Legal Education Data Deck

KEY TRENDS ON ACCESS, AFFORDABILITY AND VALUE
AccessLex Institute® offers this 2018 Legal Education Data Deck for the use of the legal education community, policymakers, and others interested in viewing a snapshot of certain data and trends organized around the three driving principles of AccessLex Institute’s research agenda: access, affordability and value. This is a living document that will be updated periodically—AccessLex Institute welcomes comments, criticisms and suggestions so that this document will be a useful tool to those whom we serve.

In compiling this data deck, we have utilized publicly available datasets from third parties, including but not limited to the Law School Admission Council, the National Conference of Bar Examiners, the National Association for Law Placement and the American Bar Association Section of Legal Education and Admissions to the Bar. 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 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 with offices in West Chester, Pennsylvania, and Washington, D.C. and with accredited financial counselors throughout the U.S.
Law Students in the United States

Fall 2017 J.D. Enrollment at AccessLex Institute Member Law Schools, by State

- 2,501 or more
- 1,001–2,500
- 501–1,000
- 500 or fewer
- No J.D. enrollment reported

Note: This map includes only the 200 AccessLex Institute member schools as of 2017.

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Law School Applicants, Admits and Matriculants, 2004–2017

The number of applicants and admitted applicants for all terms decreased slightly between 2016 and 2017.

Law School Admission Rates, 2004–2017

Three-quarters of law school applicants were admitted in 2017. The percentage of admitted applicants for all terms dropped slightly between 2016 and 2017.

Application and Admission Rates by Gender, 2013–2017

Fall data trends have consistently shown increasing numbers of female applicants but male admission rates outpacing those of females. Data from all terms in 2017 indicate similar trends with gender gaps in both applicants and admission rates.

Prior to 2000, male and female J.D. enrollment moved inversely, with male enrollment falling as female enrollment increased. For more than a decade, they have moved in tandem. But in 2017, female enrollment surpassed male enrollment for the first time.

Note: Since 2014–2015, the American Bar Association has included “other” as a gender category. The enrollment reported for this category in 2014–2015 is too small to appear in this figure.


The proportion of law school applicants who identify as ethnic minorities remained stable between 2016 and 2017; however, some ethnic groups experienced increases.

Note: Applicants who identify as more than one race/ethnicity are reported in each.

Data Source: Law School Admission Council, 2018a.
Admission Rates by Race/Ethnicity and Overall, 2013–All Terms 2017

Between 2016 and 2017, admission rates declined across nearly all racial/ethnic categories. Admission rates remained the same for white applicants.

Note: Applicants who identify as more than one race/ethnicity are reported in each.

The increase in the proportion of first-year law school students who are minorities mirrors the change in the proportion among bachelor’s degree recipients over the past 6 years.

Full-Time and Part-Time Minority J.D. Enrollment, 2009–2016

Minority students make up a greater percentage of part-time than full-time J.D. students, comprising 38 percent of part-time law students in 2016.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Full-time</th>
<th>Part-time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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 2011–2012, about 9 percent of law students had a parent whose educational attainment was a high school diploma or less.
Percentage of Students Enrolled in Graduate and Professional Programs Who Received Pell Grants as Undergrads, 2011–2012

The proportion of students enrolled in graduate and professional programs who received Pell Grants as undergraduate students varies by discipline. In 2011–2012, fewer than 25 percent of law school students previously received a Pell Grant to help fund their undergraduate studies.

2007–2008 Bachelor’s Degree Recipients Who Completed Graduate Degrees by 2012, by Family Income in 2006 and Graduate Program Area

Compared to the overall U.S. population, few 2007–2008 bachelor’s degree recipients who completed graduate degrees by 2012 came from lower income families. In particular, a high percentage of law school graduates come from high-income families. Of those who completed graduate degrees in legal education by 2012, two-thirds came from families earning $90,000 or more.

Non-J.D. students make up a greater share of law school enrollment than 10 years ago. The percentage of non-J.D. students has increased from 6 percent to 14 percent since 2008.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>J.D. Enrollment</th>
<th>Non-J.D. Enrollment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2008-09</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009-10</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-11</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011-12</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012-13</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013-14</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014-15</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015-16</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016-17</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017-18</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total J.D. Degrees Awarded at ABA-Approved Law Schools, 2004–2017

The number of J.D. degrees awarded per year increased overall between 2004 and 2013, then began to decline in 2014. In 2017, about 35,000 J.D. degrees were awarded.

The proportion of law degrees awarded to racial and ethnic minorities has increased over the last 30 years. In 1986-1987, 9.7 percent of law degrees were awarded to racial and ethnic minorities; in 2016-2017, that figure has grown to 29.8 percent.

AFFORDABILITY
Average tuition and fees for full-time students have increased across all sectors during the last 7 years. Since 2011, average full-time resident tuition and fees at public law schools have increased 9 percent; private law school tuition and fees have increased 8 percent; and public non-resident tuition and fees have increased 5 percent.

Note: Data presented are most recent as of March 2018. Figures shown are inflation adjusted using the Consumer Price Index for all urban consumers (CPI-U) from July of the year indicated, with 1982–1984 as the base years. The following schools did not report data in the given year, and are excluded from the average tuition and fees calculation indicated: Pontifical Catholic University of Puerto Rico (2015 public non-resident); University of Puerto Rico (2015 public non-resident); and Atlanta’s John Marshall Law School (2014 private).

Percentage of Law Students Who Still Owe on Undergraduate Loans, 2011–2012

Nearly half of enrolled law school students are carrying undergraduate debt. In 2011–2012, the median amount of debt still owed among those with outstanding undergraduate loans was $18,000.

Note: NPSAS is administered every 4 years. Data presented are the most recent available. Data Source: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Postsecondary Student Aid Study, NPSAS:12a. Data presentation, analysis and commentary by AccessLex Institute.
Percentage of Law Students Who Worked While Enrolled, by Year and Institution Type

More than half of enrolled law students reported annual earnings from off-campus employment, regardless of institution type.

Median Annual Earnings of Law Students While Enrolled, by Year and Institution Type

While more than half of law students reported working, median annual earnings were fairly modest.


Data presentation, analysis and commentary by AccessLex Institute.
VALUE
Occupations Requiring Graduate or Professional Degree With Most Projected Job Openings, 2016–2026

The latest occupational outlook from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics projects lawyer positions will have the most job openings among positions requiring a graduate or professional degree.

- **New (Added) Jobs**
- **Job Openings**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>New Jobs</th>
<th>Openings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lawyers</td>
<td>65,000</td>
<td>105,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Specialties Teachers, postsecondary</td>
<td>60,600</td>
<td>86,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical therapists</td>
<td>67,100</td>
<td>84,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational, Guidance, School, or Vocational Counselors</td>
<td>36,700</td>
<td>72,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nurse Practitioners</td>
<td>56,100</td>
<td>70,500</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Detail may not sum to totals due to rounding. Job openings from growth represent projections for job creation. Job openings from replacement are projected based on expected retirement and other employment departures.

Overall first-time bar passage rates for graduates of ABA-approved law schools were higher in July than in February during the period from 2008 to 2017, but the gap has narrowed. July pass rates were 10 percentage points higher in 2008, and 14 percentage points higher in 2017.


Data presentation, analysis and commentary by AccessLex Institute.
First-Time Bar Passage Rates for Graduates of ABA-Approved Law Schools by State, 2017

In 2017, 75 percent of all first-time exam takers from ABA-approved law schools passed the bar. However, the proportion of these exam takers passing varies from state to state.

Note: Bar passage is shown by the state of bar administration, not the location of the exam taker’s law school.
Change in First-Time Bar Passage Rates for Graduates of ABA-Approved Law Schools, by State, From 2016 to 2017

Between 2016 and 2017, a majority of states saw decreases in first-time bar passage rates among graduates of ABA-approved law schools.


The majority of law school graduates obtain employment requiring bar passage, although the percentage has decreased since 2007. During the same period, the proportion of law school graduates obtaining a position where the J.D. is an advantage (but not required) increased. The proportion of law school graduates who are unemployed but seeking work increased from 6 percent in 2010 to 10 percent in 2011, and has remained fairly constant.

Note: These data are based on law school graduates whose employment status was reported to the National Association for Law Placement (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 when comparing from year to year.


The percentage of employed law school graduates in part-time positions has decreased from the high of 12 percent in 2011.

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 when comparing from year to year.

Recent J.D. Graduate Employment by Sector, 2007–2016

The distribution of employed recent J.D. graduates has remained fairly stable since 2011, with the majority of graduates working in private practice.

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 when comparing from year to year.

Median Salaries of Recent J.D. Grads

The median salary for a recent J.D. graduate working in private practice was $100,000 in 2015, down from the high point of $144,000 in 2009, but continuing to increase from the low of $90,000 in 2011. Other sectors show smaller fluctuations.


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 when comparing from year to year. Figures shown are inflation adjusted using the Consumer Price Index for all urban consumers (CPI-U) from July of the year indicated, with 1982–1984 as the base years.

Median Salaries of Recent J.D. Grads

Regardless of the type of employment, the median salary of recent J.D. graduates is less in 2016 than it was in 2007.

Median Salary (in 2016 dollars) of Recent J.D. Graduates by Employment Type, 2007–2016

Bar passage required  J.D. advantage  Other professional  Non professional

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 when comparing from year to year. Figures shown are inflation adjusted using the Consumer Price Index for all urban consumers (CPI-U) from July of the year indicated, with 1982–1984 as the base years.

1992–1993 Bachelor’s Degree Recipients Who Earned a Graduate Degree by 2003, by Whether or Not They Believe Graduate Education Was Worth the Cost

When surveyed 10 years after graduation, most 1992–1993 bachelor’s degree recipients who had since earned a graduate degree agreed that their graduate education was worth the cost, regardless of program type. Over 80 percent of law-related degree recipients felt their education was worth the money.

Note: Data are shown by major/field of study as reported by the survey respondent and include all graduate degree types (i.e., master’s, professional, doctoral). Therefore, “law” includes J.D. recipients, but could also include Master of Legal Studies and similar recipients.

The perspectives of more recent graduate degree recipients are noticeably different. When surveyed 4 years later, 52 percent of 2007–2008 bachelor’s degree recipients who had since earned a graduate degree in legal professions and studies felt their education was worth the cost.

Note: Data are shown by major/field of study as reported by the survey respondent and include all graduate degree types (i.e., master’s, professional, doctoral). Therefore, “Legal professions and studies” includes J.D. recipients, but could also include Master of Legal Studies and similar recipients.

Detailed Data Sources


U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, 2008/12 Baccalaureate and Beyond Longitudinal Study (B&B:08/12a) Computation by NCES PowerStats on 8/18/2015.

U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, 2008/12 Baccalaureate and Beyond Longitudinal Study (B&B:08/12b) Computation by NCES PowerStats on 8/18/2015.


