

### Media Coverage

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Career: Sectors Creating Jobs

# Dust Off Your CV. They're Hiring

Demand spurt in some sectors throws open employment opportunities in large scale but the post-Covid world needs special skill to secure jobs

**Lola Nayar**

It's been 15 long months of uncertainty for students at all levels, particularly those completing their higher education – whether certification, diploma or degrees – and preparing to enter the job market amid the looming fear of a possible third wave of Covid. Will we get the job of our choice? The question is writ large on every face. There is no easy answer, too. Yet, all is not dismal, as jobs are on offer in many of the sectors that are looking up.

MercerMettl, a global leader in talent assessments, in its 'The State of Talent Acquisition Report 2021' states that although job cuts and rising unemployment rates were reported in 2020, the data looks promising on the hiring front in 2021. Recruitment managers are optimistic about returning to the pre-pandemic hiring levels in 2021. This outlook gains more credibility as nearly 60 per cent of companies surveyed said they were looking to hire talent for new positions.

RP Yadav, Chairman and Managing Director of Genius Consultants Ltd, which provides staffing solutions to scores of multinationals, says the job market is definitely moving upwards since June 10 when unlocking began and economic activities started reviving, though unemployment would be around 9 per cent. "In industries that are doing well, there are large employment demands like in the healthcare, pharmaceuticals, e-commerce, retail, telecom, IT and logistics. Sectors like manufacturing, consumer products, and infrastructure are still to gather pace. On the other hand, all tourism-related services, mass transportation and entertainment industries, including cinema halls, continue to be in bad shape," Yadav says.

Wage trends are industry specific. The sectors that are seeing a spurt in demand and grappling with a shortage of manpower have thrown up a trend of higher wages being offered while

## 'The Brunt is Worse for Women'

Job portals see a rise in postings from micro and small businesses in select sectors. In an interaction with Lola Nayar, **Sabina Dewan**, President and Executive Director of JustJobs Network, and Senior Visiting Fellow at the Centre for Policy Research, shares her views on the emerging trends in the job market. Excerpts from the discussion:

**What are the current trends in the post-Covid job market?**

The pandemic has no doubt wreaked havoc on livelihoods. The unemployment rate has gone up from 7.6 per cent in the last quarter of 2019 to 8.75 per cent in 2020. CMIE recorded unemployment to be 9.3 per cent at the end of the first quarter this year.

And unemployment doesn't reflect those that drop out of the labour force altogether. Anecdotal evidence suggests that some of those who have lost formal sector jobs are entering into informal work arrangements – doing whatever they can to make ends meet. Others, unable to find work, are leaving the labour force. The latter is especially true of women. Covid has made already scarce opportunities for women even more



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scouting for talent. But in those yet to step out of the Covid blues like aviation and hospitality, wage slabs have fallen, says Yadav.

The pandemic has also brought about many changes in the jobs scenario. For one, it has shifted the entire fresher hiring process from the campus to the virtual world, points out Sushant Dwivedy, Managing Director for businesses in India and the Philippines at SHL. Apart from conventional skill sets for all job functions, "companies are now looking for agile and reliable freshers who are self-learners, have strong work ethics and have the ability to adapt to changing situations", says Dwivedy, referring to survey responses from a large number of companies. "Soft skills indicative of remote work success are an important part of the recruitment criteria."

The largest hiring market in India continues to be driven by technology and IT services, as they are the highest demand creators. Latest Naukri JobSpeak Trends reveal that the IT-software sector continued its recent surge of 14 per cent sequential growth in May 2021 to record a further 5 per cent hike in the following month. "It remains the key performer in

terms of hiring activity, achieving an all-time high growth of 52 per cent, as compared to the pre-Covid levels of June 2019," states Pawan Goyal, Chief Business Officer at Naukri.com, one of the major placement companies in the country.

Goyal says hiring has also picked up significantly in the hotels/restaurants/airlines/travel (more than 87 per cent) and retail (over 57 per cent) sectors between May and June 2021 after the authorities relaxed pandemic-induced restrictions on movement. Sectors such as insurance, banking and financial services, and pharma and biotech have shown recovery from their recent slump with more than 38 per cent, 29 per cent and 22 per cent growth, respectively.

As far as cities are concerned, hiring activity in Tier-II cities was higher than in the metros with an average growth of 23 per cent and 15 per cent.

Highest growth of roles is seen in marketing, advertising, medical representatives and public relations at well over 39 per cent, sales and business development at 32 per cent, human resource and administration at over 31 per cent and banking

scarce. This is driving the low female labour force participation rate even lower. And none of this reveals the severe effects on the informal sector, including the destruction of livelihoods.

#### Which are the sectors where jobs are opening up and offering growth prospects?

The Monster Employment Index recorded a 4 per cent rise in overall job postings in May 2021, relative to the same time last year. The authors of the report claim that this is because companies have turned better at adjusting to the changes imposed by the pandemic.

But two caveats are important to keep in mind. First, those posting on a site such as Monster.com are businesses that are aware of, and know how to use, the online job portal. These are usually registered, organised, bigger businesses that also have a better capacity to withstand the crisis. Micro and small businesses that tend not to post on a site like Monster.com are not accounted for in this analysis. That is where Covid has perhaps dealt its biggest blow.

Second, this rise in postings is for specific sectors that have gained momentum against the backdrop of the pandemic-induced lockdowns, remote

and online work. Demand for labour in IT hardware, software, logistics, courier, freight, transportation, telecom and ISP industries has risen. The gig economy – from home catering kitchens to delivery services – have also seen an uptick. All the while, travel, tourism and hospitality continue to suffer. You may have seen the recent analysis that salaries and wages have declined by 15 per cent in the smaller 500 firms (by market cap), whereas they have increased by 5 per cent in the top 100 firms. We have deepening chasms in the economy. And it is clearly hurting those who are 'below' the upper-middle class.

#### Are campus placements happening this year?

There is no doubt that the pandemic has been hard on youth. Before we even talk about placements, there is a need to acknowledge the setbacks to education for children and youth. Even for those that have access to technology and the internet, a purely online education without a human interface cannot compensate for the totality of learning that happens with in-person education at school or university. Education has had a devastating blow in the past 15 months.

Some universities are trying to do placements online. JustJobs Network's own research suggests that youth were struggling to finish their respective training courses and that little is happening with respect to placement through training institutions. This was a weak spot for our training institutions and the pandemic has made it worse. Anecdotal evidence suggests that campus placements are down significantly – even up to 30-50 per cent relative to the pre-pandemic baseline – aside from sectors like IT, which are doing well.

#### Are the new jobs more on-site or work from home?

India is a dual economy. Much of our labour force doesn't have the luxury of working from home. Vegetable vendors, construction workers, security guards, domestic workers and even many gig workers provide location-based services. Working from home is a luxury that only those with the technology and skills can undertake and this is often limited to those in the formal sector. So simplistic frameworks tend to feed inaccurate models, which then lead to ineffective policy and firm choices – so we should avoid that. ■