

What Yale Law School Graduates Do: A Summary of CDO's 5th Year Career Development Survey Classes 2001 - 2005

Starting with the Class of 1996, the Career Development Office ("CDO") has solicited information from each class five years after law school graduation. In addition, CDO has compiled aggregate reports to show trends over five years. The first aggregate survey created in 2005 reported on the Classes of 1996 - 2000 ("Cohort 1"). This report provides a summary of the data collected from the Classes of 2001 - 2005 ("Cohort 2").

Compilation of Cohort 2 Data

The data in this report has been compiled from multiple sources. For the Class of 2001, first employer type was derived from CDO's 5th Year Career Development Survey ("5th Year Survey") responses. In all subsequent class years, first employer type was taken from employment information provided by each class to CDO nine months after their graduation. Information about first post-clerkship job choices is based on the results of a Post-Clerkship Employment Survey sent annually by CDO to all students who clerked immediately after graduation. The information regarding employment type and geographic location five years after graduation is based on responses to the 5th Year Survey. In addition, for the Class of 2005, CDO conducted independent research to verify employment type and geographic location. The remainder of the information provided in this report is based solely on 5th Year Survey responses. Combining the survey responses from the Classes surveyed in Cohort 2, we received an overall response rate of 63%.¹

The data about Cohort 1 in this report was compiled from *What Yale Law School Graduates Do: A Summary of CDO's 5th Year Career Development Survey (Classes of 1996-2000)*, available on the CDO website located at <http://www.law.yale.edu/studentlife/cdoalumni.htm>.

I. First Employment

First Employer Type

Law firms and judicial clerkships are the most popular destinations of our graduates in Cohort 2 immediately after law school. Smaller percentages commenced their careers in public service, academia, or business.² Because so many of our graduates clerk, the chart below also includes information about the first non-clerkship job choices of Cohort 2.

¹ We received a 56% response rate from the Class of 2001, a 60% response rate from the Class of 2002, an 82% response rate from the Class of 2003, a 58% response rate from the Class of 2004 and a 58% response rate from the Class of 2005. Because some respondents did not answer every question, some statistics reflect response rates less than the overall response rate.

² An additional 3% of Cohort 2 pursued an advanced degree upon graduation or completion of a clerkship. Those graduates are not included in this chart.

Cohort 2 (2001–2005)	First Job After Graduation	First Non–Clerkship Job Choice
Law Firms	42%	72%
Judicial Clerkship	44%	N/A
Public Service	9%	19%
Academia³	2%	5%
Business	3%	4%

Compared to graduates in Cohort 1, more graduates in Cohort 2 went to law firms as their first non-clerkship job choice, while fewer went to public service and academia. In Cohort 1, 63% of graduates went to law firms, while 21% went to public service and 9% went directly to academia as their first non-clerkship job choice.

Gender Differences in First Employer Type

More men started their careers with judicial clerkships from Cohort 2, while more women went straight to law firms and public service. This was similar to graduates in Cohort 1 with more women initially choosing law firms and public service, and more men starting their careers with a judicial clerkship.

Cohort 2 (2001–2005)	Women	Men
Law Firms	44%	41%
Judicial Clerkship	41%	46%
Public Service	10%	8%
Academia	3%	1%
Business	2%	4%

Debt

At graduation, 54% of graduates in Cohort 2 had a debt burden of more than \$75,000. That is an increase from 43% of graduates in Cohort 1. More than one quarter of both Cohorts have taken advantage of the Career Options Assistance Program (COAP) at some point since graduation. Approximately 47% of graduates in Cohort 2 believe that the need to pay off their debt affected their legal career choices, an increase from 39% of graduates in Cohort 1.

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

Debt Burden at Graduation	Cohort 1 (1996 - 2000)	Cohort 2 (2001 - 2005)
less than \$5,000	24%	21%
\$5,000 - 24,999	5%	4%
\$25,000 - 75,000	27%	21%
over \$75,000	43%	54%
Respondents who used COAP	28%	29%
Respondents who said the need to pay off debt affected their legal career choices	39%	47%

II. Employment Five Years After YLS Graduation

Employer Type

Five years after graduation the percentage of graduates from Cohort 2 in public service, academia and business increases and the percentage of graduates in law firms decreases when compared to first non-clerkship employment. These trends were similar among graduates in Cohort 1.

Cohort 2 (2001-2005)	First Non-Clerkship Job Choice	5 Years After Graduation
Law Firms	72%	55%
Public Service	19%	24%
Academia	5%	14%
Business	4%	7%

Employment Locations

Five years after law school, approximately 65% of our graduates from Cohort 2 work in NYC, DC or California. Compared to the graduates from Cohort 1, more graduates in Cohort 2 are employed in DC and California, while the percentage of graduates employed in NYC decreased slightly.

Top Three Employment Locations	Cohort 1 (1996 - 2000)	Cohort 2 (2001 - 2005)
New York City	28%	25%
Washington, D.C.	20%	23%
California (all cities)	12%	17%

Plan to Stay with Current Employer

More than one-third (37%) of respondents in Cohort 2 are still in their first non-clerkship job. Approximately half (47%) are in their second job and 16% are in their third or fourth job. These results were similar to those among Cohort 1, where 40% of respondents were still in their first non-clerkship job, and 43% were in their second job.

The most common response from graduates in Cohort 2 was that they plan to stay with their current employer for 1-3 more years, with 40% of respondents selecting that option. Only 16% believe they will stay for 3-5 more years. These results were similar among graduates in Cohort 1 with 41% of respondents planning to stay with their current employer for 1-3 more years.

Work Schedules

The most commonly reported range of work hours among Cohort 2 was 2,000 - 2,500 hours per year, with 53% of respondents working hours in that range. This is a slight increase from Cohort 1, where 48% reported working 2,000 - 2,500 hours. Only a small percentage of graduates in each Cohort reported working part-time or flex-time in their current positions (Cohort 1: 6%; Cohort 2: 5%).

Annual Salaries

Not surprisingly, law firm respondents report the highest incomes, with 72% of law firm respondents in Cohort 2 reporting salaries between \$150,000 - 300,000. Public service salaries increased from Cohort 1 to Cohort 2. Fifty-eight percent of respondents in public service from Cohort 1 earned between \$34,000 – 74,999, while 54% of respondents in public service in Cohort 2 earned between \$75,000 - 149,999.

Job Satisfaction

Respondents were asked to indicate their overall satisfaction with their current employment. Close to 80% of respondents in Cohort 2 are either “satisfied” or “very satisfied” with their current positions. This mirrors the responses from Cohort 1. Law firm respondents are the least satisfied with their current positions (29% “very satisfied”) and academics are the most satisfied (73% “very satisfied”). Public service respondents in the Class of 2002 report greater job satisfaction than public service respondents in other classes in Cohort 2, with 86% reporting that they are very satisfied with their current employment as compared to 51% of those in the Class of 2001, 70% of those in the Class of 2003, 60% of those in the Class of 2004 and only 56% of those in the Class of 2005.

Cohort 2 (2001–2005)	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Not Satisfied
Overall Satisfaction	45%	33%	18%	4%
Law Firms	29%	39%	26%	6%
Public Service	64%	26%	9%	1%
Academia	73%	20%	6%	1%
Business	47%	35%	13%	6%

III. Public Service

When looking at all the job choices of our graduates (not including judicial clerkships), it is interesting to note that 32% of graduates in Cohort 2 have worked in the public service at some point in the five years since graduation. This is similar to Cohort 1 where 35% of respondents reported working in public service at some point since graduation.

Pro Bono

Respondents were asked to report their average *pro bono* hours per year in their current position. Graduates in the private sector from Cohort 2 dedicated more time to pro bono than graduates from Cohort 1. Fifty-four percent of respondents from Cohort 2 reported conducting 51 or more hours of pro bono compared to only 39% of graduates from Cohort 1.

Pro Bono Hours	Cohort 1 (1996 – 2000)	Cohort 2 (2001 – 2005)
over 100 hours	23%	34%
51 – 100 hours	16%	20%
26 – 50 hours	14%	15%
1 – 25 hours	23%	15%
0 hours	24%	16%

Respondents were also asked if an employer’s strong pro bono policies and commitment contributed to their decision to work for that employer. More than half in Cohort 2 (60%) responded yes, while 45% of those in Cohort 1 responded yes.

IV. Retrospective

Respondents were asked to indicate why they decided to attend law school. The three most popular choices among both Cohorts 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>	Cohort 1 (1996 – 2000)	Cohort 2 (2001 – 2005)
To create career options	32%	31%
To engage in the intellectual challenges of law	29%	29%
To enter a career in public service	19%	20%
To defer making a choice about my career	8%	8%
To establish a lucrative career	8%	8%
Other	3%	4%

Respondents were also asked, “When you began law school, in what area(s) did you envision working five years after graduating?” Comparing this question to where graduates actually work five years after graduation demonstrates that more graduates in both Cohort 1 and Cohort 2 are in law firms and fewer graduates are in academia and public service than what they planned.

Cohort 1 (1996 – 2000)	Where will you work 5 years after graduation? <i>(Select as many as apply)</i>	Actual employment 5 years after graduation
Law Firm	15%	48%
Public Service	47%	28%
Academia	20%	13%
Business	8%	10%
No Idea	8%	N/A

Cohort 2 (2001 - 2005)	Where will you work 5 years after graduation? <i>(Select as many as apply)</i>	Actual employment 5 years after graduation
Law Firm	17%	55%
Public Service	49%	24%
Academia	19%	14%
Business	7%	7%
No Idea	8%	N/A