

## **Current Students and Alumni Survey Analysis**

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Prepared for Valparaiso University School of Law

In the following report, Hanover Research analyzes the results of a survey administered current students and alumni of Valparaiso University School of Law. The primary focus of the questionnaire was to learn and evaluate their perspectives on the academic culture at Valparaiso Law. As such, questions focused on the bar examination preparation process, school engagement, and views on career prospects.

## Introduction and Key Findings

Between August and September 2011, Hanover Research surveyed both current students and alumni of Valparaiso University Law School, seeking to learn more about their perceptions of the law school's academic culture. The questions asked of both current students and alumni primarily focused on their perspective on the bar examination, level of engagement with the school, and their perspective on career prospects upon graduation from Valparaiso Law. Table 1 below presents information on the response rate for both populations. It should be noted that these responses probably do not represent a random sample, especially among alumni. It is likely that the survey received more responses from actively engaged alumni than from those who have less contact with the school, so in some cases the sentiments expressed in these responses may not be perfectly representative of the feelings of all of Valparaiso's alumni.

**Table 1: Survey Response Data**

	Current Students	Alumni
Number of Contacts	582	2,969 (email only)
Number of Respondents	313	683 (641 via email plus 42 via regular mail) <sup>1</sup>
<b>Response Rate</b>	<b>54%</b>	<b>22% (email only)</b>

The remainder of this report is divided into two sections—the first section analyzes responses from current students, while the second section focuses on alumni.

### Key Findings

Our analysis of both surveys yielded the following key findings:

- ❖ A significant majority of current students stated that they intend to work for private law firms and state/local and federal government organizations. These choices were closely reflected in the organizations for which alumni currently work. However, while many current students implied a willingness to work in low-paying fields such as public interest and non-profit organizations, these sectors were among the least represented among alumni. This may suggest that financial factors become more important as they focus on their job search upon graduation.

<sup>1</sup> There were 641 responses received from alumni who were invited to take the survey via email. In addition to these responses, another 42 alumni responded after being contacted via regular mail, producing a total of 683 responses to the alumni survey. These 42 alumni are not included in the calculation of the response rate.

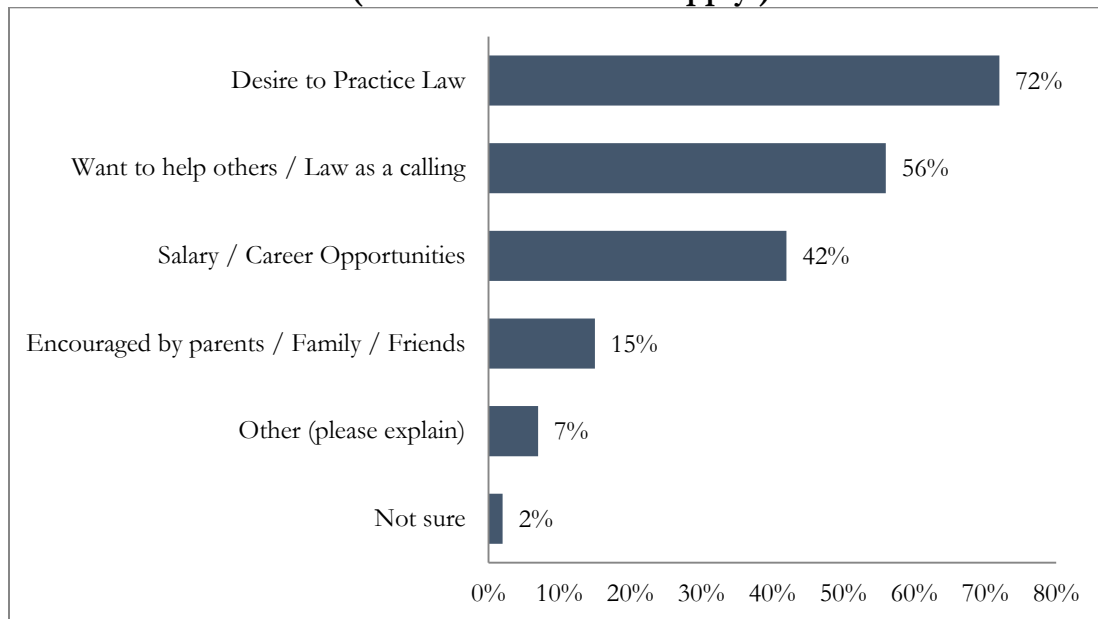
- ❖ Alumni and current students were both fairly positive about their level of preparedness for and Valparaiso Law's assistance with passing the bar examination. Nevertheless, a significant minority of both current students and alumni felt that school's bar advising service were inadequate. Also, while current students were very confident that they understood the level of effort that would be required to pass the bar, alumni tended to say that they had underestimated what would be required.
- ❖ Current students expressed more enthusiasm regarding their career prospects than alumni. A larger proportion of students felt that Valparaiso Law's reputation and alumni would play key roles in their job search; alumni, however, disagreed with the importance of these factors and were not particularly likely to say that they had played a major role in their job searches. Moreover, while both current students and alumni felt that the school's Career Planning Center should be improved, this sentiment was significantly more pronounced among alumni.
- ❖ Both current students and alumni overwhelmingly agreed that the academic culture at Valparaiso Law was positive, conducive to developing their legal research and communication skills, and helped them achieve their full academic potential. Yet, current students and alumni also indicated that the law school should reevaluate their grading policies to make them more consistent.
- ❖ While alumni were not especially likely to say that Valparaiso had a strong alumni community, many did remain engaged in various ways and expressed interest in becoming involved in additional activities related to the law school. For example, 40 percent of responding alumni expressed an interest in serving as mentors, despite the fact that only 12 percent were currently mentoring students. Moreover, they generally expressed satisfaction with Valparaiso Law's outreach to alumni, viewing previous events hosted by the law school quite positively.
- ❖ Alumni generally preferred to be contacted by email or regular mail, with very few expressing any interest in being contacted by phone.

## Section 1: Current Student Survey

### Student Profile

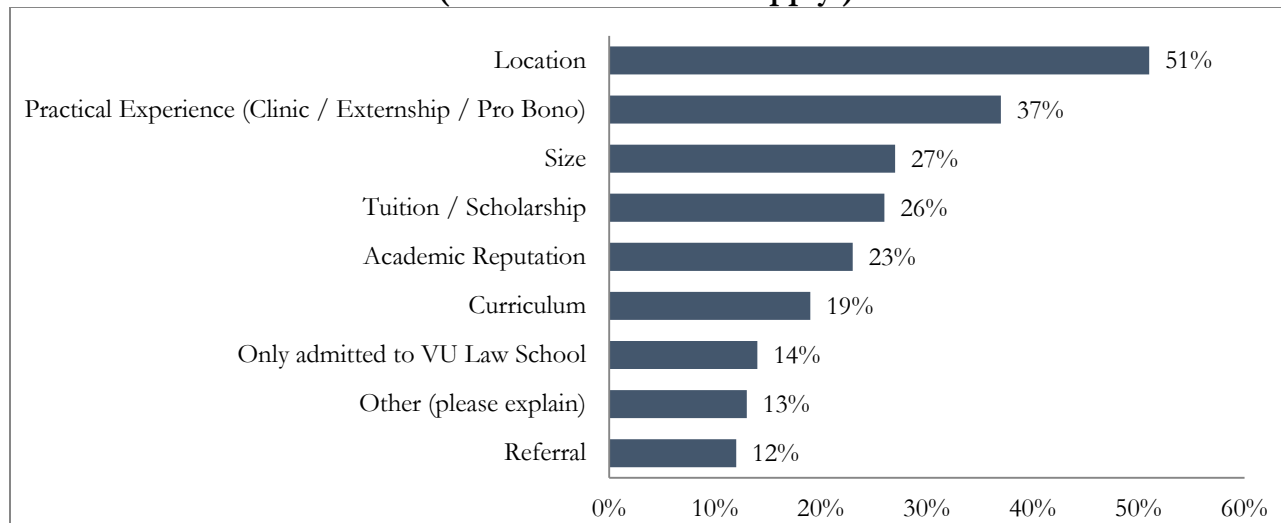
The **Desire to Practice Law** accounted for the vast majority of responses from current students regarding their motivation for attending law school. The inclination to help others (56 percent) and salary/career opportunities (42 percent) were also prominently cited as motivations for attending law school. Other reasons (7 percent) reported by current students included the desire for a challenging field and the need for a career change.

**Figure 1: What was your motivation for attending law school?  
(Please check all that apply.)**



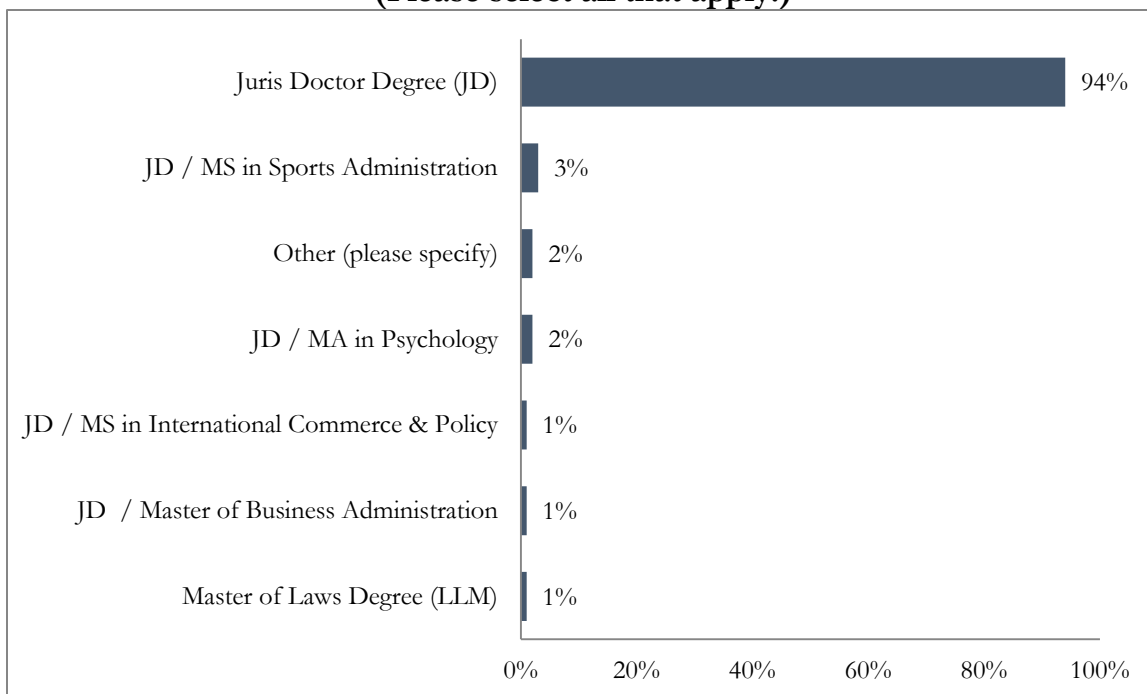
With regard to their selection of Valparaiso University Law School, **current students cited Location more than any other factor**, accounting for slightly more than half of all responses (51 percent). The second most common response was the potential for attaining **Practical Experience** (37 percent), such as clinical, externships, and pro bono work. Size (27 percent), Tuition/Scholarship (26 percent), and Academic Reputation (23 percent) each accounted for approximately one-fourth of all responses. Other reasons (13 percent) cited by students included **dual degree opportunities, a positive campus environment, and a connection to the university** through undergraduate attendance.

**Figure 2: Why did you choose to attend Valparaiso University Law School?  
(Please select all that apply.)**



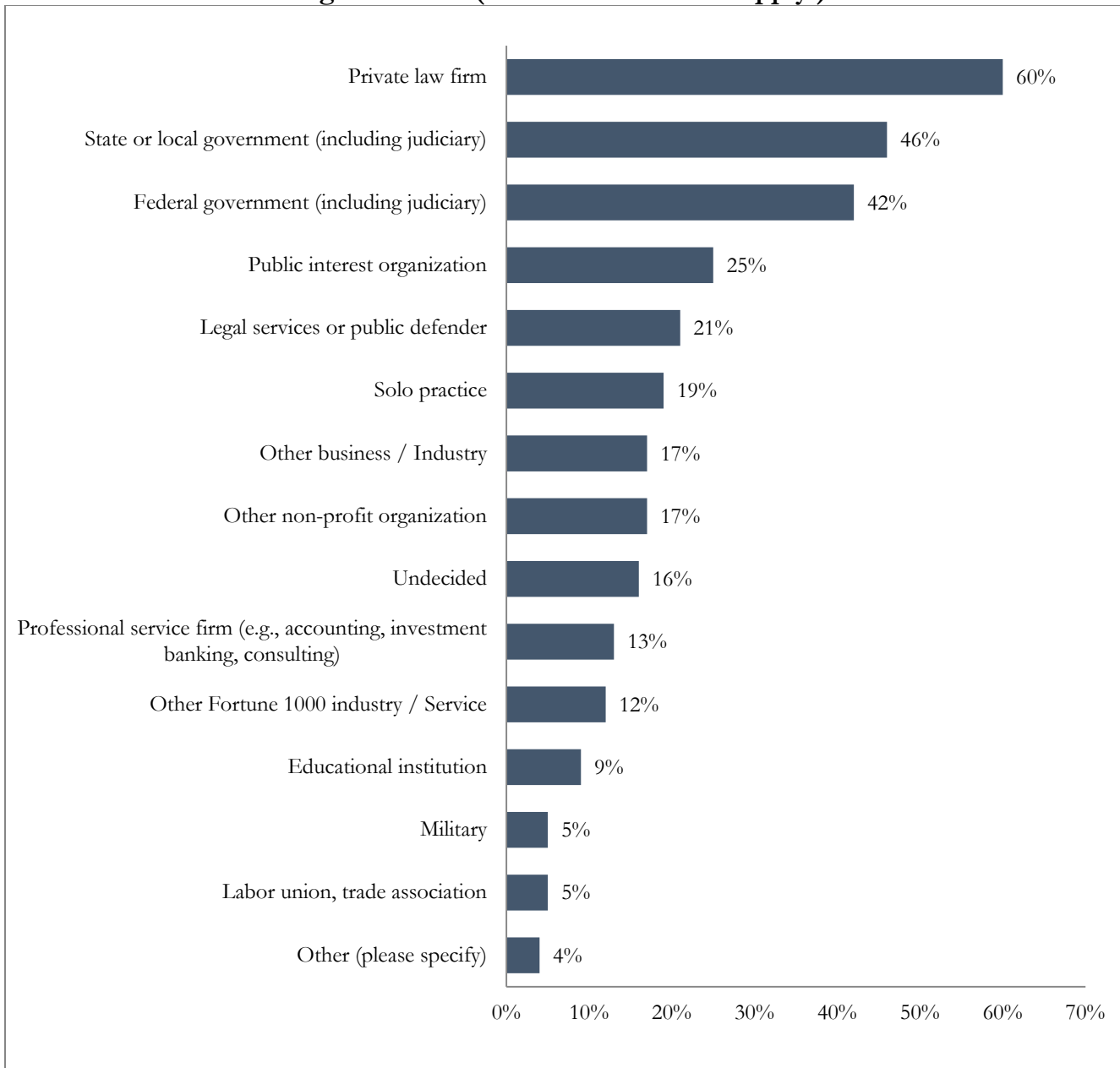
**Most law students (94 percent) are not pursuing additional degrees** aside from the standard Juris Doctor Degree (JD). Just three percent of students are pursuing a JD/MS in Sports Administration dual degree, while two percent of respondents reported pursuing a JD/MA in Psychology dual degree. No other single program accounted for more than 1 percent of responses.

**Figure 3: What degree(s) are you currently pursuing at Valparaiso Law?  
(Please select all that apply.)**



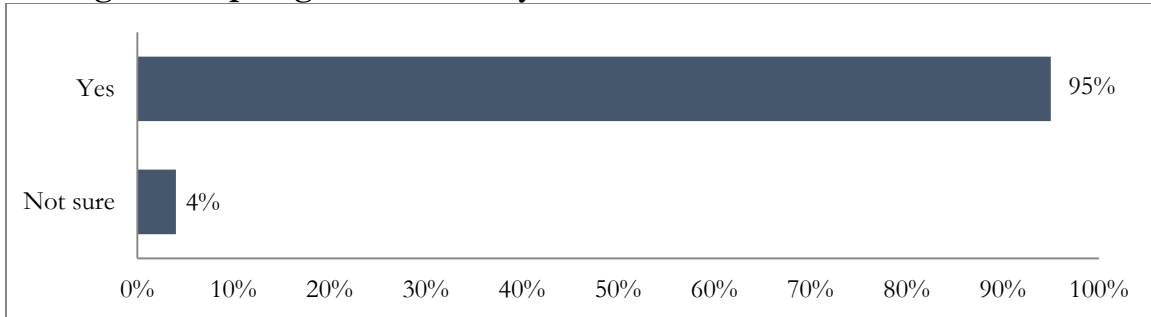
Students cited an intention to work at a **private law firm** (60 percent) after graduation more than any other potential organization. Other prominent responses included state or local government (46 percent) and federal government (42 percent) organizations. A quarter of students referenced an intention to work at a public interest organization. Of the responses specified in the survey, Military and Labor union or trade associations **received the lowest share of responses**, each accounting for 5 percent.

**Figure 4: What type of organization do you intend to work for after graduation? (Please select all that apply.)**



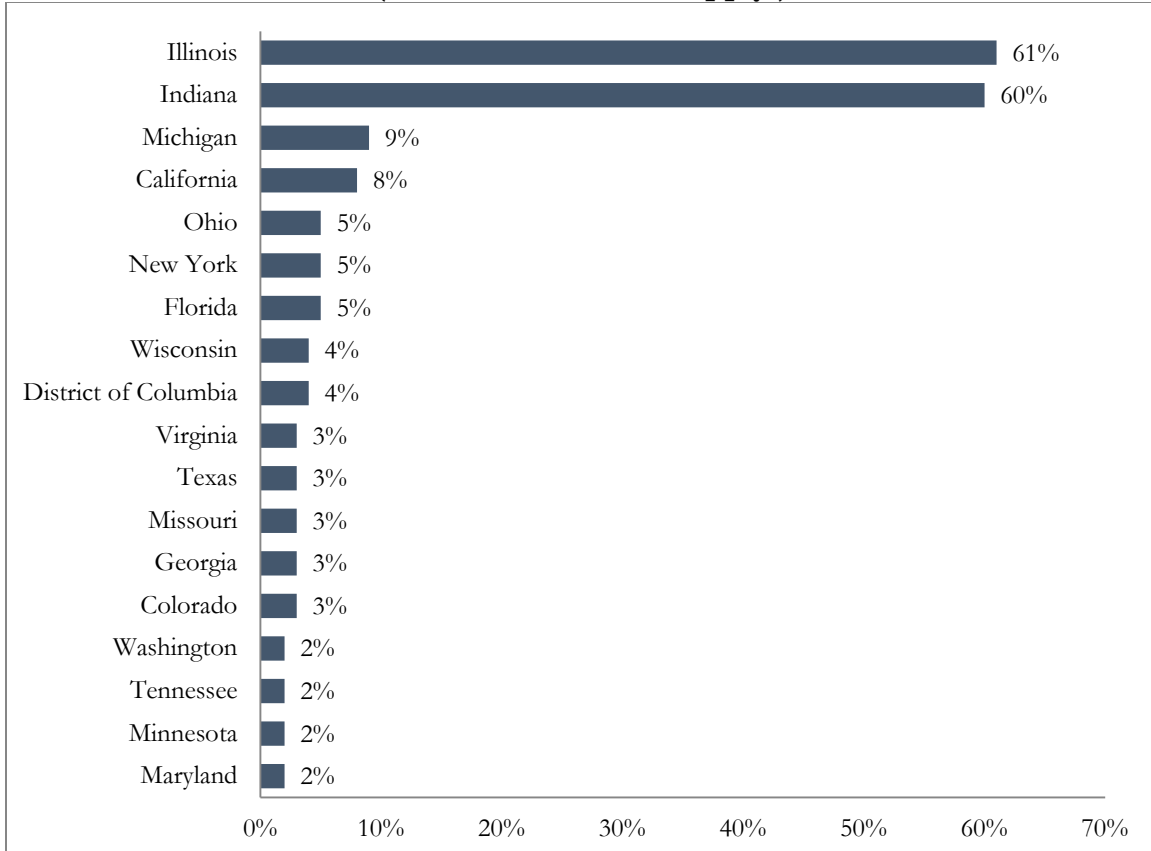
Current students **overwhelmingly affirmed (95 percent) an intention to take the bar examination** upon graduation from law school; there were no negative responses, though four percent stated that they were not sure.

**Figure 5: Upon graduation, do you intend to take the bar examination?**



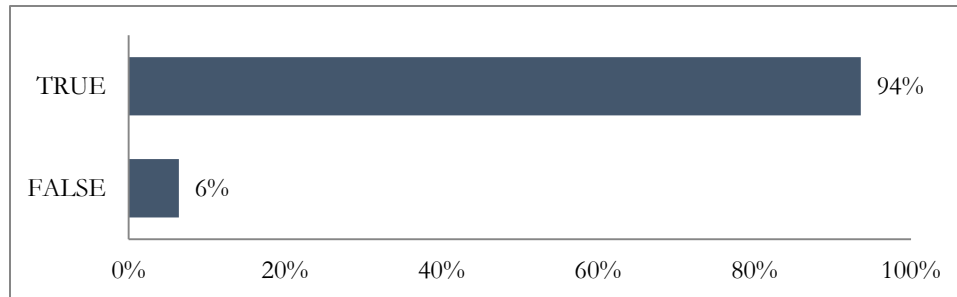
Illinois (61 percent) and Indiana (60 percent) represented the most popular states in which current students intend to sit the bar examination. Other Midwestern states such as Michigan (9 percent) and Ohio (5 percent) were relatively popular compared to states in other regions. Interestingly, California accounted for 8 percent of all responses.

**Figure 6: If yes, in which state(s) do you intend to take the bar examination? (Please select all that apply.)**

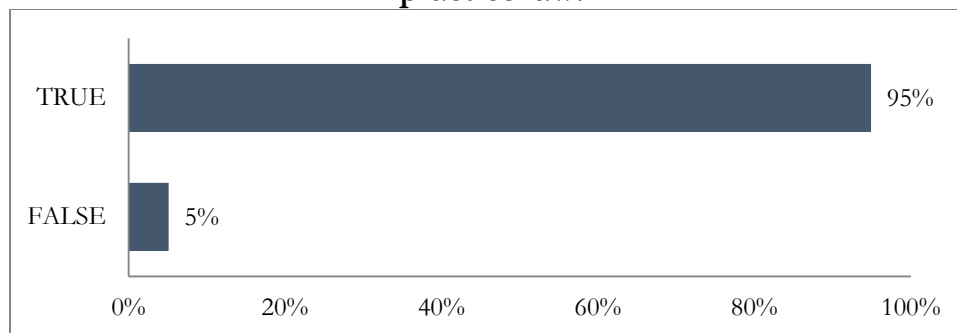


The vast majority of current students responded that they are able to take the bar examination in any state regardless of where they attend law school (94 percent). An almost identical proportion (95 percent) responded that they are required to pass the bar examination in the state in which they practice law.

**Figure 7: I am able to take the bar examination in any state regardless of where I attend law school.**

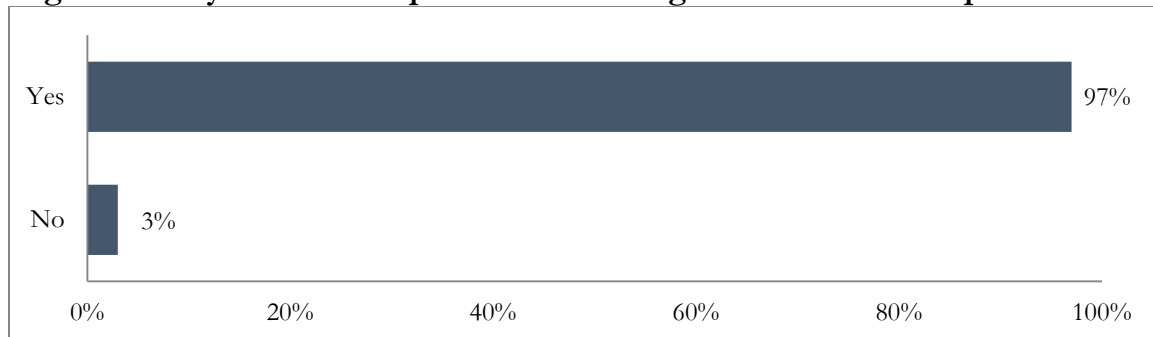


**Figure 8: I am required to pass the bar examination in the state in which I practice law.**



Students **overwhelmingly affirmed an intention to practice law after graduation** from Valparaiso Law (97 percent); just three percent stated that they did not intend to practice law.

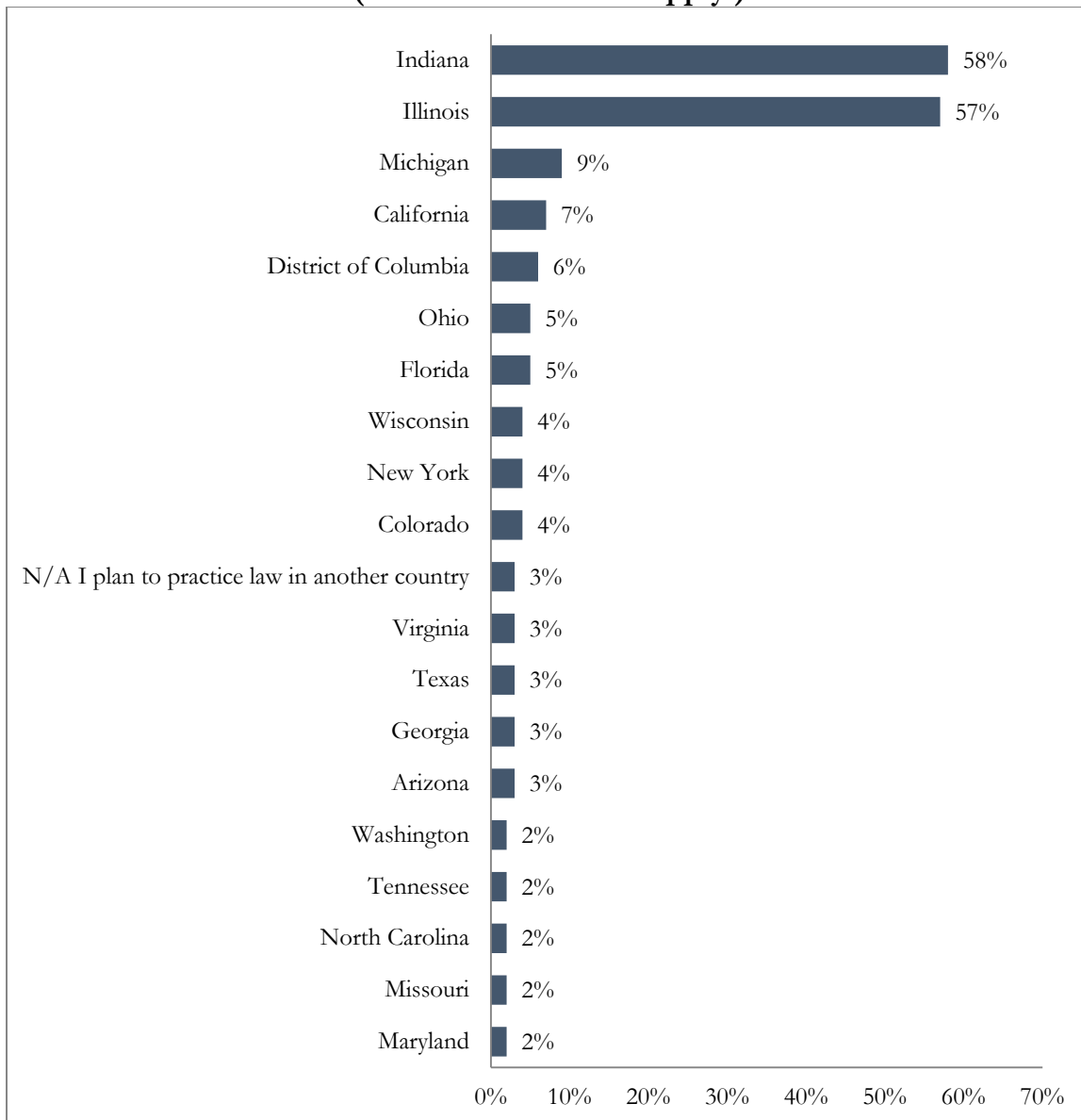
**Figure 9: Do you intend to practice law after graduation from Valparaiso Law?**





Similar to the responses outlined in Figure 6 regarding state bar selection, Indiana (58 percent) and Illinois (57 percent) represent the most popular states in which students intend to practice law. While most states each accounted for less than five percent of total responses, other relatively popular choices included Michigan (9 percent), California (7 percent), and the District of Columbia (6 percent).

**Figure 10: If yes, in which state(s) do you intend to practice law?  
(Please select all that apply.)**



## Bar Examination

Students were presented with a series of statements regarding the bar examination and were asked to state their level of agreement with each statement. The statements generally focused on students' perspectives on their personal level of preparedness and the extent to which the Valparaiso Law faculty and curriculum facilitate knowledge and awareness of the bar examination.

The chart below (Figure 11) presents each statement along with students' responses regarding their level of agreement. For each statement, we calculated a numerical mean rating corresponding to the collective level of agreement (or disagreement) with a particular statement. We did this by first assigning a value to each response. For the ratings of agreement, respondents chose from five possible levels:

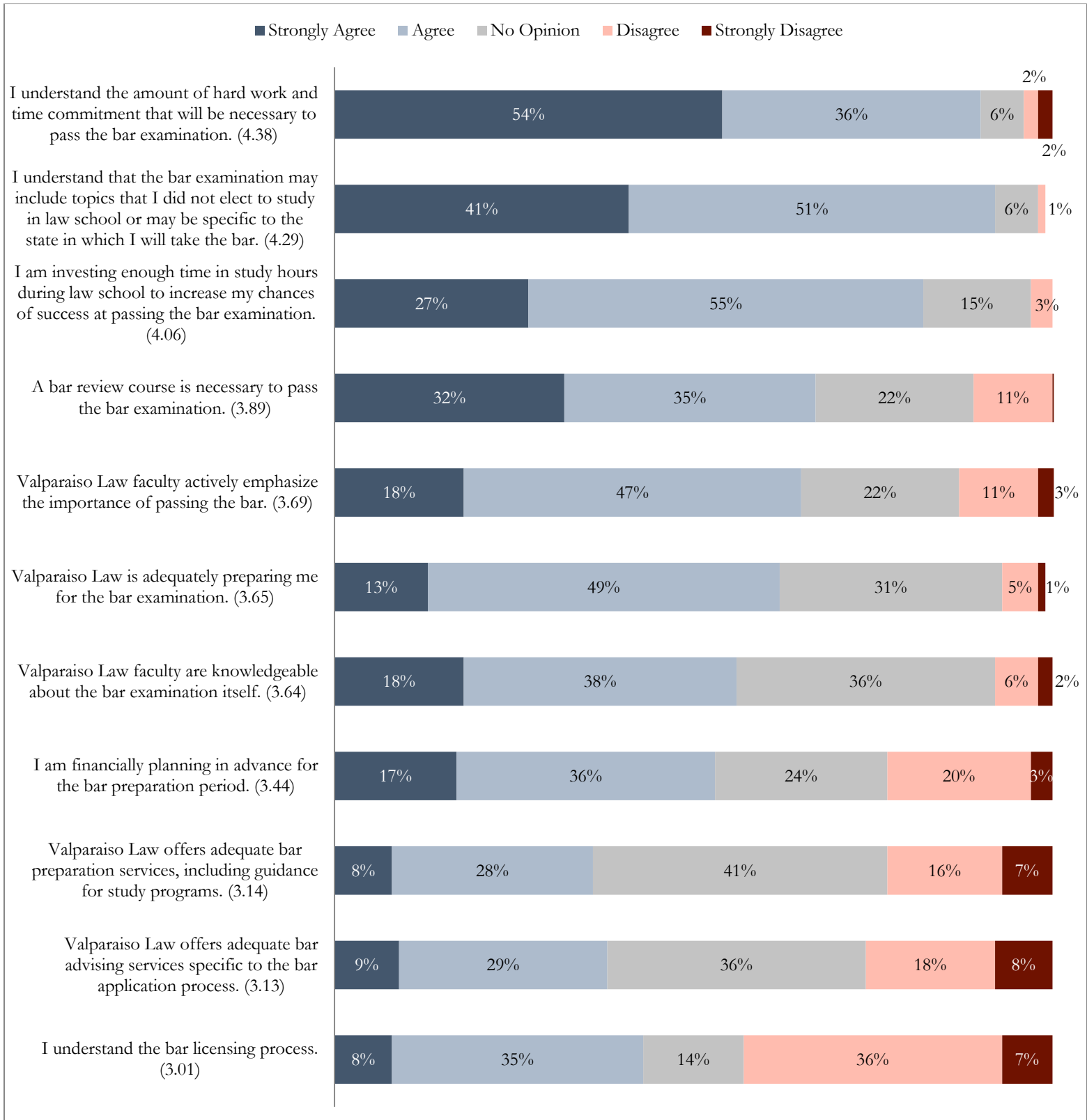
- ❖ Strongly Agree (5)
- ❖ Agree (4)
- ❖ No Opinion (3)
- ❖ Disagree (2)
- ❖ Strongly Disagree (1)

Since there were five possible responses, we assigned each level a numerical value of one through five, such that the highest level agreement, 'Strongly Agree', equaled five and the lowest level of agreement, 'Strongly Disagree', equaled one. We then multiplied the number of responses for each level by these assigned numerical values and divided this product by the total number of respondents.

The chart organizes the statements in descending order by mean rating score, shown in parentheses at the end of each statement. As it shows, current law students demonstrate an acute awareness of the requisite time and preparedness necessary to pass the bar examination and its content; 54 percent strongly agree that they understood "the amount of hard work and time commitment" needed to pass, while 41 percent strongly agree that they understand what topics may or may not be included in the examination. Moreover, over 80 percent of students generally felt that they were spending enough time studying for the bar to increase their chances of passing—27 percent strongly agreed, and 55 percent agreed.

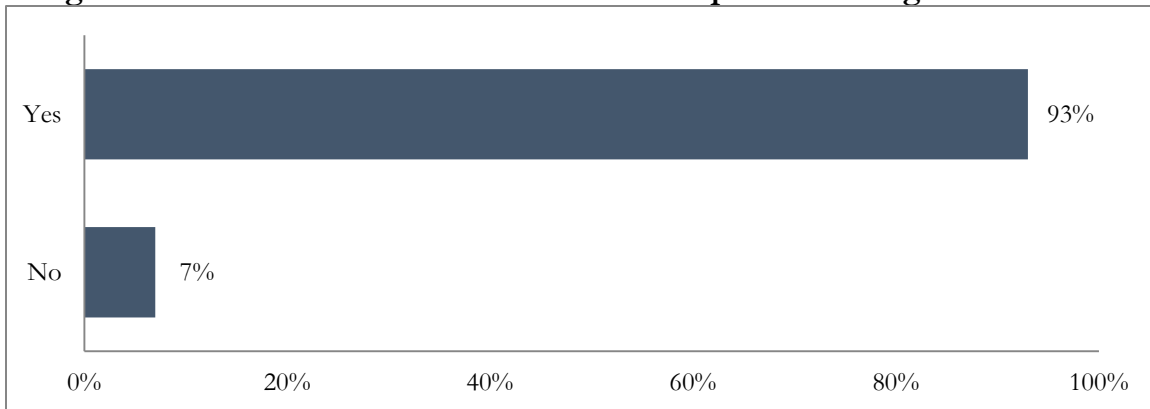
With regard to the university's facilitation of knowledge and awareness of the bar examination, students were more measured in their level of agreement. For example, while the majority agreed that faculty actively emphasize the importance of passing the bar examination, approximately a third of respondents had no opinion on whether the school is adequately preparing them for the bar examination, whether the faculty are knowledgeable about the examination, or whether the university offers adequate bar advising services—18 percent disagreed with this last statement. Similarly, over forty percent had no opinion on whether the university offers adequate preparation services, while 16 percent disagreed with this statement.

**Figure 11: Please indicate your level of agreement with each of the statements below.**

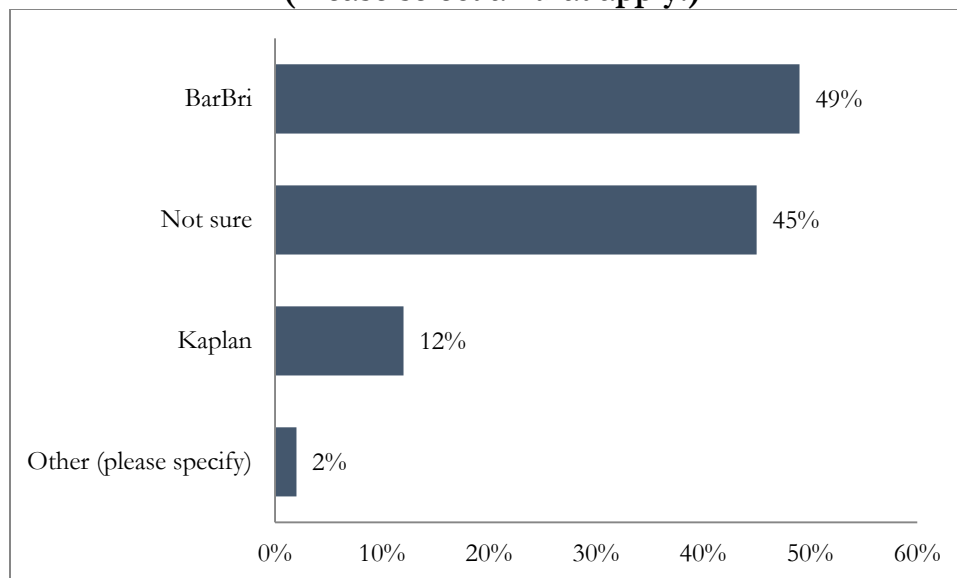


Ninety-three percent of current students stated that they intend to take a bar review course to prepare for the bar examination. Of these respondents, about half stated that they intend to take the BarBri review course. However, an almost equal proportion (45 percent) stated that they were not sure which bar review course they intend to take. Just 12 percent stated that they intend to take the Kaplan course.

**Figure 12: I intend to take a bar review course prior to taking the bar exam.**



**Figure 13: If yes, which bar review course do you intend to take?  
(Please select all that apply.)**

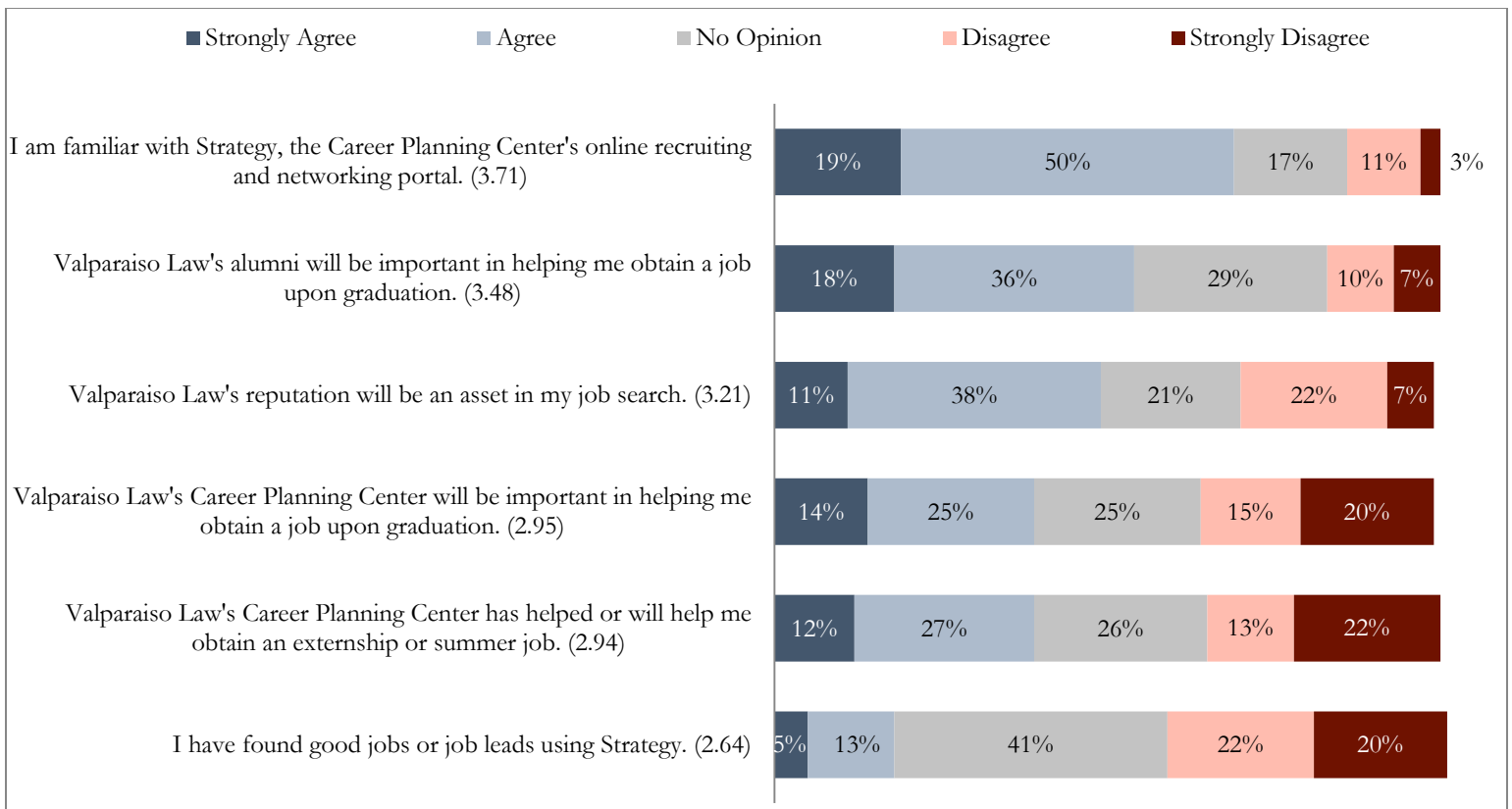


**Career**

Students were then asked to state their level of agreement with statements regarding their post-law school career, such as career planning, job search, and the efficacy of Valparaiso’s career services. Similar to the analysis in the Bar Examination subsection, for each statement we calculated the numerical mean rating, corresponding to students’ collective level of agreement (or disagreement) with a particular statement. The statements are presented in Figure 14 below, in descending order by numerical mean rating.

As the chart demonstrates, while most students are familiar with Strategy, the vast majority noted that they have not found good jobs using the service. Similarly, **less than half of respondents** stated that Valparaiso Law’s Career Planning Center has helped them obtain an internship/externship, or that it will be helpful in their job search upon graduation; approximately one-fifth of respondents strongly disagreed with these two statements. Finally, about half of students believed that Valparaiso Law’s alumni and reputation would be an asset in their job search. This belief was not universal, though; almost one-third disagreed that the value of Valparaiso’s reputation would be an asset in their job search.

**Figure 14: Please indicate your level of agreement with each of the statements below.**



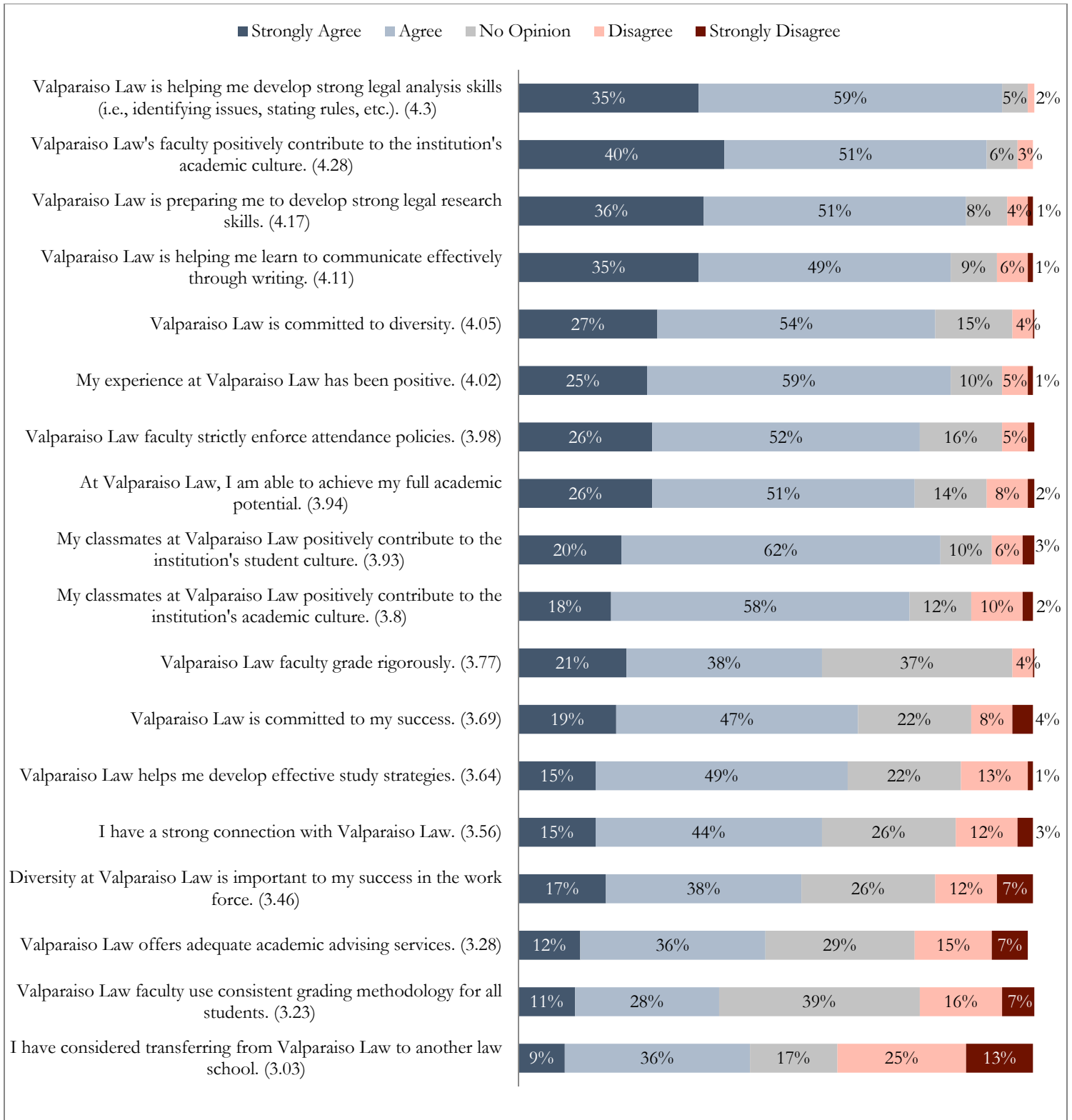
## Academic Culture

Current students overwhelmingly indicated positive sentiments about various aspects of Valparaiso Law's academic culture. As the chart on the next page clearly demonstrates, more than 70 percent of current students indicated some level of agreement with a majority of the statements. Hence, we focus on those statements where responses were not as overwhelmingly positive. For example, students expressed some level of doubt or uncertainty regarding Valparaiso Law's grading policies. Approximately a quarter of students felt that faculty did not use consistent grading methodology for all students; almost forty percent had no opinion on this issue. Moreover, close to 40 percent had "no opinion" on whether faculty grade rigorously.

Another noticeable observation lies within Valparaiso Law's advising services. Unlike most other statements, agreement on whether the school offers adequate academic advising services was below 50 percent of surveyed current students—48 percent expressed some level of agreement, while more than one-fifth expressed disagreement and close to one-third (29 percent) had no opinion.

Despite students' generally positive attitudes towards the academic culture at Valparaiso, a significant minority (45 percent) either agreed or strongly agreed that they had considered transferring to another law school. Only 9 percent strongly agreed with this statement, though, and 38 percent of students either disagreed or strongly disagreed, indicating that a significant number of students had not seriously considered transferring, and that even among those who had, most were not strongly committed to the idea.

**Figure 15: Please indicate your level of agreement with each of the statements below.**



## Academic Culture Open-Ended Responses

Students were asked to comment on four open-ended questions regarding Valparaiso Law's academic culture. The four questions were:

- ❖ How would you describe the academic culture at Valparaiso Law?
- ❖ How could Valparaiso Law improve its academic culture?
- ❖ How would you describe the student culture at Valparaiso Law?
- ❖ How does the student culture affect your learning success at Valparaiso Law?

While some students expressed some negative descriptions of the academic culture, a significant proportion positively cited the school's dedicated faculty and appropriate balance of rigor. We present a sample of both positive and negative reviews below. Note that while the quotes below are generally reproduced verbatim, obvious spelling errors were corrected.

### *Positive*

- ❖ The professors seem truly dedicated to teaching the law and learning how to think like a lawyer. I'm only 2 weeks in and i feel that the professors truly want us to succeed as both students and professionals.
- ❖ The academic culture is extremely positive. All faculty have an open-door policy that is very helpful, and all professors that I have had are very courteous. In class, the professors are extremely knowledgeable in their areas of teaching and instruction.
- ❖ Not competitive or cut throat. Everyone wants everyone else to succeed.
- ❖ The academic culture is very positive. Every student seems eager to learn and the professors are all eager to teach. There is a ““need for knowledge”” vibe.

### *Negative*

- ❖ The academic culture is lacking. I would say expectations are not set very high by either students or faculty.
- ❖ The academic culture at Valparaiso Law can be very stressful, especially in 1L year because from orientation to ASP to other aspects it seems as if the goal of the faculty is to scare the 1Ls to death and make law school sound a lot harder than it really is which causes a lot of students to freak out.
- ❖ It's a mixed bag with some extraordinarily high points, and some that are less than ideal. I'm sometimes surprised by the lack of professionalism shown by professors within the classroom.



In response to the second question, students presented an array of recommendations on how to improve the academic culture at Valparaiso Law. A significant proportion of responses fit into similar categories, outlined below.

### *Grading Policy*

- ❖ Have teachers grade on a more consistent basis.
- ❖ Get rid of normalization so we can focus on learning without the consequences of poor grades/losing scholarships. Offer more opportunities for showing what we know other than one final exam.
- ❖ I don't understand why there is grade normalization. I want the grade I've earned and I expect other students to get the grade they've earned. One test at the end of the semester is ridiculous. I feel that I am carrying other students to a better grade while my grade is lowered in the process.

### *Faculty*

- ❖ Hire faculty that are specialized and very knowledgeable in the different practice/subject areas. Some students felt as if they had to teach themselves the material because the instructor was not as familiar or comfortable with it.
- ❖ The law school faculty treats the students like they are “high schoolers” not “colleagues” like that try to tell us we are. There is no respect from faculty to students.

### *Career Planning*

- ❖ There is no section to comment on the Career Planning Department, but this is where the school needs more work. Unless you are in the top 10% of the class, they offer close to no help at all for 3Ls looking for post-graduation jobs.
- ❖ I think that a lot of work needs to be done with the career services. I feel that they are not very helpful. Their e-mails are redundant and extremely long. If you are not in the top 10% of the class career services really doesn't give you much help. Also Strategy is one of the most user unfriendly programs I have ever used.
- ❖ Allow first year students to have contact with the career planning center sooner as most students are missing out of opportunities because of it.

Similar to their descriptions of the academic culture, students were generally positive in their descriptions of the **student culture**, citing the school's diverse, friendly, and helpful student body. However, there was a noticeable increase in negative assessments, some of which are mentioned below.

#### *Positive*

- ❖ Very diverse, both ethnically, racially, and academically, gaining people from all walks of life who have multiple different goals from their legal career.
- ❖ Most students are friendly and outgoing. I think the student culture at the school helps everyone feel more comfortable in the high stress situation of law school.
- ❖ The student culture is like a family. They are there to help, support, and network. They will also put you in your place if you're acting out.

#### *Negative*

- ❖ The student culture at Valpo is somewhat disappointing. Professionalism is lacking in that many students haven't fully graduated from the high school and undergrad mentality or ways of interacting with one another. It is unfortunate to see the drama and inappropriate behavior that takes place on a daily basis.
- ❖ Students are too hands-off when there are issues that affect them. Part of this is due to the impression set by the administration that their demands will not be heard.
- ❖ There is such a lack of professionalism with some of the student body. While friends at other law school have to dress presentable and act professional while in school, that is not the case with Valpo.
- ❖ The students can be selfish and petty when it comes to helping one another.
- ❖ Very group-oriented. Not much integration. Social groups tend to stay together and never intermingle.

Finally, students referenced several ways through which the student culture affected their learning success, primarily citing their ability to gain different perspectives on issues and the comfort of having support from classmates. However, it should be noted that many students stated that they did not have an opinion on this, or that the student culture did not have any impact.

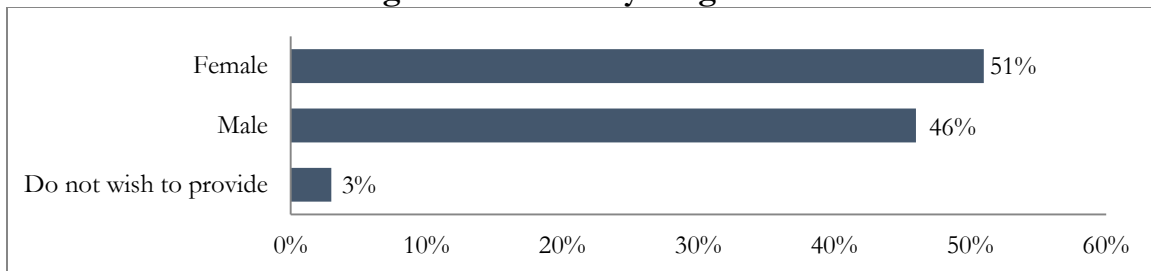
- ❖ I think it makes me learn better knowing that people are going to be nice and help each other out and not be super cut-throat.
- ❖ It allows me to feel comfortable studying, learning in the class room, and connecting with my fellow classmates.
- ❖ Encourages me to engage myself in activities, to network, and to seek/offer assistance to others

- ❖ When you have a student support group everything is less stressful.
- ❖ The student culture affects my learning in a positive manner. The fact that I have good friends who are willing to help me learn and succeed makes a positive experience.

### Demographics

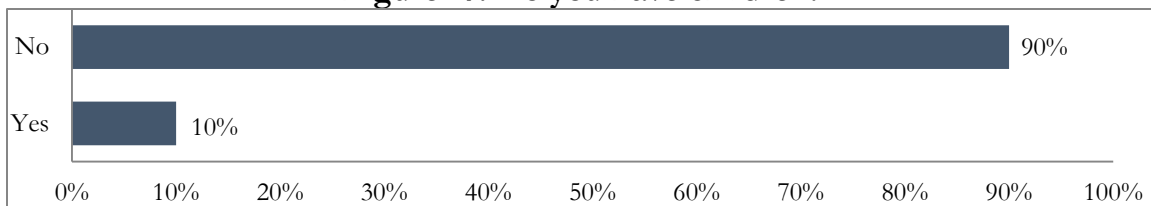
A little more than half of the student respondents were female, while 46 percent were male. Thus, there was not a significant gender gap.

**Figure 16: What is your gender?**



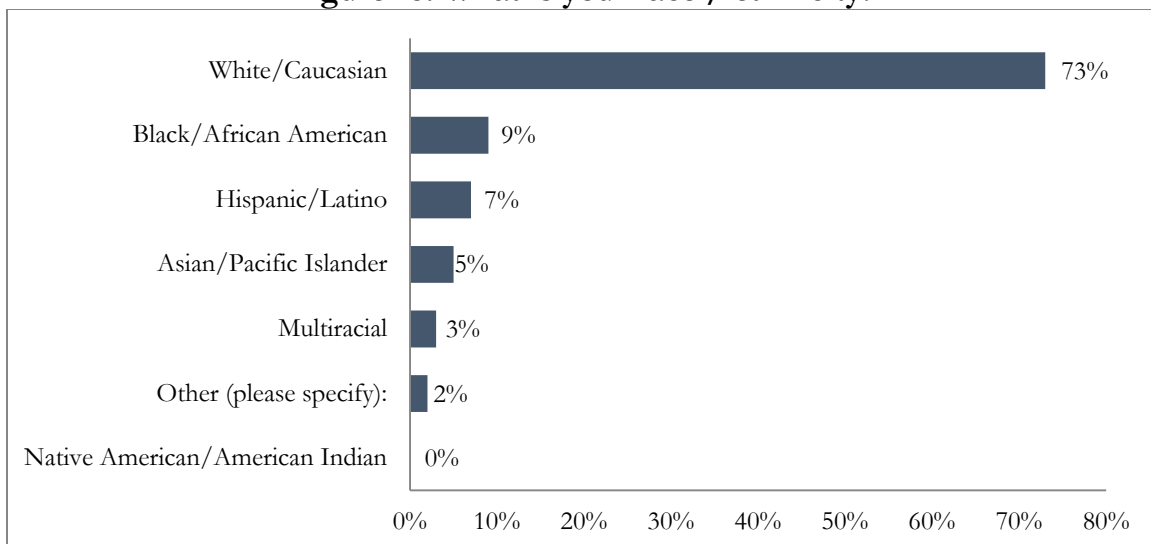
Just 10 percent of current students stated that they have children—the vast majority did not have children.

**Figure 17: Do you have children?**



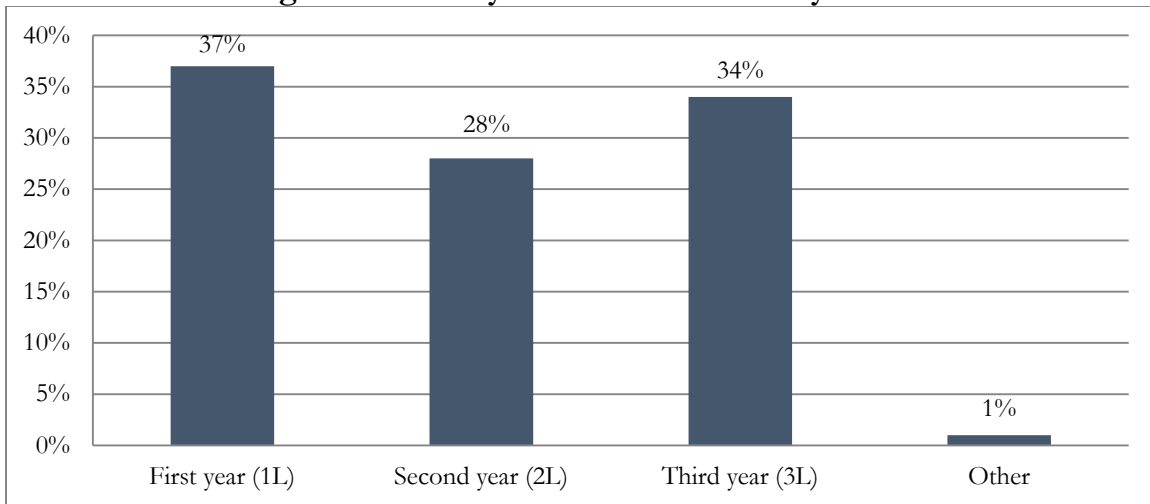
Only about a quarter of students belonged to ethnic or racial minorities, with **73 percent of respondents identifying themselves as White/Caucasian**. About 10 percent of respondents were Black/African American, while 7 percent were Hispanic/Latino.

**Figure 18: What is your race / ethnicity?**

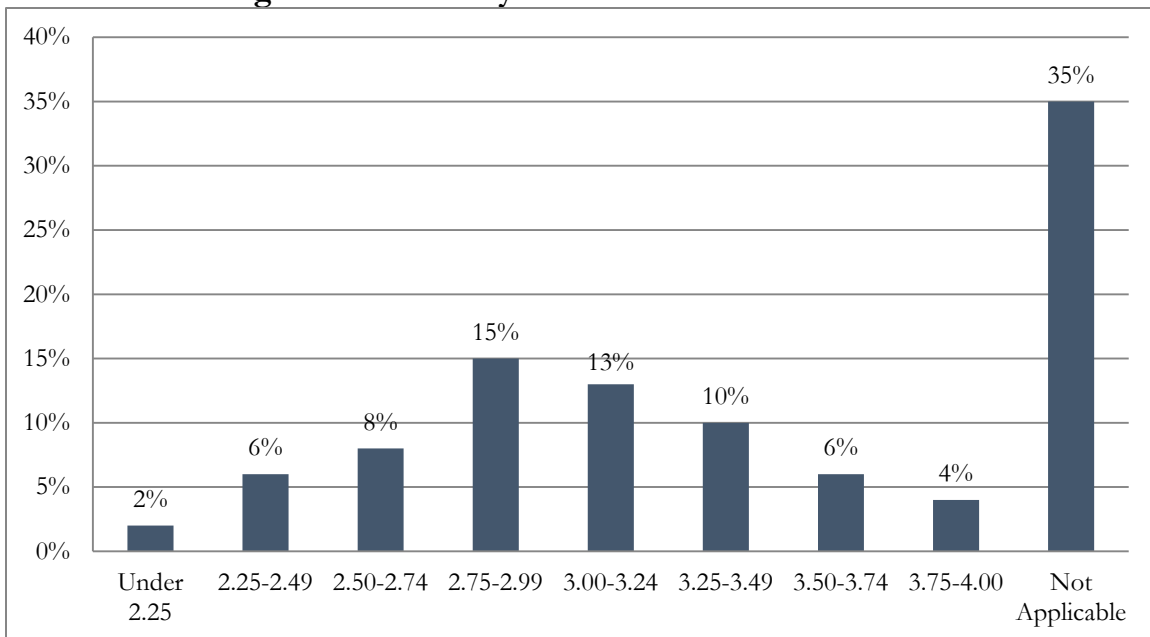


A plurality of respondents (37 percent) were in their first year of law school (Figure 19), while just over one-third (34 percent) were in their third year of law school. Second-year law students were the least represented cohort (28 percent). With regard to cumulative GPA (Figure 20), 35 percent of students did not select a particular GPA range, instead selecting “not applicable.” A plurality of students’ GPAs was between 2.75 and 3.49, accounting for almost forty percent of all responses. The highest GPA ranges, 3.50 through 4.00, combined to represent approximately 10 percent of all responses.

**Figure 19: What year of law school are you in?**

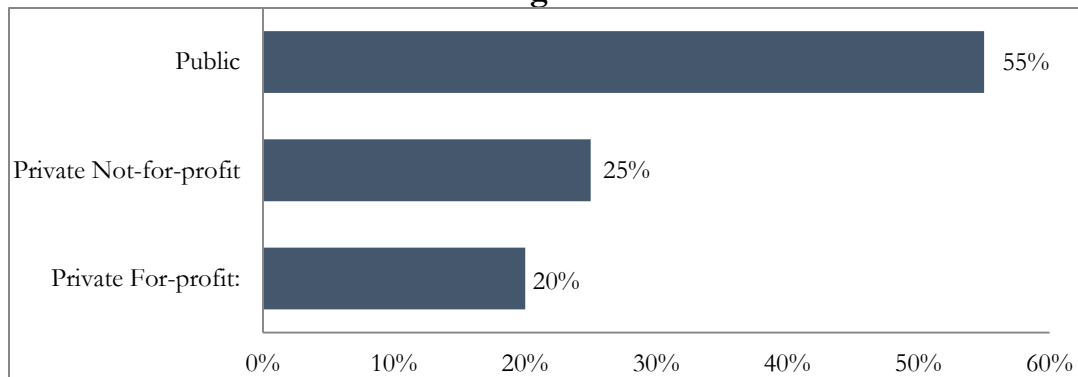


**Figure 20: What is your current cumulative GPA?**



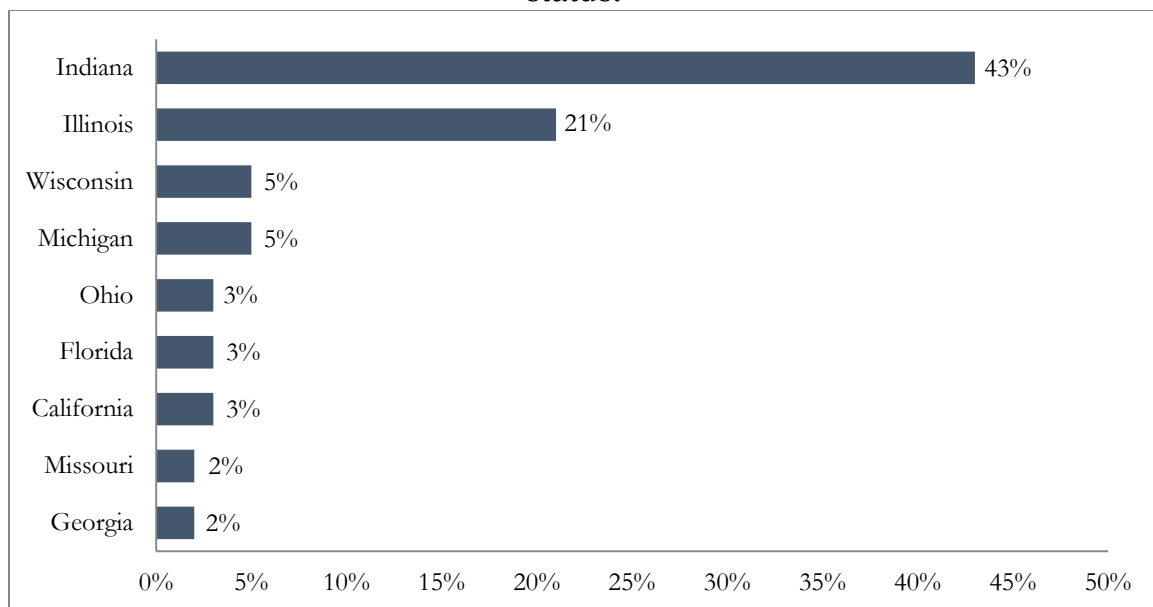
A little **more than half of students (55 percent)** reported that they graduated from a public undergraduate institution. Twenty-five percent graduated from private not-for-profit institutions, while one-fifth obtained their undergraduate degree from a private, for-profit school.

**Figure 21: From what type of institution did you earn your undergraduate degree?**



Students overwhelmingly hold permanent resident status in Midwestern states (Figure 22). Accordingly, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan and Ohio combine to represent approximately three-fourths of all responses (74 percent). The only non-Midwestern states that accounted for more than two percent of responses were California (3 percent) and Florida (3 percent).

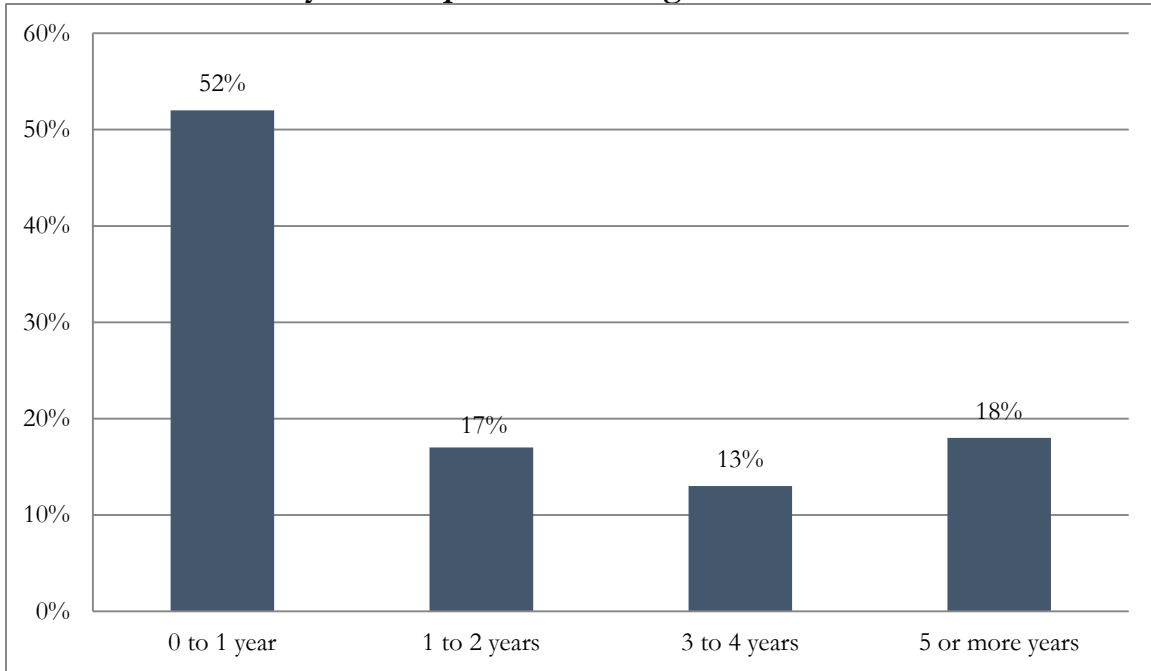
**Figure 22: In which U.S. State (or territory) do you hold permanent resident status?\***



\*States representing less than 2% of responses not included.

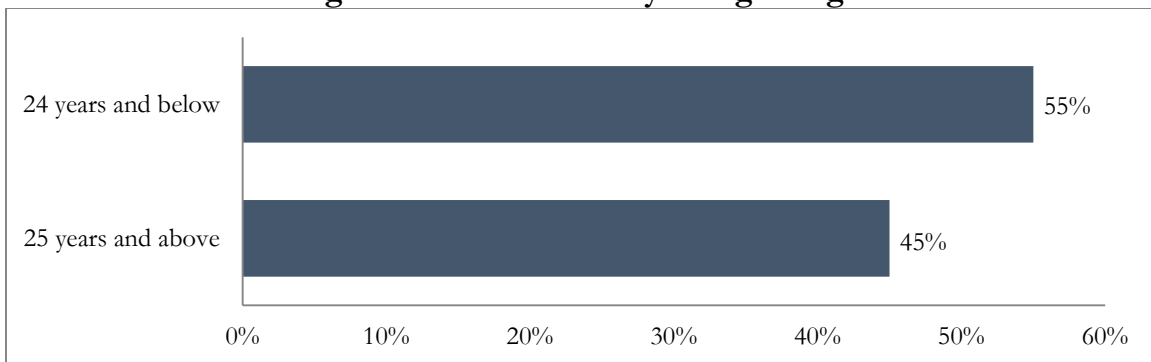
With regard to work experience (Figure 23), slightly more than half of all students had less than a year of work experience prior to entering law school. Respondents were spread fairly evenly across the other levels of work experience, with each accounting for between 13 and 18 percent of responses.

**Figure 23: How many years of professional work experience did you have prior to entering law school?**



A little more than half of respondents are 24 years of age or below (55 percent). Older students, those 25 years of age or above, account for the remainder (45 percent).

**Figure 24: Please select your age range.**

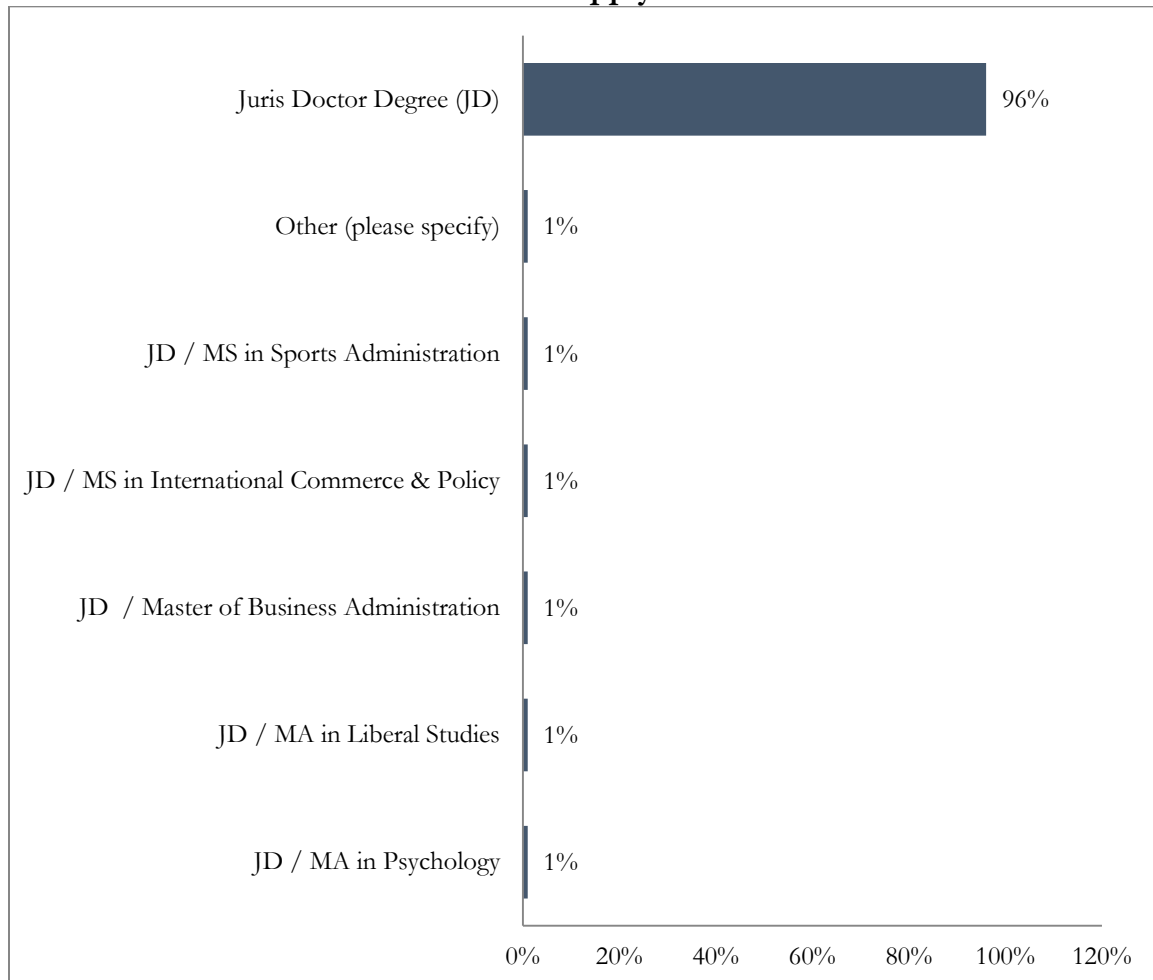


## Section 2: Alumni Survey

### Alumni Profile

Similar to current students, the vast majority of alumni (96 percent) did not pursue a degree aside from the Juris Doctor while in law school. Other degrees accounted for just 1 percent of total responses each, and only four percent combined.

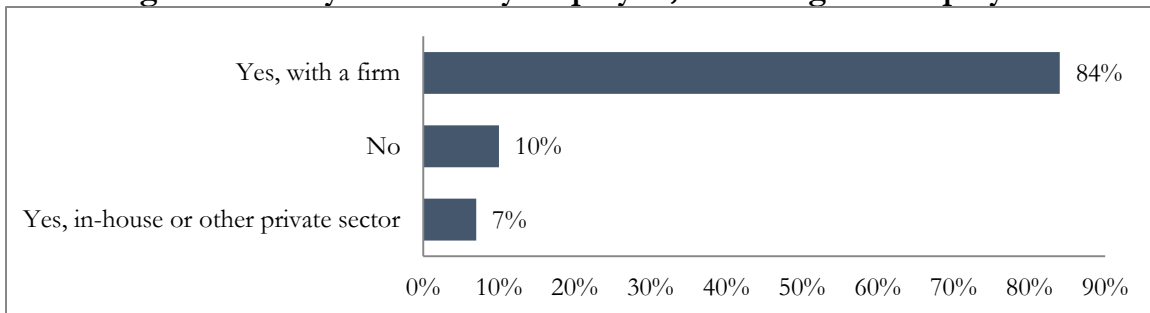
**Figure 25: What degree(s) did you earn at Valparaiso Law? Please select all that apply.**



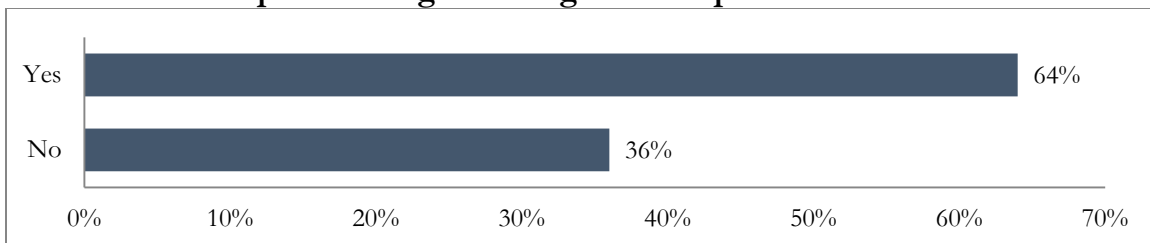


Approximately **90 percent of alumni surveyed are currently employed**—84 percent at a law firm and 7 percent as in-house counsel or at some other private sector capacity. **Ten percent of alumni are unemployed**; Figures 27 and 28 expound upon this population of alumni. Among unemployed alumni, more than one-third (36 percent) have not been employed since graduating from Valparaiso Law. While almost 40 percent of unemployed alumni are retired, **a significant proportion are currently looking for some form of employment**—52 percent are currently looking for full-time employment, while 15 percent are looking for part-time employment.

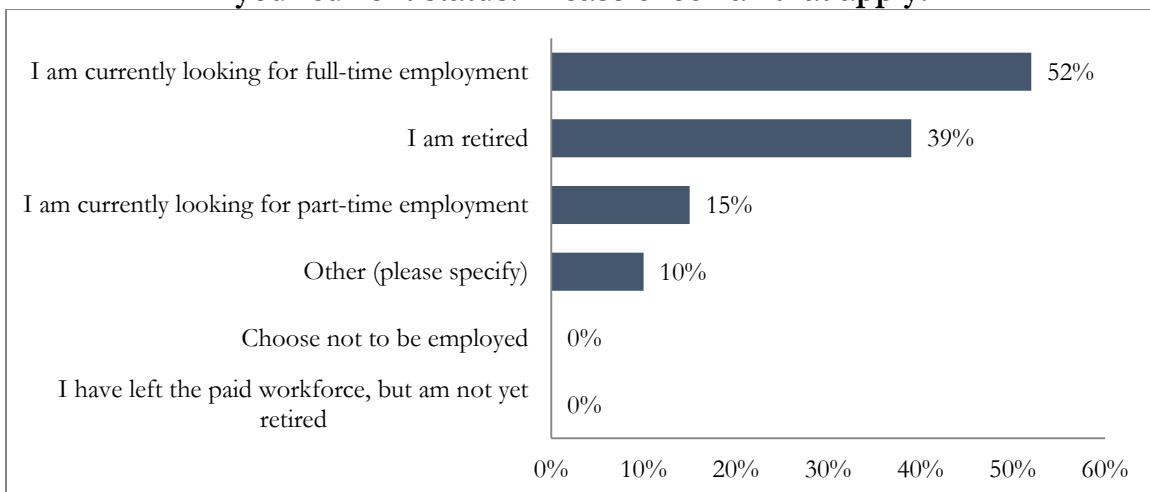
**Figure 26: Are you currently employed, including self-employed?**



**Figure 27: If not currently employed, were you previously employed at some point after graduating from Valparaiso Law?**

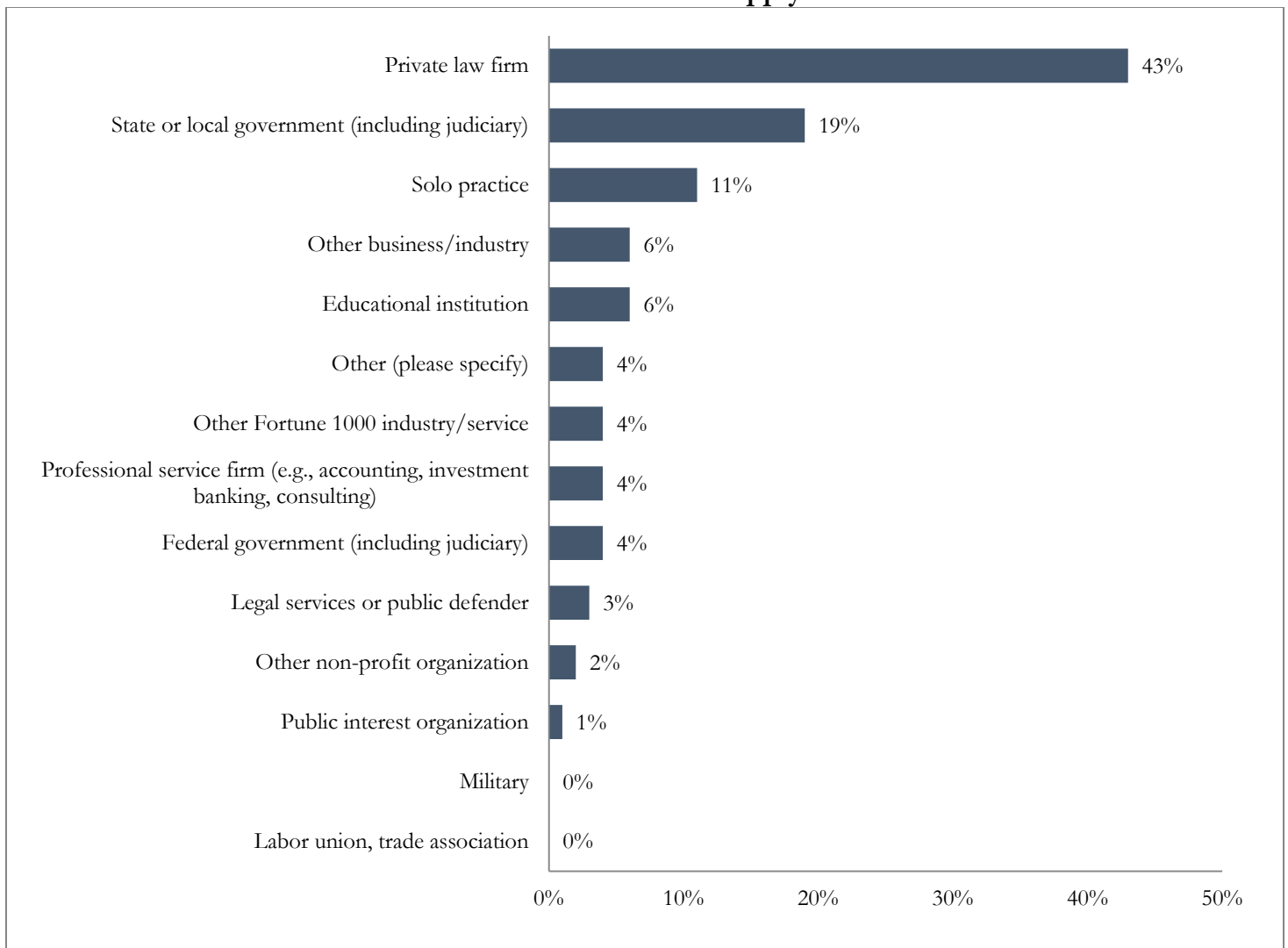


**Figure 28: If currently not employed, which of the following factors influenced your current status? Please check all that apply.**



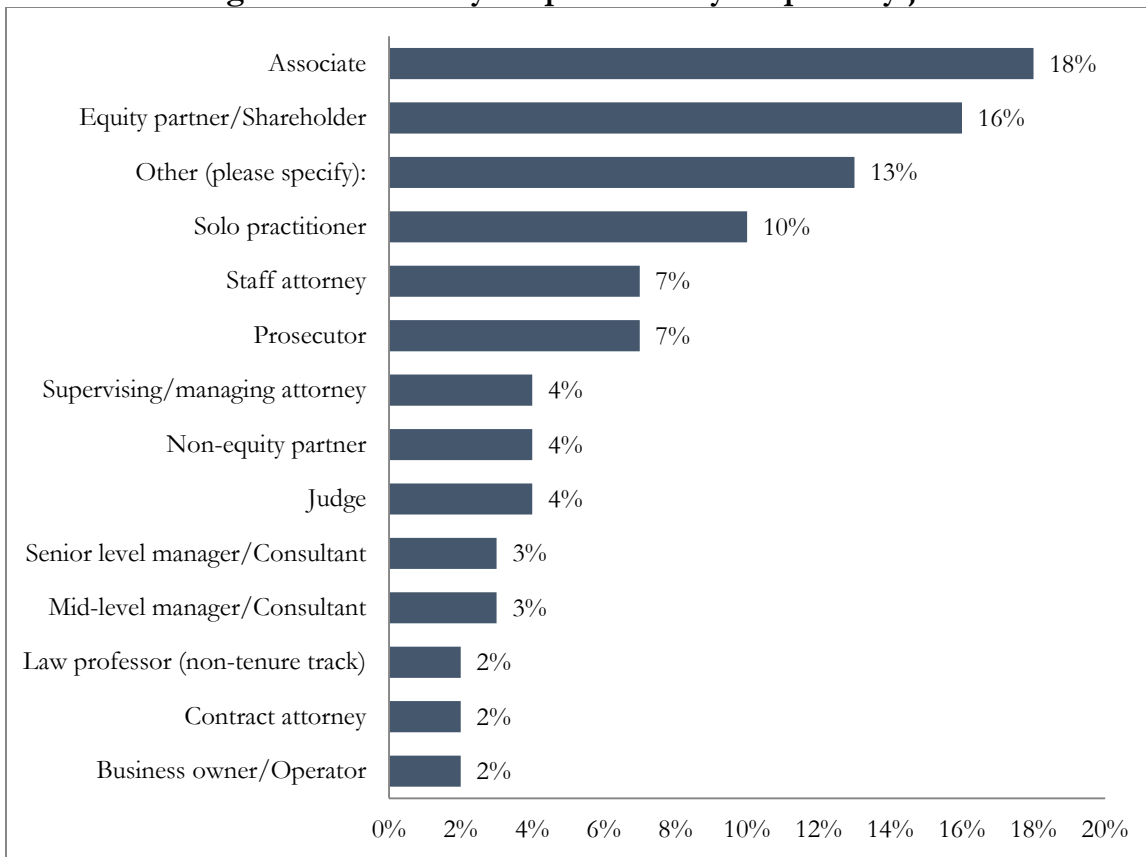
A **plurality** of alumni (43 percent) currently work in a **private law firm**, while just under a quarter work for state/local government (19 percent) or for the federal government (4 percent). These choices are closely aligned with current students' intentions after graduation; the most popular choice among students was private law firm (60 percent), followed by state/local (46 percent) and federal government organizations (42 percent). On the other hand, there was a significant gap for other fields. For example, 25 percent of current students indicated an interest in working for public interest organizations, but only 1 percent of alumni currently work in that area. Another example is seen in the legal services/public defender category: 21 percent of current students expressed interest in that field, while just 3 percent of alumni work in that field.

**Figure 29: What type of organization do you currently work for?**  
Please select all that apply.

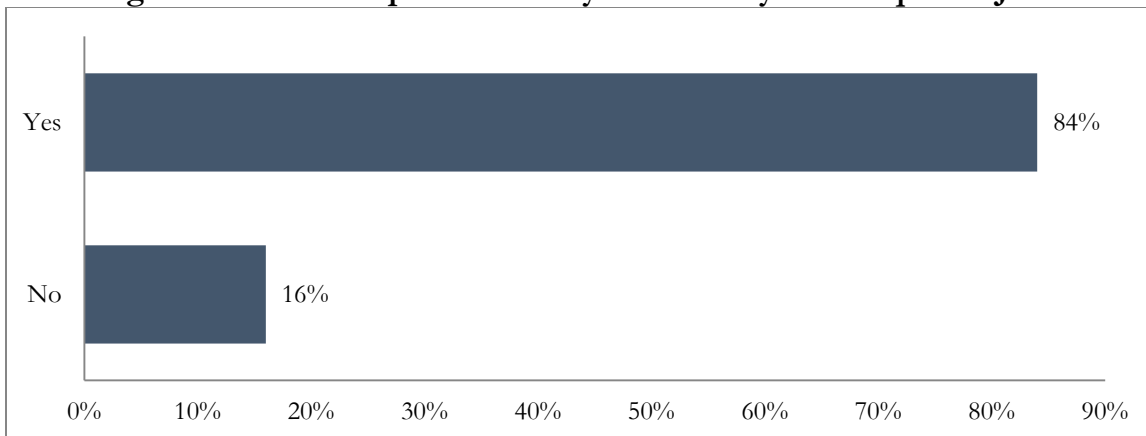


A plurality of employed alumni (18 percent) are associates at their primary jobs, while 16 percent are equity partners/shareholders (Figure 30). A relatively significant proportion of alumni selected “other” (13 percent), which included varied positions such as paralegal, executive director, and law professor. As depicted in Figure 31, most alumni (84 percent) stated that their current position required a Juris Doctor degree.

**Figure 30: What is your position in your primary job?**

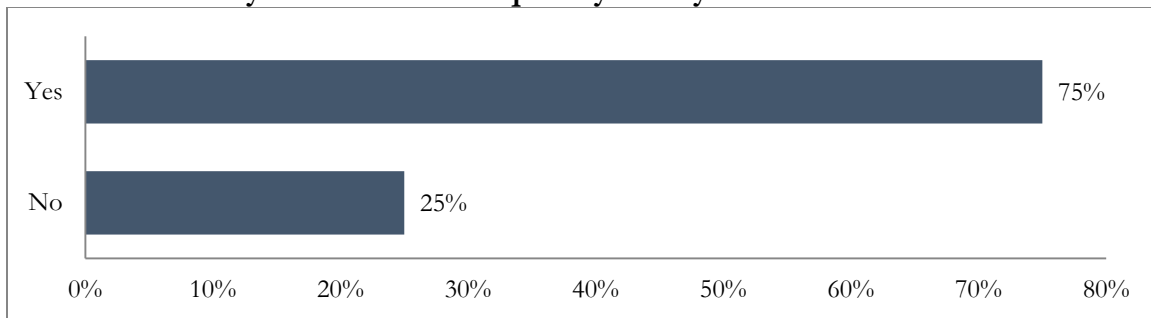


**Figure 31: Does the position that you currently hold require a J.D.?**



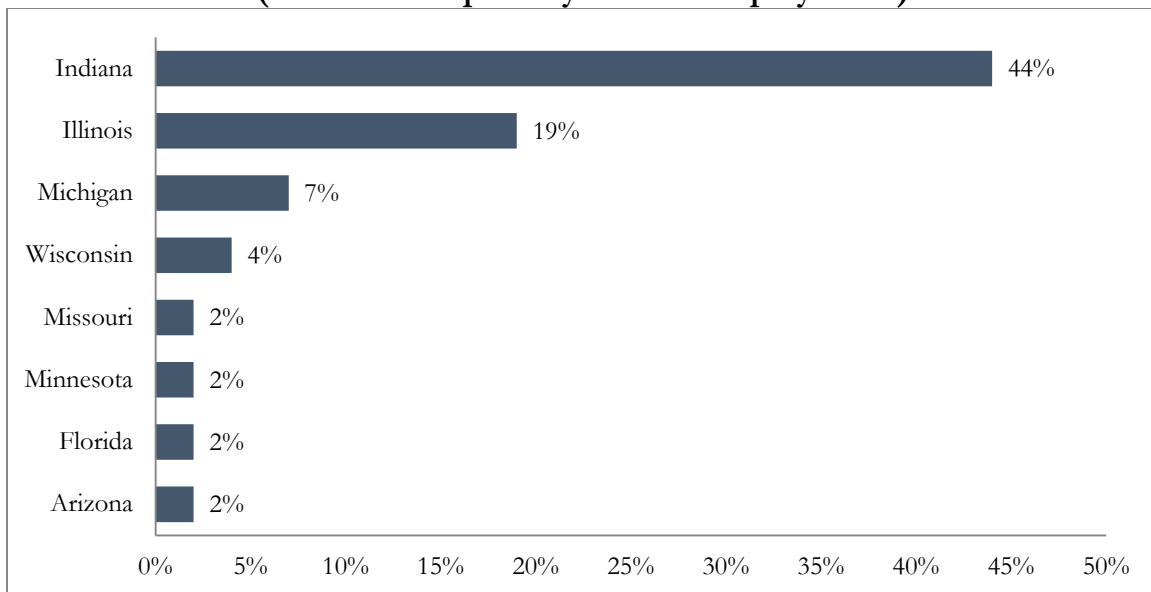
Among those alumni whose positions do not require a Juris Doctor degree, a significant majority (75 percent) stated that their law degree had enabled them to advance in their career more quickly than they otherwise would have without the degree. Overall, only 4 percent of alumni felt that their degree had not helped them advance more quickly in their career, while 96 percent either worked in a job that made use of their degree directly or indicated that their degree had been helpful despite not being an explicit requirement for the job.

**Figure 32: If not, do you believe your J.D. (or LLM, S.J.D.) has enabled you to advance in your career more quickly than you would have otherwise?**



Alumni are generally employed in Midwestern states, particularly in Indiana (44 percent) and Illinois (19 percent). The states of employment reflect the preferences of current students, who also listed Indiana, Illinois and Michigan as their top choices for states of employment. In terms of non-Midwestern states, California and District of Columbia represented relatively significant proportion of answers among current students, but each received less than 2 percent of responses among alumni.

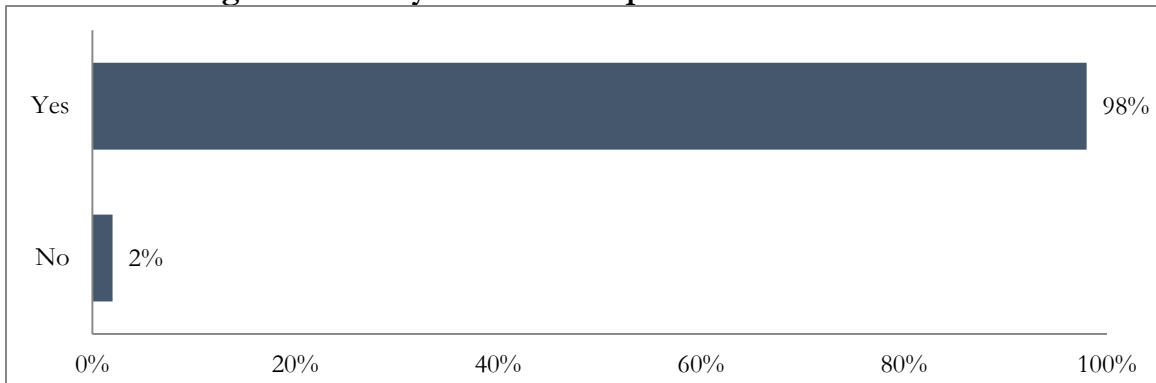
**Figure 33: In which U.S. State (or territory) are you currently employed? (Please select primary State of employment.)**



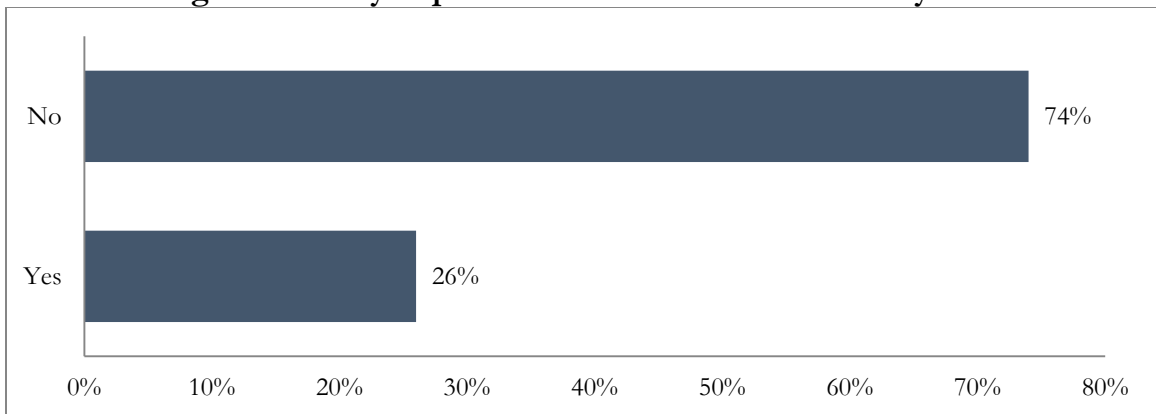
## Bar Examination

Almost all surveyed alumni (98 percent) have attempted the bar examination. Of those who have not attempted the exam, just a quarter (26 percent) stated that they intend to take the bar within the next five years.

**Figure 34: Did you ever attempt the bar examination?**

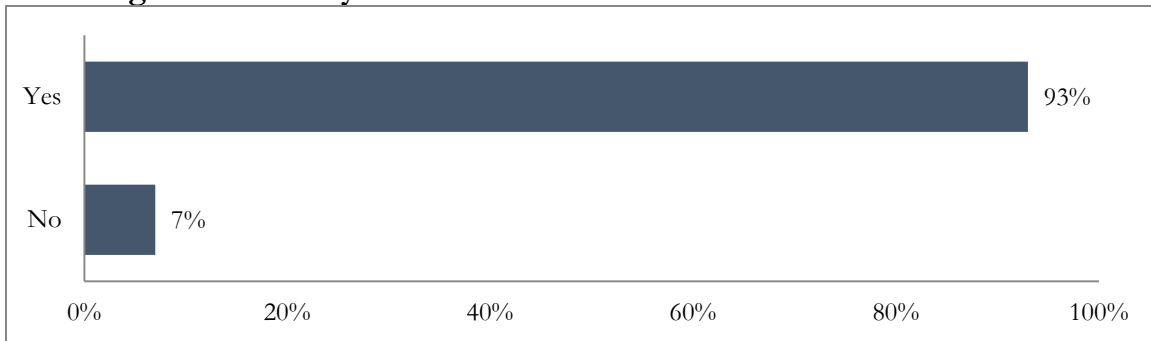


**Figure 35: Do you plan to take the bar in the next 5 years?**

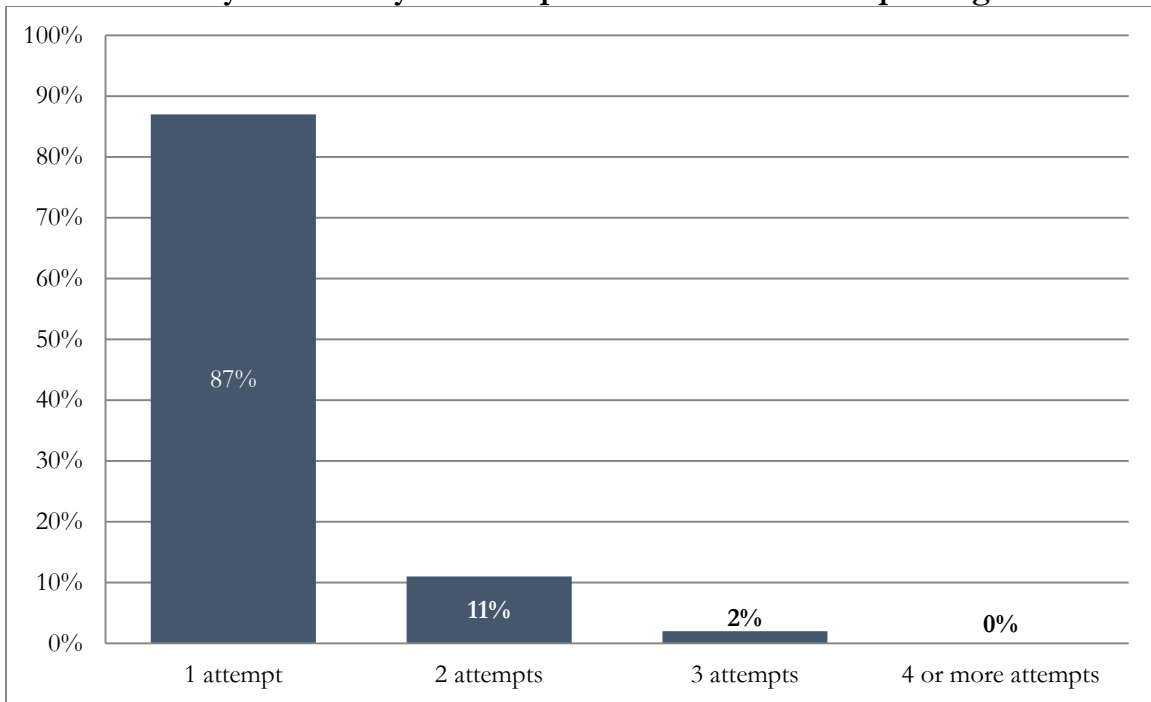


The vast majority of alumni (93 percent) have been admitted to the bar in at least one state. Moreover, an equally significant number of alumni (87 percent) were admitted to the bar after passing the bar exam on their first attempt. 11 percent passed the bar on their second attempt, while only 2 percent required three attempts to pass; no alumni required four or more attempts.

**Figure 36: Have you been admitted to the bar in at least one state?**



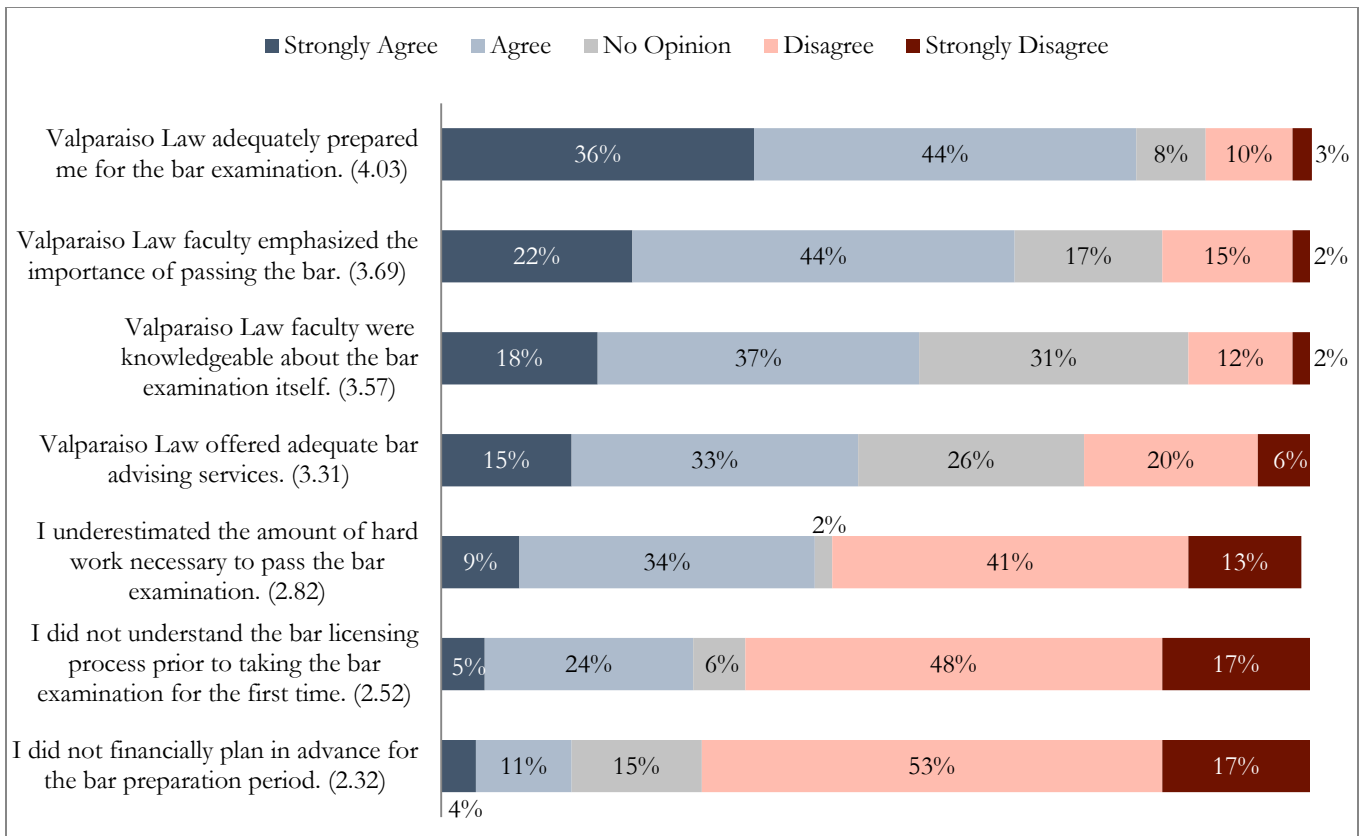
**Figure 37: In the first state in which you received admission to the bar, how many times did you attempt the bar exam before passing?**



Like current students, alumni were also presented with a series of statements regarding the bar examination and asked to state their level of agreement for each statement. Accordingly, the statements below are ranked according to the numerical mean rating, measuring the collective level of agreement among alumni for each statement.

As the chart below depicts, **alumni were more likely than current students** to agree with the statement that Valparaiso Law adequately prepared them to sit the bar examination. For example, 36 percent of alumni strongly agreed with this statement, while only 13 percent of current students strongly agreed. Interestingly, a significant proportion of alumni (43 percent) indicated they underestimated the amount of hard work necessary to pass the bar; 90 percent of current students strongly agreed or agreed that they understood the amount of hard work and time commitment required to pass the examination, suggesting that some of these students may be overconfident about their understanding of the level of preparation required. Finally, with regard to the university’s bar advising services, **an identical proportion of alumni and current students (26 percent) felt that Valparaiso Law did not offer adequate bar advising service.**

**Figure 38: Please indicate your level of agreement with each of the statements below.**

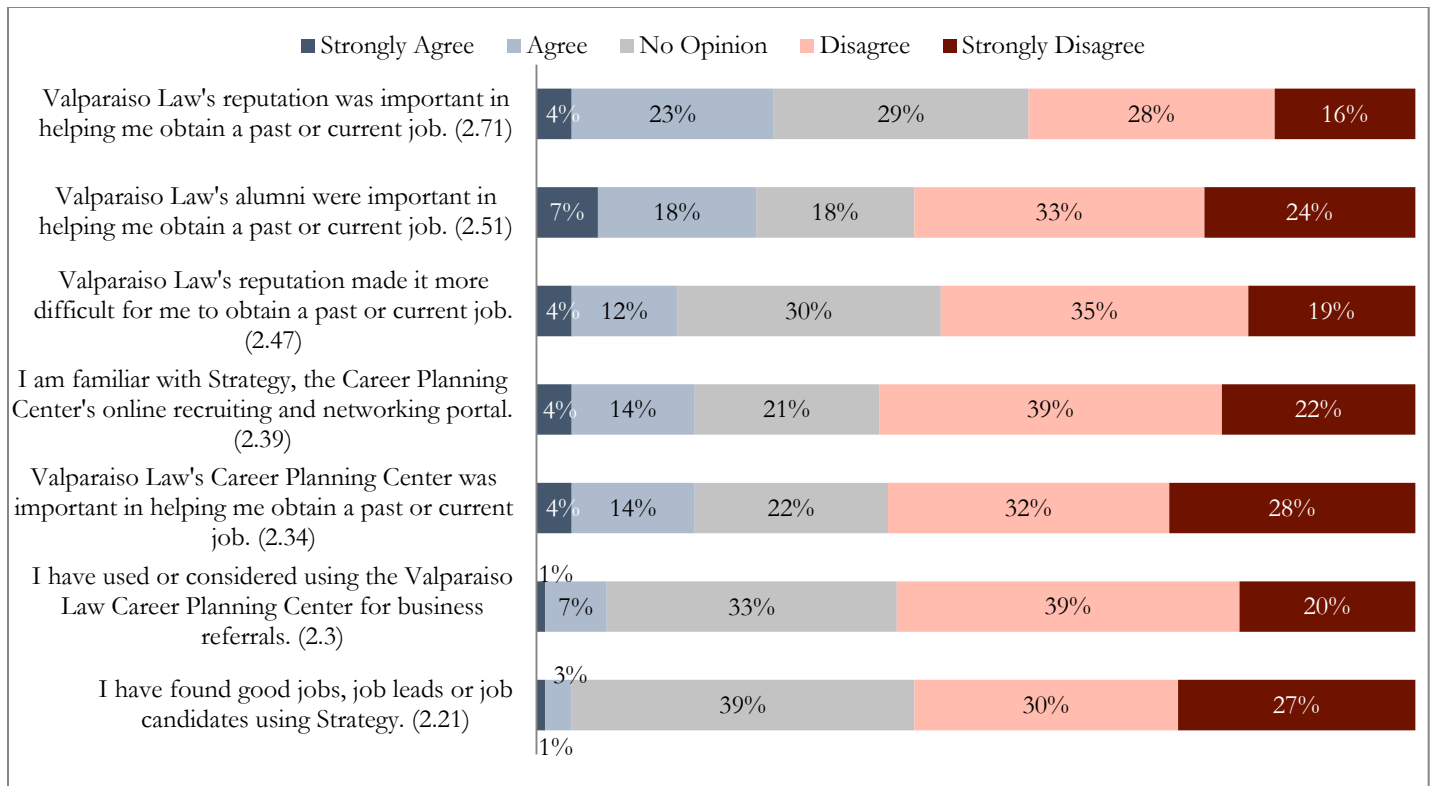


### Career

In the chart below (Figure 39), we display level of agreement among alumni with statements regarding their law school experience and its effect on their career. Interestingly, **alumni are significantly less enthusiastic than current students** are about Valparaiso Law’s impact on their careers. For example, 44 percent of alumni expressed some level of disagreement about the importance of the school’s reputation in helping them to obtain a job. This level of disagreement was even more pronounced as to whether alumni assisted them in obtaining a job—57 percent expressed some level of disagreement. While some current students were skeptical of the benefits that Valparaiso’s reputation and alumni would provide in their job search, approximately half of them believed that the school’s reputation and alumni would be helpful. Less than 30 percent of alumni reported that these factors actually helped them obtain a job, however. Alumni’s assessment of the impact of Valparaiso’s reputation was not entirely negative, though; only 16 percent believed that the school’s reputation had actively hurt their job search.

Similarly, with regard to the tools available to alumni to assist them in their job search, respondents overwhelmingly indicated that they were unfamiliar with Strategy. Few alumni indicated that they had utilized services offered by the Career Planning Center or that the center was important in assisting them in their job search.

**Figure 39: Please indicate your level of agreement with each of the statements below.**

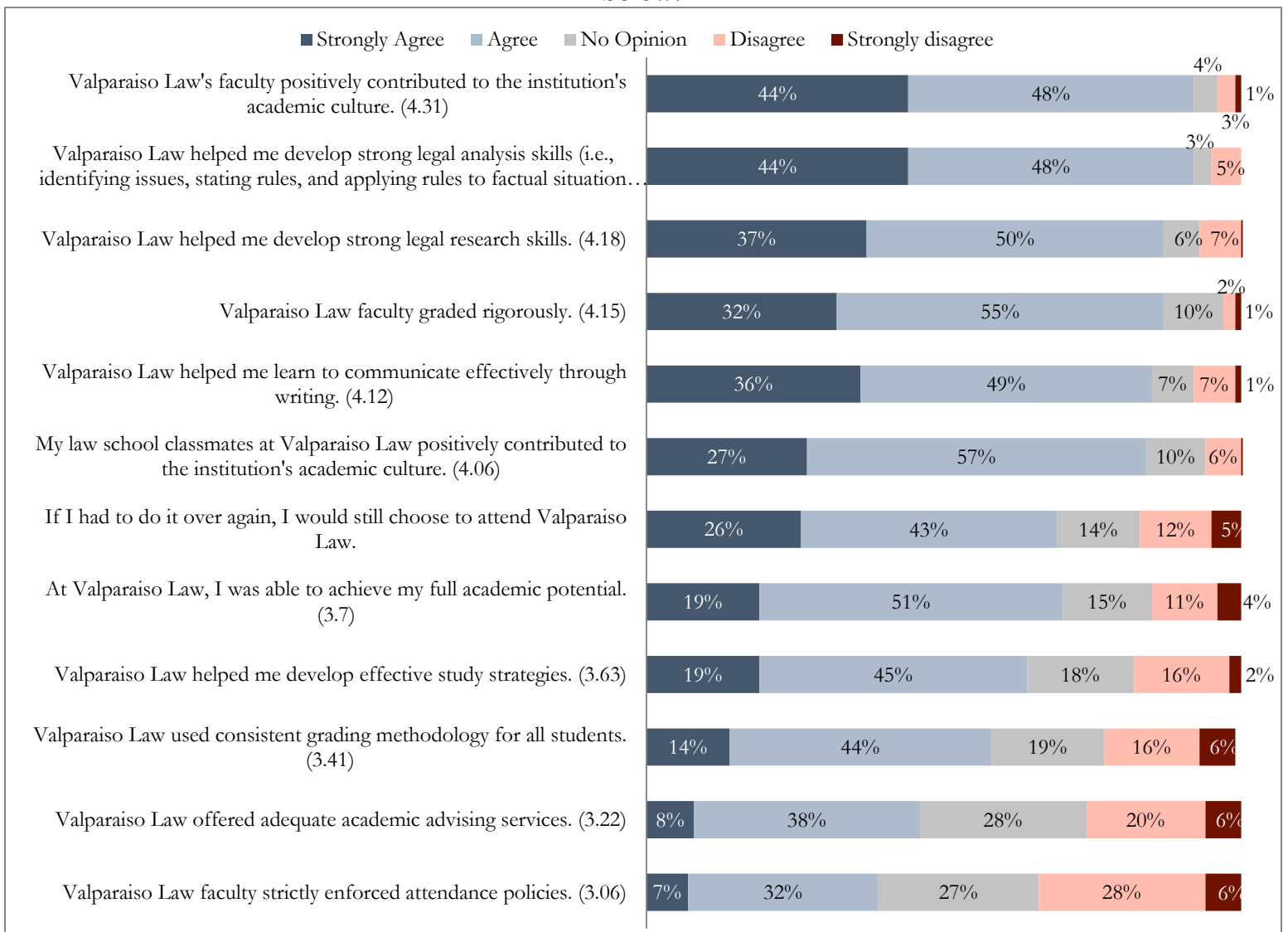




### Academic Culture

Alumni expressed similar levels of enthusiasm regarding the positive nature of Valparaiso Law’s academic culture and environment. As the chart depicts below (Figure 40), a significant majority of alumni strongly agreed or agreed with most of the statements related to these aspects of the school. There were two areas, however, where students expressed a negative perspective on the law school’s academic culture: (1) a total of 26 percent felt that Valparaiso did not offer adequate advising services (current students expressed a similar sentiment, with 22 percent expressing this sentiment) and (2) slightly more than one-third (34 percent) of alumni felt that faculty did not strictly enforce attendance policies (a sentiment shared by approximately 20 percent of current students).

**Figure 40: Please indicate your level of agreement with each of the statements below.**



## Academic Culture Open-Ended Responses

Alumni were asked two open-ended response questions regarding the academic culture at Valparaiso Law:

- ❖ How would you describe the academic culture at Valparaiso Law?
- ❖ How could Valparaiso Law improve its academic culture?

With regard to the first question, respondents' answers appeared to be evenly split between positive and negative assessments of different aspects regarding the university's academic culture, including quality of faculty and rigor of curriculum. We produce a representative sample of both positive and negative responses below. Note that while the quotes below are generally reproduced verbatim, obvious spelling errors were corrected.

### *Positive*

- ❖ Very close-knit community of faculty and students. The faculty expects a lot from the students.
- ❖ The majority of the professors were approachable and willing to answer any questions -- whether they were about class or life after law school.
- ❖ When I attended the law school, it was quite small and close-knit. Faculty members were easily accessible. Faculty were well-informed and good teachers.
- ❖ There is an expectation of academic rigor.

### *Negative*

- ❖ Generally speaking, the faculty could do a better job at incorporating more practical lessons into the classes when it would be applicable. Along those lines, the clinic faculty should be improved.
- ❖ Too lax. With a couple of exceptions during the first year, there were no penalties for not doing the reading, not being prepared in class, etc. I wanted my professors to hold the students to high and rigorous standards. I wanted my classmates to push and challenge one another. I was disappointed that those things didn't happen.
- ❖ I found the academic culture so competitive that it was a turn off. There was such an emphasis on being first in the class and making the Honor A - that if you were not in that group, you were left behind. The environment was every man for himself and there was not a collegial atmosphere.

The second open-ended question asked students for ways in which they think the academic culture could be improved. While alumni responses were varied, many centered on particular issues, which we highlight below:

### *Grading Policy*

- ❖ I think there needs to be a more transparent system for grading and grade distribution. Also, curving at a 2.5 (or below) after 1L year makes it virtually impossible to compete with other law students around the country for internships/externships.
- ❖ More frequent assessments of academic progress and topic understanding. Less reliance on 1 or 2 exam to determine grades.
- ❖ Grade all students consistent.

### *Faculty*

- ❖ More excellent scholarship from its excellent faculty
- ❖ As always, there are professors who are more or less helpful than others and who teach more or less effectively. A continuing focus on excellent faculty is a must.
- ❖ Provide faculty mentoring for struggling students.
- ❖ More involvement from faculty. My assigned ““Advisor”” never met with me or took an interest in my success at Valpo.

### *Higher Standards*

- ❖ Increase standards for admission and standards in the classroom.
- ❖ Raise admission standards.
- ❖ More emphasis on attendance in class and more rigorous classroom participation
- ❖ The school could demand students take more rigorous courses.

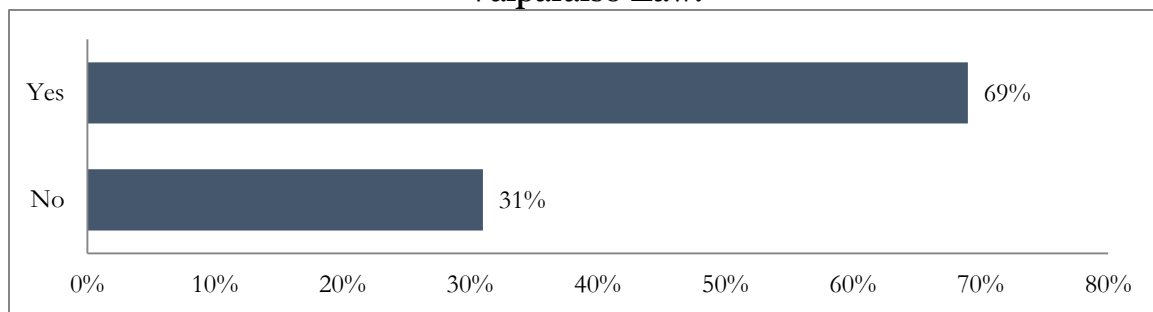
### *Career Planning*

- ❖ The career services should focus on all students, not primarily the top students.
- ❖ Improving the ranking of the school by improving the building and the career services would be a great place to start.
- ❖ I feel Valpo is a regional law school and the alumni network and career planning services were not applicable and therefore not helpful to me practicing in Pennsylvania.

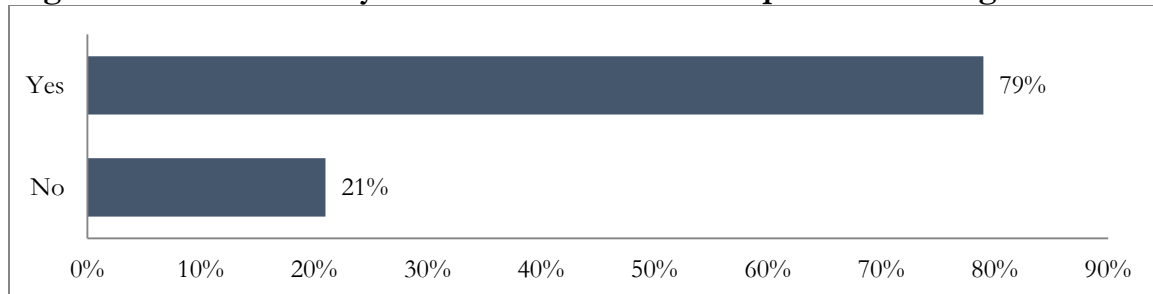
## Engagement

As the graphs below demonstrate, **the majority of alumni (69 percent) were active** in one or more student organizations while attending law school, such as law review, moot court, and other student associations. An even greater proportion of alumni (79 percent) replied that they were now active in a professional organization, mostly state bar associations. However, **a lower proportion (56 percent)** stated that were involved in one or more philanthropic organizations. Alumni cited many different philanthropic organizations, including children and family charities (e.g. Boys and Girls Club), pro bono defense funds, and church groups.

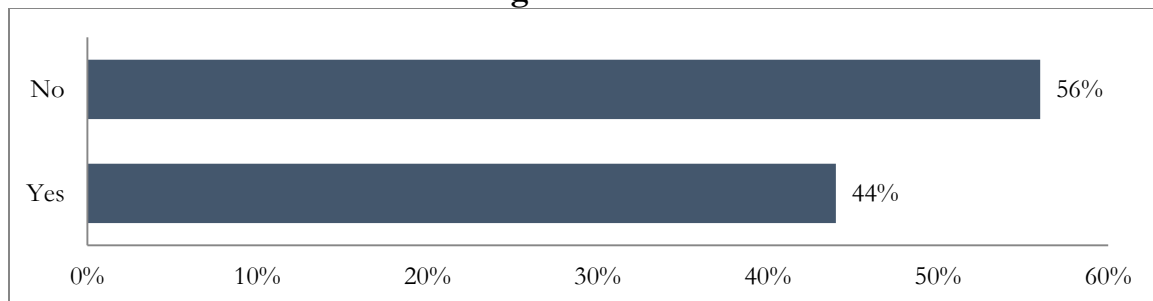
**Figure 41: I was involved in one or more student organizations while attending Valparaiso Law.**



**Figure 42: I am currently a member of one or more professional organizations.**

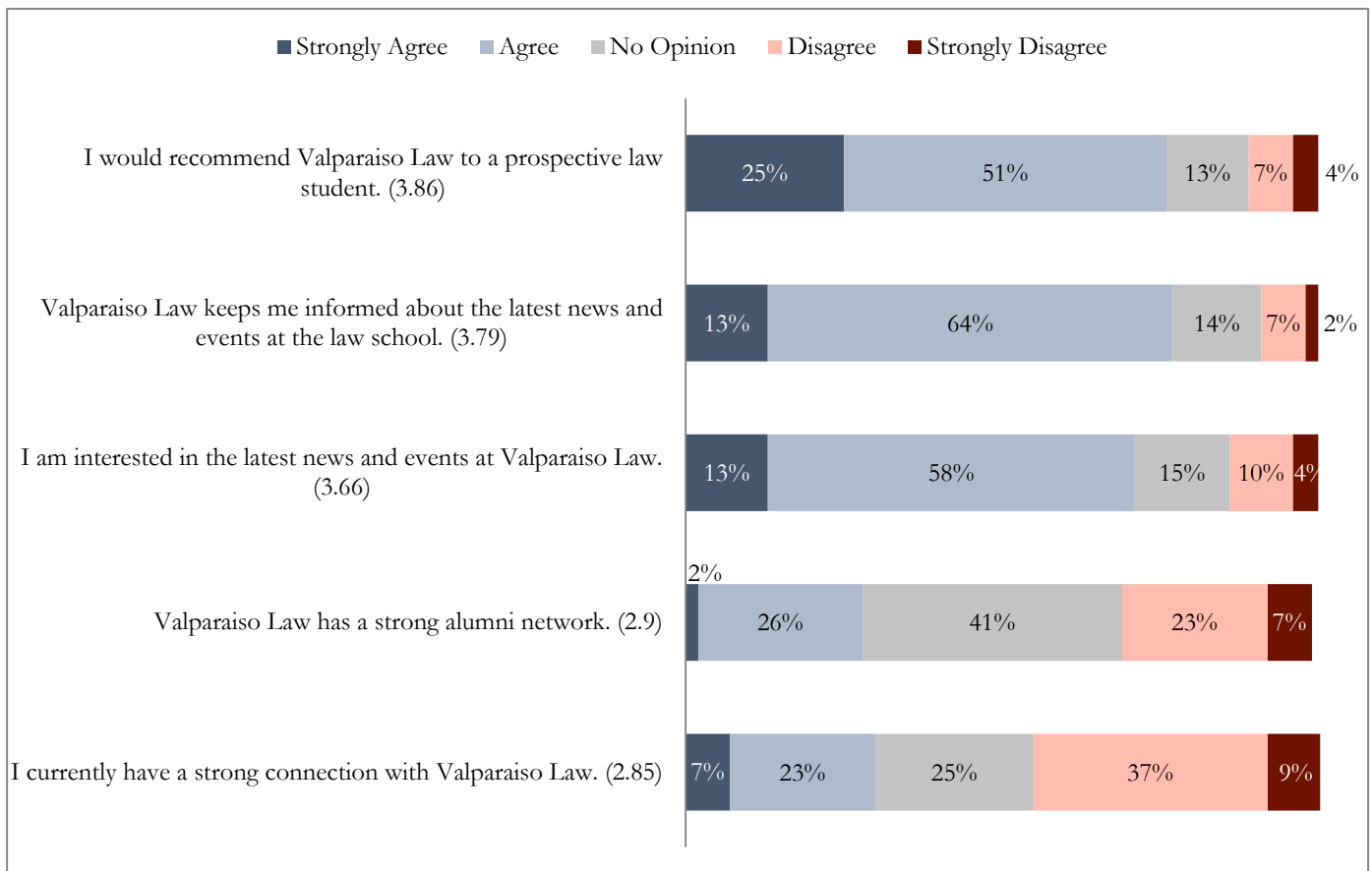


**Figure 43: I am currently involved with one or more philanthropic organizations.**



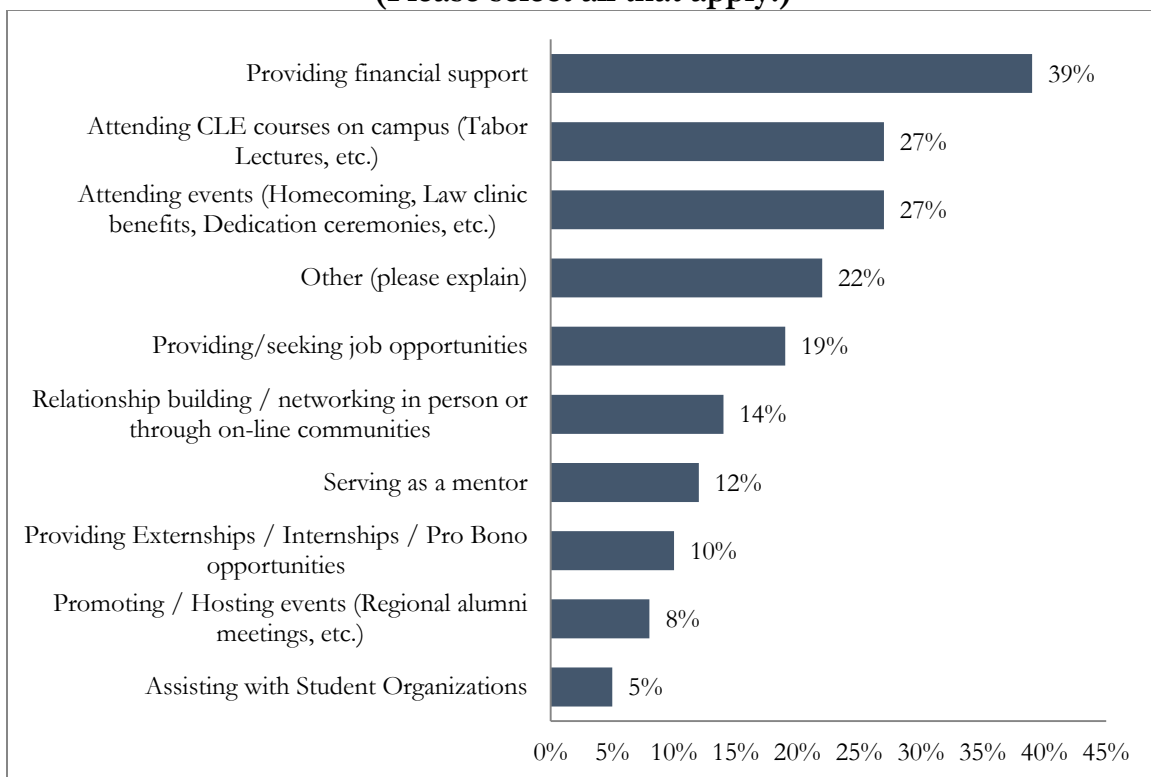
Additionally, alumni also stated their level of agreement with statements regarding their engagement with Valparaiso Law. A significant proportion of alumni (37 percent) indicated that they do not have a strong connection with the law school. Moreover, 30 percent either disagreed or strongly disagreed that the law school had a strong alumni network. Nevertheless, alumni feel that Valparaiso Law keeps them informed about the latest news at the school (64 percent agreed) and that they are interested in such information (58 percent agreed). Respondents' lack of a connection with the school also did not appear to have a significant impact on their willingness to recommend it to future students, as over three quarters (76 percent) agreed or strongly agreed that they would recommend Valparaiso to a prospective student.

**Figure 44: Please indicate your level of agreement with each of the statements below.**



Valparaiso Law alumni remain engaged with the school through various ways. The most popular way cited by alumni was by providing financial support (39 percent). A relatively significant proportion of alumni also indicated that they had attended **CLE courses or other events** such as homecoming or dedication ceremonies (27 percent each). Alumni also frequently referenced “other” ways (22 percent) through which they have remained engaged with the law school, including keeping in touch with faculty and other alumni, reading publications issued by the law school, and by attending local or regional alumni meeting and events. The least represented means of engagement was through assisting with student organizations, which accounted for just 5 percent of alumni responses.

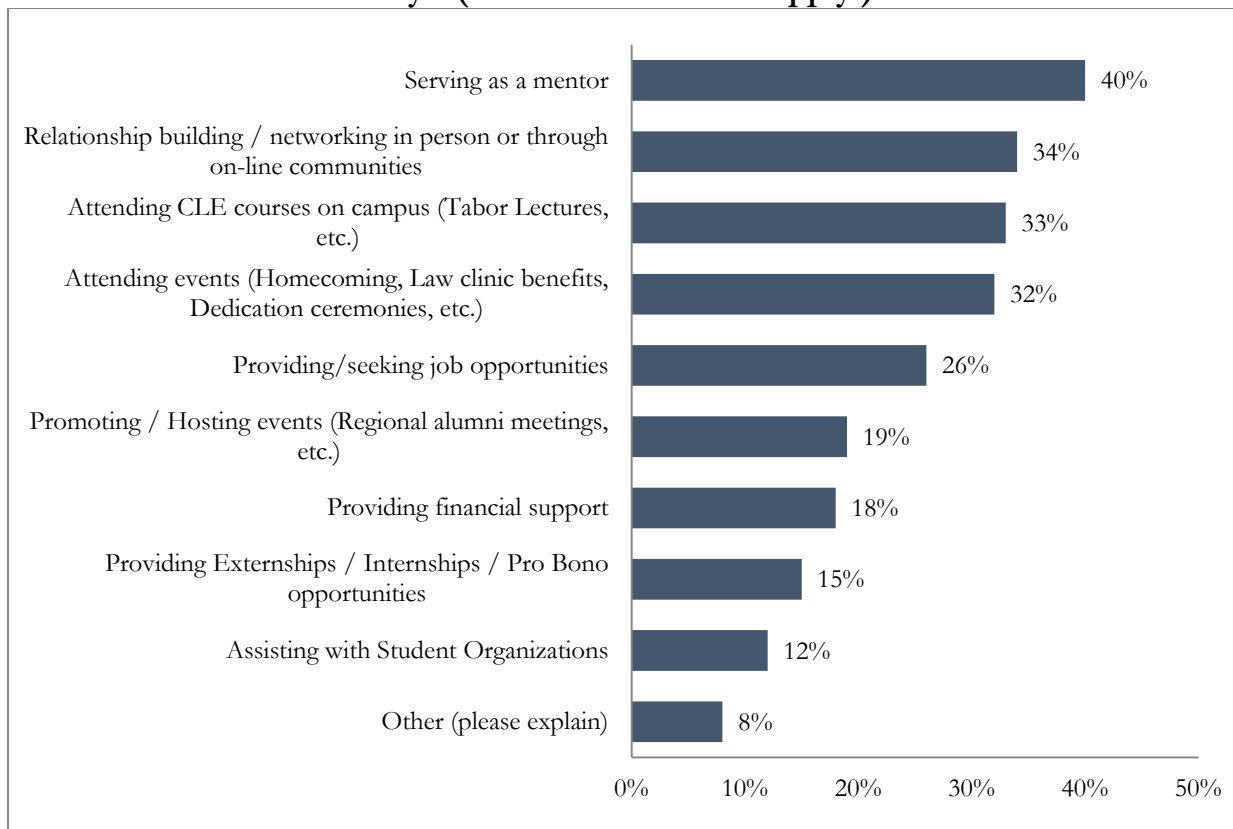
**Figure 45: I am involved with Valparaiso Law in the following ways.  
(Please select all that apply.)**



Similarly, alumni expressed varied ways through which they would like to be engaged with the school. The most popular means was through serving as a mentor (40 percent). This was also the means of involvement that displayed the largest gap between what alumni are currently doing and what they say they would like to be doing for Valparaiso, as only 12 percent of respondents are currently serving as mentors. This suggests that there may be room for Valparaiso to expand mentoring programs involving alumni.

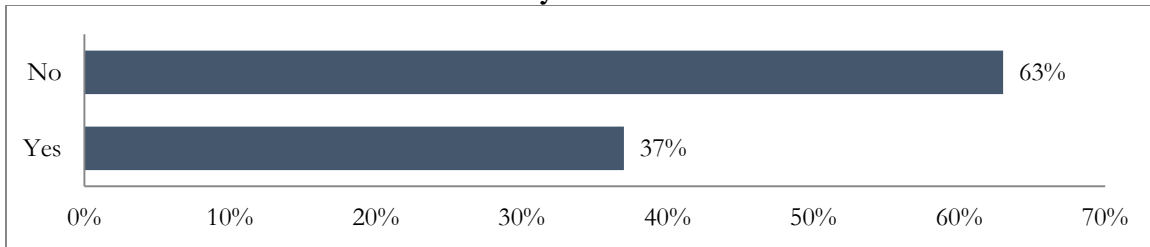
Relationship building, attending CLE courses, and attending school events were each selected by roughly one-third of respondents. When these figures are compared with the previous question, they suggest that most alumni who want to attend CLE courses and other events are already doing so (since 27 percent of respondents were already involved in these activities), but that there are some alumni interested in relationship building and networking who are not currently involved in these sorts of activities. Similar to what was indicated in the previous graph, assisting with student organizations was the least popular choice, accounting for just 12 percent of responses.

**Figure 46: I would like to be involved with Valparaiso Law in the following ways. (Please select all that apply.)**

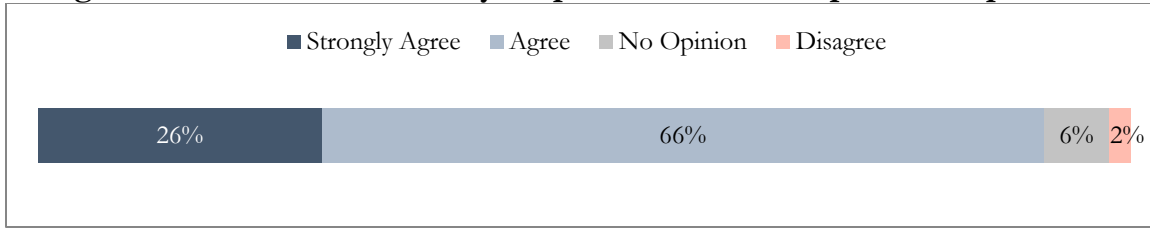


Most alumni (63 percent) stated that they have not attended an event hosted by Valparaiso Law within the past three years. However, those who did attend an event **overwhelmingly agreed that it was a positive experience** (Figure 48). A significant majority (69 percent) stated that they would like to attend an event hosted by the law school.

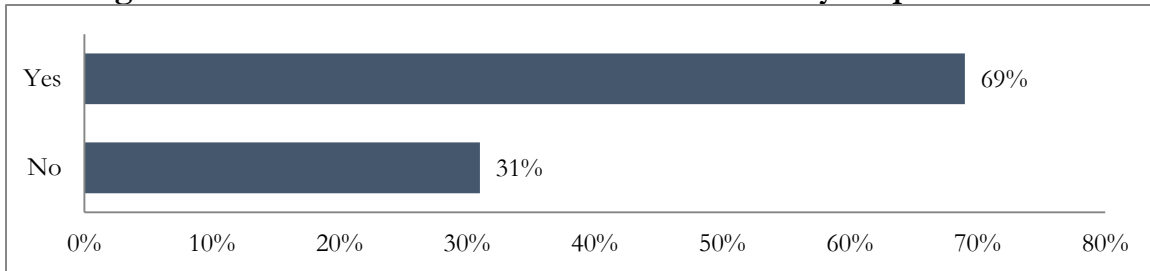
**Figure 47: I have attended an event hosted by Valparaiso Law in the last 3 years.**



**Figure 48: The event hosted by Valparaiso Law was a positive experience.**

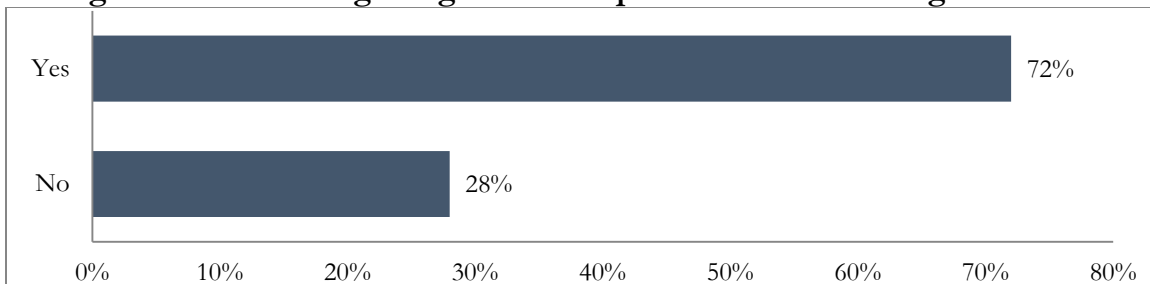


**Figure 49: I would like to attend an event hosted by Valparaiso Law.**



**More than seventy percent** of alumni (72 percent) stated that they make regular gifts to non-profit or charitable organizations.

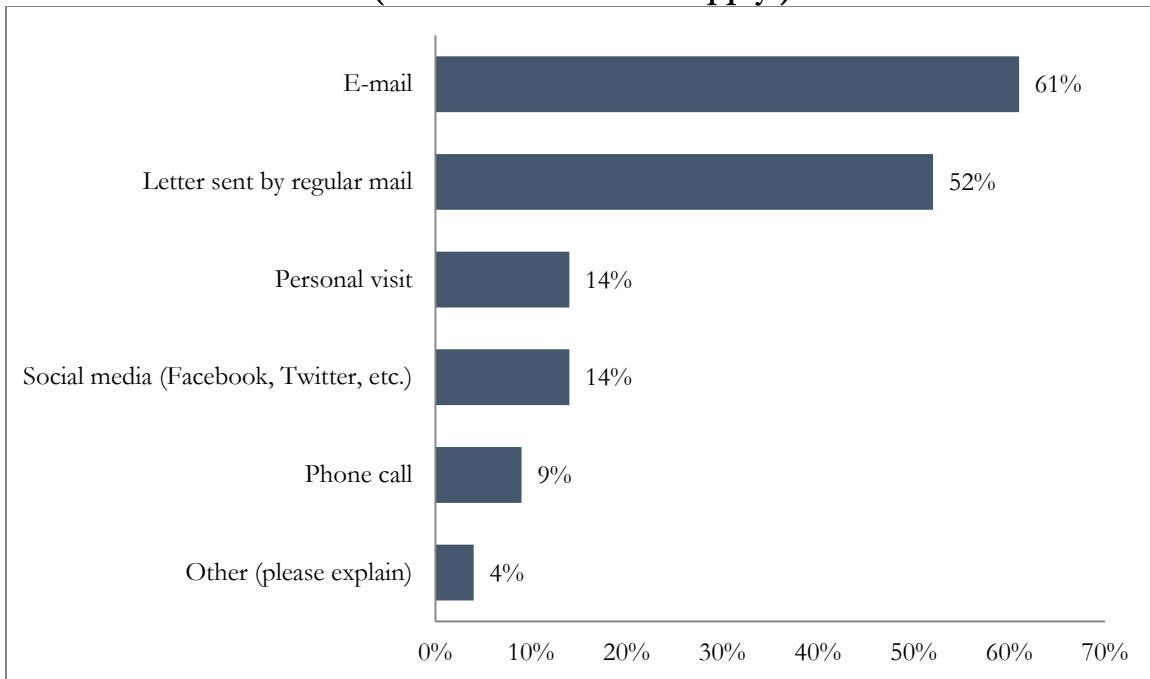
**Figure 50: I make regular gifts to non-profit or charitable organizations.**





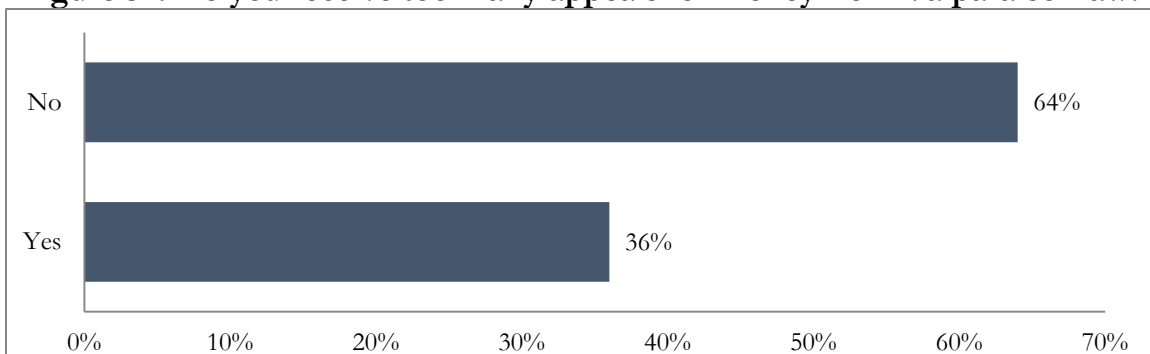
Alumni indicated that their **preferred method of communication with the law school is via e-mail** (61 percent). Letters sent by regular mail (52 percent) were the second most common response. Personal visits and communication through social media received equal numbers of selections (14 percent), while **phone calls (9 percent) were the least preferred method of communication** among those listed. The majority of alumni who selected “Other” stated that they preferred not to be contacted at all.

**Figure 51: To which of the following are you most likely to respond positively?  
(Please check all that apply.)**



While many alumni (64 percent) did not feel that they received too many appeals from Valparaiso Law for financial donations, more than one-third felt otherwise (36 percent).

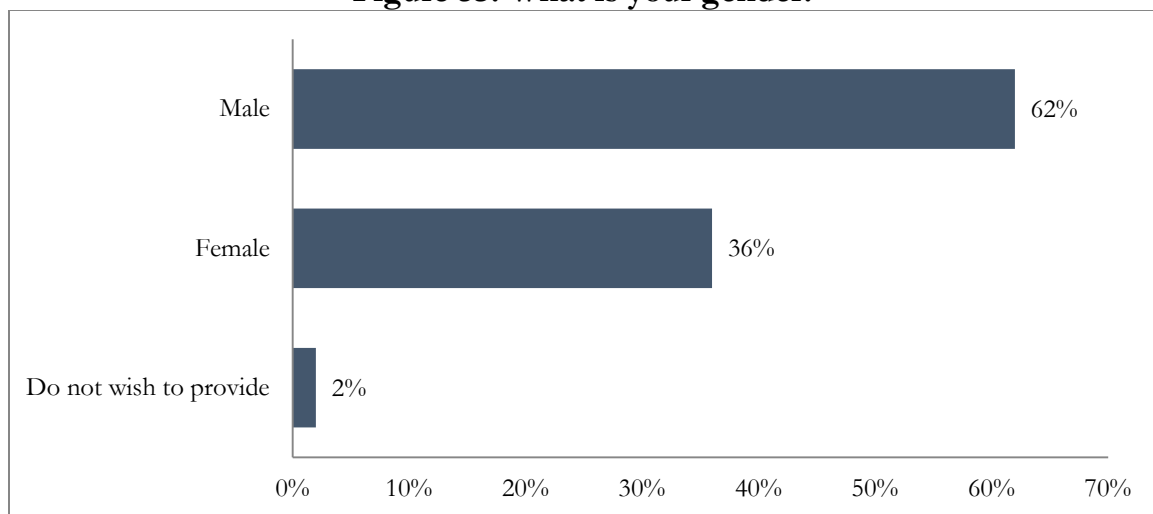
**Figure 52: Do you receive too many appeals for money from Valparaiso Law?**



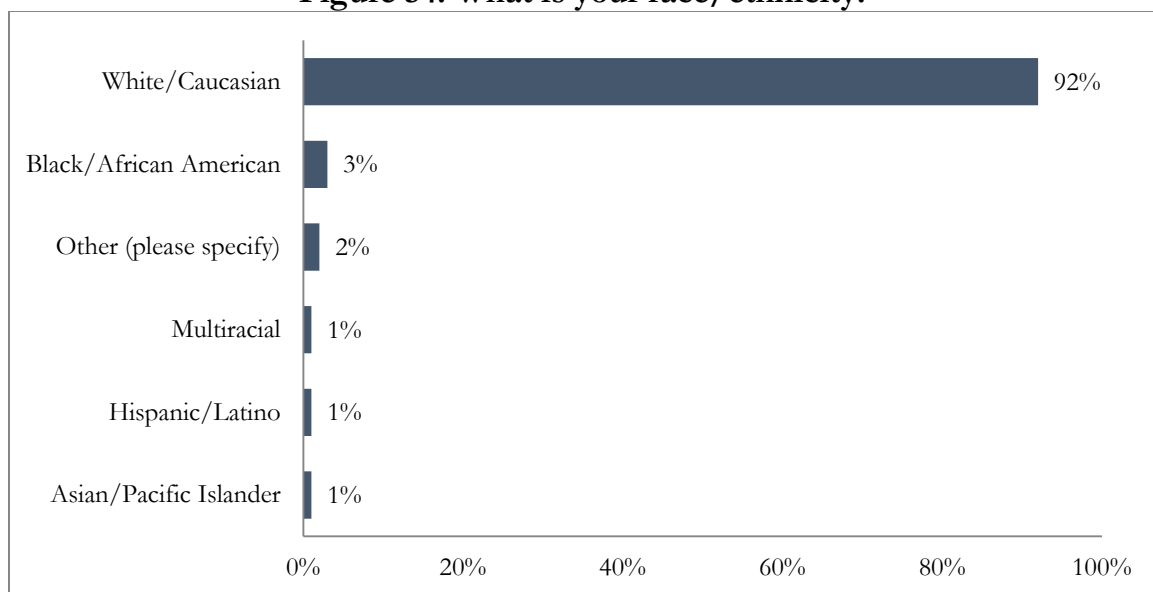
## Demographics

Unlike among current students, there was a significant gender gap among surveyed alumni. A significant majority of responding alumni were male (62 percent), whereas males accounted for 46 percent among current students. In terms of race, an even greater proportion of alumni identified themselves as White/Caucasian (92 percent) compared to current students (73 percent). As a result, there was much less ethnic diversity among alumni respondents: just 3 percent identified themselves as Black/African American, compared to 9 percent among current students. While Hispanics/Latinos accounted for 7 percent of current students, they make up just 1 percent of surveyed alumni.

**Figure 53: What is your gender?**

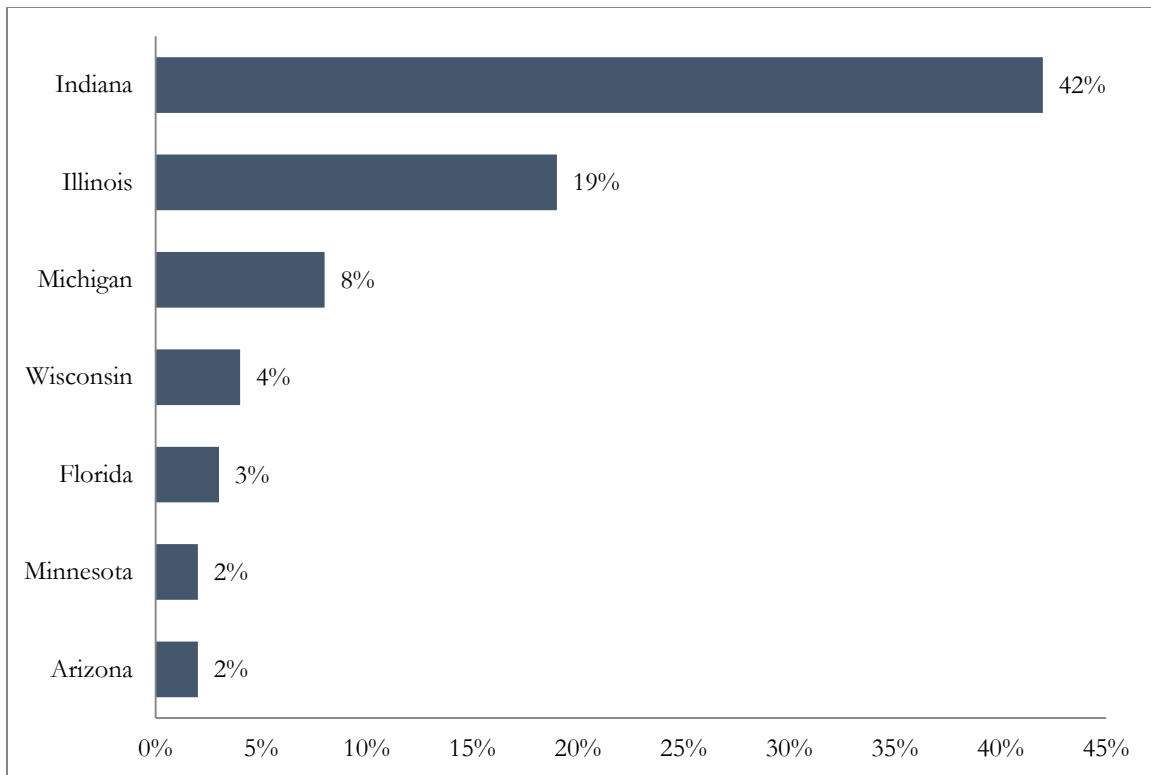


**Figure 54: What is your race/ethnicity?**



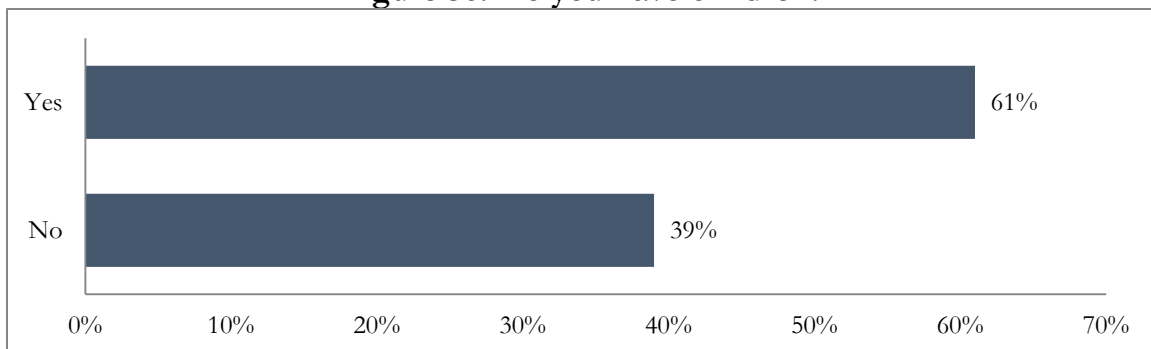
The permanent resident status of most alumni is closely aligned with that observed among current students. A plurality of alumni (42 percent) reside in Indiana (current students: 43 percent) and a relatively significant proportion (19 percent) reside in Illinois (current students: 21 percent). Midwestern states, such as Michigan and Wisconsin, account for the majority of the remaining alumni.

**Figure 55: In which U.S. State (or territory) do you hold permanent resident status?**



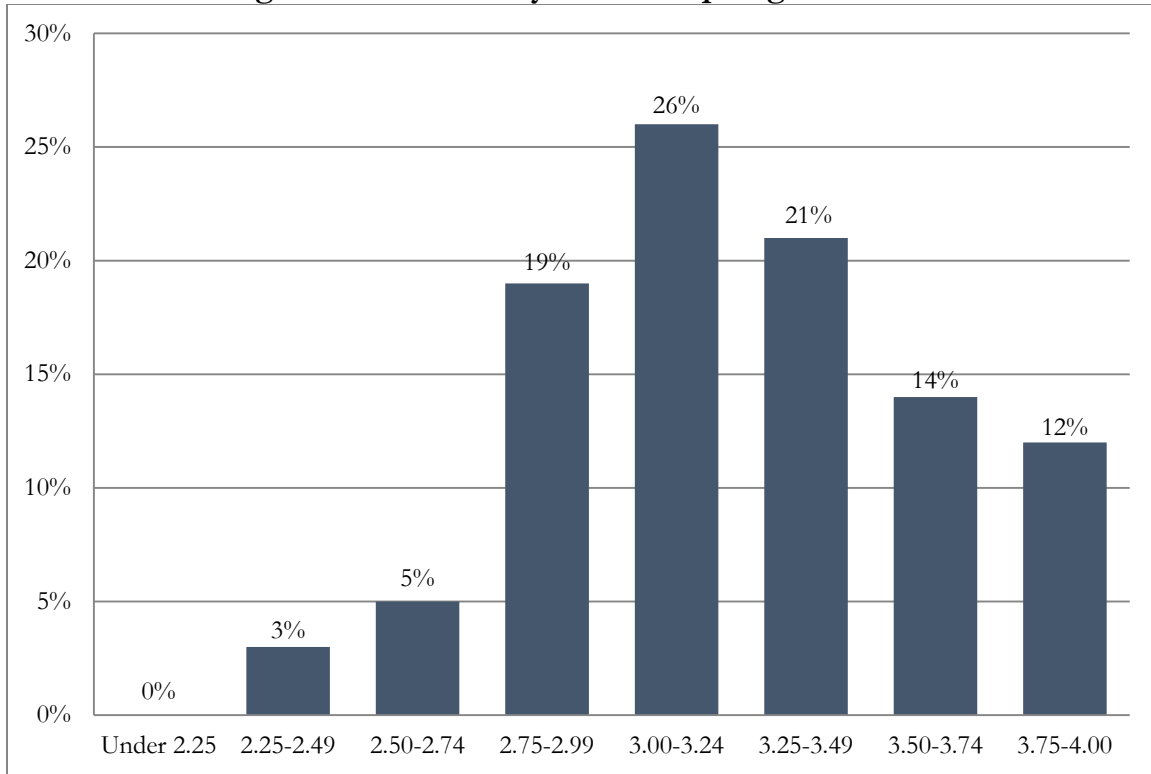
The majority of alumni (61 percent) reported having children, though almost forty percent do not (39 percent).

**Figure 56: Do you have children?**



A greater proportion of alumni (26 percent) reported having GPAs in the upper ranges, 3.50 – 4.0, than current students (10 percent). Less than ten percent of responding alumni had a GPA lower than 2.75 (8 percent). As the chart below demonstrates, alumni with GPAs between 2.75 and 3.49 represented the majority of responses.

**Figure 57: What was your GPA upon graduation?**



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