SURVEY BRIEF:
HOW EMPLOYERS SUPPORT PRECARIOUSLY HOUSED WORKERS

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The current COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted housing vulnerability and its interdependence with employment. Existing research has found that lack of affordable housing, basic amenities, and transportation impede workers from maintaining steady jobs. To address this issue, the USC Price Center for Social Innovation and LeadersUp partnered to examine how employers support workers facing housing precarity through a survey. Participants were recruited online through email newsletters and social media. Responses were gathered between February 16th and February 26th, 2021. The survey was generated through Qualtrics, and multiple response and closed-ended questions were coded and analyzed in Stata. The survey yielded a total of 1,037 respondents from across the LeadersUp and Price Center networks. In the questionnaire, employers were asked about their company’s practices both before and during the pandemic.

**Figure 1: Company Size**

![Company Size Chart]

- Large (over 1,000 employees): 10%
- Small (1-200 employees): 11%
- Medium (201-1,000 employees): 79%
Figure 2: Most Represented Industries

- Food Manufacturing: 17.6%
- Construction: 25.0%
- Finance: 25.0%
- Education: 14.7%
- Health Services: 17.6%

Figure 3: To what extent do you Agree or Disagree with the following statement?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Agree (%)</th>
<th>Neutral (%)</th>
<th>Disagree (%)</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employment helps reduce housing insecurity</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finding long-term employment is more challenging for an individual who is “precariously housed”</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing insecurity is a challenge for retaining employment</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>6% 9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Our company provides flexibility for employees who might be experiencing housing insecurity</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employing precariously housed individual fits within my company values and social missions</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
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<td>Finding long-term employment is more challenging for an individual who is “precariously housed”</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Although several employers indicated hiring among the precariously housed, across the entire survey sample, just less than half of employers said they were “familiar with the needs of precariously housed employees.” A similar proportion was familiar with trauma-informed principles. This suggests that a significant portion of employers do not feel confident in their understanding of the unique barriers and needs of this population.

Smaller businesses reported being likely to hire precariously housed employees at higher rates (78%) than medium-sized (68%) and large (70%) companies.

However, small businesses were also the least likely to express familiarity with the needs of precariously housed employees as well as principles of trauma-informed care (see graph below).

Employers were asked questions to understand how they perceived housing insecurity as a challenge for their employees:
A majority (60%) of small companies strongly agreed that “employment helps to reduce housing insecurity,” much greater than medium-sized (34%) and large (24%) companies (see Figure 3).

Smaller companies were also more likely (52%) to believe that “housing insecurity is a challenge for retaining employees,” than large (27%) and medium-sized companies (21%).

Broadly, three in four of the companies in our sample agreed or strongly agreed that they “provide flexibility for employees who might be experiencing housing insecurity.” When tabulated across company size, medium-sized employers were more likely to strongly agree with this statement (37% compared to 26% and 22% for large and small companies, respectively).
The findings across the entire survey sample show that employers at various industries and sizes are supporting strategies to assist the precariously housed. Many respondents were both currently employing and likely to hire people who are precariously housed. Additionally, two in three companies in our sample agreed that employing individuals experiencing housing insecurity fits within their company’s mission and values. These results signal openness for employers to become engaged in enhancing employment outcomes for precariously housed individuals.

However, the survey results also suggest that there is room for employers to learn how to recruit, hire, and retain talent from the precariously housed population to meet their immediate workforce needs. To better understand how to meet hiring demands, employers can work with LeadersUp to develop inclusive talent solutions designed to help generate impact across education and upskilling, employment opportunities, compensation, and benefits.