



Report: Graduate Destinations Survey 2021

Survey Overview

The Graduate Destinations Survey (GDS) is administered three times a year to undergraduate and graduate students six months after graduation to collect information regarding their current primary activity. This report summarizes the responses of May, August, and December 2021 graduates.

Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the 2021 GDS included additional questions regarding whether the pandemic affected their post-graduation activities.

Response Rates

For May, August, and December 2021 graduates, 2,162 of 8,967 responded to the survey for a response rate of 24%. Of these respondents, 1,446 were bachelor's graduates (response rate 22%) and 716 were graduate students (response rate 30%). Note that not all graduates completed all questions, so the number of respondents per question varies, provided in the parenthesis below.

Current Primary Activity

As shown in the table below, most graduates are employed or continuing their education – 89% of bachelor's, 91% of master's, and 90% of doctoral graduates:

	Bachelor's Graduates (n = 1446)	Master's Graduates (n = 511)	Doctoral Graduates (n = 205)
Employed	69%	75%	87%
- Permanent employment	55%	65%	63%
- Temporary/contract work	8%	5%	13%
- Internship or Fellowship	2%	2%	9%
- Freelance	1%	1%	1%
- Self-employed	2%	1%	
- Military service	1%	1%	
- Unspecified	1%		
Continuing education	20%	16%	2%
Seeking employment	9%	7%	8%
Volunteer/service work	1%		
Other	1%	2%	2%

Note: Percentages reported may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

- Employment is the primary activity for most graduates — 69% of bachelor's, 75% of master's and 87% of doctoral graduates.
 - Most employed graduates are employed full-time — 92% of bachelor's graduates, 95% of master's graduates, and 97% of doctoral graduates (not reflected in the table).

- A large portion of graduates are also continuing their education — 20% of bachelor's, 16% of master's, and 2% of doctoral graduates.
 - Among bachelor's graduates that are continuing their education, 71% are enrolled in a master's program, 24% in a doctoral program, and 5% in some other program such as another bachelor's program (not reflected in the table).
- A small percentage of graduates are currently seeking employment — 9% of bachelor's, 7% of master's, and 8% doctoral graduates.
- A very small percentage of graduates are doing some other activity such as traveling or raising a family (1%).

Post Graduate Plans and Impact of COVID-19

Intended Activity (n = 2,139)

In order to determine whether graduates are currently doing what they anticipated their plans would be after graduation, graduates were asked: “Prior to graduating from CU Boulder, what did you intend to be doing now?”

- Most graduates (75%) intended to be employed after graduation, 21% intended to be continuing their education, and a very small number expected to be seeking employment (3%) or doing some “other” activity (1%).
 - Among the 1,594 (75%) of graduates that *intended to be employed* after graduation: 88% are currently employed, 1% are seeking employment, 3% are continuing their education and 8% are doing some other activity.
 - Among the 440 (21%) of graduates that *intended to continue their education* after graduation: 71% are currently continuing their education, 24% are employed, and 1% are seeking employment.
 - Among the graduates (61, or 3%) that *expected to be seeking employment* now: 3% are still seeking employment, but 30% are currently employed; 13% are continuing their education and 54% are doing some other activity.
 - Among the graduates (29, or 1%) that *expected to be doing some “other” activity* after graduation: 24% are doing an “other” activity, whereas 34% are employed, 3% are continuing their education and 3% are seeking employment.
- Across all intended activities (employment, continuing education, seeking employment or some other activity), 81% of graduates’ current primary activity match what they intended to be doing now.

COVID-19 and Post-Graduate Plans (n = 2,147)

Some (24%) of recent graduates said that the COVID-19 pandemic impacted their post-graduation plans completely or to a large degree.

- 6% said completely
- 18% said to a large degree
- 46% said somewhat
- 30% said not at all

COVID-19 and Job Search (n = 1,498)

About 9% of respondents have not sought employment during the pandemic. Among the other 91% of respondents (n = 1357):

- 59% said the pandemic made it more difficult to find employment
- 41% said the pandemic did not make it more difficult to find employment

Graduate School – Bachelor’s Graduates Only

For bachelor’s graduates who are not continuing their education ($n = 1,153$), 79% are planning to pursue or considering pursuing an advanced degree; 21% are not interested in pursuing an advanced degree.

For bachelor’s graduates currently in graduate school ($n = 256$), 82% were accepted into their first-choice graduate school, 9% into their second choice only, and 9% were not accepted to first or second choice school.

Top Graduate Schools for 2021 Bachelor Graduates: ($n = 256$)

- 1) University of Colorado Boulder (39%)
- 2) University of Colorado Denver/Anschutz Medical Campus (4%)
- 3) University of Denver (4%)
- 4) Columbia University in the City of New York (2%)
- 5) New York University (2%)
- 6) University of Southern California (2%)
- 7) Arizona State University-Tempe (1%)
- 8) Front Range Community College (1%)
- 9) Northwestern University (1%)
- 10) Regis University (1%)

Top Field of Study for 2021 Bachelor Graduates: ($n = 249$)

- 1) Aerospace, Aeronautical, and Astronautical/Space Engineering, General (6%)
- 2) Accounting (5%)
- 3) Law (5%)
- 4) Computer Science (4%)
- 5) Auditing (3%)
- 6) Mechanical Engineering (3%)
- 7) Finance, General (2%)
- 8) Psychology, Other (2%)
- 9) Architectural Design (1%)
- 10) Business, Management, Marketing, and Related Support Services, Other (1%)

Employed Graduates

Job Satisfaction ($n = 1,430$)

90% of employed respondents report being very satisfied, satisfied, or somewhat satisfied with their jobs:

- 34% are very satisfied
- 40% are satisfied
- 17% are somewhat satisfied
- 4% are somewhat dissatisfied
- 3% are dissatisfied
- 2% are very dissatisfied

Necessity of Degree ($n = 1,430$)

Among employed respondents, 87% report that their degree was required or gave an advantage in current position:

- 53% reported the degree was required/expected by employer
- 34% said they could have possibly gotten the position without the degree, but the degree gave them an advantage
- 13% felt they could have gotten their current position without a degree

Relation of Job to Major (*n* = 1,429)

87% of employed respondents report that their position is considerably, or somewhat related to their major or program:

- 54% said “considerable relation to my major/program”
- 33% said “some relation to my major/program”
- 13% said “not related to my major/program”

Use of Skills and Abilities (*n* = 1,426)

93% of employed respondents report that their current position makes use of their skills and abilities frequently or some of the time:

- 59% said “I frequently use my skills and abilities”
- 34% said “my position uses my skills and abilities some of the time”
- 7% said “I do not use my skills and abilities very often”

Top Industries for May, August, and December 2021 graduates

Bachelor’s graduates (*n* = 841)

- 1) Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services (21%)
- 2) Health Care and Social Assistance (12%)
- 3) Finance and Insurance (8%)
- 4) Educational Services (8%)
- 5) Information (8%)

Master’s/Doctoral graduates (*n* = 495)

- 1) Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services (33%)
- 2) Educational Services (19%)
- 3) Manufacturing (8%)
- 4) Information (7%)
- 5) Public Administration (6%)

Top Occupations for May, August, and December 2021 graduates

Bachelor’s graduates (*n* = 900)

- 1) Business and Financial Operations Occupations (15%)
- 2) Architecture and Engineering Occupations (15%)
- 3) Computer and Mathematical Occupations (11%)
- 4) Sales and Related Occupations (10%)
- 5) Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media Occupations (7%)

Master’s/Doctoral graduates (*n* = 522)

- 1) Architecture and Engineering Occupations (22%)
- 2) Business and Financial Operations Occupations (14%)
- 3) Computer and Mathematical Occupations (13%)
- 4) Legal Occupations (12%)
- 5) Educational Instruction and Library Occupations (11%)

Top Employers for May, August, and December 2021 graduates (*n* = 1,349)

Five or more May, August, and December 2021 graduates work at the following organizations:

- 1) University of Colorado Boulder
- 2) Amazon
- 3) Ball Aerospace
- 4) Lockheed Martin

- 5) University of Colorado
- 6) KPMG
- 7) Microsoft

Note: This was a write-in response so alternate spellings or abbreviations will cause an employer to be undercounted. E.g., “University of Colorado Boulder” and “CU Boulder” are reported as separate employers in this list.

Salary

A majority of bachelor’s graduates (60%) and 91% of graduate students earn more than \$50,000 in their current position.

	Undergraduate (n = 615)	Graduate (n = 369)
Less than \$25,000	4%	1%
\$25,000 to \$49,999	36%	8%
\$50,000 to \$74,999	41%	37%
\$75,000 to \$99,999	14%	27%
\$100,000 to \$124,999	4%	14%
\$125,000 or more	2%	13%

Note: Percentages reported may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

A total of 990 graduates responded to an additional open-ended question and reported their salary. Based on these responses, the median salary is \$54,000 for the bachelor’s graduates (n = 621), and \$76,000 for the master’s and doctoral graduates (n = 369).

Job Search

Top Ways to Find Employment (n = 1,420)

- 1) Internet job search site/company website (e.g., LinkedIn, Indeed) (45%)
- 2) Friend/colleague/family member/networking (26%)
- 3) Already worked there (17%)
- 4) Internship/co-op (12%)
- 5) Academic Department/Faculty Advisor (6%)
- 6) CU Career Services/Handshake Job Board (6%)
- 7) CU Career Fair (5%)
- 8) Professional Organization (2%)
- 9) Recruitment Agency (2%)
- 10) ROTC/Military Officer Selection (1%)
- 11) CU Career Services On-Campus Interview (1%)
- 12) Newspaper/Magazine/Advertisement (1%)
- 13) Other (8%)

Note: This was a check-all-that apply response so percentages sum to more than 100%.

Job Search Timeline (n = 845)

- Out of 845 bachelor’s graduates who report currently being full-time employed, 222 (26%) were involved (employment, volunteer, internship, co-op, etc.) at their organization before graduating.
- 472 out of 845 (56%) bachelor’s graduates who report currently being full-time employed started their search at least 2 months before graduation.