

The State of Online Recruiting 2021



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Introduction

Welcome to the 3rd annual edition of **iHire's State of Online Recruiting Report**, an inside look at the challenges, opportunities, and trends surrounding today's employers and job seekers. This year's survey generated **6,370 responses** from **756 employers** and **5,614 job seekers** nationwide, representing **57 different industries**.

As with previous years' surveys, we intended to identify strategies and solutions to help hiring professionals and candidates better connect through job boards and online recruitment platforms. We set out to discover:

- What pain points are job seekers and employers experiencing as the labor market rebuilds from COVID-19?
- How critical of a role are online recruiting platforms playing in one's job search or hiring efforts?
- What can employers do to attract the right candidates to their job postings?
- How can job seekers stand out in a competitive job market?
- Where does remote work fit into the recruiting picture?
- What trends and topics will shape the digital recruiting space in the coming months?

Discover the answers to these questions – and much more – in this report.



Executive Summary

From a spike in hiring to a lack of communication between employers and job seekers, the following are five key themes that emerged from iHire's 2021 State of Online Recruiting survey:



Hiring is back in action. After a tumultuous 2020, companies are hiring fast and furiously – 86.2% of employers surveyed indicated that they are currently hiring, a 13.4% uptick from last year's report. In addition, 66.6% of employers said they increased hiring within the past year, and just 20.6% expressed concern with limited hiring budgets in the next 12 months.



Employers are (still) experiencing a talent shortage. Despite the 5.9% U.S. unemployment rate and potentially deep talent pools, 73.9% of employers cited “too few qualified candidates” among their most significant online recruiting challenges. Similarly, 77.0% anticipate a shortage of qualified applicants throughout the coming year. For perspective, 2021 marks the third straight year that survey respondents struggled with candidate quality above any other hiring challenge.



Job board usage is up. 58.9% of employers said they increased their reliance on job boards and online recruiting platforms in the past year. Further, 49.6% said they do most of their recruiting through job boards, and 23.4% said they do all their recruiting through job boards. However, employers are also leveraging referrals (used by 70.6% of respondents), social media (57.0%), and their websites (50.2%) to source talent.



Applicant-employer communication is lagging. 46.8% of employers said that “unresponsive candidates” (not hearing back from applicants after reaching out) is a top online recruiting pain point. On the other hand, 48.8% of job seekers said the same about employers – they are frustrated with applying for jobs and receiving no response. Moving forward, both parties will need to commit to communicating with one another and say “no” to ghosting if they want to find the right hires and the right opportunities.



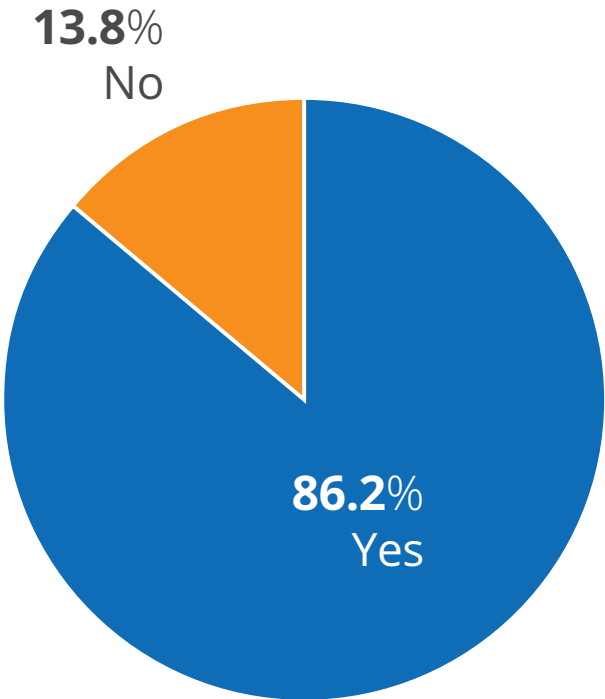
Employers and job seekers digress on the future of remote work. Despite remote work taking center stage since March of 2020, just a quarter (25.5%) of employers said they expect to see continued candidate interest in remote work in the coming year. However, job seeker responses suggest no shortage of “work-from-home” interest and opportunities: Only 16.5% of job seekers said they struggle to find remote work when searching for jobs online, and a mere 19.2% foresee difficulty finding remote work in the next 12 months.

The State of Online Recruiting: Employers

Who's Hiring?

Hiring appears to be back in full force – 86.2% of employers surveyed said they are currently hiring, a 13.4% uptick from 2020's report.

Are you currently hiring?



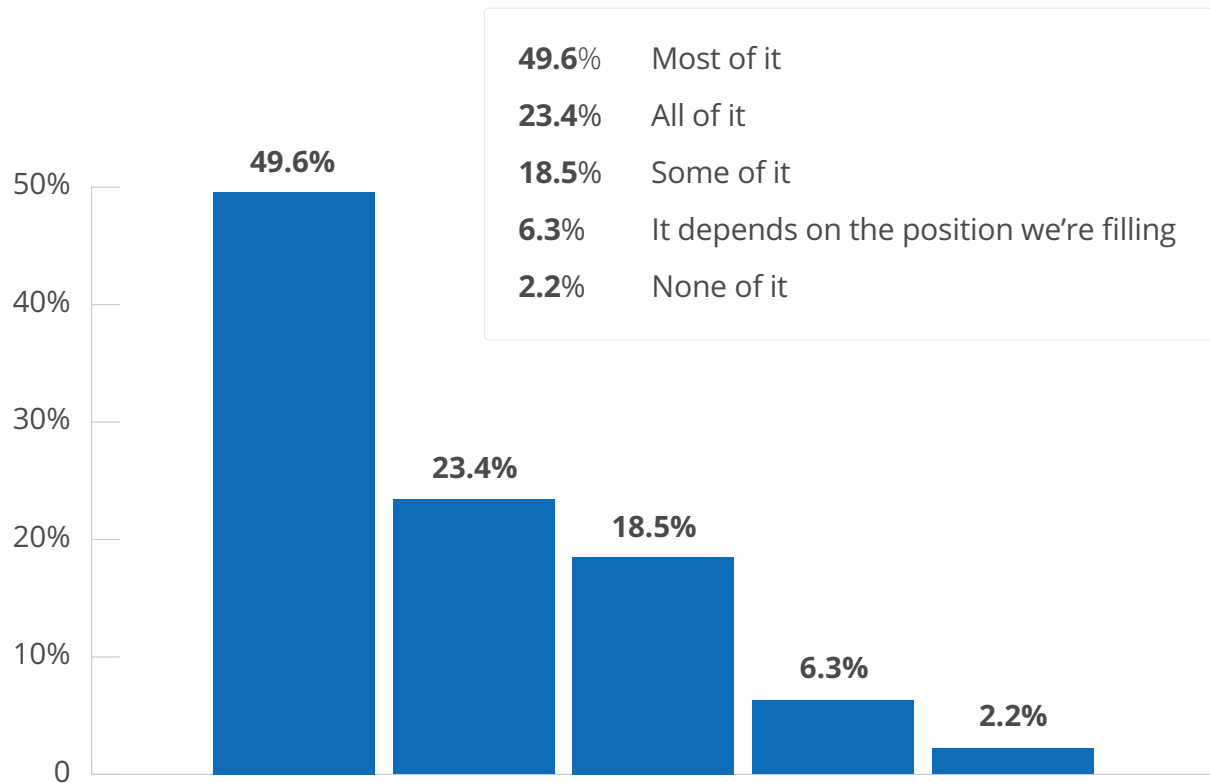
Of the employers who are not hiring:

- 26.5%** said they aren't growing their team because they don't have a need right now.
- 22.8%** said they can't attract qualified candidates/there's a talent shortage.
- 5.8%** said they don't have the budget to hire.
- 5.3%** said they've had to downsize or lay off workers due to COVID-19.
- 3.2%** said they don't have the staff or resources to hire.

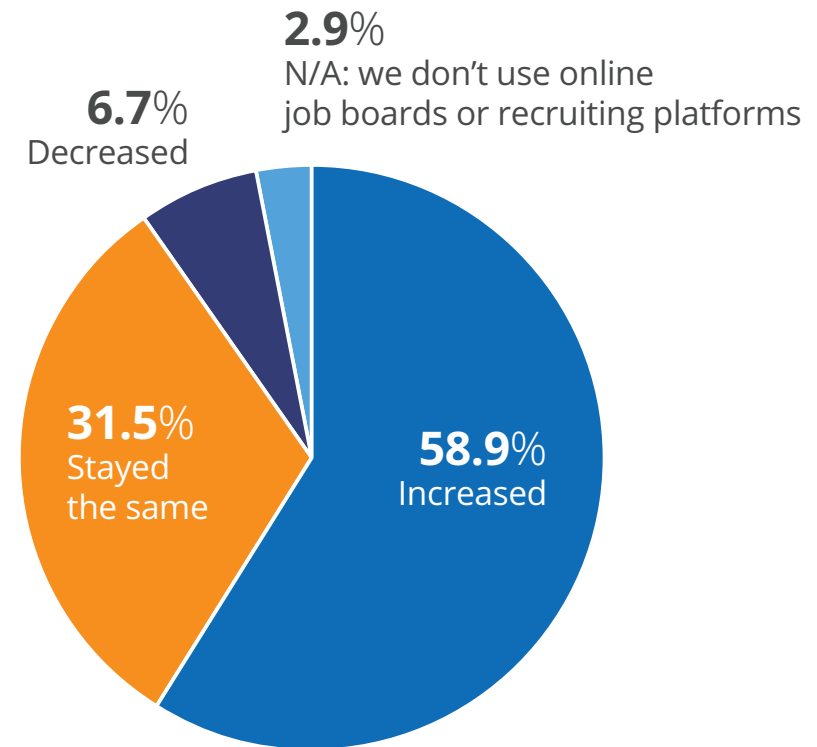
Recruiting Platforms & Preferences

How important are job boards in today's employers' recruitment processes? Nearly half (49.6%) of respondents said they do most of their hiring through job boards or online recruitment platforms. Additionally, 58.9% of employers said their reliance on online job boards has increased in the past year.

Approximately how much of your hiring is done through online job boards/recruitment platforms?



In the past year, your company's reliance on online job boards and recruiting platforms has:

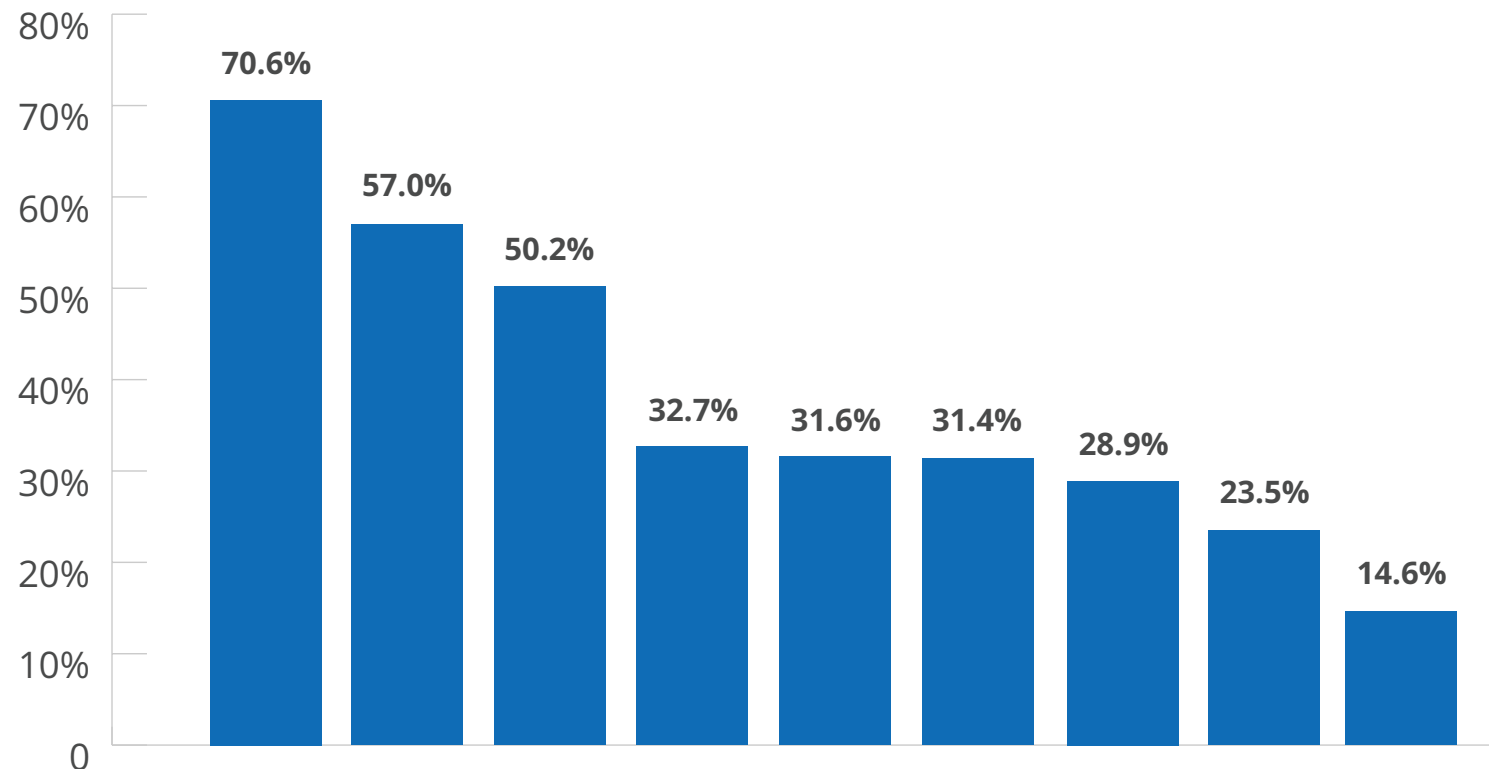


Job Board Alternatives

Despite their increased popularity, job boards aren't the only tools in recruiters' toolboxes. According to our survey, 70.6% of employers rely on referrals to source talent, 57.0% regularly use social media, and 50.2% frequently post job openings on their company's website.

Aside from posting your jobs to job boards, which of the following do you regularly use for recruiting?

(Check all that apply)



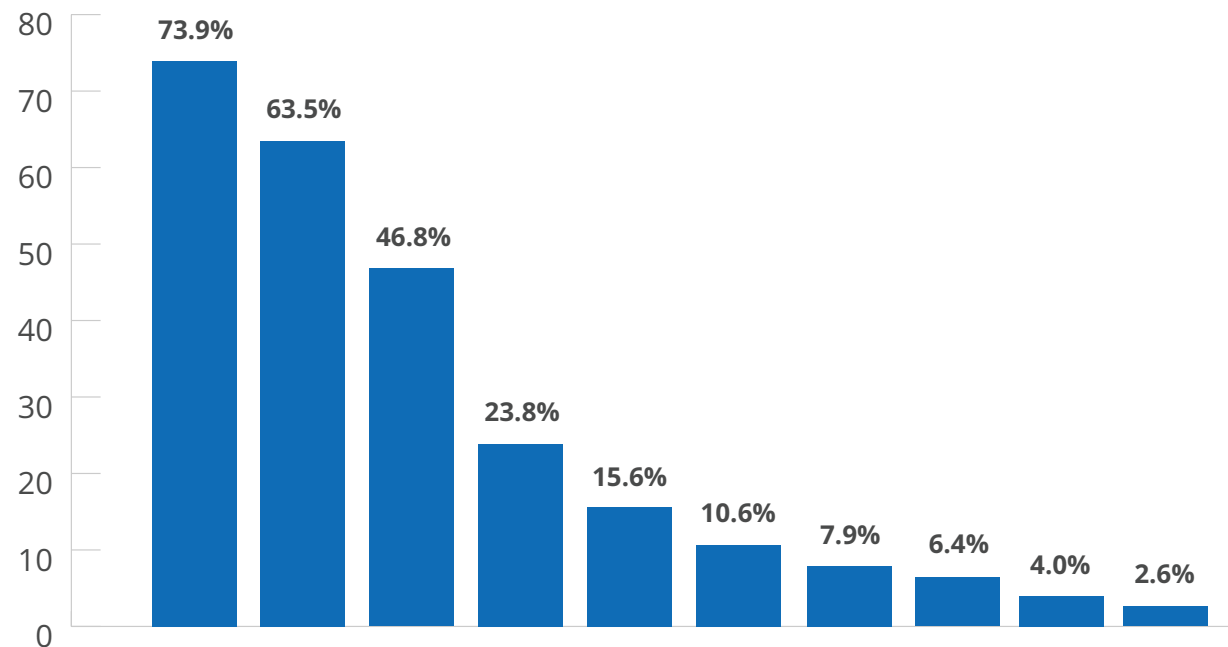
70.6%	Referrals
57.0%	Social Media
50.2%	Our company website
32.7%	Professional associations
31.6%	Alumni/school networks
31.4%	Online classifieds (Craigslist, online newspapers, etc.)
28.9%	Staffing firm or third-party recruiter
23.5%	Job fairs and networking events (online/in-person)
14.6%	Print advertisements (newspaper ads, window signs, etc.)

Online Recruiting Challenges

For the third consecutive year, State of Online Recruiting survey respondents cited issues with candidate quality as a top online recruiting frustration. In 2021, 73.9% of employers said “too few qualified candidates” is among their most significant challenges when recruiting through a job board or talent community.

Further, 63.5% struggled with a “low volume of applicants,” and 46.8% grappled with “unresponsive candidates” (not hearing back from applicants after reaching out to schedule interviews or phone screens).

What are your biggest challenges right now when recruiting through an online job board or talent community?
(Check all that apply)



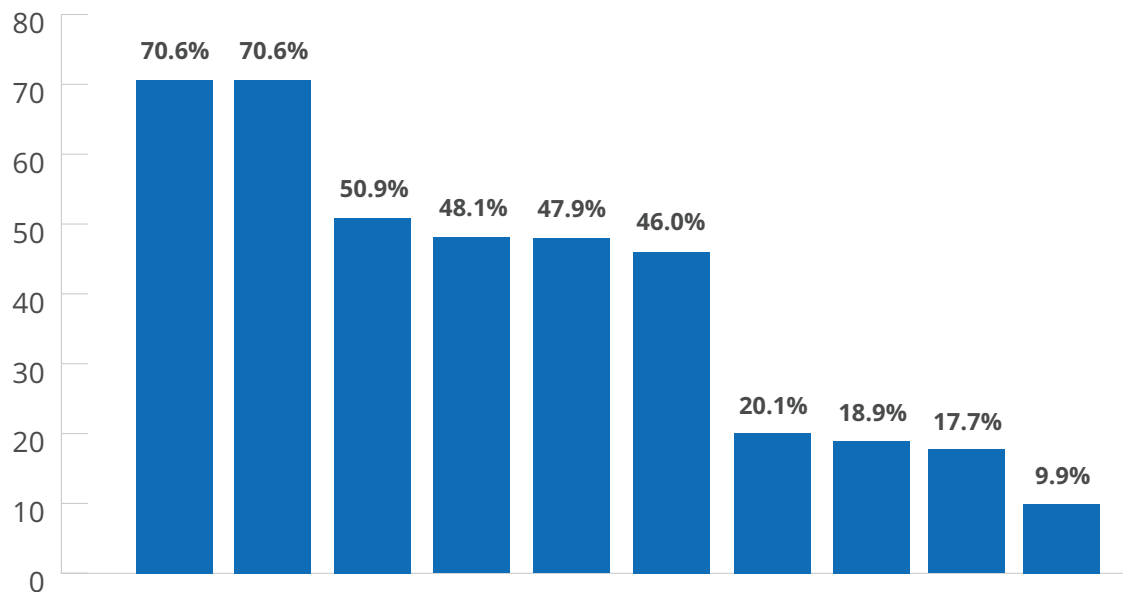
73.9%	Too few qualified candidates
63.5%	Low volume of applicants
46.8%	Unresponsive candidates
23.8%	Cost of using a job board/talent community
15.6%	High application abandonment rates
10.6%	Not enough job ad exposure/limited reach
7.9%	Lack of diversity of candidates
6.4%	Creating a compelling job ad
4.0%	Tracking and managing applicants
2.6%	High volume of applicants/too many applicants

Job Posting Preferences

An employer’s job posting can make or break a qualified candidate’s decision to apply for a role. But are hiring organizations including the right information to attract that perfect applicant?

We asked respondents to identify the elements they always include in their online job postings, aside from position requirements and qualifications. While 70.6% of employers mention benefits and perks as well as the location of the job, just 46.0% indicate the salary range for the role. As discussed on page 17, 61.9% of job seekers said they are more likely to apply for a job if employers and recruiters specify the salary for the position.

Besides requirements and qualifications for a position, which elements do you always include in your online job ads? (Check all that apply)

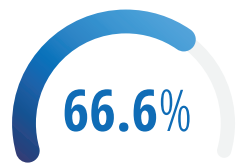


- 70.6% Benefits and perks
- 70.6% Location of the job
- 50.9% Contact information for the hiring manager/recruiter
- 48.1% Company culture details
- 47.9% Company logo/branding
- 46.0% Salary range
- 20.1% COVID-19 protocols and precautions
- 18.9% mention of an incentive or sign-on bonus
- 17.7% EOE statement/DE&I information
- 9.9% Indication of remote work options

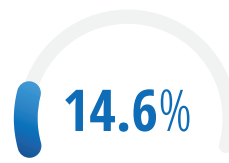
Recruiting Trends: Looking Back & Moving Forward

The past 12 months have been exceptionally unique for employers, who have been navigating a new world of remote recruiting, layoffs and rehiring, hybrid work, and everything in between.

Here's how employers spent the past year:



increased their hiring volume.



relaxed or loosened job requirements to widen their talent pool.



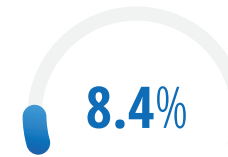
decreased their hiring volume.



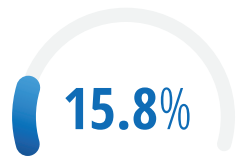
held virtual or video candidate interviews.



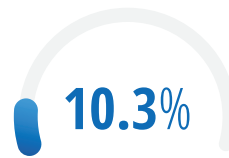
pipelined talent to fill future roles.



prioritized diversity hiring.



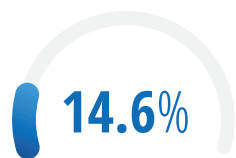
incentivized applicants or offered a sign-on bonus to bring people back to work.



hired for remote positions.



cut or reduced their recruiting budget

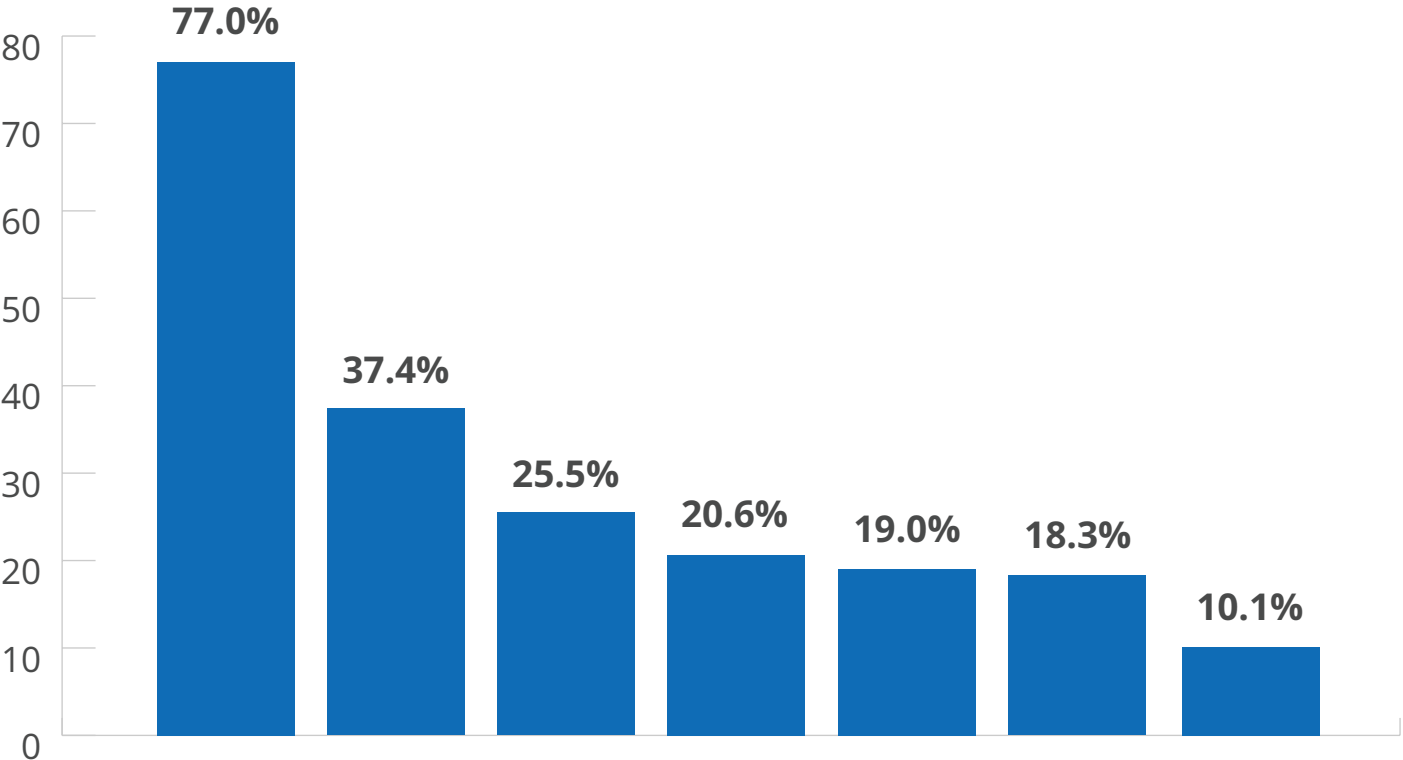


rehired employees who were laid off due to COVID-19.

Lastly, we asked survey participants to note the trends expected to impact their online recruiting efforts in the coming year. A shortage of qualified applicants outranked all other responses (77.0%), suggesting organizations will continue to prioritize one simple thing: getting the right talent in the door.

In the coming year, which trends do you expect to impact your online recruiting efforts?

(Check all that apply)



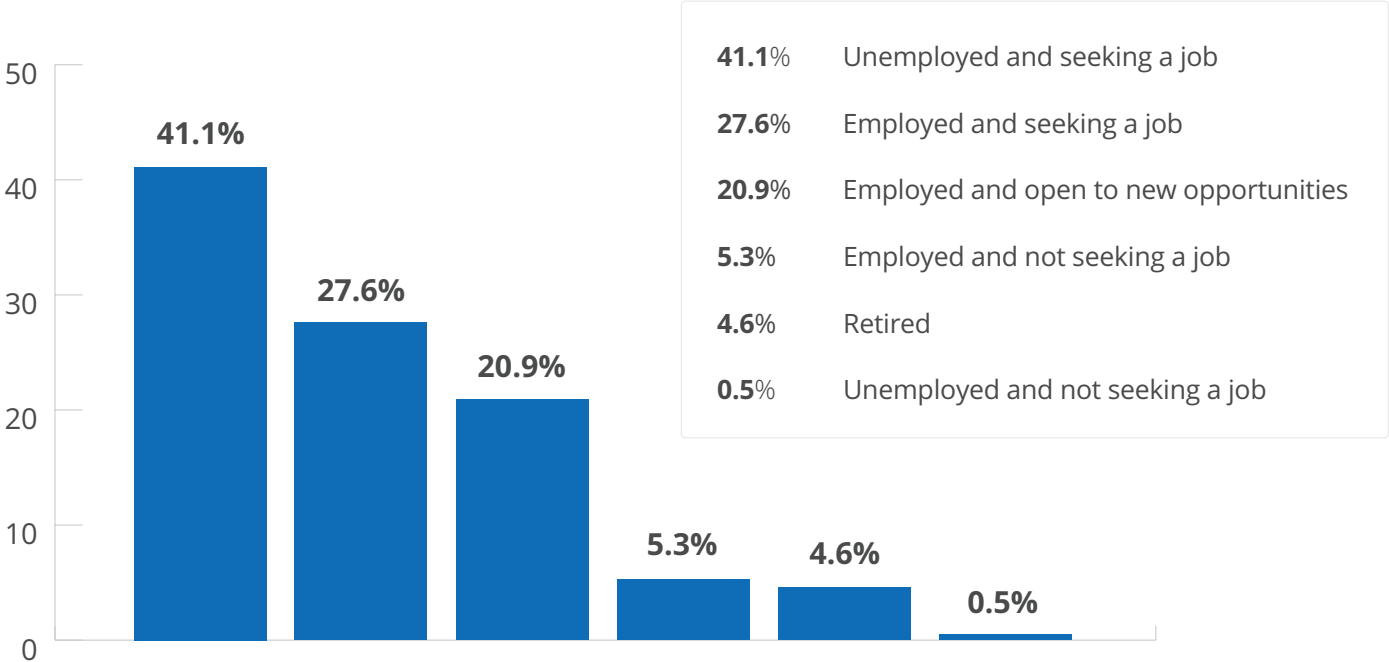
- 77.0%** Shortage of qualified applicants
- 37.4%** Candidates' hesitancy to return to in-person work
- 25.5%** Continued interest in remote work
- 20.6%** Limited recruiting budget/rising hiring costs
- 19.0%** Influx of applicants/"mass applies" due to unemployment
- 18.3%** Economic uncertainty
- 10.1%** Commitments to Diversity, Equity & Inclusion

The State of Online Recruiting: Job Seekers

Who's Searching?

When we conducted this survey in June of 2021, the U.S. unemployment rate sat at 5.9% (vastly different from the 14.7% noted in 2020's State of Online Recruiting Report). Nevertheless, respondents' employment statuses were nearly identical to those cited in 2020: 41.1% of job seekers said they were unemployed and seeking a job (41.8% in 2020), while 48.5% were employed and seeking a job, either actively or passively (50.5% in 2020).

What is your employment status?



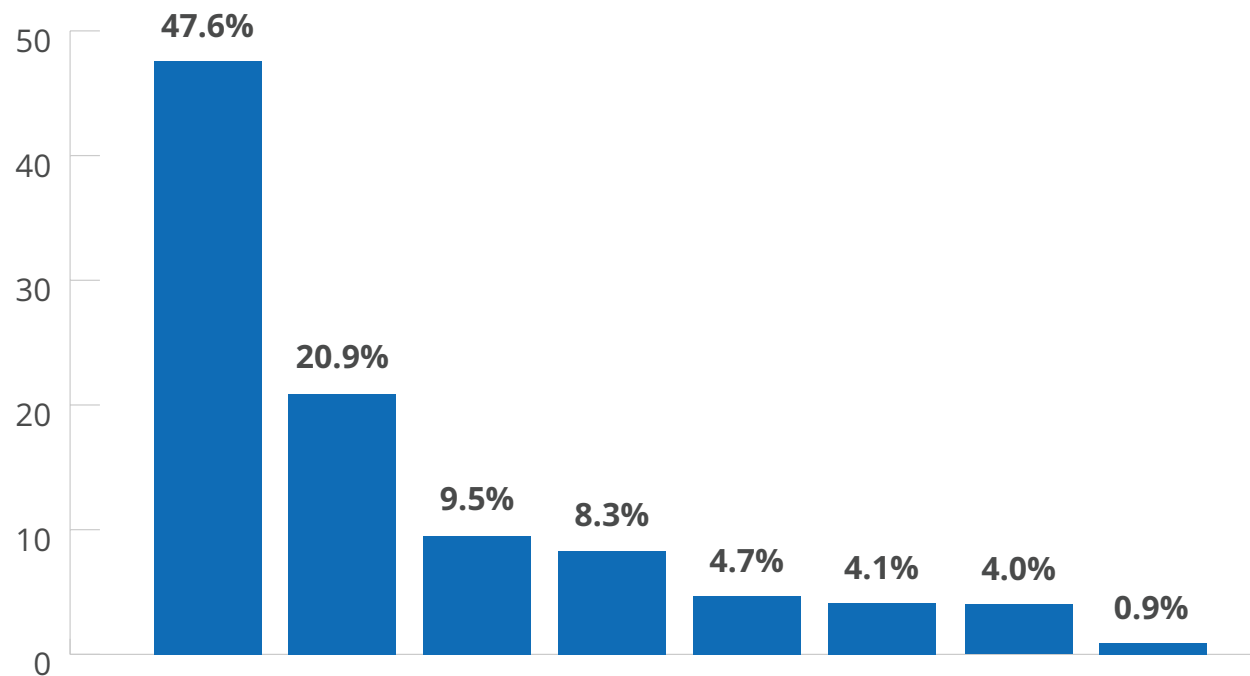
Of those currently unemployed and searching for a job:

- 24.0%** are looking for a new job because they are unsatisfied with their current or most recent employer.
- 18.4%** are searching because they were laid off due to COVID-19.
- 15.0%** are changing careers or exploring a new industry.
- 11.5%** desire a more flexible work schedule.
- 4.3%** were recently fired or terminated.

Job Search Platforms & Preferences

Where do today's candidates search for work opportunities? We asked respondents where online they'd look first if they needed a new gig. General job boards ranked as the top choice (47.6%), followed by industry-focused job boards (20.9%).

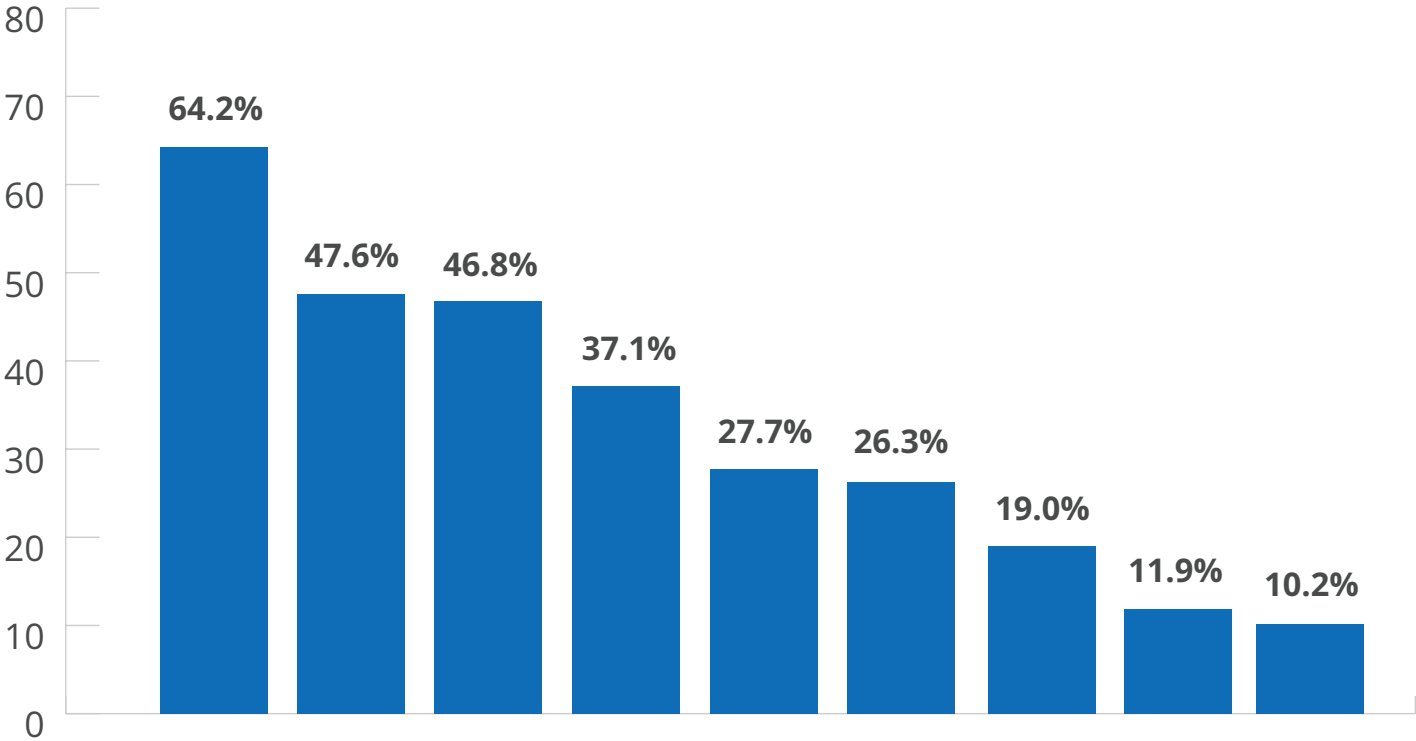
Imagine that you need a new job immediately. Where (online) would you look first?



- 47.6%** General job board (ex: Monster, Indeed)
- 20.9%** Industry-focused job board (ex: iHire)
- 9.5%** A specific company's website
- 8.3%** Google/search engine
- 4.7%** Professional association
- 4.1%** Social media
- 4.0%** Online classifieds (Craigslist, online newspapers, etc.)
- 0.9%** Alumni/school network

But just as employers use multiple channels to source candidates, job seekers rely on a variety of tools to find employment. Aside from job boards, 64.2% of job seekers search for work on company websites. However, just 50.2% of employers surveyed said they regularly post jobs to their own sites. Similarly, only 37.1% of job seekers use referrals, which happen to be the most popular recruiting source (besides job boards) for surveyed employers (used by 77.6%).

Aside from job boards, which of the following resources do you use to search for work?
(Check all that apply)



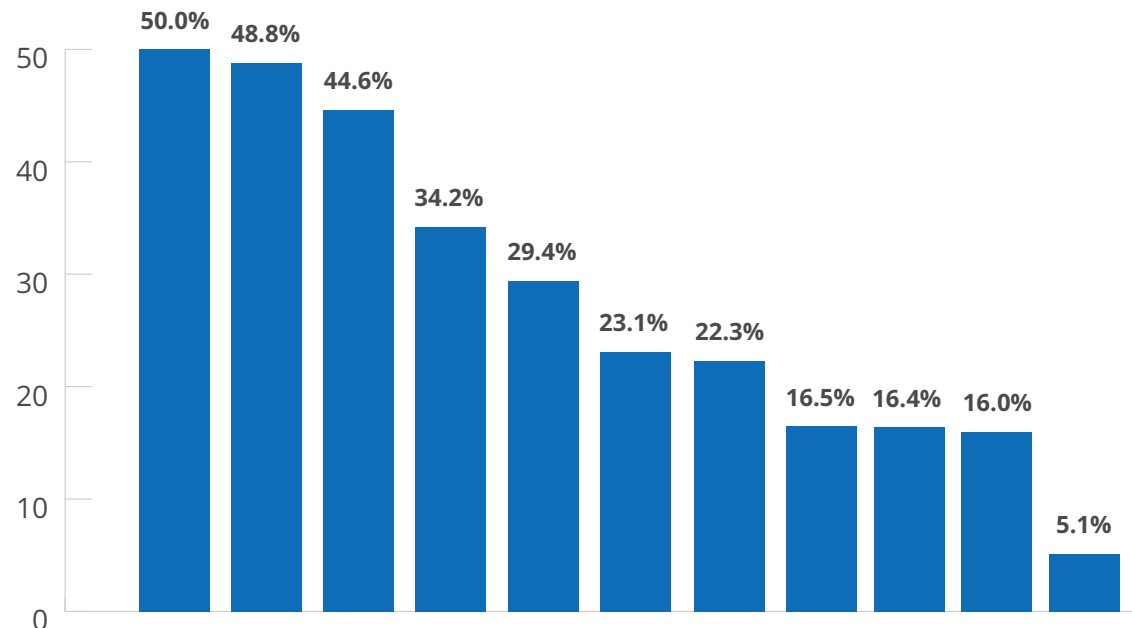
- 64.2%** Websites of companies I want to work for
- 47.6%** Recruiters/staffing agencies
- 46.8%** Social media
- 37.1%** Referrals
- 27.7%** Professional associations
- 26.3%** Online classifieds (Craigslist, online newspapers, etc.)
- 19.0%** Job fairs and networking events (online/in-person)
- 11.9%** Print advertisements (signs, newspaper ads, etc.)
- 10.2%** Alumni/school networks

Online Job Search Challenges

Amidst slowly but surely improving unemployment numbers, what challenges are today's job seekers facing when searching for work online? Despite the evolving employment market, top candidate challenges have remained fairly similar, year-over-year.

In 2021, job seekers cited finding jobs in their desired location (50.0%), "ghosting" or not hearing back from employers after applying (48.8%), and finding jobs that meet their salary requirements (44.6%) as their three biggest pain points. Although presented with slightly different response options, job seekers said a lack of employer communication was their No. 1 online job search challenge in 2020 and 2019. Finding jobs in their desired location has ranked in the top two spots annually.

When searching for work on an online job board or talent community, what are your biggest challenges? (Check all that apply)

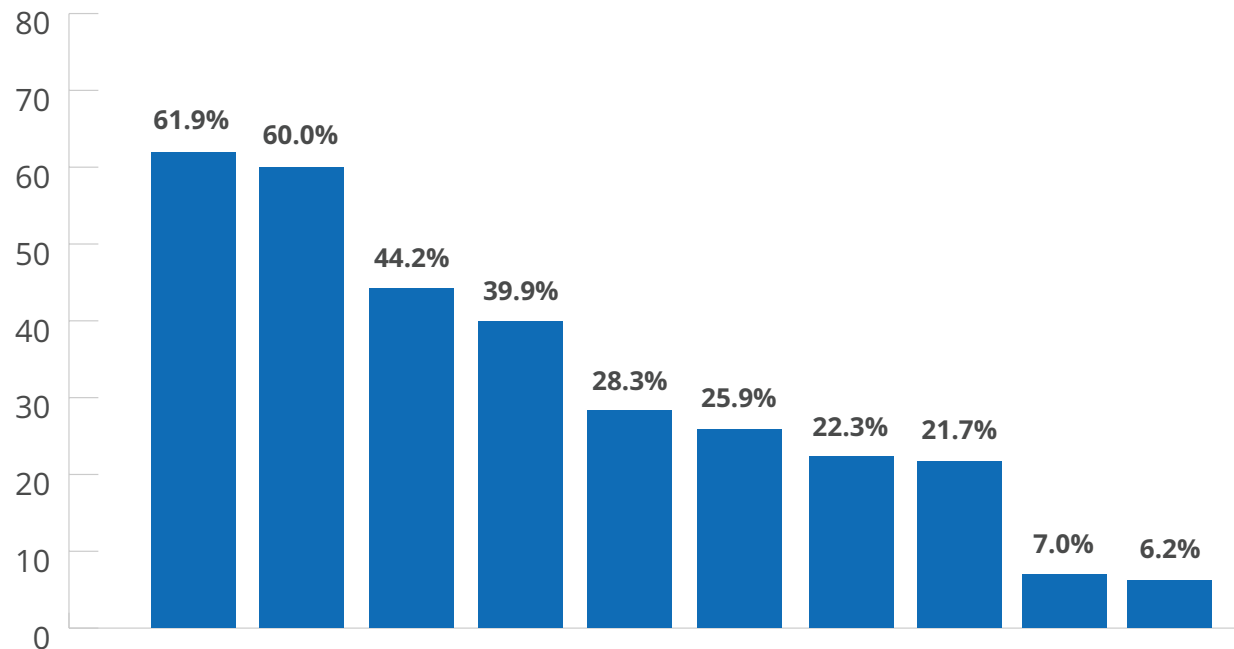


- 50.0%** Finding jobs in my desired location
- 48.8%** Applying for jobs and not hearing back from employers/"ghosting"
- 44.6%** Finding jobs that meet my salary requirements
- 34.2%** Finding jobs I'm qualified for
- 29.4%** Being directed to another site to complete an application
- 23.1%** Long application processes (too many prescreening questions, assessments, etc.)
- 22.3%** Being overqualified for jobs
- 16.5%** Finding remote work
- 16.4%** Concerns with job fraud/unsure if jobs are legitimate
- 16.0%** Vague or confusing job descriptions
- 5.1%** Unable to gauge employers' commitment to Diversity, Equity & Inclusion

Job Posting Preferences

Next, we asked job seekers what employers or recruiters could “do better” to convince them to apply for their job postings. The No. 2 and No. 3 responses centered on communication, suggesting employers could overcome their challenge of unresponsive candidates by specifying the next steps in the hiring process (60.0%) and including contact information for the hiring manager or recruiter (44.2%).

Which of the following could employers/recruiters do better to get you to apply for their online job postings? (Check all that apply)



- 61.9%** Specify the salary range for the position
- 60.0%** Specify the next steps/hiring timeline (when you should expect to hear back, etc.)
- 44.2%** Include contact information for the hiring manager/recruiter
- 39.9%** Shorten the time it takes to complete the application
- 28.3%** Ensure their application is accessible on mobile
- 25.9%** Make cover letters optional
- 22.3%** Include an incentive or sign-on bonus
- 21.7%** Provide information on their company culture
- 7.0%** Mention COVID-19 protocols and precautions
- 6.2%** Provide information on their commitment to DE&I/include an EOE statement

Job Search Trends: Looking Back & Moving Forward

Job seekers have had their work cut out for them, with many facing layoffs, shifting to remote work, adapting to virtual recruiting process, considering career changes, and more in the past year.

Here's how job seekers spent the previous 12 months:



updated their resume.



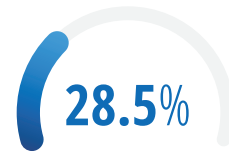
joined a job board or talent community.



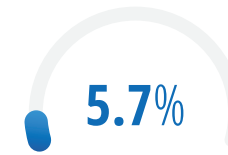
changed careers or started a new career path.



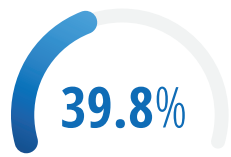
applied for a job through an online job board or talent community.



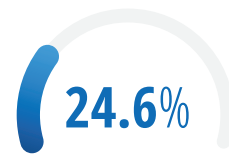
applied for jobs they're underqualified for.



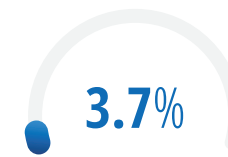
worked with a career coach.



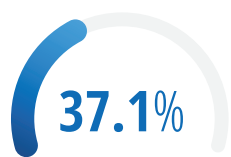
applied for jobs they're overqualified for.



took an online course.



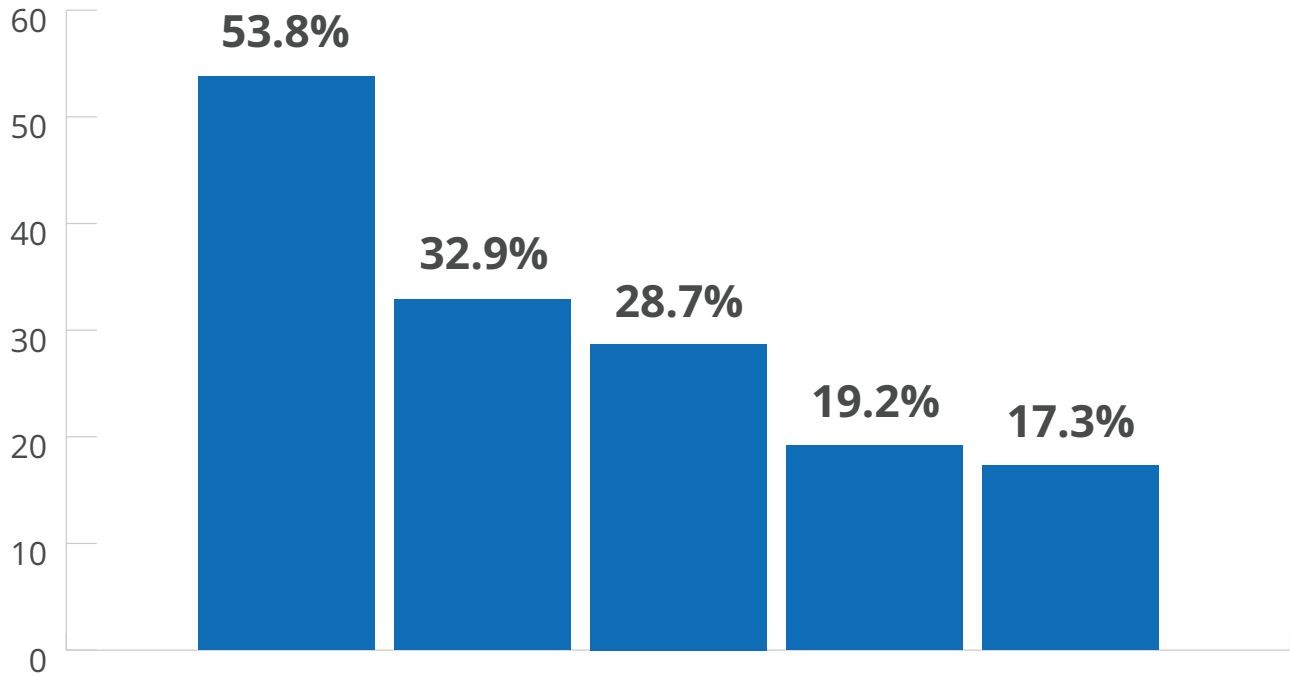
declined a job offer or left a job because it was in-person/in-office.



participated in a virtual or video interview.

To close out our job seeker survey, we asked respondents to select the trends they expect to affect their ability to search for work online in the coming year. Standing out from other applicants was the clear top trend (53.8%), as job seekers will need to look for ways to differentiate themselves from the competition in a crowded talent pool.

In the coming year, which of the following trends do you expect to impact your online job search efforts? (Check all that apply)



- 53.8%** Standing out from other applicants in a competitive market
- 32.9%** Lack of job openings
- 28.7%** Difficulty finding positions with flexible scheduling options
- 19.2%** Difficulty finding remote work
- 17.3%** Too many job openings/overwhelming to search for jobs online

Employer Takeaways: Connecting with Job Seekers

With hiring showing no signs of slowing down any time soon, how can employers connect with qualified candidates to fill their positions? Considering the survey responses from our job seekers, here are five actionable recruiting tactics to implement in 2021:

- 01 Diversify your recruiting portfolio.** Job seekers indicated that they use a wide variety of resources when looking for work, including company websites, general and industry-specific job boards, referrals, professional associations, and more. Don't rely on one single recruitment channel – test different platforms and tactics and see which are most effective in bringing in your ideal candidates.
- 02 Leverage your company's website.** 64.2% of candidates visit the websites of companies they want to work for when searching for jobs. Attract these job seekers and strengthen your employer brand by posting job openings on your site. Better yet, create a designated “Careers” page that not only lists your current openings, but also showcases your company's work culture. Include photos, videos, employee testimonials, benefits, and more.
- 03 Separate job requirements into “must-haves” and “nice-to-haves.”** If you're among the 73.9% of employers who struggle to find qualified candidates, consider whether you're overly stringent in your job requirements. When crafting your job posting, identify which qualifications are “must-haves” (dealbreakers, like certain licensures and credentials), and which are “nice-to-haves” (skills that can be taught or experience that can be gained on the job). This will ensure you don't let potentially great talent slip through the cracks.

04

Communicate, communicate, communicate. Nearly half of job seekers surveyed were frustrated by a lack of response from employers. Communicating with applicants – even if that simply means letting them know when they are out of the running for the role through an automated message – goes a long way in creating a positive sentiment about your employer brand. Enable a smooth candidate experience and show applicants that you value their time – don’t burn bridges because, who knows, a “disqualified” candidate may be a fit for a different role in the future.

05


Think “quality over quantity.” Although 63.5% of employers said they struggle with a low volume of applicants, focusing on candidate quantity is not always the best tactic. Often, it’s more efficient and effective to receive a handful of highly qualified candidates – no need to spend time and effort sifting through stacks of irrelevant resumes. And, when you do receive a stellar applicant, move fast. Don’t wait until you meet a certain quota because that A-list candidate is probably a frontrunner in another company’s talent pool.



Job Seeker Takeaways: Connecting with Employers

How can job seekers better connect with employers to find meaningful and rewarding employment? With employers' survey responses in mind, here are five ways candidates can land their next career opportunity – quickly:

- 01 Get networking.** 70.6% of employers use referrals in their recruiting efforts, while 23.5% source through job fairs and networking events. Growing your network is a proactive strategy for finding a job – often, it's about who you know, not how many applications you submit. Make new connections online (try social media, forums, groups), and in-person (attend industry events, set up informational interviews, reconnect with old colleagues), and the right opportunity may find *you*.
- 02 Expand your skills.** The most successful people are constantly learning and looking for opportunities to make themselves more desirable in their job searches. Research career titles you'd like to hold, check out related job descriptions, and work to achieve the skills needed to land that particular job. At the same time, if you are missing certain requirements listed in a job posting, play up your “transferable skills” in your resume and cover letter to fill in the gaps.



03 **Look beyond salary.** Even if the salary for a role is the most important influencer when choosing to apply or accept a job, it's essential to weigh in other factors. Your dream job may not meet your desired pay scale, but it may make up for those shortcomings with benefits and perks, such as flexible scheduling, tuition reimbursement, and other elements found in a "total compensation package." However, don't be afraid to ask for the salary you seek, do your research, and prepare to negotiate.

04 **Respond to employers.** Employers are just as frustrated by a lack of response from job seekers as candidates are discouraged by unresponsive employers – 46.8% of employers cited "not hearing back from applicants after reaching out" as a top recruiting challenge. If you're genuinely interested in a job, get back to hiring managers in a timely manner when they request interviews or phone screens. Never "ghost" an employer, even if you need to decline their invitation politely.

05 **Market yourself.** Over half of job seekers surveyed expect to struggle with standing out from other applicants in the competitive market in the coming year. Aim to market yourself and your personal brand in your job search. Keep your resume fresh, write an attention-grabbing cover letter (that's not a rehash of your resume), share work samples or a portfolio, and nail your elevator pitch. Ask questions in your interviews, send "thank-you" notes, and follow up if you experience radio silence from the employer. Show that you want the job, and you'll be more likely to land it.

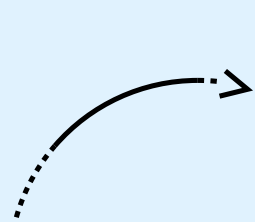
Conclusion

A lot has changed since we introduced this annual report in 2019, but one thing remains the same: Employers need qualified talent – whether they hire once or 100 times a year. On the other hand, job seekers desire meaningful and rewarding employment, and they want to feel as though their time is valued in the recruitment process.

In the coming months, employers and job seekers can increase their chances of finding one another – and ensuring the other party is the right fit – in several ways. For employers, communicating with candidates, diversifying their recruiting toolboxes, strengthening their brands and online presences, rethinking applicant “must-haves,” and focusing on candidate quality versus quantity are critical to hiring success.

For job seekers, landing that perfect opportunity also requires communication – responding to employers and following up on applications are central to standing out from the crowd. Networking and building professional connections, proactively growing skillsets, and considering employment perks beyond salary are all savvy job search strategies to embrace in 2021.

See you in 2022!



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Survey Methodology

A total of 6,370 U.S. job seekers (5,614) and employers (756) responded to iHire's State of Online Recruiting Survey in June and July of 2021. Respondents came from iHire's database of job seekers and employers of various sizes across 57 industries. All decimal points are rounded to the nearest tenth. For many questions, multiple answers could be selected so percentages add up to a sum greater than 100%. In some instances, survey questions were skipped by an individual respondent.

About iHire

iHire is a leading career-oriented platform that powers a family of 57 industry-focused talent networks, including WorkInSports, iHireVeterinary, iHireDental, iHireConstruction, and iHireChefs. For more than 20 years, iHire has combined advanced job matching technology with our expertise in the talent acquisition space to connect job seekers with employers in their desired sector. With an industry-specific, candidate-centric, and data-driven approach to recruitment, iHire helps candidates find meaningful work, and employers find unique, high-quality talent – faster, easier, and more effectively than a general job board. Visit www.iHire.com for more information.

