

What do employers want?

A research collaboration between

Workways Australia and the University of Queensland

In collaboration with Ms Ria Thornton

The UQ research team:

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Acknowledgement of Country

The University of Queensland (UQ) acknowledges the Traditional Owners and their custodianship of the lands on which we meet.

We pay our respects to their Ancestors and their descendants, who continue cultural and spiritual connections to Country.

We recognise their valuable contributions to Australian and global society.



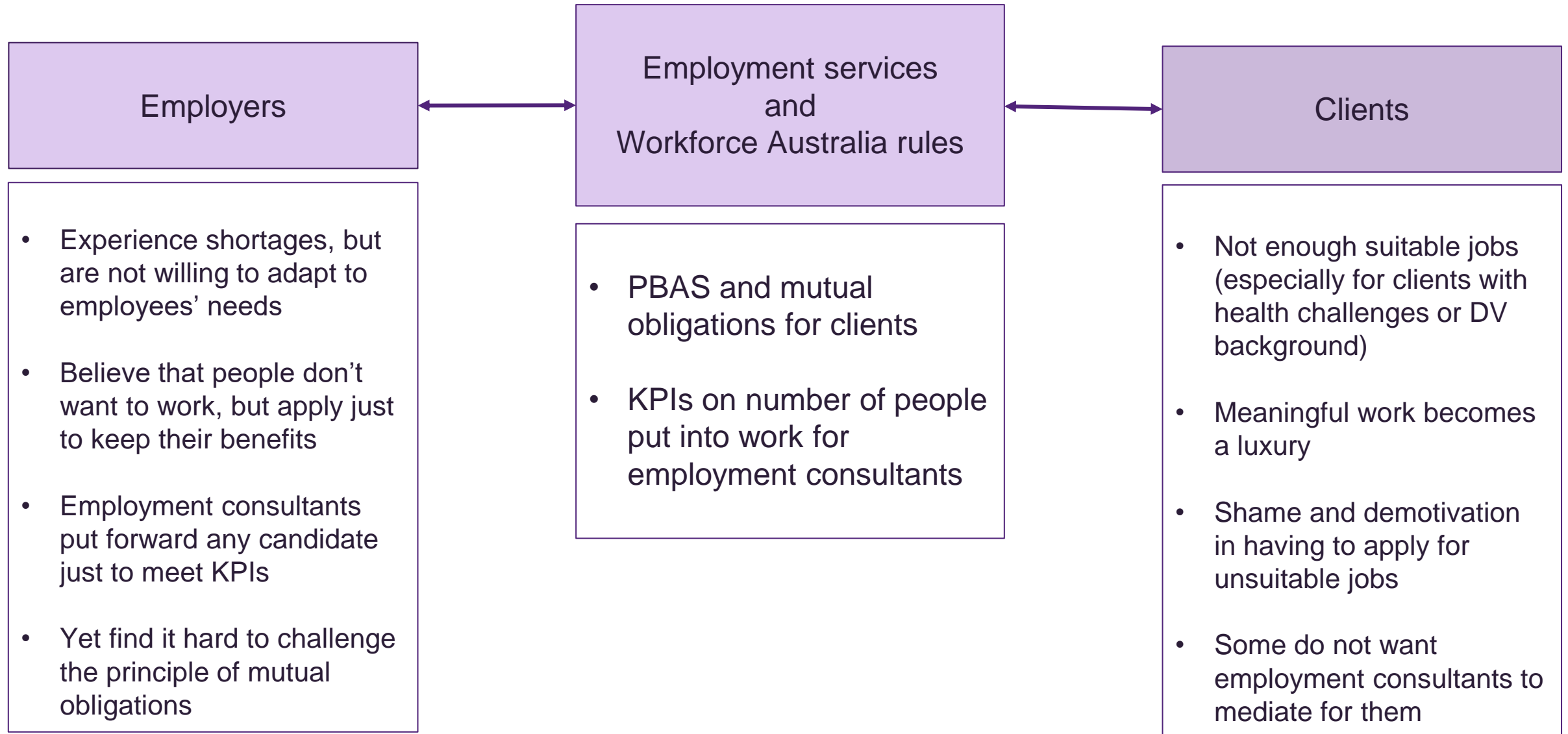
What do Employers Want

- Currently there is a lot of emphasis on clients, while we know a lot less on what works to get employers onboard
- We applied and successfully received a research grant from UQ to understand employers' perspective of employment services, the services they offer and the clients they refer

Our work together

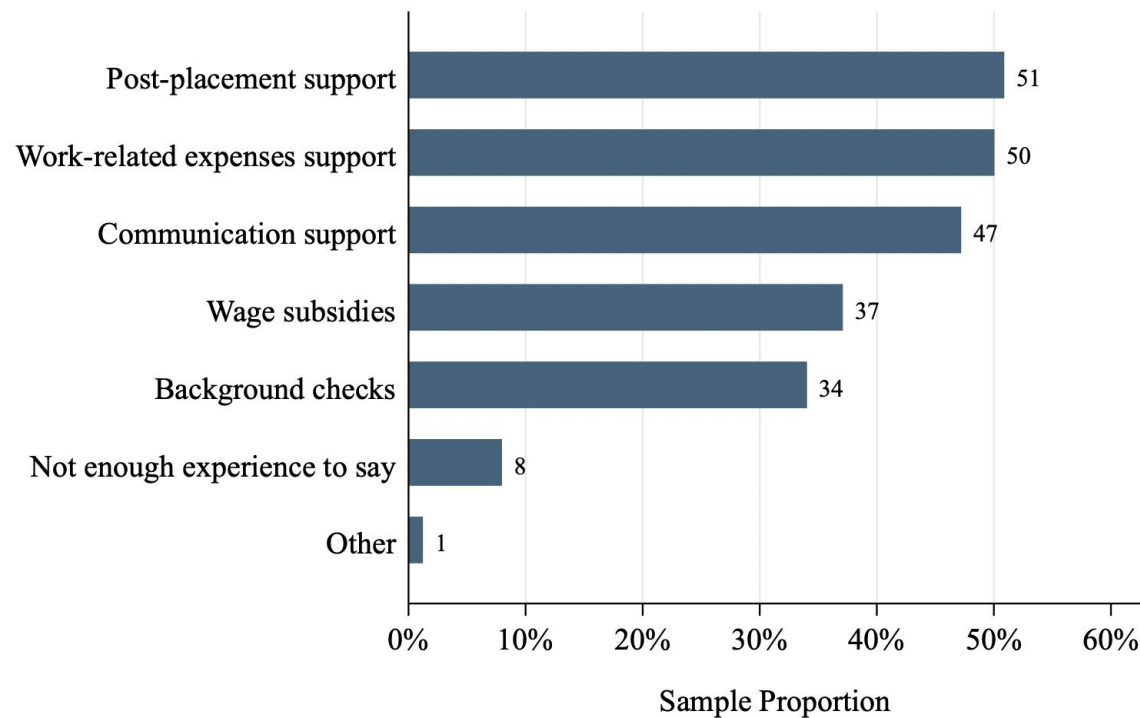
1. **Qualitative study with 22 employers and 11 clients.** We interviewed clients at the Stones Corner office in Brisbane, hosted by the lovely team led by Todd Williams, that provided invaluable support in recruiting clients. Employers were interviewed mostly online. We are grateful to the Employer Engagement Officers in Brisbane that supported us in recruiting employers.
2. **Scenario experiment** involving both employers from Workways and from a survey provider. About 1500 employers rated fictitious candidates profiles. Natalie Williams has been supporting us in crafting the email invites and sending out the survey to Workways employers. Big shout out to her!
3. **Next steps....Quantitative analysis based on Workways/DEWR administrative data.** We are in an ongoing negotiation with the department that was supported by the incredible work of Ria and Sharlene Beikoff. Thank you for getting us this far!

Qualitative interviews: employers, clients, employment services and the system in between



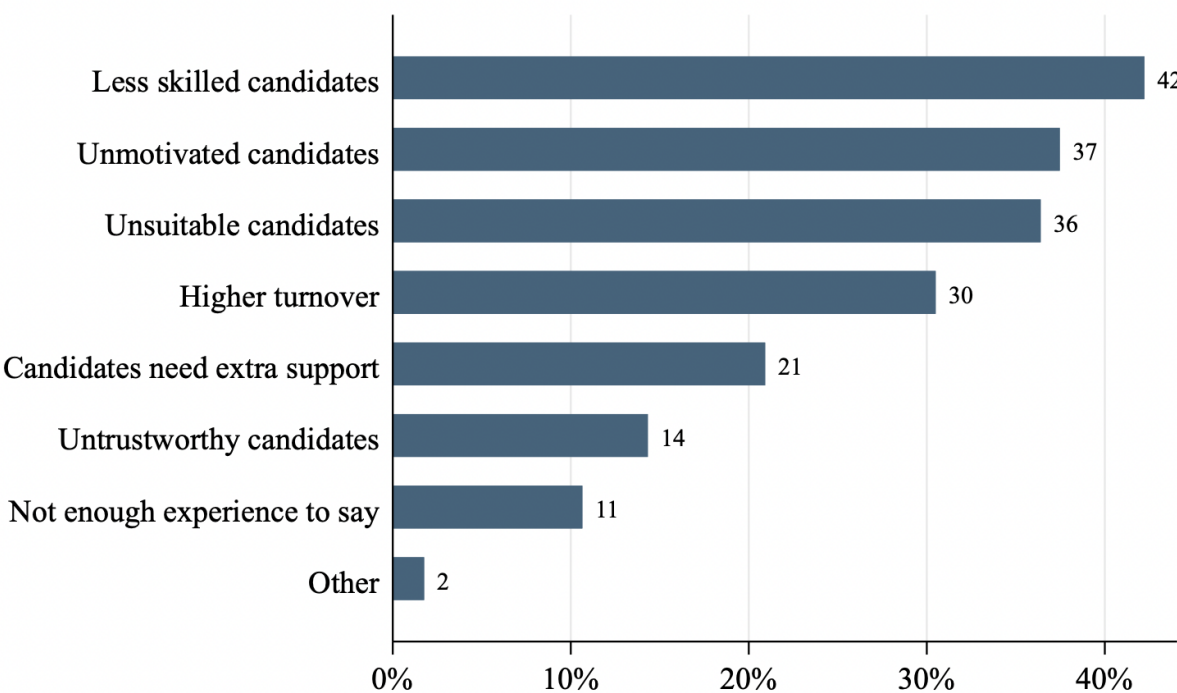
Survey of recruiters: perceived risks and benefits of employment services

Perceived Benefits of Employment Services



Note: respondents could select up to 3 benefits

Perceived Risks of Employment Services



Note: respondents could select up to 3 risks

What puts off employers and what gets clients an interview?

We presented to employers' some profiles that look like this:

Summary of pre-screening notes: Candidate A

Gender	Female
Age	31
Time out of work	25 months
Reason for time out of work	Recovering from a mental health condition
Application from	Referred by an employment consultant from a free government employment service provider
Additional information	The employment consultant offered a wage subsidy up to 10,000\$
Other activities	Completed training: Communication skills for the workplace

I will invite the candidate for a first job interview at "TradeHub Australia" for this entry level retail assistant position:

[1 - completely disagree to 7 - completely agree]

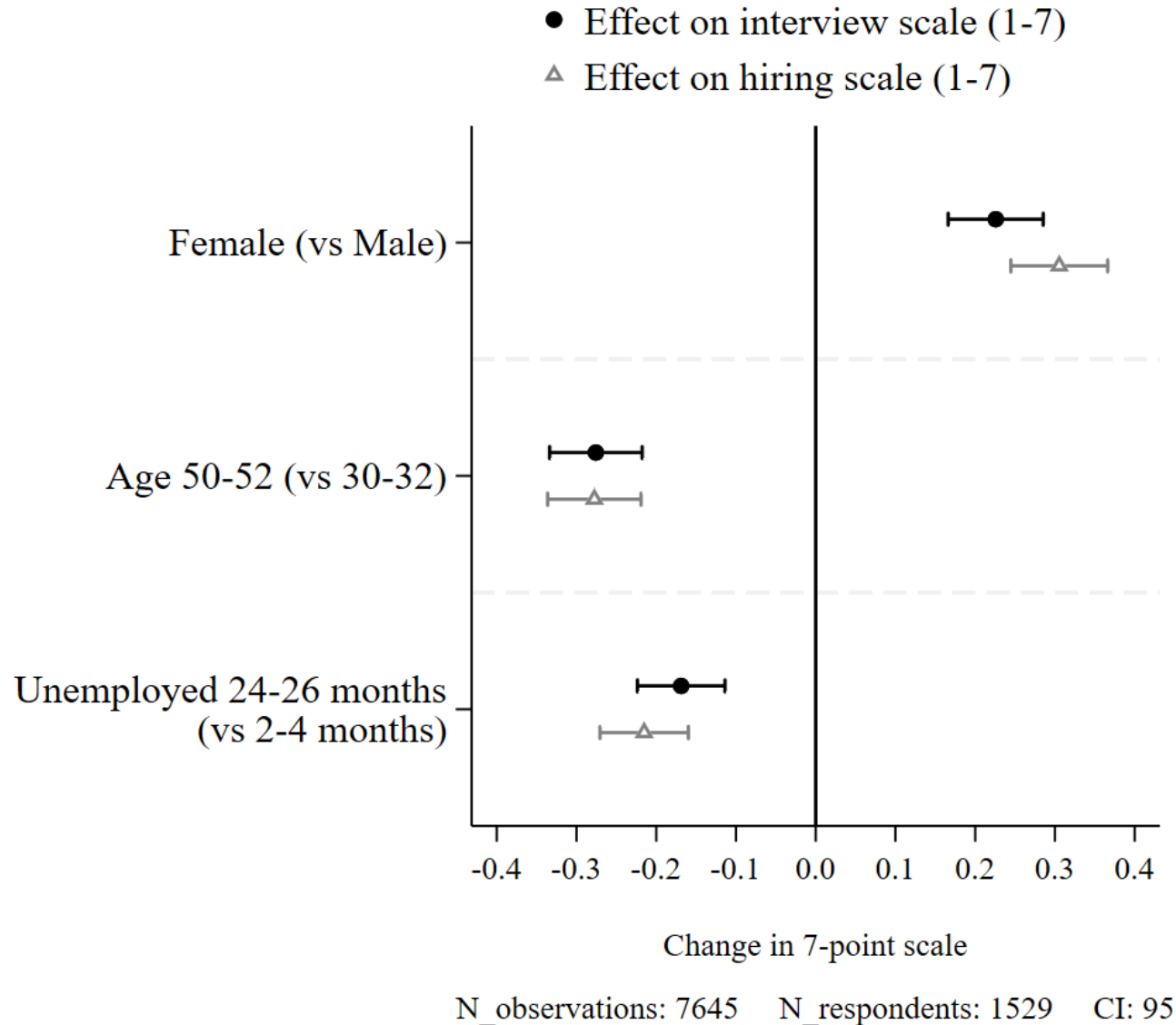
There is a large probability that I will hire this candidate for this entry level retail assistant position at "TradeHub Australia":

[1 - completely disagree to 7 - completely agree]

This is what we found:

- **Older workers (50-52)**, and those in with **24-26 months in unemployment** are less likely to be invited for a job interview
- It is better to say nothing, than to say that you have been out of work because of **mental health issues**
- If you have been out of work because of **caring responsibilities** or **firm shut down**, it is good to say that
- When referring a candidate, **emphasising their communication and soft skills** is more likely to get them an interview than anything else (e.g., direct application, paying for expenses, support plan)
- **Volunteering and training activities** are more impactful for getting a job interview for **older candidates**

Gender, age and unemployment gaps



Recruiters are less likely to interview and hire:

- Men
- Older candidates - age discrimination
- Long-term unemployed

Employers matter

It is not just about job seeker or ECs putting the effort in

It is **working around employers' biases**

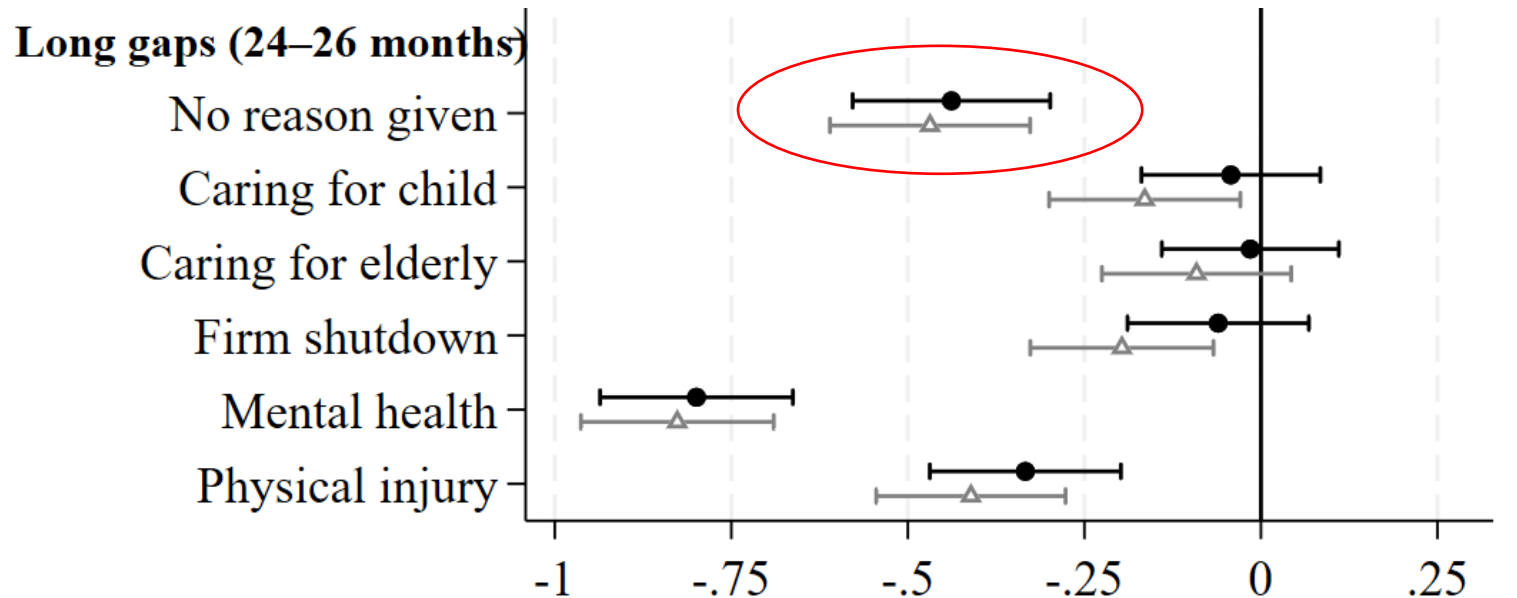
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Why have you been unemployed for so long?

- Effect on interview scale (1-7)
- △ Effect on hiring scale (1-7)



Effect compared to candidate with
short unemployment gap that did not provide a reason

- Employers **expect an explanation** from long-term unemployed candidates
- **This becomes stronger the more workforce shortage there is**
- Caring responsibilities are good explanations
- Mental and physical health issues are bad explanations

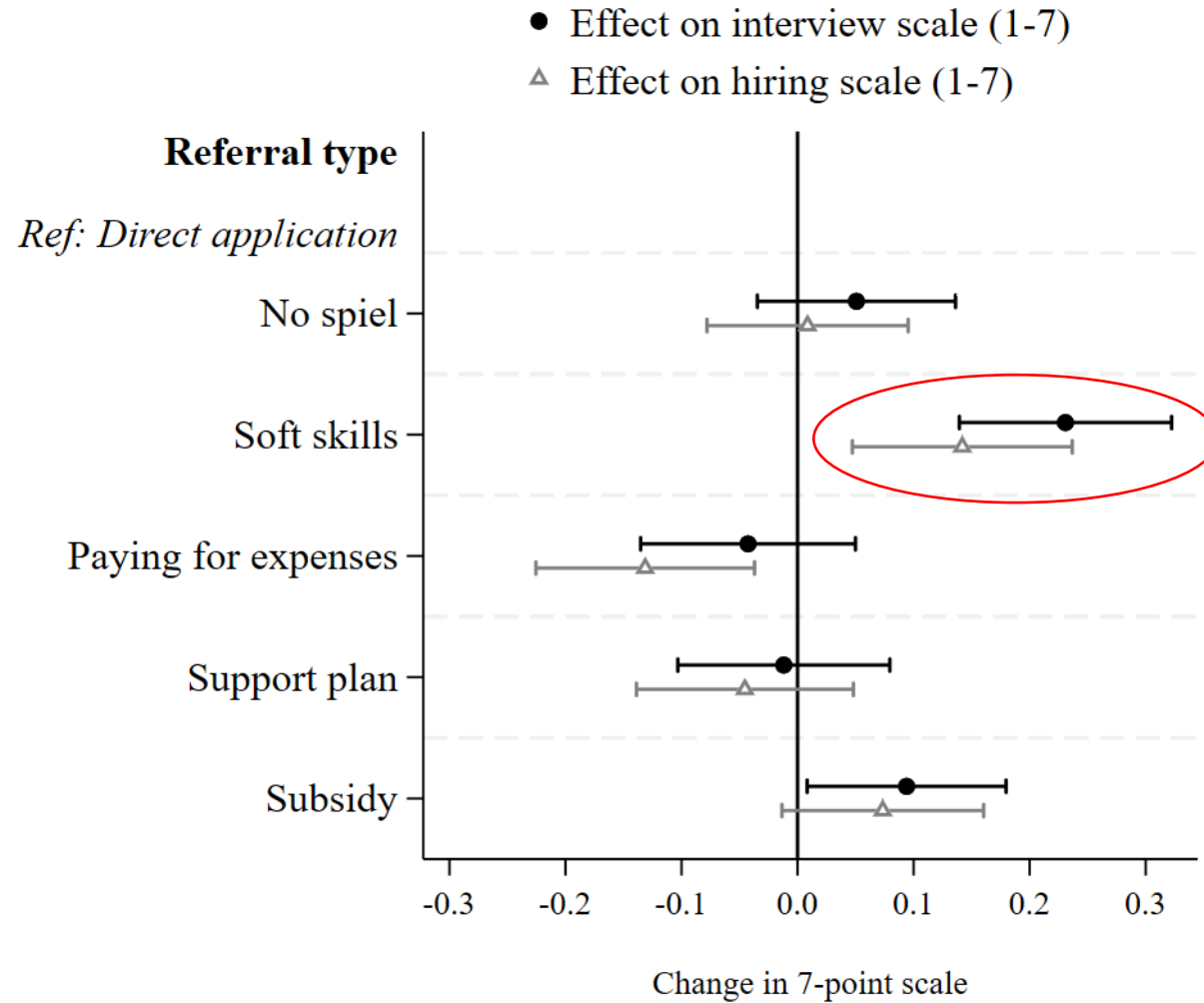
To get outcomes job seekers/ECs need to know how to best frame **why there is a long unemployment gap** and **work around employers' biases**

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Employment services toolkit: referrals



N_observations: 7645 N_respondents: 1529 CI: 95

- **ECs emphasizing candidates' soft skills is most effective.** Resonates with interviews from employers in other sectors as well
- Wage subsidies do not move the dial as much as expected

Some of these services are expensive and time consuming.

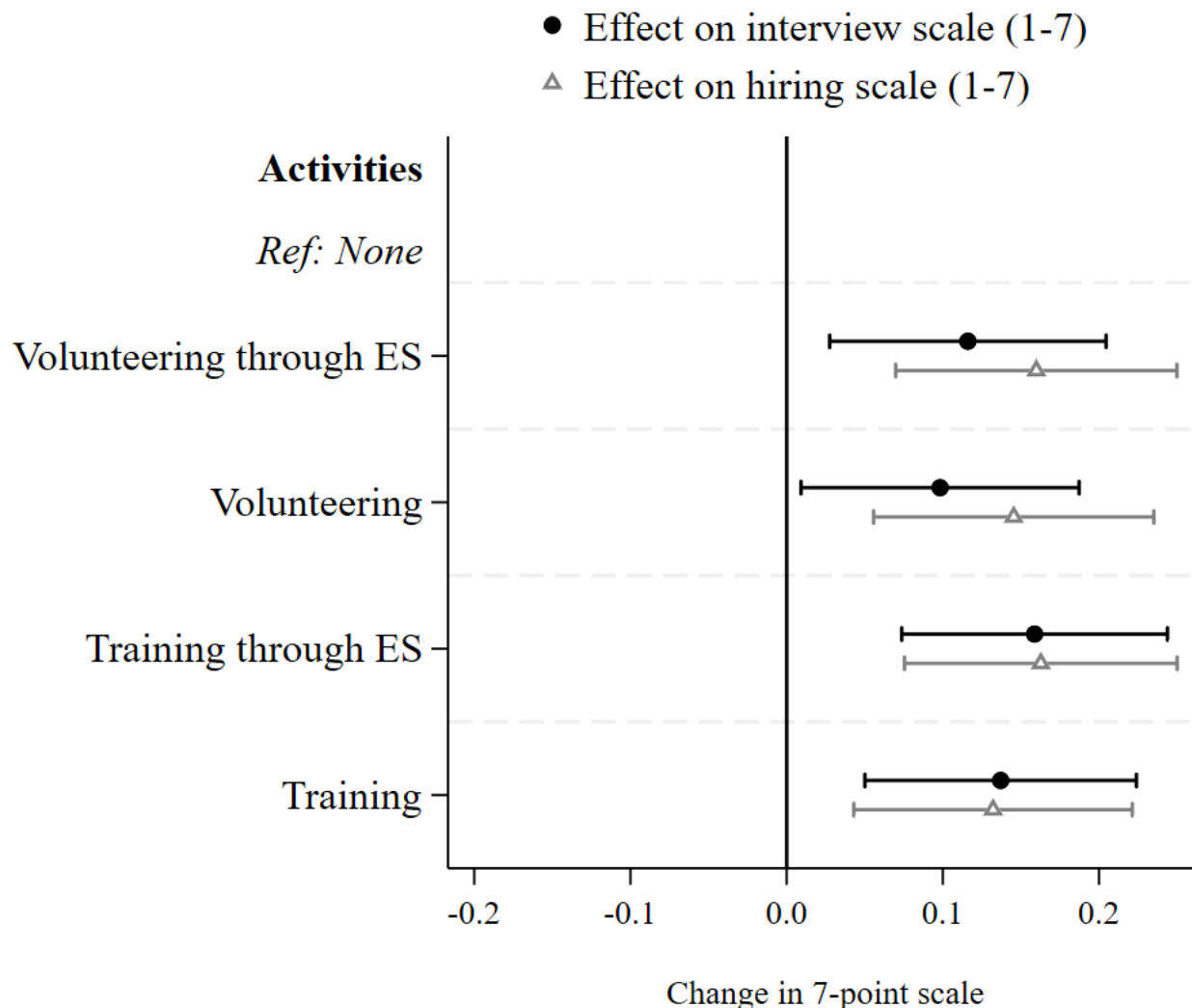
This demonstrates
which ones are most effective

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Employment services toolkit: activities



N_observations: 7645 N_respondents: 1529 CI: 95

- Recruiters value applicants that undertake volunteering and training – although effects are small
- This is true regardless whether it is self-directed or through Employment Services
- Activities **mitigate the negative bias** against **older candidates**, that are perceived as less trainable

Important to **target activities** to **who benefits most**

Some further reflections and take aways from employers

- From employers:
 1. They would appreciate **more regular contact** and **awareness on the services available**. It would be worth spending more time getting employers on board than monitoring client compliance
 2. Tell us **why we should hire this person** (not the various perks around the candidate, but the PERSON) and **make sure the candidate is onboard**
- From clients:
 1. They want to be **consulted and supported** to go for jobs that are meaningful and appropriate to their individual circumstances
 2. They appreciate the support of ECs in **navigating the PBAS system** to balance mutual obligations and their individual circumstances – which can be quite a draining exercise

Stay tuned for more insights in 2025!