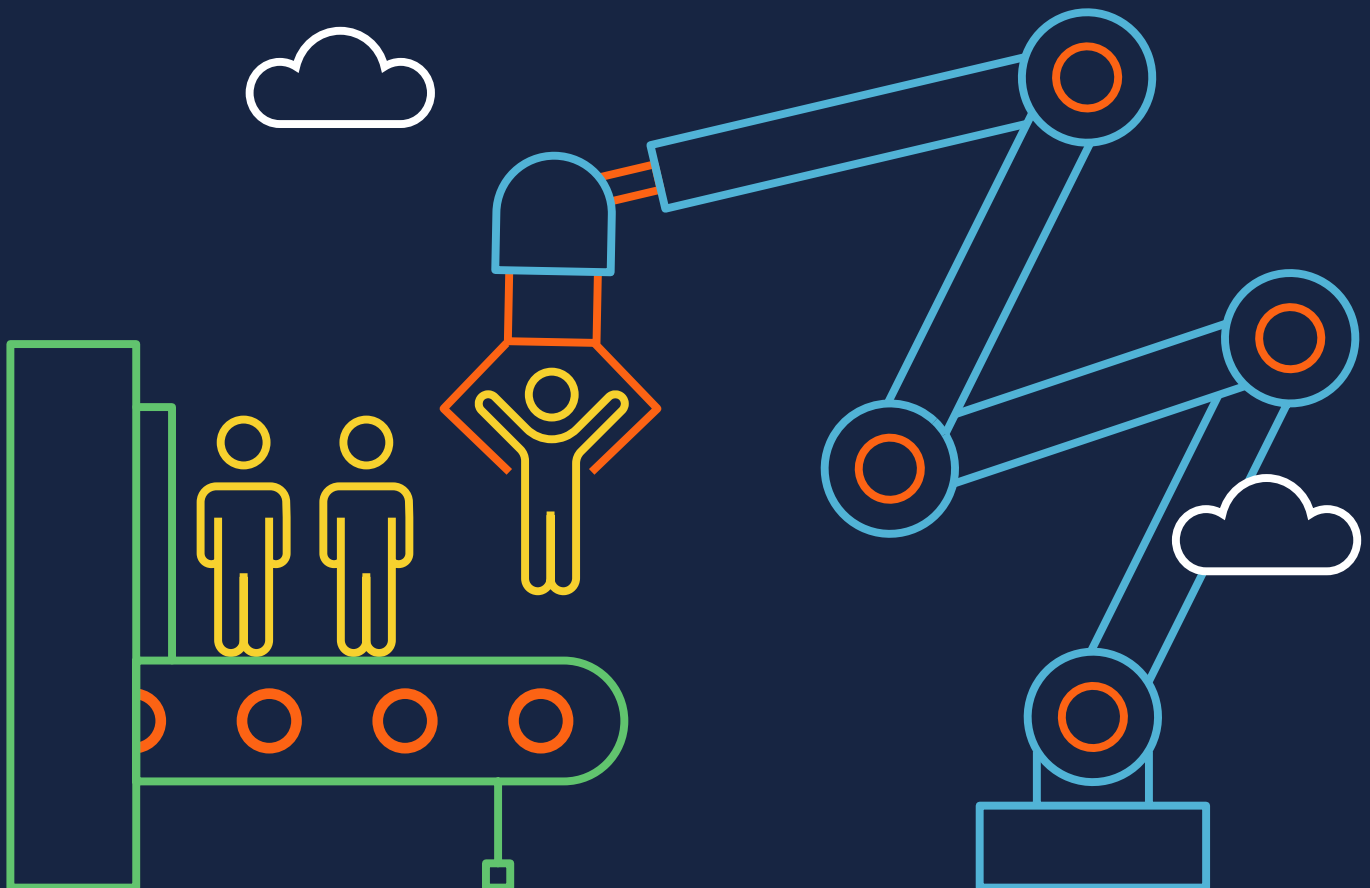


Hiring Humans vs Recruitment Robots

How technology is changing recruitment and what that means for your job



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Introduction

Recruitment has reached the end of the analogue era. No more hopeful 'To whom it may concern' or 'Dear sir or madam' letters sent out to prospective recruiters. Job boards in agency windows and 'wanted' adverts in the back of the papers are relics of the past. The paper application form has had its day.

Job finding is going fully digital. Prospective employees find new opportunities through vast, data-centric platforms like Indeed and LinkedIn. While time-poor and under pressure employers have found smarter ways to work, with advances like applicant tracking systems (ATS), video interviewing and automated screening.

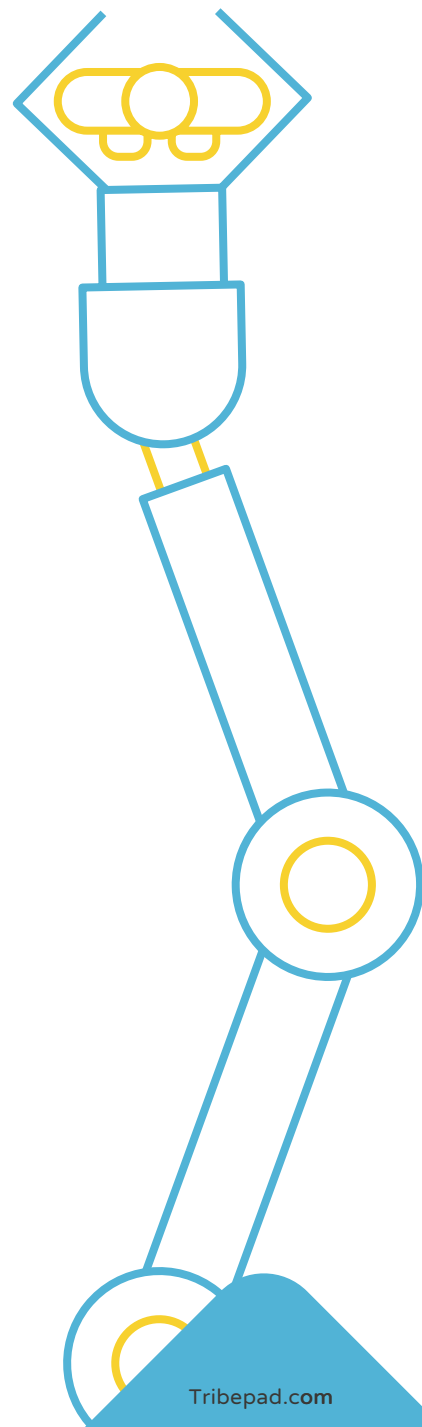
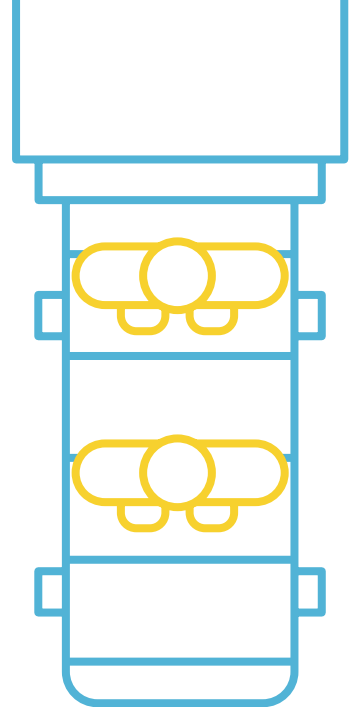
The new world of job finding works for everyone. But things aren't that simple. And recruiters have to ask themselves some tough questions about the role technology is playing in their hiring processes, and whether they're using the right solutions.

Because while technology is making life smarter and faster, it's also changing behaviours. Applicants are trying to 'game' or outwit automated systems they think are screening against them. Recruiters are struggling to strike the balance between human interaction and computer processes.

Altogether, this has brought about a battle between the two sides of the recruitment relationship. Despite the fact that they both want the exact same thing: the right candidate in the right role.

Stopping this is on recruiters, who have to get a better understanding of how technology changes candidate behaviour; look at how they can positively transform the experience candidates have when applying for roles; and explore what will help them to do that.

This new research project from Tribepad explores all of this, looking at how the right technology solution can free up your recruiters and hiring managers, to make more human connections with candidates.



Five key Findings

Our research identified an emerging problem with the role of technology in recruitment and how it affects candidate behaviour. This report explains why...

57% of candidates say they go for quantity over quality when applying for jobs

88% of people who know about applicant tracking systems have 'optimised' their CV as a result

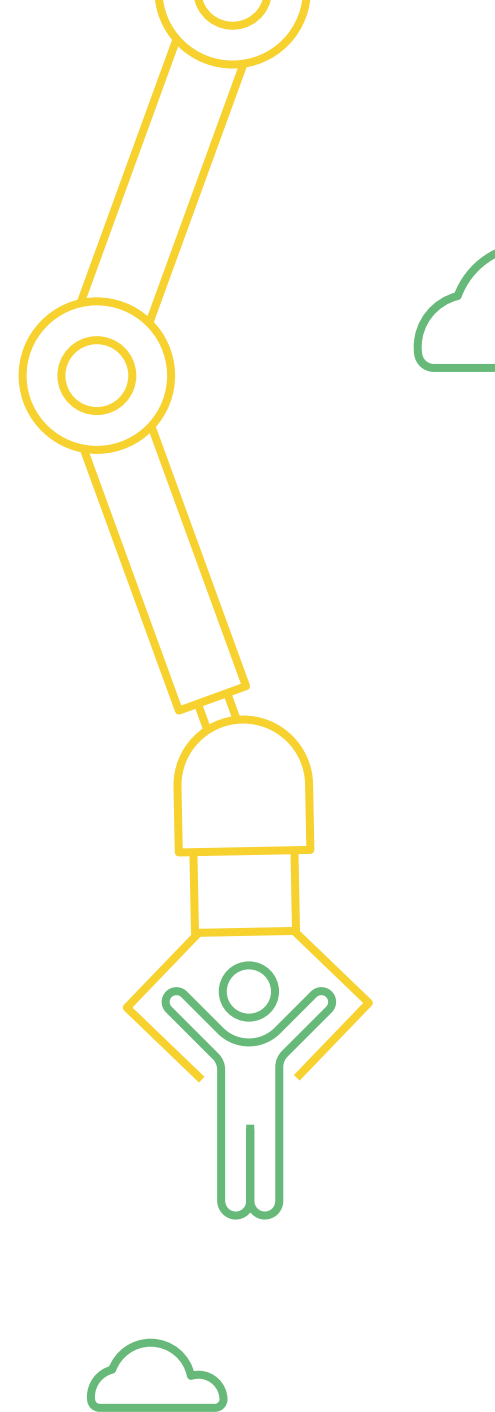
4x they're also **four times** more likely to have cheated on a test

42% say tech de-humanises the recruitment process and fear it might screen in or out the wrong people

70% say interviews should be conducted by a human

The data in detail

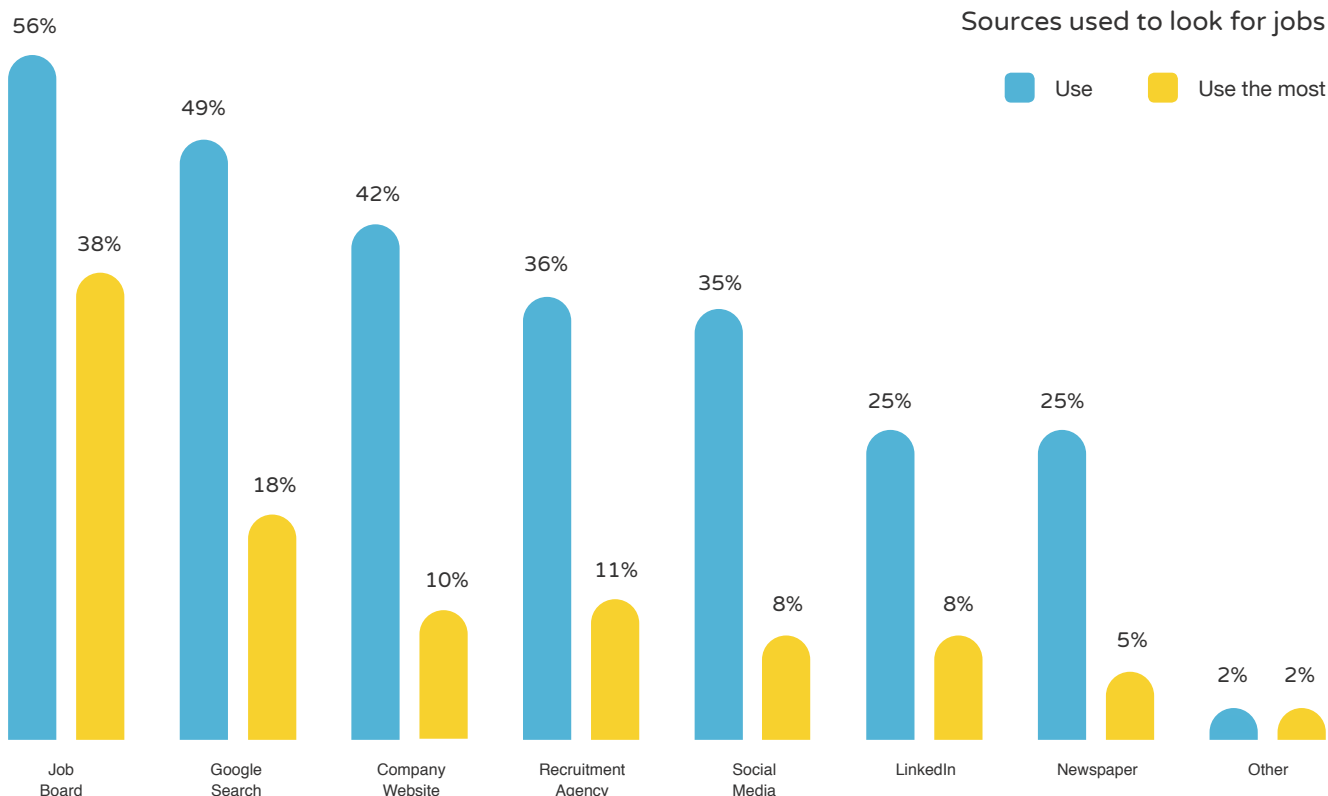
We worked with the London-based research agency, Loudhouse, to interview 1,041 employees and job seekers in the UK. Respondents are split broadly equally between men and women, the majority are aged 25 to 54, and approximately two-thirds are in full-time employment. Interviews were carried out in summer 2019.



How the hunt happens

As the figure below confirms, digital by default is growing fast in recruitment, with candidates having almost entirely moved away from analogue alternatives. While Google search and job boards may be an unsurprising top two, they do say something about the nature of job searching today. Candidates aren't necessarily making a beeline for a job they want with a company they want. Instead, they're browsing, throwing out a broad net and seeing what might be out there for them.

Q. Thinking about when you are looking for a job, what sources do you/would you generally use? And which of these do you/would you use the most?



In part, this is down to a general perception that there are fewer opportunities out there. **Just over two thirds (68%)** of respondents agree that 'there aren't enough jobs out there for everyone to be in employment'. And 40% say that a lack of jobs (**rising to 47% among 55 to 64 year-olds**) is a challenge when finding work, followed by experience (**37%**), tailoring their CV or cover letter (**37%**) and getting through to the interview stage (**35%**).

Quantity or quality?



Undoubtedly, the move to digital job hunting is good for HR professionals and recruiters. It opens the door to a lot of prospective candidates at once, and the better tools out there make searching and shortlisting easier than picking through a pile of CVs. Digital saves time, saves money, and saves recruiters having to arrange interviews with people who aren't necessarily suited to the role they've applied for.



However, as good as innovation has been for recruitment, its impact on candidate behaviour and sentiment can't be ignored.

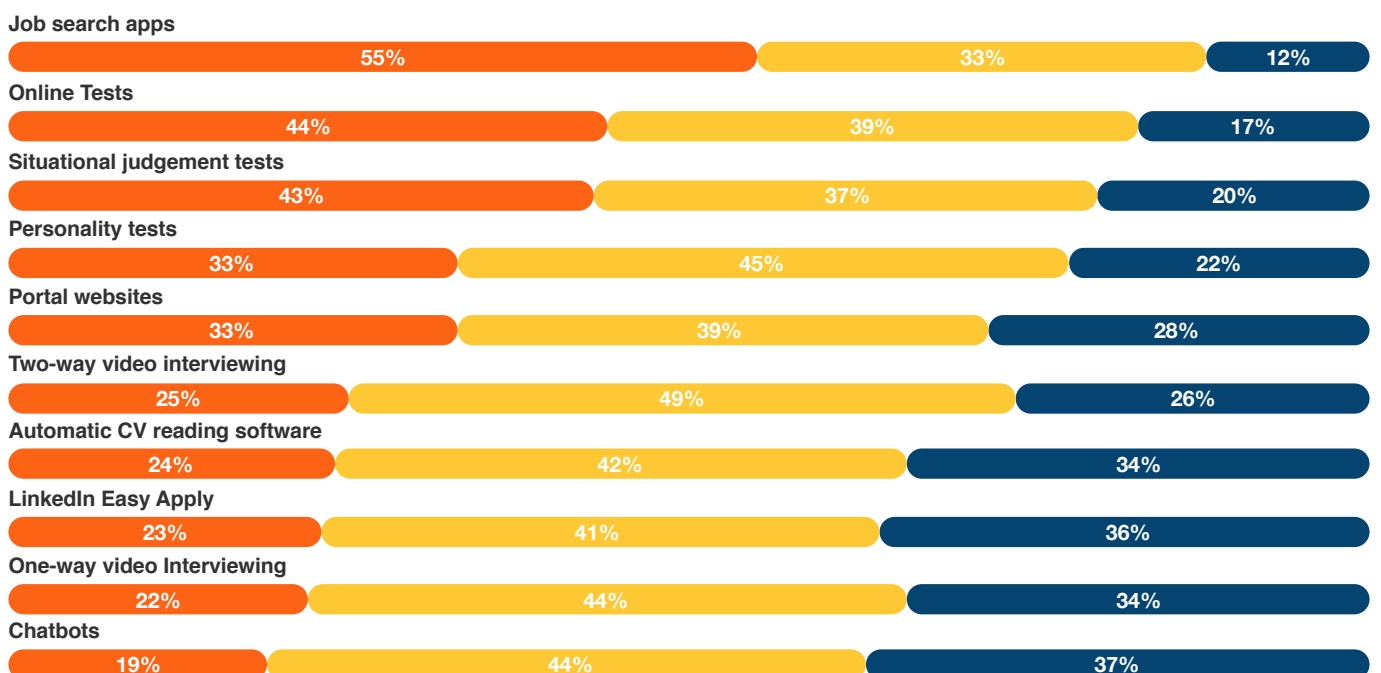
Over half (57%) of the candidates surveyed for this research admitted to taking a 'quantity over quality' approach to applying for roles. It's symptomatic of a recruitment culture that makes application easy, and where candidates broadly believe they need to kiss a lot of frogs in the job market. But it's not an approach that delivers the best outcomes.



On top of that, while candidates are generally aware of the job search tools available to them (as below shows), there is some level of negativity felt towards some of them (shown on page 7). Newer technologies such as chatbots and one-way video interviews have so far resulted in some negative experiences for candidates. It's important organisations understand how, where and when to best use these tools to enhance the candidate experience, rather than letting them being a digital barrier to human interaction.

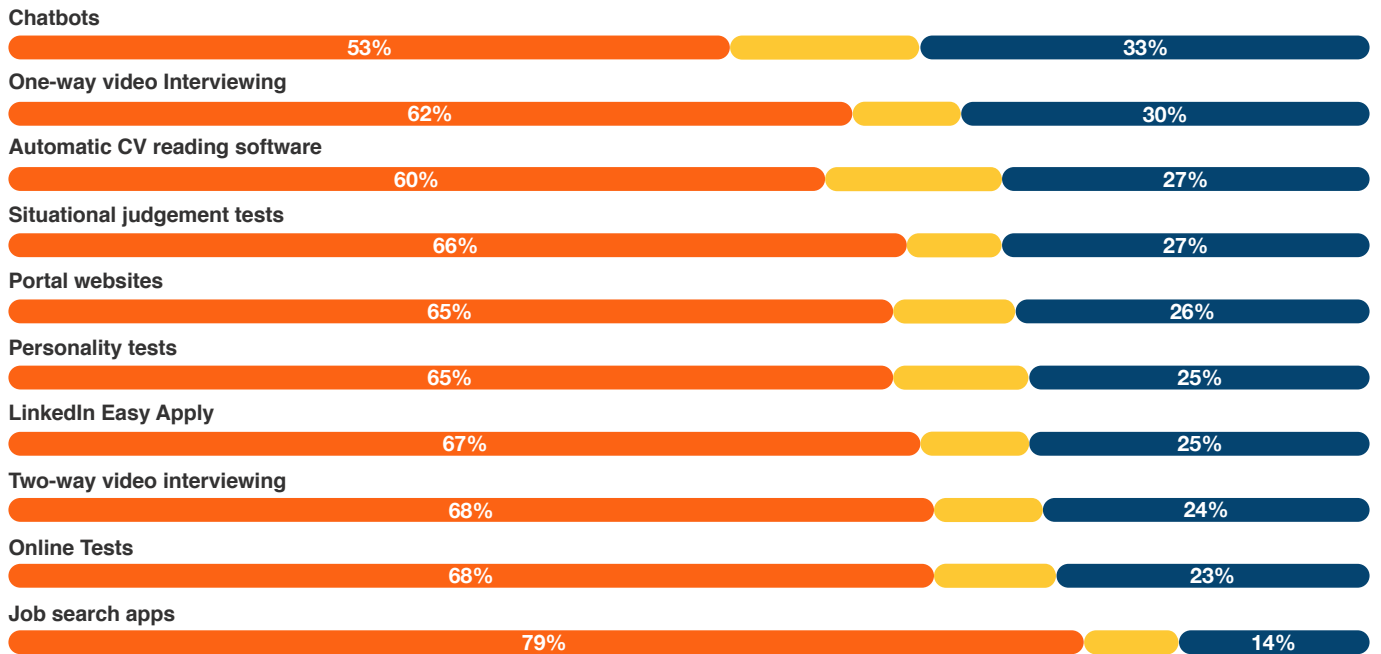
Q. Which of the following recent innovations in the job application process have you heard of?

Heard of and used ●
Heard of but not used ●
I have never heard of this ●



Q. And have these had a positive or negative impact on the job application experience?

Positive ●
Negative ●
Neutral ●



It all presents a bit of a mixed picture for recruiters. People use online tools, and they generally like applying online (no demographic surveyed polls below 50% when asked if they prefer online or human applications).

But for all that, the lack of a human touch remains problematic for many. Job hunters are wary of the idea that machines are defining the success and failure of their applications, and some even think that things are weighted against them – hence the trend for trying to game the system. While for recruiters, applicants taking a scattergun, quantity-based approach to job applications could negate the potential time savings an ATS would deliver (meaning questionnaires and questions that enable quick scoring and filtering become essential).

As the next section of this report explores.

“ There is a balance to be struck. Completely automated processes can, in my experience, result in a lack of commitment from candidates. ”

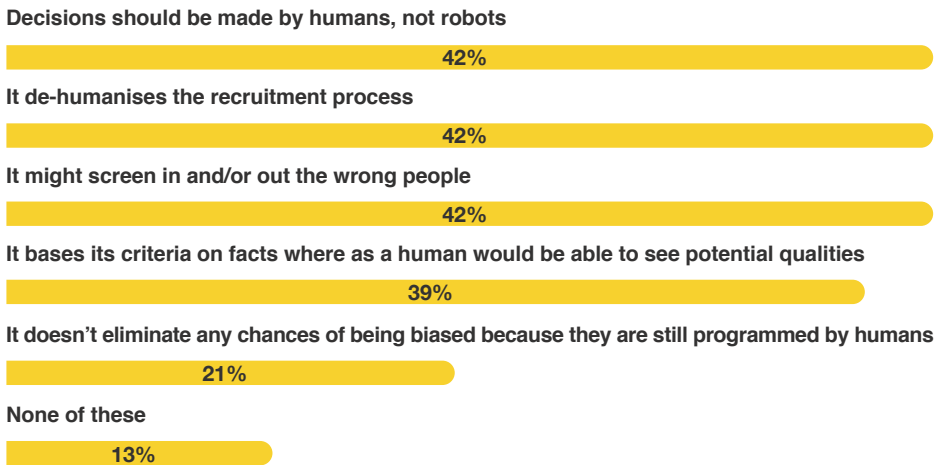
Tom Holmwood,
Recruitment and
Resourcing Manager,
Surrey County Council

People or programmes?

Job hunters use technology. But they don't necessarily trust it, with 69% of the opinion that automation in recruitment is useless because people can cheat the system by amending their CVs.

This sentiment is the tip of the iceberg, beneath which lies a host of other issues about the impact technology is having on the job finding process. As below shows, there are prominent concerns about decision making, human involvement, and screening in recruitment. All of which explains why one in ten people claim to have had a negative experience with automation when applying for a job.

Q. What do you see as the barriers of using automation in the job application process?



	Age Range			
	18-24	25-39	40-54	55-64
Decisions should be made by humans, not robots	41%	43%	43%	40%
It de-humanises the recruitment process	41%	37%	49%	41%
It might screen in and/or out the wrong people	39%	42%	44%	39%
It bases its criteria on facts where as a human would be able to see potential qualities	37%	41%	39%	35%
It doesn't eliminate any chances of being biased because they are still programmed by humans	26%	22%	19%	13%
None of these	12%	11%	13%	19%

The challenge for recruiters who use technology is that these job hunter concerns are not unfounded. Because while technology is beneficial to the process as a whole, it's also led to behavioural change – particularly among those who are aware that an ATS might be playing a part in their application. And in 2019 TopCV research revealed that **75% of UK job seekers** fear that their CV might never make it past hiring bots.

Gaming the system

Even though many candidates will have used one, as things stand just **22% know about ATS**. Comparatively few, yes. But our research shows that awareness has a profound impact on the way candidates change their applications (perhaps aided by recent articles and guides that explain how to create CVs that appeal to so-called ‘robot recruiters’).

As many as **88% of ATS aware people have optimised their CV** or application in one of the ways detailed below. And they are four times more likely to have cheated on a test than people who don’t know about ATS. What’s more, this behaviour is more likely in younger applicants.

Q. Have you ever done any of the following in order to deliberately improve your chances of getting considered for a job role?

Updated skills on your CV to match the required criteria

36%

Shortened the length of your CV

29%

Searched online to find out how other people had got hired

22%

Used buzzwords in your CV in order to manipulate an automated system

19%

Lied or exaggerated about your experience in order to get an interview

15%

Cheated on a psychometric, skills, or other kind of test

8%

None of these

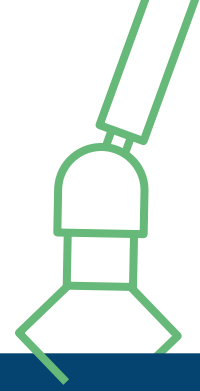
33%

This presents a challenge to recruiters who use technology. Concerns are growing about who’s making the decisions, with a widespread belief that a human should be behind the wheel. And as awareness grows, so does the likelihood that people will look to manipulate the system.

Recruiters don’t want people who only fit the bill because they’ve arrived in disguise. And job hunters should have a good (or even great) experience, even if they don’t eventually get the role they’ve applied for.

But this doesn’t mean that recruiters should shun tech. Instead, they have to understand more about where it’s most beneficial, and how to balance it with that crucial human touch. The key thing to remember is that technology should never replace humans, rather it should augment their work.

Why tech works

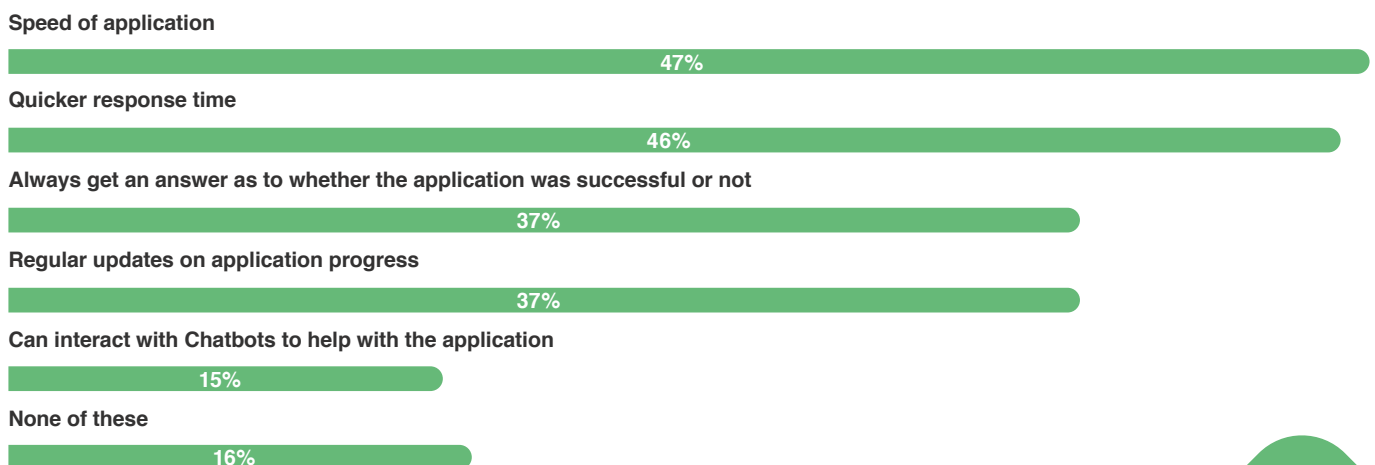


There are huge benefits to technology in recruitment, but yes, there are some key challenges with technology in recruitment. But the answer to them isn't eschewing tech. Instead, it's looking at why it works and who for, then taking the lessons from there.

Beyond the concerns about human involvement and exploitation of systems, there are many groups for whom online applications and application management are the ideal match, and for good reasons. Almost three-quarters of people who are not in work (70%) prefer online applications, for example. As do younger applicants and women. And, in general, older people don't tend to enjoy the online process, meaning web-only methods could discriminate against them.

Being online can help people to feel more confident and less nervous when applying for a job. It also speeds up the process, which is vital when people are applying for more roles and need to know where they stand before continuing their search. Indeed, as below shows, speed is cited as a main benefit of automation in the job application process, with broad levels of agreement across all age groups.

Q. What do you see as the main benefits of using automation in the job application process?



What the applicants say

These statements are taken from an open response section of our research survey:

“ Online application doesn't bring up nerves as much as face to face interaction” Female, 25-39, Not working

“ It gets you to the interview process quicker, also you find out if you're successful quicker” Male, 40-54, Part-time

“ It's a bit easier to feel confident behind a screen” Female 18-24, Full-time

Right recruitment balance

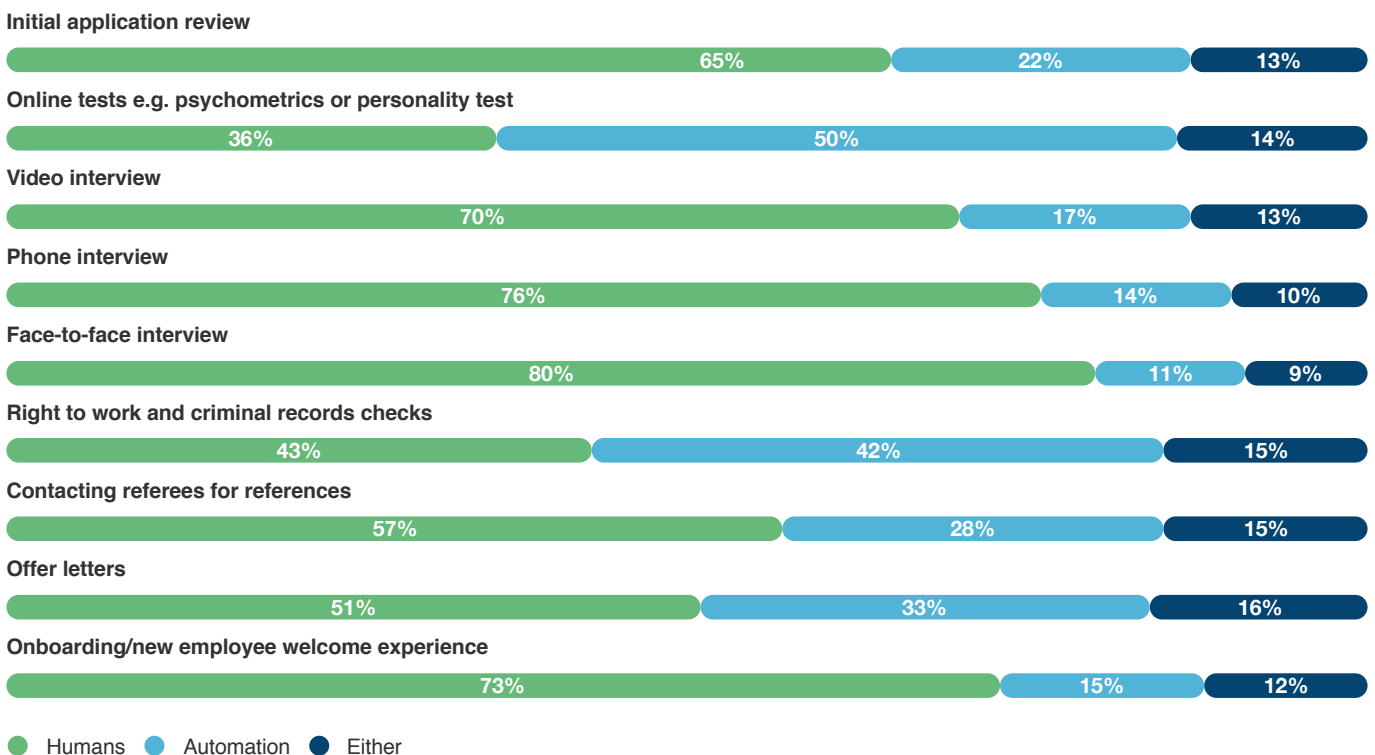
What this research shows is that there's no right or wrong when it comes to technology and automation in recruitment. There are worthy concerns. But there are also huge benefits for both recruiter and applicant that mean its place in modern hiring is vital.

As below shows, people are comfortable with a 'bit of both' in recruitment. And **42% of respondents agree** that automation in recruitment makes things easier (**only 23% said it makes it harder**).

Q. Which of the following stages of the job application process would you like to be carried out by humans, and which would you prefer to be automated?

“ Automated interview scheduling is a dream if you have loads of candidates to invite to interview.”

Tom Holmwood
Recruitment and Resourcing Manager,
Surrey County Council



But technology doesn't just make things faster. It also addresses some social concerns around recruiting, and helps people who may feel marginalised by a human-centric process, with all the pressure that brings. What recruiters need to do is get the balance right, understanding where to take the online off. While ensuring that 'gaming' tactics aren't skewing the people they take forward in hiring processes.

Perfect process to perfect fit

It's worth remembering that while recruitment has fundamentally changed from the days of circling jobs and picking up the phone, the desired outcome is still the same for everyone. People want to work in jobs, and for organisations, which suit them. Organisations want good people who can contribute to what they do.

With that in mind, change and technological innovation in recruitment should never be a source of fear or uncertainty for either party, if it's handled correctly. This means that it's on recruiters and hiring organisations to strike the right balance between automated processes and human interaction, ensuring that candidates can apply in a way that works for them, without the worry that they're being gamed out of the process. In return, recruiters will find technology working for them in the right ways – saving time that they can use for searching, interviewing and engaging with people.

Of course, all this depends on using technologies that are built with candidates in mind. And that focus on finding the right talent, taking them through the recruitment process, and ensuring that no one gets off on the wrong foot with the company they might be destined to work for.

Lets continue the conversation on technology in recruitment, get in touch at tribepad.com

