



# LSAC's Knowledge Report: The 2023 1L Profile



**Anna Russian, MAS, PhD**  
(Applied Research Scientist)

**Debra Langer, MPA, MSc**  
(Applied Research Analyst)

**Elizabeth Bodamer, JD, PhD**  
(Senior Director of Research)

**Alisha Kirchoff, MA, PhD Candidate**  
(Applied Research Program Manager)

# Table of Contents

<b>Executive Summary</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>Introduction</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>Who Was in the 2023 First-Year Class?</b> .....	<b>5</b>
Racial and Ethnic Diversity .....	6
Gender and LGBTQ+ Diversity .....	8
Socioeconomic Diversity .....	9
<b>Where Did They Enroll?</b> .....	<b>12</b>
Enrollments by Law School Selectivity .....	13
Racial and Ethnic Diversity .....	13
Gender and Sexual Orientation Diversity .....	16
Socioeconomic Diversity .....	18
Enrollment by Type of School: Public v. Private Status .....	20
Enrollment by Geographic Region .....	21
Enrollment by Program Type: Full-Time or Part-Time .....	25
<b>How Did They Decide Where to Enroll?</b> .....	<b>28</b>
Who Responded to the 2023 Matriculant Survey? .....	29
When It All Started .....	32
Why It All Started.....	36
Resources They Used and Steps They Took to Make Law School a Reality .....	38
Who They Consulted for Information .....	38
What Law School Rankings Mean to Them.....	41
Other Sources of Information They Consulted.....	42
Getting to Know Law Schools: Recruitment Activities and Meetings.....	44
Making the Enrollment Decision.....	49
Reputation Factors .....	50
Money Matters: Financial Factors and Law School .....	51
Where You Are Matters: The Role of Location Factors .....	54
The Academic Experience: Academic, Faculty, and Program Factors.....	55
The Law School Environment: Law School Culture and Social Factors .....	56
Meeting Students Where They Are: School-Provided Support Factors .....	58

Then and Now: Top Factors When They Decided Where to Enroll and What They Would Now Advise Current Candidates.....	59
Top-Ranked Factors Then and Now .....	60
Top-Ranked Factors by Law School Selectivity .....	61
<b>Preparing for the First Year of Law School .....</b>	<b>63</b>
0L/Bridge Program Participation .....	63
<b>Conclusion and Advancing Mission .....</b>	<b>67</b>
<b>Data Sources and Methodology.....</b>	<b>68</b>

# Executive Summary

LSAC's mission is to advance law and justice by promoting access, equity, and fairness in law school admission and supporting the learning journey from prelaw through practice. In doing so, we collaborate with others in the legal community, including member law schools, DEI professionals, prelaw advisors, and many other mission-aligned groups and individuals. To help advance the collective understanding of what is happening along the prelaw through practice journey, this report focuses on clarifying:

1. who is enrolling in law school,
2. where they enrolled, and
3. how they made their enrollment decision.

This report focuses on the 2023 first-year (1L) class. As such, it establishes a baseline from which to examine the 2024 1L class and future 1L classes admitted after the June 2023 SFFA v. Harvard decision.<sup>1</sup> This report provides several important insights that may help law schools recruit and support future law students along the prelaw through practice journey. The overall 2023 1L class enrollment data and data from the 2023 LSAC Matriculant Survey reveal that the 2023 1L class:

- **Was at the time the most diverse entering class in history.** 41.8% of the 1L class were from racially and ethnically minoritized<sup>2</sup> groups, 56% were women, 14% were LGBTQ+,<sup>3</sup> 24% were first-generation college graduates, and 75% were the first in their families to go to law school.
- **Enrolled differently based on identity and background.** 98% of the 1L class enrolled in a full-time program. Students who enrolled in part-time programs were more racially and ethnically diverse and were more economically under-resourced than their peers in full-time programs. While the class was almost equally distributed across all law schools based on law school selectivity, Black/African American and Hispanic or Latina/é/o/x 1Ls enrolled in access law schools at higher rates than their peers.<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> At the time of this report's publication, LSAC is writing and editing reports about trends in the composition of the first-year class over the last four years and about the 2024 1L class.

<sup>2</sup> The term "minoritized" refers to populations that have been treated as less important than the dominant population in terms of access, power, and other aspects of social processes. Minoritized incorporates an understanding of social structures rather than being numerically/statistically smaller/fewer. Minoritized can be used to describe various populations and is not synonymous with or limited to racially/ethnically underrepresented populations. This term is used interchangeably with marginalized in this report.

<sup>3</sup> LGBTQ+ refers to people who identify with any sexual orientation other than heterosexual and/or people with any gender identity other than cisgender man or woman.

<sup>4</sup> Using LSAC data, law schools are each assigned a selectivity index based on each school's 2023 admission rate, median LSAT of admitted students, and median UGPA of admitted students. The top 25% highly selective law schools are in the first quartile (Q1), and they are the first 49 law schools with the highest index score.

- **Were multidimensional enrollment decision-makers.** Once the 2023 1Ls were admitted to one or more law schools, the factors that drove their final decision on where to attend — their current law school — were multidimensional and varied based on respondents’ needs and goals. Student level outcomes were the most critical factors 1Ls considered in their decisions. In fact, nearly one in four 1Ls reported that they did not consult rankings at all when deciding where to enroll. Further, among 1Ls who reported that reputation was the top factor they considered when deciding where to enroll, more than 30% said they would not advise the same to candidates now.
- **Sought support for law school success.** The 2023 1Ls were informed help-seekers. Almost a quarter reported that they participated in 0L/bridge programs.

The 2023 1L class was not only the most racially and ethnically diverse class in history, but it was also the most diverse based on reported sexual orientation and gender identity. Therefore, it is not surprising that the factors important to this class when deciding where to enroll varied. The 2023 1L class utilized a wide range of information sources, spaces, tools, and opportunities to gather law school information to help them make their individual decisions on where to attend and how to prepare for the first semester of law school.

This report provides reliable data to inform how, as a community, we can confront challenges in a consistent manner, work toward concrete outcomes, and learn from what works and what does not. The insights in this report can further help inform a collective effort from prelaw through admission as we usher in the next generation of diverse legal leaders. Through our ongoing Knowledge Report series, LSAC will continue to collect, analyze, and share data insights in the future to support the legal community.

## Introduction

Progress has been made with increasing access to legal education and the legal profession, but there is still more work to do. [The legal profession does not reflect the U.S. population](#), and more than ever, [millions go without civil legal help](#). Access to legal education is paramount to access to justice. Therefore, central to LSAC’s mission is our commitment to supporting the legal community in having a comprehensive, data-informed understanding of who is entering law school and how they made their decision. The first-year law school class that started during the 2023-2024 academic year was the most racially and ethnically diverse class in history, and it was the last class admitted prior to the full impact of the June 2023 SFFA v. Harvard ruling. Using LSAC data and survey data, this report dives into who the 2023 first-year (1L) class was, where they enrolled, and how they made their decisions on where to attend.

The purpose of this annual report is to provide the legal community with a consistent and detailed profile of the first-year class. Understanding who is going to law school — and why — is useful for informing how future classes are recruited and supported as they make their way to and through law school and beyond.

The 2023 1L class was not only the most racially and ethnically diverse class in history, but also the most diverse based on sexual orientation and gender identity. Therefore, it is not surprising that the factors important to this class when deciding where to enroll varied. Law students are not unidimensional in their decision-making. Once admitted to law school, the factors that drove their final decision as to where to attend — their current law school — are multidimensional and vary based on respondents' needs and goals.

Lastly, and perhaps even more importantly, this report reveals a degree of self-reflection among law students as they look back on their decision-making process. Many students report that the factor they viewed as most important at the time they were making their decision on where to attend would not be the most important factor now, after experiencing the first couple of months of law school.

When asked what are the most important factors they would advise current candidates to consider when deciding where to go to law school compared to when they made their own decision, many students now cite cost as a more important factor than law school reputation. This report provides valuable insights for admission professionals, prelaw advisors, and prospective law students as they consider the many factors that go into their final decision on where to attend law school.

- For law schools, this research can help them market their strengths and programs by understanding the needs and goals of prospective applicants, or to build more effective recruitment strategies to promote a diverse applicant pool.
- For prelaw stakeholders, such as advisors and pathway programs, this report can be a vital roadmap as they guide prospective applicants.<sup>5</sup>
- And for prospective applicants, these trends and findings can serve as a collective voice of the lessons learned by recent first-year law students, and as invaluable insights and advice on how they would make their enrollment decisions today.

## Who Was in the 2023 First-Year Class?

This inaugural 1L profile report is designed to provide a broader and deeper understanding of the diversity in legal education.

Specifically, this section provides diversity breakdowns based on race, ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic status based on first-generation college, Pell Grant recipient, and LSAC fee waiver status. Overall, the 2023 1L class was not only the most racially and ethnically diverse class in history, but the class was also the most diverse based on sexual orientation and gender identity. However, the 2023 1L class was less diverse based on socioeconomic factors such as first-generation college, Pell Grant recipient, and LSAC fee waiver status.

---

<sup>5</sup> For more insights, see [LSAC's Knowledge Report: 2023-2024 Test Takers](#).

Knowing who is entering law school each year provides a snapshot of who is underrepresented, which can help drive collective efforts to intervene in the prelaw pathway. This is especially important given the growing access to justice gap and law deserts across the country. Who was in the 2023 1L class reflects the efforts of countless individuals committed to supporting, guiding, teaching, mentoring, recruiting, and welcoming these future legal leaders. The research provides an opportunity to evaluate our efforts and to continue innovating and collaborating in how we address inequality, including opportunities for skills development, growth, and guidance that start long before law school admission.

## **Racial and Ethnic Diversity**

With 41.8% of students from racially and ethnically minoritized groups, the 2023 1L class was the most racially and ethnically diverse class in legal education (Table 1), up from 40.6% in the previous year. According to LSAC's final data, 37,750 individuals enrolled in 196 U.S. law schools in the 2023-2024 academic year. Racial and ethnic diversity had been steadily increasing for the prior several years, increasing by 2 percentage points between 2021 and 2022 and by 1.8 percentage points from 2022 to 2023.<sup>6</sup>

---

<sup>6</sup> At the time of this report's publication, LSAC was working on examining the 2024 first-year class, which will be shared out in early 2025.



**Table 1: Racial and Ethnic Diversity of the 2023 1L Class**

Race and Ethnicity	Percent
American Indian or Alaska Native <sup>7</sup>	1.72%
Asian	9.64%
Black/African American	7.70%
Hispanic or Latina/é/o/x <sup>8</sup>	9.41%
Indigenous Person of Canada	0.02%
Middle Eastern or North African/Arab	2.89%
Multiracial or Ethnoracial (2 or more)	9.97%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander <sup>9</sup>	0.48%
White	51.63%
Did Not Indicate	6.54%

Source: LSAC

Multiracial or ethnoracial (2 or more) identifying 1Ls are diverse, and it is important to examine who they are within this large umbrella group. Of the 10% of 1Ls who identify as multiracial or ethnoracial (2 or more), about 1 in 3 identified as white Hispanic or Latina/é/o/x (Table 2). For the first time, more details are known about specific groups often invisible in data collection. For example, within this group, about 6% of multiracial or ethnoracial (2 or more) 1Ls identified as Afro-Latina/é/o/x (Black/African American and Hispanic or Latina/é/o/x). When individuals are all categorized as Hispanic or Latino of any race, the diversity within the community and the variety of lived experiences and educational outcomes are lost.<sup>10</sup> It is established that there are intragroup differential outcomes observed between Afro-Latina/é/o/x (Black/African American and Hispanic or Latina/é/o/x) compared to their other Hispanic or Latina/é/o/x or Black/African American

---

<sup>7</sup> LSAC is committed to improving how data is collected and reported. Given conversations with community leaders and advocates, American Indian or Alaska Native students include those who identify exclusively or in part (multiracial or ethnoracial by selecting American Indian or Alaska Native and one other racial or ethnic category) as American Indian or Alaska Native. Santos, J., & Tachine, A. R. (2024). *Layers of Identity: Rethinking American Indian and Alaska Native Data Collection in Higher Education*. Institute for Higher Education Policy.

<sup>8</sup> Hispanic or Latina/é/o/x students counted here are those who identify as only Hispanic or Latina/é/o/x and/or Puerto Rican. This category is not Hispanic or Latina/é/o/x of any race. Ethnoracial Hispanic or Latina/é/o/x students are counted under multiracial or ethnoracial (2 or more).

<sup>9</sup> Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander includes anyone who identifies exclusively or in part (multiracial or ethnoracial by selecting Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander and one other racial or ethnic category) as Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander.

<sup>10</sup> Golash-Boza, T., & Darivt, W. (2008). Latino racial choices: The effects of skin colour and discrimination on Latinos' and Latinas' racial self-identifications. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 31(5), 899-934. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/01419870701568858>



peers.<sup>11</sup> Therefore, visibility of who is multiracial or ethnoracial (2 or more) is the first step to understanding who is on the prelaw to practice path. How multiracial or ethnoracial students experience the journey is underexamined, and LSAC will explore this group in the future to understand this growing group on the prelaw through practice journey.

**Table 2: 2023 Multiracial or Ethnoracial (2 or more) Identifying 1Ls\***

Race and Ethnicity	n	Percent
White and Hispanic or Latina/é/o/x	1,368	31%
Asian and White	659	15%
Middle Eastern or North African/Arab and White	555	13%
Black/African American and White	318	7%
Black/African American and Hispanic or Latina/é/o/x	275	6%

Source: LSAC

\*The term “ethnoracial” refers to a combination of racial and ethnic identities and thereby offers a more accurate representation of the lived experiences of individuals with those combined identities (Goldberg, 1993). For example, Black people are not a monolithic group, and describing someone who is Afro-Latina/é/o/x or Afro-Caribbean only as “African American” obscures key ethnic aspects of their identities. Different ethnic identities often imply distinctly different experiences due, in part, to different immigration histories and the political-economic circumstances of each group. Goldberg, D. T. (1993). *Racist culture: Philosophy and the politics of meaning*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.

## Gender and LGBTQ+ Diversity

A more inclusive examination of gender and sexual orientation diversity has been an area of need in legal education for many years. With recent advances in LSAC’s gender identity and sexual orientation data collection,<sup>12</sup> today we have a more holistic view of gender diversity and diversity based on sexual orientation.

Overall, the majority of the 2023 1L class identify as cisgender (Table 3) and straight/heterosexual (Table 4).

In 2023, women made up 56% of the 1L class; by comparison, women represented less than 50% of the 1L class in 2015.

---

<sup>11</sup> Hernández, T. K. (2021). Latino antiblack bias and the census categorization of Latinos: Race, ethnicity, or other? In M.-K. Jung & J. H. Costa Vargas (Eds.), *Antiblackness* (pp. 283-296). Duke University Press. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv1grbbwr>; López, N., Vargas, E., Juarez, M., Cacari-Stone, L., & Bettez, S. (2018). What’s your “street race”? Leveraging multidimensional measures of race and intersectionality for examining physical and mental health status among Latinxs. *Sociology of Race and Ethnicity*, 4(1), 49-66. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/2332649217708798>

<sup>12</sup> [Why Language Matters for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion](#). For more details about the LGBTQ+ community, check out [LSAC’s LGBTQ+ Inclusion: From Candidate to Law Student, 2024 Update](#).

**Table 3: Gender Identities of the 1L Class**

Gender Identity	Percent
Man (Cisgender)	41%
Woman (Cisgender)	56%
Gender Diverse	1.4%
Nonbinary	0.3%
Transgender	0.2%
Gender Queer or Gender Fluid	0.2%
Another Gender Diverse Identity	0.8%
Did Not Disclose	1.7%

Source: LSAC. Note: The subtotals of gender diverse students add up to more than 1.4% because some students identified as both transgender and nonbinary or both transgender and another gender identity. Men and women are self-reported cisgender men and women.

LSAC collects additional details about the LGBTQ+ community, specifically about sexual orientation diversity. 14.7% of all 1Ls do not identify as straight/heterosexual, with the largest proportion identifying as bisexual, followed by many reporting that their sexual orientation is not listed.

**Table 4: Sexual Orientation Reported by the 1L Class**

Sexual Orientation	Percent
Bisexual	5.98%
Gay or Lesbian	3.21%
Questioning or Unsure	0.51%
Sexual orientation not listed	4.98%
Straight/Heterosexual	72.82%
Did Not Disclose	12.50%

Source: LSAC

Bringing together gender diversity and sexual orientation diversity, a total of 14.9% of the 1L class identified as LGBTQ+,<sup>13</sup> up from 12% in the 2021 1L class.<sup>14</sup> It is likely that this number will continue to grow, according to the [2022 Gallup report](#) that found about 1 in 5 Gen Z adults identify as LGBTQ+.<sup>15</sup>

## Socioeconomic Diversity

Researchers across various disciplines measure socioeconomic status (SES) by considering a number of factors. In addition to our income and assets, researchers

---

<sup>13</sup> LGBTQ+ refers to people who identify with any sexual orientation other than heterosexual and/or people with any gender identity other than cisgender man or woman.

<sup>14</sup> See [The 2023 LGBTQ+ Law School Survey: LGBTQ+ Representation in Legal Education](#).

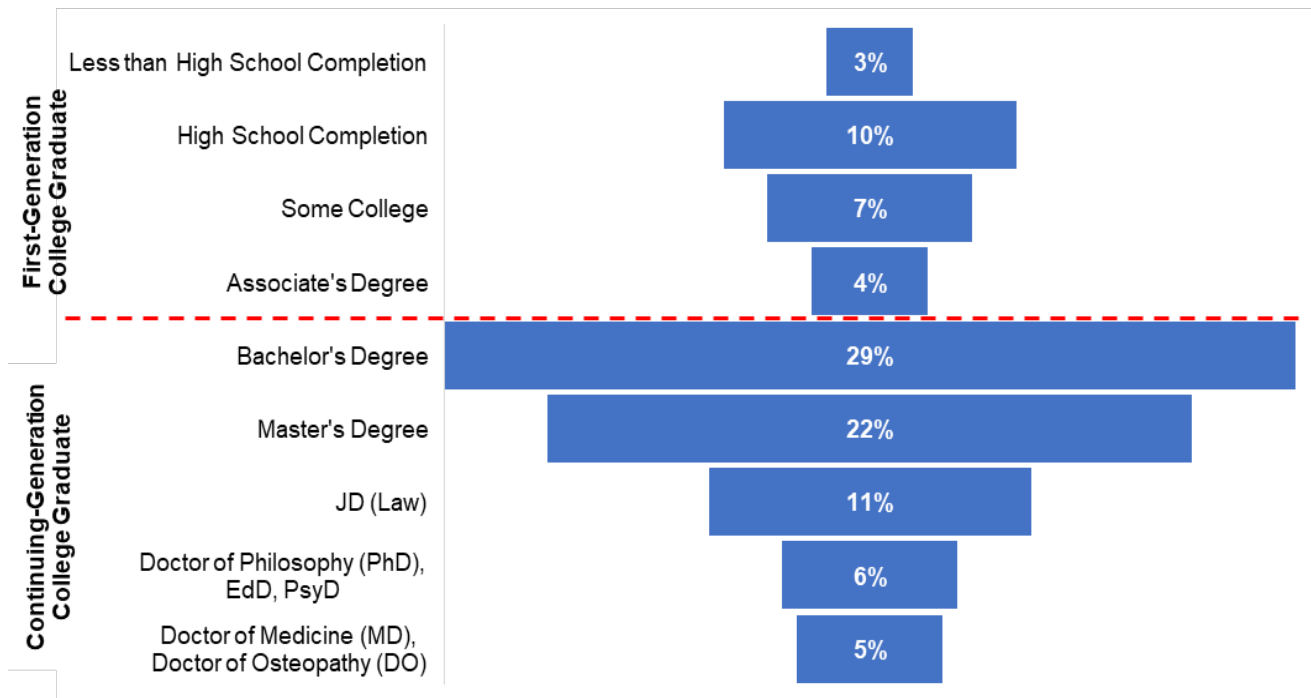
<sup>15</sup> Jones, J. M. (2022, February 17). [LGBT Identification in U.S. Ticks Up to 7.1%. Gallup](#).

consider factors like where we grew up, our citizenship status, whether we went to private or public schools, our cultural background, our occupation, our geographic location, and the education attainment, occupation, and financial assets of our parents or guardians. These factors have the potential to influence quality of life and our ability to access opportunities in life. Because opportunity is unevenly distributed in the United States, SES is important to understanding how and why people from different backgrounds vary by access to opportunities and education. In LSAC's work, first-generation college graduate status, Pell Grant recipient status, and LSAC fee waiver recipient status are important examples of SES factors.

Overall, the majority of the 1L class are continuing-generation college graduates (Figures 1 and 2) who were not Pell Grant recipients (Figure 3), who did not receive an LSAC fee waiver (Figure 3), and who are the first in their families to attend law school.

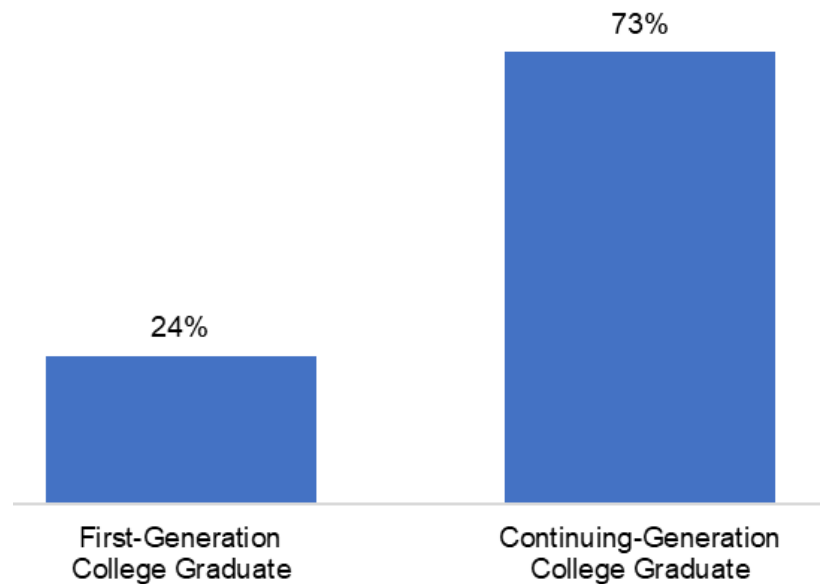
The majority of the 1L class are not first-generation college graduates; indeed, 42% reported that at least one parent or guardian had a post-graduate degree (Figure 1). That said, almost a quarter (24%) of the 1L class are first-generation college graduates (Figure 2). At the intersection, 1 in 3 racially and ethnically minoritized 1Ls (33%) are the first in their families to graduate college compared to less than 1 in 5 (18%) of white 1Ls. Future LSAC reports will examine the diversity within the first-generation college graduate population where experiences and diversity vary at intersecting identities.

**Figure 1: Highest Level of Education Attainment of Any Parent/Guardian**



Source: LSAC. Note: For 3% of matriculants/1Ls, their parent or guardian education level is unknown, or they chose not to disclose. First-generation college graduates include students with parents or guardians with an associate's degree, some college, high school completion, or less than high school completion.

**Figure 2: First-Generation College Status of the 1L Class**



Source: LSAC. For 3% of matriculants/1Ls, their parent or guardian education level is unknown, or they chose not to disclose. First-generation college graduates include students with parents or guardians with an associate's degree, some college, high school completion, or less than high school completion.

While 11% of 1Ls reported that at least one of their parents or guardians holds a JD as their highest level of education attainment (Figure 1), 24% reported they have a close family member who holds a JD and are thus defined as continuing-generation law students.<sup>16</sup> In other words, 75% of the 2023 1L class are first-generation law students.

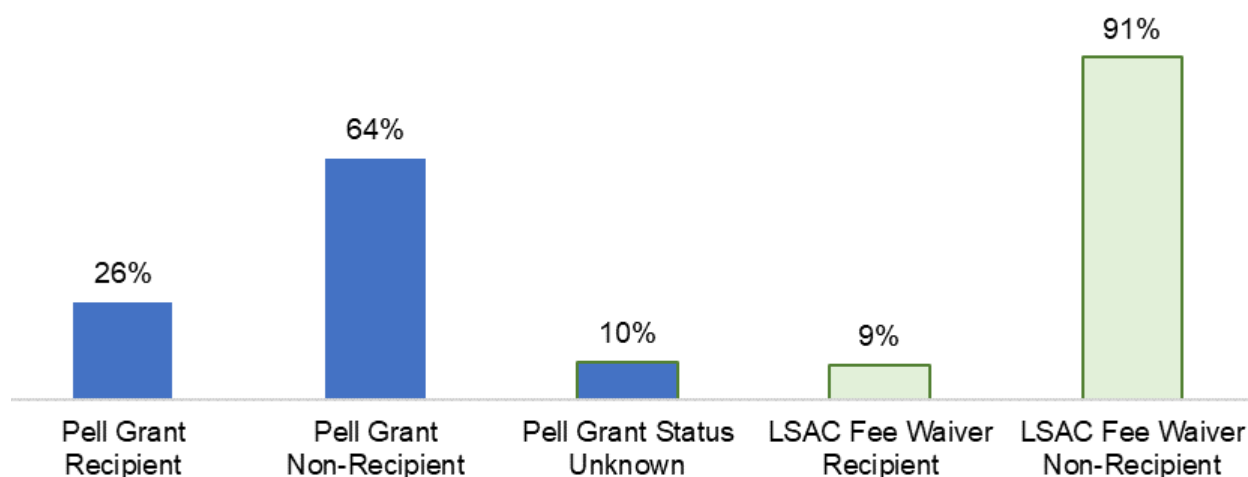
---

*75% of the 2023 1L class are first-generation law students.*

---

Pell Grants and LSAC fee waivers<sup>17</sup> are provided to students with demonstrated financial need. In the 1L class, a little more than 1 in 4 1Ls reported they were Pell Grant recipients, and about 1 in 10 1Ls received an LSAC fee waiver (Figure 3).

**Figure 3: Percent of LSAC Fee Waiver and Pell Grant Recipients in the 1L Class**



Source: LSAC. Pell Grant data is self-reported, and 10% did not indicate.

Overall, the majority of the 1L class came from relatively privileged educational and financial backgrounds. This is important to monitor and use as the legal community seeks to diversify the profession, especially to ensure representation of underserved communities that lack access to justice.

## Where Did They Enroll?

Knowing who is going to law school is one part of the story. Where students enrolled is another critical aspect, as it carries implications for whether the legal profession reflects the society it represents, especially as it relates to employment recruitment.

Law schools provide different types of support, program structures, and access to local experiential opportunities. Deciding where to attend is a big decision for law school

<sup>16</sup> LSAC asks if they have a close family member who holds a JD/law degree. This data point is based on this question.

<sup>17</sup> To be eligible for an LSAC fee waiver, applicants must demonstrate financial need supported by tax forms and other documentation.

candidates each year. In this section, LSAC data reveal patterns of where the 2023 1L class enrolled based on law school selectivity, school type (private v. public), geographic region, and program type (full-time v. part-time). When examining the future diversity of the profession, it is important to note not only the racial, ethnic, gender, sexual orientation, and SES diversity in any given first-year class, but also to examine where students attend, where diversity lives. This is informative for prospective employers and stakeholders committed to attracting future professionals from various backgrounds from across the U.S.

## **Enrollments by Law School Selectivity**

For the purposes of this research, we have used each law school's 2023 admission rate, median LSAT of admitted students, and median UGPA of admitted students to create a selectivity index score. The top 25% of highly selective law schools are in quartile 1 (Q1), the next 25% of selective schools are in quartile 2 (Q2), and so on. Given the variation in class sizes among the schools that make up each quartile, 30% of 1Ls enrolled in Q1 (top 25% highly selective) law schools, 25% enrolled in Q2 schools, 23% enrolled in Q3 schools, and 21% enrolled in Q4 schools (Figure 4). This quartile analysis allows us to understand how racial, ethnic, gender, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic diversity are concentrated differently across law schools based on selectivity.

## **Racial and Ethnic Diversity**

Racial and ethnic diversity varies widely across the four quartiles of schools based on selectivity. We also see significant differences in how students from racial and ethnic subgroups are distributed across the four quartiles.

Law schools in the fourth quartile (Q4) are more racially and ethnically diverse than the top 25% highly selective law schools in the first quartile (Q1; Table 5). For example, 51% of 1Ls enrolled in the top 25% highly selective law schools (Q1) are white compared to the 43% of 1Ls enrolled in law schools within the fourth quartile who are white. As law school selectivity decreases, the representation of white 1L students and Asian 1L students decreases, while the representation of other racial and ethnic groups increases.

However, there is some nuance in Black representation across law schools by selectivity. While there is a higher representation of Black/African American 1Ls in law schools in the fourth quartile (Q4), the top 25% highly selective law schools (Q1) have the second highest percentage of Black/African American 1Ls, followed by law schools in the third quartile (Q3) and in the second quartile (Q2; Table 5).

**Table 5: Racial and Ethnic Diversity in Law Schools by Selectivity**

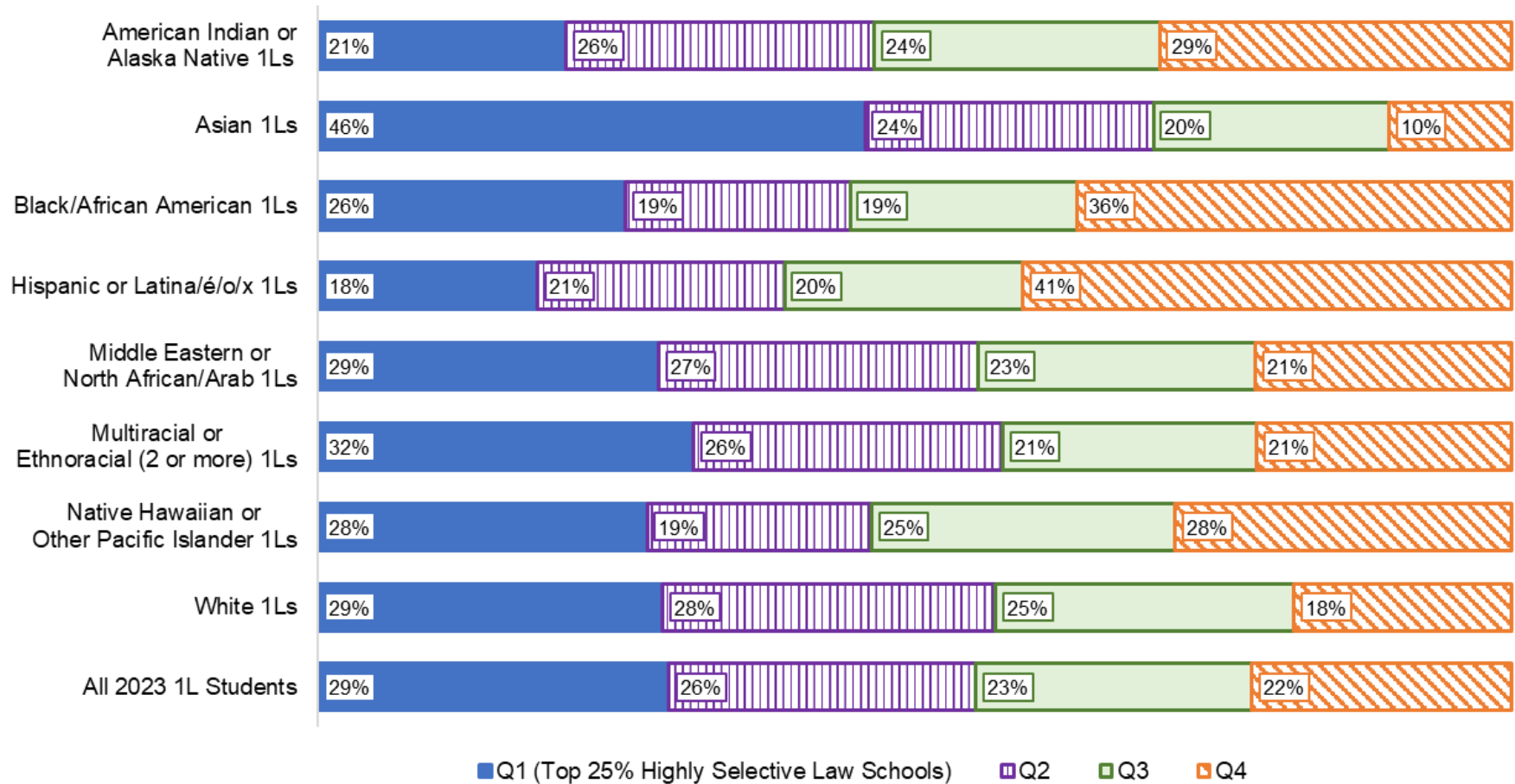
Race and Ethnicity	Q1 (Top 25% Highly Selective Law Schools)	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total 1L Class
American Indian or Alaska Native	1.2%	1.7%	1.8%	2.3%	1.72%
Asian	15.0%	9.1%	8.2%	4.6%	9.64%
Black/African American	6.7%	5.6%	6.3%	12.9%	7.70%
Hispanic or Latina/é/o/x	5.9%	7.6%	8.1%	17.7%	9.41%
Indigenous Person of Canada	0.0%	0.0%	0.06%	0.02%	0.02%
Middle Eastern or North African/Arab	2.8%	3.0%	2.9%	2.9%	2.89%
Multiracial or Ethnoracial (2 or more)	10.7%	10.0%	9.2%	9.8%	9.97%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	0.4%	0.4%	0.5%	0.6%	0.48%
White	50.7%	56.0%	55.8%	43.3%	51.63%
Did Not Indicate	6.5%	6.6%	7.1%	5.9%	6.54%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

*Source:* LSAC. Using LSAC data, law schools are each assigned a selectivity index based on each school's 2023 admission rate, median LSAT of admitted students, and median UGPA of admitted students. The top 25% highly selective law schools are in the first quartile (Q1), and they are the first 49 law schools with the highest index score.

While the 2023 1L class is relatively evenly distributed between the four law school selectivity quartiles, analysis examining each racial and ethnic group found that Asian 1Ls are overrepresented in the top 25% highly selective law schools (Q1) and Hispanic or Latina/é/o/x and Black/African American 1Ls are overrepresented at law schools in the fourth quartile (Q4; Figure 4). Almost half (46%) of all Asian 1L students enrolled in the top 25% highly selective law schools (Q1); by contrast, only 21% of American Indian or Alaska Native and 18% of Hispanic or Latina/é/o/x 1L students enrolled in the top 25% highly selective law schools (Q1). Many racially and ethnically minoritized 1Ls are overrepresented in Q4 law schools. 29% of all American Indian or Alaska Native 1Ls, 36% of all Black/African American 1Ls, 41% of all Hispanic or Latina/é/o/x 1Ls, and 28% of all Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander 1Ls enrolled in law schools in the fourth quartile (Q4). While the 2023 first-year class is the most diverse in history, this racial and ethnic diversity is not found in all law schools based on selectivity, as the diversity is not equally distributed. Similar patterns are found across other demographic considerations, such as socioeconomic status.



**Figure 4: Law School Selectivity Enrollment Within Each Racial and Ethnic Group**



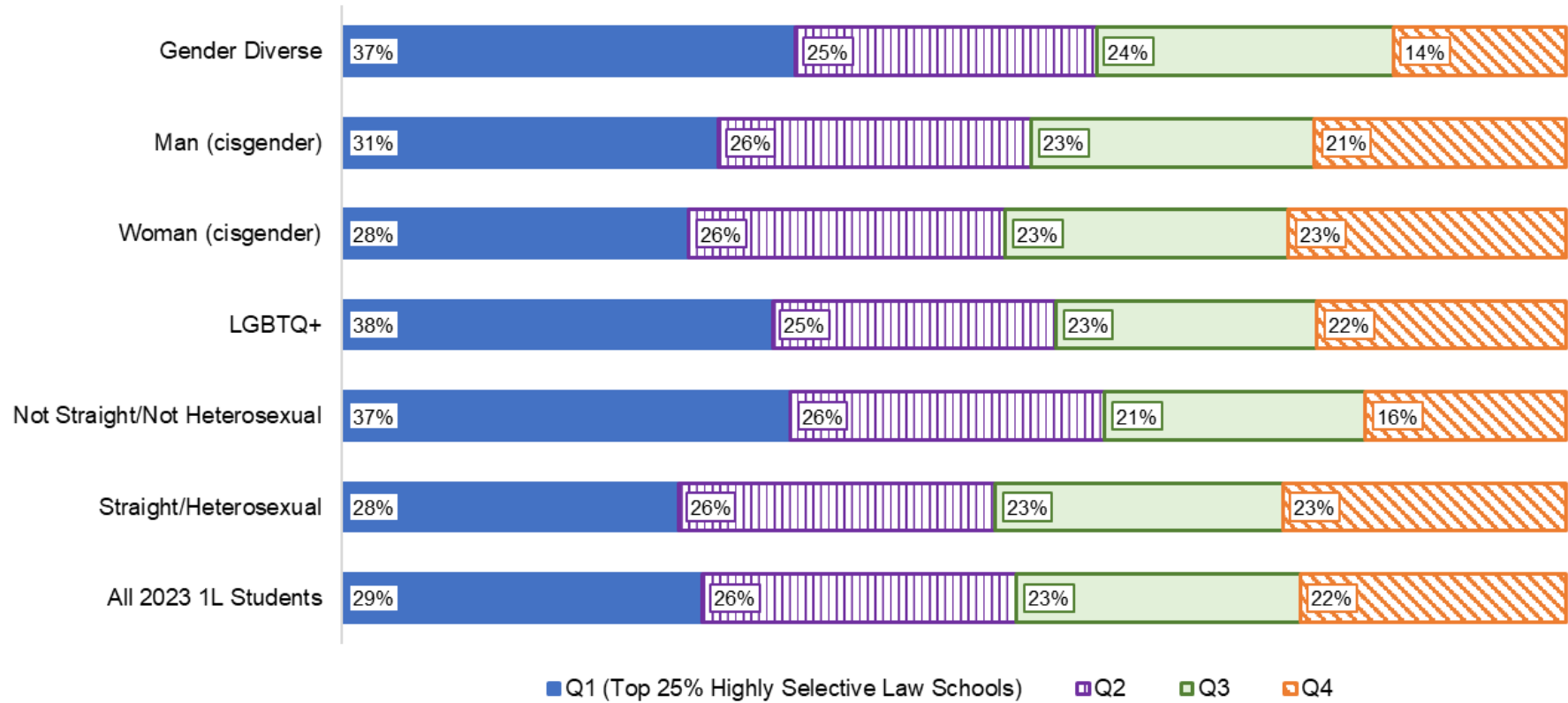
Source: LSAC. Using LSAC data, law schools are each assigned a selectivity index based on each school's 2023 admission rate, median LSAT of admitted students, and median UGPA of admitted students. The top 25% highly selective law schools are in the first quartile (Q1), and they are the first 49 law schools with the highest index score.

## Gender and Sexual Orientation Diversity

Looking at enrollment across the law school selectivity quartiles through the lenses of gender identity and sexual orientation, we find some additional trends:

- Men have greater representation than women in the top 25% highly selective law schools (Q1), while women have slightly greater representation than men in Q4 schools (Figure 5).
- Overall, LGBTQ+ 1Ls are concentrated at more highly selective law schools compared to their peers.
- The enrollment rate of gender diverse 1Ls in the top 25% highly selective law schools (Q1) is higher than their peers (Figure 5). Almost 40% (37%) of all gender diverse 1Ls enrolled in the top 25% highly selective law schools (Q1), an enrollment rate more than 20% higher than all 1Ls.
- Similarly, 1Ls who identified as not straight/not heterosexual enrolled in the top 25% highly selective law schools (Q1) at a rate (37%) almost 40% higher than their straight/heterosexual peers (28%). And not straight/not heterosexual 1Ls have lower representation in Q4 schools, where only 16% enrolled, compared to 23% of their straight/heterosexual peers.

**Figure 5: Law School Selectivity Enrollment by Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation**



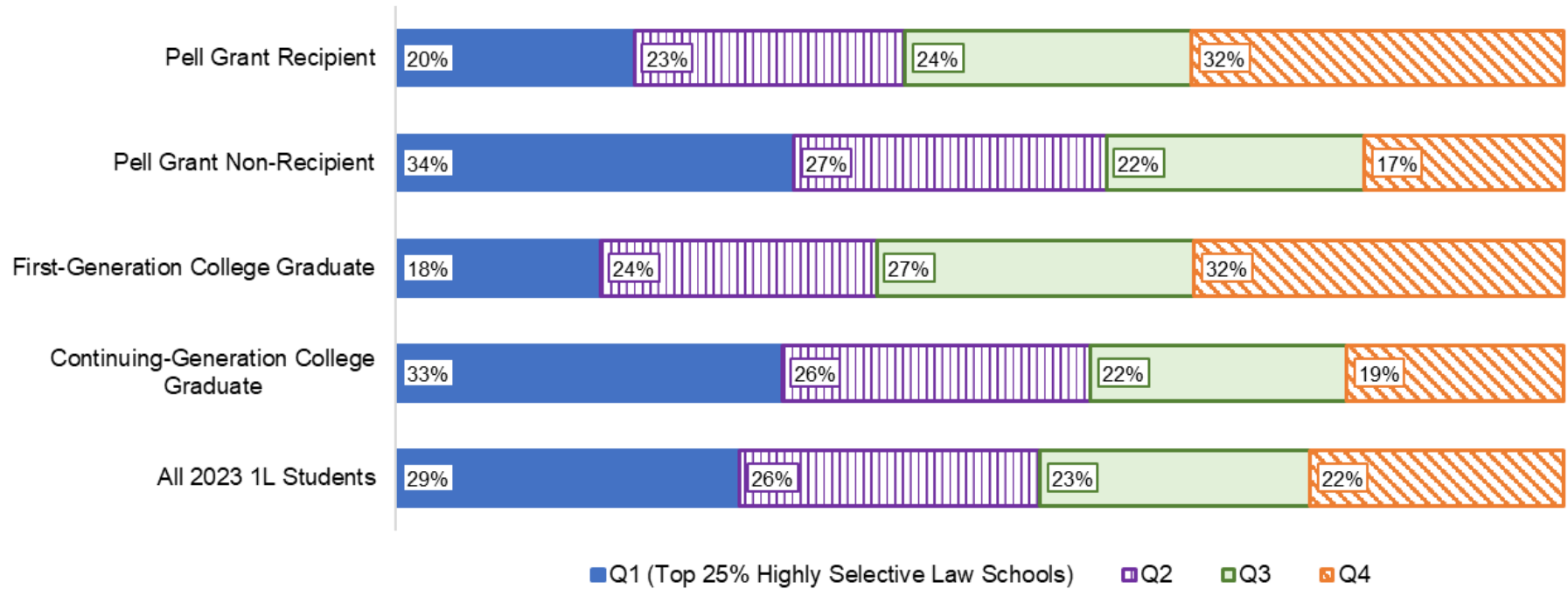
*Source:* LSAC. LGBTQ+ refers to people who identify with any sexual orientation other than heterosexual and/or people with any gender identity other than cisgender man or woman. Using LSAC data, law schools are each assigned a selectivity index based on each school’s 2023 admission rate, median LSAT of admitted students, and median UGPA of admitted students. The top 25% highly selective law schools are in the first quartile (Q1), and they are the first 49 law schools with the highest index score.

## Socioeconomic Diversity

A larger and significant gap persists in enrollment by law school selectivity based on students' socioeconomic backgrounds (Figure 6). Pell Grant non-recipients (34%) enrolled in the top 25% highly selective law schools (Q1) at a rate almost 70% higher than their Pell Grant recipient peers (20%). About 1 in 3 Pell Grant recipients enrolled in a Q4 law school, a rate that was more than 80% higher than their Pell Grant non-recipient peers (17%). A similar pattern exists when examining first-generation college graduate status. Continuing-generation college graduates enrolled in the top 25% highly selective law schools (Q1) at a rate almost 90% higher than their first-generation college graduate peers. And about 1 in 3 first-generation college graduates enrolled in a Q4 law school, a rate that was almost 60% higher than their continuing-generation college graduate peers (19%).

While the first-year class of 2023 was by many measures the most diverse in history, representation of students from different racial, ethnic, gender, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic backgrounds is not evenly distributed throughout the law schools based on selectivity. Understanding where diversity is concentrated — where it lives — has implications for job placement outcomes, in particular for larger law firms, clerkships, and other pathways to leadership in the legal profession.

**Figure 6: Law School Selectivity Enrollment by Pell Grant and First-Generation College Graduate Status**

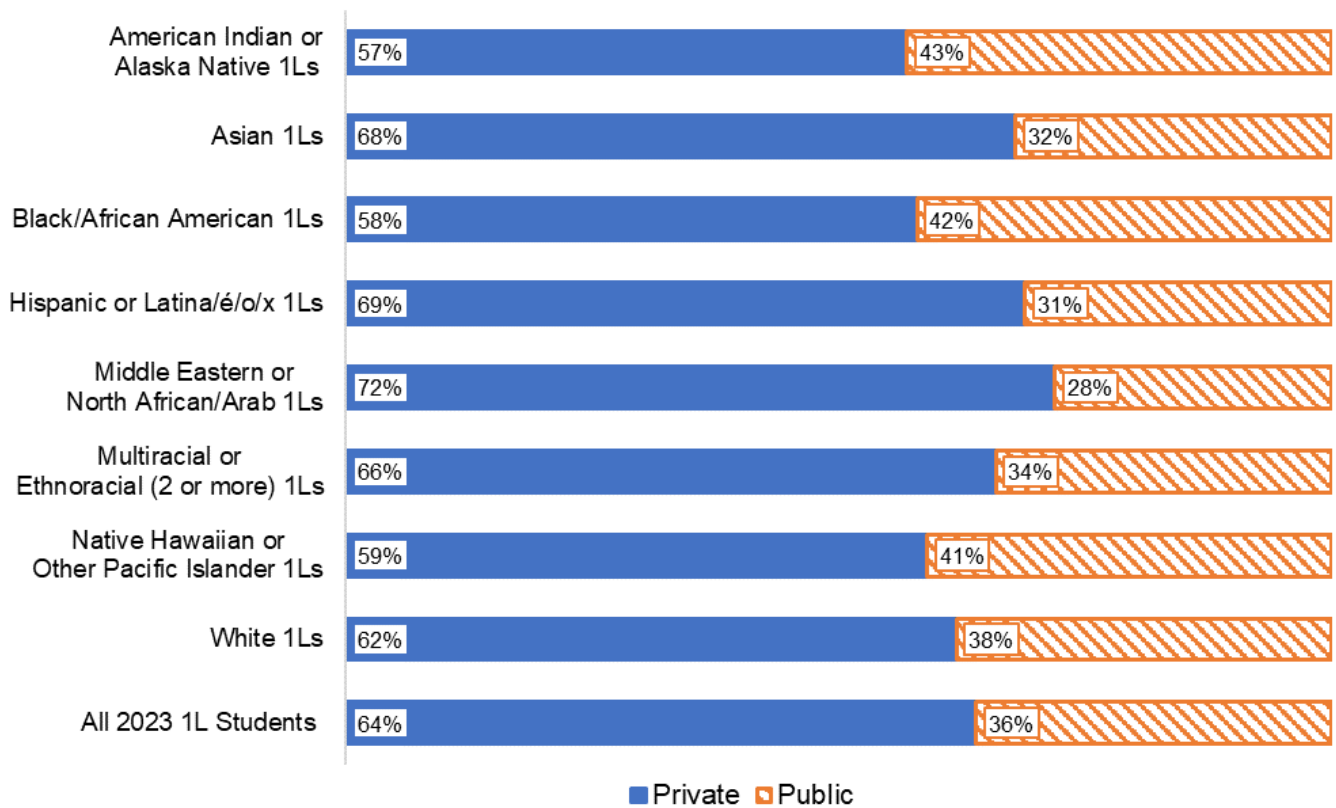


Source: LSAC. Using LSAC data, law schools are each assigned a selectivity index based on each school’s 2023 admission rate, median LSAT of admitted students, and median UGPA of admitted students. The top 25% highly selective law schools are in the first quartile (Q1), and they are the first 49 law schools with the highest index score.

## Enrollment by Type of School: Public v. Private Status

While the majority of 1Ls in 2023 attended private law schools (64% vs. 36%), enrollment by law school type varied by race and ethnicity (Figure 7). There were higher enrollment rates in public law schools for American Indian or Alaska Native (43%), Black/African American (42%), and Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (41%) first-year law students. On the other hand, there were higher enrollment rates in private law schools for Asian (68%), Middle Eastern or North African/Arab (72%), and Hispanic or Latina/é/o/x (69%) first-year law students.

**Figure 7: Enrollment by Private and Public Law School Type**



Source: LSAC. There were 84 public schools and 112 private schools.

## Enrollment by Geographic Region

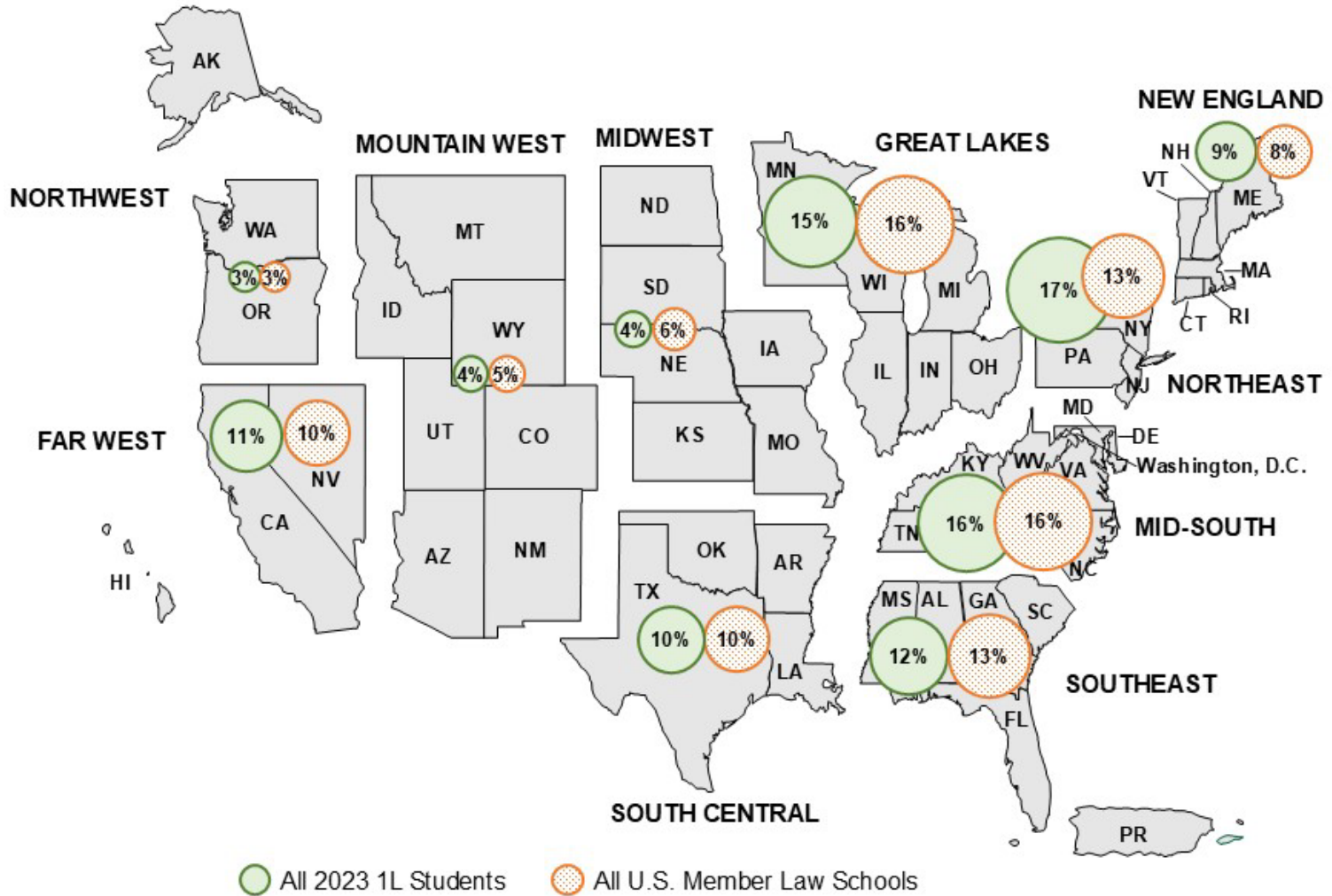
The concentration of law schools — and therefore first-year law students — varies across the geographic regions that comprise the U.S. Three regions represent nearly half of all entering law students — the Northeast (17%), the Mid-South (16%), and the Great Lakes (15%). By contrast, three other regions make up barely 10% of the total — the Midwest (4%), Mountain West (4%), and Northwest (3%; Figure 8). Where students enrolled varied by race, ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation.

Examining the top three regional concentrations (Figure 9), enrollment rates varied between racially and ethnically minoritized 1Ls, while the majority of white 1Ls were enrolled in law schools in the Northeast, Great Lakes, or Mid-South (17% each). More than 1 in 3 Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander 1Ls (37%) and almost 1 in 3 Middle Eastern or North African/Arab 1Ls (29%) attended law school in the Far West. Almost a third of Hispanic or Latina/é/o/x 1Ls attended law school in the Southeast region (28%). Almost 60% of Asian students enrolled in a law school in the Northeast (23%), Far West (20%), or Mid-South (15%). Most American Indian or Alaska Native 1Ls enrolled in a school located in the South Central (18%), Great Lakes (15%), Far West (14%), or Mid-South (13%) regions. More than 1 in 5 Black/African American 1Ls attended law school in the Mid-South (22%) region. And most multiracial or ethnoracial (2 or more) 1Ls attended schools in the Northeast (17%), Far West (16%), or Mid-South (15%) regions. These trends underscore the concentration of racial and ethnic diversity across the U.S. For many 1Ls, location was an important factor they considered when they enrolled in law school, covered later in this report.

Distribution of LGBTQ+ 1Ls also varies significantly by region. LGBTQ+ 1Ls are represented at higher rates in the Far West and Northwest regions and at lower rates in the South Central and Southeast regions (Figure 10). While 10% of all 1Ls enrolled in a school in the South Central region and 13% enrolled in the Southeast region, only 7% and 8% of LGBTQ+ 1Ls enrolled in a school in those regions, respectively (Figure 10). This pattern runs parallel with expectations given that the South Central and Southeast regions include jurisdictions with anti-DEI legislation and anti-LGBTQ+ legislation. More research is needed to examine how state and local level climates impact LGBTQ+ enrollment in law schools across the country.

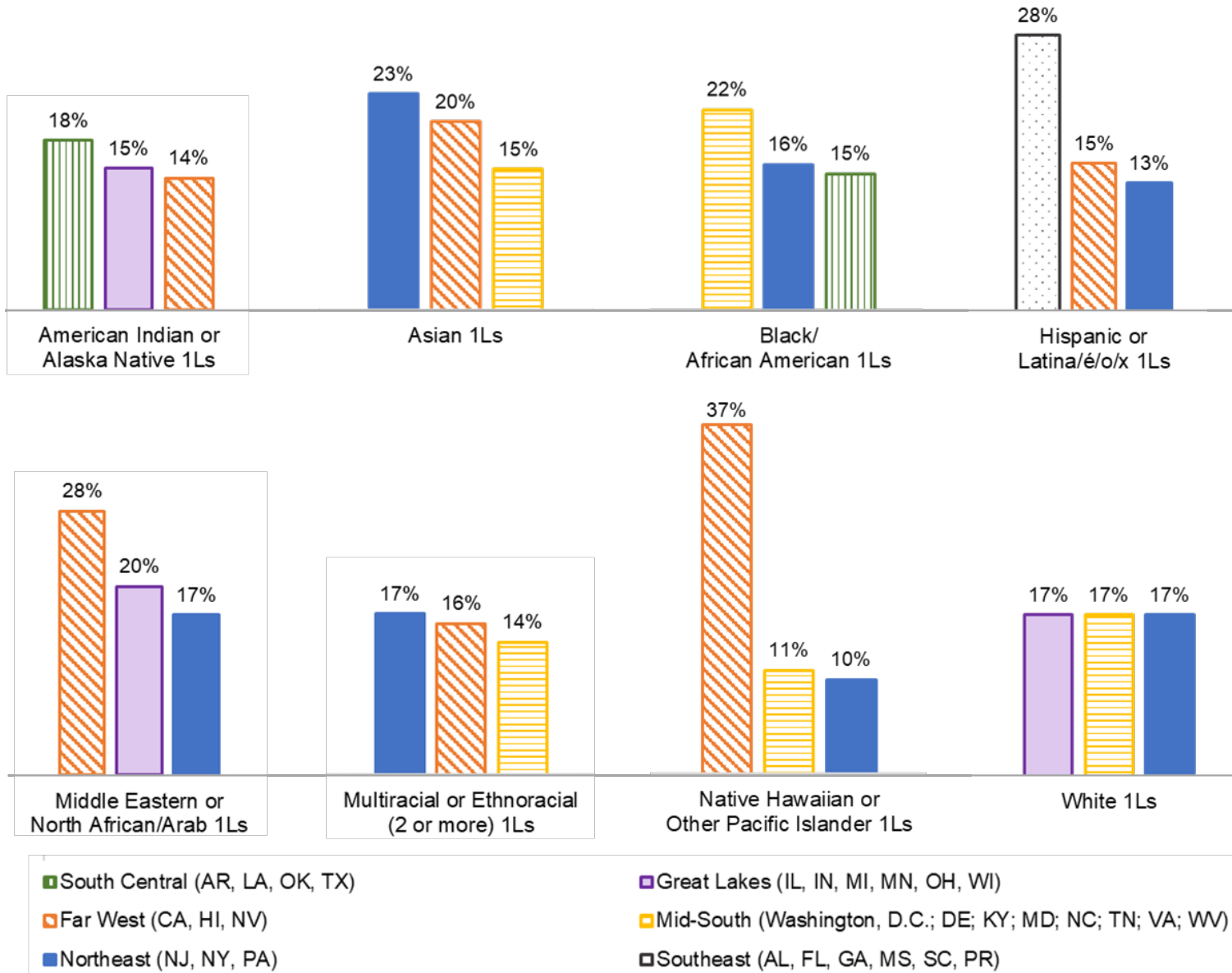


Figure 8: Enrollment by Geographic Location



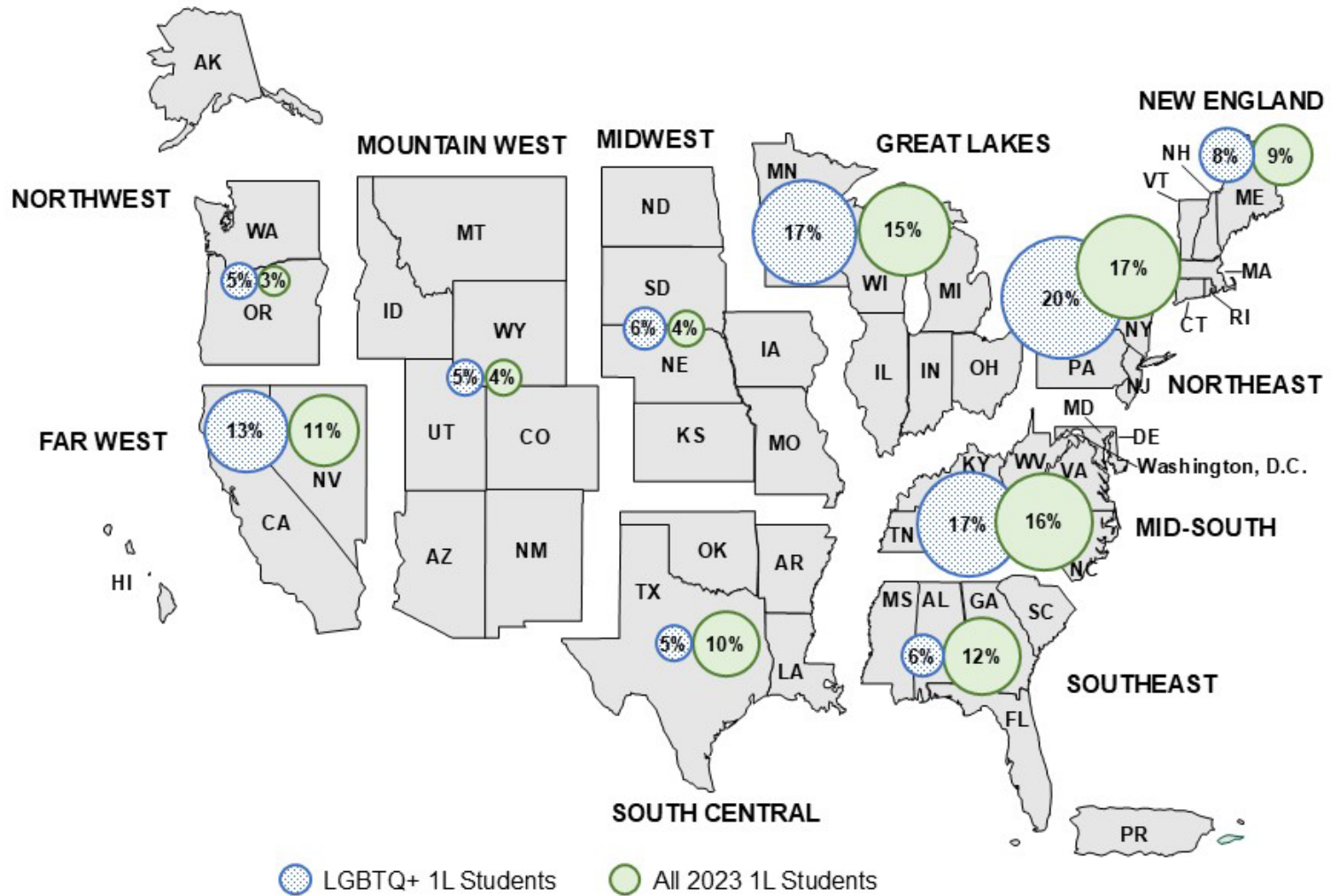
Source: LSAC

**Figure 9: Top 3 Enrollment Regions by Race and Ethnicity**



Source: LSAC

**Figure 10: LGBTQ+ 1L Enrollment by Geographic Location**



Source: LSAC. LGBTQ+ refers to people who identify with any sexual orientation other than heterosexual and/or people with any gender identity other than cisgender man or woman.

## Enrollment by Program Type: Full-Time or Part-Time

An overwhelming majority of 1Ls enrolled in full-time programs (92%; part-time program 1Ls represent 8% of the class) and programs that begin in the fall term (98%; less than 2% of 1Ls enrolled in programs starting in the spring, summer, or winter terms). However, enrollment by program type varied by race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status, resulting in part-time programs being more diverse than full-time programs (Table 6).<sup>18</sup> For example, while 7.3% of all 1Ls in a full-time program were Black/African American, 11.7% of all part-time 1Ls identified as Black/African American. Similarly, while 9% of all 1Ls in full-time programs identified as Hispanic or Latina/é/o/x, 14.3% of all 1Ls in part-time programs were Hispanic or Latina/é/o/x (Table 6).

---

*92% of the 1L class are in a full-time program.*

---

American Indian or Alaska Native, Black/African American, and Hispanic or Latina/é/o/x 1Ls, and Pell Grant recipients enrolled in part-time programs at higher rates than their peers (Figure 11 and Figure 12). While 8% of all 1Ls enrolled in a part-time program, 11% of American Indian or Alaska Native 1Ls, 13% of Black 1Ls, and 13% of Hispanic or Latina/é/o/x 1Ls enrolled in a part-time program (Figure 11). Pell Grant recipients enrolled in part-time programs at double the rate of their Pell Grant non-recipient peers (Figure 12).

Overall, law schools vary in location, program structure, student support resources, and opportunities that meet the needs for different students. Understanding who attends law school and where they enrolled provides a high-level overview of the legal education landscape that can be used by potential employers and stakeholders in recruiting and supporting law students in the prelaw through practice journey. The first half of this report has provided the “who” — a profile of the 2023 1L class; in the next section, we explore how this 1L class made the decision about where to enroll — the “why” — using LSAC’s 2023 Matriculant Survey data.

---

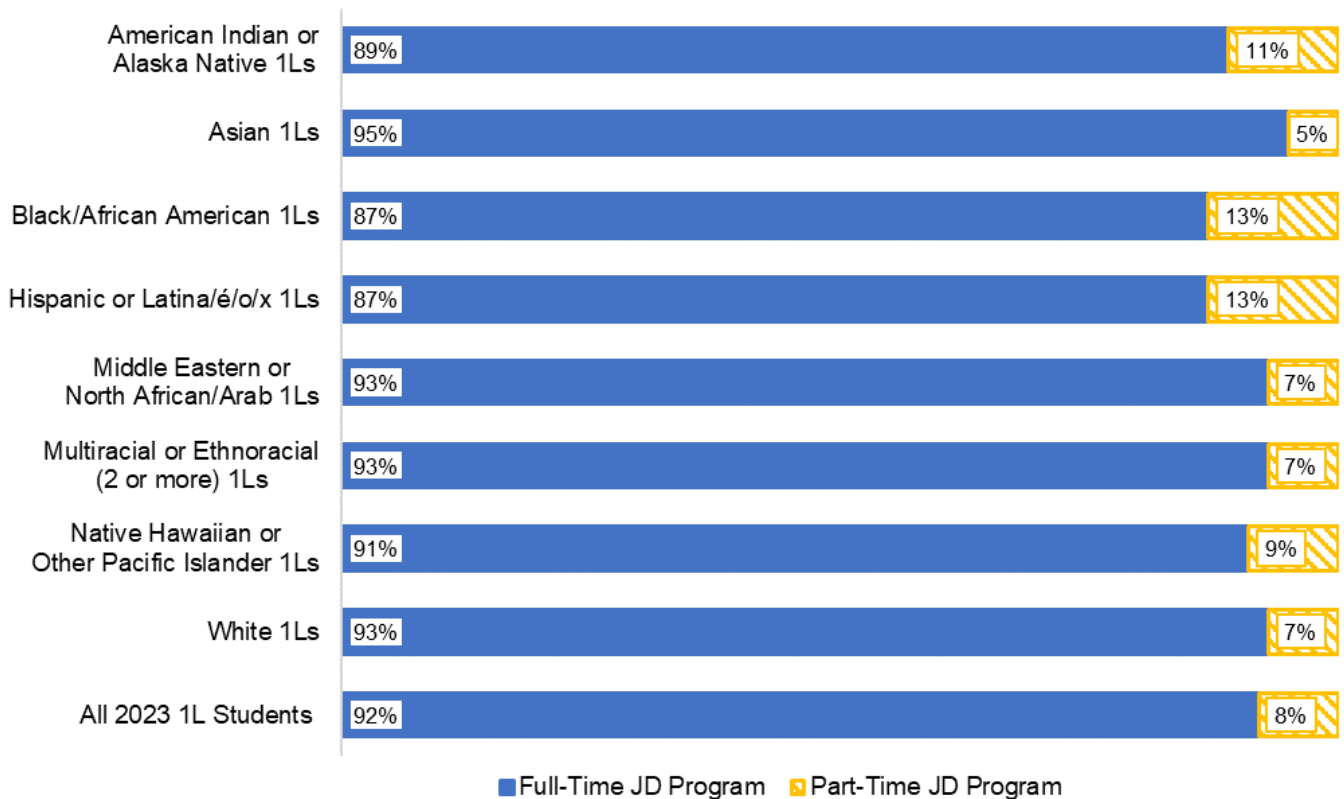
<sup>18</sup> There are no differences in rates of enrollment between gender or sexual orientation groups when it comes to law school program types and semester starting term.

**Table 6: Racial and Ethnic Diversity by Program Type**

Race and Ethnicity	Full-Time JD Program	Part-Time JD Program	Total 1L Class
American Indian or Alaska Native	1.7%	2.4%	1.72%
Asian	9.9%	6.4%	9.64%
Black/African American	7.3%	11.7%	7.70%
Hispanic or Latina/é/o/x	9.0%	14.3%	9.41%
Indigenous Person of Canada	0.02%	0.03%	0.02%
Middle Eastern or North African/Arab	2.9%	2.6%	2.89%
Multiracial or Ethnoracial (2 or more)	10.1%	8.5%	9.97%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	0.5%	0.5%	0.48%
White	52.2%	45.8%	51.63%
Did Not Indicate	6.4%	7.8%	6.54%
Total	100%	100%	100%

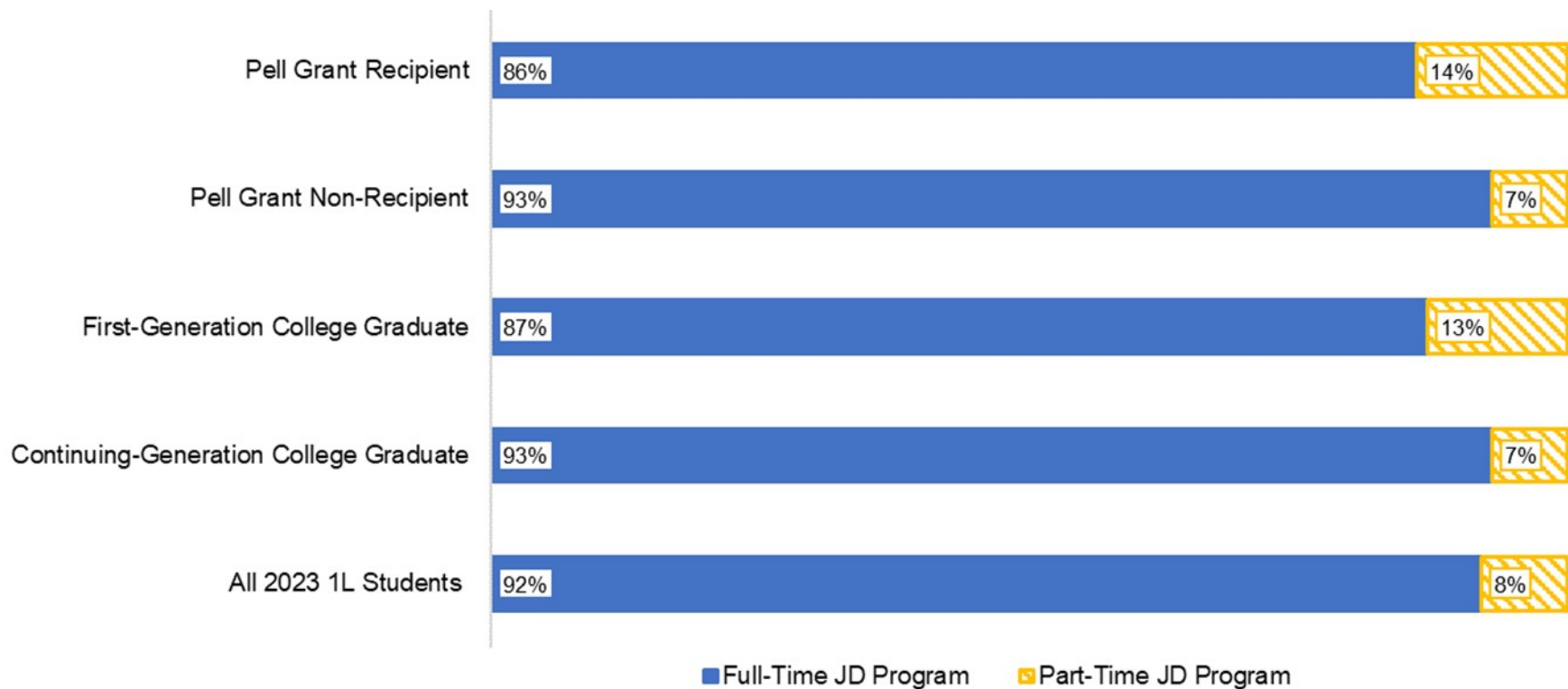
Source: LSAC

**Figure 11: Program Type Enrollment by Race and Ethnicity**



Source: LSAC

**Figure 12: Program Enrollment by Pell Grant Recipient and First-Generation College Graduate Status**



Source: LSAC

## How Did They Decide Where to Enroll?

Who law students are and where they enrolled are important for knowing who the future generation of the legal profession is going to be. However, the picture is not complete without information about where they started, their motivations, and what factors were pivotal to their final enrollment decision. Understanding what 1Ls were feeling, thinking, and considering at the enrollment point of the prelaw to practice journey is useful for informing effective recruitment and advising strategies. To this end, LSAC administers an annual matriculant survey to understand why, when, and how first-year law students made their decisions on where to enroll once they were admitted. Focused on understanding the journey to enrollment, the following sections address:

1. Who were the 1L respondents to LSAC's matriculant survey?
2. When did 1Ls first think about law school?
3. Why did they go to law school?
4. What resources did they use to make their decision?
5. What law school activities did they attend to inform their decision?
6. What were the most important factors that informed their final decisions?
7. Knowing what they do now, after about three months at their chosen law school, what are the most important factors 1Ls would advise today's candidates use to inform their final enrollment decision?

Overall, the 2023 1L respondents revealed that they are not unidimensional in how they consumed information and made their enrollment decisions. Once admitted to law school, the factors that drove their final decisions as to where to attend — their current law school — were multidimensional and varied based on respondents' needs and goals.

As noted, the survey reveals a degree of self-reflection that what was important to their decision-making process at the moment they made it would be different today after experiencing the first few months of law school. When asked what are the most important factors they would advise current candidates when deciding where to go to law school compared to when they made their decision, today they reported at a higher rate that cost was the most important factor to consider. In fact, more than 30% of 1Ls who reported that reputation was the top factor they considered when deciding where to enroll would not advise the same to candidates today.

A person's decision on where to attend law school is life-changing and will impact their quality of life, growth, and education both in the short-term as a law student and in the long-term as legal professionals. Therefore, how this decision is made is nuanced and carefully tailored to students' personal and academic needs and professional goals. The insights from this survey have implications for how law schools leverage their strengths and programs to market the ways that their schools can and will meet the needs and goals of prospective applicants. The information can be used by prelaw stakeholders,



such as advisors, to guide prospective applicants. And for prospective applicants, these findings should serve as a collective voice of the lessons learned by recent first-year law students as to how they would make their enrollment decisions today.

## Who Responded to the 2023 Matriculant Survey?

In November 2023, LSAC distributed a survey to all students who matriculated to law school for the 2023-2024 academic year to understand who current law school matriculants are and what factors they considered to determine which law school(s) would meet their academic, professional, and personal needs. Stakeholders on individuals' journeys to law school can use this information to better navigate the multi-faceted path to choosing a law school, especially for aspiring law students with special interests, specific identities, and multiple intersecting identities.

Respondents to the 2023 survey were representative of the 2023 first-year law school class, and breakdowns by socio-demographic groups are summarized in Table 7. More than half of respondents were white (51%), and slightly more than two-fifths (42%) were from racially and ethnically marginalized<sup>19</sup> populations (Table 7). More cisgender women than cisgender men answered the survey (56% and 41%, respectively), and only a small portion identified as gender diverse (1%). While the sexual orientation of the respondent population was largely straight/heterosexual (72%), a sizeable proportion identified as not straight/not heterosexual (14%). A total of 14% of respondents identified as LGBTQ+.<sup>20</sup> One-tenth of respondents identified as an individual with a disability, while three-fifths indicated they did not have a disability.<sup>21</sup> Close to 30% did not identify whether they have a disability or not.

Almost one-quarter (24%) of respondents were first-generation college graduates (Table 7).<sup>22</sup> A majority of those first-generation college graduates were from marginalized racial and ethnic groups, with only 37% of first-generation respondents identifying as white. Additionally, first-generation status varied within racial and ethnic groups. More than half (55%) of Hispanic or Latina/é/o/x respondents were first-generation college graduates, and a significant proportion of Black/African American and Asian respondents were also first-generation (33% and 28%, respectively). In contrast, only 17% of white respondents were first-generation college graduates. Three-quarters of all respondents were first-generation law students. Slightly more than one-quarter (26%) of respondents received Pell Grants to fund their undergraduate education. While 22% of white and

---

<sup>19</sup> The term “marginalized” refers to populations that historically have been excluded, disempowered, disenfranchised, or otherwise treated as being insignificant, unimportant, or peripheral. Marginalized can be used to describe various populations and is not synonymous with or limited to racially/ethnically underrepresented populations. This term is used interchangeably with minoritized in this report.

<sup>20</sup> The term LGBTQ+ refers to anyone who identifies with a gender identity other than cisgender man or woman and/or anyone who identifies with a sexual orientation other than straight/heterosexual.

<sup>21</sup> Information about students with disabilities is not presented in this report. For information about 2022 and 2023 1Ls with disabilities, see [“2022 First Year Law School Class: A Focus on Students with Disabilities”](#) and [“First-Year Law School Class: A Focus on Students With Disabilities, 2023 Update.”](#)

<sup>22</sup> First-generation college graduates include 1Ls with parents or guardians with an associate's degree, some college, high school completion, or less than high school completion.

Asian 1Ls were Pell Grant recipients, 44% of ethnically marginalized students, apart from Asian students, received Pell Grants.

**Table 7: Percent of 2023 Matriculant Survey Respondents by Socio-Demographic Group (n=1,902)**

Category	Group	Percent of 1L Respondents	2023 1Ls
<b>By Race/Ethnicity</b>	American Indian or Alaska Native	2%	1.7%
	Asian	10%	9.6%
	Black/African American	8%	7.7%
	Hispanic or Latina/é/o/x	8%	9.4%
	Middle Eastern or North African/Arab	3%	2.9%
	Multiracial or Ethnoracial (2 or more)	12%	10.0%
	Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	1%	0.5%
	White	51%	51.6%
	Not Indicated	7%	6.5%
<b>By Gender Identity</b>	Man (Cisgender)	41%	41.0%
	Woman (Cisgender)	56%	56.0%
	Gender Diverse	1%	1.4%
	Not Indicated	2%	1.7%
<b>By Sexual Orientation</b>	Not Straight/Not Heterosexual	14%	14.7%
	Straight/Heterosexual	73%	72.8%
	Not Indicated	13%	12.5%
<b>Total LGBTQ+</b>		14%	14.9%
<b>By Disability Status</b>	Students With Disabilities	10%	N/A
	Students Without Disabilities	60%	N/A
	Not Indicated	29%	N/A
<b>By First-Generation College Graduate Status</b>	First-Generation Graduate	24%	24.0%
	Continuing-Generation Graduate	73%	73.0%
	Not Indicated	3%	3.0%
<b>By First-Generation Law School Status</b>	First-Generation Student	75%	75.0%
	Continuing-Generation Student	24%	24.0%
	Not Indicated	1%	1.0%
<b>By Pell Grant Status</b>	Recipient	26%	26.0%
	Non-Recipient	64%	64.0%
	Not Indicated	10%	10.0%

Source: 2023 LSAC Matriculant Survey

In addition to representation based on race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic status, the survey respondents came from all types of law schools, representative of 192 law school programs across the U.S. In the 2023 Matriculant Survey, almost one in ten (9%) of 1Ls were part-time students (Table 8). Consistent with the previous section in this report about the entire 2023 first-year class, 1Ls enrolled in part-time programs responding to this survey were more racially and ethnically diverse and included a higher proportion of women as well as a higher proportion of first-generation college graduates.<sup>23</sup>

Based on where respondents were enrolled, how and why they made their decisions is tied to what they were needing from a law school. Survey respondents varied by where they are enrolled. By law school selectivity,<sup>24</sup> the majority of respondents were enrolled in the top 50% of highly selective law schools (Q1 and Q2), and 37% were enrolled in law schools in the third and fourth selectivity quartiles (Q3 and Q4; Table 8). There is a slight overrepresentation of 1L respondents from law schools in the first law school selectivity quartile to be noted when analyzing the trends in this report.

**Table 8: Percentage of 2023 Matriculant Survey Respondents by Program Type and School Selectivity Quartile (n=1,902)**

Category	Group	Percentage of 1Ls
<b>By Program Type</b>	Full-Time	91%
	Part-Time	9%
<b>By Law School Selectivity Quartile</b>	Q1 (Top 25% Highly Selective Law Schools)	38%
	Q2	25%
	Q3	21%
	Q4	16%

*Source:* 2023 LSAC Matriculant Survey. Using LSAC data, law schools are each assigned a selectivity index based on each school's 2023 admission rate, median LSAT of admitted students, and median UGPA of admitted students. The top 25% highly selective law schools are in the first quartile (Q1), and they are the first 49 law schools with the highest index score. The percentages indicate the proportion of respondents who matriculated to a school within each quartile.

Overall, the survey respondent population is representative of the 2023 1L class. Who responded to the survey is important for examining and understanding how different resources were used and how factors varied in level of importance for different students with varying needs and experiences. Lived experiences, identities, and responsibilities in their personal and professional lives can often drive how 1Ls report engaging in each

<sup>23</sup> Learn more about part-time students with the Law School Survey of Student Engagement (LSSSE). (2024). Part 2: Part-time students & the law school experience. <https://lssse.indiana.edu/tag/part-time-students/>

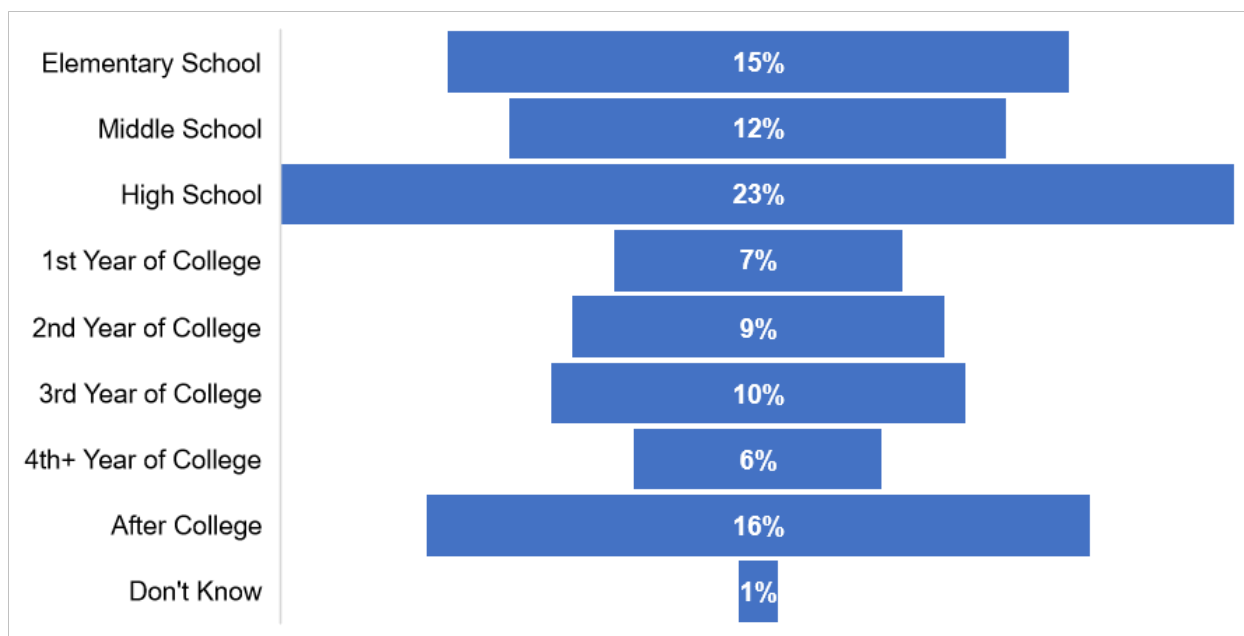
<sup>24</sup> As explained earlier in this report, each law school is assigned a selectivity index based on each school's 2023 admission rate, median LSAT of admitted students, and median UGPA of admitted students. The top 25% highly selective law schools are in the first quartile (Q1), and they are the first 49 law schools with the highest index score.

step of their journey to law school and what factors are important to them when deciding where to enroll. Given the sample size of who responded to the survey, the following sections provide some group-based analyses. Future research will examine group-based differences in decision-making factors more robustly as LSAC collects more data. The following insights are a starting point for law schools and law stakeholders to consider when recruiting and supporting the next generation of legal leaders, noting that each admitted student has a unique journey, weighing and balancing multiple factors as they decide where to attend law school.

## When It All Started

The journey to law school starts long before someone takes the LSAT and applies to law school. For many, it is a multi-year or lifetime aspiration. Half of 1L respondents first thought about law school before college (Figure 13). About 1 in 3 1Ls first thought about law school during college, and only one-sixth of 1Ls (16%) first thought of going to law school after graduating college. These trends are similar to what test takers in the 2023-2024 admission cycle reported when asked when they first thought about law school.<sup>25</sup> These trends are also consistent when examining patterns by race and ethnicity.

**Figure 13: When 1Ls First Thought About Law School (n=1,742)**



Source: 2023 LSAC Matriculant Survey

When someone first thought about law school varied by racial and ethnic groups as well as by parental education (Figure 14 and Figure 15). For many years, many have assumed that underrepresentation in the legal profession is due to the lack of exposure

<sup>25</sup> Kirchoff, A., Bodamer, E. Langer, D., & Russian, A. LSAC's Knowledge Report: 2023-2024 Test-Takers. LSAC: Newtown, PA. <https://www.lsac.org/data-research/research/lacs-2024-knowledge-report-2023-2024-test-takers>

to law at an early age. Data from the matriculant survey, in addition to the Post-LSAT Questionnaire,<sup>26</sup> challenge this assumption. While the sample size of the matriculant survey is small for some group-based analyses, preliminary trends begin to reveal that:

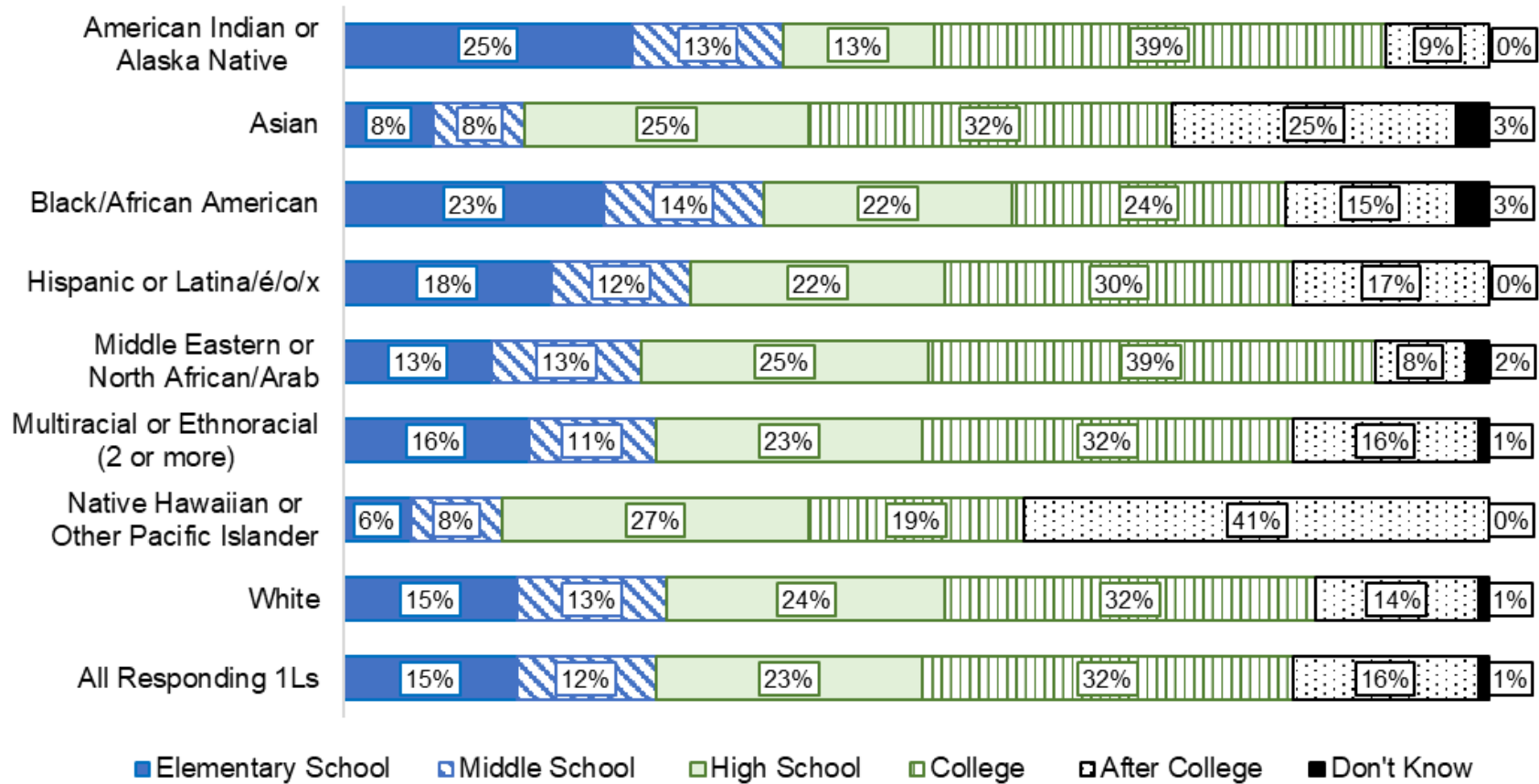
- About one-quarter of 1L respondents identifying as American Indian or Alaska Native (25%) and Black/African American (24%) reported first contemplating law school in elementary school, much earlier than their peers of other races and ethnicities (Figure 14).
- Overall, Black/African American 1Ls thought about law school in high school or earlier at a rate higher than all their peers (60%; Figure 14).
- First-generation college graduates reported first thinking about law school in elementary school at a rate (21%) more than 60% than their continuing-generation college graduate peers (13%; Figure 15).

Prospective applicant<sup>26</sup> and 1L trends are almost identical, implying that access to legal education is not just about exposure. People are exposed to the idea of a legal career very early in their journey. These trends in the larger context of how people experience the journey to law school are evidence of the need for journey-wide interventions, cultivating aspirations and turning them into reality by addressing barriers impeding access to opportunities and resources.

---

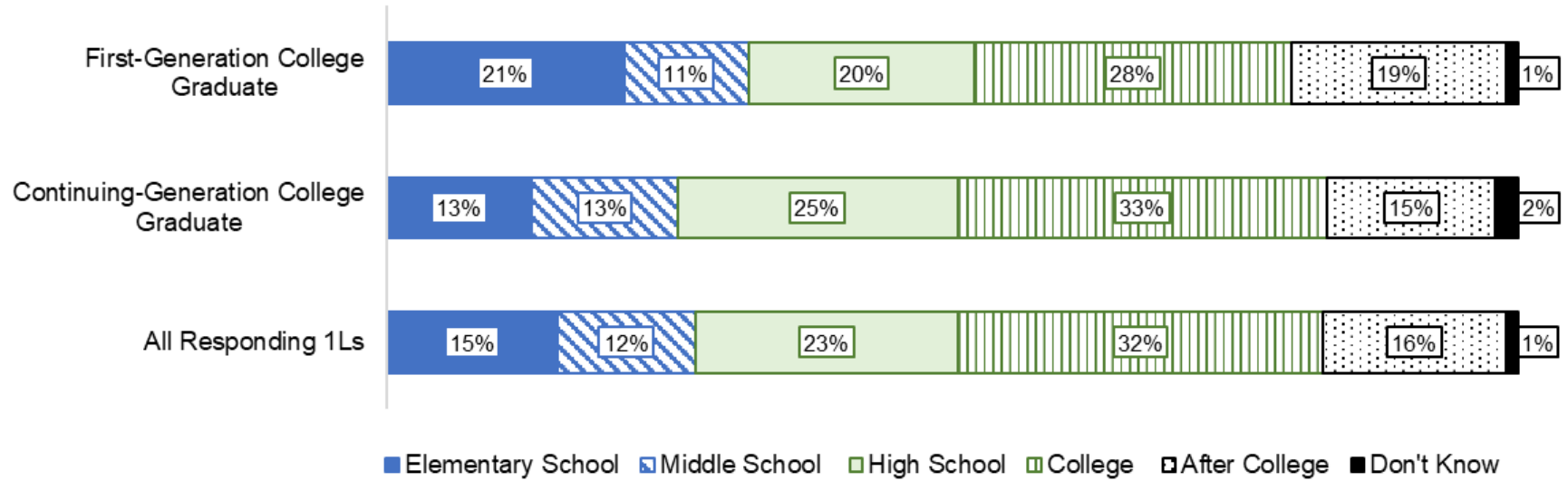
<sup>26</sup> Kirchoff, A., Bodamer, E. Langer, D., & Russian, A. LSAC's Knowledge Report: 2023-2024 Test-Takers. LSAC: Newtown, PA. <https://www.lsac.org/data-research/research/lacs-2024-knowledge-report-2023-2024-test-takers>

**Figure 14: When 1Ls First Thought About Law School by Race and Ethnicity (n=1,742)**



Source: 2023 LSAC Matriculant Survey. Due to the low number of American Indian or Alaska Native, Middle Eastern or North African/Arab, and Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander respondents, data should not be used to make strong generalizations about the entire population based on the small sample size.

**Figure 15: When First-Generation College Graduates First Thought About Law School (n=1,282)**



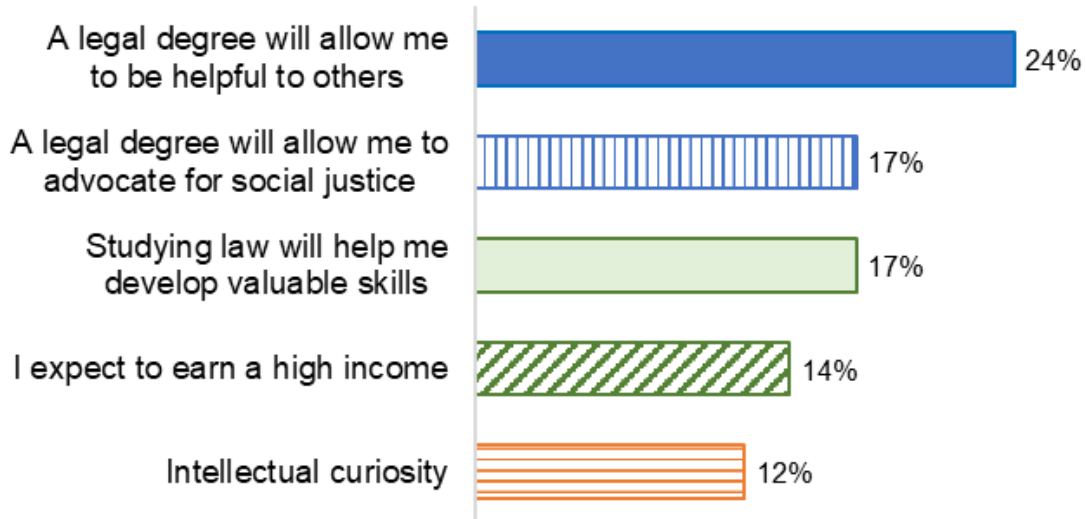
Source: 2023 LSAC Matriculant Survey



## Why It All Started

Many 1Ls are motivated to go to law school to make a difference in society. The top reported primary motivations for attending law school were being helpful to others (24%), advocating for social justice (17%), developing valuable skills (17%), earning a high income (14%), and intellectual curiosity (12%; Figure 16).

**Figure 16: Five Most Common Top-Ranked Motivations for Attending Law School (n=1,903)**

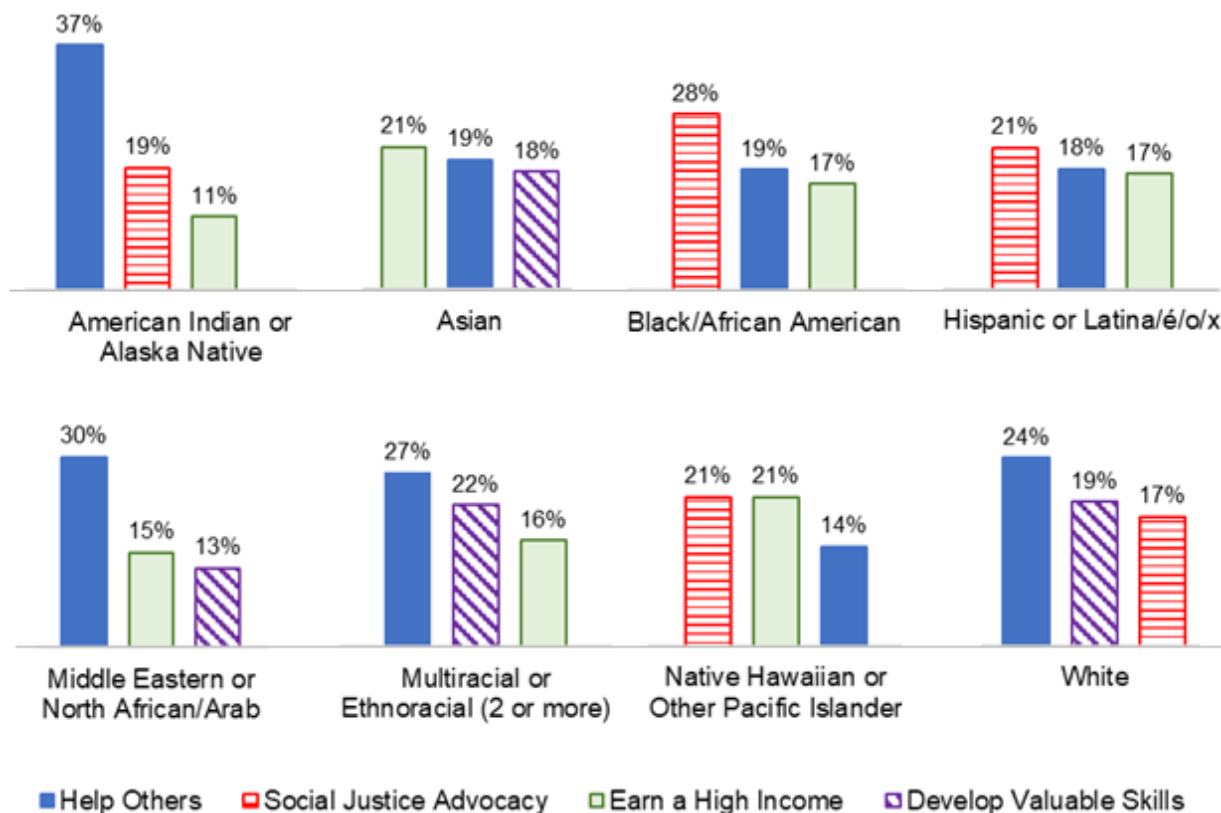


Source: 2023 LSAC Matriculant Survey

The “why” for 1Ls varied by their lived experiences, often tied to their demographic backgrounds. Every racial and ethnic group ranked helping others among their top three reasons for attending law school (Figure 17). As found with prospective applicants,<sup>27</sup> advocating for social justice was the most important law school motivation for Black/African American (28%), Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (25%), and Hispanic or Latina/é/o/x (21%) 1Ls (Figure 17).

<sup>27</sup> Kirchoff, A., Bodamer, E. Langer, D., & Russian, A. LSAC’s Knowledge Report: 2023-2024 Test-Takers. LSAC: Newtown, PA. <https://www.lsac.org/data-research/research/lacs-2024-knowledge-report-2023-2024-test-takers>

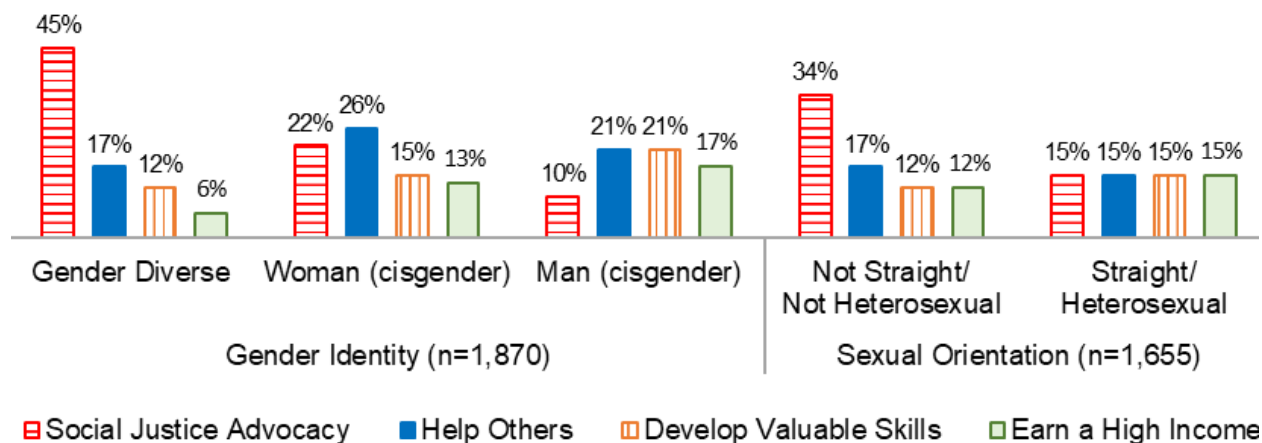
**Figure 17: Three Most Common Top-Ranked Motivations for Attending Law School by Race and Ethnicity (n=1,602)**



Source: 2023 LSAC Matriculant Survey. Due to the low number of American Indian or Alaska Native, Middle Eastern or North African/Arab, and Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander respondents, data should not be used to make strong generalizations about the entire population based on the small sample size.

Social advocacy is also a strong motivator for women, gender diverse, and not straight/not heterosexual 1Ls compared to men and their straight/heterosexual peers (Figure 18). As compared to women and gender diverse 1Ls, significantly more men were motivated to go to law school to develop valuable skills (21%) and by the prospect of earning a high income (18%; Figure 18). In contrast, gender diverse matriculants were overwhelmingly primarily motivated to go to law school to advocate for social justice (45%), a rate more than double that of their women peers and more than four times higher than their male peers (Figure 18). This was also true for 1Ls who were not straight/not heterosexual, where slightly more than 1 in 3 cited advocating for social justice as their primary motivating factor in pursuing a legal degree, more than double the proportion of their straight peers (15%). More women (26%) were motivated by helping others compared to men (21%) and gender diverse (18%) 1Ls.

**Figure 18: Four Most Common Top-Ranked Motivations for Attending Law School by Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation**



*Source:* 2023 LSAC Matriculant Survey. Due to the low number of gender diverse respondents, data insights for this group should be interpreted with caution not to make strong generalizations about the entire population based on the small sample size.

Overall, these motivational trends highlight that for many students, a law degree is viewed as a vehicle for social change and doing good in society, and this is particularly salient for students from marginalized groups. These trends also underscore that 1Ls from marginalized groups are more often motivated by intrinsic factors, which may be related to the current socially and politically charged context in which they are learning and will practice law. These insights have implications for recruitment practices that focus on different intrinsic factors that drive people to law school and into the profession.

## Resources They Used and Steps They Took to Make Law School a Reality

When deciding which law school to attend, 1Ls consulted numerous sources of information and engaged in many different activities. Understanding who prospective law students turned to for support and which sources of information they used to decide where to enroll have implications for prelaw advisors, law schools, and other stakeholders. The following insights can be used by stakeholders to guide admitted law applicants when they are weighing their law school options to meet their personal, academic, and professional needs.

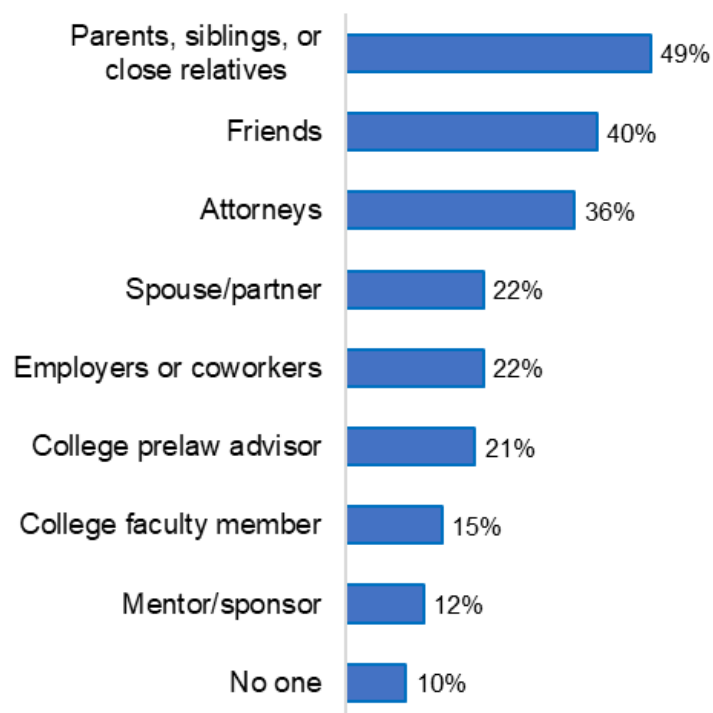
### Who They Consulted for Information

While it can be beneficial to consult with others to learn more about law schools of interest, the help these sources provide can vary widely depending on the source's own experiences or professional position. For example, unless friends have been to law school, and even if they have, they may not be able to help a candidate decide which law school will best meet their personal, academic, and professional needs. Even those who are in the legal field, such as attorneys, may give advice based on their own law

school experiences, which may have been many years ago, or based on their chosen areas of practice. This research can assist law schools and others who guide prospective students on how to use advice from different sources and what to consider and/or avoid when deciding which law school will holistically meet a candidate's goals and needs.

Among 2023 1Ls, almost half relied on family for advice. Specifically, the most often consulted influential sources of information were parents, siblings, or close relatives (49%), friends (40%), and attorneys (36%; Figure 19). Slightly more than one-fifth of 1Ls sought advice from their spouse/partner (22%), which is expected since many students will move to attend law school. A similar proportion of 1Ls consulted employers or coworkers (22%) and college prelaw advisors (21%). Notably, 1 in 10 1Ls indicated they did not consult anyone when deciding where to go to law school. There may be a number of reasons for why 1Ls reported not consulting anyone for advice when deciding where to attend, including that they may have consulted various individuals when they were actively applying to law school, or it may be because they lack access to a support network.

**Figure 19: Top Sources Consulted for Advice When Deciding Where to Go to Law School (n=1,427)**

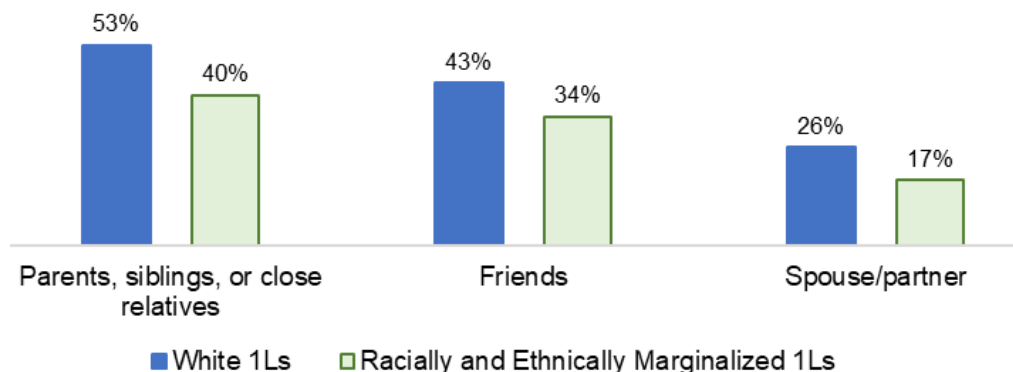


Source: 2023 LSAC Matriculant Survey

While all 1Ls from all backgrounds generally chose similar sources to consult for information, significantly fewer 1Ls from marginalized racial and ethnic groups consulted personal sources. Specifically, significantly more white 1Ls sought advice from parents, siblings, or close relatives (53%); friends (43%); and their spouse/partner (26%; Figure

20) compared to racially and ethnically marginalized 1Ls who consulted with these sources (40%, 34%, and 17%, respectively).

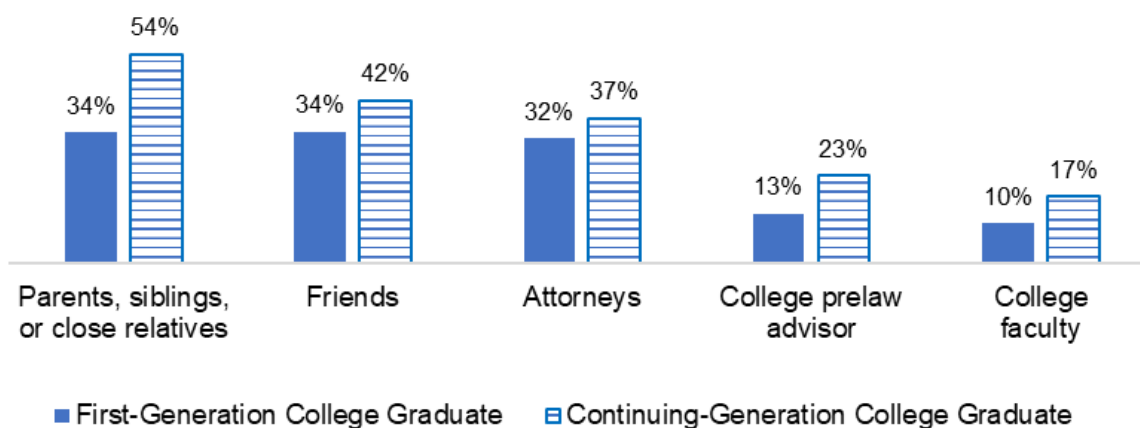
**Figure 20: Top Sources Consulted for Advice When Deciding Where to Go to Law School by Race and Ethnicity (n=1,777)**



Source: 2023 LSAC Matriculant Survey

Who one consults for support and advice about law school enrollment will vary based on students' networks. Therefore, it is not surprising that first-generation college graduate 1Ls had lower rates of relying on their networks than their continuing-generation graduate peers (Figure 21). There is a significant difference between the 34% of first-generation college graduates who got influential advice from their parents, siblings, or close relatives compared to the over half of continuing-generation college graduates who did the same (54%; Figure 21). What is unknown is the kind of advice and what specific influential advice 1Ls were seeking from their networks. A similar trend is found when examining Pell Grant recipients.

**Figure 21: Selected Sources Consulted for Advice by First-Generation College Graduate Status (n=1,847)**



Source: 2023 LSAC Matriculant Survey

Overall, who people turn to for advice on deciding where to enroll is related to who they are and their networks. The trends above reveal that 1Ls from many marginalized groups have limited access to friends and family to consult for advice about where to go to law school. Stakeholders, such as prelaw advisors, pathway programs, and law schools, can use these insights to inform how they proactively reach out to and guide their admitted applicants on finding reliable sources of information on which to base their decision-making.

## What Law School Rankings Mean to Them

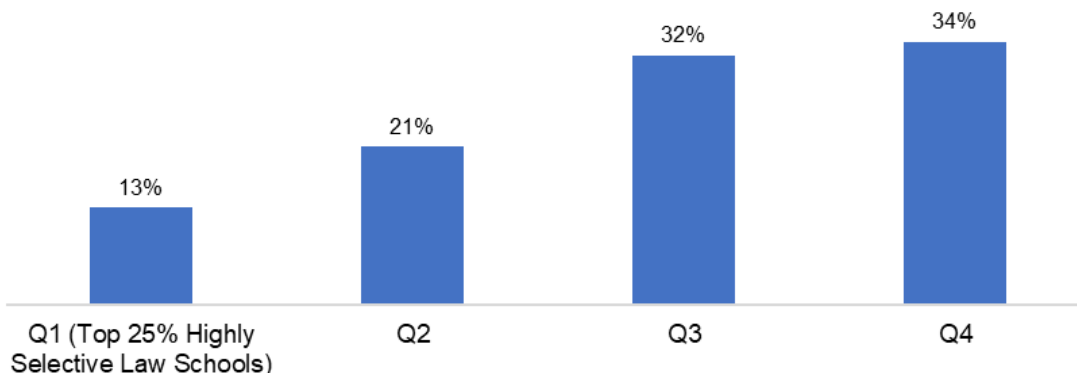
For many years, and especially the past few years, law school rankings have been a hot topic, from law schools choosing not to participate in the U.S. News and World Report ranking process<sup>28</sup> to research looking at what rankings tell students about law schools to how rankings help law schools attract high-performing applicants. While 60% of 1Ls reported consulting U.S. News and World Report rankings, almost one-quarter (23%) of respondents reported they did not use any ranking sources to help them decide where to go to law school. This shows that for at least some 2023 1Ls, rankings were not a driving force in their decisions, and they relied on many other factors, explored in-depth later in this report, to ensure they made a decision about the law school that best aligns with their personal, professional, and academic needs.

With that said, it is clear that law school rankings mattered more to some than others. For example, when examining only respondents who did not use rankings, about one-third of all 1Ls who matriculated to Q3 and Q4 law schools did not consult any rankings, while close to 90% of those who enrolled in highly selective law schools used rankings (Figure 22). This insight from the 2023 1L respondents is evidence that deciding where to enroll is not a unidimensional decision-making process. While many assume that people applying to law school are all about the rankings, in fact, many are not because they have specific needs and goals that not all law schools can meet, as the next section of this report reveals.

---

<sup>28</sup> See, for example: Clark, H. R. (2007). How the U.S. News rankings affect American legal education. *Judicature*, 91, 80; Bush, D., & Peterson, J. (2012). Jukin' the Stats: The Gaming of Law School Rankings and How to Stop It. *Conn. L. Rev.*, 45, 1235; Iacono, C. D. (2021). Legally unhappy: How US news and law schools have failed and how this can be fixed. *Touro L. Rev.*, 37, 219.

**Figure 22: 1Ls Who Didn't Use Any Rankings to Decide Where to Go to Law School by Law School Selectivity Quartile (n=388)**



*Source:* 2023 LSAC Matriculant Survey. Using LSAC data, law schools are each assigned a selectivity index based on each school's 2023 admission rate, median LSAT of admitted students, and median UGPA of admitted students. The top 25% highly selective law schools are in the first quartile (Q1), and they are the first 49 law schools with the highest index score. There were a total of 1,903 respondents across all quartiles who answered the rankings question. Out of those, 388 indicated they did not consult any rankings when deciding where to go for law school. The percentages in the figure are based on only those people who indicated they did not use any rankings.

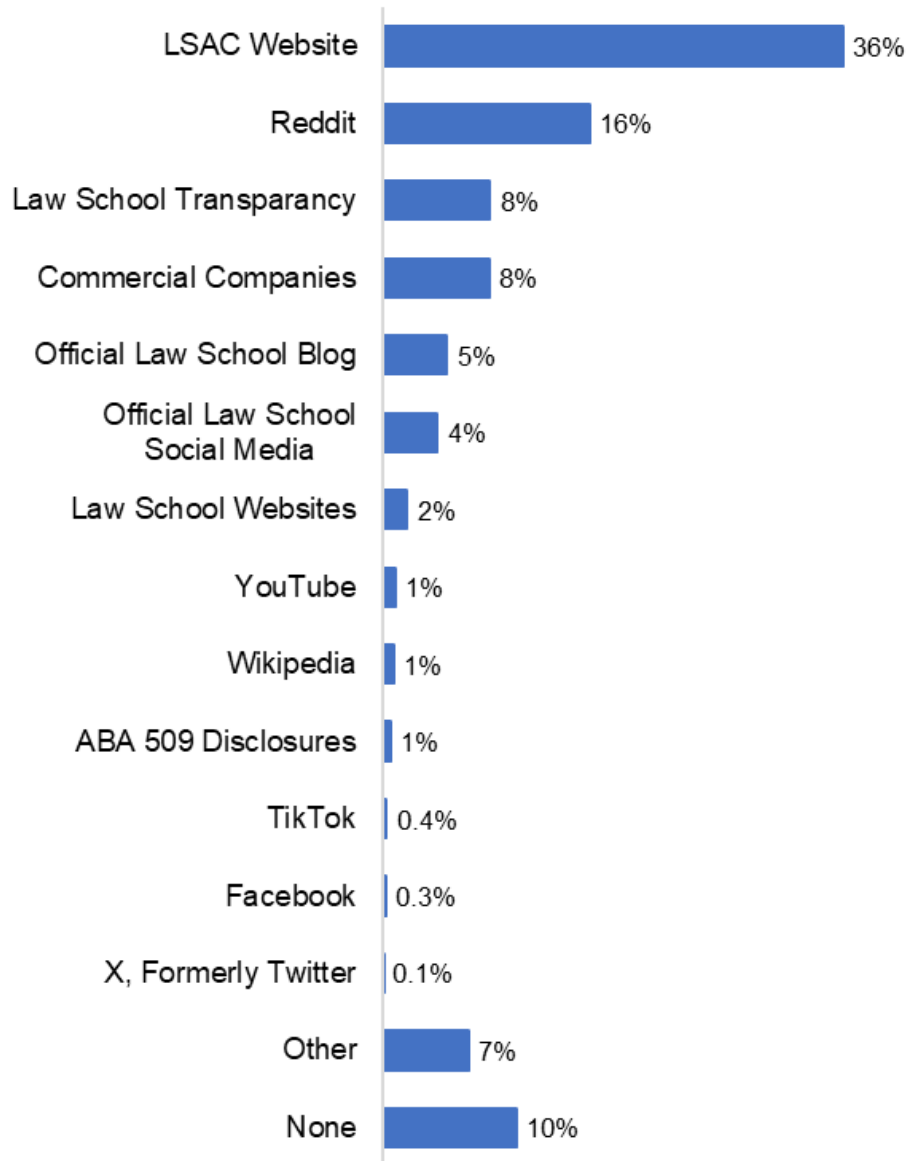
## Other Sources of Information They Consulted

In addition to seeking information from people and rankings, almost 9 out of 10 respondents sought out information from other sources (Figure 23). When asked to rank up to five online sources of information, more than 3 out of 10 (36%) 1Ls indicated they used the LSAC website as their primary source of information. More than 1 in 10 1Ls reported they primarily used Reddit (16%), and less than 1 in 10 reported they used information from Law School Transparency (8%) and commercial companies (8%). One in 10 1Ls (10%) did not use any other sources of advice.

These online platforms represent important channels for reaching prospective law students. Much of the information they seek and access online is user-generated, so ensuring that prospective students can find accurate information can be crucial to the final enrollment decision. This research has several implications that law schools, prelaw advisors, and other stakeholders can use to support candidates:

- Law schools can ensure that they are providing robust information about their own institutions online, so prospective students have access to authoritative first-party information as well as user-generated information that is often more subjective.
- Schools and prelaw stakeholders can focus on providing guidance to prospective students in terms of what online resources on what platforms will be helpful to their individual law school decisions.
- Importantly, schools and prelaw stakeholders can proactively help prospective students discern how they approach online information, to ensure the information they are relying on is accurate and applicable to their own unique goals and needs.

**Figure 23: Other Resources 1Ls Used to Inform Their Decisions About Where to Go to Law School (n=1,713)**



Source: 2023 LSAC Matriculant Survey

Overall, it is important to understand where prospective law students get their information to ensure that prelaw stakeholders and law schools know how to support these students in discerning what they read online and how to apply it to their own law school journey.



## Getting to Know Law Schools: Recruitment Activities and Meetings

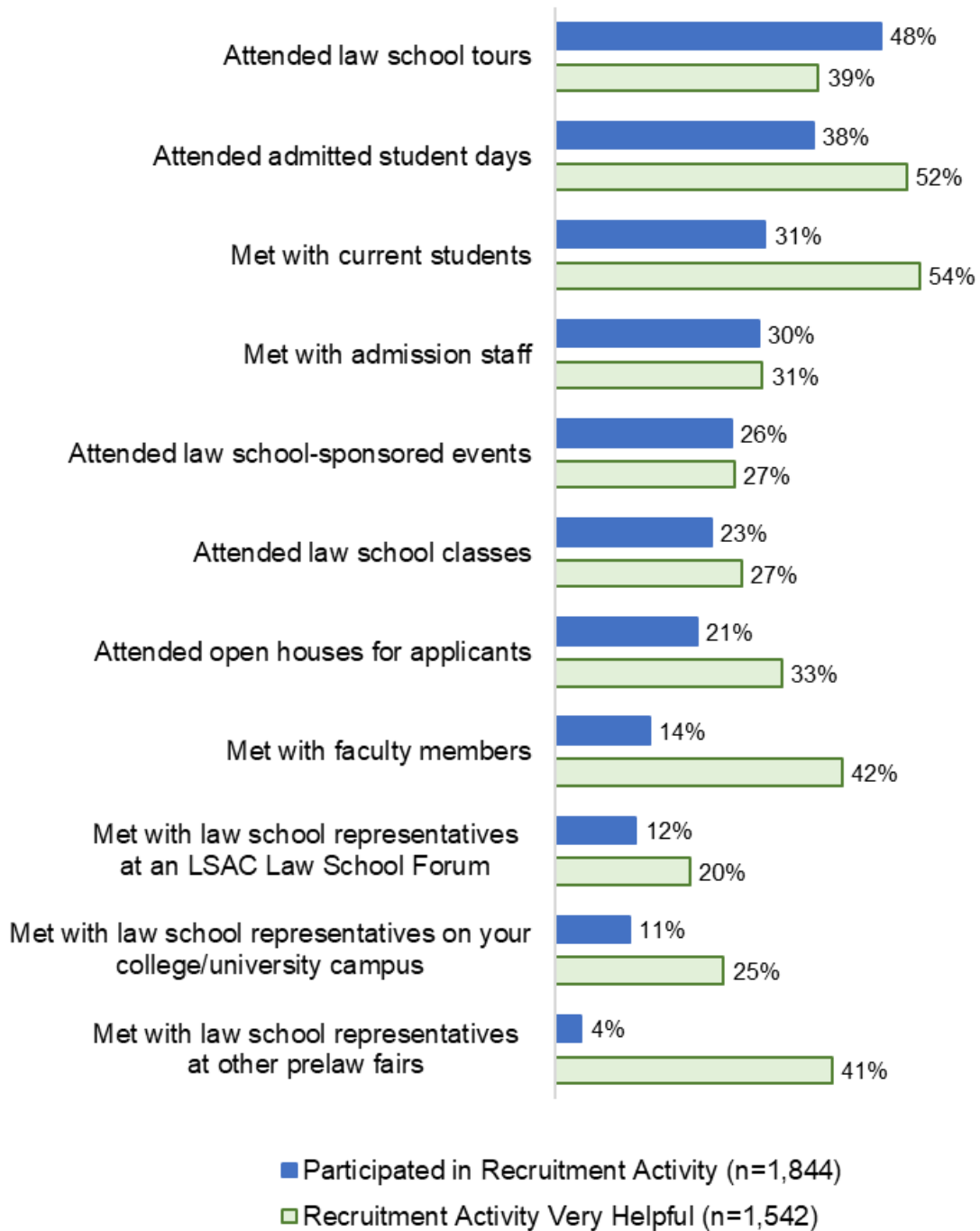
Law school recruitment activities are a staple for aspiring law students as they are applying to law school. They allow prospective students to get a feel for navigating the law school and what classes are like, while also giving them a chance to meet potential classmates. Law schools spend a significant amount of time and effort to recruit a 1L class, with these events as key parts of their strategies, to try to ensure full class enrollment. Understanding what activities students prioritize and attend can help law schools focus their recruitment efforts and prelaw support.

In addition to activities, meetings with different individuals associated with law schools in a variety of settings can provide prospective students with invaluable information about and insight into specific law schools. Meetings with law school staff provide the chance to ask personal questions about the factors that matter most to each prospective law student, allowing them to get a specific and holistic understanding of their possible law school experience.

Close to half of 1Ls (48%) reported going on law school tours, the most popular recruitment activity (Figure 24). Between approximately two-fifths and one-quarter of students attended admitted student days (38%), met with current students (31%), met with admission staff (30%), and attended law school-sponsored events (26%). Many 1Ls also attended law school classes (23%) and open houses for applicants (21%). Fewer than one-fifth of 1Ls met with faculty members (14%) or met with law school representatives either at an LSAC Law School Forum (12%), on their college campus (11%), or at another prelaw fair (4%). About one-sixth of 1L respondents didn't partake in any recruitment activities (16%).

Whether engagement with law schools through events and meetings was helpful in a 1L's decision-making process on the journey provides deeper insights for schools. The data show that 1Ls reported that certain activities were more helpful than others in making decisions as to where to apply and ultimately enroll. The most helpful activities cited by survey respondents were meeting with current students (54%), attending admitted student days (52%), meeting with faculty members (42%), and attending prelaw fairs such as the National Black Pre-Law Conference and Law Fair and Lavender Law Conference and Career Fair (41%; Figure 24). While different activities may of course have greater impact for individual students, these overall trends provide useful insights for prelaw stakeholders and law school recruiters to keep in mind in order to effectively allocate time and resources to activities and events that will help achieve their recruitment goals while meeting prospective law students' needs.

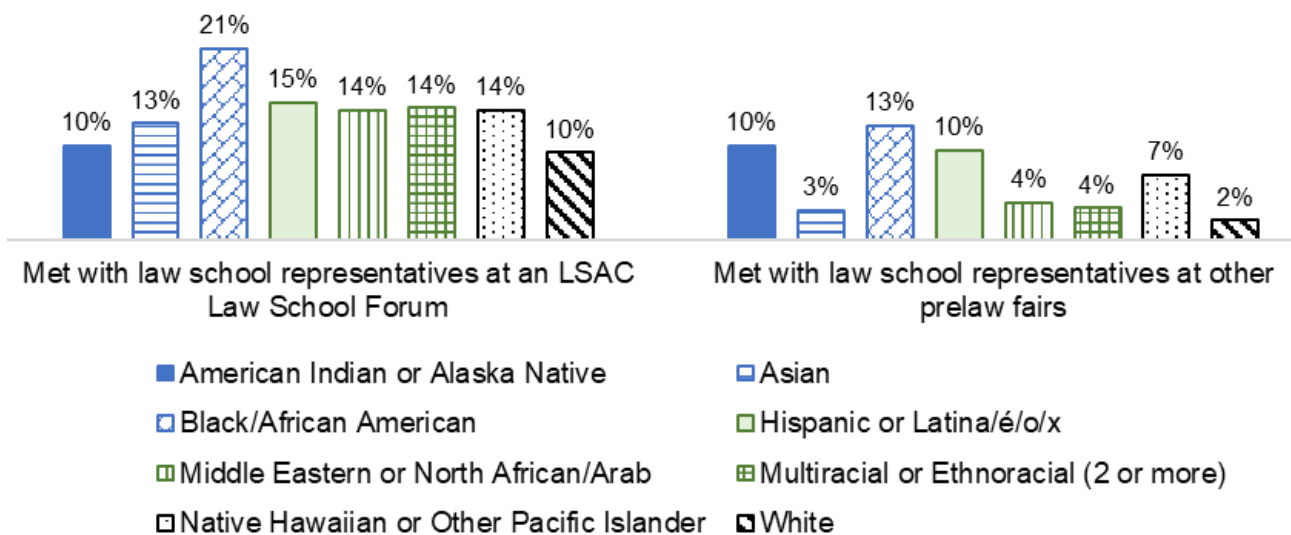
**Figure 24: Recruitment Activities 1Ls Participated in and Their Helpfulness in Deciding Where to Go to Law School**



Source: 2023 LSAC Matriculant Survey

While data on attendance and helpfulness of recruitment activities overall help direct resources and efforts effectively and efficiently, differences in both attendance and helpfulness of events by student identity provide greater insight into how to use recruitment activities to grow an applicant pool and attract prospective law students from different backgrounds. For example, while attendance at LSAC Law School Forums was, overall, near the bottom of recruitment activities, breaking it down by race and ethnicity showed that attendance at these forums was highest for Black/African American 1Ls (21%), more than double the rate of their white peers who attended (10%; Figure 25). Additionally, significantly more Black/African American (13%), Hispanic or Latina/é/o/x (10%), American Indian or Alaska Native (10%), and Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander 1Ls (7%) met with law school representatives at other prelaw fairs as compared to their peers of other races and ethnicities.

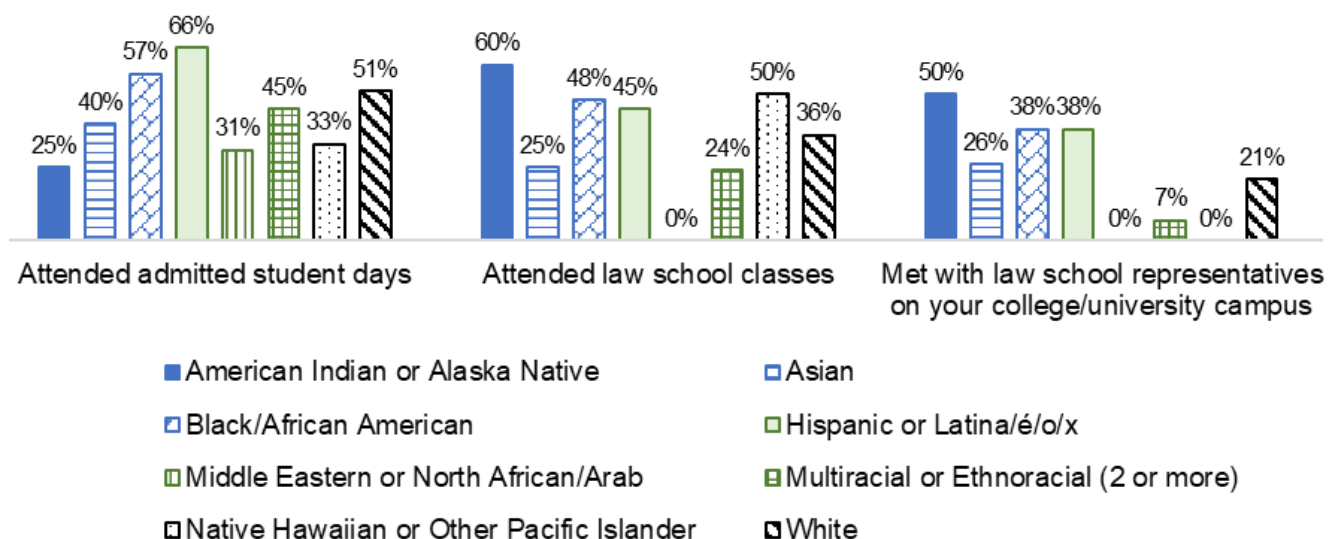
**Figure 25: Participation in LSAC Forums and Prewlaw Fairs by Race and Ethnicity (n=1,774)**



*Source:* 2023 LSAC Matriculant Survey. Due to the low number of American Indian or Alaska Native, Middle Eastern or North African/Arab, and Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander respondents, data should not be used to make strong generalizations about the entire population based on the small sample size.

Respondents of different races and ethnicities also found certain events to be more helpful in making their decision on where to enroll. About two-thirds (66%) of Hispanic or Latina/é/o/x 1Ls reported that accepted/admitted student days were very helpful in making their decision, significantly more than the 51% of white 1Ls, a rate almost 30% higher (Figure 26). Attending law school classes and meeting with law school representatives were also more helpful for Black/African American and Hispanic or Latina/é/o/x 1Ls as compared to both white and Asian 1Ls.

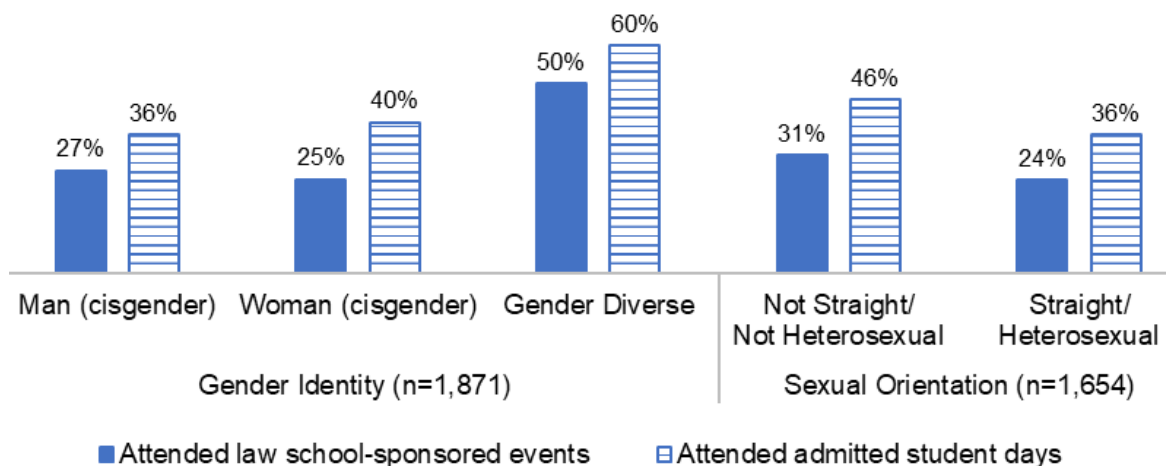
**Figure 26: Helpfulness of Recruitment Activities by Race and Ethnicity (n=1,391)**



*Source:* 2023 LSAC Matriculant Survey. Due to the low number of American Indian or Alaska Native, Middle Eastern or North African/Arab, and Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander respondents, data should not be used to make strong generalizations about the entire population based on the small sample size. Bars represent the percent of responding 1Ls of each race and ethnicity who rated the recruitment events as “very helpful.”

In addition to significant differences in attendance at and helpfulness of recruitment activities by race and ethnicity, there were gender differences. Gender diverse 1Ls and not straight/not heterosexual 1Ls were more likely to attend law school-sponsored events (60% and 46%, respectively) and accepted/admitted student days (50% and 31%, respectively) than the rate at which their cisgender and straight/heterosexual peers attended law school-sponsored events (25% of women, 27% of men, and 24% of straight/heterosexual 1Ls) and accepted/admitted student days (40% of women, 36% of men, and 36% of straight/heterosexual 1Ls; Figure 27). It is not surprising that gender diverse and not straight/not heterosexual 1Ls would be significantly more interested in learning about the law school environment and that they would be more likely to gain understanding by attending events with other likely students and experiencing the campus. These marginalized groups also attended other in-person events at slightly higher rates than their classmates; although the differences were not large enough to be significant, they still point to a trend in how prospective students sought out ways to know the law schools in which they considered enrolling.

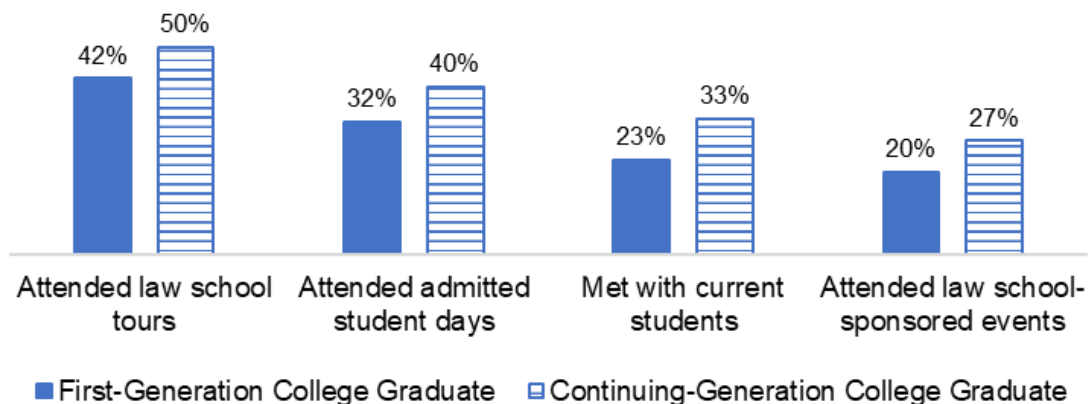
**Figure 27: Participation in Recruitment Activities by Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation**



Source: 2023 LSAC Matriculant Survey. Due to the low number of gender diverse respondents, data should not be used to make strong generalizations about the entire population based on the small sample size.

In contrast, the trends for first-generation college graduates and Pell Grant recipients were different than the trends for other marginalized populations noted above. Specifically, significantly fewer first-generation college graduate respondents attended law school-sponsored events (20%) and accepted/admitted student days (32%) than continuing-generation college graduate respondents (27% and 40%, respectively; Figure 28). Also, fewer first-generation college graduates attended law school tours (42% compared to 50% of continuing-generation) and met with current law students (23% compared to 33% of continuing-generation).

**Figure 28: Participation in Recruitment Activities by First-Generation College Graduate Status (n=1,847)**



Source: 2023 LSAC Matriculant Survey

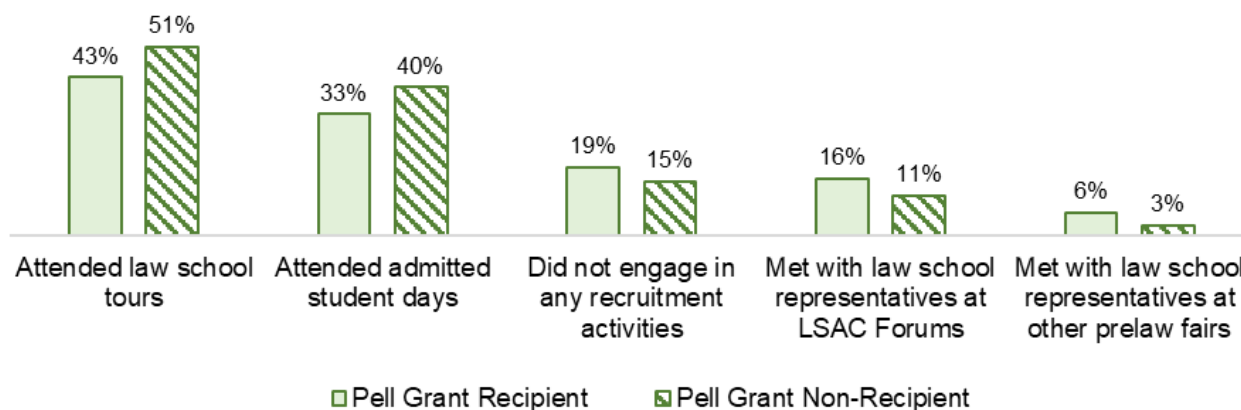
Similarly, significantly fewer Pell Grant recipients attended law school tours (43%) and accepted student days (33%) compared to non-recipients (51% and 40%, respectively). By contrast, however, significantly more Pell Grant recipients met with law school

representatives at LSAC Forums and law school representatives at other prelaw fairs (Figure 29) compared to 1Ls who did not receive Pell Grants. Almost two-thirds (64%) of Pell Grant recipients reported that other prelaw fairs were very helpful in their decision, a contrast with the 24% of non-recipients who found these fairs very helpful. Similarly, more Pell Grant recipients thought attending law school classes was very helpful (47%) compared to non-recipients (32%).

Significantly lower rates of attendance at many recruitment events by first-generation and Pell Grant recipient respondents may be due to the lack of knowledge about and/or financial resources to attend some of these events. As LSAC collects more data from 1Ls, this is also a trend that should be followed in the future to determine how prelaw stakeholders and law schools can best guide first-generation college graduates in getting the information they need to choose the best law school for their academic, personal, and professional needs.

Overall, how law school activities and meetings play a role in the enrollment decision-making process illustrates the importance of space and opportunities. Law school events, such as accepted/admitted student days and meetings with staff, were cited as being very helpful for everyone, but they were particularly helpful for 1Ls from various marginalized groups. However, these events may be financially out of reach for some; therefore, as the 1L respondents noted, LSAC Forums, both in-person and digital, and other prelaw fairs play a pivotal role in opening access for candidates to get the information they need in the most cost-effective manner.

**Figure 29: Participation in Recruitment Activities by Pell Grant Status (n=1,768)**



Source: 2023 LSAC Matriculant Survey

## Making the Enrollment Decision

Deciding where to go to law school is a multidimensional process during which accepted law school applicants have to weigh numerous factors beyond sources of advice and resources discussed above. Prewlaw stakeholders can use information about decision-making factors to guide students on their journey to law school from the very beginning. And law school representatives and admission staff can use the information to design more targeted recruitment based on which resources, opportunities, and

experiences prospective law students will look for in a school. To that end, the 2023 Matriculant survey participants were asked to indicate how important they thought various factors were when they were deciding where to attend law school. The following sections detail the importance of factors organized into six broad categories: 1) law school reputation factors, 2) financial factors, 3) location factors, 4) academic program factors, 5) social factors, and 6) academic services availability.

In addition to the multiple factors that are considered in a decision, this section ends with an examination of how 1Ls would advise candidates now, given that they had been in law school for about three months at the time of the survey administration.

Experiencing law school reorients what factors matter to 1Ls, revealing how they would advise candidates today to weigh factors like cost more than the reputation and ranking of a law school. Overall, this section provides useful information for everyone from prelaw stakeholders to law schools to law school candidates about the factors driving enrollment decisions.

## **Reputation Factors**

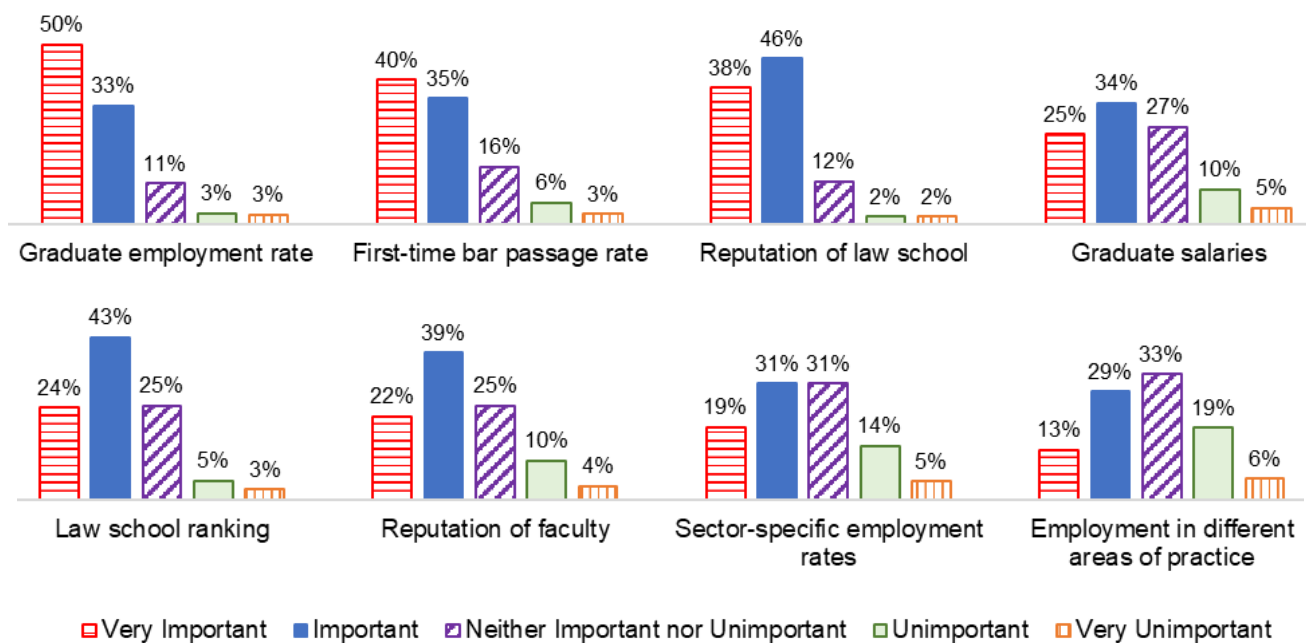
Overall, reputation is comprised of eight factors, including graduate employment rate, first-time bar passage rate, reputation of the law school, graduate salaries, law school ranking, reputation of faculty, sector-specific employment rates, and employment in different areas of practice. When dissecting these various factors, respondents show that the reputation of a law school goes beyond rankings, despite the outsized focus on rankings by many in the law space. As mentioned earlier, close to 1 in 4 1Ls did not use any ranking resources when deciding where to go to law school. This is consistent with how respondents revealed that law school reputation is driven by individual student-level outcome factors, not rankings.

The reputation of a law school is driven by their student outcomes, with half of 1Ls (50%) who reported that graduate employment rates were very important to their decision and approximately two-fifths of 1Ls who indicated that first-time bar passage rates (40%) were very important in informing their enrollment decision. And for almost two-fifths of 1Ls (38%), the reputation of the law school overall was very important in informing their enrollment decision.

1Ls balance several factors when deciding where to enroll, including employment-related student outcomes and faculty. Salaries of recently graduated law students was a very important factor to one-quarter of respondents, similar to the importance of law school rankings. The reputation of faculty, the proportion of law schools' recent graduates employed in different areas of practice (e.g., family law, criminal law, contract law, etc.), and sector-specific employment rates of law schools' recent graduates (e.g., not-for-profit, government, Big Law, etc.) were very important to one-fifth or fewer 1Ls (Figure 30).



**Figure 30: Importance of Reputation Factors in Deciding Where to Enroll (n=1,640)**



Source: 2023 LSAC Matriculant Survey

Overall, these insights reinforce points made earlier that rankings, often attributed with great importance in the application and enrollment process, are not the most important among reputational factors candidates weigh when deciding where to enroll. Candidates reported that the most important factors are individual student outcomes like employment and bar passage rates. These insights are consistent across all groups, implying the importance for prelaw stakeholders and law schools in helping admitted applicants carefully consider what law school reputation means and what is important to their personal decisions as to where to enroll.

## Money Matters: Financial Factors and Law School

The cost of law school and the increase in debt levels for law school graduates have been concerns for more than two decades.<sup>29</sup> An increasing percentage of recent lawyers are negatively impacted by law school debt. Recent studies have found that educational debt loads affect the personal lives of young lawyers, causing them to postpone or not get married, buy a house, and/or have children; choose legal jobs they do not really want; leave the legal profession; or not enter the legal profession at all; and these educational debt loads are cited as the cause of stress, anxiety, depression, and

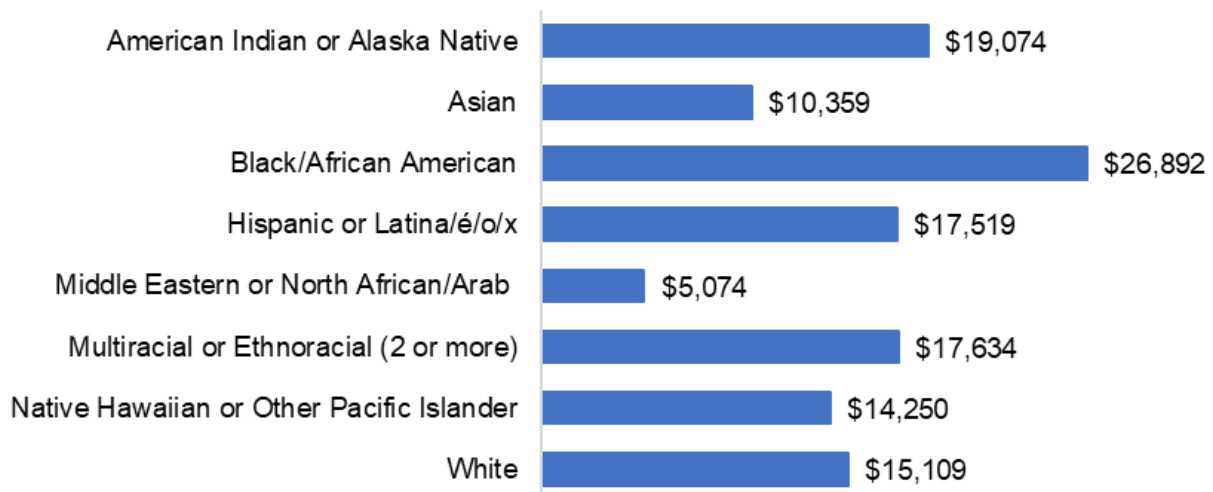
<sup>29</sup> Scott, G. A. (2009). Higher Education: Issues Related to Law School Cost and Access. Report to Congressional Committees. GAO-10-20. *US Government Accountability Office*; Webber, K., & Burns, R. (2018). Law Student Debt: Changes from 2008 to 2012 and Implications for the Future. Available at SSRN 3262772.



anger, among other negative mental health effects.<sup>30</sup> To determine how financial factors affected law school enrollment decisions for 2023 1Ls, the survey included a number of questions about undergraduate debt and financial factors candidates weighed to make their enrollment decisions. Financial factors include the availability of scholarship funds, cost of attendance, possibility of scholarship reconsideration, application fee waiver availability, availability of need-based funds, availability of loan repayment programs, and the amount of the seat deposit required for enrollment. Overall, 1L respondents from marginalized communities entered law school with higher undergraduate debt than their peers. And across groups, when deciding where to go, scholarships and total cost of attendance were the most important financial factors 1Ls considered.

Before starting law school, on average, 1Ls reported having \$14,190 in undergraduate debt<sup>31</sup>. This debt load is not held similarly across racial and ethnic groups and by first-generation college status. Black/African American, American Indian or Alaska Native, Hispanic or Latina/é/o/x, and multiracial or ethnoracial (2 or more) 1Ls held the highest undergraduate debt load, with Black/African American 1Ls reporting a debt load 90% higher than the average debt of all respondents (Figure 31). Similarly, first-generation graduates reported carrying on average an undergraduate debt load almost double that of their continuing-generation college graduate peers (\$20,158 and \$11,662, respectively). These insights are helpful to contextualize the importance of financial factors in how admitted applicants decide where to enroll.

**Figure 31: Average Undergraduate Debt by Race and Ethnicity (n=1,474)**



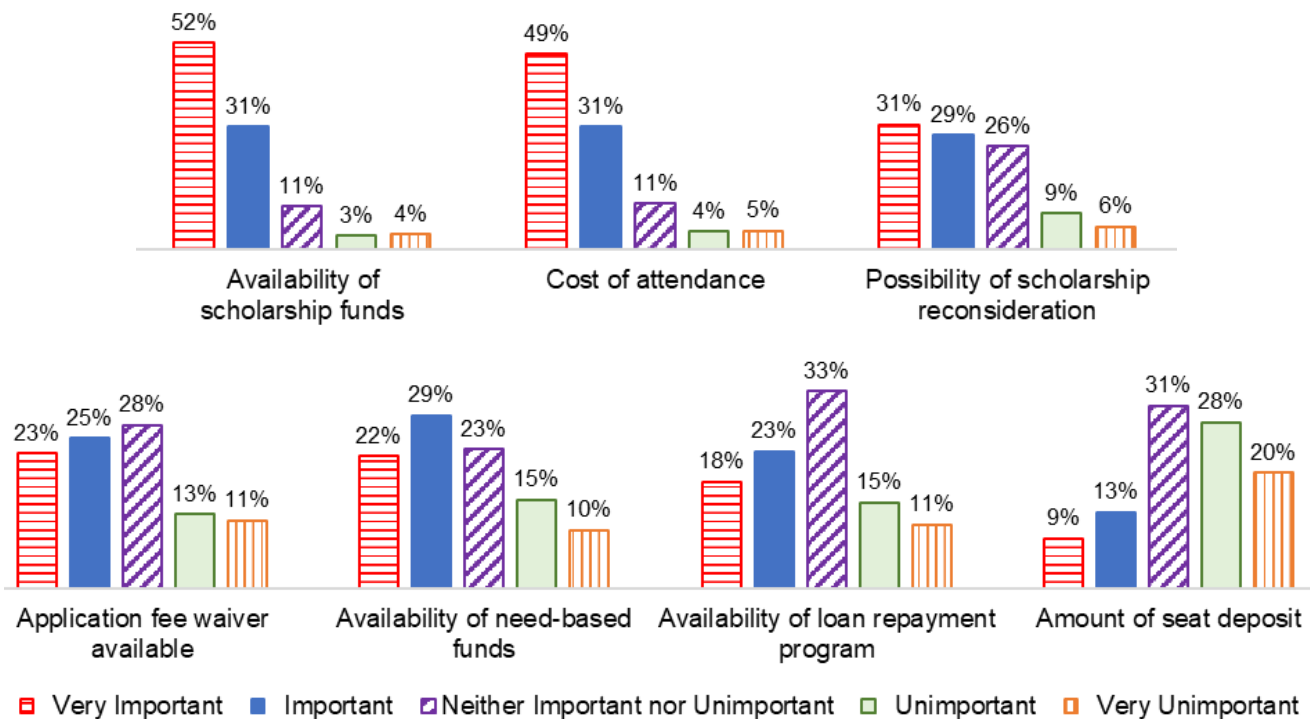
*Source:* 2023 LSAC Matriculant Survey. Due to the low number of American Indian or Alaska Native, Middle Eastern or North African/Arab, and Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander respondents, data insights for this group should be interpreted with caution not to make strong generalizations about the entire population based on the small sample size.

<sup>30</sup> American Bar Association. (2020). 2020 Law School Student Loan Debt: Survey Report; American Bar Association. (2021). Student Debt: The Holistic Impact on Today’s Young Lawyer.

<sup>31</sup> Average undergraduate debt is based on 1,547 respondents who reported their undergraduate debt total.

Overall, more than half of responding 1Ls reported that the availability of scholarship funds and cost of attendance were the leading financial factors that were very important when deciding where to enroll (52% and 49%, respectively; Figure 32). The possibility of scholarship reconsideration was very important for almost a third of 1Ls (31%). While the availability of application fee waivers was very important to about a quarter of respondents (23%), more than half indicated that this factor was neither important nor unimportant (28%), unimportant (13%), or very unimportant (11%). Only about 1 in 5 1Ls reported that the availability of need-based funds was very important, and preliminary data reveal that these insights are driven by first-generation college graduates. Lastly, the amount of the seat deposit was the least important financial factor overall, with less than a quarter of respondents indicating that it was very important (9%) when deciding where to enroll. While financial factors in legal education go beyond the cost, the overall cost of attendance and availability of scholarship funds are the most important factors weighed in deciding where to enroll across all groups. These insights are useful for prelaw stakeholders and law schools in supporting prospective law students as they weigh the various expenses associated with a legal education, including the overall cost of attendance, not just tuition; the cost of applying to law school; and other expenses.

**Figure 32: Importance of Financial Factors in Deciding Where to Enroll (n=1,621)**



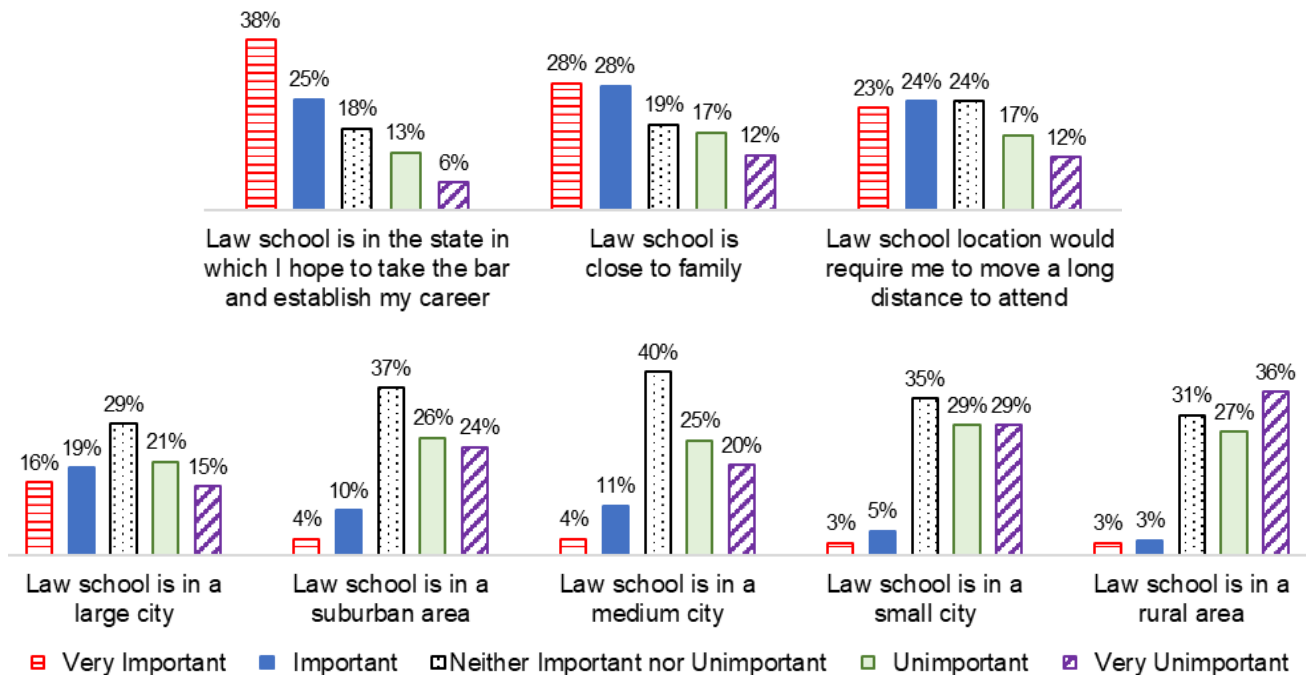
Source: 2023 LSAC Matriculant Survey

## Where You Are Matters: The Role of Location Factors

Many prospective law students will consider a number of geographic factors in making their choice. The research on location as a determining factor in law school choice is not well-developed, but the limited evidence does point to location as a relevant factor for many types of law schools.<sup>32</sup> Location factors include: the law school location is in the state in which I hope to take the bar and establish my career, is close to my family, would require me to move a long distance to attend, is in a large city, is in a suburban area, is in a medium city, is in a small city, or is in a rural area.

Location can matter for a number of reasons, including family obligations and cost of living, and, for some 1Ls, location mattered for their future careers and the jurisdiction they want to practice in. Overall, almost 40% of 1Ls reported that going to a law school located where they plan on taking the bar exam and establishing their careers was very important (Figure 33). Being close to family was very important for almost 30% of 1Ls, and almost a quarter (23%) reported that weighing whether they had to move a long distance to attend law school was very important to them when deciding where to enroll. Overall, these data show that professional goals and personal needs are the main drivers for the importance of law school location.

**Figure 33: Importance of Location Factors When Deciding Where to Enroll (n=1,611)**



Source: 2023 LSAC Matriculant Survey

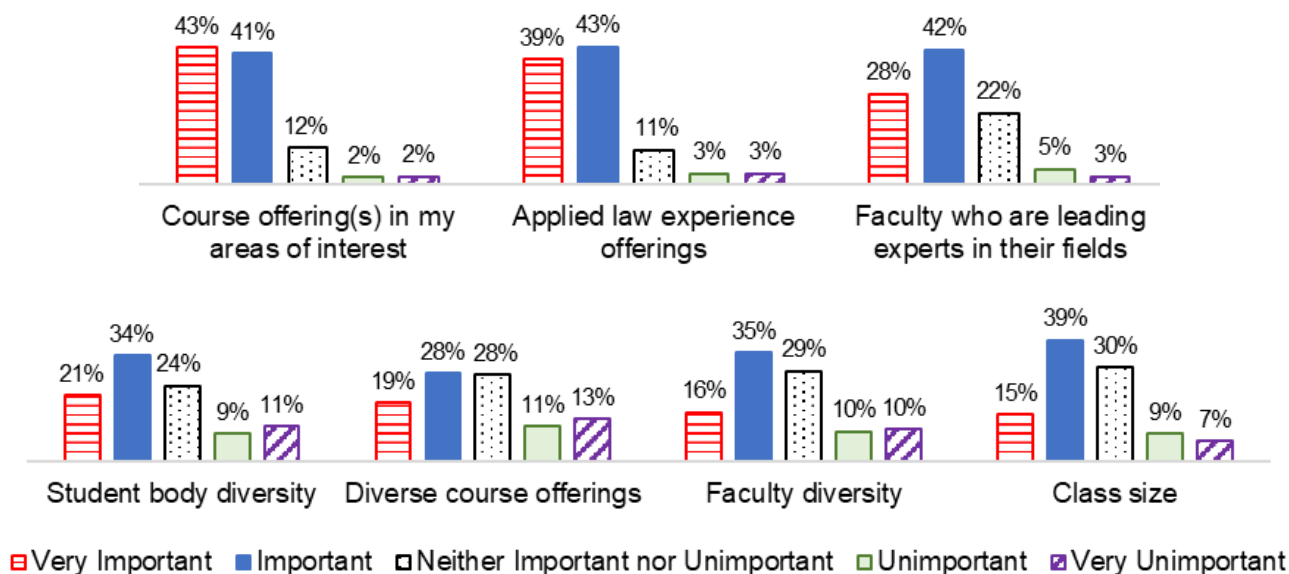
<sup>32</sup> Ryan Jr, C. J. (2020). Analyzing law school choice. *U. Ill. L. Rev.*, 583.

## The Academic Experience: Academic, Faculty, and Program Factors

While schools are often thought of in terms of their rank or reputation, prospective law students may focus on choosing a school that meets their specific academic interests or one that provides scheduling options that meet the needs of individuals who are working their way through law school. The academic experience is measured by two sets of factors. First, academic and faculty factors include course offerings in the student’s areas of interest, applied law school experience offerings/experiential learning, faculty who are leading experts in their fields, student body diversity, diverse course offerings, faculty diversity, and class size. Separately, programmatic factors can include part-time program options, evening program options, and online class offerings.

The top academic and faculty factor 1L respondents reported as being very important was course offerings in their areas of interest (43%), followed by applied law experiences/experiential opportunities (e.g., clinics and internships; 39%) offered (Figure 34). Just over 7 out of 10 1Ls indicated that law schools with faculty who are leading experts in their fields was very important (28%) in deciding where to go to law school. About 1 in 5 1Ls reported that student body diversity was very important to them when deciding where to enroll, and this percentage increases to more than half of 1Ls who reported that student body diversity was either very important or important to their decision making. About half of 1Ls also reported that faculty diversity and class size were either very important or important to their decision, underscoring the importance of the day-to-day experience 1Ls weighed when deciding which law school to enroll in.

**Figure 34: Importance of Academic and Faculty Factors in Deciding Where to Enroll (n=1,569)**

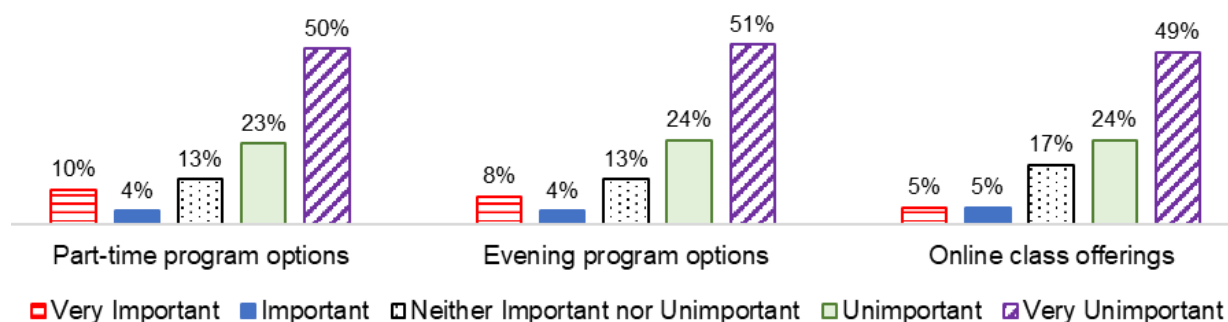


Source: 2023 LSAC Matriculant Survey

As might be expected, given that 91% of the survey respondents are in full-time programs, the question of whether a program offered part-time, evening, or online formats was not a critical factor in the decisions of most 1Ls. While half of all respondents indicated that these program factors were unimportant to their decision-making process, these factors were important to 1Ls who were looking for schools that would provide them with the flexibility they need, often not found in full-time programs (Figure 35).

Overall, 1Ls reported that academic, faculty, and program factors specifically related to their day-to-day experience as law students, including what they want to learn and the diversity of who they would be engaging with as peers and with instructors, were most important to their final decision as to where to enroll. This insight is helpful for law schools as they strategically position themselves to candidates as the best place to learn and grow based on what they have to offer in courses and their community of peers and faculty.

**Figure 35: Importance of Program Factors in Deciding Where to Enroll (n=1,569)**



Source: 2023 LSAC Matriculant Survey

## The Law School Environment: Law School Culture and Social Factors

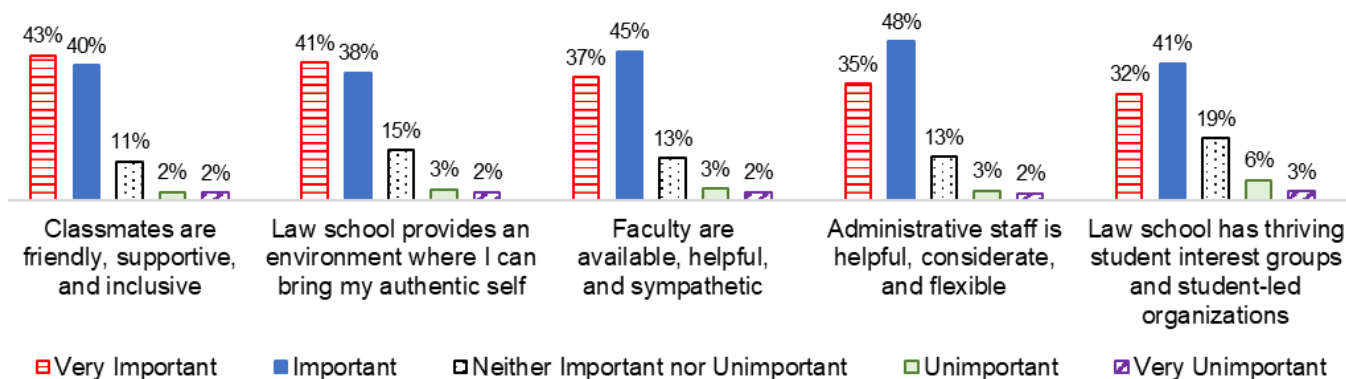
The law school environment plays a role in facilitating or hindering a 1L's sense of belonging, and a strong sense of belonging is linked to greater likelihood of achieving academic and professional success.<sup>33</sup> As shown by the key academic and faculty factors important to 1Ls in the section above, across the board, 1Ls reported they were looking for a school where they can belong and be supported. For law school culture and social factors, respondents were asked to weigh the following factors in making their decisions as to where to enroll: (1) classmates who are friendly, supportive, and inclusive, (2) the law school provides an environment where I can bring my authentic self, (3) faculty are available, helpful, and sympathetic, (4) administrative staff is helpful, considerate, and flexible, and (5) the law school has thriving student interest groups and

<sup>33</sup> Deo, M.E., & Christensen, C. (2020, September). Diversity & Exclusion. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Center for Postsecondary Research.

student-led organizations. Overall, each of these factors were key to 1Ls' decision-making process.

All of the school environment and culture factors were very important or important for about or more than 7 in 10 1L respondents (Figure 36). About 2 in 5 1Ls reported that it was very important to them to have classmates who are friendly, supportive, and inclusive and to be at a law school that provides an environment where they can bring their authentic selves. More than 1 in 3 1Ls reported that it was very important to also have faculty and staff who are available, helpful, and considerate. And more than 1 in 3 1Ls reported that it was very important to them to attend a law school where they can find the social space they need outside of the classroom, specifically looking for a school with thriving student interest groups and student-led organizations (Figure 36). These insights highlight the importance of a law school experience beyond the classroom dynamic. These factors underscore that the enrollment decisions made by the 2023 1Ls included consideration of their relationships with peers, faculty, and staff. As Meera Deo, director of the Law School Survey of Student Engagement (LSSSE), wrote, "Belonging is a function of relationships; thus, every interaction can contribute — in either positive or negative ways."<sup>34</sup> Therefore, as schools and other stakeholders recruit and advise admitted applicants on their enrollment decision, it is important to reflect on who will be a part of their law school experience and what kind of a culture they can thrive in.

**Figure 36: Importance of School Culture and Social Factors in Deciding Where to Enroll (n=1,548)**



Source: 2023 LSAC Matriculant Survey

<sup>34</sup> Deo, Meera E., Building Belonging (August 01, 2024). Available at SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=4986788> or <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.4986788>

## Meeting Students Where They Are: School-Provided Support Factors

Lastly, law school staff play a critical role in the law school experience because they provide a wide range of support important to students' academic success, employment, and graduation.<sup>35</sup> 1L respondents weighed seven school-provided support factors, including career services, financial support services, academic support services, mental health services, DEI programming and services, healthcare coverage, and disability services. Career services was the most important reported factor in their enrollment decisions.

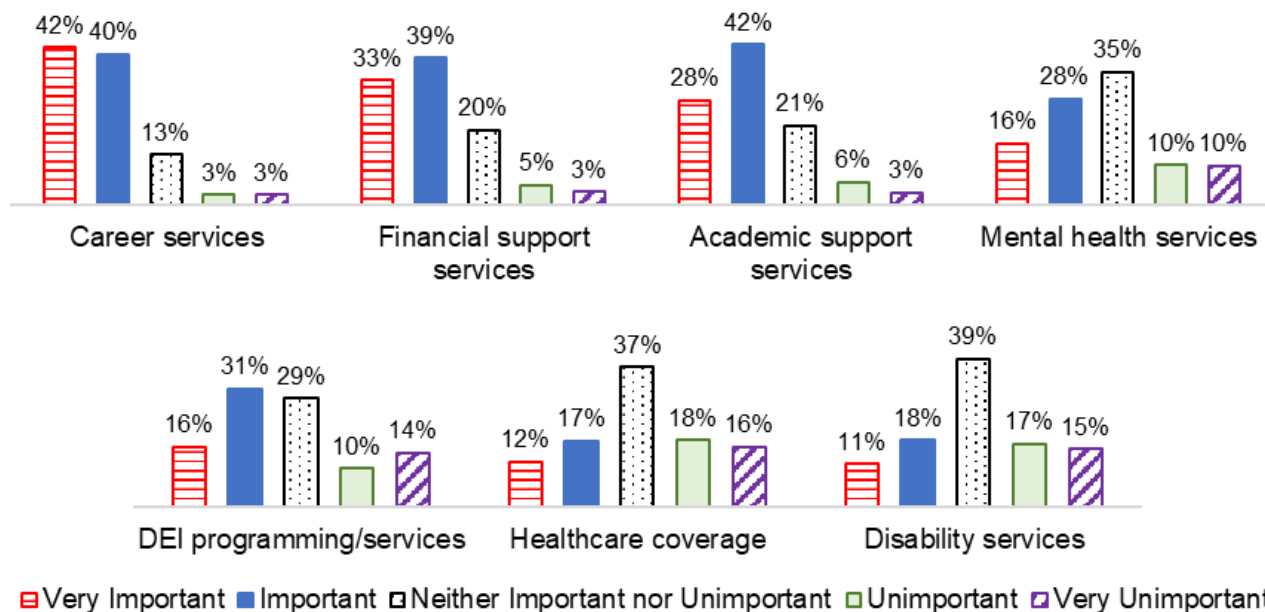
Given that employment rate was the leading reputation factor 1L respondents reported driving their enrollment decision, it is no surprise that career services was very important to their decision for more than 2 in 5 1Ls (Figure 37). Financial support services ranked as the second most important school-provided support, with 1 in 3 1Ls indicating it was very important in their decision-making. This is consistent with about half of 1Ls reporting that scholarship availability and cost of attendance were very important factors in deciding where to enroll. Academic support services were also very important for almost 1 in 3 1Ls. While less than 1 in 5 1Ls reported that mental health services, DEI programming and services, healthcare coverage, and disability services were very important to their decision, preliminary analysis reveals that these factors were very important for 1Ls from marginalized groups at higher rates than their peers, underscoring the need for more data and research about these support efforts and resources.

---

<sup>35</sup> Robbins, A. (2020). Preventing attrition: Critical interventions to close the racial gap in non-transfer attrition. *Widener L. Rev.*, 26, 143.



**Figure 37: Importance of School-Provided Supports in Deciding Where to Enroll (n=1,569)**



Source: 2023 LSAC Matriculant Survey

Overall, the 2023 1L respondents weighed and balanced a number of factors when deciding where to enroll, making it clear that they are multidimensional consumers of information and decision-makers. It is not all about rankings or prestige. 1L respondents underscored the importance of their law school experience in how they pay for it, what they learn, what support is available, and who they will engage with and be in relationships with during their legal education journey. Therefore, law schools and prelaw stakeholders supporting admitted applicants on the journey should translate these insights into ways they recruit and advise students in their decision. Each student has a unique story, set of goals, and needs. Therefore, it is critical for each student to weigh the various factors important to them and what they need in a legal education. As the following section reveals, self-reflection and introspection are important when deciding which law school will meet them where they are and help them get to where they want to go.

## Then and Now: Top Factors When They Decided Where to Enroll and What They Would Now Advise Current Candidates

Experiencing law school, even for about three months, gave 1L respondents new perspective on what factors they view as most important in making the decision of where to enroll. After respondents reported the importance of each individual factor within the overarching factor categories, they were presented with a list of every factor that they indicated was very important when they were deciding where to enroll in law school (“then”) and were asked to rank, in order of importance, their top five factors. They were then asked to rank the same factors from one to five, but rather than thinking



about what they had based their actual choice on months earlier, to instead think about what they would advise current candidates to consider as top factors based on their perspective as 1Ls (“now”).

Overall, 1L respondents would advise that candidates today consider cost of law school more, deemphasizing law school reputation factors. These insights hold across groups, but notable differences arise based on where they are enrolled. Movement between what 1Ls reported they considered as very important when they made their decision (“then”) and what they would advise candidates now (“now”) was particularly salient for respondents at highly selective law schools.<sup>36</sup>

### Top-Ranked Factors Then and Now

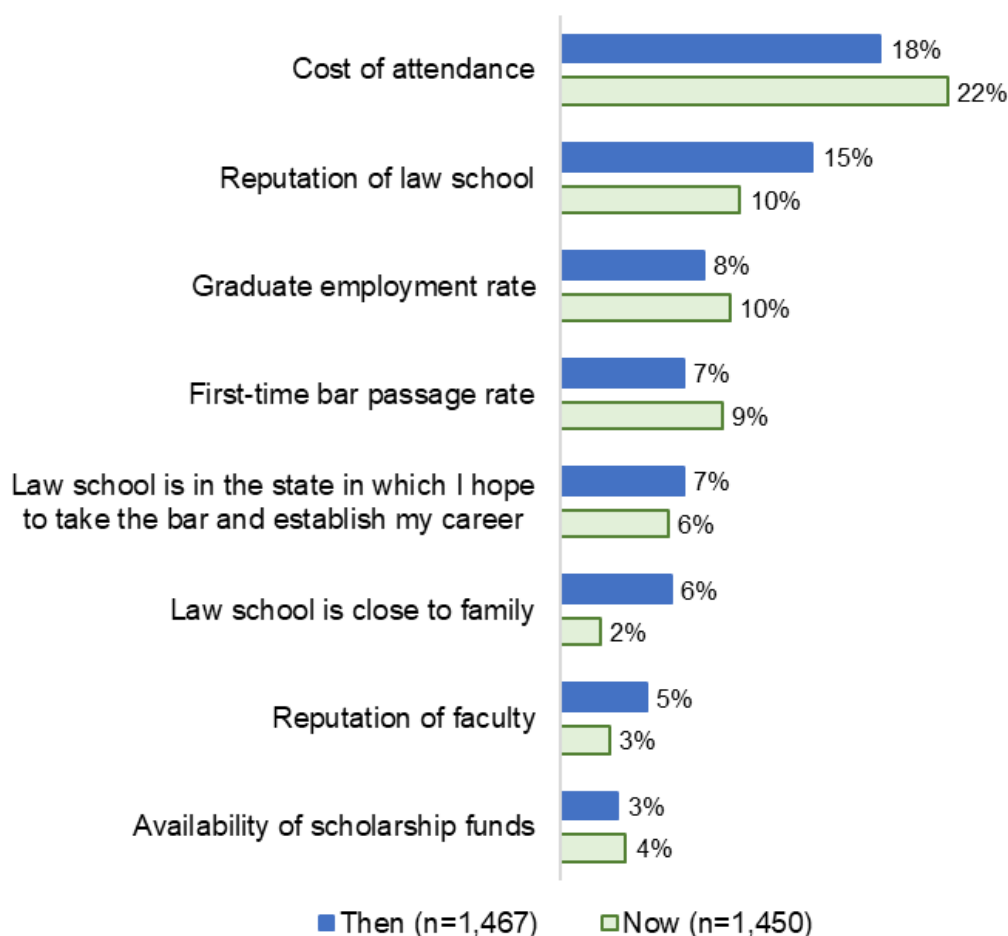
The top eight items ranked as the single most important factor to consider when deciding where to enroll include: cost of attendance, reputation of law school, graduate employment rate, first-time bar passage rate, law school is in the state in which I hope to take the bar exam and establish my career, law school is close to family, reputation of faculty, and availability of scholarship funds (Figure 38). Between then and now, 1Ls reported that the importance of the cost of attendance increased by four percentage points, or by more than 20% from when they made their decision and what they would advise candidates now. 1Ls deemphasized the importance of law school reputation by five percentage points, a 30% decrease from when they made their decision and what they would advise candidates now. And the importance of student outcomes, like employment rate and bar passage rate, increased by about 25% between then and now.

While cost and reputation were the top two factors rated as very important to 1Ls’ enrollment decision, the importance of cost increased, and the importance of reputation decreased. In short, while cost was ranked the most important factor by a three-percentage point margin at the time of decision, that margin has now grown to 12 percentage points based on the experience of the first few months of law school. These insights, along with an increase in the importance of employment and bar passage rates, imply how the experience of the first few months in law school gave 1L respondents a new perspective on what matters to them and their legal education — what they are paying and what their outcomes will be.

---

<sup>36</sup> Based on the 2023 admission rate, median LSAT of admitted students, and mean UGPA of admitted students, each school is assigned a selectivity index score used to create quartiles of law school selectivity. The top 25% of highly selective law schools are in quartile 1 (Q1).

**Figure 38: Most Common Top-Ranked Very Important Factors Then and Now**



Source: 2023 LSAC Matriculant Survey

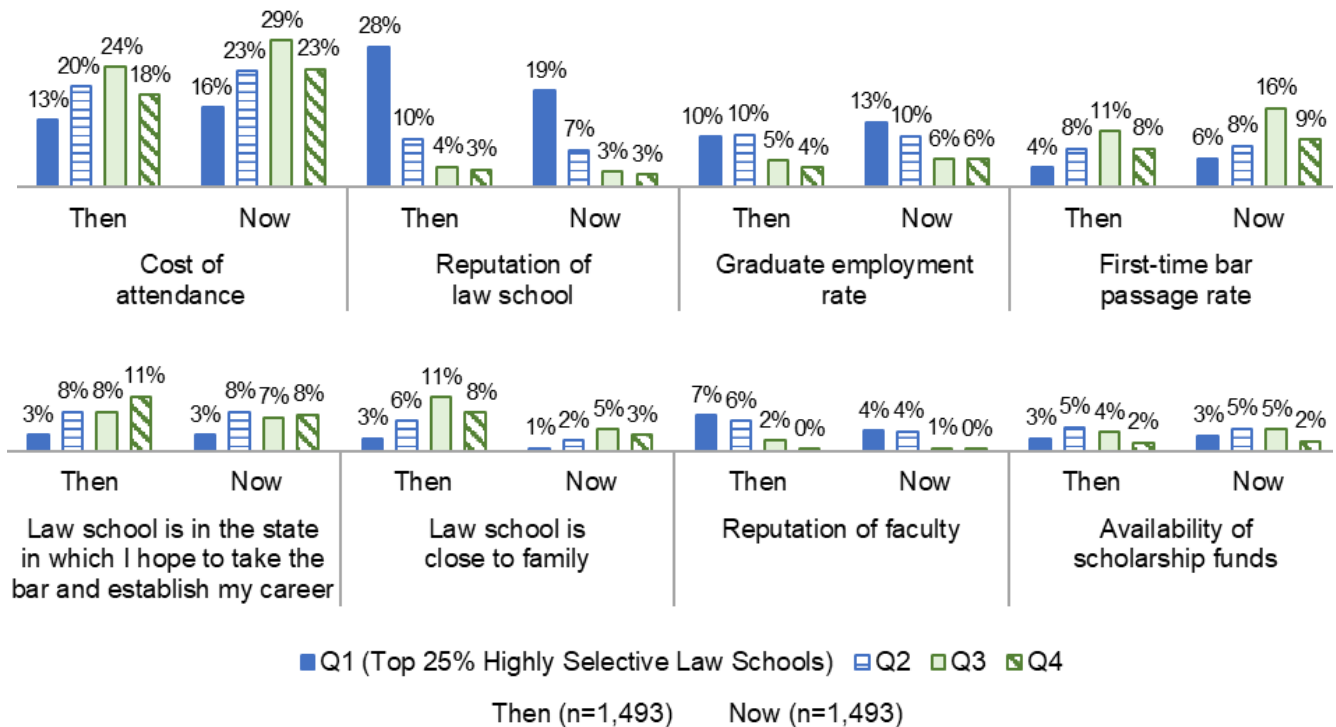
### Top-Ranked Factors by Law School Selectivity

The importance of law school reputation as a top-ranked factor decreased overall between the time 1L respondents decided where to enroll and once they were in law school. This is true across race, ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic diversity. However, the largest change in the importance of reputation factors was found based on where 1L respondents were attending law school, specifically based on law school selectivity.

A law school’s reputation was by far the most important to 1Ls who eventually enrolled in the top 25% highly selective law schools (Q1), with 61% indicating it was very important when they made their decision and more than 1 in 4 (27%) reporting that it was their top-ranked factor (Figure 39). Respondents from the top 25% highly selective law schools (Q1) deemphasized the importance of law school reputation between the time they made their decision and what they would advise candidates now by a larger amount than any of their peers enrolled in other schools (Figure 39). Only 19% of 1Ls in a highly selective law school (Q1) would advise candidates now to heavily weigh the

reputation of the law school in their enrollment decision-making process, a more than 30% drop from what they reported when they made their decision. In other words, about 30% of 1Ls who reported that reputation was the top factor they considered when deciding where to enroll would not advise the same to candidates today.

**Figure 39: Most Common Top-Ranked Very Important Factors Then and Now by Law School Selectivity (n=1,492)**



Source: 2023 LSAC Matriculant Survey. Due to small sample sizes, data insights based on law school selectivity quartiles should be interpreted with caution. Using LSAC data, law schools are each assigned a selectivity index based on each school’s 2023 admission rate, median LSAT of admitted students, and median UGPA of admitted students. The top 25% highly selective law schools are in the first quartile (Q1), and they are the first 49 law schools with the highest index score.

Changes in the most important factors from when a respondent was making their enrollment decision to what they would now advise current candidates are useful to prospective law students currently deciding where to enroll. In reflecting on what matters, it is helpful to know how the views of current law students have shifted with the benefit of their first few months of law school. And for law schools and other prelaw stakeholders, these insights reveal how multidimensional students are when deciding where to enroll, which can inform how law schools present what they have to offer to prospective candidates and how prelaw stakeholders help guide candidates to use reliable sources of information in making their decisions.

## Preparing for the First Year of Law School

An increasing number of law schools, nonprofit organizations, and others offer 0L or “bridge” programs for law students, typically held during the summer before beginning the 1L year. There is no standardized undergraduate curriculum for aspiring law students, and entering 1Ls will come to law school with vastly different background knowledge and skills. Bridge programs are designed to provide opportunities for students — especially those from marginalized communities who have not had access to the same resources and opportunities as their peers — to develop the skills and knowledge they need so they can reach their academic, personal, and professional goals. Research suggests that bridge programs in higher education help reduce non-transfer student attrition<sup>37</sup> and prepare students for the academic rigor of graduate school while easing the social transition with an opportunity to build community,<sup>38</sup> among other benefits. The 2023 LSAC Matriculant Survey reveals that 1Ls are informed help seekers, as evidenced by their 0L/bridge program participation.

### 0L/Bridge Program Participation

Programs often known as 0L or bridge programs provide incoming law students with an opportunity to learn about the law school experience, test drive the skills they will be using in the first year, and preview doctrinal courses to ease the transition into law school. Almost one-quarter (23%) of 2023 1L respondents indicated they participated in some kind of 0L/bridge program to prepare them for 1L success after enrolling in law school. Who participated in these programs varied by who they are, how they performed on the LSAT, and where they attend law school.

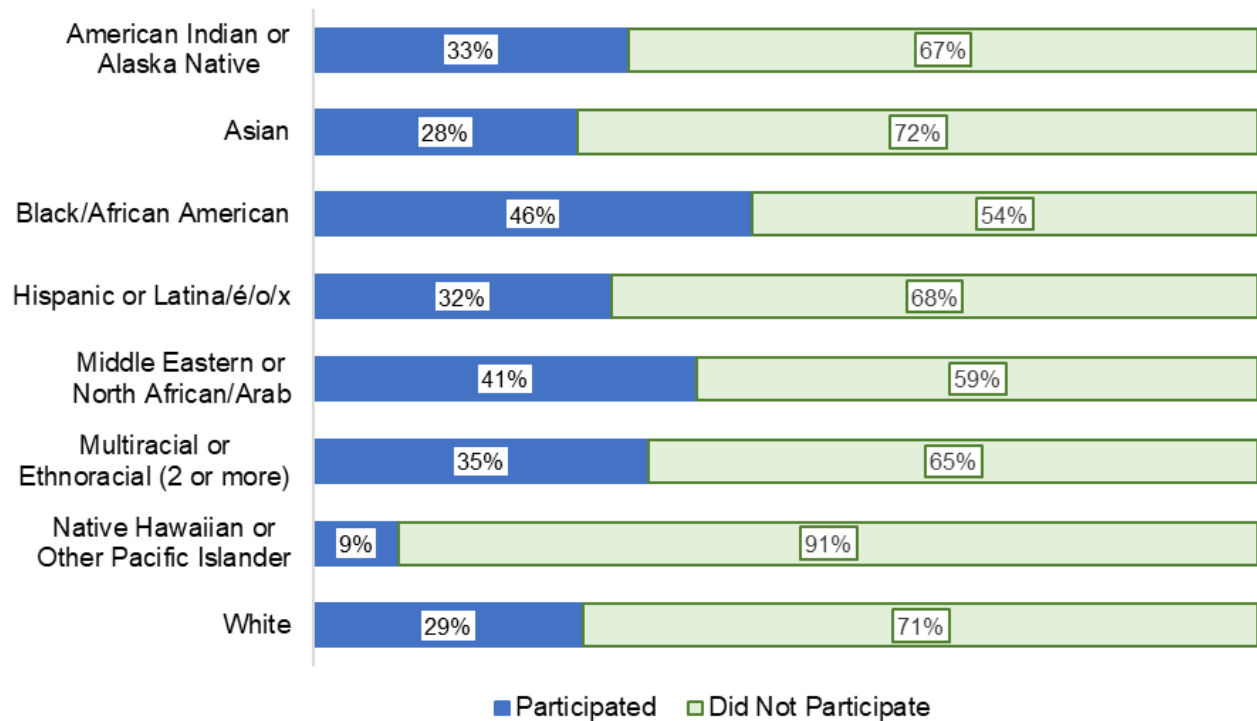
Racially and ethnically minoritized 1Ls had the highest 0L/bridge program participation rates among survey respondents. Specifically, more Black/African American (46%) and Middle Eastern or North African/Arab (40%) 1Ls participated in this type of programming compared to 1Ls of all other races and ethnicities (Figure 40). There were no significant differences for rates of participation in 0L/bridge programs by gender identity or sexual orientation.

---

<sup>37</sup> Robbins, A. (2020). Preventing attrition: Critical interventions to close the racial gap in non-transfer attrition. *Widener L. Rev.*, 26, 143.

<sup>38</sup> Hodapp, T., & Woodle, K. S. (2017). A bridge between undergraduate and doctoral degrees. *Physics Today*, 70(2), 50-56.

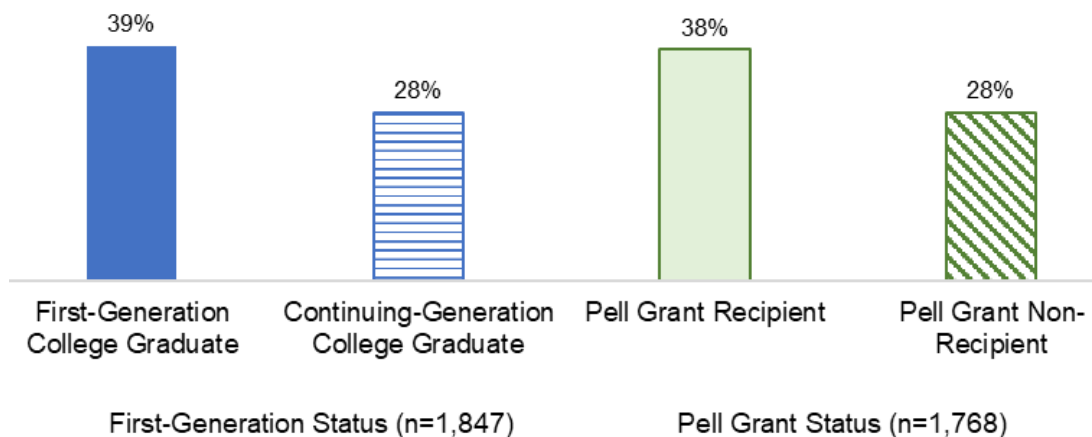
**Figure 40: Who Participated in 0L/Bridge Programs by Race and Ethnicity (n=1,378)**



Source: 2023 LSAC Matriculant Survey. Due to the low number of American Indian or Alaska Native, Middle Eastern or North African/Arab, and Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander respondents, data should not be used to make strong generalizations about the entire population based on the small sample size.

Both first-generation college graduates and Pell Grant recipients participated in 0L/bridge programs at rates about 30% higher than their peers, with 39% of first-generation college graduates participating compared to only 28% of their continuing-generation peers (Figure 41). Similarly, 38% of Pell Grant recipients took part in 0L/bridge programs, significantly more than the 28% of non-recipients. Considering that a larger segment of both first-generation college graduates and Pell Grant recipients were from racially and ethnically marginalized groups, and rates of participation are higher among these groups, it is not surprising that these trends coincide.

**Figure 41: Who Participated in 0L/Bridge Programs by First-Generation and Pell Grant Status**

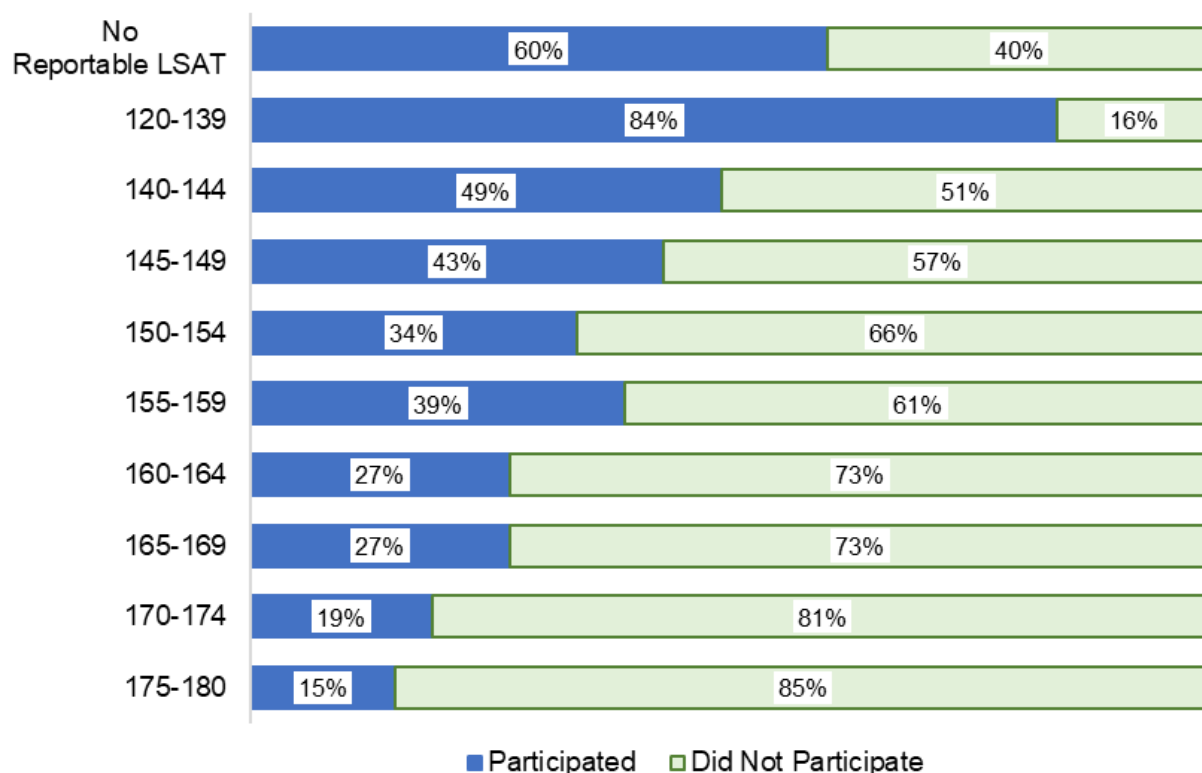


Source: 2023 LSAC Matriculant Survey

Participation rates also varied significantly by program type, LSAT score, and law school selectivity. Significantly more 1Ls enrolled in part-time programs reported participating in 0L/bridge programs compared to 1Ls enrolled in full-time programs (40% and 29%, respectively). This may be related to the fact that part-time students tend to also be working while attending school and are more likely to be older than full-time students so may have been out of school longer. 0L/bridge programs are a way for these students to prepare for law school specifically while reorienting themselves to being in school in general.

1L respondents reveal that they are self-aware and help seeking, using tools, like the LSAT, to help them prepare for 1L success. As LSAT scores decreased, 0L/bridge program participation rates increased. 84% of 1Ls who scored between 120 and 139, almost half of 1Ls who scored between 140 and 144, more than 40% of 1Ls who scored between 145 and 149, and more than 1 in 3 1Ls who scored between 150 and 154 participated in 0L/bridge programs, while less than 1 in 5 scoring 170 or above participated in these programs (Figure 42).

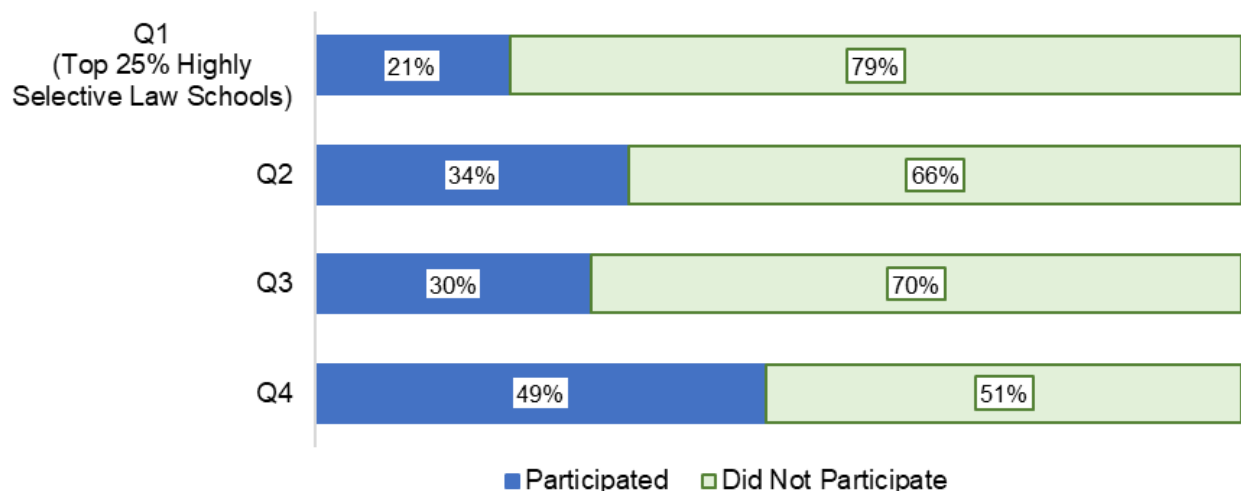
**Figure 42: Who Participated in 0L/Bridge Programs by LSAT Score Band (n=1,481)**



Source: 2023 LSAC Matriculant Survey

0L/bridge program participation also varied by law school selectivity. Those who attended highly selective law schools (Q1) had the lowest participation rates compared to their peers at other schools (Figure 43). Specifically, 1Ls at schools in the fourth selectivity quartile (Q4) had a 0L/bridge program participation rate more than double that of their peers at the top 25% highly selective law schools (Q1). Nonetheless, even at highly selective law schools, more than 1 in 5 1Ls reported participating in a 0L/bridge program before starting law school. Across the board, 1Ls in the 2023 class demonstrated being help seekers regardless of where they enrolled. Students are proactively seeking ways to transition into their first year of law school.

**Figure 43: Who Participated in 0L/Bridge Programs by Law School Selectivity (n=1,480)**



Source: 2023 LSAC Matriculant Survey. Using LSAC data, law schools are each assigned a selectivity index based on each school’s 2023 admission rate, median LSAT of admitted students, and median UGPA of admitted students. The top 25% highly selective law schools are in the first quartile (Q1), and they are the first 49 law schools with the highest index score. Refer to the [“Enrollments by Law School Selectivity”](#) section in this report to learn more.

Taken together, these trends reveal that 0L/bridge programs play a role in preparing incoming 1Ls, especially students with less access to resources and opportunities. The variation by LSAT score and school selectivity reveal that students are aware of their needs and are actively seeking help to transition into the first year of law school. This time is critical given that 1L academic performance is strongly predictive of bar passage. Therefore, these insights are useful for all stakeholders investing in opportunities to develop and cultivate the growth of incoming law students.

## Conclusion and Advancing Mission

The 2023 1L class was the last law class largely admitted before the June 2023 *Students for Fair Admissions, Inc. v. Harvard* decision. It was the most racially and ethnically diverse class in history, in addition to being the most diverse based on gender identity and sexual orientation. However, not all law schools and law school programs experienced this kind of diverse representation in their classrooms. Understanding where diversity is concentrated has implications for job placement outcomes, in particular for larger law firms, clerkships, and other pathways to leadership in the legal profession.

The 2023 LSAC Matriculant Survey provides a snapshot of how and why people enrolled in the law school they did. The insights identified can inform how prelaw stakeholders and law schools reflect and build on their recruitment strategies in future admission cycles. Overall, deciding where to go to law school is a multidimensional process during which accepted law applicants must weigh numerous factors while they take in various sources of advice. Cost, law school reputations, and graduation rates



were the overall leading factors that informed 1Ls' enrollment decisions. And when asked what are the most important factors they would advise current candidates to consider when deciding where to go to law school compared to when they made their decision, today the 2023 1L respondents reported at even higher rates that cost was the most important factor, with law school reputation a more distant second factor. Experiencing law school changes how 1Ls view and weigh the factors in their decisions. This insight implies that 1Ls learned there is more to the law school experience than reputation and rankings.

Supporting admitted applicants to make an informed decision as to where to enroll requires a collective effort across the community. We need to provide opportunities for prospective law students to learn about what schools offer, to reflect on what matters the most to them, and to expand the scope of their decision-making to consider all their academic, professional, and personal needs in the journey through law school and beyond. LSAC will continue to collaborate and collect data to illuminate how 1Ls make their enrollment decisions, in addition to other snapshots along the prelaw through practice journey to share with the legal community.

## Data Sources and Methodology

This report relies on two data sources: first, a dataset consisting of data for all first-year law students who enrolled in 196 U.S. law schools during the 2023-2024 academic calendar; second, the 2023 LSAC Matriculant Survey, conducted from October through November 2023. The purpose of this survey was to understand who the 2023 first-year law students were and what factors they considered to determine which law school(s) would meet their academic, professional, and personal needs. Almost 2,000 1Ls participated in the 2023 Matriculant Survey; post-stratification survey weights were added to more accurately reflect the demographic distribution of the 2023 matriculant population. Weights were constructed by raking<sup>39</sup> on demographic variables that exceeded 5% difference from the population to ensure the sample from the matriculant survey is representative of the 2023 first-year class.

---

<sup>39</sup> Raking is a weighting method. Andrew Mercer, A. L. and C. K. (2018, January 26). *How different weighting methods work*. Pew Research Center. <https://www.pewresearch.org/methods/2018/01/26/how-different-weighting-methods-work/>