

LSAC's Knowledge Report

The 2024 1L Class: Persistence in the First Year of Law School



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Executive Summary

Law school attrition, or the rate at which students leave law school before completing their degree, can be a signal for broader issues — such as academic pressures, low feelings of belonging or acceptance, physical and/or mental health issues, and financial pressures — students are facing. According to [American Bar Association \(ABA\) 509 Disclosure data](#), attrition rates are highest during the first year of law school. In addition to the impact on individual students, the disparities in attrition rates across different groups can have a significant impact on the composition of each graduating law school class and ultimately the composition of the legal profession.

Consequently, it is critical for the future composition of the profession to understand how often students think about leaving law school, what triggers students' thoughts of leaving, what ultimately drives them to leave, and, conversely, what factors encourage students to persist through the first year. LSAC's mission is to advance law and justice by promoting access, equity, and fairness in law school admission and supporting students' journey from prelaw through practice. To this end, this research report aims to inform schools on how they can support students through their first year of law school.

Based on LSAC's 2024-2025 Spring Matriculant survey, conducted in March 2025 among 1Ls who matriculated in fall 2024, this report examines:

1. How 1Ls experience their first year of law school, particularly their feelings of belonging or acceptance
2. How often 1Ls think about leaving law school in their first year
3. Why 1Ls persist in law school
4. What support and guidance can help 1Ls overcome thoughts of leaving school and complete their legal education.

This report provides important insights that law schools and stakeholders can use to support student retention and development in law school and beyond. Overall, the 2024 Spring Matriculant Survey data reveals that:

- Many 1Ls feel like they belong, they feel accepted, and they feel comfortable at their law school. However, students from marginalized¹ groups report lower rates of belonging and higher rates of being underestimated and not feeling valued compared to their peers.
 - About 80% of 1Ls report they feel like they belong, they feel accepted, and they feel comfortable at their law school.

¹ 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.

- However, compared to their peers, racially and ethnically minoritized students, gender diverse students,² Pell grant recipients, first-generation college graduates,³ and racially and ethnically minoritized women (women of color) report significantly lower rates of belonging and higher rates of belonging uncertainty,⁴ not feeling valued, and feeling that others underestimate them.
- Belonging matters in law school retention. Sense of belonging for first-year students who thought about leaving law school is nearly 15% lower than sense of belonging for students who never thought about leaving law school.
 - First-year law students who thought about leaving law school report belonging uncertainty, wavering between feeling like they belong and do not belong, at a rate 24% higher than their peers who report never thinking about leaving law school.
- More than two out of five 1Ls thought about leaving law school at least a few times during their first year.
 - 1Ls from marginalized backgrounds were significantly more likely to consider leaving law school during their first year than more privileged peers.
 - First-generation college graduates and Pell Grant recipients thought about leaving law school at a rate 21% higher than their peers who are continuing generation graduates and Pell Grant non-recipients.
 - Women of color thought about leaving law school at a rate 49% (or 17 percentage points) higher than racially and ethnically minoritized men (men of color), 27% (or 11 percentage points) higher than white men, and 11% (or 6 percentage points) higher than white women.
- The top reasons triggering student's thoughts of leaving law school are (1) academic pressures, (2) physical and/or mental health, and (3) financial pressures. It is critical to note that these top reasons can and are often cumulative and overlapping, meaning that students can experience them simultaneously, and pressures can accentuate other stressors.
- The top time periods that trigger students' thoughts of leaving during their first year are (1) during their first finals, (2) within the first six weeks of starting law school, and (3) after receiving their first semester grades.

² Gender diverse students include anyone who identifies as nonbinary, transgender, and/or another gender identity other than cisgender man or woman. In this report, students categorized as women or men self-reported being cisgender.

³ 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.

⁴ Wavering between feeling like they belong and do not belong.

- The top three motivators for persisting in law school include (1) support networks outside of law school, (2) commitments made to oneself, and (3) thinking about the privilege of legal education.
- 1Ls identified “achieving a healthy work-life balance”, “managing my time in law school”, and “receiving more financial aid” as their top guidance and support they need as they continue law school.

Building on established legal education research,⁵ this report finds that students from marginalized and under-resourced communities more often experience belonging uncertainty in their first year of law school and report thinking about leaving law school at higher rates than their peers. Thoughts of leaving are triggered by academic pressures, physical or mental health, and financial pressures during moments of high stress in the first year. Despite higher rates of departure in the first year, many first-year law students persist by anchoring in their support systems and their “why.”⁶

The environment, curriculum, culture, and stress in law school impact students’ experiences beyond learning. Law school impacts the way students grow in their abilities, form lasting relationships, and are socialized into the legal profession. Retention in law school requires investment in students in and outside of the classroom.⁷ Such an investment must center on optimizing the student experience and addressing barriers. The insights from this report can help schools and the legal community create resources and experiences that effectively support learning centered on the student, cultivating their persistence through law school.

Introduction

Law school attrition can significantly shape the composition of the legal profession by disproportionately filtering out students from underrepresented or disadvantaged backgrounds, ultimately narrowing the diversity of perspectives and experiences within the field. With students leaving law school at the highest rate during the first year,⁸ it is critical for the future composition of the profession to understand how often students think about leaving law school, what triggers students’ thoughts of leaving, and why they persist through the first year. In support of LSAC’s mission to advance law and justice by promoting access, equity, and fairness in law school admission and supporting the learning journey from prelaw through practice, this first-of-its-kind report focused on

⁵ Quintanilla, V. (2019, January 25). A LSSSE collaboration on the role of belonging in law school experience and performance. Indiana University Center for Postsecondary Research. <https://lssse.indiana.edu/blog/role-of-belonging-in-law-school-experience-and-performance/>

⁶ Check out [LSAC’s Knowledge Report: The 2024 1L Profile](#) to learn more about law students’ “why” and their motivations for attending law school.

⁷ Deo, M. E. (2024). Building Belonging. *Denv. L. Rev.*, 102, 771.

⁸ Refer to the [ABA 509 Disclosure data](#).

persistence in legal education provides insights to help support first-year students through what is often the most challenging transitional year of law school.

Based on the Spring 2025 LSAC Matriculant Survey, almost 2,000 first-year law students (1Ls), report that thinking about leaving law school in the first year is common. Results from the Matriculant Survey show students from marginalized and under-resourced communities —in particular first-generation college graduates, Pell Grant recipients, gender diverse students, and racially and ethnically minoritized women (women of color) — more often experience belonging uncertainty in their first year of law school and report thinking about leaving law school at higher rates than their peers. These findings are consistent with existing research in both higher education and legal education.⁹ Thoughts of leaving are triggered by academic pressures, physical or mental health, and financial pressures during moments of high stress in the first year. Despite higher rates of departure in the first year, many first-year law students persist, anchoring in their support systems and the “why” they have for being in law school.¹⁰

For people on the prelaw to practice journey, a law degree is a vehicle through which they can find a promising, long-term, stable career doing meaningful work and helping their communities.¹¹ The first year of law school can be challenging for law students, springing thoughts of doubts about their career trajectory. However, schools and other stakeholders can play a pivotal role in law school retention. Sense of belonging is predictive of academic performance and educational satisfaction in legal education, and students’ relationships with faculty, staff, and their peers play a critical role in how students experience law school and develop a strong sense of belonging.¹²

The findings in this report amplify and draw attention to current students’ voices about their needs and concerns. Given recent changes in federal financing options for law students, the persistent concern about financing legal education is a pressure valve that may negatively impact the future of the profession if current and future students can no longer afford to attend law school.¹³ LSAC, along with others in the legal community, are dedicated to increasing access to legal education and the profession in the long term, and understanding how to improve retention in law school is imperative to this mission.

⁹ Bodamer, E. (2020). Do I belong here? Examining perceived experiences of bias, stereotype concerns, and sense of belonging in U.S. law schools. *Journal of Legal Education*, 69(2), 455-490. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/27073498>; Deo, M. E. (2020). *Unequal profession: Race and gender in legal academia*. Stanford University Press.

¹⁰ Check out [LSAC's Knowledge Report: The 2024 1L Profile](#) to learn more about law students’ “why” and their motivations for attending law school.

¹¹ Refer to other LSAC applied research reports on [LSAC.org](https://lsac.org).

¹² Quintanilla, V. (2019, January 25). A LSSSE collaboration on the role of belonging in law school experience and performance. Indiana University Center for Postsecondary Research. <https://lssse.indiana.edu/blog/role-of-belonging-in-law-school-experience-and-performance/>

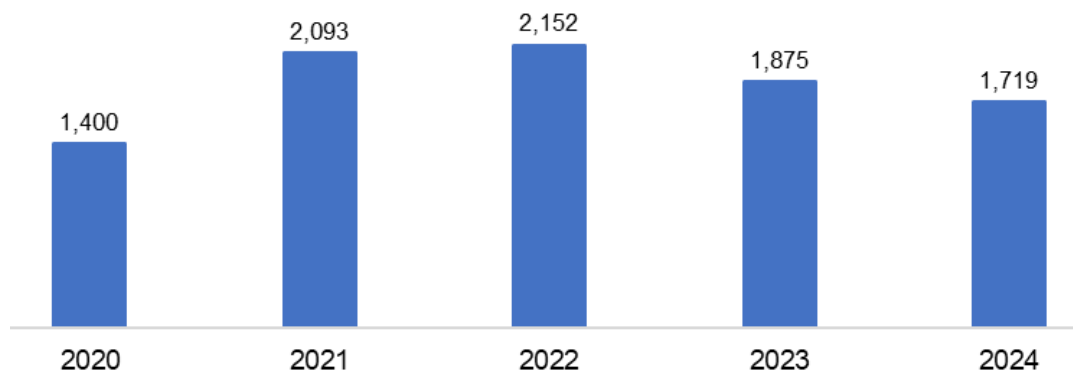
¹³ Refer to LSAC’s Knowledge report, Funding the First Year: How 2024 1Ls Paid for Law School. [LSAC's Knowledge Report: Funding the First Year: How 2024 1Ls Paid For Law School](#)

ABA 509 Data: Law School Attrition

According to [ABA 509 Disclosure data](#) reported by law schools, roughly 5% of law students leave law school during their first year. Over the past five years, the lowest attrition rate was slightly below 4% for 2019-2020, and the highest rate was about 5.5% for 2020-2021 and 2021-2022. (Figure 1).

Law school attrition is classified in two categories: academic or other.¹⁴ While the statistics vary from year to year, academic attrition usually comprises about 55-60% of overall first-year attrition. Among the students leaving in the first year, Black and Hispanic or Latina/é/o/x students are overrepresented in academic attrition comprising about 40% of students leaving in their first year (Table 1), compared to being less than 20% of all first-year law students. More specifically, women of color are disproportionately represented in academic attrition rates; for example, in 2024, women of color represented about a quarter of first-year law students but more than a third of students who left school for academic reasons (34%; Table 2). The ABA data underscores the critical need to better understand how and why students from marginalized communities are disproportionately represented in the students who leave in the first year of law school.

Figure 1: 2020-2024 Total First-Year Attrition



Source: ABA 509 Disclosures. Each year refers to the previous academic year. For example, 2020 data is for October 15, 2019, to October 15, 2020.

¹⁴ According to the ABA, academic attrition "refers to those students who discontinued their education at a time when they were not in good academic standing" and "it includes both students who have been dismissed because they did not satisfy the minimum standards of progress established by the Law School in order to continue their legal studies at that school, and students who discontinued their enrollment at the school at a time when their GPA was below that required for good academic standing as of the end of the first year". Other attrition refers to students who left the law school for reasons other than academic attrition.

Table 1: First-Year Attrition by Race and Ethnicity

Students	Academic Attrition					Other Attrition				
	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Total Number of Students Who Left	550	1129	1156	1109	1105	850	964	996	766	614
American Indian	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%
Asian	7%	5%	7%	6%	9%	5%	6%	7%	7%	9%
Black	17%	17%	20%	20%	19%	8%	10%	9%	9%	8%
Hispanic of Any Race	16%	20%	18%	24%	22%	11%	14%	13%	12%	11%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%
Two or More Races	8%	3%	5%	4%	4%	5%	4%	4%	4%	5%
White	45%	47%	43%	39%	40%	65%	59%	60%	61%	59%
Non-Resident	1%	2%	2%	2%	0%	1%	2%	2%	3%	0%
Unknown	5%	4%	3%	4%	5%	4%	5%	5%	4%	6%

Source: ABA 509 Disclosures. Each year refers to the previous academic year. For example, 2020 data is for October 15, 2019, to October 15, 2020.

Table 2: First-Year Attrition by Gender and Race and Ethnicity

Students	Academic Attrition					Other Attrition				
	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Total Number of Students Who Left	550	1129	1156	1109	1105	850	964	996	766	614
Women	51%	48%	53%	54%	56%	45%	44%	45%	49%	52%
Men	49%	51%	46%	45%	43%	55%	56%	54%	51%	47%
Another Gender Identity	0.4%	0.1%	0.3%	0.4%	0.3%	0.1%	0.1%	0.3%	0.1%	1%
Women from Racially and Ethnically Minoritized Groups	28%	25%	29%	33%	34%	14%	16%	17%	18%	21%
White Women	21%	21%	22%	19%	19%	29%	26%	26%	27%	29%
Men from Racially and Ethnically Minoritized Groups	21%	22%	23%	22%	20%	15%	18%	17%	14%	14%
White Men	24%	26%	21%	20%	21%	37%	34%	33%	34%	29%

Source: ABA 509 Disclosures. Each year refers to the previous academic year. For example, 2020 data is for October 15, 2019, to October 15, 2020. People who did not indicate race/ethnicity are not included in the table.

The decision to leave law school is not easy. The ABA data tells us part of the story. How students experience the learning environment in law school, the pressures they carry, and the support they can access are factors that impact their sense of belonging, academic performance, and retention.¹⁵ This report dives into how students experience the first year to provide concrete insights for schools to better support 1Ls, especially students facing barriers in a high-pressure environment.

Belonging in the First Year of Law School

The growing literature about belonging in legal education establishes that students' sense of belonging is predictive of academic performance and law school satisfaction.¹⁶ In March of their first year of law school, the majority of 1L respondents report feeling like they belong in law school (Figure 2). However, to capture the nuanced experience of belonging, the Spring 2025 LSAC Matriculant survey assessed belonging across seven elements:

1. I feel comfortable in law school.
2. I feel accepted in law school.
3. I feel like I can be myself in law school.
4. I feel like I belong in law school.
5. Sometimes I feel that I belong in law school, and sometimes I feel that I don't (belonging uncertainty).
6. I feel valued in law school.
7. People would be surprised if I am, or someone like me is, successful in law school.

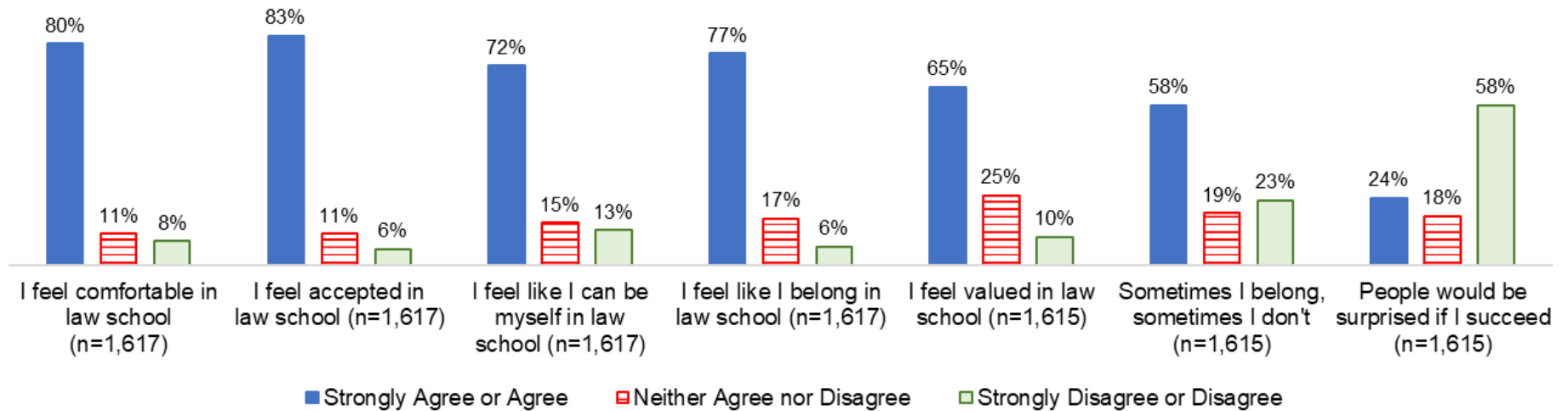
¹⁵ Quintanilla, V. D., & Erman, S. (2020). Mindsets in legal education. *Journal of Legal Education*, 69(2), 412-444.; Quintanilla, V. (2019, January 25). A LSSSE collaboration on the role of belonging in law school experience and performance. Indiana University Center for Postsecondary Research. <https://lsse.indiana.edu/blog/role-of-belonging-in-law-school-experience-and-performance/>

¹⁶ Bodamer, E. (2020). Do I belong here? Examining perceived experiences of bias, stereotype concerns, and sense of belonging in U.S. law schools. *Journal of Legal Education*, 69(2), 455-490. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/27073498>; Quintanilla, V. D., & Erman, S. (2020). Mindsets in legal education. *Journal of Legal Education*, 69(2), 412-444.; Deo, M. E., & Christensen, C. (2020). Diversity & exclusion: 2020 annual survey results. Indiana University Center for Postsecondary Research. <https://lsse.indiana.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Diversity-and-Exclusion-Final-9.29.20.pdf>; Moore, W. L. (2007). *Reproducing racism: White space, elite law schools, and racial inequality*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers; Pan, Y.-Y. D. (2017). *Incidental racialization: Performative assimilation in law school*. Temple University Press; Guinier, L., Fine, M., & Balin, J. (1997). *Becoming gentlemen: Women, law school, and institutional change*. Beacon Press; Quintanilla, V. (2019, January 25). A LSSSE collaboration on the role of belonging in law school experience and performance. Indiana University Center for Postsecondary Research. <https://lsse.indiana.edu/blog/role-of-belonging-in-law-school-experience-and-performance/>

As shown in Figure 2, the responses to these elements of belonging demonstrated some important distinctions. While most 1Ls feel comfortable, accepted, like they can be themselves, and like they belong in law school, fewer 1Ls feel valued in law school, more 1Ls experience belonging uncertainty in their first year, and more feel that others underestimate them or people like them (Figure 2). Specifically, 10% of 1Ls report that they do not feel valued at their school, 58% waver between feeling like they belong or do not belong throughout the school year, and a quarter of 1Ls agree that “people would be surprised if I am, or someone like me is, successful in law school.” As shown in Figures 3-9 below, these belonging patterns are predominately driven by how students from marginalized groups experience law school differently than their peers.¹⁷

¹⁷ Results presented throughout this report are exclusively statistically significant differences. Group-based differences that are not presented in the report are not statistically significant.

Figure 2: 1L Sense of Belonging in Law School



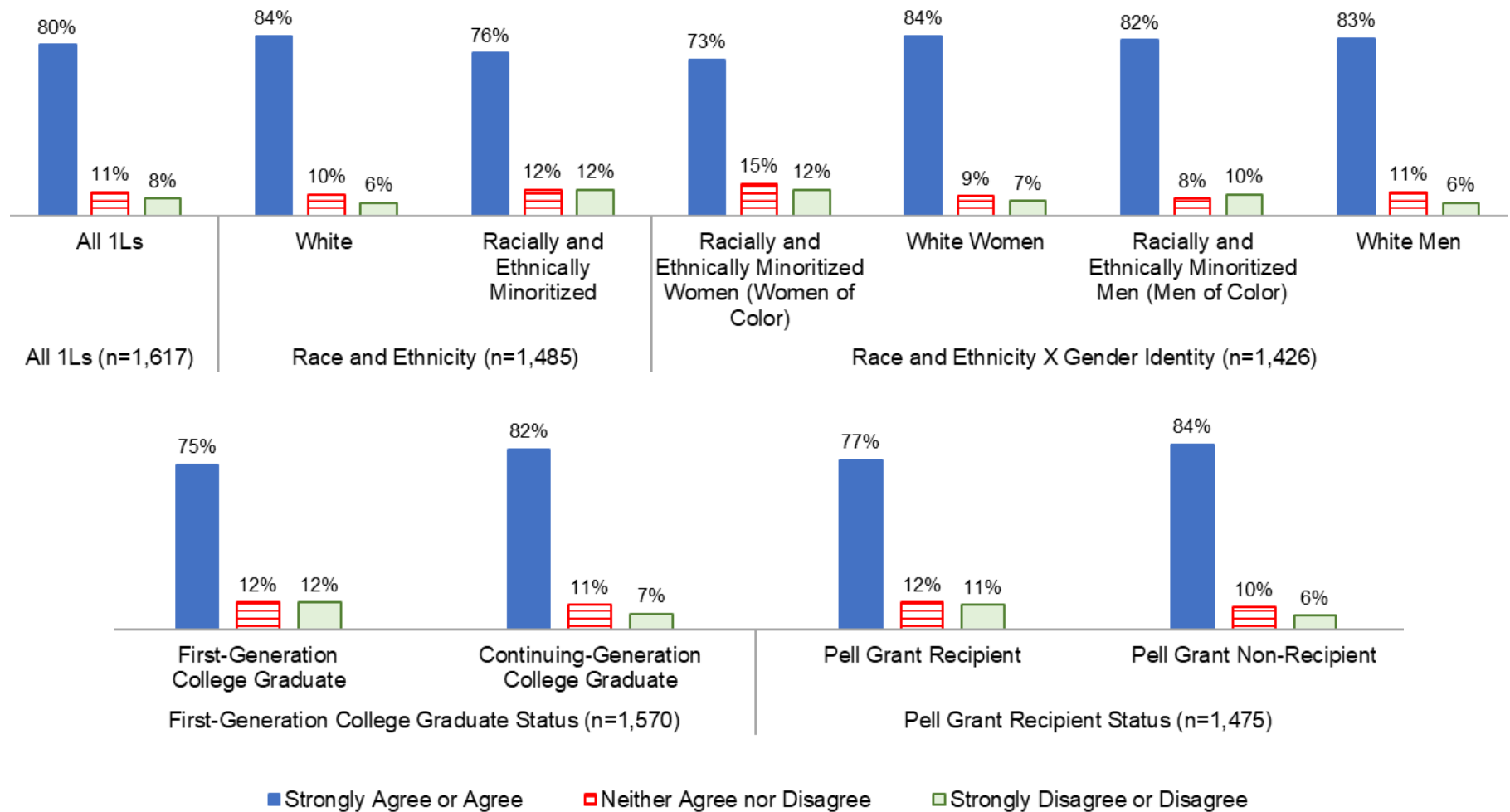
Source: 2024-2025 LSAC Spring Matriculant Survey

Feeling Comfortable in Law School

Law school is a professional and elite space, for which some students are the first in their families to navigate, learn in, and attend. While the majority of 1Ls report they feel comfortable in law school, several groups including racially and ethnically minoritized women (women of color), first-generation college graduates, and Pell Grant recipients report lower levels of feeling comfortable in law school than their peers (Figure 3). For example, racially and ethnically minoritized 1Ls report they feel comfortable in law school at a rate 9.5% (or 8 percentage points) lower compared to their white peers. Women of color report they feel comfortable in law school at a rate 9% (or 7 percentage points) lower than all 1Ls and 13% (or 11 percentage points) lower compared to their white women peers. Likewise, first-generation college graduates report feeling comfortable in law school at a rate 9% (or 7 percentage points) lower than their continuing generation college peers. Pell Grant recipients report feeling comfortable in law school at a rate 8% (or 7 percentage points) lower than peers who were not Pell Grant recipients. These trends echo prior research revealing how students from marginalized groups experience the law school environment.¹⁸

¹⁸ Reproducing racism: White space, elite law schools, and racial inequality. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers; Pan, Y.-Y. D. (2017). Incidental racialization: Performative assimilation in law school. Temple University Press; Guinier, L., Fine, M., & Balin, J. (1997). Becoming gentlemen: Women, law school, and institutional change. Beacon Press; Deo, M. E. (2020). Unequal profession: Race and gender in legal academia. Stanford University Press.

Figure 3: Feeling Comfortable in Law School

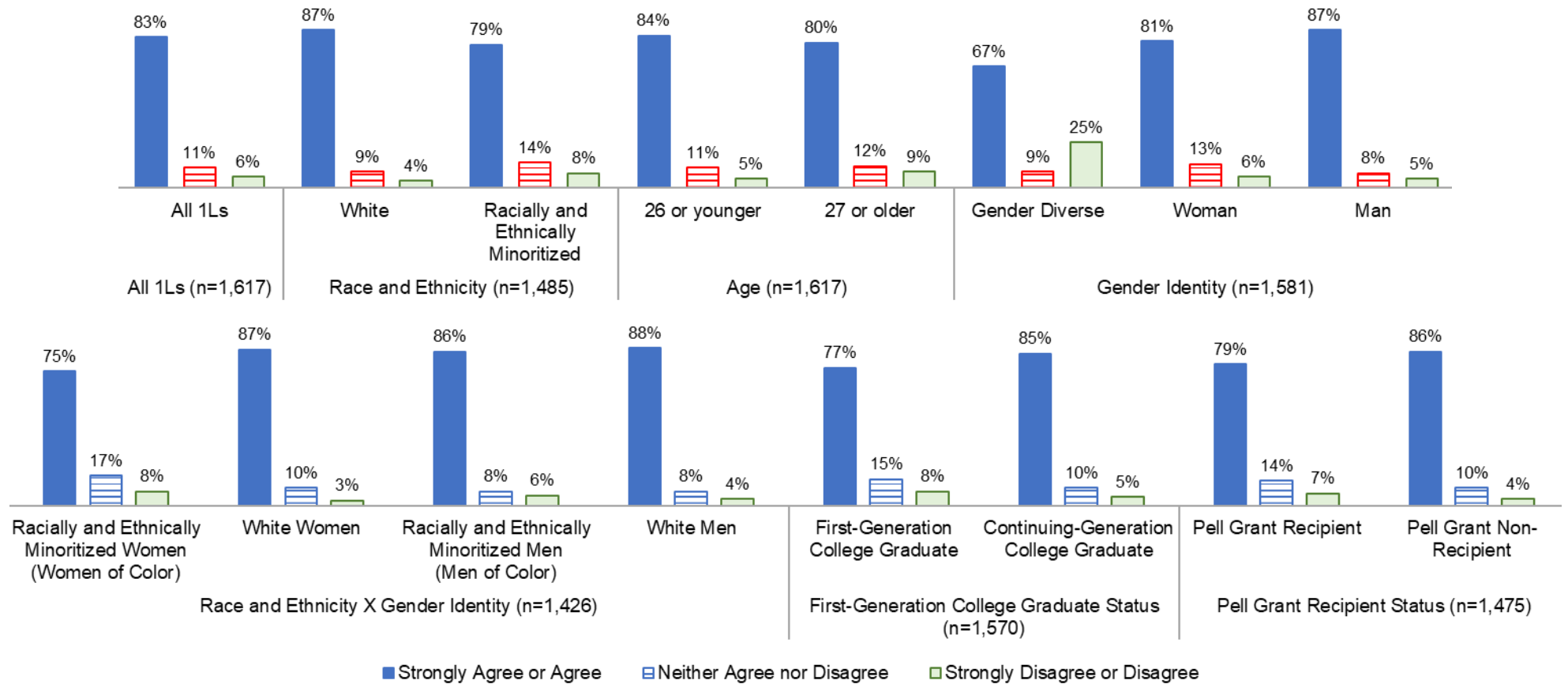


Source: 2024-2025 LSAC Spring Matriculant Survey

Feeling Accepted in Law School

Feeling accepted in law school varied significantly across multiple demographics. Racially and ethnically minoritized 1Ls report feeling accepted in law school at a rate 9% (or 8 percentage points) lower than their white peers, and older 1Ls report feeling accepted at a rate 5% (or 4 percentage points) lower than their younger peers (Figure 4). Strikingly, gender diverse 1Ls report feeling accepted at a rate 23% (or 20 percentage points) lower than men and 19% (or 16 percentage points) lower than all 1Ls (Figure 4). Women report feeling accepted in law school at a rate 7% (or 6 percentage points) lower than men in the first year. More specifically, racially and ethnically minoritized women (women of color) report feeling accepted at rate 10% (or 8 percentage points) lower than all 1Ls and 15% (or 13 percentage points) lower than white men in law school (Figure 4). First-generation college graduates report feeling accepted at a rate 9% (or 8 percentage points) lower than their continuing-generation college peers (Figure 4). Similarly, 1Ls who are Pell Grant recipients report feeling accepted in law school at a rate 8% (or 7 percentage points) lower than their peers who are not recipients (Figure 4).

Figure 4: Feeling Accepted in Law School

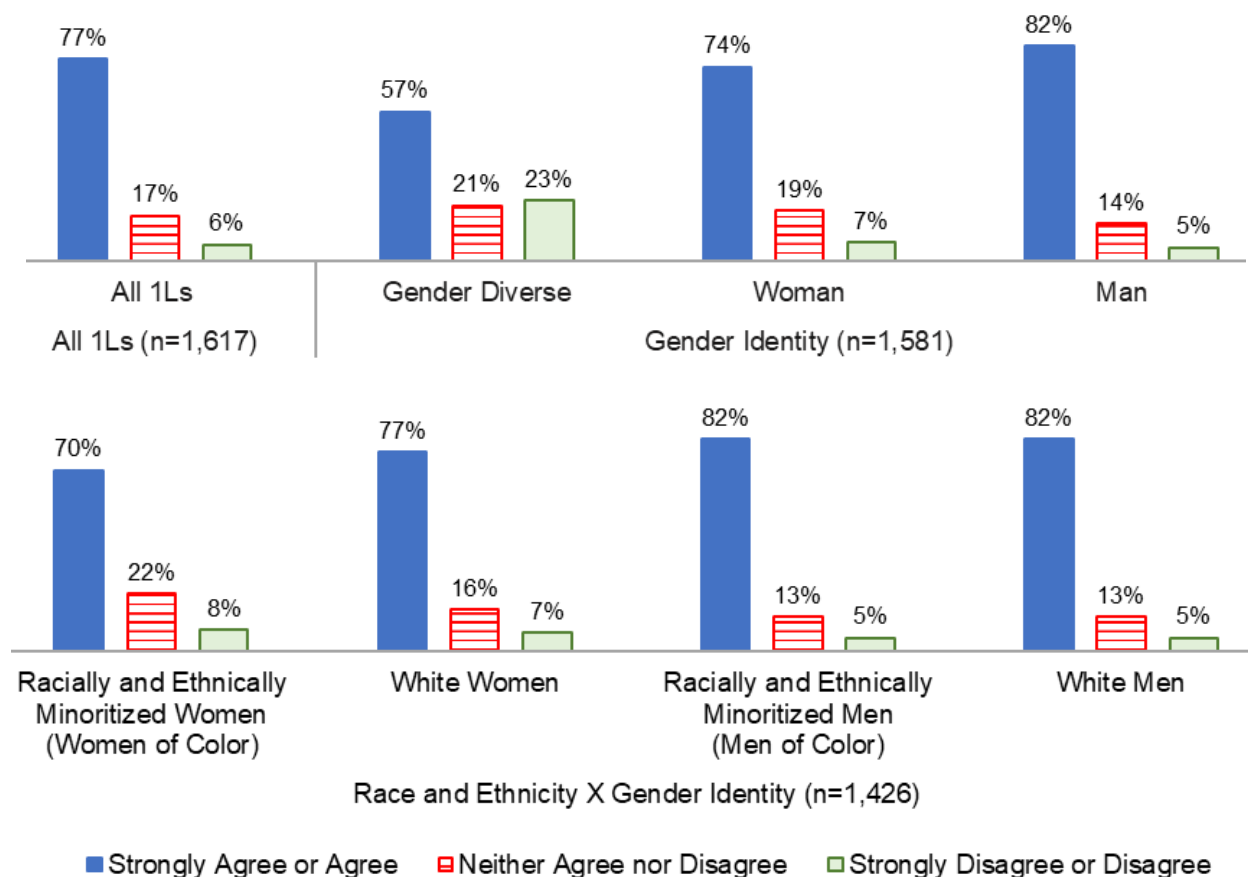


Source: 2024-2025 LSAC Spring Matriculant Survey

Feel Like They Belong in Law School

Overall, most 1Ls report feeling like they belong in law school; however, there are significant differences based on gender and at the intersection of race, ethnicity, and gender (Figure 5). As with other belonging measures, gender diverse 1Ls report they feel like they belong in law school at a rate 30% (or 25 percentage points) lower than men and 26% (or 20 percentage points) lower than all 1Ls (Figure 5). Women report feeling like they belong in law school at a rate 11% (or 8 percentage points) lower than men in the first year. These gender differences are driven by women of color, where racially and ethnically minoritized women (women of color) report they feel like they belong in law school at rate 9% (or 7 percentage points) lower than all 1Ls and white women, and 15% (or 12 percentage points) lower than all men in law school (Figure 5). These patterns echo the compounded marginalization experienced by women of color across various sectors, including law school.

Figure 5: Belonging in Law School



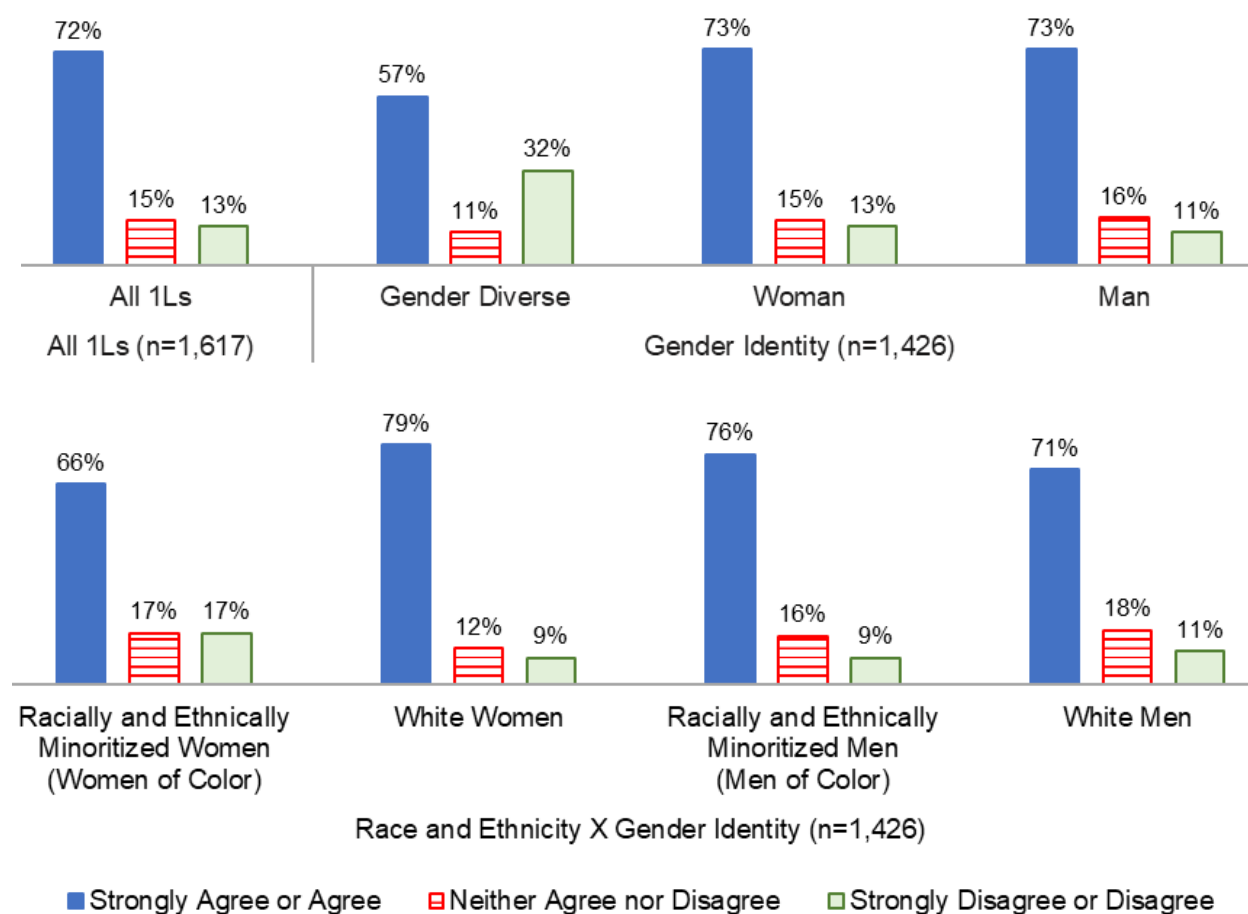
Source: 2024-2025 LSAC Spring Matriculant Survey

Feel They Can Be Themselves

As found with other measures of belonging, gender diverse 1Ls and women of color report lower rates that they feel they can be themselves at their law school (Figure 6). Gender diverse 1Ls report they feel like they can be themselves in law school at a rate 21% (or 15 percentage points) lower than men, women, and all 1Ls (Figure 11). This finding is consistent with other belonging measures, which are critical to note in a social climate where gender diverse students may not feel safe being themselves.

Additionally, women of color report they feel like they can be themselves in law school at rate 8% (or 6 percentage points) lower than all 1Ls, 13% (or 10 percentage points) lower than men of color, and 20% (or 13 percentage points) lower than white women in law school (Figure 6).

Figure 6: Feeling like 1Ls can be Themselves in Law School

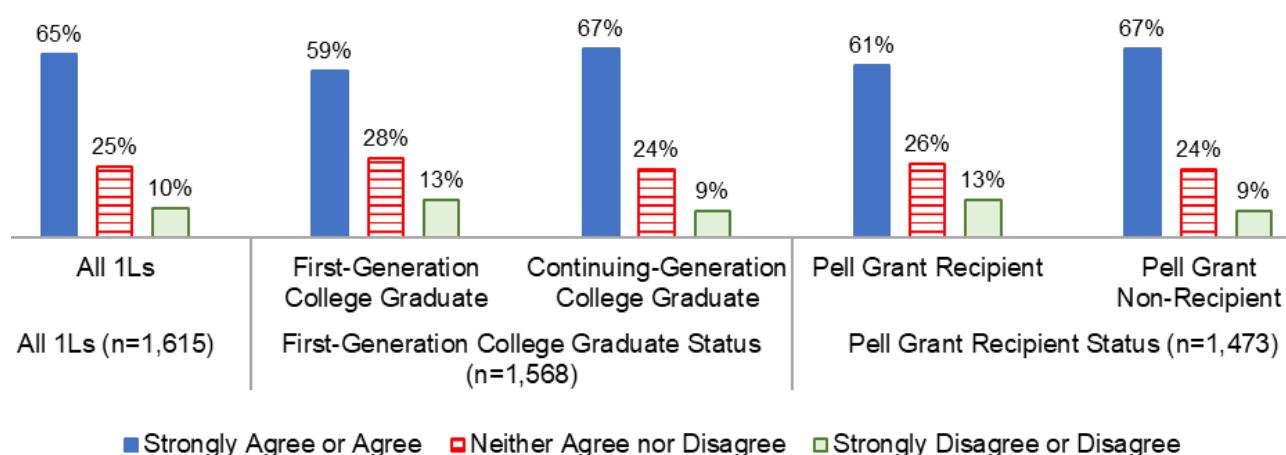


Source: 2024-2025 LSAC Spring Matriculant Survey.

Feeling Valued in Law School

Fewer 1Ls report that they feel valued in their law school, and this pattern is driven by students from under-resourced backgrounds. Specifically, first-generation college graduates and Pell Grant recipients report at significantly lower rates that they feel valued in law school compared to their peers (Figure 7). First-generation college graduates report feeling valued in law school at a rate 12% (or 8 percentage points) lower than their continuing generation college peers. Pell Grant recipients report feeling valued in law school at a rate 10% (or 7 percentage points) lower than peers who were not Pell Grant recipients.

Figure 7: Feeling Valued in Law School



Source: 2024-2025 LSAC Spring Matriculant Survey

Belonging Uncertainty in Law School

Research shows that students from marginalized groups may feel uncertain about whether they are perceived to belong in an educational environment, which can impact education outcomes.¹⁹ Overall, about three out of five 1Ls report belonging uncertainty, where students sometimes feel like they belong in law school and sometimes do not (Figure 8). Belonging uncertainty is significantly higher based on gender, sexual orientation, at the intersection of race and ethnicity and gender, and based on socioeconomic background (Figure 8).

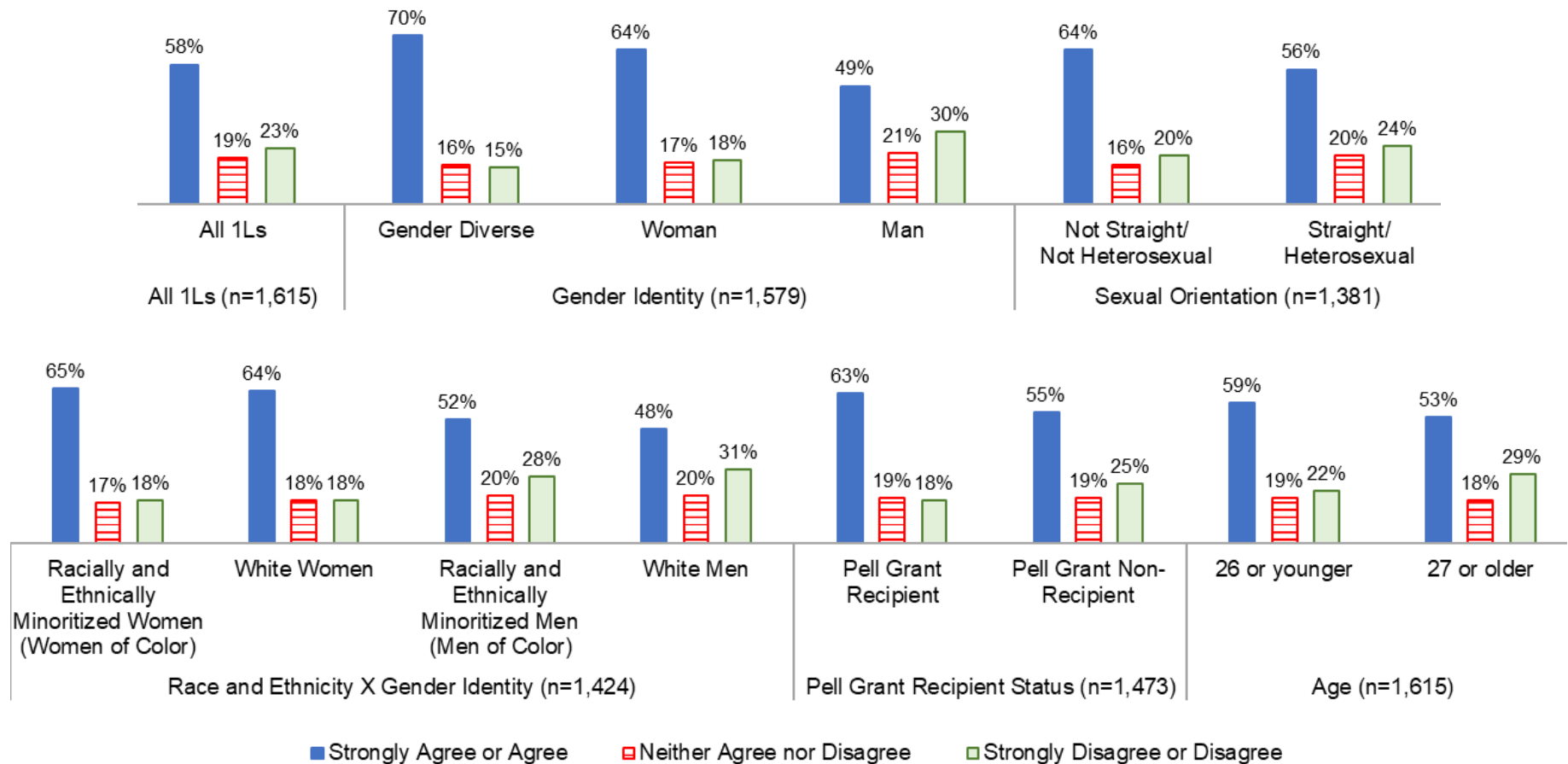
¹⁹ Murphy, M. C., & Zirkel, S. (2015). Race and belonging in school: How anticipated and experienced belonging affect choice, persistence, and performance. *Teachers College Record*, 117(12), 1-40. <https://marycmurphy.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/Race-and-belonging-in-school-How-anticipated-and-experienced-belonging-affect-choice-persistence-and-performance.pdf>

Gender diverse students report feeling uncertain about belonging in law school at a rate 21% (or 12 percentage points) higher than all 1Ls and significantly higher than men by 43% (or 21 percentage points; Figure 14). Similarly, LGBTQ+ students who are not straight/heterosexual report feeling uncertain about belonging in law school at a rate 10% (or 6 percentage points) higher than all 1Ls (Figure 8).

Women report feeling uncertain about belonging in law school at a rate 10% (or 6 percentage points) higher than all 1Ls (Figure 8), and this is consistent for white women and women of color. Strikingly, at the intersection of race and gender, both white women and women of color report feeling uncertain about belonging in law school at a rate 35% (or 16-17 percentage points) higher than white men (Figure 8).

First-year law students who are Pell Grant recipients report feeling uncertain about belonging in law school at a rate 15% (or 8 percentage points) higher than their peers who are not Pell Grant recipients (Figure 8). And younger 1Ls, aged 26 or younger, report feeling uncertain about belonging in law school at a rate 11% (or 6 percentage points) higher than their older peers (Figure 8).

Figure 8: Feeling Belonging Uncertainty



Source: 2024-2025 LSAC Spring Matriculant Survey

Feeling Others Underestimate Them

For the last belonging measure, almost a quarter of 1Ls perceive that others underestimate them or people like them, agreeing with the statement: “People would be surprised if I am, or someone like me is, successful in law school.”

This pattern is driven by how students from marginalized groups are experiencing law school, consistent with past research in higher education that shows students from racially and ethnically minoritized groups are stereotyped and often perceived negatively by others.²⁰ Specifically, the rate at which 1Ls report that others underestimate them or people like them significantly varies based on race, ethnicity, gender, at the intersection of race and gender, and based on socioeconomic background (Figure 9).

A third of racially and ethnically minoritized 1Ls agree that people would be surprised to see them succeed in law school, which is a rate 83% (or 15 percentage points) higher than their white peers and 38% higher than all 1Ls (Figure 9).

While there are no differences between men and women, gender diverse 1Ls agree that people would be surprised to see them succeed in law school at a rate almost 80% (or 19 percentage points) higher than their peers (Figure 9).

Gender differences arise for students at the intersection of race and gender. Both racially and ethnically minoritized men and women agree that people would be surprised to see them succeed in law school at a rate more than 70% higher than their white peers, men and women (Figure 9). In fact, racially and ethnically minoritized men agree at a rate more than 80% higher than white men and white women.

²⁰ Carter, P. L. (2005). *Keepin' it real: School success beyond Black and White*. Oxford University Press; Blair, I. V., & Banaji, M. R. (1996). Automatic and controlled processes in stereotype priming. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 70(6), 1142; Bonilla-Silva, E. (1997). Rethinking racism: Toward a structural interpretation. *American sociological review*, 465-480.; Fiske, S. T. (1998). Stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination. In D. T. Gilbert, S. T. Fiske, & G. Lindzey (Eds.), *The handbook of social psychology* (4th ed., pp. 357–411). McGraw-Hill; Murphy, M. C., Steele, C. M., & Gross, J. J. (2007). Signaling threat: How situational cues affect women in math, science, and engineering settings. *Psychological science*, 18(10), 879-885.; Steele, C. M. (1997). A threat in the air: How stereotypes shape intellectual identity and performance. *American psychologist*, 52(6), 613; Steele, C. M., & Aronson, J. (1995). Stereotype threat and the intellectual test performance of African Americans. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 69(5), 797; Steele, C. M., Spencer, S. J., & Aronson, J. (2002). Contending with group image: The psychology of stereotype and social identity threat. In *Advances in experimental social psychology* (Vol. 34, pp. 379-440). Academic Press.

Lastly, first-generation college graduates and Pell Grant recipients both agree that people would be surprised to see them succeed in law school at higher rates than their peers. First-generation college graduates agree that people would be surprised to see them succeed at almost double the rate of their continuing-generation college graduate peers (Figure 9). A third of Pell Grant recipients agree that people would be surprised to see them succeed in law school, which is a rate 57% (or 12 percentage points) higher than their peers who are not Pell Grant recipients (Figure 9).

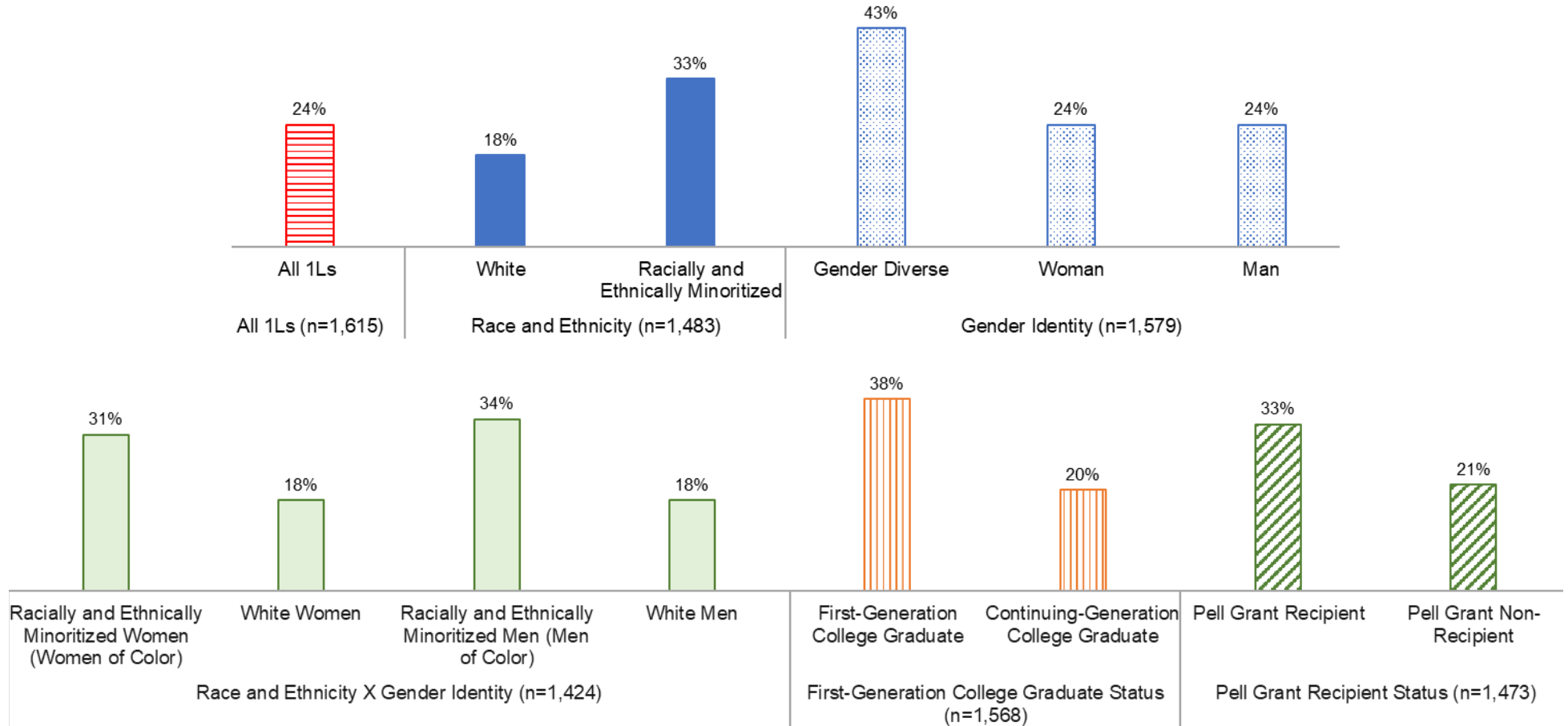
The 2024 first-year class knows they belong in law school, yet how individuals experience belonging varies based on their lived experiences and identities. Across all seven belonging measures, students from marginalized groups (based on race, ethnicity, gender, at the intersection of race and gender, and socioeconomic background) report lower rates of belonging, comfort, and acceptance, and higher rates of not feel valued, uncertainty, and awareness that others underestimate them. These patterns, also consistent with past research, are critical in echoing the importance of law schools' role in providing an environment conducive to learning for *all* students.²¹

These findings imply that the first-year law school experience for marginalized students may differ from that of their peers; many carry additional pressures tainted by negative stereotypes and presumptions about people like them in law school.²² Sense of belonging significantly impacts performance in law school; therefore, these findings are important to note in the context of law school retention, given that ABA 509 Disclosure data reveal that racially and ethnically minoritized students, especially women, are overrepresented in academic attrition in the first year of law school.

²¹ Deo, M. E. (2024). Building Belonging. *Denv. L. Rev.*, 102, 771.; Bodamer, E. (2020). Do I belong here? Examining perceived experiences of bias, stereotype concerns, and sense of belonging in U.S. law schools. *Journal of Legal Education*, 69(2), 455-490. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/27073498>; Deo, M. E. (2020). *Unequal profession: Race and gender in legal academia*. Stanford University Press.

²² These experiences vary from school to school, and preliminary analysis of the survey data reveal that marginalized students at highly selective law schools report experiencing lower rates of belonging than at other law schools. The various experiences at institutions echo what higher education research reveals. Boucher, K.L., & Murphy, M.C. (2017). Why so few?: The role of social identity and situational cues in understanding the underrepresentation of women in STEM fields. In Mavor, K.I., Platow, M., & Bizumic, B. (Eds.). *Self and Social Identity in Educational Contexts*. Psychology Press: New York, NY.

Figure 9: First-Year Law Students Who Agree That “People Would Be Surprised If I Am, or Someone Like Me is Successful in Law School”



Source: 2024-2025 LSAC Spring Matriculant Survey. These rates are based on who agree or strongly agree with the statement “People Would Be Surprised If I Am, or Someone Like Me is Successful in Law School.”

Thoughts About Leaving Law School

Belonging matters in law school retention. As explained earlier, belonging can be measured on a scale, and it can be measured by other factors, such as belonging uncertainty.²³ Some students may feel like they belong one day but then waver the next based on how they are experiencing law school. On average, 1Ls who thought about leaving law school reported a sense of belonging nearly 15% lower than 1Ls who never thought about leaving.²⁴ This relationship between sense of belonging and thoughts of leaving is critical to further understand law school attrition rates. Strikingly, 1Ls who thought about leaving law school experienced belonging uncertainty at a rate 24% higher than their peers who report never thinking about leaving. These insights reveal the critical role sense of belonging plays in not just academic performance,²⁵ but it also has implications for law school retention — law school academic attrition.

Overall, more than 40% of 1Ls thought about leaving law school during their first year. Who thought about leaving and the reasons and moments triggering these thoughts are critical insights for law school retention and belonging in legal education.

Who Thought About Leaving?

More than two out of five 1Ls thought about leaving law school during their first year, and 56% report never thinking about leaving law school (Figure 10). Almost a third of students who thought about leaving did so a few times a semester, not on a regular monthly, weekly, or daily basis (Figure 10). Similar to the law school belonging trends, 1Ls from marginalized groups report thinking about leaving law school at higher rates than their peers (Figure 11 and Figure 12). Specifically,²⁶

- Gender diverse 1Ls thought about leaving law school at a rate almost 30% (or 14 percentage points) higher than women and 63% (or 24 percentage points) higher than men.

²³ Brady, S. T., Muragishi, G. A., & Getu, R. (2025). Belonging uncertainty. *The Routledge Handbook of the Uncertain Self*, 303.; Quintanilla, V. D., & Erman, S. (2020). Mindsets in legal education. *Journal of Legal Education*, 69(2), 412-444.

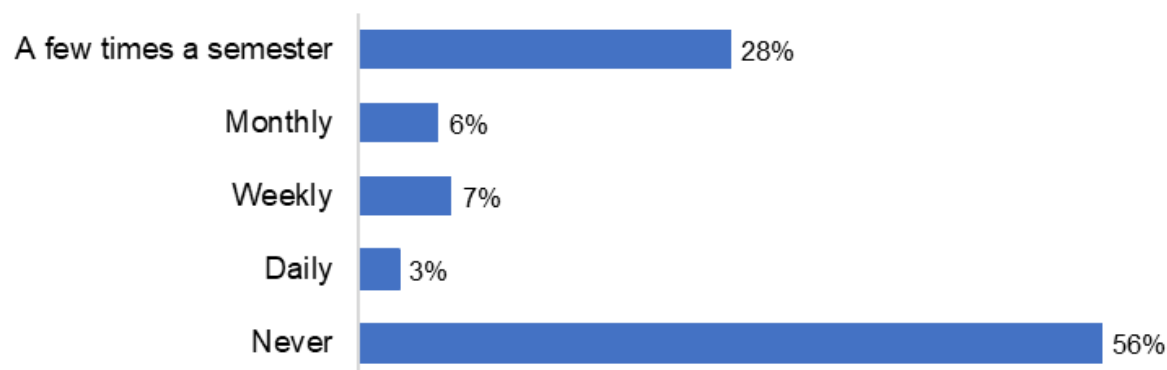
²⁴ To determine this pattern, a summative scale of sense of belonging was created using four measures — sense of belonging, feeling comfortable, feeling like they can be themselves, and feeling valued in law school. The higher the index value, the more the respondent indicated feeling like they belong in law school.

²⁵ Quintanilla, V. D., & Erman, S. (2020). Mindsets in legal education. *Journal of Legal Education*, 69(2), 412-444.; Quintanilla, V. (2019, January 25). A LSSSE collaboration on the role of belonging in law school experience and performance. Indiana University Center for Postsecondary Research. <https://lssse.indiana.edu/blog/role-of-belonging-in-law-school-experience-and-performance/>

²⁶ Results presented throughout this report are exclusively statistically significant differences. Group-based differences that are not presented in the report are not statistically significant.

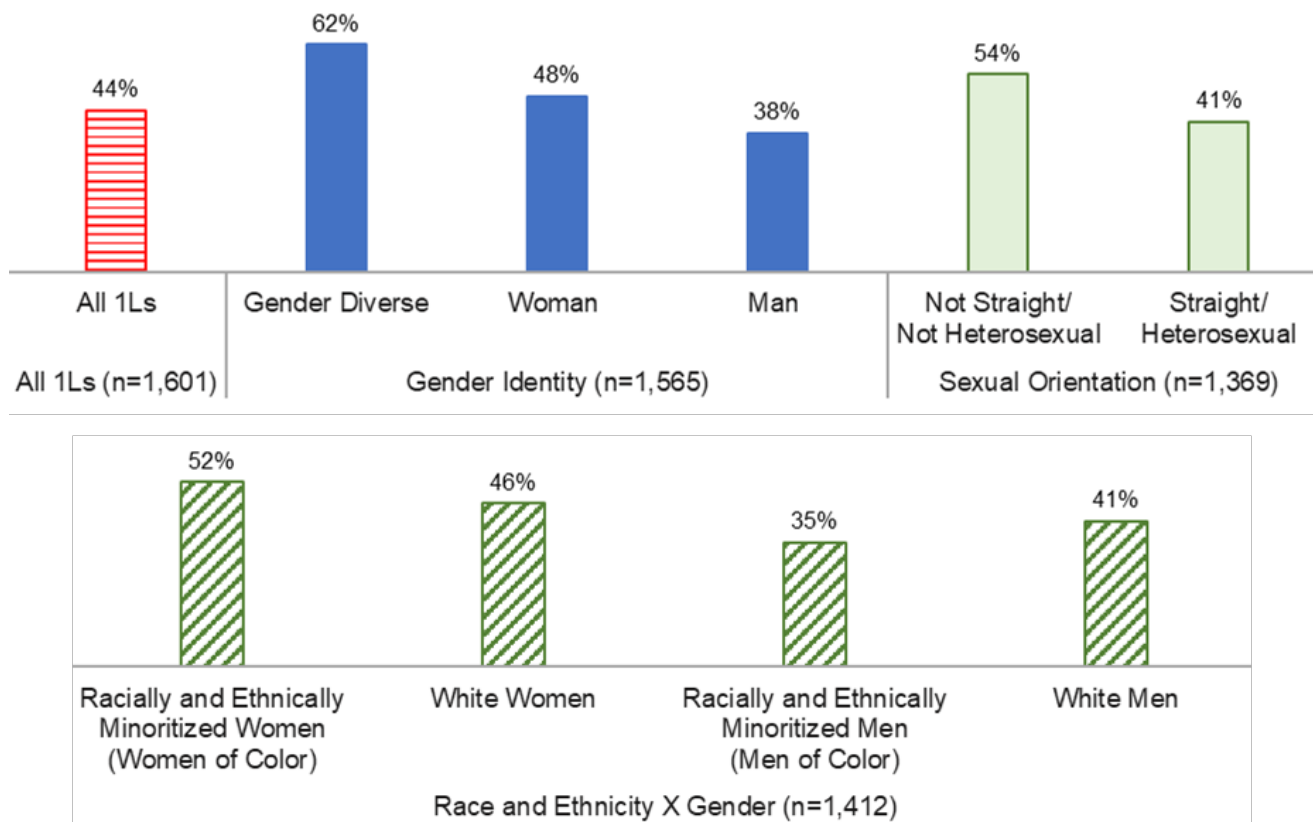
- LGBTQ+ 1Ls who are not straight/heterosexual thought about leaving law school at rates 32% (or 13 percentage points) higher than their straight/heterosexual peers.
- Women report thinking about leaving law school at a rate 26% (or 10 percentage points) higher than men.
- While women generally thought about leaving at higher rate than men, racially and ethnically minoritized women (women of color) drive this trend. Specifically:
 - Women of color report thinking about leaving law school at a rate 18% (or 8 percentage points) higher than all 1Ls.
 - This rate is 27% (or 11 percentage points) higher than white men and almost 50% (or 17 percentage points) higher than racially and ethnically minoritized men (men of color).
 - Women of color report thinking about leaving law school at a rate 13% (or 6 percentage points) higher than white women.
- First-generation college graduates and Pell Grant recipients report thinking about leaving law school at a rate more than 20% (10 to 11 percentage points) higher than their peers who are continuing-generation college graduates and Pell Grant non-recipients.
- Younger 1Ls thought about leaving law school at a rate 7% (or 3 percentage points) higher than their older peers.

Figure 10: Prevalence of Thoughts of Leaving During 1L Year (n=1,601)



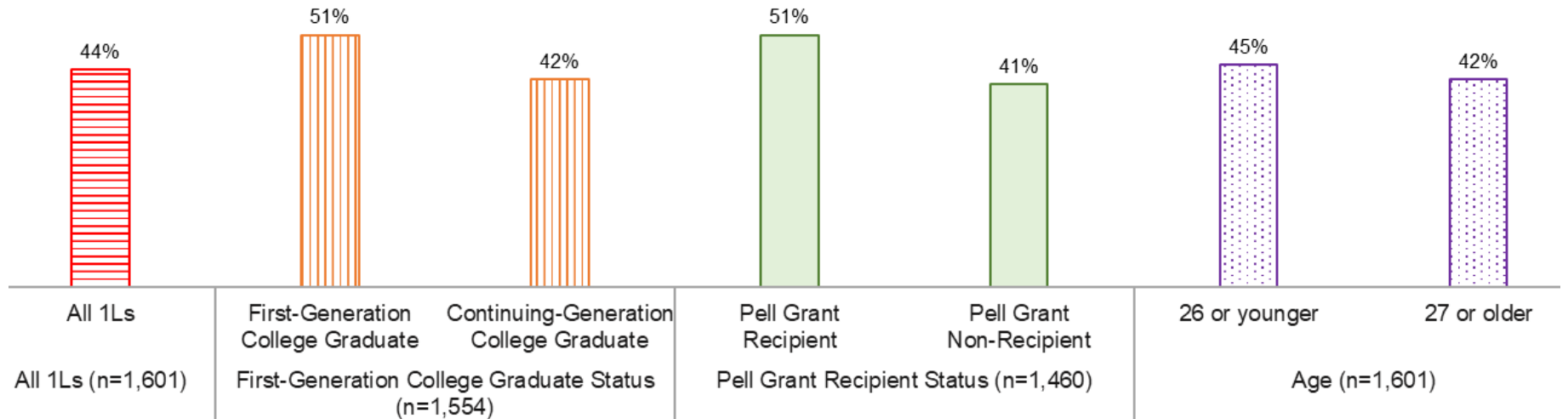
Source: 2024-2025 LSAC Spring Matriculant Survey

Figure 11: Percentage of 1Ls Who Thought About Leaving During the First Year of Law School by Gender Identity, Sexual Orientation, and Race and Ethnicity X Gender



Source: 2024-2025 LSAC Spring Matriculant Survey

Figure 12: Percentage of 1Ls Who Thought About Leaving During the First Year of Law School by Socioeconomic Status and Age



Source: 2024-2025 LSAC Spring Matriculant Survey

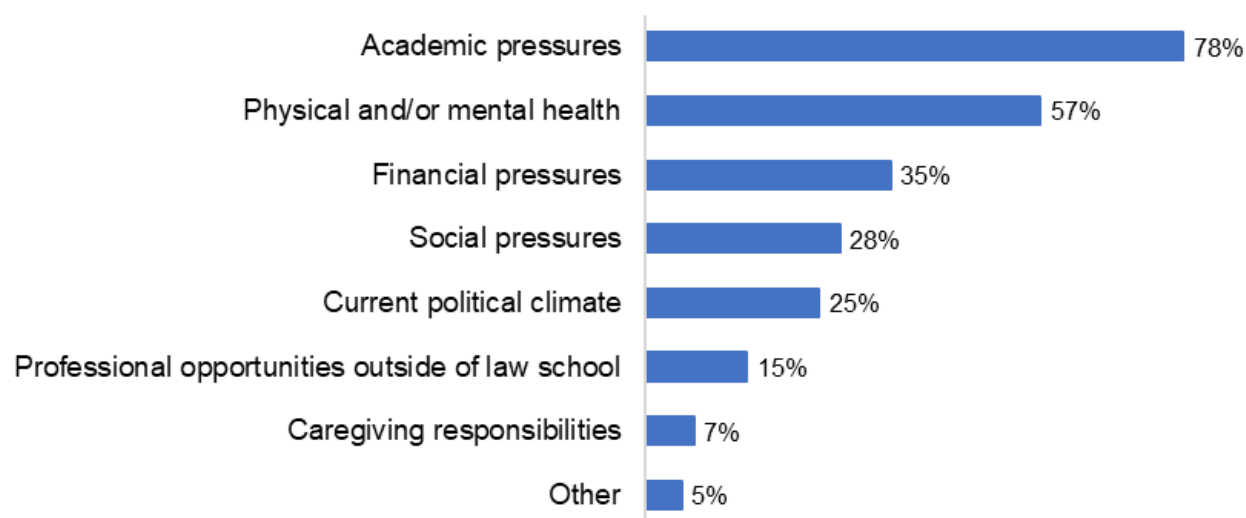
Overall, it is not uncommon for the 2024 1Ls to report they thought about leaving law school, but marginalized 1Ls, specifically gender diverse, women of color, and first-generation college graduates, report thinking of leaving at higher rates than all their peers. This is not surprising that students from marginalized groups also report lower rates of belonging in law school. Factors triggering these thoughts are primarily related to the pressures in a high-stress environment in law school.

Reasons Triggering Thoughts of Leaving Law School

Academic pressures, physical and/or mental health, and financial pressures are the three top reasons 1Ls report triggering their thoughts of leaving law school during their first year (Figure 13). It is critical to note that these top reasons can be and often are cumulative and overlapping, meaning that students can experience them simultaneously, and pressures can accentuate other stressors. Physical and/or mental health is a top reason triggering thoughts of leaving law school that is consistent across all 1Ls, while academic pressures and financial pressures are experienced differently across demographics (Figure 14 and Figure 15). Women, gender diverse students, first-generation college graduates, and Pell Grant recipients report that academic and financial pressures triggered their thoughts of leaving at rates higher than their peers (Figure 14 and Figure 15). Of the 1Ls who report their thoughts about leaving law school:

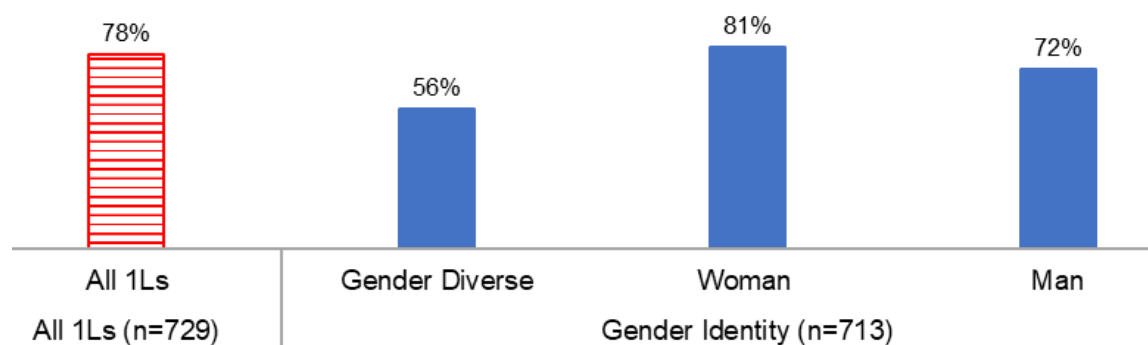
- More than 80% of women thought about leaving law school because of academic reasons, a rate 12.5% (or 9 percentage points) higher than men and 45% (or 25 percentage points) higher than their gender diverse peers (Figure 14).
- More than two in five first-generation college graduates (45%) thought about leaving law school because of financial pressures, a rate 41% (or 13 percentage points) higher than their continuing generation peers. Similarly, Pell Grant recipients thought about leaving law school because of financial pressures at a rate 34% (or 11 percentage points) higher than Pell Grant non-recipients (Figure 15).

Figure 13: Reasons for Thinking About Leaving Law School (n=729)



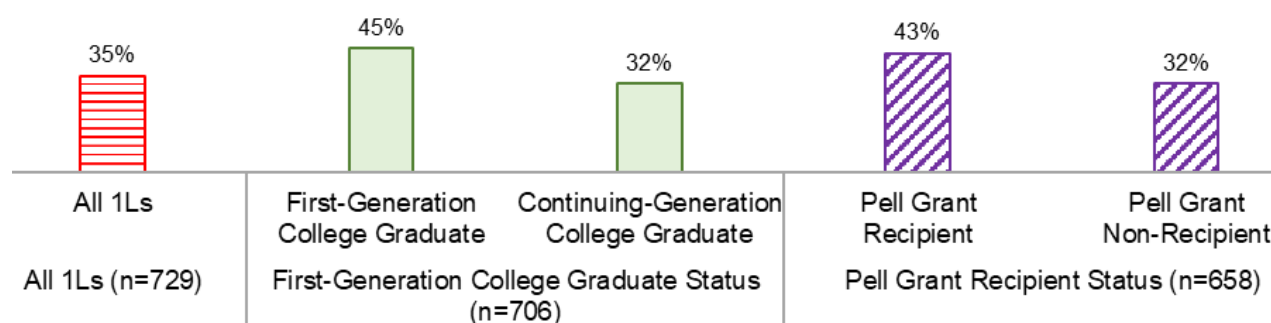
Source: 2024-2025 LSAC Spring Matriculant Survey

Figure 14: Academic Pressures Triggering Thoughts of Leaving Law School



Source: 2024-2025 LSAC Spring Matriculant Survey

Figure 15: Financial Pressures Triggering Thoughts of Leaving Law School



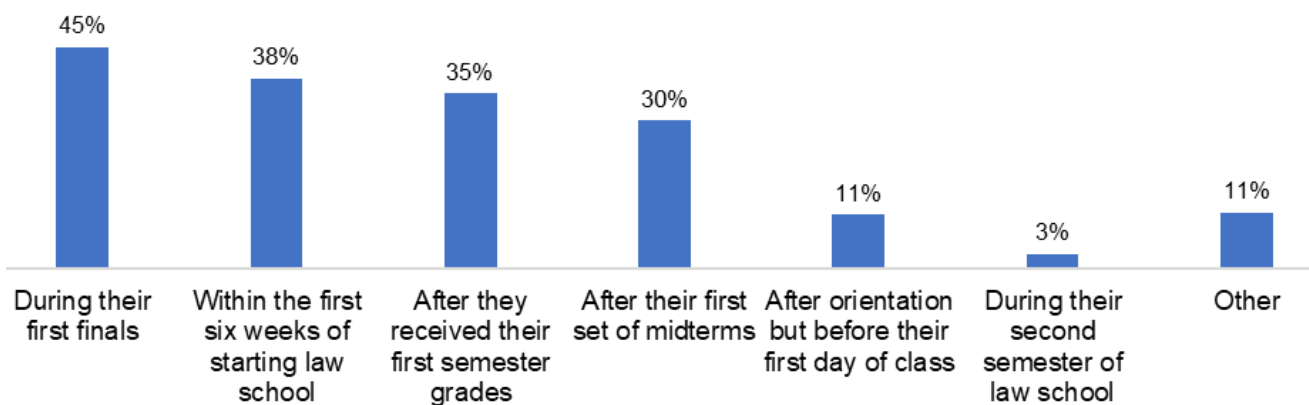
Source: 2024-2025 LSAC Spring Matriculant Survey

These results reveal that while law students generally experience various pressures in the first year, academic and financial pressures²⁷ are experienced differently by students from various backgrounds, particularly based on gender and socioeconomic status. The compounding weight of these pressures due to the systemic barriers faced by students from marginalized groups increases the risk and harm, as observed in law school attrition. These insights are important to consider when supporting students holistically during a high-stakes, high stress moment, semester, or year. Thoughts of leaving law school are more than law school simply being challenging. There are underlying concerns often tied to real life outcomes, like financing law school. Efforts directly addressing retention must center on the student, their experiences, and their lived reality.

Times Triggering Thoughts of Leaving Law School

Virtually all 1Ls who thought about leaving law school report doing so during high-stress time periods, specifically during their first semester finals, within the first six weeks of starting law school, and after receiving their first semester grades (Figure 16). Slightly under half of all 1Ls who thought about leaving law school had these thoughts during their first final exams (45%; Figure 16). Slightly under 40% of 1Ls who thought about leaving law school did so within their first six weeks of starting law school (38%), and more than a third thought of leaving after receiving their first semester grades (35%). While not all JD programs have midterms, 30% of 1L respondents who thought about leaving did so after their first set of midterms. About one in ten 1Ls contemplated leaving after orientation but before their first day of class. During their second semester of law school, 3% of 1Ls contemplated leaving. About one in ten 1Ls contemplated leaving after orientation but before their first day of class.

Figure 16: Times When 1Ls Thought About Leaving During Their 1L Year (n=732)



Source: 2024-2025 LSAC Spring Matriculant Survey

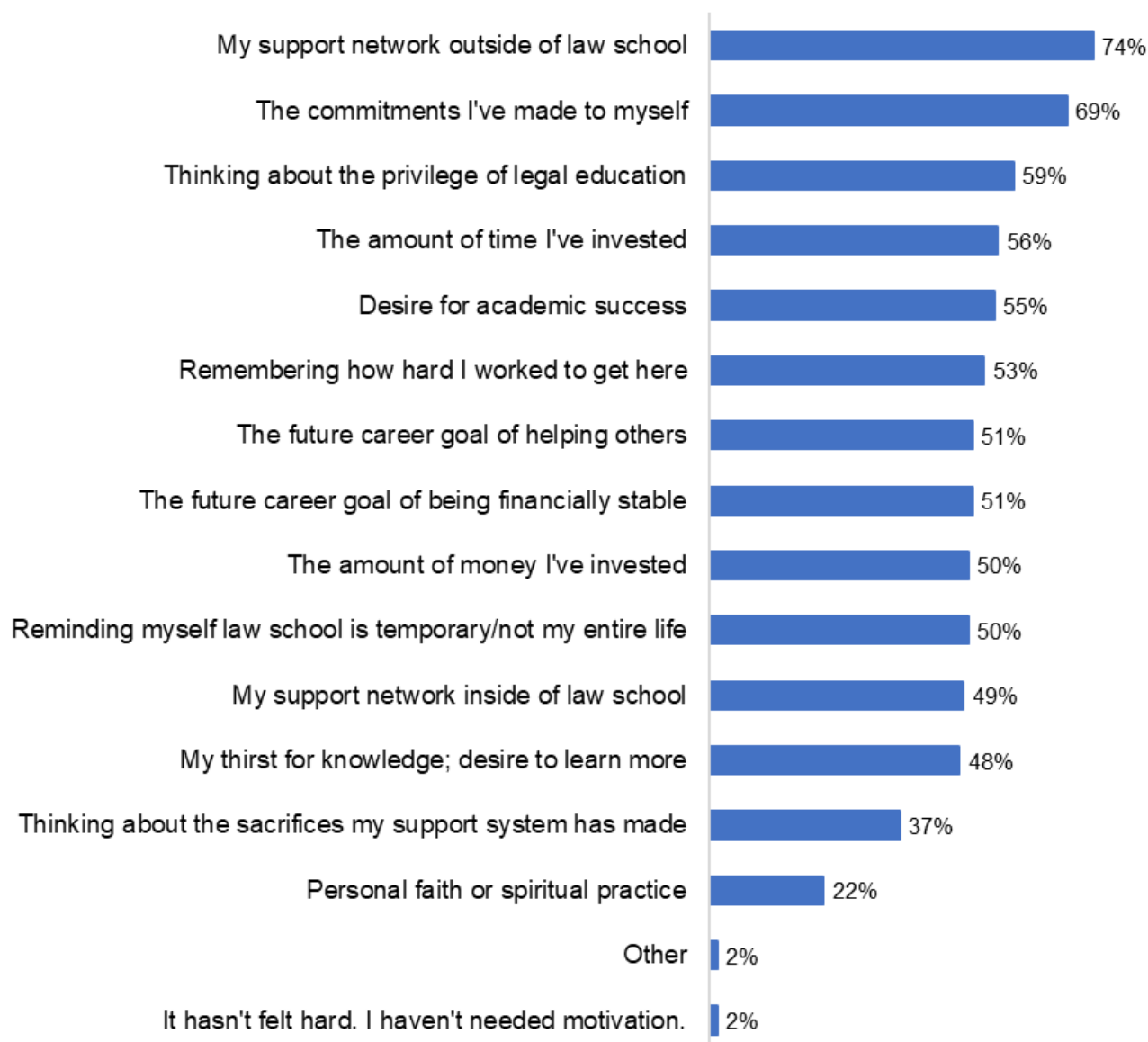
²⁷ Refer to LSAC's Knowledge report, Funding the First Year: How 2024 1Ls Paid for Law School. [LSAC's Knowledge Report: Funding the First Year: How 2024 1Ls Paid for Law School](#)

Overall, these patterns confirm that the pressures and stress of law school heighten at specific points during the first year, unforgettable moments that resonate with many lawyers and current law students today. These findings support the work that many law school staff in student affairs, academic support, and career services provide students each year to help them adjust to a new environment and expectations. Students' first set of finals, first six weeks of law school, and receiving first semester grades are times in which they reflect and process what these outcomes and experiences mean to them and what they say about their ability to succeed on their journey. At these times, students require additional services. Emotional, psychological, and personal support are critical to law school retention and are necessary compliments to the academic support students need to learn.

Persistence in the First Year

While two in five 1Ls report thinking about leaving law school, the overwhelming majority of them do not leave. They persist. Some of the biggest factors that contribute to persistence are community, support systems, and personal motivation for going to law school. Specifically, the top three motivators driving their persistence in law school are: (1) their support networks outside of law school (74%), (2) the commitments they made to themselves (69%), and (3) thinking about the privilege of legal education (59%; Figure 17).

Figure 17: 1L Motivations for Staying in Law School (n=1,600)



Source: 2024-2025 LSAC Spring Matriculant Survey

Overall, first-year respondents, regardless of background, report the same top three motivators for persisting in law school. However, the degree to which 1Ls report these three motivators varied particularly by gender, race and gender, socioeconomic status, and age, which are examined in the following three sections.

Persistence Motivator: Support Networks Outside of Law School

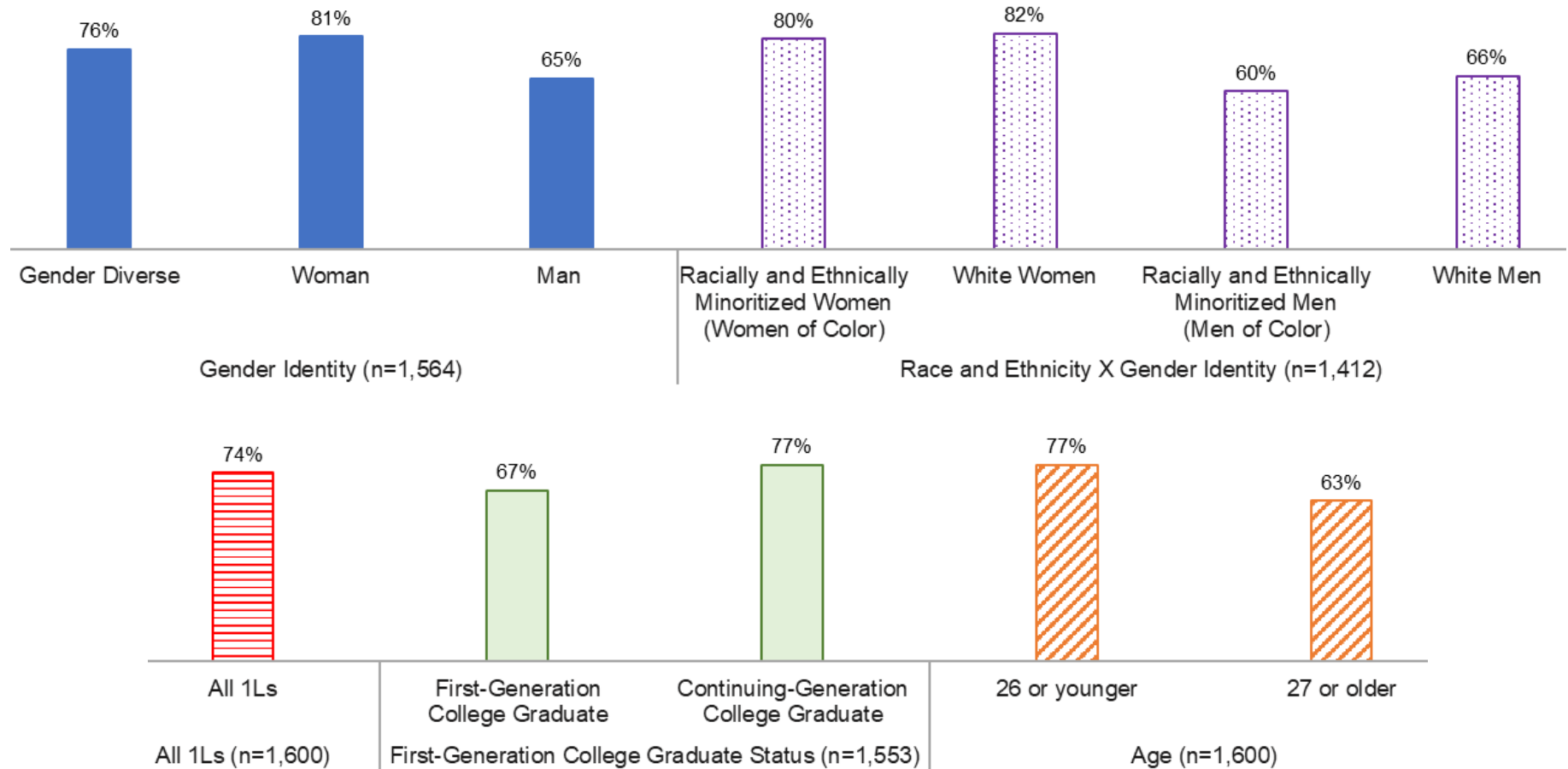
Support networks are key to persistence in higher education, including legal education. Support systems can exist internally in law school, such as through student organizations, and externally, such as through family, non-law school friends, and external organizations. More than three quarters of 1Ls report that support networks outside of law school are key to their persistence in law school. External support networks are reported by 1Ls to help them persist through law school at varying degrees based on gender, race and gender, first-generation college status, Pell Grant recipient status, and age (Figure 18).²⁸

- Women and gender diverse 1Ls report relying on support networks outside of law school at higher rates than men.
 - Women rely on their support networks outside of law school at a rate 25% (or 16 percentage points) higher than men and 10% (or 7 percentage points) higher than all 1Ls.
 - Gender diverse 1Ls rely on their support networks outside of law school at a rate 17% (or 11 percentage points) higher than men.
- Women across all races rely on networks outside of law school to persist in law school at rates significantly higher than men.
 - Women of color report relying on their support networks outside of law school at a rate 33% (or 20 percentage points) higher than men of color and 21% (or 14 percentage points) higher than white men.
 - White women report relying on their support networks outside of law school at a rate 37% (or 22 percentage points) higher than men of color and 24% (or 16 percentage points) higher than white men.
- Continuing-generation college graduates report that support networks outside of law school give them the motivation to persist at a rate 15% (or 10 percentage points) higher than their first-generation college graduate peers.
- Younger 1Ls rely on support networks outside of law school for motivation at a rate 22% (or 14 percentage points) higher than their older peers.

Overall, women across race are relying at on their networks outside of law school to persist in their first year at higher rates than their peers. Similarly, younger 1Ls and continuing-generation college graduates turn to their networks outside of law school for the support they need. Across the board, support networks outside of law school play a critical role for the majority of 1Ls. The legal community can bolster students' persistence by considering ways to cultivate new and nurture existing support networks.

²⁸ As a reminder, results presented throughout this report are exclusively statistically significant differences. Group-based differences that are not presented in the report are not statistically significant.

Figure 18: Percentage of 1Ls Report Relying on Their Support Network Outside of Law School to Persist in Law School



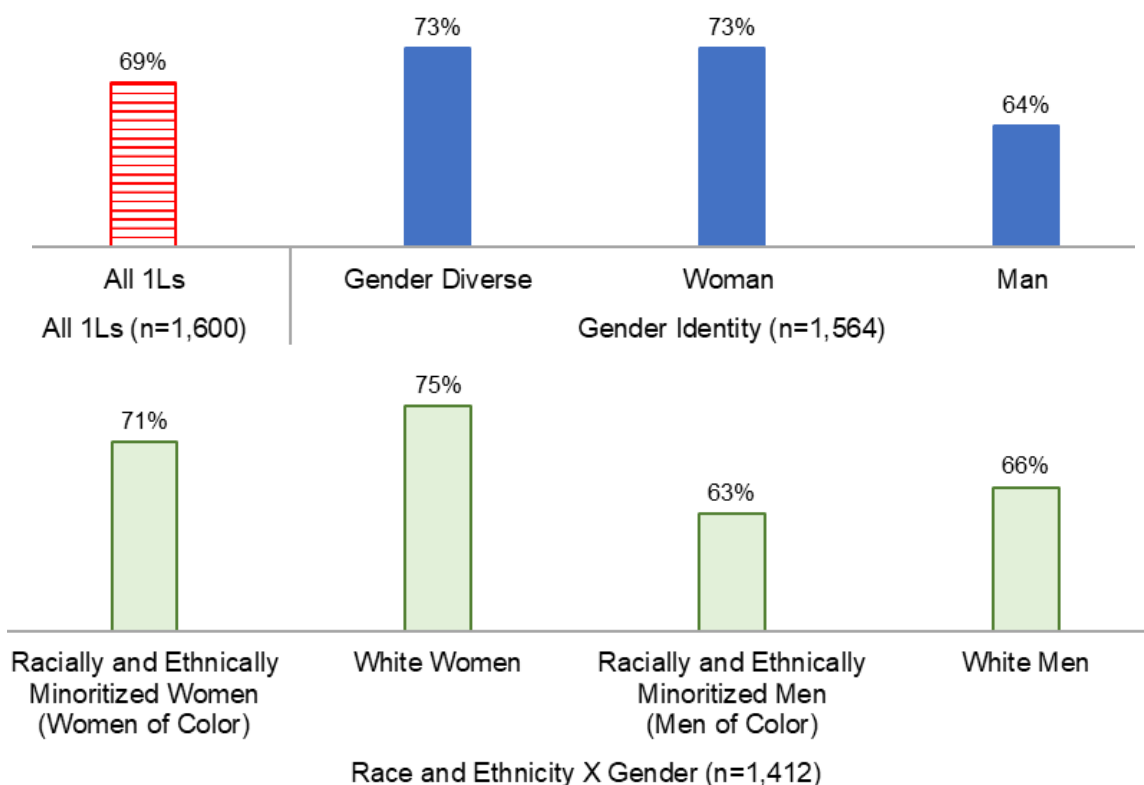
Source: 2024-2025 LSAC Spring Matriculant Survey

Persistence Motivator: Commitments Made to Oneself

Intrinsic motivating reasons are key for many students in helping them persist through the first year of law school. The top intrinsic motivation is the commitment students made to themselves. First-year law students persist through the pressure, the doubt, and uncertainty, in part, because they are driven by the commitment they made to their “why.” This persistence motivator is a top driver for women and gender diverse students at significantly higher rates than their peers (Figure 19).

- Gender diverse 1Ls and women each report that the commitment they made to themselves drives them to persist in law school at a rate 14% (or 9 percentage points) higher than men.
- White women report that the commitment they made to themselves drives them to persist in law school at a rate 19% (or 12 percentage points) higher than men of color and 14% (or 9 percentage points) higher than white men.
- Racially and ethnically women report that the commitment they made to themselves drives them to persist in law school at a rate 13% (or 8 percentage points) higher than men of color and 8% (or 5 percentage points) higher than white men.

Figure 19: Percentage of 1Ls Reporting That the Commitments They Made to Themselves Motivated Them to Stay in Law School

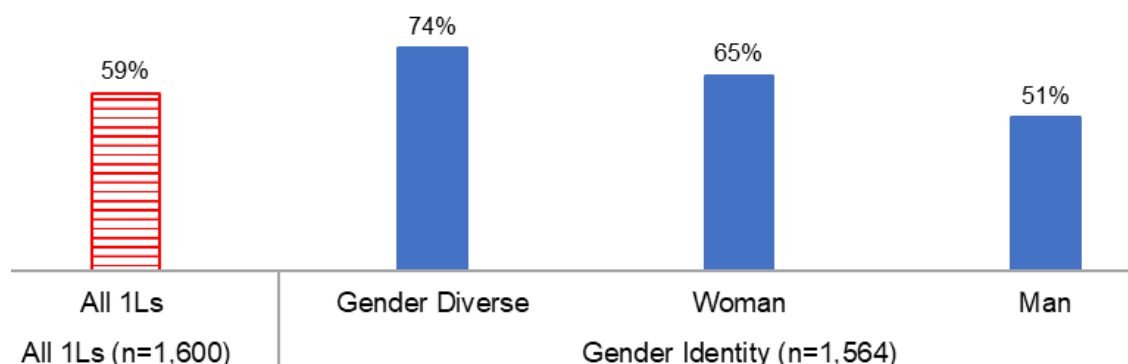


Source: 2024-2025 LSAC Spring Matriculant Survey

Persistence Motivator: Thinking About the Privilege of Legal Education

The third top reason why 1Ls persist in law school is because they are thinking about the privilege of legal education. Law school is highly competitive, and the journey is long. For many, they are the first in their families to embark on this journey. For others, it is a space they historically were barred from, such as women and other marginalized groups. Almost 60% of 1Ls report that that they persist because they think about the privilege of legal education, of being able to access it and pursue it (Figure 20). This motivation is reported at higher rates by women and gender diverse 1Ls compared to their peers. Gender diverse 1Ls report that thinking about the privilege of legal education helps them stay focused and persist through the first year at a rate 25% (or 15 percentage points higher) than all 1Ls and 47% (or 24 percentage points) higher than men. Women report that thinking about the privilege of legal education helps them persist through law school at a rate 10% (or 6 percentage points) higher than all 1Ls and 27% (or 14 percentage points) higher than men.

Figure 20: Percentage of 1Ls Saying the Privilege of Legal Education motivated them to stay in law school



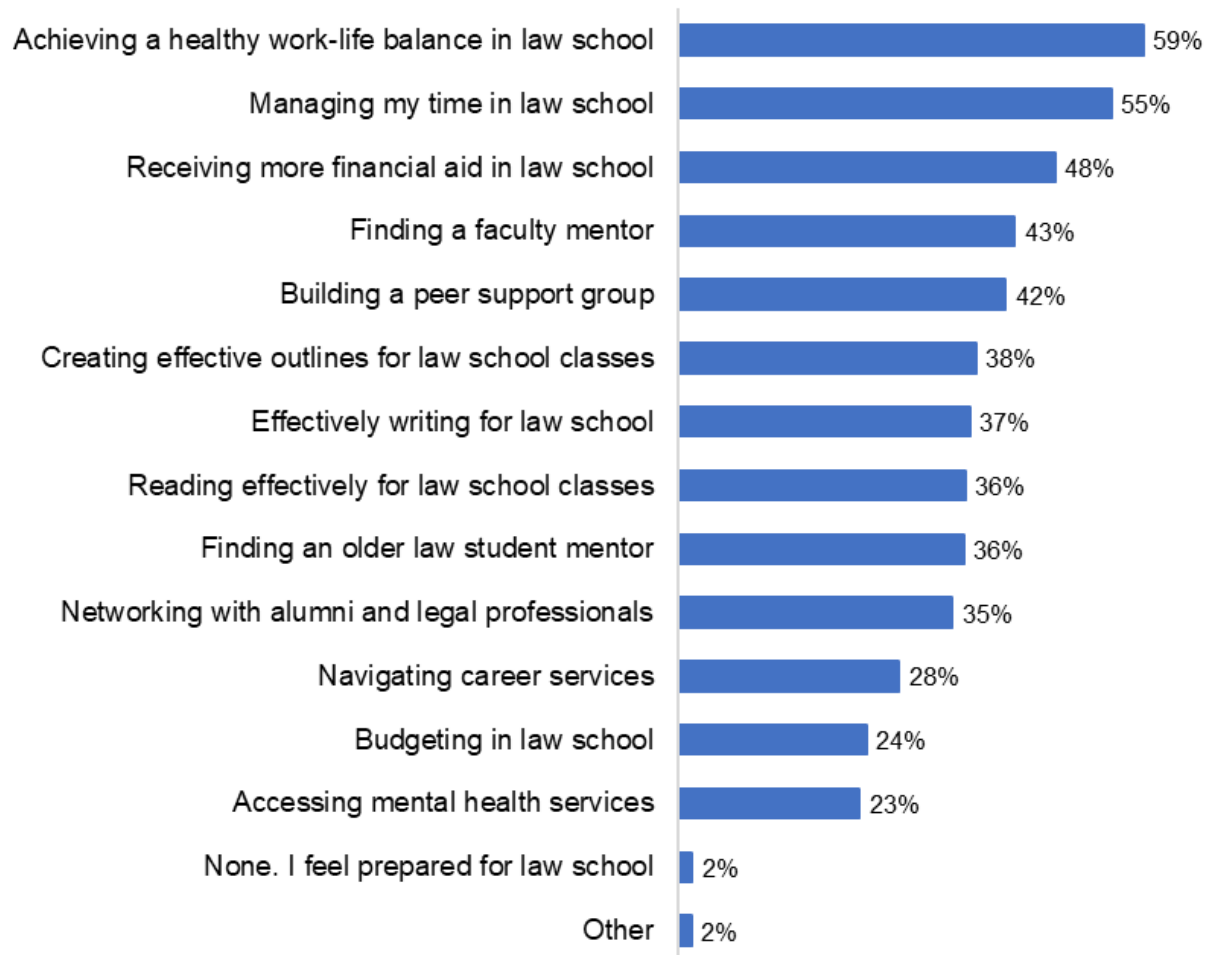
Source: 2024-2025 LSAC Spring Matriculant Survey

Compared to their peers, persistence motivators that are intrinsic and focused on internal commitments and self-reflection are reported at higher rates by women and gender diverse students to help them persist through law school despite thoughts of leaving. The pressures of law school are many, but 1L respondents reveal that both support systems and clarity on why they are in law school are important to persistence and law school retention.

Support Needs After the First Year

In reflecting on their first year, 1L respondents reveal that as they continue in law school, the top three areas they need help with include: (1) “achieving a healthy work-life balance” (59%), (2) “managing my time in law school” (55%), and (3) “receiving more financial aid” (48%; Figure 21). While many students across all backgrounds voice interest in receiving more guidance on these top three topics, some groups voice greater interest and need than others.

Figure 21: Guidance 1Ls Would Like Today to Help Persist in Law School



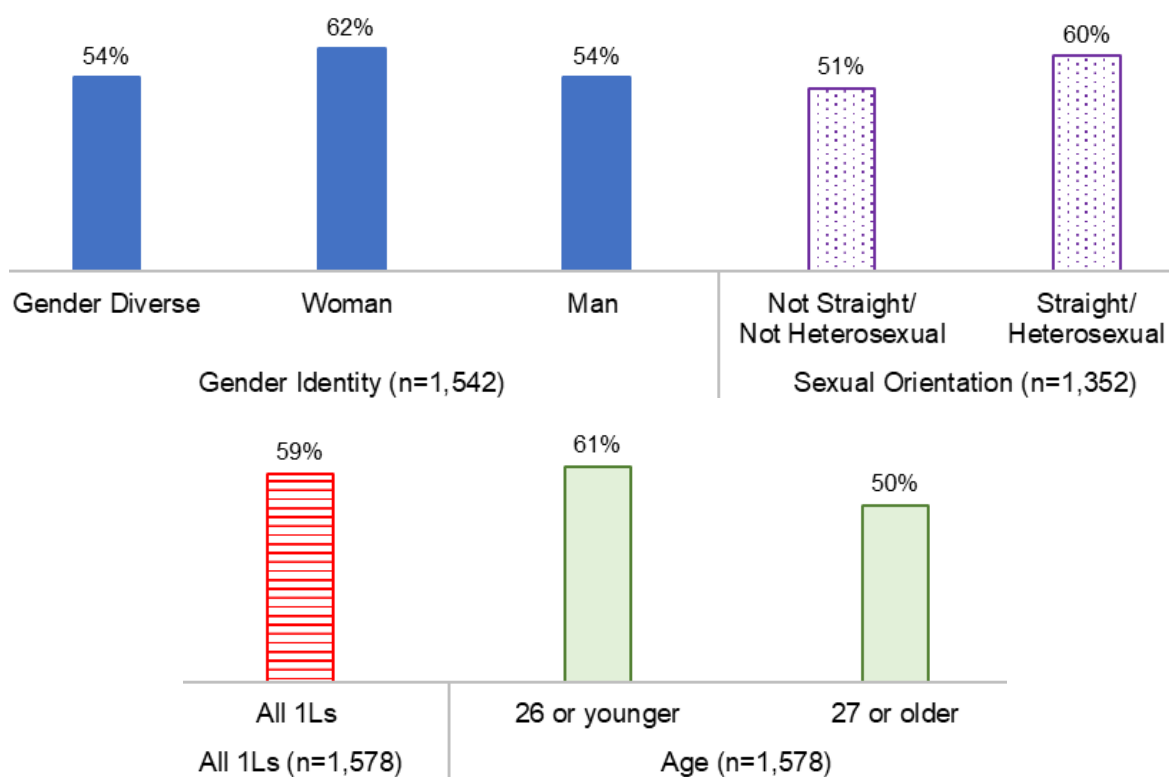
Source: 2024-2025 LSAC Spring Matriculant Survey

Guidance Need: A Healthy Work-Life Balance

Overall, 59% of all 1Ls report they would like continual guidance on how to achieve a healthy work-life balance. This need is reported to be higher for students across gender, sexual orientation, and age (Figure 22).²⁹

- Women report they need more guidance on how to achieve a healthy work-life balance at a rate 15% (or 8 percentage points) higher than gender diverse 1Ls and men.
- Straight/heterosexual 1Ls report that they would like more guidance on how to achieve a healthy work-life balance at a rate 18% (or 9 percentage points) higher than their LGBTQ+ peers who are not straight/not heterosexual.
- Younger 1Ls report they would like more guidance on how to achieve a healthy work-life balance at a rate 22% (or 11 percentage points) higher than older 1Ls.

Figure 22: 1L Need for Guidance on Achieving a Healthy Work-Life Balance in Law School



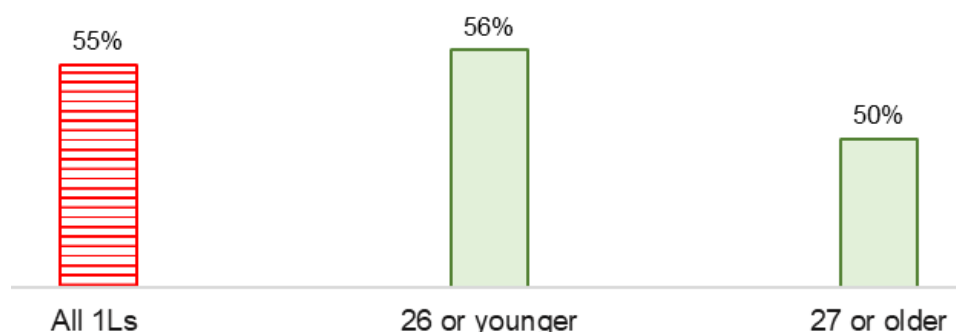
Source: 2024-2025 LSAC Spring Matriculant Survey

²⁹ Results presented throughout this report are exclusively statistically significant differences. Group-based differences that are not presented in the report are not statistically significant.

Guidance Need: Time Management

The majority of 1Ls report they need continual help with time management, and this need is significantly higher among younger 1Ls (Figure 23). 1Ls who are 26 or younger indicate that they would like more guidance on managing their time in law school at a rate 12% (or 6 percentage points) higher than older 1Ls.

Figure 23: 1L Need for Guidance on Time Management in Law School (n=1,578)



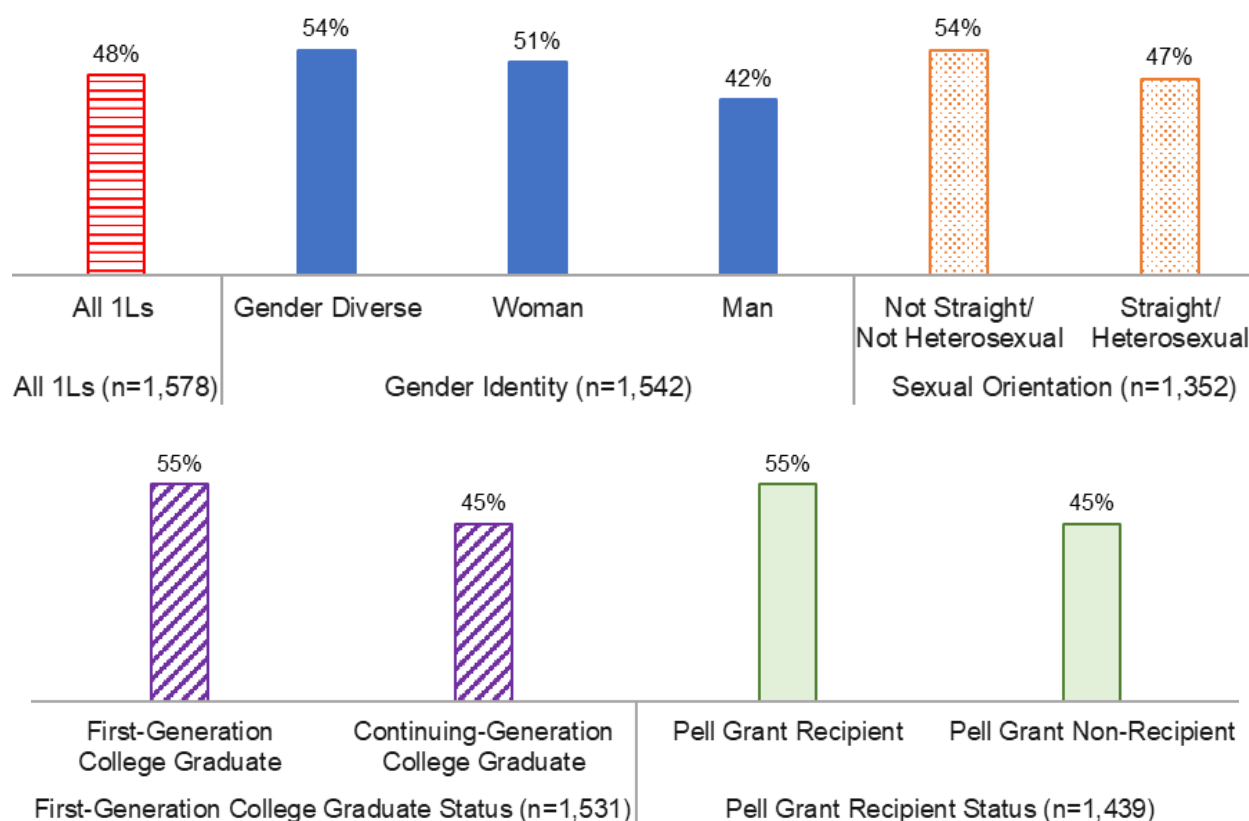
Source: 2024-2025 LSAC Spring Matriculant Survey

Guidance Need: More Financial Aid

Lastly, financing legal education is top of mind for the majority of students along the journey from prelaw through law school. Almost half of 1Ls report they would like guidance on financing law school (Figure 24). LGBTQ+ 1Ls, women, first-generation college graduates, and Pell Grant recipients report they need guidance on how to receive more financial aid at rates higher than their peers.

- Gender diverse 1Ls report they would like more guidance on financing legal education at a rate 29% (or 12 percentage points) higher than men.
- Women 1Ls report they would like more guidance on financing legal education at a rate 21% (or 9 percentage points) higher than men.
- 1Ls who are not straight/not heterosexual report they would like more guidance on financing legal education at a rate 15% (7 percentage points) higher than their straight/heterosexual peers.
- Both first-generation college graduates and Pell Grant recipients report they would like more guidance on financing legal education at a rate that was 22% (or 10 percentage points) higher than continuing-generation graduates and Pell Grant non-recipients.

Figure 24: 1L Need for Guidance on Financing Law School



Source: 2024-2025 LSAC Spring Matriculant Survey

Taken together, the 2024 1L respondents reveal that while they persist through law school with the support of their community, anchored in their motivations, and through self-reflection, they are aware they need continual support. Work-life balance, time management, and more financial aid all reflect what students need to persist through the high-pressure law school environment and experience. These insights are important for schools to consider as they create wraparound holistic student support to improve retention and academic success throughout law school.

Conclusion and Advancing LSAC's Mission

Advancing equity and access in the legal profession requires a comprehensive understanding of the entire journey to practice, including how students experience and navigate their first year of law school. Belonging matters for law school performance and retention, especially in high-pressure environments and during high-stress moments in legal education. Understanding when and why 1Ls question their place in law school is necessary to pinpoint when, where, and how the legal community can help build an inclusive environment and support systems that help students who are at risk of leaving the profession thrive and persist in law school.³⁰

This report shows 1Ls from marginalized backgrounds, especially women³¹ and men of color, gender diverse individuals, first-generation college graduates, and Pell Grant recipients, self-report feeling less accepted and valued in law school than their peers. These sentiments correlate to higher relative levels of thinking about leaving law school. When law students feel accepted, valued, and included, they are more prepared to successfully navigate the complex and, at times, challenging landscape of legal education. Advancing access, equity, and fairness on the prelaw to practice journey centers on the understanding that everyone deserves to feel supported and confident that they have access to resources and a network to help them not simply survive, but to thrive in law school. The demonstrated disparity in these experiences highlights impactful opportunities for intervention that can increase retention in law school and access to the legal profession.

The insights voiced by the 2024 1L class provide valuable guidance for a range of stakeholders, including law schools, policy makers, the prelaw community, pathway programs, and other legal stakeholders and organizations. These findings can help law schools tailor institutional messaging, outreach strategies, and support services to better aid persistence in legal education. LSAC will continue to collect and analyze data to illuminate how 1Ls make their financial decisions, in addition to other snapshots along the prelaw through practice journey to share with the legal community in fulfillment of our mission.

³⁰ Deo, M. E. (2024). Building Belonging. *Denv. L. Rev.*, 102, 771. This article provides details on how schools can create and provide a culture and environment to support students in law school.

³¹ The experience of compounded marginalization faced by women of color is evidenced throughout this report. To learn more, refer to Bodamer, E. (2020). Do I belong here? Examining perceived experiences of bias, stereotype concerns, and sense of belonging in U.S. law schools. *Journal of Legal Education*, 69(2), 455-490. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/27073498>; Deo, M. E. (2020). *Unequal profession: Race and gender in legal academia*. Stanford University Press.

Data Source

In March 2025, LSAC distributed a survey to a random subsample of all students who matriculated to law school for the 2024-2025 academic year to understand sense of belonging and persistence in law school. Stakeholders on individuals' journeys to law school can use this information to better understand how to support students during the turbulent and exciting times the first year of law school brings.

Respondents to the spring survey were representative of the 2024 first-year law school class (Table 3). More than half of respondents were white (51%), and slightly more than two-fifths (42%) were from racially and ethnically marginalized³² populations (Table 3). More cisgender women than cisgender men answered the survey (56% and 41%, respectively), and only a small portion identified as gender diverse (1.4%). While the sexual orientation of the respondent population was largely straight/heterosexual (72%), a sizeable proportion identified as not straight/not heterosexual (15%). A total of 15% of respondents identified as LGBTQ+.³³

Almost one-quarter (24%) of respondents were first-generation college graduates (Table 8).³⁴ Most of those first-generation college graduates were from marginalized racial and ethnic groups, with only 33% of first-generation respondents identifying as white. Additionally, first-generation status varied within racial and ethnic groups. More than half (51%) 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 (43% and 22% respectively). In contrast, only 15% 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 17% of white, 22% of Asian, and 24% of multiracial 1Ls were Pell Grant recipients, 37-56% of all other ethnically marginalized students received Pell Grants. Most (80%) respondents were 26 years old or younger when they began law school (Table 3).

³² 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.

³³ 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.

³⁴ 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.

Table 3: Percent of 2024-2025 Spring Matriculant Survey Respondents by Socio-Demographic Group (n=1,935)

Category	Group	Percent of 1L Respondents	2024 1Ls
By Race/Ethnicity	American Indian or Alaska Native	2.2%	1.6%
	Asian	9.5%	9.5%
	Black/African American	7.6%	7.6%
	Hispanic or Latina/é/o/x	9.6%	9.7%
	Middle Eastern or North African/Arab	2.7%	2.9%
	Multiracial or Ethnoracial (2 or more)	10.1%	10.1%
	Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	0.1%	0.5%
	White	50.8%	50.8%
	Not Indicated	7.4%	7.4%
By Gender Identity	Man (Cisgender)	40.6%	39.5%
	Woman (Cisgender)	56.4%	56.7%
	Gender Diverse	1.3%	1.4%
	Not Indicated	1.8%	2.4%
By Sexual Orientation	Not Straight/Not Heterosexual	14.7%	10.5%
	Straight/Heterosexual	71.9%	73.1%
	Not Indicated	13.4%	13.3%
Total LGBTQ+		14.8%	13.9%
By First-Generation College Graduate Status	First-Generation Graduate	23.3%	22.9%
	Continuing-Generation Graduate	74.1%	74.7%
	Not Indicated	2.6%	2.4%
By First-Generation Law School Status	First-Generation Student	75.0%	75.3%
	Continuing-Generation Student	23.8%	23.8%
	Not Indicated	1.2%	0.9%
By Pell Grant Status	Recipient	26.0%	26.4%
	Non-Recipient	64.8%	65.2%
	Not Indicated	9.2%	8%
By Age at Enrollment	22 or younger	35.2%	34.1%
	23-26	44.8%	45.8%
	27-30	9.2%	10.8%
	31-39	7.0%	6.7%
	40 or older	3.8%	2.6%

Source: 2024-2025 Spring LSAC Matriculant Survey

In addition to representation based on race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, and age, the survey respondents came from all types of law schools, representative of all 196 law school programs across the U.S. In the 2024-2025 Spring Matriculant Survey, almost one in ten (9%) 1Ls were part-time students (Table 4). Consistent with the previous section in this report about the entire 2024 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.³⁵

Based on where respondents were enrolled, how and why they made their decisions is tied to what they needed from a law school. Survey respondents varied by where they are enrolled. By law school selectivity,³⁶ most 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 4: Percentage of 2024-2025 Spring Matriculant Survey Respondents by Program Type and School Selectivity Quartile (n=1,935)

Category	School Type	Percent of 1L Respondents	2024 1Ls
By Program Type	Full-Time	91.1%	90.9%
	Part-Time	8.9%	9.1%
By Law School Selectivity Quartile	Q1 (Top 25% Highly Selective Law Schools)	37.3%	29.4%
	Q2	25.6%	26.3%
	Q3	18.7%	21.8%
	Q4	18.4%	22.4%

Source: 2024-2025 Spring LSAC Matriculant Survey

³⁵ 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/>

³⁶ Each law school is assigned a selectivity index based on each school’s 2024 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.

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 2024-2025 academic calendar; second, the 2024-2025 Spring LSAC Matriculant Survey, conducted during March 2025. The purpose of this survey was to understand 2024 first-year law students' sense of belonging, triggers that may contribute to thoughts of leaving law school, and motivations for persisting in legal education. Roughly 2,000 1Ls participated in the 2024 Matriculant Survey; post-stratification survey weights were added to more accurately reflect the demographic distribution of the 2024 matriculant population. Weights were constructed by raking³⁷ on demographic variables that exceeded 5% difference from the population to ensure the sample from the matriculant survey is representative of the 2024 first-year class.

³⁷ 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/>