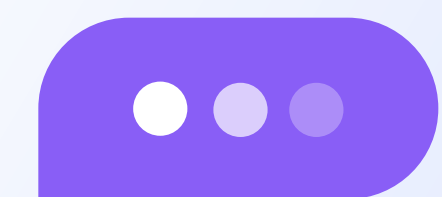




# 2024 Frontline Recruiting Benchmarks

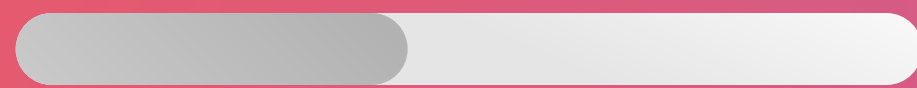
for Talent Acquisition Leaders



# Table of Contents

<a href="#">p.01</a>	Background
<a href="#">p.03</a>	Frontline Workforce at a Glance
<a href="#">p.07</a>	Salary Expectations of Frontline Workers
<a href="#">p.08</a>	Attracting and Converting Frontline Talent
<a href="#">p.16</a>	Conversion Benchmarks
<a href="#">p.19</a>	Insights in Action
<a href="#">p.20</a>	About Emi

# Background



This report presents comprehensive benchmarks for the frontline workforce with a specific focus on the banking, manufacturing (food production and industrial goods), and retail sectors. Leveraging known data collected starting in 2018 through 2023, encompassing the hiring process of over 3.4 million frontline candidates, this study offers valuable insights into the performance, trends, and characteristics of the frontline workforce.

The data used in this report is drawn from Emi's extensive customer base, comprising prominent players in these key industries, ensuring a representative and robust dataset for analysis. The findings presented are based on well-documented and tested data sources, including third-party research firms like Gallup and Pew.

# Understanding Frontline Benchmarks

The key findings from this report shed light on critical aspects of high-volume recruiting, including highlighting the needs of candidates. These insights offer frontline employers valuable information to enhance their workforce management strategies, optimize hiring processes, and remain competitive in the dynamic frontline labor market.

By examining trends and performance metrics, this report provides a comprehensive and up-to-date resource for businesses, policymakers, and stakeholders interested in understanding and improving the high-volume hiring experience in their organizations. We believe that these findings will empower decision-makers to act in creating effective hiring processes for both the talent acquisition team and the candidates.



01.

# Frontline Workforce at a Glance

In order to build a process for attracting, converting, and retaining frontline talent, it’s essential that organizations understand who candidates really are. **It’s essential to uncover the DNA of frontline workers so that talent and HR leaders** can better tailor their experiences to these individuals.

Let’s explore the demographic trends, employee needs, and employer opportunities within the frontline workforce.

> Age

AGE RANGE: 27-32

The **average age** of both applicants and hired candidates **hovers between the late twenties and early thirties**. This means that the individuals entering key frontline roles today are predominantly Millennials. It’s a balancing act that each employer must strike—meeting the needs of up to four generations in the workforce while also planning for the changes younger generations will bring.<sup>3</sup>

While each person seeking employment is certainly unique, it’s helpful to understand commonalities amongst the various generational cohorts of employees.

This generation was born into the age of smartphones and wearable technology.

## What Employees Look for In Their Employer, by Generation

- Z

YOUNG MILLENNIALS & GEN Z (1989 - 2001)

  - 1. The organization cares about employees’ wellbeing
  - 2. The organization’s leadership is ethical
  - 3. The organization is diverse and inclusive of all people
- X

GEN X (1965 - 1979)

  - 1. The organization’s leadership is ethical
  - 2. The organization cares about employees’ wellbeing
  - 3. The organization’s financial stability
- M

OLDER MILLENNIALS (1980 - 1988)

  - 1. The organization cares about employees’ wellbeing
  - 2. The organization’s leadership is ethical
  - 3. The organization’s leadership is open and transparent
- BB

BABY BOOMERS (1946 - 1964)

  - 1. The organization’s leadership is ethical
  - 2. The organization cares about employees’ wellbeing
  - 3. The organization’s financial stability

The mental shift between Gen X and Millennials is not the same as the divide between Gen X and Baby Boomers. It could be argued that Millennials (or “Older Millennials,” as shown in the table) brought an entirely new era with them of handheld technology. While the shift in employee expectations may seem subtle, it has substantial implications for employers attempting to win Millennial talent.

<sup>3</sup> Staffbase

## Millennials Frontline Candidates

**Millennials (born 1981 – 1996) have grown up with technology and expect responsiveness in their digital interactions.** 93% of Millennials own smartphones, compared with 90% of Gen Xers and 68% of Baby Boomers.<sup>4</sup> This generation is not scouring the newspaper for their next opportunity. They are likely to begin their job search on the same channel where they get news, fashion advice, and recipe ideas—social media.

> In fact, more than 40% of job seekers say social media is very important to their job search today.<sup>5</sup>

As frontline candidates, Millennials will not be forgiving of time-consuming, repetitive applications. They are used to Amazon Prime shipping and binge-watching on Netflix. Patience is not this generation's greatest skill. In fact, **being hired quickly is the most important factor to hourly job seekers—even more important than pay.**<sup>6</sup> So, both speed and ease of use should be top priorities for high-volume recruiters.

Still, employers not only need to think about adapting to their current candidates' needs but also to future ones.

Organizations that do not meet the job seekers' expectations will be in a losing battle to attract and retain this and the next generation of frontline talent.

68%

OF BABY BOOMERS  
OWN SMARTPHONES

90%

OF GEN XERS  
OWN SMARTPHONES

93%

OF MILLENNIALS  
OWN SMARTPHONES

## Gen Z as Frontline Candidates

**Gen Z (born 1997-2012) makes up 30% of the world's population and is expected to account for 27% of the workforce by 2025.<sup>7</sup>** This generation was born into the age of smartphones and wearable technology.

Gone are the days of employees joining an organization and spending their entire careers there. Gen Z candidates won't tolerate outdated candidate or employee experiences.

Recent studies show that members of the Gen Z workforce are likely to change jobs as many as ten times between the ages of 18 and 34.<sup>8</sup>

**> 75% of Gen Z employees are likely to look for a job in the next 12 months.<sup>9</sup>**

Younger generations are far more likely to leave an environment that doesn't suit them and are far less willing to pledge loyalty to a workplace.



54%

**54% of Gen Z** candidates won't complete a job application if a company's recruiting methods are outdated.



26%

**26% of Gen Z** would be deterred from accepting a job because of the lack of recruiting technology.<sup>10</sup>

Organizations that choose to continue as they have with traditional candidate attraction methods and employee experiences may find themselves struggling to retain talent in the long run.

Unsurprisingly, **Gen Z expects greater speed and convenience than any other generation before them.**






## > Education and Experience

> The highest level of education completed by hired candidates was high or prep school (41.55%) or middle school (33.02%).

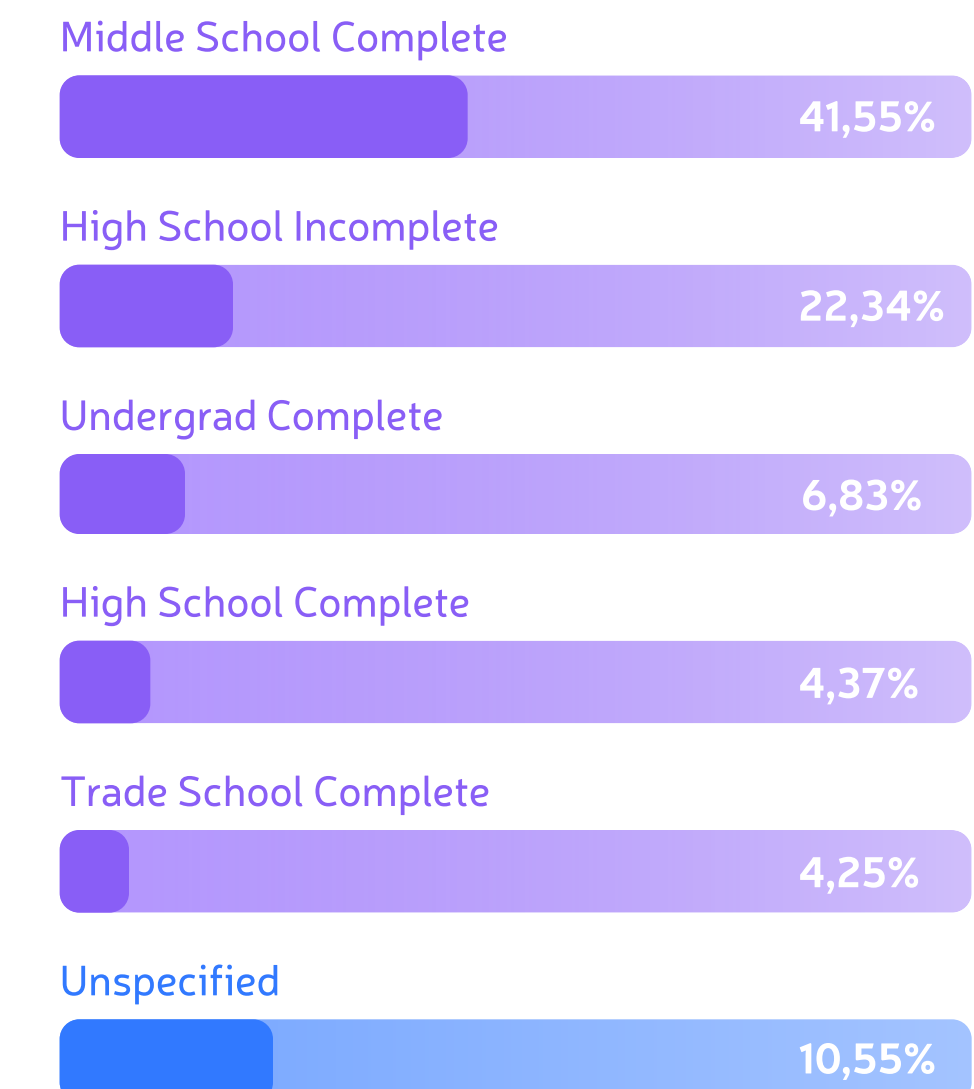
The average education level for frontline workers is usually middle school to high school completion, with an average prior work experience of 18 months. While these individuals may not have pursued higher education formally, they still desire to continue growing and learning.

In fact, job postings for roles that don't require college degrees included the term "career advancement" 35% more often from March through July 2021 than in the same timeframe two years prior.<sup>11</sup> This shows that businesses are looking for individuals interested in career advancement and job seekers are asking about these opportunities more often.

While organizations can increase pay to attract talent, **offering professional development and career advancement are essential as well.** Some different kinds of professional development opportunities that can set your organization apart from the competition include:

-  Industry designation training and testing coverage
-  Tuition reimbursement
-  Company management training

### Average Education Level Hired Candidates





### Average Experience Hired Candidates

The average experience hired candidates had was 18 months of prior work experience.

<sup>11</sup> Emsi Burning Glass



02.

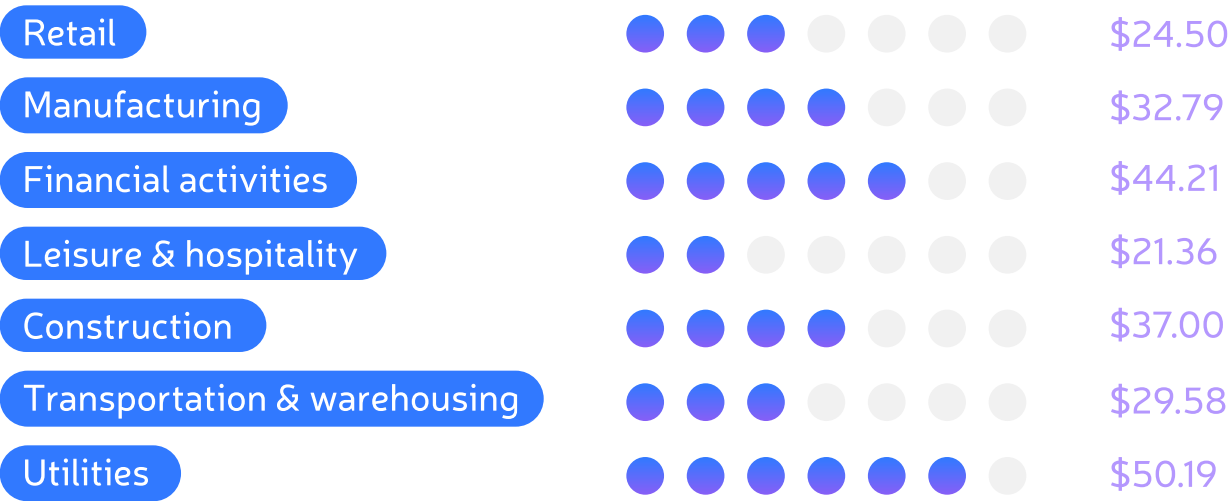
Salary Expectations of Frontline Workers

The topic of salary is crucial in any job opportunity. However, what job seekers expect varies by industry and position. Let’s explore what the landscape looks like for frontline workers across sectors.

As of October 2023, **the average salary for the hourly workforce was between \$20-50/hour** depending on the industry.<sup>12</sup> These wages have risen in the last year due to the increased cost of living. However, not all industries have adjusted salaries according to the inflation rate of 3.7%. **It’s essential for organizations to offer a salary that helps families adjust to the increased cost of living** to not only win but also to retain top frontline talent.

<sup>12</sup> Bureau of Labor Statistics / <sup>13</sup> SpiceWorks

Average Hourly Wage, by Industry



Hourly Salary Adjustments YoY Against Inflation, by Industry

	Inflation Rate 2023	% Rate Increase	Salary Adjustment
Total private	3.70%	4.10%	0.40%
Goods-producing	3.70%	5.02%	1.32%
Construction	3.70%	4.96%	1.26%
Manufacturing	3.70%	4.79%	1.09%
Durable goods	3.70%	4.50%	0.80%
Nondurable goods	3.70%	5.11%	1.41%
Private service-providing	3.70%	3.86%	0.16%
Trade, transportation, & utilities	3.70%	4.35%	0.65%
Wholesale trade	3.70%	4.30%	0.60%
Retail trade	3.70%	3.62%	-0.08%
Transportation & warehousing	3.70%	5.12%	1.42%
Utilities	3.70%	4.15%	0.45%
Information	3.70%	1.38%	-2.32%
Financial activities	3.70%	5.11%	1.41%
Professional & business services	3.70%	4.47%	0.77%
Private education & health services	3.70%	3.00%	-0.70%
Leisure & hospitality	3.70%	4.50%	0.80%
Other services	3.70%	3.98%	0.28%

Beyond Salary

It’s also worth noting that while weekly pay is becoming more of a norm, daily pay is also rising. **More than 80% of employees of Gen Z (18-24 year-olds) said it was “important or very important” to get paid early.** And a third of these employees would volunteer for additional work if they could get paid immediately after the shift.<sup>13</sup>

Don’t forget that benefits are an extension of salary. Benefit offerings should be defined for both part-time and full-time employees. These benefits may include employer-funded healthcare, retirement savings accounts, disability insurance, or even paid lunches and transportation. In some cases, these benefits are viewed as even more valuable than salary, especially for older candidates.

03.

Attracting and Converting Frontline Talent

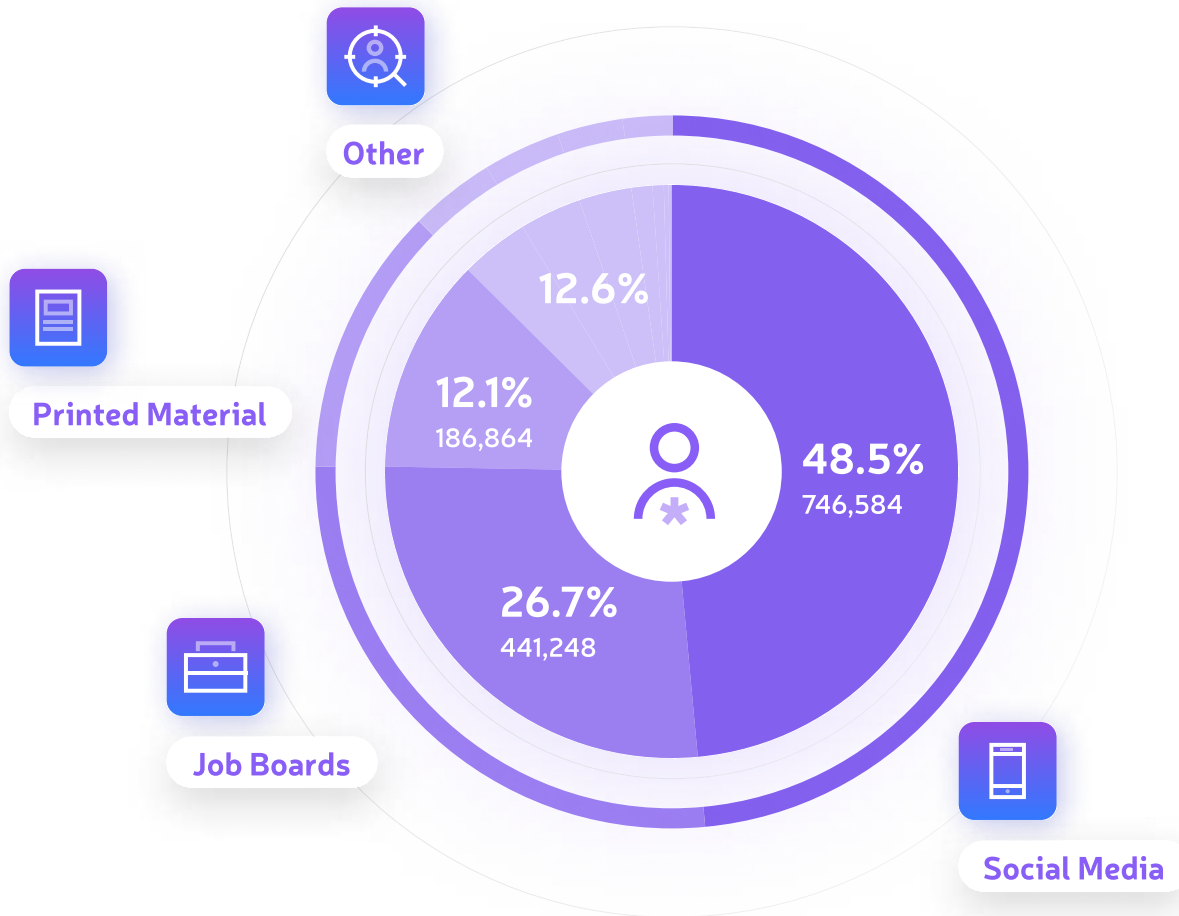
As talent teams are attempting to strategize for their year, they are consistent in asking, “How do I source more candidates?” and, perhaps more importantly, “How do I attract candidates who convert into employees?”

Here, we explore what sources drive the highest volume of candidates and employees.

> Source

Applications by Source

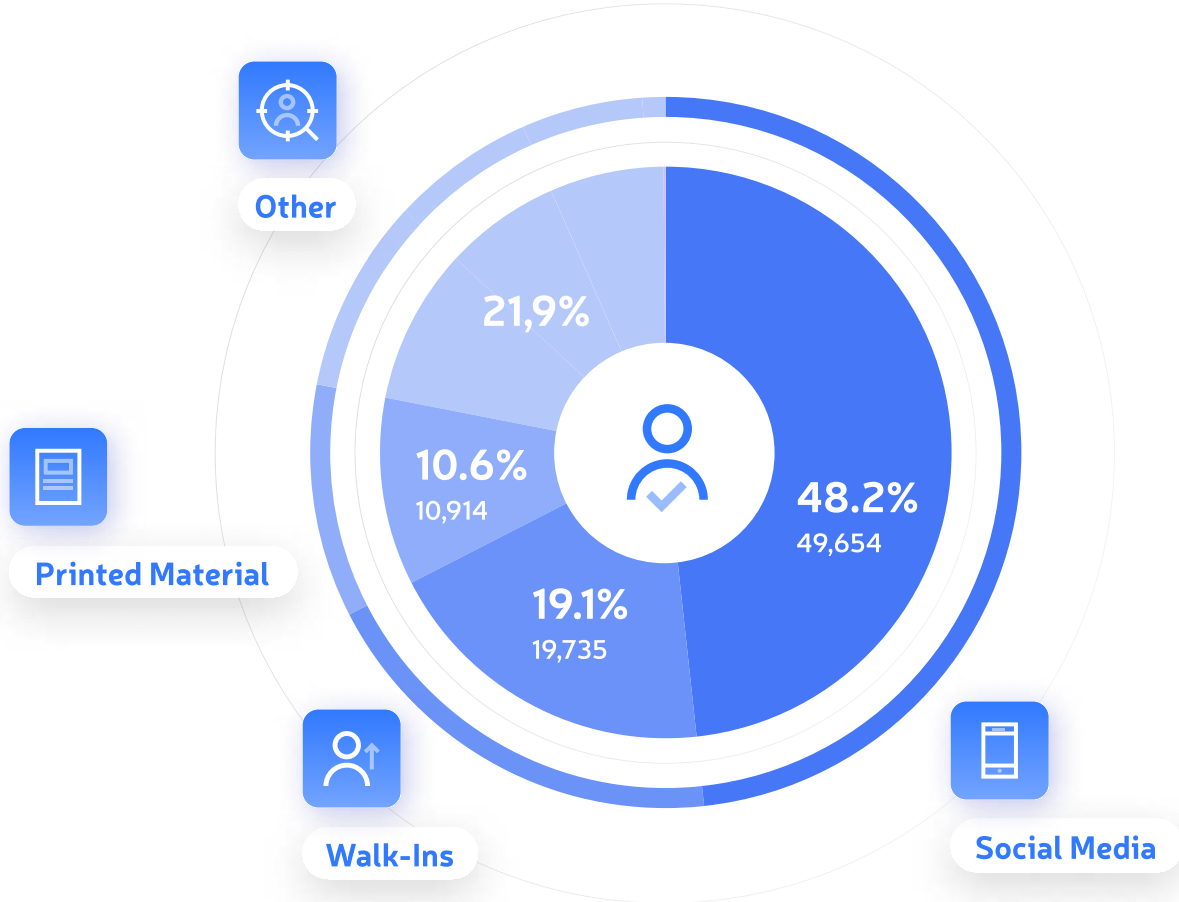
The sources that generated the most applications across all industries were social media (48.54%), job boards (26.74%), and printed material (12.15%).



- Social Media | 48.5%
- Job Boards | 26.7%
- Printed Material | 12.1%
- Walk-Ins | 3.9%
- Career Page | 3.5%
- Manually Added | 1.2%
- Referral Program | 3%
- Outbound | 0.6%
- Events | 0.3%
- Organic | 0.1%
- Partnership | 0.01%

Hired Candidates by Source

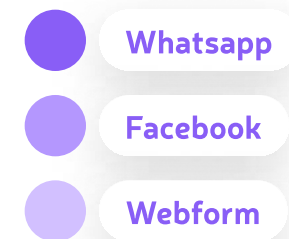
The sources that generated the most hired candidates across all industries were social media (48.28%), walk-ins (19.19%), and printed material (10.61%).



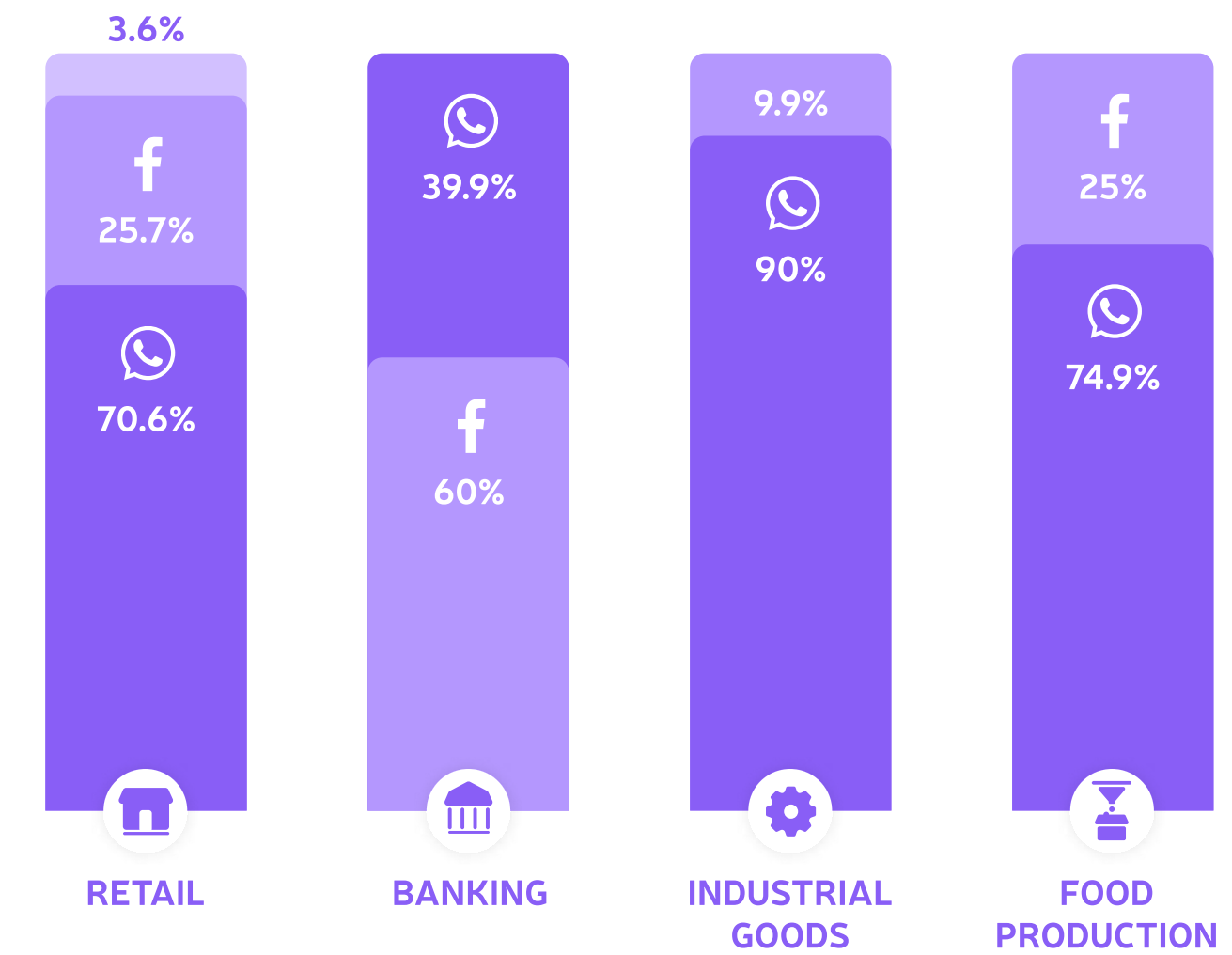
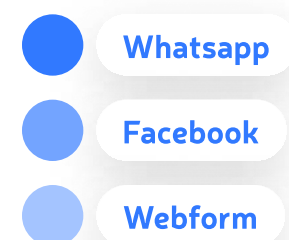
- Social Media | 48.2%
- Walk-Ins | 19.1%
- Printed Material | 10.6%
- Manually Added | 8.8%
- Referral Program | 6.6%
- Job Boards | 5.5%
- Career Page | 0.7%
- Events | 0.2%
- Outbound | 0.1%
- Partnership | 0.01%

## &gt; Channel

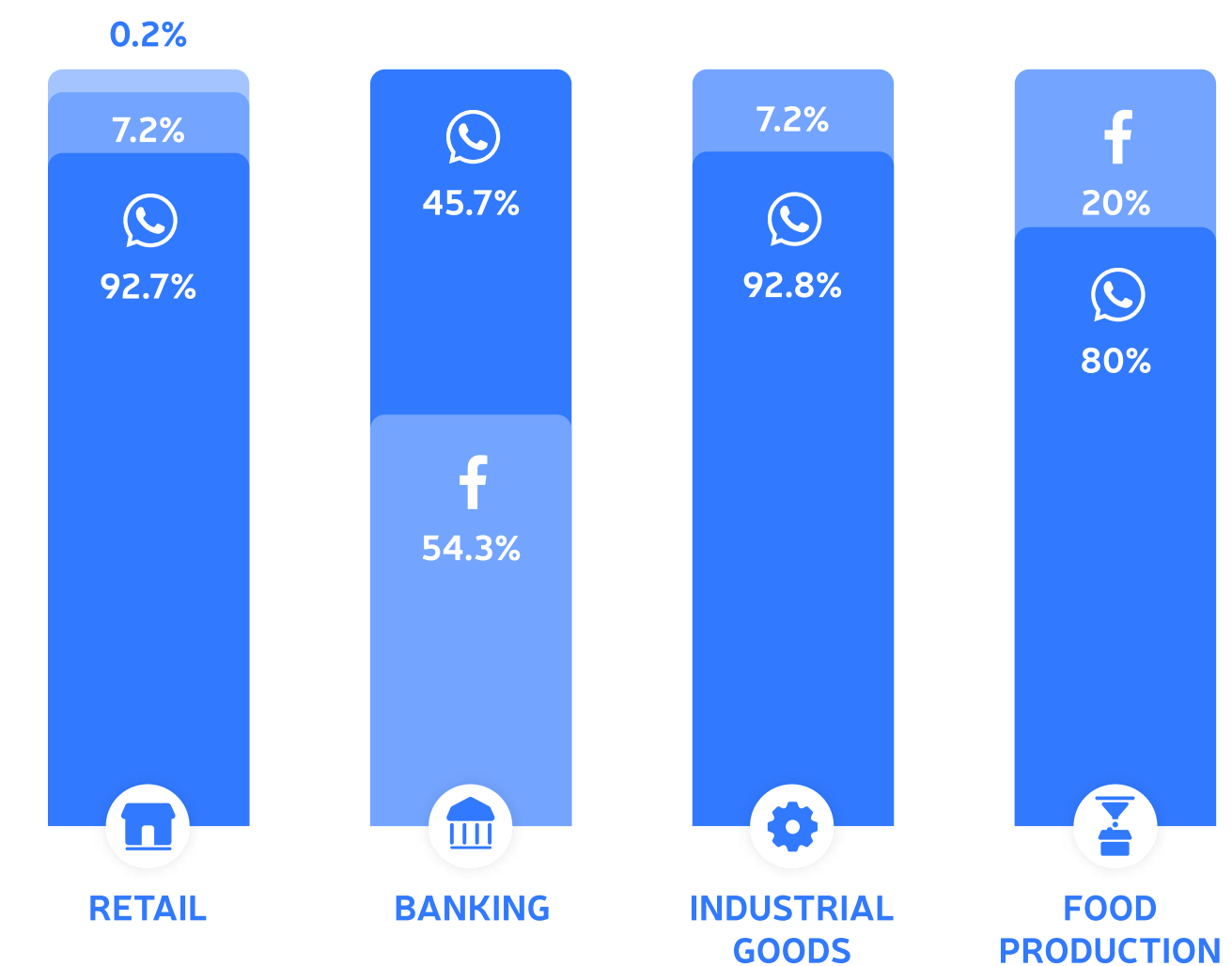
Channel effectiveness is an essential metric for Emi clients because it shows what method candidates use to interact with Emi's responsive AI chatbot. As you will see, **while certain channels drove higher volume, they didn't always drive higher conversion rates.**

Applications  
by Channel

In all industries but banking, WhatsApp drove the largest percentage of applications followed by Facebook.

Hired Candidates  
by Channel

WhatsApp led to the greatest number of new hires across all industries other than banking, which found Facebook to be the most effective channel.







Retail

Leading high-volume employers in the retail industry had the largest number of applications and hires come from WhatsApp. Additionally, WhatsApp had the highest conversion rate among the channels at 15.75%. Web was the least successful source in driving the volume of applications and conversions.



Industrial Goods

Within industrial goods, recruiters saw a much higher volume of applications from WhatsApp than from Facebook; however, the conversion rate for WhatsApp applications converted at 9.13%, and Facebook applications converted at 6.4%.



Banking



Frontline recruiters in banking saw a higher application rate through Facebook than WhatsApp by just over 20%. However, the conversion rate from candidate to hire was higher for WhatsApp.



Food Production

Talent teams in frontline recruiting for food production saw that the majority of their applications came in through WhatsApp almost 75% of applications whereas Facebook only sourced a quarter of the applications. Both sourced far more than web channels, which only contributed a fraction of a percentage. But when we examine the conversion rates, both leading channels seem very similar in their ability to move applicants to hires. WhatsApp converted applicants at a 1.8% rate, and Facebook converted at a 1.35%.

Conversion rate  
by Channel

	 Whatsapp	 Facebook	 Webform
 RETAIL	15.7%	3.3%	0.5%
 BANKING	3%	2.4%	-
 INDUSTRIAL GOODS	9.1%	6.4%	-
 FOOD PRODUCTION	1.8%	1.3%	-



## > Industry

**It's imperative for hiring teams to understand which sources are most effective in driving not only the volume of applications but also the number of hires.** Here we evaluated what sources were most effective at driving applications for each industry and what sources produced the most new hires. We also explored which sources had the highest conversion rate in each industry.

1

### — Banking

In banking, job boards produce the highest volume of applicants, making up almost 85% of all applications received. However, job boards yielded the lowest conversion rate of the sources at a conversion rate of .01%. Comparatively, events and referral programs proved to be much more effective in moving candidates through the hiring process, with conversion rates of 33.2% and 32.6%, respectively.

2

### — Retail

The three primary conversion sources for retailers were walk-ins (33.14% conversion rate), referral programs (16.49%), and social media (6.89%), while the often popular job boards (2.07% conversion) and career pages (1.01% conversion) converted at a much lower rate.

3

### — Food Production

In the food production industry, printed materials had the highest conversion rate of the sources, though, at 3.21%, it was a much lower conversion rate than many of the other industries. Additionally, while job boards contributed over 60% of the applications to the hiring funnel, the source had a conversion rate of less than 1%.

4

### — Industrial Goods

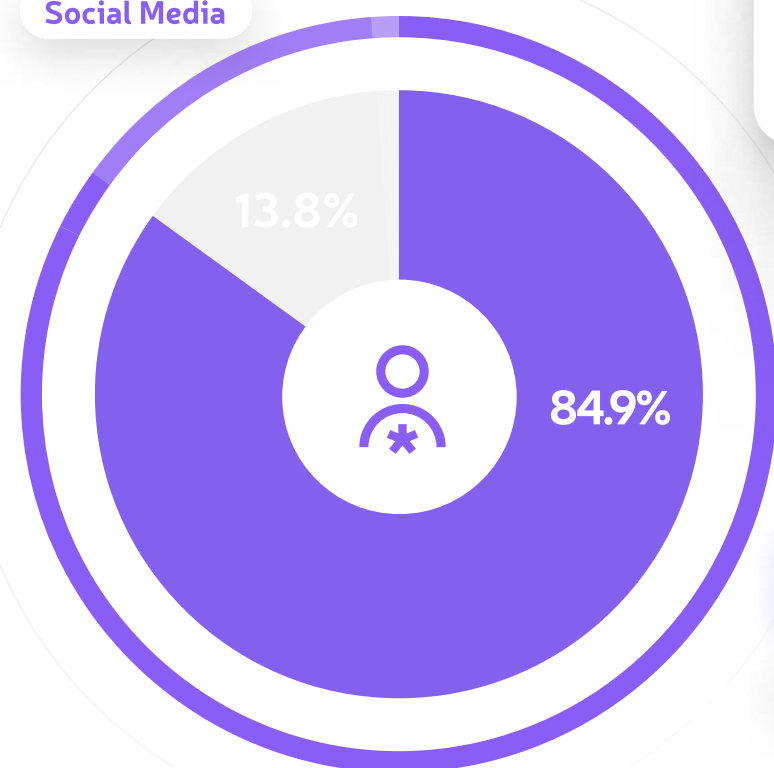
Within this industry, referrals appear to be the strongest driver of converted candidates at 19.98% conversion and one of the strongest drivers of the pipeline (33.5% of applicants). Again, for industrial goods, job boards proved to be the least effective in converting candidates to new hires at a 5.13% conversion rate.

1

## Banking

Banking Applications  
by Source

Social Media



The main application sources in **banking** were job boards (84.97%) and social media (13.87%).

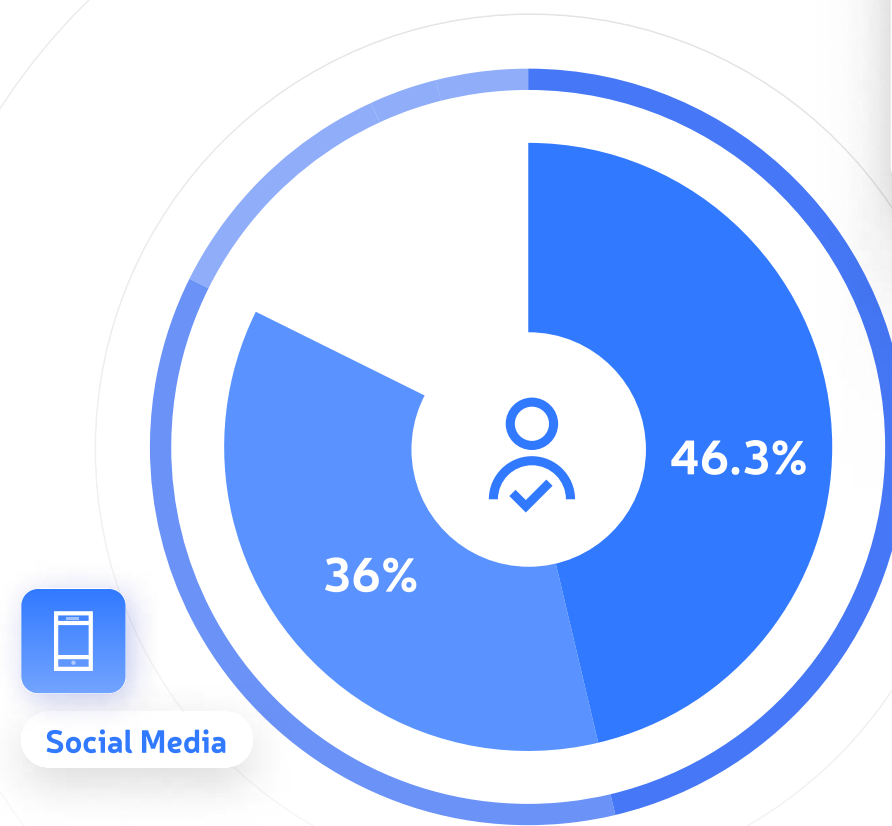
The application source that brought in the fewest applications was printed material at 0.10%.



Job Boards

Banking Hired Candidates  
by Source

Social Media



The main new hire sources in **banking** were job boards (46.30%) and social media (36.03%).

The application source that brought in the fewest hires was printed material at 0.32%.



Job Boards

Banking Conversion rate  
by Source

Applicants



Hired

1. Events

33.2%

2. Referral Program

32.6%

3. Outbound

11.6%

4. Printed Material

5.6%

5. Social Media

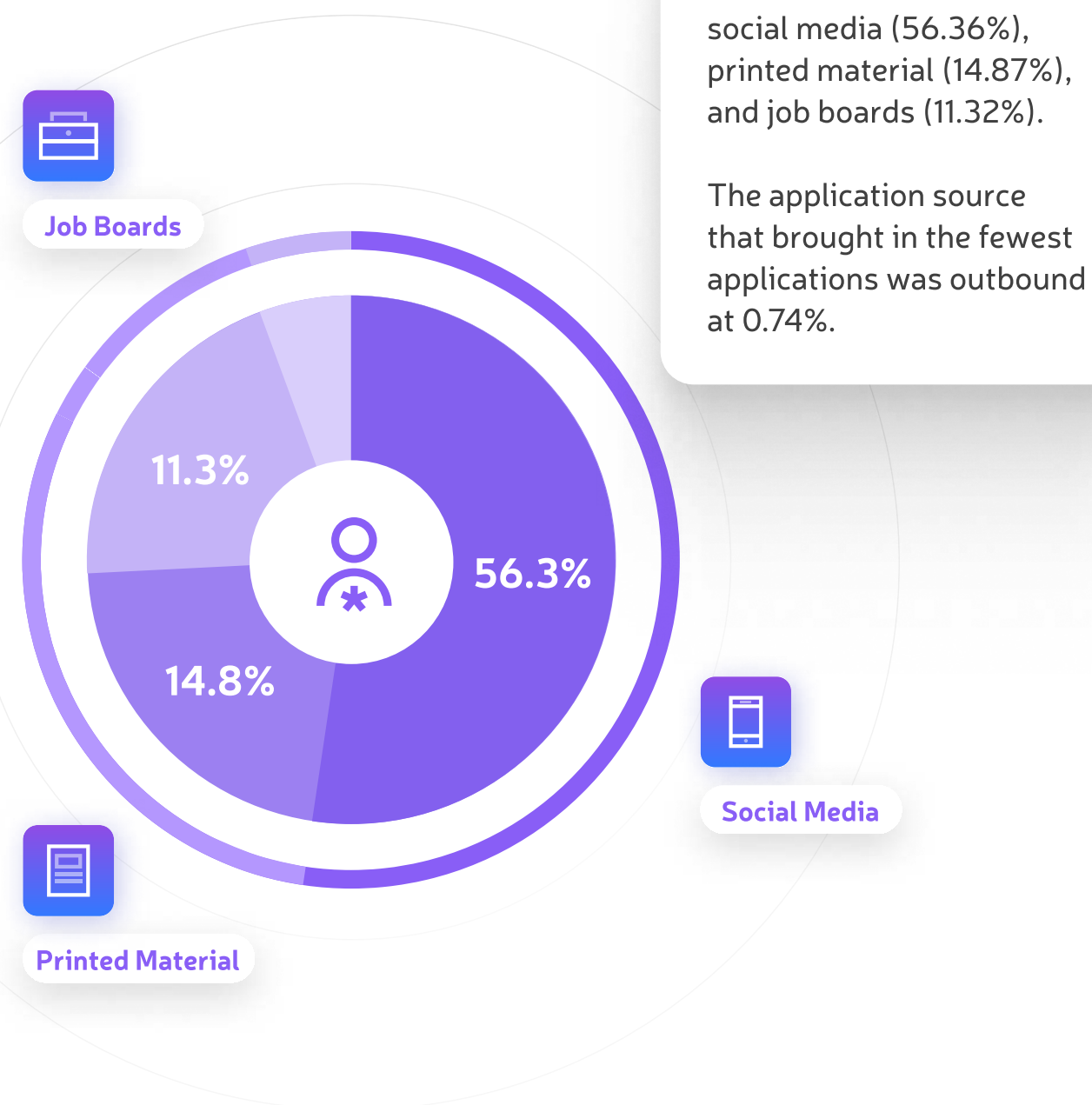
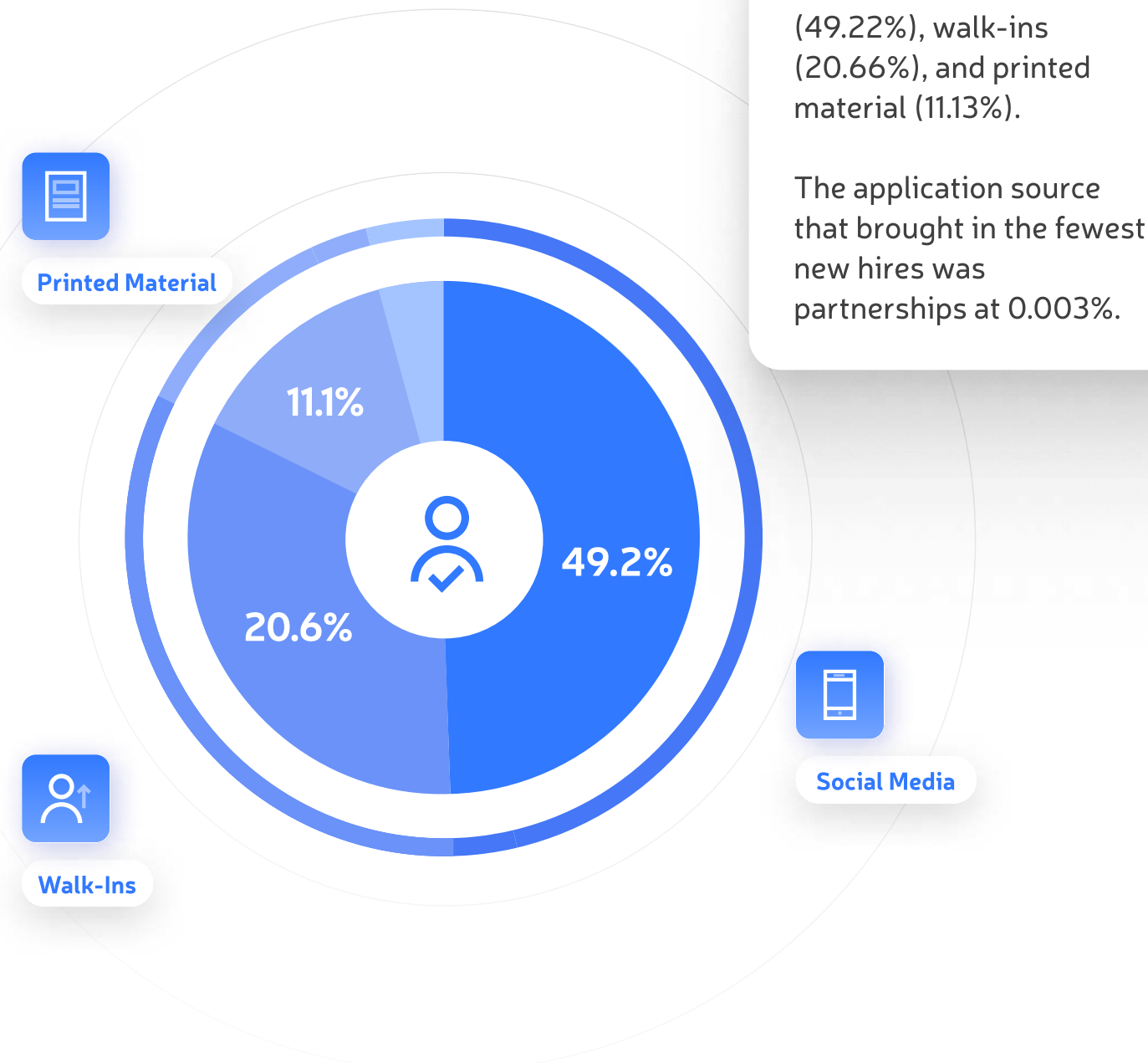
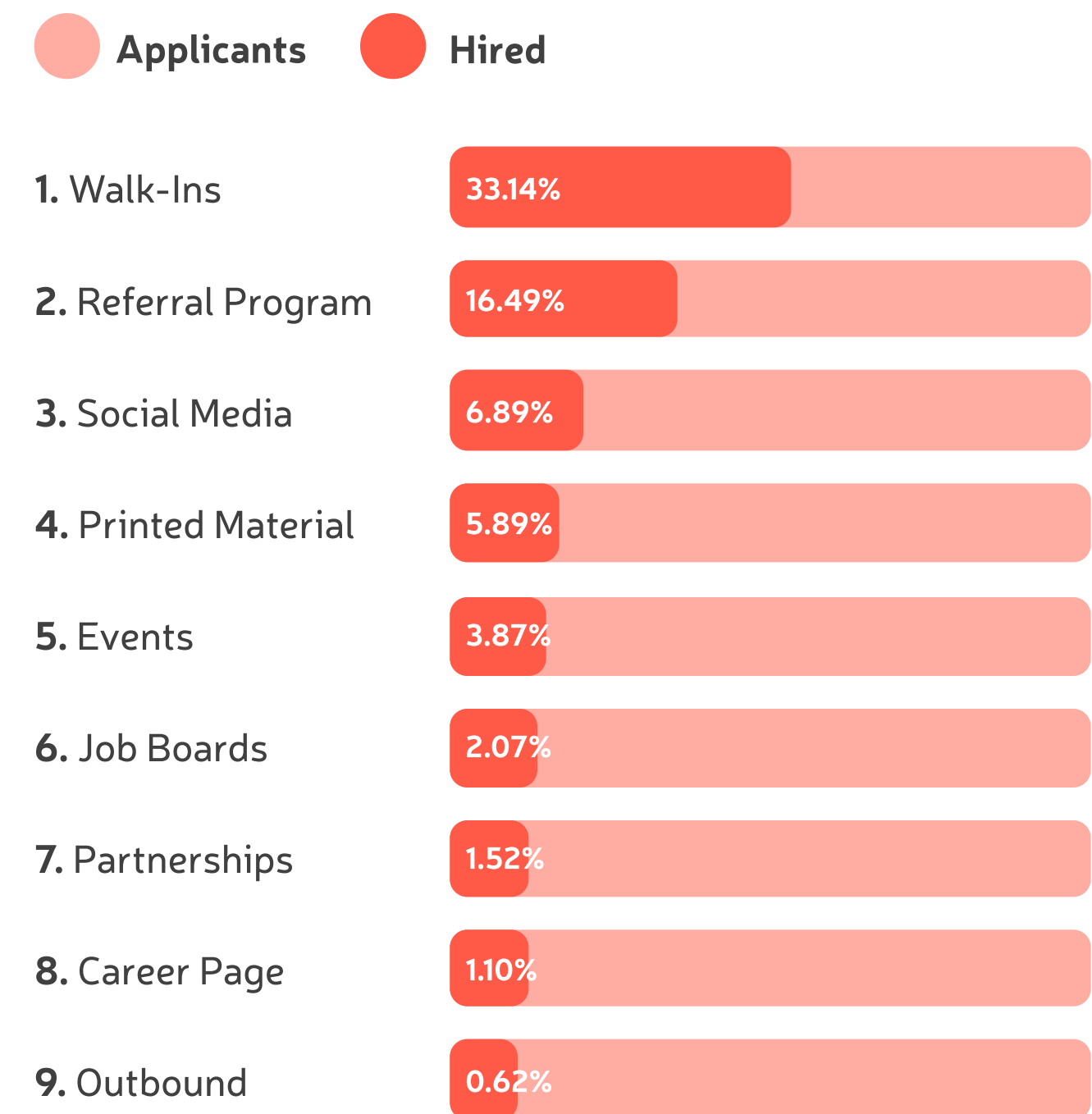
0.9%

6. Job Boards

0.01%

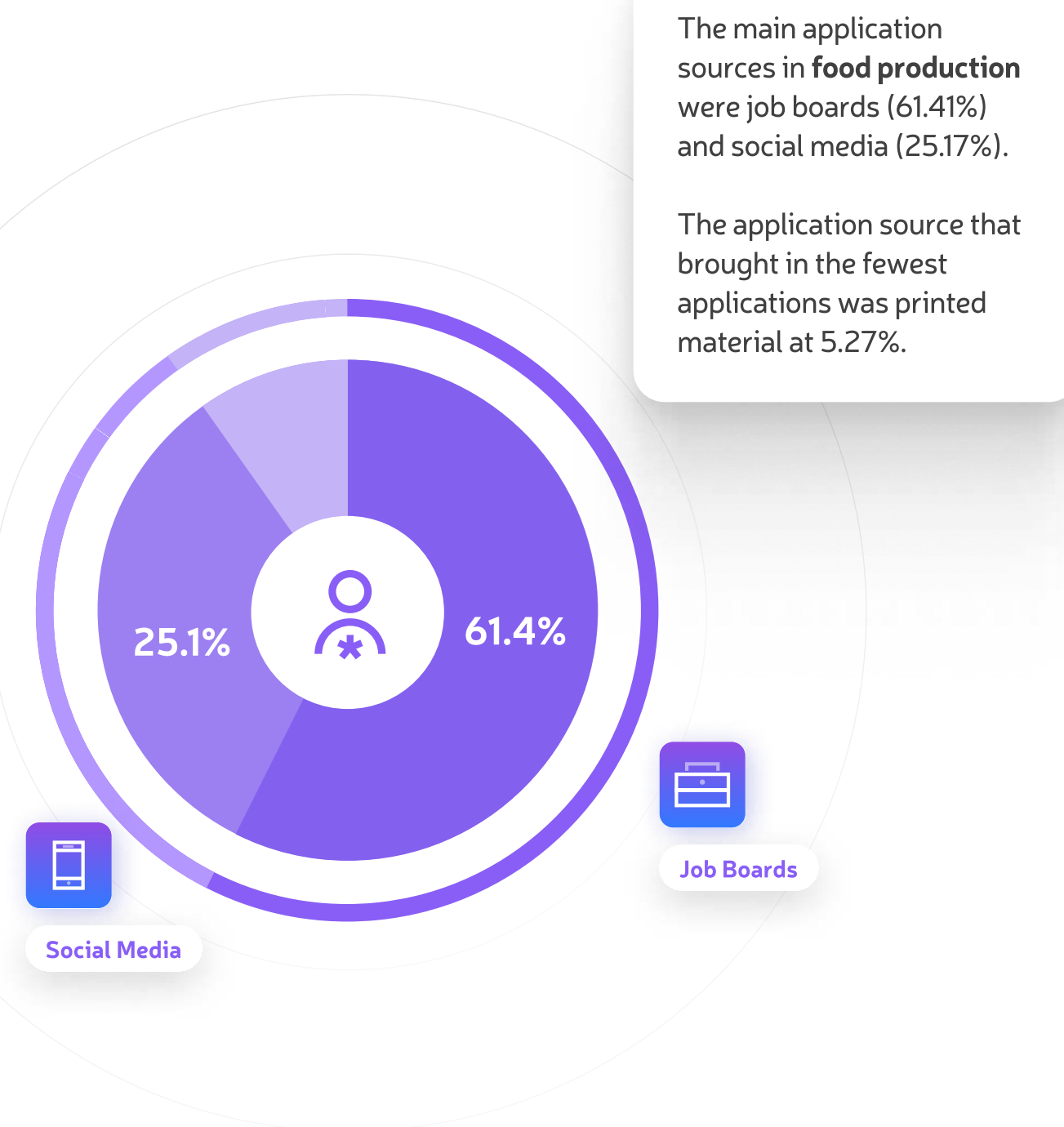
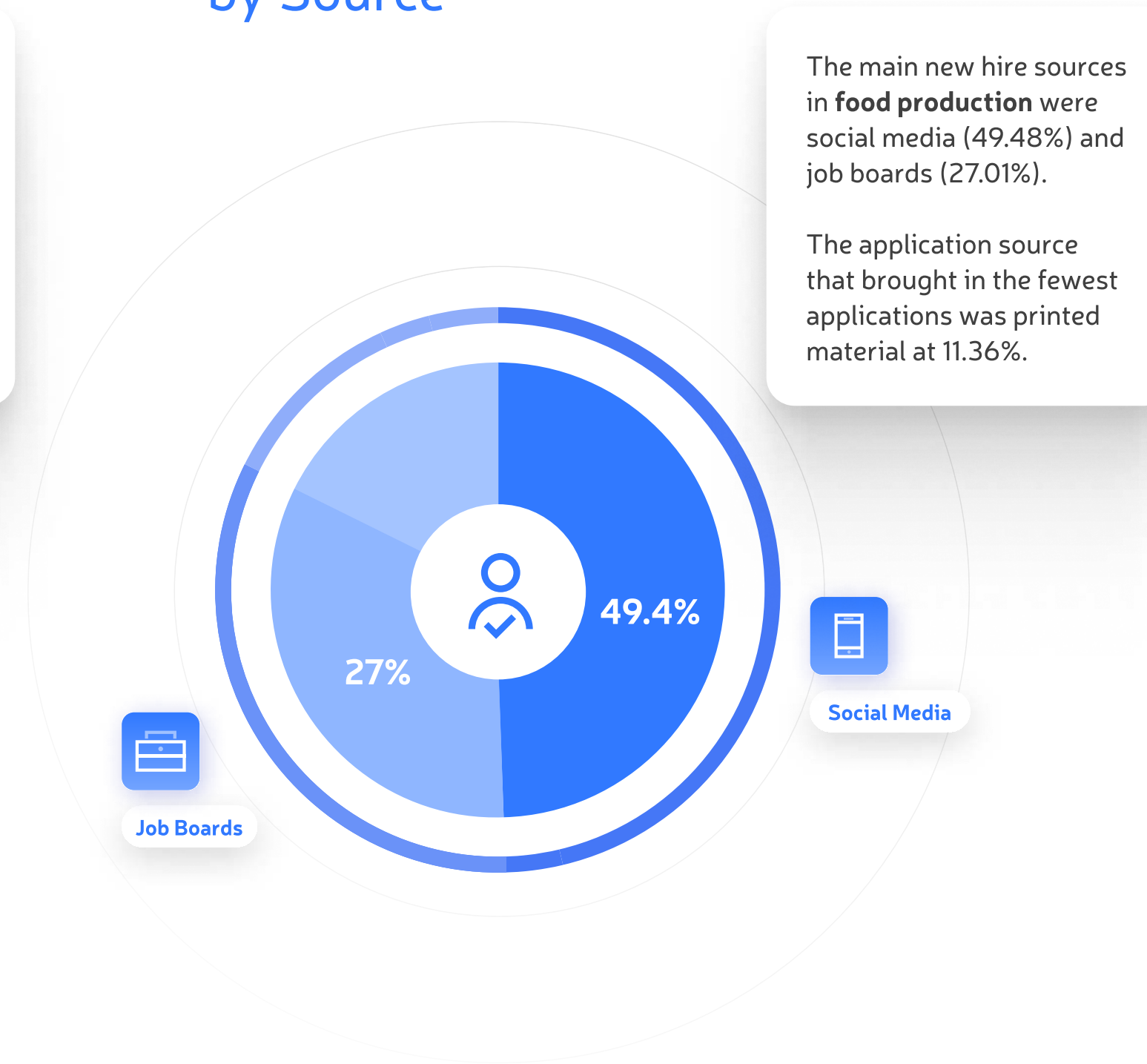
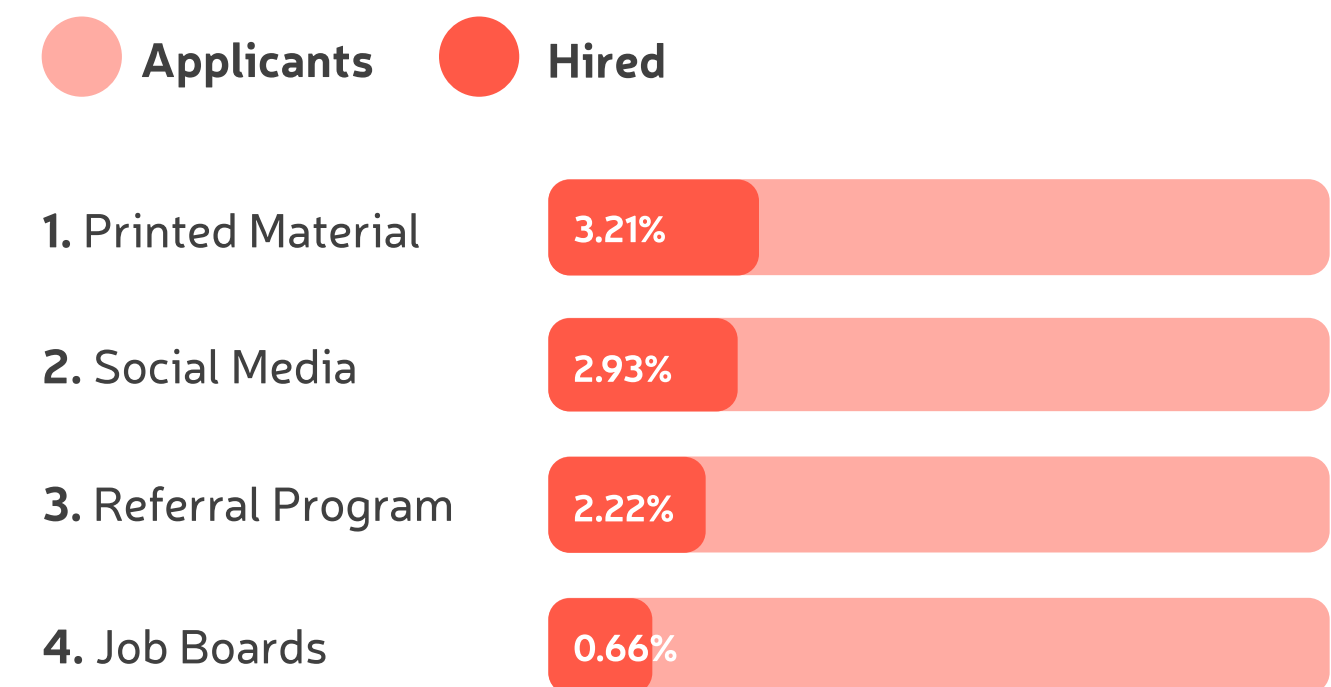
2

## Retail

Retail Applications  
by SourceRetail Hired Candidates  
by SourceRetail Conversion rate  
by Source

3

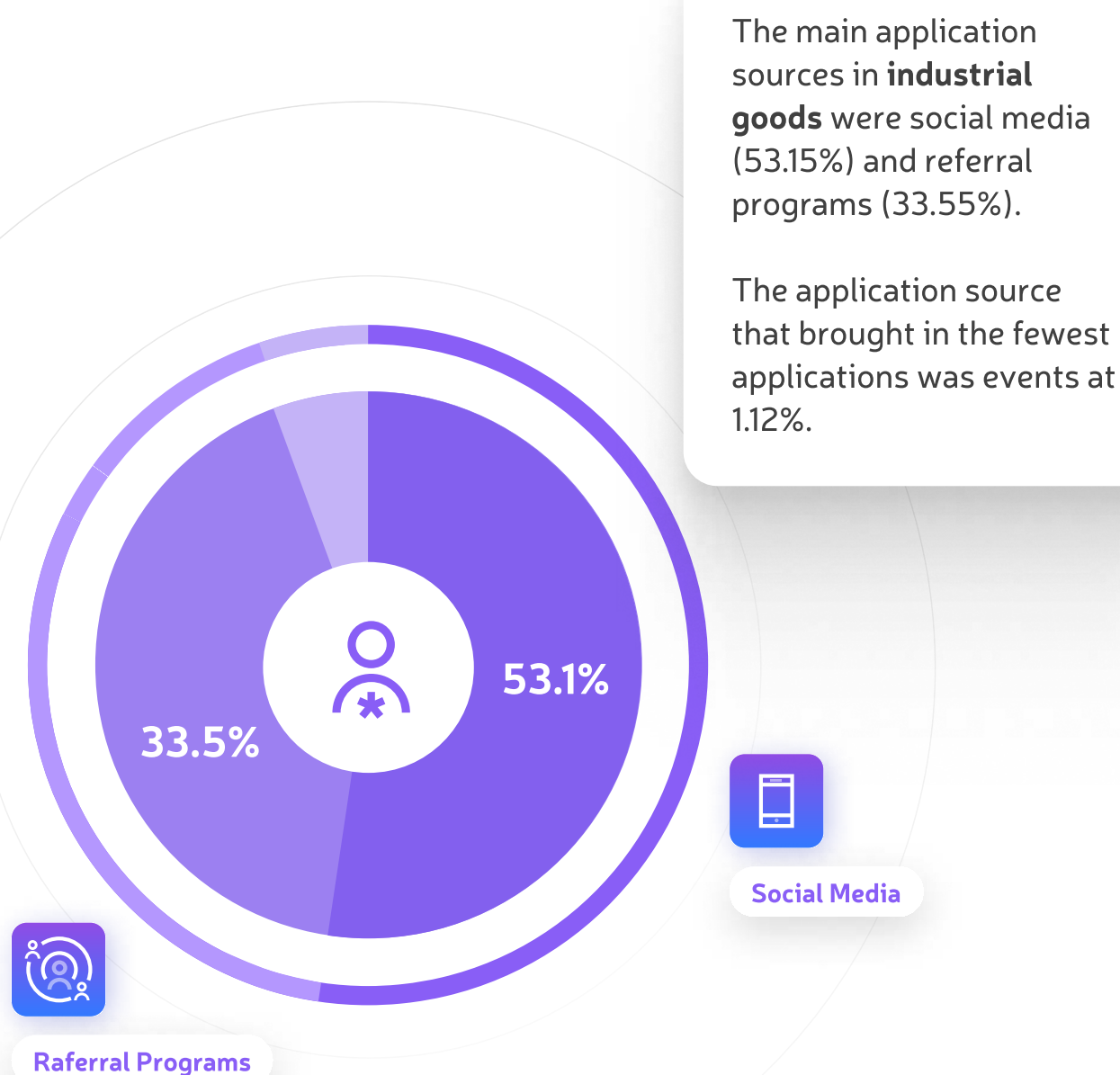
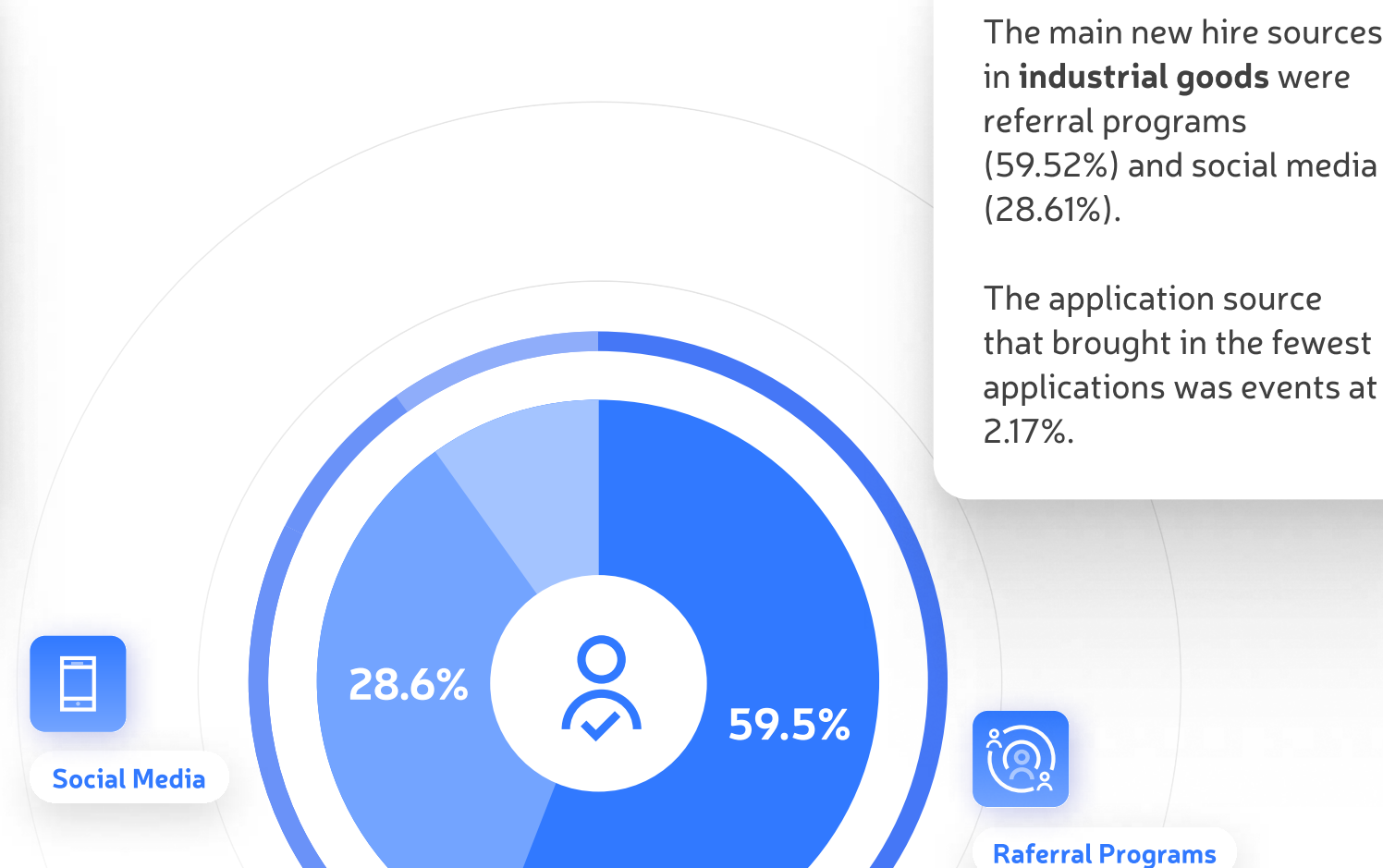
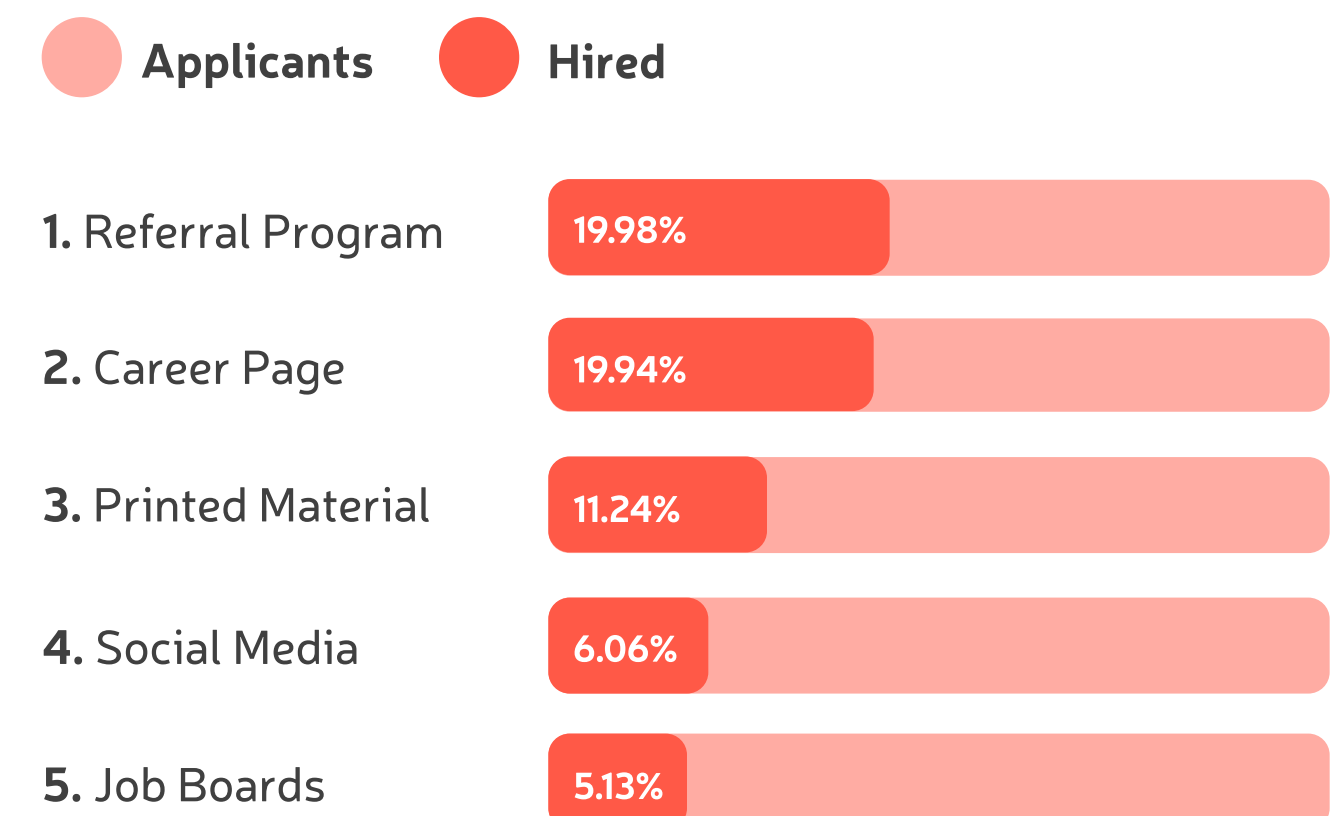
## Food Production

Food Production Applications  
by SourceFood Production Hired Candidates  
by SourceFood Production Conversion rate  
by Source



4

## Industrial Goods

Industrial Goods Applications  
by SourceIndustrial Goods Hired Candidates  
by SourceIndustrial Goods Conversion rate  
by Source

## 04. Conversion Benchmarks

### > Source by Industry

It can be challenging to know if your conversion rate is above or below where it should be. Often, leaders come to us asking what is standard across industries. You will find that retail has the highest conversion rate while banking has the lowest; however, we must consider these findings as one variable in a much larger conversation.

Retail as an industry usually recruits at a higher volume than banking and experiences turnover rates between 75.8-85% (part-time and full-time respectively).<sup>14</sup> Whereas banking recruits at a lower volume because they are smaller organizations and because their turnover sits at 23.4%, over 50 percentage points lower than retail.

**So, it's not necessarily that one industry is "better" or worse than the other at recruiting or converting candidates.** Each has unique elements that tell the story of the average conversion rate. Still, it's helpful to understand what leaders in this space have experienced utilizing recruitment automation.

<sup>14</sup>Korn Ferry

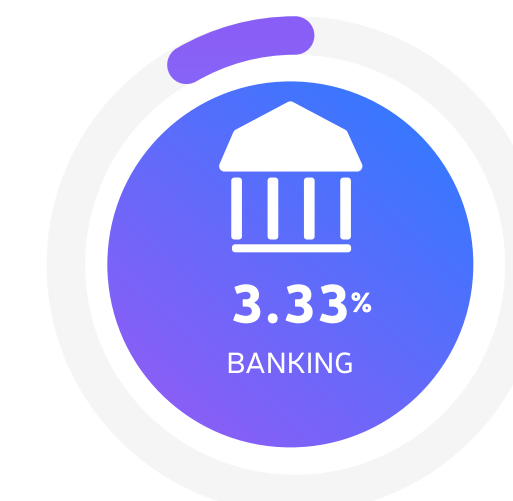
### Conversion rate, by Industry



In **retail**, the total conversion rate of applicants to hired employees was **15.69%**.



In **industrial goods**, the total conversion rate of applicants to hired employees was **9.41%**.



In **banking**, the total conversion rate of applicants to hired employees was **3.33%**.



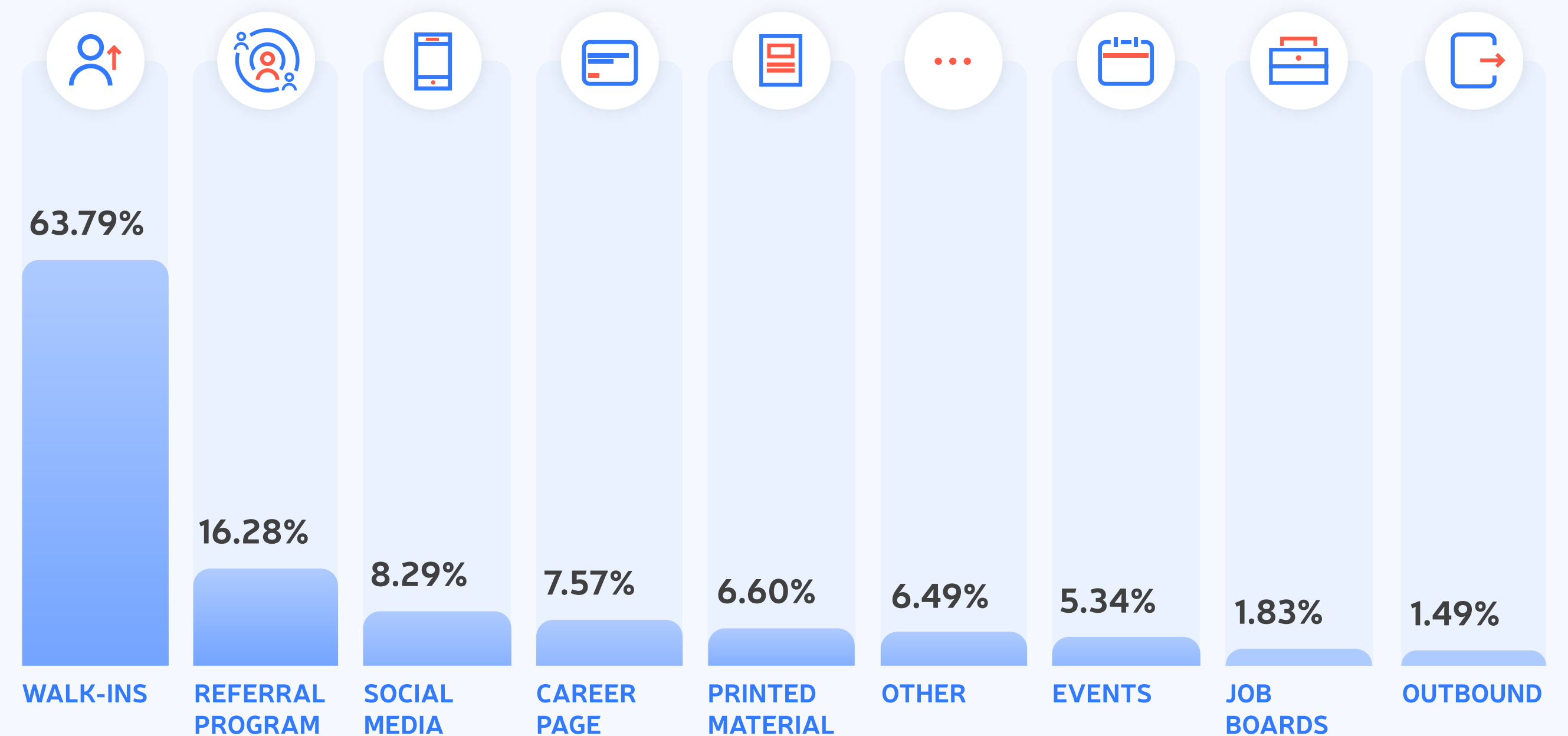
In **food production**, the total conversion rate of applicants to hired employees was **1.93%**.

## > Source and Channel

One of the biggest challenges talent acquisition teams face is how to allocate their resources to result in the highest number of hired candidates. However, it's essential to explore the response to this challenge with multiple perspectives.

We have provided **conversion data** by reviewing it through a number of lenses so leaders can draw informed conclusions about the hiring process's performance.

### Conversion rate, by Source



### Conversion rate, by Channel

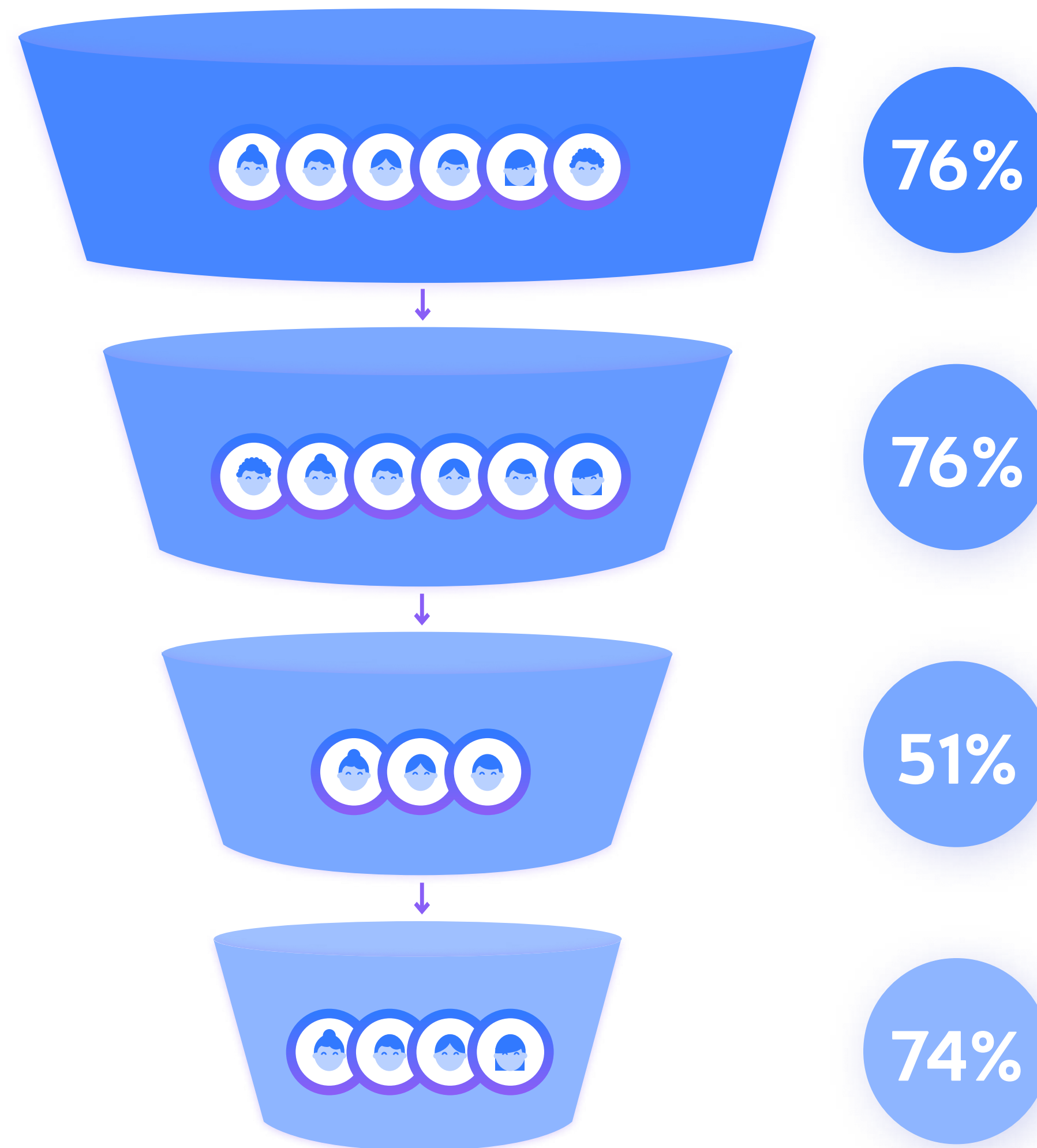


## Conversion rate by Recruitment Funnel Stage

### > Recruitment Funnel Stage

One of the biggest questions we get is what to expect when initiating recruitment automation within an organization. **Emi's clients have seen the following conversion rates from stage to stage.** Let's dive into each.

With an industry-wide average application abandonment rate over 80% and the common occurrence of hourly workers exiting the application process within the first 3-5 minutes, achieving an over 75% completion rate is almost unheard of.<sup>15</sup>



#### CONVERSATION STARTED → CONVERSATION FINISHED

Within the world of Emi, a conversion finished means that an application is complete. The average conversion rate from conversation started to conversation finished with Emi's responsive AI chatbot is 76%—far exceeding the standards set by an average of 80% application abandonment rate. Once a candidate completes the application, their resume-free submission is moved to the screening stage.

#### CONVERSATION FINISHED → APPROVED SCREENED

Talent acquisition teams utilize Emi's customizable screening capabilities to define ideal profiles for candidates. Those who meet the criteria are moved to the next stage of the process, for the hiring manager or recruiter to approve scheduling an interview. Over three-quarters of the candidates who applied were approved for an interview.

#### APPROVED SCREENED → APPROVED INTERVIEW

After a candidate is interviewed, the hiring manager will give the green light to either move forward with an offer or remove the candidate from the interview process. On average, there was over a 50% conversion rate between these stages.

#### APPROVED INTERVIEW → HIRED

When the average number of frontline workers who drop out of the hiring process is a whopping 79%, the feat of completing the journey is a feat in itself. Of the candidates who are moved forward to the offer stage, over 74% end up being hired by the organization. The loss of individuals here is due to a mixture of not getting approved documentation or testing, ghosting, finding a different opportunity, or simply removing themselves from the hiring process.



## 05. Insights in Action

While we've covered a broad landscape of the frontline workforce, **leaders may be wondering—now what?**

Let's discuss how teams can put these findings into action with key takeaways and recommendations.

1.

### Embrace Digital Transformation

#### Takeaway:

With digital natives playing an increasingly prominent role in the workforce, **organizations must align their recruitment processes with their tech-savvy preferences.**

#### Recommendation:

Incorporate technology-driven solutions such as mobile-friendly applications and digital communication channels. Enhance the overall candidate experience with streamlined and user-friendly interfaces.

2.

### Quality Over Quantity in Applications

#### Takeaway:

A high volume of applications doesn't always translate to a high volume of hires. Resource allocation when selecting sources and channels, especially, is crucial.

#### Recommendation:

Invest resources thoughtfully by analyzing the effectiveness of various sourcing channels and optimizing the recruitment funnel. Focus on quality over quantity to improve the conversion of candidates and minimize time-to-fill metrics.

3.

### Analyze Conversion Across Multiple Variables

#### Takeaway:

The conversion of candidates can vary significantly based on geographic location, source, and channel.

#### Recommendation:

Conduct in-depth analyses of candidate conversion rates in different regions and across various sources and channels. Use these insights to refine your recruitment strategies, targeting the most promising areas and optimizing the hiring funnel. By implementing these recommendations, organizations can refine their recruitment strategies, improve candidate experiences, and ultimately secure and retain top talent effectively.

## 06. About Emi

Emi is the responsive recruiting automation platform built for mobile-first frontline hiring. The largest global brands, like **Walmart, Heineken, and Burger King**, trust Emi to support a quality candidate experience with **intelligent screening, automated interview scheduling, digital document collection, and intuitive onboarding**.

**With Emi, frontline recruiters and hiring managers can:**



### Recruit top talent on the frontline

Emi's responsive AI chatbot enables you to reach candidates wherever they are.

Emi **automatically posts to all major job boards** with the click of a button, and its **mobile-based** interface makes applying frictionless via SMS and popular messaging apps like Facebook Messenger and WhatsApp.



### Engage candidates with a quality experience

With Emi, you can streamline the entire recruiting process and dramatically reduce the load on hiring teams. Screening and interview scheduling are completely automated with Emi's **24/7 responsive AI chatbot**, which also communicates with candidates to keep the process moving around the clock. Emi also **serves candidates the best-fit opportunities by matching them to the closest locale**.



### Onboard new hires and maintain engagement

Once you've closed top frontline talent, Emi makes onboarding easy with **digitized background checks, signature collection, and document validation**.

And, with Emi's custom **engagement surveys**, your team can better gauge new employee satisfaction and improve retention for the long term.

[Request Demo](#)

The logo for 'emi' is displayed in a blue, lowercase, sans-serif font. The letter 'e' is a simple circle. The 'm' is composed of two vertical strokes with a small red semi-circle at the base where they meet. The 'i' has a blue dot above it. The logo is centered within a white rounded rectangle.

emi

[emilabs.ai](https://emilabs.ai)