

Search for success: Finding work after graduation

by Warren Clark

Postsecondary graduates may have different priorities when they start looking for that first job after graduation. The main intention of many is to find a job that helps pay off their student debt. In fact, most recent graduates say they entered their program to learn job skills and to make a good income. For some, the ideal situation might be well-paying part-time employment, which would allow them to balance the demands of work and family, or a job where they could be their own boss.

Previous research has revealed a strong relationship between field of study, students' expectations and employment outcomes. This article examines what recent graduates looked for in a job and what contributed to their success in finding that first job: special skills, job search methods, or field of study.

What's important in a job is high pay

Graduates have certain expectations of what they want in a job. For many who graduated in 1995, finding a job with high pay was the most important. On their list of criteria for selecting a job, 21% of college and 13% of bachelor's degree graduates rated high pay as number one. Job location ranked second, liking the work ranked third and having a job related to their field of study ranked fourth for both groups of graduates.

High pay and job security may be particularly important to graduates with high student loans. At the bachelor's level, those with large student loans (more than \$20,000) were more likely than graduates who did not borrow at all to consider a high-paying job as most important (18% versus 13%). College graduates, on the other hand, reported

CST 1995 graduates were least successful finding full-time work and high level jobs

Two years after graduation	Class of 1982	Class of 1986	Class of 1990	Class of 1995
Working full-time			%	
College	77	82	76	70
Bachelor's	71	73	72	66
Working full-time in high level jobs¹				
College	51	54	56	47
Bachelor's	78	77	77	73

1. Six highest categories of the Pineo-Carroll-Moore socio-economic classification of occupations including self-employed and employed professionals, semi-professionals, technicians, and senior and middle managers.

Source: Statistics Canada, National Graduates Survey, 1997.

that a job with high pay was their most important criterion regardless of the extent of their student loan indebtedness at graduation.

People at different stages in their lives and careers seek different qualities in a job. Although high pay remained the most important characteristic of a job for graduates at all ages, graduates over age 40 placed less importance on pay than those in their early 20s. Job location was very important to both college and university graduates in all age groups, though women university graduates under 40 placed a higher importance on job location than those aged 40 and over. Married women, especially those with children, placed less importance on a high-paying job than men or single women. When people have children, family-friendly job characteristics become more significant, while the importance of other job qualities may decline. For example, job location was more important to married women with children under age 5 than it was for women without children, for women with older children or for men. And while women university graduates placed almost as much importance on liking their work as they did on job location, when they had young children, the priorities changed. With men university graduates, marriage seemed to change their view of the importance of liking their work.

Single university men judged liking their work to be as important as job location, while their married counterparts placed much less importance on it. However, for college graduates, the importance of liking the kind of work they did, did not vary in the same way.

Networking most effective in finding first job

Learning about a job opening through friends, relatives, co-workers or associates was the most successful way of finding a first job. Perhaps one reason for this is that acquaintances can share information about jobs and about who is hiring. In addition, they can provide direct referrals to employers or people who know more about jobs of interest. In a sense, networking expands the circle of people helping with the job search. In a small U.S. survey, for example, referrals from current employees were considered extremely important by employers.¹ It is therefore no surprise that nearly one-third

1. In a survey of 192 employers during the summer of 1997, 77% of employers considered referrals from current employees important or extremely important in finding new employees. Richard Fein. 1998. "Traditional or Electronic Tools: How Do People Get Hired?" *Journal of Career Planning and Employment* 58, 4: 40-43.



High pay was the most important job selection criterion for 1995 graduates

	College			Bachelor's		
	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women
Criteria considered when selecting a job	(Importance score 0 to 3)					
High salary/pay	1.53	1.61	1.47	1.34	1.43	1.28
Job location	0.80	0.76	0.84	0.73	0.69	0.75
Like the kind of work	0.57	0.56	0.59	0.67	0.63	0.70
Job is in my field of study	0.45	0.47	0.44	0.52	0.45	0.56
Uses and develops my skills and abilities	0.32	0.30	0.34	0.44	0.39	0.48
Job security	0.28	0.33	0.24	0.17	0.20	0.14
Career advancement	0.27	0.36	0.21	0.37	0.45	0.32
Able to work with people	0.24	0.19	0.28	0.20	0.18	0.22
Feeling of accomplishment	0.17	0.17	0.17	0.32	0.34	0.31
Job allows flexibility	0.16	0.13	0.18	0.13	0.12	0.14
Well respected or prestigious occupation	0.10	0.11	0.09	0.07	0.08	0.07

Note: Graduates identified the three most important criteria they would consider when selecting a job. A value of 3 was assigned to criterion selected as the most important, a 2 for the second most important, a 1 for the third most important and a value of 0 for those criteria that were not in the top three. An importance score was calculated by averaging the values assigned across all graduates for each job selection criterion.

Source: Statistics Canada, National Graduates Survey, 1997.

During the summer of 1997, Statistics Canada, in partnership with Human Resources Development Canada, interviewed 43,000 people in the National Graduates Survey of 1995 Graduates (NGS). This sample represented more than 295,000 Canadians who had graduated from trade/vocational, college and university programs during 1995. Interviewers asked respondents about their education, training and labour market experiences during the two years immediately following graduation. They also asked graduates about how they found their first job after graduation, difficulties they may have had looking for a job, and what they considered important in a job.

The results presented in this article are for college graduates (graduates from publicly-funded community colleges, technical institutes, hospital schools of nursing and radiology, and similar institutions) and for graduates from bachelor's degree programs. Undergraduate certificates and diplomas, and first professional degrees (e.g., medicine, dentistry, veterinary medicine and law) are excluded from the bachelor's degree group. About 11,000 college and 11,500 bachelor's graduates were interviewed. The terms bachelor's and university are used interchangeably in the text to indicate graduates from bachelor's degree programs.

First post-graduation job: The first job graduates had after graduation. It includes jobs that may have started before graduation but continued after graduation.

Difficulty with job search tasks: Graduates indicated how difficult job-search activities for their first post-graduation job had been. On a four-point scale, responses ranged from no difficulty (0) to great difficulty (3).

of college (33%) and bachelor's (32%) graduates found their first job through friends or family.

Unsolicited calls or visits to employers helped one-sixth (17% of college and 18% of bachelor's) of graduates find their first job. A person using this method of finding work may have to make many unsuccessful calls or visits before finding a job. It needs high motivation and good interpersonal skills, but cold-calls made to the right person at the right time are likely to turn up jobs listed nowhere else.²

Many people start their job search by looking through want ads because it is easy to do and newspapers contain lists of specific openings that are frequently updated. However, the wide circulation of newspapers ensures much competition. Moreover, some sources say that over 80% of job openings are not advertised in newspapers.³ According to the 1997 NGS, only about one in seven (14%) graduates found their first job after graduation through newspaper ads.

Previous employers may be a valuable source of information about new jobs. About 10% of graduates found their first job through this method. Although campus placement offices are often valuable sources of career information, only about 9% of graduates found their first job using them. Even fewer (3% of college and 4% of bachelor's) found their first job with the help of public or private employment agencies and less than 1% via the Internet.⁴

Many graduates experienced trouble in their job search

Searching for employment after graduation involves a lot of hard work for most new graduates. About one-quarter of college and bachelor's graduates had great difficulty finding a first job that paid enough, while one-third of bachelor's and one-quarter of college graduates had great difficulty finding one related to their field of study.⁵

One-sixth of graduates also had problems finding a job in the location of their choice. Newfoundland graduates had the most trouble, with 38% of college and 30% of bachelor's graduates experiencing great difficulty finding a job in the right location. In the other Atlantic provinces, about 24% of college and between 22% and 26% of bachelor's graduates had similar trouble. In contrast, only in Alberta and British Columbia did less than 15% of college and bachelor's graduates report great difficulty finding work in a place where they wanted to live.

Uncertainty about long-term goals can hamper a job search, and many university graduates — particularly in the humanities and social sciences — had trouble deciding what they wanted to do after graduation. Fourteen percent of bachelor's graduates reported having great difficulty making up their minds compared with 7% of college graduates. And the younger these graduates were, the higher their level of indecision.

The actual leg work involved in finding job openings was very difficult for about 7% of graduates. Although job interviews can be a problem for new job seekers, 51% of college and 45% of bachelor's graduates reported having no trouble in doing well during interviews for their first job. Most college (69%) and bachelor's (61%) graduates had no difficulty writing résumés and letters of introduction, or completing job applications.

Age played a role in the problems encountered in the job search. Generally older graduates (over age 30) had less difficulty finding job openings than younger graduates (under age 22). Graduates of all ages reported finding a job that paid enough among their most difficult tasks, but older bachelor's graduates found it easier than young bachelor's graduates. In contrast, college graduates of all ages reported the same degree of difficulty in finding a well-paying job.

Graduates in some fields had a much less difficult job search experience than others; the health professions, sciences and technologies field was one of these. Many health-related fields have restrictive entrance requirements with very limited numbers of spaces, thereby controlling the number of graduates entering the labour market. Bachelor's graduates from these fields had the least trouble of all university graduates deciding what they wanted to be, knowing how to find jobs, finding jobs related to their field of study and finding a job that paid enough. For them, finding a job in the desired location was the hardest task, although still less difficult than for other fields. College graduates from health-related fields enjoyed similar experiences but also had more difficulty than other college graduates finding a job where they wanted to live.

Previous work experience most useful in finding a job

In 1995, 17% of college and 7% of bachelor's graduates had completed their studies through a co-op program. About half of the college and two-thirds of the bachelor's co-op

graduates said that their co-op experience was helpful in finding a job after graduation. Even more graduates indicated that previous work experience had been helpful. Although over 80% of graduates had participated in career counselling or job search courses, only about 18% of college and 13% of university participants found them useful in finding a job.

Volunteering helps some find employment

Some graduates found their way into the paid workforce through volunteer activities. During the two years after graduation (1995 to 1997), about 54% of bachelor's and 39% of college graduates had done volunteer work, although women were more likely to do so than men. Over half of the volunteers reported that their volunteer activities were related to their field of study. About 39% of both college and bachelor's volunteers felt their activities had helped a great deal in developing positive work attitudes and about one third indicated they had helped greatly in developing work skills. About 13% of college and 18% of bachelor's volunteers indicated that these activities were a great help in finding a job. However, volunteers were less likely to be working full-time in June 1997 than those who did not volunteer; perhaps some graduates hoped to obtain work experience through volunteering if their employment prospects were not promising.

Bachelor's graduates had more difficulty deciding what to do after graduation than college graduates

CST

Over one in four graduates reported great difficulty in finding a well-paying job

	College	Bachelor's
	%	
Finding a job that paid enough	28	27
Finding a job related to my field of study	25	33
Finding a job where I wanted to live	17	16
Knowing how to find job openings	7	8
Deciding what I wanted to be	7	14
Performing well in job interviews	2	2
Completing job applications, writing résumés or letters of introduction	1	1

Source: Statistics Canada, National Graduates Survey, 1997.

- Wagner, Judith O. 1992. "Job Search Methods." *ERIC Digest No. 121*, ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult, Career, and Vocational Education. Columbus.
- Student Employment Network. 1999. *The 1999 Canada Student Employment Guide*. Toronto, p.31.
- Although the Internet now provides numerous resources to post job openings and résumés, it was still in its infancy when 1995 graduates were seeking their first jobs.
- Bachelor's graduates from the humanities and related fields, social sciences, agriculture and biological sciences and technologies had the greatest difficulty in finding a job related to their education.

The first post-graduation job

By the time the class of 1995 was interviewed in June 1997, 95% had found their first post-graduation job. On average they had held 2.1 jobs between graduation and June 1997, but one in sixteen had held five or more jobs. Young workers typically show their quest for a good career with frequent job moves, while more experienced graduates move less often.⁶ Graduates aged 20 or 21 went through 2.3 jobs on average; 7% had had five or more jobs. Meanwhile those aged 40 and over had had about 1.5 jobs, with only 2% reporting five or more jobs in the previous two years.

Graduates who accepted their first job because it was the only one they could find tended to stay in that job for a period averaging 21 or 22 months. In contrast, first jobs selected for other reasons (better pay, more opportunities for advancement, curiosity about the work) lasted an average of 31 or 32 months.

Some graduates began their first post-graduation job long before they graduated, and in some cases before they began their program: 6% of college and 8% of bachelor's graduates had been working at their first post-graduation job for five or more years before they graduated. About one-third of bachelor's graduates in this group were over age 30 working full-time in professional, semi-professional, senior or middle

management, or technician jobs while pursuing part-time studies. Another 39% were under age 30 working as semi-skilled or unskilled labourers. About 29% of college graduates who started five years or more before graduation were in high level jobs.

Other graduates started working while they were at university or college. Among graduates with jobs that began one to four years before graduation (early starters), over half were in clerical, sales and service occupations: in other words, the type of part-time jobs that many students use to

help finance their education. In contrast, graduates starting their first post-graduation job after graduating were more likely to be in professional or technical jobs. Early starters were more likely to stay in the same job than gradu-

ates who started to work after graduation. In fact, more than 70% of early starters had the same job one year after graduation, but only 47% of bachelor's and 52% of college graduates who had started their first job within three months of graduation were still in that job 12 months later.

Summary

Many colleges and universities now offer job search seminars and workshops to help students find employment. These activities seem to have paid off in that the class of

Graduates who accepted their first job because it was the only one they could find stayed in that job an average of 21 or 22 months

CST

Over half of 1995 graduates began their first job within three months of graduation

	College			Bachelor's		
	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women
First post-graduation job began...	%					
5 or more years before graduation	6	5	6	8	6	9
1 to 4 years before graduation	12	11	13	13	12	13
Less than 1 year before graduation	9	9	9	9	10	9
Less than 3 months after graduation	32	33	31	27	29	26
3 to 5 months after graduation	11	11	11	14	14	14
6 to 11 months after graduation	10	10	10	9	9	9
12 to 23 months after graduation	12	14	11	13	13	13
2 or more years after graduation	3	3	3	3	3	3
No job yet as of June 1997	6	5	6	5	5	6

Source: Statistics Canada, National Graduates Survey, 1997.

1995 had little difficulty filling out job applications, writing résumés and letters of introduction. But few found their first job with the help of career counselling; in fact, networking with friends, family members and acquaintances remains the most successful method of finding a first post-graduation job. For graduates in both college and university, high pay was the single most important criterion for choosing a job. Many found a first job in a professional or technical occupation, but turnover was high. Those who had started their first job back in the days when they were still in school were least likely to leave it, while more recent job starters were more keen to switch. Both college and bachelor's graduates experienced the greatest difficulty in finding work that paid enough.

6. Lankard Brown, Bettina. 1998. *Career Mobility: A Choice or Necessity?* ERIC Digest No. 191, ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult, Career and Vocational Education.



Warren Clark is an analyst with Housing, Family and Social Statistics Division, Statistics Canada.

Do you enjoy reading

CANADIAN SOCIAL TRENDS?

Do you use our publication in your business?
How long have you been a reader?

WE WOULD LIKE TO HEAR FROM YOU.



Send your comments to:

Editor-in-Chief,
CANADIAN SOCIAL TRENDS,
7th floor, Jean Talon Bldg.,
Statistics Canada, Ottawa, Ontario,
K1A 0T6.
FAX number (613) 951-0387.
Internet e-mail: cstsc@statcan.ca.

Need more information
from Statistics Canada?



Call our **NATIONAL ENQUIRIES LINE:**
1-800-263-1136

To order publications,
NATIONAL ORDER LINE: 1-800-267-6677
INTERNET: order@statcan.ca
National TDD Line: 1-800-363-7629

STATISTICS CANADA HAS 9 REGIONAL REFERENCE CENTRES TO SERVE YOU:

Newfoundland, Labrador
Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island
Halifax, Nova Scotia – (902) 426-5331
Fax number (902) 426-9538
Quebec and Territory of Nunavut
Montreal, Quebec – (514) 283-5725
Fax number (514) 283-9350
Ontario
Toronto, Ontario – (416) 973-6586
Fax number (416) 973-7475
Manitoba
Winnipeg, Manitoba – (204) 983-4020
Fax number (204) 983-7543
Saskatchewan
Regina, Saskatchewan – (306) 780-5405
Fax number (306) 780-5403
Alberta and Northwest Territories
Edmonton, Alberta – (780) 495-3027
Fax number (780) 495-5318
Southern Alberta
Calgary, Alberta – (403) 292-6717
Fax number (403) 292-4958
British Columbia and Yukon
Vancouver, British Columbia – (604) 666-3691
Fax number (604) 666-4863
National Capital Region
(613) 951-8116
Fax number (613) 951-0581

STANDARDS OF SERVICE TO THE PUBLIC

To maintain quality service to the public, Statistics Canada follows established standards covering statistical products and services, delivery of statistical information, cost-recovered services and service to respondents. To obtain a copy of these service standards, please contact your nearest Statistics Canada Regional Reference Centre.

If You're On the Move...

Make sure we know where to find you by filling out the inserted reply card in this publication. If the reply card is no longer attached, please forward the necessary information (subscriber's name, old address, new address, telephone number and client reference number) to:

**Operations and Integration Division
Circulation Management
Statistics Canada
120 Parkdale Avenue
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0T6**



We require six weeks advance notice to ensure uninterrupted delivery, so please keep us informed when you're on the move!



Over one in ten children now have asthma

In 1978/79, less than 3% of children under age 15, or about 141,000, were reported to have asthma. By 1994/95, the proportion had risen to 11%, or about 672,000 children. Asthma is more common among boys than girls. In 1978/79, just over 3% of boys under 15 had asthma compared with under 2% of girls; in 1994/95, asthma was reported for 13% of boys and 9% of girls. Children in both lower- and higher-income households had a significantly higher prevalence of asthma than those in middle-income households, although children in lower-income households were most likely to have had a recent attack. Asthma is one of the most common causes of hospitalization among children; in 1994/95, over 4,300 out of every 100,000 children diagnosed with asthma had spent some time in hospital because of the disease.

Health Reports

Winter 1998, Vol. 10, no. 3
 Statistics Canada
 Catalogue no. 82-003-XPB or
 Internet product 82-003-XIE



Charitable donations up even though donors down

For most of the 1990s, the number of taxfilers reporting charitable donations and the value of their donations have remained fairly stable, at around 5.4 million donors and \$3.5 billion. But in 1997, fewer

than 5.3 million taxfilers reported charitable deductions of \$4.3 billion on their 1997 personal income tax returns. The 3% decline in the number of donors was the largest this decade, while the 6% increase in donations was the second highest. Part of the increase in donations in 1997 could be due to the new, higher maximum deduction limit (75% of net income, up from 50%) allowed by Revenue Canada as of the 1997 tax year. The median charitable donation in Canada was \$170. The highest median provincial donation was \$270 (Newfoundland) and the lowest was \$100 (Quebec).

Client Services

Small Area and Administrative
 Data Division
 (613) 951-9720



Hours of television viewing still declining

In the last decade, there has been a small but steady decline in the number of hours Canadians spend watching television, from 23.5 hours each week in 1988 to 22.7 hours in 1997. The only exception to this trend was in 1995, when new specialty cable services were introduced, and viewing hours rose by about half an hour before resuming their decline. Viewing habits are also different between linguistic groups: in 1997, francophones spent more than 66% of their viewing time watching Canadian programs, compared with only 30% of anglophone viewers. Francophones were more likely to watch news and public affairs programs (29% versus 22% of

anglophones) and variety and game shows (15% and 9%). Anglophones were more likely to watch comedy (14% versus 9%) and sports (9% and 6%). Both francophones and anglophones spent under one-third of their viewing time (30%) watching dramas.

Culture Statistics Program

Culture, Tourism and Centre for
 Education Statistics
 (613) 951-3136



Direct sales approach losing steam

In 1997, Canadians bought \$3.4 billion worth of goods from direct sellers, up a marginal 0.3% from 1996. By contrast, in-store retail sales (excluding the auto sector) increased almost 6%. The value of personal sales, such as group demonstrations at house parties, increased 3% in 1997, while sales by mail or telephone declined almost 1%. The biggest sales increases were recorded for newspapers (7%) and cosmetics (6%), while sales declined for books and encyclopedias (-7%) and audio tapes, compact discs and equipment (-9%).

Client Services

Distributive Trades Division
 (613) 951-3549



Cases in adult criminal court decline slightly

In 1997/98, adult criminal courts in nine reporting jurisdictions (about 80% of the national caseload) handled

over 411,500 cases, over a 1% drop from the previous year. Almost two-thirds (63%) of the accused who appeared were between the ages of 18 and 34, although this age group makes up only one-third (33%) of the adult population overall. The most common offence dealt with was impaired driving (15% of all offences), followed by common assault (12%). Convictions for at least one charge in each case were secured for 6 out of every 10 cases. Convictions jumped to 76% for cases involving Criminal Code traffic offences.

Juristat

Vol. 18, no. 14
 Statistics Canada
 Catalogue no. 85-002-XPE or
 Internet product 85-002-XIE



Spending almost the same in 1997 as previous year

The average household spent an estimated \$49,950 in 1997, virtually unchanged from 1996. Personal income taxes still made up the largest share of household spending, at 21 cents of every dollar. The next highest expenses were shelter (20 cents) and food (11 cents). On average, the one-fifth (quintile) of households with the lowest incomes spent \$16,700, compared with \$97,930 for the quintile with the highest incomes. After adjusting for differences in household size, the average expenditure per person was \$10,250 in the lowest income quintile and \$28,800 in the highest quintile.

Client Services

Income Statistics Division
 (613) 951-7355