

TRENDICATORS SURVEY REPORT

The 2023 Job Seeker Survey Report

RECRUITMENT EDITION

**What do
today's candidates
want most?**

**What has
changed since the
pandemic?**



TRENDICATORS
HR Research & Insights by Engage2Excel® Group

Introduction

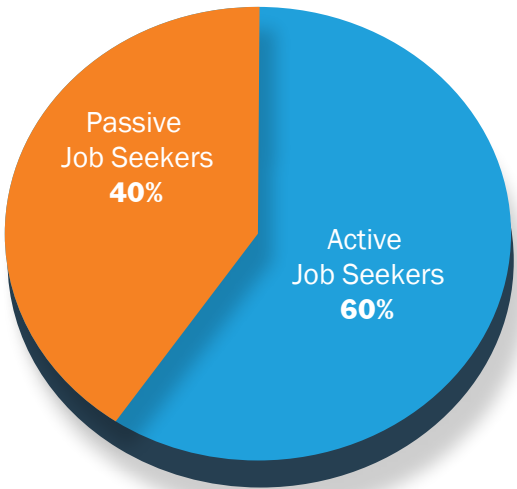
Welcome to the 2023 Job Seeker Survey Report, an analysis of the perceptions and preferences of active and passive candidates across all major industries in the U.S. produced by Trendicators™, the research division of Engage2Excel Group. This report is based on survey responses from 1,500 job seekers in March 2023. The report reveals insights into six key topics to enhance your organization’s talent acquisition and retention strategies and optimize success.

- Why do candidates accept or reject job offers?
- Why do people seek employment elsewhere?
- How do onboarding experiences affect intent to stay?
- Where does remote work stand?
- How prevalent are side gigs among today’s full-time workers?
- What do candidates think about the recruitment process?

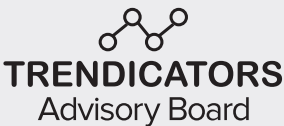
We recently held a roundtable discussion on the results of this survey with members of the Trendicators advisory board. Takeaways and recommendations based on this discussion are included on page 10.

Survey Demographics

- Number of Respondents:** 1,500
- Countries Represented:** United States
- Industries Represented:** All major industries
- Respondent Demographics:** US adult workers in all job types with proportionate representation of gender, age group and racial/ethnic origin
- Margin of Error:** 95% confidence level +/- 1.5%



Special thanks to the following members of the Trendicators Advisory Board who provided editorial review and guidance to help shape the contents of this report.



Lisa Esparza
Chief Human Resources Officer
AutoNation




Shelley Zajic
Chief People Officer
Collective Investments


Trendicators is the research division of the E2E group of companies, leading providers of engaging career and consumer experiences. Trendicators provides original HR research, and reports on insights and best practices from industry leaders and experts.

Why Do Candidates Accept or Reject Job Offers?

Reasons for Job Offer Acceptance: The pandemic caused unprecedented disruption in the workplace. However, as the survey data below reveals, the top three reasons candidates gave for accepting job offers have remained remarkably constant over the past four years. Being recognized, appreciated and respected throughout the hiring process is most important, followed by fair compensation and job fit. Comparing this year's survey results with those from 2019, the importance of recognition, appreciation and respect has increased by four percentage points while job fit has dropped 6 points. The workplace has changed significantly, but what candidates want most has not.

Reasons for Job Offer Rejection: In 2023, candidates' number one reason for rejecting job offers is a lack of recognition, respect and appreciation in the hiring process. This was followed by concerns about compensation and job fit. Over the past four years, the second and third most important reasons for rejecting a job offer have varied between concerns about job security, job fit and compensation.

Top 3 Reasons for Accepting a Job Offer 	2019	2021	2022	2023
	Recognition, Appreciation & Respect 27%	Recognition, Appreciation & Respect 29%	Recognition, Appreciation & Respect 32%	Recognition, Appreciation & Respect 31%
	Compensation 23%	Compensation 22%	Compensation 21%	Compensation 22%
	Job Fit 21%	Job Fit 17%	Job Fit 17%	Job Fit 15%


2019	2021	2022	2023	Top 3 Reasons for Rejecting a Job Offer 
Lack of Recognition, Appreciation & Respect 26%	Lack of Recognition, Appreciation & Respect 24%	Lack of Recognition, Appreciation & Respect 24%	Lack of Recognition, Appreciation & Respect 24%	
Poor Job Fit 20%	Fair & Equitable Compensation 19%	Concern About Job Security 18%	Fair & Equitable Compensation 19%	
Fair & Equitable Compensation 17%	Concern About Job Security & Job Fit 16%	Concern About Job Security & Job Fit 17%	Concern About Job Fit 16%	

Why Do People Seek Employment Elsewhere?

In 2023, compensation topped the list of considerations that would cause people to seek employment elsewhere, with 19% of respondents indicating that this was most important. However, lack of recognition, appreciation and respect was a close second this year at 18%, followed by concern over work conditions at 15%.

In 2022, amidst a robust hiring streak, an annual unemployment rate of 3.5% and inflation at 6.5%, lack of recognition, appreciation and respect edged out compensation by one percentage point as the most important attrition driver. Over the past four years, despite significant increases in inflation ('21-'23) and unemployment rates ('20-'23), the top two drivers for voluntary attrition have remained the same.

Attraction vs. Attrition: What candidates have always wanted most when seeking another job opportunity is recognition, respect and appreciation. In 2023, they rated this nine percentage points higher than compensation. However, when it comes to factors that drive employees to consider leaving, compensation and respect are nearly equal in importance. Organizations seeking to attract and retain the best-qualified talent must break down the barriers between recruitment and retention. Creating personal connections in the hiring process and ensuring competitive wages must be followed by getting people into roles where they feel secure, productive and valued.

	2019	2021	2022	2023
	Fair & Equitable Compensation 20%	Fair & Equitable Compensation 19%	Lack of Recognition, Appreciation & Respect 20%	Fair & Equitable Compensation 19%
	Lack of Recognition, Appreciation & Respect 16%	Lack of Recognition, Appreciation & Respect 18%	Fair & Equitable Compensation 19%	Lack of Recognition, Appreciation & Respect 18%
	Concern About Work Conditions 16%	Concern About Job Security 14%	Concern About Job Security 14%	Concern About Work Conditions 15%

How Do Onboarding Experiences Affect Intent to Stay?

The beginning of any new relationship comes with expectations. Candidates evaluate the quality of the relationship they will have with an employer based on how they are treated in the hiring process. If candidates are not shown the respect they feel they deserve, they are unlikely to accept a job offer. Equally important, if the onboarding process does not align with expectations set during the hiring stage, employees are far more likely to leave. In relationship terms, onboarding can be considered the honeymoon period.

The High Cost of Unfulfilled Expectations: More than two-thirds (70%) of 2023 survey respondents said that the first day of their onboarding experience is Highly Likely or Likely to affect their decision to stay more than a month. Further, 66% said their onboarding experience would affect their decision to stay more than a year. In our recent publication, *Improving Retention Rates for New Hires*, we reported that the cost of early attrition could range from 16% to 213% of an employee's annual salary. Creating meaningful onboarding experiences is critical for maximizing your organization's talent advantage in today's highly competitive environment.



First day will affect decision to stay over a month:

Highly Likely or Likely	70%
Somewhat Likely	21%
Unlikely or Highly Unlikely	9%

Total experience will affect decision to stay more than a year:

Highly Likely or Likely	66%
Somewhat Likely	24%
Unlikely or Highly Unlikely	10%

Where Does Remote Work Stand?

The pandemic had a profound and lasting impact on the advent of remote work. Return-to-office mandates, which once seemed inevitable, are being relaxed to accommodate employee desires for greater flexibility.

Time Spent Working Remotely: More than half (60%) of those surveyed work remotely at least 20% of the time. A significant percentage (46%) work from home between 40% and 100% of the time.

Return to Office Timing: Expectations for when people will return to the office vary, with a majority (60%) expecting to return within the next 3 to 6 months and 20% saying they will not return to the office.

Remote Work Challenges: The most difficult challenges cited in working from home include managing work/life balance (58%), overcoming at-home distractions (37%) and managing mental health issues (21%). Inadequate tools (21%) and insufficient workspace (15%) were among the top challenges.



What % of the week do you worked remotely?	
I don't work remotely	29%
Up to 20% of the time	14%
Up to 40% of the time	18%
Up to 60% of the time	11%
Up to 100% of the time	17%

When do you plan on returning to the office?	
Next 3 months	43%
Next 4-6 months	17%
Beyond 6 months	6%
Not sure	14%
Not returning to office	20%

What are the challenges of working remotely?	
Work/life balance	58%
At-home distractions	37%
Managing mental health issues	21%
Inadequate tools	21%
Lack of dedicated space	15%

40% to 100% = 46%

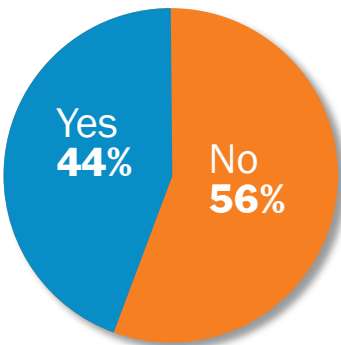
11% are currently unemployed



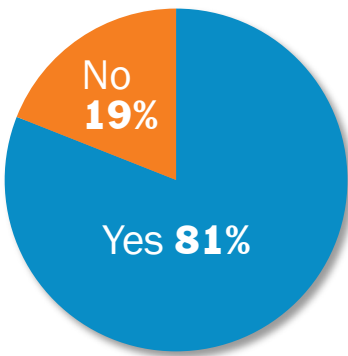
How Prevalent Are Side Gigs Among Today's Full-Time Workers?

How is the highest inflation rate in 40 years affecting working adults? A significant number of our 2023 survey respondents (44%) report having to work more than one job to make ends meet. This aligns with the results of a 2022 survey reported by CNBC from Insuranks, a small business insurance marketplace. Our data, however, contrasts significantly with other surveys and government employment statistics, which estimate the percentage to be between 5% and 10%. The vast majority of our respondents (81%) report that their full-time employers are aware of their extra jobs, and nearly half (45%) are devoting 10 to 20 hours a week to their side gigs.

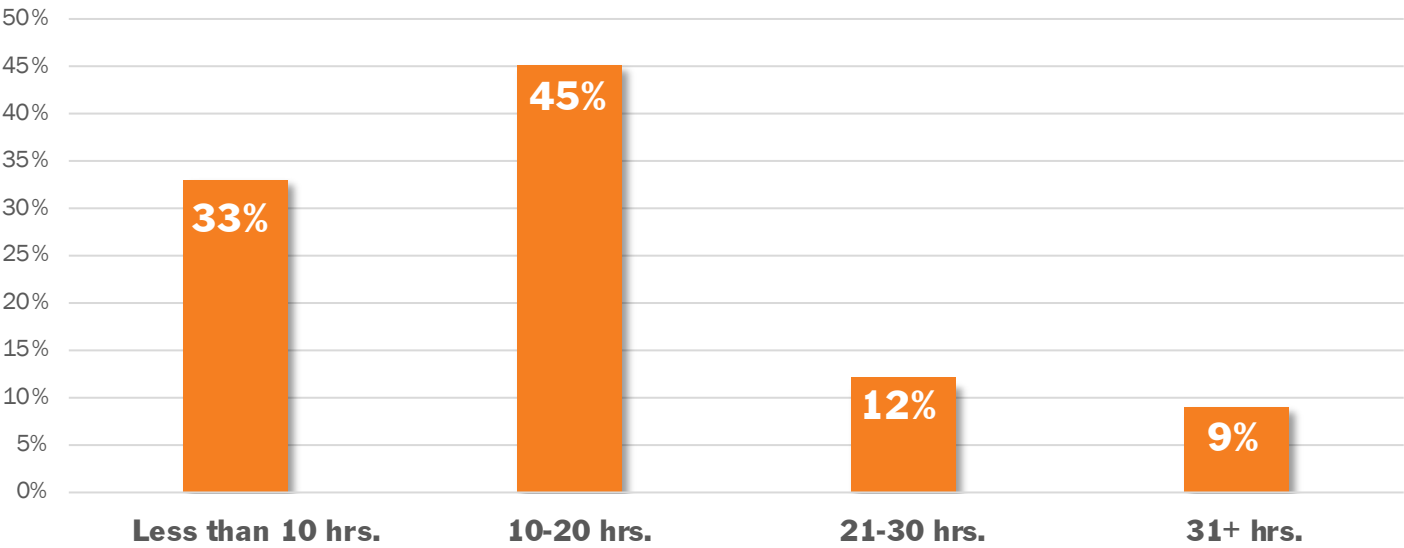
Are you currently working a side gig?



Does your full-time employer know?



How many hours a week do you devote to your side gig?



What Do Candidates Think About the Recruitment Process?



What matters most to you in the application process?

Easy and straightforward	56%
Quick to complete	28%
An engaging experience	16%

How do you prefer to communicate with a recruiter?

Email	39%
Phone call	36%
Text	17%
LinkedIn	5%

How long should it take to complete an application?

< 5 min:	5%	30-44 min:	14%
5-14 min:	34%	45-60 min:	4%
15-29 min:	43%	> 1 hour:	1%

"I expect to apply for a job on a mobile device."

'19: **72%** | '21: **83%** | '22: **91%** | '23: **87%**

What is a reasonable number of pre-hire assessments?

1 assessment	27%
2 to 3 assessments	50%
4 to 6 assessments	13%
7 to 10 assessments	3%

"I would participate in a social community for an organization I'm interested in even if there are no current job openings."

'19: **44%** | '21: **56%** | '22: **61%** | '23: **56%**

Would you consider another job offer if not contacted between the time of offer and the first day on the job?

	2019	2021	2022	2023
Yes	45%	57%	61%	58%
No	28%	21%	19%	21%
Not sure	27%	23%	19%	21%

What Do Candidates Think About the Recruitment Process?

How do you feel about participating in drug screening?

	2019	2021	2022	2023
Employers should be able to require drug screenings <small>(% who answered Yes)</small>	60%	56%	62%	60%
I would stop pursuing a job if drug screenings were required <small>(% who answered Highly Likely or Likely)</small>	32%	46%	49%	43%

How important is it to meet with the following individuals during the interview process?

Hiring Manager	78%
HR Representative	54%
Trainers	40%
Senior Management	40%
Person in Similar Role	29%
Future Coworkers	29%

Overall, I had the most positive experience with the following individual:

Hiring Manager	40%
Recruiter	22%
Coordinator	15%
Other member of the recruitment team	12%
HR Representative	8%

Passive candidates willing to learn about a new opportunity:

2019	2021	2022	2023
82%	100%	89%	97%

In life, having a career is important to me:

18 to 24	86%
25 to 34	85%
35 to 44	88%
45 to 54	83%
55 to 64	70%
65+	67%

A personalized gift at time of job offer would influence offer acceptance:

Yes—definitely or somewhat

2021	2022	2023
64%	67%	64%



Key Takeaways From the 2023 Job Seeker Survey Report

Members of the Trendicators advisory board met with Darren Findley, president of Engage2Excel Recruitment Solutions, and Dr. Jack Wiley, Engage2Excel's chief scientific officer, to discuss some of the results presented in this report. The following is a summary of key takeaways and recommendations from that discussion.

The importance of demonstrating recognition, appreciation and respect in the hiring process:

Dr. Wiley, who has been studying employee engagement for more than three decades, commented that providing recognition, appreciation and respect during the hiring process creates an emotional connection that is — and always has been — critical for candidates in evaluating job opportunities. If that connection is not made, other considerations will likely not matter. The following are comments on what organizations need to change or do differently to create stronger emotional connections in the hiring process.

The Application Process: We need to reevaluate the degree to which recruiting systems, processes and technologies depersonalize candidate experiences. If an applicant needs to spend 15 minutes setting up an account, creating a password and entering their information only to receive an automated and impersonal response after applying for a job, that is an immediate turn-off. Technology has helped employers become more efficient, but the extent to which recruiting automation solutions have created negative perceptions among candidates is a cause for concern. There has been much discussion in recent years about creating better candidate experiences, but what we need are ways to humanize hiring to create stronger personal connections. HR leaders should apply on their own careers sites to identify opportunities for improvement.

Candidate Engagement: Successful recruiters target individuals whose profiles match open job roles and personally engage with them to learn about their current situation, interests and goals for developing new skills and career advancement. Recruiting is not a sales pitch — it is a discussion. There is no higher form of respect than asking an individual what they seek to achieve in their next position.

Helping Hiring Managers Succeed: We cannot assume that hiring managers know how to effectively engage with high-potential candidates. Managers are distracted and under tremendous pressure to meet deadlines and fill open positions. Whereas some managers possess good candidate engagement and interviewing skills, others need help and training.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

The influence of onboarding experiences on voluntary attrition:

We opened the discussion by asking if the importance of the first day and total onboarding experiences was surprising. And the group's answer was no. The fact that 70% of the respondents said their first day of onboarding would influence their decision to stay for more than a month puts considerable pressure on the quality of that experience. What do organizations need to do differently to address this challenge?

Managing Experiences: The potential for disconnect between what led an individual to join your organization and their onboarding experience is significant. If the personal connection made during recruiting and job acceptance is followed by a poorly planned onboarding process, people naturally question whether they made the right decision.

Celebrating New Hires: Celebrating offer acceptance provides positive affirmation of the decision to join your organization. This can include personal emails from everyone involved in the hiring process saying, "Congratulations. We picked you! We're so happy that you've accepted." Upon offer acceptance, a personalized, company-branded gift sent to the home provides a physical connection to your organization and demonstrates appreciation to the new hire and their loved ones.

Maximizing Opportunities for Engagement: If the first day of the onboarding experience is simply a matter of filling out paperwork that could have been completed before day one, then there is a high likelihood that this new relationship will start off on the wrong foot. Organizations need to recognize that onboarding is an investment in setting expectations and building a long-term relationship with an individual to help them understand your culture, get to know their co-workers and learn what will be expected of them to succeed as a valued member of your team.



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KEY TAKEAWAYS

The battle over remote work privileges:

The growing segment of the workforce that wants flexible arrangements for working from home presents both recruiting and retention challenges for all employers. Individuals hired during the pandemic who seek to continue to work remotely can be seen as the ones held to a different standard than those working on-site, presenting an equitability problem. One board member, with high-performing recruiters around the country shared that recruiters inside corporate hubs are saying, “Why do I have to come to the office when my colleagues are sitting at home?”



Back-to-the-Office Backlash:

Whereas many of the largest employers, such as Amazon, Apple and Twitter, are hardening demands for workers to return to their cubicles, employee resistance is widespread, and many do not appear to be ready to back down. Darren related a recent incident where one CEO’s return-to-office mandate resulted in significant and immediate turnover. The pushback from IT staff, developers and knowledge workers was so strong that the policy was reversed.

Recruiting and Retention Challenges: Ever since the pandemic ushered in new ways of working, many employees have decided that they prefer the flexibility of being able to work from home. A tight labor market has empowered workers to make their demands known. People are leaving for opportunities where they will have more flexibility, presenting recruiting and retention challenges. There are, of course, legitimate reasons for wanting employees back in the office. Proponents say collaboration, mentoring and culture building are better achieved in person. But a significant divide exists between leaders and employers. Several studies report significant increases in performance and productivity related to working remotely, but a highly publicized report from Microsoft last year revealed that three-quarters of leaders surveyed remain skeptical.

No Silver Bullet Solution: The battle over remote work can be expected to continue for many months, if not years. The recent banking crisis, high inflation and recent mass layoffs are a setback for employees, but it is yet unclear how this tug of war will turn out, as talent shortages are expected to continue in the coming years.

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KEY TAKEAWAYS

Helping remote workers overcome challenges:

Managing work-life balance topped the list of remote work challenges cited by survey respondents. Various studies report that remote workers are working significantly longer hours and experiencing higher rates of burnout than office-based personnel. Distractions include attending to the needs of children, dealing with pestering pets, roommates and noisy neighbors. Lack of in-person interaction can lead to mental health problems, including loneliness and isolation. Inadequate tools and workspace were also cited among the challenges of working remotely.

Helping remote workers address these challenges is essential for companies that continue to offer remote work privileges. In hybrid office situations, successful strategies for promoting employee well-being and engagement include programs for mentorship, better training for managers in one-on-one communication skills, improved onboarding experiences for remote workers and tools for building community and collaboration, including non-work communication channels.



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To learn more, visit engage2excel.com.

The logo for Engage2Excel, featuring the word "Engage" in a bold, orange, sans-serif font, followed by a large, stylized orange "2", and then the word "Excel" in a bold, orange, sans-serif font. A small registered trademark symbol (®) is located at the top right of the word "Excel".