour forced many restaurants to match those rates to hire staff in certain markets. It also pushes innovation in benefits; some U.S. restaurants began offering perks like tuition reimbursement or child-care assistance to stand out. Another factor in the U.S. is that **immigration and work visa policies** influence labor availability (see Section 8). The restriction of new immigration in 2020–2021 contributed to shortages, but recent moves (like increasing H-2B visas and easing some immigration rules in 2023) have slightly improved the picture.

Overall, North America presents a **high-demand, high-opportunity environment** for hospitality jobs – especially for workers with skills or those willing to work odd hours, as such positions remain chronically unfilled. The career outlook is positive; the National Restaurant Association speaks of “opportunity and cautious optimism” driving growth, projecting not just more jobs in 2025 but also many **advancement opportunities** as the industry emphasizes career pathways [restaurant.org](https://www.restaurant.org). However, employers must navigate the reality that the old labor model (relying on an endless pipeline of cheap labor) is gone – higher wages and better conditions are now baseline expectations in the North American market.

Europe

Europe's hospitality labor market in 2025 is a study in contrasts. On one hand, Europe saw an impressive tourism rebound in 2022–2023, with many countries welcoming volumes of tourists near or above 2019 levels. This has created **surging demand for hospitality workers** across hotels, restaurants, and travel services. Southern European nations like Spain, Italy, Portugal, and Greece – heavily dependent on tourism – experienced especially acute hiring needs as record summer tourist crowds returned. For example, **Greece's tourism sector (25% of GDP) struggled to fill tens of thousands of jobs in early 2025** despite the impending high season, highlighting a continent-wide issue [theguardian.com](https://www.theguardian.com). Spain's hospitality industry reported a shortfall of around

200,000 workers in summer 2023 even amid high general unemployment [theguardian.com](https://www.theguardian.com). These shortages underline a paradox in Europe: **the jobs are there, but workers are not readily taking them.**

Several factors contribute to Europe's scenario. First, the pandemic led many foreign workers to leave and return home (e.g. Eastern Europeans who had staffed Western Europe's hotels and restaurants). Post-pandemic, not all returned, and policies like Brexit made it harder for cross-border labor flow into the UK hospitality sector. The **UK has been particularly hit**, with its pubs, restaurants, and hotels reporting severe staff shortages after EU workers left – job vacancies in UK hospitality were 48% higher in 2022 than pre-pandemic. The UK government, historically reluctant on immigration, had to add certain hospitality jobs (chefs, for instance) to its Shortage Occupation List to allow more visas, and businesses increased wages significantly (UK hospitality pay grew faster than many industries in 2022–24) to attract domestic workers.

In the EU, countries are responding with various measures. **Greece's government legalized 30,000 migrants and signed labor mobility agreements with countries like Egypt, Bangladesh, and Vietnam specifically to supply hospitality workers** [theguardian.com](https://www.theguardian.com). **Spain and Portugal recruited workers from Latin America and Asia** – for example, Spain launched recruitment drives in countries like Honduras and the Philippines to staff hotels and resorts gpa.netetias.com. **Germany**, facing an overall skilled labor shortage, reformed its immigration laws in 2023 to make it easier for non-EU citizens to work in sectors including hospitality. Despite these efforts, many European hospitality employers in 2025 are still short-staffed. Anecdotally, hotels in tourist hotspots have had to limit capacity or services (e.g. closing some rooms or reducing restaurant hours) because they cannot hire enough cleaners or cooks. The conditions of hospitality jobs are part of the challenge: Europeans workers, especially younger ones, often prefer jobs with **better work-life balance**. As one Greek restaurateur noted, "Greeks prefer 9-to-5 office jobs now, not working at night or weekends," which makes hospitality roles less appealing domestically [theguardian.com](https://www.theguardian.com)[theguardian.com](https://www.theguardian.com). There is also a **stigma** in some countries around hospitality careers, seen as low status, which was exacerbated by the pandemic's impact [theguardian.com](https://www.theguardian.com)[theguardian.com](https://www.theguardian.com).

Despite shortages, **wage growth and conditions are slowly improving** in Europe's hospitality sector, which could draw more workers over time. For instance, **hoteliers in popular islands have started poaching staff from each other with promises of higher pay and better conditions**, driving up wage offers [theguardian.com](https://www.theguardian.com). Unions and labor movements in hospitality are gaining momentum – in countries like France and Germany, unions have negotiated wage increases for hotel and restaurant workers in 2023 to cope with inflation and reward their role in the recovery.

Additionally, Europe's focus on work-life balance is prompting experiments like Spain's discussion of a pilot 4-day workweek (though not specifically in hospitality yet, such ideas could spill over to the sector eventually).

Regional disparities within Europe are worth noting. Northern European countries (Scandinavia, etc.) tend to have higher wages and stronger safety nets, which meant fewer workers left permanently, and their hospitality sectors, while smaller, are closer to fully staffed (though they too report difficulty in peak seasons, since they relied on intra-Europe seasonal workers pre-COVID). Southern and Mediterranean countries have the largest gaps and rely more on foreign seasonal labor now. Central/Eastern European countries, some of which are sources of labor for the west, have their own tourism recovery (e.g. Croatia's Adriatic coast booming) and are now themselves importing labor from even farther (Asia/Africa) to fill hospitality jobs. It's a cascading effect.

In summary, **Europe has no lack of hospitality job opportunities in 2025** – in fact, many more jobs are available than can be filled under current conditions. The onus is on industry and governments to make these jobs attractive enough. The short-term approach has been to import labor, but longer-term strategies include automating some tasks, raising pay, improving training, and changing perceptions of hospitality careers. The ongoing labor crunch suggests that Europe's hospitality job market will remain candidate-friendly for the foreseeable future, with upward pressure on wages and benefits as employers compete over a limited workforce.

Asia-Pacific

The Asia-Pacific region's hospitality job market in 2025 is characterized by **rapid growth with some lagging pockets and a focus on workforce development**. Asia's tourism recovery timeline differed by country: some reopened early (e.g. Maldives in 2020, Dubai (Middle East) in mid-2020, though Dubai is in Middle East region, not APAC), while others like China and Japan remained closed to international tourists until mid/late 2022. By 2023–2024, virtually all Asia-Pacific destinations were open, and a massive resurgence of travel is underway, fueling **surges in hospitality employment**.

Many APAC countries are seeing tourism jobs return *and expand*. For example, in Southeast Asia, Vietnam recorded a huge influx of tourists in 2023–2024 (international arrivals up 23.8% year-on-year in early 2025) and forecasts nearly **6 million travel and tourism jobs in 2024**, making tourism one of its largest employers aseanbriefing.com. Similarly, **Indonesia and Thailand** have millions employed in tourism, and as visitor numbers approach pre-pandemic highs, hotels and resorts are rehiring aggressively (though Thailand in 2023 noted a shortage of tens of thousands of hospitality workers, prompting it to simplify work permits for foreign workers in tourism straitstimes.com/thailand/opendevelopmentmekong.net). **Singapore** is a noteworthy case: its

hospitality job postings jumped by almost 15% from 2024 to 2025 hcamag.com, indicating both strong growth and confidence in the sector's prospects. Singapore's success in drawing jobseekers was attributed in part to a campaign highlighting tourism careers and matching talent to new roles – an Indeed spokesperson noted that “thriving jobseeker interest is a good sign” but emphasized the need to channel this talent effectively for long-term growth hcamag.com.

However, **Asia-Pacific also faces unique workforce challenges**. A comprehensive 2025 study by the Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) found that across APAC, there are urgent workforce issues, including difficulty attracting talent (especially young people), high turnover, and notable **skills gaps in areas like digital and sustainability** pata.org. A “next-gen” workforce is entering, but the industry needs to adapt to their expectations. Stakeholders in Asia report that many young workers have misaligned expectations – they might expect rapid advancement or modern work environments that some hospitality employers aren't yet providing pata.org. To address this, countries like **Malaysia, Thailand, and Indonesia** are investing in hospitality education and training programs, often in partnership with hotels (apprenticeship-style models). **Japan** is another interesting case: with strict pre-pandemic limits on foreign labor, it experienced severe hospitality staff shortages when domestic demand recovered. In response, Japan expanded special visa categories for hotel and F&B workers from overseas and is promoting greater inclusion of women and older workers in a sector traditionally dominated by young men. By 2025, Japan's hotel employment is improving but still tight, partly because language and aging population constrain the labor pool.

Australia and New Zealand also faced acute hospitality labor shortages after reopening in late 2021. Their reliance on international backpackers and students for service jobs meant that, when borders were closed, many businesses had to curtail operations. Now, with borders open, both countries have ramped up working holiday visa programs and are seeing more travelers return to take those hospitality gigs. Wages have risen as well – e.g., Australia's restaurants had to raise pay when competing for a smaller number of working holidaymakers initially. By 2025, the pipeline of young travelers working in Oz/NZ is normalizing, aiding the staffing of resorts, bars, and travel tour operators there.

China (the world's largest outbound tourism source pre-COVID) is an important part of APAC. Its domestic tourism market recovered strongly in 2021–2022, which kept many hospitality jobs intact, but its outbound and inbound tourism only normalized in 2023. Chinese tourism and hospitality companies are hiring to serve renewed demand (for instance, new theme parks opened, hotels are expanding), yet there is also an economic headwind – China's economy has slowed somewhat, which WTTC notes may temper tourism growth in 2025 wttc.org. Nonetheless, hospitality remains a

key job creator in China; hotels in major cities are recruiting as international visitors come back, and big events like the 2022 Beijing Olympics (though held under restrictions) and future Asian Cup, etc., underscore the sector's importance.

In sum, Asia-Pacific offers **growing hospitality employment opportunities**, especially in countries with proactive tourism growth strategies (e.g. Vietnam, Indonesia, Saudi Arabia in West Asia/Middle East). The region's challenge is ensuring the workforce is "future-ready." Governments and industry groups are focusing on **human capital development** – PATA's report calls for better public-private collaboration, updated curricula, and aligning training with real industry needs pata.org. Addressing these will determine if APAC can fully capitalize on its booming tourism with a skilled and sustainable workforce.

Middle East

The Middle East's hospitality job market in 2025 is buoyant, driven by ambitious tourism development goals and global events. Many Middle Eastern countries – particularly the Gulf states – view tourism and hospitality as a key pillar of economic diversification (away from oil), and they are investing heavily in new attractions, mega-events, and infrastructure. This has translated into **rapid job growth in hospitality** across the region, often outpacing the available local labor supply and relying on expatriate workers.

Saudi Arabia exemplifies this trend. Under its Vision 2030 plan, Saudi Arabia is aggressively expanding tourism, with projects like the Red Sea luxury resort, the NEOM futuristic city (which includes hospitality/leisure components), and various heritage site openings. WTTC projects that Saudi's Travel & Tourism sector will contribute over 10% of GDP by 2025 and that **sector employment will reach a record high of 2.7 million jobs** in the Kingdom wttc.org. Indeed, Saudi officials aim to create **1.6 million tourism jobs by 2030** through these investments middleeastbriefing.com. In the short term, Saudi Arabia's approach to staffing has two prongs: importing talent and "Saudization" (localization) of jobs. To build up a nascent tourism industry, they have been recruiting experienced hotel managers, chefs, and tour professionals from countries like Lebanon, Europe, and the Philippines, often offering very competitive pay packages (reports indicate some Saudi properties paying above global market rates to attract top hospitality talent). Simultaneously, the government has introduced targets to increase the proportion of Saudis in hospitality jobs – for example, a plan to localize 40+ tourism professions by 2028, meaning more Saudi nationals trained and hired as tour guides, front-desk agents, etc. soulofsaudi.com. This push is gradually filling roles with local youth, though expatriates still dominate private-sector service jobs for now.

The **United Arab Emirates (UAE)**, especially Dubai and Abu Dhabi, recovered early from the pandemic by reopening to tourism in mid-2020 and hosting global events like Dubai Expo 2020 (which actually took place Oct 2021–Mar 2022 due to delay). Dubai's hospitality workforce bounced back fast; by 2022, many hotels were reporting staffing shortages again as demand surged. The UAE hospitality labor market in 2025 remains vibrant – Dubai continues to set tourism records and is preparing to host major conferences and perhaps a future Olympic bid, all of which create jobs. The UAE's labor pool for hospitality is predominantly foreign (from South Asia, Philippines, Africa, etc.), and that pipeline is robust, though costs have risen (e.g. accommodation costs for workers). The **Gulf region** overall (Qatar, Oman, Bahrain, etc.) has similar dynamics: Qatar ramped up staffing for the 2022 FIFA World Cup (bringing in thousands of temporary hospitality staff and volunteers) and is now focusing on maintaining tourism momentum post-World Cup. Oman is developing high-end resorts requiring skilled hospitality staff. These countries typically have small local populations, so **labor mobility from abroad is crucial** – they have relatively streamlined visa processes for approved nationalities to work in hospitality, and labor agencies facilitate a steady inflow.

Outside the Gulf, other Middle Eastern countries have varied situations. **Egypt**, for instance, has a large domestic labor force and a huge tourism sector centered on antiquities and Red Sea resorts. Tourism jobs in Egypt are recovering strongly as visitor numbers increase, and Egypt's challenge is more economic – ensuring jobs pay well enough amidst high inflation to retain workers (many Egyptian hospitality workers emigrated to Gulf for higher pay). **Turkey** is another major hospitality employer; despite economic volatility, its tourism sector boomed in 2023–24 (partly due to a weak lira making it affordable for foreigners), creating many jobs. Turkey has ample labor supply domestically, but the earthquake in 2023 impacted some regions' tourism workforce.

A unique aspect in the Middle East is the emphasis on **service quality and luxury** – many new projects are ultra-luxury (Saudi's Red Sea, Dubai's myriad 5-star hotels), which require highly trained staff. Thus, there is a premium on skilled hospitality professionals (chefs, sommeliers, spa therapists, etc.), often brought from abroad. This creates great opportunities for those professionals, but also spurs local training initiatives (e.g. Saudi and UAE have scholarship programs to send citizens to hospitality schools abroad).

In summary, the Middle East is a **growth hotspot for hospitality jobs** in 2025, with some of the world's largest increases in tourism employment happening there. The combination of wealthy investment, global events, and government-led expansion plans makes it an exciting market. However, it is uniquely characterized by reliance on migrant labor and top-down workforce planning.

For job seekers (globally), the Middle East offers abundant opportunities, often tax-free salaries, but also typically term-limited expatriate contracts. For the region itself, the key will be balancing imported vs. local workforce and maintaining labor standards amid rapid expansion.

The table below provides a comparative snapshot of regional hospitality employment recovery and challenges in 2025:

| REGION | RECOVERY OF HOSPITALITY JOBS | KEY WORKFORCE CHALLENGES/NOTES |
|----------------------|--|--|
| North America | Near full recovery. U.S. leisure/hospitality employment is around 100% of pre-pandemic levels (restaurants slightly above 2019; hotels slightly below) ahla.com . Canada similarly close to full recovery. | Persistent staffing shortages in many markets; competition from other industries for workers. Employers raising wages and improving conditions to attract talent. Relies on immigrant labor for some seasonal roles (e.g. visas for resort workers). |
| Europe | High demand, but not fully met. Tourism rebounded strongly, creating many job openings. Some countries (e.g. Spain) have more hospitality jobs in 2024 than ever, but tens of thousands of positions remain unfilled theguardian.com . Overall, employment is still slightly below potential due to lack of workers. | Acute labor shortages, especially in Southern Europe during peak seasons. Many foreign workers left; slow return. Reluctance among locals to work in hospitality due to low pay/hard hours. Immigration being used to fill gaps (e.g. EU agreements, UK shortage occupation visas, legalized migrants in Greece) theguardian.com . Wage increases and better perks emerging as firms compete for scarce staff. |
| Asia-Pacific | Resumed growth. By 2025, most APAC destinations have recovered or exceeded 2019 tourism employment. E.g., SE Asia seeing rapid job growth (Singapore hospitality jobs +14.6% YoY) hcamag.com ; Vietnam on track for record tourism jobs aseanbriefing.com . Some late-reopening countries (Japan, etc.) catching up now. | Skills and talent gaps despite recovery. Difficulty attracting young talent to industry roles pata.org . High turnover remains an issue. Many countries ramping up training and education to address digital and sustainability skill gaps pata.org . Reliance on migrant workers for certain hotspots (e.g. Thai resorts, Australian outback) and working-holiday workers. |
| Middle East | Surpassing pre-2019 levels. Aggressive expansion (especially Gulf states) has increased hospitality employment beyond previous highs. Saudi Arabia projects all-time high tourism jobs in 2025 (2.7 million) wttc.org . | Labor supply is heavily migrant-based. Challenge to recruit sufficient skilled workers for mega-developments – resulting in global recruitment drives (with high pay offers). Localization |

| REGION | RECOVERY OF HOSPITALITY JOBS | KEY WORKFORCE CHALLENGES/NOTES |
|--------|--|---|
| | UAE's sector fully recovered early; continuing growth with new projects. | policies (e.g. Saudi) aim to train more citizens in hospitality. Maintaining service quality with rapid scaling is focus (lots of training needed). Working conditions and worker welfare (for migrant staff) are areas of scrutiny. |

6. Wage Trends, Labor Mobility, and Working Conditions in Hospitality Roles

Wage Trends: Wages in the hospitality industry have been on a notable upward trajectory in 2024–2025 – a direct outcome of labor shortages and inflationary pressures. After years of relatively stagnant pay, many hospitality roles are now seeing **record-high wage levels or growth rates**. In the United States, for instance, average hourly earnings in leisure and hospitality jumped significantly starting in 2021 and continued to rise through 2024, outpacing overall wage growth. As discussed, **total wages paid by U.S. hotels are projected to be about 25% higher in 2025 than in 2019, despite employing fewer people** [ahla.com](https://www.ahla.com). This implies much higher average pay per employee. Housekeepers, front-desk clerks, line cooks, and servers have all seen wage increases in many markets. Some specific cases: **Fast-food workers in several U.S. states got hikes** (e.g. California enacted a law raising minimum wage for fast-food workers to \$20/hour in 2024), and many full-service restaurants had to boost base pay as well, especially where tipping has declined or to comply with rising minimum wages. Indeed, multiple U.S. states (New York, Illinois, Michigan, etc.) are in the process of **eliminating the sub-minimum tipped wage**, ensuring tipped employees earn the full standard minimum wage before tips [ogletree.comrestaurant-hospitality.com](https://ogletree.com/restaurant-hospitality.com) – this effectively raises take-home pay for servers and bartenders and increases labor costs for employers. In Europe, hospitality wages historically lagged national averages, but there's movement here too: countries like **Germany and France increased their statutory minimum wages** in 2022/2023, directly lifting pay for many hotel and restaurant workers. Spain's hospitality associations reported agreed wage increases of around 5% for 2023 after negotiations, in part to attract workers and in part to match cost-of-living rises [mckinsey.com](https://www.mckinsey.com). In the UK, acute shortages pushed some restaurant wages up by 10–15% year-over-year in 2022. Moreover, **overtime and bonuses** have become more common to entice staff to cover shifts – further boosting income.

For skilled positions, wages are also climbing due to competition. A talented chef or experienced hotel manager is in very high demand globally right now; many are being headhunted to lead new ventures (like a new luxury resort in the Middle East, or a high-end restaurant expanding to a new city) with generous packages. This bidding war effect means that in 2025, a professional in hospitality with the right skillset can command a premium not seen before. A World Economic Forum report noted that businesses view **talent shortages as a bigger threat than capital shortages** now americas.hsm.ai.org, leading them to invest more in talent – and salary is one primary investment.

Labor Mobility: The movement of labor – both geographically and between sectors – is a defining characteristic of hospitality employment. The industry has always been quite international (with workers traveling to tourism hotspots for seasonal work, etc.), and that has intensified post-pandemic. Many regions are leaning on **mobile, migrant workers to fill gaps**. We've mentioned Europe bringing in workers from abroad (like North African or Asian workers to Southern Europe), and the Middle East's long-standing dependence on South/Southeast Asian labor continues. In 2025, **governments and companies alike have instituted programs to facilitate labor mobility** for hospitality. For example, **the EU is discussing a "Talent Partnership" program with North African countries to channel trained hospitality workers to European markets in need** theguardian.com. Countries such as **Croatia** (now an EU member) face their own tourism labor shortages and have upped quotas for foreign workers – Croatia needed 70,000 seasonal workers in 2023 and hired from countries like Serbia, Bosnia, even as far as Asia iccimmigration.ca. In Asia-Pacific, labor mobility is evident in the reliance on foreign interns/trainees in Japan's hotels, and in the flows of workers between ASEAN countries (e.g. Filipinos working on cruise ships or in Gulf hotels, etc. sending remittances home).

Another dimension of mobility is **workers shifting from hospitality to other industries and vice versa**. During the pandemic, many hospitality workers moved into retail, delivery, healthcare support, or gig work. Some of those have returned, attracted by higher pay and their passion for hospitality, while others remain in their new fields. The industry is attempting to "boomerang" those who left by showcasing improved conditions. Conversely, hospitality's talent shortage has prompted recruiting from allied industries – for instance, airlines recruited restaurant servers to become flight attendants (leveraging customer service skills), and some hotels hired unemployed retail staff for concierge roles. The skill overlap means hospitality competes with other service sectors for the same workforce.

Working Conditions: Working conditions in hospitality have historically been tough: long and irregular hours (including nights, weekends, holidays), physically demanding tasks, relatively low pay, few benefits, and at times stressful environments. These factors contributed to the labor crisis as workers reconsidered their careers. In 2025, improving working conditions has become both a necessity and a trend, albeit with much progress still to be made.

On the positive side, **many employers are actively trying to make hospitality jobs more sustainable and appealing**. This includes efforts like providing more stable schedules (as mentioned, giving advance notice and avoiding clopening shifts), offering full-time status with benefits to more employees (rather than relying mostly on part-timers), and investing in staff facilities (break rooms, staff meals, etc.). Some large hotel companies have introduced programs focusing on employee well-being: for example, implementing policies to ensure employees get at least one weekend off per month, or limiting the number of consecutive work days. There's also growing awareness of **mental health** in hospitality – industry charities (like Hospitality Action in the UK) and companies are promoting mental health resources for workers, knowing that burnout and stress are rampant. A 2025 survey by a UK hospitality charity aimed to benchmark mental health in the industry, reflecting the new focus on this issue thecaterer.com. Initiatives such as confidential counseling hotlines, "wellness days" off, and even creative ideas like bringing in therapy dogs during stressful seasons (one hotel group mentioned "puppy therapy" sessions for staff) are popping up hospitalitynet.org.

Nonetheless, **challenges remain**. Hospitality work is by nature often at odds with traditional work-life balance, since guests vacation on weekends/holidays and expect services around the clock. So even as conditions improve, the jobs may never be 9-to-5. In some places, conditions have even deteriorated in the short term due to understaffing – e.g., employees having to do the work of two people or work extra shifts because positions are vacant. This has been a vicious cycle: shortages cause remaining staff to be overworked, leading to burnout and more attrition. Breaking that cycle is a priority for many operators in 2025, by either hiring more or streamlining operations.

Regulatory factors are increasingly coming into play to improve conditions. For example, **"predictive scheduling" laws** in some U.S. cities (like Seattle and New York for retail/food service) require employers to give staff advance notice of schedules and extra pay if schedules change last-minute – these laws are creeping into hospitality, forcing better scheduling practices. **Overtime regulations and maximum workweek laws** (common in EU countries) are being enforced more strictly in hotels and restaurants as governments respond to complaints of overwork. In California, laws were passed to limit housekeeping workload (hotels must pay overtime if housekeepers clean

above a certain number of rooms in a day) and to mandate panic buttons for hotel cleaners working alone (to improve safety) – these types of regulations directly impact working conditions and require hotels to adjust staffing patterns, often hiring more staff to avoid overloading individuals [ahla.com](https://www.ahla.com).

Another aspect of conditions is **job security and benefits**. Historically, many hospitality jobs are seasonal or part-time, with few benefits (healthcare, retirement, etc.). There's a movement, especially in high-end employers and unionized settings, to provide more secure employment. Unionization in hospitality has gained traction in the U.S. recently – for example, 2023 saw large-scale union strikes of hotel workers in cities like Los Angeles demanding higher pay and better benefits, which led to some concessions. Where unions are present (e.g. Las Vegas casinos, many large European hotels), workers tend to have more robust benefits and protections. In 2025, the industry is seeing a mild uptick in union activity as employees leverage the tight labor market to negotiate improvements.

Labor Mobility and Worker Rights: The heavy reliance on migrant workers raises concerns about worker rights and conditions. In some Middle Eastern and Asian destinations, migrant hospitality workers have historically faced issues like low pay, poor housing, and limited recourse for grievances. International scrutiny (from media and organizations) in events like Qatar's World Cup has pressured improvements, such as Qatar introducing a higher minimum wage for all workers and easing the exit visa system. Saudi Arabia and UAE have also taken steps to improve conditions for foreign workers (like better accommodation standards in new tourism projects). Ethical recruitment and fair treatment are becoming part of the conversation, as destinations realize that sustainability includes caring for employees, not just the environment.

In conclusion, **working conditions in hospitality in 2025 are gradually improving out of necessity** – with higher wages, more flexibility, and greater attention to safety and well-being – but it's a work in progress. The industry is trying to shed its reputation as an exploitative employer, both through voluntary efforts and regulatory changes. Success in this area is crucial, as the next section (on hybrid/gig structures) will show how alternate employment models are rising partly because traditional job formats were unattractive to many. If hospitality roles can be made more fulfilling and livable, it will help resolve the labor crunch by drawing workers back into the industry.

7. The Rise of Hybrid and Gig Employment Structures in Hospitality

The structure of employment in hospitality is evolving, with a marked increase in **hybrid roles, gig work, and other non-traditional staffing models**. This shift has been driven by both employer needs (flexibility amid demand swings, coping with shortages) and worker preferences (desire for flexible or remote work). In 2025, the hospitality workforce is far more fluid and dynamic than in the past, as detailed below.

Gig Economy in Hospitality: The gig economy – typically defined as short-term, flexible jobs often facilitated by digital platforms – has firmly entered the hospitality realm. While gig work has long existed in areas like event staffing and catering (think on-call banquet servers or convention temps), it is now scaling up and diversifying. **Apps and online platforms for on-demand hospitality staffing** have proliferated. For example, platforms like AnyShift or GigPro allow restaurants or hotels to post shifts (for a bartender, dishwasher, housekeeper, etc.) that gig workers can claim, often on short notice anyshift.com/americas.hsmai.org. This model is transforming talent sourcing: an **HSMAI report (2023-2024)** noted that hotels are increasingly adopting fractional and gig staffing to fill critical roles, recognizing that traditional hiring alone can't meet demand americas.hsmai.org. Between 2016 and 2021, the gig workforce in the U.S. grew by 31%, and it's projected that **contract/freelance workers could exceed 90 million in the U.S. by 2028** americas.hsmai.org – a trend fueled in part by industries like hospitality embracing these models.

For hospitality businesses, gig workers provide a **flexible labor pool to tap into for peak times or specific needs**. A convention center might use an app to source 50 extra waiters for a banquet tonight, or a hotel might bring in a gig housekeeper team on a sold-out weekend. This flexibility helps alleviate the strain of permanent staff shortages – indeed, many venues have survived the staffing crisis by leaning on staffing agencies and gig talent peopleready.com. Gig workers often enjoy the flexibility too: they can choose when and where to work, which is attractive to those who need a side income or can't commit to a full schedule. As noted earlier, **87% of employees in a survey said they wanted control of their schedules**, and gig arrangements offer exactly that peopleready.com.

Common gig roles in hospitality now include banquet servers, bartenders, event setup crews, line cooks (for catering events or pop-ups), cleaners, and brand ambassadors. Even tour guides and experience hosts are turning freelance via platforms like Airbnb Experiences or Viator, essentially gig-ifying the tour sector. Rideshare and delivery services like Uber and DoorDash are also part of

hospitality's gig ecosystem – while not employed by restaurants, they provide crucial service connecting customers and eateries, and their prevalence has changed how restaurants staff (with fewer in-house drivers, for example).

One must note, however, that the gig model comes with **debates about worker protections**. Gig workers are typically independent contractors, meaning they usually lack benefits, job security, and sometimes earn variable pay. This raises concerns about exploitation – Human Rights Watch has criticized how some platform models in the U.S. leverage the promise of flexibility to avoid providing fair wages or benefits americas.hsmi.org/hrw.org. In 2025, regulatory discussions are ongoing in many countries about how to classify and protect gig workers. For instance, the U.S. Department of Labor had proposed a rule to make it harder to misclassify employees as contractors (which could affect gig workers), but as of May 2025 it signaled it might not enforce that rule nelsonmullins.com/nelsonmullins.com. The EU is also considering a Platform Work Directive to give gig workers more rights. For now, in hospitality, gig work continues to expand largely in a minimally regulated space, so workers and businesses alike are navigating this new territory.

Hybrid Employment Structures: The term “hybrid” in employment often refers to a mix of remote and in-person work, or a combination of roles. In the context of hospitality, which is inherently hands-on, **hybrid work arrangements have emerged primarily in corporate and administrative roles**, and in the blending of job functions. For example, many hotel companies moved some roles to remote work during the pandemic (like reservations agents, customer support, sales teams) and have kept them remote or hybrid since. It's now common for a hotel's central reservation office to have reservation agents working partly from home, connecting via cloud phone systems – something uncommon pre-2020. This broadens the labor pool (people who live far from the hotel or need flexible hours can do the job) and can reduce costs. Additionally, functions like marketing, revenue management, and accounting for hospitality businesses have seen **hybrid schedules**; employees might come to the property or office a few days and work from home on others. This makes hospitality firms more competitive employers to professionals who expect remote flexibility.

Another aspect of hybridization is **fractional staffing models** – essentially part-time expert roles shared across multiple properties or units. HSMI's research highlights how hotels are using fractional arrangements for skilled roles like revenue managers or sales directors americas.hsmi.org/americas.hsmi.org. Instead of each hotel employing a full-time revenue manager, a management company might have one revenue strategy expert overseeing several hotels (remotely), effectively making that position fractional. Similarly, independent restaurants might share an HR manager or a pastry chef among a few establishments. This allows businesses to

access high-level skills they couldn't afford full-time, and it allows professionals to have a **portfolio career**, working with multiple clients. It's akin to the concept of fractional CFOs or CMOs in the broader corporate world, now applied to hospitality operations.

Employee Preferences and Hybrid Roles: Worker lifestyle changes have also influenced employment structures. Many hospitality employees left for jobs with remote or hybrid options during the pandemic; to lure some back or to keep current staff, hospitality employers have had to get creative. We see more **flexible hybrid roles** like "front desk + social media coordinator" – where an employee might spend part of their time on-site with guests and part off-site managing the hotel's social channels or doing online sales, which can be done remotely. This not only enriches the job but can allow partial remote work. In restaurants, while the customer-facing roles must be in-person, some administrative tasks (inventory management, scheduling, online marketing) can be done from a laptop anywhere. Forward-thinking operators sometimes reallocate those tasks to employees who need or desire a work-from-home day or two.

In events, hybrid work has a different meaning – hybrid events (mix of in-person and virtual) were a big trend out of necessity in 2020–2021. Now in 2025, many large conferences remain hybrid (some attendees remote), which means **event professionals need to orchestrate both live and virtual experiences**. This has created specialist roles for virtual event production. While not "remote work" in the employment sense, it's another way job scopes have expanded to include digital facilitation alongside physical event management.

Outcomes and Outlook: The rise of gig and hybrid models has provided much-needed flexibility in a tumultuous labor market. Employers benefit from being able to **scale staff up or down quickly** and tap into a broader skill pool (a talented mixologist might prefer gig bartending at special events rather than a regular bar job; now an employer can hire them for a night). Workers benefit from more control and variety – someone can pick up shifts when convenient or cultivate a range of experiences across different hospitality outlets. This can also be a gateway for people to try hospitality jobs without full commitment, potentially feeding the talent pipeline in the long run.

However, there are concerns to balance. Heavy reliance on gig workers can lead to inconsistent service quality if those workers aren't as trained or engaged as full-time staff. Additionally, **workplace cohesion and culture** can suffer if a large portion of staff are transient. Many hospitality leaders acknowledge that while gig help is vital, they still need a core of committed employees to maintain standards and brand culture.

Looking ahead, it's likely that **hybrid workforce models are here to stay** in hospitality. The industry is fundamentally changing how it staffs operations – from rigid scheduling of full-timers to a fluid blend of full-time, part-time, gig, and remote contributors. Industry surveys suggest a majority of hospitality employers plan to continue using flexible staffing solutions beyond 2025, having seen the effectiveness hospitalityinsights.ehl.edu. As with many trends accelerated by COVID, this transformation in employment structure is an enduring one, redefining what it means to work in hospitality.

8. Regulatory and Immigration Developments Affecting Hospitality Employment

Government policies – from labor regulations to immigration laws – play a significant role in shaping the hospitality job market. In 2025, several developments on these fronts are impacting how hotels, restaurants, and tourism businesses hire and manage staff. This section outlines key regulatory and immigration changes and their effects.

Immigration and Work Visa Changes: Given the heavy reliance on migrant labor in hospitality globally, immigration policy shifts are critical. Many countries, faced with hospitality worker shortages, have **adjusted immigration rules to attract foreign workers**. A vivid example is **Greece**: Confronted with 80,000 open hospitality jobs, the Greek government took the extraordinary step of *regularizing the status of 30,000 undocumented migrants* already in the country so they could legally work in tourism [theguardian.com](https://www.theguardian.com). Moreover, Greece signed bilateral agreements with countries including **Egypt, Bangladesh, and India to facilitate “labor mobility”** – essentially bringing in temporary workers for hospitality and other sectors [theguardian.com](https://www.theguardian.com). By mid-2025, Greek hotels began employing trained asylum seekers from refugee camps in northern Greece, integrating them into the workforce as a mutually beneficial solution [theguardian.com](https://www.theguardian.com).

Elsewhere in Europe, as noted, **Spain and Portugal** expanded recruitment from Latin America (leveraging common language ties) and eased visa processes for seasonal workers. **Germany's new Skilled Workers Immigration Act** (passed in 2023) liberalized criteria for foreign workers, which is expected to help fill hospitality and caregiving jobs by recognizing more qualifications and allowing job seekers to come to Germany more easily. **Italy** increased its annual quota of non-EU seasonal workers, a portion of which goes to agriculture and tourism each year.

In the **UK**, post-Brexit immigration restrictions initially hurt hospitality staffing. Industry lobbying led the UK to include chefs and hospitality managers in the Shortage Occupation List, which lowers salary thresholds and visa fees for those roles. There have also been calls to allow more youth working holiday visas and easier entry for entry-level hospitality roles. By 2024, the UK government somewhat relaxed rules for foreign seasonal workers (mostly targeting agriculture, but some spillover to tourism for holiday parks, etc.) and allowed more international students to work longer hours in hospitality to ease shortages.

North America has also seen immigration adjustments: The U.S. Department of Homeland Security repeatedly raised the cap on **H-2B seasonal work visas** for 2022–2024 beyond the standard annual allotment, citing the needs of industries like hospitality (for beach resorts, summer destinations, etc.). This brought in additional thousands of temporary foreign workers (often from Mexico, Jamaica, and other nations) to work in hotels, theme parks, and restaurants during peak seasons uschamber.com. Canada, which already had a relatively open immigration system, introduced specific pilot programs to bring in workers to rural tourism and hospitality businesses (the Atlantic Immigration Program, for instance, often places immigrants in hotel jobs in Canada's eastern provinces).

Labor Laws and Regulations: On the labor law front, several developments are reshaping wages and conditions. One notable trend is the **increase of minimum wages** across various jurisdictions, which disproportionately affects hospitality (as it employs many minimum-wage earners). For example, **Germany raised its national minimum wage to €12/hour in late 2022**, lifting pay for many hotel and restaurant workers. **France** annually indexes its minimum wage (SMIC) to inflation, so high inflation in 2022–23 led to multiple automatic increases, benefiting hospitality staff. **UK's National Living Wage** has been rising steadily – it jumped to £10.42 in 2023 for those 23+, with an aim to reach two-thirds of median earnings by 2024 – pushing up the base pay in pubs and cafes. In the **United States**, while the federal minimum wage remains \$7.25, many states have enacted higher wages: by 2025, over 30 states have a minimum above \$10, and some major tourism-heavy states like California (\$15.50 in 2023, higher for some cities) and Florida (\$15 by 2026 phased in) ensure that even entry-level hospitality roles pay more. Additionally, as mentioned, states like **New Jersey and Illinois in 2025 introduced bills to phase out the tip credit**, meaning tipped restaurant workers would earn the full state minimum wage plus tips, a significant change ogletree.com nfnfib.com. If these pass, restaurants will face higher wage bills but employees get more stable income.

Another regulatory area is **working hours and overtime**. Some locales have specific rules for hospitality. For example, **Los Angeles and some California cities have Hotel Worker Protection ordinances** requiring overtime pay after 8 hours and capping workloads for housekeepers (to prevent exploitation) [ahla.com](https://www.ahla.com). **Illinois** passed a law effective 2024 guaranteeing one day rest in seven for hotel and restaurant workers and additional pay for shortened rest periods. These laws mean hospitality employers must carefully schedule or face penalties, often leading to hiring more staff to avoid overtime costs.

Health and safety regulations that emerged during COVID (like sanitation standards, ventilation requirements, etc.) are mostly normalized now and part of standard operating procedure. But they did add to training and sometimes staffing (for example, having dedicated cleaning staff for continuous disinfection in hotels, a role that persisted in some places).

Union Influence and Collective Bargaining: While not “law” in the legislative sense, collective bargaining agreements in unionized hospitality settings have had quasi-regulatory effects on wages/conditions and even spill over as standards in some markets. In 2023–2024, many unionized hotel workers (in cities like Los Angeles, Honolulu, Las Vegas, and London) negotiated new contracts. These often included substantial raises (e.g. 10-20% over a few years), reduced room quotas for housekeepers, and commitments to recall workers laid off during COVID. The presence of union deals sometimes pressured non-union hotels in the same area to raise pay to compete for staff. So, indirectly, union activity is a factor in the overall regulatory environment of hospitality employment.

DEI and Employment Law: Another regulatory angle is governments encouraging diversity and inclusion in employment. Some countries have set targets or requirements for hiring from certain groups (e.g. disabled persons quotas, or gender diversity reporting). While not specific to hospitality, these policies affect large hospitality employers. For instance, the **UK requires businesses with 250+ employees to report gender pay gaps** – and hospitality has had significant gaps due to many women in lower-paid roles. This transparency is pressuring companies to address inequities (see Section 9).

Summary of Impact: The cumulative effect of these regulatory and immigration changes is that **hospitality employers face a more complex compliance landscape but also potentially a larger labor pool**. They must budget for higher wages and improved conditions mandated by law, which can be challenging for small operators with thin margins. At the same time, eased immigration and new visa pathways provide opportunities to alleviate staff shortages by tapping global talent. Some

hoteliers say the trade-off is worthwhile: “Yes, we pay more per worker now, but at least we can find workers,” as one U.S. hotelier put it after wage hikes and bringing in Jamaican seasonal workers saved his summer season.

From the worker perspective, these developments are largely positive. Many front-line hospitality workers are seeing **better pay, more rights (like predictable schedules or overtime protections), and more job openings** thanks to talent inflows. However, enforcement remains key – laws on paper need enforcement to truly improve conditions. In regions like the Middle East, where labor reforms have been announced, the test will be implementation and ensuring migrant workers benefit from new protections.

In conclusion, **2025’s hospitality labor market is being actively shaped by government action.** Policymakers have recognized the staffing crisis and the importance of travel/tourism to the economy. As a result, they are relaxing certain barriers (immigration) while tightening labor standards to make these jobs more viable careers. The hospitality industry, historically a lightly regulated employer in many countries, is entering a period of greater oversight and support around its workforce. How well both employers and employees navigate these changes will influence the industry’s resilience and reputation moving forward.

9. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Developments in Hospitality Hiring Practices

In 2025, the hospitality industry is increasingly focusing on **diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI)** in its workforce – not only as a social imperative but as a strategic advantage. This section explores how hotels, restaurants, and travel companies are improving DEI in hiring and management, the challenges they face, and the progress being made.

The State of Diversity in Hospitality: Hospitality has traditionally been a diverse sector at the front-line level – employing large numbers of women, ethnic minorities, and immigrants worldwide. For example, women comprise about **51% of the global hospitality workforce**, one of the few industries where women are the majority [hospitalityinvestor.com](https://www.hospitalityinvestor.com). Many hotels and restaurants also have ethnically diverse staff, often more so than national averages (in the U.S., 27% of restaurant employees are Hispanic and 12% Black, both above their share in the overall labor force [restaurant.org](https://www.restaurant.org)). However, this diversity has not been reflected up the hierarchy. **Leadership roles in hospitality remain predominantly male and, in many regions, predominantly from majority groups.** Globally, women hold only about **30% of executive-level positions in hospitality** and a

mere **7% of CEO or board president positions** hospitalityinvestor.com. Racial and ethnic minorities are similarly underrepresented in top management, even if they are prevalent in entry-level roles. This gap – often termed the “glass ceiling” in hospitality – has drawn increasing scrutiny. A 2025 industry analysis bluntly stated *“there is a patriarchy at the highest levels of hospitality leadership”*, urging concerted efforts to advance women and minorities into leadership franchise.sonestacomstartlemusic.com.

DEI as a Business Priority: Beyond fairness, companies are recognizing that DEI can drive performance. Studies (including one cited by Forbes) show that companies with above-average diversity generate more revenue from innovation exudehc.com. In hospitality, having a diverse team can enhance guest experience – enabling better service for guests of different cultures, fostering creativity in problem-solving, and appealing to an increasingly diverse customer base. As one hospitality HR guide notes, **an inclusive culture expands the talent pool and gives a competitive recruitment edge**, as well as boosting brand image among socially conscious consumers hcareers.com. Many global hotel brands have publicly committed to DEI goals, often in their annual reports or CSR statements. For instance, Marriott and Hilton have targets to increase the percentage of women and minority individuals in management by 2025. Accor launched the “HeForShe” and “RiiSE” initiatives promoting gender equality in leadership. These corporate stances signal that DEI is not just an HR checkbox but part of their identity and strategy.

Inclusive Recruitment Practices: A key area of development is **removing bias from hiring and widening recruitment outreach**. Companies are implementing practical measures such as: writing **inclusive job descriptions** (avoiding gendered language or unnecessary requirements that might deter certain groups) hcareers.com; using **blind recruitment techniques** – e.g., hiding candidates’ names or demographics in initial screening to prevent unconscious bias hcareers.com; and ensuring interview panels themselves are diverse. Hotels are partnering with organizations that connect them to underrepresented talent pools – for example, some U.S. resorts recruit via historically Black colleges or through refugee employment agencies, while in Europe, programs exist to train and hire youth from migrant backgrounds into hospitality apprenticeships. The **use of AI in recruitment** is also emerging: some large chains use AI-driven tools to scan resumes or conduct initial video interviews without bias. But care is needed to ensure the AI algorithms themselves are fair (there have been instances of AI inheriting human biases).

Internal Development and Retention: Hiring diverse talent is just step one; ensuring they thrive and advance is equally important. Therefore, **hospitality companies are investing in mentorship, training, and leadership development programs aimed at underrepresented groups**. For instance, Hyatt’s “RiseHY” program focuses on opportunity youth (often minorities) to start

hospitality careers, and Marriott's mentorship initiatives pair women and minority associates with senior leaders to guide their progression. Many companies have launched Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) or affinity networks – like networks for women in hospitality, Black hospitality professionals, LGBTQ+ employees, etc. These ERGs provide support, networking, and a voice in the company. The presence of such groups signals to applicants that the company values inclusion.

Progress is being made especially on gender diversity in management: some hotel companies now report near parity at certain management levels. For example, a major hotel franchisor revealed that **51% of their leadership positions are now held by women**, a significant increase compared to past decades franchise.sonesta.comfranchise.sonesta.com. However, industry-wide, women and minorities are still more likely to be in junior positions. According to data: **56% of hospitality workers are female, but they are disproportionately in the lowest-paid roles (e.g. only 21% of chefs are women, whereas 69% of waitstaff are women) startlemusic.comstartlemusic.com. This indicates a need to not only hire diversely but to promote diversely.

Addressing Workplace Culture: Inclusion goes beyond numbers; it's about daily experience. Hospitality workplaces historically could be rife with issues like harassment (the #MeToo movement highlighted problems in restaurants), cultural insensitivity, or a "boys' club" culture in kitchens and management. In 2025, more hospitality organizations are addressing these culture issues head-on. They are conducting **DEI training for all employees**, covering topics like unconscious bias, cultural competence, and respectful communication hcareers.comhcareers.com. Some are bringing in external consultants to evaluate their workplace climate. Policies are being updated to ensure zero tolerance for discrimination and clear channels for reporting incidents exudehc.comexudehc.com. For example, many companies have instituted anonymous employee hotlines and have committed to investigate and act on any bias or harassment claims swiftly.

A specific challenge noted is **lack of diversity in leadership and the homogeneity that can pervade company culture** exudehc.comexudehc.com. When leadership is uniform, it can inadvertently perpetuate practices that aren't welcoming to others (for example, a resort whose management is all one gender/nationality might not see the need for, say, flexible hours that could benefit working mothers, or might unconsciously favor promoting those similar to themselves). To counter this, some companies have set up **diversity councils** that include executives and employees from various backgrounds to review company practices. Also, linking management bonuses to DEI outcomes (like achieving diversity hiring goals or improvement in employee survey inclusion scores) is an emerging practice to drive accountability.

Industry Collaborations: Industry associations are also pushing DEI. The **American Hotel & Lodging Association (AHLA)** and the **National Restaurant Association** have both launched initiatives and resources for their members to improve diversity – from toolkits on inclusive hiring to showcasing success stories of minority-owned hospitality businesses. In the UK, **Springboard and other charities** run programs to get disadvantaged youth into hospitality careers. Globally, events like **Women in Hospitality conferences** and **diversity leadership awards** are raising the profile of the issue and celebrating progress.

In terms of regulations, some jurisdictions mandate diversity efforts (e.g., some countries require a certain percentage of disabled employees, which affects hotels, or require larger firms to report on diversity metrics). These regulatory pressures, albeit indirect, encourage companies to be proactive rather than reactive.

Benefits of DEI Focus: Early results of these DEI efforts are promising. Companies report that improving diversity has helped alleviate labor shortages by opening roles to a broader audience. For example, by actively recruiting more women into kitchen roles traditionally seen as male-dominated, restaurants can mitigate chef shortages. Similarly, welcoming immigrants and refugees into teams not only fills jobs but can enrich service for diverse guests (like having multi-lingual staff). A more inclusive workplace also aids **retention** – employees who feel respected and see growth opportunities are more likely to stay, reducing turnover costs. Leadership diversity also brings fresh perspectives; some hotels credit diverse teams with innovative ideas that have boosted guest satisfaction.

Remaining Challenges: Despite progress, challenges remain. Biases can be deeply ingrained and take time to uproot – some HR professionals still unconsciously favor candidates that “fit the mold,” which might disadvantage non-traditional candidates [exudehc.com](https://www.exudehc.com). Turnover can also hamper DEI progress; if diverse hires leave due to feeling unwelcome, it’s a setback. The industry’s pipeline problem (few minorities in hospitality degree programs or management training historically) means it will take sustained effort to change the face of leadership. Additionally, smaller independent businesses may lack resources to devote to formal DEI programs, even if they have the will.

In summary, **the hospitality industry in 2025 is actively working to become more diverse and inclusive**, recognizing both the moral imperative and business benefits. From recruitment reforms to fostering inclusive workplace cultures, steps are being taken at multiple levels. There is a growing acknowledgment that **an inclusive hospitality workforce – where all employees have equal**

opportunity to succeed and feel valued – leads to a better experience for employees and guests alike. As DEI initiatives mature, the expectation is that hospitality will shed its image of a stratified workforce and truly embody the diversity of the global communities it serves.

Conclusion: The hospitality industry's job market in 2025 is in a dynamic period of post-pandemic recovery and transformation. **Macro trends** of surging travel demand have reignited employment growth, yet **micro challenges** like talent shortages and changing worker expectations are reshaping how the sector operates. We have seen that **hotels, restaurants, events, and tourism businesses are largely rebounding**, but not without adapting – wages are rising, working conditions are slowly improving, and technology and sustainability imperatives are demanding new skills from the workforce. **Regional differences** are pronounced: while North America and Asia-Pacific race ahead in recovery (with persistent labor gaps), Europe grapples with filling jobs, and the Middle East undergoes explosive growth fueled by foreign labor.

In response, the industry is innovating its approach to human resources. **Flexible gig and hybrid employment models** are supplementing traditional roles, providing agility in staffing. **Regulatory shifts and immigration policies** are, on the one hand, adding pressure (through higher wage floors and stricter labor standards) and on the other hand offering relief (via expanded pathways for migrant workers and government-backed training programs). Importantly, a heightened emphasis on **diversity, equity, and inclusion** is changing hiring practices and workplace cultures for the better, aligning the industry's workforce with its global customer base and core values of hospitality.

For industry professionals and decision-makers, these trends underscore a clear mandate: to succeed in this new era, **invest in your people**. This means adopting competitive compensation and benefits to attract talent, leveraging technology to empower rather than displace staff, providing training and career development to build skills, and fostering an inclusive environment that retains employees. It also means being attuned to external factors – engaging with policymakers on sensible immigration and labor regulations, and preparing for economic fluctuations that may impact travel (and thus labor demand) in the future.

The hospitality sector has always been about people serving people. Coming out of an unprecedented crisis, that human element is more critical than ever. Those companies that adapt to the evolving labor market – treating their workforce not as a cost center but as a core asset – are positioning themselves to thrive. By embracing innovation in workforce management and reaffirming a commitment to fair and fulfilling employment, the hospitality industry is not only rebuilding what was lost, but also laying a foundation for sustainable growth and service excellence in the years ahead.

Sources: The insights and data in this report are drawn from a range of up-to-date industry reports, government statistics, and expert analyses, including the American Hotel & Lodging Association's 2025 State of the Industry report ahla.commahla.com, National Restaurant Association forecasts restaurant.org, World Travel & Tourism Council economic impact research wttc.org, and numerous publications highlighting regional trends theguardian.comhcamag.com, workforce surveys pcma.org7shifts.com, and corporate DEI benchmarks hospitalityinvestor.com, as cited throughout the text. These sources provide a comprehensive, evidence-based foundation for understanding the hospitality job market's current state and trajectory in 2025.

Tags: hospitality industry, job market, workforce trends, labor market, employment recovery, talent acquisition, skill development, tourism economy, industry analysis

About ClearlyIP

ClearlyIP Inc. — Company Profile (June 2025)

1. Who they are

ClearlyIP is a privately-held unified-communications (UC) vendor headquartered in Appleton, Wisconsin, with additional offices in Canada and a globally distributed workforce. Founded in 2019 by veteran FreePBX/Asterisk contributors, the firm follows a "build-and-buy" growth strategy, combining in-house R&D with targeted acquisitions (e.g., the 2023 purchase of Voneto's EPlatform UCaaS). Its mission is to "design and develop the world's most respected VoIP brand" by delivering secure, modern, cloud-first communications that reduce cost and boost collaboration, while its vision focuses on unlocking the full potential of open-source VoIP for organisations of every size. The leadership team collectively brings more than 300 years of telecom experience.

2. Product portfolio

- **Cloud Solutions** – Including *Clearly Cloud* (flagship UCaaS), **SIP Trunking**, **SendFax.to** cloud fax, **ClusterPBX OEM**, **Business Connect** managed cloud PBX, and **EPlatform** multitenant UCaaS. These provide fully hosted voice, video, chat and collaboration with 100+ features, per-seat licensing, geo-redundant PoPs, built-in call-recording and mobile/desktop apps.
- **On-Site Phone Systems** – Including CIP PBX appliances (FreePBX pre-installed), ClusterPBX Enterprise, and Business Connect (on-prem variant). These offer local survivability for compliance-sensitive sites; appliances start at 25 extensions and scale into HA clusters.

- **IP Phones & Softphones** – Including CIP SIP Desk-phone Series (CIP-25x/27x/28x), fully white-label branding kit, and *Clearly Anywhere* softphone (iOS, Android, desktop). Features zero-touch provisioning via Cloud Device Manager or FreePBX "Clearly Devices" module; Opus, HD-voice, BLF-rich colour LCDs.
 - **VoIP Gateways** – Including Analog FXS/FXO models, VoIP Fail-Over Gateway, POTS Replacement (for copper sun-set), and 2-port T1/E1 digital gateway. These bridge legacy endpoints or PSTN circuits to SIP; fail-over models keep 911 active during WAN outages.
 - **Emergency Alert Systems** – Including **CodeX** room-status dashboard, **Panic Button**, and **Silent Intercom**. This K-12-focused mass-notification suite integrates with CIP PBX or third-party FreePBX for Alyssa's-Law compliance.
 - **Hospitality** – Including **ComXchange** PBX plus PMS integrations, hardware & software assurance plans. Replaces aging Mitel/NEC hotel PBXs; supports guest-room phones, 911 localisation, check-in/out APIs.
 - **Device & System Management** – Including **Cloud Device Manager** and **Update Control (Mirror)**. Provides multi-vendor auto-provisioning, firmware management, and secure FreePBX mirror updates.
 - **XCast Suite** – Including Hosted PBX, SIP trunking, carrier/call-centre solutions, SOHO plans, and XCL mobile app. Delivers value-oriented, high-volume VoIP from ClearlyIP's carrier network.
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3. Services

- **Telecom Consulting & Custom Development** – FreePBX/Asterisk architecture reviews, mergers & acquisitions diligence, bespoke application builds and Tier-3 support.
 - **Regulatory Compliance** – E911 planning plus **Kari's Law**, **Ray Baum's Act** and **Alyssa's Law** solutions; automated dispatchable location tagging.
 - **STIR/SHAKEN Certificate Management** – Signing services for Originating Service Providers, helping customers combat robocalling and maintain full attestation.
 - **Attestation Lookup Tool** – Free web utility to identify a telephone number's service-provider code and SHAKEN attestation rating.
 - **FreePBX® Training** – Three-day administrator boot camps (remote or on-site) covering installation, security hardening and troubleshooting.
 - **Partner & OEM Programs** – Wholesale SIP trunk bundles, white-label device programs, and ClusterPBX OEM licensing.
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4. Executive management (June 2025)

- **CEO & Co-Founder: Tony Lewis** – Former CEO of Schmooze Com (FreePBX sponsor); drives vision, acquisitions and channel network.

- **CFO & Co-Founder: Luke Duquaine** – Ex-Sangoma software engineer; oversees finance, international operations and supply-chain.
 - **CTO & Co-Founder: Bryan Walters** – Long-time Asterisk contributor; leads product security and cloud architecture.
 - **Chief Revenue Officer: Preston McNair** – 25+ years in channel development at Sangoma & Hargray; owns sales, marketing and partner success.
 - **Chief Hospitality Strategist: Doug Schwartz** – Former 360 Networks CEO; guides hotel vertical strategy and PMS integrations.
 - **Chief Business Development Officer: Bob Webb** – 30+ years telco experience (Nsight/Cellcom); cultivates ILEC/CLEC alliances for Clearly Cloud.
 - **Chief Product Officer: Corey McFadden** – Founder of Voneto; architect of EPlatform UCaaS, now shapes ClearlyIP product roadmap.
 - **VP Support Services: Lorne Gaetz** (appointed Jul 2024) – Former Sangoma FreePBX lead; builds 24x7 global support organisation.
 - **VP Channel Sales: Tracy Liu** (appointed Jun 2024) – Channel-program veteran; expands MSP/VAR ecosystem worldwide.
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5. Differentiators

- **Open-Source DNA:** Deep roots in the FreePBX/Asterisk community allow rapid feature releases and robust interoperability.
 - **White-Label Flexibility:** Brandable phones and ClusterPBX OEM let carriers and MSPs present a fully bespoke UCaaS stack.
 - **End-to-End Stack:** From hardware endpoints to cloud, gateways and compliance services, ClearlyIP owns every layer, simplifying procurement and support.
 - **Education & Safety Focus:** Panic Button, CodeX and e911 tool-sets position the firm strongly in K-12 and public-sector markets.
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In summary

ClearlyIP delivers a comprehensive, modular UC ecosystem—cloud, on-prem and hybrid—backed by a management team with decades of open-source telephony pedigree. Its blend of carrier-grade infrastructure, white-label flexibility and vertical-specific solutions (hospitality, education, emergency-compliance) makes it a compelling option for ITSPs, MSPs and multi-site enterprises seeking modern, secure and cost-effective communications.

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