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MEDIA RELEASE

Graduates may not get full-time work immediately – but most find suitable jobs within three years

Australia's 2026 Graduate Outcomes Survey – Longitudinal (GOS-L) has noted excellent medium-term graduate outcomes across a raft of measures, including high full-time employment and strong salary growth.

The annual GOS-L tracks the outcomes of a large cohort of graduates over time. In the case of this year's report, more than 43,000 graduates were first surveyed in 2023, four to six months after they finished their course, then again three years after.

In 2026, the full-time employment rate was more than 90% for domestic graduates three years after finishing their course. Graduates' median annual full-time salaries had also increased significantly in the three years following completion, from \$71,400 to \$93,500 for undergraduates and from \$98,000 to \$120,000 for postgraduate coursework graduates.

Full-time employment, however, can take time – especially for those graduating with an undergraduate degree. Four to six months out, the full-time employment rate for domestic students with an undergraduate degree was 80.2% – lagging those with postgraduate coursework or research degrees (90.2% and 86.2% respectively).

Further, in 2023, shortly after completing their course, almost 15% of respondents with an undergraduate degree were 'underemployed' – working part-time but preferring more hours – compared with 7.4% and 9.1% for postgraduate coursework and research graduates respectively. (Although these rates were all well below the ranges seen before 2022.)

But by 2026, the gap in full-time employment rates had narrowed, with all study levels enjoying full-time employment rates of more than 90%. And, among those underemployed in 2023, more than 50% were in full-time work by 2026.

Dr Angela Baker of the Social Research Centre, which conducts the GOS-L for the Australian Government Department of Education, said the data showed that a considerable proportion of 'underemployed' graduates go on to gain employment that suits them.

"The early months after graduation do not tell the whole story. Many graduates need time to build experience and find work that matches their qualifications, but within three years most have moved into full-time employment or working arrangements that suit them," Dr Baker said.

Yet she said the report also highlights unequal outcomes for certain groups. International graduates, graduates with disability, and domestic graduates from non-English speaking backgrounds were less likely than their respective counterparts to be in full-time employment in 2023, four to six months after completing their degree. Three years later, the gaps persist, although they are narrower.

“While outcomes improve for most graduates over time, the benefits are not shared equally. International graduates, graduates with disability and graduates from non-English-speaking backgrounds continue to face barriers to securing full-time work and achieving comparable earnings,” Dr Baker said.

“The narrowing of these gaps is encouraging, but their persistence three years after graduation shows why these findings matter. The survey provides an important evidence base for universities, employers and government to draw on as they consider graduates’ transition into the workforce.”

Respondents were also asked questions to gauge whether they felt ‘overqualified’ for their current job. Across all study levels, about 28% of graduates who completed the GOS in 2023 said they were not fully utilising their skills and education three years after, in 2026.

The main reason cited was ‘I’m satisfied with my current job’. Others reported that they’re in jobs below what they’re capable of because they’re also doing further study, and the job fits in with that.

Notably, however, among postgraduate research graduates who said they felt underutilised, a quarter said it was because there were no suitable jobs in their field.

“Feeling overqualified does not necessarily mean a graduate has had a poor employment outcome. Many graduates are satisfied with their jobs or are making deliberate choices that reflect further study, caring responsibilities or other priorities,” Dr Baker said.

“The results for research graduates are more concerning. When one in four who feel underutilised say there are no suitable jobs in their area of expertise, it points to a continuing challenge in connecting highly specialised research skills with opportunities beyond traditional academic pathways.”

About the 2026 Graduate Outcomes Survey – Longitudinal (GOS-L)

The GOS-L is part of the Quality Indicators for Learning and Teaching (QILT) program, conducted by the Social Research Centre for the Australian Government Department of Education.

In 2026, more than 43,000 graduates from 125 higher education institutions – including all 43 Australian universities – took part in the GOS-L. These graduates had also completed a survey in 2023 shortly after they completed their course. This allows for short- and medium-term comparisons about their employment and further study activities.

Other key findings

- International undergraduates reported the lowest full-time employment rate of all demographic sub-groups in both the short *and* medium-term (62.5% and 84.1% respectively). International graduates also consistently reported lower median salaries than their domestic peers – especially at postgraduate coursework level (\$86,000 versus \$120,000 in the medium-term).
- Domestic undergraduates originally from regional and remote areas had *higher* rates of full-time employment than their peers, in both the short-term and medium-term.

- Socioeconomic status did not have a noticeable impact on employment and median salary outcomes. However, high-SES undergraduates were more likely to be working in managerial or professional roles, in both the short- and medium-terms.
- The gender pay gap is present in the short-term and worsens over time, despite similar employment outcomes. Female undergraduates reported lower median salaries in the short-term (a difference of \$3,900, or gender pay gap of 5.3 per cent), and this difference increased in the medium-term (to \$8,000, or a gender pay gap of 8.1 per cent).¹

See the full report for details: [gilt.edu.au/surveys/graduate-outcomes-survey---longitudinal-\(gos-l\)](http://gilt.edu.au/surveys/graduate-outcomes-survey---longitudinal-(gos-l))

Media contact and further information

For further information, interviews, or media enquiries, please contact:

Anne Gerritsen	e: <u>anne.gerritsen@srcentre.com.au</u>
Communications Manager	m: 0403 017 762
Social Research Centre	w: <u>srcentre.com.au</u> or <u>gilt.edu.au</u>

The full 2026 GOS-L report and additional materials are available on the QILT website: [gilt.edu.au/surveys/graduate-outcomes-survey---longitudinal-\(gos-l\)](http://gilt.edu.au/surveys/graduate-outcomes-survey---longitudinal-(gos-l))

About the Social Research Centre

The Social Research Centre is a leading Australian provider of social research and evaluation services, with deep expertise in education research. We work with government, education providers and institutions to deliver high-quality research that informs education policy, improves learning experiences and supports better outcomes for students and educators.

¹ The gender pay gap is calculated as $100 \times (\text{Male median salary} - \text{Female median salary}) / \text{Male median salary}$, consistent with the methodology used by the Workplace Gender Equality Agency.