

University grad hiring up for second year, to 63%

Kyodo

A little more than 63 percent of university students who will graduate next spring had landed a job offer as of Oct. 1, up 3.2 percentage points from a year earlier, a government survey released Tuesday shows.

It was the second rise in two years and possibly signals a recovery from the low point following the 2008 global financial crisis.

But the figure of 63.1 percent is still more than 6 percentage points lower than in 2007, with about 157,000 prospective graduates believed to be still without job offers, according to the joint survey by the education and labor ministries.

The survey is designed to estimate employment prospects for the roughly 425,000 students hoping to get jobs after graduating. It polled students at 62 universities.

"Job offers at major firms have been rising. With the number of openings bottoming out at small to medium-size firms, there is more hiring appetite," an official with the major employment service Recruit Holdings Co. said.

A survey by the private research company Recruit Work Institute shows that the number of job offers grew 3.6 percent from a year ago among companies with at least 5,000 employees and 2.2 percent among firms employing 1,000 to 4,999 people.

"Recruitment by small to medium-size firms will move into full swing. But the situation is unpredictable, with uncertainties surrounding the economic outlook," a labor ministry official said.

A 23-year-old male senior studying economics at Chuo University said he has offers from four companies, including his first-choice firm.

"All my friends have secured job offers. I felt that job hunting was a lot easier than what I heard from my seniors," he said.

But not everyone has had such a positive experience.

"I don't feel myself that the percentage of students securing job offers has gone up," said a 24-year-old graduate student at Nihon University who attended a job fair in Tokyo earlier this month. He said he had attended briefings with more than 20 companies but had yet to land an offer.

"Students at top schools are faring well, but those in the rest of the pack are struggling," said an official in charge of job placement at a private university in Tokyo.

"The situation is tough due partly to the worsening of Sino-Japanese relations," said an official with a steel-related small enterprise in Chiba Prefecture. "The priority for companies is to keep going rather than to hire new graduates."

The percentage of high school students who had secured employment offers as of the end of September declined 0.5 percentage point to 41.0 percent from a year earlier, according to the government survey.

Job openings for high school graduates grew 13.3 percent to about 182,000.

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