



# SHRM Survey Findings: Using Social Media for Talent Acquisition—Recruitment and Screening

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SHRM surveyed HR professionals with the job function of employment or recruitment to learn more about organizations' use of social media for talent acquisition. Specifically, this report focuses on recruitment and screening of job candidates. It also looks at trends over time, comparing the results to data from 2011 and 2013 when possible.

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- **Two-thirds of organizations (66%) have taken steps to leverage mobile recruiting—to target smartphone users.** Most commonly, organizations have optimized their career websites (39%), job postings (36%) and application processes (36%) for mobile users.
- **Recruiting via social media is growing with 84% of organizations using it currently and 9% planning to use it.** In 2011, only 56% used social media for recruitment. For most organizations (81%) in 2015, it was one out of many recruiting tools used, but 5% said it was their primary recruiting tool.
- **Recruiting passive job candidates (82%) continues to be the top reason that organizations use social media for recruitment.** This was closely followed by increasing employer brand and recognition (77%), and targeting job candidates with a specific set of skills (71%).
- **Overall, 43% of organizations said they use social media or online search engines to screen job candidates, an increase from 2013.** Forty-four percent of HR professionals agreed that a job candidate's public social media profile can provide information about work-related performance.
- **Over one-third (36%) of organizations have disqualified a job candidate in the past year because of concerning information (e.g., illegal activity, discrepancy with application) found on a public social media profile or through an online search.** Two out of five organizations (39%) allow candidates to explain any concerning information found, an increase compared to 2011.

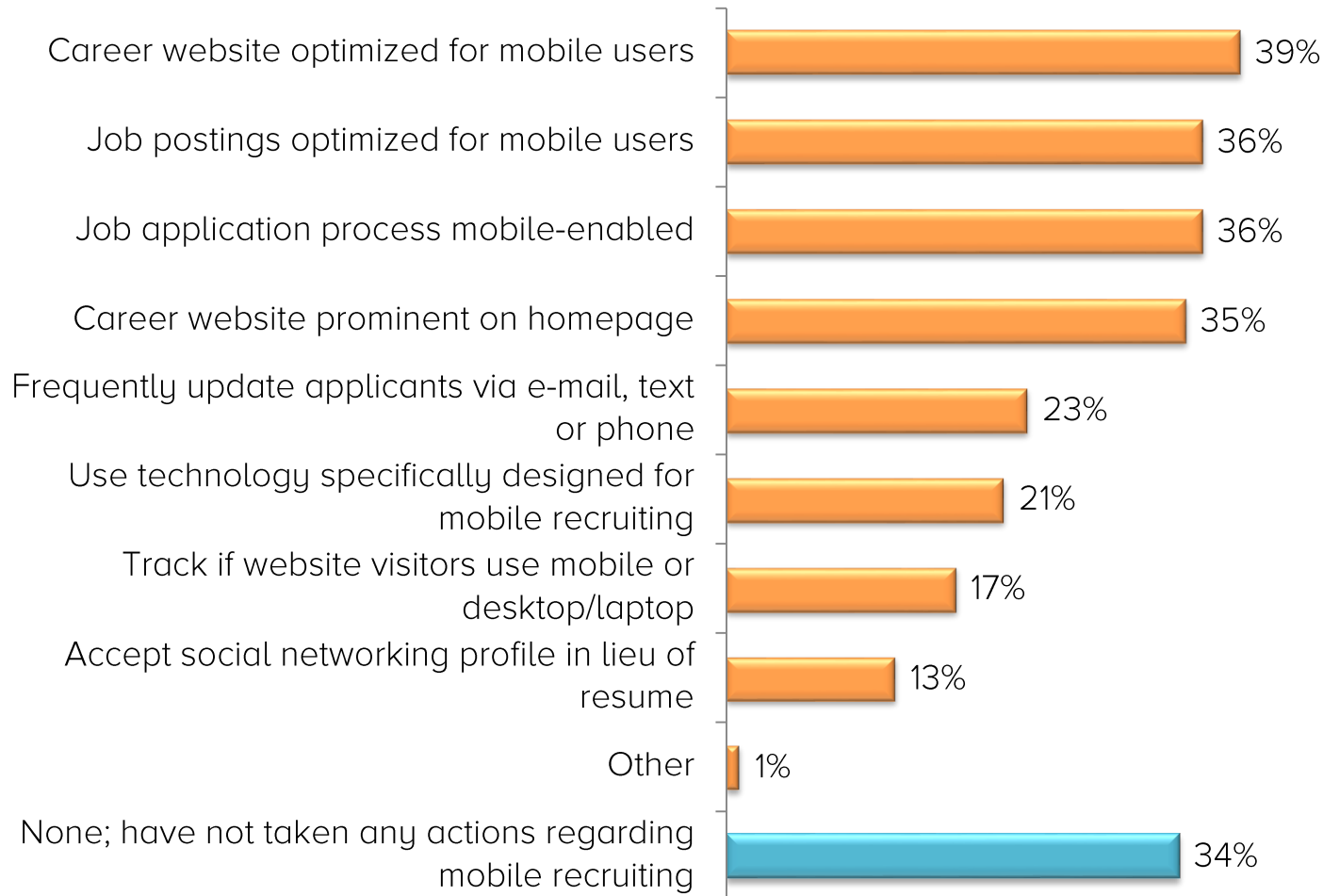
## What These Findings Mean for the HR Profession

- Consumers and Internet users have shown an increased preference for using mobile devices when online, and searching for employment is no exception. Most major job search websites, such as Indeed, LinkedIn and Monster, have free applications for mobile users that make the process easier for those seeking employment. Employers that use these and other job search websites are likely reaching a broader array of candidates when advertising for open positions.
- Research has shown that although many people are open to new job opportunities, most are “passive” job seekers and are not actively looking for new employment, and they may pursue an opportunity only if contacted regarding a new job. This is an area in which the use of social media for recruitment and screening can be an effective tool. By viewing online profiles and resumes of passive and active job seekers, HR professionals can quickly identify potential candidates for their open positions. Other SHRM research has revealed that a high percentage of HR professionals are also struggling to find qualified candidates for their vacancies, and the use of social media may help ease that difficulty.
- Although the majority of HR professionals say they are using social media for recruitment, others are not, and it may be due to a lack of resources and/or experience with this method of talent acquisition. If this is the case, these HR professionals should consider low-cost options or training measures that will increase their organizations’ online presence and incorporate the use of these technologies into their talent acquisition strategies. Ideally, these moves would broaden the pool of talent that these HR professionals search from to fill their openings.

# Recruitment Strategies: Mobile & Social Media

Two-thirds of organizations have taken steps to leverage mobile recruiting—targeting smartphone users—most commonly by optimizing their website and application process for mobile users.

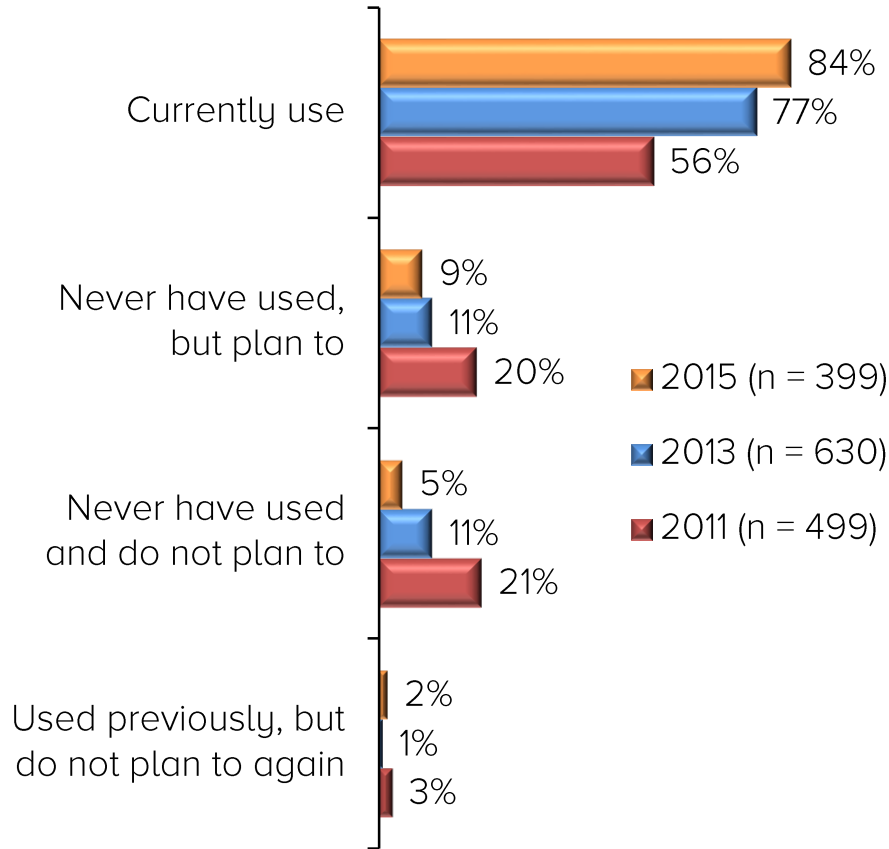
### How Organizations Leverage Mobile Recruiting—Target Smartphone Users



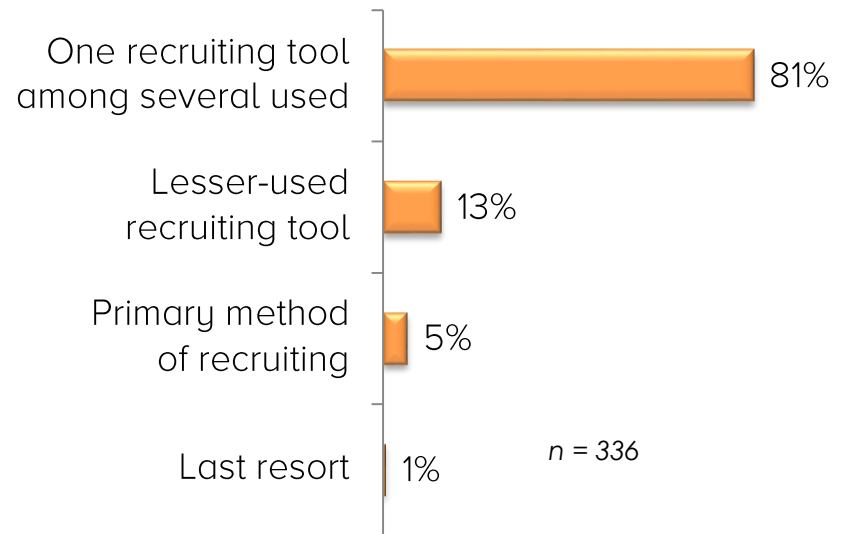
Note: n = 393. Percentages do not equal 100% due to multiple response options.

Recruiting via social media continues to grow. Mainly, it is one among several recruiting tools, but for some organizations, it is their primary method of recruiting.

### Use Social Media for Recruitment



### Among Those Using Social Media in 2015:



*Note: Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding. Respondents who answered "don't know" were excluded from this analysis.*

Publicly and privately owned for-profit organizations were more likely than the government to use social media for recruitment. They also tended to use it more often than nonprofit and government organizations.

### Comparisons by organization sector

- Publicly and privately owned for-profit organizations were more likely than government organizations to use social media for recruitment.

Use social media for recruitment		
Publicly owned for-profit (88%) Privately owned for-profit (89%)	>	Government (68%)

- Of organizations that use social media for recruitment, nonprofit and government organizations were more likely than publicly and privately owned for-profit organizations to say that social media is a *lesser-used* recruiting tool.

Social media is a <i>lesser-used</i> recruiting tool		
Nonprofit (22%) Government (41%)	>	Publicly owned for-profit (6%) Privately owned for-profit (8%)

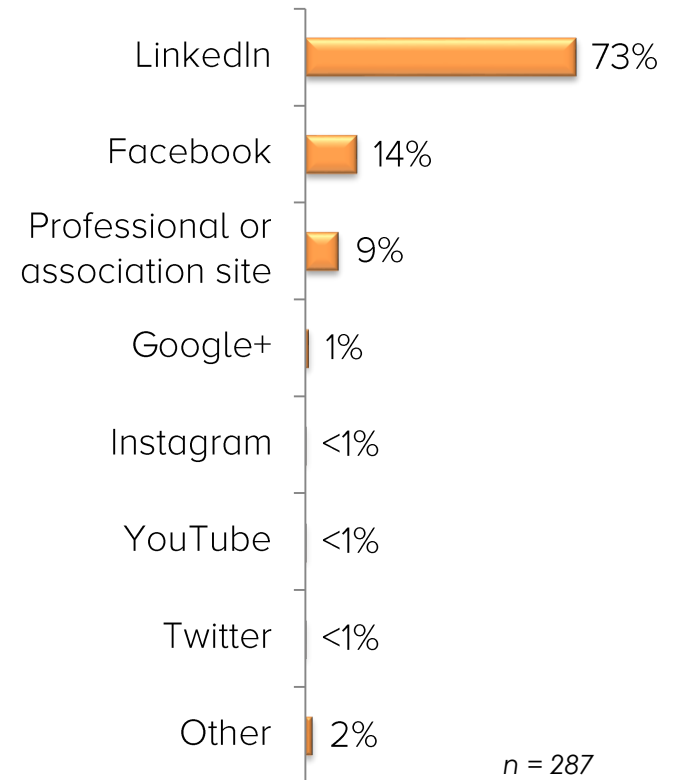
Note: Only statistically significant differences are shown.



LinkedIn is the top and most effective social media site for recruiting, but Facebook, Twitter and professional/association social networking sites are gaining popularity.

Social Media Sites Used for Recruitment	2011	2013	2015
LinkedIn	95%	94%	96%
Facebook	58%	54%	66%
Twitter	42%	39%	53%
Professional or association social networking site (other than SHRM Connect)	23%	29%	35%
Google+	*	8%	12%
YouTube	*	8%	11%
Instagram	*	*	7%
SHRM Connect	6%	5%	4%
Pinterest	*	4%	3%
Vine	*	*	1%
Other	6%	2%	5%

### Most Effective Site for Recruitment



Note: (2015 n = 337; 2013 n = 484; 2011 n = 277). Only respondents who were currently using social networking websites to recruit job candidates were asked this question. Total does not equal 100% due to multiple response options. An asterisk (\*) indicates this response option was not available in that year.

Small staff-size organizations were more likely to recruit using professional or association networking sites. Very large organizations were more likely to recruit using YouTube.

### Comparisons by organization staff size

- Organizations with 1 to 99 employees were more likely than organizations with 500 to 24,999 employees to use professional or association social networking sites (other than SHRM Connect) to recruit potential job candidates.

Recruit Using Professional or Association Social Networking Sites		
1 to 99 employees (57%)	>	500 to 2,499 employees (28%) 2,500 to 24,999 employees (30%)

- Organizations with 25,000 or more employees were more likely than organizations with 100 to 2,499 employees to use YouTube to recruit potential job candidates.

Recruit Using YouTube		
25,000 or more employees (31%)	>	100 to 499 employees (2%) 500 to 2,499 employees (7%)

*Note: Only statistically significant differences are shown.*

Recruiting passive job candidates remains the top reason for using social media, whereas a growing number of organizations are using it for brand recognition and to identify candidates in other geographic regions.

Why Organizations Use Social Media for Recruiting	2011 (n = 277)	2013 (n = 485)	2015 (n = 327)
Recruit passive job candidates who might not otherwise apply or be contacted by the organization	84%	80%	82%
Increase employer brand and recognition	60%	67%	77%
Target job candidates with a very specific set of skills	52%	69%	71%
Allow potential job candidates to easily contact the organization about employment	47%	57%	64%
Target a specific job level to recruit or contact (e.g., entry level, managers, executives)	54%	55%	61%
Less expensive than other methods of recruiting job candidates	67%	56%	55%
Identify potential job candidates in other geographic regions	39%	41%	53%

*Note: Only respondents who were currently using social networking websites to recruit job candidates were asked this question. Total does not equal 100% due to multiple response options.*

More organizations are using social media to effectively disseminate job and organizational information, and to target underrepresented groups.

Why Organizations Use Social Media for Recruiting (continued)	2011 (n = 277)	2013 (n = 485)	2015 (n = 327)
Target a specific geographic region in which to recruit job candidates	44%	45%	51%
More qualified job candidates relative to the amount of time and effort invested	36%	40%	44%
Effectively disseminate job- and organization-related information	33%	34%	43%
Create an online community focused on the organization	36%	33%	36%
Large quantity of job candidates relative to the amount of time and effort invested	29%	29%	34%
Target traditionally underrepresented groups (e.g., women, minorities, veterans, people with disabilities)	22%	24%	33%
Other	3%	1%	1%

*Note: Only respondents who were currently using social networking websites to recruit job candidates were asked this question. Total does not equal 100% due to multiple response options.*

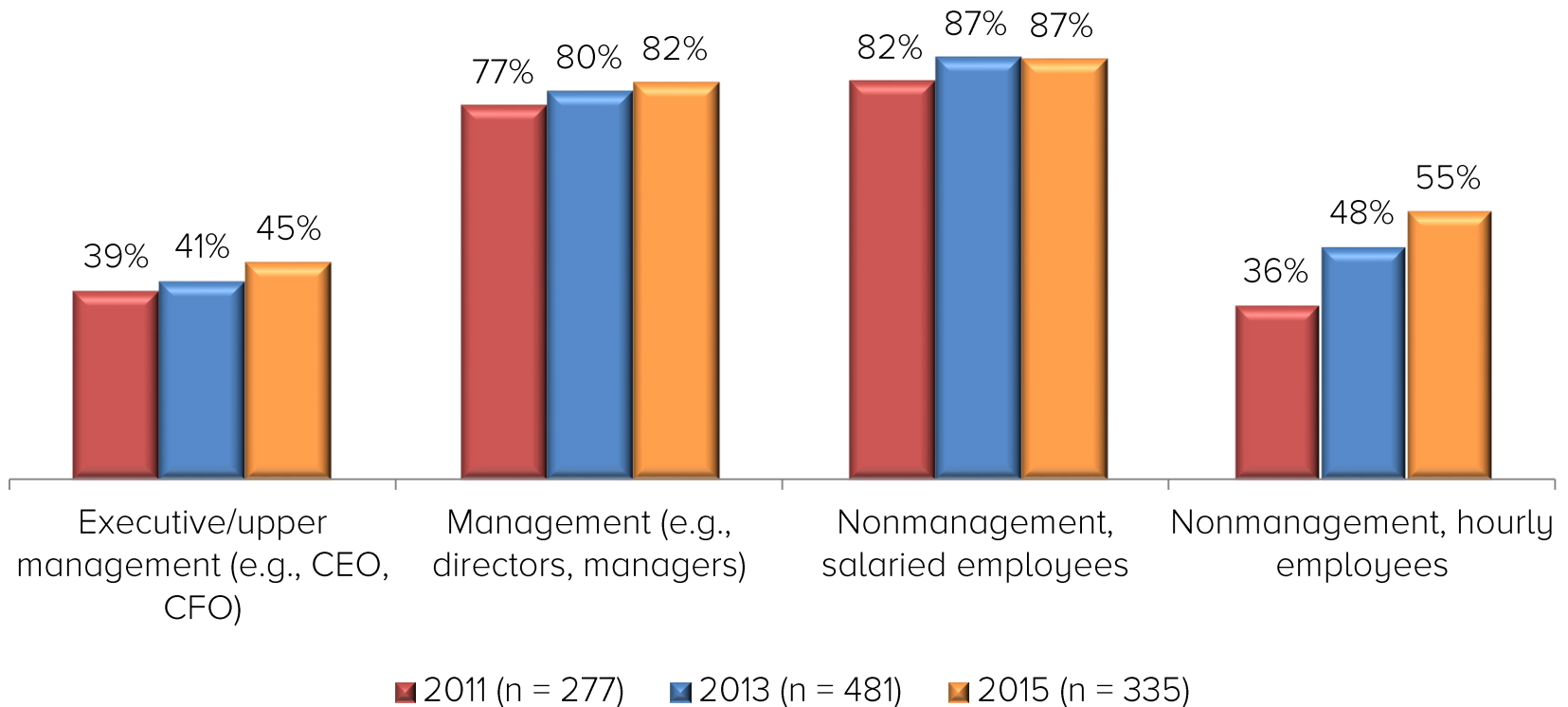
Most organizations use social media to post job advertisements, three-quarters use it to contact candidates, and over two-thirds use it to search for passive or active job candidates.

How Organizations Use Social Media for Recruitment	2015
Post job advertisements	89%
Contact candidates or potential candidates	75%
Search for passive job candidates by using the social networking website's search feature	73%
Search for active job candidates by using the social networking website's search feature	67%
Encourage employee referrals	58%
Create interest in jobs by posting useful information, photos or video	56%
Create a group or page for your organization to post information and career opportunities	46%
Contribute to discussion through social networking websites (such as read and submit blog posts)	24%
Other	2%

*Note: n = 337. Only respondents who were currently using social networking websites to recruit job candidates were asked this question. Total does not equal 100% due to multiple response options.*

The majority of organizations use social media to recruit managers and nonmanagement, salaried employees, but recruitment of hourly employees via social media is increasing.

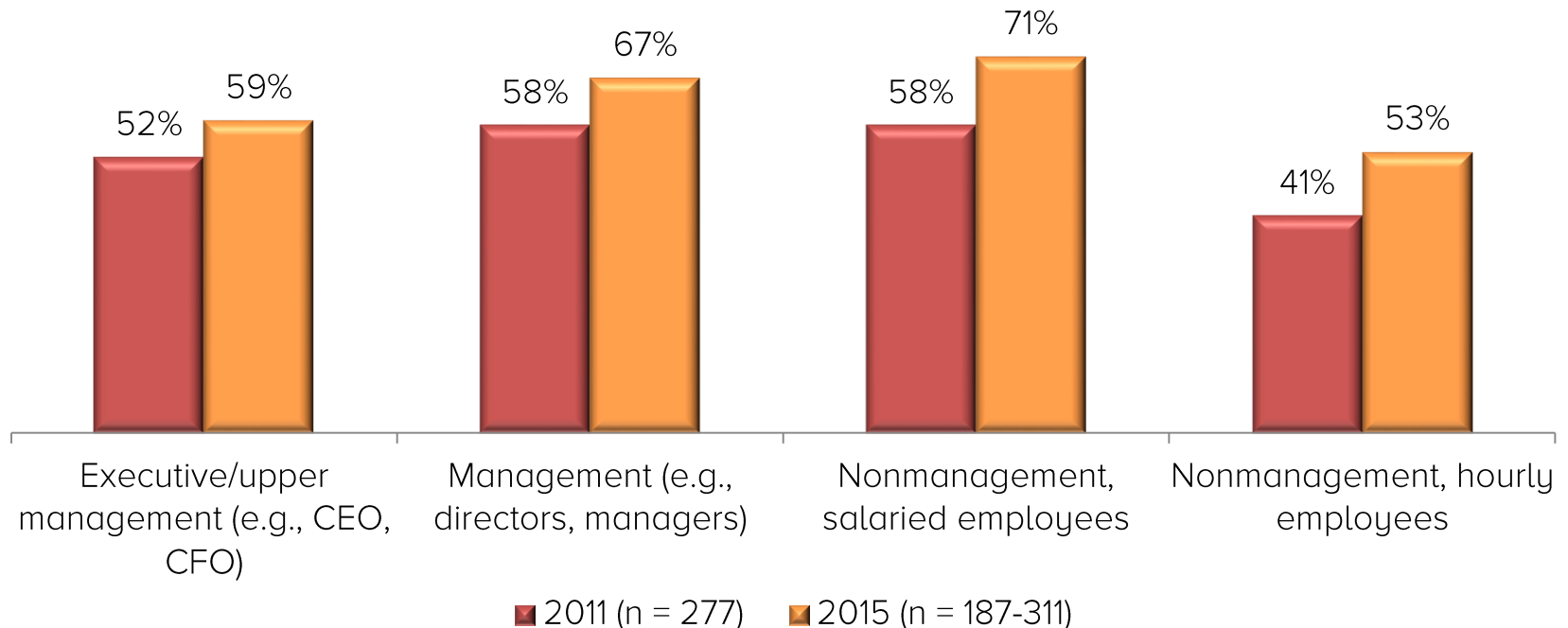
### Job Levels Recruited Via Social Media



*Note: Only respondents who were currently using social networking websites to recruit job candidates were asked this question. Totals do not equal 100% due to multiple response options. Respondents who answered "don't know" were excluded from this analysis.*

Organizations report that it is becoming increasingly efficient to recruit various job levels via social media in terms of decreasing the time to fill.

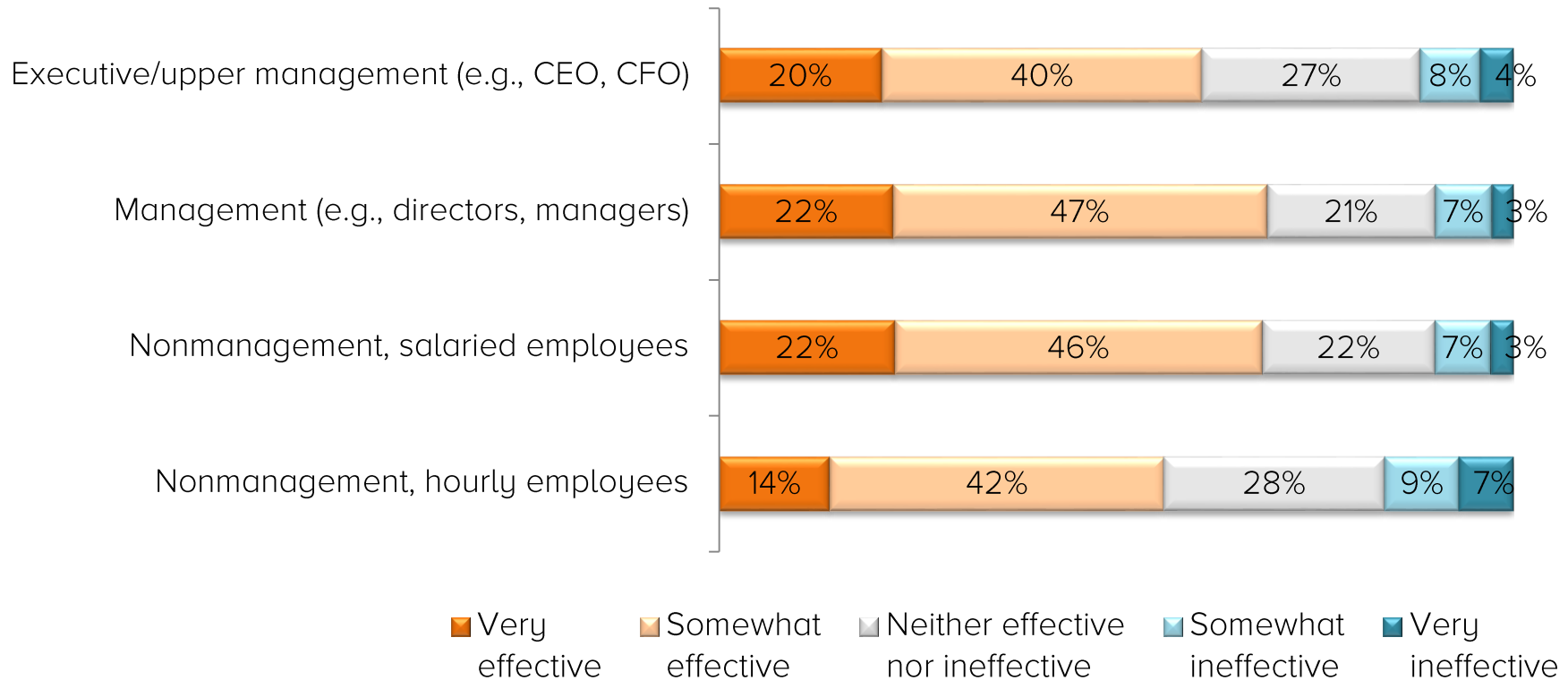
**Efficiency of Recruiting (Very or Somewhat Efficient) via Social Media by Job Level—Decreases Time to Fill**



*Note: Only respondents who were currently using social networking websites to recruit job candidates were asked this question. Figure represents those who answered "very efficient" or "somewhat efficient." Respondents who selected "Not applicable" were excluded from this analysis.*

Overall, the majority of organizations find it effective to recruit various job levels via social media in terms of the quality of hire.

**Effectiveness of Recruiting via Social Media by Job Level—Quality of Hire, Meets Performance Needs of the Job, etc.**

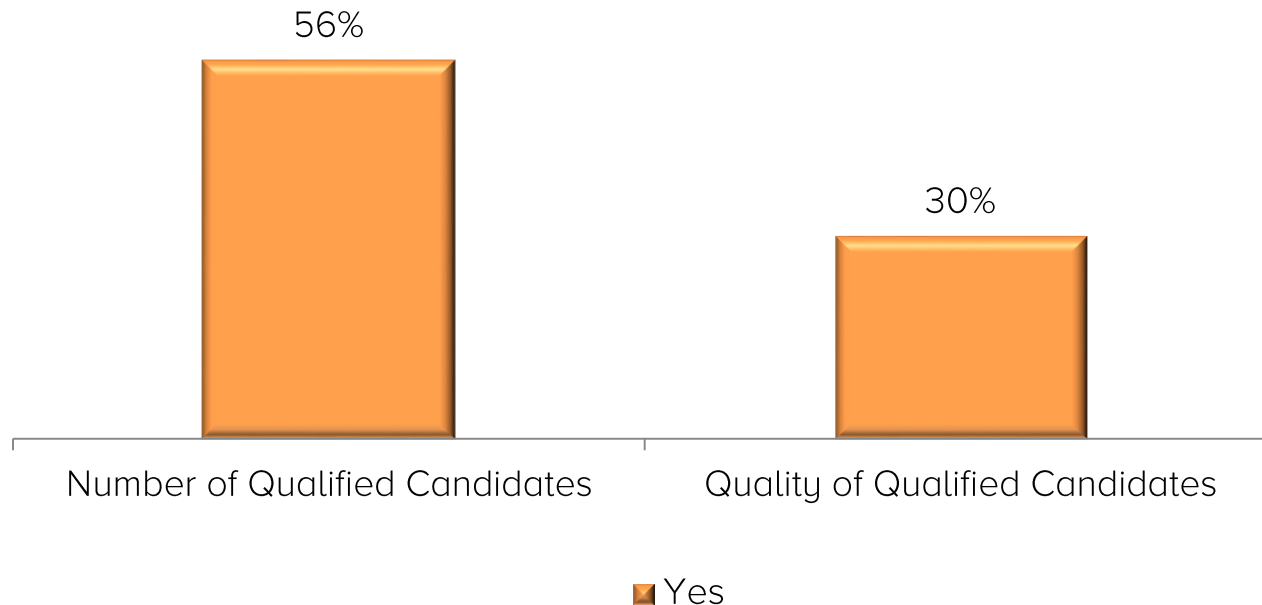


*Note: n = 171-285. Only respondents who were currently using social networking websites to recruit job candidates were asked this question. Respondents who selected "Not applicable" were excluded from this analysis. Percentages may not equal 100% due to rounding.*



Over one-half of organizations track the number of qualified job candidates by source, but far fewer track the quality of these candidates by source.

**Track the Number and Quality of Qualified Job Candidates by Source—  
Social Media, Job Boards, Print Ads, Employee Referrals, etc.**



*Note: Only respondents who were currently using social networking websites to recruit job candidates were asked this question. Respondents who answered "don't know" were excluded from this analysis.*

The top reasons organizations give for *not* using social media for recruiting are legal concerns and not having enough HR staff time.

Reasons Organizations are NOT Using Social Media for Recruiting	2011 (n = 259)	2013 (n = 143)	2015 (n = 61)
Concerns about legal risks/discovering information about protected characteristics (e.g., age, race, gender, religious affiliation)	53%	52%	46%
Not enough HR staff time to use this recruiting method in addition to others	43%	48%	46%
Questions about the veracity of the information contained on social networking websites	27%	26%	21%
Lack of knowledge or skills to recruit using this method among HR staff	17%	16%	18%
Social networking websites do not have job candidates at the job level that the organization is targeting	11%	15%	18%
Smaller quantity of job candidates relative to the amount of time and effort invested	7%	12%	11%
Less qualified job candidates relative to the amount of time and effort invested	5%	8%	10%
Other	24%	12%	13%

*Note: Only respondents who were not currently using social networking websites to recruit job candidates were asked this question. Total does not equal 100% due to multiple response options.*

# Screening Job Candidates Using Public Social Media Profiles & Online Search Engines

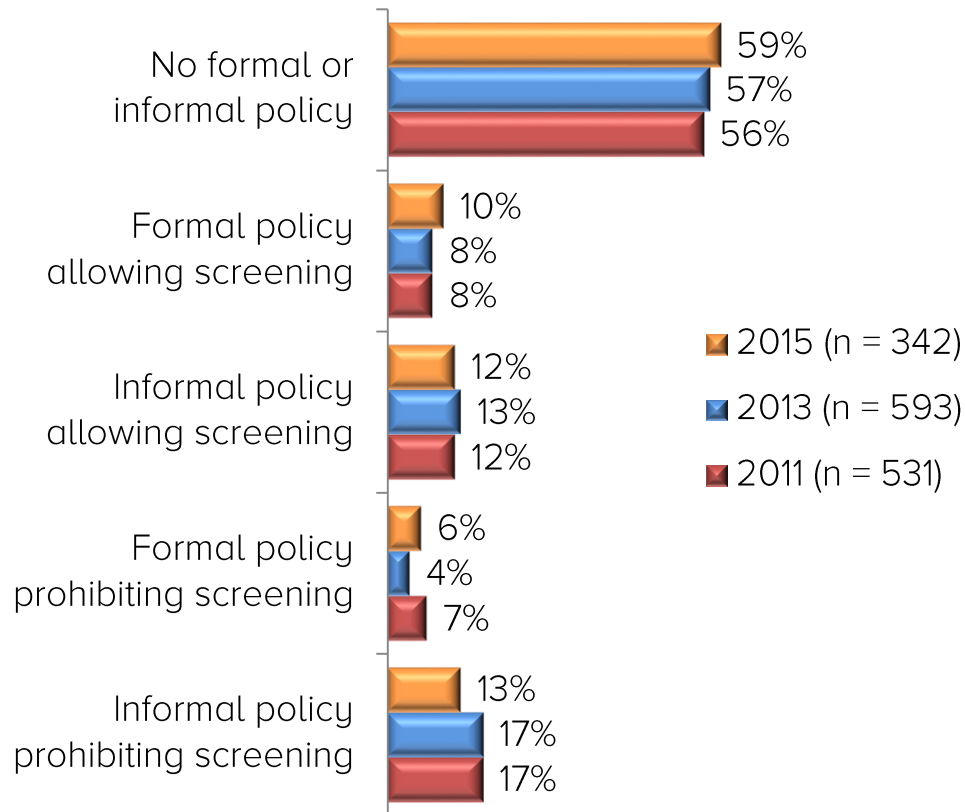
Organizations that screen a job candidates' public social media profiles typically do so to gain more information or to verify information.

Reasons for Screening Job Candidates' Public Social Media Profiles	2011 (n = 80)	2015 (n = 109)
Able to obtain more information about an applicant than would be provided by just a resume, cover letter or CV	70%	61%
Able to easily verify information from an applicant's resume, cover letter or CV	28%	50%
Job candidates include their social networking websites on their resumes	18%	41%
It takes little time and effort in relation to information gained	63%	34%
Able to assess the applicant's work-related potential or performance	28%	27%
It is less expensive than other methods of screening job candidates	20%	18%
Other	3%	9%

*Note: Only respondents who currently use social networking websites or online search engines to screen job candidates were asked this question. Percentages do not equal 100% due to multiple response options.*

Similar to 2011 and 2013, two out of five organizations have a policy on screening job candidates using public social media profiles or online search engines—22% allow and 19% prohibit this type of screening.

### Policy on Screening Job Candidates Using Public Social Media Profiles or Online Search Engines



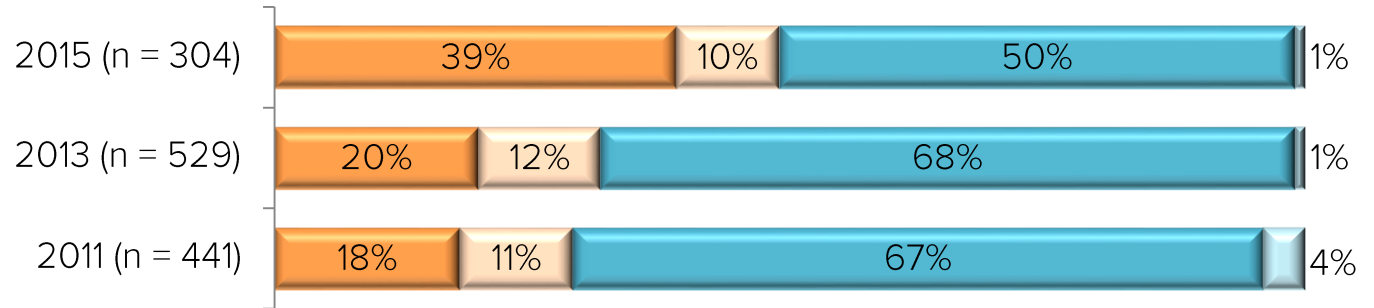
Of those organizations that did not have a formal policy in 2015, 21% said they plan to implement a formal policy in the next 12 months.

Note: Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding. Respondents who answered “don’t know” were excluded from this analysis.

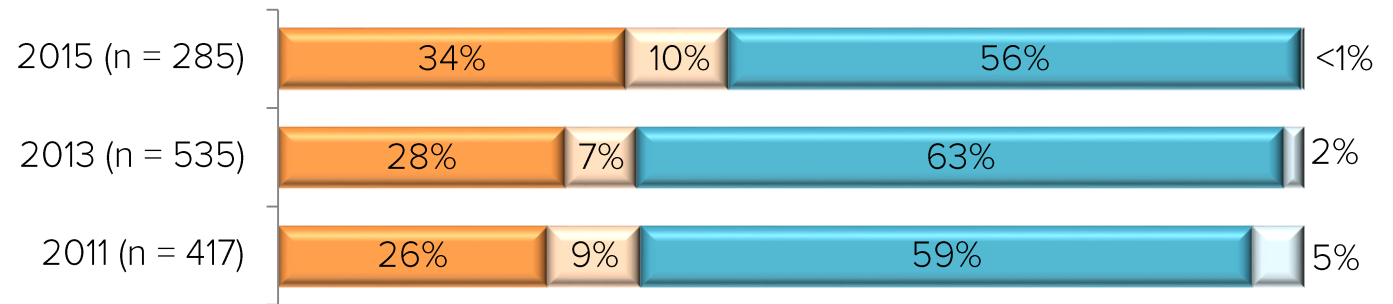
More organizations are using public social media profiles or online search engines to screen job candidates compared with 2013.

Overall, 43% of organizations used public social media profiles or online searching to screen job candidates in 2015.

### Screen Using Public Social Media Profiles



### Screen Using Online Search Engines



■ Currently use    
 ■ Plan to use    
 ■ Never used and do not plan to    
 ■ Used previously, but do not plan to again

Note: Total may not equal 100% due to rounding. Respondents who answered "don't know" were excluded from this analysis.

Privately owned for-profit organizations were more likely to use public social media profiles or online search engines to screen job candidates compared with other sectors.

## Comparisons by organization sector

- Privately owned for-profit organizations were more likely than publicly owned for-profit and nonprofit organizations to use social media to screen job candidates.

<b>Use Public Social Media Profiles to Screen Job Candidates</b>		
Privately owned for-profit (51%)	>	Publicly owned for-profit (27%) Nonprofit (28%)

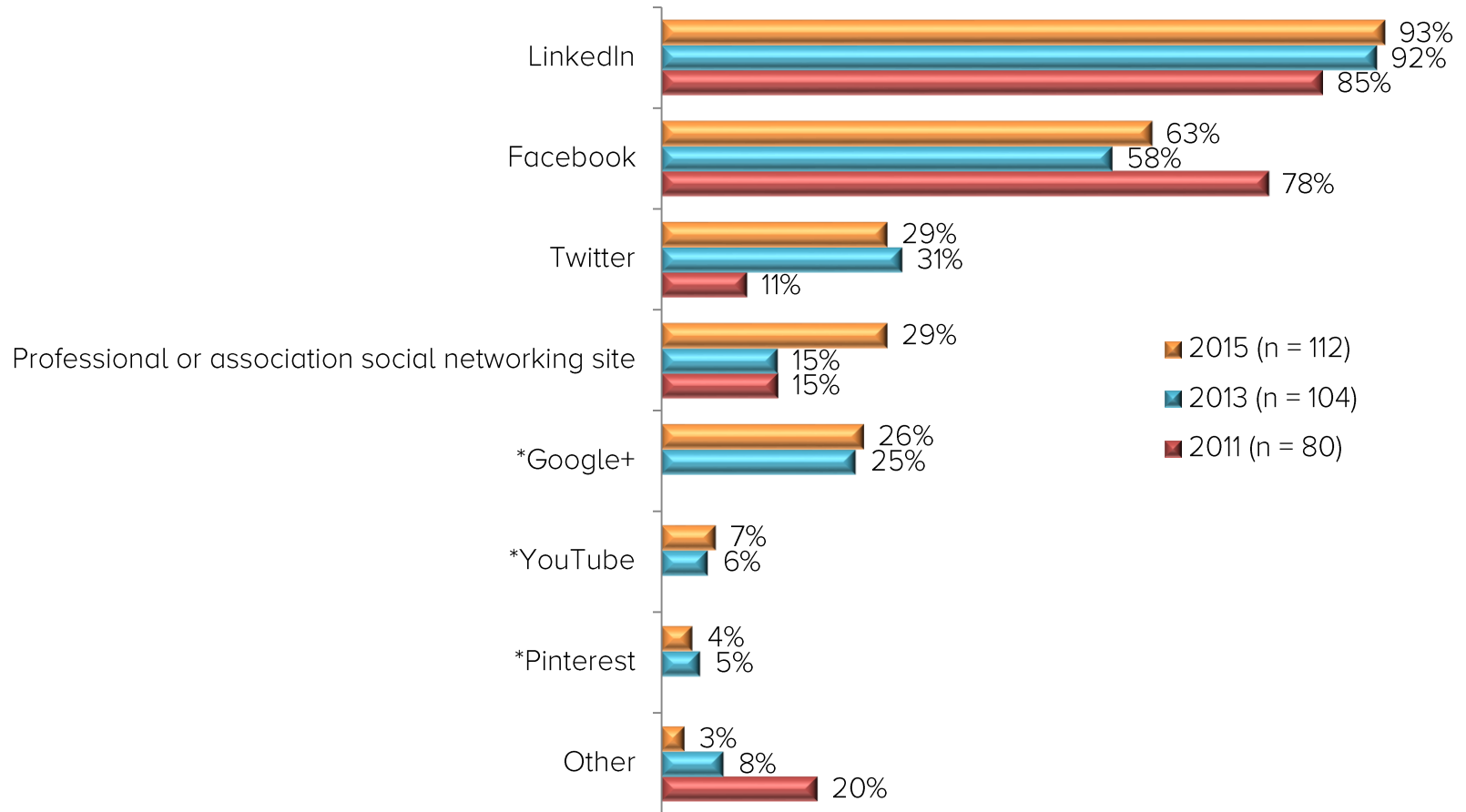
- Privately owned for-profit organizations were more likely than publicly owned for-profit organizations to use online search engines to screen job candidates.

<b>Use Online Search Engines to Screen Job Candidates</b>		
Privately owned for-profit (45%)	>	Publicly owned for-profit (24%)

*Note: Only statistically significant differences are shown.*

LinkedIn and Facebook remain the top sites used for screening, but professional/association sites have grown to become as commonly used as Twitter and Google+.

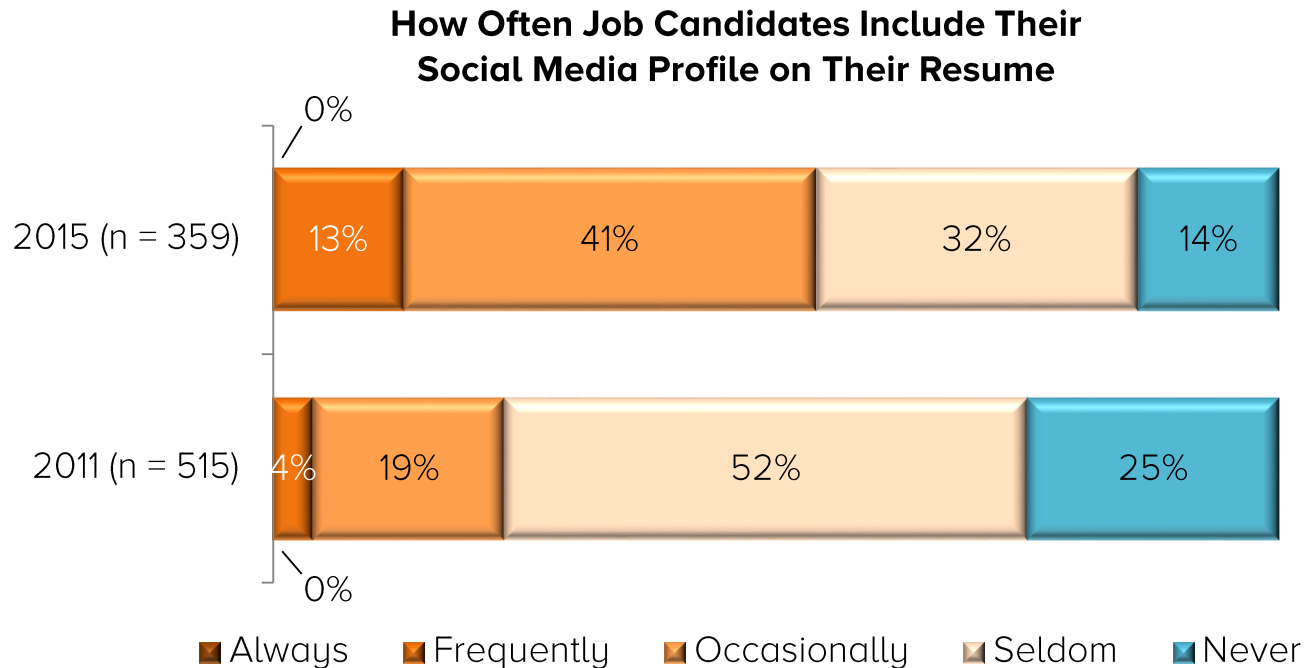
### Social Media Sites Used to Screen Job Candidates



*Note: Only organizations that use social media to screen job candidates were asked this question. Total does not equal 100% due to multiple response options. An asterisk (\*) indicates this response option was not available in 2011.*



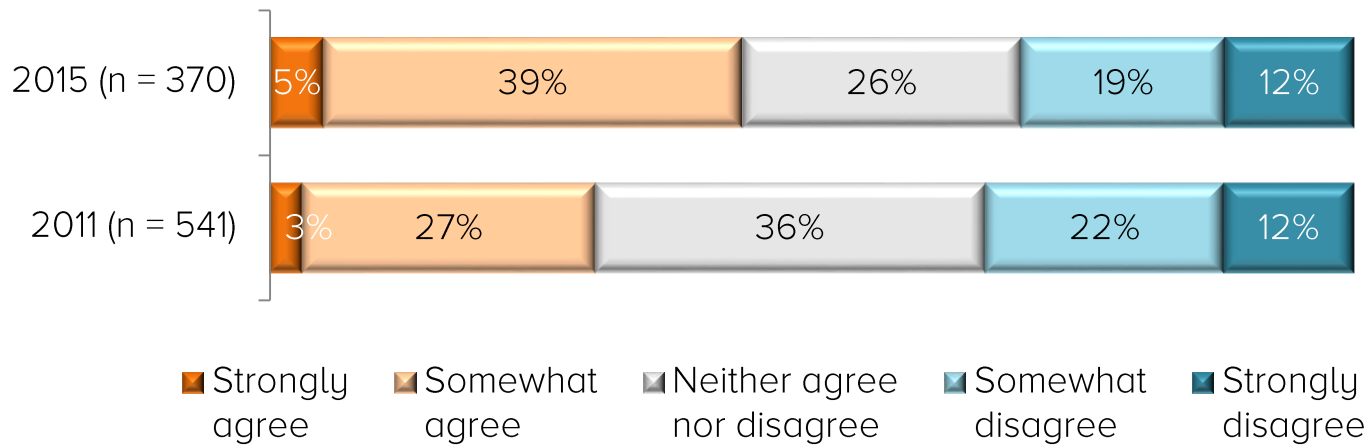
More job candidates are including their social media profiles on their resumes compared with 2011.



*Note: Respondents who answered “don’t know” were excluded from this analysis.*

Two out of five HR professionals agree that a public social media profile can provide important information about work-related potential or performance.

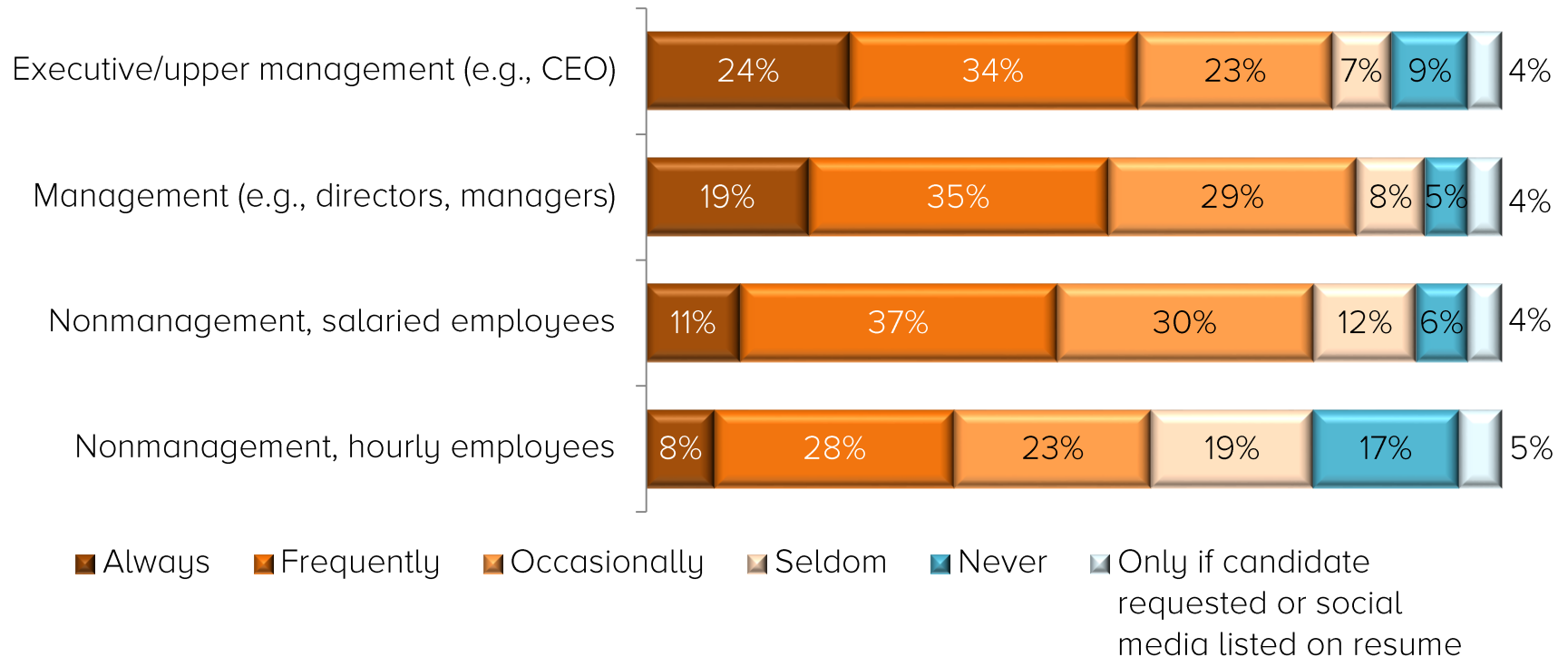
**A Job Applicant’s Public Social Media Profile Can Provide Important Information About Work-Related Potential or Performance**



*Note: Respondents who answered “don’t know” were excluded from this analysis.*

Of organizations that screen candidates using public social media profiles or online search engines, one-quarter *always* screen executive-level, more than for other job levels.

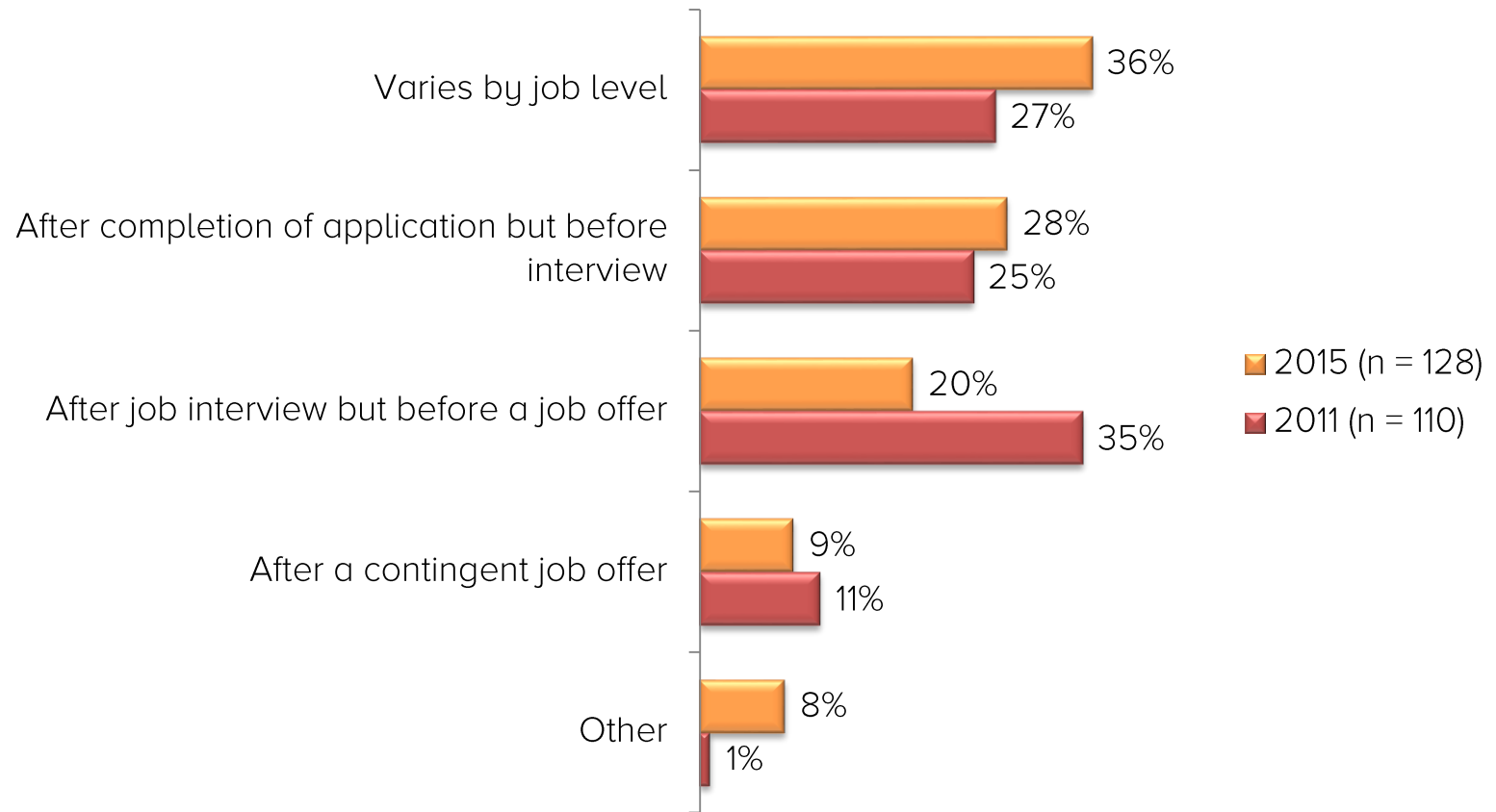
### How Often Organizations Screen Job Candidates Using Public Social Media Profiles or Online Search Engines by Job Level



Note: Only organizations that use social media or online search engines to screen job candidates at any point in the hiring process were asked this question. Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding. Respondents who answered “don’t know” were excluded from this analysis.

Of organizations that screen candidates using public social media profiles or online search engines, one-quarter do so before the interview, and three out of 10 wait until after the interview.

### When Organizations Screen Job Candidates Using Public Social Media Profiles or Online Search Engines

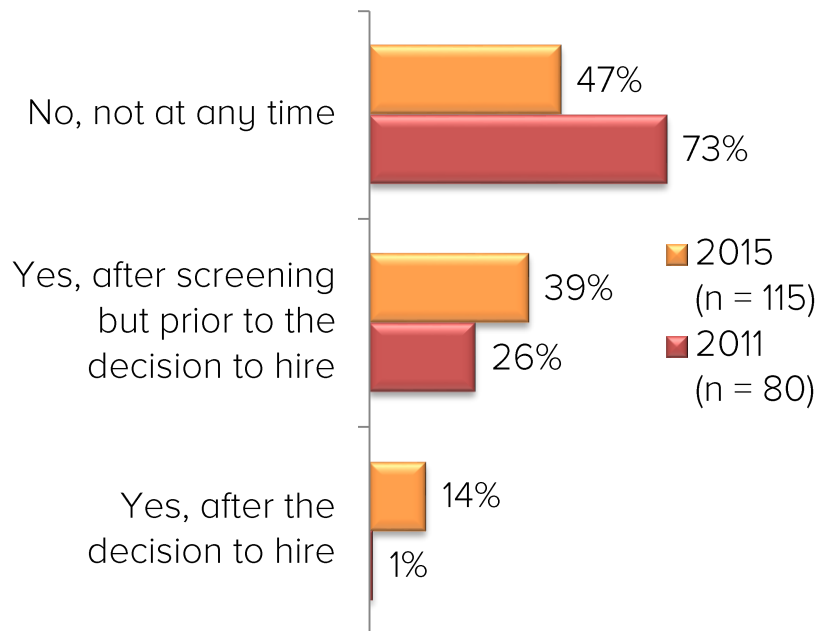


Note: Percentages do not equal 100% due to multiple response options.

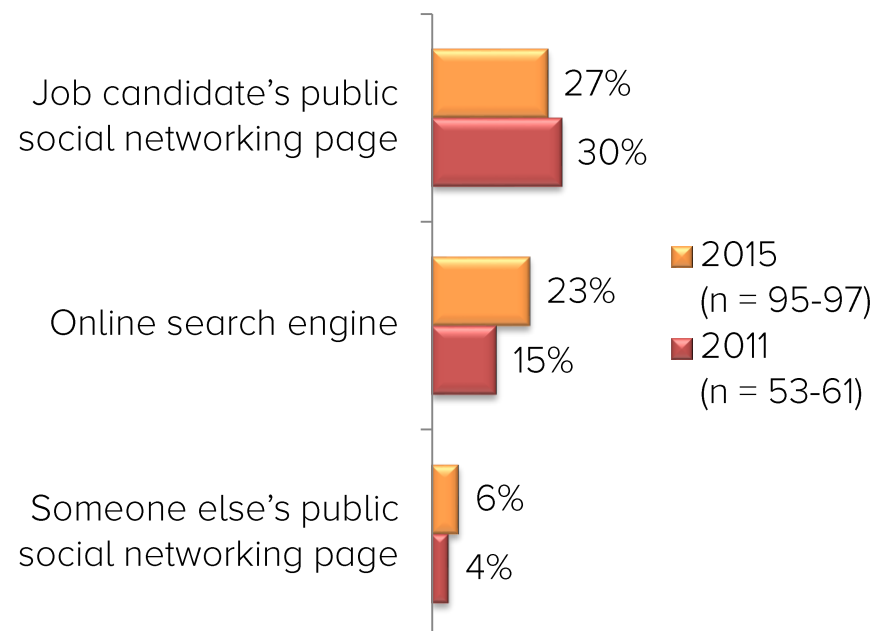
Two out of five organizations allow candidates to explain concerning information found on public social media profiles or online search engines before the hiring decision is made.

Overall, 36% of organizations have disqualified job candidates because of concerning information (e.g., illegal activity, discrepancy with application) found on public social media profiles or online search engines in 2015.

### Allow Candidate to Explain Concerning Information



### Disqualified Job Candidate in Past Year Because of Concerning Information on:



Note: Only respondents who currently use social networking websites or online search engines to screen job candidates were asked this question. Respondents who answered "don't know" were excluded from this analysis.

The most common reasons for *not* using public social media profiles to screen job candidates are legal risks, relevancy and accuracy of information, and privacy concerns.

Reasons for NOT Using Public Social Media Profiles for Screening	2011 (n = 461)	2013 (n = 406)	2015 (n = 172)
Concerns about legal risks/discovering information about protected characteristics (e.g., age, race, gender, religious affiliation)	66%	74%	76%
Information about job candidates taken from these sites may not be relevant to their work-related potential or performance	36%	63%	60%
Information about job candidates taken from these sites may not be relevant to whether they will be a good fit with the organization	33%	61%	53%
Concerns about invading the privacy of job candidates	33%	48%	49%
Not able to verify with confidence information from an applicant's social networking page	48%	47%	47%
Not all job candidates have information on social networking sites	34%	43%	37%
Takes too much time and effort in relation to information gained	17%	18%	15%
Job candidates might be less likely to apply if they knew your organization screened job candidates in this manner	7%	11%	10%
Other	8%	6%	10%

*Note: Only respondents who currently use social networking websites or online search engines to screen job candidates were asked this question. Percentages do not equal 100% due to multiple response options.*

# Demographics

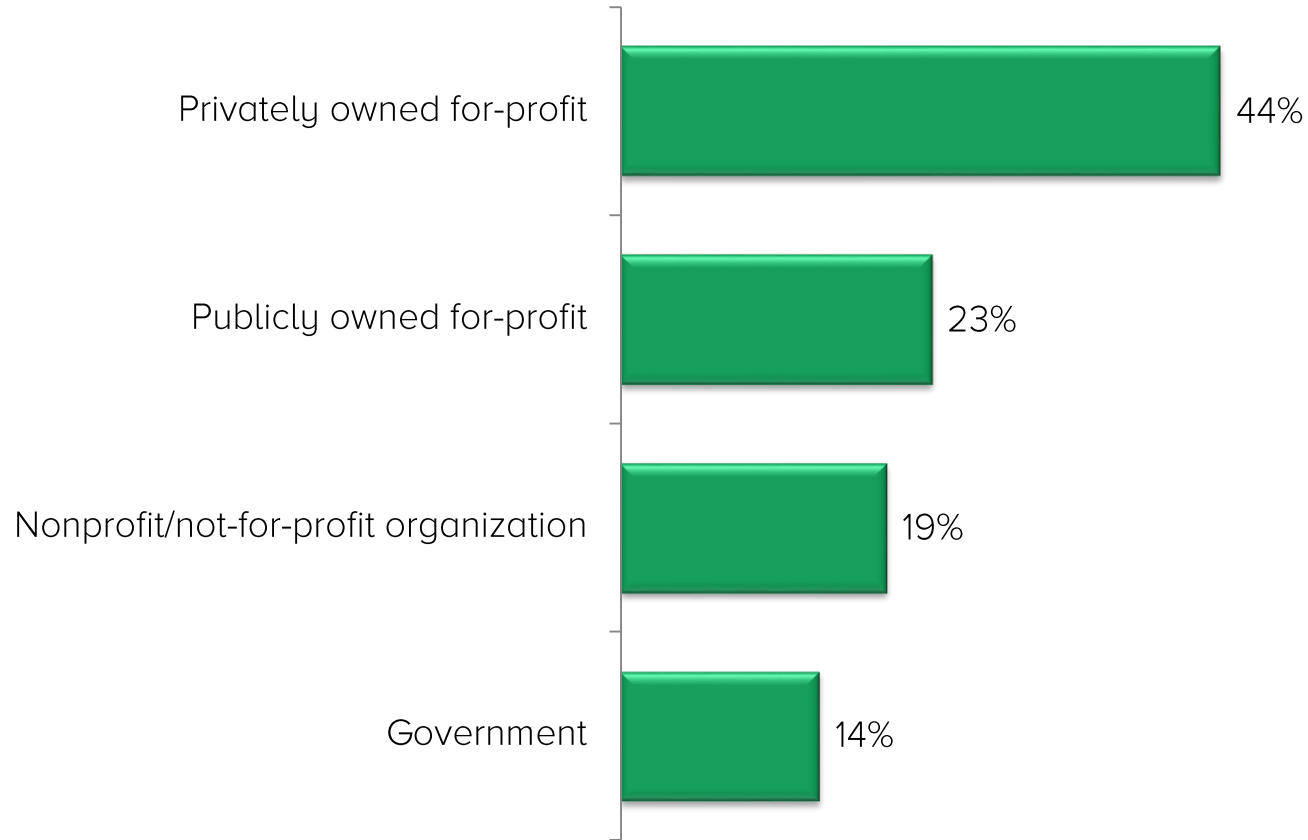
	Percentage
Professional, scientific and technical services	23%
Health care and social assistance	16%
Manufacturing	12%
Finance and insurance	12%
Educational services	11%
Government agencies	9%
Transportation and warehousing	8%
Retail trade	5%
Information	5%
Administrative and support and waste management and remediation services	5%
Construction	5%

*Note: n = 360. Percentages do not equal 100% due to multiple response options.*

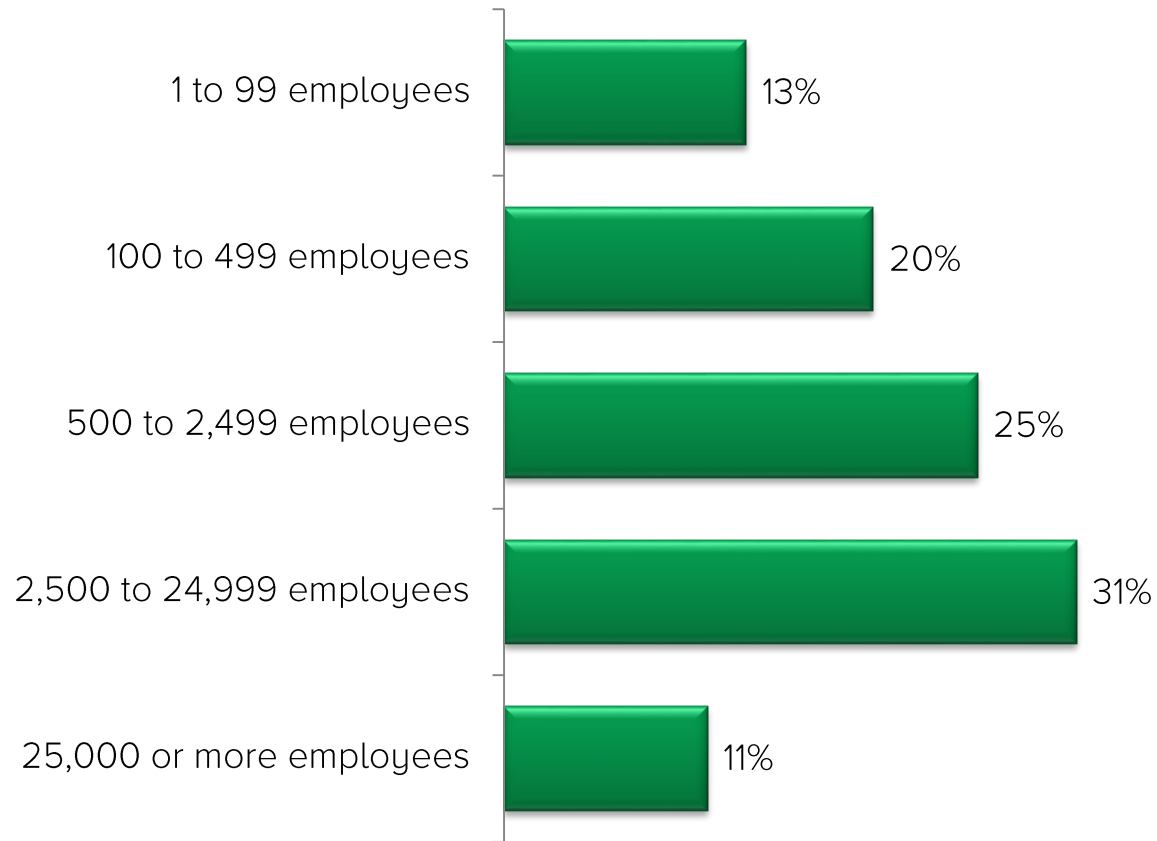


	Percentage
Repair and maintenance	4%
Accommodation and food services	4%
Mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction	4%
Utilities	4%
Arts, entertainment, and recreation	3%
Real estate and rental and leasing	3%
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting	3%
Religious, grant-making, civic, professional and similar organizations	2%
Wholesale trade	1%
Personal and laundry services	1%
Other industry	9%

Note: n = 360. Percentages do not equal 100% due to multiple response options.



*n* = 367



*n* = 338

**Does your organization have U.S.-based operations (business units) only, or does it operate multinationally?**

U.S.-based operations only	69%
Multinational operations	31%

*n* = 367

**What is the region of your work location?**

Northeast	17%
South	41%
Midwest	27%
West	15%

*n* = 349

**Is your organization a single-unit organization or a multi-unit organization?**

Single-unit organization: An organization in which the location and the organization are one and the same.	24%
Multi-unit organization: An organization that has more than one location.	76%

*n* = 367

**For multi-unit organizations, are HR policies and practices determined by the multi-unit headquarters, by each work location or by both?**

Multi-unit headquarters determines HR policies and practices.	56%
Each work location determines HR policies and practices.	1%
A combination of both the work location and the multi-unit headquarters determines HR policies and practices.	43%

*n* = 288

## Survey Methodology

- Response rate = 14%
- 410 HR professionals with the job function of employment or recruitment from a randomly selected sample of SHRM's membership participated in this survey
- Margin of error +/-5%
- Survey fielded November 19-December 4, 2015

### Project lead:

Tanya Mulvey, researcher, SHRM Research

### Project contributors:

Evren Esen, SHRM-SCP, director, Survey Research Center, SHRM Research

Joseph Coombs, senior analyst, Workforce Trends and Forecasting

Other SHRM research related to talent management

- [SHRM/Ascendo Resources: The Importance of Social Media for Recruiters and Job Seekers](#)
- [Resumes, Cover Letters and Interviews](#)
- [Business and Human Capital Challenges Today and in the Future](#)
  
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- [SHRM Talent Management Conference](#), April 18-20, 2016, Orlando, FL
  
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