

COVID GENERATION

Recruitment Expectation Index

What the graduating class of 2021 wants from their first role and company out of school, and how to engage them.





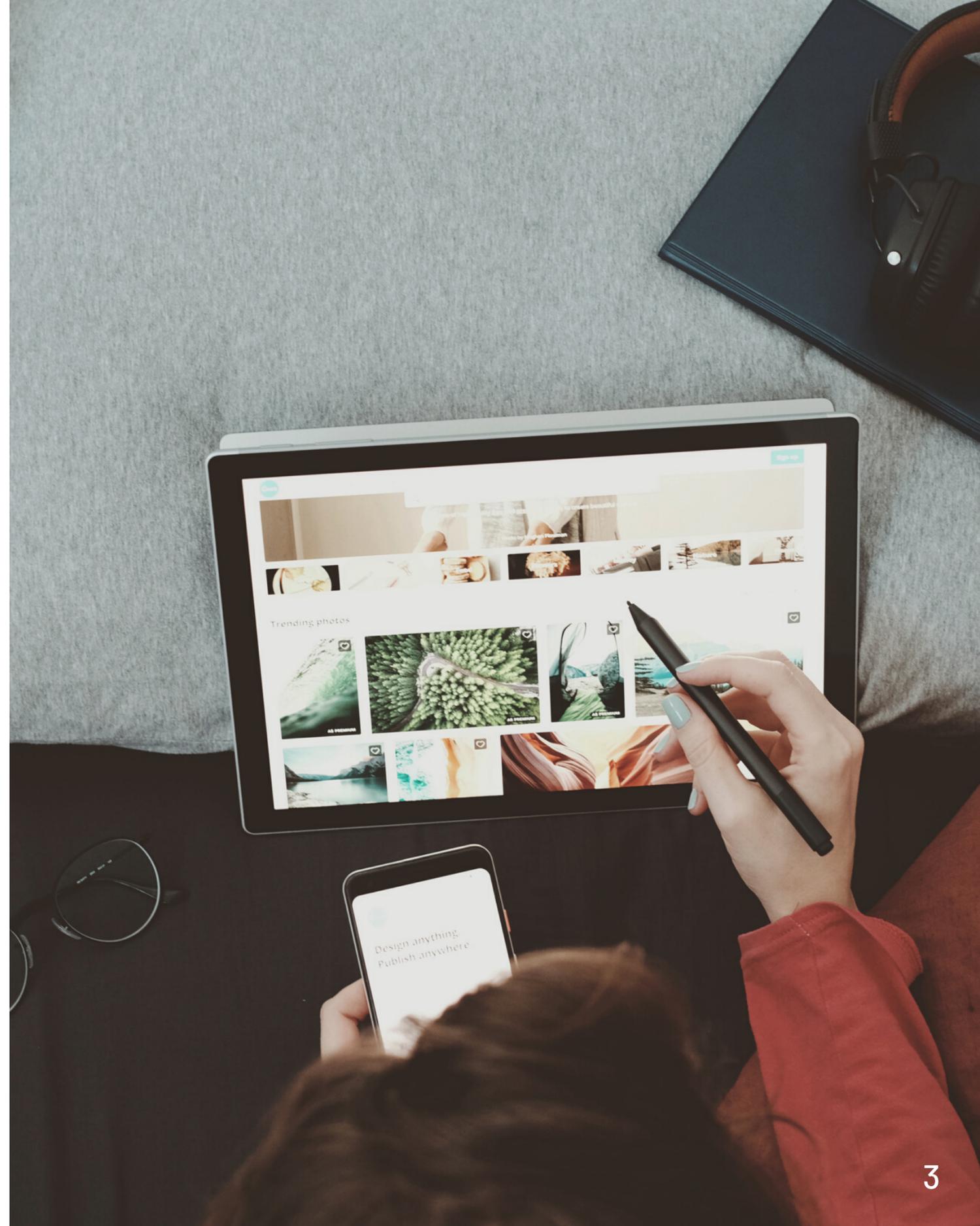
Introduction

Amid perhaps the fastest rebound in history, the class of 2021 is walking across the stage and entering the strongest jobs market we've seen in decades. After unemployment spiked from 3.5% to 14.8% just one year ago, the market has bounced back to a candidate driven and highly competitive hiring landscape with more jobs being added daily. Graduates are likely to be provided many opportunities and options throughout their job search, and as companies compete for this in-demand talent they must know what graduates are looking for in order to attract the strongest candidates.

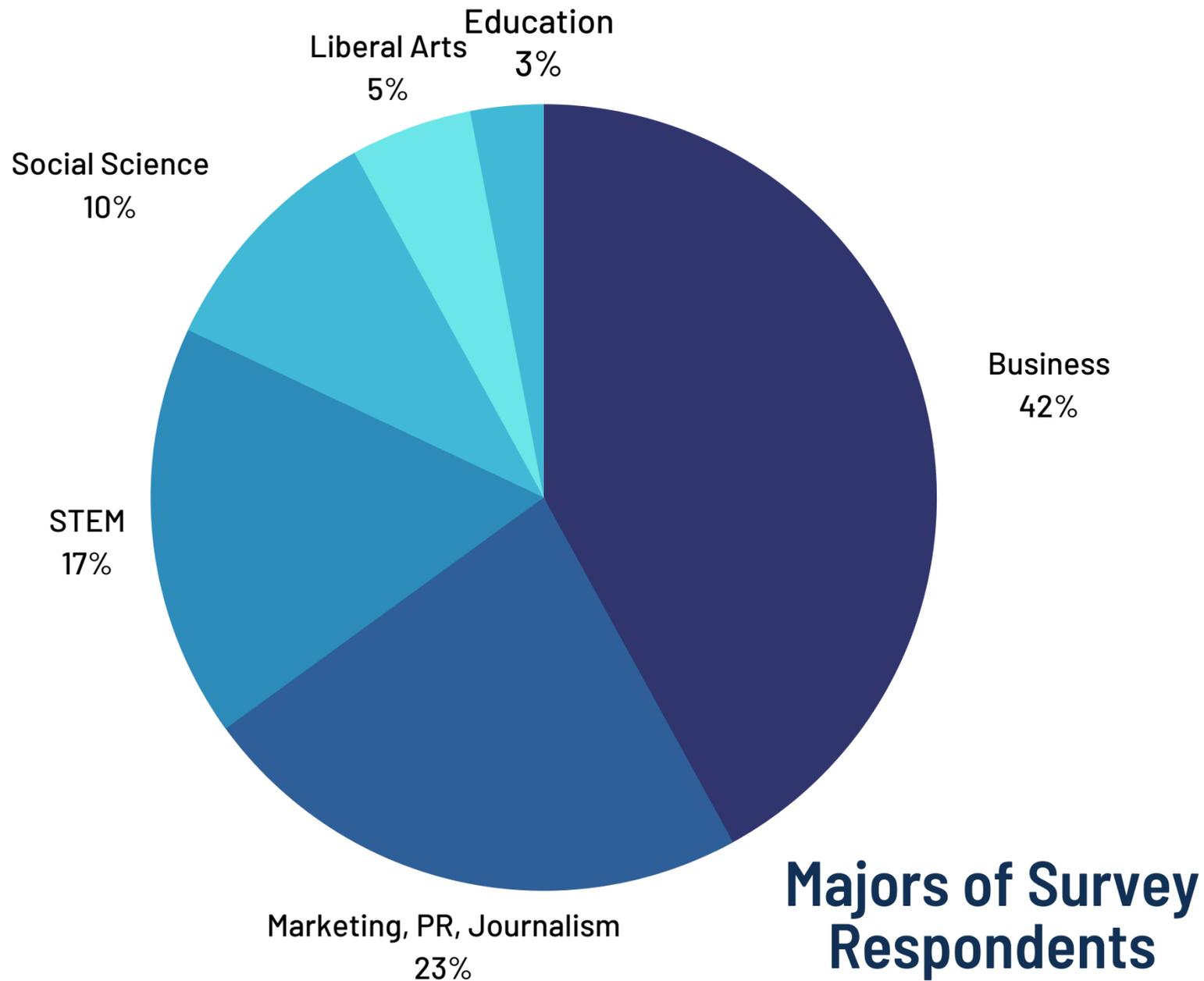
For the last six years, LaSalle Network has surveyed the graduating classes to hear what they want in their first job and company post-graduation. We surveyed more than 2,000 soon-to-be graduates in March of 2021 to learn if, and how, the pandemic has altered their job search. We have compiled that data, along with year-over-year comparison data, to help hiring companies know how to attract, recruit and retain talent from the class of 2021.

Table of Contents

Introduction	02	Compensation	11
Who is the Covid Generation?	04	Job Security	12
Employment Status	05	What do Graduates Want?	13
What Roles are Graduates Targeting?	06	Benefits	14
Where to Recruit	07	Career Advancement	16
Concerns	08	Flexibility	17
Experience	10	What Isn't Important?	19

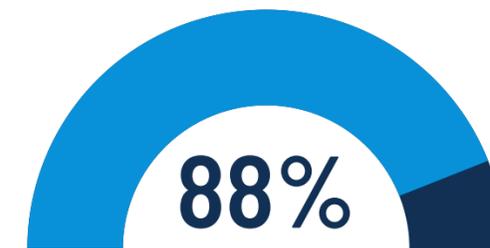


Who is the Covid Generation?



The class of 2021, whom we have nicknamed “The Covid Generation,” spent the entirety of their senior year and a portion of their junior year navigating the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

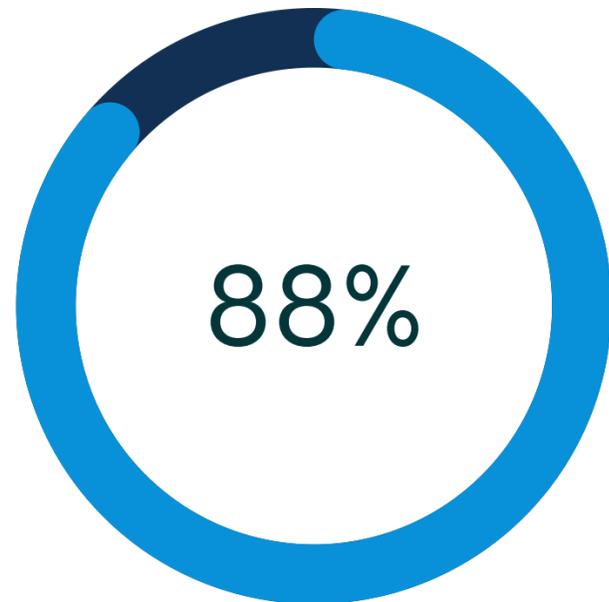
As the uncertainty of the pandemic continued throughout the year, so did their uncertainty regarding the jobs market and what opportunities it would bring post-graduation. This has impacted how 2021 graduates are searching for jobs and what they expect from their first company after graduation.



of respondents had not yet accepted their first role out of school.

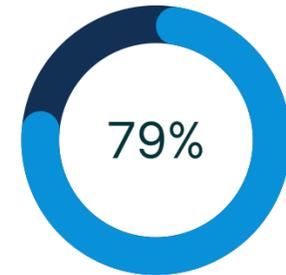
Employment Status

Talent is still available to recruit. With 88% still unemployed as their graduation date nears, companies should ramp up hiring now as to not fall behind when this valuable talent pool officially enters the market. While many are available now, they likely will not remain available for long.

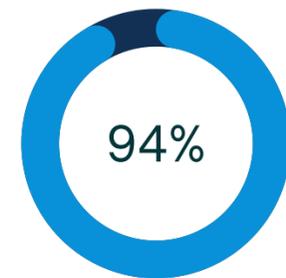


of survey respondents had not yet accepted their first role out of school

which is the highest percentage of graduates unemployed this close to graduation as we have seen in the last 5 years.



of 2021 graduates believe it will be more difficult to get a job due to the COVID-19 pandemic

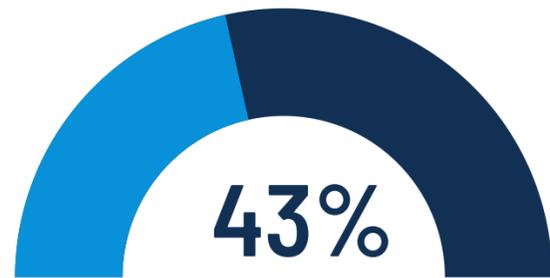


of 2020 graduates reported the same in May 2020

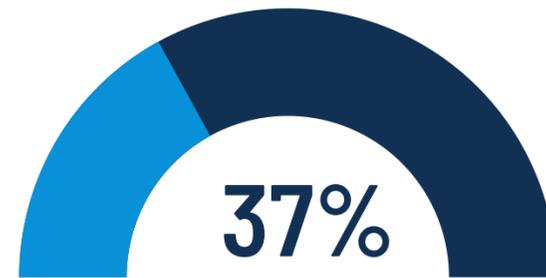
What Roles are Graduates Targeting?

Of those surveyed, here are the top targeted roles.

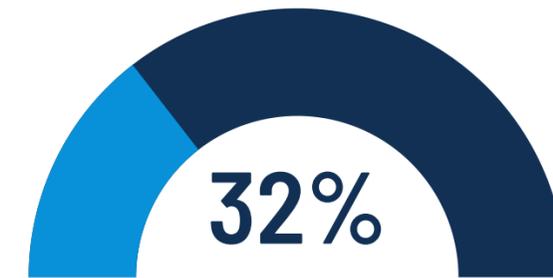
Marketing



Human Resources



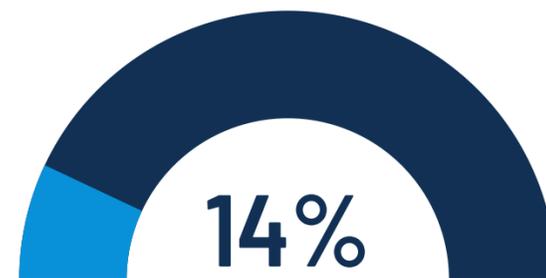
Administrative



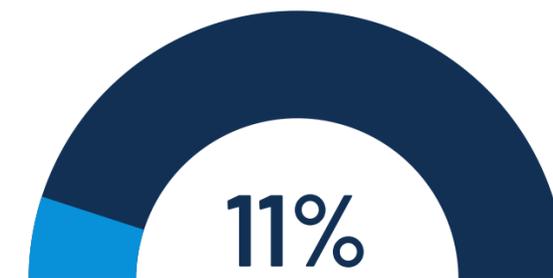
Finance



Sales



Customer Service



Where to Recruit

1

Social Media (LinkedIn, Facebook)

True to their tech-savvy nature, 2021 graduates have overwhelmingly turned to social media such as LinkedIn and Facebook for their job search. As many traditional in-person career fairs and networking events were canceled for the class of 2021, they have relied primarily on digital means of communication and networking to target for potential career opportunities.

This turn to social media as a primary means of job searching means a company's promotion of their employer brand has never been more important.

2

Job Boards (Careerbuilder, Indeed)

Key Takeaways

1

Companies looking to attract fresh talent should be aware of their online presence and what it communicates about the company and what it is like to work there. Highlighting any company accolades, the culture, or how employees are supported and recognized can help attract talent from the class of 2021.

2

Virtual career fairs and networking events have gained momentum throughout the last year and continue to be a popular option for many graduates to learn about potential industries and organizations to target in their job search. Consider participating in various school career fairs or attending virtual networking events for various industries to introduce the organization to more potential candidates.

3

Network

Concerns

1

Lack of
Experience

When asked their most pressing concerns about entering the workforce post-graduation, respondents indicated the following:

1

Lack of Experience

If looking to hire 2021 graduates, consider adjusting entry level job descriptions as to not exclude qualified candidates who may not have had the opportunity to gain professional experience via internship or part-time jobs during school. While interviewing, consider asking graduates questions about how they worked independently to develop their skills over the last year, such as taking online certification classes or skill-building courses. This can give graduates the opportunity to showcase their skills, even without the internship experience.

2

Compensation

2

Compensation

In a candidate-driven jobs market, a strong compensation package is one way employers win over talent; however, with many organizations in the midst of a financial recovery, some may not have the ability to be as competitive in compensation for entry-level employees as graduates may like.

3

Job Security

If compensation proves to be an obstacle in hiring entry-level candidates, consider what other incentives may make up for a less-than-ideal compensation offering. Investing in employee learning and development, providing growth opportunities such as mentorships and leadership courses, and cultivating a strong and supportive company culture may help attract and retain valuable talent.

Concerns

1

Lack of
Experience

2

Compensation

3

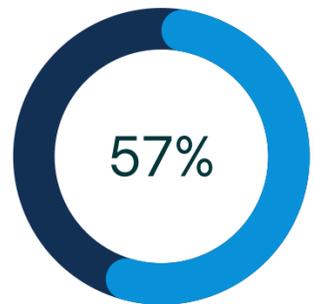
Job Security

3 Job Security

2021 graduates are likely very aware of the fluctuations within the jobs market over the last year, after seeing the class above them graduate into a recession with the highest unemployment rate in decades and potentially witnessing friends or family get laid off. Despite the recovering jobs market, many graduates may still harbor fear they will experience the same fate.

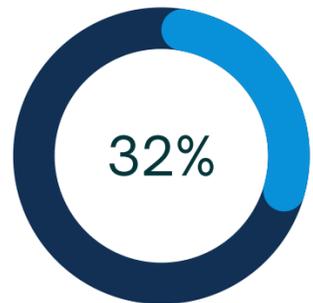
If a company had to perform layoffs last year, communicating how they have recovered and what is being done to continue that growth can help employees feel more secure. In interviews, discuss how the team has evolved over the last year, and what the vision for the future looks like.

Experience



of 2021 graduates not yet employed

marked "lack of experience" as one of their top concerns regarding entering the workforce



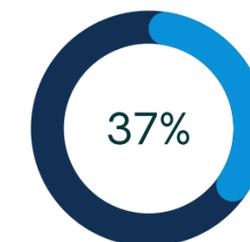
of 2021 graduates reported they had not held a single internship throughout their college career

This is nearly double the number of graduates who reported not having held an internship in 2017, 2018 and 2019. Students from the class of 2021 who waited until the latter half of their junior year or their senior year to gain internship experience may have been out of luck as many companies canceled their internships due to the pandemic and subsequent office closures.

Because many graduates did not have internships to buffer their resume, hiring managers can instead look to see additional certifications and online courses or volunteer opportunities students may have done to make up for their lack of experience. Did they lead any virtual committees or clubs, did they join new networks or associations, or did they pick up a new hobby or skill during their free time?

Key Takeaways

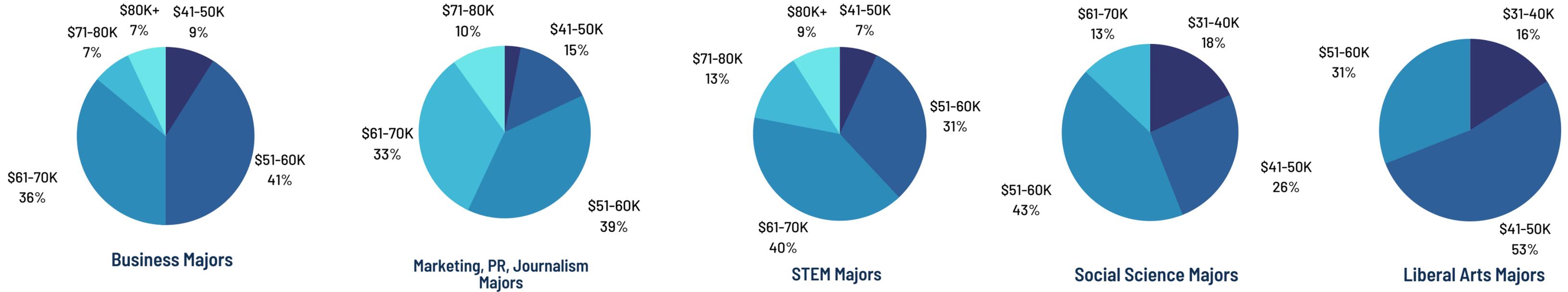
Because students had less opportunity during their college years to take on an internship, many are willing to accept an internship this summer after graduating.



of unemployed 2021 graduates reported they would be willing to take an internship this summer

Compensation

Here's what 2021 graduates are expecting for their salary in their first role out of school, broken down by major.



Key Takeaways

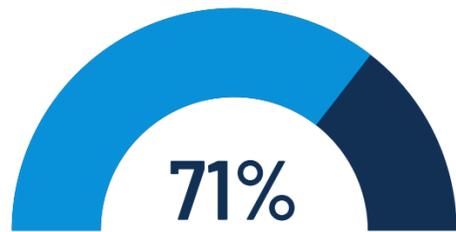
47% of those who have accepted their first role out of school were making about what they expected.

Job Security

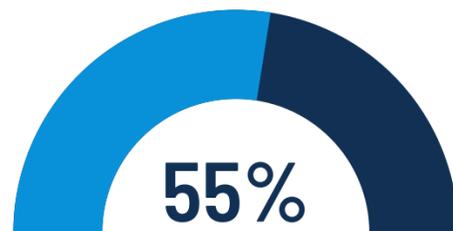
Once employed, the class of 2021 reports wanting to stay with their first company longer than prior graduates. They display a willingness to learn and a desire to contribute meaningfully to their organization long-term.

One factor that may contribute to new graduates wanting to remain at their first employer longer than in years past is due to fears regarding job security. Job security was among the top three concerns reported by respondents about entering the workforce.

2021 Graduates



2020 Graduates



plan on staying at their first company out of college for 3 or more years

Key Takeaways

- 1 The class of 2021 is looking for more than just a job, but a career they can grow within. Hiring companies may consider highlighting the development and growth opportunities an entry-level employee may have access to and discuss the career paths of certain tenured employees within the organization who started in similar roles within the organization.
- 2 Especially after a year in which many graduates watched family or friends get laid off, job security is top-of-mind. Companies may be able to help attract strong candidates by promoting their efforts to retain talent and avoid layoffs over the last year, and by showcasing how the company invests in their employees. Consider highlighting efforts to increase learning and development, mentorship, and opportunities for growth.

What do Graduates Want?

Even with the “ability to work remotely” as an option, 2021 graduates overwhelmingly value these three aspects of a company, which remain consistent over the last three years.



Company Culture

While many companies are in the process of deciding what their future workforce will look like and if it will be remote, on-site or hybrid in structure, it may be beneficial to know that this is not a deciding factor for many 2021 graduates for where they would like to work. Instead, candidates are focused overwhelmingly on the company culture, location, and benefits provided.



Location



Benefits

Key Takeaways

If planning how and when to bring employees back to the office, or considering how to structure a hybrid workforce, [download our Office Re-Entry Index here.](#)

Benefits

1

Medical Coverage

2

401(k) Match

3

Flexible Hours

Benefits were consistently reported to be among graduates' top 3 considerations while evaluating a future company for the last four years, and the top desired benefits have remained the same over the last three years of graduating classes. These include:

1 Medical Coverage

If providing medical coverage, consider if mental health resources are available as a part of your benefits offering. Of 2021 graduates who had accepted their first role out of school, 40% indicated that mental/emotional health was among their top 3 concerns about entering the workforce.

Providing mental health support may help keep employees engaged and focused at work, and could help prevent burnout. Americans over the last year have reported record-breaking levels of stress, leading to increased rates of burnout.

Employee mental health is closely tied to productivity and engagement, meaning the decline in mental health may also significantly impact a business' bottom line. Increased anxiety and depression are also correlated with increased accidents and mistakes at work.

Key Takeaways

Consider training managers to spot signs of burnout through regular wellness checks, or create employee support groups. If considering what other benefits could help support a healthy and productive workforce, LaSalle Network's sister company, LaSalle Benefits, can help. [Visit LaSalle Benefits here to learn more.](#)

Benefits

1

Medical Coverage

2

401(k) Match

3

Flexible Hours

2 401(k) Match

After the financial strain many companies endured and continue to recover from in the last year, it may or may not be possible to offer a 401(k) match. When it is possible to do so, consider this benefit as one of the first to add back in, and find additional ways to help support employees' financial wellness. This could include budgeting classes, investment opportunities, or tax preparation help.

3 Flexible Hours

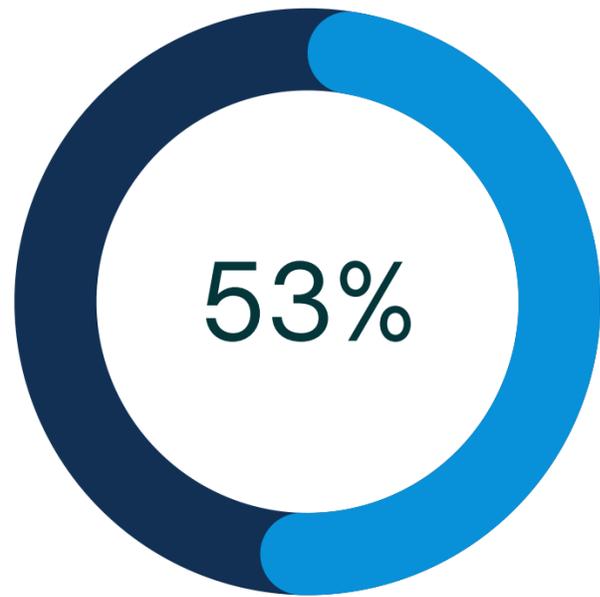
Flexible hours could mean several different things, such as adjusting the days and/or hours of work, or allowing employees to work remotely some of the time. Consider if it is possible to offer employees certain schedule options, such as coming in an hour earlier or later.

Key Takeaways

In a recent LaSalle Network report, [The Office Re-Entry Index](#), one of the top reported concerns regarding returning to an office was commuting. While some employees may be wary of utilizing public transportation to commute into an office due to the COVID-19 pandemic, flexible hours may be a good option to allow employees to commute during non-rush hour.

Career Advancement

The class of 2021 overwhelmingly is searching for growth – and fast. As compared to 41% of 2020 graduates and 24% of 2019 graduates reporting they expected a promotion within the first year...



of respondents who have not yet accepted their first role anticipate being promoted within their first year on the job

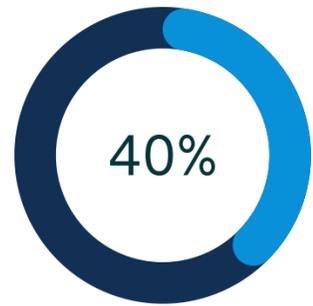
Depending on the organization, role, and candidate, promotions within the first year of an entry-level job may or may not be feasible. To continue to attract ambitious candidates, companies can highlight the ways they invest in the growth and development of their employees. Discuss in interviews what the standard procedure is for advancement within that team. While it may not come with a title change or compensation increase, employees may be able to take on new responsibilities over time or be offered additional training and development opportunities to stay engaged.

Key Takeaways

Consider discussing the career paths of successful, tenured employees. By showing how other employees have risen through the ranks and developed their own career, candidates are more likely to understand and value the opportunities available to them long-term.

Flexibility

When asked what industry and role graduates were targeting for their first job out of school, the class of 2021 was slightly less flexible than the class of 2020, yet more flexible than prior years' graduates.



2021 Graduates

reported they would consider "any industry that will hire me"

Top targeted industries by 2021 graduates include:



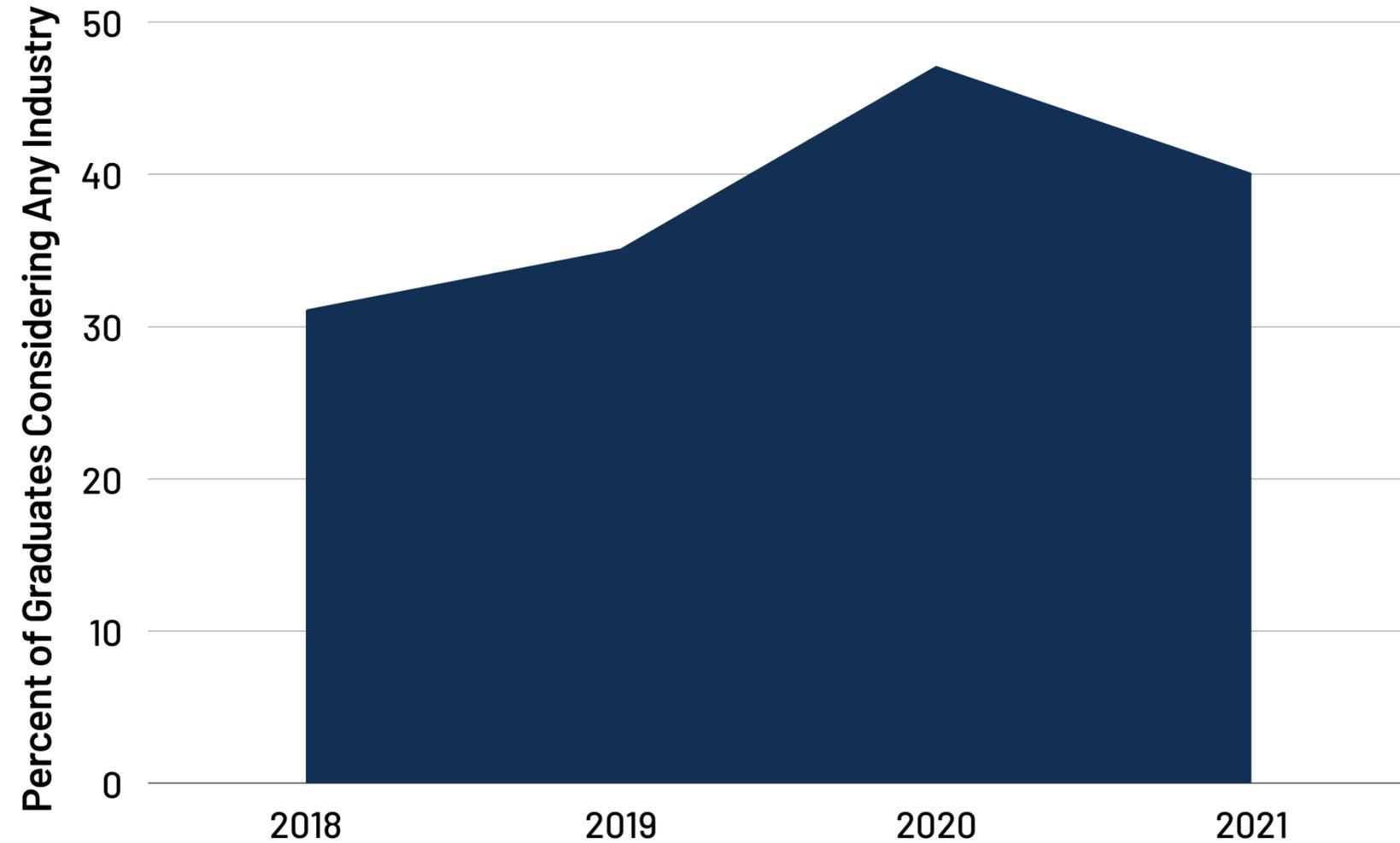
**Marketing/
Advertising**



Finance



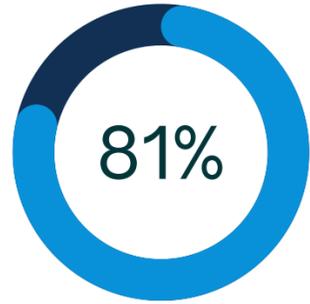
Healthcare



Key Takeaways

For companies in less in-demand industries, address hesitations regarding the industry directly. Especially if hiring within a rapidly growing industry such as technology or supply chain, communicate how this growth can present additional opportunities to a candidate that other industries may not.

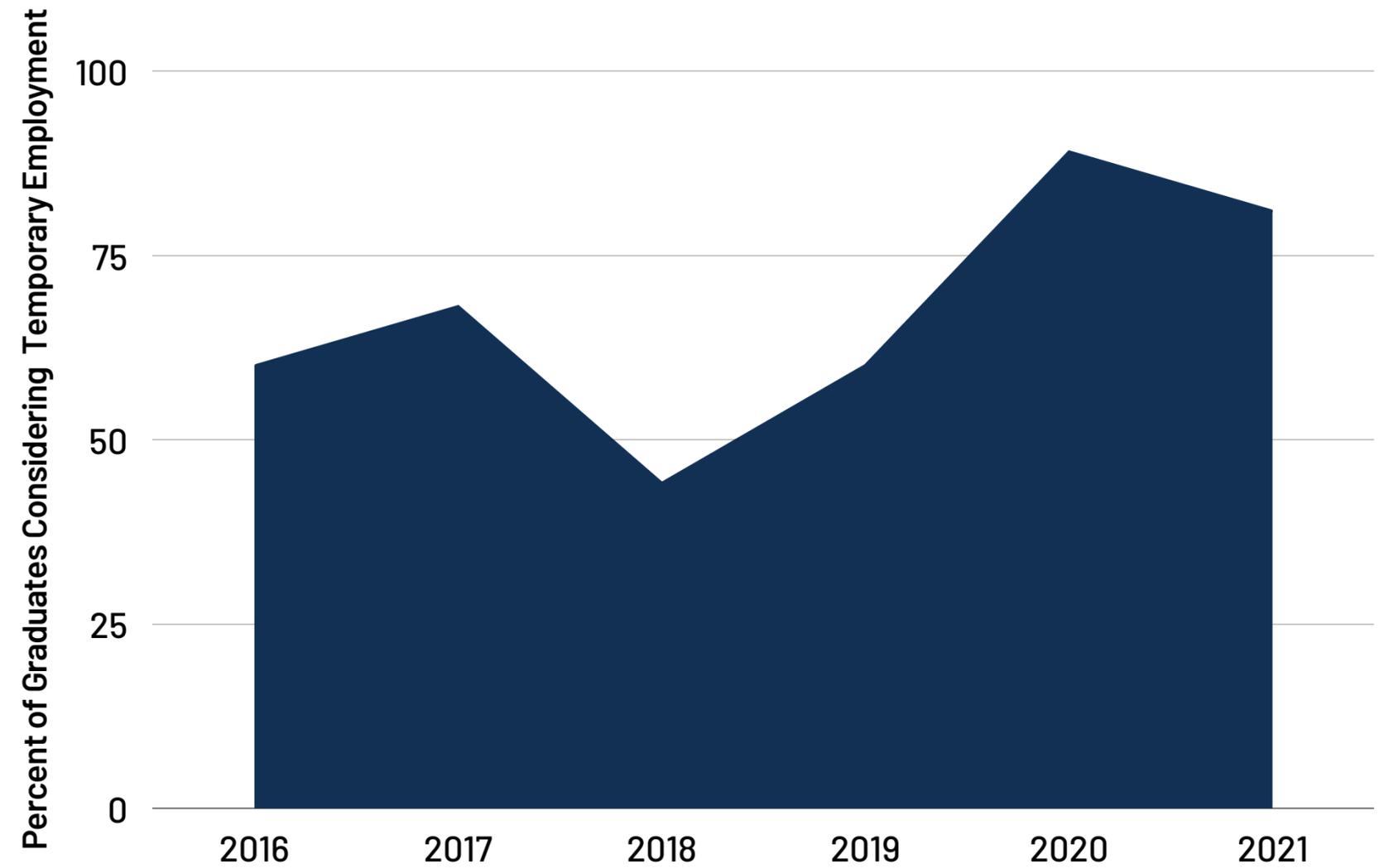
Flexibility



of 2021 graduates reported they would consider temporary or temporary-to-permanent employment

The percentage of graduates reporting they would consider temporary or temporary-to-permanent employment was on the rise for the past several years, however, that percentage took a slight dip this year.

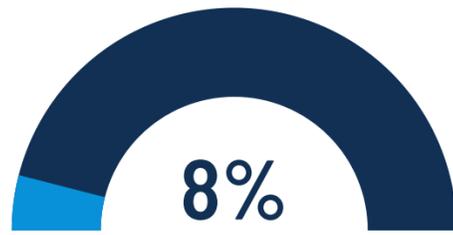
A rise in temporary employment is often an indication of an economic recovery. The labor forecast predicts a 45% increase in demand for temporary workers in 2021, and some 2021 graduates may miss out on opportunities if not considering temporary employment as an option. While it may not be as attractive to 2021 graduates, how a company speaks about the benefits of temporary employment may help influence their decision.



Key Takeaways

Consider how to communicate the benefits of a temporary role to candidates who may be targeting a direct hire opportunity. Especially for graduates who lack professional experience, a temporary role can provide a great deal of learning and development, and allows them to test out the company and role to ensure it's the right place for them.

What Isn't Important?



8%

said the option to work from home was very important

Remote Work

After a potentially very isolating year of virtual classes and social distancing, working remotely is not on 2021 graduates' minds. Only 8% of 2021 graduates responded the ability to work remotely was very important to them. However, when all 2021 graduates were asked the number of hours per week they would prefer to work remotely, if available, survey respondents reported an average of 20 hours out of a 40-hour work week.

This means the majority of 2021 graduates are not exclusively targeting remote opportunities, but if given the option, they would work from home half of the week.



10%

said student loan repayment assistance was very important

Student Loan Assistance

Throughout the last year and into the fall, government administration has placed student loans in forbearance. This may be a contributing factor to only 10% of 2021 graduates reporting student loan reimbursements to be extremely important to them while considering a future role.

As compared to prior years this number is quite low, as **23% of 2020 graduates** and **28% of 2019 graduates** reported student loan assistance to be very important.



About LaSalle

If you're looking to add 2021 graduates to your team, [get connected with us here.](#)

LaSalle Network is a national staffing, recruiting and culture firm with business units that specialize in accounting and finance, administrative, call center, healthcare revenue cycle, human resources, management resources, marketing, sales, supply chain, technology and executive search.

Each year, LaSalle Network places more than 4,000 recent college graduates at growing organizations across the country.

LaSalle's innovative approach to staffing and recruiting is designed to provide clients with quality talent who not only match the job description, but the company culture.

