

Exploring the Role of Digital Wallets and Digital Credentials in a Changing Job Market

Insights from jobseekers on digital credentials and wallets

About this project

Project to Catalyze Skills-First Practices

JFF supports transformational efforts to champion skills-first practices, reshaping how workers, employers, and educational institutions communicate and assess skills, experience, and knowledge. The Project to Catalyze Skills-First Practices, funded by Walmart, seeks to redefine and enhance the way an array of actors – including employers, policymakers, learning and education providers, philanthropy, and workforce development leaders – interpret and utilize information about a worker’s skills and experiences.

The Verifiable Credentials Project

The Verifiable Credentials Project, incubated at JFF Labs, supports development of an open standards-based infrastructure for digital credentials.



About the survey

Employers seeking to transition to skills-based hiring need a reliable way to evaluate candidates.

Digital credentials, especially those issued using the W3C Verifiable Credentials Data Model (VCDM), are a secure, transparent way for jobseekers to communicate all the skills they have gained. As digital wallets containing digital credentials become more prevalent, jobseekers now can store and share learning and employment records (LERs) to pursue job opportunities. JFFLabs surveyed jobseekers to provide a snapshot of how digital wallets and digital credentials are being used in the job search and hiring processes. The data shows baseline usage of these tools by jobseekers to track adoption and progress across the education and employment ecosystem over time.

For the online survey administered by Morning Consult, 2,049 jobseekers answered 21 questions on these topics between February 5 to 11, 2024. The data was weighted to approximate a target sample based on age, gender, race, educational attainment, and region. Results from the full survey have a margin of error of plus or minus 2 percentage points.

Note: Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number throughout and may not add up to 100.



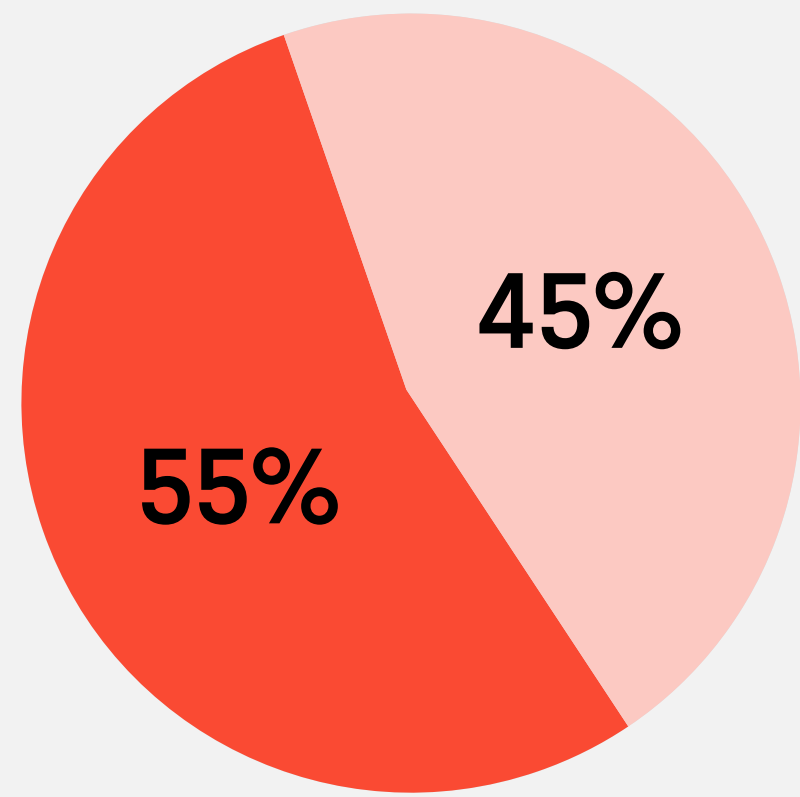
ABOUT THE RESPONDENTS

Demographic

2,049 Jobseekers

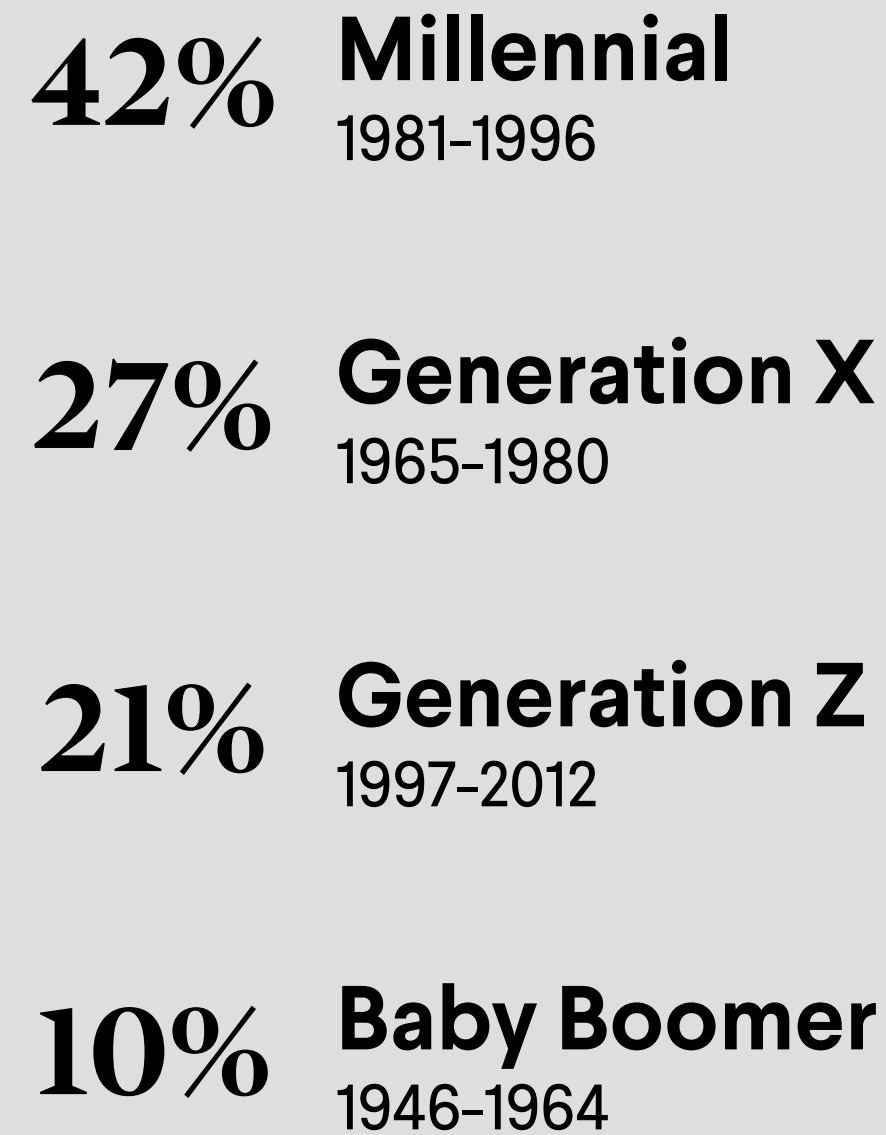
**JFF strives to use equitable and inclusive language in all our published content. When we share insights or data from individuals or organizations whose language choices differ from our own, we use their terms to preserve accuracy. See our [Language Matters guide](#) for more information.*

Gender

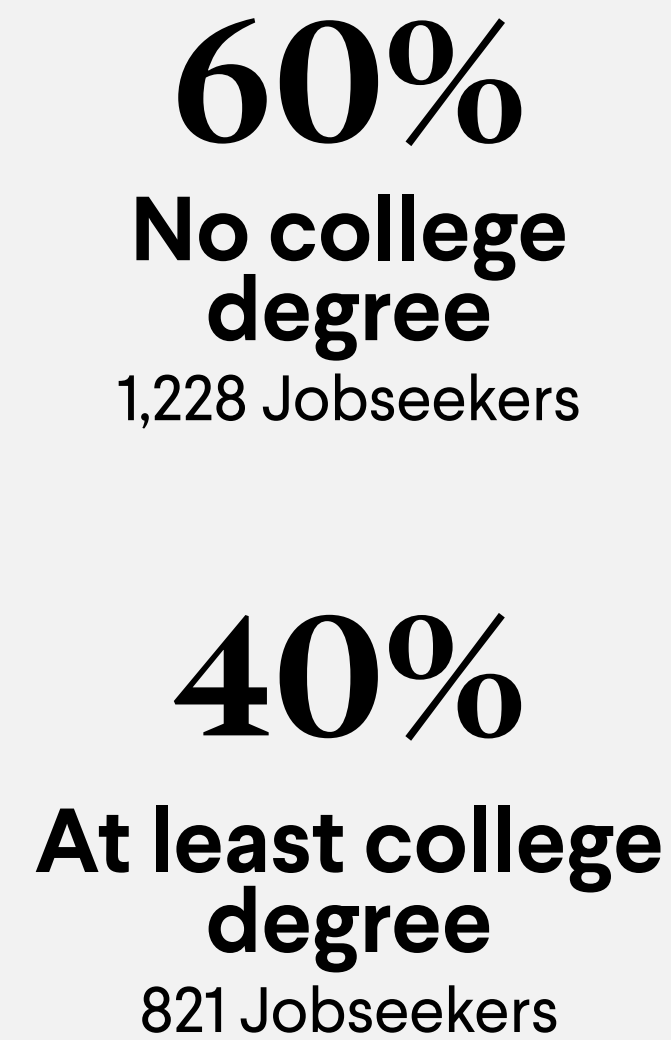


Male
Female

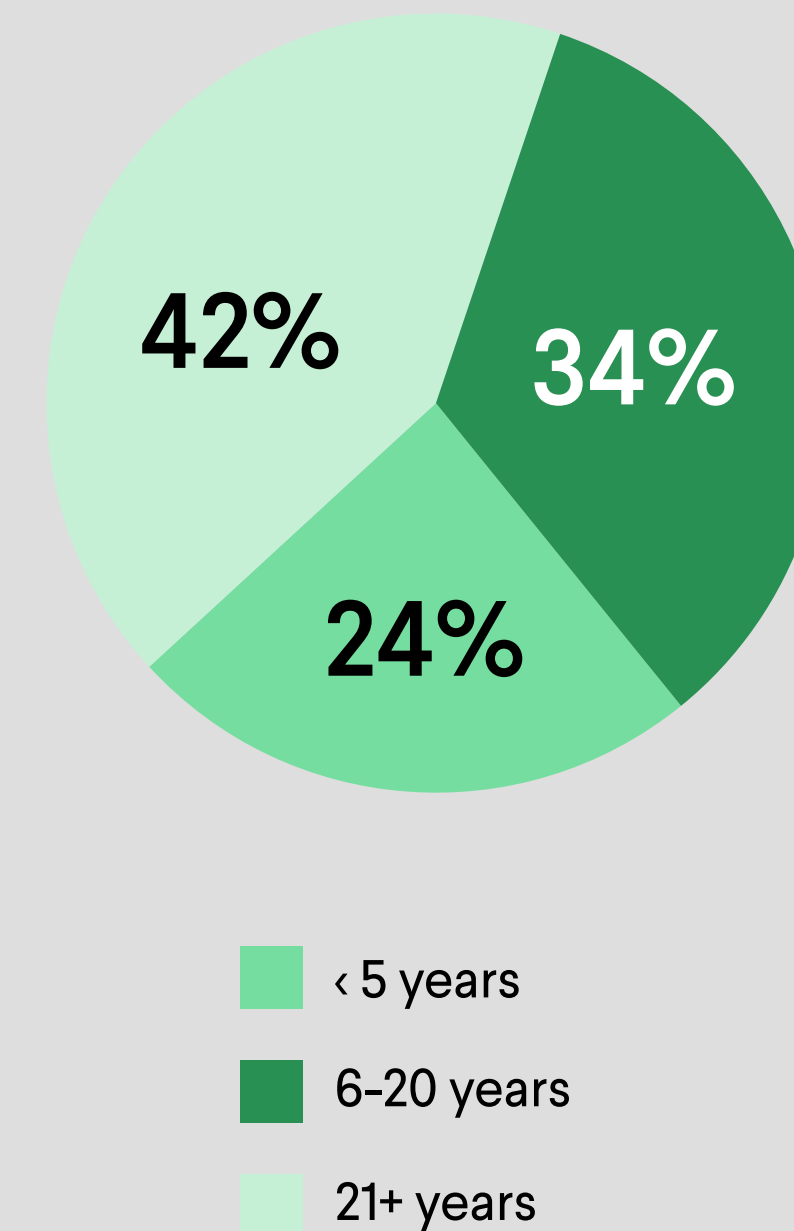
Generation



Education



Work Experience

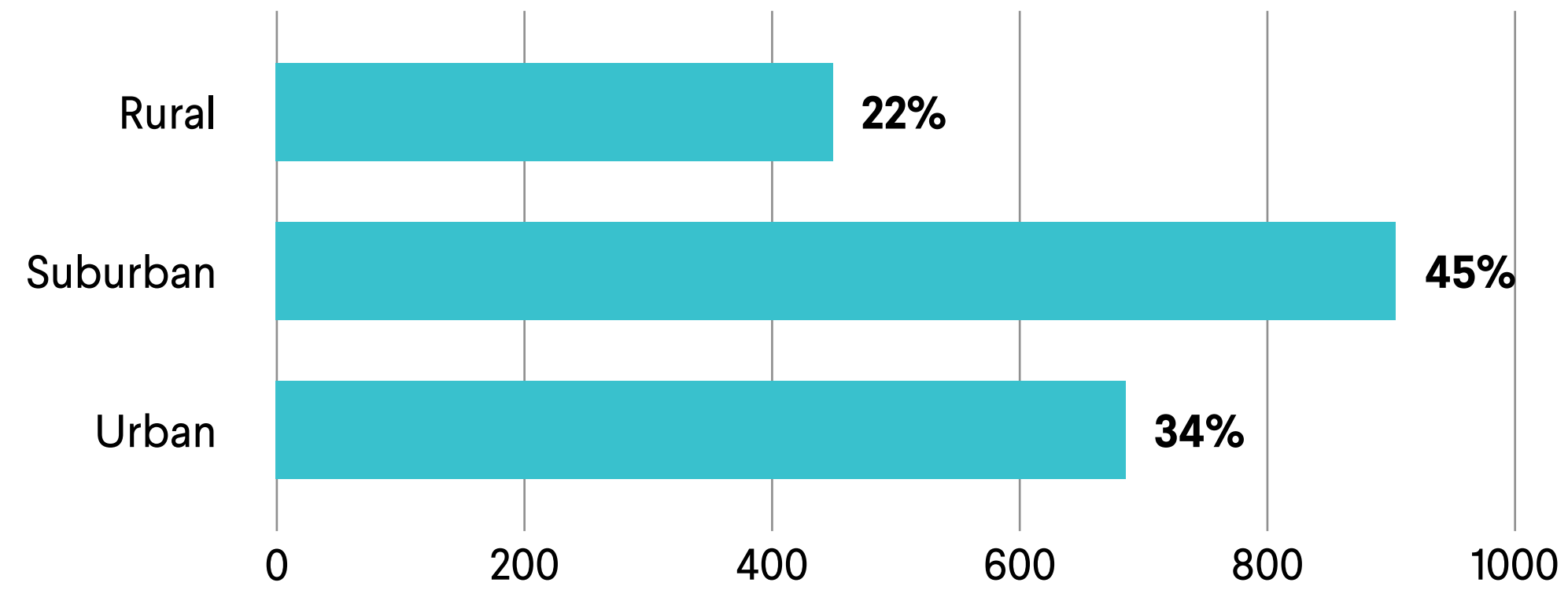


< 5 years
6-20 years
21+ years

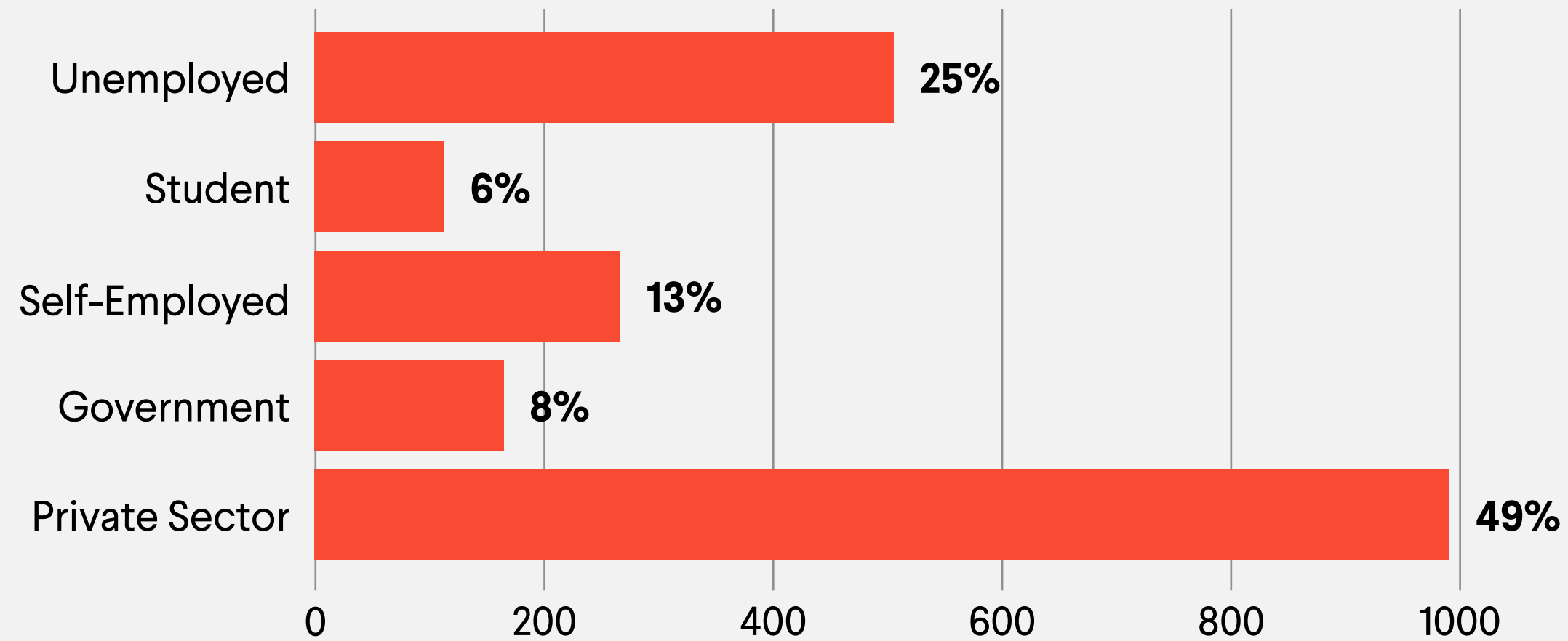
Race and Ethnicity*



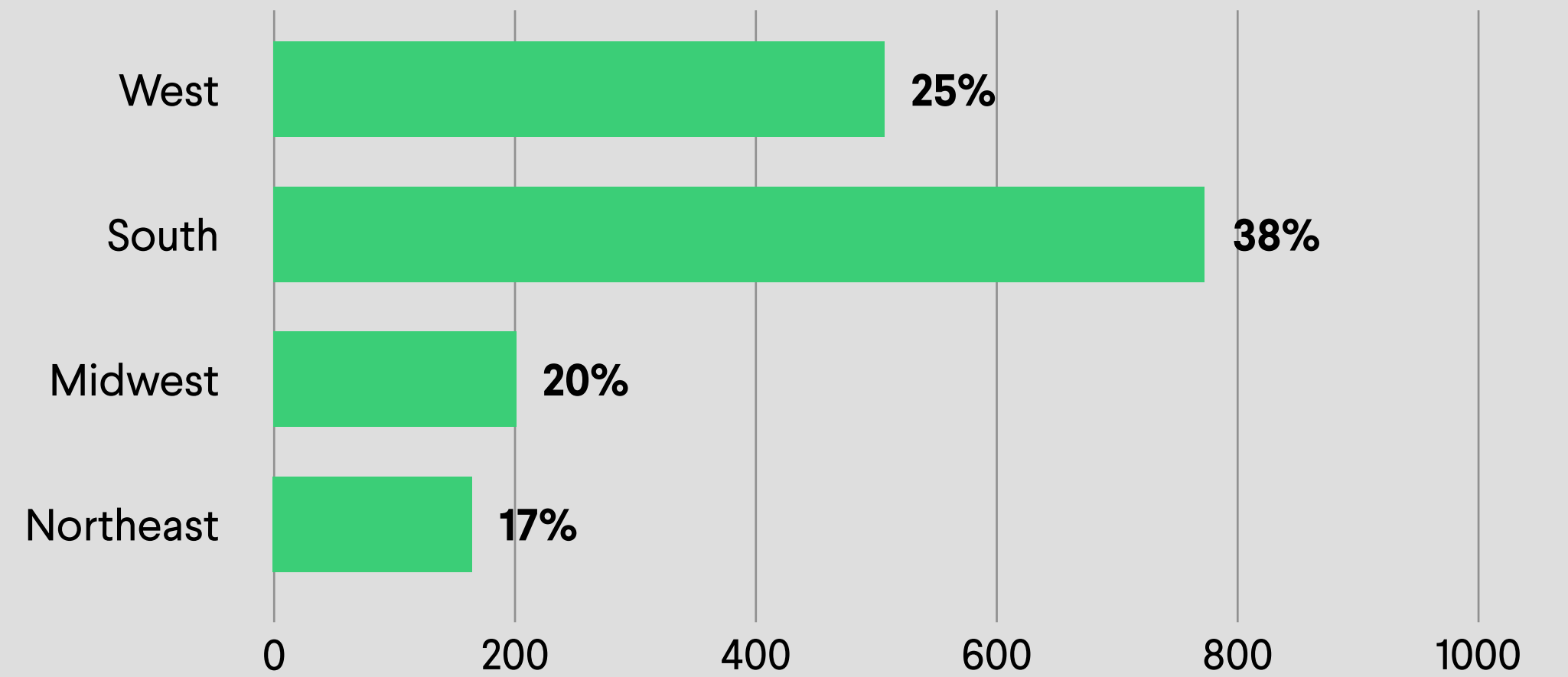
Community



Employer



Region



What do jobseekers think about digital credentials?

46% of jobseekers are familiar or somewhat familiar with digital credentials.



What is a digital credential?

Digital credentials are digital records of your accomplishments in education and employment. These credentials can represent an activity, achievement, certification, or skill you have. For example, they can be a digital version of a paper credential you have (i.e., your high school diploma, driver's license) or something issued by an institution or employer that shows you've mastered a skill (i.e., customer service, data analysis). People sometimes share these credentials with potential employers using a digital wallet, where the wallet technology makes it easy for the employer to verify that the credential is authentic. *Definition provided in the survey*

To ensure interoperability, privacy, and user control, digital credentials should be designed and issued using the W3C VCDM. The digital credentials in this survey contain a mix of both.

1 out of 4 of respondents have used digital credentials in their resume or job application materials.



The 24% of respondents that have used digital credentials in their job search tended to be younger, more highly educated, and wealthier jobseekers.

57%

Millennial and Gen Z

20%

Less than a college degree

20%

Make under \$50,000

14%

Unemployed



Almost 9 in 10

**digital credential users say including them
in their applications has been helpful in
their job-seeking process.**

77% of digital credential users say communicating their skills to prospective employers was easy.



After learning about digital credentials, 65% of respondents indicated they would be interested in using them in their job search. A majority of these did not have a college degree or current employment.

66%

Gen Z

60%

Less than a college degree

58%

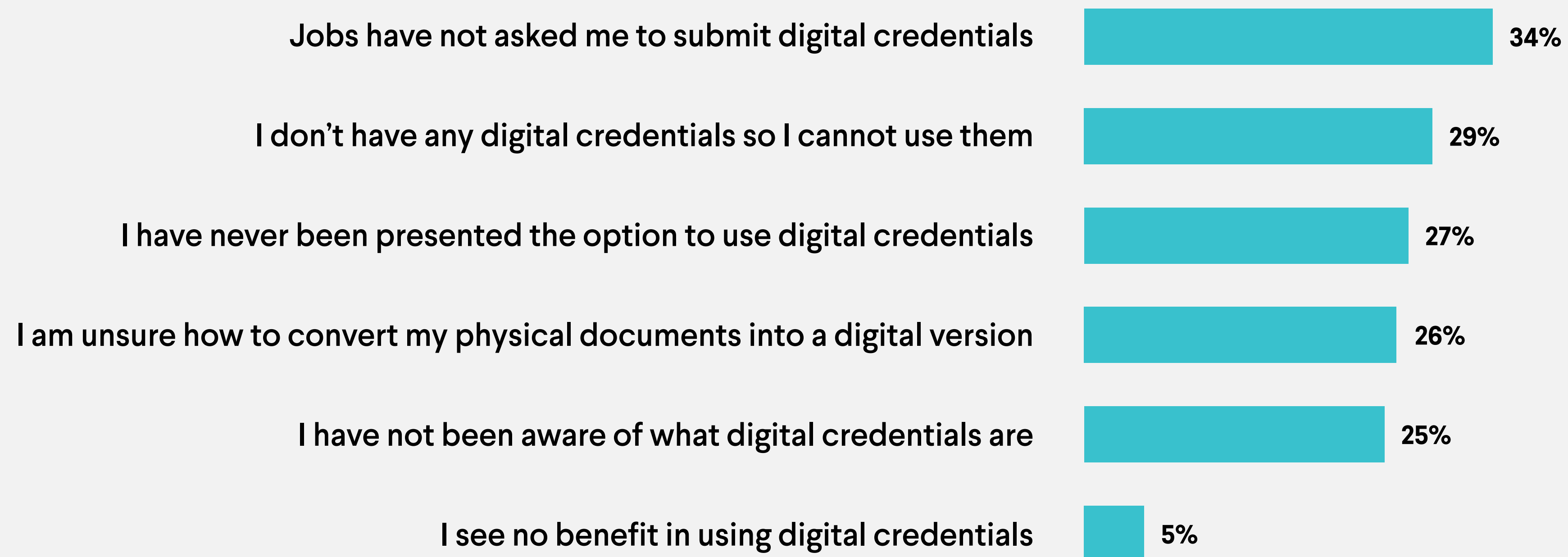
Make under \$50,000

53%

Unemployed

Why were digital credentials not used?

Among jobseekers who have not used digital credentials, the most-selected reason why is that they were not asked to include them in job applications or they do not have any to include. Very few say it was because they saw no benefit to using them.



What do jobseekers think about digital wallets?

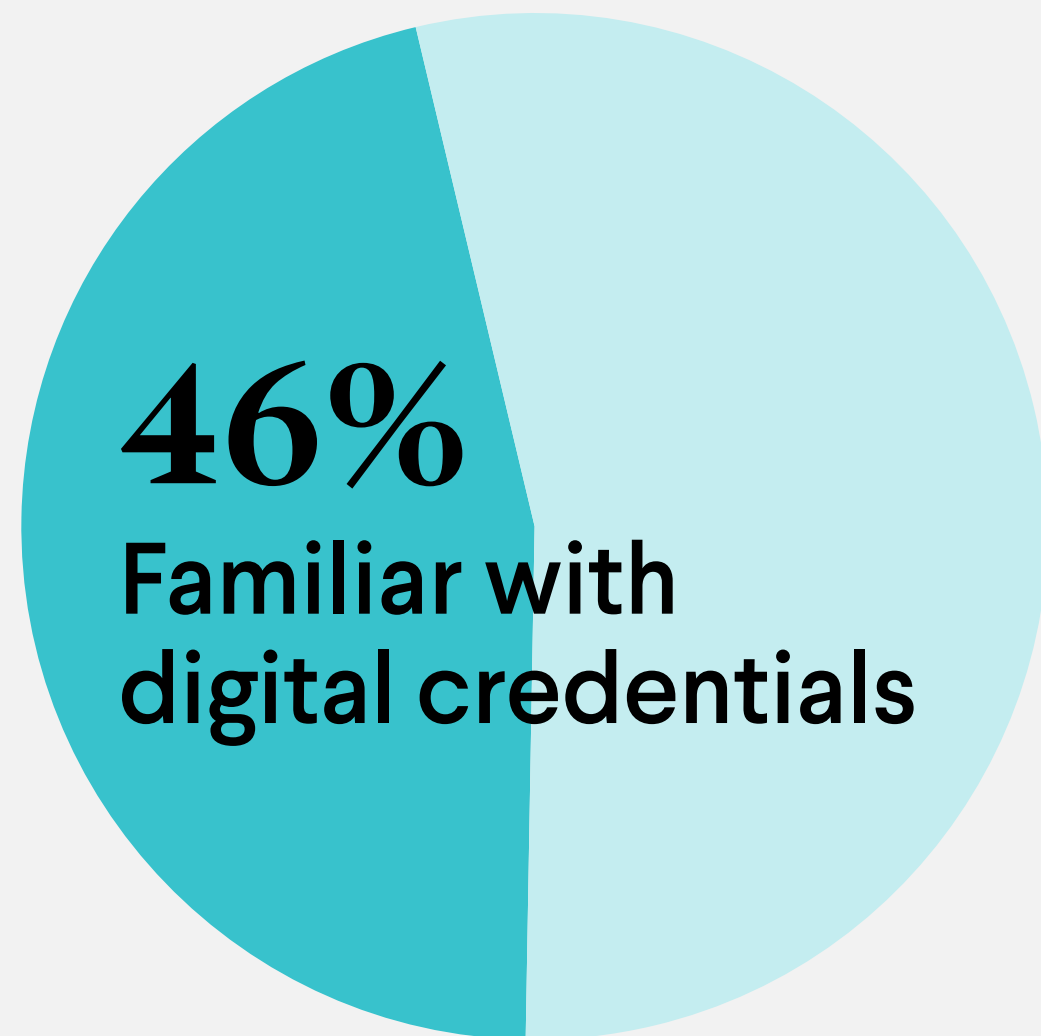
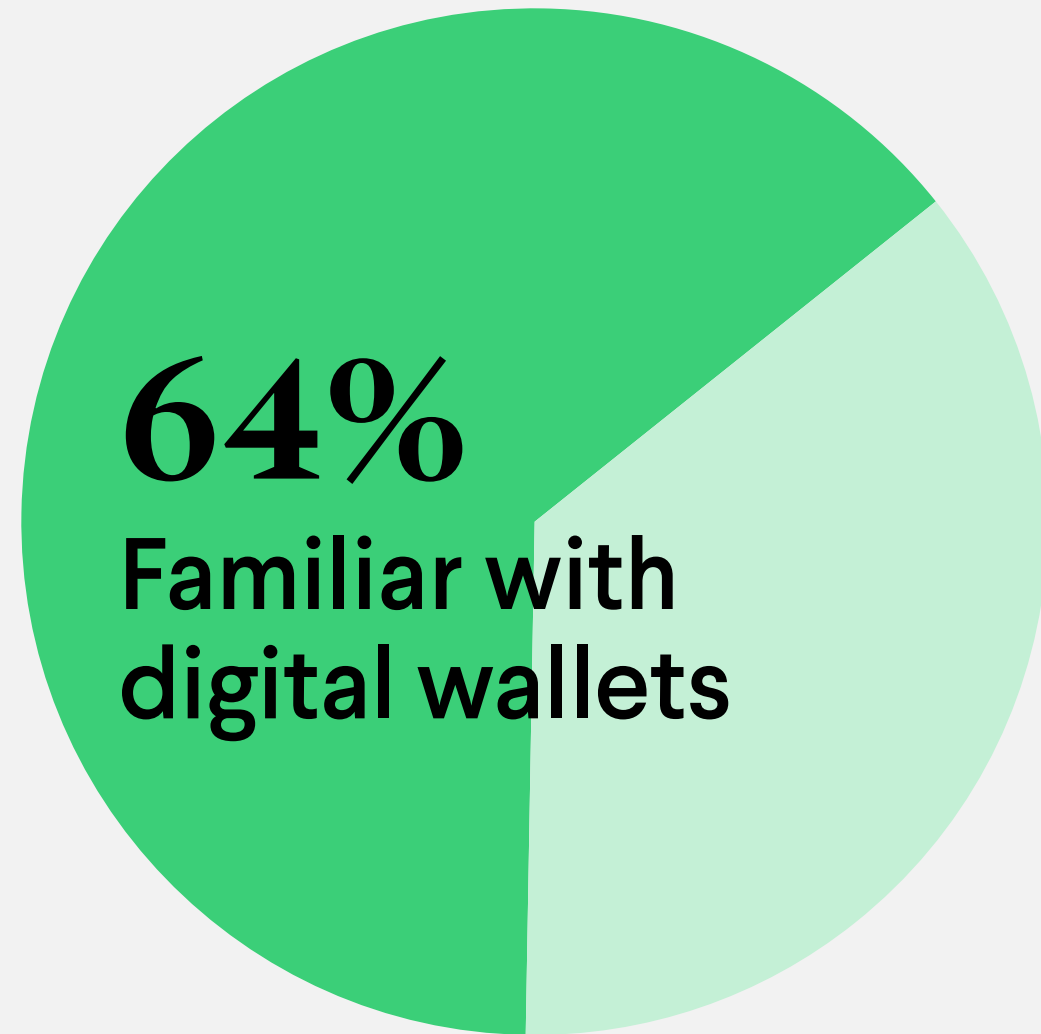
64% of respondents are familiar with digital wallets.



What is a digital wallet?

A digital wallet stores your credentials and allows you to share them with others as needed. They can be apps you download to your phone or web-based applications. For example, in a career wallet, you might have the ability to interact with employers, educational institutions, certification authorities, and other entities you've been associated with in your professional journey. This allows you to request digitally signed documents that confirm your work history, academic achievements, skills, and qualifications. *Definition of digital wallet provided to jobseekers in the survey*

With the over 1 million different credentials a person can earn through academic learning, non-academic learning, and workforce experiences, open-standards-based interoperability allows the credentials, in addition to the skills information they contain, to flow freely between jobseekers, employers, and institutions, no matter which vendors or platforms they choose



People are more familiar with digital wallets than with digital credentials.

75% of jobseekers would find a digital wallet containing their qualifications, credentials, and skills to be helpful in their potential job search.



Respondents who would find digital wallets useful tend to be younger, less educated, and make less money.

80%

Gen Z

73%

Less than a college degree

71%

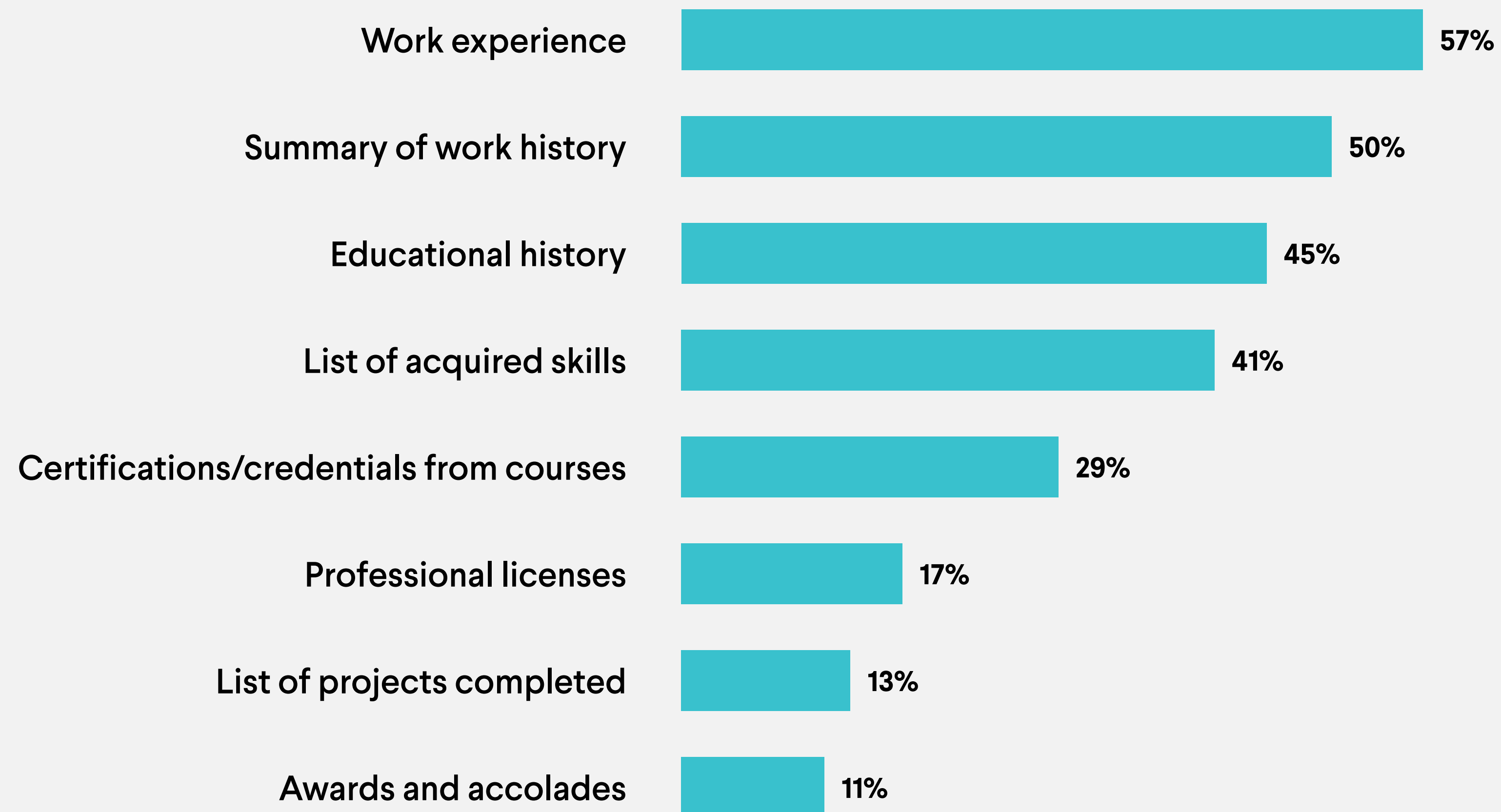
Make under \$50,000

64%

Unemployed

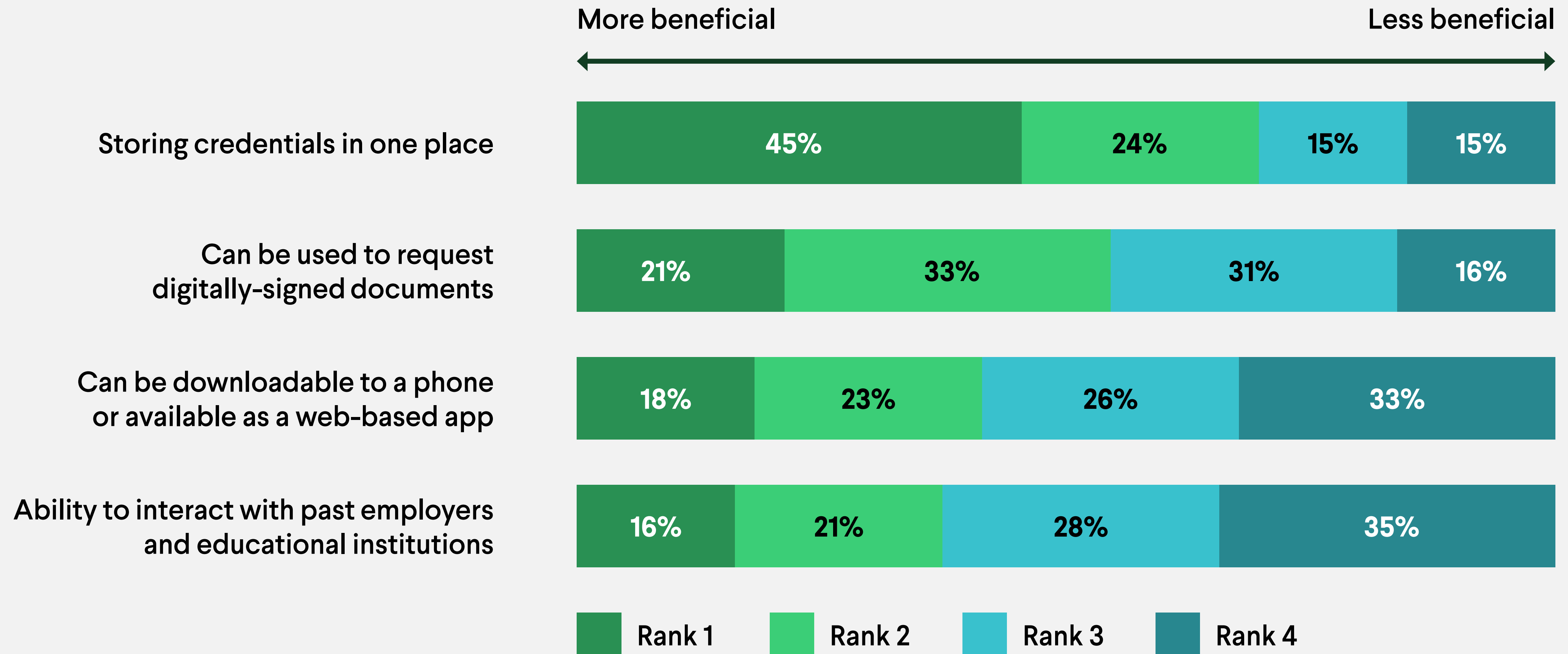
What do people want in a digital wallet?

At least half of jobseekers would include their work experience and work history in a digital wallet. They are least likely to include awards, accolades, and completed projects.



How can digital wallets be useful to jobseekers?

When asked to rank the utility of digital wallets, jobseekers said they are interested in storing their credentials in one place.



Do digital credentials change the
job search experience?

18% of jobseekers have had digital credentials requested by an employer during their job search.



Respondents who have been asked to submit digital credentials are older, employed, and hold college degrees.

21%

Gen Z

15%

Less than a college degree

14%

Make under \$50,000

10%

Unemployed

**58% of users
say they would include
digital credentials
even if not required on
applications.**



The opportunity

DIGITAL CREDENTIAL USE

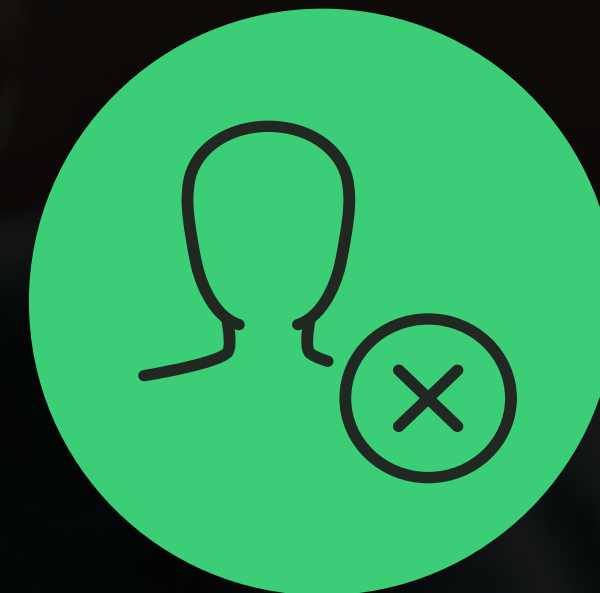
The four types of jobseekers.



EXPLORERS



ADOPTERS



INEXPERIENCED
USERS



BYSTANDERS

Explorers

Explorers are eager to improve their job search using digital credentials. They want to learn more about storing their credentials in digital wallets as they continue to gain skills from learning and work experiences. Explorers could benefit from interactive workshops or hands-on demonstrations coupled with support from current adopters.

58% Under 45 years old

Mixed gender

56% earn less than \$50,000

“

I have never heard of digital credentials, but I want to learn how they can help my job search.



63% less than a college degree

31%

Optimistic about job search

32%

Unemployed

Adopters

Adopters have experience sharing their skills and experiences with employers regardless of whether they were requested. They can continue to build their LERs by requesting digital credentials to store in their digital wallets. Employers could encourage continued use by offering incentives to use digital credentials or seeking feedback to strengthen product development.

75% Under 45 years old

66% male

38% earn less than \$50,000

“

I have used digital credentials in my job search.



51% less than a college degree

42%

Express optimism about job search

13%

Unemployed

Inexperienced Users

Inexperienced users are indifferent toward the use of credentials but could benefit the most from using them. Bringing these users on board will require employer assistance, as this group is more likely to engage if digital credentials become a required part of the job application process. Other support could include sharing positive personal stories from adopters in similar situations who used digital credentials to find a quality job.

55% Under 45 years old

60% female

66% earn less than \$50,000

“

I have never heard of digital credentials, and I am not interested in learning more.



80% less than a college degree

25%

Optimistic about job search

45%

Unemployed

Bystanders

Because they are already aware of digital credentials, bystanders provide the best opportunity to convert to a digital credential user. These jobseekers should receive support in learning how to download a digital wallet, requesting and creating credentials, and connecting to skills-based job opportunities.

66% Under 45 years old

59% male

43% earn less than \$50,000

“

I am aware of digital credentials but have not used them in my job searches.



55% less than a college degree

38%

Optimistic about job search

20%

Unemployed

“

We know that skills-based talent practices are more complicated than removing degree requirements because employers will still need to evaluate what a candidate can do. **The data clarifies the need for employers, technology developers, and workforce development partners to work together** to fully transition to a skill-based economy that benefits jobseekers and employers alike.

Kristina Francis



Actions informed by data.

These survey findings provide a snapshot of how jobseekers are using digital credentials and wallets within today's current talent processes. Based on this data, we note three major opportunities for collaboration between employers, technology developers, and workforce development partners.

Encourage skills-based talent practices by supporting employers in using digital credentials.

Expand the talent marketplace to engage with potential digital credential users.

Develop new technology to support the skills ecosystem.



Encourage skills-based talent practices.

For employers, initial preparations to transition to skills-based hiring involved removing degree requirements from job postings and listing the skills required for each position. While over 1 million credentials are available in the United States, the survey data shows 19% of employers currently ask jobseekers for digital credentials during their job search. There could be many reasons for this, including employers not connecting digital credentials with skills-based talent practices or needing assistance to get started.

This survey indicates 58% of jobseekers would include digital credentials in their job search even when not requested. Considering that predisposition, how can we fully use digital credentials as a tool in skills-based hiring and best support employers to employ digital credentials to evaluate candidates?

Developers and employers could work together to build solutions that help employers identify the credentials that most likely contain the skills to fill their workforce needs. Employers and their workforce development partners can collaborate to evaluate the process for using information about skills in credentials and which types of credentials would improve accuracy and efficiency. Finally, employers can also evaluate their own technology strategy to identify suggested improvements to any existing HR systems or get tools to identify and verify skills readily from credentials. Together, these stakeholders can also employ digital credentials to build the skills to retain their current workforce, using them to recognize current employees for accomplishments and as an internal pipeline management system.

Expand the talent marketplace.

Finding new ways to communicate qualifications can benefit jobseekers. Of those who responded to this survey, those who have used digital credentials have the lowest unemployment rate at 13%, and more than half have a college degree. Those who have never heard of and are uninterested in learning about digital credentials have a 45% unemployment rate, and 80% have less than a college degree.

The potential of skills-based hiring is greatest for those without degrees, giving them tools to communicate the skills they've gained through work experiences to find a quality job. The opportunity for these jobseekers to apply for positions using digital credentials would open up a diverse talent pool for employers who might have traditionally overlooked highly skilled candidates for positions. We should examine effective ways to engage jobseekers currently not using and not interested in using digital credentials.

For example, learning providers could consider targeted testimonial campaigns, and workforce development professionals can provide opportunities for jobseekers to explore how the technology works.

Employers will also require additional support in evaluating candidates using digital credentials, such as trainings for hiring managers or integrating these tools with existing HR management systems.

Employers in the United States are not a homogenous group and can span from corporations to small business owners to self-employed individuals. This data shows that while students use digital credentials the most, public-sector employees are most curious about them, and self-employed jobseekers are interested in using credentials to verify their past work experiences. Further exploration is warranted to see how digital credentials and digital wallets can aid diverse groups of employers and jobseekers.

Develop new technology.

To meet the requirements of jobseekers across generations and education levels, we need a more active marketplace of digital credentials and wallet solutions built using open standards. Digital credentials issued using a W3C data model allow interoperability and let people select wallet products and credentialing solutions specific to their needs.

In addition, to fully embrace digital credentials and wallets and fully transition to a skills-based hiring ecosystem, we need solutions that can help translate skills to credentials and make credential recommendations for employers writing job descriptions; performance platform tools enabling all staff members to award digital credentials easily, from line managers to senior manager; and job search platforms that allow people to share their skills data, where employers can find the skills profiles that match their needs.

Technology developers alone cannot create these features to meet marketplace demands. They need the feedback of employers, jobseekers, community partners, and other primary users to create products all the users can rely on. Wallet companies should invest in exploring funded partnerships with communities interested in using their products, while employers and jobseekers must clearly define and communicate their needs and what works for them.

Conclusion

This first-of-its-kind survey offers a glimpse into the experience of the jobseeker in the evolving landscape of skills-based hiring practices and the role digital credentials and wallets play in today's job market. The data shows collaboration between employers and solution providers is essential to streamline the integration of digital credentials into hiring processes, ensuring ease of access and utilization for both employers and jobseekers. Workforce developers also need to explain the benefits and functionalities of digital credentials to jobseekers, empowering individuals to effectively communicate their skills and experiences, regardless of educational background.

Ultimately, the path forward involves collaboration among developers, employers, jobseekers, and community partners to co-create solutions that meet the dynamic demands of the workforce. This data should spark a more active marketplace of varied product offerings and feedback-driven

development. With these tools in hand, we can design a more inclusive marketplace, where digital credentials truly empower individuals to showcase and use their skills effectively across their careers. This inclusive approach not only enhances individual opportunities but also strengthens the resilience and adaptability of the broader workforce ecosystem.

[Click here](#) to download the full data set and survey questionnaire.

About JFF

Jobs for the Future (JFF) drives transformation of the U.S. workforce and education systems to achieve equitable economic advancement for all. www.jff.org

About JFF's Language Choices

JFF is committed to using language that promotes equity and human dignity, rooted in the strengths of the people and communities we serve. We develop our content with the awareness that language can perpetuate privilege but also can educate, empower, and drive positive change to create a more equitable society. We will continually reevaluate our efforts as language usage continues to evolve.

See our [Language Matters guide](#) for more information.



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SURVEY CONDUCTED BY



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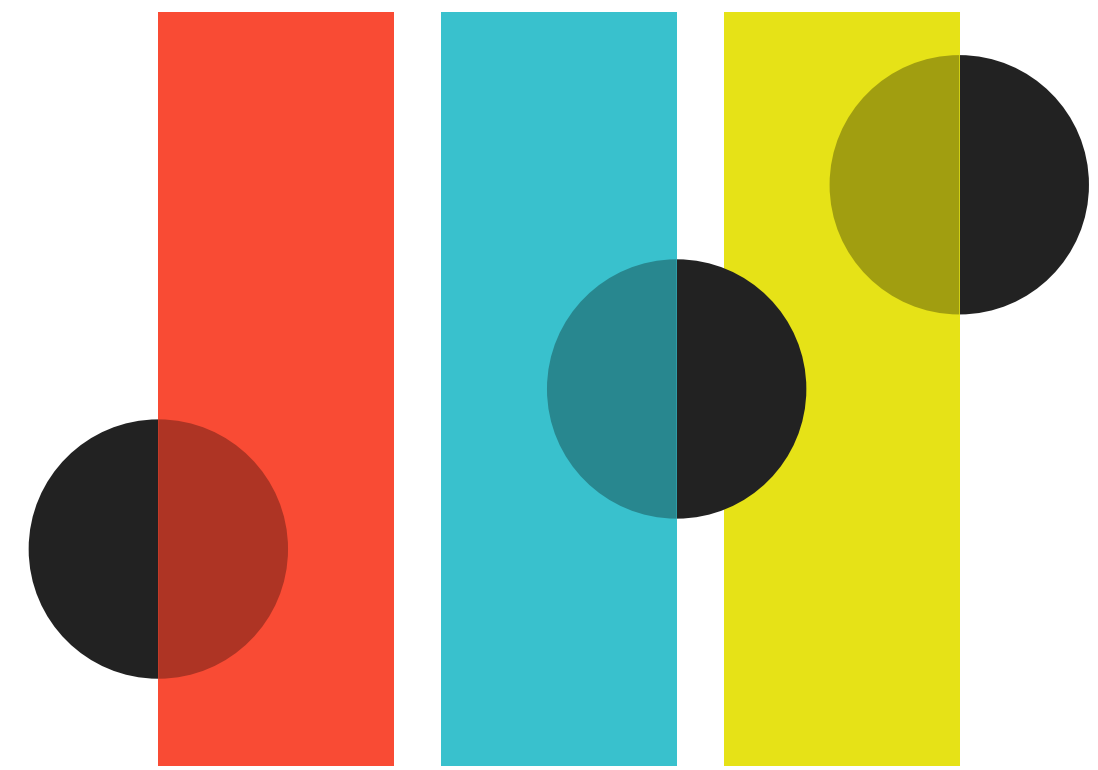


This survey is made possible through the generous support of Walmart.

About Philanthropy at Walmart

Walmart.org represents the philanthropic efforts of Walmart and the Walmart Foundation. By focusing where the business has unique strengths, Walmart.org works to tackle key social and environmental issues and collaborate with others to spark long-lasting systemic change. Walmart has stores in 19 countries, employs more than 2.1 million associates and does business with thousands of suppliers who, in turn, employ millions of people. Walmart.org is helping people live better by supporting programs to accelerate upward job mobility for frontline workers, advance equity, address hunger, build inclusive economic opportunity for people in supply chains, protect and restore nature, reduce waste and emissions, and build strong communities where Walmart operates. To learn more, visit www.walmart.org or connect on Twitter @Walmartorg.

Disclaimer: The research included in this report was made possible through funding by Walmart.org. The findings, conclusions, and recommendations presented in this report are those of Jobs for the Future alone and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of Walmart.org.



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