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The 2026 AI in Hiring Report

How jobseekers, recruiters and hiring managers across the UK, Ireland and Germany are navigating AI trust and transparency



 Make decisions faster

 **Julia Mendoza**
Candidate

 Interested

 Sentiment updated

 Source smarter



View all candidates



 Summarize scorecards

Introduction

AI and automation are now embedded in hiring across the UK, Ireland and Germany, shaping how candidates apply, how applications are screened and how hiring teams move decisions forward. That shift is creating clear opportunities for speed and scale, but it's also exposing new risks and tensions in how people experience the process.

As AI becomes more visible in day-to-day hiring, trust is becoming the pressure point. Candidates want clarity about how decisions are made and when AI is involved. Recruiters want visibility into what their systems prioritise and confidence that qualified talent is not being missed.

Hiring managers want reassurance that the people they interview match the skills and experience presented on paper.

To better understand how AI is being used and how trust is shifting alongside it, Greenhouse surveyed 1,700 jobseekers, 198 recruiters and 373 hiring managers in the UK, Ireland and Germany.

The findings reveal where AI is changing behaviour, where transparency expectations are growing and where teams are adjusting processes to keep hiring credible – supported by expert perspectives from talent leaders to help organisations use and embrace AI more confidently.



Executive summary

AI is helping hiring teams manage higher volumes and move candidates through the funnel faster, but it's also adding pressure at every stage. Recruiters and hiring managers face growing workloads, rising concerns about fraud and a greater need to validate candidate quality.

At the same time, candidates are widely using AI in their applications while reporting lower trust in hiring and stronger expectations around transparency.

Key findings

62%

of recruiters say their workload has increased over the past year

56%

of recruiters review only half or fewer of the applications they receive

86%

of recruiters have caught or suspected candidate fraud in the past 12 months

65%

of hiring managers say their involvement in the hiring process has increased

69%

of hiring managers say they are more concerned about fraudulent activity in hiring than in past years

78%

of candidates use AI to tailor their CV or application materials

40%

of candidates say their trust in hiring has decreased in the past year

85%

of candidates say it's important that employers disclose their use of AI tools in the hiring process

Recruiter workload is rising as early-stage screening is under pressure



Recruiters across the UK, Ireland and Germany are facing heavier workloads driven by a surge in applications: 62% say their workload has increased compared with the previous year, with 25% describing the rise as significant.

As volume grows, recruiters are struggling to keep up with early-stage review. Many simply cannot look at everything that comes in.



The strain also shows up in how time is spent. Thirty-eight percent of recruiters say at least half of their work week is spent filtering out junk, spam or completely unqualified applications. Rather than focusing on structured evaluation, sourcing or candidate engagement, much of their capacity is still tied up in clearing noise from the pipeline.

To manage this pressure, recruiters are leaning more heavily on AI and automated screening to support the top of the funnel. When implemented well, these tools are already delivering value. Fifty-eight percent say AI tools have had a positive impact on hiring, with the most common benefits concentrated in early-stage efficiency: filtering low-quality applications (40%) and CV or application screening (35%).

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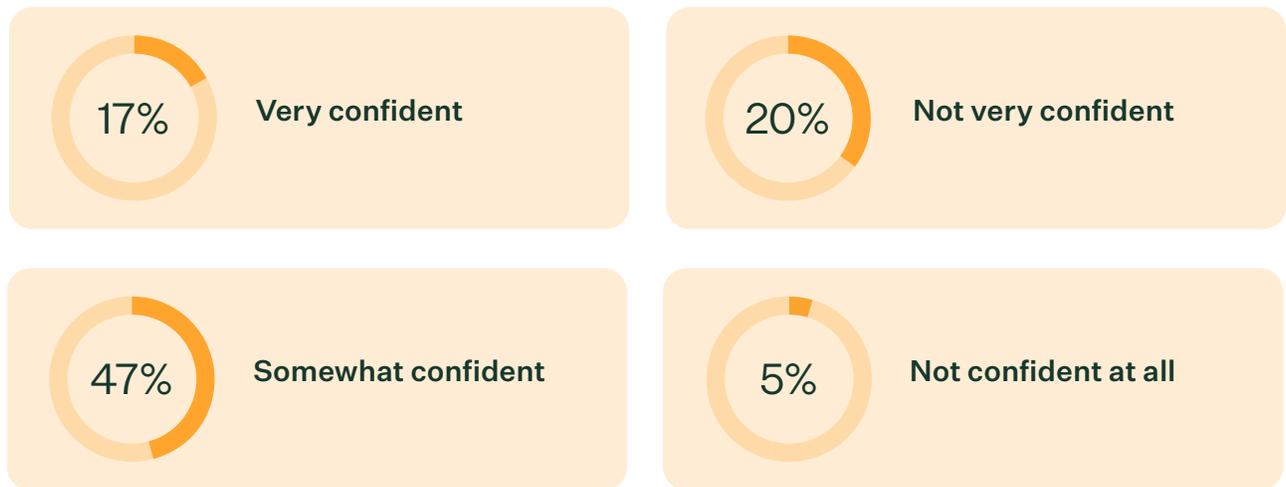
There are unique moments in the hiring process that are still inextricably human-to-human. While the AI of today is great for matching buzzwords, it takes human insight to understand the explicit and implicit preferences of a hiring manager within the unique context of their team and company.

Hung Lee
Editor, Recruiting Brainfood

Yet even as recruiters rely more on automation, confidence in these tools remains uneven. The gap between submitted applications and what a recruiter reviews makes trust in screening tools more consequential. Sixty-four percent feel at least somewhat confident in their tools, while one in four say they are not very confident or not confident at all [Fig. 1].

Taken together, the findings suggest AI is already helping teams manage scaling application volumes and tasks, but confidence in how tools work – and how reliably they support fair, structured decisions – is still catching up.

[Fig. 1] Recruiter confidence in their applicant tracking or AI-driven screening tools



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AI should be used as a co-pilot, not an autopilot. It should surface the most relevant skills while leaving the final advance or reject decision to a person. Its value lies in filtering out noise so humans can focus on deeper evaluation.

Seán Delea
Senior Manager, Talent Acquisition
Greenhouse Software

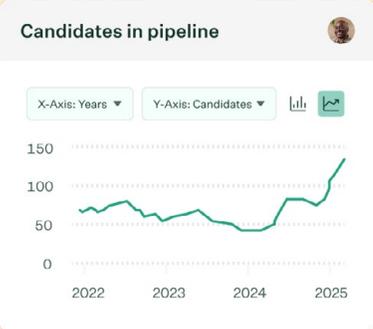


Key takeaway

Recruiters are turning to AI-enabled screening out of necessity

Application volume and limited capacity are forcing teams to automate early-stage review simply to keep hiring moving. When used to reduce noise and surface relevant candidates, AI delivers measurable efficiency gains.

But efficiency alone does not build trust. Recruiters gain confidence when automation is anchored in structure: clear role criteria, consistent evaluation standards and visibility into how screening decisions are made. Teams that pair AI with defined human judgement points are better positioned to scale hiring without losing confidence in who makes it through the funnel.



Fraud is rising with AI, and detection isn't keeping up

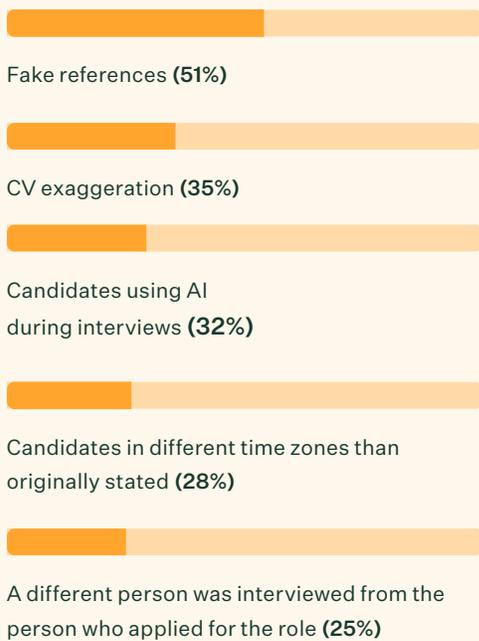
Many recruiters feel like misrepresentation is on the rise – and increased AI use by candidates may be part of the reason.

Eighty-six percent have caught or suspected [candidate fraud](#) in the past 12 months, and an additional 5% believe it may be happening undetected.

More than half of recruiters (56%) believe AI makes it easier for candidates to cheat, fake credentials or misrepresent themselves.

When asked what they have observed in the last 12 months, recruiters most often cite fake references and CV exaggeration, followed by candidates using AI during interviews **[Fig. 2]**.

[Fig. 2] Top forms of candidate fraud recruiters have observed in the last 12 months



These behaviours don't all carry the same level of risk.

Fake references and CV inflation can lead to a poor hiring decision, but identity deception tactics such as interview stand-ins, location misrepresentation and deepfakes can have even more serious consequences, enabling unauthorised access to systems, data or regulated environments under false pretences.

This is a newer risk profile for recruitment teams, one that overlaps with security and compliance rather than hiring quality alone.

Hiring managers are seeing a similar shift when it comes to fraud and spam concerns: 69% say they are more concerned about fraudulent activity in hiring than in past years. Of hiring managers who have encountered a candidate using AI to cheat during the application process:



48%

have seen candidates read off AI-generated responses during a live interview

21%

have seen cheating on technical exams

28%

have observed **prompt injections**

18%

have encountered deepfakes

What are **prompt injections**?

Prompt injections are hidden instructions embedded in CVs or application materials – often invisible to a human reader – designed to confuse or bypass AI systems or models. For example, a candidate might embed text that instructs an AI system to prioritise or advance their application regardless of qualifications, giving them an unfair advantage by exploiting recruiters' lack of visibility into hidden content.



From the candidate side, AI-enabled deception appears even more common than hiring teams realise

When asked about their own behaviour, 42% of candidates say they have used prompt injections. Even more concerning, 28% say they would consider doing so.

Against this backdrop, the fact that only 28% of hiring managers say they have observed prompt injections in the past year suggests that much AI-enabled deception is going undetected by hiring teams – and that deception may extend beyond prompt injections alone.

Candidates also report using AI technology to alter how they appear in video interviews:

36% say they have modified their appearance, background or voice

21% say they would consider doing so in the future

Fraud doesn't look the same across the UK, Ireland and Germany

Fraud is not a one-size-fits-all challenge across the countries we surveyed. While misrepresentation tactics are rising everywhere, the type of “noise” candidates and employers face can differ by market, changing what teams need to verify and where risk is most likely to surface.

Germany is seeing more job search scams:

69% of jobseekers say they've encountered fake job postings, compared with 56% across the UK, Ireland and Germany overall.

Germany also shows higher openness to digital modification tools:

74% of German jobseekers say they would be open to digitally modifying how they present themselves in interviews.

Trust is declining unevenly:

Candidates in the UK and Ireland report a sharper drop in trust (46%) than candidates in Germany (27%), suggesting perceptions of AI-enabled hiring are not uniform across the region.

In response, some employers are adding more detection measures: 59% of hiring managers say they currently use software to detect or monitor AI use during interviews at least some of the time, and among the 41% who do not, 74% say they are considering it.

The challenge is tightening controls without turning every interaction into an adversarial check.

Seán Delea, Senior Manager of Talent Acquisition at Greenhouse Software, says this balance is becoming harder to maintain as AI-enabled deception increases:

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The rise of AI has created a paradox: it makes hiring faster but also makes it easier to deceive. The challenge for TA leaders is strengthening verification without turning the application process into a suspicion-first experience.

Seán Delea

Senior Manager, Talent Acquisition
Greenhouse Software



Key takeaway

AI is making misrepresentation easier to attempt and harder to catch

Recruiters and hiring managers recognise the risks, but the gap between what candidates report doing and what teams detect shows visibility is still limited. Clear structure and consistent verification help teams rebuild confidence without defaulting to distrust.

Hung Lee, Editor of Recruiting Brainfood, says that avoiding “prolonged ambiguity” is key to protecting the candidate experience. “TA leaders can pre-empt some of the challenges that come with ID verification by explaining clearly, at the beginning, why it’s required, what the process involves, what will be done with the data collected and what options the candidate has at each stage.”

Real Talent 

Candidate	Fraud filters
 Adam Anderson	 Fraud alert
 Ben Jackson	 Verified
 Emma Cameron	 Not verified

[Filter for fraud](#)

Adam Anderson



High risk fraud

Section 3

Hiring managers are working harder and leveraging AI to protect quality

As more candidates use AI to prepare for applications and interviews, the signals hiring managers have traditionally relied on are harder to interpret at face value. CVs tend to look more polished and interview answers may sound more rehearsed.

Teams are navigating new questions around authenticity, from misrepresented skills to AI-assisted responses.

This dynamic helps explain a broader pattern across this report: While AI and automation can speed up parts of the funnel, recruiters and hiring managers are often doing more work at the decision points to stay confident in who they hire.

In fact, 65% of hiring managers say their involvement in the hiring process has increased over the past year.



Time is the constraint, even more than volume

Even with AI boosting efficiency, hiring manager capacity is still a major hiring bottleneck. When asked about their biggest challenges today, hiring managers rank limited time and resources to thoroughly evaluate candidates at No. 1 (46%), ahead of concerns about authenticity (41%) and even high application volume (40%) [Fig. 3].

In other words, the main challenge is not only identifying promising candidates, but also having enough capacity to validate skills and fit with confidence.

These pressures are not evenly distributed across markets. Hiring managers in the UK are more likely to cite application volume as a top challenge (49%) compared with their counterparts in Germany (27%).

Higher-touch evaluation is rising, even as AI increases speed

To reduce risk and confirm quality, many hiring managers are adding more “hands-on” steps: 31% say they conduct more in-person, on-site interviews.

That helps explain why time constraints are tightening. On-site interviews are one of the most time-intensive ways to validate skills, communication and fit. Even when AI improves early-stage speed, hiring managers may be reinvesting time later in the process when the stakes are highest.

[Fig. 3] Top challenges hiring managers face in today’s hiring process



Hiring managers see AI as a quality enabler, not just a speed tool

While increased manager involvement might suggest increased friction in the hiring process, the data points to a more optimistic story: AI is often improving outcomes and efficiencies.

Among hiring managers at companies using AI in hiring, 53% say candidate quality has improved at least modestly (24% notably, 29% modestly).

Another 31% say results are mixed, 12% report no significant change and only 4% say candidate quality has declined.

That perceived improvement aligns with how hiring managers describe AI's role in decision-making: 67% agree that AI helps them move faster and make stronger hiring decisions with fewer recruiter resources. And despite widespread fraud concerns across markets, 73% say they are confident that candidates' abilities match what they present during interviews.

The story is not that AI is making hiring "hands-off". It's that AI is helping hiring managers focus their time where it matters most: verifying quality, strengthening evaluation and making decisions they can stand behind.



Human interaction will likely remain the key differentiator between companies. While AI can support communication through emails, written content and even video, candidates ultimately connect with people and choose employers based on shared values and culture. Understanding who a company truly is still requires meaningful human interaction.

Rebecca Schmidt

Global Head of Talent Acquisition Programmes
Systems & Operations, Thoughtworks

Key takeaway

AI is changing how hiring managers spend their time

As candidate signals become easier to generate and harder to interpret, managers are stepping in more often at the moments where judgement, context and human connection matter most.

Teams that use AI effectively treat it as a way to protect quality, not bypass it. By letting AI surface higher-signal candidates earlier, and anchoring final decisions in structured, human-led evaluation, hiring managers can stay confident in who they hire while keeping the process defensible, consistent and scalable.

Real Talent 

Candidate	Match
 Tomás Ruiz	 Strong match
 Julia Mendoza	 Partial match
 Ben Jackson	 Partial match

[Filter by match score](#)



Tomás Ruiz
Strong match





Section 4

Candidates are open to AI in hiring, but are seeking clarity

Recruiters and hiring managers can design structured, defensible processes, but those processes only work if candidates understand and trust what they're being asked to do. Candidate perception affects everything that follows: who applies, who completes the process, who withdraws and how employer reputation travels through the market.

That's why the candidate experience matters in an AI-enabled hiring environment. If AI feels opaque, candidates fill in the blanks themselves, and those assumptions can shape behaviour and employer reputation just as much as what employers are actually doing.

Our data reflects that two-sided reality. Some candidates see AI as a risk to fairness, while others see it as a welcome improvement in efficiency and consistency.



On one hand, trust is under pressure

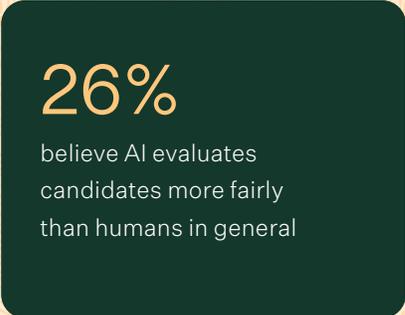
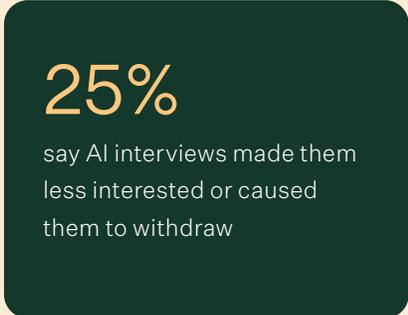


That decline is not uniform across markets: trust has dropped more sharply among candidates in the UK and Ireland (46%) than in Germany (27%).

Fairness concerns are a key driver. Nearly half of candidates believe AI either shifts bias from human prejudice to algorithmic filtering (30%) or amplifies bias by learning from historical patterns (19%).

On the other hand, candidates are not uniformly opposed to AI in hiring. AI-led interviews are already a familiar experience: 43% say they have been interviewed by an AI system – such as a chatbot, automated video analysis, or a voice-based assistant – in the past 12 months.

Among those candidates who've had AI-led interviews, reactions are split relatively evenly.



This doesn't point to one shared opinion about AI. It points to a strong sensitivity to how AI shows up in evaluation and how clearly candidates can follow what is happening during the process.



Disclosure shapes whether AI feels acceptable

Across the candidate experience, transparency acts as a dividing line. Eighty-five percent of candidates say it's important that employers disclose their use of AI tools in the hiring process, with 58% saying it's **critical** or **very important**.

Even with that preference for clarity, uncertainty remains common: 55% have suspected AI was used to evaluate their job application without them being told, and only 22% say they were able to confirm it.

That mismatch helps explain why trust can erode even when candidates are not universally anti-AI. When AI involvement feels unclear, candidates are left to make assumptions about fairness and human oversight.

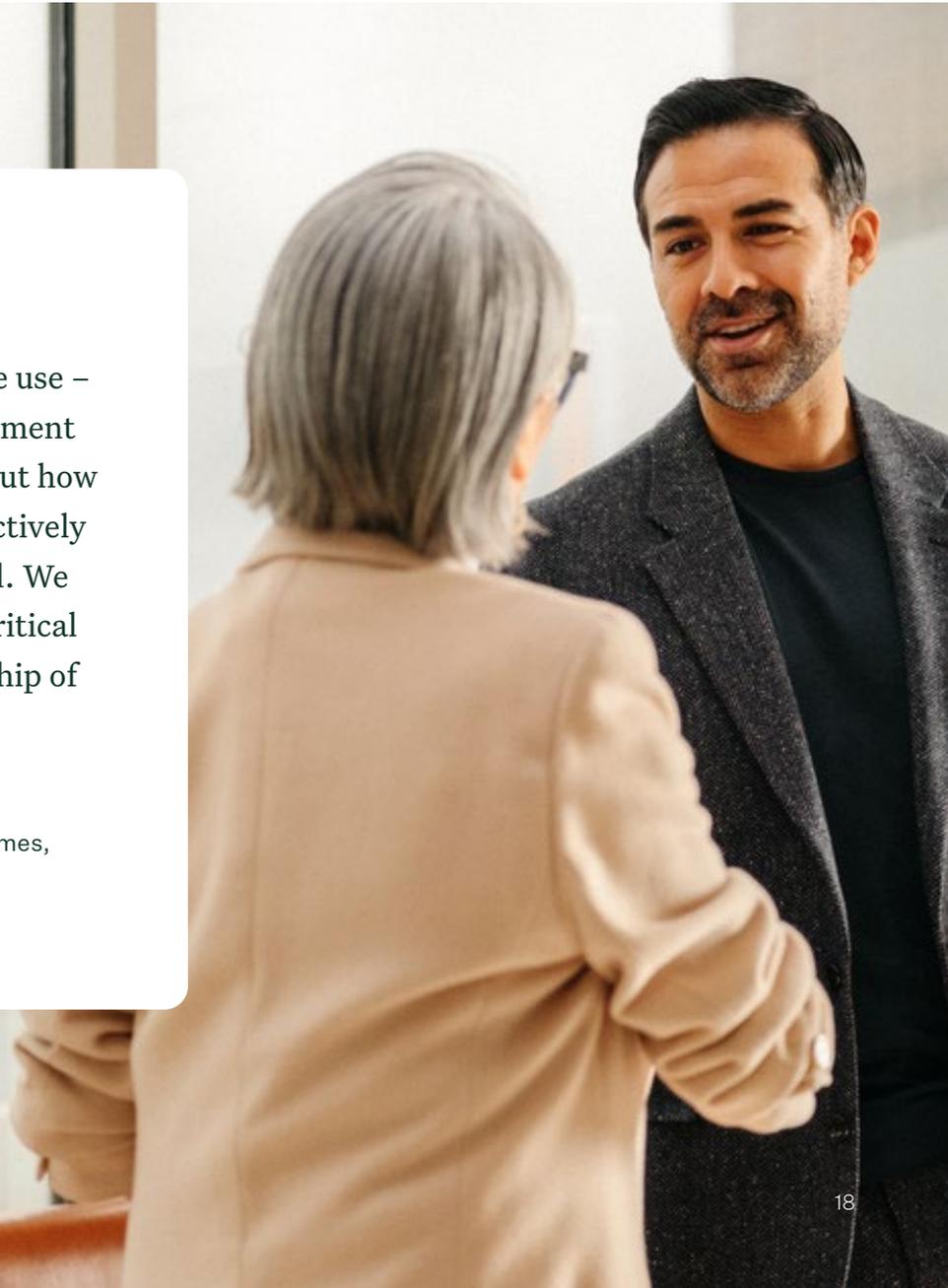
Some employers are responding by making expectations explicit on both sides of the process. Rebecca Schmidt, Global Head of Talent Acquisition Programmes, Systems & Operations at Thoughtworks, says:

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We are transparent about how we use – and do not use – AI in our recruitment process. We are equally open about how candidates may use AI, and we actively encourage AI as a supportive tool. We still expect candidates to apply critical thinking, judgement and ownership of the outcomes.

Rebecca Schmidt

Global Head of Talent Acquisition Programmes,
Systems & Operations
Thoughtworks



Candidates turn to AI to keep pace with the process

AI is now a standard part of many job searches. In fact, 78% of candidates say they use AI to tailor their CV or application materials at least some of the time

For most, the motivation is practical. Among candidates who use AI, 59% say it saves time and 41% say it improves response rates.

Others describe it as a competitive necessity: 36% use it because other candidates are doing so and 32% say they use it to level the playing field with employers.

AI tools are also showing up in how candidates present themselves in the process. Among those who have used or would consider using appearance modification tools in interviews:

35%

aim to conceal their physical appearance or identity characteristics

31%

want to match employer expectations or workplace norms

24%

cite health or fatigue-related reasons



Key takeaway

Candidates are forming opinions about employers based on how visible and understandable AI use feels during evaluation

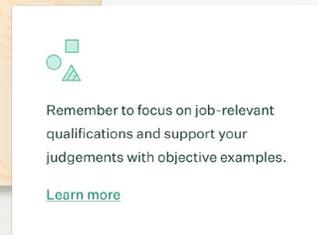
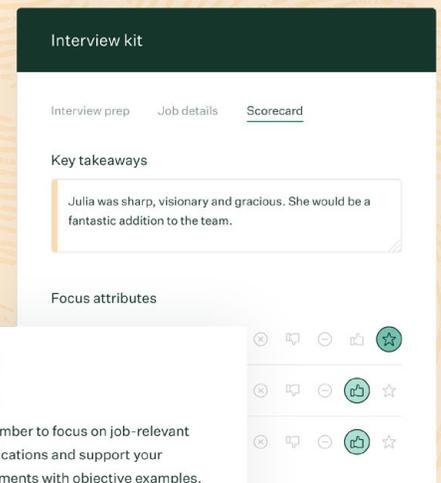


Leading talent teams should adopt a disclosure-first mindset. Instead of hiding AI behind the curtain, teams should clearly communicate where AI is used – and where it isn't. Hiring remains a human-centric decision, and transparency helps protect trust as AI becomes a standard part of the process.

Seán Delea

Senior Manager, Talent Acquisition
Greenhouse Software

Organisations that take this approach – clearly explaining where AI is used, where it isn't and how human judgement fits into the process – reduce uncertainty and set shared expectations on both sides. Greenhouse's own [guidelines for using AI in our interviewing process](#) reflect this mindset: AI should support fair, structured decision-making, not obscure it.



Conclusion

Lead with transparency, not just AI

Across the UK, Ireland and Germany, AI is now part of how candidates apply, how applications are screened and how hiring teams move decisions forward. The opportunity is obvious: AI solutions can help teams manage volume, improve consistency and move faster. What's less clear is how to adopt these tools in a way that protects quality, fairness and confidence for everyone involved.

That uncertainty shows up throughout the data. Recruiters are under pressure to process more applications and rely on screening tools they don't always fully trust. Fraud and misrepresentation are increasing alongside AI usage, raising the stakes on verification and process discipline. Hiring managers are stepping in more often to validate candidate

quality, even as many report that AI improves outcomes. Meanwhile, candidates aren't uniformly opposed to AI in hiring, but they want clarity on where it's used and how decisions are made.

Leading teams that get AI adoption right will treat it as a process design challenge, not a tool rollout. They will use AI to remove low-value work, then reinvest the time saved into structured, human-led evaluation where judgement matters most.

They will put safeguards in place to strengthen authenticity and reduce risk without turning hiring into an adversarial experience. And they will communicate clearly, disclosing AI use in plain language and setting expectations so candidates are not left guessing.

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Clear, predefined rubrics for scoring candidates ensure AI and humans evaluate against the same criteria. Documenting each step of the process shows candidates and hiring managers that decisions are reasoned, not arbitrary.

Hung Lee,
Editor, Recruiting Brainfood



AI can support better hiring, but only when it's paired with transparency, consistent structure and accountable human oversight.

Organisations that build those foundations now will be better positioned to scale responsibly, protect candidate experience and make decisions they can defend as AI becomes more common across the hiring lifecycle.

Contributing experts



Seán Delea

Senior Manager of Talent Acquisition at Greenhouse Software

Seán Delea is a Senior Manager, Talent Acquisition at Greenhouse based in Dublin, Ireland. Seán has over 10 years of experience driving strategic hiring initiatives in the SaaS industry. He has led Talent Acquisition teams across EMEA and the US and currently oversees EMEA, APAC and Executive hiring at Greenhouse.



Hung Lee

Editor, Recruiting Brainfood

Hung Lee curates Recruiting Brainfood, a weekly newsletter for the talent industry trusted by over 30,000 recruiters and HR professionals worldwide. He is an industry professional with over 20 years of experience as an agency recruiter, recruitment manager, internal head of talent, recruitment trainer, startup founder and strategic advisor for rapid-growth businesses in the London tech startup scene.



Rebecca Schmidt

Global Head of Talent Acquisition Programmes,
Systems & Operations, Thoughtworks

Rebecca Schmidt leads large-scale transformation and change initiatives across Talent Acquisition Enablement, Operations and Systems. With over 14 years of experience in talent acquisition, process optimisation and technology integration, she drives programmes that modernise how organisations attract, assess and hire talent.

Rebecca is passionate about connecting people, data and technology to create seamless, scalable talent experiences. Known for her pragmatic approach and ability to navigate complexity, she champions automation, operational excellence and global alignment across teams.

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Methodology

Greenhouse conducted a multi-market survey of 2,271 respondents, which included 1,700 jobseekers and 571 recruiters and hiring managers across the UK, Ireland and Germany.

About Greenhouse

Greenhouse is the leading hiring platform to help companies get measurably better at hiring. Our AI-powered software supports every stage of the hiring process, from sourcing to onboarding, giving businesses everything they need to hire top talent quickly, consistently and fairly – today and as their business grows.

To learn more, visit greenhouse.com