Global Smarter Hiring Insights

Solving the 7 Disconnects That Make Hiring Harder

indeed

About Indeed

Indeed is the No. 1 job site in the world[1] with over 615M Job Seeker Profiles[2] and 345M sourceable Profiles.[3] Indeed strives to put job seekers first, while providing quality matches for employers, fast, to support their hiring needs. Every day, we connect millions of people to better work to create better lives, combining the latest in AI technology with the power of human judgment and connection.

[1]Comscore, Total Visits, March 2025
[2]Indeed data (worldwide), job seeker accounts that have a unique, verified email address
[3]Indeed data (worldwide), job seeker accounts set to public that have a unique, verified email address.

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Introduction

Hiring Is Getting Harder. But Why?

Employers and job seekers share the same goal: They both want to find the right match, be it the right hire or the right role. But there are stark differences in the way each side views the hiring process today.

Both groups think **hiring is getting harder.**[4] But the reasons they give for *why* it's hard are often in conflict. According to Indeed's research, employers say their biggest hiring challenge is that too few job seekers have the required skills. But job seekers think the main hurdle is that they're competing against too many other applicants.

How can both things be true?

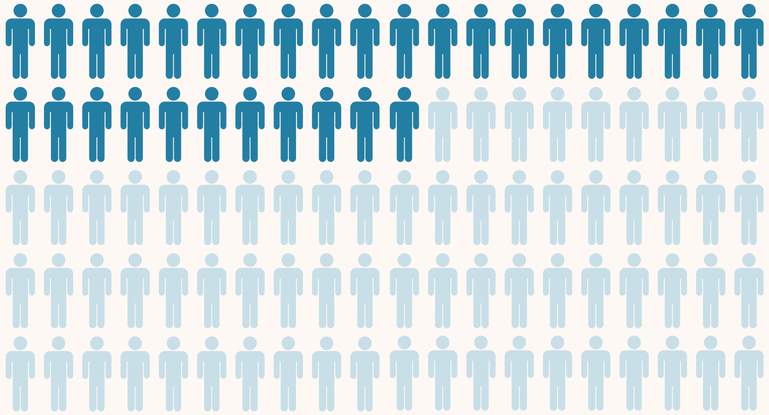
A new Indeed global survey of employers and job seekers reveals that a lot of it comes down to misunderstanding and miscommunication around what employers actually want.

This leads to disconnects between the two groups at every layer of the hiring process — from the job search to the application process to making an offer that appeals to today's candidates.

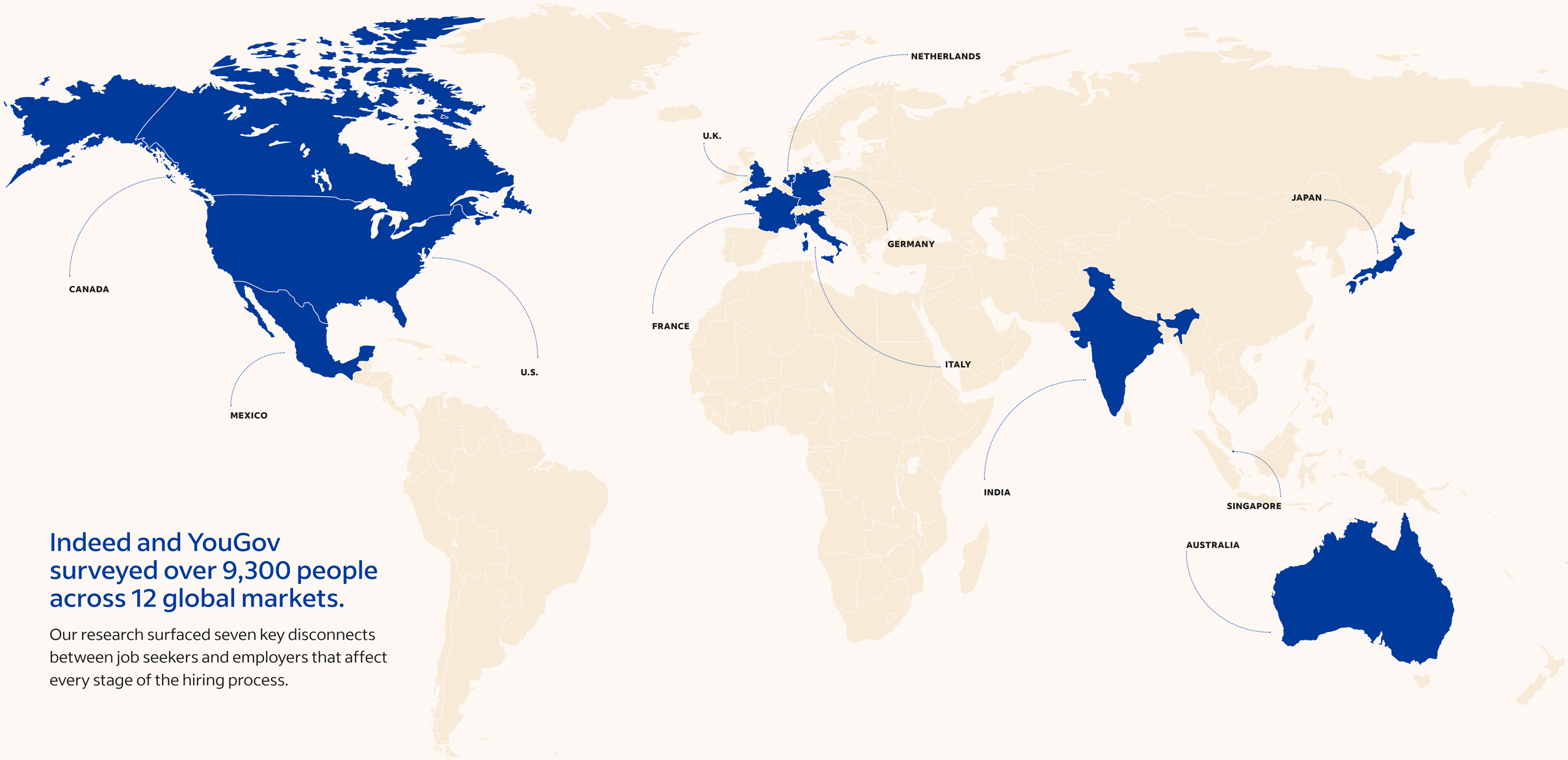
In this report, we'll dig into seven key disconnects revealed by Indeed's Smarter Hiring Survey, a global online poll of more than 9,300 employers and job seekers in 12 countries. The survey, conducted with YouGov,[5] explores the many missed connections between both sides. This report offers advice from experts on how to bridge those gaps to find better matches, faster.

[4] Indeed Smarter Hiring With Data-Driven Insights: Quality and Skills Edition
[5] Methodology p. 13

29% of employers say their biggest challenge is that too few job seekers have the required skills.



31% of job seekers say their biggest challenge is that they are competing with too many other applicants.



Indeed and YouGov surveyed over 9,300 people across 12 global markets.

Our research surfaced seven key disconnects between job seekers and employers that affect every stage of the hiring process.

Indeed Survey with YouGov 2025. Total N=6,837 job seekers and 2,481 employers. See full methodology on page 13.

Disconnect #1

Employers Want Leadership Skills. Job Seekers Don't Know That.

Employers are looking for candidates with leadership skills but can't seem to find them. Forty percent of employers say leadership and workforce skills, such as change management and the ability to lead hybrid and remote teams, are the most critical skills gaps their companies face. And these are the second most valuable skills when employers are evaluating a candidate, after "durable skills" like critical thinking and communication.

So why are employers struggling to find leadership skills? Job seekers don't know that employers are looking for them.

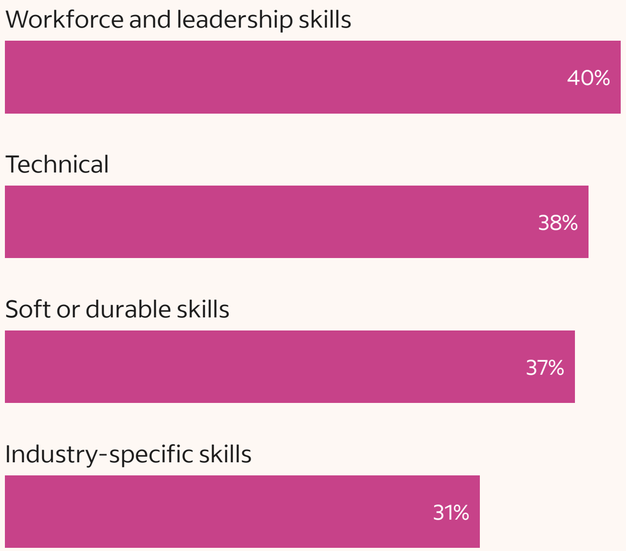
According to the survey, job seekers think leadership skills are less important than employers do. Instead, they believe it's more important to demonstrate industry-specific abilities on their applications.

"Job seekers just assume employers know they have soft, or durable, skills," says Michelle Slater, Indeed's Senior Marketing Director, Americas Region and Global Partnerships. Employers, meanwhile, assume job seekers know they're interested in team players with good critical-thinking abilities. Those assumptions lead to missed opportunities on both sides, Slater says.

Takeaway: If leadership is what employers want, Slater advises that they need to be crystal clear: Spell it out in the job posting and press candidates for real examples in interviews. Ask about tough team moments they've navigated. Ask for results. Most importantly, don't make job seekers guess what you're really looking for.

Sought-After Skills

Employers say workforce and leadership skills top the list of critical skills gaps in their organizations.



Employer question: What are the most critical skills gaps in your organization today? (Select all that apply)

Disconnect #2

Employers Look for Potential, While Job Seekers Lean on Direct Experience.

Many job seekers are selling themselves short, not just on leadership skills, but on their potential to grow.

Skills-first hiring is gaining ground,[6] meaning employers are less focused on where applicants worked or went to school and more focused on the specific skills they've developed. In fact, Indeed's survey finds that more than half of employers (62%) say they feel most confident hiring someone with an equal mix of skills, experience, and potential. But job seekers are still most confident applying to roles that mirror their direct experience.

"There's a perception gap," says Aidan McLaughlin, Director of Thought Leadership at Indeed. "Employers are trying to screen for potential, but job seekers are selecting themselves out of the process."

This gap may grow in the artificial intelligence (AI) era, McLaughlin warns. As technology takes on more tasks that people do today, experience will be far less relevant than the ability to evolve. "You have to find people who are ready to meet the needs of a future that we don't really know and understand yet," McLaughlin says.

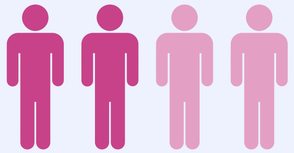
Already, half of employers say they feel most confident hiring people who demonstrate adaptability and transferable skills, like critical thinking and communication. But they're not doing enough to signal that to job seekers.

Takeaway: To close the gap, McLaughlin encourages employers to be far more explicit with job seekers about their interest in their potential, not just their pedigrees. "It's simple," he says. "Explain it. Don't be coy."

Skills That Signal Potential

One way to spot applicants who are eager to grow: Look at how they invest in themselves. Indeed and the online learning platform Udemy recently launched a partnership to give job seekers free access to Udemy courses covering technical, business, and soft skills. Completing a course makes it easy for job seekers to add specific skills to their resumes. For employers, seeing that candidates make time for these and other skill-building courses "is a signal of value," says Hugo Sarrazin, CEO of Udemy. "This is a person who is curious, has a bit of grit, and can take ownership of their future."

Half of employers say they feel most confident hiring people who demonstrate adaptability and transferable skills.



[6]Indeed Annual Report 2024

Indeed Data 2025

Disconnect #3

Employers Use Boilerplate Job Postings, Which Job Seekers Say Are Too Vague

Job postings cause a lot of confusion in the hiring process. One-quarter of job seekers say that vague job descriptions are the biggest hiring hurdle they face.

Job postings are often stuck in the past, riddled with boilerplate jargon and outdated requirements that confuse rather than clarify. “It’s a sea of sameness,” McLaughlin says.

To find the right candidates, it’s important for employers to clearly articulate the skills they’re looking for — and to rethink the way they write job descriptions altogether.

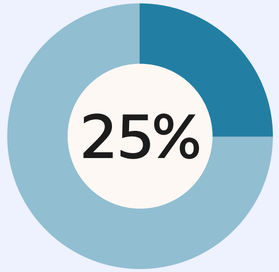
For starters, McLaughlin encourages employers to stop making job descriptions an afterthought. They’re the first thing job seekers see, and they make all the difference in whether a candidate even decides to apply. If employers want candidates with the right skills, writing a clear and compelling job post is a crucial part of the process.

Ditch the “corporate speak,” McLaughlin recommends. “There’s been this unfortunate move to use vague terms like ‘rock star,’” he says. These ambiguities often make candidates just assume they’re underqualified. “That screens out people who are potentially great quality,” McLaughlin says.

Takeaway: McLaughlin advises employers to start treating job descriptions as a narrative exercise to help job seekers see themselves in a given role. If employers are really open to applicants from alternative career paths, they should consider saying so in the job post. And they can link to resources like social media and their website’s careers page to share employee testimonials, demonstrating candidates who have thrived at the company with transferable skills. “Employers should try to tell a better story for job seekers,” McLaughlin says. “It’s about educating both sides of the marketplace to understand what demonstrates potential.”

Tech Tip

Writing job descriptions can be painful and time-consuming, particularly if you’re trying to write them in a way that both captures job seekers’ attention and spells out the skills you want. Indeed’s AI Job Description Generator tool helps employers build skills-first job listings in minutes, not hours. What’s more, employers who use the tool see a 16% increase in applicants, on average.[7]



of job seekers say vague job descriptions are the biggest hiring hurdle they face.

[7]Indeed data 2023. Indeed’s AI Job Description Generator is available in U.S., U.K., Canada, and France.

Disconnect #4

Employers Are Losing Candidates to the Competition — Maybe Because They're Taking Too Long

Getting the right people to apply for a job is only half the battle. The next challenge for employers is guiding them through the hiring process without losing them along the way. One in five employers say their biggest hiring challenge is losing candidates to the competition.

One potential culprit: the time it takes to make an offer.

Nearly 20% of job seekers say hiring is slower than a year ago, but only 13% of employers think that's the case. While both sides agree that two to four weeks is a reasonable timeline to go from application to offer, about a quarter of job seekers say they'll start looking elsewhere if it takes more than two weeks. This means job seekers aren't waiting around for employers to make a decision. And that's costing both sides.

Employers may be missing out on strong candidates, but there are other costs too. Nearly 30% of job seekers say a slow hiring process gives them a negative view of the company. And that negative view can spread, Slater warns. "If applicants have bad hiring experiences — if it takes too long or they just feel forgotten and ignored — that will impact a brand's reputation significantly," she says.

Takeaway: There's still hope: About half of employers say streamlining interviews, running faster background checks, and using AI to source candidates and schedule interviews have sped up the hiring process. And if you can't move any quicker, at least keep candidates informed with regular updates. "The space between the steps in the hiring process is as important as the steps themselves," McLaughlin says.

How Slow Hiring Fuels Burnout

When employers don't fill open roles fast enough, existing employees have to pick up the extra slack. That can contribute to burnout, which is already widespread in the workplace. Indeed's research finds that only half of employers believe most of their team is currently thriving.

That's not just bad for employee wellbeing — which Indeed data shows correlates to company performance[8] — but it can undermine hiring efforts too. Many job seekers today rely on employee reviews to vet company culture, Slater says. "If your current employees are really unhappy and are saying this is a bad place to work," she adds, "it's going to make it harder for you to hire."

Roughly a quarter of job seekers say they'll start looking elsewhere if a job offer doesn't come within two weeks.

[8] The Work Wellbeing 100

Disconnect #5

Employers and Job Seekers Differ on the Importance of Key Benefits

The job offer may be the last step in the hiring process, but misalignment with candidate expectations can still derail the whole operation.

For instance, employers understand that work-life balance is important to candidates, but they may underestimate just *how much* it matters. For more than one-third of job seekers, flexibility, including work-life balance, is the top factor when they're weighing offers. However, less than a quarter of employers see it as the most important part of an offer.

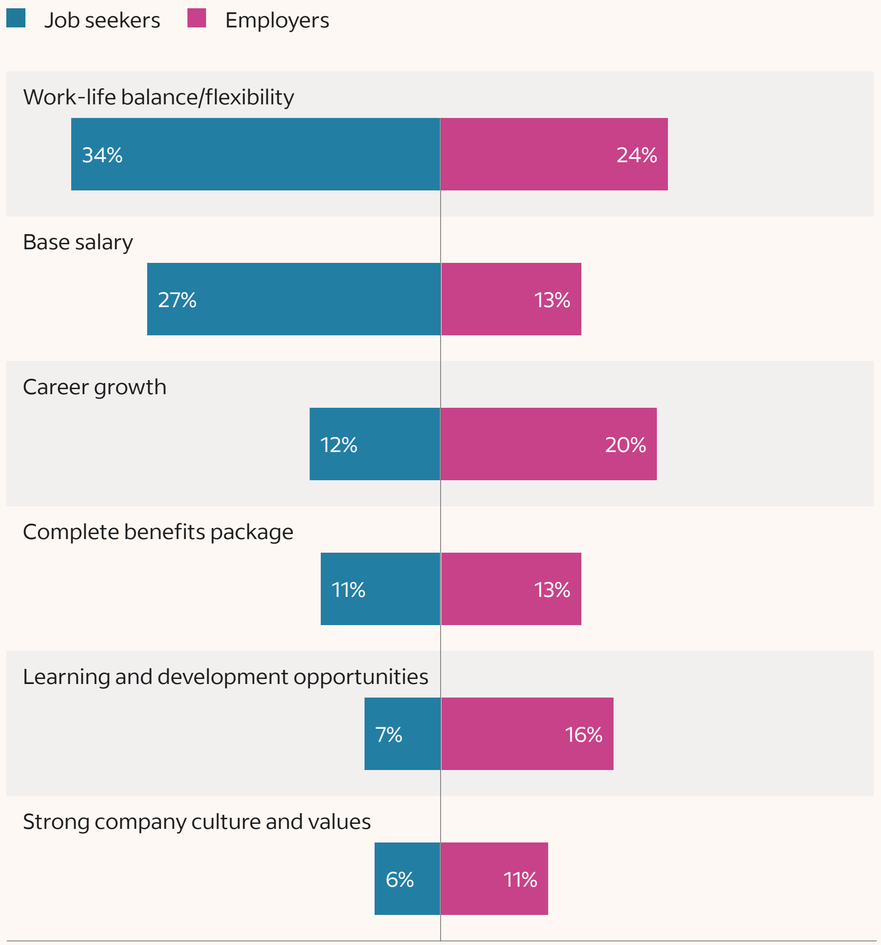
And base salary is the second biggest priority for job seekers — but it ranks fourth for employers.

Of course, not every company can offer sky-high pay or remote work options. But small changes can help bridge the gap.

Takeaway: For starters, be clear about what you mean by "flexibility." Define hybrid work. For in-person roles, explain how employees can change their hours when needed. Offer examples of how your company makes time for the realities of family life. Too often, employers gloss over these details, which McLaughlin says leads to mismatched expectations. "Job seekers want flexibility, but they're worried to ask for it specifically for fear of giving the wrong impression," McLaughlin says. "Employers have to offer it to lead the way."

What Do Job Seekers and Employers See as the Most Attractive Elements of a Job Offer?

Flexibility is more important than most employers realize.



Job seeker question: When choosing between job offers, what is the most important deciding factor for you?
Employer question: Which of the following do you believe is the most attractive part of your job offer to candidates?

Disconnect #6

Both Employers and Job Seekers Use AI — But Don't Agree on What's Acceptable.

Amid these disconnects, AI is adding new confusion. Job seekers and employers alike are using AI in the hiring process — and yet they're judging each other for doing so.

Seventy percent of job seekers say AI works best for writing and editing resumes and cover letters. But only a third of employers think that's an acceptable way for candidates to use it. Meanwhile, about three-quarters of employers say AI helps speed up hiring when they use it to screen candidates, summarize experience, and automate scheduling — but only a quarter of job seekers approve. In fact, 18% of job seekers think employers shouldn't use AI for hiring at all.

Both groups worry that AI could make hiring less fair by perpetuating historical prejudices, screening out candidates based on arbitrary keywords, or giving the edge to job seekers who figure out how to game the system. That may help explain why nearly one-fifth (19%) of employers aren't using AI in hiring at all. Neither are some 40% of job seekers.

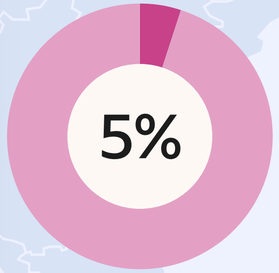
Technology may reduce your workload, but Indeed's Slater says that job seekers should always know there's a human on the other side of the decision-making process, ensuring that communication is warm, feedback is constructive, and interactions are considerate. "That's what people are scared of most: Is a bot reviewing who I am?" Slater says. "There is the human element of hiring that can't be forgotten."

Takeaway: Slater says transparency can help move past AI hesitancy. She advises employers to explain not just how they're using AI but *why*. Share how AI tools can actually help make hiring fairer, and how you're using them to speed up the process. But above all: Don't offload everything to AI.

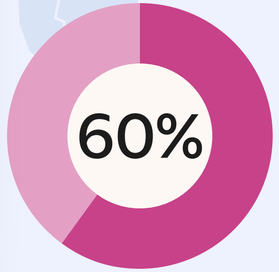
India's Edge

When AI joins the hiring team, things can move faster — just ask employers in India. Not only is it one of the speediest hiring markets of all 12 countries surveyed, it's also the top market for AI adoption among employers.

But employers in India aren't just using AI to help hire faster; they're also more accepting of the way job seekers use it. That suggests the more employers use AI themselves, the more they understand the benefits for job seekers.



of Indian employers say they're not using AI tools to hire, compared to 19% globally.



of employers in India make offers in less than four weeks.

Indeed Data 2025

Disconnect #7

Who Owns Upskilling? Both Sides Are at a Standstill.

AI isn't just changing hiring, it's reshaping the workforce. But employers and job seekers don't agree on how fast that shift is coming.

In both groups, most say that workers' skills will need to evolve within three to five years, with AI as the most-cited driver. But while 82% of employers anticipate the need for employee upskilling, just 67% of job seekers do. That gap is even bigger in the Netherlands, with just 38% of job seekers predicting a shift in skills compared to 69% of employers.

So, whose job is it to get workers ready? Depends on whom you ask. Employers say managers at all levels hold that responsibility; job seekers say it's up to them and their direct managers.

They're both right, says Sarrazin of Udemy: "This is a pretty transformational change. Everybody needs to lean in." For job seekers, Udemy offers courses covering everything from the fundamentals of AI to AI for frontline workers and leading in the age of AI. "There's a huge opportunity for employees to take ownership of their learning journeys," Sarrazin says.

Takeaway: No one can sit back. AI tools are powerful but need to be used responsibly. Sarrazin says workers can take the initiative to develop their abilities, while managers can ensure teams are exploring new tools responsibly.

The Three Pillars of AI Upskilling

As Indeed's Global Director of Brand Planning, Strategy, and Operations, Megan Myers leads AI education and adoption efforts for the marketing team. She says any AI upskilling program should focus on three things:

Awareness: Make sure employees understand the tools that are available to them and how to access them in a way that's suitable for your company.

Education: Start by asking people what they already know about AI and what they're most eager to learn. Then, host training sessions with practical examples of how employees can use AI for their jobs today, and provide options that allow people to "choose their own adventure" as they learn.

Adoption: Measure how well your adoption efforts are going. That may involve simply asking employees how they've used AI at work or, for more technical roles, analyzing code contributions. At Indeed, internal data shows that more than 33% of new code is written by AI, and we're aiming for more than 50% by the end of FY25.[9]

[9]Indeed internal data, based on Percent Code Written (PCW). Percentage reflects the proportion of code contributions made by AI in terms of character count on a company-wide level.

Solutions

What Employers Can Do Now

Employers and job seekers are ultimately on the same team — they've just been using different playbooks. Here's how employers can put this research into action and get on the same page with the people they're hoping to hire.

- **Revamp Job Descriptions With Skills in Mind**
  Focus on storytelling — describe the skills you want, what success in the role looks like, and who has thrived in similar positions. Tools like Indeed's AI Job Description Generator can help.

- **Ask About Leadership Skills in Interviews**
  Make leadership a visible, verbalized priority by asking candidates for real examples. Don't assume candidates will bring it up on their own.

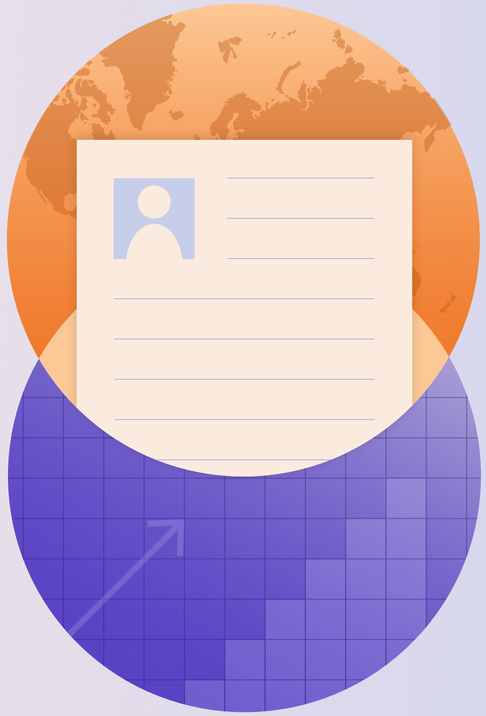
- **Streamline and Communicate During the Hiring Process**
  Cut unnecessary interview stages and automate processes like scheduling that don't need human input. Keep candidates informed at every step. Silence makes the process feel slower and weakens your brand.

- **Lead With Flexibility in Job Offers**
  Be upfront about work-life balance in job descriptions and interviews. If you can't offer full flexibility, get specific about options. And don't wait for job seekers to ask.

- **Be Transparent About AI — and Support Upskilling**
  To build trust with job seekers, explain how (and why) you're using AI in hiring. At the same time, invest in upskilling your workforce through on-the-job training as well as learning opportunities employees can pursue on their own.

For all their differences, job seekers and employers share plenty of common ground on the value of soft skills and work-life balance, with a mutual cautious optimism about AI. The challenge now is turning that common ground into common action. That means clearer communication and a willingness to evolve.

The future of hiring isn't just about new tools. It's about better alignment, shared responsibility, and building a job market that works for everyone.



Methodology

The Indeed Smarter Hiring Annual Report is based on an online survey conducted from April 30–May 19, 2025.

Respondents included:

- 6,837 job seekers, defined as people who are in full- or part-time employment or are looking for work.
- 2,481 employers, defined as people with senior management responsibility in their organization.

This survey represents 12 of Indeed's core markets. Respondents per country were distributed as follows:

- Job seekers: U.S. (1,014), Canada (505), U.K. (1,012), Germany (503), France (504), Netherlands (255), Italy (508), India (1,010), Singapore (506), Japan (520), Australia (249), Mexico (251)
- Employers: U.S. (511), Canada (100), U.K. (504), Germany (256), France (100), Netherlands (100), Italy (102), India (251), Singapore (103), Japan (253), Australia (100), Mexico (101)

When referencing this research, please use the following citation:

Indeed Survey with YouGov 2025,
Total N=6,837 job seekers and 2,481 employers

Due to differences in sample sizes per country, some percentages representing totals across all 12 core markets may not equal 100%.

Resources
Explore more hiring insights uncovered by Indeed's global research.

Smarter Hiring With Data-Driven Insights: Quality and Skills Edition

The Employers Guide to Skills-First Hiring: Why hiring for skills is good for people and business

The Indeed Global Talent Report: Insights into the Multigenerational Workforce

Country Summaries

At a Glance: Country Highlights

Australia: A Surplus of Applicants
One-fifth of Australian employers — more than in any other country — say they receive too many applications.

Canada: Skill Changes Due to AI
Around three-quarters of employers and job seekers expect employees' skills will need to change in the next 3-5 years; about half of employers and a third of job seekers think this will be due to AI.

France: Disconnects Throughout the Hiring Process
More than a quarter of job seekers in France cite intense competition and poor employer communication as top barriers. Yet nearly one-third of employers in France say candidates expect too much and lack the required skills.

Germany: Disagreement About What Matters in Job Offers
More than 40% of job seekers in Germany list base salary as the most important factor in an offer, higher than any other country. Yet only 16% of employers say the same.

India: A Widespread Embrace of AI
India leads the world in AI adoption for hiring. Just 5% of employers and 8% of job seekers say they are not using AI in the process, and they are among the least likely to say that AI usage is unacceptable in hiring.

Italy: Misunderstandings Around Work-Life Balance
Some 40% of job seekers in Italy say work-life balance is the top selling point in job offers, but just 17% of employers say the same — the lowest of any country surveyed.

Japan: Split Views Over AI
Nearly half of Japanese job seekers are not using AI to apply for jobs. That means they're using AI less than the average global job seeker and far less than Japanese employers think they should. A mere 7% of employers feel job seekers shouldn't use AI in the hiring process.

Mexico: An Emphasis on Leadership Skills
Mexico leads globally in the importance employers place on workforce and leadership skills, with 42% ranking them as the top quality when evaluating candidates.

Netherlands: Unusual Alignment on the Need for Industry Experience
Unlike every other country surveyed, employers in the Netherlands say they're most confident hiring applicants with direct industry experience. That makes them uniquely aligned with the 65% of job seekers in the country who say industry experience makes them more confident to apply.

Singapore: A Hiring Slowdown?
Job seekers in Singapore are the most likely of any market surveyed to say the hiring process is getting much slower, with 32% holding that view compared to 19% globally.

U.K.: Reluctance Around AI
The U.K. is the most reluctant to embrace AI. Nearly two-thirds of job seekers and one-third of employers say they don't use AI tools for hiring. And 21% of U.K. employers say job seekers shouldn't use AI tools at all — more than double the global average (9%).

U.S.: Differing Perceptions of the Pace of Hiring
Twenty-four percent of job seekers say the hiring process is slowing down, compared to 19% of job seekers worldwide. Employers, on the other hand, think the opposite: Roughly one-quarter say hiring is speeding up.

Australia: A Surplus of Applicants

Overview

Australia's job market is split between employers chasing workforce and leadership skills, and job seekers focusing on industry-specific expertise. While both prize work-life balance, they see hiring speed, salary importance, and AI-driven change through very different lenses.

Candidate Skills

Forty-five percent of employers in Australia say workforce and leadership skills are the most lacking in their organizations, and these are the skills they most often seek in candidates. Job seekers, however, think industry-specific skills are the most important. Both groups agree that technical skills matter least. The factors that bolster both groups' confidence also differ: More than half of employers feel most secure hiring applicants with a mix of experience, skills, and potential, while more than two-thirds of job seekers feel confident applying when they already have industry experience.

Hiring Process and Job Offers

More than one-third of job seekers say competition is their biggest challenge, and employer data reflects this concern. **One-fifth of Australian employers — more than in any other country — say they receive too many applications.** Still, employers are slightly more likely to cite high candidate expectations as the biggest hurdle. As in most countries, employers (19%) are more likely than job seekers (10%) to say that hiring is speeding up, while 19% of job seekers say it's slowing down. On job offers, both groups agree that work-life balance is most important. But about a quarter of job seekers rank base salary highest, compared to just 10% of employers.

AI Use

Employers are more engaged with AI than job seekers: 38% of job seekers in Australia are not using AI to apply for jobs, compared to just 13% of employers who are not using it in hiring. Employers also anticipate more change on the way: 81% say skills will need to evolve within five years, while only 66% of job seekers say so. However, both groups point to AI as a main driver behind this change (43% for employers, and 37% for job seekers).

Country Summaries

Canada: Skill Changes Due to AI

Overview

Canadian employers are struggling to find candidates with the right skills, while job seekers say competition from other applicants is their biggest barrier. Both agree that skills must evolve in the age of AI, but they differ on hiring speed, priorities in job offers, and how candidates should use AI in the job search.

Candidate Skills

More than half (55%) of Canadian employers say workforce and leadership skills are lacking in their organizations, the highest rate among all countries surveyed. They also lead globally in valuing critical thinking, with 73% calling it the most important non-AI skill, compared to 54% worldwide. Employers in Canada are also the most likely to prioritize candidates who combine skills, experience, and potential (80%). Still, 62% say direct industry or role experience is essential. That closely matches job seekers, 64% of whom cite industry experience as their top confidence booster.

Hiring Process and Job Offers

One-third of Canadian job seekers see competition from other applicants as their biggest challenge, but nearly the same share of employers struggle to find candidates with the required skills. Hiring speed perceptions also diverge: over one-third of employers say it's getting faster, but only 17% of job seekers agree. Meanwhile, 22% of job seekers think hiring is slowing, compared to 16% of employers. And when it comes to job offers, job seekers place more emphasis on work-life balance (33% vs. 22%) and base salary (25% vs. 14%) than employers do.

AI Use

Employers are fine with AI use, but job seekers don't know that: 40% of job seekers in Canada are not using AI to apply for jobs, despite only 12% of employers saying they think it would be unacceptable. Roughly half of employers would be okay with candidates using AI to prepare for interviews or research the company, for example. By contrast, just 18% of employers in Canada say they're not using AI for hiring. **Despite these differences, around three-quarters of both groups expect employees' skills will need to change in the next 3-5 years; about half of employers and one-third of job seekers think this will be due to AI.**

Country Summaries

France: Disconnects Throughout the Hiring Process

Overview

Employers and job seekers in France are mismatched on almost every front — from their outlook on hiring speed to their embrace of AI. While employers see an urgent need to upskill for the future, many job seekers remain underprepared for what's next.

Candidate Skills

Forty percent of employers in France report a lack of durable skills within their organizations, closely followed by a shortage of workforce and leadership capabilities. Unsurprisingly, durable skills like communication are also what they're looking for most in candidates. Although job seekers also prioritize durable skills, just 13% say workforce and leadership skills are key.

Thirty-six percent of French employers say their organizations face a critical gap in technical skills, yet only 14% are making that a hiring priority. As seen in other markets, job seekers in France think industry experience is more important than their employers do (32% vs. 24%).

Hiring Process and Job Offers

More than a quarter of job seekers in France cite intense competition and poor employer communication as top barriers. Yet nearly one-third of employers in France say candidates expect too much and lack the required skills. Job seekers in France are also growing impatient with hiring times — they're twice as likely as employers to say the hiring process has slowed (18% vs. 9%).

When it comes to job offers, priorities diverge sharply. While 24% of employers consider career growth the most compelling part of an offer, fewer than 10% of job seekers agree. Instead, candidates place much more weight on work-life balance, ranking it more than twice as important as employers do.

AI Use

Employers in France are embracing the AI revolution: Just 11% are not using AI in hiring, and only 6% disapprove of candidates using it. But job seekers are more timid. Nearly half say they don't use AI tools to help them apply for jobs, and one-quarter disapprove of employers using AI in hiring.

Employers in France are also the most likely globally to anticipate AI-driven change, with over 90% saying employee skills will need to evolve within three to five years. Only 68% of job seekers in France recognize this shift.

Germany: Disagreement About What Matters in Job Offers

Overview

In Germany, employers and job seekers mostly agree on the types of skills they find important but clash on what counts most in a job offer. They're also aligned on the need to upskill for an AI-driven future, but not on how AI should be used in hiring.

Candidate Skills

Both employers and job seekers rank durable skills like communication and adaptability as top priorities. Yet only 17% of employers prioritize workforce and leadership skills in evaluations — the lowest of any market surveyed — even though 34% of them also say that their organizations lack those very skills.

Hiring Process and Job Offers

Job seekers in Germany face unique hurdles: They're the most likely globally to say their biggest challenge is understanding company culture before applying for a job. Employers in Germany also differ from their global peers when it comes to hiring challenges. They're the most likely to say hiring is slowing down (29%), compared to 13% globally. When employers in Germany do make an offer, they underestimate how much salary matters to candidates. **More than 40% of job seekers in Germany list base salary as the most important factor in an offer, outpacing the global average. Yet only 16% of employers in the country say the same.**

AI Use

Job seekers in Germany are cautious about AI — more than half don't use it when applying. But employers don't share their reticence: Only 13% of them object to applicants using AI, and 32% actually support using AI to write cover letters, which is above the global average. Seventy-five percent of employers in Germany and 60% of job seekers agree that skills will need to evolve over the next three to five years, primarily due to AI and automation, and both groups say managers are responsible for leading that change.

Country Summaries

India: A Widespread Embrace of AI

Overview

In India, employers and job seekers are strikingly aligned in their views on everything from skills gaps to what makes a job offer compelling to the changes that AI will bring to the workforce.

Candidate Skills

More than half of employers in India say the biggest skills gaps at their organizations are workforce and leadership skills, along with technical skills. These are also the skills they value most when evaluating candidates. Job seekers appear to understand this, with one-third naming these skills as the most important to demonstrate. Both sides (68% employers vs. 61% job seekers) also agree that having an equal balance of experience, skills, and potential boosts their confidence in the hiring process.

Hiring Process and Job Offers

Forty-two percent of job seekers in India say their biggest challenge is competition from other job seekers. Employers, meanwhile, say their greatest hurdle is internal resistance to skills-first hiring practices. Thirty-one percent of employers in India cited this as their biggest barrier, and 27% said they struggle to assess candidates' skills and that candidates had excessive expectations. Both groups are more likely than global peers to say the hiring process is speeding up, though employers are more likely to say so (46% vs. 36%). Job seekers and employers in India also emphasize work-life balance and career growth in job offers over base salary. In fact, they are the least likely of any market to prioritize salary.

AI Use

India leads the world in AI adoption for hiring. Just 5% of employers and 8% of job seekers say they are not using AI in the process, and they are among the least likely to say that AI usage is unacceptable in hiring. Eighty-nine percent of employers and job seekers alike believe skills will need to change within five years, with AI as the key driver. And both groups agree that top management is most responsible for preparing employees.

Italy: Misunderstandings Around Work-Life Balance

Overview

In Italy, employers are unique globally in terms of the types of skills they prioritize. The disconnect between employers and job seekers over which skills are most important, however, is similar to what we see around the world, as are misunderstandings about what makes an attractive job offer.

Candidate Skills

More than 40% of employers in Italy say the biggest skills gap in their organization is technical skills. Perhaps as a result, they're more likely than most of their global peers to prioritize these skills when assessing candidates. Yet job seekers in Italy seem unaware: Only 13% say technical skills are among the most important to highlight, which is lower than the global average.

Like job seekers elsewhere, more than half of job seekers in Italy feel most confident applying for a job when they have direct experience in a similar industry or role. Employers, on the other hand, say they're most confident in employees who can adapt easily.

Hiring Process and Job Offers

Employers in Italy say the biggest hiring challenge is job seekers' high expectations. Meanwhile, 1 in 4 job seekers say increased competition is a top obstacle, even though only 5% of employers report receiving too many applicants.

There's also a mismatch in perceptions of hiring speed: 16% of job seekers say it's slowing down, compared to just 9% of employers. When it comes to offers, the gap is even greater. **Some 40% of job seekers in Italy say work-life balance is their top priority, but just 17% of employers say the same — the lowest of any country surveyed.**

AI Use

Roughly three-quarters of employers and job seekers in Italy believe employees' skills will need to evolve in the next three to five years, with AI and automation as a key driver. But job seekers appear reluctant: Although just 9% of employers disapprove of job seekers using AI tools to help with applications, nearly 40% of job seekers aren't using it.

Country Summaries

Japan: Split Views Over AI

Overview

In Japan, employers are equally hungry for technical, leadership, and industry skills, while job seekers focus on showcasing their direct experience. Both groups agree that adaptability is essential, but their views differ on hiring speed and the pace of AI-driven change.

Candidate Skills

Roughly 2 in 5 employers in Japan say technical skills, as well as workforce and leadership skills, are the most lacking at their companies. When evaluating candidates, they seek a broad mix of skills, ranking everything from workforce and leadership skills to industry skills about equally on the survey. One-quarter of job seekers, meanwhile, say industry-specific skills are the most important to demonstrate. And both groups say that applicants having transferable skills and adaptability makes them the most confident in the hiring process.

Hiring Process and Job Offers

For 25% of job seekers in Japan, the biggest challenge is matching their backgrounds to roles. For employers, it's the shortage of applicants with required skills, cited by nearly 30%. Despite these challenges, both groups prioritize the same factors in job offers: work-life balance (35% employers vs. 44% job seekers) followed by base salary (18% employers vs. 28% job seekers). One key difference is perception of hiring speed: 21% of employers believe hiring is getting faster, compared with just 12% of job seekers.

AI Use

Nearly half of Japanese job seekers are not using AI to apply for jobs. That means they're using AI less than the average global job seeker and far less than Japanese employers think is appropriate, with only 7% of them feeling that job seekers shouldn't use AI in the hiring process. Employers, in turn, are more likely than job seekers to anticipate skill changes ahead: 80% believe employees' skills will need to change within five years, compared with just 63% of job seekers.

Mexico: An Emphasis on Leadership Skills

Overview

In Mexico, employers and job seekers alike prioritize workforce and leadership skills and share a strong focus on career growth. They also embrace AI in hiring and anticipate major skill shifts in the next five years.

Candidate Skills

Mexico leads globally in the importance employers place on workforce and leadership skills, with 42% ranking them as the top quality when evaluating candidates. These are also the skills most lacking within organizations. Job seekers appear aware of this, as 32% say demonstrating workforce and leadership skills is most important. The two groups also derive confidence from the same things in the hiring process: having an equal balance of experience, skills, and potential.

Hiring Process and Job Offers

For job seekers, competition is the greatest hurdle, with 40% citing it as their top challenge. Meanwhile, nearly one-third of employers point to candidates' high expectations, and only 9% say they receive too many applications. Views also diverge on hiring times: 34% of employers believe hiring is speeding up, compared to 18% of job seekers. Job seekers in Mexico are the most likely worldwide to move on if offers take longer than two weeks to come. When considering offers, work-life balance and salary top the list for job seekers, but 21% of them also value career growth most. That's above the global average of 12%. Employers agree, ranking career growth as the most compelling part of their offers.

AI Use

Mexico also stands out in AI adoption. Only 25% of job seekers and 9% of employers report not using AI. That means both groups are less reluctant than their global peers. Job seekers in Mexico are also more comfortable than most in other countries with employers using AI for hiring. It stands to reason, then, that 89% of employers and 83% of job seekers in Mexico believe skills will need to change in the next five years, some of the highest rates in the world.

Netherlands: Unusual Alignment on the Need for Industry Experience

Overview

The Netherlands emerged as an outlier in our survey due to job seekers' and employers' alignment on which skills are important. They also aligned on using AI in hiring. When it comes to the key aspects of job offers, however, they don't see eye to eye.

Candidate Skills

Unlike every other country surveyed, employers in the Netherlands say they're most confident hiring applicants with direct industry experience. That makes them uniquely aligned with the 65% of job seekers in the country who say industry experience makes them more confident to apply. The two groups also agree that durable skills like communication are the most important to evaluate (and demonstrate) in the hiring process.

Hiring Process and Job Offers

The strong emphasis on direct experience may contribute to job seekers' top hiring challenge: 25% say matching job requirements to their background is their biggest hurdle, followed by difficulty navigating vague job postings.

On the employer side, the primary challenges are a lack of candidates with the right skills and applicants' overly high expectations. The two groups also differ on perceptions of hiring speed: Just 2% of employers in the Netherlands say hiring is slowing down, compared to 8% of job seekers. Echoing other countries, work-life balance remains a top priority for 41% of Dutch job seekers, but just 22% of employers rank it as most important.

AI Use

Employers in the Netherlands are among the slowest adopters of AI in hiring, with 32% saying they don't use AI tools. Nearly half of job seekers say the same. Dutch employers are also the least likely to believe that skills will need to change in the next three to five years, with only 69% anticipating change compared to 81% globally. Job seekers are even more skeptical: Just 38% expect skills to change over that time frame, making the Netherlands the only country where the majority of job seekers expect the skills for success to mostly stay the same.

Country Summaries

Singapore: A Hiring Slowdown?

Overview

In Singapore, both employers and job seekers understand the value of durable skills in the hiring process and the importance of work-life balance in a job offer. But job seekers are growing impatient with slow hiring times.

Candidate Skills

Half of employers in Singapore say soft or durable skills are the most lacking in their organizations. These are also the skills they're most often looking for when evaluating candidates — and the skills job seekers in Singapore are most eager to demonstrate. When it comes to what makes employers confident about a candidate, 78% say they're seeking a balance of relevant experience, skills, and potential. While two-thirds of them feel the same, job seekers in Singapore are slightly more likely to say that having direct industry experience makes them feel more confident.

Hiring Process and Job Offers

More than half of job seekers in Singapore say competition is their biggest hiring challenge. Nearly one-third of employers, meanwhile, say the lack of applicants with required skills is their biggest obstacle. **Job seekers in Singapore are also the most likely of any market surveyed to say the hiring process is getting much slower, with 32% holding that view compared to 19% globally.** Just 15% of employers in Singapore say the same. Yet the two sides are aligned in terms of what matters in a job offer. Roughly one-quarter of both groups say work-life balance is most important.

AI Use

Just one-quarter of job seekers in Singapore say they are not currently using AI to apply for jobs. They're also less likely than their global peers to disapprove of employers using it (11% vs. 18%). A majority of both groups (89% employers and 74% job seekers) also expect skills to change in the next three to five years, driven primarily by AI.

Country Summaries

U.K.: Reluctance Around AI

Overview

Disconnects between U.K. employers and job seekers mirror many of the gaps seen globally. However, both groups share an aversion to using AI in hiring.

Candidate Skills

Nearly three-quarters of U.K. employers say they feel most confident about job applicants who have a mix of skills, experience, and potential. But U.K. job seekers don't seem to understand that employers value varied skills and potential — 74% say they feel most confident applying for jobs when they have experience in a similar role or industry.

Despite these differences, both groups agree on one key point: Durable skills, like adaptability and communication, are the most valuable attributes a candidate can have, followed closely by industry-specific skills.

Hiring Process and Job Offers

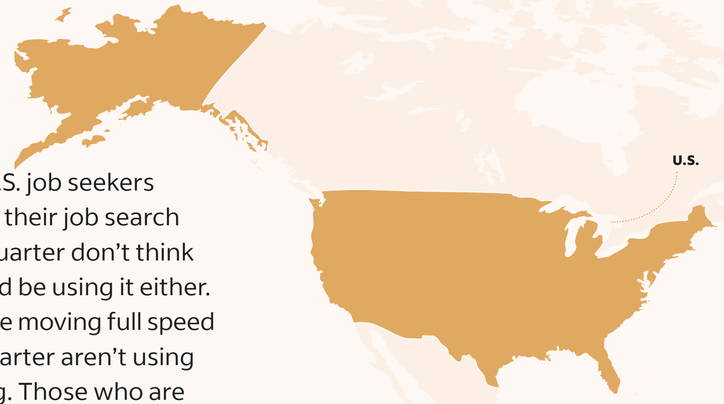
More than one-third of U.K. job seekers say they face too much competition for jobs. But U.K. employers point to different hiring challenges: 34% say their biggest hurdle is a shortage of applicants with the right skills, and the same percentage say it's job seekers' high expectations.

Job offers are another point of disconnection. Thirty-five percent of job seekers say work-life balance is a deciding factor, while 34% say base salary. Among employers, however, just 22% say work-life balance makes an offer attractive to candidates, and 13% point to base salary. Employers tend to place more value on a complete benefits package (17%) and a strong company culture (16%) over pay.

AI Use

Of all markets surveyed, the U.K. is the most reluctant to embrace AI. Nearly two-thirds of job seekers and one-third of employers say they don't use AI tools for hiring. And 21% of U.K. employers say job seekers shouldn't use AI tools in the hiring process at all — more than double the global average (9%).

U.S.: Differing Perceptions of the Pace of Hiring



Overview

Employers and job seekers in the U.S. agree on the value of durable skills — and not much else. They disagree on the most important qualities in a candidate and the use of AI in hiring, while their views on the pace of hiring reveal a major disconnect.

Candidate Skills

Nearly 40% of U.S. employers say workforce and leadership skills are lacking at their organizations. Yet they rank these skills last in terms of their importance in candidate evaluations. Instead, 36% of U.S. employers say durable skills like communication are the most important.

Job seekers, meanwhile, are almost evenly split between emphasizing durable skills and industry-specific skills in their applications, with 20% thinking they should demonstrate workforce and leadership skills.

Like their global peers, the majority of U.S. employers (71%) say they feel most confident about hires with a balance of experience, skills, and potential. In comparison, most job seekers in the U.S. (67%) feel confident about applying for a role when they have direct industry experience.

Hiring Process and Job Offers

As in other countries, one-third of U.S. job seekers say there's too much competition for jobs. **Still, they're slightly more frustrated than global peers with long, drawn-out application processes — 24% say the hiring process is slowing down, compared to 19% of job seekers worldwide.**

Employers, on the other hand, think the opposite: Roughly one-quarter say hiring is speeding up. But 26% of employers in the U.S. report struggling with candidates' high expectations. Despite these disconnects, a similar share of job seekers (26%) and employers (24%) think work-life balance is the top factor in a job offer.

AI Use

Around half of U.S. job seekers aren't using AI in their job search — and about a quarter don't think employers should be using it either. But employers are moving full speed ahead: Only a quarter aren't using AI tools for hiring. Those who are primarily use it for screening and matching candidates.

Around three-quarters of employers believe employees will need to upskill in the next three to five years, mainly due to AI and automation, but just 60% of job seekers agree. One thing they do agree on is who should take charge of that training: employees and their direct managers.

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