2026 GLOBAL BENCHMARK REPORT.



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WELCOME TO HIRERIGHT'S 2026 GLOBAL BENCHMARK REPORT.





Euan Menzies
President and CEO
at HireRight

This report shares the findings of our latest annual survey of HR, risk, and talent acquisition professionals worldwide, comparing the responses from the U.S. and Canada **(North America)**, Europe, the Middle East, and Africa **(EMEA)**, and Asia-Pacific **(APAC)**, to help identify regional trends and provide data you can benchmark your own organization against.

The report offers a deep dive into **background screening**—including the most common checks around the world, where candidate discrepancies are found, and how background screening is being used to mitigate risk post-hire and with contingent workforces—and **talent acquisition** and **workforce management**, exploring the greatest recruitment challenges, hiring predictions, and priorities for 2026, and the evolution of workplace location.

Additionally, this year's report looks at how advances in **artificial intelligence (AI)** are affecting recruitment and background screening in 2026, examining how AI is expected to impact hiring volumes this year, the HR functions teams are currently supporting with AI tools, company attitudes toward candidates using AI in the recruitment process, and confidence levels of respondents in detecting such usage.

Thank you to everybody who participated in our Global Benchmark Survey earlier this year. Without your input, this report wouldn't be possible. I hope you find it an interesting read and a helpful tool to see how your planned screening, hiring, and talent management activity for the year compares to your regional and global peers.


BACKGROUND
SCREENING

KEY GLOBAL TAKEAWAYS

1

Workplace safety and security and detecting behavior that misaligns with their corporate values are the top risks companies aim to mitigate with employment screening.

Around three-fifths of respondents from North America cited workplace safety and security as one of the key risks.

Misalignment with corporate values was the top response in EMEA and APAC, outranking last year's top response, cost of a bad hire.

2

Accuracy/quality of results is the standout priority when choosing a background screening provider.

Globally, most respondents consider accuracy/quality of results as a priority when evaluating employment screening providers.

Turnaround times and cost make up the top three responses in North America and EMEA, but in APAC, candidate experience and corporate values alignment are more highly desirable.

3

Amid rising levels of ID fraud, identity checks have become more popular in each region.

More businesses in each region—particularly in North America and EMEA—are conducting ID checks than in 2025.

In EMEA and APAC, more than half of respondents said they'd discovered identity fraud in the past year—either during the recruitment process or post-hire.

4

Most businesses found candidate discrepancies while screening in the past 12 months.

Two-thirds of North America and APAC respondents and nine out of 10 EMEA respondents found candidate discrepancies last year, with employment verifications being the area they most likely found them.

Just 3% of global enterprises (5,000+ employees) said they didn't find any discrepancies in the past 12 months, compared with around half of global SMBs (<500 employees).

5

While many companies are utilizing post-hire checks and are screening their contingent workers, the specifics vary by region.

The use of rescreening and ongoing monitoring has shown little growth in adoption since 2025, potentially leaving companies vulnerable to insider threat and other workforce risks.

Most businesses screen their contingent workers, but how this is conducted often varies, creating inconsistent screening practices across an organization's total workforce.

RISK MITIGATION

While workplace safety and security is once again the most common risk that North America respondents want to mitigate through employment screening, in EMEA and APAC, detecting misalignment with corporate values is more commonly a key objective.

What are the main risks your business aims to mitigate with employment screening?

NORTH AMERICA

	2026	2025
Workplace safety and security	61%	60%
Non-compliance with regulations	41%	42%
Financial loss through criminal activity	34%	35%
Cost of a bad hire	32%	47%

EMEA

	2026	2025
Misalignment with corporate values	38%	–
Cost of a bad hire	35%	46%
Workplace safety and security	30%	23%
Financial loss through criminal activity	29%	44%

APAC

	2026	2025
Misalignment with corporate values	36%	–
Workplace safety and security	35%	36%
Brand reputation	33%	38%
Cost of a bad hire	32%	39%

Around three-fifths of respondents from North America cited workplace safety and security as one of the key risks they aim to mitigate through their employment screening program. However, while this risk has remained top of mind for many North America employers over the past few years, it seems to be less of a worry elsewhere. Just 35% of APAC respondents and 30% of EMEA respondents listed workplace safety and security as one of their top three concerns.

Instead, misalignment with corporate values holds the top spot in both regions, with more than a third of EMEA and APAC respondents citing it as a key risk they aim to mitigate with their employment screening program. Conversely, in North America, only one-fifth of respondents said this was one of their top risks.

> **The cost of a bad hire remains among the top risks globally, with roughly a third of respondents from each region placing it in their top three.**

However, fewer respondents this year cited it compared to last year, suggesting that while it may still be a key issue, for some businesses other risks including brand reputation, financial loss through criminal activity, and non-compliance with regulations are seen as higher priorities.



CHOOSING A SCREENING PROVIDER

Accuracy and quality of results is the most-cited priority for employers globally when choosing their employment screening provider.

With the hiring landscape continuing to evolve—an increase in fraud threats, changing regulations, and high-demand skillsets—global employers seem aware of the risks. Due to this, accuracy and quality of results is the top factor when looking for a screening partner.

What do you see as the most important factors when choosing a screening provider?

NORTH AMERICA

Accuracy/quality of results	68%
Speed/turnaround times	39%
Cost	36%
Customer service/support	24%
Ease of use	24%

EMEA

Accuracy/quality of results	50%
Cost	34%
Speed/turnaround times	34%
Candidate experience	30%
Ease of use	28%

APAC

Accuracy/quality of results	54%
Candidate experience	34%
Compliance expertise	28%
Alignment with our corporate values	28%
Speed/turnaround times	27%



Speed/turnaround times scores consistently across all regions, ranging between a quarter and nearly two-fifths of respondents citing it as a priority. Additionally, customer service/support, ease of use, and candidate experience are all recognized as influential when selecting a background screening provider.

This year, more than a quarter of APAC respondents cited a new factor, alignment with corporate values, among their top three considerations when choosing a screening provider. Compliance expertise tied with value alignment for APAC employers, while surprisingly not making the top five priorities for North America or EMEA.

These findings suggest that while secondary considerations across regions vary, accuracy of findings continues to be the driving factor behind screening provider decision making.

> **When it comes to background screening processes, companies are wanting accurate and high-quality results quickly, via a process that provides a positive candidate experience.**

HOW SCREENING IS CONDUCTED

Most North America respondents said they work with a single provider for all their screening services—but the EMEA and APAC markets are more fractured.

Which of the following describes how background screening is currently conducted by your business?

NORTH AMERICA

	2026	2025	2024
We work with a single provider but only screen in one country	38%	36%	44%
We work with a single provider for all our global screening services	34%	38%	32%
We work with different providers for different screening services	12%	12%	13%
We conduct some/all of our screening services in-house	10%	5%	12%

EMEA

	2026	2025	2024
We work with a single provider for all our global screening services	41%	49%	54%
We work with different providers in different regions/countries	27%	38%	24%
We conduct some/all of our screening services in-house	16%	5%	22%
We work with different providers for different screening services	12%	8%	15%

APAC

	2026	2025	2024
We work with a single provider for all our global screening services	36%	54%	35%
We work with different providers in different regions/countries	23%	26%	41%
We conduct some/all of our screening services in-house	19%	10%	33%
We work with different providers for different screening services	16%	15%	3%

While North America saw minimal change from the last two years' survey findings, in APAC there was a notable drop in respondents saying they work with a single provider globally, returning close to the level found in our 2024 survey. Additionally, nearly two-fifths of APAC respondents said they work with different providers in either different locations or for different screening services, which is consistent with the past two years' findings in the region.

In EMEA, while working with a single provider remains the most common approach, there was a drop in respondents who said this was the case. There was also a decrease in the number of respondents working with multiple providers to screen in different locations, which, somewhat surprisingly, correlated to the increase in respondents saying they conduct some or all of their background screening services in-house.

It is worth noting that utilizing multiple providers is not without its challenges, such as product parity, providing a consistent candidate experience, and training your team to use multiple systems.

> **Working with a single global provider, and where possible integrating them with your applicant tracking system (ATS), is often the most efficient and effective way to conduct a global screening program.**



BACKGROUND SCREENING AROUND THE WORLD

Four-fifths of global respondents said they conduct criminal record checks as part of their pre-employment screening programs.

Which of the following background screening services does your company include in its pre-employment screening program?

NORTH AMERICA

	2026	2025	2024
Criminal	87%	90%	89%
ID/Social Security Number (SSN) verification	75%	66%	62%
Sex Offenders Registry	64%	60%	59%
Employment verification	58%	59%	56%
Motor Vehicle Records (MVR)	53%	52%	43%

EMEA

	2026	2025	2024
Employment verification	80%	82%	89%
Education verification	78%	77%	82%
Criminal	76%	87%	91%
ID/Social Security Number (SSN) verification	57%	33%	43%
Credit	48%	62%	50%

APAC

	2026	2025	2024
Employment verification	84%	77%	87%
Criminal	74%	82%	81%
Education verification	72%	79%	84%
ID/Social Security Number (SSN) verification	47%	40%	55%
Professional licences/ qualification verifications	37%	33%	52%



Find out more about HireRight's global screening capabilities by downloading our Global Guide to Services.

In North America, the ranking of the most common screening services shows no change from our last two annual surveys, with criminal record checks continuing to be the most common checks conducted in the region. However, there was a notable increase in respondents using ID/Social Security Number (SSN) verification in North America—a rise also seen in the other regions.

Employment checks, education verifications, and criminal checks continue to be a mainstay for screening programs in both EMEA and APAC. However, there has been a significant increase in EMEA respondents including ID verification in their pre-employment screening programs, going from a third of respondents in 2025 to almost three-fifths this year. In APAC, we are also seeing an upward trend in ID verification, as well as in professional licenses and qualification verifications.

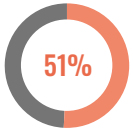
This seems to show a global mindset of employers not only using background screening as a tool to verify professional and criminal history, but to also be confident that the person hired is exactly who they claim to be. Perhaps this is in response to the rising reports and threats of candidate identity fraud and embellished professional experience driven by the growing availability and capability of AI technologies.

IDENTITY VERIFICATION

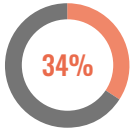
Despite ID fraud reportedly being on the rise, most organizations globally are still conducting identity verification in-house.

Does your organization conduct identity verification in-house?

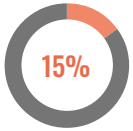
NORTH AMERICA



Yes

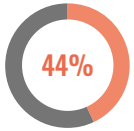


No



Don't know

EMEA



Yes

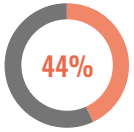


No

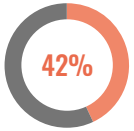


Don't know

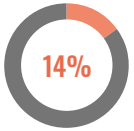
APAC



Yes



No



Don't know

With new, AI-powered and increasingly sophisticated identity fraud technology becoming more widely available, employers who are continuing to verify identity documents in person, typically at the time of hire, may be letting fraudulent candidates slip through the net. This risk could be even more pronounced if many of those same organizations are not providing proper training for the staff performing these checks, which often seems to be the case.



Between one-fifth and two-fifths of respondents from each region said they provided no specific training to their staff to ensure they knew how to detect signs of identity fraud.

For those offering training to support in-house identity verification, North America and EMEA respondents are most likely to provide annual/periodic in-house training. However, in APAC, respondents are more likely to use an external training course for their staff—which could be in direct response to the frequency that identity fraud was discovered in the region in 2025.



What training has your staff received to detect identity fraud?

NORTH AMERICA

No specific training	29%
In-house training – annual/periodic	22%
External training – informational webinar	19%

EMEA

No specific training	40%
In-house training – annual/periodic	30%
External training – informational webinar	15%

APAC

External training – certified course	28%
No specific training	21%
In-house training – one-off	17%

IDENTITY FRAUD

Businesses in APAC are the most likely to have discovered identity fraud among their candidates or employees last year.

Has your organization experienced identity fraud among your candidates or employees in 2025?

NORTH AMERICA

No	60%
Not sure	20%
Yes, pre-hire during recruitment process	13%
Yes, post-hire during rescreening or monitoring checks	5%

EMEA

No	45%
Yes, pre-hire during recruitment process	20%
Yes, post-hire during rescreening or monitoring checks	19%
Yes, post-hire after theft or fraudulent activities were detected	17%

APAC

No	36%
Yes, pre-hire during recruitment process	27%
Yes, post-hire during rescreening or monitoring checks	20%
Yes, post-hire after an employee left our organization	19%

In North America, 17% of respondents confirmed detecting fraud either during pre- or post-hire last year—and 20% were not sure if they had. However, in EMEA and APAC, the picture is rather more concerning. Almost two-fifths of EMEA respondents, and more that half of APAC respondents, said they had discovered identity fraud in 2025. In both regions, approximately half of those that experienced identity fraud found it pre-hire during the recruitment process. The others were discovered post-hire, but through a series of different means—during rescreening/monitoring checks, finding out after an employee left the company, or while investigating theft or fraudulent activity.

HireRight's identity services, such as Global ID Check or Social Security Number checks, can be used to validate candidates' identity information around the world, helping to catch fraud during both pre-hire screening and rescreening.

To learn more about identity information checks, check out HireRight's Identity Services and watch our video on Global ID Fraud.

CANDIDATE DISCREPANCIES

Most global businesses found discrepancies during their candidates' background screenings in the last 12 months.



Approximately what percentage of your candidates' background screenings have uncovered discrepancies/inconsistencies in the past 12 months?

NORTH AMERICA

More than 5%	37%
None	33%
Up to 5%	30%

EMEA

Up to 5%	48%
More than 5%	41%
None	10%

APAC

More than 5%	36%
Up to 5%	32%
None	32%

While around a third of respondents from North America and APAC reported not finding any discrepancies last year, only 10% of EMEA respondents said the same.

Further to this, more than two-fifths of EMEA respondents said they found discrepancies in at least one out of every 20 candidates—and a fifth said they uncovered inconsistencies in more than one in four candidates!

In North America and APAC, more than a third of respondents also said they found discrepancies more than 5% of the time.

But what does the data look like when we split it by company size?

CANDIDATE DISCREPANCIES – COMPANY SIZE

Enterprise-sized companies are far more likely to find candidate discrepancies, with just 3% of global enterprises reporting finding no discrepancies last year.

Around two-thirds of global enterprises reported finding at least one discrepancy per 20 candidates—and almost a fifth reported finding them in more than a quarter of their candidates.

Approximately what percentage of your candidates' background screenings have uncovered discrepancies/inconsistencies in the past 12 months?

GLOBAL SMB
(up to 500 employees)

None	51%
Up to 5%	31%
More than 5%	18%

GLOBAL MID-MARKET
(500-4,999 employees)

More than 5%	45%
Up to 5%	35%
None	20%

GLOBAL ENTERPRISE
(5,000+ employees)

More than 5%	65%
Up to 5%	31%
None	3%

These are worrying frequencies for companies of all sizes, but perhaps moreso for enterprise-sized organizations that may be hiring hundreds or even thousands of candidates per year and for whom the discrepancy rate appears to be much higher.

It should be noted that candidate discrepancies/inconsistencies can happen for legitimate reasons (e.g., a candidate misremembering a former employment period by a few months or their provided job title didn't match what HR had on record when asked to confirm their employment). However, with discrepancy rates this high, particularly for enterprise-sized businesses, it is unlikely that all these findings were innocent and that more deliberate deceptions were not detected.

So, where are you most likely to find candidate discrepancies—and how has this changed in recent years?

CANDIDATE DISCREPANCIES – WHERE THEY ARE FOUND

Employment verifications are the checks most likely to return candidate discrepancies in each region—surpassing undisclosed criminal convictions in North America this year.

In which areas do you most often find discrepancies with candidates during their background screenings?

NORTH AMERICA	Employment verifications	Criminal – previous undisclosed convictions	Education credentials	Drugs test – positive result
2026	46%	45%	31%	18%
2025	36%	41%	23%	17%
2024	38%	40%	27%	17%

EMEA	Employment verifications	Education credentials	Criminal – previous undisclosed convictions	Credit checks
2026	54%	46%	15%	15%
2025	64%	47%	22%	11%
2024	67%	36%	17%	19%

APAC	Employment verifications	Education credentials	ID information checks	Criminal – previous undisclosed convictions
2026	71%	37%	18%	16%
2025	72%	41%	11%	9%
2024	71%	57%	18%	18%





There has been little change since last year in which checks are most often uncovering candidate discrepancies across the regions—but more respondents from North America reported employment, criminal, and education discrepancies as being among their most common sources this year.

In EMEA, fewer respondents this year reported employment verifications and previously undisclosed criminal convictions being the areas where candidate discrepancies are most often found, though there was a slight increase in credit check discrepancies being the most common. Education verifications remain one of the areas where discrepancies are most often found in the region, with almost half of EMEA respondents citing it, consistent with last year's survey findings.

This year, more APAC respondents reported most often finding discrepancies during ID checks—supporting our earlier data that showed ID fraud is the most common in this region—and in undisclosed criminal convictions being discovered. But it's employment verifications that remain the area candidate discrepancies are most often found in APAC by a considerable margin, showing minimal variance in the past three years.

UTILIZING POST-HIRE SCREENING AND MONITORING

Post-hire employee screening programs continue to be under-utilized, despite the evolving insider threat landscape.

Year-over-year, similar numbers of companies in each region are utilizing some form of post-hire screening or monitoring. Employee rescreening for regulated roles and periodic employment rescreening are the top post-hire screening activities conducted by EMEA and APAC respondents. In North America, driver monitoring and employee rescreening for regulated roles remain the most common types of post-hire checks conducted.

Does your company conduct any post-hire screening or monitoring?

NORTH AMERICA

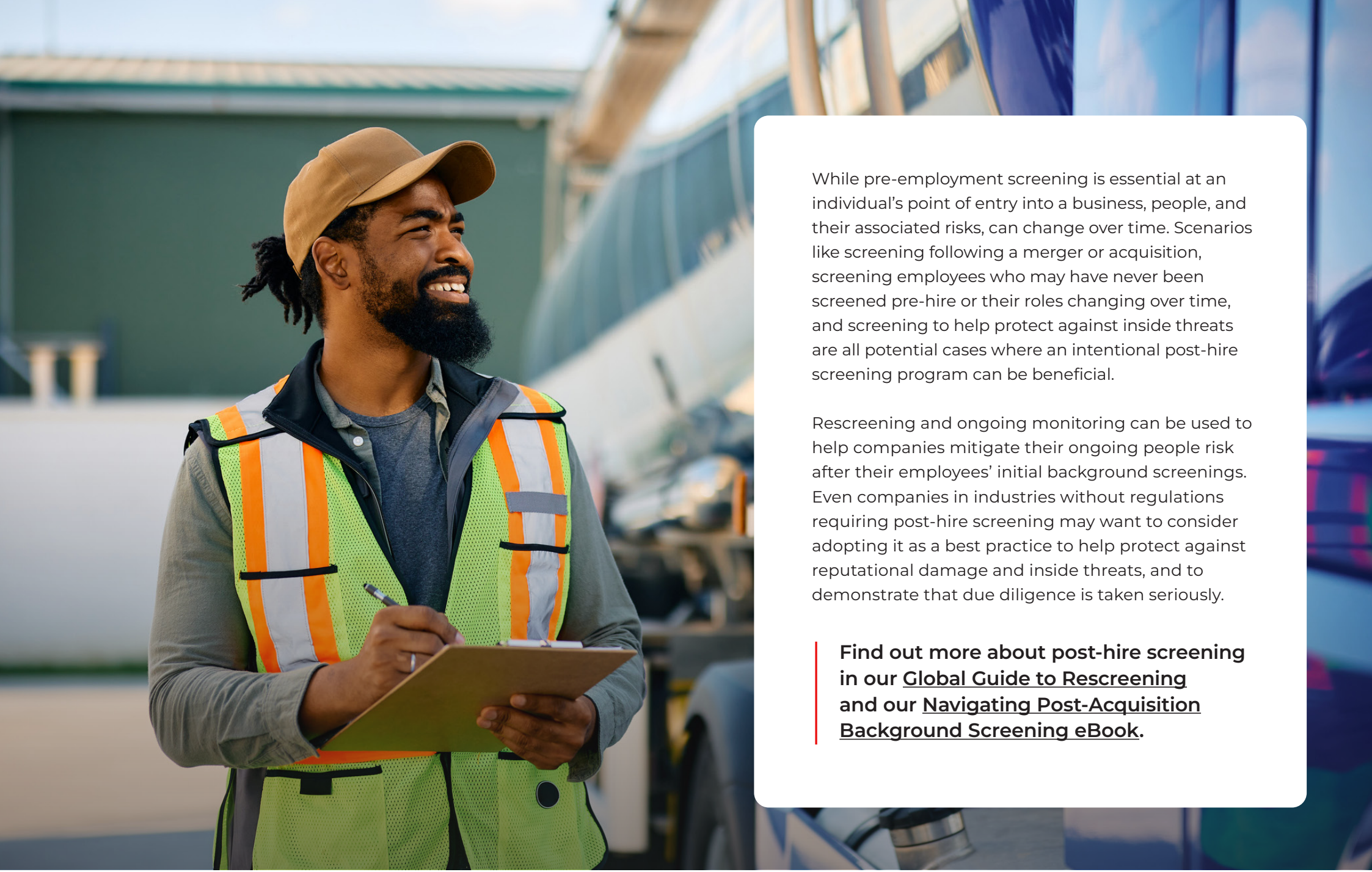
	2026	2025
No, we don't conduct any post-hire screening or monitoring	38%	38%
Driver monitoring	21%	23%
Employee rescreening – regulated	14%	17%

EMEA

	2026	2025
No, we don't conduct any post-hire screening or monitoring	34%	37%
Employee rescreening – regulated	21%	26%
Periodic employment rescreening	14%	20%

APAC

	2026	2025
No, we don't conduct any post-hire screening or monitoring	28%	35%
Employee rescreening – regulated	19%	27%
Periodic employment rescreening	17%	12%



While pre-employment screening is essential at an individual's point of entry into a business, people, and their associated risks, can change over time. Scenarios like screening following a merger or acquisition, screening employees who may have never been screened pre-hire or their roles changing over time, and screening to help protect against inside threats are all potential cases where an intentional post-hire screening program can be beneficial.

Rescreening and ongoing monitoring can be used to help companies mitigate their ongoing people risk after their employees' initial background screenings. Even companies in industries without regulations requiring post-hire screening may want to consider adopting it as a best practice to help protect against reputational damage and inside threats, and to demonstrate that due diligence is taken seriously.

> **Find out more about post-hire screening in our Global Guide to Rescreening and our Navigating Post-Acquisition Background Screening eBook.**

SCREENING YOUR CONTINGENT WORKFORCE

Around the world, most respondents whose company has a contingent workforce said that they undergo background checks.

However, how these workers (including contractors, freelancers, consultants, and vendors/suppliers) have their backgrounds vetted varies from region to region.

Are contingent workers background screened before working with your company?

NORTH AMERICA

	2026	2025
Yes, via the vendor's chosen background screening provider	55%	61%
Yes, via my organization's background screening provider	23%	21%
Don't know (responsibility unclear or handled externally)	12%	21%

EMEA

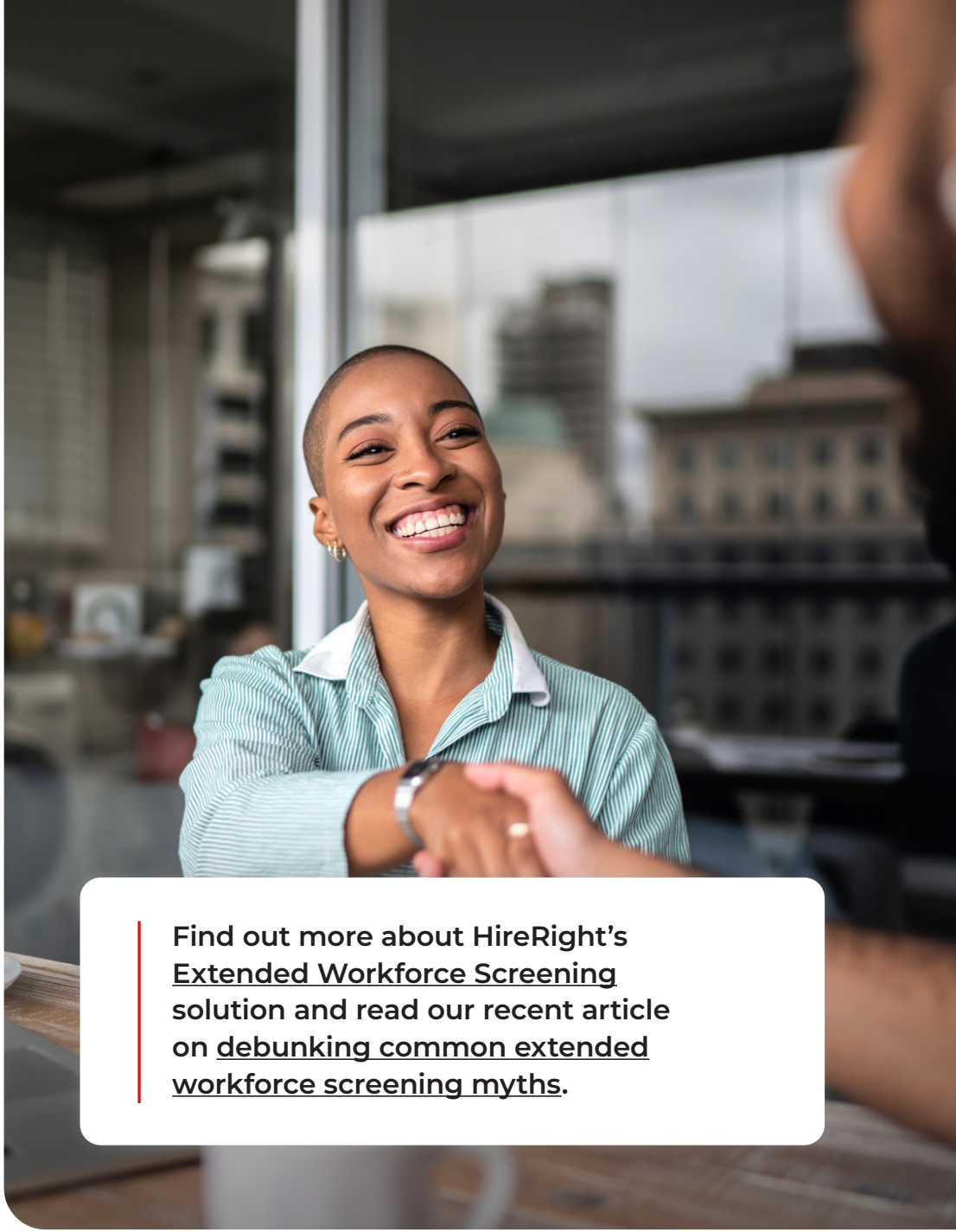
	2026	2025
Yes, via my organization's background screening provider	28%	36%
Yes, in-house (directly by my organization)	27%	–
Yes, via the vendor's chosen background screening provider	22%	32%

APAC

	2026	2025
Yes, via my organization's background screening provider	34%	38%
Yes, in-house (directly by my organization)	26%	–
Yes, via the vendor's chosen background screening provider	24%	29%

In North America, most respondents said their contingent workforce is screened by the vendor's chosen screening provider, with just under a quarter saying they are screened by their organization's chosen background screening provider. However, in EMEA and APAC there is a more even split between these two approaches to contingent workforce screening—though in both regions screening via the company's own provider was the most common.

When your contingent workforce is screened by a different provider than your own, it can be hard to calibrate the checks to ensure that everybody is screened to a similar standard. From methodology to sources, there are many factors that can vary between screening providers, so it can be beneficial to unify your approach with a centralized extended workforce screening program managed through your existing screening provider.



Find out more about HireRight's Extended Workforce Screening solution and read our recent article on debunking common extended workforce screening myths.


TALENT
ACQUISITION
AND WORKFORCE
MANAGEMENT

KEY GLOBAL TAKEAWAYS

1

Finding qualified job candidates is the most common talent acquisition challenge expected this year.

More than a quarter of respondents from each region also cited meeting candidates' pay/benefits expectations as a likely challenge in 2026.

The top challenges in 2025 were candidates dropping out if remote working wasn't offered, positions sitting vacant for up for six months, and increased hiring costs.

2

AI is already being used to support various HR functions—but not as often as you might think.

While businesses in EMEA and APAC are the most likely to be using AI to support a variety of HR functions, more than half of North America respondents say they aren't using AI in HR.

Employee training, resume filtering, and HR administration are among the most commonly cited uses of AI within HR in each region.

3

Attitudes toward candidates using AI in the recruitment process vary by region.

In North America, nearly three-quarters of respondents are neutral or unsure about candidates using AI to support their job applications.

However, almost half of APAC respondents and a third of EMEA respondents view it positively.

4

Most companies expect their workforce size to stay the same or grow by the end of the year.

Around a quarter of APAC respondents expect to hire more workers in 2026 because of market/economic uncertainty—and more than two-fifths expect to increase hiring due to AI.

Most respondents from North America and EMEA believe that neither market uncertainty nor AI will specifically result in more hiring for their organizations.

5

Globally, companies are more likely to be increasing office-based working than hybrid working in 2027.

Around half of respondents in North America and EMEA expect no significant change in their employees' ways of working by the start of next year.

In APAC, a third of respondents expect an increase in office-based working this year.

RECRUITMENT IN 2025

Despite what may have seemed like a year of uncertainty and change, for most global respondents, recruitment carried on roughly as expected in 2025.

For the third year in a row, the majority of respondents from North America, EMEA, and APAC stated it was an unassuming or expected year for recruitment. When looking at last year's survey data, which asked about recruitment in 2024, responses reflect consistent recruitment efforts. For the most part, companies seem to be able to accurately gauge recruitment initiatives going into the next year.



Which of the following best describes your company's recruitment last year?

NORTH AMERICA

	2026	2025	2024
Recruitment carried on roughly as expected	63%	58%	54%
We hired more workers to meet increased demands on the business	24%	29%	31%

EMEA

	2026	2025	2024
Recruitment carried on roughly as expected	62%	63%	53%
We hired more workers to meet increased demands on the business	22%	16%	23%

APAC

	2026	2025	2024
Recruitment carried on roughly as expected	51%	66%	46%
We hired more workers to meet increased demands on the business	37%	21%	42%

In EMEA and APAC, the decrease in respondents citing recruitment carried on roughly as expected correlates to increases in the number of responses saying they hired more workers. This tells us that if there were any changes in recruitment volumes in 2025, it was far more likely that companies around the world were hiring more than anticipated to meet growing business demands—challenging the fearful narrative of AI replacing workforces and struggling economies slowing hiring.

RECRUITMENT CHALLENGES IN 2025

While candidates dropping out of the recruitment process if remote working wasn't offered was the most common challenge for North America employers, the time and financial losses due to unfilled positions and hire expenditures were more pressing matters in EMEA and APAC.

Last year's survey found that respondents from all three regions cited candidates dropping out of the recruitment process if remote working was not an option as the most common recruitment challenge, which made sense given the growing push of return-to-office programs.

But as many companies are not, or no longer, embracing remote working, some other challenges including positions going unfilled, finding candidates within a commutable distance, and even higher churn rates are on the rise.

Did your business experience any of the following recruitment challenges last year?

NORTH AMERICA

	2026	2025	2024
Candidates dropping out if remote working wasn't offered	28%	30%	33%
Positions remaining unfilled for three to six months	24%	28%	36%
Finding candidates within a commutable distance of your office(s)	24%	27%	–
Higher-than-normal time to hire	23%	19%	21%

EMEA

	2026	2025	2025
Positions remaining unfilled for three to six months	28%	11%	23%
Reductions in your recruitment budget	26%	26%	17%
Higher-than-expected resignation rate/churn	25%	11%	20%
Understaffing in your HR/recruitment team	24%	32%	27%

APAC

	2026	2025	2025
Higher-than-normal cost to hire expenditures	30%	21%	9%
Finding candidates within a commutable distance of your office(s)	29%	16%	–
Higher-than-normal time to hire	27%	24%	17%
Candidates dropping out if remote working wasn't offered	27%	26%	17%



For our North America respondents, the top four challenges identified relate to finding candidates willing and able to commute into an office and issues filling roles resulting in having higher-than-normal time to hire rates.

In EMEA, respondents are the most likely to have reported long-term issues filling roles and reductions in their recruitment budget, which again could be related. They are also the most likely to have reported issues with increased resignation rates/staff turnover, with a quarter of respondents from the region citing this as a major recruitment challenge.

In APAC, losing candidates after remote working was not offered and higher-than-normal hiring times remained amongst their top recruitment challenges last year. Additionally, almost twice as many respondents reported issues finding local candidates able to commute to work. However, the most common challenge in the region was higher-than-normal cost to hire expenditures—including both internal and external costs such as recruiter salaries and ATS investments plus agency and sign-on bonuses—which almost a third of APAC respondents experienced in 2025.

WHO ARE YOU HIRING IN 2026?

Fewer companies around the world are expecting to hire remote employees than in previous years.

The trend of return-to-office initiatives does not seem to be slowing for many organizations globally. In North America and APAC, respondents expect to hire more office-based employees than hybrid or fully remote ones—though the percentages of each type of worker being hired across all regions have dropped since 2025.

However, the popularity—and in EMEA's case, preference—of hybrid hiring remains, showing that many businesses are not requiring all their new hires to be fully office-based.

Does your company expect to hire any of the following this year?

NORTH AMERICA

	2026	2025
Office-based employees	65%	73%
Hybrid employees	41%	51%
Temporary contract workers	37%	47%
Remote employees	36%	50%

EMEA

	2026	2025
Hybrid employees	63%	84%
Office-based employees	44%	64%
Temporary contract workers	41%	52%
Remote employees	34%	50%

APAC

	2026	2025
Office-based employees	48%	71%
Hybrid employees	37%	64%
Temporary contract workers	22%	56%
Remote employees	21%	49%

In EMEA, we have seen a significant decrease in employers hiring office-based employees, which could be somewhat due to their reported challenges of positions being vacant for long periods of time and their higher turnover rates in 2025. However, even with some of the top recruitment challenges of the last year being around filling office-based positions, the push for both hybrid and office-based workforces continues.

TALENT ACQUISITION CHALLENGES IN 2026

Finding qualified job candidates is still to be the most common global talent acquisition challenge.

Once again, as it has been for the past few years, the biggest talent acquisition challenge expected this year is finding candidates who are suitably qualified for their job vacancies. This goes hand-in-hand with the anticipated increase in competition for talent, which respondents from each region ranked among their top five expected challenges this year.

What do you see as being the most significant talent acquisition challenges this year?

NORTH AMERICA

	2026	2025
Finding qualified job candidates	54%	57%
Meeting candidates' pay/benefits expectations	28%	28%
Candidate ghosting	27%	41%
Making recruitment processes more efficient (reducing time to hire)	21%	22%
Increased competition for talent	20%	18%

EMEA

	2026	2025
Finding qualified job candidates	34%	47%
Meeting candidates' pay/benefits expectations	28%	32%
Dealing with high volumes of applicants	26%	5%
Making recruitment processes more efficient (reducing time to hire)	24%	5%
Increased competition for talent	23%	26%

APAC

	2026	2025
Finding qualified job candidates	31%	43%
Meeting candidates' pay/benefits expectations	28%	24%
Increased competition for talent	27%	22%
Finding candidates willing to work full-time or hybrid in the office	27%	–
Making recruitment processes more efficient (reducing time to hire)	26%	19%



Meeting candidates' pay/benefits expectations came in as the second-most common talent acquisition challenges expected for the year ahead in all three regions—with 28% of respondents from each region citing it as a likely challenge this year.

Conversely, we've seen a decrease in candidate ghosting being a top concern in 2026. Last year, this ranked among the top three expected challenges in each region, but in 2026 it didn't even make the top five in EMEA and APAC—and while it ranked third in North America, it dropped 14 percentage points.

While there may have been many reasons employers experienced candidate ghosting in the past, one of them is likely a protracted time to hire. Making recruitment processes more efficient (reducing time to hire) is a challenge that grew for respondents globally this year. In fact, almost five times as many EMEA respondents cited it as a significant challenge for 2026 than did last year. But how are companies going to combat these challenges to help them meet their hiring goals this coming year?

APPLICANT TRACKING SYSTEM (ATS) INTEGRATIONS



Around the world, most respondents that use an ATS and a background screening provider have the two integrated.

Like last year's findings, the majority of respondents from North America and APAC said their screening provider is integrated with their ATS. In EMEA, more than two-fifths of respondents said the same.

Which of the following best describes the integration status of your background screening provider and your ATS?

NORTH AMERICA

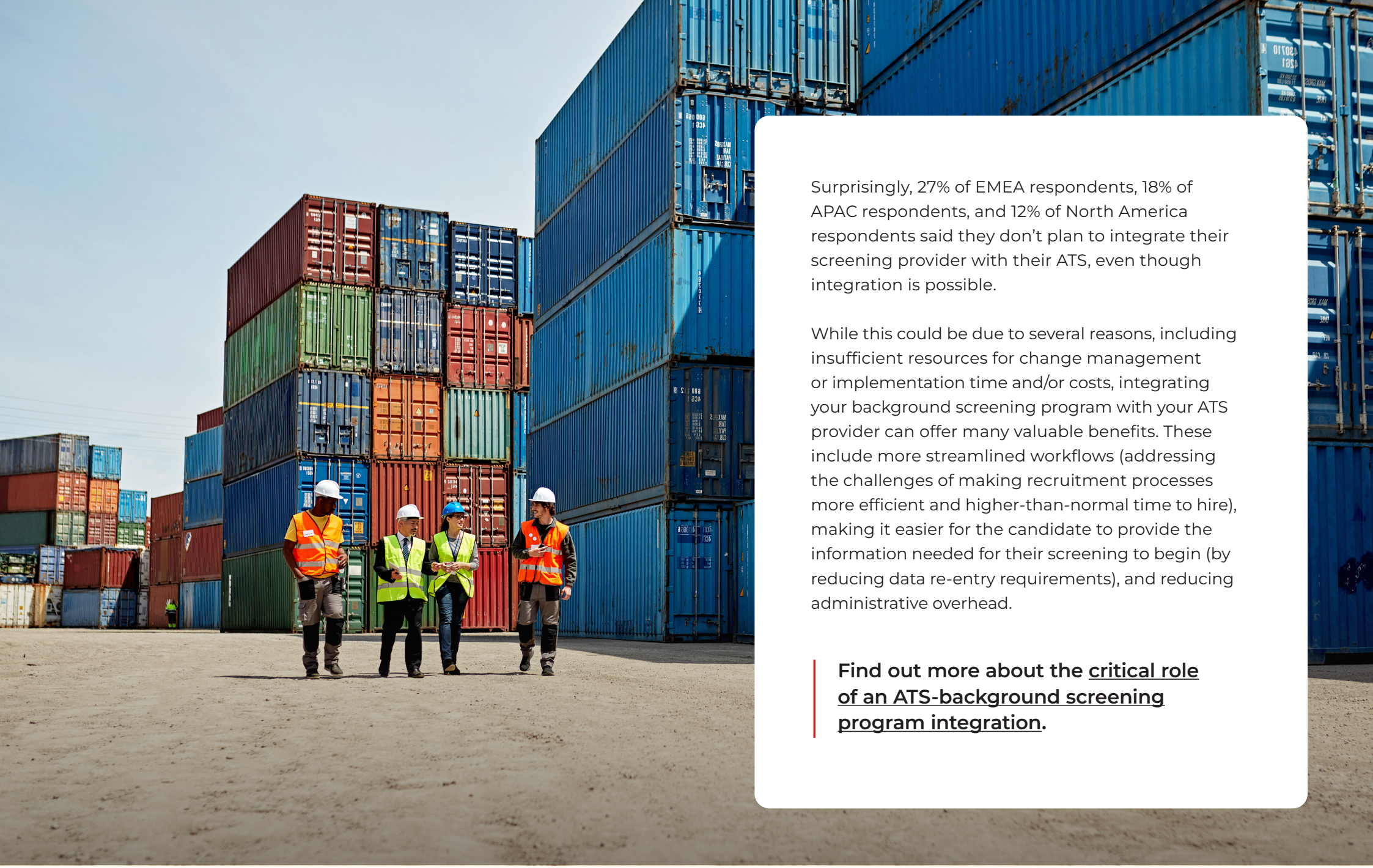
	2026	2025
My screening provider is integrated with my ATS	69%	68%
My screening provider does not integrate with my ATS	13%	11%
I have no plans to integrate my ATS with my screening provider	12%	16%

EMEA

	2026	2025
My screening provider is integrated with my ATS	43%	48%
I have no plans to integrate my ATS with my screening provider	27%	24%
My screening provider does not integrate with my ATS	25%	24%

APAC

	2026	2025
My screening provider is integrated with my ATS	54%	67%
I have no plans to integrate my ATS with my screening provider	18%	6%
My screening provider does not integrate with my ATS	16%	15%



Surprisingly, 27% of EMEA respondents, 18% of APAC respondents, and 12% of North America respondents said they don't plan to integrate their screening provider with their ATS, even though integration is possible.

While this could be due to several reasons, including insufficient resources for change management or implementation time and/or costs, integrating your background screening program with your ATS provider can offer many valuable benefits. These include more streamlined workflows (addressing the challenges of making recruitment processes more efficient and higher-than-normal time to hire), making it easier for the candidate to provide the information needed for their screening to begin (by reducing data re-entry requirements), and reducing administrative overhead.

> **Find out more about the critical role of an ATS-background screening program integration.**

A lack of functionality/workflow key to business requirements and cost savings continue to be the top reasons businesses would consider switching ATS providers.

Around two-fifths of respondents from each region said cost savings would be a key factor in switching ATS providers. Additionally, while lack of functionality/workflow key to business requirements remains a top motivator for switching providers in North America, it saw a notable drop in responses from EMEA and APAC compared with last year's survey findings.

If you were to switch ATS providers, what would be your key motivations for switching?

NORTH AMERICA

	2026	2025
Lack of functionality/ workflow key to business requirements	40%	41%
Cost savings	40%	38%
Support challenges	25%	22%

EMEA

	2026	2025
Cost savings	41%	62%
Lack of functionality/ workflow key to business requirements	37%	62%
Support challenges	20%	38%

APAC

	2026	2025
Cost savings	40%	45%
Support challenges	28%	24%
Lack of functionality/ workflow key to business requirements	23%	45%

Facing support challenges with an ATS provider also continues to be a key motivator for switching providers across the regions. While the response percentages vary, this data shows us that these three factors are the top motivators for businesses to switch ATS providers, no matter where they're located.

However, only around a tenth of respondents globally said that they are currently evaluating ATS providers or plan to switch their ATS provider by the end of 2026. This suggests that most employers are generally happy with their current ATS provider and are confident in their ability to help them manage their hiring throughout this year.

To learn out more about HireRight's ATS integrations, visit our website's Partners page.

USING AI TOOLS TO SUPPORT HR FUNCTIONS

While businesses in EMEA and APAC are most likely to use AI to support a variety of HR functions, more than half of North America respondents say they aren't using it at all.

North America HR teams are least likely to be currently using AI, either directly or through third-party tools. Conversely, APAC is the region where AI seems to be the most widely accepted, being used across several important HR and business functions.

Is your company currently using AI, either directly or through third-party tools, to support any of the following HR functions?

NORTH AMERICA

No	52%
Talent acquisition – candidate selection/resume filtering	17%
Training and development	16%
HR administration and policy management	14%

EMEA

Training and development	31%
No	28%
HR administration and policy management	27%
Workforce planning and analytics	25%

APAC

Training and development	43%
Talent acquisition – candidate selection/resume filtering	35%
HR administration and policy management	35%
Workforce planning and analytics	33%



Where AI is being adopted, however, it seems to be to support similar HR functions across the three regions. Talent acquisition (candidate selection/resume filtering), training and development, and HR administration and policy management are all areas where respondents around the world are using AI to help drive efficiency and streamline workflows. A quarter of EMEA respondents and a third of APAC respondents are also using AI to assist with workforce planning and analytics.

CANDIDATES USING AI IN THE RECRUITMENT PROCESS

Most global respondents are somewhat confident in their ability to identify when candidates have used AI tools on their job applications/resumes.

While the top response in each region is being only “somewhat confident” in detecting AI usage by job applicants, we’ve seen a major uptick in those who claim to be very confident in EMEA and APAC. Could these spikes in confidence be due to respondents seeing it more often and, therefore, learning how to spot it?

How confident are you that you could identify when candidates have used generative AI tools to assist with their job applications or resumes?

NORTH AMERICA

	2026	2025
Somewhat confident	59%	59%
Little to no confidence	30%	34%
Very confident	11%	7%

EMEA

	2026	2025
Somewhat confident	51%	68%
Little to no confidence	28%	29%
Very confident	22%	4%

APAC

	2026	2025
Somewhat confident	46%	68%
Very confident	41%	10%
Little to no confidence	12%	22%



At the other end of the confidence scale, in North America and EMEA, many respondents still seem to be less assured. Just under a third of respondents from these regions said that they have “little to no confidence” in their ability to identify when generative AI (GenAI) tools have been used by their candidates. In contrast, just 12% of APAC respondents felt this way—a drop by almost half from the 2025 survey responses from the region.

> **But perhaps the bigger question on this matter—regardless of how confident they feel about detecting AI usage by candidates in the recruitment process—is “how do these companies feel about it?”**

Most respondents have either a neutral or positive view of candidates using generative AI tools to assist with their job applications or resumes.

While the overall sentiment from North America employers remains roughly the same as in 2025, in APAC and EMEA, far more respondents now believe that candidates using AI is a positive. In both regions, the percentage of those claiming a neutral feeling around AI usage decreased significantly from last year, with most adopting positive attitudes—though there were also some small increases in negative sentiment too.

How does your company feel about candidates using generative AI tools to assist with their job applications or resumes?

NORTH AMERICA

	2026	2025
Neutral/not sure	70%	75%
Negative	22%	13%
Positive	8%	12%

EMEA

	2026	2025
Neutral/not sure	49%	72%
Positive	32%	14%
Negative	19%	14%

APAC

	2026	2025
Positive	49%	30%
Neutral/not sure	41%	66%
Negative	10%	4%

Nearly three-quarters of respondents from North America are either unsure or have a neutral view on candidates using AI tools to assist with their job applications or resumes. For those with a preference, respondents were far more likely to view it negatively, with just 8% saying they saw it favorably.

In EMEA, around half of respondents were also unsure or neutral on the matter—however, almost a third saw it as a good thing—up from 14% last year—compared with around a fifth who preferred candidates didn't use GenAI tools in the recruitment process.

Given the higher-than-average adoption rates of AI within HR from our APAC respondents, and their generally high levels of confidence in identifying when candidates are using AI, it is not surprising that this region had the most positive outlook. Around half of APAC respondents said they see candidates using AI as a positive thing—an increase of 19 percentage points on last year's findings and a stark contrast to the North America respondents.

> **As AI tools and technologies become more prevalent, more employers will need to choose their stance on if their company will, or won't, accept candidates using generative AI to support their applications. It will be interesting to see if or how this has changed in next year's survey.**

Having a strong background screening program can help to confirm the accuracy of a candidate's information provided on their resume or application, especially when opening the door to candidates using generative AI tools. While background checks may not be able to explicitly determine if a candidate used AI to exaggerate claims, it could detect if the information provided is not accurate, especially if the areas embellished can be verified at source.



HOW IS WORKFORCE SIZE EXPECTED TO CHANGE IN 2026?

The majority of global respondents said they expect their company's workforce size to stay the same or increase by the end of the year—as they did in 2025.

In EMEA and North America, more than two-fifths of respondents expect their workforce size to stay about the same size, making it the most common response in both regions again.

But for the third year running, respondents from APAC are the most optimistic about workforce growth in the coming year. Notably fewer employers from North America and EMEA are expecting to increase their workforce size in 2026.



How do you expect your workforce size to change by the end of the year?

NORTH AMERICA

	2026	2025	2024
It will stay the same	43%	43%	48%
It will likely increase	31%	36%	40%
I don't know/too early to say	23%	19%	7%
Expect it to decrease	4%	3%	4%

EMEA

	2026	2025	2024
It will stay the same	43%	38%	45%
It will likely increase	26%	24%	40%
I don't know/too early to say	23%	34%	11%
Expect it to decrease	9%	3%	5%

APAC

	2026	2025	2024
It will likely increase	44%	37%	50%
It will stay the same	29%	32%	41%
I don't know/too early to say	22%	26%	7%
Expect it to decrease	5%	5%	2%



So, while respondents from each region expect to face several recruitment challenges this year, such as finding candidates for office-based roles, employee turnover, and increased competition for suitably qualified talent, the general outlook on their workforce size by the end of 2026 is either neutral or positive.

> **Hiring around the world isn't slowing—but will economic uncertainty or the rise of AI temper respondents' predictions?**

THE IMPACT OF MARKET/ECONOMIC UNCERTAINTY

For a second year in a row, just under half of global respondents said they were either unsure or needed more time to say how market or economic uncertainty would impact their company's hiring this year.

Nearly a third of EMEA respondents and almost a quarter of North America respondents predict it having a negative impact on hiring, making it their second-most common response in these regions.

However, APAC respondents generally had a more optimistic view, with roughly a quarter expecting this market uncertainty to have a positive impact on their hiring—compared with just 10% of North America respondents and 9% of EMEA respondents who said the same. This continues to reflect the positive outlook of APAC respondents around hiring in 2026, even in times of change and market unpredictability.

What impact do you expect market/economic uncertainty—such as inflation, geopolitical tensions, or regulatory changes—will have an impact on your hiring activity in 2026?

NORTH AMERICA

	2026	2025
I don't know/too early to say	49%	53%
It will have a negative impact on my hiring activity	23%	17%
It will have no impact on my hiring activity	19%	16%
It will have a positive impact on my hiring activity	10%	14%

EMEA

	2026	2025
I don't know/too early to say	42%	47%
It will have a negative impact on my hiring activity	29%	29%
It will have no impact on my hiring activity	20%	19%
It will have a positive impact on my hiring activity	9%	5%

APAC

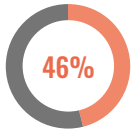
	2026	2025
I don't know/too early to say	42%	47%
It will have a positive impact on my hiring activity	23%	21%
It will have no impact on my hiring activity	18%	8%
It will have a negative impact on my hiring activity	17%	22%

IMPACT OF AI ON HIRING VOLUMES

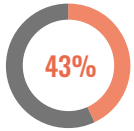
Most global respondents either expect AI to have no/minimal impact on hiring or say they will be increasing hiring due to AI requiring workers with new skills in 2026.

What impact do you expect AI to have on your hiring volumes in 2026?

NORTH AMERICA



It will have no/minimal impact

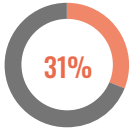


I don't know/too early to say

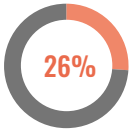


We will increase our hiring due to AI requiring workers with new skills

EMEA



It will have no/minimal impact

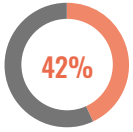


We will increase our hiring due to AI requiring workers with new skills

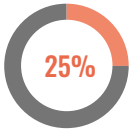


We will decrease hiring due to AI replacing certain functions

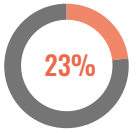
APAC



We will increase our hiring due to AI requiring workers with new skills



It will have no/minimal impact



We will decrease hiring due to AI replacing certain functions

Just under half of North America respondents expect that AI will have no/minimal impact in hiring for 2026—and an additional two-fifths admitted they don't yet know what impact it will have for them. Only 8% expect their company will need to increase hiring in 2026 to fill new roles created by the company's use of AI.



In EMEA, the response was evenly split between those expecting to hire more due to AI and those expecting to reduce hiring for the same reason, at around a quarter each. However, as with in North America, the top response in the region was that they expected little to no impact on their hiring at the time of asking.

In APAC—as we've seen elsewhere in the survey—respondents' attitudes toward AI are the most positive of the three regions. More than two-fifths expect their company will create and hire for additional roles due to them utilizing AI this year.

> **This shows that there is an identified need of workers with skills using AI tools to help businesses keep pace with advancing technology.**

However, in contrast, almost a quarter of APAC respondents expect the opposite, and foresee less hiring needed because of AI. This suggests that while some businesses are looking to drive efficiencies and upskill their existing workforce, others may simply be looking to replace low-skilled, automatable positions with technology to lower their operating costs.

If we continue to see more businesses embracing AI usage companywide—not just within HR as we have already seen in our survey—how might this impact hiring volumes in 2027 and beyond?

OFFICE-BASED, HYBRID, OR REMOTE?



More respondents globally said their businesses are continuing to transition to majority working in office.

This upwards trend of office-based working is also reflected in the lost percentage points in hybrid working, across all regions.

Which of the following most accurately describes the current working location of your workforce within your primary region?

NORTH AMERICA

	2026	2025
Most of our workforce is office-based/works on-site	36%	34%
Our entire workforce is office-based/works on-site	23%	21%
Roughly even split of hybrid/ remote and office-based	15%	19%

EMEA

	2026	2025
Most of our workforce is hybrid	30%	52%
Most of our workforce is office-based/works on-site	20%	6%
Roughly even split of hybrid/ remote and office-based	19%	23%

APAC

	2026	2025
Our entire workforce is office-based/works on-site	32%	11%
Most of our workforce is hybrid	21%	25%
Most of our workforce is office-based/works on-site	17%	16%

Like last year, almost three-quarters of respondents from North America said at least half their company's workforce is currently office-based/works on-site.

In EMEA, responses saying that most of their workforce is onsite/ office-based more than tripled compared with last year. Even though a majority hybrid workforce remains the top response in the region, that answer dropped significantly since last year, contributing to the increase in respondents citing office-based working.

APAC respondents' most common description of their workforce was entirely onsite, with a third of respondents specifying it as so. This is almost triple last year's finding, making it even more popular than hybrid working in the region. This is expected, with minimal change in responses citing a roughly even split of remote and office-based working.

OFFICE-BASED, HYBRID, OR REMOTE? – COMPANY SIZE

There are many factors that can impact where a company's workforce is located—and company size is one of them.

Global responses from small to medium-sized businesses (SMBs) show that two-thirds of those workforces are either mostly or entirely office-based.

But while the percentages of respondents saying most of their workforce is office-based/works on-site are similar, the adoption of hybrid working is far more widespread among global enterprises.

So, despite there seeming to be a clear correlation between workforce size and likelihood of that company mostly working on-site/being office-based, perhaps hybrid rates for mid-market and enterprise-sized organizations are still rising due to workforces being spread across several different countries—or several locations across vast territories such as the U.S.

Which of the following most accurately describes the current working location of your workforce within your primary region?

GLOBAL SMB
(<500 employees)

Our entire workforce is office-based/works on-site	34%	Most of our workforce is office-based/works on-site	32%	Most of our workforce is hybrid	9%

GLOBAL MID-MARKET
(500-4,999 employees)

Most of our workforce is office-based/works on-site	31%	Most of our workforce is hybrid	20%	Our entire workforce is office-based/works on-site	19%

GLOBAL ENTERPRISE
(5,000+ employees)

Most of our workforce is office-based/works on-site	33%	Most of our workforce is hybrid	25%	Roughly even split of hybrid/remote and office-based	23%

THE EVOLUTION OF WORKPLACE LOCATION

Around the world, companies are more likely to be increasing office-based working than hybrid working in 2027.

In North America and EMEA, most respondents reported no significant change expected in the workplace location of their staff in 2027—and for those expecting a change, there was a leaning more towards in-person working rather than hybrid working.

However, in APAC, most respondents are expecting to see changes over the coming months—one way or another. A third of respondents expect to see an increase in office-based working by the start of next year, and a fifth expect there to be an increase in hybrid working. This could either mean that more businesses are seeking to meet a middle ground between hybrid and fully office-based working, those already adopting hybrid or office-based working are doubling down on this, or a mix of the two.



How do you expect this will change by January 2027?

NORTH AMERICA

No significant change	57%
Increase in office-based working	13%
Increase in hybrid working	6%
Not sure	22%

EMEA

No significant change	47%
Increase in office-based working	12%
Increase in hybrid working	7%
Not sure	26%

APAC

Increase in office-based working	32%
No significant change	22%
Increase in hybrid working	20%
Not sure	16%



Between a sixth and a quarter of respondents from each region were unsure how their workforce makeup may change by the start of 2027—perhaps waiting to be led by what they're seeing in the market or what their competitors are doing.

> **With many large organizations reverting to in-person working, either full-time or hybrid, especially after the spiked popularity of the remote-first movement, it will be interesting to see how this impacts retention and recruitment.**

This should be considered given our survey findings show candidates dropping out when remote work isn't offered or finding candidates within a certain distance to the office were among the biggest recruitment challenges expected this year.

CONCLUSION

Against a global backdrop of rising identity fraud, market turbulence, and increased AI use in the recruitment process, this year's report provides a timely look at how background screening, talent acquisition, and workforce management are evolving in a time of great uncertainty.

Accuracy and quality of results is the most common priority when choosing a background screening provider. While other factors such as speed and cost remain important considerations, our findings suggest that many businesses are not willing to compromise their screening programs for short-term potential savings, showing an understanding of the true cost of a bad hire—both financially and reputationally.

While criminal record checks and employment verifications are still the most widely used background checks globally, this year we saw a notable increase in respondents from each region saying their company conducts identity checks. However, this is not surprising given the advances in increasingly sophisticated AI-powered identity fraud in the past year and the high volume of global respondents saying they had uncovered identity fraud last year.

Regarding recruitment, our survey found that while employers faced various hiring challenges last year, the majority also said that hiring carried on roughly as expected in 2025. This year, finding qualified job candidates and meeting their pay and benefits expectations are expected to be the most prominent talent acquisition challenges in each region. Yet despite previous difficulties in finding candidates willing to work in the office and candidates dropping out of the recruitment process if remote working isn't offered, more businesses are expecting to be hiring for hybrid and office-based roles in 2026, with declining numbers recruiting for remote positions this year.

Finally, AI tools are evolving rapidly, with adoption growing among both HR teams and candidates. However, our survey reveals that attitudes toward AI in recruitment are far from uniform. North American respondents tend to hold more conservative views, while those in EMEA show a growing openness to AI tools supporting core HR functions. But it's the APAC businesses that stand out as the most enthusiastic adopters, both in terms of their own uses of AI and their attitudes toward candidates' usage in the recruitment process. Given AI's potential to reshape every stage of the talent lifecycle—from sourcing and screening talent to onboarding and workforce management—it will be interesting to see whether these regional divides will widen or narrow by 2027.

> **Thank you for reading this year's report. We hope to have your participation in our next annual survey to help us better understand how the changing talent landscape is impacting businesses worldwide.**

METHODOLOGY/ABOUT US

RESPONSE

HireRight's 2026 Global Benchmark Report explores trends and attitudes from people professionals around the world. It is based on our online global survey, with participants anonymously sharing their experience and knowledge of their company's employment screening and recruitment practices with us. The survey was available between Feb. 18 and March 6, 2026, receiving a total of 1,916 complete and partial responses globally.

FORMAT

Survey questions included multiple choice, multiple selections, and open text. Figures may not add up to 100% due to rounding or multiple-selection questions.

PREVIOUS REPORTS

For a deeper dive into HireRight's past survey findings, you can download our 2025 report below:
2025 Global Benchmark Report

ABOUT HIRERIGHT

HireRight is a leading global provider of technology-driven workforce risk management and compliance solutions. We provide comprehensive background screening, verification, identification, monitoring, and drug and health screening services for customers around the globe. We offer our services via a unified global software and data platform that tightly integrates into our customers' human capital management systems enabling highly effective and efficient workflows for workforce hiring, onboarding, and monitoring. In 2025, we screened more than 85 million job applicants, employees, and contractors for our customers and processed more than 93 million screens. For more information, visit www.HireRight.com.

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2026 GLOBAL BENCHMARK REPORT

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