

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

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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 per cent 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 jobs or traineeships, said the survey – the first of its kind to

give a broad picture of the Covid-19 pandemic's impact on young job seekers. This is more than triple the 7 per cent who found themselves in temporary or part-time jobs the year before.

Overall, 93.6 per cent of the 2020 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, part-time, temporary or freelance work.

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

"What 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 fresh graduates – were in the SG-United Traineeships Programme.

The traineeships were launched last June to give fresh graduates opportunities to gain experience and skills in order to boost their employability and give them a firmer foothold in the job market once the economy recovers.

Singapore Human Resources Institute president Low Peck Kem said that given how the quieter job market and hiring demand last year had affected graduate employment globally, it was "very encouraging" that close to 70 per cent of graduates managed to secure full-time employment. She added that the SG-United



Traineeships Programme cushioned the blow of Covid-19 to graduates significantly, saying: "The programme helped our young peo-

ple 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.

Those who did courses such as computer science, cyber security and software engineering had the highest median gross monthly pay of \$4,760, as well as the highest rate of full-time permanent employment at 87.3 per cent.

Among the 22.3 per cent of fresh graduates last year who started work in part-time or temporary employment, the survey found that about half of them, or 11.3 per cent of all graduates, had involuntarily started working in such a role last year, a sharp increase from the 2.4 per cent in 2019.

Those in the SG-United Traineeships Programme undergo an attachment with a firm and get a training allowance of which 80 per cent is funded by the Government, with employers footing the remainder.

The programme has been extended until March next year to continue supporting fresh job seekers graduating this year, in addition to those who have graduated in the

past two years. From April this year, the traineeships' maximum duration will be reduced from nine to six months to encourage employers to offer them full-time jobs.

National Trades Union Congress assistant secretary-general Patrick Tay, who also chairs the Government Parliamentary Committee for Education, said: "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 that come along."

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 11,800 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 Singapore University of Technology and Design are ongoing, their results will be released later.

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NEW GRADUATES' FULL-TIME EMPLOYMENT AND SALARY NUMBERS

The Covid-19 pandemic had an uneven impact on graduates from different fields of study, with some like IT graduates weathering the storm better. New university graduates earned a higher median monthly pay of \$3,700, up from \$3,600 in 2019, according to an annual survey released yesterday.

Course clusters	Full-time permanent employment rate		Median gross monthly salary	
	2019	2020	2019	2020
Information and digital technologies	92.7%	87.3%	\$4,400	\$4,760
Health sciences	88.4%	83.3%	\$3,500	\$3,500
Business	88.8%	76%	\$3,500	\$3,500
Built environment	87.3%	72.5%	\$3,500	\$3,500
Engineering	83.3%	71.6%	\$3,750	\$3,900
Humanities and social sciences	74.5%	61.8%	\$3,500	\$3,500
Sciences	71.5%	55.4%	\$3,500	\$3,500
Arts, design and media	62.4%	50.1%	\$3,200	\$3,300
Overall	81.7%	69.8%	\$3,600	\$3,700

NOTE: Data from NTU, NUS, SMU and SUSS.



EMPLOYMENT INDICATORS OF FRESH GRADUATES

From full-time programmes (NUS, NTU, SMU, SUSS)

Proportion of graduates in the labour force who were:	2018	2019	2020
Employed	90.2%	90.7%	93.6%
In full-time permanent employment	81.2%	81.7%	69.8%
Freelancing	1.8%	2%	1.5%
In part-time/temporary employment	7.2%	7%	22.3%
• Voluntary	4.9%	4.6%	1%
• Involuntary	2.3%	2.4%	11.3%
Unemployed	9.8%	9.3%	6.4%
Unemployed but starting work soon for a job	2.9%	2.9%	2.5%
Unemployed and still looking for a job	7%	6.4%	3.9%
Median gross monthly salary (Full-time permanent employment)	\$3,500	\$3,600	\$3,700

NOTE: Employment figures may not add up perfectly due to rounding differences. *Includes graduates in the SG-United Traineeships Programme

Source: JOINT AUTONOMOUS UNIVERSITIES GRADUATE EMPLOYMENT SURVEY 2020 STRAITS TIMES GRAPHICS



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 YAOLHI