

Millions of Chinese students brace themselves for graduation after covid-19

"Graduation equals unemployment" has long been a common saying in China (the nouns share a character). It is often used *in jest* by university students as final exams loom. But for the 9m or so due to graduate in June — a record high — the words convey a dark reality.

in jest 开玩笑地

jestful 开玩笑的；诙谐的

Companies normally begin *scouring* campuses for recruits soon after the spring-festival holiday. This time, however, with universities shut and big gatherings banned, the entire process was "wiped out", says a business veteran.

scour 冲洗；清除

Some employers have gone digital. But many, *reeling* from the impact of work stoppages and still-*tepid* consumer demand, have cut hiring. In a survey on university graduates by "China Youth Daily", an official newspaper, more than 60% of respondents said covid-19 had steered them towards "more stable" work.

reel 晕眩；踉跄

tepid 温热的；不热情的

Officials are trying to satisfy such demand. They have directed state-owned businesses to boost their recruitment of new graduates. Sinopec, an oil giant, is hiring another 3,500 on top of the 6,600-odd it has already taken on. Other state-owned firms are also taking on record numbers. They are giving preference to graduates from Hubei province, where the outbreak began.

Many governments are also rewarding firms that hire graduates. In Shanghai, the district of Pudong is offering them subsidies and reduced social-security payments worth up to 2,000 yuan (\$282) for each local graduate they take on.

Students did not have to search for jobs until the 1990s. Instead they had to take positions assigned to them by the government. As a result of covid-19, officials are getting more involved in finding work for students than they have been since those days.