

2026 GLOBAL REPORT

Inside the Candidate Experience: By the Numbers

KEY FINDINGS FROM OUR 2026 GLOBAL RESEARCH

**1,000+**
job seekers

**10**
markets

Organizations across
20 sectors

Organizations globally are investing more than ever in AI-enabled hiring. Our latest research tells the story of a widening gap — between employer intention and what candidates experience. It is not primarily a story about technology. It is a story about communication. Or rather, the lack of it.

THE MUTUAL SILENCE

AI is being used by both employers and candidates, but no one is talking about it.

52%
of job seekers globally used AI during their job search in the last six months. India leads at 84%, with the U.S. at just 22%.

75%
of candidates who used AI said nothing to employers — 54% simply weren't asked

52%
believe AI is probably or definitely screening their applications

65%
of candidates heard nothing about AI from any employer they applied to

This silence has consequences.

39% of candidates who suspected AI screening changed their approach as a result

THE GHOSTING PROBLEM

64%
of candidates heard nothing back from more than half the employers they applied to

less than 1 in 10
were never ghosted at all — not being ghosted is the exception

66% felt frustrated or discouraged after being ghosted

37% would tell others not to apply after a bad experience

36% would stop purchasing from that company

AI may improve efficiency and ROI, but communication failures can erode those gains, turning candidate experience issues into business risks.

CONFIDENCE IN HUMAN REVIEW

25% of job seekers were very confident a human reviewed their application

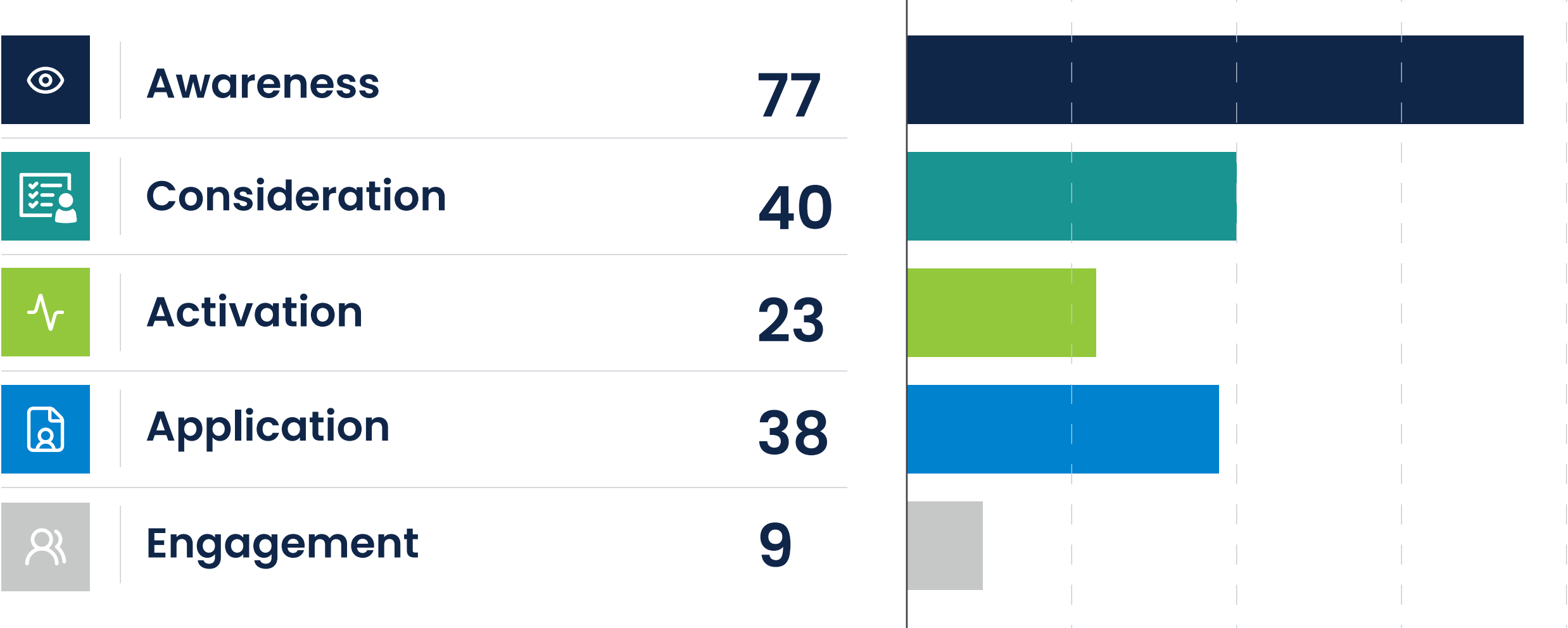
30% somewhat confident

30% not sure

12% not confident at all

The confidence gap: Among candidates who suspected AI screening, only 20% were very confident a human reviewed their application. Among those with no suspicion, 55% were confident. The gap is not caused by AI. It is caused by the silence around it.

THE CANDIDATE EXPERIENCE INDEX:
How Employers Perform

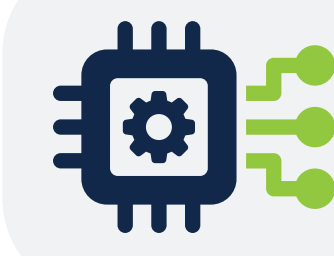


Engagement covers everything after a candidate applies: acknowledgment, next steps, rejection communication, specific feedback. In 2023, Engagement scored 24. In 2026, it scores 9.

WHAT CANDIDATES ACTUALLY WANT

The top three priorities among job seekers — respect for their time, a transparent process and fair assessment — are Engagement-stage commitments.

Priority	Global Avg (out of 5)
Employer respects my time	4.36
Process is transparent	4.28
Fair assessment regardless of background	4.27
Clear feedback if rejected	4.17
Guaranteed human review	4.12
Application is quick (5–10 min)	3.99
Demonstrate skills (work sample)	3.58



As employers invest in new technologies, the greatest opportunity lies in improving the human moments candidates value most.

To get the full analysis and understand what this means for your talent acquisition program, download the full research report, *Inside the Candidate Experience 2026*.

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