

# Recent Graduates Survey

The Impact of Studying Abroad on  
Recent College Graduates' Careers

2006-2011 Graduates

By Kendra Preston

May 2012



## Study Overview

### Objective

The main objective of the IES Abroad Recent Graduate Study was to understand the potential impact that studying abroad has on a recent graduate's prospects in securing employment and/or going to graduate school directly after earning a degree from a 4-year college or university in the US.

### Methodology

A survey was conducted online in March 2012 to address this objective. A new survey instrument was developed. While some questions were specific to the study abroad experience, others were replicated from a nationally-conducted survey in order to benchmark select results.\* The instrument was reviewed and approved by the CEO, EVP of Marketing and a Board Marketing Committee Member.

### Pilot Study

Two pilot studies were conducted in order to: test instrument reliability and look and feel of the survey, address sample sizing questions, adjust response rate estimates and provide preliminary insights into results. A new online survey administration tool was used, in which case dissemination methods also needed to be tested.

In both pilots, the survey was sent to 168 alums. The first pilot was disseminated via the online survey software; the second was sent through an IES Abroad Outlook account with a link to the survey in the body of an email. Over 40% of emails sent via Outlook failed, thus indicating that several of the email addresses on file were not valid. Each pilot was open for 2 weeks. After sending an initial invite and 2-4 reminders, the first pilot yielded 26 responses and the second only 9 responses.

Results from pilot studies led to slight modifications of the survey instrument as well as modifications of the survey sample. The original intention had been to survey a random sample of the total population, but after conducting these pilots and receiving very low response, it was decided to survey the entire population.

### Data Collection

In order to obtain the most recent data available, the survey was sent to all alumni who attended an IES Abroad program from 2004 through summer 2011. The goal was to reach students who had *graduated* from college between 2006 and 2011. Because students could have studied abroad at any time during their undergraduate career, it was necessary to account for a wider range of alumni. It was also expected that not all respondents would have graduated, at the time of the survey particularly those who attended a program in 2011.

The survey was sent to 31,439 alumni email addresses on file. A survey invite was sent, followed by 2 reminders between March 12 and April 3, 2012. Though 1,738 respondents completed the survey, only 1,008 responses were valid after screening for a 4-year college degree and eliminating any respondents who had graduated before or after 2006-2011. This response rate meets statistical accuracy at the 95% confidence level with a  $\pm 3\%$  margin of error. Results are generalizable to other IES Abroad alumni after accounting for an acceptable margin of error.

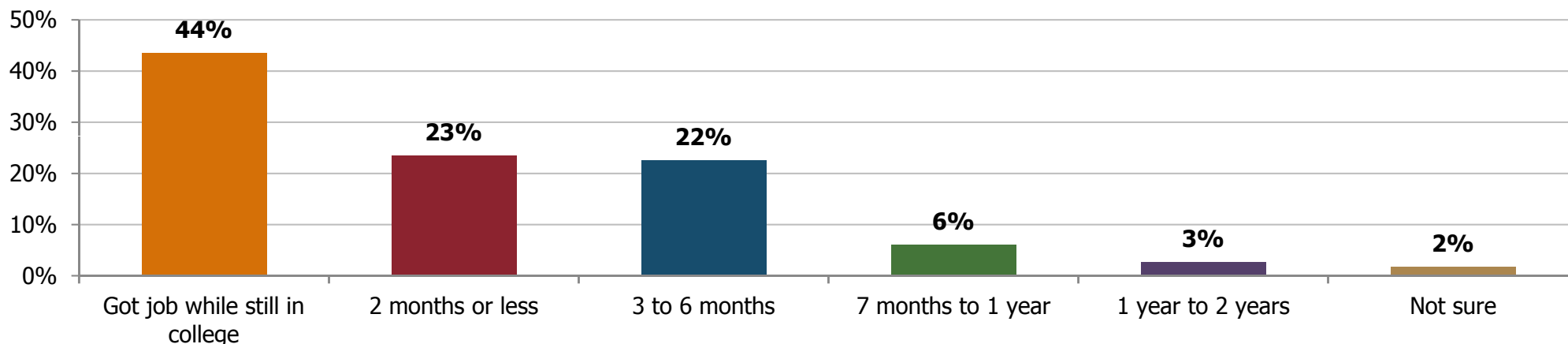
\*Source: Jessica Godofsky, Cliff Zukin and Carl Van Horn, "Unfulfilled Expectations: Recent College Graduates Struggle in a Troubled Economy," *Work Trends: Americans' Attitudes about Work, Employers, and Government*, Rutgers University, John J. Heldrich Center for Workforce Development (May 2011)



## Length of Time to First Job

How long were you actively seeking employment before you found your first job?

N=763



### Analysis

- 89% got their first job within 6 months of graduation, with almost half securing the job while still in school
- Whereas those from public schools had greater success in getting the job while still in school, those from private schools had greater success obtaining employment the first 2 months after graduation
- Graduation period had little to no impact on ability to secure a job after graduation, though it took a small number (n=17) over 1 year to find employment during the recession
- Among the 331 respondents who graduated post-recession in 2011, two-thirds found jobs within 2 months or less of graduation

### Statistically Significant Relationships

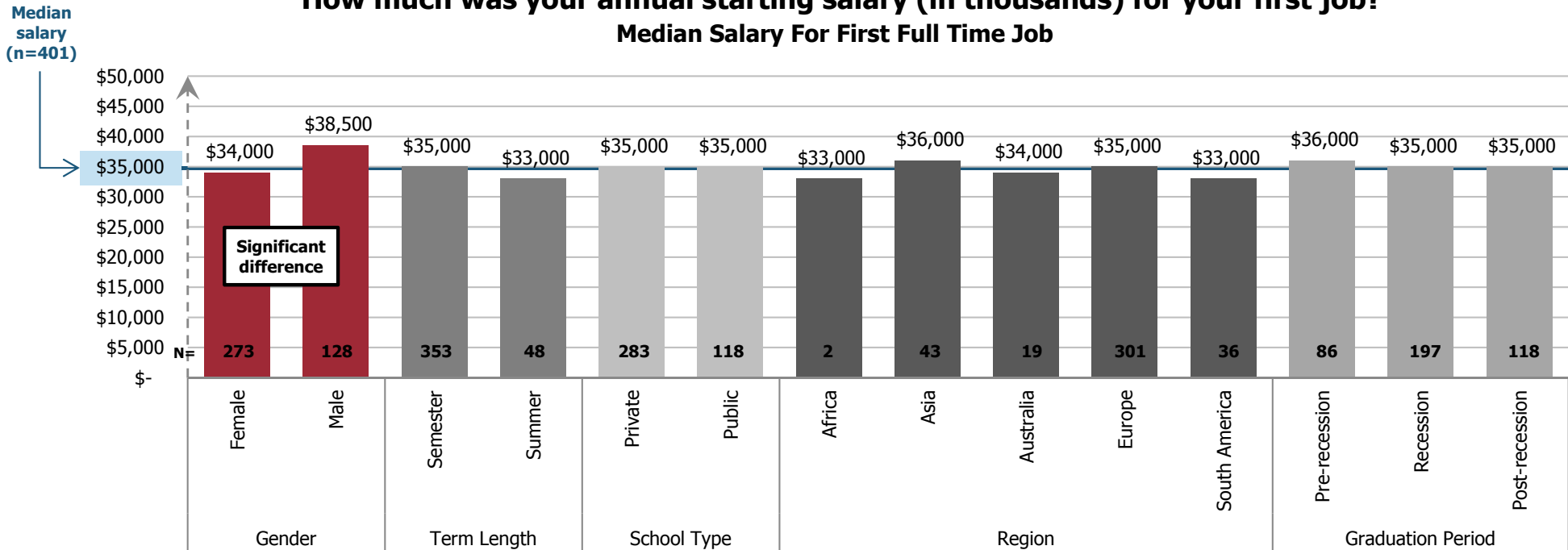
	Got job while still in college	2 months or less	3 to 6 months	7 months to 1 year	1 year to 2 years	Not sure
<b>School Type (<math>p \leq .01</math>)</b>						
Private	41%	27%	23%	5%	2%	2%
Public	50%	13%	23%	9%	4%	2%
<b>Graduation Period (<math>p \leq .05</math>)</b>						
Pre-recession	46%	23%	21%	7%	2%	2%
Recession	43%	23%	23%	5%	4%	1%
Post-recession	43%	24%	22%	7%	0%	4%

Note: significant differences highlighted in red ink



# First Job Median Pay

**How much was your annual starting salary (in thousands) for your first job?**  
**Median Salary For First Full Time Job**



## Analysis

- \$35,000 was the median starting salary among all respondents whose first job was full-time
- No statistically significant difference was found based on graduation period; however, those who graduated in 2009, at the height of the recession, earned 8.5%, or \$3,000, less than the average starting salary
- Gender made a difference: on average, men secured a starting salary \$4,500 higher than women ( $p < .01$ )
- Response to this question was optional, yielding a 65% response rate based on only those who secured full-time employment after graduation; results are accurate at the 95% confidence level with a  $\pm 2.9\%$  margin of error

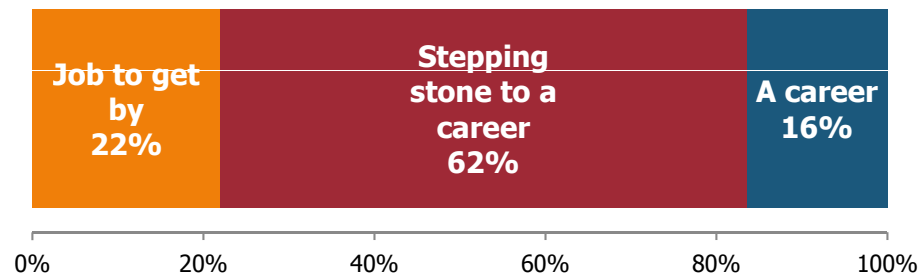
Grad Year	Median Salary	N=
2006	\$35,000	37
2007	\$37,000	49
2008	\$35,000	47
2009	\$32,000	75
2010	\$35,000	75
2011	\$35,000	118



## First Job on a Career Track

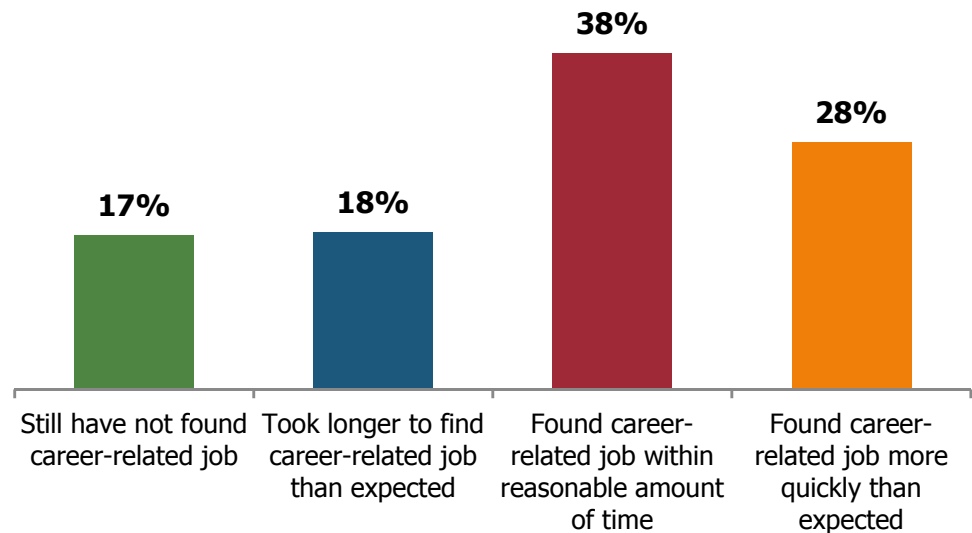
### How did/do you think of your first job?

N=765



### Which of the following statements best describes your first job after graduating college?

N=764



#### Analysis

- 78% thought of their first job either as a stepping stone to a career or as a career itself
- More than 65% found a career-related position within a reasonable amount of time or more quickly than expected
- There is a strong relationship between expected time to secure a career-related position and graduation period
- Roughly 20% of those who graduated before or during the recession indicated that it took longer to find a career-related position than expected, compared to nearly 25% of younger alumni who graduated post-recession and who have not yet found a career-related job

#### Statistically Significant Relationships ( $p \leq .01$ )

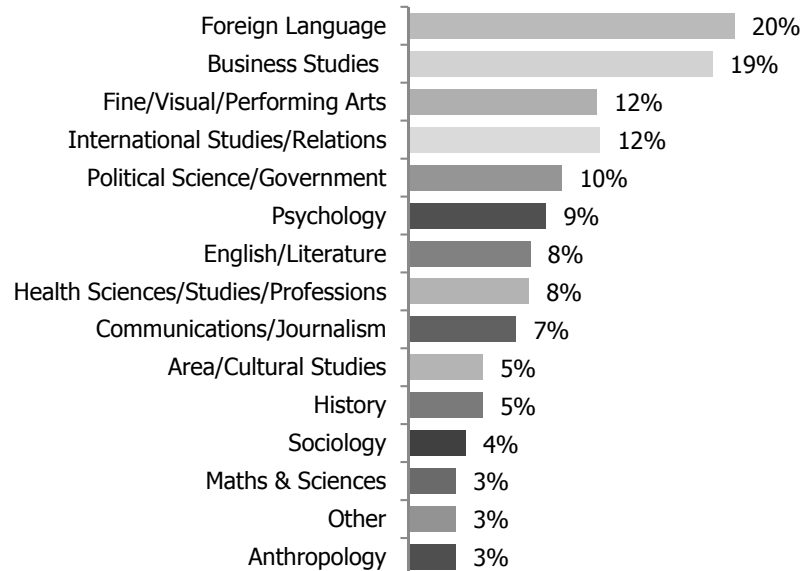
	Still no career-related job	Took longer than expected	Reasonable amount of time	More quickly than expected
<b>Graduation Period</b>				
Pre-recession	9%	20%	47%	24%
Recession	16%	21%	34%	30%
Post-recession	24%	11%	39%	27%

Note: significant differences highlighted in red ink



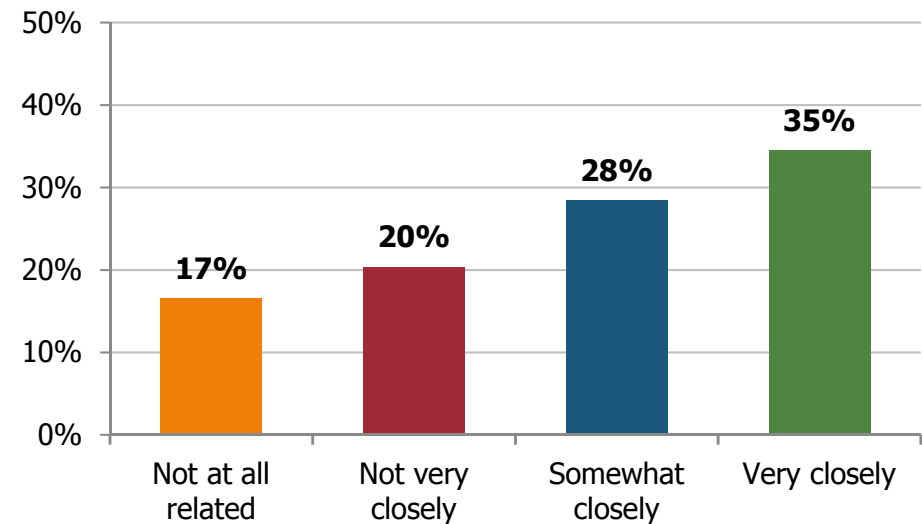
## Relationship of Academic Work to First Job

### What did you get your college degree in?



### How closely related was your first job to the field or major you received your college degree in?

N=765

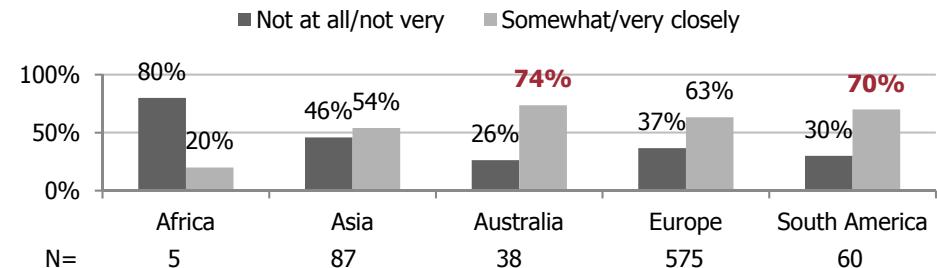


### Analysis

- Majority of IES Abroad alumni earned degrees in the liberal arts and humanities, yet nearly 65% felt their first job was 'very closely' or 'somewhat closely' related to their major
- Almost 75% of graduates who studied abroad in Australia/New Zealand found a job related to their major, with 40% indicating the job was 'very closely' related and another 34% stating it was 'somewhat closely' related
- 70% who went to South America also found first jobs 'very closely' or 'somewhat closely' related to their major
- The few respondents who went to Africa had the most difficulty finding a first job in their field

### Statistically Significant Relationship ( $p \leq .05$ )

Average Response by Region of Study Abroad



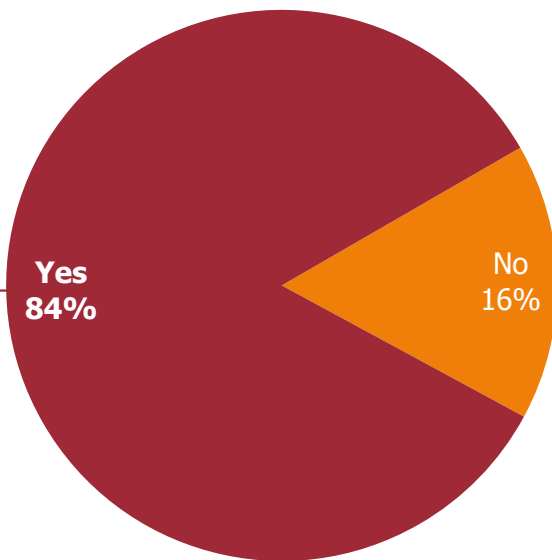
Note: significant differences highlighted in red ink



## Study Abroad's Impact on Developing Job Skills

### Did studying abroad help you build job skills?

N=764

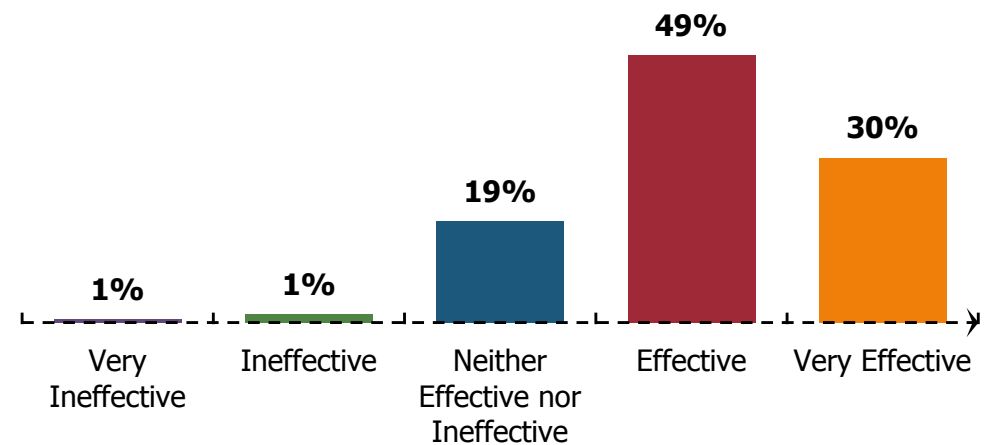


How effective was study abroad in building job skills?

Very Effective	16.5%
Effective	71%
Neither Effective nor Ineffective	12.5%
Ineffective	0%
Very Ineffective	0%

### How effective was study abroad in developing confidence to deal with new skills required for the first job?

N=747



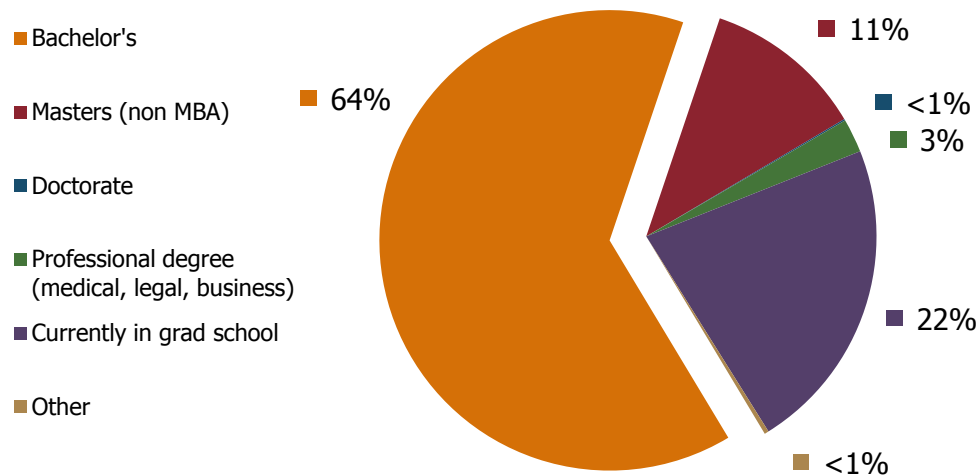
#### Analysis

- Nearly 85% felt that studying abroad helped them build job skills, of which 88% felt the experience was 'effective' or 'very effective' in helping them do so
  - A statistically significant difference was found based on school type ( $p \leq .05$ ); 88% of public school graduates, compared to 82% from private schools, felt the experience helped them build job skills
- Almost 80% indicated that studying abroad was 'effective' or 'very effective' in helping them develop confidence to deal with new skills required for the first job



# Early Career Profile

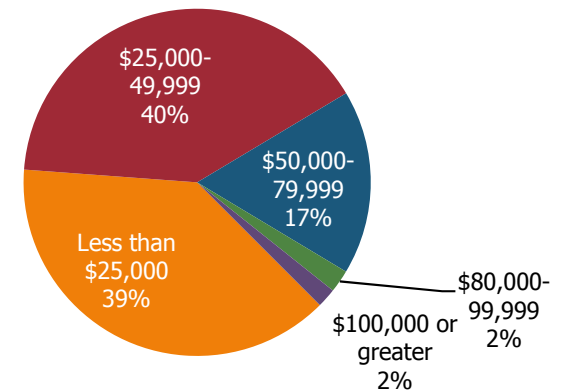
## Highest Degree Earned



**90%** got into their first or second choice graduate/professional school

## Annual Gross Income

N=949



### Analysis

- 36% of IES Abroad alumni who recently finished undergrad have already earned an advanced degree or are currently seeking one
- 76% got into their first choice graduate school and another 14% got into their second choice school
- Within 6 years or less of earning an undergraduate degree, 20% were already earning more than \$50,000 per year