

Recruitment Trends Report 2026



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Introduction

Recruitment is entering a new operating model - one defined by artificial intelligence.

AI is no longer being tested at the edges of hiring. It is becoming embedded across core recruitment workflows, reshaping how organizations source, screen, and select talent.

The findings from this study point to a clear inflection point.

AI adoption is widespread, productivity gains are already visible, and investment is accelerating.

At the same time, hiring decisions are becoming increasingly data-driven.

What is emerging is not just a technology shift, but an operating shift. Recruitment is evolving from a process-driven function into a system that is faster, more scalable, and increasingly intelligence-led.

As this transformation unfolds, the role of recruiters is also changing.

With automation handling repetitive tasks, human effort is moving toward judgment, strategy, and candidate engagement.

The future of recruitment will not be defined by whether organizations adopt AI, but by how effectively they integrate it into their hiring systems.

Key Findings

- **61%** of organizations are either piloting or scaling AI in recruitment



- **68%** report improved recruitment efficiency due to AI



- **78%** are exploring or implementing Generative AI



- **59%** plan to increase investment in recruitment AI



- **80%** expect AI to influence hiring decisions within five years



- Only **10%** of organizations are not using AI



Methodology

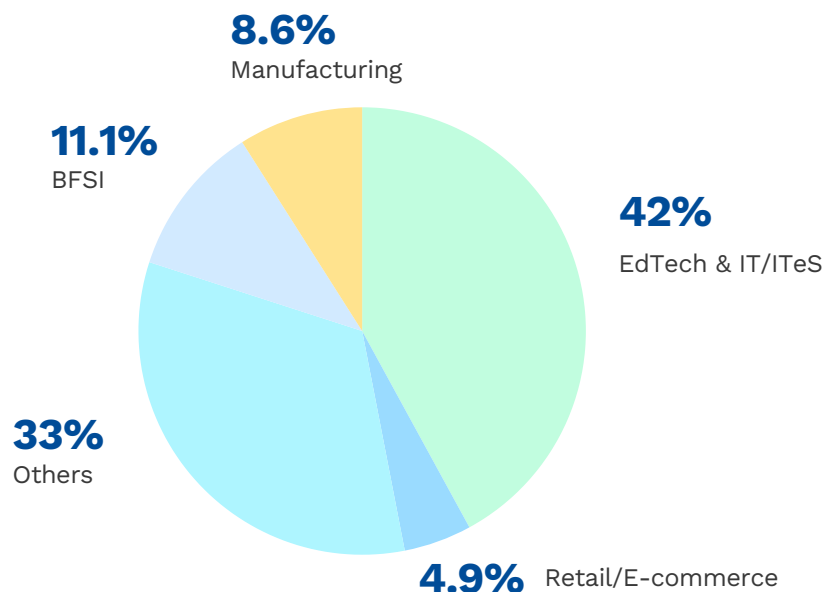
This report is based on insights gathered from **over 80 HR and Talent Acquisition leaders** across mid-sized to large enterprises, evaluating the role of artificial intelligence in recruitment.

Participants included senior professionals such as **CHROs, Heads of Talent Acquisition, HR Directors, and Recruitment Leaders**, representing a diverse mix of industries and organizational sizes.

Companies ranged from **high-growth mid-market firms to large enterprises**, offering a well-rounded view of AI adoption across different hiring environments.

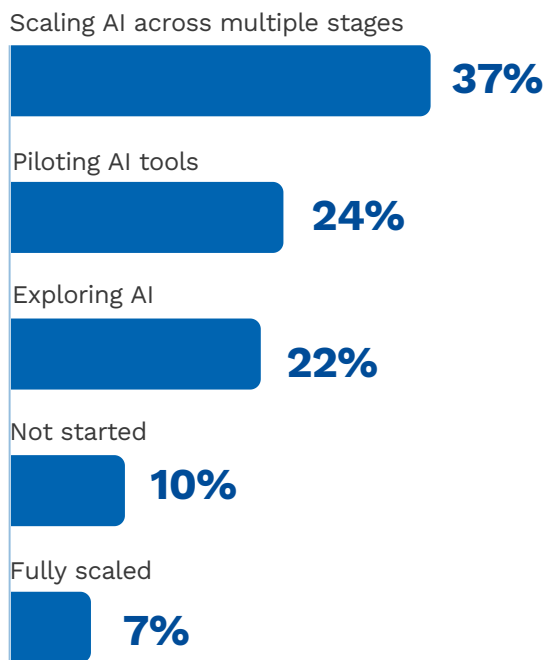
Participants were asked about their organization's current stage of AI adoption, the impact of AI on recruitment efficiency, investment outlook, and how AI is expected to influence hiring decisions in the coming years.

The findings represent a snapshot of how organizations are currently approaching AI in recruitment and how they expect these technologies to shape hiring practices in the near future.



AI Adoption Is No Longer Optional

AI Adoption Journey



AI adoption in recruitment has moved decisively beyond experimentation.

A combined **61% of organizations are already piloting or scaling AI**, indicating that adoption is no longer driven by curiosity, but by operational need. **Only 10% of organizations have not started**, making non-adoption the real outlier.

Organizations are no longer testing AI in isolated use cases. Instead, **AI is being embedded across multiple stages of hiring** — from sourcing to screening and decision-making.

This reflects a broader shift in how recruitment performance is evaluated - with increasing emphasis on speed, scalability, and consistency.



“When hiring volumes increase, manual processes don’t break immediately - they slow down gradually. AI is what keeps that from happening.”

- **Deepu Xavier**
Co-founder of Zappyhire

The Big Picture ✨

61% of organizations are already operationalizing AI in recruitment, making adoption the baseline, not the advantage.

AI is Already Delivering a Productivity Advantage

The business case for AI in recruitment is no longer theoretical.

68% of teams report that AI has increased recruitment efficiency, which means the **conversation has shifted from “Will AI help?” to “How much faster can we move with it?”**

This is where the market divide becomes visible. While AI-enabled teams are improving recruiter productivity and reducing friction across workflows, 23% are still not using AI at all.

Efficiency in recruitment is not a vanity metric. It affects time-to-screen, candidate response speed, scheduling turnaround, recruiter bandwidth, and ultimately the ability to secure top talent before competitors do.

And **AI is helping organizations remove delay from the earliest and most repetitive parts** of the funnel, which is exactly where hiring momentum is often lost.



“AI acts as a force multiplier by streamlining repetitive work and accelerating insights; however, accountability and final decision-making continue to rest with human intelligence.”

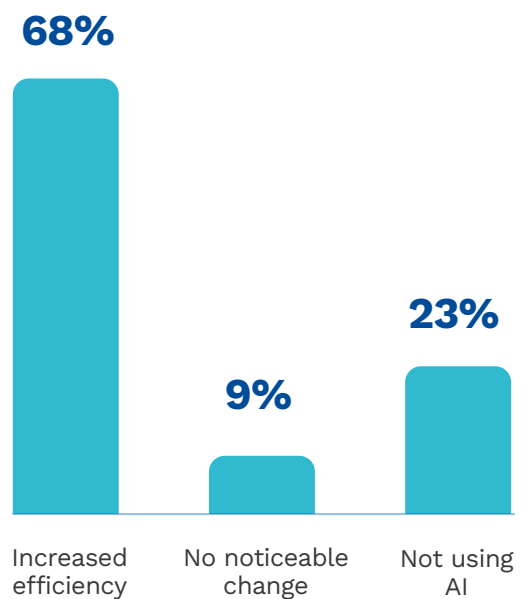
- Arijit Deb

Head of India Talent Acquisition, Manhattan Associates

The Big Picture ✨

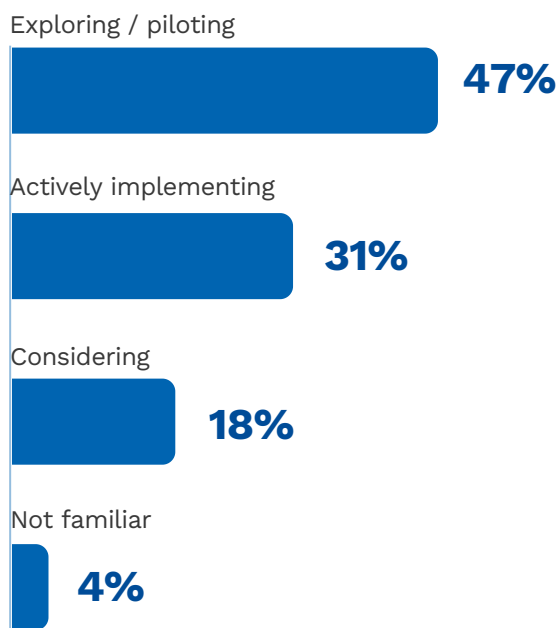
68% of organizations are already seeing efficiency gains - turning AI into a measurable execution advantage.

AI's Impact on Recruitment Efficiency



Generative AI Is Mainstream - and Agentic AI Is the Next Shift

Generative AI Adoption



Generative AI has quickly become a core layer in recruitment technology, with 78% of organizations exploring or implementing it and 31% already using it in live workflows – which is a clear shift from experimentation to execution.

But the shift is already moving beyond this with **Agentic AI being the current phase**.

Systems are now going beyond generating outputs to executing tasks across the hiring workflow with minimal human intervention.

This marks a fundamental transition from productivity gains to true workflow automation.

With awareness no longer a barrier (only 4% remain unfamiliar), the real differentiator now is speed of execution.



“AI will take over the repetitive, time-consuming parts of recruitment, allowing recruiters to spend more time on building relationships and making quality hiring decisions.”

- **Chaitanya Gadagamma**
Sr. Talent Acquisition Specialist, Phenom

The Big Picture ✨

78% of organizations are already using Generative AI - while the next phase of innovation is shifting toward Agentic AI that can execute hiring workflows end-to-end.

AI-Enabled Skills-Based Hiring is Advancing, but Execution is Lagging

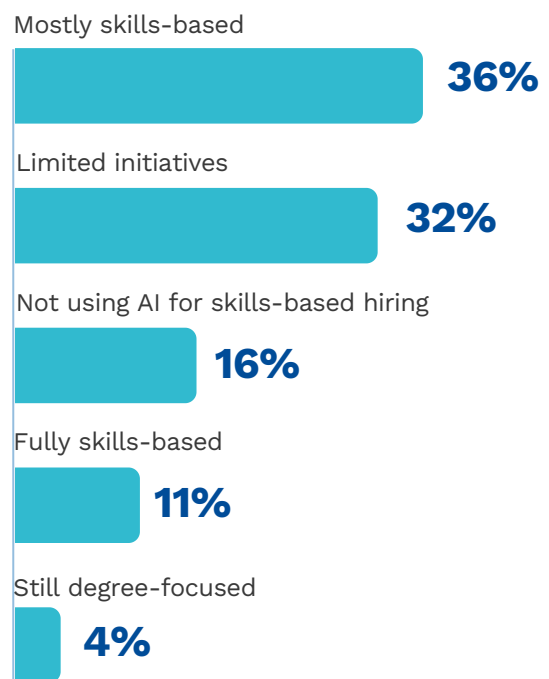
The shift toward skills-based hiring is not new, but AI is transforming how it is implemented.

While **47% of organizations have adopted skills-based hiring to some extent, only 11% have fully transitioned**, with most still operating hybrid models.

Features like automated skill extraction from resumes, AI-led video interview scoring, contextual skill benchmarking, and intelligent candidate-role matching are making this shift far more scalable than before.

However, execution maturity remains a challenge, as many organizations lack the frameworks needed to scale AI-enabled skills-based hiring.

AI enabled Skills-Based Hiring Adoption



“AI will enable skills-based hiring and internal mobility, driving more strategic talent decisions.”

- **Amita Rout**

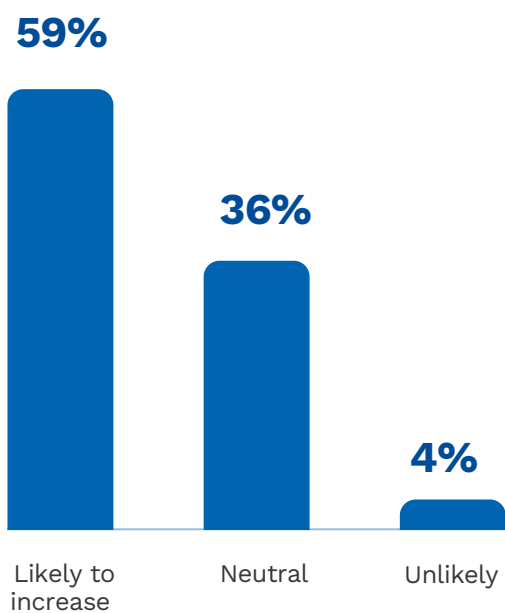
Global Talent Acquisition Leader, Fierly

The Big Picture ✨

Only 11% of organizations have fully transitioned - while AI is accelerating the shift toward more scalable, skills-driven hiring.

AI Investment is Moving from Caution to Commitment

AI Investment Outlook



The strongest signal of market confidence is not adoption alone - it is future spending.

And here the signal is clear: 59% of organizations are likely to increase investment in AI for recruitment over the next 12–24 months.

Increased investment typically means one thing: **leaders are no longer viewing AI as a pilot expense.** They are beginning to treat it as **part of long-term hiring infrastructure.**

The smaller “unlikely” segment reinforces this direction. **Resistance is becoming less common,** while uncertainty is increasingly the only remaining hesitation. But even that uncertainty is likely temporary as more teams see AI’s impact on recruiter efficiency, hiring speed, and workflow consistency.



“AI will become a core enabler in recruitment — automating processes while enabling smarter decision-making.”

- **Rachit Chandra, Director**
APAC Talent Acquisition Head, Cloudera

The Big Picture ✨

59% of organizations are increasing AI investment - signaling a shift from experimentation to long-term capability building.

Generative AI Is Mainstream - and Agentic AI Is the Next Shift

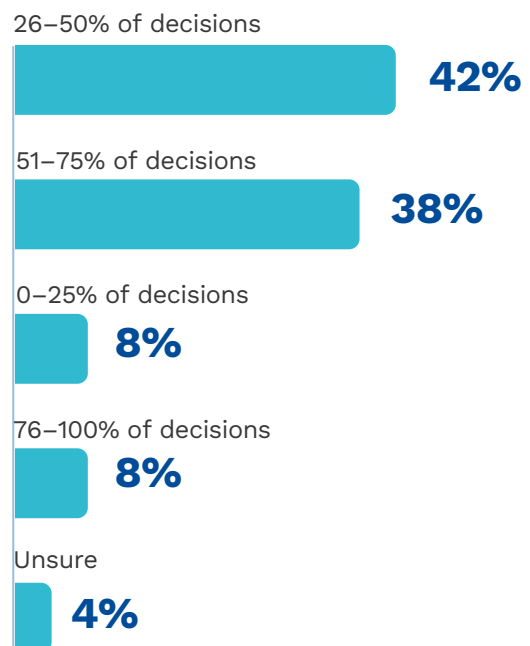
AI is set to play a central role in hiring decisions.

Around **80% of organizations expect AI to influence 25–75% of hiring decisions**, reflecting a clear shift toward data-driven recruitment.

However, this is not a move toward full automation. What is emerging is a human-led, AI-assisted model, where AI brings pattern recognition, predictive signals, ranking logic, and decision support, while humans retain contextual judgment, stakeholder alignment, and final accountability.

The recruiter becomes more strategic because AI removes low-value manual work and improves decision quality upstream.

AI Influence on Hiring Decisions



“The future of recruitment is human + AI collaboration, where technology drives efficiency and humans drive decisions.”

- Srinivas Pindi

Vice President Human Resources & TA, Phenom

The Big Picture ✨

80% of organizations expect AI to influence hiring decisions - accelerating the shift toward human-led, AI-assisted decision-making.

Recruiters Are Evolving into Strategic Talent Operators



As AI takes over repetitive tasks such as screening, scheduling, parsing, and early-stage evaluation, **recruiters are being repositioned toward higher-value work.**

Instead of spending most of their time on coordination and administrative throughput, recruiters are increasingly expected to focus on candidate engagement, hiring manager advisory, workforce planning, employer brand, and better hiring decisions.

In other words, **AI is not shrinking the importance of recruiters.** It is increasing the importance of what only recruiters can do well.



“Recruiters will focus more on strategic engagement, while AI handles repetitive tasks.”

- **Mayuresh Samant**

Senior Manager Talent Acquisition, Shaadi.com

The Big Picture ✨

AI is shifting recruiter effort from execution to strategy - redefining the role of Talent Acquisition.

The Real Risk in 2026 is *Not* Using AI

At first glance, 10% may seem like a small number. But in a market where AI is becoming embedded into hiring workflows, this 10% represents organizations that are at risk of being structurally outpaced. But the risk is not limited to non-adopters alone.

Even among the 90% that have started, a new divide is emerging - between **those experimenting with AI and those embedding it deeply** into their hiring infrastructure.

The question is whether organizations can adopt it fast enough, integrate it intelligently enough, and operationalize it deeply enough to stay competitive.

Because in 2026, the bigger risk is no longer adopting AI too early. It is adopting too slowly while the market moves ahead.



Only 10% of organizations are not using AI



“AI will be a co-pilot - recruiters who use it well will deliver significantly greater strategic impact.

- **Kaushik Konlade**

Talent Acquisition Leader, Pattern

The Big Picture ✨

Only 10% of organizations remain non-adopters - making inaction the biggest competitive risk in recruitment today.

Future Outlook

Recruitment is moving toward a model defined by human–AI collaboration.

As adoption deepens, AI is becoming embedded across every stage of the hiring lifecycle - from sourcing and screening to decision-making and workforce planning. The shift is moving beyond isolated use cases toward integrated, end-to-end systems.

The current of this evolution is already being shaped by more advanced capabilities, including agentic AI, aka, systems that can execute multi-step tasks and manage workflows with minimal manual intervention.

At the same time, the importance of human judgment remains central. Organizations are increasingly adopting human-in-the-loop models to ensure that hiring decisions stay contextual, fair, and aligned with business needs.

As Jyothis KS puts it, “AI won’t replace recruiters — but recruiters who effectively leverage AI will redefine how hiring gets done.”

The competitive advantage will not come from using AI alone, but from how effectively organizations combine AI-driven insights with human decision-making.

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About Zappyhire

Zappyhire is an **AI-powered recruitment automation platform** with a built-in ATS, designed **for large enterprises**, with tens of thousands of users around the globe.

From posting jobs and scheduling interviews to making the final offer and pre-onboarding, Zappyhire ensures **efficiency, accuracy, and ease at every step.**

www.zappyhire.com

Want to try out Zappyhire's flagship product?

Introducing **ZappyVue**, an innovative automated video interviewing software!

This **self-serve SaaS tool** enables users to sign up and start using it immediately, offering a seamless experience!

◆ Detailed analytics and reports

◆ Objective and consistent scoring

◆ No scheduling conflicts

◆ No compromise on quality

◆ Automated candidate response evaluation

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