

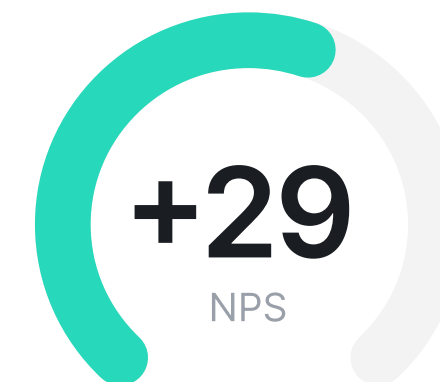


2022 Candidate Experience Benchmark Report

Candidate NPS and the drivers behind it



NPS



● Detractors ● Passives ● Promoters



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Foreword

2022 has finally come to a close. For many of us, it's been a challenging year, marked by war, inflation, cost of living increases, fears of an incoming recession, hiring freezes, and sometimes even layoffs, especially in Tech.

The labor market, already reshaped by the pandemic, is changing even faster than it previously was. Candidates' expectations are higher than they were in previous years, and ongoing talent scarcity has made candidates even pickier than before, especially in certain industries. Working remotely, or at least in a hybrid model, has become a permanent phenomenon.

With whispers of a recession on the horizon, many are skeptical about the upcoming year. We can't be sure what the future holds, but we do know one thing: talent shortage will not go away. In other words, unemployment will stay low, in some industries extremely low. We hope that, no matter what happens, this report proves to be useful to you, and Candidate Experience will remain a top priority in 2023.

This year, our Benchmark Report is diving deeper into the data than ever before. We have a larger dataset, and we've broken it down by company size, department, candidate source, and region. This allows us to more accurately map the main trends in Candidate Experience for 2022 and provide you with more granular insights into exactly what's been happening.

I hope you enjoy reading this report. It's been a labor of love from us, and we're glad to see that you care about providing an excellent Candidate Experience.



All the best,
Lars van Wieren
Founder & CEO
Starred

The Context of Candidate Experience

To properly understand Candidate Experience, we have to consider it in the context of the current labor market. The overall economic situation impacts expectations for both recruiters and candidates, and has a large impact on companies' hiring plans for the upcoming year. It's important to understand all the other trends contained in this report within the context of the labor market in 2022, and to understand where it will go in the future.

This section will primarily focus on unemployment and job vacancy rates, which give a good picture of the general tightness and competitiveness of the labor market. Let's go over some of the numbers.

WHAT IS THE UNEMPLOYMENT RATE?

The unemployment rate is the percentage of people who are without work, of the people who are able and actively looking for work. A higher rate means that there are more available workers actively seeking employment.

WHAT IS THE JOB VACANCY RATE?

The job vacancy rate is the percentage of jobs that are currently vacant and that employers are actively trying to fill out of the total number of existing jobs, both filled and available. A higher rate means that there are more open jobs that employers are trying to hire for.

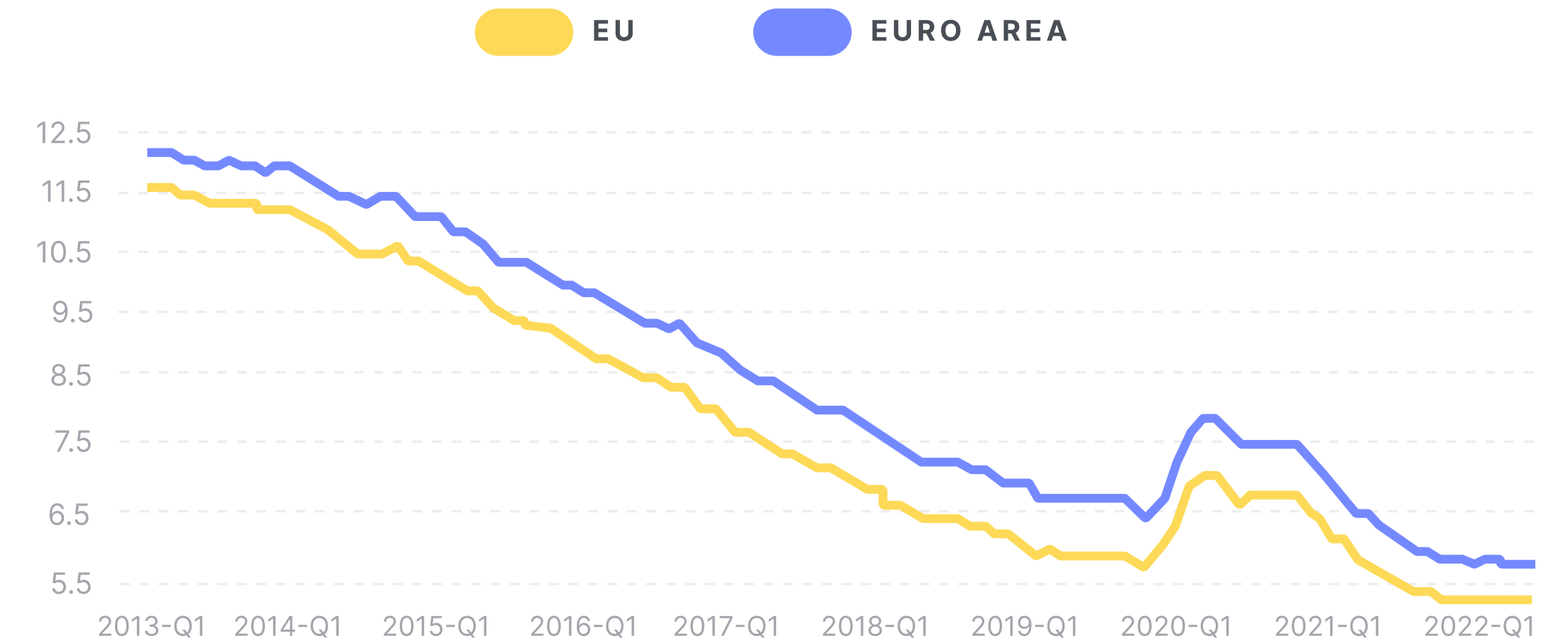


The EU Market

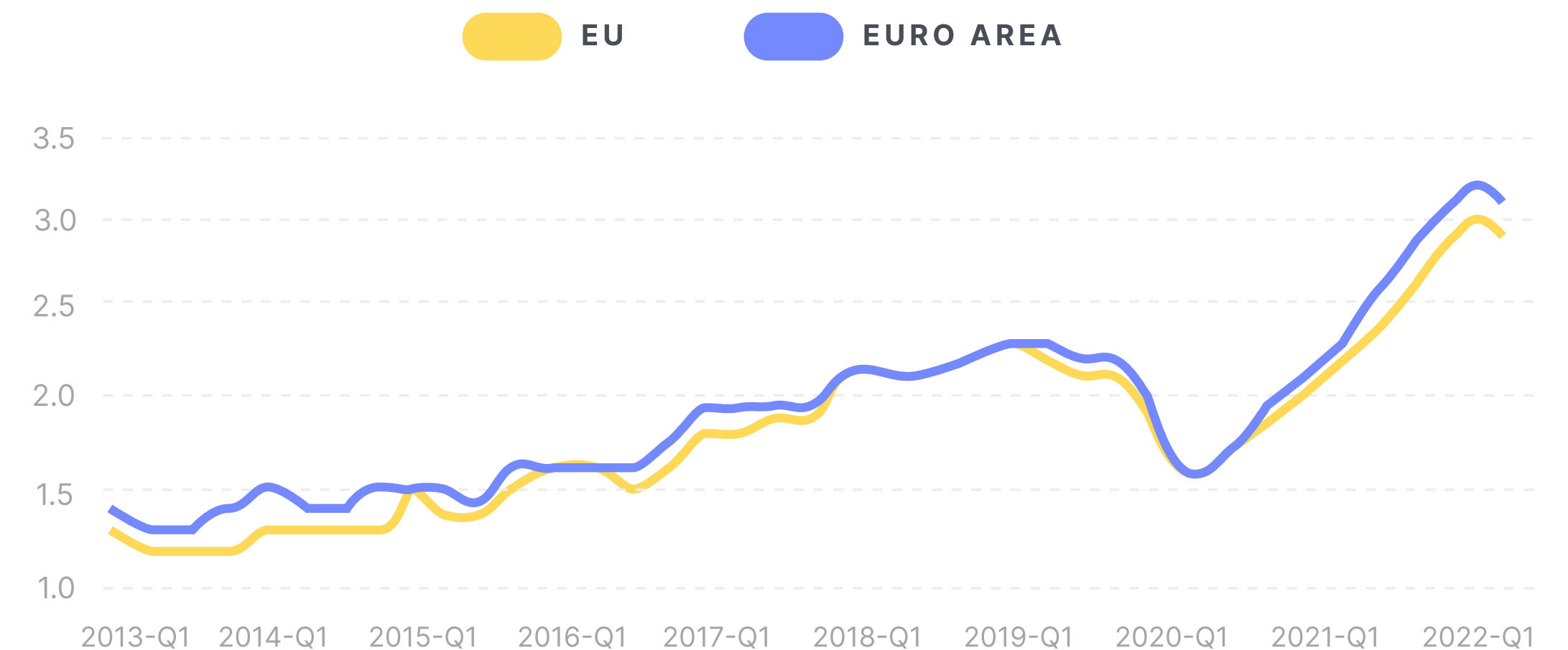
Unemployment in the EU has slightly dropped over the course of the year, starting at an aggregated average of **6.3%** and finishing the year at **6.0%**. The same trend is largely evident in most member states, apart from a few that saw slight upticks in October and November. The job vacancy rate across the EU has slightly increased over the year, currently standing at around **3%**. The member states with the highest rates are Austria (**5.0%**), the Netherlands (**4.9%**), and Belgium (**4.9%**). While it peaked in the middle of the year, and began falling later, it still stands above 2021 levels. The EU-wide job vacancy rate signifies that around **3%** of all jobs remain vacant, despite a record low unemployment rate of **6%**. The labor shortage is evident in all member states, and many companies are struggling to find the right talent to fit their needs.

The EU-wide rate signifies that around 3% of all jobs remain vacant, despite a record low unemployment rate of 6%

Unemployment rates



Quarterly job vacancy rates



The UK Market

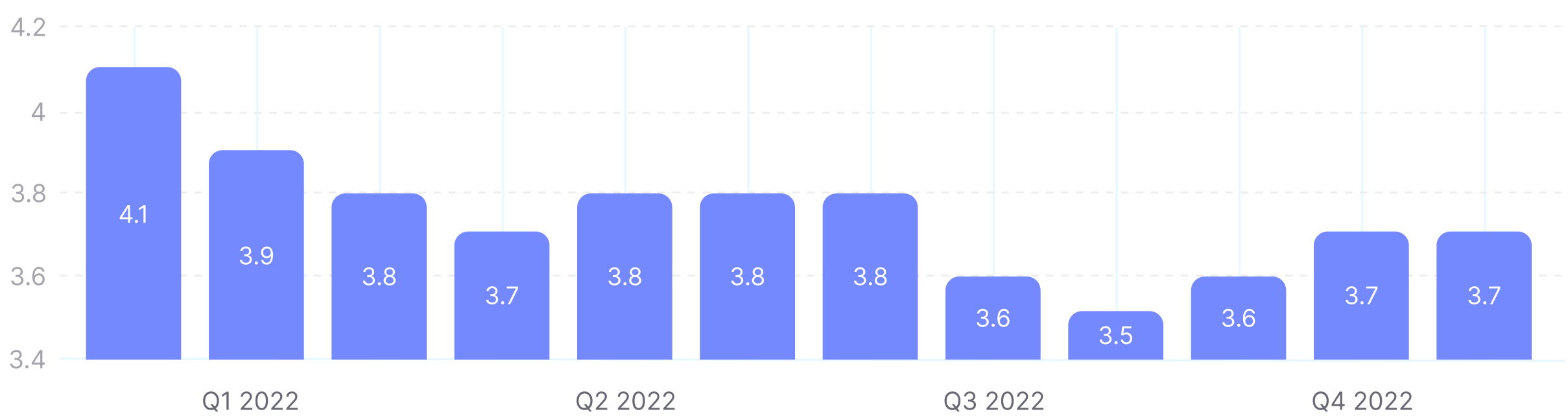
The United Kingdom also experienced a drop in the unemployment rate over the course of the year, starting 2022 at **4.1%** and ending at **3.7%**. However, unlike the EU or the US, the UK hit it's yearly low in September, when the unemployment rate sank to **3.5%**, bouncing back up to **3.7%** in Q4, 2022. The UK's job vacancy rate hit historic highs in the middle of 2022, peaking at **4.3%** in April, signifying that more vacancies than ever were unfilled despite record low unemployment. However, the vacancy rate began to drop slowly, ending the year at **3.8%**, slightly down from the peak. Still, as the graph shows, this figure is well above historical levels. This pattern is similar to the EU, and is indicative of an existing labor shortage where employers are unable to find crucial talent they need to fill these positions.

The UK's job vacancy rate hit historic highs in the middle of 2022

Number of job vacancies from June 2001 to November 2022



UK Unemployment rate

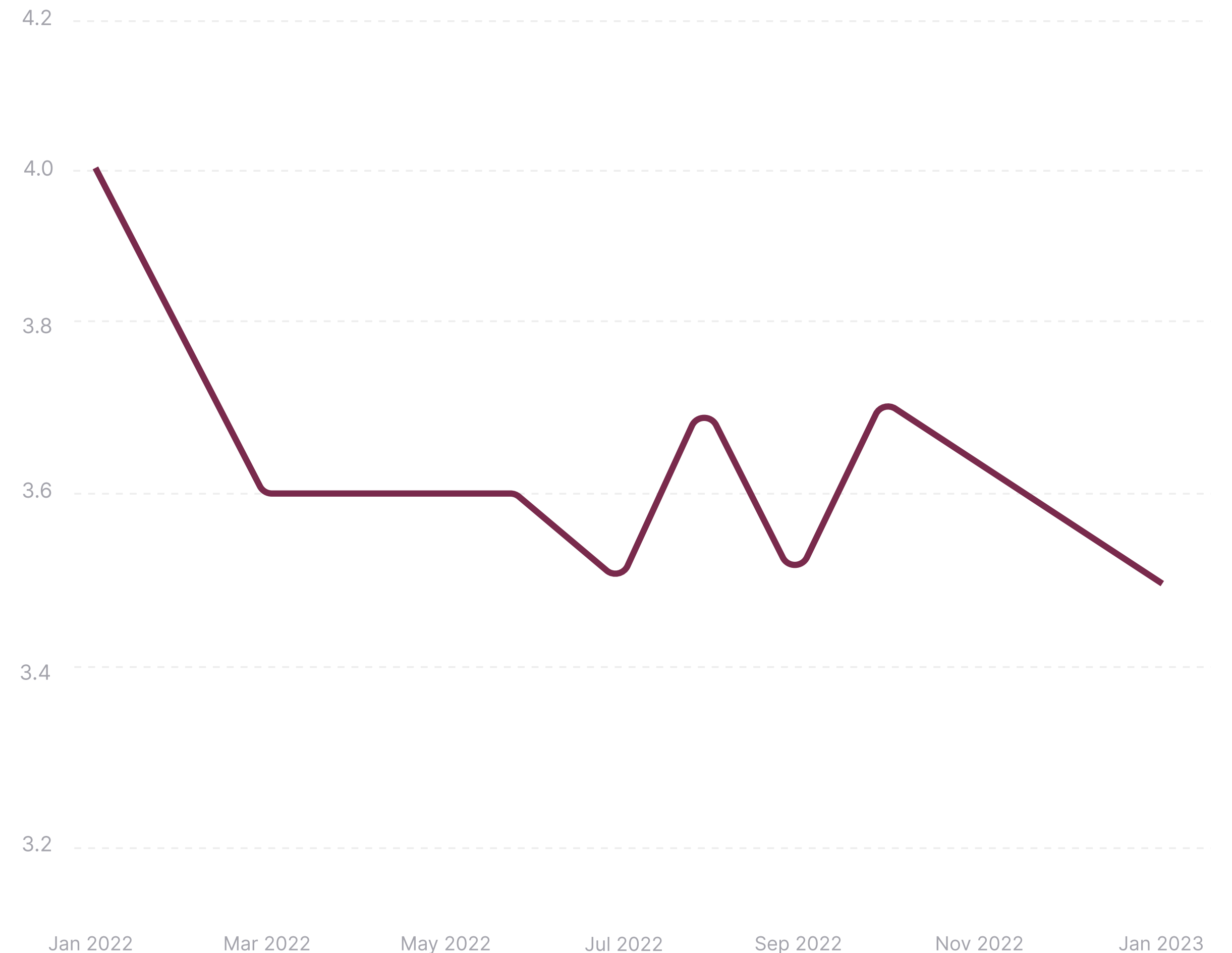


The US Market

A similar downward trend presents itself in the United States, which began the year with an unemployment rate of **4%**, which fell to **3.5%** by December. Overall, the labor market in the United States remains tighter than in Europe or the UK, with the most recent figures showing the lowest ever recorded ratio of unemployed per job opening of 0.5. The U.S. job vacancy rate is currently around 6.5%. This means that there are two vacancies open for each unemployed person. Contrary to the European labor market, the job vacancy rate has fallen over the course of the year. Still, the rate remains much higher than the European average.

In short, the EU, UK, and US labor markets remain tight, although in slightly different ways. The EU is marked by a lower rate of open jobs and higher unemployment rates than the US, but both markets are having significant difficulties with finding the right talent to fit their needs. The UK market, similar to the EU market, is seeing record low unemployment combined with historically high job vacancy rates, indicating a tight market. However, the U.S. labor market appears to be the tightest, with very high vacancy rates in certain industries and the lowest average unemployment out of all markets.

US Unemployment rate

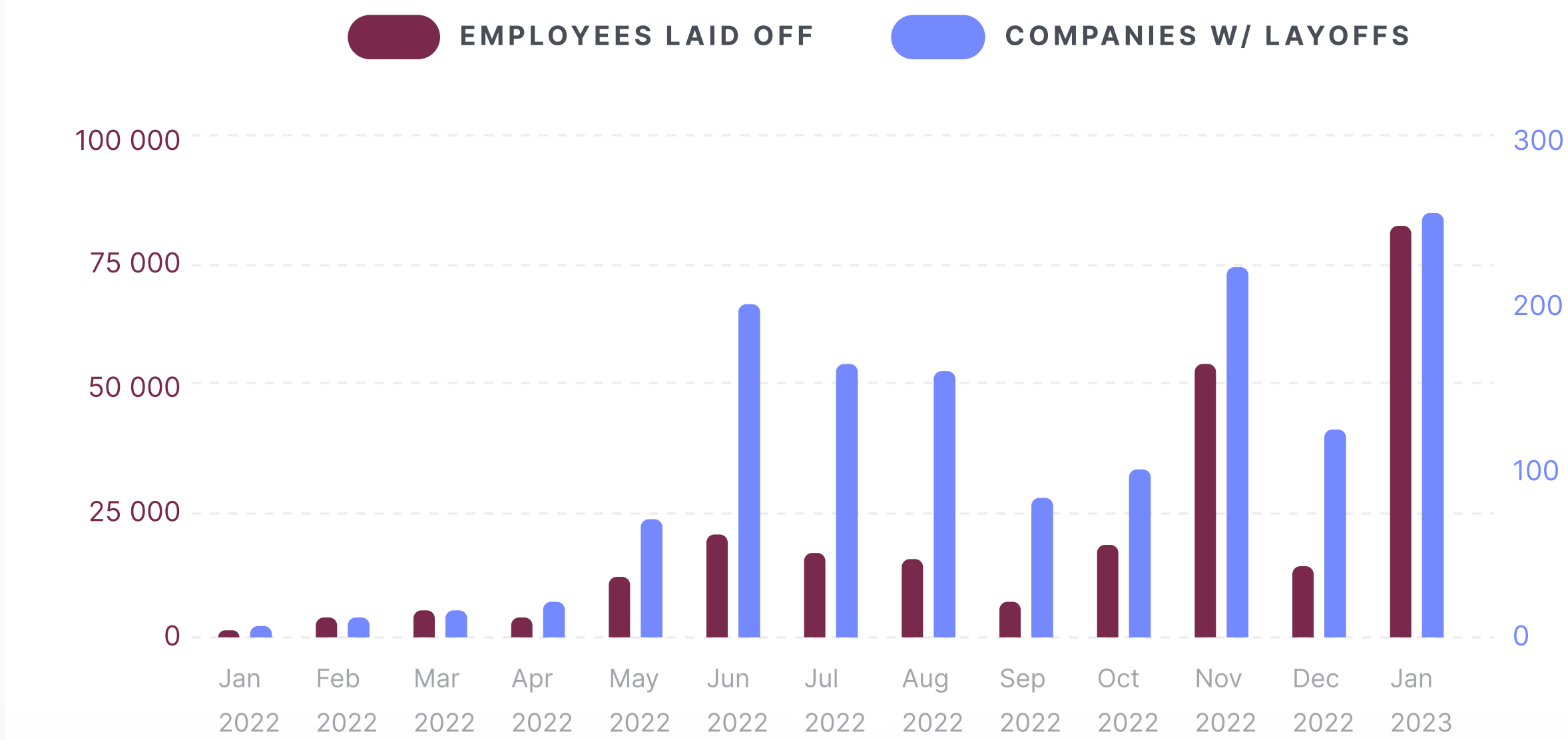


The Tech Downturn

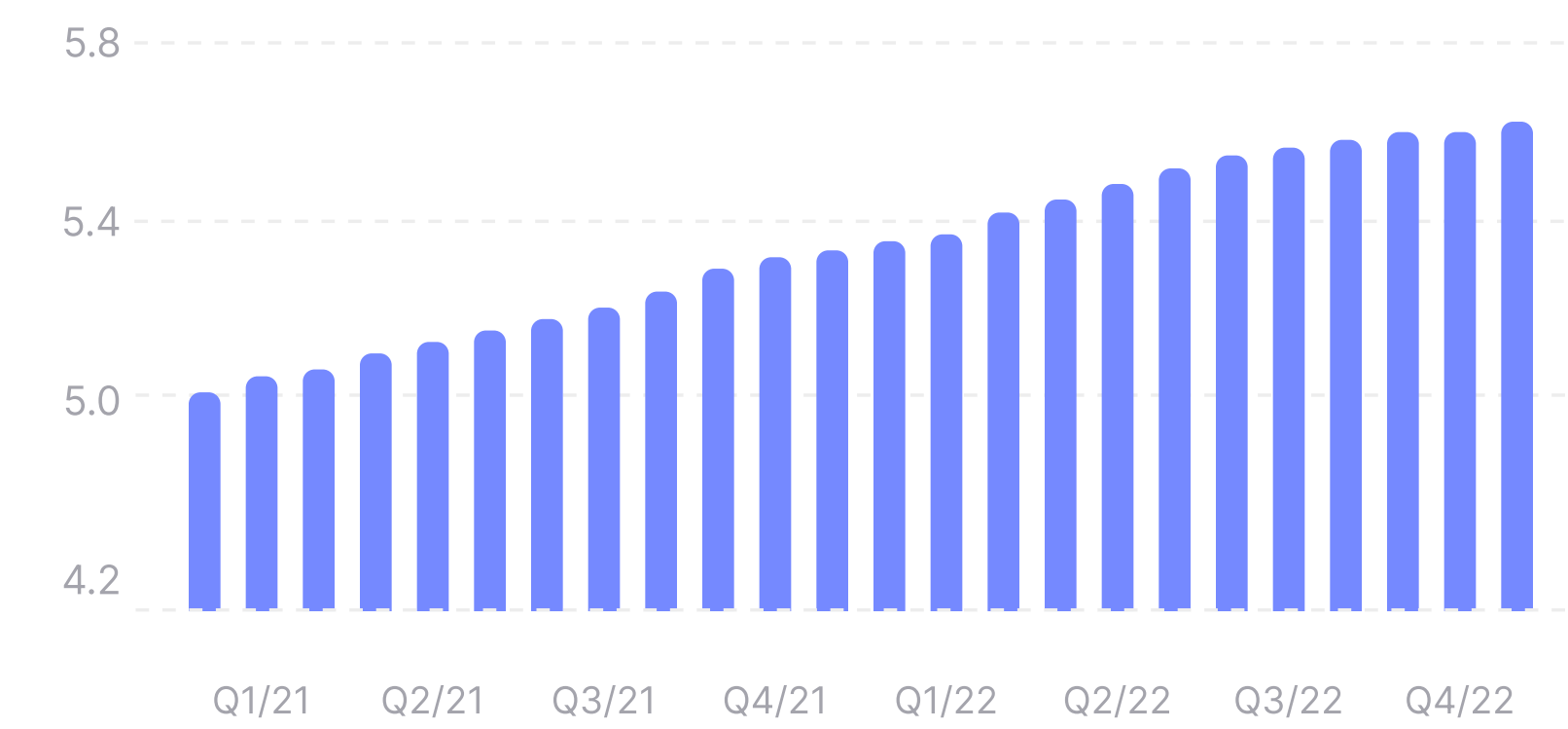
One industry that has made headlines recently is Tech, particularly because of layoffs at notable firms like Meta, Microsoft, Google, Amazon, Twitter, Salesforce, Booking.com, and many others. In total, layoffs were seen at over 1,000 tech companies, impacting more than 159,000 employees. The most impacted industries were Consumer, Retail, Transportation, Health Care, and Finance Tech, with around half of the layoffs occurring in Q3 '22, and most of the other ones being seen in Q1 and Q4. The trend continues in Q1 2023.

However, the future is still bright for the Tech labor market. The unemployment rate remains remarkably low, at around **2%**, and overall job postings have increased by 25% when compared to 2021. High demand for tech workers can also be seen in other industries like defence, banking, and healthcare, meaning that laid off workers are likely to land on their feet in other industries where shortages of skilled tech workers are still apparent.

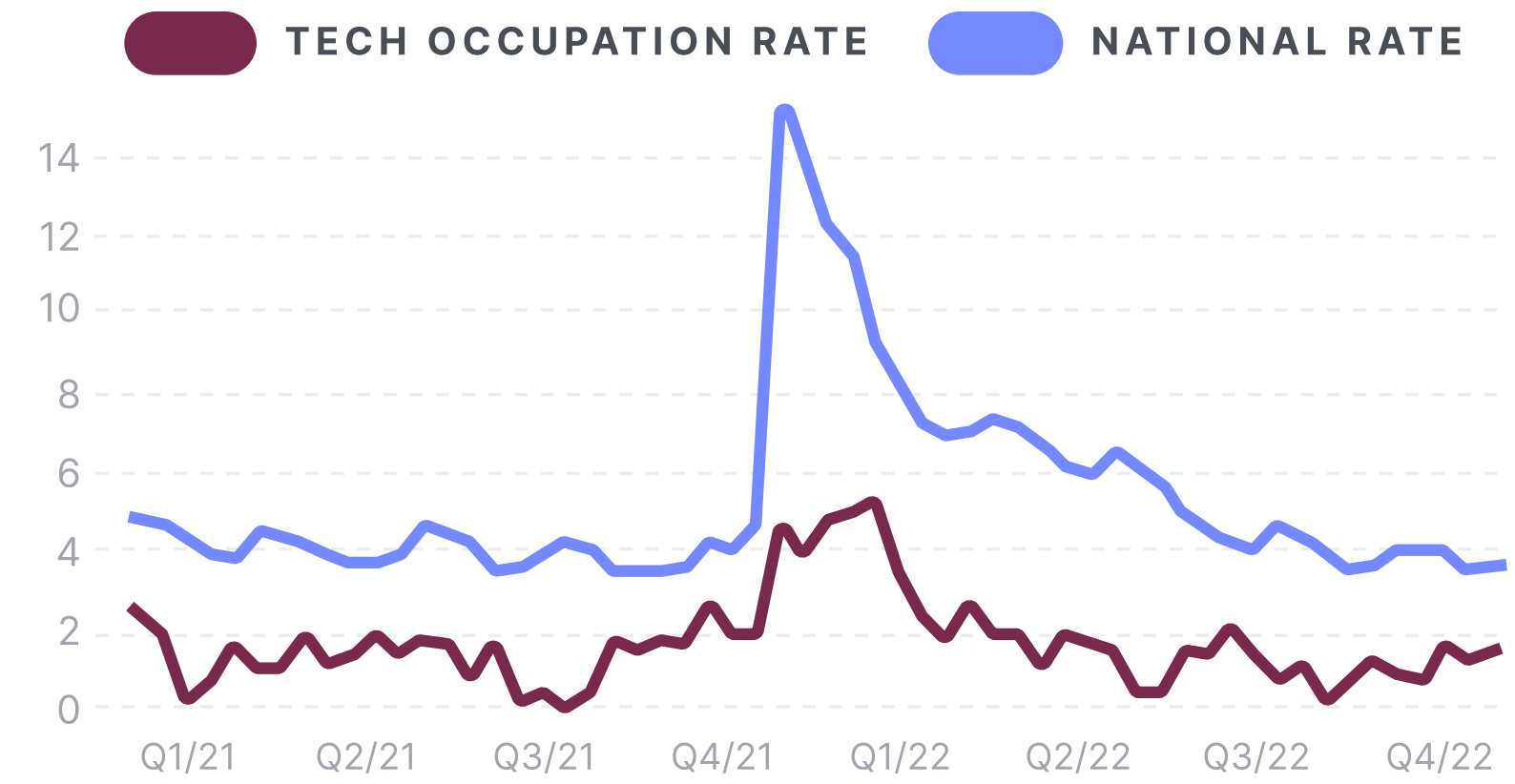
Tech layoffs in 2022-2023



Tech industry employment

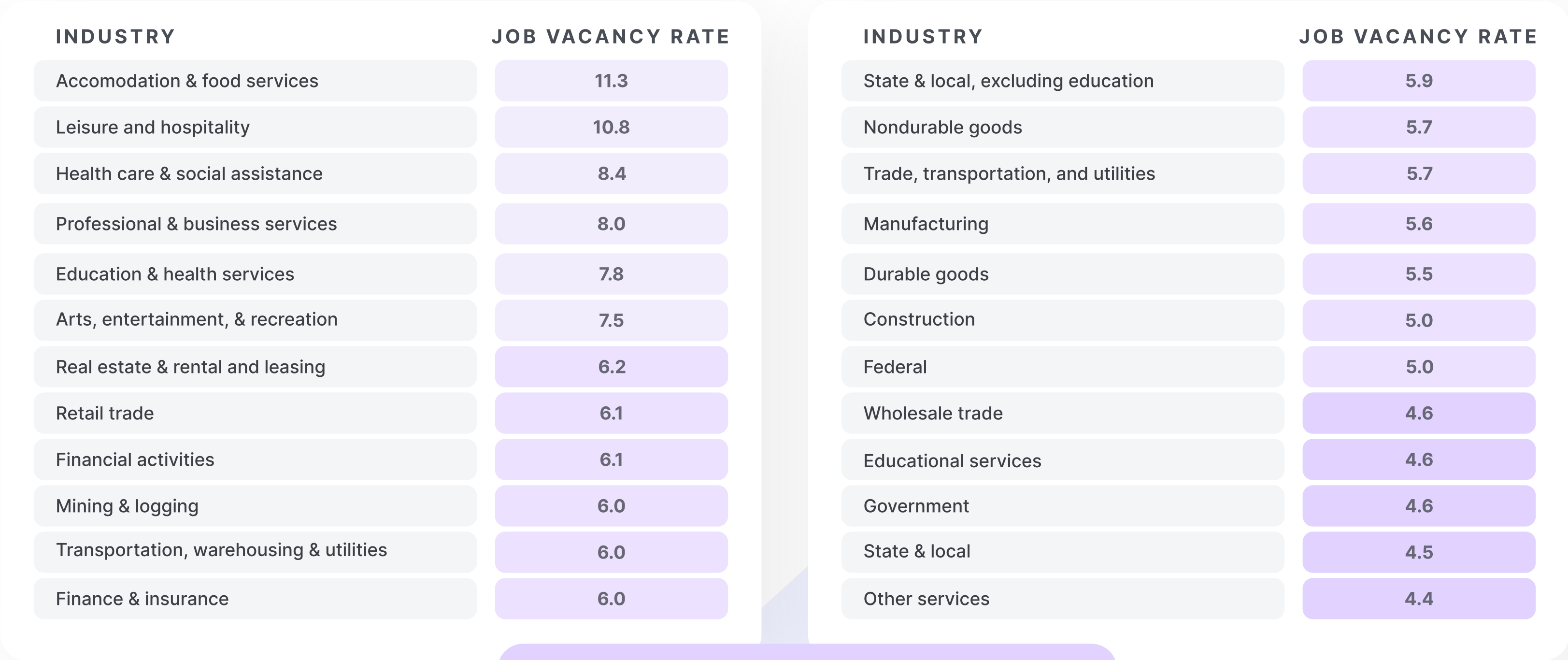


Unemployment rate trending



Industry Talent Shortages

New open roles have been outpacing new hires for the entire year, and many sectors are still facing acute talent shortages. Looking at the United States, we see that the largest job vacancy rates can be found in Accommodation & Food Services (**11.3%**), Leisure & Hospitality (**10.8%**), Health Care and Social Assistance (**8.4%**), Professional & Business Services (**8.0%**), and Education and Health Services (**7.8%**). These figures are far above the national average, and signify a large amount of open jobs that employers are seeking to fill in these industries.

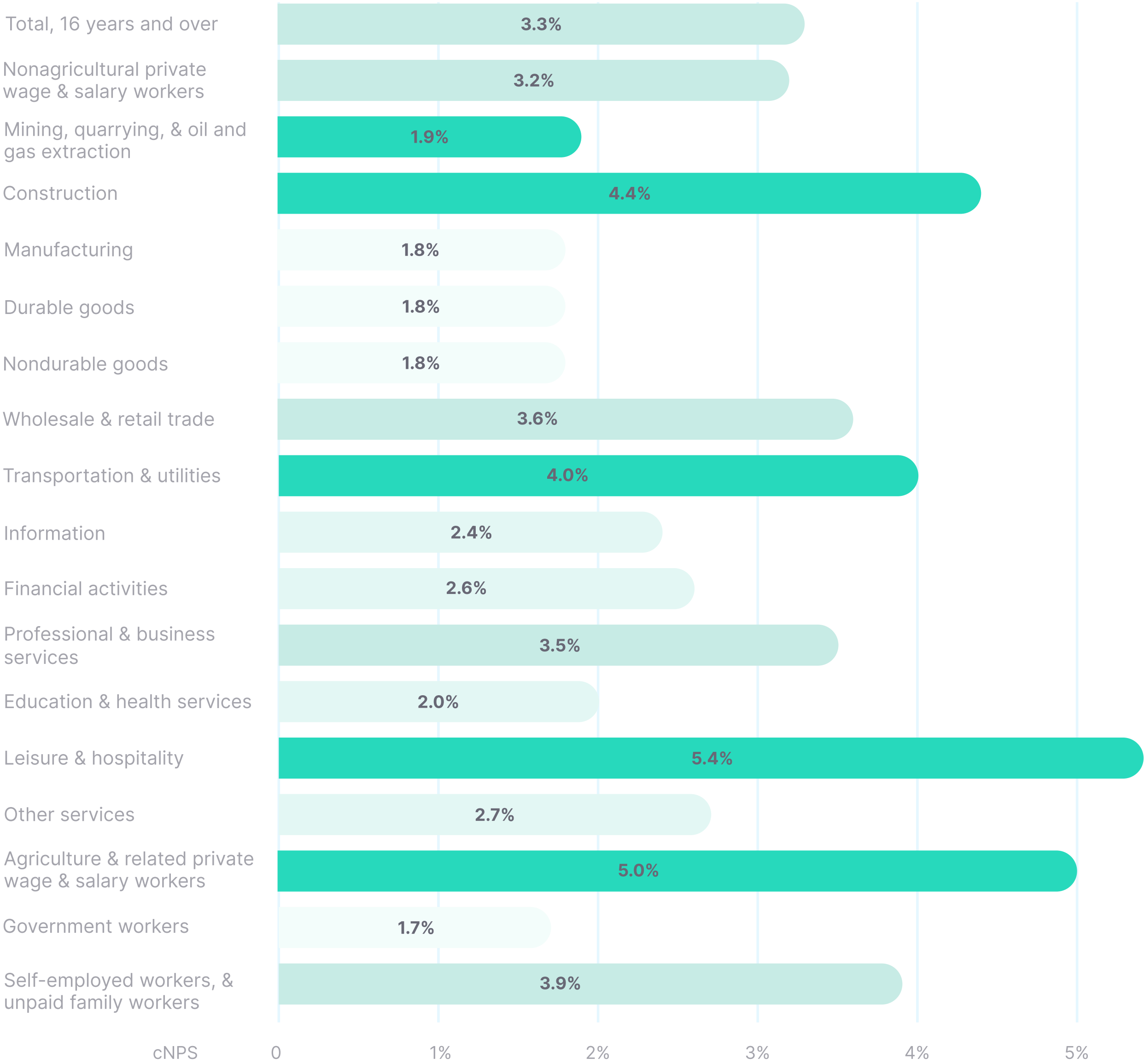


Many sectors are still facing acute talent shortages.

Industry Talent Shortages

What is even more revealing is comparing these figures to unemployment by industry, which indicates the amount of untapped labor supply that is available in each sector. We see that the lowest amount of available labor can be found in Manufacturing (**1.8%**), Mining, Quarrying, and Oil & Gas (**1.9%**), Education & Health Services (**2.0%**), Information (**2.4%**), Financial Activities (**2.6%**), and Other Services (**2.7%**). Comparing the Job Vacancy Rate to the Unemployment Rate, we see that Health Care, Education, Financial Services, and Other Services (which includes Professional & Business Services) have both particularly low unemployment rates and high job vacancy rates, indicating the tightest industries. Leisure and Hospitality has a very high unemployment rate (**5.4%**), but it also has the second-highest job vacancy rate, at **10.8%**, indicating a large number of open roles.

Unemployment rate in the United States in Dec 2022, by industry and class of worker

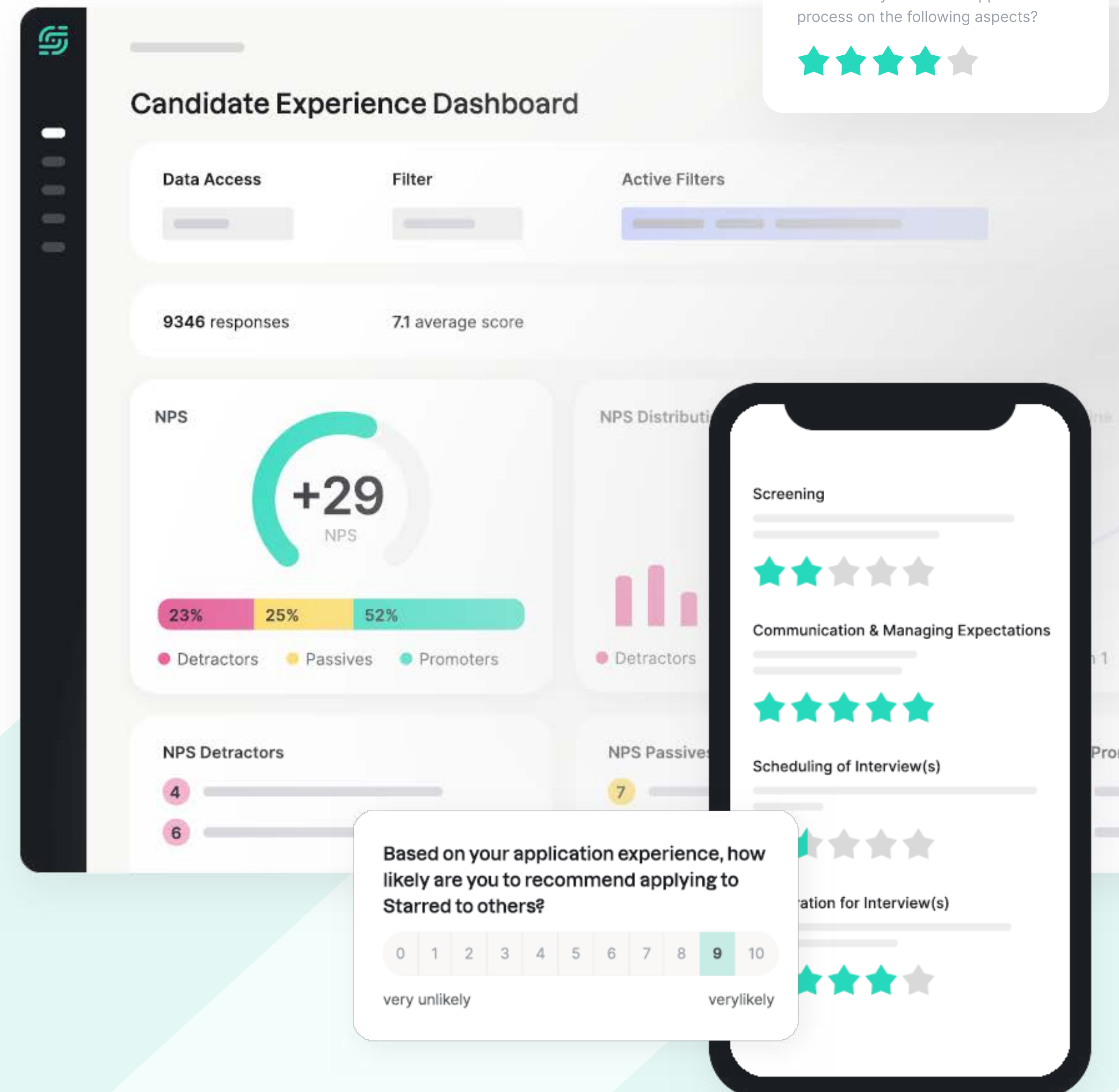


The Need for Candidate Experience Analytics

The current state of the market situation points to a new reality: the modern labor market is a candidate driven market. Job seekers choose where to apply based on employer reputation, and candidates choose to abandon the process (or 'ghost') when it's not to their liking. As we saw, a large shortage of skilled labor and rapidly increasing job openings mean that valuable candidates can often pick and choose exactly which company they would like to work in. Talent acquisition teams are well aware of this reality, and understand that offering an excellent Candidate Experience is crucial to attracting and retaining high quality candidates. Improving Candidate Experience is also beneficial to many other facets of your business, like Employer Branding, customer loyalty, and even new hire engagement

Naturally, we're reminded of Lord Kelvin's classic maxim: "If you can not measure it, you can not improve it". Indeed, the first step of improving your Candidate Experience is measuring it in a reliable and consistent manner. Your candidates will tell you where you can improve, and automated analyses of Candidate Experience data can help identify which parts of your process need a tune-up. Once you make these enhancements to your staff, processes, and/or technologies, only measurement can tell you if it has an impact on the Candidate Experience.

We'll present our main findings using a variety of statistics and metrics, but the main metric we'll use in this report is the Candidate Net Promoter Score (cNPS), which you'll need to be able to filter on all kinds of attributes to get to the right insights.



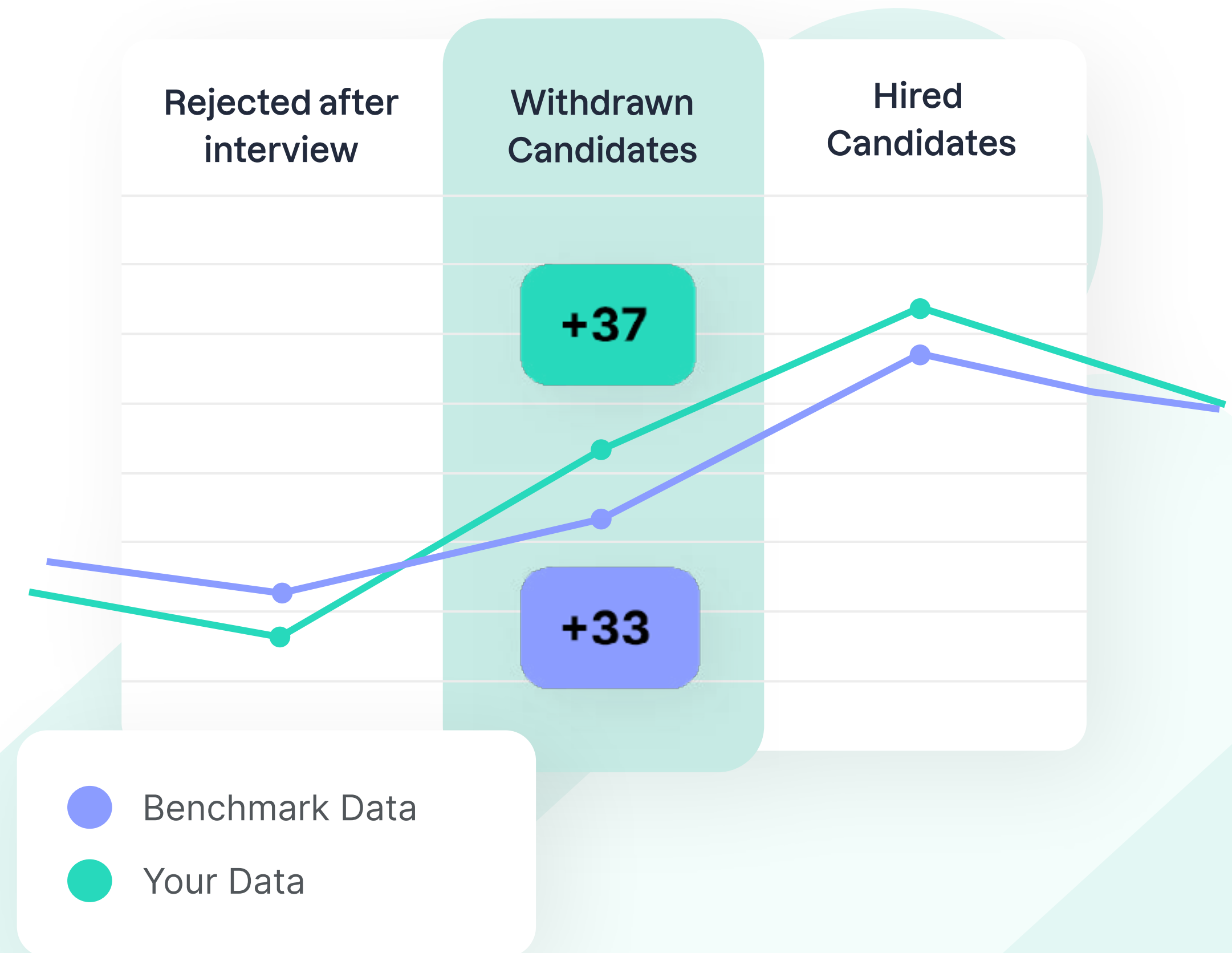
Why Care About Benchmarks?

While measuring your own Candidate Experience is a great way to understand where you stand, that information needs to be contextualized by accurate benchmarks of your peers and competitors.

Benchmarks give you a baseline and allow you to compare your own Candidate Experience. Either you realize that you're behind on the benchmark, and need to invest in Candidate Experience to catch up, or you realize that you're ahead of the benchmark, highlighting your competitive advantage. A Rejected NPS of **-20** may initially seem like a poor result on paper, but it looks quite different if you know that companies of your size are benchmarking at **-25** NPS.

Our goal with this report was to give a comprehensive overview of Candidate Experience scores across the board, as well as in-depth analyses of relevant segments. This allows you to find outliers. For example, maybe a certain department is underperforming compared to the department benchmark. What can we learn here and implement in other departments? Maybe you're scoring significantly lower than the benchmark for candidates that have had an assessment. We know that candidates are often dissatisfied about the feedback given after an assessment. Is that something you can pick up to boost your Candidate Experience?

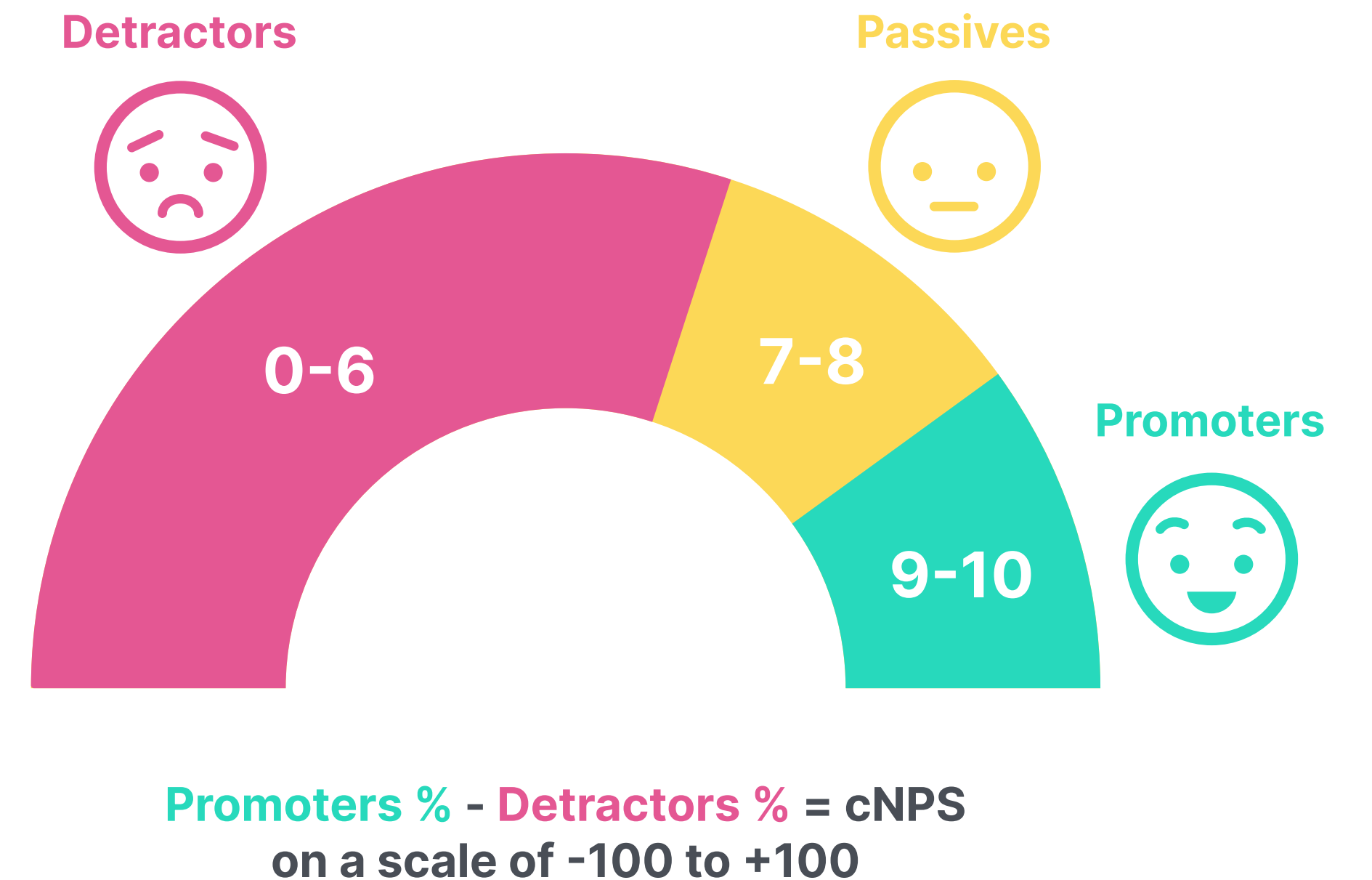
Thanks to this report, you can gain context on each of these areas and understand where you stand in relation to your peers, further informing what you can do to improve your talent acquisition process.



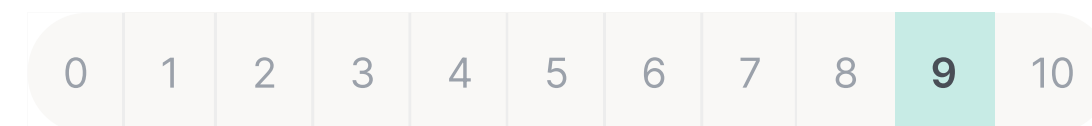
What is NPS?

Candidate Experience has a lot of relevant metrics, but NPS is the most universally relevant and important metric when it comes to understanding your candidates. It stands for Net Promoter Score. Originally used mostly in marketing, NPS is a calculation of how many respondents are promoters of your organization within their social circles. A high cNPS (Candidate NPS) means that many candidates will enthusiastically tell their friends about your company, even if they weren't hired. Conversely, a low NPS means that candidates are dissatisfied, and will gladly air their grievances to anybody who will listen, including platforms like Glassdoor. In general, NPS acts as a broad benchmark of your Candidate Experience, and the higher your NPS, the happier your candidates.

What is NPS and how it is calculated?



Based on your application experience, how likely are you to recommend applying to Starred to others?



very unlikely

very likely

Main NPS Benchmarks

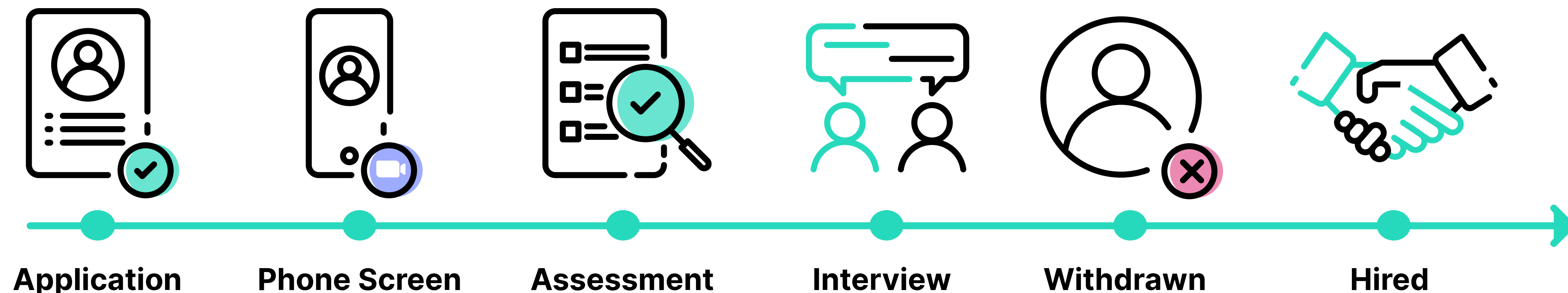
This chapter will break down our main NPS results. We've segmented our data by **stage** as well as by **touchpoint**. There are 3 main stages:

- Rejected
- Withdrawn
- Hired

As you can imagine, the experience of someone who is rejected is fundamentally different from someone who decided to withdraw from the process, or the ones who are hired. That's why we never talk about one cNPS, but instead always present cNPS with the context of a particular stage. We'll lay out these differences in depth in this chapter.

It's also important to know that we advise only asking a candidate about their experience once, at the end of the process. Waiting approximately 2-3 days after the process is complete helps to increase response rates, and means that (understandably high) emotions have run their course, minimizing bias and increasing objective results. If a candidate is asked about their experience while still in the process, the feedback is always much more positive and lacks insightful comments since candidates don't want to offend a potential employer. Asking questions at the end of the process helps to control for bias and secure insightful and honest results.

Each **stage** also has **touchpoints**, which represent different steps of the process at which candidates can be rejected, withdraw their application, or accept an offer. We collect data from a total of 6 touchpoints:



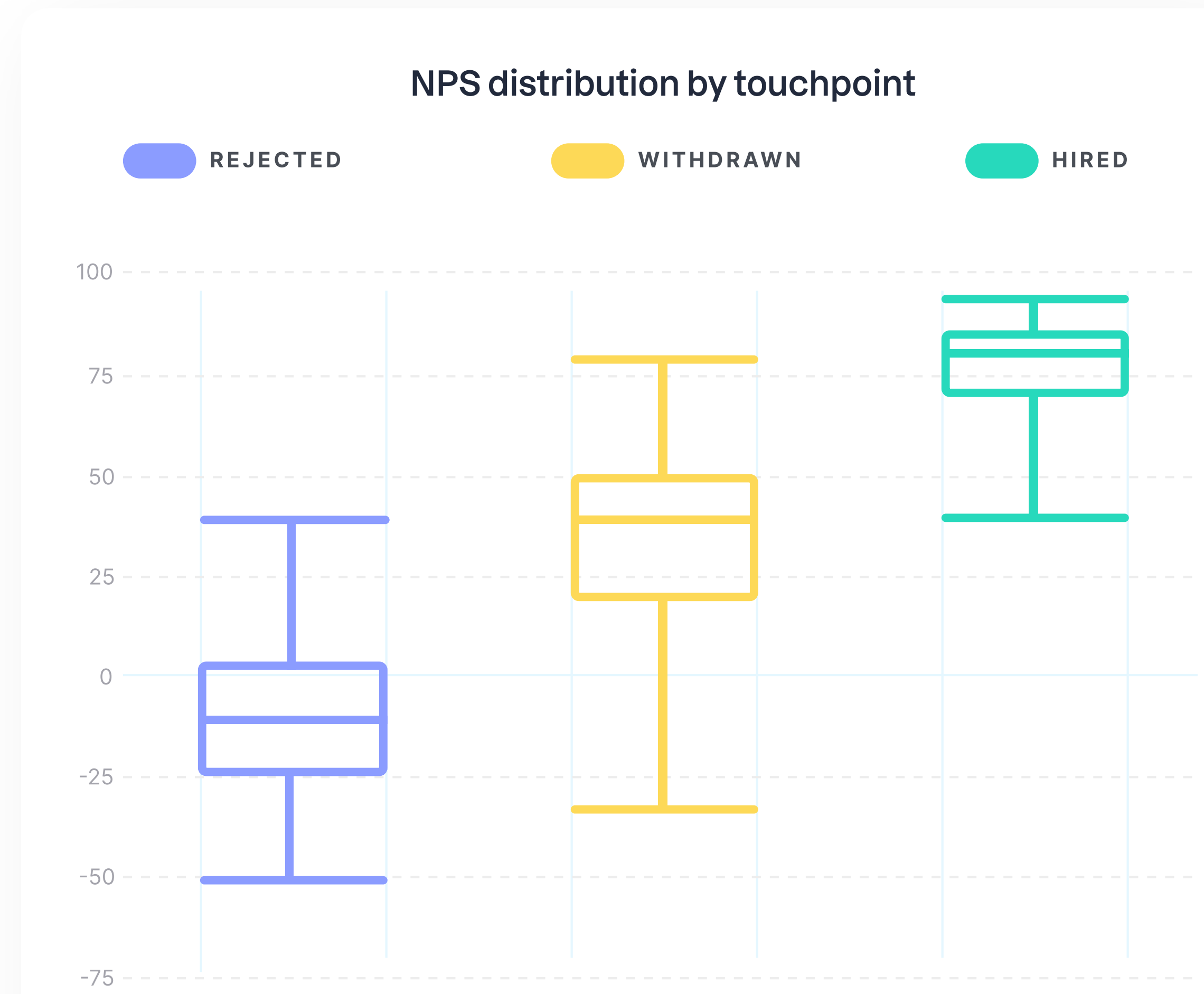
Main NPS Benchmarks

Each stage has a distinct context, and each has to be analyzed by itself, since different trends can be expected for rejected, withdrawn, and hired candidates. For example, as a general rule of thumb, we see that progress in the Candidate Journey is positively correlated with NPS. Breaking this down into touchpoints lets us identify how NPS, on average, differs per touchpoint, and informs you of what you should expect when rejecting a candidate after a CV screening when compared to a rejection after an interview.

Rather than providing an average NPS for each stage, as we have done in previous years, we've opted to analyze the data per quartile and present it using a boxplot graph. As the name suggests, there are 4 quartiles, each representing a **25%** range of our dataset. We've also analyzed each of the 6 touchpoints by quartile, enabling us to see into the ranges found in each, revealing more granular NPS benchmarks.

Our analysis gives you a good idea of how the best companies, as well as the worst, are performing on average, and where your company stands in comparison to others.

Our analysis revealed a large distribution of NPS ratings in all categories. One thing is immediately clear and no surprise: Rejected candidates rate companies the lowest, followed by Withdrawn and Hired candidates. Let's start off by zooming into the Rejected candidates.



WHAT IS A QUARTILE?

In statistics, a quartile is a segment comprising one quarter (25%) of your data. In total, there are 4 quartiles, two above the median and two below the median.

WHAT IS MEDIAN?

In statistics, the median refers to the middle number in the dataset, meaning that half of the numbers are above it, and half are below it. Since NPS is written in a range of -100 to +100, the median is more representative of the middle figure than the average.

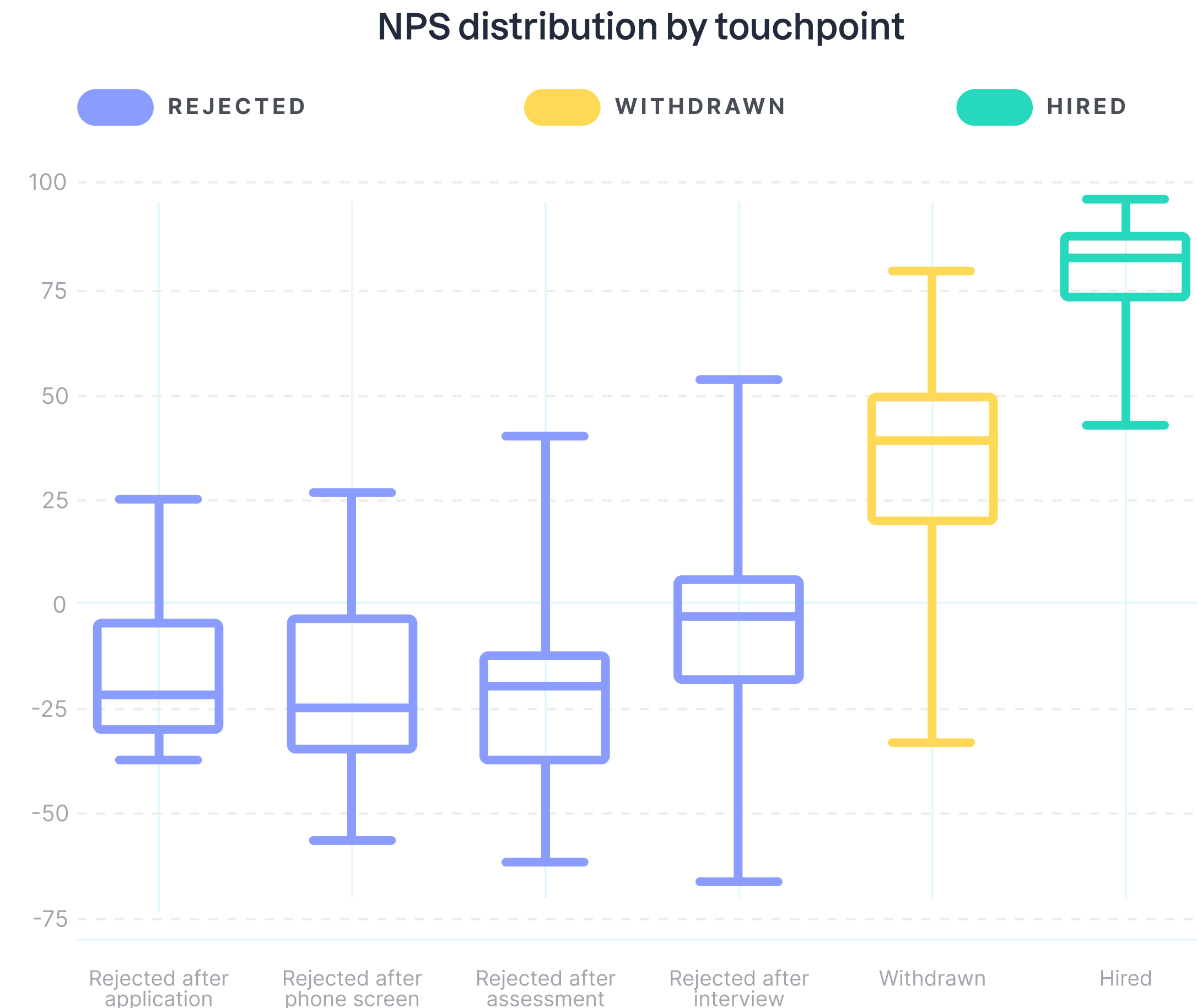
Main NPS Benchmarks

Focusing on the middle **50%** of companies, we see that the NPS scores range from **-38** to **+7** across rejected touchpoints. The boxplot graph reveals that candidates who are rejected after an application, phone screen, or assessment have relatively similar ranges of reactions.

However, there is a significant difference between candidates who were rejected before an interview and those who were rejected after an interview. Rejected after Interview appears to result in significantly more positive NPS scores by an average of **+15** points when compared to other touchpoints. The median NPS for Rejected after Interview is **-5**, compared to **-21** for Rejected after Application, **-25** for Rejected after Phone Screen, and **-20** for Rejected after Assessment. Rejected after Interview also has the widest NPS spread of all Rejected touchpoints, ranging all the way from **-70** to **+54**, with a relatively equal distribution. This signifies that interviews have a high risk/reward ratio for Candidate Experience, and can either result in a very poor Candidate Experience, or an outstanding one. Rejected after Interview also well distributed across the entire NPS spectrum, without leaning too much one way or the other.

REFLECTING ON INTERVIEWS?

This shows that many companies have not yet cracked the code of acing Candidate Experience in interviews. On our end, our new customers often see in their Starred data that there is room for improvements to their interviews. By connecting Starred data to the interviewers, our customers can give tailored coaching for each individual. In other cases our customers actively reward highly performing interviewers to incentivize best interviewing practices.



Main NPS Benchmarks

Interestingly, the top quartile of companies within the Rejected After Interview touchpoint also manage to have an entirely positive range of NPS scores, from **+7** to **+54**, which is not visible in the other Rejected touchpoints. This means that companies in the top quartile are actively creating more promoters than detractors just from their rejected candidates, resulting in a variety of net benefits. This supports the notion that interviews are particularly important to Candidate Experience, and are liable to cause both a positive as well as a negative Candidate Experience, depending on how they're done.

Moving on, we see that Withdrawn candidates' NPS ranges from **-33** to **+79** NPS, signifying a large variety of experiences. However, the vast majority of these responses are positive, meaning that withdrawn candidates usually have a positive Candidate Experience.

We can see this in the bottom quartile, which is the only one to stretch from a negative NPS to a positive NPS. This shows us that more than **75%** of all Withdrawn candidates result in a positive NPS. We'll detail exactly what Withdrawn candidates discuss in their comments in the following chapter.

Finally, Hired candidates' results are consistent with previous years. Candidates tend to be pretty happy when hired, and will generally give enthusiastic feedback when asked, ranging from **+41** to **+96**.

NPS Quartiles per touchpoint

QUARTILE	Rejected after Application	Rejected after Phone Screen	Rejected after Assessment	Rejected after Interview	Rejected Avg.	Withdrawn	Hired
Top 25%	-5 to +26	-3 to +26	-11 to +39	+7 to +54	+3 to +37	+50 to +79	+89 to + 96
Middle 25-50%	-21 to -5	-25 to -3	-20 to -11	-5 to +7	-13 to +3	+38 to +50	-83 to +89
Middle 50-75%	-33 to -21	-35 to -25	-38 to -20	-18 to -5	-24 to -13	+22 to +38	+74 to +83
Bottom 25%	-39 to -33	-59 to -35	-63 to -38	-70 to -18	-50 to -24	-33 to +22	+41 to +74

Candidate Comment Insights

While NPS scores reveal an interesting picture, they only scratch the surface of what is being actively conveyed by candidates. To better understand what candidates are saying, we've used machine learning algorithms to conduct extensive lexical analysis on our entire database of candidate comments, broken down by Stage and NPS. This allows us to understand what candidates discuss the most in their responses, what Stage they're in, and what their NPS is. We've identified 8 main topics discussed in the comments, and used them to conduct our analyses. These are visible in the graphs included in this chapter.

This analysis was conducted in three main phases. The first phase focused on frequency, identifying what candidates mentioned in their comments out of all the comments found in each Stage. This allows us to identify what topics were most frequently mentioned by Rejected, Withdrawn and Hired candidates. The second phase of analysis analyzed how often each topic was mentioned by candidates in each Stage, that is, whether candidates in certain stages proportionally mentioned topics more or less frequently than other Stages. The final phase broke down the results further according to NPS category, revealing differences between Detractors, Passives, and Promoters.

HOW DID WE IDENTIFY THE MAIN TOPICS?

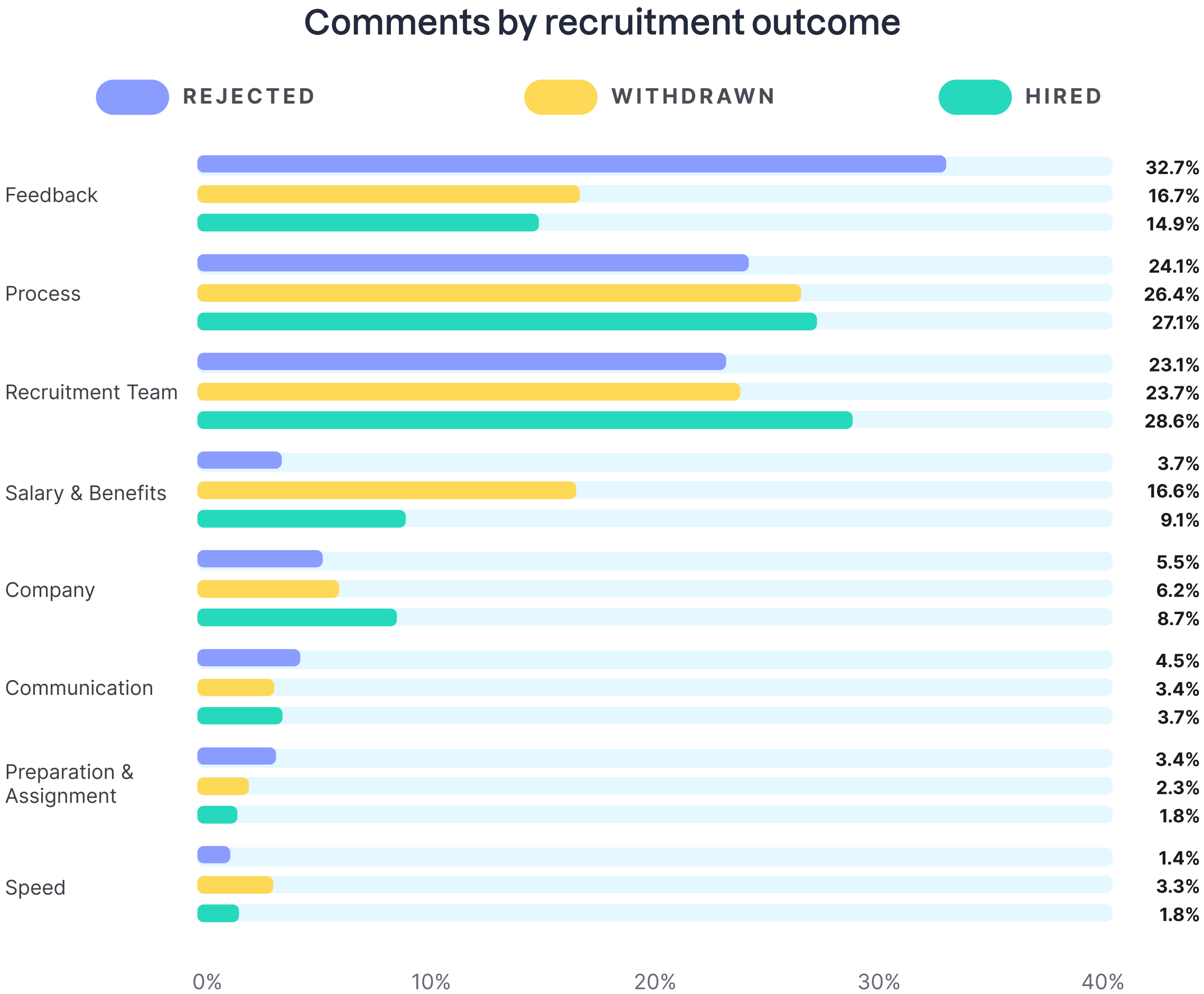
We created a rule-based algorithm that identified the most important categories mentioned in the comments using a dictionary that contained patterns and elements relevant to each topic. You can read more about it in the Appendix!

Candidate Comment Insights

FIRST PHASE: WHAT DO CANDIDATES TALK ABOUT?

The first phase revealed that Rejected candidates most often talked about “Feedback” (**32.7%**), “Process” (**24.1%**), and “Recruitment Team” (**23.1%**), in that order. Withdrawn candidates most often discussed “Process” (**26.4%**), “Recruitment Team” (**23.4%**), “Feedback” (**16.7%**), and “Salary & Benefits” (**16.6%**). Hired candidates were most vocal about “Recruitment Team” (**28.6%**), “Process” (**27.1%**) and “Feedback” (**14.9%**). These results are important because they provide us with valuable context explaining the amount of comments that mentioned each topic.

Next, each topic was analyzed to determine how often candidates in different stages discussed it in their answers. This was important to analyze because it gives us an insight on candidates’ priorities relative to other types of candidates. Note that the following percentages represent how often candidates at each Stage discussed each topic relative to candidates at other Stages.



ROUNDED PERCENTAGES

We’re reporting all the percentages in the text rounded to three significant figures for easier legibility. This means that a percentage such as 38.32% will be written as 38.3%. The specific figures can be seen on the included charts and tables.

Candidate Comment Insights

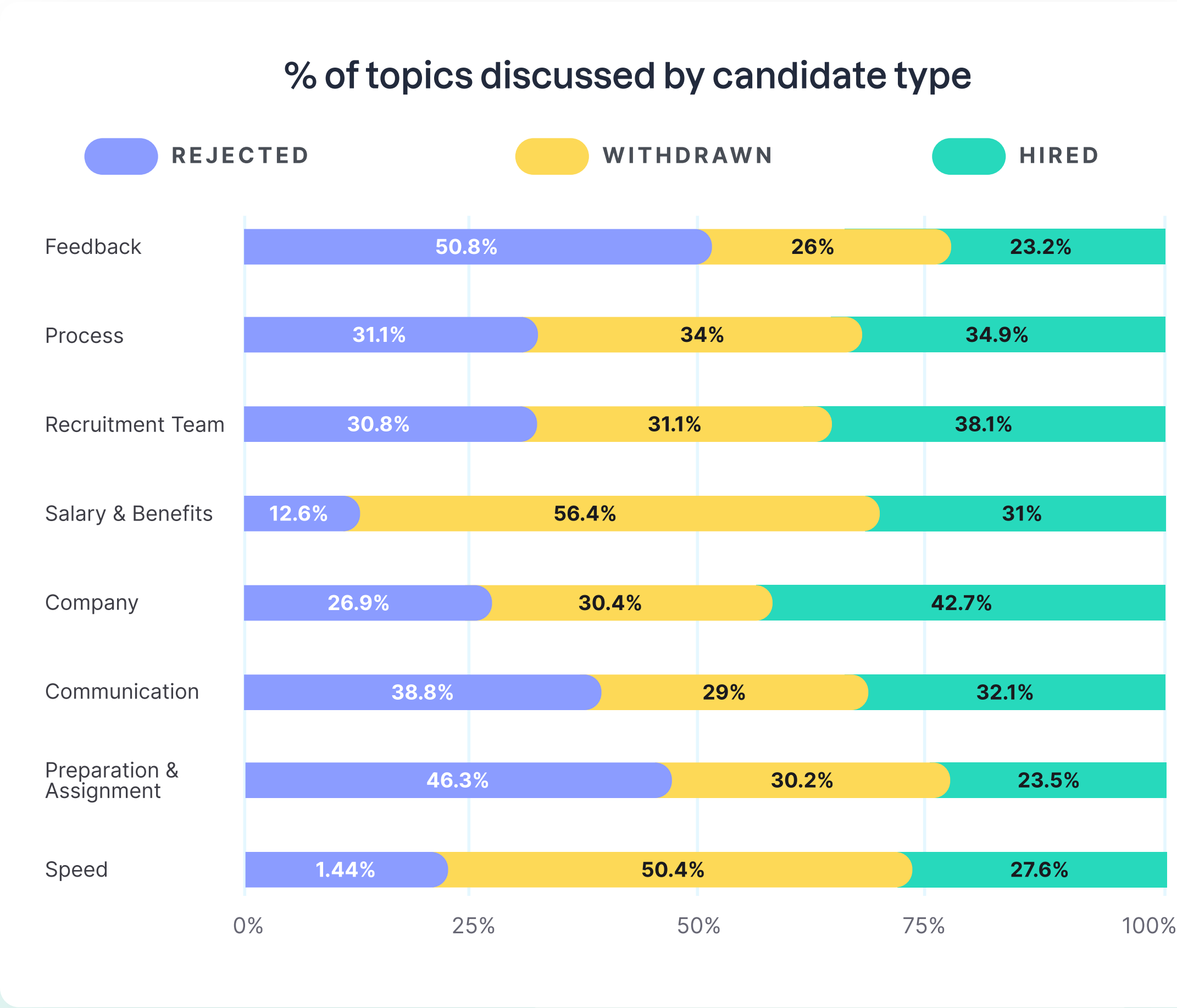
SECOND PHASE: WHO TALKS ABOUT WHAT?

We see that Rejected candidates talk about “Feedback” and “Preparation and Assignment” approximately twice as much as other types of candidates, accounting for **50.8%** and **46.3%** of total mentions of each category, respectively. Rejected candidates are the likeliest group to receive feedback, which explains why they would mention it most often. Likewise, Rejected candidates most often mentioning “Preparation and Assignment” is consistent with the previous findings. Both of these will be further discussed once we dive deeper into the differences between NPS ratings later in the chapter.

Withdrawn candidates are more concerned with “Salary & Benefits” (**56.4%** of all mentions) and “Speed” (**50.4%** of all mentions), mentioning each more than twice as often as other types of candidates. This is also understandable, since candidates withdrawing due to competing salary offers is not uncommon. Speed is likely mentioned this often either due to candidates withdrawing and mentioning the speed of the process as part of their rationale, or highlighting the fact that competitors managed to beat the other company to the punch. Having a speedy process is crucial to securing valuable talent.

Hired candidates discuss “Company / Brand” (**42.7%**), and “Recruitment Team” (**38.1%**) the most, relative to candidates in other stages. This makes sense and is expected. It would stand to reason that Hired candidates are interested in discussing their new employer, and will often praise the recruitment team that hired them.

To conclude, we can say that all types of candidates discussed the “Process” and the “Recruitment Team” often. Rejected candidates accounted for the majority of mentions of “Feedback” and “Assignment and Preparation”. Withdrawn candidates were unique in discussing “Salary & Benefits” the most, as well as the “Speed” of the process. Hired candidates mentioned , “Company / Brand”, and the “Recruitment Team” the most.



Candidate Comment Insights

THIRD PHASE: WHAT DO DIFFERENT TYPES OF CANDIDATES DISCUSS?

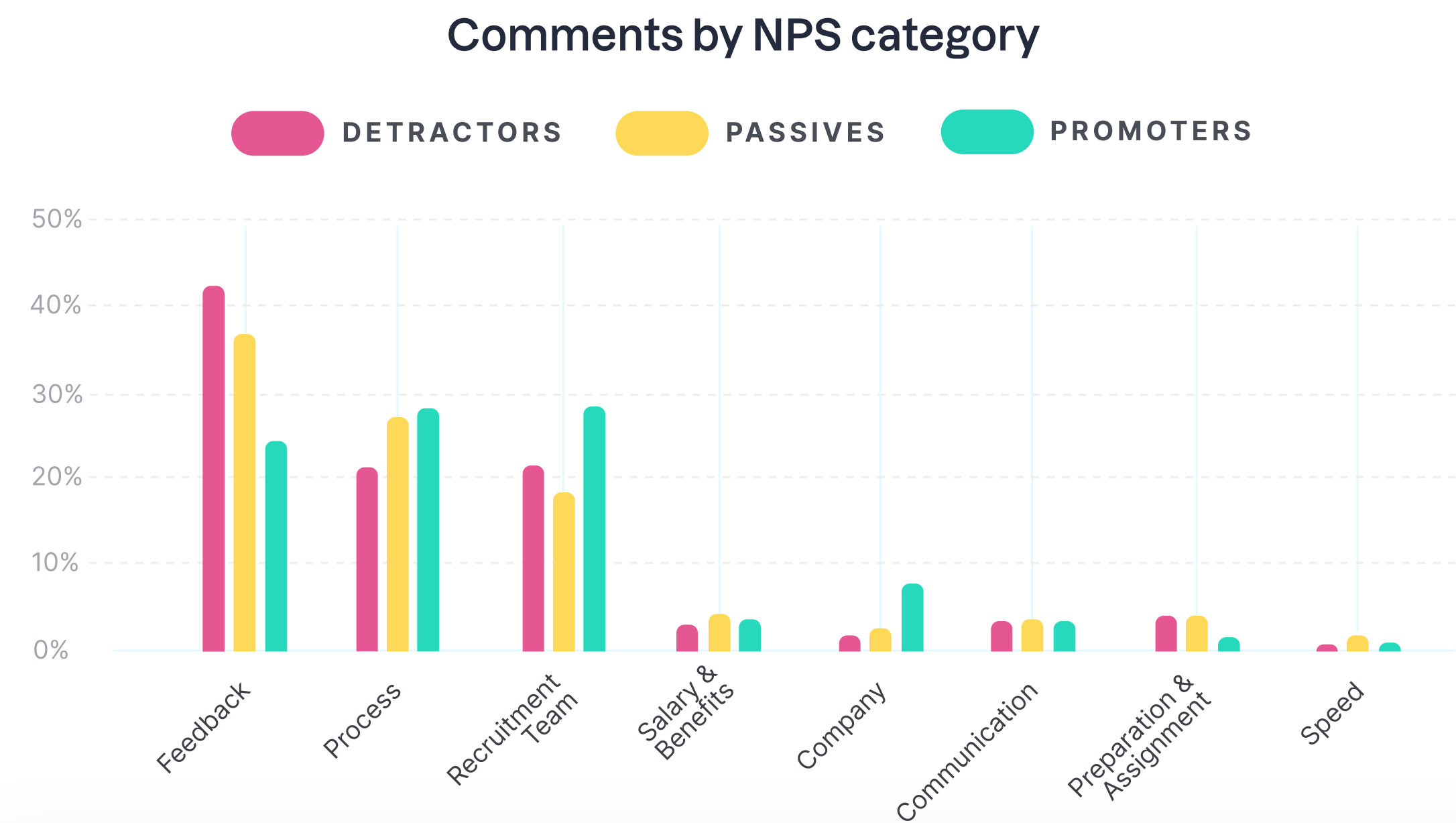
In this stage of analyses, we'll dive into the data further by splitting it out by whether a candidate was a Promoter, Passive, or Detractor. In that case we see the following:

REJECTED CANDIDATES

Starting with Rejected candidates, we can see that most of the mentions of Feedback originate with Detractors (**39.5%**), followed by Passives (**34.54%**) and Promoters (**24.3%**). This finding suggests that providing better feedback may help convert a Detractor to a Passive/Promoter, and that many Rejected candidates prioritize Feedback.

This is also confirmed by our earlier findings in our [Candidate Values Report](#), which identified Feedback as one of the most impactful categories on NPS for Rejected candidates.

Rejected Promoters have more to say about the Process and the Recruitment Team than other types of candidates, signaling that these are particularly important to creating a positive Candidate Experience.



Topics mentioned by rejected candidates per NPS category			
TOPIC	DETRACTORS	PASSIVES	PROMOTERS
Feedback	39.51%	34.54%	24.38%
Process	21.19%	25%	27.25%
Recruitment Team	22.49%	20.37%	27.08%
Salary & Benefits	3.15%	4.13%	4.13%
Company	1.98%	3%	7.23%
Communication	4.53%	4.92%	4.87%
Preparation & Assignment	4.33%	4.89%	2.22%
Speed	1.24%	1.85%	1.35%

Candidate Comment Insights

WITHDRAWN CANDIDATES

Moving on to Withdrawn candidates, we see that they do not mention Feedback nearly as much as Rejected candidates. However, when looking specifically at Withdrawn Detractors, we see that Feedback is also an important topic, with **23.9%** mentioning it, compared to **15.4%** of Passives and **13.2%** of Promoters. The importance of feedback therefore cannot be underestimated for both Rejected and Withdrawn candidates, and is seen to have an impact on both of their Candidate Experiences.

Withdrawn Passives also mention Process (**30.9%**) at increased rates, compared to Promoters (**26.10%**) and Detractors (**24.2%**). Interestingly, Withdrawn Passives mention Salary & Benefits (**21.2%**) at higher rates than both Detractors (**15.7%**) and Promoters (**15.5%**), showing that candidates who withdraw due to Salary & Benefits are not necessarily letting it reflect on their Candidate Experience.

This finding also corroborates out previous analyses in our [Candidate Values Report](#), which showed us that Salary & Benefits did not correlate strongly with Candidate Experience or NPS scores.

Topics mentioned by withdrawn candidates per NPS category

TOPIC	DETRACTORS	PASSIVES	PROMOTERS
Feedback	23.85%	15.39%	13.18%
Process	24.23%	30.87%	26.11%
Recruitment Team	22.83%	17.46%	25.66%
Salary & Benefits	15.65%	21.24%	15.50%
Company	2.59%	5.31%	8.52%
Communication	4.64%	2.70%	2.87%
Preparation & Assignment	2.81%	2.16%	1.96%
Speed	2.32%	3.24%	3.87%

Candidate Comment Insights

HIRED CANDIDATES

Finally, as we mentioned previously, the data shows us that Hired candidates most frequently mention “Company / Brand” (**9.3%**), “Process” (**26.8%**) and “Recruitment Team” (**30.3%**). But, interestingly, if we look at Promoters in other stages as well, we see that these things are mentioned nearly as frequently. Rejected Promoters also prominently discuss “Company / Brand” (**7.2%**), “Process” (**27.3%**), and “Recruitment Team” (**27.1%**), as do Withdrawn Promoters, who mention them in **8.3%**, **26.1%** and **25.7%** of cases, respectively. These results show us that these three topics are consistent across all satisfied candidates

“Feedback” is also prominently mentioned across all Promoters, but Rejected Promoters (**24.4%**) stand out in mentioning it almost twice as often as Withdrawn (**13.2%**) or Hired (**14.8%**) Promoters. This corroborates our earlier observation that Feedback is especially important to Rejected candidates, and underscores its importance to a positive Candidate Experience.

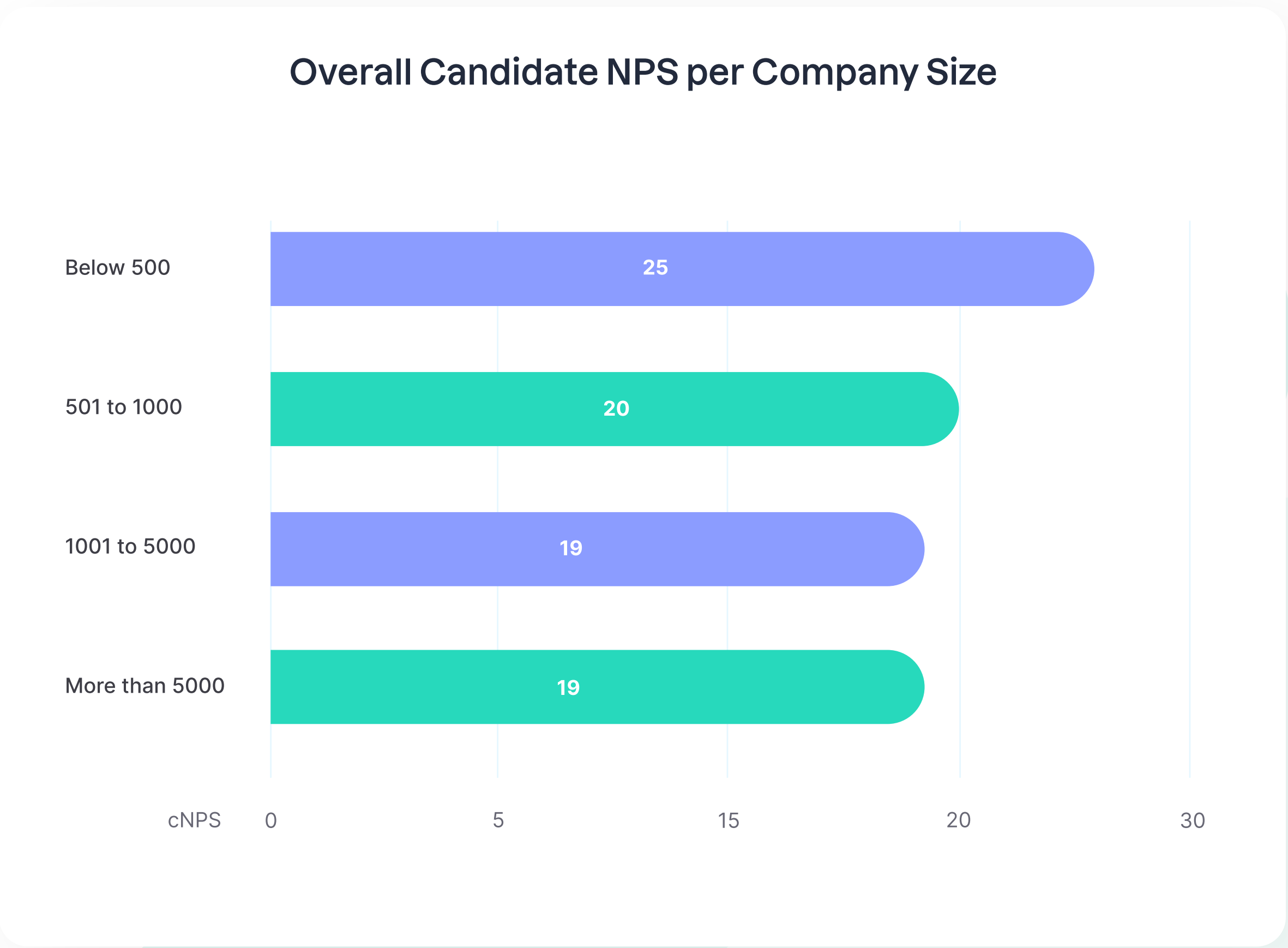
Topics mentioned by Promoters per Stage

TOPIC	REJECTED	WITHDRAWN	HIRED
Feedback	24.38%	13.18%	14.80%
Process	27.25%	26.11%	26.75%
Recruitment Team	27.08%	25.66%	30.29%
Salary & Benefits	4.13%	15.50%	8.16%
Company	7.23%	8.52%	9.25%
Communication	4.87%	2.87%	3.53%
Preparation & Assignment	2.22%	1.96%	1.52%
Speed	1.35%	3.87%	1.58%

Data by Company Size

Another area we investigated had to do with the size of the company. Our dataset includes companies of very many different sizes, and we wanted to see if there is any connection between the size of a company and candidates' responses. We identified four main categories of company size, based on the amount of full-time employees that each company has. These are Small, (<500 employees), Medium, (501-1000 employees), Large, (1001-5000 employees), and Enterprise (>5000 employees).

We see that, on average, smaller companies appear to offer a better Candidate Experience. Small companies have an overall NPS of **+25**, Medium companies are at **+20**, and Large and Enterprise companies are tied at **+19**.



Data by Company Size

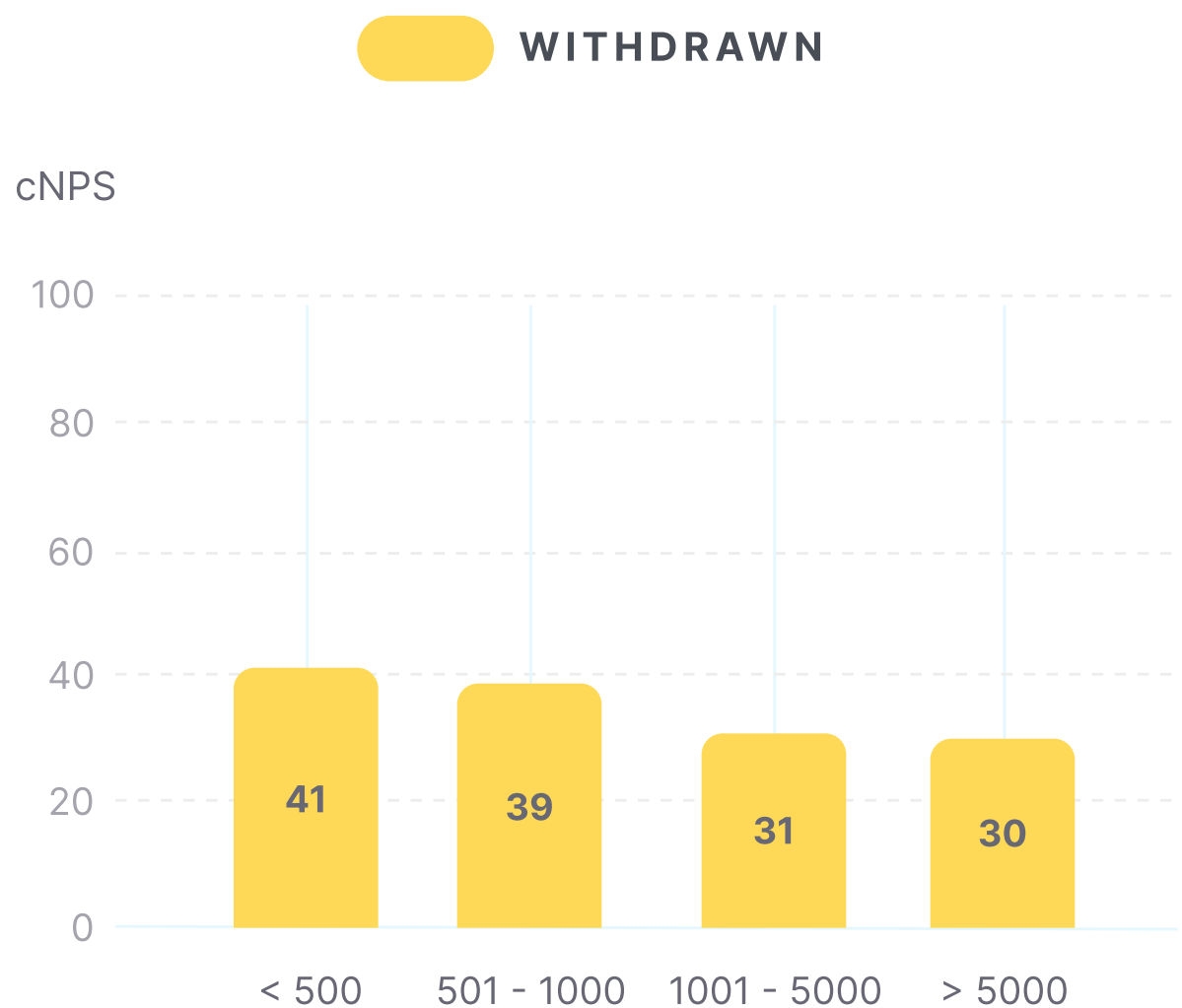
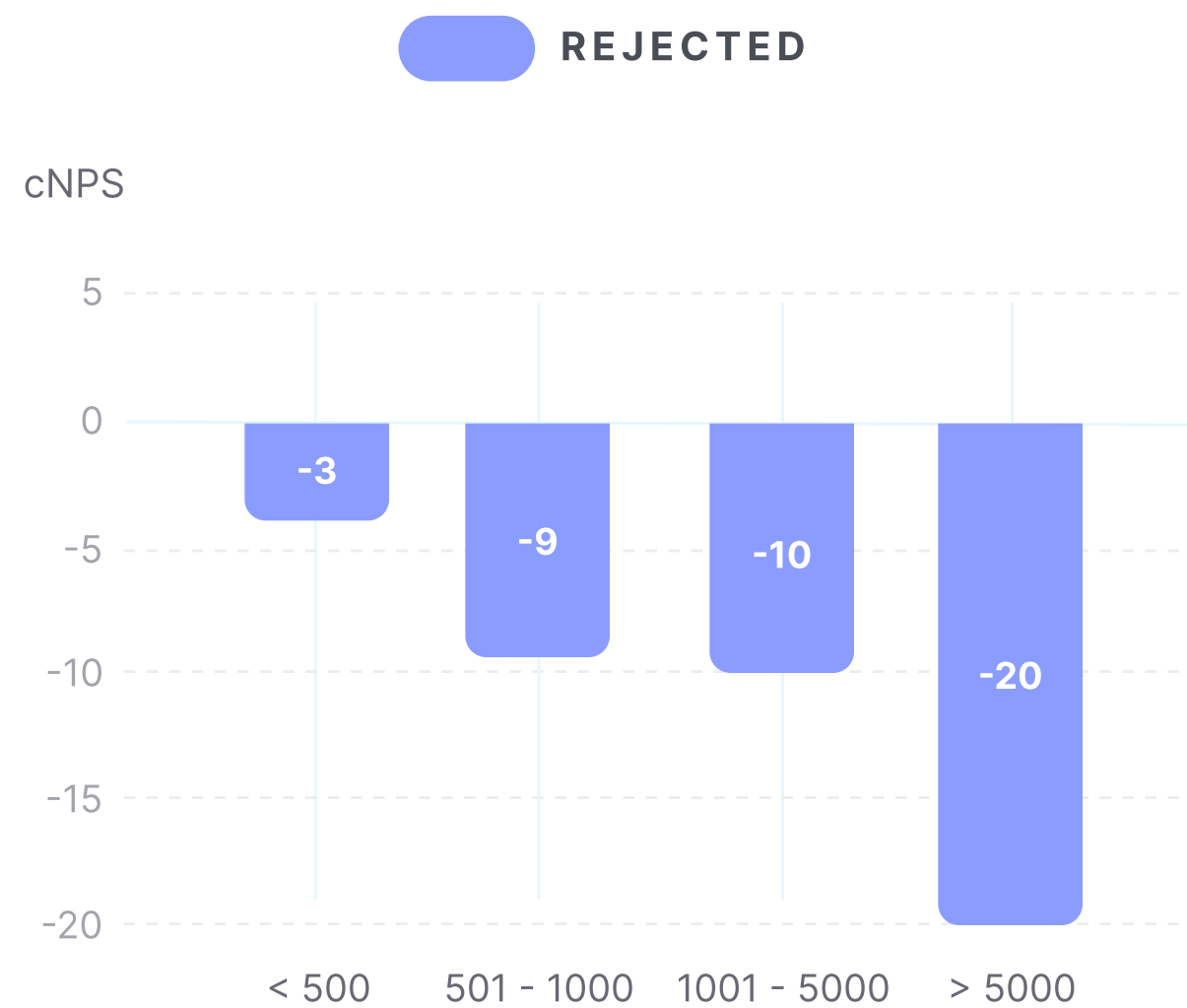
NPS BY STAGE

Breaking this down further by stage, we can see that the same effect remains regardless of stage. Enterprise companies stand out as having a particularly low NPS for Rejected Candidates, with an average of **-20**, compared to Small (**-3**), Medium (**-9**), and Large (**-10**) companies.

Looking at Withdrawn Candidates, we can see that the same pattern is evident. Small companies perform the best, with an NPS of **+41**, followed by the Medium (**+39**), Large (**+31**), and Enterprise (**+30**) categories.

The same trend stays consistent for Hired Candidates, with the exception of Medium Businesses performing the best (**+86**), followed by Small (**+84**), Large (**+78**), and Enterprise (**+71**) companies.

Candidate NPS by Company Size



Data by Company Size

NPS BY REJECTED TOUCHPOINT

Breaking the data down according to touchpoint, we can see that, regardless of company size, candidates rejected in later stages are overall more positive than those rejected in earlier stages in most cases.

Starting with Small companies, we see that Rejected after Assessment is a notable outlier, sitting at **-34** NPS. We'll dive deeper into this in the next chapter. Rejected after Phone Screen is next, with an NPS of **-14**, followed by Rejected after Interview, which sits at a comfortable **+5**. This last touchpoint is unique in being the only net positive result out of all Rejected Touchpoints, across all company sizes.

Moving on to Medium companies, we see the same pattern as earlier. Rejected after Phone Screen scores the lowest, with an NPS of **-21** followed by Rejected after Assessment (**-12**) and Rejected after Interview (**-6**).

The same effect is repeated for Large companies, with Rejected after Phone Screen (**-19**) scoring the lowest, followed by Rejected after Assessment (**-13**) and Rejected after Interview (**-6**).

Finally, Enterprise companies have a similar pattern, although the NPS values are not as equally spread as Medium and Large companies. Rejected after Phone Screen is the lowest, at **-29**, and Rejected after Assessment is next, sitting at a close **-26**, a difference of only **3** NPS. Rejected after Interview ranks the highest, with an average score of **-11**.



Data by Company Size

DIVING DEEP INTO REJECTED AFTER ASSESSMENT

As we saw in the preceding section, the largest area for improvement for small organizations is Rejected after Assessment. It stands out as having a uniquely low NPS when compared to similar stages for different sizes of organizations.

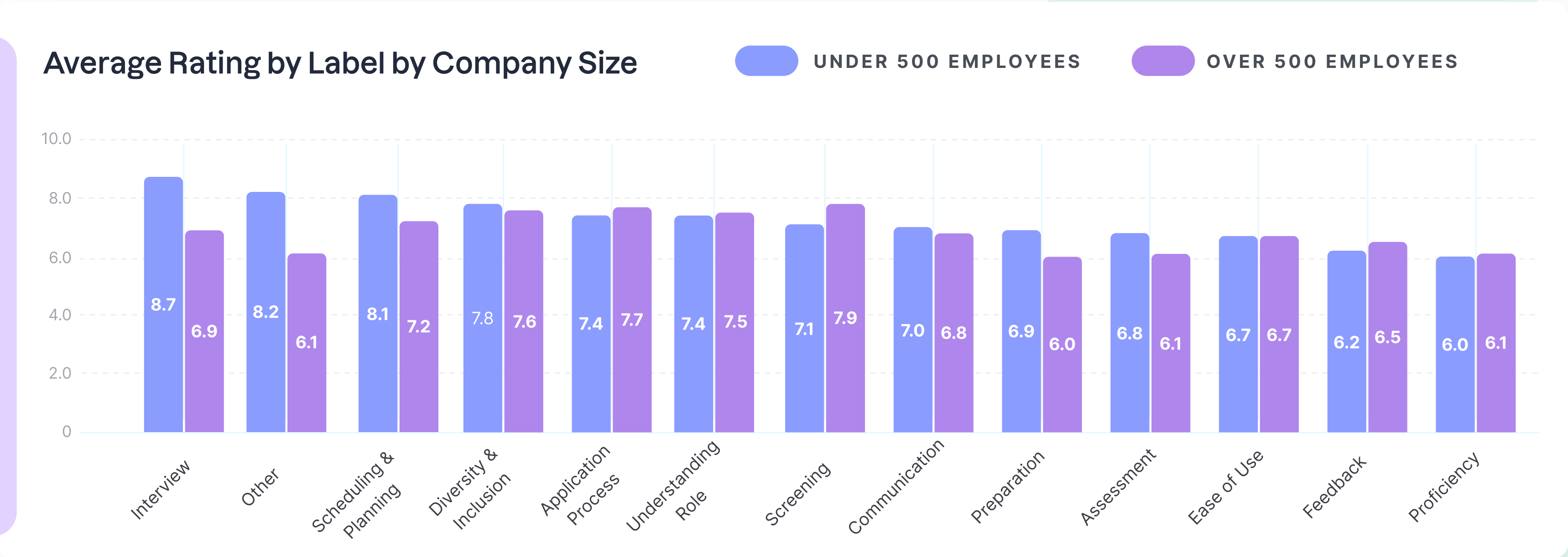
One of the best ways to understand the differences between different categories is to zoom into the Rejected Assessment touchpoint and compare the ratings given to different categories between Small (<500 employees) and larger companies (>500 employees). We broke down the data using the ratings that candidates gave to various categories of questions, which we refer to as question labels.

Looking at this touchpoint specifically, we can see that the largest differences are found in candidates' perceptions of the interviews. The Interview category is a whole **1.8** points apart, signifying that smaller companies perform much better than larger companies in terms of their interviews. Other large differences are seen in Preparation (**0.9**), Scheduling and Planning (**0.9**), and the Assessment (**0.7**).

On the other hand, small companies score lower than large companies when it comes to Screening (**-0.8**), Feedback (**-0.3**) and the Application Process (**-0.3**), signaling that these are the main areas for improvement for smaller companies. Meanwhile, we can see that large companies lag behind smaller companies when it comes to the preparation, scheduling & planning, and candidates' rating of the assessment.

WHAT ARE QUESTION LABELS?

Question labels are the tool we use to categorize and organize the main questions directed at candidates. Our surveys are fully customizable, so these question labels are used to narrow down and categorize the large amounts of data we process into standardized buckets for analysis. They allow us to organize this free-flowing structure in a way that enables us to make conclusions based on big data, like those found in this report.

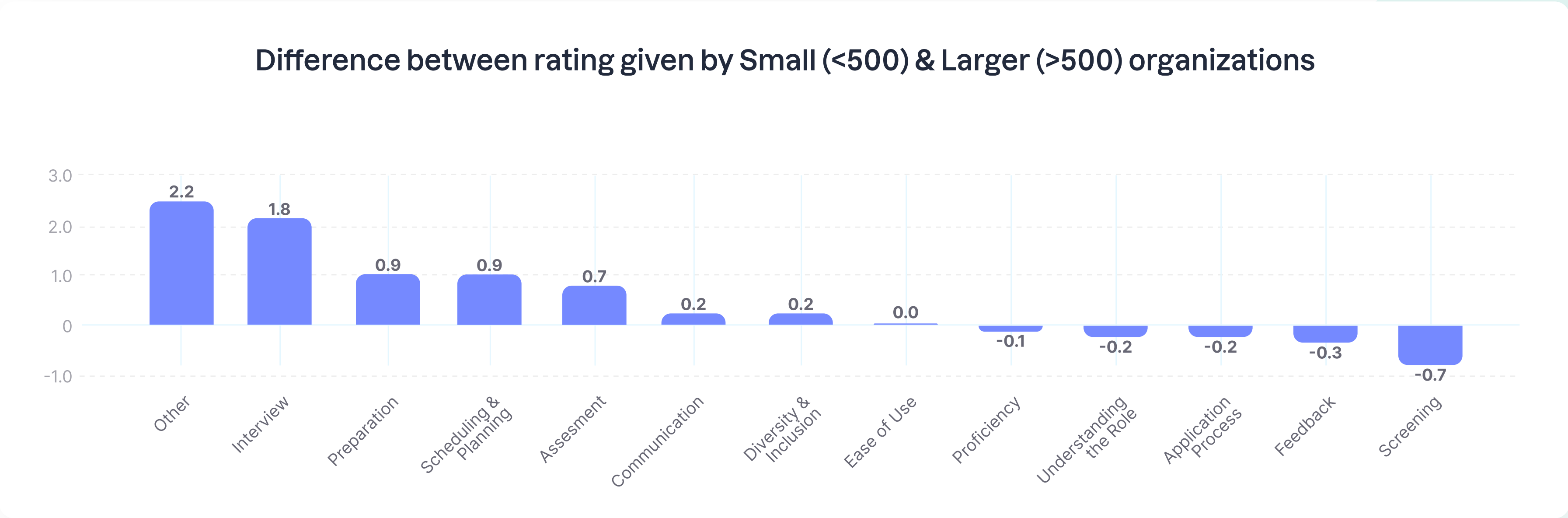


Data by Company Size

This reveals that, in general, smaller organizations receive higher ratings, but some categories are scoring quite a bit lower than larger companies.

Broadly, we can say that the main advantages of small companies appear to be related to the logistical challenges that many larger companies face when dealing with a greater number of candidates. This may also explain the discrepancy of interview experiences between smaller and larger companies. As we saw in the first chapter, interview experience is particularly important to creating a high-quality Candidate Experience.

These results also underscore the importance of Assessments to Rejected candidates that we identified earlier. Again, it is entirely possible that a limited amount of feedback on a candidate's assessment helped move the needle towards a lower NPS rating, while a higher amount of personalization and discussion with smaller companies contributed positively to a better experience.

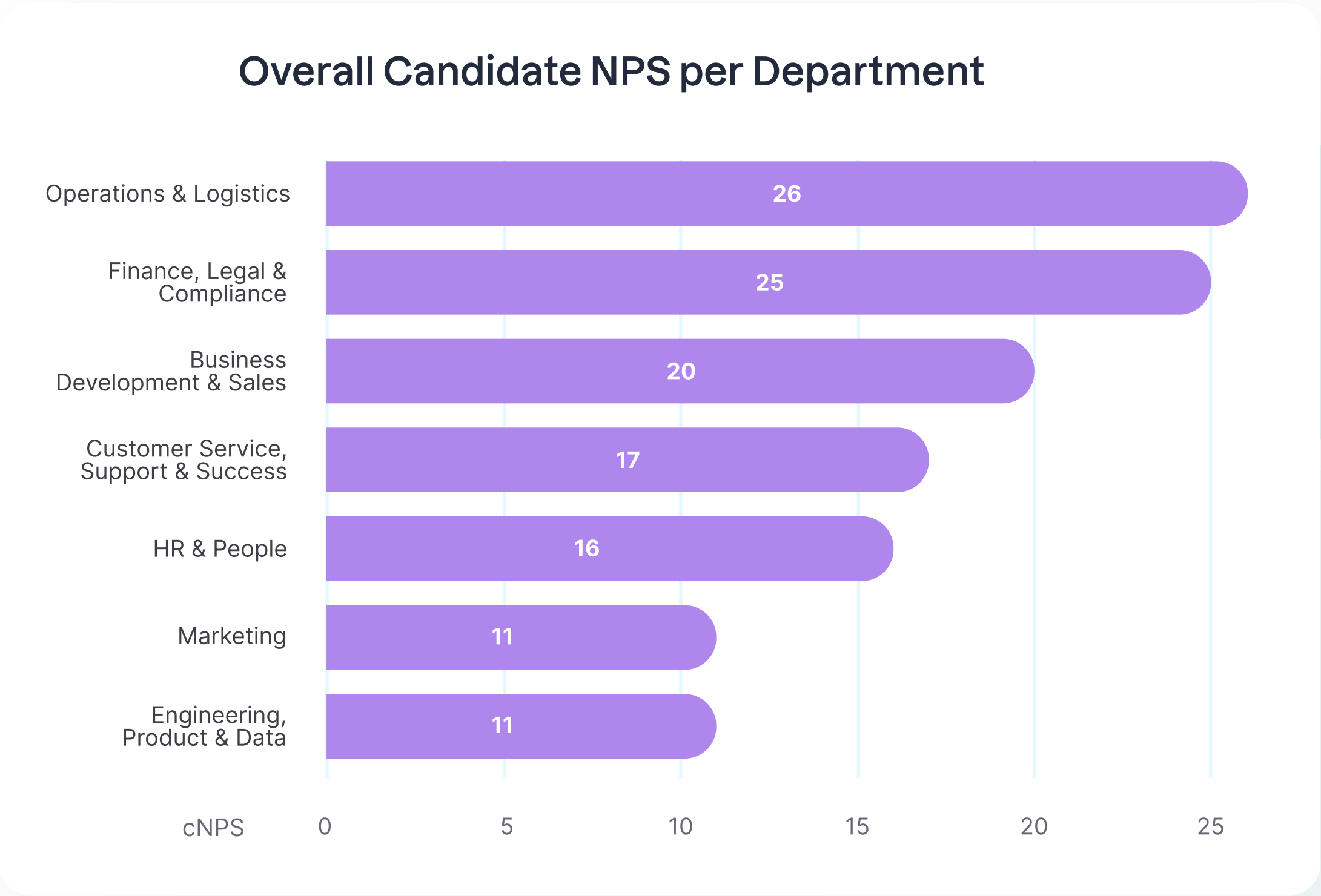


Data by Department

Next, we decided to break the data down according to the department that the candidates applied to. We did this by pulling all department fields from our ATS connections, and then organized and cleaned the tags to identify these categories.

Examining the overall NPS segmented by department data reveals that “Engineering, Product, and Data” and “Marketing” are tied for the lowest overall NPS scores, both landing at an aggregated average of **+11**.

On the other end we see that “Operations and Logistics” scores the highest, with an overall NPS of **+26**. It’s followed closely by “Finance, Legal, and Compliance”, which stands at **+25**.

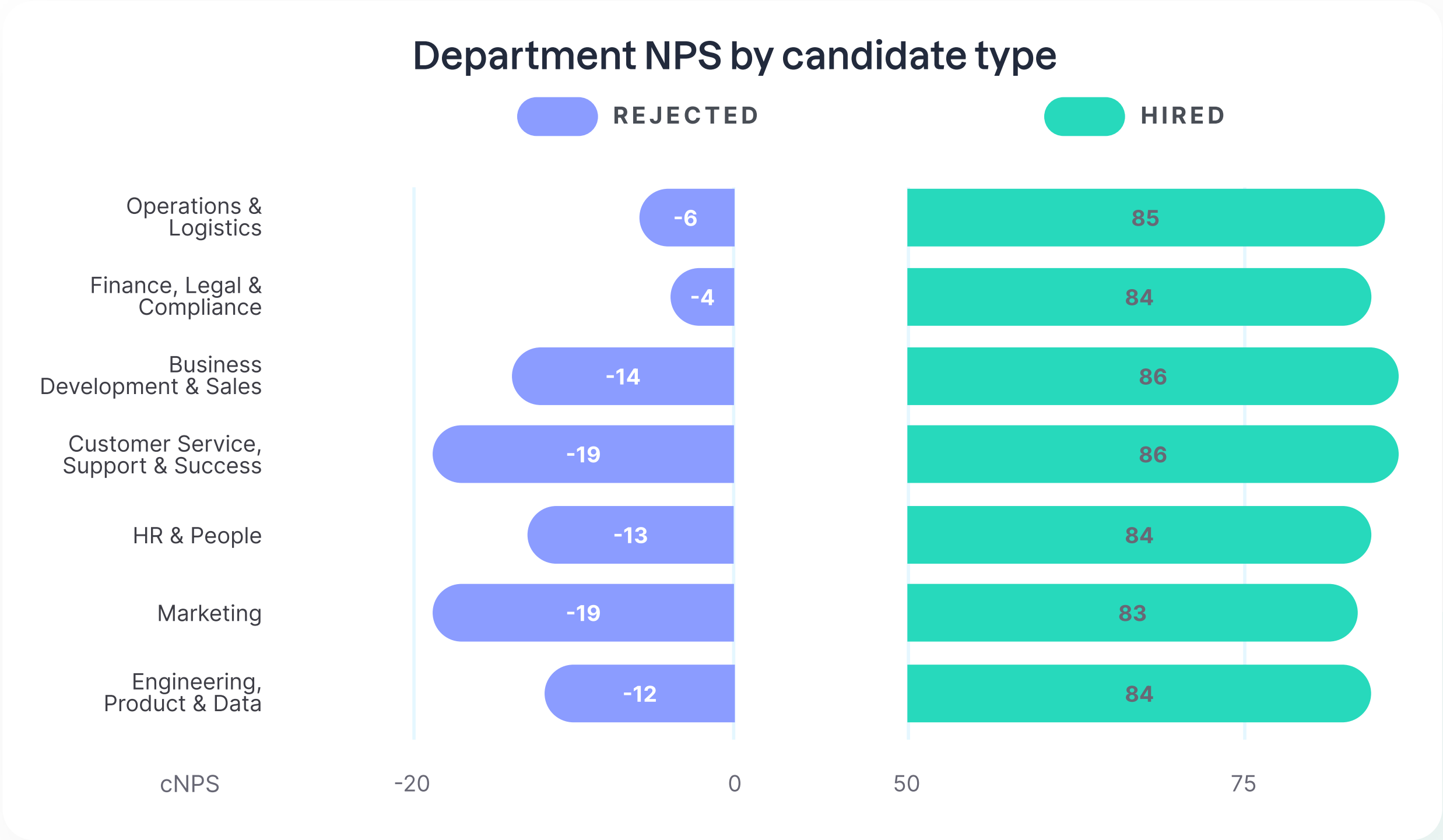


Data by Department

In order to get a better understanding of what is driving these numbers, we broke the results down according to Candidate Stage. A few things immediately stand out. Let’s begin with the Rejected Candidates.

We can see that “Marketing” and “Customer Service & Support” are tied for the lowest NPS for Rejected candidates, at **-19**. “Business Development & Sales”, “HR & People”, and “Engineering, Product, & Data” are in the middle, with **-14**, **-13**, and **-12** NPS respectively. The best performers are “Operations & Logistics”, at **-6**, and “Finance, Legal, & Compliance” at **-4**.

Hired Candidates all land between **+83** and **+86**, although Marketing still manages to have the lowest NPS at **+83**. At first glance, these figures may be confusing when referring back to the Overall NPS we presented at the beginning. How could Marketing be tied with Customer Service & Support when the former had **-6** for Withdrawn candidates, and the latter had **+48**? The answer can be found when we investigate the proportions of each Candidate Stage in the total amount of invitations that were sent.



Data by Department

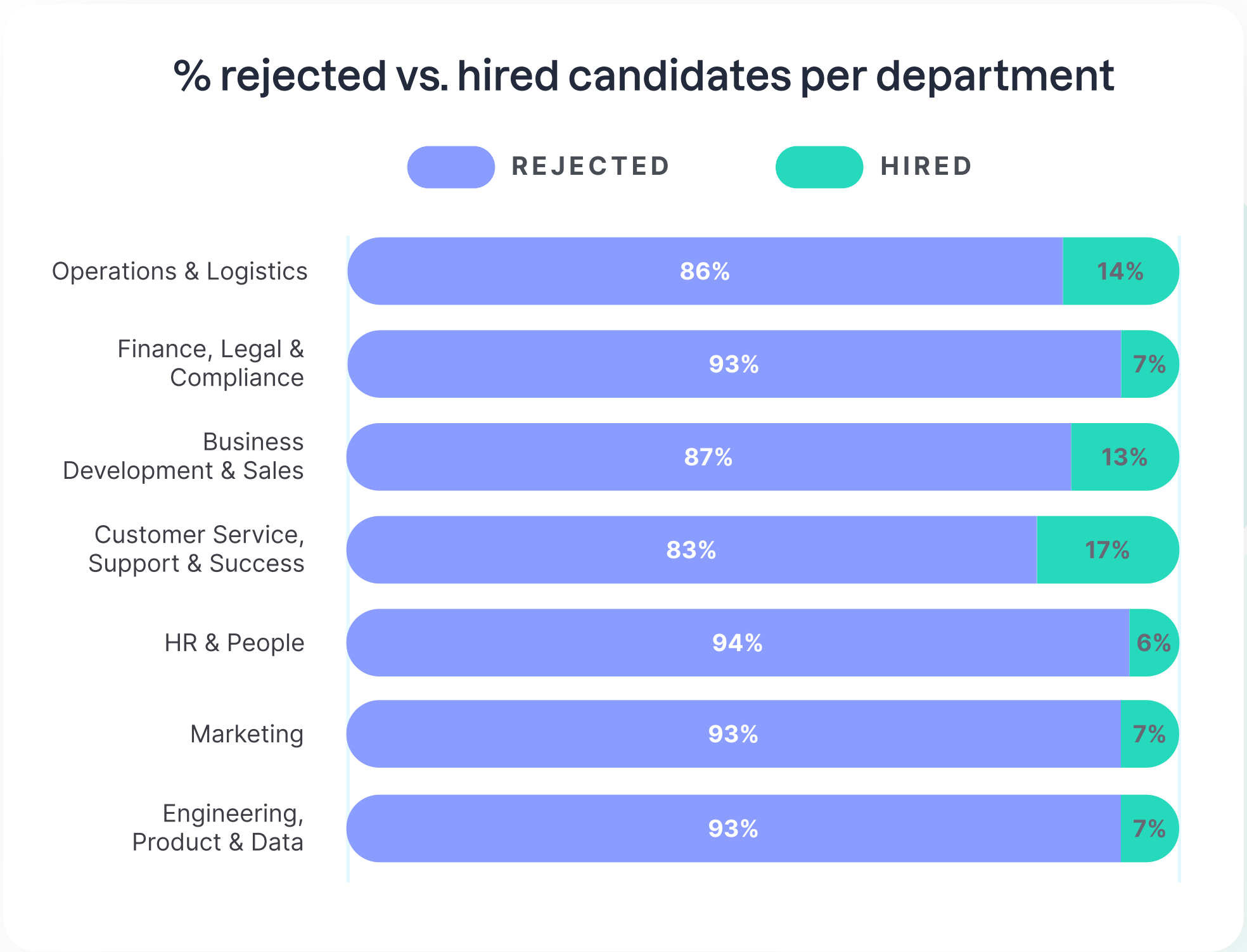
This ratio gives us an understanding of what the hiring funnel looks like for each department, and how many candidates there were in each stage relative to other stages.

As expected, Rejected candidates make up the vast majority of each department’s invitations, ranging from **79%** (Customer Service, Support, & Success) to **90%** (HR & People). Two main groups emerge: “Customer Service, Support, & Success”, “Operations and Logistics”, and “Business Development & Sales” have the lowest ratios of Rejected candidates, at **83%**, **86%**, and **87%** respectively. They also have the highest ratios of Hired candidates, at **17%**, **14%**, and **13%**, respectively. This indicated that these departments’ NPS is positively skewed due to high amounts of Hired candidates.

The second group contains “Engineering, Product & Data”, “Finance, Legal, & Compliance”, and “Marketing”, which are tied for the second-highest ratios of rejected candidates, at **93%**. “HR & People” has the highest rate, with **94%** of candidates being rejected. Naturally, these also have the lowest rates of Hired candidates. “Finance, Legal & Compliance”, “Marketing” and “Engineering, Product & Data” are tied at **7%**, with “HR & People” scoring the lowest, at **6%**.

The low overall NPS seen for “Marketing” and “Engineering, Product, & Data” doesn’t tell the full story. It does exemplify how hard it’s to find good candidates (low ratio of hired to total) in these departments, and highlights how important it is to look at NPS numbers split out by stage.

On the opposite end, we can see that “Finance, Legal, and Compliance” also has a high ratio of rejected candidates, but scores well overall. This can be attributed to having the highest NPS among departments at the Rejected Stage.



Data by Source

We also decided to see if there were any differences in NPS based on the source that candidates are identified as coming from. Our sources are pulled from ATS data, and depend on what fields the various ATS’ and our customers use when it comes to tracking the source of a candidate.

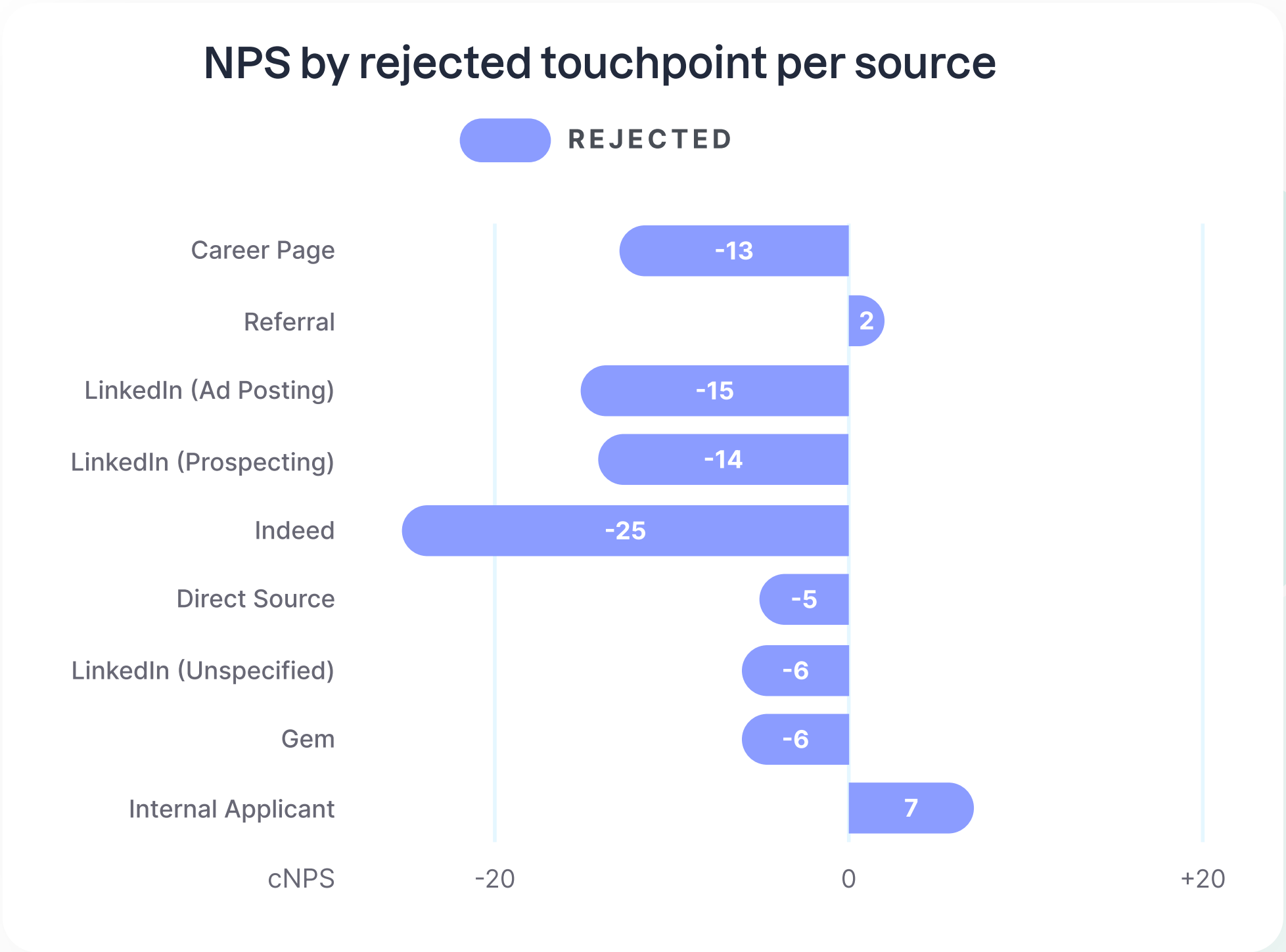
You can see the specific breakdown of what sources our sample features, sorted by type. We can see that **34.5%** of all candidates came through the Career Page, followed by Referrals, with **10.9%** of candidates. LinkedIn Ad Posts accounted for **9.8%** of the sample, while LinkedIn Prospecting was at **8%**. All other sources were under **5%**, and can be seen in the table below. Sources under **1%** were grouped under “Other”, accounting for a total of **18%** of candidates.

Source breakdown	
TOPIC	SOURCE BREAKDOWN
Career Page	34.51%
Referral	10.91%
LinkedIn (Ad Posting)	9.84%
LinkedIn (Prospecting)	8.04%
Indeed	3.48%
Direct Source	3.11%
LinkedIn (Unspecified)	2.55%
Gem	2.09%
Internal Applicant	1.74%

Data by Source

Moving on, the interesting results begin to appear when we investigate the NPS of Rejected candidates by source. We see that Internal Applicants (+7) and Referrals (+2) are the only two sources with a positive NPS for Rejected candidates, telling us that candidates with some sort of personal connection to the company are much more likely to have a positive Candidate Experience. However, it's also important to take into consideration their rate of success, which we will examine next.

Indeed scored the lowest, at -25, while LinkedIn came second, with -15 for Ads and -14 for Prospecting. It was followed closely by the Career Page (-13). LinkedIn (Unspecified) stands at -6, while Direct candidates land at -5 NPS. with LinkedIn Jobs landing at an almost neutral NPS of -1.



Data by Source

TOP MOST SUCCESSFUL CANDIDATE SOURCES

By comparing the total amount of hired candidates to the total amount of applications we can determine which sources led to the highest rates of successful candidates.

This reveals that the most successful type of candidate, by far, are Internal Candidates. More than half (**60.1%**) of these result in a successful hire. The second most hired group are Referred candidates, with a success rate of **39.6%**. The next most successful sources are Direct candidates (**25.6%**), Indeed (**23.7%**), LinkedIn (Unspecified) (**21.2%**), LinkedIn Prospecting (**19.5%**), Career Page applicants (**19%**), LinkedIn Ad Posts (**16.8%**), and Gem candidates (**16.7%**).

Similarly to the previous chapter, diving into these ratios uncovers how different rates of effectiveness can impact overall NPS results. Internal Candidates and Referred Candidates can be expected to have the highest NPS because of their higher success rates, but breaking the data down per Stage is more revealing.

% of candidates hired per source

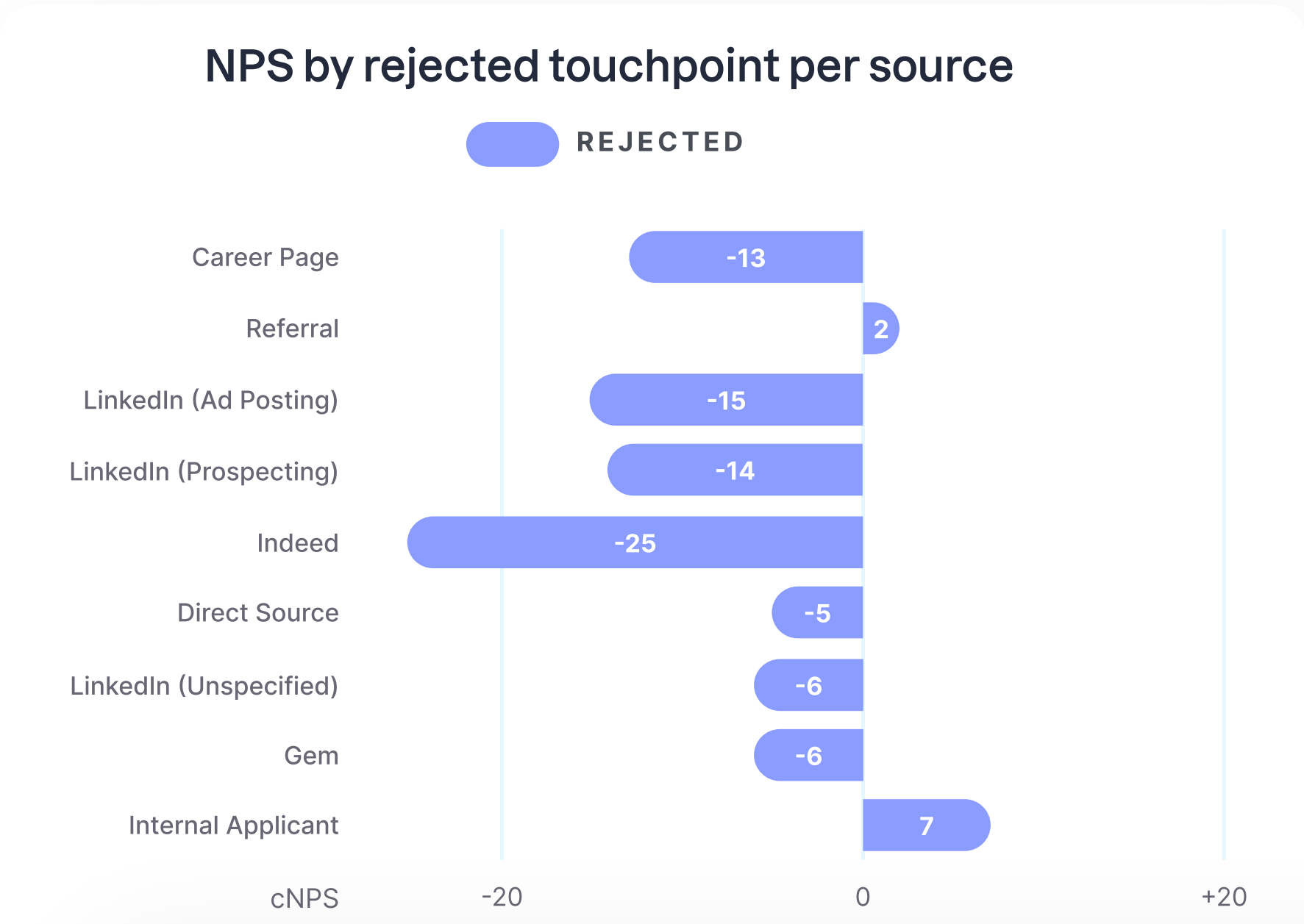
TOPIC	% HIRED BY SOURCE
Career Page	18.99%
Referral	39.63%
LinkedIn (Ad Posting)	16.76%
LinkedIn (Prospecting)	19.46%
Indeed	23.71%
Direct Source	25.58%
LinkedIn (Unspecified)	21.20%
Gem	16.72%
Internal Applicant	60.14%

Data by Source

Indeed stands out due to its relatively high success rate of **23.71%**, but it also has the lowest Rejected NPS by far, at **-25**. Interestingly, Indeed candidates appear to be more successful than those sourced through most other mediums, but those that aren't successful report much a much worse Candidate Experience than average. LinkedIn candidates appear to be slightly less successful, on average, but also aren't as prone to reporting a negative Candidate Experience, and are on-par with Career Page candidates.

In this instance, we can see that both Rejected Internal and Referred Candidates reported the highest NPS figures, signaling that they are both much more likely to have a positive Candidate Experience even when rejected, when compared to other candidate sources.

We've previously written about how Internal Candidates are a [very high risk/reward](#) demographic for Candidate Experience. We've also recently observed that Internal Mobility is one of [2023's Top Trends in Recruitment](#), and that many talent leaders are looking inwards to find talented candidates while on a stricter budget. These findings point out that most Internal Candidates are successful, and that those that aren't are, on average, pleased with the process.



Source breakdown and % of candidates hired per source		
TOPIC	SOURCE BREAKDOWN	% HIRED BY SOURCE
Career Page	34.51%	18.99%
Referral	10.91%	39.63%
LinkedIn (Ad Posting)	9.84%	16.76%
LinkedIn (Prospecting)	8.04%	19.46%
Indeed	3.48%	23.71%
Direct Source	3.11%	25.58%
LinkedIn (Unspecified)	2.55%	21.20%
Gem	2.09%	16.72%
Internal Applicant	1.74%	60.14%

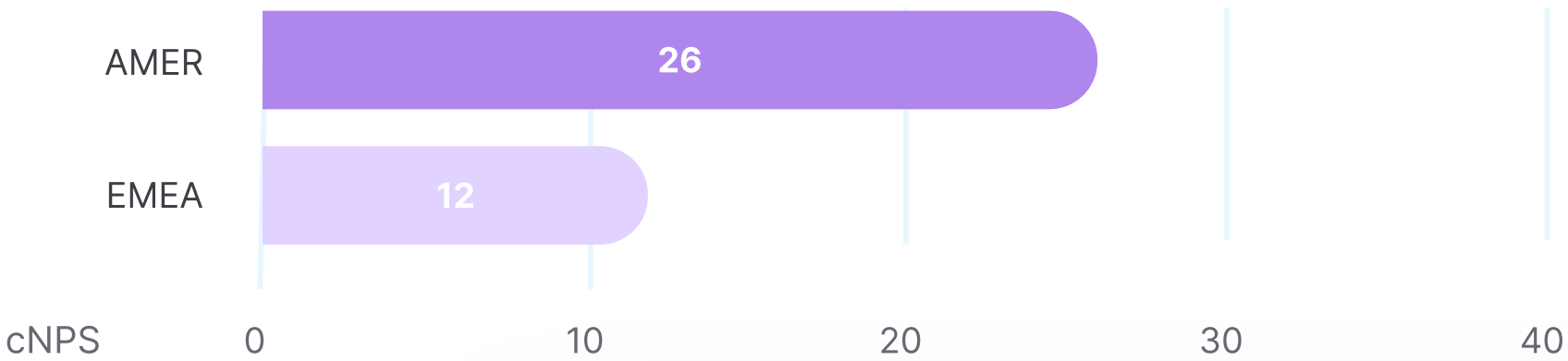
Data by Region

Finally, much like previous benchmarks, we opted to see if there was a noticeable difference between Candidate Experience across different regions. Starting off with Overall NPS, we see that the Americas score well above EMEA, reporting an NPS of **+26** compared to EMEA's **+12**.

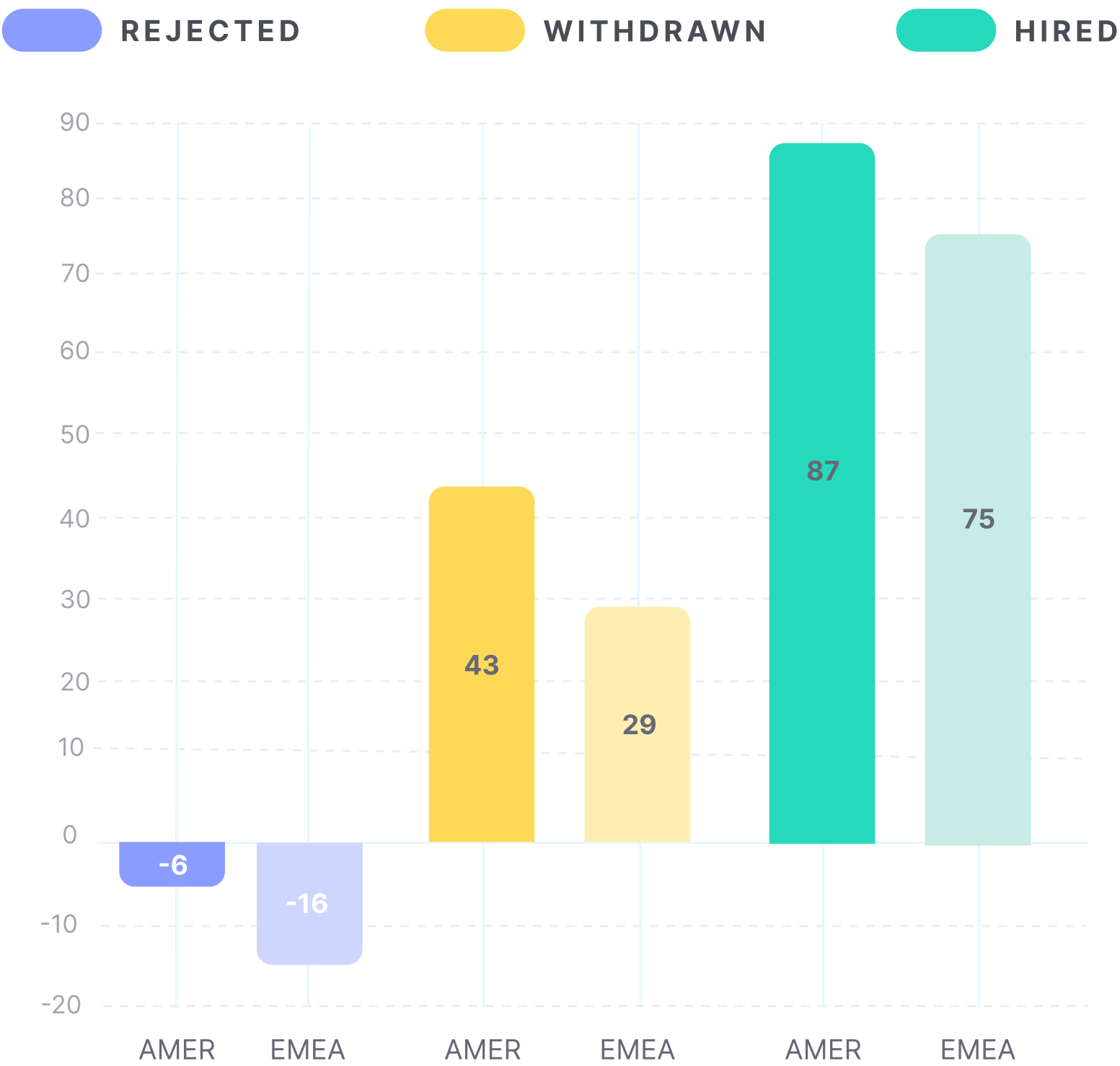
Segmenting this data further by Stage reveals an interesting picture. The same trend is found in every single stage, and American candidates consistently score higher than EMEA candidates.

Among Rejected Candidates, we see that EMEA candidates are 10 points lower than American candidates, at **-16** compared to the latter's **-6**. For Withdrawn candidates, both regions are quite positive, but the Americas still score well above EMEA, at **+43** compared to **+29**. Finally, the trend persists among Hired candidates, with EMEA scoring **+75** and the Americas scoring **+87**.

Overall NPS Americas vs Europe



Candidate NPS by Stage



WHAT ABOUT THE UK?

We've included the UK in the EMEA figures, and there was no major difference between the two.

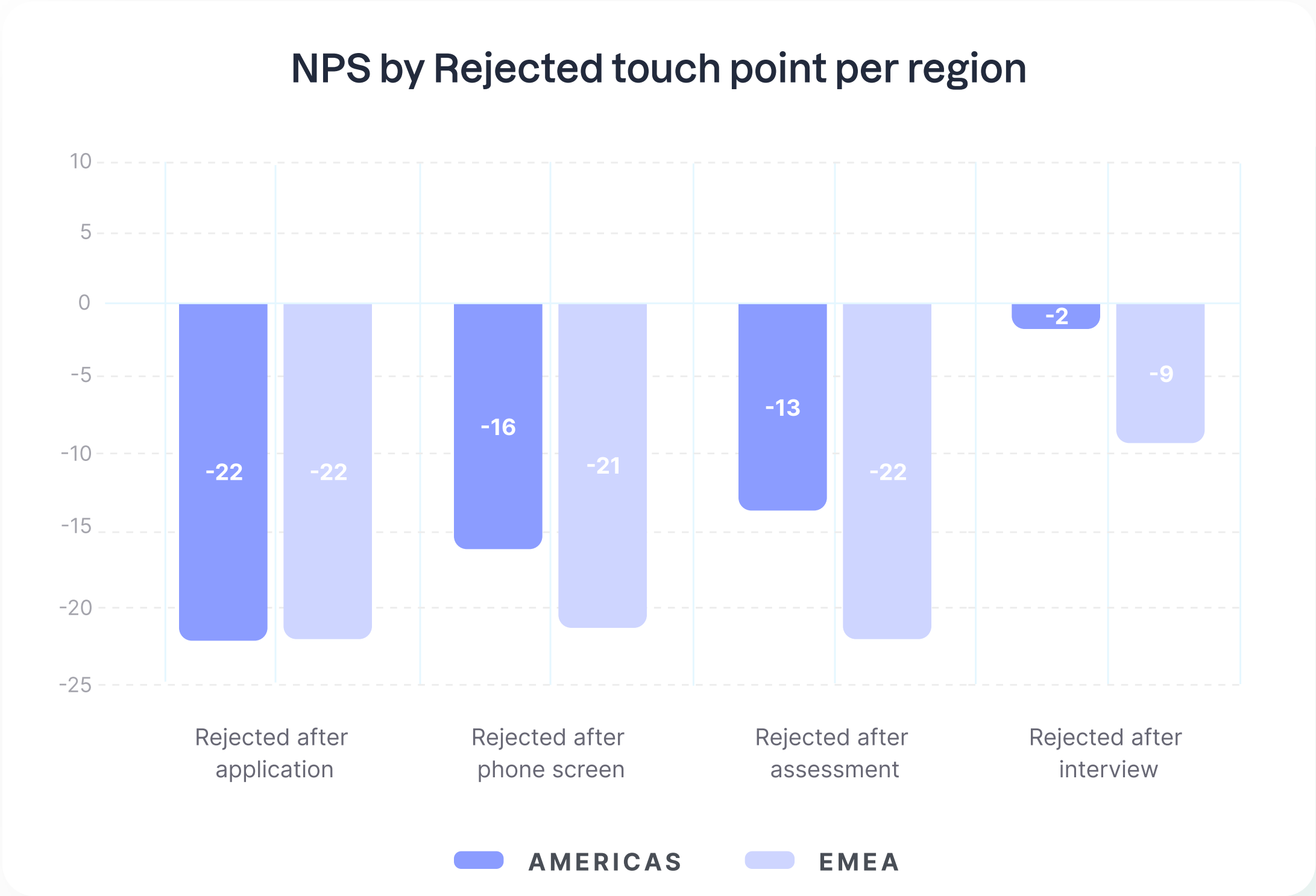
Data by Region

Diving deeper into the rejected touchpoints reveals some more interesting trends. First of all, there is no difference between cNPS between both regions in Rejected after Application. EMEA and American candidates appear to respond with an equal amount of negativity, tying at **-22**.

However, American candidates rise in NPS with each step of the process, rising to **-16** in Rejected After Phone Screen, **-13** in Rejected after Assessment, and **-2** in Rejected after Interview.

This same effect is seen in EMEA candidates, although it appears much later and less prominently than in American candidates. NPS for Rejected after Application sits at **-22**, rises by a single point to **-21** after a Phone Screen, and drops back down to **-22** after an Assessment. However, it does rise to **-2** when a candidate is Rejected after Interview, showing that Interviews are particularly important to Candidate Experience, as we mentioned before.

This consistent difference between EMEA and the Americas is already an established concept. Briefly, this difference can be attributed to cultural differences and the fact that Europeans are generally less inclined to give scores of **9** or **10**, assuming that an **8** is “good enough”, while Americans are more likely to score companies at a **9** or a **10**.



Conclusion

To conclude, we see that the state of Candidate Experience differs depending on various factors, like the candidates' stage, the company size, department, source, and regions that are being considered. This chapter will summarize the main findings and discuss their implications.

MAIN NPS BENCHMARKS

Interviews have a high risk/reward ratio for Candidate Experience, and can either result in a very poor Candidate Experience, or an outstanding one. Rejected after Interview also well distributed across the entire NPS spectrum, without leaning too much one way or the other.

CANDIDATE COMMENT INSIGHTS

All types of candidates discussed "Process" and the "Recruitment Team" often. Rejected candidates accounted for the majority of mentions of "Feedback" and "Assignment and Preparation". Withdrawn candidates discussed "Salary & Benefits" the most, as well as the "Speed" of the process. Hired candidates mentioned , "Company / Brand", and the "Recruitment Team" the most.

Feedback is especially relevant when it comes to converting a Detractor to a Passive/Promoter, and both Rejected and Withdrawn candidates prioritize Feedback, consistent with our previous findings in our [Candidate Values Report](#).

DATA BY COMPANY SIZE

We can generally see that smaller companies see a better NPS than larger companies. We also see that NPS improves in later Touchpoints and Stages, regardless of company size. Candidates rejected in later stages are overall more positive than those rejected in earlier stages. Smaller companies have a notable edge over larger companies when it comes to interview scheduling, planning, and assessments. However, interestingly, they score lower than larger companies in screening, feedback, and the application process.

DATA BY DEPARTMENT

We can see that "Marketing" and "Customer Service & Support" are tied for the lowest NPS for Rejected candidates. "Business Development & Sales", "HR & People", and "Engineering, Product, & Data" The best performers are "Operations & Logistics", and "Finance, Legal, & Compliance".

Two different groups emerged, based on their ratios of rejections to hired. We see that "Customer Service, Support, & Success", "Operations and Logistics", and "Business Development & Sales" hire the most candidates, while "Engineering, Product & Data", "Finance, Legal, & Compliance", "Marketing", and "HR & People" have the lowest rates of Hired candidates. Low Overall NPS is explained by higher rates of rejections, and worse Rejected NPS, such as in the case of Marketing. Finance, Legal, & Compliance was unique in having a relatively strong Rejected NPS with low hiring rates.

Conclusion

DATA BY SOURCE

Examining the data by source, we see that a few trends stand out. First of all, we see that Internal Candidates and Referred Candidates consistently report the highest NPS figures. They also have the highest success rates by far, but this trend persists even for Rejected candidates. Besides these, the best Rejected NPS was found in LinkedIn Jobs candidates, followed by Direct candidates, other LinkedIn candidates, and then the Career Page. Indeed finished last in terms of Rejected NPS.

Interestingly, Indeed candidates appear to be more successful than those sourced through most other mediums, but those that aren't successful report much a much worse Candidate Experience than average. LinkedIn candidates appear to be slightly less successful, but have a higher Rejected NPS, being similar to Career Page candidates.

In this instance, we can see that both Rejected Internal and Referred Candidates reported the highest NPS figures, signaling that they are both much more likely to have a positive Candidate Experience even when rejected, when compared to other candidate sources.

DATA BY REGION

We found that a simple, strong trend persisted between regions. First, the further a candidate got in the process, the higher the NPS. Second, American candidates report a consistently higher NPS than EMEA candidates, and are more impacted by each step of the process. Interviews have a significant impact on NPS for both regions, bringing the average up sharply from previous touchpoints.

Some of these findings can be explained by cultural differences and the fact that Europeans are generally less inclined to give scores of 9 or 10, assuming that an 8 is "good enough", while Americans are more likely to score companies at a 9 or a 10.

What is Starred?

Starred is a Candidate Experience Analytics platform designed to help recruitment teams to improve their recruitment processes and enhance the Candidate Experience. With Starred, you can automatically gather real-time feedback from all key stakeholders in your recruiting process, including candidates, hiring managers, recruiters, and new hires. This data is then analyzed and presented in a way that is easy to understand, so you can quickly identify areas for improvement and take action to optimize your hiring strategies.

There are no manual steps involved. Feedback is collected automatically and the data transformed into insights on various aspects of your recruitment process, such as your Candidate Experience, Hiring Manager Satisfaction, and the effectiveness of your recruitment efforts. This allows you to make data-driven decisions that will help you to attract and retain top talent.

“Candidate Experience is about starting with the human. Recruitment is one of the most human careers, and yet Candidate Experience is often forgotten about. We want to change that”

Lars van Wieren
Founder & CEO at Starred



Appendix: Candidate Comment Insights Methodology

FEEDBACK

Are comments related to the feedback the candidate has received after their application

PROCESS

This refers to whether the candidate experienced a smooth and easy recruitment process

RECRUITMENT TEAM

All comments that are related to the people in the hiring team such as the recruiter, interviewer, and hiring manager

SALARY & BENEFITS

Comments that are identified to be related to all compensation and benefits

COMPANY / BRAND

All comments related to the company, it's brand, culture, and atmosphere

COMMUNICATION

Did the candidate feel that the communication was timely and sufficient?

PREPARATION & ASSIGNMENT

Comments related to preparation of the interviews and/or the quality and preparation of the assessment

SPEED

Comments about the speed of the process

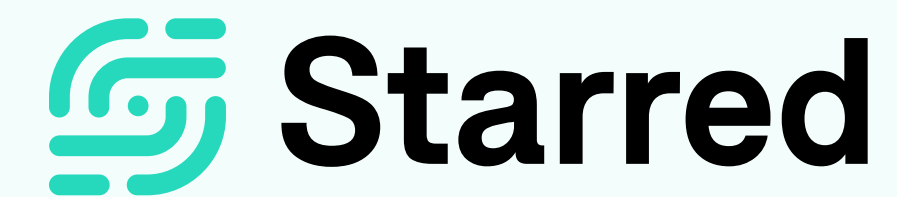
“The team developed a rule-based algorithm that uses a dictionary of relevant elements and patterns to classify comments into predefined topics. The algorithm looks for these elements in each comment and uses their frequency to make predictions.

For example, the words "why rejection" and "reasons for rejection" are linked to the topic of "Feedback."“

Camille Coeurjoly

Data Analyst at
Starred





A final word from our side. We truly appreciate you reading this report, and we hope you enjoyed it. We trust the information was useful, and that it aids you in strengthening your recruitment process and improving Candidate Experience in the coming year.

We also wanted to thank you for getting this far, and for reading this report in the first place. We're seeing a large amount of interest in Candidate Experience Analytics, and we're very happy to see that an increasing amount of companies are putting candidates first and prioritizing their experience.

If you want to start measuring your Candidate Experience to uncover hidden insights, feel free to book a discovery call to discuss how you could utilize Starred.

[Book a call](#)