



University graduates visit a job service center to consult about favorable job-hunting policies in Fuzhou, Fujian Province. — Xinhua

Blue vs. white: The job market leaves some hot under the collar

About **44 percent** of companies say their biggest challenge now is to find the workers they need, according to a National Bureau of Statistics survey of more than 90,000 companies last year. That is the highest percentage in recent years.

Yao Minji

Michael Chen, 21, graduated from vocational school with a degree in electrical machinery and promptly received three well-paying job offers. A cousin almost his age graduated from university and can't find a job, so he is preparing to take the postgraduate entrance exam in December.

Two young people; two different education and career paths. So why are Chen's parents and grandparents praising the cousin and disparaging Chen's blue-collar future?

Chen's family attitudes mirror society's long obsession with academic

credentials. University degrees and white-collar jobs are admired; blue-collar work is disdained.

The job market, however, tells a different story. Demand for vocational skills is pushing up salaries, while university graduates are floundering to find a job amid a somewhat stagnant pool of demand.

Indeed, a record 10.76 million college and university graduates are looking for jobs this summer, while many companies are on the prowl for workers with vocational qualifications.

Industry insiders tell Shanghai Daily that the situation goes beyond a persistent mismatch between jobs and skills. The whole employment framework is in the throes of change.

Businesses are altering job descriptions to adapt to digital makeovers; young people are revising their work attitudes post-pandemic; companies are scrambling to regain their profit footing after lockdowns.

"Companies need labor; they just don't need you," Feng Lijuan, chief human resources expert at HR service provider 51job.com, tells Shanghai Daily. "They either want highly skilled labor or robot-like workers who are merely accessories in a larger system."

She adds: "At the same time, youngsters want jobs; they just don't necessarily want yours. They value stability, health and family much more than previous generations."