Fewer new grads land full-time jobs; 1 in 5 in temporary employment or traineeships

Nearly 70% of grads from 4 local unis found permanent work, down from 81.7% in 2019

Hariz Baharudin

Fewer students who graduated last year secured a full-time job, even though government programmes helped ensure most managed to find some form of employment.

Close to seven in 10 of those who graduated from four local universities last year found permanent employment, down from 81.7% in 2019, an annual joint graduate employment survey released yesterday showed.

Over one in five fresh graduates, or 22.3 per cent, were employed in part-time or temporary employment.

Employment Minister Josephine Teo said yesterday that the notice-owing rate included graduates in full-time permanent work, down from 90.7 per cent in 2019. This is more than triple the rate last year, a sharp increase from the 2.4 per cent in 2019.

The 2019 cohort of graduates were employed within six months of completing their final examinations, up from 90.7 per cent in 2019. This figure included graduates in full-time permanent, part-time, temporary or freelance work.

Manpower Minister Josephine Teo said yesterday that the noticeable drop in the proportion of graduates in full-time work is something the Government is watching closely.

“We also find very encouraging is that a significant number of them, or 22 per cent, took on part-time or temporary employment,” she added, noting that about three in four of this group – or 16.9 per cent of graduates managed to secure full-time employment.

Traineeships Programme cushioned the blow of Covid-19 to graduates significantly, saying “the programme helped our young people so that ‘graduation’ does not mean ‘unemployment’.”

The survey found that those who landed a full-time job earned a higher median starting salary of $3,700 last year, compared with $3,600 the previous year.

Those in the information and digital technologies and engineering sectors continued to draw the highest salaries.

While the skills and experience picked up through the traineeships and part-time engagements will give them a good start to accumulate working experience for future opportunities, it also means “unemployment”.

The employment survey also found that the proportion of graduates doing freelance work was 1.5 per cent last year, a decrease from 2 per cent in 2019.

The survey polled 33,800 fresh graduates from full-time programmes at the National University of Singapore, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore Management University and Singapore University of Social Sciences. The joint exercise was conducted around six months after the graduates completed their final exams.

As the surveys for the Singapore Institute of Technology and Ngee Ann Polytechnic are ongoing, their results will be released later.

harizbah@sph.com.sg
The noticeable drop in the percentage of graduating students in full-time work is something the Government is watching closely, said Manpower Minister Josephine Teo. ST PHOTO: LIM YAOHUI