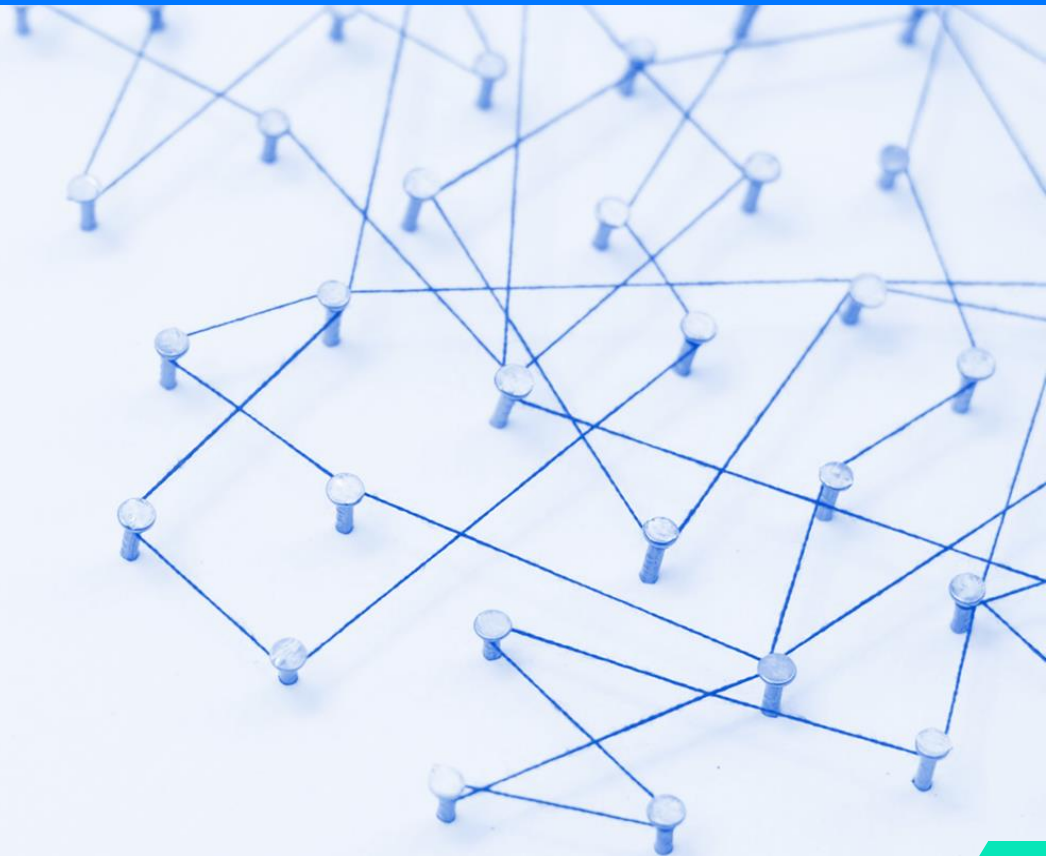# EMPLOYER CONSENSUS REPORT:
REDUCING STIGMA AND BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT FOR FORMERLY INCARCERATED INDIVIDUALS

Prepared October 2021 by Kayla Freemon, M.S.

BACKGROUND

Approximately 62,000 Arizona residents are incarcerated: a rate of 868 per every 100,000 persons (Prison Policy Initiative, 2018). The transition back into the community from jails and prisons is often difficult. Incarceration is linked to a multitude of negative experiences including difficulties securing employed upon release. In fact, formerly incarcerated people typically earn lower levels of income over time. A 2018 report found that 27% of formerly incarcerated people in the United States were unemployed, nearly five times higher than the general population (Couloute & Kopf, 2018). This report examines organizational barriers and support for the formerly incarcerated.

METHODOLOGY

The present report examines results from a 14-question survey developed by Valley Leadership's Jobs & the Economy Team. The survey was sent to the Pipeline Arizona database, the Valley Leadership alumni database, and personal contacts of team members in 2021. A total of 113 individuals responded. Most organizations represented in the survey are in the Phoenix area. The report focuses on barriers employers face to employing formerly incarcerated individuals and support for this population, specifically by industry and size of the organization.

The following topics are covered:
(1)   The respondents
(2)   Hiring practices
(3)   Barriers to hiring formerly incarcerated individuals
(4)   Organization willingness to support the formerly incarcerated
(5)   Current support for formerly incarcerated individuals
(6)   Reentry simulation interest

REFERENCES

Couloute, L. & Kopf, D. (2018). Out of prison and out of work: Unemployment among formerly incarcerated people. *Prison Policy Imitative*. Retrieved from https://www.prisonpolicy.org/reports/outofwork.html.

Prison Policy Initiative. (2018). Arizona profile. Retrieved from https://www.prisonpolicy.org/profiles/AZ.html.

THE RESPONDENTS

Table 1. Industry Type by Organization Size

	Under 50	51–100	101–500	501–1000	Over 1000	Total
Construction	4	2	1	1	4	12
Education	2	1	1	1	1	6
Government	2	0	2	0	2	6
Healthcare	5	3	3	0	4	15
Hospitality	4	0	7	2	0	13
Manufacturing	3	3	0	2	3	11
Nonprofit	14	6	5	3	1	29
Professional Services	7	4	3	1	6	21
Total	41	19	22	10	21	113

Key takeaways: Findings in this report draw primarily from non-profit industries with less than 50 employees.

HIRING PRACTICS

Table 2. Does your organization recruit job candidates through specialty or diversity job boards? (e.g., Pipeline AZ, DiversityJobs.com, Upwork, etc.)

	Yes	No	Uncertain	Total
Construction	5	4	3	12
Education	3	2	0	5
Government	1	1	1	3
Healthcare	6	4	3	13
Hospitality	7	4	1	12
Manufacturing	2	3	2	7
Nonprofit	12	11	2	25
Professional Services	4	5	6	15
1-50 employees	8	20	5	33
51-100 employees	7	8	1	16
101-500 employees	11	5	2	18
501-1000 employees	5	1	2	8
Over 1000 employees	9	0	8	17
Total	40	34	18	92

Key takeaways: Just under half of organization recruit job candidates through specialty or diversity job boards. There are few industry-specific differences. Larger organizations (over 100) more commonly use specialty or diversity job boards.

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Table 3. Does your organization have a hiring policy in place for individuals who report a criminal history?

	Yes	No	Uncertain	Total
Construction	6	3	3	12
Education	4	1	0	5
Government	2	1	0	3
Healthcare	8	1	4	13
Hospitality	7	4	1	12
Manufacturing	3	2	2	7
Nonprofit	15	6	4	25
Professional Services	6	4	5	15
1-50 employees	12	17	4	33
51-100 employees	9	2	5	16
101-500 employees	14	2	2	18
501-1000 employees	8	0	0	8
Over 1000 employees	8	1	8	17
Total	51	22	19	92

Key takeaways: More than half of organizations (55%) have a hiring policy in place for formerly incarcerated individuals. This spans all the industries represented in the survey and is more common for organizations with over 50 employees.

Barriers to Hiring Formerly Incarcerated Individuals

Table 4. Which of the following, if any, would you consider when evaluating a job candidate with a criminal history? (Select all that apply)

	A convicted criminal offense or conduct	The nature/ gravity of convicted offense	Length of time passed since a convicted offense or sentence	The nature of the job activities	The amount of supervision required	How much interaction with others is required to perform job duties	Special working hours/ accommodations	None
Construction	8	10	5	6	5	3	3	1
Education	3	4	4	2	2	2	0	1
Government	1	3	3	3	1	2	1	0
Healthcare	6	8	7	6	3	3	3	2
Hospitality	5	8	8	9	3	3	3	2
Manufacturing	3	4	1	3	2	1	2	0
Nonprofit	10	17	17	13	6	6	3	1
Professional Services	5	14	9	9	3	4	4	0
1-50 employees	12	26	18	21	7	7	7	2
51-100 employees	7	10	8	7	6	6	4	2
101-500 employees	10	13	15	13	4	5	3	1
501-1000 employees	6	8	5	3	2	2	2	0
Over 1000 employees	6	11	8	7	6	4	3	2
Total	41	68	54	51	25	24	19	7

Key takeaways: In ranked order, organizations most commonly consider the following when evaluating formerly incarcerated job applicants; (1) the nature/gravity of the convicted offence(s), (2) the length of time passed since a conviction or sentence, (3) the nature of the job activities, and (4) generally, whether the person had a criminal conviction.

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Barriers to Hiring Formerly Incarcerated Individuals

For Tables 5-7 responses ranged from strongly unwilling (=0) to strongly willing (=5). Higher mean scores indicate more willingness to support the question and lower mean values indicate lower willingness to support the question.

Table 5. Generally, what is your organization's willingness to:

		Review applications from formerly incarcerated individuals		Interview formerly incarcerated individuals		Hire formerly incarcerated individuals	
	Possible Range	n	Mean	n	Mean	n	Mean
Construction	0-5	9	3.8	9	3.7	9	3.3
Education	0-5	2	2.5	2	2.5	2	2.5
Government	0-5	3	4.3	3	4.3	3	4
Healthcare	0-5	8	4.1	8	4	8	3.5
Hospitality	0-5	10	4.3	10	4.2	10	4.1
Manufacturing	0-5	4	2.8	4	2.8	4	2.8
Nonprofit	0-5	22	3.6	22	3.6	20	3.5
Professional Services	0-5	7	3.7	7	3.7	8	3.6
1-50 employees	0-5	29	3.9	29	3.8	29	3.6
51-100 employees	0-5	9	4.3	9	4.3	9	3.9
101-500 employees	0-5	15	4	15	4	14	4
501-1000 employees	0-5	3	2	3	2	3	2
Over 1000 employees	0-5	9	2.8	9	2.8	9	2.7
Total	0-5	65	3.7	65	3.7	64	3.5

Key takeaways: Overall, organizations are more willing to review, interview, and hire formerly incarcerated individuals than unwilling. They are more inclined to review and interview individuals than hire. Mean scores for education and manufacturing jobs are lower in comparison with other industries. Larger organizations also have lower mean scores compared to smaller organizations.

Table 6. If you knew that a formerly incarcerated candidate had participated in a peer-supported reentry program and/or training, what would be your organization's willingness to:

	Possible Range	Review applications from formerly incarcerated individuals		Interview formerly incarcerated individuals		Hire formerly incarcerated individuals	
		n	Mean	n	Mean	n	Mean
Construction	0-5	9	3.9	9	3.8	9	3.6
Education	0-5	2	2.5	2	2.5	2	2.5
Government	0-5	3	4.3	3	4.3	3	4.3
Healthcare	0-5	8	4.3	8	4.3	8	4
Hospitality	0-5	10	4.4	10	4.4	10	4.3
Manufacturing	0-5	3	3.7	3	3.7	3	3.7
Nonprofit	0-5	22	3.8	21	3.8	20	3.7
Professional Services	0-5	8	4.1	8	4.1	8	4.1
1-50 employees	0-5	30	4	30	4	29	3.9
51-100 employees	0-5	9	4.3	9	4.3	9	4.1
101-500 employees	0-5	15	4.3	14	4.4	14	4.2
501-1000 employees	0-5	3	2	3	2	3	2
Over 1000 employees	0-5	8	3.5	8	3.5	8	3.4
Total	0-5	65	4.0	64	4.0	63	3.8

Key takeaways: Overall, organizations are slightly more willing to review, interview, and hire formerly incarcerated individuals who have participated in a peer-supported reentry program and/or training. There was a more substantial increase in willingness for manufacturing jobs. There were smaller increases for each of the other industries except for education and healthcare. The willingness to review, interview, and hire formerly incarcerated remains lower for the education industry. There was also a slight increase in willingness across questions by the size of the organization except for organizations with 501-1000 employees, which stayed the same.

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Table 7. What is your organization's willingness to publicly support formerly incarcerated individuals by:

	Possible Range	Publishing an opinion piece		Attending a second-chance hiring event	
		n	Mean	n	Mean
Construction	0-5	7	2.1	8	3.6
Education	0-5	1	0	1	0
Government	0-5	2	1	2	3.5
Healthcare	0-5	7	3.3	8	3.9
Hospitality	0-5	6	1.8	9	3.8
Manufacturing	0-5	3	2	3	2
Nonprofit	0-5	10	2.8	14	3.8
Professional Services	0-5	4	4.5	5	4.5
1-50 employees	0-5	20	2.7	24	3.4
51-100 employees	0-5	4	4.8	6	4.7
101-500 employees	0-5	10	1.7	13	3.9
501-1000 employees	0-5	2	2.5	2	2.5
Over 1000 employees	0-5	4	2	5	3.4
Total	0-5	40	2.6	50	3.6

Key takeaways: When examining organizational willingness to support the formerly incarcerated, organizations are more willing to attend a second-chance hiring event compared to publishing an opinion piece on the topic. Professional services organizations are highly willing to publish an opinion piece and healthcare and nonprofit organizations are moderately willing. Organizational support is also more willing among organizations with 51-100 employees. Support is lower among larger organizations. When examining willingness to attend a second-chance hiring event support is highest at professional service organizations and high for construction, government, healthcare, hospitability, and nonprofit organizations. There is not support for educational organization (though only one organization responded). There are not large differences in support by size of the organization.

Current Support for Formerly Incarcerated Employees

Table 8. Do you currently offer resources and/or training to assist employees reentering the workforce?

	Yes	No	Uncertain	Total
Construction	5	3	2	10
Education	2	0	0	2
Government	2	0	1	3
Healthcare	7	2	1	10
Hospitality	6	3	2	11
Manufacturing	2	0	2	4
Nonprofit	17	3	5	25
Professional Services	6	1	1	8
1-50 employees	24	4	2	30
51-100 employees	5	3	3	11
101-500 employees	11	3	2	16
501-1000 employees	2	1	2	5
Over 1000 employees	5	1	5	11
Total	47	12	14	73

Key takeaways: Most organizations offer resources and/or training to assist employees reentering the workforce. There are few differences by industry type or size of the organization.

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Table 9. Do you currently practice corporate giving or provide sponsorships and training that support individuals or organizations who serve formerly incarcerated individuals and those who are, or are perceived to be, harder to employ?

	Donations	Mentorships	Sponsorships	Training	Other	Uncertain	None
Construction	3	1	1	3	1	4	1
Education	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Government	0	0	0	0	0	1	2
Healthcare	0	1	0	0	2	4	3
Hospitality	2	1	0	2	0	2	5
Manufacturing	0	0	0	0	0	2	2
Nonprofit	1	3	0	4	3	6	13
Professional Services	0	1	0	1	0	3	3
1-50 employees	4	3	0	5	2	4	15
51-100 employees	0	2	0	2	1	5	3
101-500 employees	1	1	0	2	2	3	9
501-1000 employees	0	0	0	0	2	3	1
Over 1000 employees	1	1	1	1	0	8	2
Total	6	7	1	10	6	23	30

Key takeaways: Most organization do not currently practice corporate giving or provide sponsorships or training for the formerly incarcerated. Construction organizations and nonprofits more commonly engage in these types of activities as well as organizations with under 50 employees.

Reentry Simulation Interest

Table 10. Would your organization be willing to participate in a reentry simulation?

	Yes	No	Would like more info	Total
Construction	1	4	5	10
Education	0	1	1	2
Government	1	2	0	3
Healthcare	2	5	3	10
Hospitality	2	4	5	11
Manufacturing	1	2	1	4
Nonprofit	5	6	14	25
Professional Services	2	3	3	8
1-50 employees	7	11	12	30
51-100 employees	3	5	3	11
101-500 employees	2	4	10	16
501-1000 employees	1	2	2	5
Over 1000 employees	1	5	5	11
Total	14	27	32	73

Key takeaways: While many organizations are not interested in participating in a reentry simulation, several organizations are open to the opportunity with others potentially interested after being provided more information. Nonprofits are particularly interested in more information before deciding on participation.

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KEY TAKEAWAYS

- 55% of organizations have a hiring policy in place for the formerly incarcerated.
- Organizations commonly consider the nature/gravity of the convicted offence(s), the length of time passed since a conviction or sentence, and the nature of the job activities when evaluating formerly incarcerated applicants.
- Organizations are more inclined to review and interview individuals than hire.
- Participation in peer-supported reentry programming and/or training increases organizational interest in reviewing, interviewing, and hiring formerly incarcerated individuals.
- Most organizations offer resources and/or training to assist employees reentering the workforce but do not currently practice corporate giving or provide sponsorships or training for the formerly incarcerated.
- While larger organizations more commonly practice corporate giving, they are less inclined to hire the formerly incarcerated.

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ABOUT IMPACT MAKER

Impact Maker is an initiative of Valley Leadership, launched in 2019 to provide a ready-to-go network of Arizonans to take on the most pressing issues facing our state – with the aim of creating short- and long-term change. Impact Teams are composed of members of the Valley Leadership network, community organizations with subject matter expertise, and other key stakeholders who frame the issues, identify solutions, set goals, and develop plans to take action and create change. There are currently seven Impact Teams working in the areas of child wellbeing, Covid-19 response, education, environmental sustainability, health, jobs and the economy, and racial justice. Learn more at impactmakeraz.org.