



Workforce Report

icims® Insights

DECEMBER 2025

End-of-Year Report

Award-winning
data program





Big picture: December Insights

U.S. and EMEA markets saw a sharp slowdown from October to November, far steeper after November than typical seasonal dips. Elevated openings paired with hiring cuts signal structural cooling as companies prioritize caution over expansion.

Applications remain strong but hires lag — creating higher apply-to-hire ratios and tougher competition. Workers are keeping jobs but face slower mobility, while employers are dealing with longer pipelines and rising drop-off risk.

The late-year slowdown signals a cautious mindset taking hold. Companies are managing risk by slowing backfills and tightening conversion, while workers feel secure but less mobile.

BY THE NUMBERS:



Applications cool in November. Applications dropped 21% since October but were still 6% higher year over year.



Openings remain high in EMEA. Although there has been a gradual decline in openings since the spike in September, they remain 13% higher than last year.



June was hot for hiring. It marked the peak hiring month across industries in the U.S.

iCIMS Insights Workforce Reports monitor monthly labor market activity based on hundreds of millions of applicants and millions of users. Organizations can use this data as a measuring stick to anticipate and adapt to ever-changing workforce dynamics.

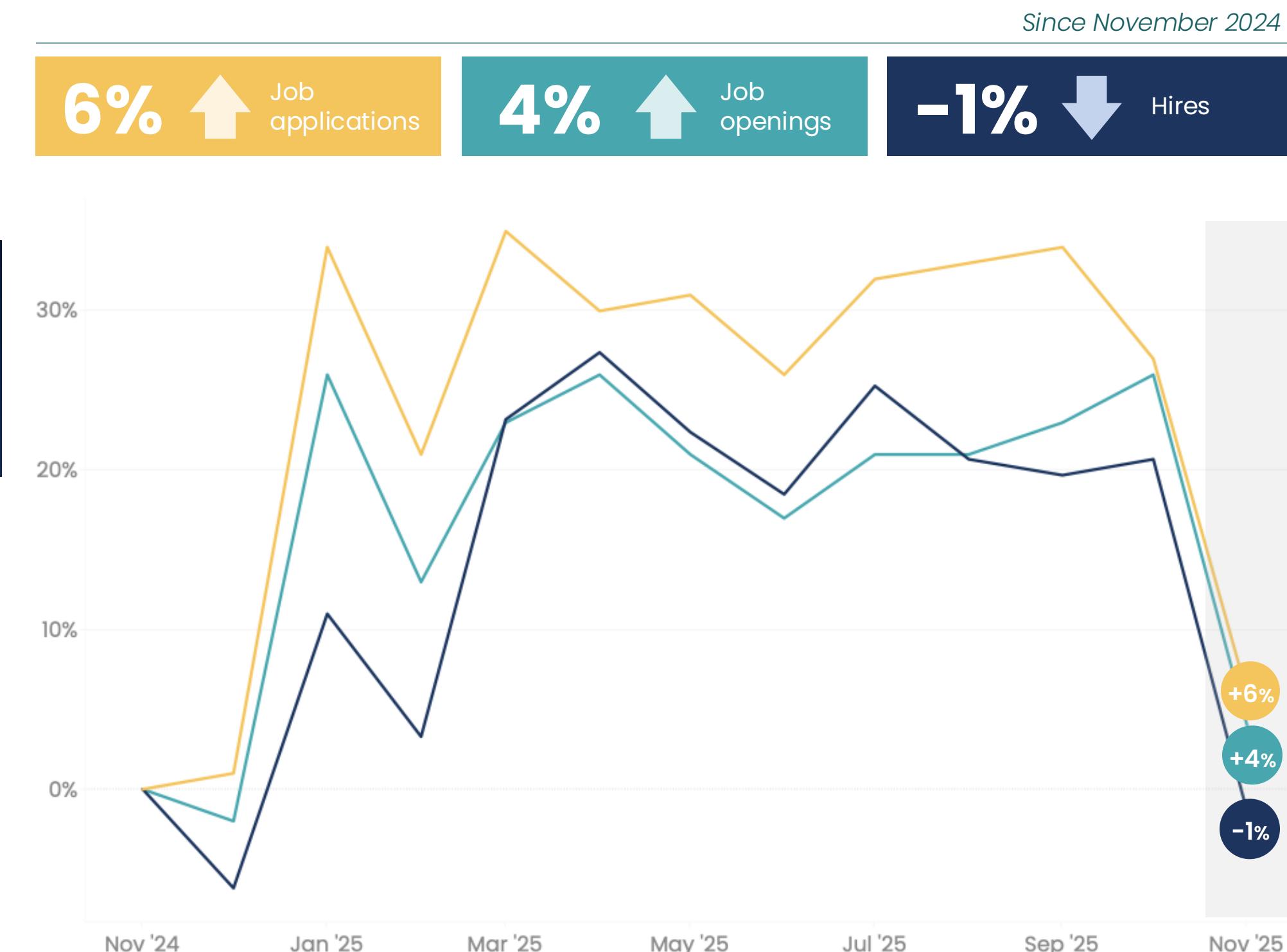


Seasonal dip or structural shift?

iCIMS Insights quick take:

Seasonality usually affects hiring; however, we are seeing some troubling trends in the job market.

- Sharp pullback is sending a mix message:** The month-over-month decline in all categories points to continued economic uncertainty combined with seasonality.
- Negative hiring trend:** Although applications and openings are still higher year over year, hiring is not keeping up. This comes as news outlets report slower hiring and backfills as companies manage their workforce numbers.
- Seasonality plays a role but not the whole story:** November hiring usually dips; however, the magnitude of this decline, paired with rising continuing jobless claims, signals a deeper labor market cooling beyond holiday effects.



The sharp drop in November isn't unexpected, but it raises the question of how much is normal seasonality versus a sign of a cooling market.



Trent Cotton,
Head of Talent
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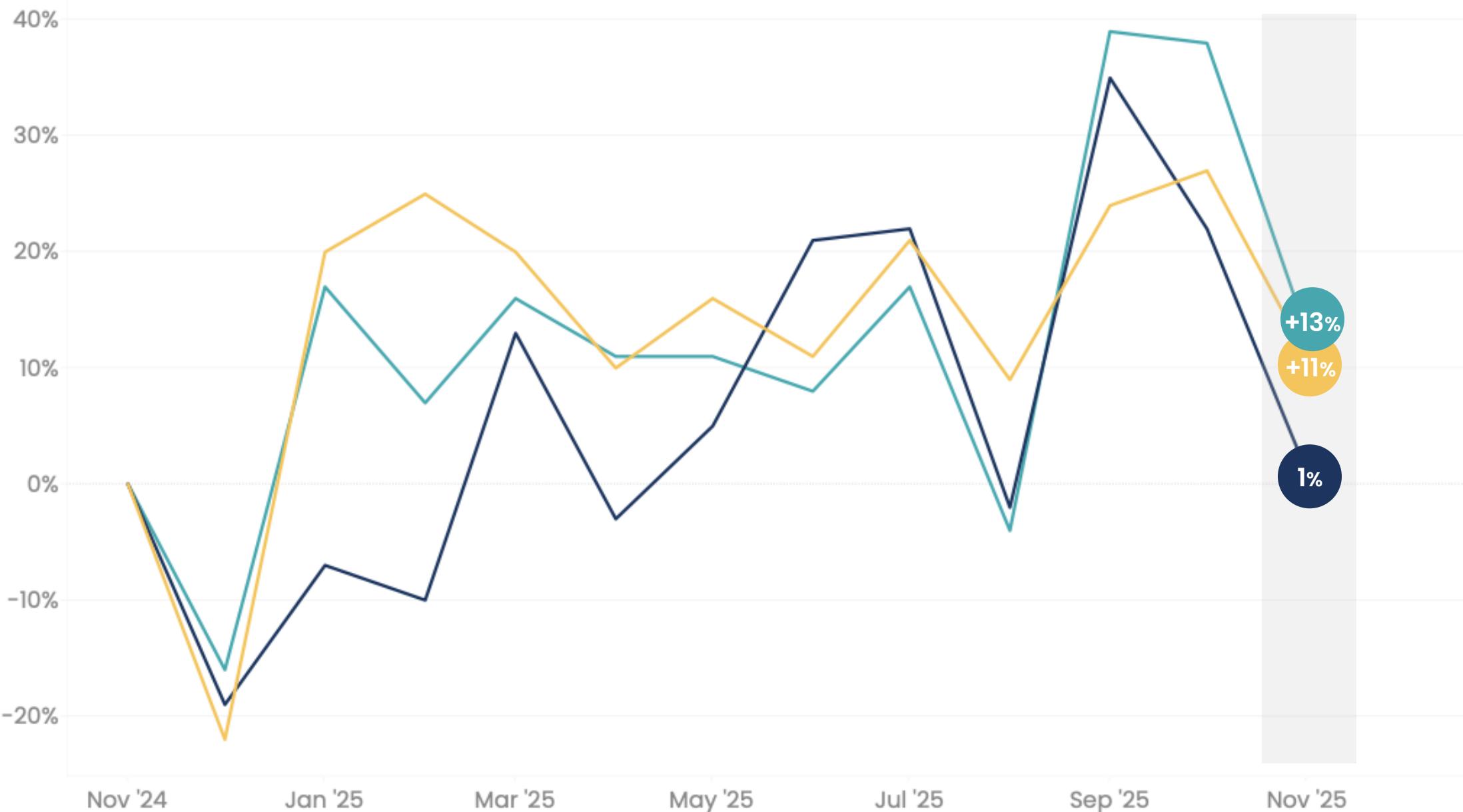
Short term spike,
followed by a cooling

iCIMS Insights quick take:

Applications track openings but hires lag – creating tougher competition and slower mobility.

- **Year-over-year growth masks late-year pullback:** The sharp September-to-November decline signals a structural slowdown – beyond seasonality – as companies curb hiring despite high job openings.
- **Candidate competition intensifies:** Applications mirror openings but hiring lags, driving higher apply-to-hire ratios, intensifying competition and reinforcing a trend of job security without mobility.
- **Spike followed by a correction:** September's peak in openings and hires was followed by a sharp November drop, signaling short-term hiring pushes tied to project or fiscal cycles, not sustained growth.

Since November 2024



EMEA platform indicators

Job openings, applications and hires
November 2024–November 2025



2025's most — and least — popular jobs

iCIMS Insights quick take:

Applicant interest varied dramatically by role type in 2025, reflecting ongoing economic uncertainty and deep talent-market imbalance.

- White collar blues:** Layoffs have flooded the market with qualified candidates. White collar jobs are still receiving heavy interest, drawing nearly double the average applicants per opening (APO). That competition comes even as the market cools and employers pull back.
- Back of house:** Food prep roles are in line with the overall market, signaling solid applicant interest. But [iCIMS research](#) found hospitality had the highest application abandonment and interview no-show rates, which creates a leaky hiring funnel.
- Still in pain:** Healthcare's worker shortage persists for both clinical and frontline staff, and the low APOs in both categories reflect that — despite the sector reporting the [highest urgency to hire](#).

HOT JOBS

Top jobs based on applicants per opening

Occupation	APO
Computer & mathematical occupations	65
Business & financial operations occupations	62
Management occupations	51
Transportation and material moving occupations	43
Food preparation and serving related occupations	33

NOT-SO-HOT-JOBS

Least popular jobs based on applicants per opening

Occupation	APO
Healthcare support occupations	25
Installation, maintenance, and repair occupations	25
Community and social services occupations	23
Educational instruction & library occupations	18
Healthcare practitioners & technical occupations	15

Overall APO in 2025: 34

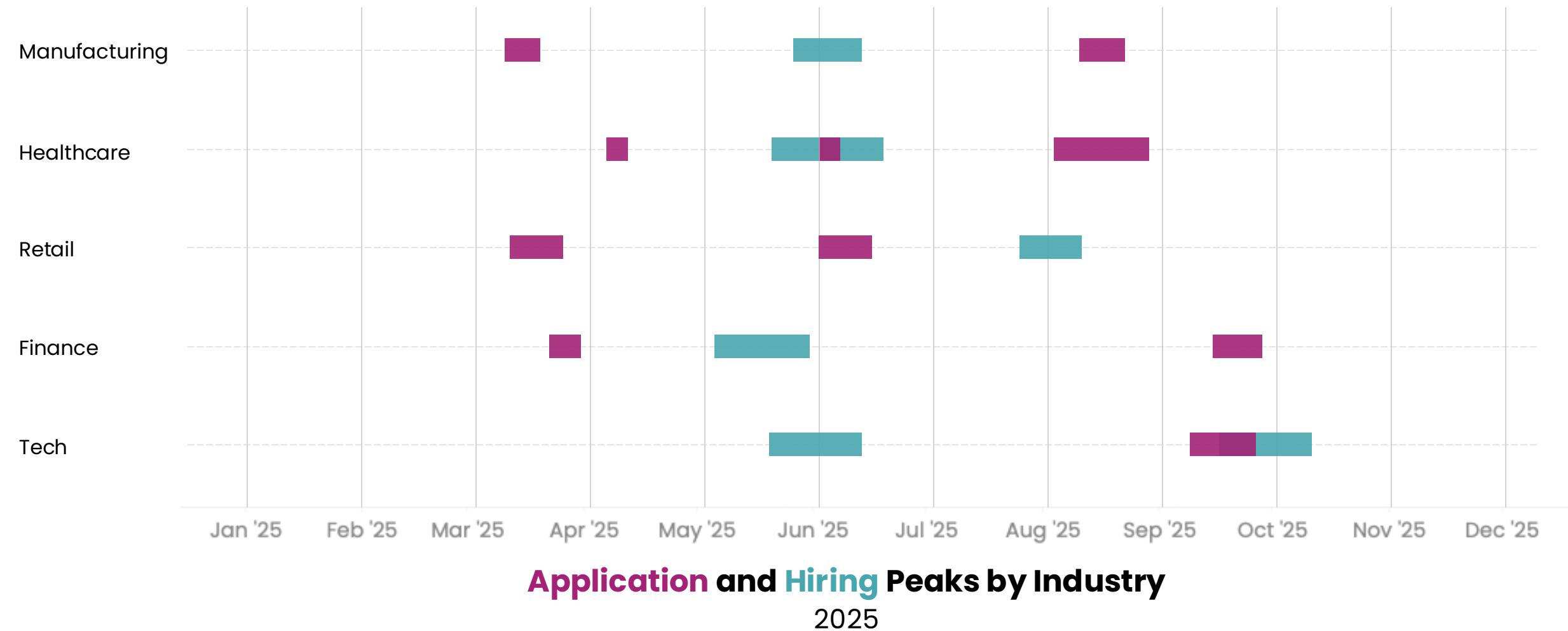


When did hiring and applications peak in 2025?

iCIMS Insights quick take:

2025's peaks point to a market moving cautiously. Job seekers acted fast, employers acted later and white-collar talent moved in waves tied to economic uncertainty.

- What's happening:** Applications tended to peak earlier than hiring across industries, reflecting strong candidate interest and cautious employer planning in the first half of 2025.
- Frontline roles:** Retail and healthcare followed predictable high-volume patterns, with early application spikes matching hiring peaks — indicating strong applicant flow but persistent conversion and retention challenges.
- Fallout:** Tech and finance saw late-year application spikes, likely tied to ongoing layoffs. However, hiring stayed flat, signaling an oversupply of candidates and cautious headcount planning.





2025 Best of Insights Research

Top findings and greatest hits from our 2025 research, including our State of CHRO and State of Frontline Hiring reports.

This year has been anything but predictable. The data we analyzed offered new clarity into the rapid and complex shifts shaping talent strategy. Recruiting has always been dynamic, but 2025 raised the bar. Here are the top insights that stood out and that will influence how we approach 2026 and beyond.



Trent Cotton,
Head of Talent Acquisition
Insights & Analyst Relations
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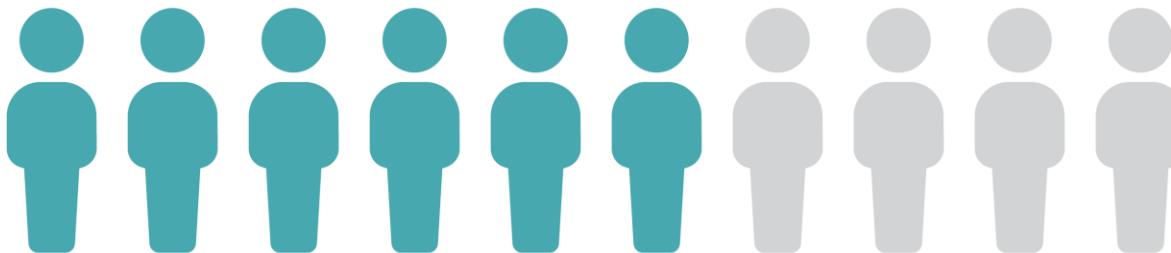


Frontline hiring urgency meets friction

iCIMS Insights quick take:

iCIMS 2025 State of Frontline Hiring Report found that urgency to fill frontline positions was high, but bottlenecks in the process are slowing hiring – not a lack of applicants.

- **Frontline hiring under pressure:** 9 in 10 frontline hiring managers say filling roles is urgent, with 62% citing candidate quality as a leading obstacle.
- **Friction across the funnel:** One-third of hiring managers say interviews are the biggest drop-off point in the hiring process. Yet high application abandonment from workers suggests the friction is at the top of the funnel.
- **Wake-up call:** 69% of frontline workers believe employers “always” or “sometimes” ignore what job seekers want in the hiring experience. This message for talent teams is loud: ignore candidate-first experiences, and your pipeline will begin to feel the squeeze.



6 out of 10 have started but **not finished** an application

TOP REASONS WHY:

- 1 50% **say it's too lengthy/time consuming**
- 2 35% **feel they lack the qualifications**
- 3 31% **cite the lack of pay transparency**

Source: [iCIMS 2025 State of Frontline Hiring](#)



CHROs are behind the wheel and driving change

iCIMS Insights quick take:

iCIMS 2025 State of the CHRO found that HR is the unseen engine accelerating business transformation.

- **Raise your hand:** In our second annual report, 88% of CHROs agreed they were driving strategic change across the business.
- **The TA disconnect:** There was no clear consensus on TA's main objective. One third of CHROs see it as a core function, another third as a support function, and the remaining third as primarily transactional.
- **Get in step:** Two-thirds of CIOs said they're already working closely with HR on TA initiatives. It's a critical move as 85% of HR leaders said TA tech was now a bigger priority than ever before.



34%

33%

33%

of CHROs say their organization views TA as a **core strategic function**.

of CHROs say their organization views TA as a **support function**.

of CHROs say their organization views TA as a **transactional process**.

Source: iCIMS 2025 State of the CHRO Report

1,000 U.S.-based CHROs and 500 U.S.-based CIOs with 1,000+ employees worldwide



Seeing is believing: AI adopters find more value than skeptics

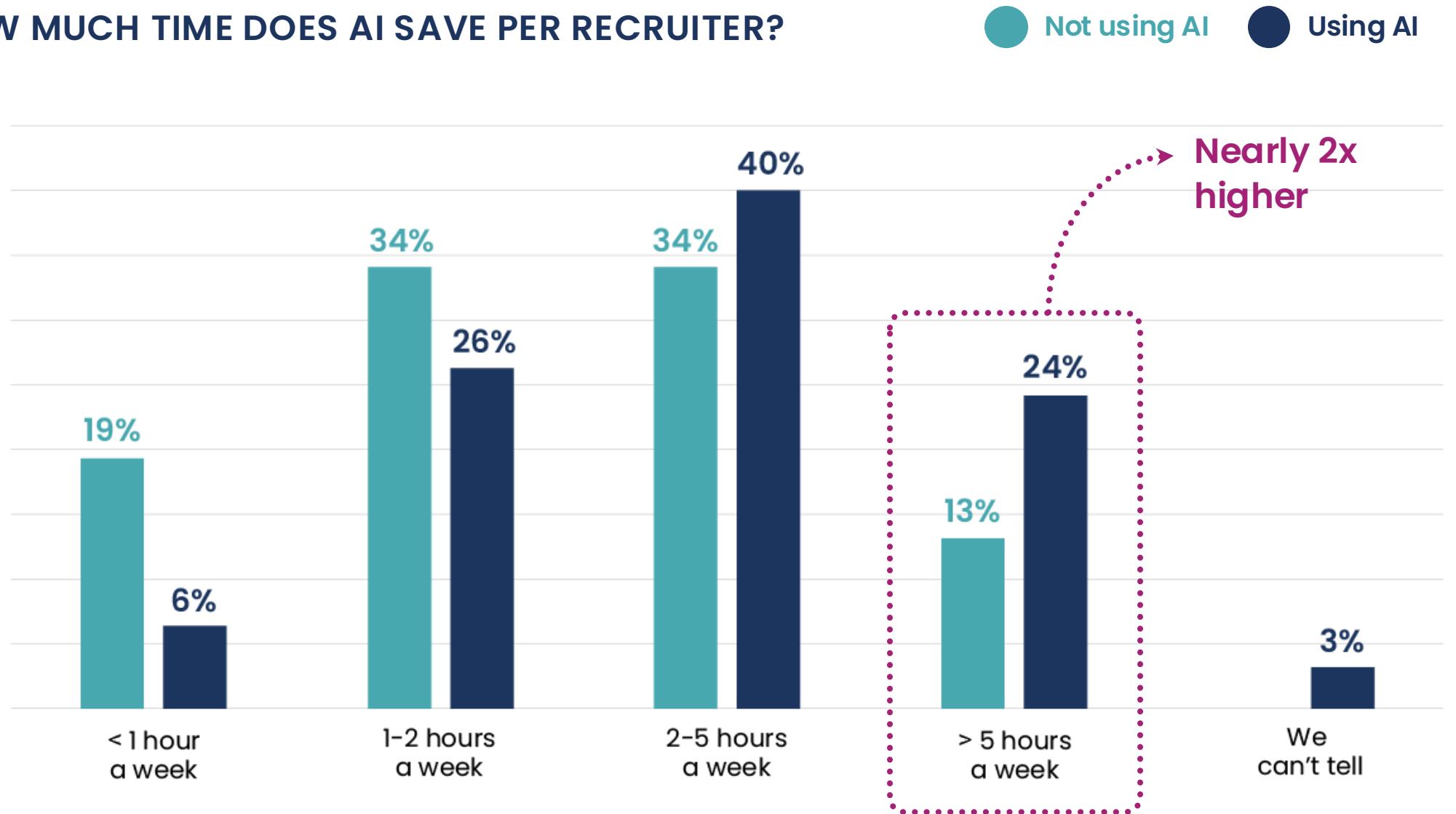
iCIMS Insights quick take:

There is a definitive divide in perceived value between TA teams using AI versus those that are not.

- **Perception vs. reality:** Most AI adopters (64%) estimate saving over two hours per recruiter weekly. Notably, 24% save more than five hours a week, a rate nearly double what nonusers anticipate.
- **The tipping point:** 24% of AI-using organizations report saving over 5 hours weekly per recruiter — almost double the rate of non-AI users. This suggests that once AI delivers savings beyond 5 hours, its impact on efficiency and ROI benefits become undeniable.
- **Strategy:** The data indicates that familiarity with AI positively affects estimated value and efficiency. Start small with your team and increase familiarity with AI over time. Be sure to measure the results to increase trust in AI.

Companies that aren't yet using AI are
more pessimistic about its value/efficiency

HOW MUCH TIME DOES AI SAVE PER RECRUITER?





Want more great insights?

iCIMS 2025 State of Frontline Hiring

Frontline roles are the backbone of our workforce, but hiring for them continues to be challenging. Based on fresh data from over 2,000 frontline workers and hiring managers across healthcare, hospitality, manufacturing and retail, our [2025 State of Frontline Hiring Report](#) uncovers why companies are struggling to fill roles.

iCIMS 2025 State of the CHRO Report

The role of HR has never been more strategic. Learn how 1,000 CHROs and chief people officers are navigating the shift and how 500 CIOs see HR navigating TA tech in [iCIMS 2025 State of the CHRO Report](#).

iCIMS Talent Experience Report

Explore what candidates want right now and how talent acquisition pros are delivering those experiences in our second annual [Talent Experience Report](#).



About iCIMS

iCIMS is a leading provider of talent acquisition technology that enables organizations everywhere to build winning workforces.

Visit www.icims.com to learn more.



Data Breakthrough Awards:
2025 Business Intelligence Solution Provider of the Year

Workforce data is vital to driving business forward.

iCIMS Insights provides data that is:

- Current
- Cross-industry
- Dual-focused on employer and job seeker intentions and activity

Data derived from:



3.3M+ global platform users



223M+ applications in 2024



630M+ candidate profiles



5.4M+ hires in 2024