



Legal Education Data Deck

KEY TRENDS ON ACCESS,
AFFORDABILITY AND VALUE

April 2022

Foreword

The 2022 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.



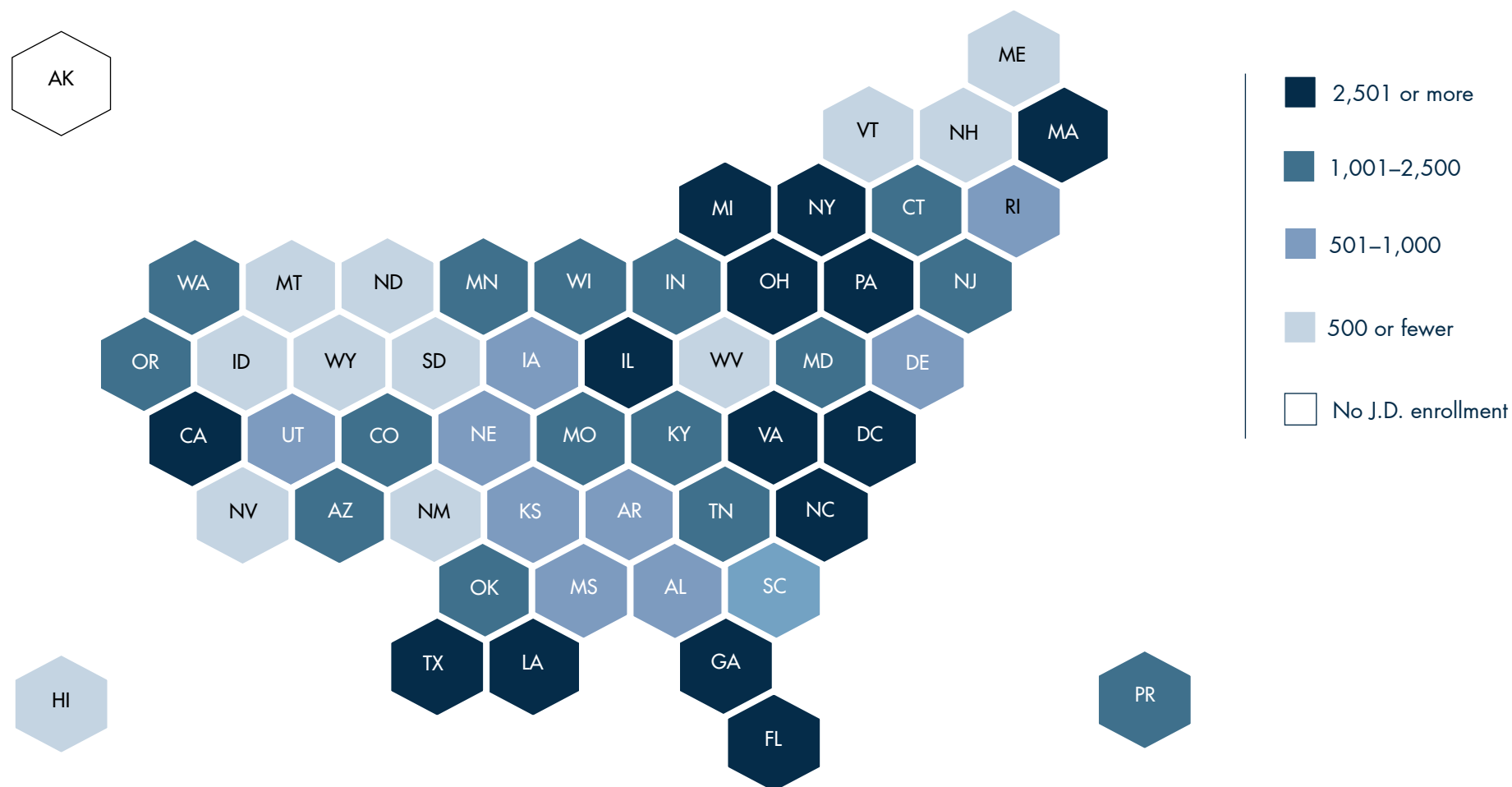
About AccessLex Institute

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 2020 J.D. Enrollment, by State.



Note: This map includes the 197 ABA-approved AccessLex Institute member schools reporting enrollment as of 2020.
Data Source: American Bar Association, 2021a. Data presentation, analysis and commentary by AccessLex Institute.

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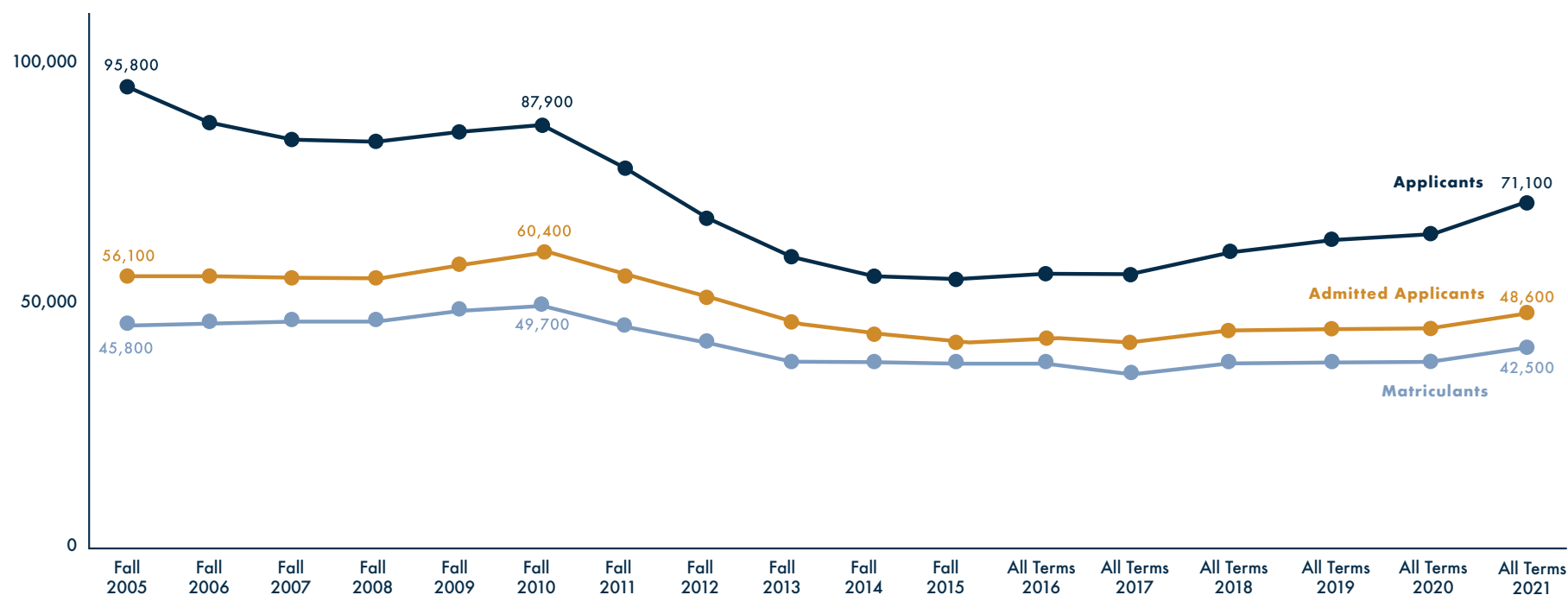


ACCESS



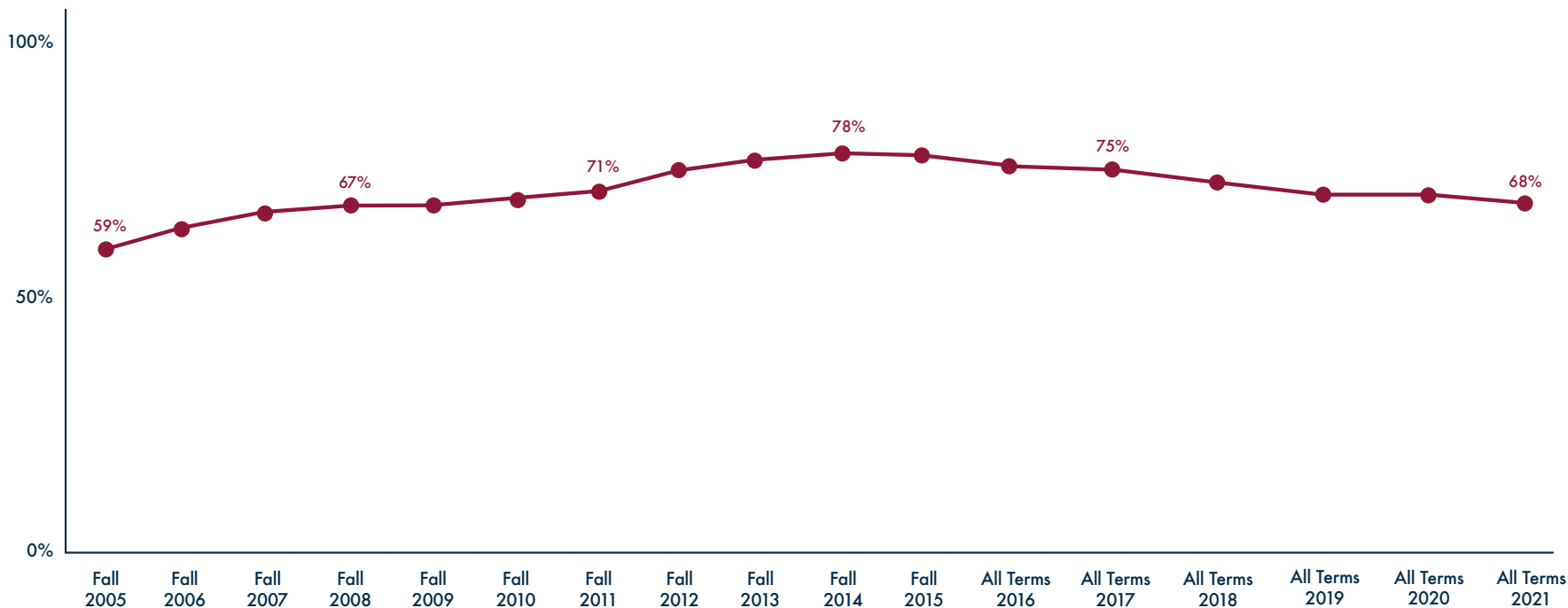
Law School Applicants, Admits and Matriculants, 2005–2021

Between 2020 and 2021, the number of applicants, admitted applicants, and matriculants increased. This marks the fourth consecutive year of increase in the number of applicants; the increase in the number of admitted applicants and matriculants is a departure from 2020's slight decline of each.



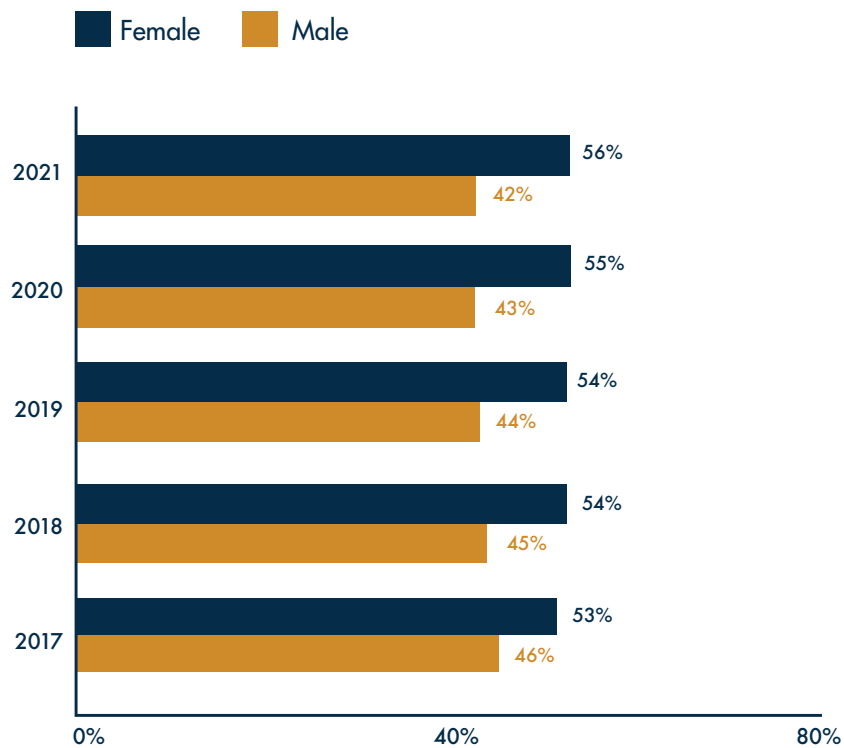
Law School Admission Rates, 2005–2021

The overall law school admission rate decreased between 2020 and 2021, with 68 percent of applicants receiving offers of admission versus 70 percent in the previous year.

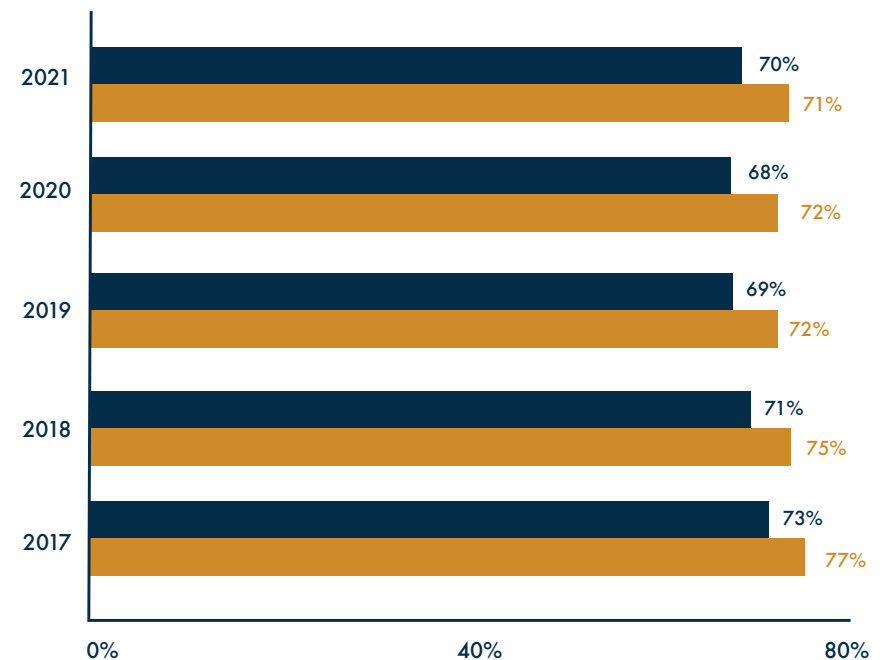


Application and Admission Rates by Gender, 2017–2021

Female applicants make up an increasing share of law school applicants. Admission rates for men have historically outpaced rates for women, but in 2021 women were admitted at a higher rate than the previous year, which has not occurred for either men or women since 2014. Men continued to experience a decrease in admission rates.



Law School Applicants by Gender



Law School Admission Rates by Gender

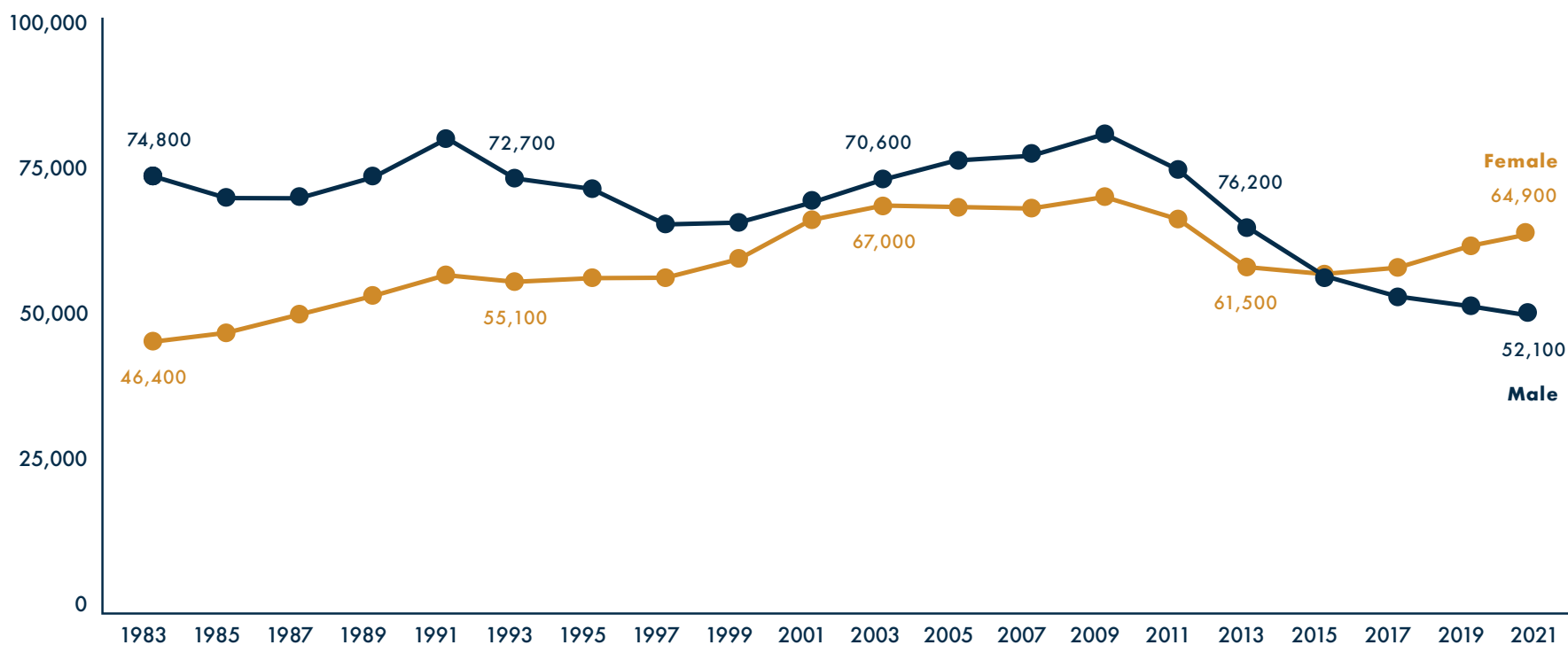
Note: Applicants by gender do not sum to 100%. Since 2014-2015, the American Bar Association has included "Other" as a gender category. The enrollment reported for this category is too small to appear in this figure.

Data Source: Law School Admission Council, 2022. Data presentation, analysis and commentary by AccessLex Institute.



Total J.D. Enrollment by Gender, 1983-2021

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, female enrollment has increased while male enrollment has declined.



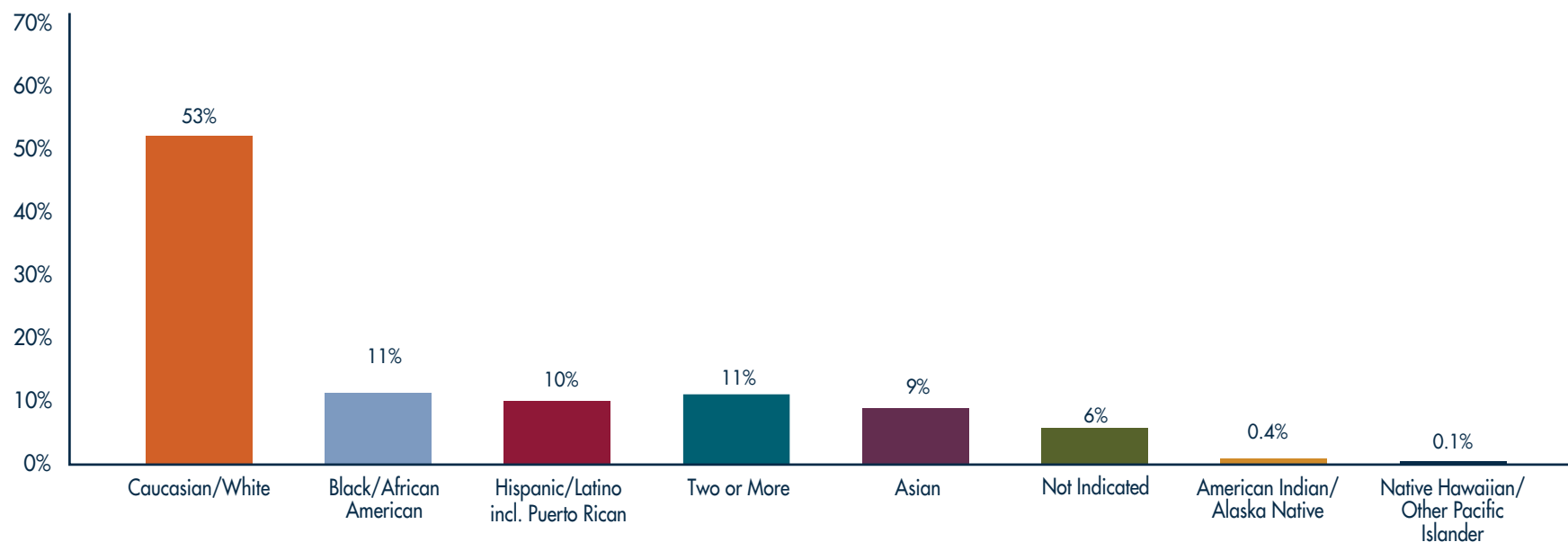
Note: Since 2014-15, the American Bar Association has included "Other" as a gender category. The enrollment reported for this category is too small to appear in this figure.

Data Source: American Bar Association, 2022a and 2022b. Data presentation, analysis and commentary by AccessLex Institute.



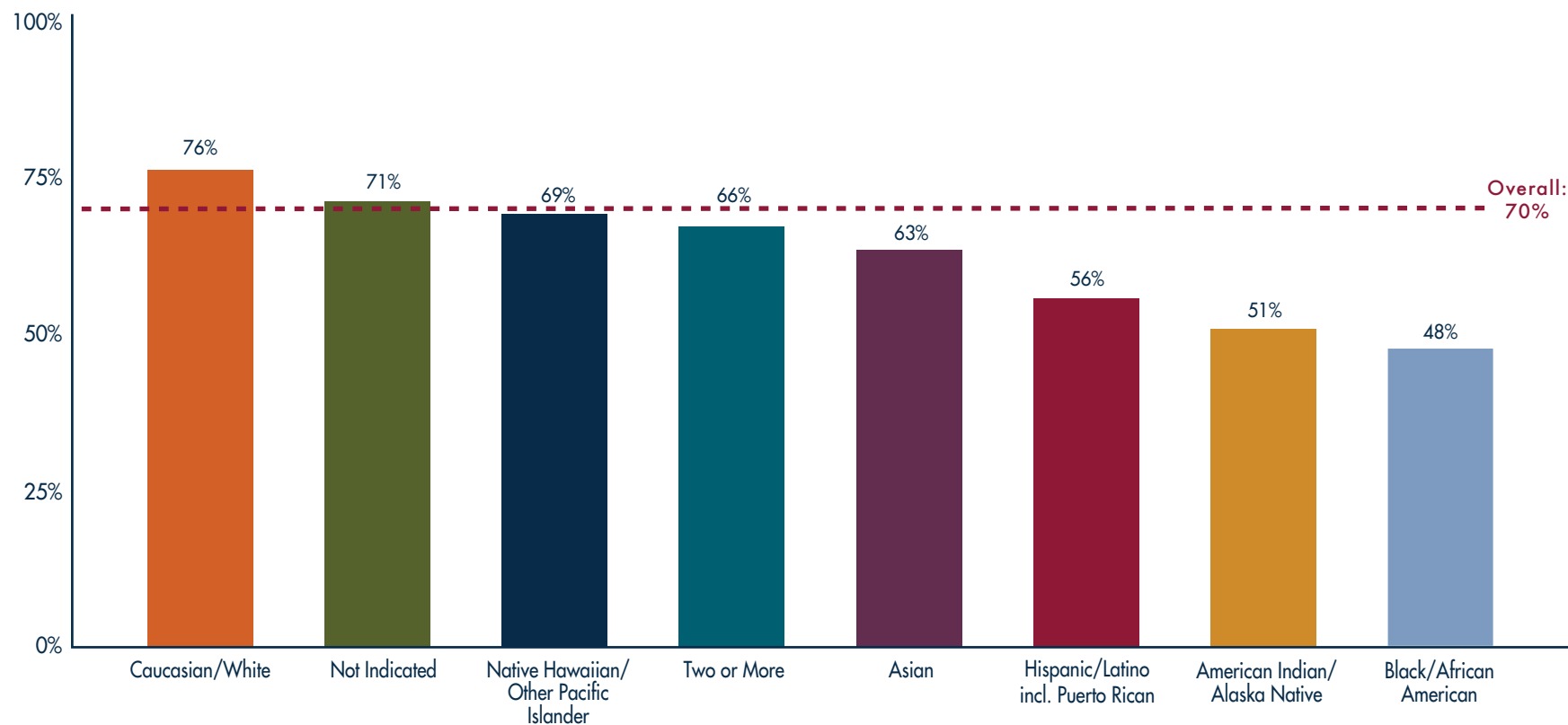
Racial and Ethnic Diversity of Law School Applicants, 2021

The racial and ethnic composition of law school applicants has remained relatively stable in recent years. In 2021, White applicants comprised roughly half of the applicant pool, while Black, Asian, and Hispanic/Latino applicants collectively comprised approximately one-third.



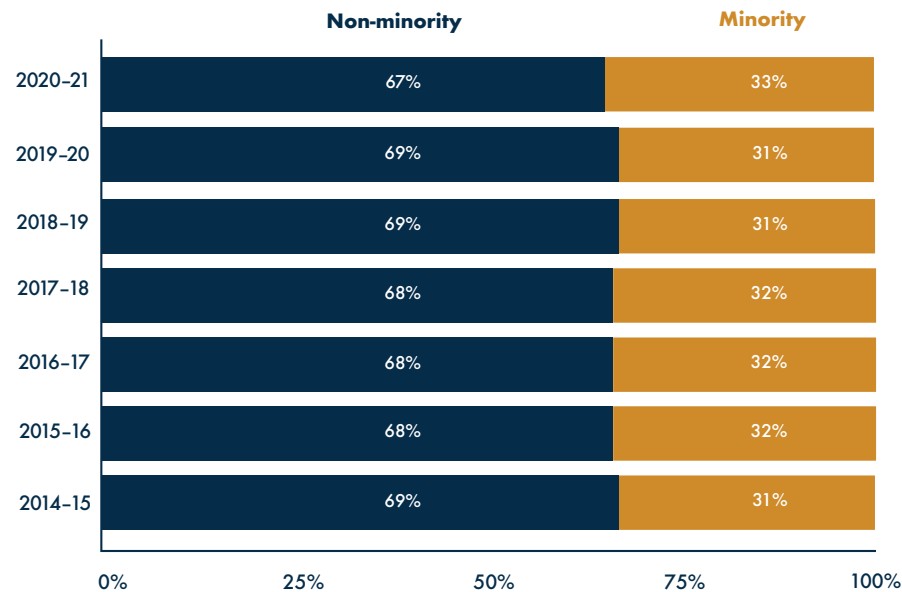
Admission Rates by Race/Ethnicity and Overall, 2021

Admissions rates differ markedly between racial/ethnic categories with 76 percent of White applicants gaining admission compared to 48 percent of Black applicants and 56 percent of Hispanic/Latino applicants.

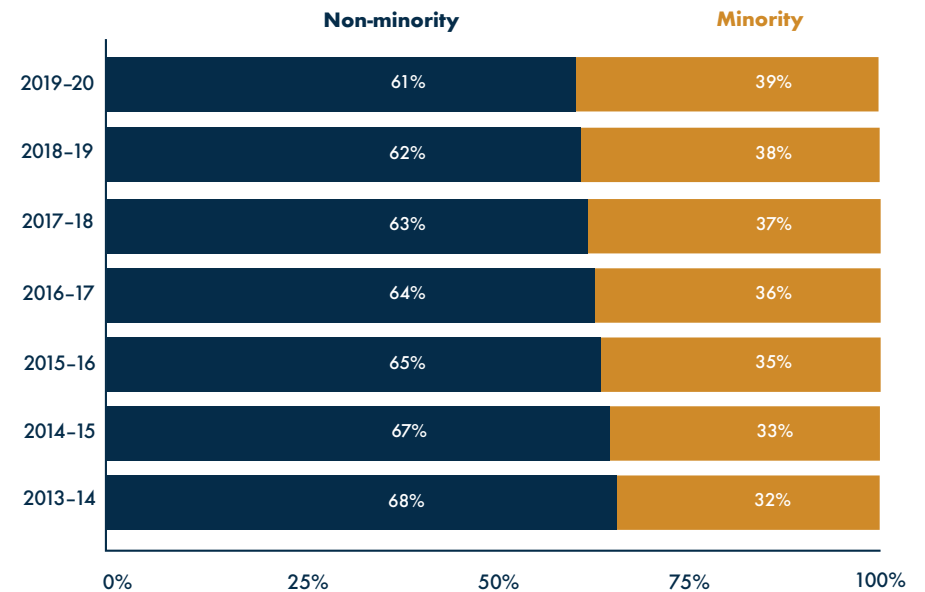


Percentage of Bachelor's Degrees Awarded to Minority Students and Percentage of First-Year Enrolled Minority J.D. Students, 2014–2021

The increase in the proportion of underrepresented minority students among first-year law school students broadly reflects the change in the proportion among bachelor's degree recipients over the period from 2013-14 to 2019-20.



Percentage of First-Year Enrolled Minority and Non-minority Students

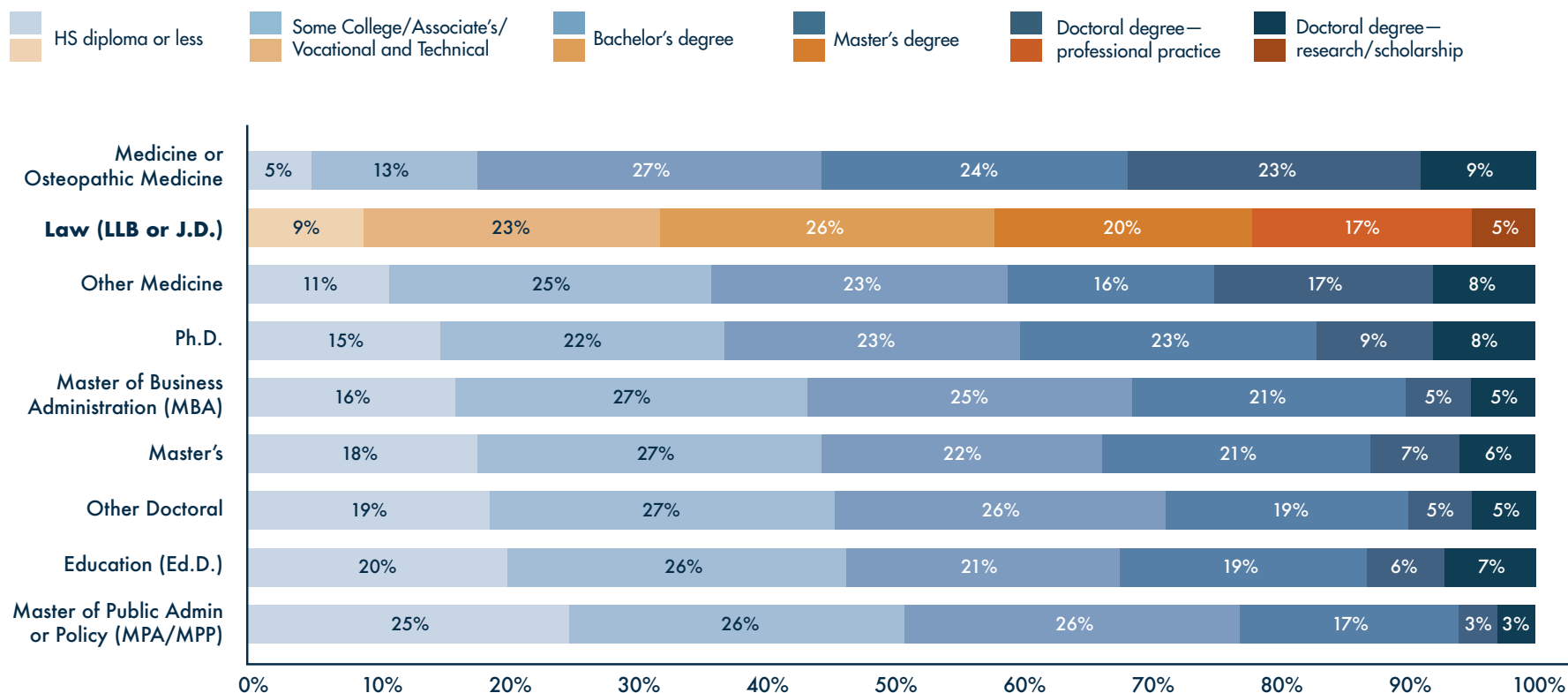


Percentage of Bachelor's Degrees Awarded to Racial/Ethnic Minority and Non-minority Students



Highest Level of Parent Education Among Graduate Students by Type of Program, 2015–2016

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, less than 10 percent of law students had a parent whose educational attainment was a high school diploma or less.



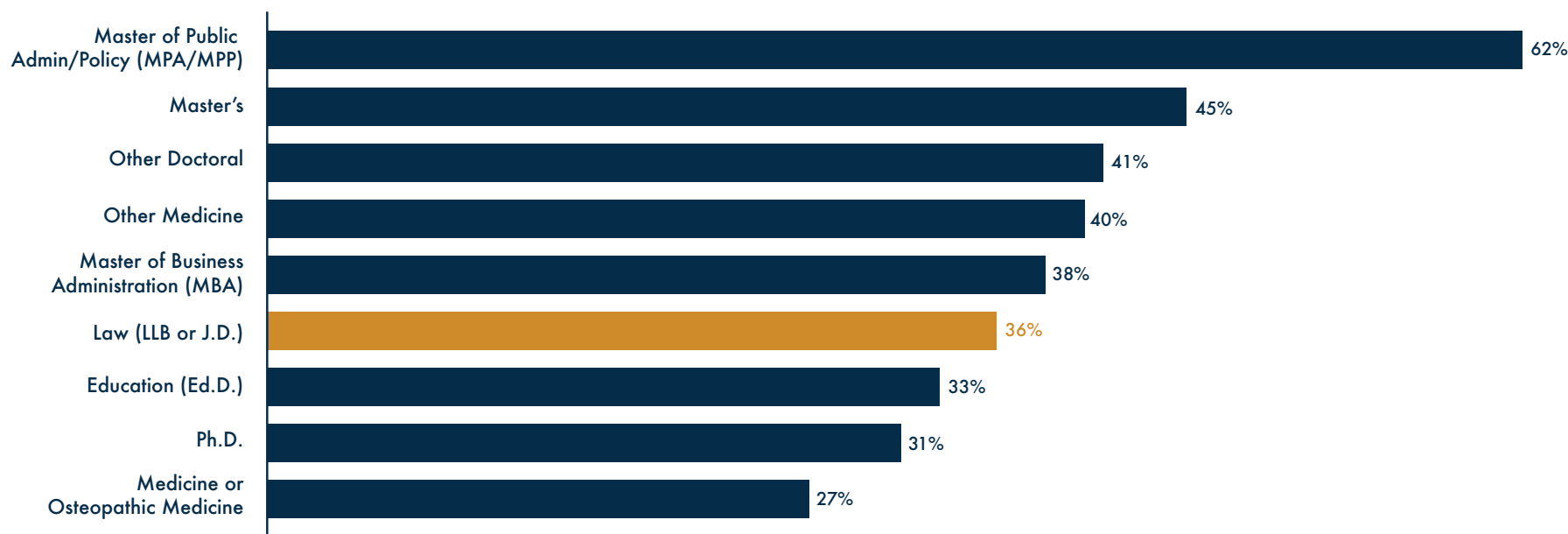
Data Source: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Educational Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Postsecondary Student Aid Study, NPSAS:16.
Data presentation, analysis and commentary by AccessLex Institute.

Master's includes: Master of Science (MS), Master of Arts (MA), Master of Education or Teaching, Master of Social Work (MSW), Master of Fine Arts (MFA), Master of Public Health (MPH), other master's degree
Other Doctoral includes: Doctor of Science or Engineering, Doctor of Psychology (PsyD), Doctor of Business or Public Admin, Doctor of Fine Arts (DFA), Doctor of Theology (ThD), other doctor's degree
Other Medicine includes: Dentistry (DDS, DMD), Chiropractic (DC, DCM), Pharmacy (PharmD), Optometry (OD), Podiatry (DPM, DP, PodD), Veterinary Medicine (DVM)



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 Source: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Educational Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Postsecondary Student Aid Study, NPSAS:16.

Data presentation, analysis and commentary by AccessLex Institute.

Master's includes: Master of Science (MS), Master of Arts (MA), Master of Education or Teaching, Master of Social Work (MSW), Master of Fine Arts (MFA), Master of Public Health (MPH), other master's degree

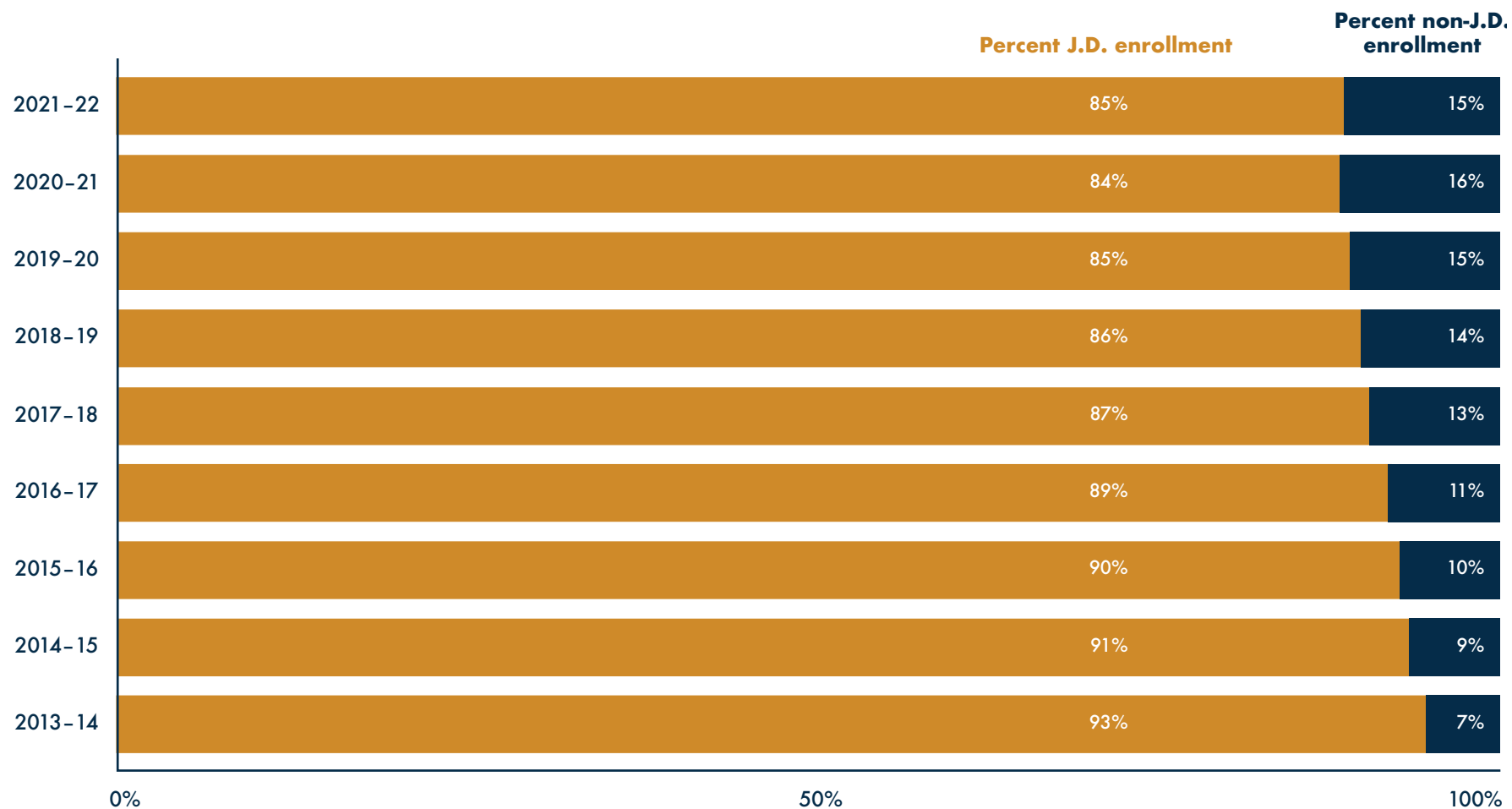
Other Doctoral includes: Doctor of Science or Engineering, Doctor of Psychology (PsyD), Doctor of Business or Public Admin, Doctor of Fine Arts (DFA), Doctor of Theology (ThD), other doctor's degree

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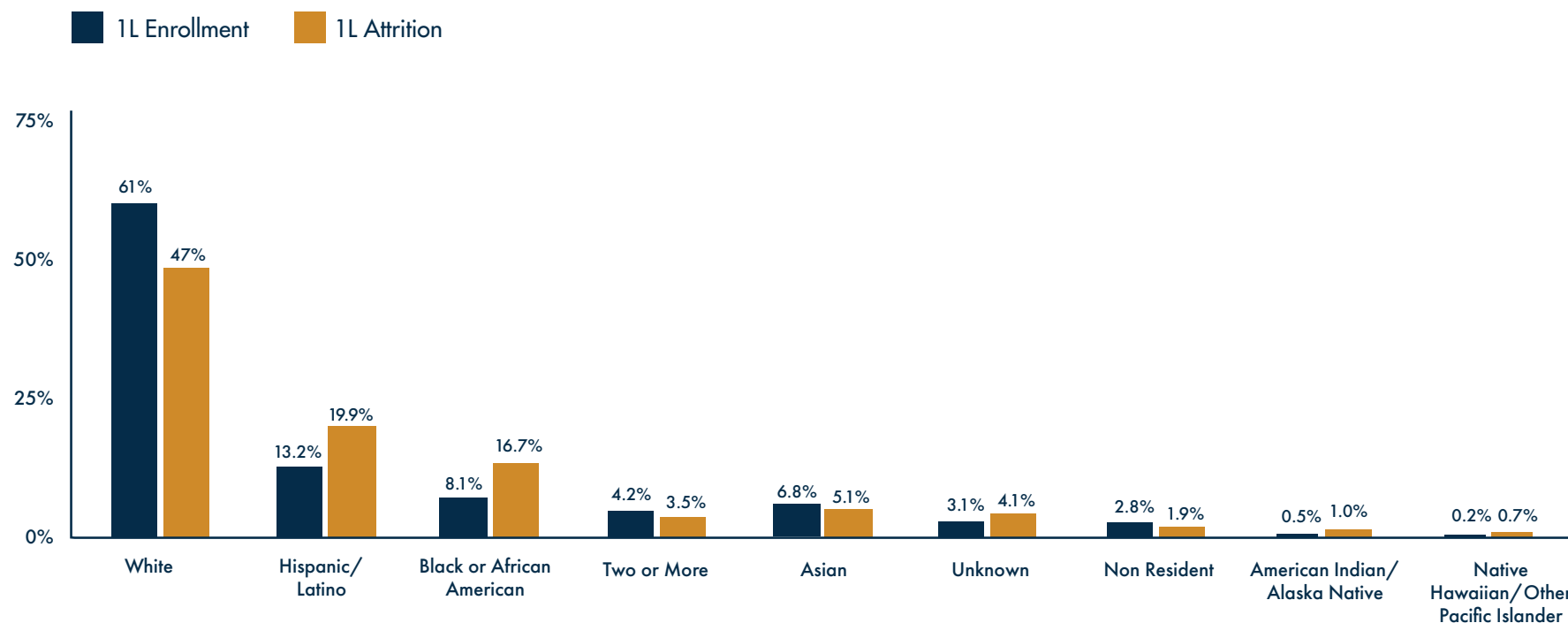
J.D. and Non-J.D. Enrollment, 2013–2021

Non-J.D. students make up a greater share of law school enrollment today than observed eight years ago. The percentage of non-J.D. students has more than doubled since 2013. However, a slight decrease in the share of non-J.D. occurred in the 2021-2022 academic year.



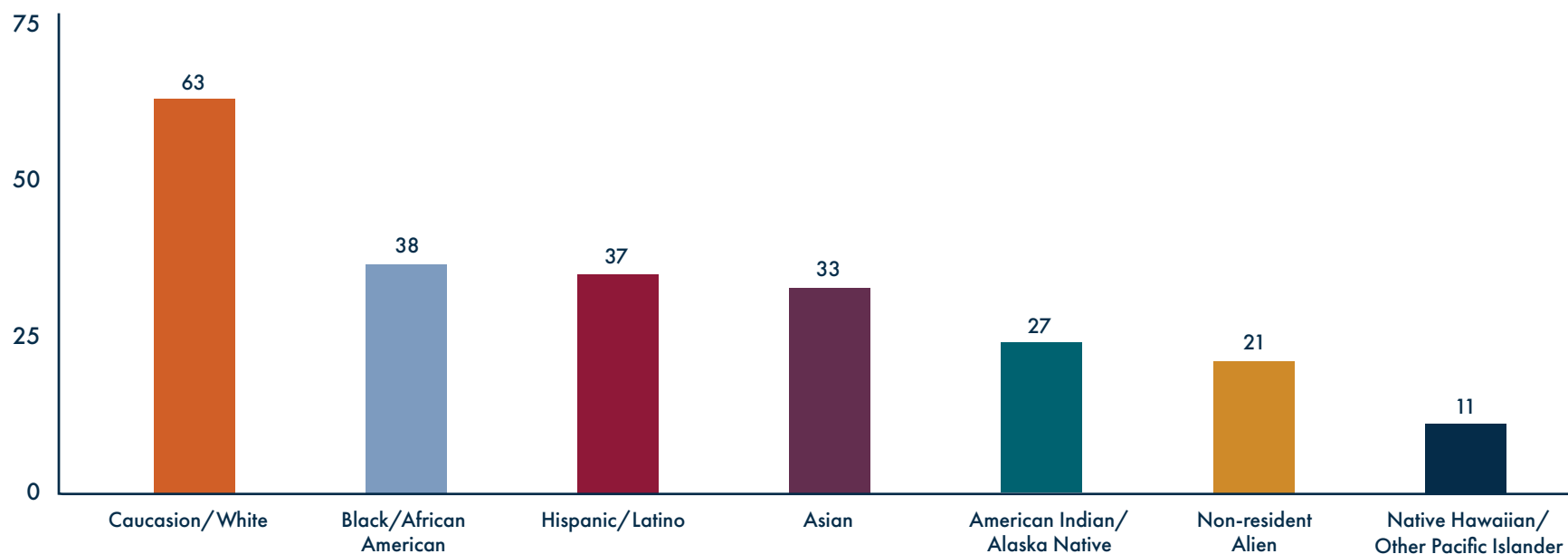
Percent of 1L Enrollment vs. Percent of 1L Non-Transfer Attrition, 2020–2021

Minority students are over-represented in the group of students who withdraw between their first and second years of law school. In 2021, minority students comprised 33 percent of enrollment but made up 47 percent of withdrawals. In particular, students identifying as Hispanic/Latino, Black, American Indian or Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, are over-represented relative to their enrollment.



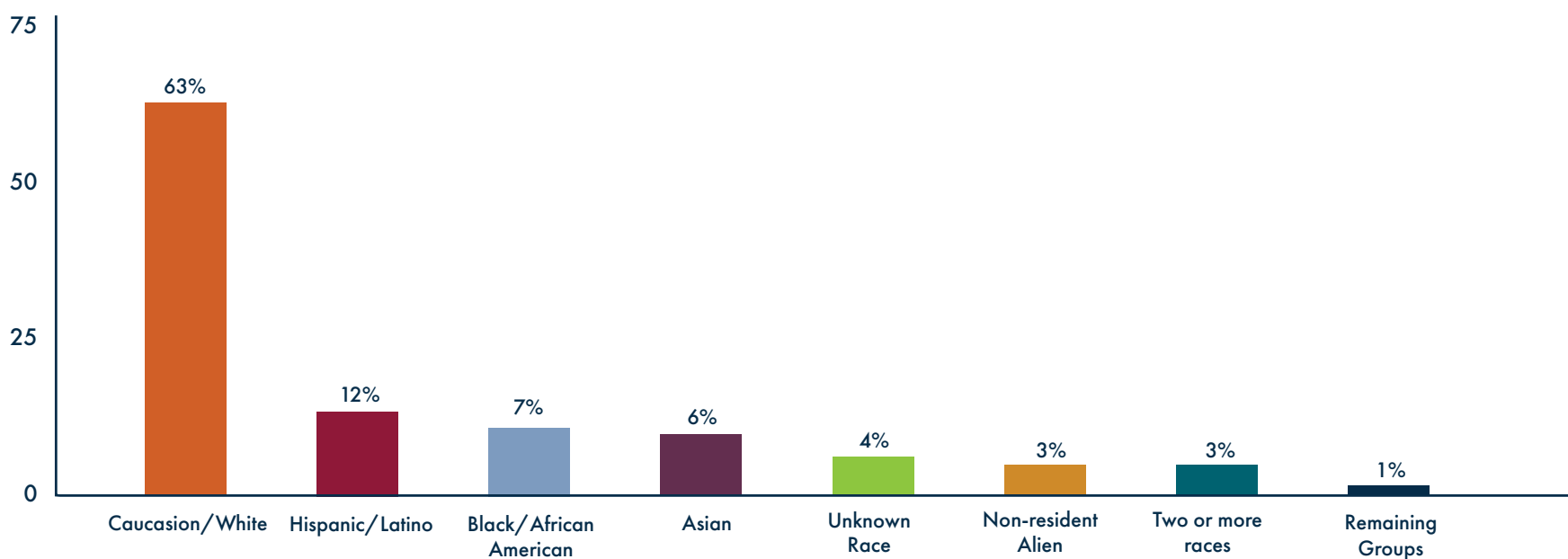
Number of Law Schools Accounting for Half or More Law Students of Each Race/Ethnicity, 2021

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 197 ABA-approved law schools. Overall, this chart indicates that underrepresented minority students are concentrated within a few law schools.



Share of J.D. Degrees Awarded by Race and Ethnicity, 2021

In 2021, White students comprised nearly two-thirds of law school graduates, while Black, Asian, and Hispanic/Latino applicants collectively comprised roughly one-quarter.

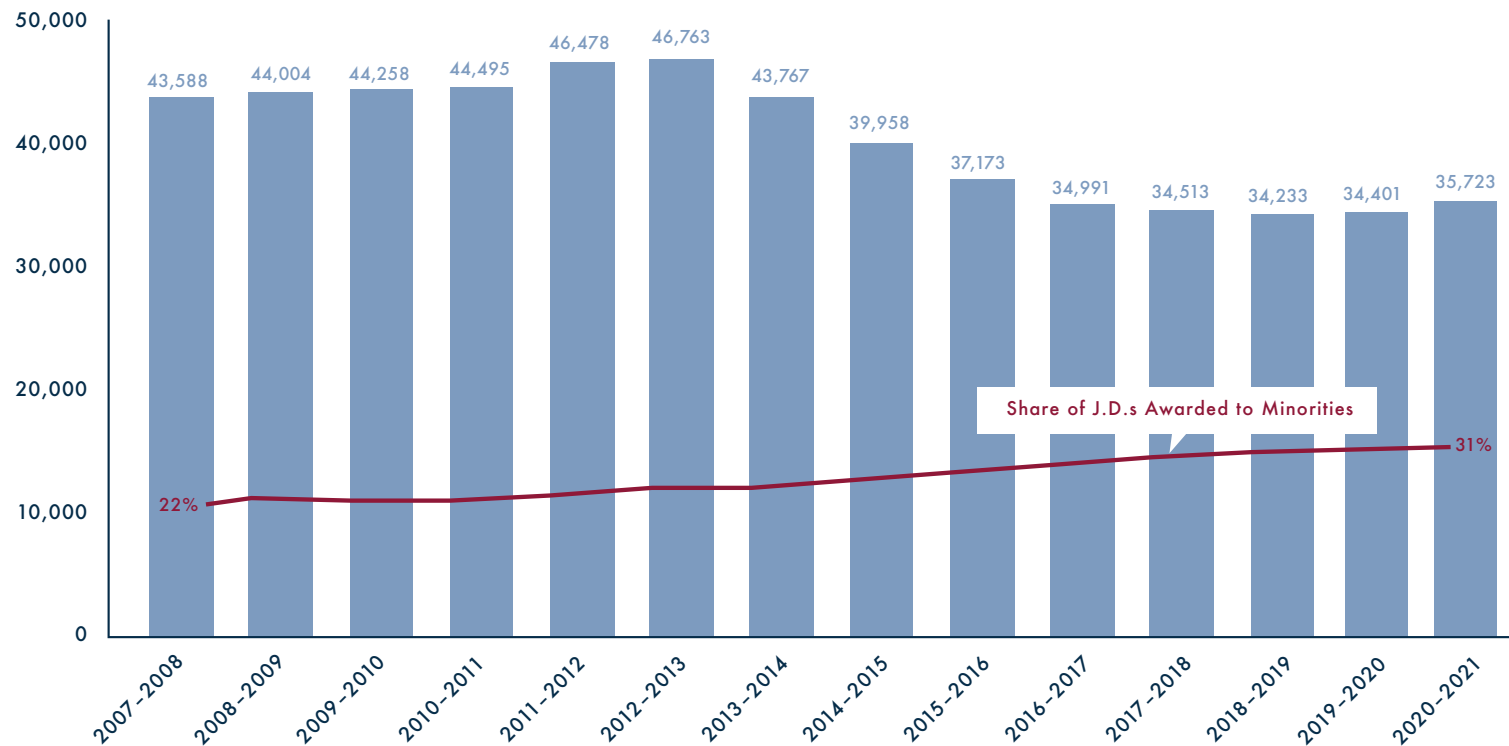


Note: "Remaining" includes students who identified as American Indian or Alaskan Native and Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander.
Data Source: American Bar Association, 2022a. Data Presentation, analysis and commentary by AccessLex Institute.



Total J.D. Degrees Awarded and Percentage of J.D. Degrees Awarded to Ethnic Minorities at ABA-Approved Law Schools, 2007–2021

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 increased between 2019 and 2020, continuing the slight increase seen between 2018 and 2019. The percentage of degrees awarded to minority students has been stable at 31 percent since 2017.

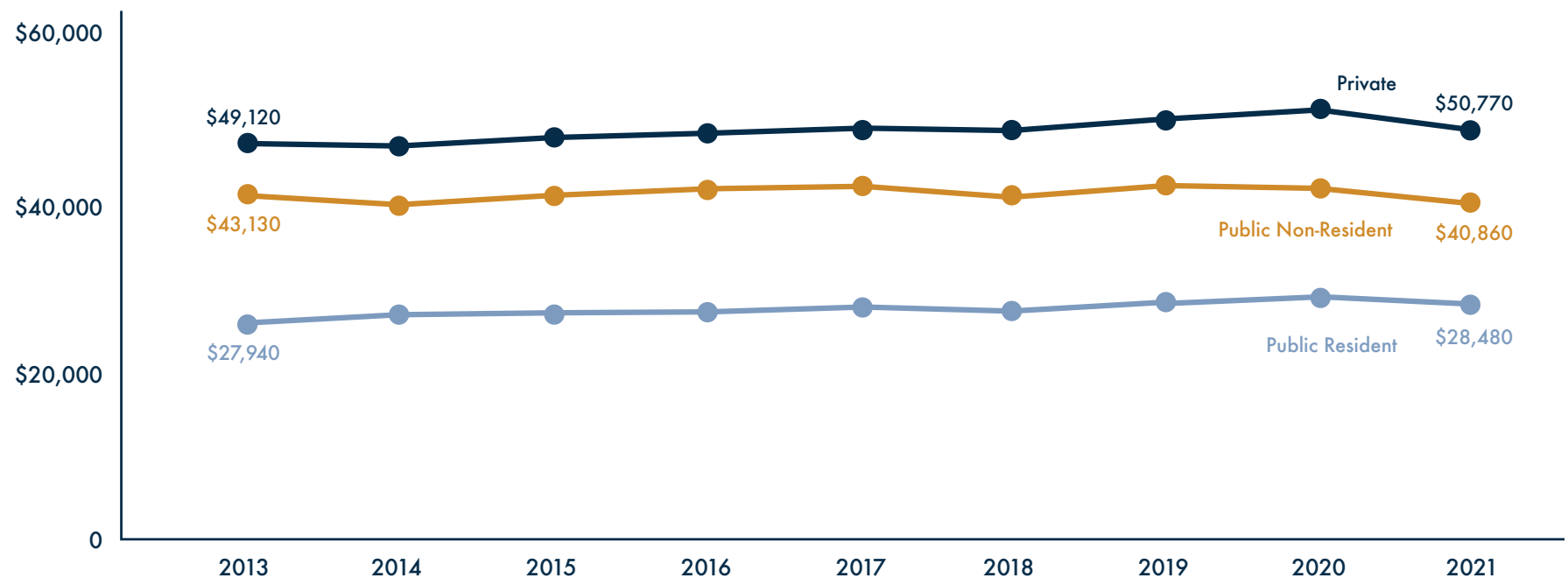


AFFORDABILITY



Average Full-Time Tuition and Fees (in 2021 Dollars) by School Type and Residency, 2013–2021

Average tuition and fees for full-time students dropped substantially. Average private school tuition and fees dropped to an amount not seen since 2016. Public resident tuition and fees dropped to approximate 2014 levels, and non-resident tuition and fees for public law schools fell below 2013 levels.



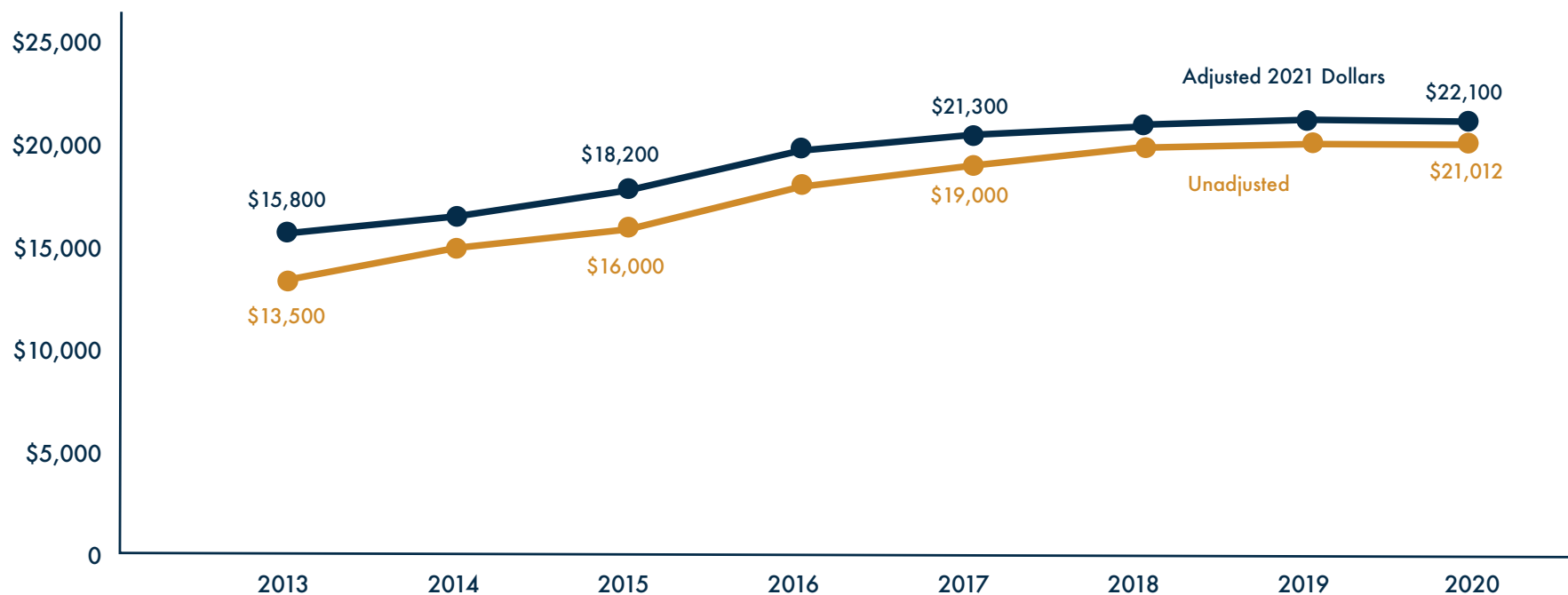
Note: Figures shown are inflation adjusted using the Consumer Price Index for all urban consumers (CPI-U) from July of the year indicated.

Data Source: American Bar Association, 2022a and 2022b. Data presentation, including conversion to real dollars, analysis and commentary by AccessLex Institute.



Median Grant Amount Awarded to Full-Time Students, 2013–2020

The median grant amount awarded to full-time students receiving aid increased by more than 50 percent between 2011 to 2019. In 2013, the median amount law schools awarded to at least half their grant recipients was \$15,800. By 2020 that amount increased to \$22,100.



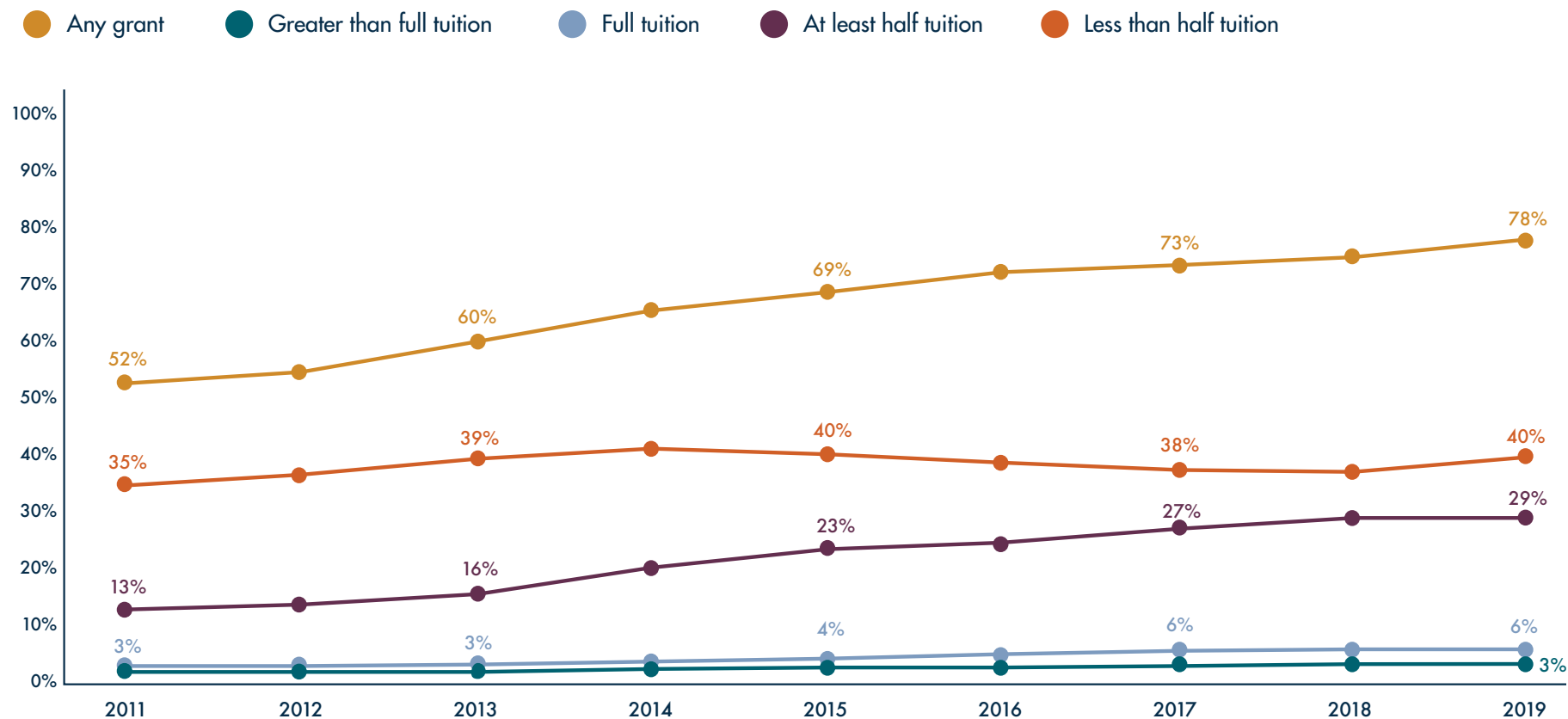
Note: The median value displayed here is the median of all school level median grant amounts.

Data Source: American Bar Association, 2022a. Data presentation, including conversion to real dollars, analysis and commentary by AccessLex Institute.



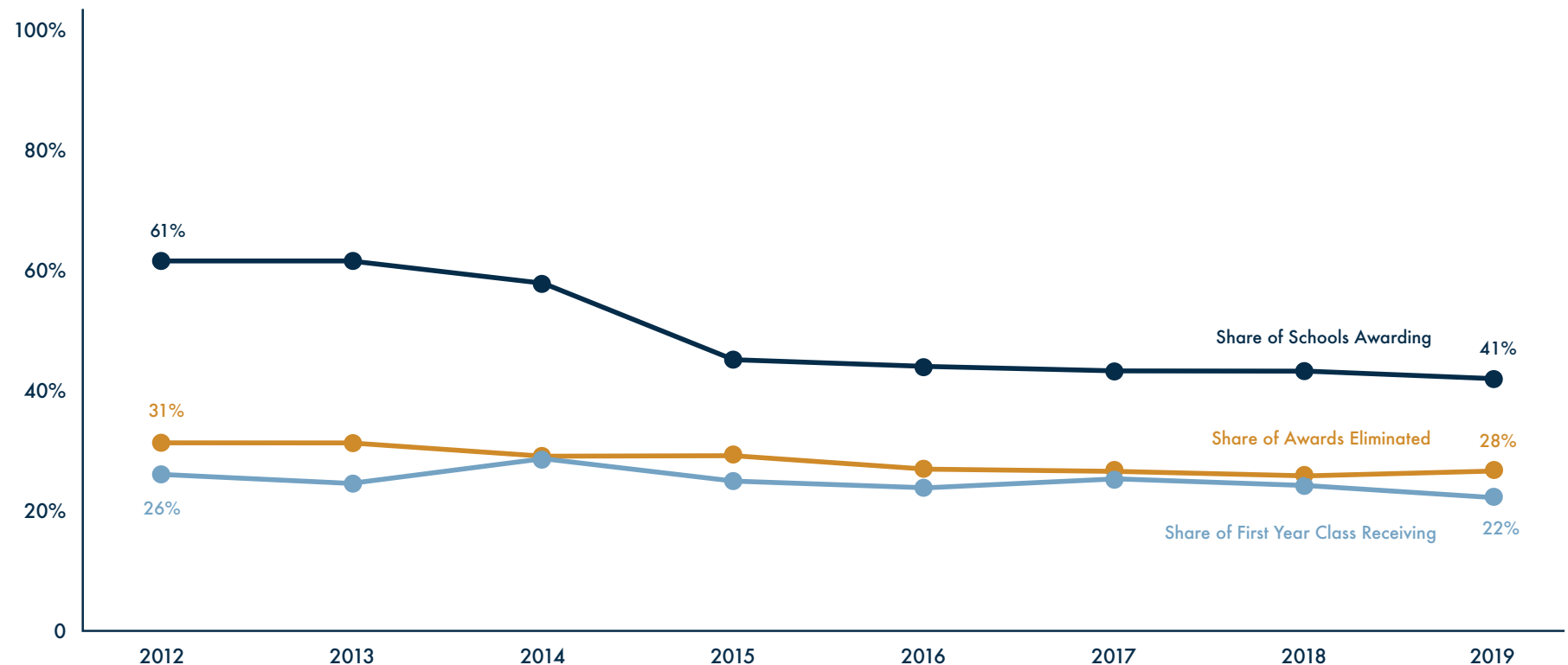
Share of Full-Time Students Receiving Institutional Grants, 2011–2019

The share of full-time students who received any grant amount increased from roughly half in 2011 to over three-quarters in 2019. Similarly, the proportion of students who received a grant totaling at least half their tuition and fees increased 16 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.



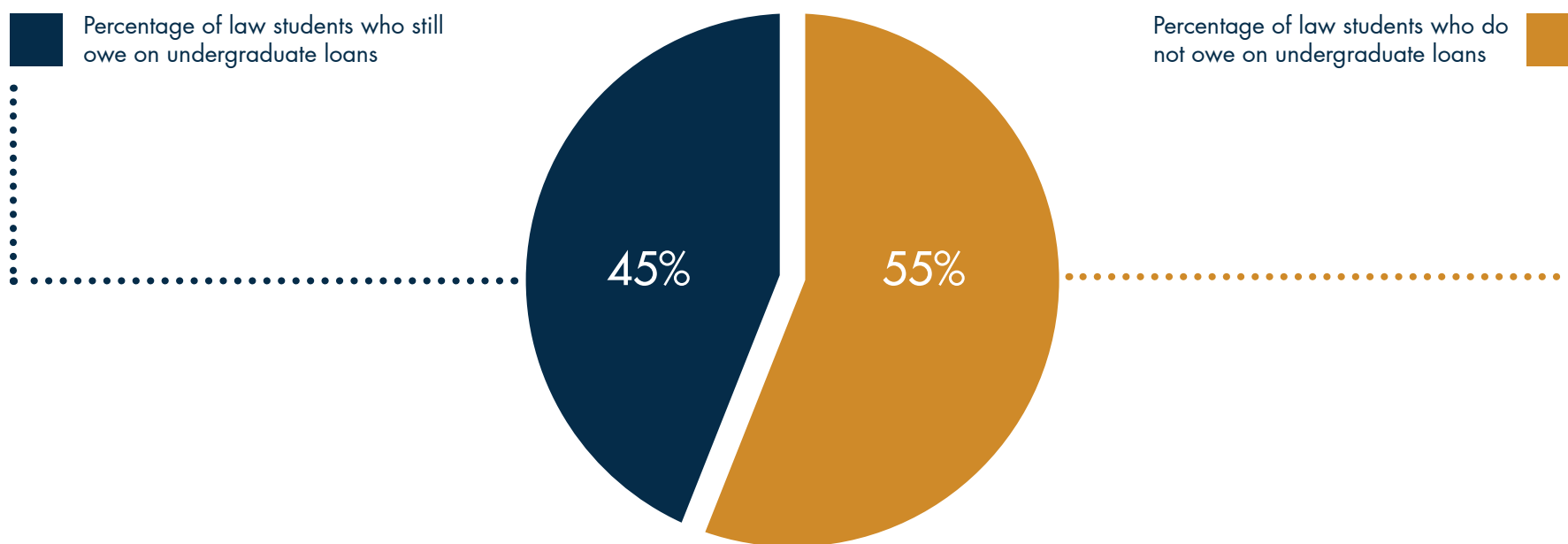
Trends in Awarding and Eliminating Conditional Scholarships at ABA Approved Law Schools, 2012–2019

From 2012 to 2019, the share of schools awarding conditional scholarships decreased from 61 percent to 41 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 smaller proportion's awards were eliminated in 2019 compared to previous years.



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.



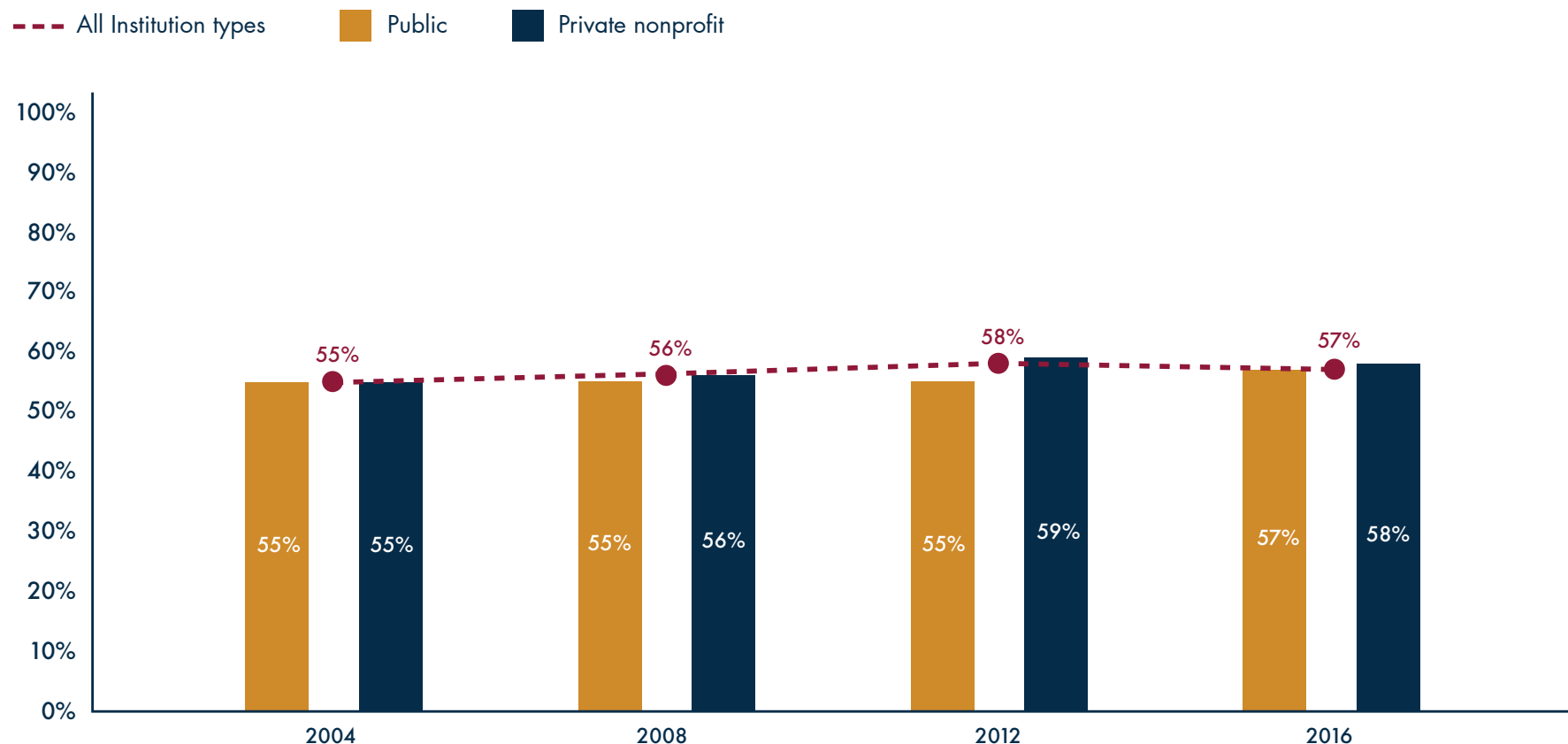
Note: Minimum reporting standards were not met for law school graduates who attended public institutions in 2016. Data presented reflects only U.S. citizens and permanent residents. Foreign/international students are excluded from analysis due to differences in financial aid eligibility.

Data Source: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, 2016 National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS). Data presentation, including conversion to real dollars, analysis and commentary by AccessLex Institute.



Percentage of Law Students Who Worked While Enrolled, by Year and Institution Type, 2004–2016

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.

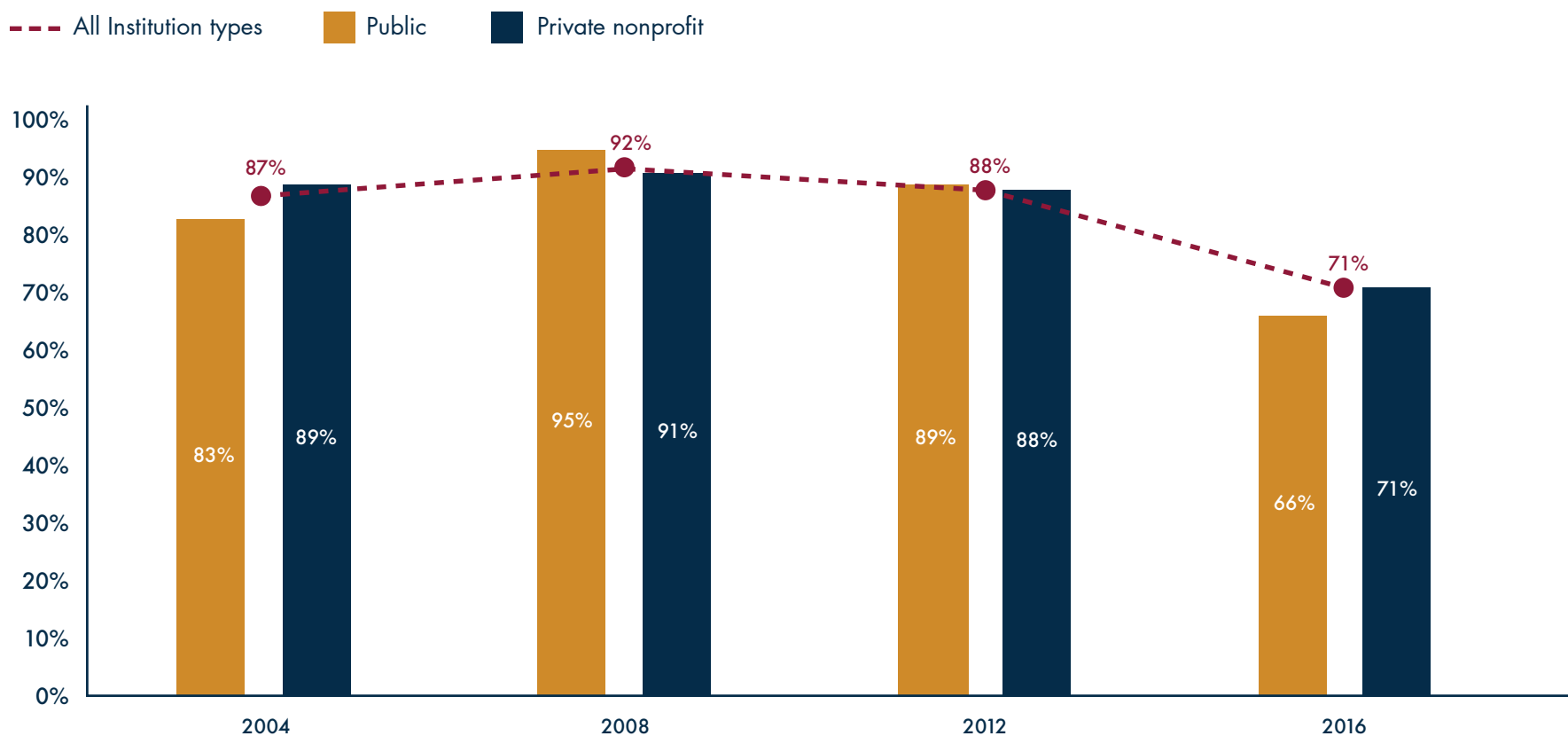


Data Source: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Educational Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Postsecondary Student Aid Study, NPSAS:04, NPSAS:08, NPSAS:12 and NPSAS:16. Data presentation, analysis and commentary by AccessLex Institute.



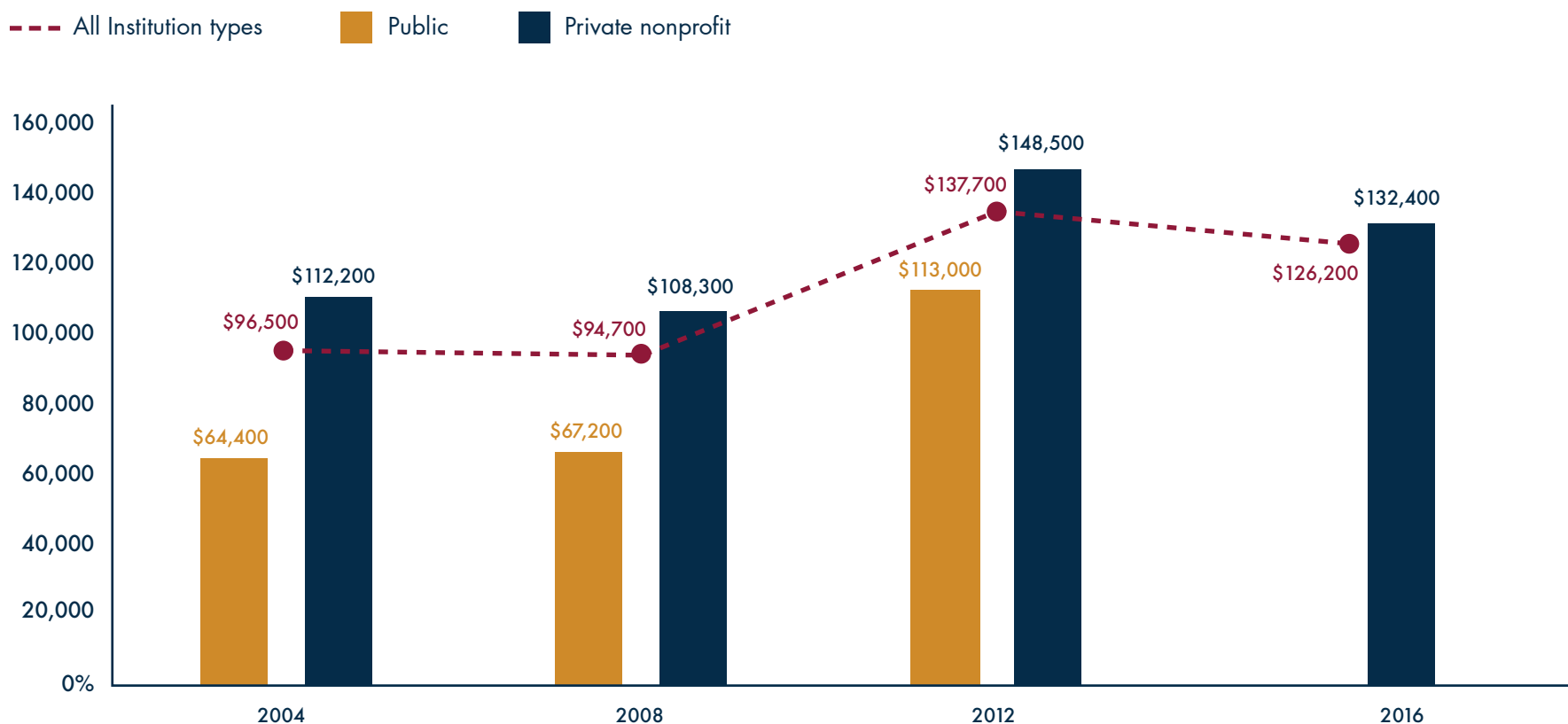
Percentage of Law Graduates Who Borrowed for Graduate Education, by Year and Institution Type, 2004–2016

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 2020 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.



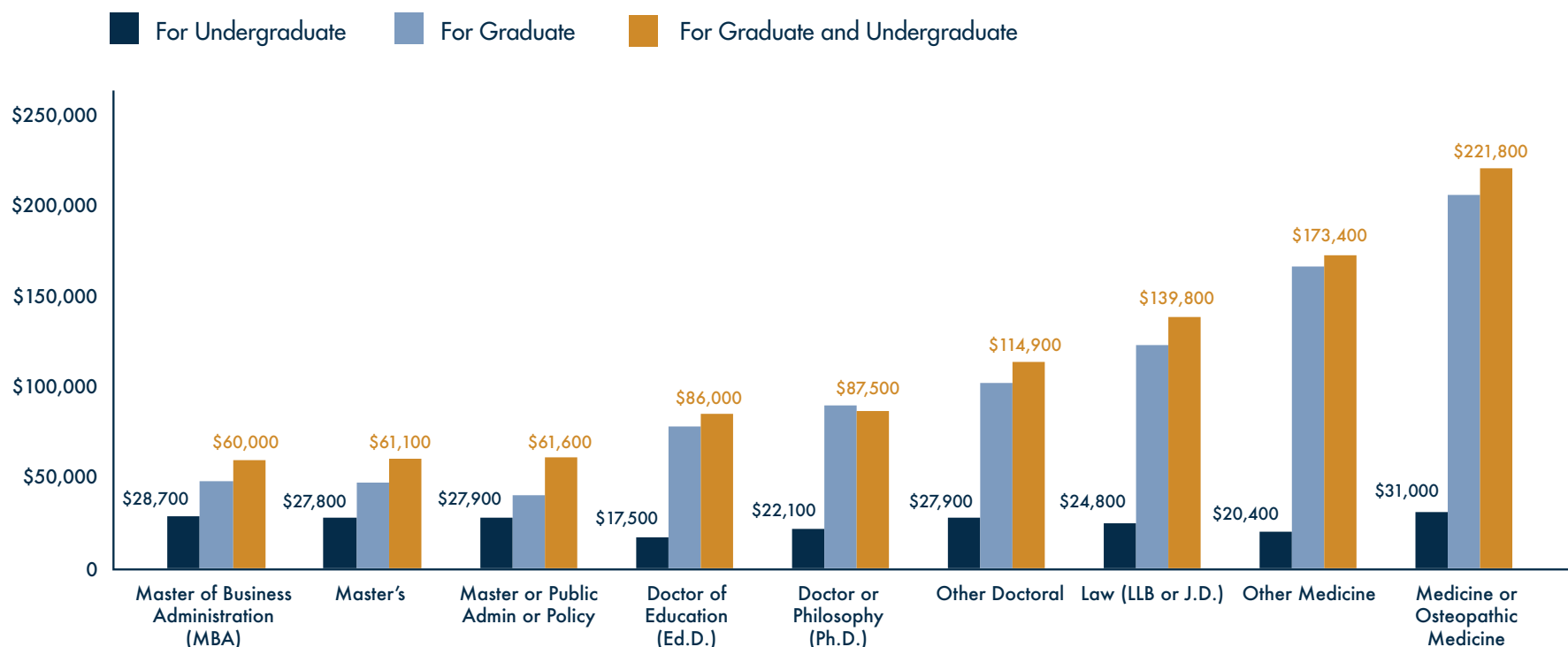
Note: Minimum reporting standards were not met for law school graduates who attended public institutions in 2016. Data presented reflects only U.S. citizens and permanent residents. Foreign/international students are excluded from analysis due to differences in financial aid eligibility.

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 Graduate Degree Type (in 2020 Dollars), 2016

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 \$2,300 less than the overall average of \$26,900 (8.5 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, National Postsecondary Student Aid Study, NPSAS:16. Data presentation, including conversion to real dollars, analysis and commentary by AccessLex Institute.

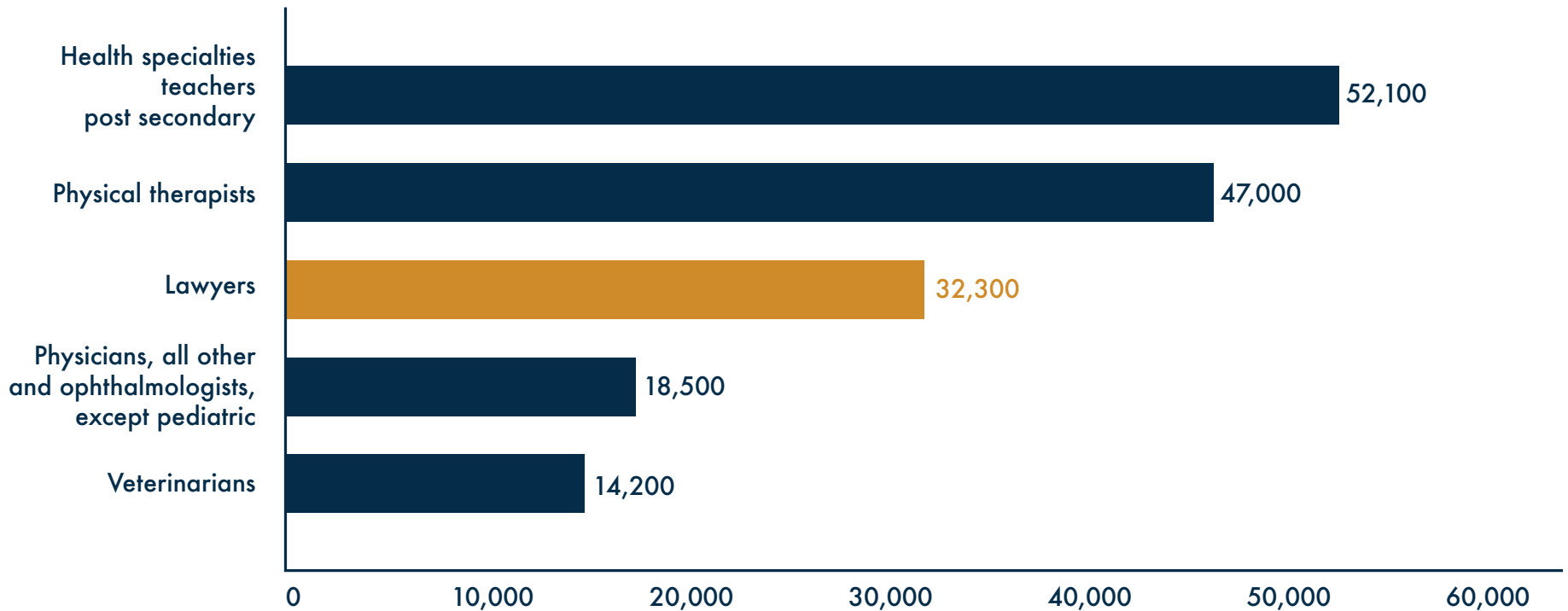


VALUE



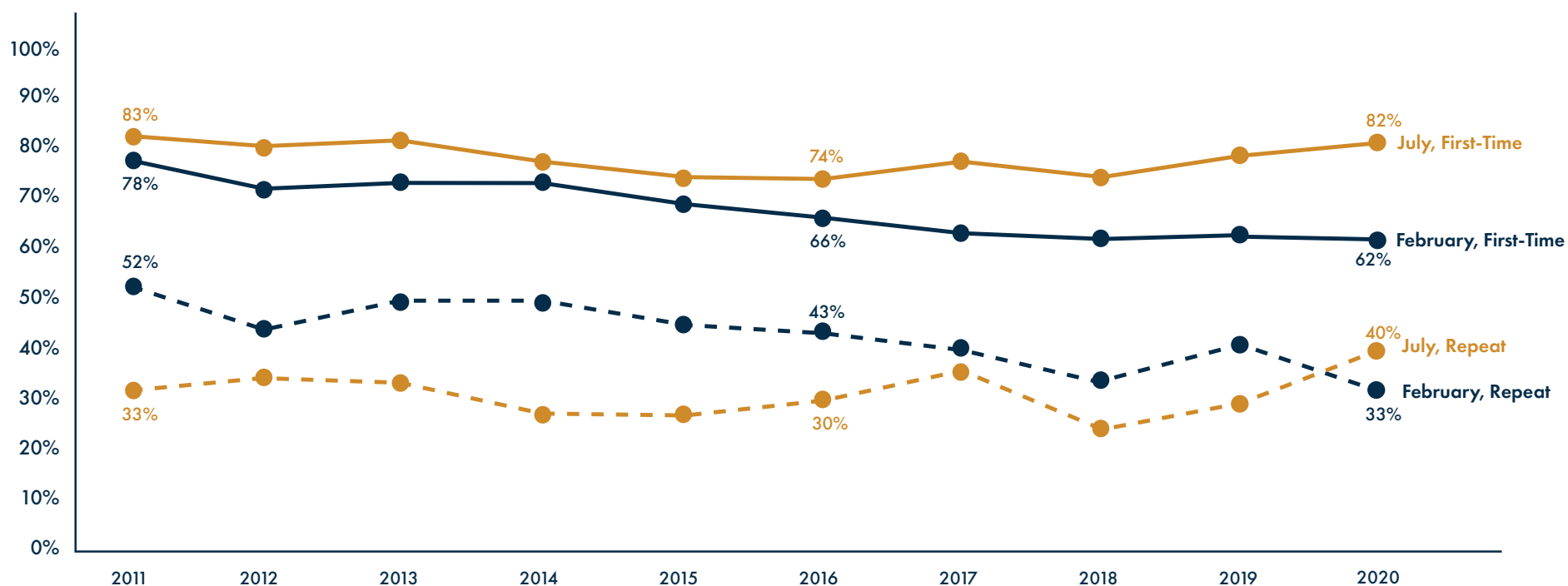
Occupations Requiring Graduate or Professional Degree with Largest Projected Increase in Employment, 2019–2029

The latest occupational outlook from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics projects lawyer positions will have the third 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, 2011–2020

Bar passage rate declines have been most pronounced for February takers in recent years, whose first-time pass rate fell 16 percentage points from 2011 to 2020 and whose repeat pass rate decreased 19 percentage points over the same period. Meanwhile, July first-time takers' bar passage rates fluctuated between 83 percent and 74 percent, rising to 82 percent in 2020. Similarly, July repeat takers' pass rates increased to 40 percent. However, COVID-19 pandemic disruptions may have affected the number of bar exam attempts and bar passage rates in 2020.



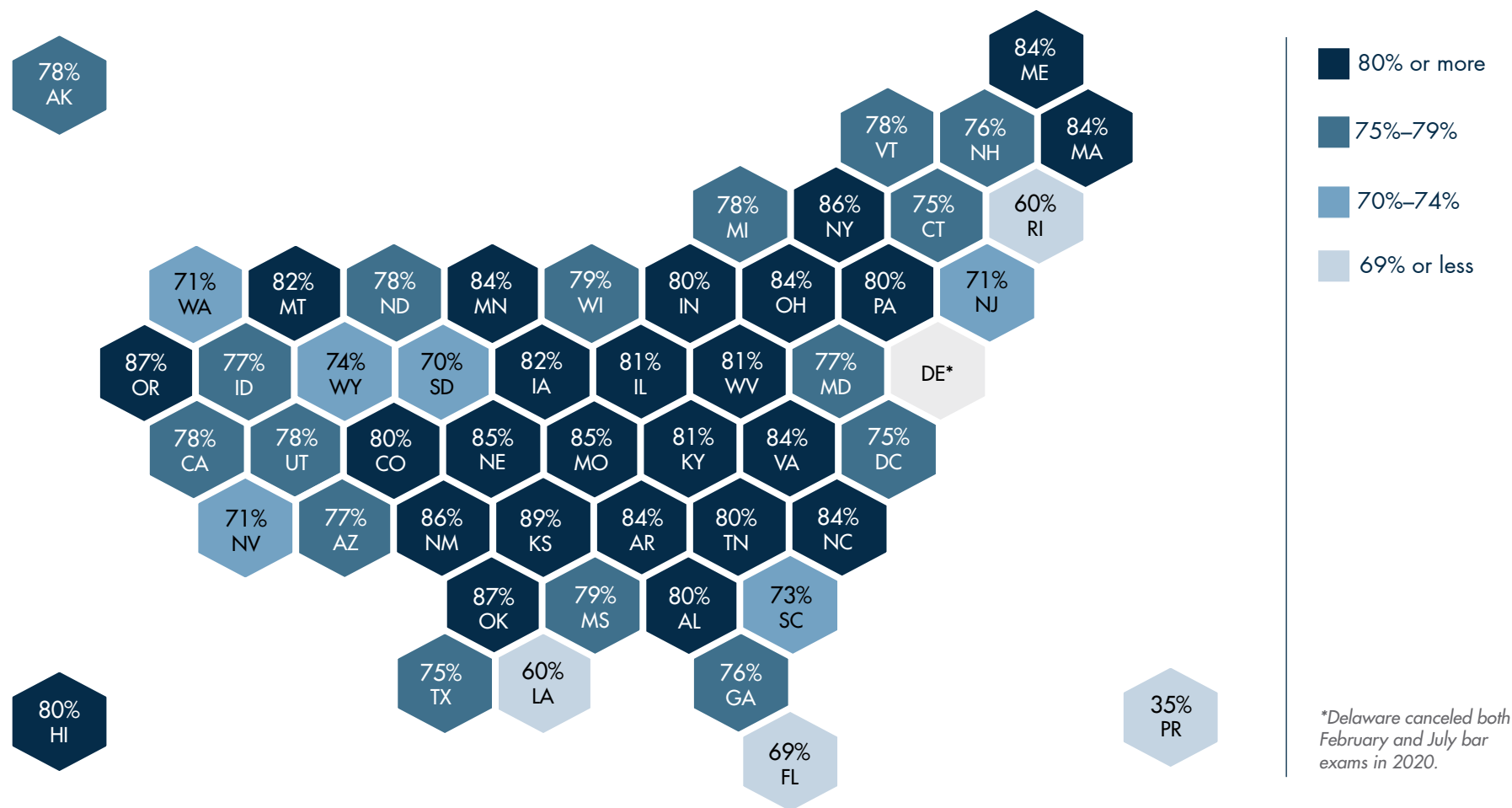
Data Source: National Conference of Bar Examiners, 2011–2020. Data presentation, analysis and commentary by AccessLex Institute.

Note: The 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, 2020

In 2020, 79 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.



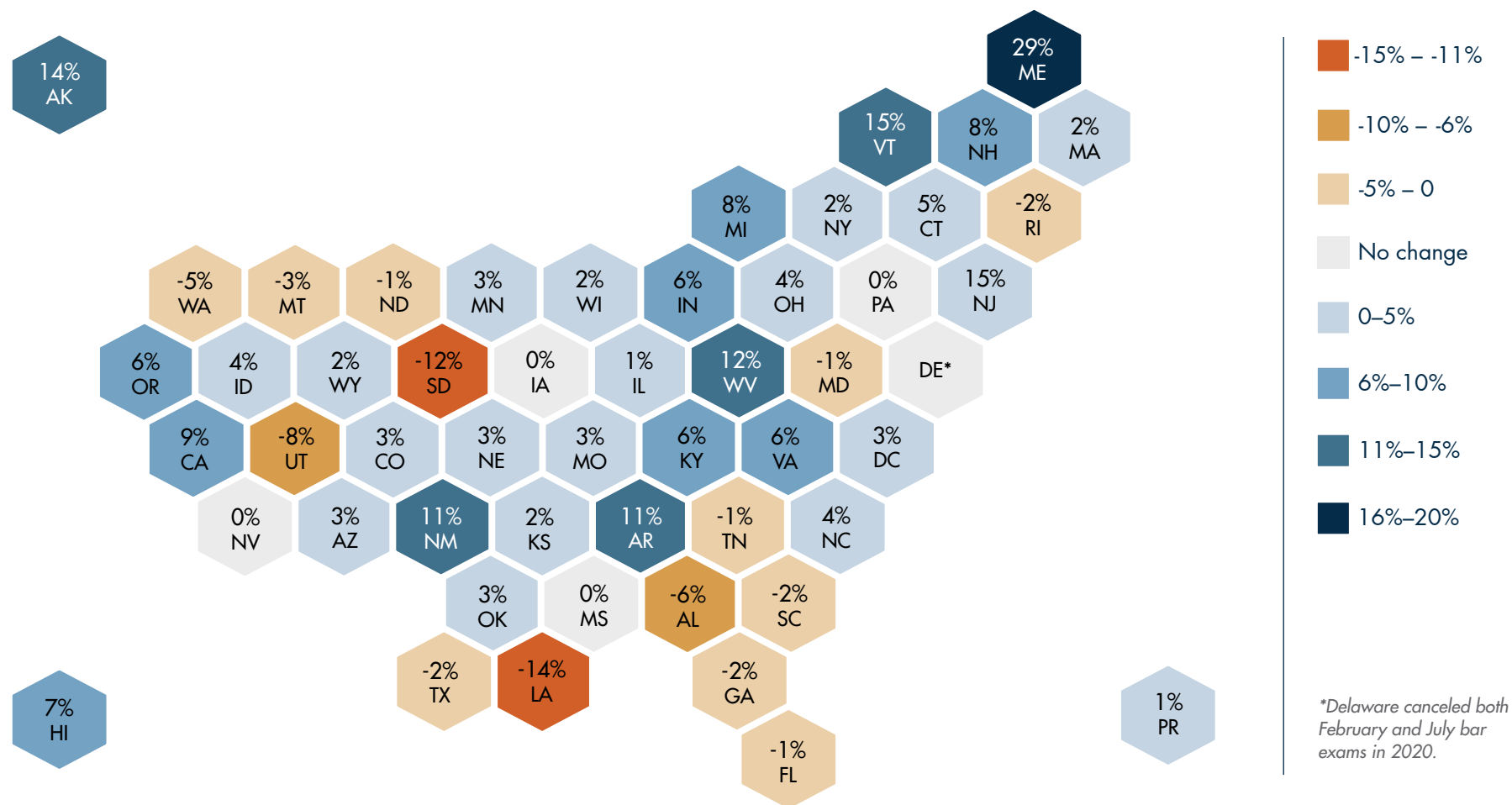
Note: Bar passage is shown by the state of bar administration, not the location of the exam taker's law school.

Data Source: National Conference of Bar Examiners, 2020. Data presentation, analysis and commentary by AccessLex Institute.



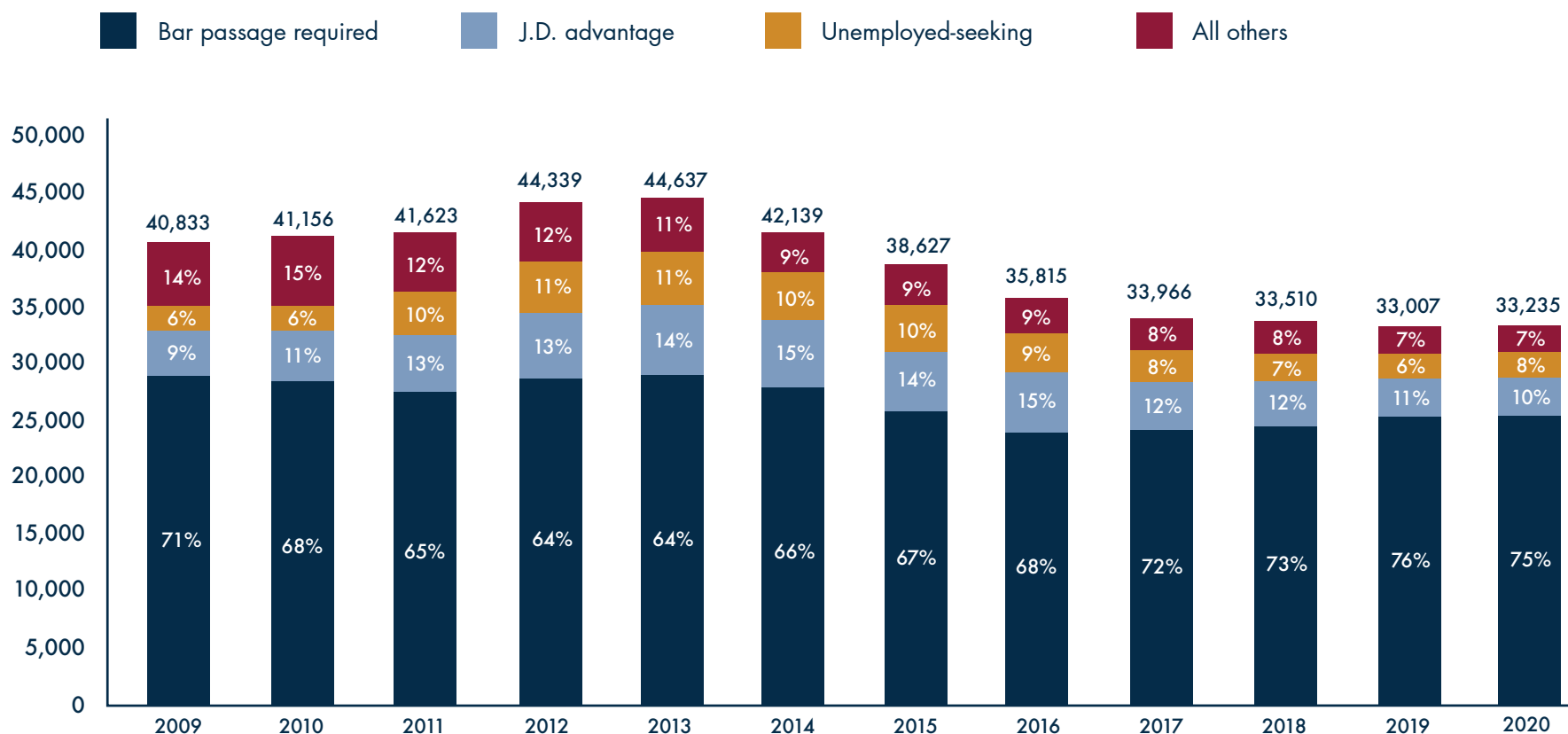
Change in First-Time Bar Passage Rates for Graduates of ABA-Approved Law Schools, by Exam Jurisdiction, 2019–2020

Between 2019 and 2020, a majority of states reported increases in first-time bar passage rates among graduates of ABA-approved law schools. Of the 15 jurisdictions where pass rates declined, only four reported decreases greater than five percentage points.



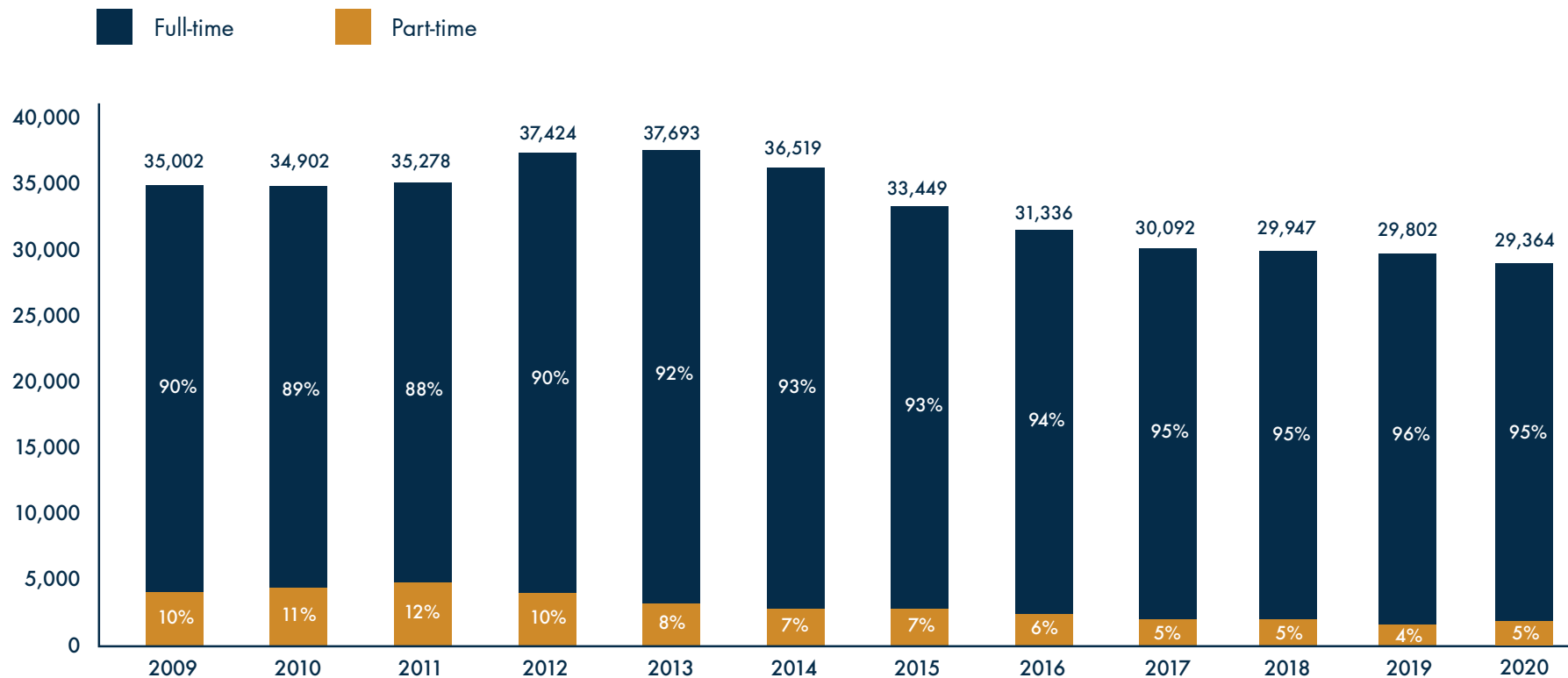
Recent J.D. Graduates by Employment Status, 2009–2020

The percentage and count of recent law graduates who obtained employment in jobs requiring bar passage fell slightly in 2020 after increasing for four consecutive years. Likewise, the percentage of unemployed graduates increased for the first time since 2012.



Full-Time and Part-Time Employment of Recent J.D. Graduates, 2009–2020

In 2020, the percentage of recent graduates employed in part-time positions increased for the first time since 2011. According to the NALP, this may be one of several employment-trends affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.



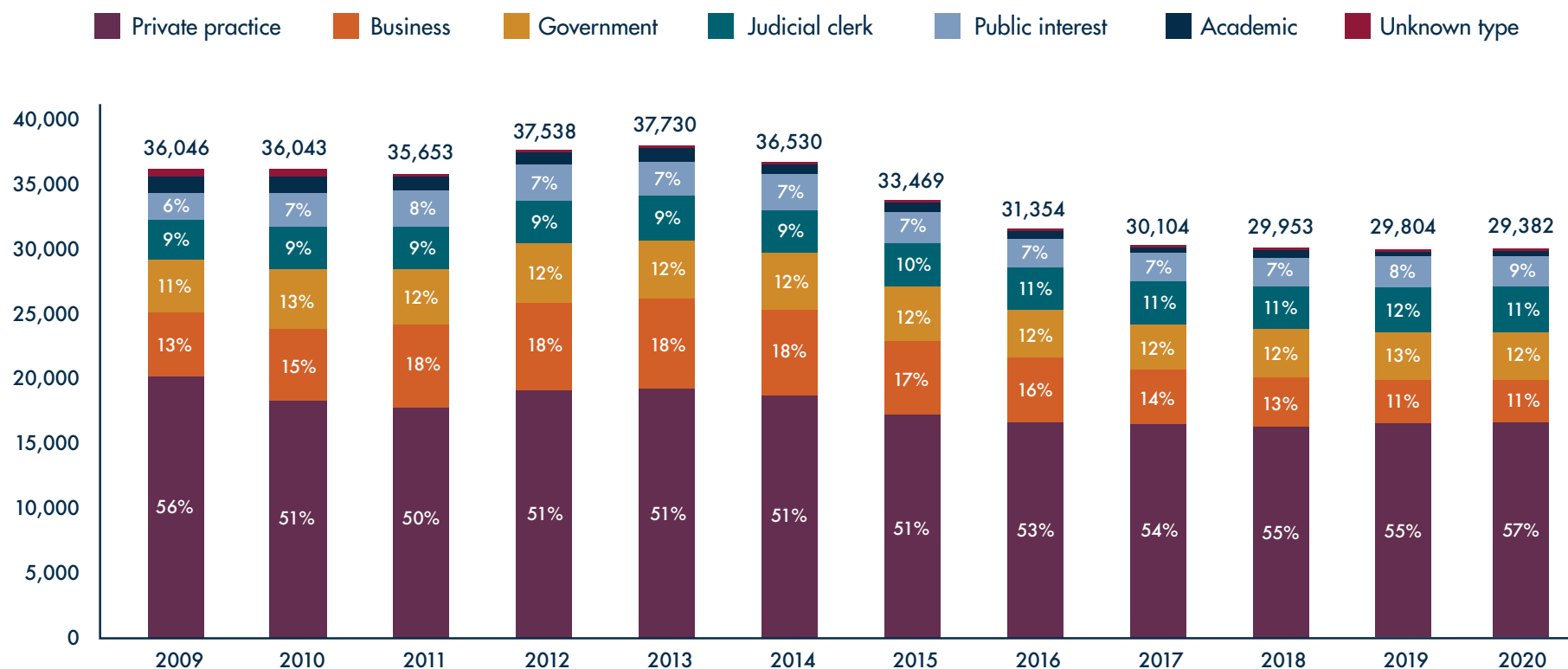
Note: These data are based on law school graduates whose employment status was reported to NALP and may not be fully representative of the total law school graduating class indicated. In 2014, NALP changed the timing of the survey administration from 9 months post-graduation to 10 months post-graduation.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

Data Source: National Association for Law Placement, 2021. Data Presentation, analysis and commentary by AccessLex Institute.



Recent J.D. Graduate Employment by Sector, 2009–2020

The total number of graduates and therefore number of employed graduates decreased since 2013. During this period, the composition of employment by sector has remained relatively stable. Two notable changes since 2013 are the increase in the proportion of graduates working in private practice and the decrease in the percentage of graduates working in business.



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.

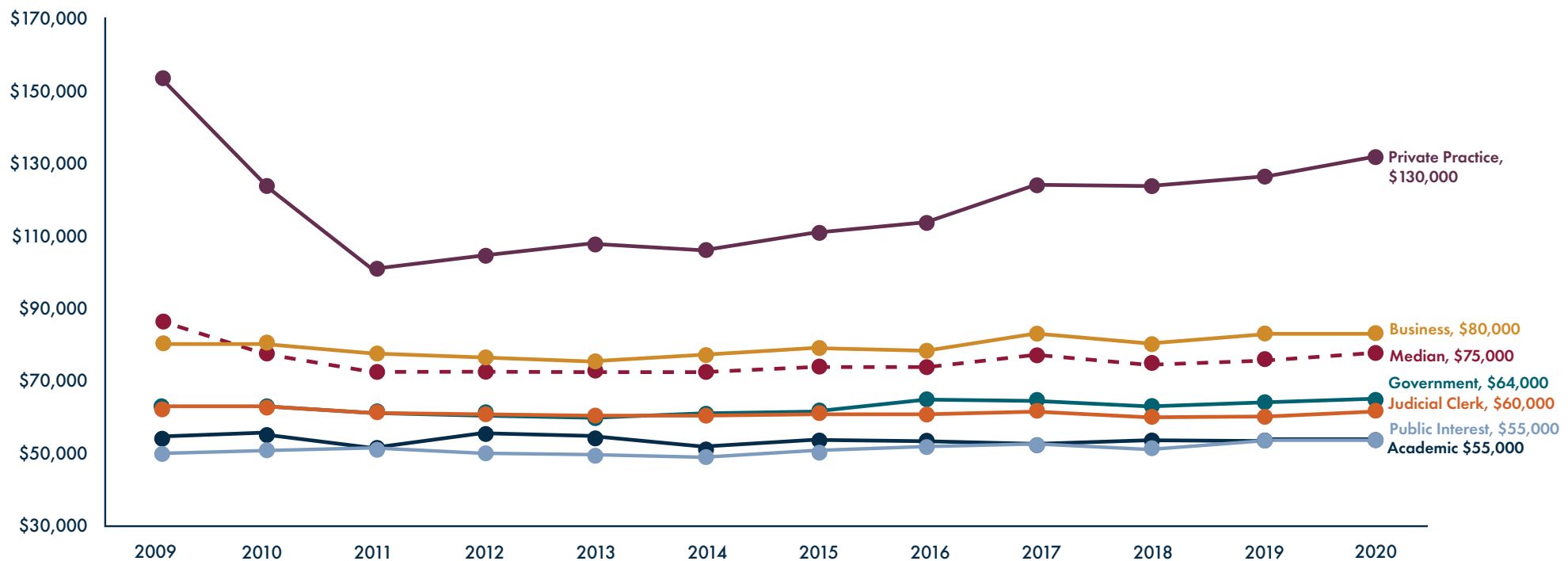
Use caution when interpreting data and when comparing from year to year.

Data Source: National Association for Law Placement, 2021. Data Presentation, analysis and commentary by AccessLex Institute.



Median Salary (in 2020 Dollars) of Recent J.D. Graduates by Sector, 2009–2020

The median reported salary for Class of 2020 graduates working in private practice was \$130,000, down from a high point of \$154,700 for the class of 2009 but continuing to increase from a low of \$96,900 for the class of 2011. Other sectors show smaller fluctuations but have been relatively stable throughout this period.



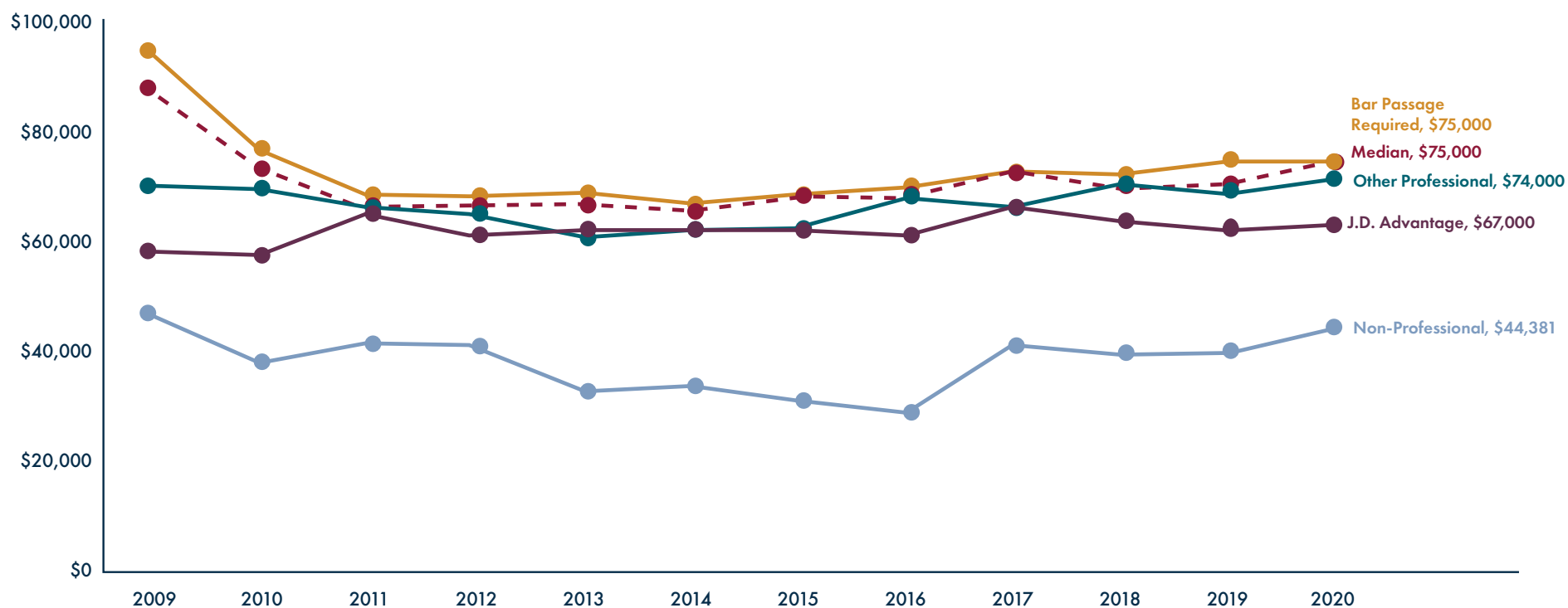
Note: These data are based on law school graduates whose employment status was reported to NALP and may not be fully representative of the total law school graduating class indicated. In 2014, NALP changed the timing of the survey administration from 9 months post-graduation to 10 months post-graduation.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

Data Source: National Association for Law Placement, 2021. Data Presentation, analysis and commentary by AccessLex Institute.



Median Salary (in 2020 Dollars) of Recent J.D. Graduates by Employment Type, 2009–2020

The overall median salary for 2020 graduates was lower than the median for the class of 2009. However, median salaries have been trending upward for almost all employment categories in recent years.



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.

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