



Survey topline

Opinion Poll: North Carolina small business owners support criminal justice reforms to address persistent workforce challenges

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Download the full report from our website: <https://smallbusinessmajority.org/our-research/north-carolina-small-business-owners-support-criminal-justice-reforms-address-persistent-workforce-challenges>

Methodology

This opinion poll, conducted by Chesapeake Beach Consulting for Small Business Majority, reflects the opinions of 100 small business owners from North Carolina. The poll, conducted from September 13 through September 20, 2022, has a margin of error of +/-10% at a 95% confidence interval. Poll respondents identified with the following political parties: 41% Democrat, 32% Republican and 24% independent.

Toplines

1. When it comes to gender, how do you identify?

Male	41%
Female	59%
Transgender	0%
Gender non-conforming and/or non-binary	0%
Prefer not to disclose	0%
Another option not listed here	0%

2. Are you the owner of a for-profit small business?

Yes.....	100%
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3. How many people does your company employ, including yourself? Please include full-time and part-time employees, but do not include independent contractors.

2 to 10	50%
11 to 25	15%
26 to 50	19%
51 to 75	12%
75 to 100.....	4%

4. What is the zip code of your business?

North Carolina	100%
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5. Which of the following categories best describes your business?

Agriculture & Mining	3%
Consulting & Business Services	6%
Education & Youth Services.....	3%
Energy & Utilities	2%
Engineering.....	1%
Food & Beverage	2%
Healthcare, Pharmaceuticals & Biotech.....	2%
Insurance & Financial Services	3%
Manufacturing	12%
Media & Entertainment	0%
Non-profit.....	1%
Real Estate & Construction	21%
Retail.....	17%
Service and Consumer Services	6%
Software & Internet.....	2%
Technology, Computers & Electronics	4%
Telecommunications.....	2%
Transportation & Storage	1%
Travel, Recreation & Leisure.....	3%
Wholesale & Distributors	3%
Other	6%

6. How optimistic or pessimistic are you about your business prospects over the next 6 months?

Very optimistic	42%
Somewhat optimistic	43%
Neither optimistic nor pessimistic	7%
Somewhat pessimistic	6%
Very pessimistic	2%
TOTAL OPTIMISTIC	85%
TOTAL PESSIMISTIC	8%

7. Thinking ahead to the next six months, how likely is it that your business will add employees? Would you say it is very likely, somewhat likely, somewhat unlikely, or very unlikely?

Very likely	20%
Somewhat likely	52%
Somewhat unlikely.....	10%
Very unlikely	14%
Not applicable to my business	1%

Not sure	3%
TOTAL LIKELY	72%
TOTAL UNLIKELY.....	24%

8. What are some challenges that you faced/are facing when hiring new employees?

(Select all that apply)

People expect higher pay	47%
Hesitation to work in person	24%
Hard to find quality candidates	69%
Vaccine requirements/mask mandates	24%
No challenges	2%
Currently not hiring.....	7%
Other	1%
None of the above	1%

9. Have you taken any of the following actions to attract more workers? (Select all that apply)

Increased pay	46%
Increased benefits	34%
Created more part-time positions.....	39%
Hired younger staff than usual	29%
Hired from within my local community	26%
Currently not hiring.....	10%
Other	0%
None of the above	7%

10. (Asked of those not hiring) Why are you not hiring? (N=10)

I do not need to	70%
I cannot afford to	20%
I had to lay off employees	0%
Other	10%
None of the above	0%

When considering potential workforce liabilities for your business, how big a concern is each of the following? For each, please indicate whether it is your top concern, a major concern, a minor concern, or not a concern at all.

11. Harassment, including sexual, physical, or other forms

My top concern	20%
A major concern.....	30%
A minor concern	22%
Not a concern at all	28%

12. Theft of company, customer property or another employee’s property

My top concern	20%
A major concern.....	39%
A minor concern	22%
Not a concern at all	19%

13. Operational safety, such as protecting employees from injury on the job

My top concern	44%
A major concern.....	27%
A minor concern	16%
Not a concern at all	13%

14. Misuse of company technology, such as wrongfully accessing or sharing customer data

My top concern	23%
A major concern.....	34%
A minor concern	21%
Not a concern at all	22%

15. The risk of an employee committing a criminal offense that is not related to the job or company.

My top concern	17%
A major concern.....	28%
A minor concern	32%
Not a concern at all	23%

16. Do you ask prospective employees whether they have a criminal background?

Yes.....	69%
No.....	30%
Refused	1%

17. (If yes to Q16) When do you ask prospective employees whether they have a criminal background? (N=69)

Initial application/interview	84%
In the middle of the hiring process	13%
Near or at the end of the hiring process	3%

18. Do you conduct criminal background checks on prospective employees?

Yes, for all positions.....	55%
Yes, for some positions	27%
No.....	18%
TOTAL YES.....	82%
TOTAL NO	18%

19. (If 1 or 2 to Q18) When do conduct a criminal background check on prospective employees? (N=82)

Initial application/interview	60%
In the middle of the hiring process	28%
Near or at the end of the hiring process	12%

Clean Slate is a policy model that automatically seals qualifying criminal records if a person stays crime-free for a set period of time. As a result, background checks will no longer show this information, as eligible criminal records are sealed, expunged, erased, or set aside meaning there is no public record of the conviction. Millions of Americans with old criminal records are entitled to record sealing or expungements.

20. How familiar are you with Clean Slate laws?

Very familiar	19%
Somewhat familiar	39%
Not too familiar.....	17%
Not familiar at all.....	25%
Don't know.....	0%
Refused	0%
TOTAL FAMILIAR	58%
TOTAL NOT FAMILIAR	42%

Here are some statements that business owners like yourself have made about the criminal justice system and its impact on families, communities, and the economy. After I read each statement, please tell me if you agree or disagree with the statement.

21. One way to expand the productivity and diversity of our nation's workforce is by making it easier for employers to recruit from underused candidate pools.

Strongly agree	39%
Somewhat agree.....	44%
Somewhat disagree	8%
Strongly disagree	2%
Neither agree nor disagree.....	7%
TOTAL AGREE.....	83%
TOTAL DISAGREE.....	10%

22. A job is one of the most important factors in determining whether someone will be re-arrested and return to jail. Many business leaders have prioritized hiring people with criminal records and building partnerships with service providers for this population.

Strongly agree	37%
Somewhat agree.....	39%
Somewhat disagree	15%
Strongly disagree	4%
Neither agree nor disagree.....	5%
TOTAL AGREE.....	76%
TOTAL DISAGREE.....	19%

23. Removing barriers to employment for people with criminal records will save tax dollars by reducing recidivism and the need for long term government assistance.

Strongly agree	38%
Somewhat agree	44%
Somewhat disagree	10%
Strongly disagree	1%
Neither agree nor disagree.....	7%
TOTAL AGREE.....	82%
TOTAL DISAGREE.....	11%

24. The American criminal justice system disproportionately impacts people of color, leading to employment barriers and economic mobility.

Strongly agree	35%
Somewhat agree	35%
Somewhat disagree	15%
Strongly disagree	9%
Neither agree nor disagree.....	6%
TOTAL AGREE.....	70%
TOTAL DISAGREE.....	24%

25. Nearly half of all children in the United States have a parent with a criminal record. Sealing or expunging old qualifying records might improve these families’ economic mobility by increasing their parents’ ability to find and maintain employment.

Strongly agree	40%
Somewhat agree	42%
Somewhat disagree	10%
Strongly disagree	5%
Neither agree nor disagree.....	3%
TOTAL AGREE.....	82%
TOTAL DISAGREE.....	15%

There are two federal government programs that incentivize hiring workers impacted by the criminal justice system. I would like to provide you with a brief description of each program. Please tell me if learning about this program makes you more likely or less likely to hire someone who has been involved with the criminal justice system.

26. The Federal Work Opportunity Tax Credit provides employers a credit for 40% of the wages paid to certain individuals, up to \$6,000. The individuals must be certified by a state workforce agency as members of one of 10 targeted groups, including people convicted of certain offenses.

Much more likely	27%
Somewhat more likely	52%
Somewhat less likely	6%
Much less likely	4%

Don't know.....	10%
Refused	1%
TOTAL MORE LIKELY.....	79%
TOTAL LESS LIKELY.....	10%

27. The Federal Bonding Program provides “Fidelity Bonds” for at-risk and hard-to-place job seekers. These Bonds protect employers from any losses caused by the fraudulent or dishonest acts of their bonded employees, whether committed on or away from the workplace.

Much more likely	35%
Somewhat more likely.....	45%
Somewhat less likely	6%
Much less likely.....	3%
Don't know.....	9%
Refused	2%
TOTAL MORE LIKELY.....	80%
TOTAL LESS LIKELY.....	9%

Different state-level policies have been enacted or are being considered as a way to reduce recidivism and boost economic security in at-risk communities. Please tell me if after learning about this program you would support or oppose a similar policy in your state.

28. In Illinois, formerly incarcerated people receive job credits that reduce their individual state taxes.

Strongly support	29%
Somewhat support	38%
Somewhat oppose	20%
Strongly oppose	6%
Don't know.....	7%
Refused	0%
TOTAL SUPPORT	67%
TOTAL OPPOSE.....	26%

29. In Iowa, employers who hire people with criminal records can deduct an additional 65% of the wages paid in the first 12 months of employment on their state income tax returns.

Strongly support	33%
Somewhat support	40%
Somewhat oppose	13%
Strongly oppose	5%
Don't know.....	7%
Refused	2%
TOTAL SUPPORT	73%
TOTAL OPPOSE.....	18%

30. California, Michigan, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Utah have passed Clean Slate laws that automatically expunge or seal certain qualifying offenses.

Strongly support	31%
Somewhat support	46%
Somewhat oppose	11%
Strongly oppose	5%
Don't know.....	7%
Refused	0%
TOTAL SUPPORT	77%
TOTAL OPPOSE.....	16%

31. In Georgia, individuals may petition the court to restrict and seal certain convictions from their criminal record.

Strongly support	32%
Somewhat support	37%
Somewhat oppose	17%
Strongly oppose	8%
Don't know.....	6%
Refused	0%
TOTAL SUPPORT	69%
TOTAL OPPOSE.....	25%

32. Would you support or oppose federal legislation that would prohibit private-sector employers from asking job seekers to disclose their criminal history?

Strongly support	18%
Somewhat support	39%
Somewhat oppose	19%
Strongly oppose	16%
Don't know.....	8%
Refused	0%
TOTAL SUPPORT	57%
TOTAL OPPOSE.....	35%

33. Would you support or oppose federal legislation to establish a process for individuals to petition federal courts to seal their records of nonviolent offenses, nonviolent cannabis, and drug offenses, and arrest records for those who have been acquitted?

Strongly support	35%
Somewhat support	41%
Somewhat oppose	14%
Strongly oppose	6%
Don't know.....	4%
Refused	0%

TOTAL SUPPORT 76%
TOTAL OPPOSE..... 20%

34. Would you support or oppose legislation in your state to establish a process for individuals to petition state courts to seal their records of nonviolent offenses, nonviolent cannabis, and drug offenses, and arrest records for those who have been acquitted?

Strongly support40%
 Somewhat support38%
 Somewhat oppose8%
 Strongly oppose 10%
 Don't know.....4%
 Refused0%
TOTAL SUPPORT 78%
TOTAL OPPOSE..... 18%

35. Based on what you know about Clean Slate policies, which statement is closest to your view?

Clean Slate policies will provide individuals with a second chance and open up the job pool for small businesses like mine.....83%
 Regardless of the Clean State policies, I am not open to hiring individuals with a criminal record. 17%

Thirty-three (33) states and the District of Columbia suspend or revoke driver’s licenses for unpaid traffic or court-related fines and fees, impacting an employer’s ability to hire a ready workforce and for that workforce to reliably attend work. Many states also criminalize driving on a suspended license and criminalize failures to appear in court for issues related to driver’s licenses.

36. Would you support or oppose proposals to end debt-based driver's license suspensions for unpaid fines and fees?

Strongly support38%
 Somewhat support44%
 Somewhat oppose7%
 Strongly oppose6%
 Don't know.....2%
 Refused3%
TOTAL SUPPORT 82%
TOTAL OPPOSE..... 13%

Thinking now about another topic...

Nearly one in four professions require an occupational or professional license, including plumbing, dentistry, nursing, cosmetology, law, and many others. Today, individuals in 30 states can be legally denied a license because of a previous arrest record, even if they were never convicted of a crime.

37. As a business owner and thinking about the impact a change in the law would have on your ability to hire qualified individuals, would you support or oppose reforms that would allow people with old convictions fairer access to occupational licenses?

Strongly support	36%
Somewhat support	46%
Somewhat oppose	7%
Strongly oppose	5%
Refused	6%
TOTAL SUPPORT	82%
TOTAL OPPOSE.....	12%

Now, I have just a few questions for statistical purposes...

38. In what year were you born?

Before 1960	9%
1960 to 1969.....	12%
1970 to 1979	30%
1980 to 1989	40%
1990 to 2000.....	9%
After 2000.....	0%

39. Generally speaking, do you think of yourself as a Republican, Democrat, or Independent?

Republican	32%
Independent.....	24%
Democrat	41%
Other	1%
Don't know.....	0%
Refused	2%

40. (If independent, other, or don't know) Do you think of yourself as closer to the Republican Party or the Democratic Party? N=25

Closer to the Democratic Party	32%
Closer to the Republican Party	24%
Neither	44%
Don't know.....	0%
Refused	0%

41. Which race do you identify with?

Asian / Asian American / East Asian / South Asian / Southeast Asian	2%
Black / African or African American.....	12%
Hispanic / Latino / Spanish origin	6%
Middle Eastern / North African.....	0%
Native American / Alaska Native.....	3%
Native Hawaiian /Pacific Islander	0%
White / Caucasian.....	74%
Other	2%
Prefer not to answer.....	1%

42. Is your business located in a rural area, a suburban area, or an urban area?

Rural	29%
Suburban.....	40%
Urban	31%