2026 Global Workforce Trends Report

Part One: Priorities and Outlook from HR Leaders and Job Seekers

Part Two: Building Trust With Millions of Data Points

FirstAdvantage

Executive Summary

Trust has become a defining requirement of modern hiring. As organizations accelerate hiring and expand across borders, they must move beyond point-in-time background screening and identity verification to continuously build trust throughout the employee lifecycle.

This report examines that shift through two distinct but connected lenses. **Part One captures the voice of the market by drawing on global insights from hiring professionals and recent job seekers** to reveal how expectations for speed, transparency, and verification are changing.

Part Two brings those expectations into focus through real-world data and customer experiences. Using millions of anonymized screening transactions across the First Advantage global network, it shows how organizations are translating trust into action across pre- and post-hire workflows.

Together, these findings illustrate that building workforce trust now requires both insight and infrastructure. Organizations that align the two will be better positioned to move faster, reduce risk, and create more confident hiring experiences.

Part One: Priorities and Outlook from HR Leaders and Job Seekers

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Part Two: Building Trust With Millions of Data Points

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2026 GLOBAL WORKFORCE TRENDS REPORT

Part One: Priorities and Outlook from HR Leaders and Job Seekers

The Workforce Trust Evolution

The *2026 Global Workforce Trends Report* highlights a rapidly evolving employment landscape shaped by globalization, workforce flexibility and accelerating AI adoption. Organizations are operating in more dynamic, connected environments where identity, speed and trust play an increasingly central role in workforce strategy. Hiring velocity remains a key competitive advantage, while verification and compliance continue to underpin organizational confidence.

Built on insights from hiring leaders, including Chief Human Resource Officers (CHROs), and job seekers, conducted in partnership with ClearlyRated, this report provides insights into how leaders are balancing risk, speed, and trust across the employee lifecycle. The findings reveal that leading organizations are strengthening compliance frameworks and expanding identity verification and background screening beyond a transactional pre-hire step into a strategic capability that enables trust, supports speed and reinforces competitive differentiation.

Throughout this report, "screening" broadly refers to pre-employment background screening and related verification processes, including criminal record checks, employment and education verification, social media screening, drug testing, and occupational health screening, where applicable.

Study Snapshot

2,148
CHROs and hiring professionals

3,244
recent job candidates

4 Global Regions
- Americas
- Latin America
- Europe, Middle East and Africa (EMEA)
- Asia Pacific

8 Industries
- Tech, Media, & Entertainment
- Finance, Business, & Professional Services
- Gig Economy
- Staffing
- Retail & Hospitality
- Transportation
- Healthcare
- Education & Government

Conducted in partnership with ClearlyRated

For trust in a changing world, organizations must know their people.

Key Takeaways

Fraud is rising and screening is expanding to keep pace.

- 76% of hiring managers report experiencing falsified employment details.
- 45% have encountered candidate identity misrepresentation.
- 89% plan to add additional background screening and identity verification solutions within two years.
- 82% of CHROs already conduct continuous monitoring or periodic rescreening as part of their processes, with nearly all other hiring professionals planning to implement it within two years.

Takeaway: Employers are adding tools and extending screening and identity verification across the employee lifecycle.

AI is accelerating hiring and raising the bar for identity trust.

- AI adoption is increasing across recruiting and onboarding workflows.
- As AI use expands, both employers and candidates place greater emphasis on verification, transparency and trust.

Takeaway: As hiring accelerates through AI, identity verification becomes foundational to maintaining workforce confidence.

Risk and speed are now dual mandates, not tradeoffs.

- Risk mitigation ranks as the most important component of background screening across all industries and regions.
- Speed and unexpected delays remain top concerns for both candidates and employers.
- 57% expect their screening processes to become more automated and integrated within two years.
- Investments are driven by ease of use, improved reporting and better candidate experiences.

Takeaway: Risk anchors decision-making, while speed and efficiency define competitive hiring performance.

Global and flexible workforces are reshaping screening strategies.

- More than 60% of global employers report growth in candidates with multi-country or multi-location work histories.
- Employers are expanding flexible or gig-friendly models to meet workforce expectations.
- 79% of screenings involve three or more stakeholders.
- Most employers use a single screening provider or plan consolidation within three years.

Takeaway: As hiring footprints expand, leaders are prioritizing operational simplicity and global consistency through consolidation.

Study Findings

Global Workforce Trends

1. The Environment

The Forces Shaping Workforce Trust

Hiring trust is evolving, with organizations and candidates placing greater emphasis on security, clarity and credibility. Identity considerations are becoming more complex, impacting employers and candidates alike. Credential "inflation," fabricated employment histories, identity manipulation, and job scams are reshaping how organizations evaluate risk.

These challenges are not limited to a single sector or geography. Across industries such as staffing, technology, and finance, verification issues are widespread. Globally, the reported incidence of candidate verification issues ranges from 71% to 88%, with the Asia Pacific reporting the highest levels. With more than 70% of hiring professionals across every region reporting some form of misrepresentation, verification risk has become widespread rather than situational.

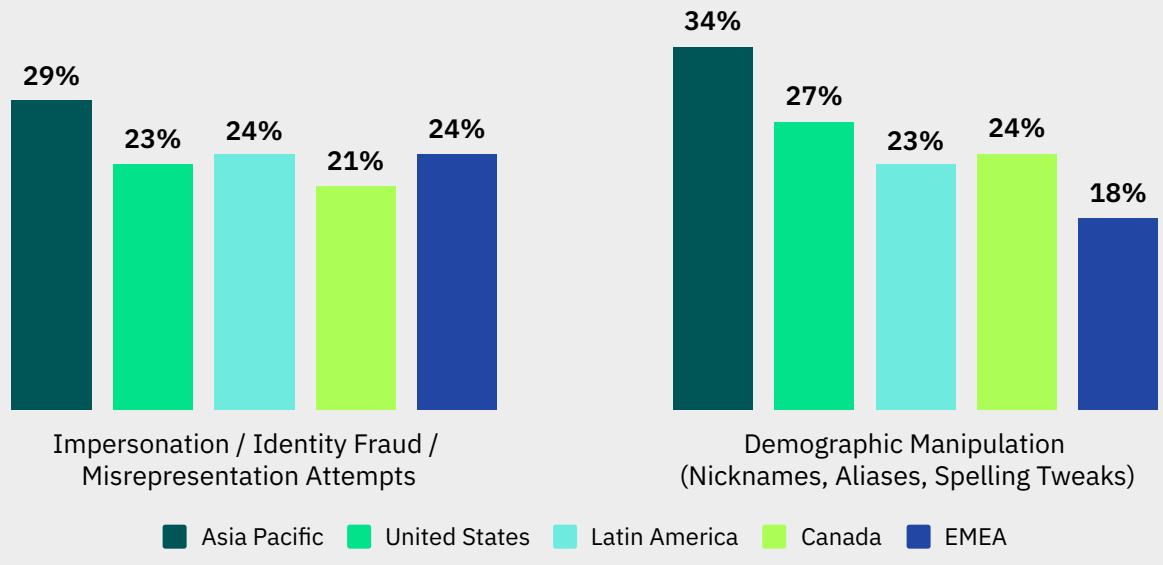
The Hiring Environment

76%
of hiring professionals have experienced falsified employment details

45%
have endured candidate identity misrepresentation

66%
of recent job candidates are concerned about applying for jobs that aren't real

Incidence of Candidate Identity Misrepresentation



Incidence of candidate verification issues:

- United States: 73%
- Canada: 71%
- Latin America: 76%
- EMEA: 76%
- Asia Pacific: 88%

Elevated Expectations on Both Sides

Hiring professionals report significant concern about hiring risks tied to undisclosed criminal history (61%), document forgery and deepfakes (60%), inaccurate or incomplete screening results (57%), and noncompliance with screening regulations (53%). Difficulty verifying employment or education history and inconsistent screening processes across locations or teams also rank among the top concerns.

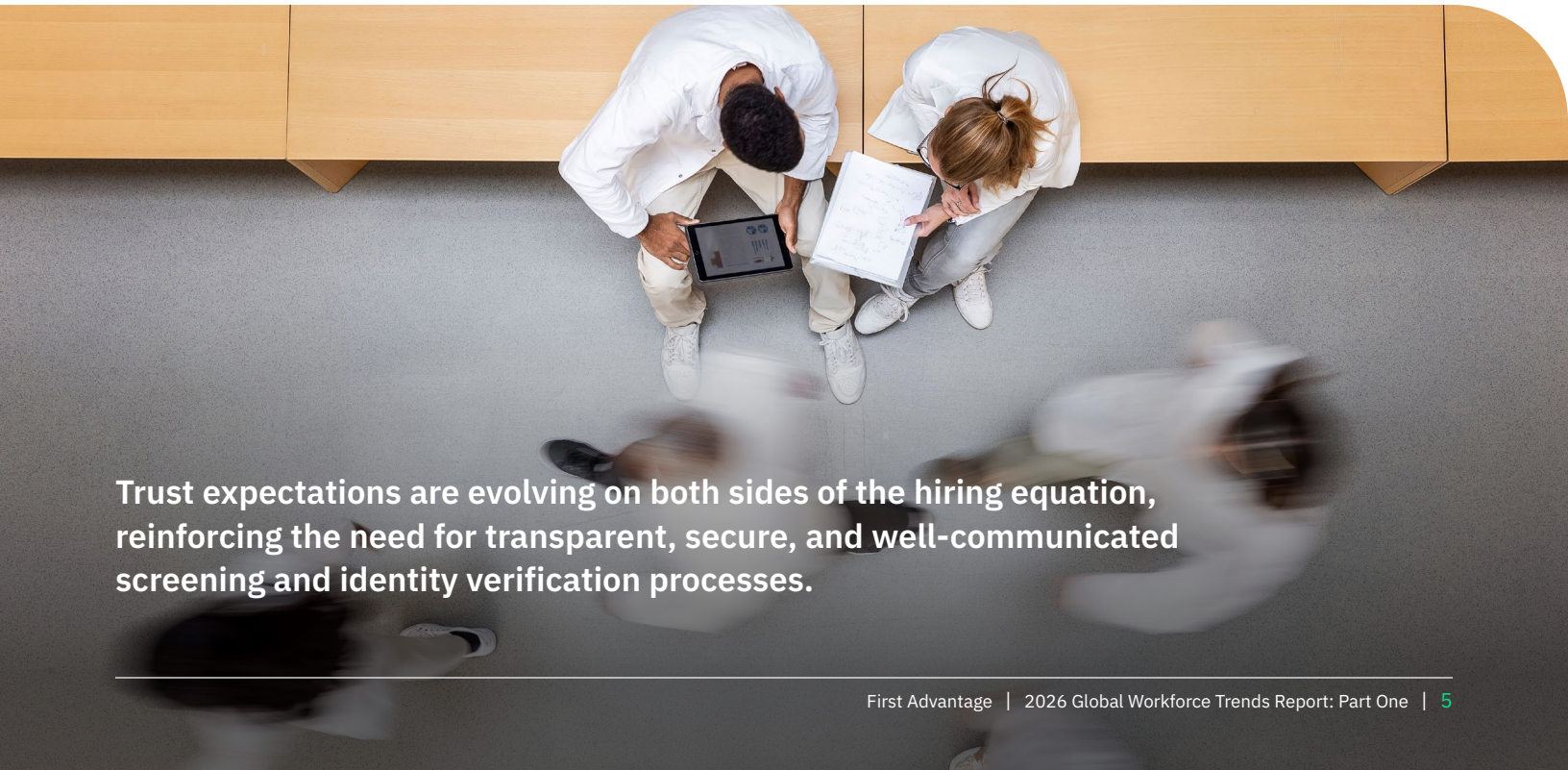
At the same time, job seekers express similar levels of unease. Two-thirds (66%) worry about applying for illegitimate roles. More than 60% are concerned about impersonation or identity fraud by potential employers, as well as document forgery or deepfakes. Over half (56%) are uneasy about sharing personal information during the application process.

The data reveal a clear pattern: **fraud awareness is shared.** Employers fear hiring the wrong candidate. Candidates fear applying to the wrong employer.

A More Complex Workforce

At the same time, structural shifts are changing how we work, and the hiring experiences candidates journey through. Multi-country work and multi-living locations continue to expand. Flexible and gig-based employment models are growing. AI tools are deeply embedded in recruiting and job searches, lowering barriers to application volume and increasing the potential for misrepresentation. At the same time, most organizations have four or more hiring stakeholders involved in the process, with one in four having six or more.

As hiring becomes more global, digital, and distributed, complexity increases. As complexity increases, screening and identity verification become increasingly important. Trust in hiring must be intentionally designed and actively maintained.



Trust expectations are evolving on both sides of the hiring equation, reinforcing the need for transparent, secure, and well-communicated screening and identity verification processes.

2. Screening & Identity Priorities

Risk Mitigation Leads, But Speed Defines Competitiveness

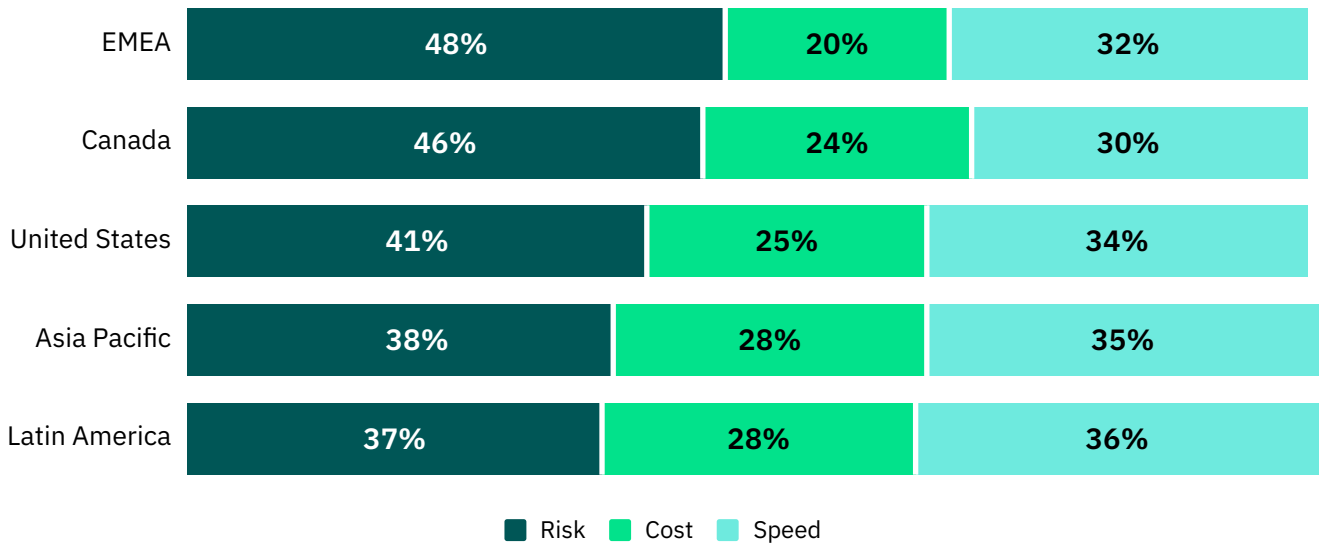
Background screening remains a foundational element of modern hiring strategy built to verify qualifications, mitigate risk, and support consistency. But in today's global, AI-enabled, and highly competitive labor market, it has evolved beyond a procedural safeguard. Screening now sits at the center of workforce trust, balancing regulatory requirements, brand protection, hiring velocity, and the candidate experience.

The most important reasons why hiring professionals use screening are to verify job qualifications and meet compliance requirements. Risk mitigation, brand protection, and adherence to best practices further reinforce screening's role as a strategic safeguard.

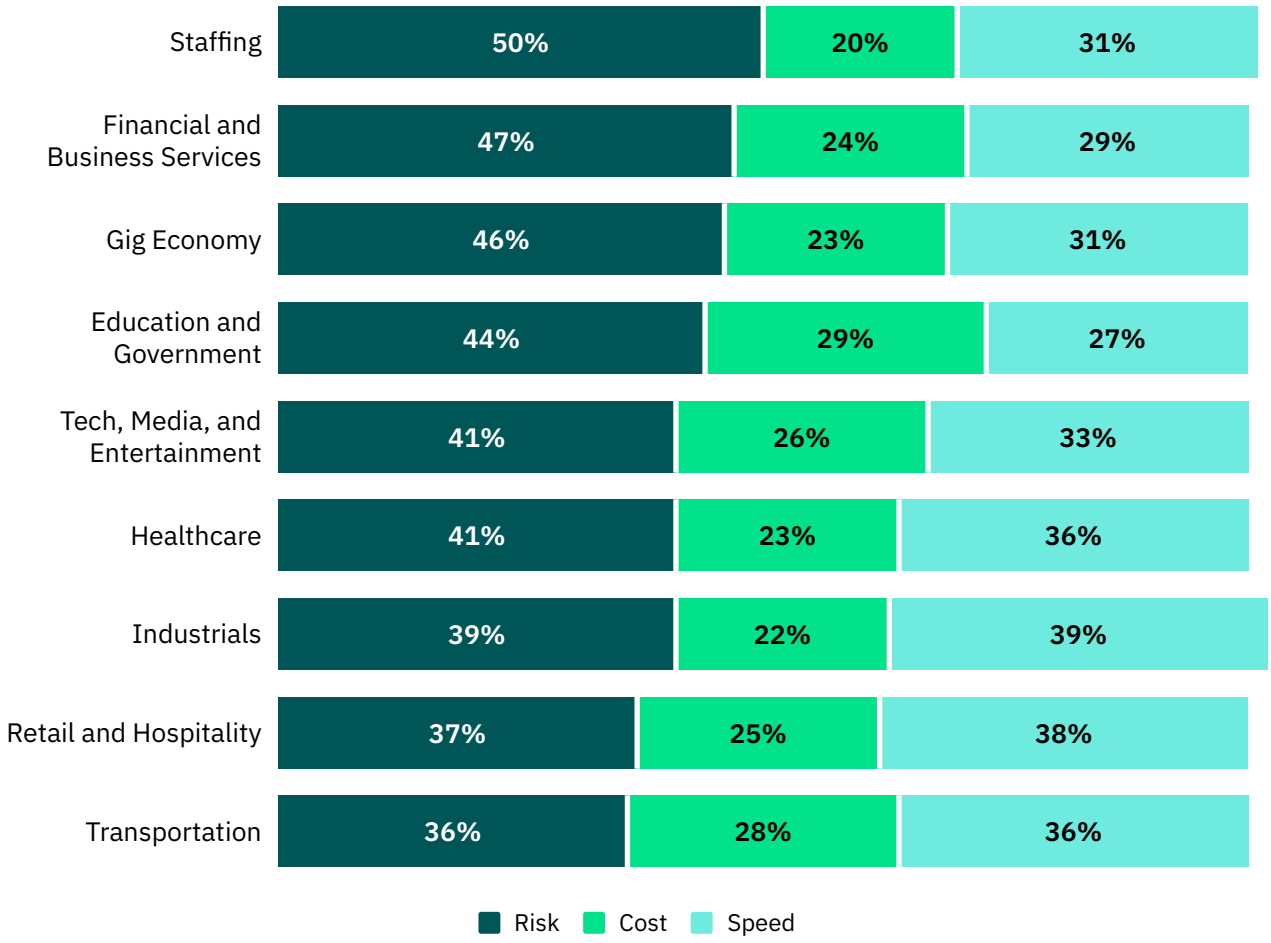
Forty-two percent of hiring managers rank risk mitigation as the most important component of the screening and identity verification process, ahead of speed (34%) and cost (25%). This ranking is consistent across industries and most pronounced among large employers, where exposure and reputational stakes are highest.

Risk anchors decision-making, while speed and efficiency define competitive hiring performance.

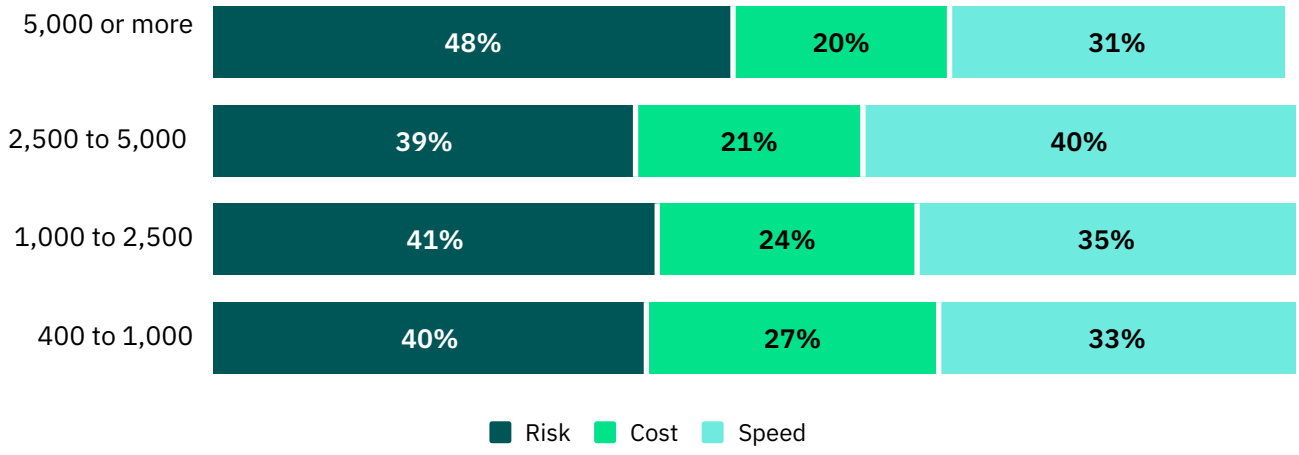
Screening Process Priorities by Region



Screening Process Priorities by Industry



Screening Process Priorities by Organization Size (Number of Employees)



Risk and Speed in Alignment

Risk mitigation remains foundational to workforce strategy, but speed increasingly defines competitive advantage. Leading organizations recognize that protection and performance are not opposing forces; they are dual mandates.

Velocity directly influences candidate experience, hiring momentum and time to productivity. In today's market, organizations that deliver both strong identity verification standards and efficient background screening processes strengthen workforce confidence while maintaining hiring agility.

Organizations that design screening processes and identity verification to support both accuracy and efficiency position themselves to compete more effectively for talent.

From Our Customer's Perspective

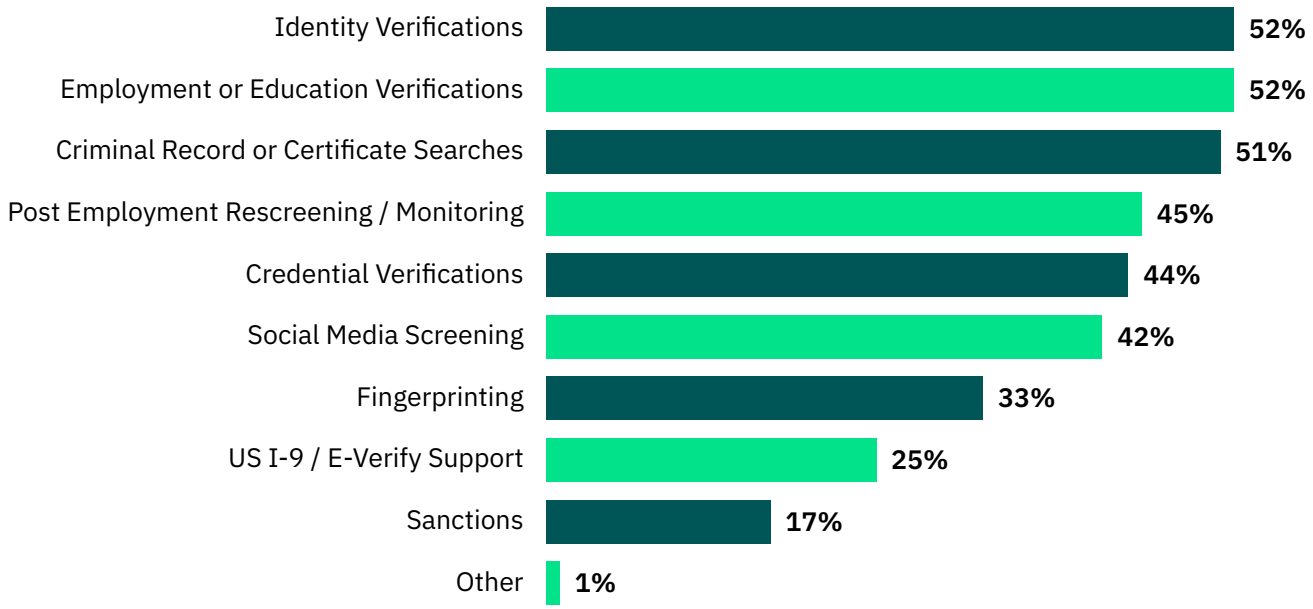
In a recent case study, First Advantage's financial and business services customers reduced background screening turnaround times by an average of two days after implementing identity-first solutions. Verifying identity upfront streamlined subsequent checks, reduced delays, and accelerated hiring outcomes. [1]

3. Screening and Identity Expands

Addressing Trust and Improving the Candidate Experiences

As identity fraud risks rise and workforce models evolve, employers are expanding the scope of background screening to better manage them. Nearly nine in 10 plan to add services within the next two years, and many expect to add multiple services. The priority services to add include identity verification, employment and education verifications, and criminal record searches. Enterprise CHRO leaders are moving even more aggressively, signaling that screening is becoming a strategic priority rather than an operational afterthought.

Screening Products to be Added to the Hiring Process Within Two Years



Expansion is not just about adding products. It reflects a broader shift in mindset. Screening is no longer confined to the pre-hire stage. Organizations are shifting from point-in-time checks to ongoing workforce verification, recognizing that risk does not end when the offer is accepted.

Nearly nine in 10 organizations report some form of periodic or continuous screening. 82% of CHROs are currently rescreening and/or monitoring their current workforce, compared to 61% of hiring managers, signaling that while momentum is strong, maturity levels vary.

Our Point of View

In a digital, AI-enabled, and globally connected world, identity is no longer static. It must be understood intelligently, checked persistently, and managed actively across the employee lifecycle.

Workforce Strategies are Evolving

Screening and identity verification expansion is occurring alongside broader workforce shifts. Nearly half of hiring managers report moving toward more flexible, gig-friendly employment models. As organizations adopt distributed and nontraditional work structures, they must balance agility with accountability.

At the same time, candidate complexity is increasing. Employers report an increasing number of candidates with multi-country work and address/residence histories in more than one country, particularly in technology, finance, staffing, and business services. Regionally, applicants from Asia Pacific (36%), EMEA (30%), and Latin America (30%) increasingly bring cross-border experience. Work continues to grow across borders, and employers must keep up to remain strong and competitive.

As work becomes more mobile and more flexible, global screening and verification become more thorough and essential. Overall, 61% of hiring managers see an increase in employees with multi-country work histories, with tech and media and entertainment showing the most candidates with these experiences, followed by finance, business, and professional services.

Candidates See Screening as a Signal of Trust

Contrary to what employers may believe, background screening and identity verification are not viewed as a barrier by most job seekers; it is seen as a benefit that provides legitimacy. Ninety-seven percent report finding value in the screening process. More than seven in 10 say it increases their confidence in the organization, and 70% say identity verification strengthens that trust in the employer.

From the candidate perspective, screening and identity verification signals that an employer prioritizes:

1. Workplace safety
2. Regulatory and legal compliance
3. Fair and consistent hiring practices
4. Confidence that colleagues are who they claim to be
5. Verification of credentials and qualifications

Screening, when done well, reinforces credibility and professionalism by putting the employer in a positive light for the candidate. While candidates and hiring professionals agree on the importance of speed and clear communication, one in four job seekers lacks confidence in their understanding of the screening process itself. Even a process designed to protect can erode trust if it feels opaque, slow, or confusing. Transparency, clarity and communication are needed for thorough execution.

Screening Builds Candidate Confidence

97%

of candidates see value in the screening process

7 in 10

say it increases their trust in the organization

Transparency, clarity, and communication throughout the background screening and identity verification processes are essential to building trust with candidates.

4. The Infrastructure Shift

Integration, Consolidation, and Automation Redefine Screening

As workforce complexity accelerates, with more cross-border histories, flexible work models, and expanding stakeholder involvement, operational friction has become a potential strategic risk. That which once functioned as a standalone process must now operate seamlessly within broader HR and people management systems. Simplicity has become a strategic advantage.

In response, employers are embedding screening and identity verification more deeply into core systems and centralizing oversight. Automation and AI are being deployed to reduce manual effort, increase visibility, and maintain consistency across distributed hiring environments. Technology is becoming the backbone of modern workforce verification.

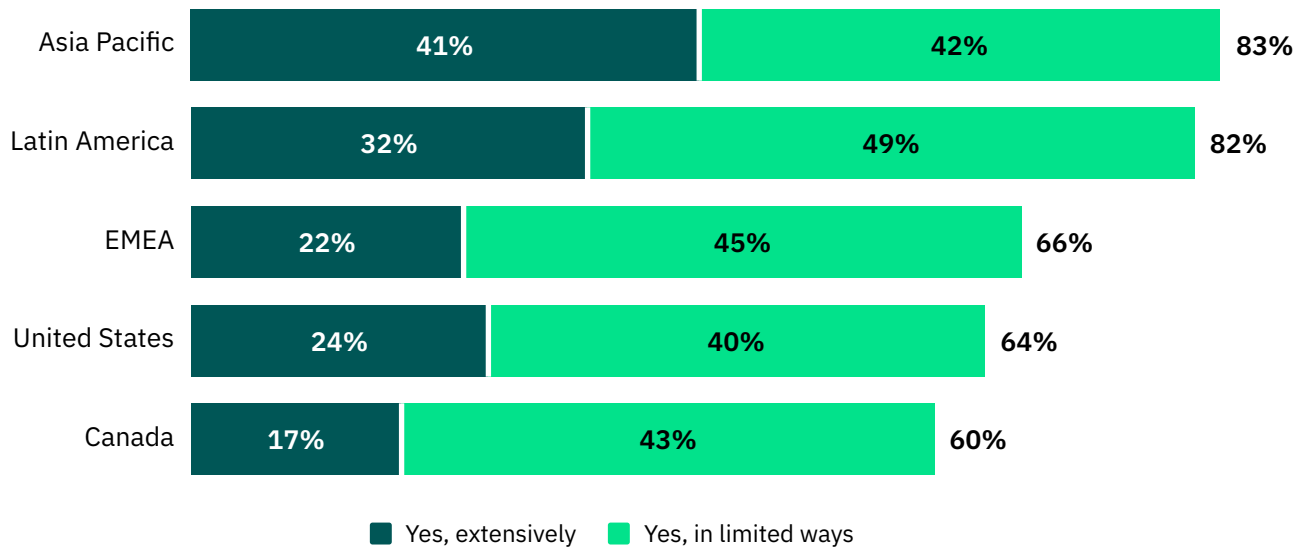
The Double Edge of AI

AI introduces two simultaneous realities:

1. Greater efficiency, speed, and scalability
2. Increased possible identity fraud sophistication

As AI accelerates hiring workflows, it also raises the stakes for identity verification and then post-hire ongoing or persistent identity checks. Organizations must modernize infrastructure to move faster and stay ahead of evolving threats.

Adoption of AI in the Hiring Process by Region



AI is increasingly embedded in screening and verification workflows, with 90% of CHROs having implemented some form of AI into their recruiting processes, and half indicating it's been very effective. Employers are leveraging AI to enhance resume screening and skills matching, improve talent sourcing, and automate onboarding processes. One in three hiring professionals already view AI as highly effective in supporting recruiting and hiring outcomes.

Human Trust Still Matters

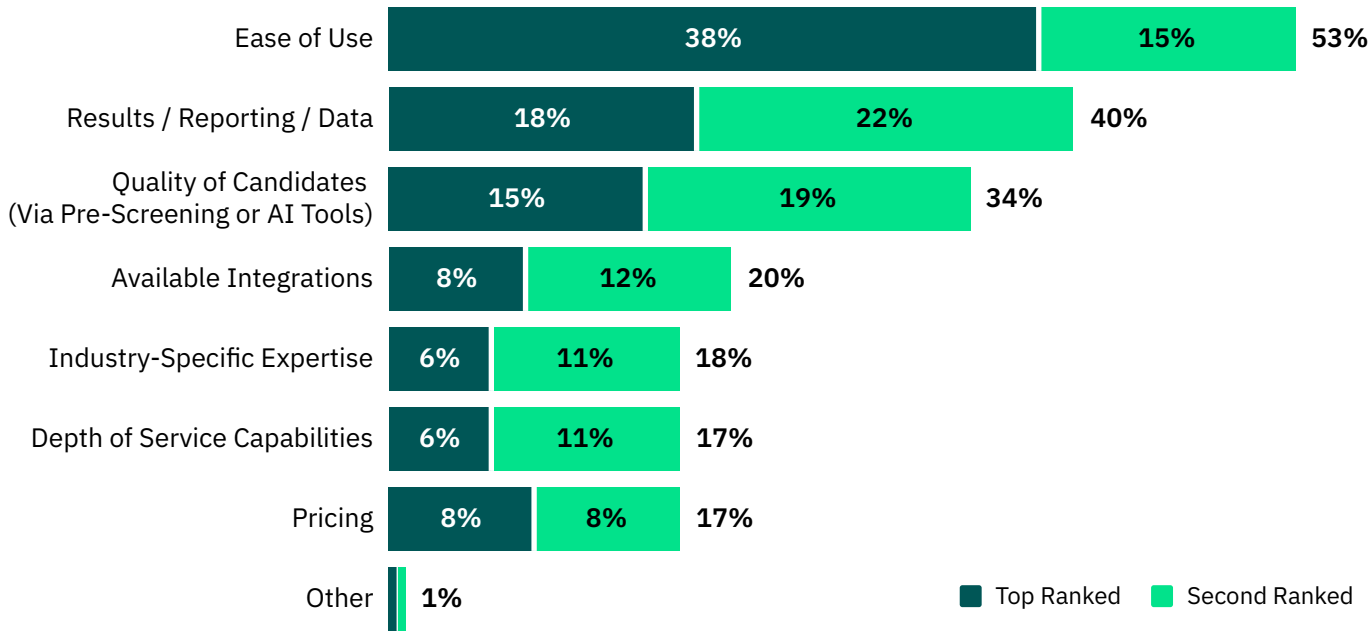
While candidates are comfortable with AI, more than half prefer greater human involvement in the hiring process.

ACTION: Use technology to drive efficiency but ensure clear communication and meaningful human touchpoints to sustain trust.

Integrations for Greater Ease

Integrations are rapidly rising as employers seek to reduce manual tasks, eliminate data re-entry, and accelerate workflows. Also, more integrations and increased automation can potentially lead to greater risk mitigation. Ease of use is the most important driver of integration decisions, underscoring the need to reduce friction without compromising rigor. As screening and identity verification becomes more deeply integrated into HR platforms, it shifts from a transactional service to an embedded infrastructure supporting the full employee lifecycle.

Integration Priorities of Hiring Managers

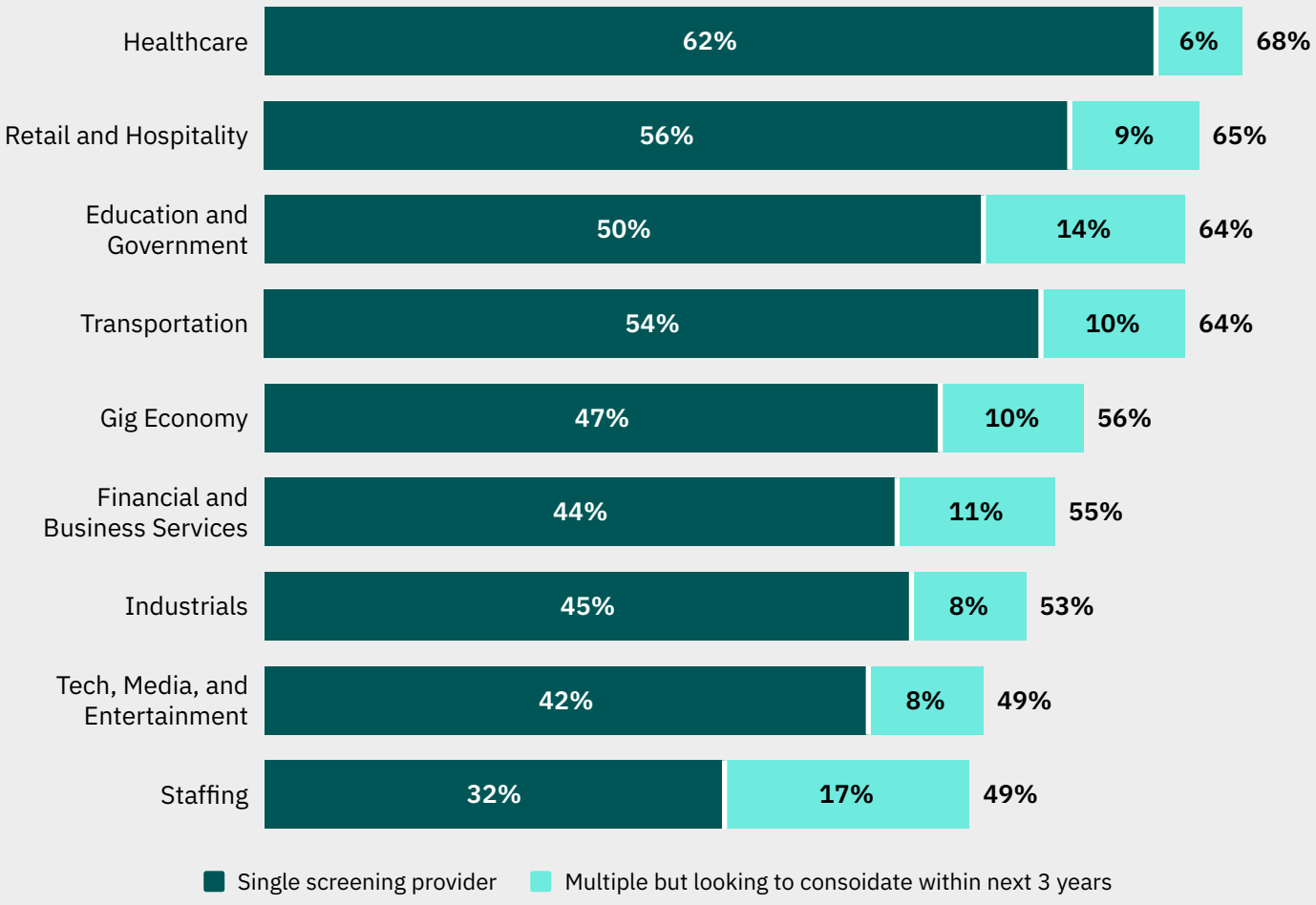


Consolidation is On the Rise

Healthcare, retail, and hospitality are leading the shift toward vendor consolidation, increasingly standardizing on a single screening partner. Regionally, consolidation is most pronounced in the United States (57%), followed by EMEA (46%) and Canada (44%), compared with Latin America (39%) and Asia Pacific (33%).

Across organization sizes, both small employers (61%) and large enterprises (54%) report using a single screening provider. This movement reflects a broader push toward simplification to reduce complexity and increase oversight and accountability.

Shift Towards Centralizing HR Providers by Industry



Trust in a Changing World

The findings in this research report point to a reset in workforce trust. Identity fraud is escalating. Workforces are more global and flexible. AI is accelerating both efficiency and exposure. And hiring speed has become inseparable from competitiveness.

In response, background screening and identity verification are evolving from a compliance checkpoint to a continuous process embedded across the employee lifecycle, from pre-hire to onboarding to post-hire employment. Organizations that adopt this approach focus on mitigating risk at speed, reducing friction for both employers and candidates, and delivering screening experiences that align with their goals for attracting and retaining a qualified, verified workforce. They demand services without operational drag, candidate drop-off, and a provider that addresses their concerns of heightened risk exposure in an increasingly complex labor market. Protection and performance are no longer tradeoffs. Leaders must deliver both.

Building trust requires more than adding services or tools. It requires intentional design to align identity verification, screening, lifecycle monitoring, integration, automation, and candidate experience into a cohesive strategy. The future of hiring will be defined by how quickly organizations move and the strength of the trust behind every hire, at every level of the organization.

A Framework for Workforce Trust

The hiring landscape has changed. Trust in the workforce can no longer be assumed; it must be verified. To compete in this new environment, organizations must:

1 Design for risk and speed

Screening programs must address employers' needs to mitigate risk without slowing momentum in the hiring process.

2 Think beyond pre-hire screening and identity verification

Workforce trust does not begin and end at day one on the job. Persistent identity verification is becoming the standard.

3 Simplify to strengthen

Integrated systems, consolidated partners, and centralized oversight reduce friction and increase visibility across complex hiring ecosystems.

4 Elevate identity as foundational

In a global, AI-driven world, identity must be intelligently verified and continuously checked, not treated as static data.

5 Put experience at the center

Screening and identity verification should reinforce candidates' confidence, not create confusion. Transparency, communication, and ease build candidate trust.

6 Align technology with accountability

AI and automation are powerful accelerators, but human judgment and oversight remain essential to maintaining fairness and credibility.

2026 GLOBAL WORKFORCE TRENDS REPORT

Part Two: Building Trust With Millions of Data Points

Workforce Trust by the Numbers

This is Part Two of the *2026 Global Workforce Trends Report,* which examines how workforce trust is built through actual hiring programs. Drawing on hundreds of millions of anonymized data points from the First Advantage global customer network across 200+ countries and territories, it analyzes real background screening activity across millions of pre- and post-hire transactions throughout the entire employee lifecycle.[1]

Our customer data reveals how workforce trust is built in practice. Identity verification and background screening sit at the center of hiring, connecting identity, regulatory compliance, credential verification, and workplace safety.

Together with the survey insights presented in Part One, this analysis provides a comprehensive view of workforce trust, from hiring intent to operational reality.

First Advantage is uniquely positioned to analyze these trends at scale.[2]

200M+
background screens annually

80K+
organizations worldwide

1B+
records in proprietary records

200+
countries and territories served

90%
of U.S. criminal screens close in one day

Key Takeaways

Analysis of millions of screening transactions across the First Advantage platform highlights several key trends shaping workforce trust.

- **Identity verification is moving upstream.** Employers are confirming identity earlier in the hiring process to reduce identity fraud and accelerate screening.
- **Screening programs are expanding beyond compliance.** Organizations are incorporating sanctions searches, media screening, and broader verification strategies to identify potential risks earlier.
- **Verification remains one of the most decision-intensive stages of the hiring process.** Employment and education verifications frequently require employer review, reinforcing the importance of consistent adjudication frameworks.
- **Workplace safety programs are evolving.** Drug screening, occupational health screening, and monitoring programs are adapting to changing regulations and workforce expectations.
- **Post-hire screening is becoming standard.** Organizations recognize that workforce trust must be maintained throughout employment, not just established at the time of hire.

Study Findings

Global Workforce Trends

1. Workforce Trust Starts With Identity Verification

Identity Misrepresentation Is Driving Screening Expansion

Identity verification may very well be the foundation of trust in hiring. As hiring expands across digital channels and global talent pools, employers should confirm candidate identity before additional screening begins. To do this, employers are increasingly verifying identity at the start of the screening process instead of later in the workflow.

Customer data confirms this shift. Between 2023 and 2025, adoption of identity verification solutions increased by 103% overall, with particularly strong growth in healthcare, staffing, government, education, and gig-based workforces.

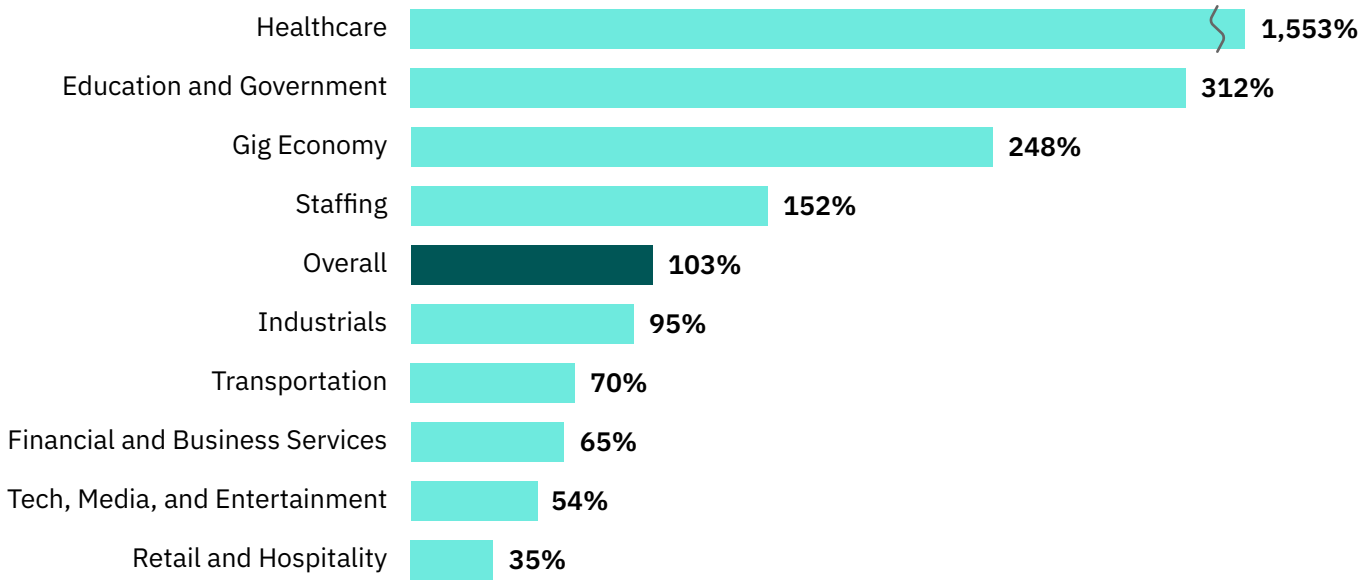
HR Professional Survey Data Shows:

45%
have experienced falsified employment details

76%
encountered discrepancies with employment details

89%
plan to add screening or identity verification solutions within the next one to two years

Growth in Identity Verification Solutions By Industry
Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) from 2023 to 2025



Modern Identity Solutions Deliver Measurable Impact

Historically, identity checks often relied on manual review of government-issued documents or database searches conducted later in the screening process. Today, modern identity verification solutions capture government-issued identity documents, extract key demographic information, and use biometric facial recognition technology with liveness detection to confirm that the individual completing the process is a real person.

356%

Compound Annual Growth Rate in near-instant global identity verification solutions outside of the U.S.

Identity Verification Success Stories

United Kingdom

Adoption of the U.K.'s own Digital ID scheme has driven digital identity services growth by 178%, enabling employers to verify identities digitally and eliminate manual identity attestation for approximately 90% of candidates.

Complex Screening Environments

Organizations in industries such as technology, industrials, healthcare, and financial and business services, where screening programs often include more complex verification requirements, have also seen measurable benefits.

In a recent case study of customers outside of the U.S. who integrated identity verification into their background screening workflows, **overall turnaround time was reduced by 25–35%** compared with traditional background checks alone.

Takeaway: Verifying identity early can improve both screening speed and accuracy.

Speed has become a critical competitive factor in hiring. In industries with high demand for talent, delays in onboarding can result in lost candidates, operational disruptions, or missed business opportunities. At the same time, organizations cannot compromise on risk management. Employers must maintain strong identity verification standards while continuing to move quickly through hiring workflows.

Risk and speed are no longer competing priorities according to our survey; they are dual mandates. Identity verification sits at the center of this balance. By confirming identity earlier in the process, organizations can strengthen trust, reduce screening delays, and support faster, more confident hiring decisions.

2. Transparency Shapes Candidate Trust

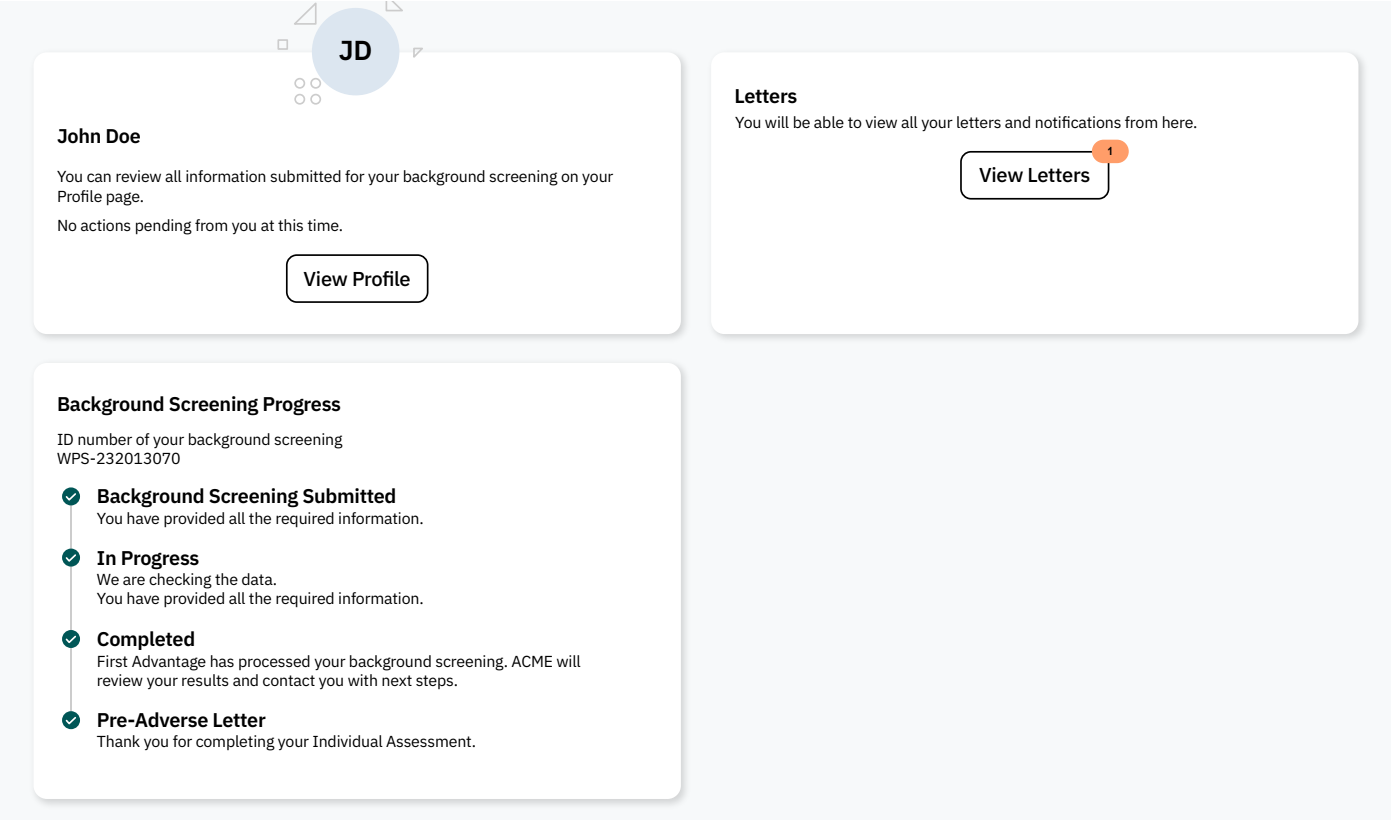
The First Interaction: Where Trust Begins

The hiring process begins with uncertainty. Candidates must share sensitive personal information during screening, so trust must be established quickly with both the hiring organization and the screening provider. Transparency and communication are critical to building that trust. Job seekers increasingly expect clear information about what data is being collected, why it is required, and how it will be used throughout the screening process.

When asked what matters most during background screening, 39% of recent job seekers identified transparency and communication as their top priority, reinforcing the importance of creating screening experiences that feel clear, predictable, and secure. Further, over 70% of recent job candidates reported that going through background screening and identity verification made them feel more confident about the organization/job.

Technology plays a central role in enabling this transparency. Modern screening platforms enable candidates to complete background screening profiles digitally and provide real-time updates on screening progress. Candidates can track their status, provide additional information if needed, and receive updates throughout the process.

Modern Screening Platforms Provide Progress Visibility to Candidates



Real-time status visibility reduces candidate drop-off

Candidate Trust Starts with Transparency

39%
of job seekers prioritize transparency in screening

28
languages supported for candidate screening experiences

Language accessibility is also a key factor in building trust. Today's workforce is global, and candidates often complete screening processes in languages other than their primary language. For example, First Advantage's platform allows candidates to complete the screening process in the language they are most comfortable with, which, as of 2026, was 28 languages and regional variants. This capability helps reduce misunderstandings, improve completion rates, and create a more inclusive candidate experience.

Global Hiring Requires Global Candidate Support

Organizations are expanding hiring beyond traditional geographic boundaries to recruit talent across countries and regions. As a result, employers must navigate growing complexity when verifying candidate history and supporting them through the screening process.

Candidates often have employment, education, and residence histories spanning multiple countries, each with different verification requirements. Among U.S.-based screening programs, candidates frequently report prior history in countries such as Mexico, the United Kingdom, China, Germany, Australia, South Korea, and Japan. For employers, this means that limiting screening to a single country may create gaps in understanding a candidate's full background.

As hiring footprints expand geographically, organizations are increasingly relying on global screening capabilities to verify candidate histories wherever those records exist. Supporting candidates across multiple languages and regulatory environments, and providing a positive screening experience, is now essential to modern hiring.

Hiring Programs Are Increasingly Global

56%
of hiring professionals recruit employees from outside their primary country

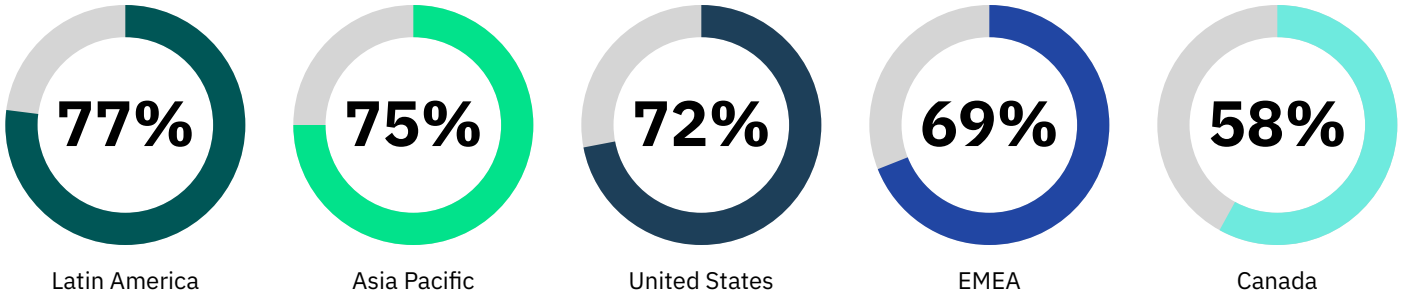
61%
of hiring professionals see an increase in candidates who have lived or worked in multiple countries

Global hiring requires screening capabilities that can verify records across countries

Integrations Provide Hiring Efficiency

As hiring becomes more digital and globally distributed, integrations between hiring systems are becoming foundational to efficient screening programs. Most organizations manage recruiting and hiring workflows through applicant tracking systems (ATS) or human capital management (HCM) platforms. Integrating screening into these systems streamlines workflows and eliminates manual data entry. Seventy-one percent of HR professionals in the survey conduct all or most background screening orders through ATS/HCM integrations, and 73% of customer orders came through integrations.

Screening Orders Initiated Through an ATS/HCM Integration by Region



Integrations provide three advantages for improving the candidate experience:

1. **They improve speed**
   by allowing screening requests to be initiated automatically from the recruiting platform. Candidate data that has already been collected during the application process can flow directly into the screening workflow, eliminating duplicate data entry.
2. **They improve accuracy**
   by reducing the risk of manual input errors and ensuring that candidate information is transferred consistently across systems, so candidates do not have to repeat data entry.
3. **They enhance the candidate experience**
   by allowing applicants to move smoothly between recruiting and screening steps within a unified workflow.

After establishing identity and focusing on providing a positive candidate experience, organizations expand screening programs to evaluate broader workforce risks.

73%

of First Advantage customers initiate background screening through ATS/HCM integrations, streamlining hiring workflows and reducing manual data entry.

From Compliance to Risk Intelligence

After verifying identity, the next step in building workforce trust is understanding the broader risk profile associated with a candidate. Employers typically layer sanctions searches, credential verification, and workplace safety screening to build a more complete view of candidate risk.

Sanctions Screening Expands Globally

Global sanctions searches are now a common practice in screening programs. These searches draw from hundreds of data sources, including government sanctions lists and regulatory enforcement records.

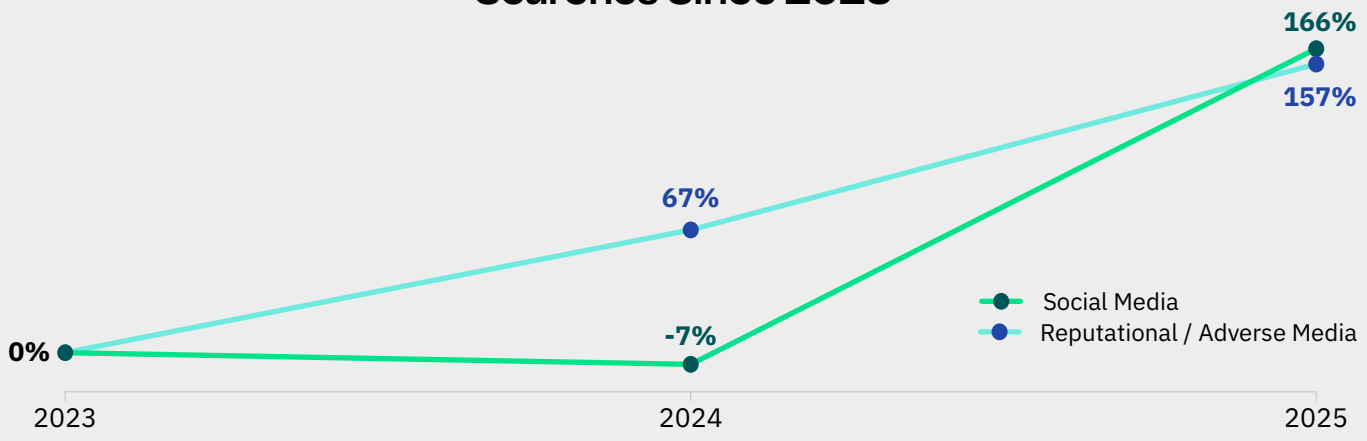
Analysis shows that 38% of First Advantage background screening orders include a global sanctions search, including lists from the Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC), politically exposed persons screening, and adverse media screening. Adoption is widespread across many regions, with approximately 44-47% of orders in 2025 including sanctions screening in markets across Asia Pacific, EMEA, and Latin America. Notably, sanctions searches increased in the Philippines from 33% in 2023 to 60% in 2025, and in the Netherlands from 41% in 2023 to 61% in 2025.

While global sanctions search hundreds of sources, including the OFAC, they do not replace compliance-driven requirements for specific roles, such as in the financial and healthcare industries.

Social Media and Adverse / Reputational Media Screening Are on the Rise

Employers are also expanding visibility into reputational risks that may not appear through traditional background searches. Adoption of social media and adverse/reputational media screening is increasing across industries as organizations seek earlier insight into behaviors or affiliations that could affect workplace safety, regulatory compliance, or brand reputation. In the last two years, First Advantage customers' use of social media screening has grown by 157%, and adverse/reputational media screening by 166%. Adoption of social media screening is accelerating fastest in financial and business services. Technology, media, and entertainment also saw tremendous growth in adverse/reputational media searches.

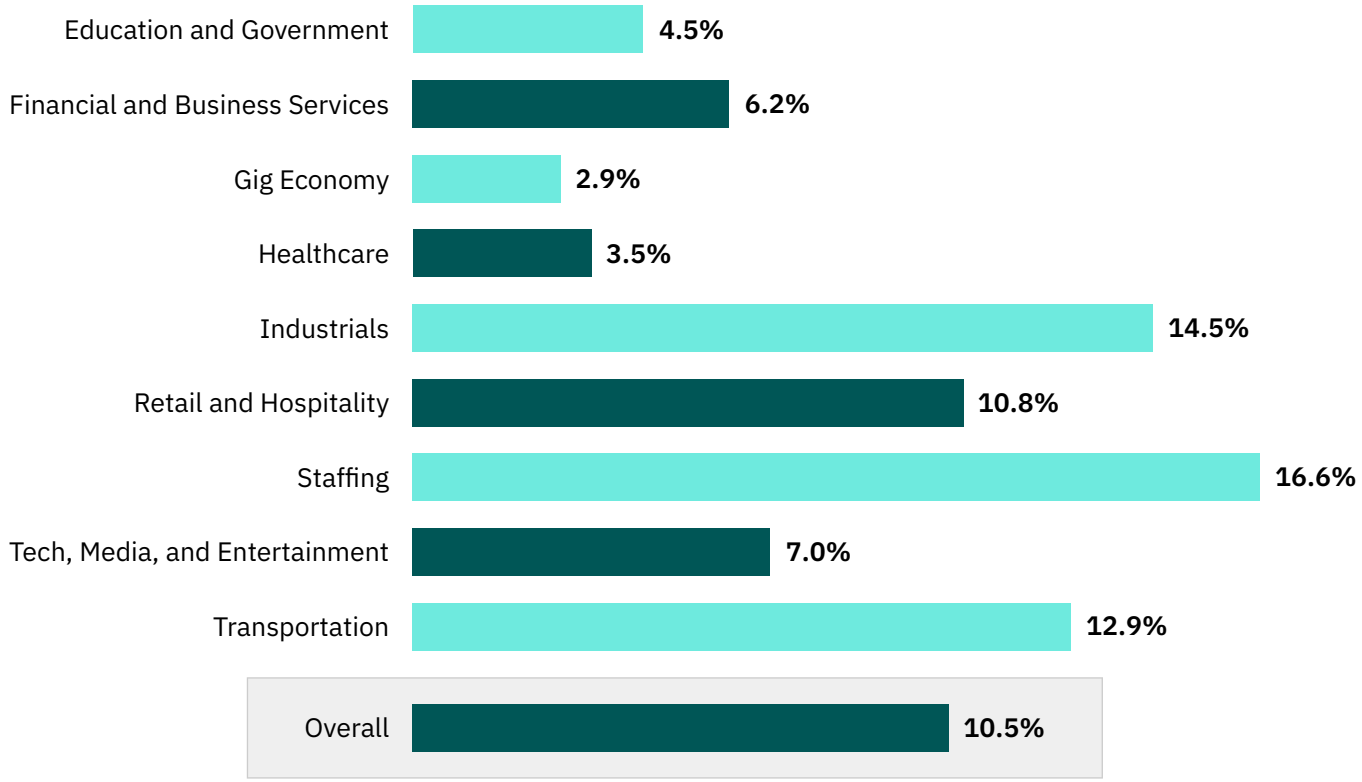
Growth in Social and Adverse/Reputational Media Searches Since 2023



Criminal Screening Remains the Foundation

Criminal background checks remain the foundation of most screening programs. Analysis shows that approximately 10% of searches returned a reportable criminal record in 2025, a rate that has remained relatively stable since 2023. While rates vary by industry, the highest are typically seen in high-volume hiring sectors such as staffing, retail and hospitality, and transportation.

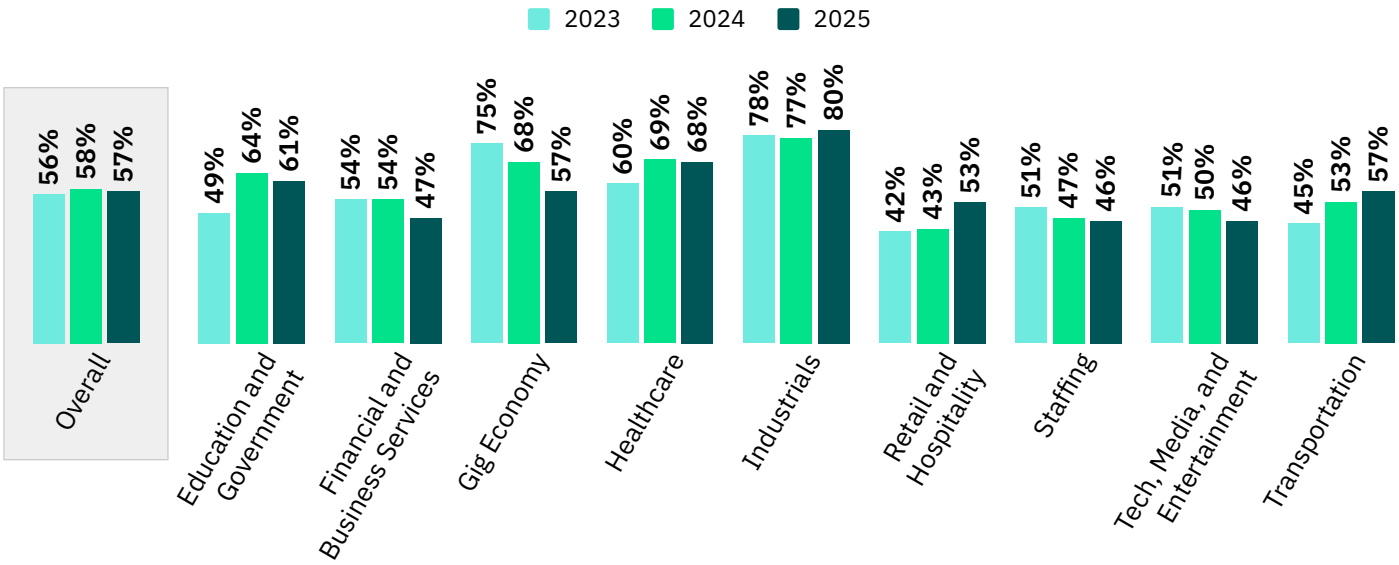
Reportable U.S. Criminal Record Rates by Industry



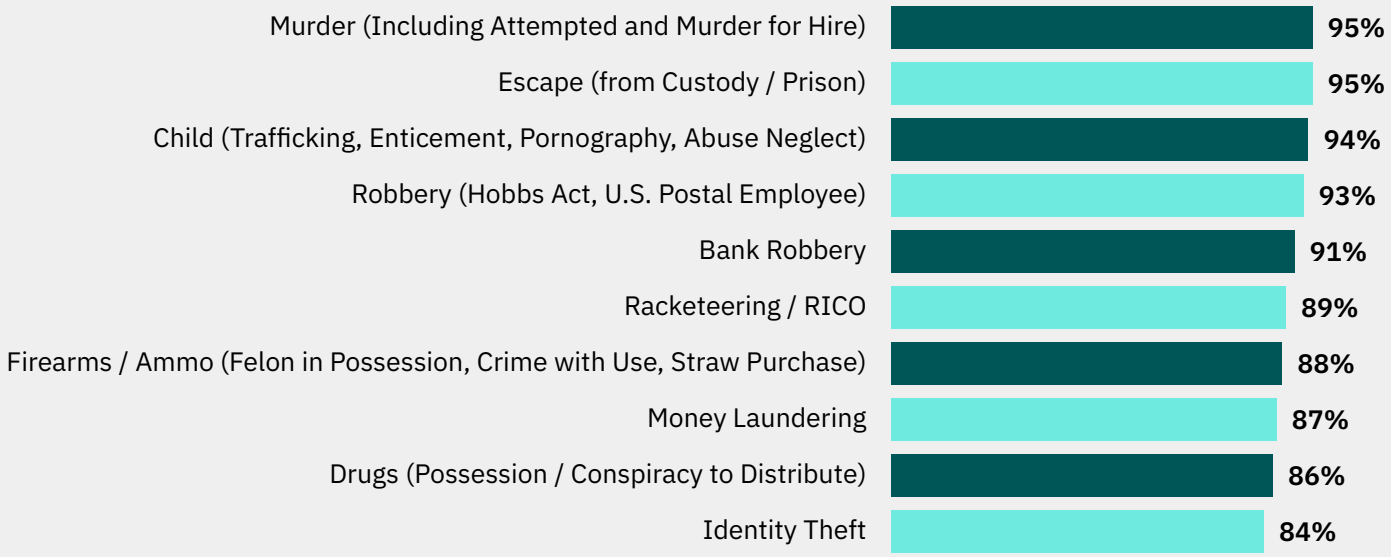
Federal criminal searches complement state or county criminal checks by identifying federal-level criminal records, including fraud, organized crime, and interstate trafficking. While federal records occur less frequently, they often involve higher-severity offenses. In other words, there may not be many records returned from a search, but those that are likely to be highly impactful on the hiring decision. Federal criminal searches have become a standard component of many screening programs.

Adoption has grown particularly in retail and hospitality, and transportation, where federal criminal search usage has increased significantly from 2023 levels, up 26% and 27%, respectively.

Percent of Orders with Federal Criminal Searches by Industry



Top 10 Federal Crime Types That Customers Adjudicated Adversely[3]



Workplace Risk and Safety

Drug Screening Trends in the U.S.

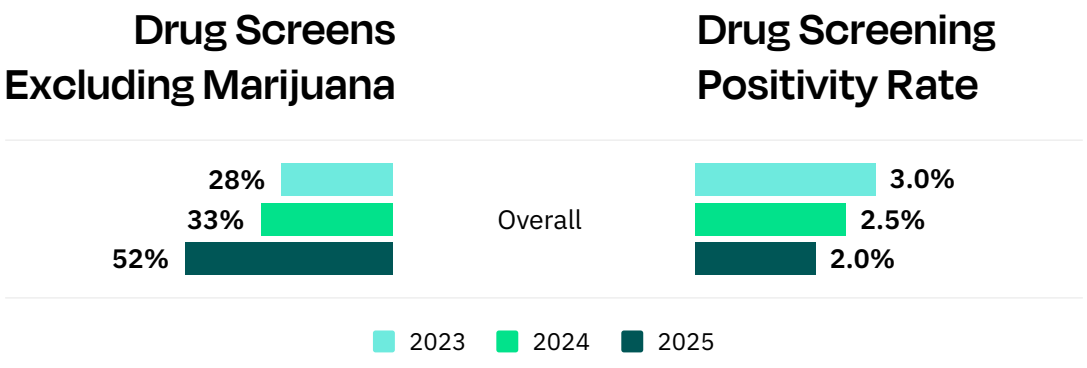
Screening strategies are evolving as employers adjust panels in response to regulatory changes and workforce dynamics. Drug screening remains an important component of workplace safety programs, particularly in industries regulated by the Department of Transportation (DOT) or deemed safety-sensitive.

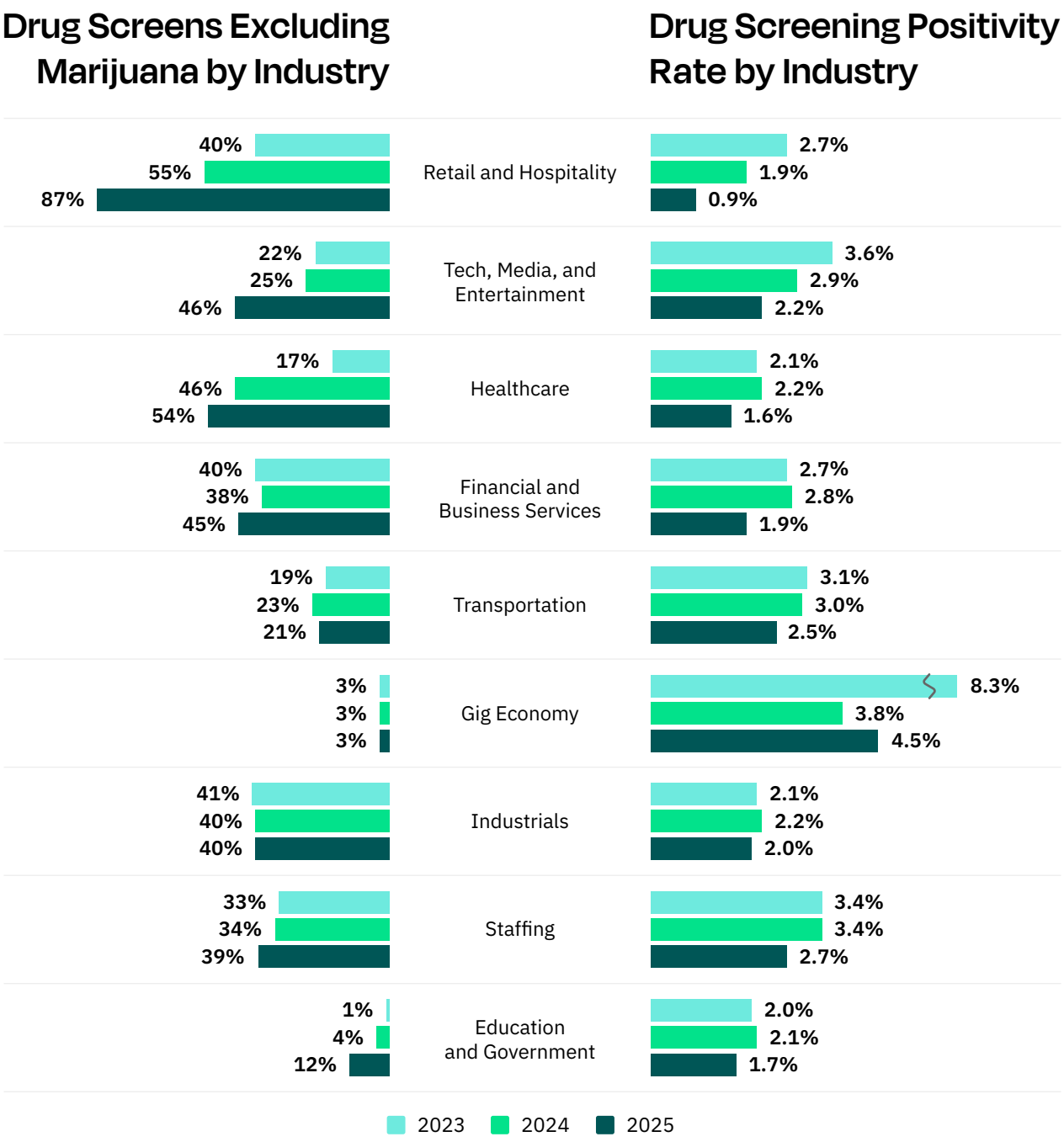
Customer data shows that the share of drug screening panels excluding marijuana increased from 28% in 2023 to 52% in 2025. As more employers remove marijuana from pre-employment panels, overall positivity rates declined from 3% in 2023 to 2% in 2025. This relationship is particularly visible in sectors such as retail and hospitality, financial services, and technology, where increased marijuana exclusions correspond with lower positivity rates.

At the same time, marijuana screening remains common in regulated industries. Transportation, industrials, staffing, and education and government employers continue to include marijuana screening due to regulatory requirements or workplace safety considerations. These trends reflect a shift toward role-specific drug screening aligned with regulatory obligations and workplace risk.

Drug Screening Programs Are Becoming Role-Specific

- Marijuana exclusions rose from **28% to 52%** of screening panels
- Positivity rates declined from **3% to 2%** between 2023 and 2025
- Department of Transportation (DOT) regulated roles continue to require full screening panels that include marijuana





Drug screening technology is also evolving. Adoption of oral fluid screening is increasing as employers explore more convenient screening options that can improve the candidate experience while maintaining workplace safety standards. Instead of applying identical panels across all roles, employers are increasingly aligning screening programs with regulatory requirements, workplace safety risks, and operational needs.

Occupational Health Screening

Employers are also expanding occupational health services to support workforce safety. These services may include physical exams, vaccinations, respiratory mask fitting, and disease detection screening.

Among disease detection methods, tuberculosis screening is the most frequently used service, reflecting the importance of infection prevention in many workplace environments and alignment with legal requirements in specific locations.

Verification and Credential Verifications

Employers must also confirm that candidates possess the experience and qualifications required for their roles. Verification searches, including employment history, education credentials, and motor vehicle records, help validate candidate claims and confirm job readiness.

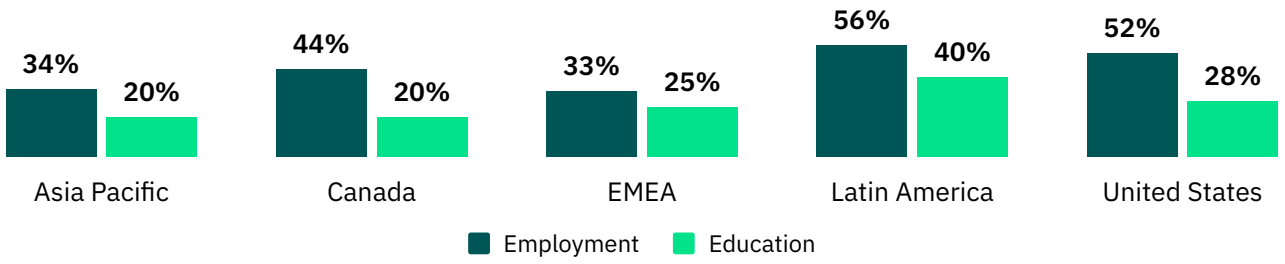
Employment and Education Verification

Employment and education verification searches confirm a candidate's work history and academic credentials. These searches can vary in complexity depending on geography and industry, using a variety of sources, including First Advantage's Verified! database, employers and schools, and third-party verification service providers.

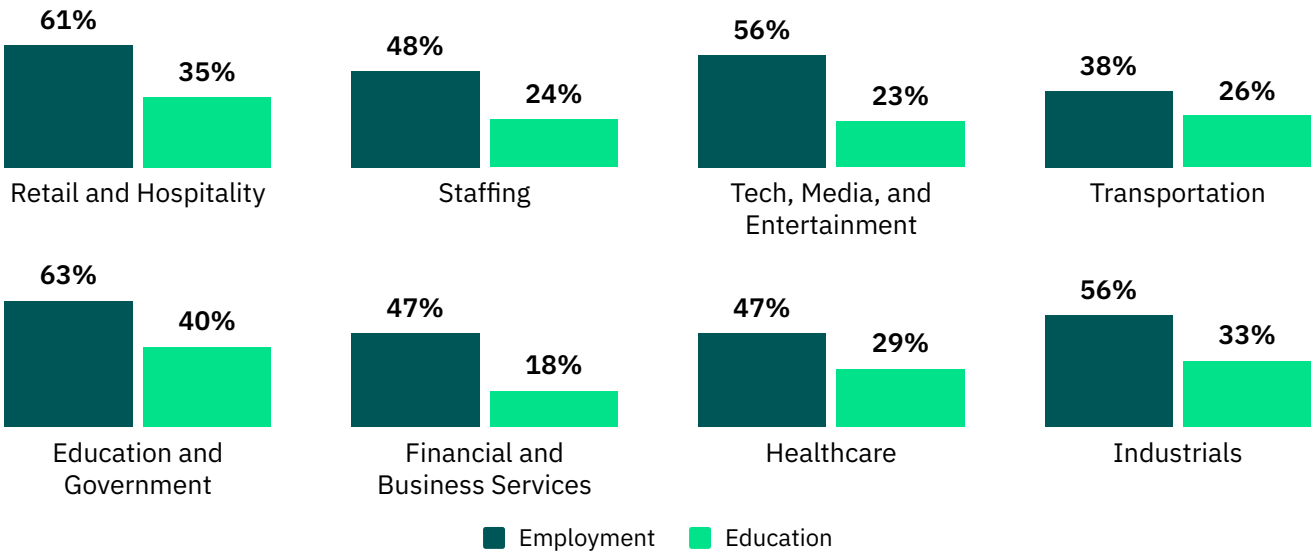
Analysis shows that verification searches can often require employer review, including manual validation across institutions, geographies, and documentation standards. For example, 52% of employment verification searches require employer review, with significant regional variation.

Organizations should review their adjudication scoring framework at least annually to refine and improve the process's efficiency.

Percentage of Searches Requiring Customer Review by Region



Percentage of Searches Requiring Customer Review in the U.S. by Industry

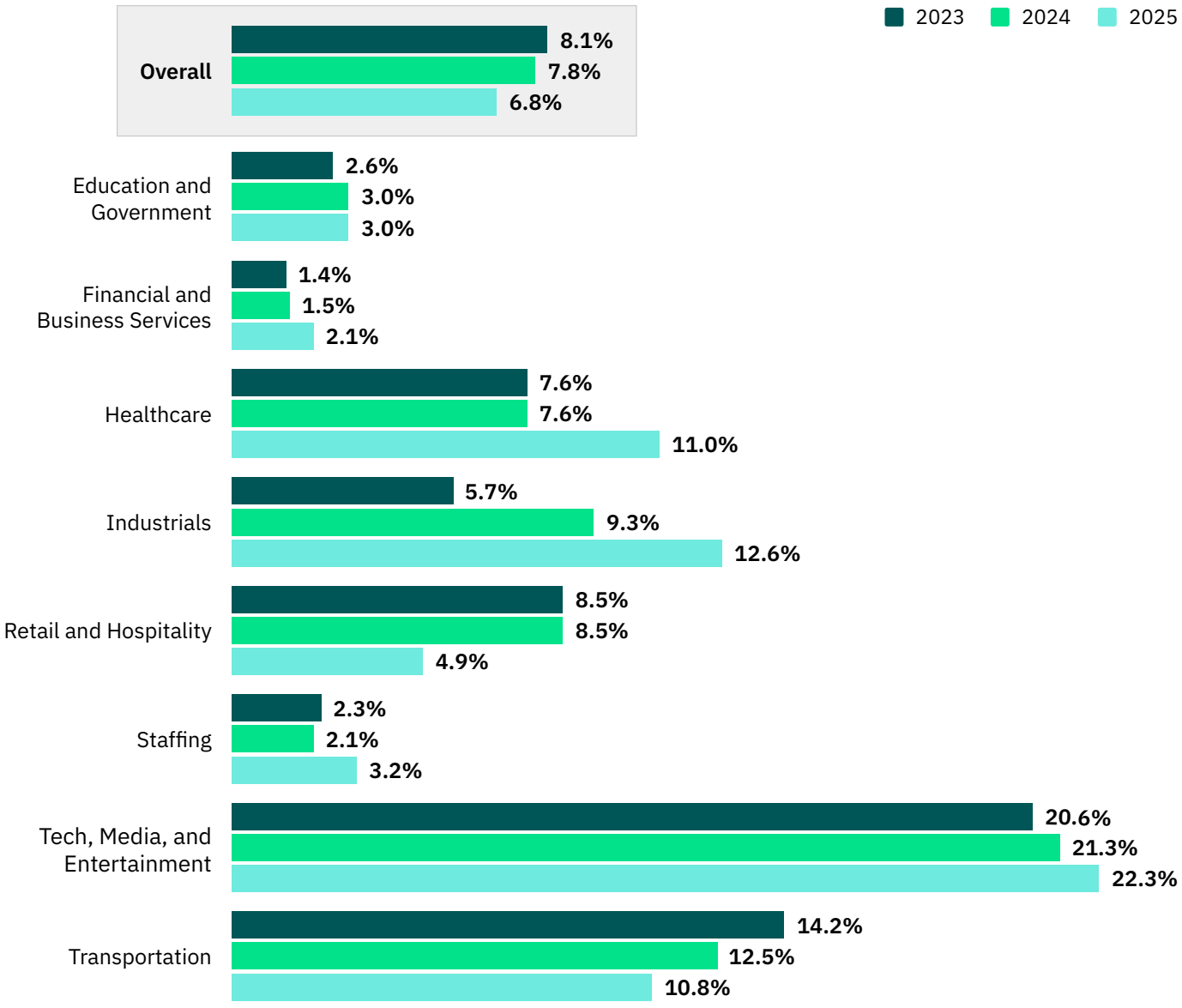


To help bring efficiency to this process, organizations should review their adjudication scoring frameworks at least yearly and can partner with First Advantage to do so.

Motor Vehicle Report in the U.S.

Motor vehicle report (MVR) searches are essential for roles that involve driving. Because MVR searches can return many possible results, refined scoring frameworks help employers speed decision-making. Specifically, transportation and retail employers have seen a year-over-year decline in manual review rates, reflecting more refined decision frameworks given the volume of searches they run. On the other hand, all other industries are seeing an increase in MVR manual review rates, highlighting the need to assess their decision frameworks to reduce manual reviews and accelerate hiring decisions.

Manual Review Rates Year-Over-Year by Industry (MVR)



Screening programs are expanding in both scope and sophistication. In addition to identity verification and criminal background checks, employers are incorporating sanctions screening, credential validation, reputational monitoring, and workplace safety to provide organizations with a more comprehensive view of candidate risk while helping them build more trustworthy workforces.

Once screening data is collected and reviewed, employers must make consistent hiring decisions.

What's Needed for Consistent Screening Decisions

While automation is crucial to reducing reliance on manual reviews and speeding up hiring decisions, screening results, especially for specific roles, must also be assessed using consistent human judgment. Analysis shows that many verification results require review because outcomes are rarely binary and must be evaluated for context and role relevance. At the same time, automation is reshaping how quickly those results are delivered and reducing administrative costs. Ultimately, consistent screening decisions are most effective and efficient with human judgment supported by technology and clear policies.

Verification Automation Is Accelerating Hiring

Automation is helping reduce the operational responsibility associated with verification searches while improving turnaround times. For example, First Advantage's proprietary Verified!® database has expanded significantly in recent years.

Adoption of Instant Present Employment verification is also growing rapidly. This solution securely verifies current employment directly through a candidate's employer's HR systems using existing credentials, significantly speeding up the employment verification process.

Technology Is Supporting Informed and Consistent Decisions

Many organizations use structured decision tools to support fair and consistent hiring decisions. Electronic individualized assessment forms help employers evaluate screening results consistently while meeting compliance requirements. These tools guide hiring teams through a structured review that considers the nature of the record, and relevance to the role. They also document decisions, more strongly supporting compliance and reducing inconsistent outcomes.

Workforce trust does not end at hiring; organizations must maintain trust and oversight throughout employment.

Automation Is Transforming Employment Verification

48%
growth in Verified!® database records

143%
increase in Instant Present Employment verification

~15%
faster turnaround times for U.S. employment verifications

Ongoing Monitoring Matters After Hiring

Pre-employment screening establishes an initial baseline of trust, but workforce risk does not end once hiring is complete. As employees move through the employee lifecycle, new information may emerge that can affect workplace safety, compliance obligations, and organizational reputation. Data from both employers and job seekers shows strong alignment around the importance of maintaining safe working environments, driving increased adoption of monitoring and rescreening programs designed to identify potential risk after hiring:

88%

of job seekers say workplace safety is very or extremely important when evaluating employers.

86%

of hiring professionals are currently or planning to monitor and/or rescreen their employees.

19%

of post-hire rescreening programs identified new reportable criminal records

Candidates want to know that organizations prioritize safe workplaces. At the same time, employers recognize that risk mitigation is important to both employees and customers, and that brand reputation requires visibility beyond the initial hiring decision.

Organizations are increasingly extending their screening strategies beyond pre-employment checks and incorporating continuous post-hire criminal records monitoring into their workforce risk management programs.

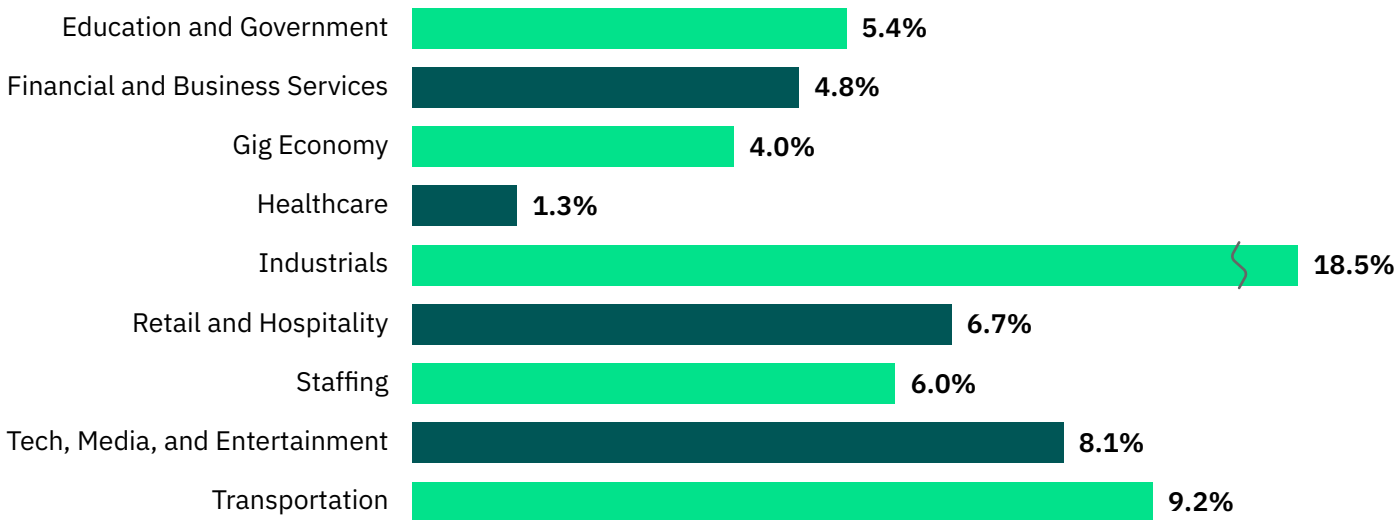
Post-hire monitoring programs can help:

- Provide employers with reportable criminal records of current employees after employment begins
- Maintain compliance with industry-specific safety and regulatory standards
- Strengthen workplace safety programs and organizational accountability

Analysis of monitoring results also shows that many post-hire records involve traffic violations, substance-related offenses, and other behavioral indicators, underscoring the importance of ongoing oversight for roles that involve driving, public safety, or sensitive populations.

Pre-employment screening provides a snapshot of a candidate at a given point in time, while ongoing post-hire monitoring provides additional visibility.

Post-Hire Criminal Reportable Record Rate By Industry



Organizations that extend screening into the post-hire phase gain greater visibility into potential risks while reinforcing the workplace safety expectations valued by both employers and employees.

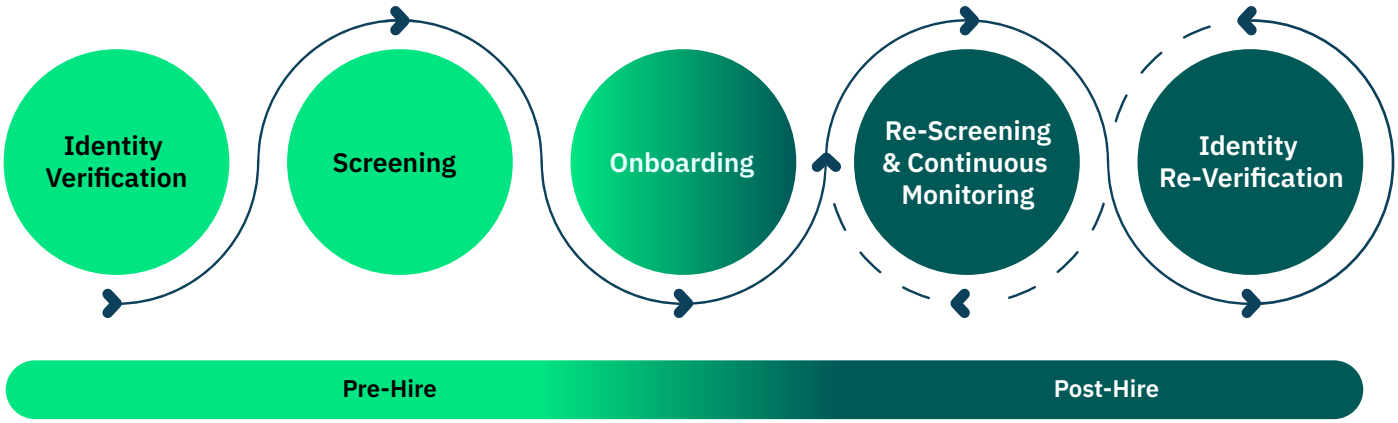
The Six Stages of Workforce Trust

In a global, digital hiring environment, trust must be built early and reinforced throughout the employee lifecycle. Modern screening programs now include six connected stages for building and maintaining trust, from pre-hire to onboarding and post-hire:

1. Identity verification
2. Background screening
3. Verification and adjudication
4. Candidate onboarding experience
5. Workplace safety
6. Post-hire monitoring

Together, these stages form an integrated workforce trust model that supports more confident hiring decisions.

The Workforce Trust Lifecycle



Together, these stages form a holistic workforce trust model that extends beyond hiring and supports the creation of more resilient organizations.

The Future of Workforce Trust

Several structural trends are reshaping how organizations build workforce trust. Identity-first hiring models are emerging as a new standard, enabling employers to verify identity early and accelerate screening without sacrificing diligence. AI-enabled verification technologies are helping to process large volumes of data, identify discrepancies faster, and improve decision consistency. Global hiring complexity continues to grow as more candidates have employment, education, or residence history across multiple countries, and screening programs need to support this complexity. Finally, employee lifecycle monitoring is becoming a core capability as organizations recognize that trust must be maintained over time, not just as a pre-hire exercise.

In the modern workforce, trust is not a point-in-time decision; it's an ongoing commitment. Organizations that build integrated, lifecycle-based screening strategies will be better positioned to hire confidently, mitigate workforce risk and operate securely in an increasingly complex global hiring environment.

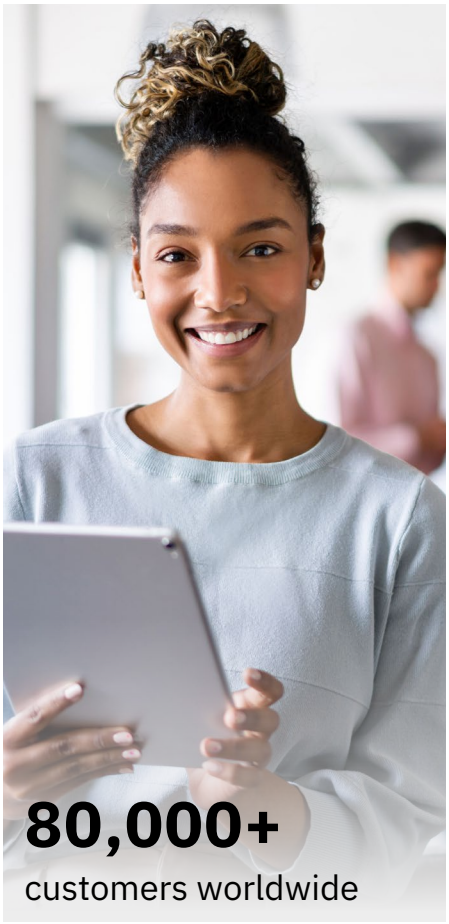
Strategic Takeaways for Employers

First Advantage's customer data highlights several important implications for workforce risk and hiring strategies:

1. Identity verification must move upstream and throughout the entire workforce lifecycle.
2. Speed and diligence are no longer tradeoffs.
3. Global hiring requires global screening capabilities.
4. Screening programs are expanding beyond compliance requirements.
5. Workplace safety expectations continue to rise.
6. Post-hire continuous monitoring will define workforce trust.

About First Advantage

Why Partners and Customers Trust Us[4]



80,000+
customers worldwide

90%
U.S. criminal screens close in one day

96%
gross customer retention rate

66%
of Fortune 100 customers

100+
ATS and HCM integrated partners

200+
countries and territories coverage for screening

1Billion+
records in proprietary databases

Trust in a Changing World

Trust starts with knowing who you hire. Build confidence with identity verification and background screening.

Let's Talk →

FirstAdvantage

ABOUT THE STUDY

Now in its fourth year, this study combines insights from two complementary data sources.

Part One includes responses from 2,148 HR professionals, providing insight into background screening and identity verification practices, alongside feedback from 3,244 job seekers and recent hires who have completed the screening process.

Part Two examines how workforce trust is built in practice. It draws on hundreds of millions of anonymized data points from the First Advantage global customer network, spanning 200+ countries and territories, to analyze real screening activity across millions of pre- and post-hire transactions throughout the employee lifecycle.

The data represents four global regions and a broad cross-section of industries. First Advantage conducted the study in partnership with ClearlyRated between December 2025 and January 2026.

Note: Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding or multiple responses.

fadv.com

[1] 2025 customer study, financial services, First Advantage.

[2] Throughout this report, "screening" broadly refers to pre-employment background screening and related verification processes, including criminal record checks, employment and education verification, social media screening, drug screening, and occupational health screening, where legally permissible and applicable.

[3] Percentage represents the rate at which that specific Federal crime type was adjudicated adversely by customers.

[4] As of 12/31/2026, First Advantage.

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