
NAVIGATING ENTRY-LEVEL JOBS & INTERNSHIPS DURING COVID-19

HOW COVID-19 IS IMPACTING CURRENT COLLEGE STUDENTS AS
THEY NAVIGATE THE FIRST PHASE OF THEIR CAREERS

For most college students, landing that first job or coveted internship is a stressful, but exciting, rite of passage. But the unfolding global health crisis has made taking that first step into a professional career significantly harder for today's college students.

Until recently, the booming economy and strong job market meant that even student job seekers had an edge when applying to and interviewing with companies. But like so much else, COVID-19 has drastically changed the employment landscape, turning one of the strongest job markets in modern history into one of the most tumultuous.

As millions of Americans deal with the economic fallout from COVID-19, college students are also grappling with how best to navigate their professional next steps, from the job search to major adaptations to summer employment plans. To find out how college students are navigating this time, RippleMatch conducted a survey of the students on our platform. We surveyed 2,210 students across 367 unique schools to collect insights on the most pressing issues students are facing right now. Read on for the complete set of findings:

STARTING A CAREER DURING COVID-19

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- Where students are in their job search

SEARCHING FOR A JOB DURING COVID-19

INCLUDES | PAGES 3-6

- Challenges in the current job search
- Top resources students are using in their job search
- Expanded interest in industries & job types
- Top priorities when searching for a job

CHANGES TO SUMMER EMPLOYMENT PLANS

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- Job & internship outcomes (Remote vs. canceled programs)
- Job & internship outcomes by career
- How students feel about working remotely
- How students feel about delayed or shortened programs
- How students feel about canceled programs or rescinded offers
- Changes to brand perception influenced by company decisions

KEY TAKEAWAYS

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- Standout themes in today's employment landscape

STARTING A CAREER DURING COVID-19

WHAT'S NEXT FOR 2,200 COLLEGE STUDENTS



Even in uncertain times, students are continuing their job search or preparing for summer employment.

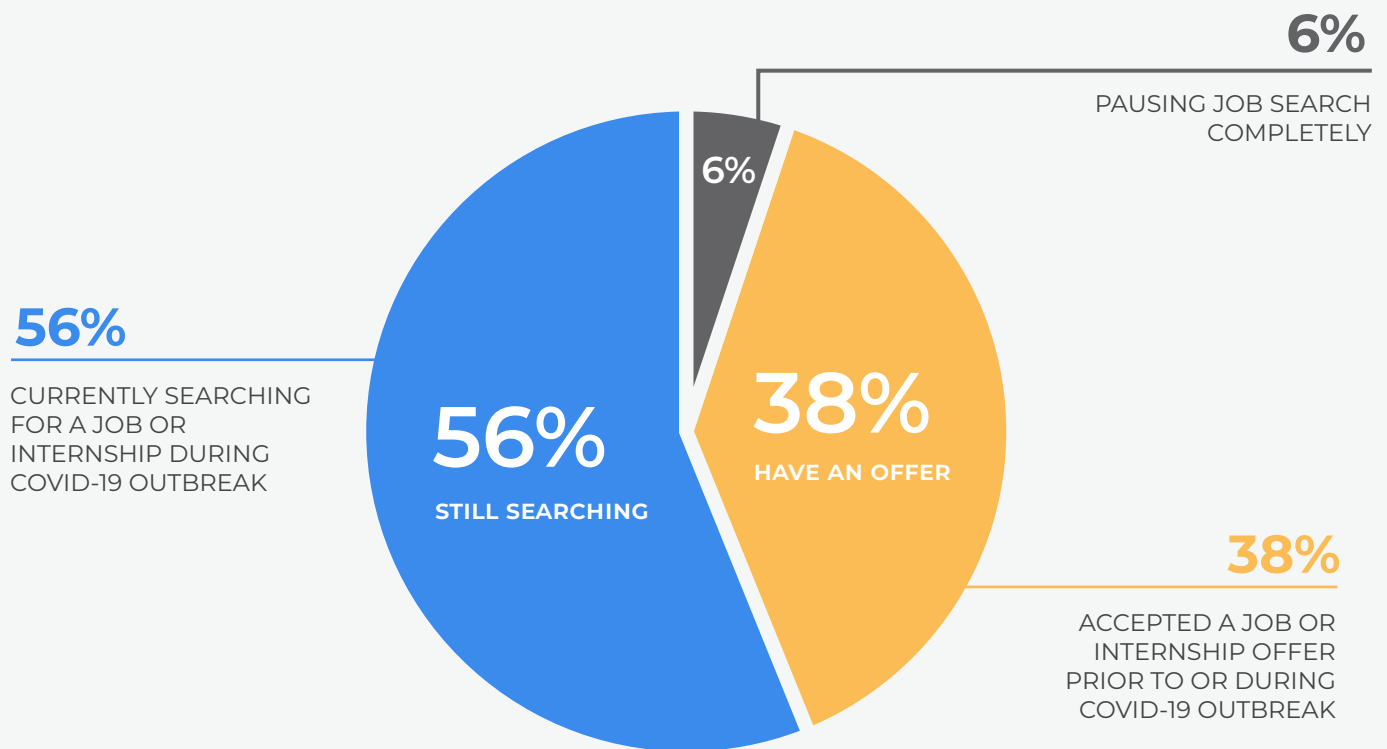
Most college students aren't pressing pause on their professional plans.

Of the 2,210 students who took our survey in early April, 94% intend to move forward with their professional plans, despite significant complications brought on by COVID-19. Over half of students that completed the survey are still actively searching for a job or internship,

while 38% secured a job or internship during or prior to COVID-19 disrupting normal operations in the U.S. (of that 38%, only 6% accepted an offer during the COVID-19 outbreak). A small percentage of students are choosing to pause their job search altogether. While these next steps vary by career path (detailed on the next page), it's clear that today's college students are doing their best to adapt to this new and challenging reality.

NEXT STEPS FOR COLLEGE STUDENTS

Of the 2,210 students that completed our survey, 56% are still searching for a job or internship amidst COVID-19, 38% have a job or internship secured, and 6% are pausing their search completely.



STARTING A CAREER DURING COVID-19

NEXT STEPS FOR COLLEGE STUDENTS

BY CAREER

The career a student is pursuing strongly influences where they are in their job search right now. Students pursuing careers in Marketing/Communications, HR/Admin, and design were most likely to be searching for a job right now, while students in software engineering, finance, and consulting are more likely to have a position secured.

% OF TOTAL RESPONDENTS	BY CAREER	CURRENTLY SEARCHING FOR A JOB OR INTERNSHIP	ACCEPTED A JOB OR INTERNSHIP	CURRENTLY PAUSING JOB OR INTERNSHIP SEARCH
25%	Software Engineer	51%	45%	4%
18%	Analyst	61%	36%	3%
11%	Marketing / Comms	73%	21%	6%
9%	Engineer (Other)	55%	40%	5%
6%	Consultant	47%	48%	5%
5%	Research / Lab	59%	34%	7%
5%	Sales	54%	38%	8%
4%	HR / Administrative	68%	25%	8%
2%	Customer Service	46%	47%	7%
2%	Design	78%	16%	6%
2%	R&D	54%	40%	6%
2%	Teaching	38%	42%	20%
2%	Manufacturing	57%	43%	<1%
2%	Finance	27%	73%	<1%

NAVIGATING THE JOB SEARCH DURING COVID-19

CHALLENGES AND CHOICES



Uncertainty from COVID-19 exacerbates the normal challenges of the job search – and many students are expanding their career interests as a result.

For most job seekers, it's not unusual to apply to a company and never hear back. But unresponsiveness is no longer the only issue troubling candidates.

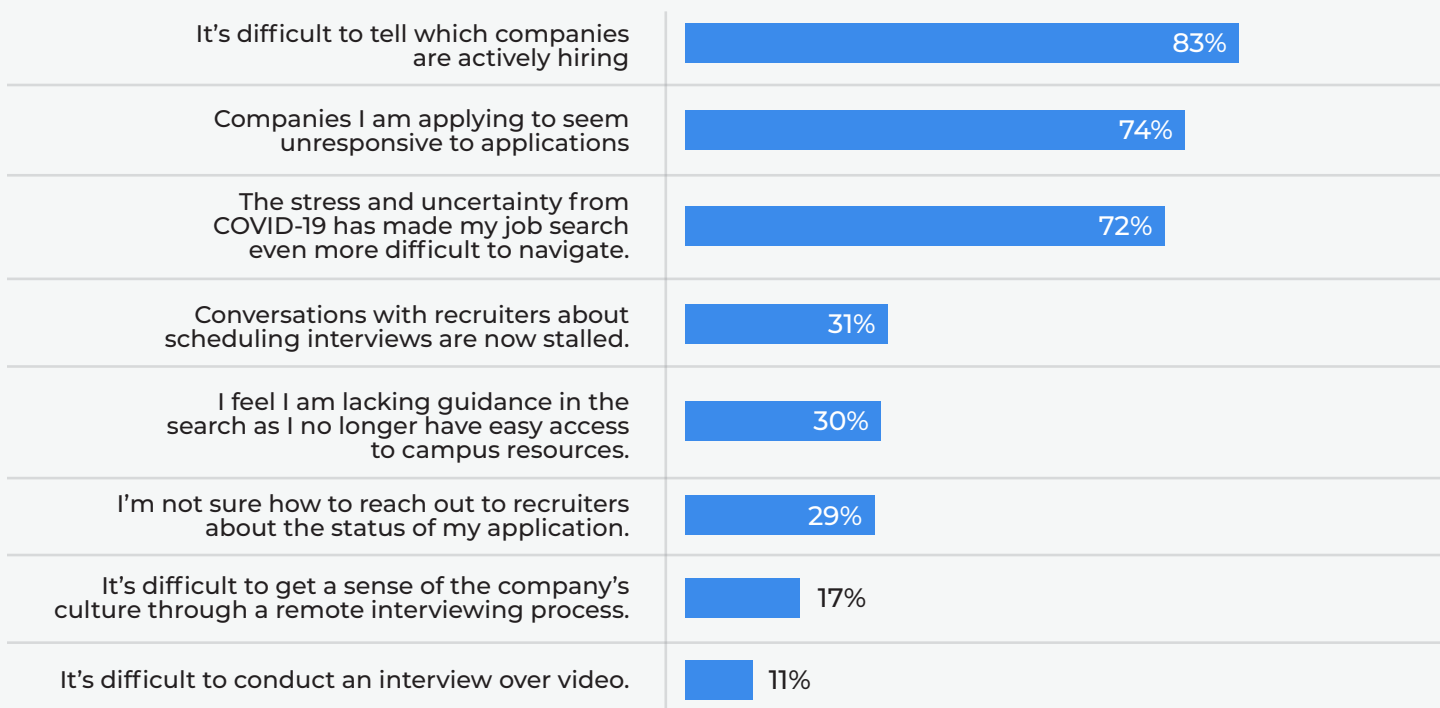
The biggest problem facing college students right now isn't only unresponsive companies; it's the lack of information on which companies they should be directing their attention to in the first place.

83% of student job seekers identified uncertain hiring status as the most significant challenge when trying to find a job during COVID-19. This was followed by issues with unresponsive companies, as well as the general stress and uncertainty piling on to the job search. Once students are in the interview process, however, our data shows there is less uncertainty regarding interviews and communication with recruiters.

TOP CHALLENGES WHEN SEARCHING FOR A JOB DURING COVID-19

We asked student job seekers to select the biggest challenges of conducting a job search during COVID-19. 83% of students said that knowing which companies are hiring is the biggest challenge of searching for a job during this time. 74% cited unresponsiveness from companies as a challenge, while 72% agreed that the added stress of COVID-19 made the search particularly difficult.

% OF RESPONDENTS THAT SELECTED PROVIDED OPTION



NAVIGATING THE JOB SEARCH DURING COVID-19

Data from 2,200+ college students around the country makes it clear that the biggest challenges of landing a job are centered around finding opportunities and submitting applications, rather than difficulties with the interview process itself. So which resources are candidates turning to in this time to find opportunities?

We provided students with a list of options and asked them to select which resources they are utilizing while searching for jobs and internships. 91% of users selected LinkedIn and 77% selected RippleMatch, followed by Handshake, Indeed, and Glassdoor. 40% of students said they are leaning on their personal network, and 25% of students said they are currently utilizing career services as a resource to find opportunities during this time.

WHY ARE SOME STUDENTS PAUSING THEIR JOB SEARCH ALTOGETHER?

We asked the 6% of students who paused their job search to identify all of the reasons why they're stepping back:

53% | Focusing on online classes and don't have time or energy to look for jobs

51% | Don't think companies of interest are hiring right now

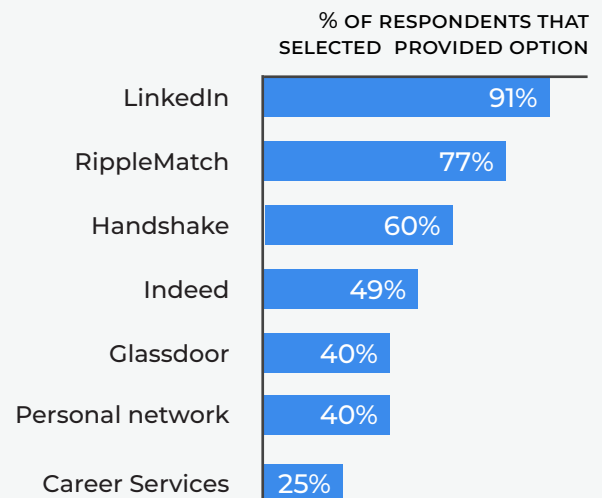
17% | Have personal obligations and don't have the time or energy for search

Even with these resources, the biggest challenge is sifting through up-to-date and accurate opportunities. In fact, of the 6% of students that said they are pausing their job search, 51% said they paused their job search because they don't believe companies of interest are hiring right now.

For companies that are actively hiring, students say the best way to get in touch with them is to contact them directly, and to be sure that career pages (on all platforms) accurately reflect hiring status. This is especially important because now more than ever, students are increasingly open to job opportunities and industries outside of their immediate preference.

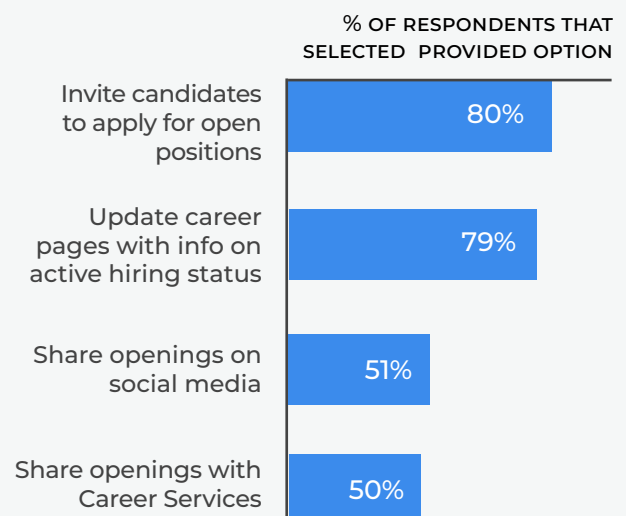
TOP JOB SEARCH RESOURCES

We asked students to select which resources they're utilizing in their job search right now. LinkedIn was selected the most often among survey respondents, followed by RippleMatch.



WHAT EMPLOYERS CAN DO

With uncertainty the biggest challenges students are facing, we asked students how employers can best advertise their open positions. These were the most popular options:

































NAVIGATING THE JOB SEARCH DURING COVID-19

OPEN TO NEW CAREER PATHS

ADAPTABILITY BY CAREER

In the wake of COVID-19, many job types and industries have been disproportionately affected, forcing students to adjust their expectations and career goals in real time. Our survey found that the majority of students are applying for jobs outside of their preferred role type and industry in an effort to land an opportunity. Unsurprisingly, students pursuing technical or specialized roles are less likely to branch out than those pursuing generalist roles such as consulting or analyst positions.

	ARE APPLYING FOR JOBS OUTSIDE OF THEIR PREFERRED ROLE TYPE	ARE APPLYING FOR JOBS OUTSIDE OF THEIR PREFERRED INDUSTRY
OVERALL	 72%	 68%
Software Engineer	 54%	 47%
Analyst	 78%	 77%
Marketing / Comms	 78%	 72%
Engineer (Other)	 79%	 75%
Consultant	 91%	 85%
Research / Lab	 73%	 64%
Sales	 78%	 78%
HR / Administrative	 84%	 80%
Customer Service	 70%	 81%
Design	 76%	 71%
R&D	 68%	 32%
Teaching	 80%	 80%
Manufacturing	 54%	 62%
Finance	 83%	 67%

NAVIGATING THE JOB SEARCH DURING COVID-19

TOP CAREER PRIORITIES

WHAT MATTERS TO STUDENTS NOW

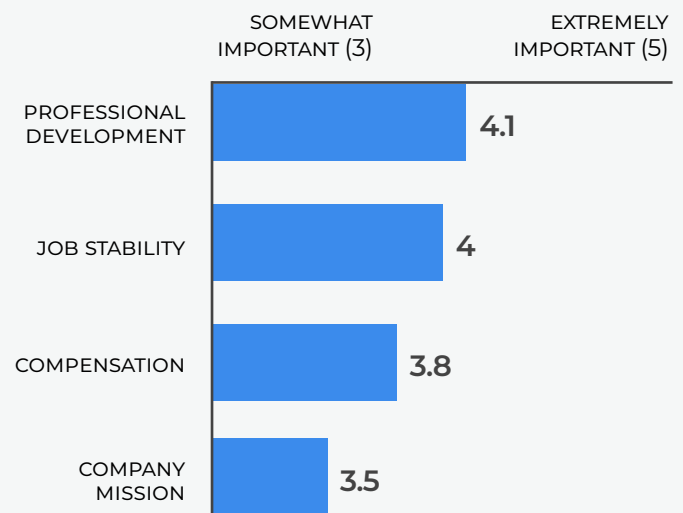
Over years of research on the career priorities of Gen Z college students, we have consistently found that professional development is the top priority for most young professionals starting their careers. In our recent survey, we asked respondents to weigh how important four factors (Professional Development, Job Stability, Compensation, and Company Mission) were in their current job search. Despite the economic uncertainty, professional development still slightly outweighed job stability, and heavily outweighed compensation and company mission.

However, the importance of these factors varied depending on demographics. Women weighed job stability as equally important to professional development, while respondents who self-identify as underrepresented minorities valued job stability, compensation, and professional development more than respondents who did not self-identify as an underrepresented minority.

WHAT COLLEGE STUDENTS ARE LOOKING FOR IN A CAREER

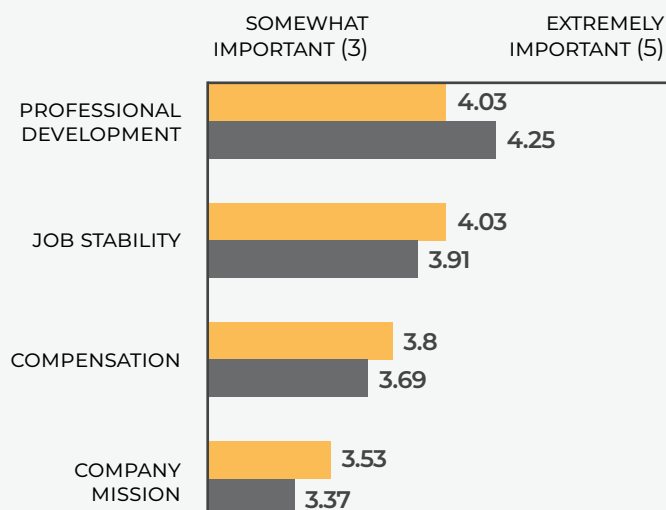
We asked students to weigh how important the following factors were to their current job search, ranging from not at all important (1) to extremely important (5).

ALL RESPONDENTS



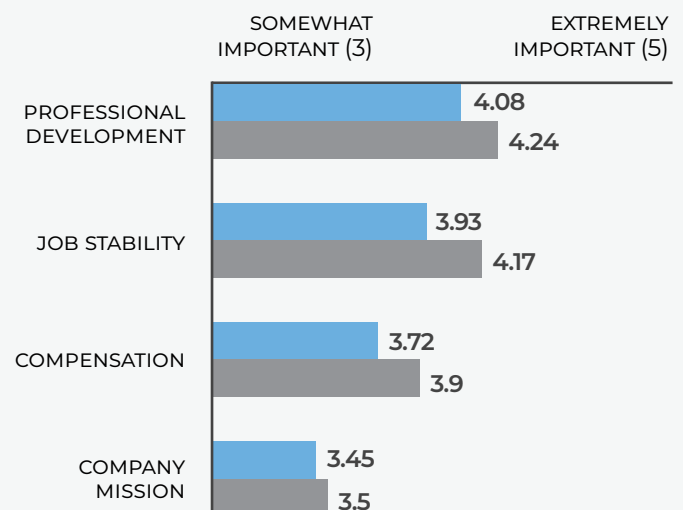
WOMEN VS. MEN

WOMEN MEN



NON-URM VS. URM*

NON-URM URM



*UNDERREPRESENTED MINORITY

CHANGES TO SUMMER EMPLOYMENT PLANS

ADAPTATIONS TO JOBS & INTERNSHIPS



From remote work to altered timelines, entry-level jobs and internships look drastically different than they did when students first accepted offers.

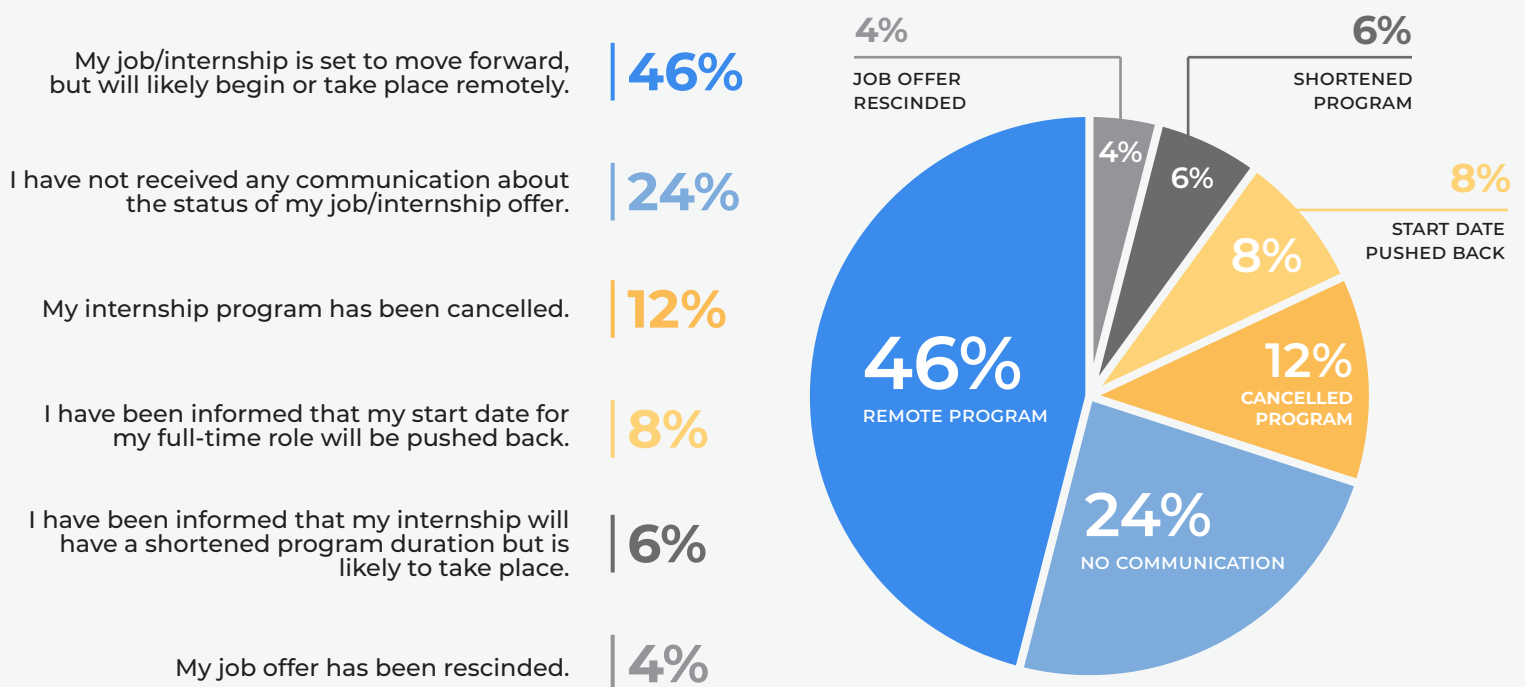
Securing a job or internship offer early on typically establishes a sense of security – but COVID-19 has forced companies to make difficult decisions regarding early-career programs.

In normal times, many students and upcoming graduates would be gearing up to begin their summer internship or entry-level job. But now, these well-laid plans are up in the air

as companies grapple with how best to support new entry-level hires and how to provide a worthwhile internship experience. As of early April, many employers – close to 50% – are transitioning these entry-level jobs and internships to a remote setting. Around a quarter of employers have yet to send an update about their programs, while 16% percent have rescinded offers or canceled internship programs entirely.

OUTCOMES FOR PLANNED JOBS AND INTERNSHIPS

We asked students to select which option best describes the status of their job or internship offer as of early to mid-April. 46% percent of programs are set to move forward remotely, while 14% of programs have been shortened or delayed. 12% of internship programs have been cancelled entirely, while only 4% of students have had job offers rescinded as of April 2020. However, 24% of respondents have not yet heard any concrete updates about the status of their job or internship.



CHANGES TO SUMMER EMPLOYMENT PLANS

CHANGES TO SUMMER EMPLOYMENT PLANS

BY CAREER

In today's climate, the status of a job or internship is very much influenced by the type of work a student or graduate will be taking part in while on the job. Software engineering internships, for example, are much better suited to remote work than manufacturing or R&D internships. Below, we've laid out the decisions and outcomes regarding program changes as they relate to job type.

BY CAREER	JOB OR INTERNSHIP WILL MOVE REMOTE	NO UPDATE ABOUT JOB OR INTERNSHIP	INTERNSHIP PROGRAM CANCELLED	JOB OFFER RESCINDED	SHORTENED INTERNSHIP PROGRAM	START DATE FOR FULL TIME ROLE DELAYED
Software Engineer	57%	18%	10%	5%	6%	4%
Analyst	45%	22%	9%	3%	11%	10%
Marketing / Comms	40%	26%	20%	2%	2%	10%
Engineer (Other)	42%	29%	12%	1%	5%	11%
Consultant	45%	31%	5%	2%	6%	11%
Research / Lab	50%	21%	21%	<1%	3%	5%
Sales	46%	28%	10%	7%	2%	7%
HR / Administrative	33%	38%	5%	5%	5%	14%
Customer Service	46%	27%	15%	4%	<1%	8%
Design	25%	37%	38%	<1%	<1%	<1%
R&D	36%	22%	21%	7%	7%	7%
Teaching	30%	50%	10%	<1%	<1%	10%
Manufacturing	11%	34%	22%	11%	11%	11%
Finance	63%	19%	<1%	6%	6%	6%

CHANGES TO SUMMER EMPLOYMENT PLANS

GOING REMOTE

WHAT STUDENTS THINK

With so many programs transitioning to remote work, we also asked students to share their opinions and expectations surrounding virtual programs.

While many companies still have not provided specifics about the exact structure of their remote programs, most students are still excited – even alongside some concerns about how working remotely will impact their experience. 69% of respondents who will be participating in a remote program said they are still excited for the opportunity, even if they had some concerns. 28% of students said they are slightly less excited about the opportunity, while only 3% reported that they are no longer excited to take part in the job or internship with the move to remote work.

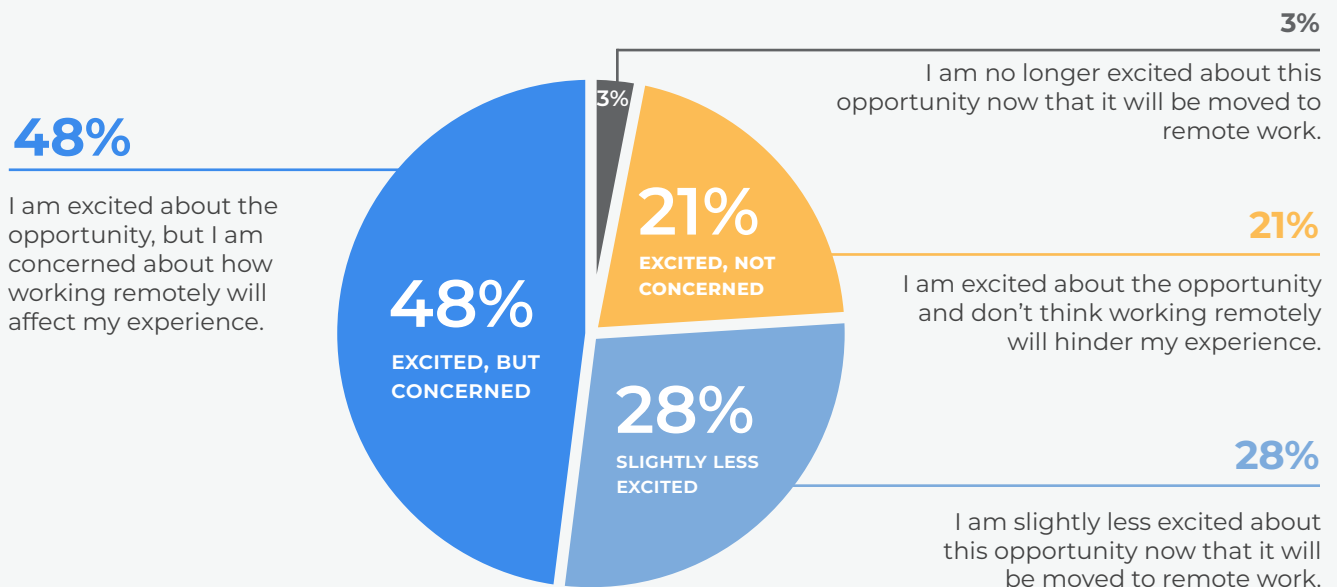
UPDATES & INFORMATION

We asked students: What kind of information have you received about your job/internship moving remotely?

- 52%** | I have only received information about the fact that the program will be remote, but no further details about the logistics or structure
- 19%** | I have received information about how/when my virtual onboarding will take place
- 7%** | I have received information on succeeding in a remote work environment
- 6%** | I have received information on how the remote program will be structured

STUDENT EXCITEMENT

We asked students: How do you feel about your job/internship taking place remotely for the foreseeable future?



CHANGES TO SUMMER EMPLOYMENT PLANS

The top concerns students had about remote work were mostly focused on how it would impact their ability to build personal relationships with managers and peers.

When provided with a set of options, 69% of students said they were concerned about being able to form strong connections with managers or company leaders, and 61% were concerned that there would be a lack of community among intern cohorts or entry-level groups.

Around half (53%) were concerned that their work performance would suffer in a remote setting, though less were concerned about the accuracy and quality of evaluations. A little less than half (47%) were concerned that there would be fewer opportunities for professional development than if the program or job was taking place in an office.

“

"I appreciate the company treating its interns as well as the full-time employees, and that the company seems to seriously consider the obstacles that people might face when working remotely. There is a stipend for ergonomic purchases, normal salary while acknowledging full work hours might not be possible for those with children or dependents, etc."

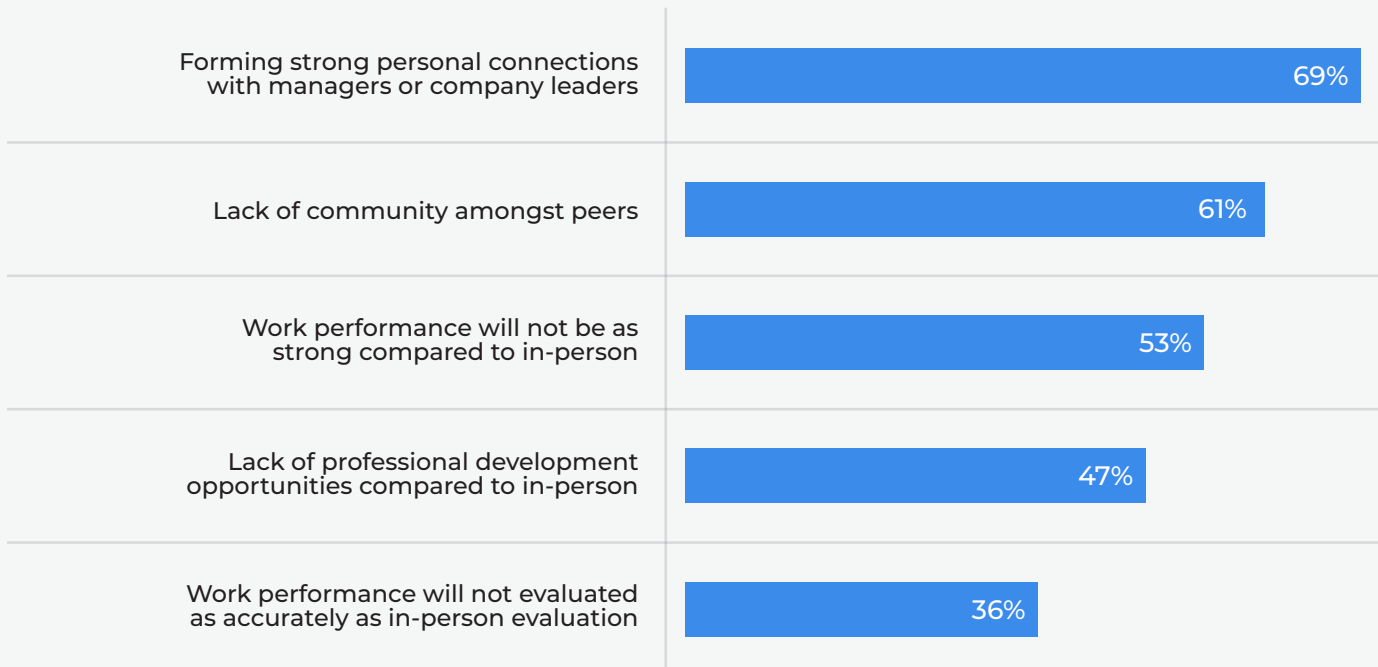
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"I am so grateful to still have the chance to intern despite the economic turmoil facing most businesses. Selfishly, I am feeling anxious and concerned on how the internship will better me professionally and personally now that it is remote."

TOP CONCERNS ABOUT GOING REMOTE

We asked students: What are you most concerned about with a move to remote work? Challenges in forming strong personal connections was top of mind for most respondents.

OF RESPONDENTS THAT SELECTED PROVIDED OPTION



CHANGES TO SUMMER EMPLOYMENT PLANS

SHORTENED PROGRAMS & DELAYS

WHAT STUDENTS THINK

As of early April, around 14% of students reported that their internship program would be shortened or that their full-time start would be delayed. We asked the students who selected this option to share more details about the altered timelines for their programs and job.

34% students who accepted jobs have not yet been informed of their new start date, while 38% say their start date has only been delayed by 1-2 months. 10% of students reported that their start date was pushed back by 3-4 months, while only 2% said it would be pushed back by 5 months or more.

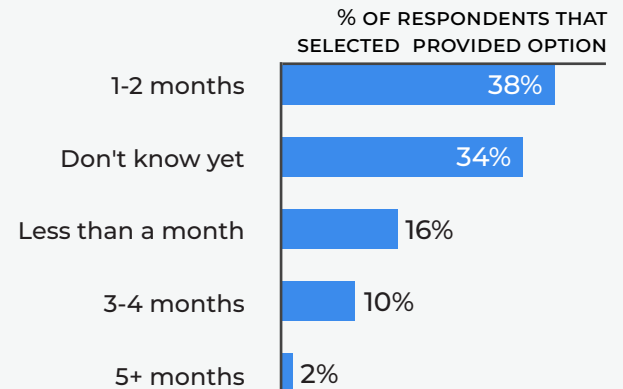
“The company handled the situation very well. Their employees are working from home. My job's start date was pushed back, however they were able to offer me a temp position to work on in the meantime until that begins. While the pay is less, it will be a great way to onboard me.”

“The fact that my company opted to cut out a full month instead of switching to remote increased my likelihood of renegeing on the offer. I've now begun talking to other companies because I would rather have more time to learn and earn money remotely than less time for those things but in-person.”

There's slightly less uncertainty surrounding internship timelines than full-time start dates – only 16% of respondents said they had no idea how their program would be shortened. Nearly all of the internship programs that have been shortened have had the number of weeks cut, rather than a shortened work day or shortened work week. Close to half of students estimate that their program was reduced by a quarter or cut in half.

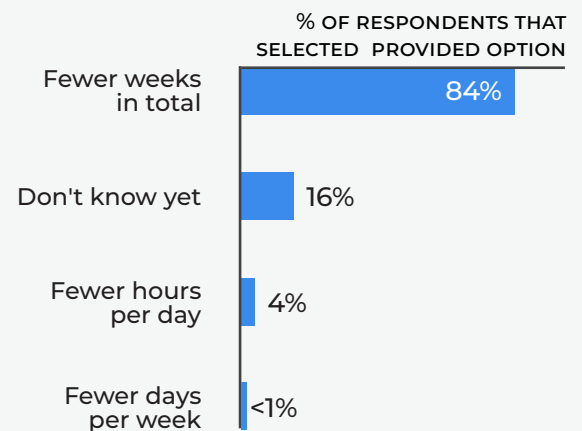
DELAYED START DATE FOR FULL-TIME

We asked students how far back their full-time start was pushed.



SHORTENED INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

We asked students if employers were shortening their program by reducing the weeks, days, or hours.



25-50% REDUCTION IN PROGRAM TIME

We also asked students to estimate by how much time their program was cut. Nearly half (45%) of respondents estimated their internship program duration was shortened by 25% or cut in half. 18% estimated that their program was shortened by less than 25%, while 18% said their program was cut by more than 50%.

CHANGES TO SUMMER EMPLOYMENT PLANS

NO COMMUNICATION YET

WHAT STUDENTS THINK

Some students are still waiting to hear from their employers about concrete next steps – 24%, to be exact.

Most students (65%) are waiting to hear from their prospective employer before considering alternate plans, but close to 30% are already looking at jobs and internships in their preferred career path in case the opportunity does fall through. 15% of students are considering pursuing

personal projects or starting a business, while a mere 8% are considering applying for temporary jobs that would be outside of their preferred career path, like essential retail personnel or food service.

The broader sentiment from students is that more communication is always preferred, even if there are no substantial updates or final decisions.

“

"This company is very unclear with whether the role will proceed. They send emails weeks apart but offer no concrete details beyond that it will not continue at the original start date. It has been very distressing and I feel as though they are not transparent."

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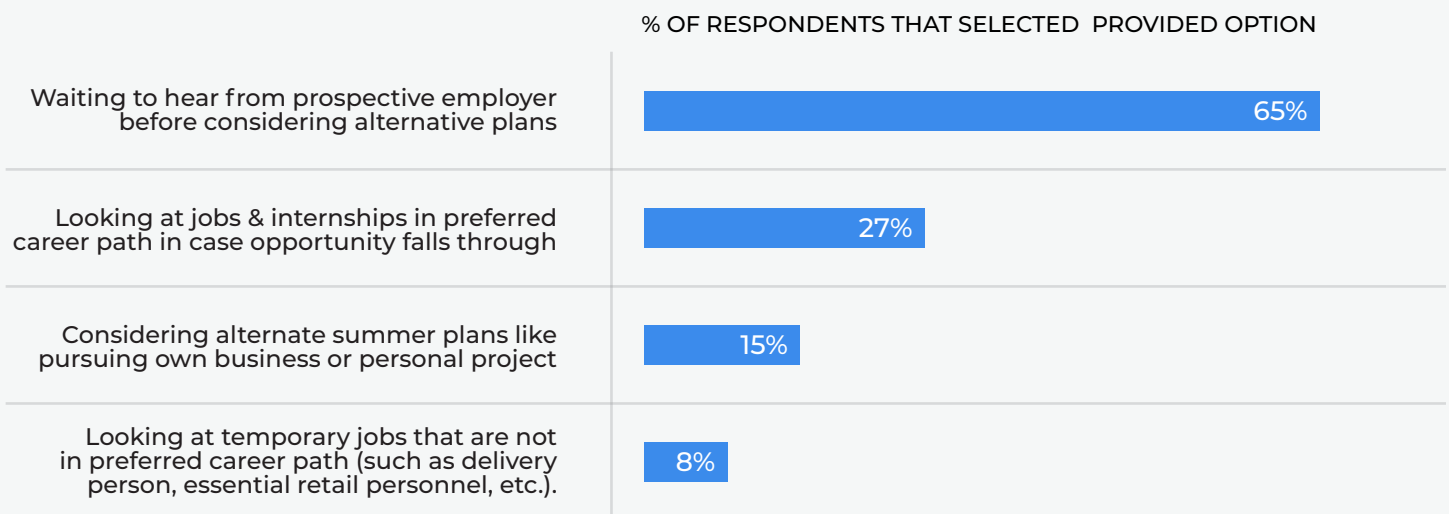
"More communication regarding plans is better than less, even if there is no major update on how things are proceeding."

“

"I have not yet received clear instructions. They just said if something changes we will let you know. This might mean that they may cancel the offer."

NEXT STEPS WHILE AWAITING COMMUNICATION

We asked prospective interns and hires how they're approaching their professional plans as they wait to hear from employers about next steps or concrete plans.



CHANGES TO SUMMER EMPLOYMENT PLANS

CANCELED INTERNSHIPS

WHAT STUDENTS THINK

Canceling an internship program is a difficult decision that no company has taken lightly – and students understand that.

Qualitative feedback collected through comments revealed that while students were disappointed by the cancellation of their program, their opinion of a company was influenced by how the company handled the decision. Companies that were communicative, empathetic, and helpful were viewed much more warmly than companies who were slow to provide updates and offered little resources after the decision was made.

“

"They compensated all interns with \$2500 after canceling the program and also told us we'd be first in line for a future internship or full-time position. In addition, the CEO reached out to us and said he will try connecting us with his network to find a new opportunity. This was extremely generous and I'm super thankful for the opportunity."

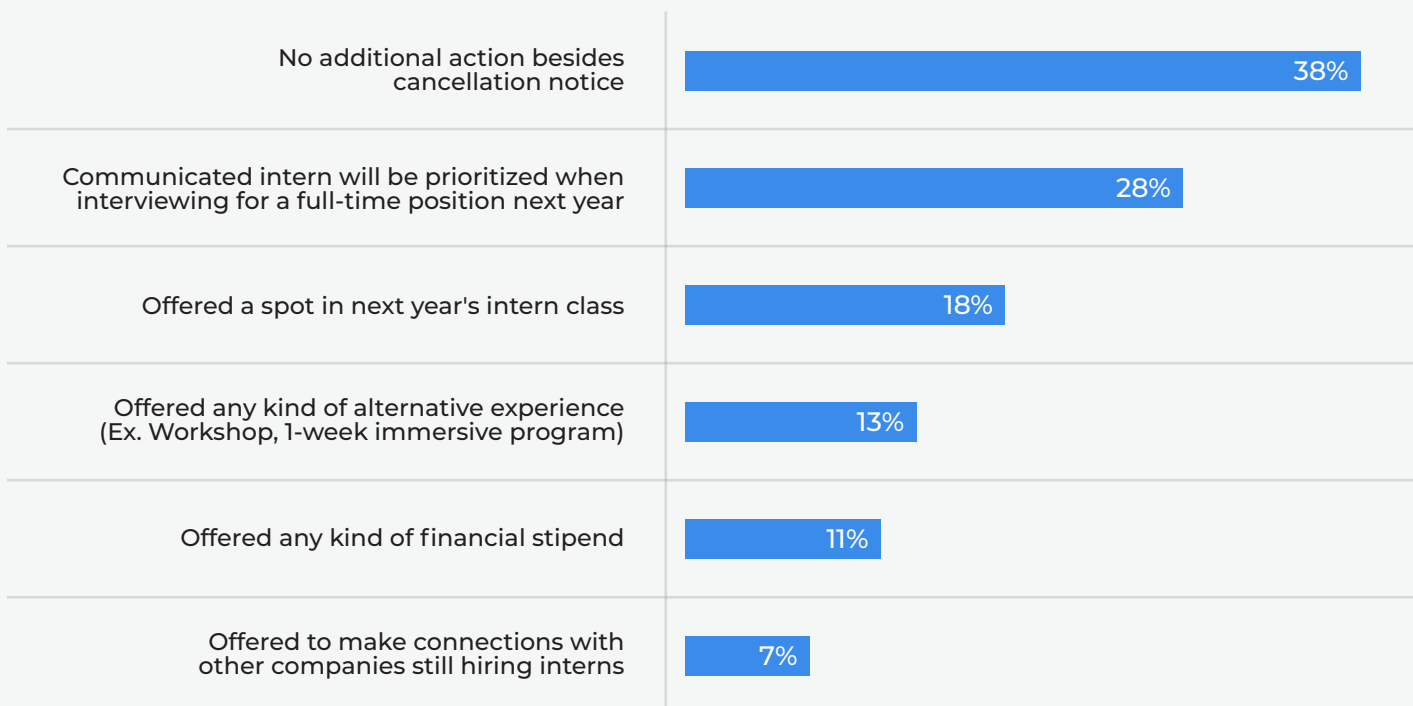
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"The company did not give any possible alternatives, solutions, or recommendations following the cancellation of their internship program, which has made my opinion of the company unfavorable."

WHAT CAME AFTER THE CANCELED PROGRAM

12% of survey respondents reported that their internships were canceled. This is what companies did next:

% OF RESPONDENTS THAT SELECTED PROVIDED OPTION



CHANGES TO SUMMER EMPLOYMENT PLANS

RESCINDED OFFERS

WHAT STUDENTS THINK

There was a significantly smaller share of students that reported a rescinded offer compared to internship cancellations. As of early April, only 4% of students, compared to 12%, reported this outcome. But students who had their offer rescinded had a much worse view of the company that rescinded their offer due to the level of long-term commitment they expected the company to have.

The negative perception was also shaped by what students viewed as a lack of assistance after a company rescinded the offer. Only 18% of respondents reported that the company made any efforts to help them find other employment, and only 11% reported that the company provided any kind of financial assistance after the offer was rescinded.

“

"This company was very considerate and caring. They explained the situation clearly, and offered a number of different resources to aid me in my job search."

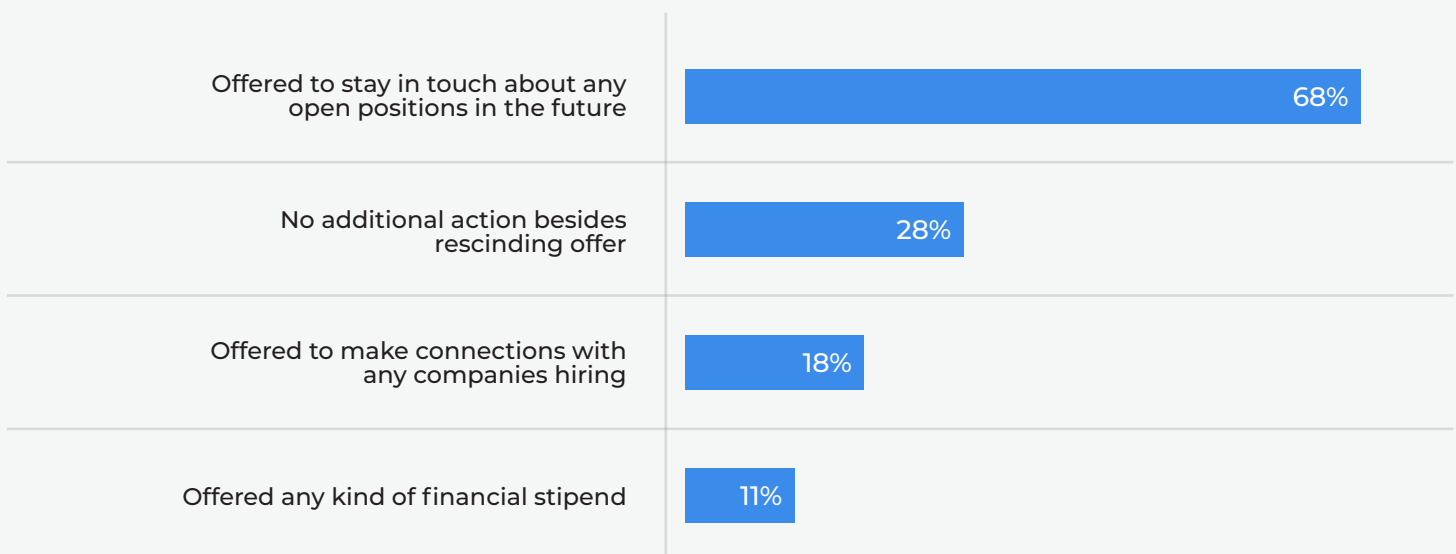
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"Leaving me with no job post-graduation in a situation like this has made me extremely stressed. I think it's holding candidates to a double standard; they're expecting you to not look for a role after you accept. Rescinding an offer is just not the kind of behavior I want from a company I would work for."

WHAT CAME AFTER THE RESCINDED OFFERS

As of early April, 4% of survey respondents said their offer was rescinded. Here's how companies handled the situation:

% OF RESPONDENTS THAT SELECTED PROVIDED OPTION



CHANGES TO SUMMER EMPLOYMENT PLANS

BRAND PERCEPTION

INFLUENCED BY ACTIONS

We asked all of the students who had accepted a job or internship offer how a company's decisions regarding their employment status in light of COVID-19 affected their overall perception of the company.

Employers that were proactive about communication and offered robust resources to aid students in next steps were viewed much more positively than companies who were sparse in their updates or provided little help after a decision was made. While this uncertain time is filled with difficult decisions, there were a number of companies that handled challenging circumstances with empathy and consideration – something that young professionals will remember as they progress through their careers.

“

"The company has kept us updated on their active efforts to help the community. **The way that they have treated all of their employees (including hourly workers, not just salaried ones) is a promising statement** for how I will be treated as an employee."

“

"Companies that canceled summer internships and full-time jobs and offered no further options or immediate compensation are terribly unprofessional. **Asking how the company responded to coronavirus will be a question everyone in this generation will ask potential employers**, and they better have an appropriate response."

	VIEW THE COMPANY IN A MORE POSITIVE LIGHT BECAUSE OF HOW THEY HANDLED THE SITUATION	PERCEPTION OF THE COMPANY HAS NOT CHANGED BASED ON HOW THEY HANDLED THE SITUATION	VIEW THE COMPANY IN A MORE NEGATIVE LIGHT BECAUSE OF HOW THEY HANDLED THE SITUATION
OVERALL	48%	43%	9%
Job or internship will move remote	62%	36%	2%
Shortened internship program	37%	47%	16%
Start date for full time role delayed	45%	51%	4%
Internship program canceled	10%	63%	27%
Job offer rescinded	6%	47%	47%

KEY TAKEAWAYS

When it comes to COVID-19, there's a lot we don't know – but our survey has uncovered some definitive themes that are shaping the early-career employment landscape right now.

1

For students, the most challenging part of finding a job during COVID-19 is knowing which companies are hiring.

The top challenge identified by student job seekers is the uncertainty surrounding company hiring status: 83% of students said that it's difficult to tell which companies are actively hiring right now. Additionally, 51% of the students that paused their job search completely did so because they believed companies of interest were not accepting applications.

2

Student job seekers are open to career paths and industries they might not have considered prior to COVID-19.

Companies that are hiring interns and entry-level employees have an incentive to advertise their openings: 72% of respondents said they are applying to jobs outside of their preferred role type, and 68% are applying to jobs outside of their preferred industry. The challenging employment landscape means that many candidates are considering opportunities that they might not have previously considered, giving stable – but perhaps less widely known – industries the chance to stand out.

3

Most employers are honoring their commitments to entry-level hires and interns.

60% of programs are set to move forward despite complications from COVID-19. While around a quarter of respondents have yet to hear from employers about the status of their program, 16% of respondents reported that their job offer had been rescinded or internship program had been canceled. From the hard numbers to the qualitative feedback, it's clear that most employers are committed to doing what's right for their interns and incoming entry-level employees. 48% of respondents said they view the company in a more positive light based on their decisions regarding employment and COVID-19, while a mere 9% of respondents viewed the company in a more negative light based on their handling of the situation. In written feedback, students made it clear that their opinions of companies were largely shaped by an employer's quality of communication surrounding their decision-making process.

LOOKING FORWARD

Landing that first job or internship is more challenging than it was a year ago – but student job seekers shouldn't give up hope. In challenging economic times, RippleMatch recognizes that it's more important than ever to connect student job seekers with the right opportunities, and we're committed to providing the resources for both students and employers to navigate the new challenges brought on by COVID-19.

RippleMatch wants to extend a sincere 'Thank You' to all students who took our survey and provided their feedback on their employment status. Stay healthy and safe during these times.



About RippleMatch

RippleMatch is college recruiting made right.

We build relationships with the best students on over 1,000 college campuses to help employers that care about building diverse, high-performing teams source the right candidates automatically.

Learn more by visiting RippleMatch.com.

SURVEY METHODOLOGY

RippleMatch surveyed 2,210 college students between April 6, 2020 and April 13, 2020. All survey respondents are confirmed users of RippleMatch and attended 367 unique colleges and universities. All respondents to this survey are slated to graduate between May 2020 and December 2021.