
**WE'RE
HIRING!**

**WHAT YOUNG JOB SEEKERS LOOK
FOR AND HOW FOODSERVICE
DISTRIBUTORS RECRUIT**

Table of Contents

Introduction	2
Executive Summary	3
Labor Pool Participant Perspectives.....	5
Foodservice Distributor Perspectives.....	11
Foodservice Distribution Workforce Demographics.....	15
Web Scraping of Foodservice Distribution Job Postings.....	19
Order Selector and Delivery Driver Perspectives	21
Methodology.....	26

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Introduction

Labor continues to be a top challenge for foodservice distributors, making recruitment and retention strategies and tactics a leading priority. As delivery drivers and warehouse workers make up two-thirds of the foodservice distribution workforce, distributors are laser focused on finding qualified applicants for open positions, while also building retention programs to maintain an internal pipeline for future workers.

In 2022, IFDA explored [what younger workers look for in a job](#) and what foodservice distributors believe will attract them. This report is a continuation of that research, analyzing how applicants find and respond to job postings, recruiting practices of foodservice distributors, the industry's workforce composition, and how current foodservice distribution drivers and selectors feel about their jobs.

IFDA surveyed more than 1,000 individuals age 18-34 without college degrees to identify their priorities when searching and applying for a job. In addition, one-on-one interviews were conducted with a dozen current drivers and selectors, asking what they like about their jobs and what they'd like to see change.

IFDA also collected details on the recruiting practices and workforce demographics from 25 foodservice distribution companies, and conducted a web scraping of 4,500 active foodservice distribution job postings to distill what components and details can be considered normative so distributors can create postings that stand out to potential applicants.

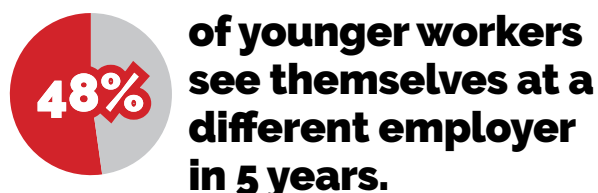
This information is intended to help foodservice distributors to further hone their recruiting practices and include the most effective details in their job postings to target the best applicants.



Executive Summary

IFDA found that roughly one-third of Millennials and Gen Z individuals without college degrees plan to stay with their current employer in the same job or a different position in the next five years. However, nearly half see themselves at a different company in a similar job or doing something else entirely. Adding that to the fact that 45% changed jobs or held several different types of jobs since the beginning of the pandemic in spring 2020, employers have ample opportunity to attract job applicants, but are simultaneously presented with challenges in retaining current employees.

Nearly half of younger workers made career changes during the pandemic.



Previous IFDA research showed that while competitive compensation and benefits packages and flexible scheduling are important to younger workers, there are other factors that carry equal or more weight in their employment decisions. For example, job security, transportation availability to work location, enjoying work tasks and work environment are high on workers' list of most important factors when choosing a job. Mentioning those priorities in job postings can boost the chances they will apply. In addition, the majority of job seekers research companies online before applying for a job, so including those pieces of information on the company website can also prove valuable.

86% of younger workers research a company online before applying for a job.



72% of younger workers say creative job titles are important.

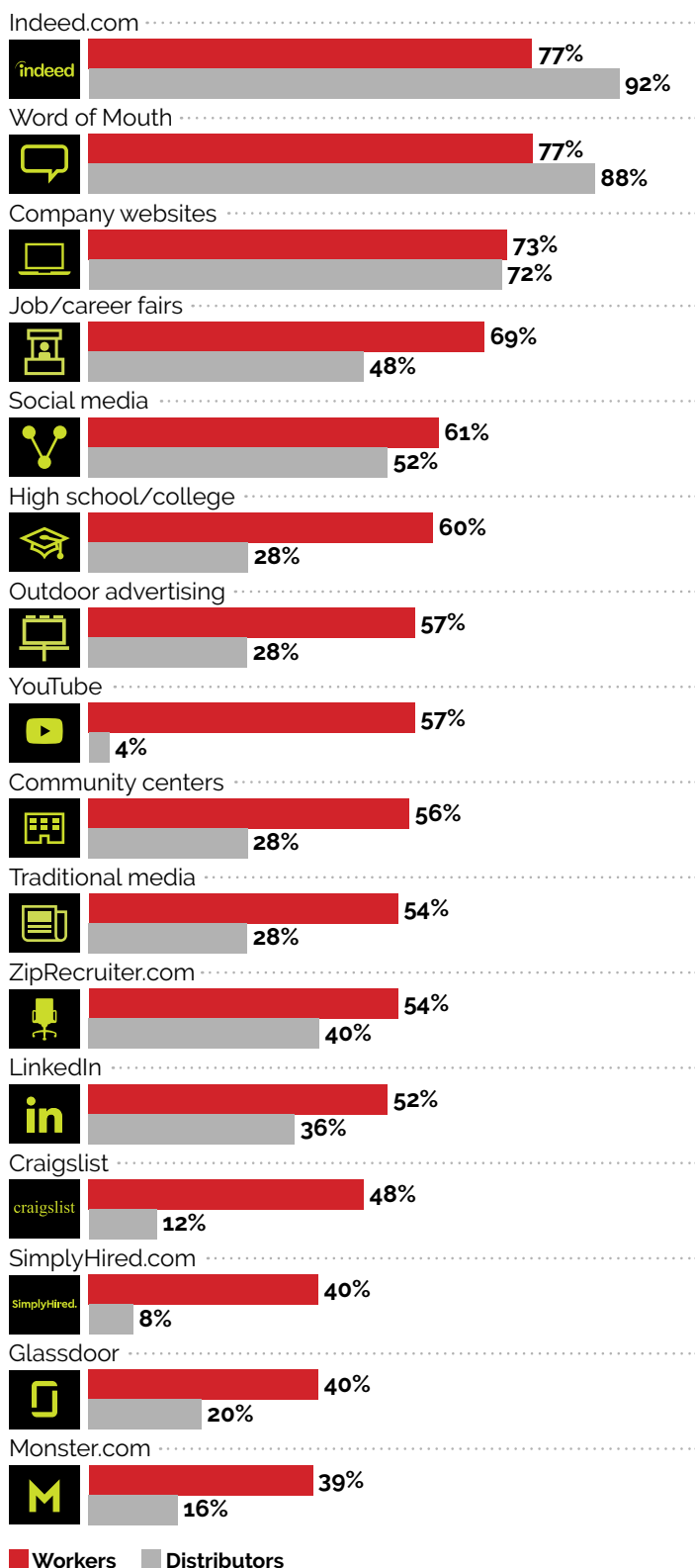
There is some alignment on what channels job seekers find most useful when searching for a job and where foodservice distributor employers regularly post their open positions. Indeed.com, word of mouth/employee referrals and company websites are the top sources for both cohorts, but there are opportunities for distributors to increase their presence in some other places where potential applicants prefer to look. A significant portion of younger workers say high schools and colleges, outdoor billboards/banners, YouTube, Craigslist, and SimplyHired.com are useful sources when job hunting, but a much smaller percentage of distributors say they are currently using those channels.

Similarly, there are some key components of job postings that align and some that differ in applicant and employer opinion of what's important. Workers say that paid time off, physical location, soft skills, hard skills, job title and company mission/history are important components in a job ad, but a much smaller percentage of distributors put those among their top five most important components of an effective post.

There are also certain details that job seekers say make them more likely to apply for a job if included in a job posting. Comparing these top items with what distributors say they typically include in their postings also present opportunities. For example, a strong majority of applicants say information on the hiring process, like fast hiring and easy application, might push them to apply, but only 16% of distributors say they include that information in their posts. Three in five workers say including photos and video in job ads would make them more likely to apply, but only about half that number of distributors say they use those features. In addition, four in five workers say information on career advancement opportunities is an important component of job postings, but only one in four distributors say they typically include it.

Where are the Job Ads?

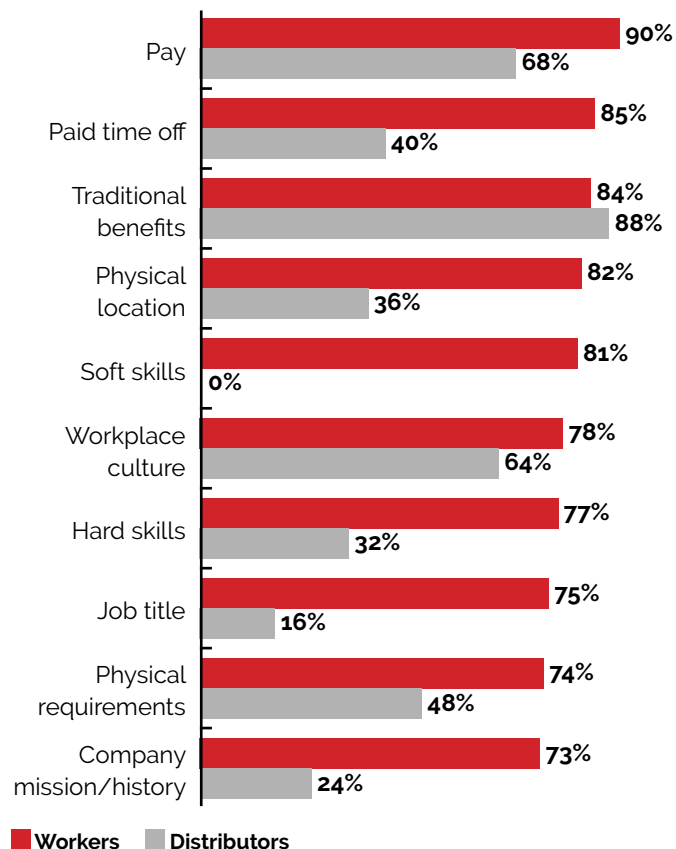
Percentages represent proportion of younger workers who say each source is somewhat or very useful, and distributors that regularly use those sources for recruitment.



Source: International Foodservice Distributors Association 2022

Key Components in Job Postings

Percentages represent proportion of younger workers who say each component is somewhat or very important, and distributors that place each component in their top 5 most important.



Source: International Foodservice Distributors Association 2022

Top 10 Components that Make Candidates More Likely to Apply

- 1 Easy application process 86%
- 2 Fast hiring 86%
- 3 Eligible for benefits immediately 82%
- 4 No college degree necessary 77%
- 5 Transportation benefits 75%
- 6 Job perks 74%
- 7 Mental health resources 73%
- 8 Safety program 72%
- 9 Child/family member care support 70%
- 10 Phone interview guaranteed 69%



Labor Pool

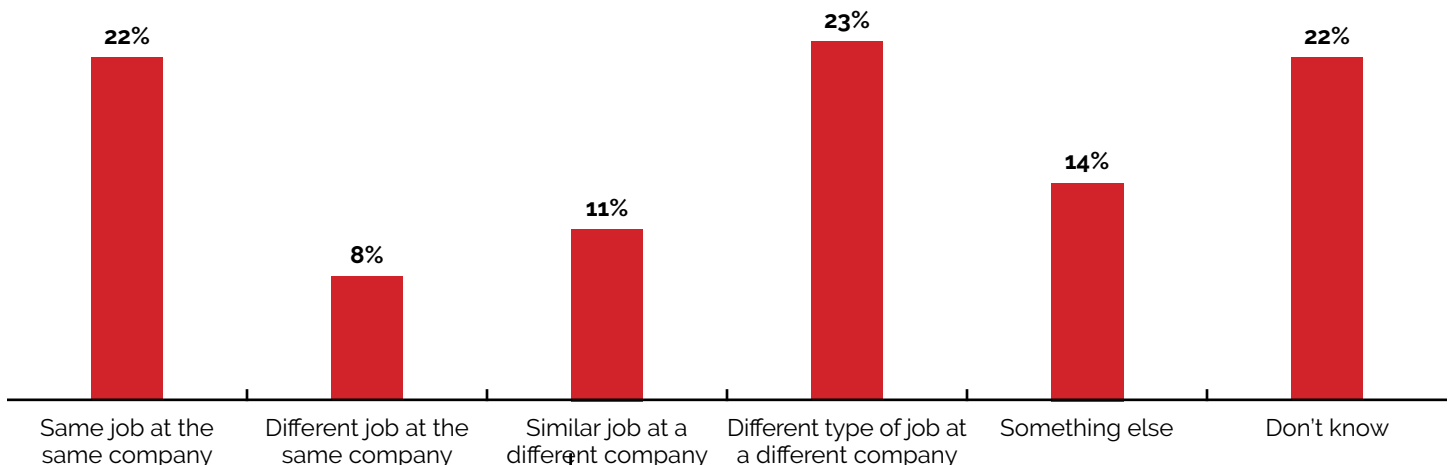
Participant Perspectives

Nearly half (45%) of Americans age 18-34 without college degrees have changed careers or worked in more than one type of job - for example, healthcare, warehouse, retail, gig work, restaurant, office administration, etc. - since the beginning of the pandemic in spring 2020. This was more common among individuals with children in their household (52%) and less common among individuals living in rural communities (39%).

When asked about their expectations for work in the next five years, roughly one-fifth say they see themselves at the same

job at the same company they're currently at, while nearly one in 10 see themselves at the same company but doing a different job. In addition, nearly one-quarter say they expect to do a different type of job at a different company, and one in 10 say they think they'll be at a similar job to what they currently have but at a different company. An additional 14% say they expect to do something else, and two in five say they don't know. Gen Z individuals (age 18-25) are less likely to say they expect to stay with the same company in five years, while those with children in their household are more likely to say so.

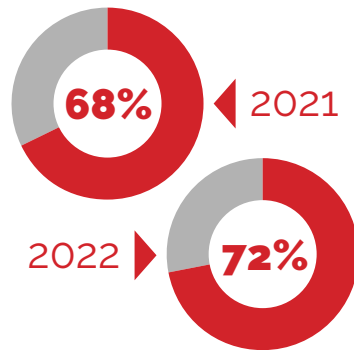
Younger Workers' Job Expectations in the Next Five Years



Source: International Foodservice Distributors Association 2022

Younger Workers Who Say It's Important that Job Titles Reflect Contributions

Nearly three-quarters of younger Americans say it's important that their job title reflects their contributions to the overall organization. For example, being called an "associate" instead of an "employee," or a "building engineer" instead of "janitor." Individuals living in rural communities are less likely to say it's important. When asked this question one year prior, two-thirds of respondents said it was important.

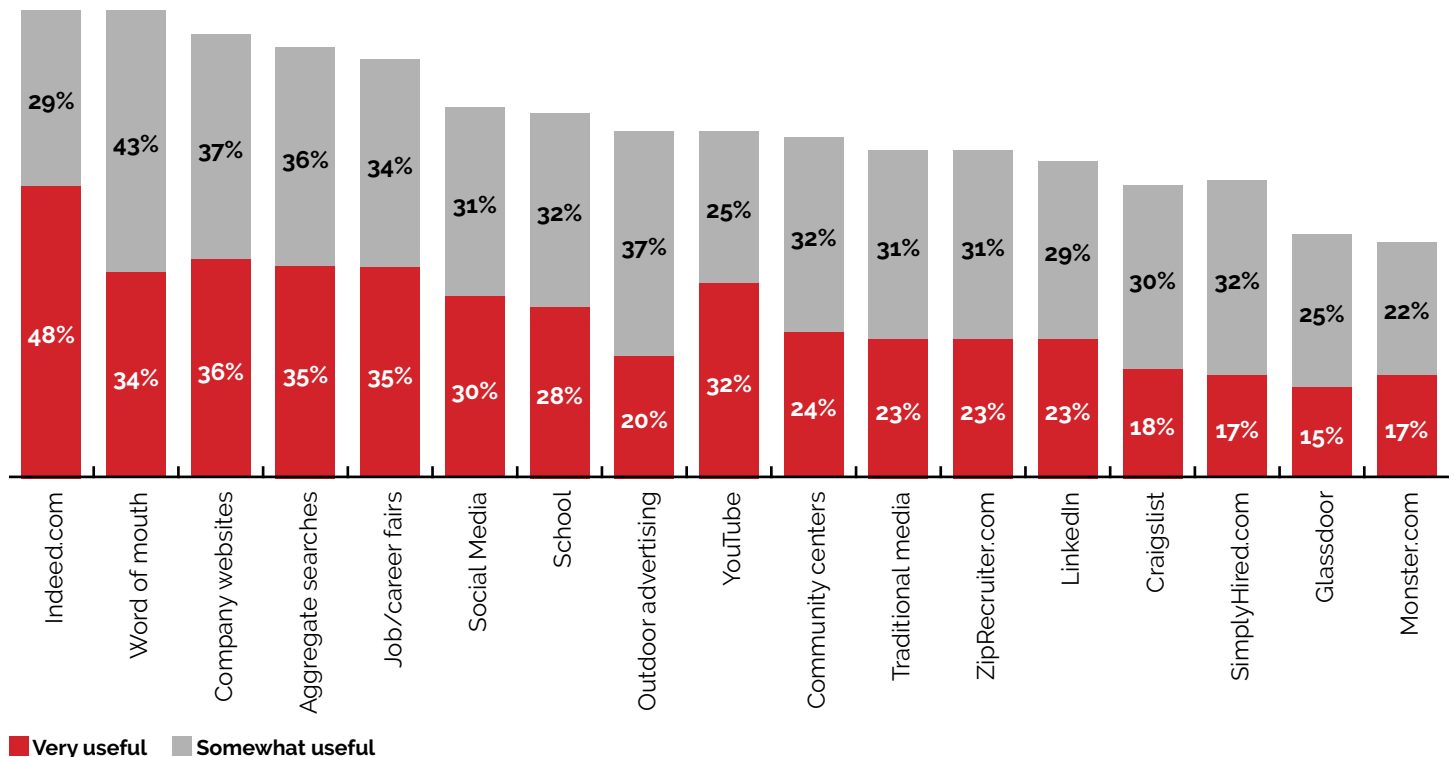


Source: International Foodservice Distributors Association 2022



Younger Workers Who Find These Sources Useful when Looking for a Job

The top five most useful sources when looking for a job are Indeed.com, word-of-mouth/family and friends, company websites, aggregate search engines like Google, and job/career fairs, according to younger workers. Roughly three-quarters of respondents agree the first two sources are useful, while about seven in 10 say the latter three are useful. In addition, about three in five say social media, schools, outdoor advertising, YouTube and community centers are useful sources when looking for a job. About half say traditional media, ZipRecruiter.com, LinkedIn and Craigslist are useful channels, with Gen Z individuals being less likely to agree.



Source: International Foodservice Distributors Association 2022

Individuals in the Northeast are less likely to find social media useful, but more likely to find LinkedIn and Monster.com useful. Those in the Midwest are more likely to say that Indeed.com, word-of-mouth, social media, LinkedIn and Monster.com are useful sources. Those in the South are also more likely to say social media is useful, while those in the West and Northeast are the least likely. Those living in urban communities are the most likely to find schools useful sources when job hunting.

In an open-ended question asking what other sources respondents use to look for jobs, comments included walk-ins and applying in person, Snagajob, temp/staffing agencies, and career centers/employment offices.

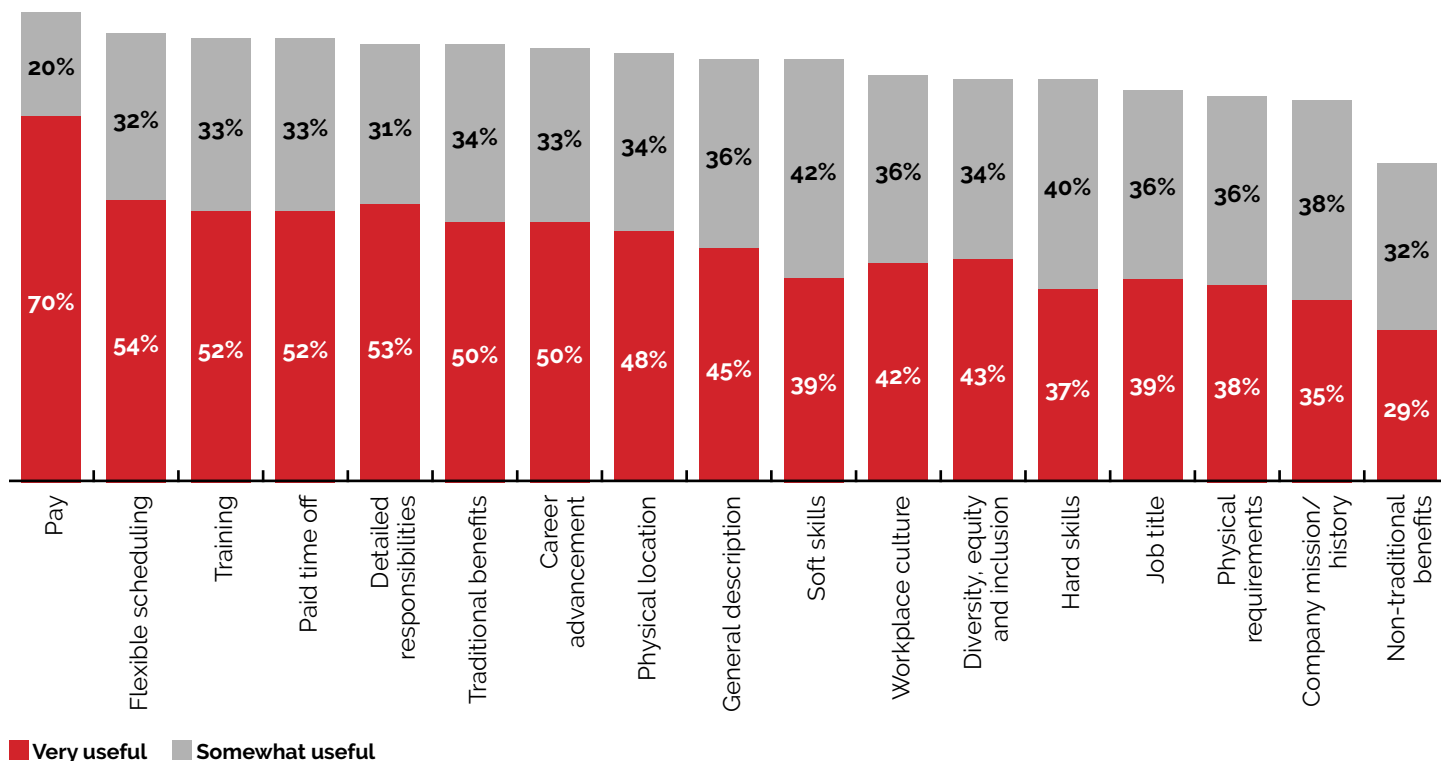
Close to nine in 10 respondents (86%) say they research a company online before applying for a job they're interested in pursuing. Among those, half say they sometimes research companies and half said they always do.

When looking at job postings, younger workers say the most important items are pay, flexible scheduling, on-the-job training, and paid time off; roughly nine in 10 agree those are important. About eight in 10 say detailed job responsibilities,



career advancement opportunities, physical location, general job description and desired soft skills are important in a job listing. About three-quarters say workplace culture, diversity, hard skills, job title, physical requirements and company mission are important job posting features.

Younger Workers Who Find These Items Important in Job Postings



Source: International Foodservice Distributors Association 2022

When it comes to things respondents find "very important" in a job posting, seven in 10 say pay, more than half say flexible scheduling, detailed responsibilities, paid time off, and on-the-job-training. For benefits, 84% say traditional benefits is important information in a job posting, while 61% say non-traditional benefits are important to include. Gen Z individuals are less likely to say the specific location and soft skills information are important, while Millennials are the most likely to say detailed responsibilities are important.

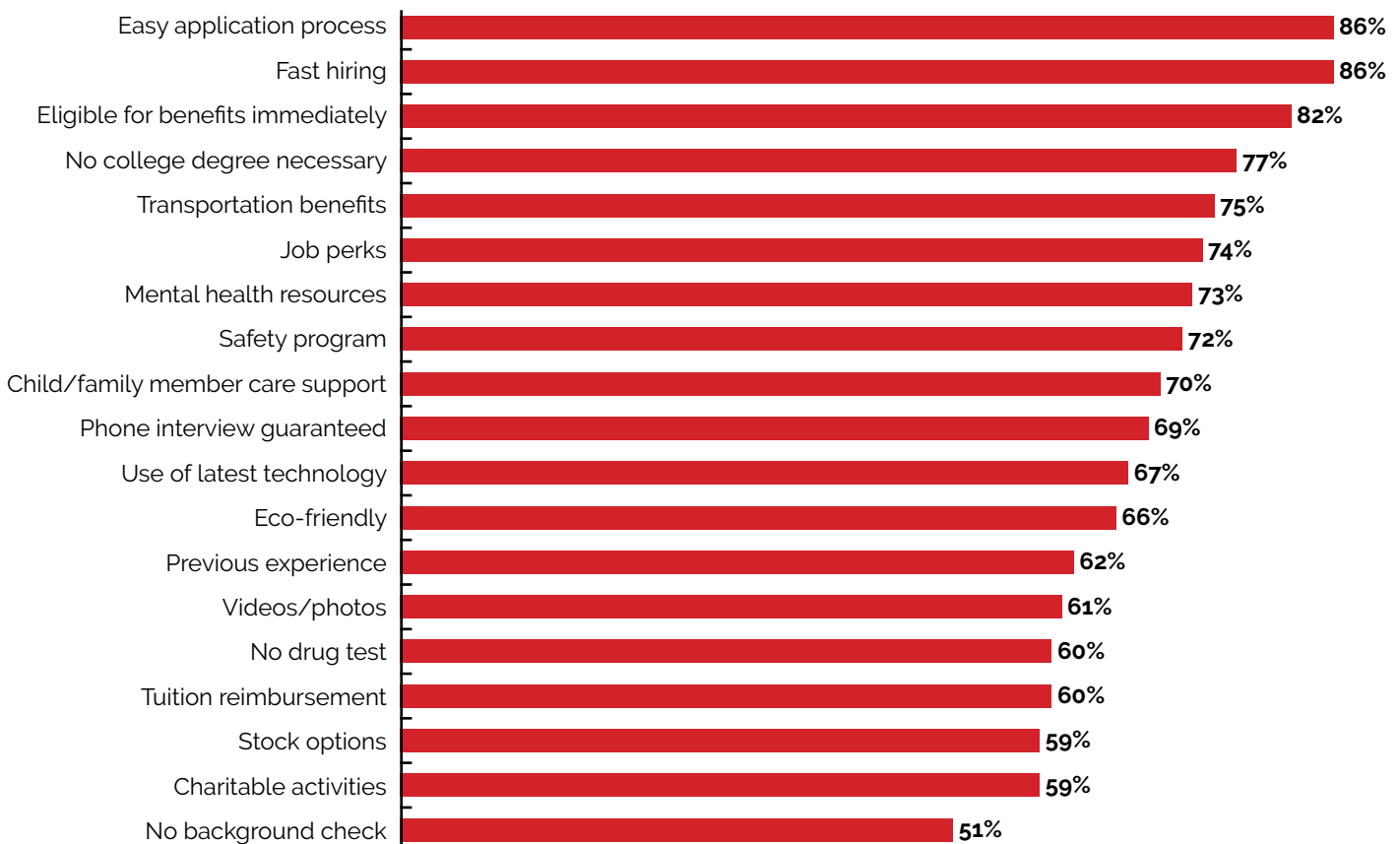
In an open-ended question on what additional pieces of information they find important in a job posting, respondents mentioned hours/work schedule, management policies/values, dress code/appearance, and transportation needs/availability. Respondents also mentioned items relating to paycheck and pay increase schedules. When it comes to job posting formats, one-third of respondents say they prefer a bulleted list and 23% say they prefer a narrative job posting; another one-third say they don't have a preference. Those in the Northeast have a slightly stronger preference for a bulleted list, while those in the South are slightly less likely to prefer that.

Respondents were also asked if specific terms or phrases in a job description would make them more likely to apply for that job. More than four in five say phrases like "fast hiring," "easy application process," and "eligible for benefits immediately" would make them more likely to apply. Additionally, roughly three-quarters say the same for phrases like "no college degree necessary," "transportation benefits like free parking," "job perks like free snacks," "mental health resources," and "safety program" would likely tip them toward applying. Men show more interest in "stock options," while women feel stronger about "child/family member care support."

Other important job posting features:

- ✓ Paycheck/ pay increase schedules
- ✓ Work schedule/ hours
- ✓ Management values
- ✓ Dress code
- ✓ Transportation availability

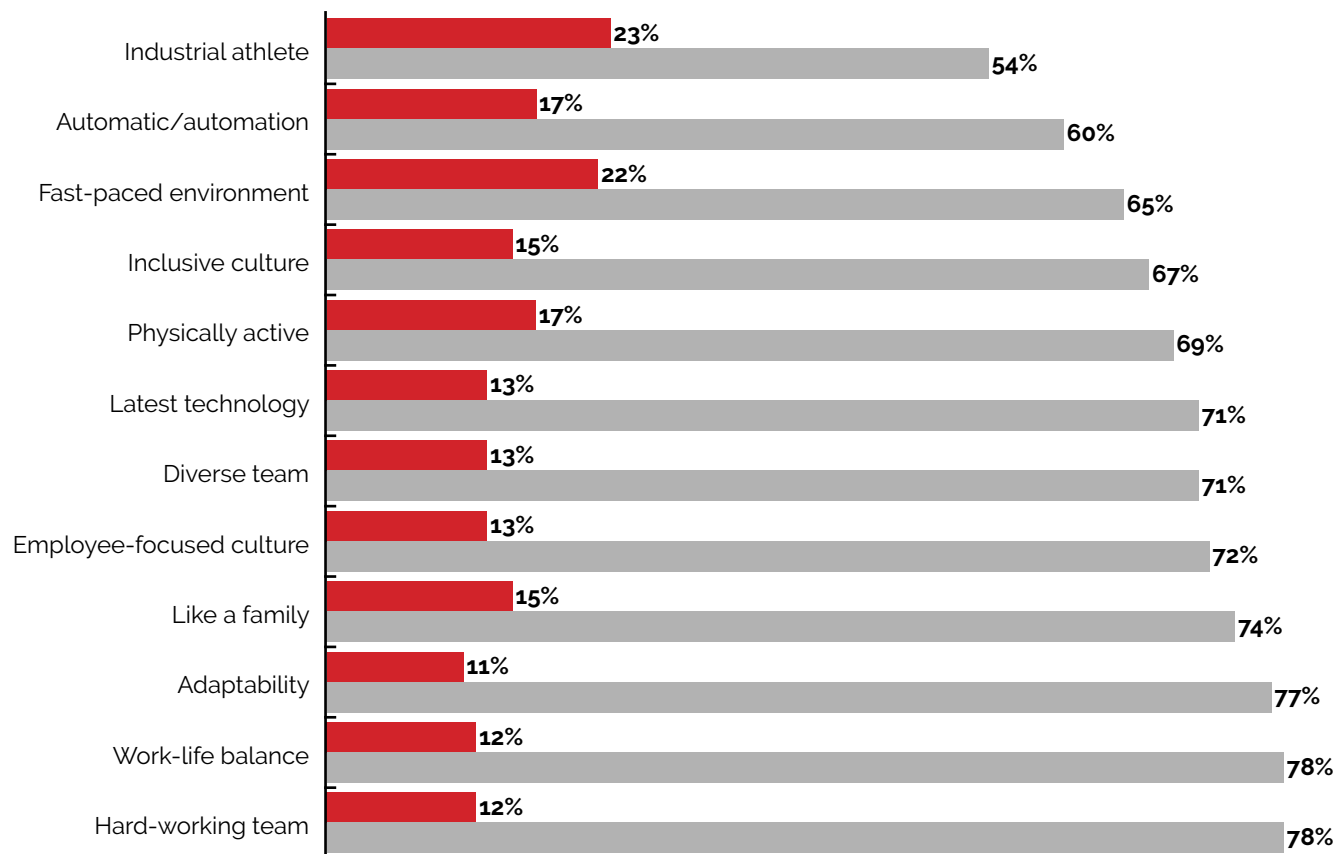
Phrases in Job Postings that Make Candidates More Likely to Apply



Source: International Foodservice Distributors Association 2022

Younger Workers' Response to Phrases in Job Postings

When asked if certain phrases in job postings make them react in a mostly positive or mostly negative way, "hard-working team," "work-life balance," "adaptability," and "like a family" are the phrases with the strongest positive association. The least positive reactions are to "industrial athlete," "automatic/automation," and "fast-paced environment."



■ Negative ■ Positive

Source: International Foodservice Distributors Association 2022



A word cloud of positive workplace attributes. The words are arranged in a circular pattern, with 'respect' being the largest and most central. Other prominent words include 'recognition', 'appreciation', 'promotion', 'feedback', 'care', 'rewards', 'flexible', 'fair', 'acknowledge', 'train', 'welcoming', 'motivate', 'equal', 'understanding', 'complements', 'team', 'environment', 'safety', 'goals', 'sympathy', 'kind', 'listen', 'available', 'relationship', 'responsible', 'parties', 'culture', 'evaluations', 'stability', 'mental-health', 'supportive', 'balance', 'managers', 'gratitude', 'leaders', 'independent', 'advancement', 'communication', 'honesty', 'valued', and 'resources'. The words are in various shades of gray and black, with larger words indicating higher frequency or importance.



Foodservice Distributor

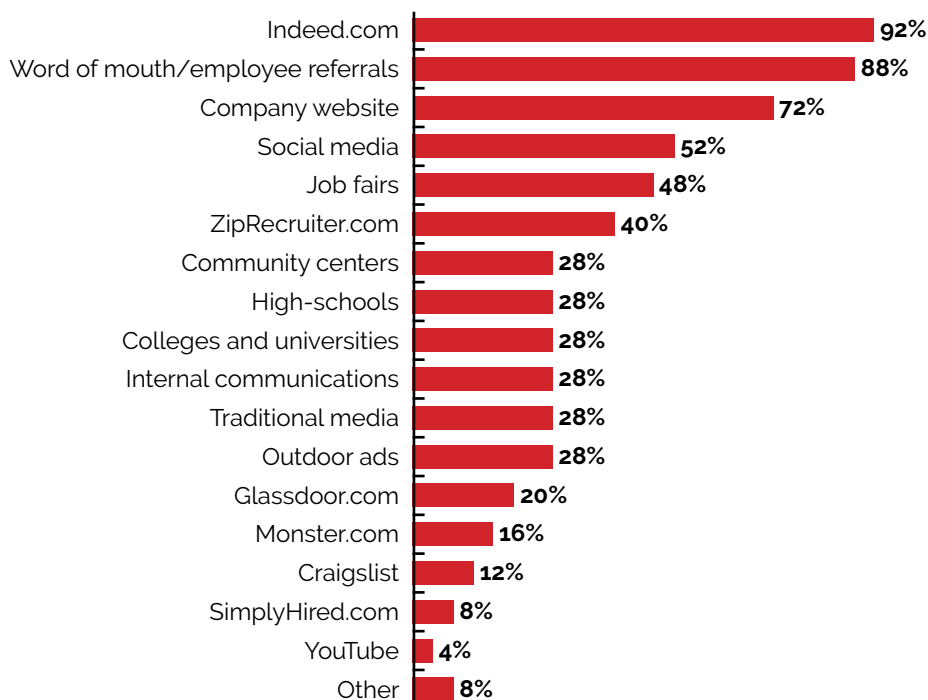
Perspectives

Roughly one in 10 foodservice distributors (12%) say their current efforts to attract qualified employees are effective, while about half (48%) say they're somewhat effective.

Foodservice distributors' most common channels for recruiting include Indeed.com, employee referrals, company websites, social media, and job fairs. Very few use YouTube, SimplyHired.com and Craigslist. As for the most effective channels, distributors say that employee referrals, third-party job boards, and their own websites are the top sources.

When it comes to the most important features of effective job postings, distributors say benefits, pay, company culture, physical requirements, and paid time off. Two in five include screening requirements in their postings (such as drug tests or background checks), one-third use video and photos, and about a quarter include information on career advancement and schedule flexibility.

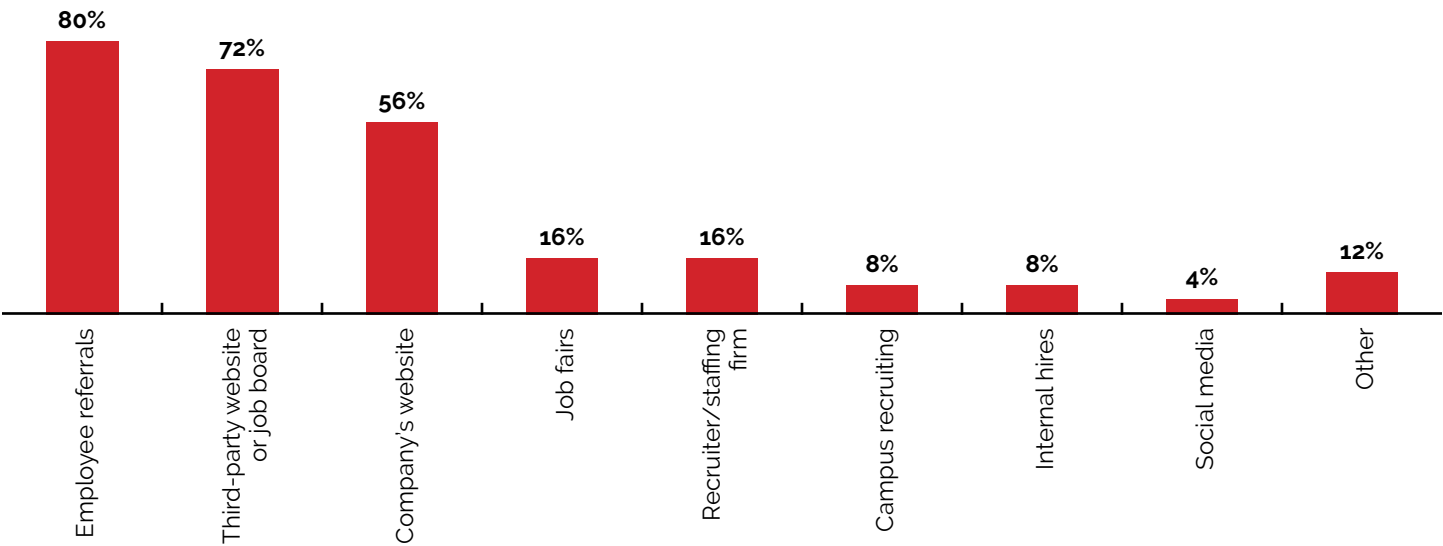
Channels that Foodservice Distributors Regularly Use to Recruit for Warehouse and Driver Positions



Source: International Foodservice Distributors Association 2022

Channels that Foodservice Distributors Say Are the Most Effective in Recruiting for Warehouse and Driver Positions

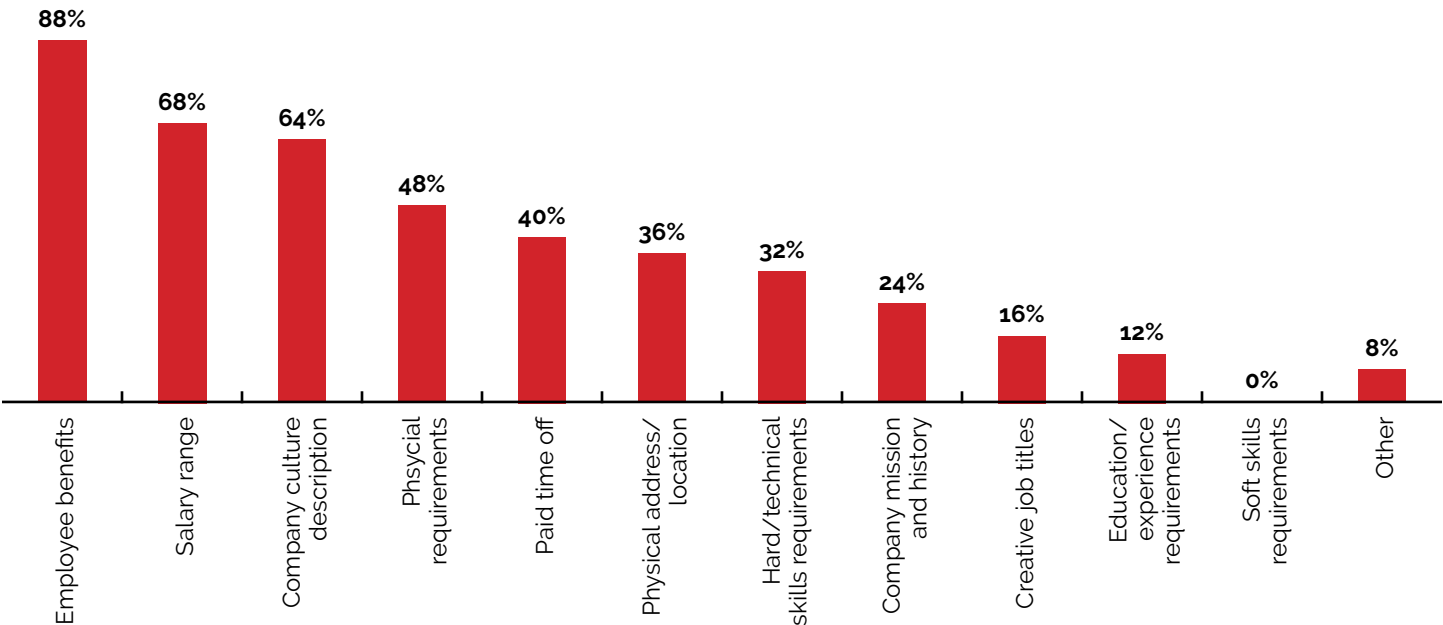
Percentages represent proportion of distributors who place each channel in their **top 3** most important.



Source: International Foodservice Distributors Association 2022

Foodservice Distributors Who Consider These Items Important in Effective Job Postings

Percentages represent proportion of distributors who place each item in their **top 5** most important.

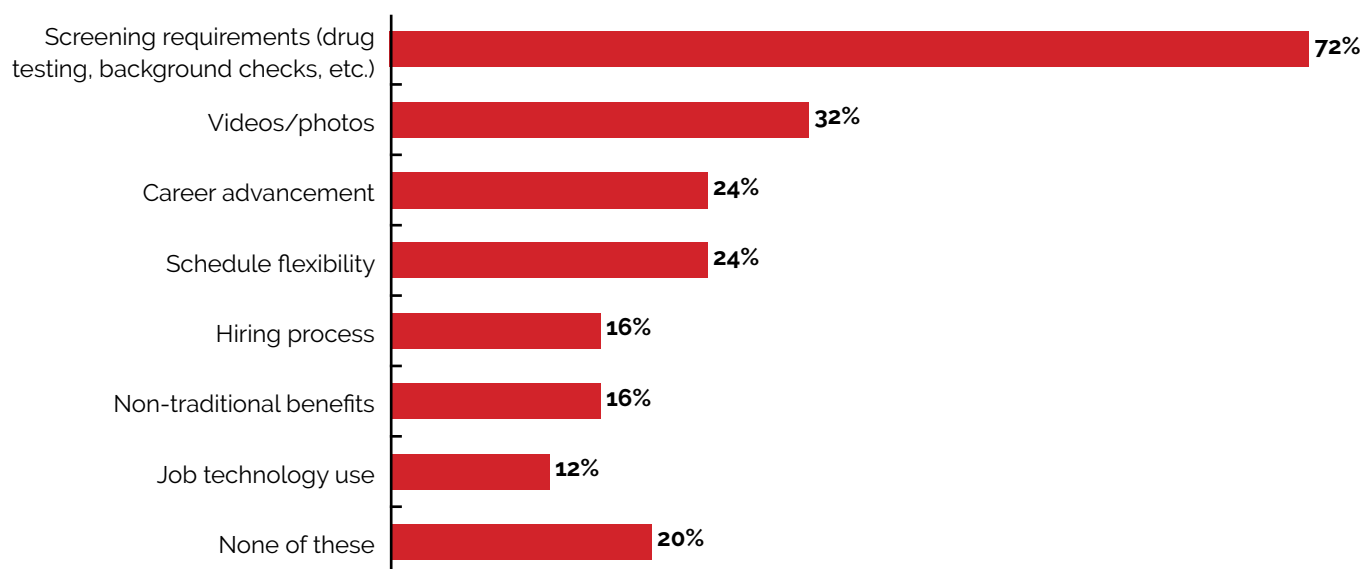


Source: International Foodservice Distributors Association 2022

Items that Foodservice Distributors Include in Public Job Postings

The majority of distributors (84%) use a combination of bullet points and narrative text in their warehouse and driver job postings, while 16% use primarily bullet points. More than nine in 10 (92%) say they always post their warehouse and driver position job openings on their company website, while 4% say they do so sometimes, and 4% say they never do. Among those that do post them on their websites, 92% say they're the same as other external posting locations.

Foodservice distributors believe the top trends that will drive human resources work overall into the future will focus on employee mental health and wellbeing, remote and flexible work and data-driven recruitment practices.

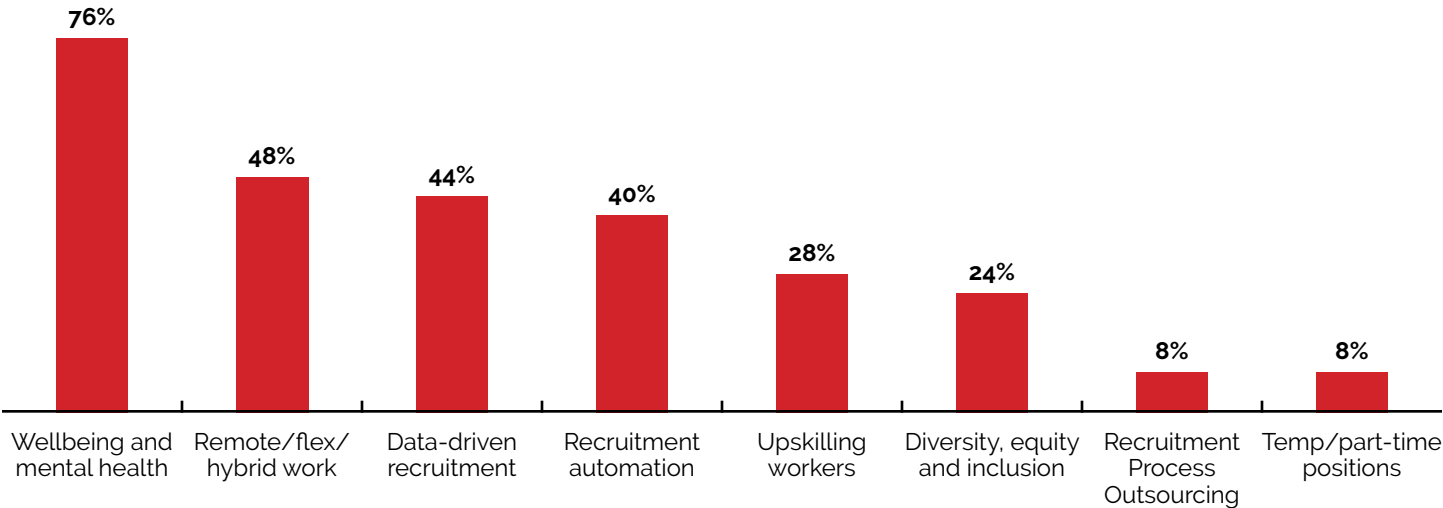


Source: International Foodservice Distributors Association 2022



Top Trends Shaping Human Resources Work Over the Next Few Years

Percentages represent proportion of distributors who place each trend in their top 3 most important.



Source: International Foodservice Distributors Association 2022

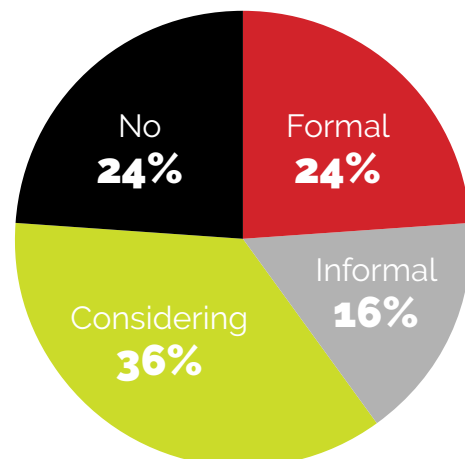


Foodservice Distribution Workforce Demographics

Current workforce demographics at foodservice distribution companies show that while the overall foodservice distribution industry reflects a diverse workforce, some demographics are underrepresented in select job categories. [Previous IFDA research](#) shows that younger workers find diversity and inclusion of importance when choosing a job, and more than three-quarters say diversity, equity and inclusion information is an important feature in a job posting.

The good news is that more distributors are instituting diversity initiatives into their businesses. In 2022, two in five distributors have a formal or informal program in place, while more than one-third are considering implementing one. In [an IFDA survey from 2020](#), 30% of distributors had a formal or informal program, while 55% were considering one.

Do Foodservice Distribution Companies Currently Have Diversity Initiatives?



Source: International Foodservice Distributors Association 2022



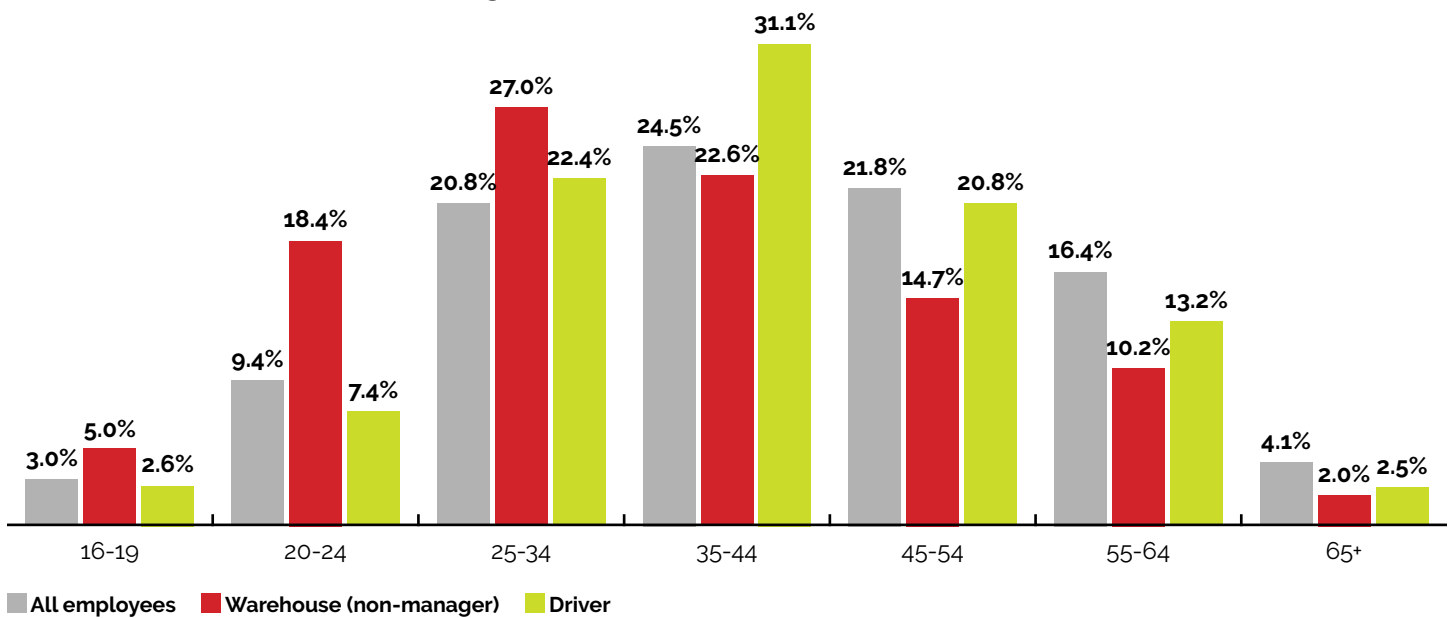
When looking at age of workers by job type, warehouse workers tend to skew younger than drivers, and salespeople tend to skew older than drivers. The median age for warehouse workers is 25-34, while it's 35-44 for drivers, and 45-54 for salespeople.

Warehouse and driver positions have a higher proportion of individuals of Hispanic, Latino or Spanish origin, as well as Black or African American individuals than the overall work-

force; executive/senior management and salespeople have the lowest proportions of ethnicity and race diversity. In addition, women are severely underrepresented in both warehouse and driver positions.

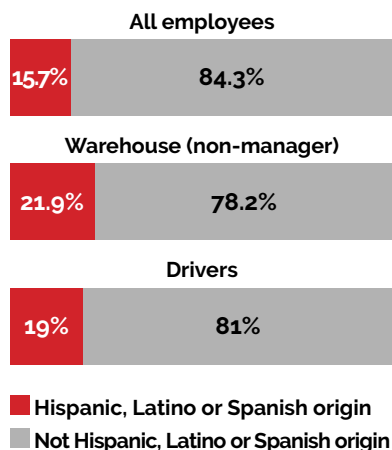
In addition, seven in 10 (70%) foodservice distributors employ veterans, and nearly two in five (38%) have employees with disabilities in their ranks.

Age of Foodservice Distribution Drivers and Warehouse Employees



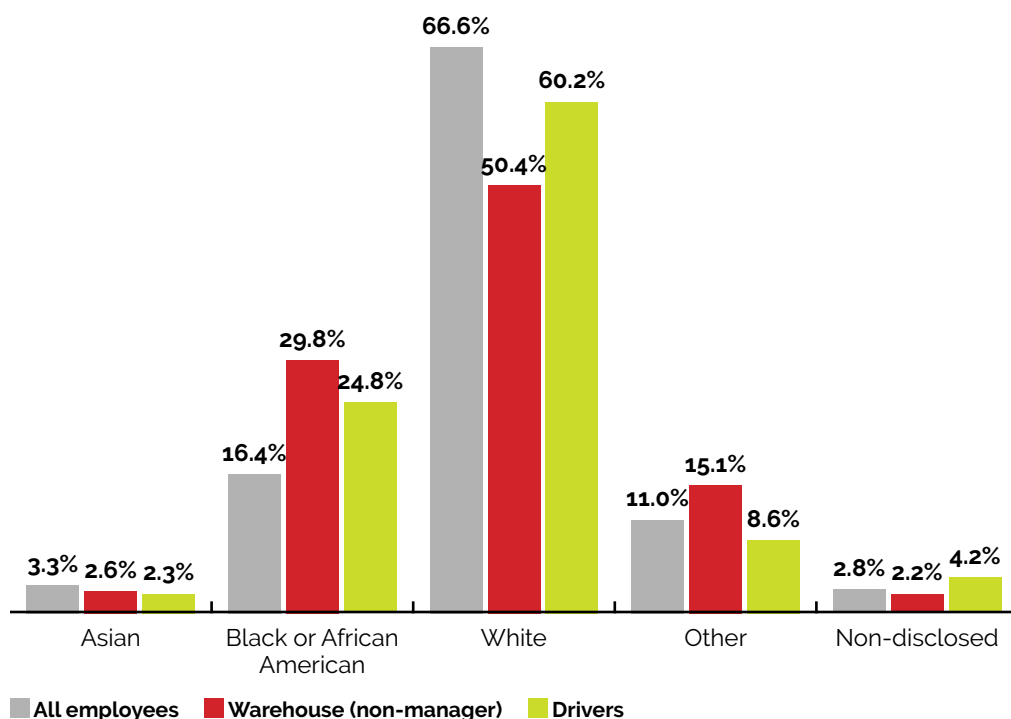


Ethnicity of Foodservice Distribution Drivers and Warehouse Employees



Source: International Foodservice Distributors Association 2022

Race of Foodservice Distribution Drivers and Warehouse Employees



Source: International Foodservice Distributors Association 2022

Gender of Foodservice Distribution Drivers and Warehouse Employees



Female Male Non-binary/other
Source: International Foodservice Distributors Association 2022





Web Scraping of Food Distribution Job Postings

FDA commissioned a web scraping of 4,500 public job advertisements for delivery drivers and warehouse selectors posted by U.S. foodservice distribution companies to identify common key words and components of typical postings.

These insights can help foodservice distributors ensure their own postings are competitive, as well as identify ways in which they can craft their job ads to capture the eye of potential job applicants.

Warehouse Position Job Post Highlights

- The majority of job ads include duties and qualifications, with an extensive list of requirements, skills, and abilities. About a quarter of ads break down activities in a typical day in the position.
- Roughly half of ads include physical requirements of lifting and/or carrying of certain weights or weight ranges; the most commonly mentioned are 100, 40, 50, 90 and 80 lbs., in order of frequency of mentions.
- About one-quarter of ads explicitly list that they tend to promote from within the organization and offer upward mobility and career advancement opportunities.
- Around half of ads mention that the workday doesn't end until certain tasks are completed, with varying start times for day shifts, including 5:00 am, 8:00 am, or 9:00 am. Commonly mentioned day shift times are Monday through Thursday. About a quarter mention that there's no work on Saturdays, explicitly say they want employees who will be flexible with shifts and willing to work long hours, and tout unique shift offerings, such as 4 days on and 3 days off.
- Job ads are typically clear about working conditions, primarily when it comes to extreme temperatures and the physical abilities needed for the job, mostly focused around heavy lifting and being on your feet for long hours.
- The most common educational requirement mentioned is high school diploma preferred.
- Roughly one-quarter of the postings stress employee benefits, such as 401(k) and healthcare for employees and families.
- Around a quarter of postings spell out that the employee will be valued, for example "We invest in you" and "You will be included and respected."
- More than half of the postings provide information on a signing bonus. About a quarter explain that signing bonuses will be paid over course of a year. Performance bonuses are also commonly mentioned.
- A few ads mention that the company has never laid off employees.
- About a quarter of the ads send prospective employees to external links to view benefits other offerings.
- Around one-quarter of ads relate personal hobbies/skills to specific positions where skills translate (e.g., "Track star? Try our Order Selector Position").

Top 10 Most Commonly Mentioned Items in Warehouse Selector Job Postings

	Key Words	Physical Reqs.	Skills Req.	Benefits Offered
1	Workplace safety	Lift	Basic Computer skills	401(k)
2	Protection Protocols	Stand	Basic Math Skills	Health Insurance
3	Family Atmosphere	Walk	Communication	Dental
4	Company Culture	Reach	Read/Write/Speak English	Life Insurance
5	Values	Push	Organized	Paid Time Off
6	Respect for People	Bend	Attention To Detail	Advancement
7	Career Growth	Pull	Enthusiastic	Profit Sharing
8	Dynamic Workplace	Carry	Customer Service Oriented	Tuition
9	Generous Pay/Benefits	Climb	Teamwork	Parental Leave
10	Commitment to Diversity	Kneel	Dependable	Competitive Pay

Delivery Driver Position Job Post Highlights

- The majority include duties and qualifications, with an extensive list of requirements, skills, and abilities. About a quarter of ads break down activities in a typical day in the position.
- About half of ads place a strong emphasis on work-life balance, including no overnight routes.
- Similarly, around half of advertisements include physical requirements. Those mentioned most often involve heavy lifting, sometimes up to 100 lbs.
- About one-quarter of listings include common potential work hazards, such as inclement weather conditions, extreme temperatures, confined spaces, mechanical parts, fumes, etc.
- It's very common for ads to place a strong focus on the importance of the customer and customer service.
- About one-half of ads require that prospects can manage conflict with customers and/or colleagues and show ability to diffuse/resolve problems.

- Roughly half of ads include an expected daily or weekly hour total, as opposed to specific shift hours.
- About a quarter of listings include average or general fleet age or specific features of trucks (e.g., no-slip seating, comfort features, well maintained, etc.).
- About a quarter of ads mention rewards in addition to compensation and benefits, such as quarterly giveaways or prizes, and competitive awards programs (e.g., prize for best annual MPG).
- Of those listing compensation details, about half include annual base pay, while roughly a quarter state monthly or weekly amounts. It's also common for ads to list amounts achieved by the company's top-earning drivers.
- About a quarter of ads featured puns, such as "put your career into high gear" and "job ingredients include..."
- Roughly one-quarter of ads mention company-paid CDL training, training with experienced drivers, and other on-the-job training from entry-level.

Top 10 Most Commonly Mentioned Items in Delivery Driver Job Postings

	Key Words	Physical Reqs.	Skills Req.	Benefits Offered
1	Workplace safety	Lift	Customer Service Oriented	401(k)
2	Protection Protocols	Stand	Read/Write/Speak English	Dental
3	Career Growth	Push	Leadership	Paid Time Off
4	Generous Pay/Benefits	Pull	Communication	Life Insurance
5	Dynamic Workplace	Bend	Friendly	Overtime
6	Passion	Reach	Basic Computer Skills	Tuition
7	Respect for People	Walk	Dependable	Home Nightly
8	Company Culture	Climb	Basic Math Skills	Relocation
9	Commitment to Diversity	Twist	Attention to Detail	Referral Programs
10	Exciting Workplace	Carry	Adaptability	Competitive Pay



Order Selector and Delivery Driver Perspectives

Foodservice distribution employees know what they like and don't like about their jobs, what they think could be improved, and what makes them feel valued.

Based on one dozen in-depth interviews with younger industry professionals currently working as delivery drivers and warehouse selectors, this report includes perspectives about their roles — including on what attracted them to their jobs in the first place. While still early in their careers, these associates relayed considerable maturity and self-awareness about their preferences and needs. Many, especially those who have held other types of jobs, recognized the importance of balancing a range of factors in assessing jobs.

Their unique insights can help foodservice distributors enhance strategies for attracting younger candidates and improving retention at a time when the workforce is a topic of major importance.

Reasons for Choosing Foodservice Distribution Roles

Drivers and warehouse selectors chose jobs in foodservice distribution because of successful company recruiting efforts, good pay and benefits, roles that align with their lifestyle needs, and advancement opportunities. Several workers were attracted by the absence of a requirement for a college degree. Some

said this industry is more attractive than others when comparing similar job roles. Here are their reasons for choosing their jobs.

- **Strong Compensation and Benefits:** Employees were drawn to highly competitive pay and benefits — including 401ks, paid vacation and medical benefits. “I didn’t have all these benefits at my last company, so I really appreciate it now,” said one warehouse associate. Some said they like the opportunities for incentive pay based on performance.
- **Good Company Recruiting Efforts:** Top ways of learning about foodservice jobs include the jobsite Indeed and word of mouth through family and friends — a finding that lines up with results from a companion labor pool survey conducted for this report. “They had a great job ad online that emphasized paid vacation, benefits and time off,” recalled one employee about his company. Some associates mentioned good company marketing on social media and radio.
- **Positive Interview Experiences:** Many employees pointed to positive interview experiences that were informational and engaging. In the most successful of these experiences, employers balanced the goals of relaying a realistic picture of the challenging nature of jobs while emphasizing the positives whenever possible to retain candidate interest. “They made it clear that it’s a hard job, but that you would get out of it what you put into it,” said one selector.

- **High Activity Levels:** Many employees were drawn to the physical activity and mental stimulation inherent in foodservice distribution roles. Said one selector, "The labor is more intense here, which is good because my brain has to work more, and it keeps me on my toes."
- **Growth Opportunities:** Some employees said they were attracted to opportunities for advancement. "It's all about your potential and how you can grow," said one.
- **Specific Lifestyle Needs:** Important lifestyle considerations included proximity of the job to employee homes and work schedules that line up with family needs.

Favorite Parts of Jobs

Warehouse selectors cite camaraderie with co-workers as big pluses in their jobs. "You're never by yourself and you can talk with others as you work," said one. "It's like a challenge with everyone racing to see who will get the most work done by the end of the shift," said another.

These employees also like the ability to use productivity technology in their roles, such as headsets that guide selectors; the opportunity to gain incentives for performance; and the ability to work schedules that fit their lifestyles, especially in the cases of employees who have families with children.

Drivers point to the enjoyment of adventure in their roles, such as "getting to drive and see new places," and "discovering new restaurants." They also express a sense of satisfaction about making a difference for customers and said customers often relay their appreciation. Work schedule flexibility is another important factor, including the ability to "balance personal and work life" and obtain accommodations for last-minute personal needs if there is backup available.

Least Favorite Parts of Jobs

Challenges outside of employees' control top the list of least favorite job aspects for both warehouse workers and drivers. Sometimes the hurdles emerge only occasionally, and employees understand it's impossible to completely eliminate the challenges, but they are still unwelcome.

In the case of warehouse selectors, one notable hurdle is an occasional shortage of coworkers for a shift, such as if coworkers call out sick. "It means you have to do more work and it takes more hours," said one selector. Warehouse shifts also can take longer during unusually busy periods or if orders come in late some days. An ongoing period of longer shifts has the potential to result in stresses on family life or even burnout.

Drivers point to challenges outside of their control that include heavy road traffic and hard-to-find customer locations. These



types of situations break up routines, leading to late deliveries and longer shifts. "Day-to-day you often don't know what you're getting into," said one driver.

In some cases, minor shortfalls within organizations lead to challenges that can frustrate drivers. "There can be little slip-ups from warehouse workers, like loading a pallet in the wrong order, which requires rearranging pallets during the route," said one driver. Drivers also say that sometimes the routing for trips could be more efficient to avoid wasting time and fuel.

Aspects That Employees Would Like to Change

Employees were asked what one thing they would change about their job to make it easier, and many suggested strategies that would enable them to focus more on their core roles.

Some warehouse selectors suggested having dedicated employees for specialized support tasks, like for wrapping and staging pallets, so that selectors can focus exclusively on their picking roles. Other selectors said they would like to change picking workflows to make their jobs easier, but they conceded that certain changes may increase the risk of errors and item damage.

Drivers said enhanced routing capabilities would make their jobs easier, even as they admitted it's hard to account for all the variables drivers face. "There are so many special needs for delivery driver routes," explained one driver. "We want to avoid low-hanging electrical lines, drive on big roads, go on the fastest routes, and avoid dead ends. And we need to arrive at the right customer location, at the back door rather than the front door."

A few drivers said they would like their organizations to reduce the number of services drivers are expected to provide customers. For example, after items are delivered, some customers expect additional sorting that isn't necessarily part of a driver's main role.

Qualities That Determine Success in Roles

Foodservice distribution employees pointed to qualities that are necessary to succeed in their jobs. While the need for physical strength is a given, employees said their jobs don't necessarily demand enormous strength and that other attributes are just as important.

"You should be in pretty good shape, but you don't have to be in the best of shape," said a warehouse worker. "The job will put you in shape."



However, employees said it would be a mistake for new employees to discount the physical nature of the jobs. Said one driver, "You have to go on a steep ramp with a heavy cart and lift cases onto the cart. There are repetitive motions. It takes some strength and endurance."

Many workers emphasized the need to maintain a positive attitude to succeed in their jobs.

"You have to want to do the work and show up with the right mindset," said one selector. "It doesn't even matter how young you are. You can pick fast [when you're older]. You just need to want to be here and work."

Employees said it's important to bring good attitudes because negativity can rub off on others. "A negative attitude will lead you to slow down, and once one worker slows down, others do too," said a selector.

Drivers pointed to the importance of qualities such as common sense, good time management, attention to detail and professionalism. "Our most important role is customer service and how we present to the customers," said one.

Another driver emphasized the imperative of having a good demeanor regardless of daily challenges. "You need a great attitude because a lot of variables come up during the day that can throw you off."

What Makes Workers Feel Valued

Warehouse workers and drivers point to a lot of ways in which employers make them feel valued, aside from compensation and benefits. They cite approaches ranging from scheduling flexibility to special gatherings held to appreciate workers.

- **Flexibility:** The ability to have leeway on scheduling, such as getting off early for an appointment, is highly appreciated.
- **Praise:** Employees like to hear praise. Some workers wish they heard it more often, but they realize it may not be realistic to get kudos all the time.
- **Thoughtful Engagement:** Employees appreciate when managers inquire about their well-being and offer help if needed, such as arranging for transportation to work in a pinch. "They ask how my work is going, and how my family is doing," said one.
- **Gatherings for Appreciation:** Company gatherings to salute employees are popular. "Company higher-ups come in and thank us, and even give us presents," said one worker. "It's kind of hard to not feel valued."

- **Making New Hires Feel Welcome:** Some employees praised their companies for making new hires feel especially welcome and encouraging all workers to do the same.
- **Encouraging Employee Feedback:** Employees take notice when companies show genuine interest in their feedback. "I like that they want to hear my feedback, because I haven't seen that from other companies," said one driver.
- **Consideration for Promotions:** The ability to grow in a career, such as from selector to manager, or from warehouse worker to truck driver, is appealing to many employees. "It makes me feel valued that if I do well, I have the opportunity to advance," said one employee.

Foodservice distribution companies that make workers feel valued are likely to generate good will that helps with retention and recruiting. Moreover, employees notice when their supervisors were promoted from the ranks, because it enables those hoping for advancement to envision how they can grow.

"I see a lot of people who were promoted into supervisory roles," said one employee. "There are a number of paths for doing this. People in charge of me with higher paying jobs started where I did. That gives me the energy to want to advance."



Methodology

IFDA conducted this multi-faceted research project in the fall of 2022 to gain insight into how foodservice distributors can attract younger workers to driver and warehouse jobs at their companies. The research documents the industry's workforce composition, how and where potential job applicants view job postings, and how distributors recruit for driver and warehouse positions.

IFDA commissioned Big Village to conduct a national, online survey of individuals from target driver and warehouse job applicant demographic populations Oct. 11-17, 2022, asking about jobs in general and job postings specifically. Respondents included 1,002 U.S. adults, ages 18-34 who never attended college. Respondents age 18-24 are considered Gen Z, and those 25-34 are considered Millennials.

IFDA conducted a survey among foodservice distributors Oct. 19-Nov. 21, 2022, asking about workforce demographics and recruiting tactics. Respondents included 25 companies. The survey was administered by Industry Insights.

IFDA engaged David Orgel Consulting LLC to conduct one-on-one interviews with six delivery drivers and six order selectors at foodservice distribution companies to explore how they feel about their jobs and what they find important in an employer. Information from the interviews is reported anonymously.

IFDA commissioned a web scraping of online job posts for foodservice distribution delivery drivers and warehouse selectors that was executed by Industry Insights. Web scraping is a method of extracting large volumes of unstructured data that is analyzed to uncover key insights. Information was extracted from 4,500 active job advertisements in the U.S. on Indeed.com and individual company websites in November 2022.

IFDA extends a heartfelt thank you to all IFDA members who contributed information to this research in surveys and facilitated the interviews.

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