



# 2018 Candidate Experience Survey



AG  
Careers.com



*Results & Analysis*

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## Executive Summary

AgCareers.com conducted the *Candidate Experience Survey* in the spring of 2018. The survey collected information about how the job seeker is treated and how they perceive they are being treated throughout the hiring cycle.

Participants were given the following definition of “Candidate Experience” before taking the survey:

*Candidate Experience includes all the interactions you have with an employer in the recruitment and hiring process. This encompasses everything from the job posting, all the way to the training and onboarding process. Candidate experience is important through each phase of the recruiting process, including:*

- *Job posting*
- *Application process*
- *Interaction with HR/management*
- *Assessments/testing*
- *Interviews*
- *Offer/rejection*
- *Communication*
- *Onboarding*
- *Training*

This analysis of survey results can help employers recruit and retain the best talent by improving the candidates' experience.

Responses were collected in an online survey format, with 444 people completing the survey. Participants were entered to win one of ten \$100 Amazon gift cards.

*\*Totals will not all equal 100% where respondents could select multiple answers, or due to rounding.*

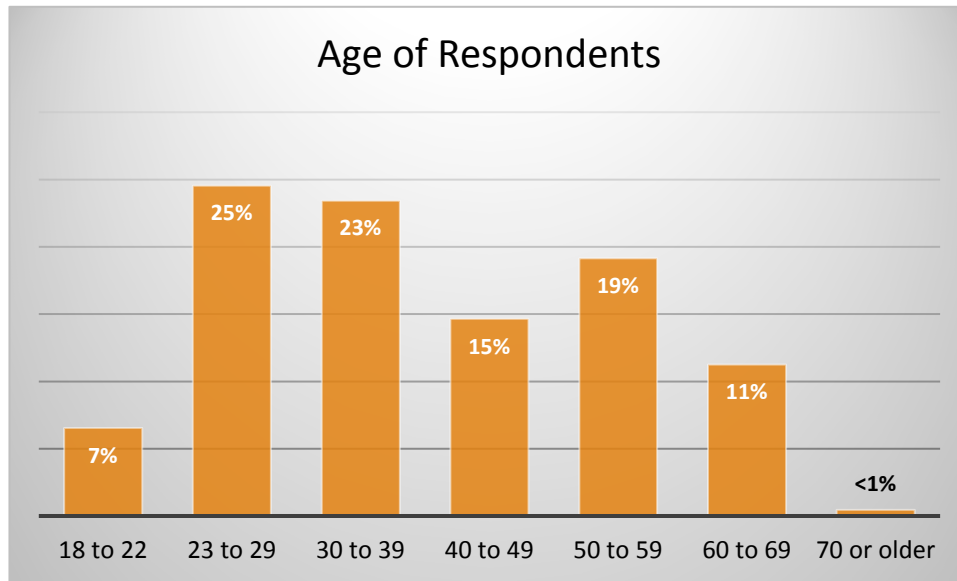
## Key Findings

- Thirty percent of respondents search for job opportunities daily.
- Candidates prefer to search by “career type” and “job location” on online job sites.
- Participants said that “job responsibilities” was the most important information to be included in a job posting, and this also was the most crucial factor influencing their decision to apply.
- Online sources were the top method candidates used to find out more information about potential employers.
- Employer reputation and brand were important to more than 80% of respondents.
- The largest segment of job seekers said it takes them “31 minutes up to an hour” to submit a single job application.
- “No response from employers” was the most discouraging aspect of the application process for candidates.
- One-third of candidates said they rarely or never heard back from employers with confirmation of application receipt.
- The majority of job seekers said a company’s lack of response would likely impact their decision to apply for future openings with the company.
- More than 40% of candidates said they were rarely or never contacted by employers after an interview if they didn’t receive the job offer.
- Candidates preferred employers contact them via email (56%), followed by phone (41%).
- Making sure the “actual job description properly aligns with job posting” was the most influential factor in creating a positive interview experience.
- Eighty-four percent of candidates said they had some form of continued communication with employers, even if they were rejected for the current job opening.
- Job seekers said that “communication throughout the process” was the most important candidate experience to develop a positive impression of the organization.
- Ninety percent of candidates are likely to share their candidate experience with friends and family. They are less likely to share their impressions publicly (online).
- The majority (78%) of candidates have never been asked for feedback on their candidate experience from an organization.
- Job seekers are most frequently looking for “job fit” in a potential employer.
- Beyond salary, health insurance was the most important job perk/benefit.
- “Growing up in an agriculture/farm/ranch background” was the most common reason for pursuing a career in the industry.
- More than 70% of respondents felt that employment in the ag industry was as stable, or more stable than other industries.
- Job seekers were more confident in obtaining a position in the agriculture industry than outside of the industry in the next year.

## Demographics

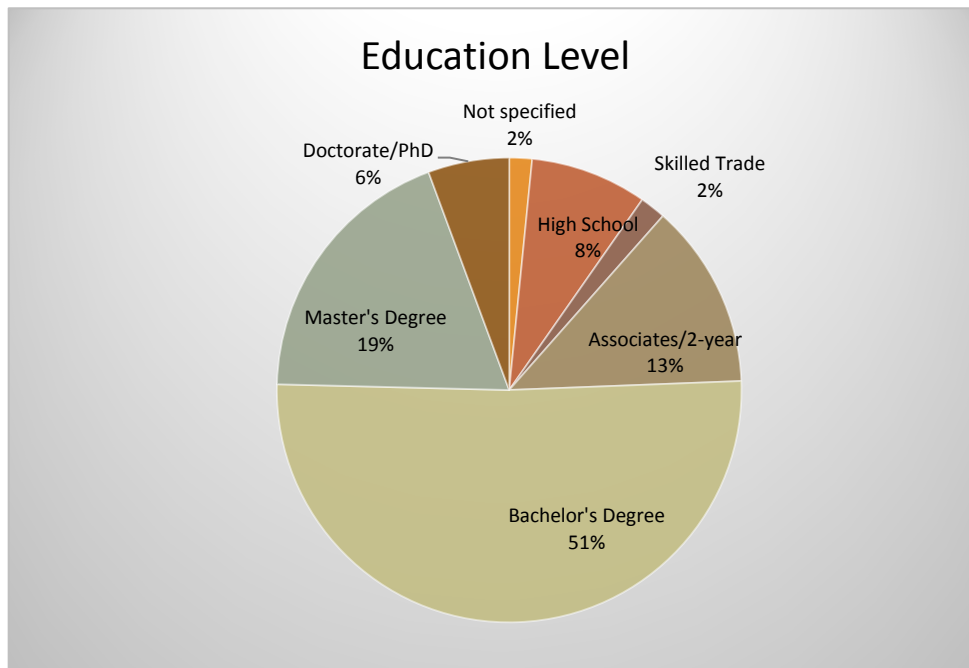
Survey responses were broken out by several demographic categories. Seventy-seven percent of respondents were from the United States; 23% were Canadian. Fifty-two percent of respondents were male; 48% were female. More than half of respondents were under 40 years old (55%). See the age breakdown in Figure 1.

Figure 1



The largest segment of respondents had a Bachelor's degree. Twenty-five percent had an advanced degree beyond a Bachelor's. Respondents' education level breakdown is shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2



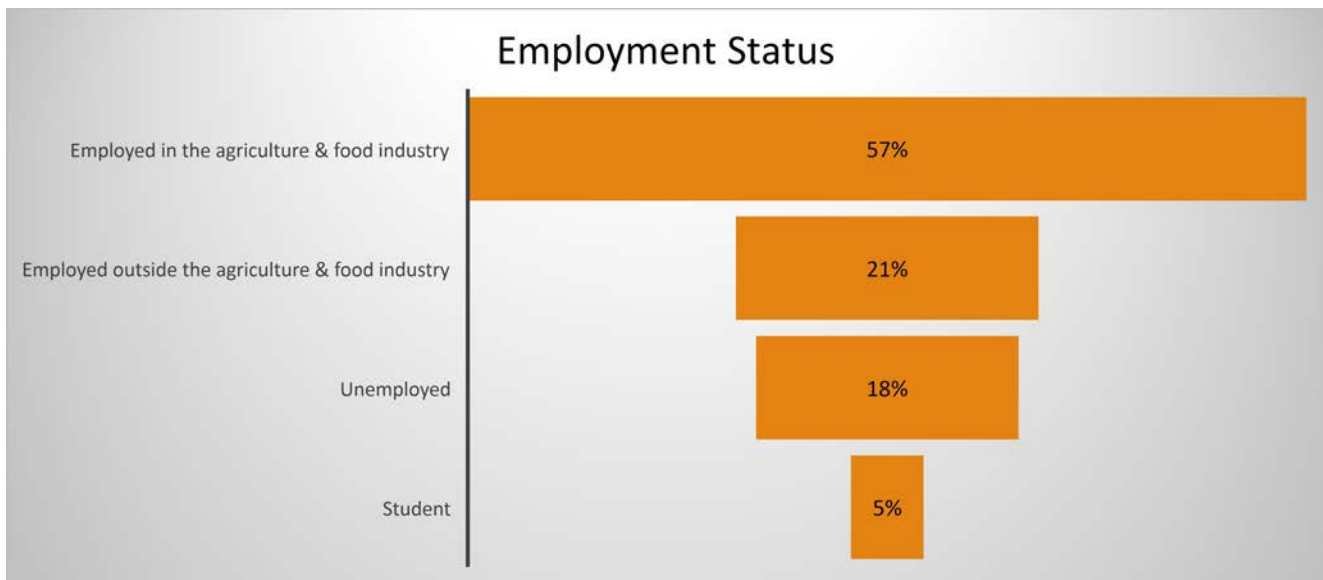
Nearly half (49%) of respondents had more than 15 years of work experience. See Figure 3.

Figure 3



The majority of respondents were currently employed (78%) and employed in the ag and food industry (57%). Five percent of respondents were students.

Figure 4

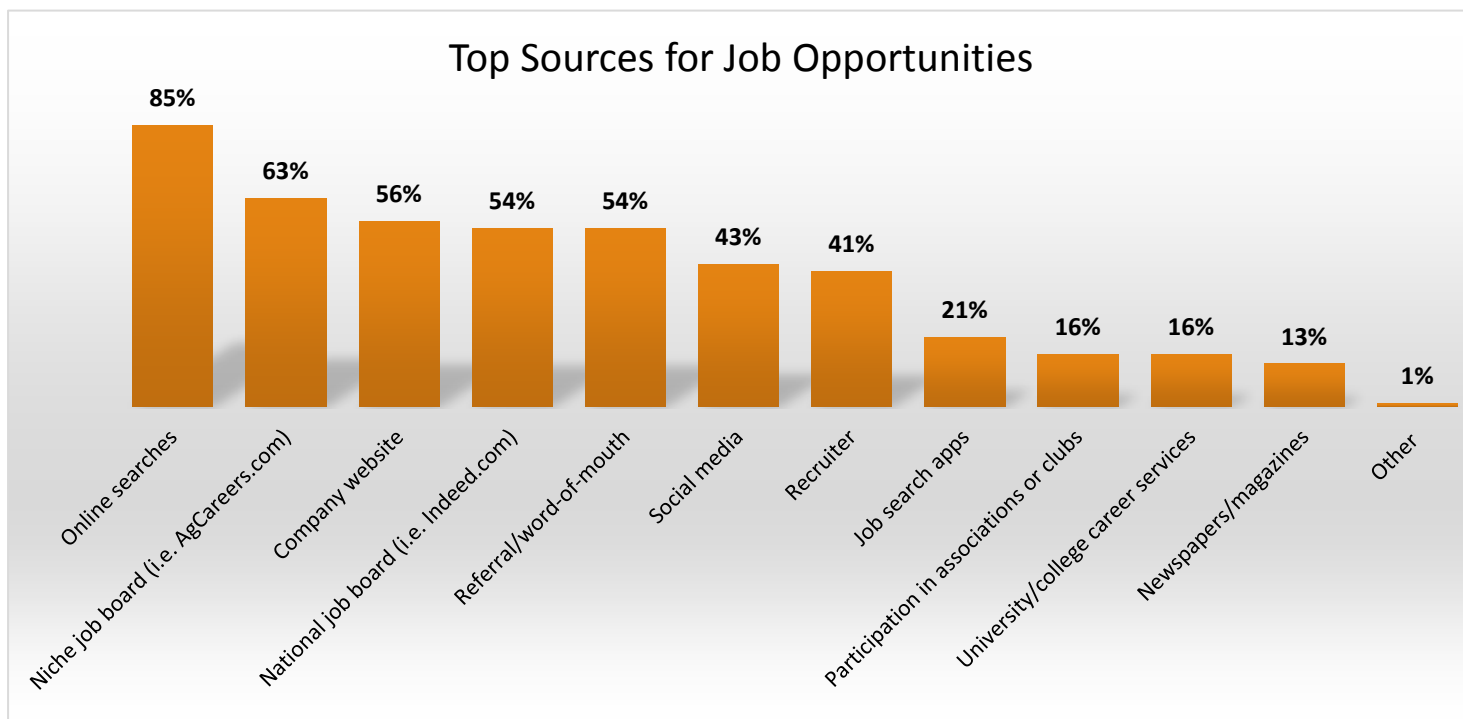


Only 23% of respondents said they were NOT willing to relocate for a new job opportunity. Forty percent said they were willing to relocate, while 37% indicated “maybe.” Men were significantly more willing to relocate than women.

## Search Activity

Participants were asked how they find out about new job opportunities. The top method was “online searches” followed by “niche job boards (e.g. AgCareers.com).” Women were significantly more likely to use social media than men, while men were more likely to use recruiters than women. Unemployed respondents were significantly more likely to use job search apps as a source for new opportunities. See Figure 5.

Figure 5

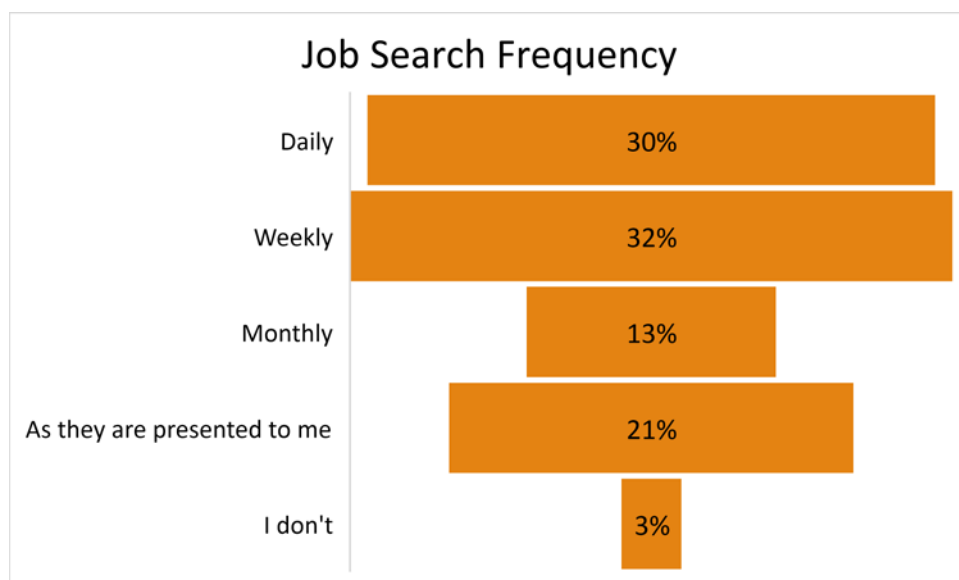


Candidates are becoming more active in their job search. More than 60% of respondents searched for jobs weekly or daily (see Figure 6 on the following page). In comparison, when we examine the [2014 Candidate Motivation survey](#), only 42% searched on a weekly or daily basis.

Not surprisingly, unemployed respondents in the current study were significantly more likely to search daily than those who were currently employed. It was intriguing that candidates employed in the ag & food industry were less likely to search daily than those employed outside the industry.

Even if employees are satisfied at work, or do not have any intention of leaving their current job, they are still exploring the opportunities available and assessing the candidate experience. [Jobvite's 2017 Job Seeker Nation Study](#) found that half of all job seekers had at least one interview in the last year to explore options or get experience, even though they weren't intent on leaving their current position.

Figure 6



The survey asked respondents to identify their preferred method to search for applicable positions on an online job site. “Career type” and “job location” were tied (22%) at the top for the most preferred search methods, followed by “keyword” (18%) and “industry type” (16%). Other options receiving 5% or less each included “date posted,” “all jobs,” “education level required,” “salary,” “years of experience required,” “post resume to a database,” “employer name,” and “register for job alerts.”

Job location was most important to those respondents aged 23-39. Required years of work experience was significantly more important to men than women.

When evaluating a job posting, respondents were questioned about the most important information to be included (see Figure 7 on the following page). Candidates were asked to select two from a list of pre-determined choices. Responses indicate that candidates believed “job responsibilities” was the most important information to be included in a job posting, same as the [2012-2013 Insight Survey](#) and corresponding to the [2017 Talent Board Experience Survey](#) where “job descriptions (duties, skills, requirements)” was also at the top of the list.

Location and compensation are becoming increasingly important for candidates. After the job description, respondents said the next most important information to be included in a job posting was the “job location.” “Salary/benefit information” was important to nearly one-third of respondents. Job location and salary information were low in importance in the previous AgCareers.com Insight Survey, while those categories moved into the top three in the current survey.

Advancement opportunities were significantly more important to men than women in this survey.



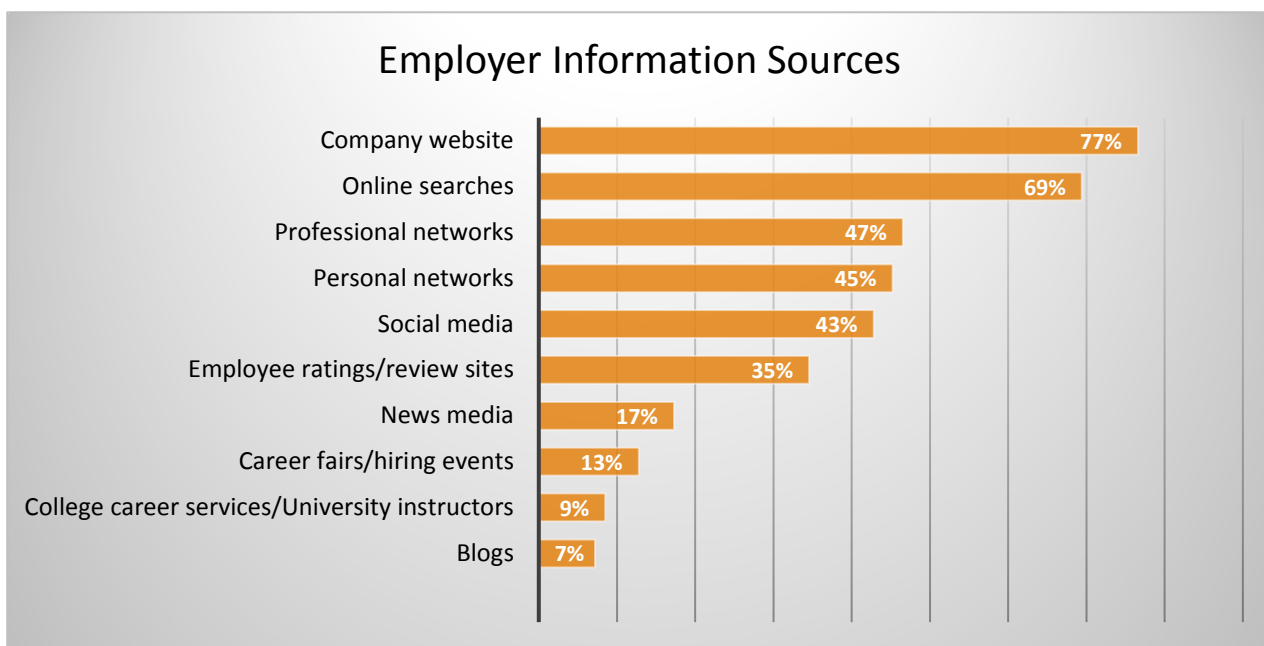
Figure 7

Most Important Information in a Job Posting		
1	Job responsibilities	49%
2	Job location	40%
3	Salary/benefits information	32%
4	Education/experience requirements	23%
5	Company’s value proposition – tell me why I’d want to work there	12%
6	Company culture	11%
7	Advancement opportunities	9%
8	Value the position brings to the employer	5%
9	Company overview	4%
10	Employer contact information	4%
11	Recruitment process – timeline	2%

Candidates were asked which sources they use to find more information about potential employers. Online sources were the top methods – company website (77%) and online searches (69%). Specifically, a company’s career site is traditionally the top research channel used by candidates.

Networks were the next most common source – “professional networks” (47%) and “personal networks” (45%). Social networks were close behind with 43% as shown in Figure 8. Overall these results were comparable to the [2014 AgCareers.com Candidate Motivation Survey](#); the most notable difference was social media jumping from 27% in 2014 to 43% in 2018.

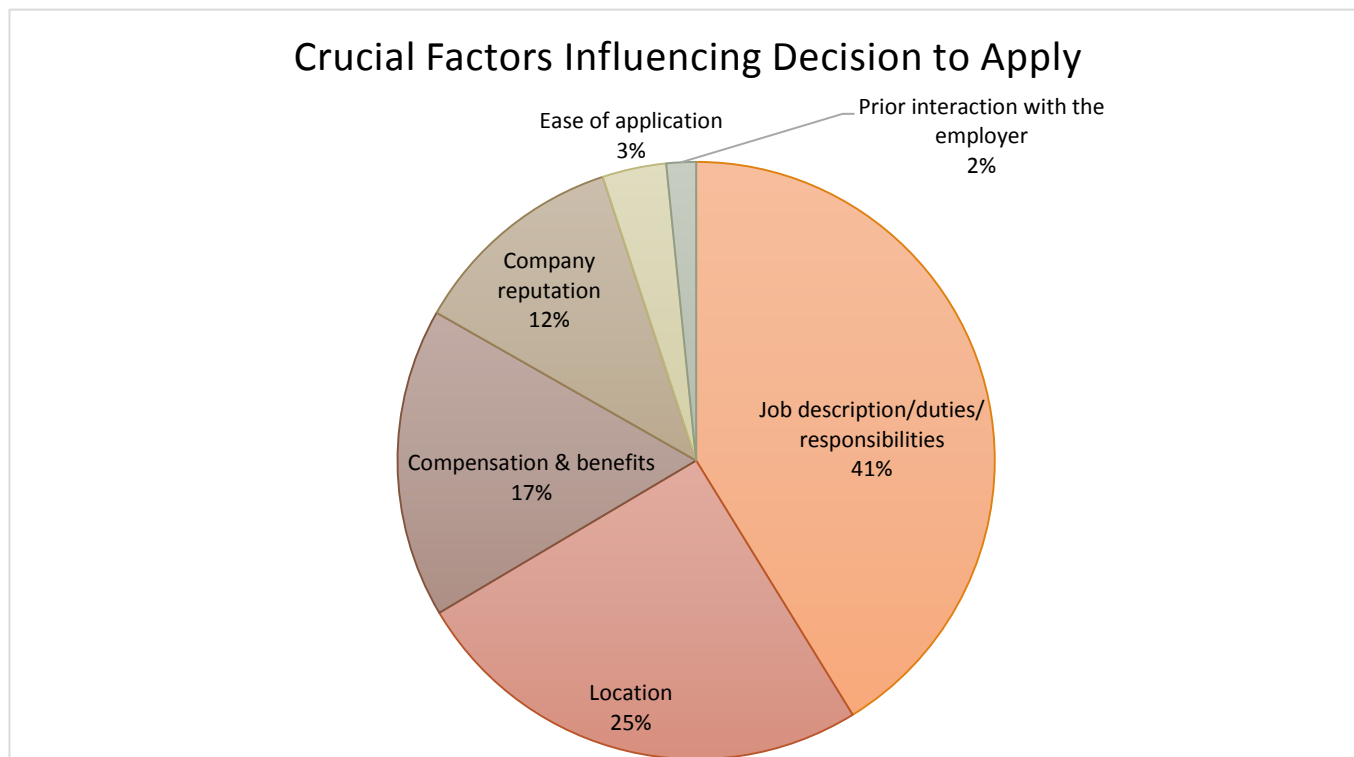
Figure 8



## Application Activity

Candidates were asked what the most crucial factor was in selecting which jobs to apply for. The top two answers were very similar to the responses from the previous question, “job description/duties/responsibilities” (41%) followed by “location” (25%). Other notable factors were “compensation & benefits” (17%) and “company reputation” (12%); see Figure 9.

Figure 9

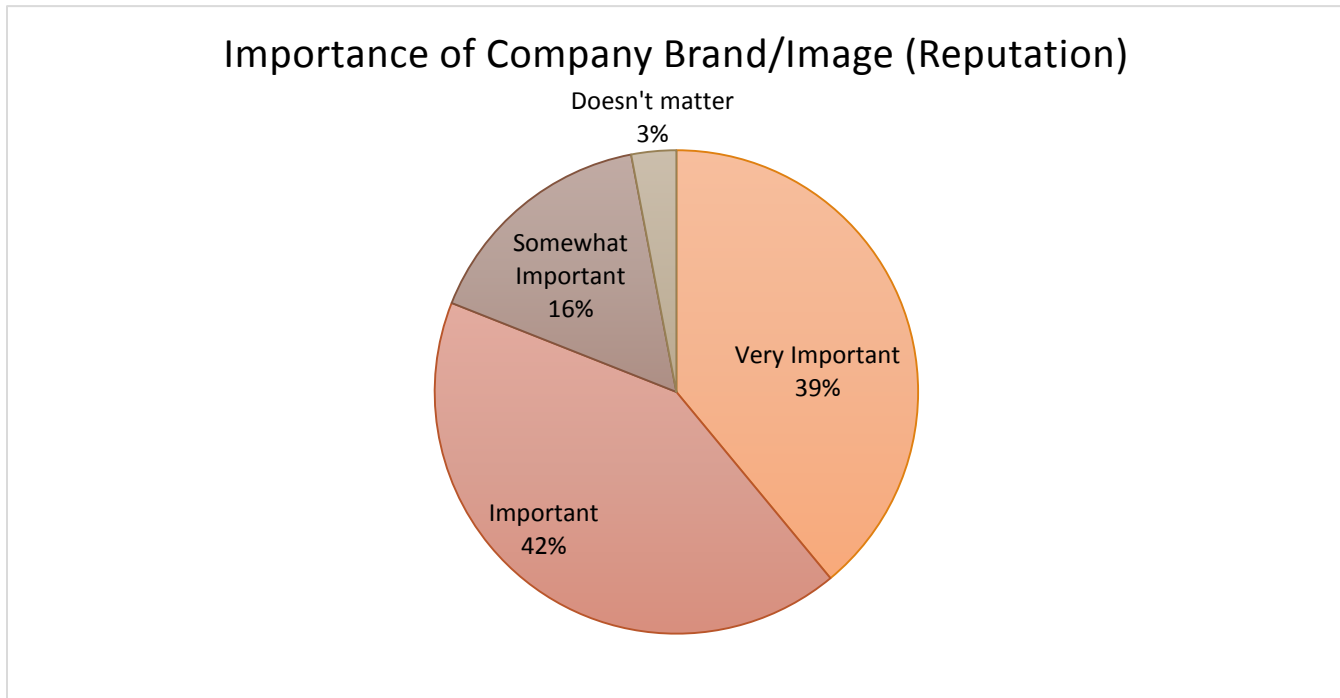


An employer’s reputation is significant to candidates; more than 80% of respondents said a company’s brand/image (reputation) was important or very important in selecting which jobs they would apply for (see Figure 10 on the following page).

Results indicate a necessity for marketing and recruitment personnel to work together on employer branding. Beyond the typical product and services sales impact, company brand also impacts recruitment and employee retention.

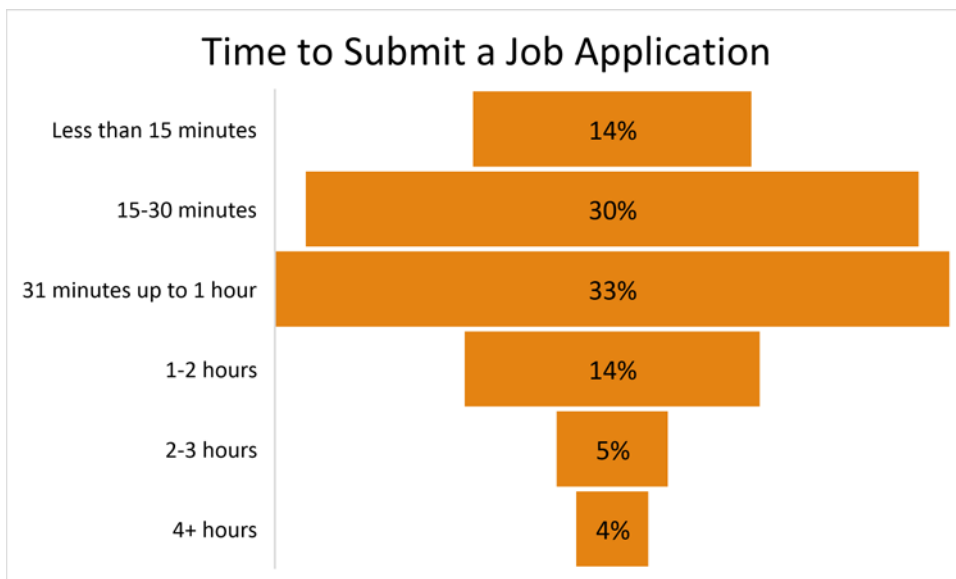
When evaluating responses by age of respondent, participants ages 30-plus placed the most importance on company brand/image. Men were significantly more likely to say that a company’s image “doesn’t matter.”

Figure 10



Candidates were asked how long it takes them to submit a typical single job application. The largest segment of respondents said it takes them 31 minutes up to an hour; 23% of respondents said it takes them over 1 hour as shown in Figure 11. Women were most likely to take 31 minutes up to an hour; men were most likely to take 15-30 minutes.

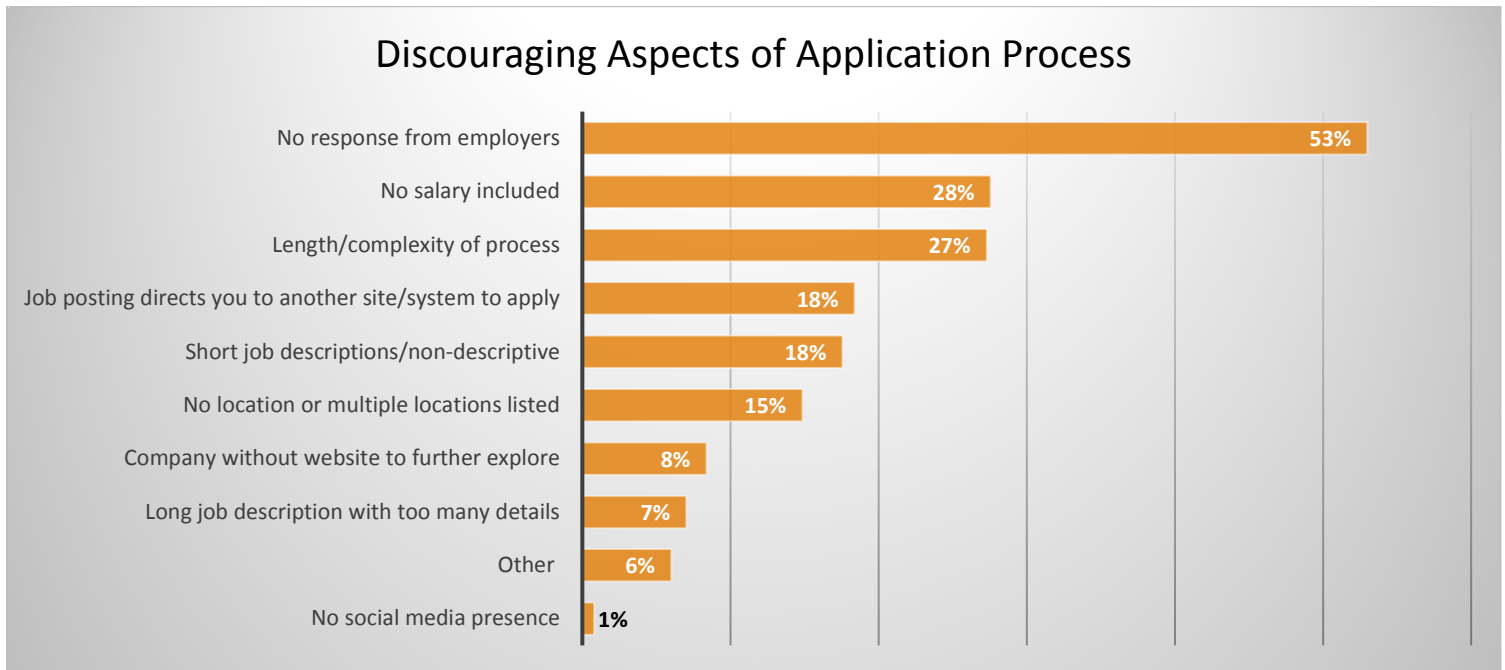
Figure 11



The survey questioned candidates about the most discouraging aspects of the job application process; results are graphed in Figure 12. The most discouraging aspect, noted by more than half (53%) of respondents was “no response from employers” (same as the [2012-2013 Insight Survey](#)). The next discouraging aspect noted by 28% of respondents was “no salary included” followed closely by the “length/complexity of process” (27%). Job seekers younger than 40 were generally less discouraged by postings that directed them to another site to apply.

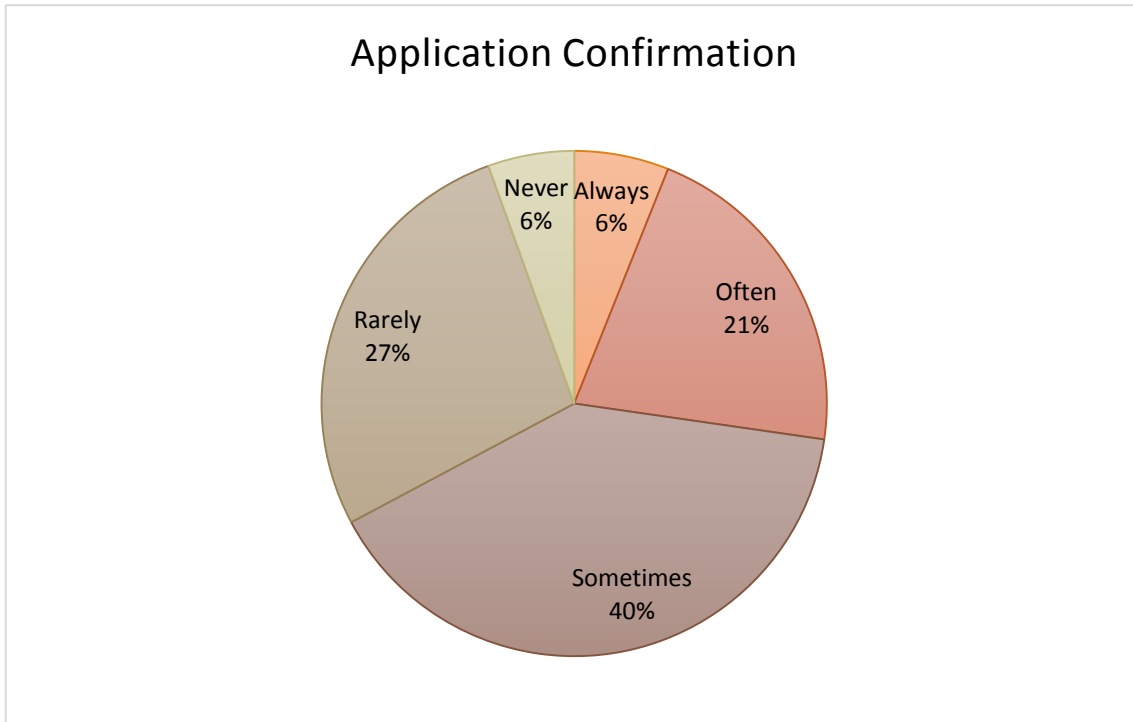
Respondents could also specify other discouraging aspects in an open-ended format. The most common other complaints included submitting redundant information during the process, and employers posting a position that wasn’t actually available or was filled by an internal candidate.

Figure 12



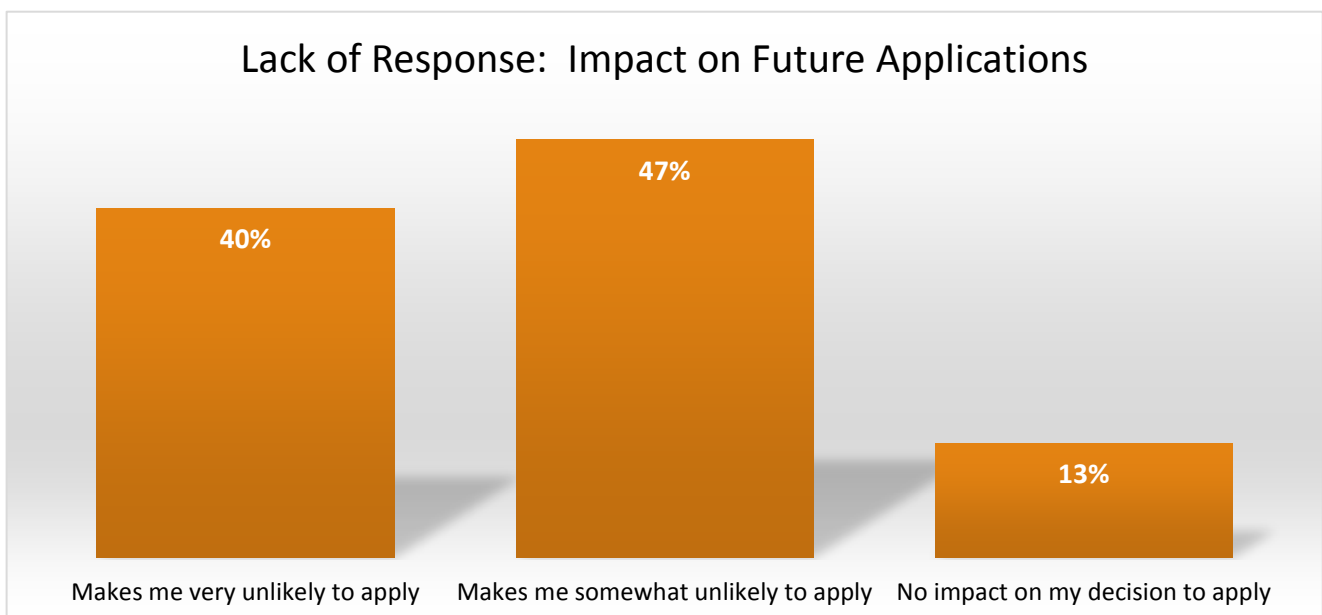
Digging deeper into employers’ responsiveness, candidates were asked how often they were notified by an employer of the receipt of their application (See Figure 13 on the next page). Unfortunately, one-third of respondents said they “rarely” or “never” heard from employers with a confirmation of receipt. Interestingly, confirmation may correlate to the completeness of application materials. Respondents that said they “never” heard back were significantly more likely to have taken less than 15 minutes to complete their application materials.

Figure 13



When a company doesn't respond to an application, candidates were asked how this impacts their decision to apply for future openings with that company, as shown in Figure 14. The clear majority (87%) indicated a company's lack of response was likely to impact their decision. Forty percent said a company's lack of response made them very unlikely to apply to future openings. Unemployed candidates and those that took less than 15 minutes to apply were significantly less likely to be impacted by lack of response.

Figure 14



## Interview

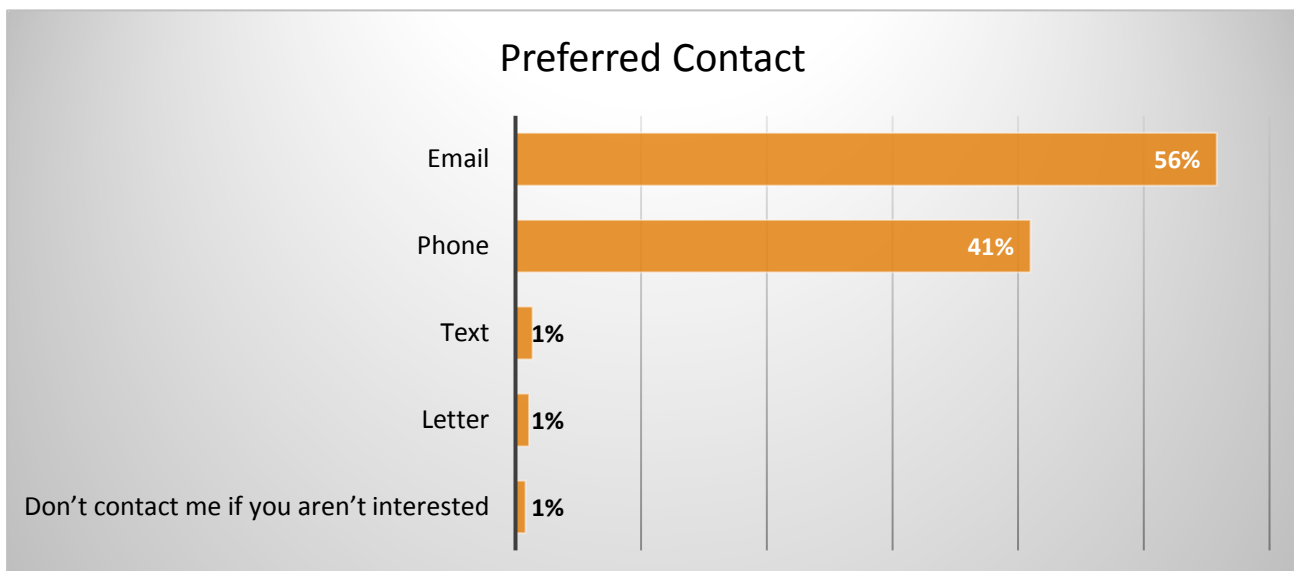
Survey respondents were asked how often employers contact them after an interview, even if they don't receive an offer. Nearly half (43%) said they were "rarely" or "never" contacted by employers after an interview; see Figure 15. Respondents over the age of 60 were more likely to say they never heard back.

Figure 15



Candidates prefer to be contacted via email (56%) followed by phone (41%), as shown in Figure 16. Females preferred to be contacted by email significantly more than men, while men preferred to be contacted by phone significantly more than women. Even though social networks may be used in the search process, no respondents selected that as a preferred contact mode. Job seekers age 60-plus were significantly more likely to prefer a letter than other age groups.

Figure 16



Candidates were asked to rank how influential factors were in creating a positive interview experience. Respondents ranked these factors from 4 = extremely influential, to 1 = not influential; see Figure 17.

Results indicate that the candidate experience begins at the start of the hiring process, and for employers this is when they are creating the job posting. The most influential factor in creating a positive interview was to make sure the “actual job description properly aligns with the job posting.”

Candidate experience is truly impacted by an accurate job description and posting, as noted by [Jobvite](#) in their statistic that “43% of job seekers have encountered discrepancies between job descriptions and actual position details.”

Sufficient preparation by the employer is also imperative to ensure they ask relevant questions, the second most influential factor to candidates. Results also indicate that employers should also set expectations for the post-interview process during the interview.

Men were significantly more likely to say that the interview location/environment was not influential.

Figure 17

Positive Interview Experience: Most Influential Factors		Rating Average
1	Actual job description properly aligns with job posting	3.56
2	Interviewer asks relevant questions	3.46
3	Employer sets expectations for post-interview process	3.43
4	Interviewers’ personality	3.32
5	Interviewers’ knowledge	3.30
6	Employer gives you feedback	3.28
7	Interviewer expresses gratitude	3.21
8	Employer sets expectations prior to interview	3.11
9	Employer asks for your feedback	2.91
10	Introduction to potential coworkers/tour of office	2.75
11	Interview location/environment	2.68

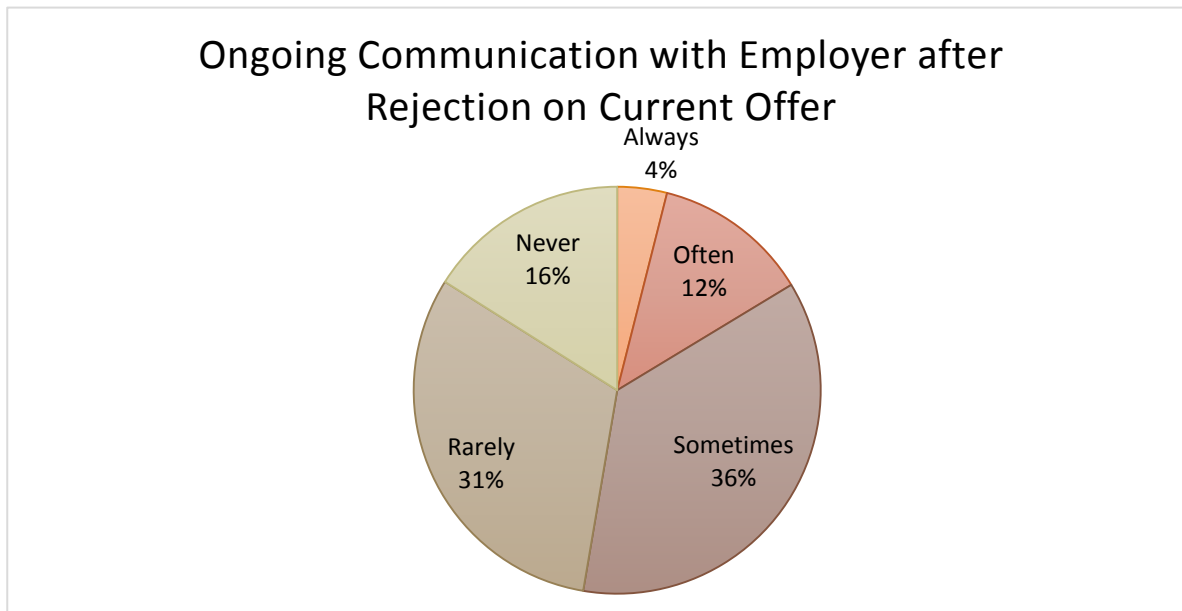
\* “Extremely Influential” (4); “Very Influential” (3); “Slightly Influential” (2); “Not influential” (1)  
Figure shows weighted average.

## Communication

Even though a candidate doesn't make the cut for a current opening, there is a chance they will be a fit for a future opening with an organization. Candidates were asked if they have ongoing engagement and communication with employers even if they aren't offered the current job opening, charted in Figure 18. Eighty-four percent of candidates said they had some form of continued communication with employers, even if they were rejected for the current job opening.

Nearly half (47%) of candidates said they "never" or "rarely" have ongoing engagement with employers when they aren't offered the job. However, more than half (52%) have some form of continued communication ("sometimes," "often," or "always") with employers, even if they are rejected for the current job opening.

Figure 18



Candidates are developing an impression of the potential employer from the very beginning of the job search process. Respondents said that communication throughout the process was the most important candidate experience impacting the development a positive impression of the organization (62%), followed by the interview (45%); see Figure 19. Respondents also recognize that the candidate experience continues even after the hire, with "training/onboarding" as another highly ranked aspect in the process. As expected, career fairs were more influential with younger candidates.

Figure 19

Impression of an Organization: Most Influential Candidate Experiences		
1	Communication throughout the process	62%
2	Interview process	45%
3	Training/onboarding experience	20%
4	Job offer	16%
5	Rejection process	12%
6	Application process	11%
7	Company website	10%
8	Job posting	7%
9	Career fair representation/interaction	2%
10	Assessments/testing	2%



Job seekers are going to tell others about their candidate experience with an organization. Previous studies have concluded this, and it's likewise illustrated by the current AgCareers.com survey results. Word-of-mouth is a powerful advertising and recruitment tool.

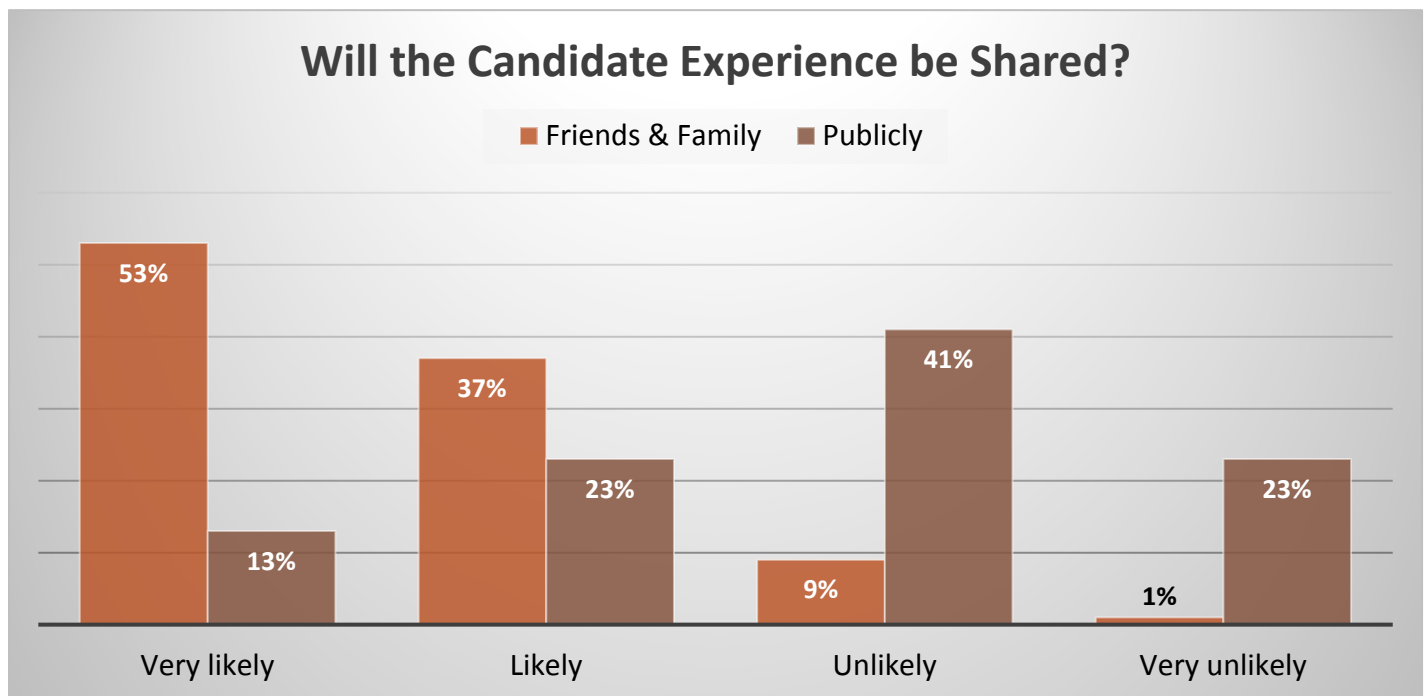
The [2017 Talent Board North American Candidate Experience Research Report](#) found that up to 80% of candidates will share their positive experiences and over 60% will share their negative experiences with their inner circle.

AgCareers.com discovered these percentages to be even higher; the current survey found that 90% were likely to share their candidate experience with friends and family. More than half were “very likely” to share their experience and impressions with family and friends, while 37% were “likely” to share their experience. Only 10% were unlikely to share their experience.

The 2017 Talent Board Survey also found that people were less likely to share their experiences publicly online. This corresponds with the AgCareers.com survey where respondents were less likely to share their candidate experience and impressions publicly via social media, online ratings, and acquaintances. However, 36% still said it was likely or very likely they would share their experience publicly. Respondents ages 18-22 were most likely to share their candidate experience publicly, however 40-49-year-olds were also very likely to share their experience.

Figure 20 charts the likelihood that a candidate's experience will be shared, comparing friends/family, to public sharing (social media, online ratings, acquaintances).

Figure 20



Participants were questioned if an organization has ever asked them to provide feedback on their candidate experience with them (see Figure 21). The clear majority (78%) said no, higher than the 41% of employers who indicated they did not survey candidates about their experience in the [2017 Talent Board North American Candidate Experience Research Report](#). In the AgCareers.com survey, men were significantly more likely to say that they've been asked for feedback.

Figure 21



## Value Proposition

Respondents were asked, “What do you look for most in an employer?” Most frequently, candidates were looking for “job fit” (51%) with an employer as shown in Figure 22. Job fit was most important to every age group except 18-22-year-old’s, who looked at company culture the most.

In the *AgCareers.com 2014 Candidate Motivation Survey*, higher compensation and better benefits were two of the most likely motivators to leave a current job for another opportunity, behind only advancement. In this study, compensation & benefits was also second (34%), followed by location (31%).

Women were significantly more likely to place increased importance on community image and involvement. An employer’s presence at career fairs & campus events, along with “others’ perception of employer” were unimportant to candidates.

Respondents were instructed to select two employee offerings from a list of ten. They could also specify other important aspects in an open-ended question. Other features noted were: stability, treatment of employees, flexibility, and education opportunities.

Figure 22

What do you look for most in an employer?		
<b>1</b>	Job fit	<b>51%</b>
<b>2</b>	Compensation & benefits package	<b>34%</b>
<b>3</b>	Job location	<b>31%</b>
<b>4</b>	Company culture	<b>25%</b>
<b>5</b>	Advancement opportunities	<b>25%</b>
<b>6</b>	Leader in the industry	<b>10%</b>
<b>7</b>	Employer has good products	<b>6%</b>
<b>8</b>	Community image and involvement	<b>4%</b>
<b>9</b>	Other	<b>2%</b>
<b>10</b>	Others’ perception of employer	<b>1%</b>
<b>11</b>	Presence at career fairs/campus events	<b>0%</b>

Besides salary, candidates were asked for their two most important job perks or benefits, ranked in Figure 23. Candidates could select two from a list of fifteen pre-identified perks and benefits. They could also specify other important benefits in an open-ended question. Other perks noted were: autonomy, location, impact (doing well by doing good), and a career they are passionate about.

Health insurance was most important to every age group except 23-29-year-olds, who said flexible work hours were the most important benefit. Female respondents were significantly more likely to rank flexible work hours, telecommuting options, paid vacation, and education reimbursement higher than their male counterparts. Men placed a higher value on commission/bonus than women.

Figure 23

<b>Most Important Job Perks/Benefits, Beyond Salary</b>		
<b>1</b>	Health insurance	<b>48%</b>
<b>2</b>	Flexible work hours	<b>37%</b>
<b>3</b>	Retirement/401k	<b>25%</b>
<b>4</b>	Amount of paid vacation	<b>23%</b>
<b>5</b>	Telecommuting options (work from home)	<b>15%</b>
<b>6</b>	Company vehicle	<b>13%</b>
<b>7</b>	Commission/bonus	<b>11%</b>
<b>8</b>	Education reimbursement	<b>7%</b>
<b>9</b>	Relocation assistance	<b>5%</b>
<b>10</b>	Overtime pay	<b>5%</b>
<b>11</b>	Sign-on bonus	<b>2%</b>
<b>12</b>	Share/stock options	<b>2%</b>
<b>13</b>	Mobile phone	<b>1%</b>
<b>14</b>	Clothing allowance	<b>1%</b>
<b>15</b>	Gym membership	<b>1%</b>
<b>16</b>	Other	<b>1%</b>

## Employment Outlook

The number one reason candidates said they were pursuing a career in agriculture was because they “grew up in agriculture/farm or ranch background” (48%); see Figure 24. The second most common reason was the desire to “work in an industry that contributes to the vital needs of the world” (20%).

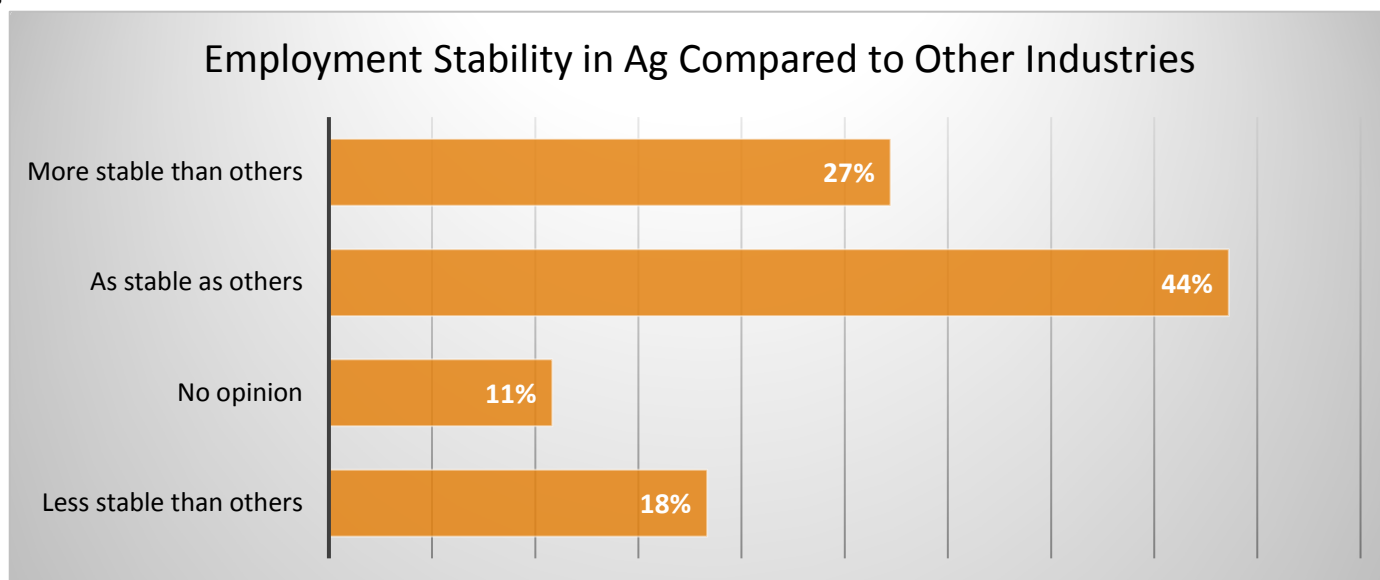
Candidates could select two from a list of fourteen pre-identified reasons. They could also specify other important reasons in an open-ended question. Other reasons noted were: passion and advocacy for the industry, expanding career options, and previous ag work experience.

Figure 24

Reasons for Pursuing a Career in Agriculture		
1	Grew up in agriculture/farm or ranch background	48%
2	I want to work in an industry that contributes to the vital needs of the world	20%
3	Education/school classes	18%
4	Always worked in ag	18%
5	Variety of opportunities to choose from in ag	12%
6	Optimistic about the future of the industry	11%
7	Involvement in clubs/organizations	7%
8	Ag employment remains strong	5%
9	Other	5%
10	Not pursuing a career in ag	4%
11	Recommendation from friend/relative	3%
12	Pay and benefits are good	3%
13	Unsure	2%
14	Career services/guidance counselor	2%
15	News media	0%

When questioned about the stability of agriculture versus other industries, 71% of respondents felt that the ag industry was as stable, or more stable than other industries.

Figure 25

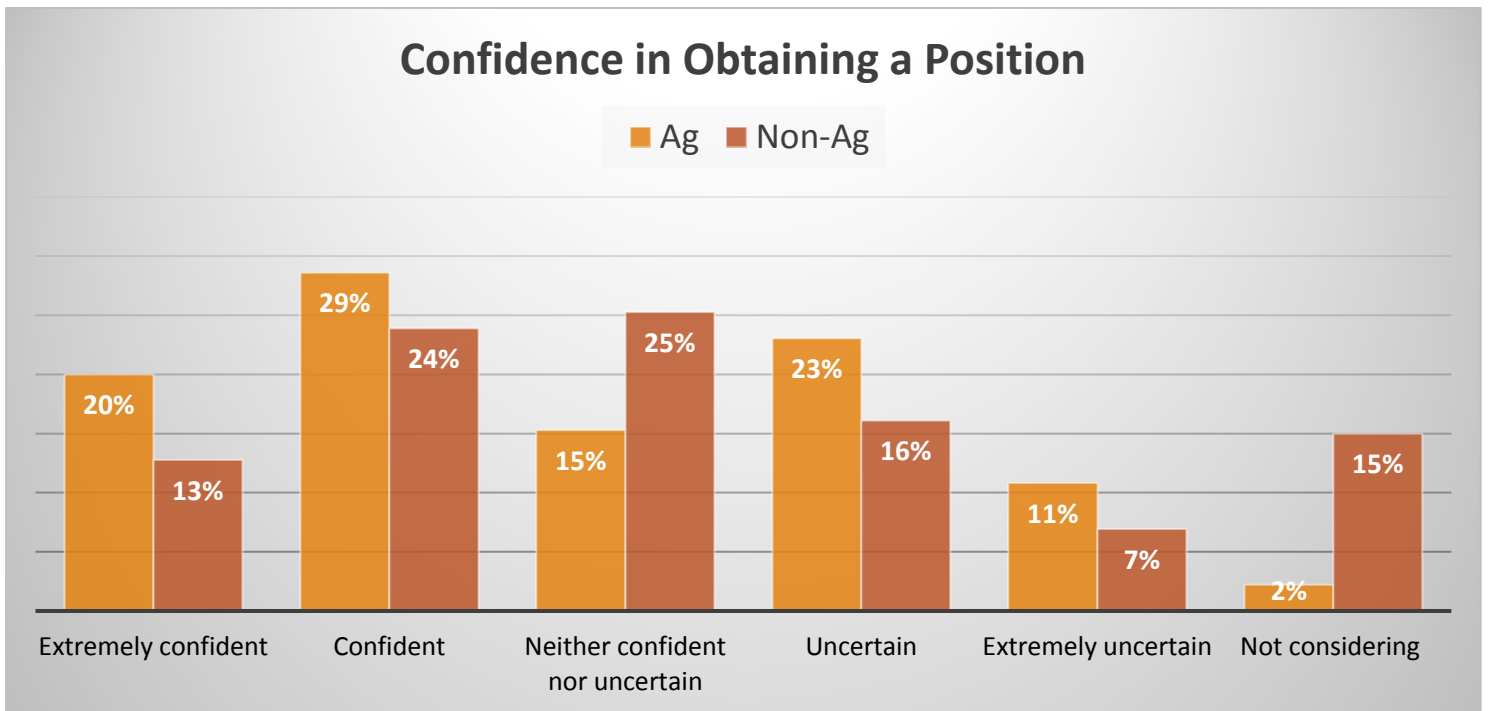


Participants were asked questions to gauge their confidence in obtaining a position in the next year, both inside and outside of the agricultural industry. Nearly half (49%) were confident in their ability to obtain a job in agriculture. Respondents aged 18-22 were most confident about obtaining an agricultural position. Thirty-four percent were uncertain about obtaining an ag industry job in the next year.

Regarding confidence in obtaining a job outside of the ag industry in the upcoming year, less were confident (37%), however, only 23% were uncertain. Fifteen percent were not even considering a position outside of agriculture.

Figure 26 graphs the confidence candidates had in securing a position in the next year, comparing confidence in obtaining a position in agriculture to confidence in obtaining a position outside of the industry (non-ag).

Figure 26



## In Conclusion

Candidate experience comprises all employer interactions with a potential employee in the recruitment and hiring process. Considering candidates as customers is an ideal first step in the process.

Key candidate experience themes emerging from this AgCareers.com survey analysis included the importance of employer responsiveness, clarity, communication throughout the process, and the opportunity for feedback.

This survey analysis can help agriculture and food employers determine how to improve the candidates' experience. Employers should evaluate how their standard procedures align with candidates' preferences in the recruitment marketing and hiring process, and then adjust and develop programs to improve the experience. A positive candidate experience helps attract and retain top talent.

### Limitation of Liability

This report has been compiled using data which to the best of the knowledge, information, and belief of and after due inquiry by AgCareers.com at the time of collection and analysis was accurate and correct. AgCareers.com does not warrant the accuracy of the information provided in this piece.

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