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# Survey Says: Undergraduates and the Prospect of Graduate School

Council of Graduate Schools  
Summer Workshop and New Deans Institute

Jeff Allum, EdD | Director of Research  
Association of American Law Schools

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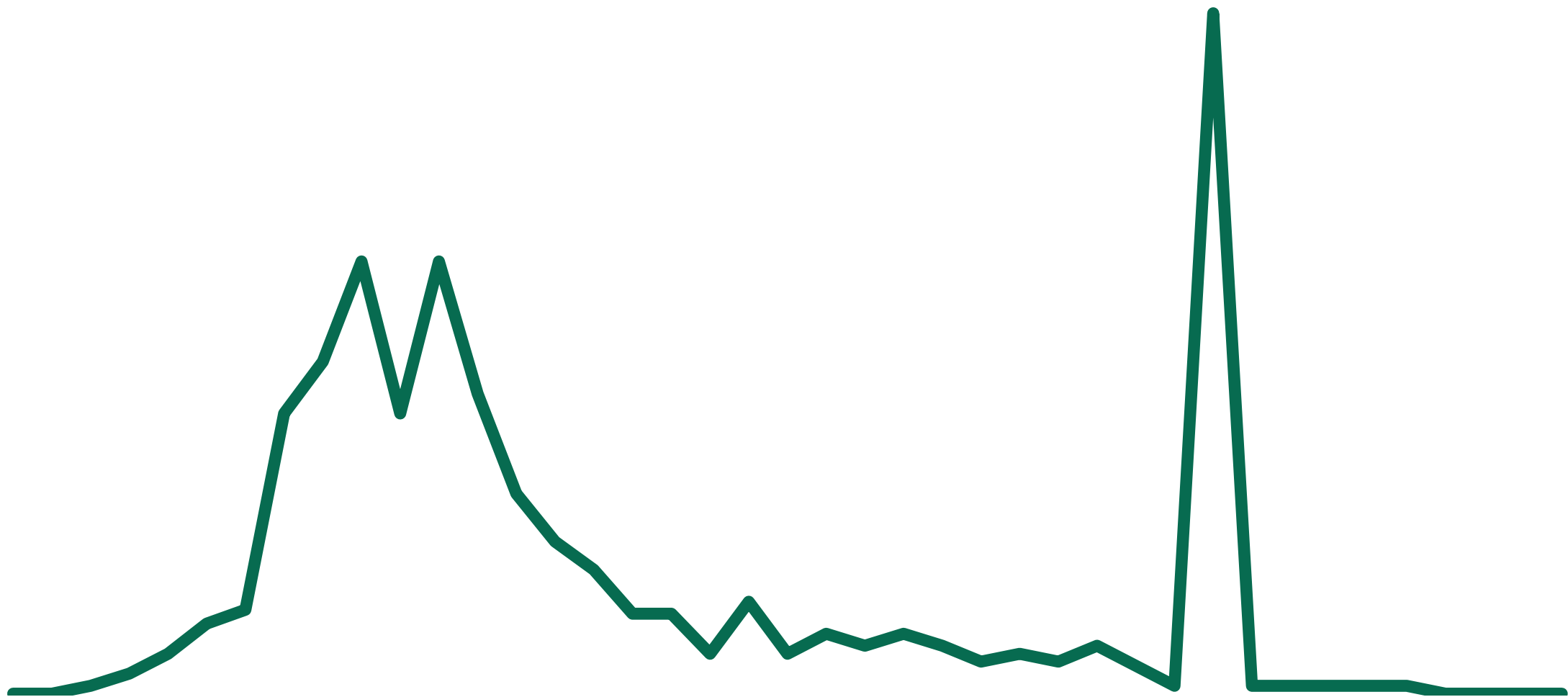
-38%

-32%

-45%

\$116,900 (public)

\$122,600 (private)

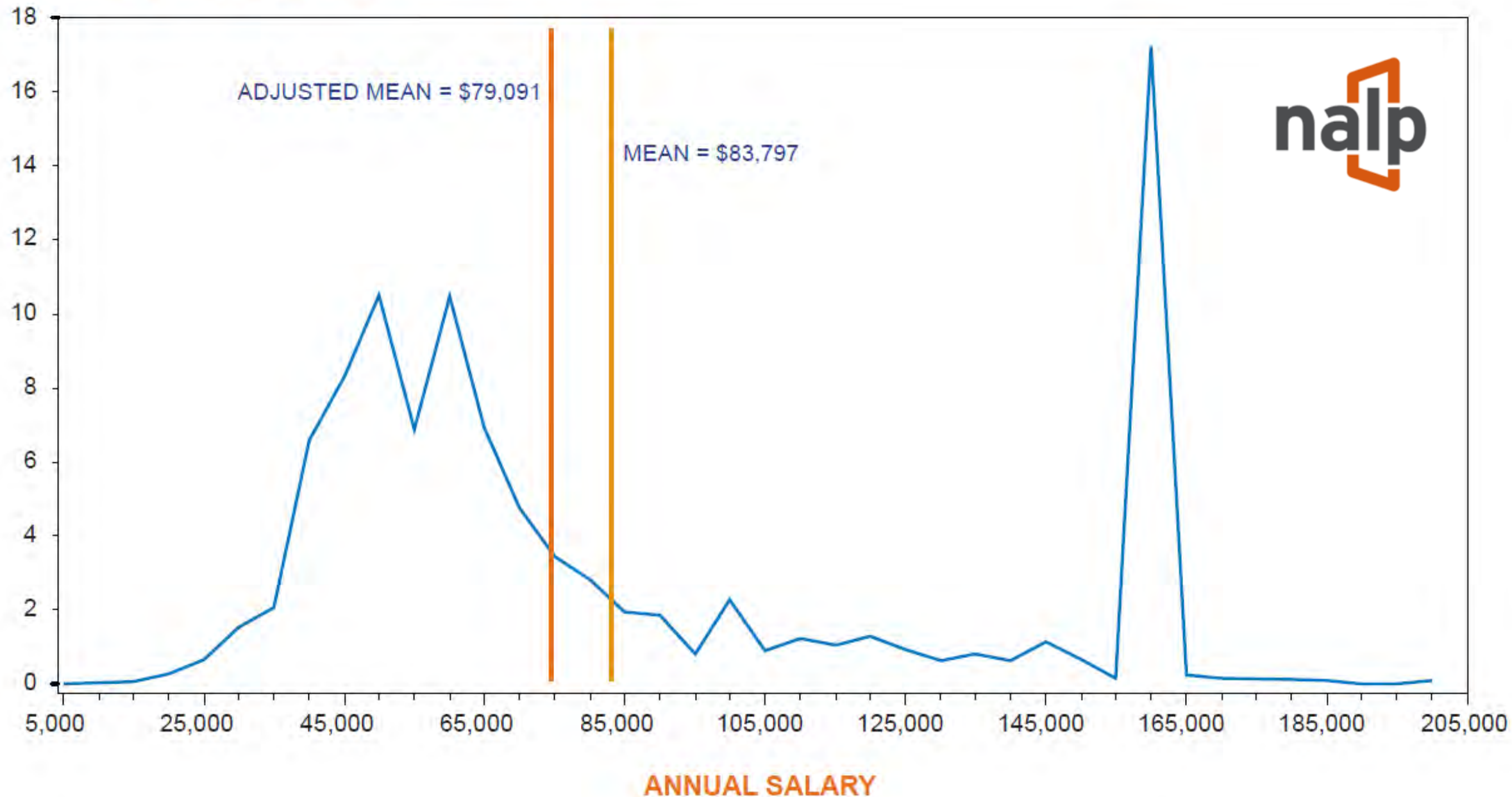


Lower Salaries

Higher Salaries

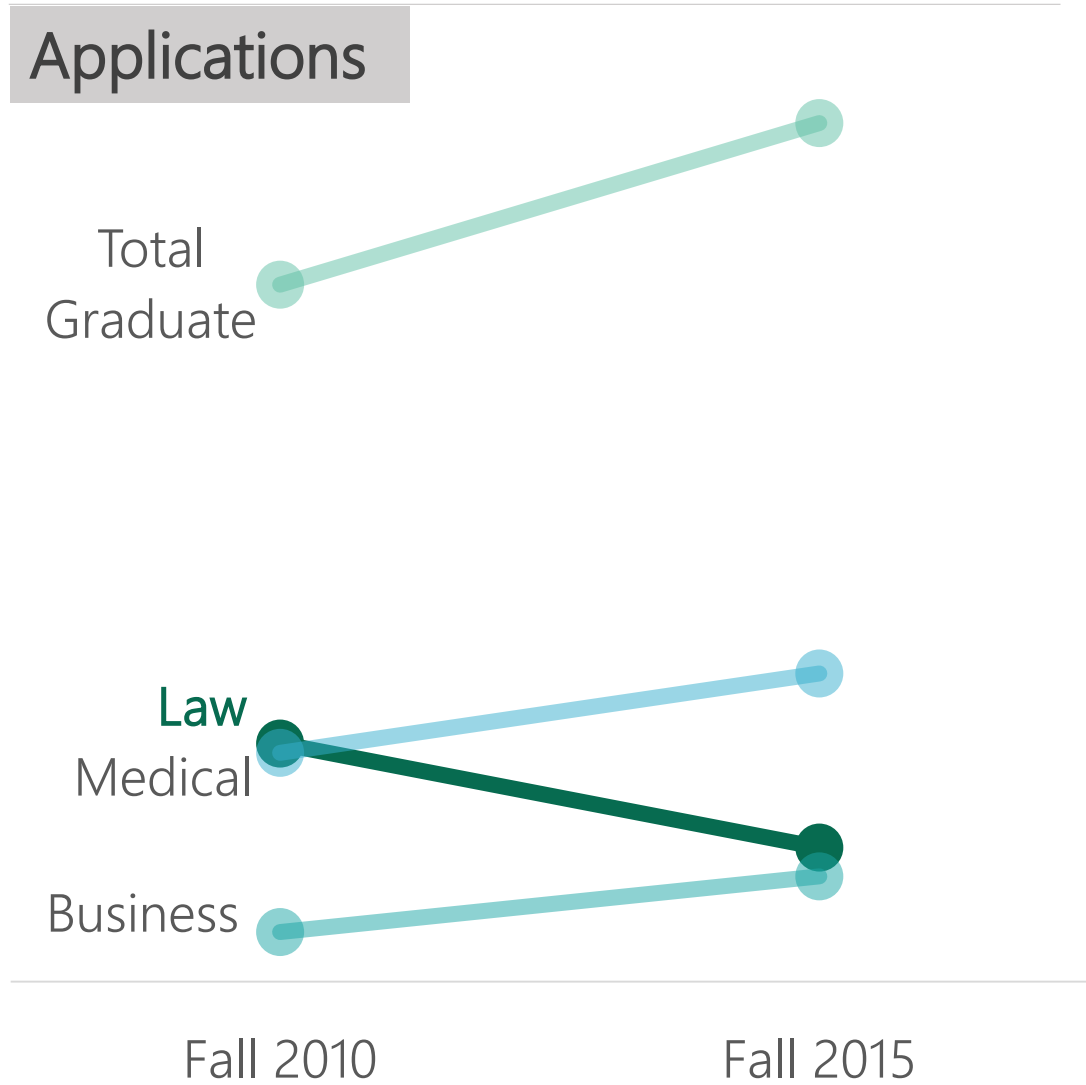


# % OF REPORTED SALARIES





One of these things  
is not like the  
others.

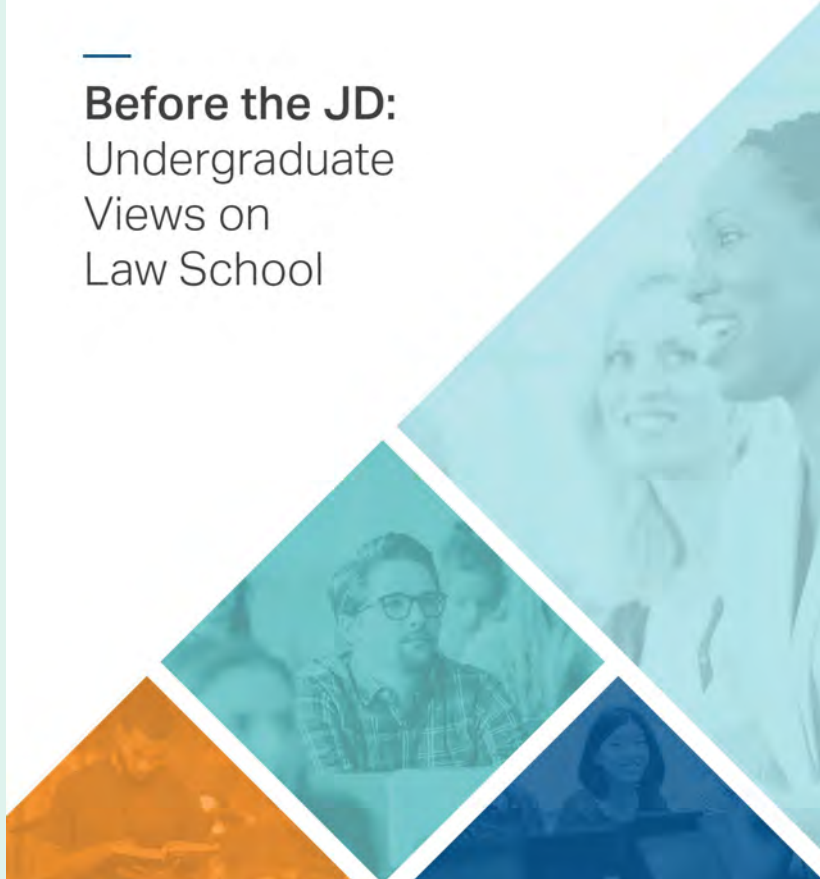




GALLUP

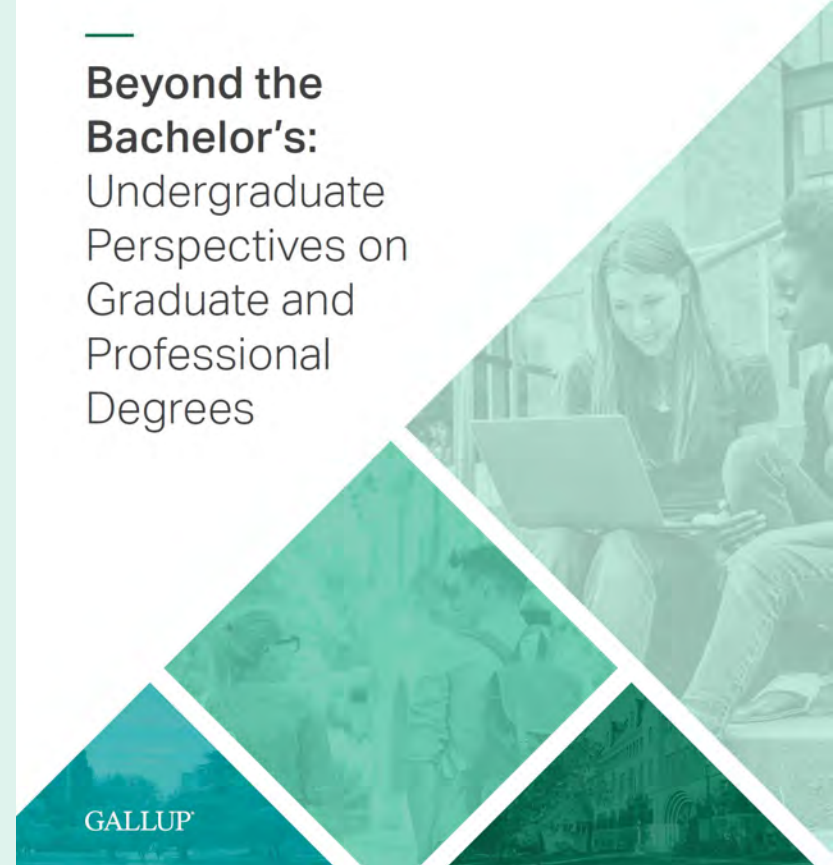
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**Before the JD:**  
Undergraduate  
Views on  
Law School



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**Beyond the  
Bachelor's:**  
Undergraduate  
Perspectives on  
Graduate and  
Professional  
Degrees



GALLUP

# Before the JD Sponsors



ABF American Bar Foundation  
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## Research Questions

1. What factors contribute most to the intention/decision to pursue an advanced degree or not?
2. What factors contribute to the intention/decision to pursue a JD or not?
3. What are the sources of information for making these decisions?



# Survey responses exceeded Gallup targets.

	Institutions & Law Schools		Student Respondents	
	Goal	Actual	Goal	Actual
Undergraduate Student Survey	20	25	3,000	22,189
Law Student Survey	30	44	1,000	2,727

# Five Takeaways

- There is a high level of interest in graduate school
- Passion is a leading factor for considering graduate school
- Students value their time & money
- They acquire advice from real people, but not in the same way
- Evidence of educational inheritance permeates the study

# Study Parameters & Limitations

- Master's and/or PhD degree preferences
- No citizenship
- Undergraduate majors, but not field of graduate study
- Selective colleges & universities



**There is a high level of  
interest in graduate school.**

# 71%

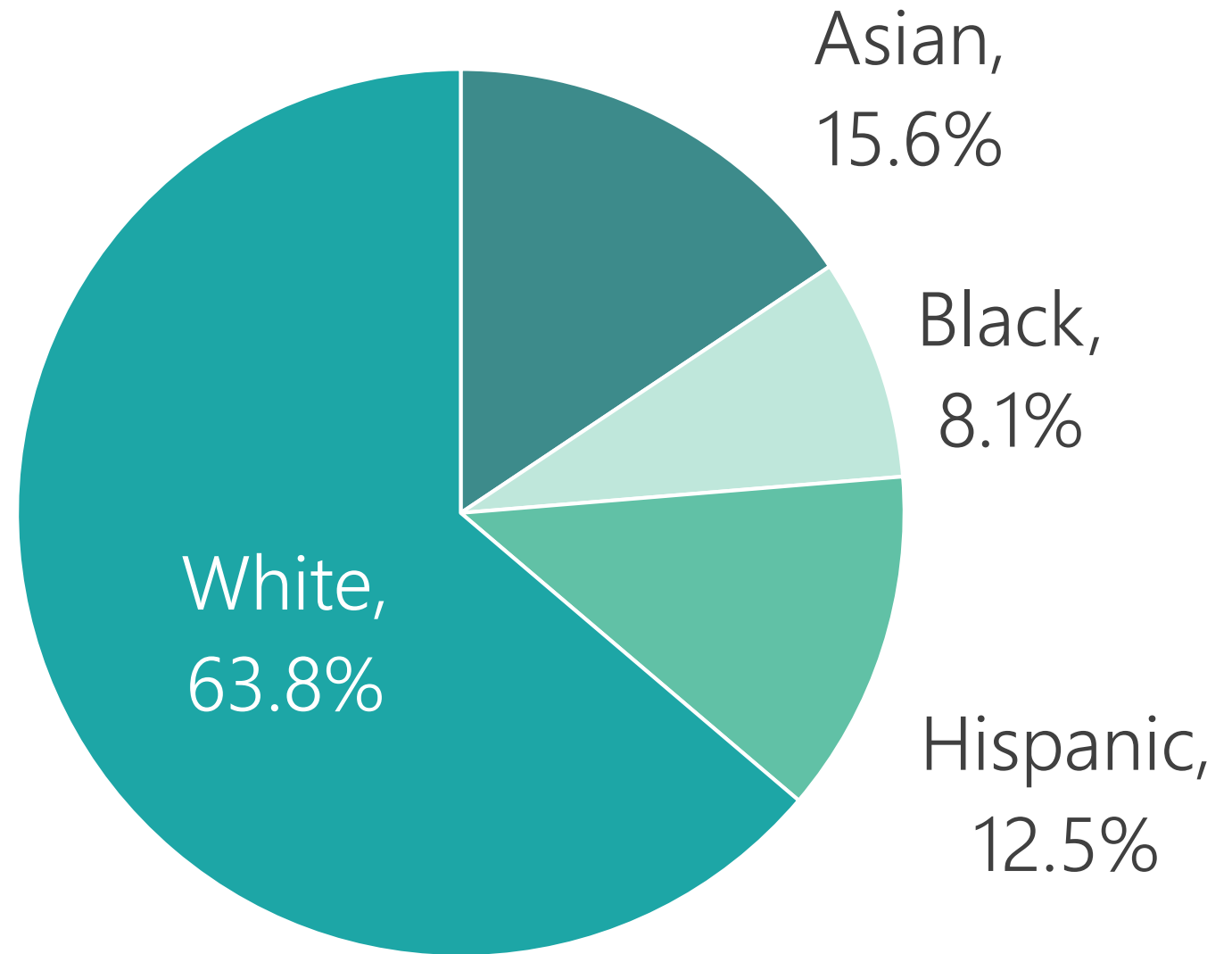
Likely to go to  
graduate school



52.3%

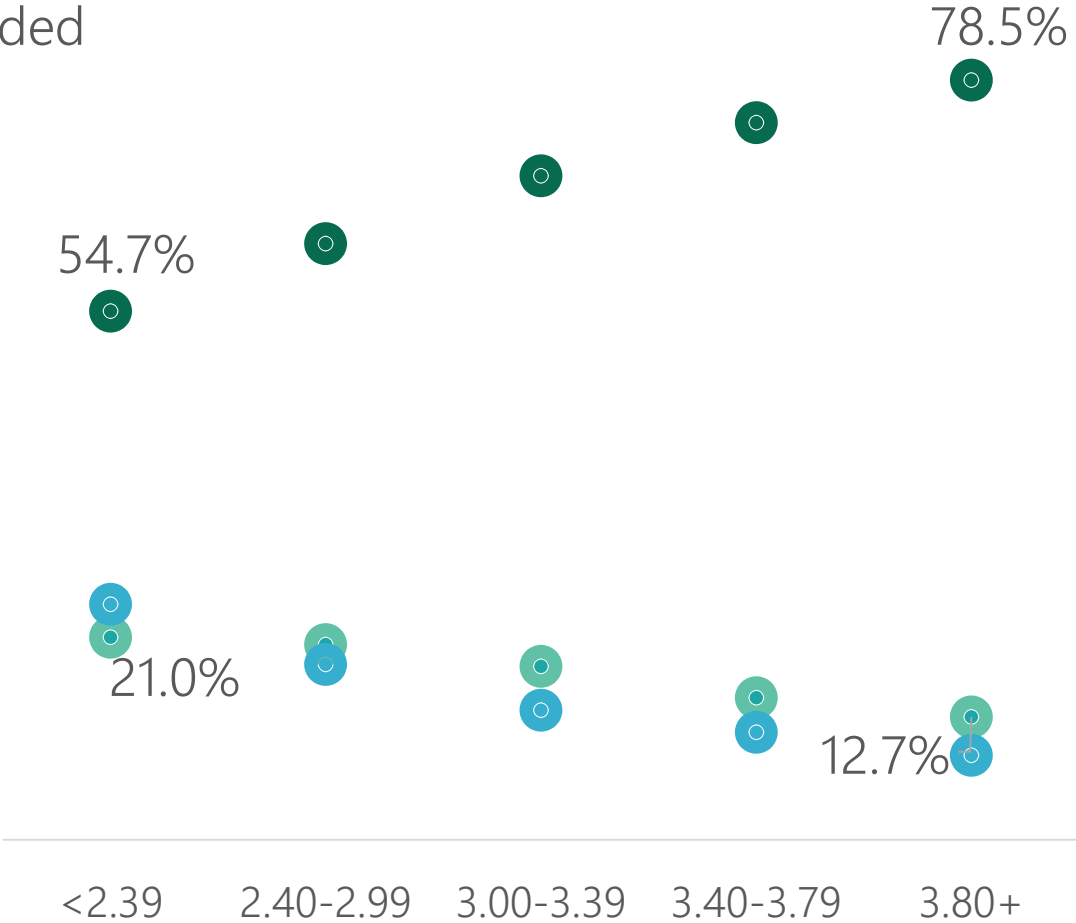


47.7%



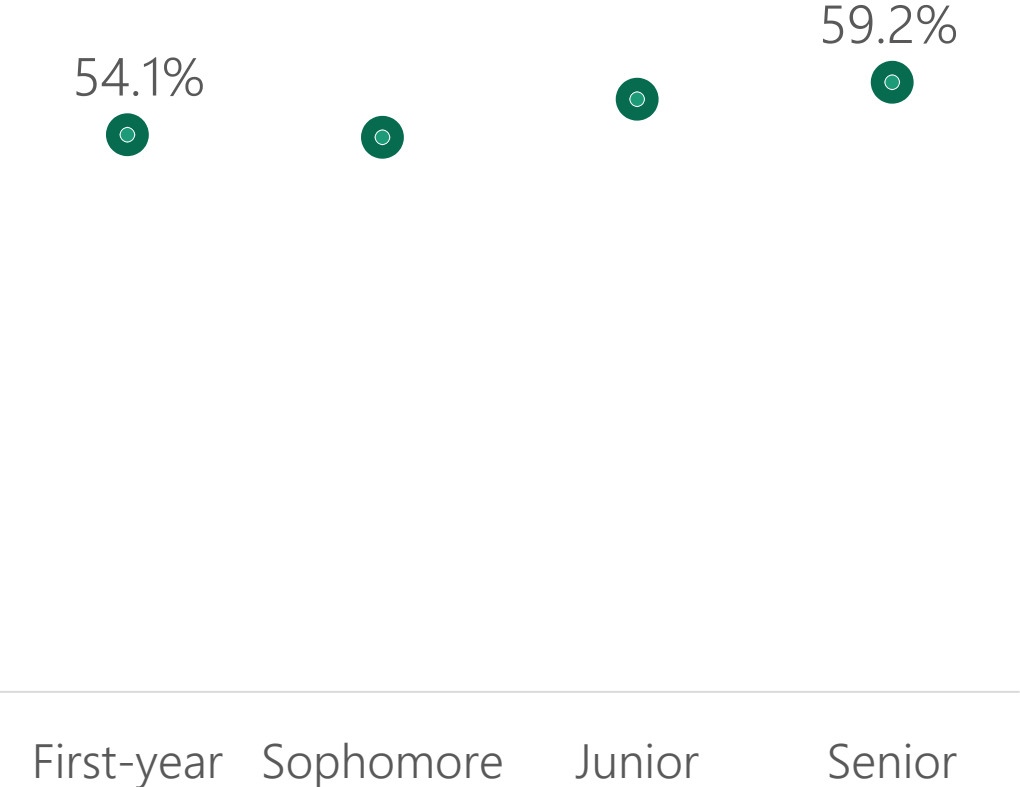
# Likelihood of graduate school increases with GPA.

- Extremely/Somewhat Likely
- Extremely/Somewhat Unlikely
- Undecided



# Likelihood of grad school **is stable** throughout college.

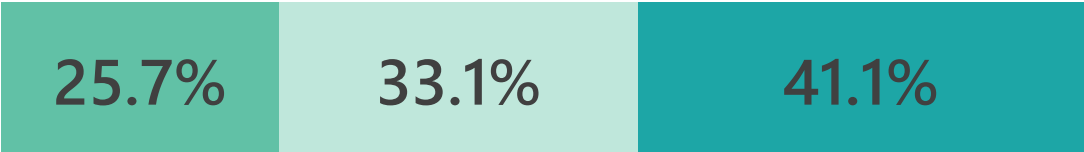
● Extremely likely



# Students likely to go to graduate school are more likely to have **parents with advanced degree ...**

## Parental Education

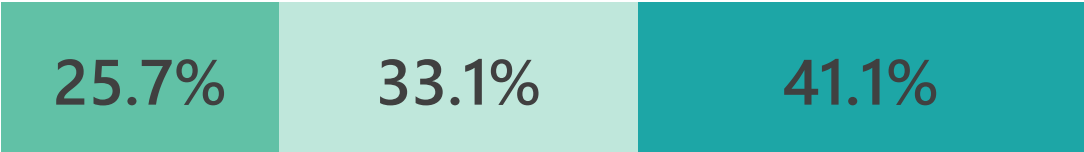
- Less than Bachelor's
- Bachelor's
- Advanced degree



# Students likely to go to graduate school are more likely to have parents with advanced degree & higher GPA.

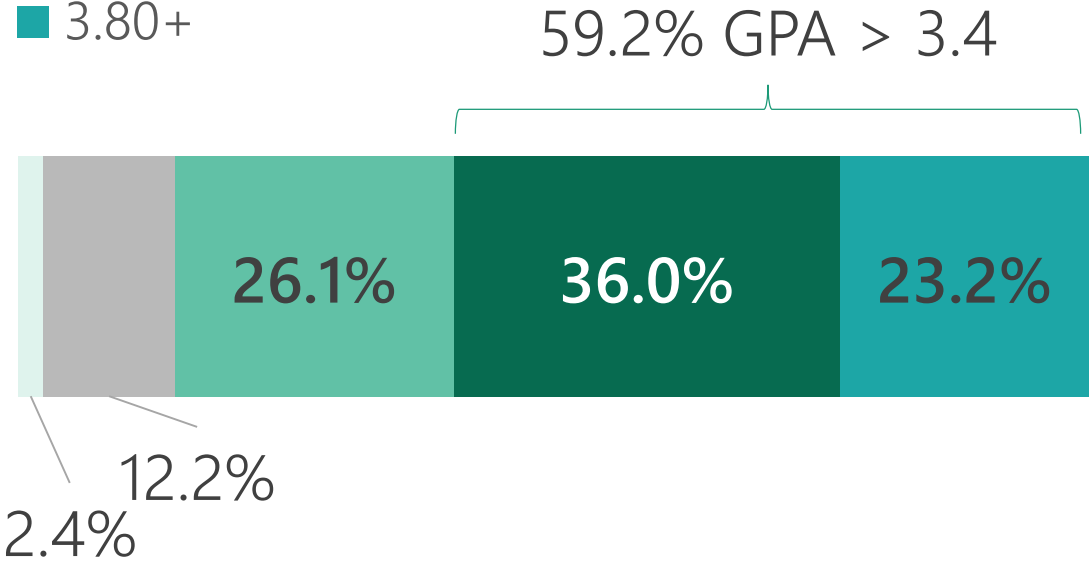
## Parental Education

- Less than Bachelor's
- Bachelor's
- Advanced degree



## Undergraduate GPA

- <2.39
- 2.40-2.99
- 3.00-3.39
- 3.40-3.79
- 3.80+



**Passion is a leading factor for considering graduate school.**



# Passion/interest is top reason for graduate school.

## MA & MS

Passion/interest	48.6%
High-paying jobs	36.4%
Advancement	34.8%
Prep for many jobs	31.1%
Develop analytic abilities	25.6%

- Passion/interest #1
- Professional purposes next
- No noteworthy differences by gender, race/ethnicity, parental education, or GPA

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## PhD

Passion/interest	58.7%
Develop analytic abilities	32.0%
High-paying jobs	30.4%
Prep for many jobs	27.0%
Advancement	25.5%
Be helpful to others	25.4%

- More pronounced patterns
- Passion/interest especially high for Hispanic, White, and women
- High-paying jobs more important for Black students
- Analytic abilities more important for students with parent with advanced degree

**Students value their  
time and money.**

# Time & money matter ... a lot.

## MA & MS

Cost is too high	69.0%
Takes too long	50.4%
Poor work-life balance	27.9%
Grad school too hard	23.8%
Too few good paying jobs	21.8%

- Potential deterrents are pragmatic
- Women more concerned about cost
- Black & Hispanic students are most concerned about cost
- Cost is less likely to be a deterrent as parental education increases

# Time & money matter ... a lot.

## MA & MS

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- Potential deterrents are pragmatic
- Women more concerned about cost;
- Black & Hispanic students are most concerned about cost
- Cost is less likely to be a deterrent as parental education increases

## PhD

Cost is too high	66.1%
Takes too long	50.8%
Poor work-life balance	32.4%
Too few good paying jobs	23.5%
Grad school too hard	22.9%

- Women, Black & Hispanic students are even *more* cost-sensitive
- Same relationship between parental education and concern about cost
- Grad school too hard: No noteworthy differences

**They acquire advice from  
real people, but not in the  
same way.**

# Students turn to **real people** for advice, but ...

## MA & MS

Family members	57.5%
Professors	53.3%
College advisors	51.8%
People in the field	40.0%
Grad admissions/recruiter	8.0%
Grad fair	3.1%

- Women more likely to turn to advisors
- Black students more likely to turn to advisors, less likely to turn to professors
- Black & Hispanic students less likely to turn to family
- Positive relationship between parental education and family as source of advice



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- Black students more likely to turn to advisors, less likely to turn to professors
- Black & Hispanic students less likely to turn to family
- Positive relationship between parental education and family as source of advice

## PhD

Professors	61.6%
Family members	52.1%
College advisors	50.0%
People in the field	40.8%
Grad admissions/recruiter	8.3%
Grad fair	2.8%

- Black students less likely to turn to professors and family
- Black (and to a lesser extent Asian & Hispanic) students more likely to turn to grad admissions, grad fair
- Positive relationship between parental ed and family as source of advice

# Information about graduate degrees is not necessarily distributed or received evenly.

MA & MS

**83.0%**

see information on campus

**58.3%**

hear professors talk about

- Sophomore year is a pivotal point in awareness of MA & MS
- Differences are subtle
- Black students (women in particular) are less likely to hear profs talk about MA & MS
- Parental education “stairstep”

# Information about graduate degrees is not necessarily distributed or received evenly.

PhD

**63.6%**

see information on campus

**49.5%**

hear professors talk about

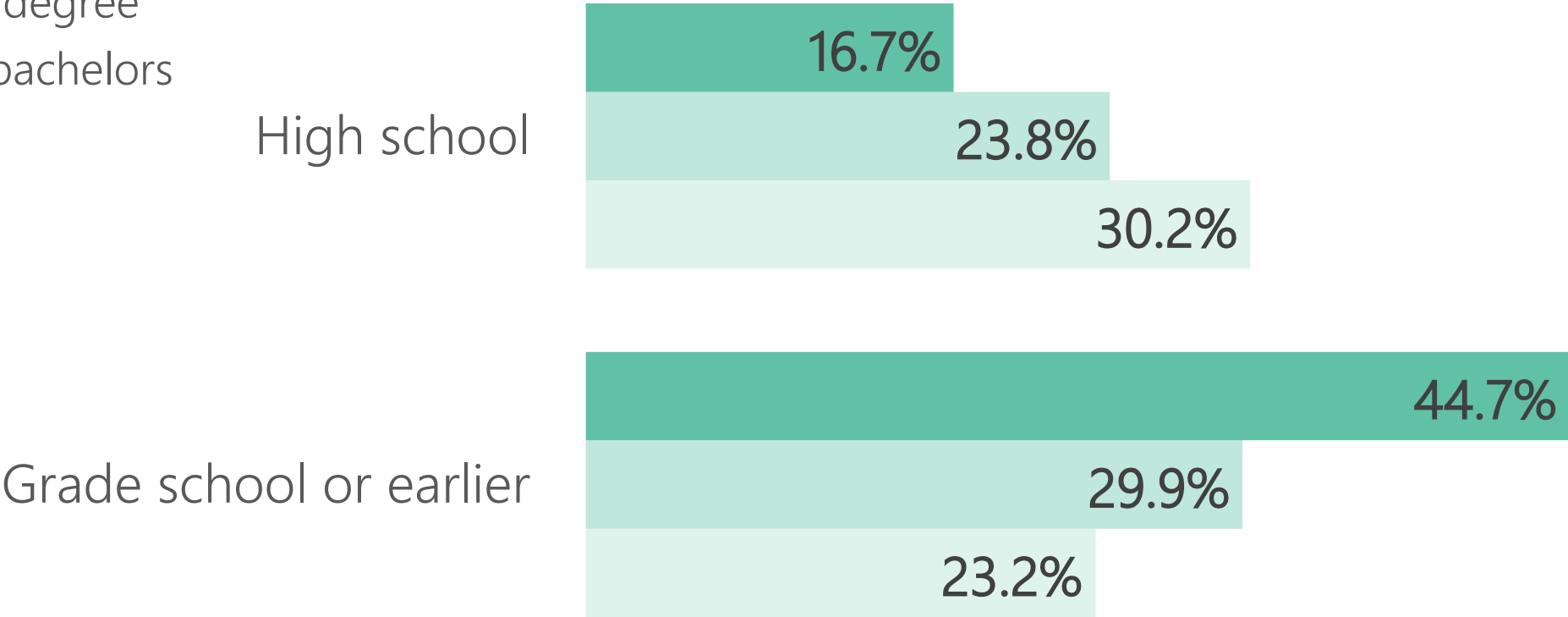
- Even more pronounced parental ed “stairstep” effect
- Positive relationship between GPA and awareness of PhD
- Black students (especially women) less likely to see info and hear professors talk about PhD
- Hispanic students are more likely to hear professors talk about PhD

**Evidence of educational inheritance permeates the study.**

# Students with a parent with an advanced degree **learn early** that some careers require graduate degrees.

When students learn that careers require graduate degrees

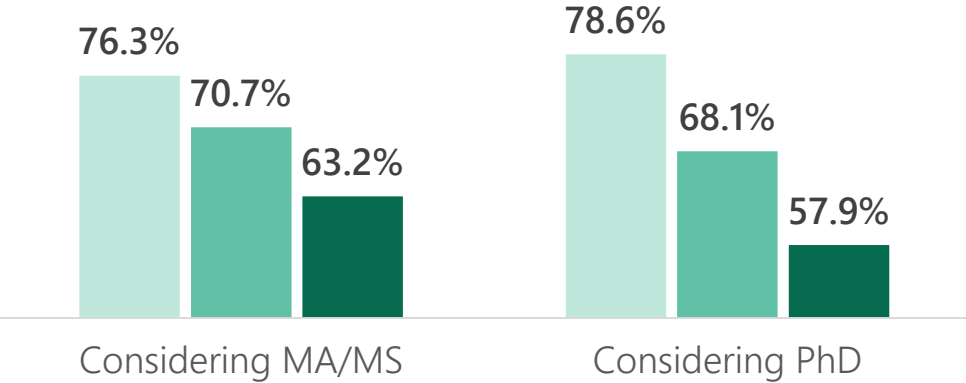
- Advanced degree
- Bachelor's degree
- Less than bachelors



# Students with at least one parent with an advanced degree are...

Less likely to be concerned about graduate school cost.

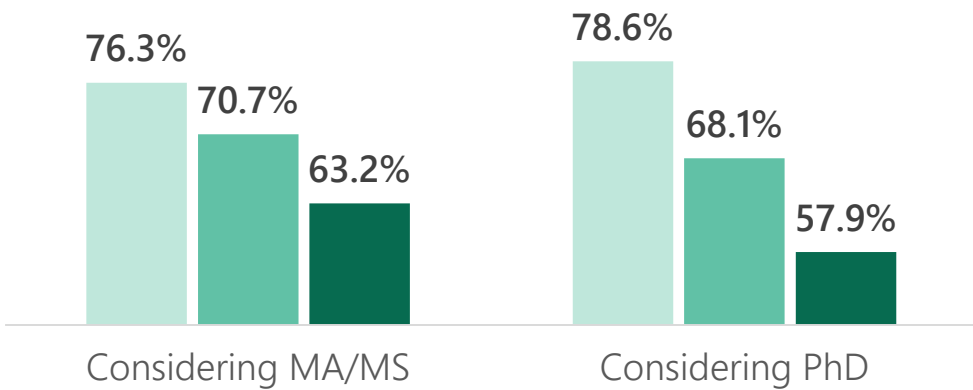
- Less than Bachelor's Degree
- Bachelor's Degree
- Advanced Degree



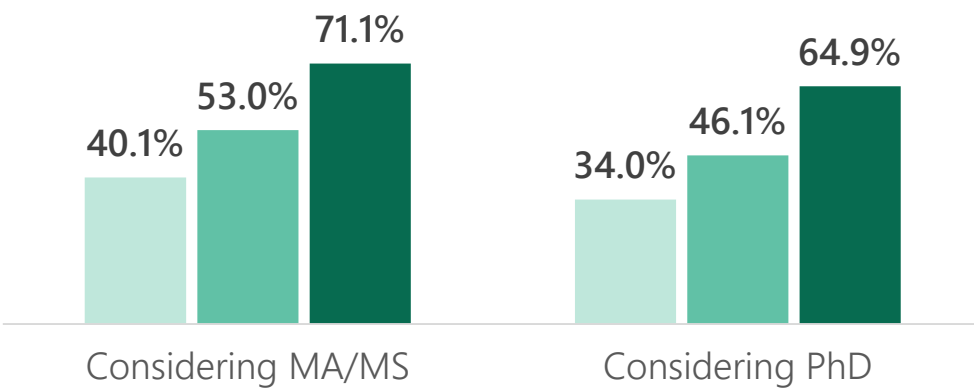
# Students with at least one parent with an advanced degree are...

- Less than Bachelor's Degree
- Bachelor's Degree
- Advanced Degree

Less likely to be concerned about graduate school cost.



More likely to turn to family for advice.



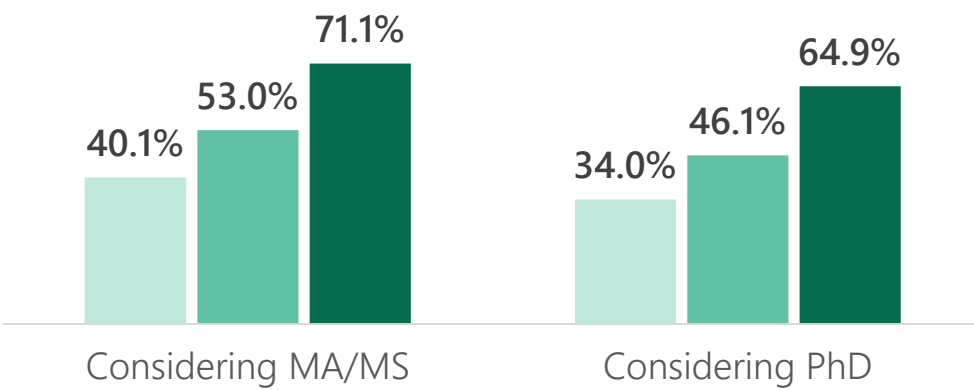
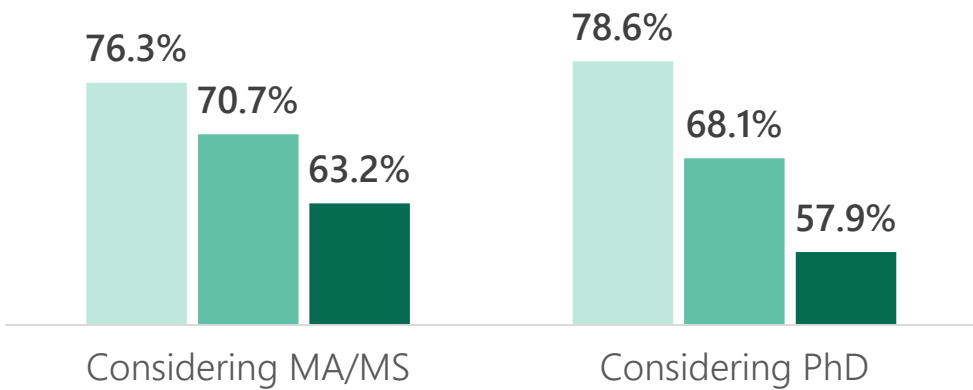


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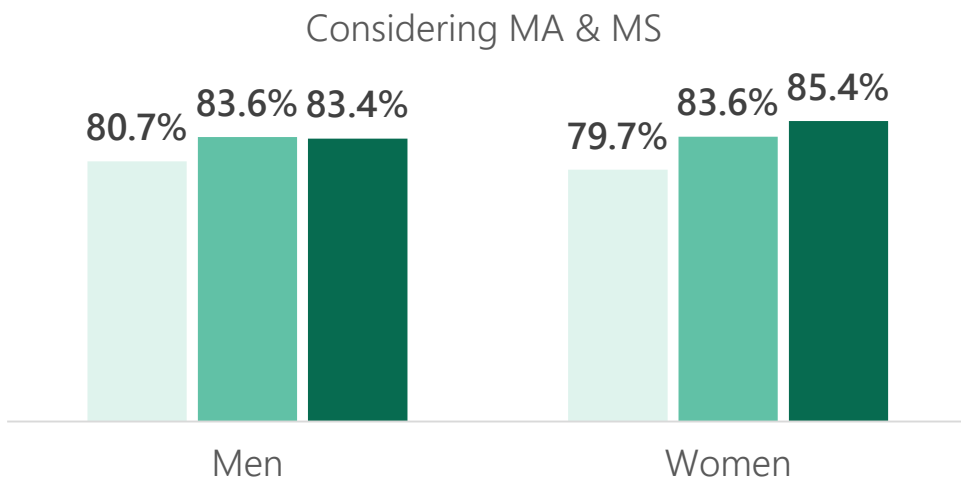
- Less than Bachelor's Degree
- Bachelor's Degree
- Advanced Degree

Less likely to be concerned about graduate school cost.

More likely to turn to family for advice.



More likely to report seeing information about MA & MS ...

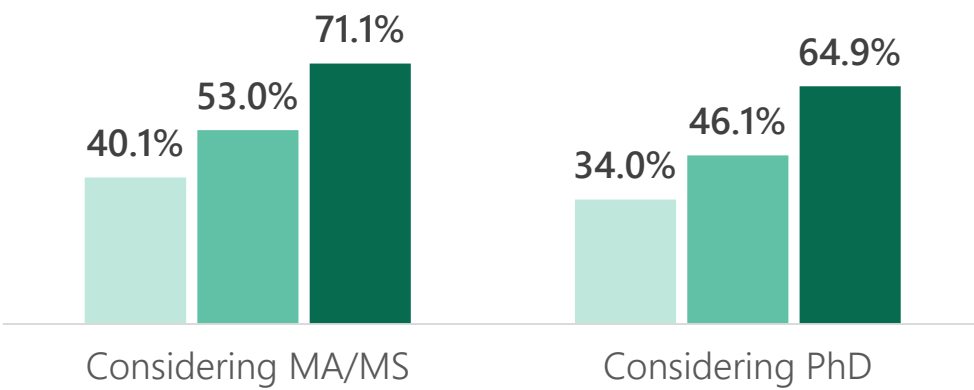
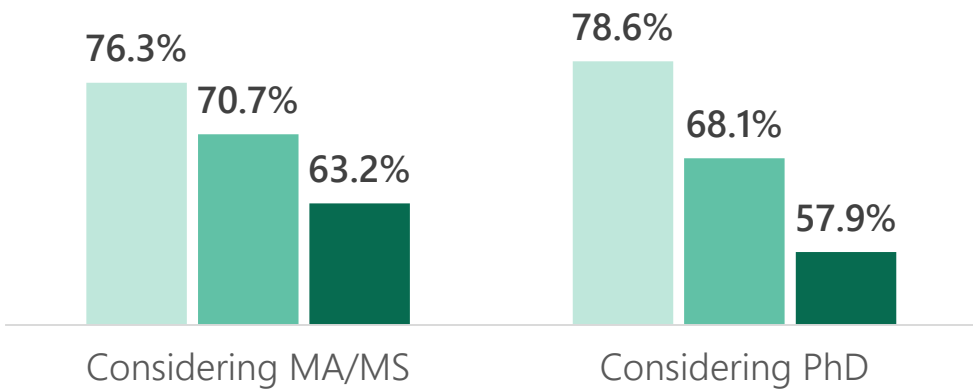


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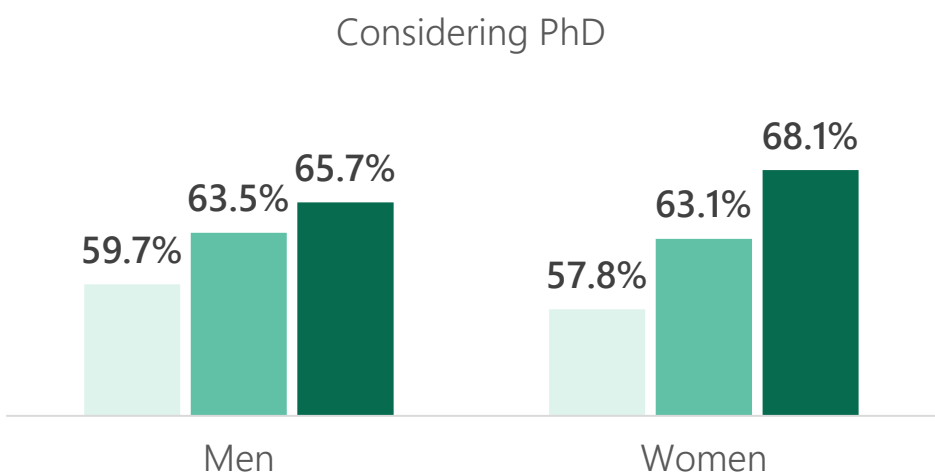
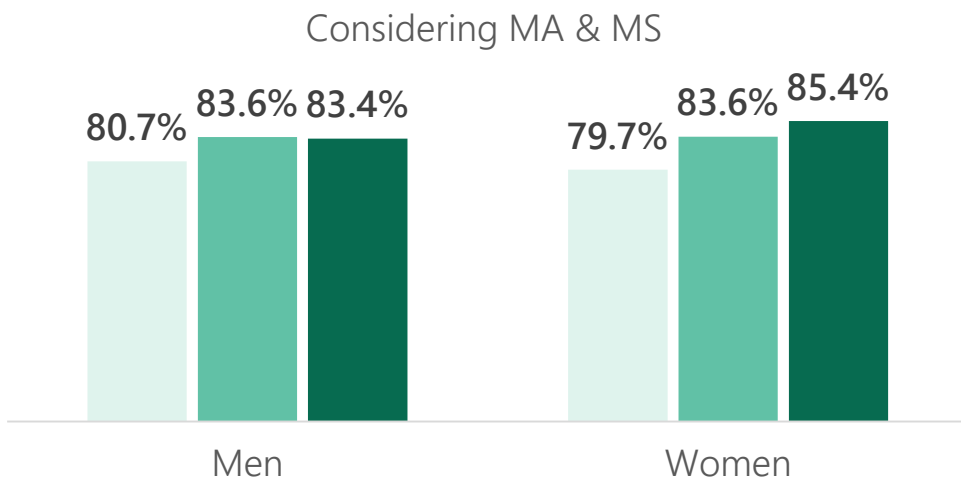
- Less than Bachelor's Degree
- Bachelor's Degree
- Advanced Degree

Less likely to be concerned about graduate school cost.

More likely to turn to family for advice.



More likely to report seeing information about MA & MS and PhDs.



# Echoes in the literature.

- Students demonstrating higher levels of academic performance at the undergraduate level are more inclined to aspire to, apply for, and enroll in graduate programs than peers.

# Echoes in the literature.

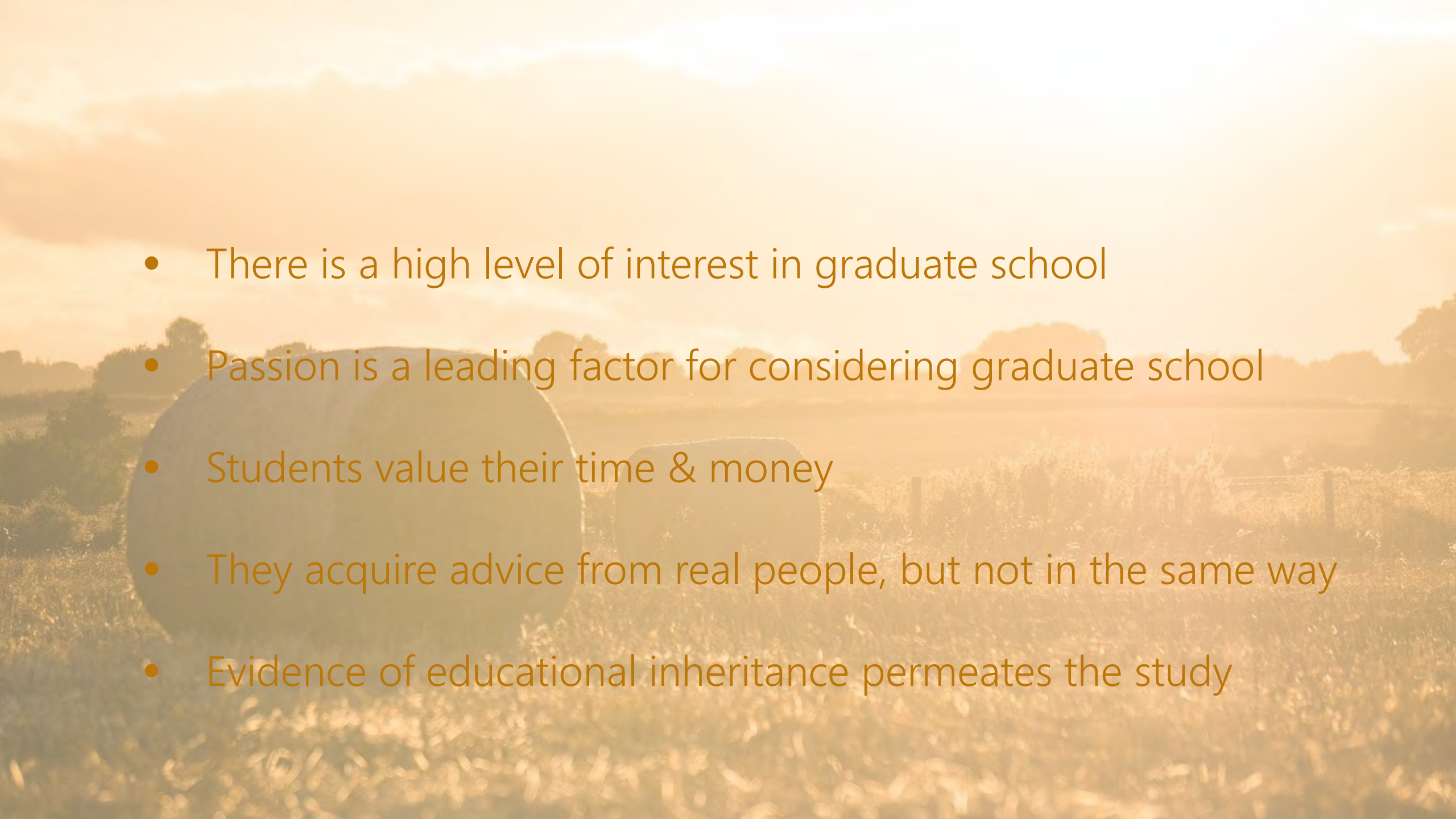
- Students demonstrating higher levels of academic performance at the undergraduate level are more inclined to aspire to, apply for, and enroll in graduate programs than peers.
- Parental education has direct and indirect effects on pathways to and through graduate education.


# Echoes in the literature.

- Students demonstrating higher levels of academic performance at the undergraduate level are more inclined to aspire to, apply for, and enroll in graduate programs than peers.
- Parental education has direct and indirect effects on pathways to and through graduate education.
- Higher levels of graduate school aspiration among Black and, to a lesser extent Hispanic students do not translate into applications and enrollment at the same rates as their Asian and White peers.







- 
- A warm, golden sunset over a field with hay bales. The sky is filled with soft, orange and yellow light, and the field is filled with rows of hay bales. The overall mood is peaceful and serene.
- There is a high level of interest in graduate school
  - Passion is a leading factor for considering graduate school
  - Students value their time & money
  - They acquire advice from real people, but not in the same way
  - Evidence of educational inheritance permeates the study

- 
- A photograph of a field of tall grasses at sunset. The sky is a mix of orange and yellow, with some clouds. In the foreground, there are several large, dark, circular shapes that appear to be shadows or reflections. The overall mood is warm and serene.
- Responsibly manage graduate enrollment & ensure success
  - Passion is a leading factor for considering graduate school
  - Students value their time & money
  - They acquire advice from real people, but not in the same way
  - Evidence of educational inheritance permeates the study




- 
- Responsibly manage graduate enrollment & ensure success
  - Shape messages about public & private benefits
  - Students value their time & money
  - They acquire advice from real people, but not in the same way
  - Evidence of educational inheritance permeates the study


- 
- A photograph of a rural landscape at sunset. The sky is a warm, golden-orange color with soft clouds. In the foreground, there are several large, round hay bales. The middle ground shows a field of tall, golden wheat or grain, with a fence line visible in the distance. The overall scene is peaceful and evokes a sense of harvest and tranquility.
- Responsibly manage graduate enrollment & ensure success
  - Shape messages about public & private benefits
  - Address return on investment
  - They acquire advice from real people, but not in the same way
  - Evidence of educational inheritance permeates the study



- 
- A photograph of a field of golden wheat at sunset. Two large, round hay bales are in the foreground, partially obscuring the view of the field. The sky is a warm, golden-orange color, and the sun is low on the horizon, creating a soft glow over the entire scene. The background shows a line of trees and a fence in the distance.
- Responsibly manage graduate enrollment & ensure success
  - Shape messages about public & private benefits
  - Address return on investment
  - Champion diversity and inclusion
  - Evidence of educational inheritance permeates the study

- 
- A photograph of a rural landscape at sunset. The sky is a warm, golden-orange color with soft clouds. In the foreground, two large, round hay bales are visible, partially obscuring the view of the field. The field is filled with tall, golden wheat or grain, and a wooden fence runs across the middle ground. The overall atmosphere is peaceful and serene.
- Responsibly manage graduate enrollment & ensure success
  - Shape messages about public & private benefits
  - Address return on investment
  - Champion diversity and inclusion
  - Inform graduate school choice given a pre-established trajectory



- 
- A photograph of a field of golden wheat at sunset. Two large hay bales are in the foreground, slightly out of focus. The sky is a mix of orange and yellow, with some clouds. The overall scene is peaceful and rural.
- Responsibly manage graduate enrollment & ensure success
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