



# **THE TRI-STATE CANDIDATE PERSPECTIVE**

Timely Insights from Local Technology Pros

# INTRODUCTION

Benchmark IT recently conducted its 2nd Annual Candidate Perspective Survey designed to gauge the attitudes and opinions of technology pros in the Tri-State area. This report details its findings, compares year-on-year results, and reveals important insights, trends, and challenges facing our local IT talent pool today.



# SURVEY DEMOGRAPHICS

The Survey was sent to over 3,000 direct-hire and contracted IT talent who Benchmark IT had personally interviewed or placed over the past three years. Their profiles largely match the most sought after levels of experience and technical skills requested by our clients.

In other words, the majority of the over 345 survey respondents are both highly skilled and highly experienced technology professionals.

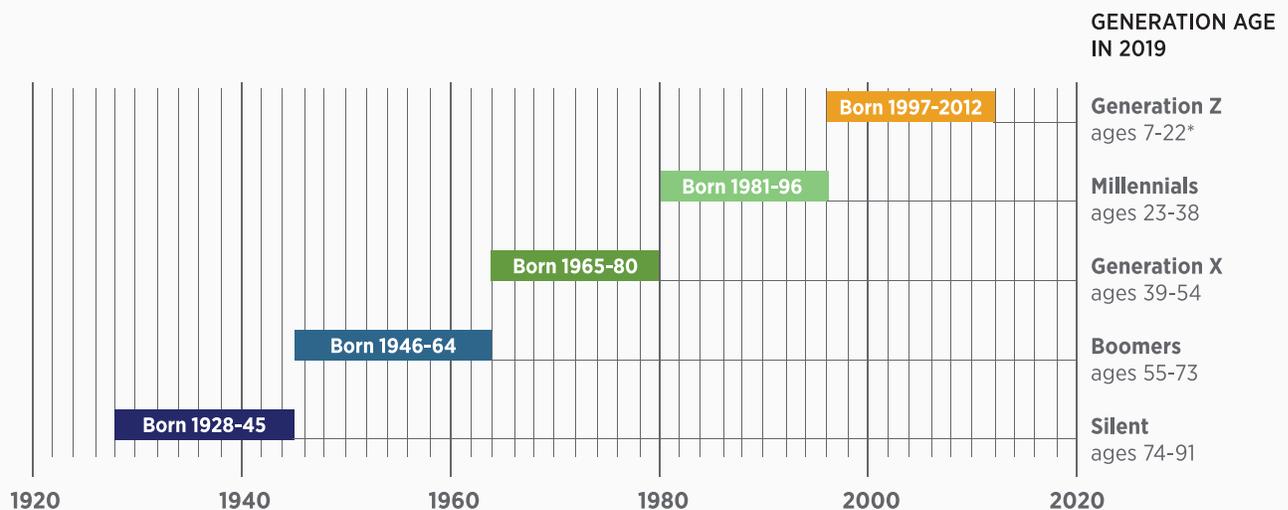
## Years of Experience:

- More than 75% of respondents +11 years of IT industry experience
- 22.5% report 1-to 10-years experience

## Age Groups:

- 45% percent are Gen X – aged between 39 – 54
- 26% are Millennials—aged 23 – 38
- 25% are Baby Boomers -- aged 55+.
- 4% are Gen Z - aged 18 – 22

## THE GENERATIONS DEFINED



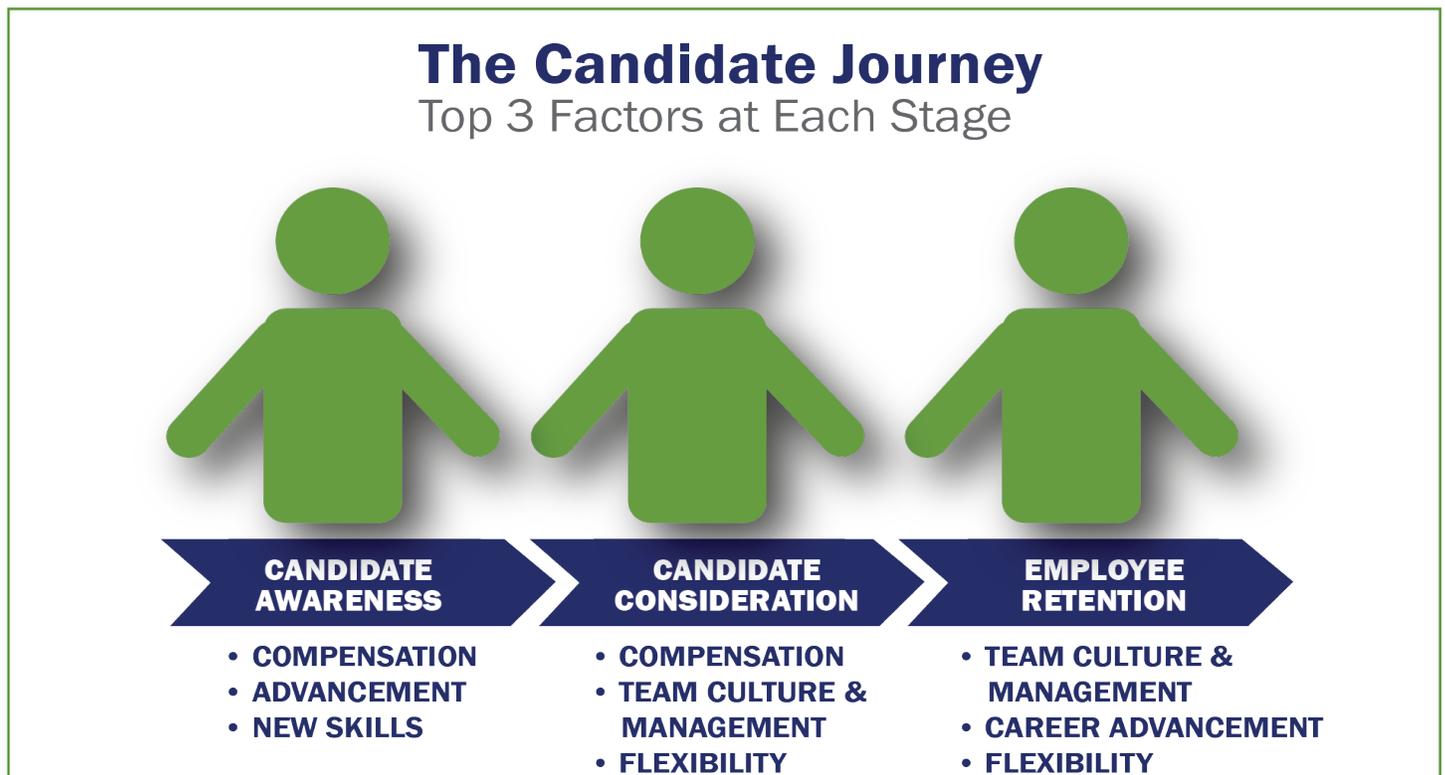
\*No chronological endpoint has been set for this group. For this analysis, Generation Z is defined as those ages 7 to 22 in 2019.

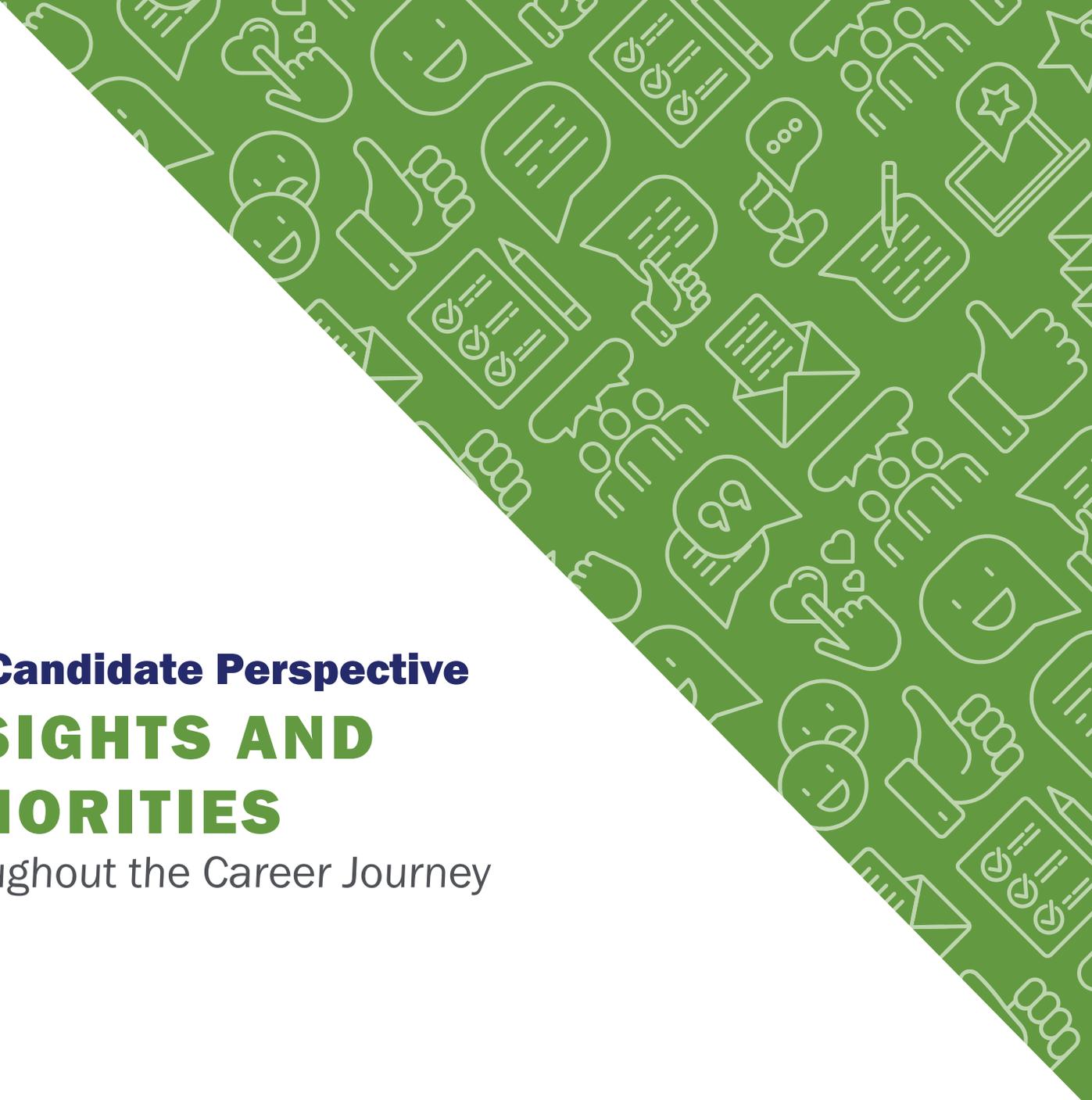
# UNDERSTANDING PRIORITIES THROUGHOUT THE CANDIDATE CAREER JOURNEY

The motivating factors a candidate considers while evaluating a job change-- either actively or passively—differ from those when accepting a job offer, or deciding whether or not to stay in their current role.

Much like a “buyer’s journey” of awareness, consideration, and purchase, factors shift depending upon where a candidate is in their journey.

The 2nd Annual Benchmark IT Candidate Perspective Survey examines these changes—some subtle, some not-- that occur throughout this journey. It compares how these criteria change year-over-year and enable us to draw insights into which market conditions or trends may be impacting those shifts.





**The Candidate Perspective**  
**INSIGHTS AND**  
**PRIORITIES**

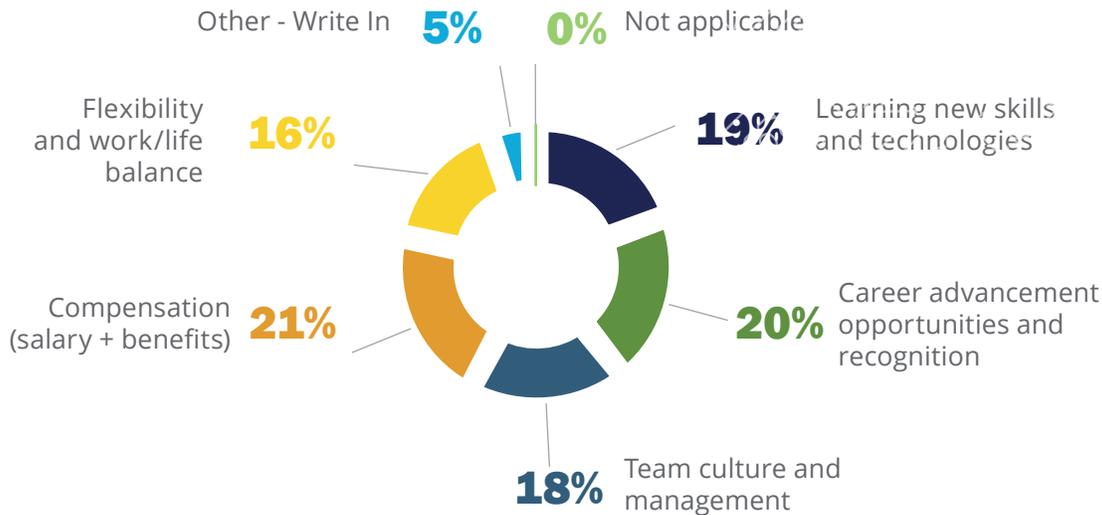
Throughout the Career Journey

# CHAPTER 1

## CANDIDATE AWARENESS

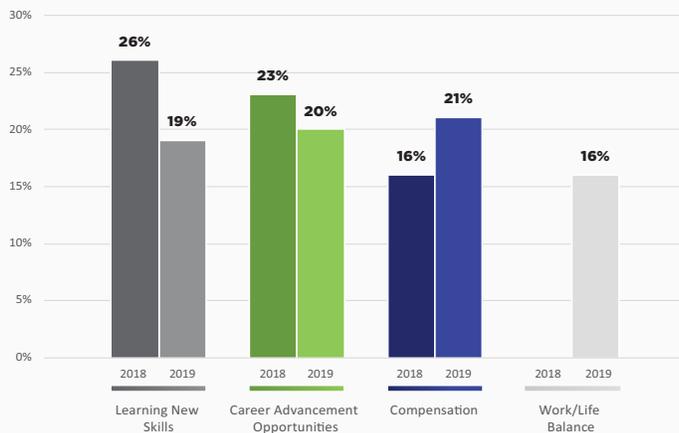
### Searching for a New Opportunity

#### 1. What is the most important factor when you are searching for your next opportunity?



Underscoring that the tight labor market is driving up salary expectations, Compensation outpaced Learning New Skills and Career Advancement Opportunities as the most critical factor when searching for a new job, up 5% from the previous year.

Need help crafting a winning job description or highlighting your employer branding and benefits to potential candidates? Benchmark IT has attracted thousands of qualified candidates to Tri-State area companies for the past 12 years. Give us a call. We'd be happy to help.

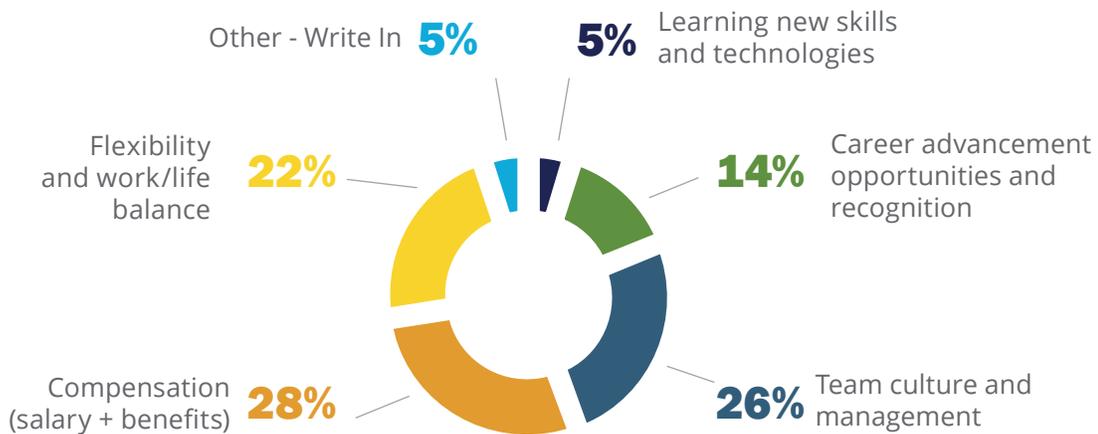


While responses to each factor were evenly distributed, they shifted even more dramatically as the career journey progressed. And, just like attracting buyers in the early stages of their buying cycle, it's wise to consider how you highlight and present the right mix of these factors in your candidate acquisition efforts.

# CHAPTER 2 CANDIDATE CONSIDERATION

## Deciding to Accept a Job Offer

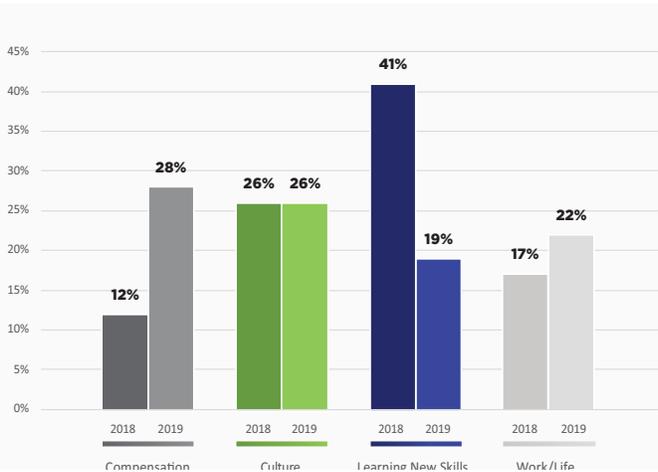
### 2. What is the most important factor when you are deciding whether or not to accept a job offer?



**Compensation** is the also highest rated criteria (28%) for candidates at the consideration stage of the journey, **rising +16%** over 2018.

**A combined 54% of candidates consider Compensation and Team Culture and Management as essential factors when deciding to accept a new job offer.**

**Firms that can offer the powerful trifecta of Salary, Flexibility, and Team Culture have the advantage when converting candidates to employees.**

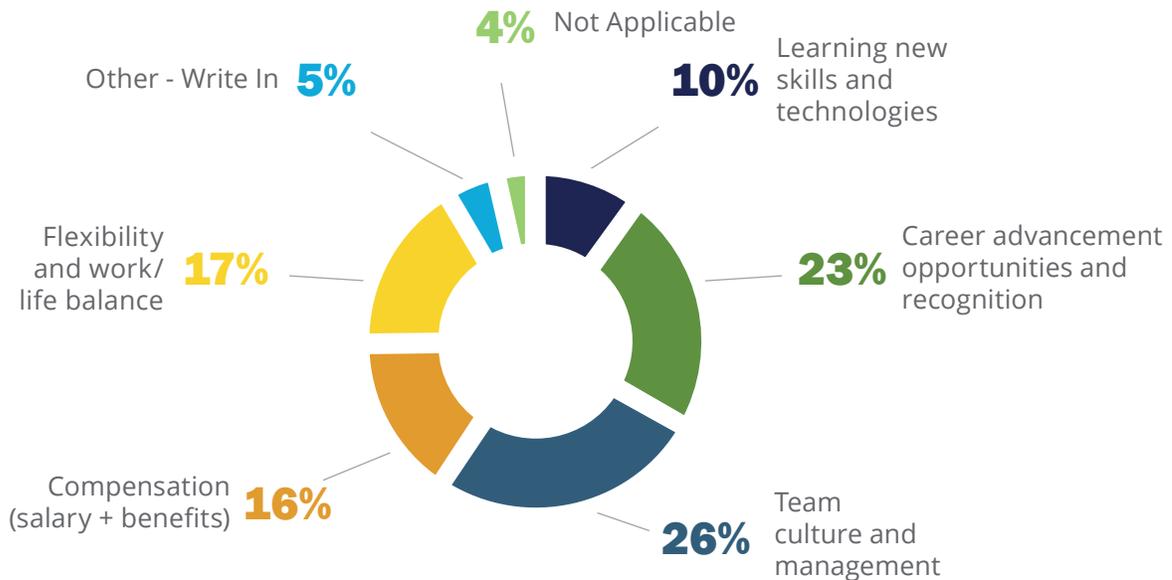


Interestingly, **Learning New Skills and Technologies** and **Career Advancement Opportunities** dropped -22% in 2019, with just 19% putting it at the top of their list versus 41% the year prior (**a 22% drop**).

# CHAPTER 3 EMPLOYEE RETENTION

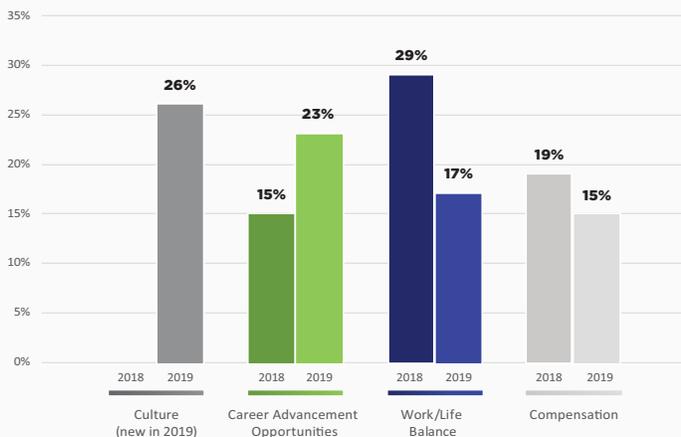
## Deciding to Stay in Current Role

### 3. What is the most important factor when you are deciding to stay at your current company/in your current role?

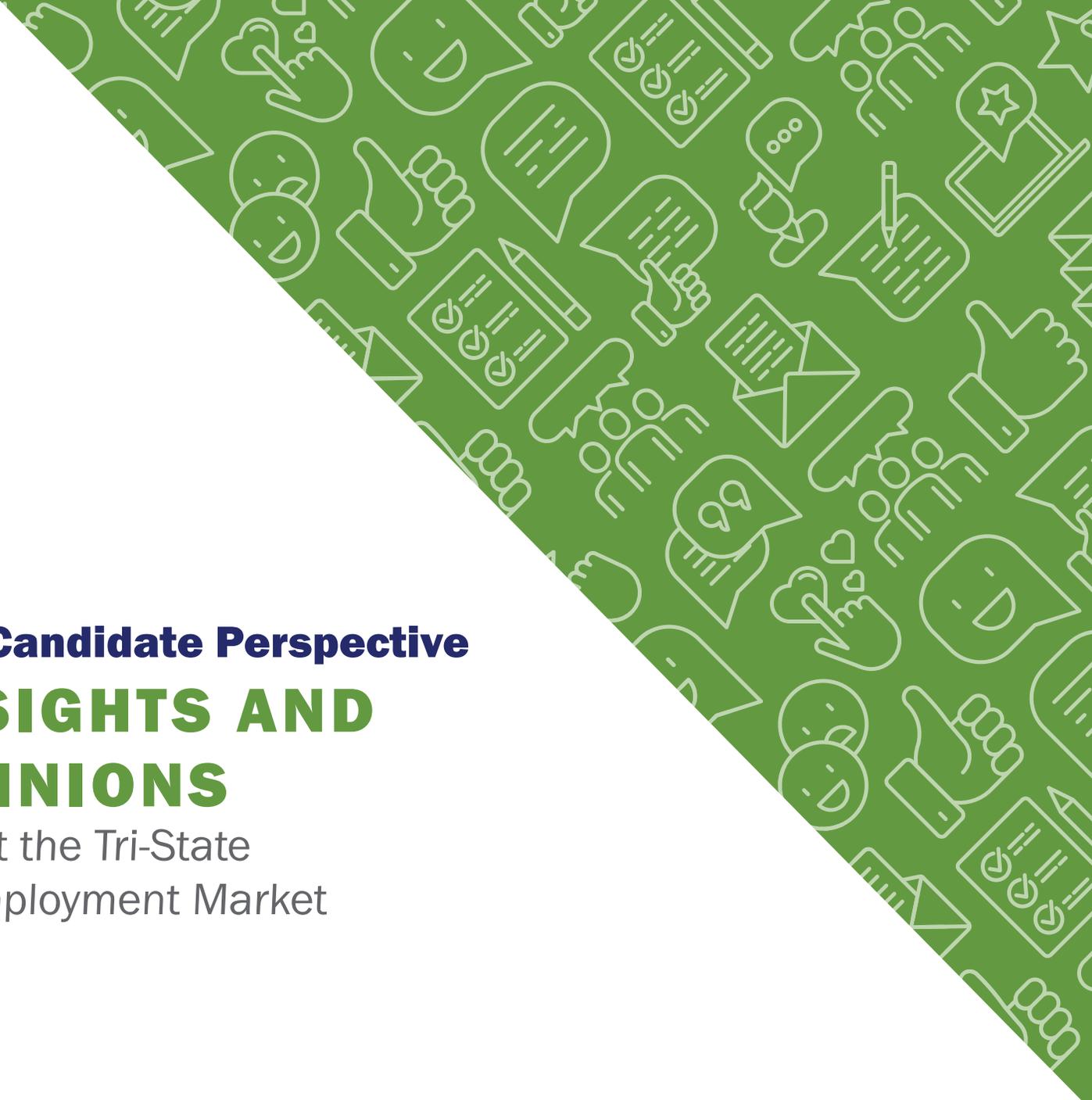


**Team Culture and Management** is the top-ranking criteria cited by 26% of those in the retention stage of their career journey. **Career Advancement Opportunities and Recognition** is a close second, with 23% reporting it as most important, an 8% increase over 2018.

Team Culture & Management, Career Advancement, and Flexibility are most important in Employee Retention. Make sure your organization incorporates them in your value proposition.



Interestingly, **Flexibility and Work/Life Balance** (17%) and **Compensation** (15%), dropped in priority over last year. In 2018, **Flexibility and Work/Life Balance** ranked most important among 29% of respondents, and **Compensation** 19%, for a combined total of 48%. The 2019 totals for the same criteria were 32%—a -16% drop.

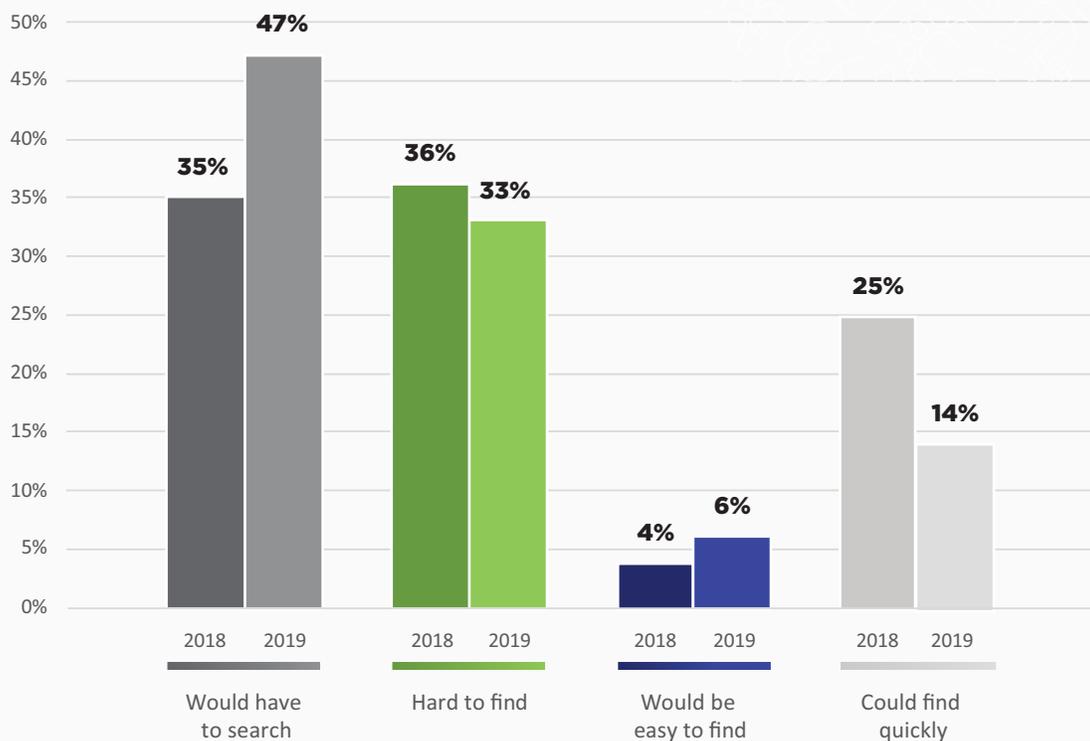


**The Candidate Perspective**  
**INSIGHTS AND**  
**OPINIONS**

About the Tri-State  
IT Employment Market

## Current IT Job Market in the Tri-State

How do Tri-State tech pros view the current job market? At first glance, not as rosy as you might expect. When asked **How Do You View the Current Job Market in Our Area?**, over 45% reported **I Would Have to Search to Find the Right Position**, (an +11% increase over 2018). **Good Positions are Hard to Find** was cited by 33%, (down just -3% vs. 2018). Only 6% thought It **Would Be Easy to Find a Great New Job**, while 14% said **I Could Find a New Job Relatively Quickly**, (down -11% from 2018).

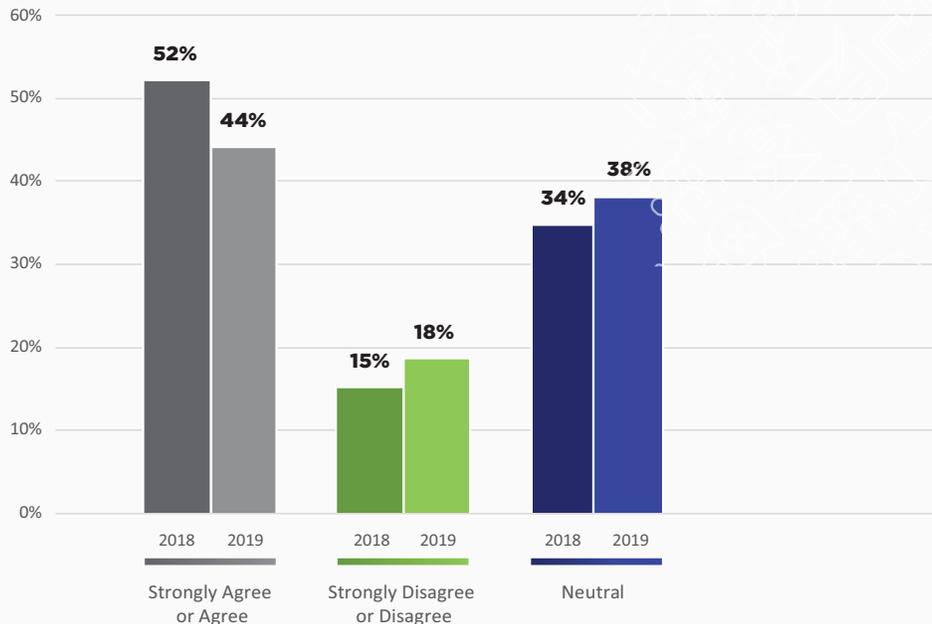


While candidates understand that demand for talent is greater than supply, these views have less to do with the talent shortage than where they are in their career journey. These opinions are also informed by their experiences and observations about the prevailing hiring practices and environment in the Tri-State area. See their opinions first-hand in the [Candidate Insights](#) section on pages 16-18.

Benchmark IT personally meets every candidate it presents and places. Each applicant meets several of our team members, who conduct in-depth interviews that probe their goals, objectives, and ideal job requirements. If you'd like to hear more about our proprietary candidate vetting process, give us a call.

## Job Prospects and Level of Optimism

When asked to evaluate the statement: *I am more optimistic about my job prospects in 2019 vs. last year*, 44% either strongly agree or agree.

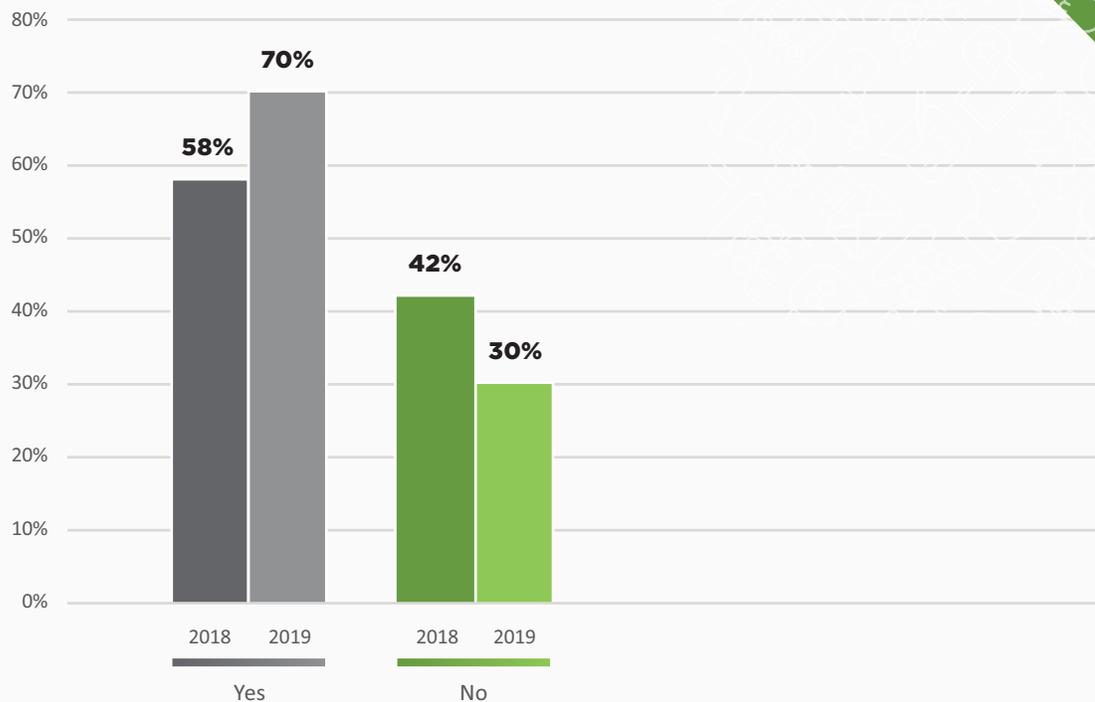


It may seem counterintuitive that with close to full tech employment\*, only 44% of respondents are more optimistic about their job prospects over last year. This lack of optimism has less to do with a tight labor market than with underlying realities facing local tech pros. A recent TechServe Alliance IT & Engineering Workforce Study reports that 57% of IT and engineering pros believe they don't have a clear path to career advancement. Additional factors include below market bill rates and salaries, lengthy hiring processes, and limited access to hiring managers. For first-hand observations about these and other issues, check out the [Candidate Insights](#) section on pages 16 - 18.

There's nothing worse than extending an offer to your top candidate and having them reject it or accept a competing offer. Benchmark IT listens to our candidates throughout the interview process and "pre-closes" them as they get close to the offer stage. We make sure that once the right offer is extended, they are ready to accept. Talk to us about your hiring needs today.

\*(1.3% IT unemployment: CompTia, June 2019, IT Employment Tracker)

## Expected Job Change in the Next Year



When asked Do you Anticipate Making a Job Change in the Next 12 Months?, 70% replied yes.

While this number appears alarmingly high, it's important to consider that many survey respondents are contract IT professionals, usually on long-term assignments. However, even if that number were cut in half, it's still almost three times higher than [the latest reported tech turnover rate of 13.2%](#).

What's driving this dramatic turnover? A recent [Information Week](#) article cites the most important factors in tech turnover are lack of career growth, company culture, and flat salaries. These factors track directly with what respondents in the retention stage of their journey had to say.

Need help sourcing, screening, and recruiting the right tech talent? Benchmark IT's proven candidate engagement, acquisition, and retention process has led to a record 95% of our contract consultants completing their contract terms, with 30% staying on to become FTE's.

# CANDIDATE OBSERVATIONS AND INSIGHTS

The Benchmark IT Candidate Perspective Survey allowed participants the opportunity to share their perspectives on the IT industry, the local technology job market, and the trends and changes affecting IT professionals. Here's what we learned from candidates, in their own words:

## Ageism is an Issue.

*I had someone ask me to take some of my experience off my resume so as not to give my age away. I had never thought about age until that point.*

*General concern over ageism, people seem to want a 25-year-old graduate with 20 years experience.*

*Above 40 years old, good luck finding IT management jobs.*

*I suspect that being a 59-year-old heterosexual, non-veteran, caucasian male is not helping my cause.*

*Recruiters, HR and hiring managers look at my gray hair, and I'm immediately eliminated from consideration.*

*As a 54-year-old IT person, I feel like I'm having an impossible time finding re-employment in my career path even after completing a master's degree years ago.*

*However, deep-down, I think that it was age discrimination.*

## Good Tri-State Area IT Jobs are Hard to Find.

Salaries are stagnant in Fairfield County. I hate my job, but I can only find horizontal moves. I've seen the same jobs at the same salary for over a year now. There's no competition, and the talent is leaving.

Companies do not want to pay top dollar for a highly skilled employee.

Most companies want to pay nothing. I truly believe that most positions listed are just fakes to get an H1-B visa worker.

Companies are not aware of the cost of living today.....offering compensations that do not match the cost of living in the Tri-State area.

It's bad in CT, and I am too old to commute to Jersey or NYC.

I'm still searching for a good-paying job a bit closer to Stamford.

Companies want more and pay less.

## Flexibility and Work/Life Balance is Important

In contracting, must get the best job security and pay rate based on skillset. Opportunity for better family/work-life balance. Most importantly, remote work in today's world should be easily available for deserving candidates.

I find that there is less flexibility in the job market for work from home or flex hours. I am spending three hours a day commuting. It's a job before a job. Would like to see more opportunities for positions with work from home options.

## Training and a Flexible Approach to Job Requirements and Skillsets are

*The IT market is always evolving... it's hard to catch up with the current ever-changing IT trends and skillsets required to match the open IT positions unless you work for a company that invests in their current staff.*

*It is very difficult to get the positions I really like. Some companies look for specific tools/skills. But sometimes the skills are transferrable. For example, if you worked in Tableau, it is easy to learn Power BI.*

*Employers need to commit more resources on training for their employees, so when having conversations with them, this point needs to be stressed more.*

*Most positions are over-customized in great detail not allowing or promising any development for the candidate.*

## Frustration with the Job Search Process has Increased.

*Tell employers to stop listing every imaginable skill and concentrate on what they need most. And tell them that they need to look at older employees. We know how to learn and work.*

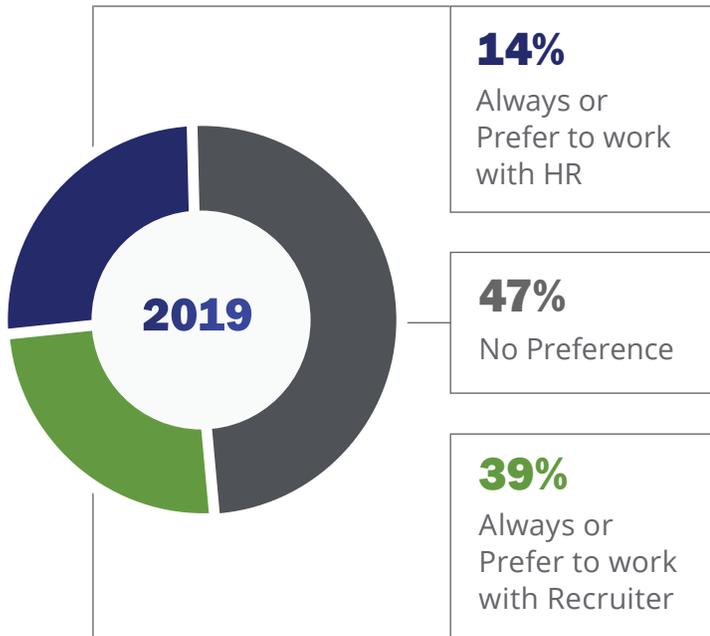
*I feel this process is remote-controlled by ATS and AI technologies, which does not present the true intention, honesty, and value delivery of the job seeker.*

*Landing a new job these days while you are employed feels like winning the lottery. Regardless of how the job market is being advertised in IT today like stable, booming etc. this does not reflect the true reality.*

*I'm being passed over for jobs because I don't have the degree they insist I need.*

## Views on Working with Recruiters

Nearly three times the number of respondents – 39% – report they either **Always** or **Prefer to Work with a Recruitment Company**, versus 14% who either **Always** or **Prefer to Work With an Employer’s Internal HR**.



Respondents were also asked whether they viewed the following statements as True or False:

	True	False
Recruiters were a useful resource in my job search	<b>89%</b>	<b>11%</b>
It's important that my recruiter meets me before presenting me to a client	<b>65%</b>	<b>35%</b>

A recent TechServe Alliance IT & Engineering Workforce Study found that over 60% of technology pros would likely/very likely take a short-term position through a recruiting firm, while 90% would take a longer-term, or contract-to-hire role through a recruiting firm. In the same study, 43% reported that the ability to “try before hiring” is a top benefit of working with an IT staffing and recruiting firm. Other top benefits included “Ability to Attain Specialized Skills,” “Access to More Candidates,” and the ability to quickly “Increase Workforce Based on Changing Project Load.”

Benchmark IT has been placing contract, contract-to-hire, and direct-hire IT professionals throughout the Tri-State area since 2007. While many highly skilled pros prefer flexible contract work, a large number believe that contract-to-hire allows both parties to determine if the role is the right fit. Are you struggling to fill your direct hire roles? We can source and deliver contract-to-hire talent quickly, before you make a significant permanent commitment.

# FROM THE BENCH

## Thoughts on the Candidate Journey and their Perspectives

Sourcing, screening, recruiting, and retaining the right technology talent gets more complex every day. State-of-the-art technology, commoditized staffing programs, and internal acquisition teams promise to reach scores of potential candidates in the hope that one or two might fit the bill. But do they genuinely listen and understand what's most important at each stage of a candidate's career journey? Do they have in-depth, on-the-ground experience in the Tri-State tech employment market?

Benchmark IT knows that quantity doesn't equal quality. We understand the nuances and priorities at each stage of a candidate's career journey. And since we personally meet every candidate we present, we get real-time intel and feedback about the local market. We know what they're seeing, what marketplace bill-rates and salaries are, which companies offer the best perks, and importantly, who's soon to be available.

Our combination of expert candidate vetting, and understanding of your technical requirements, ensure the candidates we present are worth your time and consideration. Over 66% of submitted Benchmark IT candidates proceed to an interview. Of those, 50% continue to a second interview, and 35% are hired.

Let us put our insights and expertise to work for you. [Contact us today.](#)

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