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 2021 J.D. Enrollment, by State.

Note: This map includes the 196 ABA-approved AccessLex Institute member schools reporting enrollment as of 2021.

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Detailed Data Sources

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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**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2020</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2021</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Law School Admission Rates by Gender**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2020</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2021</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**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.
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.

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

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.

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.

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.

Data Source:
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.

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), Other masters 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)
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>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Master of Public Admin/Policy (MPA/MPP)</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master’s</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education (Ed.D.)</td>
<td>41%</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.


**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), Other masters 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)
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.
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.

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.

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.

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.

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.
The median grant amount awarded to full-time students receiving aid increased by more than 50 percent between 2012 and 2020. In 2012, the median amount law schools awarded to at least half their grant recipients was $14,100. By 2021 that amount increased to $21,400.

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.
The share of full-time students who received any grant amount increased from roughly half in 2012 to 73 percent in 2020. Similarly, the proportion of students who received a grant totaling at least half their tuition and fees increased 14 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.

**Data Source:** American Bar Association, 2022a. Data presentation, including conversion to real dollars, analysis and commentary by AccessLex Institute.
Trends in Awarding and Eliminating Conditional Scholarships at ABA Approved Law Schools, 2012–2020

From 2012 to 2020, the share of schools awarding conditional scholarships decreased from 61 percent to 42 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 2020 compared to previous years.

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


Data presentation, including conversion to real dollars, analysis and commentary by AccessLex Institute.
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.

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.

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.
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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Projected Increase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Health specialties, teachers, post secondary</td>
<td>52,100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical therapists</td>
<td>47,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lawyers</td>
<td>32,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physicians, all other and ophthalmologists, except pediatric</td>
<td>18,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veterinarians</td>
<td>14,200</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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.
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.

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.

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.

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

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.

Percentage of Advanced Degree Recipients Who Believe Their Graduate Degree Was Worth the Cost

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.

Detailed Data Sources

American Bar Association. (2022a). *Compilation - All Schools Data. Section of Legal Education - ABA Required Disclosures*
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Retrieved from https://www.lsac.org/data-research/data

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