

Attitudes of employers, corrective services workers, employment support workers, and prisoners and offenders towards employing ex-prisoners and ex-offenders

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Introduction

The study described in this report investigated attitudes of employers, employment services workers, corrective services workers, and prisoners and offenders toward the employability of ex-prisoners and ex-offenders. The investigation involved conduct of a large scale survey in Queensland and Victoria. Respondents from all four stakeholder groups rated the probability of a number of hypothetical persons with different forensic histories obtaining and maintaining employment, in comparison to other disadvantaged groups. Respondents also rated the importance of several employment-related skills and characteristics to employability and the likelihood of members of the general workforce, ex-offenders, and ex-prisoners exhibiting those employment-related skills and characteristics.

This report commences with a review of the international and Australian literature relevant to employment of ex-prisoners and ex-offenders, employment of other disadvantaged groups, and employer and general population attitudes toward employment of those groups. Following the literature review, the rationale and expected findings are described. In the second section of the report, the study design and methods are described. In the third section, results are presented. Results are framed in terms of two comparisons. One is a comparison of the perceived employability of ex-prisoners, ex-offenders, and other disadvantaged groups. This comparison is based on ratings of the probability of obtaining and maintaining employment. The second is a comparison of the perceived employability of ex-prisoners, ex-offenders, and members of the general workforce. This comparison is in relation to the likelihood that members of each group exhibit specific important employment-related skills and characteristics. The fourth and final section of the report includes a discussion of the results, issues that emerge from the study, and recommendations for improving stakeholder attitudes toward the employability of ex-prisoners and ex-offenders. It also contains some general discussion on improving prospects for successful reintegration for ex-prisoners and ex-offenders.

Employment is a key issue in the successful reintegration of ex-prisoners and ex-offenders. Employment provides more than the income necessary to support adequate material conditions. It also provides structure and routine, while filling time. It provides opportunities to expand one's social network to include other productive members of society. In addition to all of this, employment can contribute to enhanced self-esteem and other psychological health.

Societal benefits relating to the employment of ex-prisoners and ex-offenders may include reduced crime and re-incarceration rates, reduced costs within the corrections system, safer communities, and inclusion of additional workers into a shrinking workforce. Reduced

costs to government in terms of lower recidivism rates among these groups are, potentially, a significant factor. Corrections Victoria estimates that approximately 60–70% of people who re-offend are unemployed at the time that they re-offend (Victorian Department of Justice 2000–2001), indicating that unemployment contributes significantly to recidivism.

This review includes an emphasis on issues impeding employment for ex-prisoners and ex-offenders, attitudes of employers and the general population toward the employment of ex-prisoners and ex-offenders, and attitudes of employers and the general population toward the employment of other disadvantaged groups (chronic illnesses, deformities, mental illness, disabilities, etc.).

Barriers to employment for ex-prisoners and ex-offenders

Issues impeding employment for ex-prisoners and ex-offenders can be classified into six main domains including personal conditions, social network and social environment, accommodation, workforce participation and training, criminal justice system, and drug and alcohol rehabilitation. The references provided in this literature review have a heavy emphasis on ex-prisoners rather than community corrections order offenders as there is only limited research relating to the latter group. Where appropriate, the issues identified from the extant research as impeding employment for ex-prisoners have been extended to the experience of the ex-offender population.

Numerous personal conditions have been identified as potential barriers to employment. Ex-prisoners may present with various psychological conditions including depression, low self-esteem, and low motivation (Helfgott 1997; Fletcher 2001), mental and/or health-related problems and disabilities (Dutreix 2000; Hirsch et al. 2002), behavioural problems such as anger management (Heinrich 2000). They may lack skills including basic life skills and key employment skills, together with limited education, low levels of numeracy and literacy, and poor social competencies, to name a few (Christian 2002). These conditions, alone or in combination, may seriously disadvantage ex-prisoners and ex-offenders in both obtaining and maintaining employment.

Other personal conditions that may serve as barriers to employment relate to education, previous work experience and finance. There is minimal empirical information on the basic skill levels of ex-prisoners, although what exists suggests that they are one of the most educationally disadvantaged groups in society. In a 2001 census of 3,391 prisoners in Victoria (ABS 2002) only 3.9 per cent had achieved a tertiary level degree or diploma as their highest level of educational attainment, and only 6.1 per cent had completed secondary level. The majority had partly completed secondary level (83.6%). While a direct comparison to the general Australian population was not undertaken, it is likely that the educational attainment of prisoners was lower than for the general Australian population, given that 25 per cent of adults aged 18-64 years had a diploma or higher as their highest level of education,

while 57 per cent of Australian adults did not complete secondary school (ABS 2001).

International figures also suggest that prisoners are educationally disadvantaged compared to the general population. In terms of education levels, a 1997 survey indicated that approximately 68 per cent of state prison inmates and 49 per cent of federal prison inmates in the United States had not received a high school diploma compared to 18.4 per cent of the general population (Harlow 2003). With respect to literacy levels, Fletcher (2001) reported that of 29,225 British prisoners who were assessed in 1985-86, a relatively large proportion (6.2% and 9.4%) had a reading age of 8 years and 10 years, respectively. More recently, the National Adult Literacy Survey (1992) reported that of approximately 1,150 state and federal prison inmates in the United States, the majority of prisoners (70%) scored at the two lowest levels of test proficiency on scales relating to prose, document, and quantitative literacy, compared to approximately half of 13,600 adults in the general community. Lower proficiency on these scales suggested that the prisoners were likely to experience difficulty in performing tasks involving the synthesis or integration of information from long or more complex sources or sequential operations which has implications for the employment of this group. There does not appear to be any comparable figures on literacy levels for Australian prisoners or releasees, although anecdotal evidence suggests that these groups are similarly disadvantaged in terms of reading proficiency.

The general pattern of educational disadvantage appears similar for offenders and ex-prisoners, with 52 per cent of 150 offenders assessed by the Inner London Probation Service demonstrating severe problems in areas including reading, writing, memory, and sequencing (Morgan 1996 cited in Fletcher 2001). Likewise, the American Probation and Parole Association (1996 cited in Rahill-Beuler & Kretzer 1997) reported that 40 per cent of released inmates could not read and relatively few (25-30%) had completed high school. A later study on the characteristics of parolees in the United States indicated that the median education level of parolees was 11th grade, with 13 per cent of parolees having achieved less than 8th grade education level and 45 per cent having achieved between 9th and 11th grade education (Bureau of Justice Statistics 1997). The impact of educational disadvantage on employment was emphasised in a recent study of 190 ex-prisoners in Britain who were questioned about the barriers that they experienced in getting work. Respondents indicated that inadequate qualifications were the primary barrier to gaining employment (NACRO 1997).

Another issue of concern for most, if not all, prisoners returning to the community is lack of money. Limited finances impact directly on the individual's ability to obtain and maintain employment, as well as having broader implications for getting suitable housing, reunifying with family members, accessing physical/mental health treatment, and transportation, among others. Prisoners are usually released with a small amount of money, primarily their earnings from prison industry

participation. Release funds have been reported to vary between \$US25 and \$US200 (Travis, Solomon & Waul 2001), with similar patterns likely reflected in Australia. As well, it is not uncommon for prisoners to be released without funds. Pressing financial concerns on the part of ex-prisoners and offenders highlight the critical role that employment plays in the successful reintegration of these groups. Limited finances may impact significantly on both obtaining and maintaining employment by negatively affecting interview attendance, purchase of clothing or equipment relative to the job role, and meeting any transportation costs associated with employment (Webster, Hedderman, Turnbull & May 2001). It is essential that ex-prisoners are supported in obtaining gainful employment so that they can have some financial responsibility for themselves and any dependants. This may help break the cycle of a return to crime related to poverty.

Social factors such as level of family support and peer influences also play a critical role in the successful reintegration of ex-prisoners and offenders. There is some evidence that ex-prisoners who have greater family support do better in terms of both obtaining employment and having greater stability in employment than those with less support (e.g., Nelson, Deess & Allen 1999). Nelson and colleagues (1999) found that among 33 male and 16 female ex-prisoners interviewed over a six week post-release period, those who indicated that their family and/or friends were supportive of them typically had the greatest success in terms of lower levels of drug use, were more likely to get a job, and had a lower level of continued criminal activity than those with less perceived family support. The jobs were obtained primarily through old contacts, with many (8 out of 12) returning to old jobs they had held in the past, and some utilising contacts from family and friends to find jobs.

Accommodation is a critical area that may affect successful transition into the community, and which has direct implications for employment. Crisis accommodation such as backpacking hostels and transient hotels may, for example, provide a “breeding ground” for substance abuse, as well as limiting the ex-prisoner’s social network to other individuals with similar backgrounds (Rowe 2002) which is likely to limit opportunities and incentive for both obtaining and maintaining employment. Unstable and unsafe housing also exacerbates the difficulties of ex-prisoners with histories of substance abuse and medical and mental health problems as these conditions are more disruptive to medical adherence and continuation of care (Hammett, Roberts & Kennedy 2001) which, once again, may impact on employment.

There has been virtually no empirical work directed toward understanding the relation between unstable housing and other key variables including employment, although recent research by Baldry and colleagues (2002) has empirically supported the link between unstable housing and poor post-release outcomes. Baldry, McDonnell, Maplestone and Peeters (2002) interviewed 194 participants in New South Wales and 145 in Victoria just prior to leaving prison, and again

at 3, 6, and 9 months post-release. They found that among other variables, employment was predictive of staying out of prison. More specifically, they found that those individuals with family support or good agency support were more likely to be employed and have stable housing.

In addition to barriers to employment imposed by personal conditions, social network, and accommodation, there are numerous factors directly related to the employment experience itself that serve to restrict employment opportunities of ex-prisoners and offenders. Compared to the general population, ex-prisoners are underemployed, and typically experience numerous barriers to finding and maintaining employment including patchy work histories, lack of basic skills, and employer discrimination, to name a few. With respect to workforce participation, in Australia, the average employment participation rate among the general population of males in February 2003 was 72.3 per cent, and for females, slightly lower at 56.8 per cent (ABS 2003). There is no current data on the employment rates of ex-prisoners and offenders in Australia, although they are likely to be considerably lower than for the general population. International figures suggest that more than half (60%) of the general population are employed in Britain compared to only 21 per cent of over 1,000 offenders under probation supervision (Mair & May 1997). Employment rates for ex-prisoners in Britain have been reported as closer to 10 per cent (Sarno, Hearnden, Hedderman, Hough, Nee & Herrington 2000).

As well as high unemployment rates being typically associated with ex-prisoners, those who do find employment upon prison release have been reported as earning substantially lower wages than for convicted offenders who did not go to prison. For example, Waldfoegel (1994) reported that the employment rates of ex-prisoners who had been imprisoned for larceny and fraud were 5 to 12 per cent lower than for offenders who were convicted of these crimes but were not imprisoned. Likewise, the ex-prisoners had substantially lower incomes (16% to 28%) than the convicted offenders who did not go to prison.

The low workforce participation rates of ex-prisoners and ex-offenders may be related largely to numerous barriers to employment. On the basis of a review of literature and interviews with 13 prisoners or ex-prisoners, Webster et al. (2001) reported barriers including attitudes of employers to ex-prisoners and crime, lack of job contacts due to segregated social networks, numerous financial difficulties impacting on interview attendance, purchase of clothing or equipment, and problems making the transition from benefits to employment. Various personal difficulties were also reported to impact on employment; namely, behavioural problems, lack of basic skills and/or poor qualifications, low self-esteem, confidence, and motivation, and absent or poor work-experience history. Difficulty adjusting to the routine of work has also been reported as a potential barrier to employment (Visher & Travis 2003).

A descriptive report based on the Employment Support Unit's Integra program (2000) affirmed many of the same difficulties for ex-prisoners in gaining sustainable employment, as well as reporting a lack of equal opportunity policy among employers, a lack of appropriate recruitment procedures, and the problem of meeting the key skill requirements of employers. Other difficulties associated with gaining employment related to the personal and social circumstances of ex-prisoners, including substance-abuse issues, accommodation problems, poor qualifications, financial problems, and responsibilities related to family care, as alluded to earlier.

Heinrich (2000) conducted focus groups with an unidentified number of ex-prisoners and potential employers to identify variables that may impact on successful transition into employment. Like other studies, a number of complex variables were identified including the stigma associated with having a criminal record, employer attitudes, legal, educational and financial barriers, mental health and substance abuse problems, low literacy levels, lack of occupational skills, and difficulties finding stable accommodation. Likewise, Fletcher (2001) conducted 26 interviews with ex-offenders in the United Kingdom to determine their views on the common barriers they face in employment. Employer discrimination was identified as the most common labour market disadvantage (54%) followed by a lack of educational and/or vocational qualifications (42%). Low self-esteem (27%), drug and/or alcohol-related problems (19%), health problems (15%), poor work discipline (15%), and low pay (12%) were also identified as barriers to employment.

Finn and Willoughby (1996 cited in Buck 2000) examined the employment outcomes for ex-offenders who participated in Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) programs in Georgia over a two-year period from 1989 to 1990. The ex-offender sample (n=521) was compared to a random sample of non-offender participants (n=734) of the JTPA programs. Both groups were matched in terms of employment barriers or economic disadvantage. Results indicated that ex-offender status had no effect on employment. Prior employment status did have an impact on employment outcome, however, whereby participants who were unemployed 15 months prior to JTPA participation were less likely to have a job following completion of the program. As well, participants were more likely to be employed both at the completion of the program and at a 14-week follow-up if they had been involved in employer-based training. These authors implied that the skill level and work experience of the ex-offender was critical to employment outcome rather than ex-offender status.

Taken together, the empirical work suggests that ex-prisoners are disadvantaged in terms of finding and maintaining employment despite the fact that more than half of incarcerated prisoners report that they were employed in the month prior to entering prison (Ditton 1999). This has broad and far reaching implications for reintegration by severely limiting options for receiving a decent and stable wage in the

community, which in turn impacts on having suitable stable housing, potentially providing a source of financial strain in family units. The possibility that employers may discriminate on the basis of criminal record adds to the employment disadvantage experienced by this group.

There is some evidence that numerous legal barriers such as job restrictions and court-ordered requirements for release, (e.g., daily reporting) may impact significantly on both obtaining and maintaining employment for ex-prisoners. Legal barriers, including laws that prohibit entry into particular job positions and the employer's right to access a prisoner's criminal record in some cases (Mukamal 2001) may impact on employment. Bowker (1994), for example, pointed out that in the United States, prisoners were restricted by state and federal statutes from 350 occupations that employ almost 10 million people, significantly reducing job options. Formal restrictions on employment in professions including medicine, law, real estate, and nursing, as well as some skilled trades exist. Corporate policy restrictions on hiring ex-prisoners add to the difficulties of this group in re-entering the workforce (Taxman, Young, Byrne, Holsinger & Anspach 2002). The observation that low skilled jobs with no provision for benefit packages are typically restricted to returning prisoners, may in part, be attributed to these formal and informal restrictions (Taxman et al. 2002). Similar formal restrictions and corporate policy restrictions are placed on the employment of ex-prisoners in Australia. Additional problems may relate to the difficulty meeting several responsibilities required for release, including finding employment, random drug screenings, day reporting, and regular parole or probation-officer meetings (Buck 2000).

Ex-prisoners as a group are largely disadvantaged by substance use problems which require immediate and responsive programs upon release. As well as drug and/or alcohol rehabilitation, the need for psychological counselling and basic post-release programs (e.g., employment), are often critical to successful long-term reintegration. A National Institute of Justice report recently indicated that mental illness and substance abuse problems are two of the most prevalent health conditions among the inmate population in the United States. In fact, approximately 80 per cent of prisoners in the United States have been identified as having some type of drug or alcohol problem (CASA 1998), with over 50 per cent reporting that they were affected when they committed the offence associated with their imprisonment (Mumola 1999). Likewise, in Victoria in the 10-year period between 1990 and 2000, more than 80 per cent of prisoners reported that drug problems related to their reason for imprisonment (Victorian Department of Justice 2000–2001). High dependency levels are similarly indicated among prisoners awaiting release, with Beck (2000b cited in Travis & Petersilia 2001) reporting that 74 per cent of prisoners in the United States who are awaiting release within the next 12 months have a history of drug use and/or alcohol abuse. Given that a large number of individuals have initial contact with the criminal justice system because

of 'self-medicating' with drugs, and are not likely to receive adequate (if any) drug treatment in prison, ex-prisoners appear particularly vulnerable to returning to the lifestyle that brought them to prison in the first place.

Dependency problems have also been reported among ex-offender samples. For example, a British study conducted by Bridges (1998 cited in Fletcher 2001) reported that 48 per cent of 739 ex-offenders who had recently completed a supervision order or community sentence had drug or alcohol-related problems.

There is some recognition of the extent of mental health problems among prisoner samples as well. It is estimated that the incidence of mental illness among incarcerated individuals (incorporating major depression, schizophrenia/psychosis, bipolar disorder, and post-traumatic stress disorder) is at least twice that of the general U.S. population (Ditton 1999). A large number of inmates with mental illness also have a history of alcohol and/or drug abuse (Ditton 1999; Travis et al. 2001). It is likely that the presence of physical and mental health problems, as well as substance use issues, may impact significantly on the ability of ex-prisoners to obtain and maintain employment. For example, Nelson and colleagues (1999) examined employment rates for 49 ex-prisoners in the first month of their release in New York City. Of the 31 participants that did not find a job, the majority were unemployed at the time of their arrest (23 of 31), as well as having deeply entrenched substance use problems.

Several studies have examined multiple and inter-related variables which may impede the process of reintegration for ex-prisoners, including job search and job maintenance. Helfgott (1997) surveyed a range of community groups in Seattle, Washington to explore the relationship between the reintegration needs of ex-offenders and the community resources available to meet this need. As well, 16 prisoners approaching release and four ex-prisoners who had been released for several months were interviewed. The ex-prisoners indicated that their immediate needs related to housing, getting a job, education, medical care, counselling for substance abuse, auto and health insurance, clothing, transportation needs, and voice-mail access. They reported that they had had little support from friends and family upon their release and emphasised their need to make links with a positive group of friends. While housing was identified as the most pressing concern upon release, employment was also identified as a difficult need to meet (Helfgott 1997). In fact, finding meaningful employment was frequently mentioned as a short-term goal. Discrimination in employment, housing, and social relationships were also viewed as problematic. As 16 of the 20 interviewees were awaiting release, their comments related to their projected needs and concerns rather than their *immediate* needs and concerns during the reintegration process, which may be viewed as a limitation of this work.

More recently, Nelson et al. (1999) conducted a study with the Vera Institute of Justice that tracked a small sample of 49 adults in New York in order to examine their post-release experiences over the first month of release from prison or jail. The participants were interviewed seven times extending from just prior to release to about 30 days after release. Results indicated that the main challenges to reintegration for this group related to getting a job, finding a house, and gaining access to much needed health care services. Some participants (18 of 49) did get a full or part-time job within the first month, but this was usually secured through family and friends or ex-employers. Relatively few ex-prisoners were able to obtain a job on their own primarily because of limited job search skills. The 31 individuals who remained unemployed over the first month were significantly older ($M = 37$ years) than those who did find jobs ($M = 30$ years), most were unemployed at the time of their arrest (23 of 31), and 13 had either not worked in a long time or never worked. Some did not search at all for a job because of other more pressing concerns, typically related to obtaining insurance and medical attention because of HIV status. In addition, most of the participants (46 of 49) reported prior alcohol or drug use in the year prior to their incarceration. Half of this group reported daily drug use and identified their habit as “an extremely serious problem” (Nelson et al. 1999:18) which may have impacted on their ability to both obtain and maintain employment.

Another study that attempted to identify elements associated with successful reintegration of ex-prisoners was conducted by Solomon, Gouvis and Waul (2001). They ran a focus group with 14 ex-prisoners (13 male and 1 female) in the District of Columbia, who they identified as having successfully reintegrated into the community. The criteria for ‘success’ and subsequent participation was that the participants were all employed, were not involved in criminal activity, and most were married and lived with their family. Time elapsed since imprisonment ranged from one year to about 30 years, with a mean release time of 10 years. The ex-prisoners discussed various challenges to successful reintegration including finding stable employment, obtaining housing, reuniting with families and assuming a role of responsibility within the family structure, maintaining sobriety, and creating positive support networks and avoiding negative ones. The ex-prisoners affirmed that a critical element to their success was a readiness or resolve to change. Having this resolve was described as a motivator to make use of the range of transition and support services available. The importance of readiness to change to offender groups has been reported elsewhere (e.g., Graffam, Shinkfield, Lavelle & McPherson in press) and has particular relevance to both job acquisition and retention.

The ex-prisoners interviewed by Solomon et al. (2001) identified a range of service needs to help them improve their basic skills and overcome dependency problems, including those relating to jobs and job training, education programs, in-prison treatment programs and treatment upon release, and assistance with the actual transition

process. The issue of discrimination was also identified as an important factor inhibiting their community involvement. The ex-prisoners described a feeling of being looked at with suspicion and being restricted in terms of job opportunities and access to housing.

More recently, Graffam et al. (2002, in press) conducted a preliminary study into the variables that may affect successful transition to a positive, healthy lifestyle for ex-offenders in Victoria. This work represents one of the few empirical studies both nationally and internationally on post-release issues affecting offenders, which includes perspectives from professional service workers. The preliminary study included 12 offenders (10 male, 2 female) ranging in age from 21 to 40 years all of whom had been convicted and were on bail while awaiting sentencing. They had diverse backgrounds relating to life history and record of offending, although they were restricted to non-violent crimes. As well, 22 professionals, including seven from the criminal justice system, four from accommodation and housing sector, seven from employment support services and four from rehabilitation programs were interviewed.

Content analysis of responses indicated that successful transition to a positive lifestyle was, to varying degrees, dependent on a number of variables including: (1) the somewhat hard to define and elusive state of 'readiness to change', and the strength to resist long-ingrained habitual behaviour; (2) dealing with profound social isolation and boredom, being alienated from former friends, family, and alienated within the community; (3) creating a stable housing situation; (4) avoiding any further difficulties, including antagonistic interactions with police, complying with court-ordered mandatory reporting, and managing to integrate those obligations into a recovery schedule that might include a range of training and support activities, as well as employment; (5) succeeding at drug rehabilitation often with little or no substantial formal support in the attempt, apart from mandatory testing and reporting and occasional brief counselling sessions about "how things are going"; and (6) remaining free of drug and alcohol dependency, addressing basic education and training needs, being patient and realistic enough to keep to a process of slow growth and recovery; and finding a source of support that will provide long-term, ongoing assistance in all aspects of the process of obtaining and maintaining employment. This preliminary work provides a unique insight into the post-release experiences of offenders in Victoria and highlights numerous barriers to reintegration, including employment, for this group.

Attitudes of employers and general population toward employment of ex-prisoners and ex-offenders

A few studies have examined employer attitudes toward hiring ex-prisoners as a means of understanding potential barriers to employment. Albright and Denq (1996) surveyed 83 of 300 employers currently advertising professional or skilled positions. Respondents were asked to complete a 23-item questionnaire examining attitudes toward hiring an ex-prisoner, including the effect of the following

variables on willingness to hire: level of education received while incarcerated; government incentives; type of offence committed; and relationship of the crime to the job. Results indicated that only 12 per cent of employers agreed or strongly agreed that they were inclined to hire an ex-prisoner; this figure was subsequently used by the authors to reflect a baseline measurement of general willingness to hire. Employer willingness to hire an ex-prisoner improved significantly for those who had completed either a college degree, vocational trade, or two training programs. There was no significant difference however, between the measured baseline attitude and those who had completed on-the-job training while incarcerated. Employers were also generally more willing to hire ex-prisoners on the basis of various government hiring incentives including those who are bonded, licensed, and insured. With respect to type of offence, respondents indicated that they were generally unwilling to hire an ex-prisoner convicted of a violent offence or crimes against children. As well, attitudes were generally more positive when the convicted crime (e.g. embezzlement) was not linked to the advertised position (e.g. accounting).

Limitations associated with this research include the low response rate (28%) and the restricted sample, which was limited to two metropolitan areas in Texas. Nevertheless, the findings by Albright and Denq (1996) generally support prior studies that have shown that the type of offence may impact on employer attitudes. Some studies, for example, have shown that employers are more likely to hire an ex-prisoner convicted on a non-violent offence than a violent offence (e.g., Hulseley 1990 cited in Albright & Denq 1996), while others have shown that offenders convicted of drug/alcohol-related crimes are less likely to be hired than those convicted of other offences (e.g., Whiting & Winters 1981).

Likewise, Holzer (1996) conducted a survey in five major cities in the United States to examine attitudes toward hiring a person with a criminal record. Without regard to the offence, nearly two-thirds of all employers reported that they would not knowingly hire a person with a criminal record. In fact, employers indicated that they would be more likely to hire welfare recipients or individuals with minimal work experience than someone with a criminal record, whether real or suspected (Holzer 1996). As well, between 30 and 40 per cent of employers likely to hire less-educated workers indicated that they conducted a background check of the criminal history records of their most recently hired employees. This study confirms a general reluctance by employers to hire someone with a criminal record. A later survey of 619 employers in Los Angeles by Holzer, Raphael and Stoll (2003) suggested that self-reported willingness to hire did correlate with the actual hiring behaviour of these firms. As in their earlier study, only 20 per cent of employers indicated that they would definitely or probably hire a person with a criminal record. In contrast, most employers indicated that they would be willing to hire an applicant with a spotty work history (66%), a history of unemployment (80%), a GED but no high school diploma (97%), or a former or current welfare recipient

(93%). Actual hiring rates for ex-offenders were quite low, with only 20 per cent of employers indicating that they had hired an ex-offender over the past year while 30 per cent indicated that they had recently hired a welfare recipient. These figures suggest that employers' willingness to hire correlates with their actual behaviour, with a greater likelihood of hiring an ex-offender over the past year associated with those employers that indicated a willingness to hire ex-offenders.

A range of social barriers including stigmatisation and discrimination toward ex-prisoners, loss of social standing in the community, fear and hostility among the general community, and a tendency to enquire about and, in many cases, reject applications for housing, employment, and further education have also been highlighted (Helfgott 1997). With respect to employer discrimination, a British study by the National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders, NACRO, (1998) reported that 42 per cent of 200 ex-prisoners said that their criminal record was identified by employers as the main reason for being unsuccessful at the job interview stage. Similarly, Fletcher (2001) identified that 54 per cent of a sample of 26 ex-offenders reported employer discrimination as their main barrier to employment. As pointed out by Ward (2001), in reality employer discrimination rates may be considerably higher given that many employers do not explain the reasons for their recruitment decisions.

Other employer concerns about hiring ex-prisoners have been raised. Conalty and Cox (1999) questioned a range of employers about their concerns for recruiting ex-prisoners with the most common concern being that they might re-offend against the company. In contrast, they were least concerned that they would be difficult to manage or demonstrate a poor work attitude.

Attitudes of employers and the general population toward employment of people with a range of other special needs

Numerous studies have examined the attitudes of employers and the general population toward the employment of individuals with other special needs, including intellectual disability, learning disability, physical disability, psychiatric disability, cognitive or emotional disability, chronic illnesses, and numerous deformities. Although it is now more common for people with a range of disabilities to be employed, the majority of people with a disability are not working despite a demonstrated interest in employment.

As many disabling conditions are relatively invisible, it is difficult to explore employer attitudes if the employee chooses not to reveal an otherwise non-obvious disability. For the most part, the general population of employers have been surveyed on their attitudes toward hiring select groups with special needs, as well as surveying employers who have, or still are, providing supported employment. There are mixed results with respect to employer attitudes on the employability of people with special needs. Some studies report that employer ratings of job applicants with a disability are favourable (e.g., Levy, Jessop,

Rimmerman & Levy 1992; Levy, Jessop, Rimmerman, Francis & Levy 1993; Nordstrom, Huffaker & Williams 1998), while other studies have reported that employers rate job applicants with a disability less favourably (e.g., Millington, Szymanski & Hanley-Maxwell 1994). As well, the type of disability or disadvantage appears to impact on employer ratings, with people with a physical disability generally receiving the most favourable rating of employability (e.g., Fuqua, Rathbun & Gade 1984), and people with a psychiatric disability commonly being viewed as least favourable by employers (e.g., Bordieri, Drehmer & Taylor 1997). As well, there is some evidence that previous experience in hiring a person with special needs including psychiatric disability may improve employer attitudes (Diksa & Rogers 1996). Managers of large companies have also provided more favourable ratings of employability than those from small organisations (Levy et al. 1993; Rimmerman 1998).

Petty and Fussell (1997) examined the attitudes of 47 employers who had hired or supervised workers with severe mental and physical disabilities. The employers reported generally favourable attitudes toward the workers with special needs, with the supported workers rated as having a favourable effect on the workplace, as well as being rated quite highly in their ability to both get along with others and positively affect workers without a disability. Items which were rated lowest related to the work performance of the employee, including the amount of time associated with training and supervising the workers and their ability to meet production standards. A later study by Olson, Cioffi, Yovanoff and Mank (2001) surveyed 126 employers of people with an intellectual disability on their attitudes, accommodations, and reasons for hiring these workers. Employers of workers with an intellectual disability reported generally positive experiences associated with hiring this group, with their reasons for hiring relating to acquiring competent workers, adding to company diversity, and improved public image of the company. Accommodation costs were viewed as negligible, although like Petty and Fussell (1997), the employees with an intellectual disability were viewed as requiring more training and supervision than other workers.

Numerous studies have examined employer attitudes toward hiring individuals with chronic illnesses (e.g., Bordieri & Drehmer 1988; Bordieri, Drehmer & Taricone 1990) and various deformities (e.g., Bordieri et al. 1997). For example, Bordieri et al. (1990) asked 132 supervisors and managers to review job applications of individuals with a history of cancer or pneumonia. Lower hiring recommendations were associated with the applicants with cancer compared to pneumonia, with the perceived cause of the job applicant's disability reported as influential on selection decisions.

More recently, Bordieri and colleagues (1997) examined promotion recommendations of 168 supervisors and managers toward hypothetical workers with a range of disabilities and health conditions. The authors found that employees with depression or obesity received

a lower recommendation for promotion and less favourable ratings of organisational value than a candidate without a disability or health condition, despite being equally qualified. However, there was no significant difference in promotion recommendations and organisational value between those candidates with an arm amputation, low vision, colon cancer, diabetes, or facial burns compared to the non-disabled applicants. Consistent with their earlier studies, these findings suggest that the perceived cause of the employee's disability may influence employer decisions which extend beyond hiring these workers to their career advancement in the organisation.

To summarise this literature, there are several significant barriers to employment for ex-prisoners and ex-offenders. Those barriers are related to personal characteristics, social environment and social network, accommodation, drug and alcohol treatment, and criminal justice system commitments. Employers have been reported to be generally unwilling to hire ex-prisoners and ex-offenders, with even greater resistance associated with violent crimes, drug and alcohol related crimes, and crimes relevant to the type of job sought. Conversely, employer attitudes toward employing people from other special needs groups are reported to be generally positive, with more positive attitudes associated with physical disabilities and less positive attitudes associated with psychiatric conditions. Greater severity tends to be associated with greater resistance as well.

Rationale and Description of the Study

The need for a study like the present one is quite clear. There is an emerging renewed emphasis on rehabilitation and reintegration of ex-prisoners and ex-offenders into the community. There are probably several sources contributing to this emergence. Only one of those sources, and possibly the least influential, is a social consciousness that recognises the conditions of disadvantage that are associated with commencing criminal activity and the increased disadvantage associated with a criminal record and maintenance of a criminal lifestyle. Additionally, there is concern within the broader community over safety and protection from rising crime associated with repeated offending. There are economic pressures associated with expanding prison populations, overcrowding of prisons, and burgeoning community corrections rolls that have led to changes in thinking about corrections models and corrective services. There is also increasing awareness of the social and economic costs to the community of not providing support for lifestyle change to break cycles of crime and dependency on community services.

Employment is recognised as an important element of successful reintegration. As the literature review suggests, there is a wide array of issues that can impede employment for ex-prisoners and ex-offenders. At least six broad ecological domains can be identified with a large number of often very complex specific variables that are recognised as influencing the transition from commission of crime to successful

adjustment within the community. Personal conditions such as education level, physical health, mental health, psychological conditions, basic living skills, and finances comprise one such domain. Social network and social environment including family and peer relations, community environment, and social activities comprise another. Accommodation, incorporating issues such as availability, location, permanence, and appropriateness of housing, comprises another. Employment, workforce participation and training, including issues related to work experience and skills, work habits, interviewing skills, and other work-related behaviours comprise another. The criminal justice system including courts, police, correctional services and solicitors, with issues such as reporting requirements, unresolved matters, legal debts, and relations with authorities comprise yet another. For many people, drug and alcohol rehabilitation including issues related to participation in groups, prescribed participation, and motivation to change comprise another domain. Any number of issues can impact on attempts to obtain or maintain employment.

The attitudes of employers toward employment of ex-prisoners and ex-offenders is just one important potential impediment to employment. Attitudinal studies have found relatively negative attitudes on the part of both employers and members of the general population. However, employer attitudes cannot be characterised simplistically. Their attitudes toward employing ex-prisoners and ex-offenders have been found to be affected by the relevance of criminal history to the position sought and by the nature of the crimes committed (there are indications of greater reluctance associated with violent and drug-related crimes). Prisoners and offenders appear to have negative attitudes toward their own employability, attributing poor prospects to negative employer attitudes. However, a good deal of the evidence is anecdotal, and little to nothing is known about the attitudes of the other two key stakeholder groups, employment support workers and corrective services workers.

Literature on employer attitudes toward the employability of other disadvantaged groups suggests a similar set of circumstances. Employer attitudes are not simplistic. Although the literature suggests generally mixed views held by employers in general, those who have hired a person with a disability or some other special condition have reported quite positive attitudes toward employability of that group, much more positive than those who have not done so. This suggests a clear majority of positive experiences. In addition, more negative attitudes toward employability are associated with more severe conditions, as well as when the condition affects cognitive function or when it is a psychiatric disability. No literature was found comparing the perceived employability of ex-prisoners and ex-offenders with that of other disadvantaged groups.

So, there are many potential impediments to employment for ex-prisoners and ex-offenders. In this study, the focus has been on attitudes of the four key stakeholder groups: employers; employment services workers; corrective services workers; and prisoners and

offenders. Understanding those attitudes, even being able to promote positive change in attitudes, is not sufficient to solve the employment and employability problems of ex-prisoners and ex-offenders. However, it is one of many important areas of inquiry.

Based on what has been found by others and is reported in the literature, we commenced the study with some expectations with respect to the results. Some of the expected findings pertain to the sample as a whole, and some to the four stakeholder groups separately.

The expected findings for the whole sample included:

- Ex-prisoners and ex-offenders, particularly ex-prisoners, will be considered less employable than other disadvantaged groups with the possible exception of people with a psychiatric disability.
- There will be differences in perceived employability related to the five forensic histories: single convictions will be rated more likely to obtain and maintain employment than multiple convictions; drug-related crimes will be more negatively viewed than other non-violent crimes; and the stigma of a prison background will be more important to ratings than training received (low ratings for ex-prisoners with training).
- Members of the general workforce will be considered more likely to exhibit employment-related skills and characteristics than both ex-offenders and ex-prisoners, with members of the general workforce rated very highly by all stakeholder groups and the ex-prisoners and ex-offenders rated quite poorly on all three employment-related skills and characteristics.

The expected findings for each stakeholder group included:

- Employers will rate ex-prisoners and ex-offenders quite low on employability, second lowest of the four groups in relation to obtaining and also maintaining employment and second lowest on likelihood of exhibiting employment-related skills and characteristics.
- Employment services workers will rate ex-prisoners and ex-offenders quite high on employability, highest of the four groups in relation to obtaining and also maintaining employment and highest on likelihood of exhibiting employment-related skills and characteristics.
- Corrective services workers will rate ex-prisoners and ex-offenders moderately low on employability, second highest of the four groups in relation to obtaining and also maintaining employment and second highest on likelihood of exhibiting employment-related skills and characteristics.
- Prisoners and offenders will rate ex-prisoners and ex-offenders as very low on employability, lowest of the four groups in relation to obtaining and also maintaining employment and lowest on

likelihood of exhibiting employment-related skills and characteristics.

In addition, we had two expected findings related to past experience with employment of ex-prisoners or ex-offenders:

- Respondents who reported past experience will rate ex-prisoners and ex-offenders higher in relation to obtaining and also maintaining employment and in relation to the likelihood of exhibiting employment-related skills and characteristics than those who do not report past experience.
- The more positive the rating of past experience, the higher the ratings in relation to obtaining and also maintaining employment and in relation to the likelihood of exhibiting employment-related skills and characteristics.

Method

Sample

There were 1181 participants in this study. Of the total, 664 (56.2%) were from Queensland and 517 (43.8%) from Victoria. The age distribution was 231 (19.6%) participants 18–30 years of age, 266 (22.5%) participants 31–40 years of age, 397 (33.6%) participants 41–50 years of age, and 287 (24.3%) participants 51+ years of age. The gender split was 626 (53.0%) males and 555 (47.0%) females. The distribution of education levels was 180 (15.2%) participants completing less than secondary school, 194 (16.4%) completing secondary school, 183 (15.5%) completing TAFE level courses, and 624 (52.8%) completing tertiary courses. Of the total, 635 (53.8%) had previous experience with employment of ex-prisoners and ex-offenders and 546 (46.2%) did not have previous experience. The sample comprised four stakeholder groups including 596 (50.4%) employers, 234 (19.8%) employment services workers, 176 (14.9%) corrections workers, and 175 (14.8%) prisoners and offenders. In addition to the whole group characteristics, each of the four stakeholder groups had particular compositions.

Of the 596 employers: 55 per cent were from Queensland and 45 per cent from Victoria; 58 per cent were male and 42 per cent female; 7 per cent were 18–30 years of age, 21 per cent were 31–40 years of age, 39 per cent were 41–50 years of age, and 34 per cent were 51+ years of age; only 12 per cent had completed less than secondary school and 71 per cent had completed TAFE or tertiary qualification; and 33 per cent had previous experience with the employment of ex-prisoners or ex-offenders. The employer group variables included were industry distribution, size of organisation by staff number; and location of business (metro, regional, rural). The industry distribution was: manufacturing, 102 (17%); health/community services, 75 (13%); property/business, 39 (7%); retail, 39 (7%); hospitality, 37 (6%); transport/storage, 35 (6%); construction, 34 (6%); wholesale, 31 (5%); education 23 (4%); finance/insurance, 23 (4%); cultural/recreation, 21 (3%); agriculture / forests / fishing, 20 (3%); and other, 117 (20%). The size distribution was: 1–20 staff, 225 (38%); 21–100 staff, 226 (38%); and more than 100 staff, 145 (24%). The distribution of locations was: capital city, 227 (38%); regional centre, 254 (43%); rural, 84 (14%); and combined locations, 31 (5%).

Of the 234 employment services workers: 41 per cent were from Queensland and 59 per cent from Victoria; 26 per cent were male and 74 per cent female; 31 per cent were 18–30 years of age, 25 per cent were 31–40 years of age, 30 per cent were 41–50 years of age, and 15 per cent were 51+ years of age; only 9 per cent had completed less than secondary school and 75 per cent had completed TAFE or tertiary

qualification; and 82 per cent had previous experience with the employment of ex-prisoners or ex-offenders. The employment services worker group variables included were type of organisation and location. The distribution in type of organisation was: Job Network provider, 135 (58%); Centrelink, 86 (37%); and specialist employment service, 13 (6%). The distribution of locations was: capital city, 151 (65%); regional centre, 62 (27%); rural, 19 (8%); and combined locations, 2 (1%).

Of the 176 corrective services workers: 79 per cent were from Queensland and 21 per cent from Victoria; 40 per cent were male and 60 per cent female; 27 per cent were 18–30 years of age, 15 per cent were 31–40 years of age, 34 per cent were 41–50 years of age, and 23 per cent were 51+ years of age; only 9 per cent had completed less than secondary school and 84 per cent had completed TAFE or tertiary qualification; and 68 per cent had previous experience with the employment of ex-prisoners or ex-offenders. The corrective services workers group variables included were sector and location. The split in terms of sector was custodial/prisons, 53 (30%) and community corrections, 123 (70%). The distribution of locations was: capital city, 67 (38%); regional centre, 71 (40%); and rural, 38 (22%).

Of the 175 prisoners and offenders: 59 per cent were from Queensland and 41 per cent from Victoria; 86 per cent were male and 14 per cent female; 41 per cent were 18–30 years of age, 33 per cent were 31–40 years of age, 21 per cent were 41–50 years of age, and 6 per cent were 51+ years of age; 42 per cent had completed less than secondary school and 39 per cent had completed TAFE or tertiary qualification; and 72 per cent had previous experience with the employment of ex-prisoners or ex-offenders. The prisoners and offenders group variables included were total time spent in prison, total time spent completing community orders, and most serious offence. All respondents reported having spent some time in prison and some time serving community corrections orders. The distribution of total time spent in prison was: 0–6 months, 38 (22%); 7–12 months, 20 (11%); 1–3 years, 37 (21%); +3–5 years 22 (13%); 5+ years, 58 (33%). The distribution of total time spent serving community corrections orders was: 0–6 months, 94 (54%); 7–12 months, 26 (15%); 1–3 years, 31 (18%); +3–5 years 13 (7%); 5+ years, 11 (6%). The distribution of most serious offences was: robbery and extortion, 49 (28%); acts intended to cause injury, 22 (13%); homicide and related crimes, 21 (12%); deception and related crimes, 21 (12%); illicit drug-related crimes, 16 (9%); acts endangering persons, 13 (7%); theft and related crimes, 11 (6%); sexual assault, 8 (5%); and other, 14 (8%).

Instrument

This study utilised a questionnaire that was designed and piloted specifically for use in the study. The questionnaire has four sections. The first section and the fourth section both contain items that elicit background information from respondents used in some of the

analyses. The second and third sections elicit information related to attitudes toward employability of ex-prisoners and ex-offenders.

Section 1 elicits bio-demographic information such as age, gender, country of birth, state/territory within which they reside, highest level of education completed, and stakeholder group into which the respondent fits (employer, corrective services worker, employment support worker, ex-offender). There is also some stakeholder group-specific information. For employer respondents, that information includes: industry within which the organisation operates; respondent's current job role; time in position of employing people; size of organisation by staff number; and location of business (metro, regional, rural). For corrective services worker respondents, that information includes: location of work within the corrections system (prison or community); respondent's current job role; total time working in corrective services; and location of the respondent's work (metro, regional, rural). For employment support worker respondents, that information includes: type of organisation (Job Network, specialist funded service, Centrelink); respondent's current job role; total time working in employment services; size of organisation by number of staff; and location of business (metro, regional, rural). For prisoner and offender respondents, that information includes: number of convictions; most serious offence; total time spent serving community corrections orders; total time spent in prison; and total time spent in employment.

Section 2 contains 25 items, each referring to a hypothetical jobseeker. The set of items includes:

- Five items that refer to intellectual or psychiatric disability — difficulties in remembering, minor brain damage, mood swings, auditory and visual hallucinations, and periods of intense depression.
- Seven items that refer to physical and sensory impairment — facial scars, use of a wheelchair, blind with guide dog, artificial limb, vision impairment, body twitches and slurred speech, and deafness/hearing impairment.
- Five items that refer to chronic illness — chronic and severe asthma, AIDS, epilepsy, drug addiction treated with methadone, and previous treatment for cancer.
- Five items that refer to forensic history — single conviction for possession and use of heroin, prison term with training program prior to release, multiple convictions for burglary, single conviction for non-violent crime, and multiple convictions for petty theft related to drug use.
- Three items that refer to communication disorders — difficulties speaking English, limited use of speech, and severe stutter.

For each item, respondents rate the employability of each hypothetical jobseeker on a 7-point scale (1–7), with 1 = no chance, 2 = very poor chance, 3 = poor chance, 4 = fair chance, 5 = good chance, 6 = very

good chance, and 7 = excellent chance. There are two ratings requested for each of the items, the probability of that hypothetical jobseeker getting a job and the probability of them staying employed.

Section 3 contains 21 items, each referring to a specific skill or characteristic relevant to employment. The set of items includes:

- Seven items that refer to work skills — good work history, skills for the job, takes direction well, works well without supervision, works well in teams, completes work efficiently, and sticks to set practices and rules.
- Six items that refer to communication and interpersonal skills — appropriate grooming and hygiene, speaks English well, can read and write English, gets along well with others, communicates effectively, and relates well to the public.
- Eight items that refer to personal characteristics — punctuality, eagerness to learn, willingness to work, being task persistent, honesty, motivation to excel, having a healthy lifestyle, and loyalty to the organisation.

For each item, respondents first rate the importance of that skill or characteristic to employability (getting and keeping a job). Then they rate the likelihood that each of three groups of people will have that skill or characteristic. The three groups are ex-prisoners, ex-offenders, and members of the general workforce. The ratings are made using a 7-point scale (1–7), with 1 = not at all important/likely, 2 = hardly important/likely, 3 = somewhat important/likely, 4 = fairly important/likely, 5 = quite important/likely, 6 = very important/likely, and 7 = extremely important/likely.

Section 4 contains items that refer to previous experience in relation to the employment of ex-prisoners and ex-offenders. The first question simply identifies, regardless of their stakeholder group status, whether the respondent does or does not have previous experience with the employment of ex-prisoners and ex-offenders. This experience can be first-hand or indirect. Those having responded in the affirmative then specify how many cases they have experienced. For the prisoner and offender group, it refers to number of jobs, followed by total time employed. Finally, respondents rate the overall positivity or negativity of employment of ex-prisoners and ex-offenders, using a 5 point rating scale (-2 to +2), with -2 = very negative, -1 = negative, 0 = neutral, +1 = positive, +2 = very positive.

Procedures

A random sampling procedure was used to select prospective participants for the study. The procedure was conducted by the cooperating peak bodies (Commerce Queensland, VECI, NESI, Centrelink, Queensland Department of Corrective Services, and Corrections Victoria) through their outlets. Following sample selection, questionnaires were mailed out by the peak bodies. Determination of

representativeness of the employer sample was based on comparisons with ABS data on Australian managers and organisations with reference to respondent age and gender, as well as location, size, and industry of their business. Determination of representativeness of the corrective services and employment services workers samples were based on relevant Department statistics on the composition of those groups in reference to respondent age and gender, location of workplace and professional role. Determination of representativeness of the prisoner and offender sample was also based on relevant Department statistics on the composition of those groups in reference to respondent age, gender, and criminal justice background and location (prison or community corrections).

Questionnaires were mailed out with reply paid envelopes for return to Deakin University, with 6,000 questionnaires sent out. A total of 3,500 were mailed to employer organisations, and 2,500 were mailed to individuals who comprise the other three stakeholder groups (750 to individuals within corrections services, 750 to employment support workers, and 1,000 to the prisoner and offender group). The response rate was 19.8 per cent.

Data analysis

Data were analysed using a program written specifically for the project. The SPSSX for Windows software package was used. The structure of the computer program developed for the study derived directly from the structure of the questionnaire. Results were analysed in terms of whole group responses and in terms of within group differences. Means, standard deviations, and analyses of variance were the techniques used for data analysis. Where appropriate, post-hoc Tukey tests were performed as well. Because of the sample sizes involved in most of the analyses, we adopted a confidence level of $p < .01$ as a standard for consideration of statistical significance. Such a conservative position is believed appropriate for the conditions of this study.

The analyses examined between group and within group differences in terms of the effect of respondent's age, gender, state within which they reside, highest level of education completed, stakeholder group, previous experience in employment of ex-prisoners or ex-offenders (Yes or No), and quality of previous experience in employment of ex-prisoners and ex-offenders (if Yes).

The analyses of variance (ANOVAs) that were conducted were in relation to:

- each of the main variables (disadvantaged groups), both for obtaining and maintaining employment;
- each of the forensic histories, both for obtaining and maintaining employment;
- each of the main variables (work skills, communication and interpersonal skills, personal characteristics) for importance and

likelihood of the skill/characteristic being exhibited by ex-prisoners, ex-offenders, and members of the general workforce;

- both ex-prisoner and ex-offender ratings in relation to each of the individual work skills, communication and interpersonal skills, and personal characteristics for likelihood of the skill/characteristic being exhibited.

Results

This study aimed to identify attitudes held by four key stakeholder groups (employers, employment services staff, corrective services staff and prisoners and offenders) toward the employability of ex-prisoners and ex-offenders. In doing so, two comparisons have been made. One is a comparison of the perceived employability of ex-prisoners and ex-offenders with the perceived employability of other disadvantaged groups. The other is a comparison of the perceived employability of ex-prisoners, ex-offenders, and members of the general workforce. There are two parts to this section of the report, one for each of these comparisons.

In the first part of this section of the report, the results relate to the comparison of the perceived employability of ex-prisoners and ex-offenders with the perceived employability of other disadvantaged groups. Employability was considered both in relation to obtaining and maintaining employment. The results are presented first in relation to the probability of a person obtaining employment then in relation to maintaining employment. With respect to each of these aspects of employability, whole group responses are presented; first in reference to main variables, then in reference to each of 25 specific conditions of disadvantage, then in reference to five different forensic histories. The main variables comprise five different disadvantaged groups, including people with: Intellectual and Psychiatric Disabilities; Physical and Sensory Disabilities; Chronic Illnesses; Forensic Histories; and Communication Disorders. Results reported focus on central tendencies (means and standard deviations). Following the presentation of whole group results, results of analyses of variance are presented. Those relate to the main variables and the five different forensic histories included in the study.

In the second part of this section, the results relate to the comparison of the perceived employability of ex-prisoners, ex-offenders, and members of the general workforce. Respondents rated the importance of 21 different skills and characteristics and the likelihood that ex-prisoners, ex-offenders, and members of the general workforce would exhibit those skills and characteristics. The main variables include: Work Skills; Communication and Interpersonal Skills; and Personal Characteristics. Whole group responses are presented; first in reference to main variables, then in reference to each of the 21 different skills and characteristics. Results of analyses of variance are next presented, first in reference to differences between the three groups, then in reference to specific variables affecting attitudes toward ex-prisoners and ex-offenders.

Perceived employability of ex-prisoners, ex-offenders, and other disadvantaged groups

The employability of ex-prisoners and ex-offenders compared with the employability of other disadvantaged groups was investigated in relation to both obtaining and maintaining employment (“getting” and “keeping” a job). The main variables that form the basis of comparisons are actually categories of special need including: intellectual or psychiatric disabilities; physical and sensory disabilities; chronic illnesses; forensic histories; and communication disorders. The specific conditions of disadvantage included were:

- *Intellectual or psychiatric disability* — difficulties in remembering; minor brain damage; auditory and visual hallucinations; and periods of intense depression.
- *Physical and sensory impairment* — facial scars; use of a wheelchair; blind with guide dog; artificial limb; vision impairment; body twitches and slurred speech; and deafness/hearing impairment.
- *Chronic illness* — chronic and severe asthma; AIDS; epilepsy; drug addiction treated with methadone; and previous treatment for cancer.
- *Forensic history* — single conviction for possession and use of heroin; prison term with training program prior to release; multiple convictions for burglary; single conviction for non-violent crime; and multiple convictions for petty theft related to drug use.
- *Communication disorders* — difficulties speaking English; limited use of speech due to brain damage; and severe stutter.

In the tables and discussion below, the results related to obtaining employment and maintaining employment are presented separately. As described above, whole group responses are presented; first in reference to main variables, then in reference to each of the 25 conditions of disadvantage included, then in reference to the five different forensic histories. Results are reported in the form of mean scores and standard deviations, followed by results of advanced analyses of variance.

Obtaining employment

Respondents from the four stakeholder groups rated the probability of ex-prisoners, ex-offenders, and other disadvantaged groups obtaining employment. Table 1 below presents mean ratings and standard deviations for each of the disadvantaged groups.

Table 1: Disadvantaged groups obtaining employment

Obtaining employment with special needs	Mean	SD
Chronic illnesses	4.27	1.00
Physical and sensory disabilities	3.96	1.00
Communication difficulties	3.50	1.00
Forensic histories	3.25	1.03
Intellectual and psychiatric disabilities	3.22	0.97

The prospect of obtaining employment was rated highest for people with conditions of chronic illness, followed by people with a range of physical or sensory disabilities, people with communication difficulties, people with forensic histories, and, finally, people with a range of intellectual and psychiatric disabilities. Although no group was rated as having a “good chance” (5.00 or better), people with a chronic illness were rated as having more than a “fair chance” (4.27) and those with a physical or sensory impairment were rated as having a “fair chance” (3.96). The other three groups, including those with a forensic history were rated as having less than a “fair chance”, but more than a “poor chance”. The variability of ratings was moderate and quite consistent across all five main variables (disadvantaged groups), between .97 and 1.03 on a 7-point scale. There was relatively little difference in the amount of variability in responses referring to each disadvantaged group.

A consideration of all 25 conditions of disadvantage separately indicates that rated probability of obtaining employment varied markedly in relation to the nature of the condition named. The table below presents the distribution of mean ratings and standard deviations for each specific condition of disadvantage.

Table 2: Obtaining employment with specific conditions

Obtaining employment with specific conditions	Mean	SD
Previous cancer treatment	5.14	1.18
Artificial limb	4.88	1.37
Facial scars	4.63	1.13
Severe asthma	4.56	1.31
Epilepsy	4.48	1.43
Hearing impairment	4.23	1.31
In a wheelchair	4.15	1.64
AIDS	4.10	1.57
Ex-prisoner with pre-release training	3.99	1.13
Stutter	3.89	1.23
Single conviction non violent crime	3.68	1.37
Blind with guide dog	3.21	1.63
Single conviction heroin possession use	3.56	1.36
Vision impairment	3.53	1.38
Depression	3.49	1.31
Memory difficulties	3.42	1.19
Mood swings	3.40	1.42
Limited English	3.31	1.34
Limited speech (brain damage)	3.30	1.23
Methadone program	3.09	1.31
Physical impairments	3.08	1.27
Brain damage (drug and alcohol caused)	2.91	1.15
Hallucinations	2.88	1.32
Multiple convictions petty theft (drug use)	2.58	1.27
Multiple convictions burglary	2.44	1.25

Only a person with previous cancer treatment (5.14), was rated as having more than a “good chance” (5.00 or better) of obtaining employment. People with any one of seven of the 25 various conditions were rated as having more than a “fair chance” of obtaining employment, including those with: an artificial limb (4.88); facial scars (4.63); severe asthma (4.56); epilepsy (4.48); hearing impairment (4.23); in a wheelchair (4.15); and AIDS (4.10). Another 14 of the 25 conditions were rated as having between a “poor chance” and a “fair chance” (3.00–4.00), with ex-prisoner having completed a pre-release training course virtually on a “fair chance” (3.99). Four conditions were associated with between a “very poor chance” and “poor chance”. Those included a person with: drug or alcohol acquired brain damage (2.91); hallucinations (2.88); a history of multiple convictions for petty theft due to drug use (2.58); and a history of multiple convictions for burglary (2.44). The variability of ratings was moderate and fairly consistent across all 25 conditions of disadvantage (between 1.13 and 1.64 on a 7-point scale). There was less variability in reference to a

person with facial scars and an ex-prisoner with training, and somewhat greater variability in responses referring to a person in a wheelchair, a blind person with a guide dog, and a person with AIDS.

A consideration of forensic history indicates that rated probability of obtaining employment also varied in relation to the nature of the criminal activity named. The table below presents the distribution of mean ratings for each named forensic history.

Table 3: Obtaining employment with a forensic history

Obtaining employment with a forensic history	Mean	SD	Rank
Ex-prisoner with pre-release training	3.99	1.13	9 th of 25
Single conviction non violent crime	3.68	1.37	11 th of 25
Single conviction heroin possession use	3.56	1.36	12 th of 25
Multiple convictions petty theft drug use	2.58	1.27	24 th of 25
Multiple convictions burglary	2.44	1.25	25 th of 25

Although none of the hypothetical jobseekers with any of the forensic histories included was rated as having even a “fair chance” of obtaining employment (4.00 or better), an ex-prisoner with training (3.99) was rated as having virtually a “fair chance”. Those with a single conviction for non-violent crime (3.68) and those with a single conviction for heroin possession and use (3.56) were rated as having even less than a “fair chance”. Much lower rated with respect to the prospect of obtaining employment, in fact rated as having less than a “poor chance”, were those with a history of multiple convictions for petty theft due to drug use (2.58) and those with a history of multiple burglary convictions (2.44). The variability of ratings was again moderate and fairly consistent across all five forensic history conditions (between 1.13 and 1.37 on a 7-point scale). When compared with the employability ratings of the other 20 conditions of disadvantage, the five forensic histories were positioned thus: ex-prisoner with pre-release training (3.99) was the ninth best rating of 25; single conviction for non-violent crime (3.68) was the eleventh best rating of 25; single conviction for possession and use of heroin (3.56) was the twelfth best rating of 25; multiple convictions for petty theft due to drug use (2.58) was the twenty-fourth best rating of 25; and multiple convictions for burglary (2.44) was the lowest rating of all 25 conditions of disadvantage.

Differences in respondents’ ratings

Analyses of variance were conducted in relation to the rated probability of obtaining employment for each of the five disadvantaged groups. A significant main effect was found. The value of the effect was $F(4, 4043) = 566.80, p < .001$. The significant effects that were found included: forensic history versus chronic illness, $F(1, 1180) = 1285.00, p < .001$, with people with chronic illnesses being rated as having higher probability of obtaining employment ($M = 4.27$) than people with forensic histories ($M = 3.25$); forensic history versus physical and sensory disabilities, $F(1, 1180) = 516.28, p < .001$, with people with

physical or sensory disabilities being rated as having higher probability of obtaining employment ($M = 3.96$) than people with forensic histories ($M = 3.25$); forensic history versus communication difficulties, $F(1, 1180) = 62.92$, $p < .001$, with people with communication difficulties being rated as having higher probability of obtaining employment ($M = 3.50$) than people with forensic histories ($M = 3.25$). The difference between the ratings for people with forensic histories and those with intellectual or psychiatric disabilities was not significant.

Further analyses examined the effect of respondent's age, gender, state within which they reside, highest level of education completed, stakeholder group, previous experience in employment of ex-prisoners or ex-offenders (Yes or No), and quality of previous experience in employment of ex-prisoners and ex-offenders on ratings of the probability of obtaining employment for people with forensic histories. There were several significant main effects:

- For age of respondent, the effect was $F(3, 1177) = 7.66$, $p < .001$, with respondents 18–30 years of age rating people with forensic histories as having higher probability of obtaining employment ($M = 3.52$) than did respondents 41–50 years of age ($M = 3.19$) and respondents 51+ years of age ($M = 3.12$).
- For state of residence of respondent, the effect was $F(3, 1177) = 8.02$, $p < .01$, with Queensland respondents rating people with forensic histories as having higher probability of obtaining employment ($M = 3.33$) than did Victorian respondents ($M = 3.16$).
- For stakeholder group, the effect was $F(3, 1177) = 70.81$, $p < .001$, with employer respondents rating people with forensic histories as having lower probability of obtaining employment ($M = 2.86$) than did all other respondent groups; employment services workers ($M = 3.72$), corrections workers ($M = 3.68$), and prisoners and offenders ($M = 3.53$).
- For previous experience of employment of ex-prisoners and ex-offenders, the effect was $F(3, 1177) = 88.26$, $p < .001$, with respondents who did have previous experience rating people with forensic histories as having higher probability of obtaining employment ($M = 3.50$) than did respondents who did not ($M = 2.96$).
- For the quality of previous experiences of employment of ex-prisoners and ex-offenders, the effect was $F(3, 1177) = 6.95$, $p < .001$, with respondents reporting a very negative experience rating people with forensic histories as having a lower probability of obtaining employment ($M = 3.15$) than did respondents with a positive ($M = 3.72$) and lower than respondents with a very positive experience ($M = 3.83$); and respondents reporting a negative experience rating people with forensic histories as having a lower probability of obtaining employment ($M = 3.35$) than did respondents with a positive experience ($M = 3.72$).

No significant main effects were found for gender or highest level of education of respondent.

Analyses of variance were also conducted in relation to the rated probability of obtaining employment for each of the five forensic histories separately. A significant main effect for forensic history was found. The value of the effect was $F(3.69, 4327.69) = 786.09, p < .001$. The significant effects that were found included:

- ex-prisoner with pre-release training versus single conviction for non-violent crime, $F(1, 1180) = 90.14, p < .001$, with ex-prisoners with pre-release training being rated as having higher probability of obtaining employment ($M = 3.99$) than people with a single conviction for non-violent crime ($M = 3.68$);
- ex-prisoner with pre-release training versus single conviction for possession and use of heroin, $F(1, 1180) = 141.49, p < .001$, with ex-prisoners with pre-release training being rated as having higher probability of obtaining employment ($M = 3.99$) than people with a single conviction for possession and use of heroin ($M = 3.56$);
- ex-prisoner with pre-release training versus multiple convictions for petty theft related to drug use, $F(1, 1180) = 1523.12, p < .001$, with ex-prisoners with pre-release training being rated as having higher probability of obtaining employment ($M = 3.99$) than people with multiple convictions for petty theft related to drug use ($M = 2.58$);
- ex-prisoner with pre-release training versus multiple burglary convictions, $F(1, 1180) = 2088.07, p < .001$, with ex-prisoners with pre-release training being rated as having higher probability of obtaining employment ($M = 3.99$) than people with multiple burglary convictions ($M = 2.44$);
- single conviction for non-violent crime versus single conviction for possession and use of heroin, $F(1, 1180) = 9.78, p < .01$, with people with a single conviction for non-violent crime being rated as having higher probability of obtaining employment ($M = 3.68$) than people with a single conviction for possession and use of heroin ($M = 3.56$);
- single conviction for non-violent crime versus multiple convictions for petty theft related to drug use, $F(1, 1180) = 954.93, p < .001$, with people with a single conviction for non-violent crime being rated as having higher probability of obtaining employment ($M = 3.68$) than people with multiple convictions for petty theft related to drug use ($M = 2.58$);
- single conviction for non-violent crime versus multiple burglary convictions, $F(1, 1180) = 1486.32, p < .001$, with people with a single conviction for non-violent crime being rated as having higher probability of obtaining employment ($M = 3.68$) than people with multiple burglary convictions ($M = 2.44$);
- single conviction for possession and use of heroin versus multiple convictions for petty theft related to drug use, $F(1, 1180) = 670.24,$

$p < .001$, with people with a single conviction for possession and use of heroin being rated as having higher probability of obtaining employment ($M = 3.56$) than people with multiple convictions for petty theft related to drug use ($M = 2.58$);

- single conviction for possession and use of heroin versus multiple burglary convictions, $F(1, 1180) = 845.60$, $p < .001$, with people with a single conviction for possession and use of heroin being rated as having higher probability of obtaining employment ($M = 3.56$) than people with multiple burglary convictions ($M = 2.44$);
- multiple convictions for petty theft related to drug use versus multiple burglary convictions, $F(1, 1180) = 25.06$, $p < .001$, with people with multiple convictions for petty theft related to drug use being rated as having higher probability of obtaining employment ($M = 2.58$) than people with multiple burglary convictions ($M = 2.44$).

Further analyses examined the effect of stakeholder group, previous experience in employment of ex-prisoners or ex-offenders (Yes or No), and quality of previous experience in employment of ex-prisoners and ex-offenders on ratings of the probability of obtaining employment for people with each of the forensic histories. There were several significant main effects related to each of the five forensic histories.

For ex-prisoners with pre-release training:

- For stakeholder group, the effect was $F(3, 1177) = 22.15$, $p < .001$, with employer respondents rating ex-prisoners with pre-release training as having lower probability of obtaining employment ($M = 3.74$) than did all other respondent groups; employment services workers ($M = 4.36$), corrections workers ($M = 4.23$), and prisoners and offenders ($M = 4.11$).
- For previous experience of employment of ex-prisoners and ex-offenders, the effect was $F(1, 1179) = 41.42$, $p < .001$, with respondents who did have previous experience rating ex-prisoners with pre-release training as having higher probability of obtaining employment ($M = 4.19$) than did respondents who did not ($M = 3.76$).
- For quality of previous experiences of employment of ex-prisoners and ex-offenders, the effect was $F(4, 630) = 10.18$, $p < .001$, with respondents reporting a very negative experience rating ex-prisoners with pre-release training as having a lower probability of obtaining employment ($M = 3.15$) than did respondents with a positive ($M = 3.72$) and respondents with a very positive experience ($M = 3.83$); and respondents reporting a negative experience rating them as having a lower probability of obtaining employment ($M = 3.35$) than did respondents with a positive experience ($M = 3.72$).

For people with a single conviction for a non-violent crime:

- For stakeholder group, the effect was $F(3, 1177) = 46.04, p < .001$, with employer respondents rating people with a single conviction for a non-violent crime as having lower probability of obtaining employment ($M = 3.24$) than did all other respondent groups; employment services workers ($M = 4.16$), corrections workers ($M = 4.15$), and prisoners and offenders ($M = 4.06$).
- For previous experience of employment of ex-prisoners and ex-offenders, the effect was $F(1, 1179) = 62.05, p < .001$, with respondents who did have previous experience rating people with a single conviction for a non-violent crime as having higher probability of obtaining employment ($M = 3.96$) than did respondents who did not ($M = 3.35$).
- For quality of previous experiences of employment of ex-prisoners and ex-offenders, the effect was $F(4, 630) = 4.51, p < .01$, with no significant effects for specific variables.

For people with a single conviction for possession and use of heroin:

- For stakeholder group, the effect was $F(3, 1177) = 21.11, p < .001$, with employer respondents rating people with a single conviction for possession and use of heroin as having lower probability of obtaining employment ($M = 3.28$) than did all other respondent groups; employment services workers ($M = 4.01$), corrections workers ($M = 3.85$), and prisoners and offenders ($M = 3.65$).
- For previous experience of employment of ex-prisoners and ex-offenders, the effect was $F(1, 1179) = 20.94, p < .001$, with respondents who did have previous experience rating people with a single conviction for possession and use of heroin as having higher probability of obtaining employment ($M = 3.73$) than did respondents who did not ($M = 3.37$).

For people with multiple convictions for petty theft related to drug use:

- For stakeholder group, the effect was $F(3, 1177) = 74.89, p < .001$, with employer respondents rating people with multiple convictions for petty theft related to drug use as having lower probability of obtaining employment ($M = 2.08$) than did all other respondent groups; employment services workers ($M = 3.17$), corrections workers ($M = 3.06$), and prisoners and offenders ($M = 3.04$).
- For previous experience of employment of ex-prisoners and ex-offenders, the effect was $F(1, 1179) = 73.88, p < .001$, with respondents who did have previous experience rating people with multiple convictions for petty theft related to drug use as having higher probability of obtaining employment ($M = 2.87$) than did respondents who did not ($M = 2.25$).

- For quality of previous experiences of employment of ex-prisoners and ex-offenders, the effect was $F(4, 630) = 3.70$, $p < .01$, with no significant effects for specific variables.

For people with multiple burglary convictions:

- For stakeholder group, the effect was $F(3, 1177) = 74.94$, $p < .001$, with employer respondents rating people with forensic histories as having lower probability of obtaining employment ($M = 1.95$) than did all other respondent groups; employment services workers ($M = 3.02$), corrections workers ($M = 2.99$), and prisoners and offenders ($M = 2.78$).
- For previous experience of employment of ex-prisoners and ex-offenders, the effect was $F(1, 1179) = 101.00$, $p < .001$, with respondents who did have previous experience rating them as having higher probability of obtaining employment ($M = 2.77$) than did respondents who did not ($M = 2.06$).
- For quality of previous experiences of employment of ex-prisoners and ex-offenders, the effect was $F(4, 630) = 4.05$, $p < .01$, with respondents reporting a negative experience rating people with forensic histories as having a lower probability of obtaining employment ($M = 2.57$) than did respondents with a positive experience ($M = 3.03$).

To summarise these results, the analyses of variance indicated that all of the differences in the ratings of the five disadvantaged groups were significant, with the exception that the difference in ratings for people with forensic histories and those with intellectual or psychiatric disabilities was not significant. Additional analyses of variance related to respondent variables identified several significant effects. Respondents 18-30 years old rated people with a forensic history more probable of obtaining employment than did 41-50 year olds and 51+ year olds. Employers rated the probability of people with a forensic history obtaining employment lower than did all three other groups. Respondents reporting some previous experience rated the probability of people with a forensic history obtaining employment higher than did respondents with no previous experience. Respondents with a positive and those with a very positive previous experience rated the probability of people with a forensic history obtaining employment higher than did those reporting a very negative previous experience and those with a positive previous experience rated the probability of people with a forensic history obtaining employment higher than did those reporting a negative previous experience.

Also, the analyses of variance indicated that all of the differences in ratings between the five forensic histories were significant. With respect to maintaining employment, all were significant except that there was no

difference between multiple convictions for petty theft related to drug use and multiple burglary convictions.

Additional analyses related to respondent variables identified several significant effects. Employers rated the probability of obtaining and of maintaining employment lower than did all three other groups in relation to all five forensic histories. Respondents reporting some previous experience rated the probability of obtaining and of maintaining employment higher than did respondents with no previous experience in relation to all five forensic histories. Respondents with a positive previous experience rated probability of obtaining and of maintaining employment higher than did those reporting a negative previous experience in relation to ex-prisoners with pre-release training. The same result was found for the probability of maintaining employment in relation to ex-prisoners with pre-release training.

Maintaining employment

Respondents also rated the probability of ex-prisoners, ex-offenders, and other disadvantaged groups maintaining employment. Table 4 below presents mean ratings and standard deviations for each of the disadvantaged groups.

Table 4: Disadvantaged groups maintaining employment

Disadvantaged groups maintaining employment	Mean	SD
Physical and sensory disabilities	4.36	1.10
Chronic illnesses	4.34	1.01
Communication difficulties	3.92	1.13
Forensic histories	3.54	1.08
Intellectual and psychiatric disabilities	2.88	0.89

The prospect of maintaining employment was rated highest for people with physical or sensory disabilities, followed by people with conditions of chronic illness, people with communication difficulties, people with forensic histories, and, finally, people with either intellectual or psychiatric disabilities. As was the case with ratings of probability of obtaining employment, no group was rated as having a “good chance” (5.00 or better), however, people with a physical or sensory disability (4.36) and people with a chronic illness (4.34) were rated as having more than a “fair chance” of maintaining employment. People with communication difficulties were rated as having slightly less than a “fair chance” of maintaining employment (3.92). Those with a forensic history were rated as having less than a “fair chance”, and those with an intellectual or psychiatric disability were rated as having less than a “poor chance”. The variability of ratings was again moderate and again fairly consistent across all five groups (between .89 and 1.13 on a 7-point scale).

Overall, the ratings for maintaining employment were somewhat higher than the ratings for obtaining employment, but not for all five groups. People with a physical or sensory disability and people with

communication difficulties had higher rated probability of maintaining employment than their ratings for obtaining employment (approximately 0.4 higher ratings). People with a forensic history and those with a chronic illness had ratings that were slightly higher for maintaining employment than for obtaining employment. People with an intellectual or psychiatric disability were rated as having somewhat lower probability of maintaining employment than for obtaining employment (.34 lower).

A consideration of all 25 conditions of disadvantage individually indicates that rated probability of maintaining employment, like obtaining employment, varied in relation to the nature of the condition named. The table below presents the distribution of mean ratings and standard deviations for each specific condition of disadvantage.

Table 5: Maintaining employment with specific conditions

Maintaining employment with specific conditions	Mean	SD
Previous cancer treatment	5.24	1.20
Artificial limb	5.19	1.14
Facial scars	5.14	1.36
Hearing impairment	4.67	1.35
Wheelchair	4.57	1.72
Severe asthma	4.54	1.35
Epilepsy	4.53	1.47
Ex-prisoner with pre-release training	4.38	1.21
Stutter	4.36	1.32
AIDS	4.19	1.58
Single conviction non violent crime	4.04	1.44
Single conviction heroin possession/use	3.86	1.45
Vision impairment	3.77	1.50
Limited English	3.75	1.52
Blind with guide dog	3.69	1.80
Limited speech	3.65	1.38
Physical impairments	3.47	1.43
Methadone program	3.21	1.38
Depression	3.05	1.22
Memory difficulties	2.99	1.13
Brain damage (drug and alcohol)	2.91	1.20
Mood swings	2.83	1.20
Multiple convictions petty theft drug use	2.70	1.35
Multiple convictions burglary	2.70	1.37
Hallucinations	2.62	1.21

People with any one of three of the 25 various conditions were rated as having more than a “good chance” (5.00 or better) of maintaining employment including those with: a previous cancer treatment (5.24); an artificial limb (5.19); or facial scars (5.14). People with any one of eight of the 25 various conditions of disadvantage were rated as having

more than a “fair chance” of maintaining employment, including those with: hearing impairment; a wheelchair; severe asthma; epilepsy; ex-prisoner with pre-release training; a stutter; AIDS; and those with a history of single conviction for a non-violent crime. Another eight of the 25 were rated as having between a “poor chance” and a “fair chance” (3.00–4.00) of maintaining employment. Six conditions were associated with between a “very poor chance” and “poor chance”. Those included a person with: memory difficulties (2.99); drug or alcohol acquired brain damage (2.91); mood swings (2.83); a history of multiple convictions for petty theft due to drug use (2.70); a history of multiple convictions for burglary (2.70); and hallucinations (2.62). The variability of ratings was moderate, and fairly consistent across all 25 conditions of disadvantage as well (between 1.13 and 1.80 on a 7-point scale). There was somewhat greater variability in responses referring to a person in a wheelchair and a blind person with a guide dog.

A consideration of forensic history indicates that rated probability of maintaining employment also varies markedly in relation to the nature of the criminal history named. The table below presents the distribution of mean ratings and standard deviations for each named offence background.

Table 6: Maintaining employment with a forensic history

Maintaining employment with a forensic history	Mean	SD	Rank
Ex-prisoner with pre-release training	4.38	1.21	8 th of 25
Single conviction for non violent crime	4.04	1.44	11 th of 25
Single conviction for heroin possession use	3.86	1.45	12 th of 25
Multiple convictions petty theft drug use	2.70	1.35	23 rd of 25
Multiple convictions burglary	2.70	1.37	23 rd of 25

The ratings for maintaining employment were higher than the rated probability of obtaining employment for all five forensic histories, although people with a history of multiple convictions for petty theft due to drug use rated only slightly higher chances (.12 higher). Again, none of the forensic histories included was rated as having a “good chance” of maintaining employment (5.00 or better). Two histories were rated as having more than a “fair chance”; an ex-prisoner with training (4.38) and a person with a history of single conviction for a non-violent crime (4.04). Those with one conviction for possession and use of heroin were rated as having somewhat less than a “fair chance” of maintaining employment (3.86). Those with a history of multiple convictions for petty theft due to drug use and those with multiple burglary convictions were rated as having between a “very poor chance” and a “poor chance” of maintaining employment (both 2.70). The variability of ratings was again moderate and quite consistent across all five forensic histories (between 1.21 and 1.45 on a 7-point scale). When compared with the employability ratings of the other 20 conditions of disadvantage, the five forensic histories were positioned thus: ex-prisoner with pre-release training (4.38) was the eighth best rating of 25; single conviction for

non-violent crime (4.04) was the eleventh best rating of 25; single conviction for possession and use of heroin (3.86) was the twelfth best rating of 25. Multiple convictions for petty theft due to drug use and multiple convictions for burglary (both 2.70) were equal twenty-third (next to the lowest) rated of all 25 conditions of disadvantage.

Differences in respondents' ratings

Analyses of variance were conducted in relation to the rated probability of maintaining employment for each of the five disadvantaged groups. A significant main effect was found. The value of the effect was $F(3.63, 4285) = 1027.90, p < .001$. The significant effects that were found included: forensic history versus physical and sensory disabilities, $F(1, 1180) = 727.76, p < .001$, with people with physical or sensory disabilities being rated as having higher probability of maintaining employment ($M = 4.36$) than people with forensic histories ($M = 3.54$); forensic history versus chronic illness, $F(1, 1180) = 798.64, p < .001$, with people with chronic illnesses being rated as having higher probability of maintaining employment ($M = 4.34$) than people with forensic histories ($M = 3.54$); forensic history versus communication difficulties, $F(1, 1180) = 157.68, p < .001$, with people with communication difficulties being rated as having higher probability of maintaining employment ($M = 3.92$) than people with forensic histories ($M = 3.54$); and forensic history versus intellectual and psychiatric disabilities, $F(1, 1180) = 598.83, p < .001$, with people with forensic histories being rated as having higher probability of maintaining employment ($M = 3.54$) than people with intellectual or psychiatric disabilities ($M = 2.88$).

Further analyses examined the effect of respondent's age, gender, state within which they reside, highest level of education completed, stakeholder group, previous experience in employment of ex-prisoners or ex-offenders (Yes or No), and quality of previous experience in employment of ex-prisoners and ex-offenders on ratings of the probability of maintaining employment for people with forensic histories. There were several significant main effects:

- For level of education of respondent, effect was $F(3, 1177) = 4.61, p < .01$, with tertiary educated respondents rating people with forensic histories as having higher probability of maintaining employment ($M = 3.63$) than did respondents who completed secondary school ($M = 3.32$).
- For stakeholder group, the effect was $F(3, 1177) = 53.77, p < .001$, with employer respondents rating people with forensic histories as having lower probability of maintaining employment ($M = 3.18$) than did all other respondent groups; employment services workers ($M = 4.02$), corrections workers ($M = 3.92$), and prisoners and offenders ($M = 3.72$).
- For previous experience of employment of ex-prisoners and ex-offenders, the effect was $F(1, 1179) = 79.35, p < .001$, with respondents who did have previous experience rating people with

forensic histories as having higher probability of maintaining employment ($M = 3.79$) than did respondents who did not ($M = 3.24$).

- For the quality of previous experiences of employment of ex-prisoners and ex-offenders, the effect was $F(4, 630) = 6.35, p < .001$, with respondents reporting a very negative experience ($M = 3.47$) and respondents reporting a negative experience ($M = 3.64$) rating people with forensic histories as having a lower probability of maintaining employment than did respondents with a positive experience ($M = 4.01$).

No significant main effects were found for age, gender, or state of residence.

Analyses of variance were also conducted in relation to the rated probability of maintaining employment for each of the five forensic histories. A significant main effect for forensic history was found. The value of the effect was $F(3.67, 4327.69) = 786.09, p < .001$. The significant effects that were found included:

- ex-prisoner with pre-release training versus single conviction for non-violent crime, $F(1, 1180) = 90.14, p < .001$, with ex-prisoners with pre-release training being rated as having higher probability of maintaining employment ($M = 4.38$) than people with a single conviction for non-violent crime ($M = 4.04$);
- ex-prisoner with pre-release training versus single conviction for possession and use of heroin, $F(1, 1180) = 141.49, p < .001$, with ex-prisoners with pre-release training being rated as having higher probability of maintaining employment ($M = 4.38$) than people with a single conviction for possession and use of heroin ($M = 3.86$);
- ex-prisoner with pre-release training versus multiple convictions for petty theft related to drug use, $F(1, 1180) = 1523.12, p < .001$, with ex-prisoners with pre-release training being rated as having higher probability of maintaining employment ($M = 4.38$) than people with multiple convictions for petty theft related to drug use ($M = 2.70$);
- ex-prisoner with pre-release training versus multiple burglary convictions, $F(1, 1180) = 2088.07, p < .001$, with ex-prisoners with pre-release training being rated as having higher probability of maintaining employment ($M = 4.38$) than people with multiple burglary convictions ($M = 2.70$);
- single conviction for non-violent crime versus single conviction for possession and use of heroin, $F(1, 1180) = 9.78, p < .01$, with people with a single conviction for non-violent crime being rated as having higher probability of maintaining employment ($M = 4.04$) than people with a single conviction for possession and use of heroin ($M = 3.86$);
- single conviction for non-violent crime versus multiple convictions for petty theft related to drug use, $F(1, 1180) = 954.93, p < .001$, with people with a single conviction for non-violent crime being

rated as having higher probability of maintaining employment ($M = 4.04$) than people with multiple convictions for petty theft related to drug use ($M = 2.70$);

- single conviction for non-violent crime versus multiple burglary convictions, $F(1, 1180) = 1486.32$, $p < .001$, with people with a single conviction for non-violent crime being rated as having higher probability of maintaining employment ($M = 4.04$) than people with multiple burglary convictions ($M = 2.70$);
- single conviction for possession and use of heroin versus multiple convictions for petty theft related to drug use, $F(1, 1180) = 670.24$, $p < .001$, with people with a single conviction for possession and use of heroin being rated as having higher probability of maintaining employment ($M = 3.86$) than people with multiple convictions for petty theft related to drug use ($M = 2.70$);
- single conviction for possession and use of heroin versus multiple burglary convictions, $F(1, 1180) = 845.60$, $p < .001$, with people with a single conviction for possession and use of heroin being rated as having higher probability of maintaining employment ($M = 3.86$) than people with multiple burglary convictions ($M = 2.70$).

There was no difference between multiple convictions for petty theft related to drug use and multiple burglary convictions, both with $M = 2.70$.

Further analyses examined the effect of stakeholder group, previous experience in employment of ex-prisoners or ex-offenders (Yes or No), and quality of previous experience in employment of ex-prisoners and ex-offenders on ratings of the probability of maintaining employment for people with forensic histories. There were several significant main effects for each of the forensic histories.

For ex-prisoners with pre-release training:

- For stakeholder group, the effect was $F(3, 1177) = 17.69$, $p < .001$, with employer respondents rating ex-prisoners with pre-release training as having lower probability of maintaining employment ($M = 4.14$) than employment services workers ($M = 4.72$) and corrections workers ($M = 4.64$).
- For previous experience of employment of ex-prisoners and ex-offenders, the effect was $F(1, 1179) = 35.79$, $p < .001$, with respondents who did have previous experience rating ex-prisoners with pre-release training as having higher probability of maintaining employment ($M = 4.57$) than did respondents who did not ($M = 4.15$).
- For quality of previous experiences of employment of ex-prisoners and ex-offenders, the effect was $F(4, 630) = 6.28$, $p < .001$, with respondents reporting a very negative experience rating ex-prisoners with pre-release training as having a lower probability of maintaining employment ($M = 4.13$) than did respondents with a

positive experience ($M = 4.77$) and respondents with a very positive experience ($M = 5.02$).

For people with a single conviction for a non-violent crime:

- For stakeholder group, the effect was $F(3, 1177) = 40.54, p < .001$, with employer respondents rating people with a single conviction for a non-violent crime as having lower probability of maintaining employment ($M = 3.61$) than did all other respondent groups; employment services workers ($M = 4.57$), corrections workers ($M = 4.48$), and prisoners and offenders ($M = 4.37$).
- For previous experience of employment of ex-prisoners and ex-offenders, the effect was $F(1, 1179) = 61.97, p < .001$, with respondents who did have previous experience rating people with a single conviction for a non-violent crime as having higher probability of maintaining employment ($M = 4.34$) than did respondents who did not ($M = 3.70$).
- For quality of previous experiences of employment of ex-prisoners and ex-offenders, the effect was $F(4, 630) = 4.79, p < .01$, with no significant effects for specific variables.

For people with a single conviction for possession and use of heroin:

- For stakeholder group, the effect was $F(3, 1177) = 14.79, p < .001$, with employer respondents rating people with a single conviction for possession and use of heroin as having lower probability of maintaining employment ($M = 3.65$) than did employment services workers ($M = 4.57$) and corrections workers ($M = 4.10$), employment services workers rating higher than prisoners and offenders ($M = 3.70$).
- For previous experience of employment of ex-prisoners and ex-offenders, the effect was $F(1, 1179) = 21.23, p < .001$, with respondents who did have previous experience rating people with a single conviction for possession and use of heroin as having higher probability of maintaining employment ($M = 4.04$) than did respondents who did not ($M = 3.65$).

For people with multiple convictions for petty theft related to drug use:

- For stakeholder group, the effect was $F(3, 1177) = 54.92, p < .001$, with employer respondents rating people with multiple convictions for petty theft related to drug use as having lower probability of maintaining employment ($M = 2.24$) than did all other respondent groups; corrections workers ($M = 3.22$), employment services workers ($M = 3.21$), and prisoners and offenders ($M = 3.07$).
- For previous experience of employment of ex-prisoners and ex-offenders, the effect was $F(1, 1179) = 60.23, p < .001$, with respondents who did have previous experience rating people with multiple convictions for petty theft related to drug use as having

higher probability of maintaining employment ($\underline{M} = 2.97$) than did respondents who did not ($\underline{M} = 2.38$).

For people with multiple burglary convictions:

- For stakeholder group, the effect was $F(3, 1177) = 53.32, p < .001$, with employer respondents rating people with multiple burglary convictions as having lower probability of maintaining employment ($\underline{M} = 2.24$) than did all other respondent groups; employment services workers ($\underline{M} = 3.29$), corrections workers ($\underline{M} = 3.18$), and prisoners and offenders ($\underline{M} = 3.00$).
- For previous experience of employment of ex-prisoners and ex-offenders, the effect was $F(1, 1179) = 75.42, p < .001$, with respondents who did have previous experience rating people with multiple burglary convictions as having higher probability of maintaining employment ($\underline{M} = 3.01$) than did respondents who did not ($\underline{M} = 2.34$).
- For quality of previous experiences of employment of ex-prisoners and ex-offenders, the effect was $F(4, 630) = 5.15, p < .001$, with no significant effects for specific variables.

To summarise these results, the analyses of variance indicated that all of the differences in the ratings of the five disadvantaged groups were significant. Additional analyses of variance related to respondent variables identified several significant effects. Respondents who had completed a tertiary qualification rated people with a forensic history more probable of maintaining employment than did those who had completed secondary school. Employers rated the probability of people with a forensic history maintaining employment lower than did all three other groups. Respondents reporting some previous experience rated the probability of people with a forensic history maintaining employment higher than did respondents with no previous experience. Respondents with a positive previous experience rated the probability of people with a forensic history maintaining employment higher than did those reporting a very negative previous experience.

Also, the analyses of variance indicated that all of the differences in ratings between the five forensic histories were significant, except that there was no difference between multiple convictions for petty theft related to drug use and multiple burglary convictions. Additional analyses related to respondent variables identified several significant effects. Employers rated the probability of maintaining employment lower than did all three other groups in relation to all five forensic histories. Respondents reporting some previous experience rated the probability of maintaining employment higher than did respondents with no previous experience in relation to all five forensic histories. Respondents with a positive and those with a very positive previous experience rated the probability of ex-prisoners with pre-release training

maintaining employment higher than did those reporting a negative previous experience.

Perceived employability of ex-prisoners, ex-offenders and members of the general workforce

The employability of ex-prisoners and ex-offenders compared with the employability of members of the general workforce was investigated in terms of three main variables: work skills, communication and interpersonal skills, and personal characteristics. Participants rated the importance of each of 21 items to “getting and keeping a job” (obtaining and maintaining employment). They also rated the likelihood that each of three groups of people would exhibit the skill or characteristic described: members of the general workforce, ex-offenders, and ex-prisoners. Results of this investigation are presented in the tables and text below.

The results are presented first in terms of whole group responses pertaining to each of the main variables, reported in the form of mean scores and standard deviations, followed by results of advanced analyses of variance. Next, results are presented in terms of whole group responses pertaining to the 21 specific skills and characteristics included in the investigation. Those results are also reported in the form of mean scores and standard deviations, along with a ranked ordering of ratings (from highest to lowest ratings). Finally, results of analyses of variance are presented related to differences in the likelihood of members of each of the three groups exhibiting each of the specific skills and characteristics.

Table 7: Skills and characteristics and employability

	Personal characteristics		Work skills		Communication & interpersonal skills	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Importance	5.90	0.67	5.82	0.71	5.70	0.74
Likelihood						
General workforce	5.07	0.75	5.06	0.75	5.13	0.70
Ex-offenders	4.30	0.99	4.25	0.96	4.48	0.81
Ex-prisoners	4.22	1.02	4.08	1.00	4.33	0.85

A consideration of the rated importance of each of the three main employment-related skills and characteristics indicates that there is little difference in their rated importance. A consideration of the rated likelihood of each of the three comparison groups (members of the general workforce, ex-offenders, and ex-prisoners) exhibiting those main employment-related skills and characteristics indicates that there are some real differences in respondents’ ratings. Although none of the groups, including members of the general workforce, were rated much above “quite likely” to exhibit any of the skills and characteristics, there are some substantial differences in the ratings.

Personal characteristics

The specific personal characteristics that were investigated included: punctuality; eagerness to learn; willingness to work; being task persistent; honesty; motivation to excel; having a healthy lifestyle; and loyalty to the organisation. Together, these eight specific variables comprise the main variable Personal Characteristics. The average rated importance of the eight personal characteristics was 5.90 or just slightly below “very important” to obtaining and maintaining employment. This was the highest rated main employment-related skills/characteristics variable. Three personal characteristics, punctuality (6.42), honesty (6.34), and willingness to work (6.30) were rated well above “very important”. Loyalty to the organisation (5.84), eagerness to learn (5.84), being task persistent (5.77) and motivation to excel (5.58) were each rated somewhat below “very important”. Having a healthy lifestyle (5.09) was rated slightly above “quite important”. The variability of these importance ratings was low (.67).

The average rated likelihood of members of the general workforce exhibiting the personal characteristics included was 5.07, slightly above “quite likely”. The average rated likelihood of ex-offenders exhibiting the personal characteristics was 4.30, somewhat above “fairly likely”. The average rated likelihood of ex-prisoners exhibiting those personal characteristics was 4.22, also somewhat above “fairly likely”. The variability of personal characteristics ratings was quite low and fairly consistent across all three main variables (between .75 and 1.02 on a 7-point scale).

Work skills

The specific work skills that were investigated included: good work history; skills for the job; takes direction well; works well without supervision; works well in teams; completes work efficiently; and adheres to set practices and rules. Together, these seven specific variables comprise the main variable Work Skills. The average rated importance of the seven work skills was 5.82, slightly lower than personal characteristics and further below “very important” to obtaining and maintaining employment. This was the second highest rated main variable. One work skill, taking directions well (5.95), was rated slightly below “very important”. All other work skills were rated only slightly lower, somewhat below “very important” to obtaining and maintaining employment. Those ratings were: skills for the job (5.83); adheres to set practices and rules (5.83); works well without supervision (5.80); completes work efficiently (5.79); works well in teams (5.78); and good work history (5.76). The variability of these importance ratings was low (.71).

The average rated likelihood of members of the general workforce exhibiting those work skills was 5.06, slightly above “quite likely”. The average rated likelihood of ex-offenders exhibiting the work skills was 4.25, somewhat above “fairly likely”, and the average rated likelihood of ex-prisoners exhibiting those work skills was 4.08, slightly above “fairly

likely". The variability of work skills ratings was quite low and consistent across all three main variables (between .75 and 1.00 on a 7-point scale).

Communication and interpersonal skills

The six specific communication and interpersonal skills that were investigated included: appropriate grooming and hygiene; speaks English well; can read and write English; gets along well with others; communicates effectively; and relates well to the public. Together, these six specific variables comprise the main variable Communication and Interpersonal Skills. The average rated importance of the six communication and interpersonal skills was 5.70, somewhat yet further below "very important" to obtaining and maintaining employment and lowest of the three main variables. All of the six communication and interpersonal skills included were rated somewhat below "very important" to obtaining and maintaining employment with the exception of one: relates well to the public (5.87); appropriate grooming and hygiene (5.86); gets along well with others (5.83); communicates effectively (5.81); and can read and write English (5.67). The importance of speaking English well was lower (5.17), but still above "quite important". The variability of these importance ratings was low (.74).

The average rated likelihood of members of the general workforce exhibiting those communication and interpersonal skills was 5.13, somewhat above "quite likely". The average rated likelihood of ex-offenders exhibiting the skills was 4.48, midway between "fairly likely" and "quite likely". The average rated likelihood of ex-prisoners exhibiting those communication and interpersonal skills was 4.33, somewhat above "fairly likely". The variability of communication and interpersonal skills ratings was very low and consistent across all three main variables (between .70 and .85 on a 7-point scale).

Specific employment-related skills and characteristics among the three groups

A consideration of all 21 of the employment-related skills and characteristics separately indicates that respondents' ratings of the likelihood of that skill or characteristic being exhibited by members of the general workforce, ex-offenders, and ex-prisoners varied markedly in relation to the specific nature of the skill or characteristic. The table below presents the distribution of mean ratings for each of the employment-related skills and characteristics included, as well as the "ranked" order of that skill or characteristic ("rank" meaning simply that the ratings have been ranked by the researchers from highest to lowest likelihood of being exhibited). Mean importance ratings and the ranking of those means is also included to provide a context for the ratings of likelihood that members of a particular group would exhibit the skill or characteristic.

Table 8: Employment related skills and characteristics among the three groups

Skill / Characteristic	Importance		General workers		Ex-offender		Ex-prisoner	
	Mean	Rank	Mean	Rank	Mean	Rank	Mean	Rank
Punctual	6.42	1	5.42	1	4.80	1	4.73	1
Honest	6.34	2	5.13	7	3.87	21	3.69	20
Willing to work	6.30	3	5.28	2	4.60	6	4.57	4
Takes directions well	5.95	4	5.13	7	4.28	13	4.14	13
Relates well to public	5.87	5	5.01	18	4.07	17	3.88	18
Grooming/hygiene	5.86	6	5.25	3	4.65	5	4.48	6
Eager to learn	5.84	7	5.23	4	4.78	2	4.72	2
Loyalty to organisation	5.84	7	4.86	20	4.11	15	4.04	15
Adheres practice/rules	5.83	9	5.02	15	4.10	16	4.01	16
Gets along with others	5.83	9	5.18	6	4.46	7	4.28	8
Skills for the job	5.83	9	5.02	15	4.36	10	4.20	11
Communicates effectively	5.81	12	5.04	13	4.34	11	4.18	12
Minimal supervision	5.80	13	5.06	12	4.26	14	4.11	14
Works efficiently	5.79	14	5.04	13	4.45	8	4.37	7
Works well in teams	5.78	15	5.07	10	4.37	9	4.21	9
Task persistent	5.77	16	5.02	15	4.33	12	4.21	9
Good work history	5.76	17	5.07	10	3.94	19	3.51	21
Reading/writing skills	5.67	18	5.23	4	4.66	4	4.50	5
Motivated to excel	5.58	19	4.88	19	4.06	18	3.96	17
Speaks English well	5.17	20	5.09	9	4.74	3	4.66	3
Healthy lifestyle	5.09	21	4.70	21	3.89	20	3.79	19

Ratings of the likelihood that each of the 21 specific employment-related skills and characteristics would be exhibited by members of the general workforce indicate that 18 of the skills and characteristics included were considered to be at least more than “quite likely” to be exhibited. However, no skills or characteristics were rated to be even close to “very likely” to be exhibited by members of the general workforce. Two personal characteristics, punctuality (5.42) and willingness to work (5.28), and one communication and interpersonal skill, personal grooming and hygiene (5.25) were rated between 5.25 and 5.50. Eagerness to learn and reading and writing skills (both 5.23) were rated slightly lower in likelihood to be exhibited. Thirteen skills and characteristics were rated to be slightly above “quite likely” to be exhibited by members of the general workforce (between 5.00 and 5.19). Three personal characteristics, motivation to excel (4.88), loyalty to the organisation (4.86), and healthy lifestyle (4.70) were rated below “quite likely” to be exhibited.

Ratings of the likelihood that the 21 skills and characteristics would be exhibited by ex-offenders indicate that respondents considered ex-offenders to be much less likely than members of the general workforce, but slightly to somewhat more likely than ex-prisoners, to exhibit every one of the skills and characteristics included. For ex-

offenders, none of the skills were rated “quite likely” to be exhibited, but 18 of the 21 were rated to be at least more than “fairly likely” to be exhibited. The highest rated skills and characteristics were punctuality (4.80) and eagerness to learn (4.78), speaking English well (4.74), reading and writing skills (4.66), personal grooming and hygiene (4.65), and willingness to work (4.60). Twelve skills and characteristics were rated to be slightly or somewhat above “fairly likely” to be exhibited by ex-offenders (between 4.00 and 4.50). Having a good work history (3.94) and two personal characteristics, honesty (3.87) and healthy lifestyle (3.89) were rated less than “fairly likely” to be exhibited by ex-offenders.

Ratings of the likelihood that the 21 skills and characteristics would be exhibited by ex-prisoners indicate that respondents considered ex-prisoners to be even less likely than members of the general workforce to exhibit every one of the skills and characteristics included. For ex-prisoners, none of the skills were rated “quite likely” to be exhibited, but 16 were rated to be at least more than “fairly likely” to be exhibited. Three personal characteristics were rated among the highest, punctuality (4.73), eagerness to learn (4.72) and willingness to work (4.57). The likelihood that an ex-prisoner speaks English well was also rated reasonably high (4.66). Twelve skills and characteristics were rated to be slightly or somewhat above “fairly likely” to be exhibited by ex-prisoners (between 4.00 and 4.50). Three personal characteristics, motivation to excel (3.96), healthy lifestyle (3.79), and honesty (3.69) were rated below “fairly likely” to be exhibited, as were relating well to the public (3.88) and having a good work history (3.51).

Differences in respondents’ ratings

Observed differences in the importance ratings of the three main variables were quite small, and the variability of ratings was very low, indicating a great deal of agreement among respondents in reference to the importance of each main employment-related skills and characteristics (between 0.67 and 0.74 on a 7-point scale). Given the small observed differences in mean ratings, it was predicted that the differences in ratings would prove to be non-significant. Nevertheless, repeated measures analyses of variance were conducted in relation to rated importance of the three main employment-related skills and characteristics to determine if the small differences were indeed statistically significant. In fact, each of the differences was found to be significant at the level, $F(1.76, 2080.97) = 113.32, p < .001$. No further analyses were performed because rated importance of employment-related skills was not the primary focus of the study.

When the likelihood of each of the main skills and characteristics being exhibited by each of the three groups is considered together, it is clear that members of the general workforce were rated much more likely than either ex-offenders or ex-prisoners to exhibit any of the skills and characteristics included. There was also the least amount of variability in respondents’ ratings of members of the general workforce, with ratings of ex-offenders slightly more variable, and ratings of ex-

prisoners even more variable, but still quite low. In order to determine whether those differences are statistically significant, more advanced repeated measures analyses of variance were performed on each of the main skills and characteristics.

Analyses of variance were conducted in relation to rated likelihood of employment-related personal characteristics being exhibited by members of the general workforce, ex-offenders, and ex-prisoners. A significant main effect was found. The value of the effect was $F(1.42, 1677.42) = 906.90, p < .001$. The significant effects that were found included:

- For members of the general workforce versus ex-offenders, $F(1, 1180) = 991.63, p < .001$, members of the general workforce were rated as more likely to exhibit employment-related personal characteristics ($M = 5.07$) than ex-offenders ($M = 4.30$).
- For members of the general workforce versus ex-prisoners, $F(1, 1180) = 1060.60, p < .001$, members of the general workforce were rated as more likely to exhibit employment-related personal characteristics ($M = 5.07$) than ex-prisoners ($M = 4.22$).
- For ex-offenders versus ex-prisoners, $F(1, 1180) = 43.48, p < .001$, ex-offenders were rated as more likely to exhibit employment-related personal characteristics ($M = 4.30$) than ex-prisoners ($M = 4.22$).

Further analyses then examined the effect of stakeholder group, previous experience in employment of ex-prisoners or ex-offenders (Yes or No), and quality of previous experience in employment of ex-prisoners and ex-offenders on ratings of the likelihood that ex-prisoners and ex-offenders exhibit those personal characteristics. Although no significant effects were found for previous experience in the employment of ex-prisoners and ex-offenders, there were several main effects related to the other two variables.

For ex-offenders:

- For stakeholder group, the effect was $F(3, 1177) = 24.02, p < .001$, with prisoners and offenders rating ex-offenders as having higher likelihood of exhibiting the personal characteristics ($M = 4.83$) than did all other respondent groups; employers ($M = 4.29$), employment services workers ($M = 4.10$), and corrections workers ($M = 4.09$).
- For quality of previous experience of employment of ex-prisoners and ex-offenders, the effect was $F(4, 630) = 7.74, p < .001$, with respondents reporting a very positive experience ($M = 4.92$) rating ex-offenders as more likely to exhibit the personal characteristics than did respondents with a neutral experience ($M = 4.27$) and those with a negative experience ($M = 4.07$).

For ex-prisoners:

- For stakeholder group, the effect was $F(3, 1177) = 21.08, p < .001$, with prisoners and offenders rating ex-prisoners as having higher likelihood of exhibiting the personal characteristics ($M = 4.72$) than did all other respondent groups; employers ($M = 4.22$), employment services workers ($M = 4.02$), and corrections workers ($M = 3.98$).
- For quality of previous experiences of employment of ex-prisoners and ex-offenders, the effect was $F(4, 630) = 9.65, p < .001$, with respondents reporting a very positive experience ($M = 4.93$) rating ex-prisoners as more likely to exhibit the personal characteristics than did respondents with a neutral experience ($M = 4.18$) and those with a negative experience ($M = 3.97$); and those reporting a positive experience ($M = 4.38$) rating ex-prisoners as more likely to exhibit the personal characteristics than did respondents with a negative experience ($M = 3.97$).

Analyses of variance were conducted in relation to rated likelihood of work skills being exhibited by members of the general workforce, ex-offenders, and ex-prisoners. A significant main effect was found. The value of the effect was $F(1.42, 1670.96) = 1132.58, p < .001$. The significant effects that were found included:

- For members of the general workforce versus ex-offenders, $F(1, 1180) = 1137.01, p < .001$, members of the general workforce were rated as more likely to exhibit work skills ($M = 5.06$) than ex-offenders ($M = 4.25$).
- For members of the general workforce versus ex-prisoners, $F(1, 1180) = 1381.18, p < .001$, members of the general workforce were rated as more likely to exhibit work skills ($M = 5.06$) than ex-prisoners ($M = 4.08$);
- For ex-offenders versus ex-prisoners, $F(1, 1180) = 163.53, p < .001$, with ex-offenders being rated as more likely to exhibit work skills ($M = 4.25$) than ex-prisoners ($M = 4.08$).

Again, further analyses examined the effect of stakeholder group, previous experience in employment of ex-prisoners or ex-offenders (Yes or No), and quality of previous experience in employment of ex-prisoners and ex-offenders on ratings of the likelihood that ex-prisoners and ex-offenders exhibit those work skills. Although no significant effects were found for previous experience in the employment of ex-prisoners and ex-offenders, there were several main effects related to the other two variables.

For ex-offenders:

- For stakeholder group, the effect was $F(3, 1177) = 22.33, p < .001$, with prisoners and offenders rating ex-offenders as having higher likelihood of exhibiting the work skills ($M = 4.77$) than did all other respondent groups; employers ($M = 4.21$), corrections workers ($M = 4.14$), and employment services workers ($M = 4.05$).

- For quality of previous experience of employment of ex-prisoners and ex-offenders, the effect was $F(4, 630) = 5.75, p < .001$, with respondents reporting a very positive experience ($M = 4.92$) rating ex-offenders as more likely to exhibit the work skills than did respondents with a neutral experience ($M = 4.27$) and those with a negative experience ($M = 4.07$).

For ex-prisoners:

- For stakeholder group, the effect was $F(3, 1177) = 15.90, p < .001$, with prisoners and offenders rating ex-prisoners as having higher likelihood of exhibiting the work skills ($M = 4.52$) than did all other respondent groups; employers ($M = 4.07$), corrections workers ($M = 3.94$), and employment services workers ($M = 3.88$).
- For quality of previous experiences of employment of ex-prisoners and ex-offenders, the effect was $F(4, 630) = 6.47, p < .001$, with respondents reporting a very positive experience ($M = 4.52$) rating ex-prisoners as more likely to exhibit the work skills than did respondents with a neutral experience ($M = 4.18$) and those with a negative experience ($M = 3.97$); and those reporting a positive experience ($M = 4.38$) rating ex-prisoners as more likely to exhibit the work skills than did respondents with a negative experience ($M = 3.97$).

Analyses of variance were conducted in relation to rated likelihood of communication and interpersonal skills being exhibited by members of the general workforce, ex-offenders, and ex-prisoners. A significant main effect was found. The value of the effect was $F(1.37, 1617.33) = 1124.75, p < .001$. The significant effects that were found included:

- For members of the general workforce versus ex-offenders, $F(1, 1180) = 1139.41, p < .001$, members of the general workforce were rated as more likely to exhibit communication and interpersonal skills ($M = 5.13$) than ex-offenders ($M = 4.48$).
- For members of the general workforce versus ex-prisoners, $F(1, 1180) = 1329.87, p < .001$, members of the general workforce were rated as more likely to exhibit communication and interpersonal skills ($M = 5.13$) than ex-prisoners ($M = 4.33$).
- For ex-offenders versus ex-prisoners, $F(1, 1180) = 209.65, p < .001$, ex-offenders were rated as more likely to exhibit communication and interpersonal skills ($M = 4.48$) than ex-prisoners ($M = 4.33$).

Once again, further analyses examined the effect of respondent's age, gender, state within which they reside, highest level of education completed, stakeholder group, previous experience in employment of ex-prisoners or ex-offenders (Yes or No), and quality of previous experience in employment of ex-prisoners and ex-offenders on ratings of the likelihood that ex-prisoners and ex-offenders exhibit those communication and interpersonal skills. Again, although no significant effects were found for previous experience in the employment of ex-

prisoners and ex-offenders, there were several main effects related to the other two variables.

For ex-offenders:

- For stakeholder group, the effect was $F(3, 1177) = 22.40, p < .001$, with prisoners and offenders rating ex-offenders as having higher likelihood of exhibiting the communication and interpersonal skills ($M = 4.90$) than did all other respondent groups; employers ($M = 4.47$), corrections workers ($M = 4.40$), and employment services workers ($M = 4.28$).
- For quality of previous experience of employment of ex-prisoners and ex-offenders, the effect was $F(4, 630) = 6.20, p < .001$, with respondents reporting a very positive experience ($M = 4.76$) rating ex-offenders as more likely to exhibit the communication and interpersonal skills than did respondents with a neutral experience ($M = 4.19$) and those with a negative experience ($M = 4.09$).

For ex-prisoners:

- For stakeholder group, the effect was $F(3, 1177) = 19.41, p < .001$, with prisoners and offenders rating ex-prisoners as having higher likelihood of exhibiting the communication and interpersonal skills ($M = 4.72$) than did all other respondent groups; employers ($M = 4.36$), corrections workers ($M = 4.17$), and employment services workers ($M = 4.14$).
- For quality of previous experiences of employment of ex-prisoners and ex-offenders, the effect was $F(4, 630) = 7.34, p < .001$, with respondents reporting a very positive experience ($M = 4.59$) rating ex-prisoners as more likely to exhibit the communication and interpersonal skills than did respondents with a neutral experience ($M = 4.18$) and those with a negative experience ($M = 3.87$); and those reporting a positive experience ($M = 4.24$) rating ex-prisoners as more likely to exhibit the communication and interpersonal skills than did respondents with a negative experience ($M = 3.87$).

To summarise these results, there was little difference in the rated importance of the three main employment-related skills and characteristics, all were rated only somewhat below “very important”. However, further analysis showed that each of the differences was statistically significant. With respect to the likelihood of each of the three referent groups exhibiting the skills and characteristics, there were some differences in the ratings. Although members of the general workforce were rated only slightly above “quite likely” to exhibit each employment-related skill or characteristic, those ratings were significantly better than ex-offender and ex-prisoner ratings, in that order. Still, the two forensic groups were rated “fairly likely” to exhibit the skills and characteristics considered important to employability.

Analyses of variance identified several significant effects in relation to the three employment-related skills. For personal characteristics, all differences between the groups were significant. For work skills, the

differences between members of the general workforce and ex-offenders and between members of the general workforce and ex-prisoners were significant, but the difference between ex-offenders and ex-prisoners was not significant. For communication and interpersonal skills, all group differences were significant.

Additional analyses of variance related to respondent variables identified several significant effects. Prisoners and offenders rated both ex-prisoners and ex-offenders higher on all three employment-related skills and characteristics than did all three other groups. Respondents reporting a very positive previous experience rated both ex-prisoners and ex-offenders higher on all three employment-related skills and characteristics than did respondents reporting a neutral experience and those reporting a negative experience. Respondents reporting a positive previous experience rated ex-prisoners higher on all three employment-related skills and characteristics than did respondents reporting a negative experience.

Discussion

Summary of results

Several remarkable findings have emerged from this study. Certainly, attitudes toward the employability of ex-prisoners and ex-offenders cannot be understood in simplistic terms. In this study, we have found that attitudes differed, not only in relation to the two questions that were investigated, but also in relation to particular stakeholder positions and other characteristics of respondents. The first of the questions that have been addressed compared the employability of ex-prisoners, ex-offenders, and members of other disadvantaged groups, in terms of the probability of obtaining and maintaining employment. The second question compared the employability of ex-prisoners, ex-offenders, and members of the general workforce, in terms of the likelihood of members of each group exhibiting a number of employment-related skills and characteristics. Attitude differences have been investigated in reference to a number of respondent characteristics as well. Based on existing literature, we commenced the study with some expectations with respect to the results. This discussion commences with a summary of results that incorporates reference to expected findings, relevant extant literature, and interpretation of results. It also includes a statement on policy and program implications.

Employability of ex-prisoners, ex-offenders, and other disadvantaged groups

With respect to the first question that compared the employability of ex-prisoners, ex-offenders, and members of other disadvantaged groups, there were two expected general findings for the whole sample. We expected that ex-prisoners and ex-offenders, particularly ex-prisoners, would be considered less employable than other disadvantaged groups with the possible exception of people with a psychiatric disability (due to previous findings of low ratings for this group). This expectation was largely supported by the results, although intellectual disability, together with psychiatric disabilities, was rated lower than forensic histories. We also expected that there would be differences in perceived employability related to the five forensic histories, with people with single convictions for non-violent crimes rated more likely to obtain and maintain employment than those with multiple convictions and drug-related crimes. We also expected that prison background would have more impact on ratings than training received (we expected low ratings for ex-prisoners even with training). This expectation was partially supported by the results with more detailed explanation below.

The main results related to the comparison with other disadvantaged groups were:

- Respondents rated the chances of all of the disadvantaged groups to be no better than “fair” for both obtaining and maintaining employment. Having a forensic history was rated fourth highest of five (intellectual and psychiatric disabilities being rated lowest). Somewhat higher ratings for probability of maintaining employment suggest a view that if someone does manage to get employment, there is increased likelihood of remaining employed.
- All of the differences in the ratings of the five disadvantaged groups were significant for obtaining employment, with the exception that the difference in ratings for people with forensic histories and those with intellectual or psychiatric disabilities was not significant. With respect to maintaining employment, all differences in ratings were found to be significant.
- Ex-prisoners with pre-release training were rated above single conviction for a non-violent crime and single conviction for possession and use of heroin, followed by multiple convictions for petty theft and multiple burglary convictions. For obtaining employment, all of the differences in ratings were significant. For maintaining employment, all were significant except the difference between multiple convictions for petty theft related to drug use and multiple burglary convictions.

Additional analyses related to respondent variables identified several significant effects. Employers rated the probability of obtaining and of maintaining employment lower than did all three other groups in relation to all five forensic histories. Respondents reporting previous experience with employment of ex-prisoners or ex-offenders rated the probability of obtaining and of maintaining employment higher than did those with no previous experience in relation to all five forensic histories. Respondents with a positive previous experience rated probability of obtaining and of maintaining employment higher than did those reporting a negative previous experience, only in relation to ex-prisoners with pre-release training. Respondents 18-30 years old rated people with a forensic history more probable of obtaining employment than did 41-50 year olds and 51+ year olds. Respondents who had completed a tertiary qualification rated people with a forensic history more probable of maintaining employment than did those who had completed secondary school.

Although these results are not overwhelmingly positive for any of the disadvantaged groups, ratings of “fair” probabilities of obtaining and maintaining employment are quite encouraging. Despite differences in ratings being statistically significant, the values of differences are quite small in almost all cases. Ratings for people with forensic histories are comparable with those of other disadvantaged groups, despite the probability of employers and employment services workers (at least) having less ‘sympathy’ for them than for other groups.

The generally positive ratings for all groups are consistent with the literature on employer attitudes toward employment of people from special needs groups (Levy et al. 1992; Olson et al. 2001). Most of those studies, however, included only employers who had already employed at least one person from the special needs group in question. Studies of attitudes among the general employer population have produced less favourable results (e.g. Millington et al. 1994). Less positive views of employability are also reported in reference to psychiatric disabilities and more severe levels of intellectual disability (Bordieri et al. 1997). Those findings are consistent with results in this study that indicate lower probability of employment for multiple convictions than single convictions.

Employability of ex-prisoners, ex-offenders, and the general workforce

With respect to the second question that compared the employability of ex-prisoners, ex-offenders, and members of the general workforce, in terms of the likelihood of members of each group exhibiting a number of employment-related skills and characteristics, there was one expected general finding for the whole sample. We expected that members of the general workforce would be considered more likely to exhibit employment-related skills and characteristics than both ex-offenders and ex-prisoners, with members of the general workforce rated very highly by all stakeholder groups and the ex-prisoners and ex-offenders rated quite poorly on all three employment-related skills and characteristics. This expectation was partially supported by the results. Members of the general workforce were rated significantly higher, but not very highly, and ex-prisoners and ex-offenders were not rated very poorly, rather, they were rated “fairly likely” to exhibit each of the three employment-related skills and characteristics.

The main results related to the comparison with members of the general workforce in relation to likelihood of exhibiting employment-related skills and characteristics were:

- There was little difference in the rated importance of the three main employment-related skills and characteristics. Each was rated only somewhat below “very important”. However, further analysis showed that each of the differences was significant.
- For all three employment-related skills and characteristics, members of the general workforce were rated highest (slightly above “quite likely” to exhibit each of the skills and characteristics), followed by ex-offenders, followed by ex-prisoners (both groups consistently rated as “fairly likely” to exhibit each of the skills and characteristics).
- Analyses of variance identified several significant differences. For personal characteristics, all differences between the groups were significant. For work skills, the differences between members of the general workforce and ex-offenders and between members of the general workforce and ex-prisoners were significant, but the difference between ex-offenders and ex-prisoners was not

significant. For communication and interpersonal skills, all group differences were significant.

Additional analyses of variance related to respondent variables identified several significant effects. Prisoners and offenders rated both ex-prisoners and ex-offenders higher on all three employment-related skills and characteristics than did all three other groups. Respondents reporting a very positive previous experience rated both ex-prisoners and ex-offenders higher on all three employment-related skills and characteristics than did respondents reporting a neutral experience and those reporting a negative experience. Respondents reporting a positive previous experience rated ex-prisoners higher on all three employment-related skills and characteristics than did respondents reporting a negative experience.

As with the comparisons with other disadvantaged groups of the probability of obtaining and maintaining employment, these results are not overwhelmingly positive, even for members of the general workforce. Nevertheless, ratings of “fairly likely” for ex-prisoners and ex-offenders exhibiting important employment-related skills and characteristics are quite encouraging. Despite differences in ratings being statistically significant, they again are quite small in almost all cases. Ratings for ex-offenders and ex-prisoners are comparable with those of the general workforce. These results (as well as the ratings related to obtaining and maintaining employment) are more positive than what is suggested in the literature. A general unwillingness to employ people with a criminal record has been widely reported (Albright & Denq 1996; Holzer 1996; Fletcher 2001). Others have suggested, however, that jobseeker characteristics are main impediments to employment for ex-prisoners and ex-offenders (Nelson et al. 1999; Webster et al. 2001; Baldry et al. 2002; Visher & Travis 2003).

Attitude differences among respondents

In order to more fully explore the complexity of attitudes toward the employability of ex-prisoners and ex-offenders, it is important to consider the differences in responses by the four participant groups. As expected, the four groups exhibited very different views on the employability of ex-prisoners and ex-offenders. We expected specific patterns of responses associated with each group. We also expected that past experience with employment of ex-prisoners and ex-offenders would be associated with more positive attitudes.

We expected that employers would rate ex-prisoners and ex-offenders quite low on employability, anticipating employers to be second lowest of the four groups in relation to obtaining and also maintaining employment and second lowest of the four groups on likelihood of exhibiting employment-related skills and characteristics. This was expected because a fairly low percentage (33%) had reported previous experience with employment of ex-prisoners or ex-offenders and because of suggestions from the literature. These expectations were partially supported. Employer ratings of all forensic histories were

lowest of the four groups in reference to both obtaining and maintaining employment. However, their ratings of the likelihood that ex-prisoners and ex-offenders exhibit employment-related skills and characteristics were second highest of the groups.

We expected that employment services workers would rate ex-prisoners and ex-offenders quite high on employability, anticipating employment services workers to be highest of the four groups in relation to obtaining and also maintaining employment and highest on likelihood of exhibiting employment-related skills and characteristics. This was expected because of existing literature on the attitudes of employment services workers toward their clients and because a high percentage (82%) had reported previous experience with employment of ex-prisoners and ex-offenders. These expectations were also partially supported. In fact, employment services workers were much less positive in relation to the employment-related skills and characteristics of ex-prisoners and ex-offenders. Their ratings were highest of the four groups in relation to all forensic histories in reference to both obtaining and maintaining employment. However, their ratings of the likelihood that ex-prisoners and ex-offenders exhibit employment-related skills and characteristics were lowest of the groups.

We expected that corrective services workers would rate ex-prisoners and ex-offenders moderately low on employability, but, even so, we anticipated corrective services workers to be second highest of the four groups in relation to obtaining and also maintaining employment and second highest on likelihood of exhibiting employment-related skills and characteristics. This was expected because of their high level of familiarity with and exposure to the population. In fact, corrective services worker ratings were consistently somewhat lower, being third highest of the four groups in relation to both obtaining and maintaining employment and exhibiting employment-related skills and characteristics.

We expected prisoners and offenders would rate ex-prisoners and ex-offenders as very low on employability, anticipating prisoners and offenders to be lowest of the four groups in relation to obtaining and also maintaining employment and lowest on likelihood of exhibiting employment-related skills and characteristics. This was expected because of suggestions in the literature about prisoners and offenders having low confidence in their employability and low self confidence in general (e.g. Fletcher, 2001). However, prisoners and offenders responded much like the employer group. Their ratings of all forensic histories were second lowest of the groups in reference to both obtaining and maintaining employment, and their ratings of the likelihood that ex-prisoners and ex-offenders exhibit the three employment-related skills and characteristics were highest of the groups.

Additionally, we had two expected findings related to past experience with employment of ex-prisoners or ex-offenders. Previous experience

with employment of ex-prisoners or ex-offenders varied across the four stakeholder groups (33% of employers, 82% of employment services workers, 68% of corrective services workers, and 72% of prisoner and offender respondents). We expected respondents who reported past experience would rate ex-prisoners and ex-offenders higher in relation to obtaining and also maintaining employment, and in relation to the likelihood of exhibiting employment-related skills and characteristics than those who do not report past experience. This was expected because of suggestions in the literature about past experiences being associated with positive attitudes toward employment of other disadvantaged groups (e.g., Levy et al. 1992; Levy et al. 1993). This expectation was largely supported by the results, in relation to obtaining and maintaining employment and in relation to the likelihood of exhibiting employment-related skills and characteristics. We also expected that the quality of one's past experience would affect ratings in relation to obtaining and maintaining employment and in relation to the likelihood of exhibiting employment-related skills and characteristics, with more positive past experiences associated with more positive ratings. This was expected on the basis of inherent logic. This expectation was also largely supported by the results, in relation to obtaining and maintaining employment and in relation to the likelihood of exhibiting employment-related skills and characteristics.

Employer and prisoner and offender responses suggest a belief that ex-prisoners and ex-offenders do have at least a modicum of the skills and characteristics important to employability, but lack the opportunities to make employment a reality. Employment services worker responses, however, suggest a belief in opportunities for employment with less belief in the skills and abilities of the clients. Corrective services worker responses suggest a rather subdued, unenthusiastic view despite having a great deal of exposure to the population in question. Previous experience, in its own right, also proved to have a significant effect on ratings of employability, as did reported quality of previous experience. It appears that exposure has a generally positive effect, and moreover, that positive exposure has a predictably positive effect on attitudes. These attitude differences among respondents are significant and are relevant to resolving some of the issues surrounding employability of ex-prisoners and ex-offenders.

Policy and program implications

Action in three areas is suggested in order to promote positive attitude change on the part of all stakeholder groups, including members of the community at large, and to promote greater workforce participation by ex-prisoners and ex-offenders. One of those areas is provision of specialist employment assistance in obtaining and maintaining employment. Such assistance has proven very effective for other disadvantaged groups. Mainstream employment assistance providers have not been effective to date with this population and could benefit from specialist training to support ex-prisoners and ex-offenders.

Another is skills training for prisoners and people serving community corrections orders with a specific focus on development of the employment-related skills and characteristics considered important to employability. Current transition training (prisons only and only some prisons) does include some relevant material. However, the point here is focusing the training on a concrete context and target, employment, as one of the key elements to successful lifestyle change. Thirdly, broad community-wide promotion of reintegration of ex-prisoners and ex-offenders is essential.

There is a rationale for this proposed three-pronged approach. Provision of specialist employment assistance addresses issues surrounding lack of opportunities and difficulties in gaining access to the labour market. Skills training addresses issues surrounding preparation of individuals for lifestyle change and engagement in the community, including the world of work. Promotion of reintegration addresses issues of community support for programs and community acceptance of individuals. All three components should include approaches that specifically involve exposure of prisoners and offenders to the community and the community to prisoners and offenders. Previous experience has been shown to be associated with more positive attitudes.

Provision of specialist employment assistance will involve a number of elements. The first is funding specialist employment services to assist ex-prisoners and ex-offenders into employment. Such an approach has been very successful in relation to employment of people with a disability and people with psychiatric conditions. Pilot employment assistance programs are currently being conducted in Queensland and Victoria (the two states that participated in this study), and both are achieving employment outcomes for their target population. Both commence involvement with clients prior to the client's completion of a sentence or order. Providing employment assistance to any client group with high level, complex support needs is labour intensive and requires specialist skills. Organising job fairs and "expos" around employment for ex-prisoners and offenders is another element. Engaging and exposing employers to prospective employees is one simple step.

In addition to funding specialist employment agencies, specialised training is needed for Job Network providers and Centrelink staff. Current moves to link prisoners with Centrelink prior to release in order to arrange crisis payments, instruct individuals on eligibility requirements, and otherwise prepare them for dealing with Centrelink is laudable. However, many offenders also need such assistance. In addition, Centrelink staff need training in relation to the needs, concerns, and capacities of ex-prisoners and offenders. Likewise, Job Network providers often lack awareness of the needs, concerns, and capacities of this group. The process of obtaining employment is often quite protracted and marked by "micro-gains" rather than a simple and

straightforward process. Flexible landmarks may be a necessary modification to the current system of administering Job Network services.

Skills training for prisoners and offenders should have a specific employment focus. In the present study, we saw that an ex-prisoner with pre-release training was considered significantly more likely to obtain and maintain employment than people with other forensic histories (even single conviction for non-violent crime). Clearly, completion of training signifies a commitment to change in the eyes of stakeholders in this process. It undoubtedly also actually reflects not only a commitment, but a commencement of change. We also saw in the present study, that a number of employment-related skills and characteristics were rated near very important to employability. Ex-offenders and ex-prisoners were considered fairly likely to exhibit those skills and characteristics. There is definitely room for improvement in all three types (personal characteristics, work skills, communication and interpersonal skills).

Current transition programs, TAFE courses offered within prisons, cognitive skills training courses, participation in prison industries, and work skills acquisition that may be associated with community service orders may go some way toward preparing prisoners and offenders for reintegration. However, often comprehensive and very basic training is needed. Many people have not experienced 'the culture of work' for example. Much more basic than that, many need training in finance and budgeting, social skills, daily living skills (cooking, cleaning, etc). Work training should be broadened to go beyond involvement in prison industries and short courses undertaken either in prison or in the community. Partnerships between corrective services and private industry should be developed in order to provide in context training and work preparation. This pertains to prisons and community corrections as well. Again, an underlying principle should be bringing the community to the prisoner and offender groups as much as bringing prisoners and offenders to the community. Developing opportunities for increased exposure is important to broad change in attitudes and, ultimately, practices.

Finally, broad, community-wide promotion of reintegration of ex-prisoners and ex-offenders should include publicising the conditions of disadvantage that are associated with commencing criminal activity, the increased disadvantage associated with a criminal record and maintenance of a criminal lifestyle, and the social and economic costs to the community of not providing support for lifestyle change and of a growing corrections system, (for example, the current cost of imprisoning a person is approximately \$75,000 per annum in Australia). It is necessary to demonstrate to the community at large that ex-prisoners and ex-offenders are capable of reintegration, and that reintegration saves money as well as improves the quality of life within our communities. Publicising 'good news stories' about the life changing effects and cost effectiveness of programs that are working is an

obvious element to this component of promoting change. Creating outreach and community education programs that bring the community into direct and indirect contact with prisoners and offenders (exposure) is another element.

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