



# 2022 HERC Job Seeker Survey Report

Reaching, Attracting, and Keeping  
Today's Higher Ed Professional



# Background

The purpose of the annual HERC job seeker survey is to understand the experiences of those looking for work in higher education, and help higher education employers identify actionable, realistic, and impactful improvements to finding, selecting, and retaining staff and faculty.

The 2022 survey included questions about the continued impact of COVID-19 on the higher education job market, as well as the importance of diversity, equity, and inclusion in work policies.

The 2022 HERC Job Seeker Survey was conducted from February 2, 2022, to February 15, 2022. The survey had 2,061 respondents.

## Who Responded

Self-reported demographics



**79%**  
hold Master's  
degrees or higher



**17%**  
individuals with  
disabilities



**39%**  
people of color



**3%**  
veterans



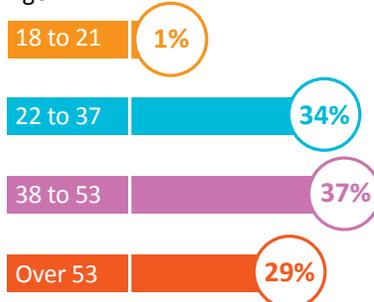
**68%**  
women



**28%**  
men

**2%** third gender or non-binary

Age



**Note:** Percentages in report might not total 100% due to rounding.

## About HERC:

The Higher Education Recruitment Consortium (HERC) is a nonprofit consortium committed to advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion in the higher education workforce. With over 700 colleges, universities, hospitals, research labs, government agencies, and related organizations, HERC works to ensure member institutions are sites of belonging, where all faculty and staff can thrive. HERC provides resources, networking, and outreach programs to attract, hire, and retain a diverse and qualified workforce.

For members: [member.hercjobs.org](https://member.hercjobs.org)

For job seekers: [hercjobs.org](https://hercjobs.org)

# Key Takeaways



## How to Grow a Candidate Pool

- **Recruit from a variety of backgrounds:** Half of the respondents have not or are not currently working in higher ed. Target both experienced higher ed professionals and newcomers who may not be familiar with higher ed careers.
- **Recruit beyond city limits:** Job seekers are open to moving for the right opportunity. Job seekers willing to relocate were more likely to choose anywhere in the United States as a possible relocation option. This was true among all age groups.



## How to Appeal to Job Seekers

- **Describe the higher ed workplace:** Over half of respondents are looking for jobs both in and out of higher ed. In recruitment materials, illustrate how working in higher education can be similar to and different than working in other industries (e.g., corporate, government, health care, nonprofit).
- **Highlight existing opportunities and benefits:** Salary, career advancement, work-life satisfaction, and seeking remote/flexible options were the top four reasons for searching for a new job.
- **Communicate remote options:** Many workers are currently working remotely. Clearly explaining expectations of in-office requirements will save time for both recruiter and job seeker.
- **Demonstrate commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion:** Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) in the workplace is important to job seekers. Concrete evidence, including salary equity, inclusive workplace culture, and a positive reputation from employees, are the most important DEI factors.



## How to Keep Employees

- **Provide internal career advancement opportunities:** Job seekers are much more likely to look for a position outside of their current institution to advance their careers. Finding ways to retain employees through pathways to promotion or interdepartmental hiring should be addressed within the institution.
- **Invest in mentorship programs and leadership training:** These are the top two indicators of an employer's commitment to career advancement.
- **Promote health and well-being:** When rating employee benefits, healthy workplace culture, supportive supervisor/leadership, health benefits, and work-life satisfaction were all rated above higher salary.
- **Provide mental health support:** Respondents reported not seeing the prioritization of mental health in their workplaces. Highlighting available mental health programs can help increase employee retention.

# Today's Higher Ed Job Seeker

## Higher Ed Job Seeker Profile



Survey respondents are currently working: full-time (65%), part-time (15%), contract/consulting (5%), not currently working (13%), and a few are retired (2%).



There is a split among job seekers who are working in-person (38%), remotely (28%), and a mix/hybrid of the two (34%).



50% of respondents have not or are not currently working in higher ed.



While the majority (52%) of survey respondents most recently worked at a college or university, the rest have a variety of work backgrounds including corporations (11%), nonprofits (9%), health care (8%), government (5%), research institute/laboratory (2%), foundation (1%), or other (11%).



Out of the survey respondents who have worked in higher education, 7% have less than one year of experience, 32% 1-5 years, 22% 6-10 years, and 39% 10 or more years.



Job seekers have experience from various types of institutions: public 4+ (42%), private not for profit 4+ (34%), public 2 year (14%), private for-profit 4+ (10%), private 2 year (5%) and other (4%).



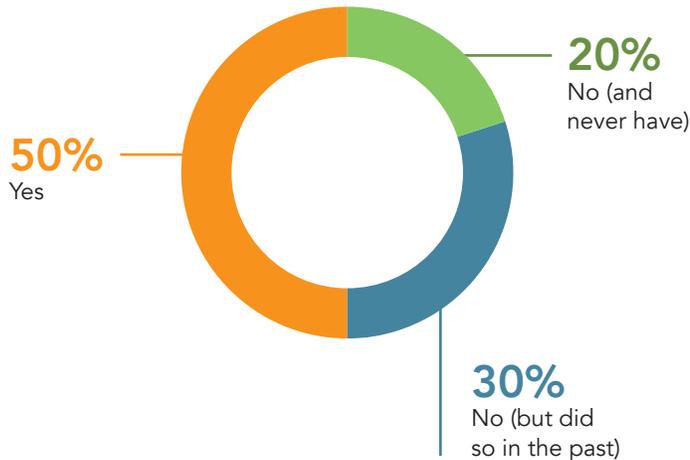
A large majority (75%) of those employed in higher ed are only working for one institution. The rest split their time among different institutions (17% at 2 institutions, 6% at 3, and 2% at 4+).



58% of job seekers are staff/administrators and 31% are faculty members. 11% are currently working both roles.

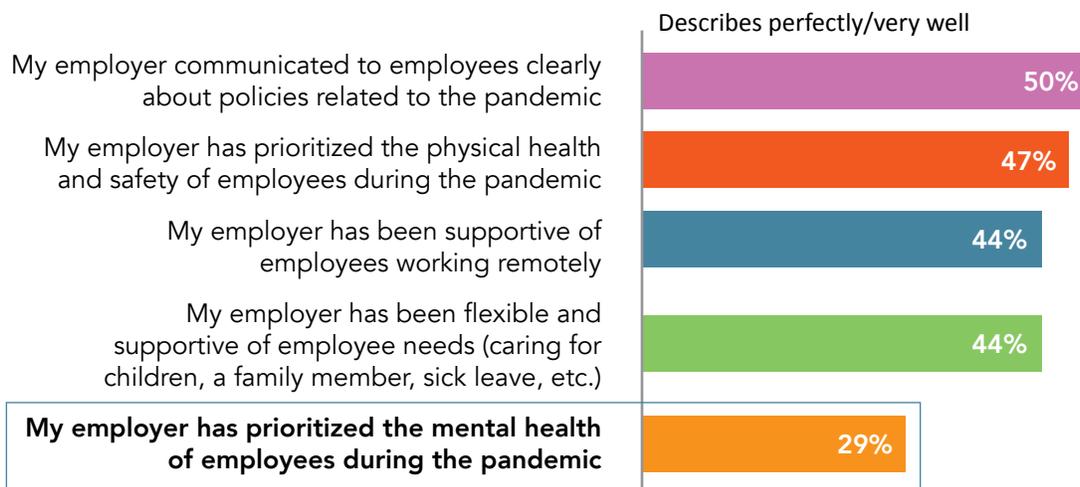
# Today's Higher Ed Job Seeker

## Are you currently working in higher education?



Half of respondents have not or are not currently working in higher ed, suggesting that recruitment materials should target both experienced higher ed professionals and newcomers who may not be familiar with job opportunities in this field.

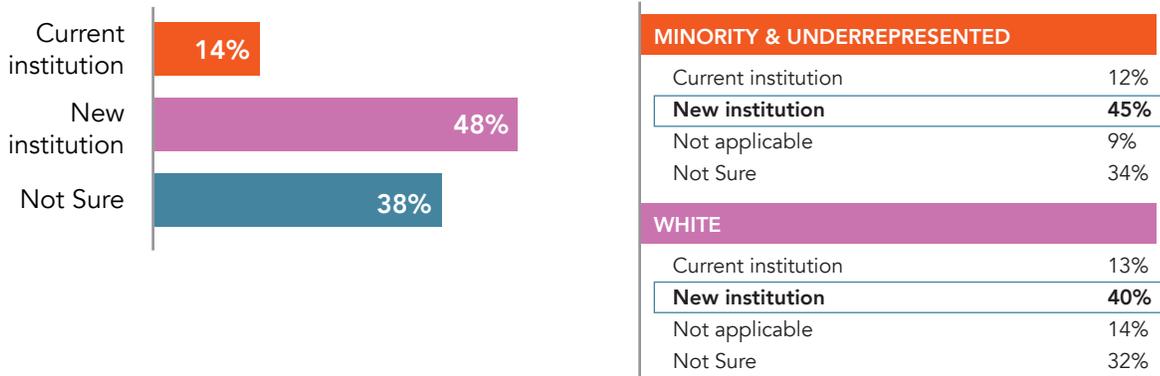
## As it relates to your career and the COVID-19 pandemic in the past year, please rate how well each statement describes you and your experience with your higher education institution.



Only 29% report that their employer has prioritized the mental health of employees during the pandemic—much lower than other considerations shown by workplace changes related to the pandemic. Promoting available mental health resources offered to employees can help in employee satisfaction and retention.

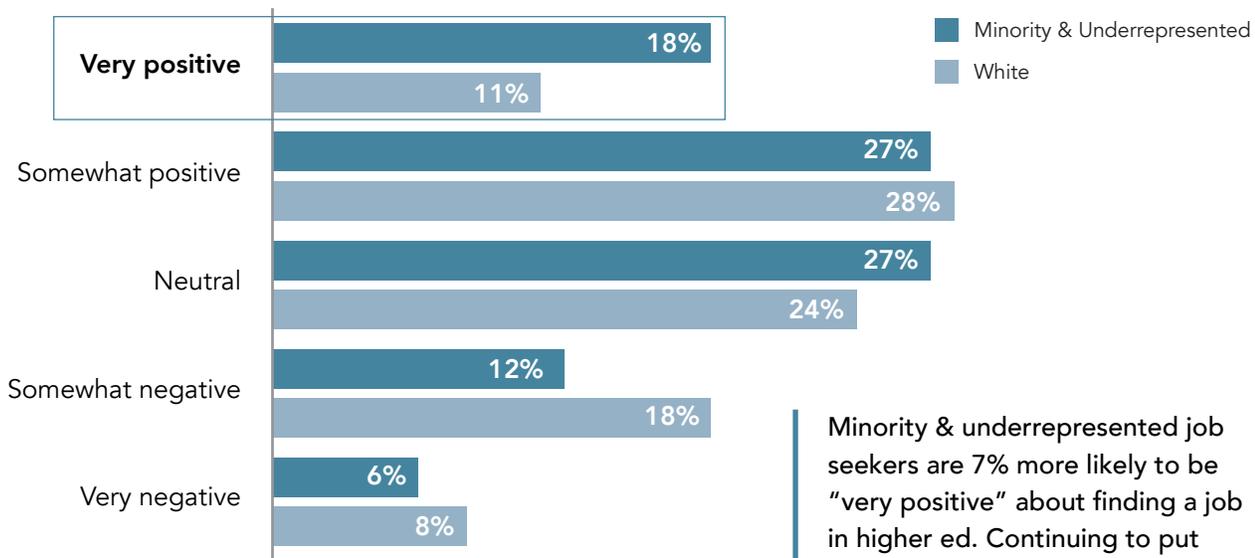
# Today's Higher Ed Job Seeker

Do you expect to advance in your career at your current institution, or with a new employer?



Job seekers believe they will be able to advance their careers at a new institution (48%), not at their current placement (14%). Furthermore, minority & underrepresented job seekers are 5% more likely to choose "new institution" over their white peers. Finding ways to retain employees through pathways to promotion or interdepartmental hiring should be addressed within the institution.

Right now, how do you feel about getting a new job (at your current institution and/or a different institution) in higher education?

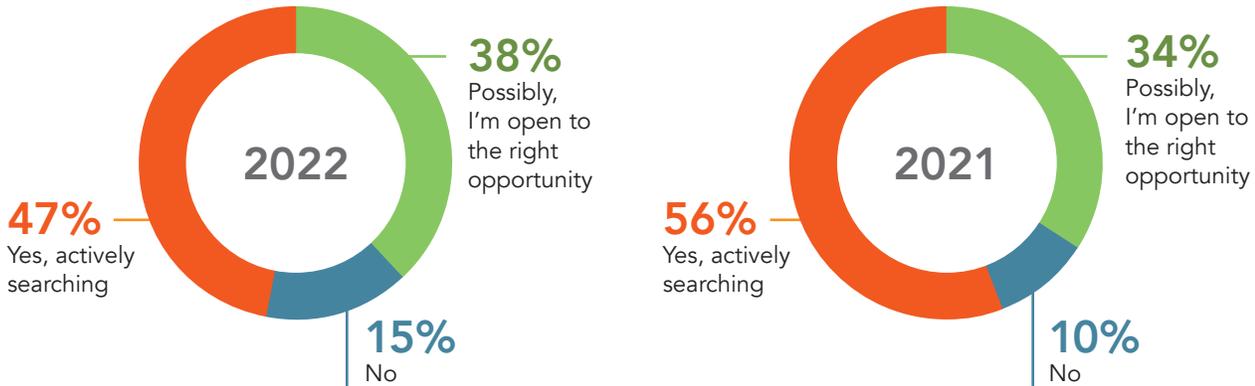


Minority & underrepresented job seekers are 7% more likely to be "very positive" about finding a job in higher ed. Continuing to put resources into diverse outreach for higher ed positions will be beneficial.

Note: "Not applicable" and "not sure" are not displayed.

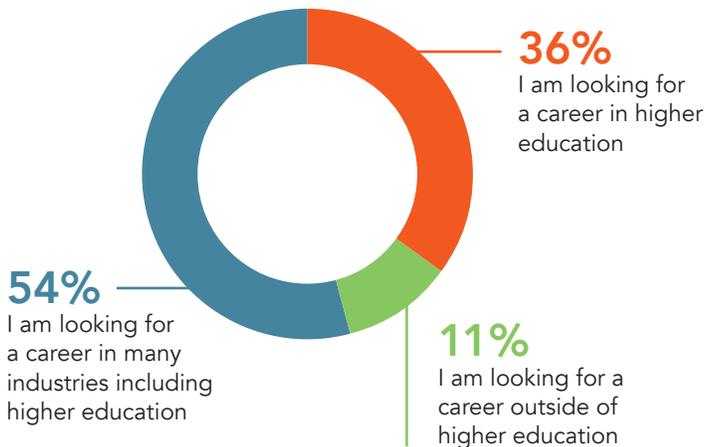
# Today's Higher Ed Job Seeker

## Are you currently searching for a new job?



Compared to last year, fewer respondents are actively looking for a new job (56% in 2021 vs. 47% in 2022). With more people refraining from seeking new opportunities, employers should consider shifting some resources to employee retention and raising brand awareness among passive job seekers.

## Which best describes your current job search:

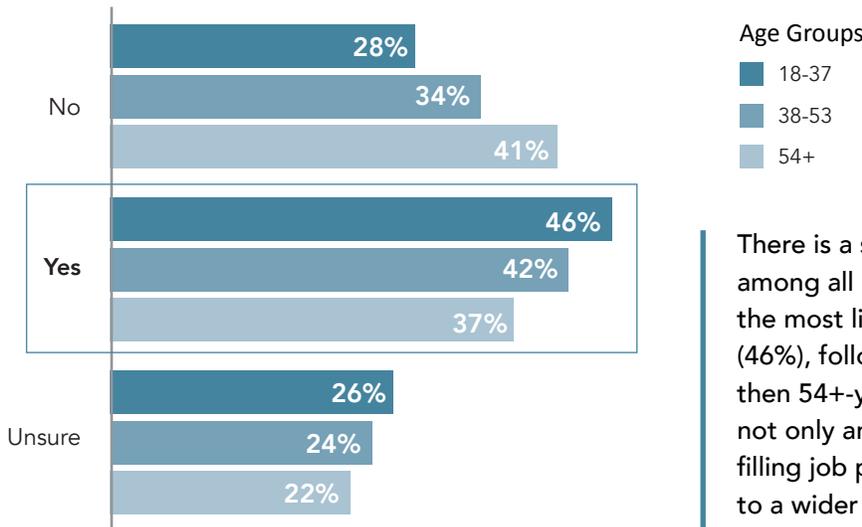
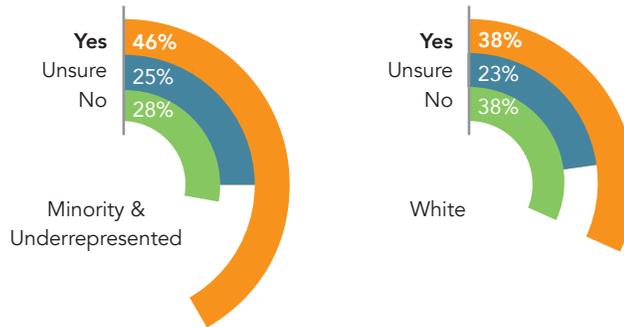


Competition for job placement is external: with 54% of job seekers looking for employment both in and out of higher education, recruiters would benefit from illustrating comparisons between and perks to working in higher education vs. other industries (corporate, nonprofit, health care, etc.).

# Today's Higher Ed Job Seeker

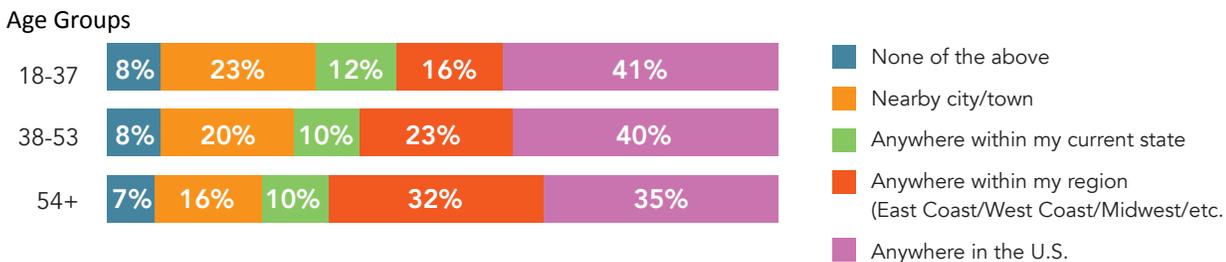
## Are you willing to relocate for a new job?

Minority & underrepresented job seekers are 8% more likely to relocate than their white peers. Institutions that seek to broaden their diversity pool can look outside their immediate location for potential candidates.



There is a strong willingness to relocate among all age groups: 18-37-year-olds are the most likely to say yes to relocating (46%), followed by 38-53-year-olds (42%) then 54+-year-olds (37%). Relocation is not only an option for young candidates—filling job positions by opening them to a wider net is possible.

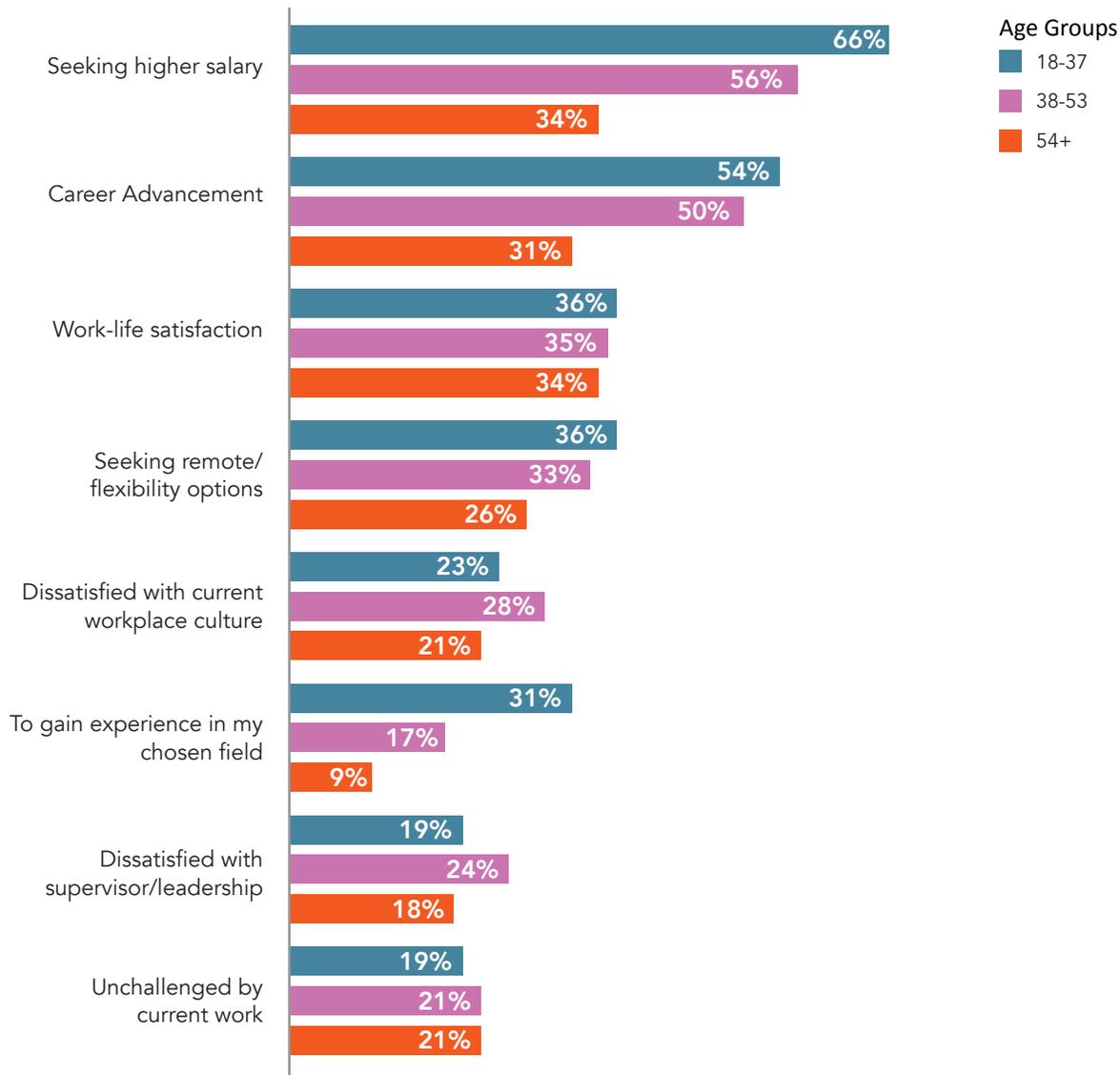
## How far from your current residence would you be willing to move for a new job?



Job seekers who are 54 and over are less likely to move to a nearby city/town, yet they are more likely to move anywhere within their region compared to their peers. A substantial percentage of each group is willing to move anywhere in the United States (18-37: 41%, 38-53: 40%, 54+: 35%).

# What Job Seekers Want

## Why are you searching for a new job?



Each age group is most likely to choose seeking higher salary, career advancement, and work-life satisfaction as their top three reasons for searching for a new job.

Additionally, 38-53-year-olds are more likely to select "dissatisfied with current workplace culture," "dissatisfied with supervisor/leadership," and personal reasons than their peers.

The youngest sector, 18-37-year-olds, chose "seeking higher salary," "career advancement," "seeking remote/flexible options," and "to gain experience in my chosen field" more often than their peers.

# What Job Seekers Want

## In your own words, why are you searching for a new job?



*"Employer is not keeping pace with the market regarding work/life balance, total compensation, growth opportunities, and overall flexibility."*

*"I am aware of a greater number of opportunities available in higher ed right now, as well as greater salaries; I am currently assessing whether my current employer can meet my desire for advancement and salary needs."*

*"Due to COVID, working on campus has proved to be more difficult with a young family at home and my employer will not allow WFH any longer."*



*"I always keep my eyes and ears open about what might be available to take the next step in my career."*

*"I am not searching, but I am open to a job that has more flexibility, awareness, understanding, accommodations, and higher pay."*

*"Not actively searching, but the culture in my current institution does not promote flexible work arrangements. I also would like to leave the geographical area where I live."*

*"I am always interested in the right opportunity in higher education and although I am not actively looking, I am always open to a conversation. You just never know where an open door might lead."*

*"I would like a change. I have always worked for nonprofits and want to try higher ed."*



*"I have hit a ceiling at my current institution, I am experiencing a high level of burnout, and I do not feel supported by toxic leadership and a current rotating door of managers."*

*"My boss is incredibly toxic and micromanaging. I have the role of at least two people and I think I want to leave higher education administration altogether."*



*"Ready to return to workforce after relocating and caring for my young child."*

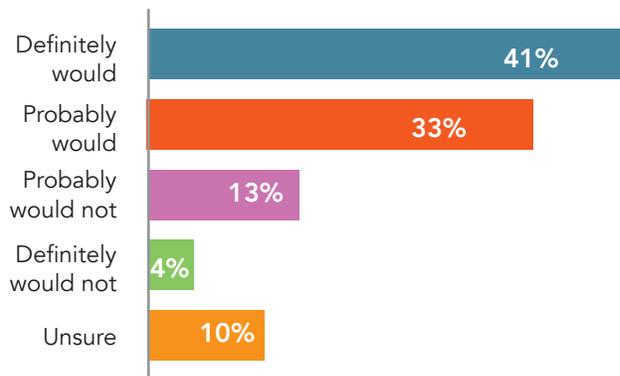
*"Lost position due to pandemic and childcare constraints."*

*"Career growth and to relocate near family due to aging parents."*



# What Job Seekers Want

In regards to remote work options, if you were offered two identical job offers with the only difference being that one job is remote, how likely would that influence your decision to choose the remote job?



Remote work options play a part in job seeking: 74% of job seekers would “definitely” or “probably” be persuaded to choose a remote job over in-person, if given the chance. Remote and flexible work options should be offered when feasible.

How important are each of the following career aspects and employee benefits to you when searching for employment?

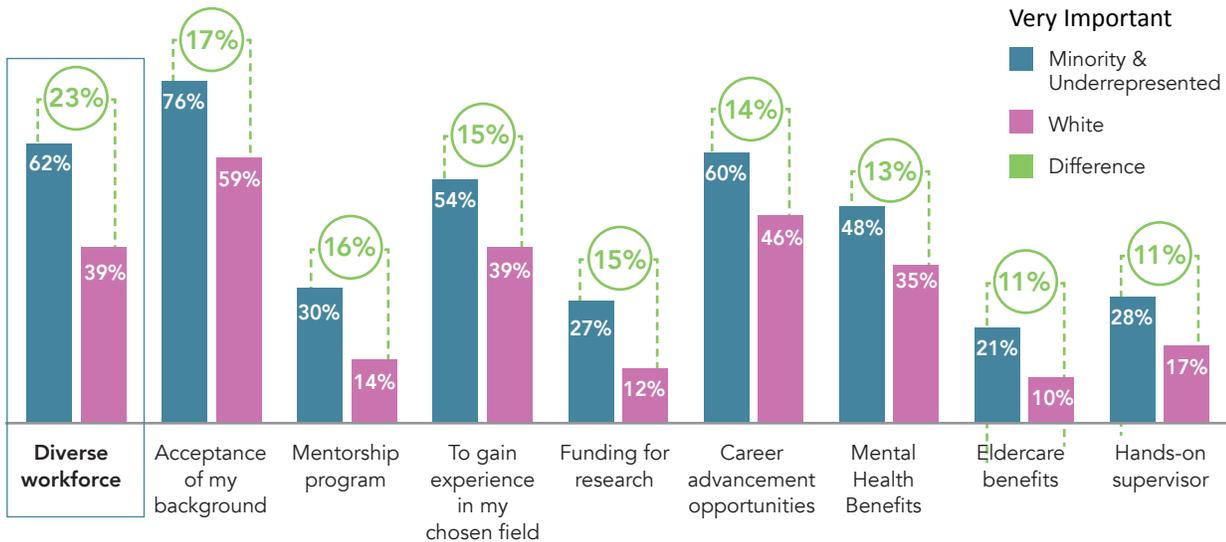
MINORITY & UNDERREPRESENTED	Very Important
Healthy workplace culture	83%
Supportive Supervisor/leadership	78%
Acceptance of my background, experiences and/or ideas in the workplace	76%
WHITE	Very Important
Healthy workplace culture	78%
Supportive Supervisor/leadership	74%
Work-life satisfaction (ex: family-friendly work environment, healthy lifestyle programs)	67%

**Focusing on a healthy workplace with supportive leadership is key to keeping employees:**

- Healthy workplace culture and supportive leadership were rated as the top two career aspects for both minority & underrepresented and white respondents.
- For minority & underrepresented job seekers, “acceptance of my background” was rated third, while “work-life satisfaction” was third for white respondents.
- DEI offices can be brought in to help demonstrate actionable ways of acceptance in the workplace for employees of different backgrounds.

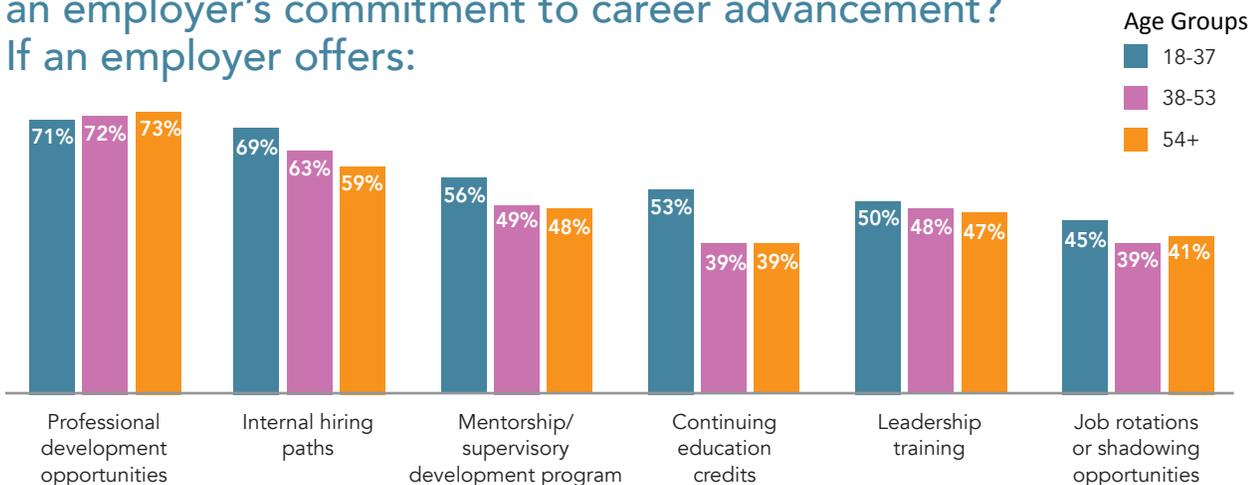
# What Job Seekers Want

How important are each of the following career aspects and employee benefits to you when searching for employment?



Respondents were asked which career aspects and employee benefits they considered “very important”; minority and underrepresented respondents rated several categories more than 10% higher than white respondents. These categories included “diverse workforce,” “acceptance of my background,” and the availability of a mentorship program.

From your perspective, what are the top 2 indicators of an employer’s commitment to career advancement?  
If an employer offers:



Survey respondents across all age groups agree on top indicators of an employer’s commitment to career advancement: professional development opportunities, internal hiring paths, and mentorship/supervisory development. Continuing education credits is ranked higher by 18-37-year-olds than their peers. Addressing these needs is critical to serve a mix of employees.

# What Job Seekers Want

When searching for employment, how important are an employer's diversity and inclusion policies and practices to you?

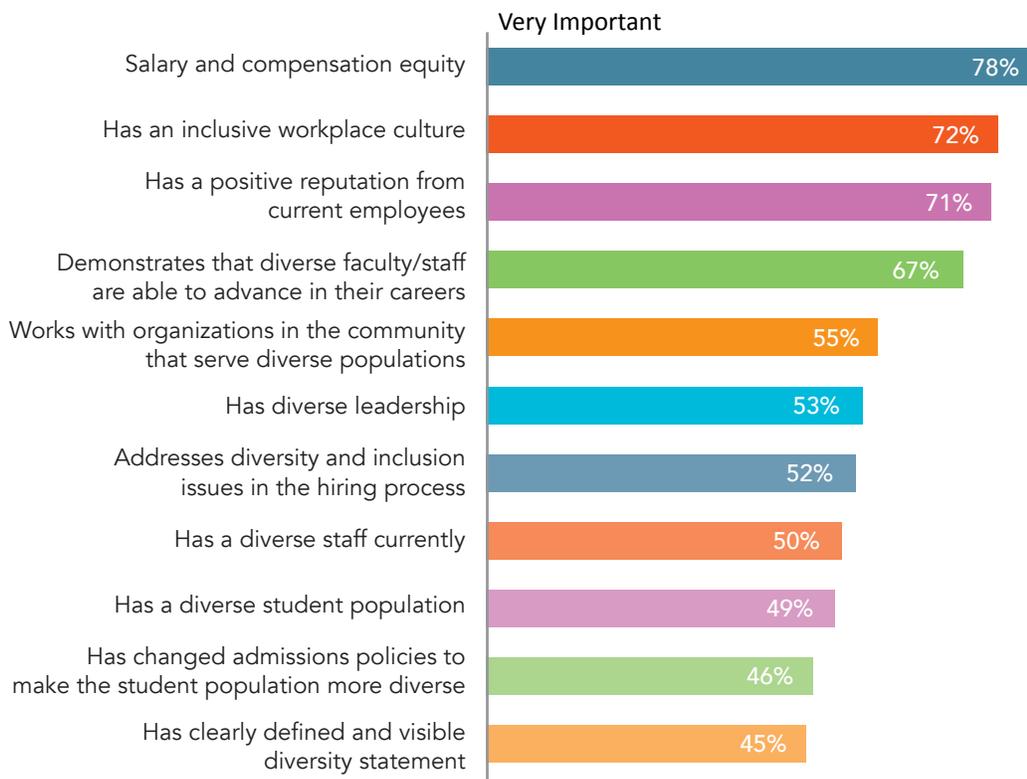


81%

Diversity and inclusion policies are somewhat to very important

Diversity and inclusion policies are "somewhat" to "very" important to the majority (81%) of respondents. Reminding employees of the work of their institutions' DEI office can help in employment satisfaction.

From your perspective, how important are each of the following indicators of an employer's commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion?



Demonstrated commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion in the workplace is important to job seekers. Concrete evidence including salary equity (78%), inclusive workplace culture (72%), and a positive reputation from employees (71%) are the most important DEI factors.