

Box Article 2:**Special Study on the Personnel of Short-Term Employment Programme**

Mohd Ikhwan Abdullah¹; Nur Layali Mohd Ali Khan²

^{1,2} Malaysian Bureau of Labour Statistics (MBLS), Department of Statistics Malaysia (DOSM)

Introduction

Labour market imbalances was among the structural issues that had become even more critical in 2020 as Malaysia faced the economic ramification to manage the fast-spreading COVID-19 pandemic in the country. In 2020, priorities to protect lives had prompted implementation of multiple social and economic restrictions which had resulted in slower labour demand by the economic sector and sharp increase in unemployment to record 711 thousand persons during the year (Malaysian Bureau of Labour Statistics [MBLS], DOSM, 2021). In addition, according to DOSM (2021), skill-related underemployment rate which had been on an upward trend grew 3.6 percentage points to 38.0 per cent, denoting the increase in those with tertiary education but were working in semi and low-skilled occupations categories.

Subsidies and fiscal injections were rolled out continuously as and when necessary corresponding to the implementations of various phases of MCO. Specifics initiatives were formulated specially to address labour market issues including escalating number of unemployment resulting from the public health crisis. The instances of these initiatives are PSU to ensure businesses can sustain and employees are retained. Hiring Incentives Programme and Training Assistance also provided opportunities for employment particularly in the Manufacturing industry as well as Wholesale and retail trade industry.

In looking at a longer-term and more comprehensive solution, the formation of National Employment Council was announced in November 2020 to execute the strategies of creating and retaining jobs, in line with the first goal of Budget 2021 namely “People’s Wellbeing” (Ministry of Finance Malaysia [MOF], 2020). Beyond the vital role of private sectors in creating and protecting jobs, one of the measures introduced was Short-term Employment Programme or MySTEP which targeted opening of 50 thousand contract job opportunities on a contract in the public sector and Government Linked Companies (GLC) starting January 2021, with the allocation of RM700 million (MOF, 2020).

A study was conducted by MBLS, DOSM in June 2021 with the objectives to evaluate the situation of MySTEP personnel working with the federal government agencies; determine basic demographic characteristics; involvement in secondary jobs; challenges to secure employment; and participation in skill and training programmes. These findings are complementary of the other official labour market statistics produced by DOSM to provide more in-depth insights on the situations of labour supply.

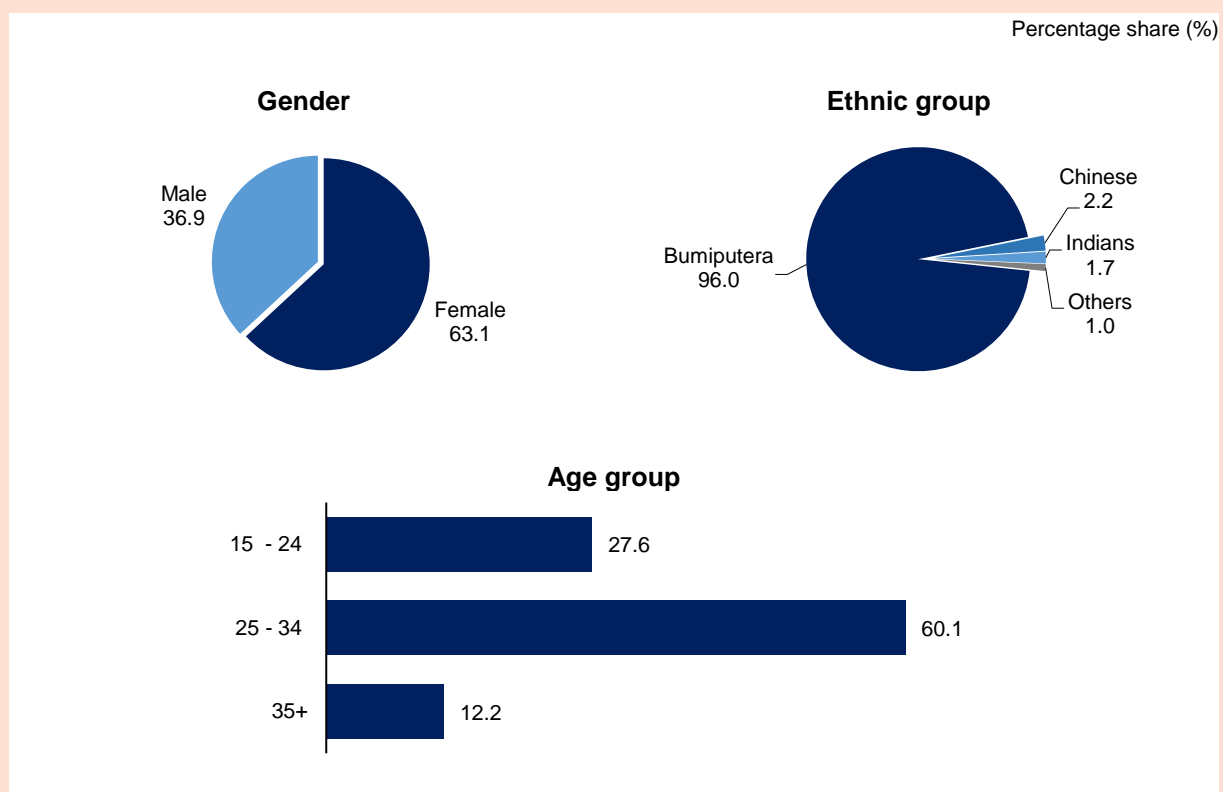
The study canvassed all MySTEP personnel serving in the federal public sector agencies. Data was collected through the mode of self-administered online questionnaire between 25 June to 7 July 2021. The study adopted non-probability sampling method i.e. convenience sample, whereby questionnaire was distributed to the resource persons in the respective ministries and agencies. In overall, a total of 18,603 MySTEP personnel responded to this study.

MySTEP Personnel in the Federal Administrative Government

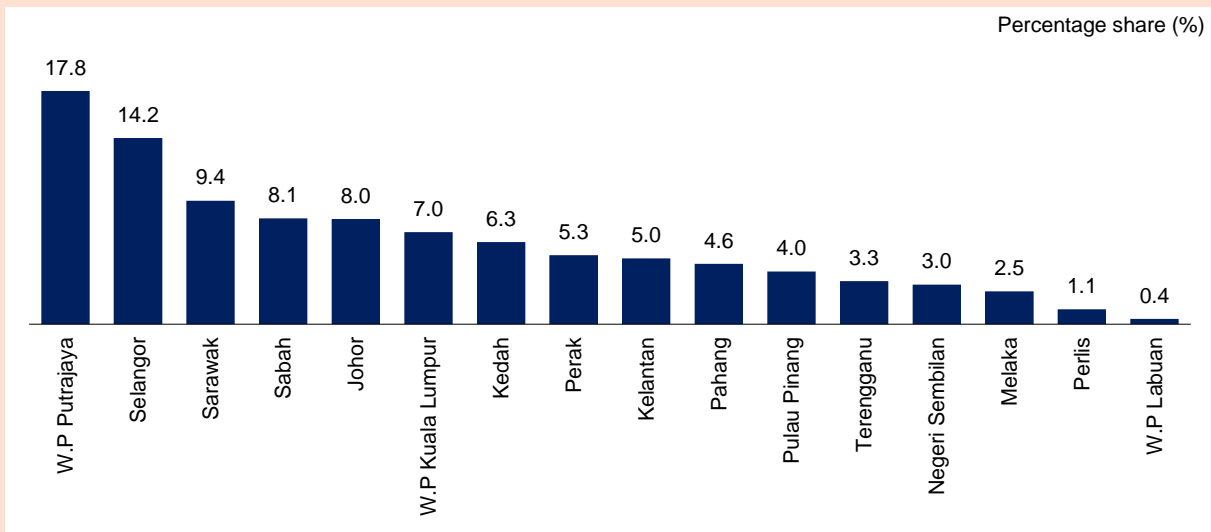
In overall, among those who responded to this survey, the majority (68.6%) were appointed to filled in the clerical and administrations positions which required the highest qualification of SPM or equivalent. Another nearly one-third (31.4%) were hired in the positions of Professionals; and Technicians and Associate Professional positions with the prerequisites of Diploma and Degree.

In terms of gender, female dominated as MySTEP personnel in the federal government services with a share of 63.1 per cent, as against 36.9 per cent of males. By ethnic group, the Bumiputera ethnic made up 96.0 per cent of total employment, followed by Chinese (2.2%), Indians (1.7%) and Others (0.1%). A large proportion of MySTEP personnel (60.1%) was in the age group of 25-34 years. In the meantime, those aged 24 years and below – which is associated with new entrants into the labour market after completion of schooling – comprised of 27.6 per cent. In addition, it was found that those aged 35 years and over made up 12.2 per cent of the MySTEP personnel employed [Chart 2.1].

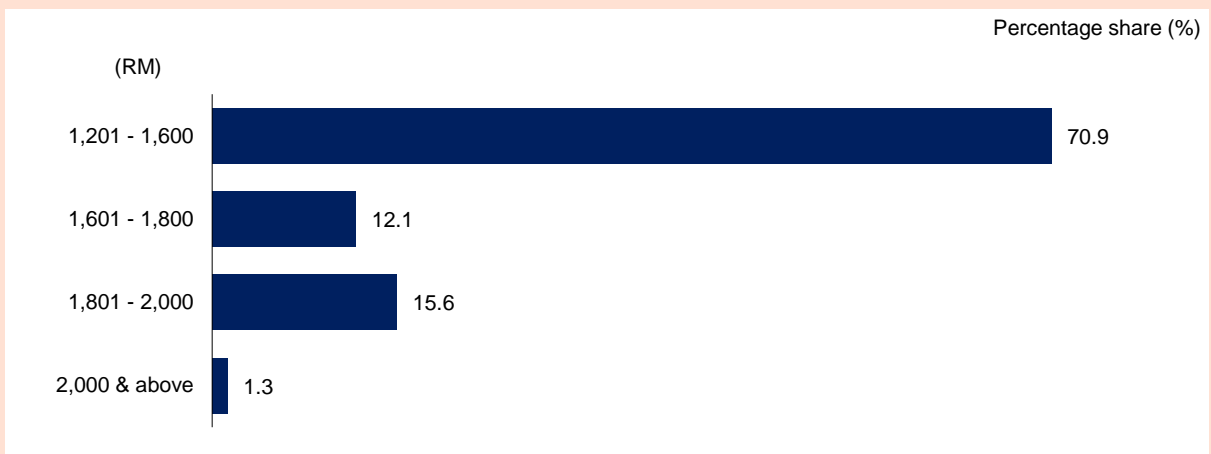
Chart 2.1: Demographic characteristics of MySTEP Personnel



In terms of the state of employment, concomitant to W.P. Putrajaya being the federal administrative centre, 17.8 per cent of the MySTEP personnel were working in offices within that federal territory, followed by Selangor (14.2%) and Sarawak (9.4%) [Chart 2.2].

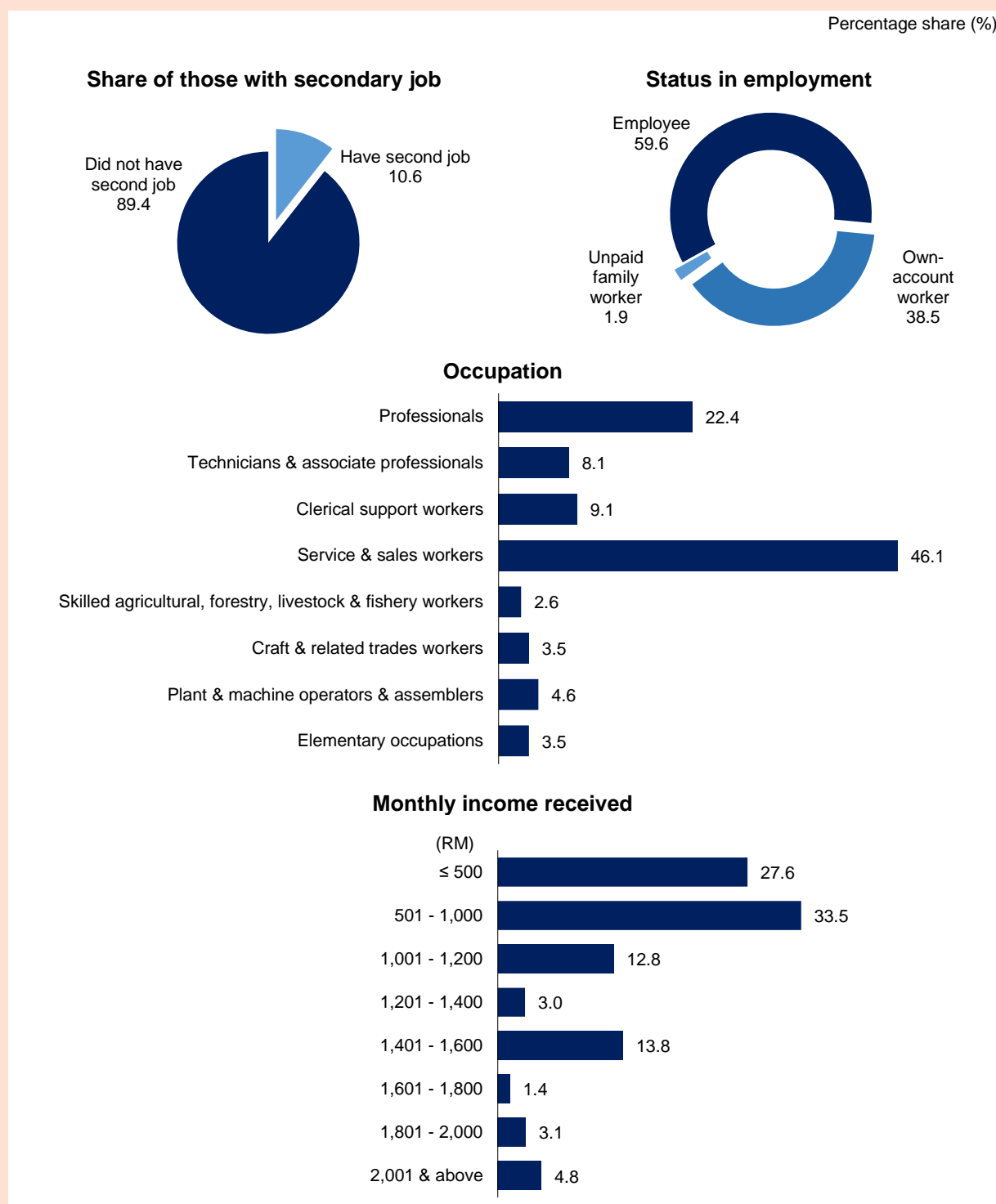
Chart 2.2: Percentage share of MySTEP Personnel by state

In terms of the income received on a monthly basis, more than two third of the respondents reported receiving monthly income between RM1,201 to RM1,600 while another 27.7 per cent received between RM1,601 to RM2,000 per month [Chart 2.3].

Chart 2.3: Percentage share of MySTEP Personnel by monthly income received

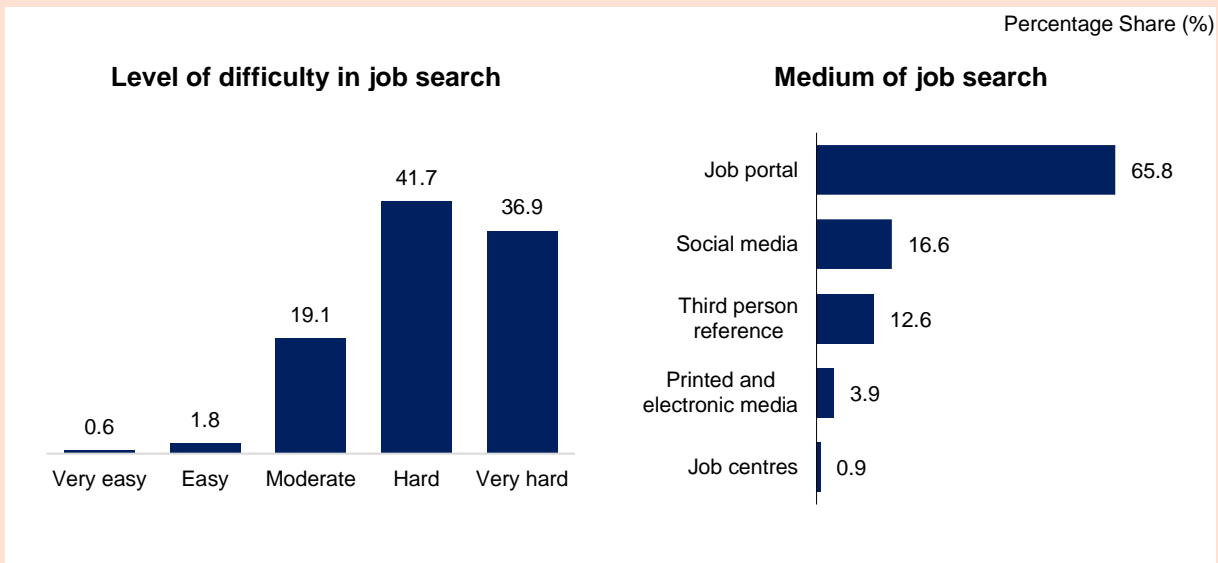
A total of 10.6 per cent from those whom participated in this survey reported that they have a secondary job apart from being a MySTEP Personnel servicing the federal government. By employment status, the employees category whom were hired by others comprised of 51.1 per cent among those with secondary job, while another 47.0 per cent were own-account workers. In terms of occupation category, almost half (45.9%) were Service and sales workers such as delivery assistant, involved as dropships, as well as cook and cakes and pastry bakers. In the meantime, a share of nearly a quarter reported to be involved in Professionals occupations such as tuition teachers and instructors. As for the monthly income received from secondary jobs, one-third reported having received a monthly income of RM501 to RM1,000; followed by 27.6 per cent with income of RM500 and below [Chart 2.4].

Chart 2.4: Profile of MySTEP Personnel with secondary job



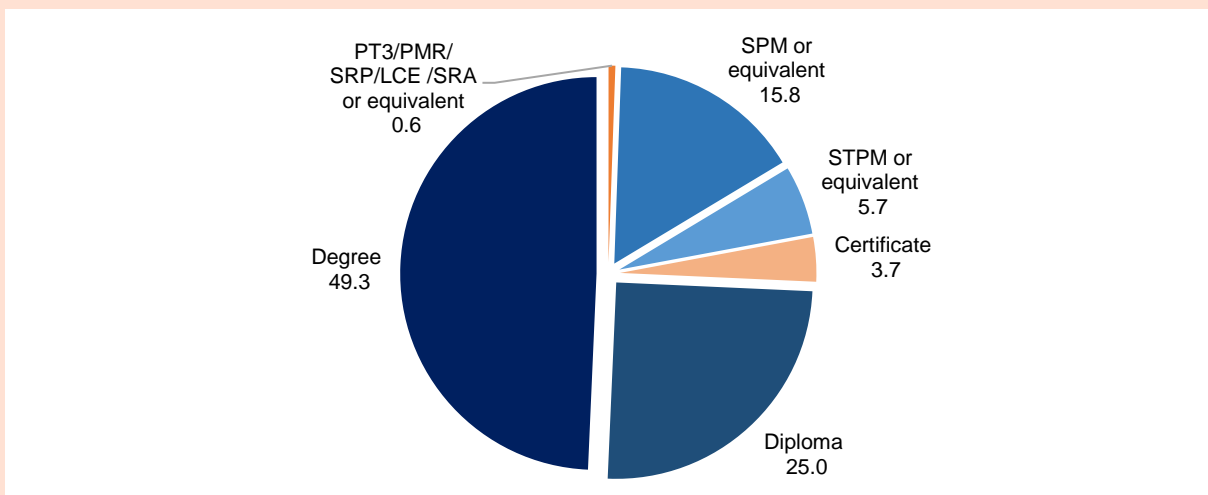
Most of the MySTEP personnel whom participated in this study found that it was difficult (41.7%) and very difficult (36.9%) to secure employment. When asked of the medium used in seeking job, largely utilised technology and digitisation whereby 65.8 per cent reported using various job search portals, followed by 16.6 per cent who leveraged social media. In the meantime, another 12.6 per cent seek the assistance from a third person such as lecturers, supervisors, family and friends [Chart 2.5].

Chart 2.5: Profile of MySTEP Personnel with secondary job



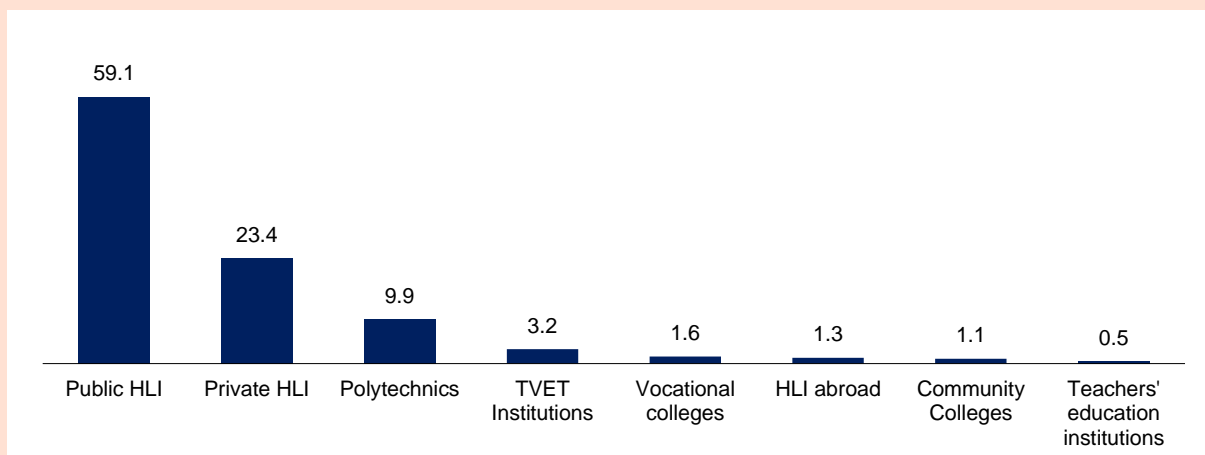
Looking at the highest certificate obtained of MySTEP Personnel, 74.3 per cent of the respondents in this study stated that they had attained tertiary certifications. The biggest composition of 49.3 per cent were degree holders including 5.9 per cent with post-graduate degree qualifications. In the meantime, those with SPM or equivalent constituted 15.4 per cent. [Chart 2.6].

Chart 2.6: Percentage share of MySTEP Personnel by highest certificate obtained



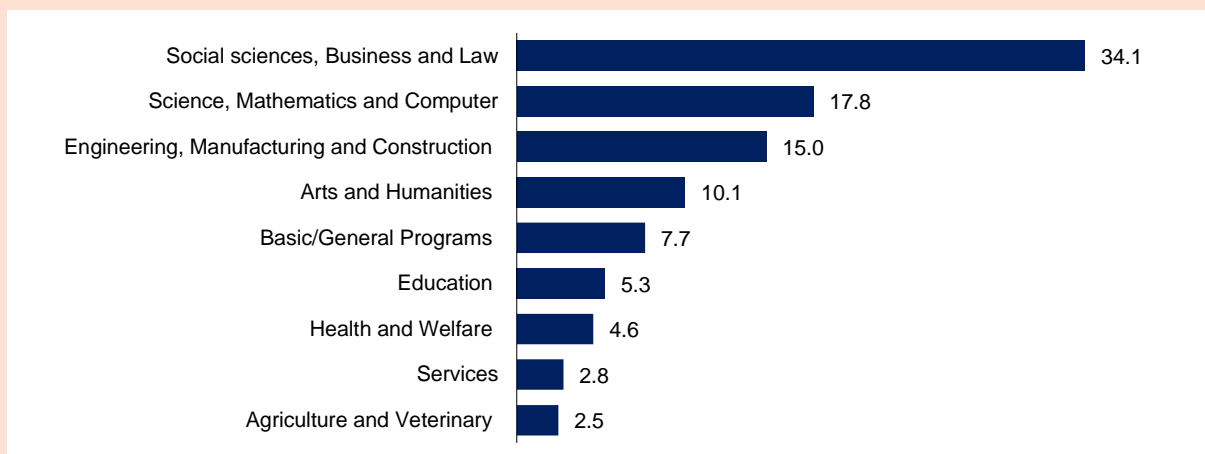
A total of 77.4 per cent MySTEP personnel employed in various federal public sector agencies were identified as graduates. Graduates in this study are defined as individuals who have obtained the highest certificate from a university, college, polytechnic, recognized body or equivalent with a period of study of at least two years. More than half (59.1%) attained their highest qualifications from public higher learning institutions (HLI) compared to 23.4 per cent in private HLI. In the meantime, another 9.9 per cent were from polytechnics followed by TVET institutions with 3.2 per cent. The other HLIs made up a share between 0.5 per cent to 1.6 per cent [Chart 2.7].

Chart 2.7: Percentage share of MySTEP Personnel with certificates, diploma & degrees by learning institution



Based on the response from this study, among the graduates who were employed as MySTEP personnel, a share of 34.1 per cent have degrees in the field of Social sciences, Business and Law. Meanwhile, graduates in Science, Mathematics and Computer studies accounted for 17.8 per cent followed by Engineering, Manufacturing and Construction (15.0%) and Arts and Humanities (10.1%). The graduates in the other fields comprised of less than 10 per cent each, namely Basic/General Programmes (7.7%), Education (5.3%), Health and Welfare (4.6%), Services (2.8%) and Agriculture and Veterinary (2.5%) [Chart 2.8].

Chart 2.8: Percentage share of graduates MySTEP Personnel by field of study



Accordingly, nearly one-third (32.5%) of graduates MySTEP personnel who graduated in 2019 to date reported MySTEP as their first job after graduation. Another 30.8 per cent took up MySTEP employment as the second job upon graduation while 19.0 per cent as their third ones, after having work somewhere else prior to this. Another 17.7 per cent reported that MySTEP was their fourth job after completion of their tertiary education.

In terms of the period of seeking before obtaining employment, a total of 45.1 percent who graduated from tertiary level since 2019 reported waiting around one to three months before being employed in the job market, followed by 21.1 per cent who waited four to six months and

another 23.8 per cent who were seeking for six months and more until there were hired. In the meantime, 9.9 per cent obtained employment before graduation.

Conclusion

As slower demand for labour was observed throughout this difficult and challenging time, the measure introduced by the government to create short-term employment opportunity within the public sector can be part of the solutions to address the issue of unemployment. This measure is seen to be particularly beneficial among new entrants into the labour market particularly youth graduates who completed their study since 2019 to date. The temporary or contractual basis of this job offers the pathway for the new entrants to gain experience, knowledge and skills as they make their ways up in the labour market. This will provide them with the prerequisites of the industry and make them more marketable in their next job. In terms of improving livelihood and well-being, the temporary solution to provide employment opportunity as MySTEP is seen to be a mean of generating income which in turn will assist the government in accelerating the recovery of the domestic economy.

Disclaimer

The findings of this study are based on feedbacks of the participating respondents and cannot be generalised as the view / feedbacks of all MySTEP in Malaysia. It is not an official statistics, hence should be evaluated and interpreted with great cautions as a complementary information in analysing the short-term labour market scenario. The view expressed in this article are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the view of DOSM.

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