

Research and Evaluation Notes

July 2021



Welcome! To support the public workforce system's research and evaluation efforts, these notes share:

- Select research and evaluation initiatives, reports, and resources relevant to the nation's workforce development system, Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) programs, and target populations; and
- Technical assistance efforts to support positive customer and program outcomes through research, evaluation, and evidence-based program design.

This issue highlights:

- A report assessing the effectiveness in serving employers measures under WIOA;
- A study on adult education implementation under WIOA; and
- Findings from a survey on evidence-building capacity in state workforce agencies during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Past editions of the [Research and Evaluation Notes](#) are available on the [Evaluation and Research Hub](#) Community of Practice.

SELECT READING

Measuring the Effectiveness of Services to Employers: Options for Performance Measures under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) requires the U.S. Departments of Labor and Education to jointly establish a primary indicator of performance for effectiveness in serving employers (ESE). This [report](#) describes the results of a pilot study of three ESE measures: 1) Retention with the Same Employer, 2) Repeat Business Customers, and 3) Employer Penetration Rate. Since 2016, states have reported on at least two of the three pilot measures. The report describes the strengths and weaknesses of each measure as well as any challenges to validity, reliability, practicality, and any unintended consequences.

- **Employer Penetration Rate**, the percentage of employers using services out of all employers in the state, provides information about the extent of employer engagement with the workforce development system and incentivizes increasing the 'number' of employers that receive services. In this respect, the rate emphasizes quantity over quality and intensity of service provided, measures outputs instead of outcomes, and may incentivize breadth over depth of employer engagement. As a standalone measure, this rate appears to have the most weaknesses.
- **Repeat Business Customers**, the percentage of employers receiving services each year that also received services within the previous three years, emphasizes quality of service more than the employer penetration rate, but it may create a disincentive to engage more employers.
- **Retention with The Same Employer**, the percentage of participants who are employed with the same employer in the second and fourth quarters after exit, is likely to be the easiest measure to implement because states and local areas already collect the required data elements.

EVIDENCE IN ACTION

National Study of the Implementation of Adult Education (Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Title II)

The Institute of Education Sciences conducted a [study](#) to provide implementation information on adult education programs funded under WIOA Title II, with a focus on how priorities within WIOA appear to be shaping the services these programs provide. A [study snapshot](#), published in April 2021, shows there is limited evidence so far to guide practitioners towards effective strategies in improving outcomes of adult learners. While there is limited evidence overall, bridge classes and integrated education and training programs show some evidence of effectiveness. The authors reviewed 22 studies with the highest and second highest ratings that met the [What Works Clearinghouse version 4.0](#) standards.

SPOTLIGHT

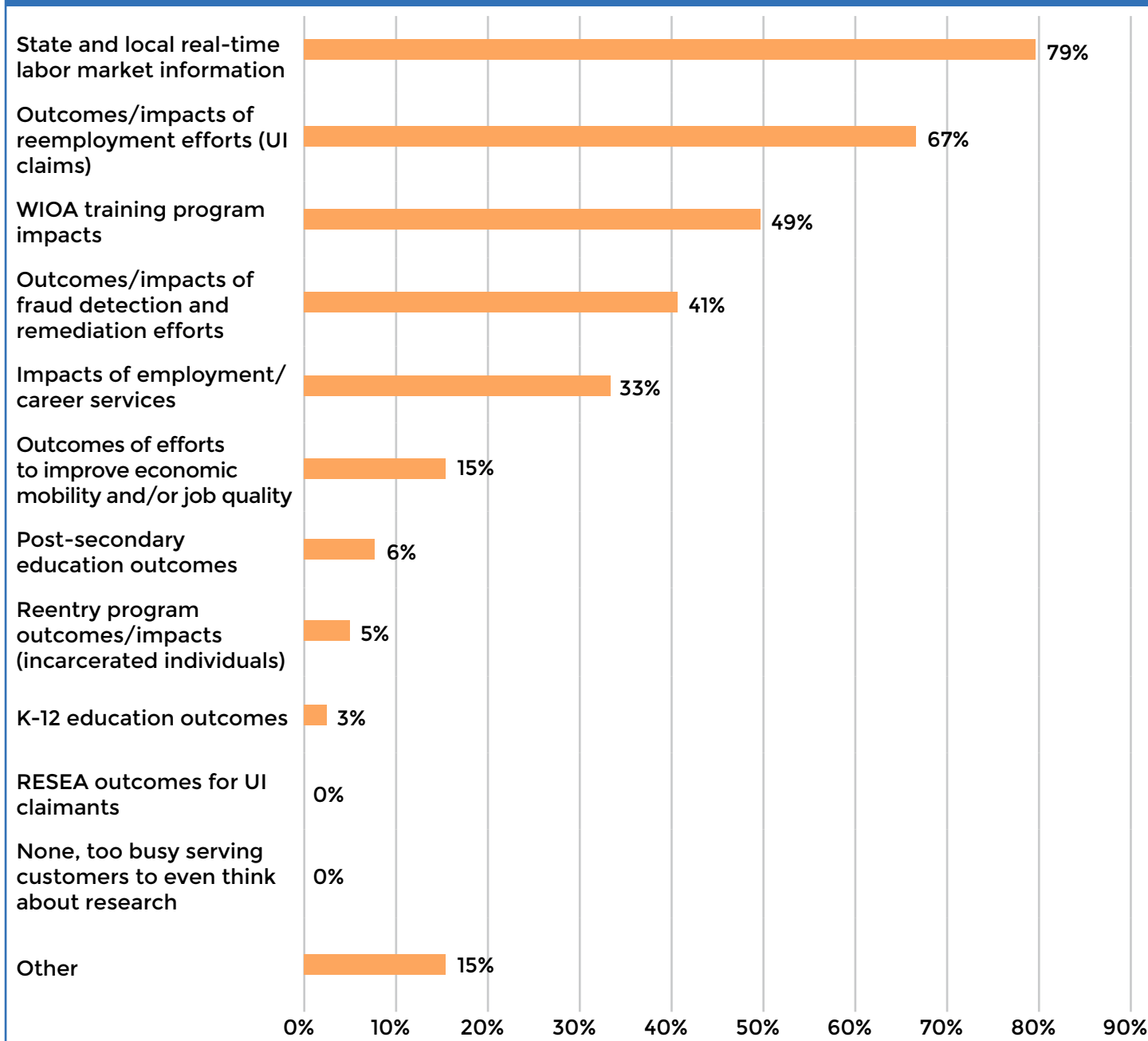
- Recent Event — Using Research and Evaluation to Improve Workforce Development Programs Webinar
- New Resource — The Impact of Automation on the Future of Work: Changing Occupations and Training

RESEARCH IN LIVING COLOR

Evidence Building Capacity in State Workforce Agencies: A COVID-19 Pulse Survey

Given the economic context caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the National Association of State Workforce Agencies (NASWA) surveyed state workforce agencies to learn more about their own information needs, staff capacity to conduct evaluation, and technical assistance and training gaps. The survey was also administered to assess current needs as a follow-up to the national scan NASWA published in 2017. Figure 1 (below) displays the responses of state agencies when asked for the “top three most pressing policy and program information needs that research could help address.”

Figure 1: Most Pressing Policy and Program Information Needs¹



¹Reproduced with permission from the authors, Chocolaad, Y., Sullivan, L., Forland, C., & Wheeler, S. (2021). "Evidence Building Capacity in State Workforce Agencies: A Covid-10 Pulse Survey." National Association of State Workforce Agencies,

<https://www.naswa.org/system/files/2021-03/evidencebuildingcapacityinstateworkforceagencies-acovid-19survey.pdf>

Share research and evaluation questions, suggestions, and resource needs with the Employment and Training Administration's Office of Policy Development and Research at workforcepractices@dol.gov.