

INDEPENDENT INDUSTRY BENCHMARK · v1.0

The 2026 AI Hiring Index

How 20 leading ATS platforms compare on compliance, AI capability, transparency, buyer-friendliness and customer outcomes — with 84 days until EU AI Act enforcement.

20

PLATFORMS TESTED

40

CRITERIA EVALUATED

800

DATA POINTS SCORED

4

READY FOR AI ACT

— EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

What this report finds — and why it matters now

We tested 20 leading applicant tracking systems across 40 criteria spanning five dimensions: compliance readiness, AI capability, transparency, buyer-friendliness, and customer outcomes. Each platform was scored against publicly available evidence as of May 5, 2026.

The Index reveals five findings that should reshape how 2026 ATS purchasing decisions are made.

Finding 1 — Compliance is the dimension where vendor positioning varies most.

The compliance dimension produced a 14-point spread between best (28/30) and worst (14/30) — wider than any other dimension. AI capability, where most vendor marketing is concentrated, produced only a 10-point spread.

Finding 2 — Only 4 platforms scored above 75/100 overall.

Ashby (86), tenperzent (84), Workable (75), and Personio (72, tied with Recruitee). The leader cluster shares one trait: each invested in compliance infrastructure ahead of the regulatory deadline rather than retrofitting after.

Finding 3 — Pricing transparency correlates with Net Revenue Retention.

Vendors that publish their pricing average 113% NRR. Vendors that gate pricing behind enterprise sales average 102%. Customers of opaque vendors report 22-40% renewal increases.

Finding 4 — Only 3 platforms ship explainable AI as a default.

Ashby, Greenhouse, and tenperzent provide candidate-level explanations of AI-driven scores in plain language. Explainability is not yet a US regulatory requirement, but is mandatory under Article 86 of the EU AI Act.

Finding 5 — Compliance retrofitting averages \$50K–\$200K per ATS.

Buyers who selected an ATS in 2024 without compliance criteria are spending \$50K–\$200K in 2026 retrofitting audit logs, explainability, EU data residency, and AI Act documentation.

For most companies, this exceeds the cost of switching to a compliance-native ATS.

The bottom line for 2026 ATS buyers. Compliance is now the most differentiating dimension and the one under regulatory time pressure. If you are signing a 2-year ATS contract in Q2 2026, weight compliance heavily — retrofit cost averages 4–6 months and \$50K–\$200K.

— RANKINGS

Complete results — all 20 platforms

Sorted by total score. Each dimension scored against the published rubric in Methodology.

#	Vendor	Total /100	Comp /30	AI /25	Trans /20	Buyer /15	Out /10
1	Ashby	86	24	23	18	13	8
2	tenperzent	84	28	19	18	13	6
3	Workable	75	18	19	17	13	8
4	Personio	72	27	17	11	9	8
5	Recruitee	72	22	16	15	12	7
6	JOIN	71	18	16	18	13	6
7	SmartRecruiters	70	23	20	11	9	7
8	Teamtaylor	70	21	17	14	11	7
9	Greenhouse	69	22	18	12	8	9
10	Manatal	69	15	18	17	13	6
11	BambooHR	68	17	14	16	12	9
12	Zoho Recruit	68	16	15	16	14	7
13	Pinpoint	67	21	15	14	11	6
14	iCIMS	65	25	19	8	6	7
15	Lever	65	19	17	13	9	7
16	Breezy HR	64	14	13	17	13	7
17	JazzHR	62	14	13	16	12	7
18	Recruiterflow	60	14	16	14	11	5
19	JobAdder	60	18	14	13	10	5
20	Bullhorn	59	20	15	10	7	7

Highlighted row: tenperzent (publisher of the Index — see Disclosures).

What separates the leaders from the rest

The five highest-scoring platforms — what they did right, where they're vulnerable, and which buyers each is best for.

#1 OVERALL · Ashby — 86/100

Compliance 24 · AI 23 · Transparency 18 · Buyer 13 · Outcomes 8

The category-leading AI ATS for scaleups. Ashby is built analytics-first, with the deepest data model of any platform tested. AI features ship with explainability defaults, audit logs, and model-change notifications baked in. EU AI Act provider documentation was published in January 2026 — earlier than any competitor.

Vulnerability. Pricing is published but starts higher than SMB-friendly competitors. Platform depth is overkill for teams under 50 and adds onboarding friction.

Best for: Series A-D scaleups · Pricing: From ~\$300/mo · Standout: Analytics depth · Watch out: Onboarding cost

#2 OVERALL · tenperzent — 84/100

Compliance 28 · AI 19 · Transparency 18 · Buyer 13 · Outcomes 6

Compliance-native ATS positioned for the August 2026 enforcement deadline. tenperzent is the only platform tested that ships EU AI Act provider documentation, NYC AEDT bias-audit automation, EEOC explainability defaults, and configurable EU data residency for AI inference as standard — not as a paid add-on.

Vulnerability. tenperzent is newer than Greenhouse or Workable, with a smaller customer base and fewer third-party integrations natively. We disclose: tenperzent built this Index. See Methodology.

Best for: Compliance-first SMBs · Pricing: Free tier · Pro from €79/mo · Standout: EU AI Act readiness · Watch out: Newer ecosystem

#3 OVERALL · Workable — 75/100

Compliance 18 · AI 19 · Transparency 17 · Buyer 13 · Outcomes 8

The workhorse SMB ATS, with strong AI sourcing. Workable's 400M-profile AI Sourcing engine remains best-in-class for top-of-funnel AI. Pricing is transparent. Implementation is among the fastest in category — most teams are live within 7 days.

Vulnerability. EU AI Act readiness lags significantly behind Ashby and tenperzent. Sourcing-AI's 400M-profile dataset triggers Article 27 FRIA obligations many customers haven't completed.

Best for: SMB high-velocity hiring · Pricing: From \$299/mo · Standout: AI sourcing · Watch out: EU AI Act gap

#4 OVERALL · Personio — 72/100

Compliance 27 · AI 17 · Transparency 11 · Buyer 9 · Outcomes 8

The DACH HR-suite leader, EU-native by design. Personio's compliance posture is unmatched among full HR suites — GDPR-first architecture, EU data residency standard, and a robust DPA. Strong for European Mittelstand and US companies hiring heavily in Europe.

Vulnerability. Pricing transparency is poor (the lowest of any top-10 vendor). AI features lag the AI-native leaders. The ATS module is one of many priorities inside a broader HR suite.

Best for: European Mittelstand · Pricing: Quote-only · Standout: EU compliance · Watch out: Pricing opacity

#5 OVERALL · Recrutee — 72/100

Compliance 22 · AI 16 · Transparency 15 · Buyer 12 · Outcomes 7

EU-native ATS strong on collaborative hiring. Recrutee's GDPR-first architecture and Dutch data residency are credible compliance signals. Product UI is among the cleanest in the category and works well for distributed teams.

Vulnerability. AI features feel late to ship — most are integrations rather than native. Product velocity has slowed since the Tellent merger. EU AI Act provider documentation is partial.

Best for: EU SMBs, design-led hiring · Pricing: From €199/mo · Standout: UX, EU residency · Watch out: AI velocity

7 platforms where our public-evidence score on compliance was lowest

These vendors scored below 18/30 on the Compliance Readiness dimension based on the public evidence we could find as of May 5, 2026. A low score reflects gaps in publicly available documentation — not a determination of legal compliance, and not a prediction about any vendor's future. Several of these platforms are excellent in their primary strengths and are actively investing in compliance.

Rank	Vendor	Compliance	Where the gap is
#16	Breezy HR	14/30	Strong on ux simplicity; less public evidence on ai act gap.
#17	JazzHR	14/30	Strong on affordable starter; less public evidence on dated, us-only.
#18	Recruiterflow	14/30	Strong on agency workflows; less public evidence on compliance gap.
#10	Manatal	15/30	Strong on ai marketing claims; less public evidence on compliance mat
#12	Zoho Recruit	16/30	Strong on lowest tco; less public evidence on dated ux.
#11	BambooHR	17/30	Strong on hris integration; less public evidence on limited ats depth.

A note on the danger zone. Inclusion is not a claim that a vendor cannot or will not become compliant — many are actively investing in compliance features as we publish. It is a snapshot of **publicly verifiable compliance posture as of May 2026**. Buyers signing 2-year contracts in Q2 2026 should weight this dimension heavily; retrofitting compliance after deployment averages \$50K–\$200K and 4–6 months. Every vendor will have an opportunity to respond before the v1.1 update.

How we scored 20 platforms across 40 criteria

The Index uses a 100-point scoring framework distributed across five weighted dimensions. Each dimension breaks into specific criteria — binary or scaled. All scoring used publicly available evidence as of May 5, 2026.

30% 12 CRITERIA	Compliance Readiness EEOC AI guidance, NYC AEDT, Illinois Video Interview Act, CA/Colorado AI laws, EU AI Act high-risk classification, GDPR Article 28 DPA, ADA accommodations, OFCCP, ISO 27001, SOC 2 Type II, EU data residency.
25% 10 CRITERIA	AI Capability Resume parsing AI, candidate matching, AI sourcing, AI interviews, explainable AI, bias testing, audit logs, score explanations, hiring-manager AI tooling, agentic / multi-step workflows.
20% 8 CRITERIA	Transparency Public pricing, security documentation, AI methodology disclosure, bias-test results, sub-processor list, uptime metrics, customer reviews, change log / roadmap.
15% 5 CRITERIA	Buyer Friendliness Self-service trial, <14-day implementation, migration support, contract terms (auto-renew, exit clauses), Net Revenue Retention disclosure.
10% 5 CRITERIA	Customer Outcomes G2 average rating, G2 review count, customer-base scale, time-to-value claims, annual customer growth.

What changed since 2025 — and what's coming next

01 Compliance is becoming the primary procurement criterion

In 2024 RFPs, compliance averaged the third-highest weight after features and price. In Q1 2026 RFPs we reviewed, compliance moved to first. EEOC AI guidance, NYC AEDT enforcement, EU AI Act, and Colorado's AI Act created a regulatory reality where buyers cannot defer compliance to year 2 of deployment.

02 AI Sourcing is consolidating around two architectures

Vendors split into two architectures: large proprietary databases (Workable, hireEZ, SeekOut) versus connector-based aggregators (Ashby, tenperzent, Findem). The proprietary-database approach faces increasing GDPR Article 6(1)(f) pressure as DPAs require Legitimate Interests Assessments many vendors never produced.

03 Pricing transparency is the new default for under-\$2B-valuation vendors

Of vendors valued under \$2B, 11 of 14 publish meaningful pricing in 2026, up from 4 of 14 in 2024. Above \$2B valuation, 0 of 6 publish pricing. The trend correlates strongly with NRR — transparent vendors average 113% NRR vs 102% for opaque ones.

04 The HR-suite vs ATS-native question is back

BambooHR, Personio, Rippling, Paylocity, and Factorial all expanded their ATS modules through 2025. The trade-off: HR-suite ATSes underperform ATS-natives by ~12 points on AI capability in our scoring, but outperform on HRIS integration friction. The buyer's question becomes: optimize for hiring or for the employee lifecycle?

05 Agentic AI is the next 18 months' battleground

Conversational AI (chatbots) plateaued in 2025. Agentic AI — multi-step autonomous workflows that schedule, source, screen, and follow up without human prompts — is now where R&D investment is concentrated. Of the 20 platforms tested, only 3 ship documented agentic capabilities; 8 have committed to 2026 roadmap delivery.

Limitations and right of reply

tenperzent built this Index.

We are also one of the 20 vendors scored. We addressed this conflict in three ways: (1) Methodology is published in full so anyone can replicate. (2) Scoring evidence for tenperzent is held to the same publicly-verifiable standard as every other vendor. (3) We held tenperzent's score below #1 where the data supported a competitor scoring higher. Ashby outranks tenperzent overall in this v1.0.

Public information only.

All scoring used publicly available evidence as of May 5, 2026: vendor websites, customer-facing documentation, G2 / Capterra reviews, Trustpilot, regulatory filings, published case studies, and vendor blog posts. Where evidence was unavailable we scored zero and noted the gap.

Vendors will have right of reply.

All 20 vendors will be invited to provide additional evidence before v1.1 (planned September 2026). Where evidence is provided, scoring will be revised. Each revision will be logged.

Reproducibility.

The scoring rubric, weights, and per-criterion definitions are published. Any third party with access to public information can replicate our scores within ± 5 points.

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