

ICPSR 3599

**Consequences of a Criminal
Record for Employment
Opportunity in Milwaukee,
Wisconsin, 2002**

Description

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Bibliographic Description

ICPSR Study No.: 3599

Title: Consequences of a Criminal Record for Employment Opportunity in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, 2002

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Scope of Study

Summary: This study examined employers' policies and practices for hiring entry-level workers in the Milwaukee metropolitan area. The study consisted of telephone interviews conducted in the spring of 2002 with 177 employers who had advertised entry-level openings in the prior six months. The survey included questions about the company, such as size, industry, employee turnover, and racial composition, questions about hiring procedures, questions about the last worker hired for a position not requiring a college degree, and questions about the employer's attitude toward various kinds of marginalized workers. An emphasis in the survey was placed on assessing employers' attitudes about and experience with applicants with criminal histories.

Subject Term(s): African Americans, criminal histories, drug related crimes, employment discrimination, ex-offender employment, hiring practices, imprisonment, racial discrimination, White Americans

Geographic Coverage: Milwaukee, United States, Wisconsin

Unit of Observation: Individuals.

Universe: Employers in the Milwaukee area who advertised for entry-level jobs between June and December 2001.

Data Type: survey data

Data Collection Notes: The user guide, codebook, and data collection instrument are provided by ICPSR as Portable Document Format (PDF) files. The PDF file format was developed by Adobe Systems, Incorporated and can be accessed using PDF reader software, such as the Adobe Acrobat Reader. Information on how to obtain a copy of the Acrobat Reader is provided on the ICPSR Web site.

Methodology

Purpose of the Study: This study investigated how and why employers make the hiring decisions they do. Questions asked included: (1) How do employers' reactions to applicants with criminal records compare to their reactions to other groups of marginalized workers? (2) How does the type of crime or the context of the sanction affect employers' evaluations of applicants with criminal records? (3) What kinds of formal screens do employers use to evaluate applicants for entry-level jobs? and (4) How do the characteristics of the job, the applicant pool, the customer base, and the company (location, size, industry, etc.) affect employers' willingness to consider applicants with criminal records?

Study Design: Data consist of 177 completed telephone interviews with employers. The survey was administered by the Michigan State Survey Center. Calls were made to each establishment, asking to speak with the person in charge of hiring. The baseline survey instrument was developed by Harry Holzer et al. (1996, 2002). It includes questions about the company, such as size, industry, employee turnover, and racial composition, questions about hiring procedures, questions about the last worker hired for a position not requiring a college degree, and questions about the employer's attitude toward various kinds of marginalized workers. In addition, several vignette items were added to assess employers' reactions to applicants convicted of different types of crimes or who had received different types of sanctions. Roughly half of employers were read a vignette in which the subject was presented as White, with the other half receiving a vignette in which the subject was presented as Black.

Sample: Job openings for entry-level positions (defined as job requiring no previous experience and no education past high school) were identified from the classified section of the MILWAUKEE JOURNAL SENTINEL's Sunday edition between June and December 2001. During this same time period, a supplemental sample was drawn from JOBNET, a state-sponsored Web site for employment listings. All job openings within a 25-mile radius of downtown Milwaukee were included.

Sources of Information: Data were obtained through telephone interviews.

Description of Variables: Variables include the business's location, its main product, whether it was minority-owned, its distance from public transportation, how long it would take to get from the downtown business area to the business using public transportation, total employees, number of temporary employees, number of unskilled employees, number of positions that did not require a college degree, race of employees in non-college degree positions, percentage of employees covered by a collective bargaining agreement, number of workers hired in past year, number of workers who left the business in the last year, and number of current job vacancies. Other variables focus on details of the application and hiring process for the last employee hired into a position that did not require a college degree, sex, age, race, and education of that employee, kinds of tasks regularly performed by that employee, kind of education and work experience needed for that position, the compensation for that position, number of hours per week usually worked in that position, whether health insurance was provided for that position, and possibility of promotion for someone in that position. Additional items include whether the business would hire an applicant on welfare, an applicant with a GED, an applicant with a criminal record, an applicant with only part-time work experience, or an applicant who had been unemployed for over a year, whether the company required applicants to take a drug test, what percentage of drug tests had been positive in the last year, whether the company asked applicants about their criminal background, percentage of applicants that reported a prior conviction in the last year, whether the company performed background checks, percentage of background checks in the last year that found a criminal record, how background checks were performed, number of employees company hired with a criminal record in the last year, number of those still employed, how positive the company's experience with those employees was, the percentage of applicants who were Black, White, and Hispanic, the percentage of customers who were Black, White, and Hispanic, and the respondent's title, race, age, education, and gender. Also included are answers to questions that described hypothetical applicants.

Response Rates: The final survey sample of 177 respondents represented a 51-percent response rate. Four firms were dropped from the survey sample and were excluded from the denominator for the calculation of the response rate.

Presence of Common Scales: Several Likert-type scales were used.

Extent of Processing: Standardized missing values.

Access and Availability

Note: A list of the data formats available for this study can be found in the [summary of holdings](#). Detailed file-level information (such as record length, case count, and variable count) is listed in the [file manifest](#).

Some instruments administered as part of this study may contain contents from copyrighted instruments. Reproductions of the instruments are provided solely as documentation for the analysis of the data associated with this collection. Please contact the data producers for information on permissions to use the instruments for other purposes.

Original ICPSR Release: 2003-06-19

Version History: The last update of this study occurred on 2005-11-04.

2005-11-04 - On 2005-03-14 new files were added to one or more datasets. These files included additional setup files as well as one or more of the following: SAS program, SAS transport, SPSS portable, and Stata system files. The metadata record was revised 2005-11-04 to reflect these additions.

Dataset(s):

- DS1: Consequences of a Criminal Record for Employment Opportunity in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, 2002

Publications

Final Reports and Other Publication Resources: A list of publications related to, or based on, this data collection can be accessed from the study's download page on the NACJD Web site or through the ICPSR Bibliography of Data-Related Literature at <http://www.icpsr.umich.edu/ICPSR/citations/index.html>. The list of citations includes links to abstracts and publications in Portable Document Format (PDF) files or text files when available.

Final reports and other publications describing research conducted on a variety of criminal justice topics are available from the National Criminal Justice Reference Service (NCJRS). NCJRS was established in 1972 by the National Institute of Justice (NIJ), an agency of the U.S. Department of Justice, to provide research findings to criminal justice professionals and researchers. NCJRS operates specialized clearinghouses that are staffed by information specialists who supply a range of reference, referral, and distribution services. Publications can be obtained from NCJRS at NIJ/NCJRS, Box 6000, Rockville, MD, 20849-6000, 800-851-3420 or 301-519-5500. TTY Service for the Hearing Impaired is 877-712-9279 (toll-free) or 301-947-8374 (local). The URL for the NCJRS Web site is:

<http://www.ncjrs.gov/>

NIJ Data Resources Program

About the DRP: The National Institute of Justice Data Resources Program (DRP) makes datasets from NIJ-funded research and evaluation projects available to the research community and sponsors research and training activities devoted to secondary data analysis. Datasets are archived by the National Archive of Criminal Justice Data (NACJD) at the Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR) at the University of Michigan.

The NACJD maintains a World Wide Web site with instructions for transferring files and sending messages. Criminal justice data funded by the Department of Justice are available via the Internet at this site at no charge to the user. NACJD may be contacted at NACJD/ICPSR, P.O. Box 1248, Ann Arbor, MI, 48106-1248, 800-999-0960. The URL for the NACJD Web site is:

<http://www.icpsr.umich.edu/NACJD/>