

# Career Outcomes of Study Abroad Students

Survey of IES Abroad Alumni 2012 - 2015

An overview of the career outcomes of more than 1,200 recent college graduates who participated in an IES Abroad study or internship program during their undergraduate degree program. Study investigates the impact study abroad has had on professional decisions and skills as well as the value alumni place on their study abroad experience.

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## Background

From a ground-breaking 50-year longitudinal study to a timely study of economic recession/post-recession outcomes, IES Abroad has a rich history of leading the field of international education in quantitative research on the practical outcomes of studying abroad. The present study aims to add to this tradition by analyzing the career outcomes of the most recent cohort of college graduates – those who completed their undergraduate degree(s) between 2012 and 2015.

## Study Design & Response

Building on a similar study that IES Abroad administered to recent graduates in 2012, the present study was distributed to IES Abroad alumni who participated in study or intern abroad programs between 2011 and 2015 and subsequently completed their undergraduate degree(s). There were 1,267 responses to the survey and an overall response rate of 11%. Respondents were screened to determine whether or not they had graduated. 62 had not and were removed from the analysis. The profile of respondents is as follows:

Year of Program	Female	Male	Private Institution	Public Institution	Total
2011	119	52	124	47	171
2012	282	107	282	107	389
2013	223	74	205	92	297
2014	253	75	234	99	333
2015	13	2	8	7	15
<b>Total</b>	<b>890</b>	<b>310</b>	<b>853</b>	<b>352</b>	<b>1205</b>

## Fast Facts about IES Abroad Alumni

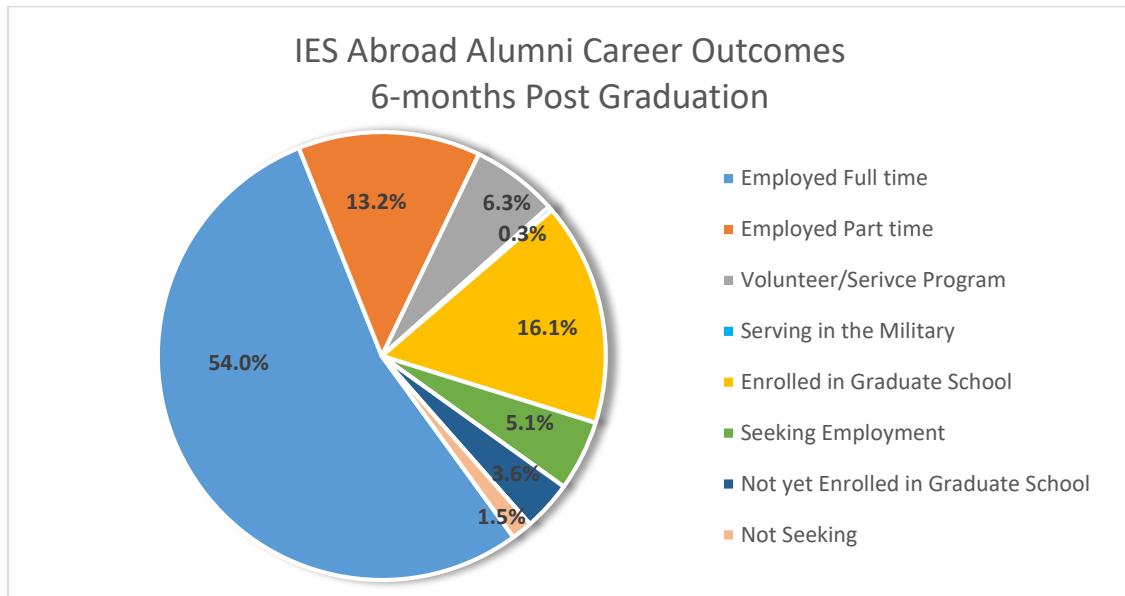
93% of those who entered the workforce were employed within 6 months of graduation

89% of those continuing into graduate school earned admission into their first or second choice school.

91% agreed that studying or interning abroad was worth the cost and an equal percentage would or have recommended IES Abroad to others

## Part 1 – Career Path Following Graduation

Within six months of completing their undergraduate degree(s), 67% of IES Abroad alumni had entered the workforce, nearly 20% were either attending or planning to attend graduate school, and 6% were participating in a volunteer or service program (such as Peace Corps). Only 5% of IES Abroad alumni reported that they were still seeking employment within six months of completing their undergraduate degree(s).



There was notable variation in the career outcomes of IES Abroad alumni based on gender, ethnicity, and institutional profile (public v. private):

- Male alumni were significantly more likely than female alumni to be employed full time within 6 months of graduation – 61.7% compared to 51.5% - whereas female alumni were more likely to be enrolled in graduate school – 17.2% versus 12.7%.
- Alumni who graduated from a public institution were much more likely to enroll in graduate studies, with 23.1% indicating this path compared with only 13.2% of graduates from private institutions.
- Alumni who self-identified as Hispanic reported the highest rates of full time employment and lowest levels of enrollment in graduate school, at 65% and 8% respectively.

See Table 1 on following page for detailed outline of career outcomes by gender, ethnicity<sup>1</sup>, and institutional profile.

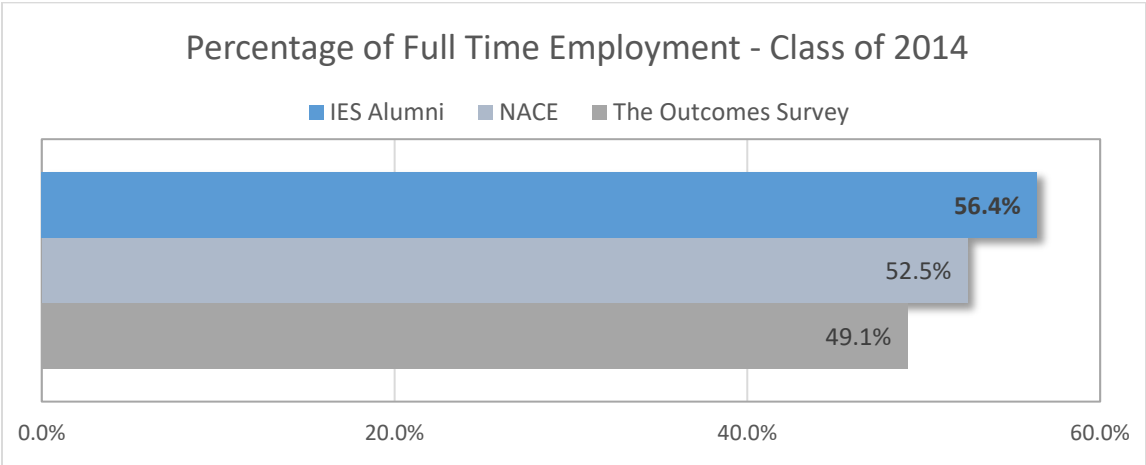
<sup>1</sup> Ethnicity as reported by alumni on original IES Abroad program application. Applicants could select from the following: African-American (non-Hispanic origin), American Indian or Alaskan native, Asian or Pacific Islander, Hawaii or Other Pacific Island, Hispanic, Multi-ethnic Background, or White, Non-Hispanic. Applicants were not required to indicate ethnicity and those who did not were categorized as Non Specified. While survey responses were received from alumni of all ethnic categories, there were fewer than 10 responses from alumni of American Indian or Alaskan Native, Hawaii or Other Pacific Islander, and Multi-ethnic backgrounds. Thus, these categories are not delineated in proceeding analyses.

**TABLE 1: Career Outcomes 6-months Post Graduation**

	Employed Full time	Employed Part time	Volunteer/ Service Program	Enrolled in Graduate School	Seeking Employment	Not Yet Enrolled in Graduate School	Not Seeking
<b>All IES Abroad alumni</b>	<b>54.0%</b>	<b>13.2%</b>	<b>6.3%</b>	<b>16.1%</b>	<b>5.1%</b>	<b>3.6%</b>	<b>1.5%</b>
Female	51.5%	14.1%	7.0%	17.2%	5.3%	3.8%	1.1%
Male	61.7%	10.1%	4.2%	12.7%	4.5%	2.9%	2.6%
Private Institution	54.2%	14.2%	7.1%	13.2%	5.5%	3.8%	1.8%
Public Institution	53.2%	10.8%	4.3%	23.1%	4.0%	3.1%	0.9%
African-American (non-Hispanic origin)	48.3%	10.0%	13.3%	15.0%	8.3%	3.3%	1.7%
Asian or Pacific Islander	56.0%	9.0%	4.0%	18.0%	6.0%	5.0%	0.0%
Hispanic	65.5%	9.5%	3.6%	8.3%	6.0%	2.4%	4.8%
White, non-Hispanic	53.2%	14.1%	6.7%	16.4%	4.7%	3.3%	1.3%

NOTE: A two-sample t-test between proportions was performed to determine whether there was a significant difference between male and female alumni and public and private alumni. Percentages above listed in red were found to be statistically significant at the  $p \leq .05$  level.

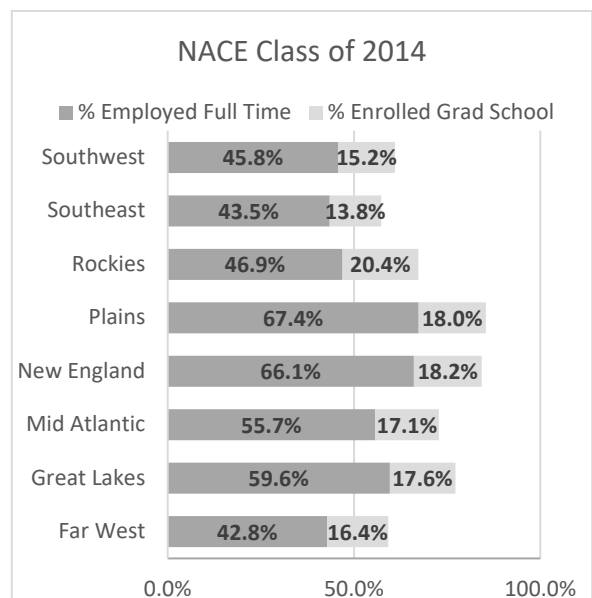
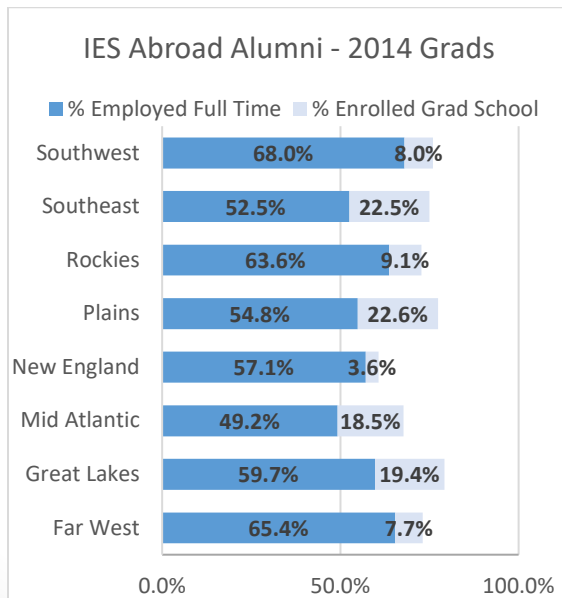
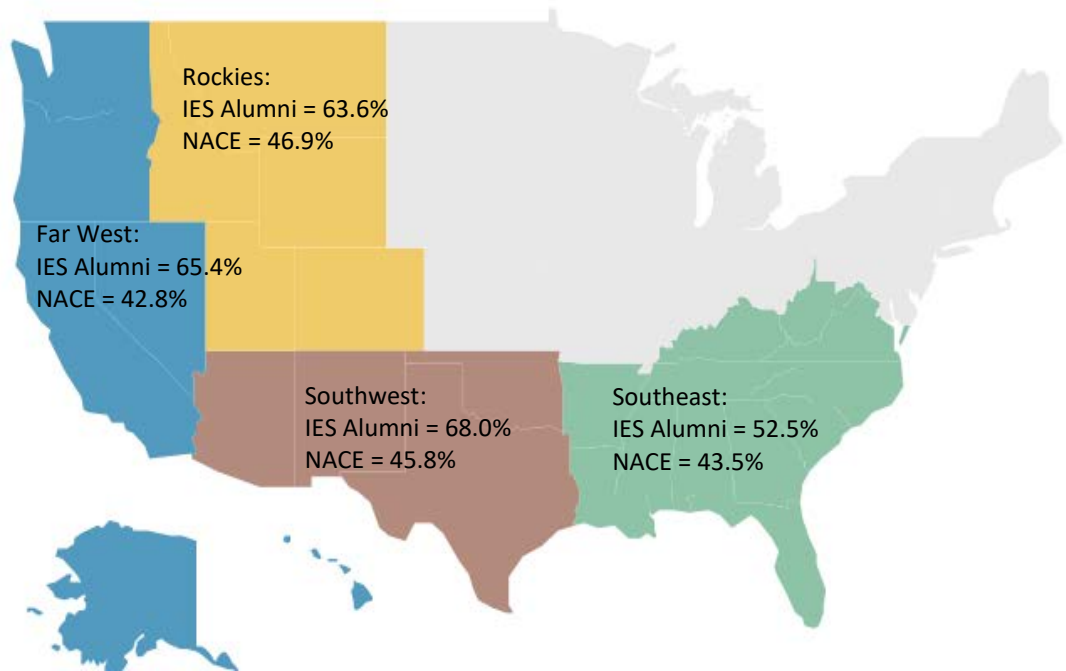
Results suggest that IES Abroad alumni who enter the workforce are more successful than the national average at gaining full time employment following graduation. In 2014, the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) reported that students who received a Bachelor’s degree that year had a full time employment rate of 52.5%, and The Outcomes Survey (TOS) reported the full time employment rate 49.1%<sup>2</sup>. By comparison, IES Abroad alumni who graduated in 2014 fared notably better, with 56.4% indicating they had found full time employment.



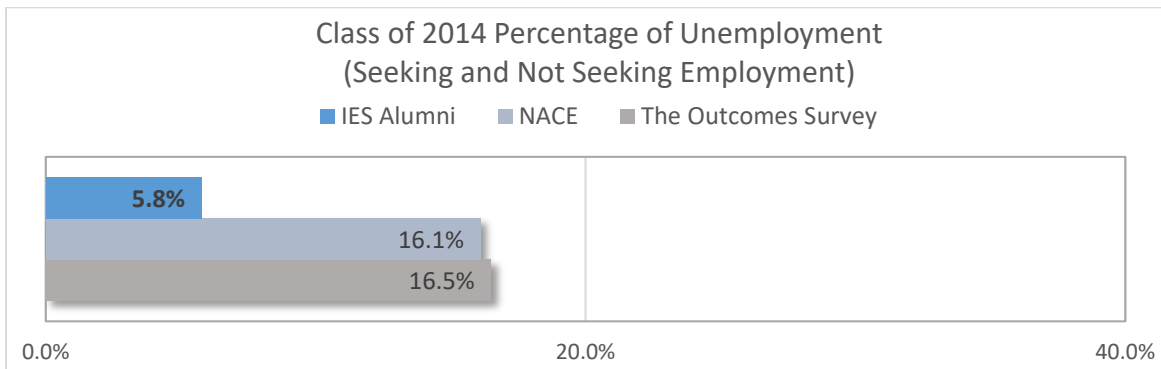
<sup>2</sup> NACE First Destinations for the College Class of 2014: <https://www.nacweb.org/uploadedFiles/Pages/surveys/first-destination/nace-first-destination-survey-final-report-05-2015.pdf>  
 TOS National Career Outcomes Report Spring 2014: <http://theoutcomessurvey.com/files/docs/spring-2014/spring-2014-12-months.pdf>

For graduates in 2014, geographic location had a significant impact on their rate of full time employment, with graduates from institutions in the Southeast, Southwest, and Far West reporting the lowest national rates of full time employment. Interestingly, IES Abroad graduates from these regions reported significantly higher rates of full time employment.

Percentage of Full Time Employment by Geographic Region – Class of 2014



Equally notable to the percentage of graduates who achieved full time employment is the low percentage of IES Abroad alumni who were unemployed following graduation. For the class of 2014, only 5.8% of IES Abroad alumni indicated they were unemployed, including those who were seeking and not seeking employment. In that year, both NACE and TOS reported unemployment rates in excess of 16% for college graduates.



Entering the workforce or going to graduate school were the two primary career paths taken by IES Abroad alumni following their undergraduate studies. In the following two sections, the motivations and outcomes for these two cohorts are explored in more detail.

## Alumni Entering the Workforce

Of survey respondents, 72.2 % indicated that they were either employed full or part time or seeking employment in the six months post-graduation. Of these IES Abroad alumni who entered the workforce following graduation:

- 93% found their job placement within 6 months of graduating
- 70% of reported that a bachelor's degree was required for this job
- 50% felt that their IES Abroad program experience helped them to get this first job
- The average full time starting salary was \$40,192.

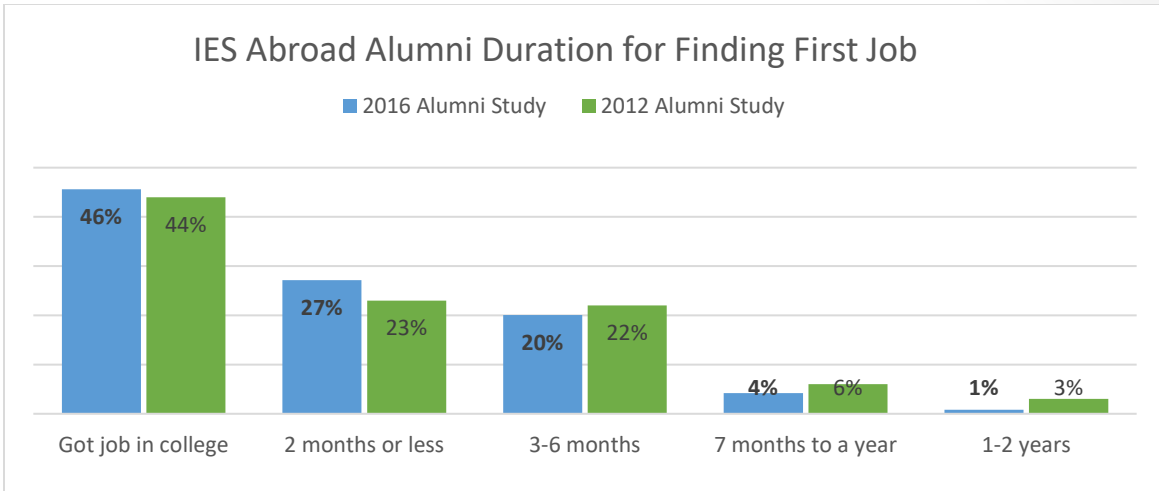
Many IES Abroad alumni, 46%, found their first job position before graduating and an additional 47.2% found their first job within the first six months following graduation. This trend was particularly pronounced among male alumni, of whom 51.5% found their first job before graduating.

**TABLE 2: Duration for Finding First Job After Graduation**

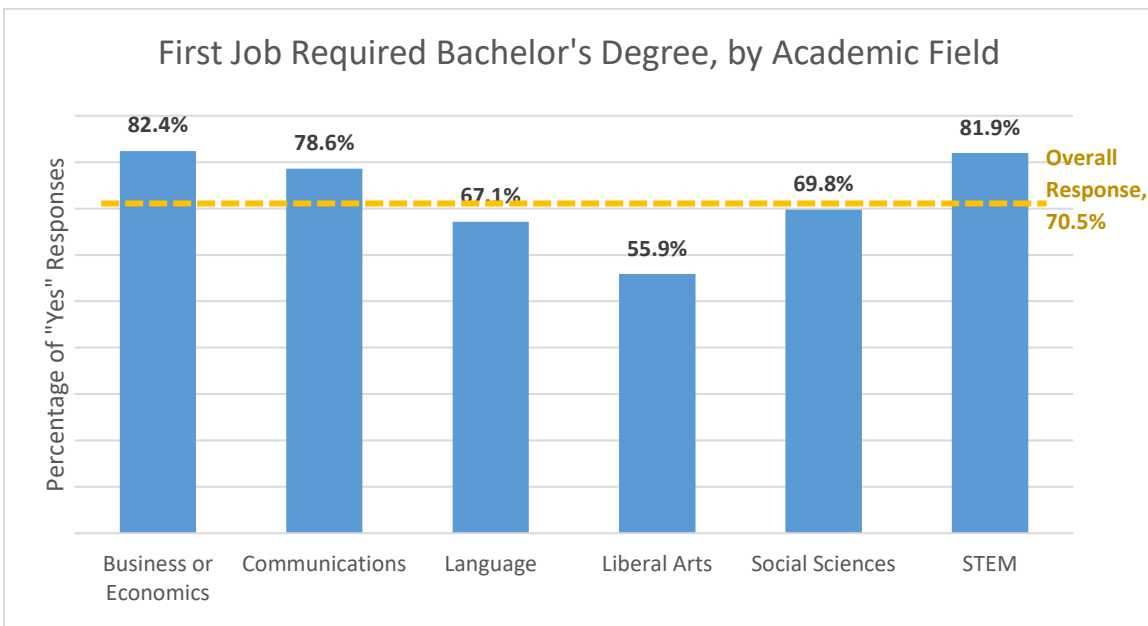
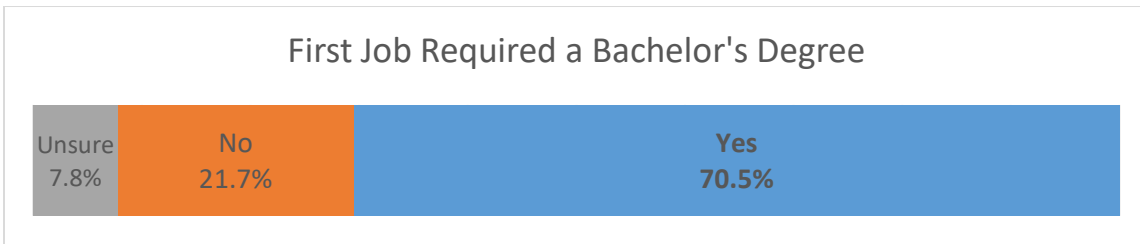
	Got the job while still in college	2 months or less	3 – 6 months	7 months to 1 year	1-2 years	More than 2 years	Not Sure
<b>All IES Abroad alumni</b>	<b>45.6%</b>	<b>27.1%</b>	<b>20.1%</b>	<b>4.2%</b>	<b>0.8%</b>	<b>0.1%</b>	<b>2.1%</b>
Female	43.4%	28.4%	20.4%	5.0%	0.6%	0.2%	2.1%
Male	51.5%	23.8%	19.1%	2.1%	1.3%	0.0%	2.1%
Private Institution	44.3%	27.4%	20.6%	4.3%	1.0%	0.2%	2.2%
Public Institution	48.9%	26.6%	18.6%	3.8%	0.4%	0.0%	1.7%
African-American (non-Hispanic origin)	47.5%	20.0%	15.0%	12.5%	0.0%	2.5%	2.5%
Asian or Pacific Islander	49.3%	25.4%	15.5%	5.6%	1.4%	0.0%	2.8%
Hispanic	41.2%	32.4%	20.6%	4.4%	0.0%	0.0%	1.5%
White, non-Hispanic	45.2%	26.8%	21.3%	3.7%	1.0%	0.0%	2.1%

*NOTE:* A two-sample t-test between proportions was performed to determine whether there was a significant difference between male and female alumni and public and private alumni. Percentages above listed in red were found to be statistically significant at the  $p \leq .05$  level.

Results of this study suggest that job placements may be more promising for IES Abroad alumni who have recently graduated than in previous years. In a similar study of alumni conducted in 2012, alumni were asked to respond on these same categories of duration to find employment. As noted in the chart on the following page, alumni from the current study were more likely to have found their first job before graduating or within 2 months of graduating than alumni in the 2012 study.

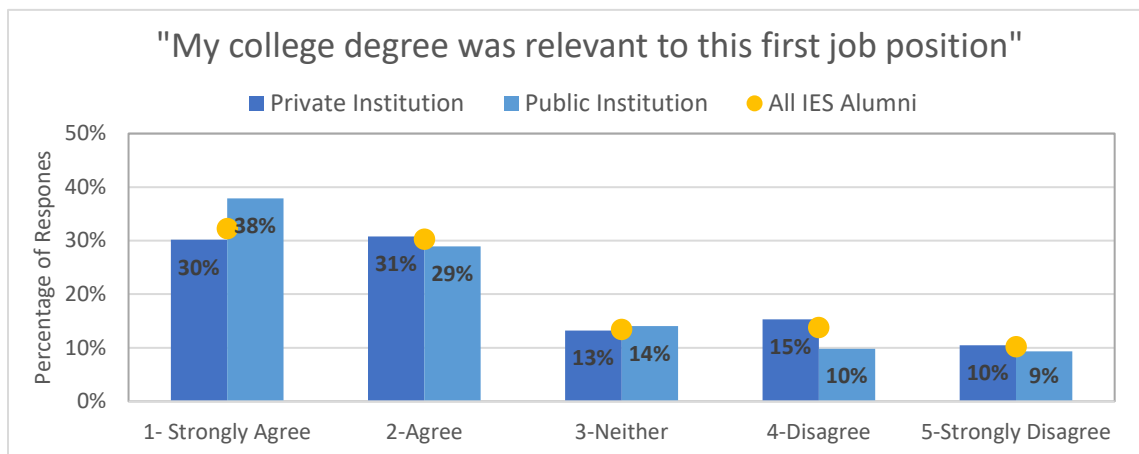


For most IES Abroad alumni entering the workforce, a bachelor’s degree was required for their first job position. 70.5% of alumni indicated a bachelor’s degree was required for their first job, 21.7% indicated it was not a requirement, and the remaining 7.8% of alumni were unsure if this was a job prerequisite. Not surprisingly, this trend was highest among alumni who earned their degree in the fields of Business or Economics or in a STEM field.

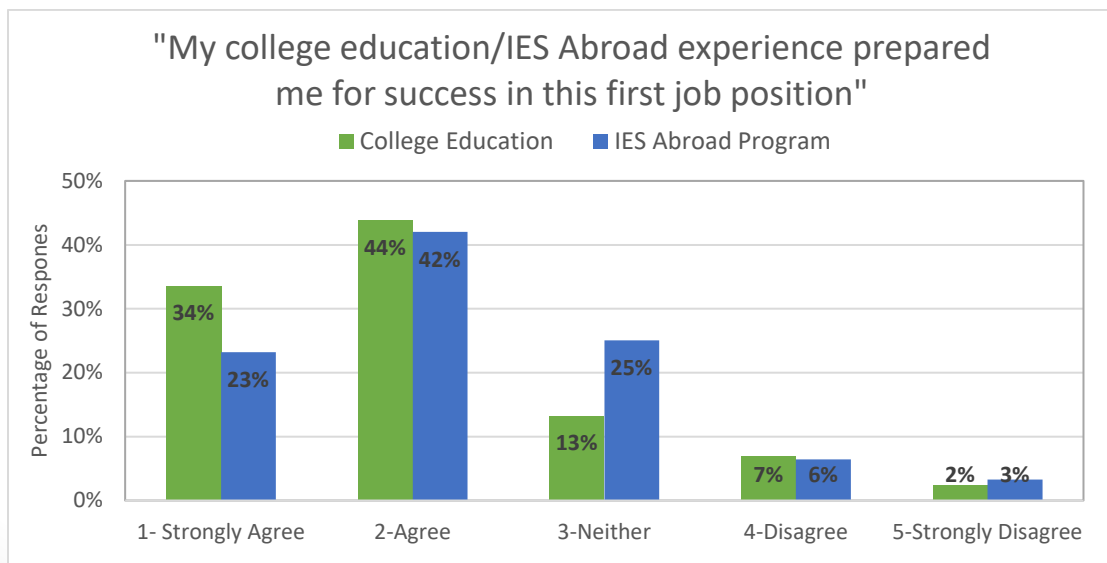




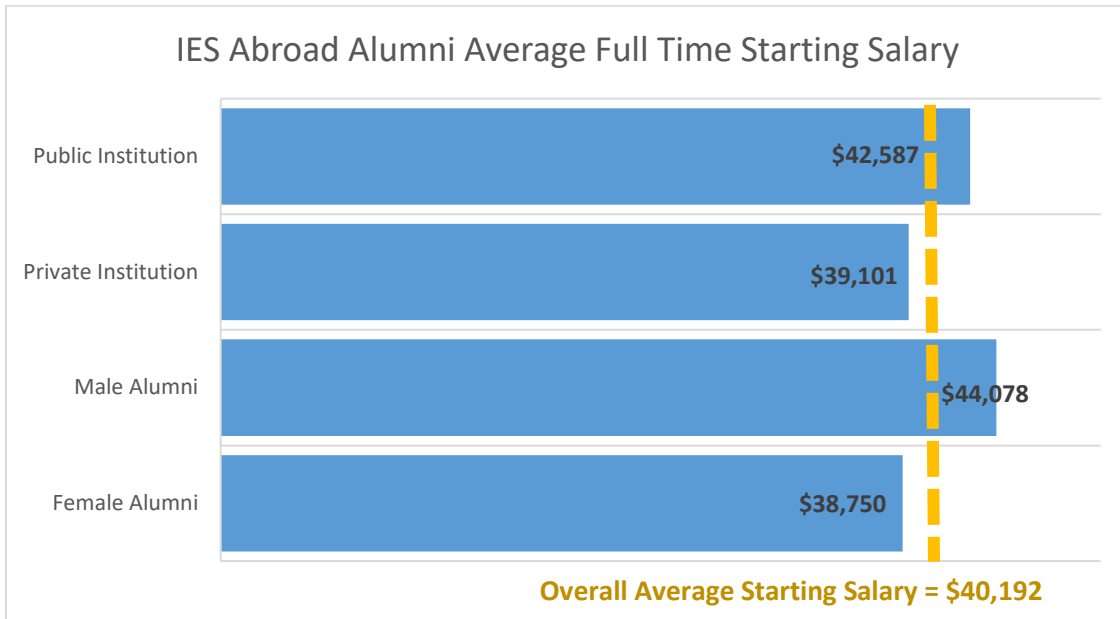
Alumni were mixed on their opinions of how relevant their particular undergraduate degree was to the job position they entered. Only about one third of respondents strongly agreed that their degree was relevant to their first job and 24% either disagreed or strongly disagreed with that statement. Alumni sentiment regarding the relevance of their degree to their first job position was not shown to vary between male and female alumni, though variation did exist between alumni from public institutions and those from private. Alumni from public institutions were more likely than their private institution counterparts to unequivocally agree that their degree was relevant, 38% compared to 30%, and less likely to disagree with this statement, 10% compared to 15%.



Alumni were somewhat more positive in assessing the level to which their undergraduate program helped prepare them to be successful their first job, with 77% either agreeing or strongly agreeing with this statement. Alumni felt similarly positive about their IES Abroad program experience, with 65% agreeing or strongly agreeing that their study or intern abroad experience helped them prepare to be successful in their first job position.



In addition to impacting an alumni’s career outcome, gender and institutional profile caused variation in average full time starting salary<sup>3</sup>. Male alumni who were employed full time following graduation reported the highest average starting salary, out-earning their female counterparts by more than \$5,000. Though less pronounced than the gender gap, alumni who graduated from public institutions reported higher starting salaries than those from private institutions.



Since the 2012 alumni study conducted by IES Abroad, the median full time starting salary of alumni has increased by nearly 7%. The median full time starting salary for all alumni reporting in the present study (N=476) was \$37,440, compared to \$35,000 in 2012, with graduates of the 2014 class having the highest median salary of \$40,000.

**2012 IES Alumni Study**

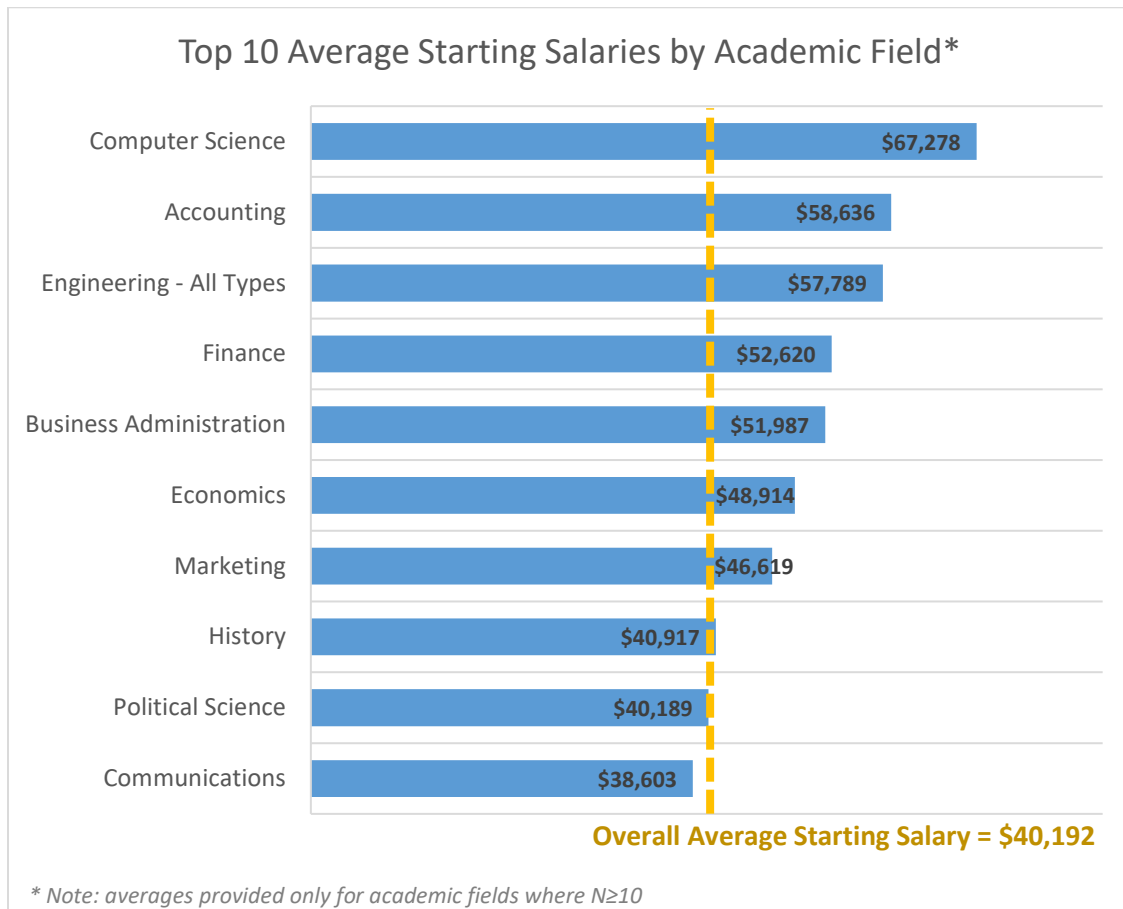
Graduation Year	Median Salary	N =
2006	\$35,000	37
2007	\$37,000	49
2008	\$35,000	47
2009	\$32,000	75
2010	\$35,000	75
2011	\$35,000	118

**2016 IES Alumni Study**

Graduation Year	Median Salary	N =
2012	\$36,000	21
2013	\$35,000	140
2014	\$40,000	176
2015	\$38,000	131

<sup>3</sup> Average starting salary as reported by students who indicated they were employed full time, N=476. For respondents who entered salary as hourly wages (and also full time employed), annual salary was calculated by compounding the hourly wage by 40 hours per week for 52 weeks.

Starting salaries for alumni who were employed full time ranged from \$10,000 to \$90,000. Many alumni at the lower end of this range indicated that they received other non-salary benefits such as room & board, transportation, or other stipends. As would be expected, the average starting salary varied by academic field. Alumni with degrees in Computer Science, Accounting, and Engineering reporting the highest average starting salaries.

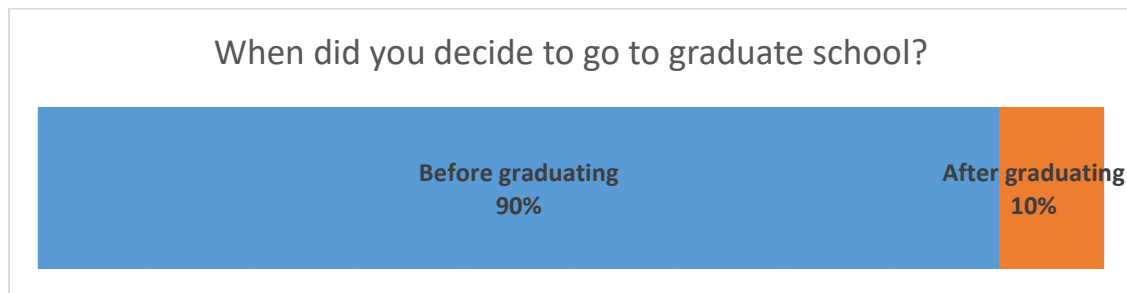


### Alumni Going to Graduate School

Nearly 20% of alumni responding to the survey indicated that at 6 months post-graduation they were enrolled in graduate school or planning to enroll in graduate school. Of these IES Abroad alumni:

- 90% decided they were going to graduate school before completing their undergraduate degree
- 89% gained admission into their first or second choice graduate program
- 42% indicated that their IES Abroad program experience influenced their decision to go to graduate school

The majority of alumni who went to graduate school decided to do so before completing their undergraduate degree. This was true regardless of gender, institutional type, and academic field.



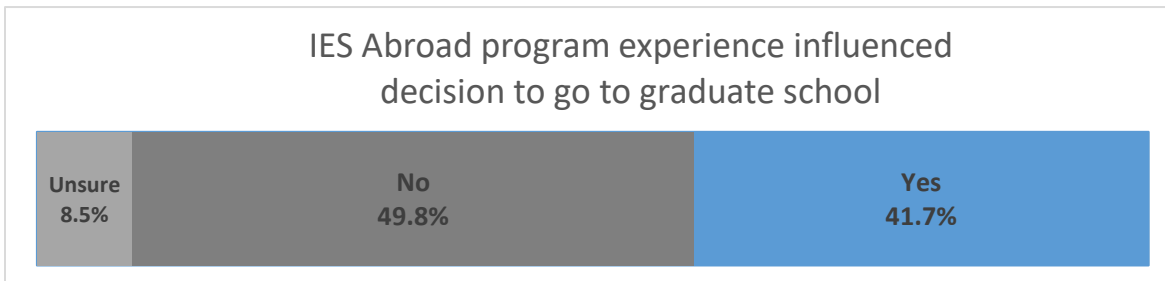
The primary reason alumni chose to pursue graduate studies was because they were interested in further study within their field, accounting for 45% of respondents. Nearly as important was the advanced degree requirements of their profession, which 44% of alumni indicated as their motivating factor for pursuing graduate school. There was no statistically significant differences in the reasons for pursuing graduate school by alumni gender or institutional profile.

**TABLE 3: Reasons for Pursuing Graduate Studies**

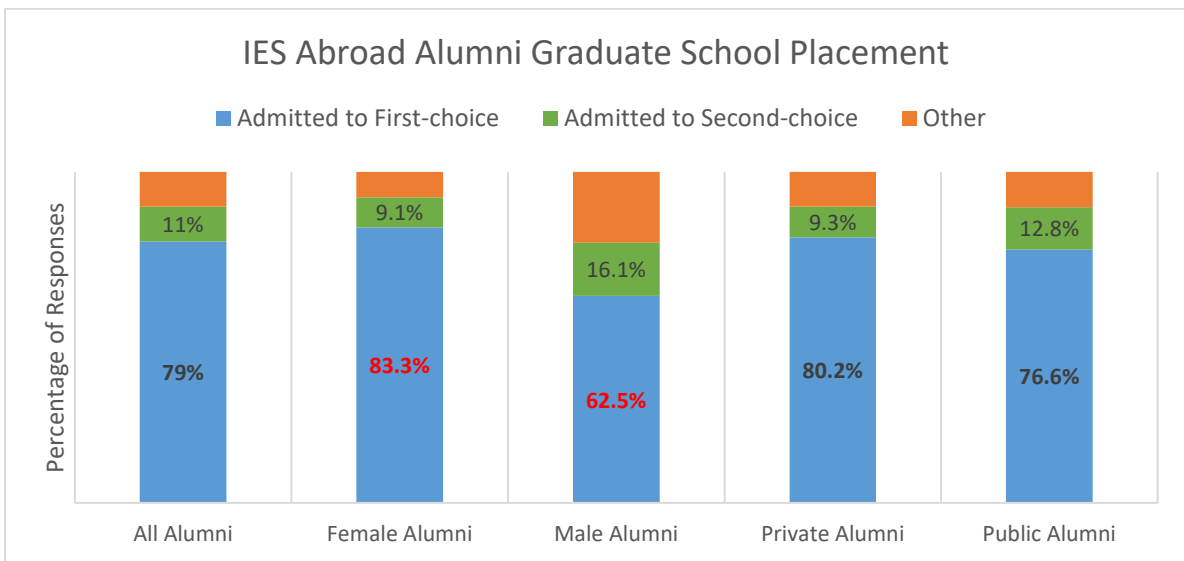
	Profession requires advanced degree	Interested in studying something else	Interested in further study in my field	Difficulty finding a job	Other Reason
<b>All IES Abroad alumni</b>	<b>44.3%</b>	<b>8.1%</b>	<b>44.7%</b>	<b>1.3%</b>	<b>1.7%</b>
Female	44.1%	7.5%	45.2%	1.6%	1.6%
Male	42.6%	10.6%	44.7%	0.0%	2.1%
Private Institution	44.8%	7.0%	43.4%	2.1%	2.8%
Public Institution	43.5%	9.8%	46.7%	0.0%	0.0%
Business or Economics	33%	27%	33%	7%	0%
Communications	33%	33%	33%	0%	0%
Health	45%	5%	50%	0%	0%
Language	40%	5%	45%	5%	5%
Liberal Arts	30%	11%	57%	0%	2%
Social Sciences	58%	6%	35%	0%	1%
STEM	40%	5%	53%	2%	0%

*NOTE:* A two-sample t-test between proportions was performed to determine whether there was a significant difference between male and female alumni and public and private alumni. No differences were found to be statistically significant at the  $p \leq .05$  level.

With the majority of alumni choosing to pursue graduate studies because of their academic field, it is not surprising that nearly half indicated that their IES Abroad program experience did not influence their decision to pursue graduate studies. Nonetheless, it is interesting to note that a significant percentage, 42%, answered in the affirmative to this question, stating that their IES Abroad experience did influence their post-graduate career track. No statistically significant difference existed in responses to this question based on gender or institutional profile.

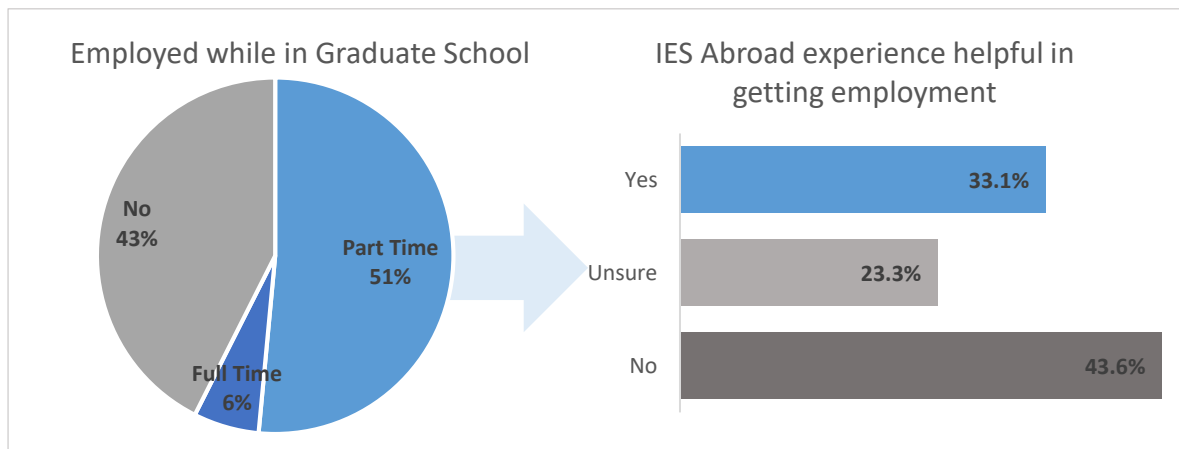


When applying to graduate schools, IES Abroad alumni were very successful in earning admission into their first or second choice school, with 79% earning admission into their first choice and 11% gaining admission into their second choice school. In contrast to the employment advantage that was outlined earlier for male alumni, female alumni appear to have an advantage in graduate school placement. More than 80% of female alumni achieved placement into their first choice graduate school program, whereas only 63% of male alumni earned placement into their first choice graduate program.



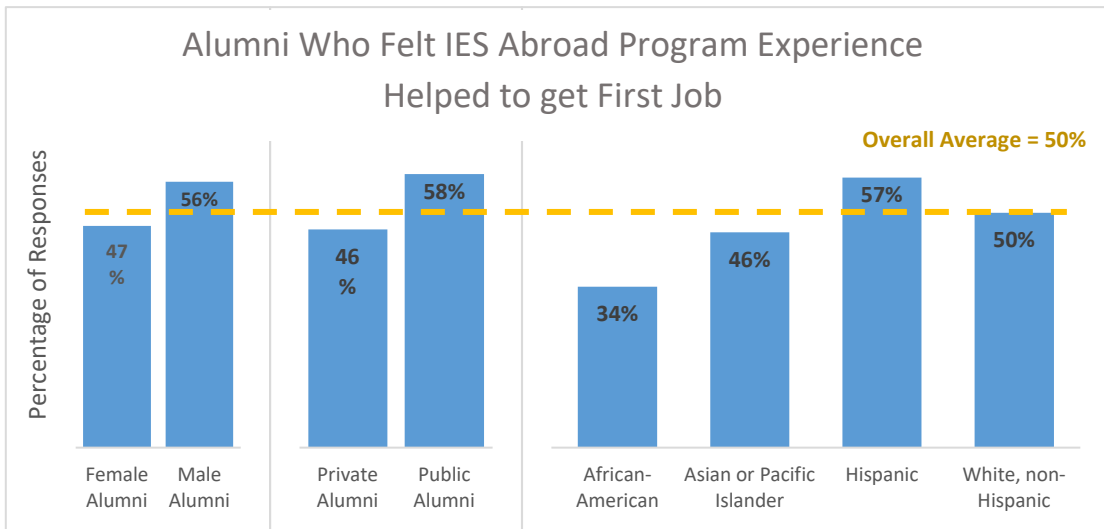
*NOTE:* A two-sampled t-test between these proportions was performed and the difference between female and male graduate school placement was found to be statistically significant at the  $p \leq 0.05$  level. There was no statistically significant difference in the rates of admission for students based on institutional profile.

More than half of alumni were employed while in graduate school, with the majority employed in part-time positions. Of those who were employed, responses were mixed on whether or not their IES Abroad program experience helped them to get the job position, with 33% of respondents saying that it was helpful, 44% saying it was not, and 23% indicating they were unsure if it was or was not. There was no statistically significant difference in responses based on gender or institutional profile.



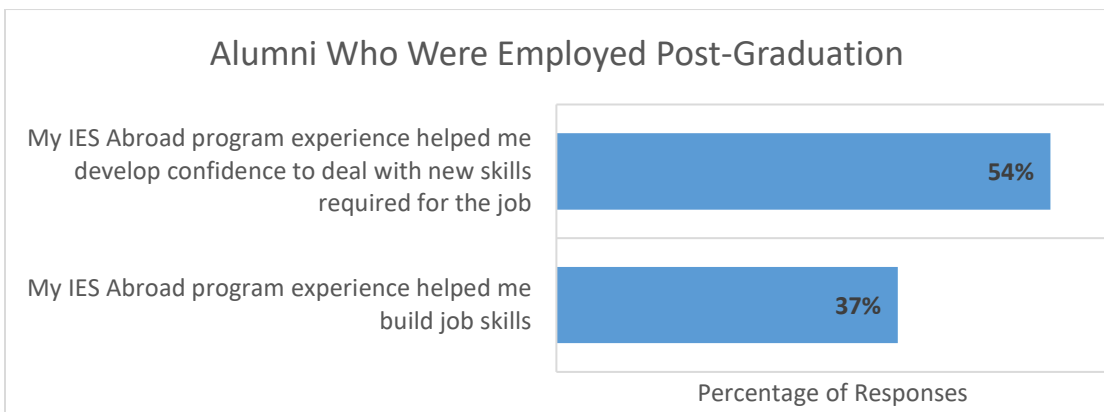
## Part 2 – The Value of Studying Abroad

Regardless of their career path following graduation, IES Abroad alumni were positive about the impact their IES Abroad program experience has had on them. For alumni who entered the workforce following graduation, half felt that their IES Abroad program experience helped them to get their first job. This sentiment was particularly true for male alumni and those from a public institution, though there was variation by self-reported ethnicity as well.

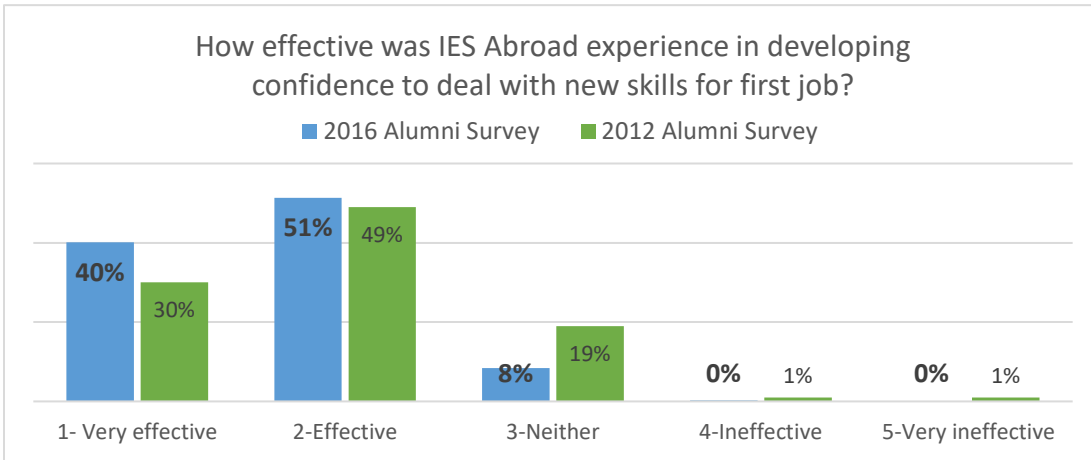


*NOTE:* A two-sample t-test between proportions was performed to determine whether there was a significant difference between male and female alumni and public and private alumni. The differences between both male and female alumni and private and public alumni were found to be statistically significant at the  $p \leq .05$  level.

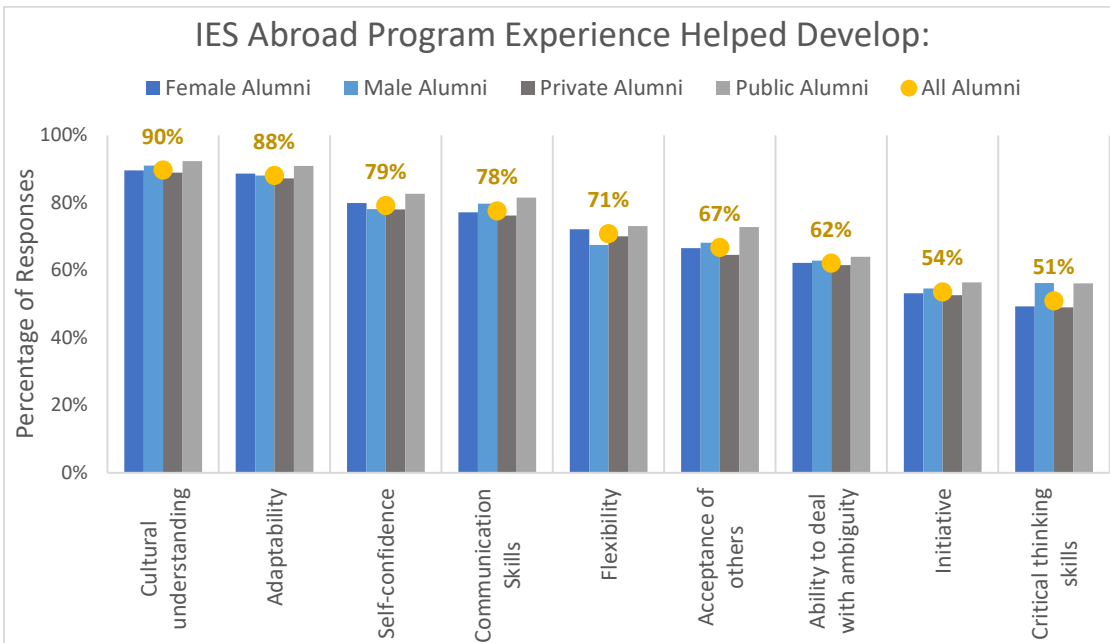
In addition to helping alumni get their first job, many alumni indicated that their IES Abroad program experience helped them to develop job skills and confidence that were required for the job.



Results suggest that IES Abroad programs may be more effective than in previous years in helping students develop confidence for their job. In the present study, of the alumni who indicated that their IES Abroad program experience helped them develop confidence to deal with new job skills, 40% felt it was “very effective” in doing so. This is up from 30% in 2012.



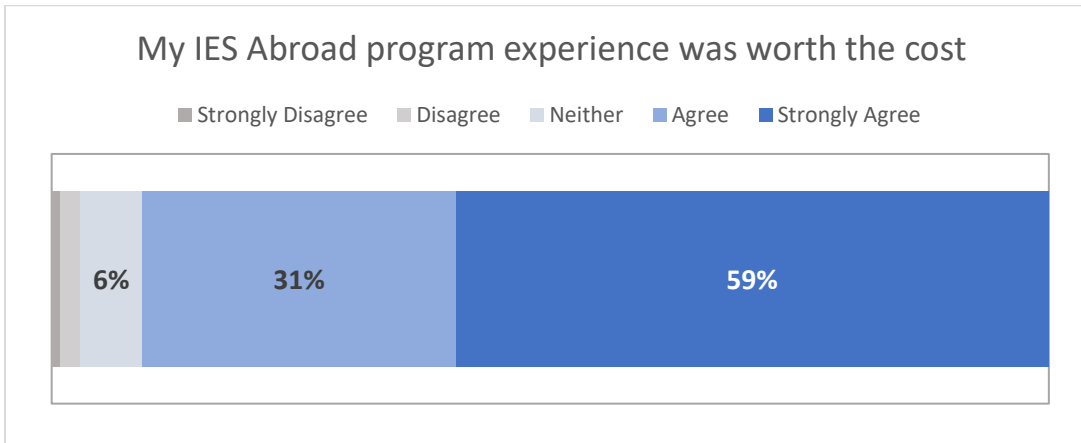
In addition to confidence, many alumni felt that their IES Abroad program experience had direct impact on several key employability traits, including adaptability and flexibility. Not surprisingly, cultural understanding was the chief character trait that alumni felt they developed as a result of their IES Abroad program.



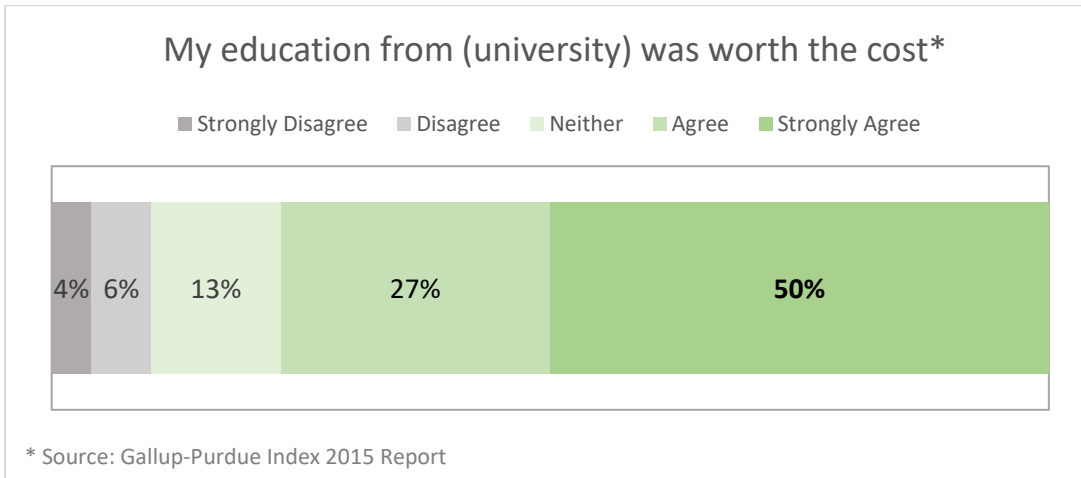
*NOTE:* A two-sample t-test between proportions was performed to determine statistical significance of difference in percentage of responses between male/female and public/private alumni. Statistically significant differences at the  $p \leq .05$  level existed between male and female alumni for only Critical thinking skills; statistically significant differences between public and private alumni existed for Communication skills, Acceptance of others, and Critical thinking skills.



Job placement, skills and employability traits are indicators that alumni place positive value in their study or intern abroad experience, though results of the present study show an additional factor to support this argument. Nearly 60% of alumni unequivocally agreed that their IES Abroad program experience was worth the cost, with an additional 31% indicating general agreement with this statement.



Studying or interning abroad, for most IES Abroad students, occurs as part of an undergraduate degree program so it is interesting to compare IES Abroad alumni response of this question to a broader study of university graduates conducted by Gallup. The 2015 Gallup-Purdue Index (GPI) reported that only half, 50%, of college graduates strongly agreed that their university education was worth the cost, and just 27% agreed with this statement.

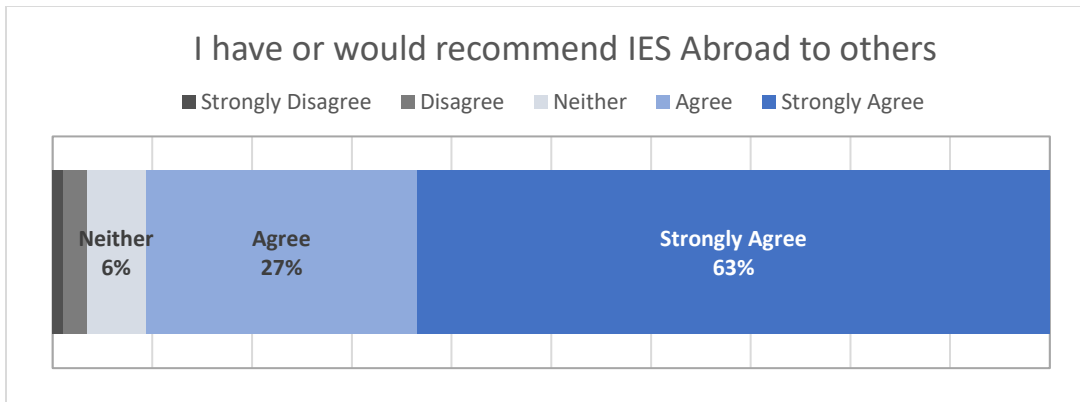


While the GPI does not provide specific figures by graduation year, it goes on to state that “Recent graduates who received their degrees between 2006 and 2015 are significantly less likely than all graduates overall to think their education was worth the cost.”<sup>4</sup> Considering the cohort of students in the present study belong to the group of graduates who are

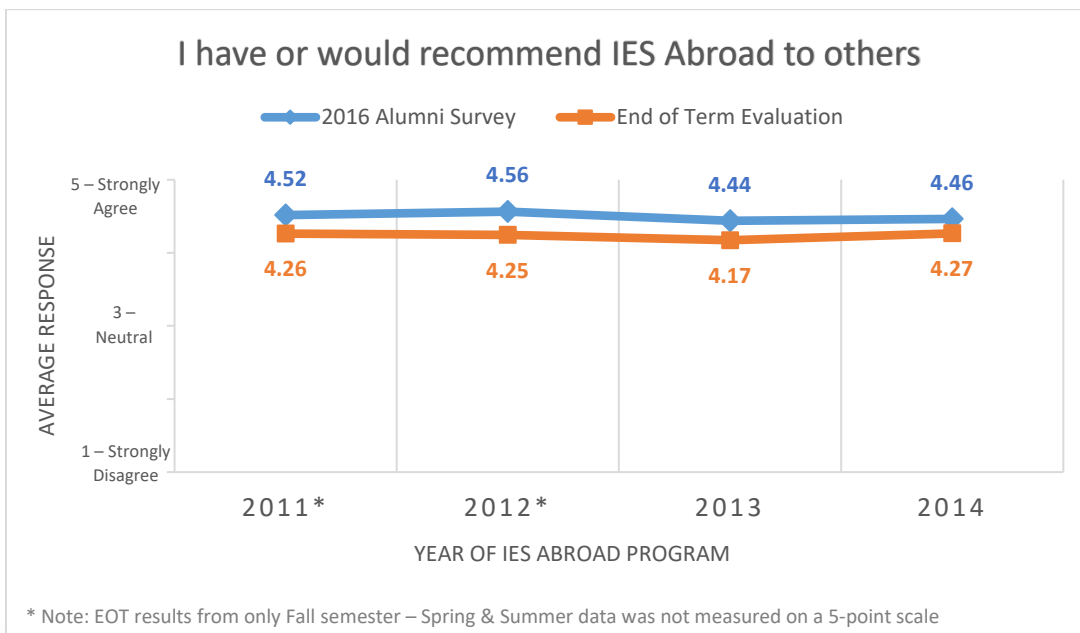
<sup>4</sup> Gallup-Purdue Index 2015 Report, “Great Jobs, Great Lives. The Relationship Between Student Debt, Experiences, and Perceptions of College Worth.” p. 8.

believed to be the least satisfied with the worth of their college education, the high level of agreement with the value of their IES Abroad program experience becomes that much more noteworthy.

The final metric this study used to gauge the value alumni place on their study or intern abroad experience is their willingness to recommend IES Abroad to others. 91% of alumni agreed or strongly agreed they either have or would recommend IES Abroad to others.



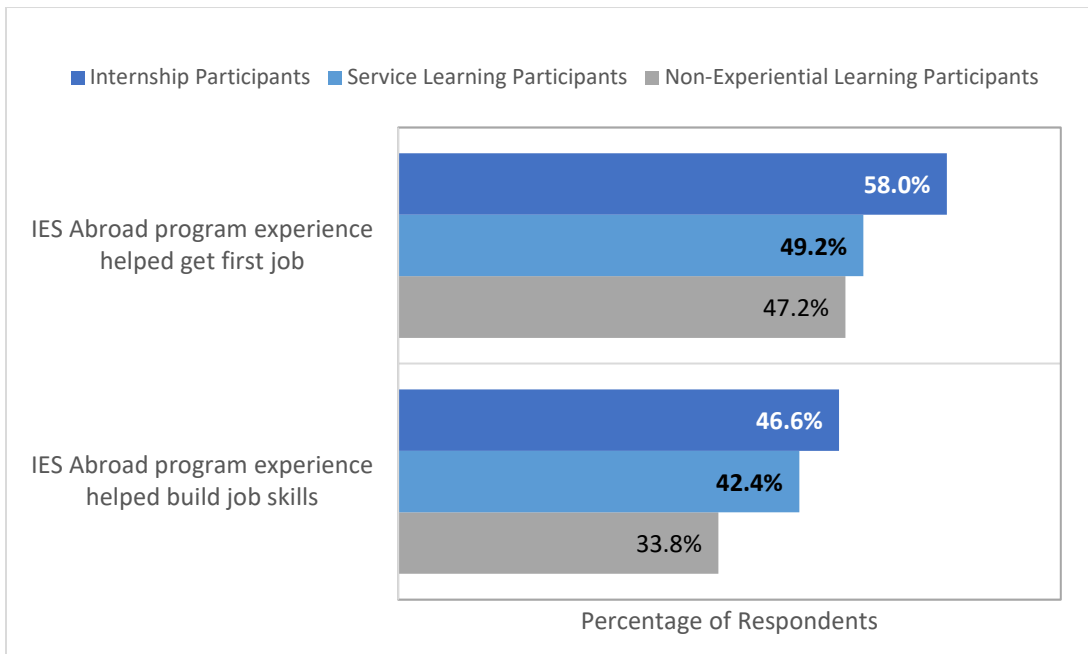
All IES Abroad alumni had been invited to answer this question at a previous point in time. This question appears in the end of term evaluations all students receive at the conclusion of their IES Abroad program. As such, repeating this question in the present study provides the unique opportunity to measure alumni sentiment over time and evaluate whether perceptions change as an alumni become further removed from their experience. Results indicate that alumni are no less likely to recommend their program to others as they become further removed from their study or intern abroad experience, suggesting the lasting value alumni place on their experience.



## Appendix – Career Outcomes of IES Abroad Experiential Learning Participants

A significant number of respondents to the 2016 IES Abroad Alumni survey indicated that they had participated in experiential learning while on their IES abroad program; 20% in internships and 8% in service learning or field placement. While these alumni showed no difference in their post-graduation career paths, finding employment or pursuing graduate studies at similar rates, there were some areas where interesting variation existed between alumni who had participated in experiential learning and those who had not.

For alumni who entered into the workforce after graduation, participation in experiential learning had an amplifying effect on whether or not their IES Abroad program experience helped them find their first job. Alumni who participated in an internship were 23% more likely than other alumni to feel that their program experience helped them to get their first job and nearly 40% more likely to feel that their experience helped build job skills. This difference is significant, as it indicates that *most* alumni who participated in an internship felt that their IES Abroad experience helped them to get their first job.

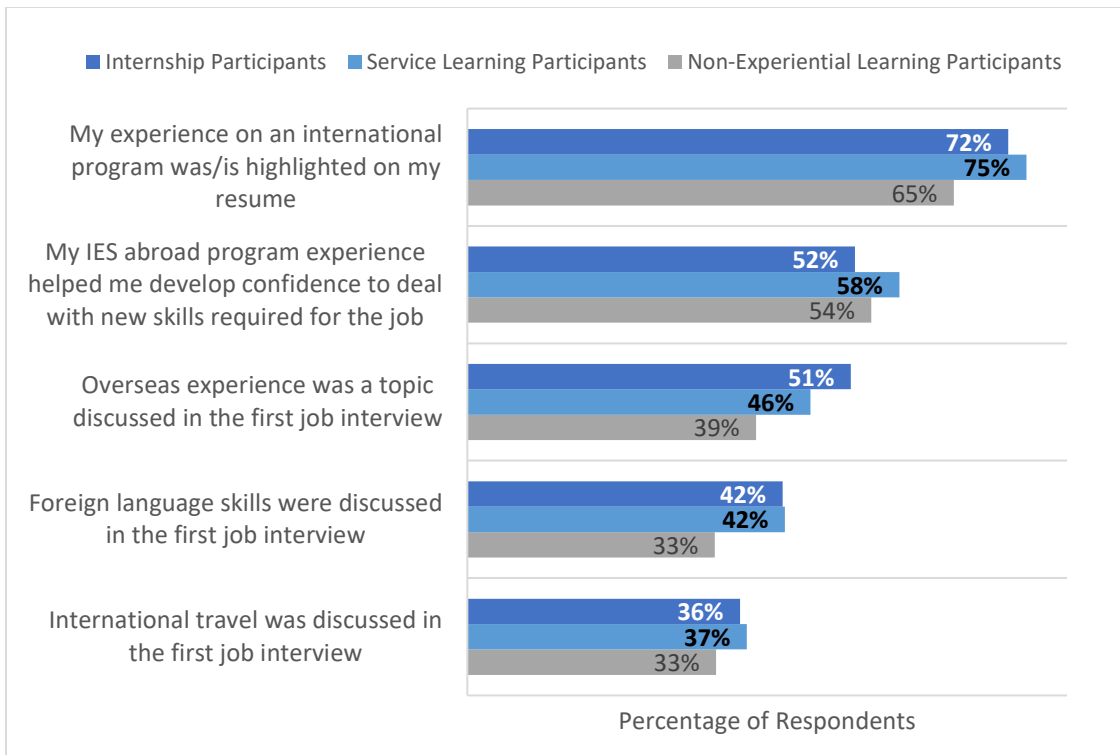


*NOTE:* A two-sample t-test between proportions was performed to determine whether there was a significant difference between internship participants and non-participants. The difference was found to be statistically significant at the  $p \leq .05$  level.

Results suggest that alumni who participated in experiential learning may parlay their IES Abroad experience differently than non-experiential learning participants. Internship and service learning participants were significantly more likely than non-experiential learning

participants to highlight their experience on their resume, discuss their overseas experience in the job interview, and discuss foreign language skills in the job interview.

- Internship participants were 11% more likely, and service learning participants were 15% more likely to highlight their experience on their resume
- Internship participants were 38% more likely and service learning participants were 19% more likely to discuss their overseas experience in a job interview
- Internship and service learning participants were 27% more likely to discuss foreign language skills in an interview



Experiential learning, particularly internships, also proved to have a positive impact on alumni's starting salaries. Alumni who participated in an internship while on their IES Abroad program earned, on average, \$1,080 more than alumni who did not participate in experiential learning.

