

Opinion poll: Illinois small businesses support expanding occupational licensing for justice-impacted individuals

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Download full report from our website: <https://smallbusinessmajority.org/our-research/workforce/illinois-small-businesses-support-expanding-occupational-licensing-justice-impacted-individuals>

Methodology

This poll reflects a survey of 100 small business owners and decision-makers in Illinois. The poll was an online and phone survey conducted by Chesapeake Beach Consulting between February 5-11, 2024. The margin of error is +/-10% at a 95% confidence level.

Survey Toplines

1. Just to confirm, are you the owner of a for-profit business?

Yes 100%

2. Please indicate your gender.

Male..... 59%

Female..... 40%

Gender nonconforming and/or nonbinary 1%

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..... 58%

11 to 25 10%

26 to 50 14%

51 to 75 8%

75 to 100..... 10%

4. What is the zip code of your business?

Illinois 100%

5. Which of the following categories best describes your business?

Agriculture & Mining 5%

Consulting & Business Services..... 3%

Education & Youth Services 3%

Energy & Utilities 0%

Engineering 3%

Food & Beverage 4%

Health, Beauty, Fitness 1%

Healthcare, Pharmaceuticals & Biotech 3%

Insurance & Financial Services	10%
Manufacturing.....	4%
Media & Entertainment	1%
Non-profit	1%
Real Estate & Construction	15%
Retail	12%
Service and Consumer Services.....	8%
Software & Internet.....	1%
Technology, Computers & Electronics	4%
Telecommunications	2%
Transportation & Storage.....	4%
Travel, Recreation & Leisure.....	0%
Wholesale & Distributors	6%
Other	10%

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

Very optimistic.....	36%
Somewhat optimistic.....	33%
Neither optimistic or pessimistic	15%
Somewhat pessimistic.....	12%
Very pessimistic	3%
Don't know	0%
Refused.....	1%
TOTAL OPTIMISTIC	69%
TOTAL PESSIMISTIC.....	15%

7. Rank the overall state of your business, where 1 indicates that your business is performing very poorly and 5 indicates it is performing very well.

One (Very Poorly).....	2%
Two.....	10%
Three	43%
Four.....	28%
Five (Very Well)	17%
TOTAL POORLY (one & two).....	12%
NEITHER POORLY OR WELL (three)	43%
TOTAL WELL (four & five).....	45%

8. 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.....	23%
Somewhat likely	27%
Somewhat unlikely	16%

Very unlikely	21%
Not applicable to my business.....	4%
Not sure.....	9%
Refused.....	0%
TOTAL LIKELY	50%
TOTAL UNLIKELY	37%

9. What are some challenges that you faced/are facing when hiring new employees? (Select all that apply)

People expect higher pay.....	45%
Hard to find quality candidates.....	61%
No challenges	6%
Currently not hiring	26%
Other	1%
None of the above.....	3%

10. Which of the following actions have you performed to attract more workers? (Select all that apply)

Increased pay	34%
Increased benefits	28%
Created more part-time positions	24%
Hired younger staff than usual.....	19%
Hired from within my local community.....	28%
Currently not hiring	26%
Other	4%
None of the above.....	6%

Now onto a different topic.

Thirty-three (33) states and the District of Columbia suspend or revoke driver’s licenses for unpaid traffic or court-related fines and fees. Many states also suspend licenses for failures to appear in court for traffic issues and other fine-only offenses.

Below are statements about driver’s license suspensions for unpaid fines or fees (this does not include failure to pay child support), or failure to appear for fine-only offenses. For each, indicate whether you agree or disagree.

11. Driver’s license suspensions for unpaid fines and fees negatively impact employers’ ability to hire employees that can reliably attend work.

Strongly agree	29%
Somewhat agree	35%
Somewhat disagree	13%
Strongly disagree.....	13%
Don’t know	10%
Refused.....	0%
TOTAL AGREE	64%
TOTAL DISAGREE	26%

12. Access to transportation is vital for our nation’s workforce.

Strongly agree	71%
Somewhat agree	23%
Somewhat disagree	4%
Strongly disagree.....	1%
Don’t know	1%
Refused.....	0%
TOTAL AGREE	94%
TOTAL DISAGREE	5%

13. Driver’s license suspensions for unpaid fines and fees unfairly discriminate against low-income individuals.

Strongly agree	33%
Somewhat agree	21%
Somewhat disagree	16%
Strongly disagree.....	22%
Don’t know	7%
Refused.....	1%
TOTAL AGREE	54%
TOTAL DISAGREE	38%

For each of the following, please tell me if you support or oppose.

14. Proposals to end debt-based driver's license suspensions for unpaid court fines and fees.

Strongly support.....	38%
Somewhat support	25%
Somewhat oppose	17%
Strongly oppose.....	12%
Don’t know	5%
Refused	3%
TOTAL SUPPORT	63%
TOTAL OPPOSE	29%

15. Proposals to end debt-based driver's license suspensions for failing to appear in court for minor offenses and traffic violations.

Strongly support.....	30%
Somewhat support	31%
Somewhat oppose	17%
Strongly oppose.....	14%
Don’t know	7%
Refused	1%
TOTAL SUPPORT	61%
TOTAL OPPOSE	31%

16. Retroactively reinstating driver’s licenses for individuals who have had their license revoked for failing to pay a court fine or appear in court.

Strongly support.....	29%
Somewhat support	35%
Somewhat oppose	17%
Strongly oppose.....	10%
Don’t know	7%
Refused	2%
TOTAL SUPPORT	64%
TOTAL OPPOSE	27%

17. Automatically reinstating driver’s licenses for individuals who have had their license revoked for failing to pay a court fine or appear in court, without them having to reapply for the license at the state department of motor vehicles or pay a fee.

Strongly support.....	31%
Somewhat support	24%
Somewhat oppose	24%
Strongly oppose.....	15%
Don’t know	4%
Refused	2%
TOTAL SUPPORT	55%
TOTAL OPPOSE	39%

18. Requiring the state to notify individuals who have had their license revoked for failing to pay a court fine or appear in court that their license is being reinstated automatically?

Strongly support.....	49%
Somewhat support	27%
Somewhat oppose	9%
Strongly oppose.....	7%
Don’t know	6%
Refused	2%
TOTAL SUPPORT	76%
TOTAL OPPOSE	16%

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 denied a license because of a previous criminal record.

19. Does your business require occupational or professional licensing to own or work for the business?

Yes	47%
No.....	47%
Not sure.....	6%

20. Does your business contract or work with another company that requires you and/or your employees for your business to have occupational or professional licensing?

Yes	45%
No.....	53%
Not sure.....	2%

Below are statements about occupational and professional licenses and state licensing boards. For each, indicate whether you agree or disagree with the statement.

21. License denials should be governed by specific guidelines and regulations pertinent to that industry, not broad or subjective guidelines such as the applicant’s “good moral character,” as is the case in some states and for some boards.

Strongly agree	34%
Somewhat agree	41%
Somewhat disagree	14%
Strongly disagree.....	3%
Don’t know	5%
Refused.....	3%
TOTAL AGREE	75%
TOTAL DISAGREE	17%

22. State licensing boards should consider the nature of the offense when deciding whether to deny a license, rather denying a license broadly for any felony conviction.

Strongly agree	41%
Somewhat agree	43%
Somewhat disagree	7%
Strongly disagree.....	4%
Don’t know	4%
Refused.....	1%
TOTAL AGREE	84%
TOTAL DISAGREE	11%

23. Licensing boards should consider the length of time since an offense was committed in its considerations.

Strongly agree	46%
Somewhat agree	43%
Somewhat disagree	4%
Strongly disagree.....	2%
Don’t know	4%
Refused.....	1%
TOTAL AGREE	89%
TOTAL DISAGREE	6%

24. Business owners should have the ability to decide whether an employee’s criminal history should preclude them from working for them, not a state licensing board.

Strongly agree	50%
Somewhat agree	34%
Somewhat disagree	7%
Strongly disagree.....	3%
Don’t know	5%
Refused.....	1%
TOTAL AGREE	84%
TOTAL DISAGREE	10%

25. Licensing boards play an important role in public safety, protecting businesses from liability and ensuring a safe job candidate pool.

Strongly agree	27%
Somewhat agree	47%
Somewhat disagree	14%
Strongly disagree.....	4%
Don’t know	5%
Refused.....	3%
TOTAL AGREE	74%
TOTAL DISAGREE	18%

26. 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 criminal records fairer access to occupational licenses?

Strongly support.....	31%
Somewhat support	47%
Somewhat oppose	11%
Strongly oppose.....	5%
Don’t know	5%
Refused.....	1%
TOTAL SUPPORT	78%
TOTAL OPPOSE.....	16%

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

27. In what year were you born?

Before 1960	18%
1960 to 1969	14%
1970 to 1979	18%
1980 to 1989.....	28%
1990 to 2000	20%
After 2000.....	2%

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

Republican	33%
Independent.....	28%
Democrat.....	33%
Other	2%
Don't know	1%
Refused.....	3%

29. Do you think of yourself as closer to the Republican Party or the Democratic Party?

(If independent, other or don't know. N=31)

Closer to the Democratic Party	35%
Closer to the Republican Party.....	29%
Neither	29%
Don't know	6%
Refused.....	0%

30. Which race do you identify with?

Asian / Asian American / East Asian / South Asian / Southeast Asian	4%
Black / African or African American	12%
Hispanic / Latino / Spanish origin	5%
Middle Eastern / North African	1%
Native American / Alaska Native	1%
Native Hawaiian /Pacific Islander	0%
White / Caucasian	72%
Other	3%
Prefer not to answer.....	2%

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

Rural.....	15%
Suburban.....	50%
Urban	35%