

FAIR
CHANCES
COALITION



All Canadians
deserve a
fair chance.

**You're an employer
who cares about equity
and inclusion.**

That's why we're inviting
you to join Canada's first
Fair Chances Coalition.

The [Fair Chances Coalition \(FCC\)](#) is a group of employers, HR professionals, and businesses committed to giving Canadians who have a criminal record a fair chance at building a better life through employment. Our lead partners include the John Howard Society of Ontario, the City of Toronto, and Prince's Trust Canada.

This is an introduction to Fair Chance Hiring, the Coalition and what Canadian organizations can do to support employment equity. It also includes the [Fair Chances Pledge](#), a simple way to express your support and take leadership.



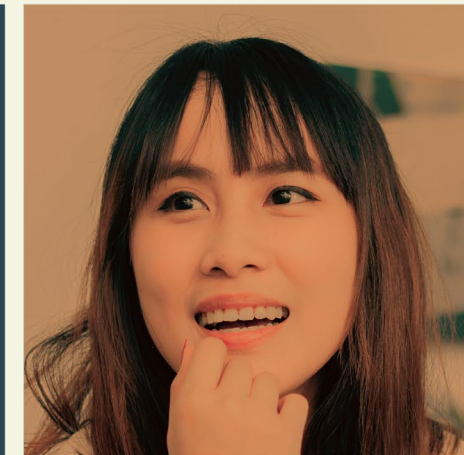
For the **four million Canadians with a criminal record**, employment is vital to rebuilding their lives and rejoining society. That's one in nine of us.



But they're **50% less likely to find a job** because of the stigma they carry. Many will be rejected before their application is even considered.

Because of the stereotypes and misconceptions that many employers have about criminal records, millions of Canadians are denied the chance to build a productive future for themselves and their families.

These Canadians – who disproportionately come from communities that are racialized and marginalized – hold incredible potential for employers willing to give them a fair chance.



The reality is that Canada's criminal justice system is too often biased and unjust.

People from racialized and marginalized communities are over-policed and over-incarcerated. As a result, they're highly over-represented among people with criminal records.

These communities include Black and Indigenous people, as well as people who are experiencing mental illness, addiction, homelessness, trauma, and poverty.

Because of systemic bias in the criminal justice system

Black people are over-represented by

3x 

and Indigenous people are over-represented by

5x 

than their share of the overall population.

It's time for **Fair Chance Hiring** in Canada.



Fair Chance Hiring (**FCH**) refers to a range of hiring **policies, best practices, and training** that every employer can use to fairly assess candidates who have a criminal record. They're built on a simple idea: that **every qualified candidate, regardless of background, has the right to a fair assessment** free from stereotypes or misconceptions about criminal records.

Fair Chance Hiring isn't preferential treatment for people with criminal records, and it isn't lowering the bar.

Instead, it's about creating a level playing field – it gives employers the knowledge and awareness they need to break down systemic, unfair barriers to employment.

Fair Chance Hiring is an effective way to advance workplace equity. And it's already widespread. In the US, more than **40 states and 150 cities** have adopted the Fair Chance Hiring policies since they were first championed by the White House in 2009. It's also already practiced in **British Columbia, Quebec** and across **Australia**.

These practices aren't simply the right thing to do: they're a good business decision. Today hundreds of employers, including Starbucks, Verizon, Microsoft and Walmart, have voluntarily adopted Fair Chance Hiring because it helps the bottom line. It **enhances recruitment** and **retention**, aligns with **values of Canadians**, and **establishes leadership** for any organization that adopts them.



verizon✓

 Microsoft

Walmart 

Canadians agree.



80% of us strongly believe that people who have served their time should have the chance to work again. We may not always align on solutions for societal challenges, but in this case the belief spans age, gender, region and education. It's in our DNA to offer our neighbours opportunity. It's also reflected in our purchasing decisions.



58% would be more likely to buy products or services from a company if they provide employment opportunities to people with a criminal record. As more consumers seek out brands that align with their values, Fair Chance Hiring policies present an opportunity to take leadership on an issue that matters to Canada.

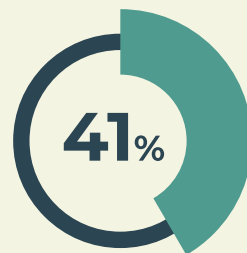
By reducing barriers, you unlock talent.

It's hard to overstate the value of employment to someone struggling to put their criminal record behind them. When you offer someone a Fair Chance, you aren't just offering them an opportunity: **you're fostering deeper loyalty.** Inspiring hope in people who have struggled for so long unlocks their potential and dedication in a way that's difficult to match.

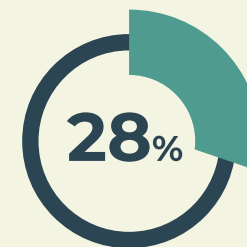


According to the Business Development Bank of Canada, 40% of entrepreneurs are facing challenges finding the workers they need. And this trend is set to continue for a decade. To get the economy back to full-stream after this difficult pandemic period, it's critical that employers have the talent to grow.

The gap spans both skilled and semi-skilled labour:



of businesses surveyed reported that a lack of skilled labour was limiting sales and growth



reported that the shortage of semi-skilled labour was affecting operations.

Slowing immigration rates, set to continue through 2022, further widen this labour gap. But many employers are overlooking a vast untapped talent pool that can help them stay ahead of the shortages.

Source: 2021 Labour Shortage Study by [Business Development Canada](#)



Employees with criminal records have a 13% lower turnover rate than those without one, according to a study from Northwestern University. They're also no more likely to be fired for misconduct than any other employee.



According to the Society for Human Resource Management, **67% of HR professionals and 82% of managers feel that the “quality of fair chance talent is about the same or higher** than that of workers without records.”



Not only that, **but 74% of both managers and HR professional surveyed believe the cost of hiring individuals with criminal records is the same as or lower** than that of hiring individuals without criminal records.

Inclusivity begins with **fairness.**

More organizations are recognizing the value and impact of a diverse community of employees. But at the same time, they often ignore a segment of the population disproportionately made up of marginalized and BIPOC Canadians. This presents an opportunity for all organizations to take greater leadership in representing all Canadians.

Employees feel pride contributing to an organization that reflects their values. And as talent increasingly finds themselves with more employment options, they're seeking out workplaces with a positive impact. Fair Chance Hiring can help you not only reach talented employees with a record, but can become a rallying flag across your recruitment efforts that differentiates you from competitors.



Today, we're building a **Fair Chances Coalition.**



Funded by the Metcalf Foundation, the John Howard Society of Ontario has partnered with the City of Toronto and Prince's Trust Canada to launch the Fair Chances Coalition.

We're looking for organizations to join us.





So, what can **your organization** do?

It starts with the Fair Chances Pledge.

“

We acknowledge the barriers to opportunity faced by millions of Canadians who have criminal records. We recognize that employment is vital to help rebuild and improve the lives of these Canadians and the communities in which they live.

We support the mission of the Fair Chance Coalition to ensure that all Canadians, regardless of whether they have a past criminal record, have a fair chance at participating in and contributing to our economy.

We are committed to understanding the context and relevance of criminal records, and to considering all qualified candidates in alignment with business needs and regulations.

”

The pledge is an expression of your support for the Coalition, drawing attention to the importance and benefits of Fair Chance Hiring for the entire Canadian economy.

It's also an opportunity to highlight the ways in which Fair Chance Hiring aligns with or enhances your existing commitments to advance workplace equity and inclusion. By taking the pledge, you'll become a **member** of the Fair Chances Coalition.

Discover the benefits of **membership.**

You'll have access **educational resources and practical tools** to help your organization break down barriers and connect with motivated, committed talent.

Building on the Coalition's knowledge-base and expertise, we ask that your organization take **voluntary, business-aligned actions** – such as education, training, and HR policy development – to realize the full benefits of Fair Chance Hiring.

For example:

- Learning the principles of Fair Chance Hiring.
- Understanding how criminal records factor into hiring practices.
- Participating in educational workshops or training with members of the Coalition.
- Identifying and enacting incremental changes to hiring policies or practices that will enable your organization realize the full benefits of Fair Chance Hiring.

Then take the next step and become a **Partner.**



**Assist with
outreach**



Co-produce content



Donate resources

Beyond taking the Fair Chances Pledge, there's a vital role for large employers to play in shining a light on this important issue and its benefits for the entire Canadian economy.

We would love to start a conversation about the the incredible impact Fair Chance Hiring can have on your business and your community. If you are interested in learning more, please reach out with a time that's convenient for you to meet.

Thank you so much for your interest in this vital work.

We look forward to building something remarkable together.

Sincerely,

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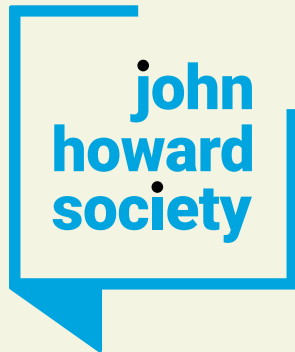
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**Let's
Connect.**

About Us



The John Howard Society of Ontario has spent the last 90 years working for human justice. Through 19 local offices across the province, we deliver specialized programs to address the root causes of crime while reducing its impact on society, such as: employment services, relapse prevention, and reintegration services. **We have seen first-hand the difference that support from employers can have on countless lives affected by our criminal justice system.**


Discover the human impact of our work by visiting I am More than My Record, a collection of heartfelt, personal stories gathered by our colleagues at the Calgary John Howard Society.

Getting
started can
be simple.

The journey to becoming a Fair Chance Employer is different for every organization. In fact, you may already be well on your way. Our goal is to inspire and enable employers to take **incremental steps along a spectrum** of Fair Chance practices in a way that's tailored to their business.

So what does your journey look like?

Where are you starting from?



I'm not sure where to begin.

Your current hiring policies are focused on finding the best candidate and comply with employment and human rights laws. You don't currently have a robust Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) policy that extends to your hiring practices.

It's simple to get started. In fact, many employers already use key principles of **Fair Chance Hiring (FCH)** without realizing it.

FCH can help you drive business while removing unfair barriers to employment.



I want to build on our existing DEI framework.

You've already invested significant time and resources to build a robust DEI framework, which may already extend to hiring practices and corporate training.

FCH isn't just a straightforward way to enhance that framework: it's an opportunity to highlight your leadership role in advancing workplace equity across Canada.

FCH can easily complement and enrich your DEI commitments.

Where are you starting from?

I don't think Fair Chance Hiring is possible in my industry.

The fact is that all industries can benefit from implementing elements of Fair Chance Hiring (FCH). It's about identifying the right approach along a spectrum that fits their needs.

Even in industries that require record checks or work with vulnerable populations, there are still many ways that FCH practices can be used to significantly enhance workplace equity.

FCH can be customized to fit your unique priorities.

My industry doesn't use record checks.

Examples of industries that often don't use record checks include film, construction, and certain roles in hospitality and manufacturing.

There are still many ways that FCH policies can make your workplace more equitable and help others learn from your industry's experience.

You can play an essential role in building a culture of FCH across Canada.

How will your organization change?

■ Employees and hiring managers will better understand what a criminal record does and does not say about a person.

■ Candidates who have records are encouraged to apply and told how and when records will be used.

Candidates are given an opportunity to speak about their records at an appropriate time.

■ Become an early adopter of a first-of its-kind program in Canada.

Because you've done the work, you'll have the confidence to talk about your policies and how they meaningfully impact workplace equity.

■ Gain improved knowledge about social equity.

Your team will better understand how records impact social equity, why certain groups are overrepresented, how stigma is harmful, and how we can break down that stigma with knowledge and awareness.

■ If a record does appear, your hiring managers will know how to assess it fairly by seeing the candidate as a whole person and not simply as a stereotype.