

# Unprecedented growth in the college labor market

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For the ninth year in a row, the job market for college graduates is booming, according to Michigan State University's Recruiting Trends, the largest annual survey of employers in the nation.

In fact, employers who took the survey expressed the highest level of optimism in the labor market since the late 1990s. In total, they plan to hire nearly 63,500 new graduates this year.

This comes as the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reported 7.1 million job openings, a record number.

"We've never witnessed such a stretch in the 48 years of this report," said Phil Gardner, survey author and director of MSU's Collegiate Employment Research Institute. "The good news is the pace of growth has slowed down so we can sustain it."

The last few years, hiring has been up 15 to 20 percent consecutively, creating more [jobs](#) than candidates available. In 2018-19, hiring is expected to increase by a manageable 9 percent.

Growth is strongest in the following industries: construction; professional, business and scientific services; real estate and leasing; transportation; retail trade; educational services; and health services.

Recruiting Trends 2018-19 summarizes data from 3,300 employers from every major industrial sector in every state.

Other key findings from the report:

- When examined by degree level, growth at the bachelor's level is 8.5 percent, 17 percent for the associate's level and 13 percent for master's of business administration.
- Small companies (those with fewer than 500 employees) are recruiting more actively than large companies, with graduates preferring small companies. Small companies are poised to add nearly 25 percent more new college grads than last year.
- Employers are spending more on healthcare for their employees, rather than increasing salaries.
- Skilled trades are the hardest to fill. Companies in nursing, engineering and construction find it most difficult to hire employees.
- There is a lack of "soft skills" among graduates, especially the ability to work across different functional areas and with diverse personalities.
- Internships are key, and employers prefer to hire those with professional experience.

Gardner said while the [job market](#) is strong, graduates need to be ready.

"Students: This is really good for you," he said. "But you need to be prepared to engage employers with the right skills and experiences. Otherwise, preferred employers will pass you up."

**More information:** [www.ceri.msu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2018-19-Part-I.pdf](http://www.ceri.msu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2018-19-Part-I.pdf)

Provided by Michigan State University

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