

# The White-collar Recruitment Market in Asia October to December 2020

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JAC Recruitment Co., Ltd. (Takeshi Matsuzono, Managing Director) provides recruitment services across 11 countries worldwide and serves as the largest recruitment consultancy in Southeast Asia\*1. JAC Recruitment has prepared this summary of trends in the white-collar recruitment markets of respective Asian nations for the fourth quarter of 2020, encompassing the three months October through December. (\*1 According to internal research of JAC Recruitment based on comparisons of sales generated by peer companies that engage in recruitment services throughout Asia.)

- **Recruitment markets with a higher number of job listings are limited to certain Asian countries given that COVID-19 continues to weigh on the respective nations.**
- In Singapore, the number of job listings increased by 6% relative to the previous quarter (July to September) amid a scenario where employers have been more actively recruiting amid the notion that adverse effects of COVID-19 are likely to persist for some time.
- In India, nearly 80% of companies have suspended hiring initiatives due to COVID-19, yet the number of job listings increased by 9% relative to the previous quarter amid a scenario where the number of companies resuming recruitment drives has been gradually increasing since October.

Trends in numbers of job listings posted by the JAC Recruitment Group’s recruitment consultancies

	Singapore	Malaysia	Thailand	Indonesia	Vietnam	China	HK	Korea	India	Japan*2
Relative to 2019 Q4	73%	96%	88%	33%	65%	80%	47%	80%	99%	114%
Relative to 2020 Q3	106%	88%	81%	72%	116%	106%	56%	98%	109%	85%

\*2 These figures reflect job listings relevant to overseas operations of Japanese companies.



## Singapore

### Companies resuming recruitment and more actively increasing headcounts despite prospects of prolonged ramifications of COVID-19

In the fourth quarter of 2020, Singapore’s real GDP was slightly lower than analyst expectations, having decreased by 33.8% relative to the same period of the previous fiscal year, according to preliminary figures released by the nation’s Ministry of Trade and Industry.

Although real GDP marked a 5.8% decrease for the entire twelve months of 2020, it is expected to recover with a gain ranging from 4% to 6% in 2021. Singapore’s services sector shrank by 6.8% relative to the same quarter of the previous year and by 2.4% relative to the previous quarter amid restrictions imposed on travel to and from the nation, while domestic economic activity particularly in the retail and food services sectors has intensified. The nation’s economy has been hit hard by travel restrictions and immigration controls. Increased production of electronic components and biomedical products underpinned performance of the nation’s manufacturing sector, which grew by 9.5% in comparison with the same quarter of the previous year but contracted 2.6% relative to the previous quarter. With its phase 3 of COVID-19 reopening having taken effect on December 28, the government increased the number of people it allows in gatherings to groups of eight from groups of five previously, yet circumstances in Singapore remain largely unchanged.

#### Corporate Recruitment Trends

Having assessed the likelihood of COVID-19 subsiding, Singapore-based companies that had suspended recruitment seemingly deem that the pandemic will continue to affect business in 2021. Amid that sentiment, employers increased the number of job listings by 6% relative to the previous quarter amid a scenario where they have been resuming recruitment since October while more actively increasing headcounts. There has been a conspicuous tendency for companies to increase headcounts in association with budgeting tasks for next fiscal year and to hire staff members to refill retirement vacancies. Many enterprises have been redoubling efforts placed on preferential hiring of Singaporean nationals, as well as Permanent Resident (PR) and Dependant’s Pass (DP) visa holders. Many professionals in Singapore actively begin seeking new employment in December of most years, and the nation’s market for career changers has been gaining momentum. Amid this environment, companies in Singapore have been intensifying recruitment initiatives with their sights set on tapping opportunities to gain more talented professionals.

#### Candidate Trends

Heading toward year-end, there was an upward trend in the number of Singaporean nationals registering as candidates for new employment in hopes of changing jobs after having received their bonuses, as has been the case in past years. The number of job openings also increased accordingly relative to the third quarter, which in turn gave rise to a higher number of candidate registrations among Singaporean nationals. As for Japanese nationals seeking employment, there was a downward trend in the number of job seekers based in countries other than Singapore as a result of travel and immigration restrictions imposed due to COVID-19. Meanwhile, from January onward the number of Japanese nationals filing registrations is likely to increase amid a surge of professionals aiming to change jobs in April.

No. of job listings  
 73% of 2019 Q4  
 106% of 2020 Q3



**Adil Driouech**  
 Managing Director  
 JAC Recruitment  
 International Group



## **With the Malaysian government having newly imposed orders restricting movement on January 13, the situation warrants close attention to developments involving infection controls and the economy going forward**

COVID-19 is spreading in Malaysia amid a scenario where the nation reached 3,309 cases on January 12, thereby exceeding the 3,000 mark for the first time. The Malaysian government announced that it would impose movement control orders spanning two weeks beginning on January 13 mainly in metropolitan areas, including Kuala Lumpur and the state of Selangor, which account for 66% of the nation's total GDP. Whereas the government has granted its approval to allow for operations in five business sectors, including manufacturing, services and logistics, the future of Malaysia's economy seemingly hinges on the extent to which the nation is able to curb transmission of the virus during that two-week period.

### **Corporate Recruitment Trends**

In the fourth quarter of 2020, the number of job listings in Malaysia was lower relative the fourth quarter of 2019 and the third quarter of 2020, yet 30% higher than in the second quarter of 2019, which saw a substantial drop in the number of such listings. Recruitment seems to have mounted a recovery given that the number of job listings remained largely unchanged, at a level 4% lower in comparison with the same period of the previous year. Non-Japanese companies and Japanese MNCs differed when it came to appetite for hiring amid a scenario where job listings posted by non-Japanese entities in Malaysia increased by 11% in contrast to a 17% decrease among Japanese firms there.

As for job listings in Malaysia categorized by salary level, there was a 13% gain year on year with respect to the number of job listings for positions at the senior managerial level and above with salaries of MYR 9,000 and higher. The number of job openings for core personnel has increased against a backdrop of many companies developing start-up ventures while strengthening existing businesses amid the COVID-19 pandemic. Non-Japanese MNCs in Malaysia have shown a particularly strong appetite for hiring highly paid professionals amid a scenario where the proportion of job listings posted by such enterprises increased to 41% in the fourth quarter of 2020, after having stood at 25% in the same quarter of the previous year.

According to a JAC Recruitment survey on employment trends administered to 207 companies, some 29.8% of companies in Malaysia intend to increase their workforces under their hiring targets for 2021, another 29.8% intend to engage in replacement hiring only, and 15.7% have suspended their recruitment. With some 19.8% of companies overall having hired additional employees during the year 2021, it seems safe to say that companies are likely to increasingly take steps to fortify operations in strategic fields of business during 2021.

Occupational categories under recruitment plans include an overwhelmingly high proportion of positions in sales and marketing development, followed by positions related to manufacturing, supply chain and logistics, and information technology.

### **Candidate Trends**

Normally Malaysia's market for career changers encounters a lull during the year-end and New Year holiday period, before subsequently heating up with a surge in employment listings and job seekers coming out of the Chinese New Year sometime around February every year. This year, however, new job seekers continued to register for recruitment services even during the year-end and New Year holidays. The reason being is seemingly attributable to a rise in the number of professionals seeking to make career changes involving employment with enterprises promising greater growth stability, particularly amid a climate of salary cuts and layoffs amid the COVID-19 pandemic. When it comes to Japanese nationals seeking employment, the Malaysian government has gradually become more accommodative in terms of its approval process for the Employment Pass (EP), with respect to which filings had stagnated in the first half of 2020. On January 1, 2021, however, the government imposed new procedures on employment listings targeting foreign nationals. As such, it will be necessary to closely monitor the effect this has on recruitment going forward.

No. of job listings

96% of 2019 Q4

88% of 2020 Q3



**Nobuaki Onishi**  
Managing Director  
JAC Recruitment  
Malaysia



## Market for career changers showing signs of gradual recovery despite COVID-19

Market for career changers showing signs of gradual recovery despite COVID-19

Whereas Thailand successfully fended off the threat of COVID-19 in 2020, the nation's prospects of economic recovery have been dealt a blow particularly given that the second wave of the pandemic struck in December. Accordingly, the nation's tourism and food services sectors in particular having been greatly affected, and growth has otherwise been substantially hampered as other sectors encounter circumstances where the government is seemingly in no hurry to allow business professionals entry into the country given imposition of stringent immigration controls. Meanwhile, rigorous enforcement of COVID-19 safeguards stands as a critical issue in Thailand amid a scenario where the government is not rigidly imposing immigration controls when it comes to land and sea routes from Myanmar and other geographic areas where the pandemic is spreading.

### Corporate Recruitment Trends

A second wave of COVID-19 emerged in December. As a result, many Thailand-based companies that had returned to normal in-house work arrangements are now shifting back to remote work. Meanwhile, many factories and other such sites are also prohibiting visits by outsiders, which is seemingly causing many companies to temporarily suspend their recruitment selection processes. Although recruitment was prone to similar circumstances in the months of April and May last year, the prevailing situation warrants close attention given the scale and speed of viral transmission this time around.

There is a strong preference among Thailand-based companies for hiring Thai nationals locally given the high costs associated with hiring professionals living in Japan. Thailand is currently somewhat of a seller's market when it comes to recruitment amid a scenario where companies are postponing hiring decisions and posting fewer job openings, given a situation where Japanese nationals residing in Japan normally account for around 40% of all Japanese nationals seeking career changes locally in Thailand.

### Candidate Trends

Thai nationals have been cautious when it comes to the prospect of changing jobs, particularly given ramifications of the second wave of COVID-19. This hesitance is compounded by concerns that new employment ultimately might not work out, thereby leaving the professional in a situation where he or she would face even greater uncertainty regarding prospects of finding yet another position.

Nevertheless, recruitment in Thailand remains a seller's market in terms of favouring job seekers given a lack of job openings. Moreover, whereas the Thai government had been gradually easing restrictions against entering the nation, when it comes to Japanese nationals living in Japan and other job seekers outside of Thailand, the second wave of COVID-19 has once again given rise to an unpredictable situation in terms of job changes that involve coming to Thailand from overseas. The Thai market remains sluggish when it comes to professionals seeking new employment given that either the prospective employer or otherwise the candidate must shoulder still high costs that include fees for using quarantine facilities, PCR testing for COVID-19, and insurance.

No. of job listings  
88% of 2019 Q4  
81% of 2020 Q3



Katsuhiko Yamashita  
Managing Director  
JAC Recruitment  
Thailand



### Recruitment activity stagnated in the fourth quarter amid an increase in the number of COVID-19 cases

The Indonesian business community currently has its sights set on revisions to the nation's omnibus law for creating jobs and improving the nation's investment environment with the aim of facilitating economic growth. With the nation's legislative assembly having approved the revisions in October 2020, the business community has been affected by a situation in the third quarter of 2020 where approval of the revisions triggered worker protests that paralysed urban areas for several days. This was compounded by restrictions on movement imposed to combat the spread of COVID-19, under which private-sector companies must operate with no more than half their workforces in-house. Indonesia, which ranks fourth worldwide in terms of population size, faces a situation where it still seems unlikely that COVID-19 will subside any time soon. Meanwhile, as the number of COVID-19 cases continues to rise, the government has been caught in a cycle of repeatedly strengthening then relaxing restrictions.

#### Corporate Recruitment Trends

Whereas we had expected the Indonesian economy to mount a recovery in the fourth quarter, the number of job openings in the nation decreased during that time due to a lull in corporate hiring as a result of the protests in October. Moreover, the government postponed a large holiday slated for May 2020 to December due to concerns that an exodus of people could cause further transmission of COVID-19. Even though the change to December meant that fewer people travelled, the end of May is still regarded as the holiday season by the people of Indonesia, which is home to the world's largest Muslim population. In the recruitment market serving Japanese MNCs, many expatriate employees who were unable to go back to their home nations over nearly the entire year in 2020 will return to their countries of origin during extended holidays lasting for a span of between several weeks to one month, including a 14-day quarantine period. As such, there has been an increasing number of instances where companies have temporarily suspended hiring. On the other hand, in the realm of recruitment business in alignment with business strategy for 2021, we have fielded a certain number of recruitment inquiries particularly for sales representatives.

#### Candidate Trends

Amid the COVID-19 pandemic, Indonesian professionals hoping to change careers have been enthusiastically looking for new positions, yet also seem to be carefully making career decisions whereby they seek favourable terms and conditions with respect to industry, salaries offered by prospective employers, and health and welfare benefits. The employment interview process in Indonesia has recently been one whereby final interviews are conducted on an in-person basis, but whereby job candidates opt for initial and secondary interviews to be carried out online.

When it comes to Japanese nationals seeking career change in Indonesia, there has been a conspicuous trend amid the COVID-19 pandemic for such individuals to register as employment candidates at the end of their employment contracts after their having served as junior sales representatives carrying out supporting roles in marketing, highly skilled senior-level sales professionals, or professionals in managerial operations.

No. of job listings  
33% of 2019 Q4  
72% of 2020 Q3



Chie Kobayashi  
Managing Director  
JAC Recruitment  
Indonesia

## Increasing number of companies have resumed hiring as markets mount a recovery

Vietnam's GDP grew by 2.9% in 2020, which was the nation's lowest rate of economic growth since 2011. That said, the nation's economy has been maintaining positive growth amid a scenario of the government having achieved success with its policy for effectively containing COVID-19 and its measures to promote the economy. Vietnam's industrial and construction sector and its manufacturing sector shifted to positive growth, up 4.0% and 5.8%, respectively. Meanwhile, the information and communications component of the services sector was up 7.4% and finance-banking-insurance was up 6.9%. Performance in these industrial sectors has been underpinning Vietnam's overall economic growth. The economy has been mounting a recovery since the fourth quarter amid projections envisioning an increase in domestic demand ahead of the Vietnamese Lunar New Year. The economy throughout Vietnam is likely to fully maintain a path of recovery amid a scenario where the nation is targeting a 6.5% rate of GDP growth in 2021.

### Corporate Recruitment Trends

During the second and third quarters of 2020, Vietnam-based companies in many industries sustained business upon having restructured and downsized operations due to effects of COVID-19. Meanwhile, there has been a conspicuous tendency for enterprises to resume recruitment drives amid a scenario where their moves to reduce headcounts has made the prospect of rebounding financial performance unlikely, even though markets have been mounting a recovery. Also, companies in Vietnam are increasingly opting to hire candidates even before start of the Vietnamese Lunar New Year, thereby accelerating hiring plans given that those entering Vietnam from abroad must undergo a two-week period of quarantine, which is in addition to the nation's immigration controls. Companies have been actively hiring top-notch talent, particularly in the fields of information technology, energy, trading company operations and real estate. Vietnam currently stands as a buyers' market for employers when it comes to recruitment given that many candidates have been losing jobs due to COVID-19.

### Candidate Trends

Up until recently, circumstances in Vietnam have been such that many professionals seeking career change prudently make decisions on workplace options or otherwise take a wait-and-see approach while sticking with their current jobs. Since the fourth quarter, however, there has been more of a tendency for professionals to engage in job searches either because they don't think COVID-19 will subside any time soon, or because they don't think their employers will pay bonuses due to poor corporate financial results. Prior to COVID-19, there had been a spate of start-up enterprises that had become subject to bankruptcy after having managed to hire top-notch talent by offering such candidates salaries that were several times higher than market levels. Many candidates who had worked for such companies as IT professionals have been unable to find new jobs because they tend to negotiate salaries with prospective employers using high salary levels as a benchmark in the course of such talks. There has been a strong tendency for professionals in other industries to seek new positions in stable companies. Currently, many candidates in Vietnam are actively engaged in job searches in hopes of successfully finding new employment before the Vietnamese Lunar New Year.

No. of job listings  
65% of 2019 Q4  
116% of 2020 Q3



Le Thuy Dieu Uyen  
Director  
JAC Recruitment  
Vietnam



### Challenges to doing business with the outside world persist in China due to ongoing impediments to travel, and despite success achieved in suppressing COVID-19

Per-unit new car sales in the nation have declined for three consecutive years yet market share of Japanese manufacturers increased in 2020. More than 60% of Japanese MNCs in China achieved favourable earnings results in 2020 amid strong performance by the nation's automotive industry.

On the other hand, the outlook in terms of economic recovery is bleak going forward amid a scenario where per capita disposable income among workers in 2020 was significantly lower than in the previous year. Consumption expenditure is likely to have declined by 3.8% for the full year amid a situation where spending has been rebounding at a sluggish pace, with such recovery underpinned by the nation's success at having curbed the spread of COVID-19, economic measures, and strong exports, according to China's National Bureau of Statistics (NBS). SMEs have exhibited a notable lack of resiliency as they encounter a lack of momentum when it comes to household consumption. It is likely to take some time before spending on eating out, lodging, travel and other such services mounts a recovery in China, given that the government has moved to impose restrictions on movement during the Chinese New Year amid resurgence of COVID-19 in Beijing and Hebei Province in 2021.

#### Corporate Recruitment Trends

Since the latter half of 2019, corporate appetite for recruitment in China has remained strong. Whereas a majority of recruitment had involved hiring employees to fill vacancies up through the first half of 2019, that situation has shifted to one where companies are increasingly seeking candidates with the aim of adding to headcounts as their earnings mount recovery and grow. Meanwhile, companies have also been updating job descriptions. As such, the number of job listings increased by 8% relative to the previous quarter, partially due to such employment trends. There has been increasing appetite for recruitment across a wide range of industries in the Chinese market. This includes China's medical and pharmaceutical industry, which is an area of growth, as well as its automotive industry, food products and daily necessities industry, and business involving machinery and equipment. When it comes to job openings seeking Japanese nationals, listings have increasingly been calling for candidates who already have work visas for China due to difficulties encountered in obtaining new visas and challenges employers face when it comes to deploying expatriate employees. There have also been some instances where companies seeking expansion into China have encountered delays when it comes to carrying out procedures for establishing a business entity and hiring new employees, partially due to challenges faced by business travellers attempting to enter the country.

#### Candidate Trends

In 2020, there was an increase in the number of professionals seeking career change who took an approach that involved prudently considering the notion of waiting until after economic recovery to change jobs. However, given the prospect of a greater number of job openings after the Chinese New Year, it seems likely that those seeking career change will more actively engage in job searches after that time, as is normally the case. Meanwhile, the prospect of entering China for the sake of taking part in employment interviews still poses challenges in wake of COVID-19 outbreaks outside of China. For instance, some Chinese cities and provinces have extended quarantine durations by seven days, and applicants for new visas must still obtain invitation letters. As such, there have been an increasing number of instances where candidates with Chinese visas are hired domestically in China by Japanese companies without having visited headquarters in Japan, upon having taken part in online interviews conducted between China and Japan.

No. of job listings

80% of 2019 Q4

106% of 2020 Q3



Maika Koyanagawa  
General Manager  
JAC Recruitment China  
(Shanghai)



### Signs of recovery in job listing numbers begins to emerge toward the latter half of the quarter

In July, circumstances surrounding COVID-19 became more severe in Hong Kong as the epidemic emerged for a third time. Although the Hong Kong economy had been poised to move in a positive direction, the third wave sparked renewed concerns regarding the prospect of further deterioration of the employment environment amid a prolonged economic downturn and return of uncertainty ahead. By mid-August a measure of serenity was gradually restored as the third wave of the epidemic began to subside. Then in September, a shift back to normalcy ensued despite controls on border crossings and social restrictions remaining in place. However, the likelihood of major airline company in Hong Kong substantially restructuring their operations now seems certain, which has given rise to concerns about the extent to which such restructuring will affect Hong Kong society.

#### Corporate Recruitment Trends

Even though the job market continues to face challenges, signs of improvement are beginning to emerge. For instance, the number of job listings in the third quarter of this year was up by 17% in comparison with the third quarter of 2019 when job listings were down by 38% year on year amid a scenario where protests in Hong Kong were steadily intensifying. Moreover, since mid-August employers have been submitting new job listings and resuming their postings of those listings that had been temporarily on hold.

This is attributable to a situation whereby employers that had been taking a wait-and-see approach have since been able to pinpoint which positions they should fill or otherwise leave vacant as a result of being able to set recruitment strategy, which has involved assessing the extent to which COVID-19 is likely to affect their business operations. The recruitment environment is now one of a buyer's market overall, marked by a tendency for employers to curtail offers made to prospective employees, particularly with respect to salaries, working conditions and other such benefits.

#### Candidate Trends

The aforementioned developments are obviously beginning to affect job seekers in Hong Kong as well. Meanwhile, respective companies have been forging ahead in making various strategic decisions, particularly in terms of downsizing, relocating, and withdrawing from the market. As such, there have been a certain number of job seekers who have embarked on their search for employment upon having been compelled to resign from jobs or amid uncertainties about the future of their current employers. Meanwhile, the unemployment rate has been increasing and the recruitment environment has begun shifting to that of a buyer's market. Amid that scenario, we are seeing an increasing number of candidates who seek to maintain the status quo or who are even willing to accept offers encompassing annual incomes that are lower than those in their previous positions. This is certainly a trend that is unprecedented in the Hong Kong market. Meanwhile, some seeking to make a career change are refraining from actively seeking new employment given that they would like to wait until COVID-19 concerns subside.

**No. of job listings**  
**47% of 2019 Q4**  
**56% of 2020 Q3**



**Kengo Atsumi**  
Managing Director  
JAC Recruitment  
Hong Kong



### Recruitment market showing signs of bottoming out in robust business sectors amid downturn in number of job listings in 2020 Q4 relative to 2020 Q3 and 2019 Q4

South Korea's real GDP is projected to decline by 1.1% in 2020 relative to the previous year, before picking up by 3.0% in 2021, according to the 2020 Economic Outlook report released by the Bank of Korea at the end of November 2020. The prospect of the South Korean economy mounting a recovery was set back amid a roughly 4% year-on-year decrease in private consumption over the entirety of 2020 due to COVID-19. Meanwhile, demand remained constant across certain industries, particularly demand for semiconductors due to capital investment throughout 2020 as telework arrangements became increasingly widespread. Moreover, the South Korean economy is likely to shift into a phase of recovery in 2021 given signs of quantitative improvement with respect to exports apparent since the second half of 2020.

#### Corporate Recruitment Trends

The number of corporate job listings in the fourth quarter remained largely unchanged, having decreased by 2% relative to the previous quarter and having decreased by 20% relative to the fourth quarter of 2019. Although COVID-19 continues to weigh on the recruitment market, the decline in the number of job listings has bottomed out and is now tracing a gradual upward trend. Companies are increasingly taking an aggressive approach to hiring when it comes to certain industries and occupations, amid a conspicuous tendency for employers to increase headcounts in the semiconductor, IoT, and digital sectors, and with respect to junior sales positions. Employers are likely to keep hiring an increasing number of professionals involved with digital transformation (DX) in 2021, amid a situation where some companies are beginning to hire DX-related professionals on a trial basis even in the manufacturing sector for BtoC and BtoB platforms. Meanwhile, an increasing number of companies in South Korea have been conducting initial job interviews online.

#### Candidate Trends

It is likely that professionals will increasingly opt to seek employment in other industries amid a situation where the number of career changers and other job seekers has been climbing since 2019 particularly in the services sector, largely because of COVID-19. In addition, although the South Korean job search market has been relatively calm during the year-end and New Year holidays, career changers and other job seekers are likely to shift into action around the time of the Korean New Year (Seollal) in mid-February 2021. Meanwhile, due to restrictions imposed on movement between Japan and South Korea due to COVID-19, Japan-based South Korean professionals who are seeking career changes have been encountering difficulties when it comes to travelling to South Korea for the purpose of taking part in employment interviews. As such, professionals have been increasingly returning to South Korea in order to search for new employment after having resigned from their positions with companies in Japan.

No. of job listings  
80% of 2019 Q4  
98% of 2020 Q3



Yuichiro Tsuchiyama  
Managing Director  
JAC Recruitment  
Korea





## India

### Employers resuming initiatives to recruit core personnel as corporate economic activity progressively rebounds

Whereas economic activity in India has fallen sharply amid a virtual standstill in corporate operations due to lockdowns throughout India since March 2020, economic activity and consumer spending has been progressively rebounding due to the nation having been incrementally easing lockdown restrictions since July. When it comes to unit sales of automobiles, which stands as a key benchmark for assessing the state of the economy, the number of cars sold has increased by nearly 40% on a year-on-year basis over the months since September 2020.

When it comes to rates of COVID-19 transmission, the number of new cases per day decreased to the 30,000 range in December after having been in 100,000 territory during the height of the epidemic in September. Meanwhile, schools and other educational institutions harbour uncertainties regarding prospects of reopening, and there are prevailing concerns regarding further transmission amid a second wave of COVID-19 partly brought about as a result of the nation having reopened shopping malls and other large commercial establishments and due to the nation operating its metro services. Nevertheless, the prospect of an ongoing decrease in the number of new COVID-19 cases provides hope that India's trajectory of economic recovery will persist.

#### Corporate Recruitment Trends

Nearly 80% of companies in India previously held off on recruitment drives for a time given that the nation's lockdowns had hampered prospects for resuming business and restoring government administration going forward. Since October, however, companies have increasingly been gradually resuming hiring initiatives and the number of job listings has increased by 9% relative to the previous quarter. Meanwhile, certain notable developments have emerged when it comes to recruitment in India. For one, companies have been hiring Indian nationals offering Japanese language proficiency with the aim of mitigating the gap between management and frontline operations given challenges that have arisen with respect to communications with workers on the ground as many Japanese nationals temporarily return to Japan. Also, companies have been resuming recruitment drives seeking candidates for positions related to production management and quality control.

Meanwhile when it comes to recruitment of Japanese nationals, most companies in India have been taking an approach to hiring that involves conducting a series of online interviews with candidates and then adjusting dates on which new hires are to begin employment, which is the same approach used prior to COVID-19. Companies have been showing flexibility particularly when it comes to back office positions where remote work arrangements would not cause disruption. For instance, some companies are having such employees temporarily assume tasks at headquarters in Japan, then having them return to India upon having assessed the status of COVID-19.

#### Candidate Trends

COVID-19 has fuelled an increase in the number of job candidates who would like to work overseas in hopes of developing careers that are not bound to a company. Meanwhile, there has been an increase in the number of professionals registering as recruitment candidates from countries neighbouring Asia who consider employment opportunities in India, where English is used in business settings. This particularly includes those who would like to develop unique and valuable skills by exposing themselves to professional environments undergoing substantial economic growth. On the other hand, professionals seeking career change and others looking for employment in India need to consider the status of COVID-19 and prevailing challenges in obtaining work visas. As such, we have been encountering many instances where prospective candidates thoroughly ready themselves for employment and career change opportunities in India while prudently monitoring the situation taking an approach that involves making a decision on when to change jobs based on prevailing circumstances.

No. of job listings  
99% of 2019 Q4  
109% of 2020 Q3



Kazuo Komaki  
Managing Director  
JAC Recruitment  
India

## Companies are taking a stringent approach to recruitment amid a scenario where the number of new job listings has recovered to levels of the previous year

After having peaked in late July, the number of new COVID-19 cases in Japan trended lower until late October when the count once again reversed course to an upward trajectory, culminating in a new record-high at year-end. There are now concerns that this could once again have a cooling effect on earnings performance in the food services industry as consumers opt not to go out at night and on financial results in the transportation and tourism industries which had been showing signs of recovery thanks to Japan's GoTo Travel campaign and other government policy initiatives. On the other hand, Japan has been experiencing recovering demand for products such as automobiles, semiconductors, construction machinery, and agricultural equipment, due to developments that include a rebounding Chinese economy, an accelerated shift to electric vehicles (EV), and increasing use of online communications. In related fields, manufacturers that produce finished products, materials and producer goods have been encountering increases in overseas production and exports. According to the Business Outlook Survey released on December 10 by Japan's Cabinet Office, the Business Sentiment Index (BSI) for the three months of October to December stood at plus 11.6, up from plus 2.0 in the July to September period. Meanwhile, there was a marked disparity in sentiment of SMEs relative to that of large companies in that the index for SMEs was minus 15.5, which indicates that many managers still predict economic downturn. Meanwhile, whereas SMEs in particular remain subject to a complex business environment, many enterprises of all sizes concur that there is a shortage of human resources.

### Corporate Recruitment Trends

Japan's nationwide ratio of job offers to applicants for November 2020 was at 1.06 applicants per job offer, which constitutes an increase of 0.02 of a percentage point relative to August, but is 0.51 of a percentage point lower than in the same period last year, indicating that the labour market environment in Japan differs substantially from circumstances prevailing up until last year. Meanwhile, companies in Japan have increasingly been unable to set hiring targets given that COVID-19 has been inhibiting their recruitment efforts. Results of a private-sector survey on recruitment prospects for university and graduate school students slated to graduate in 2022 reflect that state of affairs in that the number of companies indicating intentions to reduce such recruitment stood at 11.6% for an increase of 4 percentage points relative to the previous year, and those indicating that they were unsure stood at 26.1% for an increase of 6.4 percentage points. The number of new job listings for positions at Japanese MNCs overseas filed with JAC Recruitment Japan increased by 14% relative to the same quarter of the previous year, yet declined to 85% the number of such listings filed in the July to September quarter. Meanwhile, employment statistics compiled by JAC Recruitment Japan mainly pertain to managerial professionals and specialists in respective fields, with findings varying somewhat from ratios of job offers to applicants representing Japan's entire labour market. We find that employers are seeking professionals who are familiar with circumstances overseas, particularly those who have experience working abroad. Accordingly, companies mainly in Japan's manufacturing sector have been seeking candidates who are capable of enhancing support systems that help facilitate greater autonomy among subsidiaries overseas, and who are also capable of addressing risks that are likely to emerge in the post-COVID-19 era, such as with respect to supply chains, legal affairs and taxation matters. Employers are also increasingly seeking talent in the digital realm with respect to candidates in R&D in terms of facilitating collaborative efforts internationally in pioneering fields of business such as computer-aided software engineering (CASE) and Internet of things (IoT) technologies.

### Candidate Trends

During the October to December quarter, the number of new job seekers in Japan (registered professionals with overseas business experience) increased substantially to levels 12% higher than in the previous quarter and 40% higher than in the same quarter of the previous year. Amid that scenario, we have noticed a conspicuous tendency among job seekers to take a cautious approach in terms of deciding whether or not to make career changes depending on situations at hand. One factor underpinning that trend is seemingly the notion that people now have more time and opportunities to seek consultation regarding career change given that employees are working from home and there is greater prevalence of tools for online communication. Employers should approach hiring efforts premised on the assumption that they are likely to encounter substantial lead times extending from the candidate recruitment phase to when such candidates join the company, amid an employment market offering ample options in terms of there being many professionals equipped with knowledge and experience in the aforementioned highly specialized fields, overseas business and other such areas.

**No. of job listings**  
**114% of 2019 Q4**  
**85% of 2020 Q3**  
(Employment involving overseas business operations of Japanese companies)



**Kenji Sahara**  
Chief Analyst  
JAC Recruitment  
(Japan)

**Note:** We may intentionally seek a lower number of employment listings in certain national recruitment markets due to factors that could include changes in business sentiment or strategies being taken with respect to a certain country. For instance, we may opt to focus on listings for positions offering high annual salaries or on those in specialist categories. As such, trends that we have stated in terms of increases or decreases in numbers of employment listings do not directly reflect actual economic performance achieved by the respective countries.

■ JAC Recruitment Co., Ltd.

Established in 1988, JAC Recruitment is Japan's largest recruitment consultancy listed the First Section of the Tokyo Stock Exchange. Its recruitment services focus on employment needs with respect to specialists and managerial roles, enlisting a dual-approach business model whereby individual consultants work simultaneously with employers and job candidates. One of JAC Recruitment's strengths is that of arranging placements of professionals equipped with international business experience. As such, more than half of its revenue is generated from placing global talent in the international business operations of foreign MNCs and Japanese companies in Japan. JAC is a global recruitment consultancy currently operating in 11 countries with 24 offices. Brands under the company umbrella include JAC International specializing in recruitment involving foreign MNCs, C.C. Consulting which operates the CareerCross recruitment website, and JAC Recruitment Asia offering recruitment services in the UK, Germany and eight countries throughout Asia.

In Japan: (Corporate website) <https://corp.jac-recruitment.jp/en/>  
(Recruitment website, in Japanese) <http://www.jac-recruitment.jp>

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**Please feel free to contact JAC Recruitment per the above contact information for further details on the recruitment market for placement of white collar professionals. Members of the press may request interviews conducted in-person, by telephone, or other means.**