

Covid-19: Surge in fresh grads in part-time, temporary jobs as full-time roles fall, but overall employment is up

By JUSTIN ONG

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TODAY file photo

More fresh graduates were in part-time or temporary employment in 2020 compared to 2019, the survey found.

- Graduates in full-time permanent jobs dropped markedly from 81.7 per cent in 2019 to 69.8 per cent last year
- However, 93 per cent of graduates are employed, compared to 90.7 per cent in 2019
- Graduates from health sciences and information and digital technologies courses were the least affected, with a higher proportion having found full-time permanent employment

SINGAPORE — More than a fifth of fresh graduates from Singapore's public universities held part-time or temporary jobs last year in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic, more than treble the proportion in 2019, an annual employment survey has found.

Correspondingly, those in full-time permanent jobs dropped markedly from 81.7 per cent in 2019 to 69.8 per cent last year, as the job market was hobbled by the pandemic. Overall, however, more graduates were employed six months after their final exams in 2020 than in 2019.

These are among the results for the 2020 Joint Autonomous Universities Graduate Employment Survey, released on Friday (Feb 19).

today

EMPLOYMENT STATISTICS FOR FRESH GRADUATES IN 2020

	2018	2019	2020
Employed	90.2%	90.7%	93.6%
• Full-time permanent employment	81.2%	81.7%	69.8%
• Freelancing	1.8%	2.0%	1.5%
• Part-time/temporary employment	7.2%	7.0%	22.3%
Unemployed	9.8%	9.3%	6.4%
Median gross monthly salary (Full-time permanent employment)	S\$3,500	S\$3,600	S\$3,700

Source: Joint Autonomous Universities Graduate Employment Survey 2020

Infographic: Samuel Woo/TODAY

The survey, which garnered a 79 per cent response rate, assessed the work status of 11,800 fresh graduates from full-time programmes at the National University of Singapore (NUS), Nanyang Technological University (NTU), Singapore Management University (SMU) and the Singapore University of Social Sciences (SUSS).

The respondents were surveyed on their employment status six months after the completion of their final examinations.

Surveys for the Singapore Institute of Technology and the Singapore University of Technology and Design are ongoing. The results will be released later.

THE FINDINGS

Of the graduates who participated in the survey:

- About 93 per cent were employed, a slight improvement on 90.7 per cent in 2019
- About 22 per cent had taken up part-time or temporary employment, up from just 7 per cent in 2019
- Of those, about three in four were participating in the SGUnited Traineeship Programme
- About 11 per cent were in involuntary part time or temporary employment roles, compared to just 2.4 per cent in 2019
- Gross monthly salaries of those with full-time permanent employment rose from S\$3,600 in 2019 to S\$3,700
- While 6.4 per cent are unemployed, 2.5 per cent are starting work soon, while the rest are still looking for a job

NUS said in a statement on Friday that 93.9 per cent of its fresh graduates had found employment according to the survey, up from 90.9 per cent in 2019.

A Yale-NUS college spokesperson said in an email to TODAY that 90.9 per cent of its fresh graduates had found employment.

Said Professor Ho Teck Hua, NUS senior deputy president and provost: "We are heartened that our graduates remain highly employable in this challenging economic climate, and continue to command good salaries amid stiffer competition in the labour market."

NTU said in a statement that more than nine in 10 of its fresh graduates in the labour force had found employment according to the survey, and that is "comparable to the previous cohort".

"Despite Covid-19's impact on the economy, NTU graduates continue to stand out in the fiercely competitive job market locally and abroad," said NTU's deputy provost for education Tan Ooi Kiang.

SMU said that 93.9 per cent of its fresh graduates had found employment, and that 57 per cent were offered full-time permanent jobs before graduation.

SMU Provost, Professor Timothy Clark said that SMU graduates are "in much demand" and have been successful in finding employment despite the current economic conditions.

"This affirms the recognition by employers of our holistic and multi-disciplinary academic curriculum, as well as a co-curricular programme that enables our students to nurture the values and critical skills desired at the workplace."

SUSS said in a statement that around 94 per cent of its fresh graduates had found employment, an increase from the overall proportion in employment at 89.4 per cent in 2019.

SUSS president, Professor Cheong Hee Kiat, said: "Despite Covid-19, our graduates remain in high demand, testifying to our university's industry-relevant and applied teaching pedagogies that prepare them well for the workplace."

BREAKDOWN OF COURSE CLUSTERS

The results were also split into eight course clusters, where graduates across all clusters saw a decline in full-time permanent employment, but an increase in employment rates for all except the course cluster for information and digital technologies.

Six course clusters saw a more than 10 per cent dip in full time permanent employment last year compared to the year before.

- About half of the graduates in arts, design and media attained full-time permanent employment, a marked fall from 62.4 per cent in 2019
- For built environment graduates, the figure this year stands at 72.5 per cent, down from 87.3 per cent in 2019
- Business graduates were among the best performers at 76 per cent but that was still a fall from 88.8 per cent in 2019

- For those in humanities and social sciences, 61.8 per cent were in full-time employment, a decline from 74.5 per cent in 2019
- For engineering graduates, it was 71.6 per cent, down from 83.3 per cent
- For those in sciences, it is 55.4 per cent compared to 71.5 per cent in 2019

Only two course clusters saw a less than 10 per cent drop in full-time permanent employment.

- About 83.3 per cent of graduates from health sciences secured full time permanent employment, only a slight fall from 88.4 per cent in 2019
- For information and digital technologies, the figure was 87.3 per cent, compared to 92.7 per cent in 2019. It is the only course cluster to have lower overall employment — with 94.8 per cent employed, compared to 95.4 per cent last year

A follow up survey on 827 graduates from NUS, STU and SMU was also conducted for courses that typically require post-graduate practical training before graduates can practise in their professions.

They surveyed graduates from architecture, biomedical sciences and Chinese medicine, law, medicine, and pharmacy.

Of those in the labour force:

- About 96 per cent were employed after the completion of their practical training, housemanship or first-year residency training, compared to 98.6 per cent in 2019.
- About 93 per cent of those in the labour force secured full-time permanent employment, compared to 96.4 per cent in 2019.
- The proportion of those with part-time or temporary employment increased to 3 per cent, compared to 1.6 per cent in 2019. Of this, the SGUnited Traineeship Programme accounted for just under half.
- The median gross monthly salary of those in full-time permanent employment declined from S\$4,800 in 2019 to S\$4,625 in the latest findings