

# 今非昔比

*jin1 fei1 xi1 bi3*

A survey found university graduates nowadays earn less than their counterparts of two decades ago. In 1995, the starting salary for new grads was about HK\$16,300 a month; now it is HK\$13,900.

Salaries are a function of supply and demand so ups and downs are not really anything to be surprised about, except, of course, when you are a fresh graduate. In any event, the idiom “今非昔比” (*jin1 fei1 xi1 bi3*) has been used to describe the falling salaries.

“今” (*jin1*) is “the present,” “非” (*fei1*) “not,” “昔” (*xi1*) “former times,” “the past” and “比” (*bi3*) “compare,” “contrast.” Literally, “今非昔比” (*jin1 fei1 xi1 bi3*) is “the present cannot compare with the past.”

In this idiom, cannot “比” (*bi3*) – compare – is used in the sense that the past is better than the present, not that the two things are different. “今非昔比”

## Idiom by Lon Yan

(*jin1 fei1 xi1 bi3*) therefore means “time has changed and the good old days are gone.”

The survey said that adding to the woes of the graduates is the 176 percent rise in home prices over that period compared to 37 percent for inflation.

This of course, means that the dream of owning a home will likely remain a dream for the young generation for a long time, so home affordability is also a case of “今非昔比” (*jin1 fei1 xi1 bi3*).

But everything has two sides. People who saw their property values rise 176 percent will certainly not lament about “今非昔比” (*jin1 fei1 xi1 bi3*).

### Terms containing the character “比” (*bi3*) include:

比較 (*bi3 jiao4*) – to compare; to contrast

比賽 (*bi3 sai4*) – a match; a race

比例 (*bi3 li4*) – a ratio; a proportion

比堅尼 (*bi3 jian1 ni2*) – a bikini