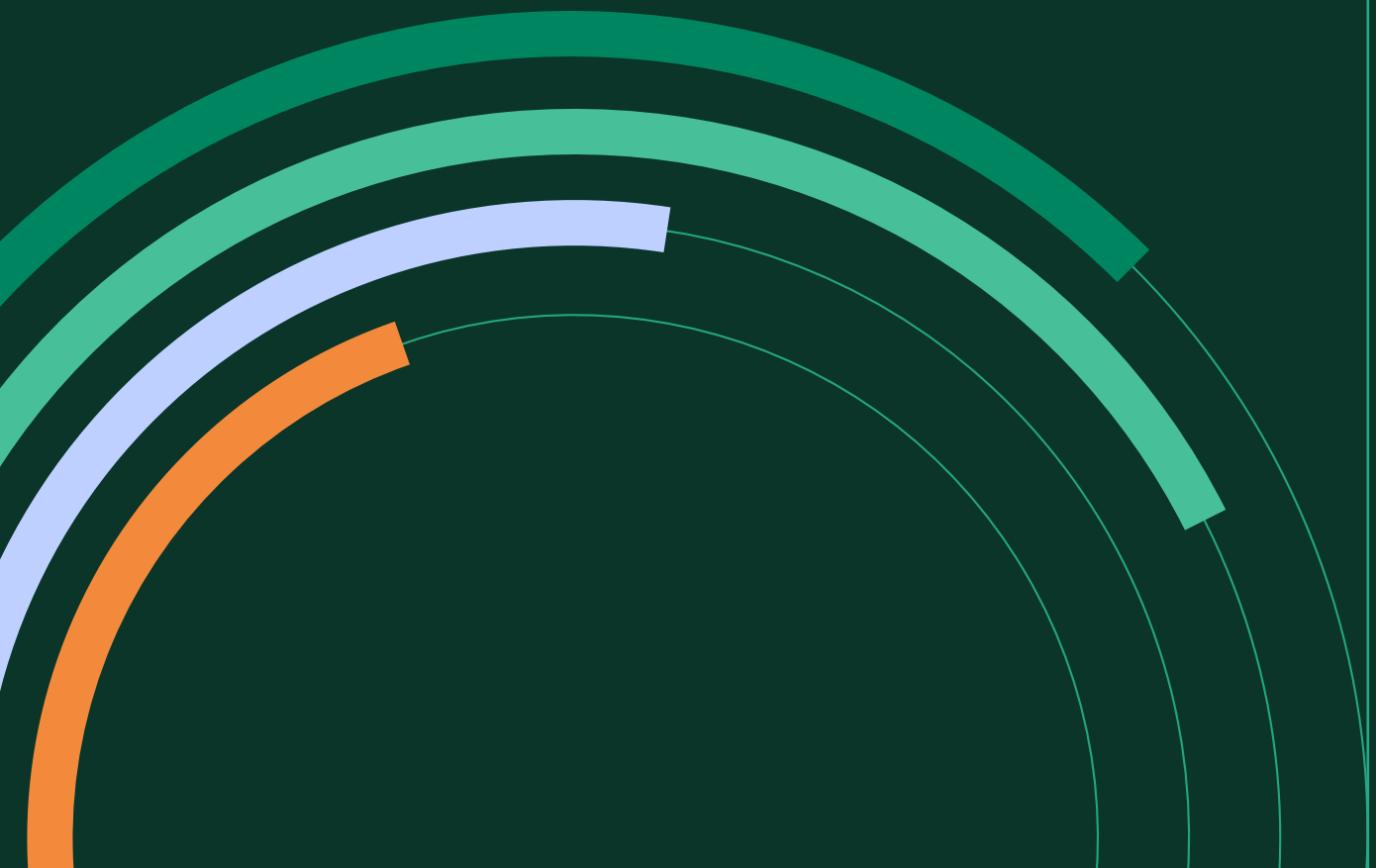
greenhouse

The Hire Standard

UK hiring trends

Autumn, 2026



Introduction

Another year, another set of hiring trends and metrics. AI continues to be a major player in the world of recruiting, with AI-first and AI-native technologies and solutions becoming available to recruiters and TA teams. Voice AI, powering conversational AI screening, has arrived and is poised to make a big difference. Outside of a few case studies, it's still too early to tell how that adoption has shifted recruiting metrics as a whole.

So, our new The Hire Standard report provides a snapshot of the hiring trends in the UK recruiting world with some key metrics year to date (YTD) as of August 2026, looking at changes over the year that can't be explained just by seasonality and digging into where organisations excel and where improvements are needed.

Let's dive in.

Methodology

Benchmarks reflect aggregated performance metrics and sourcing data from companies using the Greenhouse platform. All figures cover complete months only. Per-recruiter metrics are monthly averages. Time-to-fill is measured from requisition open to offer accepted.



January – August, 2026

Greenhouse analysed data from:

561	UK organisations
7.3M	applications
40K	hires

About our expert



Seán Delea
Senior Implementation Consultant,
Greenhouse

Seán Delea is based in Dublin. He has more than 13 years' experience in talent acquisition, including five on Greenhouse's own TA team, where he led recruiting teams across EMEA and the US.

Today he works with Greenhouse customers globally to design and roll out their hiring processes.

Our expert commentary puts the hiring benchmarks into context – exploring what the data reveals about requisition load and candidate progression, and what talent teams can do to improve hiring outcomes.

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01

Executive summary



183

applications

56

days open

1 in 3

roles unfilled

Out of every 1,000 applications an employer receives, 102 reach an assessment, 54 reach a first interview, 7 reach an offer and 6 end in a hire.



Movement over 2026

Filling far more of what opens (January–August)

Openings closed with a hire

+24%

Applications per hire

-12.2%

Interviews per job closed

+14.2%

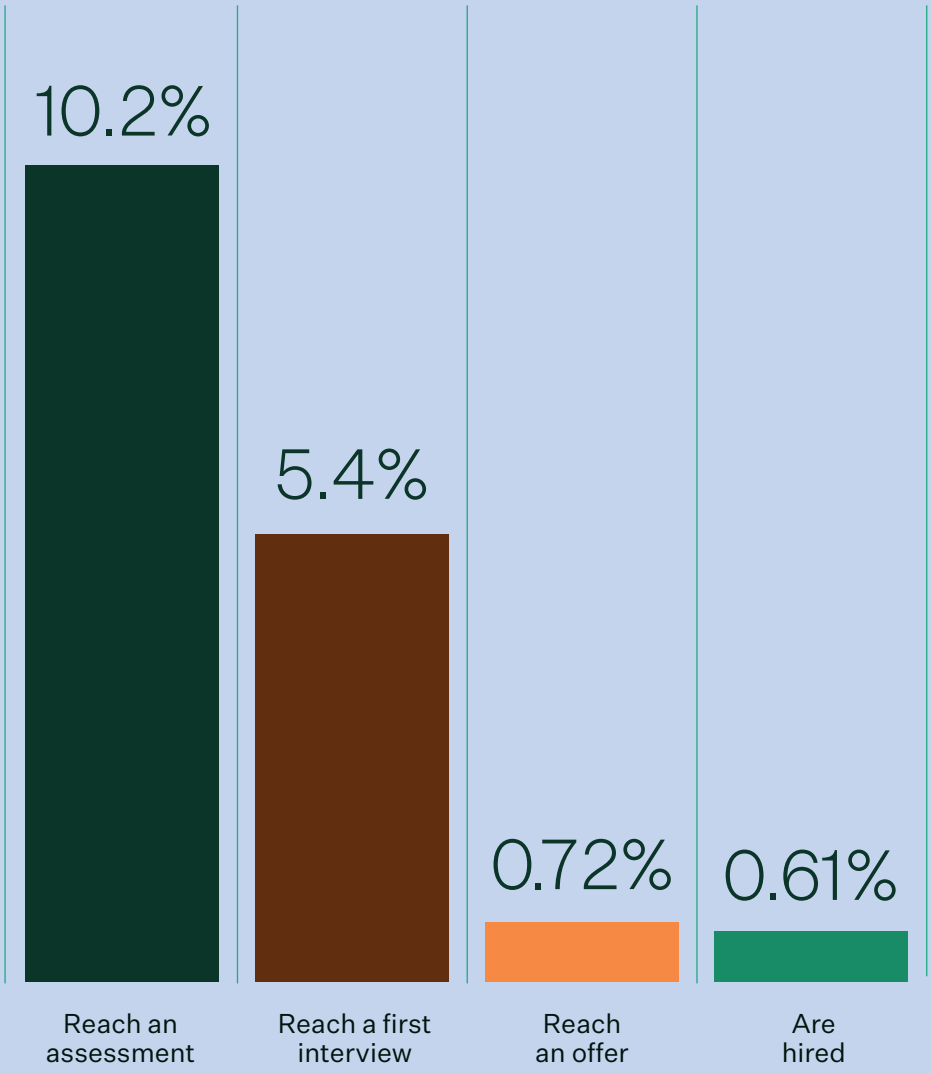
Open reqs per recruiter

-8.4%

UK employers went from filling 56.3% of their closed openings in January to 69.8% in August, despite application volume per organisation only falling 3.7%.

Where candidates actually fall out

Share of applications



The steepest drop isn't at the top of the funnel. It's between assessment and offer, where nine in 10 candidates fall away. UK employers run roughly nine first interviews for every hire they make.

Time-to-fill continues to serve as an unclear metric of effectiveness

UK employers fill a role in 56.5 days on average, but spend 18.6 of those days getting a candidate from application to first interview. That stretch happens entirely before any human contact, and it is the single largest addressable part in the hiring process.

Time-to-fill measures elapsed time, not outcome. A low number can mean an efficient team or simpler roles, while a high number may reflect a more in-depth process or a role requiring multiple stakeholders to weigh in.



Sourcing data can inform recruiter strategy

Channel	Apps per hire	% of applications	% of hires
Referrals	15.6	0.7%	9.1%
Agencies	24.4	1.1%	9.1%
Candidate search	40.3	1.8%	9.5%
Internal job boards	220.9	40.7%	38.1%
External job boards	446.6	53.2%	24.6%

Company career sites (internal job boards) and external job boards result in 94% of UK applications but have the least efficient hire conversion rate. Career sites convert at 221 applications per hire and return 38% of hires. External job boards convert at 447 and return 25%, a much worse rate. The next three channels result in more than a quarter of all UK hires despite only being under 4% of applications: referrals, agencies and recruiter outreach.

The main takeaway

The shortage in UK hiring isn't applications or conversations but instead what those conversations produce.

Only 10.2% of applications reach an assessment. For the other 90%, the entire evaluation is a CV scan, a document increasingly written with AI, thinning signal at the same time volume grows. But unlike many markets, the UK already gets a relatively high share of candidates into a first interview. The problem is what happens next: nine in 10 assessed candidates never reach an offer, and a third of openings close with nobody hired at all.

While processes can make adjustments to these metrics, conversational AI screening has emerged as a powerful new solution that can address hiring inefficiency by compressing the 19-day wait before a first interview. This produces better signal in front of the people making decisions further down so that interviews occur with higher-quality candidates selected by how they answer questions, not on how polished their CV looked.



02

What it takes to make a hire in the UK right now



183 applications.
56 days open.
1 in 3 roles unfilled.

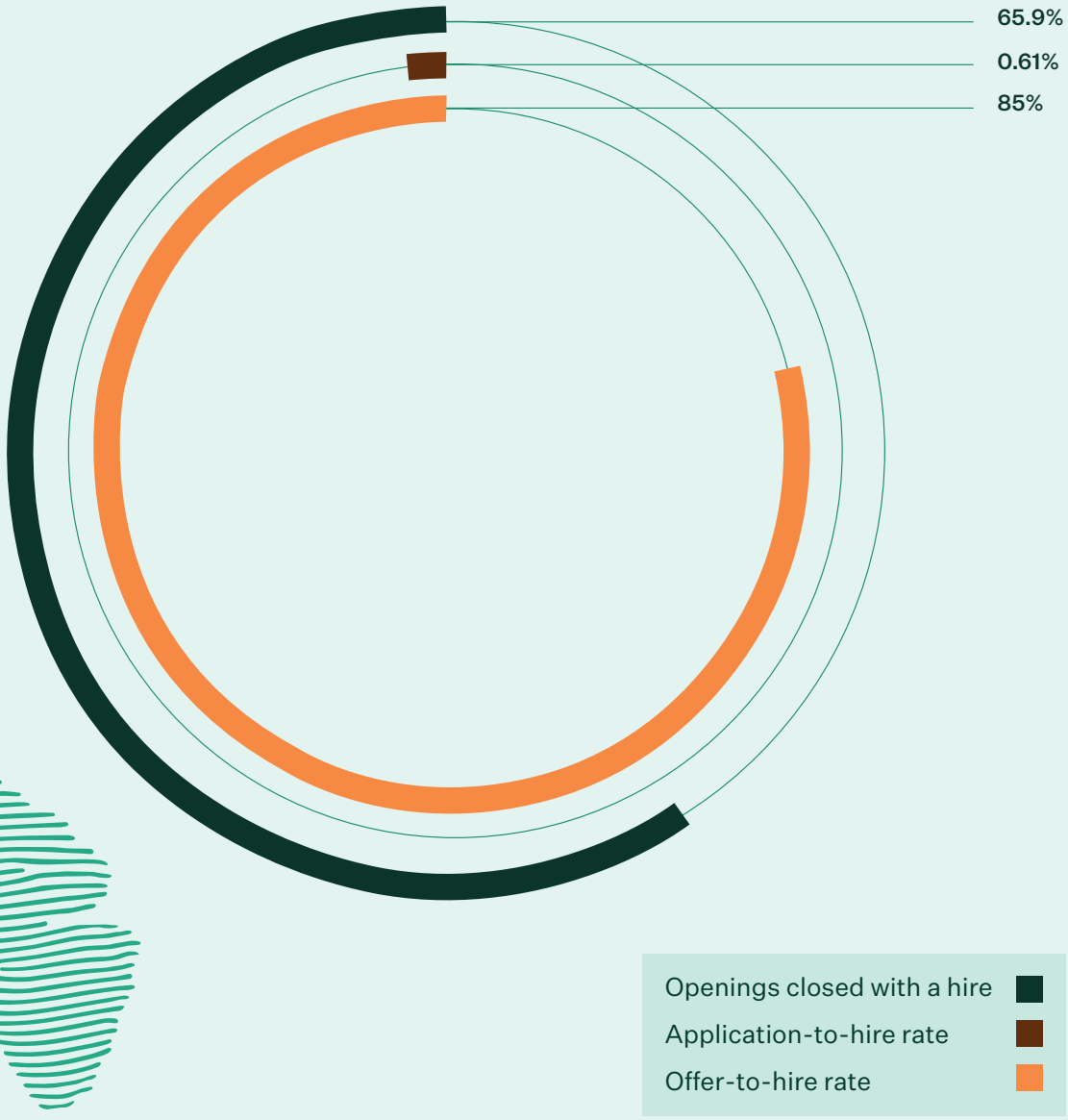
Out of every 1,000 applications an employer receives, 102 reach an assessment, 54 reach a first interview, 7 reach an offer and 6 end in a hire.

If time-to-fill is an important metric for your TA team, start by addressing the time between application and a first interview. There's an average of an 18.6-day wait, a third of the 56.5-day average time-to-fill. The rest of our metrics, alongside the over-time change, highlight how recruiters perform in 2026.



The state of hiring

2026 recruiting metrics YTD



The benchmark set

	YTD level
Applications per hire	182.6
Days to fill role	56.5
Hires per recruiter (monthly)	1.59
Open reqs per recruiter (monthly)	4.97
Interviews per recruiter (monthly)	18.52
Interviews per job closed	13.49
Applications per org	13.05
Recruiters per org	5.61

What stands out here

UK recruiters carry just under five open requisitions and make 1.59 hires a month, which is about 32% of their req load. Each recruiter runs about 18 interviews a month across those roles but closer to 13 if the role is filled.

The most consequential figure here is the closing rate. 65.9% of openings that close do so with a hire, meaning one in three close empty. That's a third of all requisition effort producing nothing.

Expert question:

Q **A third of UK openings close without a hire. Is that a demand-side problem – roles cancelled or deprioritised mid-process – or a supply-side one, where the right candidate never materialised?**

A "The problem starts before the role even opens. A lot of 'closed, no hire' roles were never really approved in the first place. A hiring manager wanted to test the market, budget got pulled mid-quarter, or the team reorganised and the role changed shape halfway through. Without a proper intake or approval step, jobs get opened on a whim and get quietly closed later.

The 85% offer acceptance rate supports that reading. The leak isn't at the end of the funnel, it's at the start, with roles that shouldn't have been opened yet. The quick win is tighter approvals and a real intake conversation. It's also worth capturing close reasons properly so you can tell 'cancelled' apart from 'couldn't find anyone'. Most teams can't currently separate the two in their data."

Seán Delea
Senior Implementation Consultant, Greenhouse

03

Movement data: January–August, 2026



Metric	Jan	Aug	Change
Openings closed with a hire	56.3%	69.8%	+24%
Applications per hire	218.1	191.4	-12.2%
Interviews per job closed	11.90	13.59	+14.2%
Interviews per recruiter	17.72	16.01	-9.6%
Open reqs per recruiter	5.17	4.74	-8.4%
Time-to-fill (days)	60.4	56.9	-5.9%
Applications per org	1,749	1,684	-3.7%



The biggest improvement over time here is the closing rate. In January, nearly half of closing openings produced no hire. By August that was under a third. What makes it notable is that some metrics stayed flat, meaning they didn't impact this improvement. Application volume per organisation only fell 3.7%, and requisition load per recruiter fell 8.4%, an essentially flat figure given that absolute numbers were involved.

Interviews per job closed rose 14.2%, yet a slight decrease in interviews per recruiter over time suggests increased focus rather than expansion. UK teams appear to give more attention to each role, resulting in an increased hire rate. If this is a predictable annual pattern, TA leaders may want to set different recruiter targets for H1 and H2 rather than a flat annual number.

Expert question:

Q **UK employers improved their fill rate by 24% while cutting both requisition load and total interviews per recruiter, but increasing interviews per role. Is this deliberate prioritisation, or a slower market allowing more attention per role? And is it repeatable?**

A "January is always messy. Roles carry over from the previous year, budgets aren't confirmed, and there are a lot of speculative openings. By summer, teams have cleared that backlog and are working on roles that are actually funded. So some of this is seasonality.

The takeaway holds either way, though. For TA leaders, the lesson is that req load is a lever, not just a fact of life. If you can push back on volume and prioritise ruthlessly, you'll often get better outcomes from the same team. I'd also say: don't wait for a slow market to force that discipline on you."

—

Seán Delea
Senior Implementation Consultant, Greenhouse

04

Where candidates fall out



Where candidates fall out, and where the time goes

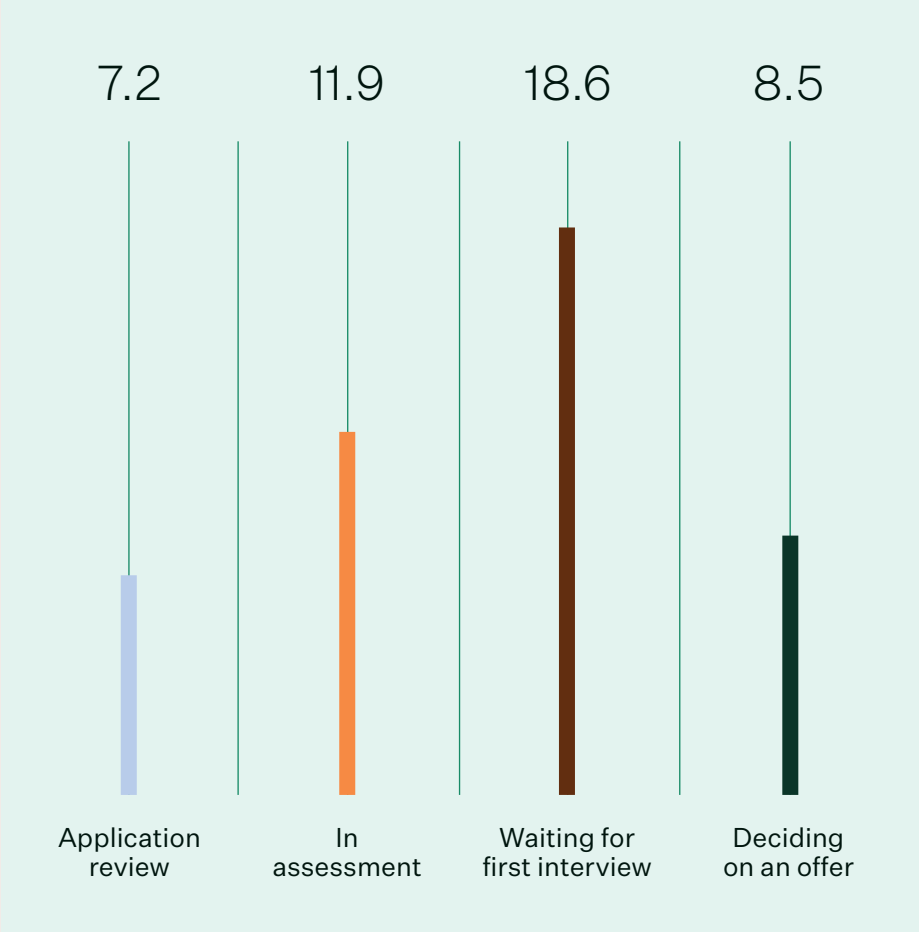
Stage	Share of applications
Reach an assessment	10.2%
Reach a first interview	5.4%
Reach an offer	0.72%
Are hired	0.61%



Stage durations

Here, we see the stage progression throughout the candidate process. Translated into effort, UK employers run roughly nine first interviews for every hire they make. That's a lot of conversation for one outcome, and it happens at the stage furthest from the application, where the information available should be at its best.

Average days



The longest single wait is the one before the first conversation: 18.6 days. It's a third of the entire time-to-fill, and the only significant stretch where recruiters can make a concerted effort to shorten the time, whether that's by optimising an existing process or introducing a new technology like conversational AI screening.

Expert question:

Q **Nine in 10 candidates who reach an assessment never reach an offer, and UK employers run about nine first interviews per hire. Is that a sign that screening decisions are being deferred to the interview stage, or that interviews aren't producing enough signal to decide on?**

A "When screening criteria aren't agreed up front, the first interview ends up doing the screen's job. That's expensive for the hiring team and slow for candidates. Waiting nearly three weeks for a first conversation is a long time to keep good people interested.

The biggest lever for time-to-fill is still the kick-off with the hiring manager. Agree on must-haves, define what a 'yes' looks like at each stage, and build the scorecard before the first CV comes in.

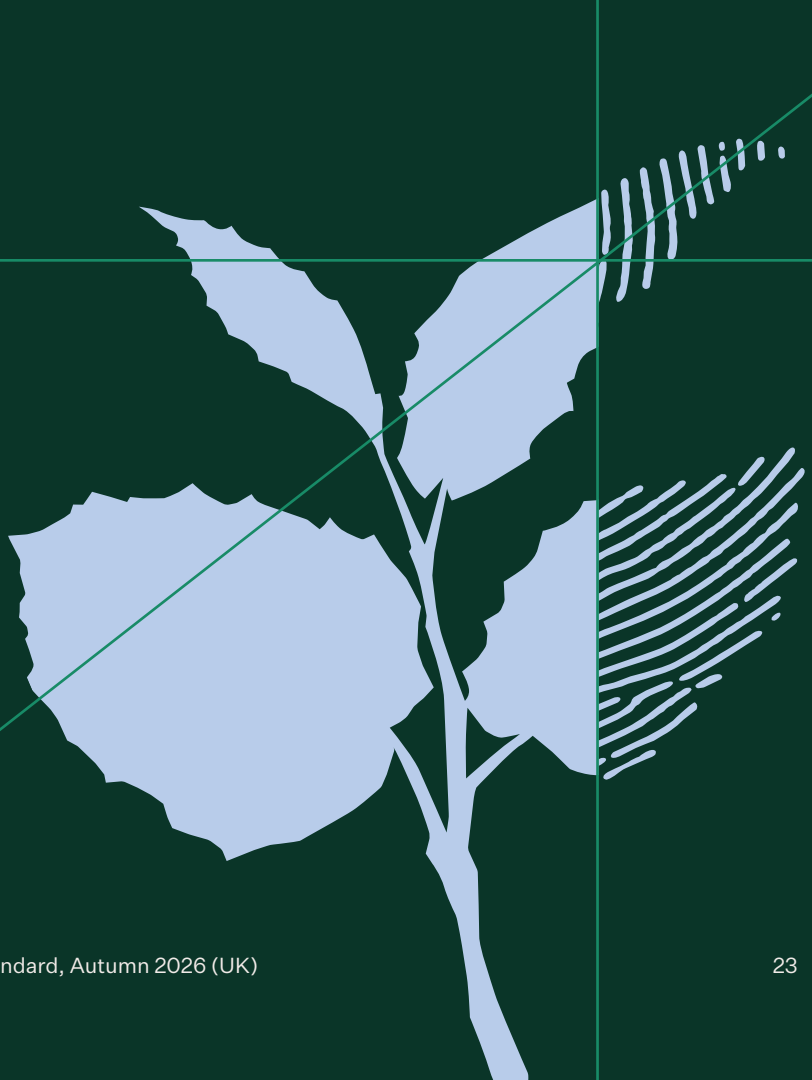
AI screening is starting to make a real difference here. Candidates can do it on their own schedule rather than waiting for a recruiter's diary to free up. The recruiter reviews the results and decides who moves forward (it's not a replacement for human judgement). The point is to get to a better-informed shortlist faster, so the live interviews go to the people most likely to be a fit. Where I've seen teams get the most out of it, the groundwork is the same: you need a clear rubric first, because the tool can only be as good as the criteria you give it."

—

Seán Delea
Senior Implementation Consultant, Greenhouse

05

Where hires are really coming from



Channel	Apps per hire	Applications	Hires
Referrals	15.6	0.7%	9.1%
Attend events	16.6	0.1%	0.9%
Custom	17.4	0.0%	0.5%
Agencies	24.4	1.1%	9.1%
Other	33.9	1.1%	6.7%
Candidate search	40.3	1.8%	9.5%
Social media	75.1	0.4%	1.1%
Internal job boards	220.9	40.7%	38.1%
External job boards	446.6	53.2%	24.6%

Career sites and external job boards dominate volume, accounting for nearly 94% of all UK applications and 63% of hires, collectively. But their efficiency varies wildly. Internal job boards, or career sites, convert at 221 applications per hire and return roughly their percentage of hires compared with their percentage of applications. External job boards, on the other hand, convert at 447 and return at about half the rate.

Referrals, agencies and recruiter outreach collectively account for 27.7% of hires despite getting only 3.6% of applications, converting at a 16 to 40 applications per hire rate. While referrals have always been a recruiter's best friend, agencies deserve a shout-out here as well. They produce 9.1% of UK hires at 24 applications per hire.

This doesn't mean companies should divert all their resources away from job boards, but it should give TA leaders food for thought when it comes to sourcing investment.

Expert question:

Q **More than half of UK applications arrive through the channel that converts worst, while referrals, agencies and recruiter outreach produce a quarter of hires from under 4% of volume. What actually prevents teams from rebalancing towards what works?**

A "My advice would be to treat high-conversion channels as something you deliberately build. For referrals, that means making it easy for employees to refer and closing the loop when they do. For outreach, it means protecting recruiter time for proactive sourcing on your hardest roles. Then you can be more selective about where your job board spend goes. The other point I'd make is that you can only have this conversation if source tracking is accurate. In a lot of implementations, I find source data is patchy, so leaders are making investment calls based on gut feel rather than evidence."

Seán Delea
Senior Implementation Consultant, Greenhouse



06

Conclusion and key takeaways



The problems are the same, but the solutions are new

If there's one thing to carry out of this report, it's that UK hiring is struggling at the conversion stage, an issue partially created due to the pipeline problem all recruiters face today. One in 19 applications reaches a first interview, and employers run about nine first interviews for every hire. So, the activity is there, but there is a lot of effort spent looking for the right hire without a guarantee of success.

A third of openings close without a hire, and 85% of offers are accepted, making that 15% a pretty significant gap when it comes to recruiter effectiveness. Our data suggests the inefficiency sits somewhere in the middle of the process. From January to August of this year, recruiters improved their hiring rate by 24% without processing more applications, further cementing the point that the high volume of applications can significantly impact recruiters.

Conversational AI screening, or AI interviewing, has emerged as a potential solution to recruiters' pipeline problem but will candidates embrace a huge change in the interview process? The answer is… it depends. Our data shows that candidates are overwhelmingly frustrated by the hiring process and see conversational AI screening as a solution if implemented right. Only 8% of jobseekers in the UK and Ireland would reject an AI interview outright, and 57% of those who took an AI-led interview said it let them demonstrate their skills well.

Employers need to assure candidates that a human will review their responses, and candidates want clarity over the use of AI overall and how they'll be evaluated with AI. Over 80% said they want employer AI use in the hiring process disclosed, and 60% want advance notice of AI interviewing use.



The right implementation isn't just for the candidates' sake – it's also to make sure the solution is addressing the elements creating the most friction in the hiring process. For most UK companies, that's the assessment prior to the interview stage. Given the length of time it takes for a candidate to get a first interview, having an AI screening come in and dramatically shortening the wait time of 18+ days can make for a much more efficient recruiting team.

Our hiring trend data highlights three additional takeaways for recruiting teams and TA leaders

1 Pick a metric pair, not a metric. Time-to-fill on its own tells you very little, especially if a deliberate process is by design. Looking at multiple metrics tells a much more complete story. A team taking 57 days to fill two-thirds of your openings is a different outcome from 57 days to fill half of them. The same is true of applications per hire, which looks like an efficiency measure but largely reflects inbound volume.

2 Re-assess your sourcing investment. More than half of UK application volume arrives through the worst-converting channel, while referrals, agencies and recruiter outreach produce a quarter of hires from a fraction of the volume. That gap is an allocation decision available this quarter, without new tooling.

3 Consider where AI screening can make the biggest impact. The 18.6-day wait before a first interview is the largest addressable block of time in the process, but it's not the only place for AI screening. Even implementing it after the first screen may prove effective in getting better information in front of the people deciding between assessment and offer, where nine in 10 candidates currently fall away.

The benchmarks here describe where UK teams are. The more useful question is whether what you're optimising is what's standing in your way.

To improve your metrics and learn more about how Greenhouse can help improve your hiring performance, request a demo here.

07

Appendix: The full dataset



The report above led with the findings we thought were most useful. This appendix holds everything we measured. A few things to consider as you review the full dataset.

Levels and movement answer different questions. A level tells you where UK employers stand today; movement tells you which direction things travelled between January and August.

Per-recruiter figures are monthly. Hires, open requisitions and interviews per recruiter are each calculated per recruiter per month, not across the full eight-month window.

Different measures draw on different parts of the dataset. Funnel and stage-duration figures cover 264 UK organisations; openings-closed figures cover 674; the rest cover 561. Compare within a table rather than across them.

All figures come from Greenhouse platform data covering UK organisations between January and August 2026 – 7.3 million applications and 40,096 hires.



A1. UK benchmarks – YTD levels

Metric	YTD level
Applications per hire	182.6
Days to fill a role	56.5
Openings closed with a hire	65.9%
Application-to-hire rate	0.61%
Offer-to-hire rate	85.0%
Hires per recruiter (monthly)	1.59
Open reqs per recruiter (monthly)	4.97
Interviews per recruiter (monthly)	18.52
Interviews per job closed	13.49
Scorecards per job closed	12.00
Applications per org	13,052
Recruiters per org	5.61
Coordinators per org	3.17
Recruiters per coordinator	1.77
Openings closed per org	96.3



A2. UK – January vs August movement

Metric	Jan	Aug	Change
Openings closed with a hire	56.3%	69.8%	+24.0%
Interviews per job closed	11.90	13.59	+14.2%
Recruiters per org	5.48	5.92	+8.1%
Coordinators per org	3.14	3.30	+5.1%
Recruiters per coordinator	1.74	1.80	+3.4%
Hires per recruiter (monthly)	1.46	1.49	+1.5%
Applications per org	1,749	1,684	–3.7%
Time-to-fill (days)	60.4	56.9	–5.9%
Open reqs per recruiter (monthly)	5.17	4.74	–8.4%
Interviews per recruiter (monthly)	17.72	16.01	–9.6%
Applications per hire	218.1	191.4	–12.2%
Openings closed per org	13.35	10.68	–20.0%
Scorecards per job closed	12.02	8.66	–27.9%

A3. UK funnel – share of all applications reaching each stage

Stage	Share
Reach an assessment	10.2%
Reach a first interview	5.4%
Reach an offer	0.72%
Are hired	0.61%
Offer-to-hire conversion	85.0%

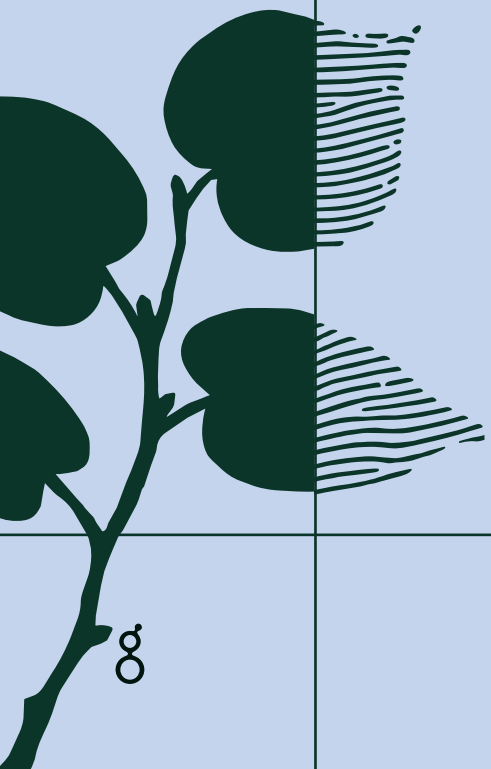
A4. UK stage durations

Stage	Average days
In application review	7.2
In assessment	11.9
Waiting for a first interview	18.6
Deciding on an offer	8.5



A5. UK sourcing channels

Channel	Apps per hire	% of apps	% of hires	Orgs using
Referrals	15.6	0.7%	9.1%	180
Attend events	16.6	0.1%	0.9%	37
Custom	17.4	0.0%	0.5%	10
Agencies	24.4	1.1%	9.1%	167
Other	33.9	1.1%	6.7%	124
Candidate search	40.3	1.8%	9.5%	175
Social media	75.1	0.4%	1.1%	84
Internal job boards	220.9	40.7%	38.1%	260
External job boards	446.6	53.2%	24.6%	219
All channels	206.9	100%	100%	—



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Greenhouse is an Orchestrated Hiring Ecosystem, bringing employers and job seekers together in one place to make hiring work for everyone in the AI era.

To learn more, visit greenhouse.com