



2023 Industry Report

Mind the Candidate Expectations Gap

What candidates really think of current pre-hire assessments and recruitment processes, and why they are quitting

1000+ employees share their take on the state of recruitment

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Just four years ago, we delved into the intriguing question of how accurately interview processes reflected the jobs candidates applied for. With over a decade of recruitment experience myself, I anticipated uncovering a discrepancy between candidate expectations and the reality of their roles. However, the sheer magnitude of the gap left me astounded. A staggering 48% of the employees surveyed admitted to leaving a role because it wasn't what they expected, while almost a third had quit due to a cultural mismatch with the organization.

These alarming statistics revealed that traditional recruitment processes weren't working, leaving new employees disillusioned and dreams dashed. Yet, in the wake of the pandemic, many organizations have revamped their hiring approach, adopting flexible working practices and using virtual tools to cast a wider net for potential applicants.

Given these changes, we set out to investigate whether the gap had narrowed.

- Are employers more effective in their recruitment efforts?
- Are revamped recruitment processes providing candidates with a more realistic picture?

Regrettably, our findings indicate a resounding “no” - in fact, the gap has only widened. The persistent mismatch between employee expectations and workplace reality, continues to drain valuable time and resources. And, as we reveal, some of the proposed solutions to this are actually doing more harm than good.

In this eye-opening report, we delve into how candidates feel about the recruitment process in 2023 and examine the impact of Covid-19 on hiring. We explore candidates' views on pre-hire assessments and whether these tools provide a fairer selection process. Moreover, we provide practical tips on how to improve your hiring process and craft an authentic,

I hope you enjoy it.

Chris Platts, CEO - ThriveMap



Key Findings



Mismanaged expectations in hiring is getting worse

A striking **55%** of employees have quit a job due to a disconnect between the job's portrayal in the recruitment process and the actual experience - a **15%** increase since 2019.



Candidates feel mis-sold by recruiters

Over half (**52%**) of employees report feeling misled by companies or recruiters, who they believe misrepresented their job roles in the hiring process.



Changes in work environment are not being communicated

The pandemic has “drastically altered” job responsibilities for **25%** of employees, yet only **46%** of employees say the changes in their job role due to Covid-19 were communicated during the hiring process.



Candidates are growing to like taking online assessments

Currently only **20%** express a dislike for completing online tests during the hiring process vs **45%** who disliked them in 2019, a **55%** decrease since our last report.



Job-relevant assessments are judged to be the fairest and most accurate assessment type

Perceived accuracy and fairness is significantly higher in job relevant assessment types (**58%, 57%**) than in personality tests (**25%, 25%**) or game-based tests (**5%, 4%**).



Candidates feel that game-based assessments are unfair

95% of respondents believe that certain people are disadvantaged by game-based, pre-hire assessments.

Background

Despite the pandemic, persistent inflation and rising interest rates, global job markets have remained remarkably resilient over the past few years. However, since our last report in 2019, the skills shortage has intensified. Employers, already struggling to secure the right talent to grow their business, now face an even more daunting challenge - **57% report difficulties in filling open positions.**¹ This, combined with historically-low unemployment has led to a particularly tight labour market making successful recruitment and retention more important than ever.

The workplace has changed

The Covid-19 pandemic has reshaped the workplace, with millions now embracing report work and its benefits. A recent survey found that 87% of office workers wanted to work at home at least some of the time.² Employers have also benefited from an expanded talent pool with record numbers of job applicants for high volume, home based jobs such as call centre workers.

While some high-profile organizations publicly stating they want employees back in the office full time, others have embraced a more flexible approach. In fact, half of bosses think their teams are more productive working from home.³ Additionally rapid advancements in AI are also impacting the jobs market with predicted job displacement, creation and skills transformation all expected to occur within the next few years.

Employees want more from work

For many Covid-19 has also prompted a profound re-evaluation of life and priorities, with increased appreciation for family connections and personal fulfilment. Amid the monotony of unfulfilling jobs, many sought new career paths, fueling the “Great Resignation” and record-breaking job departures.

A recent McKinsey report⁴ revealed that 40% of surveyed employees across six countries were dissatisfied and contemplating leaving their positions. Consequently, employers face not only the challenge of finding talent but retaining it as well. Our research explores where employers are currently going wrong and provides insights on how they can get it right.

Recruitment technology usage surging

The pandemic forced employers and recruiters to overhaul their recruitment processes significantly. Social distancing rules required them to embrace video interviewing,

which has now become the norm. Candidate screening tools such as online assessments have also become more common, especially for frontline jobs.

Our Research



In March 2023, we surveyed 1000 full-time UK employees who have had at least two jobs and have changed jobs in the past two years. We asked them how well they feel the recruitment process indicates:



the job role on offer versus the reality of the job



the impact Covid-19 had on their job role



their experience of using pre-hire assessments



their view on which pre-hire assessments are the most accurate and fair

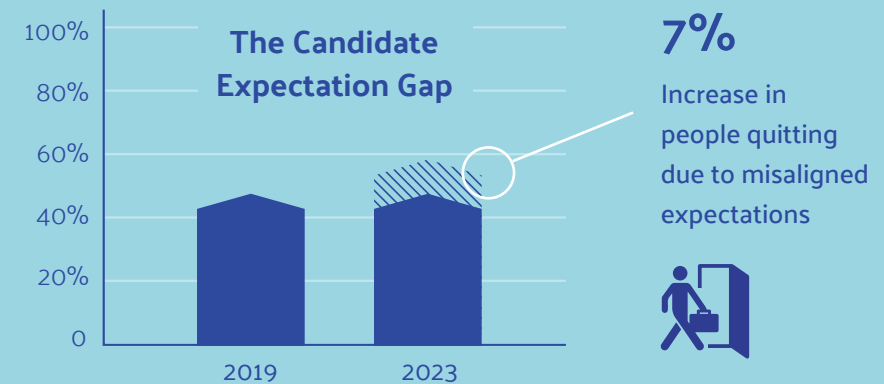
This report, based on their insights, provides practical tips for aligning recruitment practices with both the demands of today's employees and the realities of working life in your organization. Ultimately, this should help you to improve hiring precision, lowering staff turnover and enhancing candidate experience to attract top talent.



Chapter 1

Are candidates being sold an unrealistic dream?

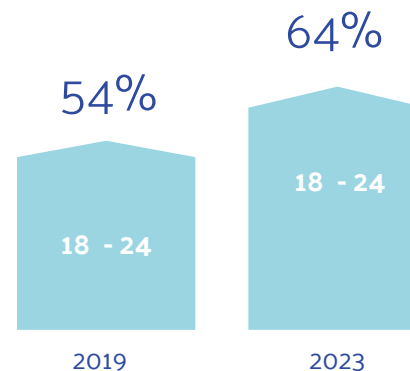
Our 2019 research found that 48% of respondents had left a position due to job misrepresentation during hiring, the 2023 study shows a disconcerting increase to 55%. This highlights a worsening trend in recruitment processes, emphasizing the urgent need for more accurate role portrayal.



Gen Z are still the most affected

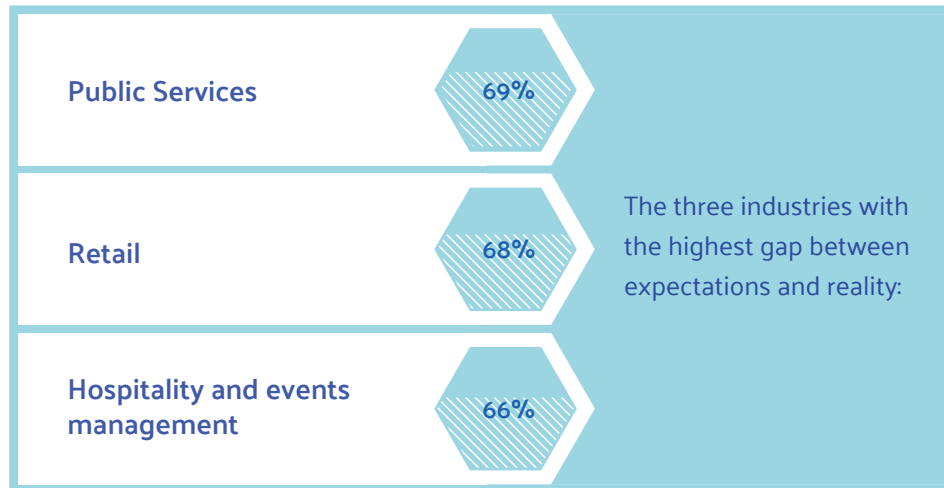
In 2019, the youngest workforce members (ages 18-24) faced the greatest disparity between job expectations and reality, with 54% leaving positions due to unmet expectations.

By 2023, a staggering 64% of this age group reported leaving jobs for the same reason, highlighting their vulnerability as the most affected demographic.



Starting a new job is inherently challenging, but for this generation, navigating the onset of their careers amidst the Covid-19 pandemic, with minimal prior experience and limited face-to-face interactions, the process has become exponentially more difficult.

The Expectation gap by industry sector



Why are expectations not being met?

When employees were asked why they had left their role, the most common reason was that the job responsibilities didn't match their expectations. 59% gave this response, the same figure from the 2019 survey. Close behind job responsibilities was the working environment, with 57% of people highlighting this as a cause. Back in 2019, this was significantly lower (42%), showing the shift over the last few years in employees' mindsets and the desire to have a flexible, supportive working environment.

What's going wrong?

It appears that employers still aren't being honest when it comes to recruitment. The situation has deteriorated as the war for talent has intensified. Employees are demanding more from employers and if they don't get what they want, they are fully prepared to leave and search for it elsewhere.

The most common reasons for employees leaving

Our research in 2019 and 2023 asked the same question of those who left a job because the role wasn't what they expected. Here are the most common reasons in the two surveys:

2019

Job responsibility

59%

Working environment

42%

Working hours/shift pattern

35%

Salary/benefits

29%

Location of role

10%

2023

Job responsibility

59%

Working environment

57%

Working hours/shift pattern

47%

Salary/benefits

35%

Location of role

20%

The gender gap

Looking at the results for this year, there are significant differences between the experience of men and women.

Reason for leaving	Men	Women
Job responsibilities	61%	58%
Working environment	53%	60%
Working hours/shift patterns	55%	42%
Salary/benefits	49%	26%
Location of role	31%	13%

Women are more likely to find that job responsibilities or the work environment do not meet their expectations, compared to any other factor. Men were much more likely than women to feel the salary, locations and benefits were not what was promised. In general, men are much more likely than women to address salary issues and to make this more of a priority.

Reasons for leaving by region

Londoners are far more likely to leave because of salary/benefits

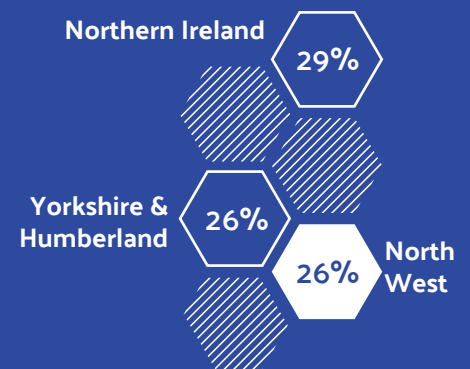
It appears that where you live has an impact on what's important to you at work.

A striking 57% of Londoners reported leaving jobs due to unmet salary and benefits expectations, significantly higher than other regions such as the North East at only 38%. This indicates that residents in the high-cost capital prioritise pay more than other areas, confident they can find desired compensation elsewhere.

Top 3 regions where people are most likely to leave a job due to mismatched salary/benefits expectations



Bottom 3 regions where people are least likely to leave a job due to mismatched salary/benefits expectations



What does the expectations vs reality gap mean for employers?

Over the past four years, the gap between employees' expectations and reality around working environment, hours and location has grown significantly, mirroring the rising demand employees have for greater flexibility and autonomy in 2023. Employers must recognise this as a priority for employees, ensuring they not only talk about flexibility to attract candidates but follow-through on this promise.

Our latest survey reveals another serious problem for employers; filling vacancies has become harder, more expensive and more time consuming. Data from the CIPD⁵ suggests **the average time taken to fill a role is now 48 days**, and, if, after that time, a new hire proves to be unsuccessful, the organization faces being understaffed for a further six weeks, harming productivity.

The CIPD estimates the average cost of filling a UK vacancy is £6,125,⁵ rising to £19,000 for managers. This figure doesn't consider any loss of productivity. A conservative estimate is that it takes a new employee two months to become fully productive, adding to overall costs.

Employer reputation is key. **64% of candidates will research a company's background online before applying for a role.⁶** Negative feedback from former employees both deter candidates from applying, and reduce offer acceptance rates making it even harder to find the right recruits.



More than an employer issue – recruiters are mis-selling jobs too

Our survey indicates that employees feel recruiters often mis-sell or misrepresent roles in the recruitment process with 52% believing they've experienced dishonesty. Younger employers aged under 35 report higher mis-selling rates (55%) than those 45 and over (46%).

Sectors like hospitality, public services, and retail show over 60% dissatisfaction, compared to 30% in social care. This misrepresentation leads to employees leaving roles that don't meet their expectations, highlighting a disconnect between job descriptions and actual responsibilities.

**52%**

of people felt recruiters had deliberately mis-sold them a job.

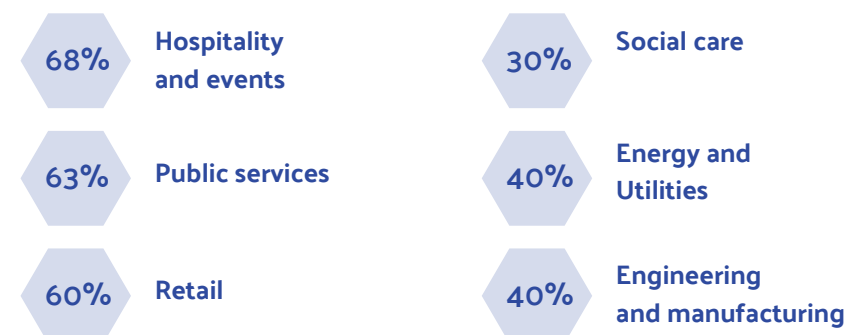
What should employers and recruiters do differently?

- ✓ Focus on the essential skills needed for the job – avoiding misleading “nice to haves”.
- ✓ Conduct a job analysis to identify the above skills and job details that need communicating.
- ✓ Be truthful about job details – avoid overpromising flexibility or responsibilities.
- ✓ Be realistic about your organization, addressing areas for improvement and sharing plans to enhance the work environment.

Recruiter mis-selling by industry sector

Top 3 sectors for people being mis-sold a job by a recruiter

Bottom 3 sectors for people being mis-sold a job by a recruiter.



Chapter 2

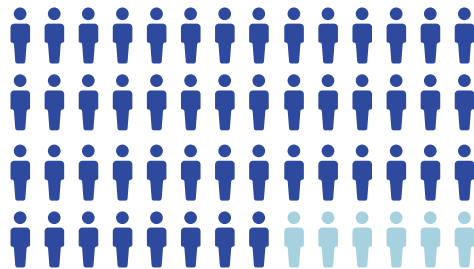
The Covid-19 gap

Covid-19 has transformed the workplace, emphasising remote work and flexibility. Behind higher pay, employees rate the ability to work remotely⁷ as their second priority when looking for a new job.

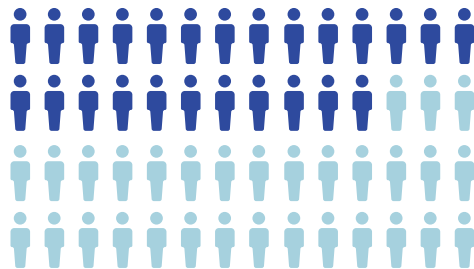
Much less has been written about how Covid-19 has changed job roles. Our survey shows the impact has been significant with 90% of employees experiencing changes. Youngest (18-24; 34%) and oldest workers (65+; 40%) have seen the most drastic shifts, highlighting the challenges faced by Gen Z. Meanwhile, 28% of those aged 55-64 report no change in their roles, possibly due to their senior positions and pre-existing autonomy before the pandemic.

To what extent did Covid-19 change your job role?

Reason	18 to 24	25 to 34	35 to 44	45 to 54	55 to 64	65+
Changed a lot	34%	21%	19%	26%	19%	40%
Somewhat	35%	51%	53%	32%	26%	26%
Not very much	25%	17%	18%	27%	24%	32%
Not at all	5%	9%	11%	13%	28%	1%
Not sure	1%	2%	0%	2%	4%	1%



90%
People who
reported their jobs
changed due to
Covid-19



46%
People who reported
changes are being
communicated to
them in the hiring
process

Are candidates being told of these changes?

Our research highlighted these changes were not being effectively communicated to candidates in the hiring process, adding to the gap between what candidates believe a role will be like and what it is actually like in practice.

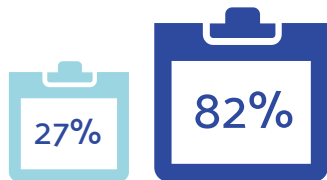
This reveals that most recruitment processes fall short, failing to accurately portray job realities for candidates. This lack of clarity creates mismatches between candidate and employer expectations, resulting in dissatisfaction and resentment with potentially damaging consequences.



Chapter 3

The use of pre-hire assessments is on the rise

The rise in pre-hire assessments usage is undeniable. When we asked respondents in our 2019 survey whether they had completed one, just over a quarter (27%) had; in our 2023 survey this figure has jumped to nearly three quarters (82%).



Three decades ago, pre-hire assessments primarily consisted of personality tests. Today, we see various types being used, broadly, they fall into the following categories:



Personality Tests

involve a series of questions or statements that assess an individual's behavioural tendencies, emotional responses, and thought patterns. The purpose of the test is to provide insights into an individual's personality traits, such as extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness and openness to experience. The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) is a well-known personality test based on the theories of Carl Jung but has been criticised for its lack of scientific rigor and reliability.



Gamified Tests

incorporate game elements to make the assessment experience more enjoyable and engaging, while still providing insights into an individual's skills and abilities. They are most commonly used to assess skills such as problem-solving and decision-making. In recent years, gamification has become more prevalent with the rise of digital technology and the popularity of mobile games.



Cognitive Ability Tests

measure an individual's aptitude in problem-solving, critical thinking, and logical reasoning. They are commonly used to assess intellectual capacity and potential and are designed to provide insights into an individual's ability to learn quickly and think critically. Cognitive ability tests are typically standardised and norm-referenced, meaning that an individual's score is compared to the scores of a representative sample of the population.



Job-Relevant Skills Tests

evaluate an individual's ability to perform specific tasks or skills that are required for a particular job. They are designed to measure the knowledge, skills and abilities that are necessary to succeed in a specific role. Job-relevant tests can be used to assess a wide range of skills, from technical skills such as coding or data analysis, to soft skills such as communication and teamwork.



Situational Judgement Tests

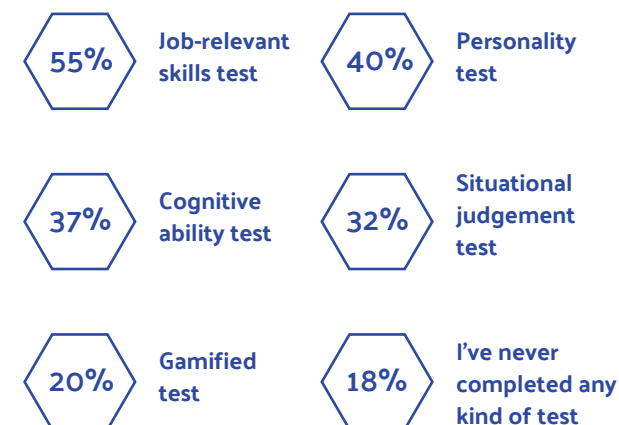
evaluate an individual's ability to make decisions in hypothetical work-related scenarios. They typically present participants with realistic scenarios or situations that might occur on the job and ask them to choose the best response or course of action from a set of options. They date back to the 1940s when the U.S. Army developed a test to assess soldiers' leadership potential. Since then, they have become a popular method of evaluating job candidates, particularly for roles that require strong decision-making skills.



Realistic Job Assessments

(sometimes called Job Simulations) are a new type of assessment that incorporate a range of different assessment types including Situational Judgement, Skills tests and Cognitive ability tests. Questions are embedded within a day-in-the-life narrative that simulates the job and work environment. These are more accurate than generic tests as they consider each company's unique work environment and they can help reduce new hire attrition by enabling a company to tell an honest narrative about what a job is really like to candidates.

Which of the following pre-hire assessments have you completed?



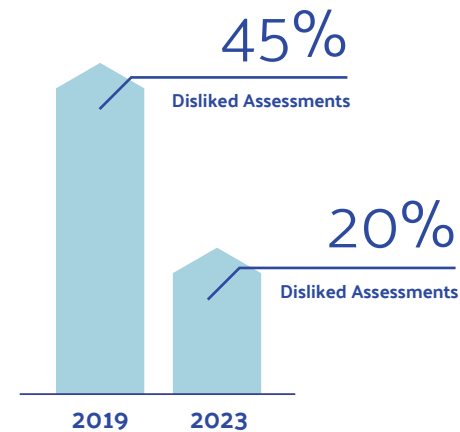
Of the 82% of respondents who'd completed a pre-hire assessment, job-relevant skills tests were the most common (55%) and gamified tests were the least common (20%). Interestingly, older workers are less likely to have completed a test at all – 28% of those aged 45 to 64 had not completed a test. This is perhaps because they are more likely to be moving into senior roles where the use of pre-hire assessments tend to be less common.

Are online assessments superior to traditional recruitment methods in fairness and accuracy?

Human-led interviews are prone to flaws and biases. Online assessments provide a powerful solution to address these issues, particularly in a world where diversity, equity, and inclusion are vital corporate priorities. But how do candidates truly perceive assessments?

Pre-hire assessments – do candidates enjoy them?

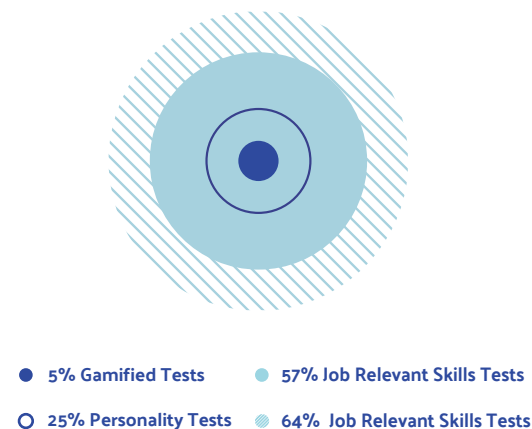
Our latest survey shows candidates are growing to like online assessments. **Less than 1 in 5 (20%) respondents said they either dislike the tests or dislike them a lot, a significant decrease from the 45% who stated they disliked taking a test in 2019.** Perhaps with the increasing prevalence of their use in recruitment, people are starting to get used to them? Or maybe they can see how their use in the process is beneficial.



Pre-hire assessments – do candidates think they're accurate?

Candidates judged gamified tests to be the least accurate at selecting people for jobs, which raises an interesting question around the perception of their purpose.

Job relevant skills tests were deemed to be the most accurate by candidates (57%) rising to 64% amongst 18-24 year olds. 25% felt that personality tests were most accurate and only 5% stated gamified tests.



Assess to Impress



Making your assessment job-relevant increases the perception of accuracy and fairness in candidates minds.

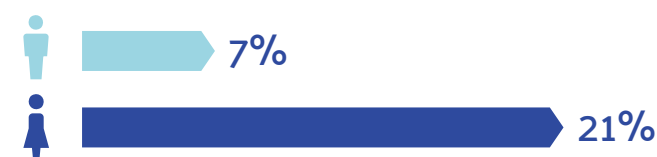
Providing candidates with an open narrative around how pre-hire assessments are helping you overcome traditional flaws and biases is an important step in them understanding why you're using them.

Pre-hire assessments – do candidates think they're fair?

Job-relevant skills tests (58%) were also judged by candidates as being the fairest at selecting people for jobs. 25% felt that personality tests were the fairest – although men (32%) and women (23%) had differing opinions on this. Just 4% felt that gamified tests were the fairest and 12% didn't know.

While men are more interested in game-based tests than women, only 6% think they are the fairest way to select a candidate for a job .

Percentage of people who actively dislike game based assessments



Gamified tests – are they biased?

Game-based assessments are thought to surpass traditional psychometric tests in terms of engagement, reduced drop outs, and minimised candidate anxiety. They also claim to exclude bias and social desirability from hiring. However, our survey results imply that the “game” aspect may introduce its own biases.

They're much more appealing to male candidates

Gamified tests are more appealing to male candidates (80%) than females (61%), with only 7% of men disliking them compared to 21% of women. Furthermore, 27% of men are 'very likely' to take such a test if asked, versus 18% of women.

They're less appealing to older candidates

Older candidates (55+) find them less appealing, with 28% disinterested in game-based tests, higher than the 13% average. Additionally, 24% of this age group would feel annoyed if asked to take a game-based assessment, compared to the 13% overall average.



Additionally, an overwhelming 95% of respondents believe that certain people are disadvantaged to some extent by gamified tests.



Summary

Since our last report, the workplace has experienced dramatic changes, widening the gap between candidate expectations and employee reality. To keep pace with constant evolution, you'll need to adapt your hiring processes. Consider implementing job-relevant pre-hire assessments as a potential solution, but be mindful of their purpose and the importance of maintaining perceived fairness throughout the process.

Employees demand fair treatment and transparency in the hiring process. Recruiters should not be afraid to embrace radical honesty in their job adverts and hiring processes to build trust-based relationships with candidates.



Here are the key takeaways from our report to help you rethink your process:



Transparency is a huge benefit to hiring – attracting candidates on false pretences leads to an “expectation mismatch” and higher new hire attrition.



Covid-19 has changed job responsibilities and working environments. Ensure candidates are well-informed about these changes and any possible changes in future to avoid miscommunication.



Many candidates have felt misled by recruiters - build trust by highlighting the negatives as well as the positives.



Candidates are growing to like online assessments as part of the hiring process, however gamified or abstract assessment types are perceived as unfair and inaccurate.



Only use job-relevant assessments - candidates want to work in an organization that judges them on their capabilities not any other criteria.



Help hiring managers to be more inclusive and support greater diversity by creating a hiring process based on how well a candidate can do the job, rather than by how tech savvy they are.



In a cost of living crisis, pay matters, but candidates also seek value, support, and authenticity. To attract top talent, emphasise these aspects from the start of the recruitment process.



Job-related pre-hire assessments are perceived as fairer by employees in candidate selection. Develop assessments that showcase your organization attractively and offer candidates a genuine glimpse into the employee experience.

Methodology

This methodology outlines the process used to obtain non-biased report findings on recruitment industry trends. The objective was to gain insights into the current trends within the recruitment industry. To ensure consistency and meaningful comparisons, the same set of questions were asked to all participants both in 2019 and in 2023. The survey was conducted by OnePoll on behalf of ThriveMap.



Sample Size

A sample size of 1000 participants was chosen to ensure statistical significance and meaningful insights. This sample size provides a representative snapshot of the recruitment industry trends among the target population.



Survey design

Questions were carefully designed to cover various aspects of the industry and provide meaningful insights. The questions were reviewed and validated by experts in the field to ensure their relevance and clarity.



OnePoll and Professional Affiliations

The survey was conducted by OnePoll, a reputable polling company. OnePoll is a member of ESOMAR (European Society for Opinion and Market Research) and employs members of the MRS (Market Research Society). These professional affiliations indicate adherence to ethical and quality standards in conducting surveys and ensure the credibility of the research process.

About ThriveMap

ThriveMap creates bespoke Realistic Job Assessments that take candidates through a digital “day-in-the-life” of a job.

Unlike generic, “off-the-shelf” assessments, ThriveMap assessments help candidates to learn about the job and work environment whilst being assessed. This means that candidates can self-deselect if it's not a good fit

If you'd like to find out how ThriveMap could work with you to create a pre-hire assessment that tells your story, book a demo today:

<https://thrivemap.io/demo/>



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2. Get Hybrid Working Done Survey - Atlas Cloud
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