RECRUITMENT TRENDS SURVEY RESULTS

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2015

It's been a turbulent few years for recruiters of academic, research and science staff with economic downturns, increased competition and a variety of new channels and technologies.

But what's it really like on the frontline?

What are the big challenges?

And what are the current trends/hot topics/burning issues?

At **jobs.ac.uk** we wanted to better understand the needs, concerns and thoughts of the people we work with day in, day out. So, we contacted a variety of professionals who know academic, research and science recruitment inside and out to build a much better picture of today's recruitment market and the challenges ahead.

Executive Summary

People are the heartbeat of any organisation. They make the difference between success and failure. So, effective recruitment is a top priority for many organisations in 2015/16.

However, our survey revealed a world of squeezed budgets, complex processes and overstretched teams facing tough challenges. Today's recruiters are increasingly under pressure to quickly attract top international talent in a market that's getting more and more competitive every day.

Hampered by a growing workload and a lack of time, resources and budget, some respondents are frustrated with unrealistic timescales and a lack of understanding. Others feel that the time to hire is too long, particularly for specialist roles, which means quality people are dropping out of the process.

However, there is a big opportunity to be had by those teams who have the vision and backing to make improvements and deliver a competitive edge. Change takes time and money, but the long-term benefits could be priceless.

Streamlined systems and better educated hiring managers could dramatically reduce the time to recruit. Improved succession planning could reduce costs and increase employee retention and satisfaction. While effective e-recruitment can help to take the strain and save you time and money.

A revitalised employer brand could also help you raise your awareness worldwide, attract new talent and make you stand out from the competition. In fact, our survey highlights that employer branding is high on the agenda of many recruiters, but their actions aren't speaking as loud as their words with only half of respondents actively investing in a proactive strategy to develop their employer brand.

We've only just scratched the surface with our executive summary, so read on to discover more about our 2015 Recruitment Trends Survey.

Key Findings

- A skills shortage of quality candidates is the biggest challenge for recruiters of academic, research and science staff. This has increased from 30% to 38% since our last survey in 2013.

- The top priorities for 2015/16 are reducing time to hire, staff retention and employer branding.

- 93% of respondents said employer branding was a key part of their recruitment strategy – but only half are investing in it.

- 74% of respondents said it was important to recruit international research and academic staff – but two thirds said that the global competition for talent is becoming increasingly intense.

- 40% of respondents believe legislative problems and immigration processes are the biggest barriers to recruiting top international talent.

- Recruitment budgets have stagnated this year despite growing pressures to recruit top international staff.

- Nearly 30% of respondents expect to recruit over 100 people 2015/16.

- Lecturers and Professors within Engineering and Technology are the most difficult to recruit roles.

- 67% of people preferred using specialist job boards for recruitment.

Over 160 professionals from the world of academic, research and science recruitment answered our survey.
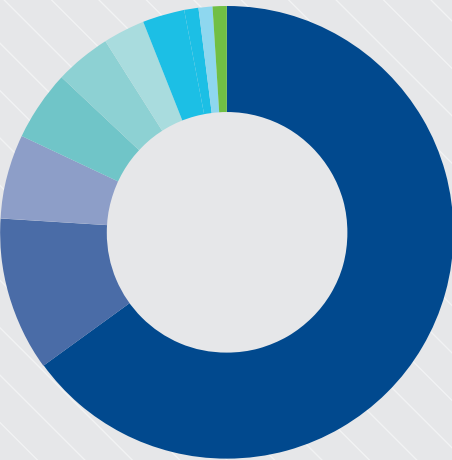
Q1. WHAT IS YOUR JOB ROLE?
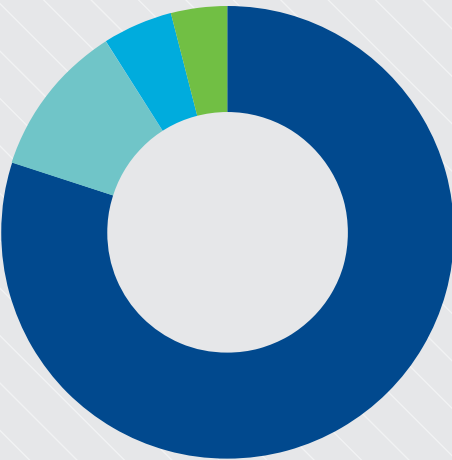
To gain a great insight into the world of HE recruitment, we sought the thoughts and opinions of a diverse range of professionals.

- **80.0%** HR
- **10.7%** Academic or Head of Faculty/Department
- **5.0%** Agency
- **4.3%** Marketing

## Q2. WHAT MOST ACCURATELY DESCRIBES YOUR TYPE OF ORGANISATION?

Around two thirds of the people we contacted are currently working in higher education institutions.

- **66.3%** Higher Education
- **12.3%** Private Sector
- **5.5%** Agency
- **4.9%** Charity/Voluntary
- **3.7%** Further Education
- **2.5%** Research Institute
- **2.5%** Public Sector (other)
- **1.2%** Self-Employed
- **0.6%** Government (local/national)
- **0.6%** Public Sector (research)

Q3. WHERE IN THE WORLD IS YOUR ORGANISATION LOCATED?

Q4. WHERE DOES YOUR RECRUITMENT BUDGET SIT?
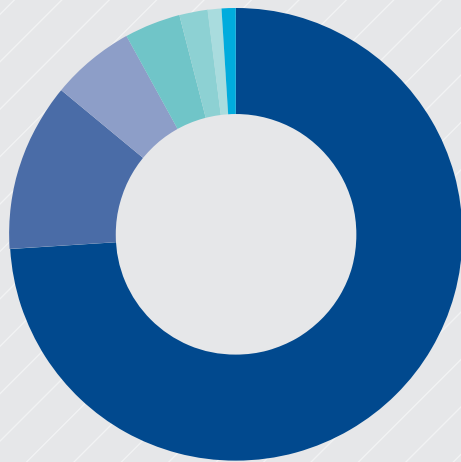
Over two thirds of the people who responded to our survey are based in the UK.

- **76.1%** UK
- **11.7%** Europe (EU country)
- **6.1%** Australasia
- **3.7%** Asia
- **1.2%** Middle East
- **0.6%** North America & Caribbean
- **0.6%** Africa
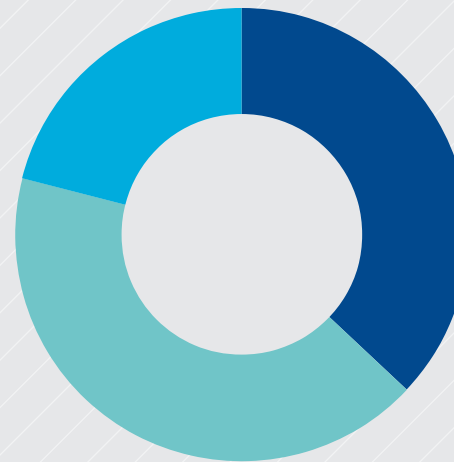
Most budgets are held by individual Faculties and Academic Departments.

- **42.3%** Faculty/Academic Department
- **36.6%** HR
- **21.1%** Line Manager/Company Director

Q5. WHAT HAS BEEN YOUR BIGGEST RECRUITMENT CHALLENGE IN THE PAST 12 MONTHS?
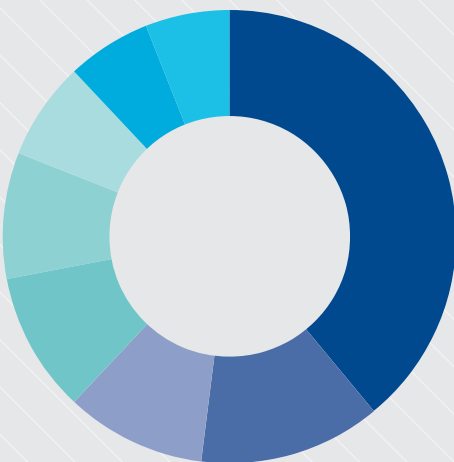
The lack of skilled/quality candidates and the high competition for talent from other employers proved the biggest recruitment challenges for 50% of our respondents.

- **38.7%** Lack of Skilled/Quality Candidate
- **12.9%** High Competition for Talent from Other Employers
- **9.7%** Staff Retention
- **9.7%** Competing with International Salaries/Benefits Package
- **8.9%** Reduced Recruitment Budgets
- **7.3%** Too Many Applicants
- **6.5%** Too Few Applicants
- **6.5%** Attracting International Candidates

Q6. WHAT ARE THE BIGGEST CHALLENGES IN YOUR JOB?
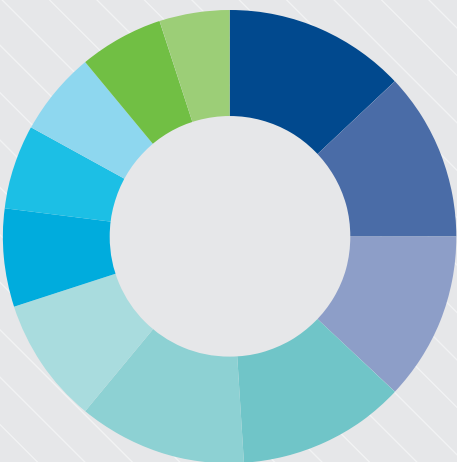
- **13.0%** Candidate Quality
- **12.0%** Poor Process
- **12.0%** Tight Budget
- **12.0%** Time
- **12.0%** Other
- **9.0%** Retention
- **7.5%** Candidate Attraction
- **6.0%** Organisational Politics
- **6.0%** Forward Planning
- **6.0%** Workload
- **4.5%** Unsucessful Recruitment

Q6.   CONTINUED...

Candidate Quality - 13%

A lack of skills in the job market is a growing problem. Finding high quality international candidates (especially academics and middle managers) with the right skills, experience and attitude is a major challenge for many institutions. A couple of respondents also had difficulties finding the right job board to attract people with the skills they needed.

Poor Process - 12%

Application and internal recruitment processes were a big frustration. Many seem to be slow, long-winded and overly complex with added layers when using agencies as intermediaries. For some, it's also challenging to get hiring managers to comply with best practice and follow processes. While others had difficulties co-ordinating shortlisting meetings and had to jump through hoops to get visa applications sorted.

Tight Budget - 12%

Squeezed recruitment budgets were a key challenge for some respondents who are finding it difficult to attract high quality candidates from around the world. Especially as there is growing competition from international employers and new entrants into the market who can offer better salaries and rewards. The need for bigger budgets for indirect recruitment activities (events and job fairs) was also highlighted.

Time - 12%

As well as a lack of time to do things properly and the red tape of processes, some respondents were worried about the unrealistic timescales in which they had to find top talent, especially people with specialist skills and experience. Once the process is underway they are also frustrated by the slow speed of hiring managers, which can frustrate candidates who'll go elsewhere.

Retention - 9%

The high turnover of employees (especially top academics) and voluntary resignations was a concern for many. Engagement with employees and students was highlighted as a growing issue.

Candidate Attraction - 7.5%

Some respondents highlighted the challenge of attracting quality candidates (especially passive candidates). A number of factors were mentioned ranging from candidates not understanding if they were suitable for the role to problems creating attractive adverts using current recruitment systems. 'Overpriced' recruitment agencies that didn't understand HE challenges were also an annoyance.

Organisational Politics - 6%

As well as the wider politics of a region, office politics and even bullying were mentioned. Some respondents were frustrated with vague targets, colleagues not meeting deadlines and the unwillingness of hiring managers to advertise jobs with broader selection criteria.

Forward Planning - 6%

The lack of succession planning and focus on advertising externally rather than promoting from within was mentioned. Some respondents also believed HR teams and hiring managers needed more training to understand recruitment needs and employ people who offered the right skills and attitude – not just the right qualifications. A lack of data also makes it difficult to create reports and learn from insight.

Workload - 6%

The sheer volume of recruitment and lack of HR resources is a big issue. Some respondents have to deal with large numbers of roles, applications and dropouts at the interview and offer stage. As HE recruitment often involves peak times, this has naturally created challenging pressure points for some respondents.

Unsuccessful Recruitment - 4.5%

A few respondents were frustrated with the time, efforts and high costs that go into offering jobs and onboarding people, only for them to decline at the last minute. Quicker and better candidate journeys would make a big difference.

Q7. WHAT IS YOUR TOP RECRUITING PRIORITY FOR 2015/2016?
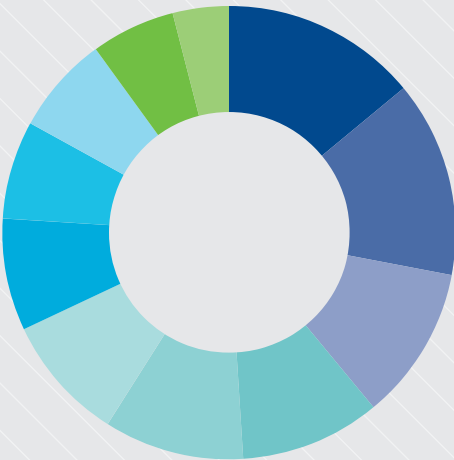
The top 3 priorities for recruiters are reducing time to hire, staff retention and employer branding.

- **13.7%**   Reducing Time to Hire
- **13.7%**   Staff Retention
- **11.3%**   Employer Branding
- **10.5%**   Talent Pooling
- **10.5%**   Attracting More International Staff
- **9.7%**   Updating, Changing and Implementing Policies
- **8.9%**   Cost Reduction
- **7.3%**   Direct Resourcing
- **7.3%**   Implementing an eRecruitment System
- **4.8%**   Social Recruitment
- **2.4%**   Mobile Recruitment

Recruiting landscapes across the world

Although recruitment priorities and challenges are similar in the UK and USA, there are notable differences across different borders.

EUROPE
Priority: Attracting international staff
Challenge: Lack of skilled/quality candidates

ASIA
Priority: Talent pooling
Challenge: Attracting more international candidates

UK & USA
Priority: Reducing time to hire
Challenge: Lack of skilled/quality candidates

MIDDLE EAST
Priority: Attracting international staff
Challenge: Too few applicants

AUSTRALASIA
Priority: Implementing e-recruitment
Challenge: High competition for talent

Q8. HOW HAS YOUR ORGANISATION'S RECRUITMENT BUDGET CHANGED FROM LAST YEAR?
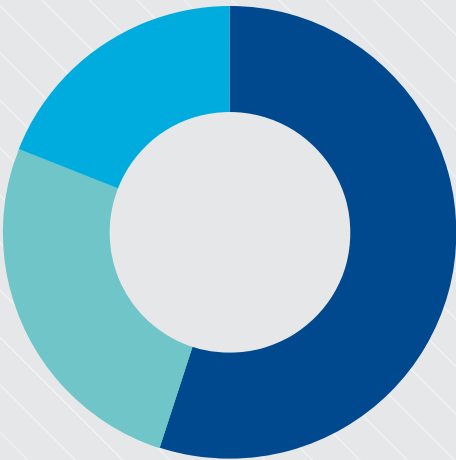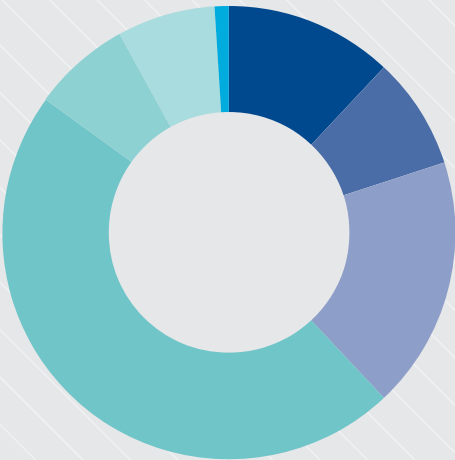
Despite the jobs market growing in confidence, budgets for academic, research and science recruitment have stagnated.

- ● **55.4%** About the same
- ● **25.9%** Decreased
- ● **18.8%** Increased

Q9. IS YOUR LEVEL OF RECRUITMENT DUE TO INCREASE OR DECREASE COMPARED TO LAST YEAR?
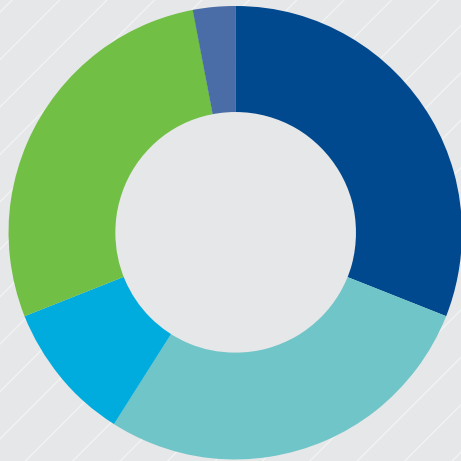
Around half said it would stay roughly the same while over a third said it was set to increase.

- ● **11.6%** Increase by 25% or more
- ● **8.0%** Increase by 11% to 24%
- ● **17.9%** Increase by up to 10%
- ● **47.3%** It will remain about the same
- ● **7.1%** Decrease by up to 10%
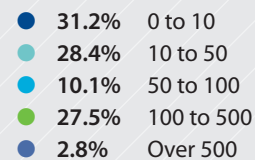- ● **7.1%** Decrease by 11% to 24%
- ● **0.9%** Decrease by 25% or more

Q10. HOW MANY VACANCIES DID YOUR ORGANISATION FILL LAST YEAR IN 2014?

Q11. HOW MANY VACANCIES DOES YOUR ORGANISATION ANTICIPATE FILLING IN THE NEXT 12 MONTHS?

40% of respondents filled more than 50 vacancies in 2014. This is a slight decrease from 42% in 2013.

- **31.2%** 0 to 10
- **28.4%** 10 to 50
- **10.1%** 50 to 100
- **27.5%** 100 to 500
- **2.8%** Over 500
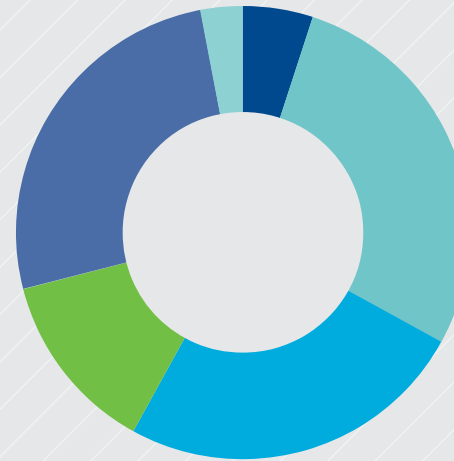
95% of respondents are planning to recruit in 15/16. This is a slight decrease from 97% in 2013. Nearly 30% of respondents expect to recruit over 100 people.

- **4.5%** No plans for recruiting
- **27.9%** 0 to 10
- **25.2%** 10 to 50
- **12.6%** 50 to 100
- **26.1%** 100 to 500
- **3.6%** Over 500
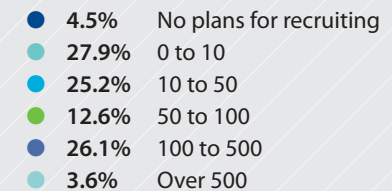
Q12. WHICH ROLES ARE MOST DIFFICULT TO FILL?

- **20.4%** Lecturer
- **19.4%** Professor
- **15.3%** Professional/Managerial/Support Service
- **13.3%** Senior Lecturer
- **10.2%** Post-Doc Researcher
- **9.2%** Head of Dept/School/Research centre
- **9.2%** Senior Researcher
- **8.2%** Research Assistant
- **8.2%** Technicians
- **7.1%** Scientist/Scientific
- **6.1%** Teacher/Teaching Assistant
- **5.1%** PhD Student
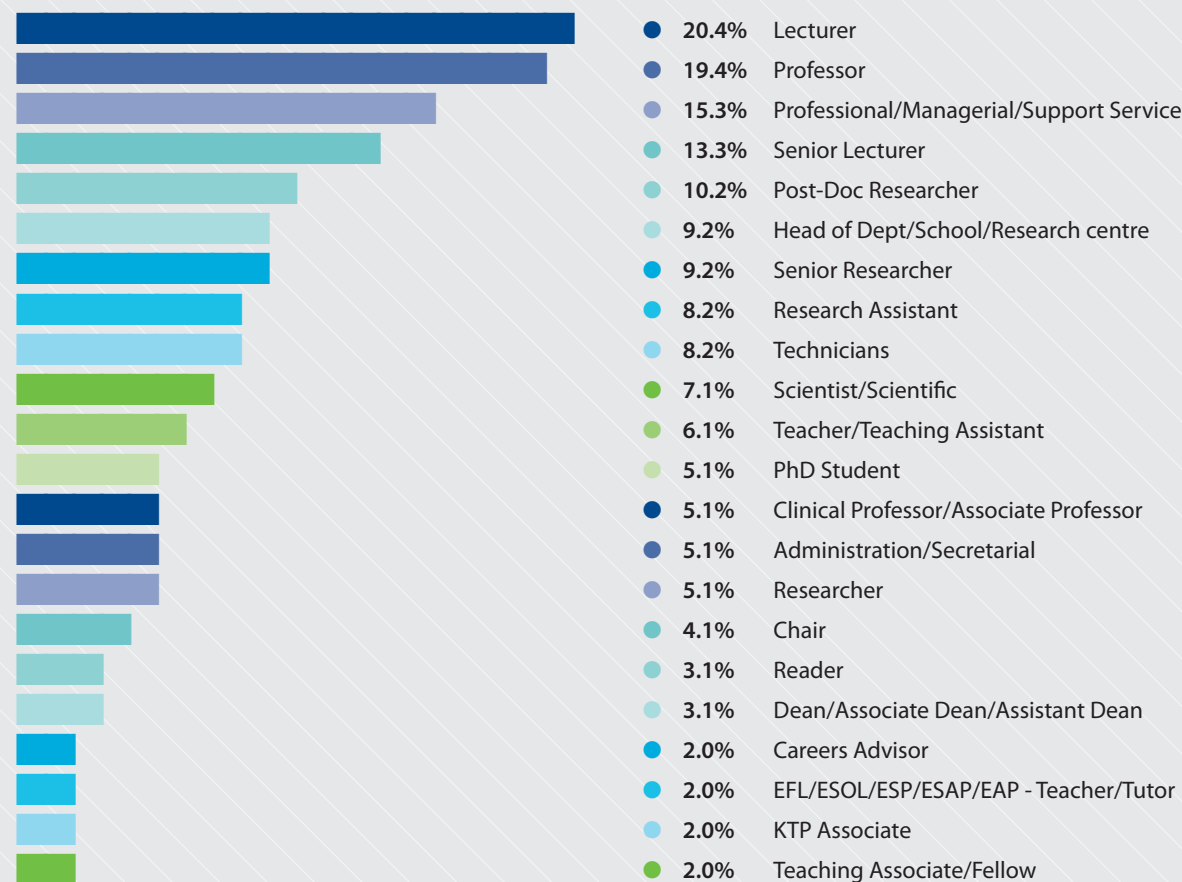- **5.1%** Clinical Professor/Associate Professor
- **5.1%** Administration/Secretarial
- **5.1%** Researcher
- **4.1%** Chair
- **3.1%** Reader
- **3.1%** Dean/Associate Dean/Assistant Dean
- **2.0%** Careers Advisor
- **2.0%** EFL/ESOL/ESP/ESAP/EAP - Teacher/Tutor
- **2.0%** KTP Associate
- **2.0%** Teaching Associate/Fellow

Recruiting Lecturers and Professors is still the biggest challenge.

Q13. WHICH ACADEMIC DISCIPLINE DO YOU HAVE THE MOST DIFFICULTY RECRUITING OPPORTUNITIES FOR?

- **32.6%** Engineering/Technology
- **16.3%** Social Sciences/Social Care
- **16.3%** Health/Medical
- **16.3%** Business/Management Studies
- **14.0%** Biological Sciences
- **14.0%** Economics
- **11.6%** Mathematics/Statistics
- **7.0%** Law
- **7.0%** Physical/Environmental Sciences
- **7.0%** Computer Science
- **4.7%** Architecture/Building/Planning
- **4.7%** Creative/Art & Design
- **4.7%** Education Studies (inc.TEFL)
- **4.7%** Historical/Philosophical Studies
- **4.7%** Information Management/Librarianship
- **4.7%** Politics/Government
- **4.7%** Psychology
- **4.7%** Sport/Leisure
- **2.3%** Languages/Literature/Culture
- **2.3%** Media/Communications

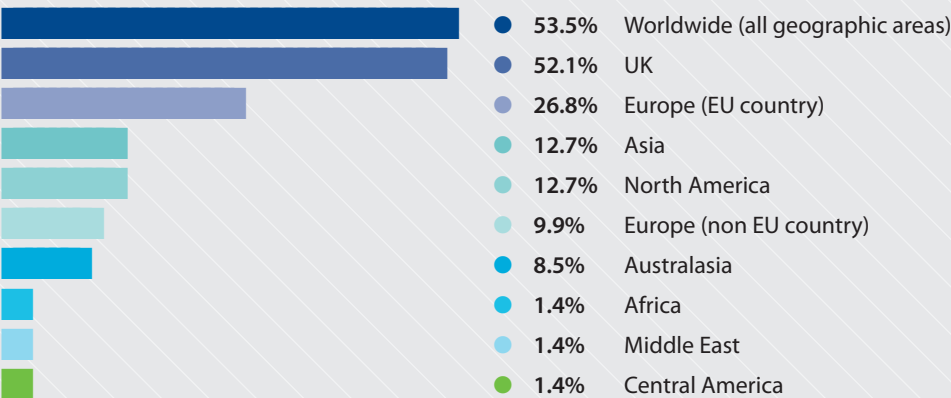**Engineering and technology academics are highly sought after.**

Q14. HOW IMPORTANT IS RECRUITING INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH AND ACADEMIC STAFF AT YOUR INSTITUTION?
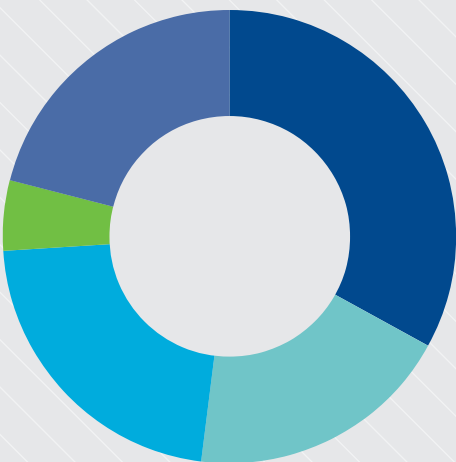
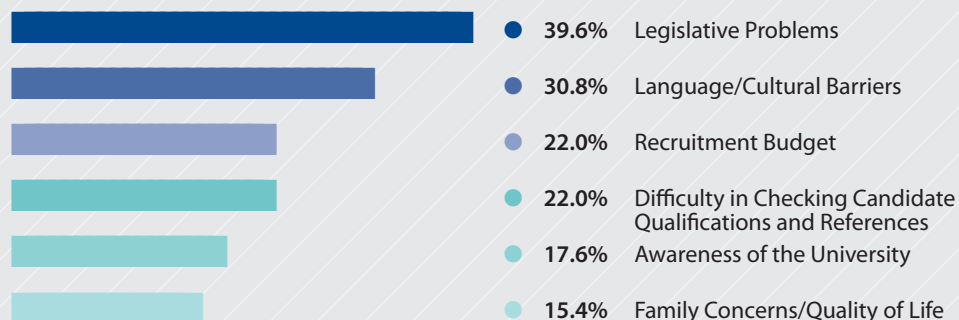**Over 70% of respondents said it was important to recruit international research and academic staff.**

- **32.6%** Extremely Important
- **18.9%** Very Important
- **22.1%** Important
- **5.3%** Slightly Important
- **21.1%** Unimportant

Q15. WHERE IN THE WORLD ARE YOU TARGETING YOUR RECRUITMENT ACTIVITIES?

- **53.5%** Worldwide (all geographic areas)
- **52.1%** UK
- **26.8%** Europe (EU country)
- **12.7%** Asia
- **12.7%** North America
- **9.9%** Europe (non EU country)
- **8.5%** Australasia
- **1.4%** Africa
- **1.4%** Middle East
- **1.4%** Central America

HE recruiters are scouring the world for the best talent with a particular focus on Europe.

Q16. WHAT ARE THE MAIN CHALLENGES IN RECRUITING INTERNATIONAL ACADEMIC STAFF?

- **39.6%** Legislative Problems
- **30.8%** Language/Cultural Barriers
- **22.0%** Recruitment Budget
- **22.0%** Difficulty in Checking Candidate Qualifications and References
- **17.6%** Awareness of the University
- **15.4%** Family Concerns/Quality of Life

Legislative problems and immigration processes are the biggest barriers when recruiting international academic staff.

Q17. HOW DO YOU THINK THE GLOBAL COMPETITION FOR TALENT HAS CHANGED RECENTLY?

- **78.0%** More competitive
- **11.0%** It's the same
- **5.5%** Decreased
- **5.5%** More positive
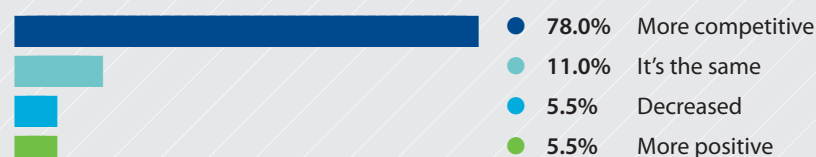
78% of our respondents felt that the market was increasingly competitive and intense.

It was felt by some that there was a larger talent pool, but new entrants into the market and online tools were making the competition increasingly fierce. Some believed the complex and costly visa process was having a negative impact in the UK. While others were worried by the better remuneration packages offered elsewhere.

Q18. HOW IMPORTANT IS EMPLOYER BRANDING TO YOUR RECRUITMENT STRATEGY?
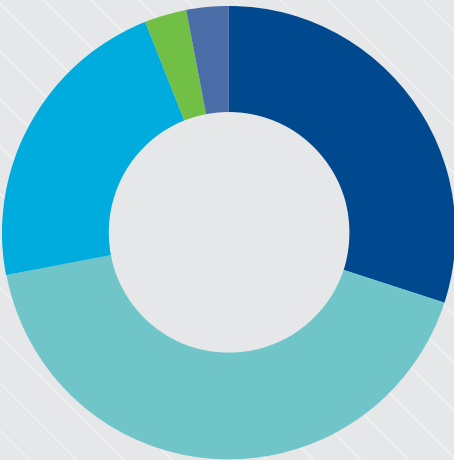
93% of respondents said that employer branding was a key part of their recruitment strategy.

- ● **30.8%** Extremely Important
- ● **41.8%** Very Important
- ● **20.9%** Important
- ● **3.3%** Slightly Important
- ● **3.3%** Unimportant

Q19. ARE YOU PLANNING ON INCREASING YOUR INVESTMENT INTO EMPLOYER BRANDING THIS YEAR?

Despite the importance of employer branding - only half of our respondents are looking to invest in it.
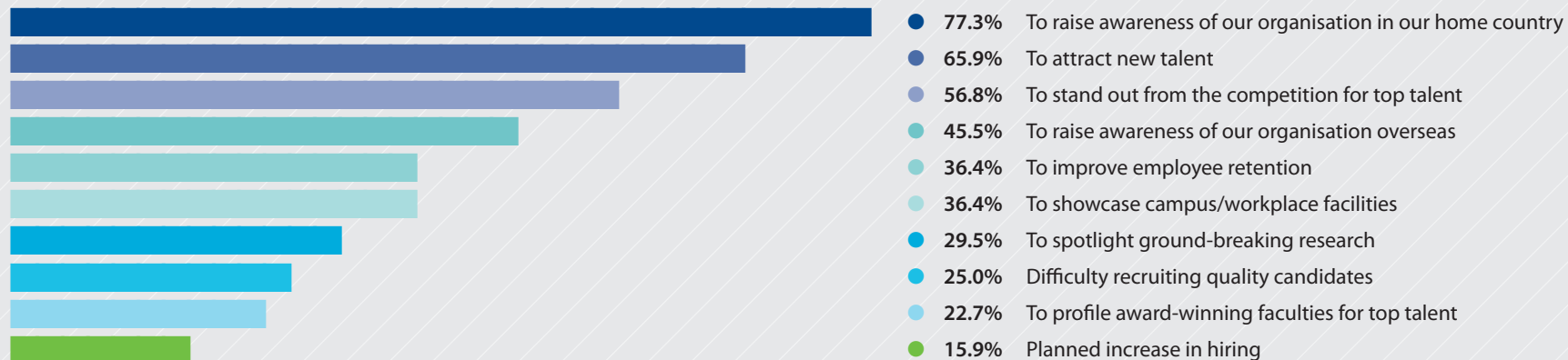
- ● **51.7%** Yes
- ● **48.3%** No

Q20. WHAT ARE YOUR MAIN REASONS FOR INVESTING IN EMPLOYER BRANDING?

- **77.3%** To raise awareness of our organisation in our home country
- **65.9%** To attract new talent
- **56.8%** To stand out from the competition for top talent
- **45.5%** To raise awareness of our organisation overseas
- **36.4%** To improve employee retention
- **36.4%** To showcase campus/workplace facilities
- **29.5%** To spotlight ground-breaking research
- **25.0%** Difficulty recruiting quality candidates
- **22.7%** To profile award-winning faculties for top talent
- **15.9%** Planned increase in hiring

**People are investing in
their employer brand
to attract new talent,
raise awareness of their
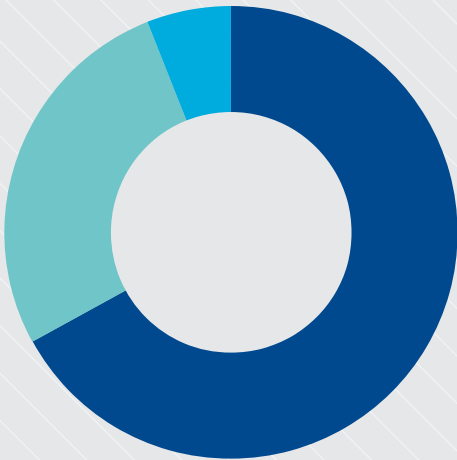organisation and stand
out from their competitors.**

Q21. HOW MANY DIFFERENT JOB BOARDS/ RECRUITMENT WEBSITES DO YOU USE?

Q22. WHAT TYPE OF JOB BOARDS DO YOU USE?
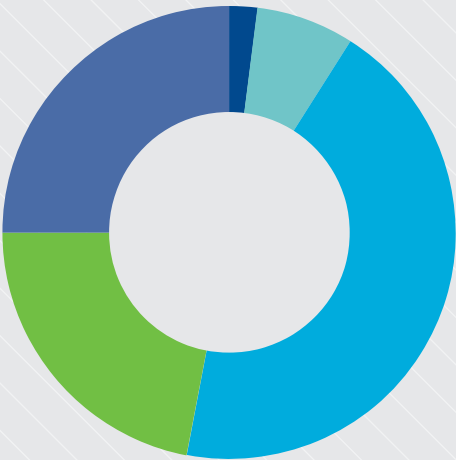
52% of respondents use 3 or less job boards for recruitment.

- **2.2%** None
- **6.7%** Just 1
- **43.8%** 2 to 3
- **22.5%** 4 to 5
- **24.7%** Over 5

67% of respondents preferred using specialist job boards for recruitment.

- **66.7%** Mainly Specialist (industry specific e.g. jobs.ac.uk)
- **27.6%** Equal Mix of Generalist and Specialist
- **5.7%** Mainly Generalist (e.g. Monster/TotalJobs)

About the survey

When?
- Carried out online between August and September 2015.

Why?
- To better understand recruitment trends across the academic, research, science and related sectors.

- Help provide recruitment professionals with key benchmarking information, so their organisations can make well-informed recruitment decisions.

Who?
- Our data was based on the responses we gathered from 163 people who are currently engaged in recruiting academic, research, science and related staff.

About jobs.ac.uk

jobs.ac.uk is the world's leading job board for academic, research, science and related careers. Launched by the University of Warwick in 1998, we're a trusted brand with a global reach that's unmatched in our sector.

Our website can connect you to an unrivalled global network of academics, researchers, scientists and other higher education professionals.

Key facts about jobs.ac.uk

- **1.5 million unique users each month**

- **554,000+ PhD qualified jobseekers**

- **Used by over 7,600 organisations worldwide including 1,000+ universities**

- **More than 21,000 job searches a day from the UK, USA, Europe, Middle East & Asia Pacific**

- **Ten times more effective than other media combined for academic and research posts.**

If you'd like to advertise a role, please get in touch using the contact details on the back page. Our team can help you put together a targeted or bespoke recruitment campaign.

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