

Candidate Behaviour: The Big Report

What your candidates really do, think and feel when they apply for a role with you.

(And what you can do about it)

Produced by:



Welcome



We're delighted you've downloaded this report.

Our aim is for this to be the most comprehensive candidate report out there. We've dug deep into all elements of the recruitment process, to bring employers like you real insights into what candidates think and do when they're applying for a new role. Each section includes actionable ideas and takeaways for you to put into practice.

From how a potential candidate researches your organisation to attitudes towards testing, it's all in here - including quotes from candidates themselves. We spoke to over 800 jobseekers for this project, and learnt a lot. We hope you do too.

Emma Johnson, Head of Customer Success at Hireserve



Understanding the candidate is at the heart of what Monster do.

As recruiters, it's natural to design our hiring from a corporate perspective; what we want to know and how and when we desire the information. This is convenient, but it's not the best way to engage with the top talent you need to drive your business forward. Gaining an evidence-backed understanding of candidate attitudes allows us to build better experiences - leading to 'better-fit' hires, happier employees and stronger workplace cultures.

We're excited to have worked with Hireserve to produce this new research. While some findings confirmed established trends, there are new insights here we know you will find useful!

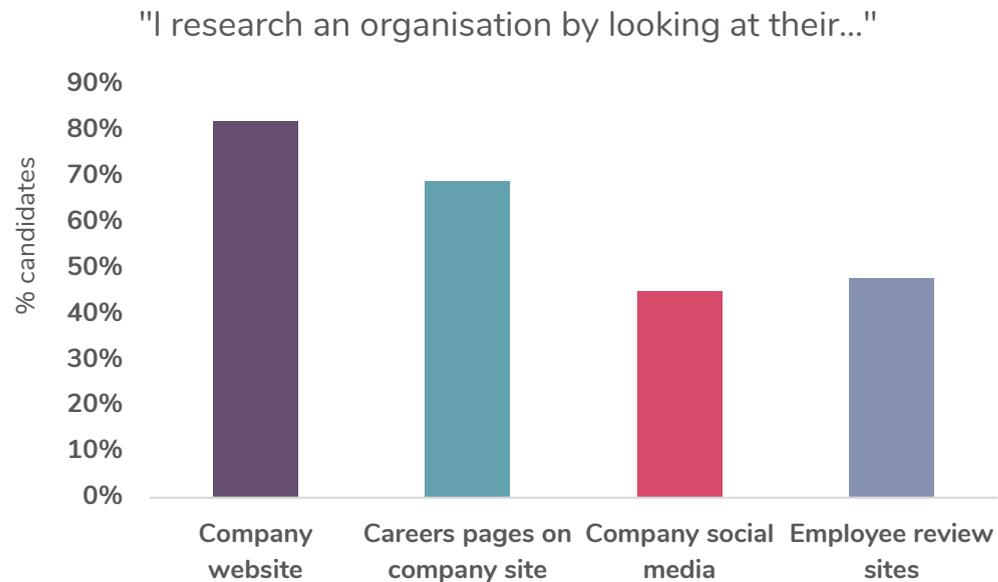
Louise Goodman, EU Marketing Director (Inbound / Outbound) at Monster

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Before candidates apply

We asked candidates to imagine they were about to apply for a new role. Where would they look for information first?



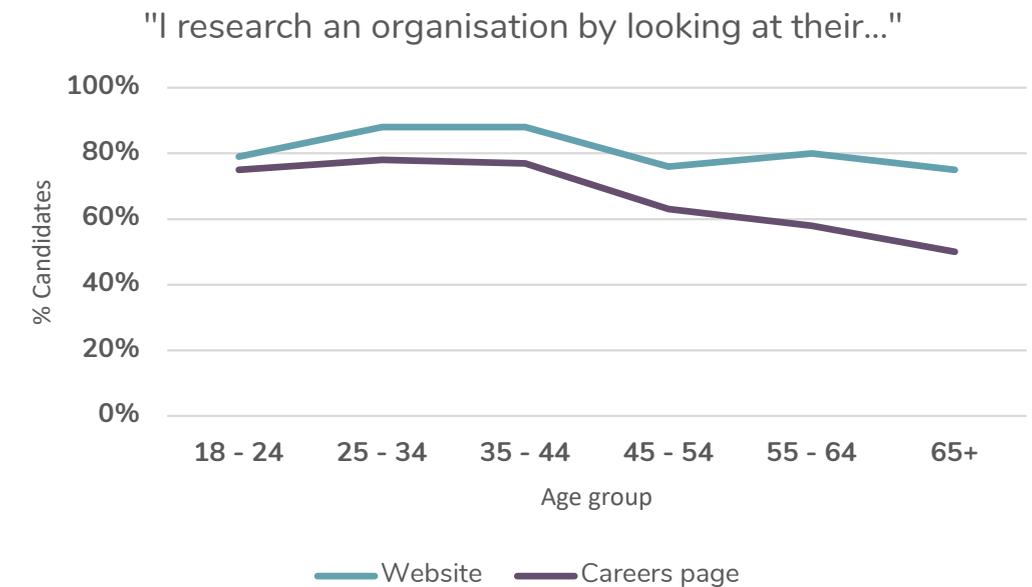
When asked, **82% of respondents said they would look an organisation's website** for information before applying for a role.

It's interesting however, that **only 69% of candidates said they would also go on to look at a company's careers pages** on their website.

Further analysis and recommendations

When we dig deeper, the percentage of candidates who look at the careers pages of a website decreases as we work through the age groups.

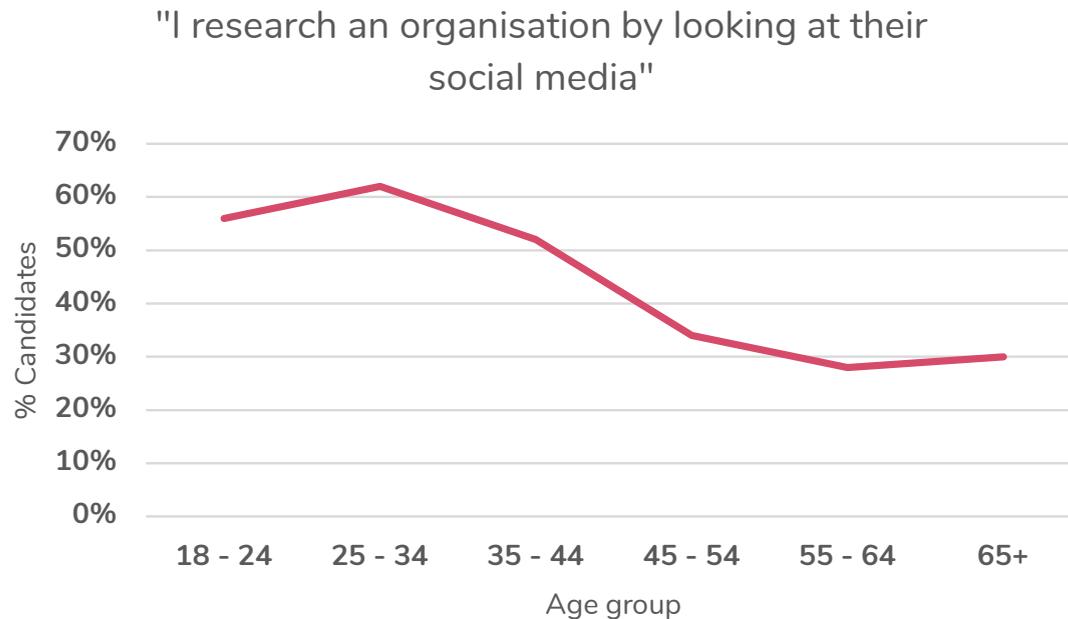
Could this be because older candidates spend less time researching an organisation online, or are less familiar navigating an organisation's site?



Don't hide information about your company culture, benefits or social value on your careers pages. Make sure it's accessible for all potential candidates to find on the main part of your website.

Before candidates apply

Social media was the least popular platform for pre-application research. We dug into this a little further.



Just under **half of all respondents (45%)** said they would look on social media to research an organisation before applying for a role.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, social media use dropped for candidates in the older age brackets.

Further analysis and recommendations

Interestingly, it wasn't the youngest respondents who had the highest use of social, but the 25 - 34 years age group.

It would be easy to speculate that the reason for this is because B2B organisations tend to use Facebook or Twitter to promote their employer brand - and these platforms skew towards an older demographic (as opposed channels like TikTok, which have a high Gen Z user base).

However, social media use is always evolving.

Younger candidates may well be using different platforms (Instagram, Snapchat, etc.) in more closed and controlled ways for their socialising - but might still go on Facebook to research a company.

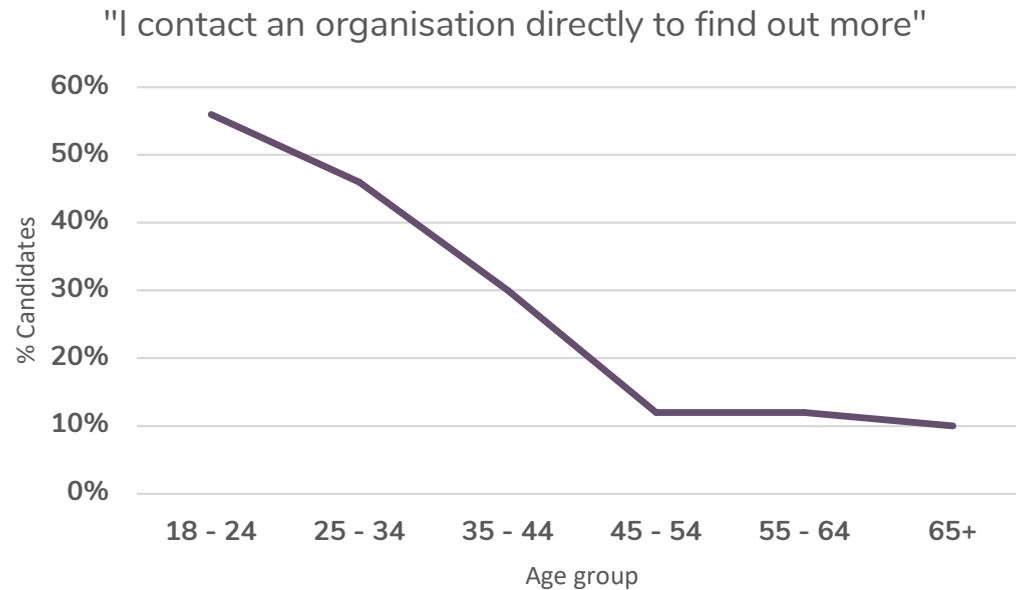
If you're keen to reach and engage young talent, or are recruiting for a grad or apprenticeship scheme, a key action you can take is to ask your Gen Z candidates for feedback.

Ask candidates where they seek information. How much is social media a part of their decision-making process? What elements of an organisation's employer brand matters to them - and how can it best be communicated to them?

“ Social media can give a truer depiction of a company than
the hype on a website. ” - Survey respondent

Before candidates apply

We asked candidates whether they would directly contact a potential employer to find out more about a role.



Across all age groups, **only 29% of respondents would contact an organisation directly** to find out more about a role.

Interestingly though, this differs widely across the age groups. **56% of candidates in the 18-24 age group would contact** an organisation directly, as opposed to **just 10% of those aged 65+**.

Further analysis and recommendations

Of those who would contact a prospective employer directly:



61% would send an email



18% would call the company via telephone



13% would use a B2B social media platform to send a direct message



4% would reach out via social media

Less than 1% respondents would take a more traditional approach, either by writing a letter or by approaching decision makers in person.

Try to provide a range of inclusive options for candidates to contact you. Including a telephone number, for example, might make it easier for candidates with poor digital access to get in touch and find out more.

To reduce email traffic, you could also consider recruitment chat-bots to answer simple queries instantly.

Before candidates apply

We wanted to understand how much of an impact past or current employees of an organisation would have on candidates' research.



36% of candidates would look up current employees (on a B2B social networking site, for example) before applying for a role with an organisation.



Just under half (48%) would look up employee feedback on a review site.



Respondents in the **35-44 years age bracket** were most likely to read employee reviews at 61%.



The age group **least likely to read reviews** were the **18-24 year olds**, at only 39%.

Your current employees could be the secret weapon to attracting new talent.

With **over a third of candidates saying they would research current team members**, employee advocacy is a powerful tool.

Further analysis and recommendations

If you don't have initiatives in place already, consider exploring a pilot scheme. Invite interested team members to trial being an 'employer brand ambassador'.

These employees could share resources and company updates on their social media channels.

Be clear on expectations and how much you require from your ambassadors. Also consider how you could measure the results of this activity.

The key here is authenticity - your employee ambassadors need to have the freedom to share updates in a way which reflects their style and approach.

You can issue guidelines to support them, but you also need to be able to trust your ambassadors and allow them to present their experience of your organisation authentically online.

They should be able to use their own words and experience as examples of your organisation's values and ethos.

Prospective candidates can sniff out corporate speak and staged enthusiasm very quickly!

“ Jargon makes me switch off. ” - Survey respondent

Before candidates apply:

Summary and takeaways



The **vast majority of all candidates who took part in the survey would research an organisation** before they applied for a role.



Of those, a huge **82% would look at an organisation's website** to find out more



Just under **half of candidates (45%) would look at an organisation's social media** channels



Only **29% of candidates would contact an organisation directly before applying for a role**. This figure dramatically decreases as we reach the older age brackets.



Just over **a third (36%) would look up existing employees** at an organisation before applying for a job there.



Almost **half (48%) of candidates would read employee reviews**.

What can we do with this information?

Candidates are clearly motivated to find out more about an organisation and its working culture before applying for a role. This is your Employer Brand, and must be considered separately from your corporate brand.

Ensure you present information in a variety of formats and across different platforms.

Consider the various adjustments and formats that candidates with different requirements and barriers might need.

Even across a range of platforms, strive for consistent messaging. Post different content on TikTok to Facebook, but ensure each still promotes your same company values and underlying message.

Explore employee advocacy schemes and encourage existing team members to share updates online and what excites them about their role.

If you receive negative employee reviews, take action.

If appropriate, consider starting a conversation with the reviewer, even if they no longer work for you. A disgruntled former-employee could turn into a customer or talk to future candidates.

If valid points are raised, consider responding to the review and acknowledge where you can potentially make changes in light of their comments.

This transparency may impress jobseekers who look up your reviews.

The application process

We were keen to understand what candidates would find off-putting during an application. What could be losing you talent?

"I would give up on a job application if the application form/process was too long"

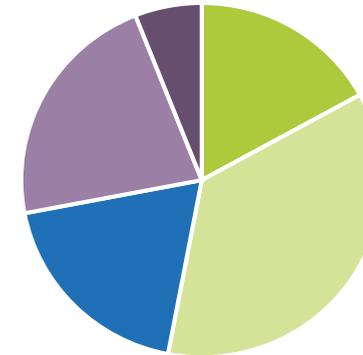


■ Strongly agree ■ Agree ■ Neither agree or disagree ■ Disagree ■ Strongly disagree

Nearly **half of all respondents (44%)** would give up on an application form if it was too long.

Interestingly, women had a little more patience than men. **40% women said that they would be put off** by a lengthy form, **compared to 47% of male** respondents.

"I would give up on a job application if the application form/process was too complicated"



■ Strongly agree ■ Agree ■ Neither agree or disagree ■ Disagree ■ Strongly disagree

It seems that **complexity of the recruitment process has a greater impact** on our respondents than length.

When asked, **53% candidates would give up on an application if the process was too complicated.**

“ Online app forms need to be short and simple.

Most [recruitment processes] seem to be automated with no
feedback, so why waste time on a lengthy form filling process?”
- Survey respondent

The application process

Candidates had the opportunity to tell us what they thought about lengthy and complex application processes.

“I prefer straight upload of my CV for job applications and no parsing, because often the automated parsing puts information from my CV in the wrong areas...

I will decide not to complete the application if it takes me more than 15 minutes to correct parsing errors.

- Survey respondent

“I appreciate the option to save my progress on online applications and return to it at a later date.” - Survey respondent

“I dislike having to input lengthy information on application portals when it is already on my CV...” - Survey respondent

How can you improve speed and simplicity?

Use tools such as auto-fill to help save candidates time if they have previously applied for a job with you.

Enable simple CV uploads.

If a vacancy requires specific essential criteria, ask for it upfront before a candidate can progress. Use pre-screening questions to ensure only candidates who meet minimum requirements can move through the process.

Consider a two-stage process, perhaps where candidates can display interest and share basic skills or experience via a simple form as a first step.

Ensure your ATS or recruitment system accepts a wide range of document formats (e.g. Word, PDF, etc.) and file sizes.

Ask your team to routinely test your recruitment process. Get them to time their applications!

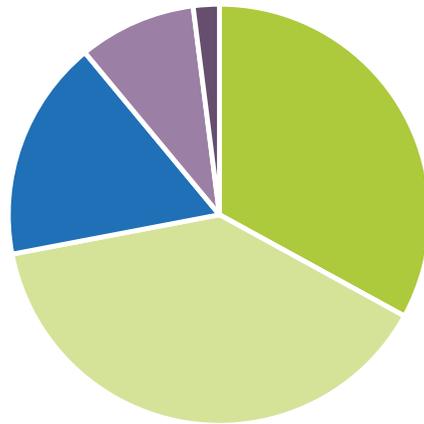
Look at your candidate drop-off rates to identify problem areas.

Manage expectations if your application process is necessarily lengthy.

The application process

What else might put your candidates off? We also asked about something which can often be overlooked: spelling and grammar.

"I think poor spelling or grammar on a job description reflects poorly on an organisation"



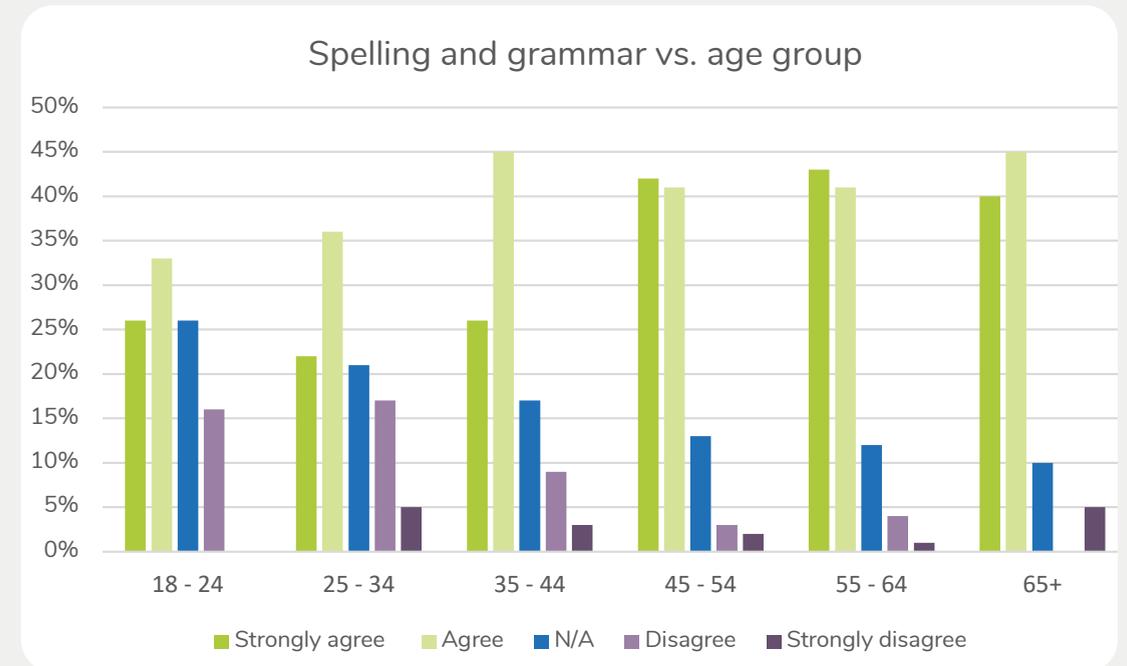
■ Strongly agree ■ Agree ■ Neither agree or disagree ■ Disagree ■ Strongly disagree

The vast majority (72%) of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that spelling mistakes and bad grammar reflected poorly on an organisation.

Only 11% of all respondents said that they disagreed, or strongly disagreed.

Further analysis

On the graph below, we broke these responses down by age group.



Respondents in the 25-34 year old age group were the least put off by poor spelling or grammar.

22% from this group said they disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement, compared to only 5% for candidates in the two highest age groups.

“
I would not consider applying for a job where the job description
[...] contains mistakes.

Since attention to detail is a key part of my role, I would not
want to work for anyone who clearly pays no attention to detail
themselves.” - Survey respondent

The application process

We were keen to find out how candidates' confident levels are currently faring. How much of a job spec do they need to meet to have the confidence to apply?

✓ Over half (**58%**) of candidates would not apply for a role if they didn't feel they could meet all of the job criteria.

Men are more likely to apply for a role even if they don't have the full skill set required.

63% of women would not apply for a role unless they were confident that they met the full role specification, compared to only 55% men.

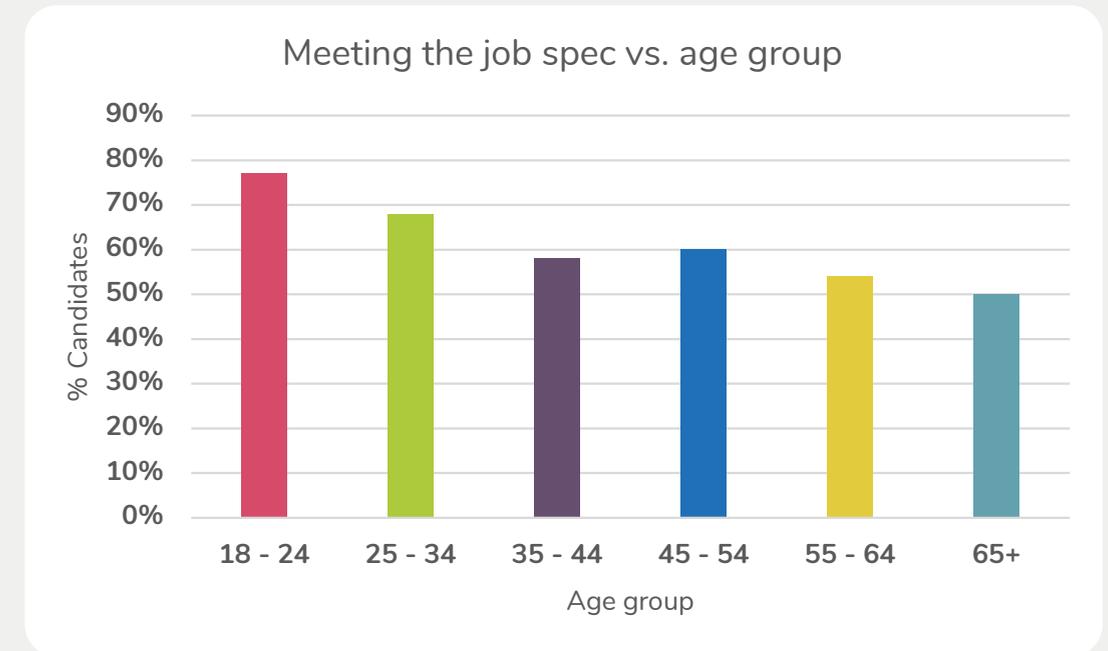
Consider what needs to be included in your 'Essential' criteria? Can you move some of it into the 'Desirable' category?

Where possible (and we know this is not the case for all roles!), eschew this list all together.

Further analysis and recommendations

Younger candidates were hardest hit by lack of confidence, with **70% of respondents in the 18-24 age group saying they wouldn't apply for a role.**

If you are recruiting or trying to attract younger talent, consider how a hefty set of job requirements may appear to them.



Focus instead on the duties candidates would need to perform if they got the role, and the values and approach you're seeking from a new hire.

If you have the resource and capacity within your organisation, make it clear that training and support will be readily available.

“ The requirements for jobs can sometimes be so numerous [and] with so much emphasis on the “exceptional” individuals required that it ends up being dissuasive. ”

- Survey respondent

The application process:

Summary and takeaways



Almost **half of candidates (44%)** would give up on an application form or process if it was too long.



Over **half (53%)** would give up on an application form or process if it was too complicated



A significant **majority of candidates (72%)** think **poor spelling and grammar in a job description reflects poorly** on the organisation.



Over **half of candidates (58%)** would only apply for a role if they felt they could meet **all or most** of the essential criteria.



This most impacted younger candidates, of whom a **large majority (70%)** said they would not apply for a role if they felt they didn't meet the job specification.

What can we do with this information?

Review and test your application process to ensure it is quick and simple.

Try to create different forms and processes for different roles, so you're not requesting the same level of (sometimes unnecessary) information for all jobs.

Flick back to our other tips for a shorter, simpler application [process here](#).

Ensure you get a member of your team to proof read job specs and adverts!

Try to reduce your 'Essential' criteria where possible, and maintain focus on candidate experience, approach and values if the job allows.

If you do have a (short!) list of essential requirements for a role, list them upfront and early. Several respondents flagged how demoralising it could be to scroll through a job spec only to find a requirement left until the end.

Be mindful of your choice of language. Are you using gendered phrases or other terminology which is not inclusive?

Focus on support, training and development for younger candidates or those who may have had a break from the workplace.

Regularly seek feedback from your candidates and team.

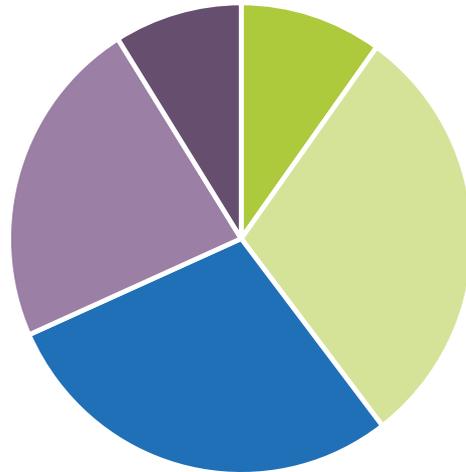
“
[Recruiters] have to understand the potential in a candidate and
give people a chance...”

- Survey respondent

The assessment process

How do candidates feel about psychometric testing?

"I feel comfortable with psychometric testing"



■ Strongly agree ■ Agree ■ Neither agree or disagree ■ Disagree ■ Strongly disagree

Opinions were really mixed on this one.

39% candidates agreed or strongly agreed that they would be comfortable with psychometric testing, whilst a similar volume (32%) disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Further analysis and recommendations

There's no clear sentiment displayed towards psychometric testing based on our data, with an almost equal amount of responses for each choice.

What's more, responses may be based on past personal experiences - so it's challenging to draw any meaningful conclusions.

Those respondents who left comments about psychometric testing were either highly dubious, or felt tests offered a positive alternative to interviews.

The most constructive action you can take is to manage your candidates' expectations. Inform them that psychometric tests will be used as part of your recruitment process, explain why and clearly outline what will be expected of them.

Of course, we'll never reach a stage where all candidates are in agreement about psychometric testing.

But managing expectations and providing clear guidance could help make your applicants feel a little more comfortable.

“ Not everyone does well with interviews maybe due to nerves...
It could be a good idea to [...] focus more on testing to see whether
people have the skills needed for the job. ” - Survey respondent

The assessment process

Since Covid-19, online interviews have become the 'new normal' for many - but how do candidates feel about this?



Most candidates (**62%**) still prefer a more human approach to interviews and favour face-to-face interviews rather than those conducted online.



Only **13%** of jobseekers actively prefer online interviews - although as you can see on the [next page](#), the majority are now comfortable taking part in online interviews, even if it's not their preferred option.



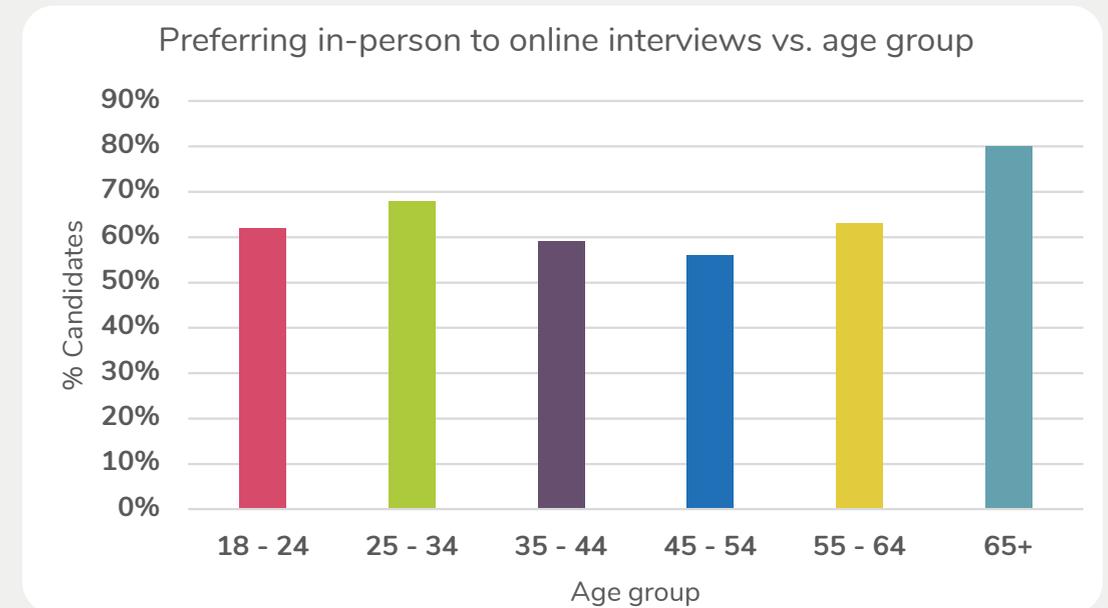
Men are more likely to prefer face-to-face interviews (67%), compared to only 58% of women.

Although in-person interviews are still preferred over online, employers could promote some of the positives of online interviews when asking candidates to attend.

Online interviews are generally quicker and more flexible, which potentially means they are more accessible to candidates with caring responsibilities, barriers to travel and other considerations.

Further analysis and recommendations

The preference for in-person interviews compared to online is fairly consistent across all age groups, until we reach the 65+ age bracket. Here, the preference for face-to-face shoots up to 80% from all respondents within that group.



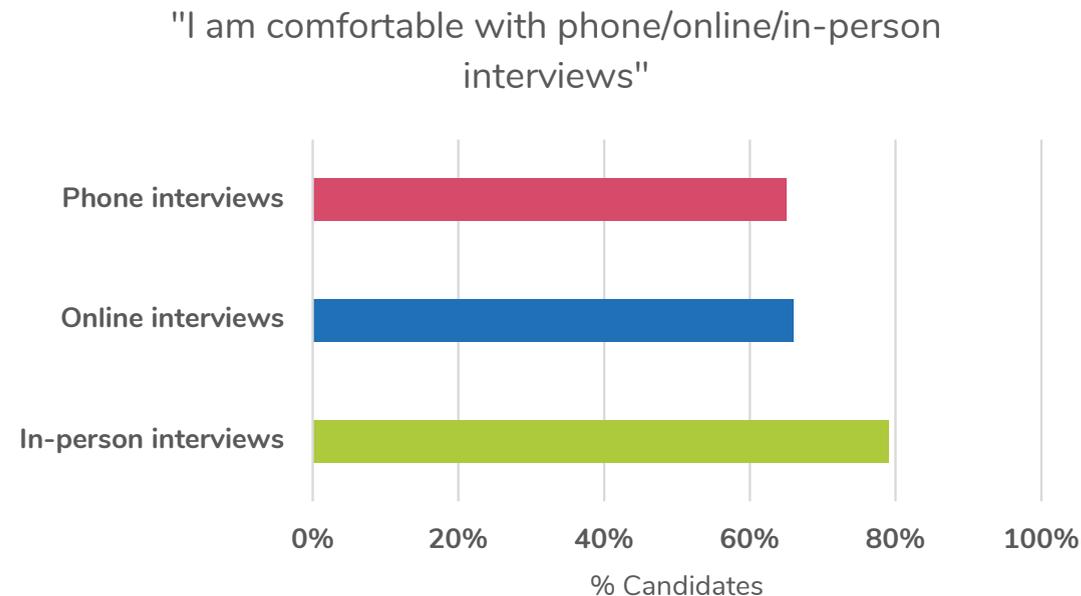
Interestingly, it is not the two youngest age groups who most favour online interviews, but respondents in the 35-44 and 45-54 age brackets.

This could be down to familiarity with professional digital tools. Younger candidates are digital natives, but won't necessarily have experience in business applications, such as Outlook or video interviewing software. Provide guidance on how to participate in online interviews and offer practice sessions, if possible.

“Candidates need better guidance about online interview technique.” - Survey respondent

The assessment process

We were interested to understand how comfortable candidates were in general with different interview formats.



Whilst **face-to-face is still the most popular option**, it seems we've all adapted quickly since the pandemic.

The **majority of candidates agreed or strongly agreed that they are comfortable with phone, online and in-person interviews.**

Further analysis and recommendations

Respondent comments were highly split between positive and negative sentiments towards online interviews compared to face-to-face. Similar to psychometric testing, it's likely that those who had negative feedback have had a poor experience in the past.

If possible (and Covid restrictions allowing), why not offer a range of options for candidates.

Encourage them to take a first interview as a phone call or online interview, which can be more flexible and accessible than a face-to-face session.

You can then follow up with an in-person chat if the role requires it, or it would be beneficial for the candidate.

Providing a few different options (where practical and appropriate, of course!) can position you as a more inclusive and accessible employer.

Again, as with psychometric testing, it is not possible to please everyone.

But providing a multi-stage approach and managing expectations about what each stage will entail can help to offset candidate frustrations.

“ One way video interviews have been a particularly terrible experience.” - Survey respondent

“ Online interviews work really well and save time for everyone involved.” - Survey respondent

The assessment process

We asked candidates whether they expect feedback after an interview.



A large majority of candidates (73%) expect to be given detailed feedback after an interview without having to ask for it.

This probably isn't a surprise to most employers, and stats like this crop up time and time again in surveys. Yet, clearly, many organisations are still not providing interview feedback to candidates (or are unable to do so).

When we asked candidates for their thoughts, many of them expressed deep frustration at the lack of feedback. This is just a brief selection:

“A lack of feedback post interview, either positive or negative is the best indication of an organisation’s culture.” - Survey respondent

“Feedback is absolutely essential” - Survey respondent

“Not replying to an application reflects badly on the company” - Survey respondent

Further analysis and recommendations

Often time is one of the biggest barriers for organisations in providing feedback.

If you have an ATS, make use of automated emails, which can be branded and personalised to candidates. You should be able to trigger these at each stage of a candidate’s journey with you

Most candidates are unlikely to expect detailed feedback after shortlisting and pre-interviewing - but they do expect at least an acknowledgement that they haven't progressed.

Before an interview, provide timescales so candidates have an idea of when to expect feedback.

“Far too many companies fail in providing at least a templated decline email to applications received. Job hunting is hard and stressful, being polite does not cost a company that much time or effort” - Survey respondent

“ Yes we know it’s a pain - but a rejection is better than being left out to dry. ” - Survey respondent

The assessment process:

Summary and takeaways



Responses were mixed on attitudes to psychometric testing, with **39% agreeing that they would be comfortable taking part in a psychometric test, and 32% saying that they would not.**



62% candidates still prefer a face-to-face interview experience, with only **13% saying they actively prefer an online** interview.



However, generally **the majority of candidates agreed that they were comfortable with all forms of interview**, including phone, online and face-to-face.



Almost **3/4 of candidates (73%) expect to be given detailed feedback after an interview** without having to ask for it.

What can we do with this information?

Manage expectations. Where possible, inform candidates of the next steps of your process and explain why you have the different methods in place.

Be clear on timescales for feedback.

Try to think in the mindset of your candidates. It's incredibly hard when you have limited time and resources, but if you can, try to think about the journey your candidates are going on during their job hunt.

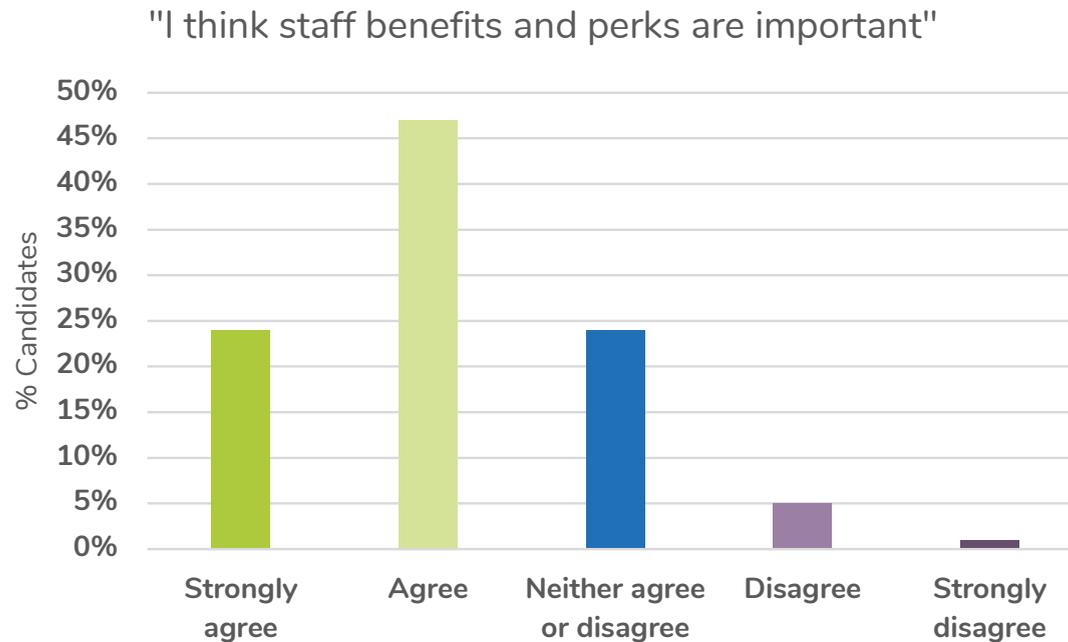
Consider providing a range of interview formats and options.

Offer tips and guides to help candidates have a better experience of online interviews or psychometric tests.

Use technology to automate and save you time. It's your friend!

Company culture & perks

In our final section, we asked candidates to tell us what mattered to them in terms of working culture and staff benefits.



Unsurprisingly, the majority of respondents (70%) agreed or strongly agreed that staff benefits were important.

Only 8% disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement.

Further analysis and recommendations

When we dug deeper into company culture, we also discovered that:



48% candidates think it is important for an organisation to offer enhanced maternity, paternity and shared parental leave



Women are more likely to view this as important (62%), compared to only a third of men (34%).



Working for a organisation that is committed to diversity and inclusion is important for most candidates (73%).



And 74% of candidates said working for an organisation that is committed to helping the environment was important to them.



Half of jobseekers (50%) felt that it was important for a company to support a charity or to make charitable donations.

Ensure your staff benefits and company values are clearly displayed so candidates can view them.

Company culture & perks

Lastly, we asked how candidates were feeling about the potential return to the office once restrictions lift again.



70% respondents would prefer to return to the office in some capacity when it is safe to do so.



Almost half (**45%**) would prefer to be offered a mix of home working and time in the office.



Whilst a quarter (**25%**) are keen to return to the office full-time.



Less than a third of respondents (**29%**) would like to remain working from home full-time.

Note that for some of our respondents, working from home throughout the pandemic has not been possible, such as those working in retail, hospitality, etc.

This may have impacted results, as those who can work from home could be more likely to want to remain doing so.

What can we do with this information?

Whatever approach you take to returning to the workplace, manage candidate expectations.

If remote working is going to be an option, whether full-time or as a hybrid approach, make this clear on an application.

This could expand your pool of candidates, as remote working could reduce location or travel barriers.

With time and budget pressures, it's easy to overlook the emotional journey that jobseekers have gone through.

In the current climate, you may need to dedicate more time to talk to candidates about their views on home vs. office-based working, particularly from a safety perspective.

Remote working can be a popular 'perk', but don't confuse it with flexible working. If candidates are still expected to work fixed hours from home, with no scope for flexibility, then you shouldn't promote it as a benefit.

True agile working can still be experienced in an office environment if there is trust and flexibility among staff and team members.

In closing

Well, Candidate Behaviour: The Big Report has come to an end.

We hope it's been full of valuable insights to help you better understand what matters to your candidates, particularly after a year like no other.

And we hope our recommendations and tips have enabled you to turn some of these insights into actions that you can start putting into place today.

About Hireserve

Established in 1997 and trusted by organisations across the globe, Hireserve ATS is designed for in-house recruitment teams. One of the original e-recruitment providers and still leading the way in continually pushing the boundaries of Applicant Tracking Systems and recruitment technology, Hireserve is trusted by in-house recruitment teams to streamline, simplify and enhance their recruitment processes.

Find out more: hireserve.com

About Monster

Monster is a global leader in connecting people and jobs. Every day, Monster aims to make every workplace happier and more productive by transforming the way employers find the right talent and candidates find the right careers. For over 25 years, we have worked to transform the recruiting industry. Today, we leverage advanced technology using intelligent digital, social and mobile solutions, including our website, app, and a vast array of products and services.

Find out more: www.monster.co.uk

Methodology

Hireserve and Monster received responses from 800 UK jobseekers from Monster's user database, and external research with aytm.com carried out in May 2021.

The data was analysed by an independent PR Consultant. Additional analysis was undertaken by Hireserve.

The responses were split across a range of age groups, from 18 - 65+ and were split across gender equally.

All percentages have been worked out of the total number of respondents, or of the total number within a particular response or age bracket.

This report was created in partnership by Hireserve Ltd and Monster Worldwide.

Thanks to Robyn Ellis at Wonderer PR for data analysis and support with this project.

Find out more: www.wondererpr.com

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June 2021