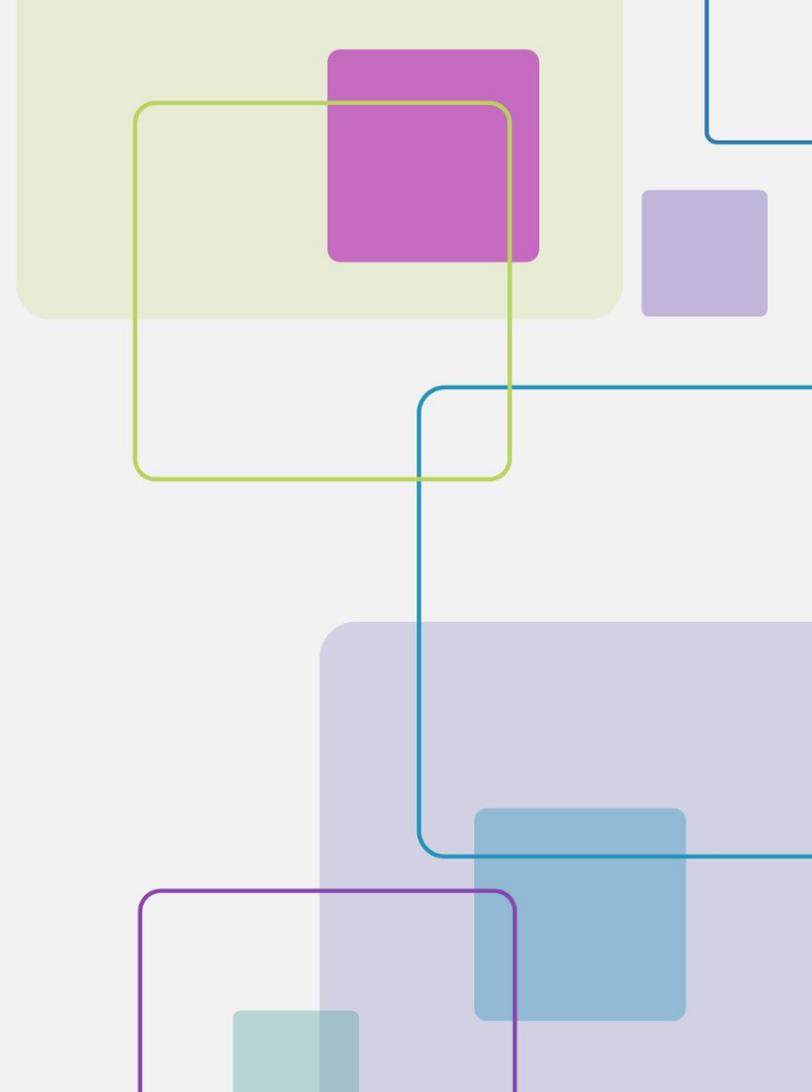




# GRID

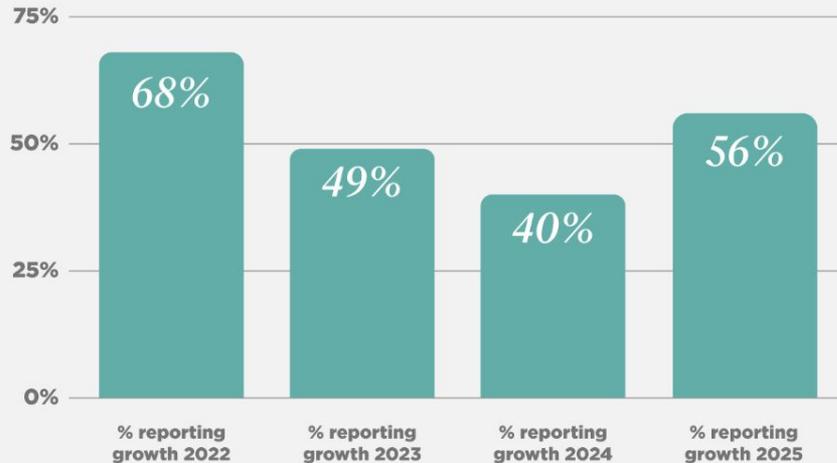
 **INDUSTRY TRENDS REPORT**

*2026 Slide Deck*



# 2025 was a turnaround year for recruiting

**Revenue Growth 2022-2025**



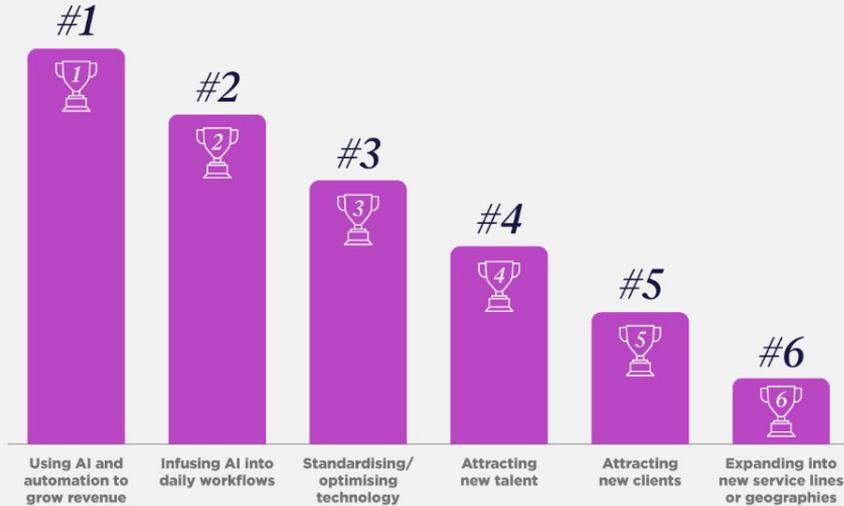
Bullhorn GRID 2026 Industry Trends Report

- **54%** of agencies saw revenue growth - an increase from last year
- **16%** saw growth of more than 25%
- **11%** of agencies saw revenue decline
- **Highest** percentage of revenue growth agencies since 2022

Bullhorn 

# AI dominates the list of 2026 priorities

## 2026 Priorities ranked



Bullhorn GRID 2026 Industry Trends Report

- Using AI and automation to grow revenue was the **top priority**
- And agencies want to make sure AI is embedded across their platforms within the system of record
- Leaders shared the goal of optimising technology is largely related to AI preparedness
- These priorities held true across regions, business lines, and verticals

Bullhorn 

# Talent shortage and lower job volumes are top challenges



Bullhorn GRID 2026 Industry Trends Report

- Ongoing combination of tight talent pool with fewer jobs
- This is the third year these have topped the list
- Turndown rates are improving
- **Lack of confidence** still elongating client hiring cycles
- **AI has changed the benchmark** for speed and service

Bullhorn 

# Four key takeaways

1



*AI drives  
revenue  
growth*

2



*AI leads to  
operational  
improvement*

3



*AI  
implementation  
strategy is  
crucial to  
adoption*

4



*Recruiters  
are never  
going back*

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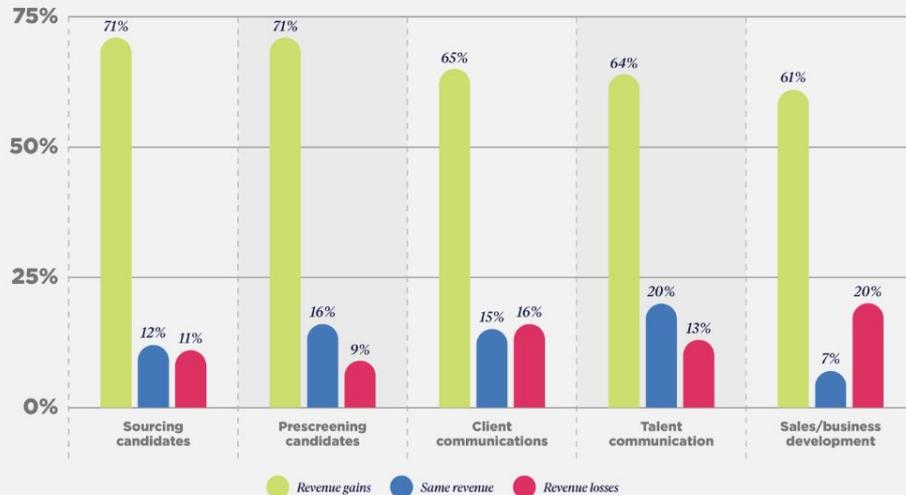
INDUSTRY TRENDS REPORT



# AI and revenue performance

# Agencies using AI are 4-8 x's more likely to grow revenue

*Revenue growth by AI use case*



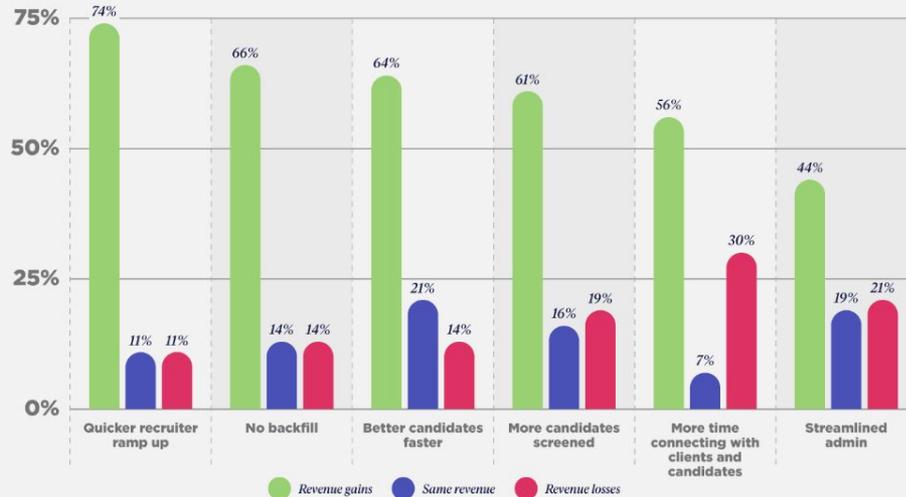
Bullhorn GRID 2026 Industry Trends Report

- Top-performing agencies most likely to be using AI
- Agencies with revenue declines of 10+% were the **least likely to be using AI**
- AI screening correlates with **3 x's** likelihood of revenue growth
- AI revenue gap is **growing** each year

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# Highest growth agencies are reaping multiple AI benefits

**Revenue performance  
by AI benefit**



Bullhorn GRID 2026 Industry Trends Report

- Agencies that are seeing meaningful benefits from AI are as much as **6 x's** more likely to have increased revenue
- Globally, the highest growth agencies (25+%) are **2.5 x's** more likely to be deploying AI in meaningful ways
- It isn't enough just to implement AI, it needs to be **strategic** and **high-impact**

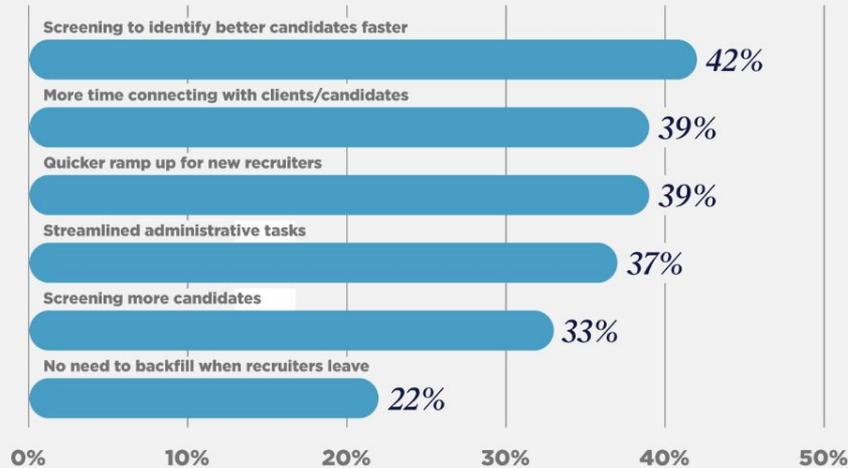
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# Operational impact of AI

# Better candidates faster is the biggest benefit of AI

## What is the current impact of AI on your business?



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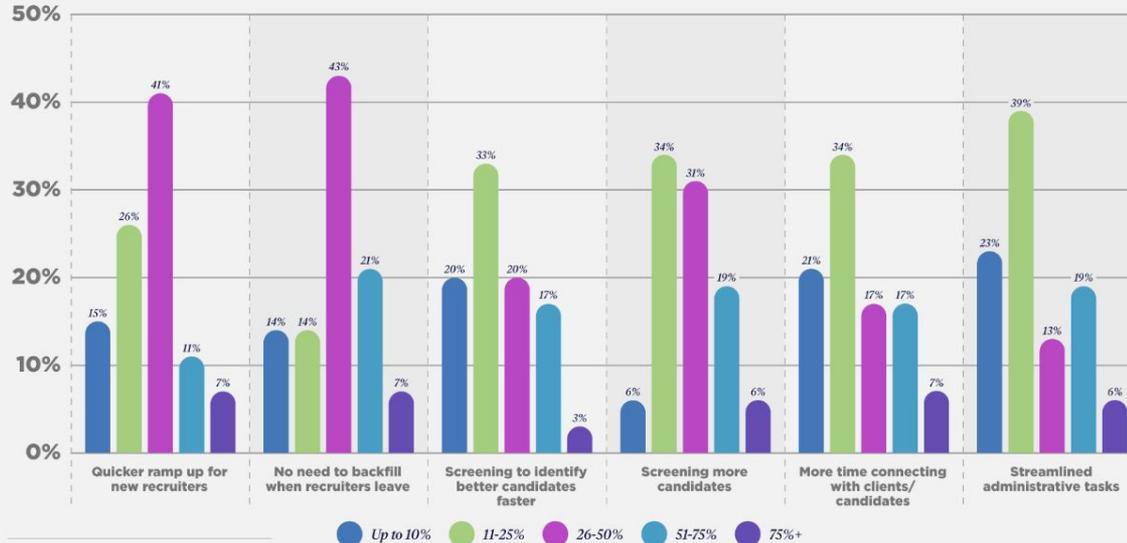
Respondent chose all that apply

- **2/3** of top-performing agencies have placement times under 10 days
- The benchmark for placement times has already shifted — **1/3** of agencies that lost revenue had placement times of 10-19 days
- **41%** of agencies have seen screening speed increase by more than **50%** because of AI

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# AI is improving KPIs across the board

## AI-related KPI improvement



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- **59%** of recruitment leaders say AI has accelerated recruiter ramp-up by more than **25%**
- **56%** say AI screening has improved related KPIs by more than **25%**
- One leader shared that recruiters are getting an entire day back each week

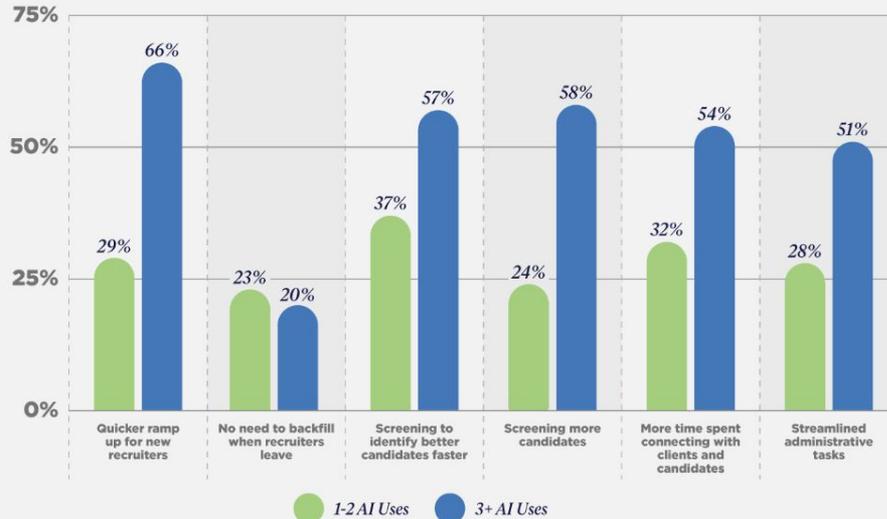
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INDUSTRY TRENDS REPORT

# Platform AI can double the benefits

*Operational benefits by AI usage*



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- Agencies using AI in 3 or more parts of their recruitment lifecycle were
  - **2.4 x's** as likely to be screening more candidates
  - **Twice** as likely to be training recruiters faster
- **69%** of agencies that grew revenue are using AI embedded in their ATS
- Globally, AI throughout the workflow **doubles the chances** of fill rates over 75%

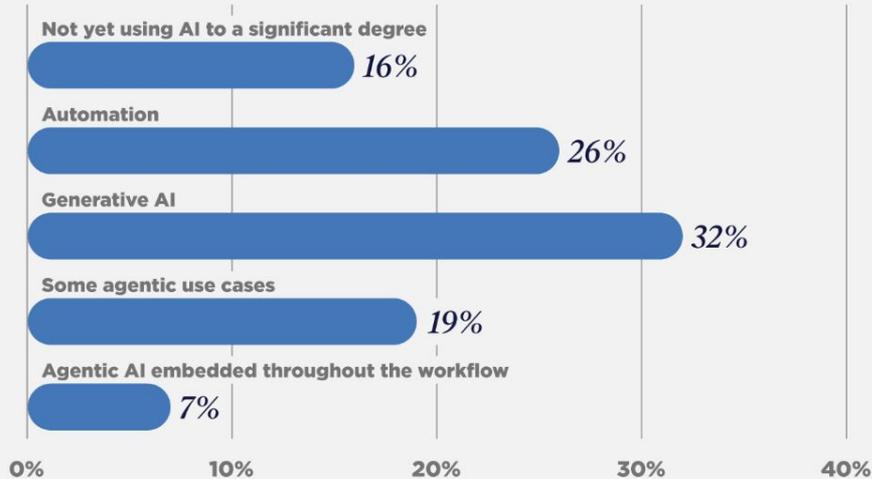
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# Successful AI implementation

# Still a long way to go with AI and automation

*To what degree is your agency using automation and AI?*



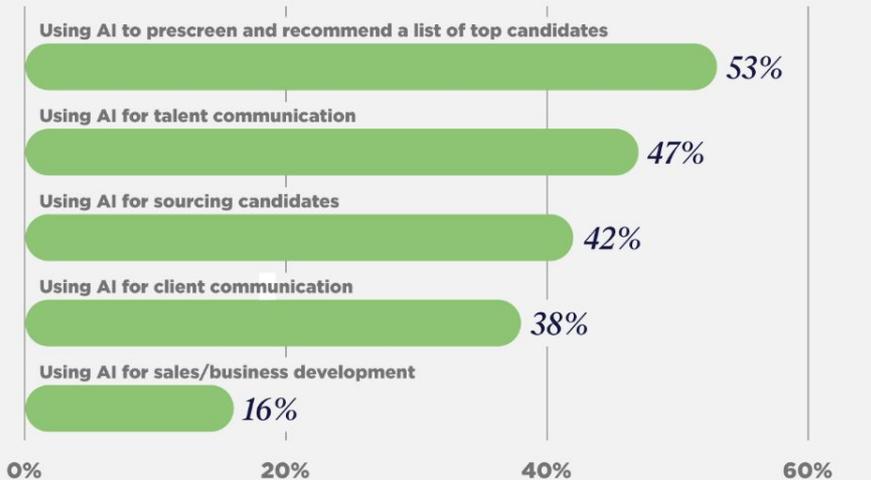
Bullhorn GRID 2026 Industry Trends Report

- **58%** of agencies are currently using AI
- **Only 26%** are taking advantage of agentic AI
- **Only 58%** have even fully automated search
- **Less than 1/3** have automated payroll and billing
- **67%** are using AI solutions embedded in their ATS

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# Most agencies are still not fully leveraging AI

*For which of the following are you using AI today?*



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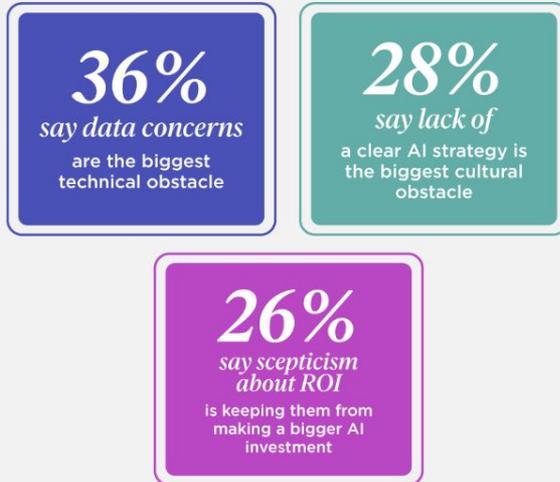
Respondents chose all that apply

- **Less than 55%** of agencies report using AI at any given step of their workflow
- But AI at any stage of the recruitment cycle yields significant revenue benefits
- **Only 7%** report having agentic AI embedded throughout their workflow
- These numbers are going to shift dramatically in the near future

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# AI implementation requires data quality and a clear strategy

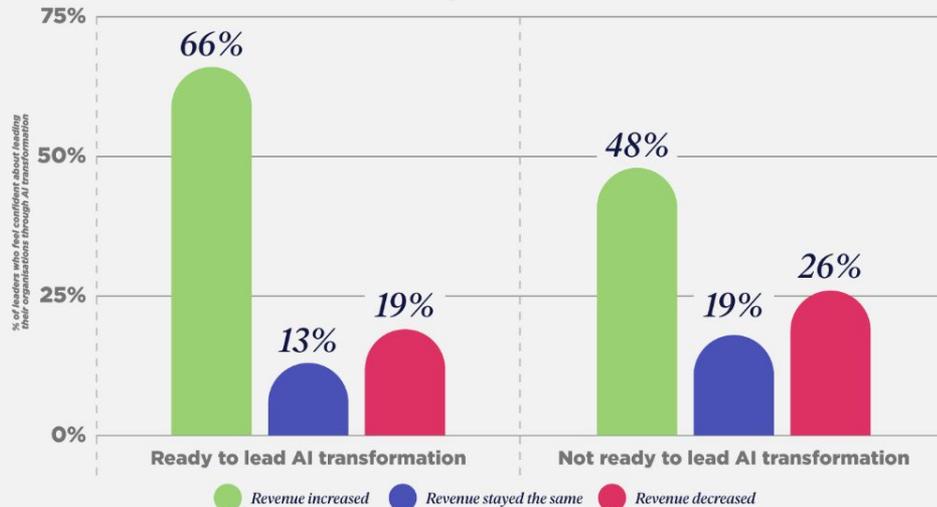
## ***Biggest obstacles to AI adoption:***



- Data quality (**39%**) and lack of a single source of data (**8%**) are technical obstacles to AI implementation
- Lack of a clear AI strategy (**26%**) is the top organisational obstacle, followed by lack of AI literacy (**21%**)
- Leaders shared that strategies like:
  - Formal AI training for employees
  - Designating AI ambassadors from across the organisation
  - Celebrating wins and sharing best practices

# Leadership matters when it comes to AI adoption

**Financial performance by level of leadership confidence**



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- **66%** of leaders who feel prepared to lead AI transformation saw revenue gains — compared to 19% of those who do not feel prepared
- Leaders shared that it is vital that leaders model AI usage and really “walk the walk”

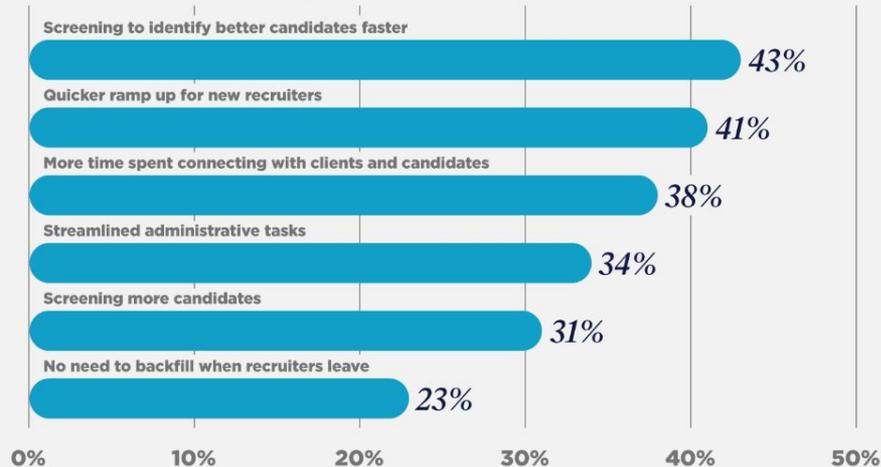
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# Recruiters are never going back

# Recruiters love AI for search and pre-screening

## What is the current impact of AI on your day-day work



Bullhorn GRID 2026 Industry Trends Report

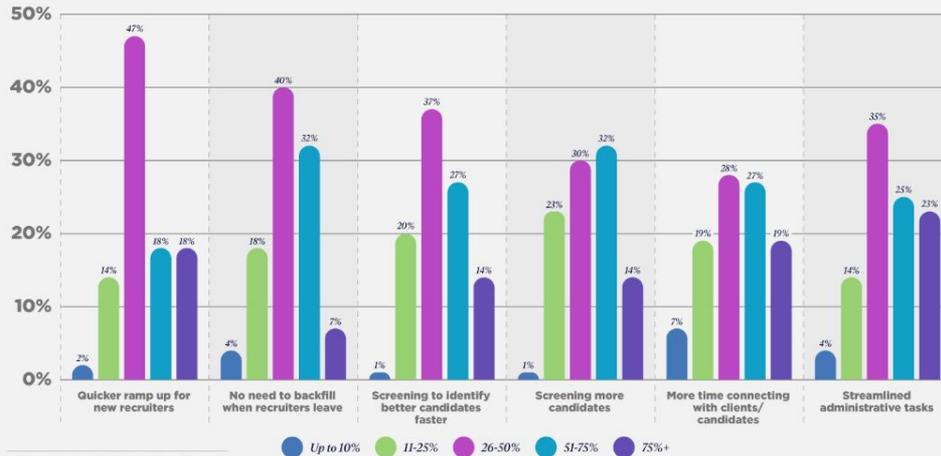
Respondents chose all that apply (recruiters only)

- **43%** of recruiters say AI is helping identify better candidates faster
- **Almost 1/3** appreciate that there is more time to spend with clients
- All leaders stressed that they are focused on finding the ideal **balance** between technology and human interaction

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# AI has rewritten the rules for search and screening

**Time savings by AI benefit**



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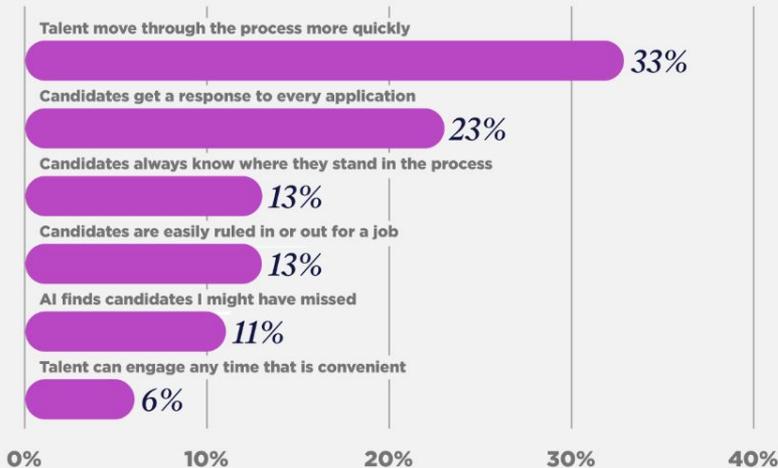
- Recruiters report searching for candidates is the most time-consuming task
- 41%** say screening candidates faster with AI is cutting this time in half or better
- More time to connect with candidates clients is another key benefit for recruiters

*“AI won’t take your job, it will help you get better at it, but what will take your job is another recruiter at a competitor that’s using AI and automation really well...”*

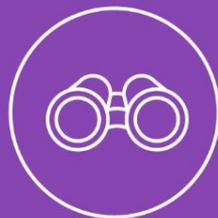
**Sam Porter,**  
IT Director, Morgan Hunt

# Recruiters appreciate that AI improves talent experience

## *Biggest impact of AI on talent experience*

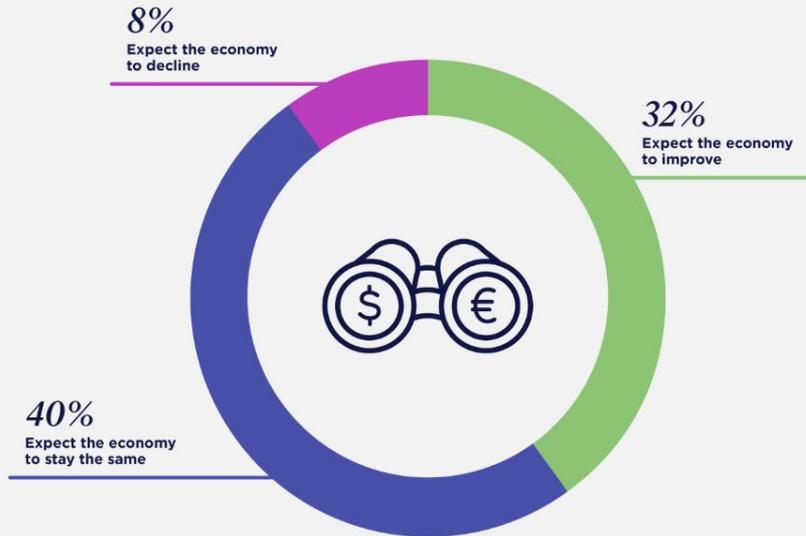


- **33%** of recruiters say moving candidates through the process faster is the top benefit of AI
- **23%** say it's that candidates get a response to every application
- Speed and responsiveness also top talent's wishlist for recruitment
- Leaders shared the key for recruiters is to personally experience AI wins and to have AI tools integrated into existing systems



# Economic and market outlook

# 2026 revenue outlook: Cautiously optimistic



- **61%** of agencies expect the economy to improve in 2026 – the most optimistic outlook of any region
- **1/3** expect it to stay the same
- And leaders we spoke with shared that they **expect any improvement to be modest**, not dramatic

# Agencies are creating their own tailwinds with efficiency and specialisation

## Top strategies to improve financial performance



- **51%** are planning to reduce headcount this year – highest of any region
- Leaders shared that they are counting on **AI to up their level of productivity**
- Leaders say the biggest benefits of AI are **scaling without adding headcount** and **getting new recruiters productive faster**
- **42%** are continuing to find niche specialties where they can be definitive market leaders