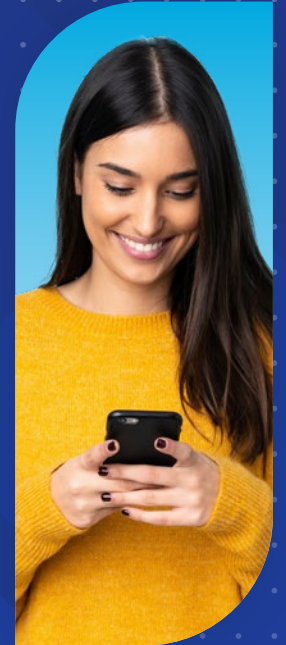




2023

Candidate Experience Report

What candidates are thinking and feeling in 2023



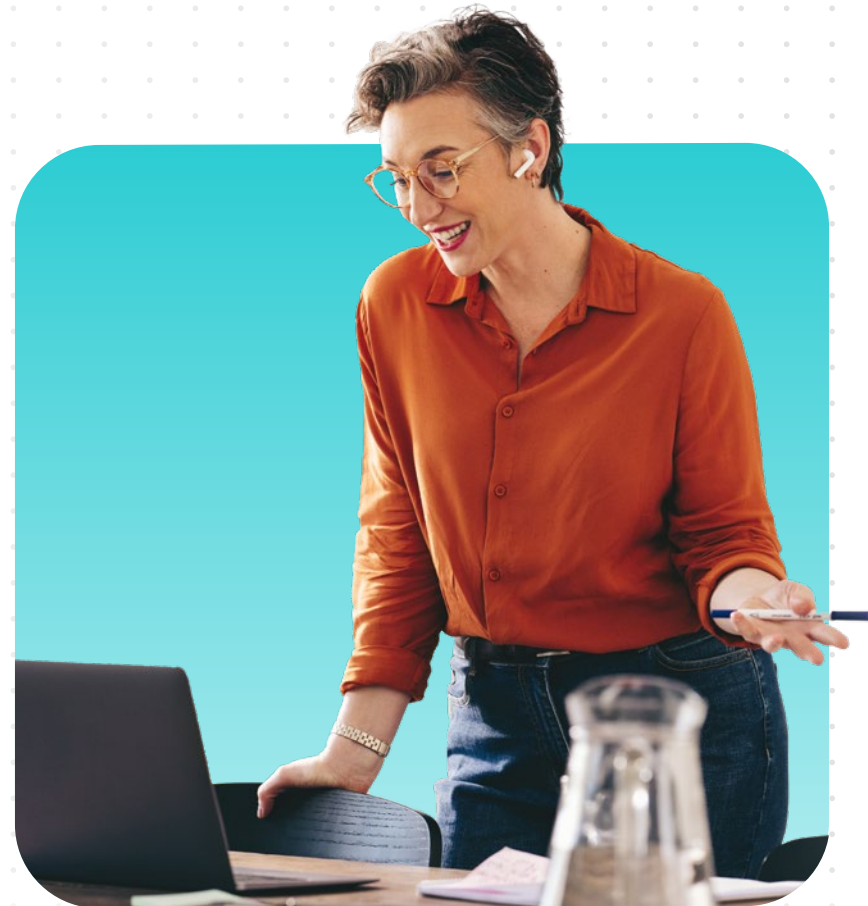
The talent landscape in 2023 has been full of contradictions.

While the Great Resignation of 2022 may be over, the economy is still experiencing the ramifications of high inflation, a still-looming recession, and a seemingly endless wave of highly visible layoffs that have rocked the talent market.

At the same time, employers continue to face challenges when it comes to winning over top talent. Why? Despite all the turbulence in the job market, the number of open jobs still exceeds the number of job seekers by **nearly 2 to 1**. Simply put, candidates still hold the power, and employers will have to keep competing to stand out.

This report dives into the thoughts, feelings, and desires of job candidates today. The results in the report are based on a survey of 2,059 job candidates from around the globe, representing a wide range of industries and backgrounds.

Regardless of the economy, candidate experience matters. It's just as essential as ever to understand what candidates want and need from work. The results in this report provide insight into what HR and talent leaders can start doing today to win over top talent.



Who We Are

Criteria is a talent success company that helps organizations make more objective, evidence-based talent decisions that both reduce bias and drive outcomes. We are fascinated by all things hiring, and we built this report to dig deeper into what drives candidates today. Visit us at criteriacorp.com.

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Key Insights From the Report

1 The economic climate paints a complicated picture.

17% of candidates report being laid off in the last year, many of them more experienced candidates. But with job seekers still outnumbering jobs by two to one, we may be in a multi-speed market where some industries are affected more than others.

2 Work-life balance is still the #1 priority for candidates.

Despite the rising cost of living, candidates still prioritize work-life balance over better compensation or opportunities for career advancement. 37% say they've walked away from roles that couldn't offer flexibility.

3 54% of candidates have walked away from a job due to poor communication.

Lack of communication continues to be the biggest issue candidates face. After all, 39% of candidates report being ghosted in just the last year.

4 67% of candidates are confident their next job will be satisfying.

And despite the doom and gloom in the media, nearly half of candidates strongly agree that they'll be able to find a job that compensates them well.

5 70% of candidates agree that assessments help them demonstrate their potential.

Meanwhile, 80% of candidates say they feel positively about video interviews.

6 Half of candidates prefer fully remote jobs.

Three years post-COVID, remote work remains the most favored way to work, especially for women. But 15% of job seekers prefer fully in-person work, while 36% favor a hybrid model.





01

The Job Market



Finding a job has gotten harder.

2023 has been characterized by an unusual job market. Candidates still hold the balance of power, with the number of job openings still exceeding the number of job seekers. But job seekers are also feeling the pressure, having to deal with high inflation while taking in the constant news of layoffs and economic instability.

According to our survey, 41% of job candidates feel that finding a job has become harder compared to last year. Just 12% say it's easier, and 47% say it's neither harder nor easier.

Unsurprisingly, the longer a candidate has been searching for a job, the more likely they were to say that the experience was harder than last year. For example, candidates who had been searching for more than 4 months were significantly more likely to be feeling the burn.

KEY TAKEAWAY

Finding a job is hard, no matter the economy. Treat candidates with empathy and respect for the time they invest in your recruitment process.



Compared to last year, finding a job has become:

41%

Harder

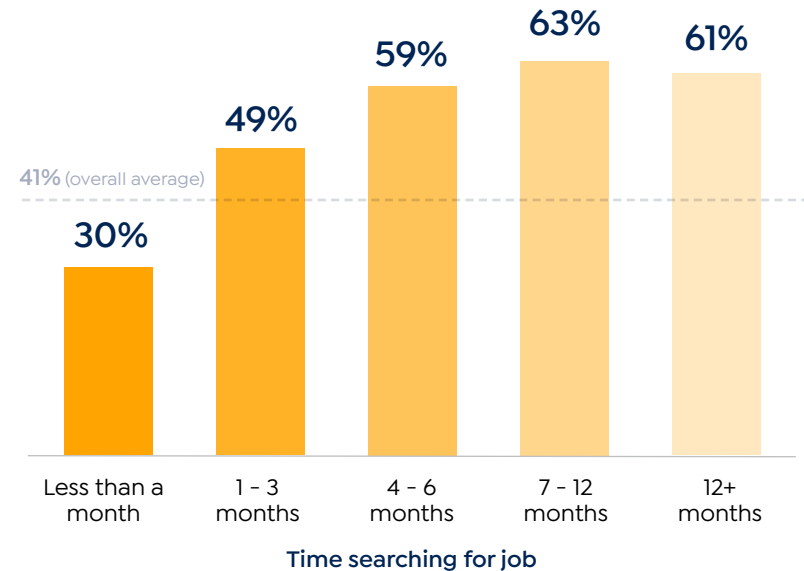
47%

Neither harder nor easier

12%

Easier

Percentage who say finding a job is harder:



17% of job seekers say they've been laid off.

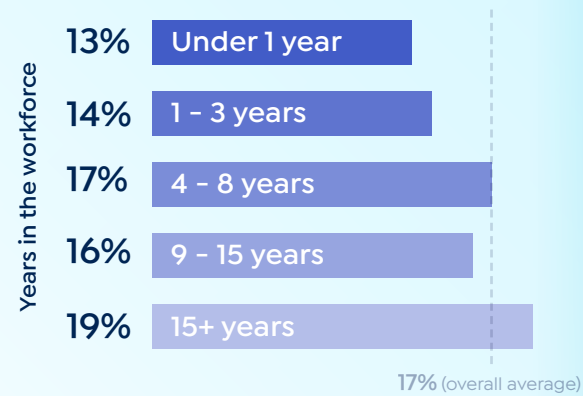
High-profile layoffs have dominated the news cycle over the last year. Within our survey pool of job seekers, 17% say that they've been laid off in the last year. That percentage jumps to 20% for job seekers in the technology industry.

Later-career candidates were also more likely to say they had been recently laid off. For example, 19% of candidates with more than 15 years in the workforce say they experienced a layoff, compared to just 13-14% for early-career candidates.



KEY TAKEAWAY For many hiring professionals, employment gaps can be a red flag. But in today's economic climate, it's worthwhile to ask and understand why a gap may have occurred. Don't overlook great candidates simply because of a resume gap.

Candidates who have been laid off in the last year





02

What Candidates Want



Candidates still crave better work-life balance.

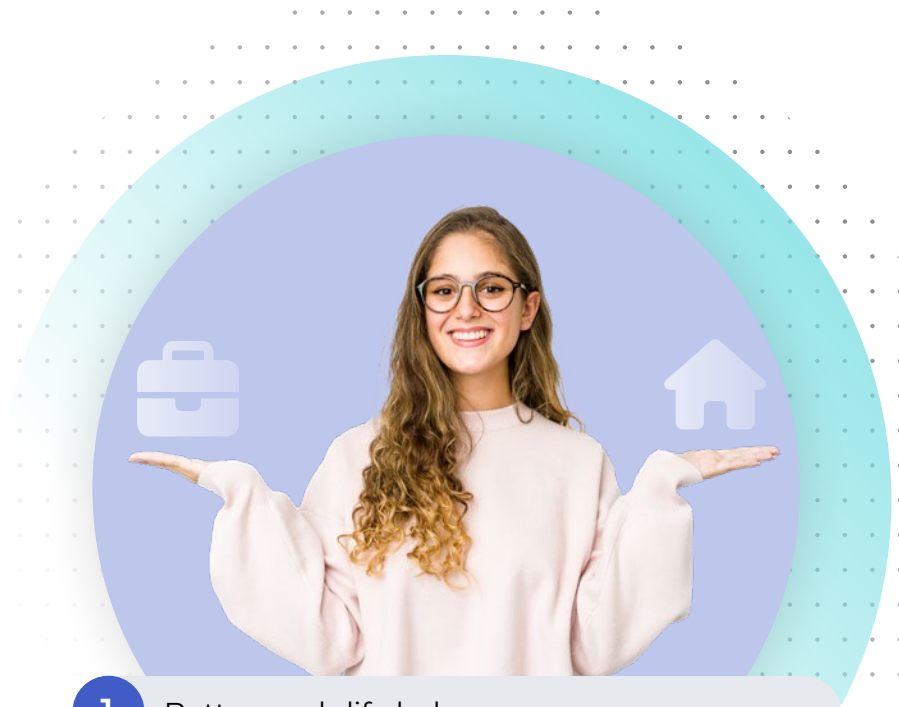
We asked candidates to rank their job priorities from most important to least important. Just like last year, better work-life balance came out on top. In fact, 23% of candidates placed it in the number one slot.

Meanwhile, candidates also continue to crave jobs that offer more opportunities for career advancement, or internal mobility. Unfortunately, according to our 2022 survey of hiring professionals, only 28% of organizations have internal mobility programs in place.

Compared to last year, this list remained almost the same. The only change was that candidates prioritized “more sense of purpose at work” slightly higher than “better work culture” this year. Interestingly, “better compensation” remains in third position, despite the perception organizations often have that candidates care about compensation the most.



KEY TAKEAWAY This list provides a window into the qualities that attract candidates the most. If your organization is able to offer these to your candidates, make sure to emphasize them in your job descriptions and throughout the recruitment process.



- 1 Better work-life balance
- 2 More opportunities for career advancement
- 3 Better compensation
- 4 Better manager and / or team
- 5 More sense of purpose at work
- 6 Better work culture
- 7 Better benefits

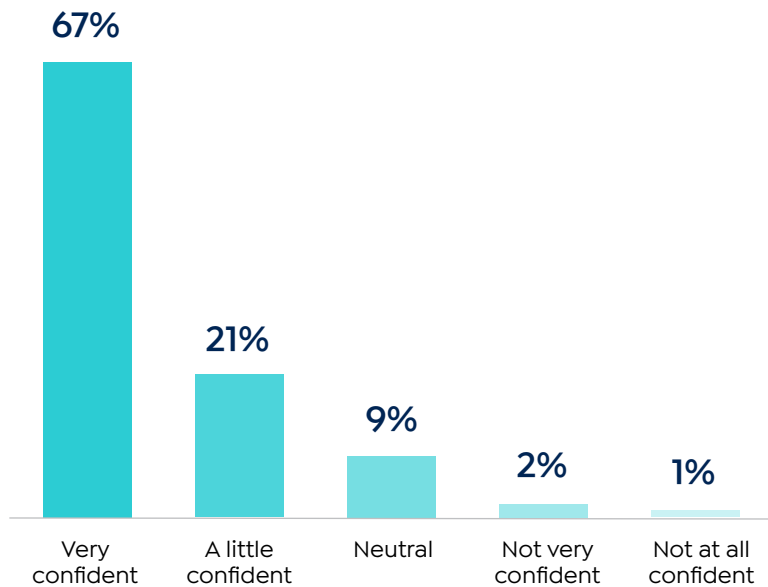


Candidate confidence is high.

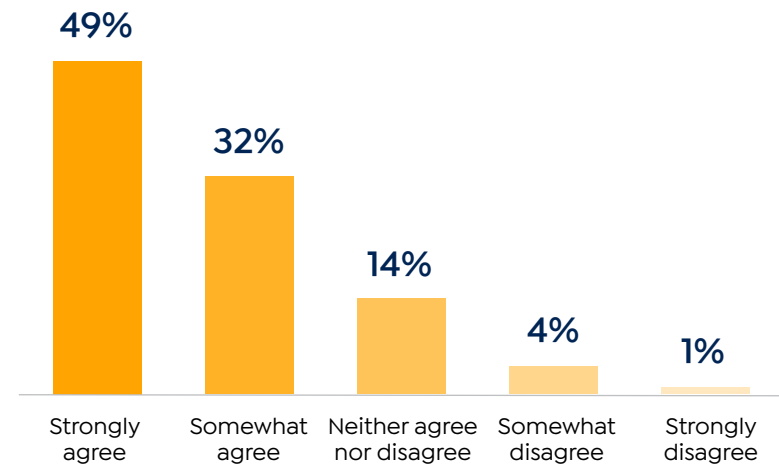
While many candidates do feel that finding a job has gotten harder this year, they're also feeling fairly confident about their job search prospects. Two-thirds of candidates are very confident that their next job will be satisfying. Meanwhile, nearly 50% of candidates strongly agree that they believe they'll be paid enough in their next role.



How confident are you that you will be able to find a new job that is satisfying?



How confident are you that you'll be paid enough in your next role?



How to lose a candidate in 10 days.

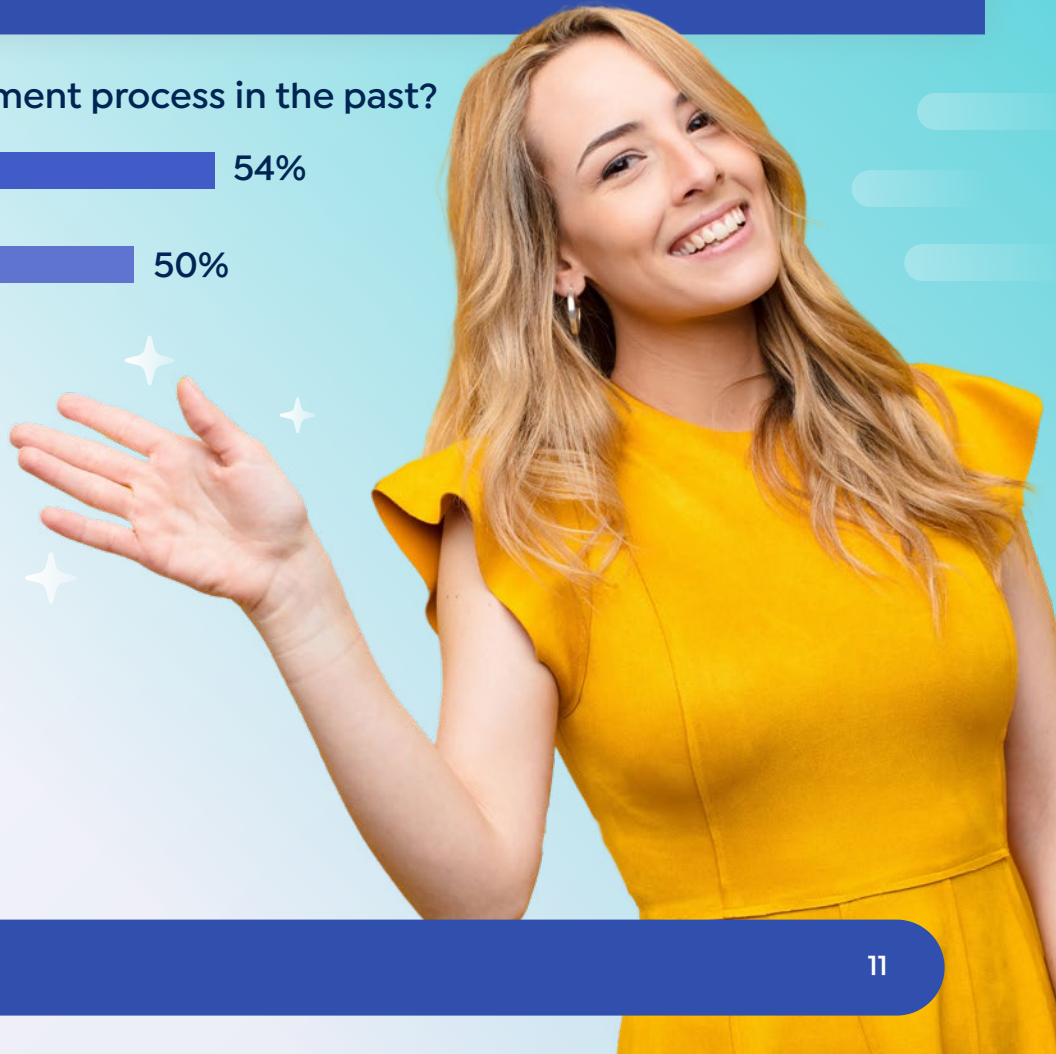
Poor communication continues to be the number one reason why candidates say they've abandoned a recruitment process in the past. In fact, 54% have had this experience. Meanwhile, half of candidates have walked away if the salary didn't meet expectations. More than a third of candidates (37%) also say they've walked away if the role didn't offer remote or flexible work options.

Ironically, poor communication is one of the easiest things on this list to fix, and one that organizations have the most control over. While salaries and remote work options are not always something that HR, recruiters, and hiring managers can control, communications are.

KEY TAKEAWAY

When competition for talent is tight, any improvement can make a difference. The way that employers communicate with candidates has a major impact on whether or not they'll stick around for an offer. Organizations that excel at transparent, timely, and respectful communications are likely to have an enormous advantage at winning over top talent.

What are the reasons you've abandoned a recruitment process in the past?



Candidates are still being ghosted.

When it comes to lack of communication, ghosting is surely the worst offense. 39% of candidates say that they've been ghosted by an employer or recruiter in the last year alone.



KEY TAKEAWAY Don't ghost. While the advice is simple, it's easy for candidates to sometimes slip through the cracks. Take a hard look at your entire recruitment funnel to uncover gaps in communications. To fill those gaps, you can rely on automation to ensure that candidates are consistently getting the messages they deserve.



39%

of candidates have been ghosted in the last year

There are consequences to a poor candidate experience.

The way candidates are treated in the hiring process can impact their opinion of a company's brand. We asked candidates to rank items based on how much they would damage their opinion of the company. Unsurprisingly, candidates ranked lack of communication as the most damaging thing a company could do. 29% of candidates placed this in the number one position.

Candidates also felt poorly about organizations that misrepresented the job requirements, misrepresented the salary, or took too long to make a decision.



KEY TAKEAWAY Noticing a theme? Communications continue to be one of the biggest factors for winning over (or losing) your candidates. In fact, the top three items in this list all represent some form of poor communication.

Whether candidates get the job or not, the best way to improve the candidate experience is to tighten up your communications.

- 
- 1 Lack of communication
 - 2 Misrepresentation of job requirements
 - 3 Misrepresentation of salary
 - 4 Taking too long to make a decision
 - 5 Tedious application process
 - 6 Too many rounds of interviews
 - 7 Unusual or personal interview questions
 - 8 Use of outdated technology

03

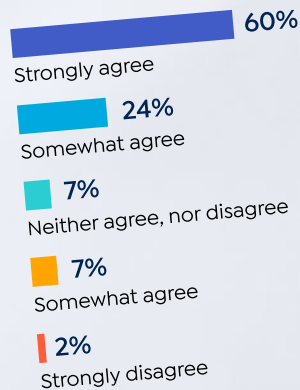
How Candidates Feel about the Hiring Process



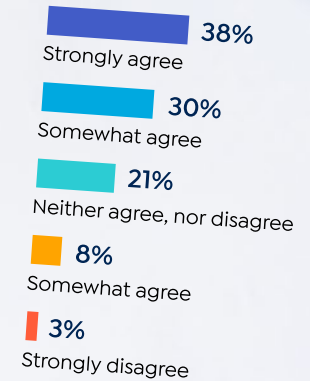
Most candidates feel the hiring process is fair.

Most job candidates feel that they are being treated and evaluated fairly in the hiring process. 60% strongly agree that they are able to demonstrate their full potential to employers. 38% strongly agree that the hiring process is fair.

I feel that I am able to demonstrate my full potential to employers



I feel the hiring process is fair



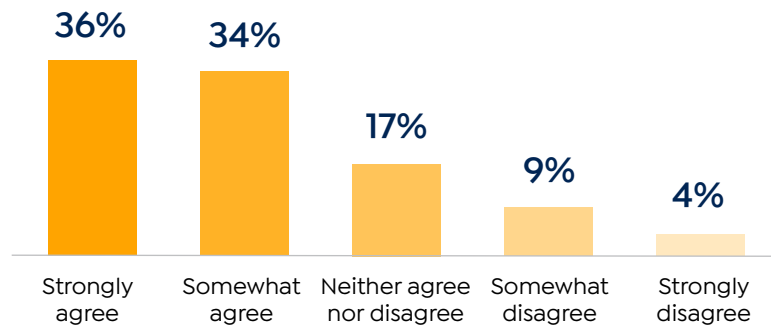
Candidates see the positive side of assessments.

When it comes to pre-employment assessments, candidates are able to see the benefits. In fact, our data indicates that candidates appreciate the opportunity to be evaluated based on their skills and abilities, as opposed to their resume.

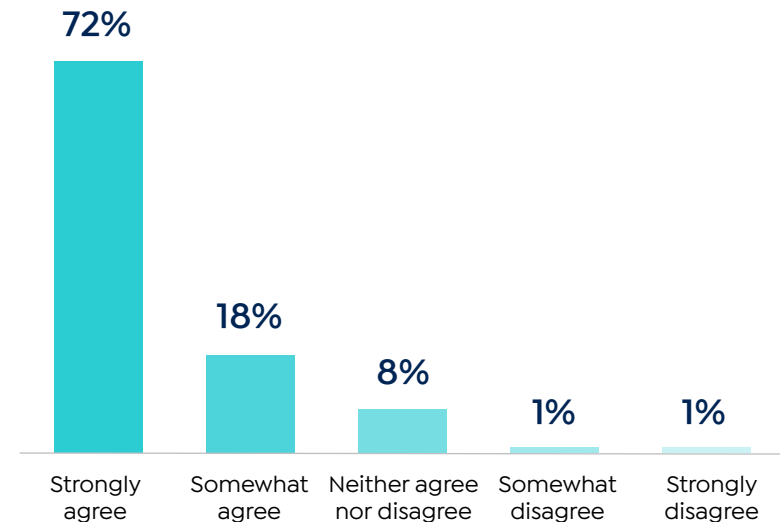
The majority of candidates agree that assessments help them to demonstrate their potential beyond their past experience. 70% strongly or somewhat agree. Meanwhile, the vast majority of candidates also enjoy receiving feedback on their assessments.



Assessments help me demonstrate my potential beyond my past experience



I like to receive feedback on my assessment results after I'm done



Candidates are increasingly comfortable with video interviews.

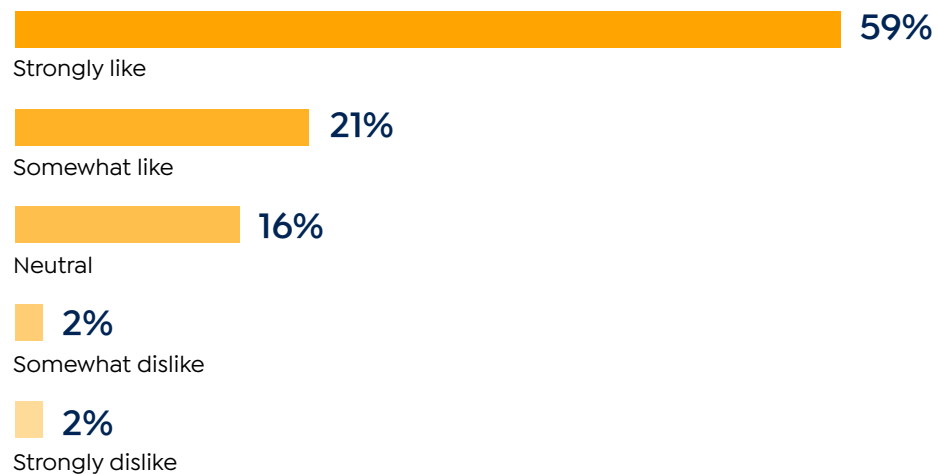
Video interviews exploded in popularity following the COVID-19 pandemic and rapid adoption of remote work. And today's job candidates view video interviews in a very positive light. Out of those who have completed a live interview before, the vast majority feel positively about them, with 80% saying they like them (59% strongly like, 21% somewhat like).



KEY TAKEAWAY Video interviewing has officially gained mass acceptance. For remote or hybrid roles, video interviewing is a candidate-friendly way to get to know your job applicants.



How do you feel about live video interviews?



A man with short grey hair and glasses, wearing a white sweater, is smiling and looking at a laptop screen. He is sitting at a desk in a home office setting. The background shows a bookshelf and a window with blinds. The entire image has a blue overlay.

04

Remote Work



Remote work is still favored by candidates.

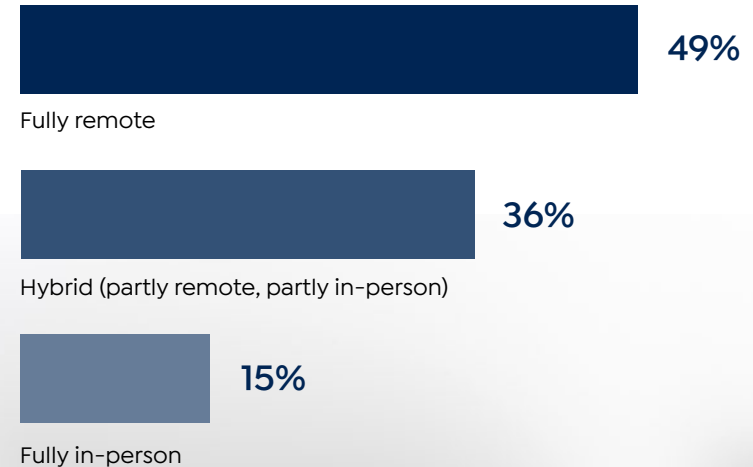
It's been three years since the workforce got its first taste of remote work on a massive scale. For about half of candidates, the love affair with working remotely isn't over, with 49% of candidates saying that their ideal work situation would be fully remote. However, more than a third of candidates (36%) would prefer a hybrid (partly remote, partly in-person) role, while 15% prefer a fully in-person role.



KEY TAKEAWAY Job seekers are not a monolith. While half of job seekers would prefer to work fully remote, the other half prefer some form of in-person engagement. Meanwhile, organizations must weigh the pros of in-person collaboration and culture, with the cons of reduced flexibility and long commutes.

We expect remote work to be an ongoing conversation, one that requires organizations to make evolving decisions based on what is best for their unique culture and circumstances.

In a perfect world, your ideal role would be:



Who desires remote work the most?

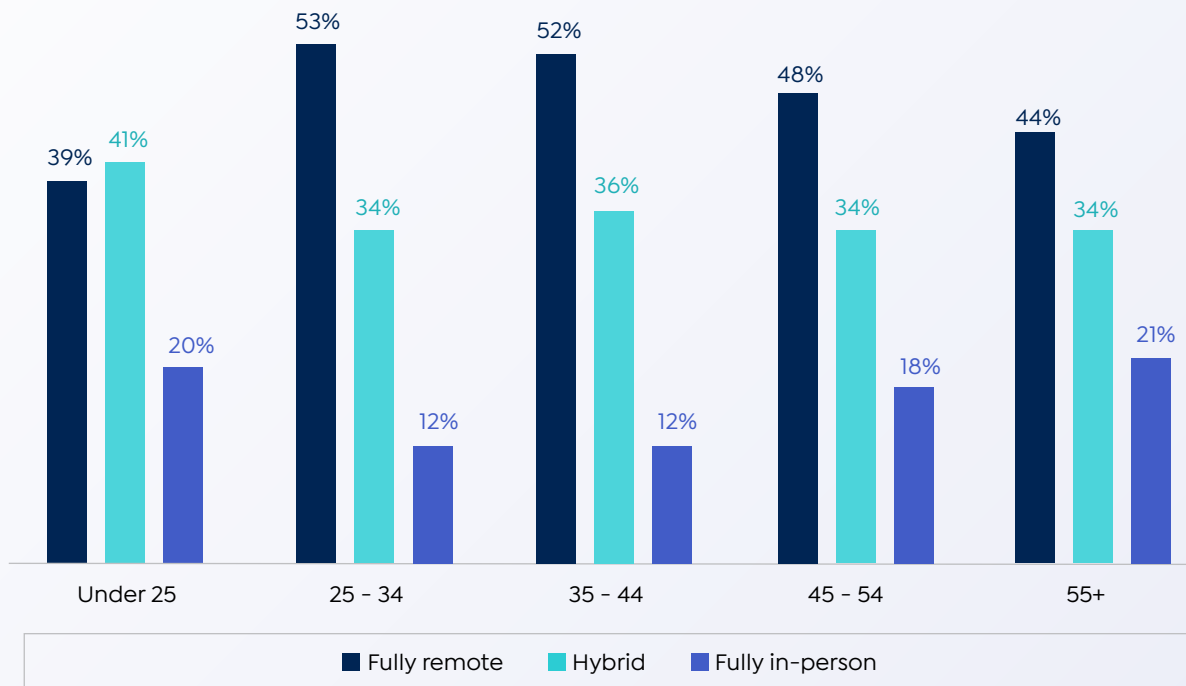
Some groups prefer remote work more than others. For example, mid-career workers between the ages of 25 and 54 were the most likely to prefer remote work. Interestingly, job seekers under 25 slightly prefer hybrid work over others. Those under 25 and those over 55 were the most likely to prefer fully in-person work.

There was also a significant difference in preferences between men and women. 57% of women would prefer a fully remote role, compared to just 39% of men. In fact, out of all three options, the most men prefer a hybrid role, at 41%.

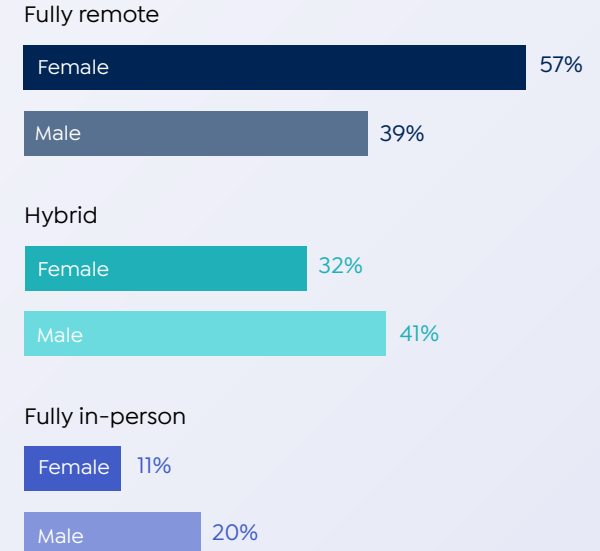
KEY TAKEAWAY

The differences in opinions likely have to do with a wide range of factors, including personal preferences, family obligations, societal expectations, and the desire for flexibility and work-life balance.

Remote work preference by age



Remote work preference by gender





05

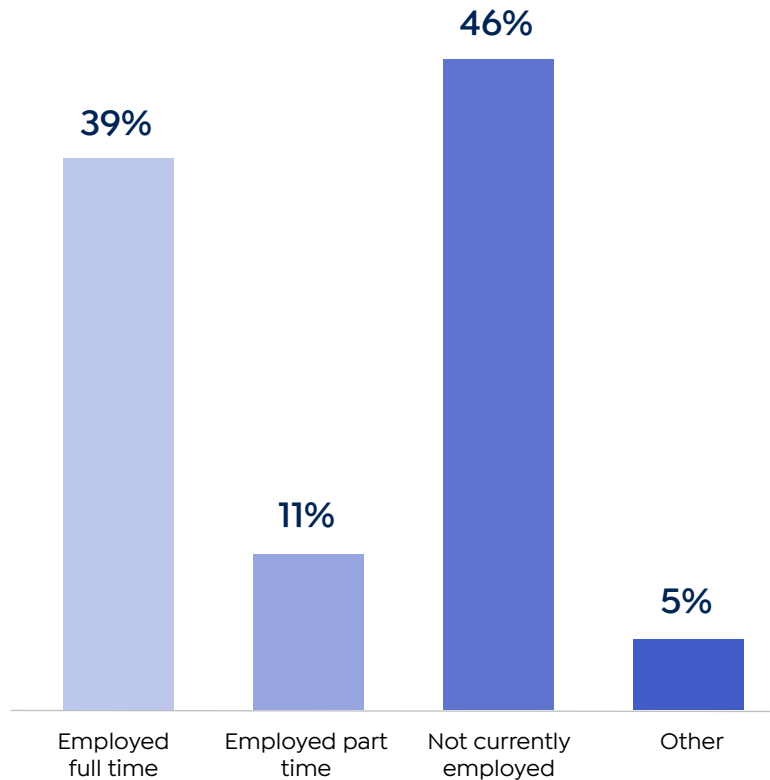
Survey Respondents

This report is based on a survey of 2,059 job candidates.
Read on to learn more about them.

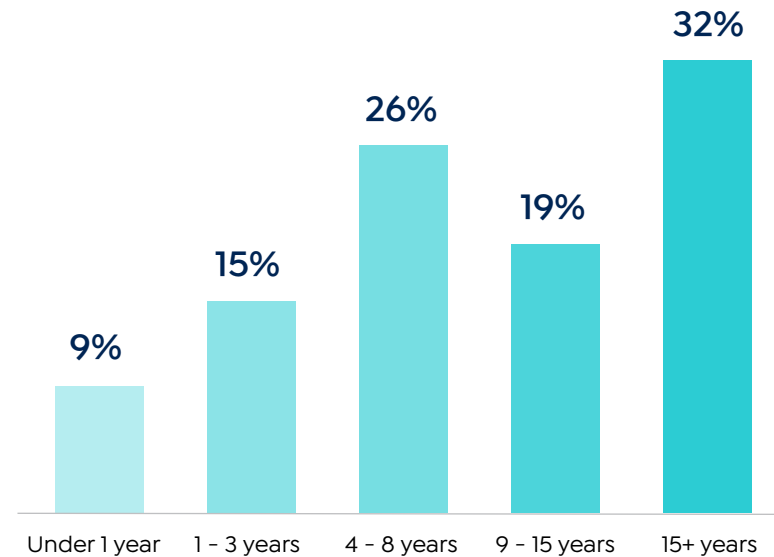


Employment Status

Employment Status



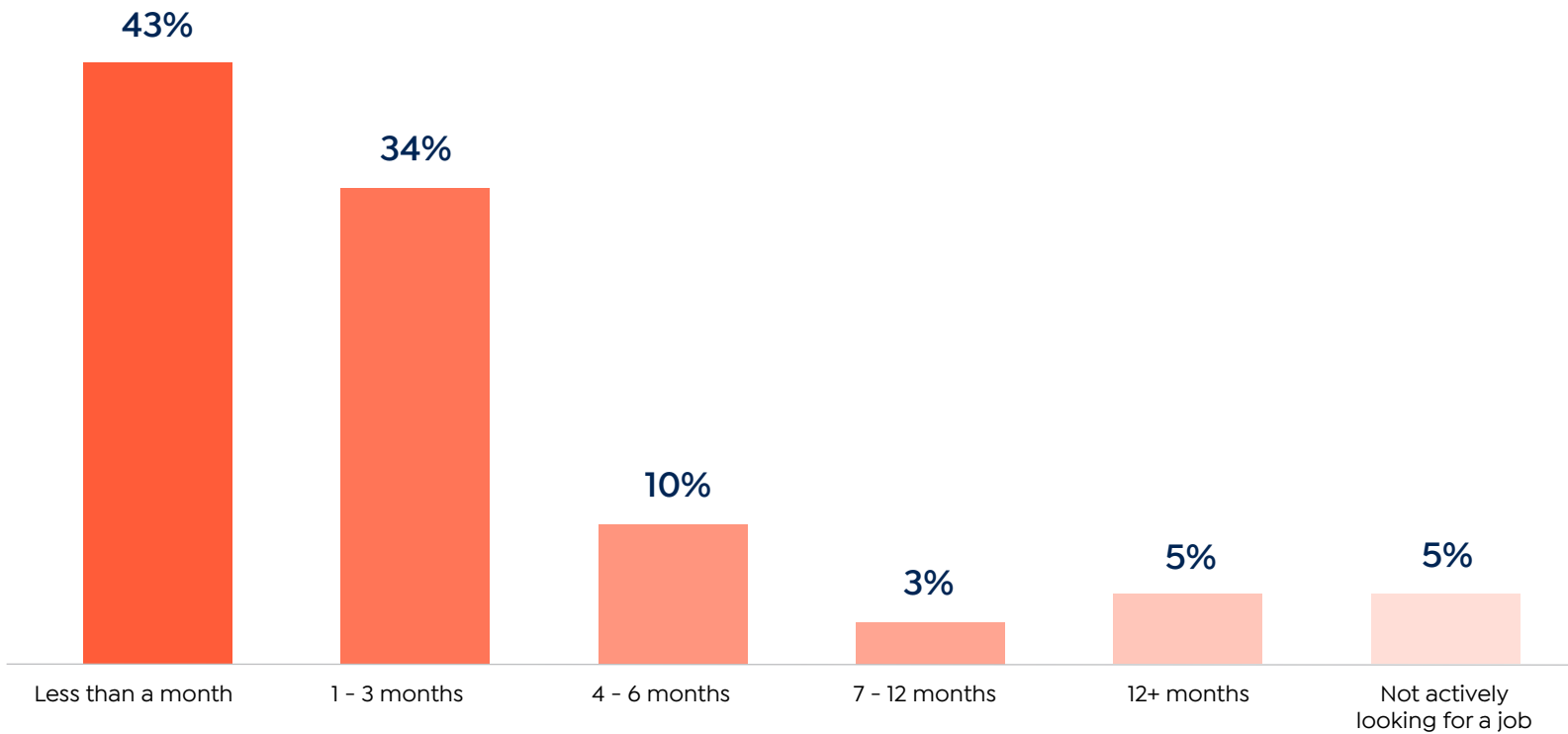
Years in the Workforce

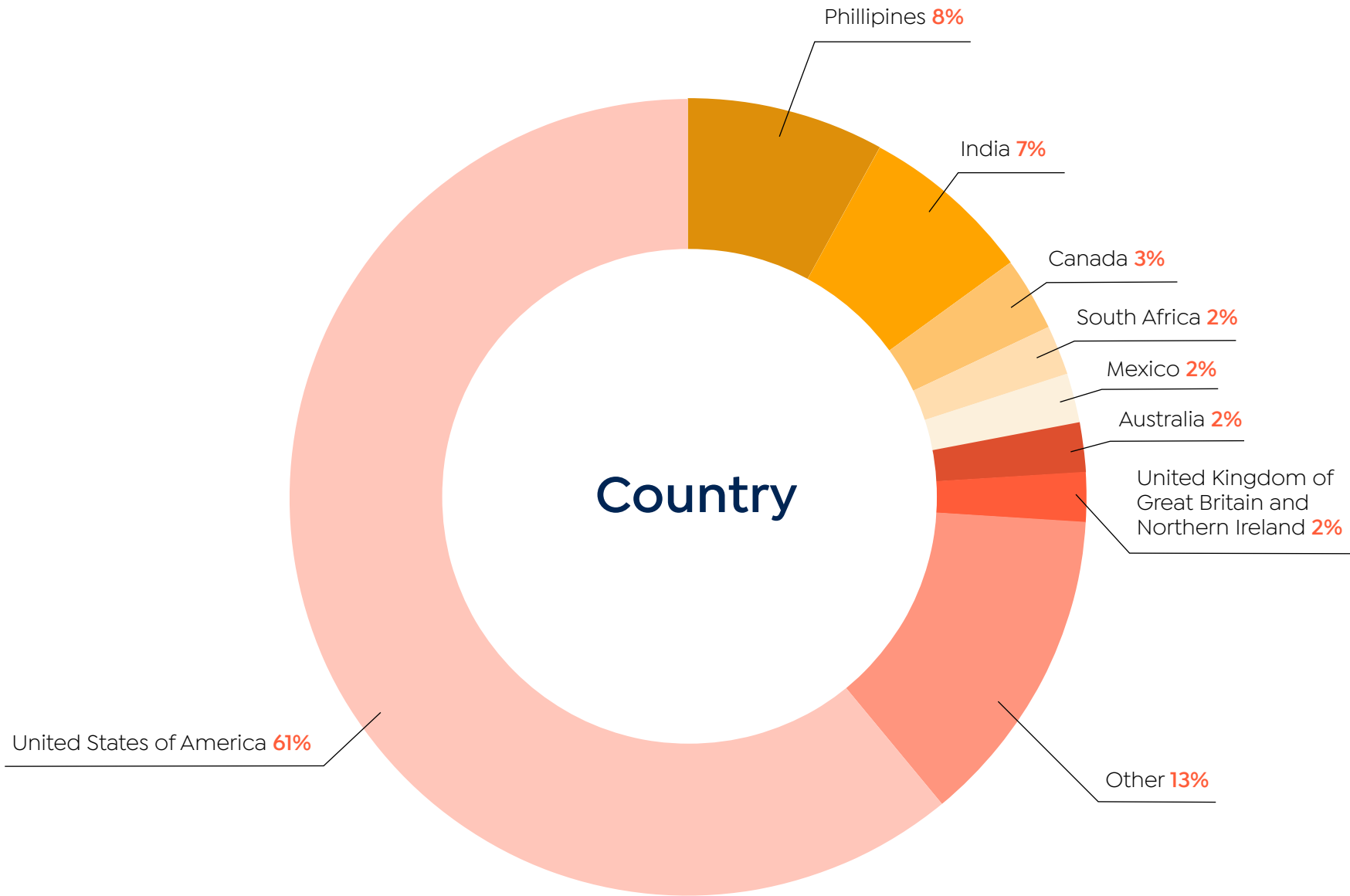


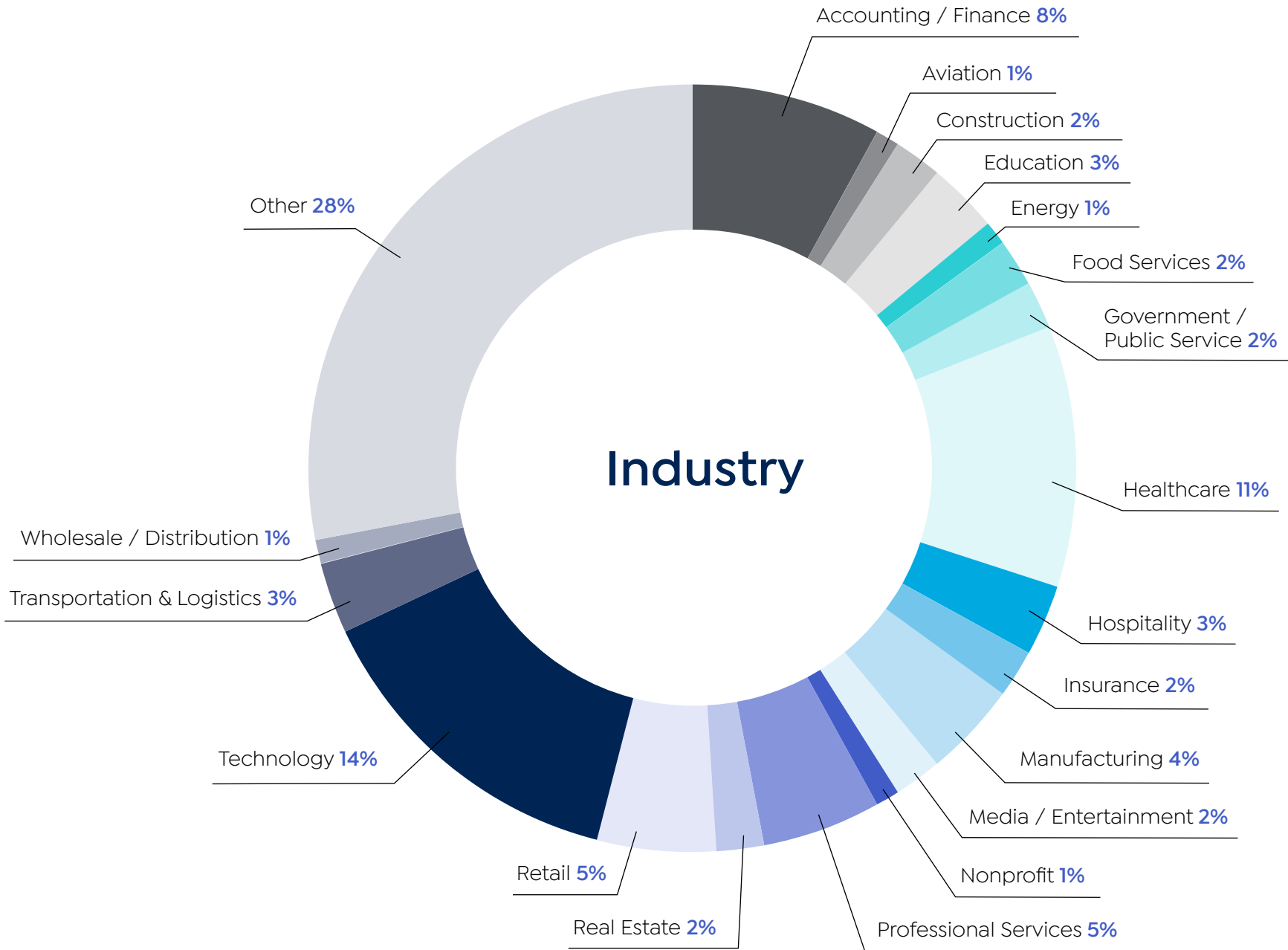
In our sample, the proportion of job seekers with 15 years of experience increased dramatically from 2022 to 2023, from 27% to 32%. Could this be related to the data we shared earlier in the report, which found that experienced workers were more likely to have been laid off in the last year?

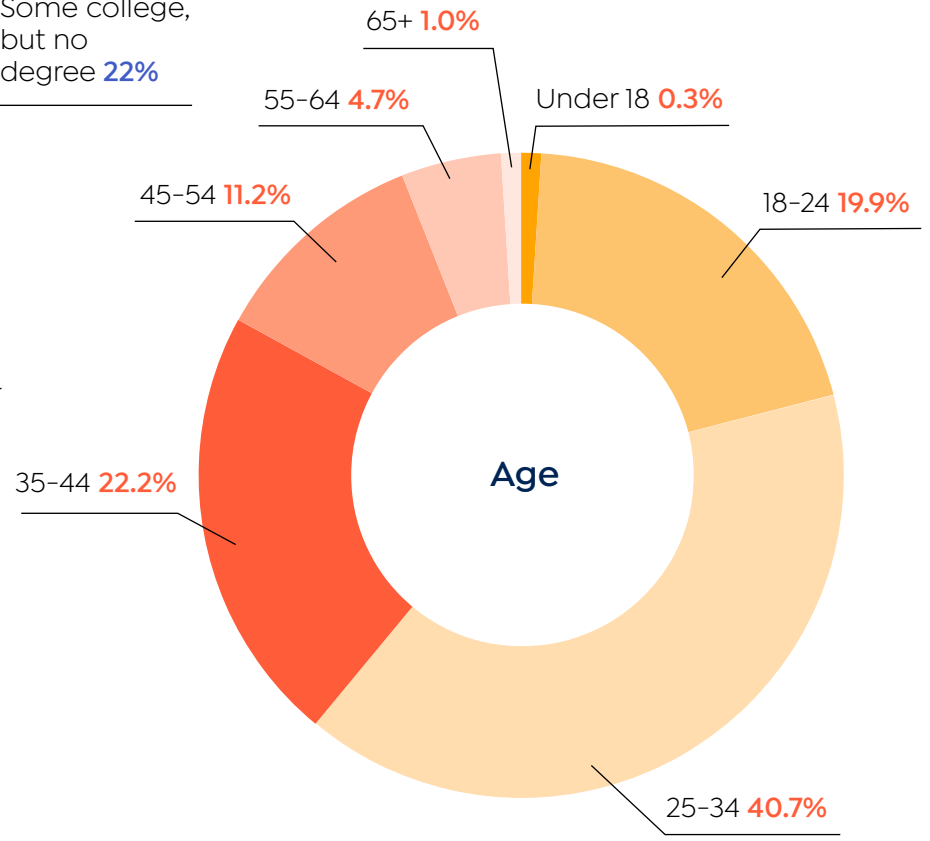
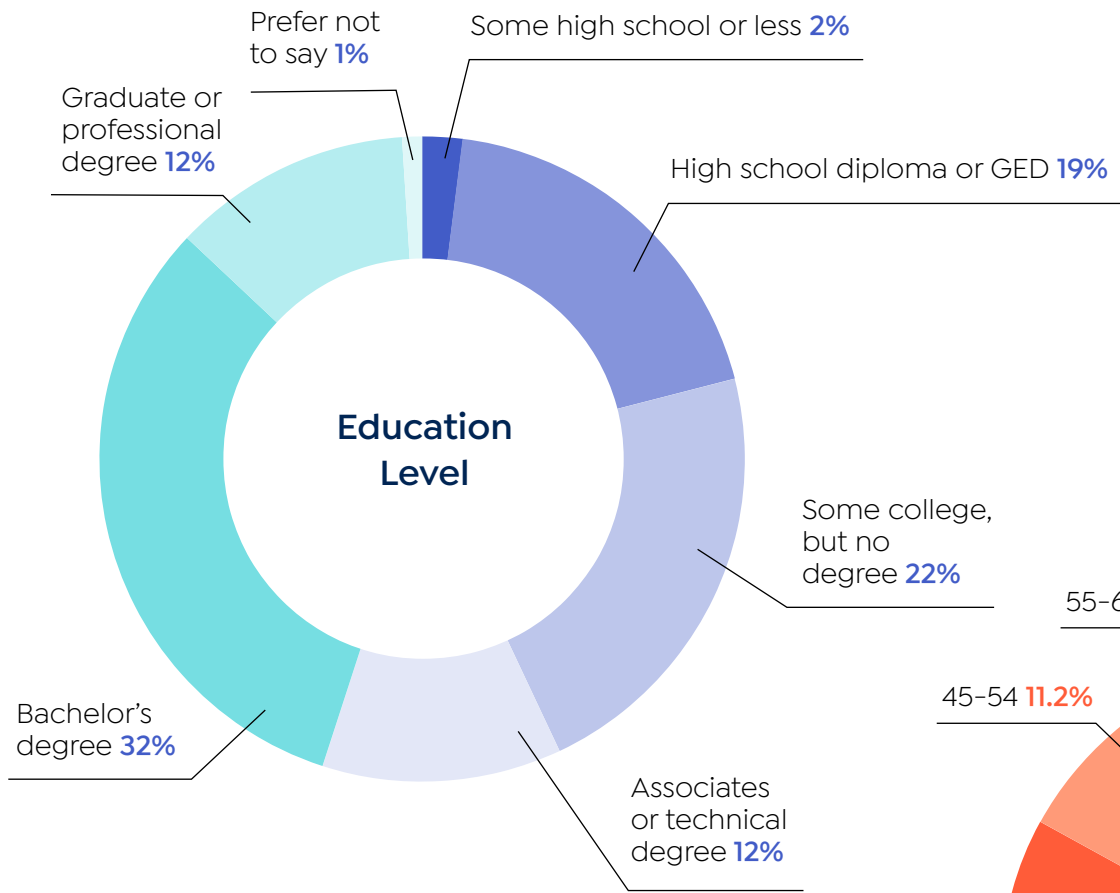
Job Search Status

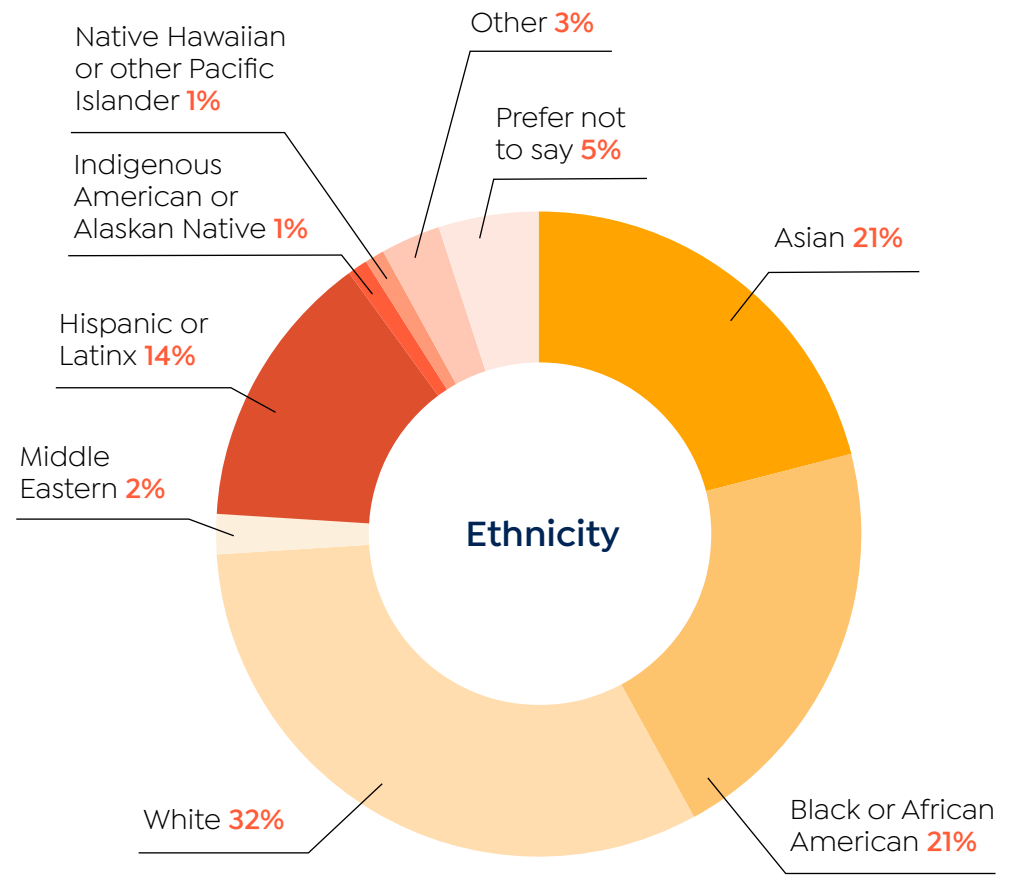
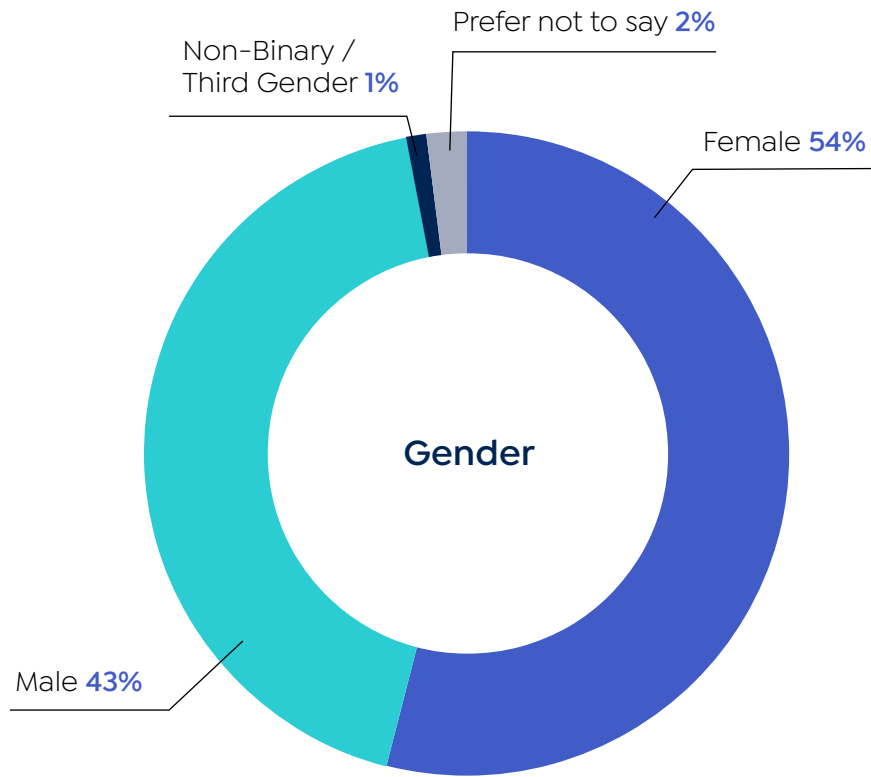
How long have you been looking for a new job?













Drive Talent Success with Criteria

Criteria is a talent success company that helps organizations make more objective, evidence-based talent decisions that both reduce bias and drive outcomes. Our world-leading tools include a comprehensive suite of rigorously validated assessments and decision-making tools that highlight the potential in every job candidate while providing an experience that candidates love.

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