

THE
FUTURE
OF VIRTUAL
ASSESSMENT
CENTRES

AN INTRODUCTION

BY TOPSCORE

CO-FOUNDER

AND MD

PHIN

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We set out on this research project because there's a question that's been bugging me these last couple of years and I really wanted to get to the bottom of it.

The question was: do candidates prefer attending assessment centres and interviews virtually or in-person?

Before the pandemic, attending a virtual assessment centre - also referred to as an online assessment centre - was almost unheard of, and the norm was that assessment centres were held by employers in an office or rented meeting or event space.

That all changed very quickly because of Covid-19, during which there was no choice but to attend assessment centres and similar events virtually.

And while it was a challenging time, employers immediately saw benefits in terms of reduced overhead costs and greater digital efficiencies.

Because of this, and the fact that many more people work remotely now than before, virtual assessment centres have remained in place despite Covid-19 restrictions being long gone.

However, how do candidates feel about this?

As a Co-Founder of TopScore, a platform that enables virtual assessment centres, I wanted to provide our clients and the wider industry with useful data about candidate preferences at a time when candidate experience is increasingly important for all of us. I hope you are able to use this research to understand what the next generation of talent wants from employers when it comes to assessment centres.

THE SURVEY

Throughout April 2023, we surveyed over 1,000 UK university students and graduates to learn about their experiences with assessment centres, their preferences when it comes to

engaging with employers, and how employers can update their practices to better suit the next generation of talent.

Note: Percentages are rounded and may not always equal 100.

1,003

RESPONSES

FROM

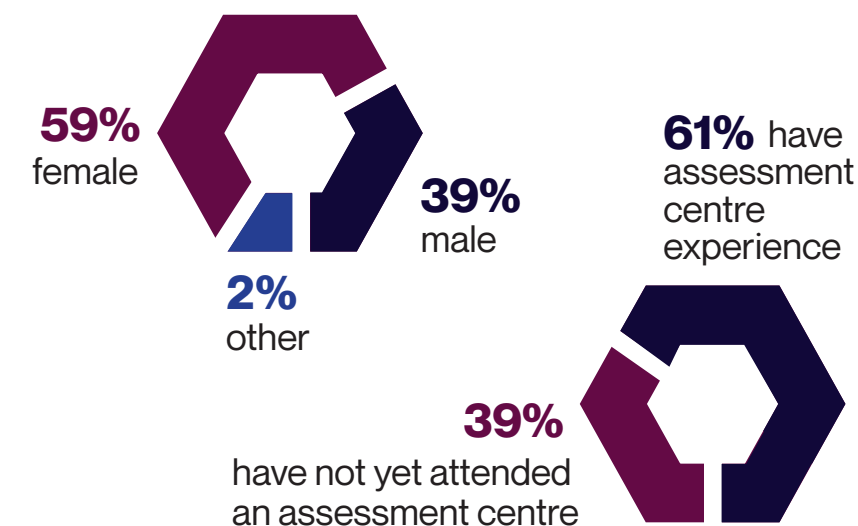
STUDENTS &

GRADUATES

AT OVER

140

UNIVERSITIES



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CREATING A POSITIVE ASSESSMENT EXPERIENCE FOR THE NEXT GENERATION

THEIR EXPERIENCES SO FAR

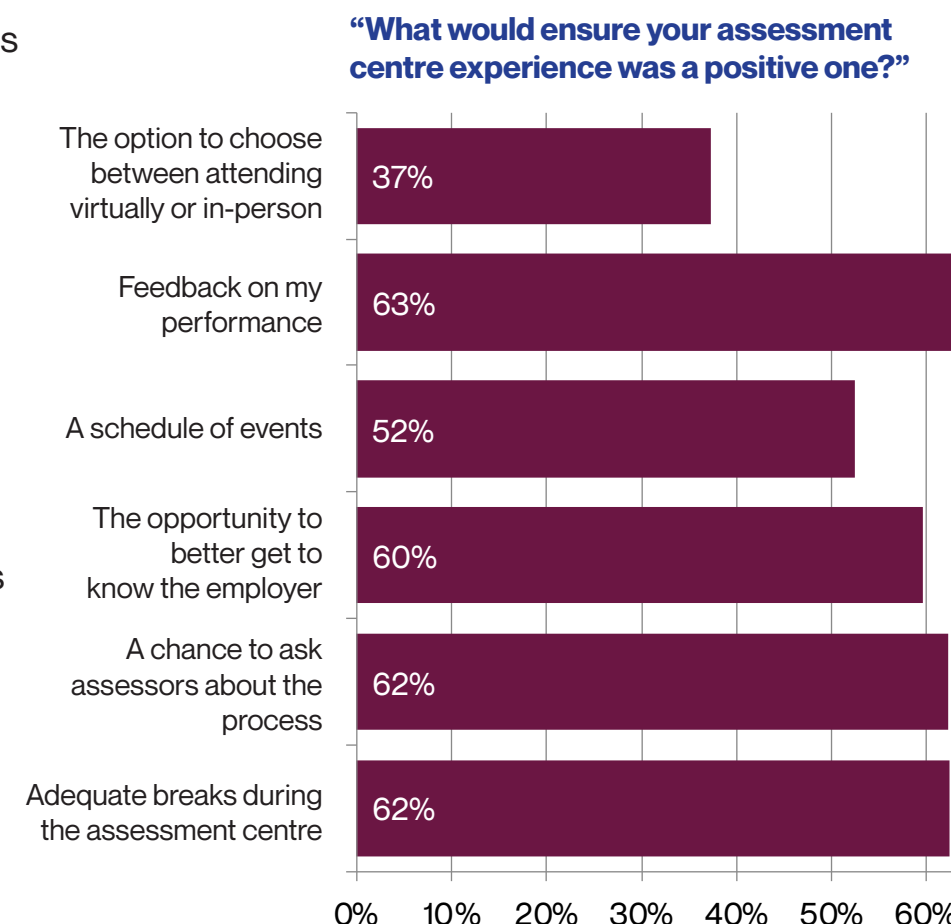
The first thing we wanted to understand was how many of the respondents had previously attended some form of assessment centre. This way, we would know whether their answers were based on perceptions or real experiences.

61% said they had attended an assessment centre before completing the survey, despite the same number saying their university had not offered them a mock assessment centre experience. This tells us that respondents have mostly been engaging with employer assessment centres.

- 26% HAVE ATTENDED A VIRTUAL ASSESSMENT CENTRE
- 22% HAVE ATTENDED AN IN-PERSON ASSESSMENT CENTRE
- 13% HAVE ATTENDED BOTH

'I WANNA BE ASSURED'

We've found that candidates are looking for positive assurances from employers before, during, and after recruitment events. When asked about what would ensure their assessment experience was a positive one, the highest response was for performance feedback, with 63% selecting this. Alongside adequate breaks during the assessment centre, respondents also placed the opportunity to engage with the assessors as the second most important thing that would ensure a great experience.



These findings correlate with the fact that 43% also said they had not received any feedback from an employer after doing an interview or assessment centre. This shows the level of importance future generations of talent place on understanding their own ability and being able to develop based on employer feedback. As well as this, we found that

61% of people said that their university had not offered them the chance to take part in a mock assessment centre while still studying, which could explain why so many said that the chance to ask their assessor about the assessment process would be helpful. Candidates may be feeling unsure of what to expect, and therefore unprepared to perform at their best.

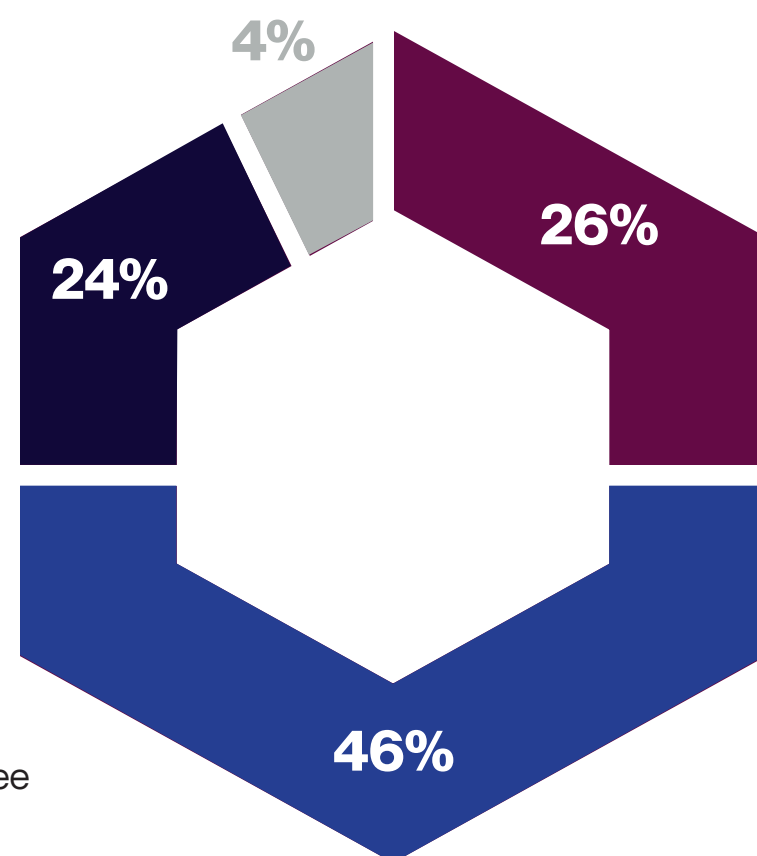
43% SAID THEY HAD NOT HAD ANY FEEDBACK FROM AN EMPLOYER AFTER DOING AN ASSESSMENT CENTRE OR INTERVIEW

61% SAID THEIR UNIVERSITY DIDN'T OFFER THE CHANCE TO TAKE PART IN A MOCK ASSESSMENT CENTRE

72% OF PEOPLE SAY THEIR ASSESSMENT CENTRE EXPERIENCE INFLUENCES WHETHER THEY ACCEPT A JOB OFFER

We asked respondents whether they agreed with the following statement:

"MY ASSESSMENT CENTRE EXPERIENCE INFLUENCES MY DECISION TO WANT TO JOIN THE ORGANISATION IF GIVEN AN OFFER"



 Strongly agree

 Disagree

 Agree

 Neither agree nor disagree

Ensuring you have a great candidate experience is increasingly important for the current and coming cohorts of early talent. Only 4% saying their decision would not be impacted by their

assessment experience demonstrates that candidates themselves are assessing employers just as much as they are being assessed while taking part in recruitment events.

"IT GIVES THE OPPORTUNITY TO GAIN MORE OF AN INSIGHT INTO THE ROLE YOU'LL BE TAKING ON"

- A graduate's response to assessment centre experiences.

IN-PERSON VS VIRTUAL

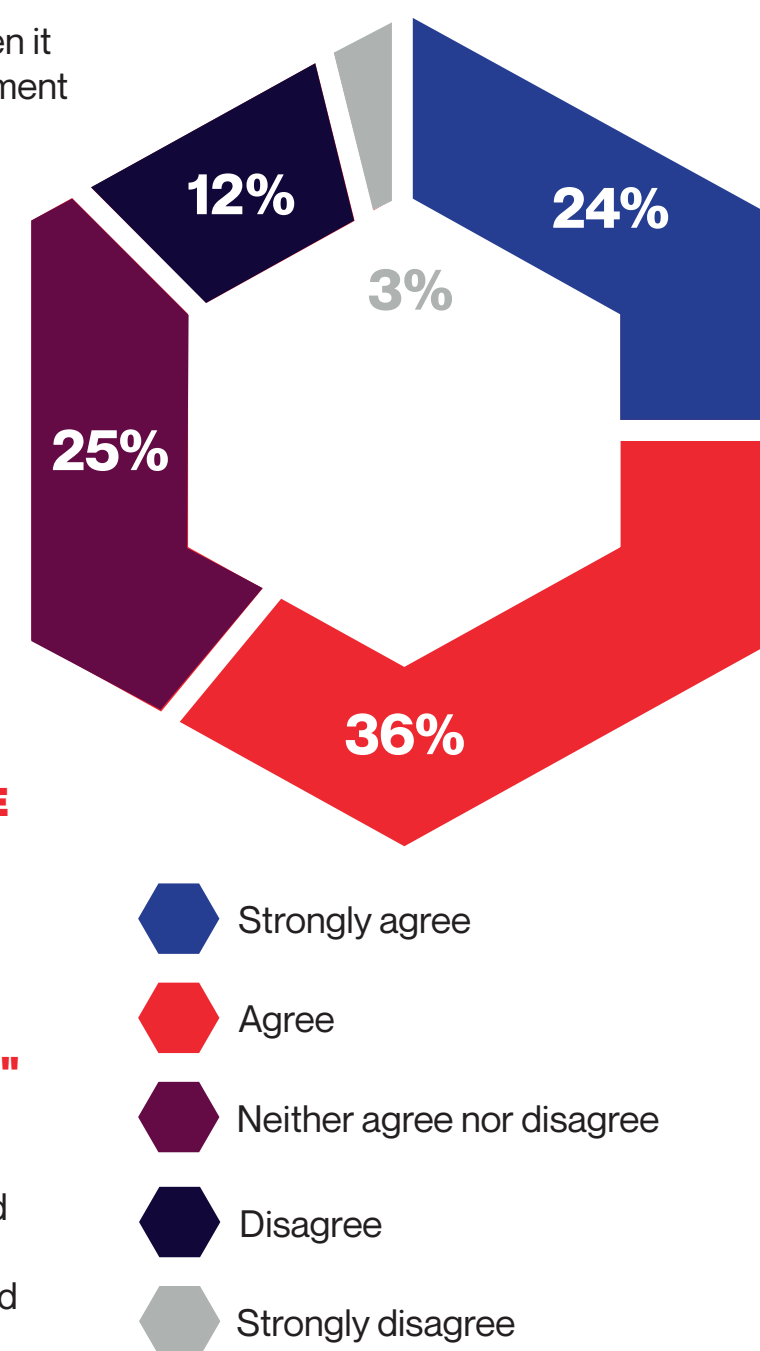
WHICH DO
PEOPLE
PREFER?

60% SAID THEY'D PREFER TO ATTEND AN ASSESSMENT CENTRE VIRTUALLY OVER IN-PERSON

To uncover people's preferences when it comes to virtual vs in-person assessment centres, especially considering the opinions of those who may not have attended an assessment centre previously, we not only asked them which type of assessment centre they'd prefer to attend, but also looked at several factors including which they think they'd be more likely to attend and which they'd feel most comfortable performing at.

**"IF INVITED BY AN
EMPLOYER AS PART
OF THEIR APPLICATION
PROCESS, I WOULD
PREFER THE CONVENIENCE
OF ATTENDING
AN ASSESSMENT
CENTRE VIRTUALLY
OVER TRAVELLING
TO A LOCATION AND
CONDUCTING IT IN-PERSON"**

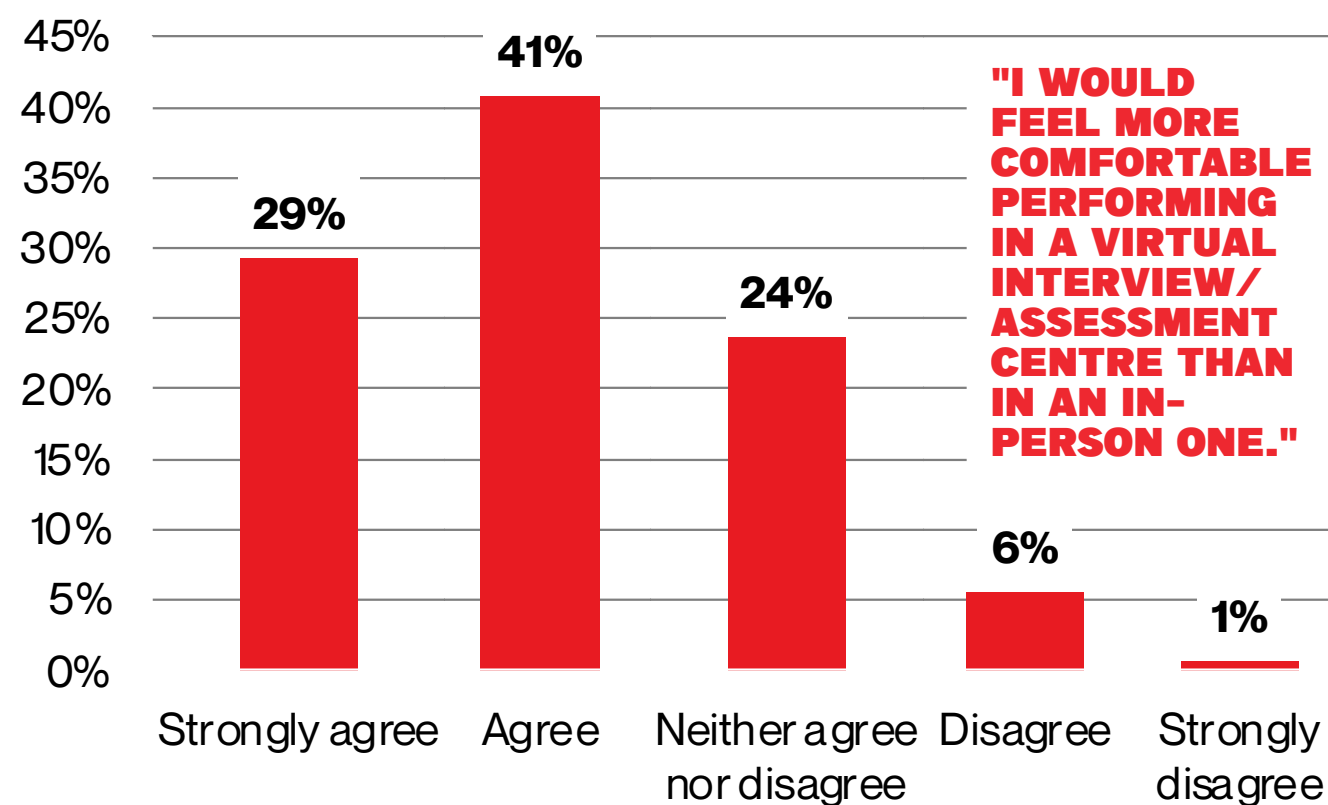
We asked people whether they agreed with the above statement, and 60% agreed or strongly agreed, with only 15% saying they'd prefer to attend in-person.



HOME COMFORTS

We asked people whether they'd feel more comfortable performing in a virtual assessment centre over an in-person assessment centre, with 70% saying they agree or strongly agree.

Only 7% said they think they'd be more comfortable performing at an in-person event, showing that people really value the familiarity of their own space when it comes to performing at their best.

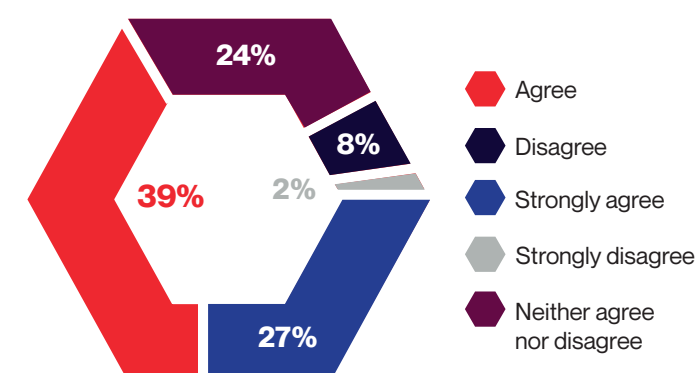


52%

SAID TRAVELLING LONG DISTANCES FOR AN IN-PERSON ASSESSMENT CENTRE COULD CAUSE DIFFICULTIES FOR THEM

66% SAID THEY'D BE MORE LIKELY TO ATTEND A VIRTUAL ASSESSMENT CENTRE

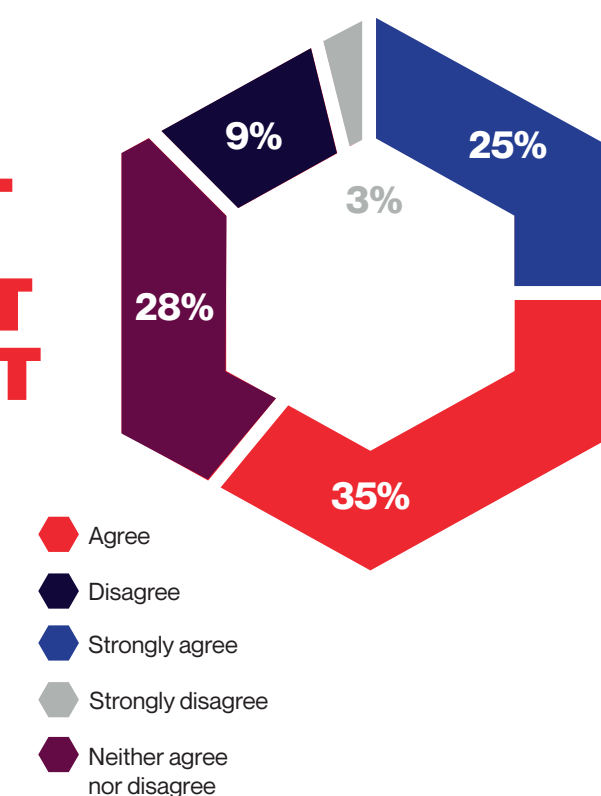
We know that attendance can be an issue for those running assessment events, which is why we looked into the impact of attendance levels based on the type of event being hosted. We asked people whether they agreed or disagreed with the following statement: "The convenience of virtual assessment



and the response was overwhelmingly in favour of virtual assessment events with 66% of people saying they'd be more likely to attend, and only 10% saying they'd be more likely to attend an in-person assessment centre.

60% OF THOSE WHO HAD ALREADY ATTENDED VIRTUAL ASSESSMENT CENTRES SAID THAT THEY PREFERRED IT BEING VIRTUAL

To understand how much people with virtual assessment centre experience valued the online nature of their event, we asked those with virtual experience to agree or disagree with the following statement: "I preferred attending the assessment centre virtually over travelling to a location and conducting it in-person", with the majority agreeing.



**"LESS
INTIMIDATING."**

**"FLEXIBLE, CONVENIENT,
SAVES TIME AND
RESOURCES."**

**"IT REDUCES
EMOTIONAL
STRESS."**

"MORE INCLUSIVE."

**"MORE
ACCESSIBLE. I
HAVE AUTISM,
SO I FEEL LESS
NERVOUS."**

**"YOU ARE NOT
RESTRICTED BY
LOCATION OR ANY
MOBILITY-RELATED
DISABILITIES."**

**"YOU HAVE THE
PHYSICAL AND
MENTAL SPACE TO
WORK. YOU'RE MORE
MOTIVATED AS YOU'RE
COMFORTABLE IN
YOUR SPACE."**

**"IT TAKES THE NERVES
AWAY AS YOU'RE IN
THE COMFORT OF
YOUR HOME RATHER
THAN A STRANGE
PLACE."**

Some of the 135 written responses we received on the
benefits of attending an assessment centre virtually.

FINAL THOUGHTS

It is absolutely clear that for the most part, students and recent graduates would prefer to attend a virtual assessment centre over an in-person one.

Not only do the findings indicate they are more convenient for them, but the qualitative responses suggest a strong trend towards feeling less stressed and anxious when participating virtually, meaning they feel more comfortable and better able to perform their at their best. It was also assuring to see the positive impact virtual events have had on neurodiverse candidates when it comes to their confidence and ability to attend.

I also thought it was interesting to see how many candidates say that their assessment experience influences their decision to accept a job offer. We can see that creating this positive experience starts with holding them virtually, as well as providing them with assurances before, during, and after they take part in the form of information

on the assessment process and detailed feedback on their performance.

I would strongly encourage employers to look at these findings to inform their decision on whether to run virtual or in-person assessment centres, as it seems from this data that there is a genuine risk of losing out on talented candidates by choosing not to run assessment centres virtually.

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digital assessment centre software.
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