Fair Chance Hiring: A Canadian Perspective

National Polling Results
Canadians Believe in Fair Chances

In March 2020, the John Howard Society of Ontario (JHSO) partnered with Navigator to conduct a survey on Canadians’ opinions surrounding hiring practices and employment eligibility for individuals with a criminal record. The online survey polled over 1,500 Canadians, age 18 and over, sampling a representative of the national average in terms of age, region, and education. This report summarizes some of the key findings.

Can individuals with a record do the job? Do they deserve a second chance?

The answer to these two questions was a resounding yes. Survey findings showed that Canadians want to see others be given a second chance and believe that individuals can thrive when given the opportunity. By and large, Canadians agreed that employers should have inclusive hiring practices and policies that emphasize equal opportunity.

Key Findings:

- 82% agreed that individuals with a record should be given the chance to work again.

- 76% agreed that those with a criminal record can do their job just as well as someone without a record.

- 75% agreed that having a police record is not an indicator of a candidate’s job performance.

When asked about concerns around skillset or character, the perceptions of job candidates with criminal records were largely positive. In fact, the popular sentiment was a “root for” mentality with 82% of Canadians wanting to see individuals back in society.
Are Record Checks Always Useful?

Canadians believe interviews, resumes, cover letters and reference checks are the most important routine employment screening requirements.

Only 41% of Canadians believed that police record checks should always be required when applying for a job, and this varied largely by industry.

Police records were seen as more important for select roles, industries, and positions.

Police record checks were seen as less important for positions involving:

- General labour or construction
- Trades, maintenance, utilities, and manufacturing
- Lower responsibility or entry level positions
Are Candidates Given Equal Opportunity?

85% of Canadians believed that companies do not have inclusive hiring practices or policies for individuals with a criminal record.

Unfortunately, they are largely correct. The reality is that there is a lack of understanding around criminal records and hiring practices that enables discrimination.

- 90% of Canadians believed employers should always seek additional information or follow up with an interview when a candidate is flagged with a positive record check.

- Over half agreed that helping record holders to become employed citizens would make an employer stand out positively.

- 58% said they would be more likely to buy or use products or services from a company if they offered employment opportunities to those with a criminal record.

- Millennials are even more supportive. 68% of respondents aged 18-34 said they would be more likely to purchase products from a company if they offered employment opportunities to those with a criminal record, a score 10% higher than the national average.

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