

Virtual Internship Statistics and Trends: A 2020 COVID-19 Impact Report

COVID-19 presents an unprecedented challenge for recruiting teams across the globe. We turned to current college students to find out how leading organizations are adjusting their early talent hiring processes, taking their summer internships virtual, or canceling altogether. Here are the virtual internship statistics you need to know.

COVID-19 has [changed the way recruiting teams operate \(https://yello.co/blog/how-covid-19-changed-the-face-of-recruitment-overnight/\)](https://yello.co/blog/how-covid-19-changed-the-face-of-recruitment-overnight/) overnight. As employers adjust to remote work, adapt budgets to reflect the current reality, and transition to an [all-virtual hiring model \(https://yello.co/blog/virtual-recruiting-resources-coronavirus/\)](https://yello.co/blog/virtual-recruiting-resources-coronavirus/), many campus recruiters are faced with a challenging question: what will their company's [internship program \(https://yello.co/blog/8-ways-improve-internship-program/\)](https://yello.co/blog/8-ways-improve-internship-program/) look like this year?

And for college students, uncertainty about the current economy prompts questions too. Will young job seekers struggle to find employment post-graduation? Will internship opportunities dwindle as employers cut back on hiring? Will student interns still be able to get the academic credit they need to graduate, and the work experience they need to be successful as a full-time employee?

To answer these questions, we conducted a survey of over 900 current college students to find out how their upcoming internship opportunities have been affected by the global pandemic. The results show that some employers are canceling internships altogether, while others are moving to a [remote model \(https://yello.co/resource/iguide/campus-recruiting/harnessing-technology-to-power-your-2019-campus-recruiting-program/\)](https://yello.co/resource/iguide/campus-recruiting/harnessing-technology-to-power-your-2019-campus-recruiting-program/).

Take a look at these internship statistics to inform your own company's plan for 2020 and beyond:

Key insights include:

- Of the employers who canceled internships, **64% offered no compensation**.
- **85% of students don't plan to list canceled internships** on their resume, citing lack of gained experience as their main reasoning.
- Students are sympathetic to COVID-19's impact on employers. Of the students whose internships were canceled, **70% say they're disappointed but understanding of the situation**, while 26% say they're upset.

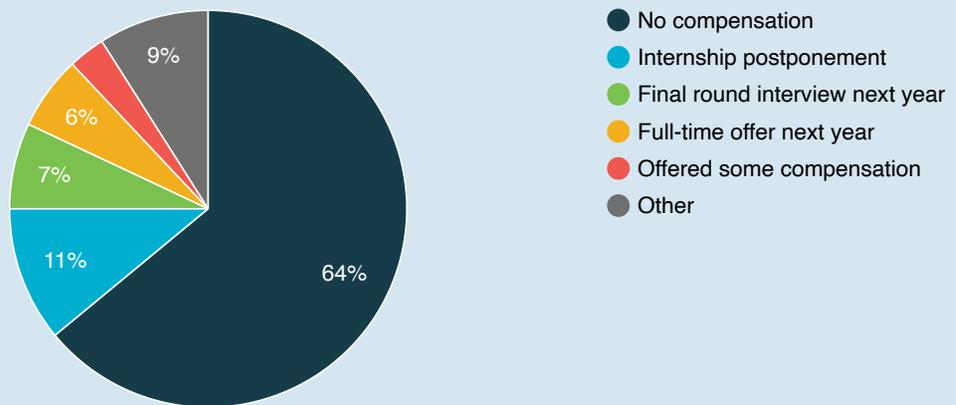
- Of the students with virtual internships, **67% want daily check-ins** with their manager.

Some employers are canceling internships altogether

The coronavirus outbreak has changed nearly everything about the way we work. And for an internship coordinator, these changes may raise concerns about how to properly onboard a new intern class, offer hiring managers the tools they need to mentor their direct reports, and make sure interns gain enough work experience in the process.

For some employers, these concerns have led to internship program cancellations. Many student respondents said their summer internship has already been canceled, and many are going unpaid:

Will you be compensated for your canceled internship?



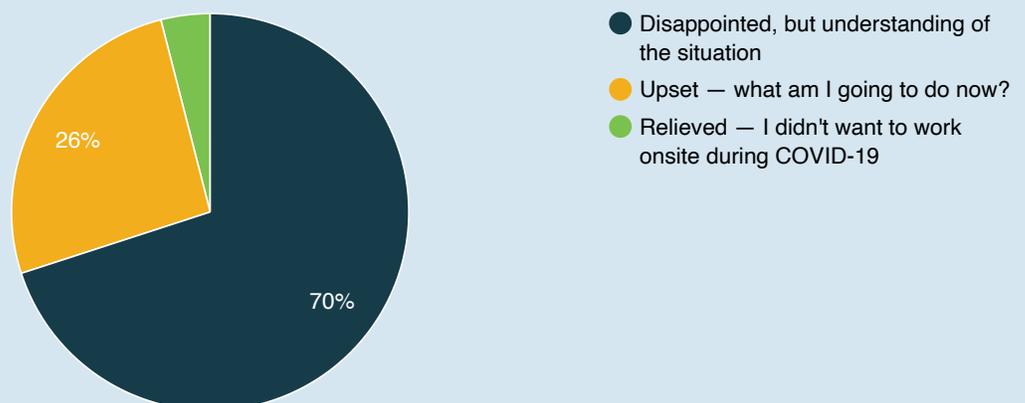
“We remember how difficult the 2008 recession was for both employers and student job seekers, and we know that the COVID-19 outbreak poses similar challenges. The good news is that today’s technology makes hiring, onboarding, and remote work easier than ever before. As companies big and small consider internship next steps, we encourage them to adapt by offering remote options rather than canceling internships altogether. Continuing to invest in early talent development is crucial to the success of the future workforce, and is key to ensuring a lasting talent pipeline for your organization.”

— Jason Weingarten, Yello Co-Founder & CEO

The student response to canceled internship positions

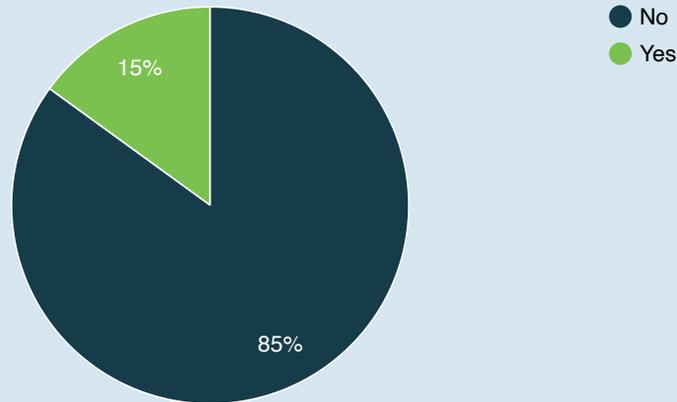
The study shows that while students are disappointed about the lack of employment, they’re sympathetic to COVID-19’s impact on companies. They’re still hesitant to return to work for that employer though, as they’re worried about job security:

How do you feel about your canceled internship?



And **85% of students don't plan to list canceled internships on their resume**, citing lack of gained experience as their main reasoning:

Will you list your canceled internship on your resume?



“We understand the hesitation students may have in listing canceled internships on their resume. But we encourage young job seekers to consider including them, at least until they secure another internship or full-time offer. Even though no work was completed, these canceled internships show that an employer was interested in you, and that you stood out from other candidates. You earned a coveted spot at that company, and that’s worth noting when applying for future roles.”

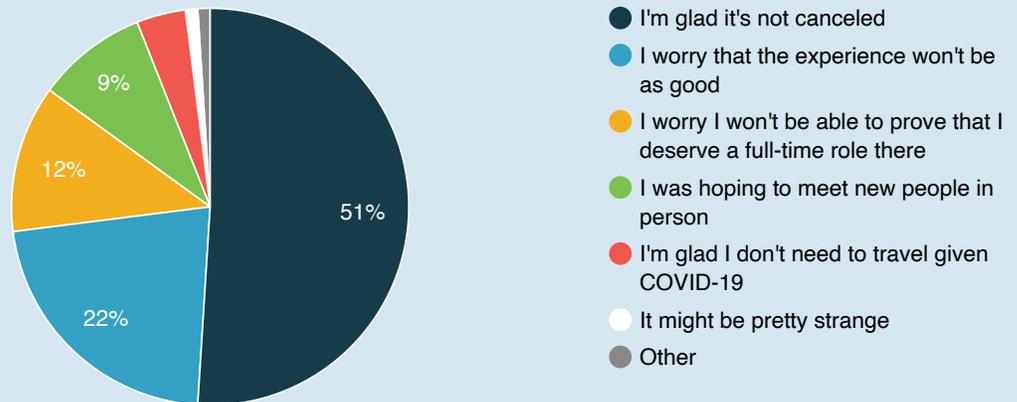
— Jason Weingarten, Yello Co-Founder & CEO

Other employers are opting for a virtual internship experience

While some companies have hit pause on their paid or unpaid internships, others have pivoted to a remote experience. With a little creativity and virtual technology, (<https://yello.co/blog/virtual-recruiting-resources-coronavirus/>), these employers are giving summer interns the opportunity to start their career from home.

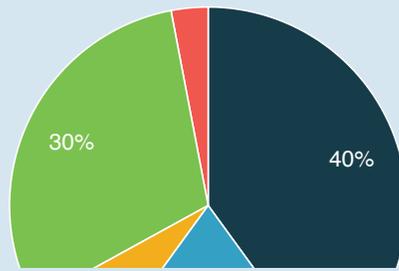
How did students react when they heard their internship would be remote? Most were grateful to still be working safely at home, while others were concerned that a virtual program wouldn't offer enough work experience to be a strong candidate for a full-time offer down the road:

How do you feel about moving to a virtual internship?

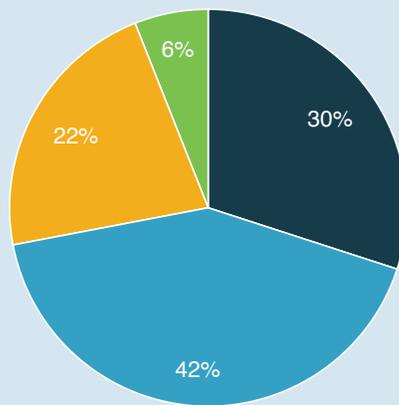


And while they may not get to sit next to each other in the office, college students still crave frequent communication with their hiring managers. **67% want to touch base daily**, with a majority saying a 5-10 minute check in is fine, with a once/week longer one-on-one:

How often would you like to have 1:1s with your manager?



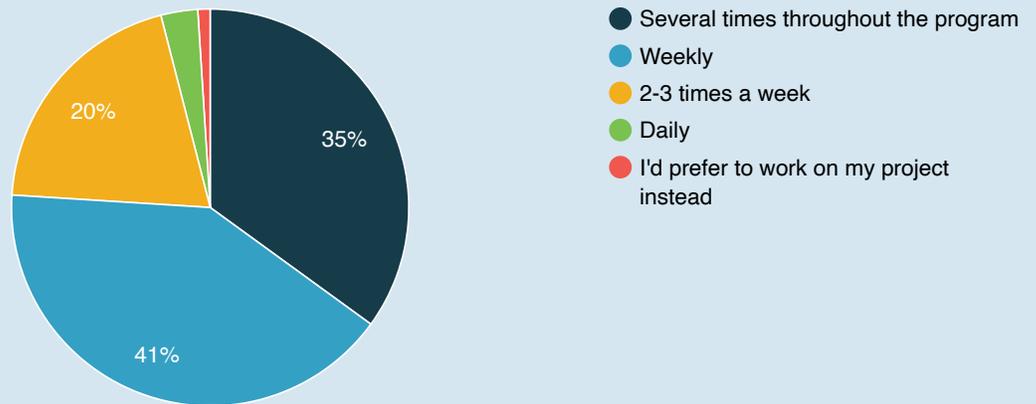
- Daily 5-10 minute check-ins but once a week for an hour
- Daily 5-10 minute check-ins
- Daily 30-60 minutes
- Weekly 30-60 minutes
- Other



- Yes — frequently
- Yes — every now and then
- Doesn't matter
- No — prefer phone or chat

For internship coordinators, offering meaningful career development programming is a crucial part of any intern's experience. That fact still rings true when going virtual — students want to gather and learn together as an intern class, but no more than once per week:

How often should there be virtual programming for the whole intern class?



1. GO virtual if you can.

These are difficult times for employers and job seekers alike. But if your company can swing it, keep your internship opportunities in place rather than canceling. The future workforce will thank you, and your employer brand and talent pipeline will benefit long-term.

2. Be communicative.

No matter what you decide, maintain strong relationships with candidates and communicate changes as you know about them. Whether you're canceling, adjusting paid internships to unpaid opportunities, or switching to remote work, you owe students a clear explanation.

3. Advocate for your interns.

For college students who are just starting their career, this uncertain time can cause a lot of anxiety about future job security. Serve as a mentor to interns, offering to review resumes, write a letter of recommendation or connect them with others in your network. Even if you can't offer students employment right now, being an ally goes a long way — and they'll remember you for it later.

4. Plan virtual intern events.

Virtual happy hours, fun trivia challenges or career development webinars with your company's leadership team can go a long way in making students feel connected to your organization and to other interns.

5. Educate your hiring managers.

Remote work is an adjustment for everyone — not just interns. Make sure hiring managers have the right tools and support to manage their direct reports from afar. Arm them with onboarding templates that have been altered to our account for virtual work, and ensure

they're scheduling regular check-ins to connect with their interns.

****Methodology:** Yello partnered with SurveyMonkey to survey 913 current college students in the United States. The survey was conducted from April 10-15, 2020.*