

Most Law School Students Don't Have a Good Job after Graduation



Summary: A recent report indicates that less than half of law school graduates have a good job lined up soon after graduation.

A recent report by AccessLex Institute on law school graduates found that only 44 percent of respondents had a “good job” upon graduation. The 44 percent had graduated from law school during the Great Recession between 2009 and 2017.

AccessLex, a nonprofit organization that focuses on improving access to legal education, released their survey titled “Examining Value, Measuring Engagement: A National Study of the Long-Term Outcomes of a Law Degree.” The [ABA Journal](#) reports that the survey questioned over 10,000 adults with a minimum bachelor’s degree obtained between 1941 and 2017. Of those that responded to the survey, 813 had Juris Doctorates and 63 percent had practiced law. Of those with JD’s, 182 had additional advanced degrees.

Twenty-six percent of the post-recession graduates claimed it took them over a year to find a good job. Compare this to the pre-recession graduates, of which only 10 percent indicated it took over a year to find a good job.

The survey also asked about student loans and the amount respondents borrowed. Of those who graduated between 2010 and 2017, 60 percent claim to have borrowed over \$100,000 to obtain their law degree. Of those that graduated between 1990 and 1999 and borrowed over \$100,000 for their legal education, 26 percent responded. A minimal 4 percent borrowed over \$100,000 who had graduated between 1980 and 1989.

Focusing on those who borrowed over \$100,000, a strong 42 percent would go to law school again if given a do-over. However, only 23 percent of those who borrowed the money felt that their law degrees were worth it.

The report went on to state, “Higher costs and difficulty finding good jobs have raised the question about the true value of a law degree. Conventional estimates of the value of a law degree use traditional economic metrics, such as employment rates and income amounts. While these are important factors in evaluating the return on investment for graduates, they do not fully capture the value of an education – and specifically, a legal education, which more appropriately includes an examination of individual well-being, employee engagement and perceptions of degree utility.”

Overall, a legal education was deemed to be a valuable one, second to a medical doctorate degree. Over half of those surveyed, whether they earned their degree before or after the recession, would encourage others to pursue law school. Those with JD’s also reported being engaged in their work with only 8 percent claiming to be “actively disengaged.”

Financially, a legal career is not as plentiful as would be expected. The survey found that 48 percent of JD respondents were thriving, but 35 percent were struggling and 17 percent were suffering. In comparison, 55 percent of JDs who no longer practice law are reportedly thriving, but 43 percent of those who were practicing were thriving. This appears to indicate that working in a field other than the law will provide greater financial well-being. The reasons for this vary but may include the student loan amounts that law school students find themselves with at the end of law school.

Do you think a legal career is a dying career? Share your thoughts with us in the comments below.

To learn more about job placements for law school graduates, read these articles:

- [Surprising Law School Job Placement Rankings](#)
- [Law Schools Starting Firms to Help Graduates Get Jobs](#)
- [10 Law Schools Sanctioned by the ABA](#)

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