

HIRING BENCHMARKS REPORT

# Redefining What Good Looks Like

See how you stack up, why you might be falling behind, and how to make a change in 2026.



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## Setting the Stage:

# Planning for the Unpredictable

If you work in talent acquisition or HR and it feels like your 2026 hiring plan needs a crystal ball, you're not alone. Every recruiter right now is trying to predict the unpredictable and the rules keep changing.

If 2025 taught us anything, it's that predictability is off the table. From [economic slowdowns](#), [unpredictable job market shifts](#), to the [government shutdown delaying official labor data](#), this past year made one thing clear: building a hiring strategy is anything but easy.

That's where this Employ Hiring Benchmarks Report comes in. It's built to help hiring teams cut through the noise and show what "good" really looks like right now. When the market shifts, so do hiring benchmarks, and the teams that adapt fastest are the ones that win. We analyzed thousands of data points from across industries and company sizes to answer the question on every talent leader's mind: what does great hiring look like today and how do we get there?

In the pages ahead, we'll walk through each stage of the hiring process—from attracting candidates to making the final offer—and spotlight the metrics that define success at each stage. For every metric, you'll see the latest benchmark data, a breakdown of what those numbers mean, and clear, practical steps for what to do next.

Whether you're looking to tighten your funnel, make a stronger business case for new tech, or simply benchmark your team's performance, this is your roadmap for hiring smarter, faster, and with more confidence in 2026.





# About the Data

These benchmarks aren't based on generic market estimates or outdated reports. They come straight from the source: real hiring data from 6,640 Employ customers—the teams using our ATS solutions (Jobvite, Lever, JazzHR) and our AI Companions every day.

We broke the data down by company size—small to medium businesses (0–249 employees), mid-market (250–999 employees), and enterprise (1,000+ employees)—and across five key industries: retail, hospitality, manufacturing, software & tech, and business services.

Now that you know the story behind the numbers, let's dig into the benchmarks and how to put them to work.





## Hiring Stage #1:

# Attract & Engage

Turn job seekers into applicants with the right mix of reach, relevance, and reputation.

This is where your hiring journey begins—getting in front of the right people, spotlighting what makes your company stand out, and giving them a reason to click “apply.” It’s not just about posting jobs—it’s about storytelling, connection, and helping candidates picture themselves on your team. When your message hits the mark, casual browsers become believers and believers turn into serious applicants.

In this stage, we’ll dig into the four metrics that reveal how magnetic your employer brand really is:

- **Engagement Rate:** Are your messages breaking through the noise and inspiring action?
- **Average Applications per Job:** How strong is your overall attraction power?
- **Source of Hire:** Which channels are bringing in your best talent—and where should you double down?
- **Applicant Diversity:** How well does your talent pipeline reflect the broader workforce?

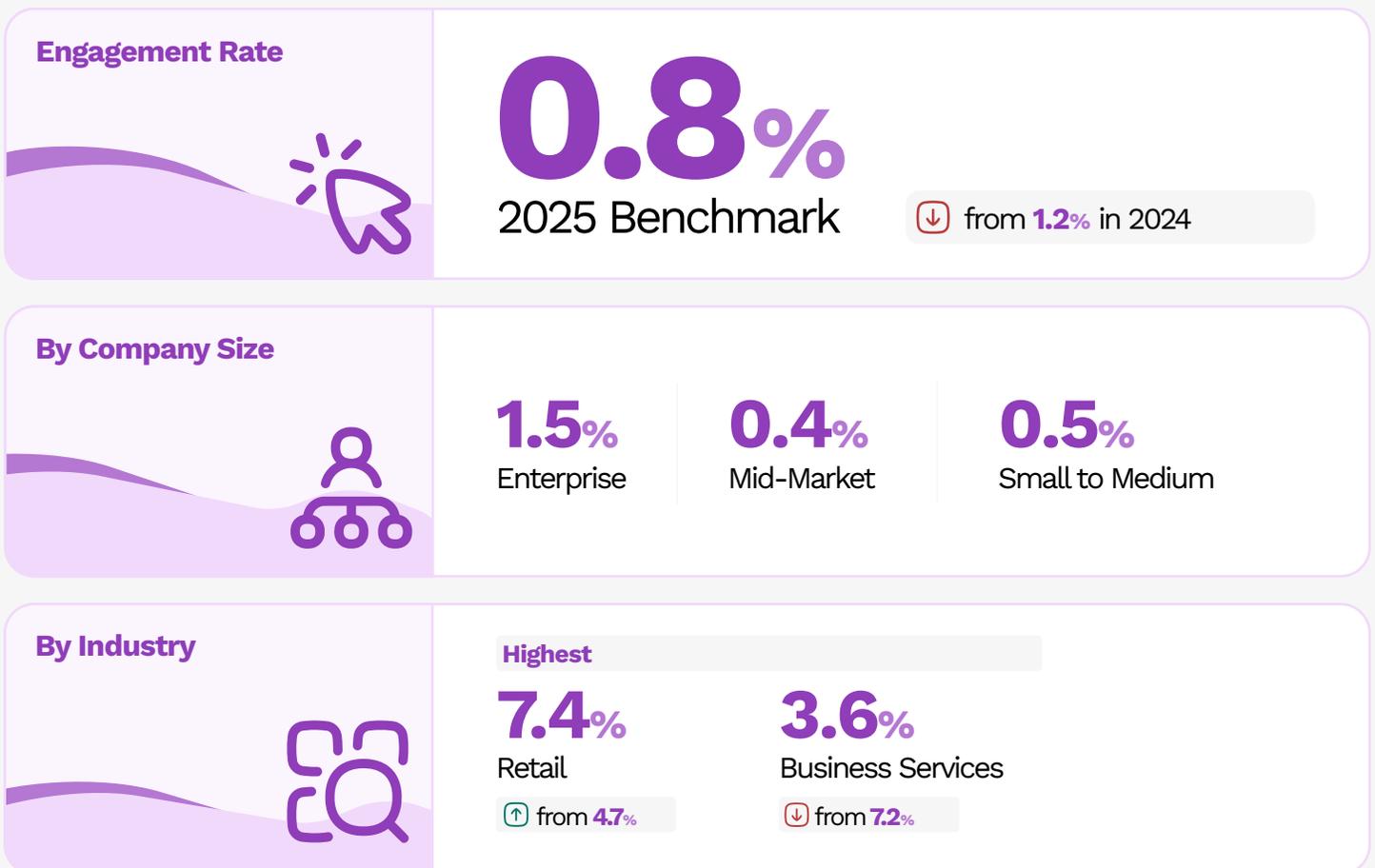


# Engagement Rate

**The percentage of people who click through your recruitment marketing emails**

Engagement rate tells you how well your emails break through the noise and get candidates to take that next step, whether it's learning more, exploring roles, or starting an application. A higher click-through rate (CTR) means your outreach is landing: it feels relevant, timely, and worth your candidates' time. A lower CTR suggests your messages may be getting lost in the inbox or failing to resonate.

## By the Numbers:



## What's happening:

**Bigger brands win on name recognition:** Enterprises saw the highest engagement this year at 1.5%, which makes sense. Bigger brands often have more name recognition and dedicated resources for recruitment marketing, giving their emails a natural advantage. Smaller organizations, by contrast, may struggle to stand out against that level of visibility.

**Retail surges ahead with fast, high-volume hiring:** By industry, retail led the way with a 7.4% CTR, up from 4.7% last year. That lift reflects the nature of retail recruiting: fast-paced, high-volume roles that appeal to a broad audience. These teams can cast a wider net and see quicker response rates, compared to more specialized industries like software or tech, where hiring tends to be more targeted and deliberate.



## How to take action:

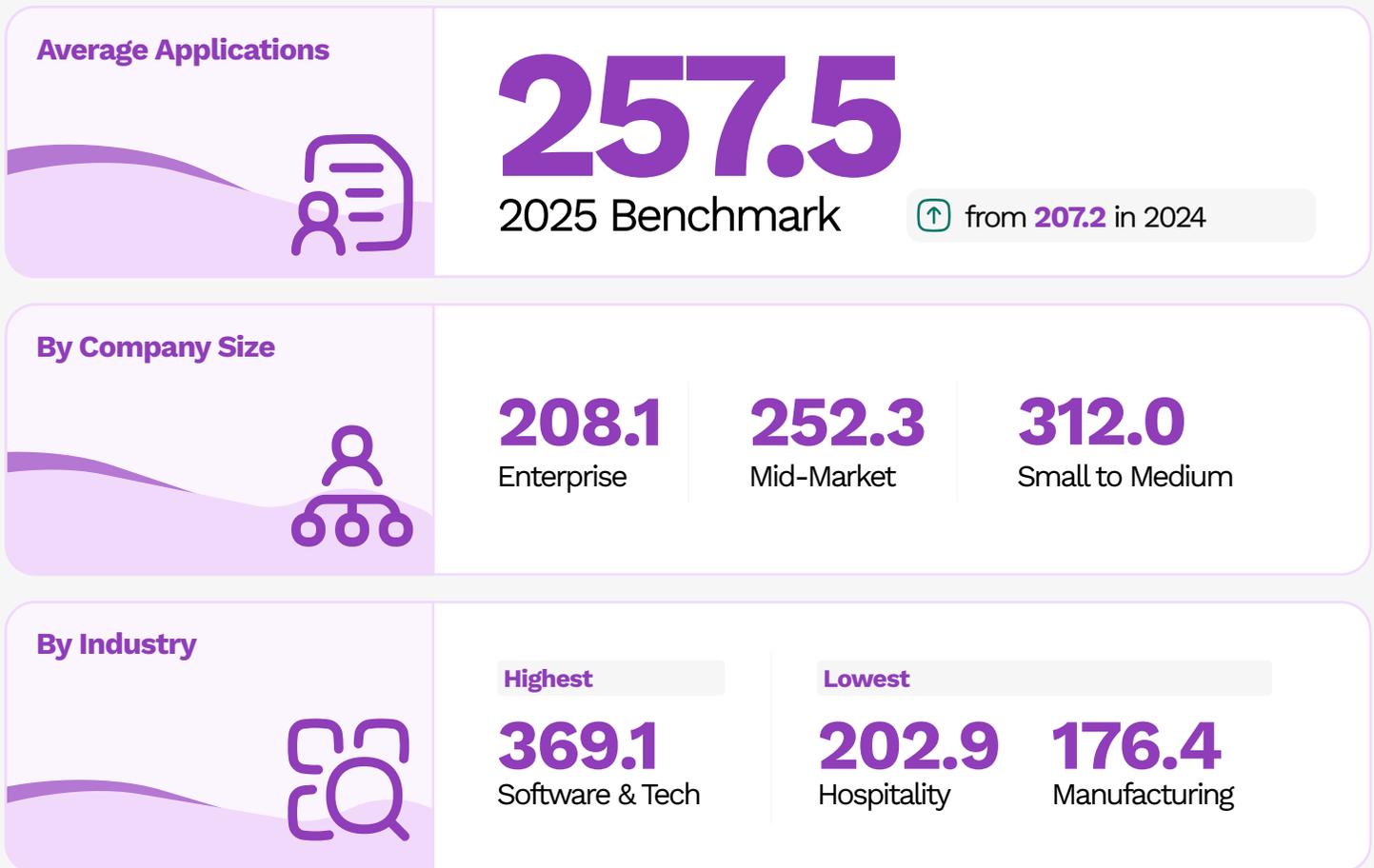
- **Low CTR?** Revisit your subject lines and calls to action (CTAs). Keep emails short, personal, and focused on what candidates gain by clicking. Test different send times and formats to see what earns the best engagement.
- **High CTR?** Study what's working (tone, timing, or type of content) and replicate it across future campaigns. Double down on your best-performing audiences and messages.
- **For enterprises:** Personalization matters, even at scale. Use segmentation, dynamic fields, and recruiter signatures to make messages feel human and relevant, not automated.
- **For mid-market and small/medium-sized businesses:** Your smaller reach allows for greater connection—lean into it. Test conversational subject lines and use storytelling to humanize your brand.

# Average Applications Per Job

## The average number of applicants that apply to each open role

Average applications per job gives you a snapshot of your overall attraction power: how well your employer brand, job visibility, and sourcing strategy are working together to pull talent into your pipeline. It's not just about volume for volume's sake. A healthy funnel balances both quantity and quality, ensuring you're reaching enough candidates without overwhelming recruiters or compromising fit.

### By the Numbers:

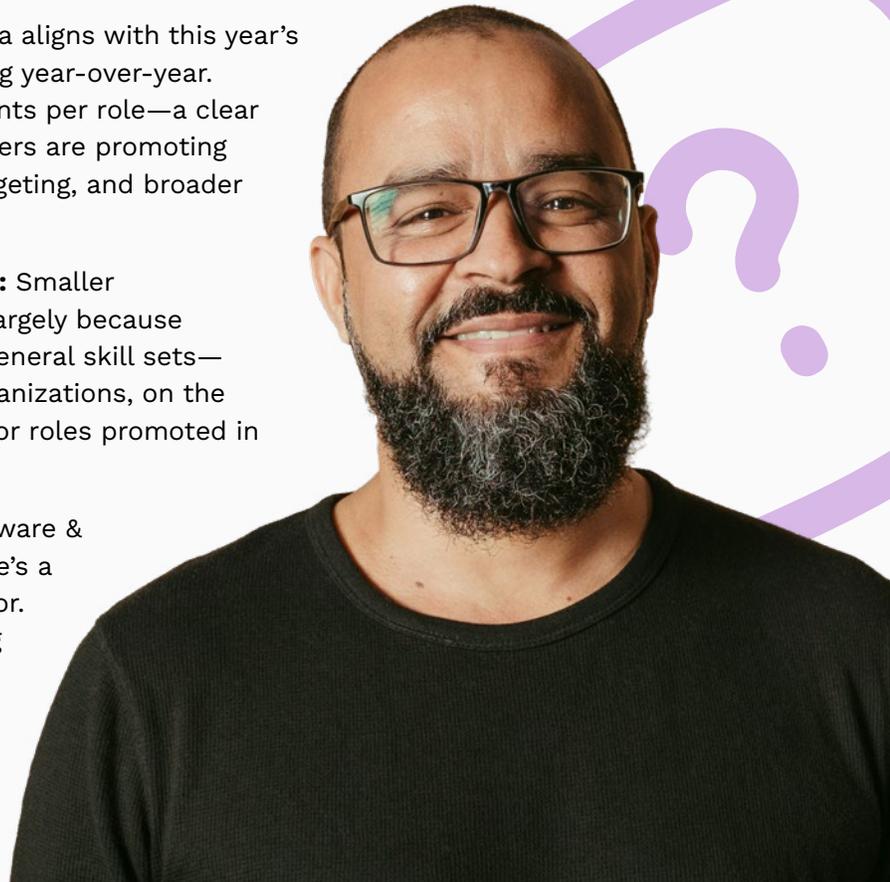


## What's happening:

**Applicant volume is up across the board:** Our data aligns with this year's [Recruiter Nation Report](#): applicant volume is rising year-over-year. Organizations are seeing roughly 50 more applicants per role—a clear sign that job seekers are more active, and recruiters are promoting smarter. Stronger employer branding, sharper targeting, and broader distribution are fueling bigger pipelines.

**Small businesses see the biggest applicant pools:** Smaller businesses lead with 312.0 applications per job, largely because they recruit for broader roles that require more general skill sets—widening the qualified talent pool. Enterprise organizations, on the other hand, tend to hire more specialized or senior roles promoted in niche channels, which naturally limits volume.

**Industry matters, with tech topping the list:** Software & tech attract the most applicants (369.1), and there's a few reasons for that, but flexibility is likely a factor. These roles often offer remote options, attracting candidates from a wide range of locations. In contrast, hospitality (202.9) and manufacturing (176.4) roles often require onsite work, attracting a smaller pool of local jobseekers.



## How to take action:

- **If you're above the benchmark:** A big applicant pool is a good problem—until it isn't. Focus on quality over quantity by tightening targeting and using [screening tools](#) to surface better fit candidates faster.
- **If you're below the benchmark:** You likely have a visibility gap. Audit where and how you post, refresh titles for real-world search terms, and test new boards to reach active talent.
- **If you're flat:** “Steady” in a rising market means stagnation. Keep experimenting with new channels, fresh branding, and benefit-forward messaging to stay competitive.

# Source of Hire

## The percentage of hires coming from each sourcing channel

Source of hire shows where most of your candidates are coming from and reveals a lot about how your hiring funnel performs. When “applied” leads, it means your jobs are visible and attracting attention. But a healthy funnel also balances inbound activity with proactive sourcing, referrals, and internal mobility. The right mix signals a mature, multi-channel strategy that combines visibility with precision.

### By the Numbers:



|          | Enterprise | Mid-Market | Small to Medium |
|----------|------------|------------|-----------------|
| Applied  | 52.7%      | 63.2%      | 67.0%           |
| Internal | 8.8%       | 5.5%       | 1.9%            |
| Sourced  | 13.1%      | 17.0%      | 19.8%           |
| Referred | 6.8%       | 8.3%       | 7.3%            |
| Agency   | 2.0%       | 2.7%       | 2.1%            |



## What's happening:

**Inbound still dominates the hiring mix:** “Applied” remains the top source of hire, making up 60.6% of all hires this year—nearly identical to last year’s numbers. Strong inbound pipelines continue to fuel high-volume hiring, especially in industries like retail (68.8%) and hospitality (78.4%) where job seekers are proactively applying. But relying too heavily on inbound can limit access to passive or specialized talent.

**Smaller teams win through sourcing & referrals:** Mid-market and small businesses rely more on sourced (17.0–19.8%) and referred (7.3–8.3%) hires than enterprises. Larger brands benefit from name recognition, which fuels stronger inbound pipelines through applied channels. Without that pull, smaller teams balance inbound traffic with outreach, referrals, and network-driven recruiting to stay competitive.

**Specialized roles require proactive outreach:** In specialized industries like software and business services, sourcing and referrals are the secret weapon. These organizations take a proactive approach—reaching out, nurturing networks, and relying on trusted recommendations rather than waiting for applications to roll in.



## How to take action:

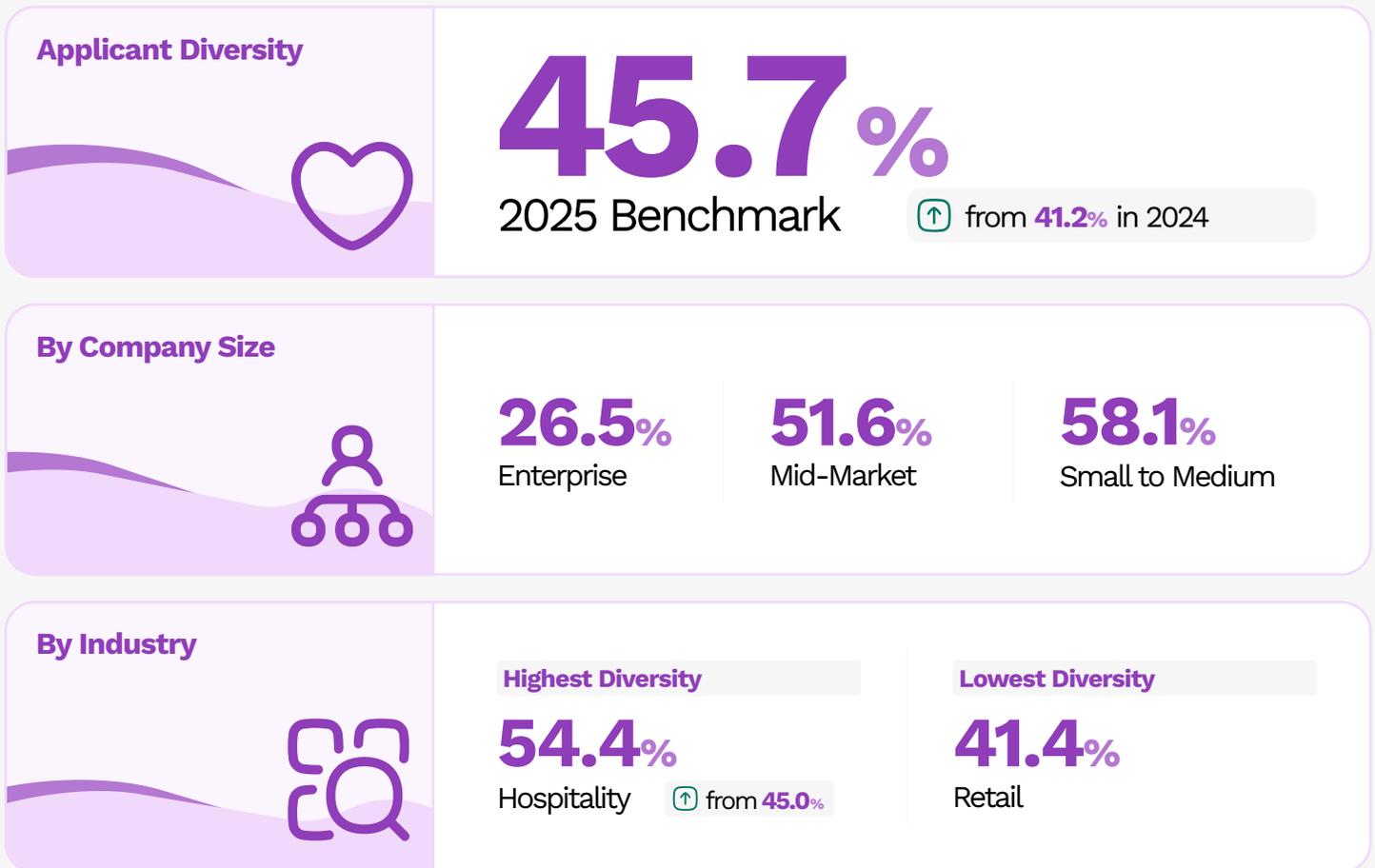
- **If applied dominates:** Your jobs are getting seen—but if quality’s lagging, tighten your targeting. Refine job titles, expand to niche boards, and use AI-powered matching to surface strong fits.
- **If sourcing is low:** You might be missing out on specialized or passive talent. Invest in sourcing automation or CRM tools that help identify and nurture high-fit candidates.
- **If referrals are lagging:** Low referrals often signal untapped advocacy. Relaunch your program with clear incentives, fast feedback, and success stories that inspire action.

# Applicant Diversity

## Percentage of applicants from underrepresented groups

Applicant diversity shows how well your talent pipeline reflects the broader workforce. A more diverse applicant pool means your jobs are reaching people with a wide range of backgrounds, perspectives, and experiences, and that's where stronger teams begin. At Employ, we define a diverse candidate using the [Equal Employment Opportunity Commission \(EEOC\)](#) definition, which includes individuals from underrepresented racial and ethnic groups, women, people with disabilities, and veterans.

### By the Numbers:

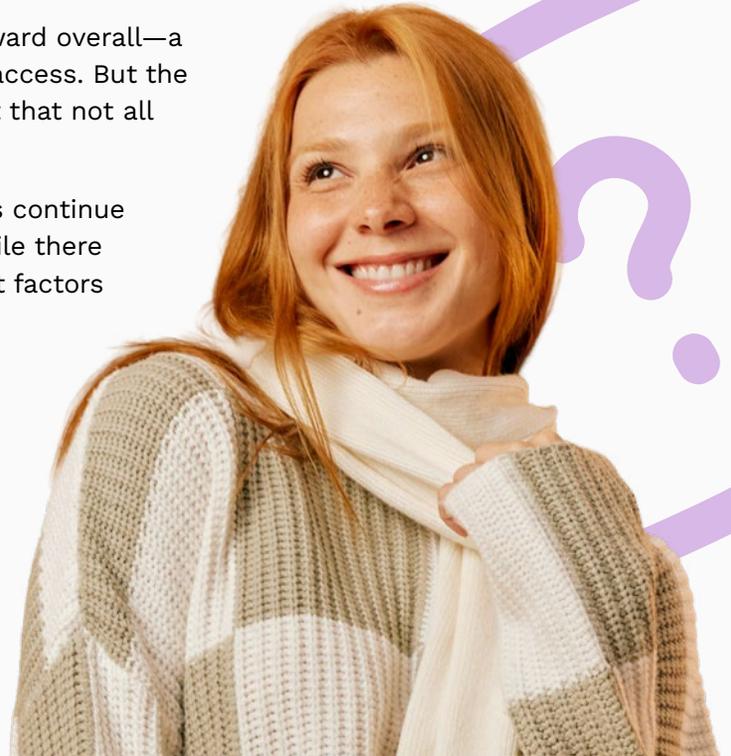


## What's happening:

**Diversity is on the rise:** Applicant diversity is trending upward overall—a positive sign that organizations are expanding reach and access. But the differences across company sizes and industries highlight that not all hiring experiences are equal.

**Enterprises struggle with attracting diversity:** Enterprises continue to see the lowest share of diverse applicants (26.5%). While there are a few possible reasons for that gap, one of the biggest factors is brand perception. If candidates don't see people like themselves represented on a company's website, social channels, or leadership team, they are less likely to apply.

**Hospitality sets the standard for inclusion:** By industry, hospitality had both the highest share of diverse applicants (54.4%) and the largest year-over-year increase. Many of these roles are hourly or entry-level, which widens the funnel and welcomes a broader range of applicants, naturally leading to a more diverse pipeline.



## How to take action:

- **If your numbers are low:** Audit your job descriptions for inclusive, bias-free language. If you're using gendered or exclusionary language, that could be why your diversity numbers are lagging.
- **If your numbers are strong:** Keep building on what's working. Track representation at every stage of hiring to make sure inclusivity continues through interviews, offers, and onboarding.
- **For enterprises:** Showcase employee stories, employee resource groups (ERGs), and other real examples of inclusion on career sites. Candidates should see themselves reflected not just in your values, but in your people.
- **For specialized industries:** Broaden your definitions of "qualified." Look for transferable skills and adjacent experience that might not fit a traditional mold but bring valuable perspective.



## Hiring Stage #2: Screen

Separate the standouts from the stack—fast, fair, and fueled by data.

Once candidates enter your funnel, the clock starts ticking. The screen stage is where recruiters turn applications into conversations, balancing how quickly they act with how effectively they identify the right people. It's about making connections, spotting alignment, and keeping momentum alive.

In this stage, we'll look at three metrics that show how effectively you're turning interest into conversations:

- **Qualified Applicant Rate:** How strong is your applicant pool—and are your job ads attracting the right people?
- **Time to Screen:** How quickly do recruiters move from application to first contact?
- **Screen-to-Interview Rate:** How aligned are recruiters and hiring managers on what “qualified” really looks like?

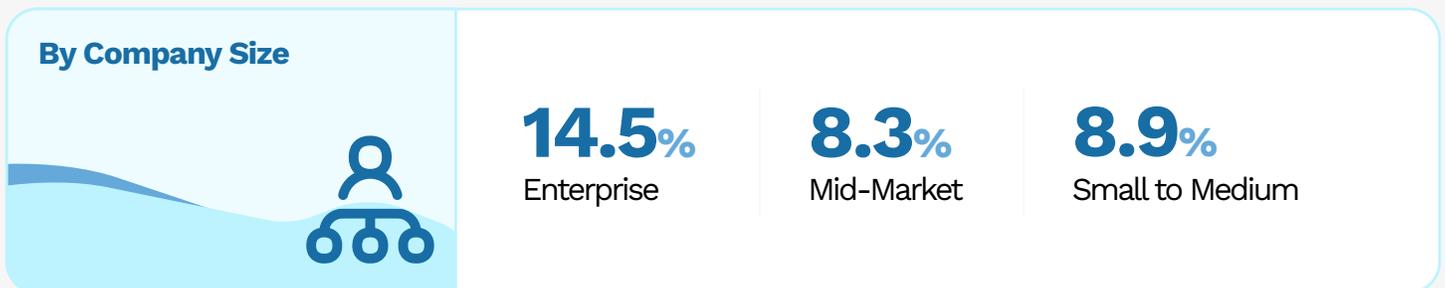


# Qualified Applicant Rate

**The percentage of candidates who advance from application to screening stage**

Qualified applicant rate is your first real read on how strong your applicant pool is. It shows how many people move beyond the “apply” button into an actual conversation. A high rate means your job ads and outreach are targeting the right audience. A low rate can signal a mismatch between what you’re advertising and who’s applying. Maybe the job description is too broad, expectations aren’t clear, or the posting isn’t reaching the right people.

## By the Numbers:



## What's happening:

**Fewer qualified applicants are entering pipelines:** Across the board, qualified applicant rates dipped slightly this year, showing that while job visibility is strong, not every click translates to quality.

**Enterprises have the strongest quality:** When you break it down by company size, the trends point directly to resources. Enterprises move the highest percentage of applicants into interviews (14.5%), likely because they have bigger recruiting teams and access to more tools that help them get their jobs in front of the right people.

**More specialized roles struggle to find quality:** By industry, it comes down to complexity. In fields like hospitality (11.7%) and manufacturing (9.7%), more candidates meet the role requirements, so a larger share naturally moves forward. Industries like software & tech (5.3%) and business services (6.3%) require deeper, more specialized skill sets, so their qualified pools are smaller, and fewer applicants make it past the first screen.



## How to take action:

- **If your rate is high:** Identify where those qualified applicants are coming from and double down—whether it's a specific channel or message. Use that data to guide where you invest next.
- **If your rate is low:** Revisit your job descriptions and targeting. Small tweaks to role clarity, required experience, or even job titles can help attract stronger candidates faster.
- **If you hire for specialized roles:** Don't stress over smaller pools. Keep nurturing passive candidates and focus on long-term relationship building instead of chasing volume.

# Time to Screen

## Days from application to initial screening interview

Time to screen shows how quickly your team moves from interest to action. Faster times show recruiters are engaged, reviewing applications quickly, identifying qualified candidates, and booking screens before competitors even reach out. Slower times can indicate process bottlenecks, communication delays, or recruiter overload.

### By the Numbers:



## What's happening:

**Time to screen is getting faster:** This year, screening times improved across all company sizes—a clear sign that teams are prioritizing responsiveness and tightening workflows.

**Size doesn't have to slow speed:** Enterprises continue to have the fastest time to screen (5.7 days), showing that scale doesn't have to slow things down. When systems, automation, and hiring teams are in sync, even the biggest organizations can move quickly.

**High-volume industries move the fastest:** By industry, hospitality moves the fastest (6.5 days). These teams are often managing high-volume hiring surges—think summer travel or holiday seasons—and have built the muscle to move fast. Software & tech (9.0 days) stretch longer since those roles often require multiple hiring team touchpoints and deeper evaluations.



## How to take action:

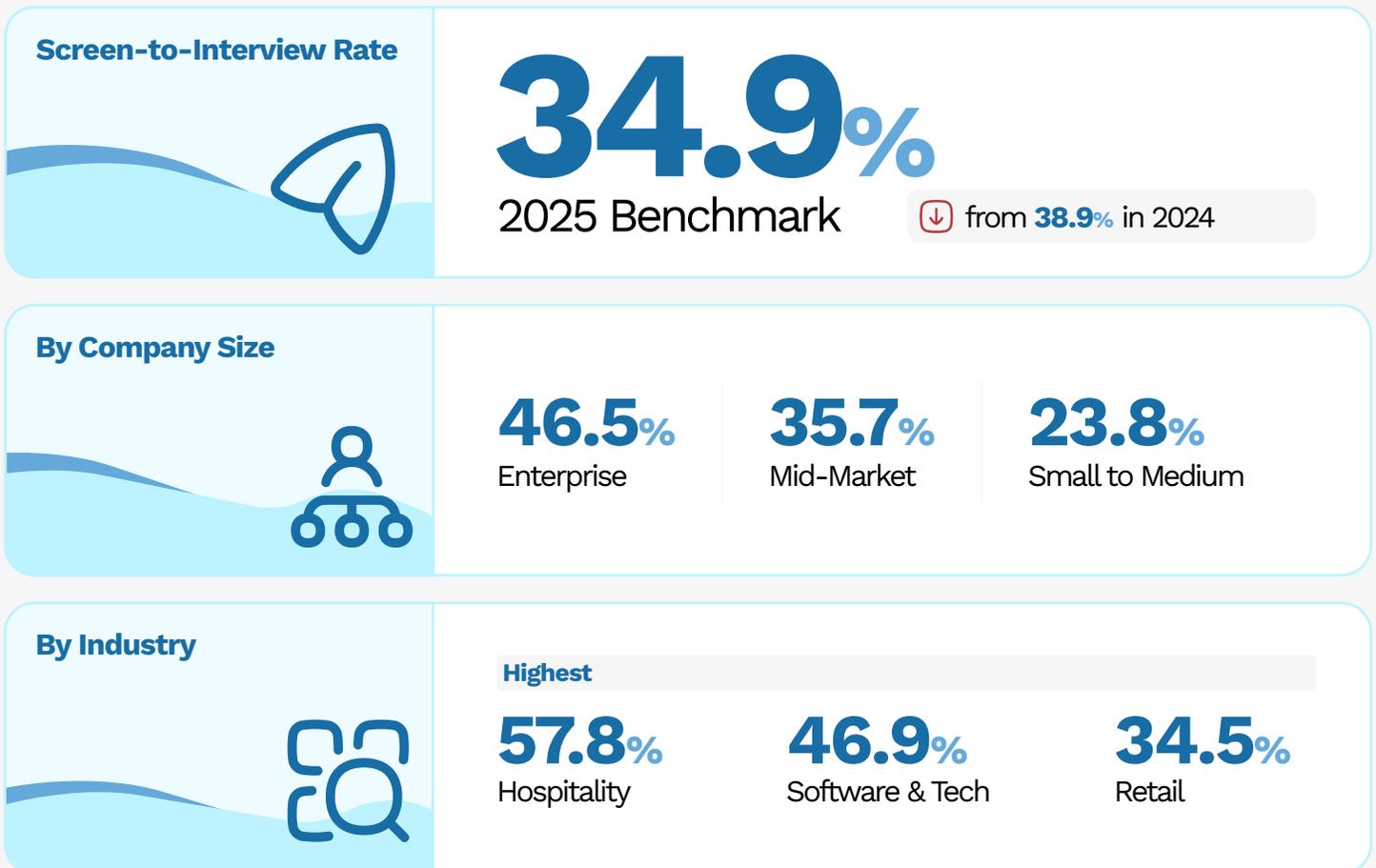
- **If your time to screen is long:** Find the bottlenecks—slow responses, too many unqualified applicants, or manual steps—and fix them with automation and clear service-level agreements (SLAs).
- **If your time to screen is short:** Keep it up but make sure speed isn't sacrificing thoroughness. Maintain consistent evaluation criteria, so every candidate gets a fair and informed review.
- **Across all organizations:** Be upfront about timing. A quick note acknowledging application receipt and outlining next steps can go a long way toward improving your candidate experience.

# Screen-to-Interview Rate

## The percentage of screened candidates who advance to interview

Every recruiter knows that moment: deciding whether to move a candidate forward or let them go. This metric shows how often those calls turn into interviews, giving you a pulse on how well your recruiters can identify fit early on. A higher rate means recruiters and hiring managers are aligned on what “qualified” looks like. When it’s lower, it could signal uncertainty or misalignment—maybe recruiters aren’t sure who’s interview-ready, or hiring managers are pushing back once they see the slate.

### By the Numbers:



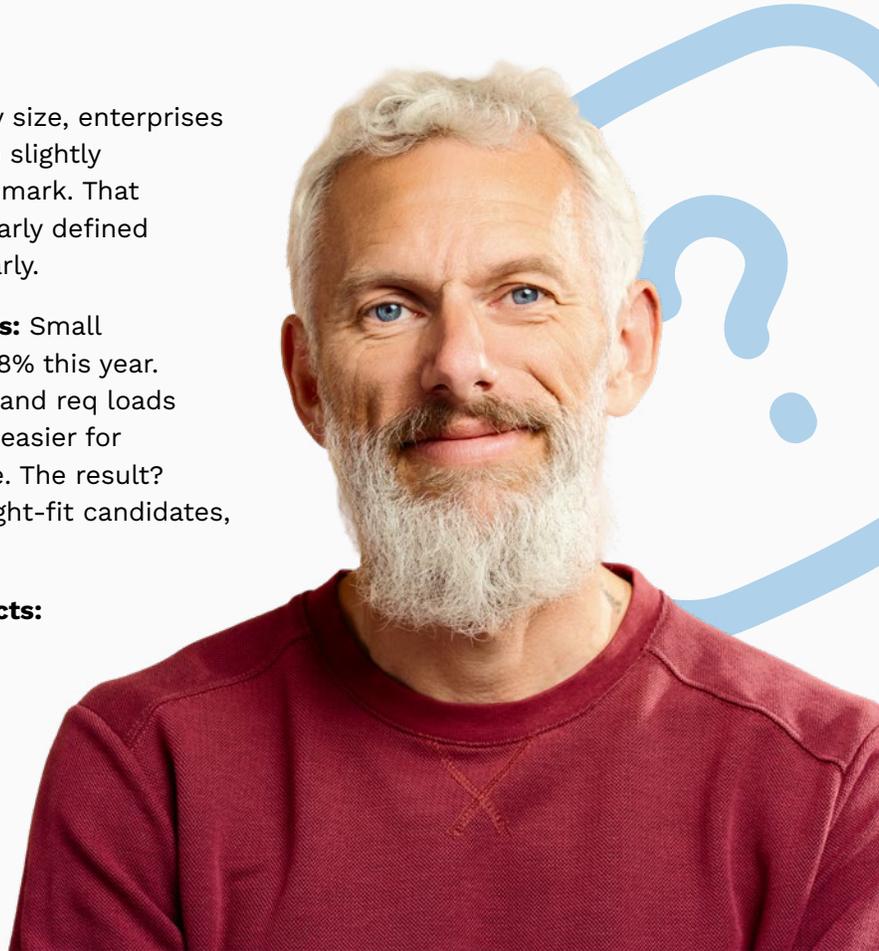
## What's happening:

**Enterprises convert more candidates:** By company size, enterprises lead with a 46.5% screen-to-interview rate—down slightly from 51.7% last year but still well above the benchmark. That consistency reflects structured processes and clearly defined screening criteria that make it easier to spot fit early.

**Smaller teams are impacted by resource shortages:** Small businesses saw a sharp decline from 30.0% to 23.8% this year. When lean teams juggle bigger applicant volumes and req loads without the right technology to manage scale, it's easier for mismatched talent to slip into the screening stage. The result? Bigger talent pools, but a smaller percentage of right-fit candidates, which naturally brings conversion rates down.

**Hospitality's repeat roles sharpen recruiter instincts:**

By industry, hospitality leads with a 57.8% screen-to-interview rate. Constantly hiring for similar roles helps teams recognize the right fit fast and keep candidates moving. Software and tech follow at 46.9%, where specialized qualifications help filter early and advance top talent with confidence.



## How to take action:

- **If your rate is low:** Partner with hiring managers to decide which skills matter most and build short, targeted assessments that make it easy to identify strong-fit candidates from the start.
- **If your rate is high:** Nice work—your process works. Now, check how far candidates advance; if they drop off early, re-align with hiring teams on applicant criteria and screening questions.



## Hiring Stage #3:

# Interview

Transform interviews from checkboxes into conversations that convert.

The interview stage is where process meets people. This is the moment that turns qualified applicants into real contenders and first impressions make-or-break a hire. Speed still matters, but now it's joined by experience, consistency, and connection. From how quickly interviews are booked to how candidates feel after the conversation, these metrics reveal how efficient and engaging your interview process really is.

In this stage, we'll explore the three metrics that show how well your interviews turn opportunity into offers:

- **Time to Interview:** How quickly do you move from decision to scheduling?
- **Interview-to-Offer Rate:** How strong is your interview loop at confirming fit and making confident decisions?
- **Candidate Experience Score:** How do candidates feel about the fairness, communication, and quality of their interview experience?



# Time to Interview

## Average number of days to schedule an interview

If time to screen measures how fast you identify the right candidate, time to interview shows how quickly you turn that decision into action. It's less about reviewing resumes and more about logistics—coordinating calendars, juggling hiring manager availability, and keeping candidates engaged while you lock in that first meeting.

### By the Numbers:



## What's happening:

**Speed holds steady in a busier market:** Time to interview held steady at three to four days on average—a win worth celebrating. According to this year's [Recruiter Nation Report](#), 66% of TA pros saw higher applicant volumes year over year. Maintaining that pace despite heavier workloads shows just how much coordination and efficiency have improved behind the scenes.

**Enterprises move faster with automation and support:** Enterprises lead at just over three days from decision to invite. With more resources, automation, and dedicated scheduling support, they're able to move candidates quickly without letting logistics slow them down. Mid-market and small businesses sit closer to four days—a slight difference that probably reflects smaller teams juggling more hats, not necessarily inefficiency.

**Recruiters across industries keep their pace:** From software & tech to retail to manufacturing, recruiters are maintaining their rhythm even as pipelines grow. Holding steady in a high-demand market proves that TA teams are becoming more agile—streamlining handoffs, reducing bottlenecks, and prioritizing candidate momentum.



## How to take action:

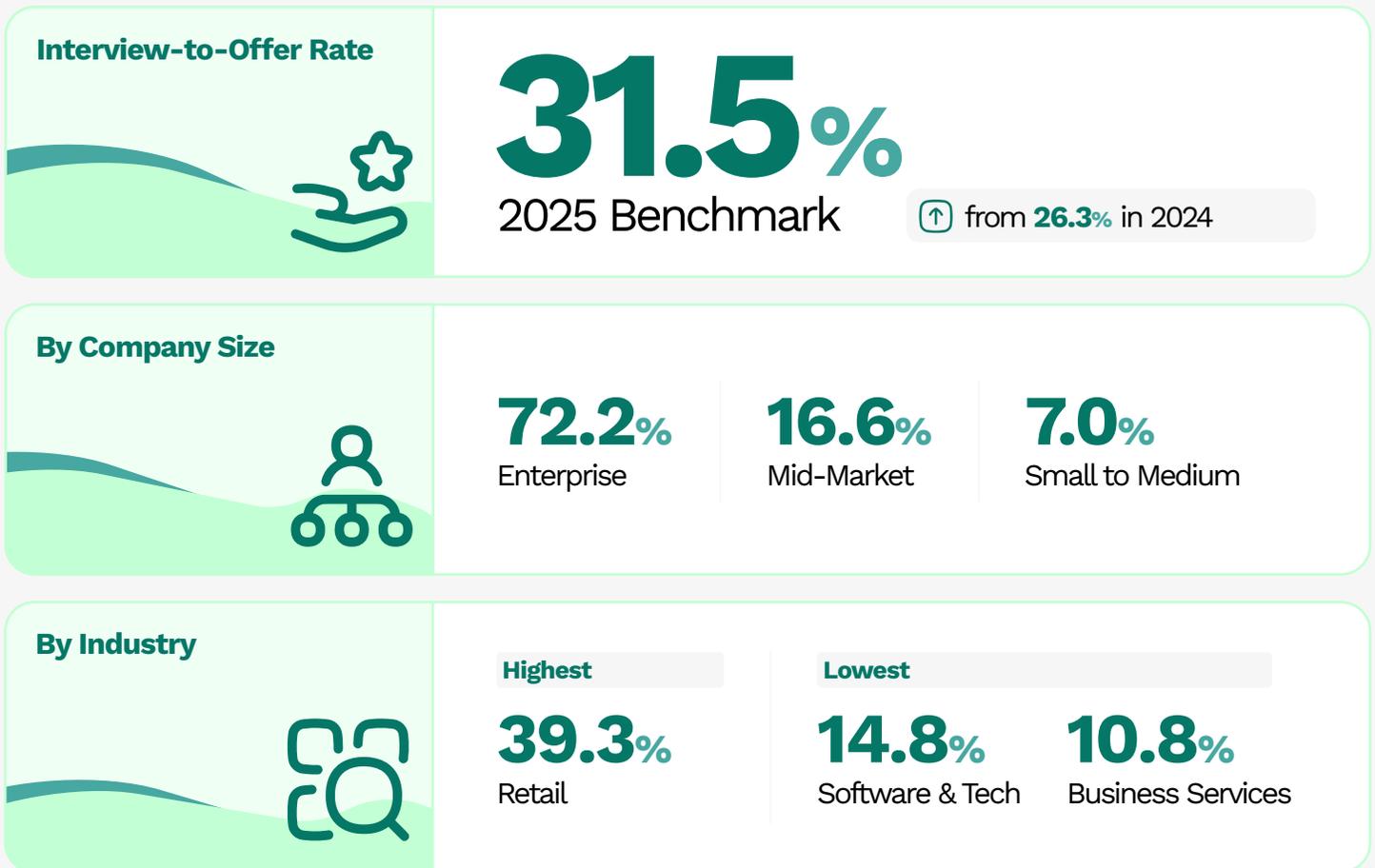
- **If your time to interview is long:** Tighten the handoff between recruiters and hiring managers. Pre-block interview slots or use automated scheduling tools to reduce the back-and-forth.
- **If your time is strong:** Now that you've nailed speed, focus on the candidate experience. Keep candidates up to date, informed, and engaged between “you're moving forward” and “see you Tuesday.”

# Interview-to-Offer Rate

## Percentage of interviews that result in an offer

This is your “did the conversation convert” metric. It doesn’t just reflect candidate quality—it reveals how sharp your interview loop is at confirming fit, surfacing red flags, and making a confident decision without dragging things out.

### By the Numbers:



## What's happening:

**Enterprises convert more interviewers by design:** Enterprises stand out with a 72.2% conversion rate, showing the impact of strong alignment and disciplined funnel management. These teams typically move fewer candidates to interview, but those candidates are already well-vetted, so most conversations end in a confident yes.

**Smaller teams have mixed results:** Mid-market and small businesses, on the other hand, often cast a wider net. This strategy can bring in great talent, but it also leads to more interviews that don't convert, especially if hiring criteria shift midway through the process or feedback loops are inconsistent.

**Conversion rates drop with role complexity:** Retail (39.3%) sees a higher conversion because they run repeatable, fast-turn interview processes where fit is easier to confirm. Tech (14.8%) and business services (10.8%), by contrast, deal with complex roles and specialized skill sets—more nuance, more evaluation, and often, more back-and-forth before extending an offer.



## How to take action:

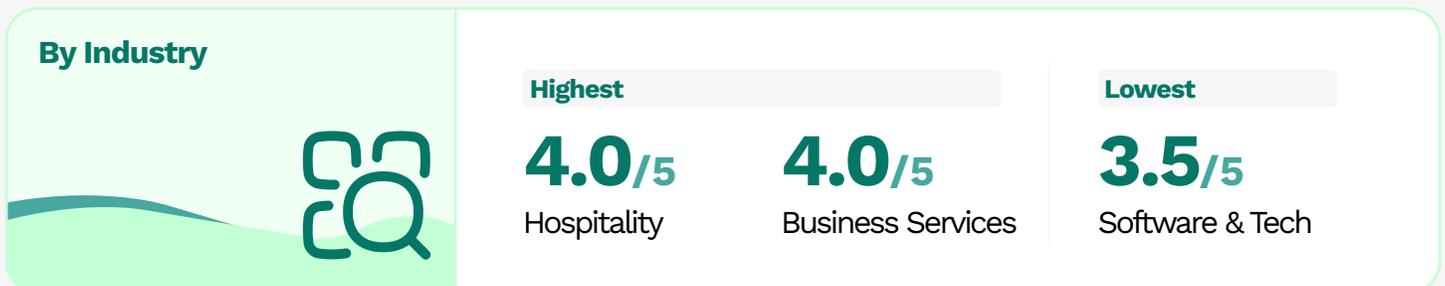
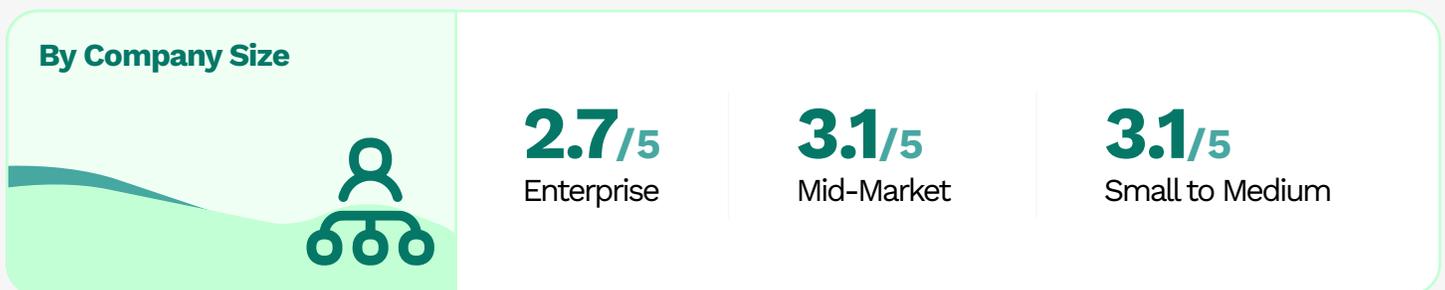
- **If your rate is low:** Revisit screening criteria to ensure only top matches reach interviews. Train interviewers to spot “hireability” early and give structured feedback fast. If strong candidates still aren't converting, look for late-stage gaps like compensation or title misalignment.
- **If your rate is high:** Now's the time to stress-test that process for inclusivity. Make sure a strong conversion rate doesn't come at the expense of diversity by auditing whether you're consistently interviewing candidates from different backgrounds and experiences.

# Candidate Experience Score

## Feedback on fairness, communication, and interview quality (out of 5)

While your other metrics measure how fast and effective your workflow is, this one shows how it felt for candidates. Think of your experience score as a mirror reflecting a candidate's emotional journey—did they feel respected, heard, and in the loop? A high score means candidates felt valued, even if they weren't hired. A low one signals a breakdown in communication, transparency, or human touch.

### By the Numbers:

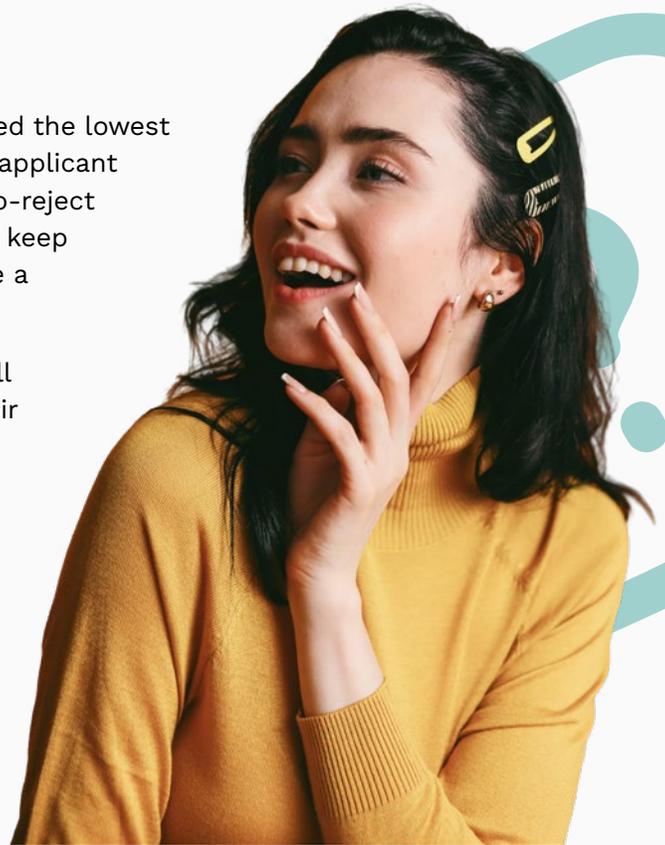


## What's happening:

**Enterprises struggle to personalize at scale:** Enterprises scored the lowest (2.7), and it's not hard to see why. Big brands attract massive applicant pools and lean heavily on automation to manage volume. Auto-reject emails, templated updates, or long stretches of silence might keep operations efficient, but they can leave candidates feeling like a number, not a person.

**Smaller scale makes connection easier:** Mid-market and small businesses, on the other hand, scored slightly higher (3.1). Their scale makes it easier to add personal touches: real names in emails, timely updates, and direct communication that helps candidates feel seen.

**Service-driven fields lead the way:** Hospitality and business services have the highest candidate experience scores (4.0)—no surprise for sectors built on relationships and communication. Empathy and attentiveness are already part of the culture, and that people-first mindset naturally extends into hiring.



## How to take action:

- **If your score is low:** Audit every touchpoint—from “thank you for applying” to rejection emails—and make them transparent, specific, and human. Even automated notes can feel personal with the right attention to tone and detail.
- **If you're an enterprise:** When you're handling high-volume rejections, tier your outreach. For candidates who made it further, include a short note of appreciation or encouragement. It's a small investment of time that leaves a lasting impression, even for those who aren't moving forward.
- **For all organizations:** Remember that every applicant walks away with an opinion of your brand. A great candidate experience isn't just about filling a role; it's about leaving people feeling respected. Those positive impressions pay off long after the interview ends.



## Hiring Stage #4:

# Select

Seal the deal with speed, transparency, and personalization.

The select stage is where offers go out, and decisions get made. Metrics like time to hire and time to fill reveal how smoothly your process runs behind the scenes. If those numbers are climbing, hidden handoffs or decision bottlenecks might be slowing things down. Meanwhile, offer acceptance rates show how your candidate experience feels, how compelling your offer is, and how you stack up against the competition.

In this stage, we'll analyze the three metrics that reveal how well your team closes the loop:

- **Offer Acceptance Rate:** Are your offers resonating—and what's making candidates say yes (or no)?
- **Time to Hire:** How efficiently do you move from first interaction to final decision?
- **Time to Fill:** How long does it really take to close a role, start to finish?

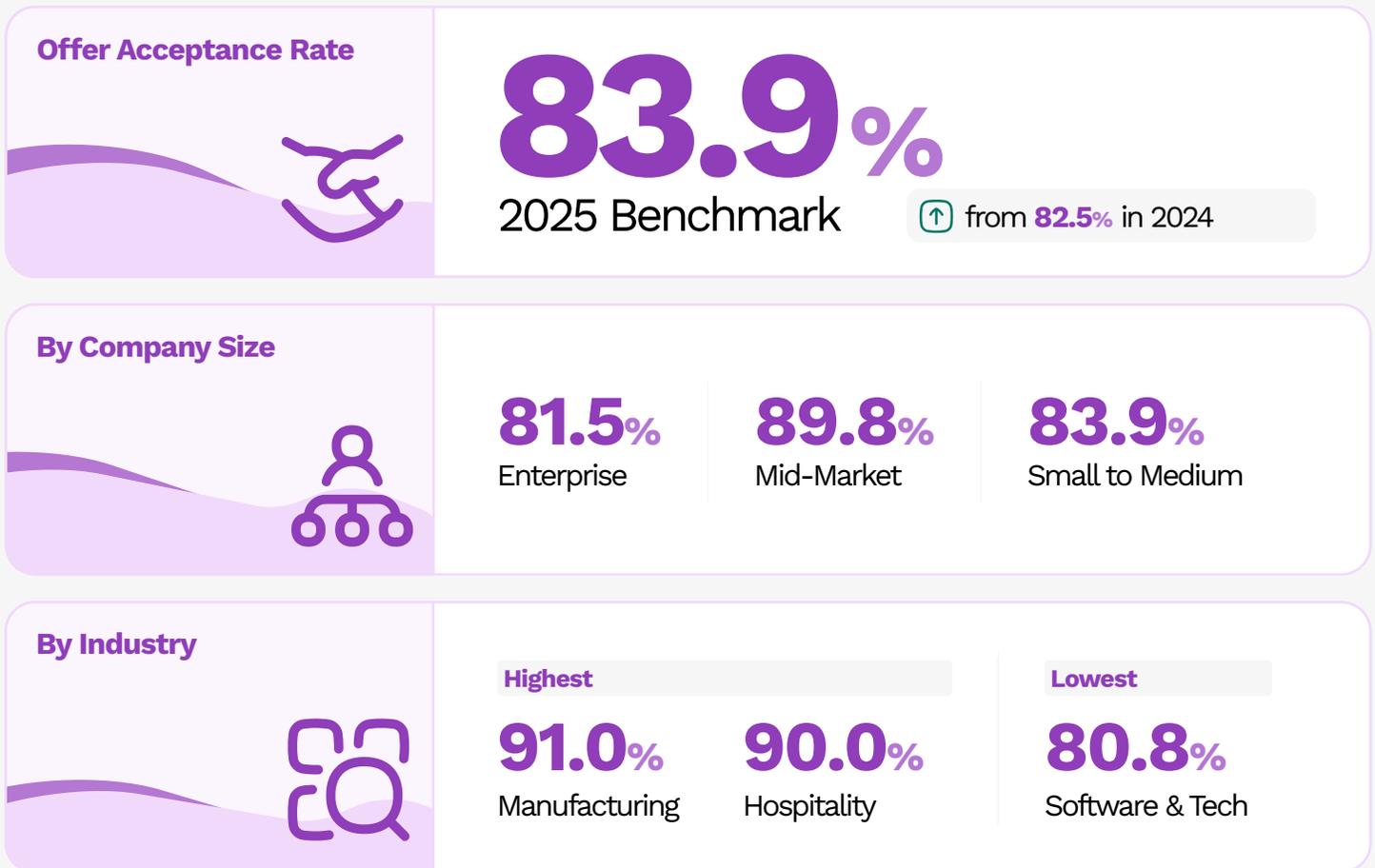


# Offer Acceptance Rate

**The percentage of candidates who accept an offer**

Your offer acceptance rate shows how well your process connects with candidates. A high rate means candidates had a great experience—they felt seen, got answers fast, and received an offer that made sense for their goals. A low one usually means something missed the mark, whether it was experience, timing, or what the offer included.

## By the Numbers:

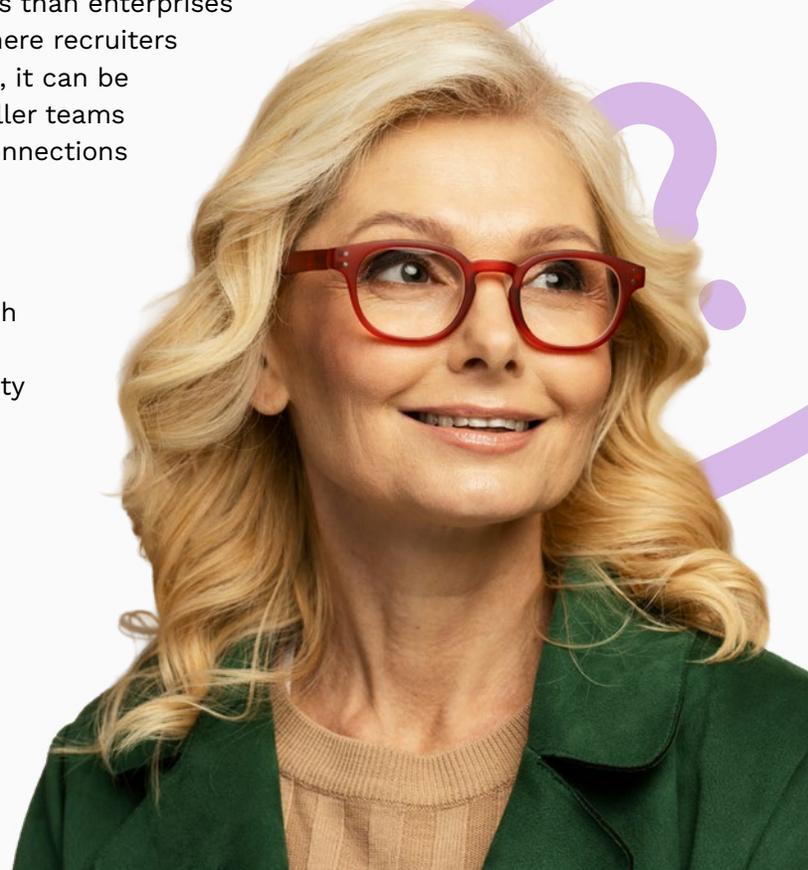


## What's happening:

**Smaller teams benefit from personalization:** Mid-market (89.8%) and small businesses (83.9%) have slightly higher acceptance rates than enterprises (81.5%). One possible reason: at larger organizations, where recruiters manage more requisitions and rely more on automation, it can be harder to keep every interaction personal at scale. Smaller teams often have more flexibility to build those one-to-one connections that make a lasting impression.

**Candidate behaviors influence industry trends:** Those interviewing for software & tech (80.8%) roles are often fielding multiple offers for high-demand positions, which can naturally pull acceptance rates down. On the flip side, industries like manufacturing (91.0%) and hospitality (90.0%), tend to see higher acceptance rates simply because candidates are less likely to be entertaining competing opportunities.

**Career growth and flexibility are top ranked deal breakers:** While this data doesn't tell us exactly why candidates say no, our [2025 Job Seeker Nation Report](#) offers some clues. Of the 23% who declined a job offer in the last year, nearly 40% cited limited career growth or poor location, 32% mentioned lack of flexibility, and 20% pointed to negative experiences or perceptions of culture and leadership.



## How to take action:

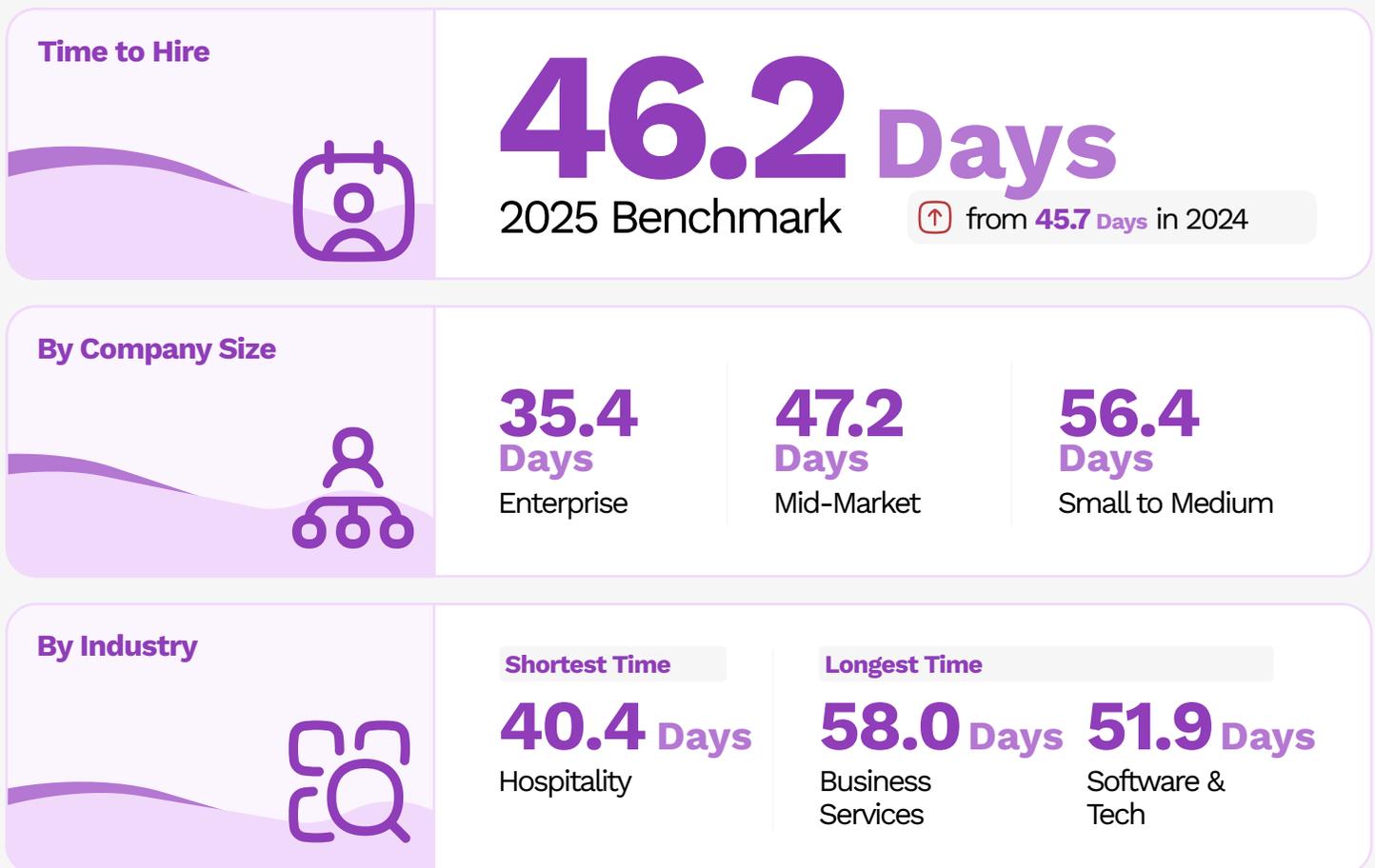
- **If your rate is low:** Look for red flags in your process—unclear timelines, slow responses, or inconsistent interviews. Then audit your offer: how do pay, flexibility, and benefits stack up.
- **If your rate is strong:** Learn why candidates say yes. Ask what sealed the deal—experience, culture, growth—and double down on those moments that make your offer irresistible.

# Time to Hire

**The number of days between a candidate’s first interaction and their accepted offer**

Time to hire measures how long it takes you to make a decision once the right candidate is in play. A shorter time to hire means recruiters, hiring managers, and decision-makers are working in sync and keeping candidates engaged. A longer one can point to bottlenecks, too many interview rounds, or slow feedback loops. And when hiring drags, great candidates don’t wait—they move on.

## By the Numbers:

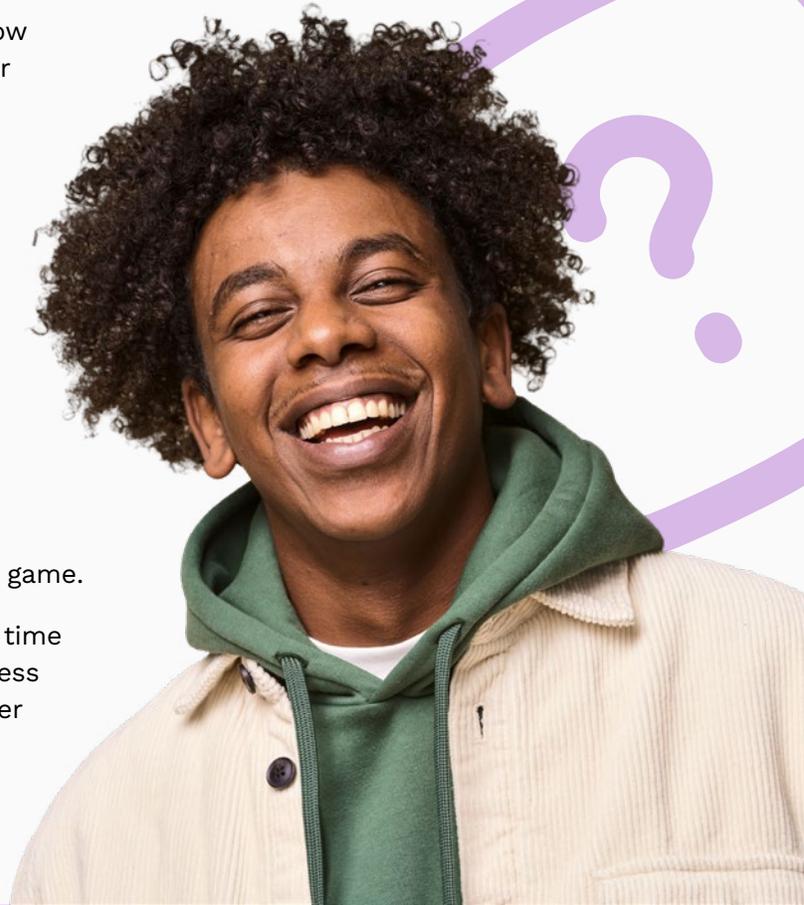


## What's happening:

**Bigger companies move faster:** Time to hire tends to grow as company size shrinks, and that pattern tells a familiar story. Enterprises (35.4 days) benefit from structured processes, clear workflows, and automations that keep candidates moving. Small businesses (56.4 days) often operate with leaner teams and fewer systems, which can impact timelines as recruiters and hiring managers juggle multiple hats.

**Industry complexity impacts hiring speed:** In fields like business services (58.0 days) or software & tech (51.9 days), roles are more specialized and assessments more detailed, which naturally extends hiring timelines. In contrast, industries like hospitality (40.4 days) move faster, often hiring at high volume or seasonally, where filling roles quickly is the name of the game.

**Time to hire reflects alignment and context:** Ultimately, time to hire is a reflection of your team's alignment and process efficiency, but it's also shaped by context. Like with other metrics, factors like company size, industry, and role type will always influence how quickly you can make the right hire.



## How to take action:

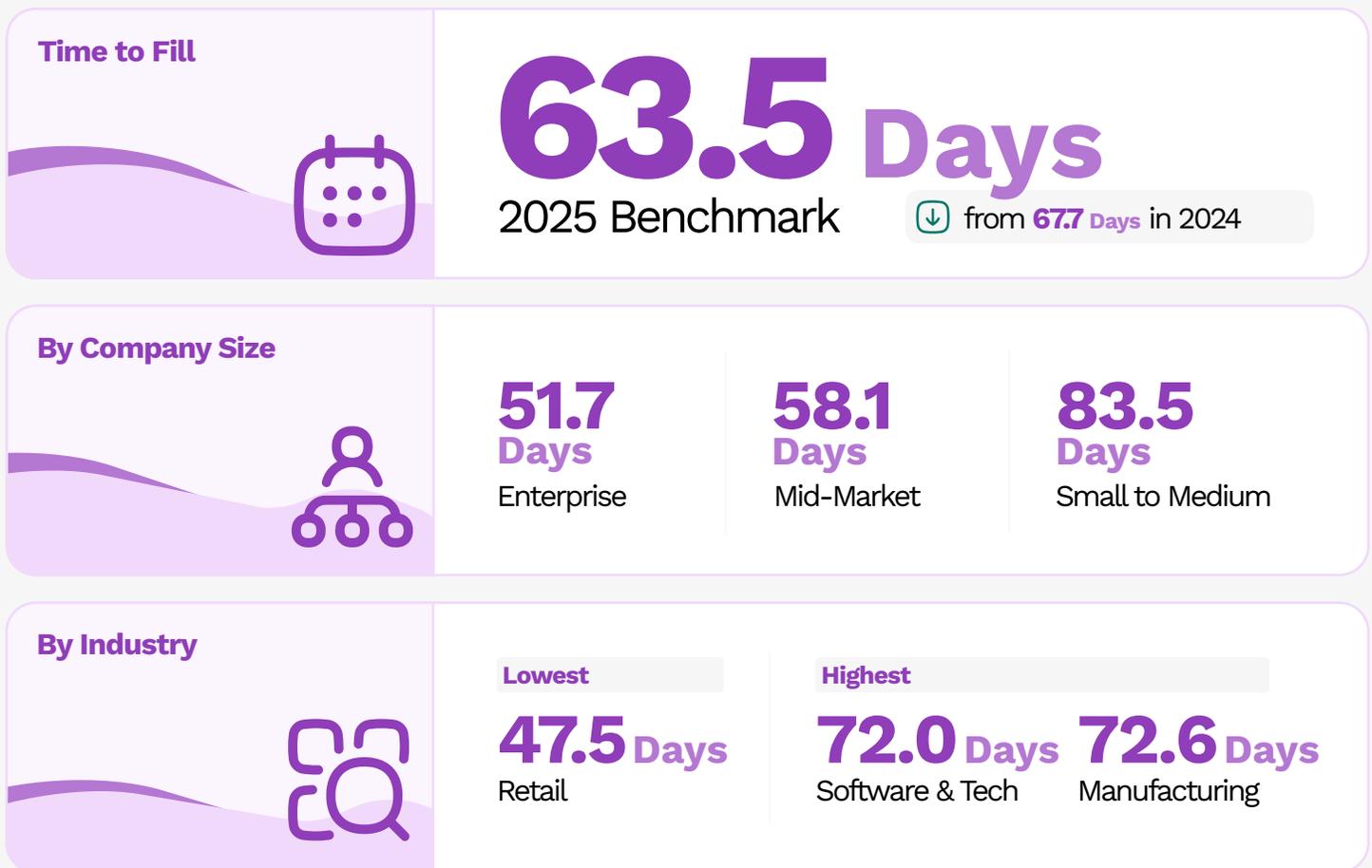
- **If your time is long:** Pinpoint where momentum stalls—slow feedback, stuck offers, unclear ownership—and set SLAs to keep every stage moving.
- **If your time is short:** Check in post-hire (30, 60, 90 days) to gauge fit and retention. If turnover is on the rise, speed may be coming at the expense of quality.

# Time to Fill

**The total number of days from job posting to accepted offer**

While time to hire focuses on speed once a candidate enters your pipeline, time to fill captures everything that happens before that, too. It's a broader, more holistic look at how long it really takes your team to close a role.

## By the Numbers:



## What's happening:

**Faster fills signal stronger efficiency across the board:** Time to fill improved this year, dropping nearly four days on average. That might seem small, but it adds up—saving recruiters weeks (or even months) across a full year of hiring.

**Resources & automations widen the efficiency gap:** As with time to hire, filling roles faster often comes down to the systems and support behind the process. Enterprises have the edge with automated job distribution, bigger recruitment marketing budgets, and dedicated teams. Smaller organizations, still posting manually or relying on organic reach, often see timelines stretch.



## How to take action:

- **If your time is long:** Even simple automation can make a big difference. Build a case for [tech that handles admin tasks](#) and show leadership how much time it frees up for more people-first work—quantifying impact helps secure buy-in.
- **If your time is short:** Monitor candidate net promoter scores (NPS) or post-interview feedback. If scores are slipping, speed might be coming at the cost of personalization. Create touchpoints that add warmth without slowing you down, like personalized follow-ups or clear next-step updates.



## Hiring Stage #5:

# Onboard

Turn new hires into confident contributors with an onboarding process that sticks.

Onboarding is often seen as the final step of recruiting, but it's really the first step of retention. Nail it, and you turn new hires into long-term team members who grow and thrive with your organization. Miss the mark, and you could find yourself backfilling the same role three months later. Paying attention to these benchmarks reveals how well your recruiting process handles that handoff from “you’re hired” to “welcome home.”

In this stage, we'll look at the three metrics that measure how well your organization sets new hires up for lasting success:

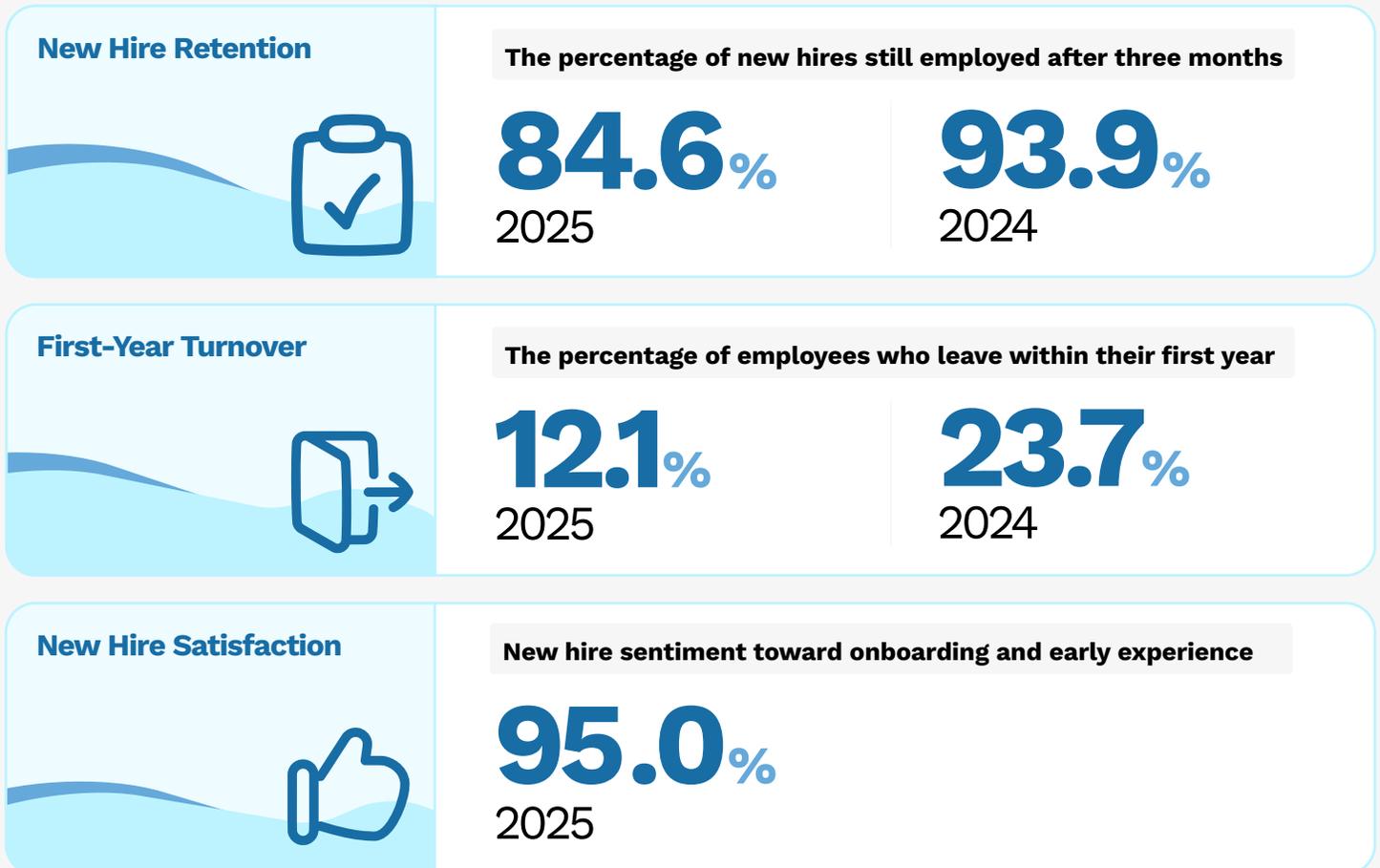
- **New Hire Retention:** How many new hires are still with you after their first three months?
- **First-Year Turnover:** How effectively are you keeping talent beyond the ramp-up period?
- **New Hire Satisfaction:** How do employees rate their onboarding experience and early journey?



# 2025 Onboarding Benchmarks\*

## By the Numbers:

\*These benchmarks reflect Employ's internal data



## What's happening:

### Early turnover slips, while long-term retention

**strengthens:** Early retention slipped slightly this year—a reminder of how critical the first 90 days are. The good news: once employees move past that ramp-up, they're thriving. First-year turnover dropped by nearly half, showing that once people connect with their teams and settle into their roles, they're far more likely to stay.

### Strong onboarding fuels lasting engagement:

With 95% of new hires rating their onboarding experience positively, it's clear the fundamentals are strong. New employees feel supported and set up for success—building the trust and belonging that turn early enthusiasm into long-term commitment.



## How to take action:

- **Start before day one:** Reach out before their start date with a warm welcome, key resources, and pre-read materials. Encourage teammates to do the same—a personal touch sets the tone for belonging.
- **Keep the momentum:** The first 90 days shape engagement. Check in often, set clear goals, and create space for connection through regular one-on-ones.
- **Make it ongoing:** [Onboarding shouldn't end after week two.](#) Refine it based on feedback—what helped most, what caused confusion, and what made them stay. Treat it like a living program that grows with your people and culture.

## Next Steps:

# Turning Benchmarks into Actions

Now that you've got the benchmarks, it's time to put them to work. Audit your hiring workflow and figure out where you're ahead of the curve, where you're falling behind, and where you're right on track. The patterns you uncover are the blueprint for your 2026 hiring strategy.

## How to Plan Your 2026 Strategy: ✨

1. **Assess your flow:** Look across each stage of your process and flag where you're below the benchmark. Metrics tell you more than numbers—they tell you stories. Applicant volume reveals marketing gaps, time to screen exposes slowdowns, and offer acceptance reflects candidate experience. Figure out what each metric is really saying about your workflow.
2. **Prioritize the biggest wins:** The hiring funnel is long, complex, and full of moving parts. You can't fix it all at once. Focus on one or two stages where small improvements—like automating interview scheduling or testing stronger messaging—could create the biggest ripple effect.
3. **Track and iterate:** Don't wait until next year to measure progress. Set quarterly goals, review your metrics often, and refine them as you go. The strongest hiring strategies evolve continuously.

### How Employ Can Help

If this report surfaced friction points, Employ can help you turn them into opportunities. Our [ATS Solutions and AI Companions](#) make it easy to attract, screen, and hire smarter at every stage. Whether you're tightening your process, improving collaboration, or speeding up decision-making, Employ helps you move faster and hire better—all without losing the human touch.

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