

LSAC's Knowledge Report 2024-2025 Test Takers



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Executive Summary

In the 2023-24 admission cycle, law schools faced a changing landscape, beginning with the June 2023 *Students for Fair Admissions, Inc. v. Harvard* decision. Since then, legal education has come up against abrupt changes in standards, policies, and legal practices, from anti-DEI legislation and executive orders to major changes to federal Grad PLUS loans. As schools navigated these changes during the 2024-25 cycle, candidates took the LSAT and applied to law school in record numbers.¹

Speculation abounded on why more candidates were pursuing a legal education and how changes such as caps on federal loans would affect what candidates are thinking, feeling, and doing. LSAC's Post-LSAT Questionnaire (PLQ) provides the first empirical glimpse into the thoughts, feelings, and actions of the first cohort to take the redesigned LSAT (without an analytical reasoning section), an event that came amid a competitive admission cycle unfolding during a period of legislative, policy, political, economic, and social change. Based on data collected from over 15,000 test takers between August 2024 and April 2025, this report focuses on:

1. When test takers first thought about going to law school.
2. What motivates test takers to pursue law school.
3. What are test takers' plans for the application cycle, including who they plan to turn to for support and when they plan to submit applications.
4. What are test takers' anticipated barriers to attending law school.

This report has several insights that can help law schools and other organizations recruit and support future law students in an ever-changing landscape and inform efforts to ensure law school is financially feasible for the next generation of aspiring lawyers. These insights include:

- **When test takers began thinking of attending law school.** Like the 2023-24 test takers, most 2024-25 test takers initially considered going to law school before attending college — in many cases, well before college. Indeed, first-generation college graduates were nearly 20% more likely than their continuing-generation college peers to report first thinking about law school in elementary school or middle school.
- **Motivations for attending law school.** During a record year for testing and applicants, what motivated individuals to pursue legal education? Like their peers before them, test takers want to do good, which can mean different things to different candidates. Compared to 2023-24 test takers, 2024-25 test takers' motivation to "help others" increased by about 20%, while their motivation to "advocate for social justice" increased by more than 30%.

¹ Refer to [Law School Admission Council | Five Year Comparison](#); [Law Schools Report Record-High Application Rates as Numbers Continue to Skyrocket | Law.com](#)

- **Who test takers turn to for advice and information about the application process.** The top people or groups of people on whom test takers rely for information or advice about the law school application process were (1) peers or friends, (2) an attorney, and (3) a family member. However, one in five test takers report having no one to rely on — and first-generation college graduates report this absence at a rate almost 60% higher than their continuing-generation college peers.
- **When test takers plan on submitting their applications.** More than 70% of test takers between August 2024 and April 2025 report that they plan on applying to law school during the 2024-25 admission cycle, with the remaining 24% planning on applying in future admission cycles. However, when test takers plan to apply to law school changes in January. At that time 29% say they plan to apply to law school in the 2025-26 and other future admission cycles. The shift varies by first-generation college and Pell Grant status.
- **How anticipated barriers to law school have grown.** If admitted to their preferred law school, test takers say the top three barriers that would stop them from attending are (1) the overall cost of attendance, (2) not receiving sufficient financial aid, and (3) having to take out too many loans. Such financial concerns reverberated across test takers in the 2024-25 testing cycle. For example, when 2023-24 test takers were asked what would hold them back if they were admitted to their preferred law school, 30% reported nothing would stop them, but in the 2024-25 cycle, that rate dropped to only 18% — a decrease of 40% (or 12 percentage points). This trend is paralleled by a rise in factors that test takers said would hold them back. For example, if admitted to their preferred law school, 38% of test takers in 2023-24 reported that the total cost to attend would stop them from going, but this increased by 45% (or 17 percentage points) in 2024-25, with 55% of test takers reporting that the overall cost of attending their preferred law school would stop them from enrolling. These trends are significantly pronounced based on Pell Grant Status.

Access to effective guidance, support systems, and resources is at the core of how test takers think about, plan, and experience the journey to law school. Inequality persists in who helps aspiring law students and how they approach the application process. The concerning insight in this year's report is that candidates' anticipated barriers to law school have grown. As the first empirical measurement of how the new federal loan caps will affect aspiring lawyers, we find that the specific barrier of cost has increased by more than 40% from 2023-24 to 2024-25 test takers, and fewer test takers report that if they are admitted to their preferred law school, nothing will stop them.

Aspiring lawyers first think about law school long before taking the LSAT, and they are highly driven and motivated to do good. But the financial feasibility of law school is top of mind for today's test takers, especially those who are Pell Grant recipients. In the past, many of these test takers relied on federal loans to remove their biggest barrier to attending their chosen law school. With the availability of those loans now uncertain, future law students are facing financial challenges their predecessors did not. Indeed, test takers' responses indicate that the future of the legal profession might not include them if law school is financially out of reach. In short, the changes to federal loans will have a long-lasting impact on not just individual aspiring lawyers, but also their families, their communities, and the legal profession.

The insights from this report can help inform a collective effort, from prelaw through admission, to make legal education attainable for future aspiring lawyers. LSAC will continue to collect data and share snapshots of the journey to support the legal community.

Introduction

The 2024-25 test takers embarked on their journey to law school during a time of rapid and significant change in the U.S. political landscape. As they often do, broader debates about law, policy, and rights influenced, propelled, and inspired future lawyers to take the first steps in their legal education journeys.

Through real-time data collection, LSAC's Post-LSAT Questionnaire (PLQ) provides the first empirical glimpse into what test takers were thinking, feeling, and doing as the first cohort to take the LSAT during the 2024-2025 cycle. This cycle was noteworthy for being the first LSAT administration without an analytical reasoning section, and it also came amid a competitive admission cycle unfolding during abundant legislative, policy, political, economic, and social change. Based on data collected from over 15,000 test takers between August 2024 and April 2025, this report focuses on when test takers first thought about law school, their law school motivation, their application plans, and their anticipated barriers to law school.

Access to effective guidance, support systems, and resources is at the core of how test takers think about, plan, and experience the journey to law school. Overall, while aspiring law students first think about law school long before taking the LSAT and are highly driven and motivated to do good, inequality persists in the availability of support for aspiring law students and their approach to the application process. For example, information may be available to everyone, but access to this information is not always equal.

The inequality in access to resources and support systems is compounded this year by recent federal loan changes. In that context, this year's key finding is concerning:

Candidates' anticipated barriers to law school have grown. As the first empirical measurement of how the new federal loan caps may affect aspiring lawyers, we find that the specific anticipated barrier of cost has increased by more than 40% from 2023-24 to 2024-25 test takers, and that fewer test takers report that if admitted to their preferred law school, nothing will stop them from enrolling. These test takers' voices speak to the need for intervention: Aspiring lawyers continue to be motivated and inspired, and they continue to apply at high rates, but will they be able to enroll if law school is financially out of reach? What does this mean for the future of the legal profession; for communities that do not have access to justice, education, and economic opportunities; and for communities in rural areas?

As schools and candidates work through how the future availability of federal loans affects the financial feasibility of legal education, the insights in this report are critical in informing how, when, and where legal stakeholders — from pathway programs to prelaw advisors to law schools — can address barriers, intervene, advocate, and provide reliable and effective support to all aspiring law students in the years to come.

Who Were the 2024-25 PLQ Respondents?

LSAC's unique ability to interact with tens of thousands of people who take the LSAT annually provides a wealth of data and insights on what aspiring attorneys are thinking and feeling along their law school journeys.

The 2024-25 LSAT administration cycle experienced a volume increase compared to 2023-24. Among the test takers who sat for the LSAT between August 2024 and April 2025, 15,483 responded to the PLQ — and, like last year, these respondents are representative of the entire test-taking population (Table 1). The population of PLQ respondents is almost evenly split between white respondents and respondents from racially and ethnically minoritized groups (45% and 46%, respectively).² Just under one in 10 (8%) respondents are LGBTQ+. Close to one-third (30%) of respondents are first-generation college graduates, and 80% are the first in their families to attend law school (Table 1). Almost a third (29%) of respondents are Pell Grant recipients, and 12% are LSAC fee waiver recipients (Table 2). The score distribution of PLQ respondents is similar to that of the total population of test-takers. The middle 50% of score for responding test-takers is between 147 and 162, and for all test-takers, the middle quartile is 146 to 160.

² The term "minoritized" 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. These terms are used interchangeably in this report.

Table 1: Percent of PLQ Respondents by Socio-Demographic Group (n=15,483)

Category	Group	Percent of Respondents
By Race/Ethnicity	American Indian or Alaska Native ³	2%
	Asian	11%
	Black/African American	11%
	Indigenous Person of Canada	<1%
	Hispanic or Latina/é/o/x ⁴	9%
	Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander ⁵	1%
	Middle Eastern or North African/Arab	3%
	Multiracial or Ethnoracial (two or more) ⁶	10%
	White	45%
	Not Indicated	9%
By Gender Identity	Man	34%
	Woman	64%
	Gender Diverse ⁷	1%
	Not Indicated	1%
By Sexual Orientation	Not Heterosexual/Not Straight	7%
	Heterosexual/Straight	79%
	Not Indicated	14%
Total LGBTQ+⁸		8%

³ 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.*

⁴ 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 (two or more).

⁵ 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.

⁶ 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/African American 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.

⁷ Gender-diverse students include anyone who identifies as nonbinary, transgender, and/or another gender identity.

⁸ 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.

Category	Group	Percent of Respondents
By First-Generation College Graduate Status	Continuing-Generation College	70%
	First-Generation College ⁹	30%
By First-Generation Law Student Status	Continuing-Generation Law	19%
	First-Generation Law	80%
	Not Indicated	1%
By LSAC Fee Waiver Recipient Status	Fee Waiver Recipient	12%
	Fee Waiver Non-Recipient	88%
By Pell Grant Recipient Status	Pell Grant Recipient	29%
	Pell Grant Non-Recipient	64%
	Not Indicated	7%

Source: 2024-25 LSAC PLQ Data. Percents are rounded. Men and women test takers reported they are cisgender.

How education and the admission process are experienced varies across identities and at the intersection of identities. The composition of test-taking respondents is layered, found at the intersection of race and ethnicity, first-generation college status, and LSAC fee waiver status (Table 2). About two-thirds of respondents who are first-generation college graduates, more than two-thirds of respondents who received an LSAC fee waiver, and two-thirds of respondents who are Pell Grant recipients are from racially and ethnically minoritized groups (Table 2). The insights in this report are primarily focused on individual identities; however, it is acknowledged that individuals with multiple minoritized identities experience compounded marginalization in education and in the workplace.¹⁰ As we continue to collect this data, future reports will dive deeper into intersecting identities and the experience on the prelaw through law school journey. Nonetheless, it is important to note who are the first-generation college graduates, LSAC fee waiver recipients, and Pell Grant recipients responding to the PLQ to keep in mind the nuance required to provide effective support.

⁹ First-generation college graduates include 1Ls with parents or guardians with an associate degree, some college, high school completion, or less than high school completion. First-generation college graduates include 1Ls with parents or guardians with an associate degree, some college, high school completion, or less than high school completion.

¹⁰ Deo, M. E. (2020). Unequal profession: Race and gender in legal academia. Stanford University Press.

Table 2: Racial and Ethnic Diversity of PLQ Respondents by First-Generation College Graduate, Pell Grant Recipient, and LSAC Fee Waiver Recipient Status

Race and Ethnicity	First-Generation College Graduate Status		LSAC Fee Waiver Recipient Status		Pell Grant Recipient Status	
	First-Generation	Continuing-Generation	Recipient	Non-Recipient	Recipient	Non-Recipient
American Indian or Alaska Native	3%	1%	4%	2%	3%	1%
Asian	11%	12%	6%	12%	7%	14%
Black/African American	16%	8%	22%	8%	22%	6%
Indigenous Person of Canada	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%	0%	0%
Hispanic or Latina/é/o/x	19%	6%	16%	8%	17%	6%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%	1%	<1%
Middle Eastern or North African/Arab	3%	3%	4%	3%	3%	3%
Multiracial or Ethnoracial (two or more)	10%	12%	12%	10%	11%	10%
White	31%	52%	26%	46%	32%	52%
Did Not Indicate	5%	7%	4%	11%	4%	7%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Source: 2024-25 LSAC PLQ Data. Percents are rounded.

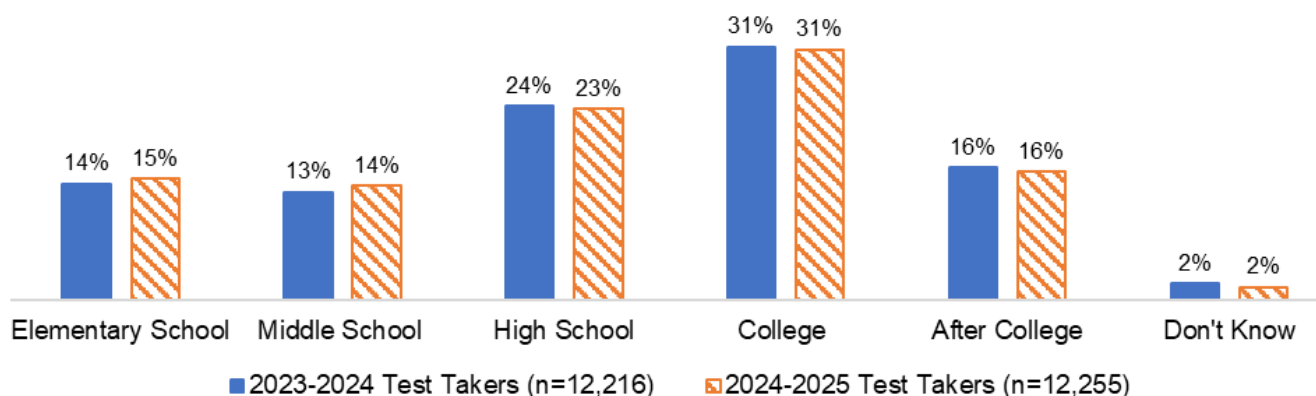
The 2024-25 testing cycle was notable for both the volume of test takers sitting for the LSAT and the current events surrounding this period. This cycle's test takers were the first to experience the LSAT without an analytical reasoning section. They also experienced rapid and significant changes in the U.S. political landscape, where broader debates about law, policy, and rights influenced, propelled, and inspired future lawyers to take the first steps in their legal education journeys, as they often do. Policy changes with heavy implications for the future of legal education, including the federal loan caps for graduate programs, were rapidly unfolding during the 2024-25 LSAT administration cycle. This report is the first empirical examination at what aspiring law students were thinking, feeling, and doing — and how these changes may affect who will be able to afford to go to law school in the future. This report focuses on four key areas: (1) when test takers first thought about going to law school, (2) test takers' law school motivations, (3) test takers' plans for the application cycle, and (4) test takers' anticipated barriers to attending law school.

When Did They First Think About Law School?

The majority of test takers first think about law school before college, as has been the case the past two years, if not longer (Figure 1). Many individuals on the prelaw-to-practice journey, though, think about going to law school as early as elementary or middle school. This reinforces the fact that increasing access, fairness, and equity to and through law school is about more than exposing people to the possibilities of a career in law — it is about the collective effort to address barriers along the way and help turn aspirations into reality.

While most 2024-25 test takers report first thinking about law school before college, almost a third say they first thought about it while in college. Another 16% say they first thought about law school after graduating from college (Figure 1).

Figure 1: When 2023-24 and 2024-25 Test Takers First Think About Going to Law School



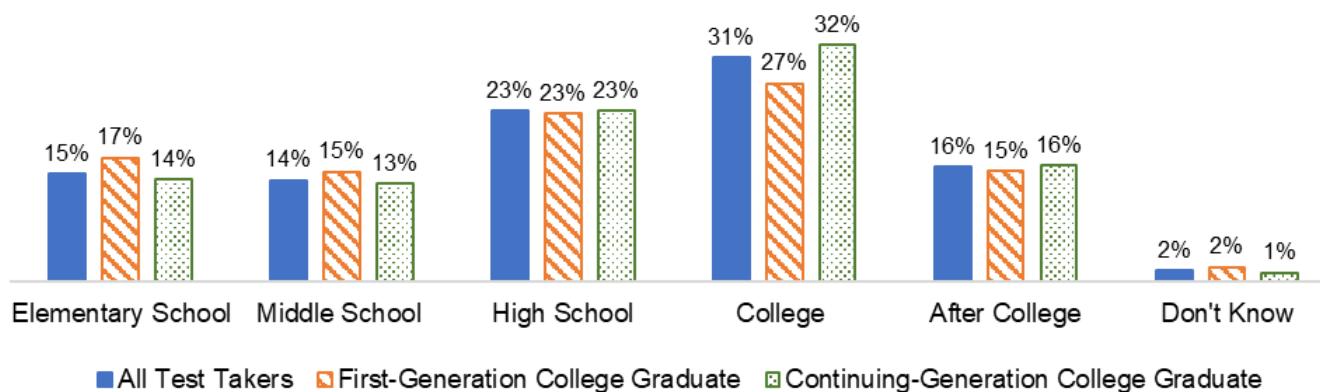
Source: 2023-24 and 2024-25 LSAC PLQ Data.

As revealed by past test takers and first-year law students, the decision to go to law school is not impulsive.¹¹ It is an intentional decision, often spanning years, if not decades of a candidate's life — particularly for candidates from under-resourced and marginalized communities. For example, in 2023-24, Black or African American test takers reported the highest rate of first thinking of going to law school as early as elementary school;¹² this trend remains the same in 2024-25. Adding to the nuance of who is embarking on the journey to law school, this year we examined test takers by first-generation college status, finding that 55% of test takers who are first-generation college graduates first thought about law school before college, compared to 50% of their continuing-generation peers — a 10% (or 5 percentage point) difference (Figure 2). Early exposure to law is evident, with 32% of first-generation college graduates reporting they first thought about going to law school in elementary school or middle school, a rate almost 20% (or 5 percentage points) higher than their continuing-generation college peers (27%; Figure 2).

¹¹ Refer to any of LSAC's applied research reports, such as the [2023-2024 Test Takers](#) and [2024 1L Profile](#) reports. Check out LSAC's blog on [When Did You First Think About Law School?](#)

¹² To learn more, check out [LSAC's Knowledge Report: 2023-2024 Test Takers](#).

Figure 2: When 2024-25 Test Takers First Think About Going to Law School by First-Generation College Graduate Status (n=12, 255)



Source: 2024-25 LSAC PLQ Data. “All Test Takers” refers to PLQ respondents between August and April of the 2024-2025 cycle.

Echoing and supporting last year’s findings, insights from the 2024-25 test takers add important context to the notion that people do not pursue law school because they are not exposed early enough. Early outreach and exposure are important, but the data continue to make it clear that simply exposing students to the possibilities of a legal career is not enough; the legal community must also identify what barriers may be impeding students’ access to opportunities and resources to develop the skills needed to effectively apply to law school and succeed there.

Given ongoing legislation and policy changes that imperil the future financial feasibility of legal education, it is important that we, as a community, link programs that expose young aspiring students to law with resources and other opportunities that those same students can use in their pursuit of a legal career. Candidates are thinking about law school at the same rate as their peers before them, and in a record-breaking applicant year, 2024-25 test takers reveal that they were motivated by the same core desire as their peers before them: to do good.

Law School Motivations

While much has been speculated about why people applied to law school in record numbers during the 2024-25 cycle, the story boils down to this: Candidates are in pursuit of a meaningful, stable, long-term career. In 2023-24, the top three motivations for attending law school were: (1) being helpful to others, (2) advocating for social justice, and (3) developing valuable skills.¹³ However, in 2024-25, the PLQ motivation question was altered to reflect a more accurate set of motivations. In comparing the top three selected motivation statements in 2023-24 to the top statements in 2024-25, it is clear that helping others and advocating for social justice remain the top motivations for test takers (Figure 3). In fact, the mention of helping others increased by about 20%, and advocating for social justice increased by more than 30%, between 2023-24 and 2024-25.

¹³ [LSAC’s Knowledge Report: 2023-2024 Test Takers \(PDF\)](#)

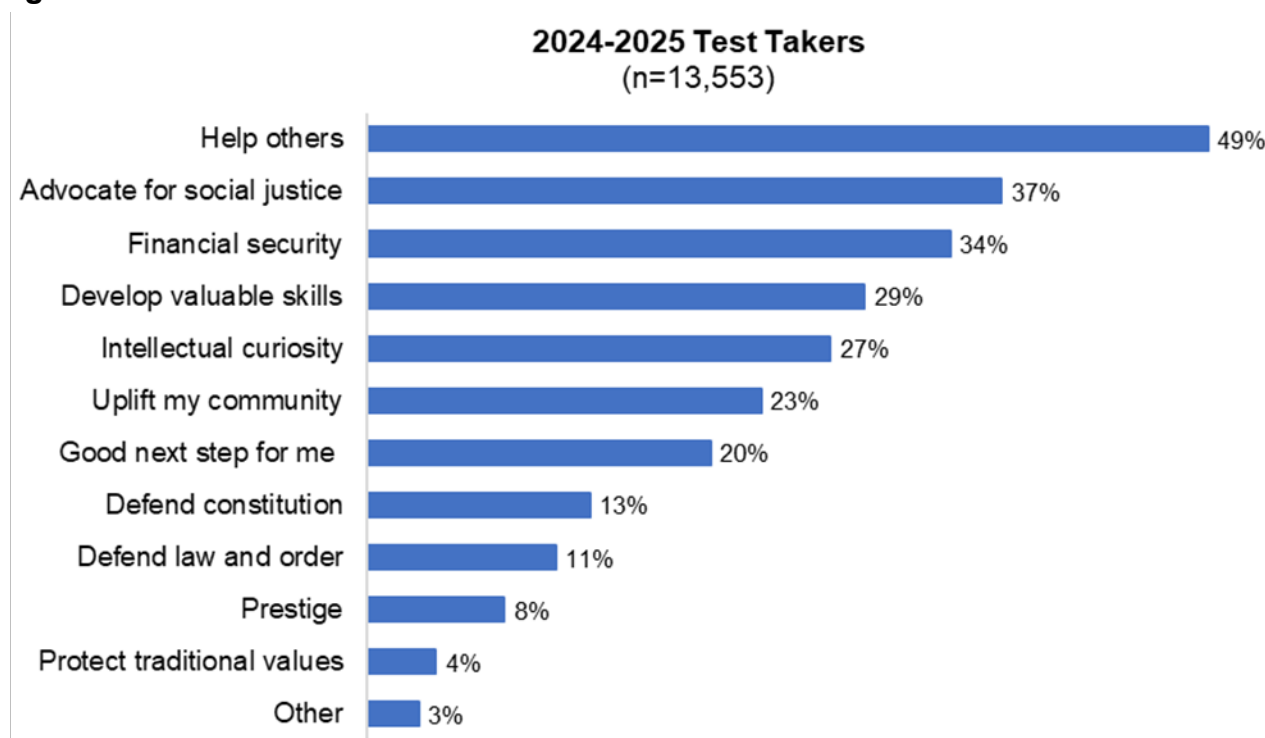
Overall, about half of 2024-25 test takers (49%) indicate that helping others is a top motivation for attending law school, 37% indicate that advocating for social justice is a motivator, and 34% say having a career with financial security is driving them to pursue law school (Figure 3). These top three responses indicate that, in general, prospective applicants view a career in law as a way to help others and contribute to society while making a decent living doing so. In a free-response question on the survey, some people expanded on this idea to reveal that they want a profession that makes them feel like they are having a positive impact on the world but will still be able to someday own a home, send their future children to college, or make enough to not live paycheck to paycheck. In general, people do not pursue law to get rich; rather, they go to law school for a career that promises financial security and an opportunity to do good in the world.

As reflected in previous cycles, most people want to go to law school for a combination of altruistic and aspirational reasons.¹⁴ This is especially important to remember when trying to make sense of a testing and application cycle where a record-breaking number of test takers and applicants were recorded. The top two reasons why people want to go to law school are to help others and to advocate for social justice. This motivation is important to recruiting, retention, and professional development training efforts in the law school environment; many, if not most, students have a “why” that goes beyond personal advancement and compensation.

Everyone has their own timeline for developing an interest in law, and everyone has their own reasons and motivations for doing so. However, how people experience the journey depends on their access to resources, opportunities, and support systems. Throughout their lives, prospective and current law students face a number of barriers to successful admission to law school. Many of these barriers exist outside each individual’s control, but they directly affect their ability to succeed or the difficulty of their journey. 2024-25 PLQ respondents reveal how these barriers appear long before law school, as they imagine their journey and reflect on their plans and support systems for the process ahead.

¹⁴ While not in this report, trends in the [LSAC’s Knowledge Report: 2023-2024 Test Takers \(PDF\)](#) by groups were similar in 2024-25. We aim to provide multiyear trends in the future.

Figure 3: Law School Motivation for 2023-24 and 2024-25 Test Takers



Source: 2024-25 LSAC PLQ Data. In 2024-25, respondents could select up to three top motivation statements without ranking them. This is different from 2023-24, when respondents were asked to rank their motivation statements. The 2023-24 motivations presented in the figure are the top three statements selected. Any 2023-24 motivations with an asterisk were revised to be totally different or dropped altogether in 2024-25. New options were included in 2024-25.

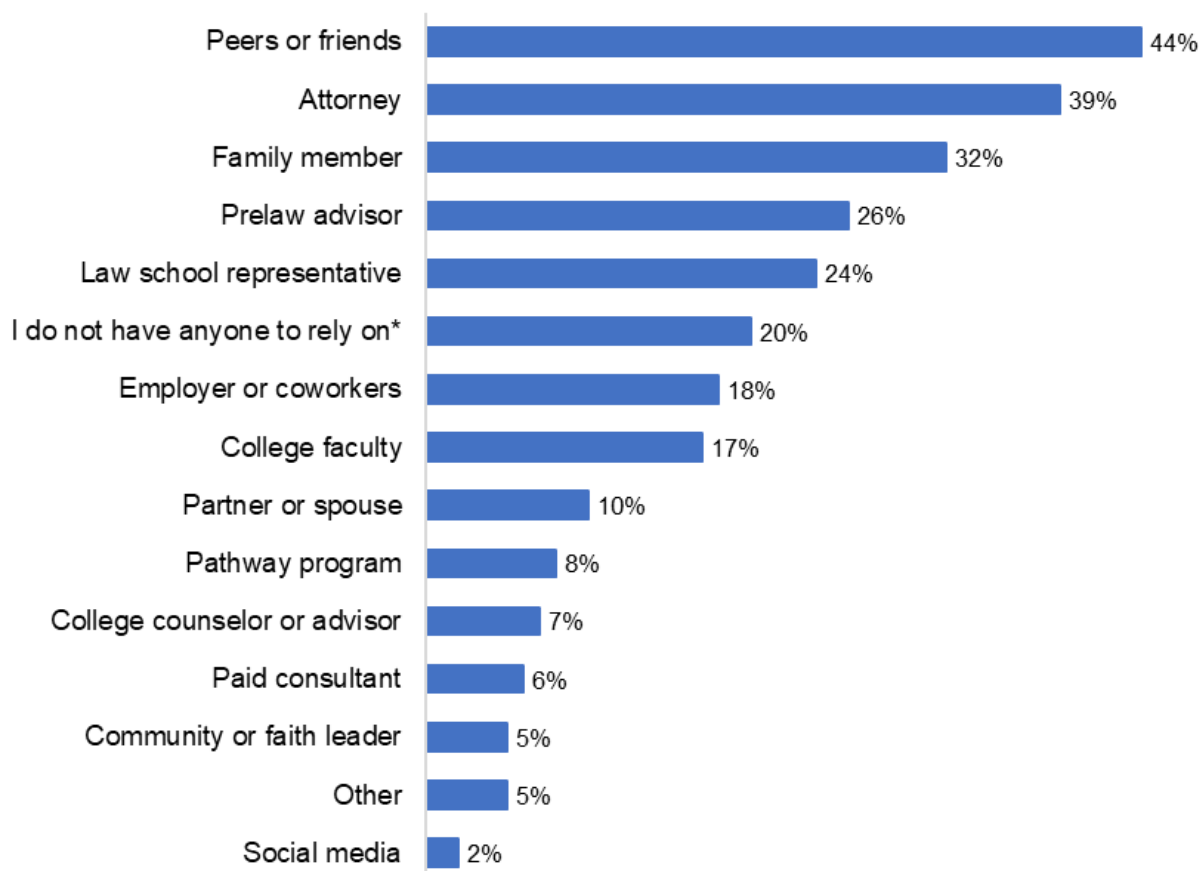
Plans for Applying to Law School

For many, taking the LSAT is the first active and concrete step on their journey to law school. When they take the LSAT, test takers are asked who they plan to turn to for help with the application process and when they intend to submit applications. These two factors further map how the journey to law school is experienced differently based on access to resources and support systems.

Who Do Prospective Applicants Turn to for Help?

On average, test takers rely on about three different people or groups for information or advice about the law school application process. The top groups of people test takers rely on for information or advice are: (1) peers or friends (44%), (2) an attorney (39%), and (3) a family member (32%; Figure 4). More than a quarter of respondents indicate that they rely on prelaw advisors, 24% say they turn to law school representatives, and 20% of test takers report not having anyone to rely on for information or advice about the application process (Figure 4).

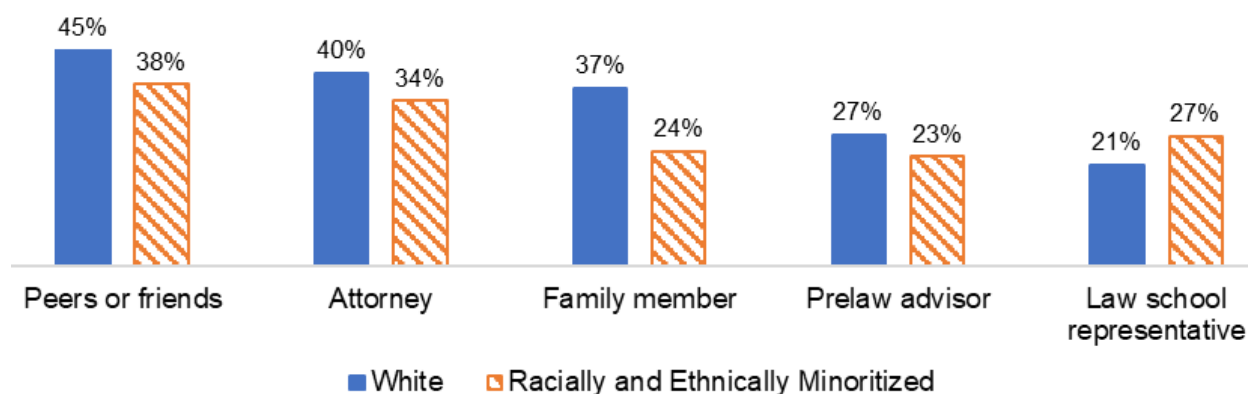
Figure 4: Sources of Information or Advice about the Law School Application Process (n=12,608)



Source: 2024-25 LSAC PLQ Data. Respondents can select all that apply, and “I do not have anyone to rely on*” is an exclusive option.

Who test takers rely on for advice and information about the application process varies by race, ethnicity, first-generation college status, and Pell Grant status, revealing that how each person navigates the law school application process is not only different, but unequal, given their disparate access to resources and support systems. For example, white test takers report they turn to peers or friends, attorneys, family members, and prelaw advisors at higher rates than their racially and ethnically minoritized peers do (Figure 5). In fact, white test takers report relying on family members for advice and information about the law school application process at a rate more than 50% higher than their racially and ethnically minoritized peers (Figure 5). Conversely, racially and ethnically minoritized test takers report they turn to law school representatives at a rate almost 30% higher than their white peers (Figure 5).

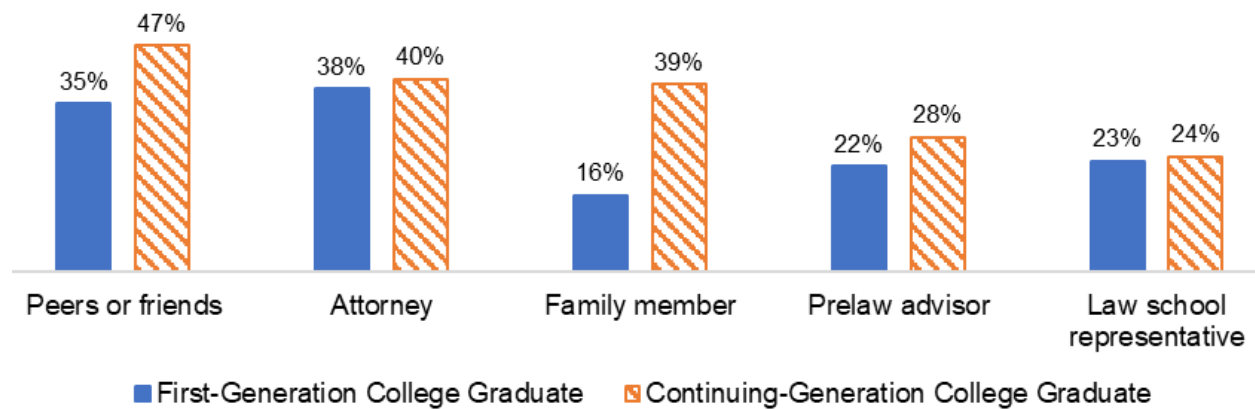
Figure 5: Top Five People Test Takers Turned to for Information or Advice About the Law School Application Process by Race and Ethnicity (n=11,715)



Source: 2024-25 LSAC PLQ Data.

Group-based differences in networks and support systems are also observed based on first-generation college status (Figure 6). While continuing-generation college graduates report relying on peers or friends, attorneys, family members, prelaw advisors, and law school representatives at higher rates than their first-generation college peers. For example, continuing-generation college graduates rely on their peers and friends at a rate almost 40% higher than first-generation college graduates. Strikingly, continuing-generation college graduates rely on their family members for advice and information about the application process at a rate more than 140% higher than first-generation college graduates (Figure 6).

Figure 6: Top Five People Test Takers Turned to for Information or Advice About the Law School Application Process by First-Generation College Graduate Status (n=12,381)



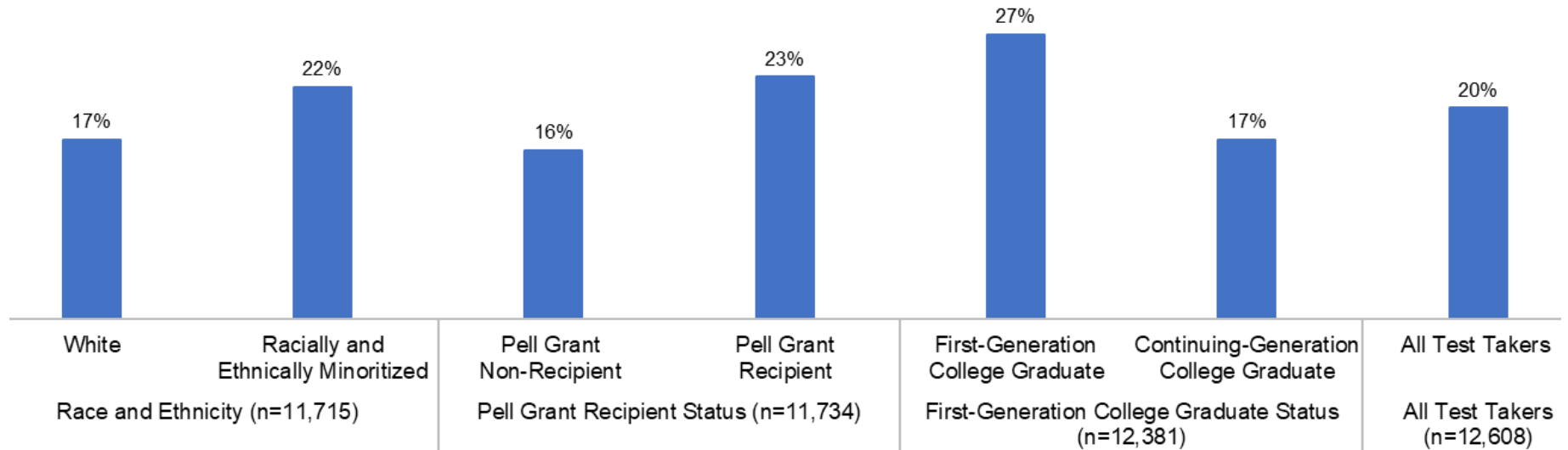
Source: 2024-25 LSAC PLQ Data.

While 20% of test taker respondents report they do not have someone to rely on for advice and information, this rate is higher for test takers who are race and ethnicity minoritized, first-generation college graduates, and Pell Grant recipients (Figure 7).

- Racially and ethnically minoritized test takers report they have no one to rely on at a rate almost 30% (or 5 percentage points) higher than their white peers.
- Pell Grant recipients report they have no one to rely on at a rate 44% (or 7 percentage points) higher than Pell Grant non-recipients.
- First-generation college graduates report they have no one to rely on at a rate almost 60% (or 10 percentage points) higher than continuing-generation college graduates and 35% (or 7 percentage points) higher than all test takers.

Applying to law school is a complex process requiring guidance and support systems, which, as these insights reveal, are not equally accessible for all aspiring law students. These differences are opportunities or impact points on the journey where schools and other prelaw stakeholders can integrate solutions that open the doors to the profession. This is evidenced in how test takers from under-resourced backgrounds more often rely on law school representatives for advice and information than they do on their own personal networks. Aspiring law students are help seekers; the question remains, how does the legal community address the barriers some individuals disproportionately face to ensure they have access to effective guidance and support throughout the journey, not just at one point in time?

Figure 7: Test Takers Reporting They Do Not Have Someone to Turn to for Advice or Information About the Law School Application by Sociodemographic Groups



Source: 2024-25 LSAC PLQ Data. “All Test Takers” refers to PLQ respondents between August and April of the 2024-2025 cycle.

When Do They Plan on Applying?

Not all test takers plan on applying to law school during the admission cycle in which they sit for the LSAT, but most do. Slightly more than 70% of test takers between August 2024 and April 2025 reported they plan on applying during the 2024-25 admission cycle, and about a quarter of test takers planned to apply to law school in future admission cycles (Figure 8). More specifically, 51% of test takers report that they plan on applying to law school in the fall (between August and December), while 20% plan on submitting applications in the spring (between January and May). Between August and November, the majority of test takers intend on applying to law school before January. In January, 50% of test takers aim to submit applications in the spring (between January and May), which drops to 39% for February test takers. While some test takers after November still report they plan on applying to law school in the fall (between August and December), this is because candidates can apply (and may have applied) prior to January, even though they take the LSAT in January and onward.

During the test administration cycle, there is a shift in when test takers plan on applying to law school, starting in January and February (Figure 8). Almost 30% of January test takers are planning to apply to law school in the 2025-26 admission cycle, and by February, almost half of test takers are planning to apply to law school in the 2025-26 admission cycle (Figure 8). By April, almost 60% of test takers are planning on applying to law school in the 2025-26 admission cycle or later (Figure 8).

Intended application timeline shifts vary by first-generation college and Pell Grant status (Figure 8a and Figure 8b). While, for the most part, first-generation college graduates and Pell Grant recipients plan on applying similarly to their peers, they plan on applying to law school in the spring (between January and May) at higher rates later in the test administration cycle than their peers. For example, first-generation college graduates in February plan on applying in the spring (between January and May) at a rate almost 20% (or 7 percentage points) higher than their continuing-generation peers (Figure 8a). By April, first-generation college graduates plan on applying in the spring (between January and May) at a rate more than 60% (or 11 percentage points) higher than their continuing-generation peers (Figure 8a). Similarly, Pell Grant recipients in February plan on applying in the spring (between January and May) at a rate more than 30% (or 11 percentage points) higher than Pell Grant non-recipients (Figure 8b). By April, Pell Grant recipients plan on applying in the spring (between January and May) at a rate more than 80% (or 13 percentage points) higher than Pell Grant non-recipients (Figure 8b).

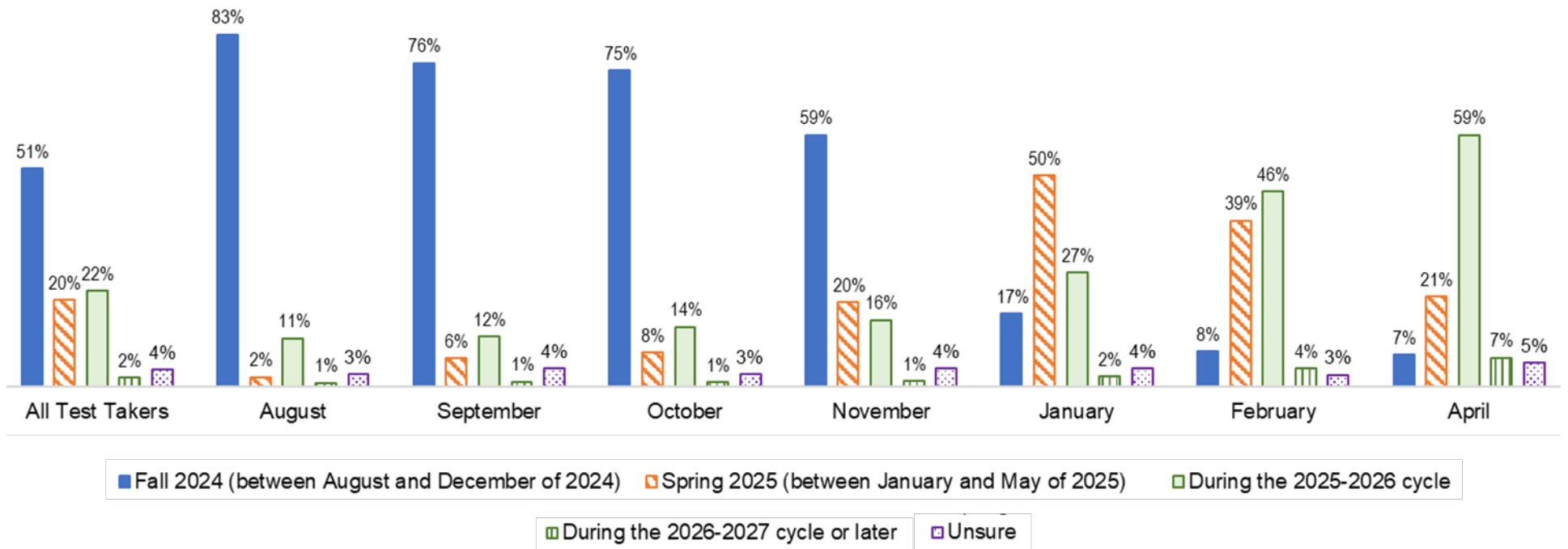
On the other hand, by February and April, continuing-generation college graduates and Pell Grant non-recipients are planning to apply to law school in the next admission cycle at higher rates than their peers. In February, continuing-generation college graduates plan on applying to law school during the upcoming 2025-26 admission cycle at a rate 15% (or 7 percentage points) higher than first-generation college graduates. By April, continuing-generation college graduates plan on applying to law school during the upcoming 2025-26 admission cycle at almost 30% (or 14 percentage points) higher than first-generation college graduates (Figure 8a). Similarly, Pell Grant non-recipients in February plan on applying in the spring (between January and May) at a rate 26% (or 10 percentage points) higher than Pell Grant recipients (Figure 8b). By April, Pell Grant non-recipients plan on applying in the spring (between January and May) at a rate almost 20% (or 9 percentage points) higher than Pell Grant recipients (Figure 8b).

The majority of test takers, including those from marginalized groups, intend on applying to law school early in the admission cycle, revealing they know about strategic approaches in timing their application submission. But for some, barriers and access to the resources and systems to effectively execute their plans persist. Evidence of the persistent inequality in access to guidance and support systems is observed in the fact that test takers from under-resourced backgrounds are planning to apply later in the admission cycle at higher rates than their peers. Depending on the JD program type, submitting applications later in the admission cycle may have negative implications, both for test takers' admission outcomes and in terms of access to financial resources that can make law school financially feasible.¹⁵

Taken together, the insights on who test takers turn to for advice and information and when they plan on applying to law school reinforce that the journey to law school is not experienced the same — and that solutions must be systematically built to address barriers throughout the trajectory.

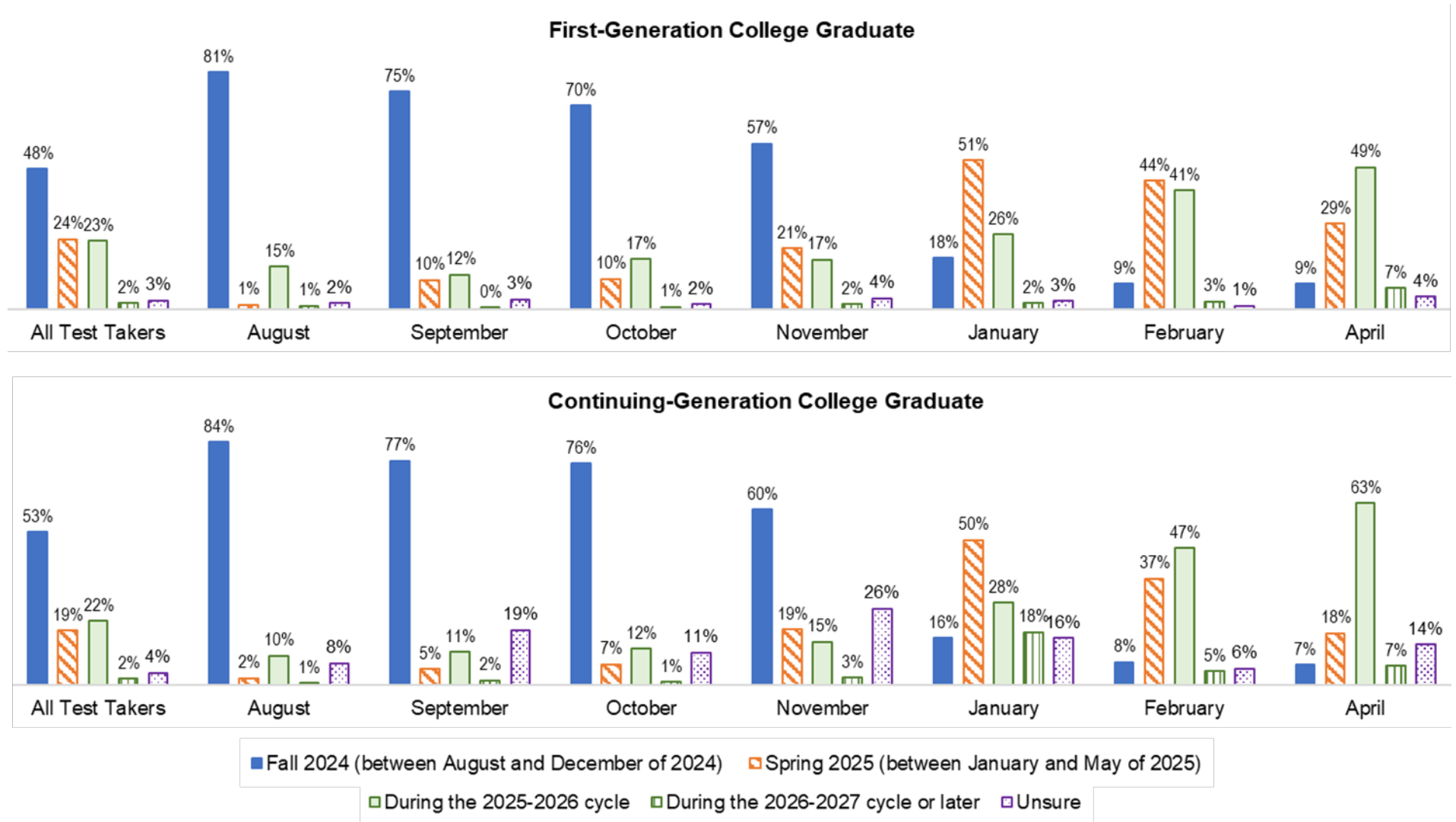
¹⁵ First-generation college graduates and Pell Grant recipient 1Ls report higher anticipated law school debt than their peers. [Funding the First Year: How 2024 1Ls Paid for Law School | The Law School Admission Council](#)

Figure 8: Intended Application Timeline Plans by LSAT Administration Month (n= 12,955)



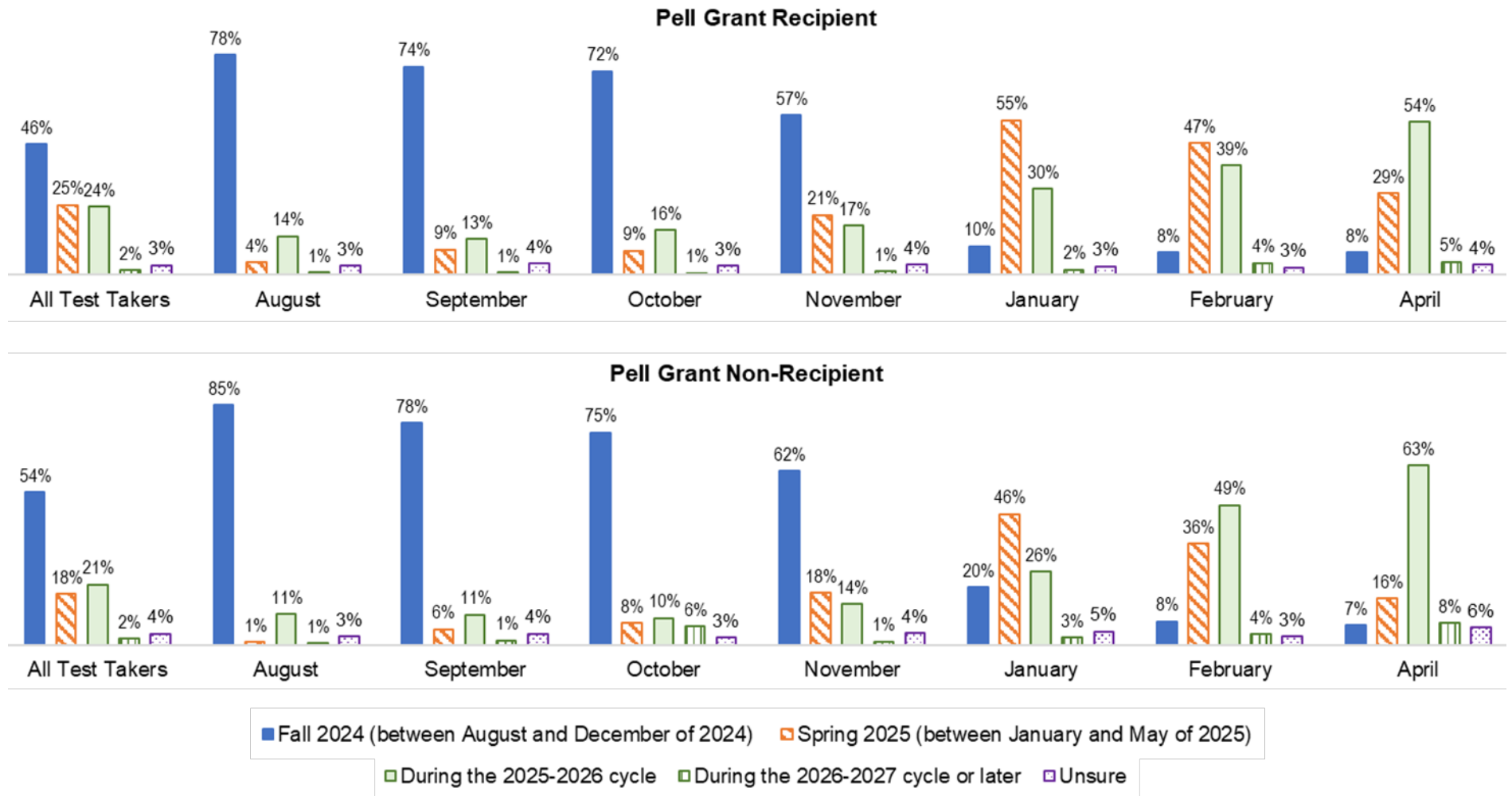
Source: 2024-25 LSAC PLQ Data. Candidates can apply and may have applied prior to January, even though they take the LSAT in January and onward. “All Test Takers” refers to PLQ respondents between August and April of the 2024-2025 cycle.

Figure 8a: Intended Application Timeline Plans by First-Generation College Graduate Status (n=12,955)



Source: 2024-25 LSAC PLQ Data. Candidates can apply and may have applied prior to January, even though they take the LSAT in January and onward. “All Test Takers” refers to PLQ respondents between August and April of the 2024-2025 cycle.

Figure 8b: Intended Application Timeline Plans by Pell Grant Status (n=12,955)



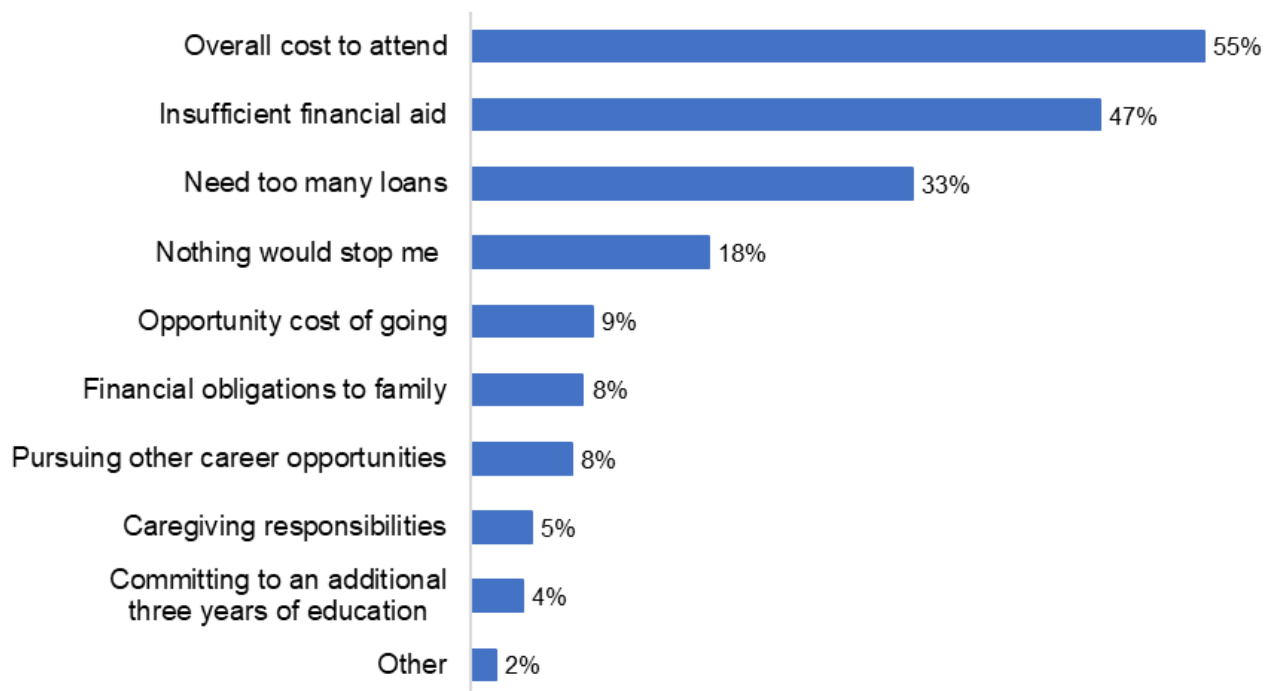
Source: 2024-25 LSAC PLQ Data. Candidates can apply and may have applied prior to January, even though they take the LSAT in January and onward. “All Test Takers” refers to PLQ respondents between August and April of the 2024-2025 cycle.

Anticipated Barriers to Law School

On the journey to law school, cost is top of mind for test takers. If admitted to their preferred or top law school, they said, the top three anticipated barriers that would stop them from attending are (1) the overall cost of attendance, (2) not receiving sufficient financial aid, and (3) having to take out too many loans (Figure 9).

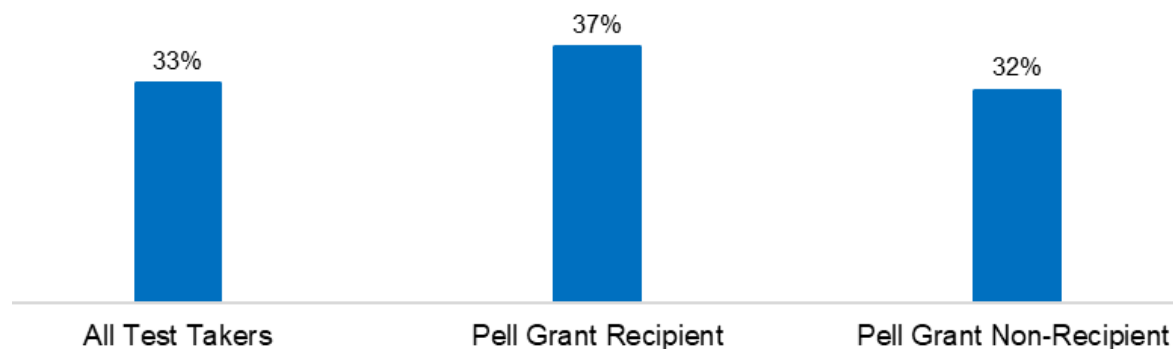
A third of test takers selected a new response option this year: “Having to take out more loans than I’m comfortable with” (Figure 9). Almost 40% of Pell Grant recipients indicated that having to take out too many loans would stop them from attending their preferred law school, a rate 16% (or 5 percentage points) higher than their peers who are not Pell Grant recipients (Figure 10).

Figure 9: Anticipated Barriers 2024-25 Test Takers Report Would Stop Them from Attending Their Preferred Law School (n=14,153)



Source: 2024-25 LSAC PLQ Data. Respondents can choose up to three options that apply. “Nothing would stop me” is an exclusive response.

Figure 10: 2024-25 Test Takers Who Report Taking Out Too Many Loans Is an Anticipated Barrier to Attending Their Preferred Law School (n=2,913)



Source: 2024-25 LSAC PLQ Data. “All Test Takers” refers to PLQ respondents between August and April of the 2024-25 cycle.

In 2023-24, test takers reported that the overall cost of attending law school was a barrier,¹⁶ and that barrier grew in 2024-25. While 2024-25 test takers sat for the LSAT, Congress passed major legislative changes, including the suspension of Grad PLUS loans and borrowing limits on unsubsidized loans. These changes are anticipated to change the way that students can fund their education and to disproportionately impact those who need financial assistance the most.

This financial concern reverberated across test takers in the 2024-25 testing administration cycle. For example, when test takers were asked in 2023-24 what would hold them back if they were admitted to their preferred law school, 30% reported nothing would stop them. In the most recent cycle, 2024-25, that rate dropped to only 18% saying nothing would stop them, a staggering 40% (or 12 percentage points) decrease (Figure 11). This decrease is pronounced based on Pell Grant status. In 2023-24, 25% of Pell Grant recipients reported that nothing would stop them from attending law school, a rate 38% (or 15 percentage points) lower than their Pell Grant non-recipient peers (40%; Figure 11). This trend significantly changed in 2024-25, when 16% of Pell Grant recipients reported that nothing would stop them from attending law school, a rate 41% (or 11 percentage points) lower than their Pell Grant non-recipient peers (27%; Figure 11). Overall, 2024-25 test takers, both Pell Grant recipients and Pell Grant non-recipients alike, report that nothing would stop them from attending their preferred law school, if admitted, at rates more than 30% lower than their peers who took the test in the 2023-24 testing cycle (Figure 11).

¹⁶ Refer to [LSAC's Knowledge Report: 2023-2024 Test Takers \(PDF\)](#), which examines the top-ranked barrier reported by test takers in 2023-24.

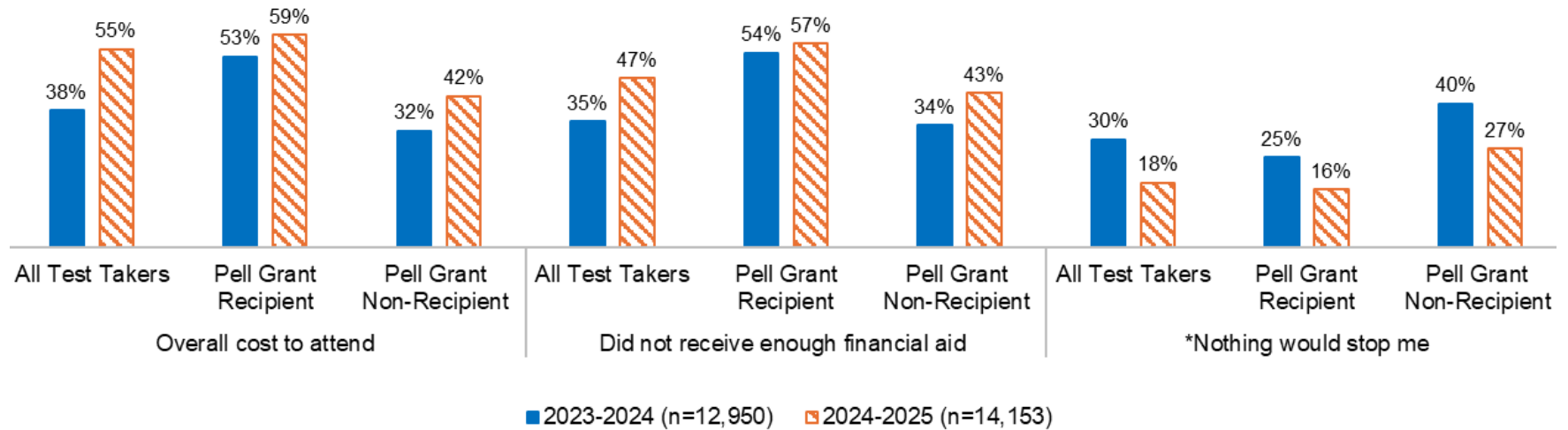
This trend of fewer test takers reporting that nothing would stop them from attending their preferred law school is paralleled by an increase in what test takers said would hold them back. If admitted to their preferred law school, 38% of test takers in 2023-24 reported that the total cost to attend law school would stop them from going. This increased by 45% (or 17 percentage points) in 2024-25 with 55% of test takers reporting that the overall cost of attending their preferred law school would stop them from enrolling (Figure 11). This difference is particularly acute based on Pell Grant status. In 2023-24, 53% of Pell Grant recipients reported that the overall cost of attendance would stop them from attending law school, a rate 66% (or 21 percentage points) higher than their Pell Grant non-recipient peers (32%; Figure 11). This trend significantly changed in 2024-25, when 59% of Pell Grant recipients reported that the overall cost of attendance would stop them from attending law school, a rate 40% (or 17 percentage points) higher than their Pell Grant non-recipient peers (42%; Figure 11).

Similarly, more test takers report that not receiving enough financial aid would hold them back if they were admitted to a preferred law school (Figure 11). If admitted to their preferred law school, 35% of test takers in 2023-24 reported that not receiving enough financial aid would stop them from going. This increased by 34% (or 12 percentage points) in 2024-25, with 47% of test takers reporting that not receiving enough financial aid would stop them from enrolling (Figure 11). This change is significantly pronounced based on Pell Grant status. In 2023-24, 54% of Pell Grant recipients reported that not receiving enough financial aid would stop them from attending their preferred law school, a rate 59% (or 20 percentage points) higher than their Pell Grant non-recipient peers (34%; Figure 11). This trend persisted in 2024-25, when 57% of Pell Grant recipients reported that not receiving enough financial aid would stop them from attending law school, a rate 33% (or 14 percentage points) higher than their Pell Grant non-recipient peers (43%; Figure 11). Overall, while most test takers indicated that not receiving enough financial aid is an anticipated barrier to law school, in the last two testing cohort this trend increased the most for Pell Grant non-recipients (Figure 11).

In the context of the federal loan changes, these insights about anticipated barriers to law school provide concrete evidence that the cost of law school will probably affect the future enrollment of aspiring law students, especially those who are Pell Grant recipients.¹⁷

¹⁷ This concern must be underscored given that about one in four Pell Grant recipients in the 2024 1L class reported that they expect to owe \$150,000 or more in law school debt at graduation. [Funding the First Year: How 2024 1Ls Paid for Law School | The Law School Admission Council](#)

Figure 11: Top Anticipated Barriers to Attending Preferred Law School Comparing 2023-24 and 2024-25 Test Takers



Source: 2023-24 and 2024-25 LSAC PLQ Data. PLQ respondents between August and April of each cycle. “All Test Takers” refers to PLQ respondents between August and April of each cycle. Respondents can choose up to three options that apply. “Nothing would stop me” is an exclusive response.

Conclusion and Advancing the Mission

Central to how test takers think about, plan, and experience the journey to law school is their access to effective guidance, support systems, and resources. Inequality in access to reliable and trusted support persists, evidenced in the 20% of all test taker respondents indicating they had no one to turn to for advice and information about the application process. Even in a time when information is widely available, it is essential to remember that access to information is not the same as access to effective guidance and resources that can be leveraged to make informed decisions.

Overall, aspiring law students first think about law school long before taking the LSAT, and they are highly driven and motivated to do good. But today, the financial feasibility of law school is newly in question for many prospective law students, especially those who are Pell Grant recipients. This report is the first empirical measurement of how the new federal loan caps and graduate education financing policies may affect aspiring lawyers, and it shows that candidates' anticipated barriers to law school have grown: The specific barrier of cost has increased among test takers by more than 40% from 2023-24 to 2024-25, and fewer test takers report that if admitted to their preferred law school, nothing will stop them from attending. This trend emerged at a time when aspiring law students were taking the LSAT and applying to law school at higher volumes; thus, while interest in legal education is high, the financial feasibility of law school may affect which of these aspiring students eventually enroll in law school. Of particular concern is the notion that top law school candidates, especially from under-resourced communities, might not enroll because they can no longer afford to — affecting not just the future composition of the legal profession, but also the availability of lawyers committed to meeting the growing need for access to justice across legal deserts, rural areas, and under-resourced communities.

In summary, access to legal education is uncertain today as law schools and candidates alike try to make sense of how federal changes to loans will play out. Even in these times, high volumes of test takers and applicants show that people are pursuing their legal career dreams, but this pursuit is not experienced equally. The insights in this report are critical for pathway programs, prelaw advisors, law schools, and stakeholders supporting test takers and law school applicants. In practical terms, this means intentionally considering and linking efforts to empower prospective applicants to make informed decisions, including by:

- Using prospective applicants' motivations to inform guidance on how and where to apply to law school, including helping them search for schools that will meet their personal, professional, and academic needs.
- Educating prospective applicants on the full cost of attendance; how to finance their legal education with a strategic, informed, multi-year budget plan; and how to plan for loan repayment.

In an ever-changing law school landscape, it is important to continue learning from test takers and aspiring law students about how they are experiencing the pathway to law school, and what their concerns are, in real time, allowing stakeholders to create effective interventions, quality resources, and support systems that can help candidates break through the noise to present their best application materials to schools.

With this data and additional data LSAC will continue to gather, analyze, and share in the months and years ahead, there is an opportunity for the legal community to come together to expand access and promote equity through a supportive pathway from prelaw through practice. As we continue to collect data, take snapshots throughout the journey, and conduct research, we welcome collaboration. If you want to work with us or have questions, please contact us at StrategicResearch@LSAC.org.

Data Source and Methodology

The PLQ was sent via email to all individuals who sat for the LSAT, both first-time and repeat test takers, in August, September, October, and November 2024, as well as in January, February, and April 2025. Respondents answered the PLQ on a secure online platform and were able to choose which questions or set of questions they wanted to answer, although some questions were required for research purposes.

Significance testing and testing for post-stratification survey weights were explored to ensure that PLQ respondents are representative of the LSAT test-taking population. The model with the best fit was the unweighted version, or the raw PLQ respondent population. The respondents to the PLQ proportionally matched those who took the test, and the maximum threshold of difference between any key group did not exceed the 5% maximum threshold that would require the application of post-stratification survey weights. Put differently, no demographic categories qualified for the use of weights for this report, including repeat test-takers. Insights based on PLQ data (n=15,483) are generalizable for the testing population between August 2024 and April 2025.