



REPORT OF FINDINGS

**MILITARY SPOUSE JD NETWORK MEMBER SURVEY
JANUARY 1, 2014**

INTRODUCTION

About MSJDN

The Military Spouse JD Network (“MSJDN”) is a bar association for military spouse attorneys (“MSAs”), men and women building careers in the legal profession while also serving their country with a spouse or partner in the United States Uniformed Services. Formed in 2011, MSJDN’s mission is to improve the lives of military families by empowering military spouses. The organization’s roughly 900 members come from active duty, guard, and reserve units from all branches of services. MSJDN also has members who are veterans and/or are married to veterans of the Armed Services.

Purpose

In July 2013, the MSJDN Board voted to develop a survey to collect important data about its members for use in official reports, and to inform a number of the initiatives in which MSJDN anticipates participating in the coming years. Categories of information collected included:

- Information about the types of services represented among members
- Information about the branches of service, length of service, and military careers represented among its members’ spouses and partners
- Information about members’ family composition, frequency of moves, and stints serving as remote families
- Information about members’ careers, including duration, type of practice, and how service may have impacted careers
- Information about factors impacting member careers, including service, licensing issues, and student loans.

Methodology

The MSJDN Member Survey was developed and approved by the MSJDN board of directors. The survey was opened on September 9, 2013 and published to members via email and social media. The survey ran from September 9, 2013 to October 4, 2013. The survey was further advertised internally and publicly over the three week period it was open. Three hundred ninety-five (395) individuals participated in the survey. Although predominantly a member survey, MSJDN permitted any MSA to participate, regardless of membership.

Results were compiled for this report by a member of the board of directors, and the full board was given the opportunity to review the report for accuracy prior to publication.

REPORT FINDINGS

The findings of the Member Survey fell generally into two broad categories: (1) information about MSJDN’s composition as an organization; and (2) information about MSJDN’s individual members.

I. MSJDN Member Composition

As an organization, MSJDN is predominantly composed of women. 95.3% of members are women, while 4.7% are men. This falls generally in line with Department of Defense statistics concerning its own composition. MSJDN is a two-year-old bar association, and its member distribution is reflected in *Figure 1*:

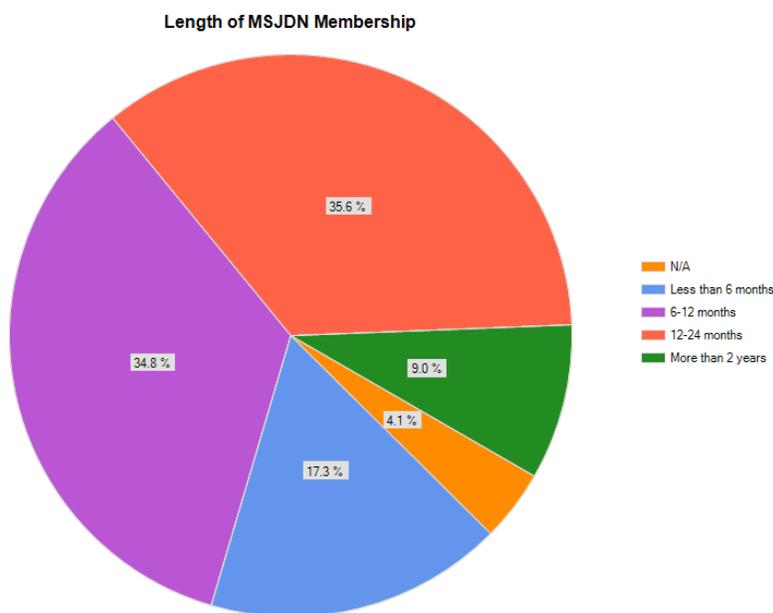


Figure 1

A. Service Affiliation

MSJDN members represent active duty, guard, and reserve families, as well as veteran and retired active duty, guard and reserve families. Active duty families make up the largest percentage of MSJDN members, at 83.6%. The distribution of each type of service is reflected in *Figure 2* below. In addition, a number of MSJDN members are servicemembers or veterans themselves. Five percent of members are currently serving in the military, and 12.1% are veterans. Of that number, 7.5% are veteran Judge Advocate General (JAG) officers.

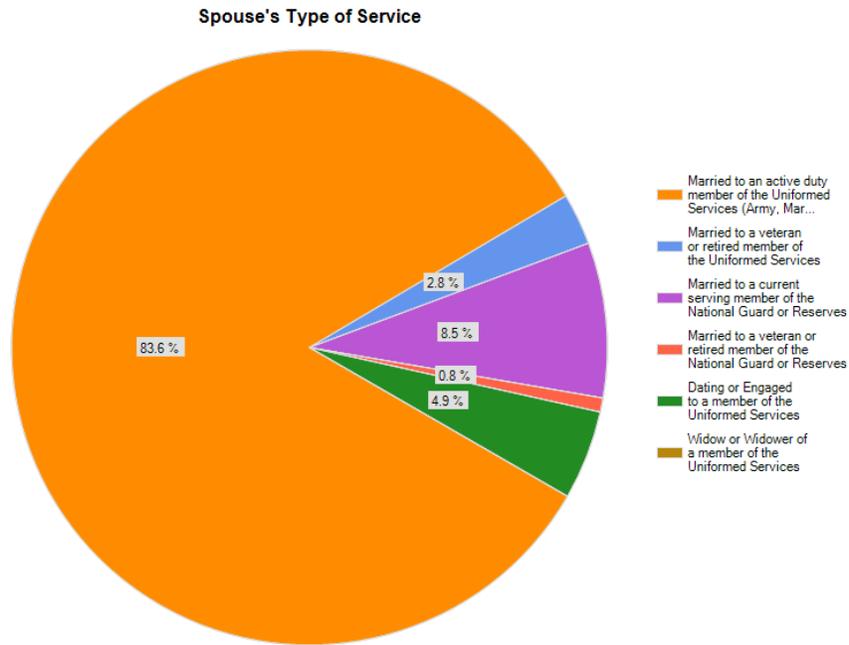


Figure 2

MSJDN Members represent all branches of service, as reflected in *Figure 3*. The largest percentage of members are Army at 36.2%, followed by Navy at 25.3% and Air Force at 21.4%.

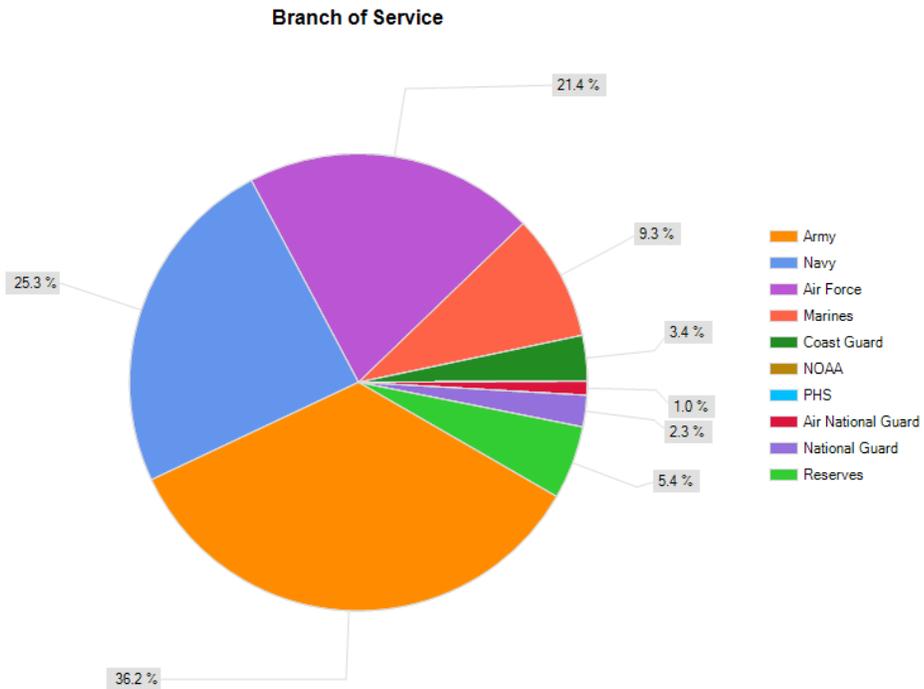


Figure 3

B. Officer/Enlisted Break-Down

MJSDN members have spouses that are enlisted, warrant officers, and officers. Approximately 78% of MSJDN member spouses and partners are officers, and 21% are enlisted. A very small number of members are married to warrant officers. The ranks of MSJDN member spouses and partners vary widely, as reflected in Figure 4. However, the largest distribution is among mid-level officer ranks.

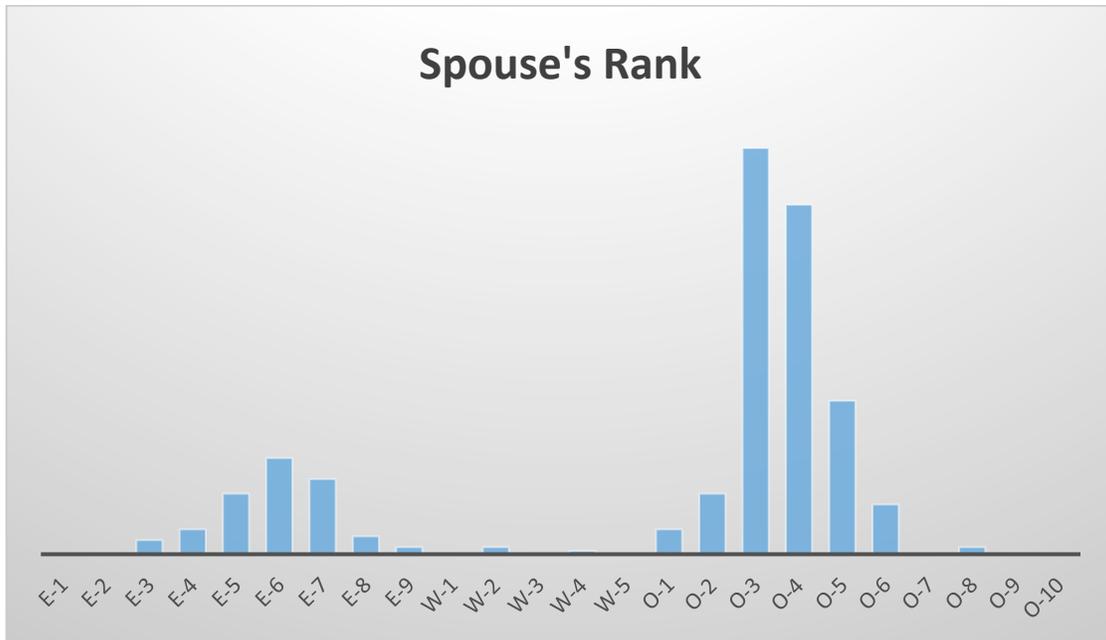


Figure 4

C. Career Field

As shown in *Figure 5* below, the spouses of MSJDN members come from a wide variety of different career fields within the military. Surprisingly, the most common career field for an MSJDN spouse is in aviation, with JAG spouses a close second. The “Warfare” category includes spouses with careers in artillery, armor, PsyOps, SPECWAR/SPECOPS/EOD/STG designations, and field electronics. The “Support” category includes spouses with careers in logistics, supply, acquisitions, force management, systems analysis, transportation, and several others.

Spouse Professions in the Military

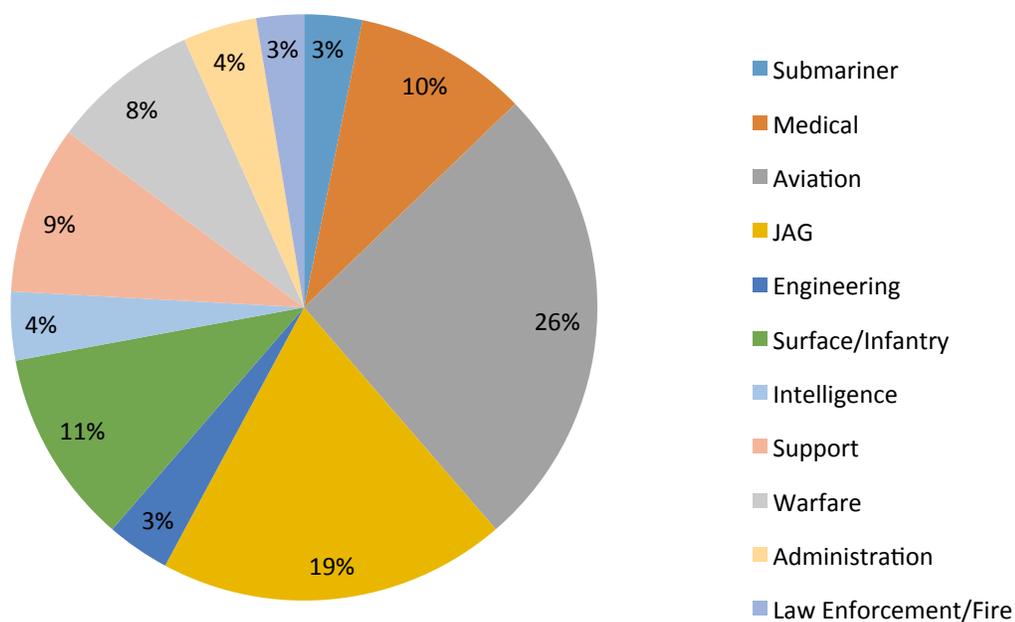


Figure 5

II. Characteristics of MSJDN Members

A. Relationship to the Military

MSJDN members are a diverse group, but one thing they have in common is a connection to the United States Uniformed Services. The number of members married to servicemembers is 95.1%, with another 4.9% engaged to them. Of the members who are married to servicemembers, approximately 1% are married to same-sex partners.

The length of time that MSJDN members have been married to servicemembers is widely distributed, as reflected in *Figure 6*. As reflected in *Figure 7*, a significant portion of the time members have been married has been during military service.

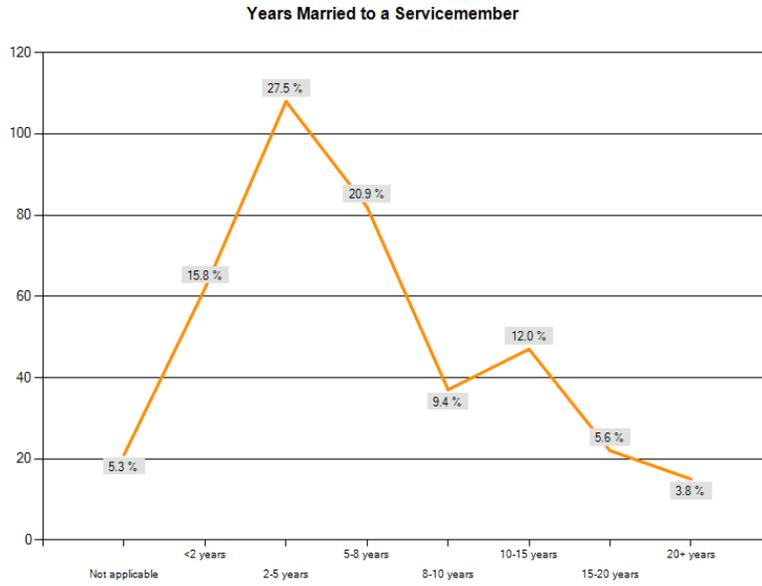


Figure 6

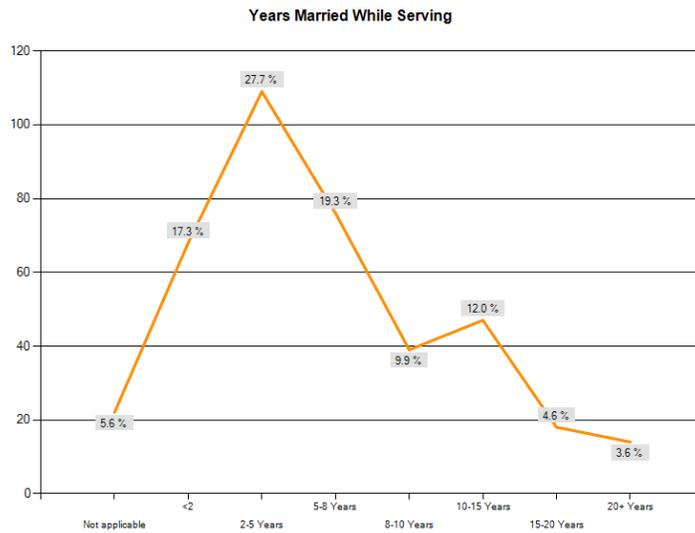


Figure 7

B. MSJDN Family Composition

Approximately 57% of MSJDN members have children, while 43% are families without children. *Figure 8* reflects the number of children in MSJDN members' households.

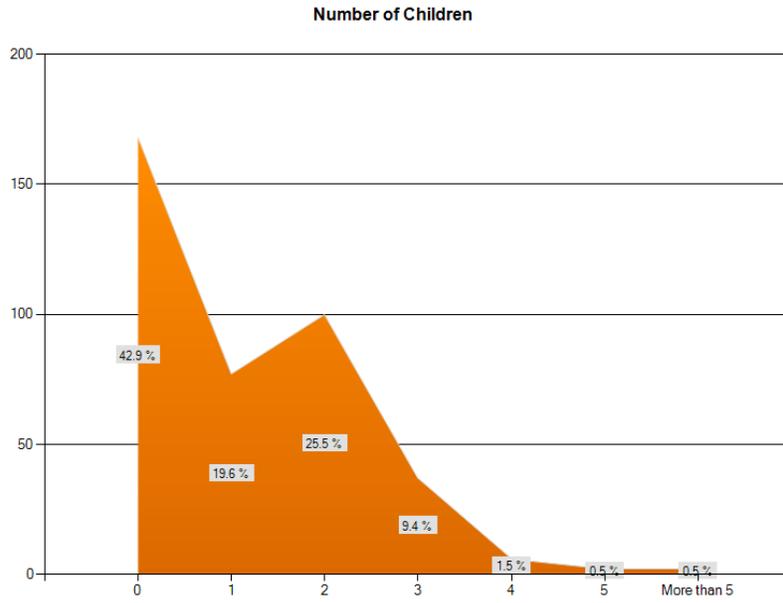


Figure 8

In the MSJDN member households with children, the ages of those children are distributed widely, as reflected in *Figure 9* below. The greatest concentration is among young children, ages seven and under.

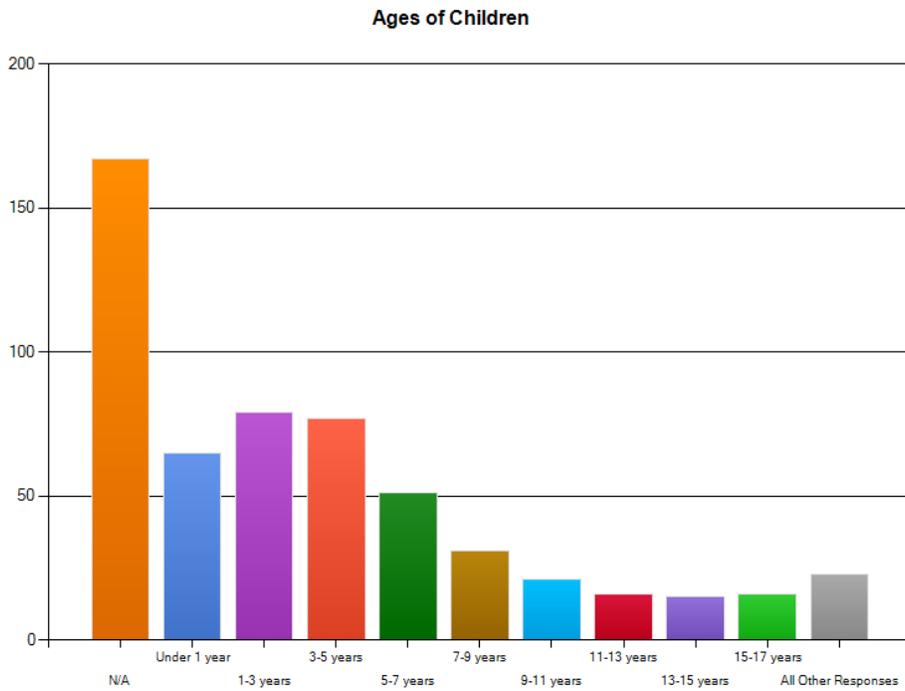


Figure 9

C. Relocations

Permanent changes of duty station (“PCS moves”) are a frequent occurrence for military families, and happen, on average, every two to three years. MSJDN asked its members how many PCS moves they had experienced as military spouse attorneys. As reflected in *Figure 10*, 28.6% indicated only one move during the course of their careers, which is consistent with the statistics in *Figure 12* concerning length of practice for members. However, 24.5% indicated they had experienced at least two PCS moves, and another 20.2% indicated that they had experienced at least three. Some members indicated they have experienced more than ten PCS moves.

It should be noted that not all military spouse attorneys are able to PCS move with their servicemember. As discussed in Section V below, some military spouse attorneys must live remotely from their servicemember to maintain a legal career.

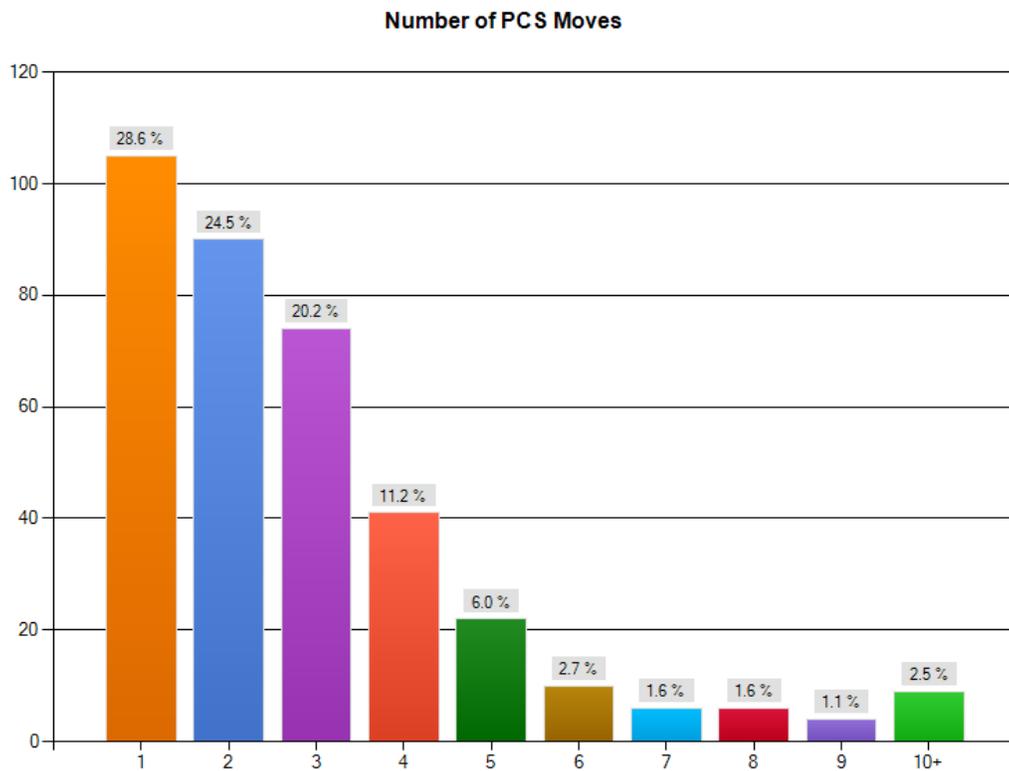


Figure 10

D. Volunteerism

As a community, military spouses tend to perform significant hours of volunteer work. Approximately 75% of members indicated that they do volunteer work in the communities in which they live, and 41.5% indicated that they volunteer regularly. *Figure 11* reflects the number of hours MSJDN members indicated they volunteer on a weekly basis.

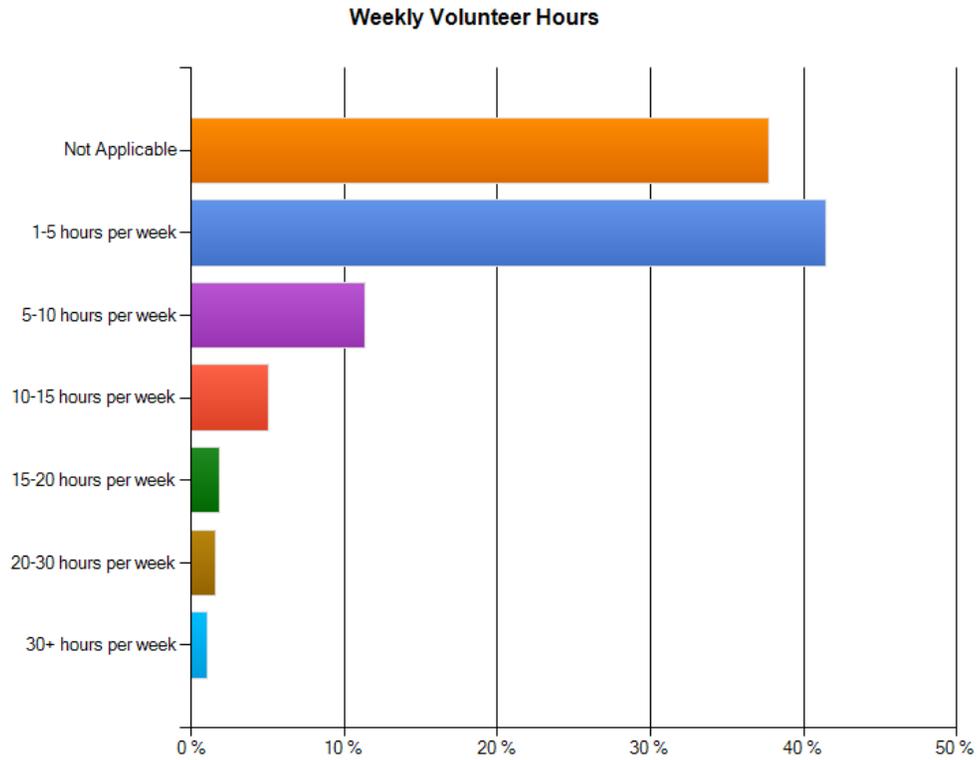


Figure 11

It should be noted that *Figure 11* reflects all volunteer hours performed by members, and is not specific to *pro bono* work. However, 27.5% of members answered that they do *pro bono* work in jurisdictions where they are licensed. 58.9% of members said that their ability to obtain a license (or lack thereof) in a new jurisdiction impacts whether they volunteer for their local bar association.

III. Members as Professionals

Approximately 97.7% of MSJDN members are members of the legal profession. The remaining 2.3% are law students, or members who have not yet been licensed. The length of time that MSJDN members have been practicing members of the legal profession is reflected in *Figure 12*.

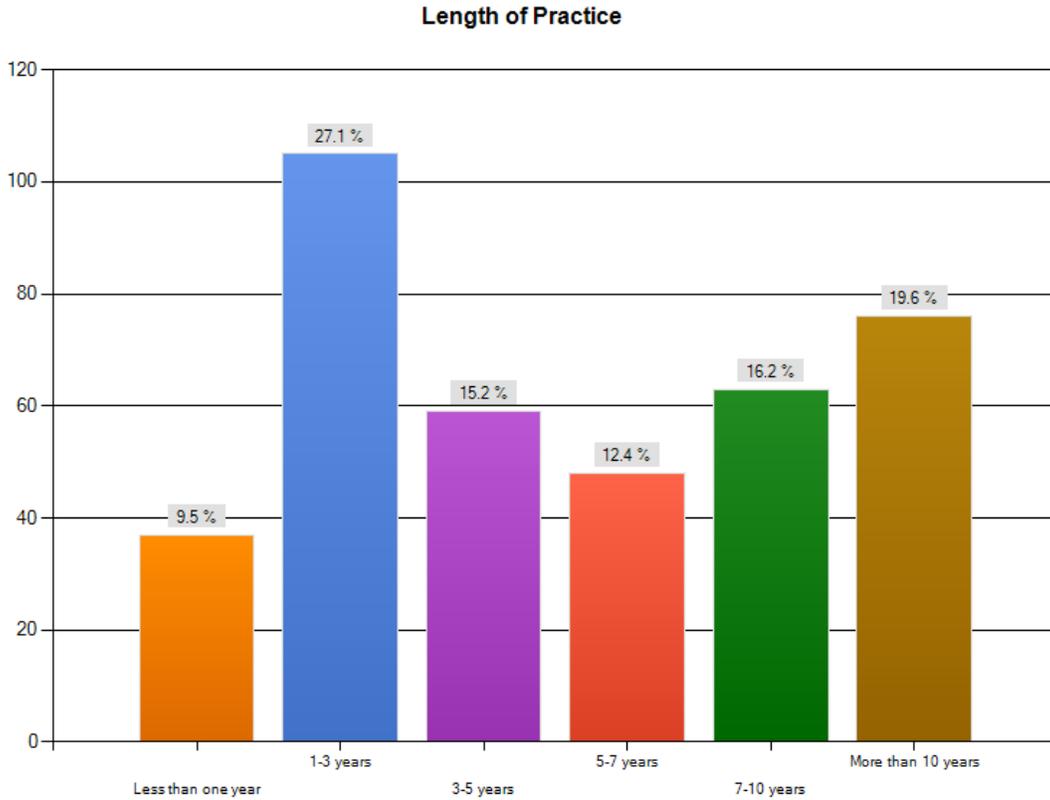


Figure 12

The various levels of experience among members are fairly evenly distributed. Roughly 27.1% of members have between one and three years of practice. Another 27.6% of members have three to seven years of practice, just over 16% have seven to ten years of practice, and nearly 20% have over ten years of practice.

A. **Type of Practice**

MSJDN members come from a wide array of practice backgrounds, as reflected in *Figure 13* below.

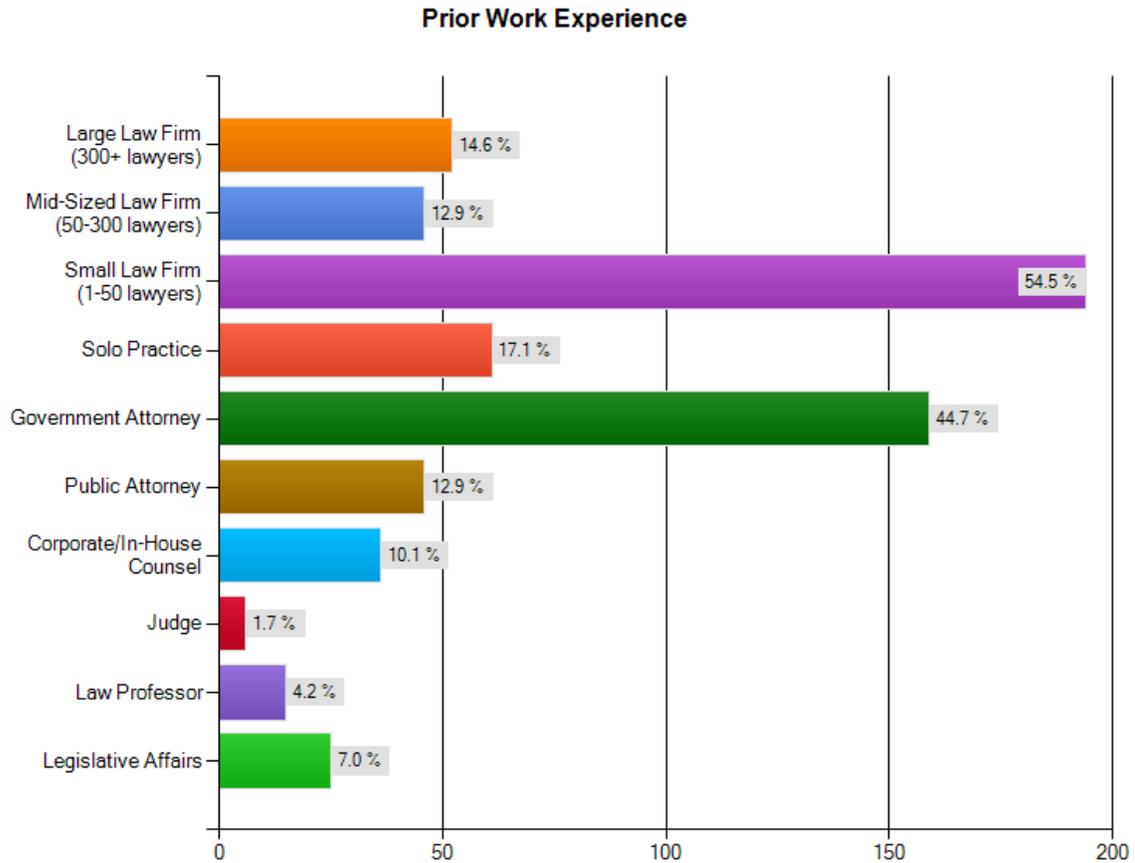


Figure 13

The two most common practice backgrounds for MSJDN members are small firm practice and government practice, with solo practice a distant third. Only about 27% of MSJDN members have experience working in a law group that has more than 50 lawyers.

B. Remote Work

Due to frequent moves, it is often hard to keep a single position for an extended period of time unless an employer is willing to permit a military spouse attorney to work remotely. Approximately 33.7% of members answered that an employer has given the opportunity to work remotely, but only 17% of those members say they have been given the opportunity by a legal employer to continue working remotely after a PCS move.

IV. Impact of Service on Job Prospects

When asked whether military service has impacted their ability to progress in the legal profession, 81.3% of members answered in the affirmative, and 59.1% of members have been asked by a prospective employer about their status as a military spouse. Member responses indicate that their service is frequently a reason employers choose not to hire them. Based on member input, there are a number of explanations provided by employers, the most frequent of

those including: (a) the fact of frequent moves; (b) concern that deployments will interfere with performance; (c) the existence of gap periods in resumes; or (d) the perception that the military spouse is looking for a job instead of a career.

A. Employment

Despite the fact that 98.6% of members responding have a license to practice law in at least one jurisdiction, only about 34% report having full-time employment in a job requiring a law license. *Figure 14* reflects member responses concerning current employment status:

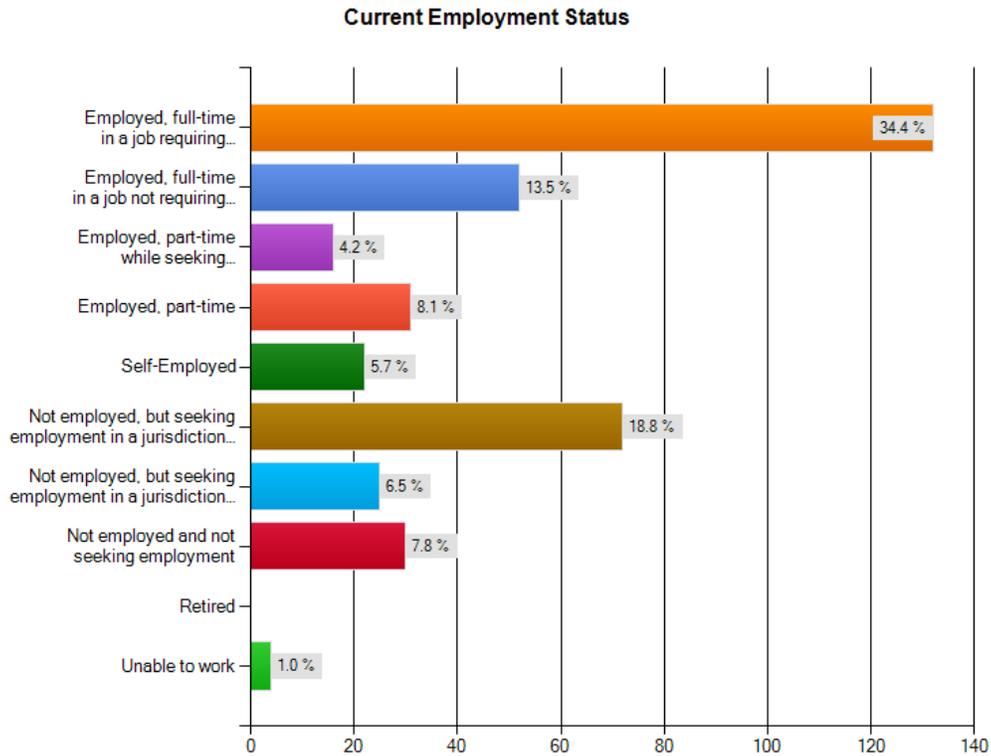


Figure 14

Of the members not employed full-time in a legal position, 13.5% have some other kind of job, and 4.2% are employed part-time while seeking legal employment. Approximately 13.8% have some kind of part-time or self-employment, while the remaining 33.1% are unemployed and either still seeking employment, or have decided not to seek employment any longer.

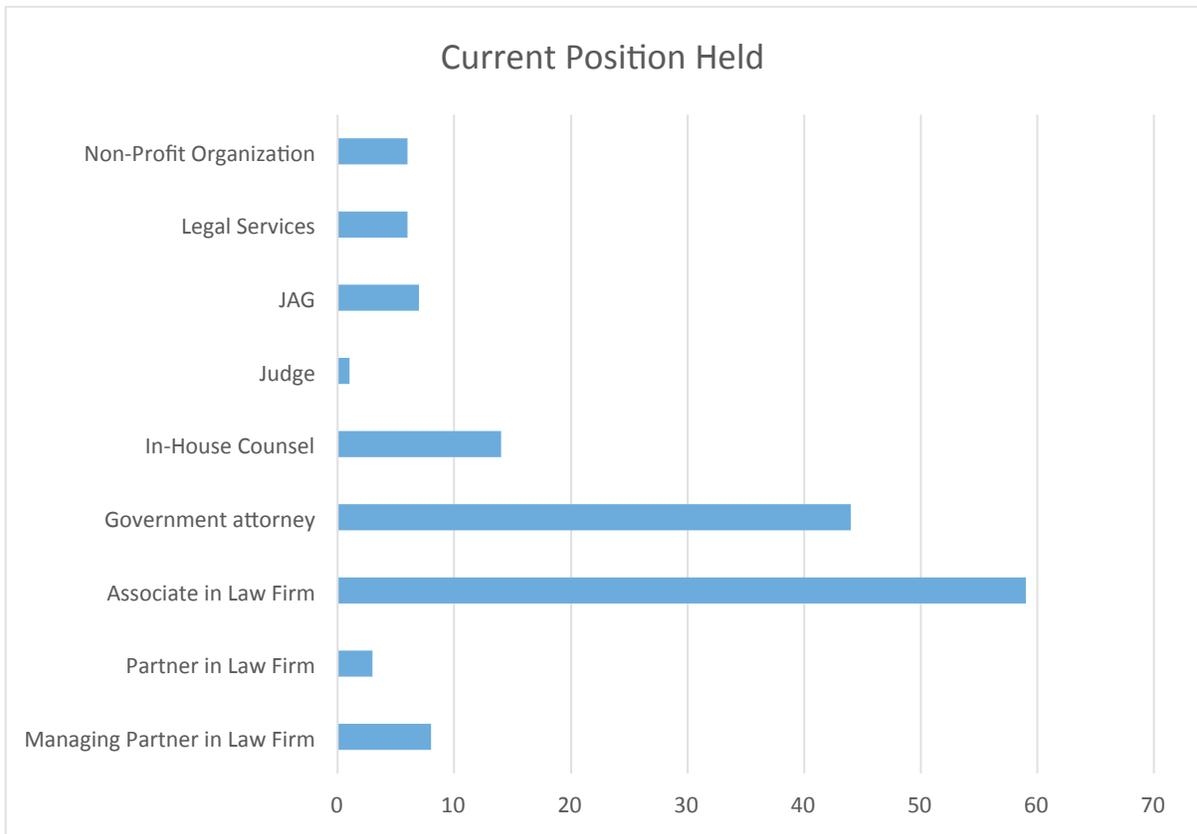


Figure 15

Of the roughly 34% that are employed full-time in legal positions, members are overwhelmingly involved in private practice, with government work a close second. Members work in a number of other legal professions as well, albeit in smaller numbers. These include in-house, non-profit, legal services corporations and JAG. A small percentage of members are judges.

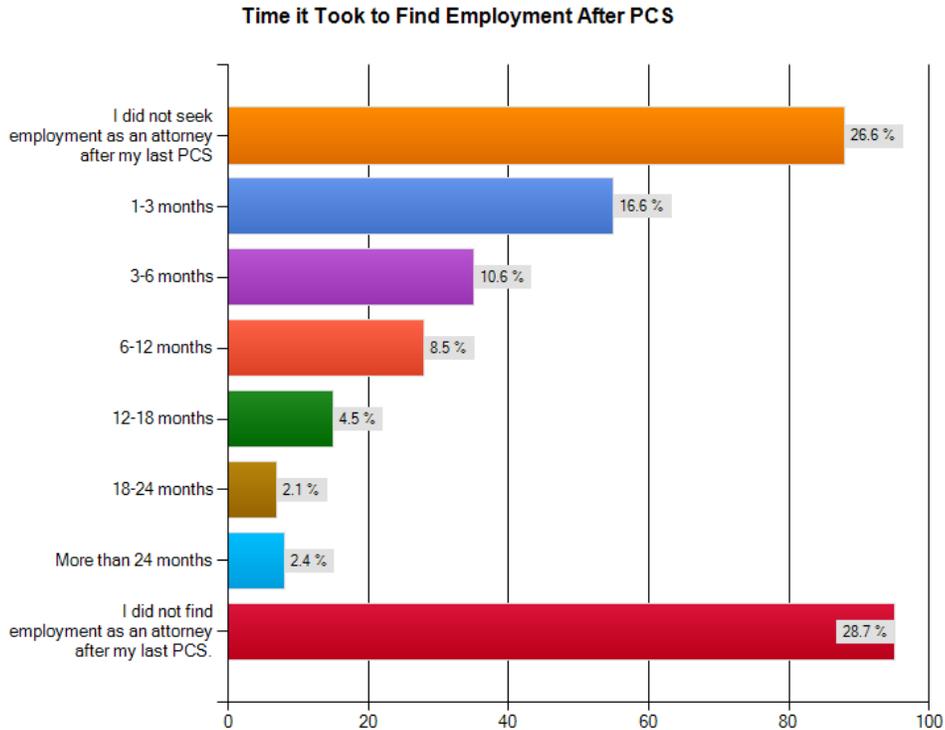


Figure 16

Figure 16 reflects the length of time it took for members to find employment after their most recent PCS move. Approximately 26.6% reported that they did not seek new employment, and 28.7% reported that they could not find employment as an attorney after a PCS move. Of the remaining members that were able to find work in the legal profession after their latest PCS move, 27.2% report that they found work within the first six months of moving. Another 8.5% indicate it took up to a year to find work, while 4.5% answered that it took them between a year and eighteen months to find work, and another 4.5% indicated that took them more than eighteen months to find work in the legal profession.

B. Licenses and Practice

Approximately 80.4% of members reported that they have at least one active law license. Another 6.6% of members are law students, and 6.6% have earned a juris doctorate but do not yet have a license. This distribution is reflected in Figure 17.

Current License Status

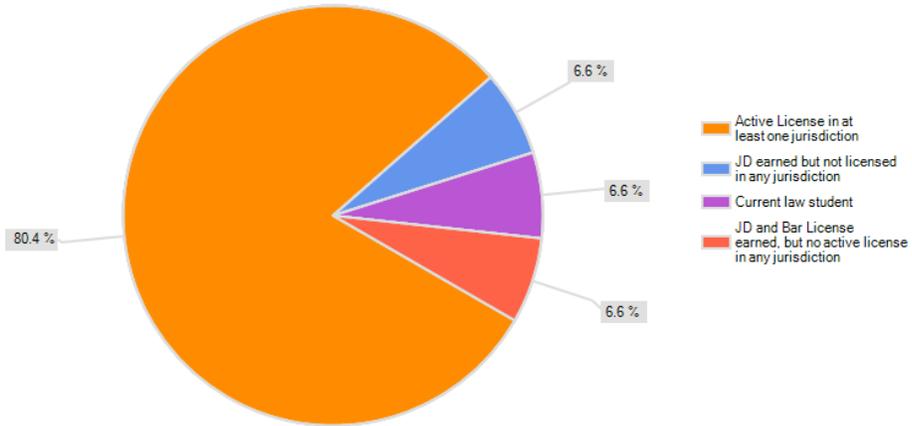


Figure 17

Figure 18 reflects the number of licenses members have obtained by taking a bar examination in a new jurisdiction:

Number of Admissions by Examination

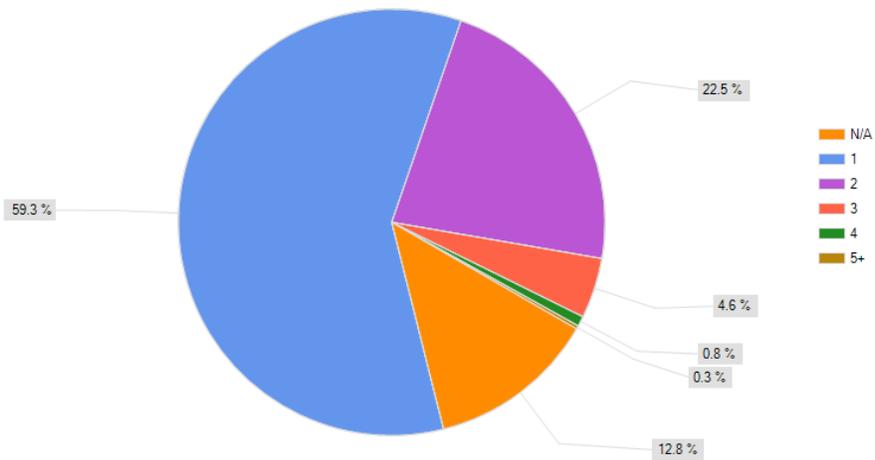


Figure 18

Over 28% of members responded that they have taken more than one bar exam. 22.5% say that they have taken two bar exams. Nearly 6% of members responded they have taken more than two bar exams, and a small percentage have taken more than five bar exams.

Figure 19 reflects the number of licenses a particular member has been able to obtain without having to take a bar examination in a new jurisdiction.

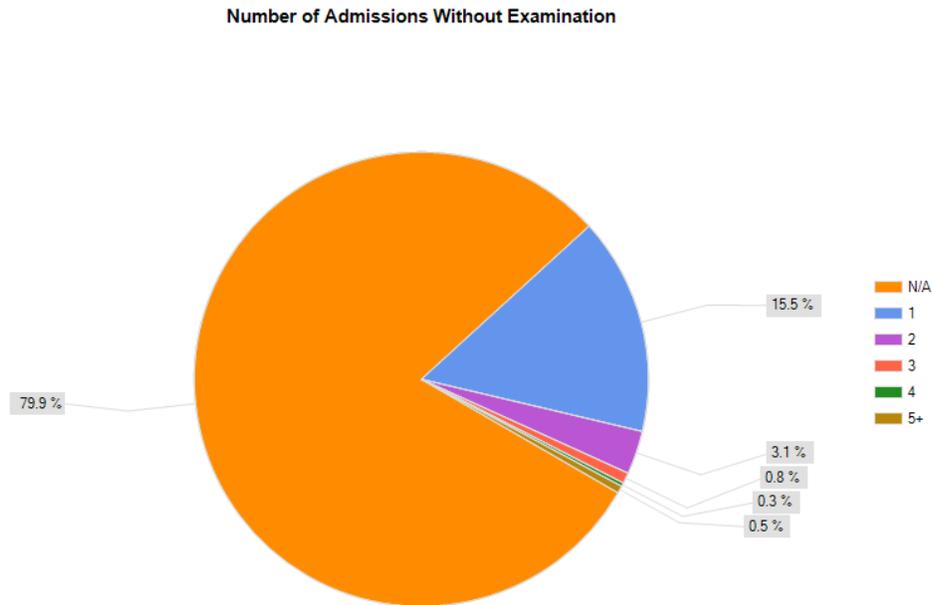


Figure 19

Nearly 80% of members say they have never been admitted to a jurisdiction without having to take a bar examination. 15.5% say they have been admitted to one jurisdiction without examination, and a small percentage of members say they have been admitted without examination more than once. Members further reported that the vast majority of those admissions without examination were reciprocity admissions, as reflected in *Figure 20*.

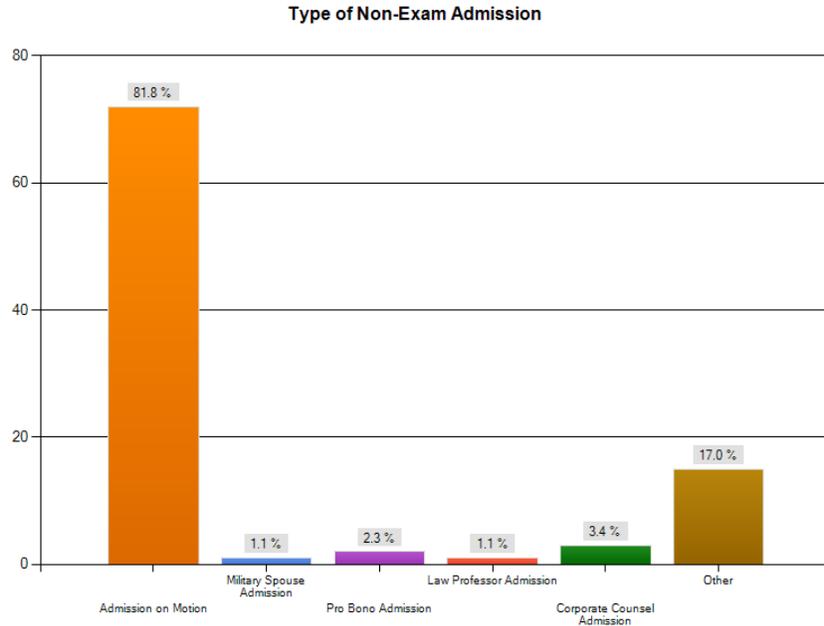


Figure 20

C. Professional Dues

Figure 21 below reflects member responses concerning the amount of mandatory bar dues that they pay on an annual basis.

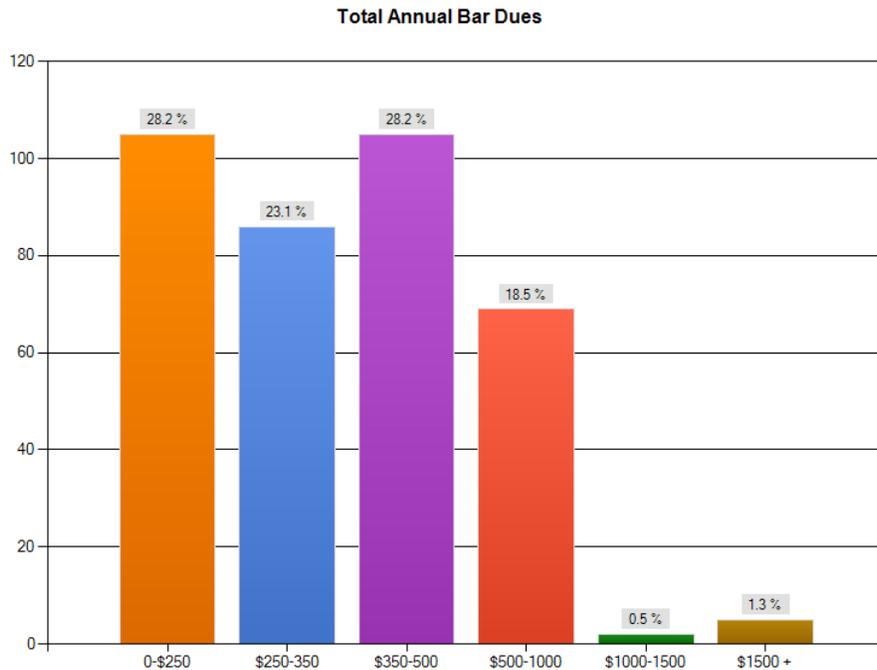


Figure 21

When asked to calculate the total amount they pay in annual bar dues, 28.2% said they pay less than \$250, 23.1% said they pay between \$250 and \$350 in bar dues, and 28.2% say they pay between \$350 and \$500 in bar dues. 20.3% say that they pay more than \$500 in annual bar dues.

According to member responses, 71.4% of members maintain an active license in every jurisdiction in which they've obtained one. Of the 28.6% that do not maintain an active law license in every jurisdiction in which they've obtained one, 86.7% say cost is the reason they do not maintain licenses. Another 36.1% say it is because they do not intend to return to the jurisdiction.

In addition to mandatory bar dues, many members responded that they pay dues to voluntary bars as well. Those dues are reflected in *Figure 22*, and are, on the whole, considerably lower than the mandatory bar dues.

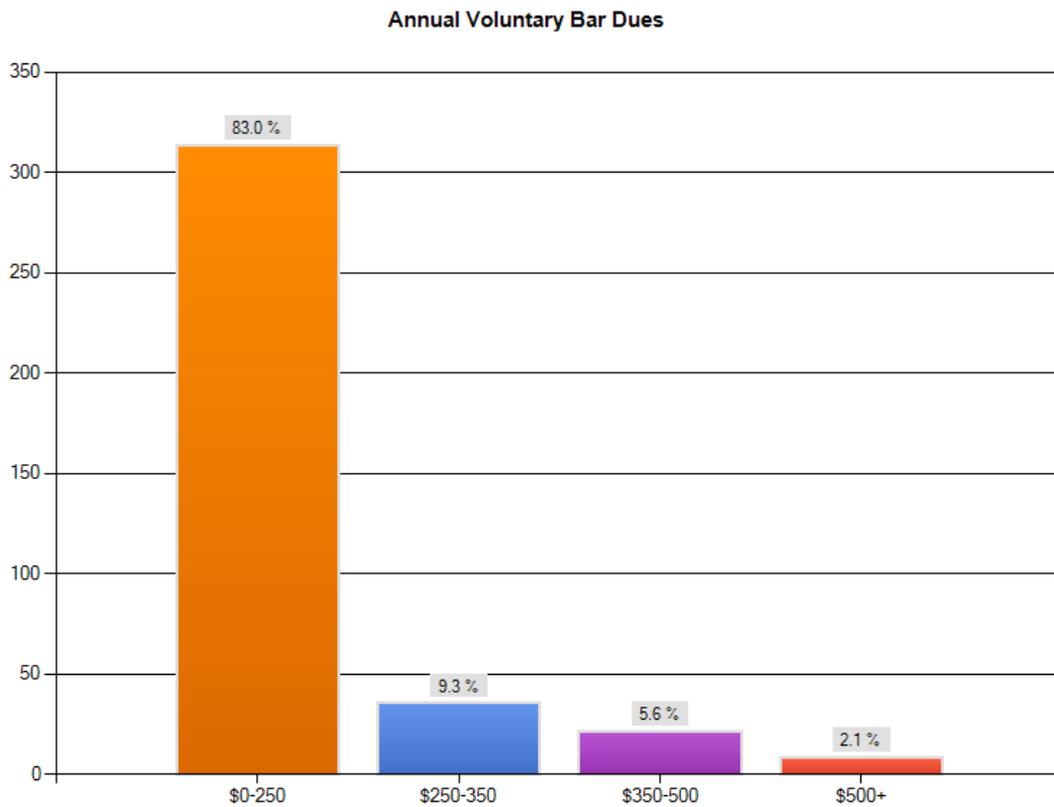


Figure 22

V. Separations and Remote Families

Approximately 49.7% of members say that they have lived remotely from a servicemember spouse to maintain a legal career. *Figure 23* shows the amount of time members have lived remotely from their servicemember, and *Figure 24* shows the distance members lived remotely from their servicemember spouse.

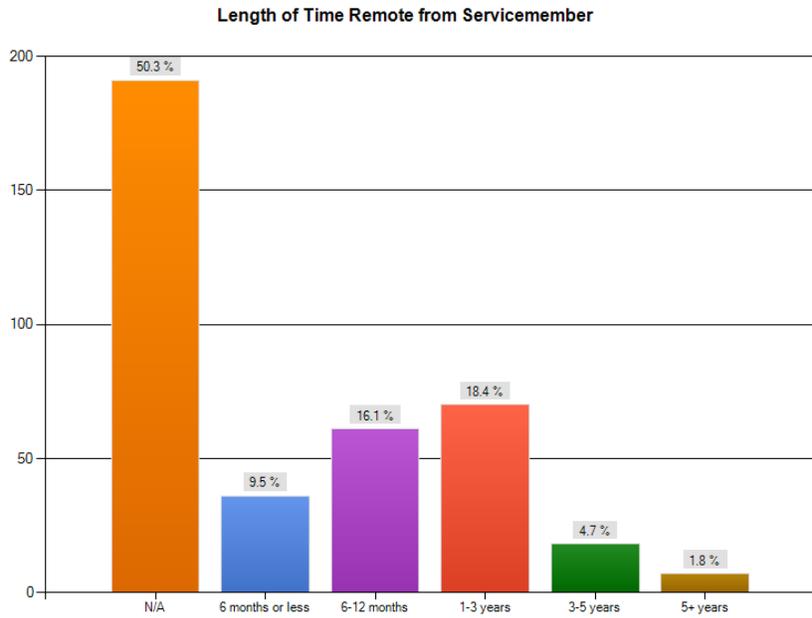


Figure 23

Of the members that reported having to live remotely from a servicemember spouse, just under 10% of members say that they lived remotely for six months or less. 16.1% say they lived remotely for six months to a year, while 18.4% say they lived remotely between one and three years. The remaining 6.5% say they have lived remotely from their servicemember spouse for more than three years.

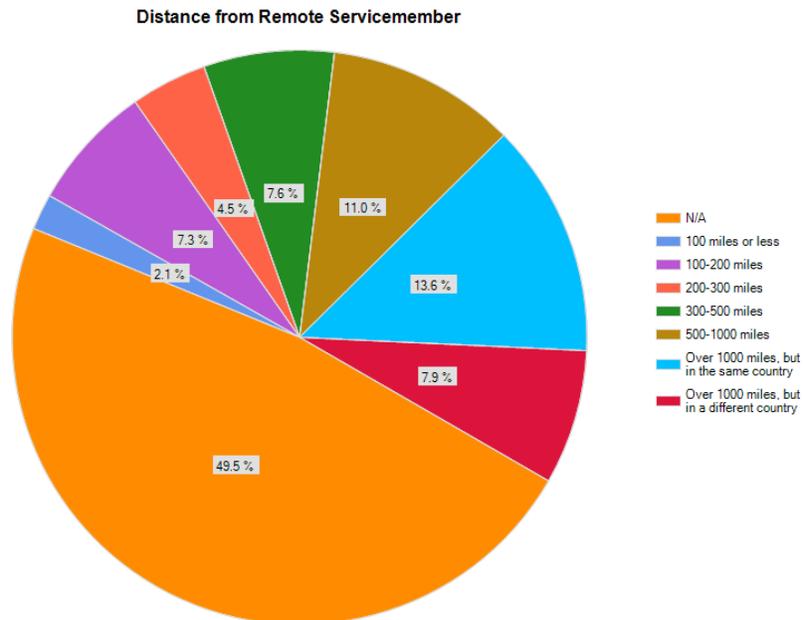


Figure 24

Of the members that reported living remotely from their servicemember, 13.9% say they have lived 100-300 miles away from their servicemember spouse. Another 7.6% say they have lived between 300 and 500 miles apart, and 11% of members say they lived between 500 and 1,000 miles from their servicemember spouse. The greatest concentration, over 21%, say they lived more than 1,000 miles away from their servicemember.

A. Families with Children

Approximately 12.6% of members reported that they have had to live remotely from a spouse to maintain a legal career and they had children in the home while living remotely. *Figure 25* reflects the amount of time members had to live remotely with children, and *Figure 26* reflects the distance they lived from their servicemember while living remotely.

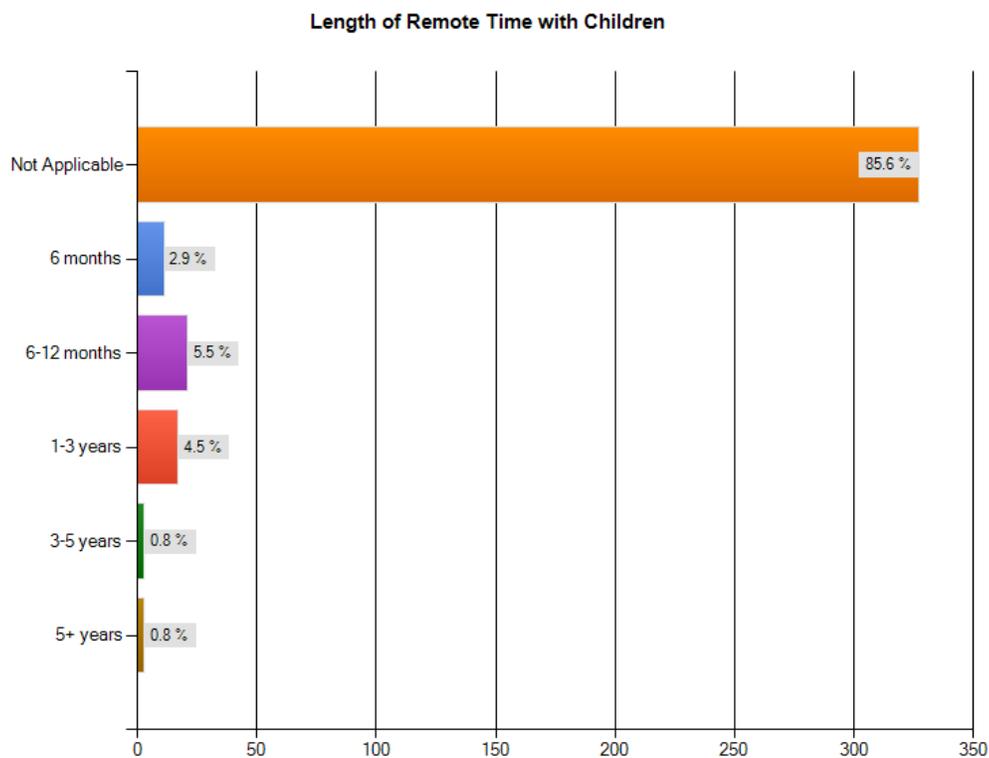


Figure 25

Of the families that have had to live remotely with children, just under 3% say they lived remotely for six months or less. 10% of families say they lived remotely between one and three years, while the remaining 1.5% say they lived remotely for three years or more with children.

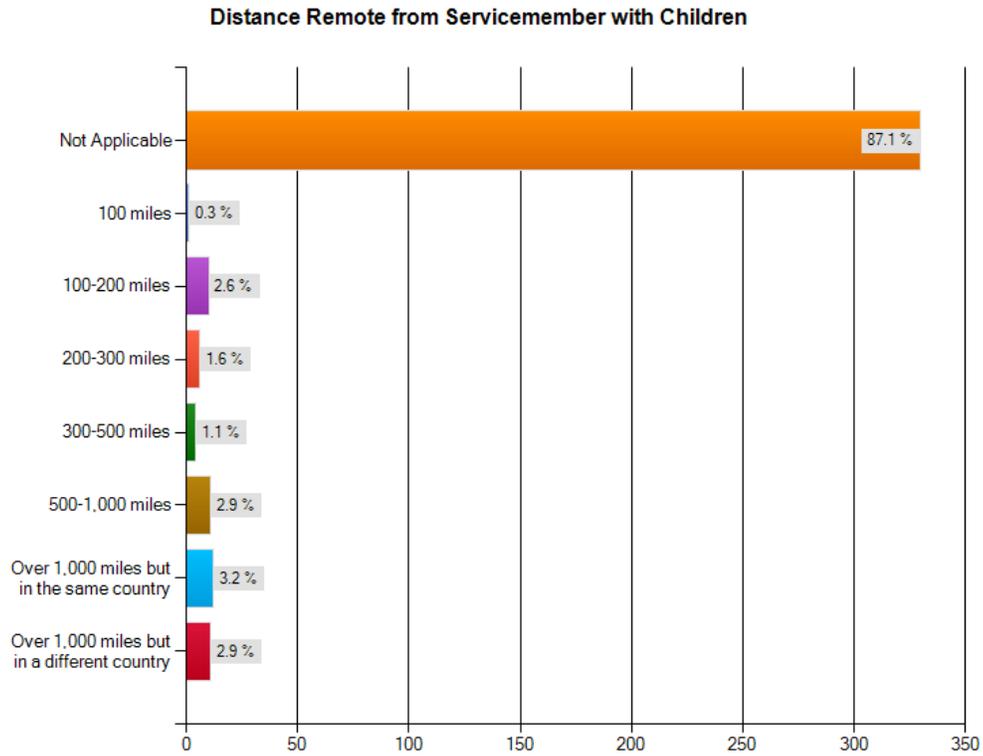


Figure 26

Of the families who say they have lived remotely with children, approximately 5% lived between 100 and 500 miles from their servicemember. The remaining approximately 9% say they have lived more than 500 miles apart, and 6% say they have lived more than 1,000 miles apart.

VI. Membership and Student Loan Debt

Based on member responses, 86.6% of members used student loans to pay for some or all of their schooling. *Figure 27* shows the total debt incurred by members for undergraduate degrees. *Figure 28* shows the total debt incurred by members for law school degrees. And *Figure 29* shows the total debt members still owe from their student loans.

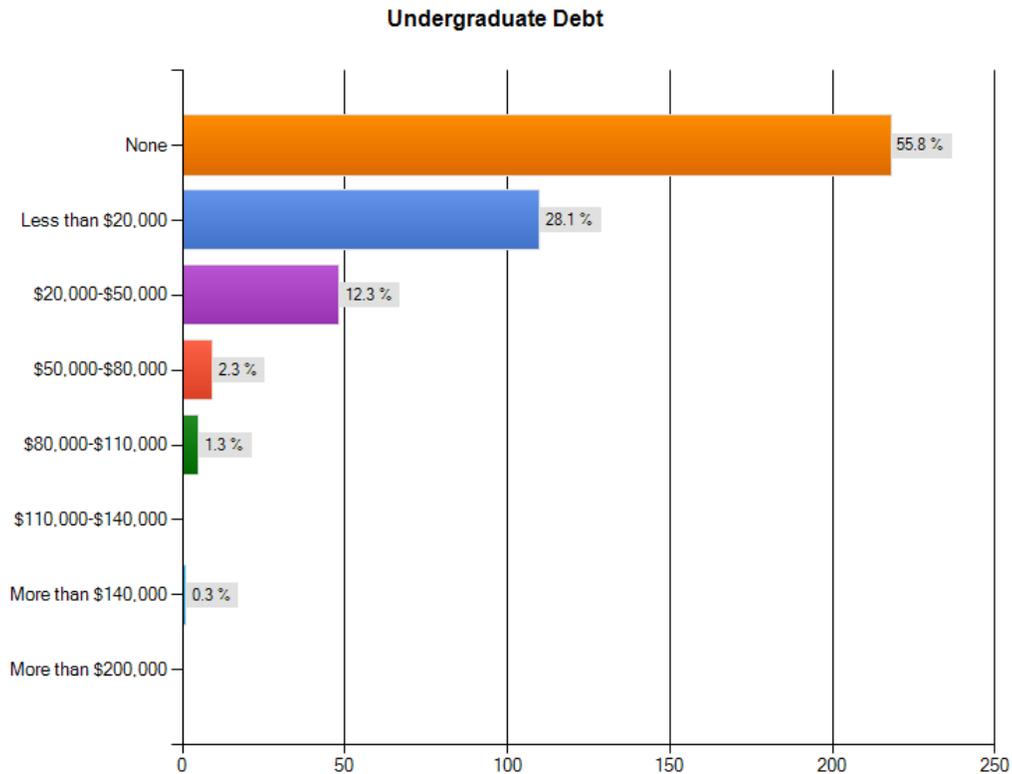


Figure 27

Over 55% of members say that they completed their undergraduate degrees without incurring any student loan debt. Another 25.1% say they incurred less than \$20,000 in loan debt to complete their undergraduate degree, and just over 12% said they incurred between \$20,000 and \$50,000. Less than 5% incurred more than \$50,000 in student loan debt to complete an undergraduate degree.

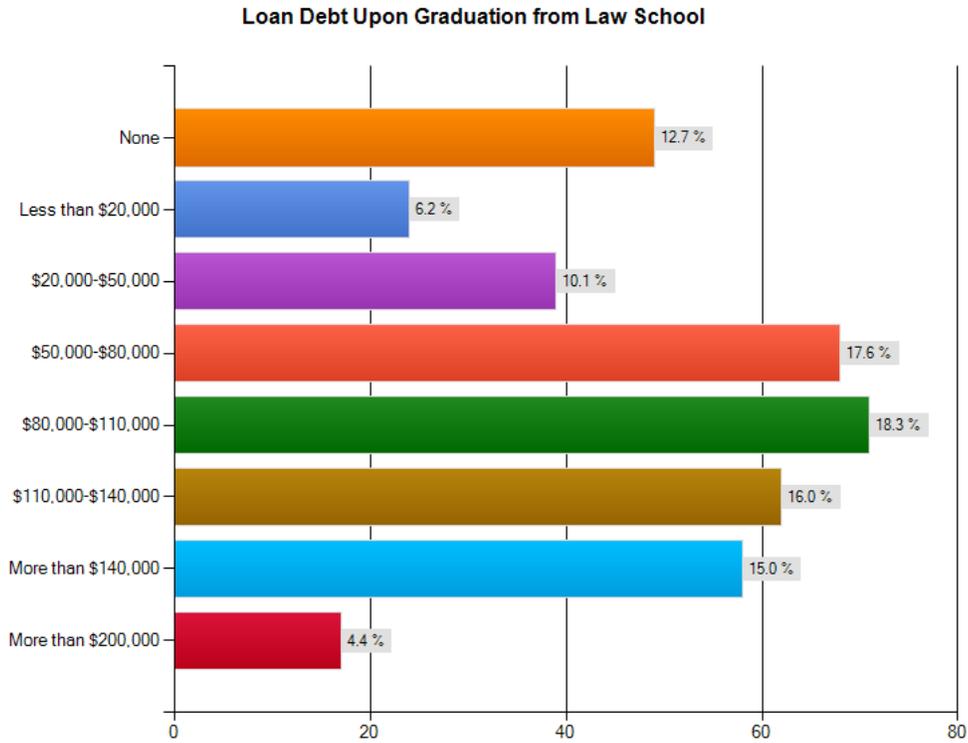


Figure 28

Approximately 12.7% of members say that they finished law school with no student loan debt. The greatest concentration of members, 35.9% say they finished law school with between \$50,000 and \$110,000 in student loan debt. But 16% of members say they graduated with between \$110,000 and \$140,000 in student loan debt, and 19.4% say they incurred more than \$140,000 in student loan debt by the time they finished law school.

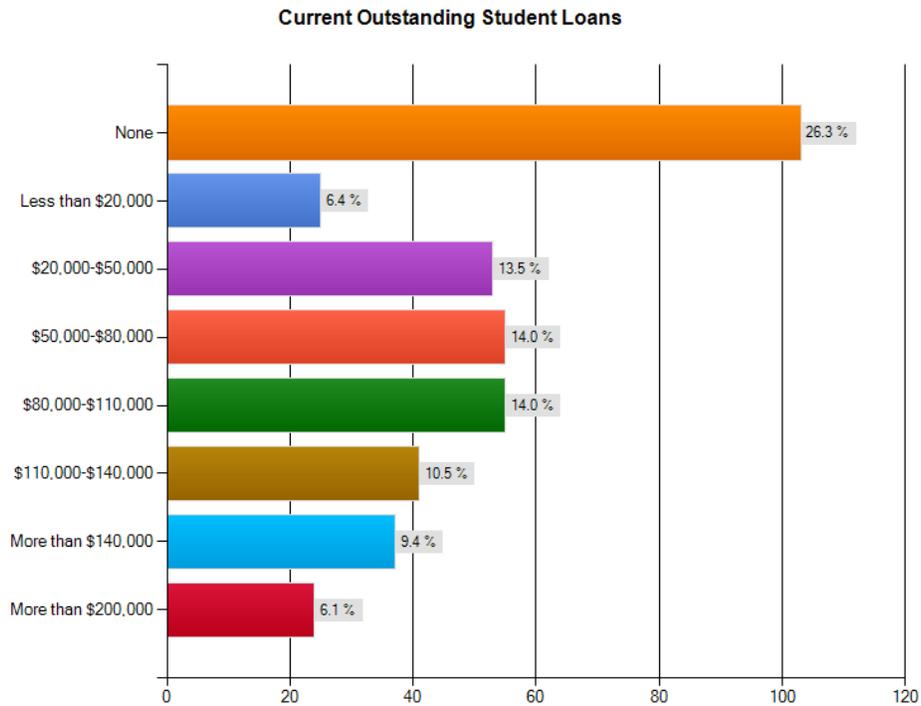


Figure 29

Just over a quarter of members say that they currently have no outstanding student loans. The largest distribution of members, 28%, say that they currently have between \$50,000 and \$110,000 in outstanding student loans. 26% of members say they have more than \$110,000 in student loans, and 6.1% say their balance is over \$200,000.

When asked whether their level of outstanding loans impacts their spouse’s decision to stay in the military, 23.8% of members answered in the affirmative. In addition, 35.6% of military spouses say that student loan debt affects their decision about whether or not to PCS with their servicemember.

A. Household Income

Household income among MSJDN Members varies widely, the largest distribution of income between \$75,000 and \$150,000, as shown in *Figure 30*. Based on member responses to the question concerning their servicemember’s rank, as reflected in *Figure 4* above, this data would suggest that even in the households reporting income on the higher end of the spectrum, the attorney spouse in the household is being paid below the national average for attorneys.

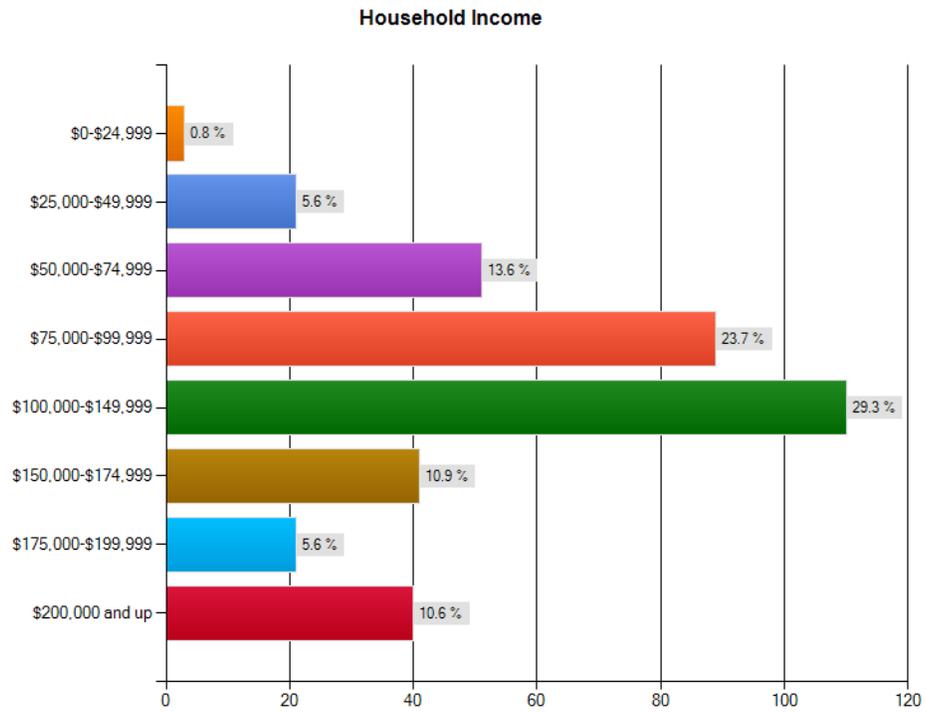


Figure 30