

SHL.

The State of Your Interview Experience Report (2022)

Insights on the candidate experience based on real employee interview conversations.



Executive Summary

Job interviews are a centuries-old practice, but they are still plagued by inconsistent, subjective, and biased decision-making. Poor interviewing practices have a significant impact on the candidate experience and the organizations' efforts to build a diverse workforce.

The lack of measurement and metrics for the interview experience is one of the primary bottlenecks in conducting effective job interviews. Most interview conversations have shifted to digital mediums, providing a unique opportunity to use Artificial Intelligence (AI) to measure and benchmark the interview experience.

We define key metrics that can impact candidate experience in interviews, and SHL's interview intelligence platform analyzes thousands of real interview conversations to provide insights into today's interviewing practices.

Some of the key insights presented in this whitepaper include,

- Nearly 80% of interviewers overlook key practices that have an impact on the overall candidate experience.
- More than half of interviewers do not adhere to proper interview etiquette.
- Female candidates had to face more personal questions during interviews.

This whitepaper's insights reinforce the fact that organizations can do better when they know better. Automatic measurement of interview experience is the first step toward changing today's interviewing practices.



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A negative interview experience reflects poorly on the organization, limiting its ability to attract talent ³.

Introduction

Hiring and managing talent is central to an organization's success or failure in today's knowledge-driven economy. Interviews have been one of the longstanding practices in the recruitment process, with their existence going on for over a century. A job interview was historically described as a "face-to-face interaction conducted to assess an individual's suitability for a given job ¹."

With the advent of technology and the new age of communication, employment interviews have been shifted to new mediums i.e., phone, audio/video conferencing, etc. The covid pandemic in the last two years has made this shift exponential, and most of the interviews are conducted virtually now.

Interviews (in particular, interviewers) have the maximal impact on the candidate's experience in the recruitment lifecycle ².

¹ Chapman, D. S., & Rowe, P. M. (2002). The influence of videoconference technology and interview structure on the recruiting function of the employment interview: A field experiment. *International Journal of Selection and Assessment*, 10(3), 185-197.

² Guide: Train your Interviewers, <https://rework.withgoogle.com/guides/hiring-train-your-interviewers/steps/giving-interviewers-practice/>

³ Your Candidate Experience, Creating Impact or Burning Cash, <https://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/us/Documents/humancapital/us-human-capital-your-candidate-experience-creating-an-impact-or-burning-cash.pdf>

The overall interviewing practice (and specifically, interviewers) has not changed much in the last decades. **Figure 1** presents some of the well-known issues of today's interviewing practice. First and foremost, most organizations as well as interviewers do not follow established scientific methods (for example, structured interviewing). Allan Huffcutt said that *"Two ships that pass in the night"* is a meaningful way to describe the relationship between scientific research on employment interviews and the actual practice of conducting them in organizations⁴. Unlike other constituents of the recruiting process, recruiting teams have very limited visibility into how interviews are conducted.

There is a lack of a feedback system for the interviewers that can provide actionable insights into their interviewing practices. The pandemic-driven digital shift in interviews provided a one-of-a-kind opportunity to analyze interview conversations. The Smart Interview Live product offering by SHL helped conduct over 600K+ interviews in India. SHL Labs analyzed thousands of interview conversations of the largest Indian IT Software and Services organizations.

Figure 1: Today's Interviewing practices are a "black hole" of information and have significant issues.

Limited or No Structure

Lack of Interviewer Training

Limited Adoption of Science

Limited Visibility to the Recruiting Team

Brings Irreparable Damage to the Brand

⁴ Huffcutt, Allen I. "From science to practice: Seven principles for conducting employment interviews." *Applied HRM Research* 12.1 (2010): 121.

About the Indian IT Software and Services Market

It is one of the largest employers in India with over

5 million people.

Added nearly 0.5 million people in 2022 alone.



The top three IT companies are expected to offer nearly

100,000

job opportunities in FY22.



It has a total revenue of

US\$227B

with over 15% YoY growth.



Most interviews are digital now, but little has changed in the overall interviewing practice in the last two centuries.

Defining “Interview Experience”

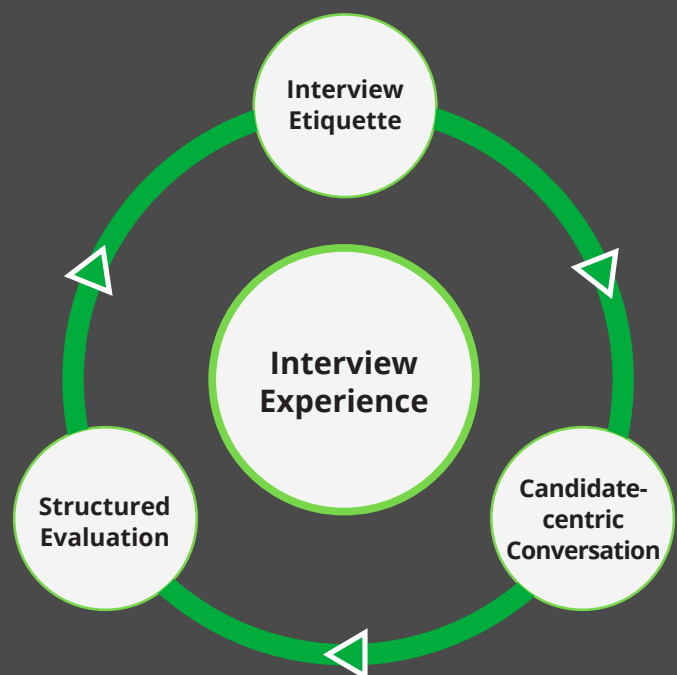
Even though candidate experience is a much-talked-about term in the recruitment industry, there is not much discussion or research literature about interview experience. However, despite the little representation, interview experience has the greatest impact on the candidate experience ⁵.

We define some of the key metrics of a positive interview experience in digital interviews (**Figure 2**).

We have derived these metrics by understanding candidates’ expectations through surveys as well as by analyzing anonymous textual feedback posted by thousands of candidates on websites such as Glassdoor and Indeed.

1. **Interview Etiquette:** An interviewer acts as a brand ambassador of the organization during the interview conversations. The job interviews are like any other professional conversation and the interviewer needs to follow appropriate etiquette.
 - a. **Self-Introduction:** The interviewer should introduce themselves and their organization during the interview conversation.
 - b. **Ability to Listen:** The interviewer should let candidates speak and represent themselves to the best of their ability.
 - c. **Keeping Their Webcam On:** The interviewer should keep their webcam on if they are expecting the same from the candidates.

Figure 2: **Key Constituents of the Interview Experience**



⁵ Guide: Train your Interviewers, <https://rework.withgoogle.com/guides/hiring-train-your-interviewers/steps/giving-interviewers-practice/>

2. Candidate-centric Conversation:

The interviewer should conduct a candidate-centric conversation, valuing their time and presence, as well as keeping the discussion focused on the skills required for the job.

a. Value the Candidate's Time:

An interviewer should respect and value a candidate's time, especially by joining the conversation on time and completing the evaluation within the allocated time.

b. Opportunity to Ask Questions:

The interviewer should provide an explicit opportunity for the candidate to ask questions related to the job profile, hiring process, or the organization.

c. Avoid Unnecessary Personal

Questions: The interviewer should avoid asking personal questions to the candidate, especially if they are not related to the job. Asking personal questions can make some candidates uncomfortable and may lead to unconscious biases.

3. Structured Evaluation: The structure is the enhancement of the interviews to increase psychometric properties focused on standardization of the content (i.e., questions) and evaluation of the candidates' responses.

a. **Standardized Questions:** For a given job profile, the competencies, related questions, and difficulty levels should be consistent across all interviews.

b. **Standardized Scoring:** Interviewers should use the standardized scoring template to evaluate the candidates' responses to help minimize bias.

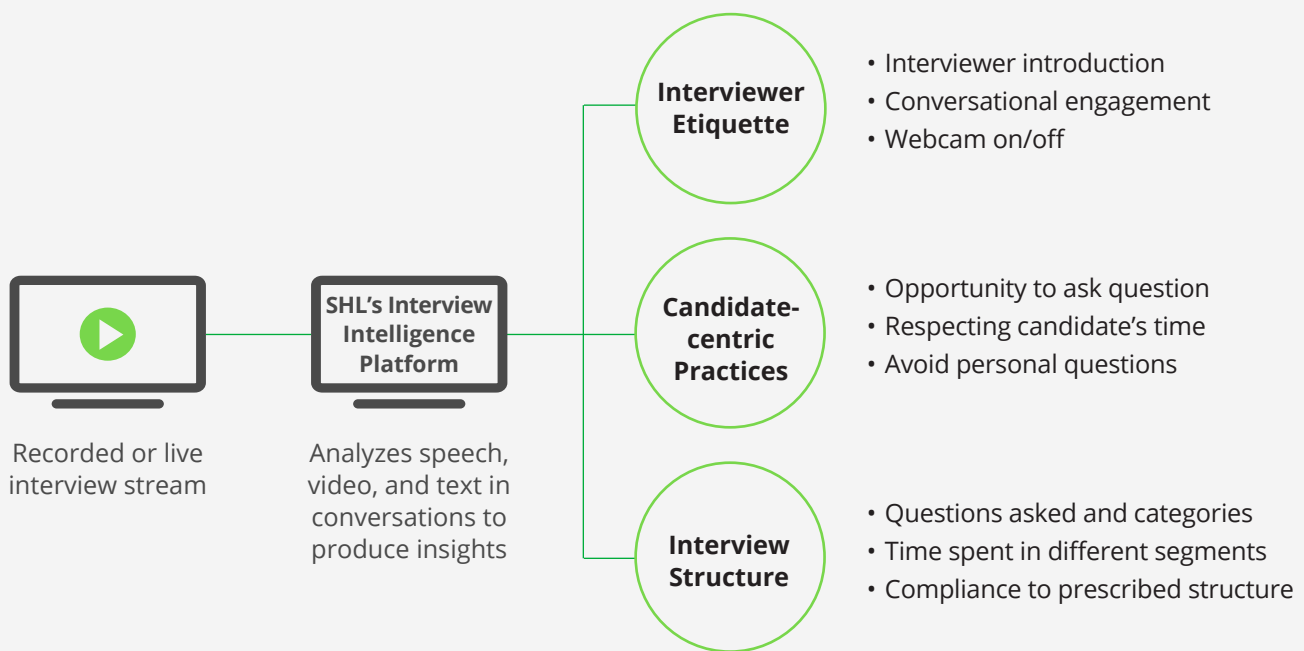
In the next section, we discuss how these components can be automatically measured in interviews.



Measuring the Interview Experience

We developed an end-to-end AI-powered system (i.e., SHL's interview intelligence platform) that can help extract key interview experience metrics from the interview recordings. **Figure 3** provides a high-level model of how these insights are extracted from audio, video, and textual streams.

Figure 3: **High-level Model of Interview Intelligence Platform**

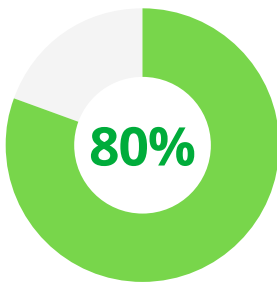


“Anything that can be measured can be improved.”
Michael Dell

Interview Experience Insights

Sample Size

We analyzed a total of 3000+ interviews sampled from a broader pool of 600,000 interviews. All were conducted in India, across 10 different organizations. Broadly, these organizations are part of the Indian IT Software and Services Industry.



Interviewers do not provide a great experience to the candidates



Interviewers missed on appropriate **interview etiquette**



Interviewers did not follow **candidate-centric practices**



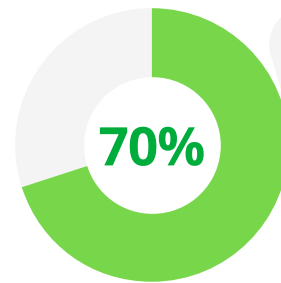
Interviewers follow the prescribed **interview structure**

High-level Analysis

In any interview process, demonstrating appropriate interview etiquette and conducting candidate-centric conversations is critical for an interviewer. We analyzed the data and found that 80% of the interviewers miss at least one of these best practices and compromise on the opportunity to provide a great interview experience.

A) Interview Etiquette

We found that 70% of the interviewers do not follow at least one of the three interview etiquette metrics defined earlier. Introducing oneself is a basic courtesy while starting a professional conversation. Nearly 40% of interviewers missed introducing themselves while starting the conversation.



Interviewers did not follow at least one of the three interview etiquette metrics



Interviewers **did not introduce themselves** while starting the conversation



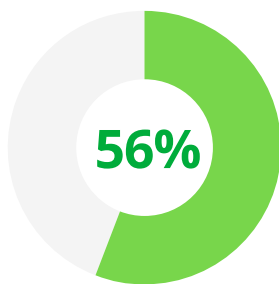
Interviewers **did not switch on their cameras**, even when the candidate's video feed was on



Interviewers **spoke more than the candidate** during the interview

B) Candidate-centric Conversations

It is important for organizations to design a candidate-first hiring experience. Therefore, interviewers need to also adopt a candidate-first approach while doing their conversations with the candidate. Our analysis finds that 56% of the interviewers miss out on candidate-centric conversations. Specifically, 30% of interviewers ask questions that may not be related to the job profile and requirements. Also, nearly 27% of interviewers do not provide an opportunity to ask questions.



Interviewers missed on the candidate-centric conversations



Interviewers **asked personal questions** that may not be related to the job



Interviewers **did not provide the opportunity** to ask questions



Interviewers **did not respect the candidate's time**

Further breaking down into personal questions, the following figure describes different categories of personal questions asked during the interview conversation. 22% of interviewers ask about parents whereas nearly 10% of the interviewers enquire about children. Nearly 8% of interviewers also ask about marital status during the conversation.



Information about **parent backgrounds**



Information about **children**



Information about **siblings**



Information about **marital status**

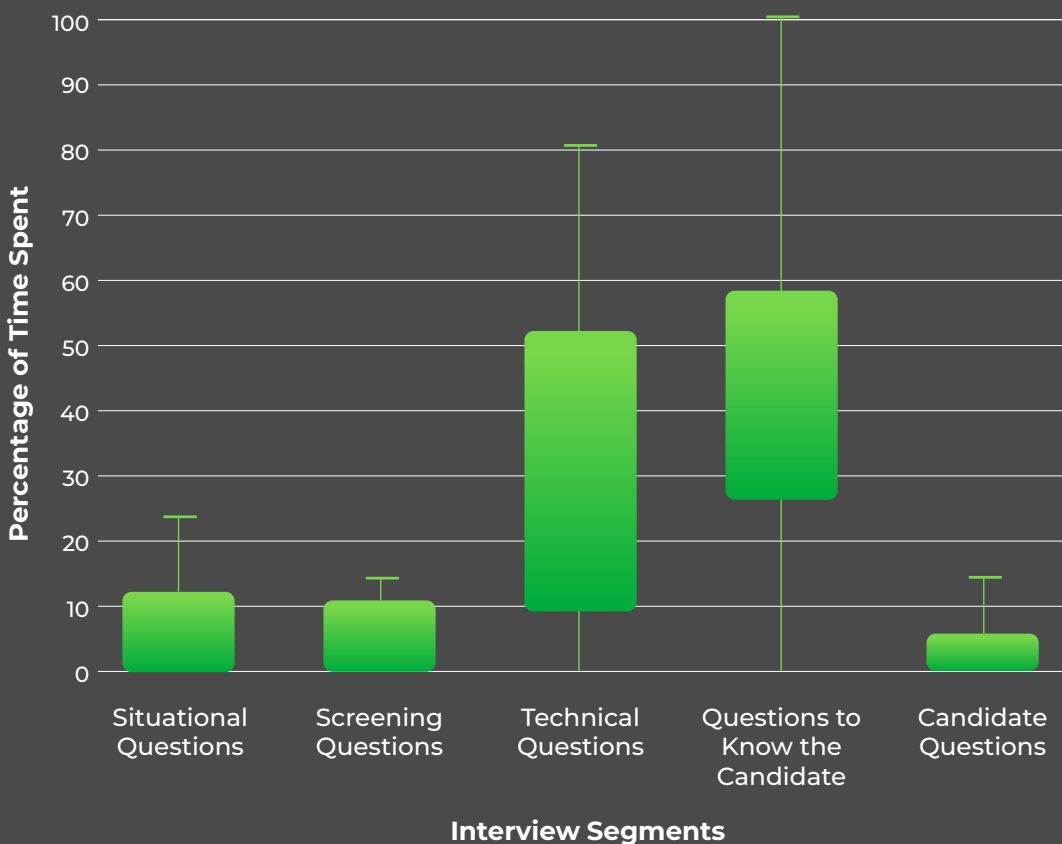
C) Structured Evaluation

The interview process needs to be consistent across candidates for a given job profile. We analyzed if the interviewers are following the structured interviewing practices or not. Only 40% of the interviewers follow the prescribed questions during the interview conversations. It is also important for the interviewers to rate the candidate on

standardized rubrics evaluation immediately after the interview.

Finally, we have observed high variability (and hence, lack of consistency) across interviewers even when they were hiring for a single profile. For instance, **Figure 4** describes the time spent by the interviewers on different segments for a single profile.

Figure 4: **Time Spent by Interviewers on Different Segments of the Interview for a Single Profile**

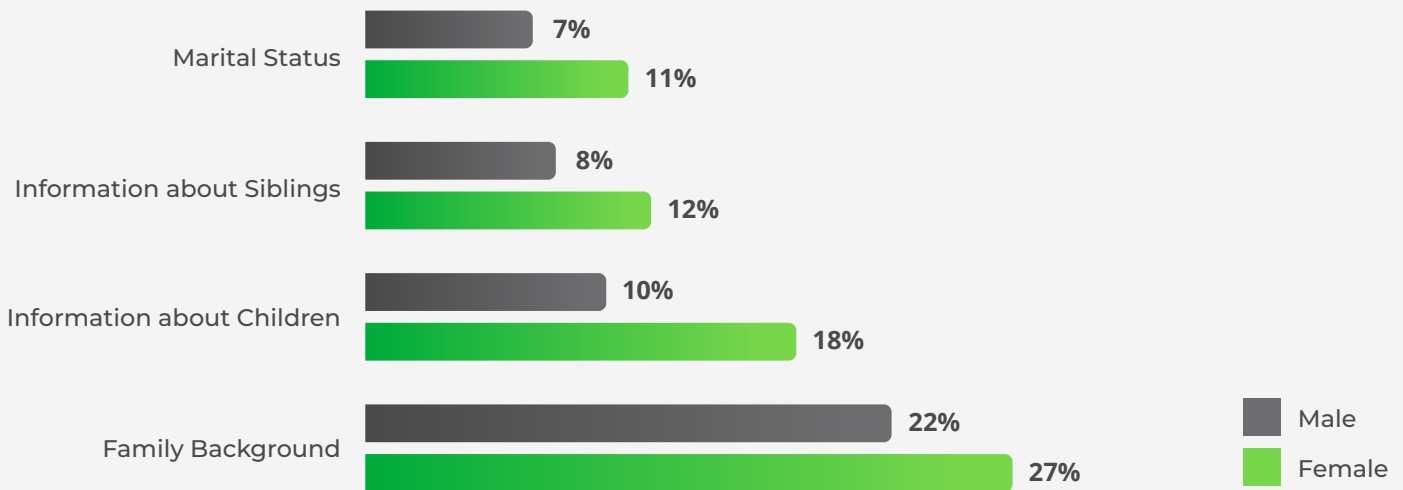


Gender Bias in Interviews

Organizations that seek to hire quality, diverse candidates should minimize the opportunity for unconscious bias to influence hiring decisions. An important strategy for reducing bias is to ensure that all interview questions are job-relevant, and to avoid personal questions. Personal questions become even more problematic when they are asked to some demographic groups more frequently than others.

Our analysis has found that 42% of female candidates were asked at least one personal question whereas only 33% of male candidates were asked at least one personal question. **Figure 5** also provides a breakdown of different kinds of personal questions asked to both male and female candidates.

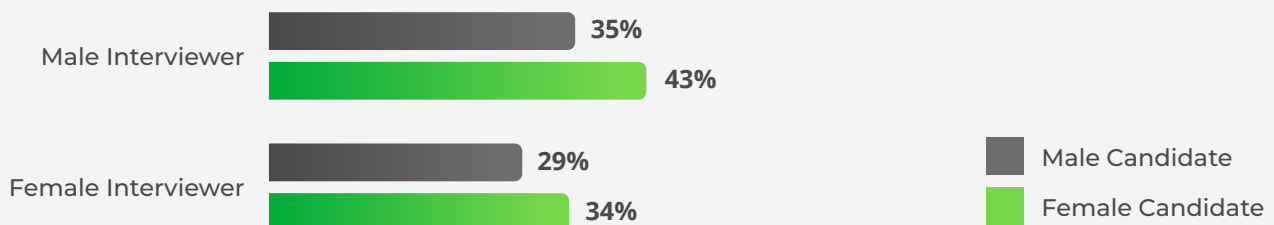
Figure 5: **Breakdown of Personal Questions Categories Asked to Male and Female Candidates**



Also, male interviewers are more likely to ask a personal question to the candidates as compared to female interviewers. We found that nearly 43% of male interviewers asked a personal question when the candidate was a female vs only 35% of male interviewers asked a personal question when the candidate was a male (**Figure 6**).

When interviewers ask questions that are not job-related, they decrease the predictive power of interviews ⁶, open the possibility of biased hiring decisions and, in some regions, expose the organization to legal risk. These effects are amplified when members of some subgroups are asked such questions more often than members of other subgroups, as in the case with gender above.

Figure 6: **Gender Bias in Frequency of Personal Questions Male and Female Interviewers Asked**



⁶ Huffcutt, A. I., & Arthur, W. (1994). Hunter & Hunter (1984) revisited: Interview validity for entry-level jobs. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 79, 184-190.

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Recommendations to Improve the Interview Experience

In this white paper, we described the framework and metrics to benchmark candidate experience in interviews. The interview experience is the most impactful in the overall candidate experience and therefore it needs maximum attention from the talent leaders. We have the following recommendations for organizations and talent leaders going forward.

1. **Measure and Track “Interview Experience”:**

Our analysis has demonstrated that many interviewers do not display appropriate etiquette during the conversation, impacting the overall candidate experience. Many interview conversations are being conducted using digital platforms⁷. Talent leaders need to invest in [interview intelligence platforms and capabilities](#) that can help analyze the interviews (real-time or offline) creating visibility and helping them track the overall interview experience.

2. **Adopt Structured Interviewing Practices:**

Structured interviewing is found to be the most predictive hiring assessment for job success⁸. Organizations need to ensure that they adopt structured interviewing practices across different departments and job profiles which can help them hire quality candidates while providing a consistent interview experience. Additionally, interview intelligence platforms can help track the compliance of structured interviewing practices, i.e., how many interviewers are following these practices during the actual conversation.

3. **Interviewer Training:** Interviewers act as brand ambassadors for the organization during the interview conversations. Organizations need to take proactive steps in training and equipping their interviewers with the best practices on how to conduct interviews. Interviewer training can be delivered through a realistic simulation as well as using the learning-in-the-flow-of-work methodology where automated feedback can be passed back to the interviewers.

⁷ The Virtual Interview Is The New Resume: What You Need To Know, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbesbusinesscouncil/2022/05/05/the-virtual-interview-is-the-new-resume-what-you-need-to-know/>

⁸ Levashina, J., Hartwell, C. J., Morgeson, F. P., & Campion, M. A. (2014). The structured employment interview: Narrative and quantitative review of the research literature. *Personnel Psychology*, 67(1), 241-293.

About SHL Labs



SHL Labs is SHL's high-tech innovation powerhouse with cross-disciplinary collaboration across people scientists, AI researchers, and academics dedicated to advancing innovation in talent acquisition and talent management.

SHL Labs is focused on the following themes:

- Envision and articulate the next generation of people's experiences, insights, and platforms.
- Build cutting-edge solutions leveraging AI and emerging tech adhering to IOP principles.
- Nurture cross-functional innovation practice actively collaborating with academia globally.

