Foreword

AccessLex Institute® offers this 2019 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 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 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 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 2018 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 ABA-approved AccessLex Institute member schools as of 2018.
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ACCESS
The number of applicants, admitted applicants, and matriculants for all terms increased between 2017 and 2018. This increase comes after a slight dip was observed in all these categories between 2016-17.

Law School Admission Rates, 2005–2018

The overall law school admission rate declined by three percent between 2017 and 2018, falling from 75 to 72 percent as the number of law school applicants increased.

Female applicants make up an increasing share of law school applicants but admission rates for males continue to outpace those of females.

Prior to 2000, male and female J.D. enrollment mainly 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, female enrollment has increased while male enrollment has declined.

Note: Since 2014–15, 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.

Racial/Ethnic Diversity of Law School Applicants, 2014–2018

The racial and ethnic composition of law school applicants has remained relatively stable over the last five years. White applicants comprise nearly two-thirds of the applicant pool.

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

Admission Rates by Race/Ethnicity and Overall, 2014–2018

Between 2017 and 2018, admission rates declined across nearly all racial/ethnic categories. Admission rates increased slightly for Puerto Rican 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 seven years.

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.

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 2015–2016, about 10 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, 2015–2016

The proportion of students enrolled in graduate and professional programs who received Pell Grants as undergraduate students varies by discipline. In 2015–2016, over a third of law school students previously received a Pell Grant to help fund their undergraduate studies.

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 presentation, analysis and commentary by AccessLex Institute.
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.

*Estimated income distribution among all U.S. households. Calculated using those households reporting positive income on 2006 American Community Survey.

J.D. and Non-J.D. Enrollment, 2009–2018

Non-J.D. students make up a greater share of law school enrollment today than they did at the start of the decade. The percentage of non-J.D. students has increased from 6 percent to 16 percent since 2009.

Total J.D. Degrees Awarded at ABA-Approved Law Schools, 2005–2018

The number of J.D. degrees awarded per year increased overall between 2004 and 2013, but began to decline in 2014. In 2018, about 34,500 J.D. degrees were awarded.

The proportion of law degrees awarded to racial and ethnic minorities has increased over the last 30 years. In 1987, nearly 10 percent of law degrees were awarded to racial and ethnic minorities; in 2017-2018, that figure has grown to just over 30 percent.

AFFORDABILITY
Average tuition and fees for full-time students has been relatively flat across all sectors over the last seven years. Since 2012, average full-time resident tuition and fees at public law schools has actually decreased by 2 percent; private law school tuition and fees have decreased 0.4 percent; and public non-resident tuition and fees have decreased 6 percent.

Note: Data presented are most recent as of August 2019. Figures shown are inflation adjusted using the Consumer Price Index for all urban consumers (CPI-U) from July of the year indicated with 1982–84 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: Appalachian School of Law (2017 private); Lincoln Memorial (2017 private); Pontifical Catholic University of Puerto Rico (2017, 2016 and 2015 public non-resident); Stanford University (2017 public non-resident); Northwestern University (2016 public non-resident); University of Puerto Rico (2015 public non-resident); and Atlanta’s John Marshall Law School (2014 private).

Data Source: American Bar Association, 2019a. Data presentation, including conversion to real dollars, analysis and commentary by AccessLex Institute.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Public resident</th>
<th>Private</th>
<th>Public non-resident</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>$25,160</td>
<td>$43,490</td>
<td>$38,730</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>$25,160</td>
<td>$43,490</td>
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</tr>
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<td>$25,160</td>
<td>$43,490</td>
<td>$38,730</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Data presented are most recent as of August 2019. Figures shown are inflation adjusted using the Consumer Price Index for all urban consumers (CPI-U) from July of the year indicated with 1982–84 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: Appalachian School of Law (2017 private); Lincoln Memorial (2017 private); Pontifical Catholic University of Puerto Rico (2017, 2016 and 2015 public non-resident); Stanford University (2017 public non-resident); Northwestern University (2016 public non-resident); University of Puerto Rico (2015 public non-resident); and Atlanta’s John Marshall Law School (2014 private).

Data Source: American Bar Association, 2019a. Data presentation, including conversion to real dollars, analysis and commentary by AccessLex Institute.
Percentage of Law Students Who Still Owe on Undergraduate Loans, 2015–2016

Nearly half of enrolled law school students are carrying undergraduate debt. In 2015–2016, the median amount of debt still owed among those with outstanding undergraduate loans was $25,500.

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.

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 2018 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.

VALUE
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.

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.

Bar passage rate declines have been most pronounced for February takers in recent years, falling from 74 to 62 percent between 2014 and 2018. Over the same time period, July bar passage rates have fluctuated around 75 percent.

First-Time Bar Passage Rates for Graduates of ABA-Approved Law Schools by State, 2018

In 2018, 73 percent of all first-time exam takers from ABA-approved law schools passed the bar. However, bar passage rates vary among jurisdictions, generally falling between 60 and 85 percent.

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

Between 2017 and 2018, a majority of states saw decreases in first-time bar passage rates among graduates of ABA-approved law schools.

Recent J.D. Graduates by Employment Status, 2009–2018

The percentage of recent law graduates who obtain employment in jobs requiring bar passage has increased over the past six years, and jumped five percentage points between 2016 and 2018. The unemployment rate has also improved—however, it is important to note that while the unemployment rate has declined, the total pool of recent graduates has been shrinking since 2013.

Note: These data are based on law school graduates who 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.

Full-Time and Part-Time Employment of Recent J.D. Graduates, 2009–2018

The percentage of recent law school graduates employed in part-time positions has steadily declined since 2011 as more graduates obtain full-time employment each year.

These data are based on law school graduates who 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, 2009–2018

Since 2014, the proportion of graduates working in private practice has increased while the percentage working in business has steadily decreased. The proportion of graduates working in government, public interest and academic jobs has remained flat over this period, with only judicial clerkships seeing a slight increase.

Note: These data are based on law school graduates who 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 Salary (in 2018 Dollars) of Recent J.D. Graduates by Sector, 2009–2018

The median salary for the class of 2018 graduates working in private practice is $120,000, down from the high point of $152,100 for the class of 2009, but continuing to increase from a low of $95,200 for the class of 2011. Other sectors show smaller fluctuations but have been relatively stable throughout this period.

Note: These data are based on law school graduates who 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.

Data Source: National Association for Law Placement (2019). Data presentation, including conversion to real dollars, analysis and commentary by AccessLex Institute.
Median Salary (in 2018 Dollars) of Recent J.D. Graduates by Employment Type, 2009–2018

For all employment categories, the median salary of class of 2018 graduates is lower than the median for the class of 2009. However, median salary has been trending upward for almost all employment categories in recent years.

Note: These data are based on law school graduates who 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.

Data Source: National Association for Law Placement (2019). Data presentation, including conversion to real dollars, analysis and commentary by AccessLex Institute.
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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Major/Field of Study</th>
<th>Graduate education not worth its cost</th>
<th>Yes, graduate education worth its cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Any graduate degree</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts and humanities</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medicine/health</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social and behavioral sciences</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business and management</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life and physical sciences</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering/math/computer science</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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.

2007–2008 Bachelor’s Degree Recipients Who Earned a Graduate Degree by 2012, by Whether or Not They Believe Graduate Education Was Worth the Cost

The perspectives of more recent graduate degree recipients are noticeably different. In 2012, 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

**American Bar Association. (2019a).** *Compilation - All Schools Data. Section of Legal Education - ABA Required Disclosures.*
Retrieved from http://www.abarequireddisclosures.org/

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**National Association for Law Placement. (2019).** *Recent Graduates.*
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Detailed Data Sources (continued)


