

The background of the cover is a photograph of a large, metallic geodesic dome, likely the Reichstag dome in Berlin. The dome is composed of many triangular panels. A diagonal line, colored teal, splits the image from the top-left to the bottom-right. The top-right portion is dark, while the bottom-left portion is light. The text is overlaid on these sections.

Caissa

SURVEY
REPORT
2020

Recruitment Journeys
from Berlin Tech

Made by
Caissa Global

ABOUT US

WHO WE ARE

Caissa is a technology recruitment agency focused on scaling tech businesses in Berlin and beyond.

WHAT WE DO

We provide companies with talent market insights, consult them on talent acquisition strategies, and help them find and hire the best professionals and future colleagues.

In our work with tech candidates, we support them throughout the entire recruitment process and ensure they fulfil their career aspirations.

HOW WE WORK

- We understand the technologies that our candidates work with.
- We act as our client's brand managers and advocates when communicating with candidates.
- We approach our candidates only if there is a suitable job opportunity for them.
- We endorse and cherish diversity in the workplace.
- We don't do sales. We don't do numbers. We do mutually beneficial long-term relationships.

CAISSA IN NUMBERS:

- 11 years of existence
- 10 employees from 9 countries
- 14 languages spoken
- 50+ years of recruitment experience combined

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THE SURVEY

We first conducted the yearly Caissa Survey in 2017. Our goal is to provide hiring managers, recruiters and HR specialists with actionable market insights, as well as give our candidates a means to share their views on and experiences with recruitment.

We aim to facilitate an open conversation between all actors in the Berlin job market. As 2020 has challenged and disrupted the entire industry, this year's survey includes a special section on how COVID-19 affected engineering talent.

In this survey you will find fresh insights on:

- How COVID-19 impacted engineers and their views on hiring & onboarding
- Dos and don'ts when hiring engineers (in their own words)
- What makes engineers accept an offer
- Best and worst aspects of working in Berlin tech
- How often engineers get approached by recruiters
- What engineers think of recruiters
- This year's most needed technologies



THE QUESTIONS

ABOUT YOU

1. Where do you live?
2. Have you applied for a job with a Berlin-based company within the last 2 years?
3. What is your current employment status?
4. Did your employment status change because of COVID-19?
5. How would you describe your work (before COVID-19)?
6. How would you like to work after COVID-19?
7. What is your job?
8. What is your seniority level?
9. How many years of experience do you have?
10. Which is your main technology/ language?

YOUR EXPERIENCE WITH RECRUITERS

1. How many job messages did you receive last month (approximately)?
2. How many of them were sent by agency recruiters (approximately)?
3. How many jobs have you applied for, if any?
4. From your experience with recruiters, what frustrates you the most?

RECRUITMENT PROCESS: THE UPS AND DOWNS

1. In your experience, what is most stressful about the recruitment process?
2. How would you rate the following steps of the hiring process?
HR interview, technical interview, home assignment, whiteboard interview, pair programming, day in the office, team lunch, interview with top managers.
3. Can you tell us about the best recruitment experience you've had? What made it so great?
4. What would definitely persuade you to accept a job offer?
5. At your current place of work, how long was the recruitment process (from the first interview
6. Have you ever had remote onboarding? If yes, how would you compare it to on-site onboarding?

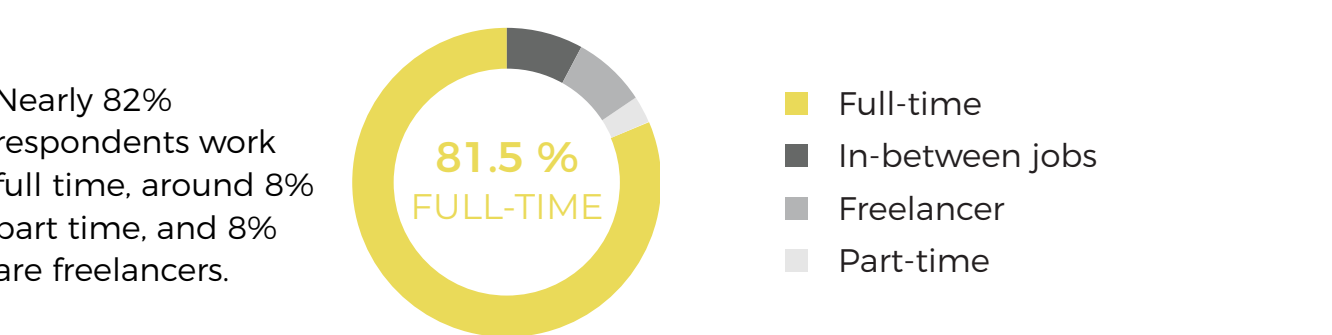
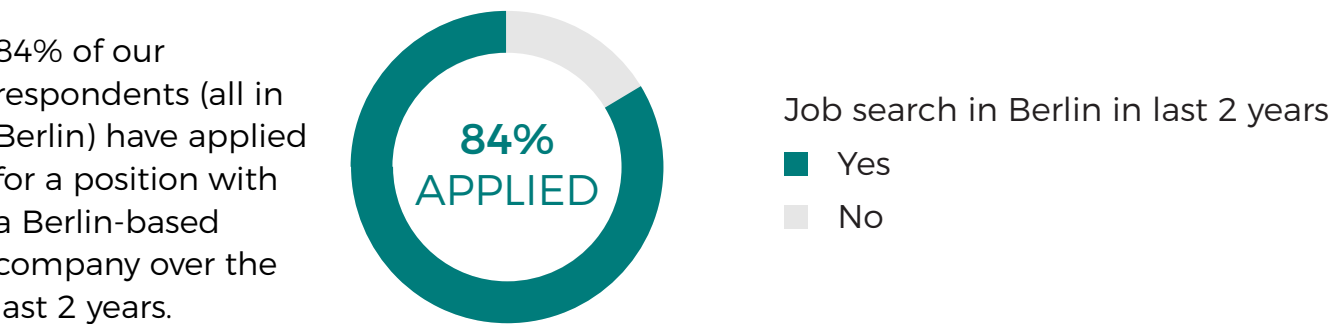
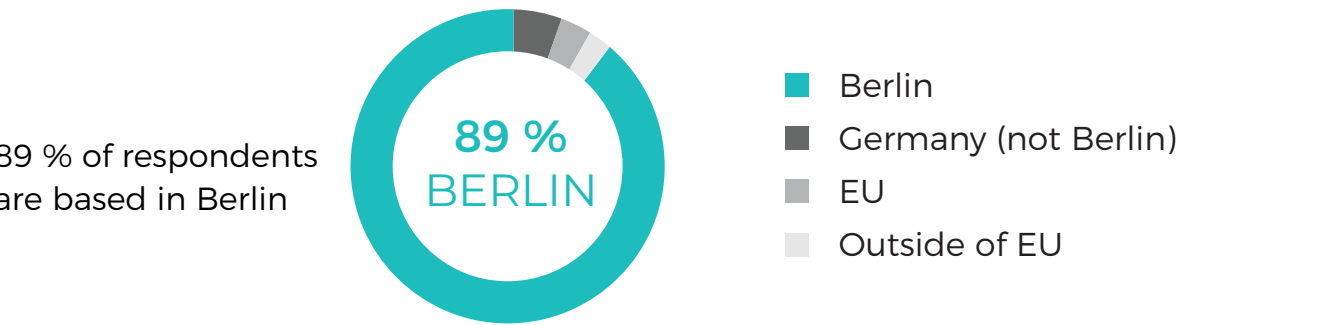
WORKING IN BERLIN: PAST, PRESENT & FUTURE

1. What do you think is the biggest problem with Berlin's tech companies?
2. What are the best things about tech companies in Berlin?
3. How many times have you changed jobs over the last 3 years?
4. When you last changed jobs, how did your base salary change?
5. Lastly, do you think the nature of work will change after COVID-19? What are your expectations?

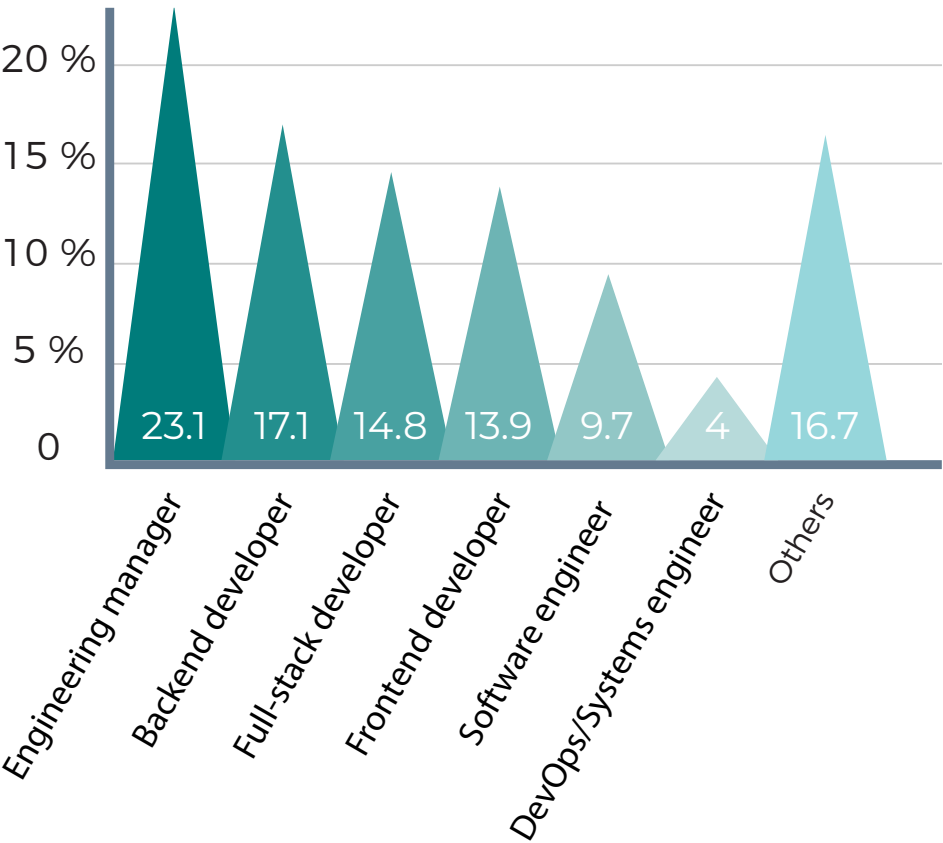


RESPONDENTS

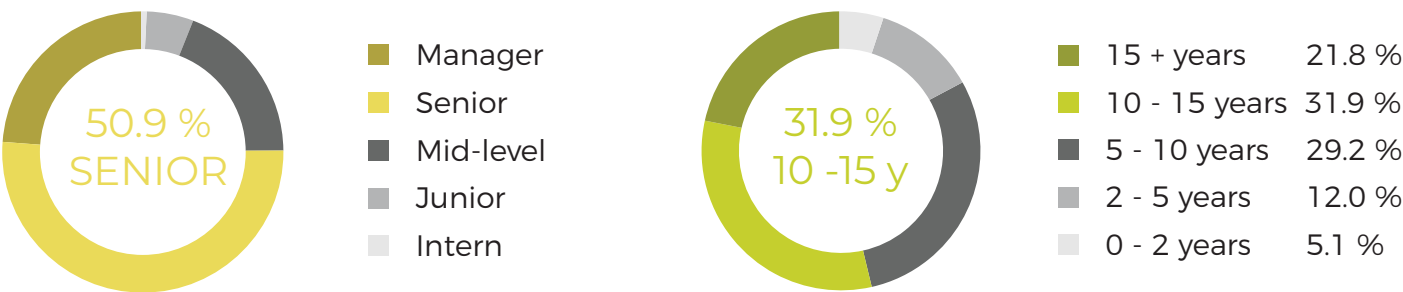
We analyzed responses from a total of 216 people. They are either based in Berlin or were applying for a job in Berlin and thus have experience with local recruitment and hiring processes.



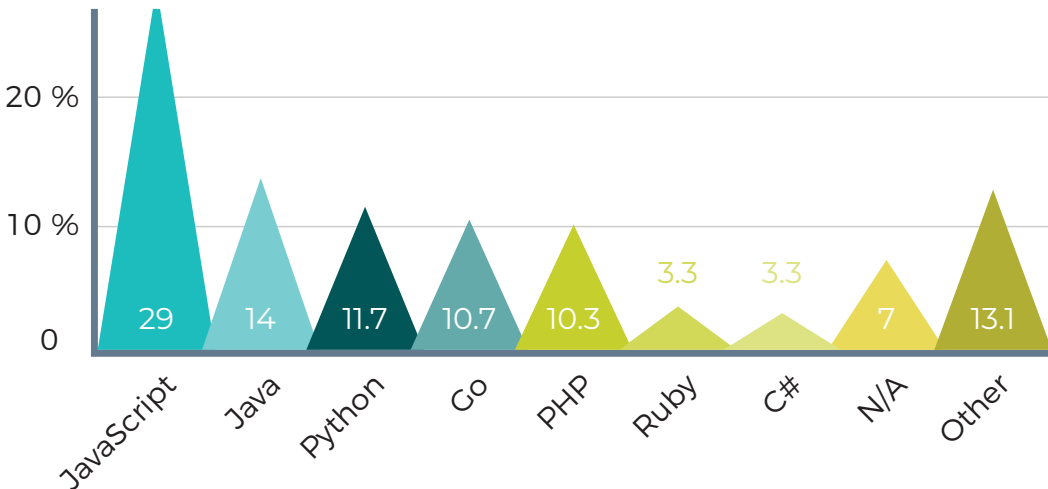
46% of our respondents are Web Developers with Backend Developers outnumbering Frontend and Full-stack Developers by a slim majority; 23% of them are Engineering Managers, around 10% - Software Engineers, and 5% DevOps.



51% of the respondents are senior, and 24% manage others. 54% have over 10 years of work experience.



29% of respondents use JavaScript and its frameworks. In our sample, Java was the most used backend language, closely followed by Python, Go, and PHP.





Remote onboarding
can work as well as
on-site if the process is
well structured.

HOW COVID-19 AFFECTED ENGINEERS

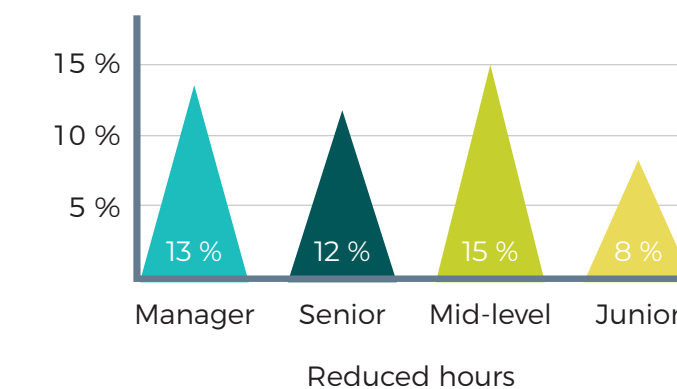
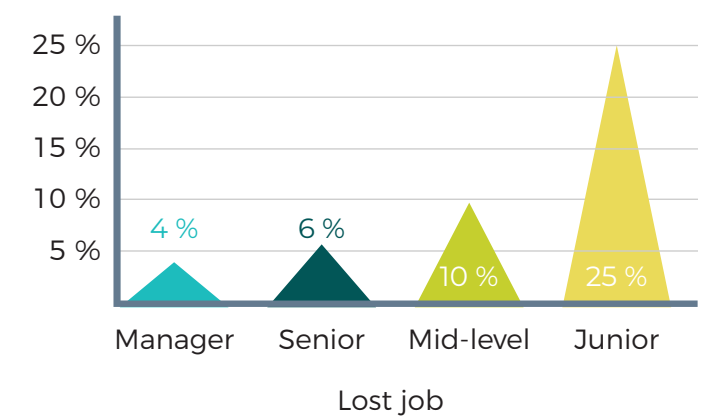
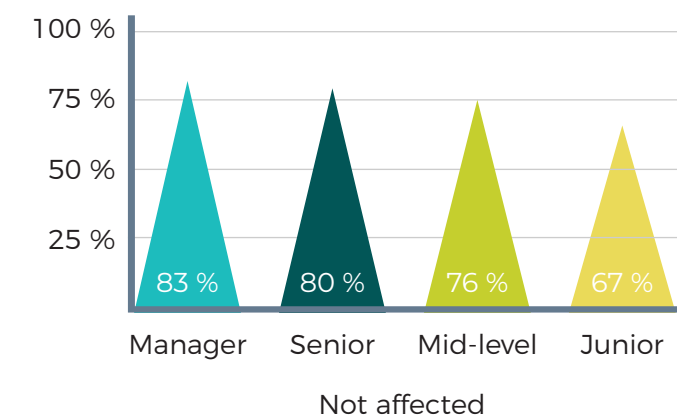
The majority of the survey respondents (80%) were not affected by COVID-19, while 13% are on Kurzarbeit (reduced working hours) and 7% lost their jobs.



- No change
- Lost job
- Hours were reduced

When we look deeper, we can see that managers and seniors were less likely to be affected by COVID-19. 25% of junior professionals have lost their job as opposed to 4% managers and 6% seniors.

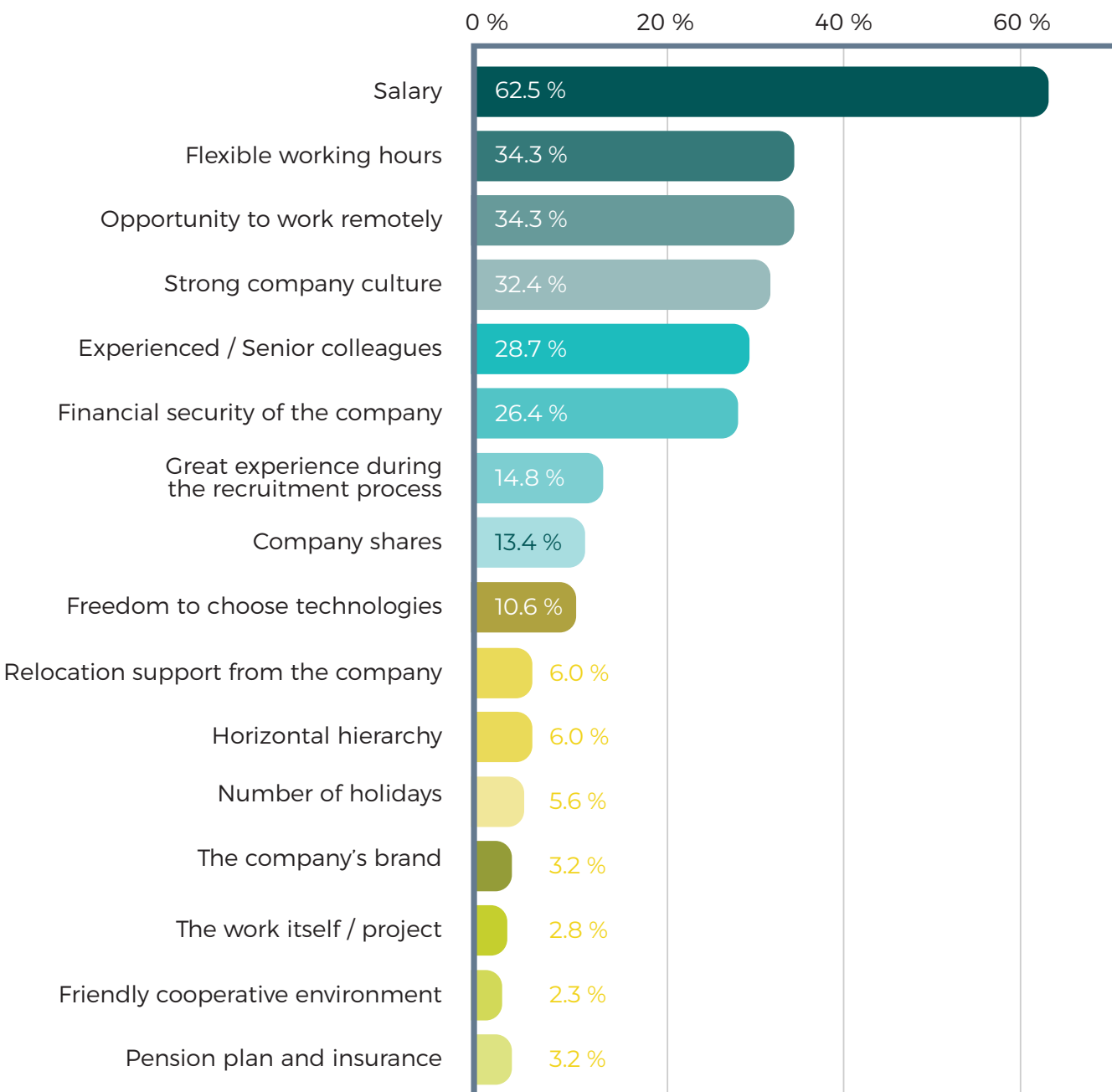
However, mid-level employees were the ones who were most affected by Kurzarbeit (15%).



OFFER ACCEPTANCE

For the third year in a row, salary is the no.1 job offer acceptance factor. And yet, while it was mentioned by 79% of tech professionals last year, only 63% emphasized it this year. Other factors have gained prominence, such as remote work and the company's financial stability.

As COVID-19 forced many to work remotely, the idea of having a home office gained favourable votes from slightly over one third respondents (as opposed to one fifth last year). Flexible office time remained among the top-3. The attitude toward the company's financial stability has changed as well. Twice as many respondents (26%) as last year have selected it.



REMOTE vs. ON-SITE ONBOARDING

Because of COVID-19, many companies have had to transform how they hire. However, a remote hiring process is not big news. What's truly new is remote onboarding. This is why we asked our survey participants to tell us about their experience if they had any.

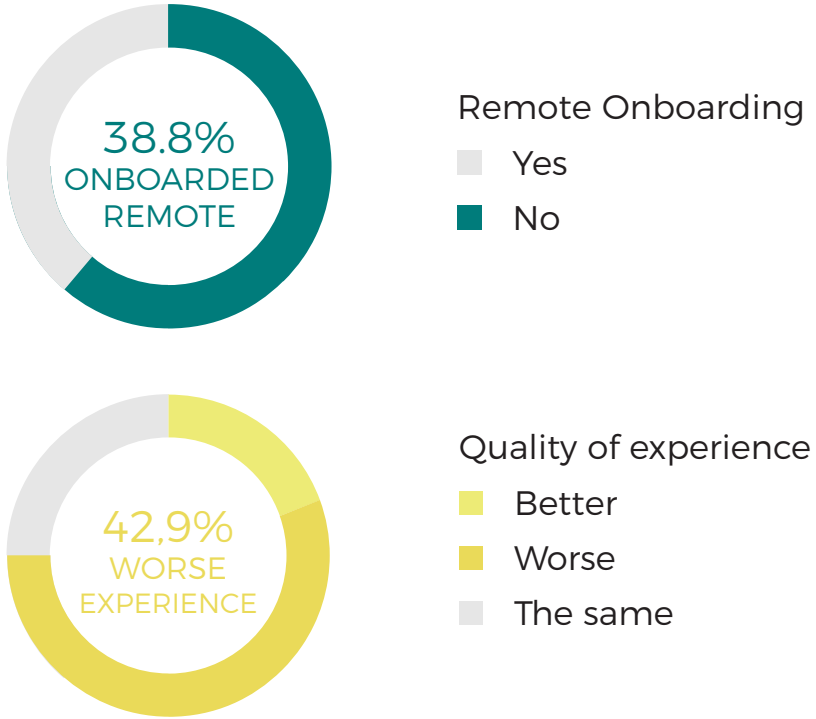
Out of 129 people who responded to the question about remote onboarding, only 39% have experienced it.

Out of those, only 19% liked onboarding remotely more than on site.

Among things that they liked about remote onboarding, they mentioned that it's less stressful and less resource-consuming: **"less stressful and easy to commute you just jump out of your bed"** and **"less time and money consuming both for the company and the employee"**.

For many, however, the process was difficult, cumbersome and not well-structured **"Remote on-boarding is harder and not so clear"** and **"During an on-site interview, it is not easy to understand what kind of person you are talking to — is he/she a real professional, self-disciplined, reliable, etc. With remote onboarding it is even harder to evaluate those."**

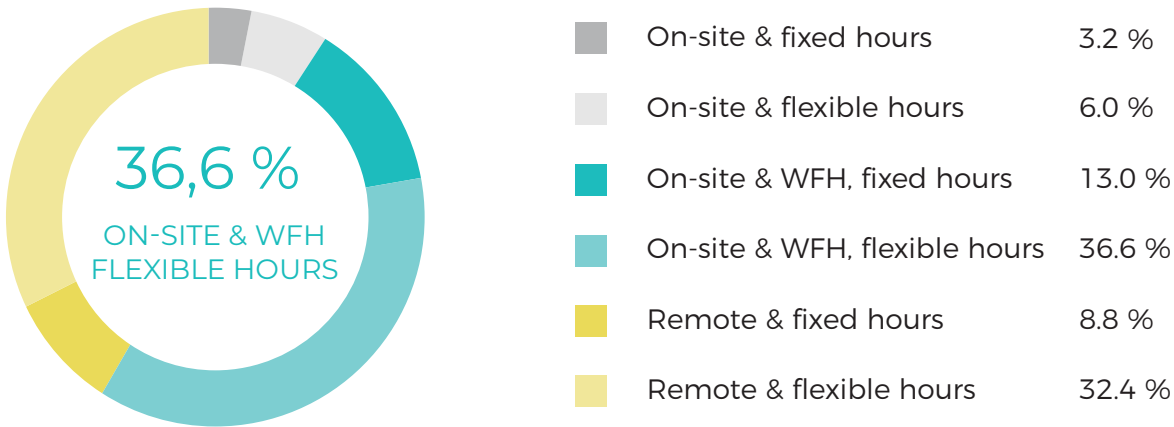
When talking about what remote onboarding is lacking, many mentioned the missing face-to-face communication **"It's missing the personal touch"**. A few respondents agreed that **"given the current time, it makes sense"** and **"remote onboarding can work as well as on-site if the process is well structured"**.



PREFERRED WAYS OF WORK

We also learned about our respondents' preferences as to how they would like to continue working after "things get back to normal":

- Over one third would like to work flexible hours in the office but also to have an opportunity to work from home;
- Almost one third would like to work remotely and have flexible hours.

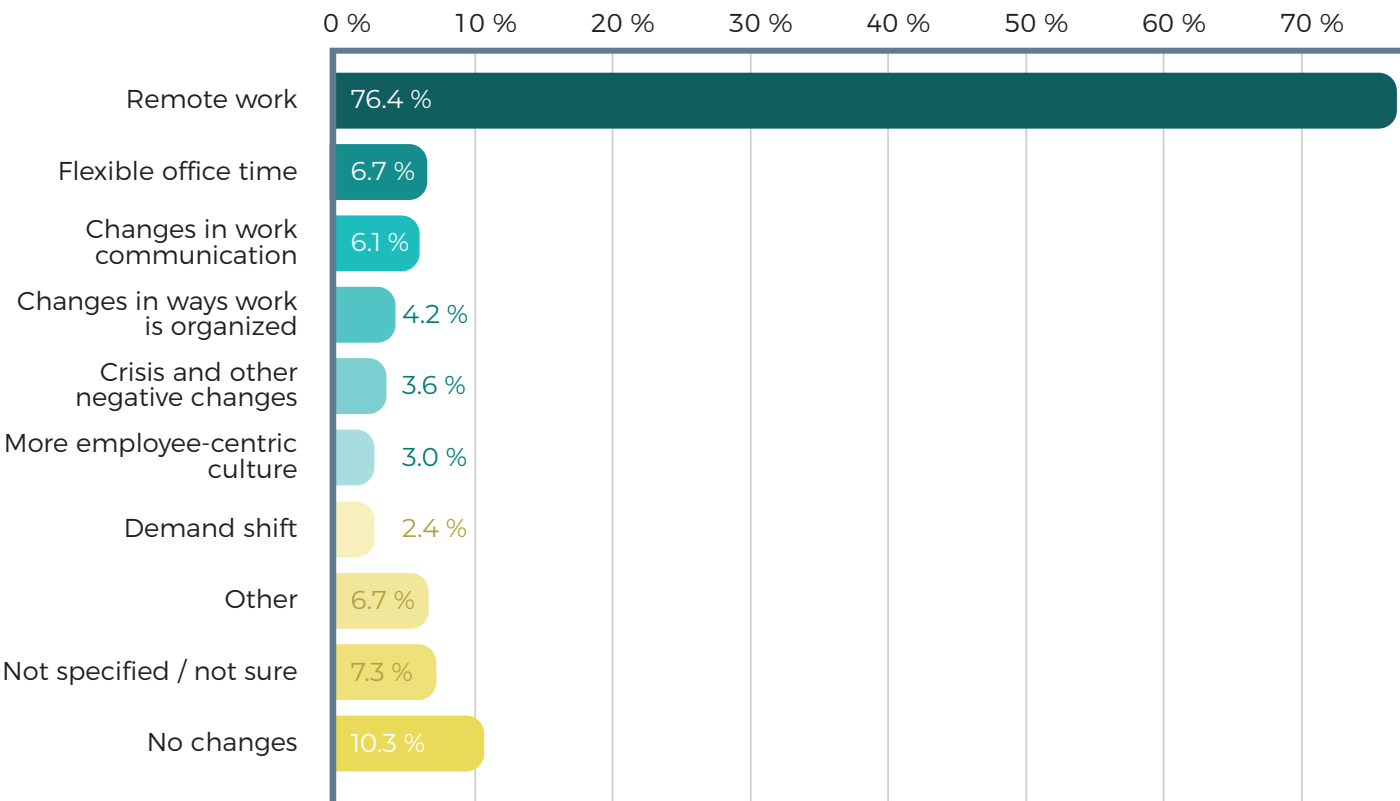


THE NATURE OF WORK: EXPECTATIONS

We asked tech professionals one of the most pressing questions of the recent months: "How will the nature of work change because of COVID-19?" (at least in Berlin).

Remote work was mentioned by ¾ respondents. There were other interesting responses but nothing got as much support as WFH.

Future of work - expectations of respondents



Other responses include:

"More remote working is the way to go even without COVID-19."

"I hope companies will realise people can be productive (in some cases even more) when working remotely. This should naturally lead to changing the old-days' mindset that the office is what unites people."

"Companies will have to provide more flexible working hours and better support for parents that have small kids at home, in case childcare decides to close due to a corona case."

"My expectation is that companies improve communication culture so that teams can work better at distance."

"Less micro management, more opportunities to work remotely (it's 2020 after all...), more responsibilities for individual teams/team members and in general just moving away from an outdated management style/company structure"

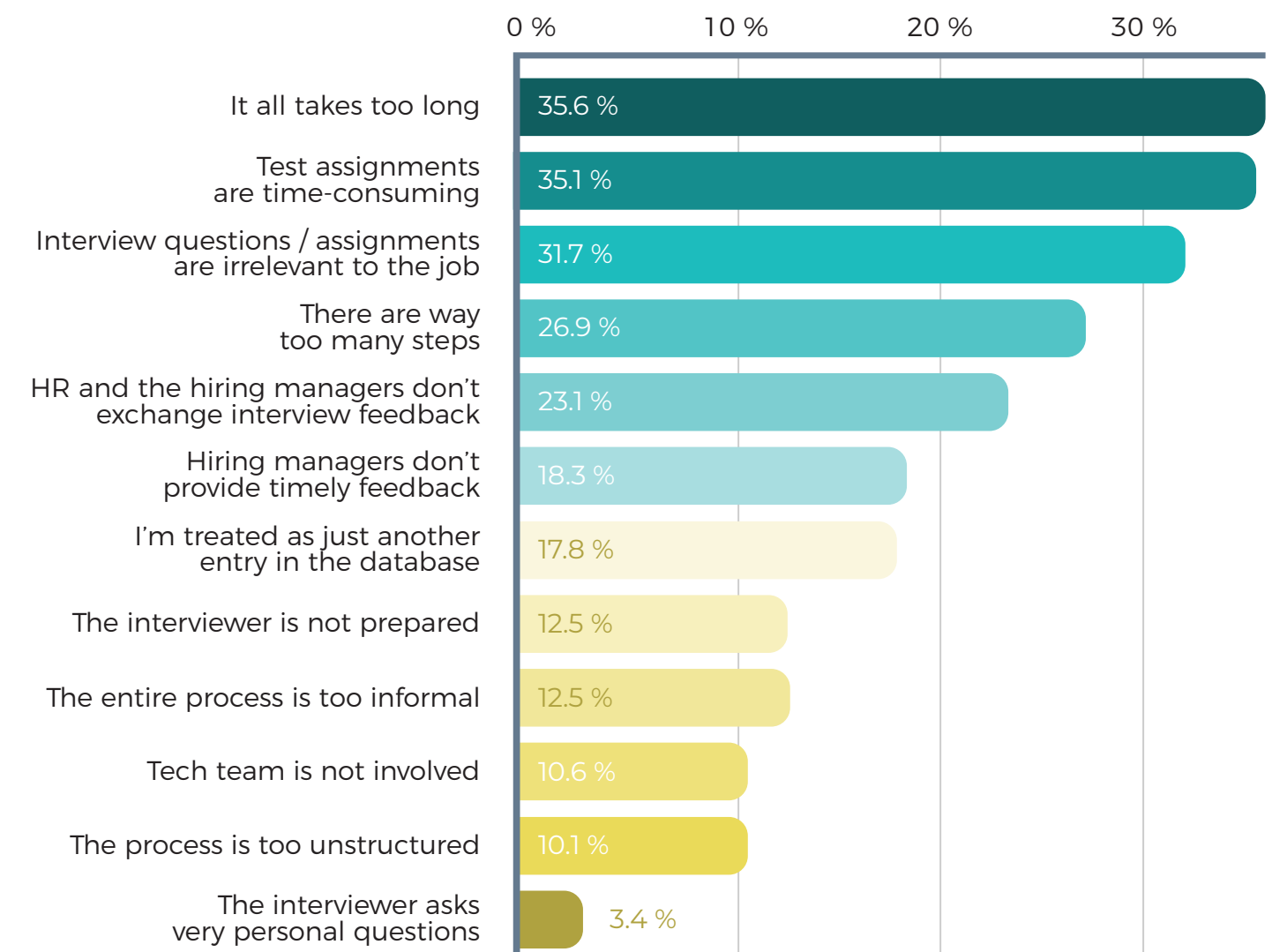
DOS AND DON'TS WHEN HIRING ENGINEERS

THE BIGGEST PAINS

This year, the biggest stresses and pains of the recruitment process are:

- The process takes too long (mentioned by 36% respondents)
- Test assignments are time-consuming (35%)
- Interview questions/assignments are irrelevant to the job (32%)

There is some good news as well: Last year, one third of respondents complained about hiring managers not providing timely feedback. This year, less than one fifth agreed.

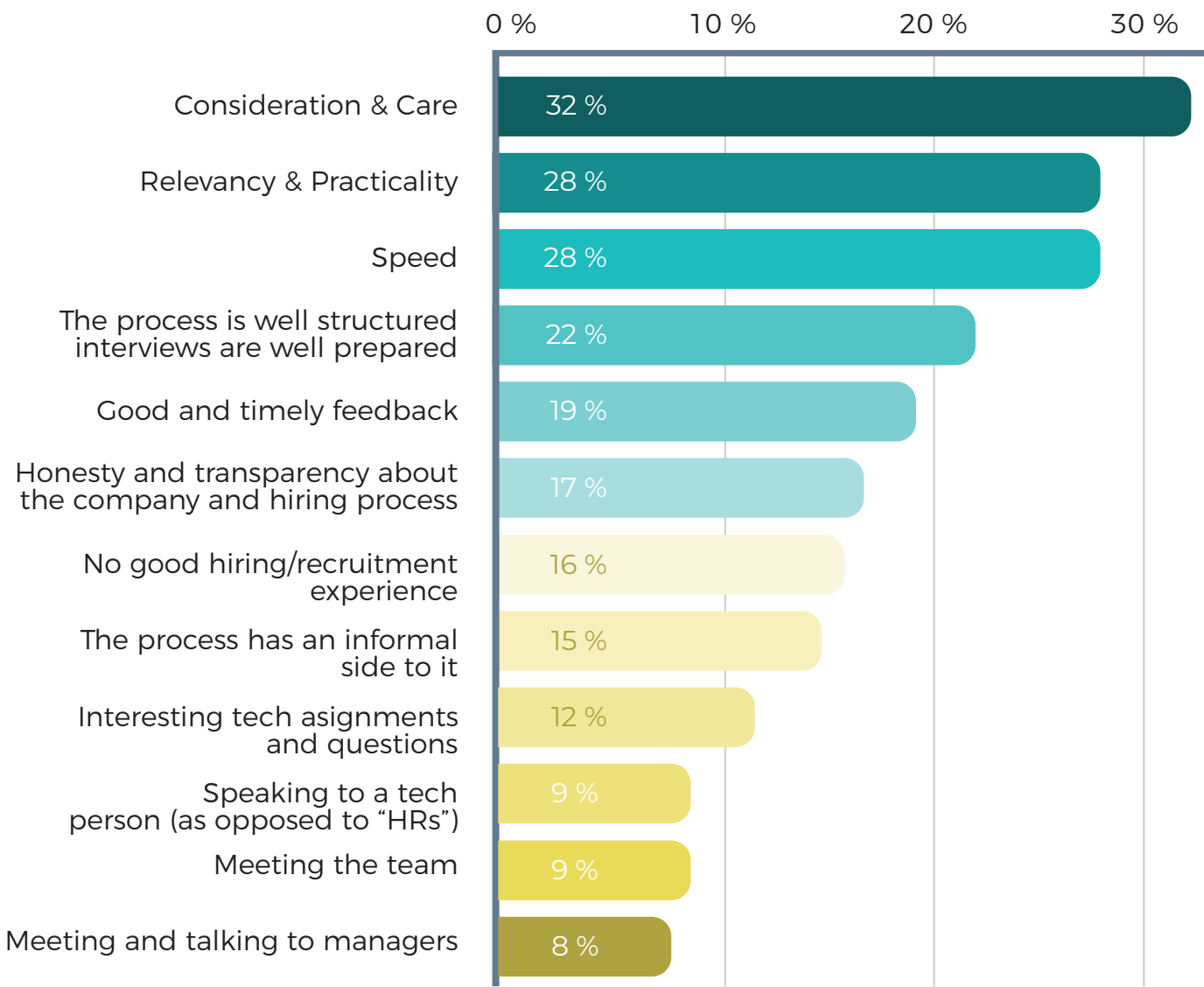


”
I knew that's where
I was supposed to be,
I was expected, and
they were prepared
and looking forward to
having me there.



THE GREAT EXPERIENCE

We asked the respondents to describe a positive recruitment process they have had. 16% explicitly stated that none of their recruitment experiences had been positive. We looked at patterns in the responses and, based on their frequency, mapped out the top ingredients of a great recruitment journey.



Here are a few stories our respondents shared:

”

“One company acknowledged that I can become good at a tech that is new to me. Usually, most companies just look at your CV to see if you have worked professionally with a specific tech they need, and that is all they care about.”

“Each of the 5 steps was very well defined and explained previously by the HR. She explained the expectations of each step. She was very quick in replying to my questions and scheduling the next steps. She was friendly, and our chats were like she was already a coworker.”

“Clear steps, no 8 hours take home tasks, technical interviews instead of doing a project.”

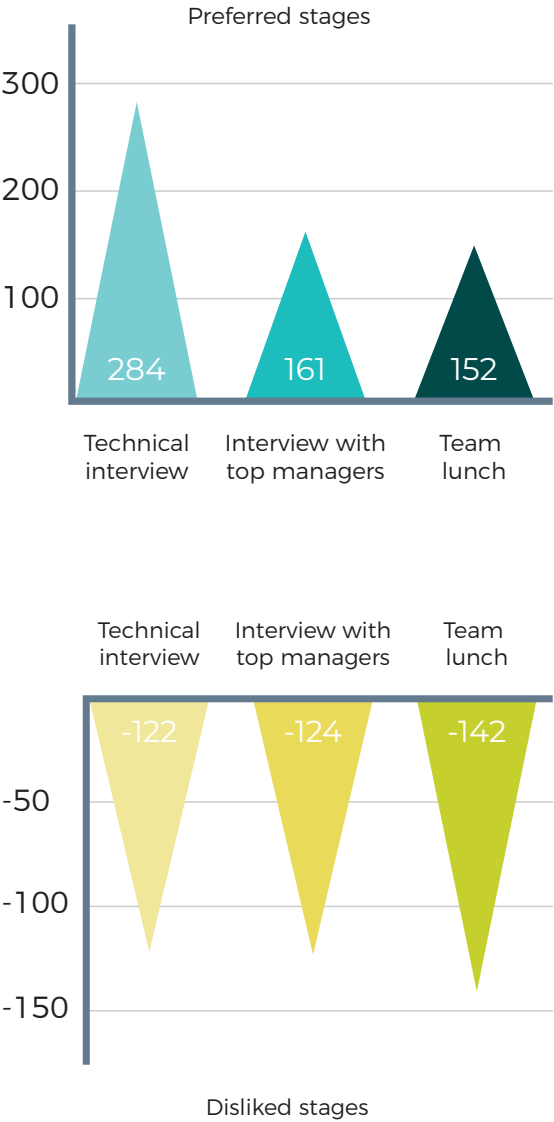
“One company put up a welcome sign with my name on the front door on the day of my interview, and it felt quite nice to see it! I knew that’s where I was supposed to be, I was expected, and they were prepared and looking forward to having me there.”



STAGES OF A RECRUITMENT PROCESS

Tech professionals evaluate different parts of a recruitment process differently. Whiteboard interviews remain the most disliked step of a recruitment process for the third year in a row, a close second and third are home assignments and a day in the office.

Technical interviews, on the contrary, are considered most useful and important, followed by interviews with top managers and team lunches.



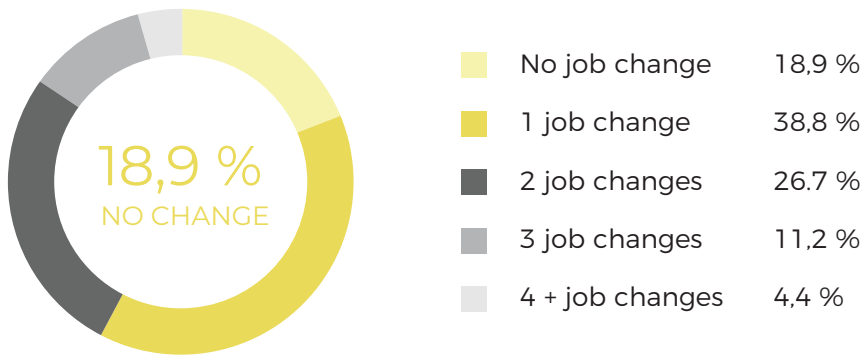
”
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WORKING IN BERLIN

HOW OFTEN PEOPLE CHANGE JOBS IN BERLIN

Almost 40% of respondents changed their role once in the last 3 years. 25% changed their role twice, and slightly less than 25% remained in the same job.

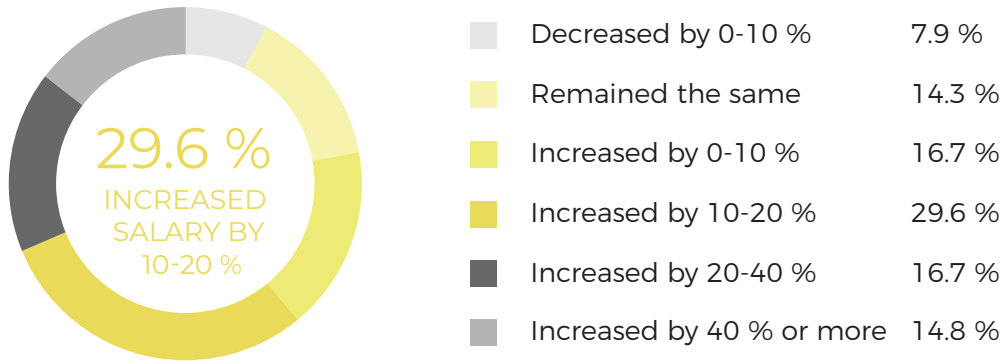
On average, the survey participants tend to stay in the same position for 1.5 years.



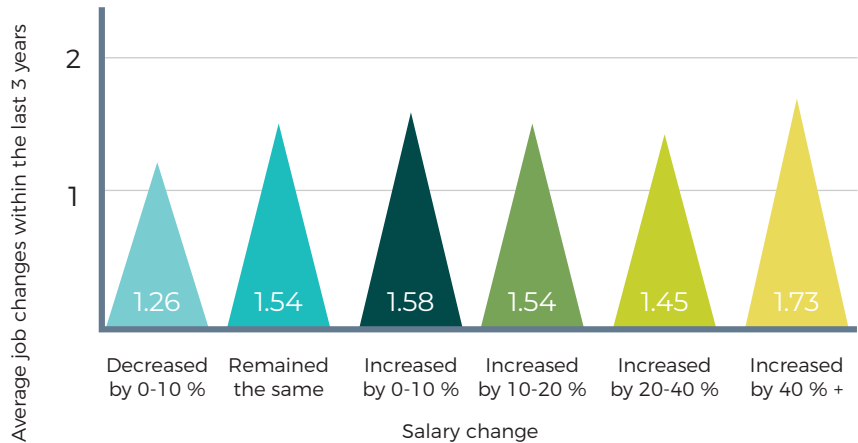
Job changes over the last 3 years

NEW JOB — NEW SALARY?

61% respondents had their salary increased by 10% or more after landing their latest job. 8% of respondents changed their job even though they experienced a salary decrease.

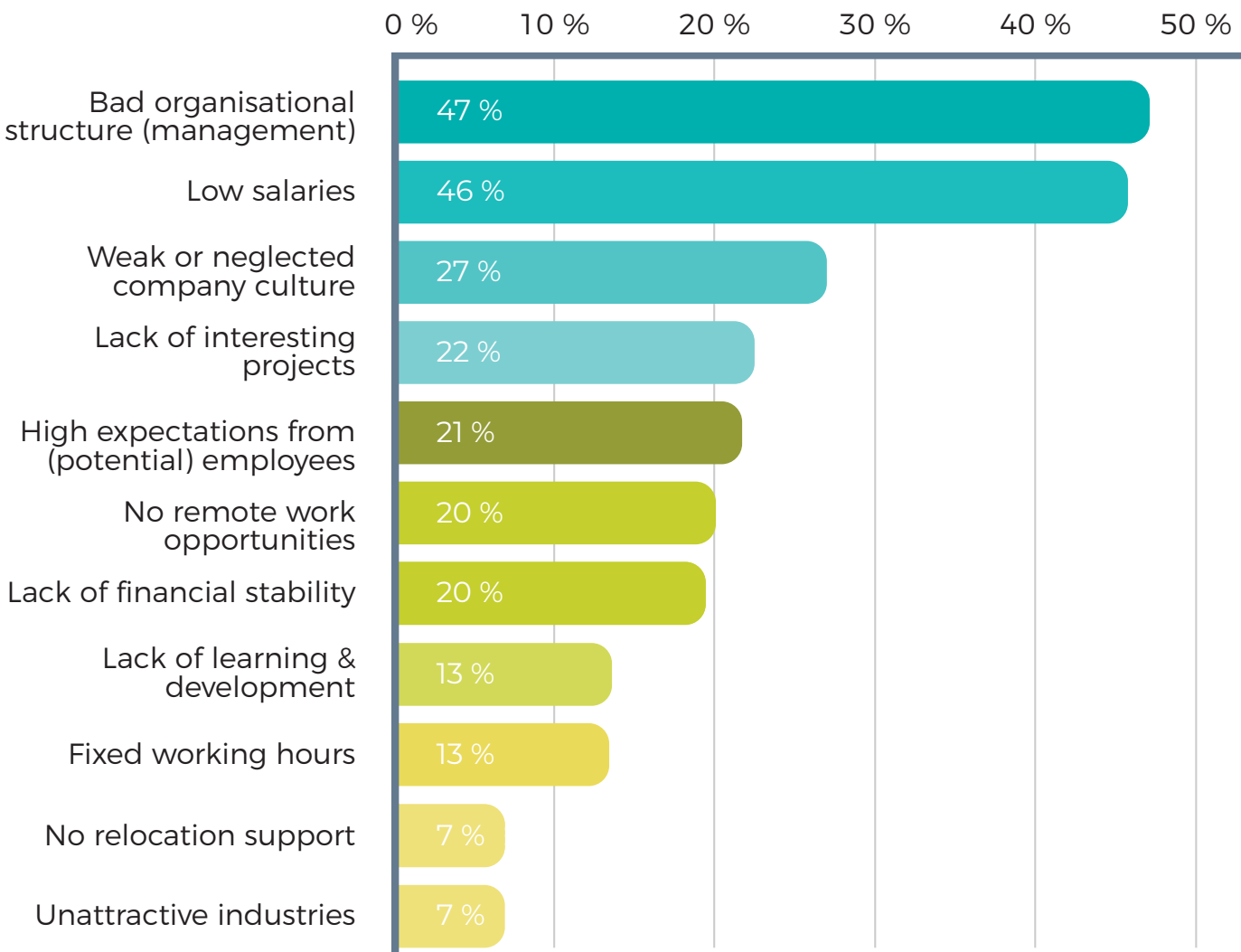


According to our data, those who reported the highest increase in salary were the ones who changed jobs (on average) slightly more frequently than others.



WHAT DEVELOPERS DISLIKE ABOUT BERLIN TECH

First, the bad news. Namely, the bad organisational structure/bad management and low salaries. Also, weak or neglected company culture.



Several people named tech incompetence/managers' incompetence: "Lack of tech process know-how of top management", as well as the lack of proper tech culture: "It seems that all jumped to scrum and put accent more on form than on work" as the main problem with local tech companies.

Other interesting responses included:

”

“I think bigger companies need to focus on hiring and mentoring Juniors. It feels like companies only want to hire experienced staff. I don't understand where they expect to find these people when they won't invest in Juniors.”

“My biggest problem is that they are all very similar in their processes and hierarchies.”

“Mediocre white dudes in leadership positions thinking they got there because of meritocracy.”

“Everybody has to “burn” for the project, while I believe that identification with a company and product grows over time and doesn't happen automatically.”

“Solving problems after they appeared, even if we could predict they could happen.”

“Dogs in the office. It discriminates people with allergies.”

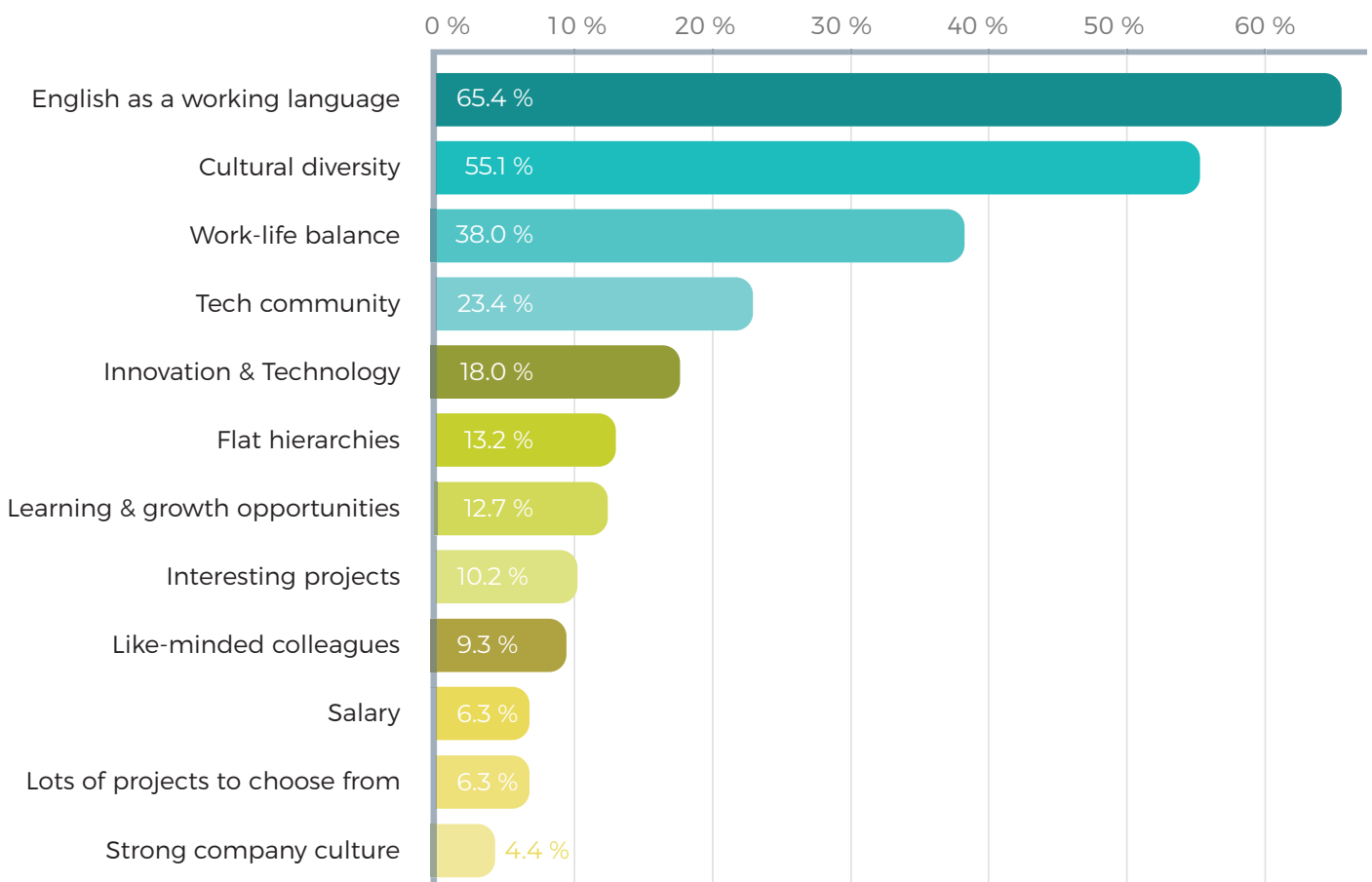


THE BEST ASPECTS OF BERLIN TECH

Now, some good news about Berlin and its tech scene.

While cultural diversity and work-life balance observed in Berlin’s companies have remained major attractors over the years, the ability to speak English at work turned out to be way more important this time.

One respondent mentioned “German labor law” as one of the best things working in Berlin can offer.



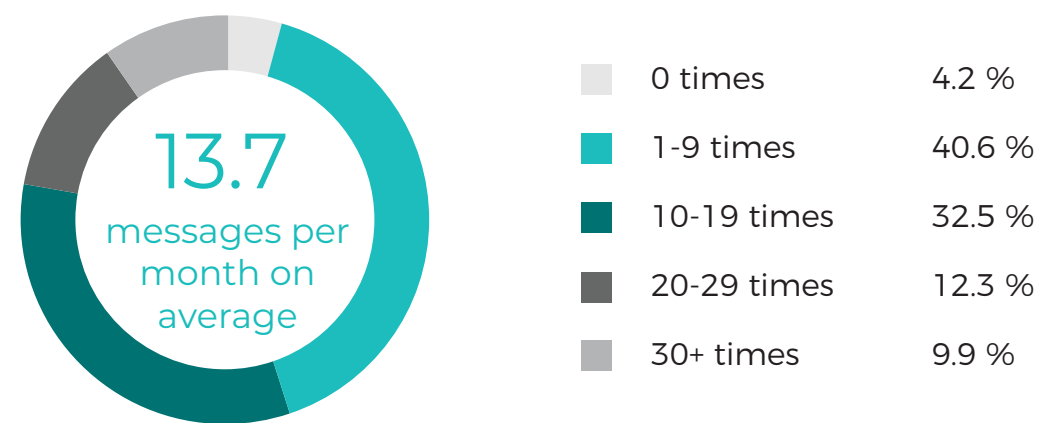
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“German labor law” is one of the best things working in Berlin can offer.

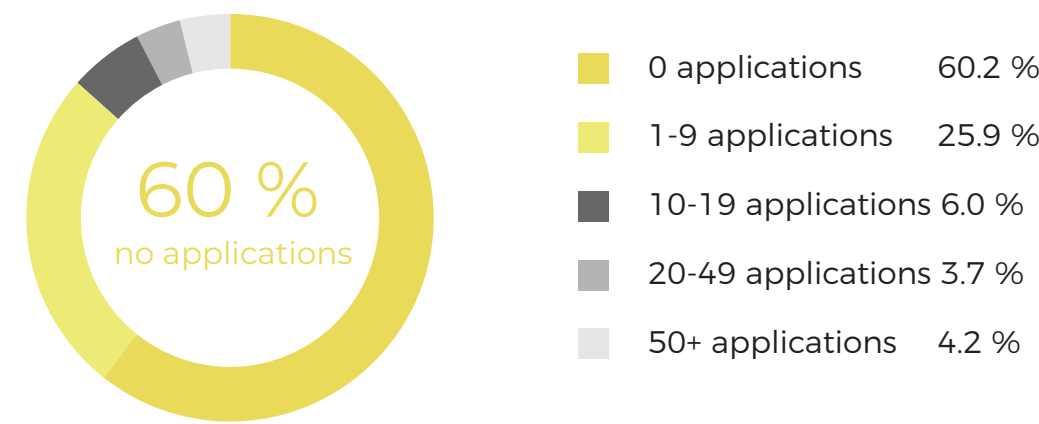
RECRUITMENT MESSAGES

In summer this year, tech professionals received on average 13.7 messages per month. Developers and Engineers – 13.8, Engineering Managers – 14.4.

In our last year’s survey, it was 17.9 monthly reach-outs.



Let’s compare it to numbers of applications that respondents themselves sent. The majority (60%) did not apply for jobs over the month of May, 26% submitted between 1 and 9 applications.

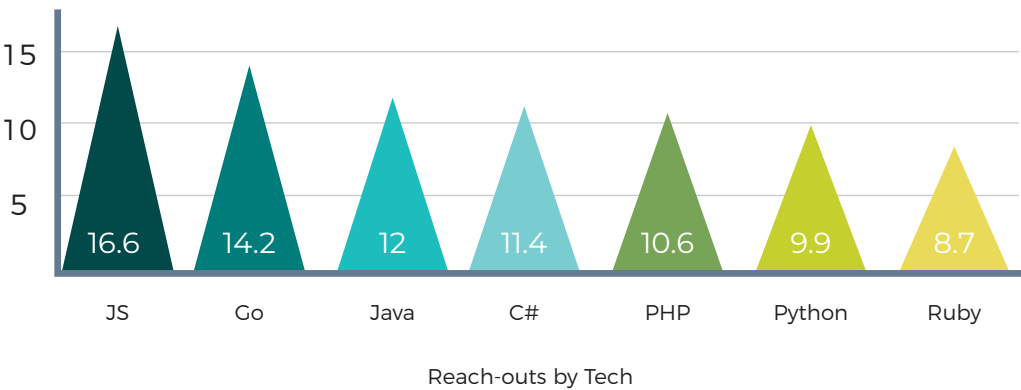
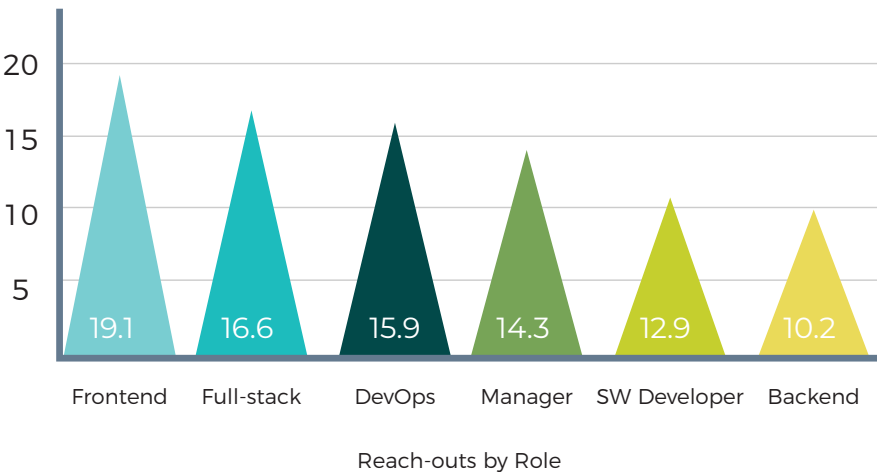


MESSAGES PER MONTH

Like in the previous years, more senior as well as more experienced professionals are approached more often. Respondents are receiving from 6.8 to 16.9 messages per week on average.



And here is the popularity of tech professionals among recruiters by jobs and technologies. Frontend Developers are likely to be contacted by recruiters almost every weekday; Full-stack Developers, DevOps, and those with JavaScript as their main tool are contacted 4 times a week.



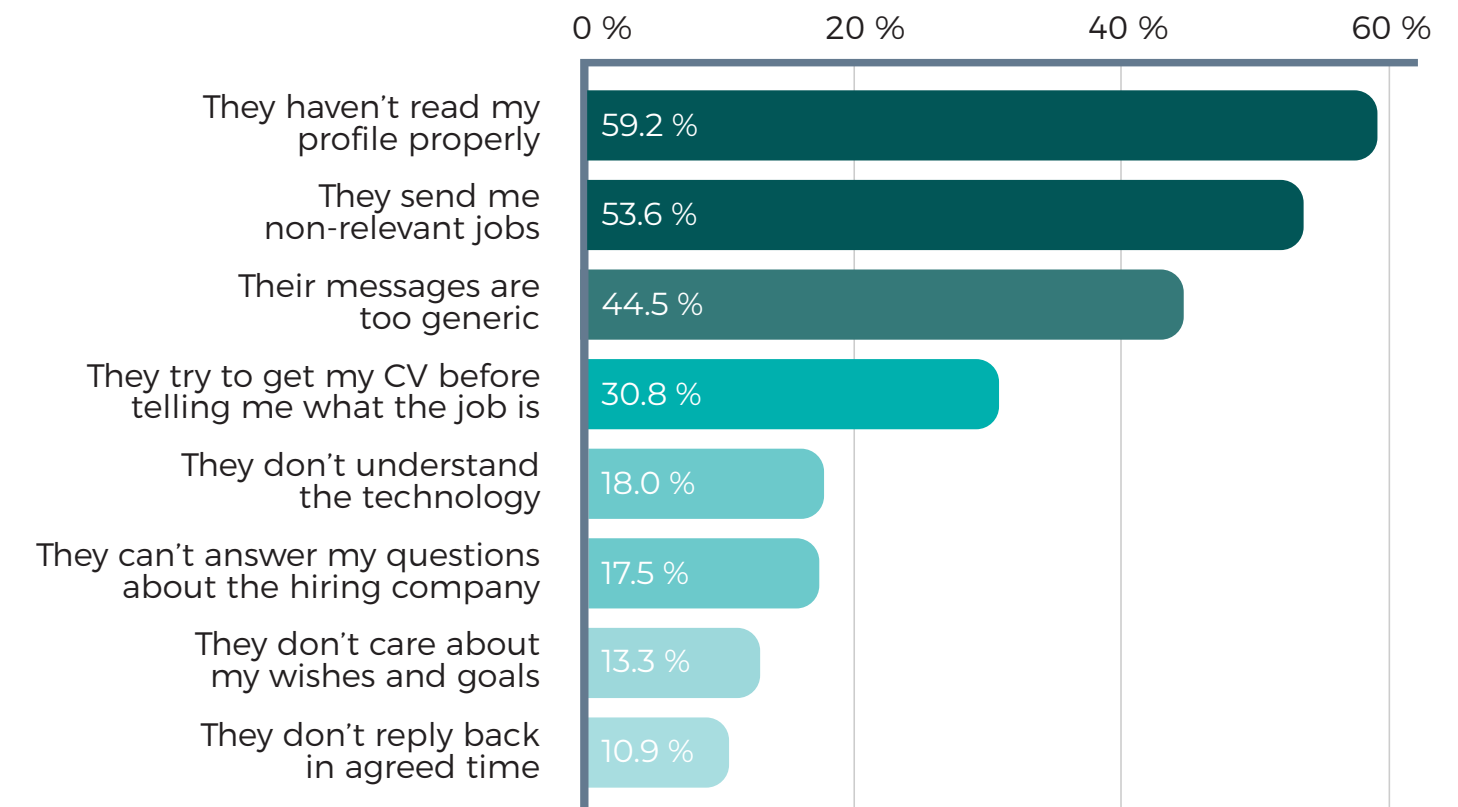


At least have some respect and learn the difference between **Java and Javascript.**

FRUSTRATION WITH RECRUITERS

Top 3 things that respondents find the most frustrating about recruiters are:

- Recruiters don't read their professional profile properly (mentioned by 59%)
- They send non-relevant job descriptions (54%)
- Their messages are too generic (45%)



Ghosting after the initial contact and keeping the salary secret were mentioned by several respondents.

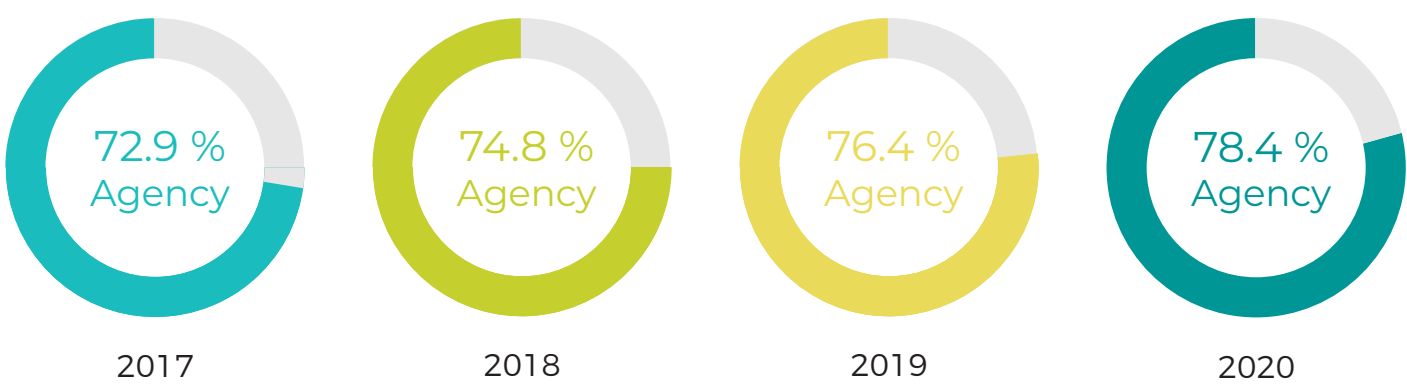
"All just use a spray and pray approach. And many reach out on LinkedIn and never get in touch again after a connection (pointless time wasting)"

"They just try to get their share without adding any value to the community. At least have some respect and learn the difference between Java and JavaScript :) would be nice to see recruiting agencies publishing salary indexes or hosting tech meetups"



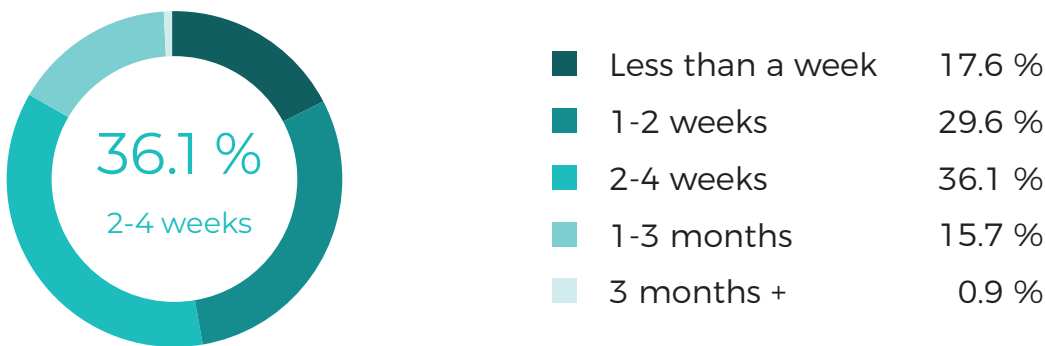
AGENCY vs INHOUSE

On average, 78% of all recruitment messages come from agency recruiters. The trend has stayed the same over the years (and is steadily growing)



HOW LONG IT TAKES TO GET HIRED

This year, 47% respondents were hired within two weeks (as opposed to 34% in 2019). 16% were not so lucky, and their recruitment process from application to job offer lasted over 1 month.



CONCLUSION

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED FROM THE SURVEY?

COVID-19 impacted engineers as well, albeit less than employees in other areas. While managers and senior engineers weren't affected by the pandemic, some mid-level and junior employees went on Kurzarbeit and even got laid off. Remote work has gained a lot of popularity and has been mentioned more than 100 times by our survey respondents.

Last year, less than 20% of respondents were concerned that Berlin's companies were not open to WFH, and 21% named remote work as a significant offer acceptance factor. This year, over 34% said the possibility to work from home will play a pivotal role in their decision to accept an offer. What's more, 76% expected companies to not require their employees to be physically present in the office.

Respondents have changed their opinions on the importance of the company's financial stability. Twice as many participants choose it as a significant offer acceptance factor compared to the 2019 survey results.

40% of our respondents experienced remote onboarding, and very few of them enjoyed it. The overall consensus is that remote onboarding can be good but the

process needs to be very well-structured and well thought out for it to be effective.

The importance of a strong company culture, a good work-life balance, and recognition of one's needs by the employer are felt even more strongly in 2020. These topics emerge on the forefront when it comes to applying for a job, choosing a company to work for, and considering a city to live in.

Apart from this evident work-life-balance aspect, tech candidates still get frustrated by irrelevant recruiter messages, by companies wasting their time with demanding take-home challenges and then never getting back to them.

All this calls for a change in the ways companies organize their workflows, work with their teams, hire and onboard new team members. COVID-19 has presented us with unique challenges and unique opportunities. Companies that will manage to seize these opportunities and engage with the engineering talent in the right way will emerge as winners and will be able to attract A-players to continue innovating and improving their product. And we are here to help you make a difference.



HOW WE MAKE A DIFFERENCE



LILY WILKEN
HEAD OF TALENT
MANAGEMENT

At Caissa, Lily successfully combines her coaching experience with her tech industry knowledge as Head of Talent Management. Starting her career in corporate finance, she has seen both the corporate environment and the startup culture from the inside.

Having lived in multiple locations (Bulgaria, the Netherlands, UK, and Germany) and worked in various fields, Lily puts great importance into challenging herself, taking risks and learning from experience and from the people she surrounds herself with.

Twitter: @LilyanaUzunova
LinkedIn: /lilyana-uzunova



EWELINA KUZMICZ
JAVASCRIPT RECRUITER
KEY ACCOUNT MANAGER

Ewelina is Caissa's JavaScript Recruiter, Key Account Manager, and a master of boolean search. With a background in social research, she has always had a strong focus on asking questions, designing research tools and analysing data. She now uses her skills to connect professionals and companies.

The unprecedented growth of technology and its interplay with business fascinates Ewelina. She finds it thrilling to participate in this process by meeting and connecting people from IT, e-commerce and online worlds.

Twitter: @kuzmiczewelina
LinkedIn: /ewelinakuzmicz



KONSTANTY SLIWOWSKI
FOUNDER & CEO

Konstanty, Caissa's Founder and Managing Director, has been involved in the staffing industry for a decade and a half. He established Caissa with the intent to incorporate executive search flow and procedures into technology recruitment. This means providing clients with a more effective, quality-driven and, above all, people-focused headhunting service.

Konstanty is driven by working to a high business ethics standard. He is a believer in human interaction and true opportunity to embrace change.

Twitter: @KSliwowski
LinkedIn: /sliwowskik



AYTAC CAKAR
RECRUITER

Aytac moved into the realm of IT recruitment after having worked in sales and business development. He believes that every person should have an opportunity to thrive in the right environment. He describes himself as a sparring partner and advocate who wants to connect inspiring people.

A DIY enthusiast himself, Aytac likes finding out not only how things work, but also what drives and motivates people. He is passionate about technology, music and politics, and his personal mission as a recruiter is to unearth people's unique stories.

LinkedIn: /aytac-cakar



ALBIN BANKUTI
EXECUTIVE SEARCH
SPECIALIST

Albin is an expert in targeted executive search and talent acquisition strategy. His speciality is connecting executives and entrepreneurs with startups and major players of the digital world.

Having deep knowledge of the tech industry, combined with his rich experience working with businesses in Europe and Asia, Albin proves to be highly adaptable and efficient. In his free time, Albin volunteers for events like TechStars Demo Day and TechCrunch's Disrupt.

Twitter: @AlbinBankuti
LinkedIn: /albinbankuti



DAVID FALUSSY
KEY ACCOUNT
MANAGER

David has over five years of recruitment experience across Europe. His former clients highlight his consultative approach and ability to listen carefully to their needs. David believes his skills lie in accurately representing the company to candidates, as an insider would.

In addition to placing developers in new roles, David is quite technical himself holding a degree in Engineering Management from Hungary's best university, Obuda.

LinkedIn: /david-falussy



TEST YOURSELF

HOW DO YOU RECRUIT ?

1. How many people did you or your company interview in the last year?
2. How many people did you hire in 2020 so far?
3. How many people rejected your job offers? Do you know why?
4. What was the shortest time to hire at your company?
5. And what was the longest?
6. How many steps are in your hiring process?
7. Who agrees upon a new hiring process at your company?
8. How do you log feedback from interviews? How do you share it?
9. How do you address candidate expectations during the hiring process?
10. What do you do during the hiring process to showcase your company as an employer of choice?
11. How do you manage candidate feedback?
12. What are the steps you're going to take to improve your current hiring process?

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Respondents have
changed their
opinions on the
importance of the
company's financial
stability.

GET IN TOUCH



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