

National Survey

Employers Universally
Using Background
Checks to Protect
Employees, Customers
and the Public

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Executive Summary

Today's employers face an ever-evolving landscape when it comes to making informed decisions related to safety, qualifications and risk. Many companies, particularly in the "gig economy," are in uncharted territory, while others are seeking to navigate a patchwork of federal and state regulations.

The results demonstrated that nearly all human resources professionals now utilize background screening, citing public safety as their top priority. Employers of all sizes and locations report using screening as part of their onboarding process, typically after an interview or job offer.

When asked about the challenges they face when conducting background screening, these professionals were most likely to cite the length of time to get results. NAPBS members echo that this is a predominant challenge. They cite the trend of ever-decreasing availability of identifiers—such as dates of birth—in public record data, which requires additional time in researching. The survey also provided a clearer picture of how and what employers are screening.

About the Survey

The National Association of Professional Background Screeners (NAPBS) commissioned HR.com to conduct the national survey of 1,528 human resources (HR) professionals. The respondents collectively had operations in all 50 states. The survey gauged how companies approach background screening in order to identify today's trends and practices.



Background Checks Are Nearly Universal

In an era when workplace security is more important than ever, employers are increasingly turning to background checks. Nearly all the employers surveyed—96 percent—stated their organization conducts one or more types of employment background screening. A background check for employment purposes, in very basic terms, is the compilation of information regarding an individual which may be considered when determining eligibility for a position.

- 83 percent of respondents screen all full-time employees
- 67 percent of respondents screened all part-time employees

Of the four percent that stated they do not conduct background checks:

- 37 percent stated they use other tools or methods to screen applicants
- 29 percent cited cost as the reason
- 27 percent could not state a reason why their company does not conduct background screenings



Safety Is the Driving Force

Public safety was overwhelmingly cited as the top reason employers conduct background checks. A full 89 percent stated they conduct checks to protect employees, customers and others. In a time when workplace shootings and other violence are often news topics, employers are responding by implementing screening programs to protect employees, customers and communities.

Other top reasons cited for screening:

- Improving quality of hires (52 percent)
- Protecting company reputation (45 percent)
- Law/Regulation (44 percent)



Employers Recognize the Importance of Accuracy, but Are Challenged with the Length of Time to Get Results

Human resource professionals highlighted the need for accuracy in their screening, with 98 percent responding they believe it is “very important” to their organization that the checks are accurate. At the same time, 62 percent stated that the length of time to get results is the most significant challenge facing their organization when conducting background checks. Cost was the second most cited challenge at 60 percent.

The results send a strong message to those states or locales that are considering or are already removing identifying information, such as addresses and dates of birth from public records. Redacting identifiers can lead to delays in hiring or result in applicants losing out on a job while the search for identifiers to confirm or refute that a record matches the applicant is ongoing. Identifiers are also crucial to ensuring the accuracy of background screenings.



Background Checks Are Utilized Nationwide by Employers of All Sizes, Primarily After Interview or Job Offer

Slightly more than half of the survey respondents represented companies with fewer than 99 employees (52 percent), with nearly a quarter (24 percent) of all respondents coming from companies with fewer than 24 employees. Nearly half (46 percent) represent privately held companies, with 37 percent representing non-profits. Sixty-one percent of companies perform fewer than 100 background screenings annually, compared with 28 percent that conduct 101 to 1,000 screenings. Six percent conduct 1,001 to 4,999 screenings, and less than 5 percent conduct 5,000 or more.

Eighty percent reported their organization has a documented screening policy, with only 10 percent saying they did not and 9 percent stating they did not know. Most companies wait to conduct a background screen until after a job interview or conditional job offer.

- A full 86 percent conduct a background screen after the job interview, including 55 percent that wait until after a conditional job offer is made

Of the 96 percent of employers that reported conducting background screening, when asked whether screening was conducted at any point other than the initial hiring/onboarding process:

- 57 percent conduct a background screening only during the hiring process
- 15 percent report conducting screenings at times other than the initial hiring/onboarding because they are required by law to do so
- 11 percent conduct screenings at times other than the initial hiring/onboarding process for cause

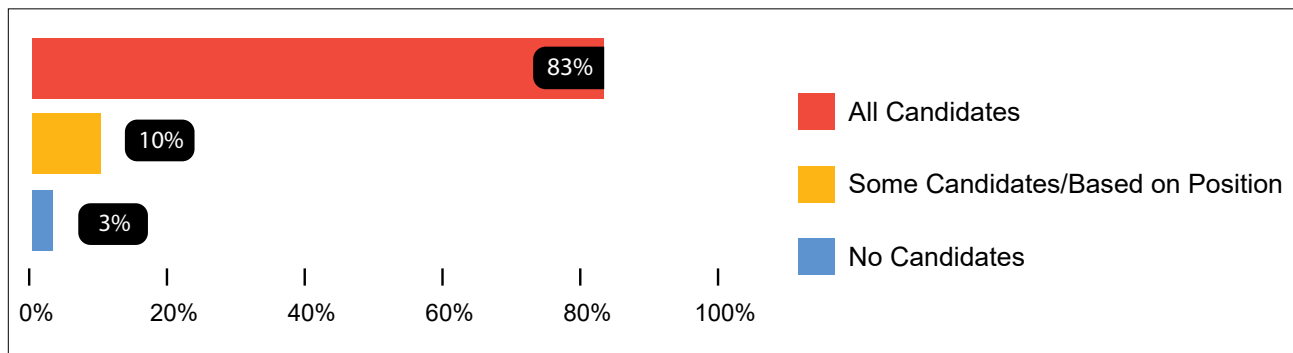


Components of a Background Check: What's Common and What's Not

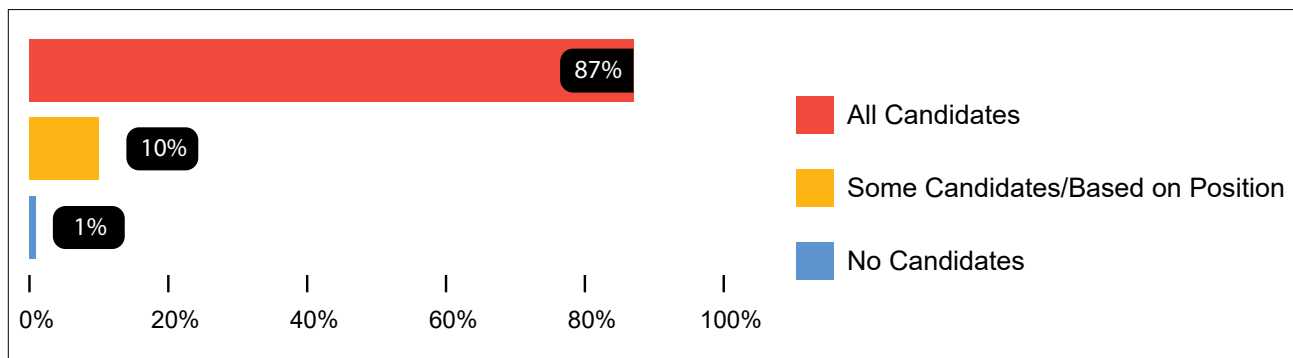
The vast majority of respondents report including some form of criminal history check in the screening program (97 percent). On the other hand, 77 percent of employers currently do not use social media in their screening process, and only 5 percent use social media for all candidates.

The survey provided one of the most in-depth looks at exactly what types of background screenings are being conducted. These include:

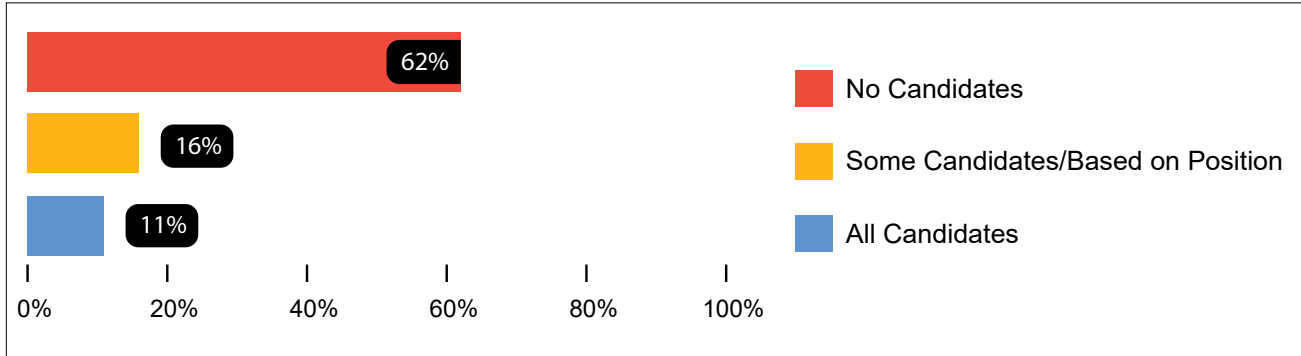
Type: Database/National Criminal



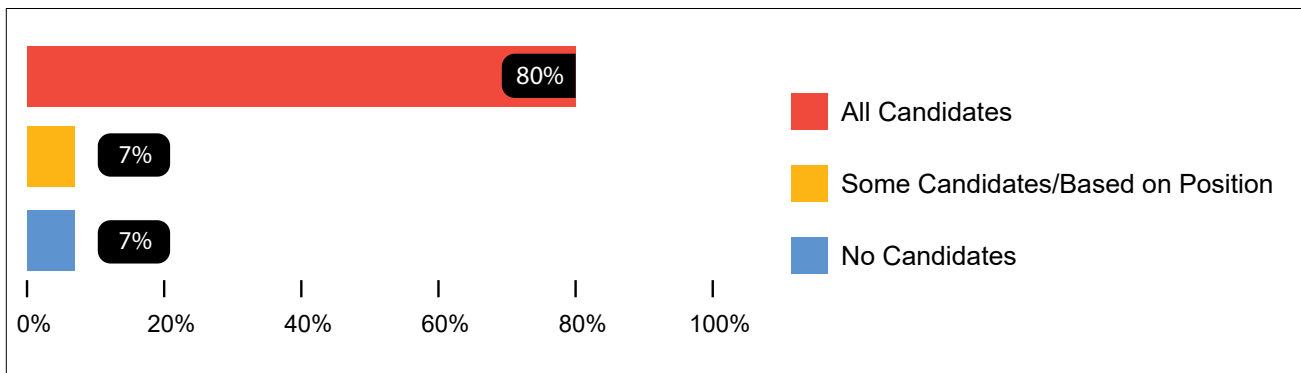
Type: County/Statewide Criminal Searches



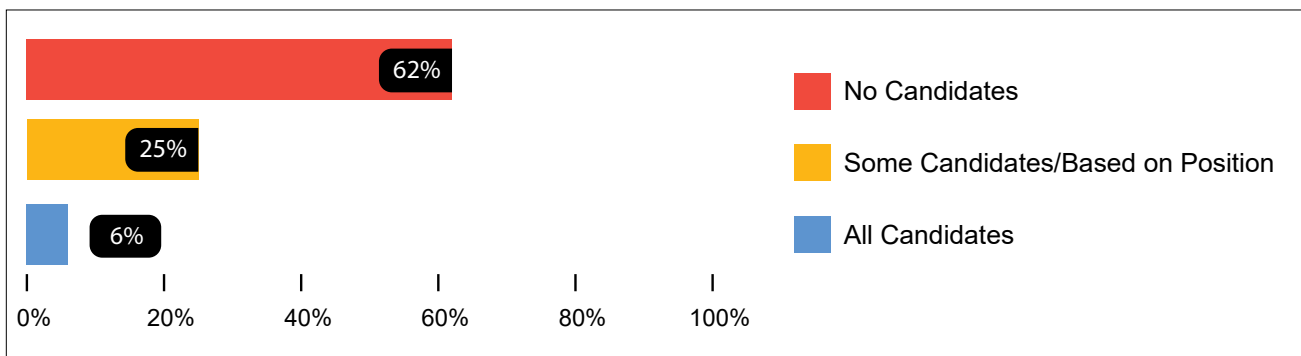
Type: Fingerprint Based Criminal *



Type: Social Security Number Trace **



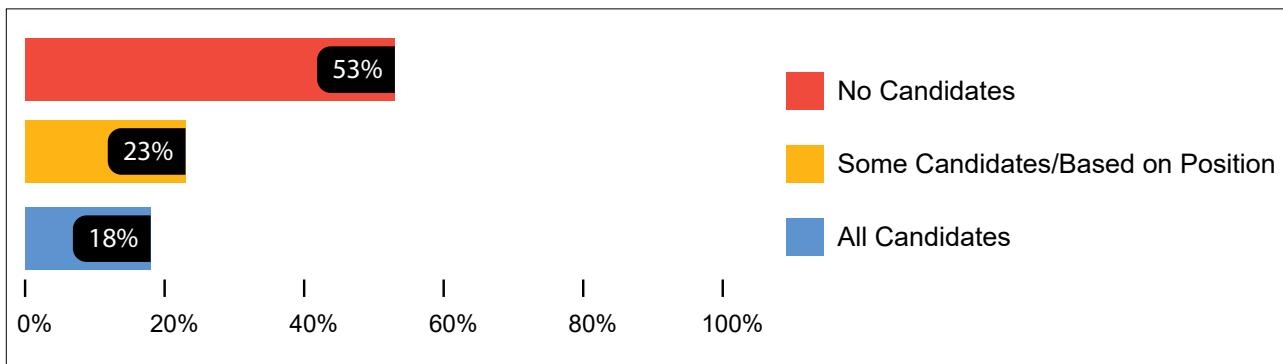
Type: Credit/Financial



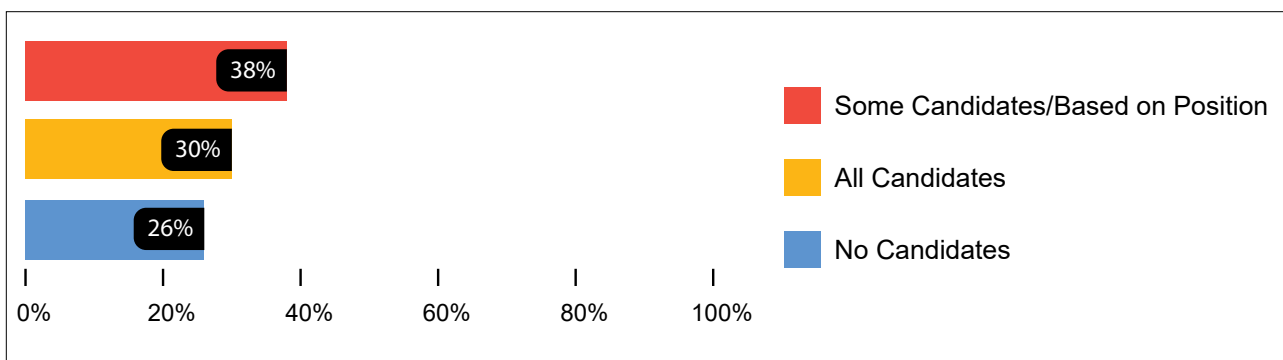
*Fingerprint based searches may only be used when statutorily authorized

**This may be referred to as an identity check, location search tool for adding criminal jurisdictions or similar

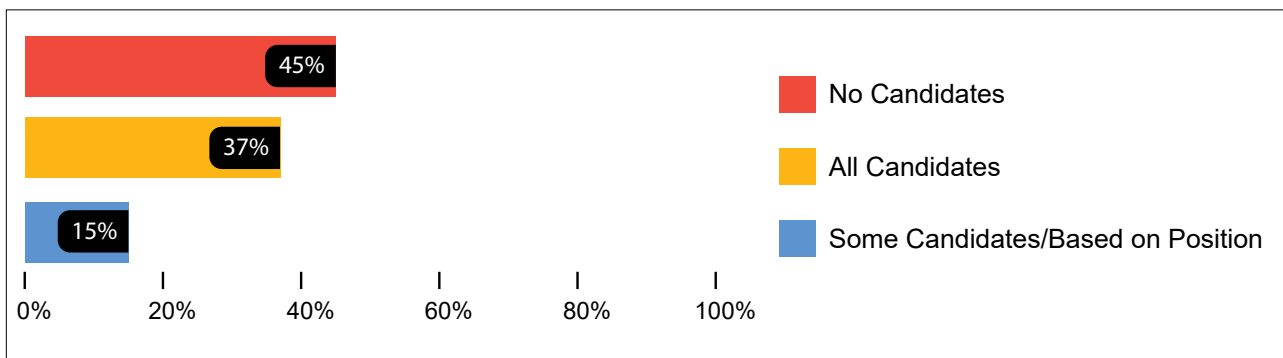
Type: Education Verification



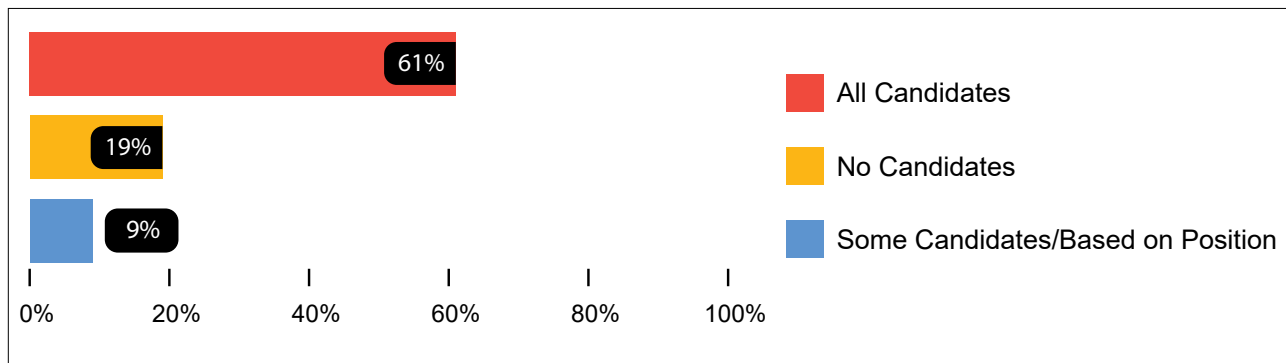
Type: Motor Vehicle Driving Records



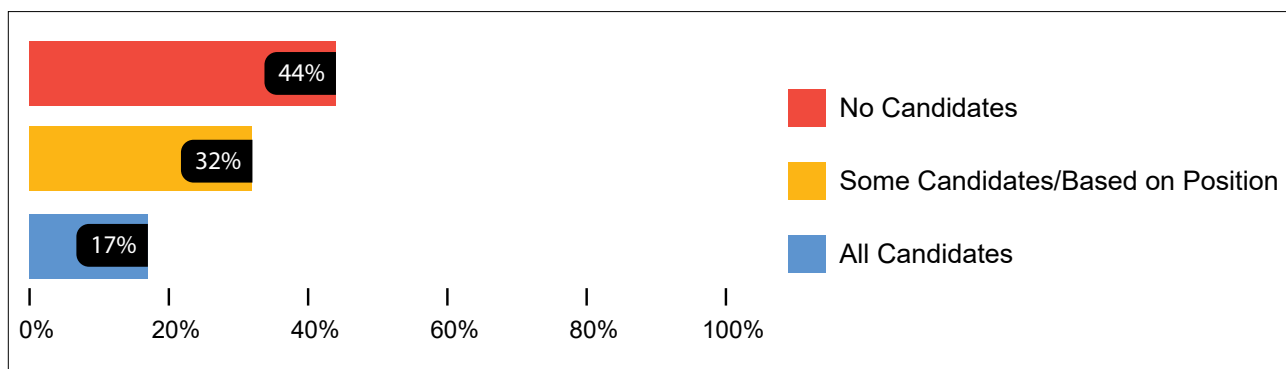
Type: Drug and Alcohol Testing



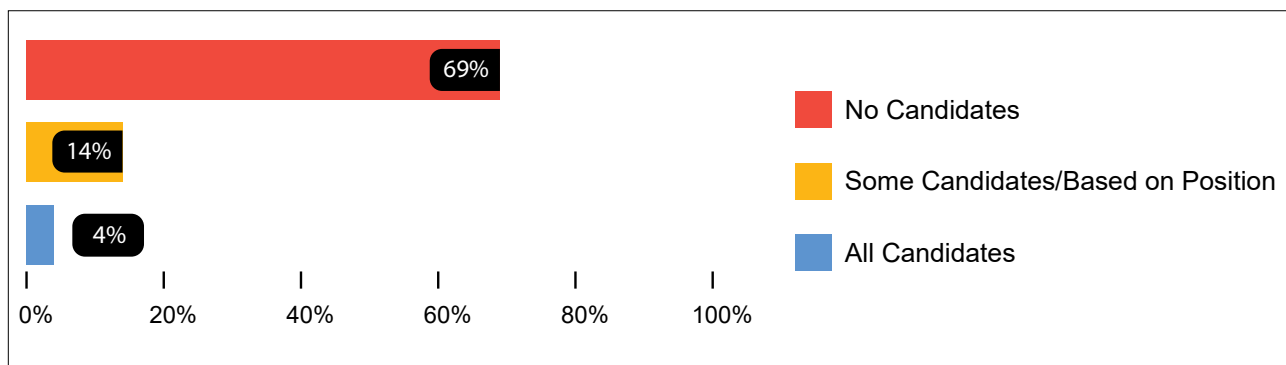
Type: Sex Offender Registry



Type: Professional License Verification



Type: International Checks



The most effective way for an applicant to determine which components may be included in a background check is to consult with their prospective employer, according to NAPBS. Additional resources can be found at www.napbs.com/resources/for-consumers/.

About NAPBS

Founded in 2003 as a not-for-profit trade association, the National Association of Professional Background Screeners (NAPBS) represents the interests of more than 800 member companies around the world that offer employment and tenant background screening. NAPBS provides relevant programs and training aimed at empowering members to better serve clients and maintain standards of excellence in the background screening profession, and presents a unified voice in the development of national, state, and local regulations. For more information, visit www.napbs.com.

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