



RESULTS FOR CANADIAN LAW SCHOOLS

STUDY OF
LAW SCHOOL ALUMNI
EMPLOYMENT & SATISFACTION

EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES THREE YEARS AFTER GRADUATION

CLASS OF 2018

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Class of 2018
Study of Law School Employment & Satisfaction
Employment Outcomes Three Years After Graduation

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Selected Canadian Results

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Executive Summary

The survey responses were provided by 341 Class of 2018 alumni from four Canadian law schools, collected between September 2021 and December 2021.

Employment Profile

High employment levels at the three-year mark: 97% of respondents reported they were employed at the time of the survey (a modest increase from the Class of 2017's 95%). Nearly all graduates – 99% – reported full-time employment, with 90% employed in “permanent or long-term” positions (i.e., lasting more than one year). Law firms were the most frequently cited work setting (64%), followed by businesses or corporations (11%), and government (10%). Most unemployed alumni were actively seeking employment. *[pp. 20-22]*

Annual Compensation¹

Annual compensation varied: 59% of respondents reported annual compensation of over \$100,000. The most frequently single selected annual compensation level was \$101,000-\$150,000 (45%). While 68% of employed males reported incomes over \$100,000, only 51% of employed women did so. *[pp. 26-28]*

Mobility

Alumni have held multiple sequential jobs: Graduates reported they have held one or two sequential positions since graduation at comparable rates (38% and 39%); 22% reported they have held three or more. *[pp. 30-33]*

Low levels seeking a move: 16% of employed alumni reported they were actively seeking a new job. *[pp. 34-35]*

¹All figures are in Canadian dollars.

Work Setting and Career Track

Focus on law firm positions dips following graduation: While the majority of alumni had considered practicing in a firm during law school (82% in a small or medium firm and 70% in a large firm), a lower percentage (64%) reported currently practicing in a law firm setting. Of these, 66% intended to pursue partnership. *[pp.36-45]*

Litigation is the most frequently cited practice area: Law firm respondents selected “litigation” as their primary practice area at rates double that of those selecting “transactional” – 60% vs. 29%. *[p. 46]*

Dimensions of Satisfaction

Decline in overall average job satisfaction levels: 35% of Class of 2018 alumni reported being “extremely satisfied” with their current job, falling from 43% of 2017 graduates; 45% were “somewhat satisfied.” *[pp.47-48]*

Remote work: In contrast to the Class of 2017 study, graduates working solely from home reported slightly higher overall job satisfaction compared to those working in a hybrid system or 100% at the office. *[p.49]*

Relative organizational satisfaction metrics: Alumni were most satisfied with “attitude or “fit” with their organization’s culture,” “level of responsibility you have,” and “job security,” while “support for mental health and well-being” – one of the new factors explored in this year’s study – and “civic/public service opportunities” received the lowest ratings. *[pp. 50-54]*

Key skills for practice: Alumni identified “ethics and professional responsibility” followed by “teamwork” (on option for the first time this year) and “litigation/legal skills” (including legal research, analysis, writing and trial advocacy) as the most important skill sets for their current positions. *[pp. 55-57]*

Efficacy of law school preparation: Alumni were most satisfied with how well law school prepared them in “ethics and professional responsibility” followed by “litigation/legal skills” such as legal research, analysis, writing, and trial advocacy and “teamwork,” but they were significantly less satisfied

with their preparation in “law practice management skills” such as administrative operations, management, and project management. [pp. 58-63]

Experiential Learning

Participation levels and types: 93% of graduates had participated in at least one experiential learning opportunity during law school, with 59% citing legal practice skills or simulation courses, followed by 52% listing individual representation clinics, and 50% listing externships, internships, and/or field placements; substantially fewer participated in policy/issue clinics (20%). Among clinic participants, participation rates in one semester and two semester clinics were essentially the same (40% and 39%); 18% participated for more than two semesters. [pp. 64-69]

Discussions during employment interviews: 45% of employed graduates reported they substantially discussed their experiential courses during employment interviews, while nearly one third reported having limited discussions; approximately one quarter did not discuss them at all. [pp. 70-71]

Post-Graduate Law School Engagement

NEW: Preferred methods for law school engagement: Alumni identified networking events and mentoring programs as their top choices, with service in alumni associations and financial contributions listed at much lower rates. Interestingly, 3% of alumni reported they did not want to remain engaged at all with their law school following graduation. [pp. 72-74]

NEW: Barriers to engagement: Alumni listed limited time (52%) and location/geography (42%), as their top barriers to engaging with their law school. Approximately one quarter or less of participating graduates reported lack of interest (27%) or student debt (16%) as barriers. [pp. 75-76]

Limited post-graduation use of law school resources: Only 10% of respondents requested post-graduate career assistance from their law school; of those, the Career Services Office was the primary point of contact, followed by faculty members. Very few reached out to their alumni office or other administrative offices for this purpose. [pp. 76]

Financing Legal Education - The View Three Years After Graduation

Law school debt represents the majority of remaining total educational debt: While total reported educational debt ranged from none to \$300,000, the average was \$39,227 and the median was \$18,000, with the vast majority of debt – 83% – attributable to law school. At the two extremes, only 12% reported having more than \$100,000 total remaining educational debt, while 39% reported no remaining educational debt. *[pp. 78-82]*

Outstanding educational debt varied by work setting: Those working in private law firms and business/corporations reported the highest average level of outstanding debt. *[p. 80]*

Alumni feel the weight of their educational debt: Graduates reported the amount of debt they carry has influenced job choice and major life choices, including whether to purchase a home, deciding where to live, when to have children, and what sector to work in. *[p. 83]*

Impact of COVID-19 and Economic Crisis

Variable Effects: Nearly two thirds (61%) of graduates reported the pandemic and economic crisis affected their mental health and well-being, 21% changed jobs, 12% changed office locations, while 15% reported a positive professional effect. Those reporting no impact dropped substantially from 32% for the prior study to 15%. *[pp. 84-85]*

Differentiated impact by cohort: Female graduates reported these issues affected their mental health and well-being at markedly higher rates than males. Those working in government reported the impact on mental health at higher rates than their peers in other sectors, while graduates working in business/corporations reported the highest job change levels. *[pp. 85-86]*

About The NALP Foundation

The NALP Foundation is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization; our mission is to improve the quality and delivery of legal services by advancing excellence in strategic and practical organizational leadership, effective management of legal personnel, professional development of lawyers, access to and diversity within the profession and ethical practices and professionalism. For over 25 years, The NALP Foundation has conducted unique benchmark research, and delivered exceptional educational programming and publications based on this research. For more information on The NALP Foundation and our research and programming, please visit www.nalpfoundation.org.

About NALP

The National Association for Law Placement (NALP) is an association of over 2,500 legal career professionals who advise law students, lawyers, law offices, and law schools in North America and beyond. What brings NALP members together is a common belief in three fundamental things. First, all law students and lawyers should benefit from a fair and ethical hiring process. Second, law students and lawyers are more successful when supported by professional development and legal career professionals. Third, a diverse and inclusive legal profession best serves clients and our communities. That's why NALP members work together every day to collect and publish accurate legal employment data and information, and champion education and standards for recruiting, professional and career development, and diversity and inclusion. For over 50 years, NALP has played an essential role in the success of its members and the lawyers and law students they serve.

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