

RECRUITMENT MARKETING

# Benchmark Report 2026

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Welcome to the 2026 Recruitment Marketing Benchmark Report, Appcast's 10th edition!

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For a full decade, our annual benchmarks have helped talent acquisition teams sharpen how they plan, measure, and optimize their recruitment marketing.

This year, we're raising the bar with two big updates. We've added international benchmarks from select markets outside the United States so global and expanding teams can see how performance shifts by country or region.

And we've brought in disposition data that goes further down-funnel to show how candidates move through screening, interview, and offer stages, and how those conversion patterns connect to overall hiring cost.

# A Note to Our Readers

## To get the most out of this report, please note:

- The data included is a reference point for benchmarking your recruitment marketing performance and understanding candidate behavior. Your own results may differ based on roles, locations, employer brand, and other factors, so be sure to pair these benchmarks with your internal metrics when setting targets for the year ahead.
- We encourage you to look at the data in the report with attention to your specific hiring goals. Ask yourself, what are you currently looking to improve or fix in your hiring process? Higher quality candidates? Quicker turnaround times? Taking this approach will help you prioritize and act upon the insights.
- As always, we open the report with an economic overview from our Recruitonomics team. This section provides the labor market context for the benchmarks that follow and, together with the ongoing insight available at [Recruitonomics.com](https://www.recruitonomics.com), helps recruiters make sense of a shifting hiring landscape.
- Throughout the report, we primarily use median values and percentiles to represent performance. Many charts also use a three-month moving average to smooth out short-term volatility and keep focus on the underlying trend.
- We know many TA leaders are focused on how AI will shape the future of recruiting. While this report does not delve into AI-specific analysis, we encourage readers to explore our [Top Recruiting Trends for 2026](#) report for additional insights.
- [AppcastOne](#), our recruitment marketing solution, helps employers create and execute a holistic recruitment marketing strategy, attracting and engaging not just active job seekers but passive candidates as well. As in last year's report, you'll see benchmarks from search and social media campaigns alongside job board data. Each channel brings something a little different, but the goal never changes — hires. This section is here to help you sense-check whether your recruitment marketing mix is working across easy and hard-to-fill roles and both short-term and long-term needs.

# Executive Summary

- The labor market is in near-perfect balance but relatively stagnant. Hiring and quitting are both subdued, creating a “low-hire, low-fire” environment where workers are staying put, and employers are cautious about adding headcount.
- Apply rates rose in 2025, driven by both higher job-seeker volume and improvements in recruitment marketing strategies.
- The white-collar recession is unmistakable in the data. Apply rates for “sitting down” jobs in tech, finance, consulting, etc. climbed sharply while healthcare and other “standing up” roles remained chronically hard to fill.
- Recruitment costs defied expectations and climbed throughout 2025. Cost-per-click (CPC), cost-per-application (CPA), and cost-per-hire (CPH) all trended upward, running against everything you’d expect in a softer labor market.
- New candidate disposition data benchmarks now track what it costs to move candidates from apply through screening, interview, offer, and hire, giving talent leaders a way to judge channels and roles on down-funnel quality instead of just top-of-funnel volume.
- Where you’re recruiting matters enormously. U.S. apply rates and CPA generally track with local unemployment, but European markets are heading the other direction with costs actually easing.
- Search and social are now essential parts of the recruitment media mix. CPCs and click-through-rates differ by occupational group, but choosing the right partner unlocks significant efficiency gains.
- The content of a job ad still moves the needle. Short, focused titles and salary transparency consistently lift apply rates, while the ability to work remotely is no longer the talent magnet it once was.

# Our Scope and Methodology

Appcast’s analysis utilizes 2025 job ad data from nearly 1,200 employers in the United States, across every major occupational group. In total, over 302 million clicks and 27 million applies (shown in the charts at right) were analyzed for this report.

As in previous editions, the focus is on performance-based recruitment media. Duration-based posts and slots were excluded so the benchmarks reflect true click and apply activity rather than inventory purchased. We also excluded recruitment ads using easy-apply technology so, unless otherwise noted, all job board benchmarks reflect long-apply / ATS ads.

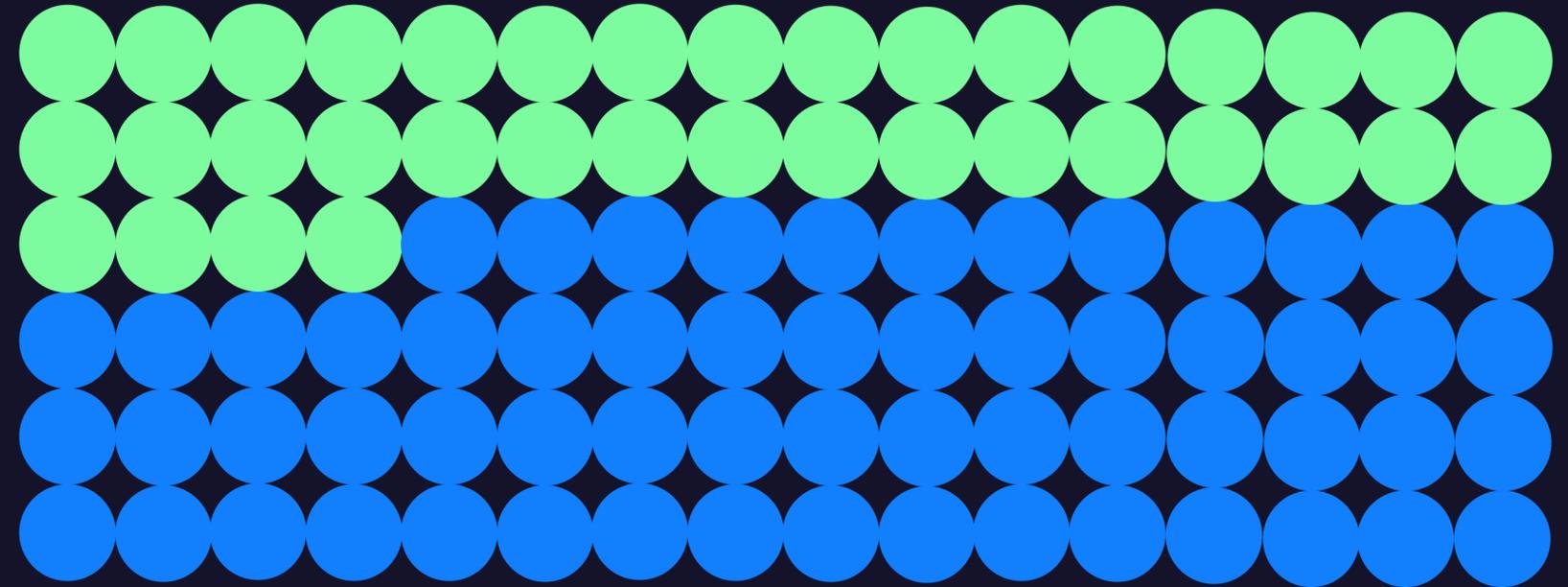
For pages 35 to 38, Appcast’s analysis utilizes 2025 data from over 200 employers in the United States. In total, over 1.4 billion impressions and 42 million clicks were analyzed for this report.

Appcast analyzed paid search and social ads across every major occupation group. Only sources supporting search or social advertising were included in this part of the study.

## 302 Million Clicks

37%  
DESKTOP

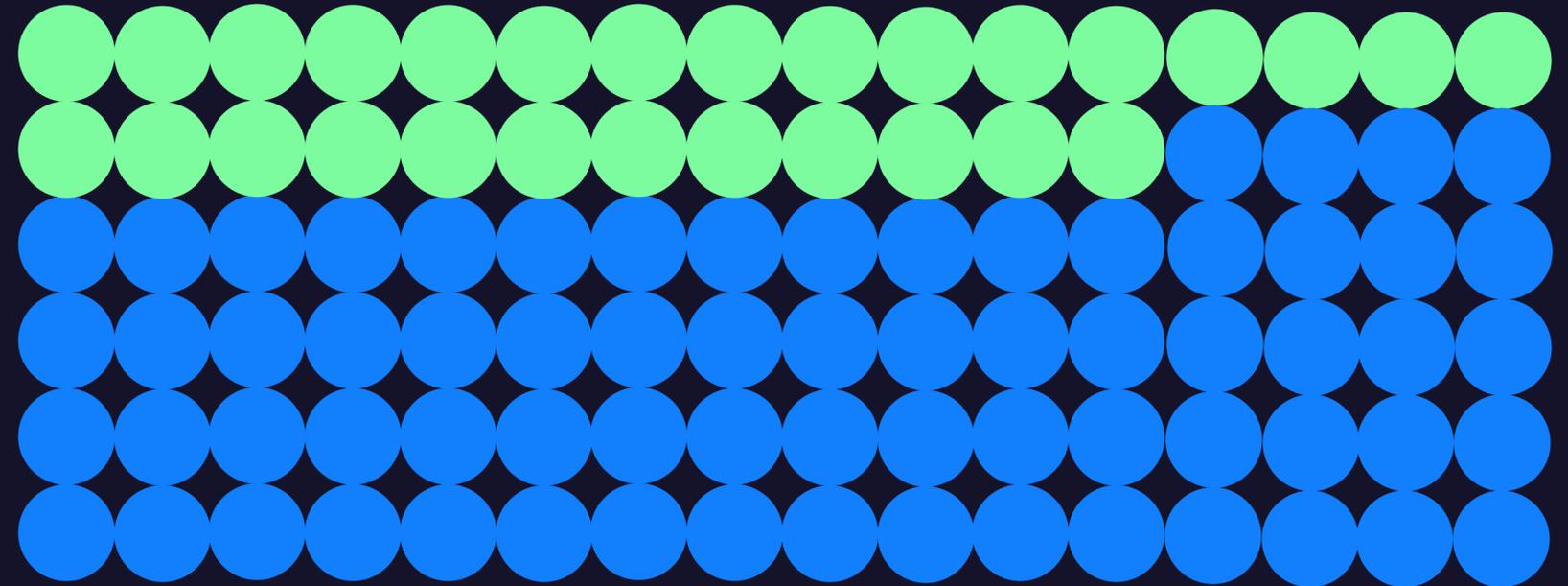
63%  
MOBILE



## 27.4 Million Applies

29%  
DESKTOP

71%  
MOBILE



# An Overview of Recruitonomics

In this section, we break down the key labor market and economic developments from 2025, providing context for the recruitment marketing data that follow.

## Recruitonomics™

Recruitonomics helps talent acquisition leaders understand recruiting challenges driven by global economic forces. Powered by Appcast, it brings together labor economics insights and recruitment best practices to clarify how the changing economy impacts hiring. For timely research and insights, you can follow Recruitonomics on our Substack page, [here](#).

↘ [Learn More](#)

# Supply and demand in near perfect balance

## Looking at the demand vs. the supply of the U.S. labor market between 2001 and 2025.

The U.S. labor market has settled into an equilibrium where demand (open jobs and employment) and supply (the available labor force) are in rough alignment, easing some of the extreme mismatches employers faced in 2022 and 2023. For hiring employers, that tilt in power should make hiring easier.

That said, the picture varies sharply by industry. As we will see in this report, signs of a white-collar recession are all over the data. In “sitting-down” office-based roles such as tech and professional services, the market has slackened considerably. Job seekers in these fields face a longer, tougher search with a more crowded applicant pool to compete against.

In “standing-up” fields such as healthcare and the skilled trades, it remains relatively easy to find work. Healthcare in particular operates in a different universe from other sectors. Competition for talent remains intense in healthcare and success hinges on finding qualified candidates before competitors do.

U.S. Labor Market: Demand vs. Supply



SOURCE: BLS VIA MACROBOND CREATED ON 12.16.2025

# A labor market in the slow lane

The labor market hit pause in 2025. Monthly job growth stepped down to its slowest pace since 2009 (outside the pandemic shock), and we started to see periods of net job loss rather than steady expansion. Overall hiring fell and quit rates (workers voluntarily leaving their jobs) deteriorated in lockstep, suggesting that workers are less confident about finding new opportunities in a softer market.

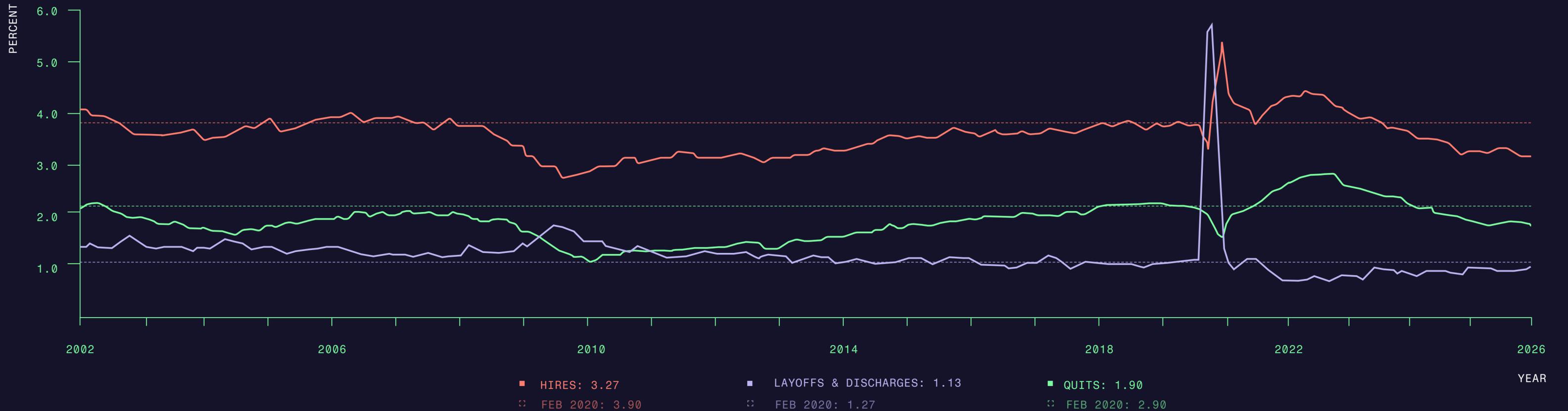
Underneath, layoffs drifted up, though more modestly than headlines suggested. Knowledge-based roles in tech, government, media, and professional services absorbed

most of the job losses. The drip-drip of cuts gradually raised the unemployment rate, which hit a peak of 4.6% in the fall of 2025.

The result is a “low-hire, low-fire” environment where most people are staying put and employers are cautious about adding headcount. For talent teams, that means more scrutiny on every open role and more pressure to show that each dollar spent brings in the right candidates.

## The “Great Resignation” Has Become the “Great Stay”

HIRES, LAYOFFS, AND QUILTS %, THREE-MONTH AVERAGE, SEASONALLY ADJUSTED



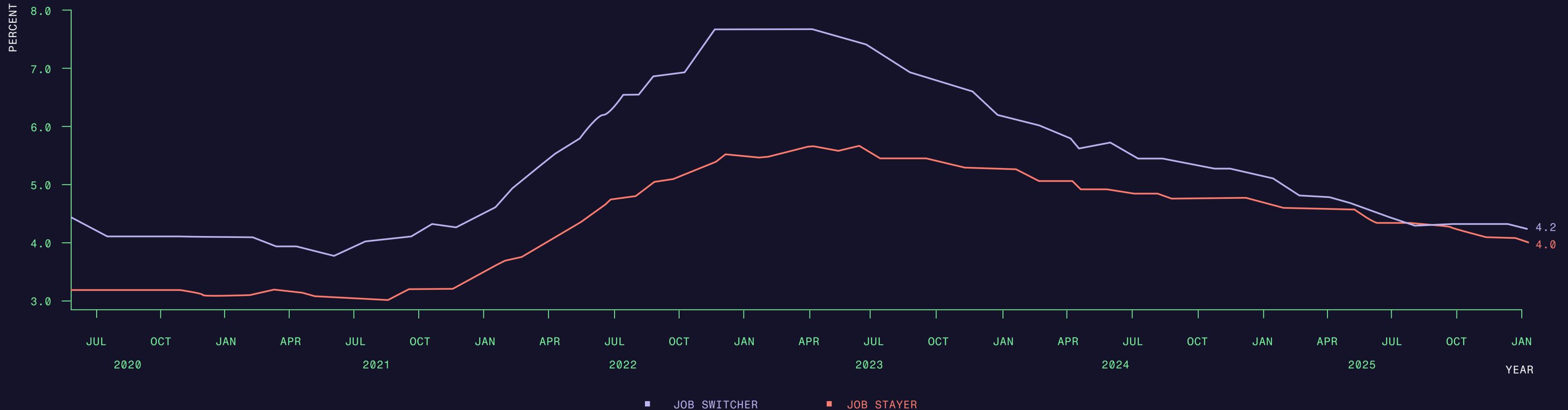
# Job switching no longer pays off like it used to

One of the main drivers of the “Great Resignation” that saw 50 million Americans quit their jobs was that labor was scarce and employers were offering impressive salaries to poach workers from their roles. Job switching often came with a hefty raise, and millions took the incentive.

In today’s low hire, low fire environment, that dynamic has reversed. Stay-put behavior is keeping both hiring demand and wage growth in check, and the wage premium for job-hopping has all but evaporated.

### Atlanta Fed Median Wage Tracker: Job Switchers vs. Stayers

YEAR-OVER-YEAR PERCENT CHANGE IN NOMINAL WAGE GROWTH





#### TREND TO WATCH

For hiring employers, quit rate is *the* metric to watch. If it starts to climb again, the world of recruiting will feel very different, very quickly.

More labor movement means more backfills, fiercer competition for talent, and higher ad budgets as employers fight to keep pipelines full.

*Watch for that shift.* If quit rates turn upward and stay there, you'll know the competitive cycle is coming back hard.

# Overall Benchmark Trends

In this section, we review the headline benchmarks derived from job board advertisements.

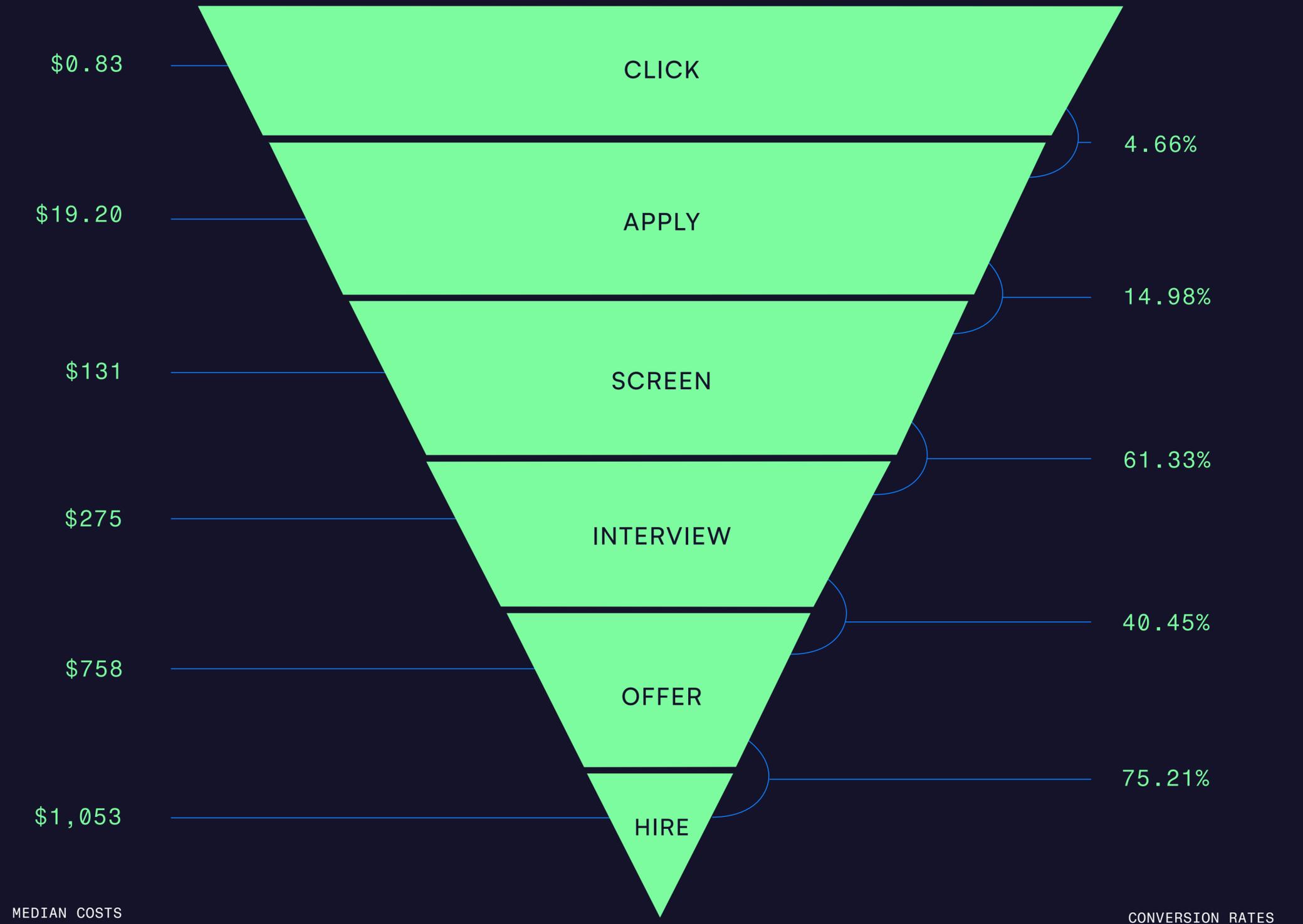
# New this year: Tracking the full funnel

## Median costs across the funnel in 2025 shows the details of the application process.

Candidate disposition data adds a new layer to the occupational benchmarks this year. They show what happens after the apply, tracking how much it costs to move candidates through the core down-funnel stages of screening, interviewing, and offering.

Historically, most teams have optimized around top-of-funnel efficiency: lower cost-per-click (CPC), lower cost-per-apply (CPA), higher apply rates. Disposition data surfaces where that can be misleading. A source that looks expensive on CPA may actually be more efficient if a high percentage of its candidates sail through screening and interview, and vice versa.

**This data is genuinely new in the market.** Having access to these down-funnel benchmarks should give hiring employers a clearer way to allocate budget toward channels that reliably generate hireable candidates; not just clicks and applications.



MEDIAN COSTS

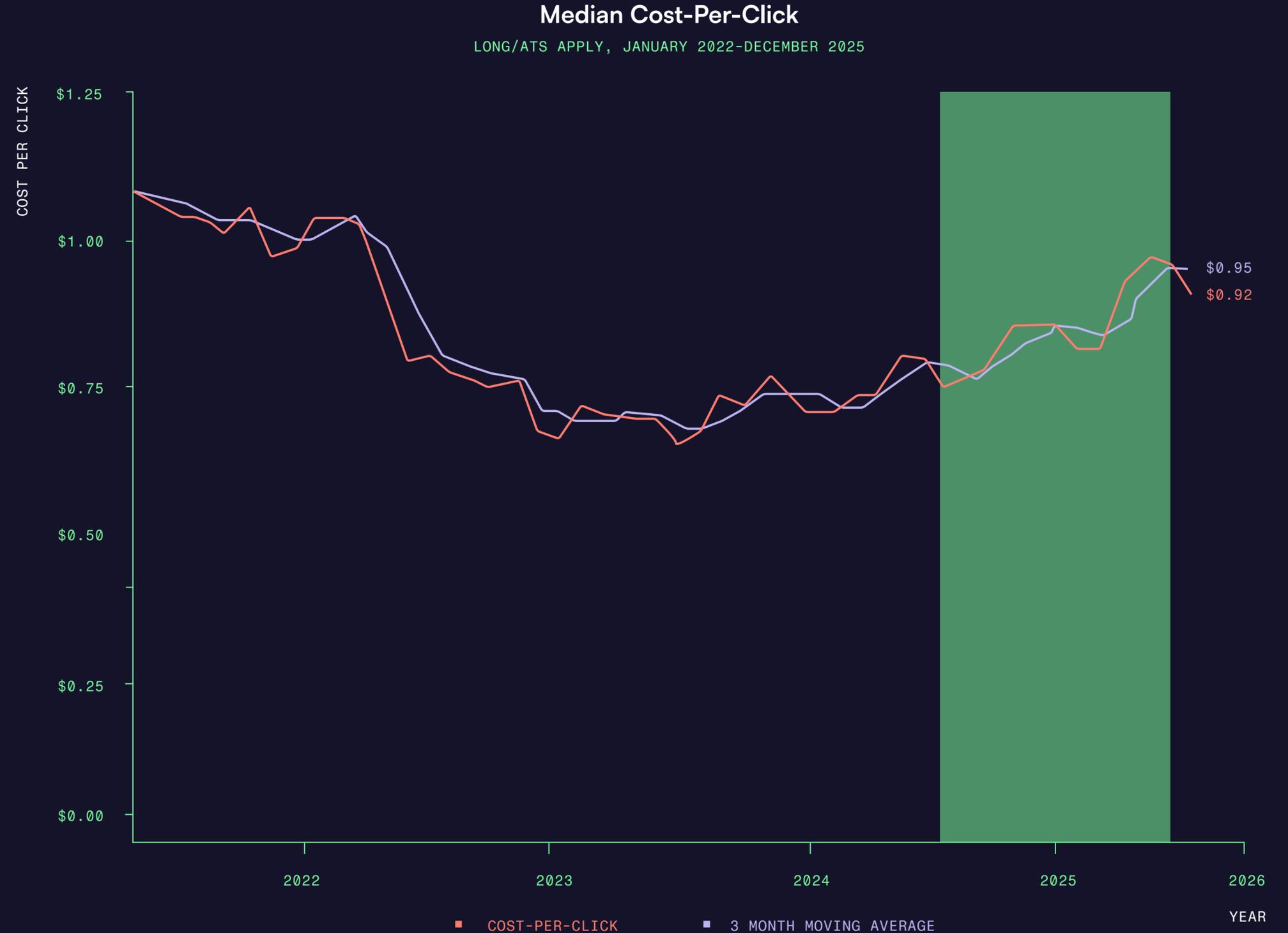
CONVERSION RATES

# Despite labor market softening, cost-per-click climbed steadily in 2025

For most of 2023 and into early 2024, it looked as though the cost of recruiting had finally cooled off.

Cost-per-click (CPC) and cost-per-hire (CPH) both eased from the highs of the post-pandemic years, when competitors were hiring aggressively and employers were paying a premium to win scarce talent. Normally, when application volumes climb and there's less competition in the marketplace, recruiting costs should ease. And for a moment, they did.

But CPCs have been rising steadily through 2025. This bucks everything we'd expect from labor economics, for reasons we'll explore over the next pages. The bottom line? Recruiting isn't getting any cheaper, even as the labor market stays soft.



# Following years of decline, cost-per-application also trended upward

If the labor market were the only force at work, a softer demand environment and more people looking for work should push recruitment media costs down, not up. The fact that CPCs and CPAs are increasing anyway tells us something else is going on.

A large part of the answer lies in how job boards and media platforms have shifted their business models. As the market moves steadily toward paid distribution, employers face rising costs simply to maintain visibility in front of candidates. The trend is pushing organizations to think more strategically about where budget has the biggest impact, typically on high-priority or hard-to-fill roles.

This doesn't negate genuine tight spots — healthcare and specialized roles still command premium pricing. But overall, CPA is now at least as much about how job boards price and sell media as it is about job-seeker competition.

**Median Cost-Per-Application**  
LONG/ATS APPLY, JANUARY 2022-DECEMBER 2025



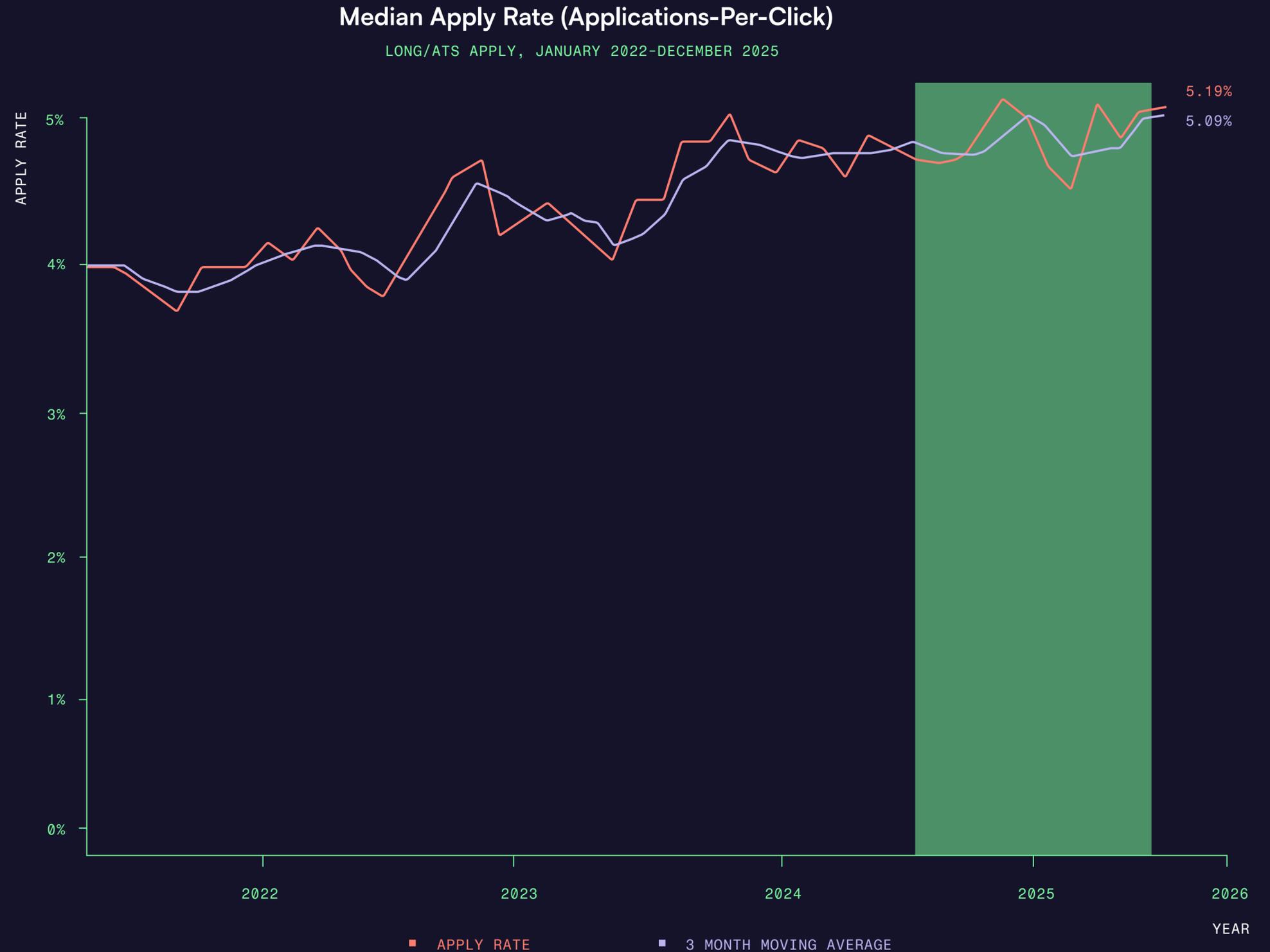
# Apply rates reflect both the job seeker reality and the impact of smarter activation

Apply rates climbed in 2025, ending the year at 5.19%. That reflects a market where more job seekers are applying at higher volumes as they chase a smaller pool of roles.

That’s the job seeker reality, but the numbers may tell a more positive story than the macro-economics suggest.

If we dig a bit deeper, a rise in apply rates can be read as evidence that recruitment marketing is getting more efficient at finding the right candidates. An effective media mix, paired with smarter ad placement and streamlined apply flows, means candidates are more likely to be a good fit when they see a role, and more likely to complete the application. Tools like [Appcast Brand Ads](#) and [Appcast Search Ads](#) are built to do exactly this while giving control over where the budget goes.

For employers, apply rate is one of the most powerful conversion metrics for understanding how job ads are performing. Even a small lift can meaningfully improve budget efficiency and the volume of qualified applicants.



# Hiring got more expensive in 2025

## Median Cost-Per-Hire

LONG/ATS APPLY, JANUARY 2022-DECEMBER 2025



Cost-per-hire shows a clear seasonal pattern, with a spike around October and a drop again in December as seasonal hiring winds down. This kind of seasonal swing is normal, but it still matters for seasonal employers because it can have a real impact on hiring budgets.

Even allowing for that seasonality, and a few ups and downs through the year, the bigger story is that it was more expensive to make a hire in 2025. It's worth noting that our employer base, and thus our visibility, expanded significantly in 2024, so the rise in CPH captures both genuine market movement and the effect of a more comprehensive dataset.

In any event, the takeaway is the same: Employers can't assume that a softer labor market will deliver cheaper hiring. Rising costs are a reminder to keep working on better conversion, even when recruitment feels easier.

**Note:** We only report up to October in CPH, as hires are still coming in from job requisitions posted in November and December, and the data is subject to change.

# Occupational Group Insights

This section explores recruitment marketing data by occupational group, by which we mean a collection of similar occupations, not necessarily the employer's industry.

# The white-collar recession did not ease recruitment costs

Regardless of what the labor market is doing, performance can look very different from one employer to the next. Employer brand has a major impact on click-through rates, which then drive cost-per-click and overall recruiting efficiency. In other words, two companies advertising the same job can see very different outcomes simply because of differences in brand strength.

In this year's data, healthcare, as ever, stands apart as the most expensive occupational group to hire for. What's interesting is that our "sitting down" occupational groups (tech, consulting, finance, etc.) haven't seen the cost relief

you'd normally expect when competition for labor eases. This is more proof that labor market softening doesn't automatically translate to cheaper recruiting costs — it depends entirely on the sector.

## Median Cost-Per-Click by Occupational Group

LONG/ATS APPLY, 2025



# Applicants are flooding “sitting down” roles

If last year’s data showed the start of a white-collar recession, this year’s apply rates confirm it.

Technology, the sector most hit by layoffs, tops the list with the highest apply rate in 2025 at 7.14%, an almost 14% increase on last year. But apply rates for almost all “sitting down” groups have climbed as nervous white-collar job seekers apply far and wide to find a position.

Meanwhile, apply rates are down in healthcare, hospitality, and the skilled trades. Healthcare hiring is robust and the labor market for those roles is ultra-tight, explaining the drop in apply rates. For hospitality and skilled trades, shifting [immigration policies](#) have led to labor shortages, leaving many teams understaffed even as overall hiring cools.

## Median Apply Rates by Occupational Group

LONG/ATS APPLY, 2024 - 2025

OCCUPATIONAL GROUP	2024	2025	% DIFFERENCE
LEGAL	4.30%	5.06%	17.86%
FINANCE	5.40%	6.15%	13.98%
TECHNOLOGY	6.27%	7.14%	13.82%
CONSULTING	5.72%	6.49%	13.50%
BUSINESS & CONSUMER SERVICES	6.29%	7.02%	11.61%
MANUFACTURING	5.20%	5.76%	10.88%
HUMAN RESOURCES & STAFFING	6.36%	6.91%	8.71%
ADMINISTRATION	5.78%	6.27%	8.44%
WAREHOUSING & LOGISTICS	5.19%	5.50%	5.94%
CONSTRUCTION & SKILLED TRADES	4.39%	4.56%	5.67%
FOOD SERVICE	5.91%	6.23%	5.39%
CUSTOMER SERVICE	5.88%	6.12%	4.02%
SALES	5.05%	5.22%	3.42%
SECURITY	5.39%	5.52%	2.54%
SCIENCE & ENGINEERING	4.60%	4.70%	2.22%
MARKETING & ADVERTISING	6.18%	6.24%	0.95%
RETAIL	5.30%	5.26%	-0.67%
TRANSPORTATION	5.52%	5.43%	-1.47%
MANAGEMENT	5.48%	5.39%	-1.68%
INSURANCE	5.05%	4.94%	-2.12%
REAL ESTATE	6.10%	5.97%	-2.21%
EDUCATION	4.07%	3.94%	-3.18%
HEALTHCARE	3.41%	3.22%	-5.67%
HOSPITALITY	5.23%	4.85%	-7.31%

# Volume is masking hiring complexity

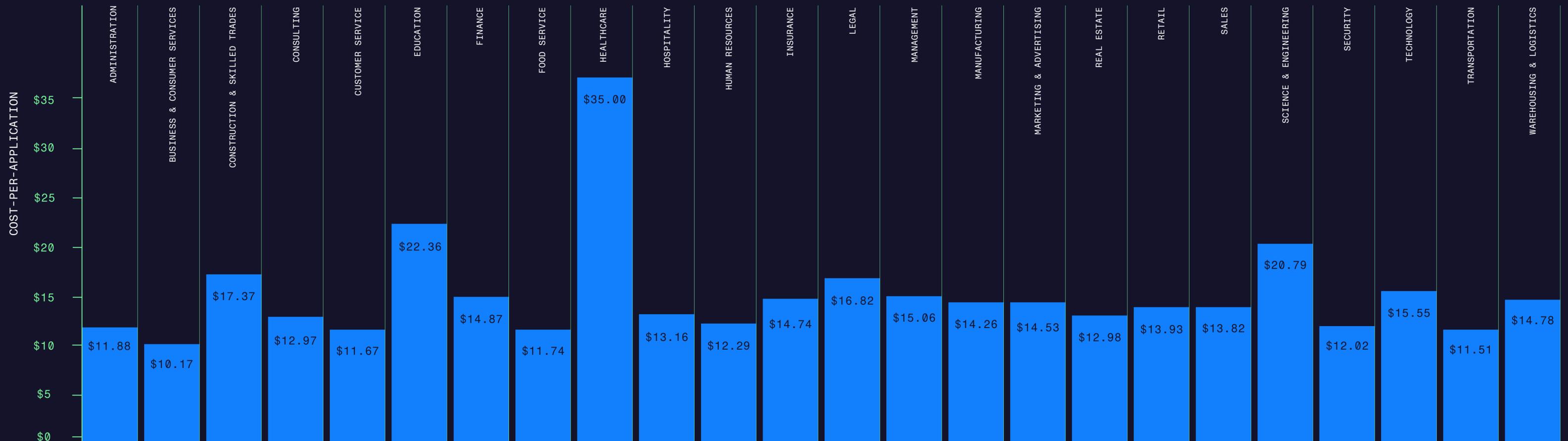
The same trend follows into cost-per-applications — the occupational groups with the lowest apply rates have some of the highest CPAs, and vice versa. This pattern is clearest in healthcare and education. These occupations sit toward the bottom of our apply-rate ranking yet show the highest CPAs and cost-per-hire, illustrating how expensive it is to secure qualified candidates when relatively few people are applying.

But volume alone doesn't guarantee cheaper hiring. Tech has high apply rates and a relatively ordinary CPA, yet cost-per-hire more than doubled from \$1,364 in 2024 to \$2,795\* in 2025. This is the downside of quantity. The influx of applications often hinders efficiency as recruiters have to sift through significantly more applicants to find quality candidates, and all that extra screening effort drives cost higher even with reasonable CPAs at the top of the funnel.

\*CPH figures (see page 26) reflect an expanded enterprise account set in 2025; when the analysis is run on the same group of accounts as 2024, the 2025 cost-per-hire for technology is slightly lower at \$2,782 but shows the same sharp upward trend.

## Median Cost-Per-Application by Occupational Group

LONG/ATS APPLY, 2025



# More specialized roles have steeper screening costs

Many hiring strategies optimize for volume at the top of the funnel, but that doesn't necessarily translate to better outcomes downstream. When you understand what it costs to get candidates to the screening stage, you can make smarter decisions about which channels really support efficiency all the way through the funnel.

Looking at our first set of disposition data, we see that science and engineering, healthcare, tech, and finance carry the highest median cost-per-screen. The common thread is that these sectors rank among our more

specialized roles. It's here that we start to see cost-per-screen for technology and science & engineering diverge from the fold when comparing to CPA. They're either getting too many unqualified applicants relative to other industries, or getting so many candidates that recruiters aren't able to screen them. Employers may have to spend more to reach candidates with the right credentials in specialized sectors, regardless of whether they're fishing in a crowded pond (tech/finance) or a scarce one (healthcare).

Median Cost-Per-Screen by Occupational Group

LONG/ATS APPLY, JANUARY-OCTOBER 2025



# Cost-per-interview varies sharply by occupation

Cost-per-interview shows you which sources consistently produce interview-ready candidates. The median cost-per-interview across all occupations is \$275, but as you can see, some roles sit well above or below that line. If your cost-per-interview is much higher than the median for similar occupations, it's worth reviewing which sources are generating high volume but low-quality candidates, and reallocate from there.

### Median Cost-Per-Interview by Occupational Group

LONG/ATS APPLY, JANUARY-OCTOBER 2025



# Offer costs don't always follow apply rates

Cost-per-offer (CPO) shows what it costs to generate a candidate deemed suitable to receive an employment offer. It's one of the most useful metrics for seeing which sources genuinely work for you, because it measures your efficiency in reaching candidates who are viable all the way through the funnel.

CPO is most useful when used alongside other metrics like CPA and CPH. A low CPO but high CPH might signal problems with offer-acceptance rates, suggesting issues with compensation packages or market competitiveness, for example. And some roles with high CPAs actually look more favourable when you look at cost-per-offer because so many applicants are genuinely good fits. These insights can help you shift budget away from under-performing channels and toward those that generate the outcomes that matter: placements.

## Median Cost-Per-Offer by Occupational Group

LONG/ATS APPLY, JANUARY-OCTOBER 2025



# Cost-per-hire shows the double-edged sword of quantity

Breaking down cost-per-hire by occupational group, we see that technology and healthcare have the highest CPH. But the forces driving those costs tell very different stories.

In tech, rising apply volumes haven't translated into cheaper hiring. Employers are receiving a flood of applicants, yet hiring remains expensive because finding the right fit in that volume takes significant effort and cost. Healthcare faces the inverse problem. The supply of qualified nurses, care staff, and clinical roles simply hasn't caught up with demand, which we see in the low apply rate. Employers are paying more for each click, more for each application, then converting a tiny candidate pool into actual hires. The CPH reflects that scarcity.

Median Cost-Per-Hire by Occupational Group

LONG/ATS APPLY, JANUARY-OCTOBER 2025



# The white-collar recession, told in mobile applies

We said earlier that the white-collar recession has left fingerprints all over the data, and the shift toward desktop applications this year is where it's most visible. Across all occupations, there was a 5% drop in the number of applications made on a mobile device, and a 10% drop in mobile clicks, while desktop's share of both grew.

The pattern makes sense when you think about who uses what device. White-collar workers are more likely to use desktop computers for their job search, whereas "standing-up" workers tend toward mobile work-flows.

So when desktops share climbs while mobile's falls, it signals that white-collar job seekers are applying at higher rates than they were last year.

That said, mobile can drive anywhere from nearly 28% to over 85% of applications depending on the occupational group. As we remind readers every year, it's best to optimize for mobile. Make the apply process simpler by leaving the long questions for interview, and avoid asking for documents, or more specifically, resumes, that job seekers won't have on their phones.

## Share of Mobile Applies by Occupational Group

LONG/ATS APPLY, 2025



# Apply time has found its range

Across nearly all occupation groups, the time it takes candidates to complete an application clusters around 6–8 minutes. Gig work is unsurprisingly quicker since there’s rarely an actual application to fill out. Only security stands out as notably longer, likely due to additional screening requirements.

### Median Apply Time by Occupational Group

LONG/ATS APPLY, 2025



# Geographic Insights

Location strongly influences recruitment marketing performance. Costs and apply rates move in familiar patterns across the map, but there are some important shifts this year — both within the U.S. and across new international benchmarks.

# Apply volumes follow population dynamics

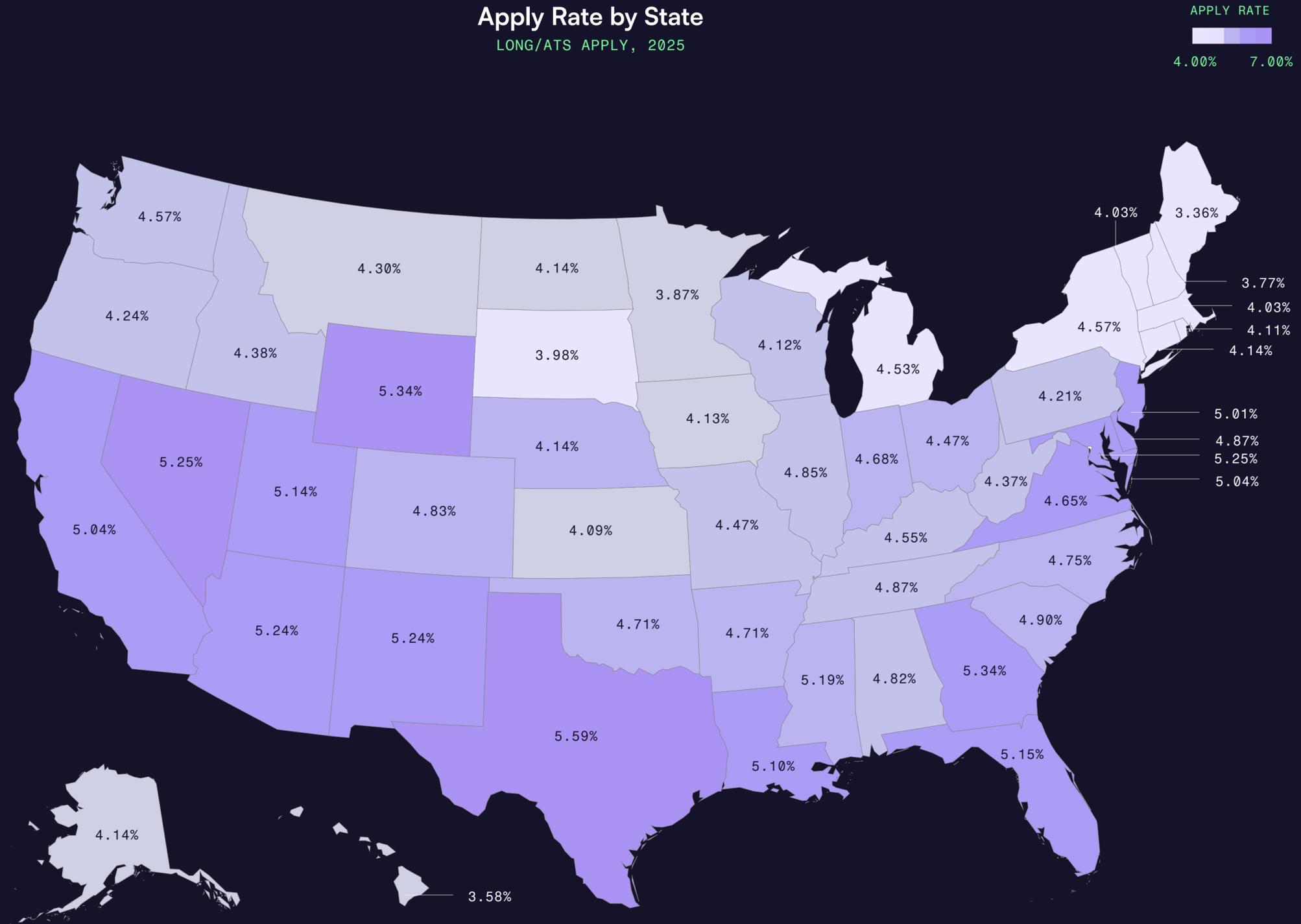
Depending on where in the U.S. you're recruiting, you'll encounter vastly different labor market conditions. Some states, and even different metro areas within a state, have plenty of people looking for work. Others have relatively few. This fundamentally changes your recruiting equation.

Dig deeper, and you see that younger states (those where the median age is lower than the national average) and states with greater in-migration (population growth driven by people moving into the state from other states or from abroad) tend to have higher apply rates — and many of these are the same fast-growing markets. We see this particularly in the Sun Belt, where younger workers are more likely to be engaged in the labor market and population growth naturally pulls in more people who are actively searching for a job. In contrast, states with older populations, mostly in the

north or in rural areas, show lower apply rates. People there are more established in their careers and less likely to be job hunting.

Take Vermont versus California. Vermont is a rural and older state, with an ultra low unemployment of 2.6%. Whereas California is a more urban and younger state, with an unemployment rate of 5.5%. No surprise that Vermont's apply rate is just 3.4%, and California's is 5.0%. More available workers means more applications, which spills into CPAs.

There are exceptions, of course. Wyoming has low unemployment (3.4%) but still manages strong apply rates (5.34%), which suggests that other local factors are at play. But most of the time, population dynamics in a specific market gives a pretty good sense of what to expect there.

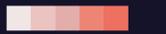


# Older and rural states have the highest CPAs

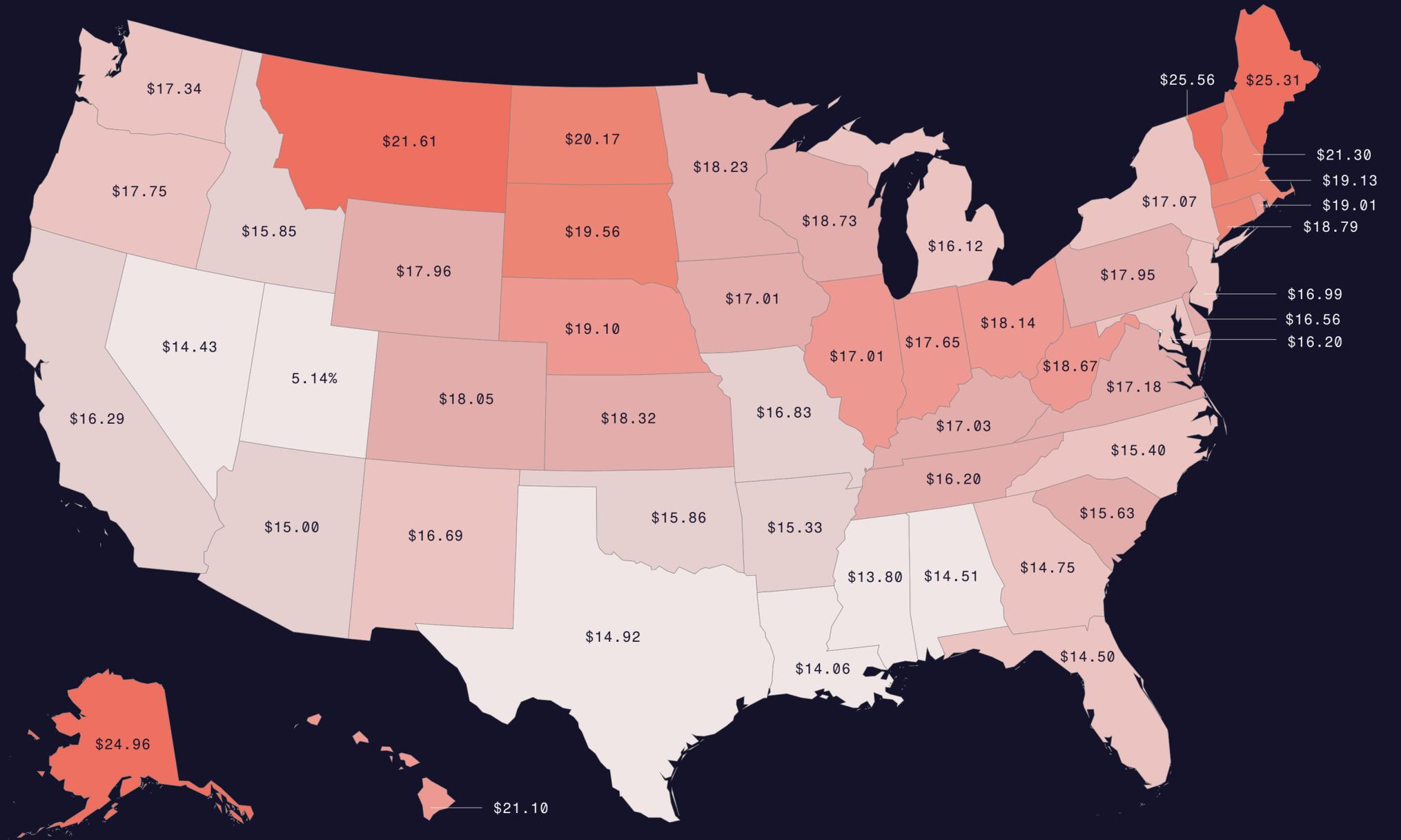
## Cost-per-Application by State

LONG/ATS APPLY, 2025

COST-PER-APPLICATION



\$9.00 \$25.56



High CPAs correspond to either low apply rates, labor supply, competition, job type, or more likely a combination of these factors. But as a rule of thumb, where there are low apply rates, there are high CPAs, and vice versa.

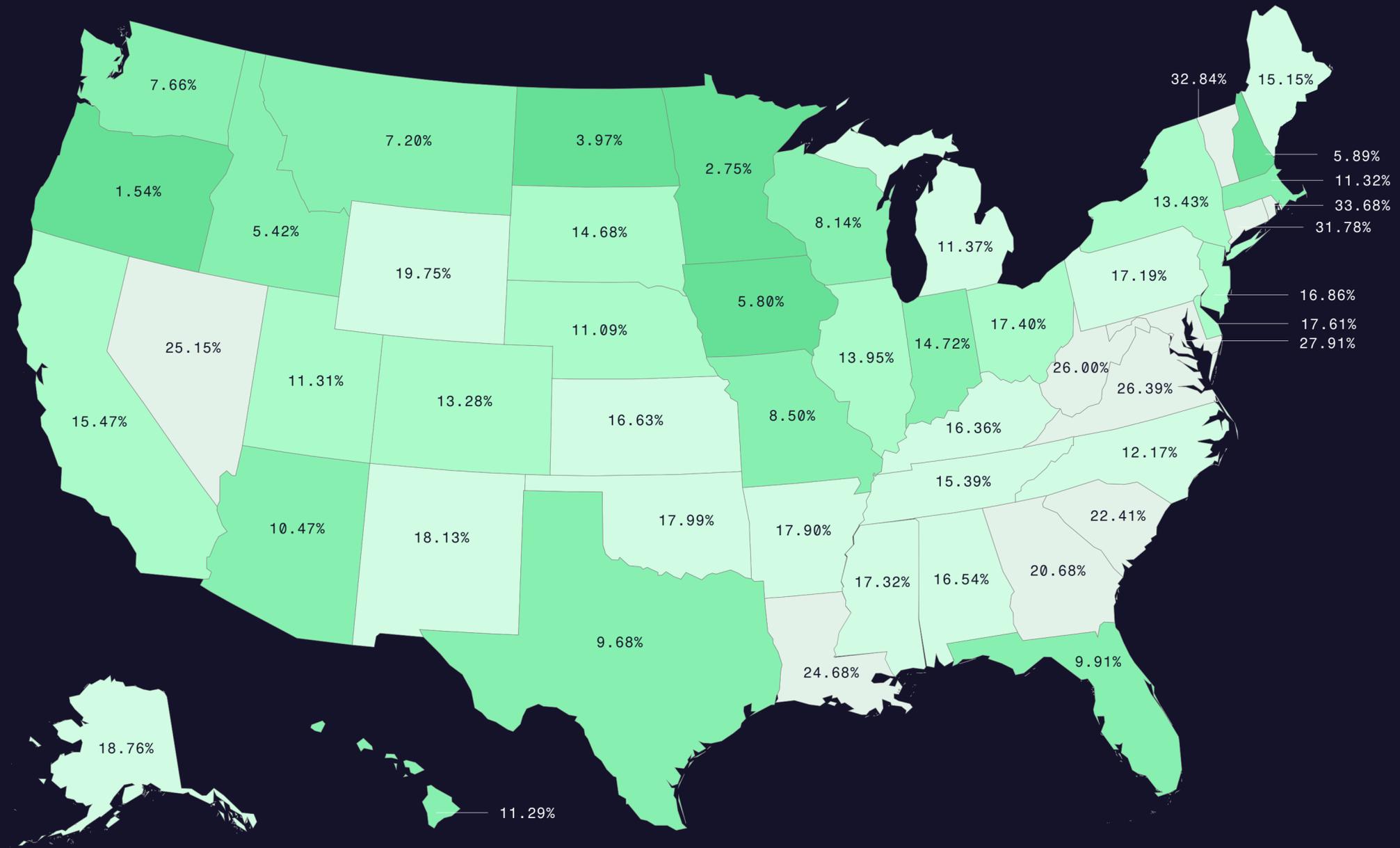
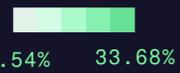
Looking here at the CPA by state, you'll see the data tells the same demographic story. The fast-growing Sun Belt states have more hungry job seekers looking for work, and they post some of the lowest CPAs. The older states, especially in New England and parts of the Midwest, post some of the highest CPAs. Low apply rates in these older markets push up costs, reinforcing the rule that geography can make the same role meaningfully more expensive to fill depending on where it is advertised.

# The Southeast is moving up the cost ladder

## Percent Difference in Cost-per-Application by State

LONG/ATS APPLY, 2025

PERCENT DIFFERENCE



**While hiring is getting more expensive across the country, the Southeast’s shift is particularly striking.**

Historically, Sun Belt states were among the cheapest places to hire, but the region is getting noticeably more expensive compared to 2024. CPA has risen across the Carolinas, Georgia, and neighboring states, narrowing the gap with traditionally high-cost areas.

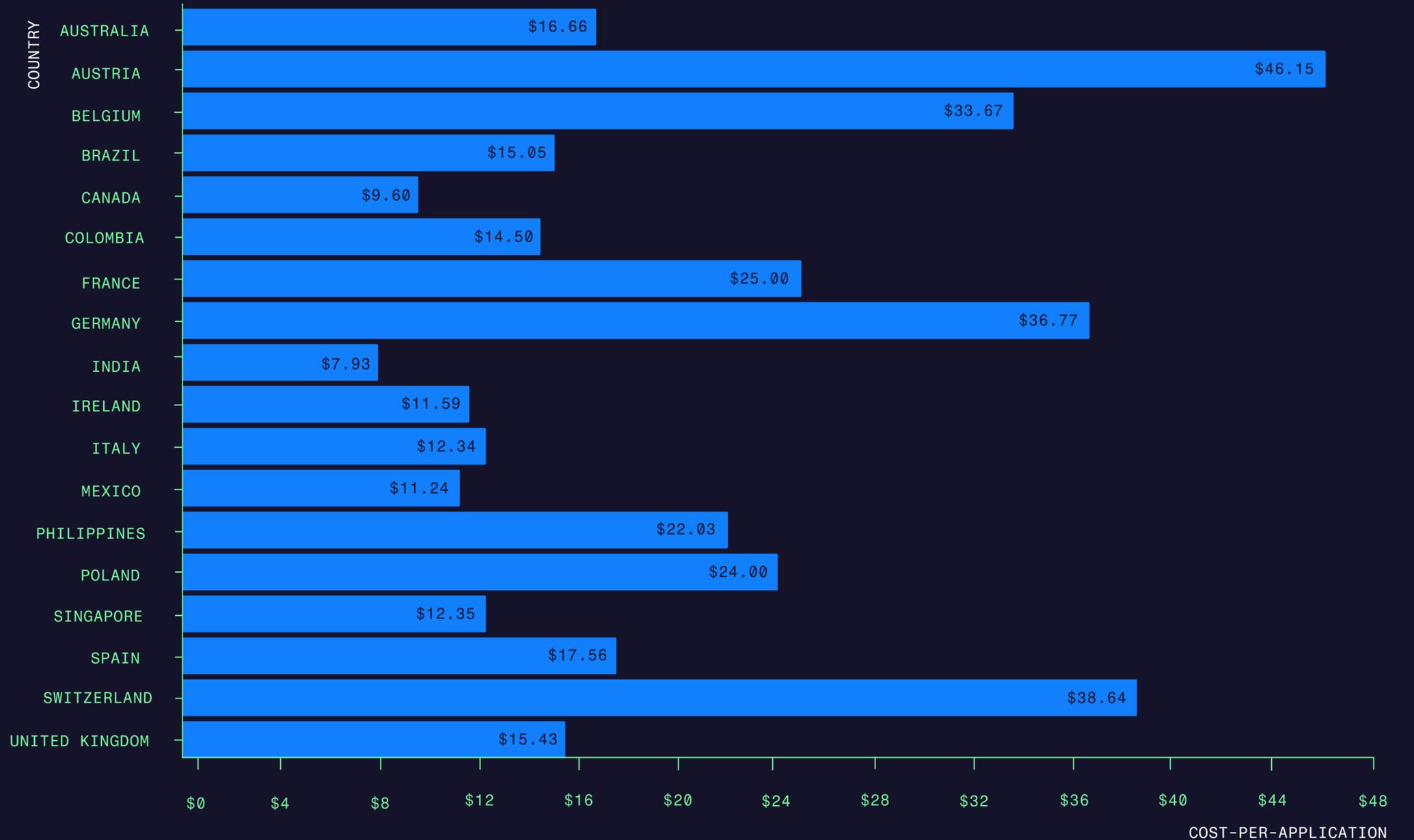
Why is this happening? The reason is mainly one of population dynamics again. Population growth in North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and nearby states has been among the strongest in the country. That influx of people has brought business and new investment, including data center expansion in Virginia and Texas, which has created more job openings across the broader region.

The result is a region that still looks relatively affordable compared to the nation overall, but it’s no longer the “bargain” it once was.

# Outside the U.S, a different picture emerges

Cost-Per-Application by Country

2025



For the first time, we've included international country-level benchmarks, with data converted into U.S. Dollars for easier comparison. As you can see, there's a tenfold difference across markets.

What's interesting is that while U.S. hiring costs keep climbing, many European markets are heading the other direction. CPAs in several European countries have actually fallen year over year, which could be a result of relatively weaker labor markets. In the U.K., for example, the labor market continues to cool, creating ample candidate supply for most roles and easing CPAs for employers.

# Search & Social Benchmarks

A robust recruitment marketing plan will source from all over the web. The following insights deal with advertisements on search and social channels.

## A PRIMER ON SEARCH AND SOCIAL BENCHMARKS.

At Appcast, we continually emphasize the value of having a holistic and flexible recruitment marketing strategy — one that can ebb and flow with your hiring goals and priorities. Part of that is achieving the right media mix, which can vary for a given job or location.

Job boards still do the heavy lifting when it comes to generating direct applications. They remain the best way to reach active candidates ready to apply right now. But search and social bring exciting new audiences and broader value to the mix.

Goals differ for these channels. Search ads help you show up for high-intent candidates at the exact moment they're looking and are more tightly tied to generating immediate applications for high-priority roles. Social campaigns keep your brand in front of candidates who aren't ready to apply yet and are optimized for reach, engagement, and nurture. Used together, these channels support both short-term hiring needs and longer-term pipeline building.

This year, Appcast has deeper and more reliable data on these channels than ever before. In 2025, we launched Appcast Search Ads and Appcast Brand Ads, which allows recruiters to optimize their paid search and paid social channels.

### ■ appcast™ search ads

Appcast's industry-first programmatic search offering that helps reach high-intent job seekers for harder-to-fill roles.

↘ [Learn More](#)

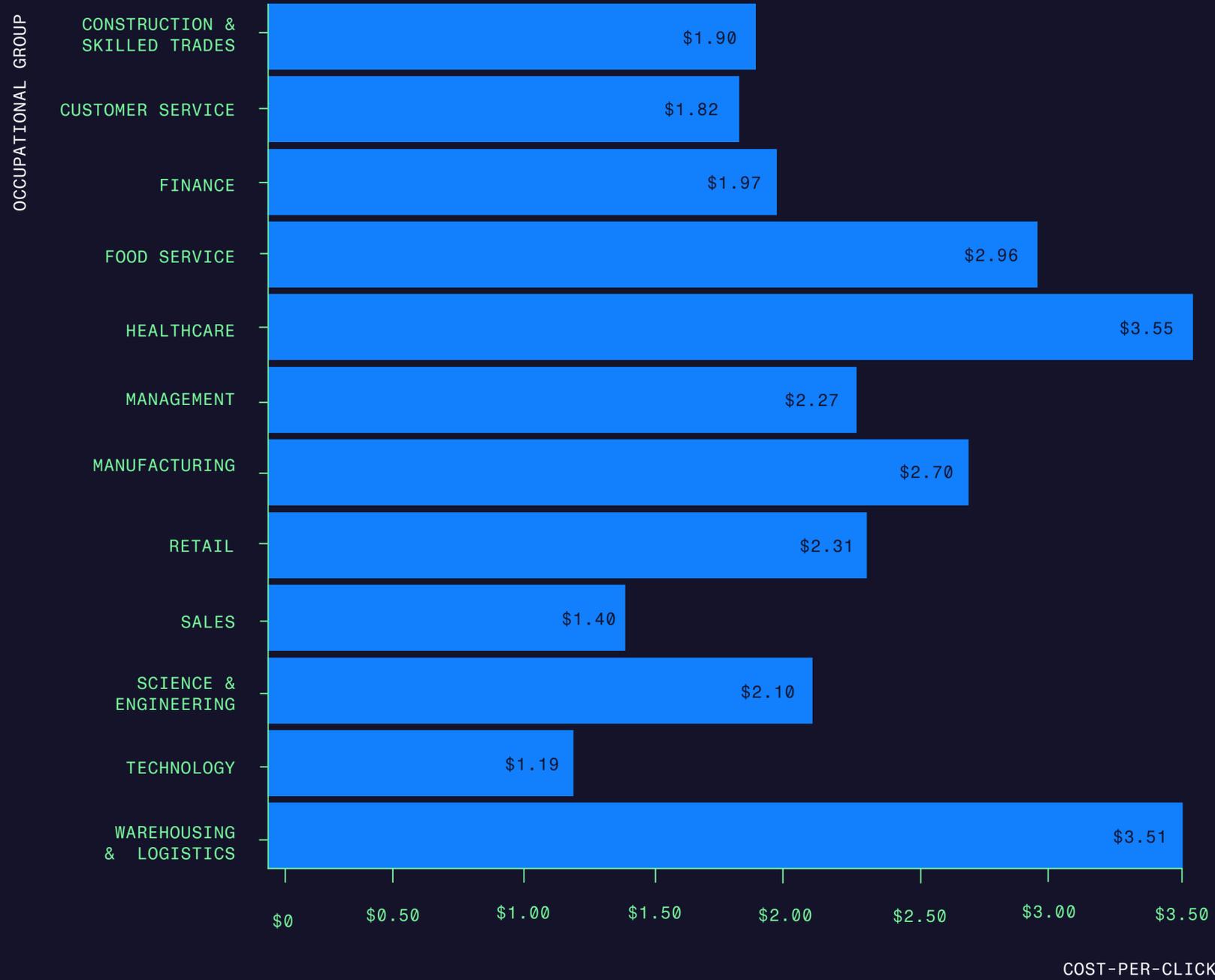
### ■ appcast™ brand ads

Appcast's programmatic social offering to engage and auto-nurture passive candidates.

↘ [Learn More](#)

### Median Cost-Per-Click by Occupational Group

SEARCH MEDIA, 2025



# “Standing up” jobs pay more for search visibility

**Search became more expensive in 2025. Cost-per-click is up on last year’s benchmarks across almost every occupational group.**

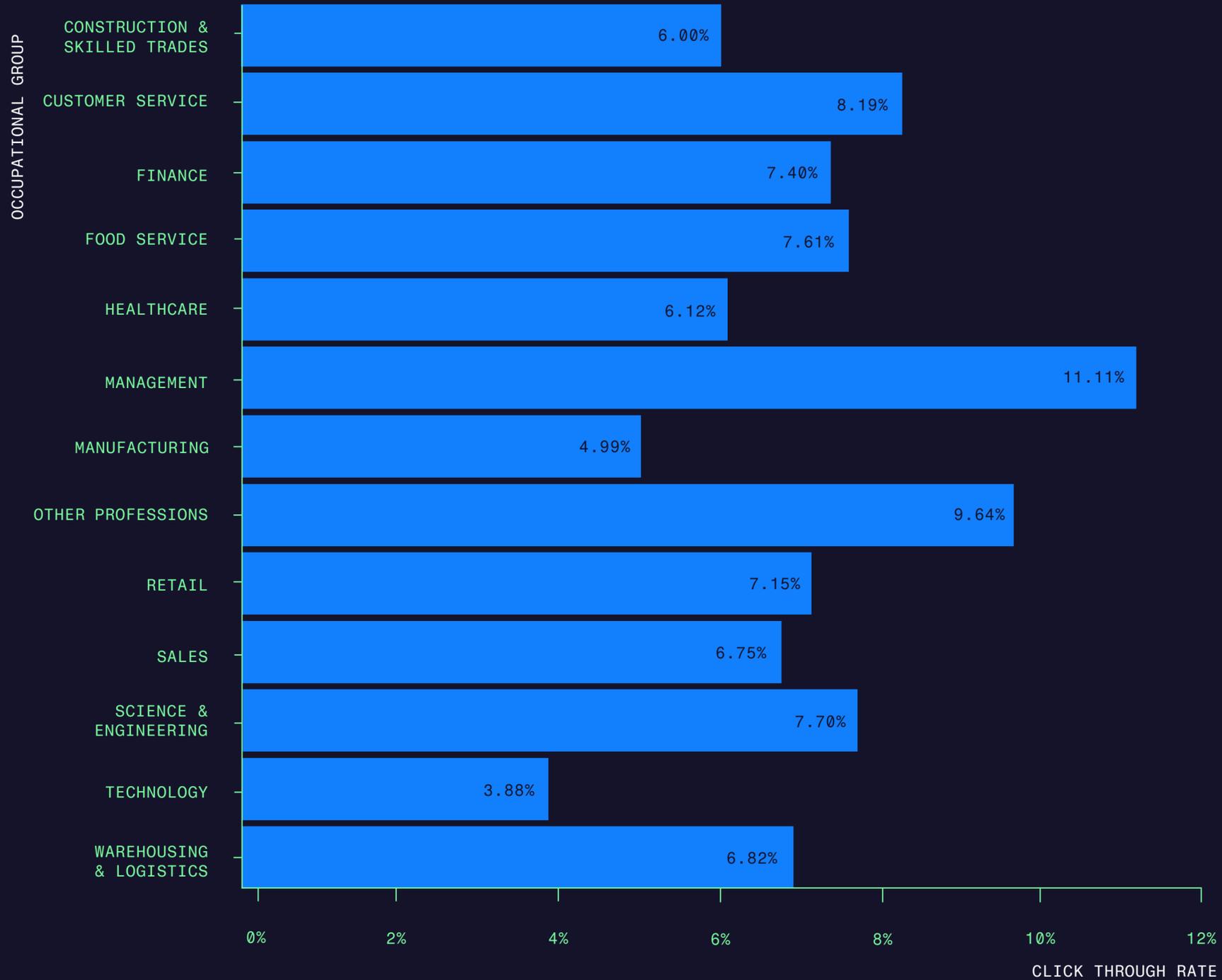
Healthcare, warehousing & logistics, and food service top the list, which makes sense in the context of tight candidate availability. These “standing up” sectors face constant, high-volume hiring needs and a lot of competition for interested, quality job seekers. Employers often need to move fast and bid more assertively to stay visible to

the relatively small pool of candidates who are actively searching in these fields.

Overall, these CPCs reflect labor market trends. If you’re bidding on search across multiple occupational groups, it helps to know where you may need to allocate more budget.

### Median Click Through Rate by Occupational Group

SEARCH MEDIA, 2025



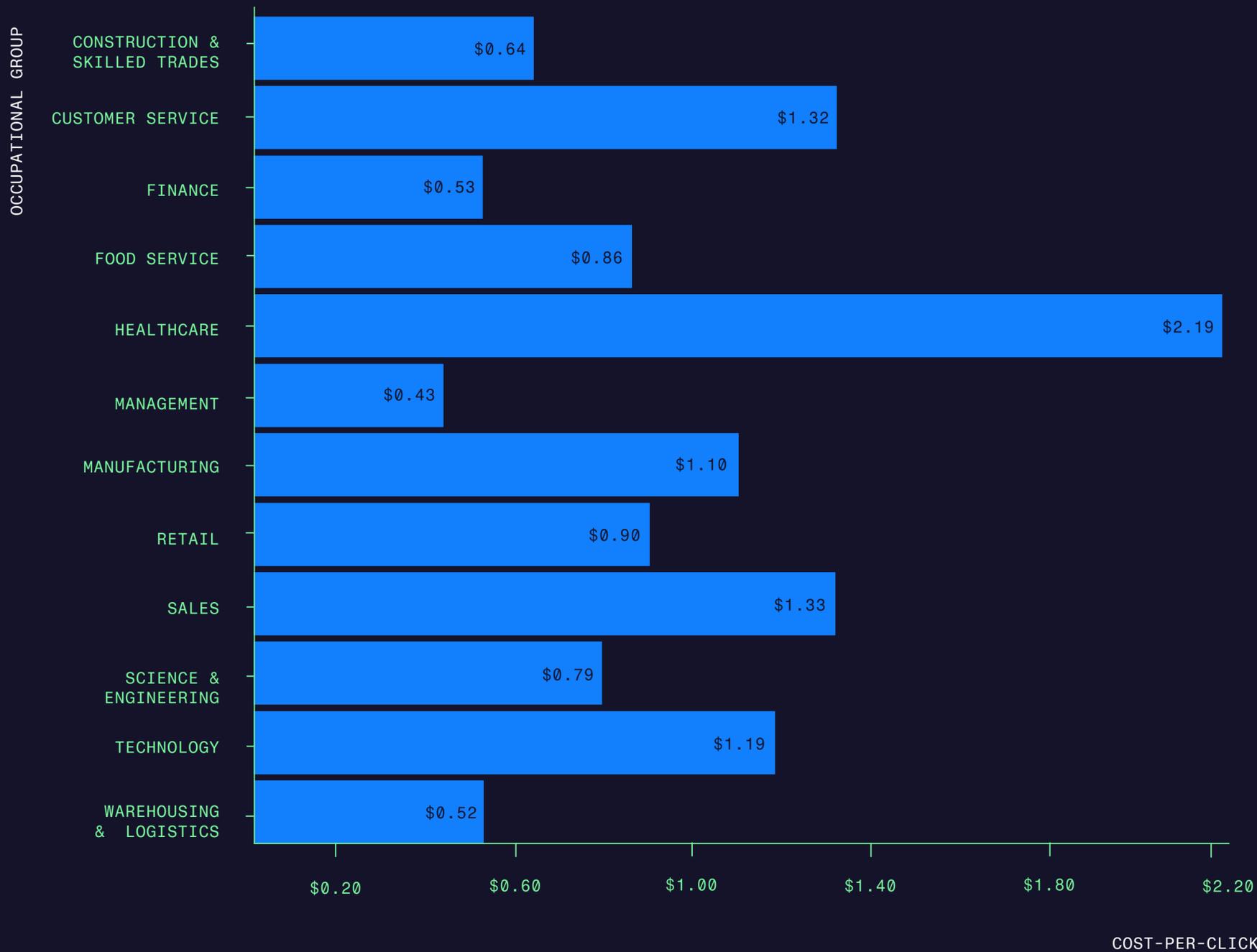
# Engagement is holding strong

Here's the good news: click-through rates for search remain solid across the board. A higher CTR in occupational groups indicates that the ads are highly relevant to the audience, prompting more clicks on your call-to-action, whether that's an application or a contact form.

What does this mean for hiring employers? It means your budget goes further when targeting is tight. Over 70% of job seekers start their search on search engines, and a high CTR indicates your ads are resonating with the right people. If you're below the occupational benchmark, it usually suggests your targeting and keywords are not closely aligned with what candidates in that occupational group are actually searching for.

### Median Cost-Per-Click by Occupational Group

SOCIAL MEDIA, 2025



# Social: Appcast performs well above industry averages

Social job advertising reaches people on the platforms they use every day. Its power is less about triggering an instant application and more about shaping how your brand shows up to passive job seekers over time, feeding a longer-term talent pipeline.

This year, social media CPCs remained steady and close to last year's levels. However, the data shows that Appcast significantly outperforms what the major platforms publish as industry benchmarks.

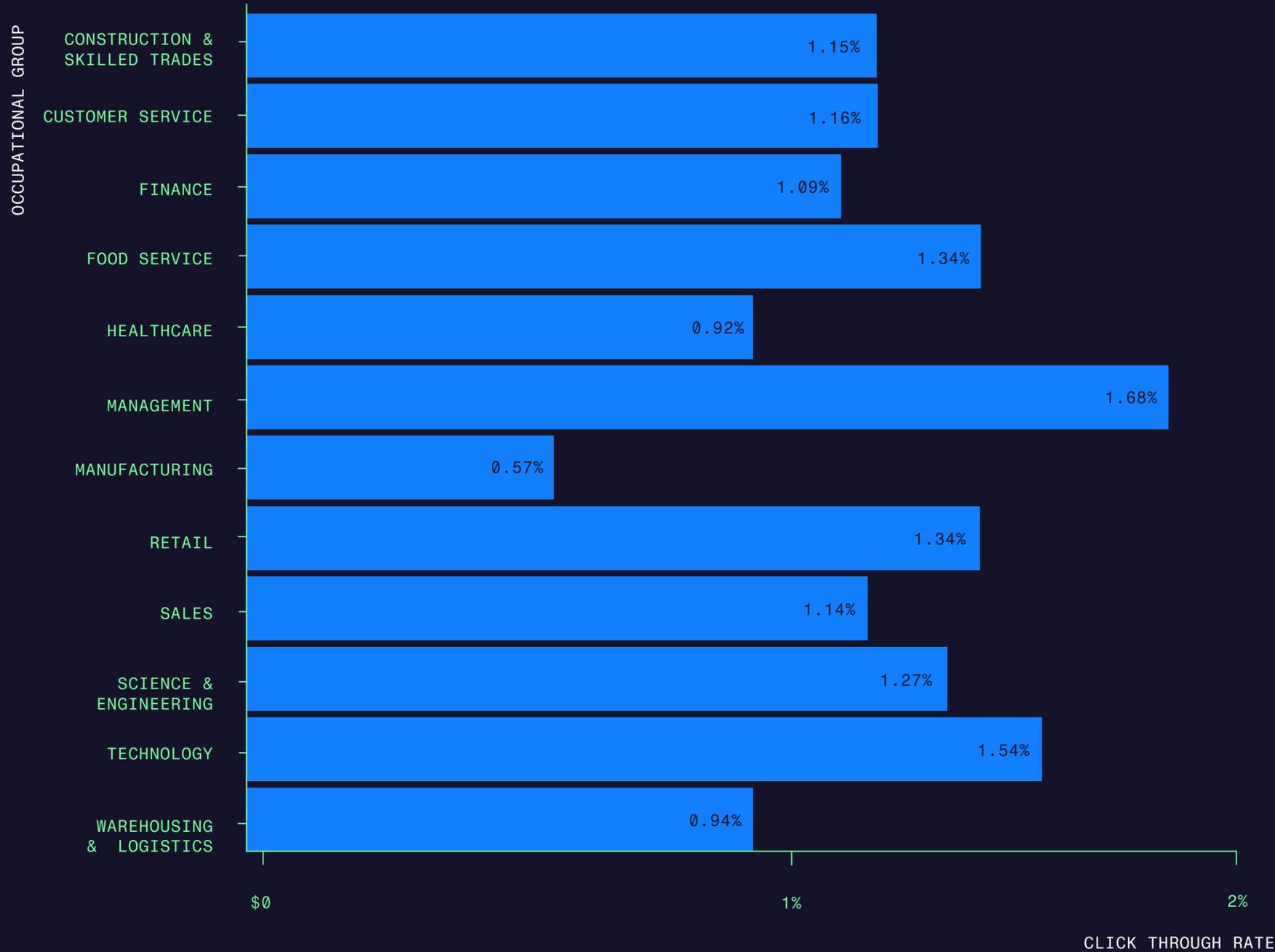
As you can see, Appcast social CPCs sit mostly in the \$0.40 - \$1.30 range, with management positions as the sole outlier. Because of smarter targeting, stronger creative, and optimized landing experiences, we're able to buy traffic on platforms like Meta and LinkedIn well below their published CPC benchmarks.

Instagram's \$0.40—\$1.00+ range is the closest comparison, but through more efficient buying, we're often able to achieve costs at or below the low end of these ranges.

One interesting sector is healthcare. Despite being one of the most expensive groups to hire in on job boards, healthcare roles show relatively low costs on social campaigns. This suggests that social is a particularly efficient way to reach and nurture healthcare candidates in a market where demand for talent remains high.

### Median Click Through Rate by Occupational Group

SOCIAL MEDIA, 2025



# The power of partnership in social job advertising

Social CTRs are naturally lower than search, which is typical given the more passive audience, so they must be understood in context. But when we look at engagement, Appcast’s click-through rates run well above typical platform benchmarks across occupational groups.

For comparison, Facebook/Instagram feeds average 0.3–1.0% CTRs, LinkedIn standard sits at 0.4–0.8%, and TikTok typically runs below 1%.

Simply put, the choice of partner matters. Achieving consistently higher CTRs than industry averages means your budget reaches more candidates per dollar spent on social campaigns.

# Job Ad Content

In the following pages, we highlight data to help you compile effective job ads.

# Short, focused titles lift apply rates

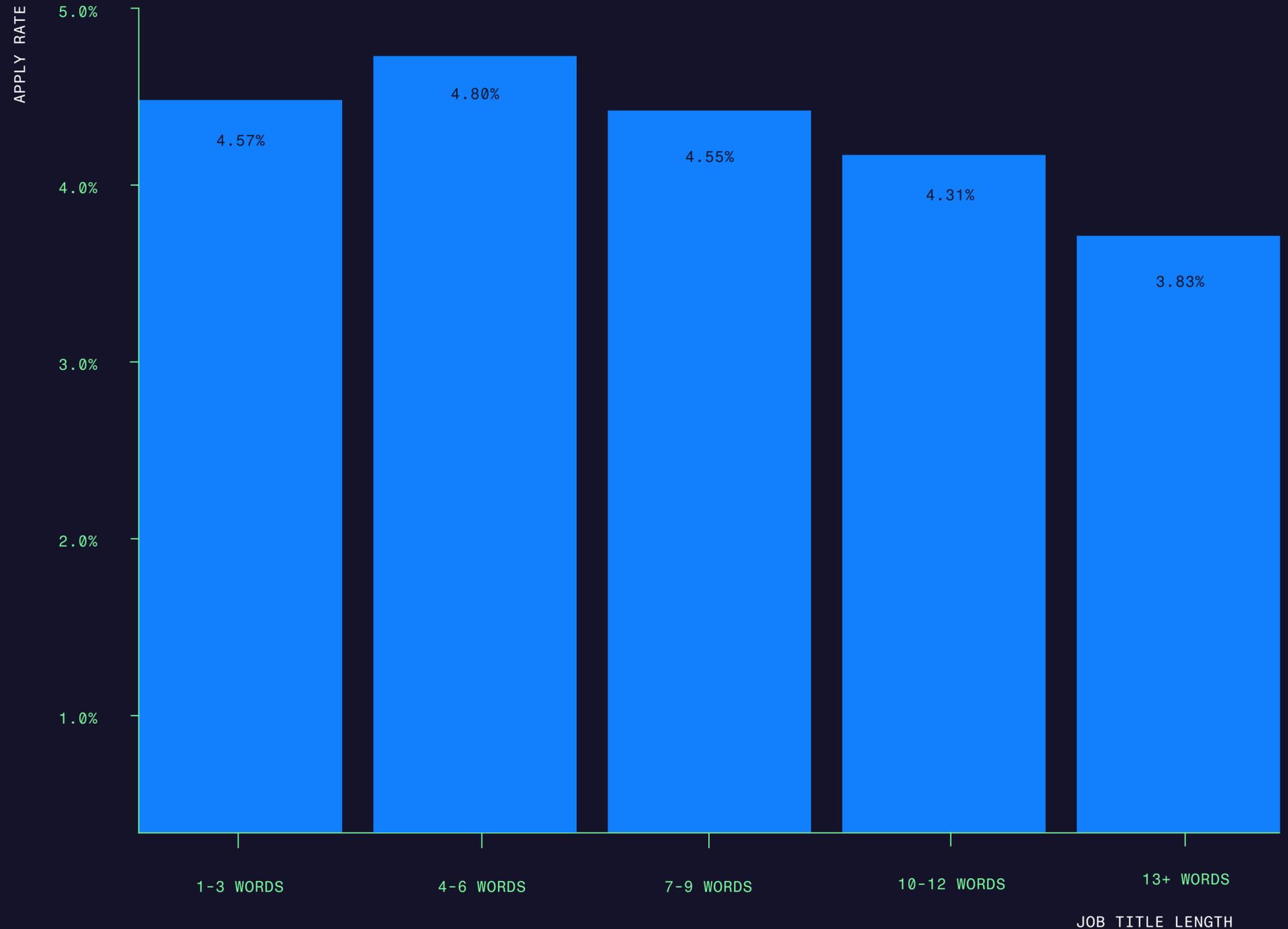
Of course, job seekers base their decision to apply on more than just the job title, but it can make a difference. Apply rates are strongest for titles in the 4–6 word range, though there is little meaningful difference until titles reach 10 words or more, at which point performance starts to fall.

Titles perform best when they reflect the words and key phrases that job seekers are typing into their search bars. When titles get too long, apply rates drop, likely because they dilute focus or misrepresent the role.

For employers with job titles in the 1–3 word range, there may be opportunities to experiment and see whether adding a bit more context improves relevance for candidates and, in turn, apply rates.

### Apply Rate by Job Title Length

LONG/ATS APPLY, 2025



# Symbols don't help much

Last year, apply rates dropped sharply once symbols appeared in the job title. This year, there is very little difference in performance between titles with and without symbols, although the specific symbol does matter, as shown in the charts above.

It is worth testing selectively here. Overusing certain symbols (especially ! or \$) can feel spammy to some job seekers, yet may still attract those who are particularly motivated by pay transparency or signing bonuses.

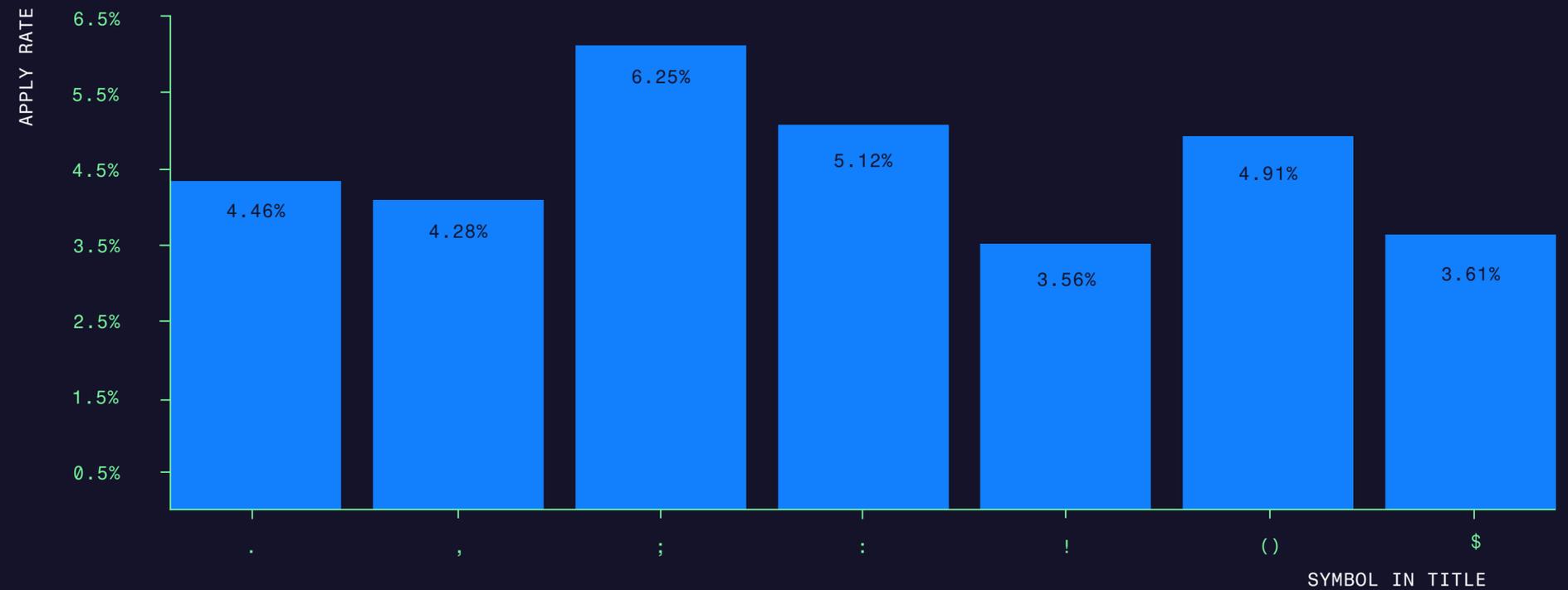
Apply Rate by Symbol Presence in Job Title

LONG/ATS APPLY, 2025



Apply Rate by Symbol (in Job Title)

LONG/ATS APPLY, 2025



# Salary transparency pays off, even in a softer market

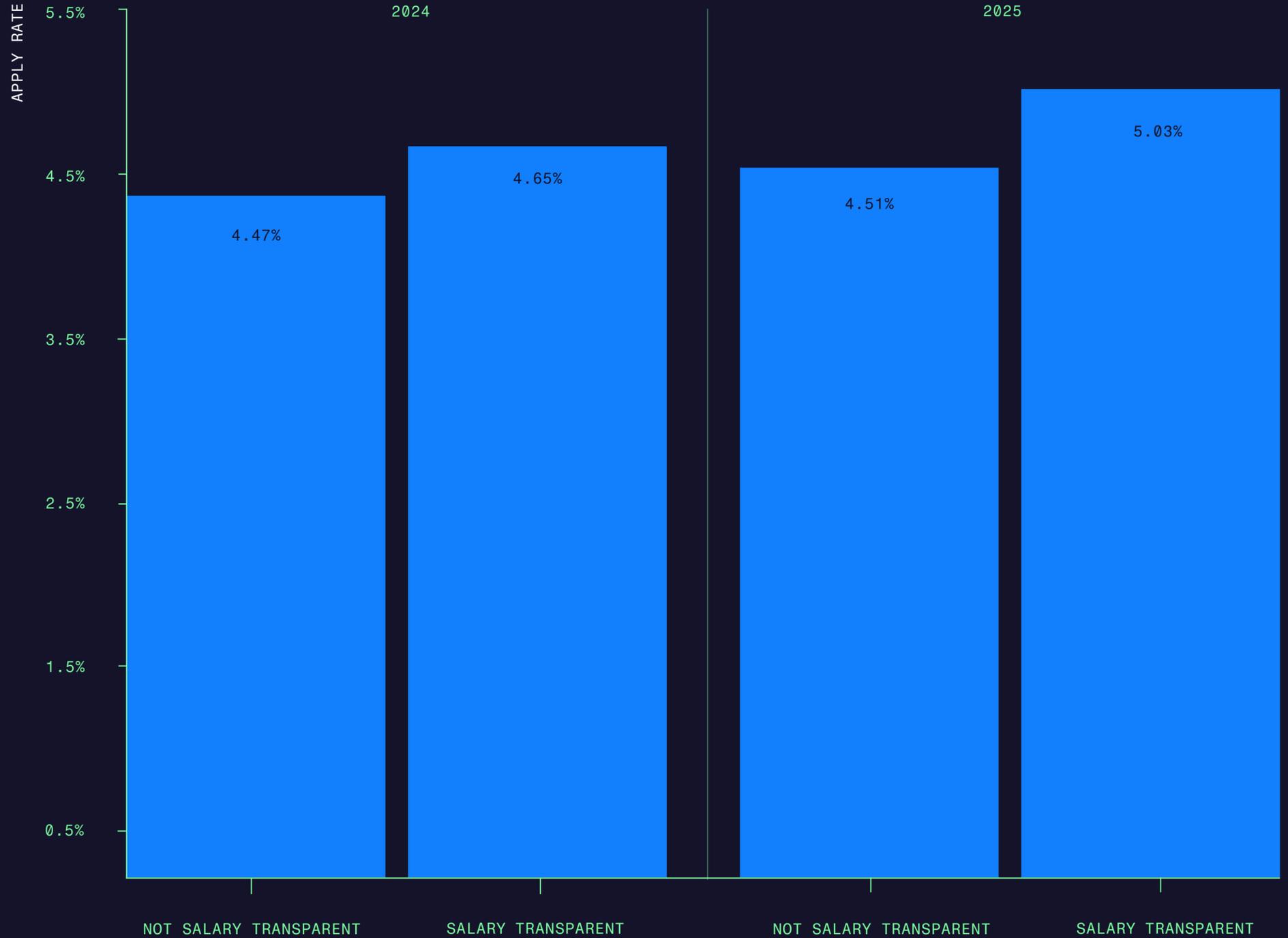
**Job postings that include salary disclosure receive more clicks and higher apply rates than those that do not.**

Month-over-month data shows that salary-transparent jobs recorded higher apply rates in every month but two over the past year, with cost-per-apply generally decreasing in line with the stronger apply rate. In fact, CPAs only rose above non-salary-transparent postings in two months during the same period.

For hiring employers, adding a pay range to a job ad is one of the simplest ways to improve media efficiency, even if some job seekers self-select out when they see the range. The traffic you pay for is more likely to convert, and the job seekers who apply are better aligned on compensation, reducing downstream friction and wasted screening time.

Apply Rate by Salary Transparency Status and Year

LONG/ATS APPLY, 2024-2025



# Remote has lost its shine as a hiring differentiator

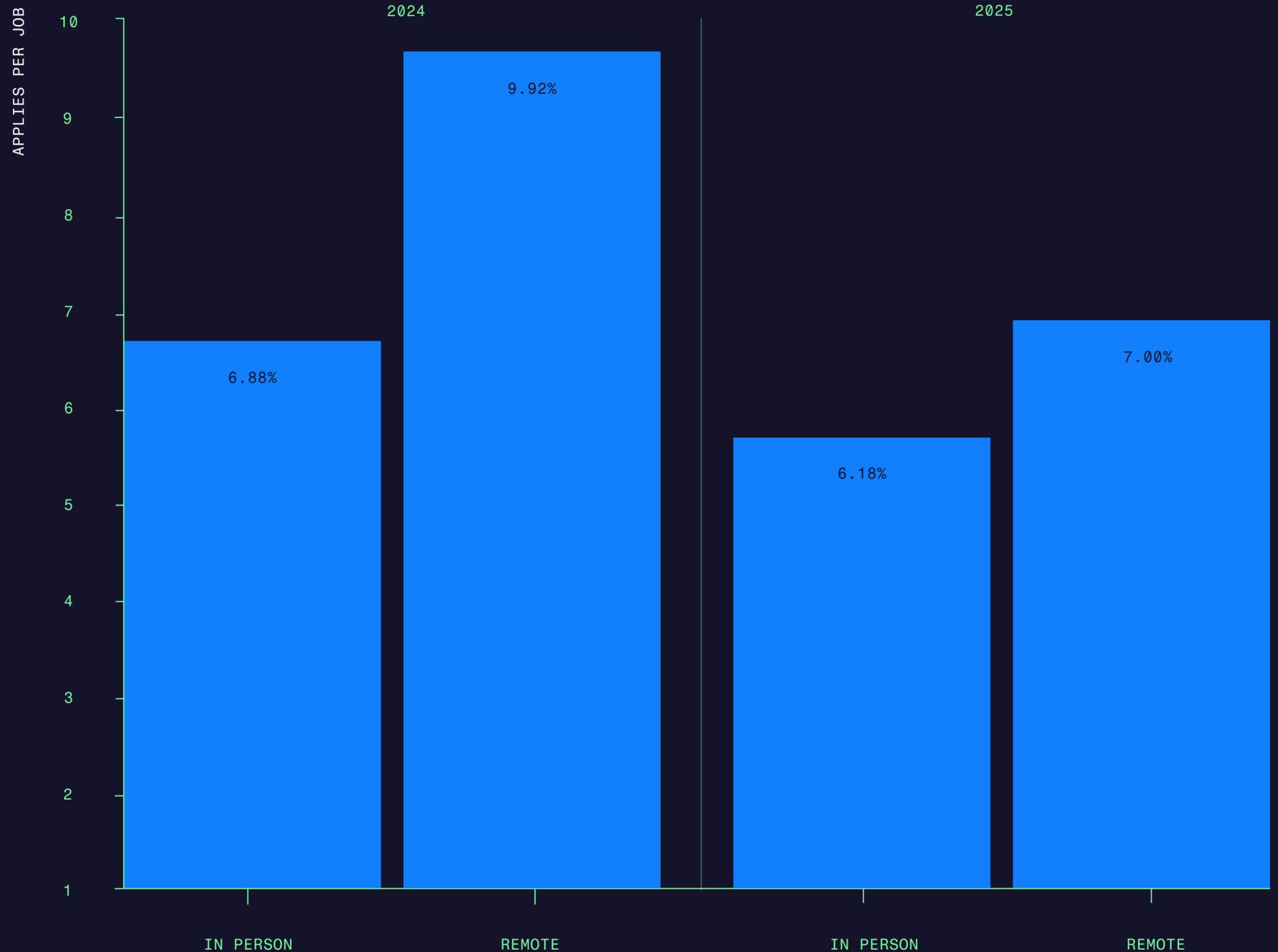
In previous years, tagging a role as “remote” or “hybrid” delivered a clear performance advantage. Both click-through and apply rates ran significantly higher than for in-person roles.

Now that advantage has narrowed. For one, remote roles are significantly rarer, with the share of requisitions carrying a remote tag dropping five-fold in our total job composition in 2025. And while remote jobs still get a slightly higher apply rate, they’re no longer guaranteed to flood the funnel.

Is this down to the broader slowdown in white-collar hiring, or the return-to-office policies employers have quietly pushed through? No one can say for certain. But in practical terms, remote is no longer a universal differentiator; it is a scarcer option, and its impact on apply volume is more muted than it once was.

Applies per Job by Remote Status

LONG/ATS APPLY, 2024-2025



# As usual, apply rate decreases the longer it takes to apply to a job

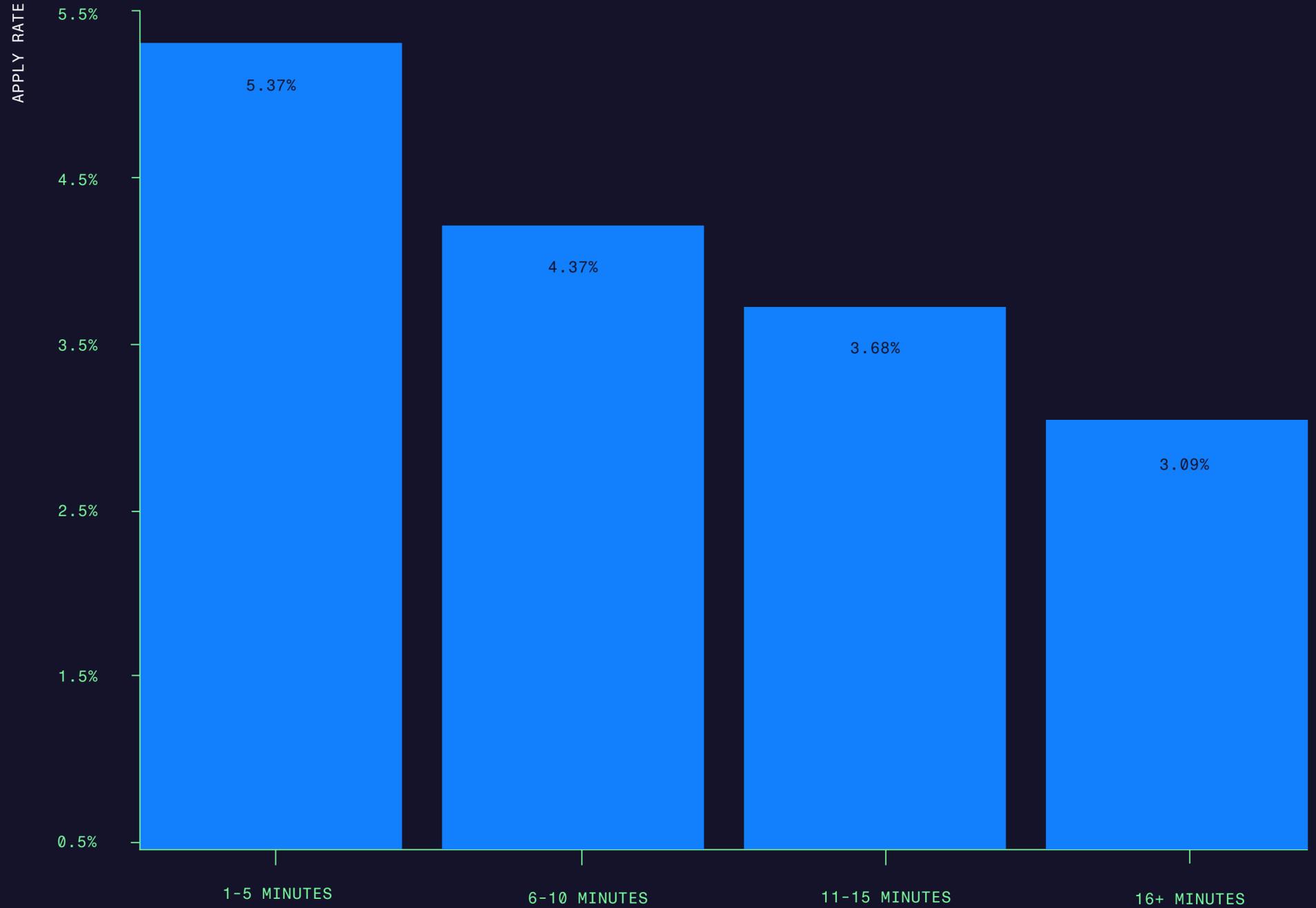
At Appcast, we consistently bang the drum for a strategic, low-friction application process. Across multiple years of data, jobs that take between one and five minutes to apply to convert several percentage points higher than those with 10+ minute apply times.

In 2025, that gap stayed wide, with no sign that candidate tolerance for slow or complex apply processes is improving. In the current market, job seekers are submitting more applications to find the right role, and many will not take extra time to complete yet another lengthy form.

The takeaway for recruitment teams is straightforward. Keep the initial apply process short and move non-essential questions later in the funnel. It's an easy win for lifting apply rates.

Apply Rate by Apply Time

LONG/ATS APPLY, 2025



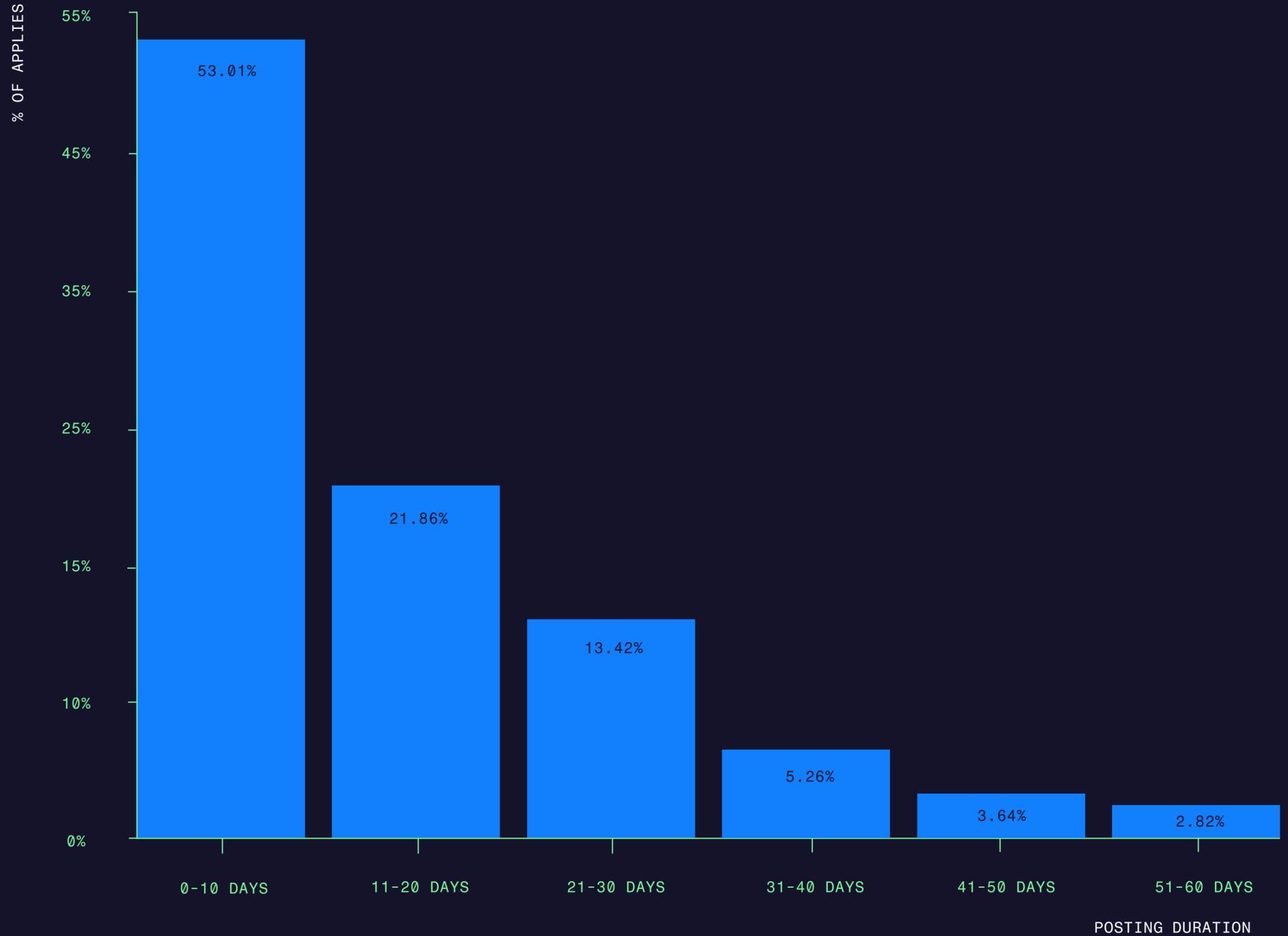
# Job ads have a limited shelf life

There's just no way around it: job seekers love freshly posted roles. Over 50% of applications in a job ad's lifetime arrive in the first 10 days. As ads stay up longer, volume drops sharply, down to around 2.8% in the 51–60 day range.

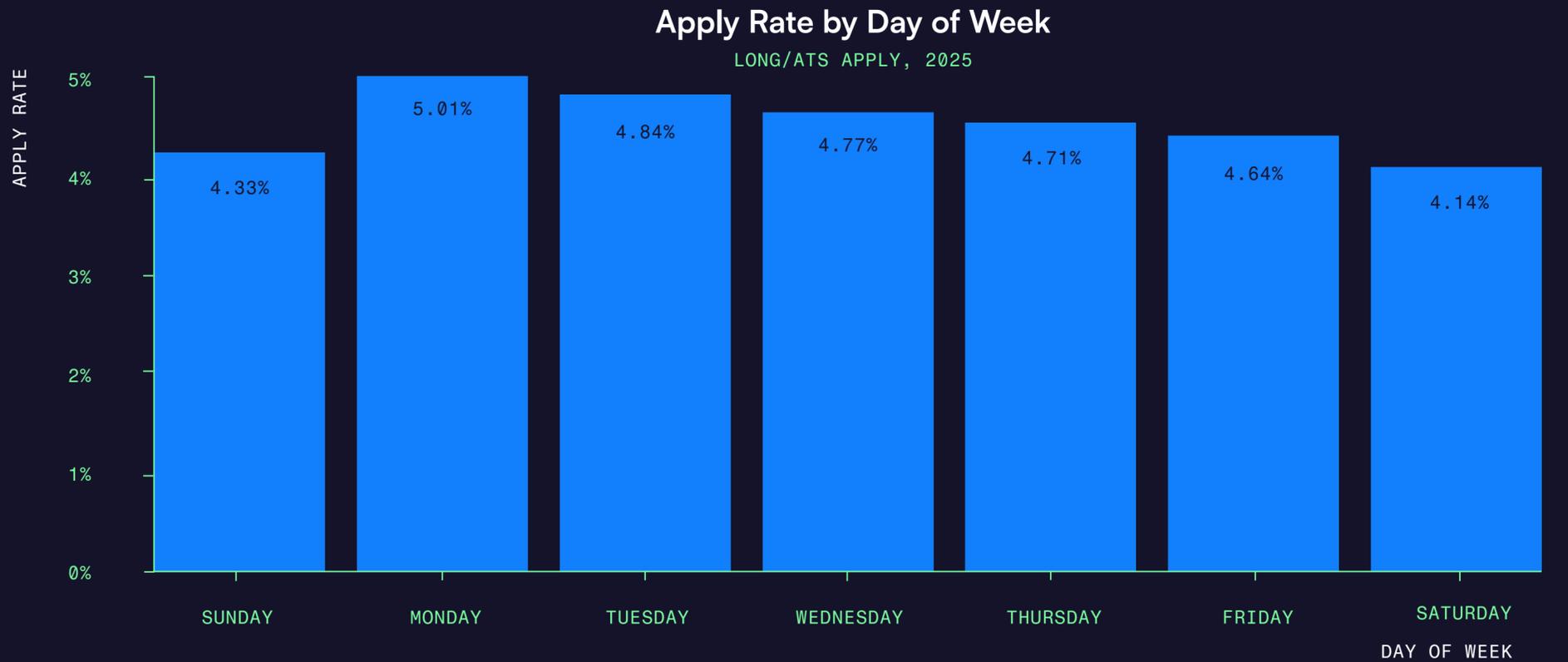
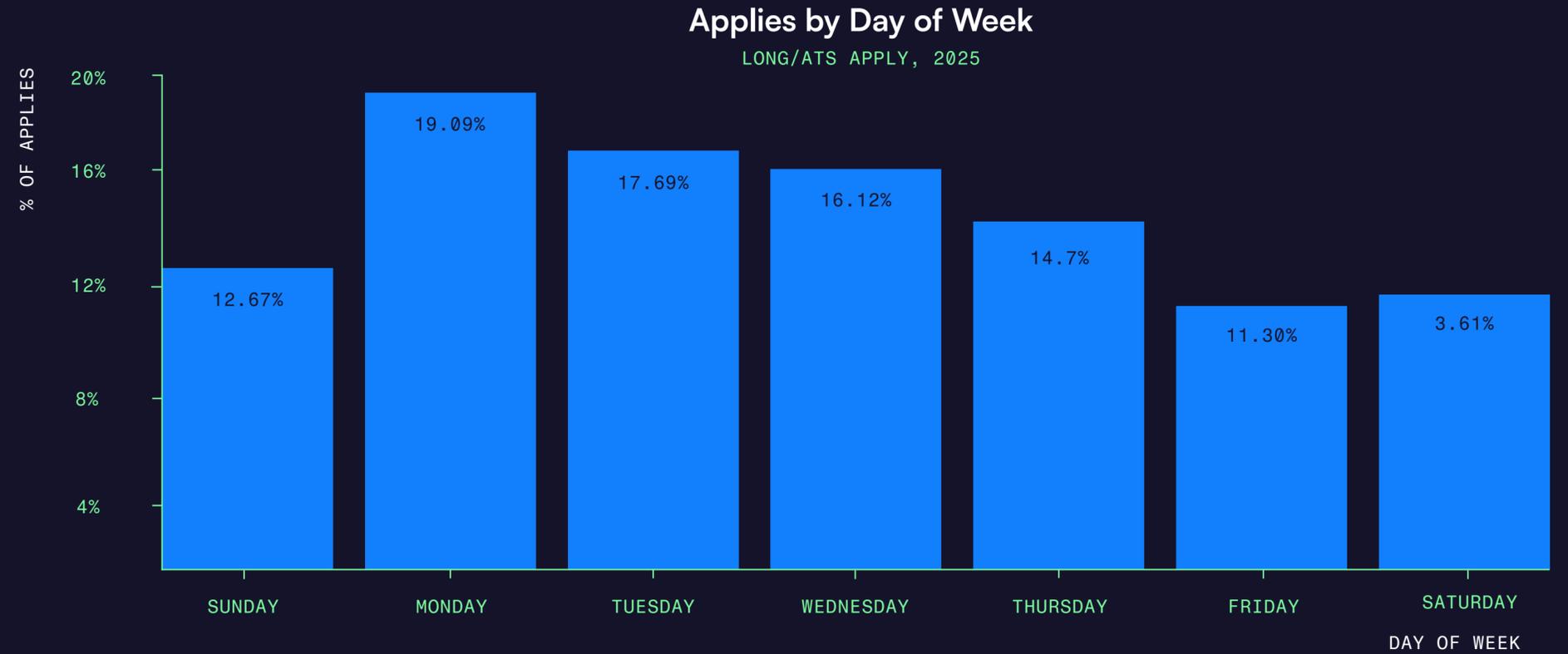
That's not to say your dream candidate won't show up on day 43. But if your apply volume has plateaued, it may be time to refresh the ad, especially since fresher content is typically prioritized on job boards.

## Applies by Posting Duration

LONG/ATS APPLY, 2025



# Apply rates drop as the week wears on



## Job seekers tend to be most active at the start of the week.

Nearly 20% of applications land on Monday and application share tapers off as the week goes on. Apply rate also declines over the week, though the change is less pronounced than the drop in applies.

As we've seen across this report, even small shifts in the apply rate can have an outsized impact on budget efficiency. To get the most from your job ads, aim to post early in the week so candidates have the chance to see them on a Monday before the roles start to feel "stale" on job boards.



#### INTERESTED IN LEARNING MORE?

We'd love to keep the conversation going and help you hit your 2026 hiring goals.

Our recruitment marketing experts work with teams like yours every day, and our industry-leading technology is built to get more of the right candidates in the door, faster and more efficiently.

Let's talk through  
your hiring strategy

↘ [Learn More](#)

# Glossary

- **Apply rate**  
The percent of completed applications per clicks on a job. Perhaps one of the most effective conversion metrics for understanding the performance of job ads.
- **Click**  
Counted when a user clicks on a search, social, or job board advertisement.
- **Click-through-rate**  
Number of clicks per impressions. Used to measure effectiveness of social and search campaigns.
- **Cost-per-application**  
Amount necessary for each individual application to a job advertised on a job board.
- **Cost-per-click**  
Total number of advertising dollars spent per click received on search, social, or job board advertisement.
- **Cost-per-hire**  
Advertising dollars spent per hire. In this report, it does not include recruiter or source expenses, training costs, etc.
- **Cost-per-interview**  
Advertising dollars spent for each candidate who reaches the interview stage of the hiring process.
- **Cost-per-offer**  
Advertising dollars spent for each job offer extended to a candidate, regardless of whether the offer is accepted.
- **Cost-per-screen**  
Advertising dollars spent for each candidate who completes an initial screening step (such as a phone screen, skills assessment, or recruiter review).
- **Display ads**  
Advertisements shown on websites, in email, and across the web, such as banner ads.
- **Disposition data**  
Normalized applicant-tracking-system (ATS) information that maps candidate progress into shared stages such as applied, reviewed, screened, interviewed, offered, and hired, allowing consistent down-funnel benchmarking across employers and systems.
- **Remote status**  
A job-ad attribute inferred from copy that indicates whether a role is remote, hybrid, or on-site, including phrases such as “work from home” or “option to be remote.”
- **Sitting-down jobs**  
Occupations that require workers to be sedentary for most of their shifts, such as office workers in tech and legal fields.
- **Search ads**  
Advertisements displayed above and below organic search results when users search certain keywords.
- **Standing-up jobs**  
Occupations that require workers to be on their feet for most of their shift, such as RNs, construction workers, and more.



2026 RECRUITMENT MARKETING BENCHMARK REPORT