



# Navigating the Hybrid Hiring Era

Create a better and fairer candidate experience with the right blend of digital and human hiring strategies





**Job searching in 2021 looks very different than it did just a few years ago. Candidates are now more familiar with video interviews, online applications and software like Applicant Tracking Systems. They're savvier than ever. And in their fight to be the one who gets hired, they've learnt and shared new techniques.**

Here we look at how applicants have negotiated changes in digital recruitment trends and consider what systems and processes recruiters can employ in the new era of hybrid hiring. We also look at how all of these changes can bring everyone closer to finding their dream job.

The successful, modern job applicant is precise, prepared and ready to outwit their competition. Putting their best foot forward in this new arena means rethinking every aspect of how they present themselves. Candidates have always edited their CVs, making them highly specific and relevant to improve their chances of getting to that first stage interview. But the modern applicant knows that they must now fill section heads and descriptions with catchy keywords for their CVs to filter through resume-scanning technology and into human hands. Their preparation strategy now involves browsing forums to find out what companies ask during interviews and, crucially, assess which answers elicit the best responses.

In our last report *Hiring Humans vs Recruitment Robots*, we explored how technology and digital recruiting changed job hunting. Those changes have only accelerated and this time, candidates are much more aware. Digital tools that might have once been intimidating are now fully integrated into their working practices, opening new doors to their future.

We worked with OnePoll, a survey-led marketing agency, to gather valuable insight into how 1,000 job-seeking UK adults navigated these changes. Respondents were split broadly equally between men and women, the majority were aged 18 to 64 and approximately two-thirds are in full-time employment. Interviews were carried out in early 2021.





# A Tougher Marketplace

2020 was a difficult time for job-seekers. It began with a record high employment rate of 76.3% (according to the Office of National Statistics) but just a few months later, shuttered businesses increased the unemployment rate and drove down year-on-year job vacancies. Many found themselves without access to their long held positions, now only supported by government retention schemes.

Back on the job market, they updated their CVs and LinkedIn profiles, asked former managers for recommendations and set up daily alerts for new positions that matched their skills, experience and interest. Forced by the global pandemic, applicants started becoming familiar with a whole host of new digital tools.

While a two-way video interview was always technically possible, barriers to its adoption were torn away in the past year. Now, most candidates (64%) believe two-way video interviewing has had a positive impact on the job application experience; some even say video interviews and applications make them feel more confident and prepared (48%) and help them present a better version of themselves.

**A quicker application process means more applications, and on that account, increased competition.**



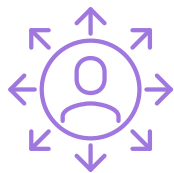
# Here's how respondents felt about their experience:



**Job-seeking** has gotten harder due to the impact from Covid-19



There **aren't enough jobs** out there for everyone to be in employment



I think when it comes to getting a job it's more about **who you know** rather than what you know



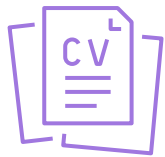
It's **so easy to apply for jobs** now which means the number of applicants is rising, which decreases my chance of getting the job



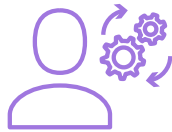
● Strongly agree      ● Somewhat agree      ● Neither agree nor disagree      ● Somewhat disagree      ● Strongly disagree



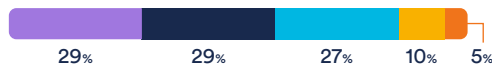
More and more employers are expecting candidates to have **post-degree qualifications**



I'm having to **exaggerate my experience** and skills on my CV to get interviews



My industry was hard hit by Covid-19, and I'm struggling to **transfer my skills** to a new industry



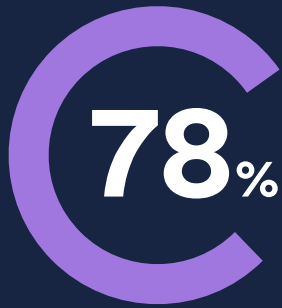
● Strongly agree

● Somewhat agree

● Neither agree nor disagree

● Somewhat disagree

● Strongly disagree



78%

## 78% said the impact of Covid-19 made job-seeking harder.

The average job-seeker in lockdown competed with more applicants over much fewer options. Due to mass redundancies, recruiters were inundated with a large increase in the number of applications made per job posting. Many organisations suddenly became [high volume recruiters](#) overnight. Retail organisations, for example, saw their normal rate of job applications skyrocket. Data from Tribepad showed that the usual average of 5,000 applications per day, for one

client, increased to more than 200,000 on Friday 20th March 2020. Other industries were affected too. Overall annual application volume increased in outsourcing (110%), public sector (93%), property (63%) and more. As a result, many organisations have implemented additional screening measures to cope with the additional work but this made the application process a lot more complicated for applicants unfamiliar with these demands.



68%

## 68% believe it's now who you know, rather than what you know.

Even before the pandemic, job applicants were aware of a hidden job market where open jobs are quickly filled by former colleagues, classmates, fellow society members, neighbours, family or friends. Experts at Deloitte's Future of Work<sup>1</sup> practice predict that

tomorrow's job seekers will increasingly need to "find others who can help them get better faster." And in a market where there are not enough jobs to go around, these fears are only heightened.



58%

## 58% said Covid-19 hit their industry hard and they're struggling to transfer their skills to a new industry.

Job cuts and closures made due to the pandemic have wiped out at least 158,945 jobs in retail, aviation, hospitality, energy, manufacturing and the wider economy according to reporting [from Sky News](#). Employees in these industries were pushed

to adapt by repurposing their skills to occupations that could be performed from the safety of their own homes. 42% of respondents said that not having the right experience required was the biggest challenge they faced in applying to jobs last year.



## More people are coming into contact with a broader variety of tech in the hiring process

Video interviews have jumped 12% in usage our last survey and we've found that the younger the candidate, the more comfortable they are interacting with potential employers this way. 49% of 18-24-year-olds agree that they feel more confident and prepared during video interviews but only 17% of 55-64-year-olds feel the same way.



Of the HR recruitment tools surveyed, respondents had heard of and used:



**Two-way video interviewing**

**36%**



**Situational judgement tests**

**33%**



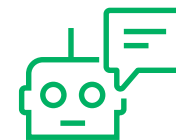
**One-way video interviewing**

**29%**



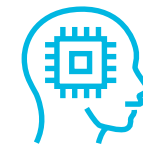
**Gamification**

**26%**



**Chatbots**

**25%**



**Recruitment AI**

**24%**



# Winners and Losers

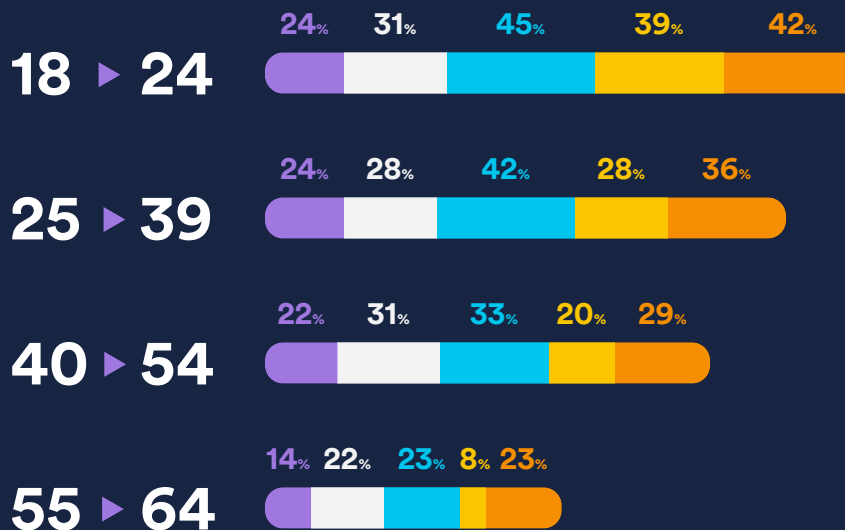
Job seekers in a digital-first recruitment world are responding to tougher conditions by taking any advantage available to deliberately improve their chances. In some cases, it's everything recruiters have ever wanted from candidates – targeted CVs (49% going for quality over quantity) that are updated to match the required criteria (39%). Some (27%) even search online to learn from success stories of previous hires or find questions asked by the company (42%) on sites like Glassdoor.



## Here are some steps applicants have taken in the past year:

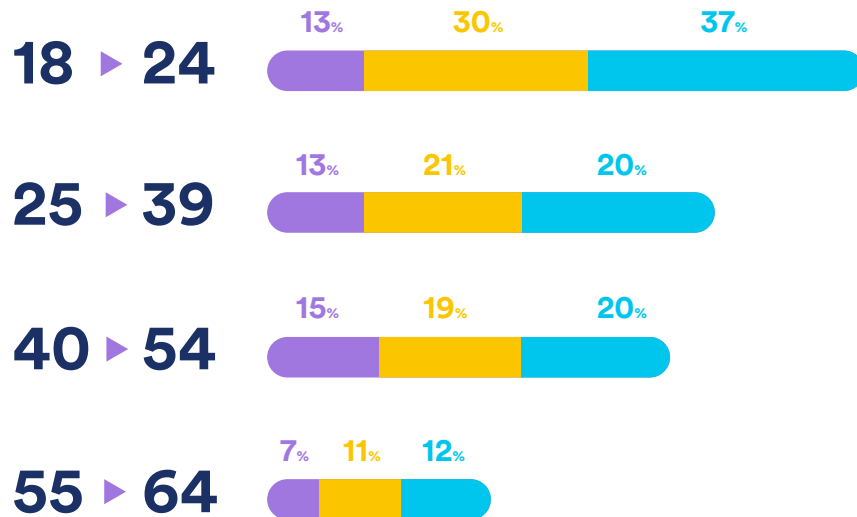
- Used buzzwords in my CV in order to manipulate an automated system
- Shortened the length of your CV
- Updated skills on CV to match the require criteria
- Searched online to find out how other people had got hired
- Searched online to find the questions asked by the company

### Age Range



While preparation is always encouraged, what presents a challenge to recruiters who use technology is some candidate's underhanded attempts at misrepresentation. Cheating on tests, lying or exaggerating experience to get hired hurt the application process and put companies in the position of hiring someone ineligible or inexperienced.

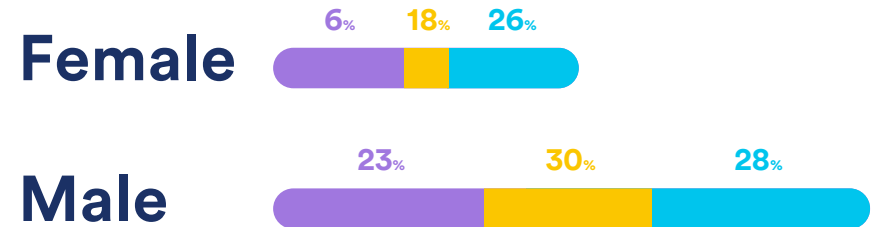
### Age Range



- Cheated on a psychometric, skills, or other kind of test
- Lied or exaggerated about experience in order to get an interview
- Had someone else help me with parts of the interview process

They also let down candidates with lower but more honest scores. Younger male applicants, for example, stand a better chance of being selected because they employ more tactics, both encouraged and punishable, to skew their performance. And applicants are aware of this weakness. 59% feel the wrong people get hired because they know how to work the system.

### Gender



Recruiting in 2021 has added extra pressure to effectively manage your systems and processes so that the most deserving candidate always wins.

### Digital exclusion

While more candidates have experience with tools like two-way video interviews (36%) and chatbots (25%), a worrying 15% say they don't have the means to apply for roles at home.

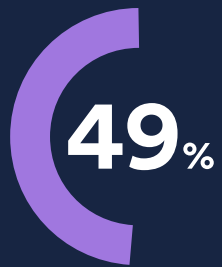
This means you could miss out on a sizable portion of applicants who may be the right fit, but aren't able to present their value online. So to be truly inclusive in the recruitment process, employers must consider how they can engage with this group.

# The Hybrid Hiring Era Needs You



**Recruiting automation is incredibly helpful. It can make finding the best talent quicker and more cost-effective by eliminating mundane, repetitive and time-consuming processes.**

Job-seekers see the benefits:



**Experience a quicker application process, from submitting an application to receiving a response**



**Even notice a quicker response time**



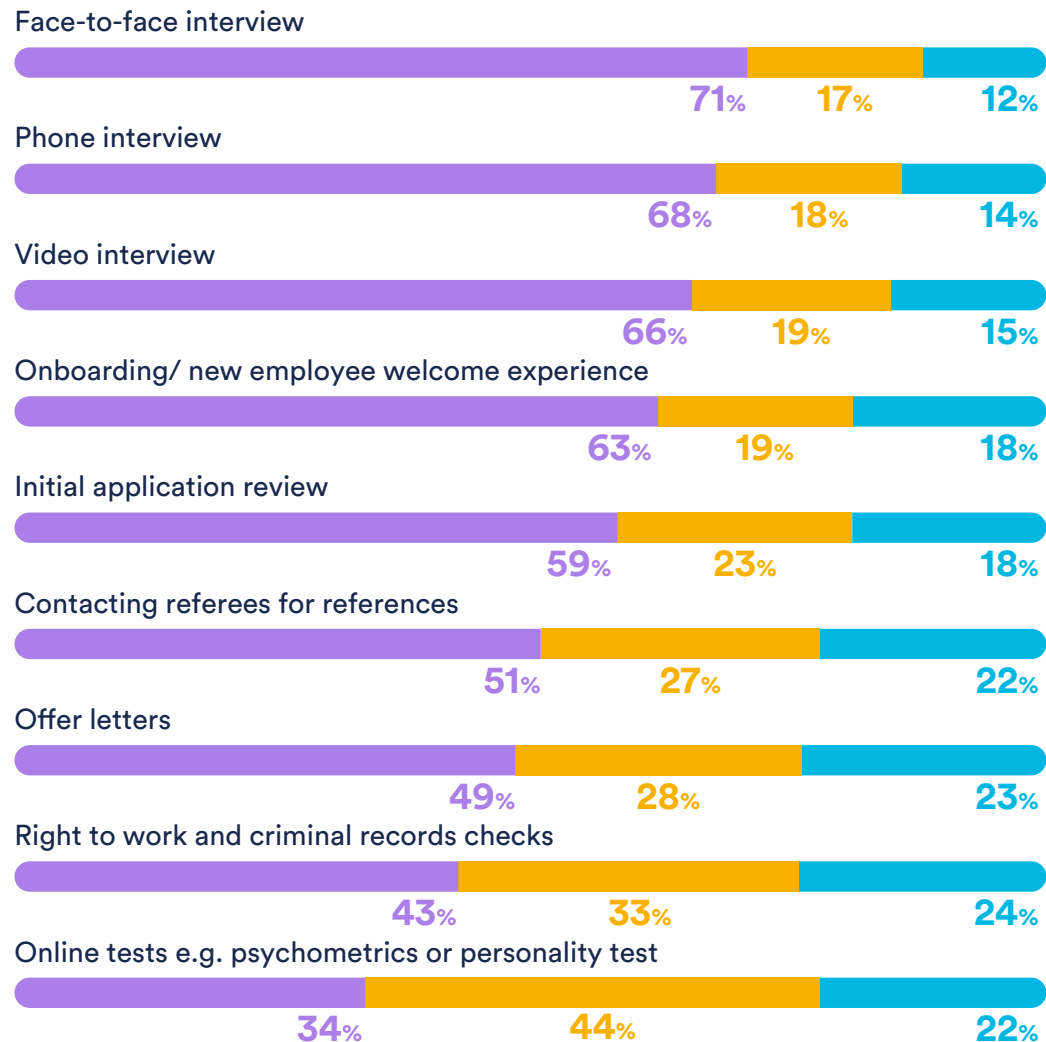
**Said they value regular updates on the progress of their application**

But the hiring process still needs humans. Last year, the role of the recruitment agency diminished, with many now reliant on job search apps, social media or referrals through friends to find new opportunities in the market. Only 24% of respondents applied for jobs directly through a recruiter.

While a third (32%) of candidates prefer to search for jobs online, without human interaction, 50% of job seekers still prefer human interaction when looking for a job, rather than doing it all online. Many of those said the process felt dehumanised (45%). The main barrier for this group was that automation bases its criteria on past facts, not future potential (49%).



## Which of the following stages of the job application process would you like to be carried out by humans, and which would you prefer to be automated?



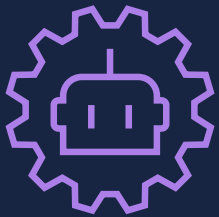
Applicants favoured contact with people, whether recruiters or hiring teams in-house, in face-to-face interviews (71%), on the phone (68%) or on a video (65%).

At the other end of the scale, they were less important to the screening stage of the application experience. Automation was preferred in online tests (44%) and for right to work and criminal record checks, the preference between humans (43%) vs automation (33%) was much closer.

- Humans
- Automation
- No Preference



## The argument for human contact:



**64%**

say using automation only saves the recruiter time in the process, not them.




**60%**

think they would stand a better chance if they went through a human.



**59%**

feel the wrong people get hired because they know how to cheat the system.



So while candidates are clearly now more comfortable with, and can see the benefits of, more technology in the hiring process. Human contact and involvement still needs to be present at the appropriate time. Because the human touch – and human contact – is still an essential part of creating a great candidate experience.





# Conclusion



## Finding the right balance

Recruitment can't go back to the analogue era. Not now that applicants are used to practices that help them feel more confident, prepared and save them time. But it can't be fully digital either.

Job seekers still depend on human interaction to determine a lot about a company. For example, a company's culture can give them a better sense of how comfortable they'd feel in that environment – something that can only fully be experienced in person. In-house recruiters and hiring teams benefit from these connections too, picking up on nuances like a candidate's potential, presence and ambition.

The world has very quickly shifted and changed in the last year, accelerating trends that were already on their way in. As we emerge into a post-pandemic world, more organisations will look to start hiring again.

## Here are some key takeaways to be aware of:

# 1

### Don't leave important steps in the recruitment process up to robots

The promise of AI might need the guidance of experienced human HR teams to be fully effective. For example, Tesco uses several solutions including mobile optimisation, integrated assessments and

automated processing to support its recruitment team. However, it's their hiring team that puts reporting data into action, identifying areas of inefficiency and assuring recruitment process compliance.

# 2

### Have a clear idea of where and why you are using automation

How candidates view your application process will be reflected in how they think about your company and future opportunities. Coventry City Council implemented a new system, balancing automation with human touch to tailor every application

process to its specific needs. By introducing anonymous applications they increased BAME hires from 18% to 40%, and candidates rated the hiring experience as 9/10 in surveys.

# 3

### Find your balance

Ask your candidates about what makes their experience more efficient and match those solutions with what works for your organisation. Serco did this and found that candidates were struggling to find vacancies in their organisation due to a lack

of integration with social networks, which also made the application process difficult. New recruitment software helped them deliver a better candidate experience, while improved reporting helped Serco reduce agency spend and deliver internal efficiencies.

**In return, effective recruitment software will help recruiters find time to set up fairer procedures and engage with a group of applicants of a much higher calibre – those that are prepared and ready to do good work.**

Let's continue the conversation  
on technology in recruitment.

Get in touch



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