

STATE OF THE LEGAL FIELD SURVEY

*Insights from BARBRI's first annual survey of law students,
law school faculty and attorneys.*

BACKGROUND

Widely regarded as the defacto choice for bar review among law students, BARBRI has led this area of legal education for nearly 50 years. Now the company supports all stages of the legal life cycle – from pre-law students and practicing attorneys to professionals in related fields seeking certifications and additional training.

BARBRI's evolution is not accidental. The learning experts at BARBRI adapted to changes in the legal field that began shortly after the 2008 recession. The number of first-year students who enrolled in law school fell to 37,924 in 2014 – a 28-percent drop from an all-time high of 52,488 students who began law school in 2010 and the lowest level in 41 years – according to the American Bar Association (ABA). Law student education loan debt is up. Industry influencers and the president of the United States have argued that law school should be shortened from three years to two years. And law firms aren't hiring new attorneys at the same rate as they used to, making for a tough job market.

OBJECTIVES

To better understand how the industry can reconcile these interrelated trends and still thrive, BARBRI commissioned a first-of-its-kind “State of the Legal Field” survey that the company plans to repeat every year. The BARBRI report is the only one ever to interview the three groups most closely associated with the field – law students, law school faculty and practicing attorneys.

The annual BARBRI tracking study will evaluate industry perceptions about the state of the legal field. Specifically, BARBRI will establish benchmarks related to:

- Perceptions of law students' preparedness to enter the workforce upon graduation (skill assessment, areas for improvement, etc.).
- Employment expectations (time to find positions, salary, etc.).
- Employment trends (number of jobs, types of jobs, firm sizes, etc.)
- Law degree ROI (debt repayment, debt justified by income, salary expectations versus reality, time to train recent law school graduates, etc.)

METHODOLOGY

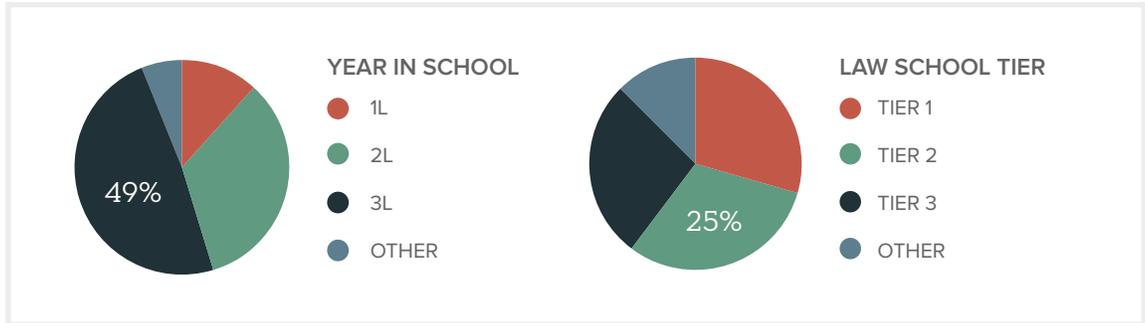
An independent research firm specializing in the legal industry conducted more than 1,500 online quantitative surveys among the following audiences:



SAMPLE DESCRIPTORS

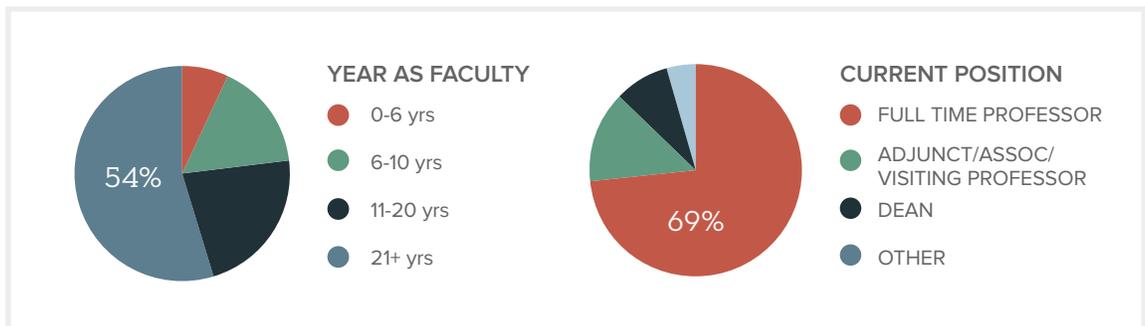
LAW SCHOOL STUDENTS

- About half are 3L/third-year.
- Evenly distributed by law school tier.



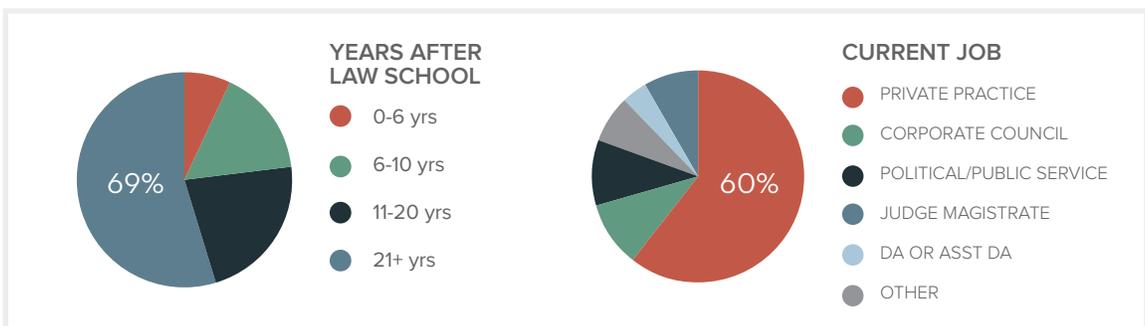
LAW SCHOOL FACULTY

- More than half have been law school faculty members for more than 20 years.
- More than two-thirds are full-time professors.



PRACTICING ATTORNEYS

- More than two-thirds graduated from law school more than 20 years ago.
- More than half are in private practice.

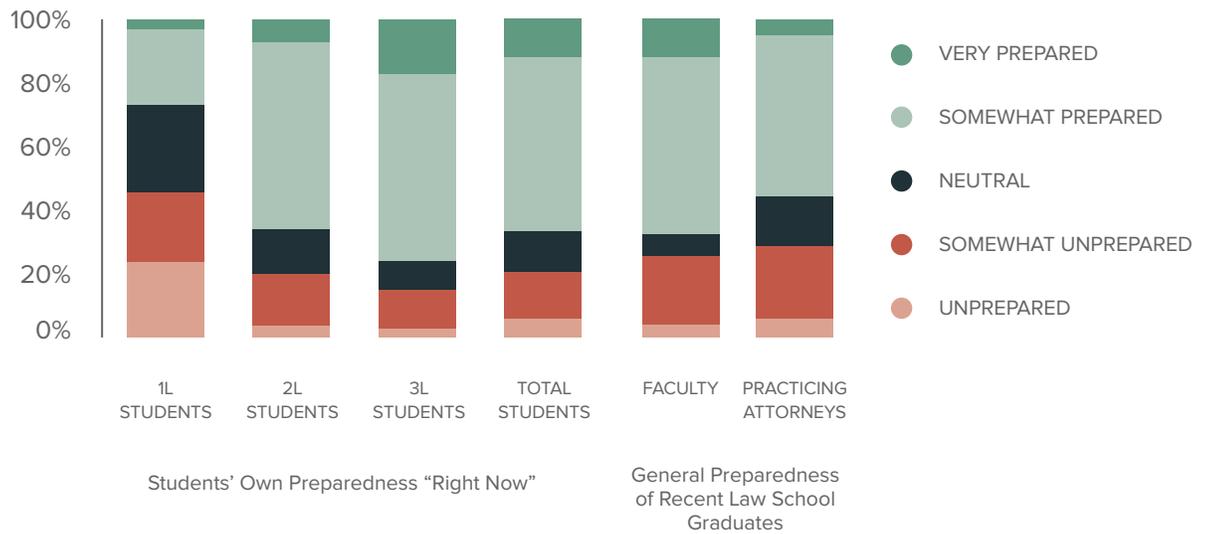


KEY FINDING #1

Law students (and particularly 3L law students) assess their own readiness to practice law more positively than do attorneys who work with recent law school graduates.

- 76 percent of 3L law students believe they are prepared to practice law “right now.” In comparison, 56 percent of practicing attorneys who work with recent law school graduates believe that, in general, recent law school graduates are prepared to practice law.

PERCEIVED PREPAREDNESS TO PRACTICE LAW

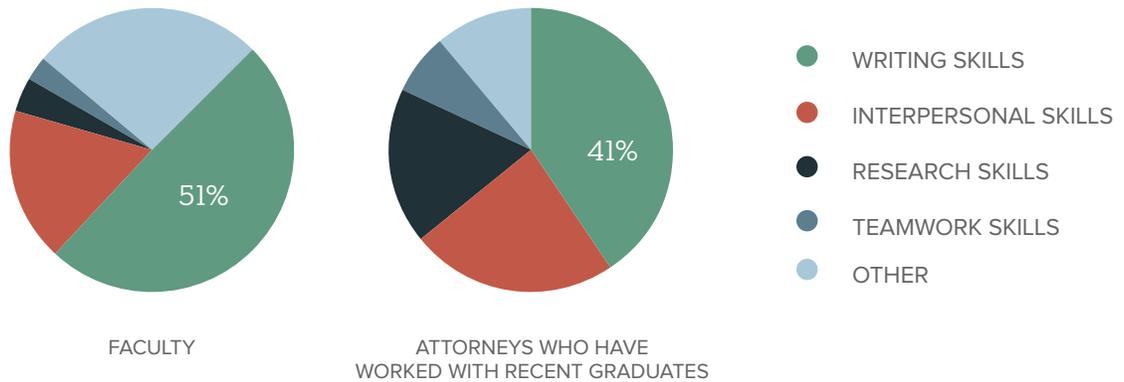


KEY FINDING #2

When forced to choose, both attorneys (41 percent) and law school faculty (51 percent) agree that writing is the most important skill for recent law school graduates.

- Attorneys placed more importance than did faculty on interpersonal skills (24 percent) and research skills (18 percent).
- Almost a quarter of attorneys who have worked with recent law school graduates rate interpersonal skills as the most important skill for them to have mastered.

MOST IMPORTANT SKILL



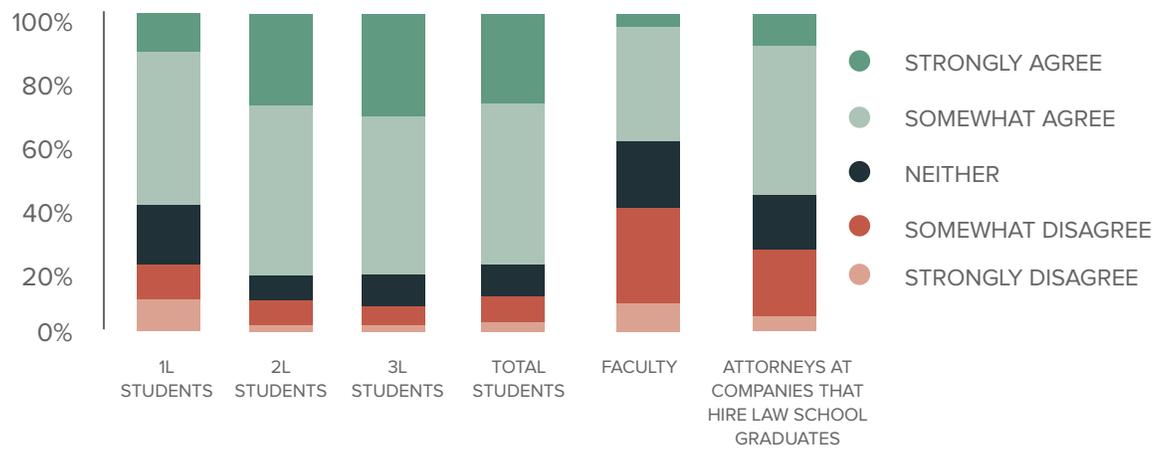
- Among faculty, 27 percent of law school professors cite other skills (critical thinking, analytical skills, work ethic, etc.) as the most important ones for recent law school graduates to possess, whereas only 11 percent of practicing attorneys agree with that statement.
- Faculty placed very little importance on research, with just 4 percent citing it as the most important skill for recent law school graduates. In contrast, 18 percent of attorneys named research the most important skill a new lawyer should possess.
- Only 18 percent of law school faculty members and the same number of practicing attorneys who work at companies that hire recent law school graduates believe recent law school graduates have the financial and business acumen required to practice law.

KEY FINDING #3

Law students assess their legal writing skills and their practice skills more positively than attorneys who work with recent law school grads.

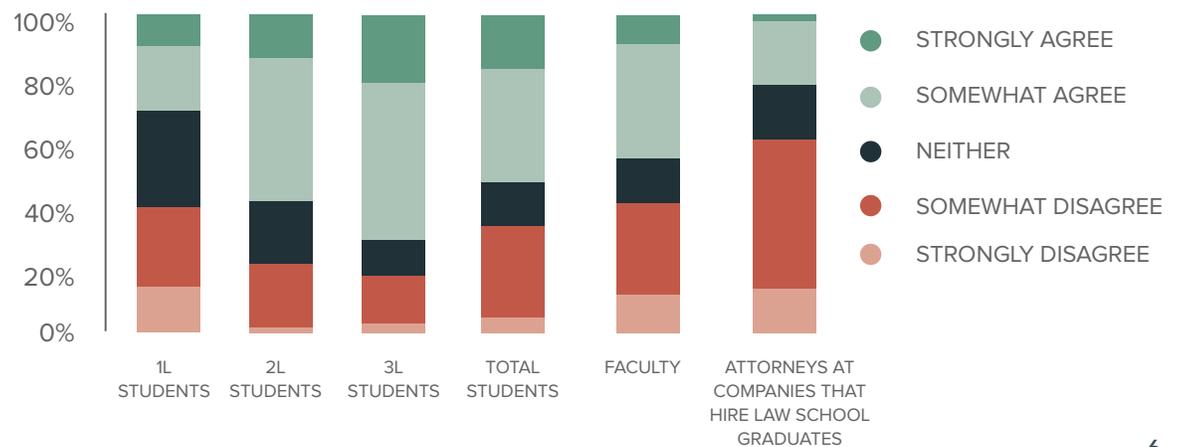
- 82 percent of 3L law students believe they are effective legal writers. In contrast, only 57 percent of practicing attorneys who work at companies that hire recent law school graduates believe recent law school graduates are effective legal writers.

LEGAL WRITING SKILLS



- 71 percent of 3L law students believe they possess sufficient practice skills. In contrast, only 23 percent of practicing attorneys who work at companies that hire recent law school graduates believe recent law school graduates possess sufficient practice skills.

PRACTICE SKILLS

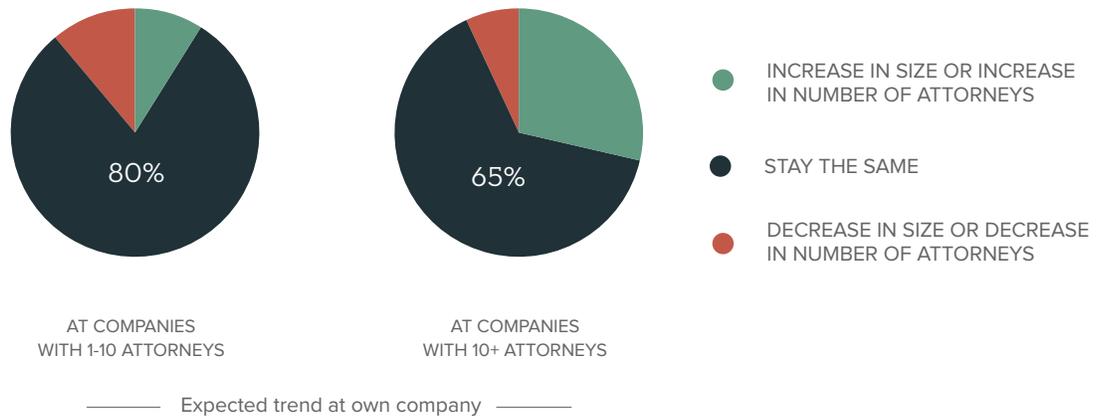


KEY FINDING #4

Most attorneys expect a somewhat stagnant job market, but law students are optimistic.

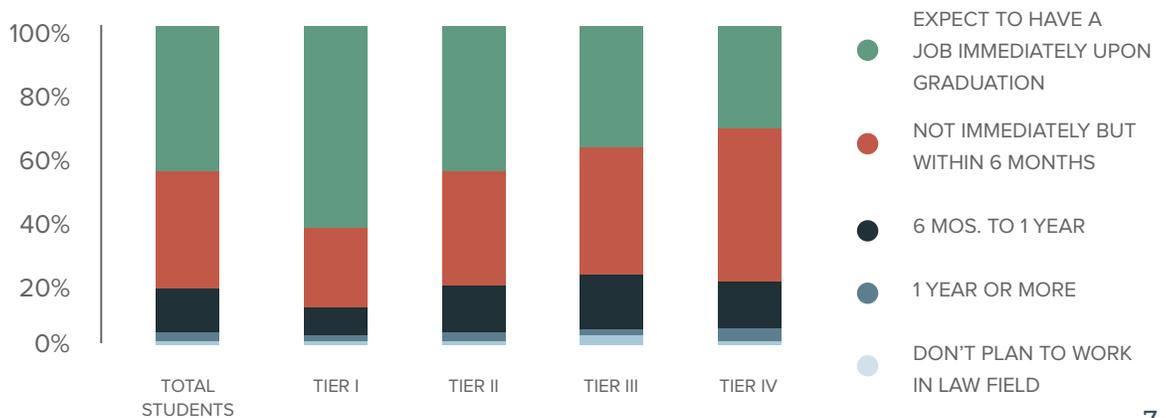
- Attorneys at companies that hire recent law school graduates report a median salary starting at \$50,000/year. The median expected starting salary among law students is \$70,000/year.
- 91 percent of attorneys at companies with 1-10 attorneys expect their companies to stay the same or decrease in size over the next 3 years.
- At companies with more than 10 attorneys, 72 percent expect their companies to stay the same or decrease in number of attorneys over the next 3 years.

EXPECTED TREND IN NUMBER OF JOBS



- Almost half (46 percent) of law students expect to have a job in the law field immediately upon graduation. 83 percent expect to have a job within 6 months.

EXPECTED TIME TO FIND A JOB



- Practicing attorneys at companies that hire recent law school graduates estimate that it takes 1-2 years (median) to begin seeing a “return on investment” in a newly hired recent law school graduate, although 38 percent said it takes more than 2 years.



Among practicing attorneys at companies that hire recent law school graduates

KEY FINDING #5

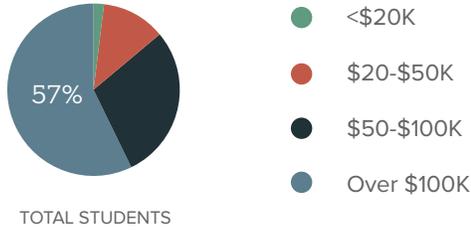
Although most law students will have significant debt at graduation, 82 percent of them expect to get good value out of that investment. And 78 percent of practicing attorneys agree that their income since graduation has justified the cost of their J.D.

- 83% of current law school students expect to have education loans when they graduate. More than half expect to have over \$100,000 in loans when they graduate.

% WITH EDUCATION LOANS AT LAW SCHOOL GRADUATION

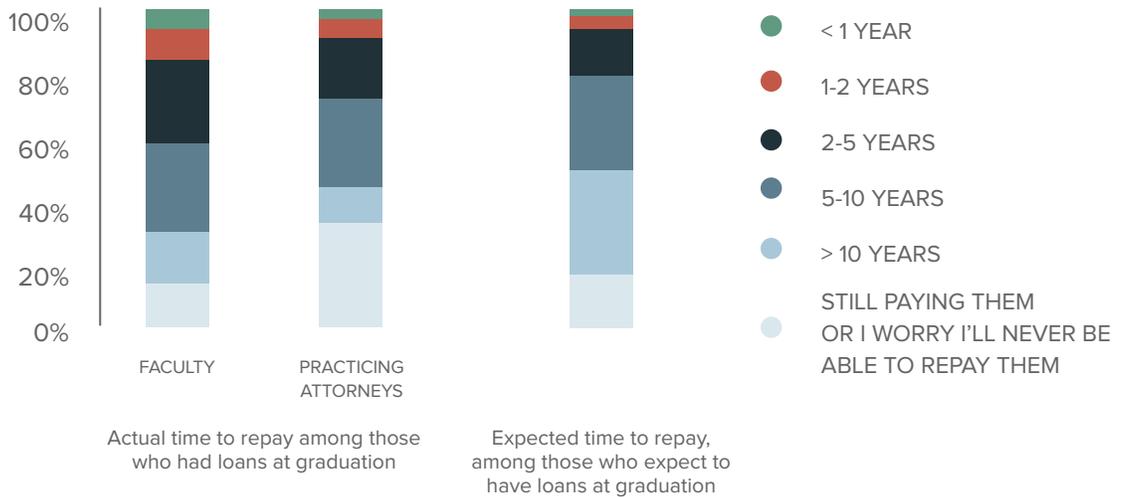


LAW SCHOOL DEBT UPON GRADUATION



Among those who had loans at graduation

TIME TO REPAY EDUCATION LOANS



IF I WERE TO DO IT ALL OVER AGAIN, I'D GO TO LAW SCHOOL

