



STATE OF THE RECRUITMENT

Annual Survey Report 2024

Uncovering the hiring process and challenges for
candidates and HR in India

Introduction

The recruitment landscape in India is rapidly evolving, especially regarding leadership hiring. In an era marked by technological advancements, changing workforce expectations, and an increased focus on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI), organizations are rethinking their approach to attracting and retaining top talent for critical roles. This annual report aims to provide an in-depth analysis of the current recruitment trends, challenges, and strategies in India's leadership hiring space based on insights gathered from a nationwide survey of HR professionals and candidates.

By publishing this report, we aim to equip industry professionals and job seekers with actionable insights and best practices to navigate the ever-changing recruitment landscape.

Scope of the Survey:

To provide a holistic view of leadership hiring in India, we conducted a comprehensive survey involving two key groups:

- **HR professionals** responsible for recruiting mid-senior and senior leadership roles across industries and
- **Candidates** actively seeking or considering leadership positions.

Through this survey, we sought to explore four critical dimensions of leadership hiring:

1. **Recruitment Journey:** Understanding the process of sourcing, evaluating, and selecting leadership talent from the perspective of both recruiters and candidates.
2. **Challenges Faced:** Uncovering the hurdles HR professionals encounter during the hiring process, such as talent scarcity, cultural fit, and rising recruitment costs.
3. **Recruitment Trends:** Analyzing the impact of current trends like DEI hiring, the use of AI and technology, and the emergence of hybrid and remote leadership roles.
4. **Strategies for Success:** Identifying the best practices and innovative strategies HR leaders adopt to improve recruitment outcomes and ensure long-term success.

**Recruitment in India is a black box—opaque and unpredictable.
It's time to lift the lid and unravel it, one layer at a time.**

Our Founder Writes

Recruitment is more than just matching resumes to job descriptions; it's about connecting capabilities with opportunities. Over the years, I've come to see recruitment as a craft—one that requires a deep understanding of people, industries, and the evolving world of work.

Every mandate we close actually shapes the future of an organization. The right fit will propel the execution, create momentum and build a huge positive outcome for that organization. Similarly, every candidate we place is an opportunity for them to become what they are capable of, what they aspire for. If we do our job well, we create Magic! This belief fuels everything we do at The LHR Group.

This report reflects our commitment to transparency, insights, and excellence in recruitment. We aim to empower businesses and job seekers by sharing data-driven trends and on-ground realities. We want this to be more than just a report—it's a conversation starter about the challenges, opportunities, and future of hiring in India.

As we navigate this dynamic and competitive talent landscape, one thing is clear: the way forward lies in collaboration, innovation, and empathy. Whether you're an employer looking for the right talent or a candidate seeking the right opportunity, we're here to bridge the gap and make the process seamless, meaningful, and impactful.

Let's continue building workplaces that inspire, empower, and thrive.

Ankur Agarwal
Founder & CEO, The LHR Group
[LinkedIn](#)



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Hiring Process

We delved into the hiring journeys of HR professionals and candidates.

80% of HR respondents handle five or more senior-level hires annually. We explored their typical hiring process, from sourcing candidates to extending offers, uncovering how much time each stage demands and the steps involved.

On the flip side, we asked candidates about their job-hunting experiences. The responses reveal a dynamic talent market:

- **52% of candidates are currently employed but actively seeking new opportunities.**
- **32% more are employed and passively exploring job opportunities.**

These insights reflect a workforce that is always on the lookout for better prospects, signalling the need for companies to continually improve their recruitment strategies to attract and retain top talent.

Job portals are most widely used, both by HRs and candidates

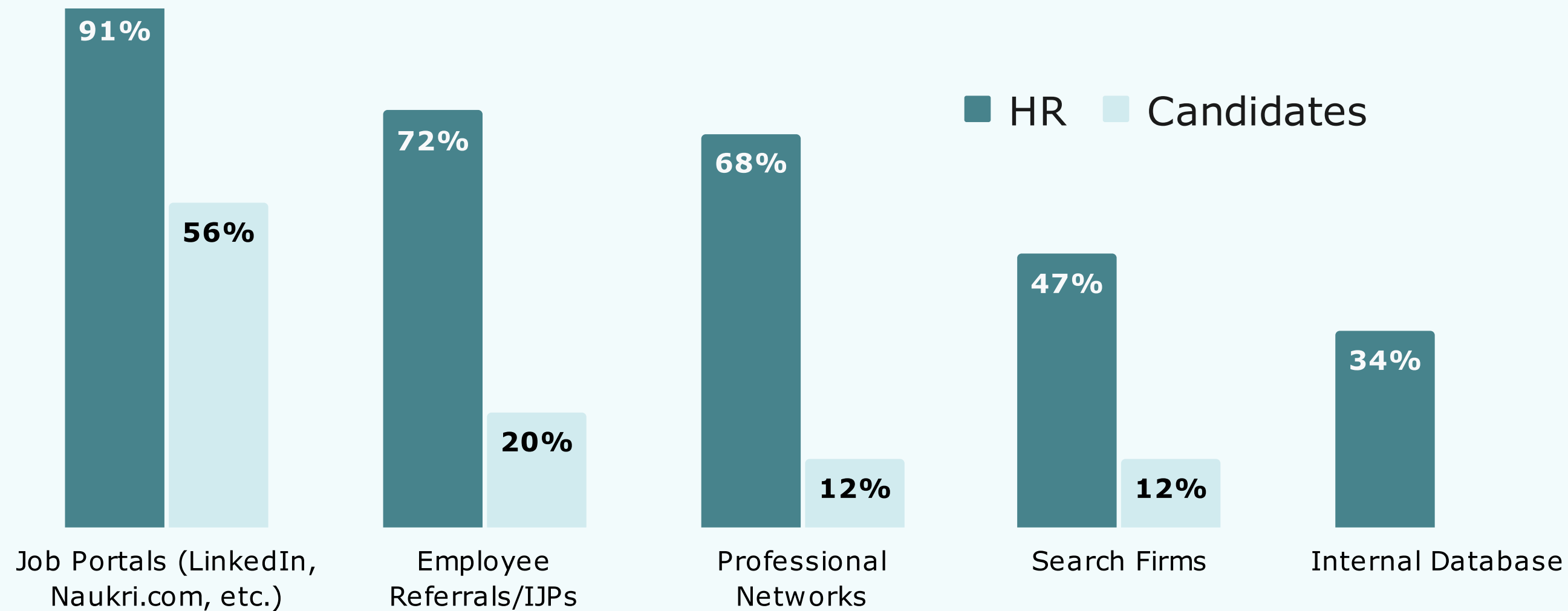


Fig 1.0. Comparison of Methods Used by HR Professionals to Source Candidates vs. Methods Through Which Candidates Secured Their Current (or Last) Job

90.6% of HR use job portals like LinkedIn, Naukri, etc., to source candidates in combination with employee referrals/internal job postings (IJPs) and professional networks. The least used method is using the internal database. When we asked candidates how they got their current (or last) job, 56% answered job portals, followed by employee referrals (20%). 12% got it through their professional networks, and the rest, 12%, through a recruitment firm.

The implication for recruiters and HRs is that the candidate pool is most readily available on job portals, making them the best places to scout candidates.

The implication for candidates is to optimize their profiles on these platforms to stand out from the crowd.

More than 2/3rds of organisations look beyond CV screening and interviews to test candidates

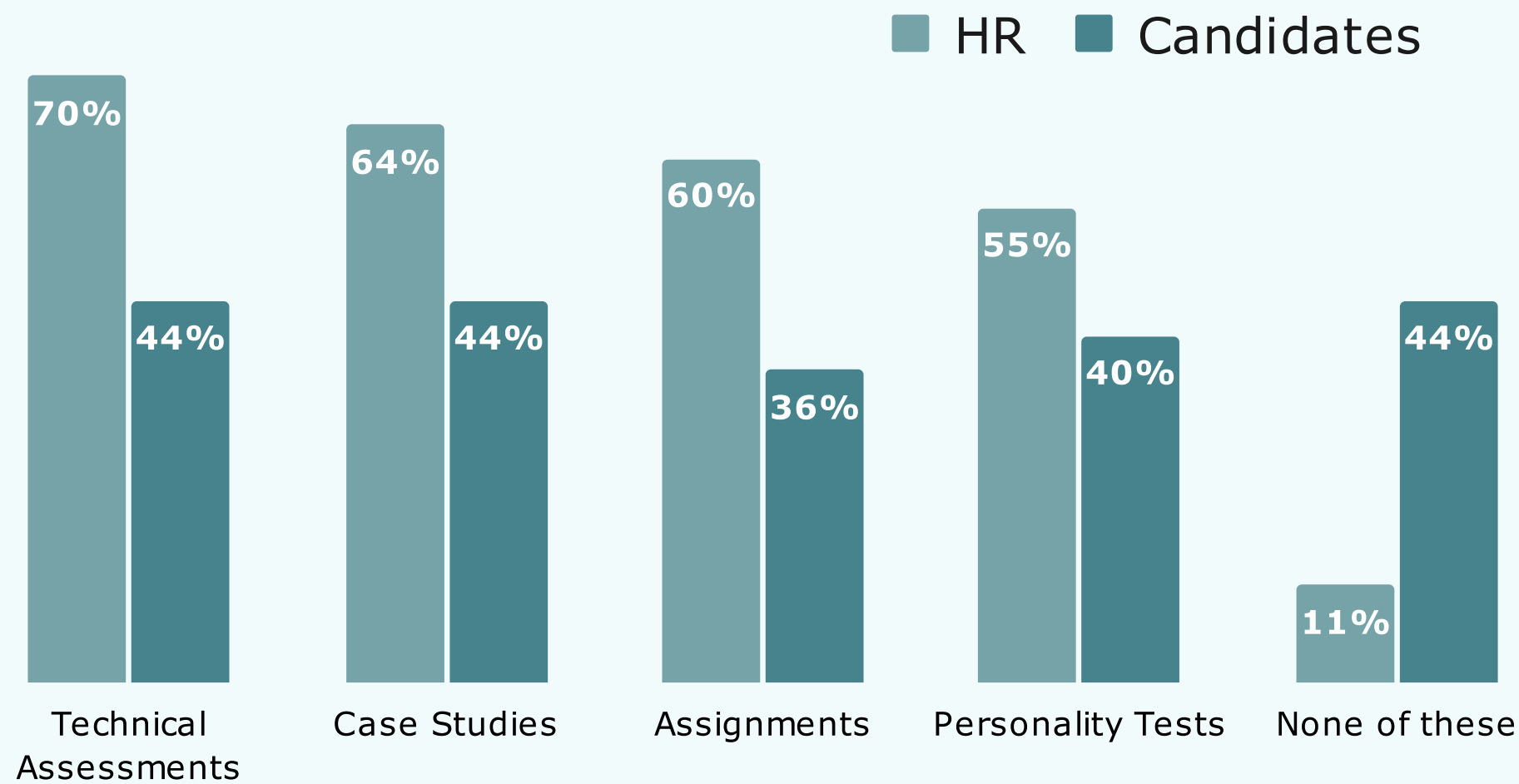


Fig 2.0. Percentage of organisations who use and candidates who have come across ways other than interview and CV screening during hiring

Technical assessment (such as aptitude tests, coding tests, etc.) is the most common method used by organisations (69.8%). 44% of candidates have come across this during the hiring process.

Case studies to assess problem-solving skills are used by 64.2% of organisations, and 44% of candidates have come across this.

Assignments to assess the work quality (for example, making a financial model for a financial analyst) are the third most common method used by 60.4% of organisations. 36% of candidates have come across this.

Personality tests are used by 54.7% of organisations. 40% of all candidates have come across this.

Only 11.3% of companies use none of these, relying only on interviews and CV screening. However, 44% of candidates say that they have never come across any of these methods in their hiring processes.

However, 56% of candidates say that assessments don't truly test caliber

Question to candidates: Do you think assessments and test are able to assess candidates' caliber?

56% of the candidates responded negatively, saying that the **candidates manipulate answers as per what the company wants to hear.**

This defeats the purpose of tests and assessments.

Our research shows that manipulating answers is the easiest in personality tests (a method used by 54% of organisations).

The implication for HR and recruiters is to make the tests as objective as possible. It is advisable to use technical assessments and assignments that test the applicant's hard skills.

What firms do to increase chance of success for applicants

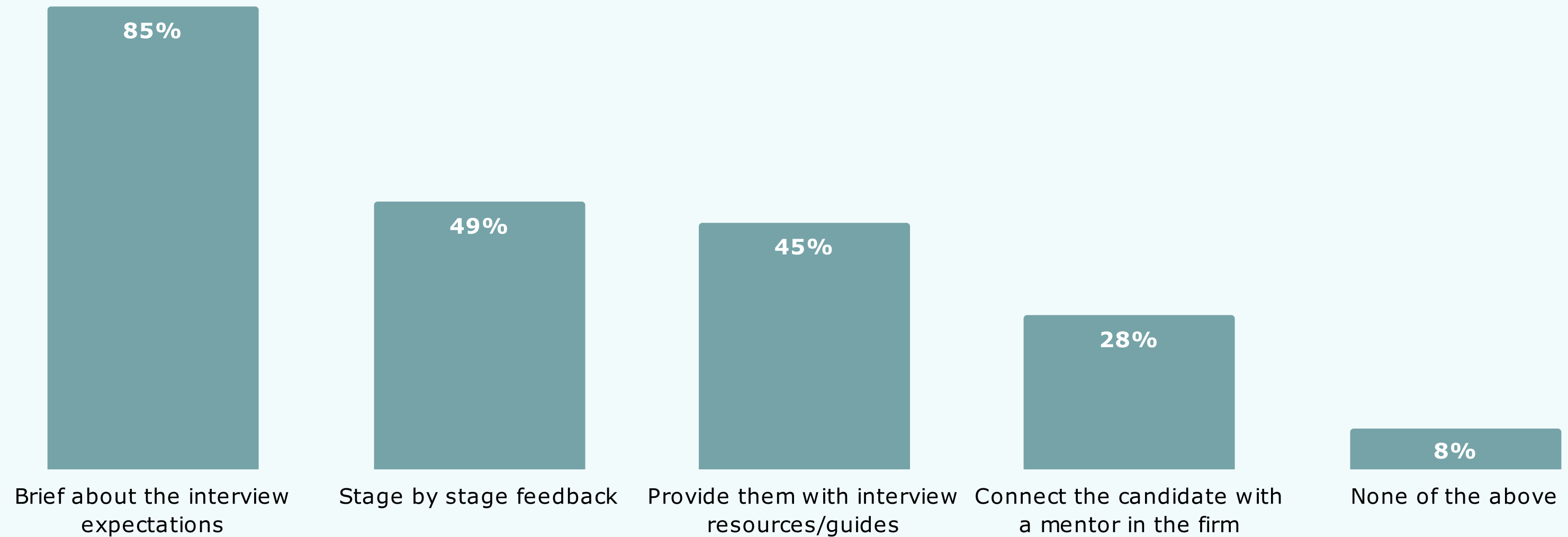


Fig 3.0. Methods used by organisations to increase the chances of success for candidates

The most common way, used by 85% of HRs, is to give an upfront briefing about the interview expectations. It requires the least time and resources.

49.1% of the organisations provide stage-by-stage feedback, and 45.3% provide resources and guides to help prepare for the interview.

Connecting candidates with a mentor in the firm who can guide them through the process is done by only 28.3% of organisations, all of them either MNCs or large Indian companies.

Only 7.5% of organisations use none of the above methods to increase the chances of success for candidates.

Implication of different methods to improve candidate success

Employing methods to increase the chances of success for candidates is a proven way to showcase your organization's values, commitment to employee growth, and focus on creating a positive workplace environment.

For 76% of candidates, joining an organisation with a good culture is extremely important.

Recruitment process is the doorway to your company's culture.

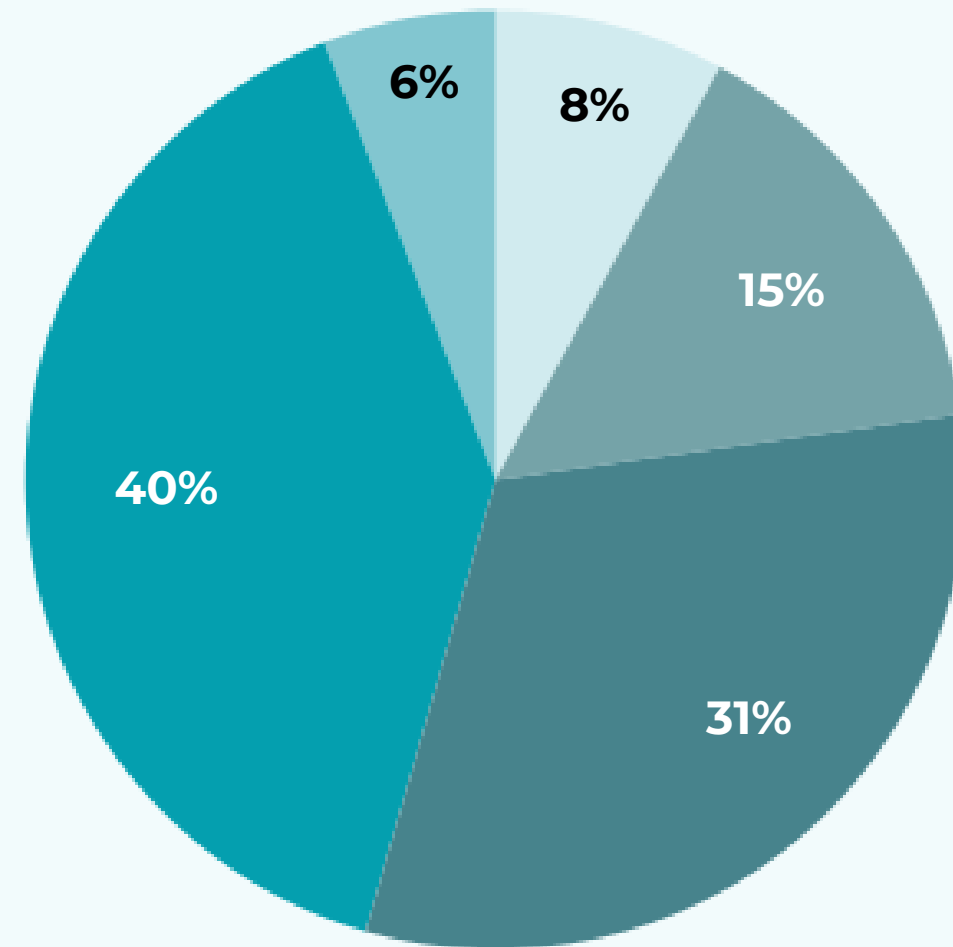
Less than 50% of organisations across industries are using any method other than giving an upfront briefing about the interview expectations.

The implication for organisations is that they can make a difference to candidates' experience by employing one of the following methods:

- **Stage-by-stage feedback:** Let the candidate know their shortcomings and strengths to help prepare them for the next round.
- **Interview resources and guides:** For the core roles in your organisation, prepare an interview guide to help candidates align their preparation as per the actual interview's requirements.
- **Connecting with a mentor in the organisation:** Widely used by consulting and investment banking firms, this benefits both the candidates and the organisation. Mentor Connect allows candidates to clear doubts and understand the company's work culture. The conversations allow the mentor to understand the candidate's personality and calibre.

Positive candidate experience adds to the brand equity.

It takes 3+ months for selecting a senior hire in 46% cases



● Less than 1 month ● 1 month to 2 months
● 2 to 3 months ● 3 to 6 months ● More than 6 months

Fig 4.0. Average time period for a senior hire, from when a position opens up until the offer is extended

Here, the time period represents the time from when a position opens up until the offer is extended.

This extended timeframe highlights the complexities involved in recruiting for high-level positions, which require candidates with specialized skills, extensive experience, and strong cultural alignment with the organization.

The lengthy hiring process for senior roles can be attributed to various factors, including a smaller talent pool, rigorous evaluation stages, and the need for careful alignment with organizational goals. As a result, companies may face prolonged vacancies in critical positions, which can impact productivity and team dynamics.

This underscores the importance of strategic workforce planning and the potential value of streamlined hiring practices or proactive talent pipelines to minimize time-to-hire for senior roles.

This prompts the question - what challenges are faced by HR and candidates during talent hunting.

Hiring challenges faced by HR and candidates

The hiring process is notorious for being riddled with challenges - from the POV of both, candidates and talent acquisitionists.

With **100% of candidate respondents believing that a smooth, hassle-free, and fast recruitment process adds to the organisation's brand value**, it will serve the organisations well to identify and fix the gaps in their hiring process.

Similarly, it serves as a promising data point for candidates to understand what to avoid and how to conduct themselves throughout the process.

Challenges faced by HR- Shallow Talent Pool is the biggest one

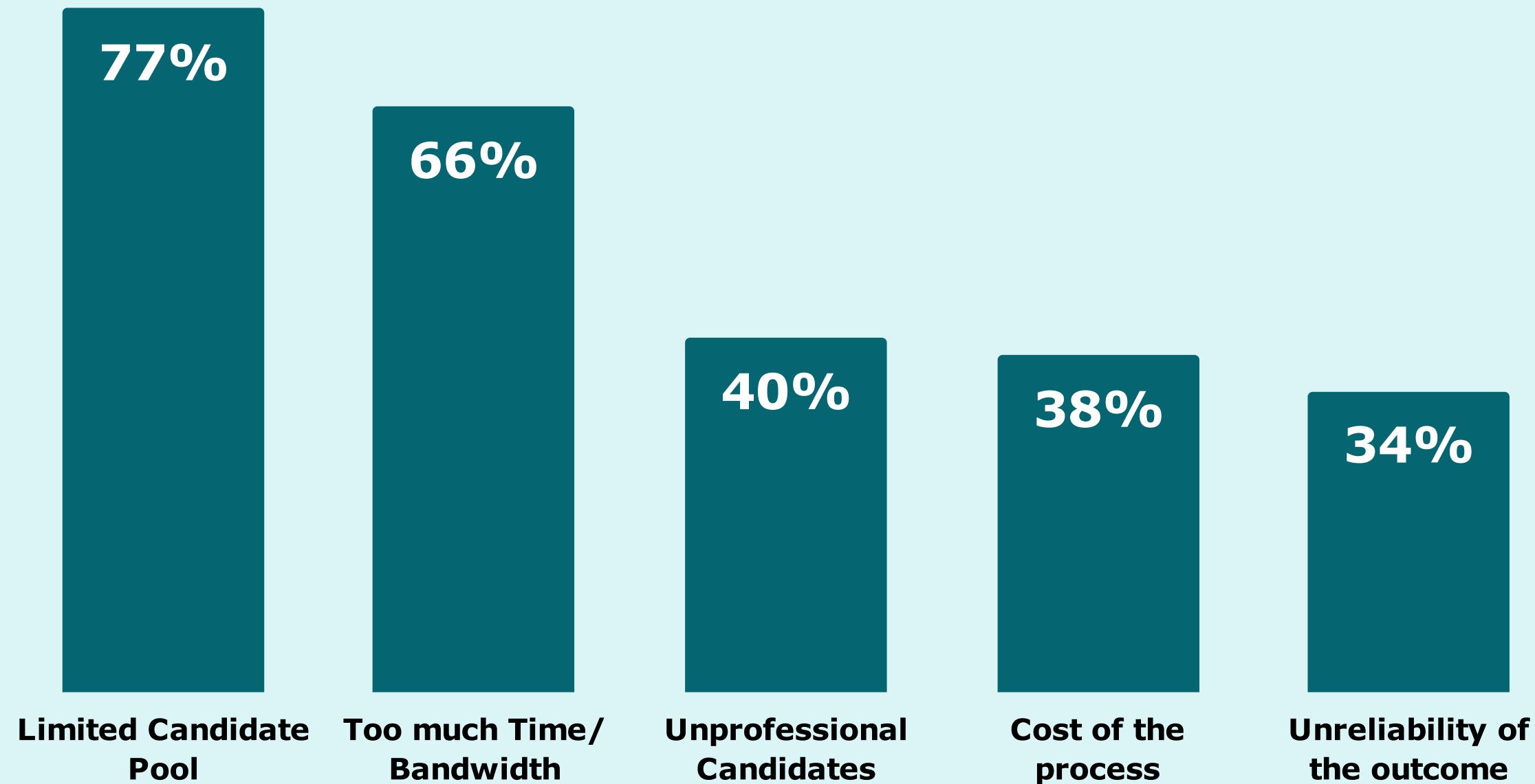


Fig 5.0. Biggest challenges faced by organisations when hiring for senior-level roles

We asked the HR professionals to select the top 3 challenges faced when hiring for senior-level roles. The top 3 selections were:

- **Limited pool - Difficult to find relevant candidates (77.4% respondents)**
- **Takes too much time/bandwidth (66%)**
- **Unprofessionalism shown by candidates - Offershopping, dropouts, etc. (40%)**

The cost of the process was selected by 37.7% and the unreliability of the outcome by 34% of respondents.

Challenges faced by HRs w.r.t candidates and interview

Question to HR: What is the biggest challenge you face with candidates during the process?

Unrealistic CTC expectations is the biggest challenge (faced by 52.8% of respondents), followed by **late-stage dropouts** (30.2%).

9.4% of respondents select **unreliable/unprofessional candidates** as the biggest problem, 5.7% select **communication gaps**, and the remaining 1.9% say their biggest problem is their **CV looking good but lacking technical expertise in reality**.

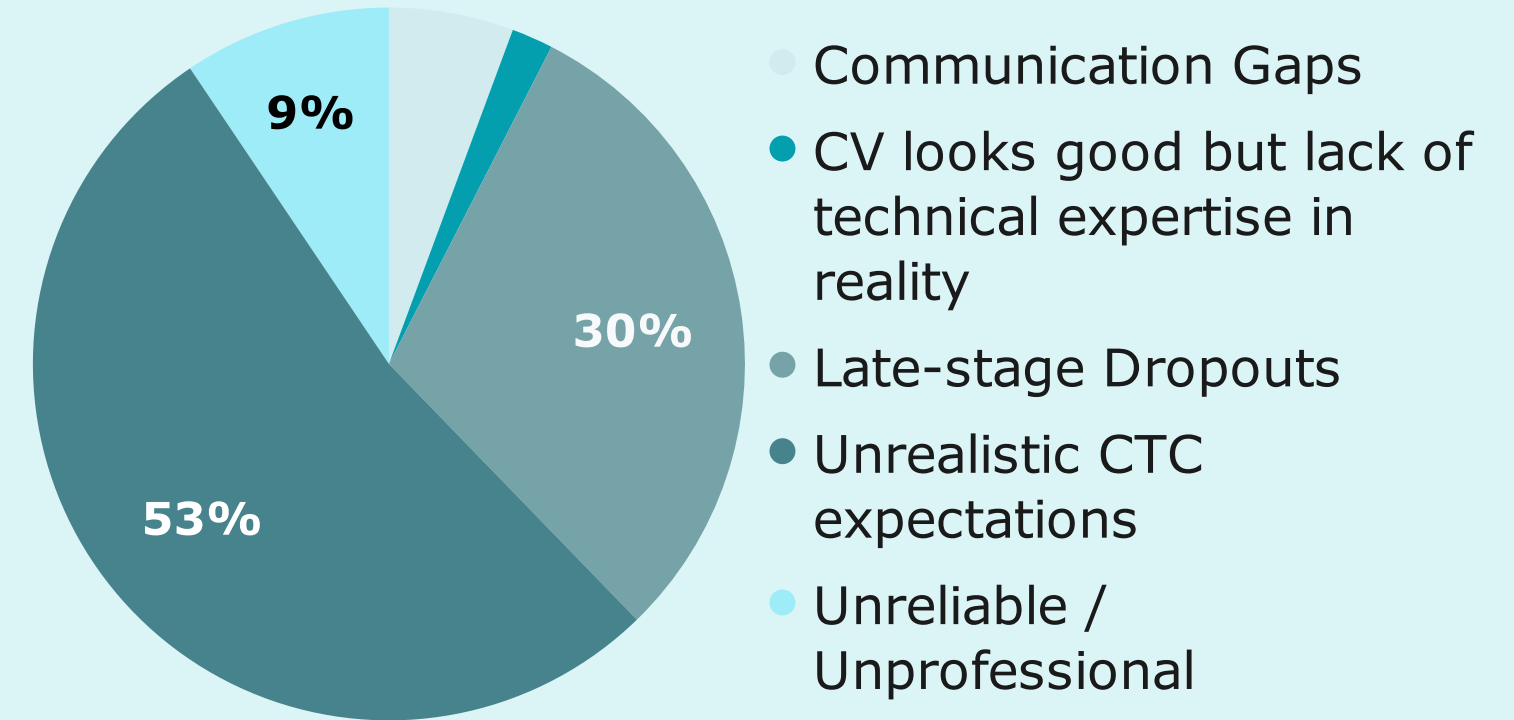


Fig 6.0. Challenges faced with candidates

Question to HR: What is biggest challenge you face during the interview process?

- Candidates not willing to share information about their last role
- Evaluating cultural fit
- Good candidates dropping out
- Interviews stretching for days due to limited availability of the panel or candidates
- Making a standard interview process to judge candidates objectively

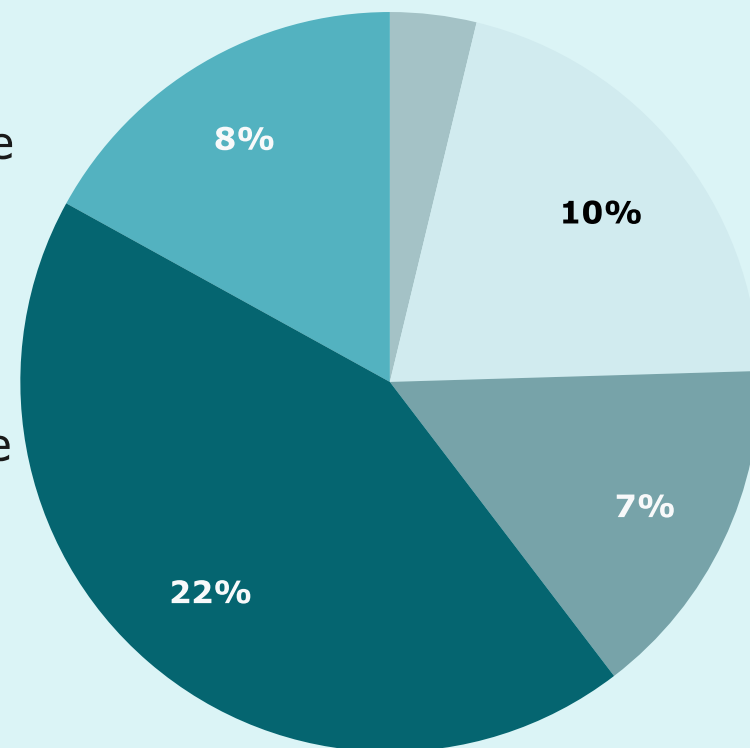


Fig 7.0. Challenges faced during interview

During the interview stage, **interviews stretching for days due to limited availability of the panel or candidates is the most commonly faced problem** (by 43% of respondents).

Evaluating cultural fit (21%), **making a standard interview process** to judge candidates objectively (17%), **good candidates dropping out** (15%), and **candidates not willing to share information about their last role** (4%) follow.

Challenges faced by HRs - Last-stage Candidate Dropout

76% HR have had a candidate dropout just before joining

76% of all HR respondents have had a senior candidate dropout just before joining, causing significant delays in filling up the position. **The primary reason is offer shopping - candidates leverage the extended offer to secure a better opportunity elsewhere.**

In fact, **60% of candidates think that candidates should keep looking for opportunities even after securing an offer.**

LHR tried-and-tested solutions:

- Delaying the release of the offer letter as much as possible and
- Keeping the candidate engaged even after extending an offer.

Both these solutions require the recruiter to have excellent communication skills with the candidate. At The LHR Group, this is an essential skill we imbibe in our consultants.

43% HR have dropped out a senior candidate due to discrepancies in their documents

43% of HRs have had to drop out a senior candidate due to discrepancies in their documents, which is a last-stage step conducted after an offer is extended.

To solve this, it is prudent to conduct this exercise at the T-1 interview stage. Any candidate with document discrepancies is hence dropped. Only the candidates whose documents check out get to do the final interview. This saves the company's efforts and time.

Challenges faced by candidates during job hunting

Question to candidates: What are the 3 biggest challenges you have faced while jobhunting?

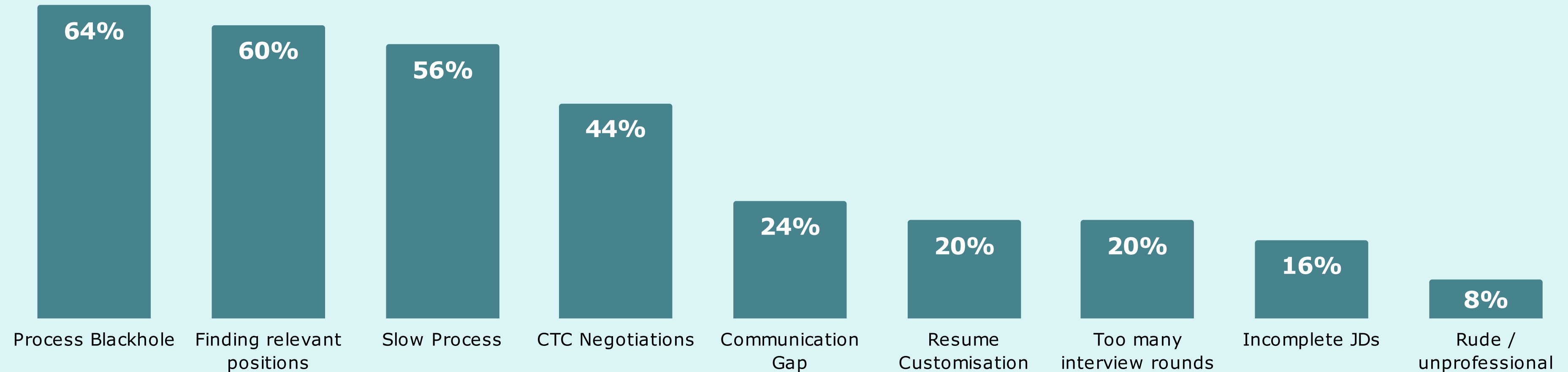


Fig 8.0. Top 3 challenges faced by candidates while jobhunting

- Process Blackhole - No clarity on the status of the application (64%)
- Finding relevant positions (60%)
- Slow Process - Long Gaps between interview rounds (56%)

Other challenges: CTC negotiations (44%), communication gap (24%), resume customisation (20%), too many interview rounds (20%), Incomplete JDs providing no clarity on job roles (16%), and rude/unprofessional behaviour (8%).

What makes candidates drop out of a recruitment process

Question to candidates: what has made you drop out of a recruitment process without another offer in hand?

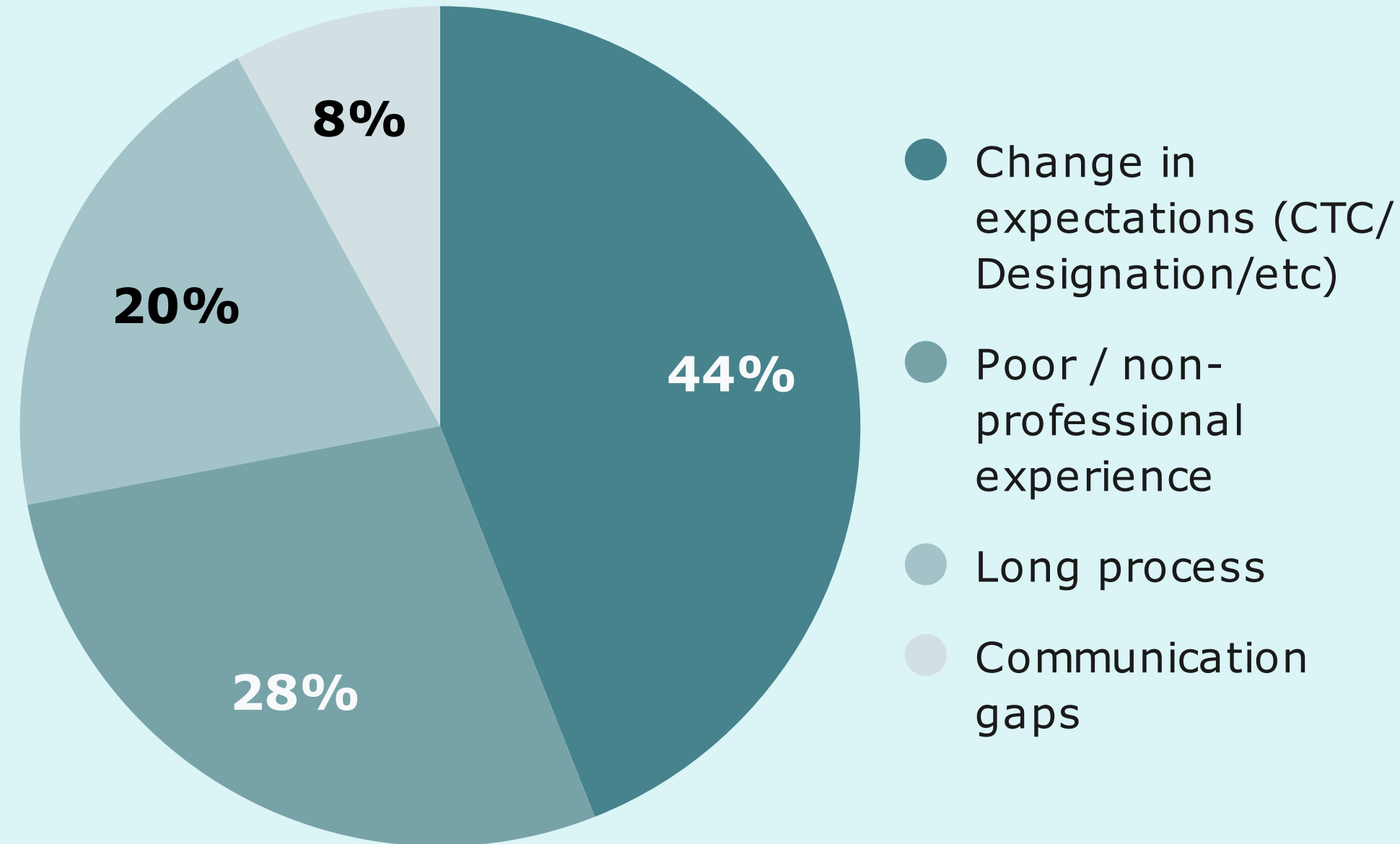


Fig 9.0. What has made candidates drop out of a recruitment process without another offer in hand

The top reason is change in expectations (CTC/designation/role requirements/etc.), selected by 44% of respondents.

It is followed by poor/unprofessional experience (28%), long process (20%), and communication gaps (8%).

Interestingly, **cultural misfit has not been a reason for anyone to drop out of an ongoing process.**

Challenges faced by Candidates - Ghosting and Lowballing

80% candidates have been ghosted by the recruiter during the process

80% of candidates have said they stopped receiving updates and replies to their applications during the process, without any reason - (AKA Ghosting). This not only creates an unprofessional impression of the organization but also leaves candidates with a sense of frustration and anxiety, tarnishing their overall job-seeking experience.

The solution lies in adopting simple yet impactful practices to enhance communication and transparency:

- **Leverage Chatbots to handle routine queries** about the application status or hiring process, reducing communication gaps.
- **Leverage ATS to send regular updates** to candidates at each stage, keeping them informed about their application status.
- **Standardise the process of sending rejection emails** after each stage of the hiring process.

64% candidates have been lowballed - given poor offers that left them no choice but to decline the offer

64% of candidates report being lowballed with offers that were far below their expectations, leaving them no option but to decline. On the other hand, 52.8% of HR professionals cite unrealistic CTC expectations from candidates as the most significant challenge in the hiring process. This disconnect between what candidates expect and what employers are willing to offer creates frustration on both sides, leading to wasted time, effort, and missed opportunities.

Clarifying compensation expectations during the first round is the best-proven solution.

Challenges while working with Search Firms

17% of organisations don't work with search firms and handle their own hiring.

The rest 83% answer the biggest challenge they face while working with search firms.

45.5% put candidate control as the biggest problem. high cost (ins the 2nd with 27.3% of votes. Limited to no transparency in the hiring process is the top challenge faced by 20.5% of HR respondents. The remaining 6.8% select unreliability/unprofessionalism.

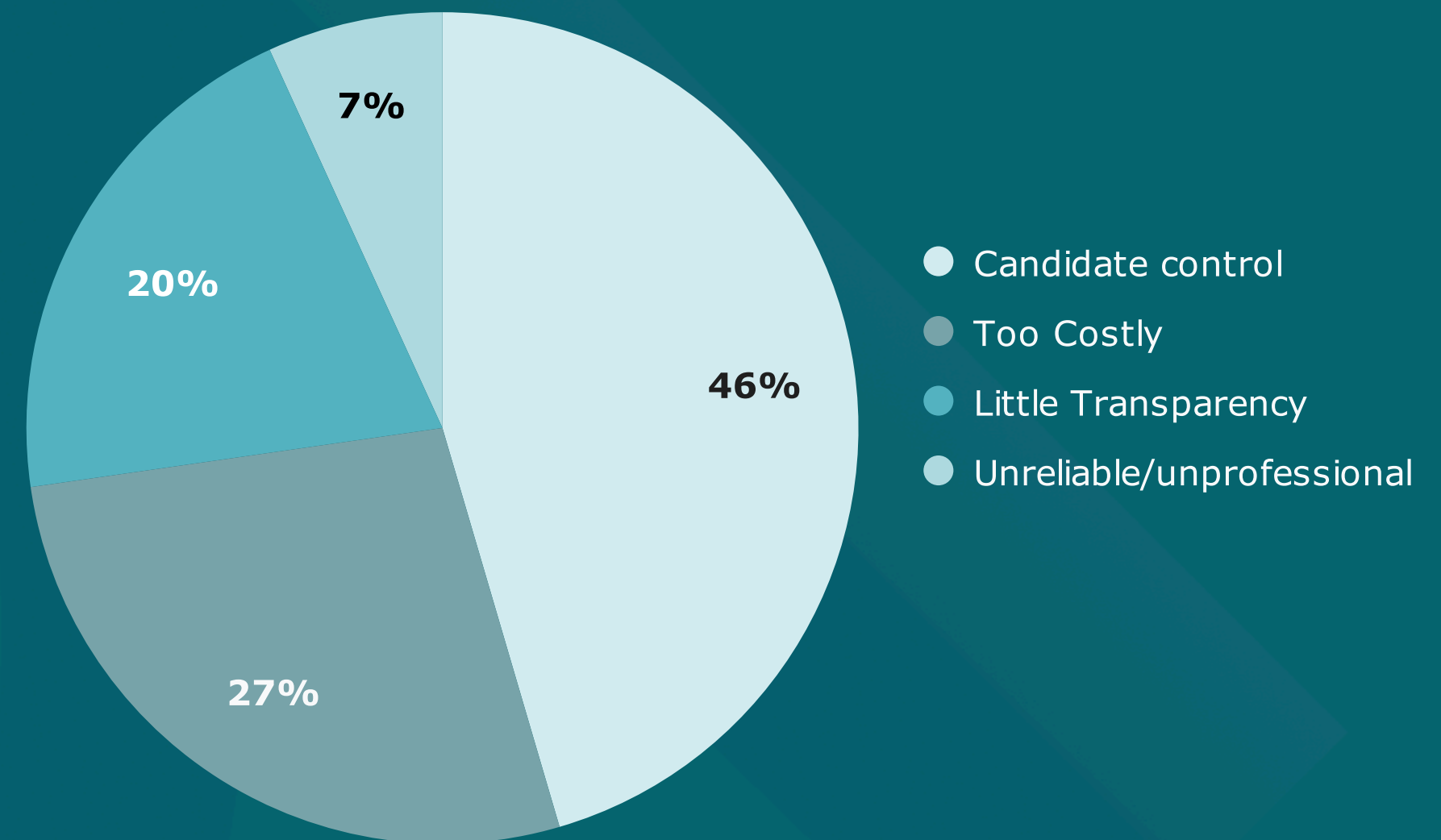


Fig 10.0. Challenges faced with search firms

Employee Value Proposition (EVP)

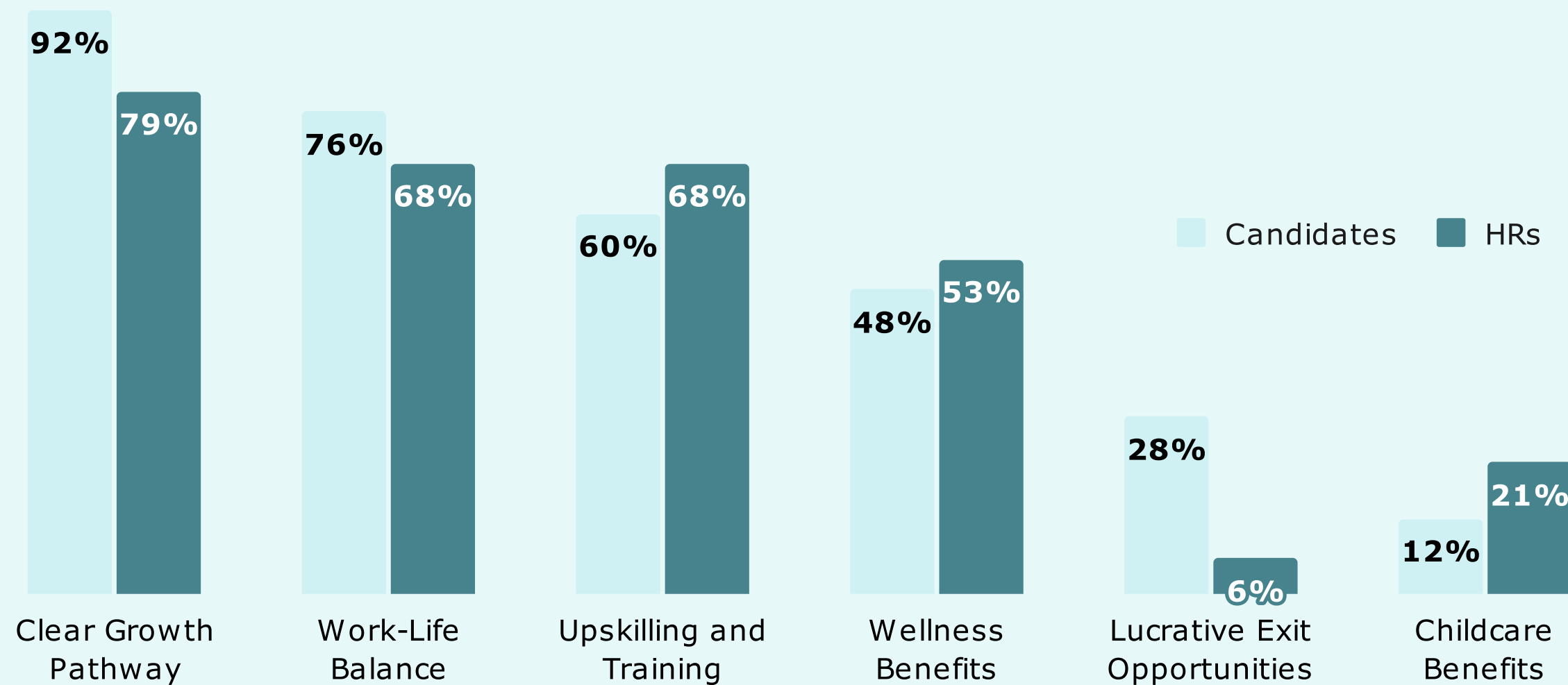
It is the candidate's job market, and simply offering money does not cut it anymore. EVP is a set of attributes that you offer to current and prospective employees, comprising a combination of compensation, benefits, growth opportunities, work culture, work-life balance, the organization's value system, and a clear career path.

In fact, **4/5 candidates will select an organisation with a better work-life balance over an organisation that offers 10% higher pay, *ceterus paribus***. This reaffirms the need for organisations to design their offerings more holistically.

Clear growth pathway is the top non-monetary offering for candidates while choosing a new job

The candidates were asked to select the top 3 non-monetary benefits they wanted from their organisation, and the HRs were asked to select the top 3 non-monetary reasons a candidate would choose them over a competing firm.

The results highlight that the organisations are cognisant of the candidates' needs, both having the same top 3.



A well-laid-out career growth pathway with a stipulated timeline is sought after by 92% of candidates and is also offered by 79.2% of organisations.

It is followed by work-life balance (76% of candidates) and continuous upskilling and training programs (60%).

Wellness benefits (48%) include family medical cover and mental health and wellness days.

Lucrative exit opportunities (28%) and childcare benefits and parental leave (12%) rank last.

Fig 11.0. Top non-monetary benefits: Candidate v/s HR responses

This serves as a **concrete data point for organisations looking to attract top industry talent.**

In an ideal case, the organisation provides all the listed benefits and more. If you are one of them, kudos!

However, if not, we recommend to focus on the aspects sought by the highest percentage of candidates.

For 1/5 organisations, evaluating cultural fit is the biggest challenge during interviews

45.3% of HR professionals answer that they never hire without cultural fit.

39.6% say that they sometimes forego the cultural fit when the role is niche and the candidate supply is limited.

15.1% prefer technical soundness over cultural fit in most cases.

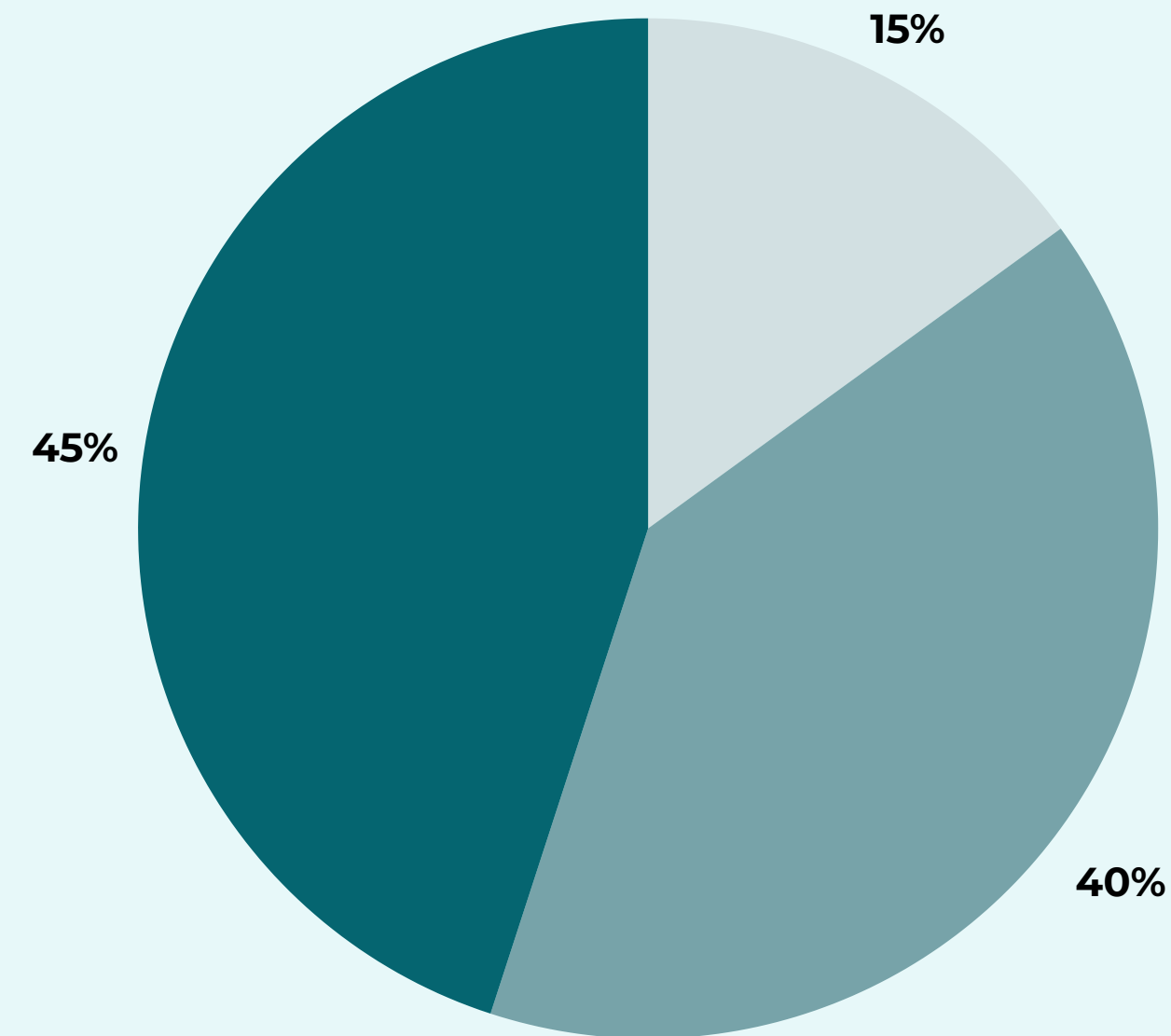


Fig 12.0. Importance of cultural fit for organisations

When asked about the biggest challenge during interviews, 20.8% of HR responded “evaluating cultural fit.”

3/4 candidates believe cultural alignment is always important

Question: How important is the cultural alignment for you while deciding to join the company?

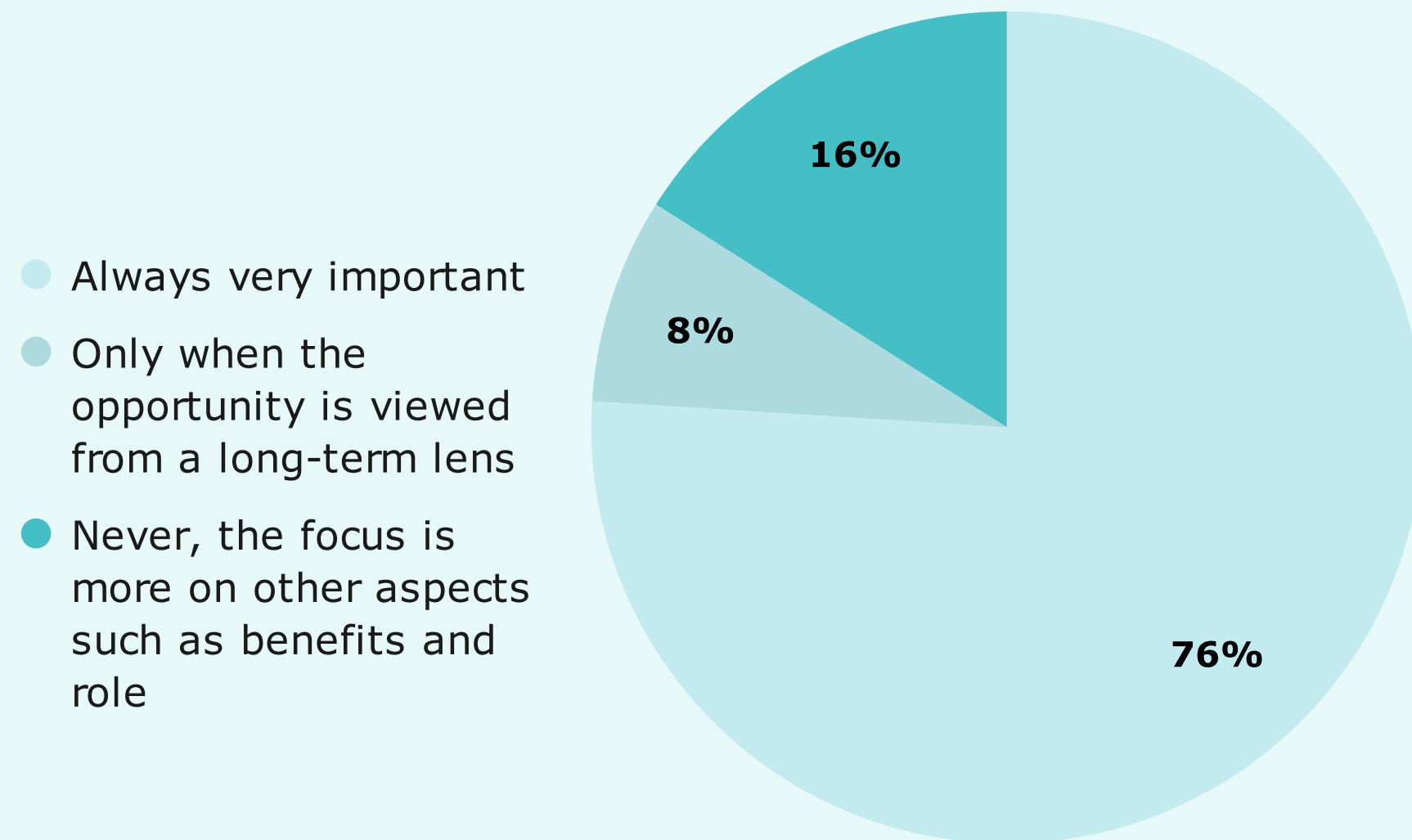


Fig 13.0. Importance of cultural fit for candidates

3/4 candidates always consider cultural alignment a crucial indicator of joining the company.

When a candidate places high importance on cultural fit, it's a positive indicator for the organization. It suggests that they:

- **Value elements beyond monetary incentives**, such as a supportive work environment, shared values, and meaningful work, and
- **View the role as a long-term commitment**, aligning their personal goals with the company's vision and mission.

This underscores the growing importance of organizational culture in attracting and retaining top talent.

Candidates today are drawn to workplaces where they feel an alignment with core values and take pride in the company's purpose.

For new-age organizations, this means **culture is no longer just a buzzword—it's a strategic priority**. To remain competitive, companies must cultivate an authentic, positive, and inclusive culture that resonates through their hiring processes. By embedding these values into every stage, from recruitment to onboarding, they can ensure not just the right hire but also stronger retention and employee satisfaction.

However, only 1/4 get a fair chance to know it during hiring

Question: Did you get a fair chance to know the company's culture during hiring?

Only 1/4 candidates got a chance to know their company's culture during the hiring process.

44% did not have the opportunity to know the culture at all, and 32% believe that what was shown before joining is much different from on-ground reality.

- Yes
- Yes, but what was portrayed before joining was different than on-ground reality
- Didn't get a chance to know the company culture during hiring

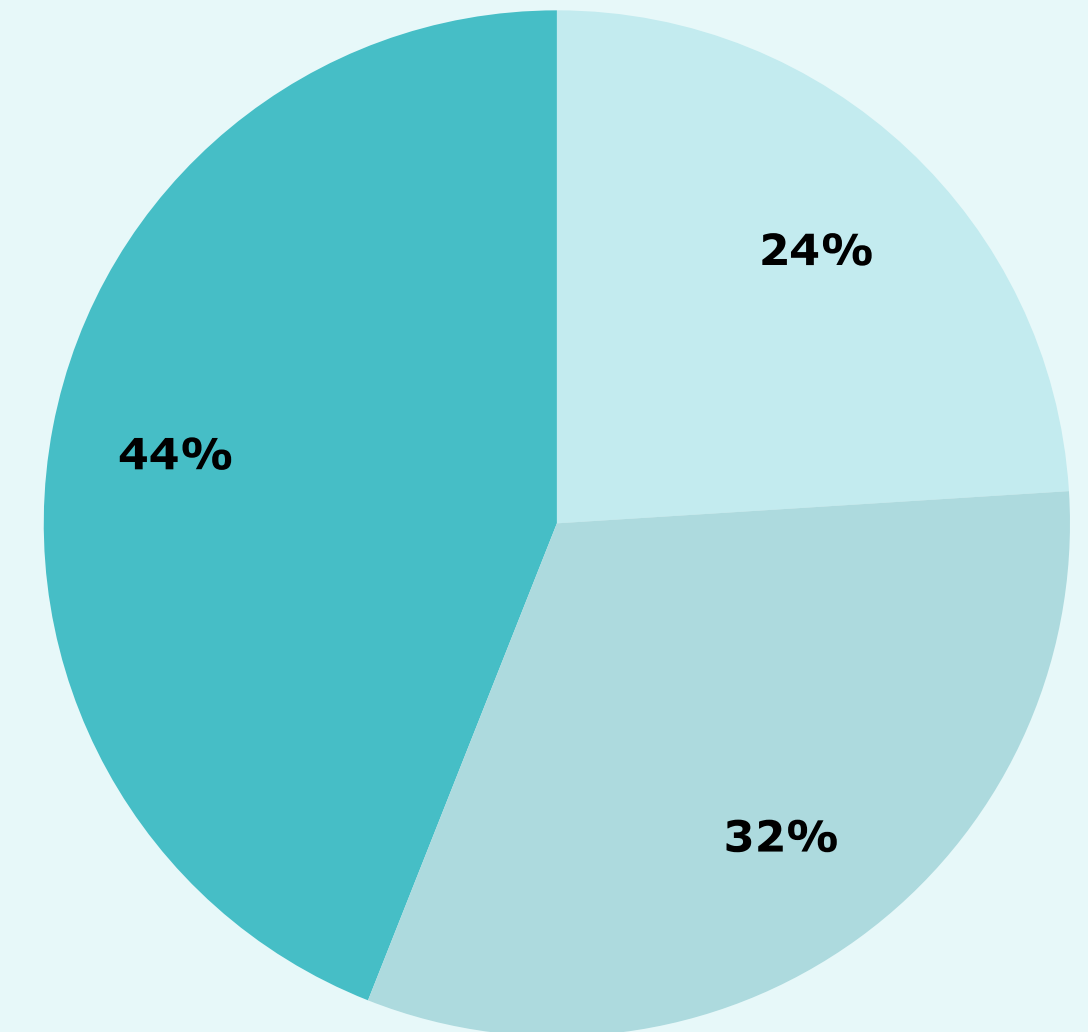


Fig 14.0. Percentage of candidates who got a chance to know their company's culture before joining

On the surface level, it seems that the HR and recruiters are to blame.

However, **the underlying cause is that the concept is so new that neither the HR nor the candidates know how to navigate through it.** Getting to know the candidate is widely talked about, and there are tests and questionnaires for the same. The other way around is uncommon.

Most candidates do not know how to gauge the culture before joining. Many HR and recruiters are not fully aware of all the ways it can happen. We break it down for you.

48% of candidates never take the feedback of their reporting manager before joining the company

When we asked candidates if they took their reporting manager's feedback before joining their current (or last) company, 48% said they did not do it.

Out of 52% of the candidates who did so, 75% relied on their professional network (asking friends and colleagues) for the feedback, while the rest 25% reached out to company employees on LinkedIn for the same.

Taking the manager's feedback is the simplest and best way to know the culture of the company. A few other ways are:

1. Explore social media

Gauging the company's tone, employee engagement, and workplace environment. Candidates can explore not just the firm's but also employees' social media profiles (primarily LinkedIn).

2. Check Online Employee Reviews

Checking platforms like Glassdoor for employee testimonials, workplace reviews, and company ratings to gain an insider's perspective.

3. Assess Hiring Process practices

A structured, inclusive, and well-communicated hiring process with feedback loops signals a strong culture of respect and organization.

In addition, there are questions that candidates ask at the end of an interview to gauge the company's culture. The LHR Group is working on its compendium, which will be released soon.

Trends in Recruitment & Their Ground State

- **Technological Advancements**, particularly AI-driven recruitment tools, are helping HR teams streamline tasks like candidate screening, while predictive analytics are being used to identify high-potential talent. We asked HR professionals and candidates their views on the increasing use of technology in recruitment.
- **Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI)** have become critical components of talent acquisition strategies. Companies are realizing that a diverse leadership team not only fosters innovation but also strengthens the overall culture and performance of the organization. HR and candidates respond to how they view DEI in recruitment.
- **Remote/hybrid work** became mainstream during COVID-19, but now the organisations are calling people back to the office to work. We assess how many organisations are still offering remote opportunities. We also asked candidates how important the option of remote work is for them.
- **Hiring for AI roles** is gaining prominence. AI will drive employment growth this decade, creating an estimated 2.73 million jobs in India by 2028. We assess how many organisations are in the process of hiring for AI roles and the challenges they face.

Tech in Recruitment - HR loves it, Candidates are worried. But the writing is on the wall - its here to stay.

We asked both HRs and candidates their views on the use of technology by recruiters - whether they feel optimistic or pessimistic about it. Technology here refers to Applicant Tracking Systems (ATS), Personality tests, Technical Skill tests, JD repositories, resume parsers, video screening tools, and chatbots (*refer to the [glossary](#) to know about these in detail*).

91% of HRs feel optimistic about the increased use of technology in recruitment, agreeing that it has made their work easier and saves their time in mechanical tasks. The remaining 9% feel pessimistic that fewer talent acquisition specialists are required to fill the same number of job roles, which makes the industry very competitive.

This starkly contrasts with candidates' responses - 64% feel pessimistic, affirming that a human should always screen resumes as it involves a subjective judgment for which technology cannot be trusted. The rest, 26%, express optimism as they are confident about their resume optimization skills - they know how to use the right keywords.

Implication

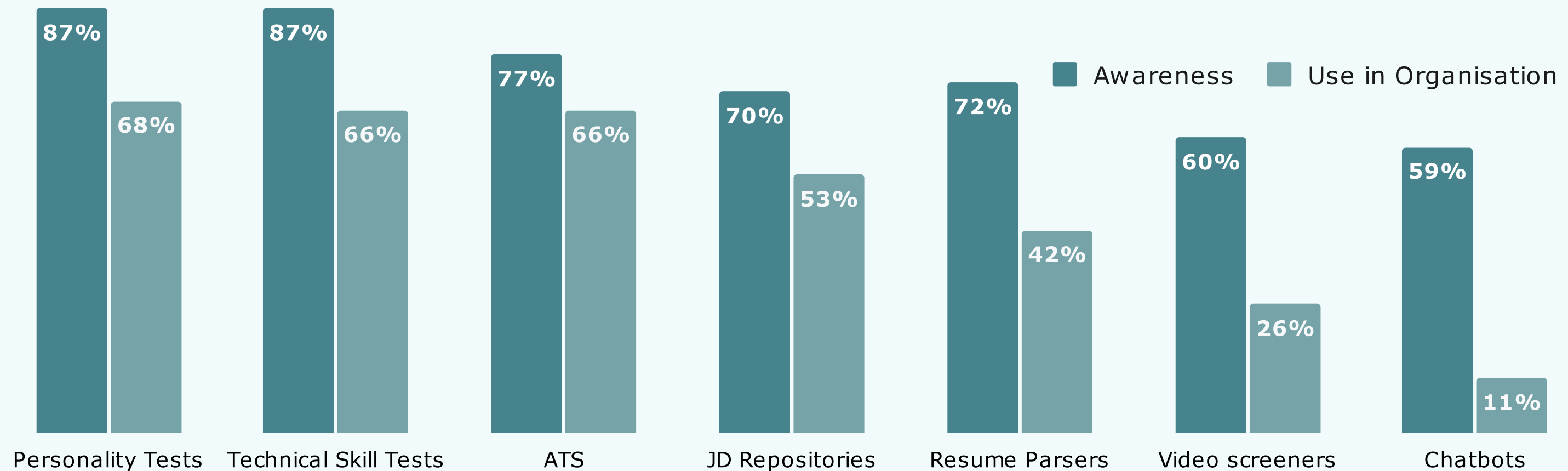
HRs, the consumers of technology, express optimism about it, which means that it is here to stay. 66% of respondents already use the Application Tracking System (ATS) in their organisation. It will likely increase in the future.

This means that resume optimisation needs to be a basic skill for candidates - they need to learn how to use keywords to appear in the filtered results. 92% of candidates mark making their resumes themselves - without any external help from either their network or a professional agency. For those efforts to be successful, the resume needs to pass the technology test.

Despite expressing optimism in tech, 55% of HRs still prefer manual CV screening

There is a considerable gap in the awareness and actual utilisation of different technology tools in recruitment, as evident from the graph below.

Fig 15.0. Awareness v/s use of different tech tools in hiring



This presents both an opportunity and the need to rethink the offering for recruitment tech and software companies.

Opportunity: There is still a large market to serve. However, most respondents do not trust the technology despite being aware of it, which means the **offering needs to be refined to better suit the needs of recruiters.** It should save their time and effort to provide value for money. This can be achieved by:

- Putting the focus on improving the outcome accuracy
- Improving the UI/UX, minimising the number of clicks to achieve the results.

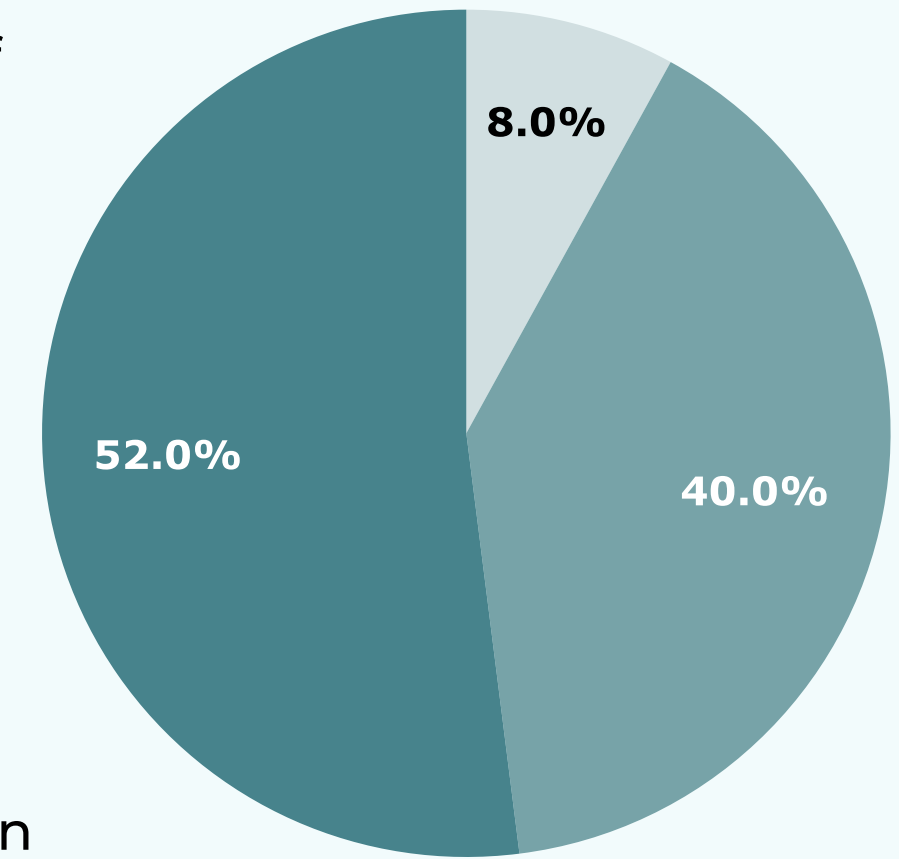
Technology benefits candidates as well; however only 8% use it

The scepticism of candidates regarding the use of technology in recruitment suggests a lack of awareness about its dual benefits.

There are numerous resume-scoring tools—many available at no cost—that help candidates assess how well their resumes will perform against ATS and resume parsers. By using these tools, candidates can identify gaps in their resumes and optimize them to meet ATS requirements.

Despite these advantages, **a whopping 52% of candidates are unaware of such tools.** Of the remaining 48%, **40% are aware but choose not to use them**, leaving only 8% who have utilised them.

This data highlights an opportunity for greater candidate education on leveraging technology in their job search strategy.



● Have used ● Aware, but not used ● Not aware

Fig 16.0. Percentage of candidates who are aware of technology tools for candidates

- Always
- Sometimes
- Aware but do not do
- Not aware

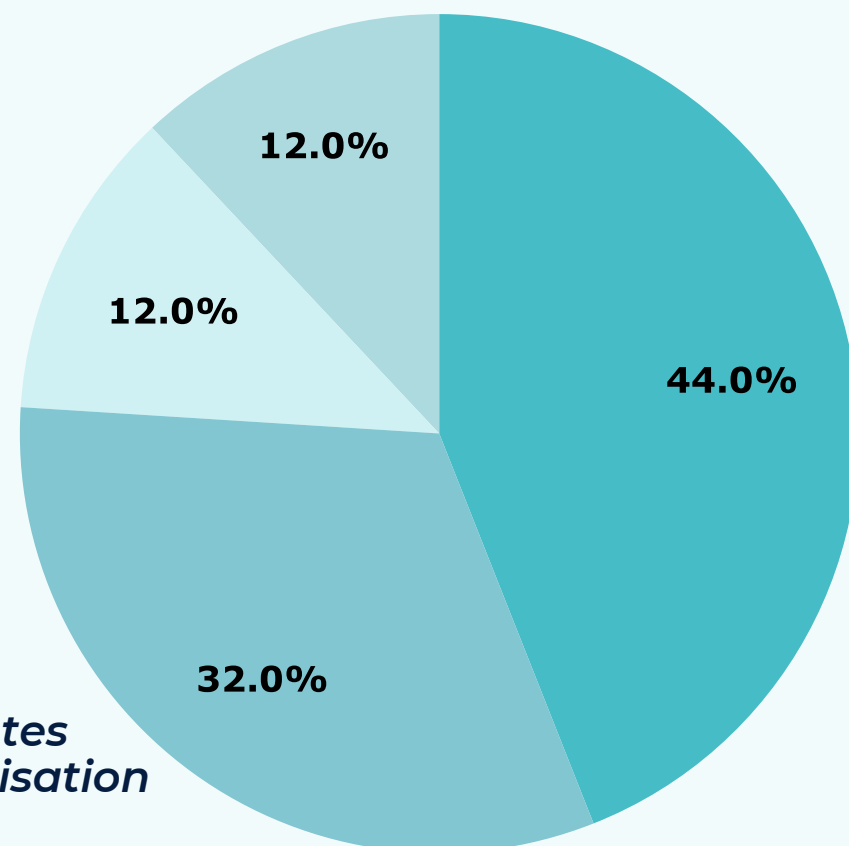


Fig 17.0. Percentage of candidates who do resume keyword optimisation

Despite knowing that the resumes may be screened by software first, **only 12% of candidates always do keyword optimisation to maximise the probability of shortlisting.** 44% only do so when the job requirements are very different from the usual. 32% believe the benefit-to-effort ratio to be too low to conduct this time-consuming exercise. **The rest, 12%, are not aware in the first place.**

DEI Hiring - What it means and Why it matters

DEI hiring refers to recruitment practices that prioritize diversity, equity, and inclusion to build a more representative and inclusive workforce. The goal is to create a workplace where individuals of all backgrounds, identities, and experiences are valued, respected, and empowered to succeed. Here's a breakdown of each element:

- **Diversity:** Presence of differences within a workforce. This includes differences in race, ethnicity, gender, age, sexual orientation, socioeconomic background, disability status, and other factors.
- **Equity:** Ensuring fair treatment, access, and opportunity for all employees. Unlike equality, which treats everyone the same, equity recognizes that people may have different needs and challenges and, therefore, aims to provide resources and opportunities tailored to those needs. In hiring, this could mean adjusting recruitment processes to level the playing field, such as removing bias from job descriptions or offering support to underrepresented candidates.
- **Inclusion:** Creating an environment where all employees feel a sense of belonging and are encouraged to participate fully. This involves fostering a culture that respects and embraces individual differences and promotes open communication and collaboration.

What it means

- **Improved Performance:** Studies after studies show that diverse teams are more innovative, as varied perspectives lead to better decision-making and problem-solving.
- **Broader Talent Pool:** DEI hiring expands the talent pool, allowing firms to tap into candidates they might otherwise overlook.
- **Enhanced Company Reputation:** Companies prioritising DEI are more attractive to job seekers, especially younger generations who value social responsibility and inclusivity.
- **Reduced Turnover:** Inclusive workplaces are more likely to retain employees, as they feel valued and respected.

DEI hiring at senior-level is a mandate in 55% organisations, but there are two big challenges

Lack of channels to reach the DEI candidates and lack of DEI talent pool at the senior level are the two challenges faced by HRs while doing DEI hiring.

When we asked candidates if an organisation having/not having a DEI policy impacts their joining decision on a 5-point scale, **76% of them responded in negative, i.e. an organisation's DEI policy does not affect their joining decision.** The remaining **24% of candidates responded that DEI is crucial to them.** There is no correlation with gender.

DEI hiring is talked about separately as the hiring practices vary in the following ways:

- **Unbiased Job Descriptions:** Avoiding gendered or culturally specific language that could deter certain candidates from applying.
- **Blind Recruitment:** Removing identifying information (like names or photos) from resumes to reduce bias in initial screenings.
- **Inclusive Interviewing:** Training interviewers to recognize and reduce bias and including diverse interview panels to represent different perspectives.
- **Support for Underrepresented Groups:** Providing mentorship, resources, and clear career pathways for underrepresented employees.

Remote Work

3 years after the COVID-19 peak, organisations around the world are increasingly mandating in-office presence. We ask both HR professionals and candidates their take on this.

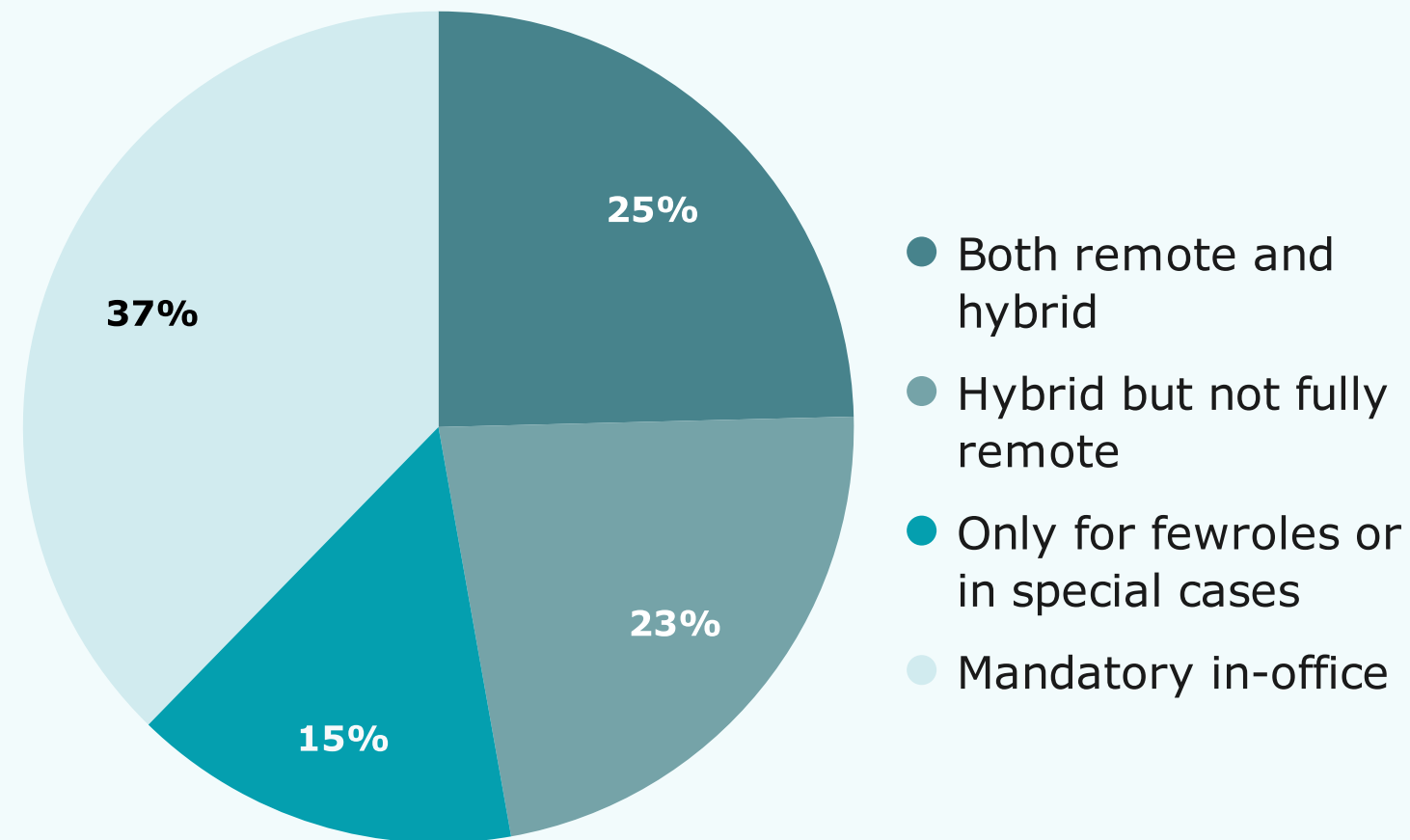


Fig 18.0. Percentage of organisations allowing remote/hybrid work opportunities

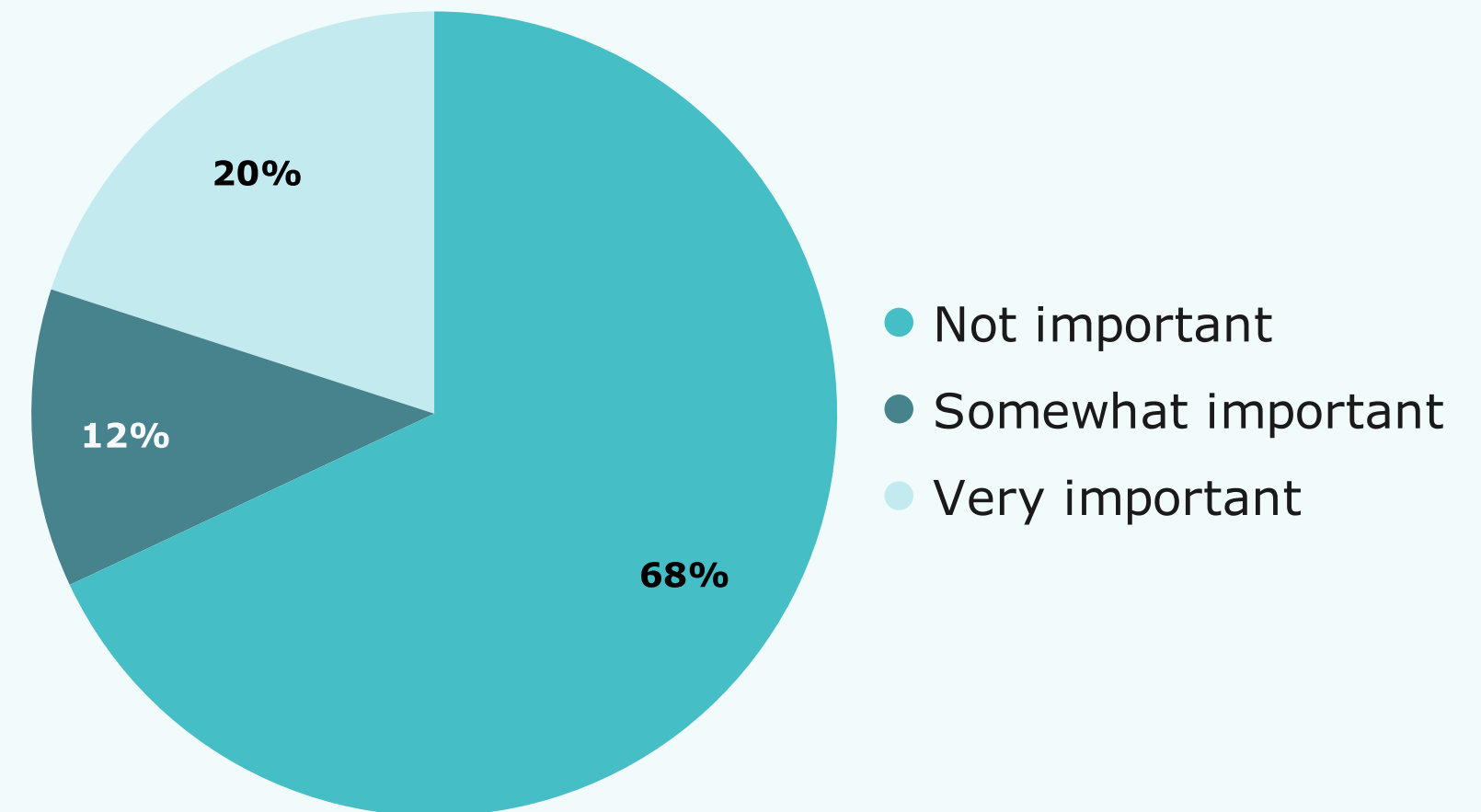


Fig 19.0. Candidates respond how important is the option of remote work to them

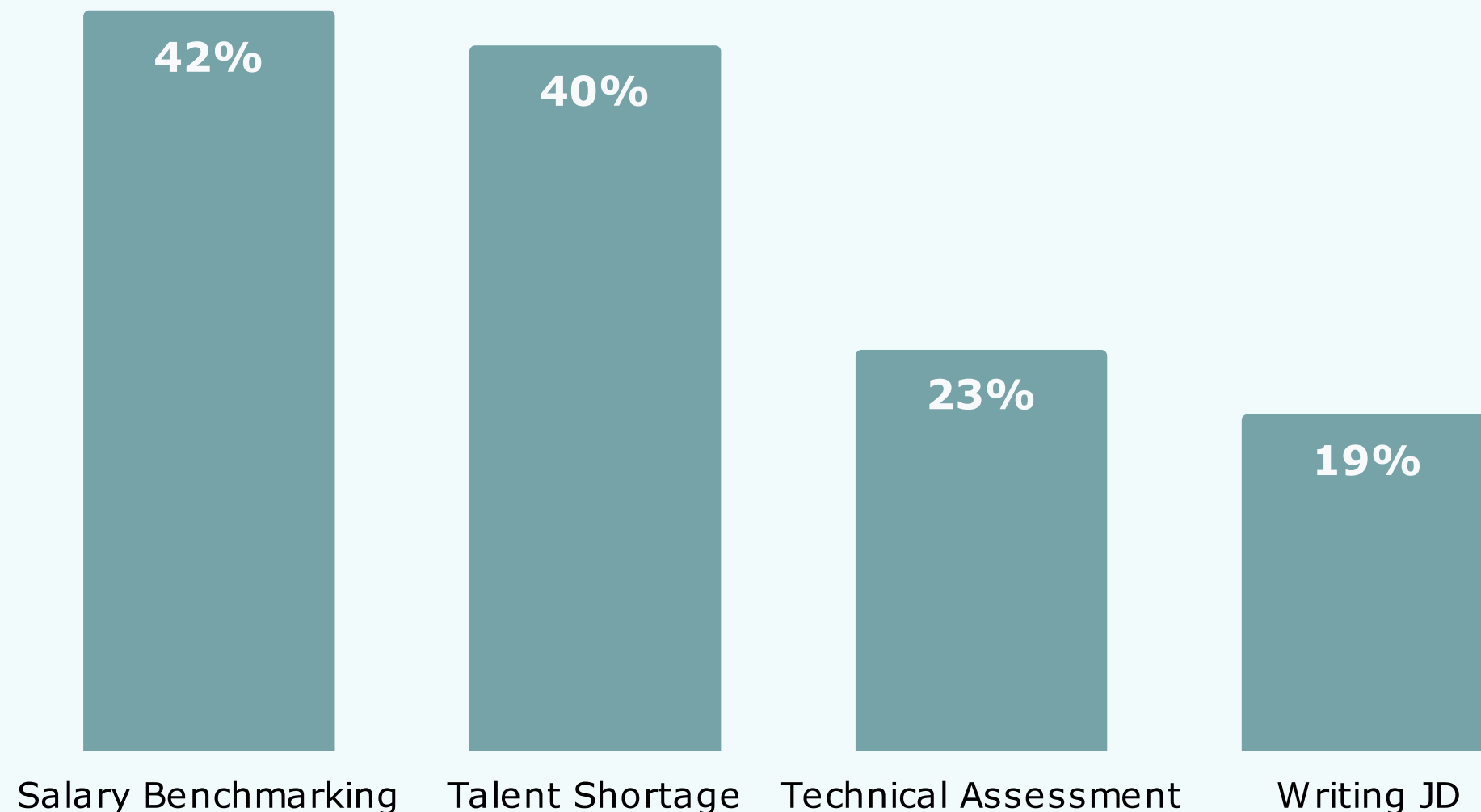
HR Response: 37.7% of organisations have mandatory in-office requirements. 15.1% are allowing remote/hybrid in special cases. 47.2% of organisations allow hybrid.

Candidate Response: For 68% of candidates, the option of remote work is not at all important, while 20% place high importance on it. It does not have any correlation with gender.

Senior-level AI Jobs - 51% organisations have either hired or are in the process

There is no linear correlation found between the type of organisation or the industry with senior-level AI job hiring.

Positions such as ML Engineers, Data Scientists, and Prompt Engineers are more specialised and multi-faceted, requiring expertise in areas like deep learning, robotics, and natural language processing. The rise of generative AI has transformed these roles, making them essential across various stages of AI implementation, from consulting to application development and support, they added.



The biggest problem is salary benchmarking (41.5% of respondents).

This is followed by a looming talent shortage (39.6%). India currently has approximately 4 lakh AI engineers, but the demand stands at 6 lacs, with industry projections to reach 1 million by 2026. This supply-demand match widens further at senior levels.

Technical assessments and writing JDs (specifying roles, responsibilities, and qualifications) follow at 22.6% and 18.9%.

Fig 20.0. Challenges faced while hiring for AI roles

The background is a solid teal color. On the left side, there is a white line-art illustration of a Christmas tree with a star on top. A large, white, four-pointed star is positioned above the tree. On the right side, there are several overlapping, curved, semi-transparent teal bands that create a sense of depth and movement.

Annexure

Endnotes

The LHR Group conducted a comprehensive nationwide survey, reaching out to HR professionals and job seekers to uncover valuable insights into the hiring process, its challenges, and emerging trends.

To ensure the survey captured the nuances of both sides, **we developed two separate questionnaires—one tailored for HR professionals and another for candidates.** The questions were carefully crafted to remain unbiased and objective, focusing on gathering honest and actionable feedback. Topics ranged from hiring timelines and candidate sourcing methods to experiences with transparency, compensation expectations, and cultural alignment.

Participants for the survey were selected from our extensive company database, which includes a diverse range of industries, geographies, and roles. By leveraging this broad network, we ensured that the data collected was representative and insightful, capturing the realities of recruitment across India.

Responses were screened for inconsistencies, duplicates, or incomplete entries. Only validated data was included in the final analysis to maintain the credibility of the findings.

While every effort was made to ensure accuracy, the findings are based on self-reported data and should be interpreted within the context of the survey's limitations.

All data was handled with strict adherence to confidentiality and anonymity to protect the privacy of respondents.

We extend our sincere gratitude to everyone who took the time to fill out the survey.

HR Respondent Profile

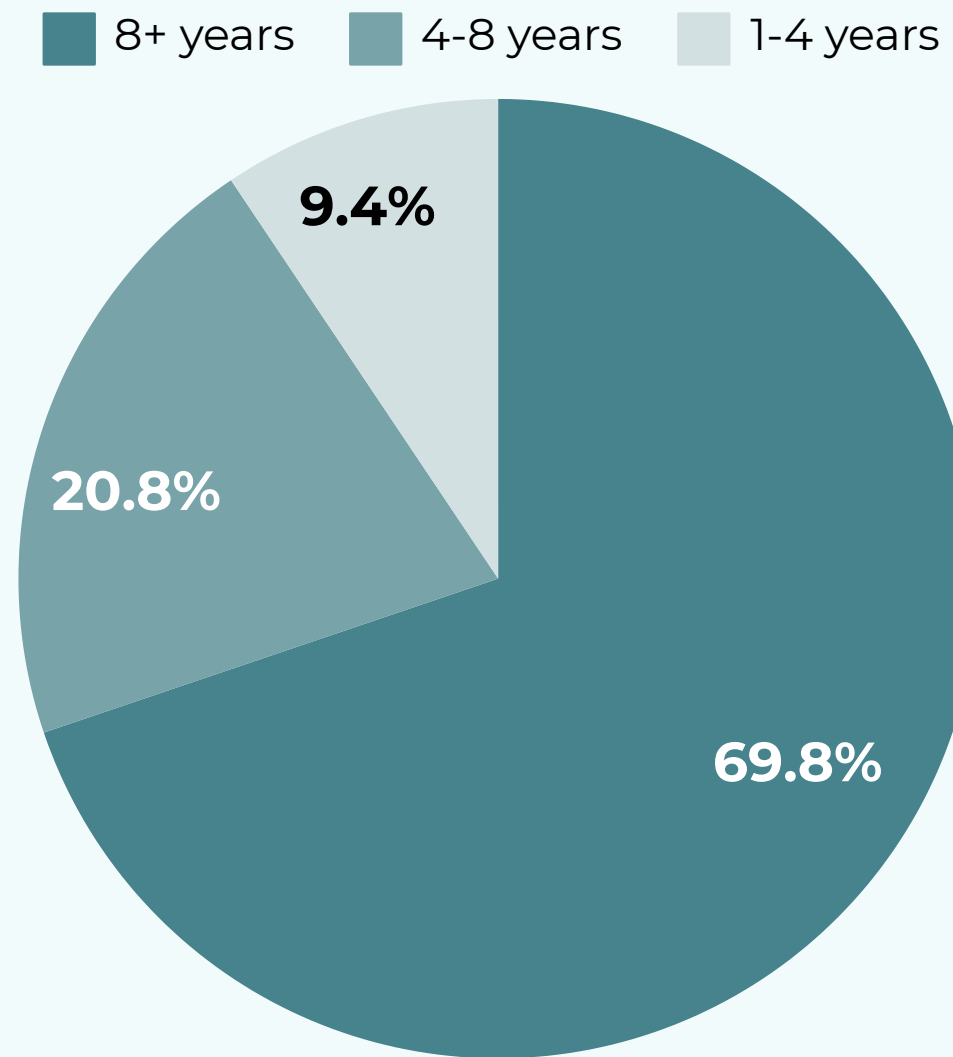


Fig 21.0. Total years of work experience as an HR

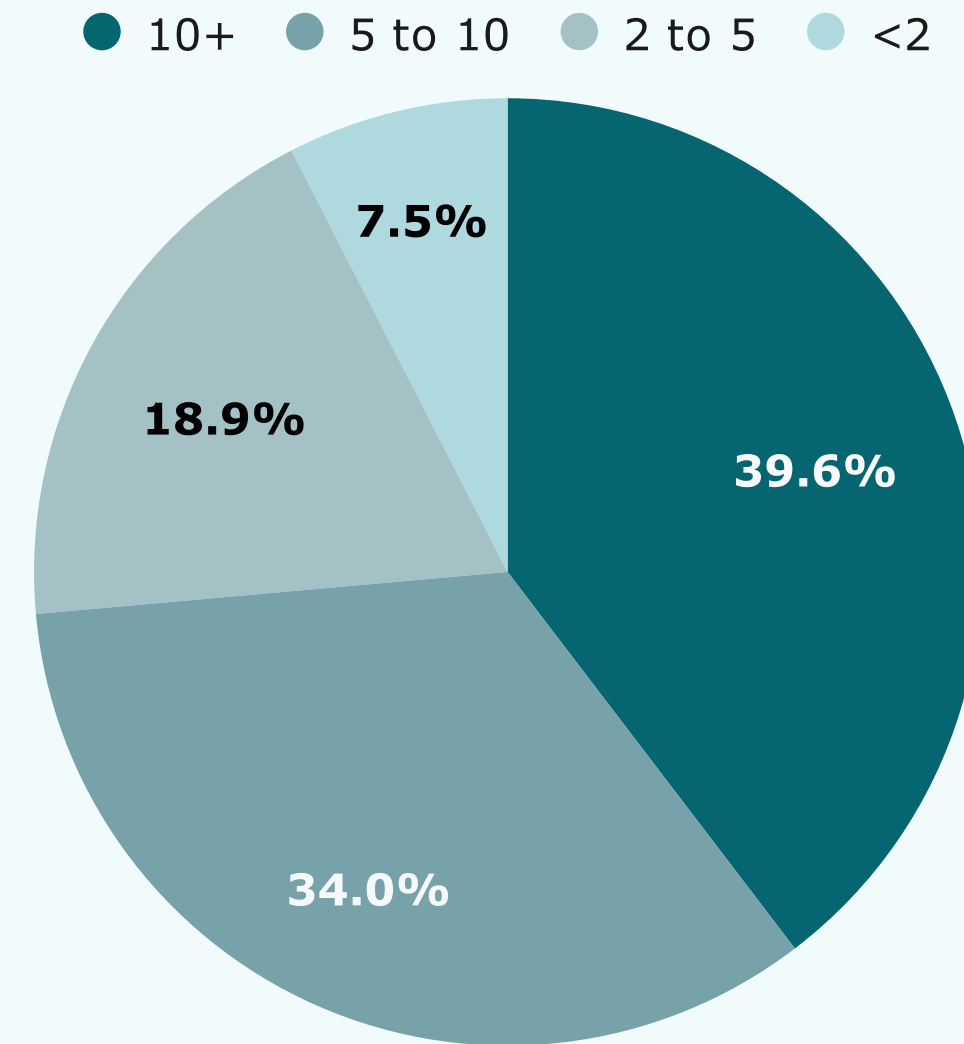


Fig 22.0. Number of senior hirings handled annually

Almost 70% of HR professionals have 8+ years of work experience in their domain. Only 9.4% have less than 1 to 4 years of experience. 39.6% of HR handle 10+ senior hirings every year, 34% handle 5 to 10 senior hirings per year, 18.9% handle 2 to 5, and the rest 7.5% handle less than 2 senior hirings per year.

HR Respondent Profile

- Large Indian Company
- MNC
- Start-up
- Part of a Conglomerate
- VC/PE/other Fund

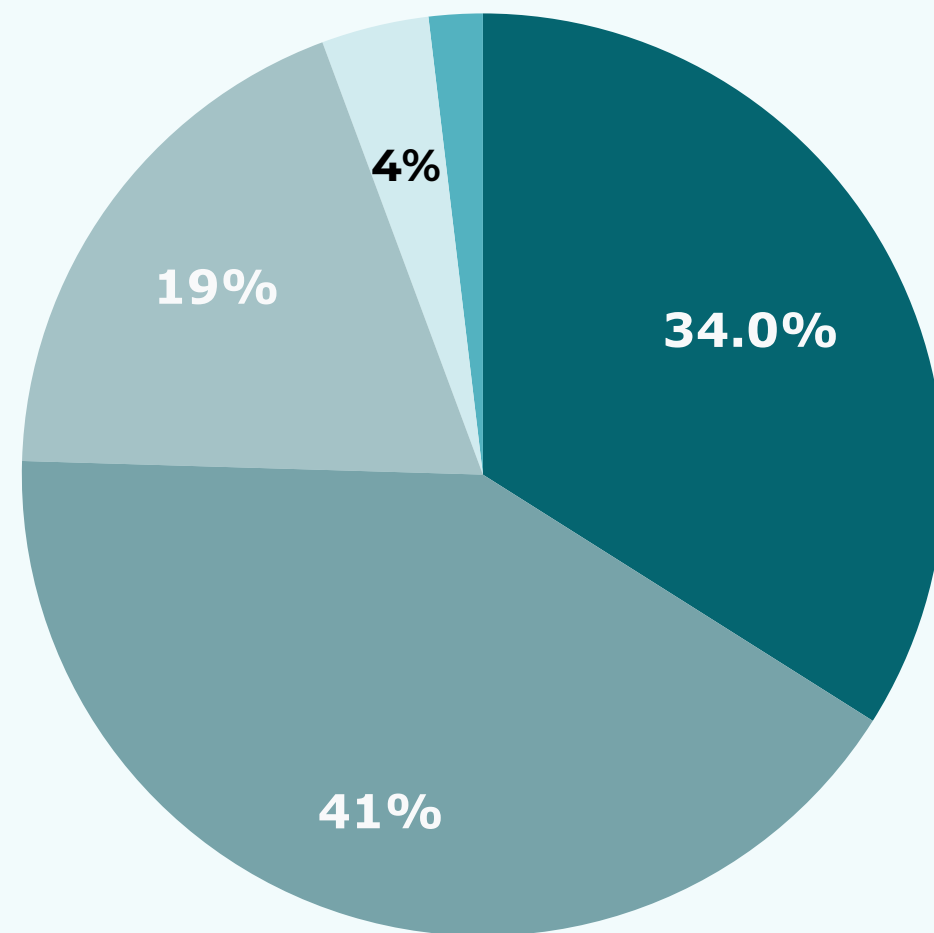


Fig 23.0. Organisation Type

- BFSI
- Retail / Apparel and Fashion
- Consulting
- FMCG/FMCD/Electricals/Paints
- Industrial Goods
- SaaS / Software / IT
- Others

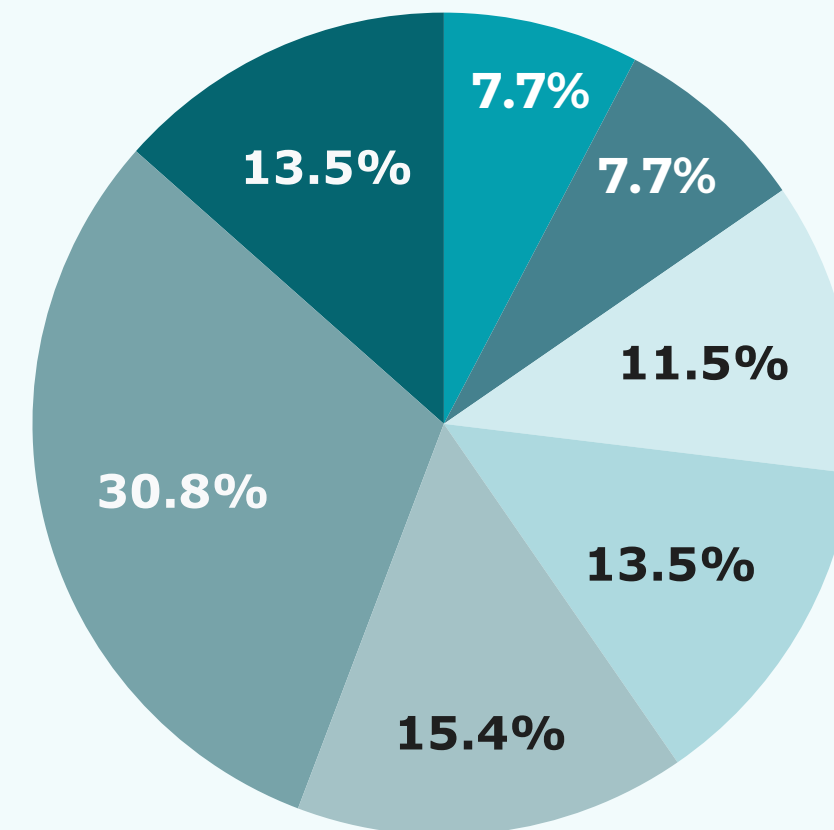


Fig 24.0. Industry

41.5% of organisations are MNCs, 34% are Indian companies, 18.9% are startups, and 3.8% are a part of a conglomerate. There's only 1.9% VC/PE.

30.8% of organisations are in the SaaS/Software/IT domain, followed by 15.4% in industrial goods/manufacturing/automotive. 13.5% of organisations are in the FMCG/FMCD/Electricals/Paints. 11.5% are in consulting, and 7.7% in Retail/Apparel and BFSI each. 13.5% of organisations are in other domains including healthcare, energy, media/entertainment, and non-profits.

Candidate Respondent Profile

8+ years 4-8 years 1-4 years

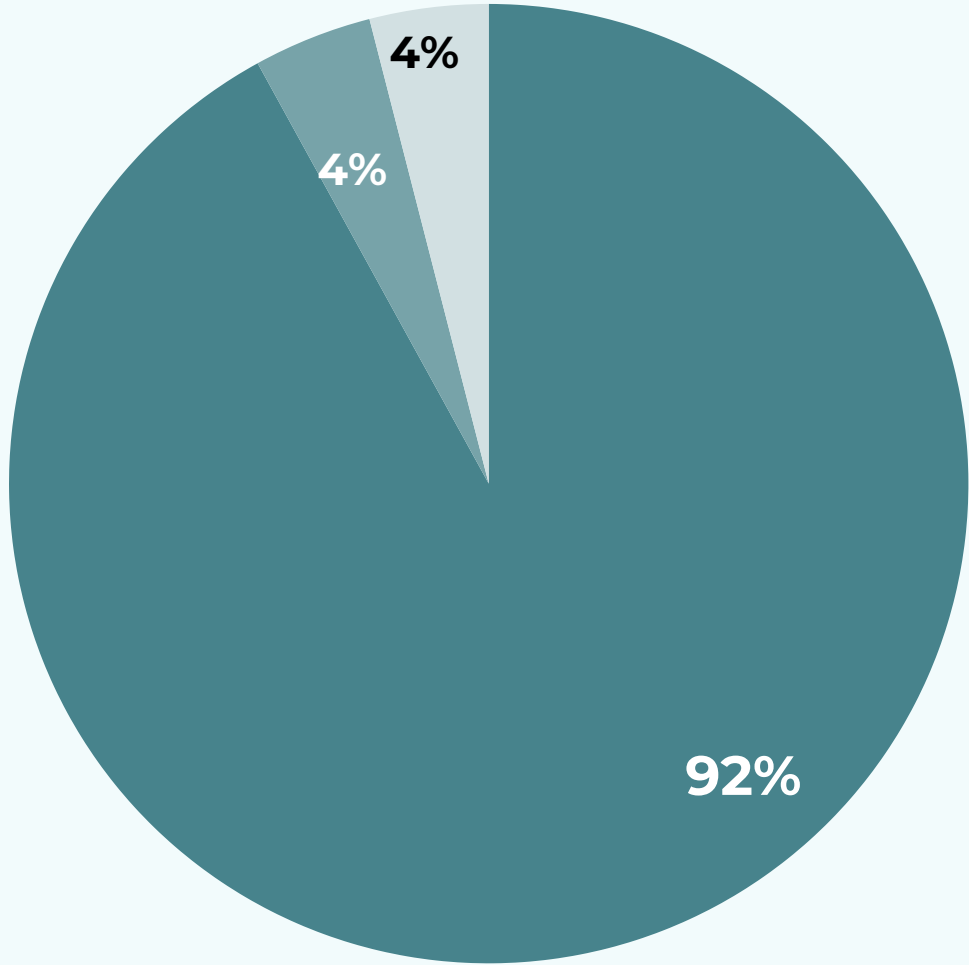


Fig 25.0. Total years of work experience

<25 25-50 50-75
75-100 100+

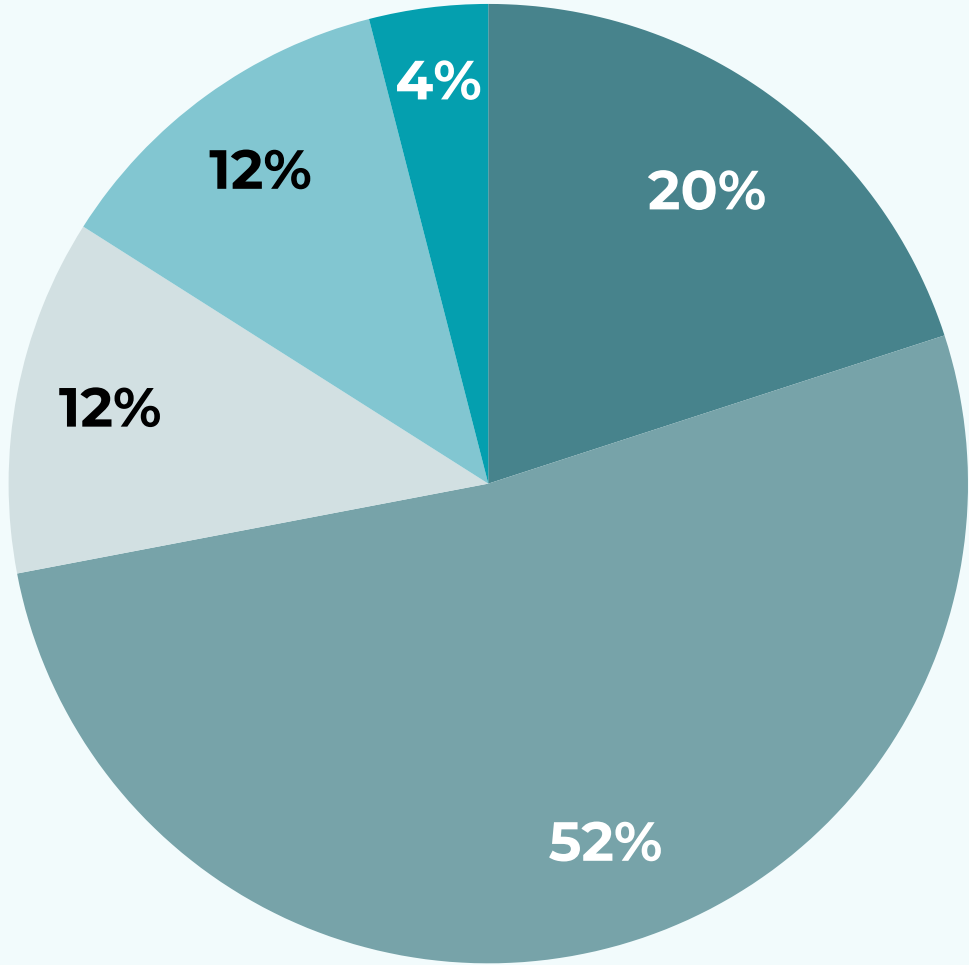


Fig 26.0. Current (or last) CTC in INR Lacs per annum

92% of candidates have 8+ years of work experience.

52% of them draw the CTC between INR 25 to 50 lacs, and 12% draw between INR 50 to 75 lacs and INR 75 to 100 lacs each. 20% draw CTC below INR 25 lacs per annum. 4% of candidates draw a CTC of INR 100 lacs+.

36% of candidates are from the SaaS/Software/IT industry, and 12% are from consulting. The rest are equally scattered between FMCG, hospitality, BFSI, telecom, real estate, industrial goods, e-commerce, logistics, pharma, etc.

Glossary - Use of Technology

- **Applicant Tracking System (ATS)** - A software application that automates various stages, from collecting and sorting applications to filtering resumes based on specific keywords and qualifications. The ATS helps recruiters efficiently handle large volumes of applications, ensuring that only the most relevant candidates proceed through the hiring process.
- **Personality Tests** - These are assessments designed to evaluate a candidate's personality traits, work style, and cultural fit within an organization. Personality tests commonly include the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) and the Big Five personality traits.
- **Technical Skill Tests** - These tests assess a candidate's expertise in specific technical areas required for the role, such as coding, data analysis, or engineering skills. They may involve timed exercises, simulated work scenarios, or practical tasks to evaluate a candidate's competency and problem-solving abilities in a controlled environment.
- **JD Repositories** - Centralized databases that store job descriptions and role requirements to provide recruiters with standardized templates and detailed role descriptions, ensuring consistency in job postings and making it easier to align candidates with job expectations.
- **Resume Parsers** - Resume parsers are tools that scan resumes to extract essential information, such as work experience, education, and skills. This data is then formatted for easy reading and categorization within an ATS, helping recruiters quickly assess candidates' qualifications and compatibility with job requirements.
- **Video Screening Tools** - Video screening tools allow recruiters to conduct remote video interviews, often as an initial stage in the hiring process. These tools may include pre-recorded or live video interviews and can assess both verbal and non-verbal cues, enabling recruiters to evaluate candidates more efficiently than traditional phone screenings.
- **Chatbots** - Chatbots are AI-powered tools that assist with initial candidate interactions, answer frequently asked questions, and guide applicants through the application process. They can also collect basic information and pre-screen candidates, helping recruiters save time while enhancing candidate engagement and experience.



Thank You

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