

5th Year Career Development Survey Class of 2003

Every spring the Career Development Office solicits information from our graduates five years after their departure from the law school through our 5th year Career Development Survey. We commenced surveying the Class of 2003 in May 2008 and ultimately received an 82% response rate.¹

The purpose of this report is to provide a snapshot of the career experiences of the Class of 2003 in their first five years since graduating YLS. In order to provide a complete picture, this report includes statistics from two sources. The statistics reflected in Section I of this report are based on information provided to CDO from the Class of 2003 upon their graduation from law school or upon completion of a judicial clerkship. The statistics reflected in Sections II – VII of this report are derived from Class of 2003 responses to the 5th Year Career Development Survey.

I. First Employment²

Employer Type

Law firms and judicial clerkships were the most popular destinations of our graduates immediately after law school. Smaller percentages commenced their careers in public service, academia, business, or pursued further education.

Because so many of our graduates clerk, it is also relevant to know our graduates' first non-clerkship job choices. Based on those statistics, 75% worked in law firms, while 14% worked in the public service.

Class of 2003	First Job	First Non-Clerkship Job
Total Respondents	216	166
Law Firms	44% (96)	75% (124)
Judicial Clerkship	40% (86)	NA
Public Service	7% (15)	14% (23)
Academia³	1% (3)	5% (8)
Business	2% (5)	3% (5)
Advanced Degree	3% (6)	4% (6)

¹ Although we received an overall response rate of 82%, not every respondent answered every question. As a result, some statistics reflect response rates less than the overall response rate for the Class.

² The statistics reflected in this section are derived from information provided by students to CDO either upon their graduation from law school or upon completion of a judicial clerkship.

³ Includes teaching, research, academic fellowships and academic administration.

Gender Differences in First Employer Type

When looking at gender and first employment choices, more women commenced their careers in law firms and public service, while more men clerked for judges and entered business careers.

Class of 2003⁴	Women	Men
Total Respondents	108 (53% of all respondents)	97 (47% of all respondents)
Law Firms	53% (57)	40% (39)
Judicial Clerkship	37% (40)	47% (46)
Public Service	8% (9)	6% (6)
Academia	1% (1)	2% (2)
Business	1% (1)	4% (4)

Reason for Leaving First Non-Clerkship Position

According to the 5th Year Career Development survey, the two most frequently reported reasons for graduates leaving their first non-clerkship positions were professional and career development (23%) and work/life balance priorities (17%).

II. Employment Five Years After YLS Graduation

Employer Type

When comparing first non-clerkship job choices with where the Class of 2003 is working five years after graduation, fewer graduates are with law firms five years after graduation and more graduates are in public service, academia, and business.

Class of 2003	5 Years After Graduation	First Non-clerkship Employment
Law Firms	58% (72)	75% (124)
Public Service	24% (30)	14% (23)
Academia	14% (18)	5% (8)
Business	4% (5)	3% (5)

⁴ According to information reported by YLS to the ABA, 53% of the Class of 2003 was comprised of women.

Gender Differences in Current Employer Type

A slightly greater percentage of men are in law firms and a slightly greater percentage of women are in public interest five years after graduate. Otherwise, men and women are similarly represented in other fields.

Class of 2003	Women	Men
Total Respondents	70 (56% of all respondents)	55 (44% of all respondents)
Law Firms	54% (38)	62% (34)
Public Service	27% (19)	20% (11)
Academia	14% (10)	14% (8)
Business	4% (3)	4% (2)

Employment Locations

Five years after graduation, more than half of the Class of 2003 resides in either New York, DC or California, with DC just edging out New York as the city of choice.

Top Three Employment Locations for Class of 2003	5 Years after Graduation
Washington, D.C.	22% (26)
New York City	21% (25)
California (including all cities)	14% (17)

Work Schedules

The most commonly reported range of work hours was 2,000-2,500 hours per year, with 61% of those in law firms, 43% in public service, 45% in academia and 50% of those in business reporting working hours in that range. Only 5% of respondents report working part-time.

Annual Salaries

Not surprisingly, law firm respondents report the highest incomes, with 73% of those in law firms reporting salaries over \$150,000. Half of the respondents in public service and 40% of those in business report earning between \$75,000 – 149,999. Among academics, 39% earn between \$30,000 – 74,999 and 50% earn between \$75,000 - 149,999.

Plan to Stay with Current Employer

With regard to how long they plan to stay with their current employer, the most common response from graduates was that they plan to stay for 1-3 more years, with 42% of respondents selecting that option. One-fifth (20%) plan to stay for less than one more year, 16% plan to stay for 3-5 more years and 24% plan to stay for more than five years.

Job Satisfaction

Respondents were asked to indicate their overall satisfaction with their current employment. Almost half of the class is “very satisfied” with their current position and 30% are “satisfied.” As in prior years, law firm respondents are less likely to state that they are “very satisfied” with their jobs as compared to those in other sectors. Only 28% of those in law firms are “very satisfied”, as compared to 70% of those in public service, 67% of those in academia, and 80% of those in business.

Class of 2003	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Not Satisfied
Overall Satisfaction	46% (57)	30% (37)	23% (29)	1% (2)
Law Firms	28% (20)	36% (26)	33% (24)	3% (2)
Public Service	70% (21)	20% (6)	10% (3)	--
Academia	67% (12)	22% (4)	11% (2)	--
Business	80% (4)	20% (1)	--	--

Men express slightly greater job satisfaction than women – 80% of men are either satisfied or very satisfied with their current positions as compared to 70% of women.

Respondents were also asked to rate their level of job satisfaction with regard to 12 specific aspects of their work. Overall, respondents are most satisfied with the collegiality of their colleagues, with 51% of respondents indicating that they are “very satisfied” with that area of their work.

Among those in law firms, 23% indicated that they are not satisfied with their ability to balance work and life. In the Classes of 1996-2000, an average of 40% of law firm respondents stated that they were not satisfied with their work life balance. Other areas of dissatisfaction among law firm practitioners are mentor availability (16% not satisfied) and control over work (13% not satisfied).

Public service respondents expressed the greatest dissatisfaction with their compensation (23% not satisfied).

III. Public Service Employment

Not factoring judicial clerkships, almost one-third of respondents (29%) have worked for a public service employer at some point in the five years since graduation.

IV. Job Changes

On average, respondents have changed jobs twice in the five years since graduation, not including judicial clerkships. While 37% are still in their first non-clerkship job, 46% are in their second job, 14% are in their third job, and 2% are in their fourth job.

Among graduates whose first non-clerkship position was with a large law firm, 63% left that position at some point within the first five years after graduating. Of those 63%, 24% accepted work with another large firm, 42% went to federal government, 13% went into business, 4% went to a smaller law firm, 13% went into academia, and 4% went to a non profit.

V. Pro Bono

Respondents were asked to report their average pro bono hours per year in their current employment. Among those in law firms, 36% devote over 100 hours to pro bono per year and 23% devote 51-100 hours.

Class of 2003	Law Firm Respondents	Business Respondents
over 100 hours	36% (25)	--
51 - 100 hours	23% (16)	--
26 - 50 hours	16% (11)	--
1 - 25 hours	15% (10)	100% (4)
0 hours	10% (7)	--

The survey inquired about the factors that have contributed to and limited respondents' *pro bono* hours. Respondents ranked personal satisfaction, followed by sense of professional obligation and employer encouragement as the factors most contributing to their *pro bono* hours. Workload demands and employer billable hour expectations were selected as the two most important factors that have limited their *pro bono* hours.

Respondents were also asked to select the activities at Yale Law School that positively influenced their *pro bono* commitment. As with all prior class years surveyed, the clinics had the most positive influence.

YLS Activities Positively Influencing <i>Pro Bono</i>	Class of 2003
clinics	37% (25)
summer or term-time public interest work	22% (15)
public interest lectures and programs	25% (17)
public service student organizations	16% (11)

Finally, respondents were asked the following question: "Has an employer's strong *pro bono* policies and commitment contributed to your decision to work for that employer?" Two-thirds (65%) responded yes.

VI. Debt

At graduation, almost half of the Class (48%) reported a debt burden of more than \$75,000. Twenty-one percent reported using the Career Options Assistance Program (COAP) at some point since graduation. Almost half of respondents (43%) believe that the need to pay off their debt affected their legal career choices.

Debt Burden at Graduation	Class of 2003
less than \$5,000	22% (31)
\$5,000 - 24,999	6% (8)
\$25,000 - 75,000	24% (33)
over \$75,000	48% (66)
Percent of respondents who used COAP	21% (30)
Percent of respondents who said the need to pay off debt affected their legal career choices	43% (60)

VII. Retrospective

Respondents were asked to indicate why they decided to attend law school. The three most popular choices were to create career options, to engage in the intellectual challenges of law, and to enter a career in public service.

Why did you attend law school? <i>(Select as many as apply)</i>	Class of 2003
To create career options	30% (91)
To defer making a choice about my career	8% (25)
To engage in the intellectual challenges of law	29% (87)
To enter a career in public service	20% (60)
To establish a lucrative career	8% (23)
Other	4% (13)

The survey asked respondents, “When you began law school, in what area(s) did you envision working five years after you graduated?” Respondents were able to select one or more choices. Close to half the class (47%) selected public service, 19% selected academia, 15% selected law firm practice and 9% selected business. Comparing these responses to where graduates actually work five years after graduation demonstrates that more graduates are in law firms and fewer graduates are in public service than what they planned.

Class of 2003	Where will you work 5 years after graduation? <i>(Select as many as apply)</i>	Actual employment 5 years after graduation
Law Firm	15% (33)	58% (72)
Public Service	47% (103)	24% (30)
Academia	19% (43)	14% (18)
Business	9% (19)	4% (5)
No Idea	10% (21)	N/A