

Survey Responses: Oregon State Bar Survey of New Lawyers, 2006

*Please note: Not all participants answered every question on the survey.
The figures presented with each question represent only those
respondents who answered that particular question.*

1. What category best describes your undergraduate course of study?

Liberal Arts	23.7%
Political Science	19.8%
Science	16.4%
Business	9.6%
English	8.5%
Engineering	4.5%
Other	17.5%

*Majors mentioned more than once in the "other" category included
journalism, economics, mathematics, psychology, anthropology, history,
criminal justice, theater, speech communications and dual majors.*

2. How soon after earning your undergraduate degree did you enroll in law school?

Less than 2 years	50.8%
2-4 years	26.0%
5-10 years	15.3%
More than 10 years	7.9%

3. Where did you attend law school?

Oregon (Lewis & Clark College, University of Oregon, Willamette University)	70.6%
Out-of-state law school	29.4%

4. As of today, what is the total of any remaining undergraduate debt you have?

Average, overall:	\$7,185
Average, among those who have debt:	\$17,002
High:	\$68,000
Low:	None (reported by 57.7% of respondents)

5. As of today, what is your law school debt?

Average, overall:	\$67,962
Average, among those who have debt:	\$80,064
High:	\$160,000
Low:	None (reported by 15.1% of respondents)

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6. Please rate the quality of your law school experience in the following areas:

(Poor = 1; Fair = 2; Neutral = 3; Good = 4; Excellent = 5)

	Response average
Quality of instruction	4.20
Content of courses	4.05
Background in ethics and professionalism	3.81
Preparation for the bar exam	3.46
Preparation for law practice	2.94

7. While in law school did you participate in any of the following? (Check all that apply.)

Law firm clerkship	50.3%
Public sector clerkship	49.7%
Law school clinical program	48.5%
Law school extern program	27.6%

*92% of respondents participated in at least one of these activities.
55% participated in more than one type of activity.*

8. Was Oregon's your first bar exam?

To ensure the analysis of answers from new lawyers only (not those moving from other states, etc.), only respondents who answered "yes" to this question were included in the survey results.

9. Did you take a bar review course?

Yes	94.9%
No	5.1%

10. Did you pass the Oregon State Bar exam on your first attempt?

Yes	90.4%
No	9.6%

Note: This passage rate is substantially higher than in the general test-taking population; for example, in February and July of 2005 the overall passage rate for first-time exam takers was 65% and 76%, respectively.

11. Based on your expectations prior to taking the exam or compared to other bar exams, please rate the difficulty of the Oregon State Bar admissions process and bar exam on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 meaning "very easy" and 5 meaning "very difficult."

	Response average
Essay portion	3.73
Multistate (multiple choice) section	3.94
MPRE (professional responsibility)	2.95
Character and fitness review	2.54

12. Do you think passing the bar exam should remain a requirement to practice law in Oregon? (Please comment.)

Yes	81.4%
No	7.9%
Don't know	11.3%

Some themes from the comments to Question #12:

The bar exam is a way to ensure a minimum competency and demonstrate commitment to the profession, which is important.

The bar exam in its current form is not necessarily a good indicator of a person's ability to succeed as a lawyer. It has little to do with the actual practice of law and more to do with memorization and the ability to take standardized tests. The essay portions of the bar exam are most applicable, but could be expanded or given more time.

Reciprocity with some or all states would be helpful.

The cost of the bar exam (and associated costs such as review courses) can be burdensome.

Law school and the bar exam could either be better coordinated or could be considered individually as sufficient to qualify someone to practice law.

The current format of the bar exam doesn't reflect many lawyers' focus on specialized areas of law.

Sample comments:

"[The bar exam] is viewed as a 'right of passage' even though it is not particularly indicative of whether one will become a good attorney. I believe that the exam should be improved to indicate more analysis in the answers and focus less on speed of answering."

"I think more emphasis should be placed on evaluating practical skills and less on ability to memorize vast quantities of information, especially since most of us have narrow practice areas and don't need to know much of what we learned. ..."

"The OSB owes a duty to the public to place a minimal level of competency on the market."

"[The bar exam] requires diligence and persistence that is necessary in the field."

"... The exam also favors students with more cash flow – those of us from low income families have really suffered."

"The bar is so disconnected from law school – so many things are covered on it that aren't covered in school. Somehow, the two have to connect better."

"I think that the bar should choose between requiring accreditation of law schools and a bar exam. ..."

"...I believe Oregon should try to attain reciprocity with as many states as possible. ... I also believe portions like the MPT that measure the ability to actually do legal work, are better than memorizing answers to crazy multiple choice hypotheticals."

13. How long after graduation until you first began employment as a lawyer?

Had a job offer before graduation	33.0%
0-1 month	4.0%
2-3 months	7.4%
4-5 months	14.2%
6-7 months	9.1%
8 or more months	11.4%
Unable to secure employment as a lawyer	7.4%
Did not seek employment as a lawyer	4.0%
Other	9.7%

Comments listed under "other" included clerkships, contract work, relocation, self-employment, further education, etc.

14. Rate the helpfulness of the following resources in your job search:

(Not at all helpful = 1; Somewhat helpful = 2; Fairly helpful = 3; Very helpful = 4. N/A was also included as an option.)

	Response average
Law school career center	2.47
Contacts from clerkships/other employment	2.68
Personal contacts	3.06
Employment agency	1.29
Online job banks	2.09
OSB Affirmative Action Program	1.29

15. Are you currently employed in a position requiring you to be an active member of a bar?

Yes	76.7%
No, still looking	14.2%
No, not seeking employment as a lawyer	9.1%

16. If you are not employed as a lawyer, and are not seeking employment as a lawyer, please explain why. (Asked only of those respondents who answered "No, not seeking employment as a lawyer" to Question 15.)

Respondents cited judicial clerkships and positions in public policy, the nonprofit sector, public service, academia and healthcare. Most indicated they chose to work in these areas; others said they took jobs in other fields after they couldn't find work as a lawyer.

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(Note: Questions 17-23 were asked only of those respondents who indicated they are currently employed in positions requiring them to be bar members.)

17. Which category best describes your first position after being admitted to the bar in Oregon?

Sole practitioner	9.8%
Associate at a small firm (1-5)	16.5%
Associate at a medium-size firm (6-14)	13.5%
Associate at a large firm (15 and above)	23.3%
In-house counsel	3.0%
Judicial clerkship	9.0%
Public sector/government	14.3%
Nonprofit/legal services	6.0%
Other	4.5%

Comments under "other" included consulting, clerking at a firm, and contract and temp work.

18. What was your starting salary (full-time equivalent)?

Less than \$30,000	15.6%
\$30,000-\$39,999	16.3%
\$40,000-\$49,999	31.9%
\$50,000-\$59,999	10.4%
\$60,000-\$69,999	2.2%
\$70,000-\$79,999	5.2%
\$80,000 or more	18.5%

19. What was your primary practice emphasis?

General (no one area greater than 50% of practice)	17.9%
Bankruptcy	2.2%
Business/corporate	7.5%
Civil litigation – defense	7.5%
Civil litigation – plaintiff	5.2%
Criminal – defense	9.0%
Criminal – prosecution	6.7%
Estate planning	5.2%
Family law	3.7%
Government lawyer (non- criminal)	3.7%
Real estate/land use/environmental	6.0%
Tax	1.5%
Workers' compensation	1.5%
Other	22.4%

Categories mentioned by three or more respondents in the "other" category included patent/intellectual property (7.5% of total respondents), labor/employment (3.0% of total respondents) and

immigration (2.2% of total respondents). Other categories included federal administrative law, public policy issues, civil litigation (no specified focus on defense or plaintiff), juvenile defense, clerkships, regulated industries, animal law, health law, insurance defense and energy/public utilities.

20. What was the main factor in your decision to accept your first position as a lawyer?

Field of law	25.2%
Employer	34.1%
Salary	5.2%
Benefits	0.0%
Location	6.7%
No better offers	17.0%
Other	11.9%

Comments under the "other" category included self-employment, schedule, desire for particular experience, etc.

21. How long do you expect to stay in this position?

0-2 years	29.6%
3-5 years	23.0%
For the duration of my career	14.8%
Unknown	26.7%
Other	5.9%

22. What is your level of satisfaction with your first position as a lawyer? Please list the most significant factors affecting your answer.

Highly satisfied	43.3%
Somewhat satisfied	38.1%
Neutral	10.4%
Somewhat dissatisfied	6.0%
Highly dissatisfied	3.7%

Major recurring factors in satisfaction level:

- *Diversity of work*
- *Level of challenge/responsibility*
- *Compensation*
- *Work schedule/number of hours worked*
- *Stress*
- *Office environment*
- *Support from senior attorneys*

Sample comments:

"I enjoy my job, those with whom I work, I enjoy learning and that there is a learning curve so that I am not bored. I also enjoy litigation and [that] I get to be involved in most aspects of litigation. However, I would like a more diverse practice eventually... ."

"I work 60 hours a week, not using my skills as an attorney and not contributing to society in any measurable way."

"Love my job. Hate the hours."

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"I love the work but hate marketing and scrounging for clients. I also dislike the worries about money."

"The variety of cases I have witnessed from beginning to end has been invaluable experience."

"I am very satisfied with the flexibility my job offers. I am dissatisfied with the amount of mentorship I receive from my employer, in addition to the fact that my pay is low and I receive no benefits."

"I love the attorneys I work for and the reputation of my firm. I really like the diversity of my practice."

"I love my job, but the pay is so minor, I'm barely making ends meet. ..."

"This is my dream job. It is exactly the job I went to law school hoping to get: I am in the exact field of law I am most interested in, doing exactly the type of work I hoped to do, serving the clients I wanted to serve, and to top it all off I have a tremendously supportive boss."

"I am totally unprepared for the practice of law despite the hard work I put in during law school. I find that my colleagues are willing to help me, but view the initial lack of preparedness as a rite of passage. I think a lot could be done to prevent this stage, if not at law school then at the firm. ..."

"...Neither a partner nor an associate at my firm has as much as looked at a single thing I have done. ..."

"I feel like a form jockey. ... I need something more challenging and thus more rewarding. I want to research and make legal arguments in a variety of areas of law."

23. How challenging have the following job-related issues been for you?

(Very difficult = 1; Somewhat difficult = 2; Neutral = 3; Fairly easy = 4; Very easy = 5. N/A was also included as an option.)

	Response average
Understanding substantive law	3.31
Understanding legal procedures	2.62
Practical application of law	2.98
Obtaining appropriate mentoring	3.27
Applying legal ethics to practice	3.57
Understanding employer's expectations	3.41
Receiving challenging work	3.89
Billable hours requirements	2.64
Balancing career and family/personal life	2.85
Maintaining civility and professionalism	4.19
Business development	2.74

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Note: The following questions were asked of all respondents, regardless of whether they are currently employed as a lawyer.

24. What is your level of satisfaction with the following?

(Very dissatisfied = 1; Somewhat dissatisfied = 2; Neutral = 3;
Somewhat satisfied = 4; Very satisfied = 5. N/A was also included as an option.)

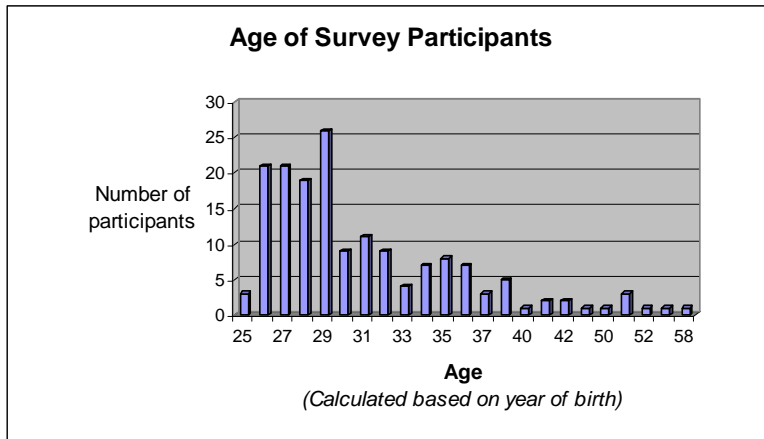
	Response average
Being a lawyer	3.89
Lawyers with whom you work in your firm	4.32
Lawyers with whom you work outside your firm	3.71
The legal profession in general	3.50
Clients	3.58

25. What is your level of satisfaction with services provided by the Oregon State Bar?

(Very dissatisfied = 1; Somewhat dissatisfied = 2; Neutral = 3;
Somewhat satisfied = 4; Very satisfied = 5. N/A was also included as an option.)

	Response average
Admissions process	3.58
Admissions staff	4.03
Material provided upon admission	3.88
Membership fee information	3.72
Bar section information	3.65
MCLE process	3.39
Professional Liability Fund information	3.71
Oregon New Lawyers Division	3.50
Lawyer Referral Service	3.33
Affirmative Action Program	3.24
Ethics and discipline information	3.54
Website (www.osbar.org)	4.16
Casemaker (online legal research)	3.47

Demographics of Survey Participants



Age
(calculated based on reported year of birth)

Average age: 31.3 years
Age range: 25 to 58 years
% under 30 years old: 54.2%

Race/ethnicity

Asian/Pacific Islander	3.0%
Black	0.6%
Hispanic	3.0%
Native American/ Alaska Native	0.0%
White (non-Hispanic)	86.8%
Multicultural	4.2%
Other	2.4%

Respondents choosing the "Other" category identified themselves as White/Native American, Middle Eastern, Middle-Eastern/European, and Other.

Gender

Female	57.5%
Male	42.5%

Sexual Orientation

Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual or Transgendered	5.4%
Heterosexual	94.6%

Marital Status

Divorced	4.2%
Married/Domestic partner	49.1%
Single (never married)	46.7%

Children*

1-2 children	19.0%
3 or more children	4.1%
None	76.9%

Disabilities

Learning disability	2.4%
Physical disability	0.6%
No disability	97.0%

**The percentage of respondents with no children may be larger than reflected. This question was skipped by a higher number of respondents than usual, and given the wording of the question—"How many children do you have, if any?"—it seems likely that many of the respondents who skipped the question do not have children.*