An exploration of job-hunting preferences in the games industry

Bridging the gap between candidates' expectations and companies' recruitment processes.

HITMARKER.NET | The home of gaming jobs.

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Introduction

When we look at who makes up the gaming community, we find a huge diversity of age, gender, ethnicity, and location. This isn't a surprise given that it's by far the largest entertainment industry in the world, topping both movies and music.

Over 50% of gamers come from the Asia-Pacific region, 15% from the Middle East & Africa, 14% from Europe, 7% from North America, and 10% from Latin America. (Newzoo, 2021). Genders are also varied: 45% of US-based gamers are cisgender women, with this figure rising to 50% in the UK and Europe.

However, when we look at game developers and the people working in the games industry, they aren't representative of the audience they create for. According to the 2020 UKIE census of the UK games industry, 70% of all staff members were male, 28% were female, and only 2% were non-binary. Their ethnicity split was 90% white, 6% Asian, 2% black, and 2% mixed race.

This discrepancy led us to look at the industry through our recruitment lens in the hopes of understanding

where the barriers for underrepresented groups are, and what companies can do to remove them.

Our first step was to create the biggest recruitment survey in games, asking companies about their hiring processes and candidates about their preferences when job hunting. Once we had this data, we analyzed the different candidate groups so we could understand what mattered most to each of them, specifically underrepresented groups, to later compare to the hiring processes of companies.

In this report, we've analyzed what candidates want to see in job descriptions, how important they find gender-neutral job posts, how frequently they write unique cover letters, how many interview stages they feel comfortable doing, their openness to automated interviews, and their interest in job-specific questions replacing cover letters.

In order to understand the data, we've divided the respondents into two groups — one containing all candidates, and the second containing only those with

full time jobs and three years of experience in the games industry. This allowed us to measure whether or not the seniority of a candidate changes what they value when job seeking.

While this report focuses on candidate preferences, we'll also be publishing future studies on the role of feedback, tests, recruiters, and bias within recruitment.

Thanks for your support as we seek to improve the recruitment process for everyone.

Sara Machado
Head of Recruitment

Who's running this survey?

Hitmarker
The home of gaming jobs

Hitmarker is the world's largest English language video game industry job platform. It provides candidates with a curated feed of listings and hiring companies with access to an unrivaled pool of talent that loves video games. Hitmarker's mission is to make the hiring process as smooth, transparent, and fair as possible. The company was incorporated in February 2018 and has since grown into a multi-award-winning operation based out of Newcastle upon Tyne in the far north of England.

Hitmarker.net   Twitter   LinkedIn

Sara Machado
Head of Recruitment

Sara Machado is a London-based Brazilian game recruiter and career strategist with a strong focus on diversity, inclusion, and equity. She is currently working as Hitmarker's Head of Recruitment. Her main goal is to help studios create inclusive and less-biased recruitment processes, while also advocating for more entry-level roles and representation at every single level — especially senior management.
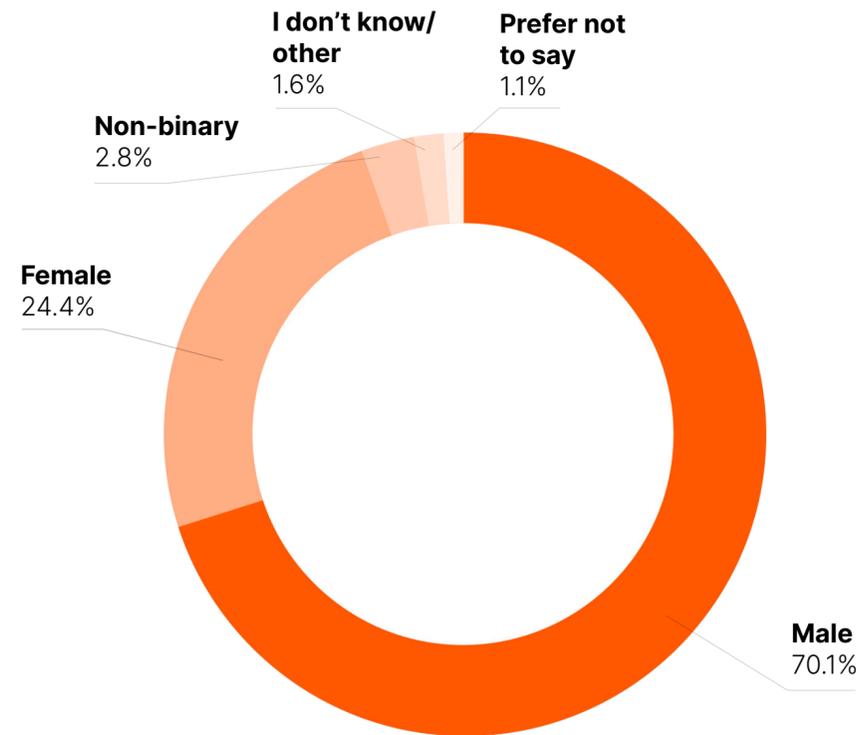
Twitter   LinkedIn

632 people from a variety of backgrounds completed our survey.

How old are you?

44.6% | **18-24**
44.5% | **25-34**
9.2% | **35-44**
1.4% | **45-54**
0.3% | **55+**
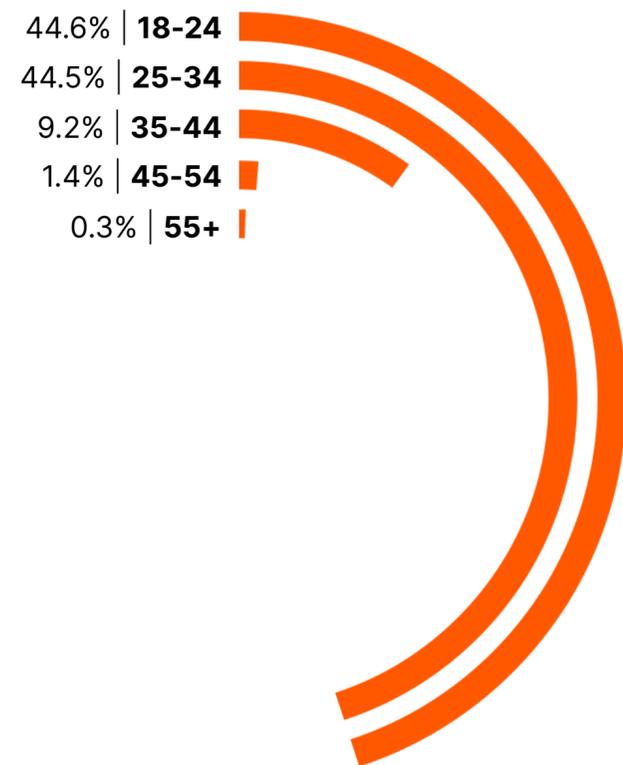
How would you self-identify?

*Among male, female, and non-binary respondents, **9.9%** were transgender.

I don't know/ other
1.6%

Prefer not to say
1.1%

Non-binary
2.8%

Female
24.4%

Male
70.1%

Are your day-to-day activities limited because of a health problem or disability which has lasted, or is expected to last, at least 12 months?

78.3%	No
16.9%	Yes, limited a little
2.5%	Yes, limited a lot
1.9%	Prefer not to answer
0.3%	Other
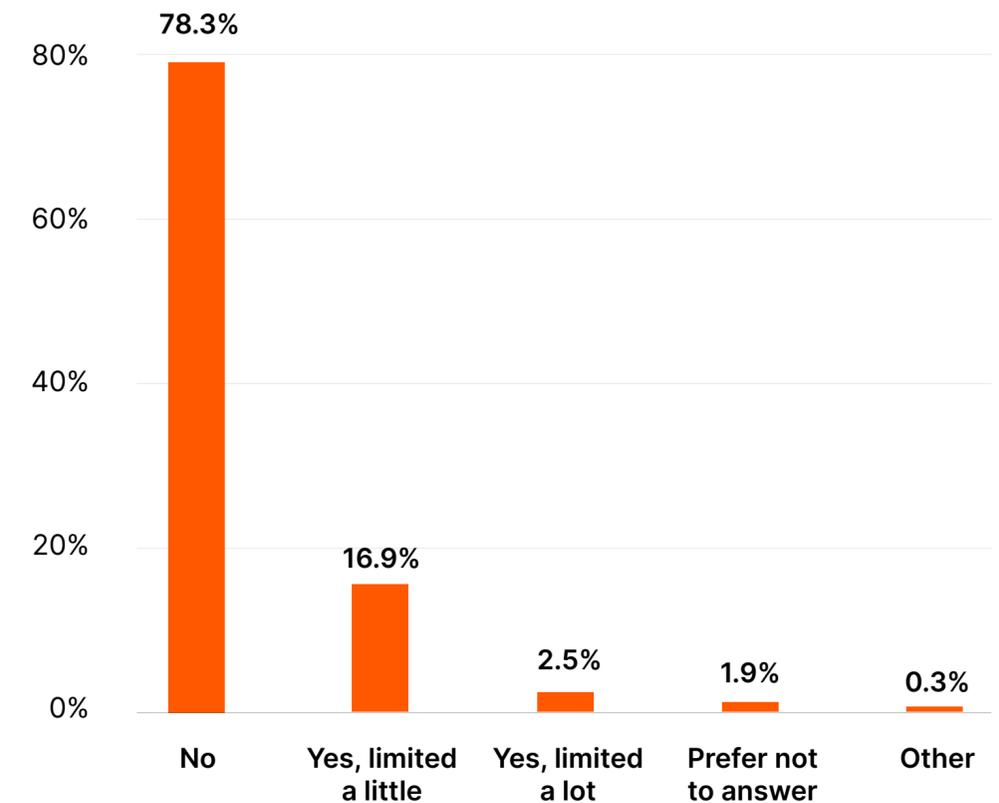
Where are you from?

*Top 10 responding countries highlighted.

Canada: 3.5%

UK: 23.4%

Germany: 1.9%

Portugal: 1.7%

Italy: 1.7%

Spain: 2.7%

USA: 30.9%

Mexico: 2.2%

India: 1.7%

Brazil: 8.5%

0%   20%   40%
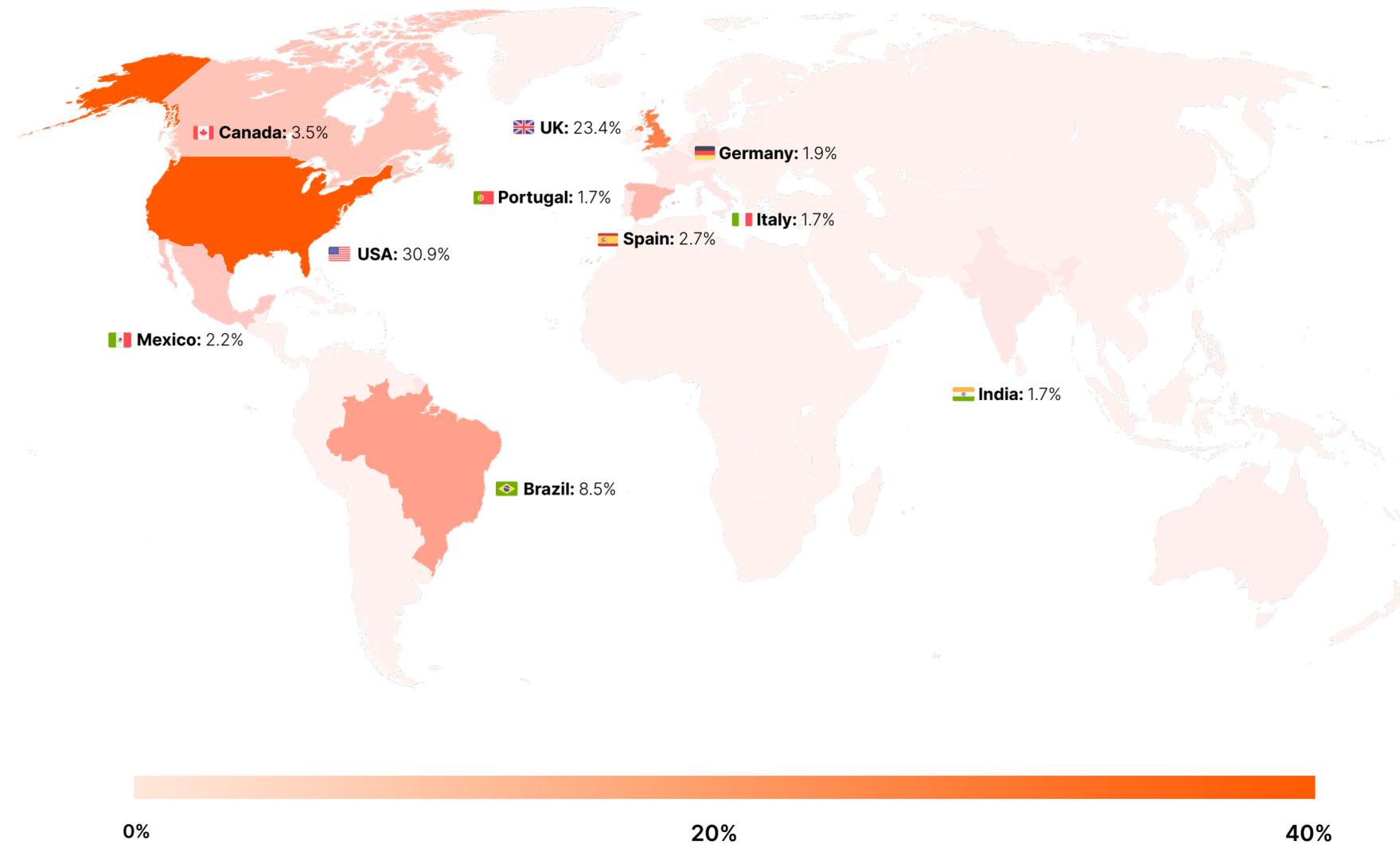
Are you currently looking for a job?

80.1%
Yes

19.9%
No

What is your current employment status?

*Participants had the option of selecting multiple answers.

Full Time
40%
39.4%
30%
20%
Part Time
15.2%
10%
0%
Other
13.4%
Freelance
26.3%
Studying
22.3%
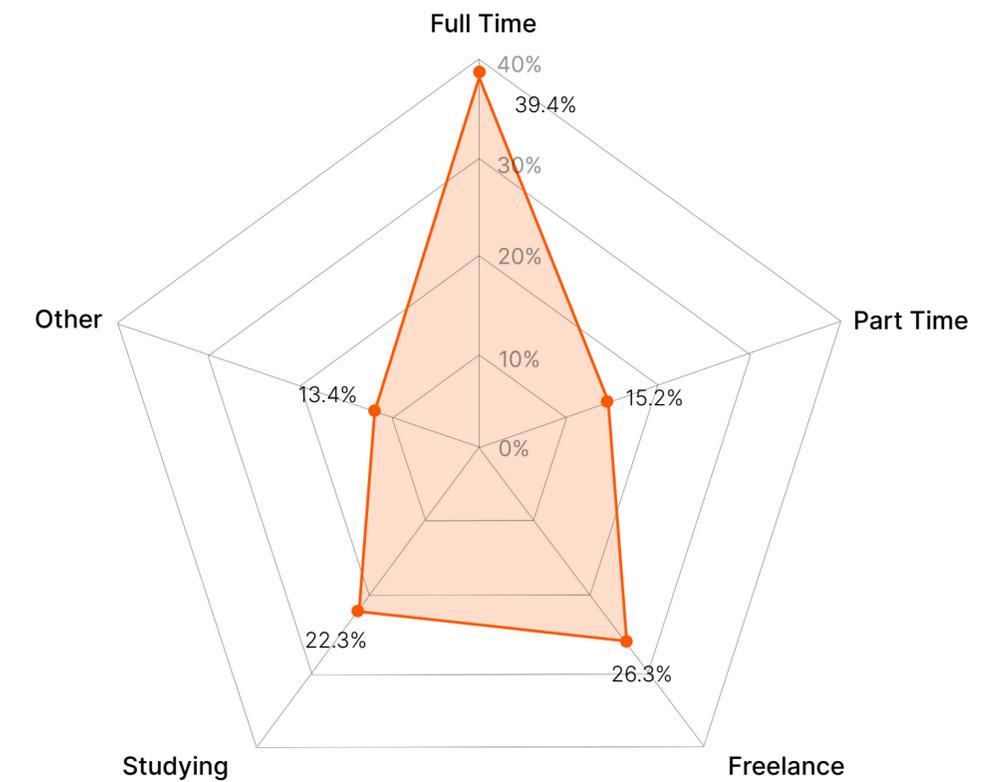
How many years of professional experience do you have in the games industry?
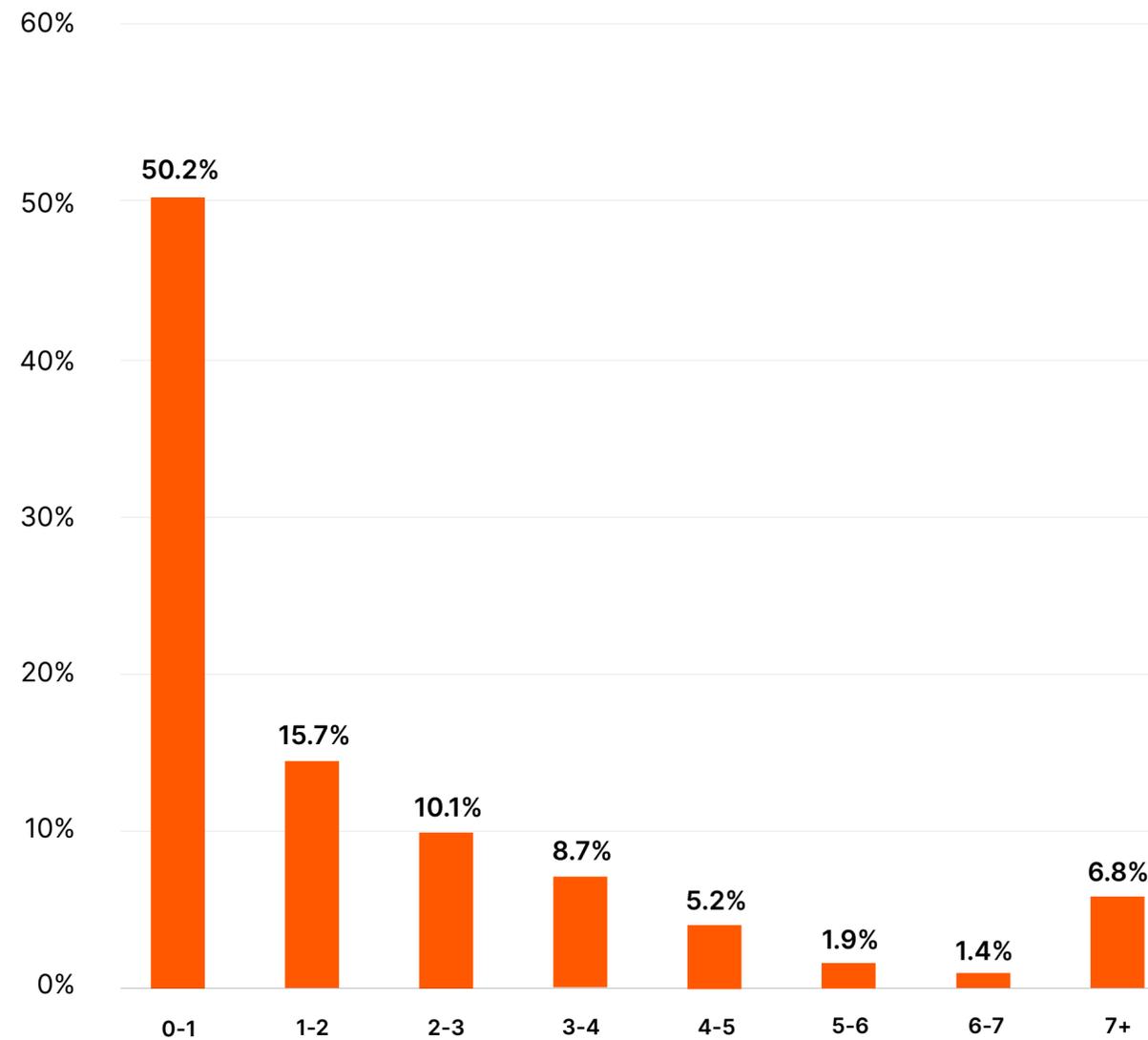
What is your profession?

*Participants had the option of selecting multiple answers.
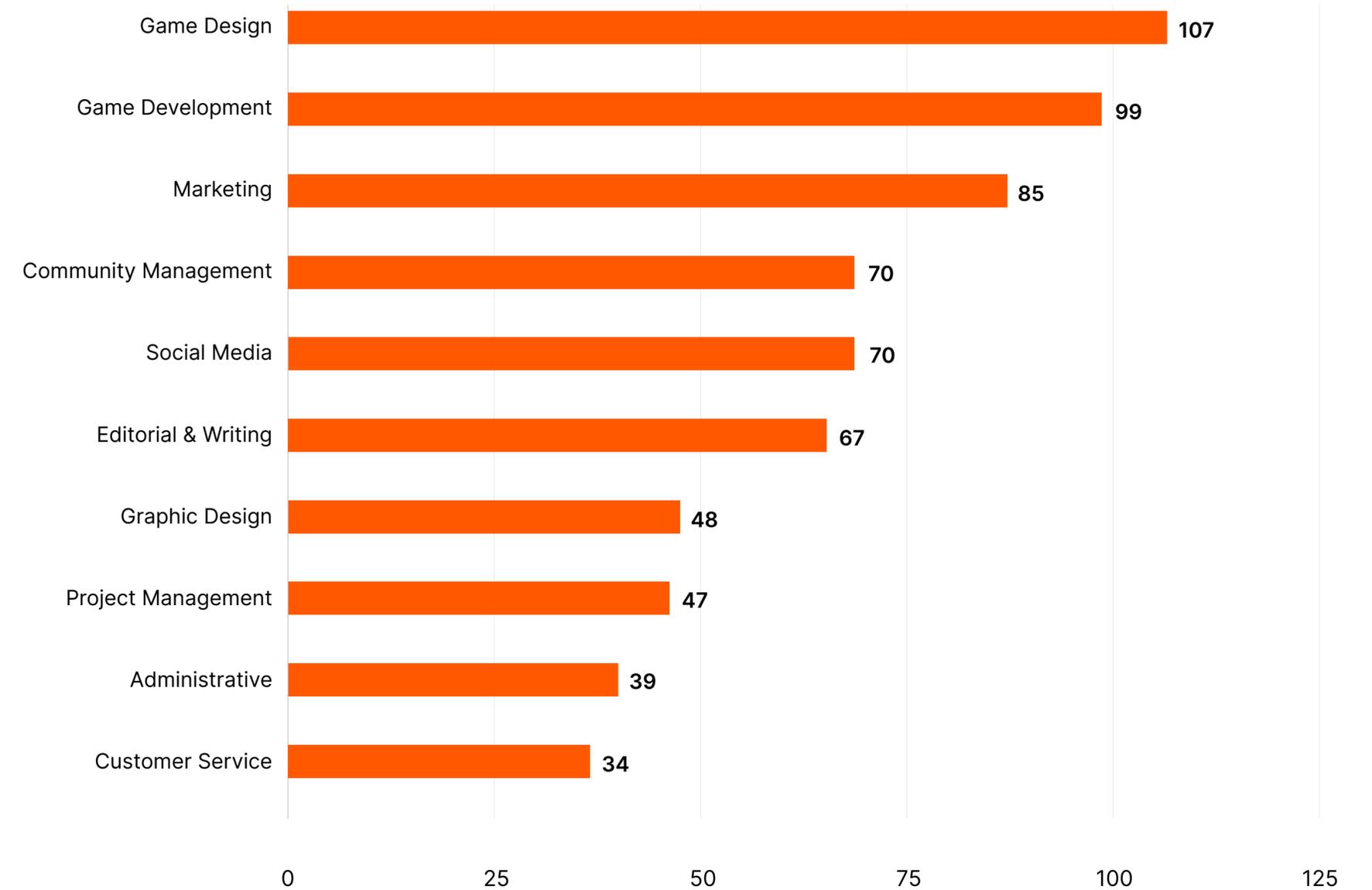
Job Description Preferences

■ Informative job descriptions attract a greater number of underrepresented candidates than vague ones.

■ Being transparent about a job's location and any flexibility that exists makes your post more accessible to people with disabilities.

■ Defining how progression works within the company makes your job more popular among diverse candidates.

■ Gender-neutral job descriptions are especially welcomed by non-binary individuals, people with disabilities, and cisgender women.

■ Jobs that display salary information are much more popular than those that don't, particularly among underrepresented groups.

Game Designer
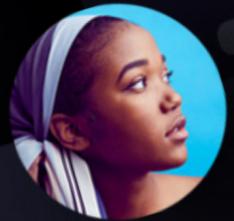
Responses

Listing clear company benefits is vital for attracting experienced candidates.

All candidates:

🟠 While **37.5%** of all candidates found including company benefits in the job description to be very important, this rose to **45.8%** among cisgender women and **52.6%** for BIPOC individuals.

Candidates with full time jobs and over three years of experience:

🟠 Experienced candidates value benefit information even more. **51.9%** of all participants with full time jobs and at least three years of experience found benefit information to be very important, which rose again among BIPOC candidates to **58.8%** and cisgender women to **66.7%**.

Key takeaways:

- Benefit information becomes **14.4%** more important for candidates with at least three years of experience.

- Across the groups we looked at, cisgender women and BIPOC individuals valued transparent benefit information the most.

How important are company benefits to you?

🟧 Very important 🟧 Important 🟧 Somewhat important 🟧 Somewhat not important 🟧 Not important 🟧 Not important at all

All candidates:

| 37.5% | 34.2% | 21.4% | 5.1% | 1.7% | 0.2% |

Candidates with full time jobs and over three years of experience:

| 51.9% | 24.1% | 17.7% | 3.8% | 2.5% |

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%
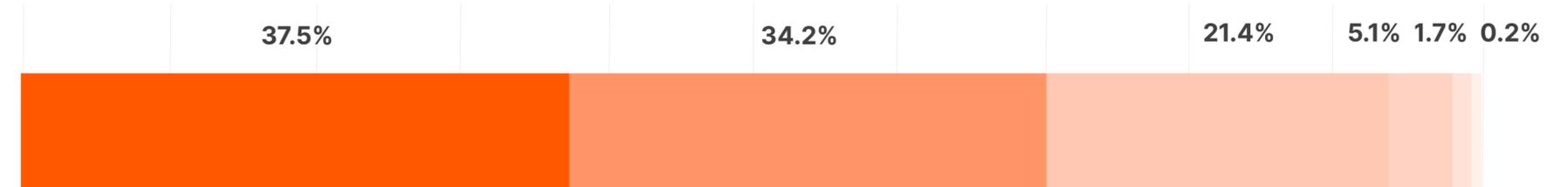
Not defining company culture in a job description can decrease the diversity of applicants.

All candidates:

● Only **33.7%** of cisgender men said that defining a company's culture in a job description was very important, compared to **45.9%** of BIPOC candidates, **43.1%** of candidates with disabilities, and **41.7%** of cisgender women.

Candidates with full time jobs and over three years of experience:

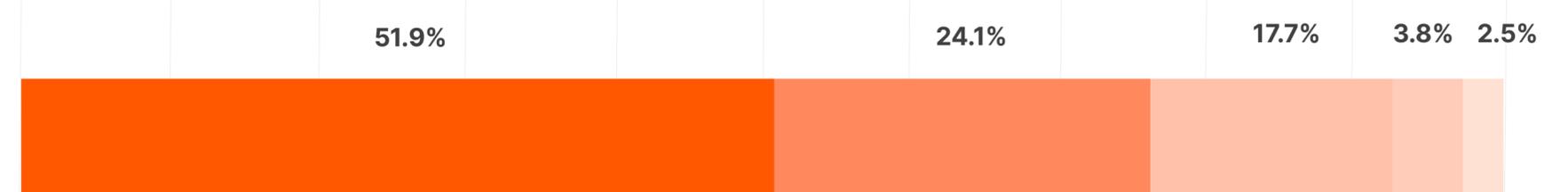● **45.6%** of candidates with at least three years of experience rated company culture as very important. This increased to **52.9%** for BIPOC individuals and **61.5%** for people with disabilities. In fact, after excluding the industry's most represented group, white cisgender men, this rose to a massive **68%** with only a single response for company culture being somewhat not important.

Key takeaway:

− Company culture information is most significant to groups that haven't historically been well represented in the games industry.

How important is company culture to you?

■ Very important ■ Important ■ Somewhat important ■ Somewhat not important ■ Not important ■ Not important at all

All candidates:

| 37.2% | 32.6% | 21.4% | 6.5% | 1.3% | 1.1% |

Candidates with full time jobs and over three years of experience:

| 45.6% | 32.9% | 16.5% | 3.8% | 1.3% |

0%   10%   20%   30%   40%   50%   60%   70%   80%   90%   100%
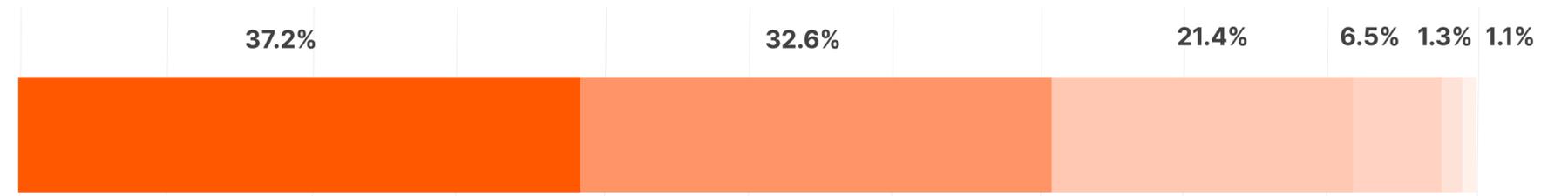
Underrepresented groups value demographic information twice as much as cisgender men.

All candidates:

● Overall, only **15.3%** of respondents rated a company's demographics as very important to them.

● However, differences emerged in how each group responded. **11.2%** of cisgender men deemed company demographics to be very important, compared to **20.1%** of cisgender women, **22.2%** of transgender candidates, and **22.2%** of BIPOC candidates.

Candidates with full time jobs and over three years of experience:

● **19%** of experienced candidates rated company demographics as very important. When analyzing all groups except cisgender men, the industry's most represented, this rose to **36%**.

Key takeaway:

- Demographic information is a good way for underrepresented groups to assess how diverse companies are and if retention of their diverse staff is an issue.

How important are company demographics?

■ Very important ■ Important ■ Somewhat important ■ Somewhat not important ■ Not important ■ Not important at all

All candidates:

| 15.3% | 23.9% | 33.2% | 16.3% | 5.9% | 5.4% |

Candidates with full time jobs and over three years of experience:

| 19.0% | 21.5% | 24.1% | 17.7% | 10.1% | 7.6% |

0%   10%   20%   30%   40%   50%   60%   70%   80%   90%   100%
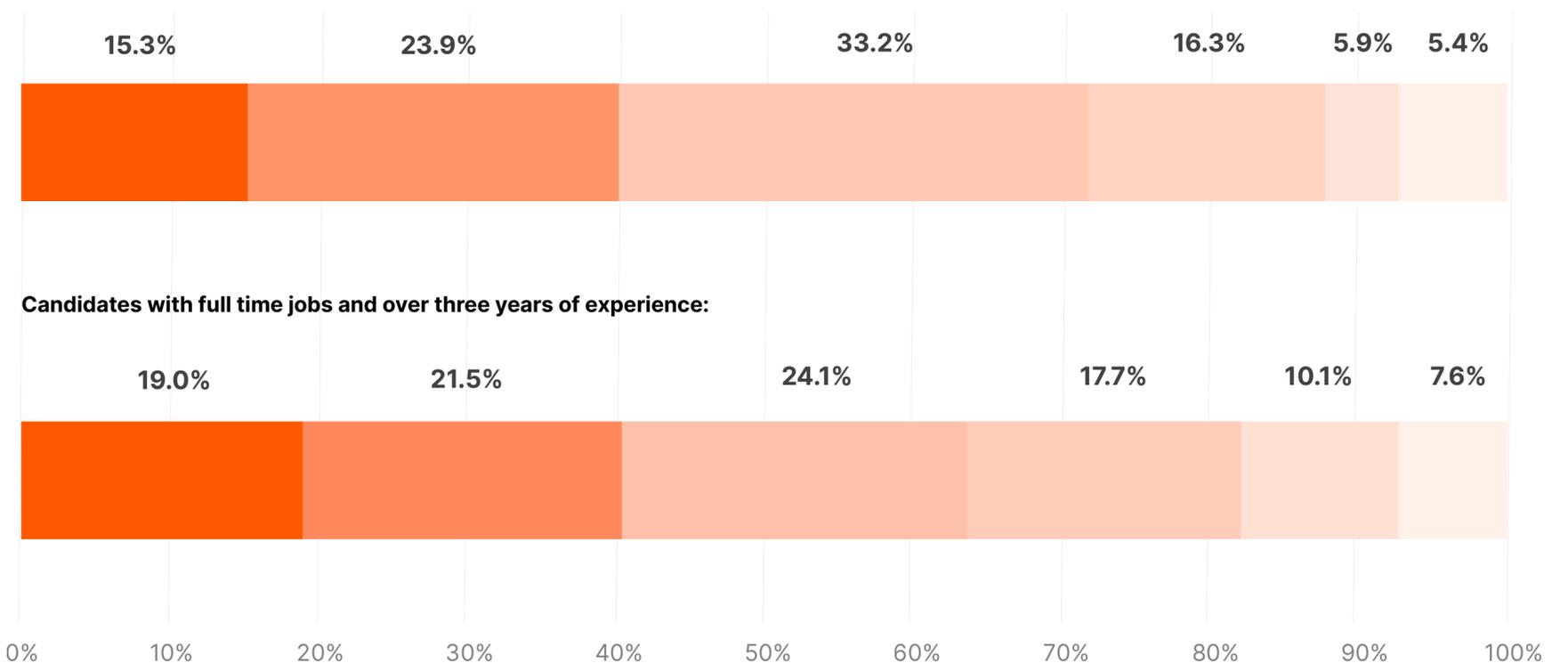
D&I initiatives are considered important by underrepresented groups.

All candidates:

● Only **14.4%** of all candidates found information on D&I initiatives very important. In underrepresented groups, however, this rose sharply. **41.2%** of BIPOC candidates and **30.8%** of candidates with disabilities ranked this area as very important, and among all groups except for cisgender men the result came to **48%**.

Candidates with full time jobs and over three years of experience:

● While both experience levels said that D&I initiatives were important to them, candidates with at least three years of experience ranked it with more urgency.

Key takeaway:

- Minority groups take companies' efforts around diversity, inclusion, and giving back to the community into consideration more than the most represented group in the industry.

How important are a company's D&I initiatives?

■ Very important   ■ Important   ■ Somewhat important   ■ Somewhat not important   ■ Not important   ■ Not important at all

All candidates:

| 14.4% | 22.8% | 39.6% | 14.4% | 4.9% | 4.0% |

Candidates with full time jobs and over three years of experience:

| 19.0% | 29.1% | 26.6% | 16.5% | 6.3% | 2.5% |

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%
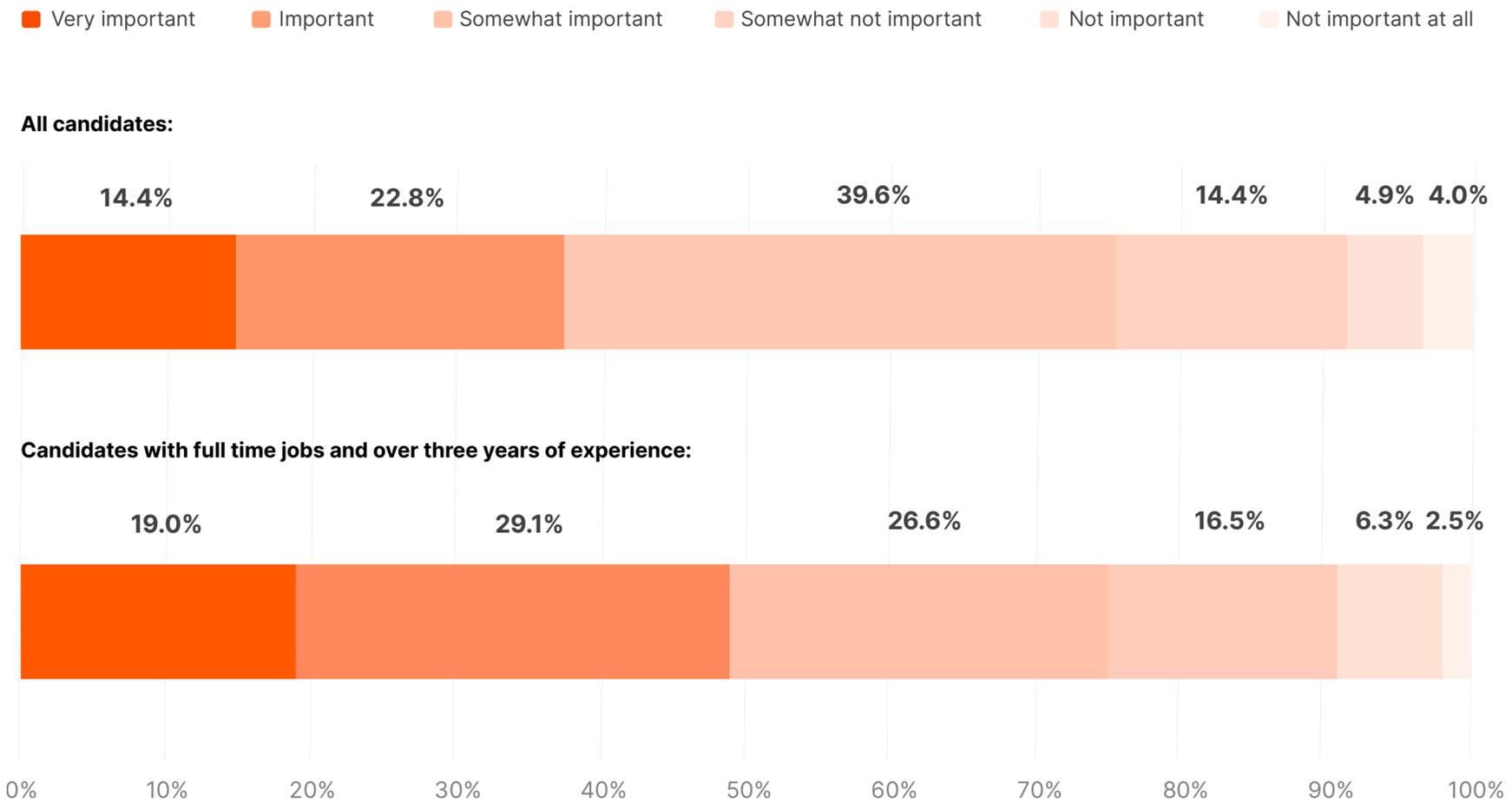
24.1% of experienced candidates find information about holiday policy very important.

All candidates:

● Though sometimes omitted from job descriptions, **78%** of all candidates ranked information about a company's holiday policy as either very important, important, or somewhat important to them.
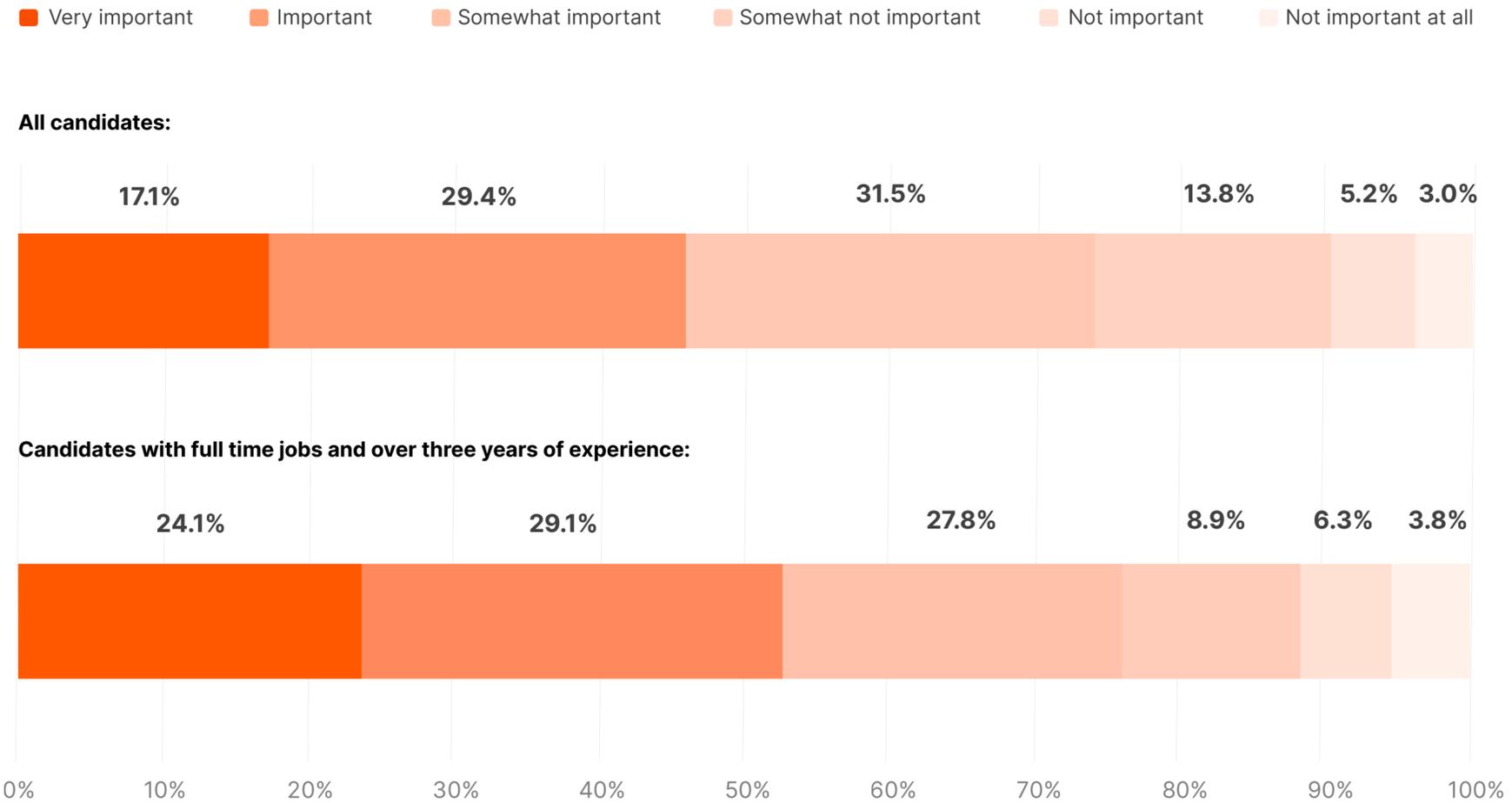
Candidates with full time jobs and over three years of experience:

● **24.1%** of all experienced candidates found information about holiday policy to be very important. Once we remove cisgender men from this dataset however, the industry's most represented group, the number climbs to **44%**.

Key takeaway:

- When it comes to any company policy, it's much better to define it than leave it unsaid. Holiday is an important benefit to a lot of people so make it clear and visible in your job descriptions.

How important is the company's holiday policy?

■ Very important ■ Important ■ Somewhat important ■ Somewhat not important ■ Not important ■ Not important at all

All candidates:

17.1%	29.4%	31.5%	13.8%	5.2%	3.0%

Candidates with full time jobs and over three years of experience:

24.1%	29.1%	27.8%	8.9%	6.3%	3.8%

0%   10%   20%   30%   40%   50%   60%   70%   80%   90%   100%

Displaying detailed location requirements makes your jobs more accessible to people with disabilities.

All candidates:

● **67.9%** of candidates rated location as very important compared to **72.4%** of those with disabilities.

Candidates with full time jobs and over three years of experience:

● **64.6%** of candidates considered information about the job location to be very important. Once again, when we look only at people with disabilities, this figure jumps to **76.9%**.

Key takeaway:

- Being clear about your place of work, specifically regarding remote options and flexible hours, makes for a better candidate experience and increases the relevancy of applications.

How important is the company's location?

■ Very important　■ Important　■ Somewhat important　■ Somewhat not important　■ Not important　■ Not important at all

All candidates:

| | 67.9% | | 22.2% | 5.7% | 2.8% | 0.8% | 0.6% |

Candidates with full time jobs and over three years of experience:

| | 64.6% | | 29.1% | 5.1% | 1.3% |

0%　10%　20%　30%　40%　50%　60%　70%　80%　90%　100%

Laying out your company's progression path attracts more diverse, senior applicants.

All candidates:

🔸 Over 70% of all candidates indicated that progression information is at least important to them, with 34.5% finding it very important.

Candidates with full time jobs and over three years of experience:

Progression information was very important to **39.2%** of candidates with a full time job and over three years of experience, a slight raise from **34.5%** when looking at all candidates.

🔸 Among more experienced candidates, **44.4%** of cisgender women and **58.8%** of BIPOC candidates found progression information to be very important, compared to **38%** of cisgender men.
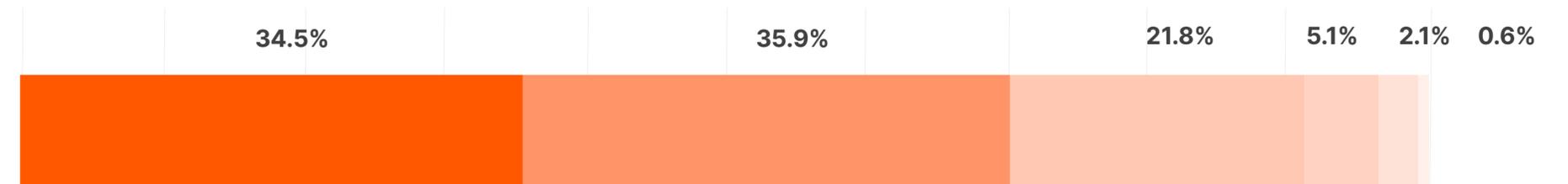
Key takeaway:

🔹 Women and BIPOC aren't proportionately represented in senior roles in the industry. Being clear and transparent about role progression in the job description could help drive more people from underrepresented groups into senior positions.
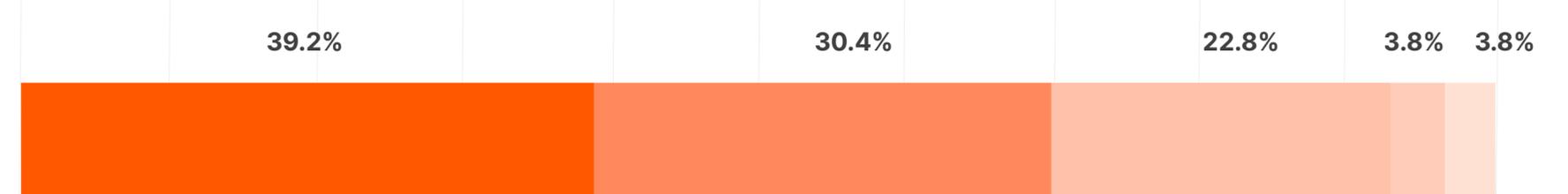
How important is progression information within the company or job role?

■ Very important ■ Important ■ Somewhat important ■ Somewhat not important ■ Not important ■ Not important at all

All candidates:

| 34.5% | 35.9% | 21.8% | 5.1% | 2.1% | 0.6% |

Candidates with full time jobs and over three years of experience:

| 39.2% | 30.4% | 22.8% | 3.8% | 3.8% |

0%   10%   20%   30%   40%   50%   60%   70%   80%   90%   100%

Salary information is immensely important to nearly all candidates.

All candidates:

■ **56.7%** of all cisgender men said that salary information was very important to them, compared to **66.7%** of cisgender women and **68.1%** of transgender people.

Candidates with full time jobs and over three years of experience:

■ **70.9%** of experienced candidates considered salary information to be very important. This jumped to a massive **84%** when looking at all groups except cisgender men.
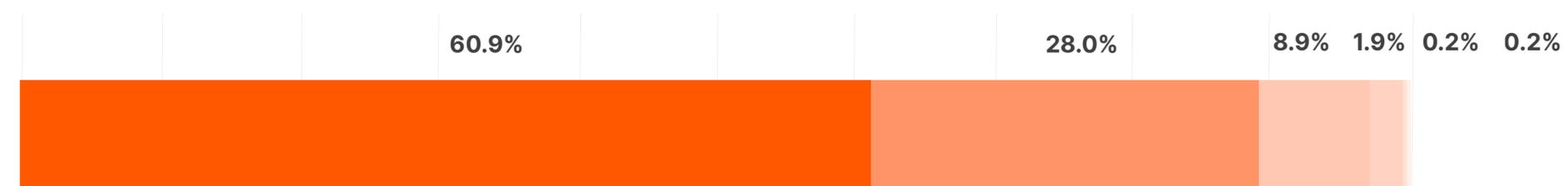
Key takeaway:

- Adding salary information to your job adverts is one of the easiest steps you can take to appeal to a wider, more diverse audience.

How important is salary information in the application process?

■ Very important   ■ Important   ■ Somewhat important   ■ Somewhat not important   ■ Not important   ■ Not important at all

All candidates:

| 60.9% | 28.0% | 8.9% | 1.9% | 0.2% | 0.2% |

Candidates with full time jobs and over three years of experience:

| 70.9% | 22.8% | 3.8% | 2.5% |

0%   10%   20%   30%   40%   50%   60%   70%   80%   90%   100%

40.8% of candidates rated gender-neutral job descriptions as very important.

All candidates:

● Only **40.8%** of all candidates rated gender-neutral job descriptions as very important. This figure dropped to **31.9%** among cisgender men, compared to **52.1%** with cisgender women, **55.3%** with people with a disability, and **73.3%** with non-binary participants.

Candidates with full time jobs and over three years of experience:

● **39.2%** of experienced candidates considered gender-neutral job descriptions to be very important. Without the industry's most represented group, cisgender men, the percentage rose to **48%** with only one (**4%**) answer for anything below somewhat important (compared to **18%** with cisgender men included).

● **53.8%** of candidates with a disability and **52.9%** of BIPOC individuals rated gender-neutral job descriptions as very important.
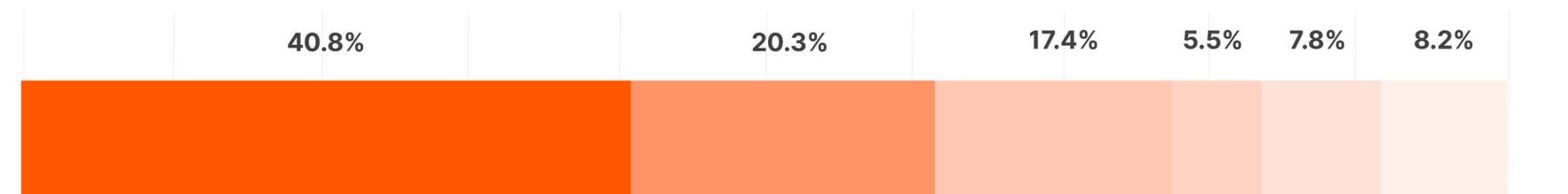
Key takeaway:

– Using gender-neutral language in your job posts makes them much more accessible to underrepresented groups, especially non-binary people.
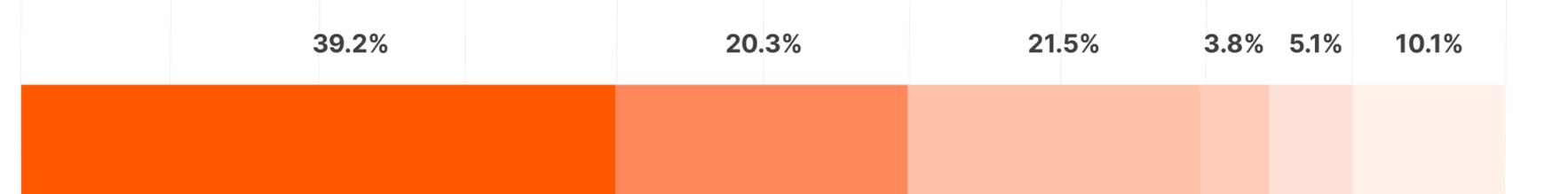
How important are gender-neutral job descriptions?

■ Very important ■ Important ■ Somewhat important ■ Somewhat not important ■ Not important ■ Not important at all
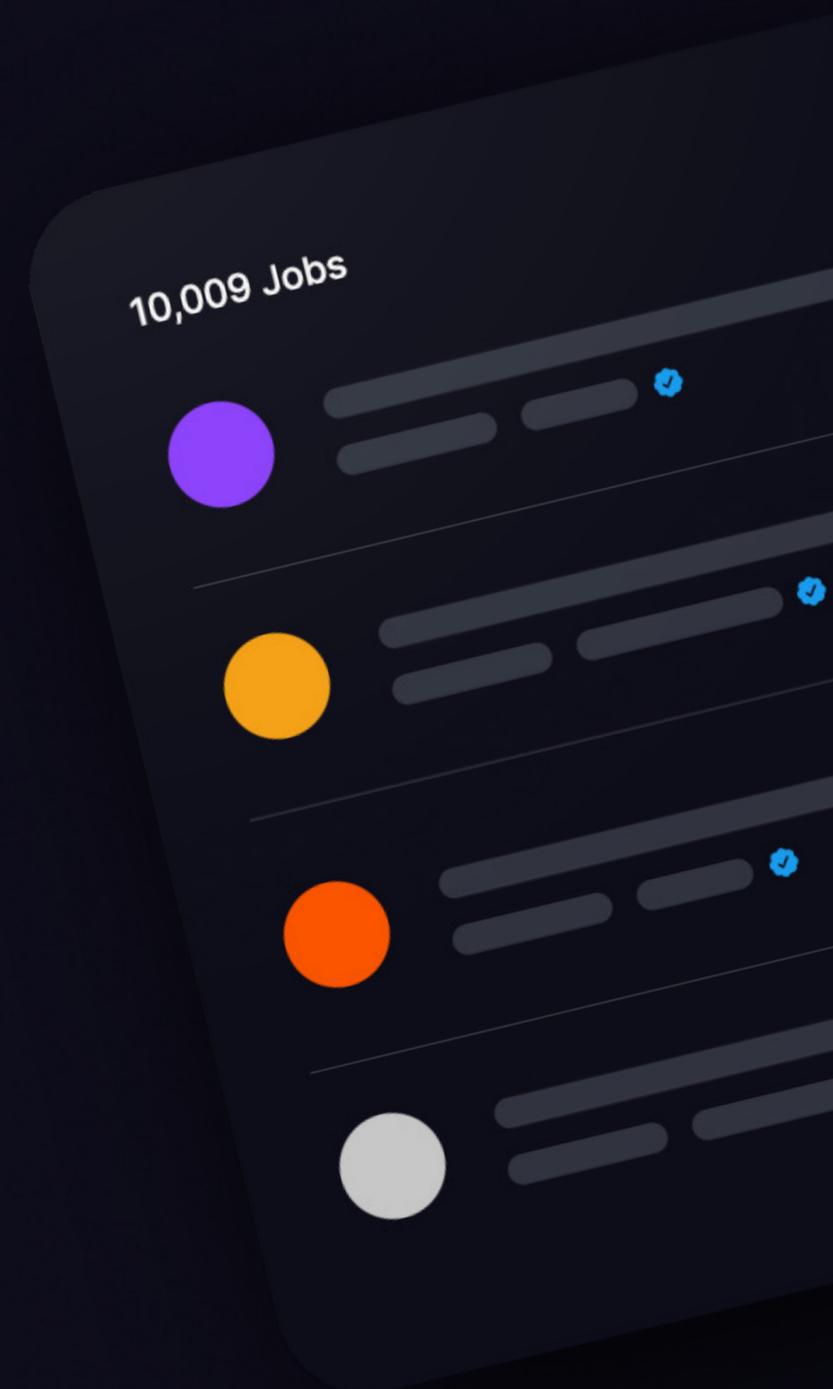
All candidates:

| 40.8% | 20.3% | 17.4% | 5.5% | 7.8% | 8.2% |

Candidates with full time jobs and over three years of experience:

| 39.2% | 20.3% | 21.5% | 3.8% | 5.1% | 10.1% |

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

Application Preferences

■ Across all levels of experience, only a small percentage of candidates write a unique cover letter for each application and most would prefer to answer job-specific questions instead.

■ The majority of candidates don't feel comfortable at all with automated tests and interviews, especially non-binary people, cisgender women, transgender candidates, and individuals with disabilities.

■ Application processes with more than three interview stages are generally disliked and will decrease the size of your talent pool.

10,009 Jobs

Less than a third of candidates write a new cover letter for every single application.

All candidates:

🟧 Only **30.5%** of candidates said that they write a new cover letter for each job. This rose to **37.5%** among cisgender women and **43.3%** among non-binary respondents, whilst dropping to **27.2%** among cisgender men.

Candidates with full time jobs and over three years of experience:

🟧 While experienced candidates write unique cover letters more regularly, it's a narrow margin. **34.2%** of respondents with full time jobs and at least three years of experience in games said that they write a new cover letter for each application.

🟧 **28%** of cisgender men in this group answered that they always write a unique cover letter compared to **55.6%** of cisgender women, **35.3%** of BIPOC candidates, and **46.2%** of people with disabilities.
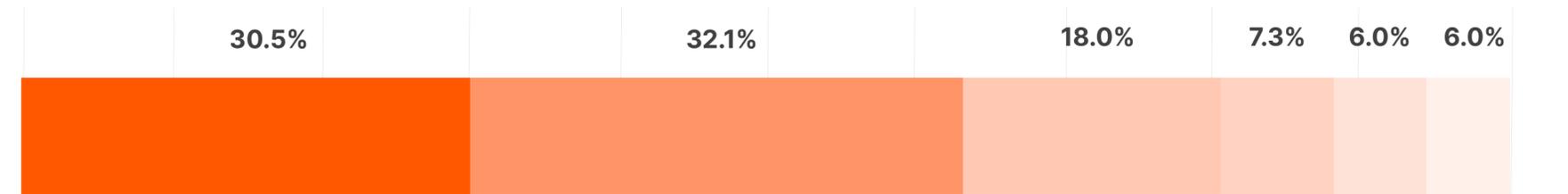
Key takeaway:

- The least represented groups in the industry tend to put more effort into their cover letters than cisgender men.

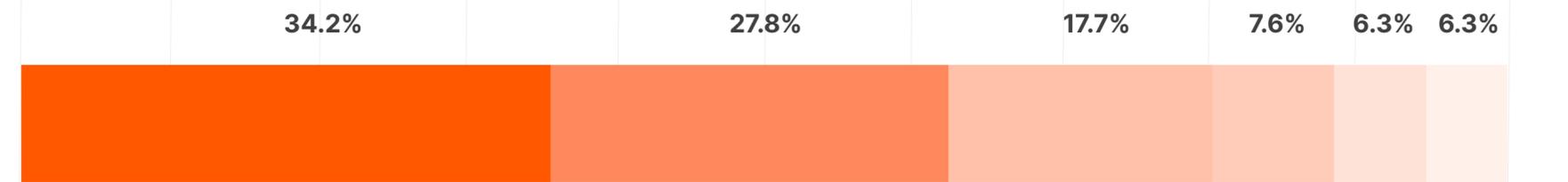## Do you write a different cover letter for every job?

🟧 Always 🟧 Most of the time 🟧 Sometimes 🟧 Not very often 🟧 Not often ⬜ Never

All candidates:

| 30.5% | 32.1% | 18.0% | 7.3% | 6.0% | 6.0% |

Candidates with full time jobs and over three years of experience:

| 34.2% | 27.8% | 17.7% | 7.6% | 6.3% | 6.3% |

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

Using job-specific questions instead of cover letters can increase the relevancy of your candidate pool.

All candidates:

🔸 An enormous **84.4%** of all candidates said that job-specific questions were preferable to cover letters, showing that there's massive desire for change in this area.

Candidates with full time jobs and over three years of experience:

🔸 This number rose very marginally to **84.8%** of experienced candidates saying that job-specific questions would be preferable to a traditional cover letter. No matter their seniority, candidates are tired of submitting cover letters that don't necessarily represent their skill fit for a job.
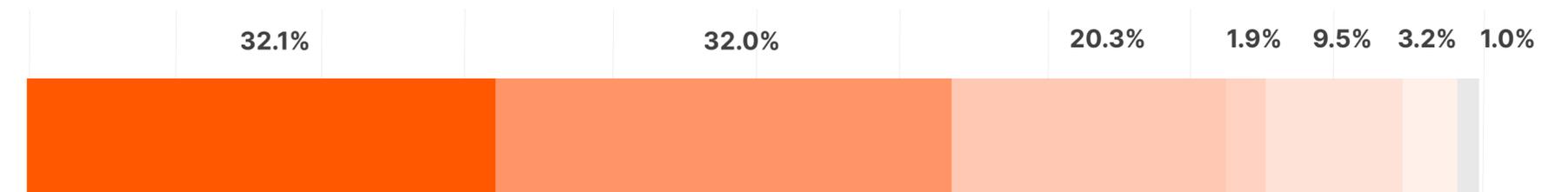
Key takeaway:

- Using job-specific questions instead of cover letters can increase the relevancy of your candidate pool and is strongly wished for. They also make your process less biased against candidates with disabilities and non-native speakers.

How would you rate job-specific questions compared to cover letters?

🟧 Very preferable 🟧 Preferable 🟧 Somewhat preferable 🟧 Not preferable 🟧 Not really preferable 🟧 Not at all preferable ⬜ Other

All candidates:

| 32.1% | 32.0% | 20.3% | 1.9% | 9.5% | 3.2% | 1.0% |

Candidates with full time jobs and over three years of experience:

| 22.8% | 29.1% | 32.9% | 1.3% | 10.1% | 2.5% | 1.3% |

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

When it comes to automated first-stage interviews, candidates aren't on board.

All candidates:

🟧 While **20.1%** of candidates were somewhat comfortable with automated interviews, **19.5%** were very uncomfortable with them.

🟧 Automated interviews are especially uncomfortable for some groups. **46.7%** of non-binary candidates rated it as very uncomfortable followed by **26.4%** of transgender candidates, **23.6%** of cisgender women, and **22.8%** of people with disabilities. This is compared to **14.9%** of cisgender men.

Candidates with full time jobs and over three years of experience:

🟧 **22.8%** of experienced candidates were very uncomfortable with automated first stages, while a further **20.3%** were uncomfortable.

🟧 Among cisgender men in this group, **20%** were very uncomfortable with automated interviews compared to **38.5%** of people with disabilities and **27.8%** of cisgender women.
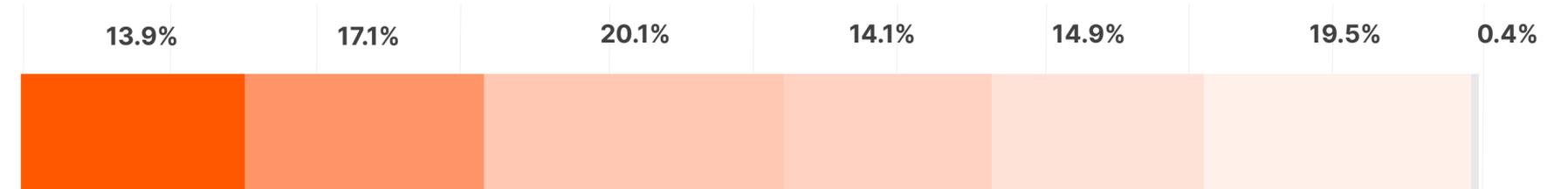
Key takeaway:

– Automated first interviews are generally disliked and don't provide a quality candidate experience, in addition to decreasing the size of your candidate pool and lowering its diversity.

Would you be comfortable doing an automated video or test interview as a first stage?

🟧 Very comfortable 🟧 Comfortable 🟧 Somewhat comfortable 🟧 Somewhat uncomfortable 🟧 Uncomfortable 🟧 Very uncomfortable ⬜ Other

All candidates:

| 13.9% | 17.1% | 20.1% | 14.1% | 14.9% | 19.5% | 0.4% |

Candidates with full time jobs and over three years of experience:

| 13.9% | 15.2% | 16.5% | 11.4% | 20.3% | 22.8% |

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%
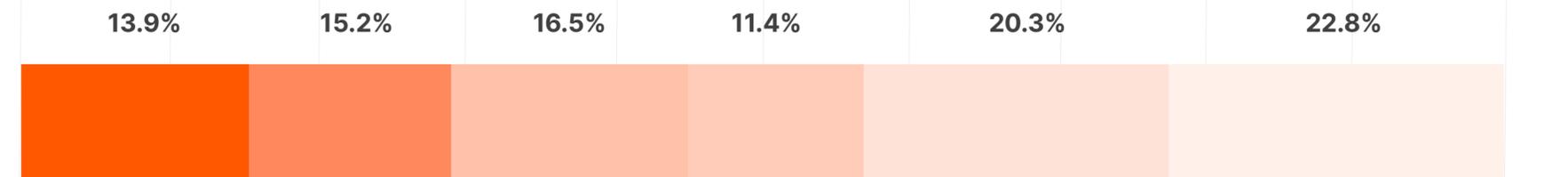
Too many interview rounds leads to significant candidate burnout.

All candidates:

🟧 **42%** of candidates felt comfortable doing two interviews at the most, with **40.3%** answering that three was their upper limit.

🟧 Only **6.2%** of candidates were comfortable doing four interview rounds, which dropped to just **3.6%** for those comfortable doing five.

Candidates with full time jobs and over three years of experience:
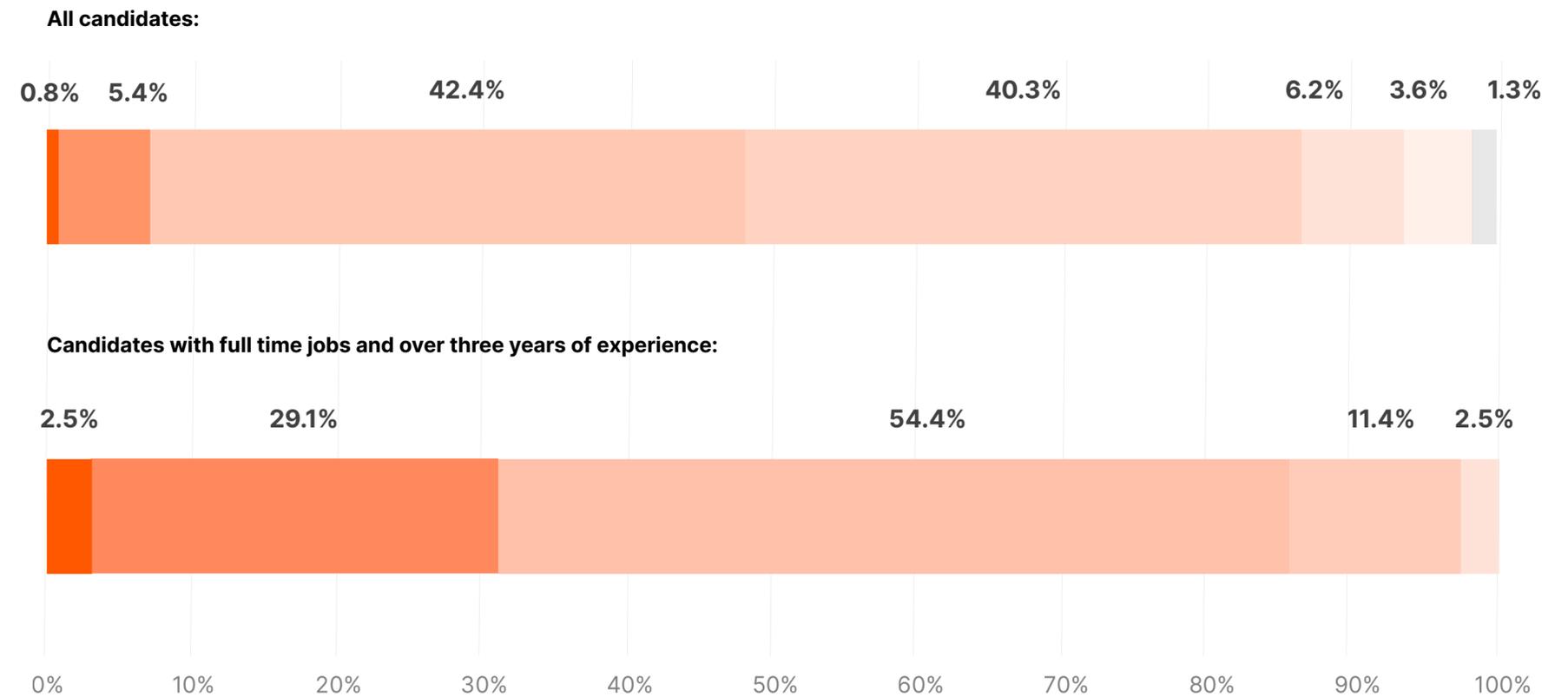
🟧 Experienced candidates were more comfortable going through a greater number of interview rounds. **54.4%** felt comfortable doing three interviews while **11.4%** were comfortable doing four, which is a noticeable increase over candidates with fewer than three years of experience.

Key takeaway:

━ Taking candidates through four interview stages or more decreases your talent pool across all groups, while not necessarily increasing their relevancy.

How many interview stages are you comfortable doing?

🟧 0 🟧 1 🟧 2 🟧 3 🟧 4 🟧 5 ⬜ Other

All candidates:

0.8% | 5.4% | 42.4% | 40.3% | 6.2% | 3.6% | 1.3%

Candidates with full time jobs and over three years of experience:

2.5% | 29.1% | 54.4% | 11.4% | 2.5%

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

Candidates have made their most pressing issues known. Now companies can start addressing them.

"*The lack of feedback is, in my opinion, a big problem. While I understand that most companies don't have time to answer each candidate individually, a short email doesn't cost much.*"
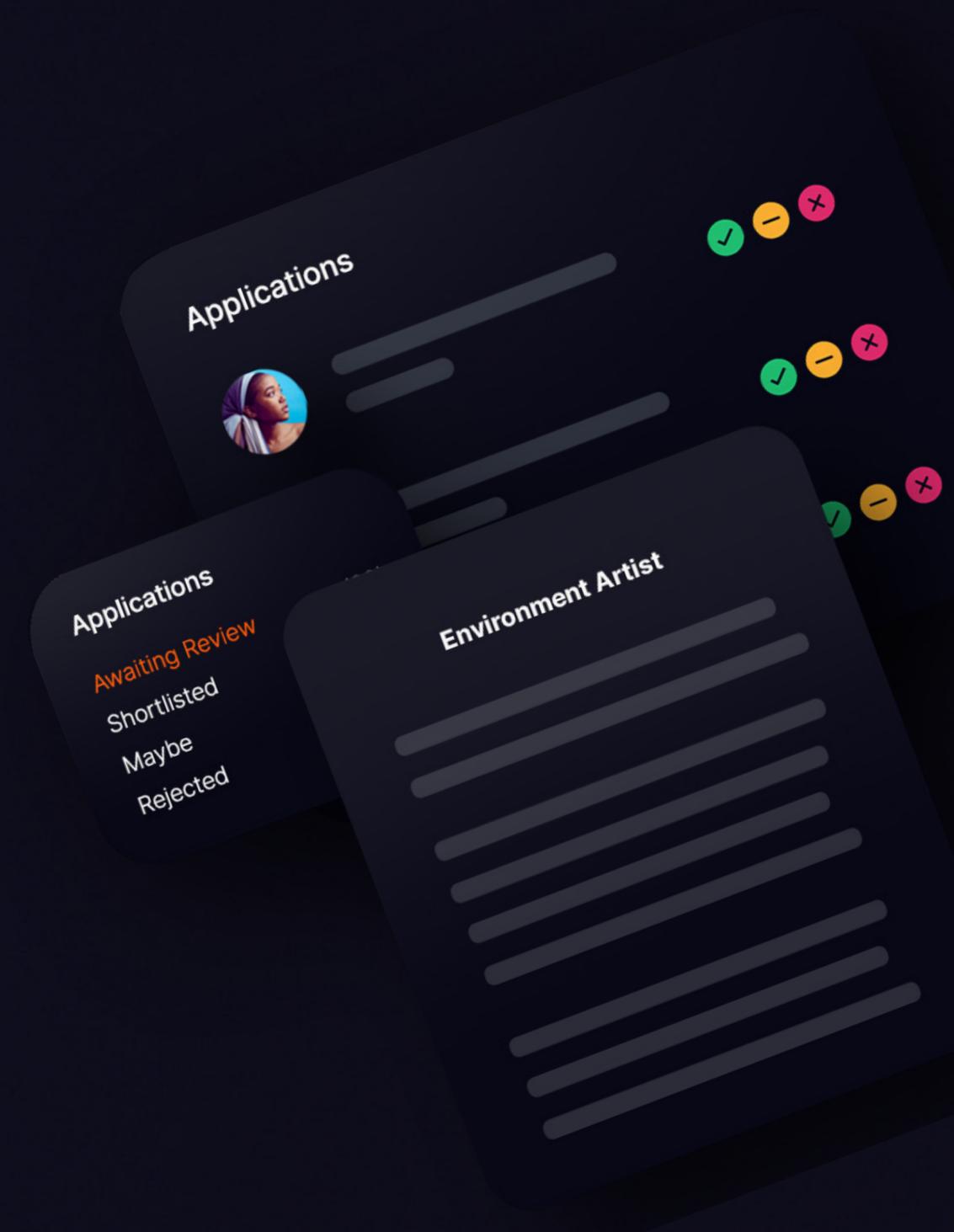
- Survey participant

"*Employers having unrealistic expectations of their candidates, expecting anywhere between 2-5 years of experience on entry-level jobs and internships. I can't get experience without getting a job, and can't get a job without experience.*"
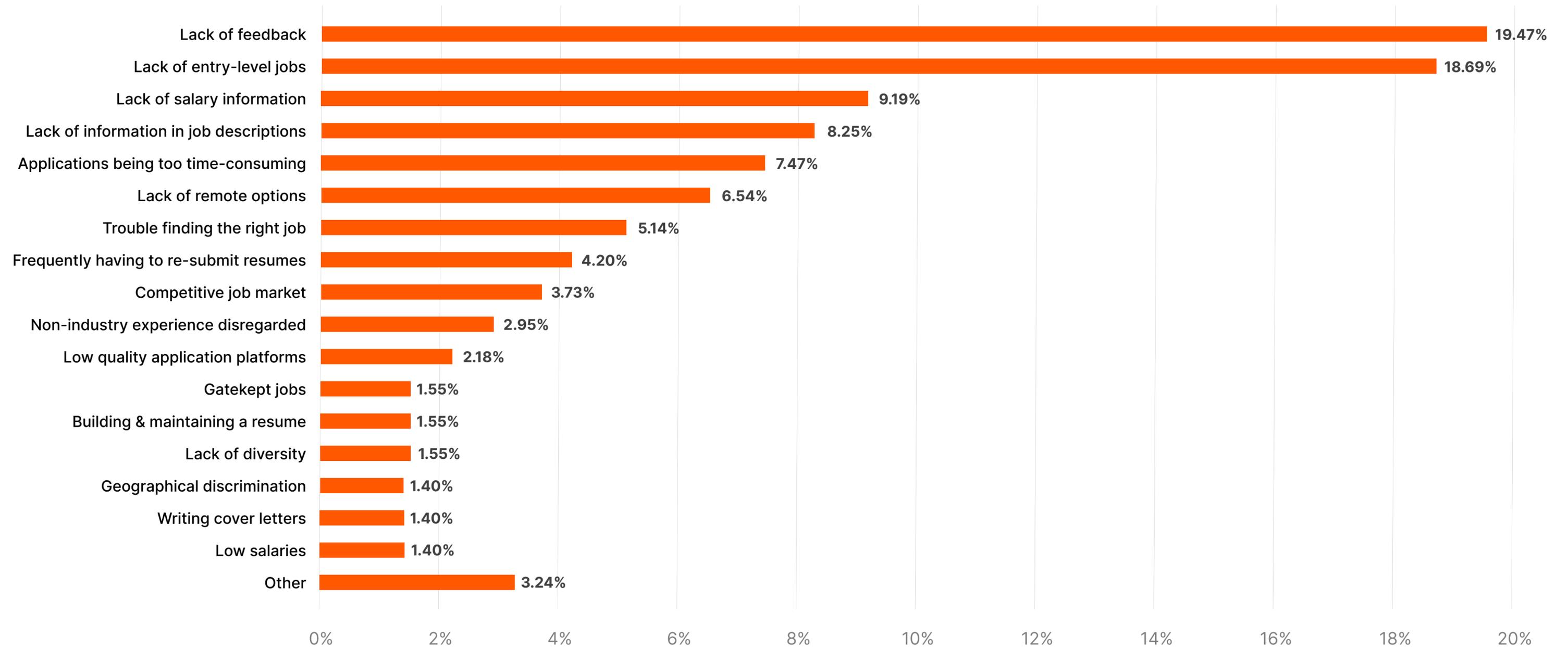
- Survey participant

"*Lack of salary information. I currently have a job and couldn't take a pay cut because I have a family.*"

- Survey participant

Challenge	Percentage
Lack of feedback	19.47%
Lack of entry-level jobs	18.69%
Lack of salary information	9.19%
Lack of information in job descriptions	8.25%
Applications being too time-consuming	7.47%
Lack of remote options	6.54%
Trouble finding the right job	5.14%
Frequently having to re-submit resumes	4.20%
Competitive job market	3.73%
Non-industry experience disregarded	2.95%
Low quality application platforms	2.18%
Gatekept jobs	1.55%
Building & maintaining a resume	1.55%
Lack of diversity	1.55%
Geographical discrimination	1.40%
Writing cover letters	1.40%
Low salaries	1.40%
Other	3.24%

10 key takeaways to improve the application process for candidates within the games industry.

01
Answer questions
Craft job descriptions that answer more questions than they create. The more specific, transparent, and informative you are the more relevant and diverse your candidate pool will be.

02
Salary ranges
If you can't define a job's exact salary, aim to at least provide a range and be clear about what criteria would place a candidate at the top and bottom of this range.

03
Remote working
Be crystal clear about your company's stance on flexible and remote work. Adding your core working hours and explaining how any existing remote employees operate will give people more confidence when applying.

04
Gender decoders
Use gender decoders on job descriptions to make your language as inclusive as possible.

05
Don't generalize
Create application processes that are specific to each discipline you hire for and review these regularly.

06

Shorten the journey

Think about how you can streamline your application process for candidates. In today's market, a bloated application process is only going to lead to candidate fatigue and cause you to lose out on talent.

07

Reconsider cover letters

Consider trialing job-specific questions in some of your recruitment processes. More than 80% of candidates responded favorably to these over a traditional cover letter, and they can be much more valuable in certain disciplines.

08

Be present

Even though automated interviews save a talent acquisition team's time, they seriously damage the candidate experience. Don't cut corners here and instead arrange 15-30 minute initial interviews that will allow you to screen candidates while making them much more comfortable.

09

Create your own talent pipeline

If you're in the position to, try to offer some form of internship or entry-level initiative into your organization. This supports candidates looking to start their career, improves your employer branding, and fosters a pool of talent that will be uniquely connected to your company.

10

Prioritize giving feedback

Keeping candidates informed should be the bare minimum a company does in exchange for the hours spent applying to them. Providing direct feedback to candidates is always preferable, but if this isn't possible then you should be using a hiring tool that lets you set up automated emails to keep candidates in the loop whenever their status is updated. Not only is this the decent thing to do, it will also support your company's reputation in the industry.

Any questions? Get in touch.

Hitmarker

contact@hitmarker.net   Twitter   LinkedIn   Discord

Sara Machado
Head of Recruitment
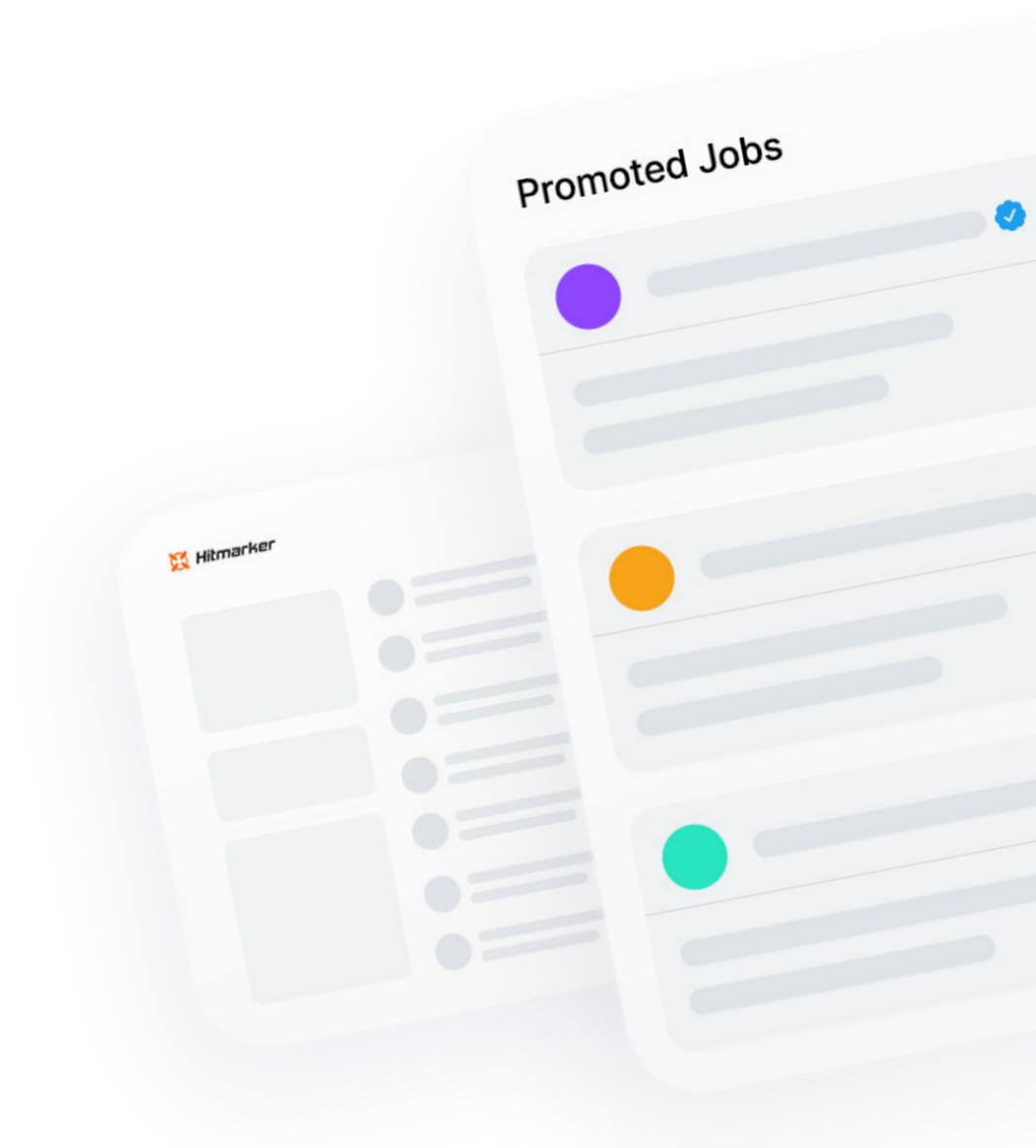
sara@hitmarker.net   Twitter   LinkedIn

intogames.

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Into Games   Twitter   LinkedIn

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