



RECRUITING METRICS

Benchmark Data by Industry

INTRODUCTION

In CareerPlug's sixth annual Recruiting Metrics Report, we continue to analyze our hiring data to shed light on hiring metrics and trends for small businesses across various industries. Our team analyzed hiring activity in 2024 from more than 60,000 small businesses — covering more than 10 million job applications.

In this report, you will find analysis of data covering the hiring funnel from initial visit through hire, organized by industry.

This report will establish industry-level benchmarks for key hiring metrics, including:

- » Average click and application rates
- » Conversion rates from click to application, from application to interview, and from interview to hire
- » The number of applicants typically needed to make one hire
- » The average time it takes to contact applicants — and how long it typically takes to contact a hire
- » The top sources for applicants and hires
- » The times of the year that are most likely to produce the highest application rates

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The Labor Market of 2024

The 2024 hiring and labor market was marked by economic uncertainty, persistent labor shortages in key industries, and evolving workplace expectations. While job growth has slowed compared to the rapid post-pandemic recovery, unemployment has remained relatively low.

Employers continue to struggle with retention, particularly in sectors like healthcare, hospitality, and skilled trades, leading to a stronger emphasis on onboarding and employee engagement.

AI-driven hiring solutions have gained traction, streamlining recruitment while raising concerns about bias and fairness. Additionally, a shift toward skills-based hiring has helped companies expand talent pools, reducing reliance on traditional degree requirements.

Employee retention starts with a strong hiring process. We hope that the hiring data in our latest Recruiting Metrics Report empowers small businesses with insights and advice on how they can better shape their hiring practices to make the right hires.

Benchmark Metrics Defined

Hiring Benchmarks

» Clicks Per Job

How many views a job posting gets

» Average Days to Contact

The number of days it took to contact an applicant, starting from the minute the applicant applied

» Applicants Per Job

The number of applicants received divided by the number of jobs posted

» Average Days to Contact Hire

The number of days it took to contact an applicant who became a hire

» Applicants Per Hire

How many applicants were received to make one hire

» Average Days to Hire

The number of days it took to hire an applicant, starting from the minute the applicant applied

Conversion Benchmarks



Click-to-Apply Conversion Rate

How many views of an job posting turn into applications



Applicant-to-Interview Conversion Rate

How many applications turn into interview invitations



Interview-to-Hire Conversion Rate

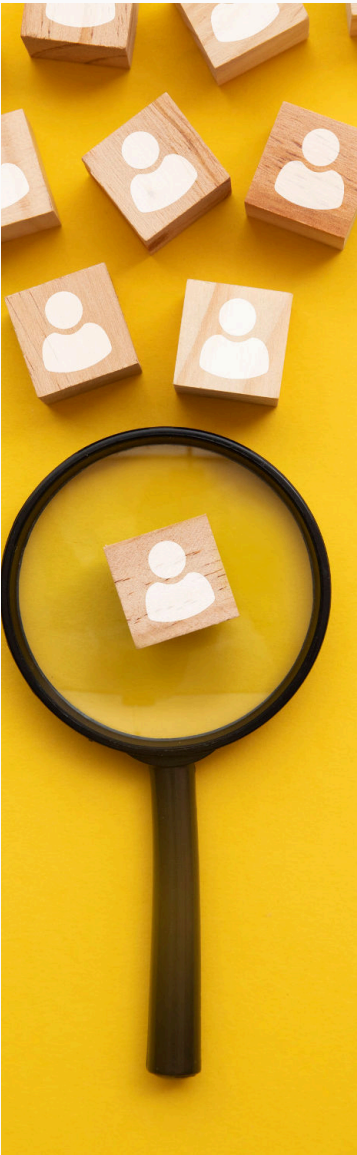
How many interview invitations turn into hires

What We Learned About Hiring in 2024

In analyzing data, we found the most significant takeaways to be the answers to the following questions:

How many job views convert to applicants?

In 2024, the click-to-apply conversion rate averaged 4.7% across all industries. Even though many businesses slowed down hiring, this suggests there were still quite a lot of opportunities for job seekers to choose from.



Click-to-apply conversion

Industry	Click-to-apply rate
Automotive	6%
Cleaning Services	2.9%
Education & Child Care	3.5%
Fitness	2.6%
Healthcare	5.7%
Home & Commercial Services	5.3%
Hospitality, Entertainment & Recreation	13.8%
Personal Care	5.3%
Restaurant & Food Service	4%
Retail	7.1%

How many applicants convert to hires?

Many employers want to know how many applicants it takes to make one hire. But that's a tricky question to answer without looking at a few other variables:



The applicant-to-interview
conversion rate



The interview-to-hire
conversion rate

Employers in our study received an **average of 180 applicants per hire made**, this is up from last year, when it took employers an average of 93 applications per hire. When we examine the hiring funnel by stage, we see that employers invited an average of just **3% of applicants to interview for their open roles**, but were far more efficient later in the hiring process, converting 27% of interviews to hires.

These figures vary widely based on the industry and we'll provide a detailed analysis of each industry's benchmarks later in this report.



Applicants per hire by industry

Industry	Number of applicants per hire
Automotive	234
Cleaning Services	317
Education & Child Care	57
Fitness	120
Healthcare	139
Home & Commercial Services	312
Hospitality, Entertainment & Recreation	165
Personal Care	112
Restaurant & Food Service	166
Retail	153

Applicant-to-interview

Industry	Conversion Rate
Automotive	2.2%
Cleaning Services	2.1%
Education & Child Care	5.9%
Fitness	1.6%
Healthcare	2.7%
Home & Commercial Services	2%
Hospitality, Entertainment & Recreation	2.6%
Personal Care	2.5%
Restaurant & Food Service	2.4%
Retail	1.7%

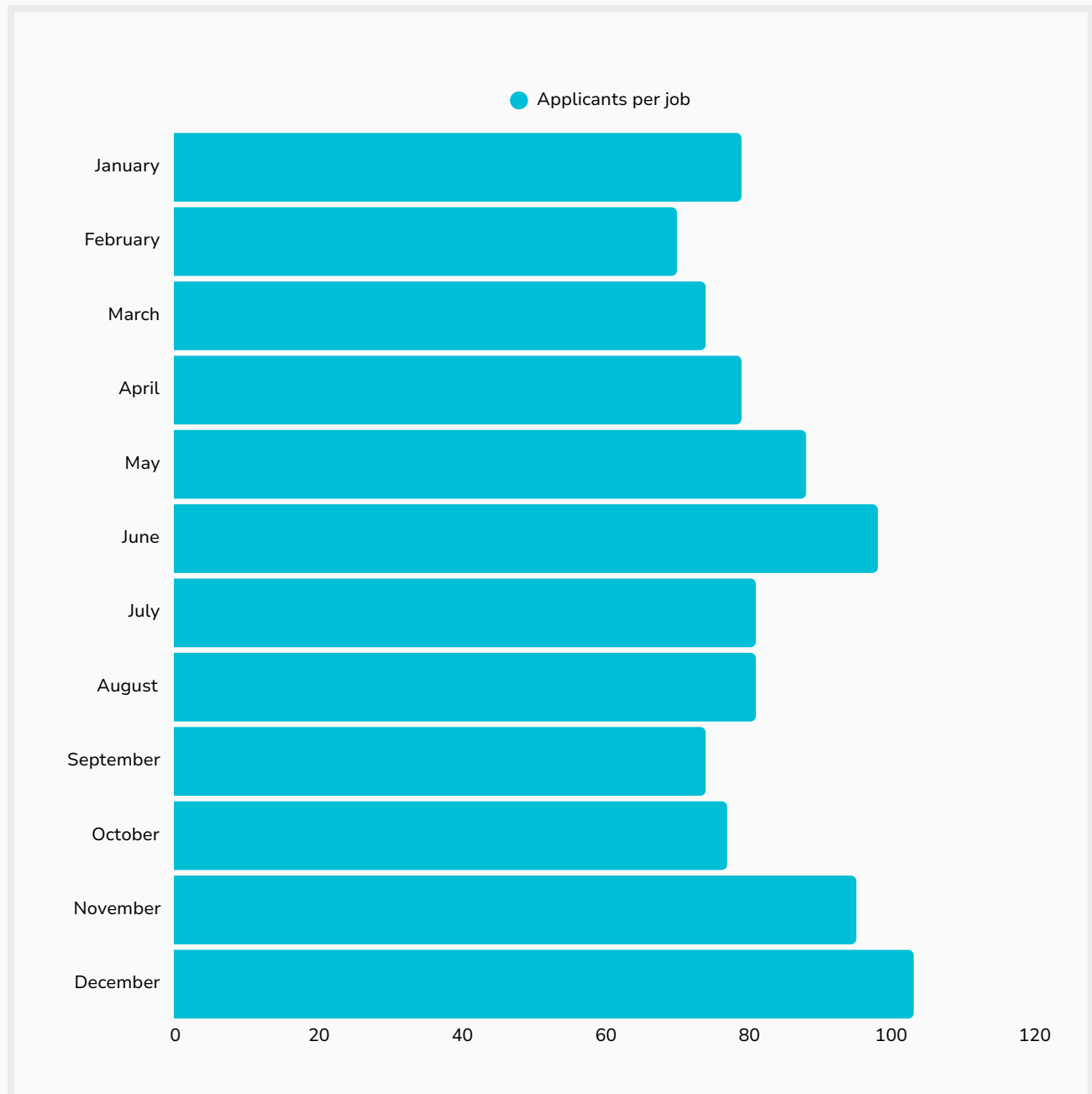
Interview-to-hire

Industry	Conversion Rate
Automotive	19%
Cleaning Services	15%
Education & Child Care	30%
Fitness	51%
Healthcare	26%
Home & Commercial Services	16%
Hospitality, Entertainment & Recreation	24%
Personal Care	36%
Restaurant & Food Service	25%
Retail	39%



What are the best times of year to post jobs?

We saw a fairly steady rate of applicants month over month. There was a spike in applicant counts in June. With the end of the year, also seeing an increase in the number of applicants.



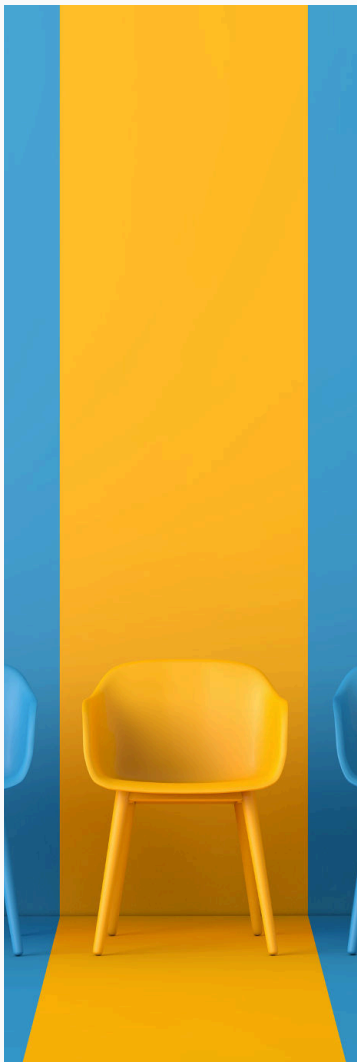
Best month to post in 2024:
December



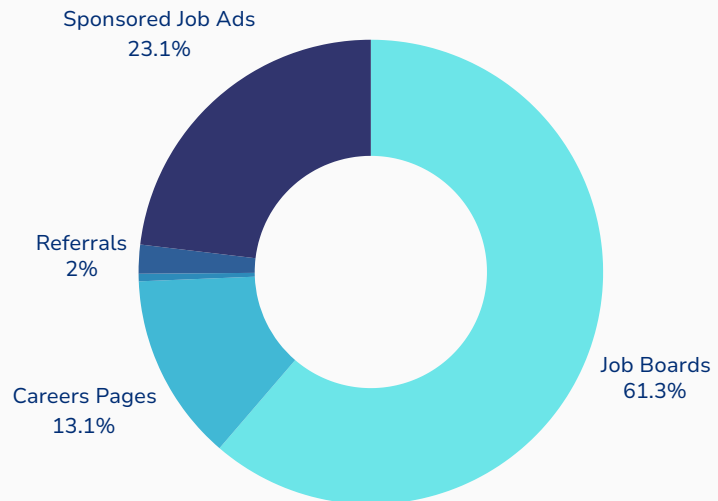
Worst month to post in 2024:
February

Where are the best places to post jobs?

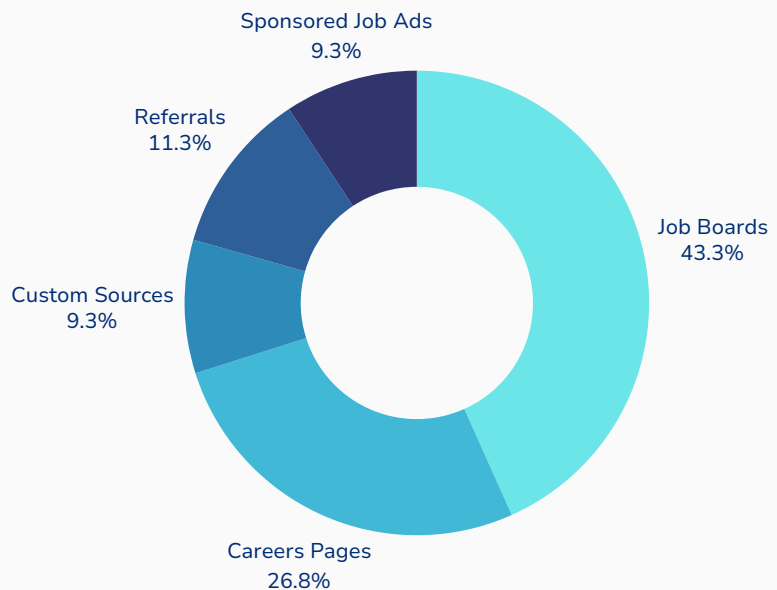
Job boards are the most common source for applicants, producing an average of **61% of applications** across all industries in our analysis. If absolute volume is your goal, [posting your job](#) to job boards is your best bet. But despite being the source of most applicants, **job boards do not produce hires at nearly the same rate as other sources.**



Applicants by source



Hires by source



Applicant Sources Explained



Job Boards

Job boards produced **61% of all applications and 42% of hires** in our analysis. While this makes job boards a reliable source for finding a candidate, they don't produce hires at the same rate of other sources like careers page, referrals, and custom links.



Careers Page

Careers pages bring in just 13% of applicants, but 26% of hires, meaning that applicants who apply directly from a company careers page are **4 times more likely to be hired** than those from job boards.



Custom Sources

These are sources in which an employer manually shares a job posting (industry-specific job boards, local and niche job boards, etc.) Custom source applicants are **14 times as likely to be hired** than those from a job board, likely because they target an employer's ideal applicants.



Referrals

Referrals account for just 2% of applicants, but 11% of hires, meaning they're **10 times more likely to be hired** than applicants from a job board.



Sponsored Job Ads

While sponsored job ads bring in 23% of applicants, they account for the lowest percentage of hires at only 9%

Job Boards Produce Quantity, But Not Always Quality

The reasons for these stark differences in applicant-to-hire rates may vary, but our experience shows us that applicants who apply from job boards are more likely to be sending out many applications in short order, with less consideration for their qualifications for the role or their interest in the specific job.

By comparison, an applicant who takes the time to research a role and apply directly through a company careers page is more likely to have spent time considering their own fit for the role and the company. Likewise, an applicant who is referred to a job is much more likely to be familiar and engaged with your employer brand. And while custom sources vary among industries, employers that use them consistently find high-quality candidates they may not have found on the major job boards.

HIRING DATA BY INDUSTRY



The following sections of this report are analyses containing comprehensive hiring data for the following industries:

Automotive

Cleaning Services

Education & Child Care

Fitness

Healthcare

Home & Commercial Services

Hospitality, Entertainment,
& Recreation

Personal Care

Restaurant & Food Service

Retail



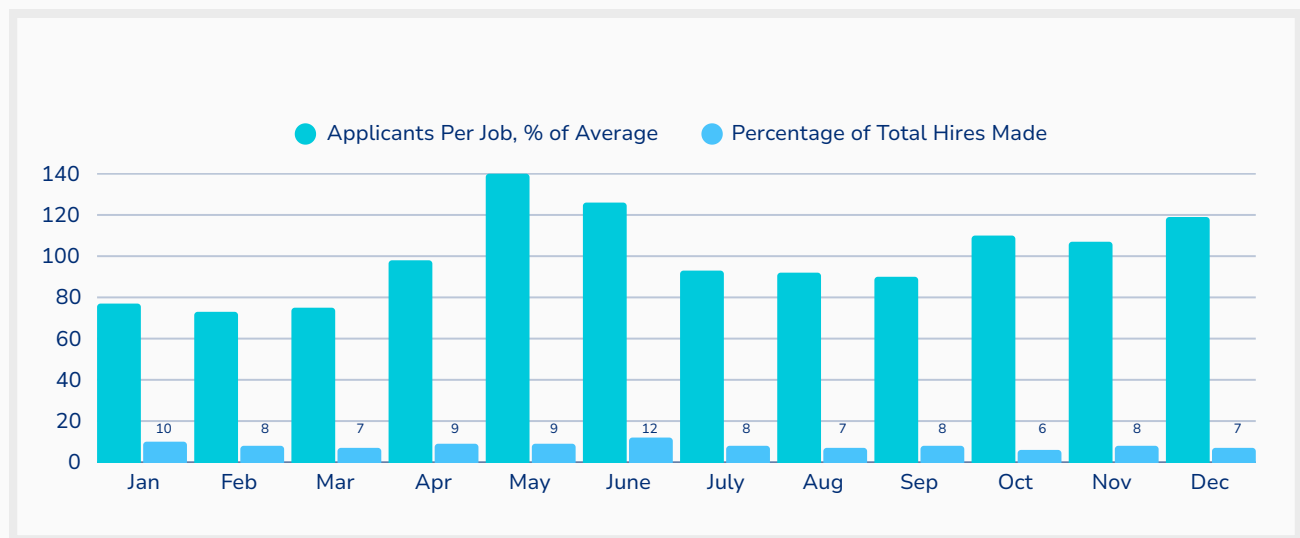
AUTOMOTIVE

Benchmark Data

Clicks Per Job	1057
Applicants Per Job	63
Applicants Per Hire	234
Average Days to Contact	3.9
Average Days to Contact Hire	2.6
Average Days to Hire	16.7

The Best Time to Hire

Applicant volume rose during the summer months, and stayed pretty strong throughout the rest of the year. Automotive businesses did a lot of their hiring in the spring and early summer, taking advantage of applicant volume peaks in May and June. There was also a significant increase in applicants at the end of the year but hiring didn't coincide as closely.



Applicant Sources

Job boards produce 66% of applicants and 55% of hires, which is certainly significant for employers. But it's not enough to write off all the other sources which result in hires at an outsized rate – like company careers pages, which account for only 6% of applicants, but 13% of hires. Referrals also bring in less than 2% of applicants, but 10% of hires.

Sources of Applicants and Hires	Job Boards	Sponsored Job Ads	Careers Page	Custom Source*	Referral
Percentage of Applicants	66%	26%	6%	0.1%	1.6%
Percentage of Hires	55%	10%	13%	11%	10%

*Custom source: A source to which an employer manually shared a job posting (industry job board, local university job boards, etc.)

Key Metrics	Automotive Industry	Average Across All Industries
Click-to-apply conversion	6%	6%
Applicant-to-interview conversion	2.2%	3%
Interview-to-hire conversion	19%	27%
Time to contact	2.6 Days	4.9 Days

Key Takeaways

- » Employers in the automotive industry have a lower than average applicant-to-interview conversion. Businesses that struggle to convert applicants into interviews despite having a high volume of applicants are likely receiving unqualified applicants in the first place. Focus your efforts on **pre-screening candidates through questions and assessments** early in the application process.
- » This industry sees more success with job board applicants than any others. CareerPlug makes it easy to post open jobs to all the major job boards in one click. Focusing on writing great job descriptions that clearly explain the details of the role and benefits of working with your company can help employers in this industry stand out from other similar opportunities.
- » Company **careers pages** have proven to be a great source of high-quality applicants in this industry. **Automotive businesses should focus on employer branding** on their careers pages to attract candidates by giving them a sense of what they can expect from the job, your company culture, and why your business is a great place to work.

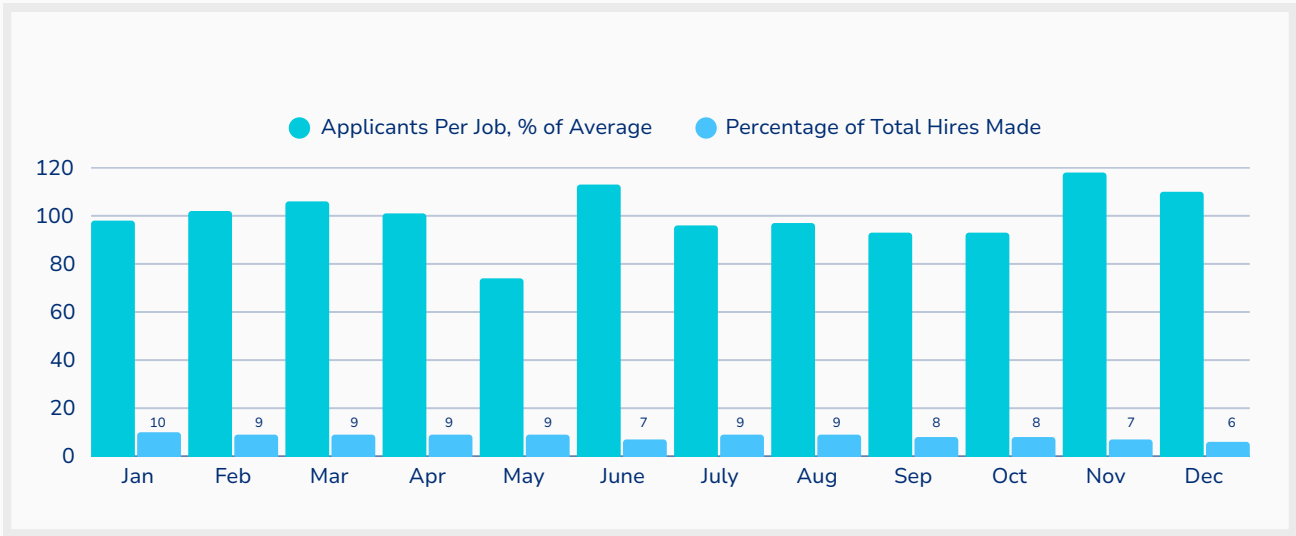
CLEANING SERVICES

Benchmark Data

Clicks Per Job	4620
Applicants Per Job	134
Applicants Per Hire	317
Average Days to Contact	5.4
Average Days to Contact Hire	2.3
Average Days to Hire	18

The Best Time to Hire

Job postings in the cleaning services industry received the highest number of applicants in November, but applicant volume ebbed and flowed overall with the most significant dip in May. In 2024, cleaning services businesses made most of their hires at the top of the year.



Applicant Sources

Job boards produce the majority of applicants (54%), and around half of hires (52%). Sponsored job ads produce a lot of applicants (22%) but only 9% of hires. Compare that to custom sources, which also accounts for 9% of hires—but less than .1% of applicants. This means custom sources turns applicants into hires at a much higher rate.

Sources of Applicants and Hires	Job Boards	Sponsored Job Ads	Careers Page	Custom Source*	Referral
Percentage of Applicants	54%	22%	22%	>.1%	2%
Percentage of Hires	52%	9%	21%	9%	8%

*Custom source: A source to which an employer manually shared a job posting (industry job board, local university job boards, etc.)

Key Metrics	Cleaning Services Industry	Average Across All Industries
Click-to-apply conversion	3.4%	6%
Applicant-to-interview conversion	2.1%	3%
Interview-to-hire conversion	15%	27%
Time to contact	5.4 Days	4.9 Days

Key Takeaways

- » The cleaning services industry's click-to-apply rate is below average. Employers in this industry should make an effort to improve job descriptions to encourage more applicants. We recommend **including compensation and benefits information early in the job posting**, and giving job seekers as much information about the role as possible to help them align themselves with the position.
- » A 15% interview-to-hire conversion rate is one of the lowest in our study – it's also down from 20% last year. Cleaning services employers should focus on evaluating candidates more thoroughly earlier in the hiring process – through pre-screen questions, phone screens, or assessments – so that you're only inviting qualified candidates to interview. An [applicant tracking system like CareerPlug](#) can automate this kind of top-of-funnel candidate screening for you.
- » Custom sources have proven to be a highly successful recruiting method for this industry. Employers found success posting on local job boards, but the most effective custom source of all was **referral emails to customers**. Cleaning services businesses should consider emailing their customers to let them know when they're hiring, as it's proven to be a great source of high-quality applicants in this industry.

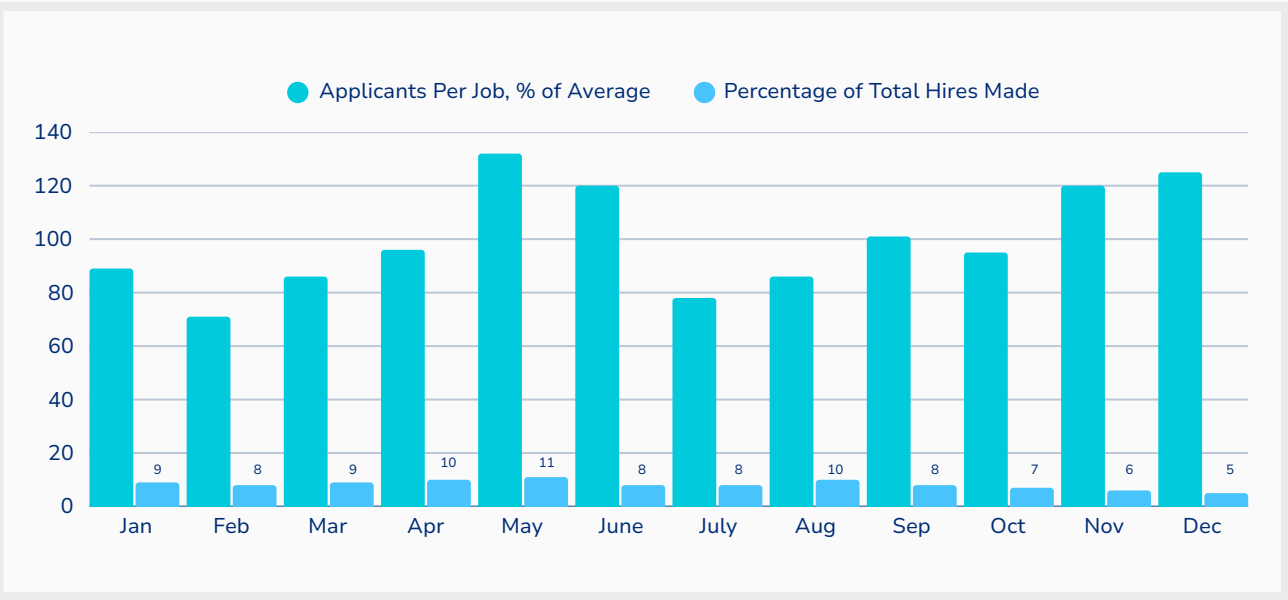
EDUCATION & CHILDCARE

Benchmark Data

Clicks Per Job	1546
Applicants Per Job	55
Applicants Per Hire	57
Average Days to Contact	4.2
Average Days to Contact Hire	2.6
Average Days to Hire	22

The Best Time to Hire

Education and childcare hiring in 2024 reflected normal seasonality for this industry. The end of the school year saw applicant volume increase in May and June with additional peaks in November and December. Employers hired at more steady rates throughout the year, and did the least amount of hiring in Q4.



Applicant Sources

This industry has more success with **sponsored job ads** on major job boards (like Indeed and ZipRecruiter) than any other industry in our study. At the same time, the organic (non-sponsored) job postings on those same job boards produce the fewest hires among our industries. **Careers pages** and **custom sources** continue to be better sources for candidates that convert to hires at a much higher rate.

Sources of Applicants and Hires	Job Boards	Sponsored Job Ads	Careers Page	Custom Source*	Referral
Percentage of Applicants	49%	33%	14%	1%	3%
Percentage of Hires	36%	20%	27%	5%	5%

*Custom source: A source to which an employer manually shared a job posting (industry job board, local university job boards, etc.)

Key Metrics	Education & Childcare Industry	Average Across All Industries
Click-to-apply conversion	3.6%	6%
Applicant-to-interview conversion	6%	3%
Interview-to-hire conversion	30%	27%
Time to contact	4.2 Days	4.9 Days

Key Takeaways

- » This industry has lower than average success with job boards. This means that diversifying applicant sources is key. Creating an employee referral program could be helpful for getting existing employees to share your open roles with their network. Employee referrals typically stick around longer, too.
- » You should also focus your efforts on **improving your employer brand online**. Since company career pages yield 27% of hires, it's important to ensure that you have an attractive careers page that results in more applications from high-quality talent.
- » This industry has a below average click-to-apply conversion, meaning that many job seekers aren't applying once they view the job posting. To help, consider putting **compensation and benefits at the top of the job posting**, and let job seekers know if you're offering any additional perks like a sign-on bonus or flexible scheduling.

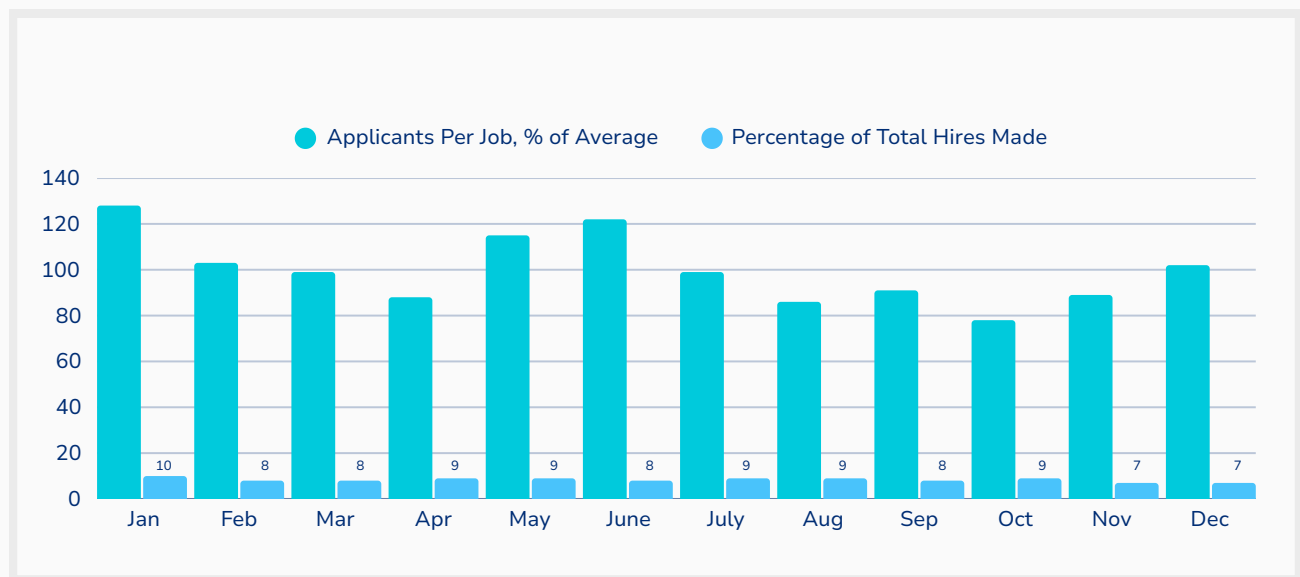
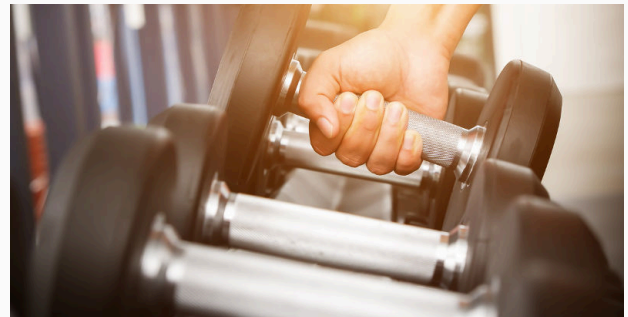
FITNESS

Benchmark Data

Clicks Per Job	2981
Applicants Per Job	79
Applicants Per Hire	120
Average Days to Contact	6.5
Average Days to Contact Hire	4.8
Average Days to Hire	23

The Best Time to Hire

We all know New Year's resolutions push people toward the gym at the beginning of the year. As usual, January saw the highest hiring activity in the fitness industry. Applicant counts also spiked in the summer months, with hiring staying pretty consistent throughout the rest of the year.



Applicant Sources

Company careers pages are responsible for 39% of all hires despite only bringing in 29% of applicants. Compare that to job boards, which bring in 59% of applicants, but convert to hires at a much lower rate, resulting in only 39% of hires overall. Fitness employer careers pages remain among the highest performing of any industry in our study, year after year.

Sources of Applicants and Hires	Job Boards	Sponsored Job Ads	Careers Page	Custom Source*	Referral
Percentage of Applicants	59%	8%	29%	.2%	3%
Percentage of Hires	39%	4%	39%	4%	12%

*Custom source: A source to which an employer manually shared a job posting (industry job board, local university job boards, etc.)

Key Metrics	Fitness Industry	Average Across All Industries
Click-to-apply conversion	2.6%	6%
Applicant-to-interview conversion	1.6%	3%
Interview-to-hire conversion	51%	27%
Time to contact	6.5 Days	4.9 Days

Key Takeaways

- » One explanation for the extraordinary careers page hire rate is that fitness is an industry with a huge overlap between their customers and their potential employees – people who love coming to your gym are often the people that are best qualified and most interested in joining your team. **Focus your efforts on marketing your employment opportunities to your customers.** Investing in a [strong careers page](#) and making it visible and accessible to your customers is a great way to maximize this source.
- » One underutilized source of high-quality applicants is referrals. Like careers page applicants, **referrals convert to hires at a very high rate.** Create an [employee referral program](#) that incentivizes your current employees to recruit from their own networks. You can also prospect your customers for referrals. Consider emailing your customers to let them know when you're hiring and including a link to your careers page that they can easily share with others.
- » The fitness industry has a slower than average time-to-contact. **Contact applicants sooner** so that you can convert more of them into interviews. Consider using [automated interview scheduling](#) or [text recruiting](#) to speed up your contact times and avoid losing quality applicants to competitors.

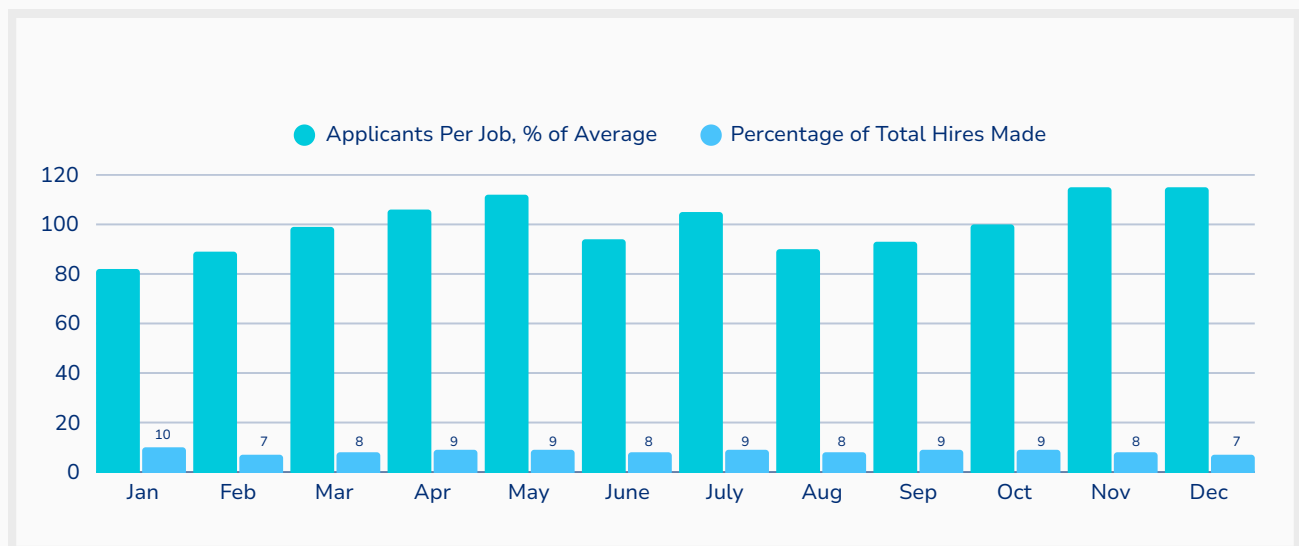
HEALTHCARE

Benchmark Data

Clicks Per Job	771
Applicants Per Job	44
Applicants Per Hire	139
Average Days to Contact	4.8
Average Days to Contact Hire	3.7
Average Days to Hire	20

The Best Time to Hire

Healthcare saw the most applicant activity starting in May with the biggest upswings in November and December. Employers did most of their hiring in January, but stayed relatively consistent throughout the year, with the least amount of hires made in February and December.



Applicant Sources

Custom sources are very effective channels for recruiting high-quality candidates in the healthcare industry. Healthcare companies receive just 1% of their applicants from custom sources but 14% of hires — this is more than referrals and sponsored job ads! In 2024, our clients made use of custom sources such as industry-specific job boards like [myCNAjobs](#), local and state government job boards, career fairs, and referral programs for employees and customers.

Sources of Applicants and Hires	Job Boards	Sponsored Job Ads	Careers Page	Custom Source*	Referral
Percentage of Applicants	64%	28%	4%	1%	2%
Percentage of Hires	50%	10%	15%	14%	9%

*Custom source: A source to which an employer manually shared a job posting (industry job board, local university job board, etc.)

Key Metrics	Healthcare Industry	Average Across All Industries
Click-to-apply conversion	5.7%	6%
Applicant-to-interview conversion	2.7%	3%
Interview-to-hire conversion	26%	27%
Time to contact	4.8 Days	4.9 Days

Key Takeaways

- » Our healthcare clients (largely home healthcare businesses) typically see a lower-than-average number of applicants per job, likely because the field is more specialized than our other industries. In 2022, that number was 12 applicants per job posting; in 2023, 28. This year brought a bit of an increase, but it still remains lower than average at 44.
- » Because of the low applicant-per-job rate, it's important for home healthcare businesses to **contact applicants quickly** (using automated interview scheduling software can help you engage your applicants earlier in the process) and **create a great candidate experience** to get more candidates to say yes to your offers. The data shows that home healthcare employers contact candidates within 4-5 days – **we suggest contacting within 24 hours**. An ATS like CareerPlug can automate this fast candidate outreach for you.
- » Healthcare employers should take the time to **explore niche applicant sources**: industry-specific job boards, local and university job boards, and in-person events like career fairs. CareerPlug integrates with two major home healthcare industry job boards – myCNAjobs and the Home Care Association of America – which means that with just one click, your jobs are automatically distributed where the best applicants are searching.

HOME & COMMERCIAL SERVICES

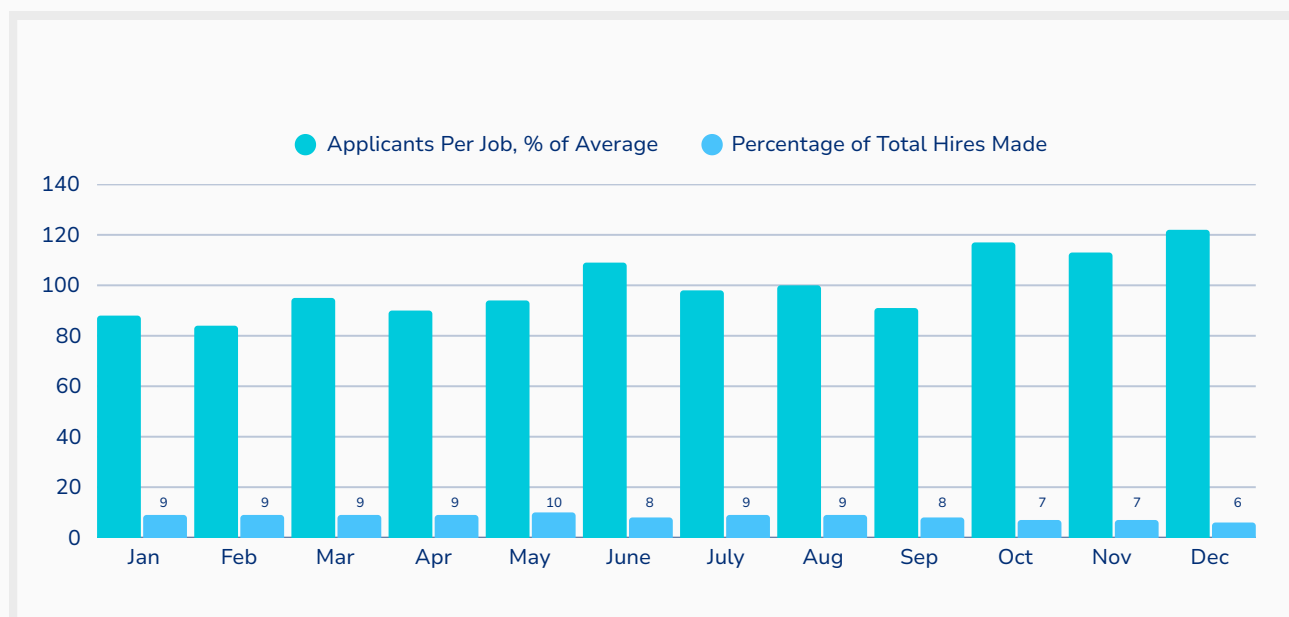
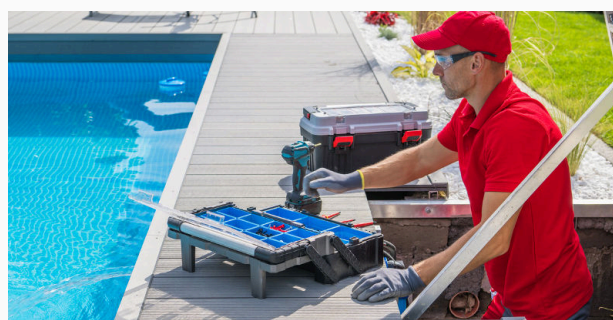


Benchmark Data

Clicks Per Job	1737
Applicants Per Job	93
Applicants Per Hire	312
Average Days to Contact	4.9
Average Days to Contact Hire	2.8
Average Days to Hire	21

The Best Time to Hire

Home & commercial services job postings received the most applicants in the second half of the year, with applicant volume peaking in December. However, this didn't coincide with when employers were doing the most hiring, in May. As a result, they may have missed out on that heightened applicant activity.



Applicant Sources

Job boards bring the largest share of applicants at 63% and about 59% of hires, so they shouldn't be counted out. However, referrals bring in just 1.5% of applicants, but an outsized 9% of hires, making them a much more effective source of high-quality candidates.

Sources of Applicants and Hires	Job Boards	Sponsored Job Ads	Careers Page	Custom Source*	Referral
Percentage of Applicants	63%	29%	7%	.1%	1.5%
Percentage of Hires	59%	15%	11%	5%	9%

*Custom source: A source to which an employer manually shared a job posting (industry job board, local university job boards, etc.)

Key Metrics	Home & Commercial Services Industry	Average Across All Industries
Click-to-apply conversion	5.3%	6%
Applicant-to-interview conversion	2%	3%
Interview-to-hire conversion	16%	27%
Time to contact	4.9 Days	4.9 Days

Key Takeaways

- » Home & commercial services employers have below average conversion rates throughout the hiring funnel, with one of the lowest interview-to-hire conversion rates in our study. One explanation for the low applicant conversion rates is that this is an industry that suffers from a high rate of low-quality applicants and candidate ghosting as job seekers drop out of the process after applying or interviewing. You can help increase conversion rates by reaching out to high-quality applicants quickly to engage them earlier in the hiring process
- » Additionally, this industry's average time-to-hire is around 20 days, but we recommend making the hire within 5 days to beat the competition. Using an automated interview scheduling software can help, along with text recruiting. The goal is to identify quality talent quickly and engage them before your competition scoops them up.
- » Major job boards like Indeed and ZipRecruiter are a great source for applicants, but employers in this industry see great success by **diversifying their applicant sources** to include company careers pages, employee referrals, and custom sources such as local and state government job boards, college job boards, Facebook groups, Craigslist, as well as sending referral emails to customers.

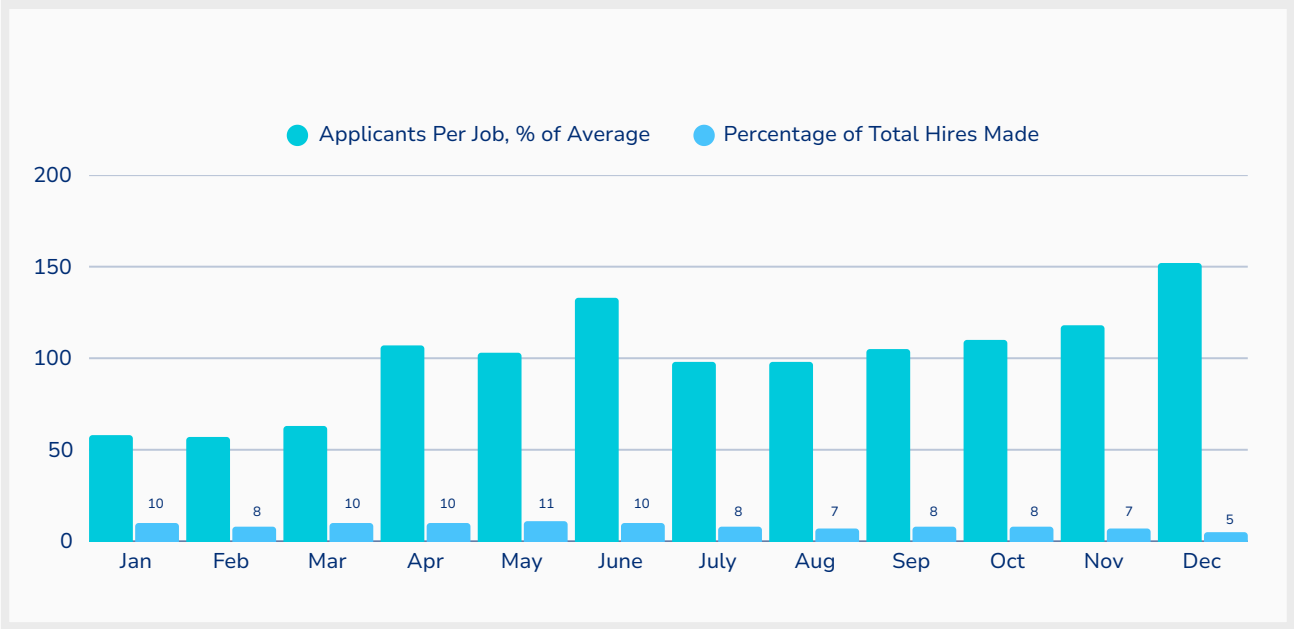
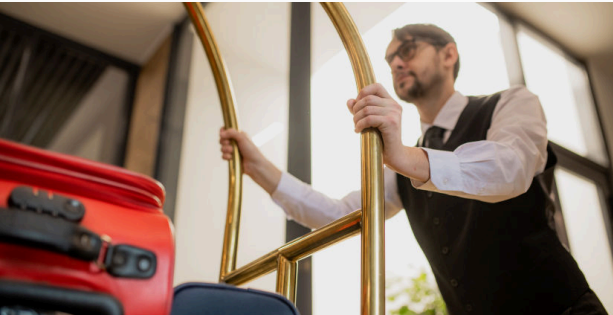
HOSPITALITY, ENTERTAINMENT, & RECREATION

Benchmark Data

Clicks Per Job	848
Applicants Per Job	117
Applicants Per Hire	165
Average Days to Contact	5.7
Average Days to Contact Hire	3.9
Average Days to Hire	21

The Best Time to Hire

Employers and applicants in this industry were not always on the same page in 2024. Job postings received the most applicants in the second half of the year, with applicant volume peaking in December. Employers did take advantage of June’s high applicant volume, doing most of their hiring in the spring and early summer.



Applicant Sources

While job boards bring in 57% of applicants total, they account for just 29% of hires. Compare this to company careers pages, which bring in only 9% of applicants, but 39% of all hires. This year, referrals were a great source of hires in this industry, bringing in 14% of hires from just 2% of applicants.

Sources of Applicants and Hires	Job Boards	Sponsored Job Ads	Careers Page	Custom Source*	Referral
Percentage of Applicants	57%	32%	9%	.3%	2%
Percentage of Hires	29%	4%	39%	13%	14%

*Custom source: A source to which an employer manually shared a job posting (industry job board, local university job boards, etc.)

Key Metrics	Hospitality, Entertainment & Recreation Industry	Average Across All Industries
Click-to-apply conversion	13.8%	6%
Applicant-to-interview conversion	2.6%	3%
Interview-to-hire conversion	24%	27%
Time to contact	5.7 Days	4.9 Days

Key Takeaways

- » While employers in this industry could never quite get the timing right on peak applicant volume, they still enjoyed a high number of applicants per job. They also had higher than average click-to-apply conversions, which indicates that job descriptions are effective and thorough.
- » Job boards produce a lower than average amount of hires in this industry. Since they may not give you the results you're looking for, **focus on the biggest drivers of hires – [company careers pages](#), [employee referrals](#), and [custom sources](#)**, such as local and university job boards, career fairs, and referral emails to customers.
- » This year, employers took longer to contact applicants than the year before, and their overall time to hire increased by six days. You'll want to move faster than that so your competition doesn't scoop up quality candidates. Try [text recruiting](#) to communicate with candidates faster and [automated interview scheduling](#) to move them along your hiring process.

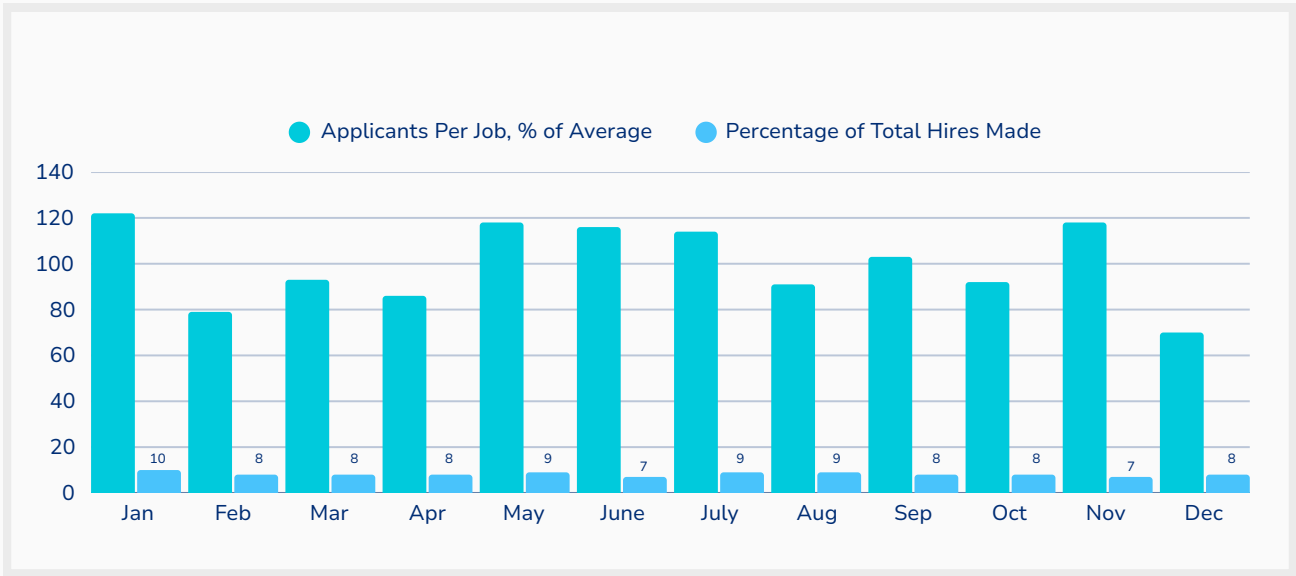
PERSONAL CARE

Benchmark Data

Clicks Per Job	942
Applicants Per Job	50
Applicants Per Hire	112
Average Days to Contact	5.7
Average Days to Contact Hire	2.7
Average Days to Hire	21

The Best Time to Hire

Our data shows that applicant volume peaked in January, with another big uptick in November. Employers did most of their hiring in January, taking advantage of the high applicant counts then, but missing out on the other peaks in volume.



Applicant Sources

Employers in the personal care industry benefited from diversifying their applicant sources in 2024, but most of their applicants and hires came from job boards. Careers pages and referrals also performed really well with referrals accounting for just 2% of applicants and 10% of hires.

Sources of Applicants and Hires	Job Boards	Sponsored Job Ads	Careers Page	Custom Source*	Referral
Percentage of Applicants	58%	23%	17%	.2%	2%
Percentage of Hires	40%	11%	28%	10%	10%

*Custom source: A source to which an employer manually shared a job posting (industry job board, local university job boards, etc.)

Key Metrics	Personal Care Industry	Average Across All Industries
Click-to-apply conversion	5.3%	6%
Applicant-to-interview conversion	2.5%	3%
Interview-to-hire conversion	36%	27%
Time to contact	5.7 Days	4.9 Days

Key Takeaways

- » The personal care industry saw lower than average click-to-apply and applicant-to-interview conversions this year. Creating [thorough job descriptions](#) with clear and accurate information about the role (including benefits and compensation) can help you receive more high-quality applicants.
- » Even though the applicant-to-interview ratio was a little lower than average, this industry saw a pretty healthy interview-to-hire rate. Pre-screen questions on your application can help ensure that only high-quality candidates make it to the interview stage.
- » Personal care employers also reported success from **referral email campaigns to customers**. If you already have a mailing list to market your services to customers, you already have an audience that loves your brand. Take this opportunity to market your [employer brand](#) to them as well.

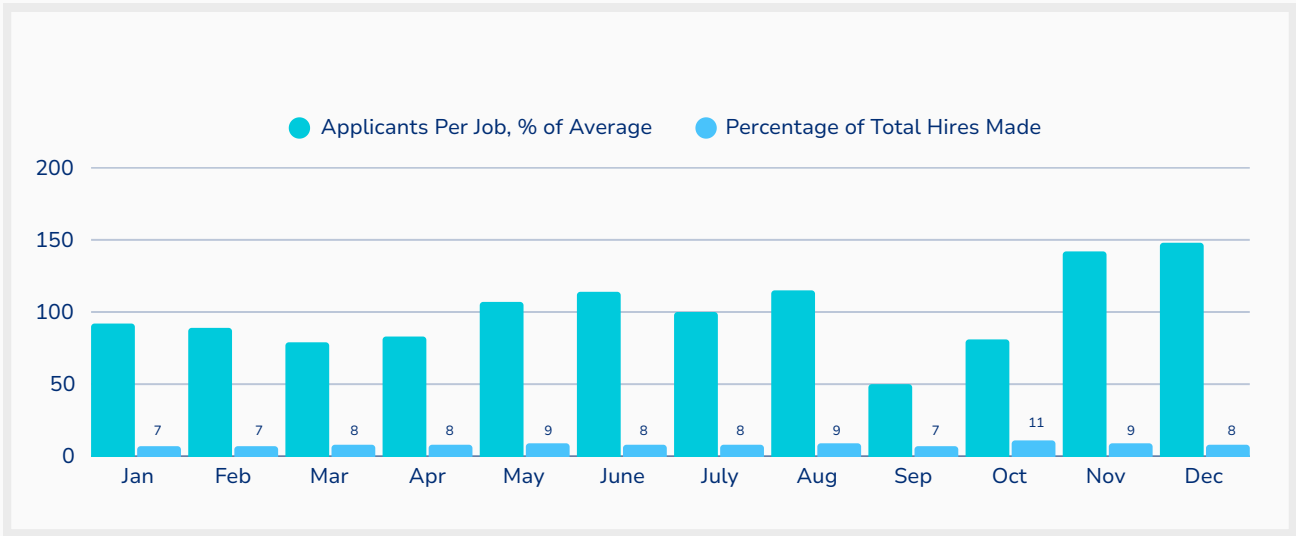
RESTAURANT & FOOD SERVICE

Benchmark Data

Clicks Per Job	2788
Applicants Per Job	112
Applicants Per Hire	166
Average Days to Contact	6.5
Average Days to Contact Hire	5.5
Average Days to Hire	16

The Best Time to Hire

November and December were the best months to hire in 2024 for the restaurant industry, with applicant volume reaching its peak. Employers took the best advantage of high applicant volume by ramping up hiring in October. They did the least amount of hiring in January and February, during what is typically a slower period in the industry.



Applicant Sources

Year after year, company careers pages consistently produce high-quality candidates for restaurants. While bringing in only 15% of applicants, company careers pages account for the majority of hires (38%). Compare that to the major job boards, which bring in the vast majority of applicants (66%), but just 26% of total hires. Custom sources and referrals also bring in fewer applicants, but they convert to hires at much higher rates than job boards.

Sources of Applicants and Hires	Job Boards	Sponsored Job Ads	Careers Page	Custom Source*	Referral
Percentage of Applicants	66%	15%	15%	.5%	3.4%
Percentage of Hires	29%	2%	38%	11.5%	17%

*Custom source: A source to which an employer manually shared a job posting (industry job board, local university job boards, etc.)

Key Metrics	Restaurant & Food Service Industry	Average Across All Industries
Click-to-apply conversion	7.9%	6%
Applicant-to-interview conversion	2.6%	3%
Interview-to-hire conversion	41%	27%
Time to contact	6 Days	4.9 Days

Key Takeaways

- » Restaurant employers were slightly slower to initially contact candidates, but made the hire quicker than any other industry – in some cases, **nearly 10 days faster than other industries!** This reflects the urgency of filling open positions in this industry.
- » Restaurant company careers pages are the primary driver of high-quality candidates and hires. This isn't surprising, as this is an industry where your customers and your potential employees have significant overlap, especially in quick-serve and fast-casual dining. People who know and love your brand will be motivated to apply to your business when they're on the job market. Make sure you're prepared to capture that inbound traffic by **having an accessible and attractive careers page** where your customers can easily apply.
- » Custom sources were another source of high-quality applicants that turned into hires for this industry, including **Craigslist, Facebook groups, and referral emails to customers.**

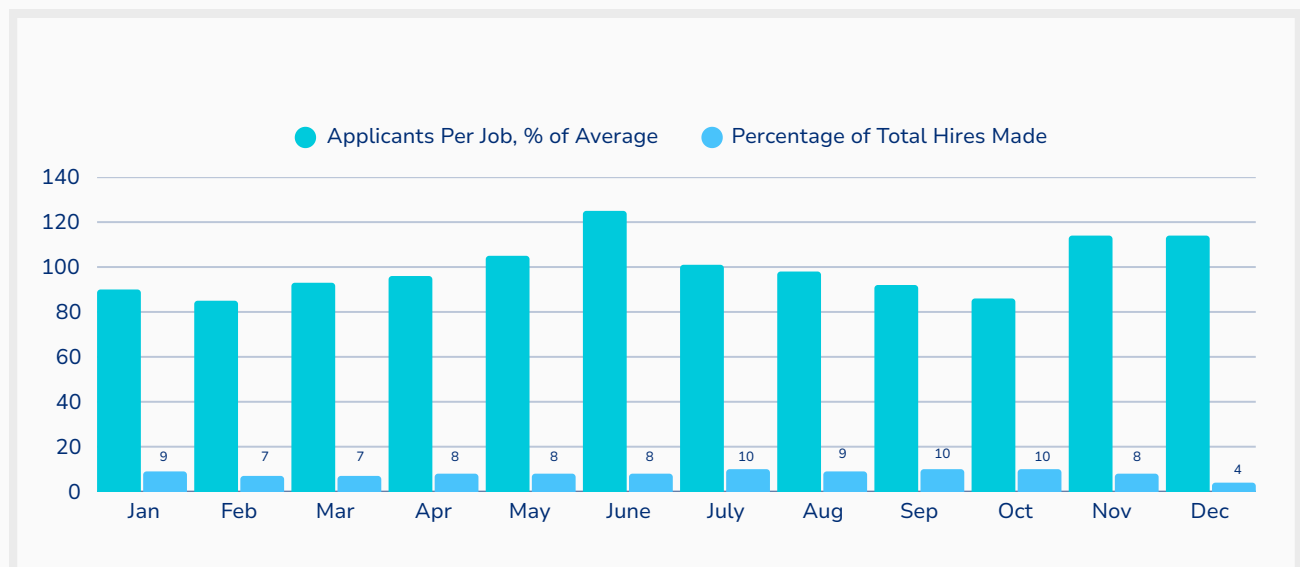
RETAIL

Benchmark Data

Clicks Per Job	1373
Applicants Per Job	97
Applicants Per Hire	153
Average Days to Contact	5.1
Average Days to Contact Hire	3.8
Average Days to Hire	19

The Best Time to Hire

There wasn't any real pattern to the rise and fall of applicant counts in the retail industry this year. The highest number of applicants came in June with some other increase in November and December. The retail industry had a hiring increase in July then started their seasonal hiring early with an equal amount of hires being made in September and October. By December, hiring slowed to the lowest rate all year.



Applicant Sources

Job boards produce the vast majority of applicants (62%), but 39% of hires. Meanwhile, company careers pages account for just 10% of applicants, but 27% of hires – a great ROI for retail recruiting. Equally as impressive: Candidates who apply from employee referrals make up only 3% of applicants, but 13% of hires.

Sources of Applicants and Hires	Job Boards	Sponsored Job Ads	Careers Page	Custom Source*	Referral
Percentage of Applicants	62%	23%	10%	1%	3%
Percentage of Hires	39%	6%	27%	13%	13%

*Custom source: A source to which an employer manually shared a job posting (industry job board, local university job boards, etc.)

Key Metrics	Retail Industry	Average Across All Industries
Click-to-apply conversion	7%	6%
Applicant-to-interview conversion	1.7%	3%
Interview-to-hire conversion	39%	27%
Time to contact	5.1 Days	4.9 Days

Key Takeaways

- » Retail sees a slightly above average click-to-apply conversion rate, but a low applicant-to-interview conversion rate. Businesses that struggle to convert applicants into interviews despite having a high volume of applicants are likely receiving unqualified applicants in the first place. Focus your efforts on **pre-screening candidates through questions and assessments** early in the application process.
- » Another factor that may be contributing to a low applicant-to-interview conversion rate is an increase in **candidate ghosting** – when candidates stop responding to businesses after submitting an application and drop out of the hiring process without explanation. **Consider using automated interview scheduling** to instantly engage high-quality candidates early in the hiring process, while also identifying unengaged applicants you shouldn't waste your time on.
- » Careers pages and referrals are huge drivers of hires for retail businesses. **Make sure your careers page is engaging** (e.g. showcase **employee testimonials** or create a brand employment video). Create an **employee referral program** that incentivizes your current employees to recruit from their own networks. You can also prospect your customers for referrals. Try emailing your customers to let them know when you're hiring and including a link to your careers page that they can easily share with others.

HOW TO IMPROVE YOUR HIRING IN 2025

Build your employer brand and showcase it on your careers page.

Company careers pages are a hugely successful source of hires, but an underutilized source of applicants overall. Candidates who take the time to research a company tend to be high-quality candidates who are more selective about where they choose to apply. **Invest in creating an engaging and attractive careers page that showcases employee testimonials, aspects of your company culture, and your core values.**

Create a job marketing strategy that doesn't rely on job boards.

Compile a list of custom sources like industry-specific job boards, community message boards, local and university job boards, and email campaigns to customers. Compile another list of employees, friends, and colleagues in your personal network to reach out for referrals. Our data shows **these sources produce the highest-quality candidates, yet the lowest percentage of applicants.** Plan on targeting them before your next round of hiring.

Develop a passive recruiting strategy so you don't miss out on great candidates.

Many industries missed out on the highest applicant volume. At CareerPlug, we have a saying, "Always be hiring." This refers to creating a passive recruiting strategy, where you have a pipeline of ideal candidates waiting in the wings. This can look like storing the contact information of candidates you were impressed by but didn't hire and posting a job to your careers page or website that's labeled as a "future opening" so you can accept applications all year long.

Communicate with candidates faster.

Our data shows that over the last 3 years, small businesses have been speeding up their hiring processes as competition in the labor market increases. In 2024, you'll want to move fast before your competition scoops up quality candidates. **Try text recruiting to communicate with candidates faster**. Texts have a 97% read rate within 15 minutes of delivery, and the average response time for a text is 90 seconds. An applicant tracking system like CareerPlug can also help you quickly evaluate candidates using a proven hiring process, allowing you to accelerate your hiring decisions without sacrificing quality.

Use hiring software with automations to reduce candidate ghosting.

One major pain point that employers report year after year is an increase in candidate ghosting – when candidates stop responding to businesses after submitting an application and drop out of the hiring process without explanation. Candidate ghosting can lead to low applicant-to-interview conversion rates. **Consider using automated interview scheduling software** to instantly engage high-quality candidates early in the hiring process.

Onboard better to improve new hire retention.

A strong onboarding process sets the tone for employee success and long-term retention. New hires who feel welcomed, supported, and prepared are more likely to stay with your company.

Streamline onboarding by providing clear expectations, structured training, and early engagement opportunities. Automate paperwork and task reminders to reduce administrative burden and focus on building connections. Investing in a great onboarding experience not only boosts retention but also accelerates productivity—ensuring new hires contribute to your business faster.



ABOUT CAREERPLUG

CareerPlug is a software company on a mission to solve the #1 challenge of running a business: attracting and hiring the right people. More than 60,000 clients love working with us because we give them a proven playbook to make the right hires. And you don't need to be an HR pro to succeed, since our software is easy enough for anyone to use. [Get a demo of CareerPlug today](#) and speak with an expert about how we can help you hire better.