Legal Education Data Deck

Key trends on access, affordability and value
Foreword

The 2023 Legal Education Data Deck utilizes datasets made publicly available by third parties to offer a snapshot of certain trends organized around the three guiding principles of AccessLex Institute’s research agenda: access, affordability and value in legal education. This is a living document that is updated periodically — AccessLex welcomes comments, criticisms and suggestions in order to make this as useful a tool as possible for all those we serve.

The data contained herein exists thanks to the work of the Law School Admission Council, the National Conference of Bar Examiners, the National Association for Law Placement, the American Bar Association Section of Legal Education and Admissions to the Bar, the U.S. Department of Education and the Department of Labor. We thank these and other organizations for making such data available.

AccessLex Institute uses these data as the basis for the presentation, analysis and commentary contained herein, and takes sole responsibility for the quality and accuracy of such presentation, analysis and commentary.
About AccessLex Institute

AccessLex Institute, in partnership with its nearly 200 nonprofit and state-affiliated ABA-approved member law schools, has been committed to improving access to legal education and to maximizing the affordability and value of a law degree since 1983. The AccessLex Center for Legal Education Excellence® advocates for policies that make legal education work better for students and society alike, and conducts research on the most critical issues facing legal education today. The AccessLex Center for Education and Financial Capability® offers on-campus and online financial education programming and resources to help students confidently manage their finances on their way to achieving personal and professional success. AccessLex Institute is a nonprofit organization headquartered in West Chester, PA.
Law Students in the United States

Fall 2022 J.D. Enrollment, by State.

Note: This map includes the 196 ABA-approved AccessLex Institute member schools reporting enrollment as of 2022. Data Source: American Bar Association, 2023a. Data presentation, analysis and commentary by AccessLex Institute.
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Access
Between 2021 and 2022, the number of applicants, admitted applicants, and matriculants decreased. Compared to 2021, the number of applications decreased by nearly 10,000 in 2022, returning to pre-pandemic levels.
Law School Admission Rates, 2005–2022

The overall law school admission rate rose two percentage points between 2021 and 2022, with 70 percent of applicants receiving offers of admission in 2022. This marks the first increase in admission rates in the last seven years.

Prior to 2000, male and female J.D. enrollment primarily moved inversely, with male enrollment falling as female enrollment increased. After 2000 they moved in tandem, until female enrollment surpassed male enrollment for the first time in 2017. Since then, J.D. enrollment among women has increased while decreasing among men.

Note: Since 2014-15, the American Bar Association has included “Another Gender Identity” as a gender category. The enrollment reported for this category is too small to appear in this figure.

Data Source: American Bar Association, 2023a and 2023b. Data presentation, analysis, and commentary by AccessLex Institute.
Racial and Ethnic Diversity of Law School Applicants, 2022

The racial and ethnic composition of law school applicants has remained relatively stable in recent years. In 2022, White applicants comprised roughly half of the applicant pool, while Black, Asian, and Hispanic/Latine applicants collectively comprised approximately one-third.
Admission Rates by Race/Ethnicity and Overall, 2022

Admissions rates differ markedly by applicants’ race and ethnicity. Seventy-eight percent of White applicants received at least one law school admission offer compared to 48 percent of Black applicants and 58 percent of Hispanic/Latine applicants.
Percentage of Bachelor’s Degrees Awarded to Students of Color and Percentage of First-Year Enrolled J.D. Students of Color, 2015-2021

The increase in the proportion of students of color among first-year law school students mirrors the change in the proportion among bachelor’s degree recipients over the period from 2014-15 to 2020-21.

Recent estimates indicate that students who were the first in their families to go to college are in the minority among students enrolled in graduate programs. In 2017–2018, less than 20 percent of law students had a parent whose educational attainment was a high school diploma or less.
The proportion of students enrolled in graduate and professional programs who received Pell Grants as undergraduate students varies by discipline. It is estimated that nearly 40% of law school students enrolled in 2017-2018 previously received a Pell Grant to help fund their undergraduate studies.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Pell Grant Proportion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Master of Public Admin/Policy (MPA/MPP)</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master’s Education (Ed.D.)</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master of Business Administration (MBA)</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law (LLB or J.D.)</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Medicine</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Doctoral</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ph.D.</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medicine or Osteopathic Medicine</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Data presented reflects only U.S. citizens and permanent residents. International students are excluded from analysis due to differences in financial aid eligibility.

J.D. and Non-J.D. Enrollment, 2013-2022

The share of non-J.D. student enrollment in law school has more than doubled over the last 10 years, comprising nearly 20 percent of total law school enrollment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Percent J.D.</th>
<th>Percent non-J.D.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2013-14</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014-15</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015-16</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016-17</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017-18</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018-19</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019-20</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2020-21</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2021-22</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2022-23</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data Source: American Bar Association, 2023b. Data presentation, analysis, and commentary by AccessLex Institute.
In 2021-2022, students of color comprised 35 percent of first-year enrollment and 34 percent of withdrawals after the 1L year — a significant improvement over 2020-2021 when students of color comprised 47 percent of students who attritted after the first year but only 33 percent of first-year enrollment.

Number of Law Schools Accounting for Half or More of Law Students of Each Race/Ethnicity, 2022

The chart displays the minimum number of ABA-approved schools whose combined enrollments make up half or more of each racial/ethnic group. For instance, half of all Asian law students are enrolled at just 33 of the 196 ABA-approved law schools. Overall, this chart indicates that students of color are concentrated within a few law schools.

In 2022, White students comprised nearly two-thirds of law school graduates, while Black, Asian, and Hispanic/Latine applicants collectively comprised roughly one-quarter.

Note: “Remaining” includes students who identified as American Indian or Alaskan Native and Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander.

The number of J.D. degrees awarded per year increased between 2006 and 2012 but began to decline in 2013. The number of J.D. degrees awarded remained roughly the same between 2020 and 2021. As the number of graduates has declined, the proportion of law degrees awarded to students of color has increased from roughly 22 percent to 31 percent.

Data Source: American Bar Association, 2023a and 2023b. Data presentation, analysis, and commentary by AccessLex Institute.
Affordability
Average Full-Time Tuition and Fees (Unadjusted) by School Type and Residency, 2015-2022

Before adjusting for inflation, tuition and fees appear to have increased steadily between 2015-2022.

Note: The following schools are excluded from figures shown due to changes in accreditation or status between 2015-2022: Arizona Summit Law School, Charlotte School of Law, Florida Coastal School of Law, Hamline University, Indiana Tech Law School, Thomas Jefferson School of Law, University of La Verne, Whittier Law School. The following schools are excluded due to missing tuition data during the period shown: Creighton University, Florida State University, Inter American University of Puerto Rico, University of Puerto Rico, University of Tulsa, Washington University.

Data Source: American Bar Association, 2023a and 2023b. Data presentation, analysis, and commentary by AccessLex Institute.
When adjusted for inflation, average tuition and fees for full-time students appears to have decreased between 2020-2022. Nominal increases in tuition have not kept pace with unusually high inflation in the last two years.

**Note:** Figures shown as adjusted for inflation are adjusted using the Consumer Price Index for all urban consumers (CPI-U) from July of the year indicated. The following schools are excluded from figures shown due to changes in accreditation or status between 2015-2022: Arizona Summit Law School, Charlotte School of Law, Florida Coastal School of Law, Hamline University, Indiana Tech Law School, Thomas Jefferson School of Law, University of La Verne, Whittier Law School. The following schools are excluded due to missing tuition data during the period shown: Creighton University, Florida State University, Inter American University of Puerto Rico, University of Puerto Rico, University of Tulsa, Washington University.

**Data Source:** American Bar Association, 2023a and 2023b. Data presentation, including conversion to real dollars, analysis, and commentary by AccessLex Institute.
Median Grant Amount Awarded to Full-Time Students, 2013–2021

The median grant amount awarded to full-time students receiving aid nearly doubled from 2010 to 2019. In 2013, the median amount law schools awarded to at least half their grant recipients was $13,500. By 2021, that amount increased to $23,000.

Note: The median value displayed here is the median of all school level median grant amounts.

Data Source: American Bar Association, 2023a. Data presentation, including conversion to real dollars, analysis, and commentary by AccessLex Institute.
Share of Full-Time Students Receiving Institutional Grants, 2013–2021

The share of full-time students who received any grant amount increased from roughly 60 percent in 2012 to over four-fifths in 2021. Similarly, the proportion of students who received a grant totaling at least half their tuition and fees increased 17 percentage points over the same period. Combined with the increase in median grant amounts shown on the previous page, these changes indicate schools are providing greater tuition discounting to students.

Trends in Awarding and Eliminating Conditional Scholarships at ABA-Approved Law Schools, 2013–2021

From 2013 to 2021, the share of schools awarding conditional scholarships decreased from 61 percent to 40 percent, with bulk of that change occurring between 2014 and 2015. During the same period, the proportion of all entering law students who received conditional scholarships remained stable, at or near 25 percent. Of the students who received conditional scholarships, a greater proportion’s awards were eliminated in 2021 compared to previous years.

Percentage of Law Students Who Still Owe on Undergraduate Loans, 2017–2018

Nearly half of enrolled law school students are carrying undergraduate debt. In 2017–2018, the average amount of debt still owed among those with outstanding undergraduate loans was nearly $28,000.

Note: Data presented reflects only U.S. citizens and permanent residents. International students are excluded from analysis due to differences in financial aid eligibility.

More than half of enrolled law students reported earnings from off-campus employment at both public and private, nonprofit schools. Their median hourly earnings were $15 in 2015–2016.

Percentage of Law Graduates Who Borrowed for Graduate Education, by Year and Institution Type, 2004–2016

A majority of law graduates use loans to fund their graduate education. However, the proportion of graduates who borrowed declined by 17 percentage points between 2012 and 2016.

Cumulative Amount Borrowed (in 2022 Dollars) by Law Students While Enrolled, by Year and Institution Type, 2004–2016

As the percentage of law graduates who borrowed declined, the average cumulative amount of graduate debt also decreased between 2012 and 2016.

Note: Minimum reporting standards were not met for law school graduates who attended public institutions in 2016. Data presented reflects only U.S. citizens and permanent residents. Foreign/international students are excluded from analysis due to differences in financial aid eligibility.

Data Source: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Educational Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), National Postsecondary Student Aid Study, NPSAS:04, NPSAS:08, NPSAS:12, and NPSAS:16. Data presentation, including conversion to real dollars, analysis, and commentary by AccessLex Institute.
Average Amounts Borrowed by 2016 Graduates by Graduate Degree Type (in 2022 Dollars)

Compared to other 2016 graduate degree recipients, law graduates borrowed, on average, less for their undergraduate education, but more for their graduate education. The average amount law students borrowed for undergraduate education was $540 less than the overall average of $24,800 (2 percent). However, the amount law students borrowed for graduate school exceeded all other graduate and professional degree recipients except medical students.

Note: Data presented reflects only U.S. citizens and permanent residents. Foreign/international students are excluded from analysis due to differences in financial aid eligibility.

Data Source: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Educational Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), National Postsecondary Student Aid Study, NPSAS:04, NPSAS:08, NPSAS:12, and NPSAS:16. Data presentation, including conversion to real dollars, analysis, and commentary by AccessLex Institute.
Value
The latest occupational outlook from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics projects lawyer positions will have the second largest increase in openings among positions requiring a graduate or professional degree.
Percentage of ABA-Approved Law School Graduates Passing the Bar by Attempt and Administration, 2011–2021

Bar passage rate declines have been most pronounced for February takers in recent years, falling 16 percentage points from 2011 to 2020 for first-time takers and 19 percentage points for repeat takers over the same period. Meanwhile, July first-time takers’ bar passage rates fluctuated between 83 percent and 74 percent, declining from 82 percent in 2020 to 77 percent in 2021. Similarly, July repeat takers’ pass rates dropped sharply from 40 percent in 2020 to 22 percent in 2021. COVID-19 pandemic disruptions may have affected the number of bar exam attempts and bar passage rates in 2020.


Note: 2020 bar passage rates include data from states which adopted the use of diploma privilege in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Those graduating with diploma privilege are counted as successfully passing the bar exam.
First-Time Bar Passage Rates for Graduates of ABA-Approved Law Schools by State, 2021

In 2021, 77 percent of all first-time exam takers from ABA-approved law schools passed the bar. However, bar passage rates vary among jurisdictions, generally ranging from 60 to 90 percent.

Note: Bar passage is shown by the state of bar administration, not the location of the exam taker’s law school.


*Delaware canceled both February and July bar exams in 2020.*
Between 2020 and 2021, a majority of states reported decreases in first-time bar passage rates among graduates of ABA-approved law schools. Of the 37 jurisdictions where pass rates declined, seven reported decreases greater than ten percentage points. However, given the anomalous circumstances surrounding bar examinations in 2020, comparisons to 2021 should be interpreted with caution.

*Delaware canceled both February and July bar exams in 2020.*
Recent J.D. Graduates by Employment Status, 2010–2021

Employment outcomes for the Class of 2021 were particularly strong compared to previous cohorts. Between 2020 and 2021, both the number of J.D. graduates and the number of employed graduates increased. The percentage of graduates with jobs requiring licensure rose three percentage points, and the number of graduates in these positions reached a high not seen since 2014. Likewise, the cohort unemployment percentage fell three percentage points.

Full-Time and Part-Time Employment of Recent J.D. Graduates, 2010–2021

The percentage of employed recent J.D. graduates who had a full-time job rose to 97 percent, a two-point increase over 2020. According to the NALP, this is likely one of several employment statistics affected by a spike in demand for legal services after the 2020 pandemic’s effect on employment trends began to subside.

Note: The percentage of employed recent J.D. graduates who had a full-time job rose to 97 percent, a two-point increase over 2020. According to the NALP, this is likely one of several employment statistics affected by a spike in demand for legal services after the 2020 pandemic’s effect on employment trends began to subside.

Recent Graduate Employment by Sector, 2010–2021

While the total number of recent J.D. graduates who are employed rose by about 2,400 in 2021, the distribution of employment across sectors remained relatively unchanged from 2020. 57 percent of recent graduates held jobs in private practice, while business, academic, and judicial clerk positions each represented 11 percent of recent graduates.

Note: These data are based on law school graduates whose employment status was reported to NALP and may not be fully representative of the total law school graduating class indicated. In 2014, NALP changed the timing of the survey administration from 9 months post-graduation to 10 months post-graduation. Use caution when interpreting data and comparing from year to year.

Median Salary (in 2021 Dollars) of Recent J.D. Graduates by Sector, 2010–2021

The median salary for private practice, business, government, and judicial clerk jobs fell in 2021, while the overall median salary rose by $5,000 to $80,000. While the dollar amounts for the aforementioned employment sectors rose compared to those reported in 2020, after adjusting for inflation, the adjusted salaries represented a decline in real dollars from 2020.

Note: These data are based on law school graduates whose employment status was reported to NALP and may not be fully representative of the total law school graduating class indicated. In 2014, NALP changed the timing of the survey administration from 9 months post-graduation to 10 months post-graduation. Use caution when interpreting data and comparing from year to year.

The median salary for jobs requiring bar passage, as well as other professional jobs, rose to $80,000 in 2021. The median salary for J.D.-advantaged jobs remained relatively stable at $70,000. However, due to the relatively high inflation rate over the previous year, the median salary by employment type fell to $75,000, from an adjusted 2020 median of $78,750.

Note: These data are based on law school graduates whose employment status was reported to NALP and may not be fully representative of the total law school graduating class indicated. In 2014, NALP changed the timing of the survey administration from 9 months post-graduation to 10 months post-graduation. Use caution when interpreting data and comparing from year to year.

A longitudinal study of Class of 2008 college graduates found that, among those who earned an advanced degree, a majority agreed their graduate education was worth the cost. However, those who earned an advanced degree in legal professions and studies (including J.D. recipients) were the exception—just under half (48%) agreed their graduate education was worth the cost.

### Data Source:
Detailed Data Sources


