



AI in Talent Acquisition

How Talent teams are adopting,
trusting, and navigating AI

Executive Summary

AI is no longer an experiment in Talent Acquisition. Instead, it's become infrastructure.

Most talent professionals in TA are now using AI daily or weekly. Familiarity with AI is high, and productivity gains are real, with growing investment into the next year.

But beneath that momentum sits a harder truth. Even though AI is widely adopted, it's not necessarily trusted.

Talent Acquisition is under real pressure. Application volumes are up, and so are expectations for speed and personalization. At the same time, fraud and low-quality applicants are increasing, leaving many TA teams struggling.

To understand what this shift really looks like inside TA teams, we surveyed 215 North American Talent Acquisition and People professionals. The goal was simple: create a realistic benchmark for how AI is being used today, what's working, what's broken, and what leaders need to pay attention to as they plan for the future.

"AI tools sometimes sound very sure even when they're inaccurate. That makes people double-check everything, which reduces trust."

"Strong candidates get overlooked because the AI filters out profiles that do not match exact keywords."

"The recruitment process should always be conducted by a human. AI should be a backup tool, not a primary source of information.."

AI Hits the Mainstream:

AI is no longer a niche tool for early adopters. It's used *frequently* in recruiting workflows. Familiarity and confidence with AI also score high. For the vast majority of teams, AI is no longer optional but rather how recruiters keep up with overwhelming volume. AI supports sourcing, screening, scheduling, note-taking, and more across the hiring process.

Adoption is broad. Usage is consistent. And confidence is growing.

High Productivity vs. Low Trust

AI is clearly delivering value, especially when it comes to productivity and speed. Recruiters report faster workflows, reduced overhead, and stronger output. These gains are real and measurable.

At the same time, trust in AI is fragile. Teams remain deeply concerned about accuracy, fairness, security, fraud, and tool fragmentation.

AI accelerates work, but human review is still required to ensure fairness, accuracy, and compliance. This creates a clear message from the market. AI is widely accepted as a helper, but it's not trusted as a decision maker.

AI Works in Pieces, But the System Is Still Fragmented

One of the most consistent themes in this research is fragmentation. Without strong direction and governance, AI tools multiply quickly, creating overlapping features, disconnected workflows, and shadow IT. This undercuts trust, slows adoption, and weakens ROI.

Organizations with formal AI policies consistently report higher confidence, stronger adoption, and better tool discipline. In practice, AI maturity isn't just about how many tools are deployed. It's about how well those tools are rolled out, how users are trained on them, and how they're integrated with existing workflows.

Looking to the Future

Despite concerns, outlook for AI in Talent Acquisition remains optimistic. Most talent teams believe AI will have a positive impact on their function over the next 12 months. Nearly all organizations expect AI budgets to increase or at least stay flat.

Future expectations are shifting from novelty to reliability. Teams are no longer chasing more tools. They're asking for fewer tools that work better together. They want stronger matching, better fraud detection, clearer bias controls, and workflows that are unified inside the systems they already use.

Momentum is strong.

Talent Acquisition AI Overview

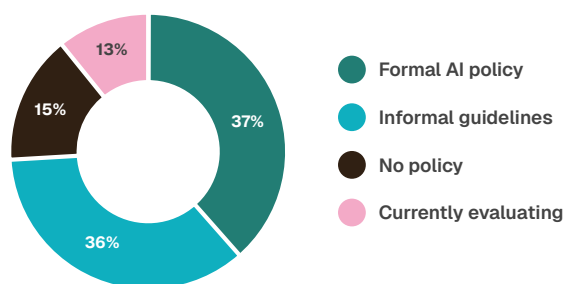
Usage, Familiarity, and Confidence with AI

AI usage in Talent Acquisition is now both frequent and normalized. Most respondents report using AI daily or weekly as part of their core recruiting workflow. This is no longer experimentation; rather, it's habitual, embedded use.

Familiarity with AI is also high. Most TA professionals rate their comfort level near the top of the scale, reflecting how quickly these tools have moved from novelty to necessity. Recruiters now rely on AI to assist with sourcing, screening, scheduling, note-taking, and drafting content across nearly every phase of hiring.

In practice, AI is no longer layered on top of recruiting work. It is part of how recruiting work happens.

What best describes your organization's AI policy status?



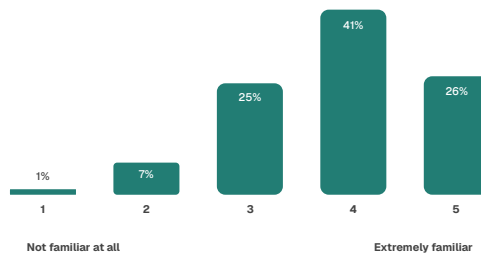
Tool Consolidation and Workflow Fragmentation

Fragmentation is slowing down ROI on AI. Many teams use multiple AI tools that don't necessarily integrate with existing tools like their ATS or HRIS, leading to manual uploads, duplicate work, and disconnected candidate data. All areas where productivity gains are erased.

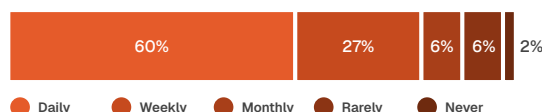
Several respondents described running parallel processes: using AI for speed, while still maintaining manual backups for confidence. This limits the efficiency gains AI is intended to deliver.

Organizations with clearer procurement discipline, tool training, and integration strategies are better positioned to consolidate tools and reduce operational friction.

How confident are you using AI responsibly & compliantly?



How often do you use AI tools in your work?



Policy as a Marker of AI Maturity

While adoption is strong, governance is uneven. Respondents are split across organizations with formal AI policies, informal guidelines, and no defined policy at all. This divide matters.

Teams with formal policies consistently report higher confidence using AI responsibly and compliantly. They also tend to show stronger alignment with legal, security, and IT stakeholders. By contrast, teams without policy guardrails are more likely to experience uncertainty around tool usage, inconsistent adoption, and internal resistance.

AI maturity isn't just about how many tools a team uses. It's about whether those tools are governed, standardized, and trusted.

"Still getting used to using them, I really only have used them on Indeed to help search and find the best matches for our job openings, but it's already become part of how we hire."

"We use Gemini for notetaking because we are in Google Cloud Enterprise, but those don't sync with Greenhouse, so we have to manually upload. It's double work"

AI use cases in Talent Acquisition

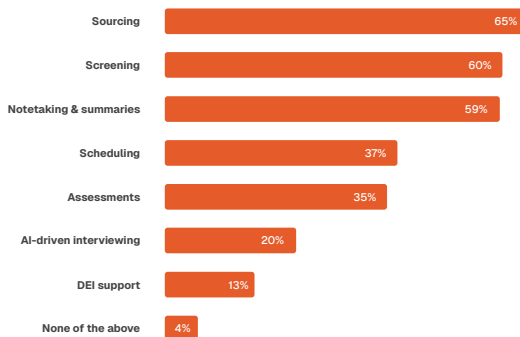
Where AI Is Being Used Today

AI adoption in Talent Acquisition is concentrated in the front half of the hiring funnel. The most common use cases today are sourcing and talent search, screening and resume review, scheduling and coordination, and note-taking and documentation.

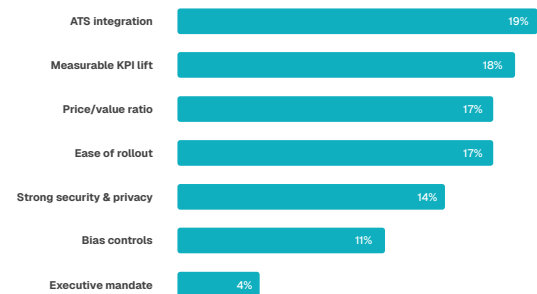
These are operational workflows where speed, scale, and consistency matter most. Recruiters use AI to surface candidates faster, reduce manual coordination, and handle repetitive work that would otherwise slow down the hiring process.

More advanced use cases, such as AI-driven interviewing and assessments, remain far less common. These are the stages where trust, bias risk, and candidate experience concerns remain highest. As a result, adoption here is still cautious.

Which parts of the recruiting process currently use AI at your organization?



Which factor most influences your willingness to adopt new AI tools?



"AI is not quite there on the sourcing side of things. It is not a huge leap from what we had a year ago."

"I would want AI that would review applicants in my ATS to help me find the most qualified candidates who have applied."

"There are so many tools out there that do not integrate or cross-pollinate with each other."

Operational AI vs. Judgment AI

A clear divide is emerging between where AI is trusted and where it is still questioned.

Operational AI tools that support sourcing assistance, scheduling, drafting, and note-taking are widely used and largely accepted. These tools increase efficiency without directly influencing final hiring outcomes.

Judgment AI, which includes screening, ranking, disqualification, and interviewing, is where confidence drops. This is where concerns about bias, fairness, hallucinations, and missed candidates become most acute.

Across the market, the message is consistent. AI is welcome as an assistant. It is still under scrutiny as an evaluator.

AI Value & Sentiment

Benefits and ROI

The business case for AI in Talent Acquisition is focused on two areas: productivity and speed.

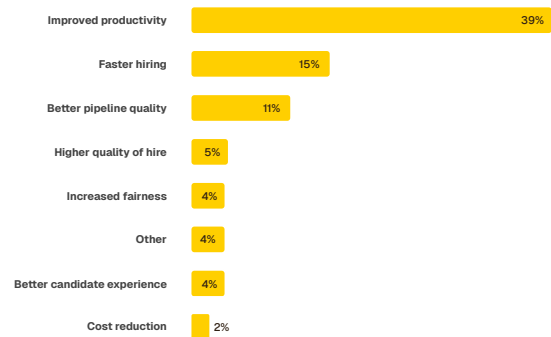
Recruiters report that AI is helping them move faster across high-volume workflows. From automating scheduling and capturing interview notes to accelerating resume review and candidate outreach, AI is reducing manual effort and freeing up time for higher-value work.

These gains are especially meaningful in an environment where application volume is rising and recruiter capacity is stretched thin. For many teams, AI has become the pressure-release valve that helps them maintain output without adding headcount.

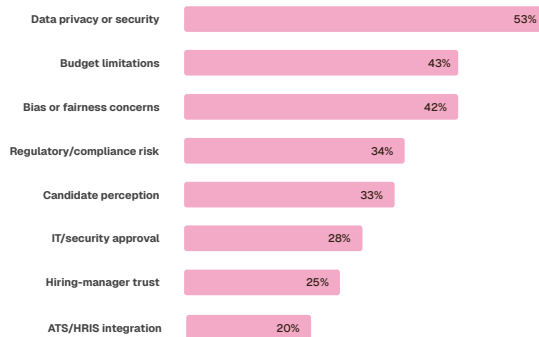
What AI isn't delivering yet is consistent improvement in quality of hire, fairness, or candidate experience at the same scale. Most of the measurable return today sits firmly on the efficiency side of the equation. This reinforces a broader pattern across the market. AI is proving its value as a productivity engine first, not as a decision authority.

"I don't have any frustration; it's been a great tool to assist in productivity and communications"

What's been the greatest benefit of AI in your recruiting work?



What are the biggest barriers to AI adoption in your org?



"I find that AI is still kind of unreliable sometimes, so I don't like to give it much autonomy."

"AI tools are a work in progress. They require many prompts before getting information accurate, and you cannot assume the information is always correct."

Frustrations and Barriers

Despite positive ROI on speed and output, there's still plenty of friction.

Many teams describe a tradeoff between speed and trust. AI can accelerate workflows, but human verification is still a huge need. Others point to the growing burden of managing multiple tools that don't communicate well with one another.

The combined effect is that while AI is delivering value, it's also introducing new complexity. For most TA teams, value is real, but so is the operational and risk overhead that comes with it.

Looking to the future

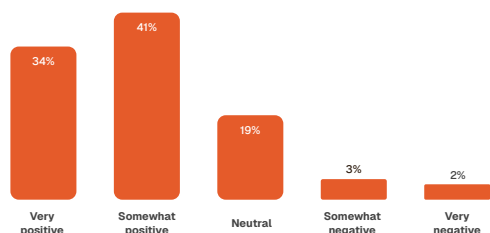
Predictions for the Next 12 Months

Despite the operational and trust challenges that remain, overall sentiment about the future of AI in Talent Acquisition is largely positive. 75% of respondents expect AI to have a positive impact on their function over the next year. And only a very small minority anticipate a negative effect.

This signals an important shift in the market. The conversation is moving away from whether AI belongs in recruiting and toward how it should be implemented more responsibly and effectively. TA teams aren't debating adoption but rather how to optimize.

AI is expected to remain an important enabler, especially as application volume climbs and recruiter bandwidth is stretched. The pressure to do more with the less is very real, and AI is viewed as the primary tool to absorb that pressure.

Over the next 12 months, I predict AI will have the following impact on my TA function:



AI Budgets Are Holding Strong

From an investment standpoint, AI spend is resilient. Most organizations expect AI budgets to either increase or remain flat over the next year. Very few anticipate meaningful cutbacks.

Not surprisingly, those who report the highest confidence in using AI responsibly are also the ones most likely to expect budget increases. This pattern shows up across the data: trust and governance directly connect with long-term investment.

"AI is going to keep shaping how we work because there's just no way to manage this level of volume manually anymore."

"I really see the positive impact that AI can have, but it still needs refinement before we can rely on it more heavily."

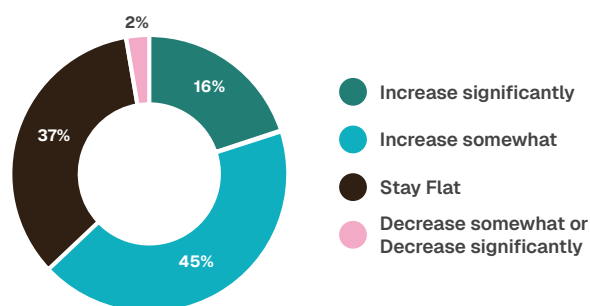
What TA Teams Are Asking For Next

As expectations mature, feature requests become more focused and practical. The strongest themes in future requests include:

- Fewer tools and more unified workflows
- Better candidate matching and signal quality
- Stronger fraud and fake candidate detection
- Fairer, more transparent screening logic

Many TA professionals describe feeling overwhelmed by both resumes and tools. The desire isn't necessarily for more AI, but for better-integrated AI that reduces noise.

How do you expect your AI budget to change next year?



"Still lacking one system that can do screening, scheduling, resume review, and bias checks without needing four different tools."

AI is now a permanent part of the Talent Acquisition stack. The next phase of maturity isn't about adding more tools but using the right tools. And doing so with stronger discipline, clearer governance, and deliberate human oversight.

Formalize AI governance early

Teams with defined AI policies show stronger confidence, familiarity, and long-term adoption of AI. Clear guidelines on data use, security, bias controls, and approved tools reduce internal friction.

Prioritize integration for maximum gains

Fragmented tools erase productivity gains. Leaders should favor tools that integrate directly with their ATS and core systems, even when that means adopting fewer tools overall. Consolidation creates clarity, trust, and cleaner workflows.

Draw a clear line between assistance and decision ownership

Operational AI should be fully embraced to reduce administrative burden. Judgment AI should remain tightly supervised with human accountability at the center of screening and selection decisions.

Invest in training and change management

Confidence grows when recruiters know how to use AI well, understand its limitations, and feel supported by leadership.

Treat fraud, bias, and candidate experience as strategic risks

These factors will increasingly define whether AI strengthens trust in hiring or erodes it. The teams that win with AI won't be the fastest adopters. They'll be the most intentional ones.

Methodology

This study is based on a survey of 215 Talent Acquisition and People professionals across North America, conducted in December 2025. Respondents represented a mix of in-house TA teams, staffing and recruiting agencies, RPOs, consultants, and business and executive leadership.

Participants were based in the United States, Canada, and Mexico.

The survey examined how AI is being adopted and evaluated across modern TA organizations. Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected. Closed-ended questions established benchmarks and directional trends, while open-text responses captured practitioner sentiment and real-world friction.

Percentages are rounded for clarity.



About Elly

Elly is your AI recruiting partner, helping talent teams reduce manual work and create a more consistent candidate experience. With products like AI Sourcer, AI Interviewer, and AI Notetaker, Elly equips recruiters to work efficiently and focus on the human side of hiring.



About HR Chief

HR Chief is a community dedicated to improving the Human Resources/People Operations space. Powered by a packed library of resources for the industry, AI tools tailored to people teams, a job board, and host of the PeoplePeople Slack group, HR Chief empowers people leaders to make a positive difference in their roles.