

NEOGOV

THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON PUBLIC SECTOR JOB SEEKERS

MAY 2020

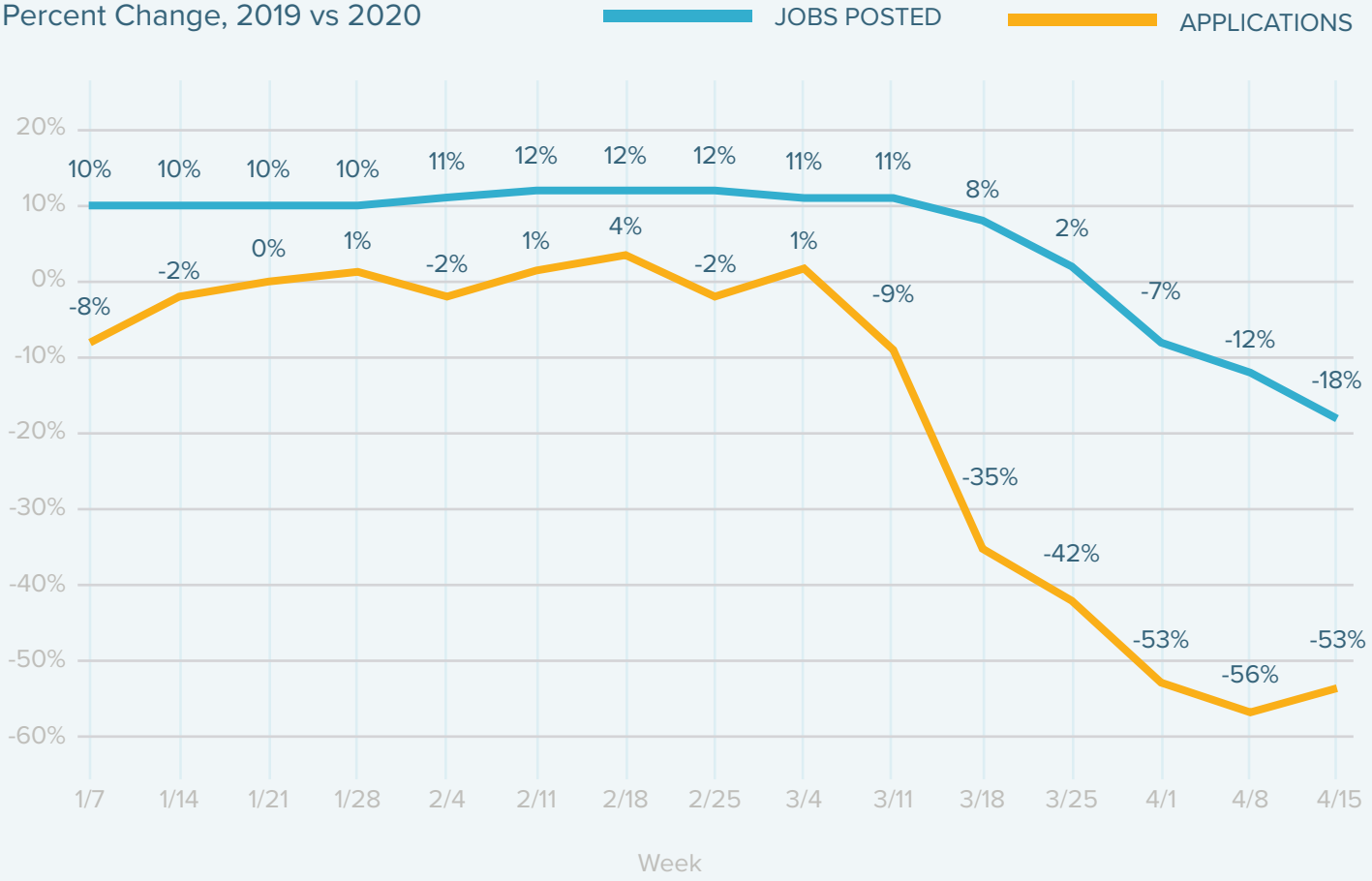
THE EFFECT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

ON EMPLOYMENT

As the United States contends with what the long-term economic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic will be, there seems to be mass uncertainty and anxiety around finding jobs. According to the Department of Labor, the six week period between President Trump's announcement of a national state of emergency on March 14th and the end of April yielded 30 million unemployment claims. The third week of April 2020 saw 3.5 million jobless claims, compared to 200,000 in the same week of the prior year.

Figure 1

Percent Change, 2019 vs 2020



To understand the effect on public sector employment specifically, we compared the number of public sector job postings to the number of applicants in the first three weeks of April 2020 versus the same period for the prior year. **While job postings by public sector organizations have only declined by 13%, the number of job applicants has decreased by 54%. The result is a staggering 41% gap.**

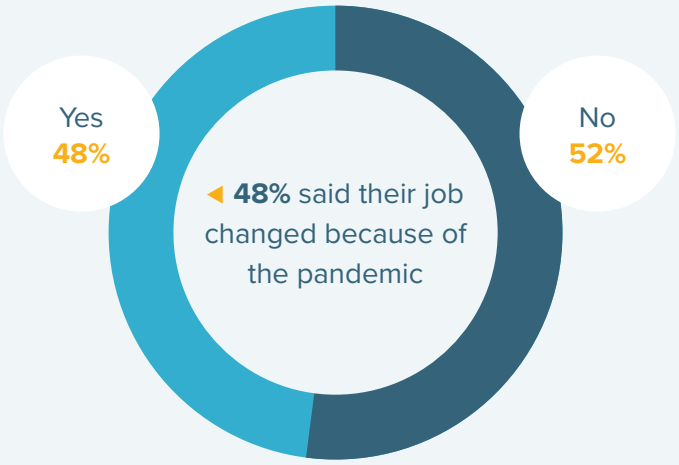
There is a perception that the public sector is not hiring, but that is not the case. **So we asked job seekers why they have stopped looking for roles.**

THE SURVEY

In April 2020, we surveyed over 7,000 recent public sector job seekers with the goal of learning how their search has been impacted by the pandemic. Respondents were a cross-section of job seekers who have previously worked in both the public and private sectors. 34% had public sector experience.

Figure 2

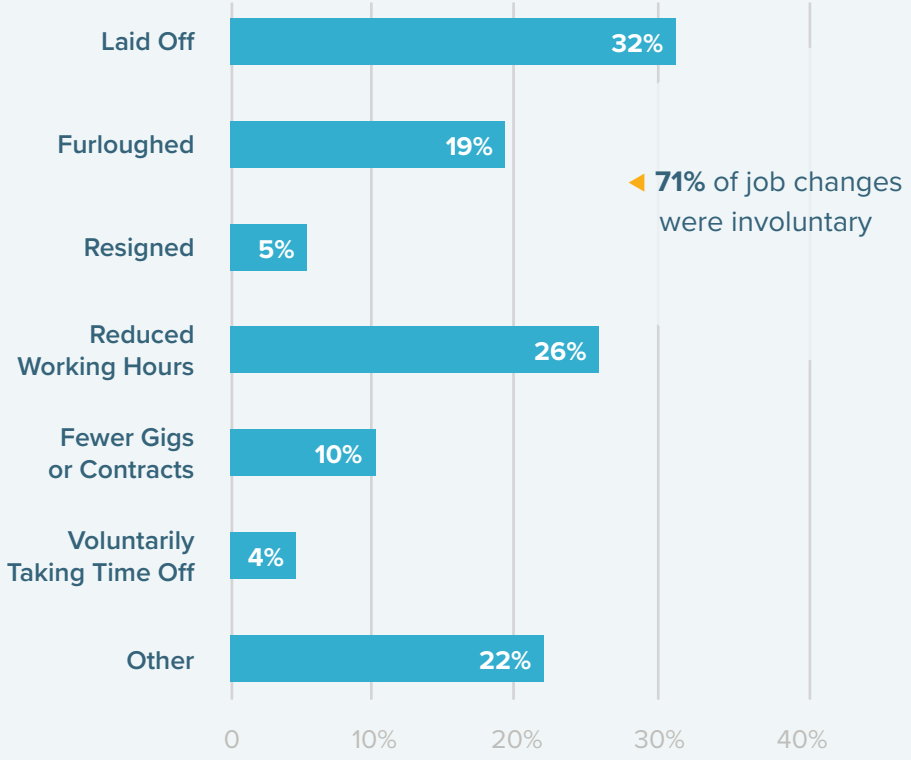
Has your job status changed because of the COVID-19 pandemic?



Almost half of the respondents reported that their job status has changed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. 71% of those changes were involuntary, including being laid off, furloughed, or having their work hours reduced.

Figure 3

How has your job status changed? (Select all that apply.)



MANY JOB SEEKERS HAVE

SLOWED DOWN THEIR JOB SEARCH

Figure 4

Have you recently **slowed down or stopped** your job search?

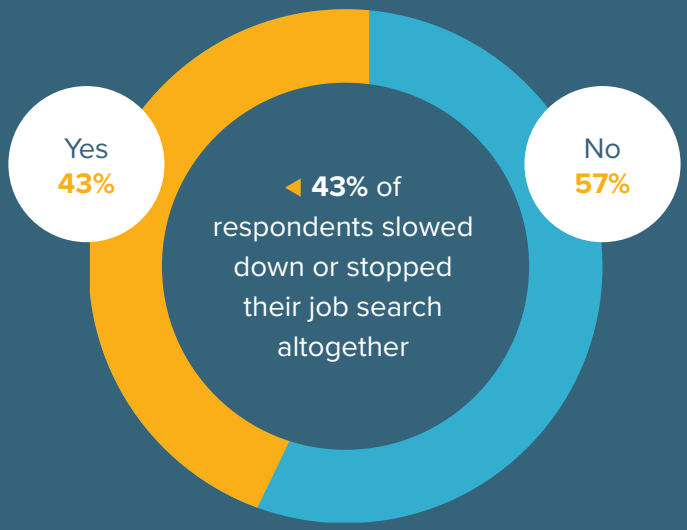
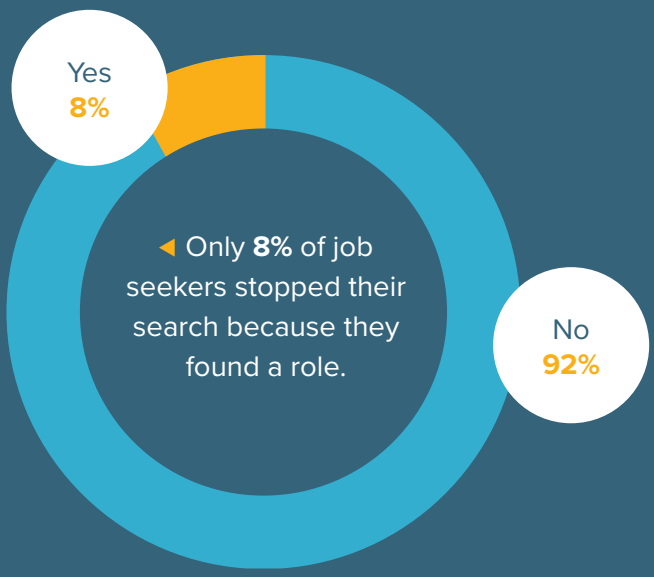


Figure 5

Have you stopped your job search because you have **found new employment?**



However, **92%** of those job seekers stated the reason for slowing their job search was not finding new employment. **So, why did they stop looking?**

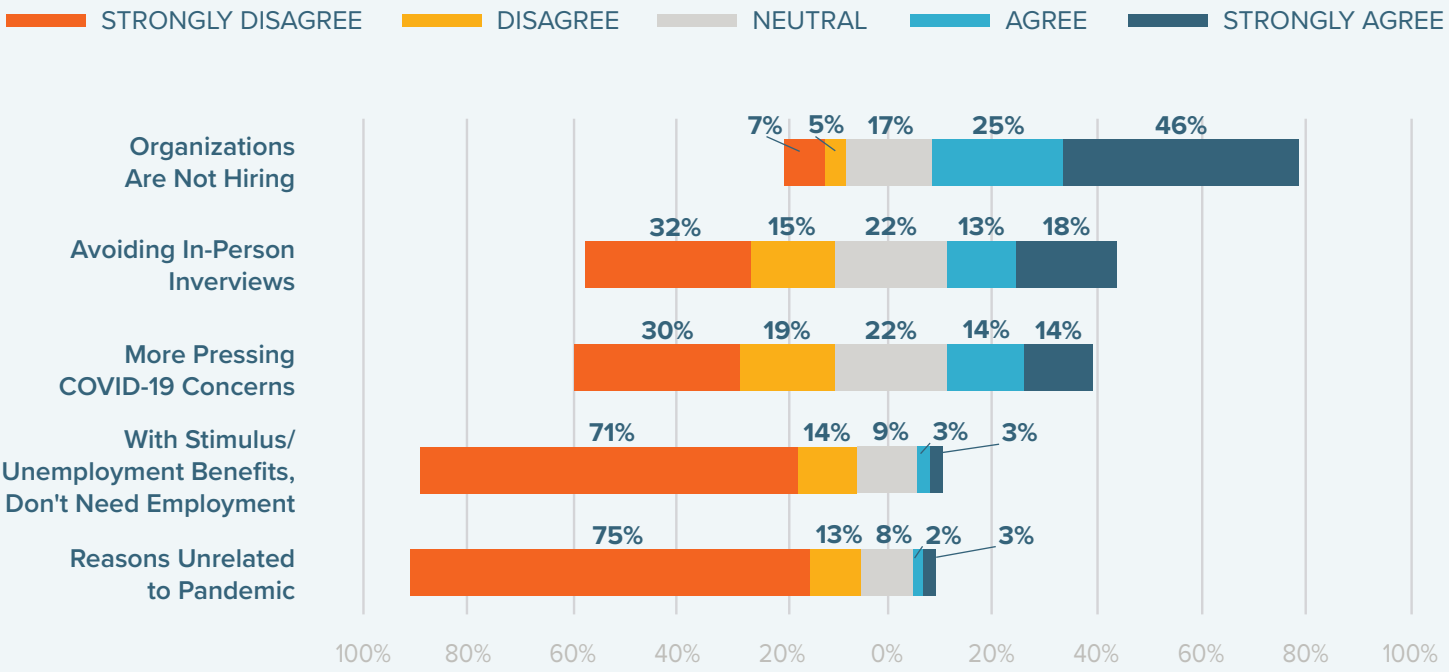


JOB SEEKERS

THINK ORGANIZATIONS ARE NOT HIRING

Figure 6

Job Seekers have slowed down or stopped their current job search because:



▲ **71% of job seekers stopped looking for jobs** because they believe public sector organizations are not hiring or posting new roles they would be interested in

When asked why they halted their job search, 71% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they stopped looking because public sector organizations are not hiring or posting new roles they would be interested in. However, as we saw in Figure 1, job postings only decreased by 13%, indicating that there's a misperception that the government is not hiring at this time, but that is not the case.

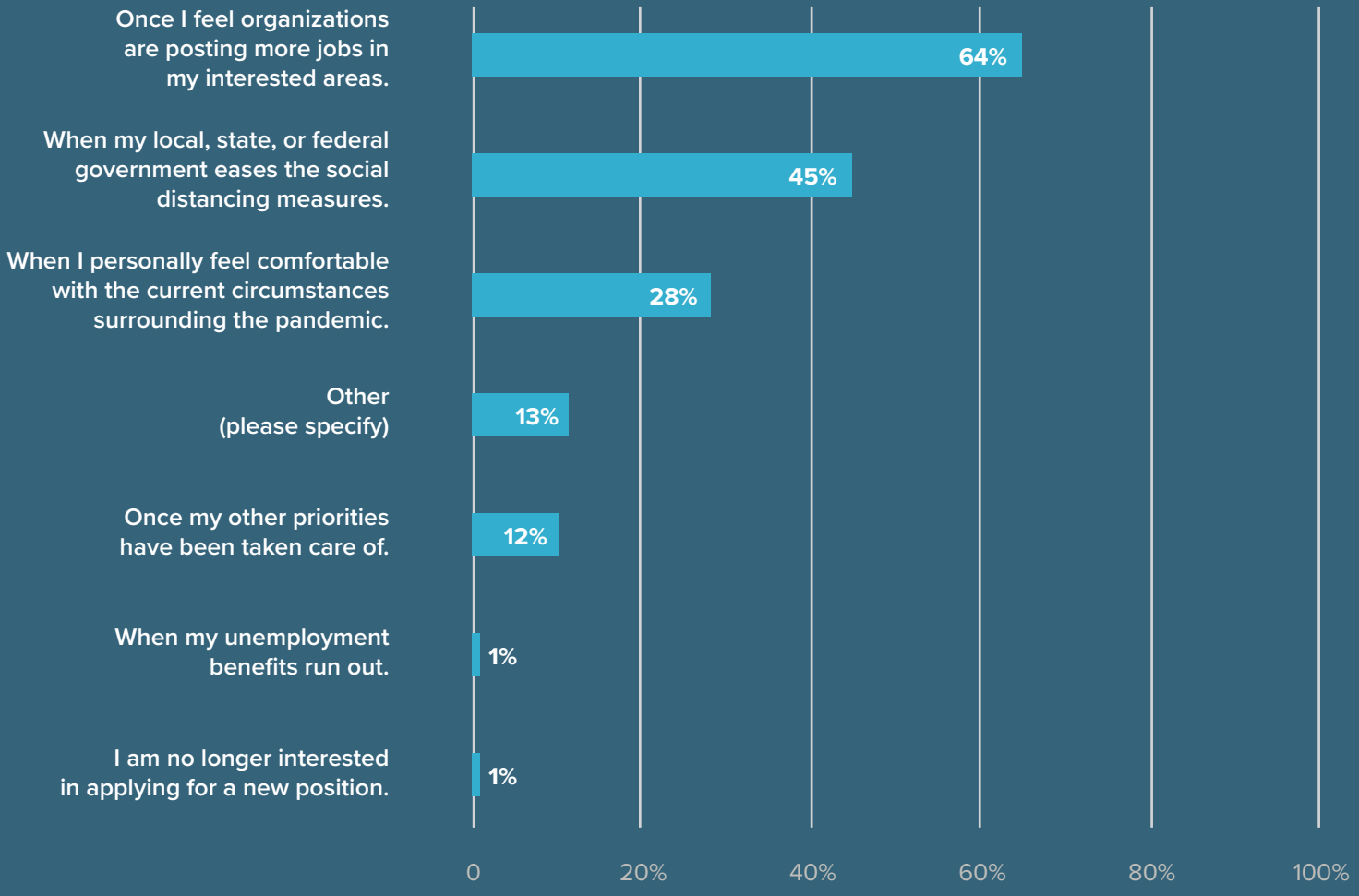
84% of respondents do not believe that the stimulus check and unemployment support are enough to support them. They have put their job search on hold because they do not believe it would be a fruitful exercise.

JOB SEEKERS

THINK ORGANIZATIONS ARE NOT HIRING

Figure 7

When do you anticipate **returning to your job search**? (Select all that apply.)



64% of respondents report that they will return to their job search only when they believe organizations are hiring for roles in their areas of interest. It is up to the public sector to make it clear that positions are still open and being hired for.

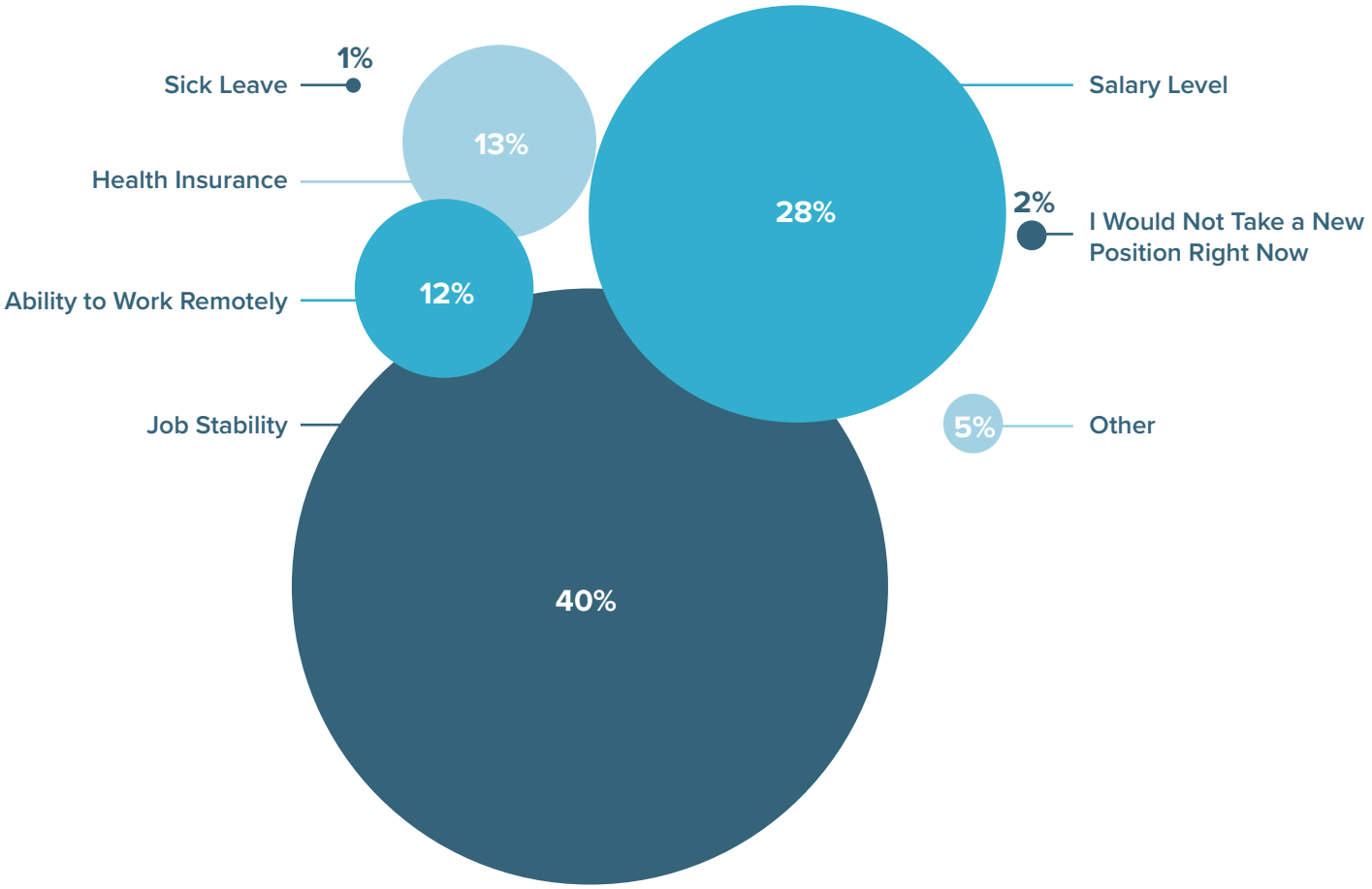
45% will resume their job search when social distancing measures are eased, while 28% need to feel personally comfortable with the circumstances to resume their job search.

ADVERTISING MORE EFFECTIVELY TO

CAPTURE JOB SEEKER ATTENTION

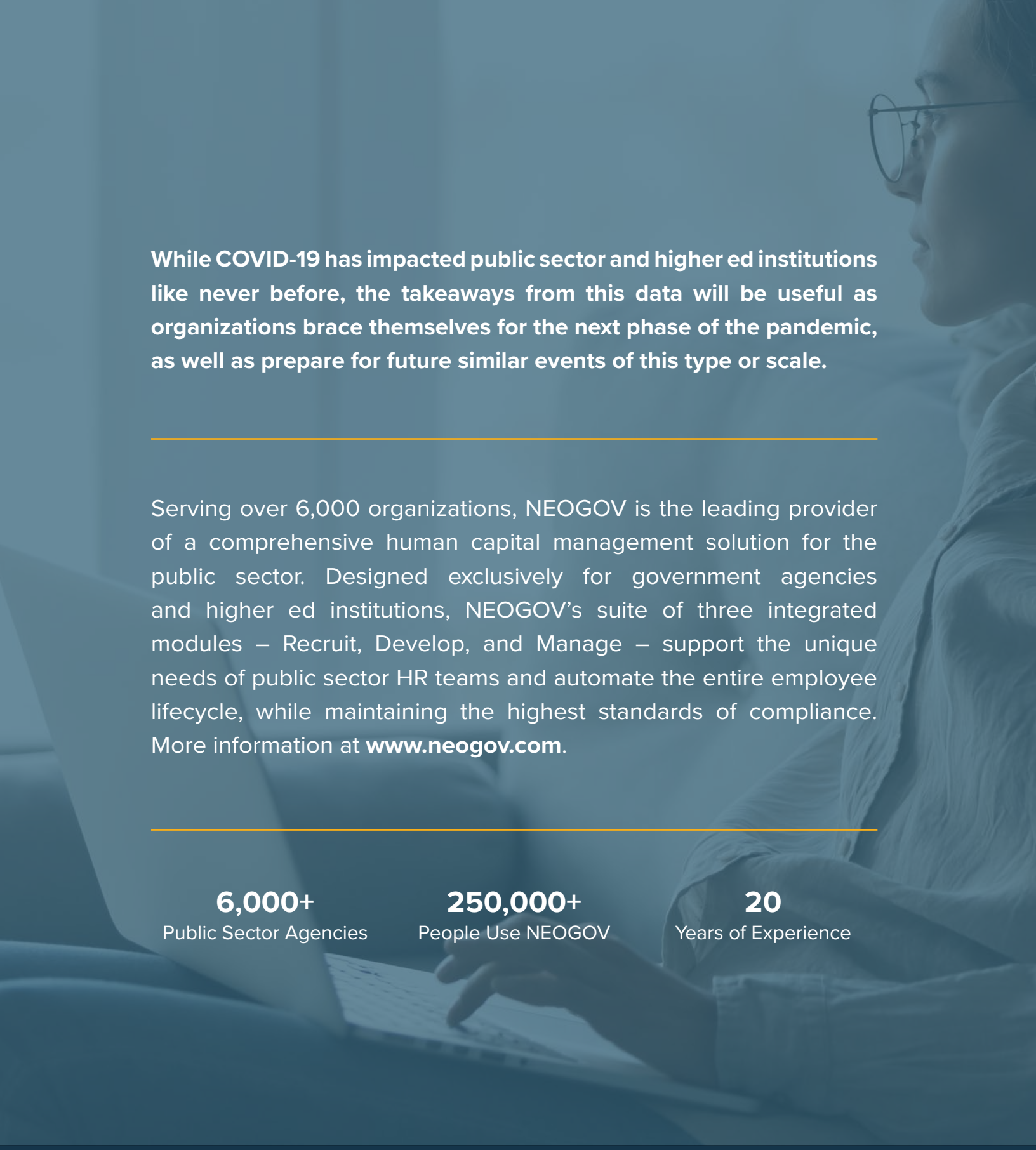
Figure 8

Which factor would be most important right now for **starting a new position**?



Typically, salary level is the main factor that applicants seek out. But that has changed in the face of the pandemic and the uncertainty of the country's economic future. 40% of respondents listed job stability as the most important factor in finding a new role during the COVID-19 pandemic.

By advertising jobs more effectively, and highlighting the public sector's long-recognized benefit of job security, government agencies and higher education institutions can increase applicant submissions.



While COVID-19 has impacted public sector and higher ed institutions like never before, the takeaways from this data will be useful as organizations brace themselves for the next phase of the pandemic, as well as prepare for future similar events of this type or scale.

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