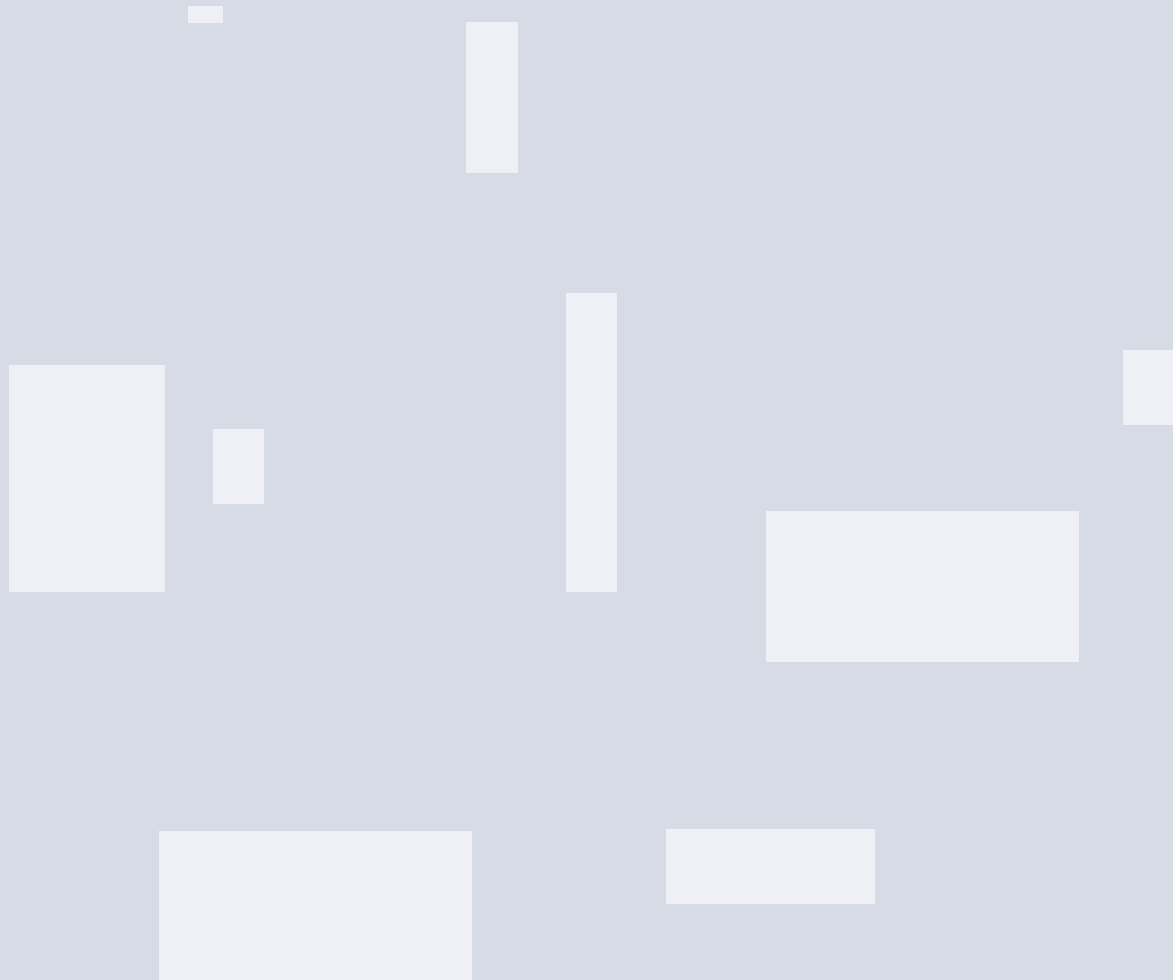


Saville Assessment

WillisTowersWatson 



## Is Your Assessment Process Achieving **All** the Outcomes that Matter?

By Martin Kavanagh, Saville Assessment

## Key points to reflect on

- The criteria used to evaluate assessment processes can be grouped into **five** core areas. When asked “**Was your assessment process effective?**”, you need to consider:
  - **Quality** – e.g. did the assessment process identify the right people, of the right calibre, for the right roles?
  - **Engagement** – e.g. after completing the assessment process, did candidates say positive things about their experience?
  - **Efficiency** – e.g. did recruiters and other stakeholders (including candidates) spend as little time as was necessary assessing/completing the process?
  - **Cost** – e.g. how cost effective was the assessment process?
  - **Diversity and Inclusion** – e.g. was diversity in the candidate pipeline maintained through each stage of the assessment process (gender, ethnic origin, etc)?
- Most assessment case studies only report on the effectiveness of an assessment process in one or two of these core areas.
- We should work harder to **broaden our focus** when we implement and evaluate assessment processes.
- We should avoid a “**see-saw effect**” where an increased focus in one area comes at the expense of others.
- As a live example, we need to ensure the healthy increase in the focus on candidate engagement does not come at the expense of ensuring our assessment processes identify the highest quality candidates.

One way or another I have been involved in talent assessment all my career. As a result I have always been interested in how you identify the talent most likely to succeed. I started off as a recent graduate on one of the UK's largest private sector graduate development programmes, convinced I had the answer. Surely it's simply a case of getting the right people with the right calibre. What else could matter? The importance of getting good people was reinforced when I managed the graduate development programme for a County Council, but I also became more aware of the need to have an assessment process which was both efficient and cost effective. More recently, I moved to a large recruitment process outsourcer and the concern of many of my clients (some of the largest public and private sector recruiters in the UK) seemed to be the opinions of their candidates and how engaging they found the process.

When I joined Saville Assessment, perhaps it was a surprise to me that I still often felt I didn't have a clear answer to a very simple question: “Was that assessment process effective?”

What has always made it difficult is that assessment processes can be effective in so many different ways. Here, I discuss the work I have recently completed at Saville Assessment which has helped me, and therefore helped my clients, ensure we can answer this surprisingly difficult question.



## The evolution of a more complete approach

To help us scrutinise the impact of our assessment processes, researchers have identified a wide range of evaluative criteria which can be used. The CIPD (2016) brought together over 250 of these individual metrics.

Examples of these are given below.

Reliability of the assessment	The extent to which the candidates are given equal opportunity to perform
Predictive power of the assessment	Stakeholder acceptance
Degree of alignment with organisational strategy	Candidate reactions
Group differences, adverse impact	Dropout rates across the selection process
Diversity of pipeline, widening access	Costs per hire, financial investment
Legal defensibility	Impact on time to hire / fill
Generates appropriate feedback	Interpretation of assessment outputs, level of training required
Ease of interpretation	Level of resources required
Generality of use	Impact on employer brand
Cost effectiveness	Educational impact, opportunity to disseminate
Administration, speed of process, automation	Feasibility of ongoing evaluation & refinement

A lot of great work has gone into evidencing success against these criteria to demonstrate the return on investment of assessment processes. But using these metrics still resulted in questions. How do you choose the metrics to focus on out of 250 possibilities? Are the metrics which have been selected being evidenced in the most robust way?

In a desire to simplify this complex picture, and develop a more coherent approach to evidencing assessment effectiveness, I analysed all criteria identified by the CIPD (2016) and mapped them into five core areas:



**Quality** - e.g. assessment processes must identify the right people, of the right calibre, for the right roles.



**Engagement** - e.g. after completing an assessment process, candidates should be positive about their experience.



**Efficiency** - e.g. assessment processes should minimise the demand it places on recruiters and other stakeholders (including candidates). Candidates should be asked to spend as little time completing an assessment as is necessary to assess them in a robust and fair way.



**Cost** - e.g. assessment processes should be cost effective.



**Diversity and Inclusion** - e.g. diversity in the candidate pipeline should be maintained through each stage of the assessment process (gender, ethnic origin, etc).

All the CIPD (2016) criteria mapped to one of these five areas. Therefore, these are the five core areas an assessment process should be measured against.

Once this framework was in place, I was interested in whether each of these critical areas is being given sufficient attention.

### Are all five areas consistently covered in practice?

How do we ensure we are effectively assessing all five areas? Well, in a sense there is no perfect method, but as showcases of the partnerships between clients and assessment providers, I felt published case studies could provide an indication of how this can be done.

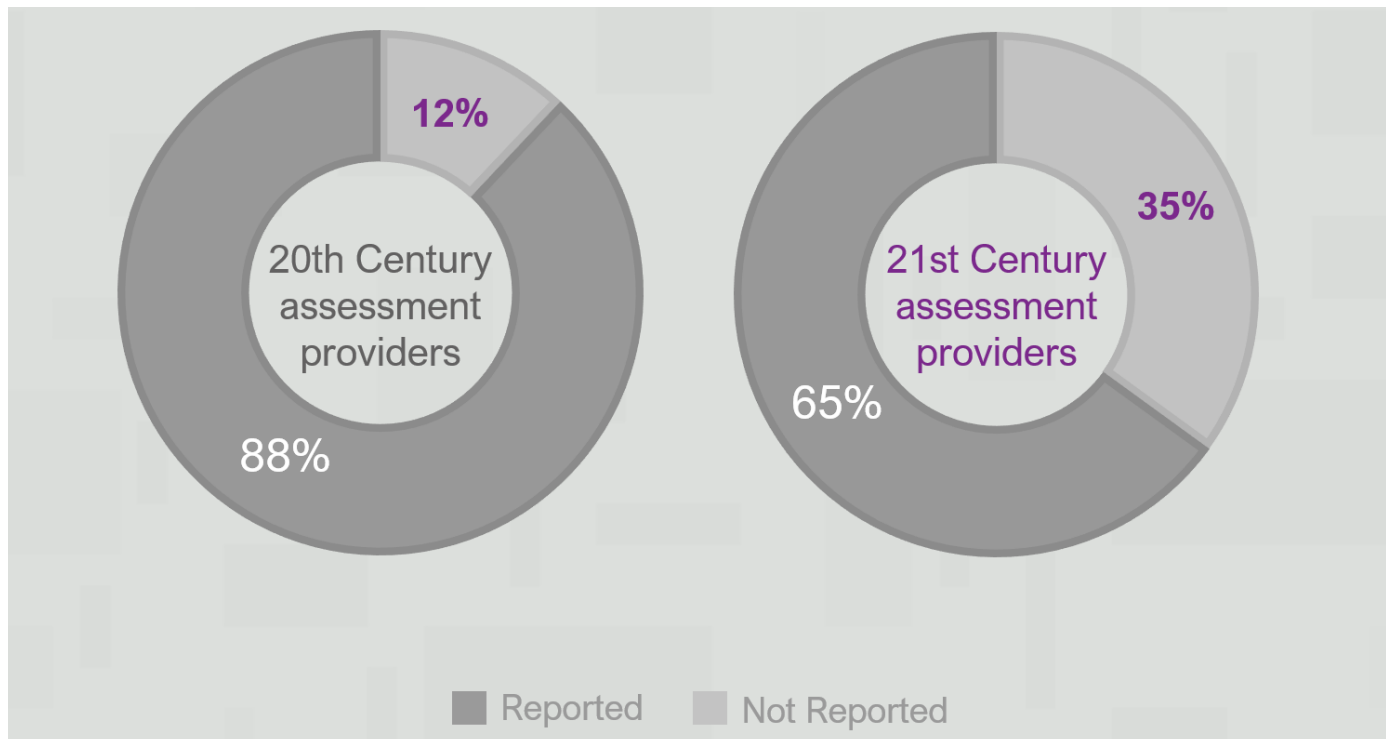
I identified 140 case studies from the websites of 10 major assessment providers. I was interested in how many of the five areas were covered in the case studies. The vast majority of the case studies (86%) only reported on the effectiveness of the assessment process in one or two of the five areas. Only two case studies reported against four areas. None of the case studies identified reported on all

five of the areas. It was a surprise to me at first that no case study covered all five. On reflection this started to make more sense from my past experience. Whether it be quality, engagement, efficiency, cost or diversity and inclusion, often in designing a selection process there is one or two of these areas which are of paramount importance to a client and the assessment consultant. Getting good success metrics in all five areas may often be unrealistic in practice. Even so, the fact the vast majority of the case studies only covered one or two of the five areas is concerning. Perhaps, in individual assessment processes there is too much focus on establishing success in only one of the five areas. If this is the case, does this focus come at the expense of the other four?

That led me to ask which of the five areas are most often reported in case studies? Which are most often missing? And has there been a change in what is being focused on by newer entrants to the assessment market?

To answer the final question above, I broke the case studies down into those prepared by “20th Century assessment providers” (those established before 2000) and “21st Century assessment providers” (those established after 2000).

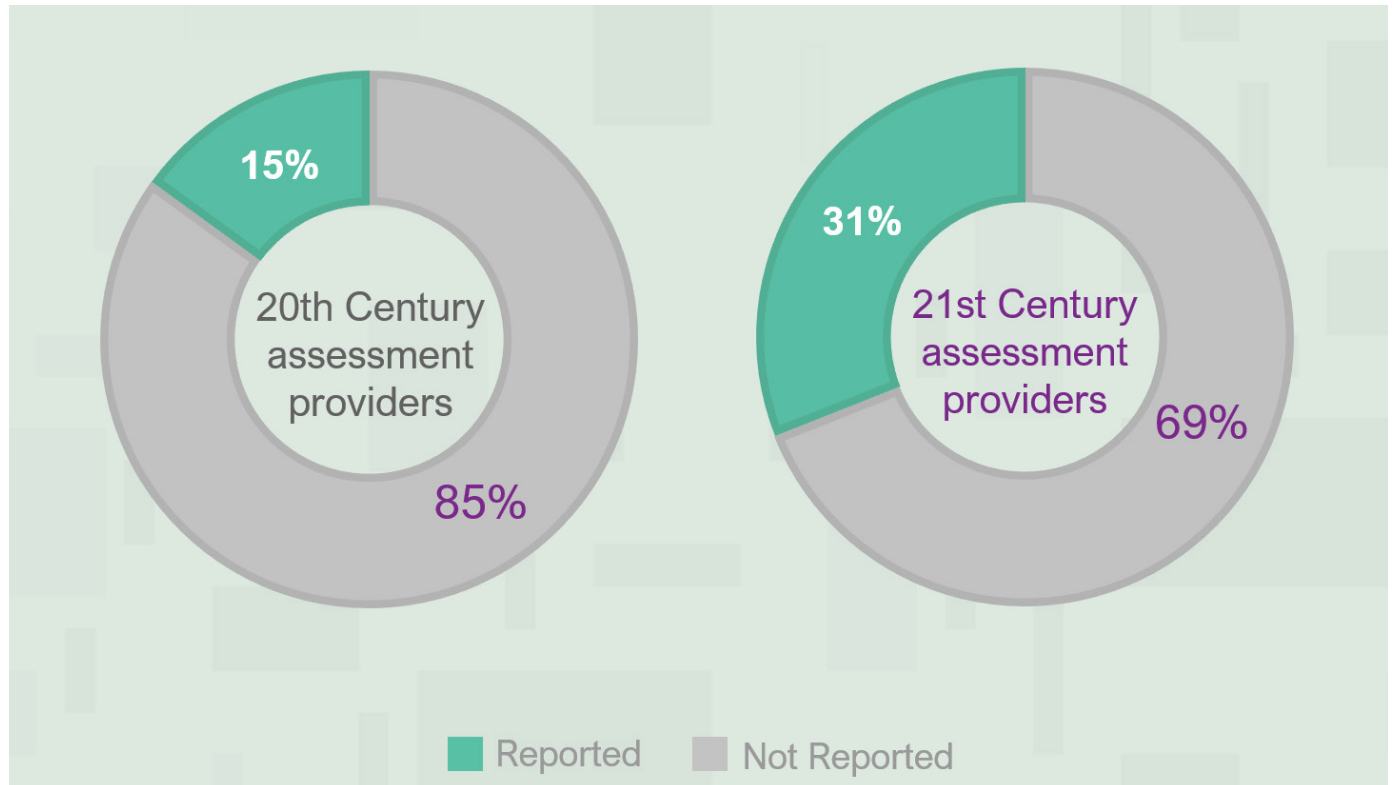
## Efficiency



Perhaps surprisingly, it is efficiency that is the area most commonly reported in the case studies. This was true of both 20th and 21st Century assessment providers.

However, 20th Century assessment providers report on the performance of their assessment processes in terms of efficiency in a higher proportion of their case studies than 21st century providers. This suggests this is less of a focus for new providers to the assessment market, but it still seems to be at the forefront of thinking when implementing assessment.

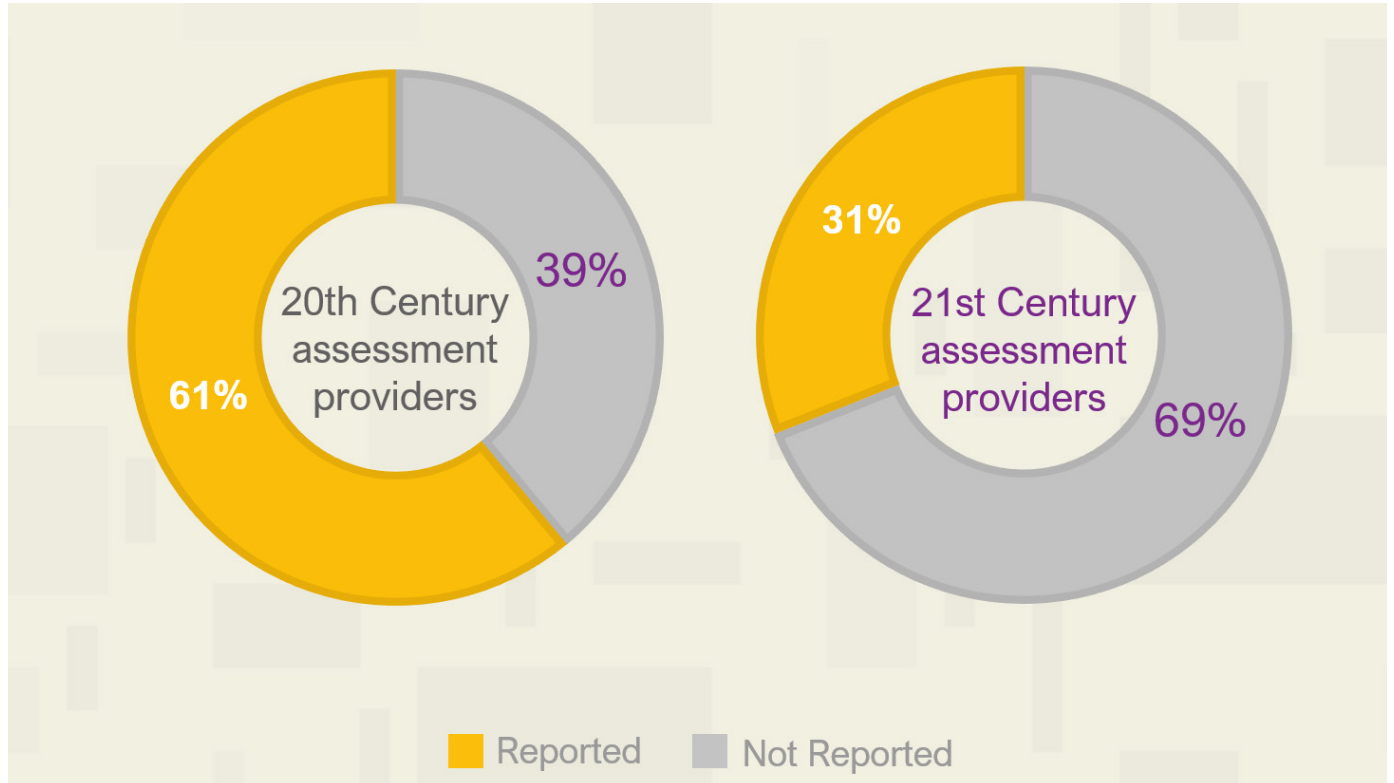
## Engagement



A small proportion (less than a third in both assessment provider categories) of case studies reported on the impact of the assessment process in terms of candidate engagement levels.

This is clearly more of a focus for newer entrants to the assessment market. The 21st Century assessment providers were more than twice as likely to report on engagement compared with the 20th Century assessment providers. Clearly, there has been a real move towards the importance of engagement, which is a positive shift in the market.

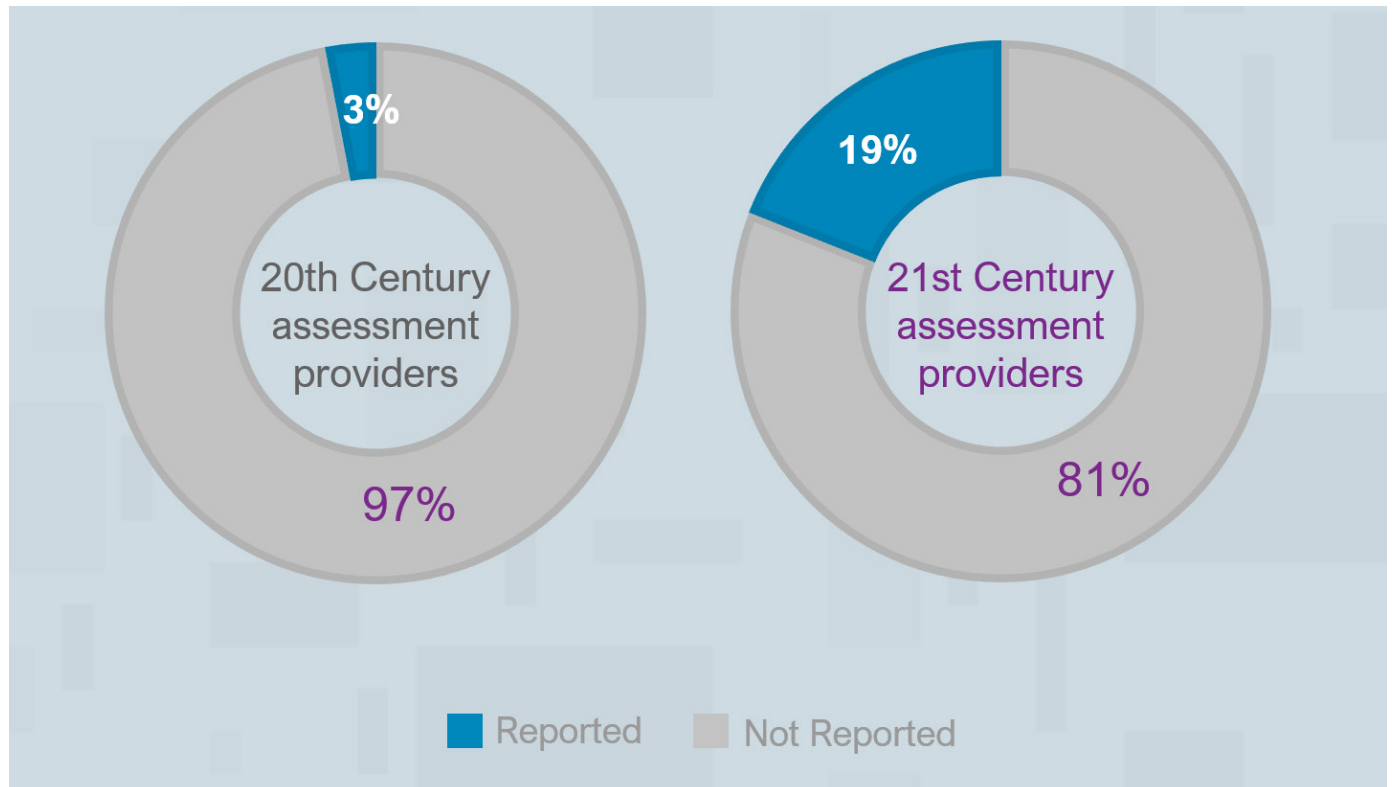
## Quality



The area with the biggest difference between the longer established and more recent entrants to the assessment market is quality of hire. 20th Century assessment providers reported measures of quality in 61% of their case studies. This compared with just 31% for 21st Century assessment providers. The likelihood of 21st Century assessment providers reporting on quality in their case studies has reduced by the same proportion as the incidence of reporting on engagement has gone up.

Taking the trends in quality and engagement together, it appears the increased focus on engagement may have come at the expense of focusing on selecting the candidates who are most likely to succeed in the role.

## Diversity and Inclusion

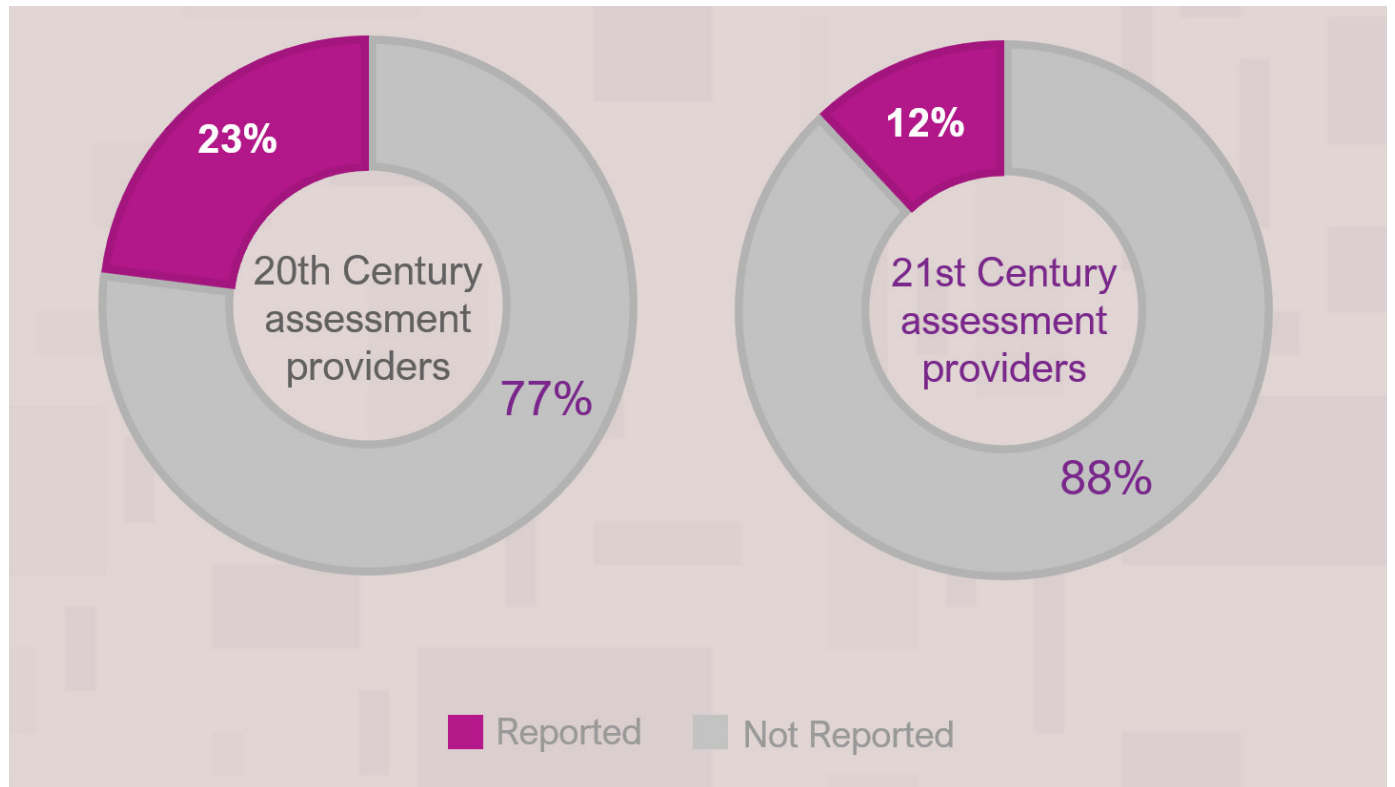


This was perhaps one of the most surprising findings for me given the current focus on diversity and inclusion. There is a large difference in the proportion of case studies written by 21st Century assessment providers reporting on diversity and inclusion (19%) when compared with the case studies of 20th Century assessment providers (3%).

It should be noted this increase is from a surprisingly low base. Only 3% of case studies of 20th Century assessment providers reported diversity and inclusion outcomes – the lowest area for this group of assessment providers. However, even 19% feels a low prevalence given how regularly the discussion arises with clients around how to better manage diversity through the use of specifically-designed assessments, aiming to avoid the loss of minority candidates as they navigate their way through the process.



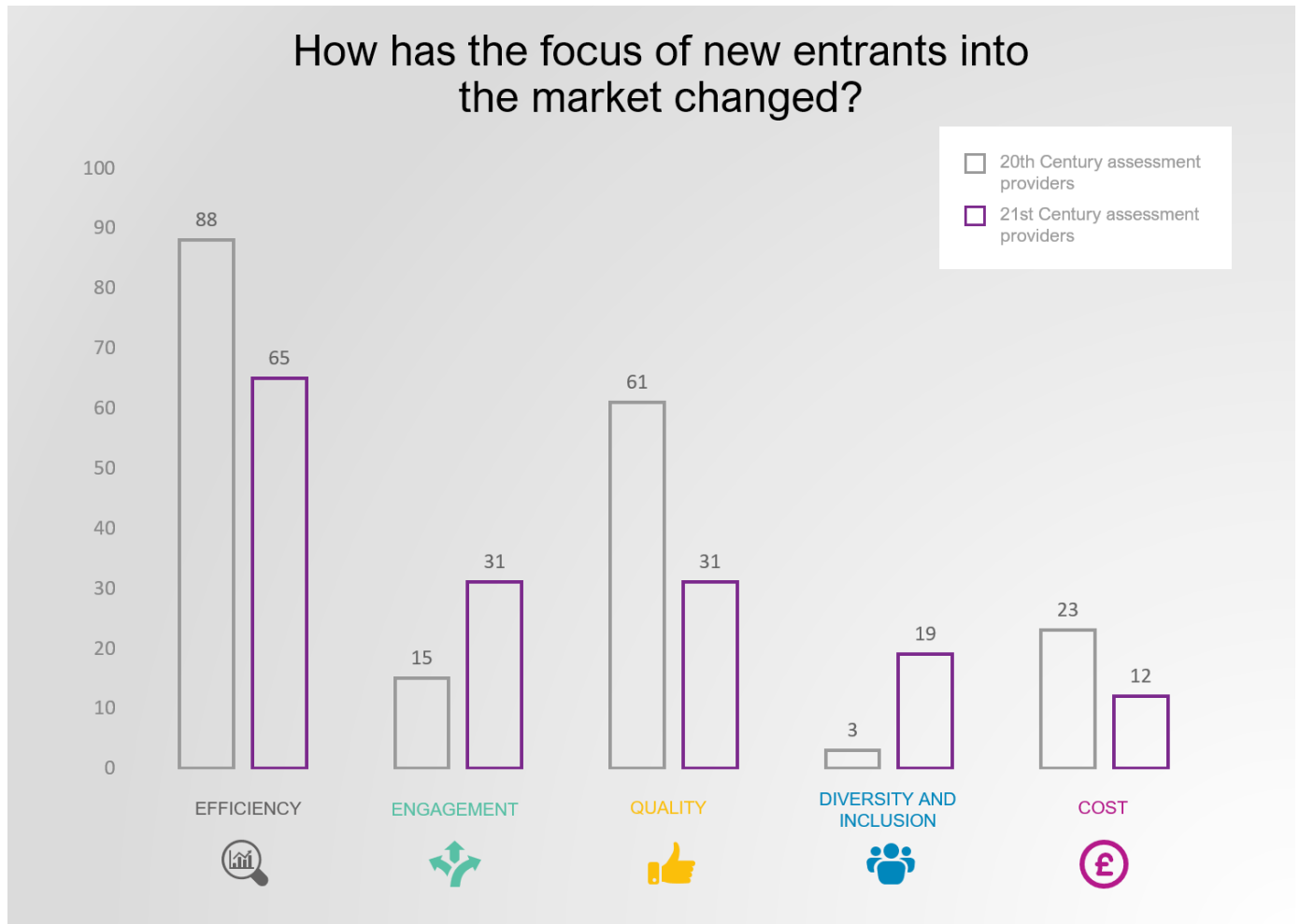
## Cost



Finally, less than a quarter of the case studies reported how introducing a new assessment process had saved the client organisation money.

New entrants to the market, 21st Century assessment providers, reported on cost savings in an even smaller proportion of their case studies.

So here is a summary of the data all in one place:



## Moving towards a more complete approach

Whilst demonstrating effectiveness of an assessment process is not easy, there is nothing stopping all five criteria being reported in 100% of case studies. All five may not always be a realistic goal but we should work harder to broaden our focus to more areas when we implement and evaluate assessment processes.

So, in the end, why does this all matter? Well perhaps the most concerning issue for me is that we can see there is a danger of a see-saw effect from our data – the increased focus on candidate engagement is a positive trend but it should not come at the expense of measuring the effectiveness of an assessment in delivering quality of candidates, through robust validation research.

By keeping our attention on all five areas of the Saville Assessment model we can all ensure when stakeholders ask us “Was that assessment process effective?” we have a definitive, convincing, and evidence-based response.

## Get in touch

If you would like to discuss how our complete approach to identifying what matters in an assessment process can benefit you, contact us at [info@savilleassessment.com](mailto:info@savilleassessment.com).



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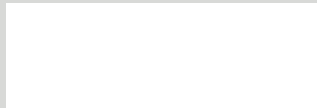
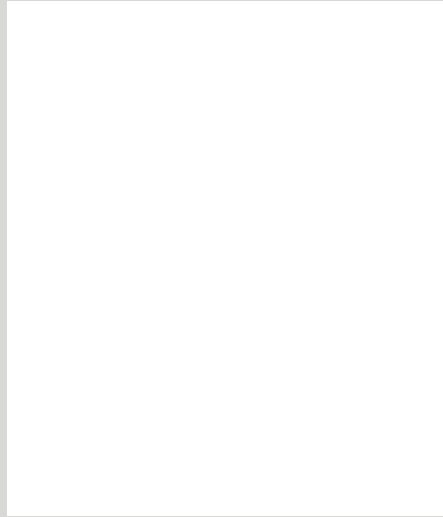
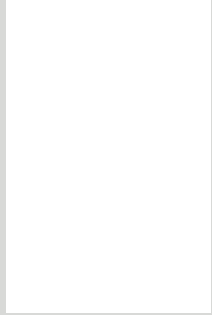
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## About Saville Assessment, a Willis Towers Watson Company

Our mission is to transform assessment around the world. We enable organisations to identify potential, accelerate performance, and achieve outstanding results. Our portfolio of leading-edge assessments are designed based on extensive research into successful workplace performance and the critical relationship between motive, talent and workplace culture. With representatives in over 80 countries we are transforming how organisations Hire, Build and Lead talent globally. Learn more at [www.savilleassessment.com](http://www.savilleassessment.com)