



# Legal Education Data Deck

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Key trends on access,  
affordability, and value

JANUARY 2024



# Foreword

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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

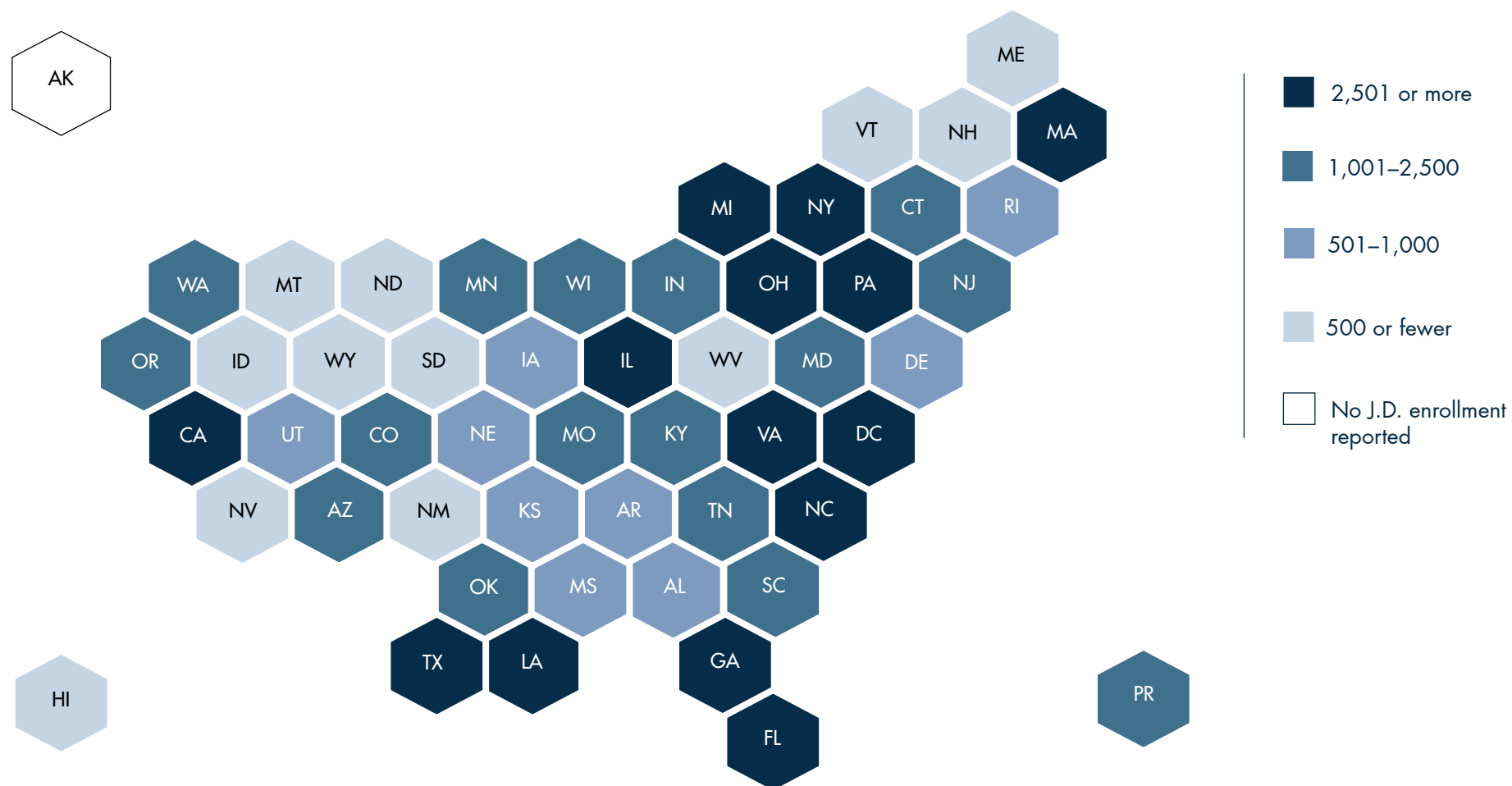
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AccessLex Institute, in partnership with its nearly 200 nonprofit and state-affiliated ABA-approved member law schools, has been committed to improving access to legal education and to maximizing the affordability and value of a law degree since 1983. 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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## Detailed Data Sources





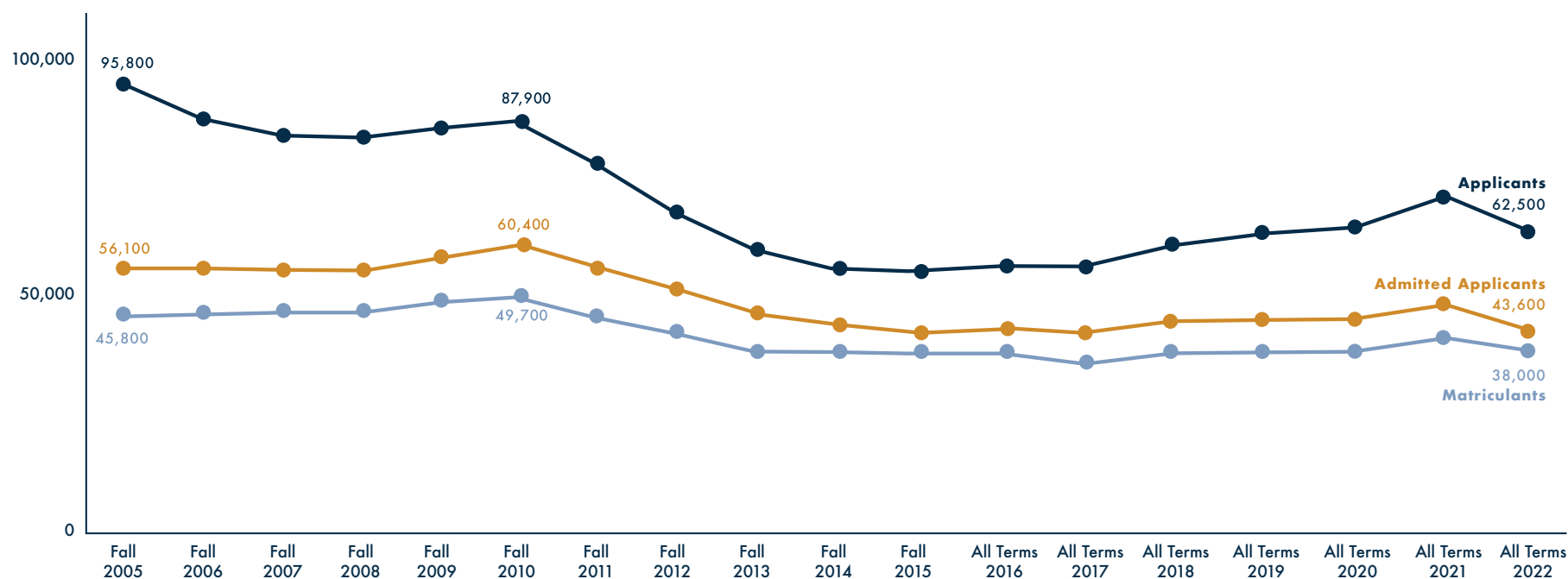


Access



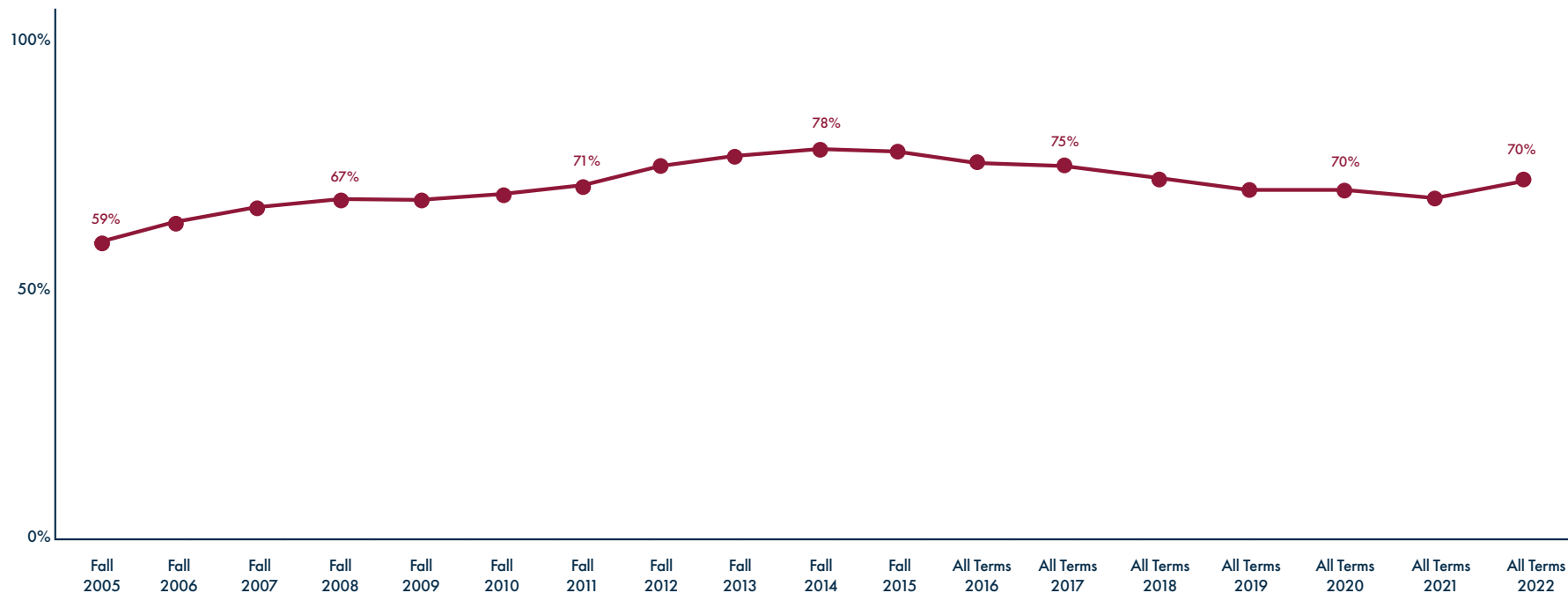
# Law School Applicants, Admits and Matriculants, 2005-2022

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.



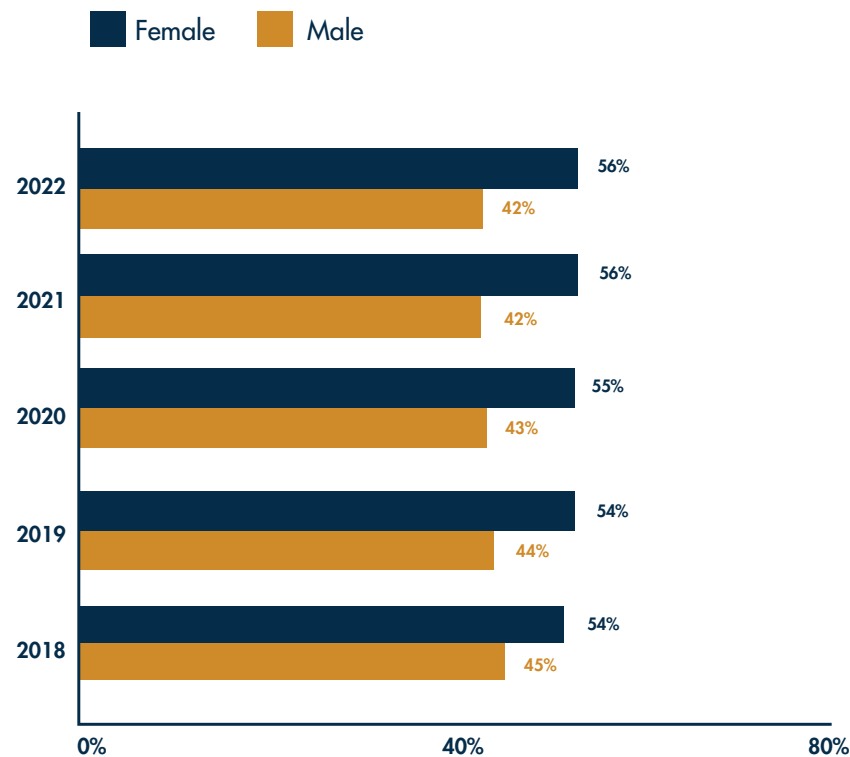
# Law School Admission Rates, 2005-2022

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.

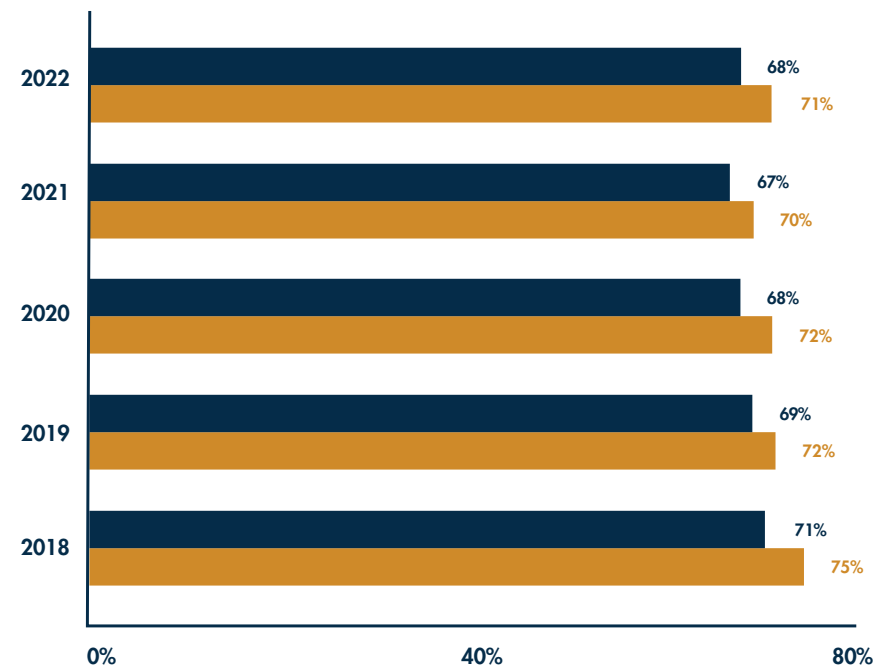


# Application and Admission Rates by Gender, 2018-2022

Although women continue to make up a larger share of law school applicants, men continue to be admitted at a higher rate. Compared to 2021, the admission rate for both men and women increased by one percentage point in 2022.



Law School Applicants by Gender



Law School Admission Rates by Gender

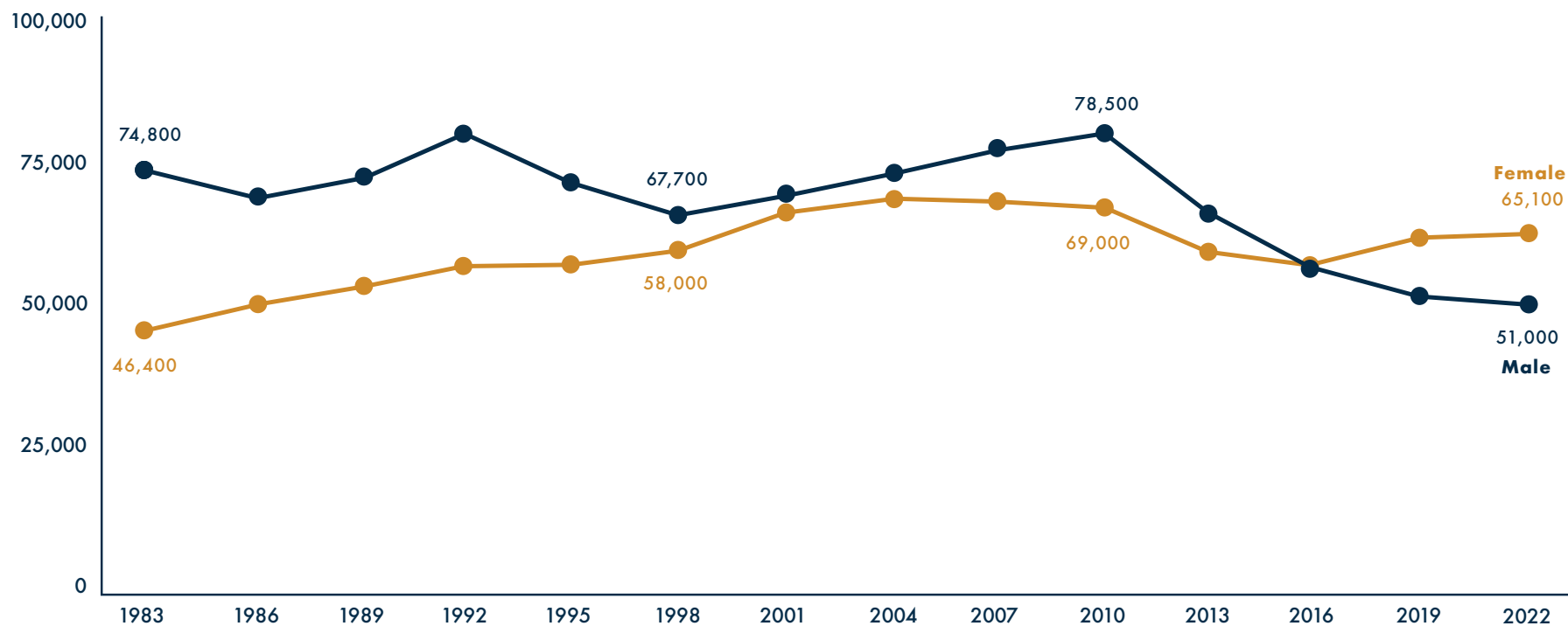
**Note:** Applicants by gender do not sum to 100%. Public data on admission outcomes is only available for female and male applicants, but some applicants decline to provide this information to LSAC or self-identify as transgender, gender nonbinary, or genderqueer/gender fluid. Therefore, the proportions of male and female applicants do not sum to 100%.

**Data Source:** Law School Admission Council, 2023. Data presentation, analysis, and commentary by AccessLex Institute.



# Total J.D. Enrollment by Gender, 1983-2022

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.



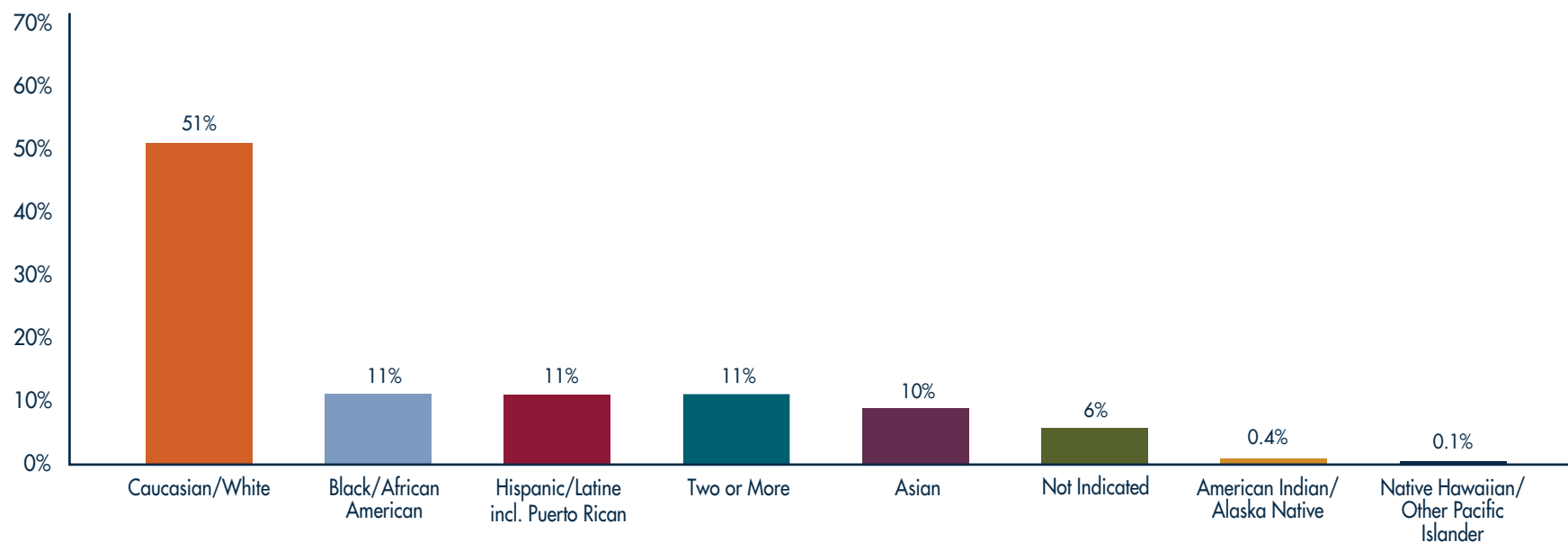
**Note:** Since 2014-15, the American Bar Association has included "Another Gender Identity" as a gender category. The enrollment reported for this category is too small to appear in this figure.

**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

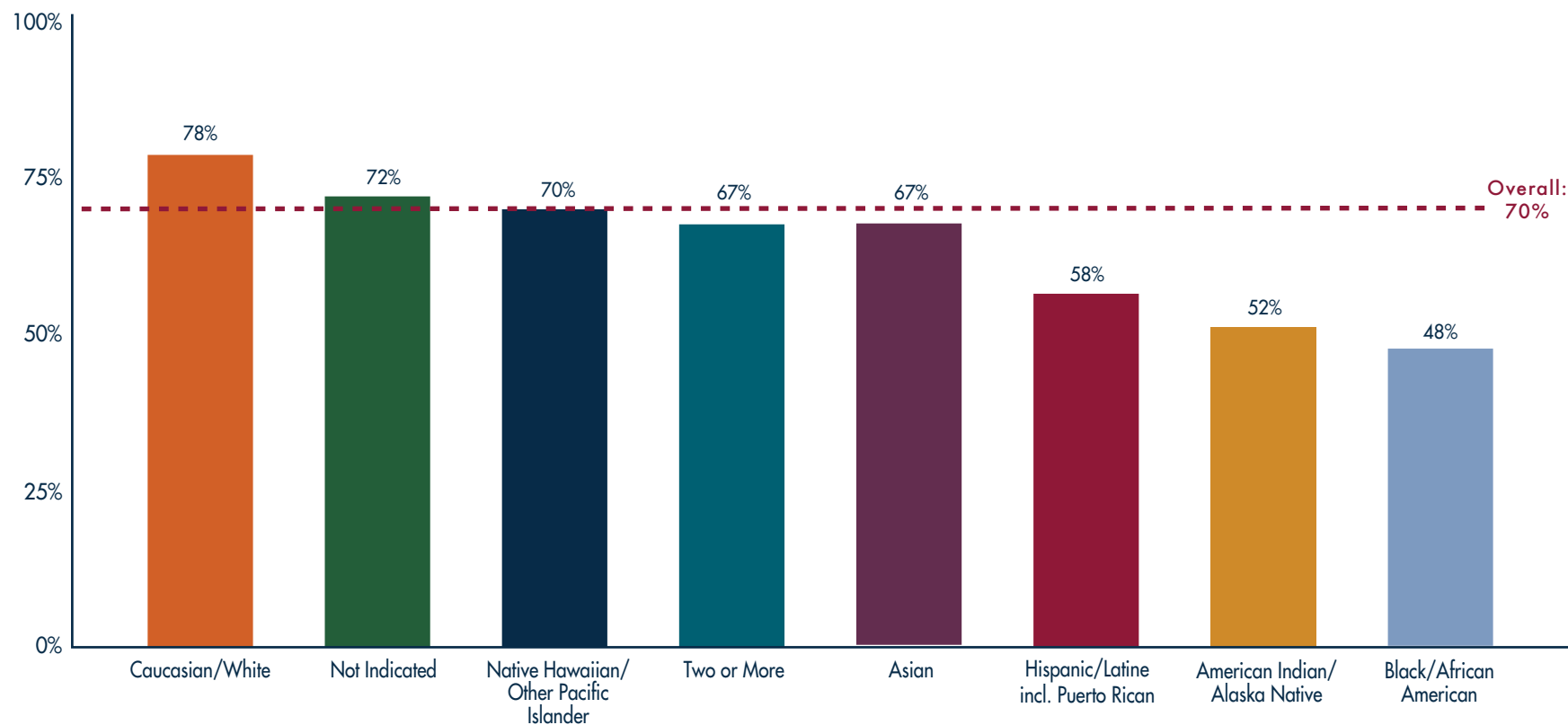
The racial and ethnic composition of law school applicants has remained relatively stable in recent years. In 2022, White applicants comprised roughly half of the applicant pool, while Black, Asian, and Hispanic/Latine applicants collectively comprised approximately one-third.





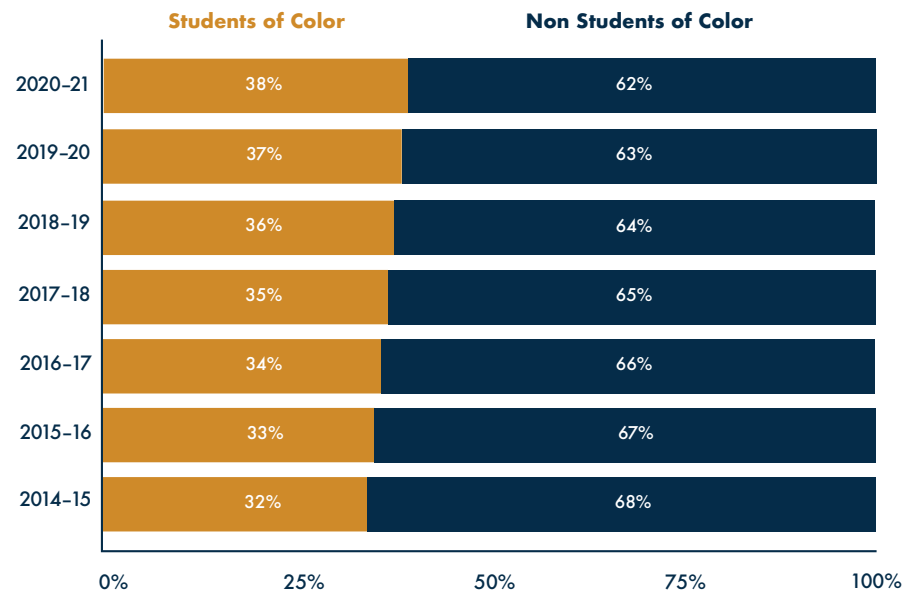
# Admission Rates by Race/Ethnicity and Overall, 2022

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.

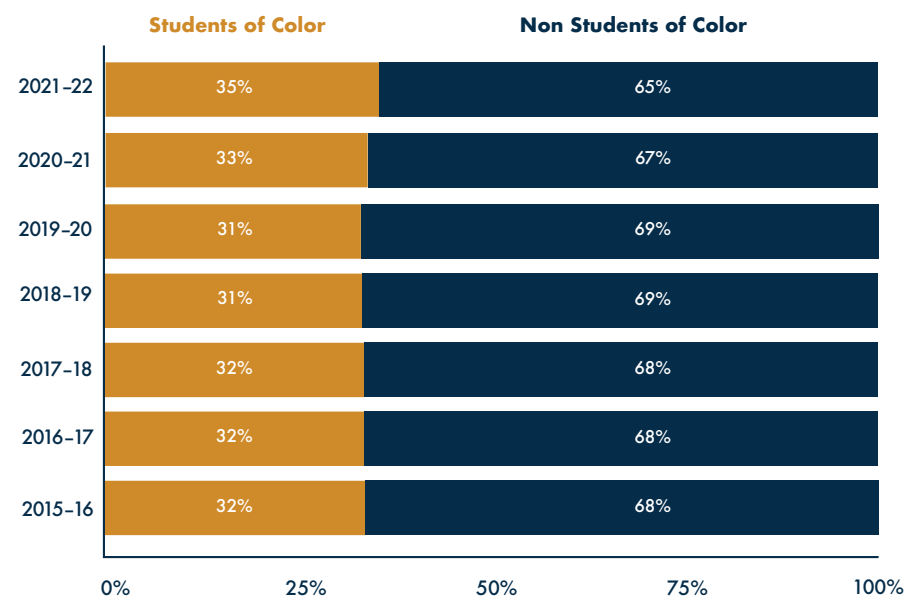


# Percentage of Bachelor's Degrees Awarded to Students of Color and Percentage of First-Year Enrolled J.D. Students of Color, 2015-2021

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.



Percentage of Bachelor's Degrees Awarded to Students of Color and Non-Students of Color

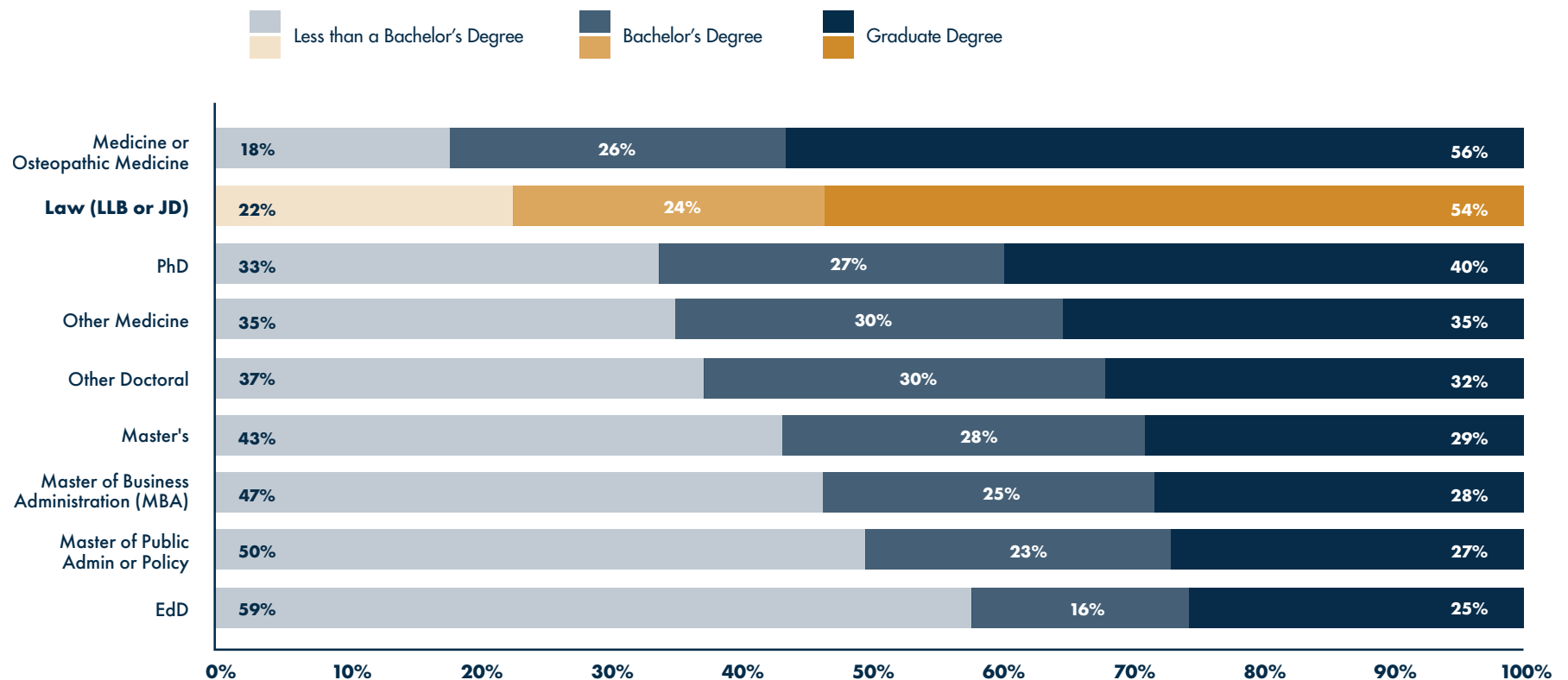


Percentage of First-Year Enrolled Students of Color and Non-Students of Color



# Highest Level of Parent Education Among Graduate Students, by Type of Program, 2019-2020

Among law students in 2019-2020, 22 percent had a parent whose highest educational attainment was less than a bachelor's degree. Relative to other graduate programs, only medical school students were less likely to have a parent who had not attained a bachelor's degree.



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

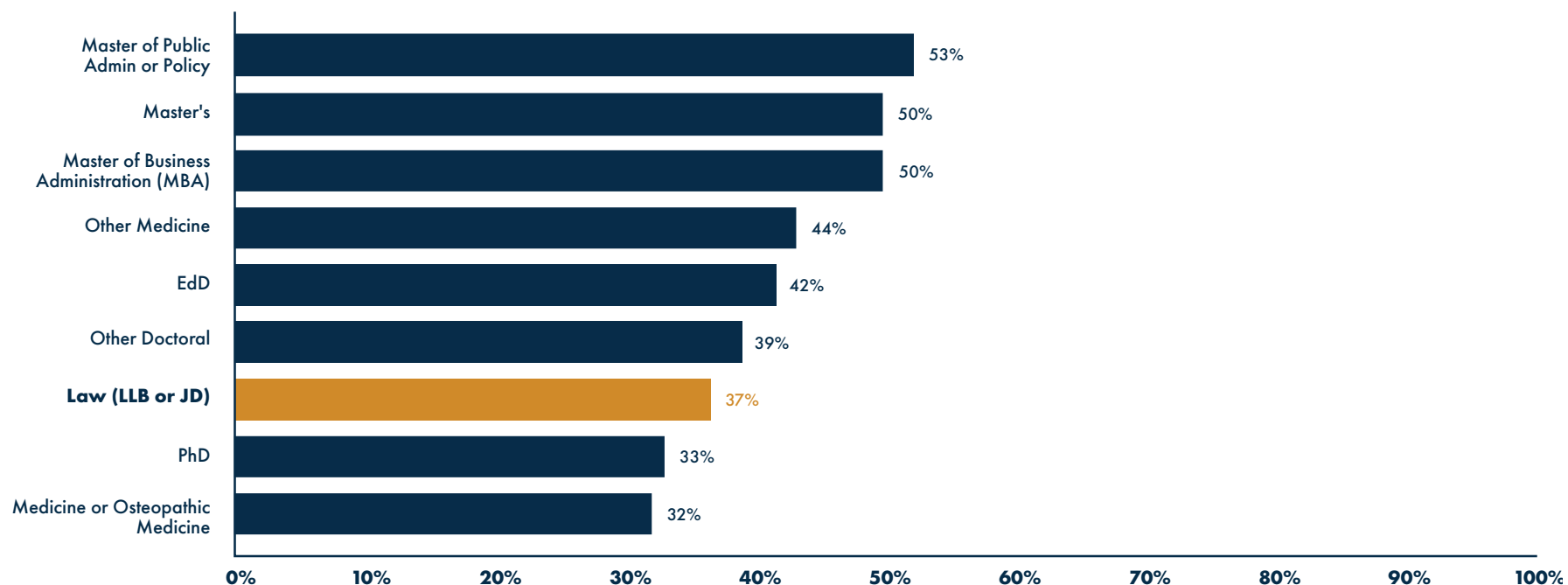
**Data Source:** U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2019-20 National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS:20). Retrieved on October 10, 2023.

Data presentation, analysis, and commentary by AccessLex Institute.



# Percentage of Students Enrolled in Graduate and Professional Programs Who Received Pell Grants as Undergrads, 2019-2020

The proportion of students enrolled in graduate and professional programs who received Pell Grants as undergraduate students varies by discipline. Among law students in 2019-2020, 37 percent received a Pell Grant during their undergraduate studies. Relative to other graduate programs, this proportion was only higher than PhD and medical school students.

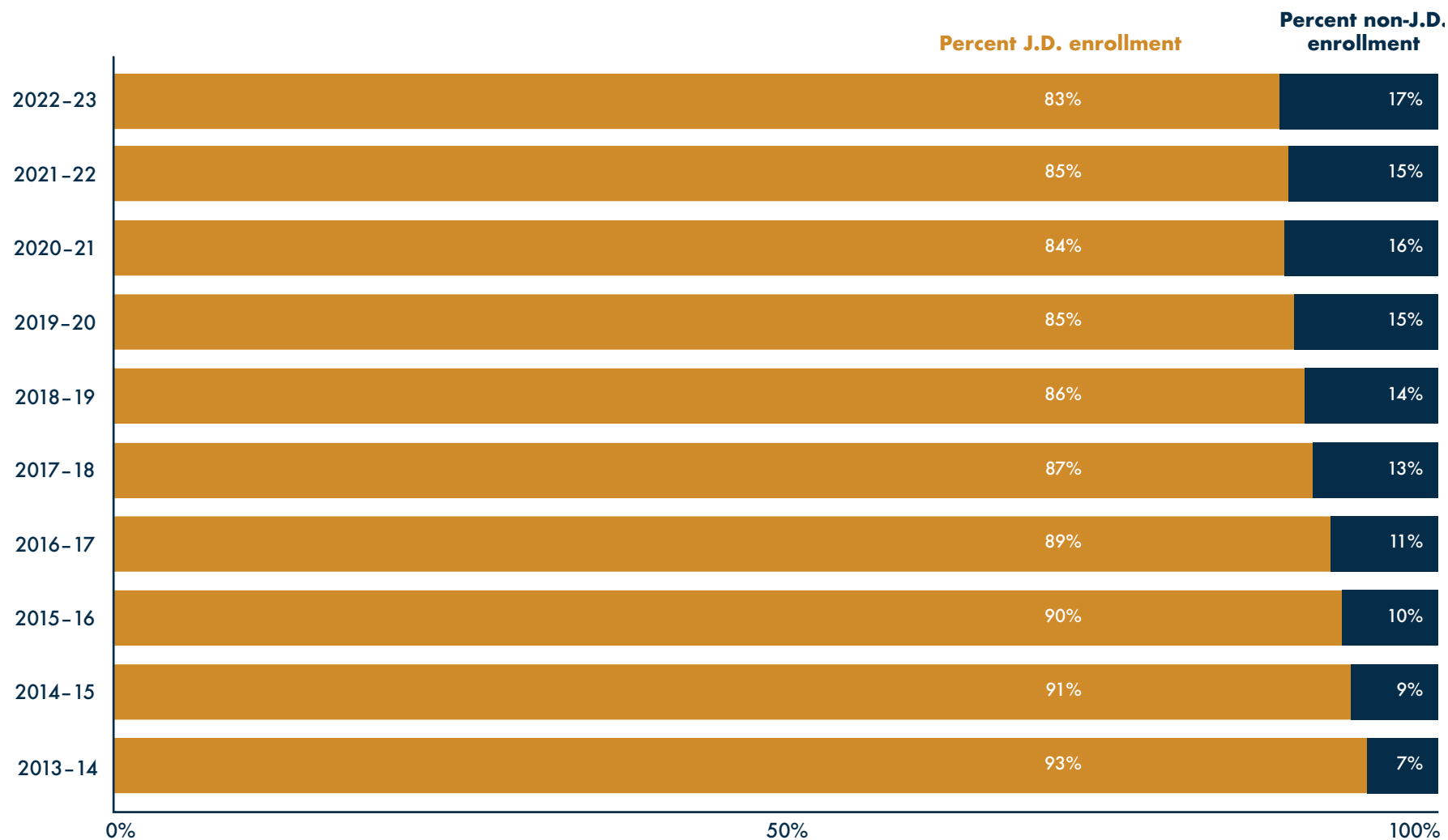


**Data Source:** U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2019-20 National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS:20). Retrieved on August 6, 2023. Data presentation, analysis, and commentary by AccessLex Institute.



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

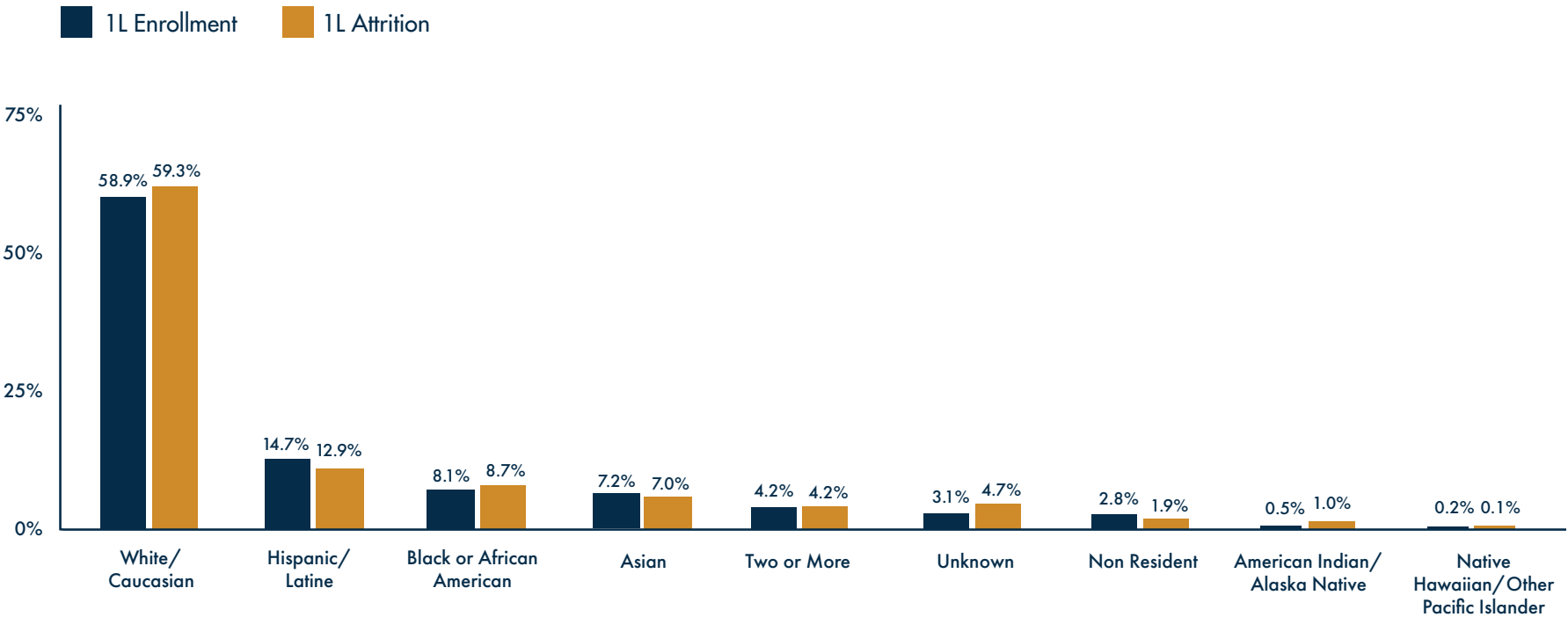
The share of non-J.D. student enrollment in law school has more than doubled over the last 10 years, comprising nearly 20 percent of total law school enrollment.





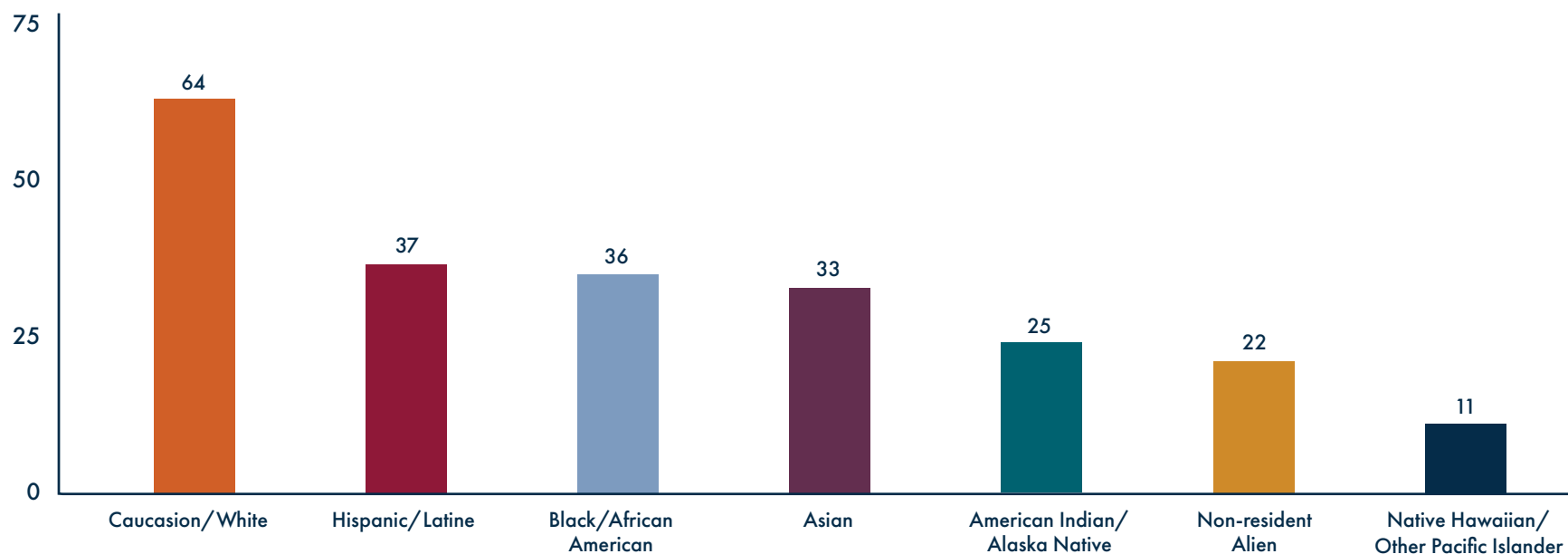
# Percent of 1L Enrollment vs. Percent of 1L Non-Transfer Attrition, 2021-2022

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 attrited after the first year but only 33 percent of first-year enrollment.



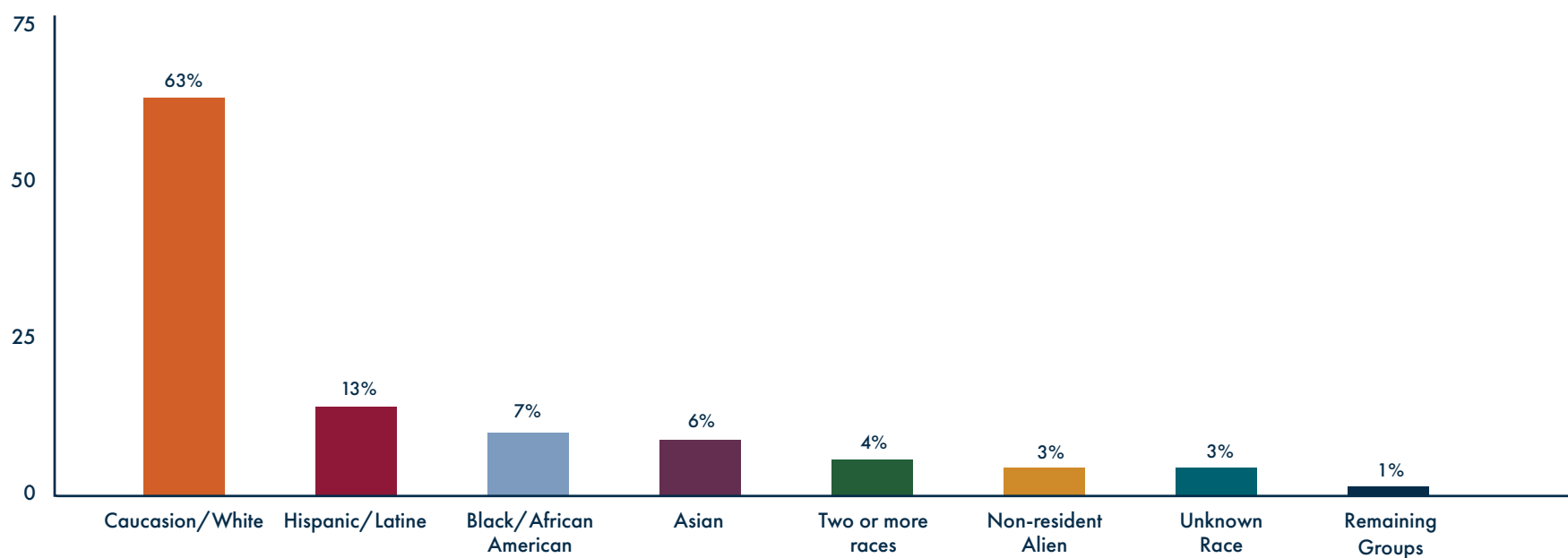
# Number of Law Schools Accounting for Half or More of Law Students of Each Race/Ethnicity, 2022

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.



# Share of J.D. Degrees Awarded by Race and Ethnicity, 2022

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

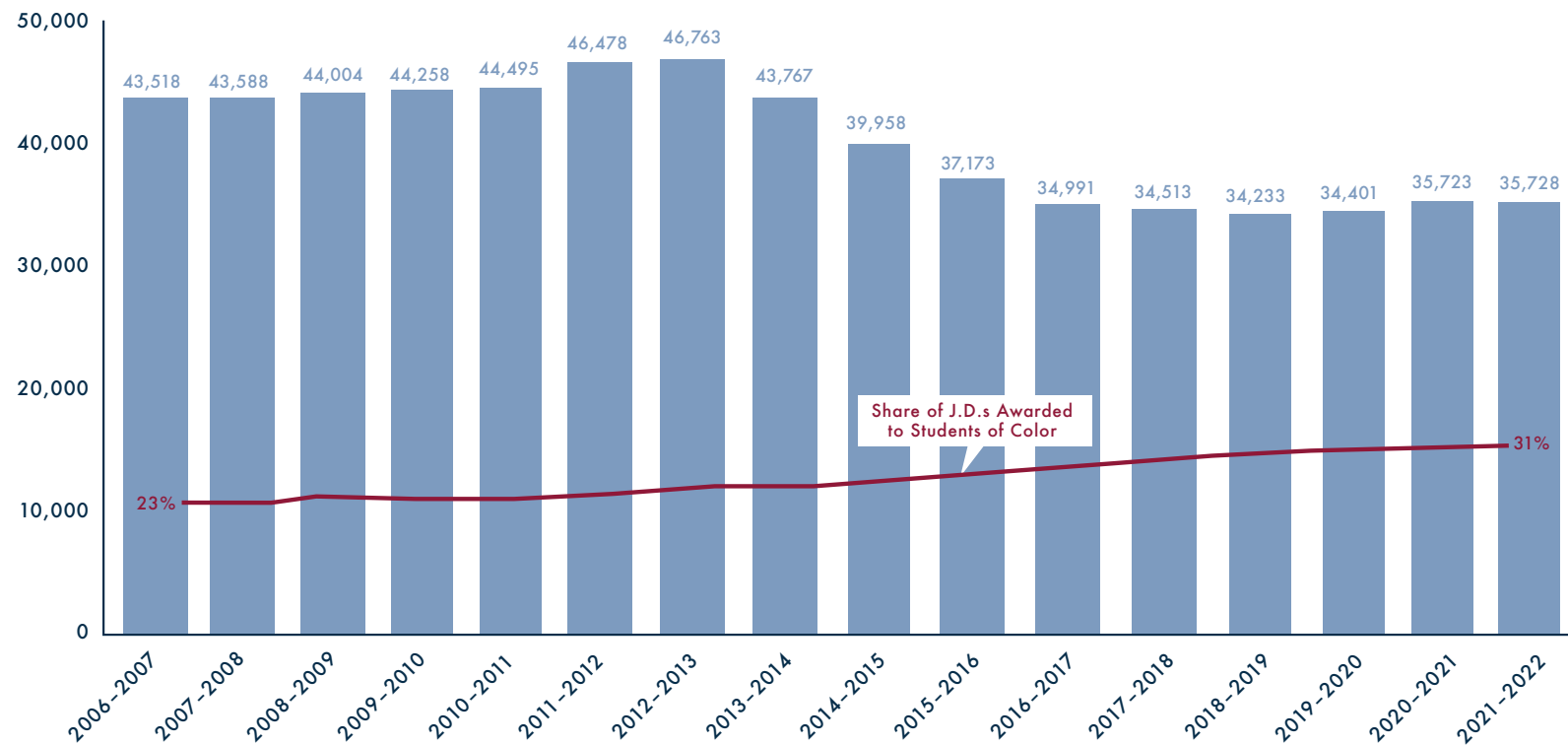


**Note:** "Remaining" includes students who identified as American Indian or Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander.  
**Data Source:** American Bar Association, 2023a. Data presentation, analysis, and commentary by AccessLex Institute.



# Total J.D. Degrees Awarded and Percentage of J.D. Degrees Awarded to Students of Color at ABA-Approved Law Schools, 2006-2021

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 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 23 percent to 31 percent.



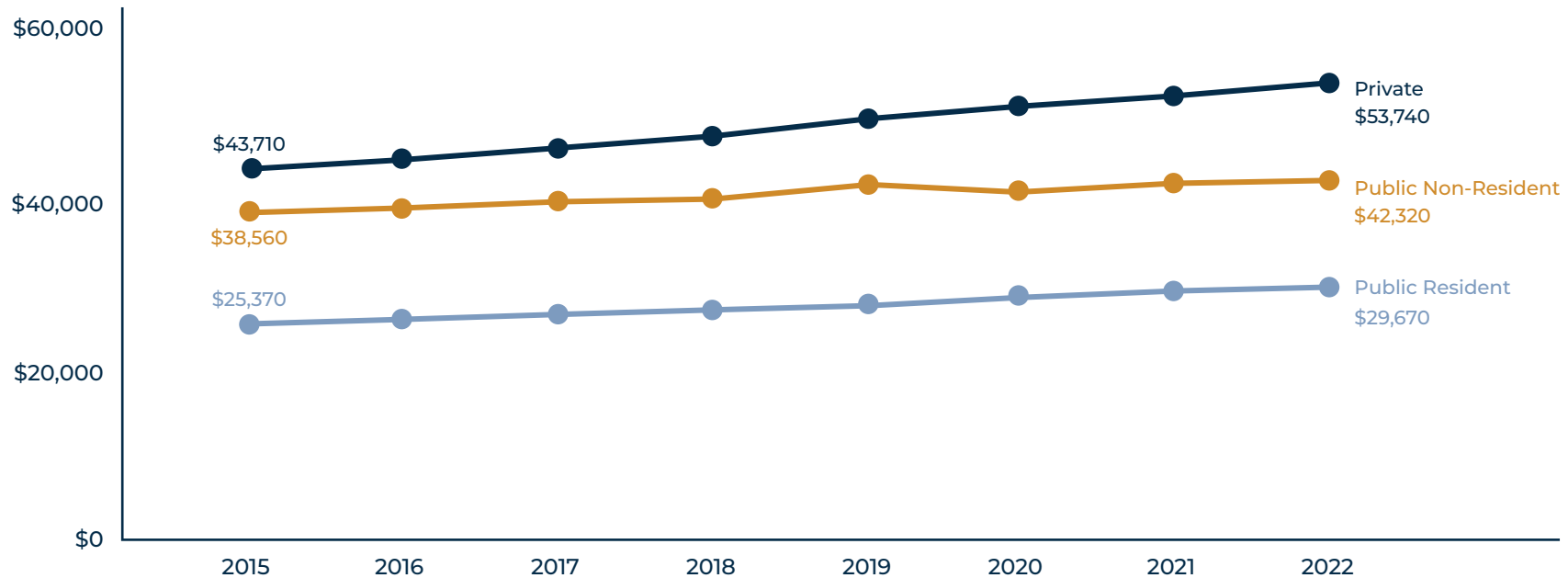
A photograph of a diverse group of students sitting at a wooden table in a classroom or study hall. They are looking at papers and smiling. A large, stylized letter 'A' is overlaid on the left side of the image, composed of geometric shapes in teal, yellow, and light purple. The word 'Affordability' is written in white, bold, sans-serif font across the middle of the image, with a yellow rectangular block at the end of the word. The background is slightly blurred, showing a typical classroom setting with windows and posters on the wall.

# Affordability



# Average Full-Time Tuition and Fees (Unadjusted) by School Type and Residency, 2015-2022

Without adjusting for inflation, tuition and fees increased steadily between 2015-2022.



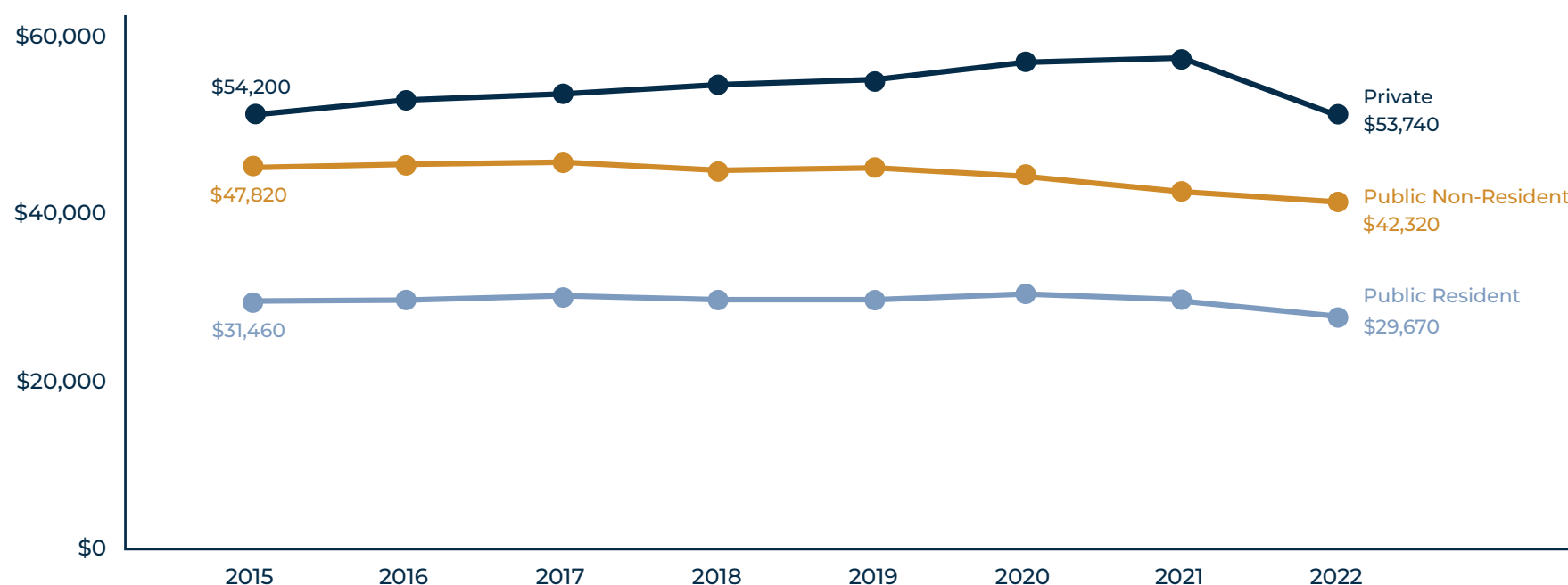
**Note:** The following schools are excluded from figures shown due to changes in accreditation or status between 2015-2022: Arizona Summit Law School, Charlotte School of Law, Florida Coastal School of Law, Hamline University, Indiana Tech Law School, Thomas Jefferson School of Law, University of La 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.



# Average Full-Time Tuition and Fees (in 2022 Dollars) by School Type and Residency, 2015-2022

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.



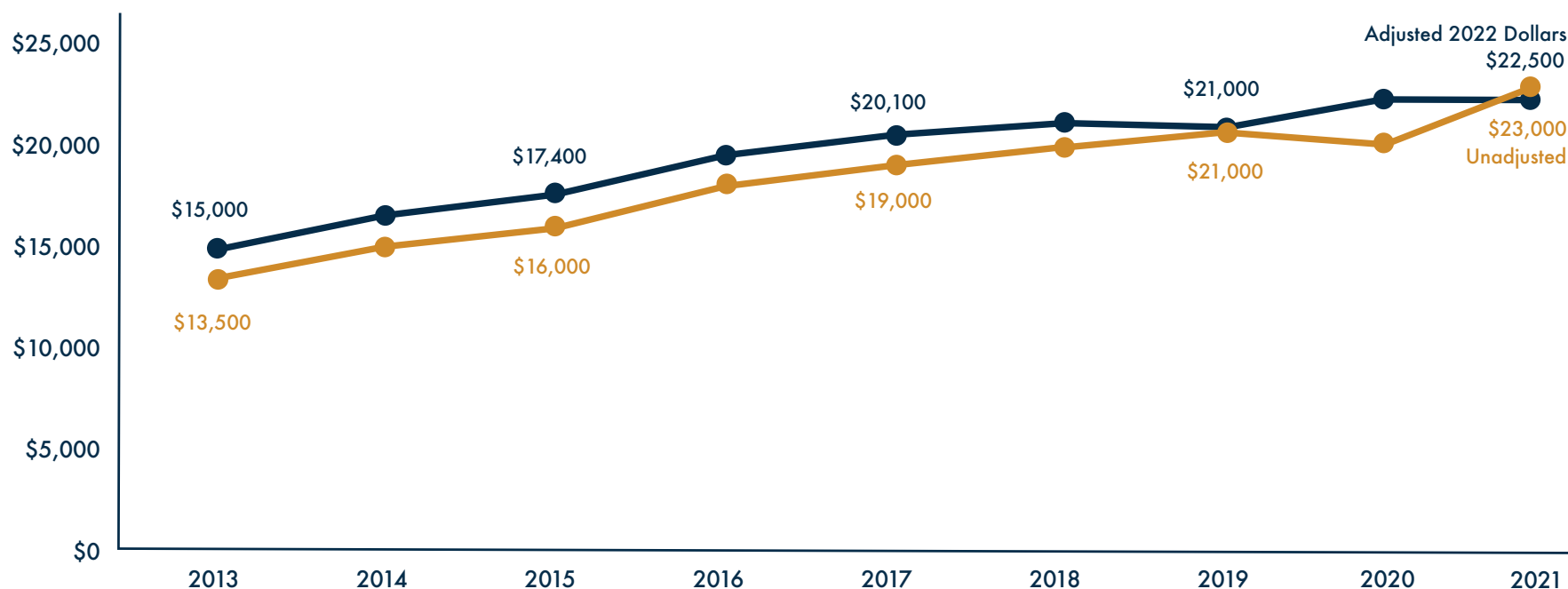
**Note:** Figures shown as adjusted for inflation are adjusted using the Consumer Price Index for all urban consumers (CPI-U) from July of the year indicated. The following schools are excluded from figures shown due to changes in accreditation or status between 2015-2022: Arizona Summit Law School, 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.



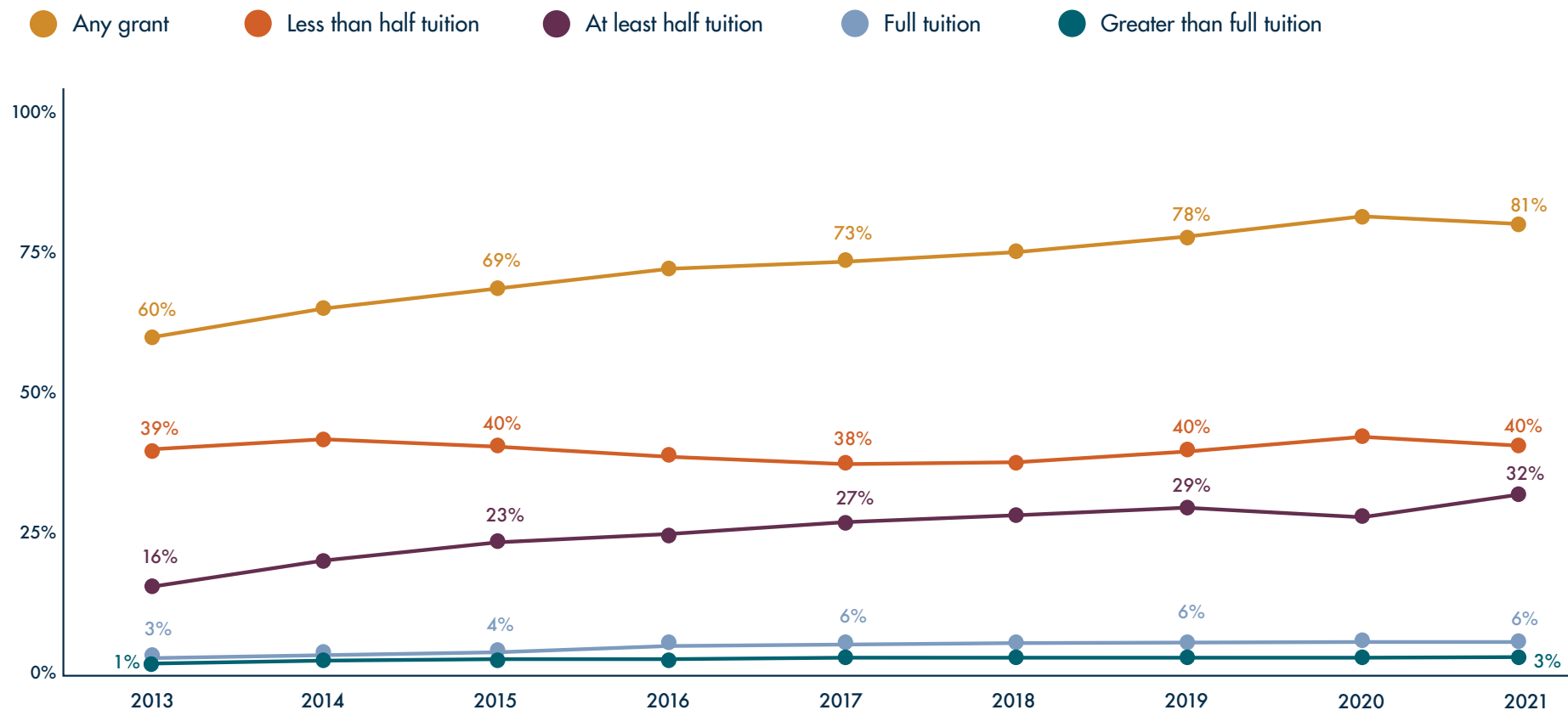
**Note:** The median value displayed here is the median of all school level median grant amounts.

**Data Source:** American Bar Association, 2023a. Data presentation, including conversion to real dollars, analysis, and commentary by AccessLex Institute.



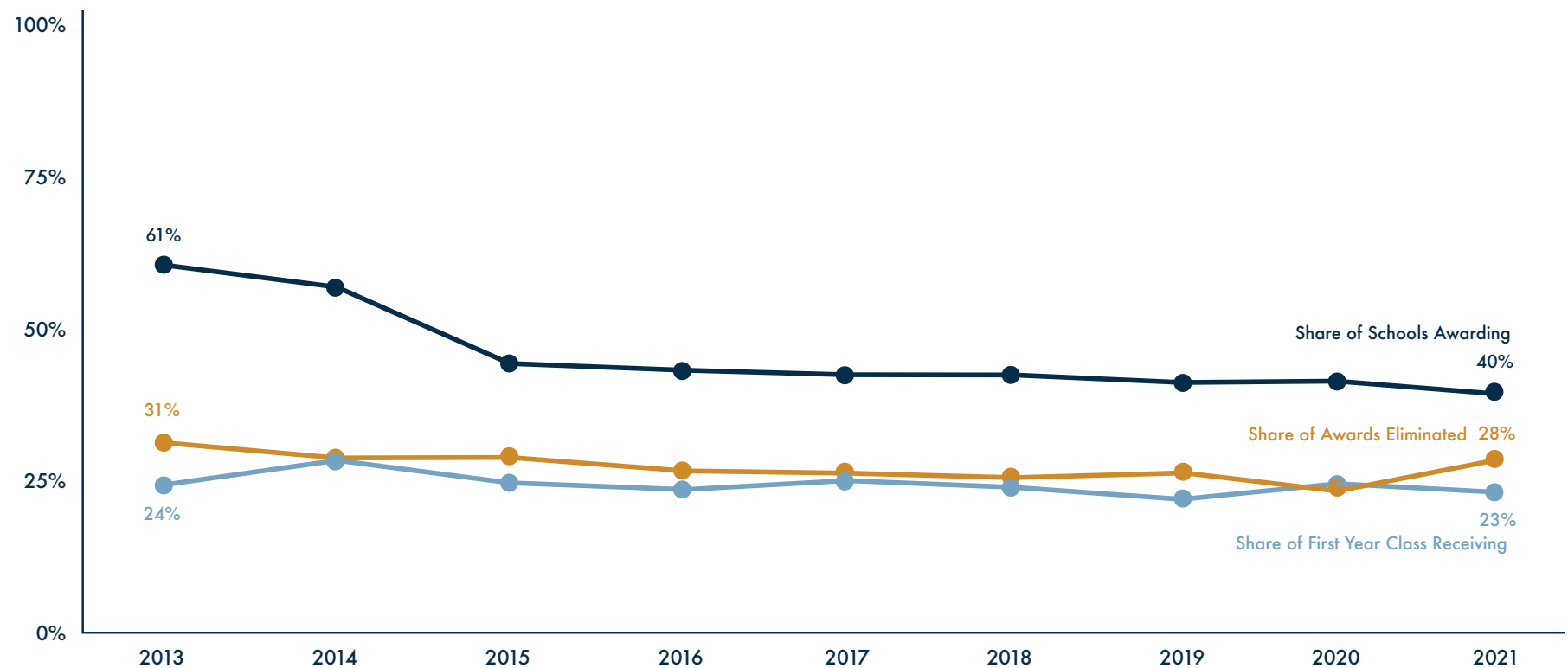
# Share of Full-Time Students Receiving Institutional Grants, 2013-2021

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.



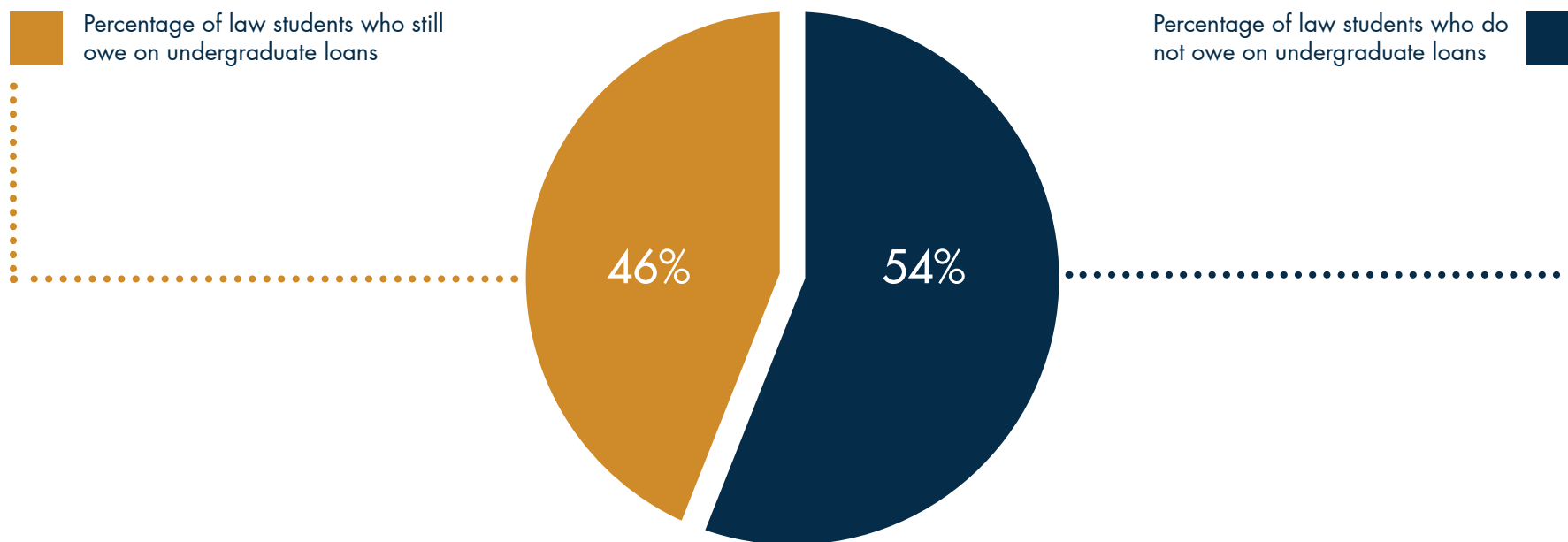
# Trends in Awarding and Eliminating Conditional Scholarships at ABA-Approved Law Schools, 2013-2021

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, 2019-2020

Nearly half of enrolled law school students are carrying undergraduate debt. In 2019-2020, the average amount of debt still owed among those with outstanding undergraduate loans was nearly \$27,000.



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

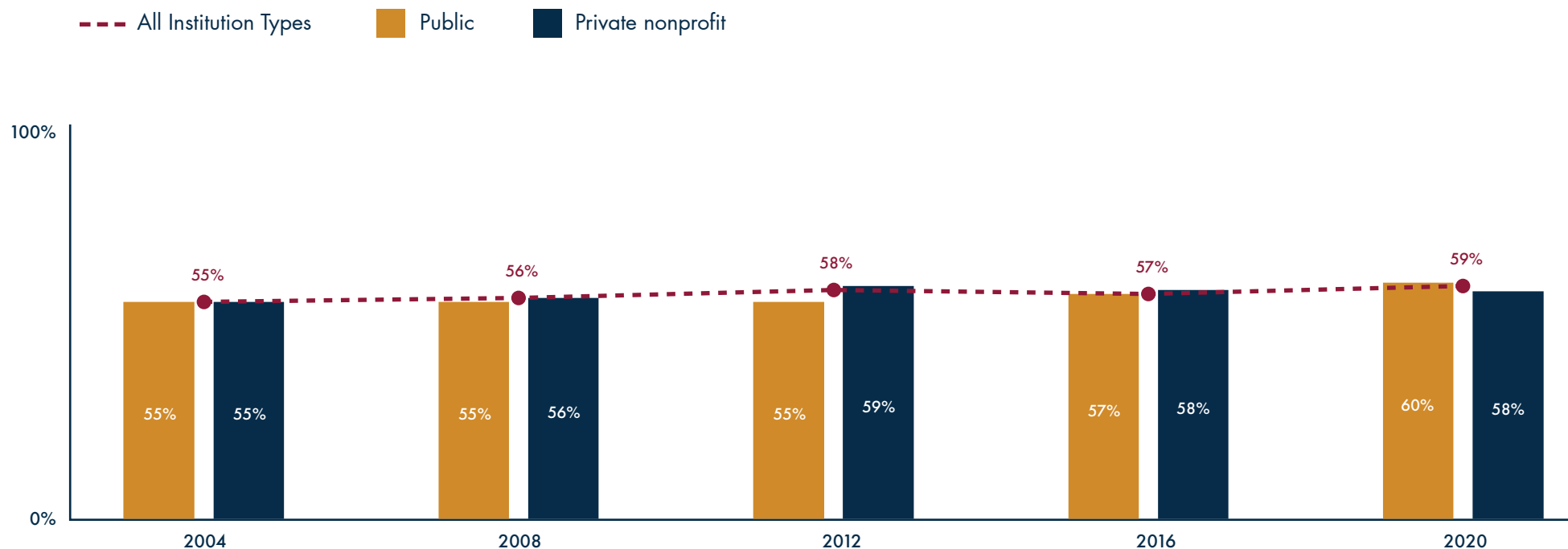
**Data Source:** U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2019-20 National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS:20). Retrieved on August 6, 2023.

Data presentation, analysis, and commentary by AccessLex Institute.



# Percentage of Law Students Who Worked While Enrolled, by Year and Institution Type, 2004-2020

More than half of enrolled law students reported earnings from off-campus employment at both public and private, nonprofit schools.

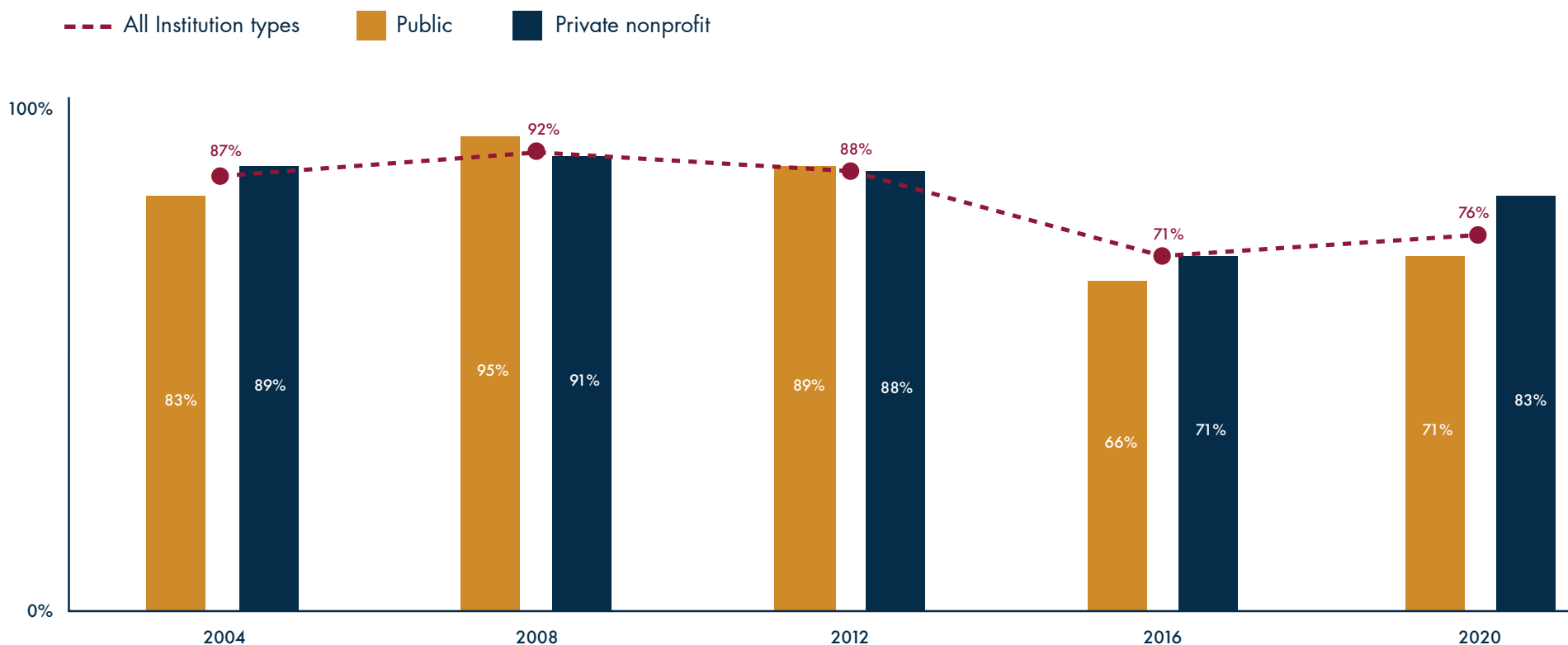


**Data Source:** U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Postsecondary Student Aid Study, NPSAS:04, NPSAS:08, NPSAS:12, NPSAS:16, and NPSAS:20. Retrieved on August 22, 2023. Data presentation, analysis, and commentary by AccessLex Institute.



# Percentage of Law Graduates Who Borrowed for Graduate Education, by Year and Institution Type, 2004-2020

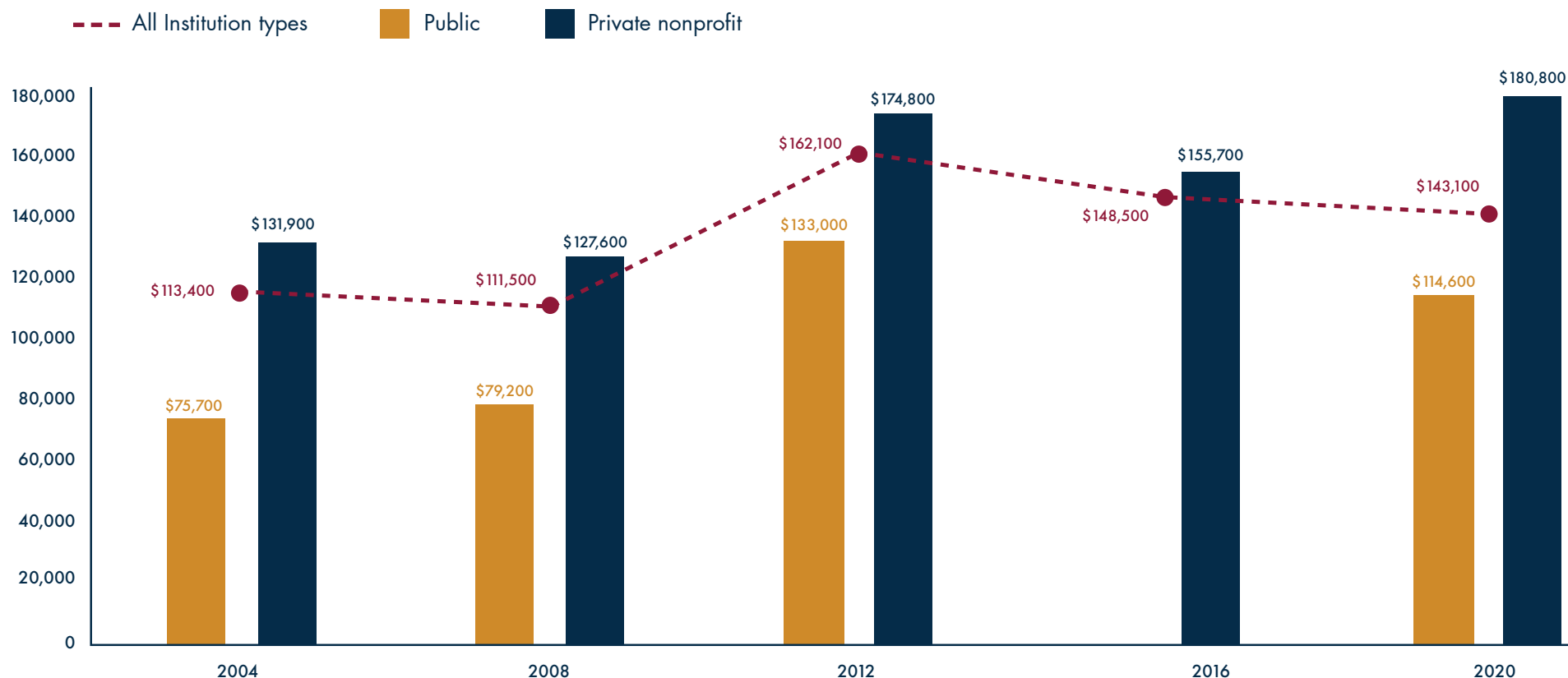
A majority of law graduates use loans to fund their graduate education, and the overall proportion who borrowed increased by 5 percentage points between 2016 and 2020.





# Cumulative Amount Borrowed (in 2023 Dollars) Among Law Students Who Borrowed While Enrolled, by Year and Institution Type, 2004-2020

Although the percentage of law graduates who borrowed increased between 2016 and 2020, the average cumulative amount of graduate debt among those who borrowed decreased by more than \$4,000.



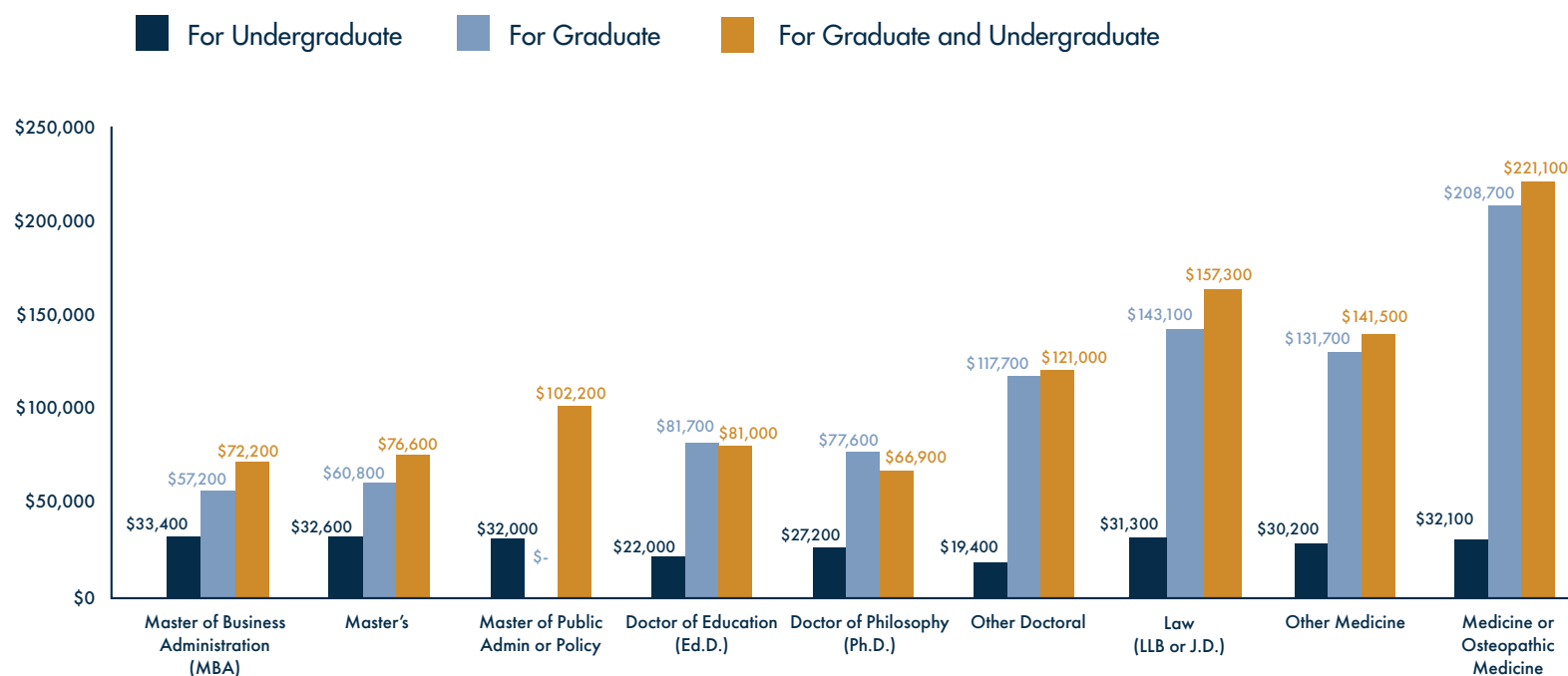
**Note:** Minimum reporting standards were not met for law school graduates who attended public institutions in 2016. Data presented reflects only U.S. citizens and permanent residents. Foreign/international students are excluded from analysis due to differences in financial aid eligibility.

**Data Source:** U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Postsecondary Student Aid Study, NPSAS:04, NPSAS:08, NPSAS:12, NPSAS:16, and NPSAS:20. Retrieved on August 6, 2023. Data presentation, analysis, and commentary by AccessLex Institute.



# Average Amounts Borrowed by 2020 Graduates by Graduate Degree Type (in 2023 Dollars) Among Those Who Borrowed

Among those who borrowed, compared to other 2020 graduate degree recipients, law graduates borrowed, on average, less for their undergraduate but more for their graduate education. The average amount law students borrowed for their undergraduate education was \$600 (2 percent) less than the overall average of \$31,900. However, the amount law students borrowed for graduate school exceeded all other graduate and professional degree recipients, except those in medicine and other health professions, such as dentistry.



**Note:** Cumulative amount borrowed for graduate education is unavailable for Master of Public Administration or Policy degree recipients in 2020. Data presented reflects only U.S. citizens and permanent residents. International students are excluded from analysis due to differences in financial eligibility.

**Data Source:** U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Postsecondary Student Aid Study, NPSAS:04, NPSAS:08, NPSAS:12, NPSAS:16, and NPSAS:20. Retrieved on August 6, 2023. Data presentation, analysis, and commentary by AccessLex Institute.

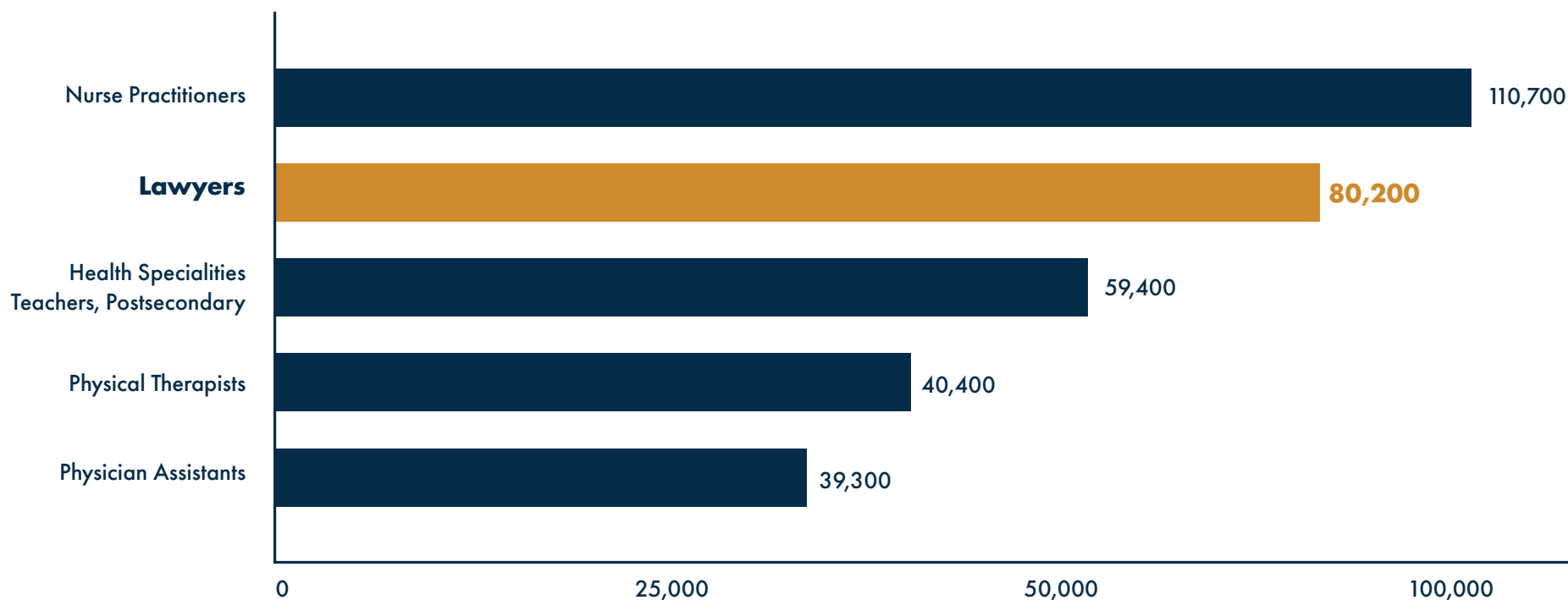




**Value**

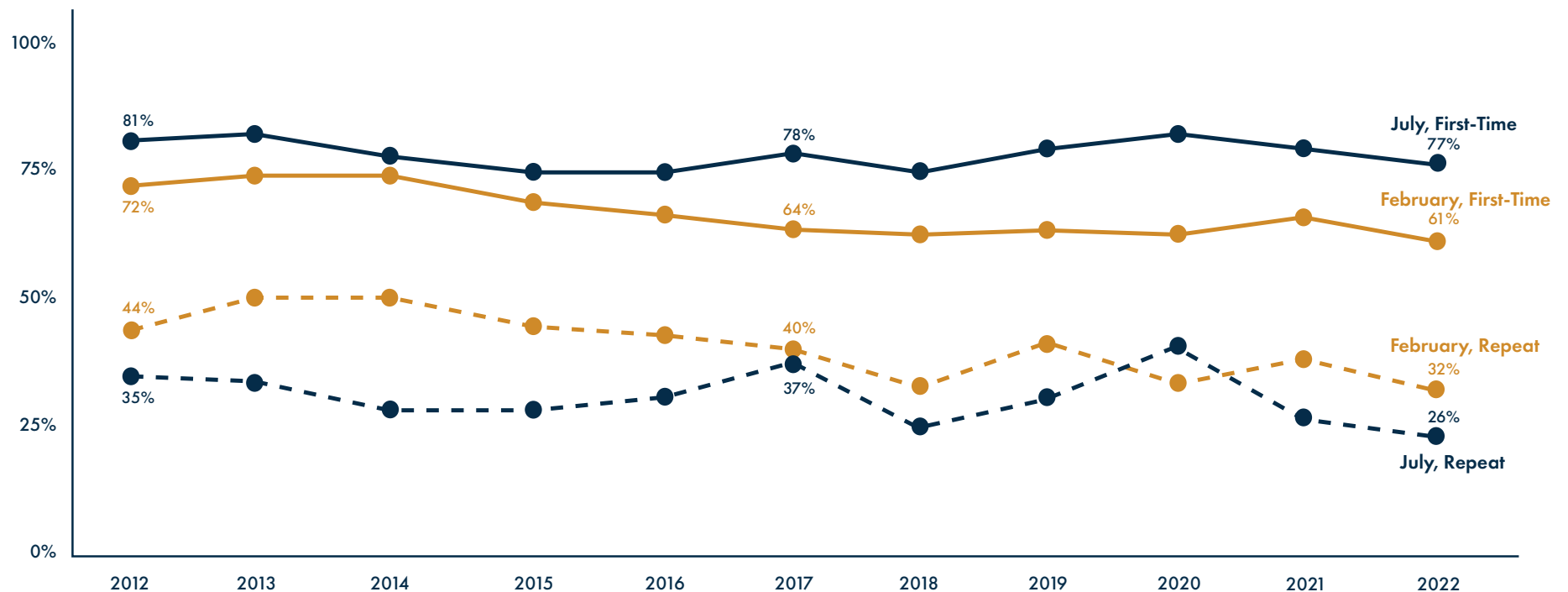
# Occupations Requiring Graduate or Professional Degree with Largest Projected Increase in Employment, 2021-2031

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, 2012-2022

Bar passage rate declines have been most pronounced for February takers in recent years, falling 11 percentage points from 2012 to 2022 for first-time takers and 12 percentage points for repeat takers over the same period. Meanwhile, July first-time takers' bar passage rates fluctuated between 82 percent and 74 percent, declining from 82 percent in 2020 to 77 percent in 2022. Similarly, July repeat takers' pass rates dropped sharply from 40 percent in 2020 to 26 percent in 2022. 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.

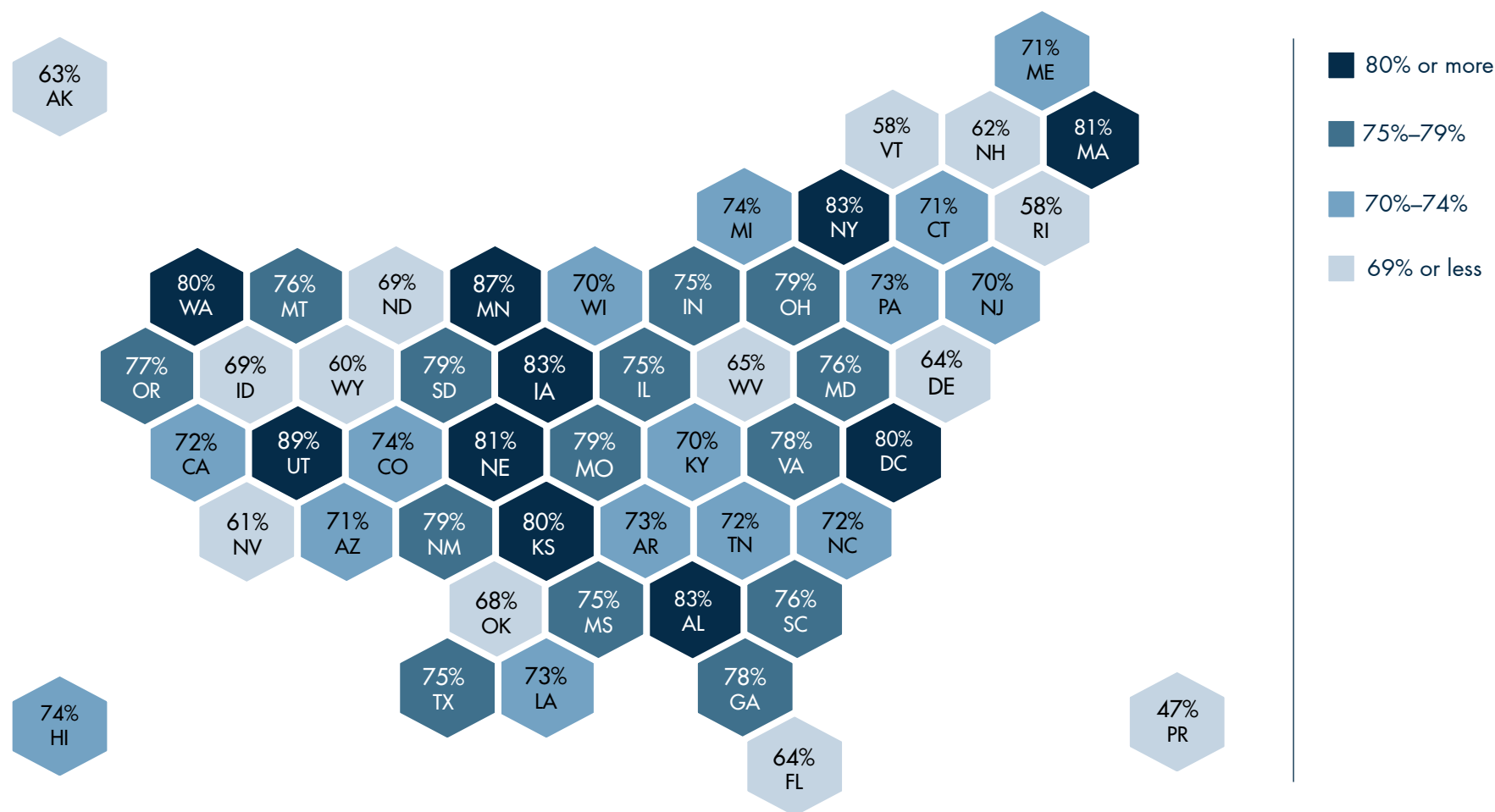
**Data Source:** National Conference of Bar Examiners, 2013–2023. Data presentation, analysis, and commentary by AccessLex Institute.





# First-Time Bar Passage Rates for Graduates of ABA-Approved Law Schools by State, 2022

In 2022, 75 percent of all first-time exam takers from ABA-approved law schools passed the bar. However, bar passage rates vary among jurisdictions, generally ranging 58 to 89 percent.



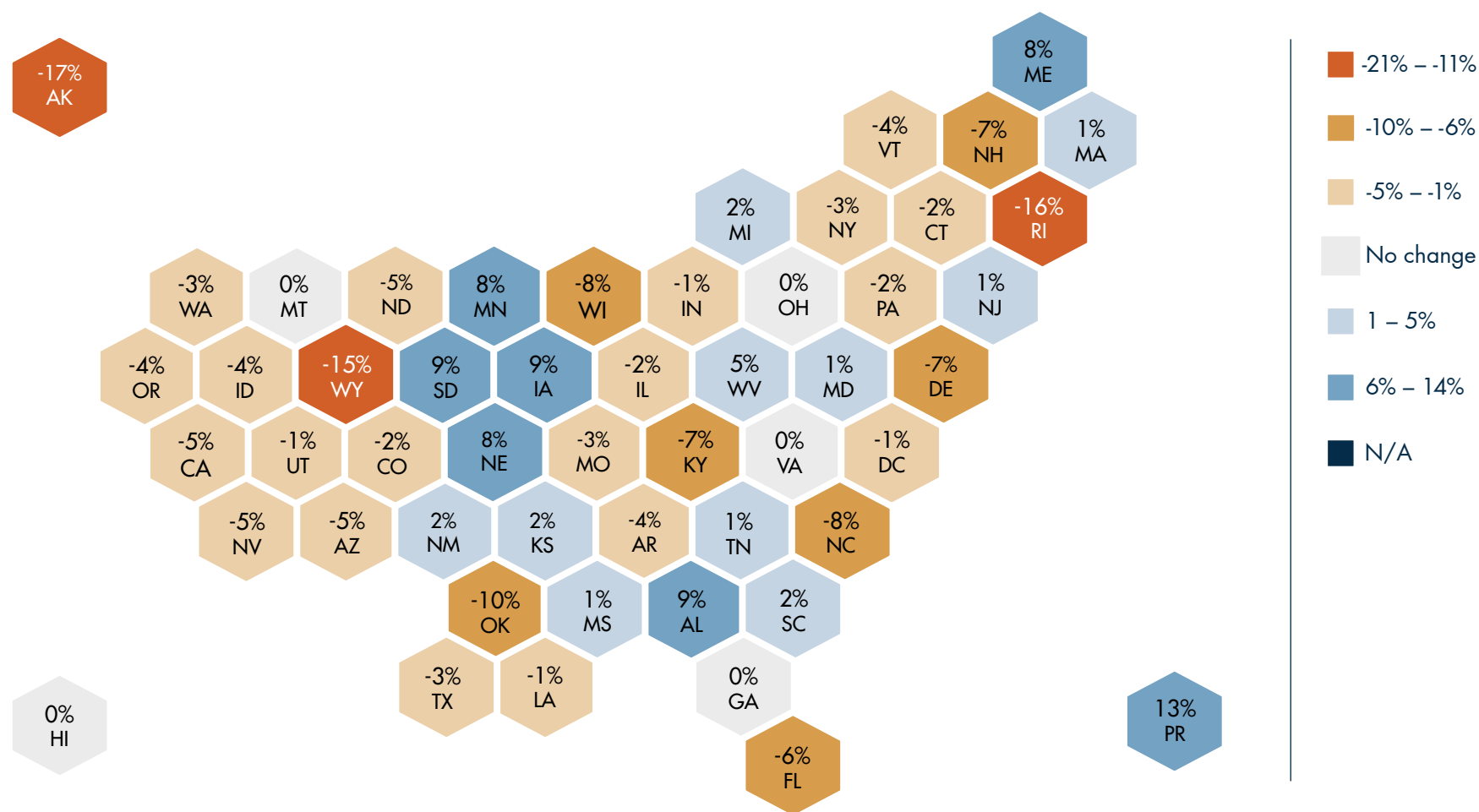
**Note:** Bar passage is shown by the state of bar administration, not the location of the exam taker's law school.

**Data Source:** National Conference of Bar Examiners, 2023. Retrieved on September 7, 2023. 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, 2021-2022

Between 2021 and 2022, a majority of states reported decreases in first-time bar passage rates among graduates of ABA-approved law schools. Of the 30 jurisdictions where pass rates declined, three reported decreases greater than ten percentage points.



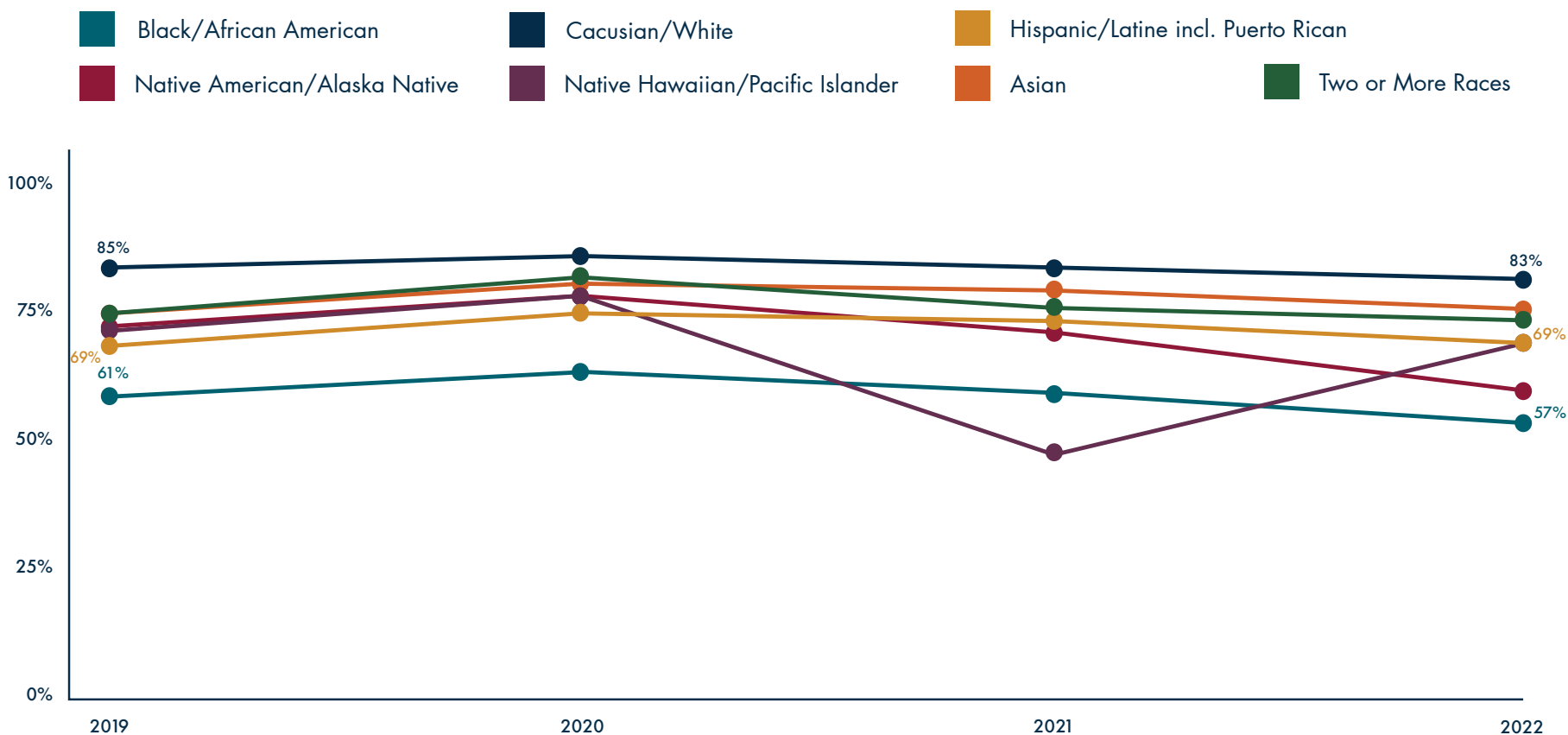
**Note:** Bar passage is shown by the state of bar administration, not the location of the exam taker's law school.

**Data Source:** National Conference of Bar Examiners, 2023. Retrieved on September 7, 2023. Data presentation, analysis, and commentary by AccessLex Institute



# First-Time Bar Passage by Race and Ethnicity, 2019-2022

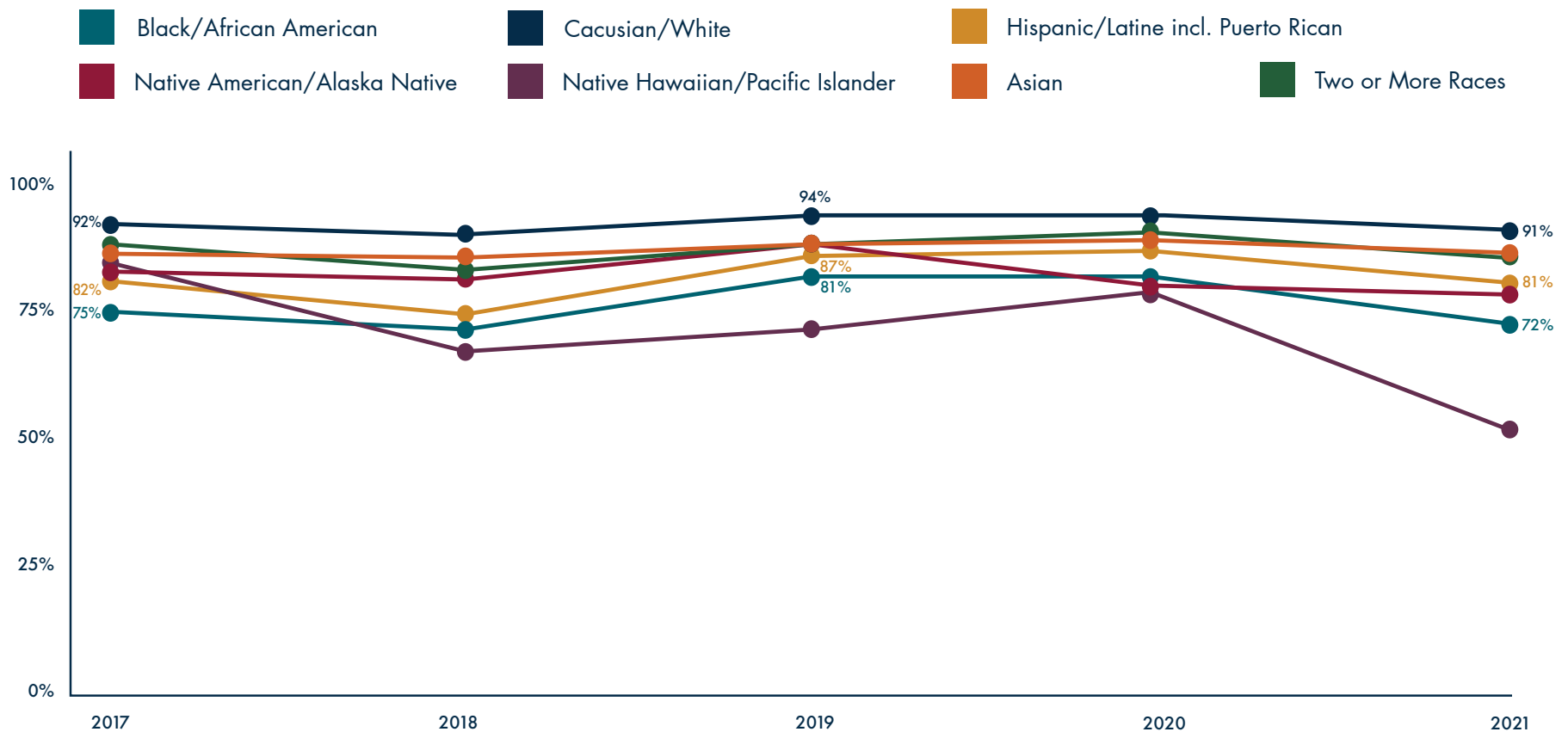
Between 2019-2022, first-time bar passage varied by race and ethnicity, with White graduates passing the bar during the first attempt at a higher rate than their peers across all 4 years. In 2022, 83 percent of White graduates passed the bar on their first attempt, whereas only 57 percent of Black graduates and 69 percent of Hispanic/Latine graduates passed on their first attempt.





# Ultimate Bar Passage by Race and Ethnicity, 2017-2021

Between 2017-2021, among ABA-accredited law school graduates who sat for the bar within one to two years of graduation (referred to as “ultimate” bar passage), White graduates passed at higher rates than their peers. In 2021, 91 percent of White graduates passed the bar within one year of graduation, compared to 72 percent of Black graduates and 81 percent of Hispanic/Latine graduates.



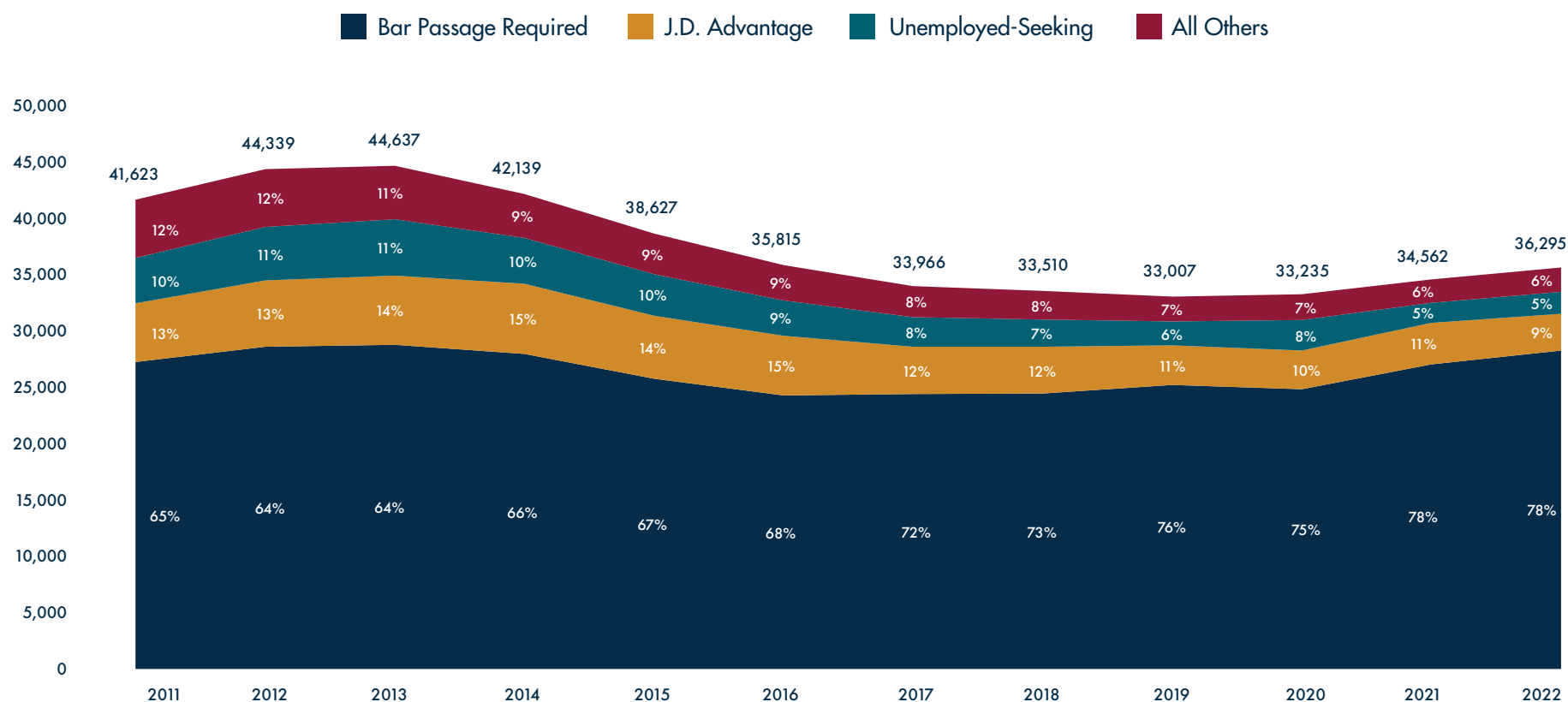
**Note:** Ultimate bar passage data for 2021 contains data for the graduating classes in that year after one year. Ultimate bar passage data for 2017-2020 contains data for the graduating classes after two years.

**Data Source:** American Bar Association, 2023. Data presentation, analysis, and commentary by AccessLex Institute.



# Recent J.D. Graduates by Employment Status, 2011-2022

Employment outcomes for the Class of 2022 were strong compared to recent cohorts. Between 2021 and 2022, both the number of J.D. graduates and the number of employed graduates increased. However, the percentage of graduates with jobs requiring licensure remained the same, while the number of graduates in these positions reached a high not seen since 2013. The cohort unemployment percentage remained the same.



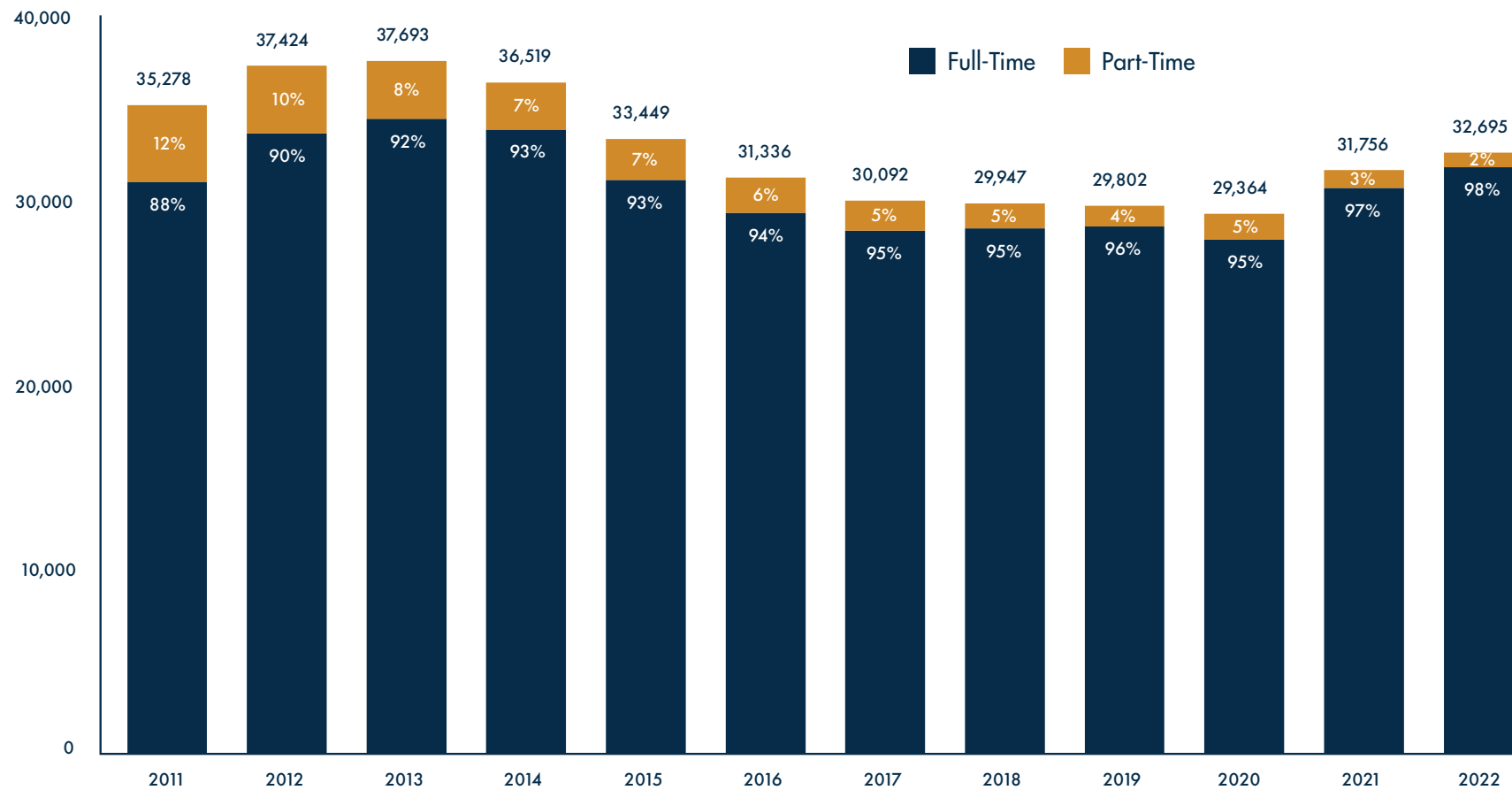
**Note:** These data are based on law school graduates whose employment status was reported to NALP and may not be fully representative of the total law school graduating class indicated. In 2014, NALP changed the timing of the survey administration from 9 months post-graduation to 10 months post-graduation.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

**Data Source:** National Association for Law Placement, 2023. Retrieved on August 22, 2023. Data presentation, analysis, and commentary by AccessLex Institute.



# Full-Time and Part-Time Employment of Recent J.D. Graduates, 2011-2022

The percentage of employed recent J.D. graduates who had a full-time job rose to 98 percent, a one-point increase over 2021. According to 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.



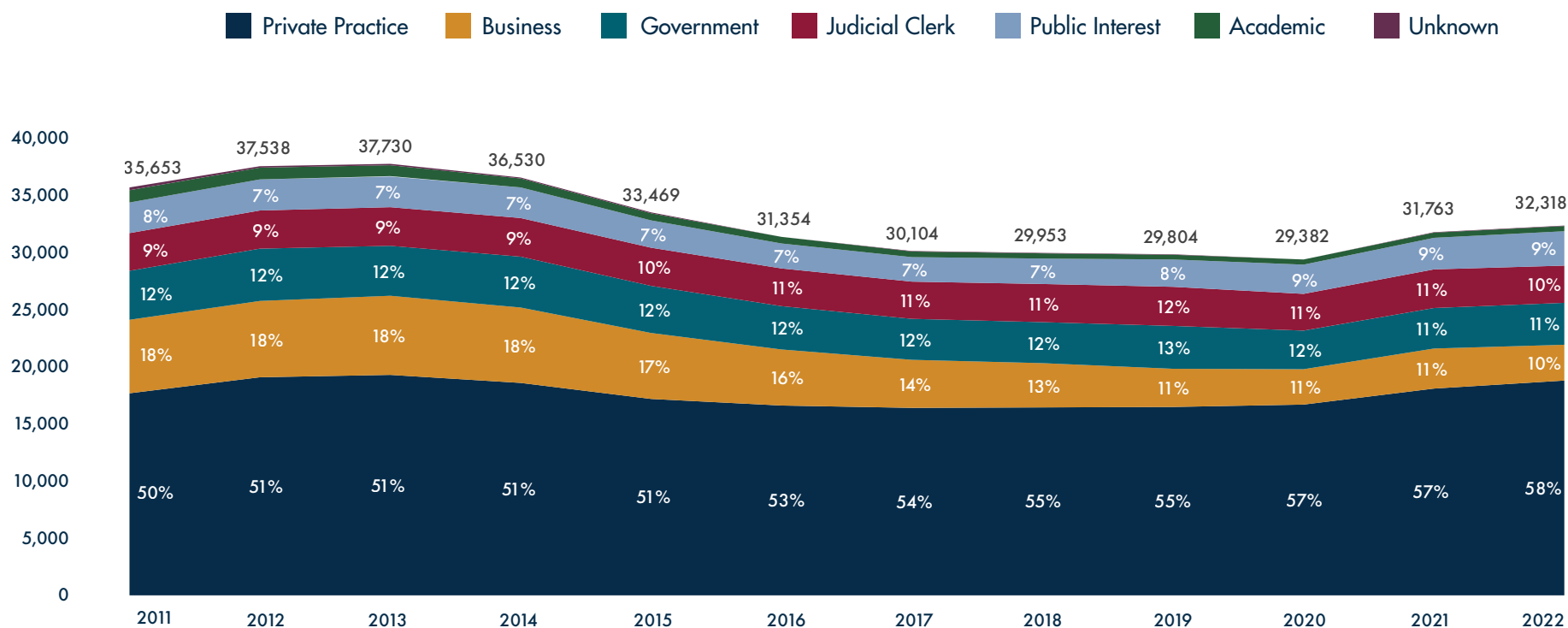
**Note:** These data are based on law school graduates whose employment status was reported to NALP and may not be fully representative of the total law school graduating class indicated. In 2014, NALP changed the timing of the survey administration from 9 months post-graduation to 10 months post-graduation.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

**Data Source:** National Association for Law Placement, 2023. Retrieved on August 22, 2023. Data presentation, analysis, and commentary by AccessLex Institute.



# Recent J.D. Graduate Employment by Sector, 2011-2022

While the total number of recent J.D. graduates who are employed rose by about 500 in 2022, the distribution of employment across sectors remained relatively unchanged from 2021. In 2022, those employed in private practice comprised 58 percent of recent graduates; those employed in business, government, or judicial clerkships comprised 10-11 percent each.



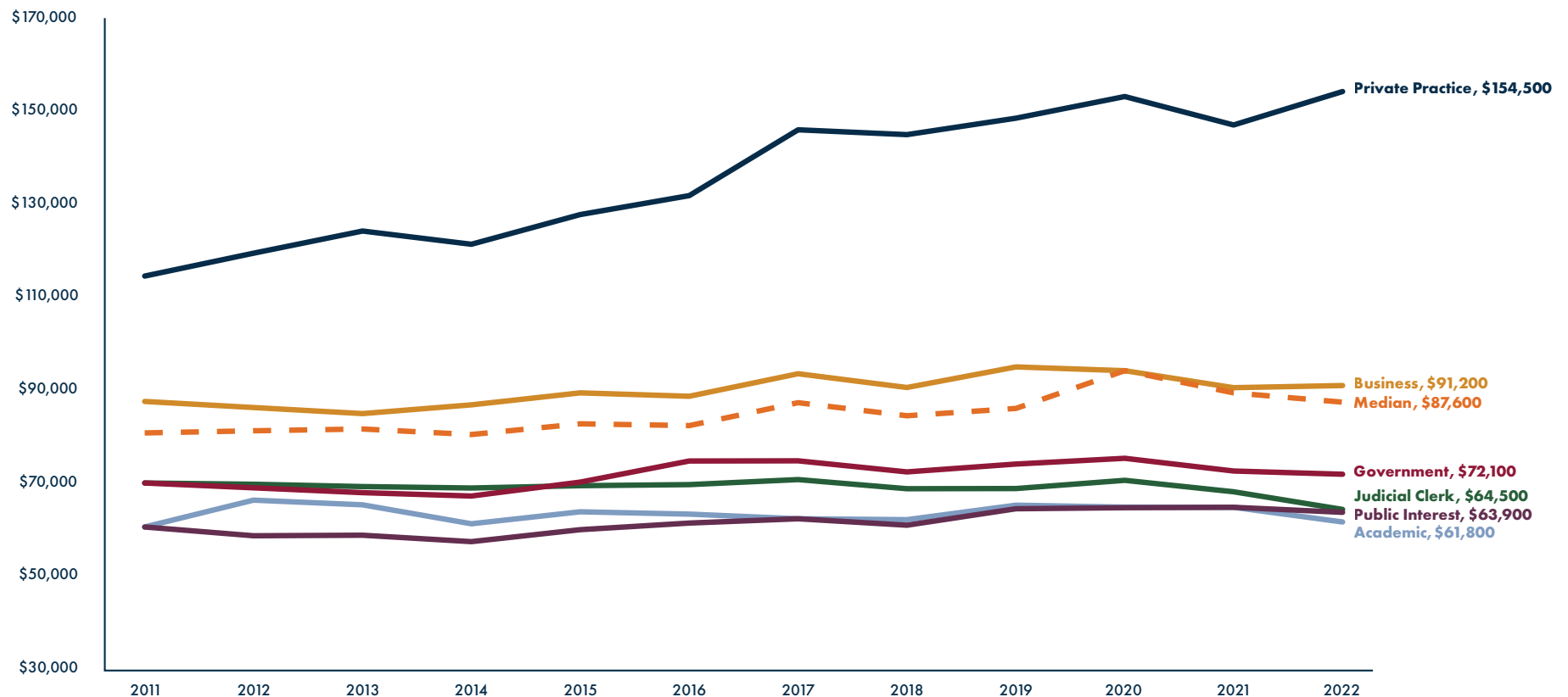
**Note:** These data are based on law school graduates whose employment status was reported to NALP and may not be fully representative of the total law school graduating class indicated. In 2014, NALP changed the timing of the survey administration from 9 months post-graduation to 10 months post-graduation.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

**Data Source:** National Association for Law Placement, 2023. Retrieved on August 22, 2023. Data presentation, analysis, and commentary by AccessLex Institute.



# Median Salary (in 2023 Dollars) of Recent J.D. Graduates by Sector, 2011-2022

Adjusting for inflation, the median salary for those in private practice increased by \$7,000 from 2021 to 2022; however, the median overall salary for recent J.D. graduates declined by \$2,000. The median salaries for academic and judicial clerk jobs fell by more than \$3,000 whereas they remained largely unchanged for business, government, and public interest jobs.



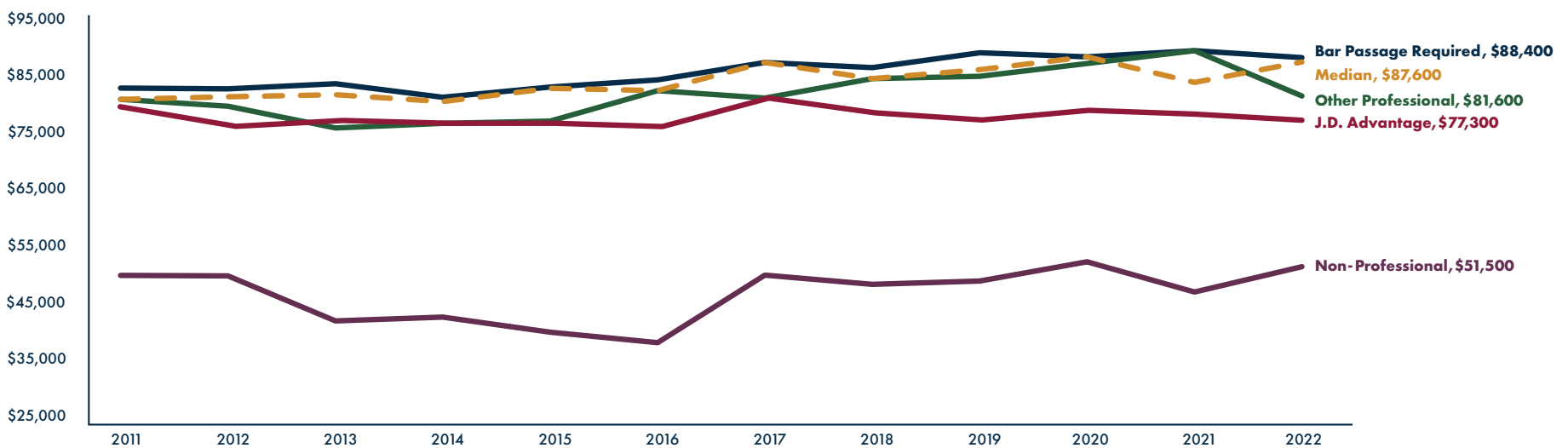
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**Data Source:** National Association for Law Placement, 2023. Retrieved on August 22, 2023. Data presentation, analysis, and commentary by AccessLex Institute.



# Median Salary (in 2023 Dollars) of Recent J.D. Graduates by Employment Type, 2011-2022

The inflation-adjusted overall median salary fell \$2,000 between 2021 and 2022. Although the real (unadjusted) salaries for all employment types except Other Professional increased by \$5,000 from 2021 to 2022, these gains were less than the rate of inflation.



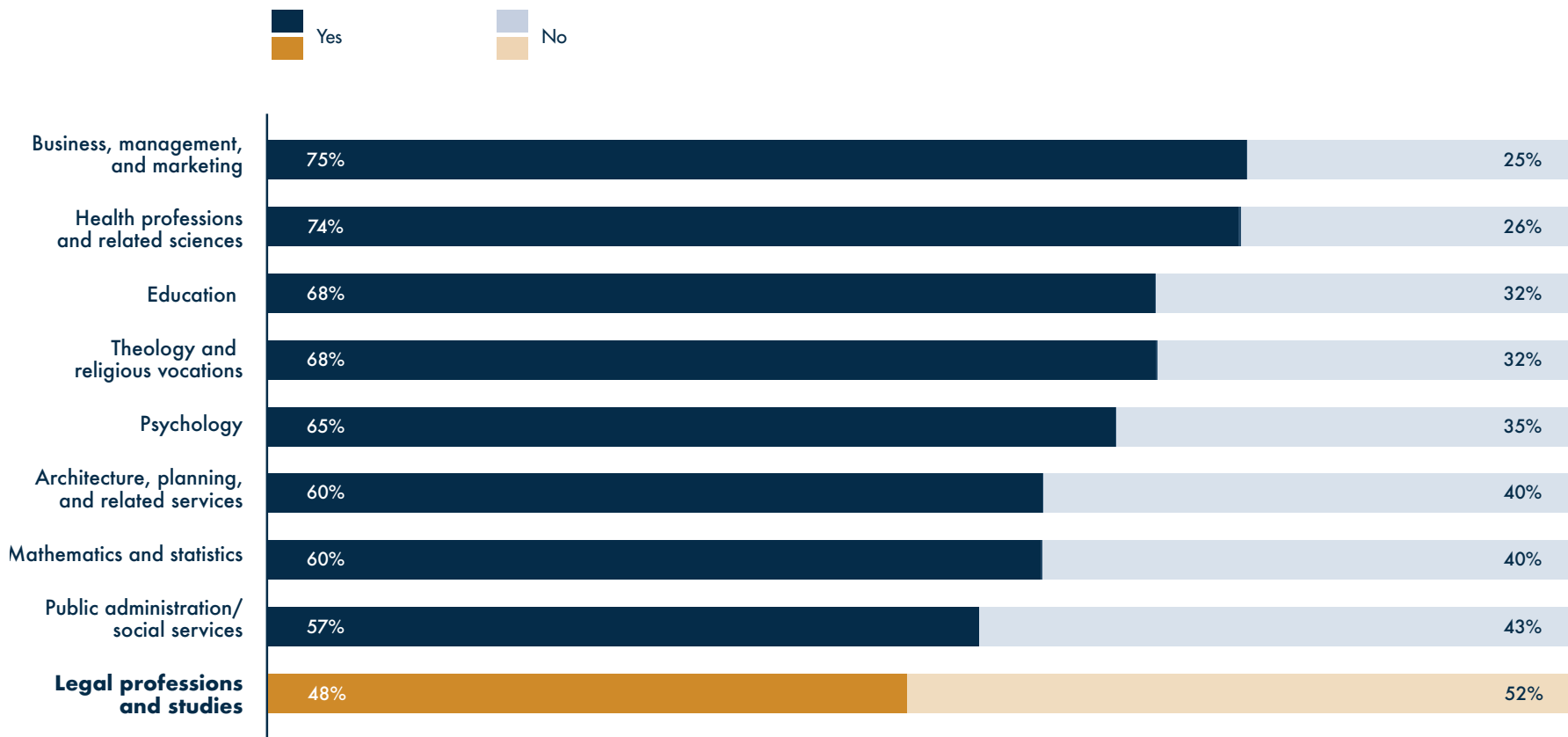
**Note:** These data are based on law school graduates whose employment status was reported to NALP and may not be fully representative of the total law school graduating class indicated. In 2014, NALP changed the timing of the survey administration from 9 months post-graduation to 10 months post-graduation.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

**Data Source:** National Association for Law Placement, 2023. Retrieved on August 22, 2023. Data presentation, analysis, and commentary by AccessLex Institute.



# 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.



**Data Source:** U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Baccalaureate and Beyond (B&B:08/18): First Look at the 2018 Employment and Educational Experiences of 2007–08 College Graduates. Data presentation, analysis, and commentary by AccessLex Institute.



# Detailed Data Sources

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