



ICIMS 

# Workforce Report

---

Our data and insights lead to  
your recruiting success.

February 2026 – Spotlight on healthcare

# The Big Picture

Labor market momentum strengthened into early 2026, with all three key metrics — applications, openings and hires — rising month over month. However, the year-over-year increases are smaller than those of 2025, suggesting a softer start as both applicants and employers adjust to shifting market dynamics.

The **healthcare sector** continues to lead the rebound, showing strong applicant growth and steady gains in openings for clinical roles compared to late 2025. Yet hiring remains below prior-year levels, creating friction in conversion rates and the need for improved process efficiency to capitalize on renewed activity.

Nonclinical markets tell a similar story of imbalance: candidate interest is high, but hiring lags. With applicants per opening (APO) hitting a record high, employers face both opportunity and risk. The chance to refine quality while supply is strong, emphasizes the imperative to move fast before talent moves on.

## TOP FINDINGS



**A strong start**, but the year-over-year increases are smaller than those of 2025.



**Clinical applications are on the rise**, indicating a potential change in the interest for top talent to make a move.



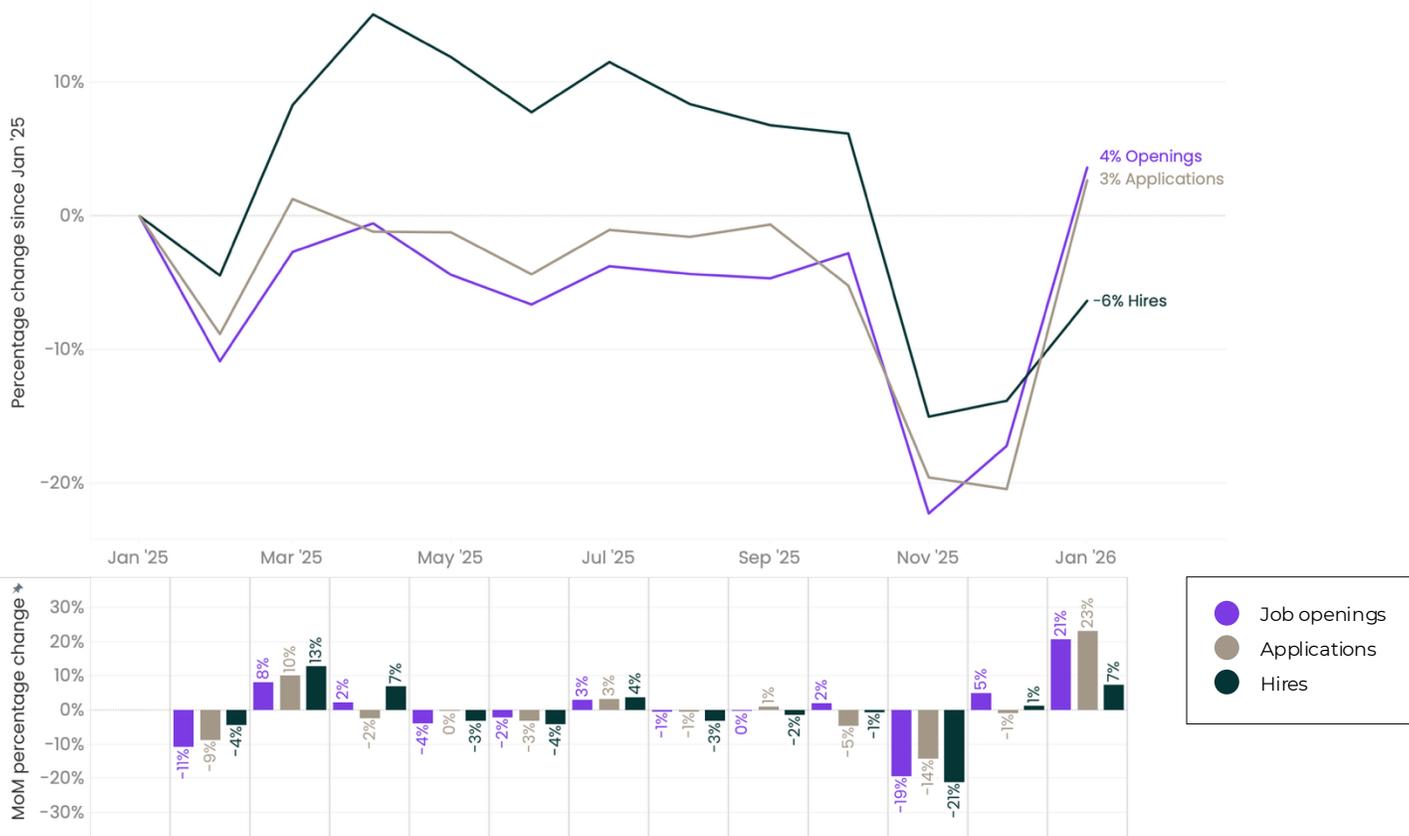
**As applicant per opening hits a new high**, will need to find a balance between speed and quality.

**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.

# Openings and applications rise, but can hiring keep up?

## PLATFORM INDICATORS

Job openings, applications and hires  
January 2025 – January 2026



### ICIMS INSIGHTS QUICK TAKE

Although the activity in January is on the rise, it is still not on par with last year.

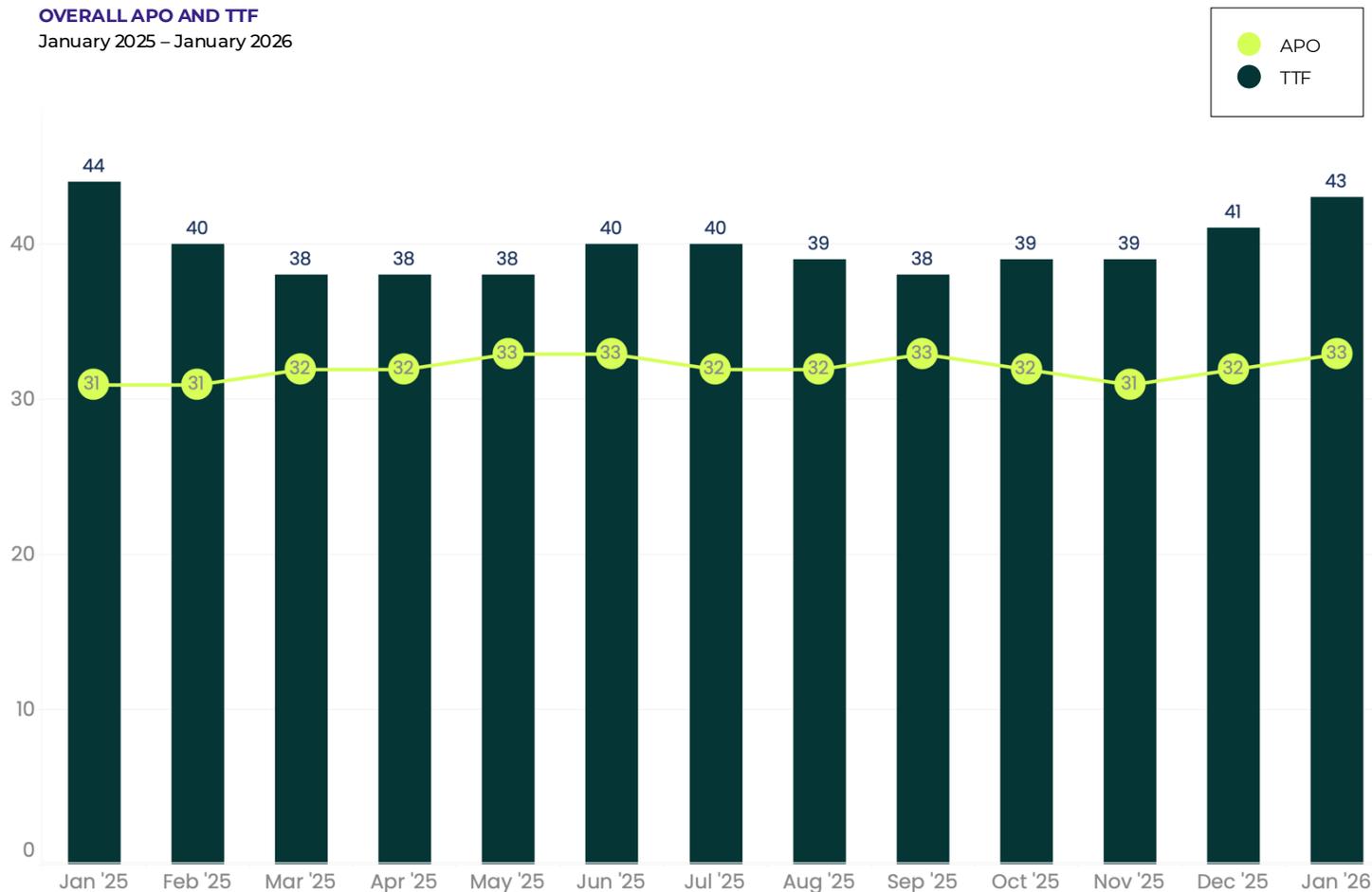
**Reporting update:** We've expanded our reports to show both month over month and year over year changes, giving a clearer view of short-term trends and long-term shifts. Data now directly compares 2025 to 2026 to better capture current labor market dynamics.

**Increased activity in January:** The three key metrics tracked increased last month, but this is a typical yearly trend. However, if we review data from last year, the year-over-year increase in applications and openings is lower. This could indicate a softer start to the year as both applicants and organizations navigate the market.

**Hiring continues to lag:** This gap points to ongoing friction in hiring capacity, decision speed or candidate-to-hire yield despite increased applicant flow.

# A bigger funnel doesn't fix a slower flow

**OVERALL APO AND TTF**  
January 2025 – January 2026



## ICIMS INSIGHTS QUICK TAKE

Even with higher applicant volume, time to fill refuses to decline, spotlighting interview and decision bottlenecks.

### Higher applicant volume does not mean lower time to fill.

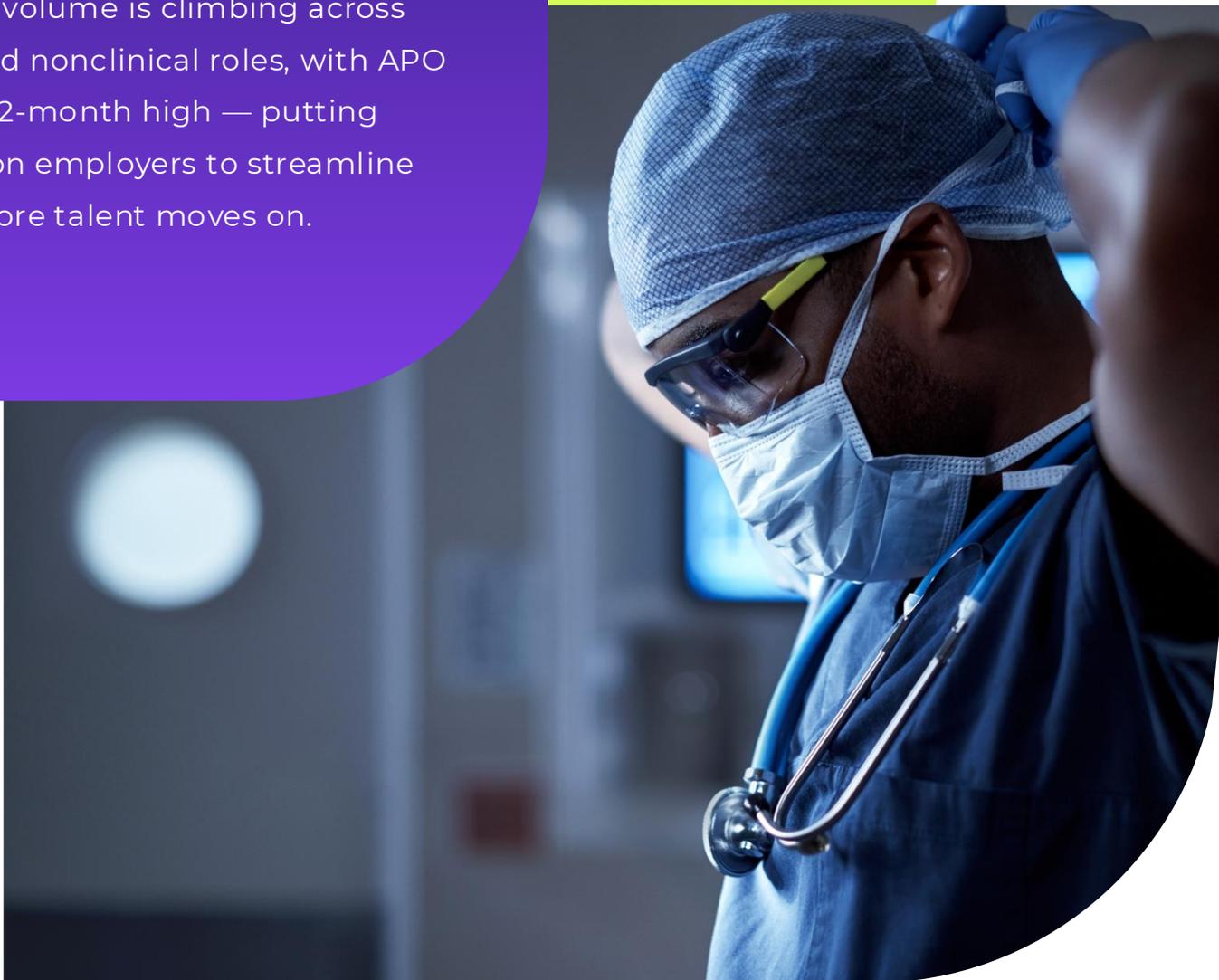
Despite month-to-month shifts, time to fill (TTF) stayed between 38–44 days and closed January at about 43, showing that cycle time is limited by process, not pipeline. This decoupling suggests that interview throughput and decision velocity are the constraints.

**Friction in the middle.** Our [Frontline Hiring Report](#) highlighted the common areas of friction for both managers and candidates. Both indicate the greatest areas of opportunity are in the screening and interviewing phases of the process. If your applicant volume is high and TTF remains unchanged, find ways to remove bottlenecks in these two stages of the process.

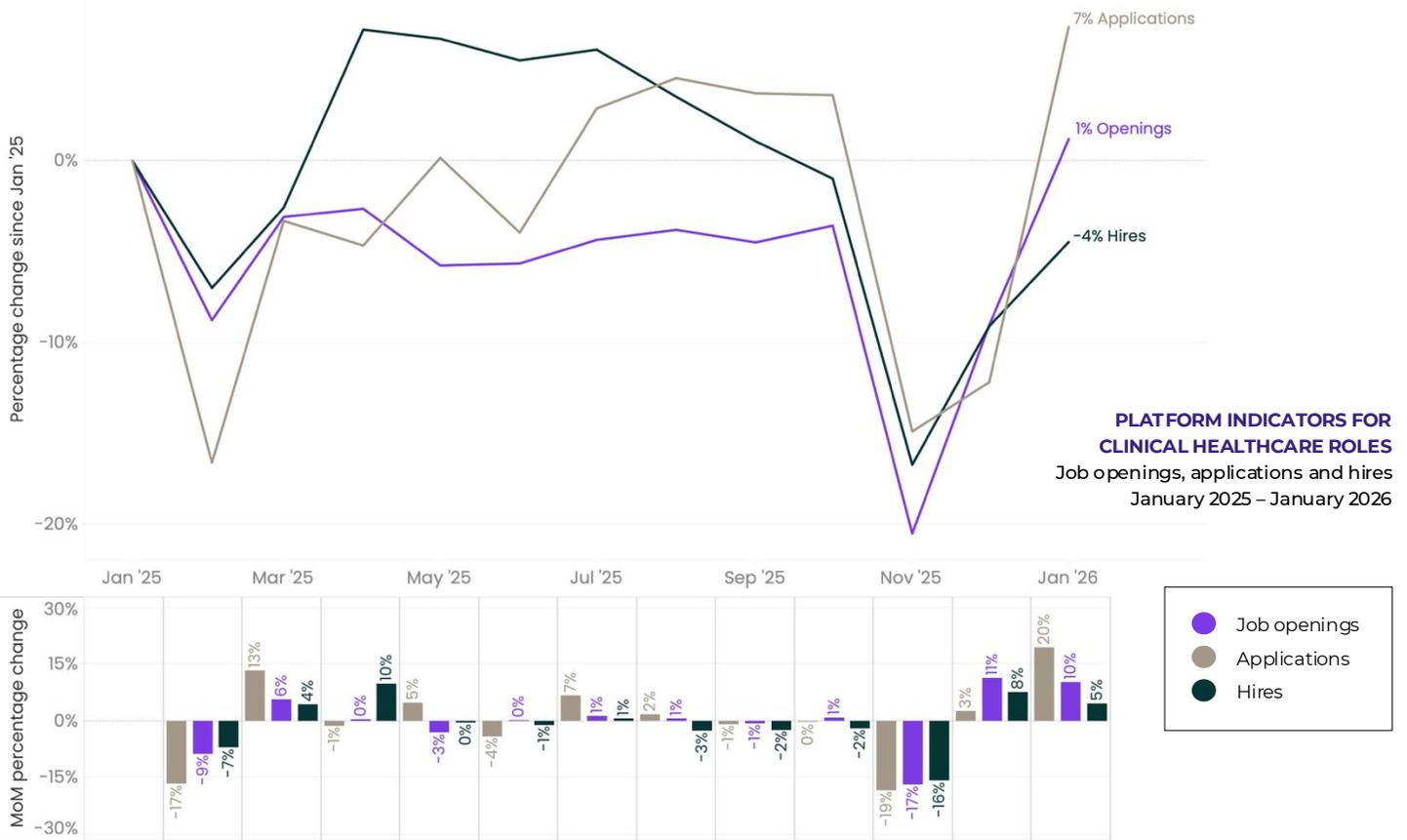
# Healthcare hiring is at an inflection point

---

Applicant volume is climbing across clinical and nonclinical roles, with APO hitting a 12-month high — putting pressure on employers to streamline hiring before talent moves on.



# Is 2026 the year of the clinical hiring rebound?



## ICIMS INSIGHTS QUICK TAKE

Clinical healthcare applicants are showing signs of interest as openings regain ground.

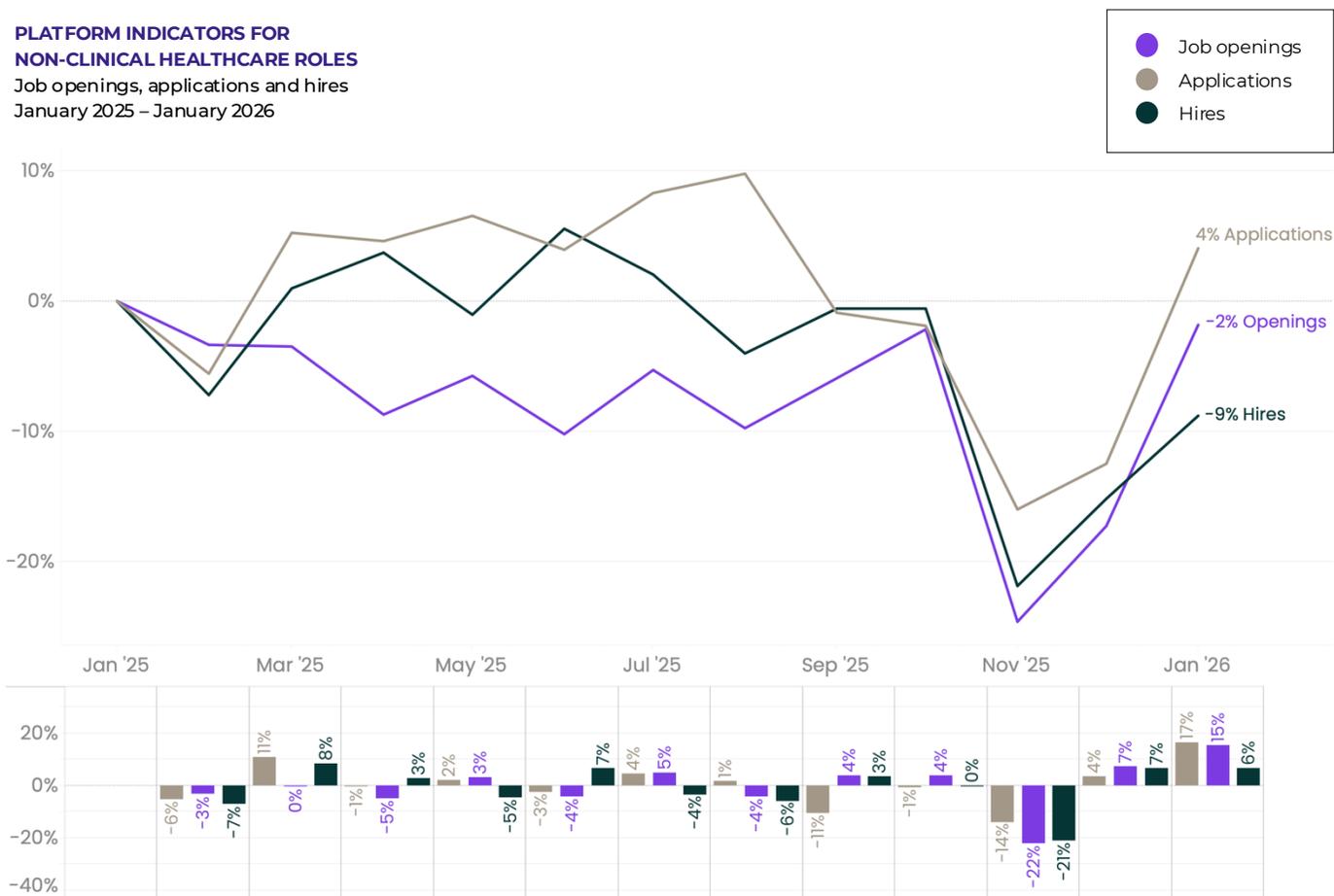
**The rebound.** Clinical healthcare exhibited an uptick in all three key metrics, with a significant month-over-month jump in candidate applications. While candidate interest and demand are showing signs of a comeback, hiring is still below last year's totals.

**Conversion remains a concern.** This sector is still recovering from the dramatic drop in November 2025, with hires and openings hit hardest. The increased activity in January will require organizations to focus on process efficiency to make best use of the positive trends in candidate activity and openings.

**Data alignment.** ICIMS clinical trends closely track [government hiring and turnover data](#), which continues to show healthcare openings exceeding hires.

# For non-clinical jobs, interest is rising but hiring isn't keeping up

**PLATFORM INDICATORS FOR NON-CLINICAL HEALTHCARE ROLES**  
 Job openings, applications and hires  
 January 2025 – January 2026



## ICIMS INSIGHTS QUICK TAKE

In the nonclinical space, talent holds the advantage. They have options and they'll choose the employers who keep pace.

**Interest is up, hiring is still down.** Although the positive trend from December continued into January, openings and hiring remains lower year over year. This signals that candidate interest is outpacing employer demand and conversions.

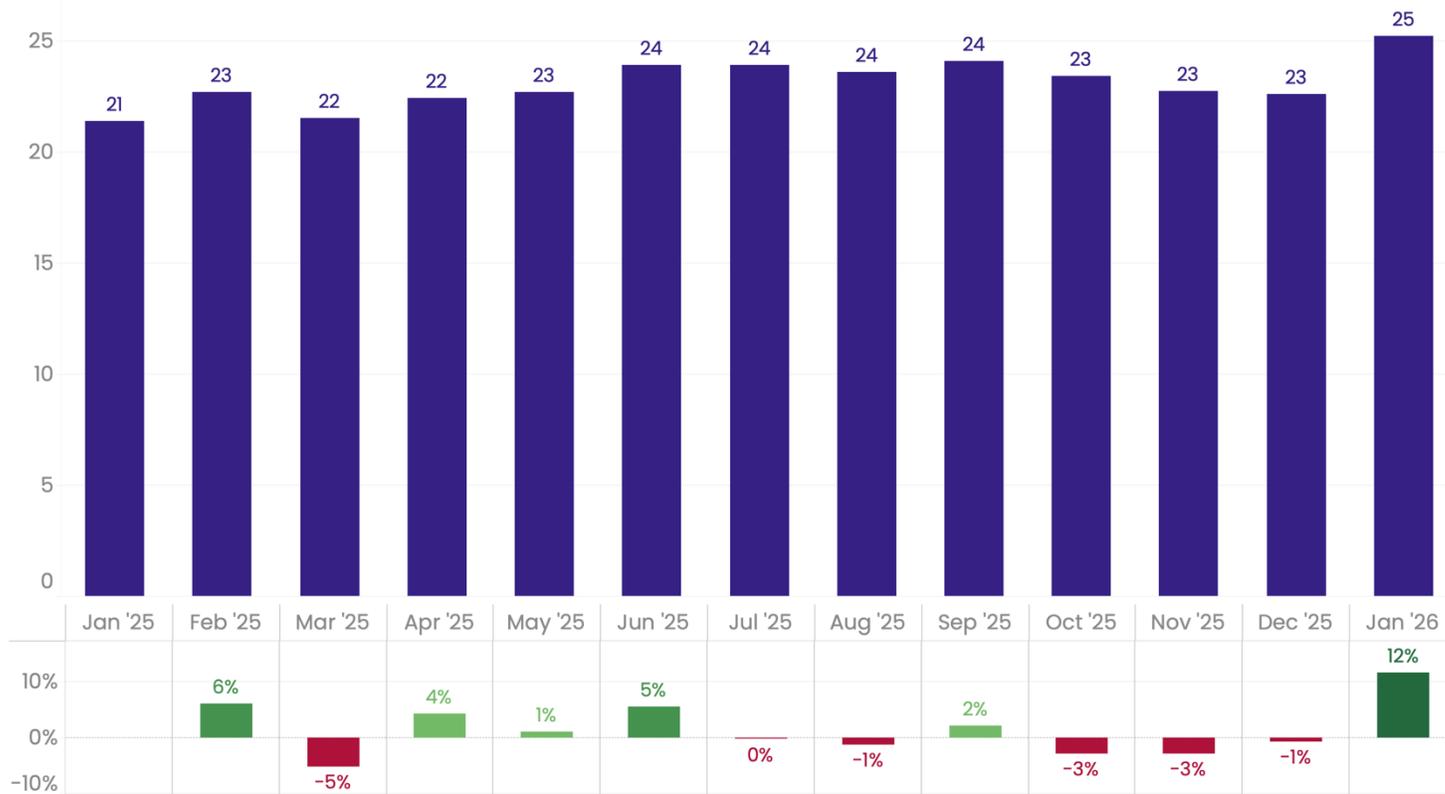
**Activity is stabilizing, but recovery remains incomplete.** After the sharp November 2025 contraction, month over month activity rebounded in December and strengthened further in January. While momentum has turned positive, it has not yet been sufficient to close the underlying year over year gaps in openings and hires.

**The winning strategy.** Speed wins. In a tight nonclinical market, slow decisions turn applicants into missed hires.

# APO hits a high note: Now it's about conversion

## HEALTHCARE APPLICANTS PER OPENING

January 2025 – January 2026



### ICIMS INSIGHTS QUICK TAKE

Candidate supply per opening just hit a 13-month high, giving employers leverage to raise the bar — but only if they move fast.

**APO hits a series high.** After hovering in a tight 22–24 range through most of 2025 and softening slightly in Q4, APO spiked to 25 in January (+12% MoM) — the highest level in the 13-month view. So what? Candidate supply per opening is improving, creating room to raise the quality bar without sacrificing speed.

**The rise is applicant-led, not opening-led.** Given that openings have been slower to recover than applications and hires, the higher APO confirms a buyer's market dynamic in the near term. Expect more qualified shortlists per opening, but also a higher risk of process bottlenecks if pipelines aren't actively managed.

**Key insight.** Monitor funnel efficiency. High APO without throughput or acceptance gains signals aging roles and stalled hiring.

## FROM INSIGHTS TO IMPACT

# Tailored takeaways for business, HR and talent leaders

Whether you lead people, run operations or shape strategy, you can use these insights to align teams, reduce friction and move faster on your goals.

## FOR THE Talent Leaders

- January is often a very busy time for recruiting organizations. The data is telling us we should find ways to fast-track top talent while applicant activity is high by examining the recruiting funnel for bottlenecks.
- Organizations with a candidate relationship management system should take advantage of increased applications to build future pipelines.

## FOR THE CHROs

- Reorient TA and hiring leaders from sourcing expansion to decision acceleration. Set enterprise standards for first response, interview scheduling and offer turnaround, and hold leaders accountable for throughput — not just req count.
- Faster decisions are now the primary lever to unlock hiring gains.

## FOR THE CXOs

- This is a window to right-size demand, prioritize critical roles and raise quality — but only if hiring velocity is protected.
- Pausing or slowing decisions now increases downstream operational and workforce risk.

# BrightSpring Health increases applications 242%

---

BrightSpring Health Services' focus on quality home- and community-based care across the US has led to massive growth. However, a growing shortage of clinical talent was putting pressure on their talent acquisition team. A new approach was needed to properly staff over 40 brands under the company's umbrella.

By using ICIMS as the cornerstone for a streamlined hiring process, the BrightSpring team has amassed a couple million unique applicant profiles and increased applicant flow by 242%, going from ~700 to 2,400 applications per day.



---

**242%**  
increase  
in applications

---

**100+**  
employee video  
testimonials submitted

---

**68%**  
decrease in  
recruiter turnover

## RESPONSIBLE AI

# The conversation on everyone's mind

### Want to bring AI into your hiring process?

Our [Hire Confidently with Responsible AI](#) white paper breaks down the six responsible AI principles you need to know, making it easy to pick trustworthy vendors. Get practical guidance on topics such as human oversight, explainability and protecting candidate data. Understand what responsible AI looks like in practice and how to apply it to your organization.



“When I speak at conferences about the power of AI, one of the most frequent questions I get involves how to implement it responsibly.

This conversation about how to leverage AI the right way will continue to not only be relevant but to evolve.”



**TRENT COTTON**

Head of Talent Acquisition Insights, ICIMS

# Want more great insights?

## ICIMS 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 [State of Frontline Hiring Report](#) uncovers why companies are struggling to fill roles.

## ICIMS 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 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.

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:



**3.1M+**  
global platform users



**630M+**  
candidate profiles



**200M+**  
applications



**5M+**  
hires



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

Visit [icims.com](https://icims.com) to learn more.