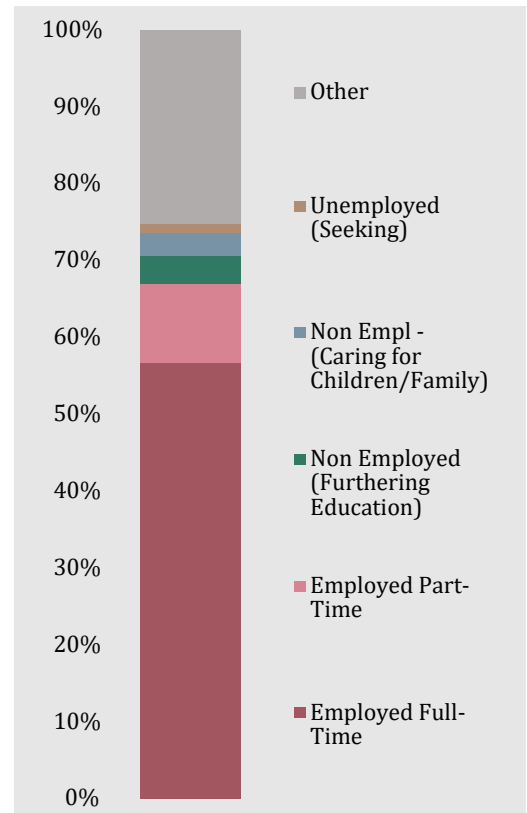




## Alumni Survey, 2020: Outcomes Employment and Pursuit of Advanced Degrees

### Overview

- In fall 2020, amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, the College surveyed all Swarthmore alumni, asking them to reflect on many aspects of their college experience, and how it may have impacted current activities. The response rate was 31%. This report focuses on the employment and advanced education outcomes of these alumni based on the survey.
- Over half of Swarthmore alumni who responded (55%, across all years) are working full-time, with an additional 10% working part-time. The unemployment rate (not employed with seeking employment as their primary activity) for alumni respondents is 1.2%, below the national average (for individuals with a Bachelor’s degree or higher) of 4.2% at the time of the survey.<sup>1,2</sup> The unemployment rate for recent graduates at Swarthmore is around 5%, compared to over 7% nationally, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics.
- Consistent with our liberal arts mission, over a third of graduates (39%) are working in fields unrelated to their undergraduate majors. Thirty-seven percent work in fields related to their major, and nearly one-quarter (24%) are working in the field of their major.
- Most often, those alumni not currently employed are pursuing further education (4% of all respondents).
- The rates at which Swarthmore graduates earn advanced degrees are very high. About sixty percent of those who graduated five years ago (Class of 2015) reported earning or currently pursuing a graduate or professional degree – and the rate was even higher for each of the older classes, to a high of 86% of the Class of 1969. Across all classes (excluding 2019 and 2020), 32% of the graduates had earned or were pursuing doctoral degrees at the time of the survey.
- While the largest share of doctorate earners who were employed full-time work in the field of higher education, 44% do not.
- Graduates work in a range of occupations, with the largest categories being educators, trainers, or librarians (23%), health or mental health professionals (13%), scientists, social scientists, or mathematical occupations (10%), legal professionals (8%), business or management occupations (7%), and computer scientists, programmers, or technologists (6%).

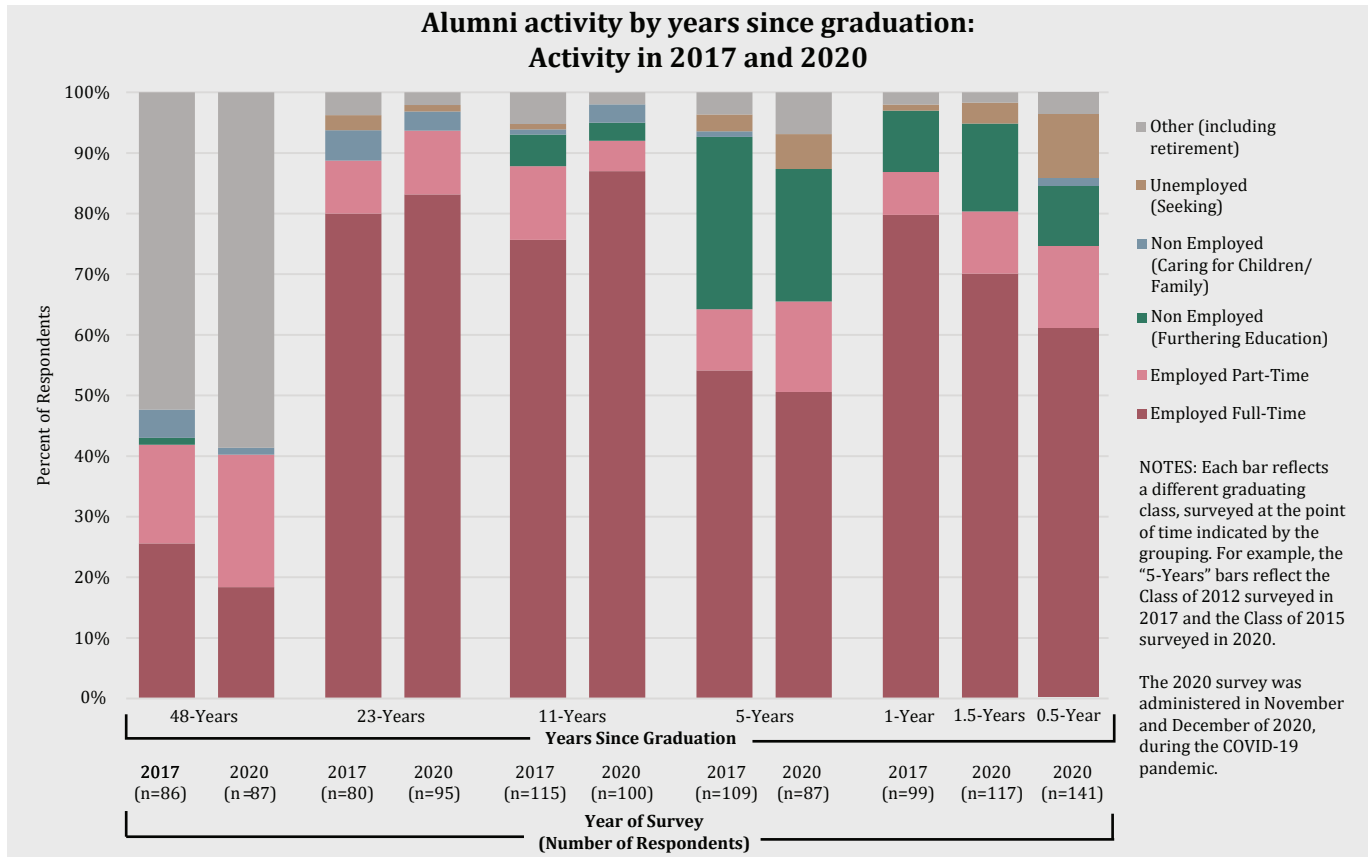


<sup>1</sup> Table A-4. Employment status of the civilian population 25 years and over by educational attainment (seasonally adjusted), November 2020, Bureau of Labor Statistics.

<sup>2</sup> Those who are not employed are classified by their reported “primary activity.” The “Other” category includes those who are retired, those who are employed but on leave, and those who are not employed but not seeking employment (for reasons other than family care or education).

**Survey**

Along with a group of peer institutions, we conduct the COFHE Alumni Survey about every four or five years, asking a cross-section of alumni to reflect on many aspects of their college experience, and how it may have impacted current activities. In fall 2020, the College surveyed *all* alumni, with a response rate of about 31%. This is down from a response rate of around 40% in 2017, which was down from around 50% when administered in 2013. The reduced response rate over the last decade is consistent with survey response rates nationally and among our peer institutions. The current report focuses on the employment and advanced education outcomes of these alumni.



**What are they doing now?**

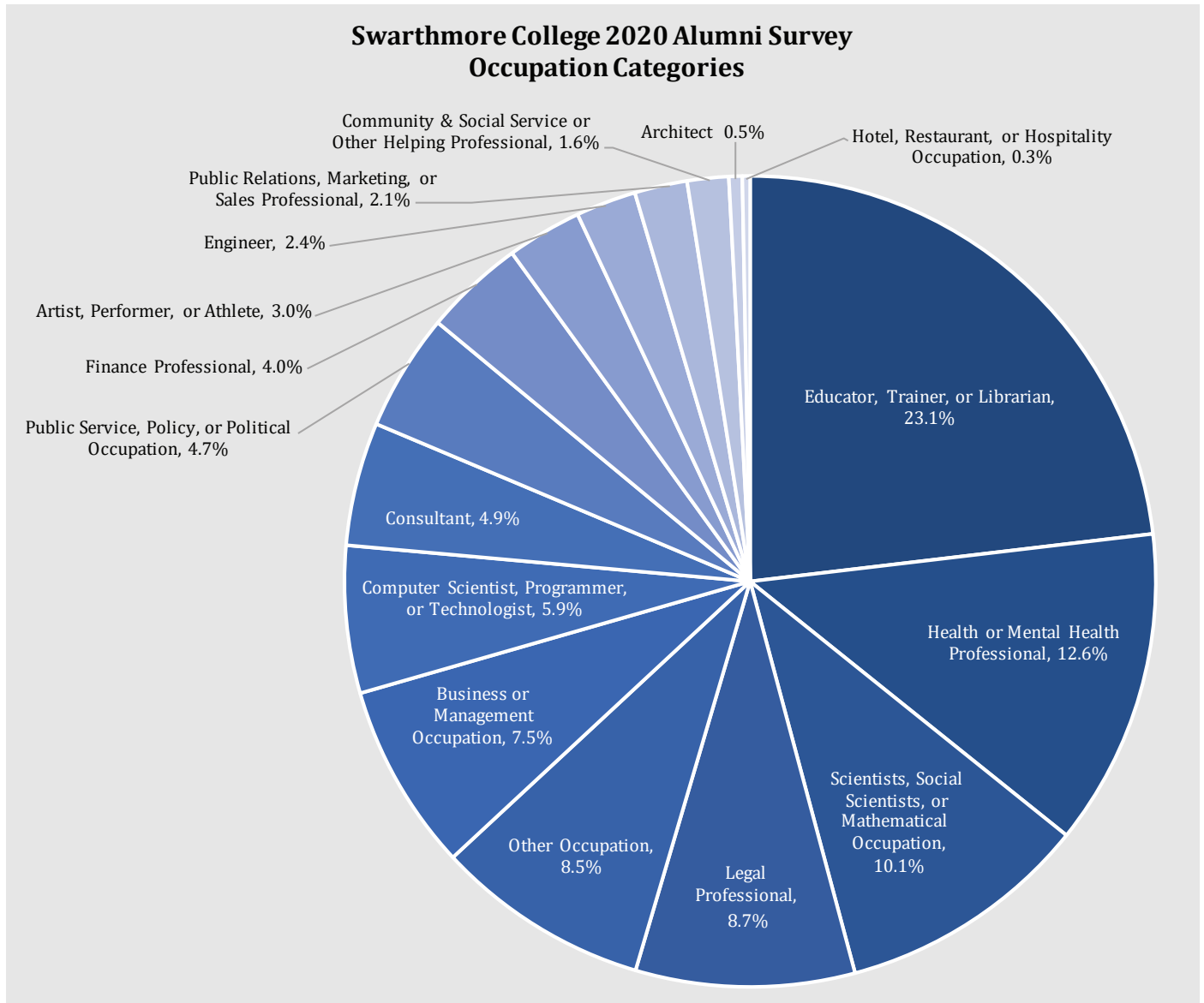
The graphic above reflects reported activities at the time of the survey for both the 2017 and 2020 surveys. For the 2020 results, with the exception of those who graduated prior to the Class of 1973 (47 years ago), many of whom are retired, the majority of alumni from each of the classes are working full time. Pursuing further education is the next largest category of activities for the younger classes (0.5 and 1.5 years out). Nearly a quarter of the Class of 2015 (5-years out) is pursuing further education, compared with 10% of the Class of 2020 (0.5 years out), 3% of the Class of 2009 (11-years out). This finding is consistent with earlier surveys that showed that Swarthmore students often wait a year or more before attending graduate school. In contrast, members of the older classes who are not employed are more likely to be taking care of children or family. This is true for one to four percent of respondents from the Classes of 1972 and 1997. The unemployment rate (unemployed and seeking a position) for these graduates is 1.1%, below the national average (for individuals with a Bachelor’s degree or higher) of 4.2% at the time of the survey.<sup>3,4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Table A-4. Employment status of the civilian population 25 years and over by educational attainment (seasonally adjusted), November 2020, Bureau of Labor Statistics.

<sup>4</sup> Those who are not employed are classified by their reported “primary activity.” The “Other” category includes those who are retired, those who are employed but on leave, and those who are not employed but not seeking employment (for reasons other than family care or education).

**Employment**

The survey asked about the sector, industry, level, and occupation that reflected respondents’ jobs, and here we report on those alumni who indicated that they were employed (full-time, part-time, or on leave).



The occupation categories of alumni are presented above. The largest category is *Educator, Trainer, or Librarian* (23%). The next largest groups are *Health or Mental Health Professionals* (13%), *Scientists, Social Scientists, or Mathematical Occupations* (10%), *Legal Professionals* (9%), *Business or Management Occupations* (8%), and *Computer Scientists Programmers or Technologists* (6%). The prevalence of educators/trainers/librarian as well as health or mental health professionals tends to be lowest in the most recent class years. This could, in part, be a result of the time it takes to acquire the education and credentials required for many of the positions in these fields.

On the other hand, several occupational categories reflect the reverse pattern. When looking at the Classes of 2019 and 2020 together, there are substantially higher proportions of scientists/social scientists/math occupations as well as computer scientists/programmers/ technologists compared to the older classes. These trends may be reflective of growth fields and shifts in the occupational landscape.

Though the trends for business/management occupations and legal professionals are less distinct, both have a slight downward trajectory when starting with the Class of 1982 and moving across to the youngest cohort (the Class of 2020). It is important to recognize that these results reflect a cross-section of alumni at a fixed point in time. A longitudinal analysis of the occupational proportions for specific cohorts across time would help to determine the impact of both age and time period on occupational affiliation.

<b><u>Largest occupation categories</u></b>	<b><u>1972</u></b>	<b><u>1982</u></b>	<b><u>1992</u></b>	<b><u>1997</u></b>	<b><u>2007</u></b>	<b><u>2009</u></b>	<b><u>2015</u></b>	<b><u>2019</u></b>	<b><u>2020</u></b>
Educator, Trainer, or Librarian	20%	43%	23%	24%	21%	23%	17%	12%	10%
Health or Mental Health Professional	14%	7%	11%	15%	15%	14%	15%	2%	7%
Scientists, Soc. Scientists, or Math Occ.	9%	6%	12%	6%	11%	12%	9%	18%	15%
Legal Professional	20%	6%	10%	19%	10%	4%	2%	4%	3%
Business or Management Occ.	6%	9%	9%	9%	7%	7%	4%	7%	1%
Computer Scientist, Programmer or Tech	0%	1%	4%	6%	4%	9%	11%	21%	14%

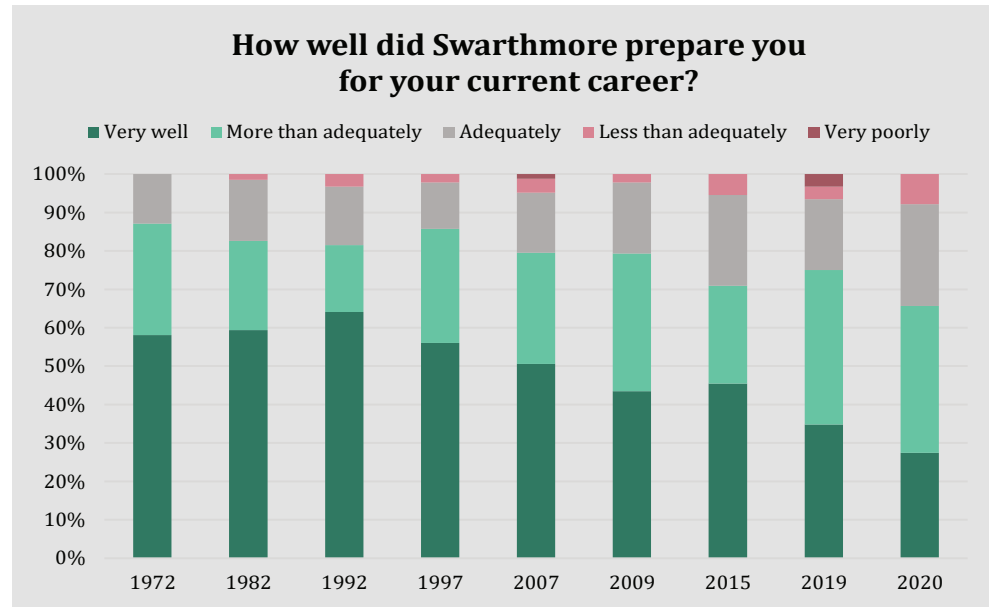
As a liberal arts institution we do not have strong expectations that jobs will be related to a student's undergraduate major, but in this era of public pressure to relate education to employment it is a question that is often asked. The following chart shows the percentage of alumni within each division who indicated that their jobs were either related to their major or in the same field as their major. Seventy-seven percent of those with Natural Science and Engineering majors and seventy-four percent of those with double majors across divisions reported working in the same or related field. On the other hand, 46% and 56% of those with Humanities and Social Science majors, respectively, reported working in the same or related fields.

### Current Job Related to Undergraduate Major



SOURCE: COFHE Alumni Survey, 2020.

For all employed respondents, the survey asked how well their undergraduate education had prepared them for their current career. Again, as a liberal arts institution, Swarthmore aims to prepare its students for a range of endeavors rather than for a particular career. But as the adjacent chart shows, most respondents felt that the College had prepared them well for their careers. Consistent with previous iterations of the survey, more years since graduation tends to be associated with positive feelings about levels of preparation.



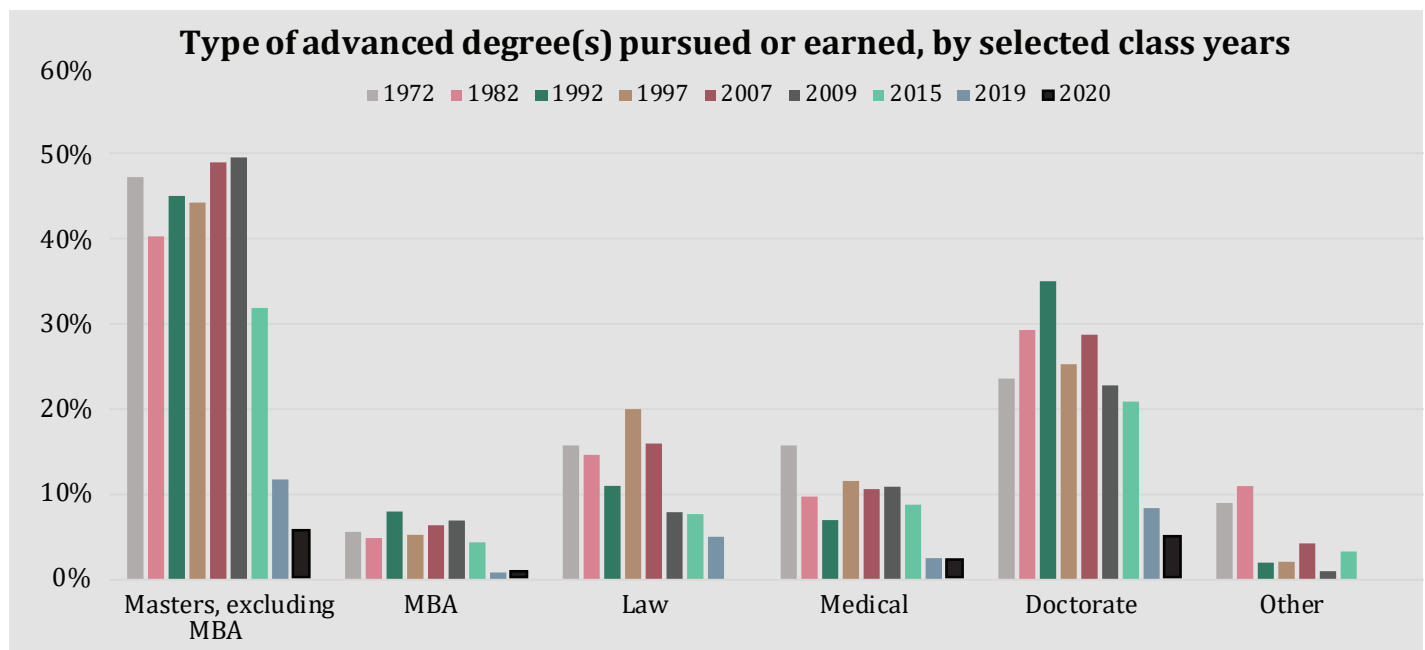
Class	Ever Enrolled?	Advanced Degree*
2020	13%	12%
2019	26%	20%
2015	70%	60%
2009	79%	73%
2007	87%	81%
1997	84%	72%
1992	89%	75%
1982	86%	73%
1972	88%	77%

\*Earned or currently pursuing

### Graduate School

The table below presents the proportion of alumni from each class reporting that they have enrolled in graduate or professional school since graduating from Swarthmore, as well as the proportion that has earned (or is still pursuing) an advanced degree. These results are consistent with earlier surveys showing that the overwhelming majority of Swarthmore alumni pursue graduate level education.

The most prevalent advanced degrees pursued or earned were Master's degrees, followed by Doctorates. For alumni across all nine classes, 11% earned Law degrees, 9% earned Medical degrees, and 7% earned an MBA. As expected, the percentages for those in prior years are higher since they have had more time to pursue potential degrees. (Because alumni reported on all degrees earned, the types of degrees may sum to more than 100% within an alumni class).



SOURCE: COFHE Alumni Survey, 2020.

The percentage of alumni who have pursued or earned doctorates, across all classes except 2019 and 2020, was 28% based on this survey. Since this includes students still enrolled in their programs, this finding is consistent with external data that estimates our doctorate attainment rate at about 22%, one of the highest rates in the country.<sup>4</sup>

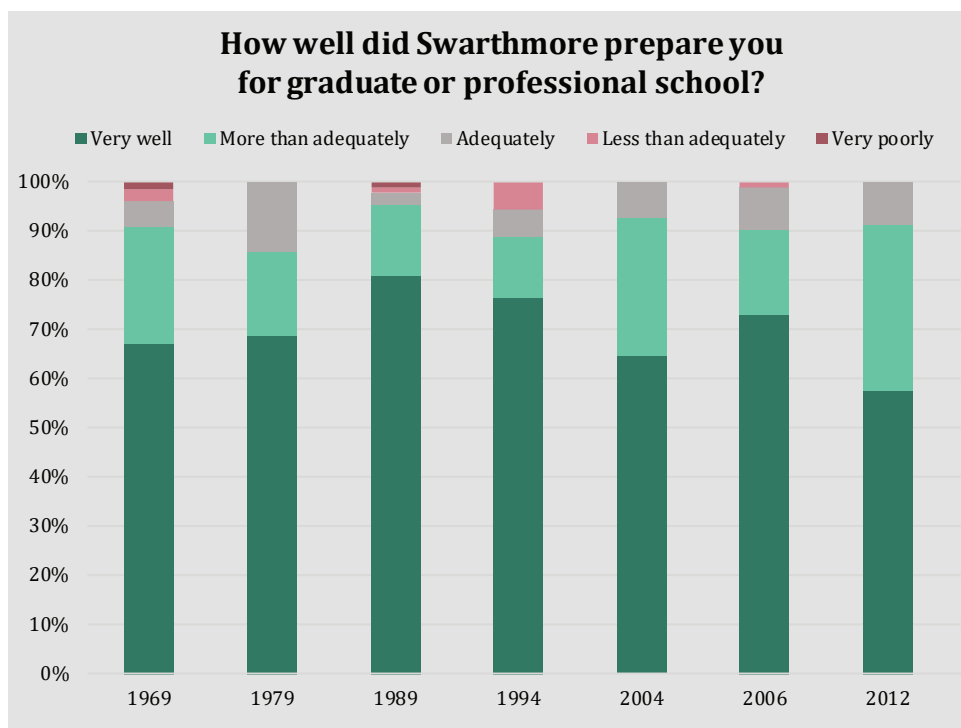
Doctorate earners work in a range of settings, in addition to academia. Over half (56%) of those with doctorates working full time indicated that they worked in higher education. The remainder worked in many other industries, including:

- Technology, Science, or Engineering
- Education (K-12, adult)
- Healthcare, Social Assistance, or Advocacy
- Cultural, Charitable Arts, Religious, Sports/Rec.
- Professional or Business Services
- Journalism, Publishing, or Media
- Finance, Insurance or Real Estate
- "Other"

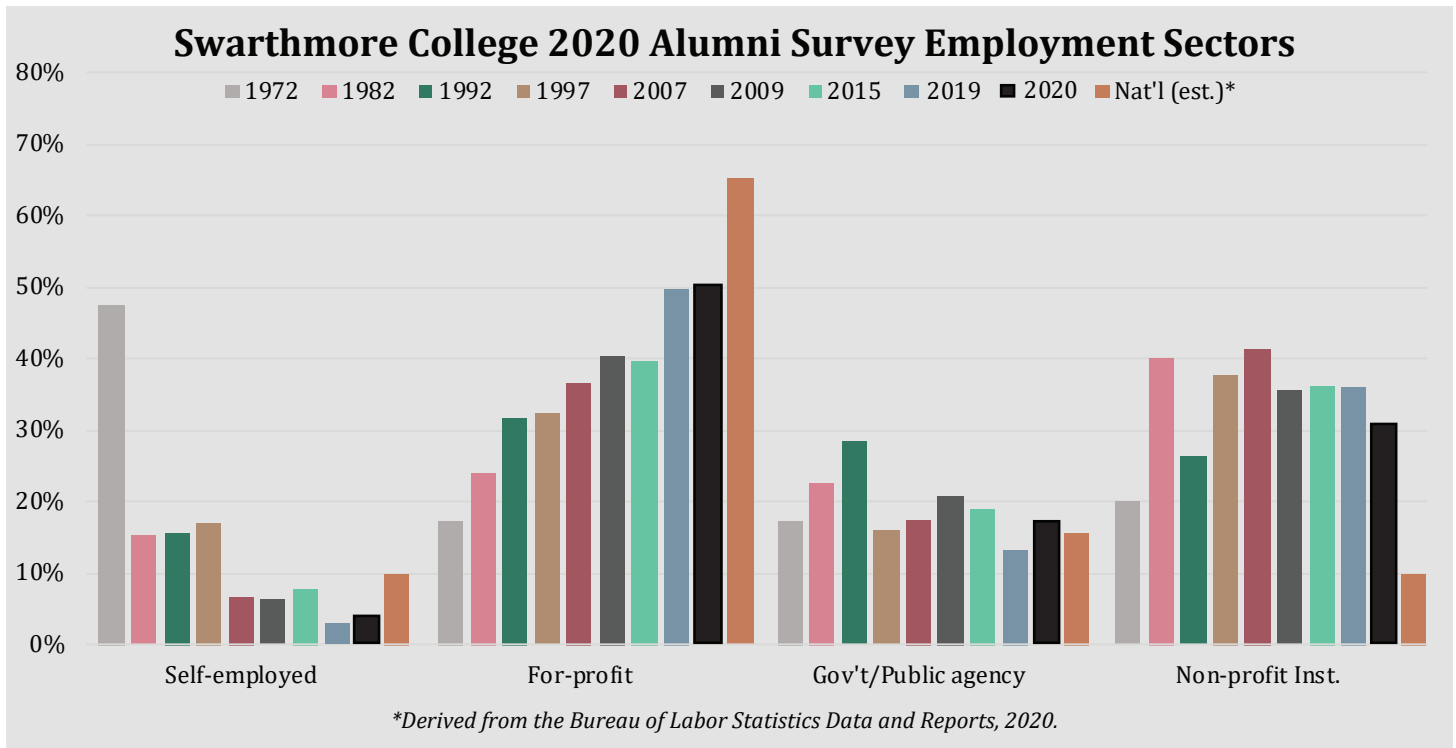
The percentage of those with doctorates employed full-time who do work in higher education varied somewhat by the division of their undergraduate degree. Humanities majors were most likely to be working in higher education, and Natural Science and Engineering majors were least likely.

<u>Division</u>	<u>Higher Ed</u>
Humanities	71%
Doub Maj-2	65%
Soc Sci	62%
NSE	39%

Respondents who pursued or earned advanced degrees (excluding the Classes of 2019 and 2020) were asked how well their Swarthmore education prepared them for graduate or professional school. As the chart below shows, for each of the classes, the majority responded that they were very well prepared.



<sup>4</sup> This is based on data from the NSF Survey of Earned Doctorates. The rate may vary slightly depending on which years are included in the analysis, but Swarthmore generally ranks third, behind Cal Tech and Harvey Mudd.



Across all classes, the largest group of alumni, (33%) works in the non-profit sector, with for-profits a close second (31%). The percentage working at for-profits generally decreases with the older classes, as the percentage reporting they are self-employed rises. Comparative national data on employment by sector is estimated using data and reports available through the Bureau of Labor Statistics. As the chart shows, Swarthmore graduates work in the non-profit sector at a much higher rate than employees nationally.