

THE 2025 JOB SEARCH REALITY

**WHY JOB SEEKERS ARE BURNT OUT,
EMPLOYERS ARE OVERWHELMED,
AND THE SYSTEM ISN'T WORKING**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



The modern job search is not failing because candidates lack skills. It is failing because hiring signals have collapsed under scale.

Based on responses from over **300 job seekers**, The 2025 Job Search Reality reveals a market where effort has increased, tools have multiplied, and automation has accelerated: yet clarity, confidence, and connection have steadily declined.

This report brings together job seeker experience, employer constraints, graduate readiness, and the growing role of AI to explain **why the hiring system feels broken for everyone involved**, and why the problem is structural, not personal.

WHY THIS MATTERS

FOR JOB SEEKERS:

The problem isn't your potential, it's visibility. Understanding how hiring systems work is now essential to protecting confidence, making better decisions, and avoiding burnout in a noisy market.

FOR EMPLOYERS:

High application volume is not a talent shortage. It's a signal problem. Processes optimised for speed without clarity reduce signal quality, erode trust, and reshape who stays in the funnel.

FOR UNIVERSITIES & EDUCATORS

Career readiness now extends beyond qualifications. Graduates need preparation for rejection, silence, networking, AI-driven screening, and non-linear hiring pathways, not just employability theory.

WHO WE SURVEYED

This report is based on a cross-sectional survey of 300+ job seekers, designed to capture lived experience rather than theoretical outcomes.

SAMPLE OVERVIEW

- **Career levels:** Entry-level, mid-career, and senior professionals
- **Geography:** Primarily UK-based, with international representation
- **Industries:** Technology, business, marketing, operations, finance, and related professional roles

APPROACH

Combination of multiple-choice, scaled, and open-text responses. Focus on experience, perception, and behavioural change, not just outcomes. Analysis prioritised patterns, distribution shifts, and system-level effects over individual anecdotes

NOTES ON INTERPRETATION

Findings reflect job seeker perception and experience, which directly shape behaviour in the hiring market. Percentages are rounded for clarity. Qualitative quotes are representative of recurring themes

KEY FINDINGS

FEEDBACK HAS DISAPPEARED FROM THE JOB SEARCH

~65%

of job seekers say they rarely or never hear back - even after progressing to interviews.

GHOSTING IS NO LONGER AN OUTLIER. IT'S NORMALISED

70%+

report being ghosted after an interview. This is happening at moments that should provide clarity and trust.

JOB SEARCHING ACTIVELY DAMAGES CONFIDENCE

The hiring process doesn't just filter candidates - it erodes self-belief.

Average self-rated confidence drops by nearly one full point after sustained job searching.

GRADUATES ARE PREPARED FOR DEGREES, NOT FOR THE REALITIES OF HIRING

70%+

of graduates say university did not prepare them for: networking, rejection, modern hiring dynamics and signal-based evaluation

AI CHANGED THE RULES - BUT NOT HOW PEOPLE THINK

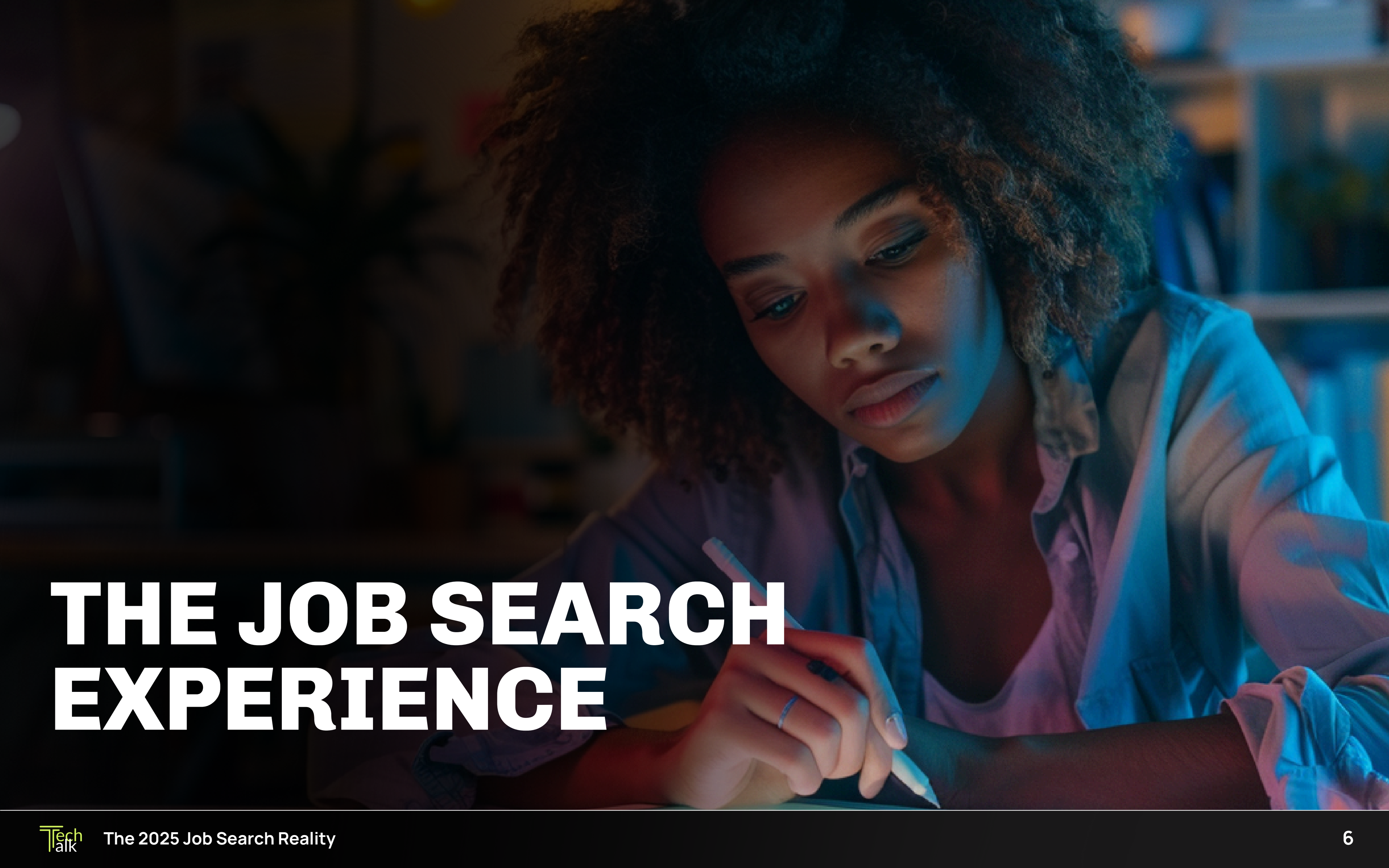
Job seekers use AI to: prepare, position and iterate faster - Not to mass-apply.

AI increases speed and volume, but does not improve signal quality.

BURNOUT IS NOW A PREDICTABLE STAGE

80%+

say job searching has negatively affected their mental wellbeing. ~70% have taken a break from applying due to burnout.



THE JOB SEARCH EXPERIENCE

JOB SEEKERS

FRUSTRATION AT SCALE

01

FROM EFFORT TO SILENCE

The most common frustration reported by job seekers is **lack of feedback**.

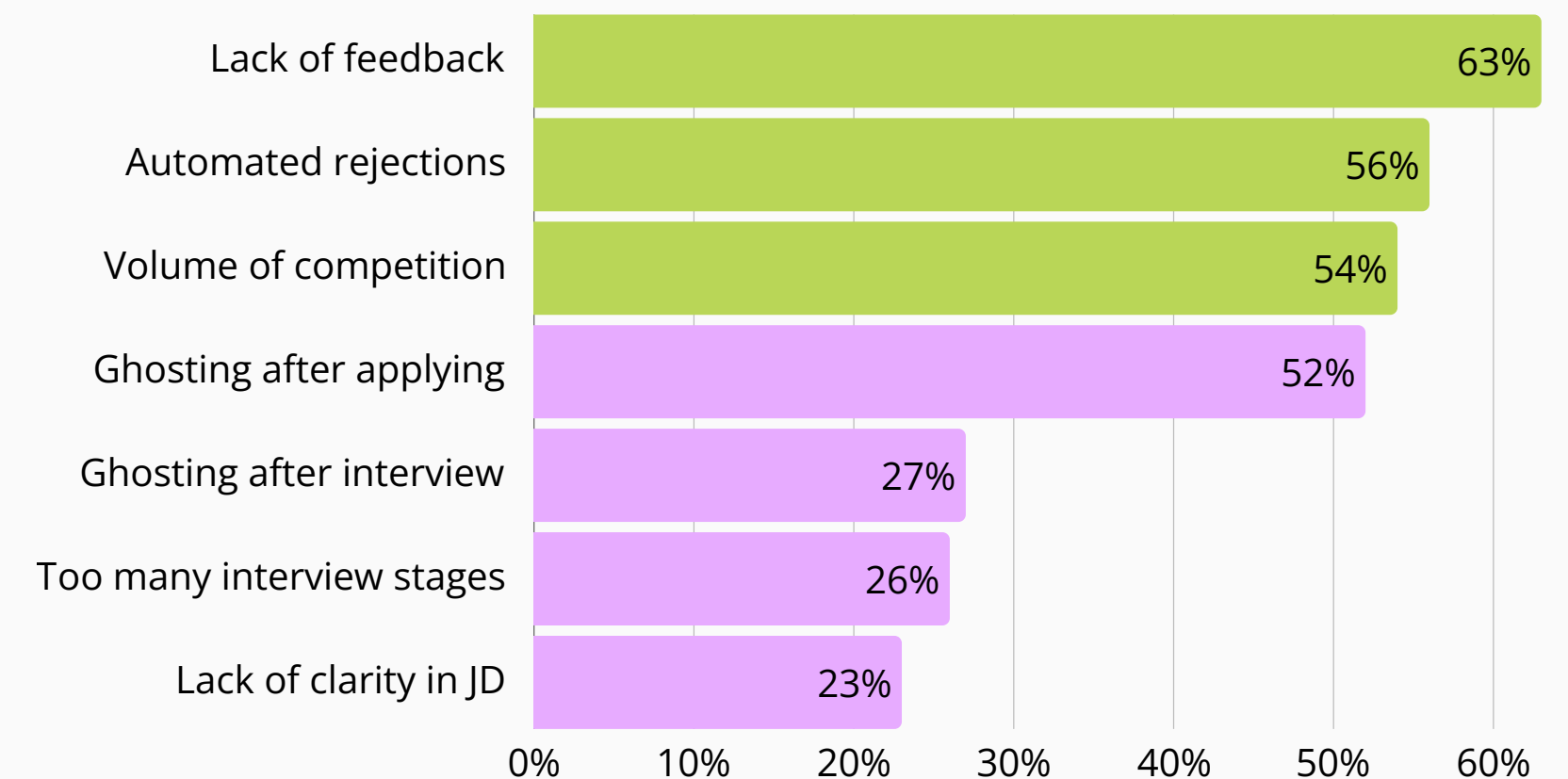
Nearly two-thirds (64%) of respondents list it among their top frustrations, and almost 1 in 5 say they rarely hear back at all after applying. Even when responses do arrive, they are slow, often taking weeks, reinforcing a sense that applications disappear into a void.

“THE HARDEST PART ISN’T REJECTION, IT’S NOT KNOWING WHETHER ANYONE EVER LOOKED.”

The job search has not become harder because candidates are less capable. It has become harder because the system now operates at a scale that strips away clarity, feedback, and human connection.

Most job seekers enter the process with realistic expectations. They don’t expect every application to lead to an offer, but **they do expect to be acknowledged, informed, and evaluated fairly**. What they encounter instead is silence, automation, and rejection without context.

OVER 63% OF JOB SEEKERS CITE LACK OF FEEDBACK AS THEIR #1 FRUSTRATION



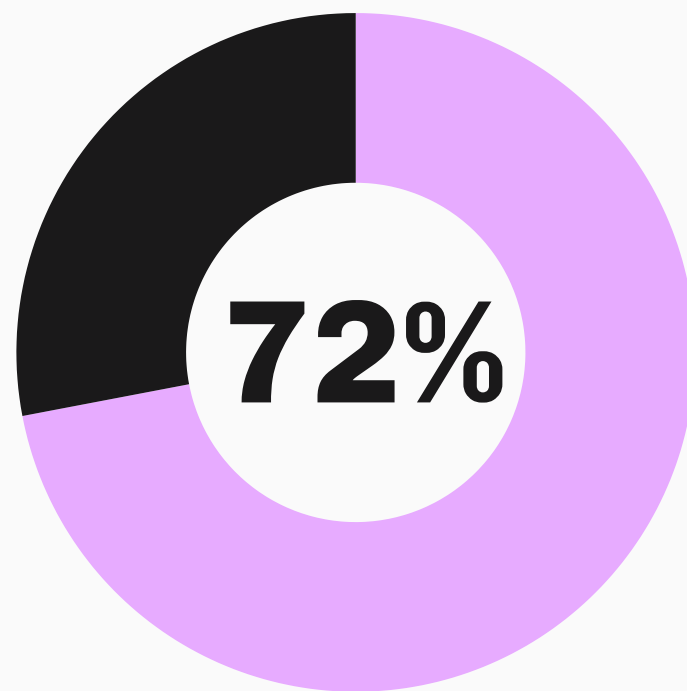
02

GHOSTING HAS BECOME NORMALISED, EVEN AFTER INTERVIEWS

Silence does not end once candidates enter interview processes. In fact, this is where its emotional cost is highest.

Around 7 in 10 job seekers report being ghosted after interviews. At this stage, candidates have already invested time, preparation, and hope. Without closure, many internalise the silence as a judgement on their ability rather than a limitation of process.

“ONCE YOU’VE INTERVIEWED, THE SILENCE FEELS PERSONAL, EVEN WHEN IT ISN’T.”



HAVE BEEN GHOSTED AFTER AN INTERVIEW

03

WHEN FEEDBACK DISAPPEARS, BEHAVIOUR CHANGES

As clarity disappears, job seekers adapt, not because it works better, but because it feels necessary.

Many respondents describe shifting from targeted, thoughtful applications to higher-volume strategies simply to stay visible. This fuels a self-reinforcing cycle: more applications lead to more automation, which leads to less feedback, which drives even more volume.

The result is a market where job seekers apply more but feel less confident, and employers see more candidates but less signal.



- 01 No feedback | Ghosting | Long response times
- 02 More applications per role | Spray & pray behaviour | Less targeting
- 03 ATS filters | Auto-rejections | Keyword screening
- 04 Less human touch | Less feedback capacity | Slower responses

04

CONFIDENCE COLLAPSE: BEFORE VS AFTER JOB SEARCHING

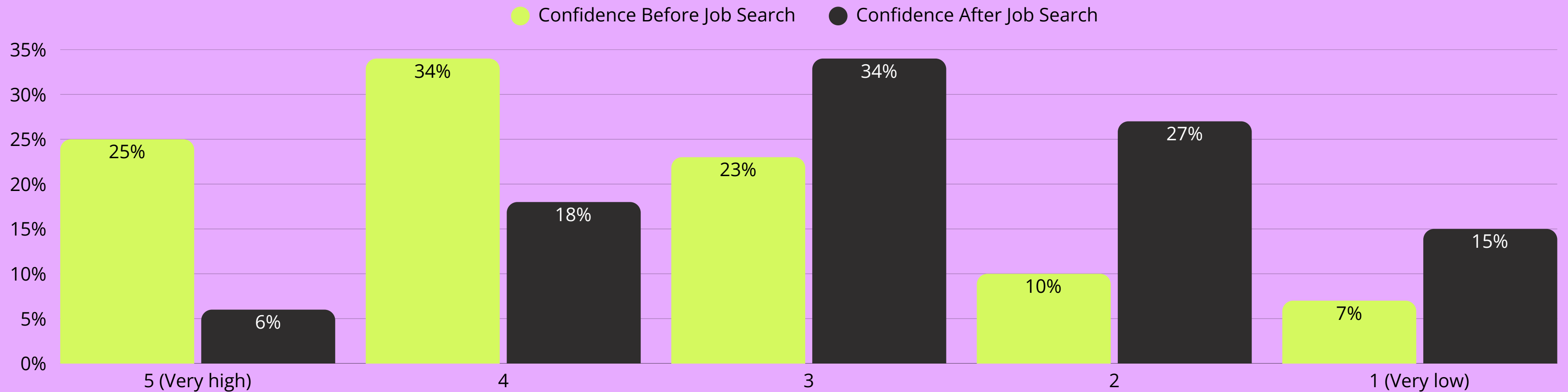
The job search is often framed as a test of skill or preparation. The data suggests something else is happening.

Before entering the market, **most job seekers rate themselves as reasonably confident**. After sustained exposure to silence, automation, and unclear decisions, that confidence drops sharply. On average, confidence declines by nearly a full point, with a visible shift toward the lowest confidence levels.

“NOTHING ABOUT MY SKILLS CHANGED. HOW I FELT ABOUT MYSELF DID.”

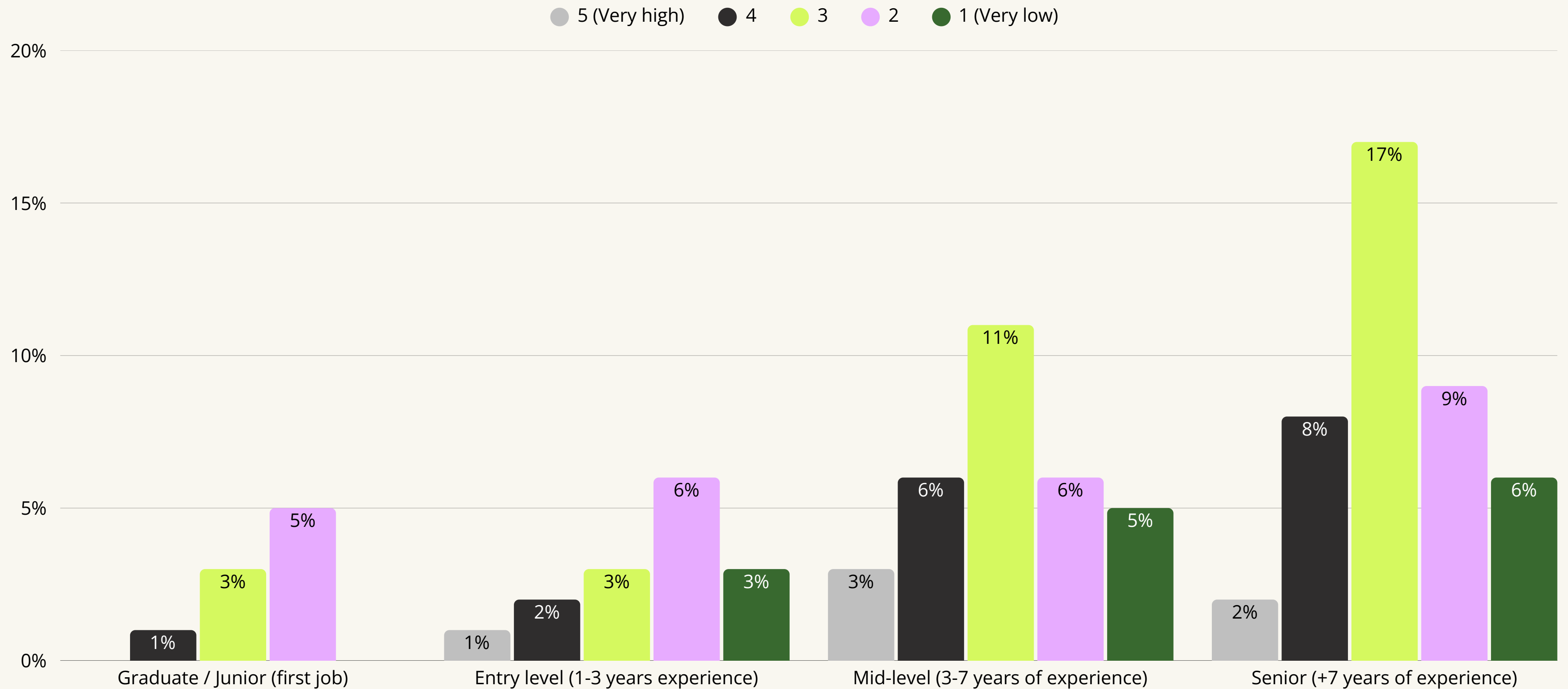
This matters because confidence shapes outcomes. As confidence declines, candidates undersell themselves, avoid stretch opportunities, disengage from networking, and exit the process earlier.

AVERAGE CONFIDENCE DROPS BY NEARLY ONE POINT



FROM GRADUATES TO SENIORS, CONFIDENCE FALLS ONCE JOB SEARCHING BEGINS

Confidence is lowest at the early stages and only moderately improves with experience - even senior professionals are far from “very confident.” **Graduate and entry-level candidates skew heavily toward low confidence (levels 1-2)**, likely driven by lack of experience, unclear positioning, and limited feedback loops.



05

BURNOUT IS NOW PART OF THE JOB SEARCH

Burnout is often framed as a personal threshold. Our data suggests it is a predictable stage of the process.

Over 80% of job seekers report that job searching has negatively affected their mental well-being. Nearly 7 in 10 say they have taken a break due to burnout, not as a strategy, but as a necessity.

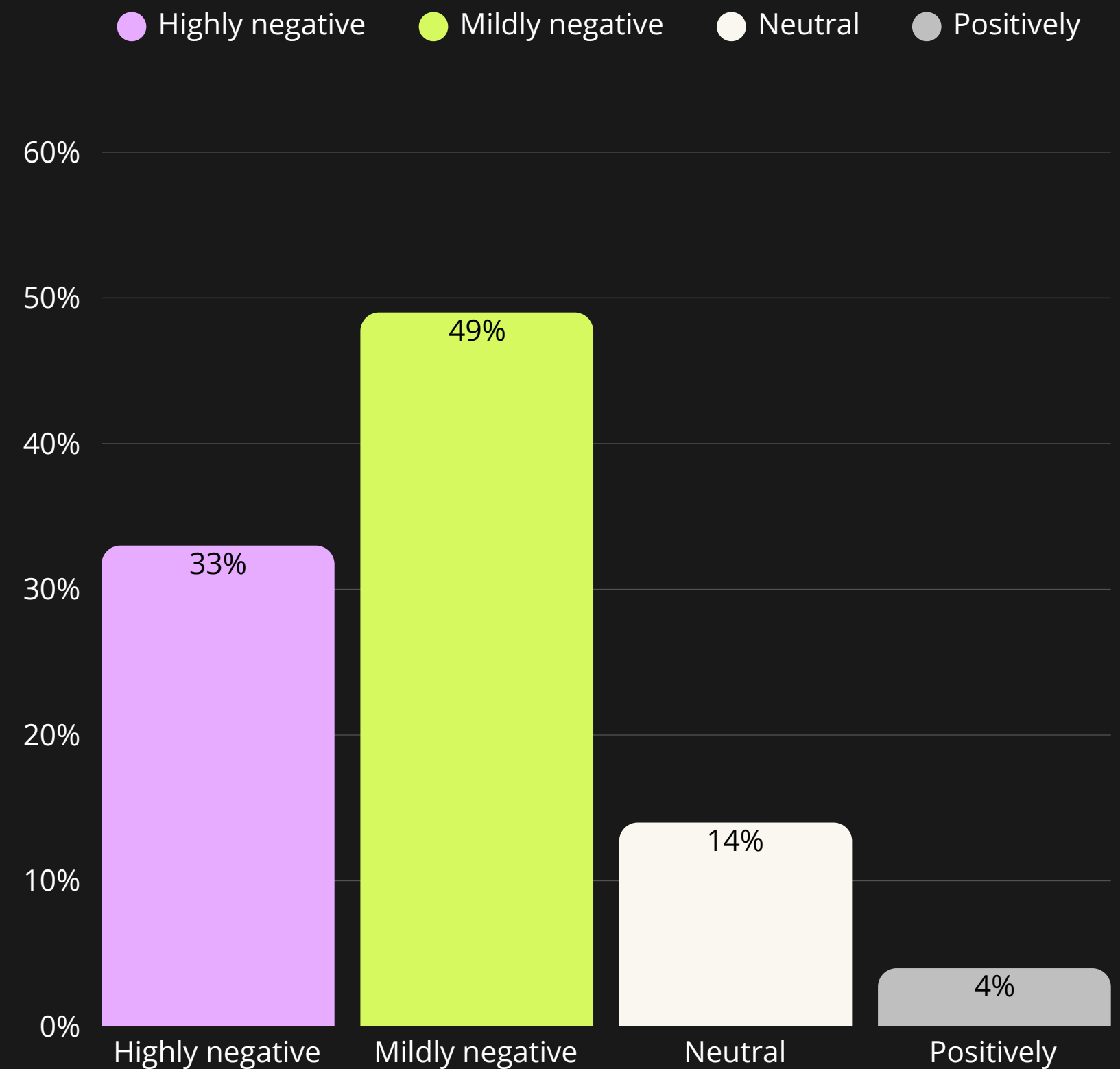
“IT’S NOT THE WORKLOAD. IT’S THE CONSTANT WAITING AND NOT KNOWING.”

Burnout doesn’t just affect how candidates feel. It affects how they show up. Applications become less targeted, preparation suffers, and high-potential candidates disengage before roles are filled.



70% OF RESPONDENTS SAY THEY HAVE TAKEN A BREAK FROM JOB SEARCHING DUE TO BURNOUT

JOB SEARCHING NEGATIVELY IMPACTS MENTAL WELL-BEING FOR THE VAST MAJORITY OF CANDIDATES WITH OVER 80% OF JOB SEEKERS REPORTING A NEGATIVE IMPACT ON MENTAL WELL-BEING





THE EMPLOYER SIDE

EMPLOYERS

THE SAME PROBLEM, SEEN DIFFERENTLY

It's easy to frame the hiring market as a conflict between employers and job seekers. The data suggests something more complex.

Employers are not acting out of indifference. In many cases, they are responding rationally to an overloaded system. But the way that overload is managed is increasingly shaping how candidates experience companies, and how those companies are perceived long before an offer is ever made.

What job seekers experience as silence or detachment often begins as a capacity issue. What it becomes is an employer brand issue.

01

WHEN HUMAN SIGNALS DISAPPEAR, TRUST ERODES

From the employer side, hiring today often feels unmanageable.

When applications arrive in the hundreds or thousands, relevance becomes harder to identify, not easier. Screening time increases, signal quality drops, and speed becomes a necessity. Automation fills the gap, not because it's ideal, but because it's the only way to keep processes moving.

From the job seeker side, the experience looks very different:

- Applications disappear without acknowledgement
- Interviews end without closure
- Communication feels generic or absent

As human signals disappear, candidates begin to interpret the process as impersonal or dismissive, even when that was never the intent.

“I DON'T EXPECT FEEDBACK ON EVERYTHING. I JUST WANT TO KNOW WHERE I STAND.”

02

POOR HIRING EXPERIENCES ARE ACTIVELY DRIVING CANDIDATES AWAY

This erosion of trust has real consequences.

Nearly 4 in 10 job seekers report that they have withdrawn, or seriously considered withdrawing, from an interview process due to a poor candidate experience. This isn't about rejection. It's about how the process made them feel.

For many candidates, silence, unclear timelines, and lack of communication signal deeper issues:

- Disorganisation
- Low regard for candidates' time
- A culture that deprioritises people

By the time an offer is made, damage may already be done.

“IF THIS IS HOW THEY TREAT CANDIDATES, WHAT WILL IT BE LIKE ONCE YOU'RE INSIDE?”

At scale, these experiences don't stay isolated. They accumulate, spread through networks, and shape reputation, especially in competitive talent markets.

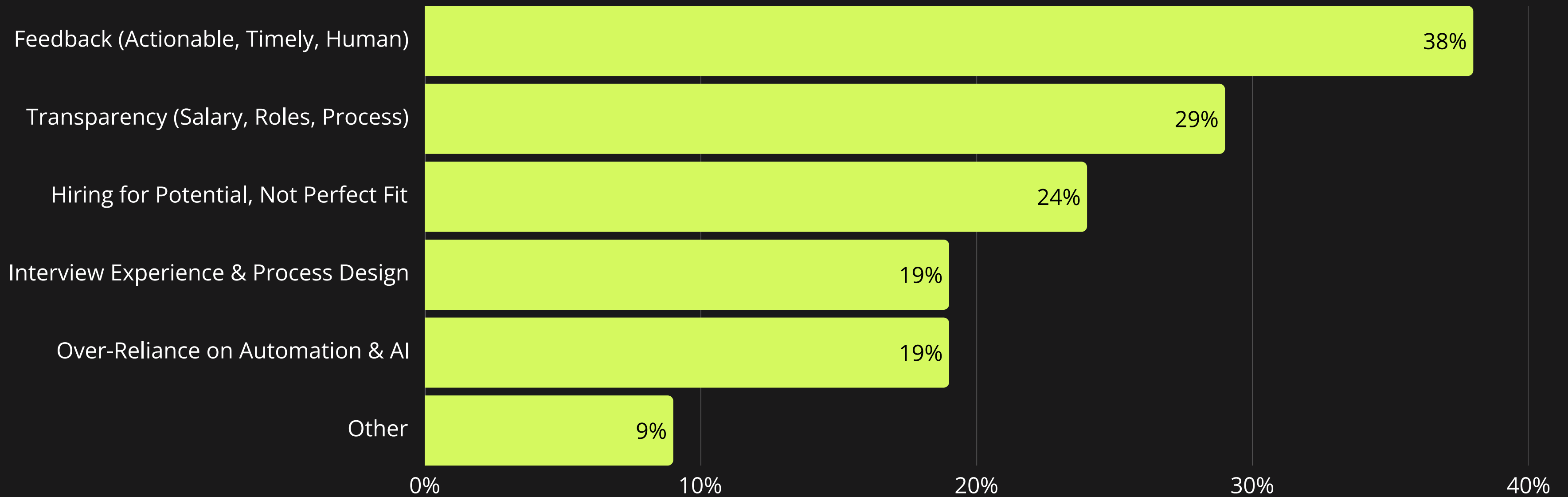
40%

OF CANDIDATES HAVE WITHDRAWN OR NEARLY WITHDRAWN DUE TO POOR HIRING EXPERIENCE

When candidates reflect on their hiring experiences, five themes appear repeatedly:

Feedback is the most prominent, with many saying silence after interviews is more damaging than rejection itself. **Transparency**, particularly around salary ranges, role expectations, and hiring timelines, is another major gap, with candidates describing late-stage mismatches as a waste of time and trust. **Hiring for potential** emerges as a frustration where transferable skills and learning ability are overlooked in favour of rigid experience requirements. **The interview experience** is often described as overly rigid or impersonal, while **overreliance on AI** without explanation leaves candidates unsure how decisions are made or how to improve.

WHAT JOB SEEKERS WANT COMPANIES TO FIX (TOP 8 THEMES)



03

EMPLOYER BRAND IS NOW SHAPED INSIDE THE HIRING FUNNEL

Traditionally, employer brand has been shaped through marketing, messaging, and reputation-building activities outside the hiring process. Increasingly, however, it is being shaped within it.

For many candidates, the hiring journey is their first meaningful interaction with a company. When that experience is marked by silence, unclear communication, or a lack of human touch, it doesn't just affect how a role is perceived, it shapes how the organisation itself is remembered.

In a high-volume market, candidate experience becomes a proxy for culture. It signals how decisions are made, how people are treated, and what working relationships might feel like once inside the business.

This means employer brand is no longer only built through campaigns or careers pages. It is reinforced, or undermined, through every touchpoint candidates experience while trying to

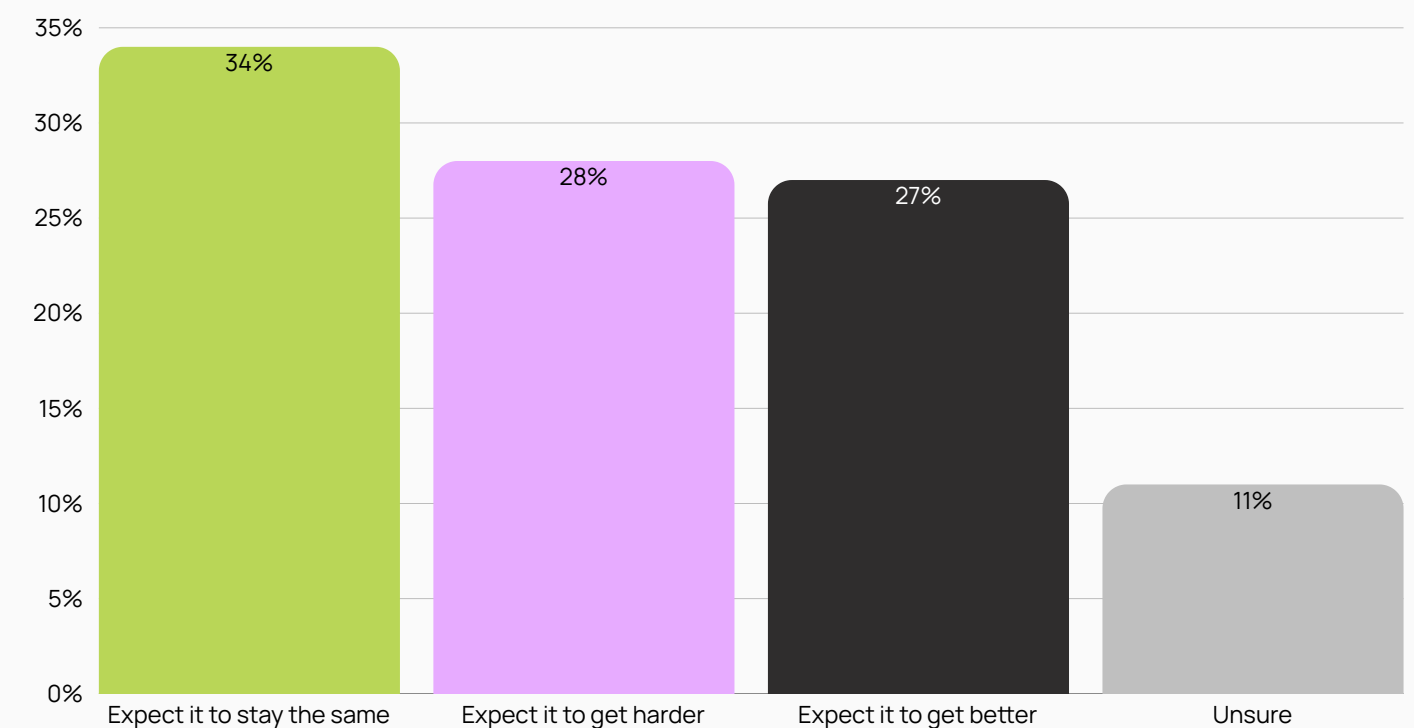
04

CONFIDENCE IN THE MARKET IS DECLINING

When asked how they expect the job market to change in 2026, a **clear majority of respondents expect it to become harder, or at best, no easier, than it is today.** Very few anticipate meaningful improvement without structural change.

This outlook reflects lived experience rather than pessimism. Candidates are adjusting expectations based on what they are seeing and feeling inside the system.

JOB SEEKER OUTLOOK FOR THE 2026 JOB MARKET IS DECLINING WITH +60% EXPECTING TO BE EITHER AS HARD OR HARDER THAN THE 2025 JOB MARKET



GRADUATES & UNIVERSITIES

GRADUATES & UNIVERSITIES

THE TRANSITION SHOCK

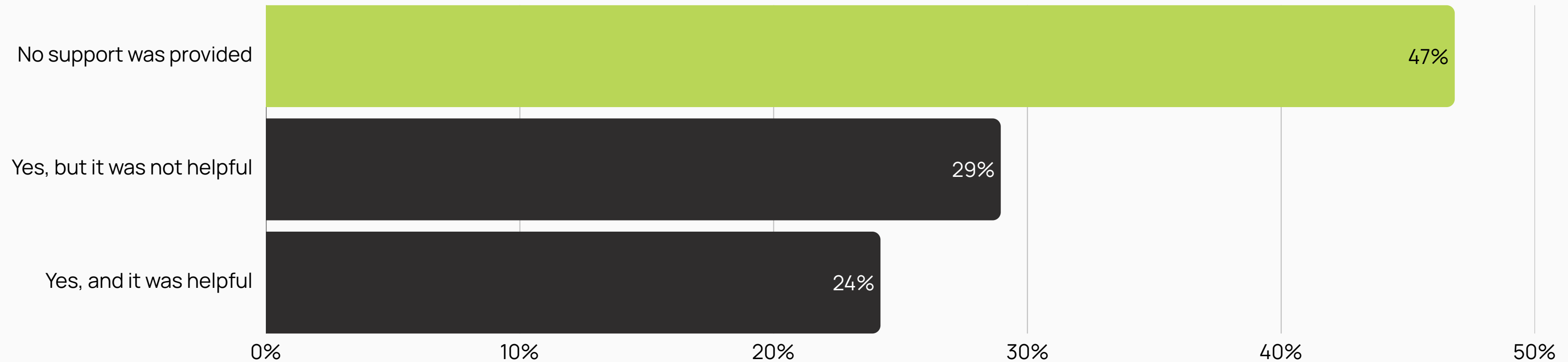
For many graduates, the biggest shock after university isn't competition, it's how different the job search is from what they were prepared for.

More than 70% of graduates say university did not prepare them for the realities of hiring. While some received career support, few found it relevant to modern job searching.

“WE WERE TAUGHT HOW TO WRITE ESSAYS, NOT HOW TO GET SEEN.”

Graduates consistently point to missing skills that are not academic, but practical: networking, storytelling, self-advocacy, handling rejection, and understanding hiring processes. This points to a preparation gap, not a talent gap.

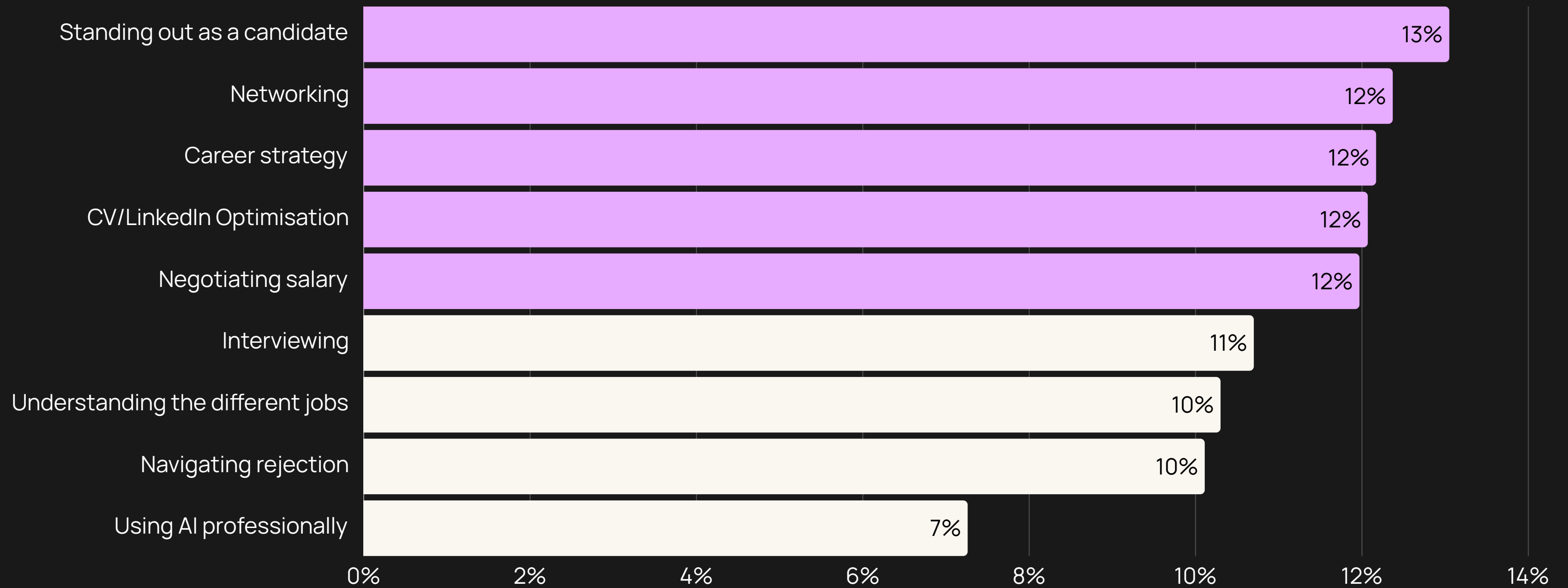
CAREER SUPPORT EXISTS BUT RARELY PREPARES GRADUATES FOR REALITY



70%

OF GRADUATES SAY UNIVERSITY DID NOT PREPARE THEM FOR THE REAL JOB SEARCH

SKILLS UNIVERSITIES DIDN'T PREPARE GRADUATES FOR





AI, AUTOMATION & THE 2025 JOB MARKET

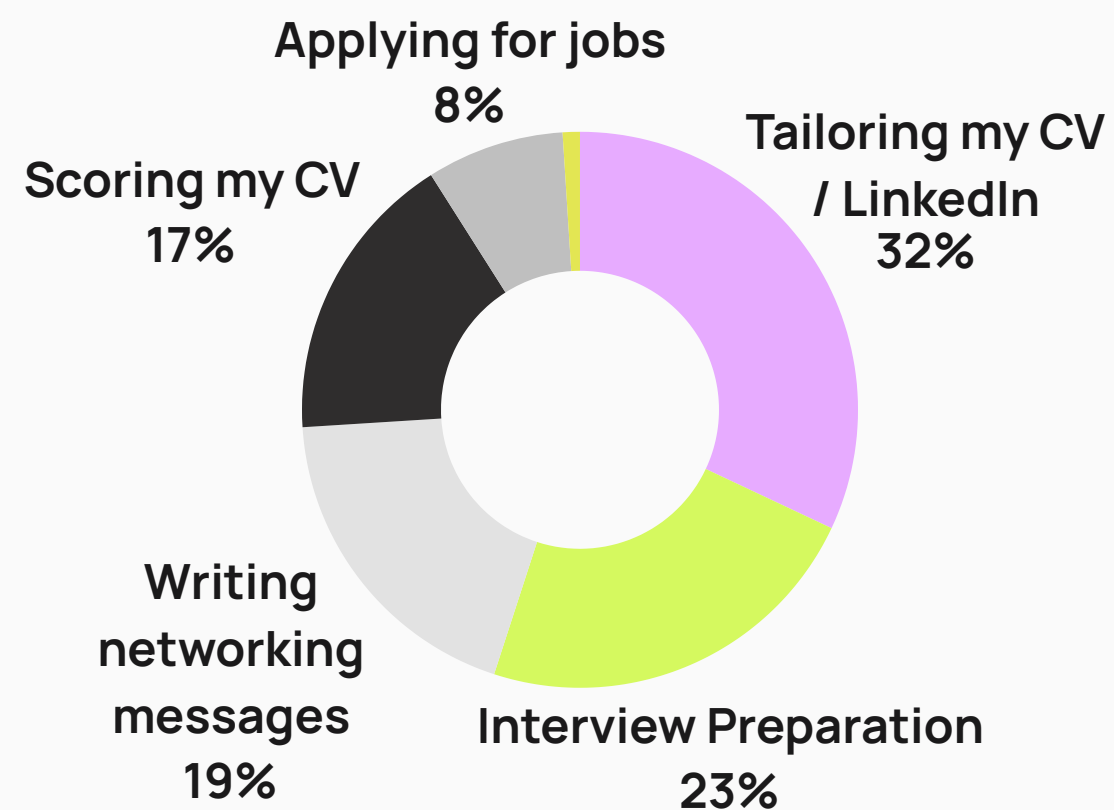
AI, AUTOMATION & THE 2025 JOB MARKET

AI is now embedded in the job search, but not always in the way people assume.

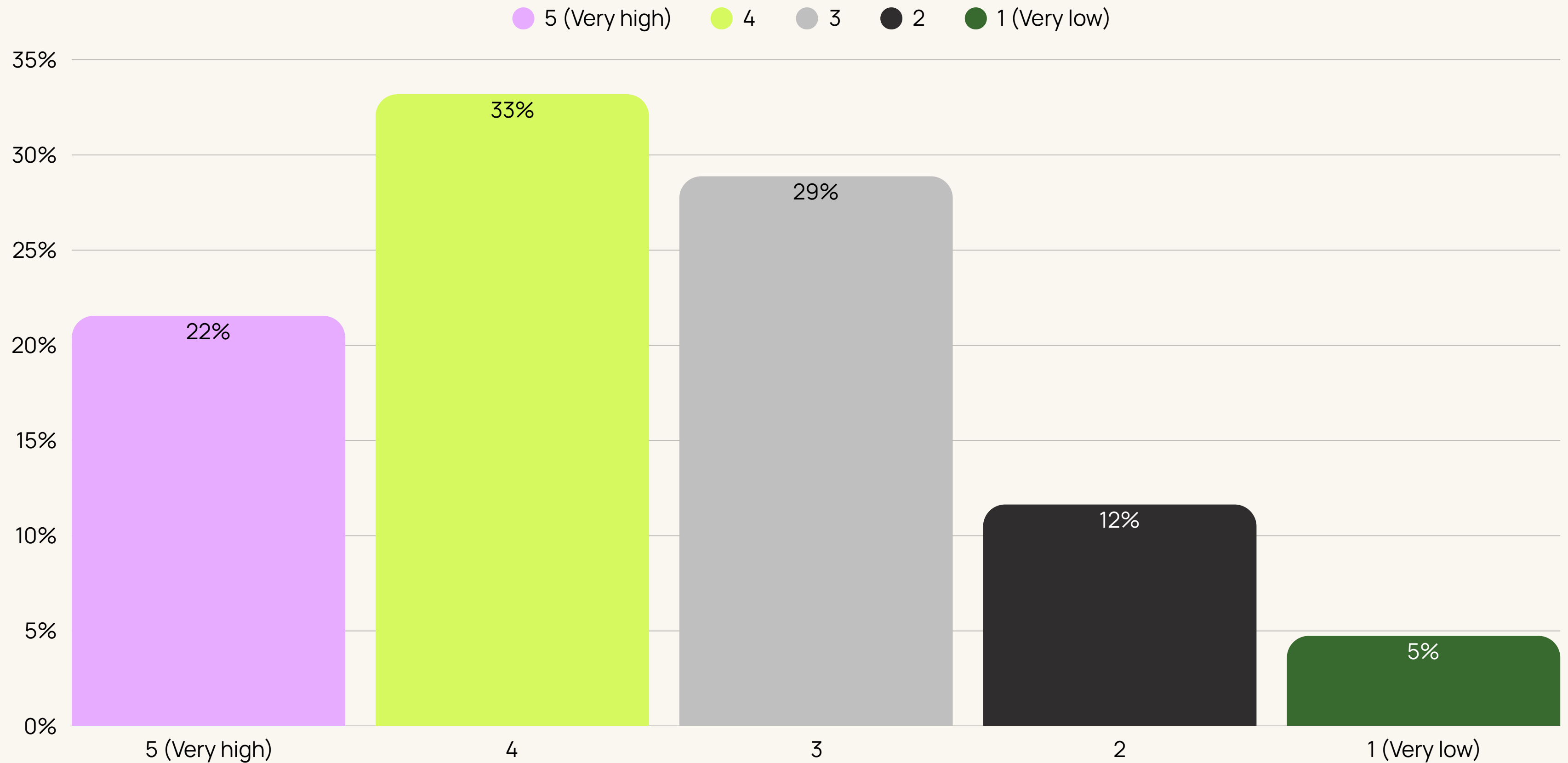
Most job seekers already use AI, primarily to prepare: tailoring CVs, preparing for interviews, and drafting networking messages. **Over 8 in 10 rate their confidence using AI as moderate to high.**

AI increases speed and volume, but not signal quality. It helps people do more, faster, without improving outcomes.

JOB SEEKERS ARE USING AI TO PREPARE AND POSITION THEMSELVES, NOT TO MASS-APPLY OR REPLACE HUMAN JUDGEMENT



OVER 8 IN 10 JOB SEEKERS RATE THEIR CONFIDENCE USING AI TOOLS AS MODERATE TO HIGH (3–5), HOWEVER THAT CONFIDENCE DOESN'T EXTEND TO HOW HIRING DECISIONS ARE MADE.





FINAL TAKEAWAYS

WHAT JOB SEEKERS WANT COMPANIES TO DO DIFFERENTLY

Despite widespread frustration, job seekers are not asking for special treatment. They are asking for clarity, consistency, and respect.

Across the survey, five themes stand out consistently.

- **Transparency:** Clear timelines, honest updates, and closure reduce uncertainty and prevent candidates being left in the dark.
- **Feedback:** Even light-touch feedback confirms effort was reviewed and helps candidates improve future applications.
- **Human touch:** Human communication at key moments reassures candidates they're not being processed purely by systems.
- **Clear expectations:** Clear role criteria and interview stages help candidates self-select and reduce misaligned applications.
- **Respect for time:** Streamlined processes and fewer unnecessary steps signal respect for candidates' time and effort.

These are not radical asks. They improve outcomes for employers and candidates alike by reducing noise, improving signal quality, and preserving trust.

TRANSPARENCY

FEEDBACK

HUMAN TOUCH

CLEAR EXPECTATIONS

RESPECT FOR TIME



WHAT WON'T FIX IT

The future of hiring will not be fixed by:

- Encouraging people to apply more
- Filtering harder or earlier
- Automating faster without context
- Treating confidence loss and burnout as personal failure

Speed without clarity simply amplifies noise.

WHAT WILL FIX IT

The market doesn't need more volume. It needs better signals.

That means:

- Helping candidates communicate relevance, not just experience
- Designing clearer, more transparent hiring processes
- Preserving human context, even at scale
- Investing in employer brand as a signal, showing candidates that people, not just systems, sit behind the process
- Preparing graduates and job seekers for how hiring actually works today

When signals improve, confidence is preserved, effort becomes more targeted, and outcomes improve on both sides.

ABOUT TECHTALK

TechTalk is redefining how people **navigate the modern hiring market.**

We exist to translate how hiring actually works today - cutting through outdated advice, broken signals, and the noise that keeps capable people stuck.

In a market overwhelmed by applications and automation, TechTalk helps job seekers build real hiring signal: clear positioning, credible narratives, and visibility that aligns with how employers make decisions.

By combining insight, education, and access, TechTalk creates a bridge between job seekers and employers - enabling meaningful connection beyond the application. When people understand the system, confidence replaces self-blame. Decisions improve. Outcomes follow.

TechTalk brings the right talent and the right employers into the same space - restoring clarity, trust, and momentum on both sides of the hiring market.

www.techtalkuk.co | contact@techtalkuk.co

