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STRATEGIC HIRING:
UNDERSTANDING TRENDS AMONG AGRICULTURAL JOB SEEKERS

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SURVEY REPORT INTRODUCTION

In the ever-changing agricultural job market, understanding job-seeker behavior and preferences of potential employees is pivotal for those in the ag industry to attract top talent. To give us some insight into what agriculture job seekers are looking for, **AgHires** recently surveyed over 700 employees throughout the agriculture industry.

This report will dive into the details of the job search process from the candidate's perspective, covering topics such as job search methods, essential elements in job descriptions, desirable qualities of a job, common job search frustrations, perceptions of the hiring process, and the effectiveness of passive recruitment strategies.

This insight is invaluable for you, an agriculture employer, shedding light on how to fine-tune your recruitment approach to meet the expectations and needs of today's candidates. By implementing recommendations based on our findings—such as refining job postings to better showcase opportunities, streamlining the hiring process to enhance candidate experience, and leveraging passive recruiting to reach a broader talent pool—you can significantly improve your hiring success. Reevaluate your hiring strategy to ensure your farm or agribusiness remains competitive and attractive to the skilled workforce.
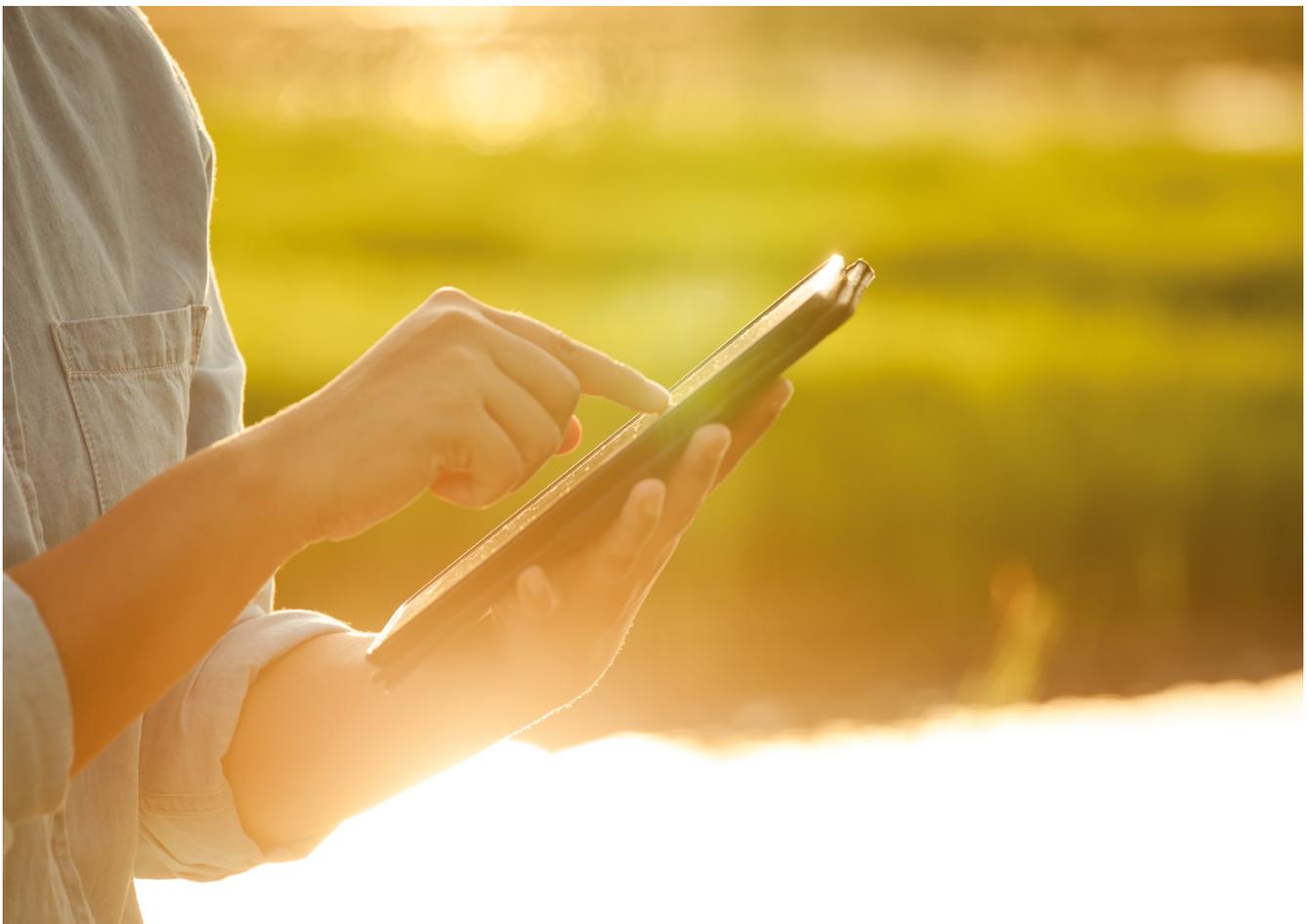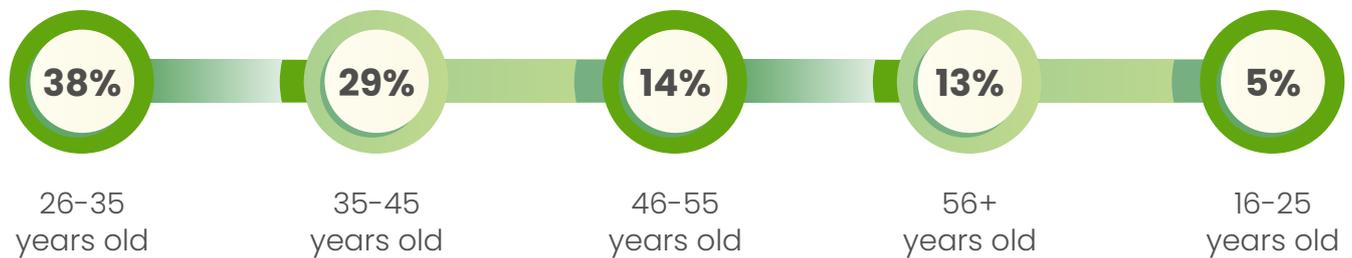
DEMOGRAPHICS

We aimed to collect data from a variety of ages, regions, education levels, and income brackets within different sectors of the agricultural workforce. We had 708 participants employed within the agricultural industry residing in the United States. The majority of participants were male, at 60%. While the age of participants ranged from 15 to 56+, the largest percentage of participants were between the ages of 26 and 35. Respondents work in various roles within the agriculture industry, the most common being sales/marketing, farm management, and farm employee positions.

MALE, FEMALE

60% Male   **39% Female**

AGE RANGES

38%	29%	14%	13%	5%
26-35 years old	35-45 years old	46-55 years old	56+ years old	16-25 years old

REGIONS

Western United States

Northeastern United States

32%	30%	28%	9%
Midwestern United States		Southern United States	

ANNUAL INCOME

Income Range	Percentage
$75k-$100k	34%
$50k-$75k	22%
$100k-$150k	19%
Less than $50k	16%
More than $150k+	5%
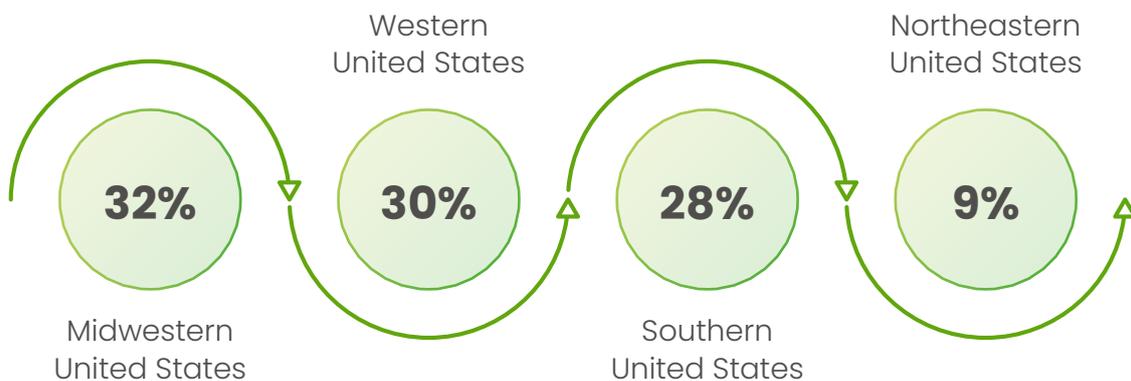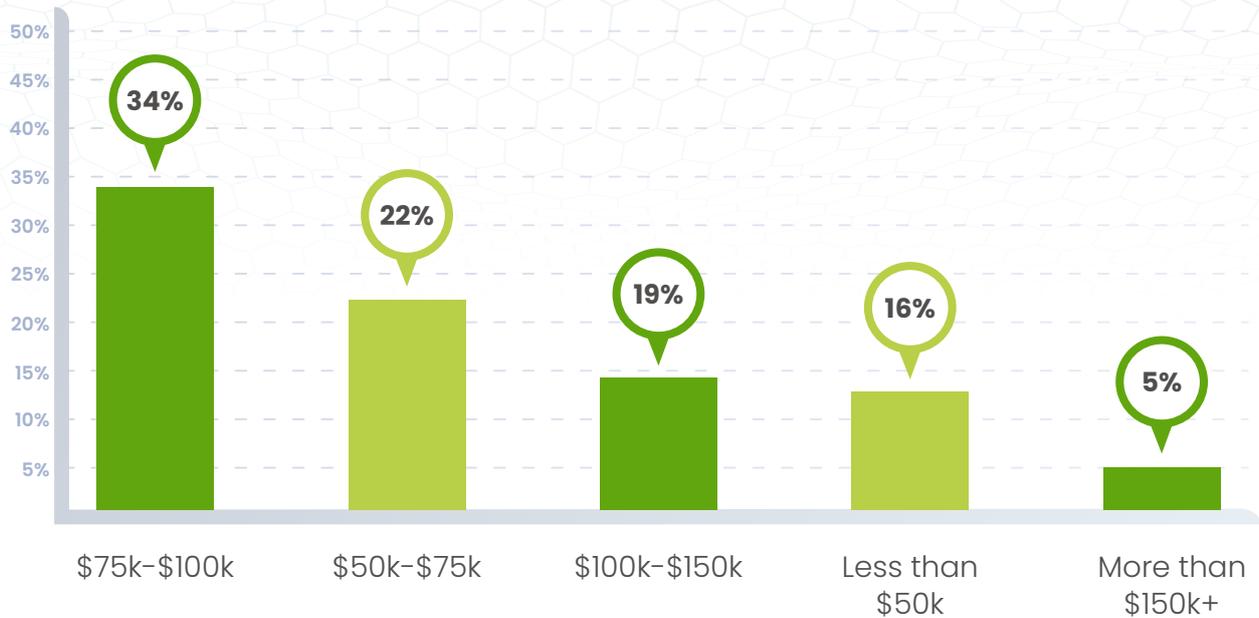
HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATION

Education Level	Percentage
High School Diploma/GED	20%
Associates Degree	13%
Bachelors Degree	42%
Masters Degree or Higher Education	21%
Trade School Certificate	3%

CURRENT ROLE

| Role	Percentage
Sales/Marketing	21%
Farm Management	21%
Farm Employee	20%
Human Resources	13%
Company Senior Manager/Director United States	12%
Owner/CEO/President	5%
Skilled Labor Trade	5%

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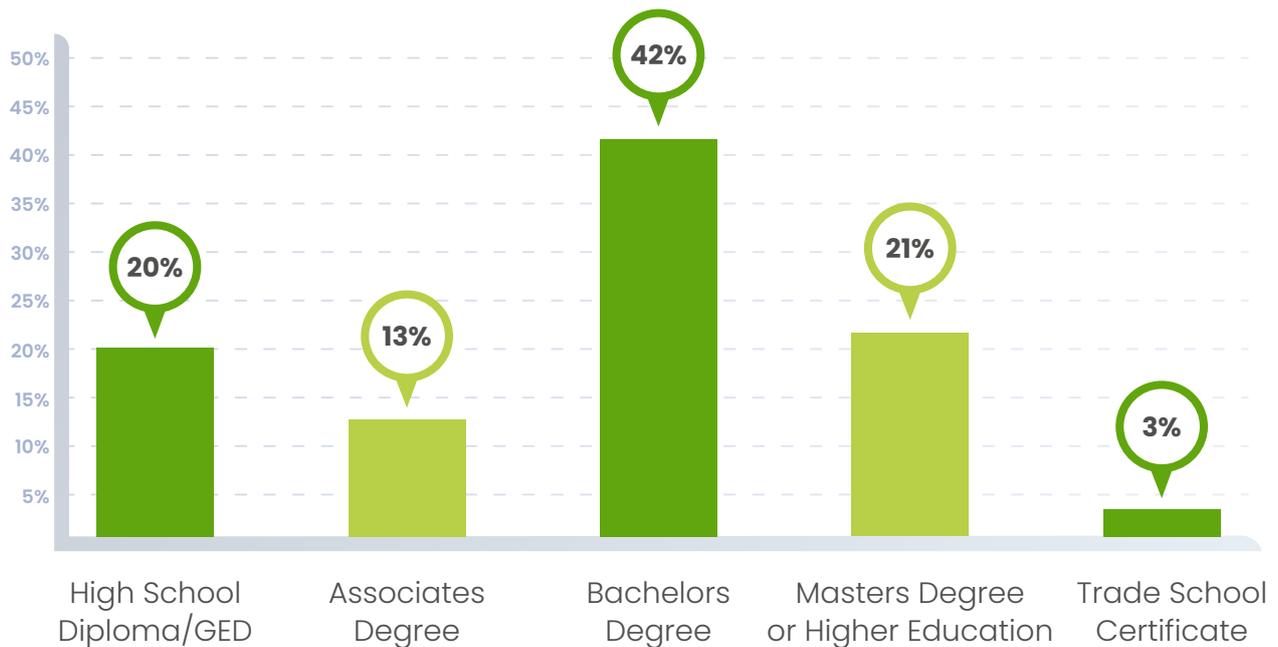
62% of respondents indicate that it is likely they will be looking for a new job within the next year.

# HOW CANDIDATES ARE SEARCHING FOR JOBS

To understand the most effective mediums to attract job applicants, we asked respondents how they discovered their current or most recent job, and where they would start if they were to search for a new job.

Individuals found their current or most recent job through...

27%	25%	18%	15%
Online Job Boards	Social Media	Word of Mouth	Search Engines
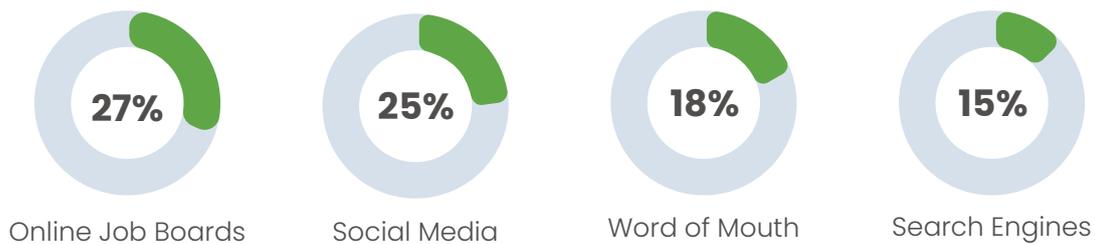
Job boards, such as **AgHires**, Indeed, Monster, and ZipRecruiter, are an effective place to house job postings and reach candidates. Social media is also commonly used to find job opportunities. For additional reach, we suggest sharing links of your job postings to your company's social media pages.

If starting a new job search today, job seekers would start their search on...

50%	21%	12%	11%
Job Boards	Social Media	Search Engines	Networking
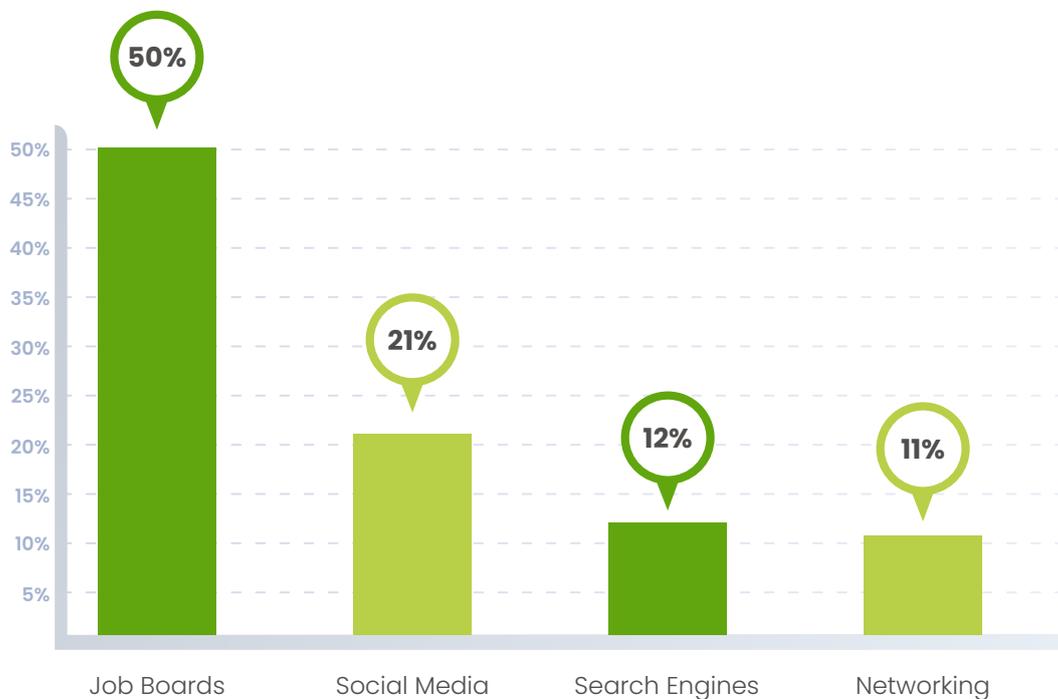
If you want to advertise your company's job openings in only one place, we suggest posting them to job boards (such as **AgHires.com**) for the best results. Niche job boards are a great opportunity to narrow down your audience and reach the right type of candidate for your ag organization.

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WHAT ARE CANDIDATES LOOKING FOR IN A JOB DESCRIPTION?

Your job description, many times, is the first touch point with a job seeker, meaning you want to make a good first impression. The content and length of a job description plays a significant role in a job seeker's overall interest and likeliness to apply for a position.

70%
express a higher likelihood of applying for the job when salary information is provided.

To attract a higher number of applicants, you should include a salary range, or any available compensation information, in the job description when possible.

In a job description, it's recommended to include as many details as possible regarding your farm or agribusiness' benefit offerings. Not including benefits information could result in a lower number of applicants, as many candidates may assume no benefits are offered at all.

74%
said they are more inclined to apply for the job when benefits information is included.

55%
are unlikely to apply when no benefits are offered, whereas 45% are still open to applying.

If your company offers benefits, you will attract a higher number of applicants than if your company does not offer benefits. Including your ag company's benefits and other perks, such as housing, company vehicle, provided lunch, bonuses, etc., in your job descriptions will attract more applicants and interest.

Candidates can be easily turned off by a lengthy job description. To attract more qualified applicants, keep a full job description to provide at a later date, but also have a shorter job description that is used for advertising purposes which is 1 page or 400 words. To help keep it concise, keep the responsibilities list short and specific to the role, and try to only list required qualifications.

53%
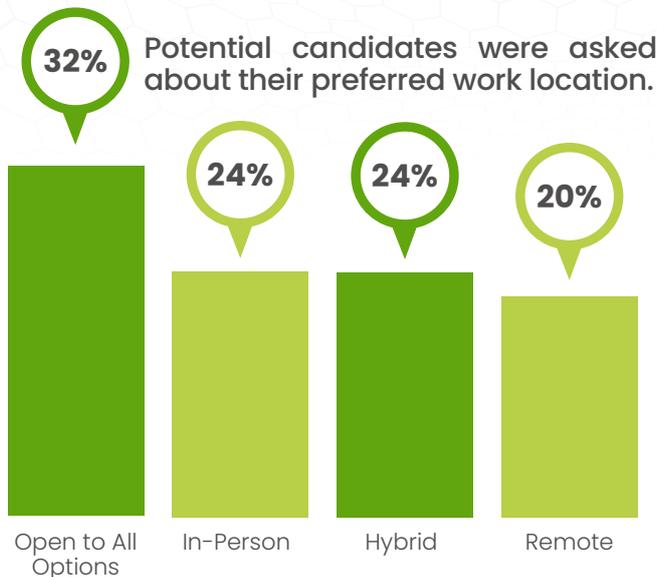would feel discouraged from reading a job description that extends beyond 2 pages.

38%
would not apply if they didn't have a qualification that was listed as preferred, not required.

To expand your pool and attract more qualified candidates, list only the required qualifications in your job description. Quality candidates may eliminate themselves as potential applicants if they feel they do not meet all the qualifications.

WHAT ARE CANDIDATES LOOKING FOR IN A JOB?

To help you to be more competitive, and attract and retain more candidates in a competitive job market, we analyzed what candidates are looking for in a new job.

Potential candidates were asked about their preferred work location.

32% Open to All Options
24% In-Person
24% Hybrid
20% Remote

When a job can be performed remotely

71%

would wait for a remote position to open and not apply to a position that is in-person.

Since there are many jobs in the agricultural industry that cannot be performed remotely, we found the results to be nearly split between in-person, remote, hybrid, and those open to all options. If you have a role that could be done remotely, even if only a portion of the time, consider allowing candidates the option for remote work or a hybrid schedule to attract more applicants and widen your talent pool.

When considering a new position, candidates find company culture...

47% Very Important
33% Fairly Important
20% Somewhat Important
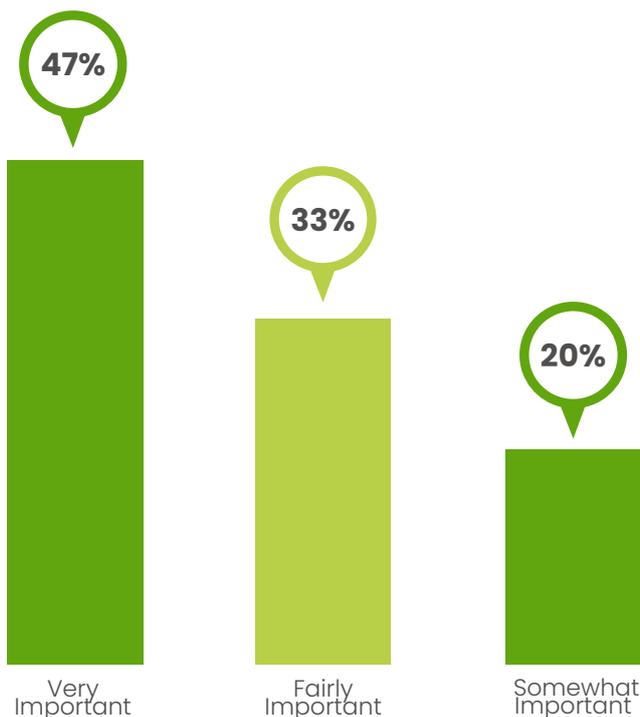
Candidates want to work for a company that shares their values and where the work environment fits their standards and behaviors. To learn more about a company's culture, candidates may look at your job description, company website or social media, ask current employees, or ask culture-related questions. Include details about your culture in your job description, keep your website and social media updated, and be prepared to answer questions regarding your company's culture to give an insight into what it's like to work at your organization.

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Candidates were asked how employer branding impacts their likeliness to apply.

37%
Very Important

33%
Somewhat Important

19%
Important
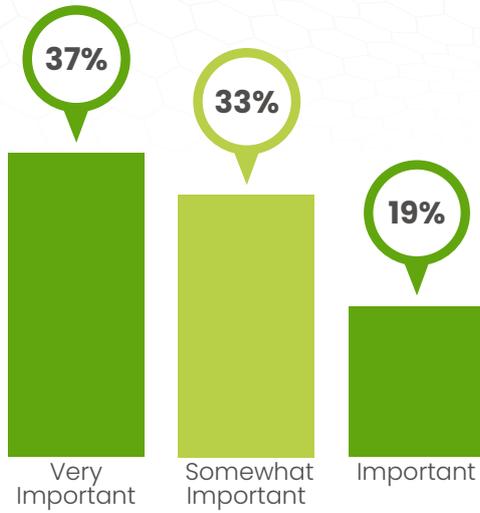
It's common for candidates to research the company prior to applying or interviewing for a position to discover if it's a place they want to work. They may analyze the company's website, social media, career page, and other advertising, looking at the employer's overall branding. Candidates want to know if people view your farm or agribusiness' in a positive light and if they want to be associated with your organization. These components of your company are important to potential new hires, so be sure that your branding is consistent and accurately represents your company.

To get a bigger picture of what candidates are looking for in a job, we asked them to rank 13 factors in order of importance when considering a new job offer.

TOP 3 FACTORS CANDIDATES LOOK FOR IN A JOB

1 Job Security

2 Advancement Opportunities

3 Continued Learning Opportunities

Interestingly, when considering a new job offer, candidates placed compensation at the 7th spot and benefits at the 8th in their list of priorities. Suggesting that, while salary and benefits remain important, other factors play a more critical role in the decision-making process for candidates.

WHERE CANDIDATES RANKED OTHER FACTORS

4 Job Fit

5 Recognition, Appreciation & Respect Through the Hiring Process

6 Company Culture

7 Compensation

8 Benefits

9 Company That Supports Diversity and Inclusion

10 Rapport with Hiring Manager/Staff/Recruiter

11 Company Branding

12 Sign-On Bonus

13 Easiness of the Application Process

To understand how to attract and retain employees to your organization, it's important to know what motivates them to stay long term. We asked job seekers what encourages them to stay committed to their employer beyond money and found several recurring themes.

flexibility trust
promotion training
relationship balance leadership
recognition culture
communication values
growth opportunities learning advancement
support environment loyalty
career respect team welfare
benefits people care
atmosphere colleagues
family development work-life

CANDIDATE JOB SEARCH FRUSTRATIONS

To help keep candidates engaged and interested in your role, it's important to understand how you can improve your hiring process experience. We analyzed the key factors that turn candidates off from a company's application and/or interview process.

Candidates find the following most frustrating when it comes to job searching and the application process.

Not hearing back from employers after applying or an interview	Job descriptions without pay range listed	A long application process	Confusing or lengthy job descriptions	Having to complete an assessment
41%	28%	25%	22%	16%
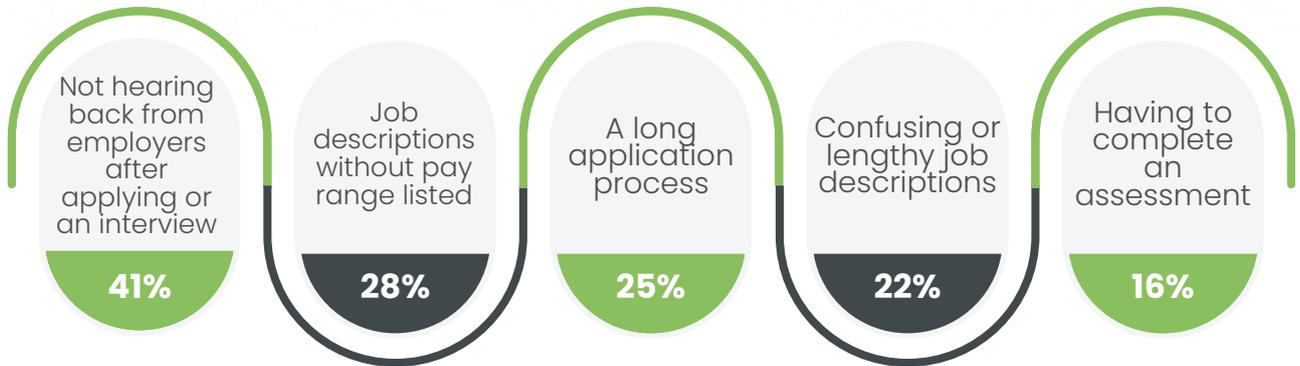
You can attract more candidates to apply just by including a pay range within the job description. To improve the candidate's job search experience, give candidates a timeline to hear back and follow up with all candidates who apply or interview for the position, even if the candidate is not being further considered. These results also suggest keeping the job description concise and the application process as short as possible, as lengthy job descriptions and applications may cause some individuals to not complete, or even start, the application process.
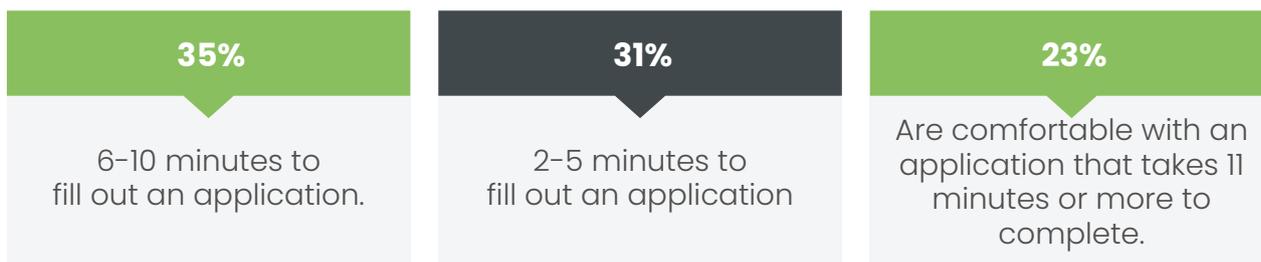
HOW CANDIDATES VIEW THE HIRING PROCESS

To improve the overall hiring process and experience for candidates, we must understand their views on key aspects of the hiring process and what may or may not attract them about a company's procedure. Timing throughout the hiring process is also a key factor that can heavily impact a candidate's continued interest in a position, potentially even more so than the actual interview steps.

APPLICATIONS

Candidates were asked how long they expect a job application to take.

35%	**31%**	**23%**
6-10 minutes to fill out an application.	2-5 minutes to fill out an application	Are comfortable with an application that takes 11 minutes or more to complete.

While respondents have differing views on how long a job application should take, lengthy applications are more likely to turn candidates off. Avoid choosing an application process that requires candidates to upload a resume and input their work experiences in a text field, requiring unnecessary time when those details are likely on their resume. The shorter the application process, the more likely candidates are to apply.

INTERVIEWS

Candidates were asked how many interviews they find acceptable during the hiring process.

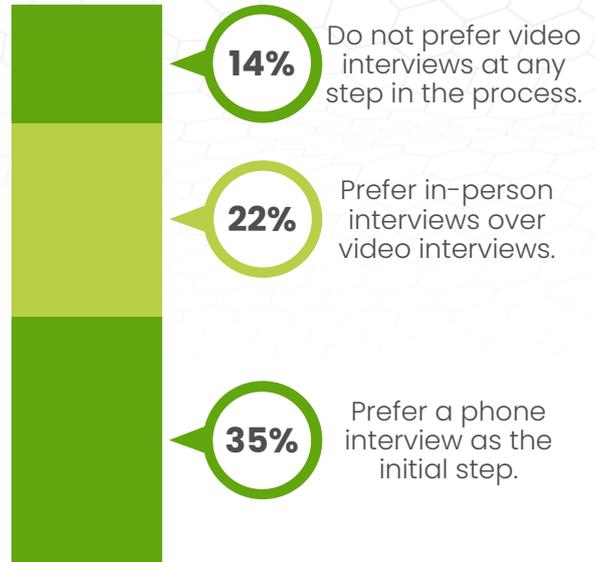| **53%**	**36%**
Prefer 1-2 interviews.	Find 3-4 interviews acceptable.
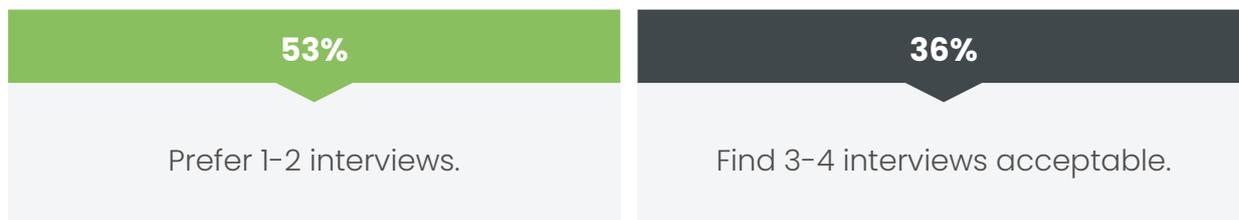
While most candidates find 1-2 interviews ideal, 3-4 is still acceptable to job seekers and is common for many employers. Keep in mind, the number of interviews an employer should conduct depends heavily on the position. For example, a leadership or executive-level position will require more interviews than a farm hand role. However, it is important to respect the candidate's time and keep the number of interviews to the minimum that is necessary to determine if they are the right hire.

INTERVIEWS

64%
are comfortable with video interviews

Most candidates are comfortable with video interviews, but many still prefer a phone interview as the first step. The hiring manager should consider the nature of the position and determine if and when a video interview is appropriate or necessary in the process.

14% Do not prefer video interviews at any step in the process.

22% Prefer in-person interviews over video interviews.

35% Prefer a phone interview as the initial step.

PRE-HIRE ASSESSMENTS

69%
find it reasonable for potential employers to ask candidates to complete pre-hire assessments.

Pre-hire assessments can serve as great tools to learn more about candidates' skills and culture fit before making an offer. While most candidates find pre-hire assessments a reasonable request, employers should consider the nature of the position before deeming an assessment as an appropriate part of the process.

RESPONSE TIME

44%
find it standard to hear back within
4-7 DAYS

38%
want to be contacted within
3 DAYS OR LESS

Candidates expect a relatively prompt response from hiring managers. We recommend hiring managers contact candidates within 7 days of applying or as soon as possible. Waiting several weeks to respond to applicants provides enough time for candidates to lose interest in the position/company, start the interview process with other companies, or accept other offers. Top candidates are going to be grabbed up fast, so you must move quickly in a competitive job market.

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FEEDBACK

50%
want to receive feedback
from an interview within
3-5 DAYS

33%
want to hear
feedback within
1-2 DAYS

It is appropriate to provide an update or feedback to a candidate within 5 days after an interview. If you are unable to decide on the candidate by the 5-day mark, at the least, we recommend providing an estimated timeline of when the candidate will receive an update. Keeping the candidate informed during the process will help keep them interested, engaged, and excited about the opportunity.
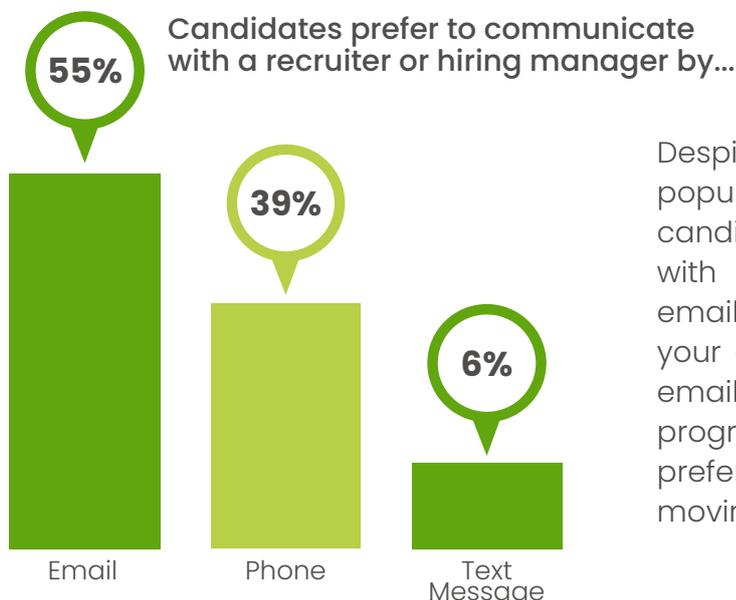
JOB OFFER

46%
would like to receive a
job offer within
7 DAYS

While presenting an offer within 7 days of the first interview is not always possible, especially for higher-level positions, candidates do expect the process to move quickly. Employers should vet an appropriate number of candidates while making decisions as quickly as possible to avoid candidates withdrawing from the process.

31%
find it acceptable to
receive a job offer
8-14 DAYS

COMMUNICATION

Candidates prefer to communicate with a recruiter or hiring manager by...

55%

39%

6%

Email | Phone | Text Message

Despite text messaging becoming a more popular means of communication, most candidates still prefer to communicate with hiring managers and recruiters via email and phone call. We suggest starting your communication with candidates via email, and as the hiring process progresses, you may ask candidates if they prefer other communication methods moving forward.

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PASSIVE RECRUITING

Job seekers don't always come to you, which may limit your pool of candidates. To combat this, you should try passive recruiting by seeking out qualified candidates who may not be actively looking for a job. We found that most respondents are open to discussing new career opportunities presented to them by another company or recruiter.

94%
would at least listen and consider a new job if contacted by a company or recruiter.

These results prove that passive recruitment is an effective way to reach and hire new candidates even if they are already employed with another company. Most individuals will at least consider the new opportunity when approached by a company or recruiter.

Even if a candidate accepts a role within your company and signs the offer letter, they may still be open to discussing other opportunities before their start date. We suggest keeping communication open and making a new hire's start date as soon as possible allowing less time for them to entertain other opportunities. Presenting the candidate with a strong offer that aligns for both parties can also help limit their interest in other opportunities prior to the start date.

80%
express willingness to listen and consider a new opportunity even after accepting a job offer, but before their start date.

Implementing the tips outlined in this survey will ensure your company, position, and hiring process are attractive to job seekers, while utilizing passive recruitment strategies can allow you to reach the right talent for your organization.

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FINAL TAKEAWAYS

We've shared some great stats, but what does it mean for you?

Go Where the Job Seekers Are

When searching for jobs, candidates use:

» Job boards/search engines (**AgHires**, Indeed, CareerBuilder, etc.)

» Social media (Facebook, LinkedIn, etc.)

» Word of mouth/networking

When you can, utilize as many platforms as possible to get your position in front of more job seekers.

Write Your Job Description to Attract Candidates

When you're writing your job description, think about what candidates are looking for to attract them to apply. Candidates look for:

» Salary and benefits information

» A clear, concise job description under 400 words or only one page.

» Only the required qualifications

Create an Ag Organization Where Employees Want to Work

When looking for a job, candidates find the following the most important:

» Job Security

» Advancement opportunities

» Continued Learning Opportunities

» Job Fit

» Recognition, appreciation & respect through the hiring process

Think about if the above attributes relate to your farm or agribusiness and how you can showcase them in your job description and branding. Can you improve on any of the above?

Ease Candidates Frustrations Where Possible

The most common frustrations candidates experience when job searching include:

» Not hearing back from employers after applying or interviewing

» Job descriptions without a pay range

» A long application process

Consider your job descriptions, application, and hiring process, and make changes where you can to alleviate these candidates' frustrations.

Make the Hiring Process as Seamless as Possible

In the hiring process, candidates prefer:

» A short application process that takes less than 10 minutes to complete

» 1-2 interviews

» A phone interview as the first step, as opposed to a video interview

» To hear back from the hiring manager within 7 days of submitting an application

» To hear back from the hiring manager within 5 days after interviewing

» To receive a job offer within 7-14 days of the first interview

» To communicate with recruiters or hiring managers via email instead of over a phone call or text message

What does your hiring process look like? Are there changes you could implement to make the hiring process more seamless and keep candidates engaged longer?

Consider Passive Recruiting

» Most candidates are open to considering new opportunities presented by a recruiter or company.

» Even after accepting a new position, many candidates are still open to considering other opportunities before their new start date.

» Majority of respondents are likely to seek a new job within the next year.

While passive recruiting can take a lot of time and energy to seek out candidates, it can really enrich your pool with quality candidates. If you don't know where to start with passive recruiting, AgHires is here to help. Our expert ag recruiters form a deep partnership with you to understand your needs and take care of all the details for you. Let us build your dream team by showcasing your organization and recruiting top qualified talent.

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For more information on how you can find and attract qualified talent to your farm or agribusiness, please contact AgHires at 844-244-4737, email sales@aghires.com, or find additional information at AgHires.com.