

A woman with blonde hair, wearing a white blazer and dark jeans, is seated in a wheelchair. She is holding a tablet and looking towards a man standing on the right. The man is wearing a light blue plaid shirt and dark jeans. They are in a modern office environment with desks, computers, and a ladder in the background. A woman with curly hair, wearing a pink shirt, is seated in the foreground, facing away from the camera.

## 2020 Recruiting Trends Report

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# Introduction

What does the future hold for recruitment? If 2020 has taught us anything so far, it's that none of us can predict that—or much of anything, for that matter—for sure. COVID-19 radically transformed the macroeconomic landscape and the talent market within a matter of weeks. For many talent acquisition teams, the pandemic has meant reduced reqs and headcounts, redefined team functions, and downshifts in processes and priorities; for others, it's meant doubling-down on hiring amidst an influx of inbound applications. The subsequent police killings of yet more Black men and women have led to worldwide protests on a scale we haven't seen in decades—which means, on top of the economic crisis, companies are having to do some serious reflecting on what diversity, equity, and inclusion look like in their workforces. And it will ultimately be up to recruitment to impact the “D” of their orgs' DEI initiatives.

Gem's 2020 Recruiting Trends Report is based on a survey of nearly 500 talent acquisition professionals that ran for six weeks starting on April 6, 2020—three weeks after shelter-in-place was announced in the Bay Area. We'd been planning questions for a very different trends report, many of which we preserved because that data is essential for companies whose hiring loads are unimpacted, or have increased. (It'll also be important for recruiters once their hiring freezes are lifted and those reqs get resurfaced.) But we also included questions about the challenges teams are facing in light of the pandemic. We hope this gives us the most accurate picture we can get of the recruiting landscape right now.

We don't know what talent acquisition is going to look like as the rest of 2020 unfolds. But we can now observe some industry trends, including:

- Where prospect outreach is happening, and what the most valuable channels are for candidate engagement
- How teams are using automation and recruitment technology, and what KPIs they're tracking

- How talent acquisition teams are thinking about diversity initiatives, and what their biggest challenges are to diversifying the pipeline
- What's keeping teams from hitting their hiring goals
- Talent leaders' highest-priority initiatives and where they plan to use their budget for the remainder of 2020
- The trends that sourcers, recruiters, and TA leaders anticipate for the remainder of 2020
- Talent leaders' biggest struggles in the face of COVID

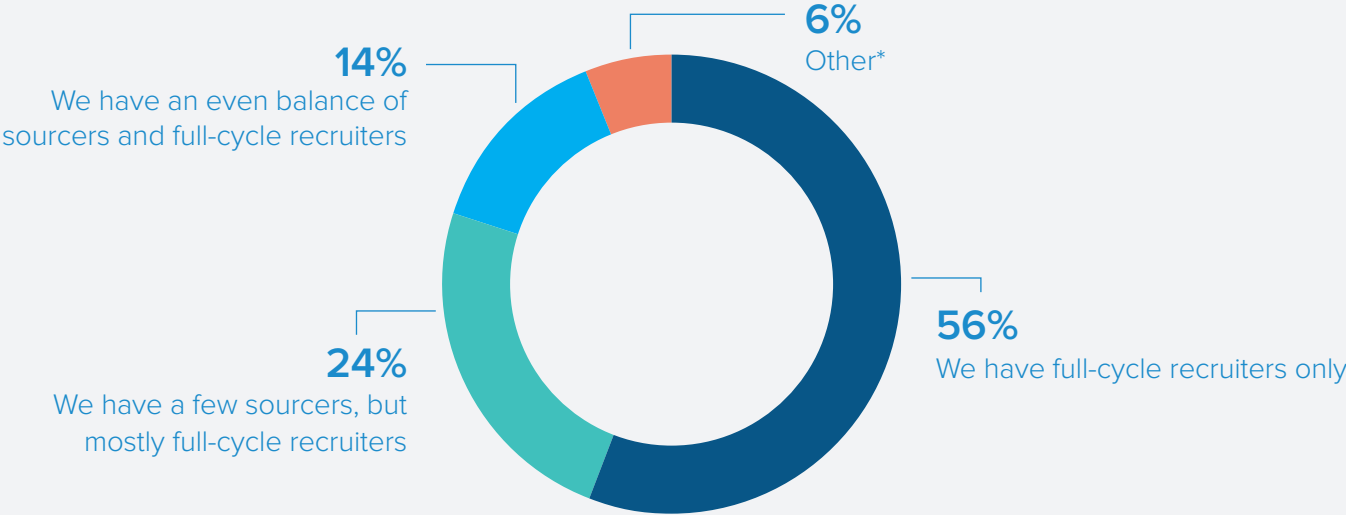
The challenges ahead for recruitment may be *changing*, but the challenges *themselves* aren't going anywhere. And while we can't predict the future, we *can* offer a bird's-eye view of top priorities, action plans, and collective concerns that might help you better understand the landscape we're still adjusting to, assess your company's place in that landscape, and anticipate what may lie ahead. It's as important as ever to keep a finger on the pulse of the industry right now. So here's what your peers are thinking about, and what they're up to.

# Sourcing and Outreach

## Around 40% of talent leaders say they have dedicated sourcers on their teams

Talent leaders are embracing sourcing as a standalone function in talent acquisition: even many of the talent leaders who selected “Other” said they turn to contract sourcers when necessary (meaning: when their recruiting teams can’t find the talent they need). Talent sourcing is not an entry-level function. Sourcers are true knowledge workers with skills in research, search strings, information discovery, the ability to craft unique value propositions to pique talent’s interest, and qualification. More and more, the role is seen as a specialized and essential function in talent orgs.

Q. Does your team have dedicated sourcers?

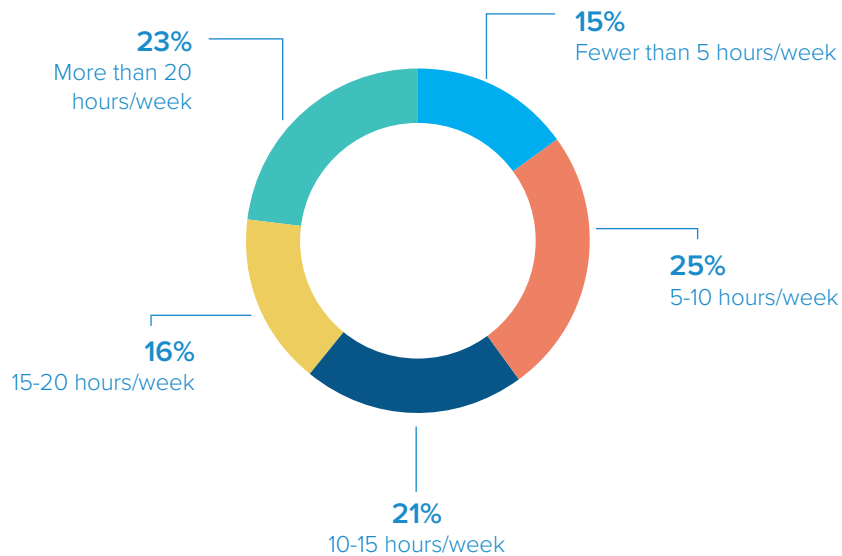


\* Talent leaders who responded with “Other” have single-person recruiting teams, or recruiting falls to their People Ops or Head of People, or they only turn to external/contract sourcers if their recruiting team can’t find the talent they need.

## Prospect outreach takes time

This shouldn't be a news flash to anyone. Top-of-funnel efforts are getting increased attention now that between 70% and 80% of "recruiting" happens prior to application. Nearly ¼ of recruiters say they spend more than half their working hours crafting and sending outreach, which takes precious time away from research, current candidate engagement, and strategic business functions. This points to the urgency of outreach automation tools to increase efficiency. Automation allows teams to source 4x faster, freeing up hours in the day for sourcers and recruiters to focus on other demands.

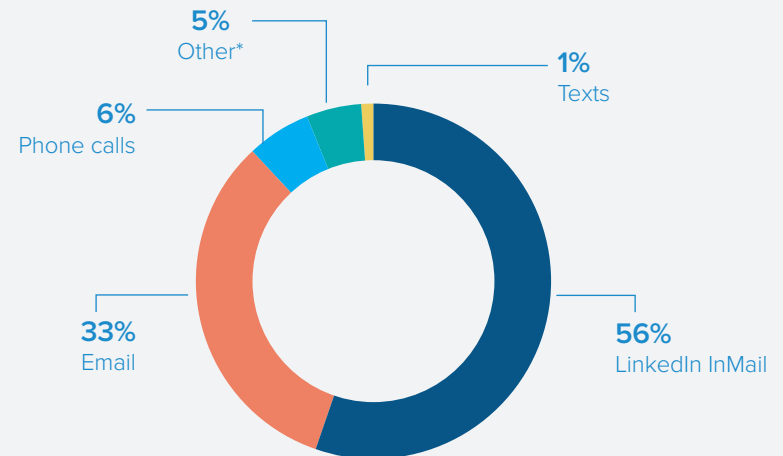
### Q. How many hours/week do you spend on prospect outreach?



## The vast majority of prospective candidate outreach occurs through LinkedIn InMail and email

More than half of sourcers and recruiters use LinkedIn as their primary method of prospect outreach. One-third say they rely most heavily on email. These numbers make sense. LinkedIn is the world's largest professional network, with 660M+ members and counting; and it's where sourcers and recruiters spend the majority of their time searching for talent. But it *also* makes sense that so many recruiters are turning to email. After all, 90% of talent prefers to be contacted by email rather than InMail, and 40% of tech talent has their InMail notifications turned off—meaning they won't see those messages unless they proactively check LinkedIn. And whereas InMail follow-ups are manual and can't be tracked without a spreadsheet, emails can be automated—meaning you can send more messages, doubling or tripling your reply rates.

### Q. What is your primary method of prospect outreach?



\* The "Other" category included social, Gem, recruiters' ATS, ZipRecruiter, Indeed, Hired, and other job boards and job search marketplaces

### Recruiters also recognize the power of the phone

For all the attention email and InMail get, sourcers and recruiters are relying on phone calls and texts as secondary methods of prospect outreach. This also makes sense. For Millennials and Gen Z especially, their phones are natural extensions of themselves, and texting is the mode of communication they're most comfortable with. (In fact, many prefer to communicate over text rather than over a phone call.)

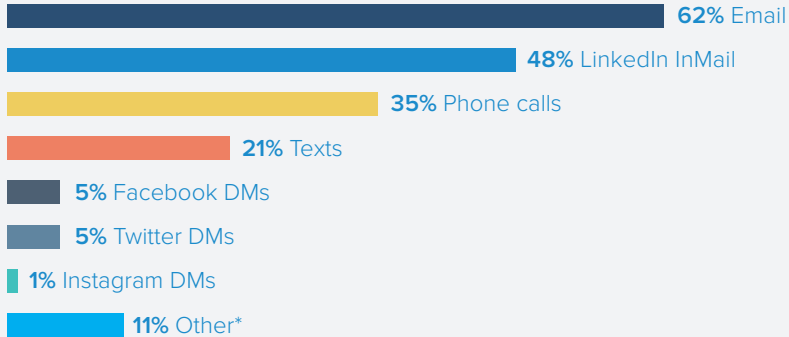
\* The "Other" category included referrals, networking with past applicants, searching previous candidates in Gem, WhatsApp, Indeed, and job search platforms—especially platforms for engineers, like Triplebyte

### LinkedIn and referrals still beat out all other sources for highest-quality candidates... by a long shot

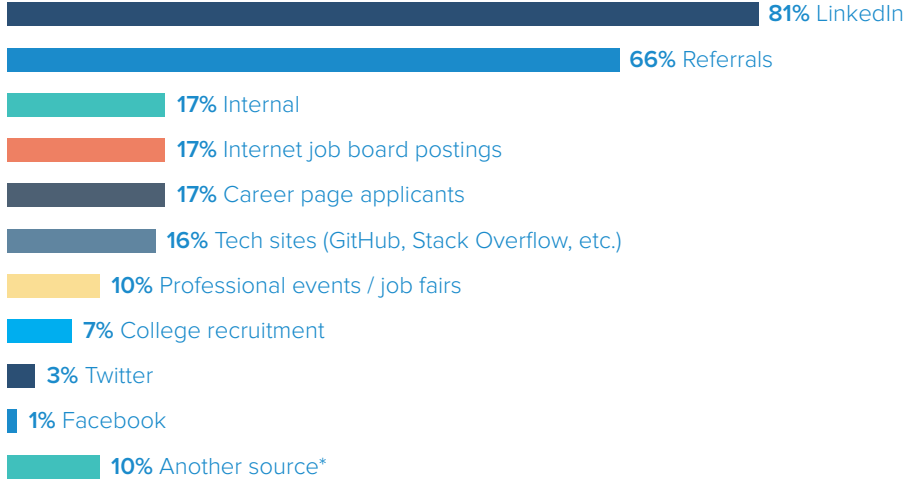
As the world's largest repository of knowledge workers, LinkedIn remains the top source from which recruiting teams uncover their highest-quality candidates. But referrals come in at a close(-ish) second. Think about referrals this way: employee referrals have the highest applicant-to-hire conversion rate of any source; referred candidates begin their positions more quickly than candidates from almost any other source; and referral hires have higher job satisfaction ratings and longer retention than candidates from any other source. If they're referred, they've also already been vetted by an employee who wants to see your company thrive.

That said, recruiters who heavily rely on referrals should keep a close eye on how those referrals are affecting the organization's diversity. Because employees are more likely to refer talent who is demographically similar to themselves, referrals tend to benefit White men more than men of color or women of any race. White women are 12% less likely, men of color are 26% less likely, and women of color are 35% less likely to receive a referral than White men are. So if you notice that your referral programs are starting to replicate the homogeneity in your organization, we recommend you rethink those programs as quickly as possible.

### Q. What other methods of prospect outreach do you regularly use?



### Q. Where do you find your highest-quality candidates?



\* Other sources included other recruiters in respondents' industries, Google searches, surfacing former candidates in an ATS, Triplebyte, AngelList, Hired, and Monster

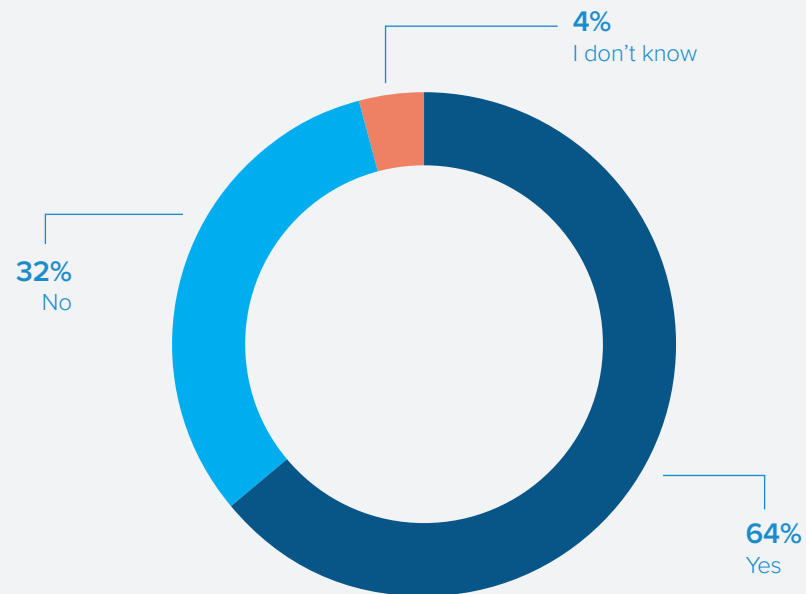
## Most teams are tracking, and gathering data on, prospect outreach

64% of talent leaders and talent ops say their team has a formal initiative in place to track candidate outreach, and 58% of sourcers and recruiters say they track metrics like open rates and click rates. This points to the increasing importance of data-driven practices in recruiting. The best teams are tracking these stats and using them to discover best practices about their outreach—from best send times, to most engaging subject lines, to most compelling content, to most effective number of stages and cadence in an outreach sequence.

If your team isn't currently tracking outreach, we recommend you start looking for solutions. The most data-driven teams will be sweeping up the best talent—in fact, they already are.

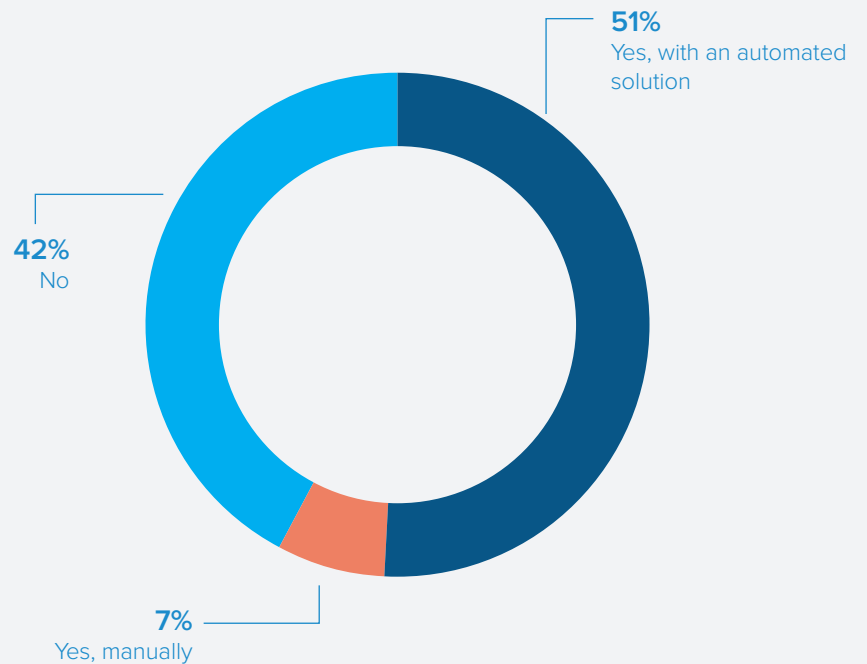
### TALENT LEADERS:

Q. Does your team have a formal initiative to track all candidate outreach?



### SOURCERS AND RECRUITERS:

Q. Do you currently track email open rates or click-through rates?



# Employer Branding and Employee Value Propositions

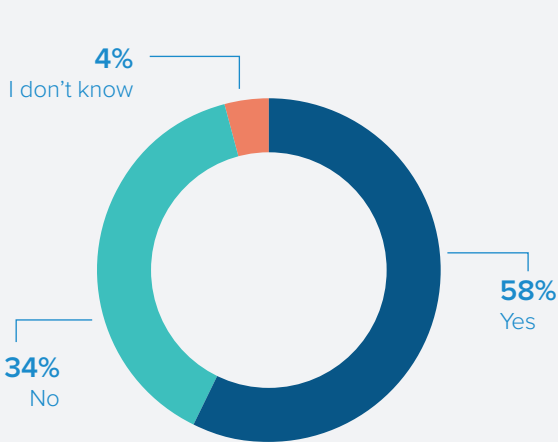
## More than half of talent leaders and talent ops are formally thinking about employment branding... but that thinking is not necessarily being shared with sourcers and recruiters

58% of the talent leaders we surveyed said they have an employment branding campaign in place—and that’s a great thing for those 58%. An employer brand includes both a company’s reputation among the broader workforce and its employees’ perception of it as an employer. It’s not only how a company “markets” itself to active candidates and passive talent, but also how it continues to “sell” itself to its own employees. Strong employer branding can double your time to hire, cut your cost-per-hire in half, and reduce your turnover rates by nearly 30%. What’s more, 75% of talent considers an employer’s brand before they apply for a job.

The fact that only 35% of sourcers and recruiters say their company has an employee value proposition that they use in their outreach means that, for many companies, there’s a disconnect somewhere between the employment branding campaign and the story recruiters are telling prospective candidates. The data suggests that talent ops, management, and leadership would benefit from taking the time to share the details of the employer branding campaign more fully with recruitment, so the team can tell a more cohesive story about the org.

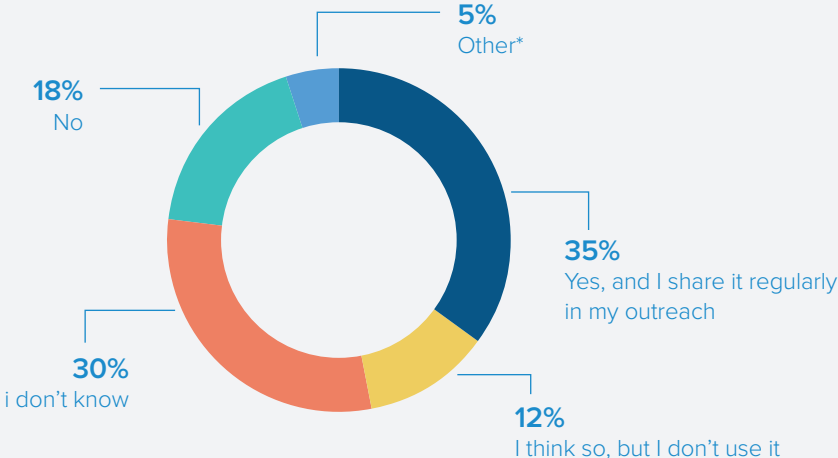
### TALENT LEADERS:

Q. Does your organization have an employment branding campaign?



### SOURCERS AND RECRUITERS:

Q. Does your organization have an employee value proposition (EVP)?



\* Sourcers and recruiters who selected “Other” said they had developed their own to communicate to candidates; they’re in the process of creating and formalizing one; they have a vague EVP but it isn’t formalized; and they do, “but it needs to be emphasized & regularly communicated”

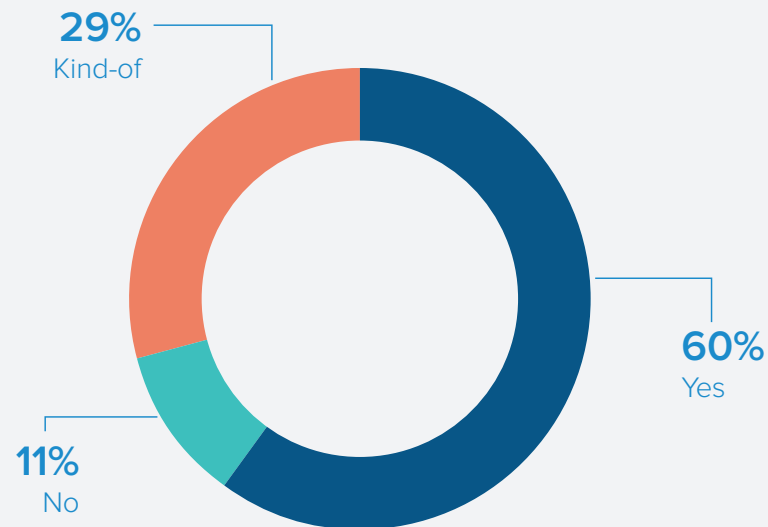


## Almost 90% of sourcers and recruiters feel they have to understand marketing *at least somewhat* in order to do their jobs well

60% of sourcers and recruiters answered with an emphatic “yes,” they feel they need a grasp of marketing concepts to truly compete in their industry. After all, there’s a strong analogy there: recruitment isn’t selling a product or service; but it *is* selling a company, a culture, and a role. Consumer marketing experts have proven that great marketing can influence every decision we make—from what toothpaste we use, to what car we buy, to what university we attend. If recruiters can learn to think like marketers (personas, candidate journeys, multi-channel branding, storytelling, long-term nurture), that influence will extend to what jobs we apply for.

The moral of this story might be particularly valuable in this moment, when recruiters may have some extra time on their hands because of slowed reqs or hiring pauses. If you’re a recruiter, consider reaching out to the folks on your marketing team and asking if they’d be willing to chat about their strategies. If you’re a talent leader, consider recommending that your sourcers and recruiters spend some of their newly-freed-up time digging into marketing best practices, to see what they can implement in their *own* processes when hiring kicks back into gear again.

Q. Do you feel that you need to understand marketing in order to do your job well?



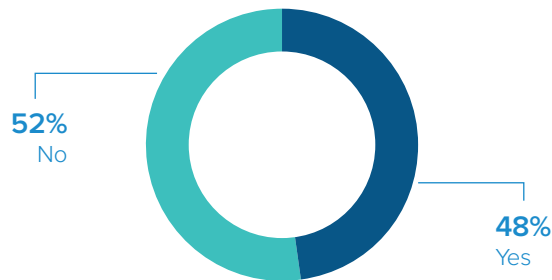
# Diversity

## Around half of talent acquisition teams have formal diversity hiring initiatives in place

48% of talent leaders and 46% of sourcers and recruiters say their teams have formal diversity hiring initiatives; and we're very happy to hear those affirmative responses. After all, workplace diversity breaks cycles of discrimination and oppression and eases the struggle for representation. If recent events have taught recruitment anything, it's that diversity isn't just about meeting quotas. It's about honoring—and therefore protecting—lives. You can add to this the business case if you find yourself in a position to have to argue for the importance of diversifying your org. Study after study shows that companies that embrace diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) strategies in all aspects of the business statistically outperform their peers—from employee productivity and performance, to innovation, to employee retention, to market share growth and overall profitability.

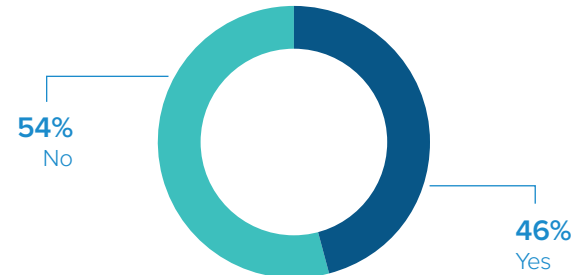
### TALENT LEADERS:

Q. Does your team have a formal diversity hiring initiative?



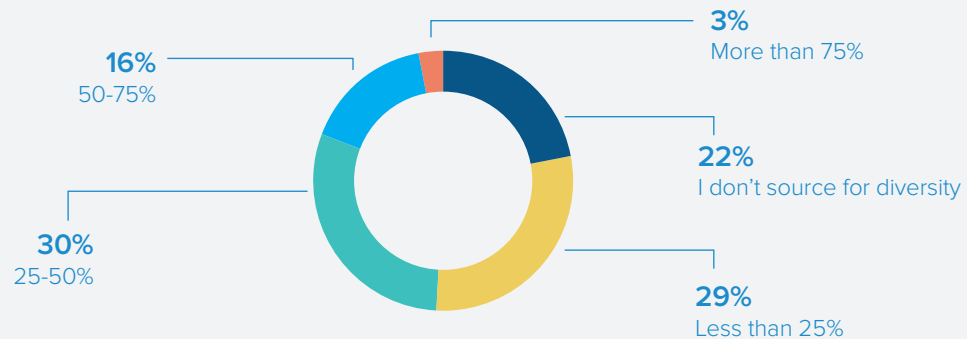
### SOURCERS AND RECRUITERS:

Q. Does your team have a formal diversity hiring initiative?



Responses from sourcers and recruiters suggest that, even if their organizations or clients *don't* have formal diversity initiatives in place, they're still putting effort into diversifying their pools.

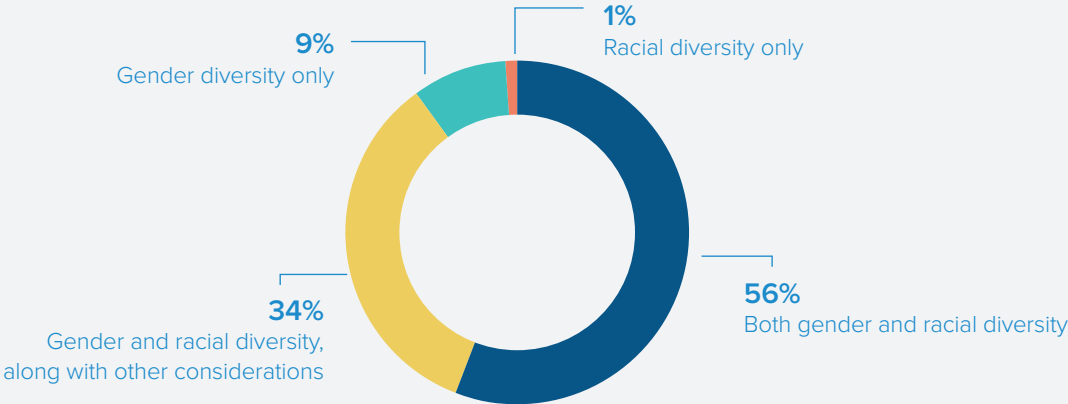
Q. When sourcing talent, how much of your effort is focused on sourcing diverse candidates?



**Most teams are striving for both gender and racial diversity, while 1/3 of teams look for other underrepresented groups as well**

Of the talent leaders we surveyed, 56% said they focus on gender and racial diversity, while 34% said their diversity initiatives encompass more than these two categories. The underrepresented groups talent leaders most often said their teams are focused on include veterans, disabled talent, and LGBTQ+ talent. Others said they are also striving for diversity in age, experience, education, and geolocation.

Q. What is included in your diversity hiring initiative?



### Teams still struggle to meet their diversity goals

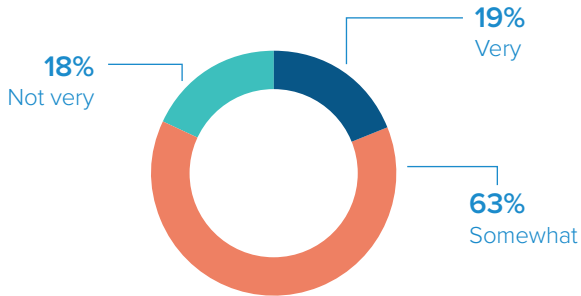
Sourcers and recruiters say the two biggest barriers they face when it comes to improving diversity in both their pipelines and their organizations are: 1) finding diverse candidates to interview, and 2) moving diversity candidates past the interview stage. Offer accepts and employee retention are also fairly significant barriers: 11% and 10% of recruiters, respectively, cited these as obstacles.

When it comes to underrepresented talent, low offer accept rates and low employee retention may be correlated with how inclusive your organization is. Do female-identified and underrepresented employees feel recognized, appreciated, and like they belong once they've arrived? Some questions you might ask to find out include: Do we have employee resource groups or affinity groups? Do we offer trainings on topics such as unconscious bias, cultural awareness, and gender identity/expression? What safeguards are in place to ensure leadership assessments and promotion processes are as free of bias as possible? Are company social events inclusive? If you can answer questions like these in the affirmative, you're on your way to making it easier for talent to accept your offer, and stay with you for the long term.

For teams that find they're struggling to get diversity candidates through the funnel, consider examining your hiring process as a whole. Are there implicit biases in your interview questions, or is bias creeping up in debriefs? Are you preparing underrepresented candidates for the interview by walking them through the process, sharing insights on the hiring manager and department, and letting them know what's important to the HM and what kinds of questions will be asked? Are you helping them identify areas of experience to highlight and how best to present their accomplishments? These tips could be particularly helpful for talent coming from non-traditional backgrounds.

When it comes to sourcing talent for your diversity initiatives, consider diversifying your keyword searches on LinkedIn, enhancing your referral program, asking underrepresented employees to assist with "sourcing parties," leveraging other social networks using hashtags and @mentions to find talent associated with underrepresented communities, and partnering with organizations that represent the communities you want to reach. (We've written an entire guide called [Diversity Sourcing at the Top of the Funnel](#) if you'd like to dive deeper into any of those strategies.)

#### Q. How successful would you say your diversity initiative is?



#### Q. What would you say are your biggest barriers to improving diversity?



\* Sourcers and recruiters who chose "Other" named barriers such as getting buy-in to have a diversity initiative, influencing hiring managers/decision-makers, finding legal ways to identify diversity candidates (especially in the E.U. "where gender etc. can't be tracked"), location, and prioritization

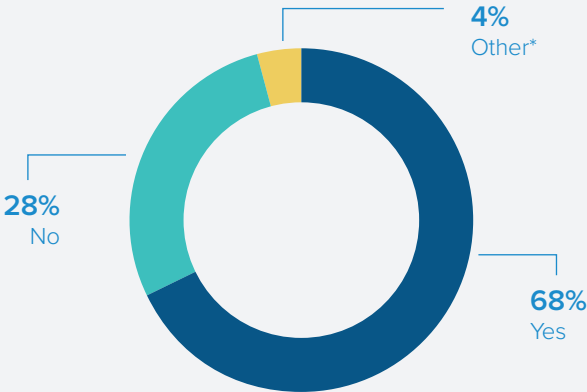
# Data, Metrics, and Recruiting Technology

## Talent acquisition is now a majority data-driven industry

The majority of talent acquisition teams (between 68% and 78%, depending on whether you're asking talent leaders or sourcers/recruiters) say they rely on data to track recruiter performance, identify and debug pipeline issues, and forecast hiring. Of those who said they *don't* rely on data, responses ranged from "I wish I had that data" to "we're new at it and would like to get better" to "not now but would like to." The moral of the story? Talent acquisition is now a majority data-driven industry. Respondents who said they weren't quite there yet recognize the urgency of catching up with their peers.

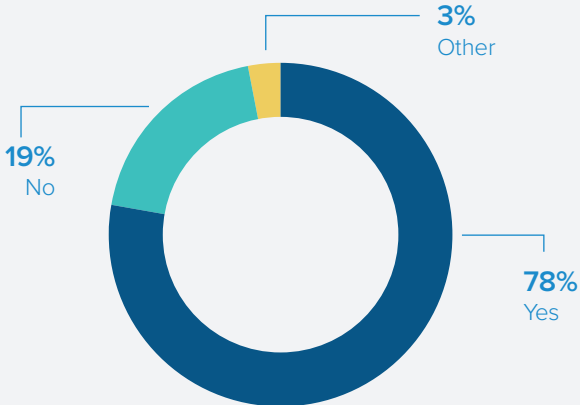
### TALENT LEADERS:

Q. Does your team rely on data for things like recruiter performance, identifying pipeline bottlenecks, and forecasting hiring?



### SOURCERS AND RECRUITERS:

Q. Does your team rely on data for things like recruiter performance, identifying pipeline bottlenecks, and forecasting hiring?



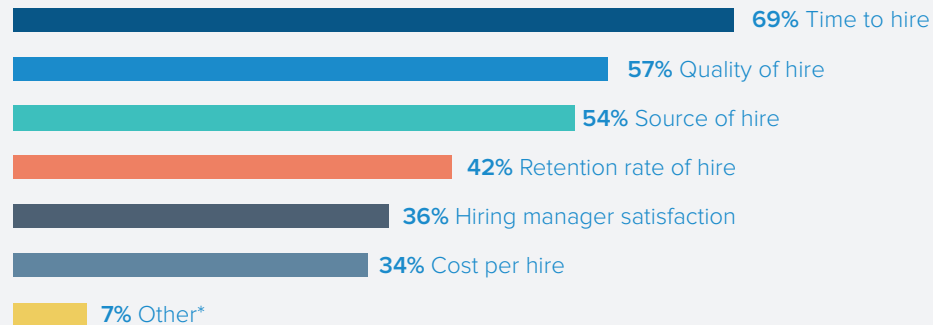
\* Respondents who chose "Other" said things like: "yes but it's very manual right now"; "it's a work in progress"; "we are working on building this out"; and "just getting started with a change in management"

## Time to hire and quality of hire are the KPIs talent leaders pay the most attention to, with source of hire coming in at a close third

What this suggests is that talent teams need visibility into their passthrough rates—from initial outreach and phone screen all the way through offer accept—so they can identify bottlenecks in their process and optimize for overall faster time to hire. It means that recruiters and hiring managers need to calibrate on reqs from the very beginning and stay in close touch throughout the hiring process. When hiring managers can articulate what they're looking for and recruiters are clear about their hiring managers' vision, quality of hire increases. Ultimately, it means that talent acquisition teams need recruitment technology that will give them essential insights and allow recruiters and HMs to better collaborate.

### TALENT LEADERS:

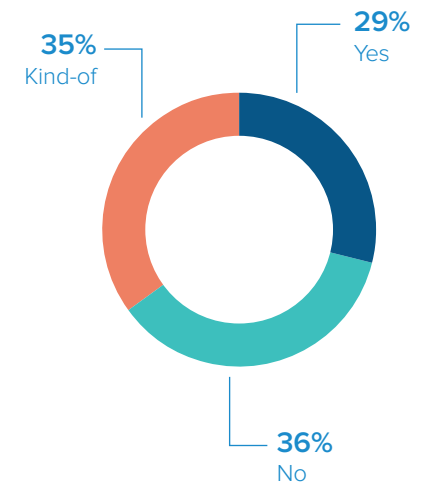
#### Q. What are the most important metrics/KPIs you use to track recruiting success?



\*Talent leaders who responded with "Other" added these metrics/KPIs: passthrough rates/conversion rates, ROI on recruitment efforts, number of submittals, number of hires, diversity, hiring targets and capacity, meeting the hiring plan timing, and number of recruiter screens in order to forecast whether hiring targets will be met on time

## The majority of talent leaders (64%) believe they need to be *at least kind of analytics-savvy in order to do their jobs well*

About a third of respondents said that yes, they feel they need to be analytics experts in order to be good talent leaders. Another third said they feel this way to some extent. Given that so many TA teams are currently relying on data to meet hiring goals, optimize funnels, and gauge recruiter performance, this makes sense. (We suspect the talent leaders who answered with "kind of" and "no" largely have recruitment technology that's acting as the expert *for* them.)

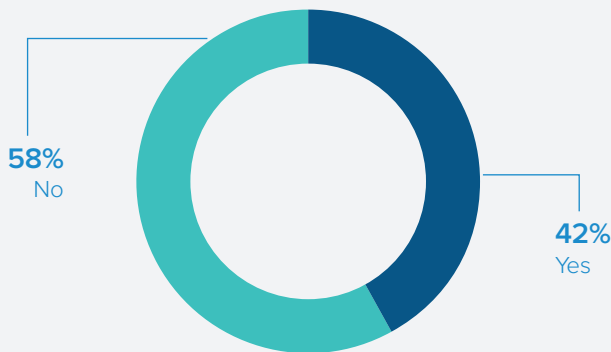


## Less than half of talent leaders say their team uses a talent CRM; and more than half of talent leaders who use a CRM say it has positively impacted their hiring org

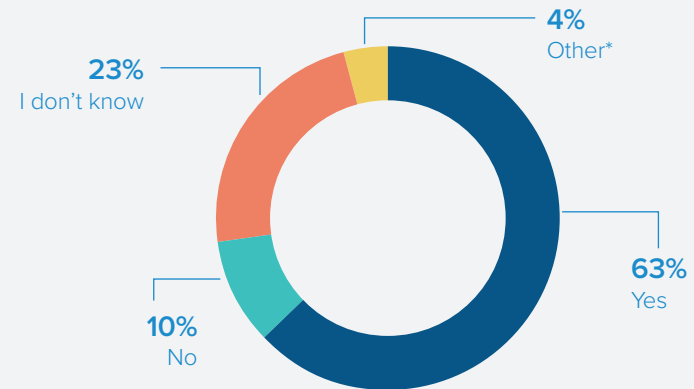
As teams become more data-driven and top-of-funnel efforts become increasingly important to hiring orgs, talent CRMs are becoming essential technologies for TA teams. Talent CRMs are sometimes referred to as “pre-applicant platforms” because they help TA teams manage outbound sourcing; build talent pools around criteria such as role and geo; engage those talent pools with targeted nurture campaigns; access analytics to observe how campaigns are doing, identify best outreach practices, and help recruiters manage their performance; and support talent teams in controlling the overall employer brand. But at Gem we think “pre-applicant platform” is a misnomer, since some CRMs manage the entire recruitment process, from the top of the funnel all the way to hire.

While an ATS supports reactive hiring and holds applicant data, talent CRMs support *proactive* hiring. They’re the ecosystem and source of truth not just for applicants, but also for prospective candidates: former silver medalists, talent you’ve met at professional events and whom you think would be a good fit for your company, referrals from current employees, folks you’ve come across on LinkedIn that you’d like to nurture relationships with for the next time that role opens. In other words, if a talent team’s hiring model is the old-school “post-and-pray” model, their ATS alone should suffice—they’re just likely to run into trouble when they’ve got an opening that has to be immediately filled, and they have no talent pipeline to draw from. But if you’re building a modern recruiting machine—in which sourcers seek out top talent, build talent pools, nurture those prospects, and enhance the end-to-end candidate experience—then a CRM is a crucial add to your recruiting tech stack.

### Q. Does your team use a talent CRM?



### Q. Has the talent CRM positively impacted your hiring org?



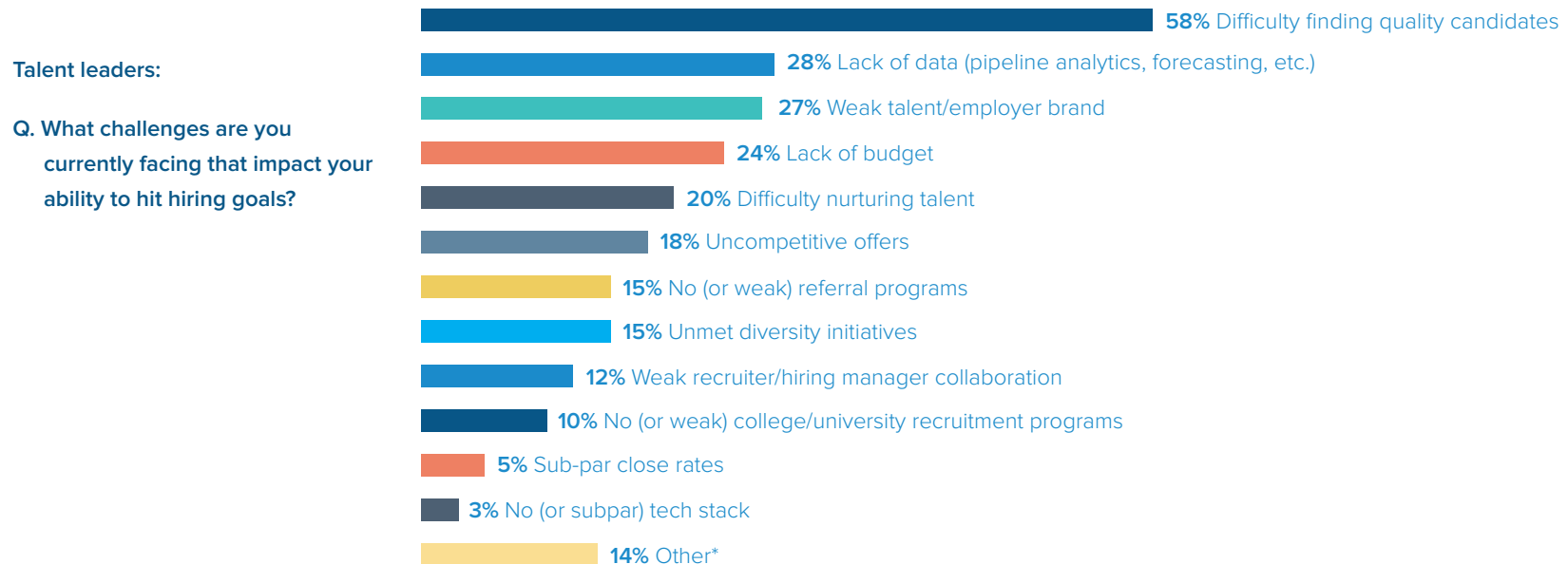
\* Talent leaders who responded with “I don't know” and “Other” did so primarily because they've recently implemented their CRMs and don't have sufficient data on their impact yet

# Top Recruiting Challenges

## Both sourcers/recruiters and talent leaders say their #1 challenge when it comes to hitting hiring goals is difficulty finding quality candidates

We posed this question to sourcers/recruiters and talent leaders separately, because we were interested in hearing how they thought differently about their hiring obstacles. It's worth noting that "difficulty finding quality candidates" remained the #1 obstacle *even* in the early stages of COVID-19, when unemployment numbers started rising. Respondents parted ways when it came to secondary obstacles. For talent leaders, obstacles #2 and 3 are a lack of data and a weak talent/employer brand. For sourcers/recruiters, obstacles #2 and 3 are uncompetitive offers and working with hiring managers.

These numbers suggest a few things: 1) plenty of teams are still in need of recruitment technology that can give them hiring metrics; 2) talent acquisition teams need to start exploring conversations about talent brand, bringing marketing to the table if necessary; 3) sourcers and recruiters need to sit down with hiring managers, remind them that they're business partners, and determine best practices for working together (Gem has [resources](#) for that if you need them); and 4) teams need to start thinking about their employee value proposition (EVP): the unique set of benefits employees receive in return for the skills, experience, and effort they bring to the company to help it succeed. Even when companies *can't* compete on salary, there are plenty of other things they can compete on.

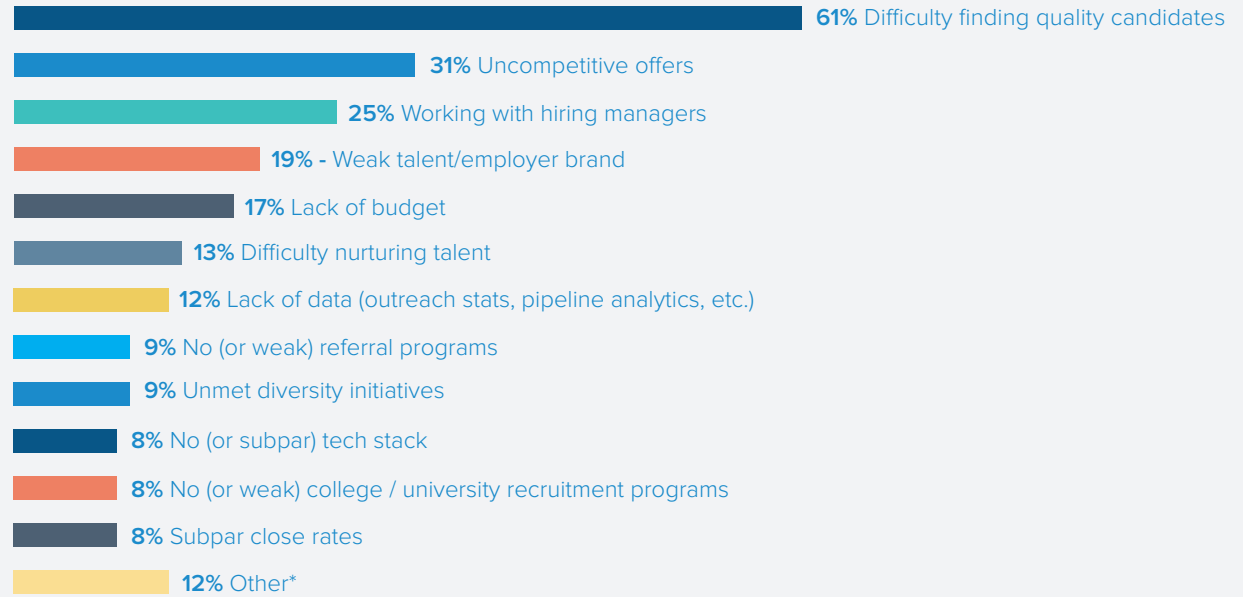


\* The majority of talent leaders who chose "Other" cited COVID-19 as a challenge, noting that the environment leads to a preference for stability in larger companies, or that passive candidates are declining to make moves in the face of fear and uncertainty. Some respondents' companies have put hiring on hold either across the board, or for a number of teams/roles. A few respondents (whom we assume are still hiring) noted that their process needs fine-tuning because they're seeing sub-par passthrough rates. At least one respondent noted that, while they've paused hiring for the moment, they anticipate a much richer pool from which to recruit on the other side of COVID.



▶ ▶ ▶ SOURCERS AND RECRUITERS:

Q. What challenges are you currently facing that impact your ability to hit hiring goals?



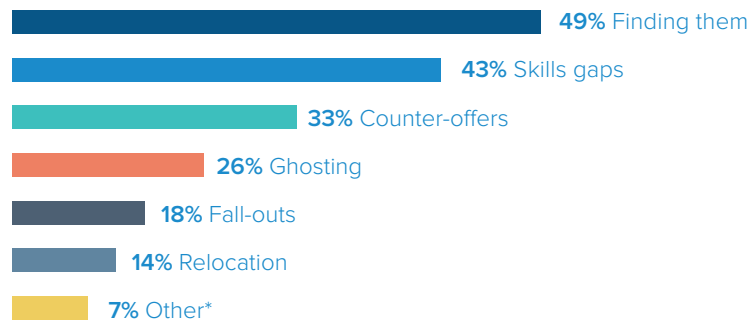
\* As was the case with talent leaders, the majority of sourcers/recruiters who chose "Other" cited COVID-19 as a challenge: in many of those cases, hiring is paused for their respective companies. Sourcers and recruiters also cited inefficient and unstandardized interview processes that drag on and open them up to competition, unrealistic expectations from hiring managers, irrelevant technical assessments, and hyper-competitive hiring environments in which stronger candidates are "collecting 10+ offers and drawing out timelines."

## Sourcers' and recruiters' #1 struggle with candidates is "finding them"

Given the data points above, this isn't a particularly surprising finding. A few recommendations to sourcers/recruiters who are struggling with finding candidates include: 1) more complex Boolean searches on LinkedIn (Glen Cathey is one authority to turn to for this: see BooleanBlackBelt.com); 2) leveraging hashtags to uncover talent on social media platforms like Instagram and Twitter; 3) leveraging untapped or less-tapped sources (YouTube, Google Play Store, Dribbble, Medium, Quora, Pinterest, Mogul, Handshake, and AngelList come to mind); and 4) getting "out into the world" (even if virtually) and attending industry events. Event platforms like Eventbrite or Meetup.com allow you to search for community and professional events that would likely attract your target prospects.

None of this is to say that finding candidates *still* won't be a struggle; but thinking outside the box might alert you to talent you won't find in the same habitual searches.

### Q. What is/are your biggest struggle/s with candidates?

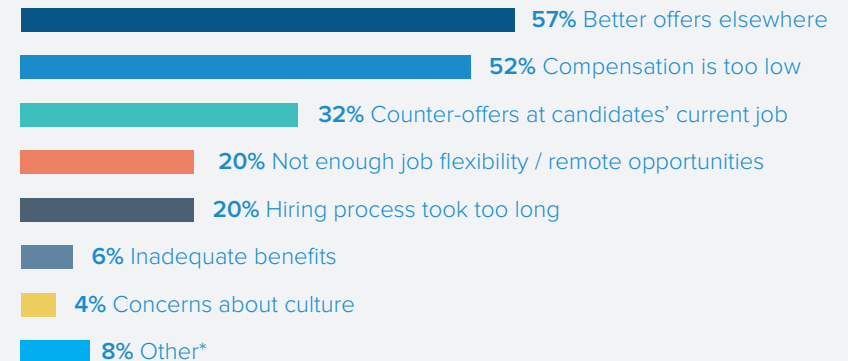


\* Sourcers and recruiters who selected "Other" also named these struggles: engaging the candidates they really want to connect with and getting them interested in the company/role to begin with, staying organized amidst the tremendous volume of talent, hiring manager alignment, getting candidates to meet the technical bar or pass the interview process, and timely candidate movement through the pipeline

## "Better offers elsewhere" is the #1 reason sourcers/recruiters give for why candidates reject job offers

It's worth noting that the #2 reason is "compensation is too low." We're not sure how closely these top two reasons are connected (are those "better offers elsewhere" *always* about compensation?); but for teams struggling with this, we recommend drilling into your org's employee value proposition. Remember: just because you can't compete on salary doesn't mean there aren't other things you can't compete on. EVPs include things like career advancement opportunities, personal development, the reputation of senior leadership, team-building activities and events, company culture, the quality of your product/service, diversity, social responsibility, work-life balance, intellectual stimulation, remote work, tuition benefits, and more. So take the broad view of your company and consider everything you can promise candidates beyond compensation.

### Q. What are the most common reasons candidates give for rejecting job offers at your org?



\* Sourcers and recruiters who selected "Other" also listed wrong timing, commutes, lack of product interest, and "fear of the economy given we are a startup"

# Talent Leaders' Initiatives

**Talent leaders' two biggest priorities for the remainder of 2020 are sourcing/growing pipeline and talent branding... though given the current economic climate, some of them will be implementing those initiatives with little to no budget**

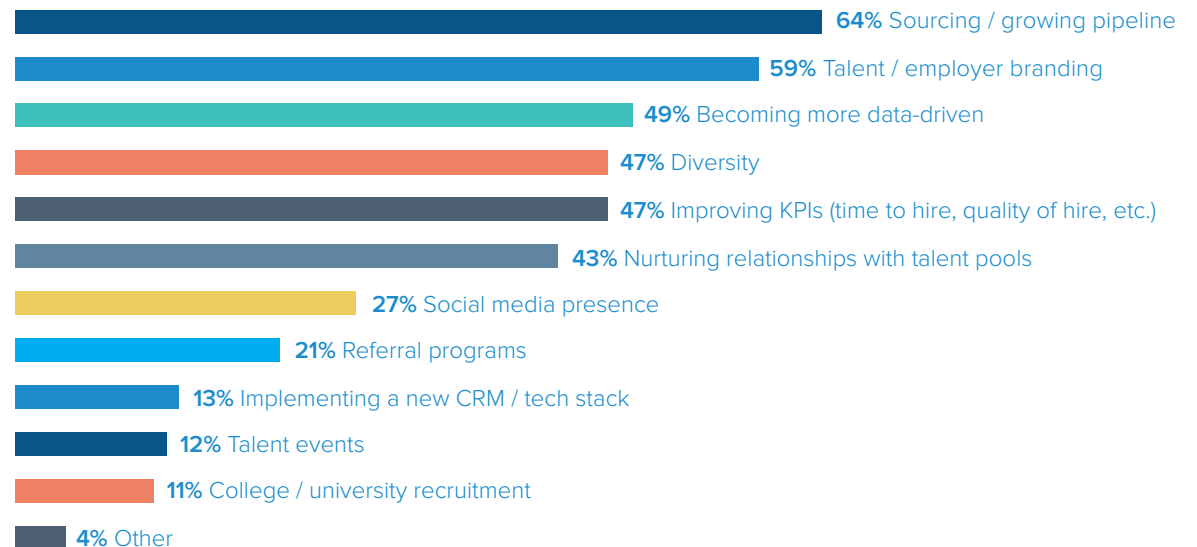
That 64% of talent leaders who are hoping to spend the remainder of 2020 growing pipeline seem to recognize that nurture as a recruitment concept might be more important *now*—when the market is so uncertain—than ever. As unemployment rises, recruiters may soon be managing the largest talent pipelines they've ever had to manage. Reqs may be on hold; existing candidates may be temporarily trapped in various stages of your hiring funnel. Keep sourcing. If you can develop and maintain relationships with passive talent *now*, those outreach labors will pay off in a ready talent pool that felt seen by your company in a time of crisis. It's also worth noting that this is a great opportunity to increase the diversity in your pipelines—and diversifying your company is perhaps more urgent now than ever.

The 59% of talent leaders hoping to focus on employer branding this year should consider bringing together a group of interested employees (ideally some of them from your marketing team) to determine what a unified talent brand *looks like* for your org. What's the overarching narrative you tell about your team and its culture? What's the "story" of the value you'll bring to prospects' lives—even, and perhaps especially, during COVID—should they choose to work with you? How will you get employees' voices out as part of that storytelling? What platforms will you use? And so on.

Priority #3 for talent leaders, by the way, is to become more data-driven. There's recruitment technology out there for this (we're biased, but we think Gem is a great option!); and it doesn't have to break your possibly-diminished budget. Indeed, the ROI will speak for itself when you have visibility into how to optimize your hiring funnel, and when you see KPIs like time-to-hire improve.

## TALENT LEADERS:

**Q. What are the highest-priority initiatives for your team for the remainder of 2020?**



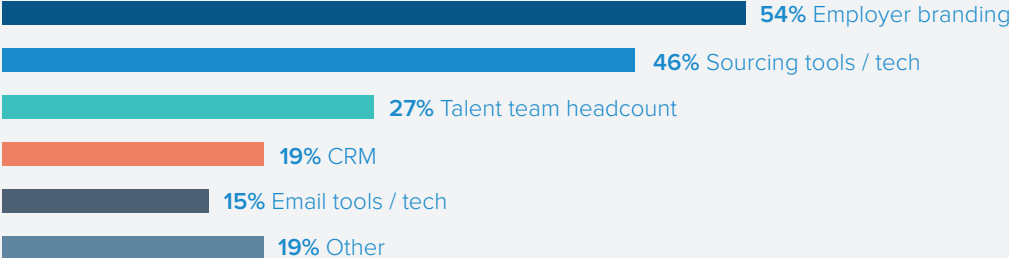
\* "Other" included workflow automation, developing recruitment as a business partner role, implementing onboarding modules and mobile apply, and "surviving" and "getting past" COVID

**Talent leaders plan to invest most of their talent acquisition budgets in employer branding (54%) and sourcing tools and tech (46%) for the remainder of 2020**

This makes sense, given that sourcing and talent branding are the top two stated initiatives for talent leaders for the remainder of this year. Employer branding is always essential, but particularly so in times of crisis—which, between COVID-19 and Black Lives Matter, we are in. So even if employer branding *isn't* at the top of your priority list right now, it's worth checking in to make sure that you have a unified story that speaks directly to the talent you hope to eventually work with.

**TALENT LEADERS:**

**Q. Where will you invest your talent acquisition budget for the remainder of 2020?**



\* Most talent leaders who selected "Other" said some version of "it's hard to say if we'll invest in 2020 given COVID." Priorities are being reevaluated. In some cases, budgets are being cut to almost zero; in others, budgets are staying steady but TA teams have been tasked with utilizing what they have *better*. Others mentioned culture decks, interview tools, metrics and reporting, advertising, and recruiter/HM training.

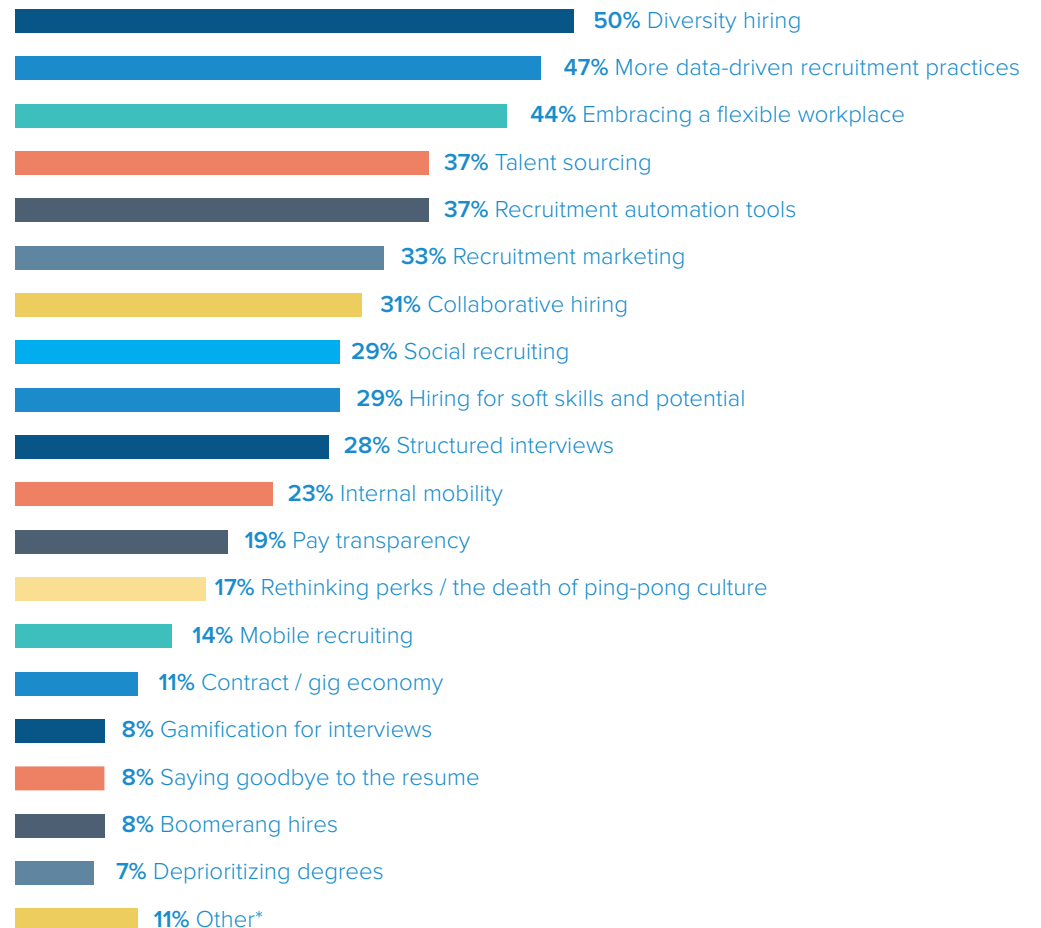
# Anticipated Trends: Sourcers, Recruiters, and Talent Leadership

**Both sourcers/recruiters and talent leaders chose the same top-five trends for 2020 (just in a different order): diversity hiring, data-driven recruitment practices, recruitment automation tools, talent sourcing, and embracing a flexible workplace**

This is pretty remarkable; and it suggests that 1) sourcers/recruiters and talent leaders are in direct conversations about these trends, and 2) the trends are evident enough that *all* parties are observing them. The moral of the story? Be prepared for the fact that the industry is likely headed in these five directions. It's also worth paying special attention to what respondents wrote when they chose the "Other" category, since many of those responses concern recently-emerging trends in response to COVID-19.

## TALENT LEADERS:

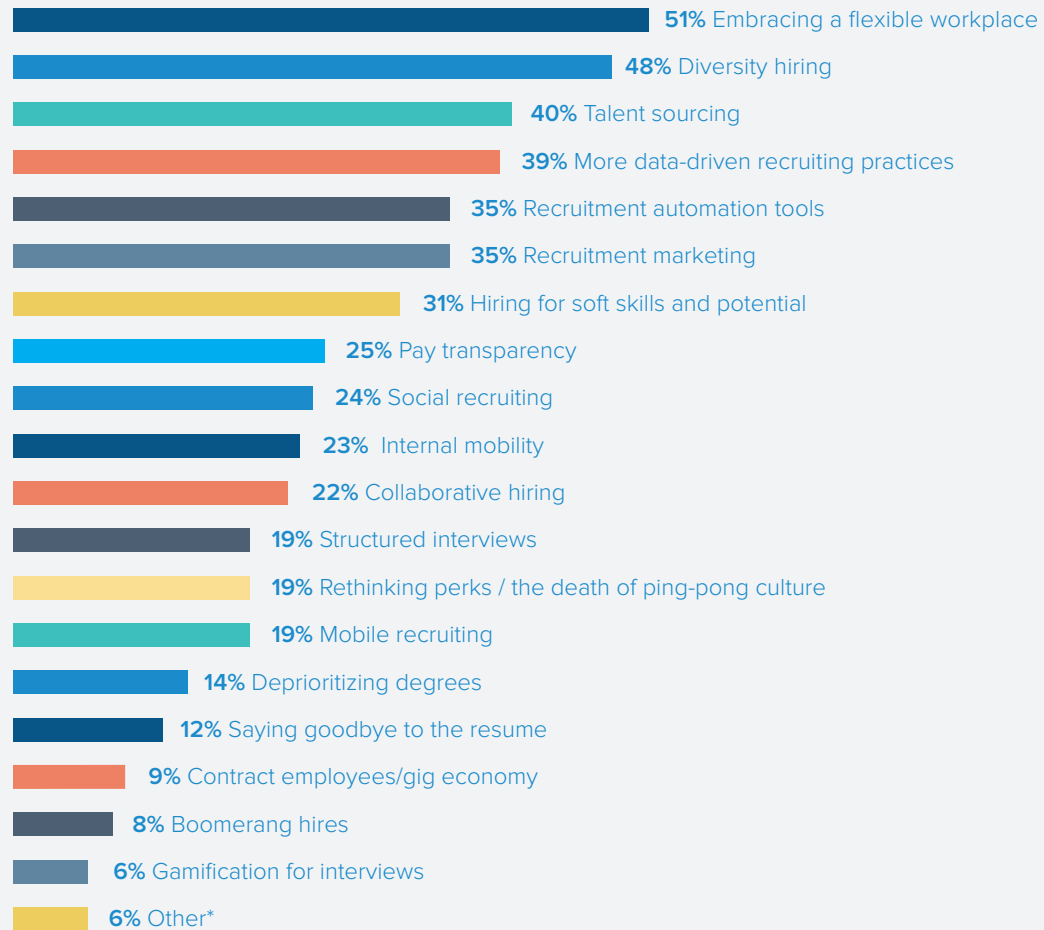
Q. What are the most important trends in the recruiting industry that you anticipate for 2020?



\* "Other" anticipated trends talent leaders noted include: remote working/work-from-anywhere; fully remote recruiting, interviewing, and hiring; hiring effectively for remote work; the challenges of hiring in a virtual world; benefits like student loan relief for new grads; text recruiting and SMS messaging tools for candidate engagement; restructuring of perks and benefits; looser role specifications; more focus on candidate selection over discovery given increased unemployment; increased importance of employer brand over specific roles; talent looking for a flexible and happy workplace rather than a certain title

**SOURCERS AND RECRUITERS:**

**Q. What are the most important trends in the recruiting industry that you anticipate for 2020?**

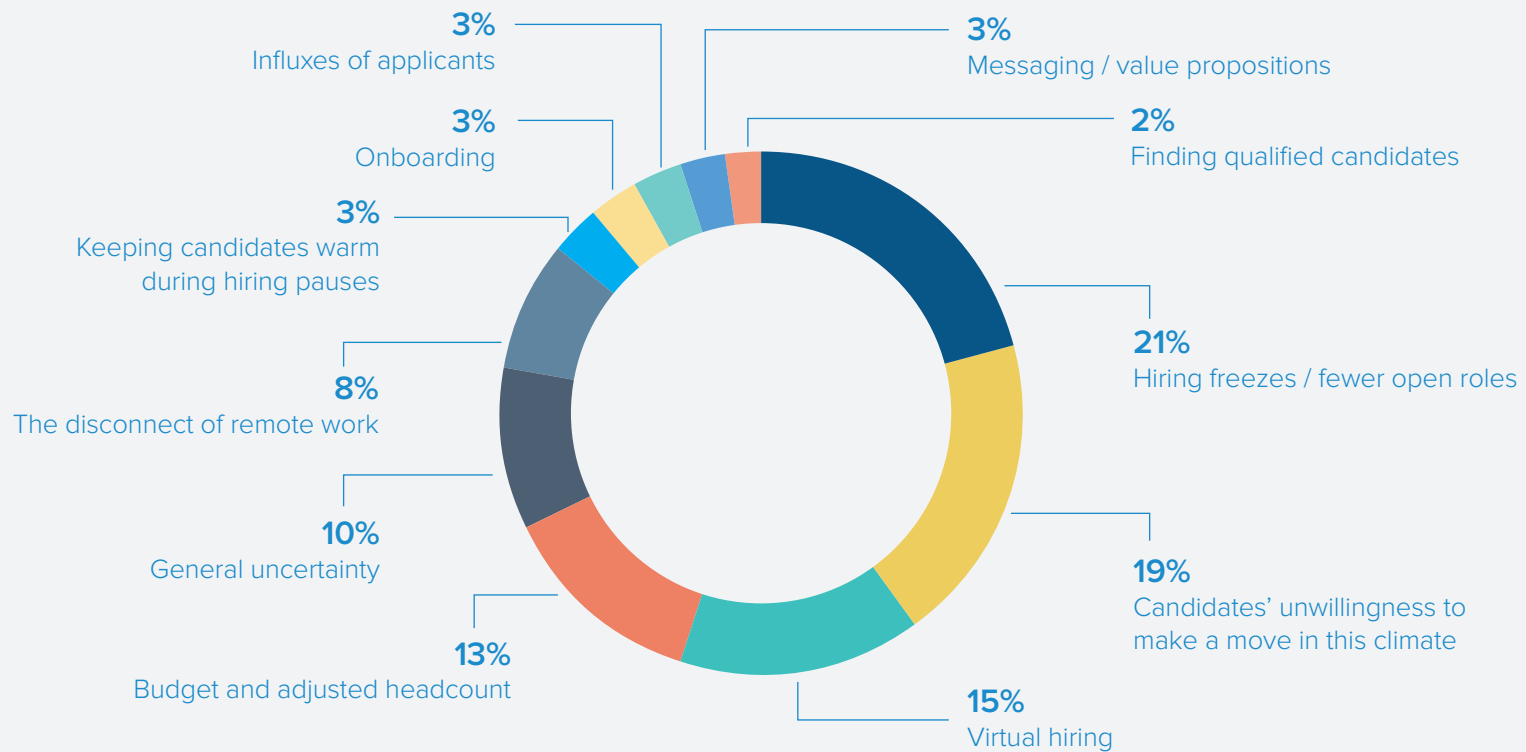


\*“Other” anticipated trends sourcers and recruiters noted include: remote work, video/virtual interviews, extending offers without having met candidates face-to-face, virtual onboarding, streamlined hiring processes, and closing passive candidates (“I think the candidates we want will likely be ones that are still employed and not willing to make a move”). Unlike talent leaders, who seemed to be a bit more certain in their responses, many sourcers and recruiters said something along the lines of “given COVID, it’s hard to say what the rest of 2020 will bring.”

# Recruiting During COVID-19

Talent leaders' three top struggles when it comes to recruiting during coronavirus are hiring freezes, candidates' unwillingness to make a move, and virtual hiring

Q. What's your biggest struggle when it comes to recruiting during coronavirus?



**But we'll let talent leaders speak for themselves on these issues:**

**Hiring freezes / fewer open roles:**

*"No open jobs... so the question is: how can recruiting be valuable?"*

*"Our clients have stopped hiring and there is a glut of talent available on the market now which makes the value proposition of an agency redundant"*

*"Hiring freeze—so many quality candidates but not enough active roles for them"*

*"We, as many, are in a hiring freeze. When things hopefully return to normal, I imagine there will be a lot of hiring all at once, putting a lot of pressure on me and my team"*

**Candidates' unwillingness to make a move in this climate:**

*"Employed candidates are withdrawing from the process"*

*"Closing and engaging candidates who value stability"*

*"Closing candidates—convincing folks to join a startup during this time is rough!"*

*"Top talent isn't willing to leave their current jobs due to economic uncertainty"*

*"People want more stability from a big company right now"*

**Virtual hiring:**

*"The biggest struggle for me is not being able to meet candidates in person"*

*"Hiring managers' unwillingness to accept video interview outcomes as they would in-person interview outcomes"*

*"We can't make offers because candidates haven't met their hiring managers face-to-face or seen our office. We feel that's a huge selling point and only fair to the candidate. We want the candidate to make the right decision."*

*"It's hard to accept an offer when you have never seen the culture in person"*



### **Budget and adjusted headcount:**

*“Staffing needs uncertainty due to budget uncertainty and constantly shifting priorities given the crisis”*

*“Budget—we are a Series A start-up”*

*“Potential headcount revisions due to unknown downside scenarios”*

*“No granted commitment if we’ll be able to make an offer to every position mentioned on the hiring plan”*

### **General uncertainty:**

*“Ambiguity around hiring goals, how long the pandemic and resulting uncertainty will persist”*

*“Variables, unknowns. It’s hard to anticipate how “the new normal” will look.”*

*“Uncertainty of the economy over the next 6 months”*

*“Projecting needs. What are we recruiting for? It’s hard to know right now.”*

*“Recognizing real hiring needs versus what can wait until this is over”*

### **Missing the team / remote work:**

*“Missing impromptu office conversations regarding recruitment efforts”*

*“Lack of IRL meetings”*

*“Maintaining alignment between stakeholders without getting them into a room”*

*“Being disconnected from my team”*

*“Boredom at home”*

*“Staying connected and aligned with the business”*

*“The decline of collaboration in a work-from-home environment”*

### **Keeping candidates warm in the meantime:**

*“Communicating shifting needs and adjusted (and slower) process to candidates active in the process”*

*“Keeping top candidates warm until we can make an offer when we get back into the office”*

*“Keeping candidates motivated towards us”*

### **Onboarding:**

*“Not being able to onboard new hires due to inability to move to the country of work”*

*“Establishing trust between hiring teams and new hires given there’s no face-to-face interaction for the foreseeable future”*

### **Messaging / value propositions:**

*“Communicating stability in such an insecure job market”*

*“Creating the content in sourcing emails to persuade prospects to consider moving companies at this time”*

### **Influx of applicants:**

*“Managing the influx of candidates on the market”*

*“Candidates looking for work but being overqualified and our pay not aligning”*

*“Increase in applications, but not an increase in qualified applicants”*

### **Finding qualified candidates:**

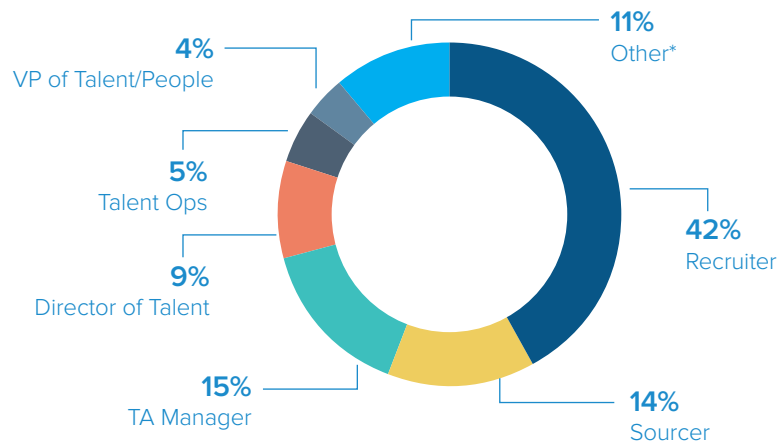
*“Selecting quality candidates (we have a selection problem rather than pipeline problem when it comes to non-diverse applications), and having enough qualified diverse candidates in the pipeline”*

*“Sourcing”*

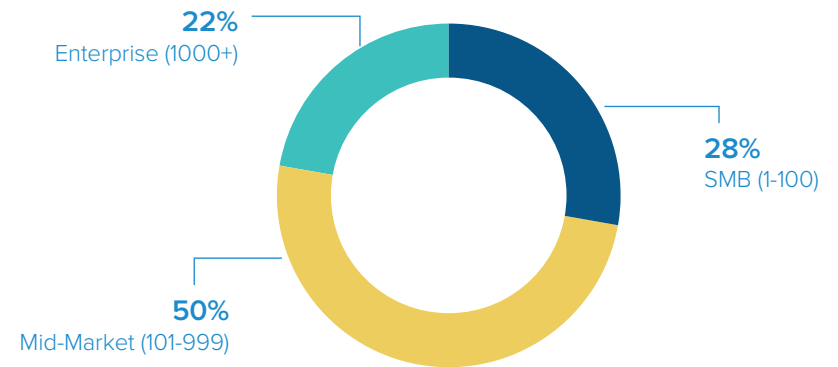
These unprecedented times have presented unique challenges to talent acquisition. In the months ahead, we'll keep putting out content at Gem to help sourcers, recruiters, and TA leaders navigate these waters. We're having as many conversations as we can with both our customers and industry leaders; and we'll continue sharing what we're finding along the way.

# About Our Respondents

Q. Which job title best matches your role?

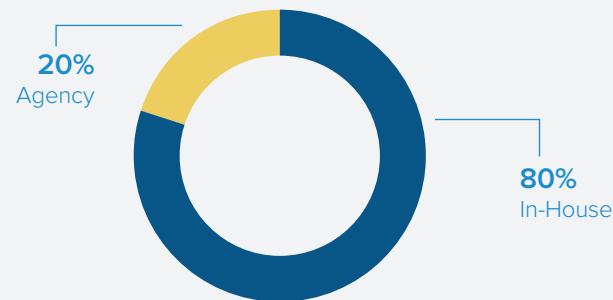


Q. How big is your organization?



**SOURCERS AND RECRUITERS:**

Q. Do you work in-house or for an agency?



\* Respondents who chose "Other" were Recruitment Managers, Recruitment Coordinators, Sourcing Managers, Recruitment Marketing Managers, Global Heads of Talent Sourcing, Diversity Program Managers, People Ops Managers, Recruiting Agency Founders, Senior TA Specialists, Talent Partners, and VPs of Growth



**Lauren Shufan, Author**

Lauren is a content strategist with a penchant for 16th-century literature. When she's not trying to tap into talent teams' pain points, she's on her yoga mat or hiking the hills of Marin County. Come at her with your favorite Shakespeare quote.

Gem is an all-in-one recruiting platform that integrates with LinkedIn, email, and your Applicant Tracking System (ATS). We enable data-driven, world-class recruiting teams to find, engage, and nurture top talent. With Gem, recruiting teams can manage candidate pipeline with predictability.

To learn more and see a demo, visit  
[gem.com](https://gem.com)