Three Generations of Talent:

Who's Searching for Jobs Today

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Each Generation Brings Unique Strengths to the Labour Market

The labour market is undergoing dynamic changes that affect how employers source talent for today and tomorrow. In this report, we compare and contrast the subtle differences between Millennials, Generation Xers, and Baby Boomers, and anticipate how employers in the UK can successfully recruit candidates of any age.

We looked at how each generation searches for jobs and asked what their preferences could tell us about the future demographics of the workforce. As Baby Boomers retire, will Gen Xers be able to assume the leadership positions they leave? Will Millennials be qualified to fill subsequent gaps? And, will the future talent supply include the skills employers need?

We approached these questions by examining what each generation is looking for and where they're searching. The aggregated, anonymised data on Indeed offers insights into how these behaviours vary from generation to generation and how they're similar. For this study, we grouped a sample set of candidates into three broad age categories that correspond roughly to Millennials (aged 21 to 30), Gen Xers (aged 31-50), and Baby Boomers (aged 51-70).

As opposed to survey data, in which people from each generation self-report their preferences, these data give us a look at those preferences in action and reveal the top occupations, job titles, and cities that people of all ages are searching. Notably, we find that job seekers of any age respond to labour market conditions, searching more in occupations and locations where there are many jobs. It also reveals that the retirement of the Baby Boomers will affect the labour market in ways we can't fully predict yet, creating potential shortages in areas where they have the most interest and opening opportunities for younger generations at the same time.

Getting to Know the Generations

In how they search for jobs, Millennials, Generation Xers, and Baby Boomers are not so different from one another – they all search in occupations and locations where the most jobs are available. Still, there are some subtle variations between them all. Younger generations prefer mobile to desktop. They're looking more in Computer and Mathematical jobs and Business and Financial jobs than Baby Boomers. Those more experienced jobseekers are searching more often in blue-collar jobs than younger generations –Transportation jobs and Construction jobs draw their attention.

		Preferred Device	Top Occupation	Most Distinctive Query
(M)	**Millennials** 21 to 30 years	📱	Office & Administrative Support	Bank
(X)	**Gen Xers** 31 to 50 years	📱	Management	Events
(B)	**Baby Boomers** 51 to 70 years	📱🖥	Transportation & Material Moving	Factory Work

Millennials

What they search

Millennials are creative-minded and well-educated jobseekers. They search more than other generations in the following occupations:

Sales and Related	Arts, Design, Entertainment, and Media	Education, Training, and Library

These are high-skill areas of the labour market, and the trend of Millennials directing their focus here may leave gaps in trade occupations as they take over the workforce.
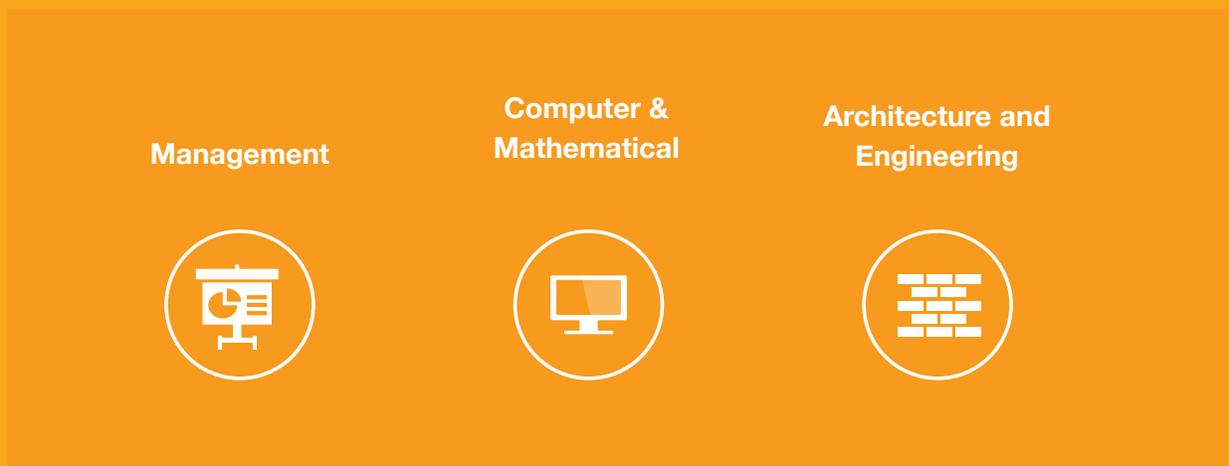
How they search

72.6%

of clicks come from **mobile**

Generation Xers

What they search

With so much focus on Millennials taking over the workforce and Baby Boomers leaving it, Gen Xers are often left out of the conversation. But this generation makes up a roughly equal share of the current workforce and has been honing their leadership and tech skills, making them great candidates for the senior-level roles that Baby Boomers will soon retire from. In the prime of their professional lives, Gen Xers are searching most in these occupations:

Management

Computer & Mathematical

Architecture and Engineering

They're searching more in Computer and Mathematical jobs than Millennials and more than Baby Boomers in Management jobs.

How they search

74.6%

of clicks come from **mobile**

Baby Boomers

What they search

Baby Boomers have been in the workforce the longest and they plan to stay on longer than previous generations did. They are much less interested in Computer and Mathematical jobs than younger generations but show more interest in the following occupations:

Transportation & Material Moving
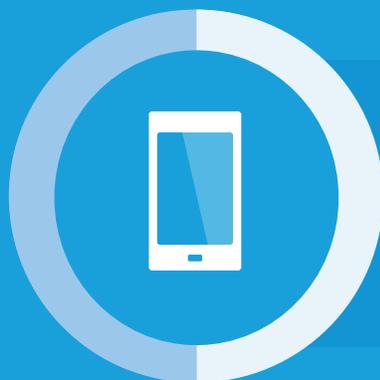
Construction and Extraction

Production

Boomers show interest in more traditionally blue-collar jobs, with "Driver" and "Warehouse" appearing in their top search terms. Many are also interested in part-time jobs, which may be one way of delaying retirement in favour of working fewer hours.

How they search

50.5%

of clicks come from **mobile**

Low Interest in Some Occupations Could Indicate Future Talent Shortages

The 21 occupations listed in this chart are ranked by the difference in interest between the two ends of the generational spectrum: Millennials and Baby Boomers. Occupations that appear at the top are those that receive the most interest from Millennials while those at the bottom are most attractive to Baby Boomers. As we approach the middle, we see those occupations that receive similar levels of interest from all three generations.

On the x-axis, we're showing the ratio of interest from each generation compared to postings in each occupation.

M Millennials are interested in high-skill occupations, with these occupations appear at the top of this chart.

X This generation shows the most interest in Management occupations. They are more like Boomers when it comes to blue collar work and more like Millennials when it comes to high-skill occupations, like business-related jobs.

B Except for Architecture and Engineering occupations, Baby Boomers show the most interest in traditionally blue collar work.

Ratio of Clicks to Postings

Legend: Millennials, Gen Xers, Baby Boomers
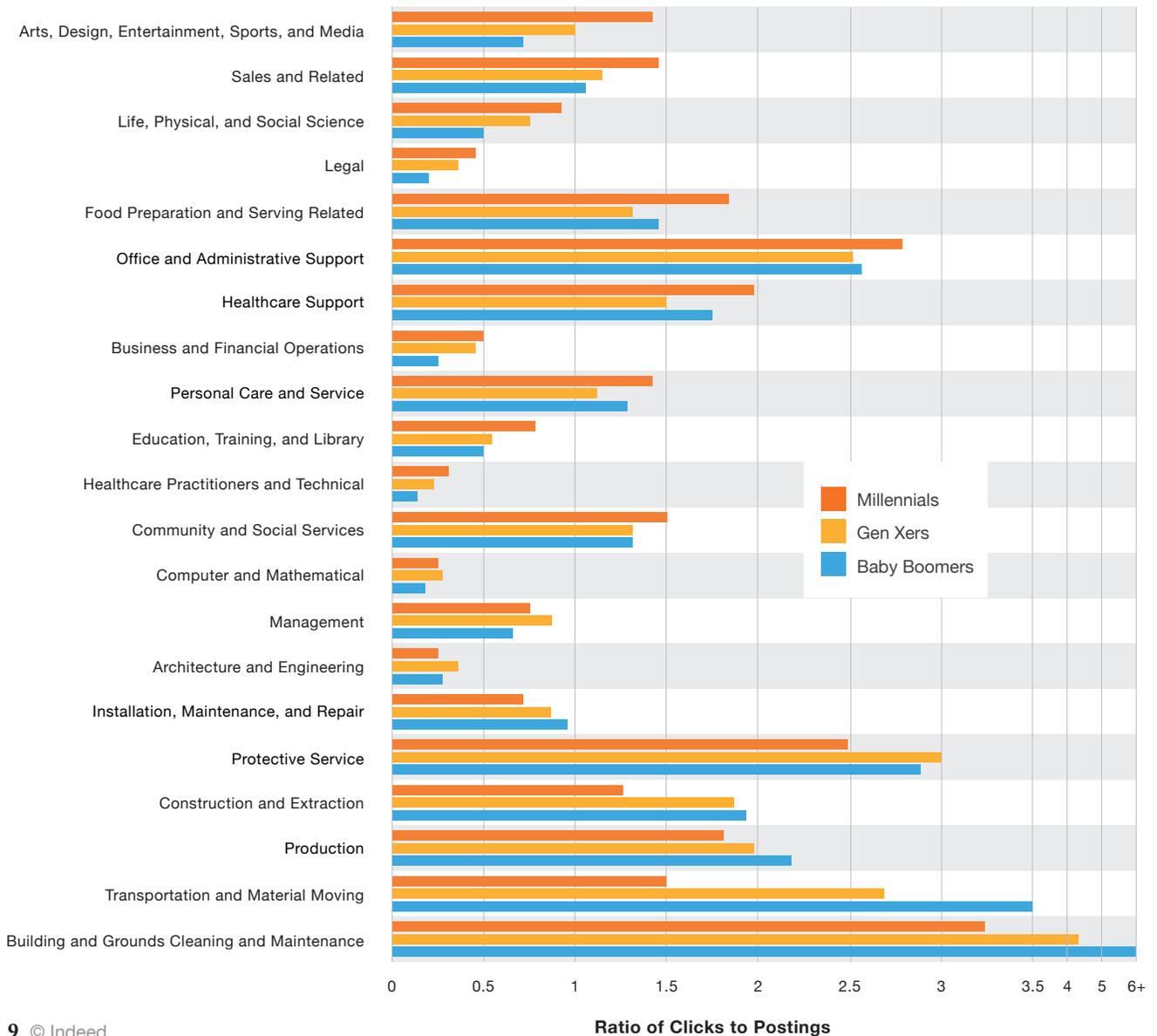
Identifying Talent Opportunities in Key Occupations

Each generation shows different levels of interest in each occupation. In some occupations, the level of interest from each generations is close to the number of jobs available. This match between interest in and availability of jobs is a good environment for jobseekers to find the right job and for employers to find the right candidate.

In other occupations, however, there may be too much or too little interest from jobseekers – a mismatch between jobseeker interest and the number of jobs employers are offering.

The following occupations are areas where the number of job postings exceeds the number of clicks from jobseekers.

M   X   B

These are occupations with many opportunities for jobseekers:

1. Management

2. Business and Financial Operations

3. Computer and Mathematical

4. Architecture and Engineering

5. Life, Physical, and Social Science

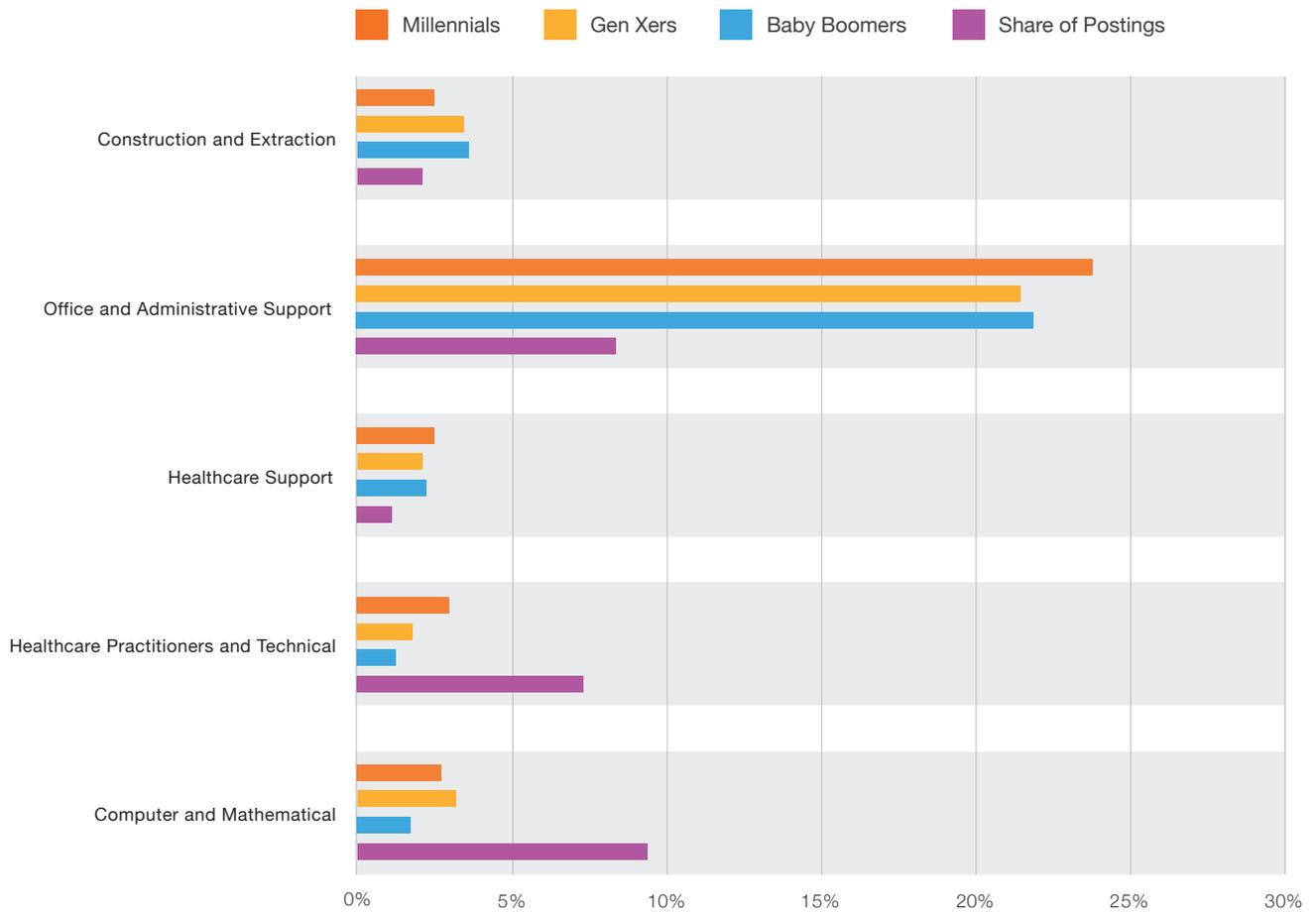The following occupations are areas where the number of clicks from jobseekers exceeds the number of job postings.

M   X   B

These are occupations with many recruiting opportunities for employers:

1. Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance

2. Office and Administrative Support

3. Protective Service

4. Healthcare Support

5. Transportation and Material Moving

Which key occupations receive the most interest from each generation?

The chart below shows what that interest looks like in several key occupations compared to the share of postings in those occupations. At a glance, these data show us where interest in jobs and availability of jobs are well matched and where they are out of balance.

Legend: Millennials | Gen Xers | Baby Boomers | Share of Postings

- Construction and Extraction
- Office and Administrative Support
- Healthcare Support
- Healthcare Practitioners and Technical
- Computer and Mathematical

X-axis: 0% | 5% | 10% | 15% | 20% | 25% | 30%

Preparing for Tomorrow's Talent Demands

The opportunity and the challenge faced by many organisations today is uncovering channels that supply the talent their business needs to thrive in the near and distant future.

The findings of our research indicate that for each generation of job seekers, trends in the economy drive relative interest in occupations – as demand for certain skills rise, job seekers begin to show interest in those jobs. While Baby Boomers currently adhere closest to this trend, Gen Xers are not far behind, and Millennials will likely catch up as they settle into the workforce.

Still, there are troubling gaps between the types of jobs that jobseekers show interest in and the types of jobs that employers are offering. In some crucial areas, including healthcare occupations, there is significantly less interest from all jobseekers than there is demand from employers. In trade occupations like Construction and Extraction and Transportation, there is significantly lower interest from younger workers. More broadly, as Baby Boomers and Gen Xers retire they may leave leadership gaps in areas where Millennials have yet to gain expertise.
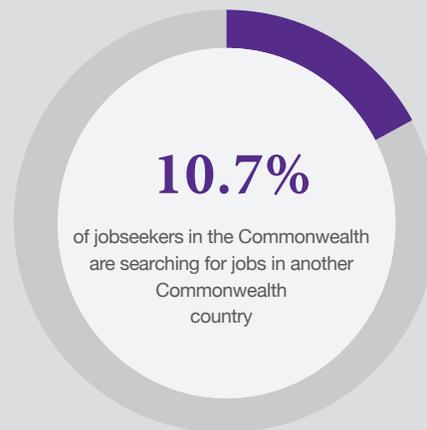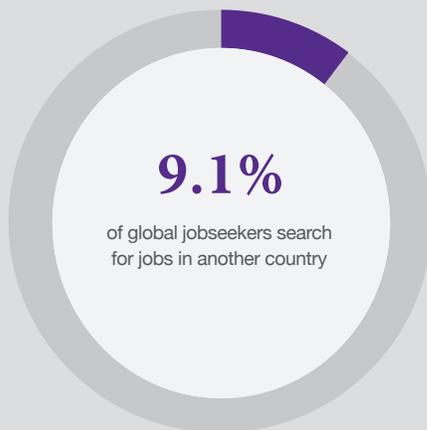
Developing a full sense of the generational landscape helps us understand these gaps and shortages, while also uncovering opportunities to address them. This research presents a vibrant profile of our workforce today and in the future, serving as a guide for employers and labour market analysts to navigate through such shifts. Here are three top-level takeaways from our analysis.

1. Create your own supply channels

For many organisations, finding candidates who leave university and enter the workforce with the skills their businesses need is no longer realistic. Instead, leading companies have created internal and external programmes that help existing employees and potential recruits develop skills that are relevant to today's labour market. These programmes can support the community and the education system and work to promote both skills development as well as employer brand for the companies who back them.

2. Source candidates from new markets

Previous research from the Indeed Hiring Lab revealed potential pockets of talent in untapped markets. Employers may find candidates by looking outside their typical talent pool:

9.1%
of global jobseekers search for jobs in another country

10.7%
of jobseekers in the Commonwealth are searching for jobs in another Commonwealth country

3. Redefine when and where work takes place

Today's technologies have made it possible for more work to take place outside the office, offering flexibility for workers of all kinds and new talent opportunities for employers. Evaluating the part-time, remote, or flexible jobs that your organisation can offer widens to the pool of people you can recruit from.

Data Sources

The focus of this report is jobseeker interest in occupations based on which generation each job seeker belongs to. Our main source of information was aggregated and anonymised data from Indeed CV, in combination with a collective view of each CV owner's search activity. Our sample was drawn from jobseekers who have CVs posted on Indeed and conducted at least one job search on Indeed via desktop or mobile during our sample month of July 2014.

We estimated job seekers' ages based on the information supplied in each CV, and used this information to divide our sample into generational categories. Millennials are jobseekers aged 21 to 30 years, Generation Xers are aged 31 to 50 years, and Baby Boomers are aged 51 to 70 years. We then examined how each of these generations searches for jobs on both mobile and desktop.

To measure each generation's interest in various occupations, we used the US Department of Labor's Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) categories. This internationally-recognised system classifies workers based on the work they perform, rather than the industry in which they perform it. While we could have used the International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO) or the UK's Standard Occupational Classification, these both contain a smaller number of major groups than the US classifications. For this reason, we used the US SOC to compare across all the English-language markets in our data set.

We used Indeed's data on job postings, which includes millions of jobs from thousands of sources, to estimate each occupation's share of the total UK labour market. It is important to note that Indeed job postings do not reflect the precise number of jobs available in the labour market, as an opening may be listed on more than one website and could remain online for a period of time after it has been filled. Moreover, employers sometimes use a single job postings for multiple job openings. However, the data do represent a broad measure of each occupation's share of job openings in the labour market.

Measuring Relative Interest

Similar to using the share of job postings as an approximate measure of available jobs, click activity can be used as a measure of jobseeker interest in an occupation. To determine where each generation's interest in the labour market ultimately lies, we examined each generation's clicks to jobs in each of the standard occupational categories, and ranked those click shares to determine the most popular occupations for each generation. We measured relative interest across occupations for each generation and also measured mismatch for each occupation by comparing the share of total job postings in that occupation against the share of clicks that occupation receives from each generation. We divided the occupation's share of total job clicks from a particular generation by the occupation's share of total job postings. A reading of 1 would indicate that the level of interest in an occupation is in line with the number of available jobs, when both figures are considered as a share of the total labour market. A reading greater than 1 indicates more interest than available job postings, and vice versa.

Distinctive Queries

We defined each generation's most distinctive query as the query that is searched more by one generation than it is searched by our overall jobseeker population in the UK. This is not the most popular query used by each generation but rather the query that is used more by one group than by jobseekers at large.

About the Author

Tara M. Sinclair, PhD, is an associate professor of economics and international affairs at The George Washington University in Washington DC and chief economist at Indeed. Her research focuses on examining historical patterns in data to understand both the current and past structure of the labour market and to forecast future movements. As Indeed's Chief Economist, Tara is developing original research using proprietary Indeed data to uncover exclusive insights into the labour market.

In addition to her research, Tara is frequently invited to brief the media on economic and labour trends as well as offer commentary. She has been quoted in the New York Times, the Wall Street Journal, and the Washington Post, and she has appeared on CNN, C-Span, NPR, Fox Business, Bloomberg Radio and TV, and many other local and international news programmes.
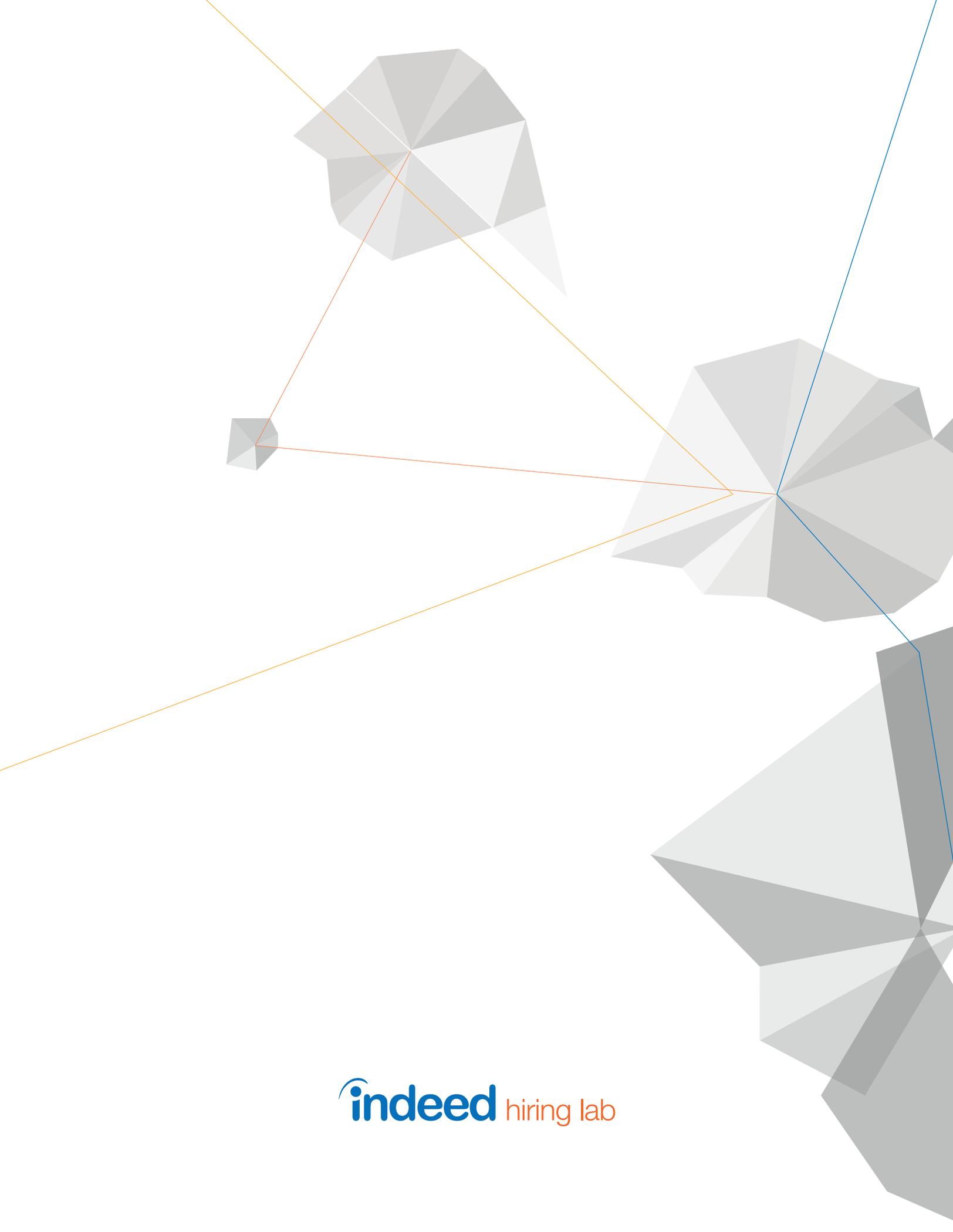
About the Indeed Hiring Lab

The Indeed Hiring Lab is a global research institute committed to advancing the knowledge of human resource and talent management professionals worldwide. Led by Dr. Tara Sinclair, Indeed's Chief Economist and Associate Professor of Economics and International Affairs at The George Washington University, the Indeed Hiring Lab research agenda includes large-scale research projects, ongoing tracking and analysis of employment trends, and surveys of industry professionals.

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