

2023-2024 HIRING SEASON

# The State of The Gen Z Job Search

The latest data on the experiences and expectations of today's early career candidates



# How are early career candidates approaching the job search today, and what are they expecting from their future employers?

The landscape of early careers is in a state of constant evolution. As more internship and entry-level job seekers enter the labor market, we are continually gaining insights into the defining values of the newest generation of workers (Gen Z). And these insights often challenge our preconceptions.

For example, in this report you'll discover that despite being the most tech-savvy generation to date and adept at navigating work-related technology such as Zoom, Gen Zers are craving opportunities to connect with companies in person. You'll also learn that despite coining the term 'ghosting' (referring to the act of ignoring someone, often through digital means like text), Gen Z identifies being 'ghosted' by recruiters during the hiring process as their foremost signal of a negative candidate experience.

In other words, attracting Gen Z candidates this hiring season means that employers today will have to leave their assumptions behind and instead rely on data-backed insights to better understand their future leaders.

In the report, you'll find a trove of our latest data that offers a panoramic view of Gen Z's outlook and behavior as they navigate the job market ahead of this fall recruitment season. This report is intended to paint a vivid picture of Gen Z's unique perspective today, from their initial confidence levels to the challenges they foresee, their approaches to career exploration, and their expectations that are woven throughout the hiring process.

We'll delve into Gen Z's mental states as they embark on their job search journey, revealing the delicate balance between aspirations and apprehensions as they attempt to secure meaningful roles in the professional world.

We'll also explore the very essence of career discovery today, exposing the influences behind Gen Z's career choices to enable employers to resonate effectively with this generation.

Stepping into the shoes of Gen Z candidates, the report examines their expectations throughout the hiring process, such as the timely responsiveness they anticipate after submitting applications to the intervals they deem reasonable for recruiters to respond post-interview. Plus, we'll explore how the evolving early career landscape has affected Gen Z's attitudes toward reneges.

Our hope is that this report will serve as a strategic compass guiding recruiters, employers, and decision-makers toward actionable insights that resonate with the early career candidates of today.

## About RippleMatch

RippleMatch is the new way to hire early career talent and build diverse teams. Our recruitment automation platform takes all the manual effort out of candidate sourcing and applicant review, making it the most cost-effective and time-efficient way to recruit Gen Z.

# At a Glance

This report is divided into four sections, each one containing multiple data sets and an analysis of candidate behavior. See below for what each sections entails.

## The State of Gen Z Confidence

page 5

This section takes a look at Gen Z's confidence heading into their job search this fall, followed by the challenges they are anticipating to accompany their search. We'll also dive into trends when it comes to how many applications candidates today expect to send out during their search.

## The State of Career Discovery

page 9

This section walks through what influences Gen Z as they explore career paths, as well as what channels they use to search for roles. We'll also explore Gen Z's preferences when it comes to recruitment events, such as whether they prefer in-person or virtual events, and why.

## The State of Hiring Expectations

page 17

This section dives into the timelines that Gen Z expects during the hiring process, including how long they think recruiters should take before responding to their applications or whether they are advancing after completing an interview round at a company.

## The State of Reneges

page 24

This section explores how early career candidates' attitudes toward reneges have changed over time, including how their reasons for renegeing have evolved. We will also explore the ways in which employers today can avoid reneges at their organizations.

## How to use this report

The insights in this report are designed to help you create a stellar candidate experience tailored to Gen Z, spanning from the application stage to hiring.

The report opens with data on Gen Z's confidence levels, job search hurdles, and application trends, offering a comprehensive snapshot of today's early career candidates. We then provide insights into the decision-making processes of candidates around their career searches, including an analysis of recruitment events. The report also highlights Gen Z's anticipations as they progress through the hiring process, concluding with the latest data on reneges heading into the fall to help your team prepare to keep candidates engaged.



# By the Numbers

To shed light on the experiences and expectations of Gen Z candidates, we asked more than 1,500 internship and entry-level job seekers about their career searches heading into the fall recruitment season.

Between August 2-24, 2023, we surveyed 1,570 early career candidates about their internship and job searches ahead of the fall recruitment season.

We asked questions ranging from how they search for jobs today to how long they think the hiring process should take. We also asked candidates about their greatest anticipated job search challenges heading into the fall, and their inclination toward renegees.

Of our survey respondents, 51% self-identified as female, 45% identified as male, and 4% identified as non-binary.

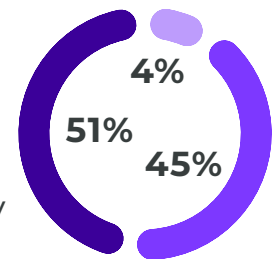
Analyzing the academic backgrounds of our survey participants, we discovered that 65% are engaged in STEM disciplines, encompassing fields like engineering, computer science, biology, statistics, and data science. Additionally, 35% of respondents are pursuing or have pursued non-STEM fields of study, including business management, marketing, history, psychology, and public health.

Our survey respondents included a range of early career candidates at various stages of their colleges and post-college careers, from college freshman to graduate school students. Specifically, 16% of our respondents were underclassmen, 56% were juniors and seniors, 10% were recent graduates, and 19% were enrolled in graduate school.

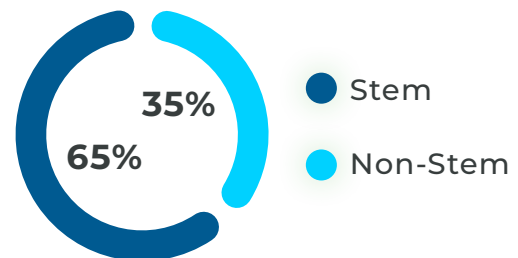
Continue reading the report for an analysis of how these candidates are approaching the labor market.

## GENDER

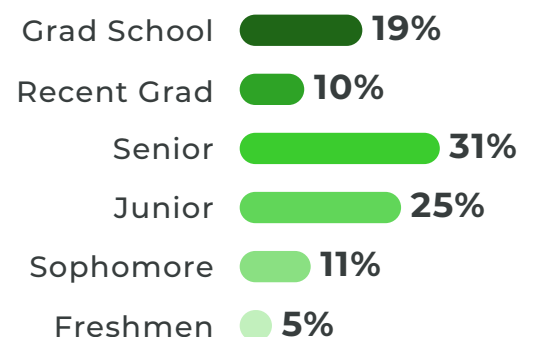
- Female
- Male
- Non-binary



## FIELD OF STUDY



## ACADEMIC YEAR



# The State of Gen Z Confidence

## How has the economy influenced Gen Z's confidence in securing a job this year, and what implications does that hold for recruitment teams?

As students gear up for the fall recruitment season, we sought to find out how they are feeling about their job prospects this year. This insight into the mind of Gen Z job and internship seekers is critical to understanding the motivations behind their career searches.

Our findings reveal that although the share of Gen Z candidates lacking confidence in securing a favorable job or internship this year has slightly diminished, these figures remain far from the levels seen just one year ago. Back then, in fall 2022, a mere 15% of candidates lacked confidence in their job search. Presently, however, half of Gen Zers still harbor skepticism about their ability to secure a promising role within the year.

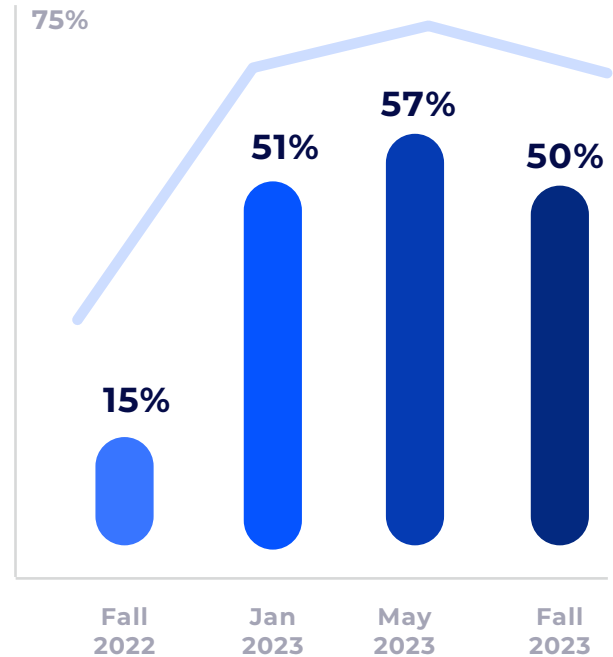
The stark decline in job confidence suggests that the current economic landscape has left a lasting impact on the expectations and anticipations of Gen Z candidates, and this emotional shift in today's early career candidates is concerning for recruitment teams. For example, Gen Zers may hesitate to take on new challenges and settle for offers that may not align with their true passions solely to maintain stability. Plus, as we'll dive into later in this report, their shaky confidence may also play in role in why they are planning to send out hundreds of applications this year, which will overburden talent teams.

For recruitment teams, this data underscores the need for strategies that address the emotional challenges these candidates face. By acknowledging this shift, recruitment teams can take a more empathetic approach



### CANDIDATE JOB CONFIDENCE REMAINS SHAKY HEADING INTO FALL RECRUITMENT

This graph represents candidates who said they are **NOT confident** in their ability to secure a good internship/job.



to early career candidates today, provide relevant resources and support, and ultimately foster a more positive candidate experience.

## The State of Gen Z Confidence

# Job Search Challenges

Now that you have some insight into Gen Z's emotional state as they embark on their job search, it's crucial to delve into their anticipated challenges for the upcoming fall.

We found that a majority of Gen Z candidates today (60%) are most concerned about ensuring that their applications stand out to recruiters and securing invitations for company interviews. This may partly explain why, as elaborated on in the subsequent page, many candidates intend to send out numerous applications in the hopes of

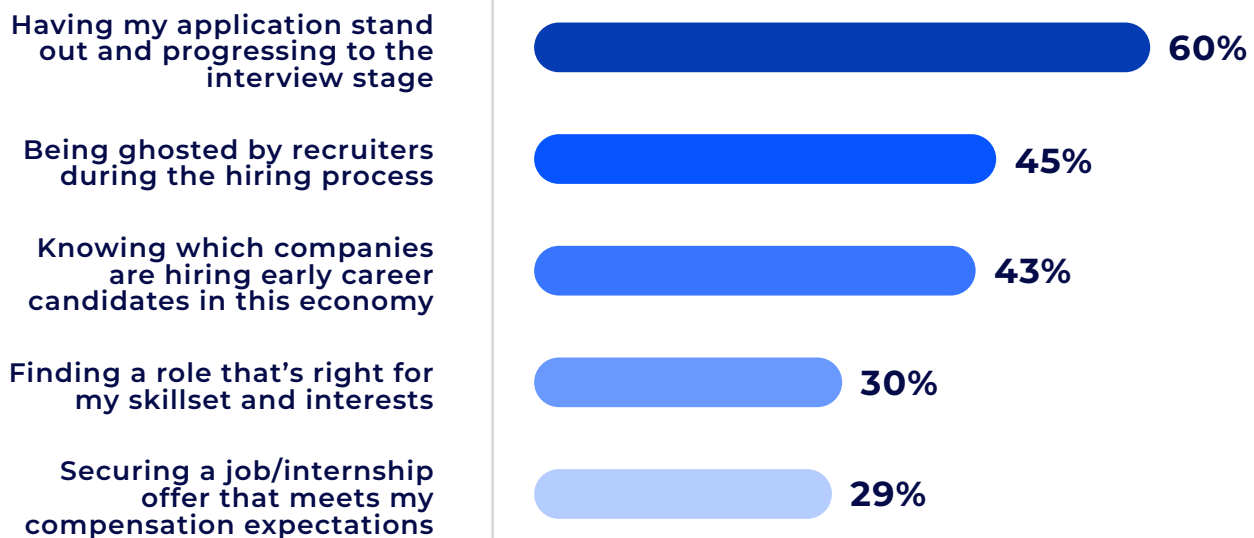
progressing to the interview stage.

Our findings also highlight that 45% of candidates are apprehensive about being ghosted this fall – a scenario where they don't hear back from recruiters post-application or post-interview.

Finally, we also found that 43% of candidates are anticipating it be challenging to navigate which companies are hiring early career candidates like themselves this fall amidst continued layoffs and hiring freezes.

## HAVING APPLICATIONS STAND OUT & BEING 'GHOSTED' ARE GEN Z'S TOP ANTICIPATED JOB SEARCH CHALLENGES

We asked candidates: What do you expect the biggest challenges in your job/internship search to be this year?



75%

## The State of Gen Z Confidence

# Applicant Volume

Now that we've explored Gen Z's shaky confidence and their top anticipated challenges heading into the fall, we sought to find out how those factors may influence how many opportunities Gen Z candidates plan to pursue this year.

What we found is that a majority of early career candidates predict they will send out hundreds of applications during their job or internship search this year.

Specifically, we discovered that 57% of Gen Zers will be sending out a hundred or more applications this fall, with 30% of that group planning to submit more than 200 applications this year.

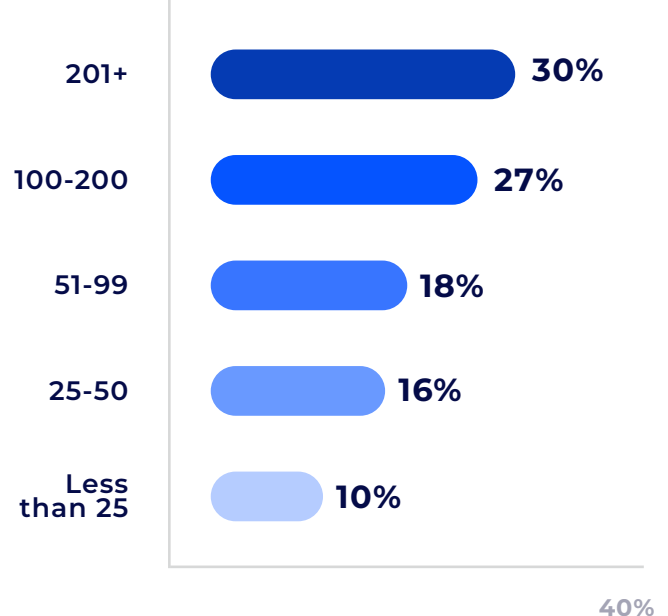
This surge in applications may be related to Gen Z's uncertain confidence in the current job market. Specifically, their desire to secure meaningful roles combined with an inherent uncertainty about their prospects may have spurred them to plan to cast a wide net this year, hoping to increase their chances of landing a promising opportunity.

Additionally, the convenience of applying for roles online may also be contributing to the high volume of applications candidates plan to submit. The digital age has made it remarkably easy for candidates to submit applications with a few clicks, resulting in higher application numbers. The accessibility of online platforms, job boards, and company websites has streamlined the application process, encouraging Gen Z candidates to explore a multitude of opportunities within a short span of time, even if they aren't all a great fit for their skillsets or interests.

All that being said, it's critical that talent

### GEN Z CANDIDATES EXPECT TO SUBMIT 100+ APPLICATIONS THIS FALL

We asked: How many applications do you predict you will submit during your job or internship search this year?



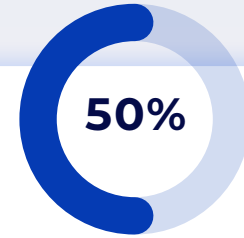
teams looking to secure top talent this year prepare for an influx of applications headed their way this fall. But that's easier said than done, especially as talent teams grow leaner. Identifying a strategic partner like [RippleMatch](#) can help your team swiftly sort applications and spend time on what really matters this fall — connecting with and hiring great-fit talent for your organization.

# Key Takeaways

Gaining insight into Gen Z's expectations and experiences as they approach the fall recruitment season can enable you to tailor your recruitment strategy to address their unique concerns and position your team for success.

### Gen Z's confidence remains shaky heading into the fall

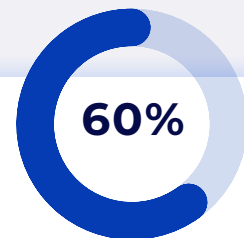
While only 15% of Gen Zers lacked confidence in their job search last fall, 50% of candidates currently harbor skepticism about their ability to secure promising roles within the upcoming year. This shift carries the potential to shape their approach to the job search process, such as how many applications they plan to submit this year, and their willingness to explore opportunities outside of their comfort zones.



50% of Gen Z are not confident in their ability to land a good job/internship this year

### Candidates are concerned with standing out to recruiters this fall

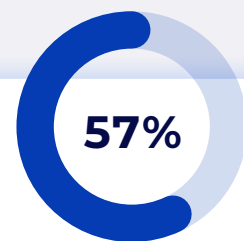
As the fall recruitment season approaches, Gen Z candidates are grappling with how to make a memorable impression on recruiters and get invited to interview, which offers insight into their strategy of submitting hundreds of applications. However, this approach, while intended to increase visibility, could inadvertently contribute to the challenge of capturing recruiters' attention, given the surge in applications.



60% of candidates are concerned with having their applications stand out to recruiters

### Candidates plan to submit 100+ applications this year

We found that a majority of candidates plan to submit a hundred or more applications this fall, which may present a challenge for leaner recruitment teams struggling to keep up with high applicant volume and identify top players before their competitors scoop them up.



57% of candidates plan to submit 100 or more applications this year



# The State of Career Discovery

## How is Gen Z finding opportunities that excite them today?

In today's career exploration landscape, it's critical that employers understand the motivations that drive Gen Z candidates as they pursue internships and jobs. As you'll learn in this section, their choices are influenced by both personal experiences and cutting-edge technology. As we delve into the different methods that candidates are employing as they navigate their career search, it becomes clear that employers looking to engage Gen Z candidates must take a multifaceted approach to recruitment.

This section begins with what is molding Gen Z's career trajectories, which we find is a fusion of real-life experience and digital influence. We then dive into what channels Gen Z candidates are using to find open opportunities today, which in many ways mirrors their career path influences.

The significance of recruitment events in the career journeys of Gen Z cannot be overstated. The second half of this section on career discovery takes a deep dive into recruitment events and Gen Z's preferences around which event-types they wish to attend. Specifically, we'll explore whether in-person or virtual events will be more popular for job searching this fall, as well as the reason behind why candidates prefer one event-type over another.

As campus recruitment teams plan out events, they should acknowledge the emphasis that Gen Z places on in-person interactions. Attending career fairs and visiting campuses remain effective strategies to engage early career talent. Simultaneously, a significant



### WHAT YOU'LL LEARN



What influences Gen Z as they discover careers?



What channels are they using to find roles?



What are their preferences around recruitment events?

subset of candidates favors virtual opportunities, enabling employers to diversify their talent pool and connect with individuals from varying backgrounds across the nation.

We will also explore the reasons behind why candidates may RSVP for an event but not follow through with attending to give employers insights into how they might avoid no-shows. By understanding how Gen Z is searching for roles and how they prefer to connect with employers, talent teams can craft recruitment strategies that resonate with Gen Z candidates today.

## The State of Career Discovery

# Career Path Influences

Before we dive into the methods that Gen Z candidates today are using to find internships and jobs, it's important that employers understand the motivation behind candidates' searches. In other words, what is fueling them to seek an opportunity at a certain company or within a specific field?

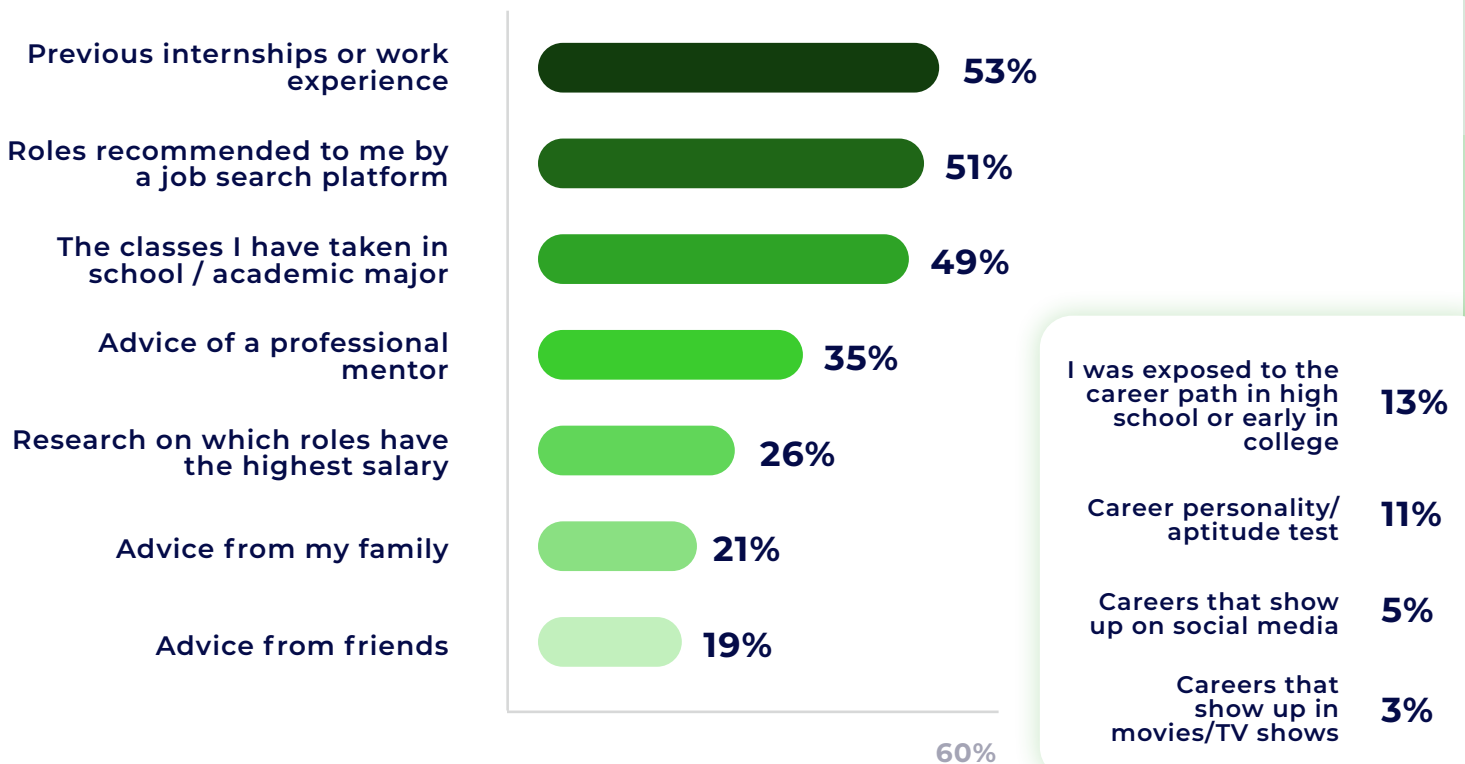
What we discovered is that Gen Z is influenced both by their personal experiences at a company or within the industry, and by

modern technology.

Specifically, when we asked candidates about the decisions behind their career path, 53% said they were influenced by traditional real-life experiences, such as past internships or work experience, and 51% said that job search platforms recommending roles influenced their choices — followed by their academic major or courses (49%).

## GEN Z CAREER PATHS ARE INFLUENCED BY PERSONAL EXPERIENCES AND JOB SEARCH TECHNOLOGY

We asked: When deciding which roles to apply for, which of the following influences your career path?



## The State of Career Discovery

# Job Search Methods

In addition to how they decide on what career path to follow, we also asked candidates what channels they use to search for roles today.

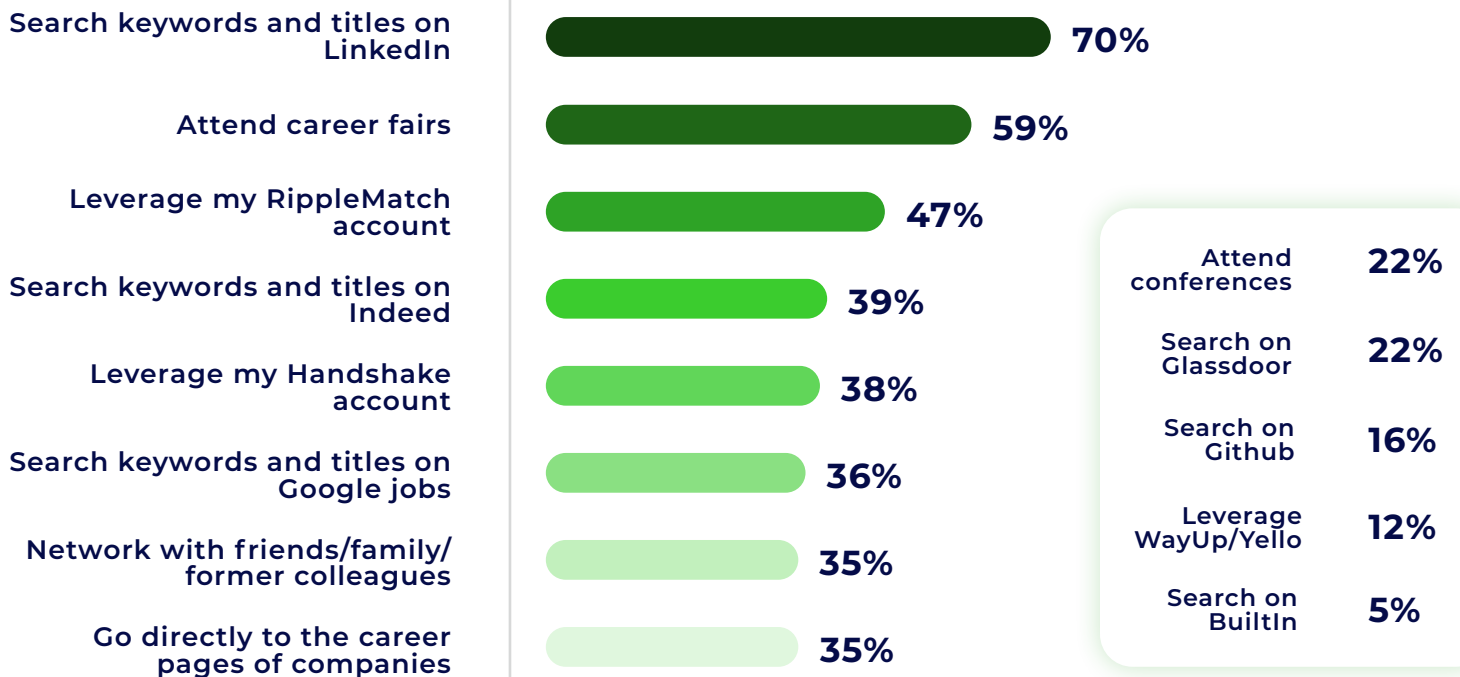
Similar to their career search influences, we discovered that Gen Z is taking a hybrid approach to their job searches, with 70% of candidates today turning online via LinkedIn to find open roles, and nearly 60% leaning on career fairs to learn about new opportunities.

In terms of job search platforms geared toward early career candidates, our survey results also show that candidates today are relying more heavily on RippleMatch (47%) than platforms like Handshake (38%) or WayUp/Yello (12%).

We also found that only 35% of candidates are using networking to find roles or proactively seeking out companies' career pages during their search.

## CANDIDATES ARE USING BOTH ONLINE AND IN-PERSON METHODS TO SEARCH FOR OPEN ROLES

We asked: What are the ways you plan to find and apply for jobs or internships?



75%

## The State of Career Discovery

# Event Preferences

As mentioned on the previous page, recruitment events, such as career fairs, play a significant role when it comes to how Gen Z candidates today are searching for internships and jobs, with nearly 60% of candidates agreeing that they lean on career fairs during their search. And when we asked Gen Z candidates about their preference for recruitment events in general, we found that 92% of candidates plan to attend them as they look for internships and jobs. But what event-types do they prefer, virtual or in-person?

Specifically, we found that 41% of candidates plan to attend more in-person events than virtual events this fall, and that 28% of candidates plan to attend more virtual events. We also found that 23% of candidates plan to attend an equal amount of virtual and in-person events to support their internship/job search.

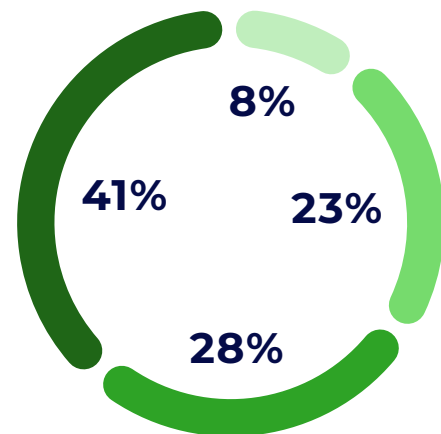
As campus recruitment teams plan out their recruitment events, it's important that they understand that Gen Z candidates today value in-person opportunities to engage with their company, and that visiting campuses and attending career fairs in person remains a great way to attract early career talent.

At the same time, a significant share of candidates have a preference for virtual opportunities, which also offer employers the ability to diversify their teams and connect with talent from different backgrounds across the country.

On the following pages, we'll dive into why candidates prefer one event-type over another, as well as their reasons for declining to show up for recruitment events.

### 41% OF CANDIDATES PLAN TO ATTEND MORE IN-PERSON THAN VIRTUAL EVENTS THIS FALL

We asked: Regarding recruitment events, which statement is the most accurate for your plans for your job/internship search?



- I plan on attending **more in-person** events than virtual events
- I plan on attending **more virtual events** than in-person events
- I plan on attending an **equal amount** of virtual and in-person events
- **I don't plan** on attending any recruitment events

## The State of Career Discovery

# In-Person Events

On the previous page, we highlighted that 41% of candidates plan to attend more in-person recruitment events than virtual events as they search for roles. Within that group, we also asked candidates about their motivations behind that decision.

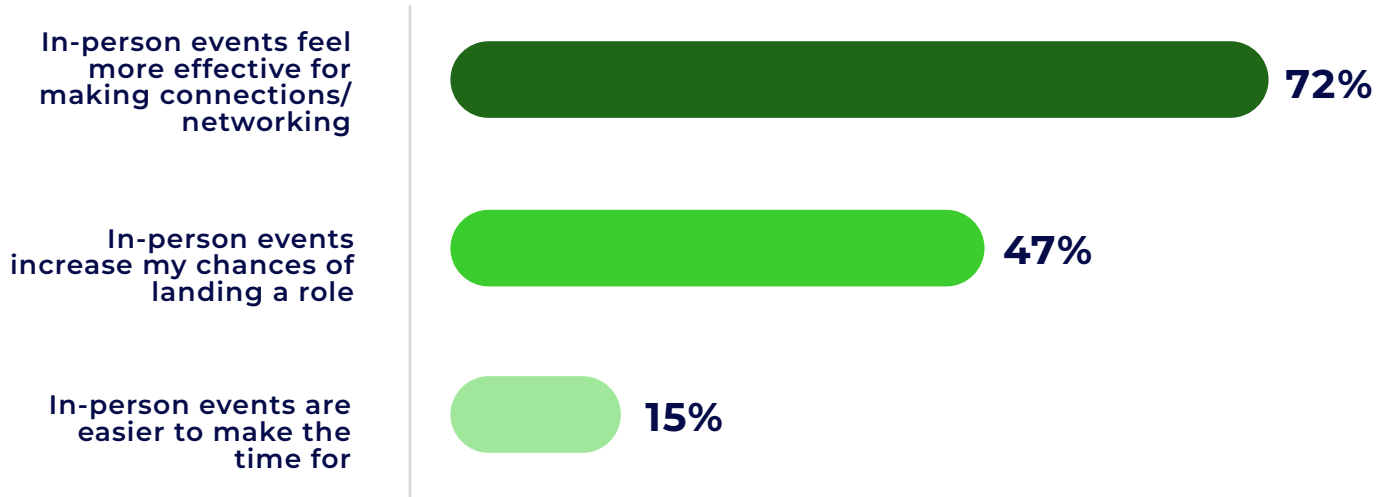
We found that 72% of candidates prefer in-person events because they find them to be more effective for making connections with recruiters and employers. We also found that 47% of candidates find in-person events to increase their chances of landing a role more than virtual events, and that a small share of candidates (15%) prefer in-person events because they are easier to make time for.

Taking a look at the answers that candidates wrote into our survey, we found that some candidates also find that it is easier to stay focused while attending in-person events over events hosted on the screen, and that it is easier to showcase their personality while interacting with recruiters in person than trying to do so on a computer.

Continue reading to learn why other candidates plan to attend more virtual events than in-person events as they search for internships and jobs this year, as well as why candidates neglect to show up to up to events, despite the fact that they RSVPed to them.

## CANDIDATES PREFER IN-PERSON EVENTS FOR MAKING PROFESSIONAL CONNECTIONS

We asked: Why do you plan on attending more in-person events than virtual?



75%

## The State of Career Discovery

# Virtual Events

When it comes to virtual recruitment events, we found that 51% of candidates prefer them to in-person events because it is easier to attend more of these event-types, and that they are more convenient for their schedule.

While in-person events hold significant value for a substantial segment of Gen Z, it's imperative to acknowledge the inherent flexibility that virtual events extend to students spread across the nation.

This point is underscored by a respondent who noted in our survey that they intend to participate in virtual recruitment events this year due to the fact they are studying abroad for the semester.

Our data also shows that 31% of candidates find virtual events to increase their chances of landing a role over in-person events (compared to 47% of candidates who find in-person events to increase their chances of landing a role more than virtual events).

Finally, nearly 30% of candidates told us that they prefer virtual events because most employers don't visit their schools in-person, and that virtual events allow them to learn about new opportunities. Virtual events, in this context, serve as an avenue for them to explore new roles and gather insights from a broader range of employers that they might not otherwise have access to.

## CANDIDATES PREFER VIRTUAL EVENTS FOR EASE OF ATTENDING MORE EVENTS

We asked: Why do you plan on attending more in-person events than virtual?

It is easier to attend more of these events and more convenient for my schedule



Virtual events increase my chances of landing a role



Most employers don't visit my school



75%

## The State of Career Discovery

# Event No-Shows

Now that you have a better understanding of candidates' event preferences and the reasons behind their plans to attend a certain event-type over another, it is also important to understand their motivations for neglecting to attend a recruitment event — either in-person or virtually. This information is crucial as talent teams draft their strategies for creating and promoting their recruitment events.

When we asked candidates why they might RSVP to a recruitment event but not end up attending, 53% told us that something came up that was a higher priority that day, followed by 38% who said they had some interest in the event when they RSVPed, but they were not fully committed to attending. We also found that 36% of candidates RSVPed with no intention of attending the event, but solely to receive information from the event.

To help employers create recruitment events that keep candidates engaged from the very beginning, we pulled [data from 2022-2023](#) on the most successful recruitment events hosted on our platform. We found that the top 25 events on our platform accomplished one of three things: they provided students with information about a company with a very specific focus, they offered some form of professional development opportunity, or they targeted a specific school.

Finally, 23% of candidates told us they might not attend an event if they didn't receive enough follow-up information, and just under 10% said they forgot about the commitment. Its critical recruitment teams are [communicating with their RSVPs](#) to both provide them with details about the event, and to stay top-of-mind so candidates don't forget about the event.

### NEARLY 40% OF CANDIDATES ARE SKIPPING EVENTS DUE TO LIMITED INTEREST

We asked: Why might you RSVP for a recruitment event, but not end up attending?

Something came up that was a higher priority the day of



I RSVPed with some interest, but wasn't sure if I would really attend



I couldn't attend live but wanted to receive the info from the event



I didn't receive sufficient follow-up from a recruiter to understand where to sign on/show up



I forgot about the commitment

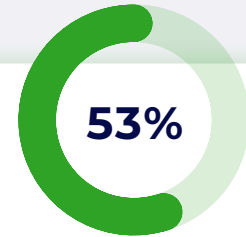


# Key Takeaways

Understanding the motivations behind Gen Z's career discovery, such as what influences their job search and how they prefer to connect with companies, is critical for employers looking to attract early career candidates today.

### Gen Z is using personal experiences and tech to learn about careers & jobs

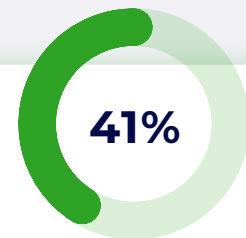
Gen Z's pursuit of internships and jobs is fueled by a combination of personal experiences and modern technology. Employers aiming to reach Gen Z candidates should acknowledge their reliance on both tangible experiences and digital tools, and create recruitment strategies that touch both aspects of the modern job search.



of candidates discover career paths through previous work experience

### Gen Z values in-person opportunities to connect with recruiters

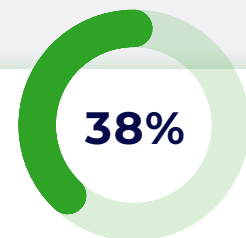
For Gen Z candidates, in-person opportunities hold immense value when connecting with recruiters. Campus recruitment strategies should recognize that Gen Z highly values face-to-face interactions and the chance to engage with companies in person. Incorporating in-person events within your recruitment strategy, such as campus visits and career fairs, remains a great way to attract early career talent this fall.



of candidates prefer in-person recruitment events over virtual

### Event no-shows may be due to limited interest

One of the primary reasons for event no-shows is limited interest in the event. While some candidates may have initially RSVPed with some level of interest, they might not be fully committed to attending just yet. Effective recruitment events need to address this by providing clear and targeted content that continuously engages candidates.



of candidates who don't show for an event were not fully committed



# The State of Hiring Expectations

## What elements of your hiring process resonate with Gen Z today, and where might you be falling short?

Despite entering the labor market with shaky confidence and plans to submit hundreds of applications to a limited number of roles, Gen Z candidates today have high expectations when it comes to employers' hiring processes.

In this section, we'll dive into Gen Z's expectations during each part of the hiring process — from applications, to interviews, to being hired.

This section kicks off with candidates'



experiences during the application process, specifically what might lead to a negative candidate experience as they first interact with your brand, and how quickly they think employers should either reject or advance them.

We'll also explore the time frame in which Gen Z starts to lose interest in a role after applying and hearing nothing back to help employers better understand the growing importance of a [quick applicant response time](#). We will then dive into Gen Z's preferences when it comes to the interview process, in which the data will reiterate the need for employers to identify ways to reduce the amount of time it takes for them to respond to candidates.

Finally, we will explore what Gen Z thinks the ideal amount of time the entire hiring process should take (from application to hire) to illustrate how crucial it is for employers who want to hire Gen Z candidates to have the systems in place to do so quickly.

This section of the report should serve as a benchmarking tool for your team, offering invaluable insights into the alignment of your current hiring process with Gen Z's expectations and desires. Plus, the section is intended to help you identify areas within your hiring process that warrant increased efficiency to help you secure top talent, protect your employer brand, and stay ahead of the curve.

### TIMELINES THAT GEN Z EXPECT DURING THE HIRING PROCESS



#### 5-7 business days

*What Gen Z considers a 'timely' response to applications*

#### Less than 2 weeks

*How long before Gen Z loses interest in a role if they don't hear back*

#### 3-4 weeks

*How long Gen Z hopes the hiring process – application to interview – will take*

## The State of Hiring Expectations

# The Application Process

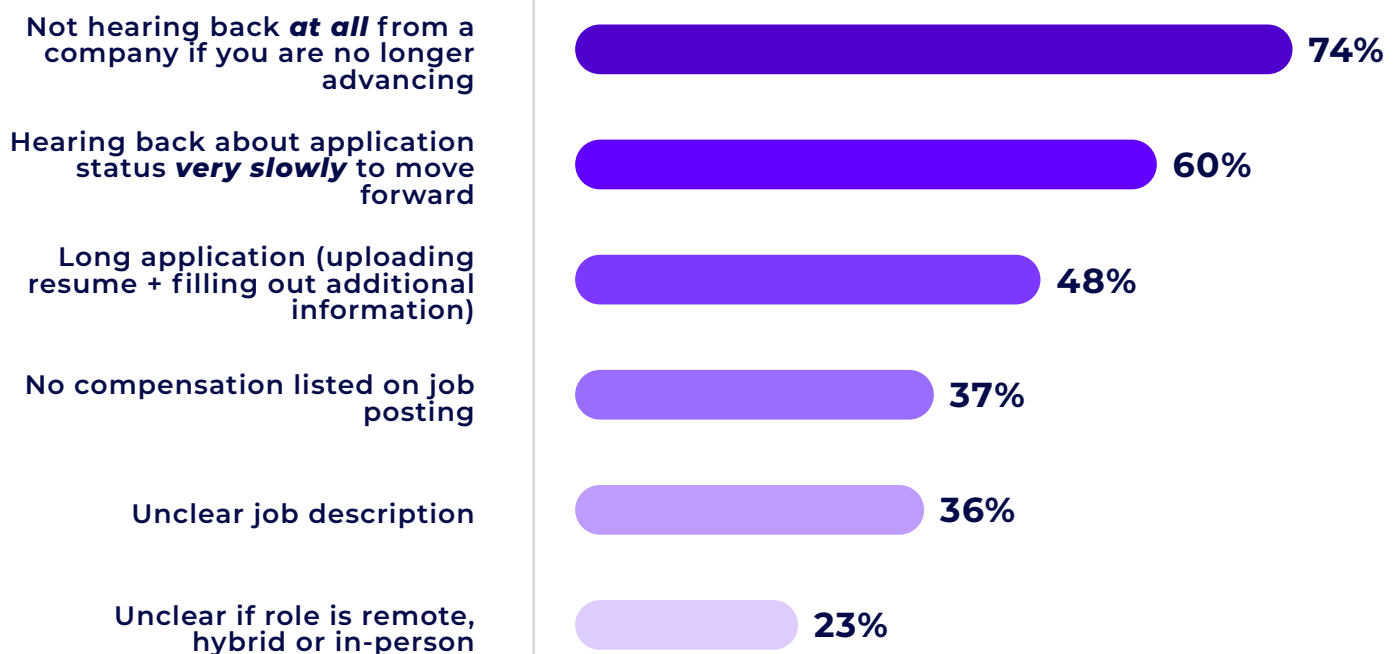
As mentioned in section one of this guide, the ease of modern internship/job application technology has enabled candidates to send out hundreds of applications each. At the same time, [applicant review technology](#) on the employer-side remains limited, and as a result many employer are struggling with slow response times and are 'ghosting' applicants.

This puts employers at risk of tarnishing their

reputation and losing great candidates once interested in their company. In fact, our data shows that being 'ghosted' or not hearing back at all from a company is the top indicator of a negative candidate experience for Gen Z today, followed by a very slow response to their applications. It's therefore imperative that employers today prioritize a [quick applicant response time](#).

## GHOSTING IS THE NUMBER ONE FACTOR LEADING TO A NEGATIVE CANDIDATE EXPERIENCE DURING APPLICATIONS FOR GEN Z

We asked: When applying to jobs or internships, which of the following options contributes to a negative experience?



80%

# Applicant Response Rates

When we asked candidates how they feel about being ghosted by recruiters, 72% told us that they feel frustrated when they don't hear back after putting in the time to complete an application, adding that they prefer a rejection to silence.

But in terms of when an employer gets back to an applicant, how slow is too slow? On the previous page we highlighted that for many Gen Z candidates, a slow response time to their applications is a top indicator of a negative candidate experience. So what timeline is ideal when it comes to responding to Gen Z?

Notably, the current [industry average for responding to candidates is 17 days](#) – but we found that length of time may be too much for Gen Z today.

Specifically, our survey results show that a majority of early career candidates today (63%) expect to hear back after submitting their application within one week or less. That discrepancy can harm an employer's brand in both the short and long term, and can cause employers to lose great-fit candidates to their competitors with speedier response times.

Using [RippleMatch](#) to sort through applications, recruiters on our platform — with even the leanest of teams — are able to respond to all of their applicants within one week, quickly rejecting unqualified ones and focusing on advancing qualified candidates through their hiring process. In fact, top performing teams on our platform are even getting back to candidates within one day of receiving their application, beating their competition for great-fit talent.

## MAJORITY OF CANDIDATES EXPECT AN APPLICATION RESPONSE WITHIN 1 WEEK

We asked: After submitting an application, how fast do you think a company should get back to you about your application status?

2 business days or less



3-4 business days



5-7 business days



8-14 business days (1-2 weeks)



15-21 business days (2-3 weeks)



22-32 business days (3-4 weeks)



# When Candidates Lose Interest

In addition to when candidates expect to hear back from employers after submitting their applications, we also asked candidates about when they begin to lose interest in a role they were once excited about.

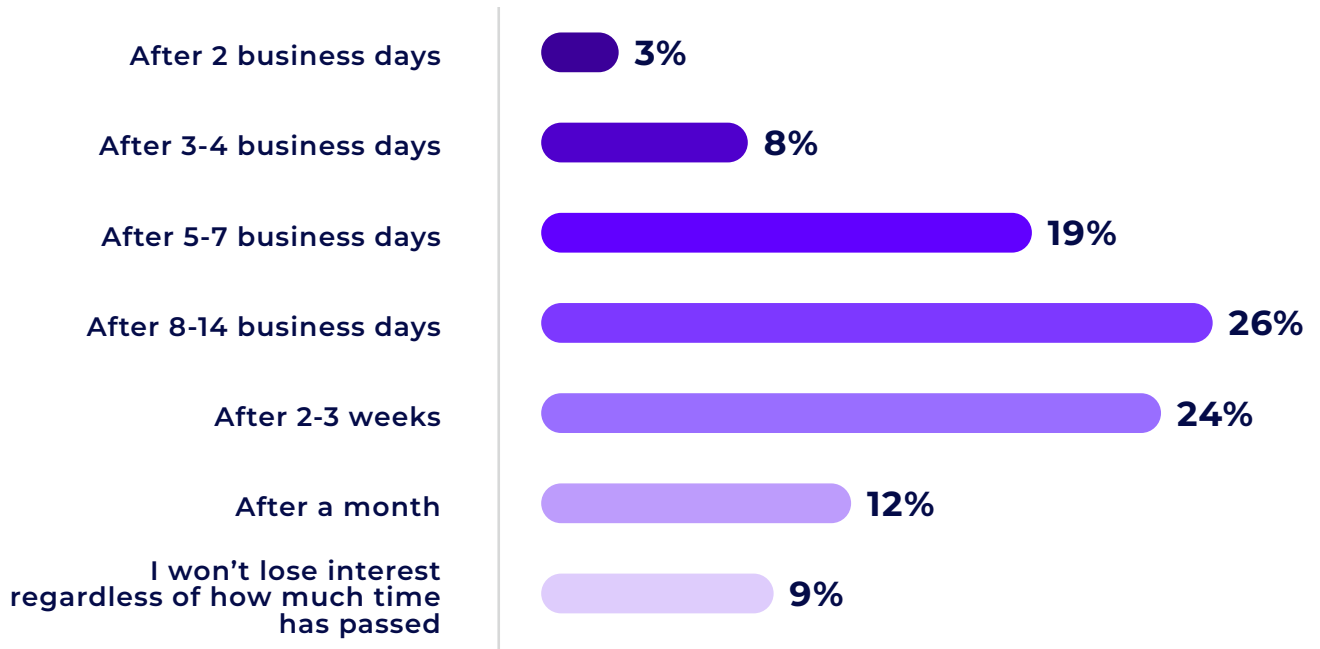
We found that a majority of candidates (56%) begin to lose interest in a role within two weeks of applying. While they expect to hear back from employers within one week and

may feel under-appreciated or unimportant to the employer after that time frame, many candidates admit that they will still remain interested in the role for another 7 days.

That being said, with the industry average being 17 days to respond to applications, many employers today will struggle to keep candidates excited about their opportunity before their competitors scoop them up.

## GEN Z CANDIDATES BEGIN TO LOSE INTEREST IN A ROLE WITHIN TWO WEEKS OF APPLYING

We asked: If you don't hear back from a company initially after submitting an application, after how many days do you begin to lose interest in their role, even if they were to eventually respond?



30%

# The Interview Process

When it comes to the interview process, being ghosted by recruiters continues to be a top indicator of a bad candidate experience.

As explained previously, 74% of candidates agreed that not hearing back from employers at all after submitting their application would result in a negative candidate experience. Heading a little further into the hiring process, 70% of candidates told us that not hearing back from a company if they are no longer advancing after an interview contributes to a

poor candidate experience (while 52% cited a slow response time on next steps to be a top indicator of negative experience with an employer).

A majority of candidates (57%) also said that a lack of information about what to expect during the interview process would result in a negative candidate experience, and nearly 40% of candidates said unprofessional behavior from interviews, such as being late or unprepared, would harm their perception.

## 70% OF CANDIDATES CONSIDER BEING GHOSTED AFTER AN INTERVIEW A TOP INDICATOR OF A BAD CANDIDATE EXPERIENCE

We asked: When interviewing for a role with a company, which of the following options contributes to a negative experience?

Not hearing back from a company if you are no longer advancing after an interview



Lack of information on what to expect from the interview process



Slow response time on next steps of interview or rejection notification



Unprofessional behavior from interviewer



Excessive rounds of interviews seemingly without reason



Lack of diversity among interviewers



80%

# From Application to Hire

Clearly Gen Z candidates appreciate and expect a tight feedback loop when it comes to whether or not they are advancing within your hiring process. But how long do they think the entirety of the hiring process — from application to offer — should take?

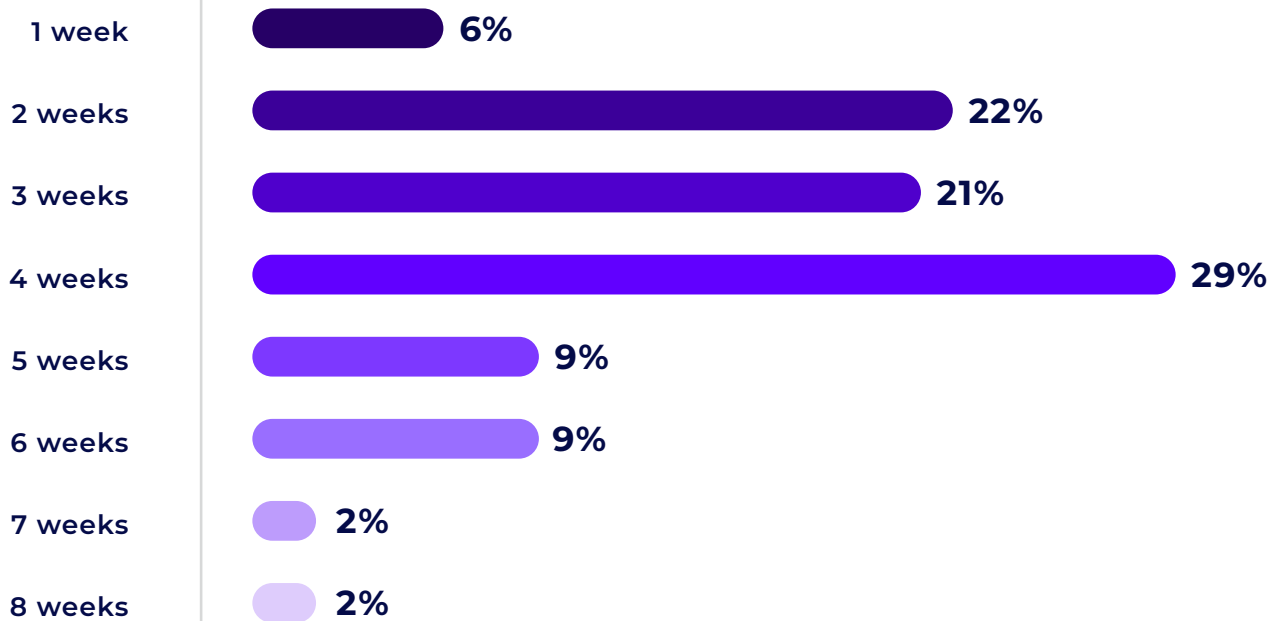
When we asked candidates what they feel to be the most reasonable and ideal amount of

time for an employer's hiring process to take, we found that most candidates today (77%) agree that time frame should be four weeks or less.

Within that group, nearly 50% of candidates think it should be closer to three weeks, and nearly 30% think the process should take two weeks or less.

## NEARLY 80% OF CANDIDATES THINK THE ENTIRE HIRING PROCESS SHOULD TAKE LESS THAN ONE MONTH

We asked: From submitting an application to receiving an offer, what do you feel is the most reasonable and ideal amount of time for a hiring process to take?



30%

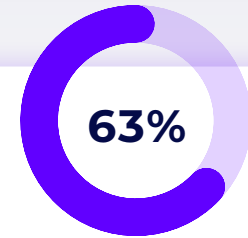
## The State of Hiring Expectations

# Key Takeaways

The data included in this section is a great benchmarking tool for talent teams looking to craft a hiring process that attracts Gen Z talent and keeps them excited about their opportunities.

### Gen Z expects a response to their applications within one week

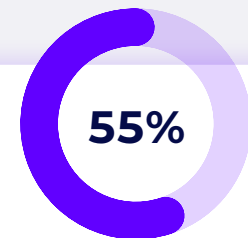
The current industry average of 17 days for responding to candidates' applications does not align well with Gen Z expectations. In fact, we found that 63% of early career candidates anticipate hearing back within a week or less after applying. Failing to meet this timeline can not only damage an employer's reputation in both the short and long term but also result in the loss of great candidates to competitors with faster response rates.



63%  
of candidates expect a response  
after their application within one  
week

### Candidates lose interest in a role within 2 weeks

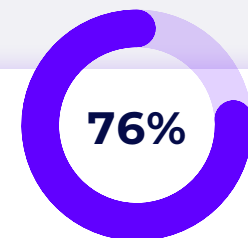
Candidates' interest in a role can wane quickly if employers fail to provide timely responses. A significant majority (55%) of candidates start losing interest within two weeks of applying. Swift response times are crucial to retaining candidate enthusiasm and positioning employers as an attractive choice for Gen Z talent.



55%  
of candidates lose interest in a  
role within two weeks

### Gen Z hopes the hiring process will take under a month

Gen Z candidates have a strong preference for quick feedback during the hiring process. When considering the entire journey from application to offer, approximately 76% of candidates believe that a 4-week timeline is reasonable. Employers that struggle to provide initial application responses swiftly will find it challenging to meet these expectations.



76%  
of candidates think the hiring  
process should take 4 weeks or  
less

# The State of Reneges

## How do Gen Z candidates today feel about rescinding their offers if a better one comes along?

Now that we've delved into Gen Z's preferences during the hiring process, namely around the speed at which employers respond to their applications and statuses, we also wanted to explore what occurs in the mind of Gen Z after they accept your offer.

Specifically, how loyal do they feel to your organization after completing your hiring process, and what would cause them to pursue another opportunity even after signing your offer?

Looking across four data sets from spring 2022 through fall 2023, we found that Gen Z has remained steadfast in their attitudes toward reneges, with this year signaling the highest inclination for rescinding offers yet. Specifically, we found that 76% of candidates today would renege on their offer if a better one came along, compared to 68% just last spring, 75% from fall 2022, and 73% from spring 2022.

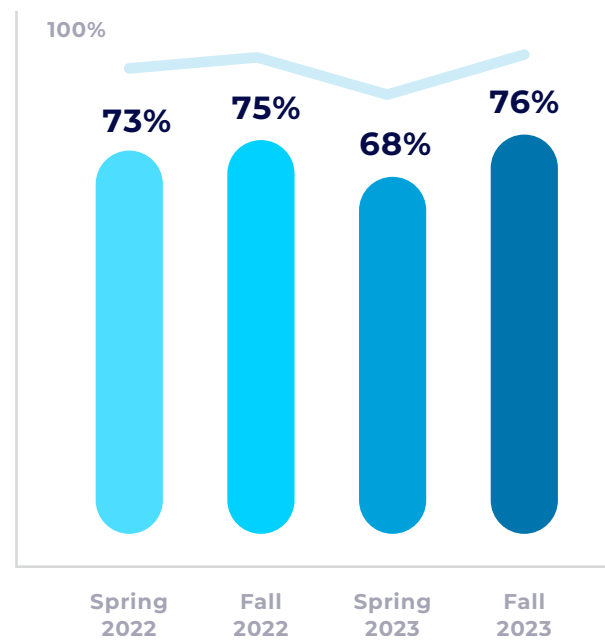
As the dynamics of the modern workforce continue to evolve, adapting your approach to not only attract but also retain Gen Z talent becomes an imperative. And that includes accepted candidates who may not have start dates until months away.

The rest of this section will dive into the reason behind reneges today, followed by the steps that employers can take to avoid reneges and keep accepted candidates excited about their opportunities before their start dates.



### CANDIDATES' WILLINGNESS TO RENEGE ON OFFERS IS HIGH AS EVER

This graph represents candidates who said they **would rescind** their original offer if a better one came along.





## The State of Reneges

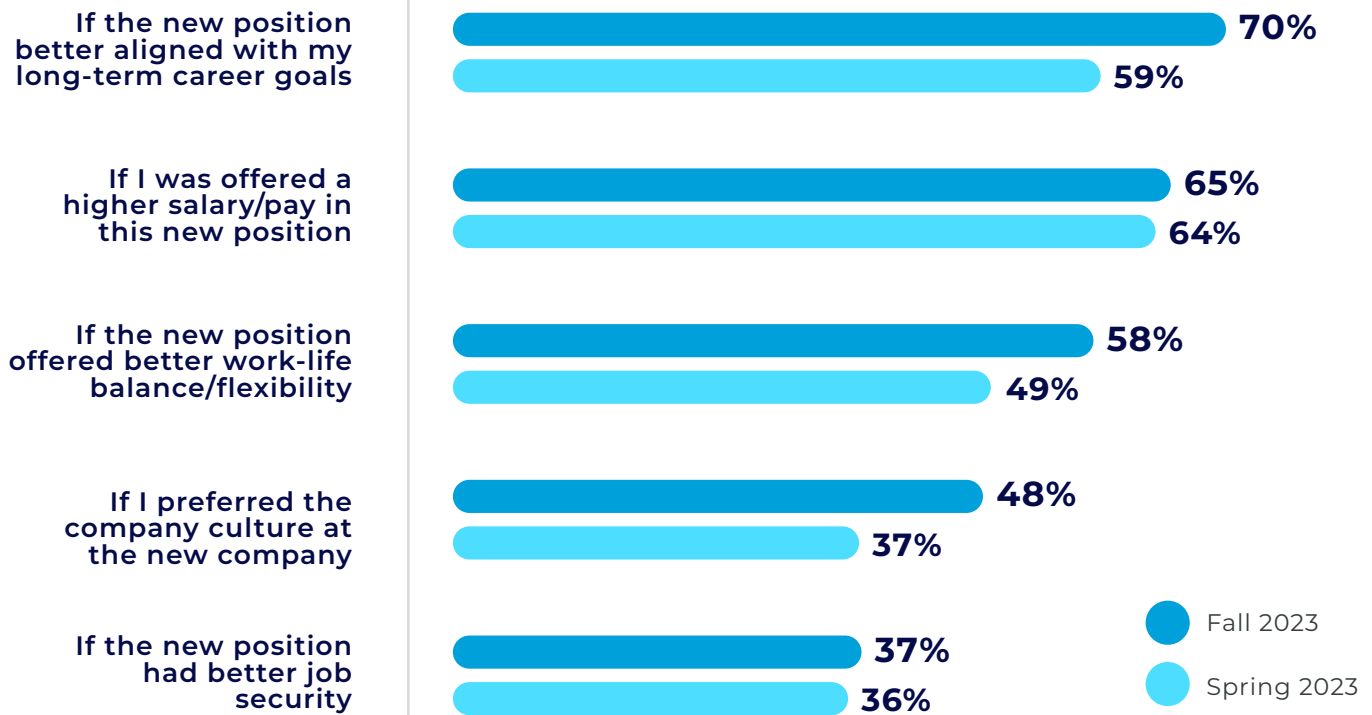
# Reasons for Reneging

When we asked candidates last spring about the reasons they would rescind an offer, the most popular response (64%) was over a higher salary, followed by career fit (59%). This fall, however, that order was swapped, with an alignment with long-term career goals being the most common reason (70%), followed by compensation (65%).

This fall, work-life balance may also play a larger role in reneges (with 58% of candidates saying they would renege over this factor compared to 49% last spring), as well as culture-fit, with nearly half of candidates today agreeing this would be a reason to renege, compared to 37% last spring.

## CAREER FIT INCREASES IN SIGNIFICANCE FOR GEN Z CANDIDATES WHEN IT COMES TO REASONS FOR RENEGING

We asked: What would be the reasons you would rescind an offer for a different one?



75%

## The State of Reneges

# Avoiding Reneges

In addition to asking today's candidates about the reasons behind why they would renege, we also asked them what companies can do to make them less likely to back out of their offers.

What we found aligns with the fact that candidates today consider a superior salary and better career fit to be the top two reasons for reneging—and that discussing the two with Gen Z at length can make all the difference.

Specifically, we found that a majority of candidates (57%) agree that matching their competing offer would stop them from backing out, followed by 47% of candidates who think that being walked through their compensation package would keep them excited about their original offer.

Similarly, 47% of candidates also said that they would be less inclined to renege if an employer walked them through opportunities for professional growth and career advancement at the company.

We also found that 42% of candidates said they would feel more allegiance to a company if they kept in touch on a regular basis, but under one-third said that meeting future coworkers would deter them from reneging.

Just over a third of candidates said that a signing bonus would make them less likely to renege on an offer.

With all of this in mind, it's important for employers looking to keep accepted candidates warm take the extra step of walking them through the details of their compensation packages and potential for internal growth during the hiring process.

### EMPLOYERS CAN REDUCE RENEGES WITH COMP & GROWTH CONVERSATIONS

What are some things a company could do that would make you less likely to rescind an offer for another one?

If for compensation reasons, offer to match the salary of the new offer I received



Walk through my compensation package so I understand its full value



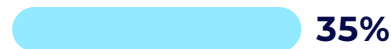
Walk me through their opportunities for growth and career advancement at the company



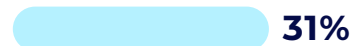
Stay in touch on a regular basis prior to me beginning my position with the company



Offer a signing bonus I only receive when I start the job



Put me in touch with my future coworkers to build community

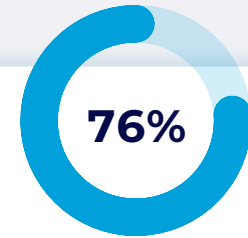


# Key Takeaways

Acknowledging that Gen Z's inclination to renege remains high, talent teams today need to understand why candidates may renege and how they might avoid losing accepted candidates to competitors.

### Willingness to renege reaches all-time high

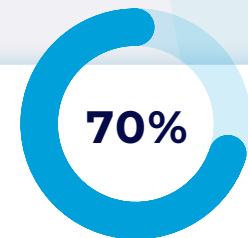
Three-quarters of Gen Z would renege today if another better offer came around, marking a substantial increase from the previous spring (where 68% of candidates said they would rescind an offer for a superior one). Understanding the evolving motivations behind reneges and implementing effective retention strategies emerges as a critical concern for employers aiming to retain their accepted candidates.



of Gen Z would renege on an offer for a better one

### Career fit and work-life balance have increased in importance for Gen Z

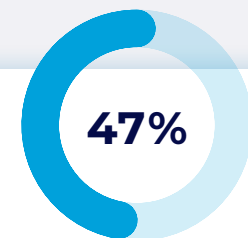
When we asked Gen Z about why they would renege today and compared their responses to last spring, we found that they are placing a greater emphasis on career alignment and work-life balance when evaluating their future employers. While compensation remains a large factor in reasons for reneging, it's important for talent teams to acknowledge that there are other considerations beyond compensation as Gen Z evaluates offers.



of candidates would renege over career fit

### Employers can mitigate renege risk with conversations around salary & career development

We found that, in addition to matching salary offers, walking candidates through your compensation package and potential for growth at your company can be critical in deterring candidates from backing out of their offers. As employers build strategies around keeping accepted candidates warm, they should consider including these discussions during their hiring processes.



of candidates would be less likely to renege after discussing their compensation package

# Final Takeaways

Now that you understand the experiences and preferences of today's early career candidates, below are the top three takeaways you need to build a hiring process tailored to Gen Z talent.

## **Gen Z has ushered in the mass-apply era**

Early career candidates today expect to submit hundreds of applications this year, fueled partly by their lack of confidence in the labor market and the ability to apply to many roles online with the click of a button. This phenomenon is sure to impact talent teams this recruitment season and beyond, especially as those teams grow leaner and budgets continue to tighten. It's therefore imperative that employers looking to secure top Gen Z talent partner with a recruitment automation platform like RippleMatch to streamline sourcing and applicant review this year.

## **Candidates today are taking a hybrid approach to discovering career paths and searching for jobs**

Today's early career candidates are relying both on personal experiences, such as past work and internships, as well as technology, such as roles recommended by a job search platform like RippleMatch, to discover career paths and search for open roles. Similarly, we learned that candidates today are attending both in-person and virtual career fairs, with different reason for preferring one over the other. With this in mind, its critical that recruitment teams engage in a hybrid approach to recruitment to meet candidates where they are.

## **Gen Z today expect a tight feedback loop during your hiring process**

Through the section in our report about hiring expectations once thing remained clear — Gen Z wants timely responses from employers, whether they are advancing in your hiring process or not, and expect a hiring process that doesn't exceed one month. Employers that continue to struggle to respond to applicants in a timely matter or at all risk losing out on great candidates this year and tarnishing their employer brand in the long-term.

**By leveraging the comprehensive data and analysis in this report, you can assess your current recruitment practices and hiring process and establish your organization as an employer of choice for Gen Z.**

# Want more content like this?

We have resources for leaders who care about recruiting and retaining the next generation of talent. Check out our other guides and reports to help inform your talent acquisition strategies.



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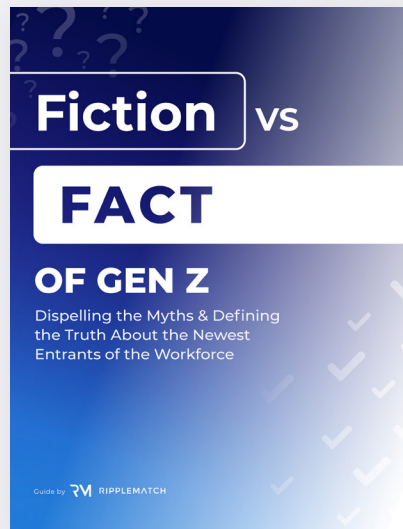
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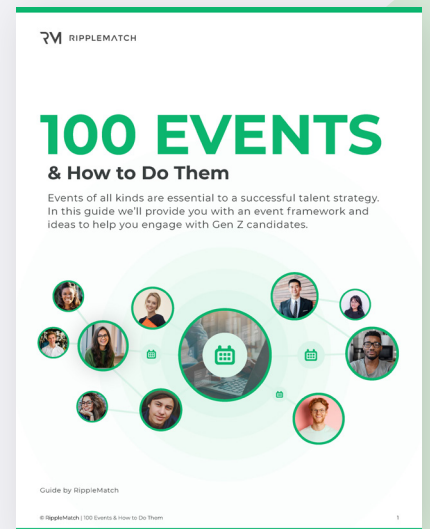
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# About RippleMatch

RippleMatch is the new way to hire early career talent and build diverse teams.

Our recruitment automation platform takes all the manual effort out of candidate sourcing and applicant review, making it the most cost-effective and time-efficient way to recruit Gen Z.

Learn more by visiting [RippleMatch.com/employers](https://RippleMatch.com/employers)

A decorative graphic in the bottom left corner consisting of several overlapping, semi-transparent shapes in shades of light blue, light green, light purple, and lavender. The shapes are rounded and layered, creating a modern, abstract design.