



# 2025 1L Class: Student Awareness and Impact of Accelerated Big Law Recruitment



## Special Knowledge Report

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# Executive Summary

Most large private U.S. law firms, commonly referred to as “Big Law,” hire almost all their entry-level lawyers through second-year (2L) summer associate programs.<sup>1</sup> These programs place law students at firms during the summer between their second and third years. At the end of the summer, roughly 96–98% of participants receive offers for post-graduation employment, making these programs the primary pathway to Big Law employment.

For decades, much of the Big Law recruiting process occurred just before the start of the second year of law school, usually in late July and August. Law schools organized on-campus interview (OCI) programs, during which firms conducted in-person screening interviews on campus and then invited selected students for longer callback interviews. This timing allowed students to acclimate to law school, receive two semesters of grades, and begin meaningful career planning. In recent years, however, law firm recruiting has undergone a significant shift.<sup>2</sup> With the rise of virtual interviewing during the COVID-19 pandemic, firms increasingly moved away from a traditional OCI-driven recruitment model and now rely more heavily on earlier, direct engagement with law students.

As some firms now recruit as early as the first semester of law school, stress and pressure have intensified for many students, while others may be entirely excluded — because they either are not informed in time or lack access to the resources needed to compete for often-lucrative 2L summer associate positions and postgraduation opportunities.

In collaboration with NALP, the 2025 LSAC Matriculants Survey, administered in October 2025, included a dedicated module examining accelerated law firm recruitment timelines and their impact on the first-year law school experience.<sup>3</sup> This joint report is the first of its kind to center the student perspective in the broader conversation about accelerated recruiting, disruptions to the 1L curriculum, and the inequities such practices may perpetuate in access to careers at large private law firms. To examine how accelerated Big Law recruiting timelines are affecting the first-year law school experience, this report focuses on:

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<sup>1</sup> In this report, large private firms (i.e., “Big Law”) are defined as having more than 500 attorneys.

<sup>2</sup> Learn more: [NALP’s 2025 Perspectives on Law Student Recruiting Report](#)

<sup>3</sup> For most 1L respondents, they had just started law school only a few months before receiving the survey.

1. Which employment sectors 1Ls considered before and since starting law school
2. Whether and when 1Ls were aware of Big Law recruiting timelines
3. How 1Ls learned about Big Law recruitment timelines
4. How Big Law recruitment timelines affect 1Ls' enrollment decisions
5. How accelerated Big Law recruiting timelines affected 1Ls' first-year experience
6. How 1Ls are engaging with law school career services offices

Overall, the shift toward earlier law firm recruiting timelines is negatively affecting first-year law students and disproportionately advantages those with greater access to resources, opportunities, and information — whether through their law schools or personal networks. The key insights that follow underscore the need to reflect carefully on the purpose and effectiveness of early law firm recruiting timelines for employers. They also raise important questions about how these timelines affect first-year law student development and how aspiring law students are guided throughout the application process to pursue opportunities aligned with their professional, academic, and personal goals.

# Accelerated Law Firm Recruiting Timelines: Highlights of What 1L Students Told Us

Based on survey responses collected in October 2025 from more than 2,000 1L students across 196 law schools

## Employment Sector Interests

- Big Law interest grew during the first year:
  - **45.4%** of 1L respondents considered Big Law since starting law school.
- Interest in government declined:
  - Interest decreased by **9%** since starting law school.
- Higher Big Law interest was reported among:
  - Continuing-generation college graduates
  - Continuing-generation law students
  - Younger students
  - Full-time students
  - Students at highly selective law schools

## Awareness of Accelerated Big Law Recruitment Timelines

- At the time of the survey, **88%** of respondents **were aware** of Big Law recruitment timelines for 2L summer associate positions.
- **25%** were aware of these timelines **before starting law school**.
- Students who considered Big Law **before law school** were nearly twice as likely to be aware compared with those who never considered Big Law (32.8% vs. 16.8%).
- Higher awareness before law school was reported among:
  - Men
  - Continuing-generation college graduates
  - Younger students
  - Full-time students
  - Students at highly selective law schools

## Sources of Information

- **58.1%** learned about recruiting timelines from their **law school career offices**.
- **40.1%** learned from **current or former law students**.
- **28.2%** learned from **law faculty**.
- At highly selective law schools, **25.4%** learned from **law-firm-hosted events**, compared with 19.3% of all respondents and 12% of respondents at law schools in the fourth selectivity quartile.
- **21.2%** of **continuing-generation law students** learned about timelines from family or friends in the legal profession, compared with **9.1%** of **first-generation college graduates**.



### Enrollment Decisions

- **30.6%** of respondents said accelerated Big Law recruitment timelines **did not influence** their enrollment decisions
- **29.1%** chose a school with strong overall employment outcomes.
- Early interest in Big Law influenced enrollment decisions. Among respondents who expressed interest in Big Law before law school:
  - **40.8%** chose a school with strong Big Law placement outcomes.
  - **21.5%** chose a school that hosted networking events with large law firms.
  - **18%** chose a school with strong relationships with large law firms.

### Impact on the 1L Experience

- **72.6%** of respondents said Big Law recruitment timelines affected their first-year experience.
- **55.5%** of all respondents, regardless of Big Law interest, reported their first-year experience was negatively affected.
  - **67.3%** of students considering Big Law reported a negative impact.
  - **41.3%** of students *not* considering Big Law reported a negative impact.
- “It’s been extremely stressful knowing that we should start applying to Big Law jobs when we started law school just two months ago. I prioritize my schoolwork, but I’m afraid of passing on an opportunity. It’s been extremely overwhelming for my mental health, and I feel like I’m drowning most of the time.”

### Law School Career Services Engagement

- **22.6%** received their first career counseling **before orientation**.
- Most students received counseling **during or after orientation**.
- Only **8.2%** had not yet received any career counseling.
- **More than 80%** knew how to access career counseling and would seek guidance on summer opportunities, internships, and postgraduate employment planning.



# Long Before the Interview: The Ripple Effects of Accelerated Big Law Recruiting on Access, Enrollment Decisions, and the First-Year Experience



*By Sudha Setty, President and Chief Executive Officer, LSAC*

The legal profession is shaped not only by who chooses to pursue a legal education, but also by the opportunities available to students as they begin their careers.

Before I became a law professor, a dean, and now the president of LSAC, I spent seven years practicing at a large law firm in New York. These were formative years that shaped my career and introduced me to talented colleagues from a wide range of law schools, backgrounds, and life experiences. Some followed traditional pathways into Big Law, while others arrived through less conventional routes, demonstrating their potential to Big Law employers through their 1L performance and cocurricular work.

Unequivocally, working in an environment with colleagues who followed diverse paths made my Big Law experience much richer and made us better legal counsel to our clients.

Today, the legal hiring landscape is evolving rapidly. Among the most notable changes is the acceleration of some law firm recruiting timelines, with certain hiring decisions occurring earlier in students' law school careers than ever before. As this report demonstrates, these shifts can influence not only students' professional opportunities, but also the decisions they make before they even enroll in law school.

Students enter the law school admission process with varying levels of access to information, guidance, and professional networks. Aspiring law students come from every background and circumstance, and many navigate the law school application process with limited guidance about the pathways available to them. At the same time, law school represents a significant investment of time, effort, and financial resources. Prospective students increasingly weigh factors such as affordability, employment outcomes, and long-term career opportunities when deciding where to apply and enroll.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Learn more about how aspiring law students apply to law school: [LSAC's Knowledge Report: The 2024-25 Law School Applicant Profile](#). A 2025 update was not available before the publication of this report.

Learn more about student enrollment decision-making: [LSAC's Knowledge Report: The 2024 1L Profile](#). A 2025 update was not available before the publication of this report.

Learn more about enrollment trends: [LSAC's Knowledge Report: The Composition of the First-Year Law School Class and Enrollment 2021-2025 Trends](#).

LSAC's mission is to advance law and justice by promoting access, equity, and fairness in legal education and by supporting learners through their legal education journey. In that spirit, we are proud to collaborate with NALP on this report, which brings together the perspectives of today's first-year law students to better understand how early recruiting practices shape the law school experience and the broader pathway into the profession — and to note that uneven access to the Big Law recruitment process affects upstream application and the enrollment decision-making process itself.

The findings presented here are not intended to prescribe a single or simple solution. Rather, they provide valuable insight into how students experience an evolving recruiting landscape, and they invite thoughtful engagement from all those who help shape legal education and the profession — law schools, employers, advisors, and organizations such as ours. By better understanding these experiences, we can identify opportunities to strengthen pathways into the profession and support students as they make some of the most consequential decisions of their educational and professional lives.

The legal profession benefits when talent, potential, and ambition can be recognized and developed wherever they are found. As recruiting practices continue to evolve, we hope this report contributes to a constructive, evidence-based conversation about how best to support students and how we can collectively build a stronger future for the profession.

# The Students Are Clear: Accelerated Recruitment Affects Their First-Year Experience and Access to Big Law



*By Nikia Gray, Executive Director, NALP*

This groundbreaking study, conducted in partnership between NALP and the Law School Admission Council, confirms with data what many across legal education and legal recruiting have observed for some time: Accelerated recruiting timelines are negatively affecting law students and creating meaningful barriers to access for many talented individuals seeking entry into some of the profession's most sought-after opportunities.

The findings are compelling not only because of the scale of the data, but also because they are grounded in the voices of the students themselves. More than 2,000 first-year law students described the difficulty of balancing the intense academic, emotional, and financial transition into law school while simultaneously navigating networking, applications, and interviews for positions that increasingly arise before many students have even received first-semester grades. Importantly, the study found that the effects of accelerated recruiting are not limited to students pursuing Big Law opportunities. Even students who never considered Big Law as a career path reported that these timelines contributed to stress, dissatisfaction, and pressure throughout the broader law school experience.

The research also raises serious concerns about access and equity, revealing a recruiting environment in which opportunity is increasingly tied to access to information that is not uniformly shared or understood. Awareness of accelerated recruiting timelines varied significantly, with students at highly selective law schools and continuing-generation college graduates substantially more likely to understand Big Law recruiting timelines before starting law school and therefore better positioned to engage strategically with the process. First-generation students and students at less selective institutions were significantly more likely to report being unaware of those timelines.

These findings should give the profession pause. The first year of law school is foundational to students' academic development, professional identity formation, and well-being. Yet the accelerated pace of Big Law recruiting is reshaping that experience in ways that undermine each of those goals while risking the exclusion of talented students who lack early access to information, networks, or guidance.

While market pressures may have contributed to the emergence of accelerated recruiting timelines, participants in the recruiting process still have agency. Employers can make intentional decisions about how, when, and where they recruit. Law schools can intervene earlier and more effectively to ensure students receive the information, preparation, and support they need to navigate an increasingly compressed hiring.

Our hope in undertaking this research is to provide the profession with meaningful data, backed by the voices of students themselves, about the consequences of accelerated recruiting for the next generation of lawyers. We hope these findings encourage employers to critically examine their recruiting practices, consider how those practices align with NALP's *Principles for a Fair and Ethical Recruitment Process*, and engage students in ways that are more thoughtful, responsible, and consistent with the educational mission of law schools.<sup>5</sup>

As recruiting practices continue to evolve, they must do so in ways that protect student well-being, preserve fairness and access, and strengthen confidence in the integrity of the profession. NALP is proud to partner with LSAC on this important research.

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<sup>5</sup> Check out NALP's [Principles for a Fair and Ethical Recruitment Process](#) to learn more.

# The 2025 1L Matriculant Survey Respondents: Survey Sample

In October 2025, LSAC administered the matriculant survey to the current first-year class. More than 3,000 1Ls from 196 U.S. law schools responded to the survey. For this report, more than 2,000 1L responded to the accelerated recruitment questions, and weights were created to ensure the sample reflected the 2025 1L class (Table 1).<sup>6</sup>

Overall, nearly 40% of the sample were from racially and ethnically minoritized groups, while more than half identified as white. Almost 23% of respondents were first-generation college graduates, and more than a quarter are Pell Grant recipients. The majority of respondents were women, nearly 80% were under the age of 27, and students from the top 100 selective law schools were slightly overrepresented in the sample (Table 1).

Taken together, the first-year law students represented in this survey share their collective experiences as they transition into law school while navigating academic, mental, emotional, and financial pressures alongside the demands of internship and job recruitment. The purpose of this report is to amplify student voices and spotlight their experiences for the broader legal community, in order to:

1. **Encourage legal employers** to reflect on how and when aspiring lawyers are recruited
2. **Strengthen how law schools provide employment preparation resources** to first-year students
3. **Inform those who support law school applicants** on how to advise and guide students throughout the application process, taking into account employment goals as well as personal and academic needs

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<sup>6</sup> Learn more in the [methodology](#) section at the end of the report.

**Table 1. 2025 1L Matriculant Survey: Demographic Summary**

Category	Group	2025 1L Class <sup>7</sup> (N = 42,723)	2025 Matriculant Survey Respondents – Weighted <sup>8</sup>
Race and Ethnicity	American Indian or Alaska Native <sup>9</sup>	1.3%	1.0%
	Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Australian <sup>10</sup>	‡	—
	Asian	9.1%	9.7%
	Black or African American	7.4%	6.4%
	Hispanic or Latina/é/o/x <sup>11</sup>	9.3%	8.6%
	Indigenous Person of Canada <sup>12</sup>	0.1%	0.1%
	Middle Eastern or North African/Arab	2.7%	2.5%
	Multiracial or Ethnoracial <sup>13</sup>	11.3%	10.8%
	Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Island <sup>14</sup>	0.3%	0.4%
	White	51.1%	53.1%
	Did Not Indicate	7.6%	7.3%

<sup>7</sup> Population estimates include the entire 2025 1L class.

<sup>8</sup> Survey weights were constructed by combining a base weight (the inverse probability of selection into the survey sample) with a raking adjustment to align respondents with known population margins. This adjusts for the small proportion of the 1L class not sampled due to administrative data timing. Raking was performed using iterative proportional fitting on key demographic characteristics that differed meaningfully between respondents and the population, including gender identity, sexual orientation, first-generation status, Pell Grant receipt, and age. Final weights were trimmed to limit extreme values.

<sup>9</sup> “American Indian or Alaska Native” includes those who identify exclusively or in part (multiracial or ethnoracial by selecting American Indian or Alaska Native and one or more other racial or ethnic category) as American Indian or Alaska Native, given conversations with community leaders and advocates.

<sup>10</sup> “Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Australian” include those who identify exclusively or in part (multiracial or ethnoracial by selecting Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Australian and one or more other racial or ethnic categories) as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Australian.

‡ Exact percent is suppressed to ensure individual privacy; group is present in totals throughout the report.

— No data available.

<sup>11</sup> “Hispanic or Latina/é/o/x” includes 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 individuals are included in the “Multiracial or Ethnoracial (two or more)” category.

<sup>12</sup> “Indigenous Person of Canada” includes those who identify exclusively or in part (multiracial or ethnoracial by selecting Indigenous Person of Canada and one or more other racial or ethnic categories) as Indigenous Persons of Canada.

<sup>13</sup> “Multiracial/Ethnoracial” identities represent a diverse group of people constituting more than 100 different identities. Non-Indigenous individuals who selected two or more races and/or ethnicities, or Indigenous individuals who selected three or more races, are considered multiracial.

<sup>14</sup> “Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander” includes those who identify exclusively or in part (multiracial or ethnoracial by selecting Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander and one or more other racial or ethnic categories) as Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander.

Category	Group	2025 1L Class <sup>7</sup> (N = 42,723)	2025 Matriculant Survey Respondents – Weighted <sup>8</sup>
<b>Gender Identity</b>	Gender Diverse <sup>15</sup>	1.1%	1.1%
	Cisgender Woman	54.6%	54.6%
	Cisgender Man	41.0%	41.0%
	Did Not Indicate	7.6%	7.3%
<b>Sexual Orientation</b>	Straight/Heterosexual	71.4%	71.3%
	Not Straight/Not Heterosexual	14.3%	14.3%
	Did Not Indicate	14.3%	14.4%
<b>LGBTQ+ Identity</b>	Not LGBTQ+	71.2%	71.0%
	LGBTQ+	14.5%	14.6%
	Did Not Indicate	14.3%	14.4%
<b>First-Generation College Graduate Status<sup>16</sup></b>	Continuing-Generation College Graduate	76.4%	75.5%
	First-Generation College Graduate	21.7%	22.8%
	Did Not Indicate	1.9%	1.7%
<b>First-Generation Law Student Status</b>	Continuing-Generation Law Student	23.8%	23.8%
	First-Generation Law Student	72.1%	72.1%
	Did Not Indicate	1.9%	1.9%
	{Missing}	2.2%	2.2%
<b>Pell Grant Recipient Status<sup>17</sup></b>	Pell Grant Non-Recipient	66.2%	66.2%
	Pell Grant Recipient	25.9%	25.9%
	Did Not Disclose/Don't Know	7.1%	7.3%
	{Missing}	0.9%	0.6%
<b>Age at Start of Academic Year</b>	22 or Younger	33.3%	33.2%
	23 to 26	45.6%	45.5%
	27 to 30	11.2%	11.3%
	31 to 39	7.0%	7.1%
	40 or Older	2.9%	2.9%

<sup>15</sup> “Gender Diverse” includes all individuals whose derived gender identity is not Cisgender Woman or Cisgender Man, which may include transgender and/or nonbinary individuals, and all individuals who selected “Gender identity not listed.”

<sup>16</sup> “First-Generation College Graduate” includes individuals with parents or guardians whose highest level of education includes an associate degree, some college, high school completion, or less than high school completion.

<sup>17</sup> Pell Grant recipient status is self-reported in the LSAC JD Account profile with the optional question “Have you ever received a Federal Pell Grant?” with drop-down selections of “No,” “Yes,” “I don’t know,” and “Prefer not to answer.”

Category	Group	2025 1L Class <sup>7</sup> (N = 42,723)	2025 Matriculant Survey Respondents – Weighted <sup>8</sup>
<b>Law School: Enrollment Intensity</b>	Full-Time	90.7%	89.8%
	Part-Time	9.3%	10.2%
<b>Law School: LSAC Selectivity Quartile<sup>18</sup></b>	Q1	28.6%	31.5%
	Q2	25.8%	26.6%
	Q3	22.1%	21.7%
	Q4	23.5%	20.1%

Source: LSAC 2025 1L Class Data and 2025 Matriculant Survey.

Note: Missing values are reported when the missingness rate for the variable is 0.5 or greater; otherwise, missing values are suppressed.

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<sup>18</sup> Recruitment by large law firms is highly competitive and often concentrated at the most selective law schools, carrying significant implications for which students secure these coveted positions. For example, highly selective (top 25% in terms of selectivity) law schools continue to be less diverse than other law schools, with less representation of first-generation college graduates and less representation of students from different racial and ethnic groups. Learn more about enrollment trends: [LSAC's Knowledge Report: The Composition of the First-Year Law School Class and Enrollment 2021-2025 Trends](#). In this report, each school is assigned a selectivity index score used to create quartiles of law school selectivity. Selectivity is based on the admission rate, median LSAT score of admitted students, and median UGPA of admitted students of a given year. The top 25% of law schools by selectivity, considered “highly selective,” are in the first quartile (Q1). Each quartile holds about 49 or 50 law schools.

**Employment Sector(s) Consideration:  
Where Do You Want to Work?**

The professional socialization that occurs in law schools often shapes — and reshapes — students’ views about where they want to work after law school. Working in the private practice sector (for-profit law firms of various sizes) remains popular among students, as evidenced by Law School Survey of Student Engagement data and NALP’s *Employment Report and Salary Survey*.<sup>19</sup> However, how these interests and considerations change quickly within the first few weeks of starting law school is a critical point to understand, given how some private large law firms (Big Law) are pushing their summer program recruitment timelines earlier in the first year of law school. Understanding which employment sectors students considered before and since starting law school provide insights into which students know how to prepare for the competitive Big Law recruitment process — and how the accelerated timelines affect the overall first-year experience.

The legal profession changed in the short period of time between when the 2025 1L respondents applied to law school and when they started law school. In addition to Big Law’s accelerated recruitment timelines, government hiring also changed as a new presidential administration took office. For example, in January 2025, the federal government rescinded highly competitive Honors Program and other agency job offers to Class of 2025 law graduates and enacted a broad hiring freeze across many government agencies. These and other factors, such as exposure to more legal sectors and education and guidance from law school career services offices, can influence students’ employment sector interests.

Overall, private firms of all sizes and government agencies remained the top sectors of interest for 1L respondents, but interest in government decreased for students after starting law school. While it is unknown whether the decline in interest in government is isolated to this class or will become a trend, this finding adds to the importance of examining how and when firms, especially Big Law, recruit students in the first year, and their growing interest in the sector.

## Employment Sector Considered Before Law School

The majority of respondents (86%) had an idea before starting law school about where they wanted to work after graduation, while only 14% reported they did not have a clear employment sector interest, because either they are choosing to explore their interest once in law school (9.7%) or they simply had not considered their postgraduation employment interest before starting law school (3.9%; Figure 1).

The top employment sectors 1L respondents report they considered before starting law school include large private firms (Big Law), medium-sized private firms, government, small private firms, and judicial clerkships (Figure 1). First-year respondents considered

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<sup>19</sup>Learn about sector interest while in law school: Deo, M.E., Petzold, J. & Christensen, C. (2024). [LSSSE 2024 Annual Report: Twenty Years of LSSSE Sharing Trends in Legal Education](#). Learn more about recent law graduate employment sector trends: NALP’s [Employment for the Class of 2024 – Selected Findings Report](#). The Class of 2025 report is anticipated to be released in July 2026.

a wide range of sectors before starting law school and confirmed that when they thought about where to practice, generally, private practice was the leading sector. Since students may be open to exploring multiple career paths, they had the opportunity within the survey to select all employment sectors they were considering.

However, employment sectors considered by respondents before law school varied significantly<sup>20</sup> by 1L respondents' backgrounds, specifically in terms of race, ethnicity, gender, age, first-generation college status, Pell Grant status, and the law school they attend (Figures 2 to 9). Some of these significant differences include:

- More racially and ethnically minoritized respondents said they considered large private law firms (Big Law) before starting law school than their white peers — 43.5%, compared with 36.9%, a 6.6% absolute difference (Figure 2).
- Gender-diverse respondents and women considered employment in a public defender's office at higher rates than men, while men considered solo practice and military at higher rates than their peers (Figure 3).
- LGBTQ+ students considered public interest and government sectors at higher rates than their classmates (Figure 4). For example, 42.9% of LGBTQ+ respondents considered government, compared with 33.4% of their peers, and 38.5% considered other public interest (outside of a public defender's office), compared with 20.8% of their peers.
- First-generation college graduates considered Big Law, judicial clerkship and academic/education sectors at lower rates than continuing-generation college graduates (Figure 5). For example, 41.6% of continuing-generation college graduates considered Big Law, compared with 34.4% of first-generation college graduates. On the other hand, first-generation college graduates considered solo practice at higher rates than their peers.
- First-generation law students considered Big Law at a lower rate than continuing-generation law students: 37.5%, compared with 47.7% (Figure 5).
- Students who did not receive a Pell Grant reported considering Big Law and judicial clerkship at a higher rate than students who are Pell Grant recipients (Figure 6). For example, 42.5% of respondents who did not receive a Pell Grant considered Big Law, compared with 32.5% of Pell Grant recipients — an absolute difference of 10%. On the other hand, 15.2% of Pell Grant recipients considered solo practice, while only 9.6% of Pell Grant non-recipients did so.

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<sup>20</sup> In this report, "significantly" indicates that the mean values between two groups are significantly different from one another. Survey-weighted Wald F tests evaluate whether observed group differences are statistically significant while accounting for survey weights, so results reflect the population rather than just the sample. An F-test p-value of 0.05 indicates strong evidence that group differences exist, with less than a 5% probability that the observed differences occurred by chance. \*\*\*p<0.001, \*\*p<0.01, \*p<0.05.

- More respondents under the age of 27 considered Big Law compared with their older peers (Figure 7), while respondents older than 30 considered solo practice at higher rates than their younger peers.
- Students in full-time programs reported at higher rates that they considered large and medium-sized law firms and judicial clerkships compared with their part-time peers (Figure 8). Meanwhile, part-time students considered small firms and solo practice more than their full-time peers.
- Interest in Big Law and judicial clerkship increases as law school selectivity increases (Figure 9).<sup>21</sup> For example, 58% of respondents at highly selective law schools (Q1) considered Big Law, compared with 23.7% of respondents at law schools in the fourth selectivity quartile. Similarly, 40.7% of respondents at highly selective law schools (Q1) considered judicial clerkships, compared with 21.1% of respondents at law schools in the fourth selectivity quartile. On the other hand, 22.1% of respondents at law schools in the fourth selectivity quartile considered solo practice, while only 5.3% of respondents at highly selective law schools (Q1) did so.

First-year respondents' reported sector interests before starting law school align with general employment sector trends. The group-based differences reaffirm that most students interested in Big Law or other coveted sectors, such as judicial clerkships, are enrolled in full-time programs, younger, and attending highly selective law schools. This is not surprising, given that Big Law and clerkship recruitment are highly concentrated at highly selective schools.<sup>22</sup> These trends shift but persist after starting law school, as analyzed in the next section.

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<sup>21</sup> Recruitment by large law firms is highly competitive and often concentrated at the most selective law schools, carrying significant implications for which students secure these coveted positions. For example, highly selective (top 25% in terms of selectivity) law schools continue to be less diverse than other law schools, with less representation of first-generation college graduates and less representation of students from different racial and ethnic groups. Learn more about enrollment trends: [LSAC's Knowledge Report: The Composition of the First-Year Law School Class and Enrollment 2021-2025 Trends](#). In this report, each school is assigned a selectivity index score used to create quartiles of law school selectivity. Selectivity is based on the admission rate, median LSAT score of admitted students, and median UGPA of admitted students of a given year. The top 25% of law schools by selectivity, considered "highly selective," are in the first quartile (Q1). Each quartile holds about 49 or 50 law schools.

<sup>22</sup> Enrollment by age varies across law school selectivity. For example, older students enroll into law schools in the third and fourth selectivity quartiles at higher rates than their younger peers. The 2025 1L Profile report is forthcoming at the time of publication. Check out [LSAC's Knowledge Report: The 2024 1L Profile](#) to learn more about enrollment trends by age.

Importantly, many of these early career interests prior to starting law school closely align with ultimate career outcomes at the conclusion of law school. For example, NALP's annual *Jobs & JDs* report shows that when racially and ethnically minoritized law graduates are employed in private practice, they are much more likely to work at a large firm than their white peers are. For the Class of 2024, one-quarter of all employed racially and ethnically minoritized law graduates were working in a large firm (Big Law), compared with 18% of employed white graduates.<sup>23</sup>

NALP's *Employment Report and Salary Survey* also highlights employment disparities by highest level of education, with continuing-generation law students consistently finding employment in judicial clerkships and Big Law at the highest overall rates, while first-generation college graduates have the lowest rates of employment in these sectors.<sup>24</sup> For the Class of 2024, 27% of employed continuing-generation law graduates were working in a large firm, compared with just 16% of first-generation college students, and 13% of continuing-generation law graduates found employment as a judicial clerk, compared with 8% of first-generation students.

Likewise, there are differences in post-graduation employment destinations by enrollment intensity, with 21% of full-time students working in Big Law, compared with just 8% of part-time students. As evidenced by the NALP data, these early career interests often persist throughout the law school and early career journey.

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<sup>23</sup> Learn more: NALP's [Jobs & JDs: Employment and Salaries of New Law Graduates – Class of 2024](#).

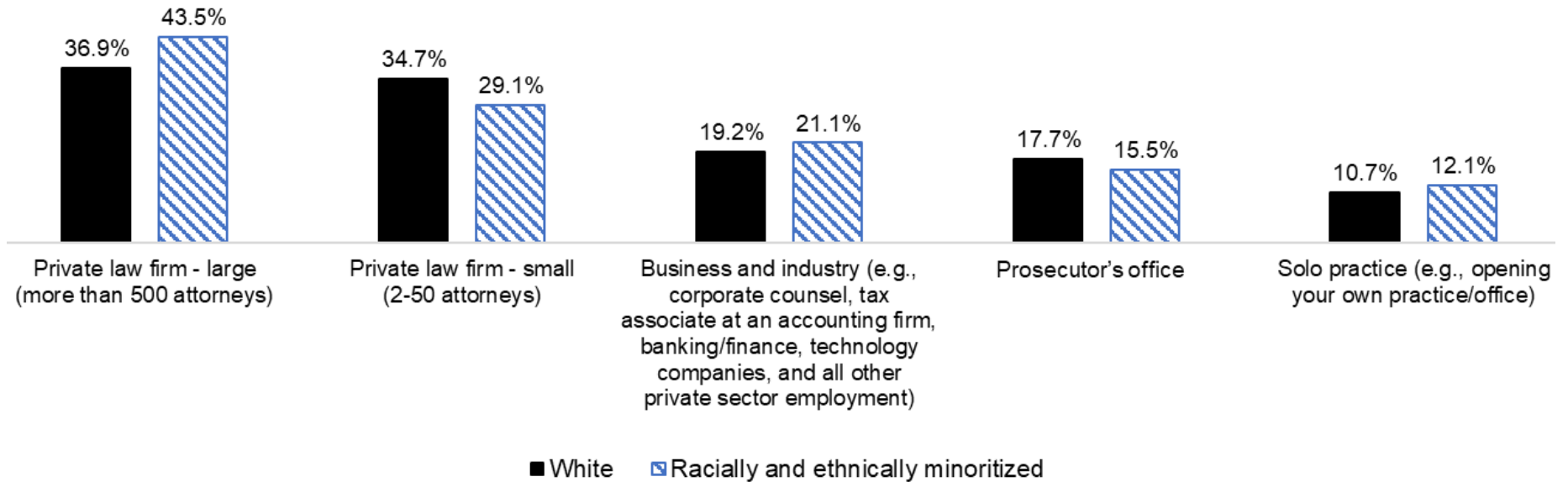
<sup>24</sup> Learn more about postgraduation employment by level of parental education: [NALP Research: First Gen Graduates of Color Face Largest Entry-Level Employment Gaps](#).

**Figure 1. Employment Sectors Considered Before Law School**



Source: 2025 LSAC Matriculant Survey

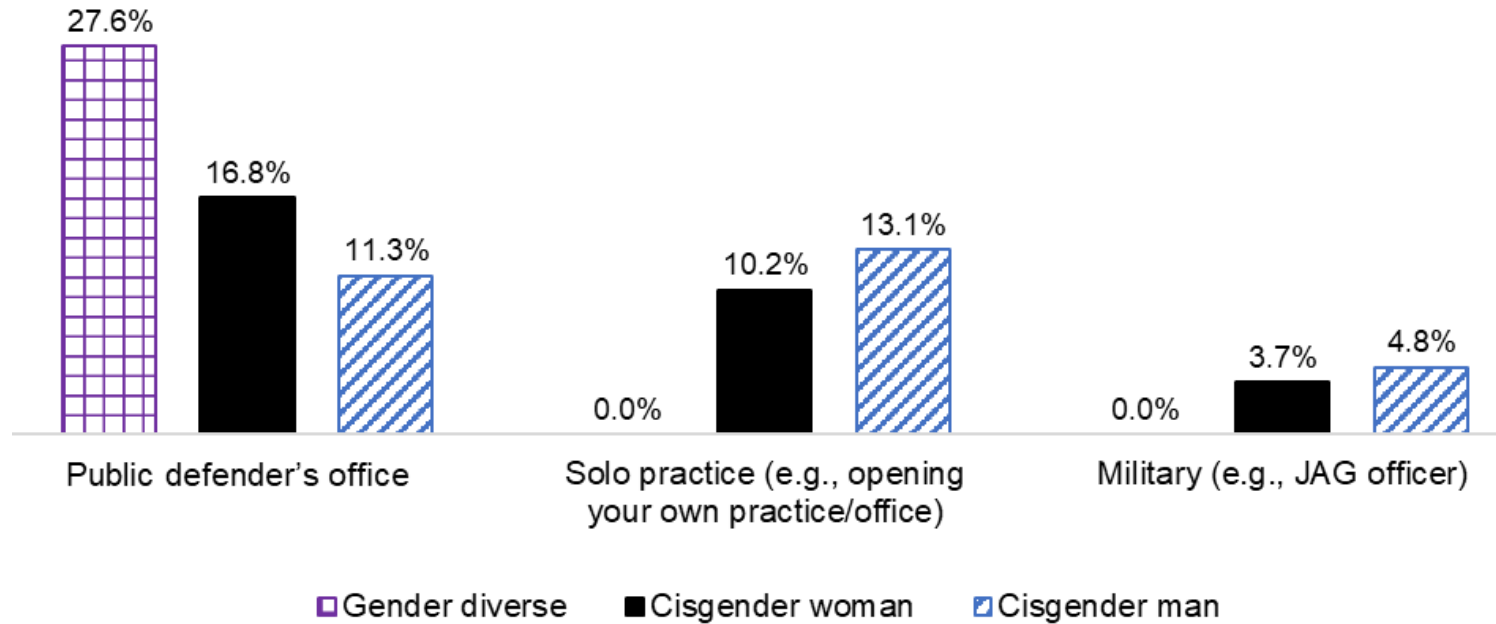
**Figure 2. Employment Sectors Considered Before Law School, by Race/Ethnicity**



Source: 2025 LSAC Matriculant Survey.

Note: Only statistically significant sector differences are shown. An F test p value of 0.05 indicates strong evidence that group differences exist, with less than a 5% probability that the observed differences occurred by chance.

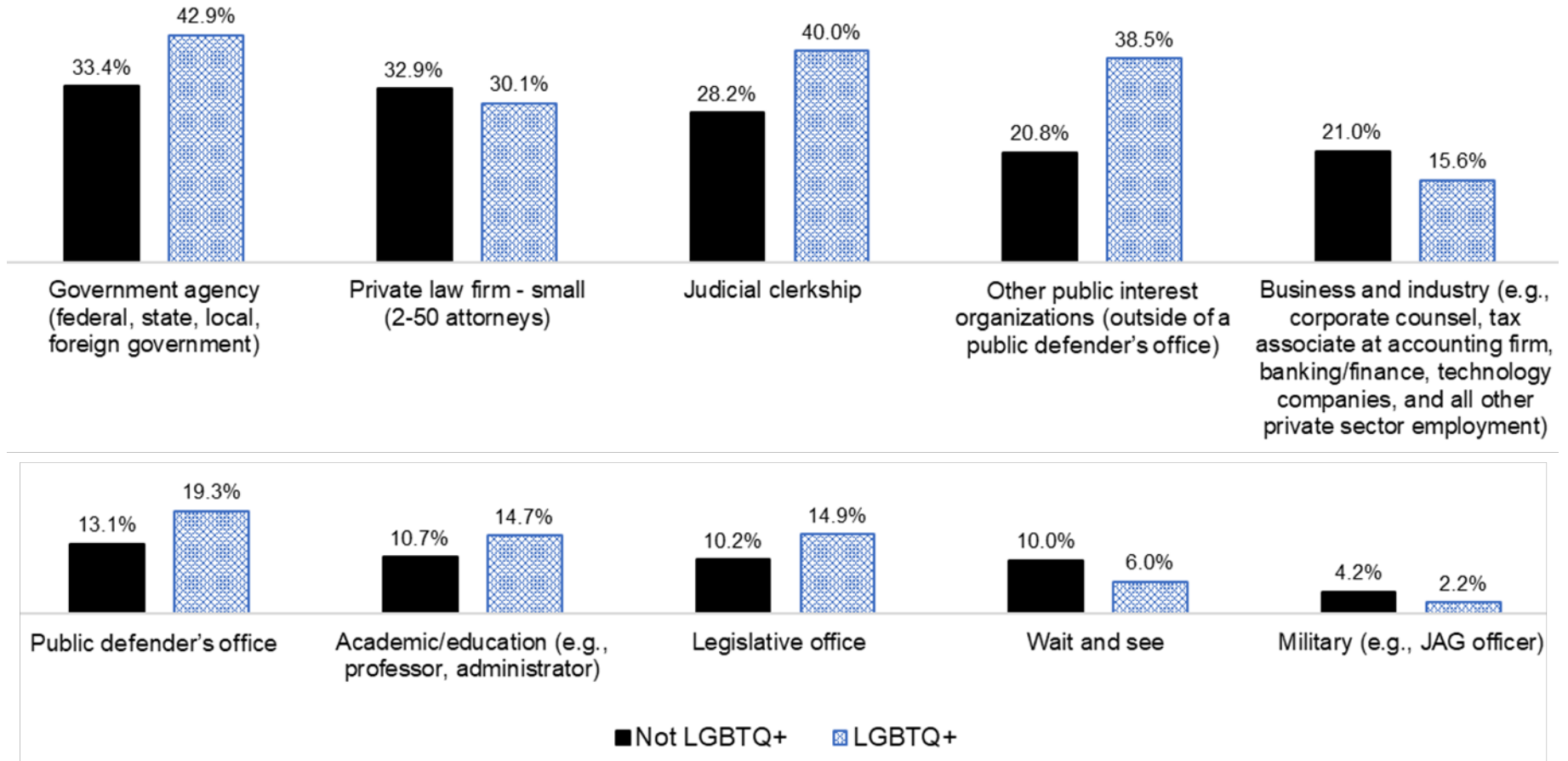
**Figure 3. Employment Sectors Considered Before Law School, by Gender Identity**



Source: 2025 LSAC Matriculant Survey.

Note: Only statistically significant sector differences are shown. An F test p value of 0.05 indicates strong evidence that group differences exist, with less than a 5% probability that the observed differences occurred by chance.

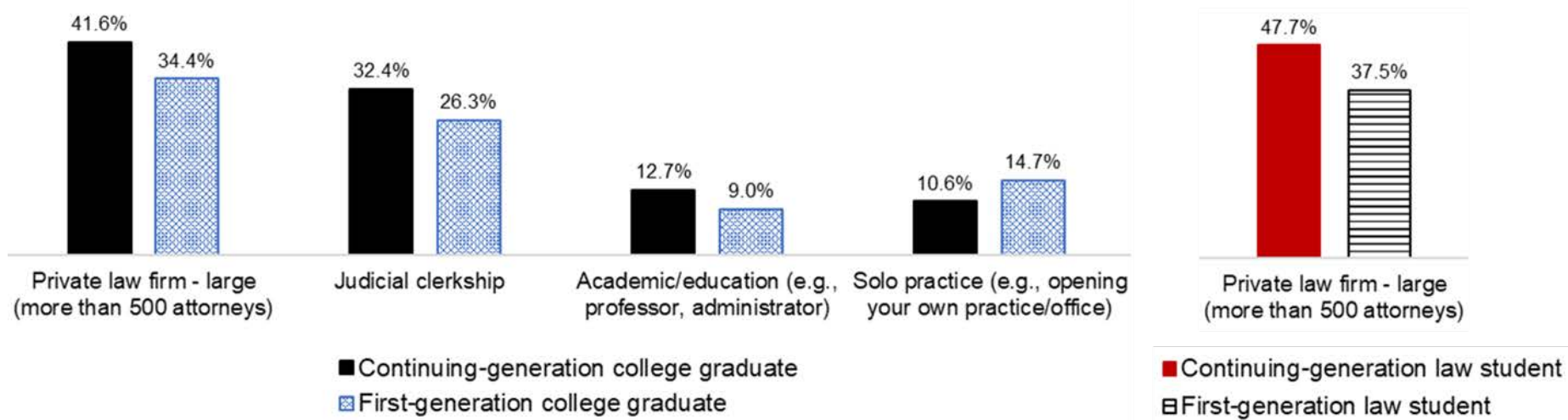
**Figure 4. Employment Sectors Considered Before Law School, by LGBTQ+ Identity**



Source: 2025 LSAC Matriculant Survey.

*Note:* Only statistically significant sector differences are shown. An F test p value of 0.05 indicates strong evidence that group differences exist, with less than a 5% probability that the observed differences occurred by chance.

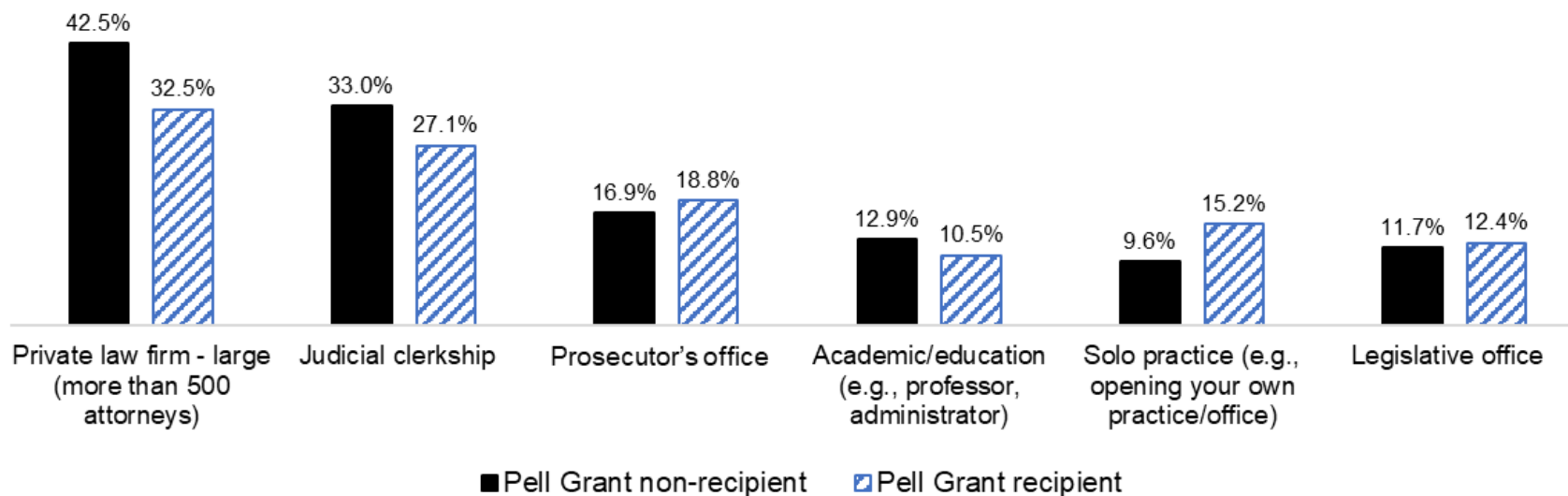
**Figure 5. Employment Sectors Considered Before Law School, by First-Generation College Graduate Status and First-Generation Law Student Status**



Source: 2025 LSAC Matriculant Survey.

Note: Only statistically significant sector differences are shown. An F test p value of 0.05 indicates strong evidence that group differences exist, with less than a 5% probability that the observed differences occurred by chance.

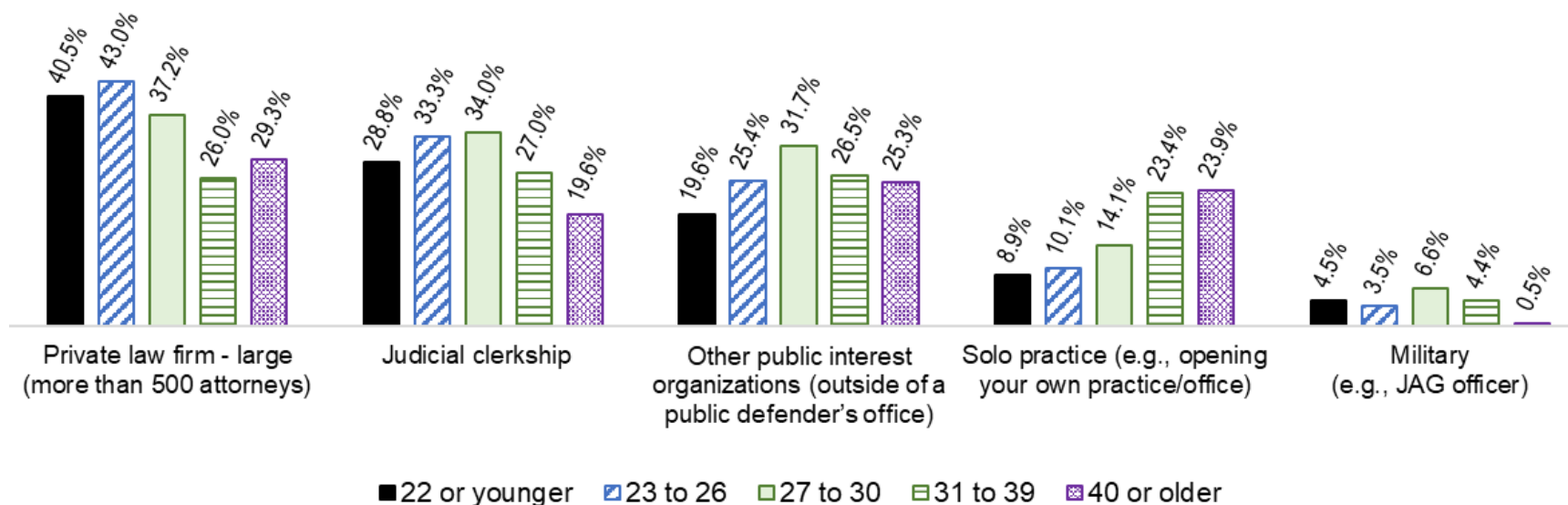
**Figure 6. Employment Sectors Considered Before Law School, by Pell Grant Recipient Status**



Source: 2025 LSAC Matriculant Survey.

Note: Only statistically significant sector differences are shown. An F test p value of 0.05 indicates strong evidence that group differences exist, with less than a 5% probability that the observed differences occurred by chance.

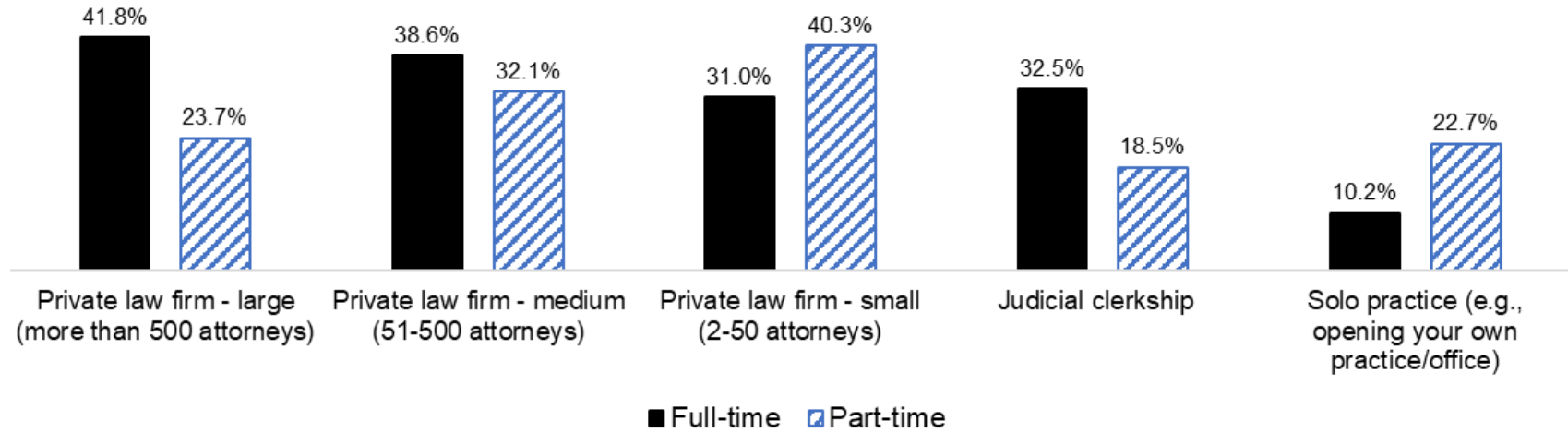
**Figure 7. Employment Sectors Considered Before Law School, by Age at Start of Academic Year**



Source: 2025 LSAC Matriculant Survey.

Note: Only statistically significant sector differences are shown. An F test p value of 0.05 indicates strong evidence that group differences exist, with less than a 5% probability that the observed differences occurred by chance.

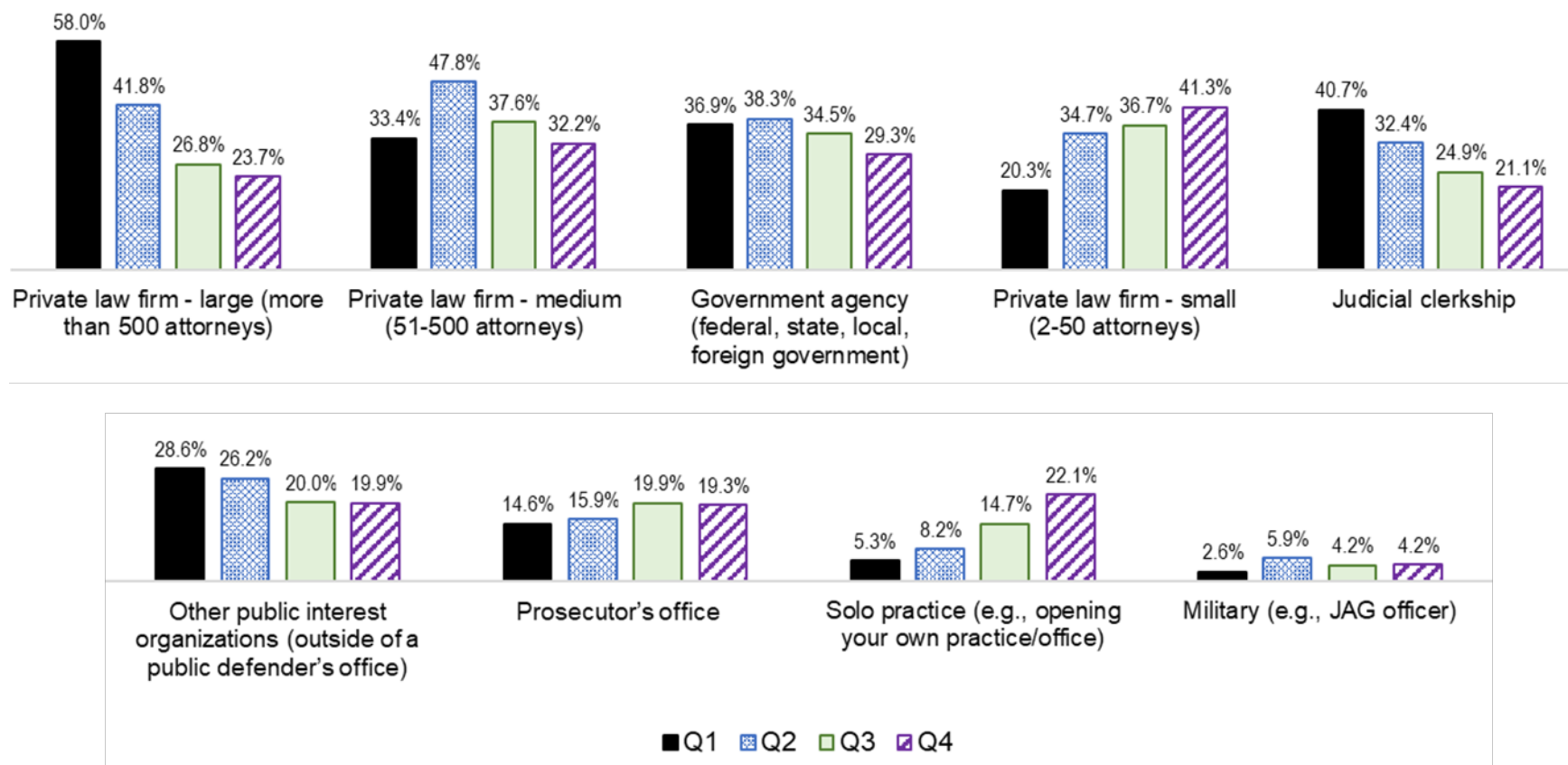
**Figure 8. Employment Sectors Considered Before Law School, by Enrollment Intensity**



Source: 2025 LSAC Matriculant Survey.

Note: Only statistically significant sector differences are shown. An F test p value of 0.05 indicates strong evidence that group differences exist, with less than a 5% probability that the observed differences occurred by chance.

**Figure 9. Employment Sectors Considered Before Law School, by Law School Selectivity Quartile**



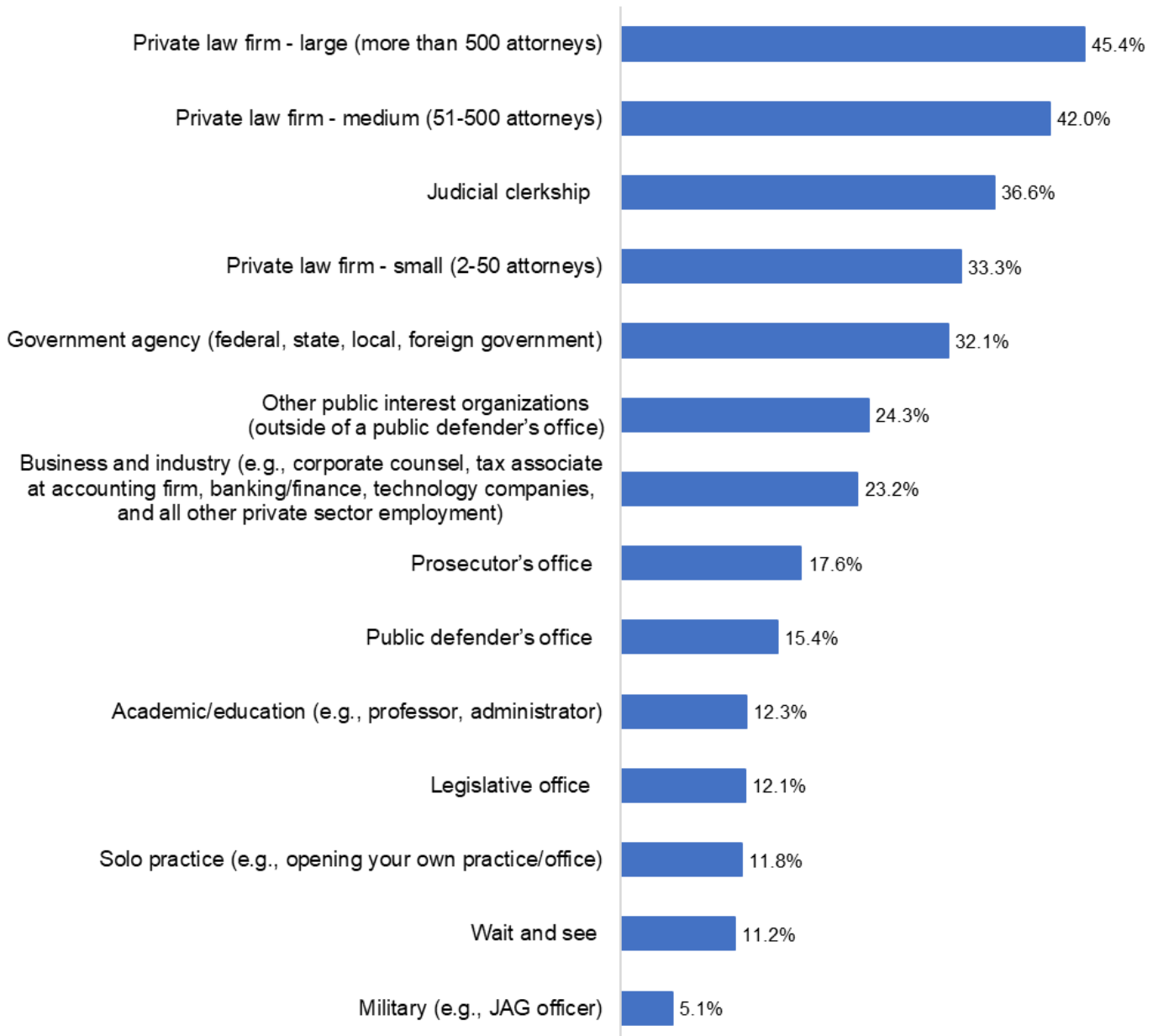
Source: 2025 LSAC Matriculant Survey.

Notes: Only statistically significant sector differences are shown. An F test p value of 0.05 indicates strong evidence that group differences exist, with less than a 5% probability that the observed differences occurred by chance. Each school is assigned a selectivity index score used to create quartiles of law school selectivity. Selectivity is based on the admission rate, median LSAT score of admitted students, and median UGPA of admitted students of a given year. The top 25% of law schools by selectivity, considered “highly selective,” are in the first quartile (Q1). Each quartile holds about 49 or 50 law schools.

## Employment Sector Consideration Since Starting Law School

First-year respondents' interests in employment sectors shift within the first few months of starting law school. Almost 90% of respondents were considering more than one sector since beginning law school. Compared to prior to law school, interest rose in all sectors except government, which was the only sector to see decreased interest among this group. The top three sectors 1L respondents reported considering since starting law school were large private law firms (Big Law at 45.4%), medium-sized private law firms (42%), and judicial clerkships (36.6%) (Figure 10). More than one in 10 respondents (11.2%) reported they were still weighing their options. Overall, interest and consideration of Big Law grew for many students since starting law school.

**Figure 10. Employment Sectors Considered Since Beginning Law School**



Source: 2025 LSAC Matriculant Survey

Employment sectors considered by respondents since starting law school continued to vary significantly<sup>25</sup> by 1L respondents' backgrounds, specifically in terms of race, ethnicity, gender, age, first-generation college status, Pell Grant status, and the law school they attend (Figures 11 to 19). Some of these significant differences include:

- More racially and ethnically minoritized respondents said they had considered large private law firms (Big Law) since starting law school than their white peers — 50.1%, compared with 42.1%, an 8% absolute difference (Figure 11).
- More white respondents indicated they had considered government since starting law school than their racially and ethnically minoritized peers — 35.8%, compared with 27.6%, an 8.2% absolute difference (Figure 11).
- Men said they were considering Big Law (47.4%) at higher rates since starting law school than their peers (44.7% for women and 35.7% for gender diverse), and gender-diverse students reported considering other public interest work (outside of a public defender's office) at higher rates than their peers (Figure 12).
- LGBTQ+ students reported considering more Big Law, judicial clerkship, public interest, and government sectors than their peers (Figure 13). For example, 49.1% of LGBTQ+ respondents said that since starting law school, they had considered Big Law, compared with 45.7% of their peers.
- First-generation college graduates reported considering Big Law, judicial clerkship and other public interest sectors outside of a public defender's office at lower rates than continuing-generation college graduates (Figure 14). For example, 47.3% of continuing-generation college graduates considered Big Law, compared with 38.7% of first-generation college graduates — an 8.6% absolute difference. On the other hand, first-generation college graduates considered solo practice at higher rates than their peers.
- First-generation law students reported considering Big Law since starting law school at a lower rate than continuing-generation law students — 43%, compared with 52.4%, a 9.4% absolute difference (Figure 15).
- Students who did not receive a Pell Grant reported considering Big Law since starting law school at a higher rate than students who are Pell Grant recipients (Figure 16). For example, 48.3% of respondents who did not receive a Pell Grant considered Big Law, compared with 38% of Pell Grant recipients — an absolute difference of 10.3%.

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<sup>25</sup> In this report, "significantly" indicates that the mean values between two groups are significantly different from one another. Survey-weighted Wald F tests evaluate whether observed group differences are statistically significant while accounting for survey weights, so results reflect the population rather than just the sample. An F-test p-value of 0.05 indicates strong evidence that group differences exist, with less than a 5% probability that the observed differences occurred by chance. \*\*\*p<0.001, \*\*p<0.01, \*p<0.05

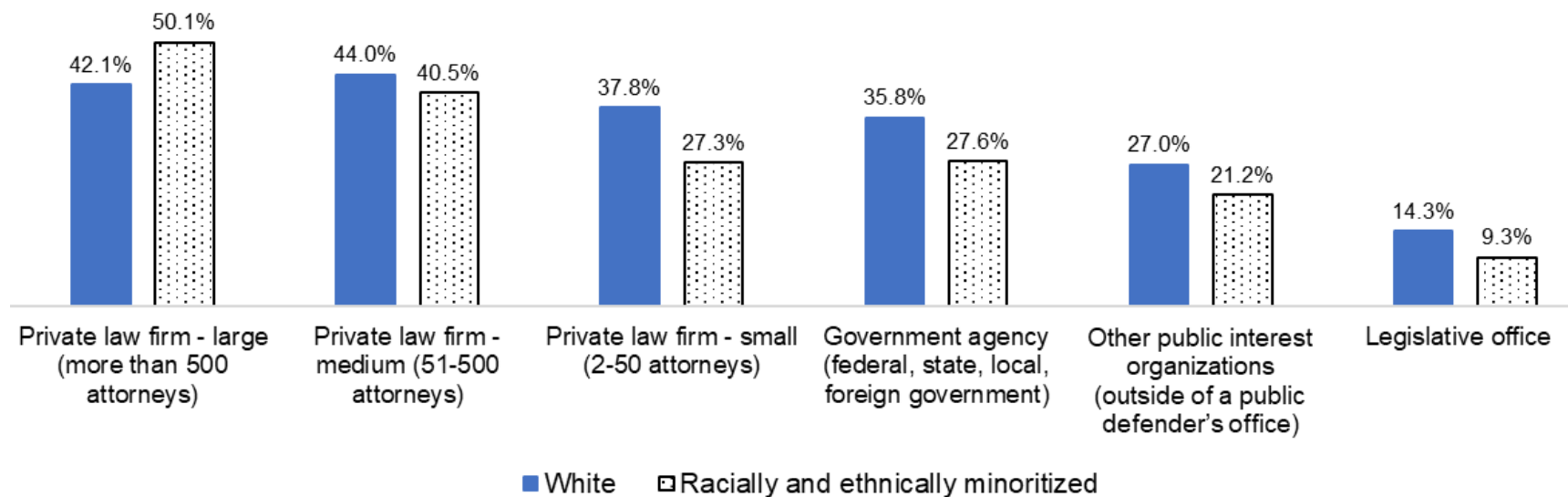
- More respondents younger than 27 reported considering Big Law since starting law school compared with their older peers (Figure 17), while respondents who are older than 30 considered solo practice at higher rates than their younger peers.
- Students in full-time programs reported higher rates of considering Big Law and judicial clerkships since starting law school compared with their part-time peers (Figure 18). For example, 47.7% of respondents in full-time programs reported they were considering Big Law, compared with 25.9% of respondents in part-time programs. Meanwhile, part-time students considered small firms and solo practice more than their full-time peers. And 16.5% of part-time students reported they were still exploring employment sector interests, compared with only 10.6% of full-time students.
- Interest in Big Law and judicial clerkship increased as law school selectivity increased (Figure 19). For example, 65% of respondents at highly selective law schools (Q1) reported considering Big Law since starting law school, compared with 27% of respondents at law schools in the fourth selectivity quartile. Similarly, 45.2% of respondents at highly selective law schools (Q1) considered judicial clerkships, compared with 25.7% of respondents at law schools in the fourth selectivity quartile. On the other hand, 1.8% of respondents at law schools in the fourth selectivity quartile reported considering solo practice since starting law school, while only 5.8% of respondents at highly selective law schools (Q1) did so. Fewer respondents said they were still exploring their employment sector interests as law school selectivity increased.

First-year respondents reported growth in employment sector interests since starting law school, except for interest in government positions. Group-based differences persisted, as increasing numbers of students reported interest in Big Law and other highly competitive sectors, such as judicial clerkships. Since starting law school, students interested in Big Law have continued to be predominantly enrolled in full-time programs, younger, and enrolled at highly selective law schools. This pattern is not surprising, given that Big Law recruiting is highly concentrated at more selective institutions, a factor that may help explain the growth in Big Law consideration.<sup>26</sup> Overall, while students' preferences shift after entering law school, many of the underlying patterns observed prior to enrollment persist once law school begins.

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<sup>26</sup> Enrollment by age varies across law school selectivity. For example, older students enroll into law schools in the third and fourth selectivity quartiles at higher rates than their younger peers. The 2025 1L Profile report is forthcoming at the time of publication. Check out [LSAC's Knowledge Report: The 2024 1L Profile](#) to learn more about enrollment trends by age.

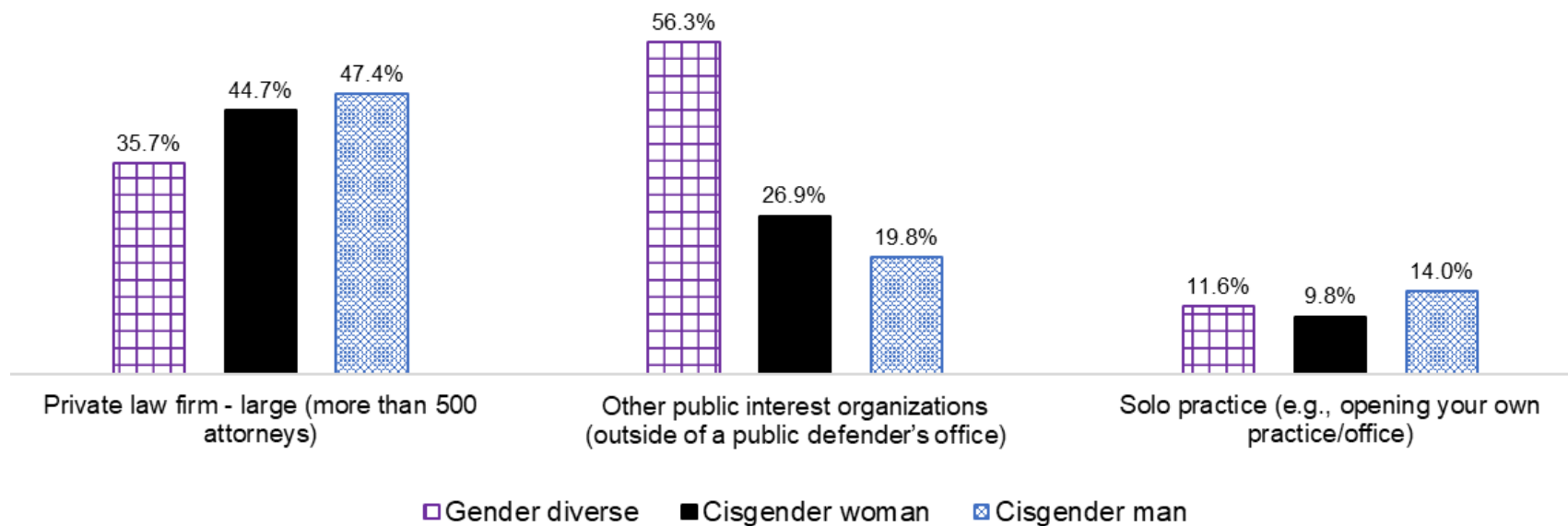
**Figure 11. Employment Sectors Considered Since Beginning Law School, by Race and Ethnicity**



Source: 2025 LSAC Matriculant Survey.

Note: Only statistically significant sector differences are shown. An F test p value of 0.05 indicates strong evidence that group differences exist, with less than a 5% probability that the observed differences occurred by chance.

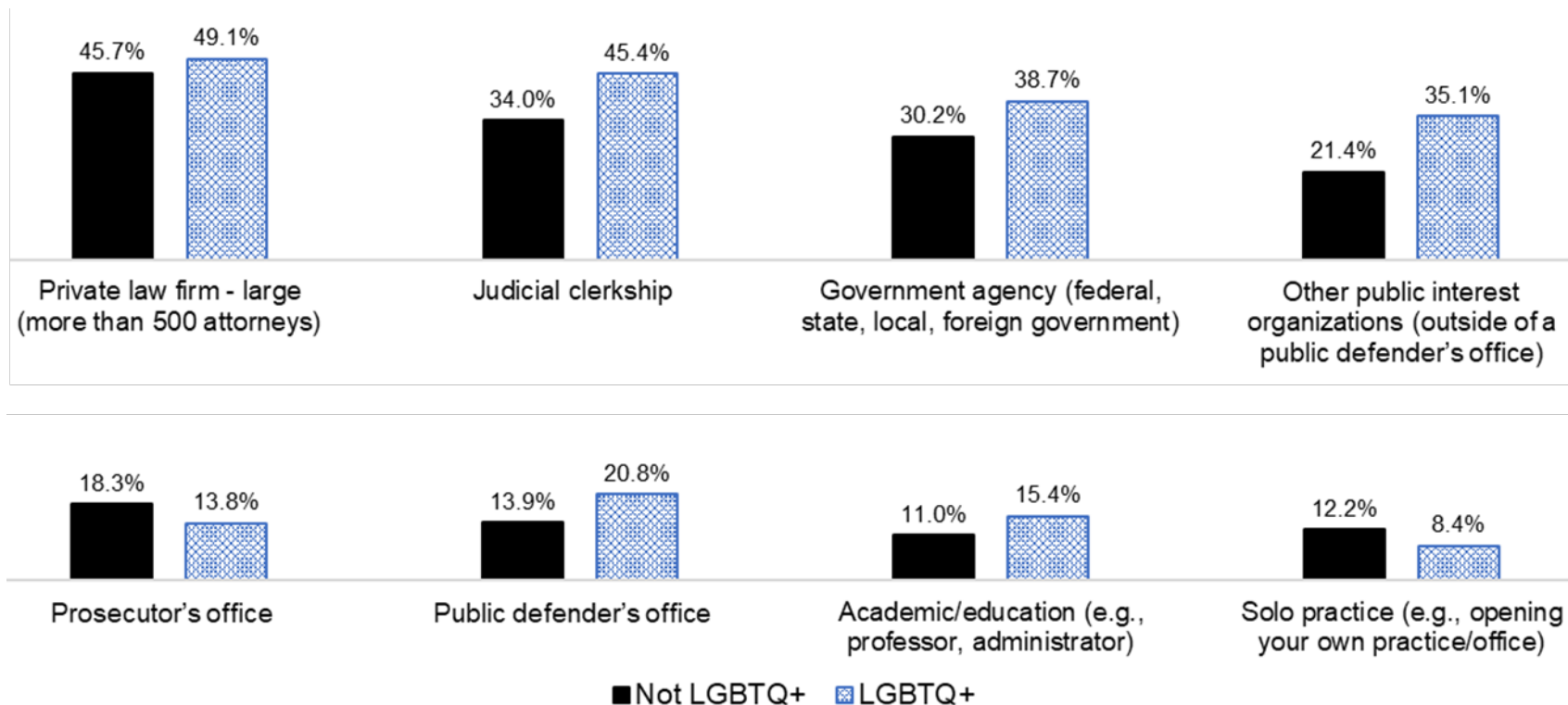
**Figure 12. Employment Sectors Considered Since Beginning Law School, by Gender Identity**



Source: 2025 LSAC Matriculant Survey.

Note: Only statistically significant sector differences are shown. An F test p value of 0.05 indicates strong evidence that group differences exist, with less than a 5% probability that the observed differences occurred by chance.

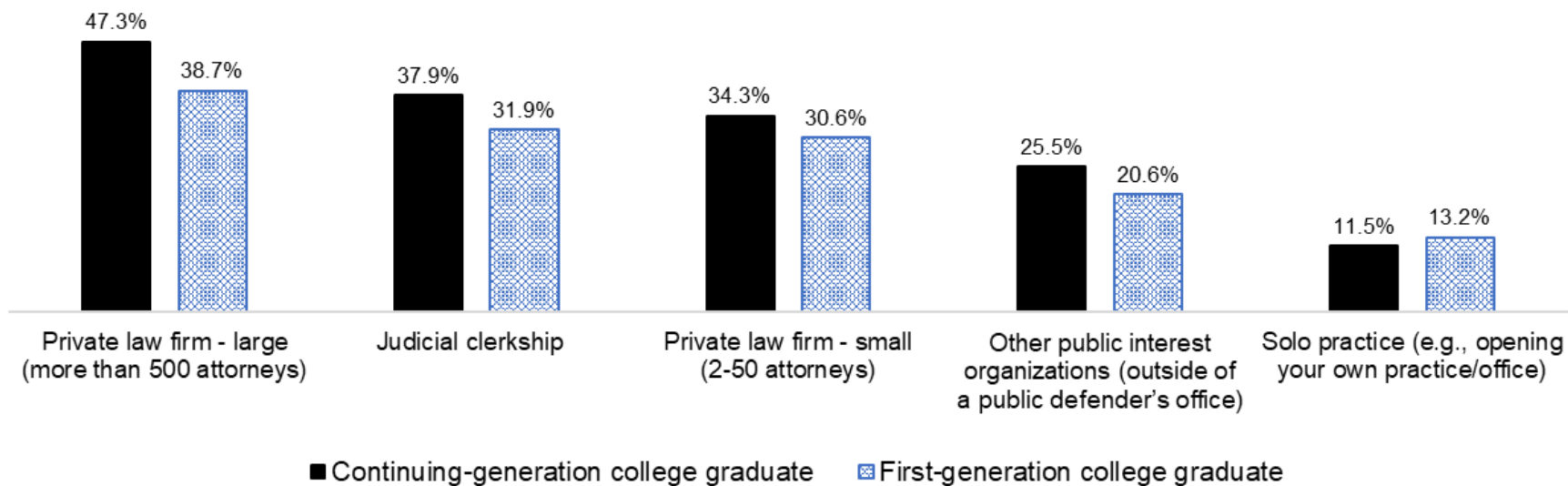
**Figure 13. Employment Sectors Considered Since Beginning Law School, by LGBTQ+ Identity**



Source: 2025 LSAC Matriculant Survey.

Note: Only statistically significant sector differences are shown. An F test p value of 0.05 indicates strong evidence that group differences exist, with less than a 5% probability that the observed differences occurred by chance.

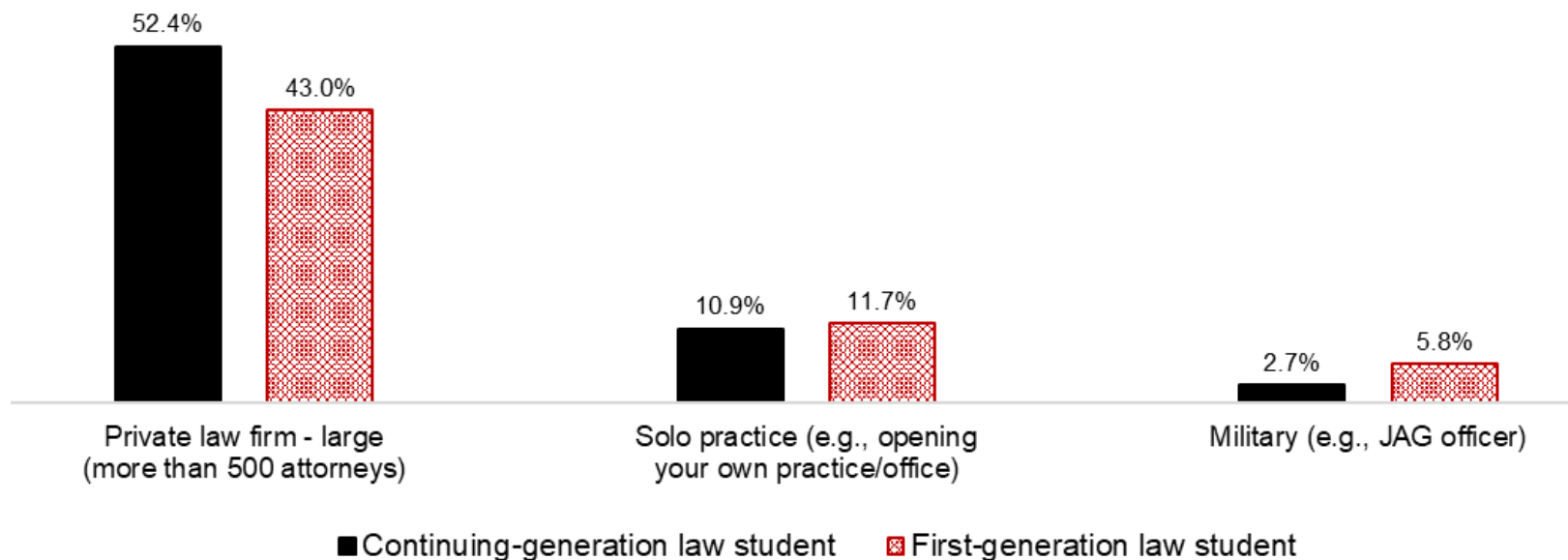
**Figure 14. Employment Sectors Considered Since Beginning Law School, by First-Generation College Graduate Status**



Source: 2025 LSAC Matriculant Survey.

Note: Only statistically significant sector differences are shown. An F test p value of 0.05 indicates strong evidence that group differences exist, with less than a 5% probability that the observed differences occurred by chance.

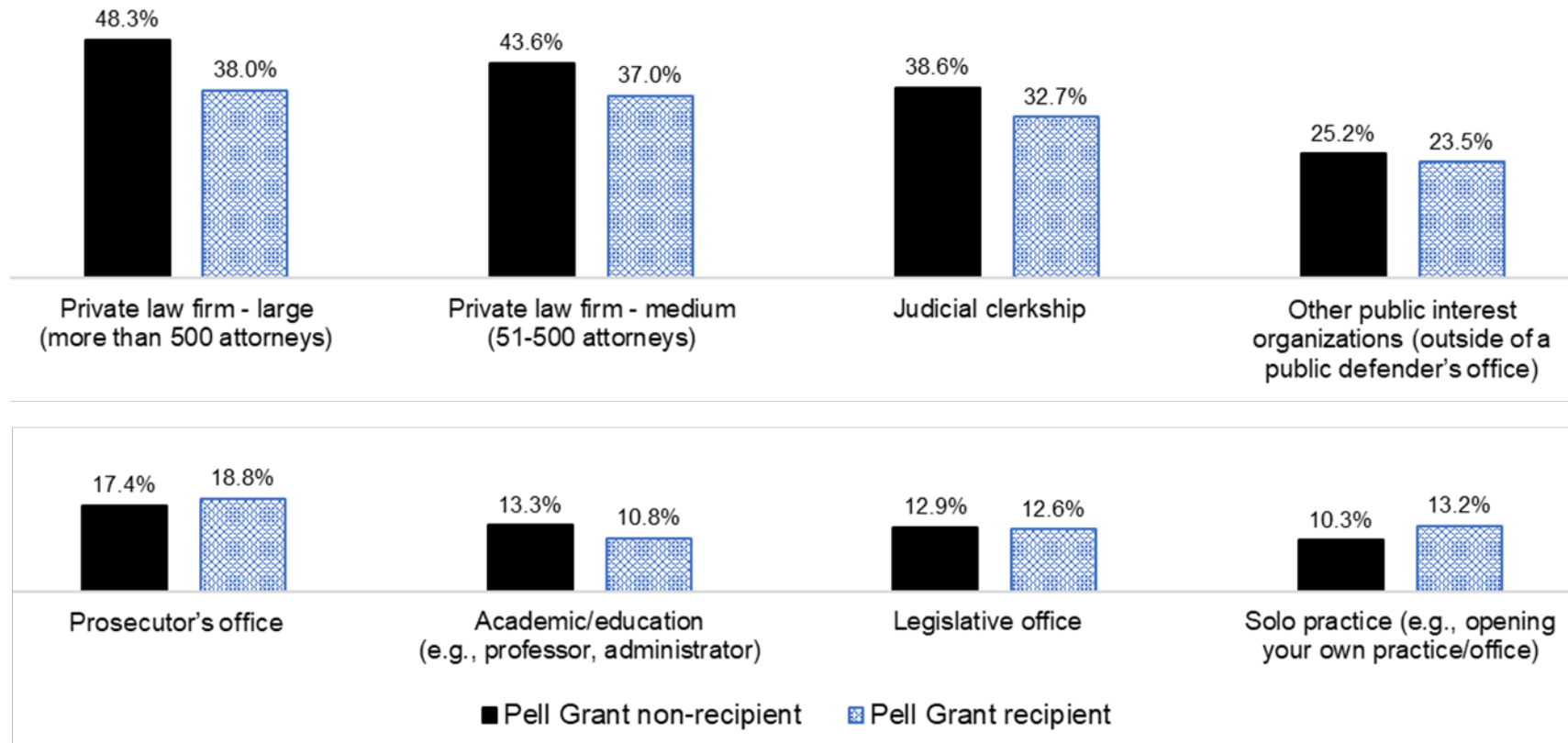
**Figure 15. Employment Sectors Considered Since Beginning Law School, by First-Generation Law Student Status**



Source: 2025 LSAC Matriculant Survey.

Note: Only statistically significant sector differences are shown. An F test p value of 0.05 indicates strong evidence that group differences exist, with less than a 5% probability that the observed differences occurred by chance.

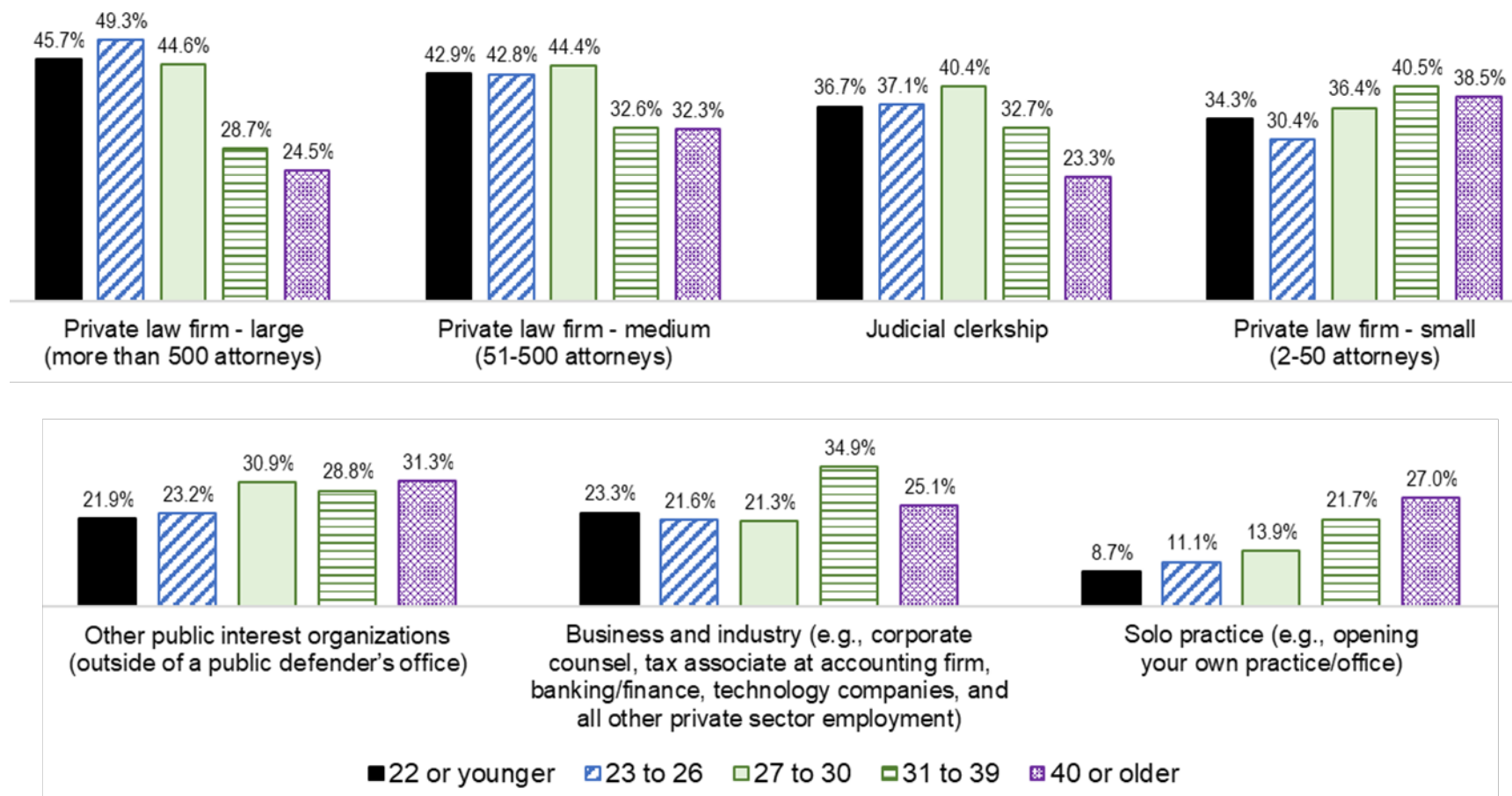
**Figure 16. Employment Sectors Considered Since Beginning Law School, by Pell Grant Recipient Status**



Source: 2025 LSAC Matriculant Survey.

Note: Only statistically significant sector differences are shown. An F test p value of 0.05 indicates strong evidence that group differences exist, with less than a 5% probability that the observed differences occurred by chance.

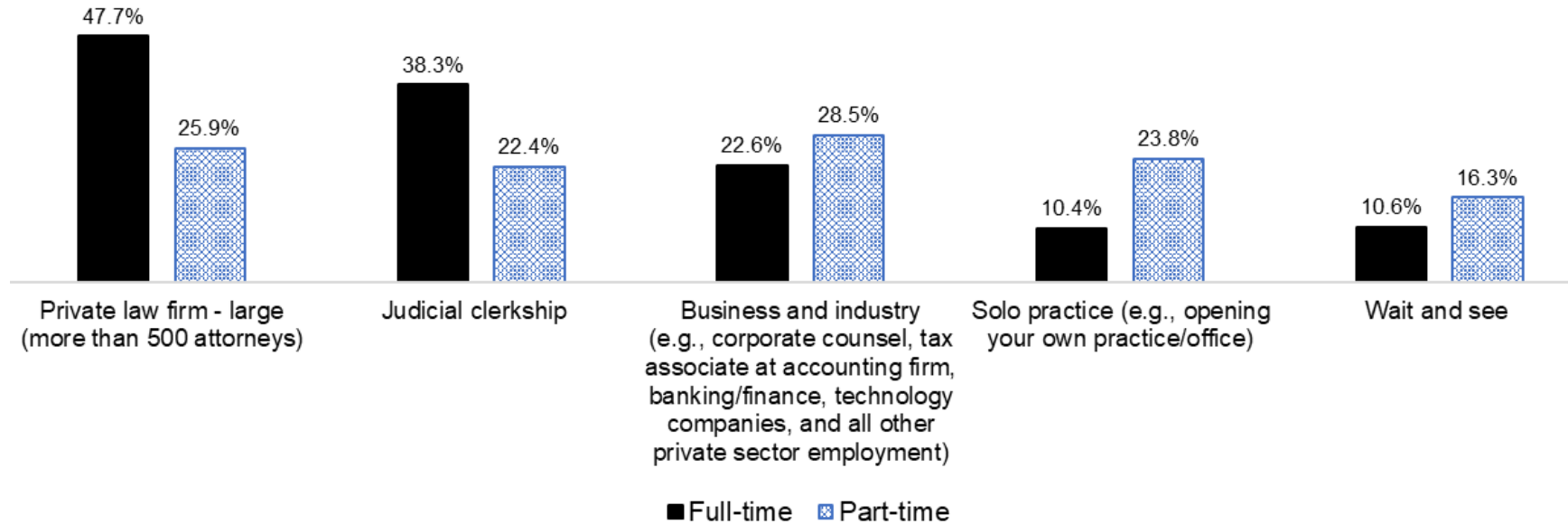
**Figure 17. Employment Sectors Considered Since Beginning Law School, by Age at Start of Academic Year**



Source: 2025 LSAC Matriculant Survey.

Note: Only statistically significant sector differences are shown. An F test p value of 0.05 indicates strong evidence that group differences exist, with less than a 5% probability that the observed differences occurred by chance.

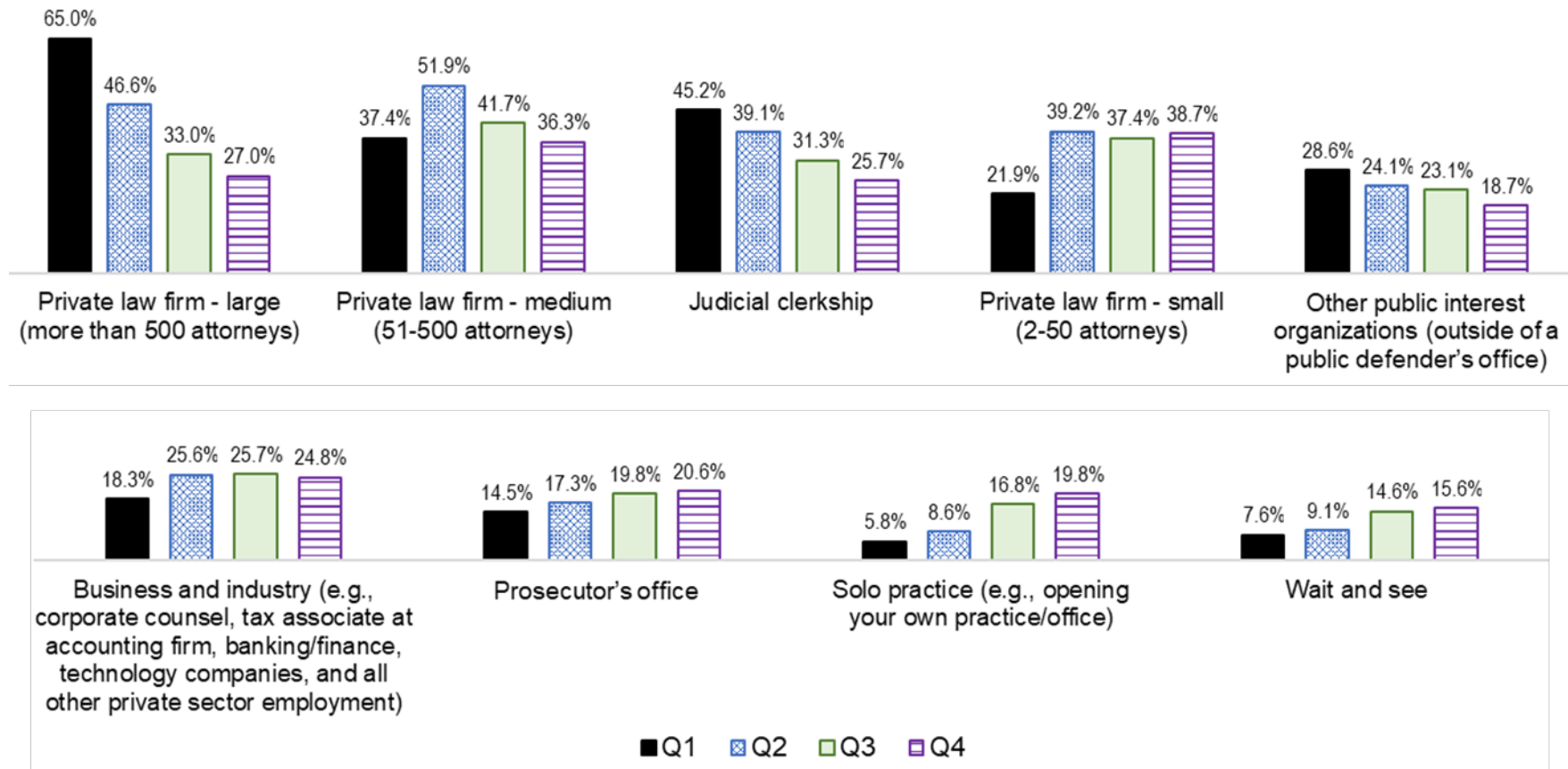
**Figure 18. Employment Sectors Considered Since Beginning Law School, by Enrollment Intensity**



Source: 2025 LSAC Matriculant Survey.

Note: Only statistically significant sector differences are shown. An F test p value of 0.05 indicates strong evidence that group differences exist, with less than a 5% probability that the observed differences occurred by chance.

**Figure 19. Employment Sectors Considered Since Beginning Law School, by Law School Selectivity Quartile**



Source: 2025 LSAC Matriculant Survey.

Notes: Only statistically significant sector differences are shown. An F test p value of 0.05 indicates strong evidence that group differences exist, with less than a 5% probability that the observed differences occurred by chance. Each school is assigned a selectivity index score used to create quartiles of law school selectivity. Selectivity is based on the admission rate, median LSAT score of admitted students, and median UGPA of admitted students of a given year. The top 25% of law schools by selectivity, considered “highly selective,” are in the first quartile (Q1). Each quartile holds about 49 or 50 law schools.

## Changes in Employment Sector Consideration: Before and After Starting Law School

Interest in private practice, across firm sizes, increased for 1L respondents since starting law school compared to what they considered before starting law school. The top three sectors that saw growth were large private firms (Big Law), medium-sized private law firms, and judicial clerkships. On the other hand, interest since starting law school dropped in only one sector: government. While it is unknown what factors led to this decrease in government interest, the 2025 1L class applied to and started law school in two different presidential administrations and amid federal government hiring and employment changes. Time and additional research will show whether this decrease is a trend or a one-off result of this sample.

Overall, Big Law was a leading employment sector of interest before law school and remained so after students began their studies. Given this growing level of interest, understanding how accelerated Big Law recruiting timelines affect the first-year experience is critical for ensuring that all students are positioned for success and that access to the profession is equitable.

**Table 2. Employment Sectors Considered Before and Since Starting Law School**

Sector	Employment Sector Considered Before Law School	Employment Sector Considered Since Starting Law School	Absolute Difference	Percent Change
Private law firm - large (more than 500 attorneys)	39.9%	45.4%	5.5%	13.8%
Private law firm - medium (51-500 attorneys)	37.9%	42.0%	4.1%	10.7%
Government agency (federal, state, local, foreign government)	35.2%	32.1%	-3.2%	-9.0%
Private law firm - small (2-50 attorneys)	31.9%	33.3%	1.3%	4.2%
Judicial clerkship	31.1%	36.6%	5.6%	17.9%
Other public interest organizations (outside of a public defender's office)	24.3%	24.3%	0.0%	-0.1%
Business and industry (e.g., corporate counsel, tax associate at an accounting firm, banking/finance, technology companies, and all other private sector employment)	20.1%	23.2%	3.1%	15.3%
Prosecutor's office	17.1%	17.6%	0.6%	3.3%
Public defender's office	14.8%	15.4%	0.6%	4.0%
Academic/education (e.g., professor, administrator)	11.7%	12.3%	0.6%	5.0%

Sector	Employment Sector Considered Before Law School	Employment Sector Considered Since Starting Law School	Absolute Difference	Percent Change
Solo practice (e.g., opening your own practice/office)	11.5%	11.8%	0.3%	2.6%
Legislative office	11.3%	12.1%	0.8%	7.4%
Wait and see	9.7%	11.2%	1.4%	14.7%
Military (e.g., JAG officer)	4.1%	5.1%	0.9%	22.8%
Not considered before law school	3.9%	N/A	N/A	N/A

Source: 2025 LSAC Matriculant Survey.

Notes: Absolute difference measures the absolute difference of two values; for percent values; this is also sometimes referred to as “percentage point change.” Throughout this report, the phrase “absolute difference” is used to describe this comparison. Percent change measures the relative increase or decrease of a value, which describes how much a new value has changed in relation to the original value. This is used in this report to demonstrate magnitude of change, which provides more context than the numeric (absolute) difference. These trends are based on respondents who answered both employment sector considered before and after starting law school.

## Employment Sector Considerations: A Focus on Students Who Ever Considered Big Law

The growth in respondents’ interest in large private law firms (Big Law) is important in the context of who is applying for summer associate positions and how accelerated Big Law recruitment timelines affect the first-year experience. Respondents who had considered large private law firms (Big Law), before and/or since starting law school, came from an array of backgrounds and differed from their peers who never considered Big Law (Table 3).

Among 2025 1L respondents, students who reported ever considering Big Law differed in meaningful ways from those who never considered Big Law. Students interested in Big Law were more likely to be enrolled full time, younger, and attending highly selective law schools (Q1), reflecting the typical concentration of Big Law recruiting at those institutions. While the group of students considering Big Law was racially and ethnically diverse — with Asian students disproportionately overrepresented — and displayed slightly higher LGBTQ+ representation, it included lower proportions of first-generation college graduates, first-generation law students, and Pell Grant recipients compared with the group of students who never considered Big Law (Table 3).

**Table 3. 1L Respondents Who Considered Large Private Firm (Big Law) Sector**

Category (F Wald Significance)	Group	Never Considered Big Law	Considered Big Law
<b>Race and Ethnicity (***)</b>	White	57.5%	48.8%
	Racially and Ethnically Minoritized	35.4%	43.7%
	Did Not Indicate	7.1%	7.5%
<b>Race and Ethnicity (***)</b>	American Indian or Alaska Native	1.1%	1.0%
	Asian	6.2%	13.0%
	Black or African American	6.2%	6.7%
	Hispanic or Latina/é/o/x	8.9%	8.3%
	Indigenous Person of Canada	‡	0.2%
	Middle Eastern or North African/Arab	2.8%	2.1%
	Multiracial/Ethnoracial	9.8%	11.9%
	Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Island	0.5%	0.4%
	White	57.5%	48.8%
	Did Not Indicate	7.1%	7.5%
<b>Gender Identity</b>	Gender Diverse	1.3%	1.1%
	Cisgender Woman	55.2%	54.0%
	Cisgender Man	39.8%	42.3%
	Did Not Indicate	3.7%	2.8%
<b>Sexual Orientation (*)</b>	Straight/Heterosexual	72.1%	70.6%
	Not Straight/Not Heterosexual	12.9%	15.7%
	Did Not Indicate	15.0%	13.7%
<b>LGBTQ+ Identity (*)</b>	Not LGBTQ+	71.7%	70.4%
	LGBTQ+	13.2%	16.0%
	Did Not Indicate	15.2%	13.7%
<b>First-Generation College Graduate Status (**)</b>	Continuing-Generation College Graduate	72.9%	78.1%
	First-Generation College Graduate	25.5%	20.1%
	Did Not Indicate	1.7%	1.8%

‡ Exact percent is suppressed to ensure individual privacy; group is present in totals throughout the report.

Category (F Wald Significance)	Group	Never Considered Big Law	Considered Big Law
<b>First-Generation Law Student Status (**)</b>	Continuing-Generation Law Student	20.9%	26.8%
	First-Generation Law Student	74.9%	69.3%
	Did Not Indicate	1.7%	1.8%
	{Missing}	2.6%	2.2%
<b>Pell Grant Recipient Status (***)</b>	Pell Grant Non-Recipient	62.7%	69.6%
	Pell Grant Recipient	29.7%	22.1%
	Did Not Disclose/Don't Know	7.1%	7.6%
<b>Age at Start of Academic Year (***)</b>	22 or Younger	32.7%	33.8%
	23 to 26	42.2%	48.8%
	27 to 30	11.7%	10.9%
	31 to 39	9.6%	4.6%
	40 or Older	3.9%	1.9%
<b>Law School: Enrollment Intensity (***)</b>	Full-Time	85.7%	93.8%
	Part-Time	14.3%	6.2%
<b>Law School Selectivity Quartile (***)</b>	Q1	19.8%	43.0%
	Q2	25.7%	26.8%
	Q3	27.8%	17.5%
	Q4	26.6%	12.7%

Source: 2025 LSAC Matriculant Survey.

Notes: In this report, “significantly” indicates that the mean values between two groups are significantly different from one another. Survey weighted Wald F tests evaluate whether observed group differences are statistically significant while accounting for survey weights, so results reflect the population rather than just the sample. An F test p value of 0.05 indicates strong evidence that group differences exist, with less than a 5% probability that the observed differences occurred by chance. \*\*\* p<0.001, \*\* p<0.01, \* p<0.05.

Knowing which students considered Big Law, before and/or after starting law school, is important to contextualize how the future of the profession is shaped, including who ultimately enters Big Law and other employment sectors. These insights can help law schools better meet students where they are by tailoring skills development opportunities and career advising to support their evolving interests. For other stakeholders, this information demonstrates how recruitment timelines shape both the first-year experience and the decisions students make when applying to and enrolling in law school, with important implications for how aspiring and current law students are supported throughout the process.

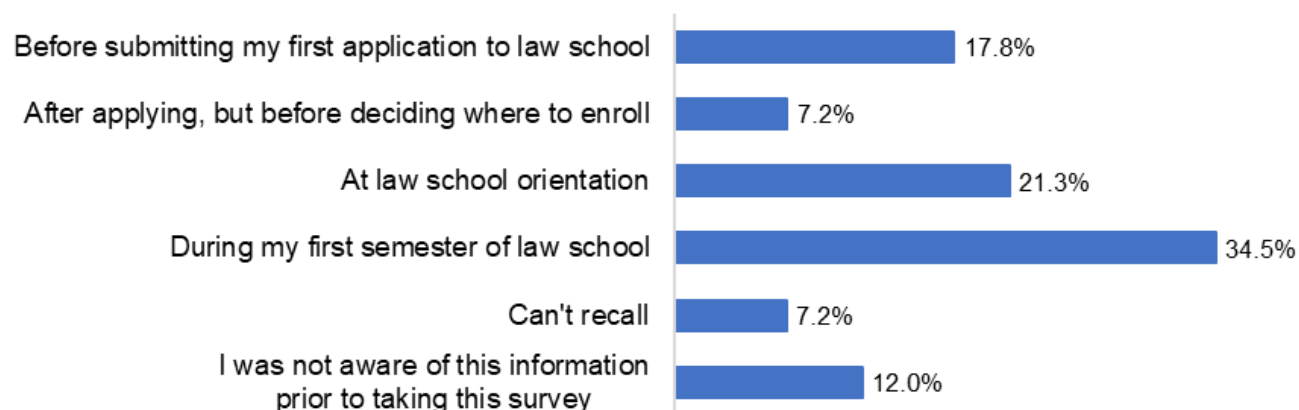
**Awareness of Accelerated  
Big Law Recruitment Timelines**

## When Did First-Year Law Students Become Aware?

1L respondents revealed that awareness of accelerated Big Law recruiting timelines differs across student populations, reflecting unequal access to institutional resources and personal networks.

The vast majority of the 1L respondents (88%) indicated they knew about large law firm (Big Law) recruitment timelines for 2L summer associate positions (Figure 20). A quarter of respondents learned about them *before starting* law school; specifically, almost one in five (18%) knew before submitting their applications. Twelve percent of respondents were not aware of the accelerated Big Law recruitment timelines at the time of the survey. The majority of 1L respondents indicated learning about Big Law recruitment timelines after starting law school, either during orientation or during their first semester (Figure 20).

**Figure 20. Awareness of 2L Summer Associate Recruitment Timeline**



Source: 2025 LSAC Matriculant Survey.

Students who were aware of these timelines sooner had an advantage over their peers who were not, particularly when recruitment occurred as early as the first semester of law school for this cohort.

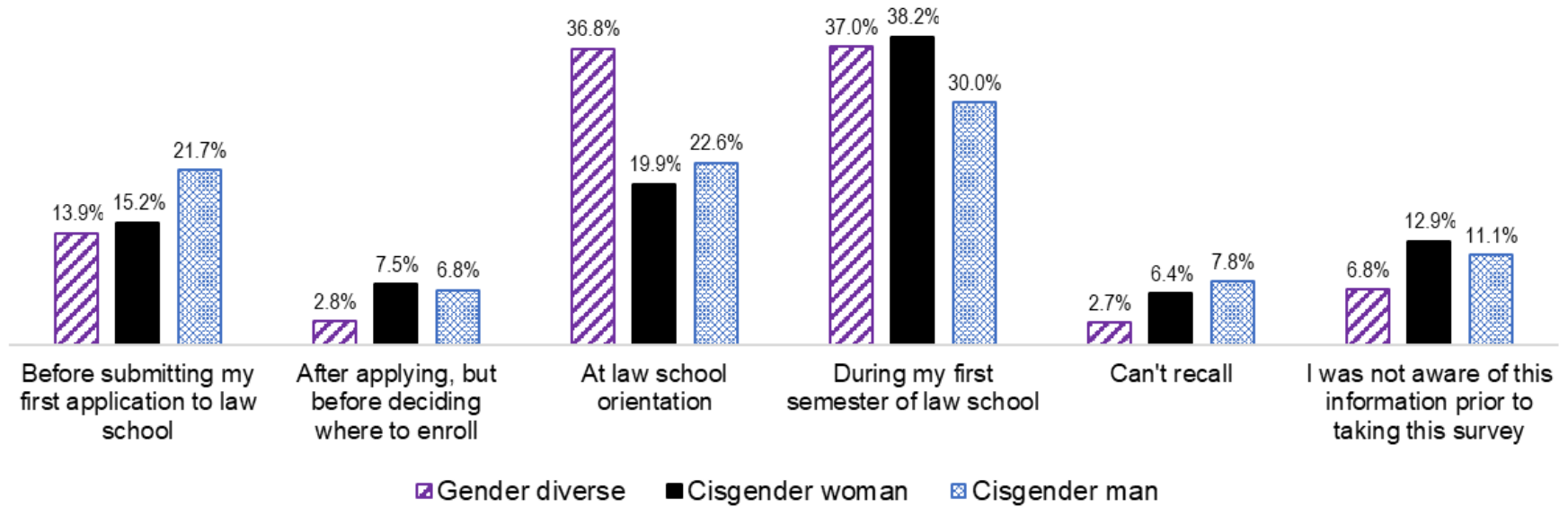
An examination of when respondents became aware of Big Law recruitment timelines shows that the timing of this awareness significantly<sup>27</sup> varied by 1L respondents' backgrounds, specifically in terms of gender, age, first-generation college status, Pell Grant status, the law school they attend, and whether they ever considered Big Law (Figures 20 to 27). Some of these significant differences include:

<sup>27</sup> In this report, "significantly" indicates that the mean values between two groups are significantly different from one another. Survey-weighted Wald F tests evaluate whether observed group differences are statistically significant while accounting for survey weights, so results reflect the population rather than just the sample. An F-test p-value of 0.05 indicates strong evidence that group differences exist, with less than a 5% probability that the observed differences occurred by chance. \*\*\*p<0.001, \*\*p<0.01, \*p<0.05.

- Men were aware of Big Law recruitment timelines before submitting their law school applications at significantly higher rates than their peers (Figure 21). More women were unaware of the Big Law recruitment timelines at the time of the survey compared with their peers.
- Continuing-generation college graduates reported they were aware of Big Law recruitment timelines before starting law school at higher rates than their first-generation college graduate peers (Figure 22). Meanwhile, more first-generation college graduates reported they were unaware of the Big Law recruitment timelines at the time of the survey compared with their continuing-generation college graduate peers — an absolute difference of 5%.
- More respondents who were Pell Grant recipients reported they were unaware of the Big Law recruitment timelines at the time of the survey compared with their peers who did not receive a Pell Grant (Figure 23). And fewer respondents who were Pell Grant recipients reported they were aware of the Big Law recruitment timelines before starting law school compared with their peers.
- More respondents between the ages of 23 and 39 were aware of the Big Law recruitment timelines before starting law school than their younger and older peers. However, significantly more respondents older than 30 reported they were unaware of the Big Law recruitment timelines at the time of the survey compared with their peers (Figure 24).
- Students in part-time programs reported at lower rates that they learned about the Big Law recruitment timelines in law school (at orientation or during the first semester) than their peers in full-time programs, an absolute difference of 19.8%. Moreover, significantly more respondents in part-time programs reported they were unaware of the Big Law recruitment timelines at the time of the survey compared with their peers in full-time programs, at almost double the rate (Figure 25).
- Awareness of Big Law recruitment timelines increases as law school selectivity increases (Figure 26). For example, almost a third of respondents at highly selective law schools (Q1) reported they were aware of the Big Law recruitment timelines before starting law school, while about one in five respondents at law schools in the fourth selectivity quartile did. Almost a quarter of all respondents at law schools in the fourth selectivity quartile were unaware of the Big Law recruitment timelines at the time of the survey, compared with only 5.8% of their peers at highly selective law schools (Q1).

- 1L respondents who reported considering Big Law before and/or after starting law schools were aware of the Big Law recruitment timelines before starting law school at nearly double the rate of their peers who never considered Big Law (32.8%, compared with 16.8%). And 17.4% of respondents who reported never considered Big Law were unaware of the Big Law recruitment timelines at the time of the survey, compared with 6.9% of respondents who reported considering Big Law before and/or after starting law schools (Figure 27). The 6.9% of respondents considering Big Law without knowledge of these timelines thus faced a significant disadvantage, given how accelerated the recruiting timeline was during this most recent recruiting cycle.

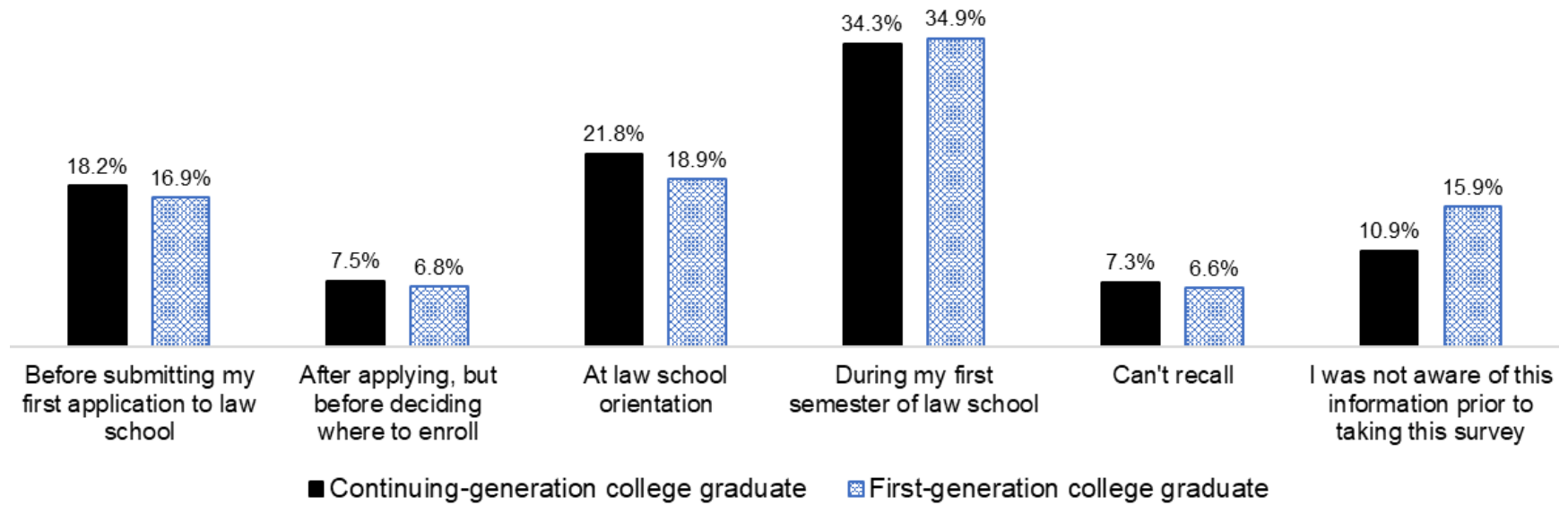
**Figure 21. Awareness of 2L Recruitment Timeline, by Gender identity**



Source: 2025 LSAC Matriculant Survey.

Note: Only statistically significant differences are shown. An F test p value of 0.05 indicates strong evidence that group differences exist, with less than a 5% probability that the observed differences occurred by chance.

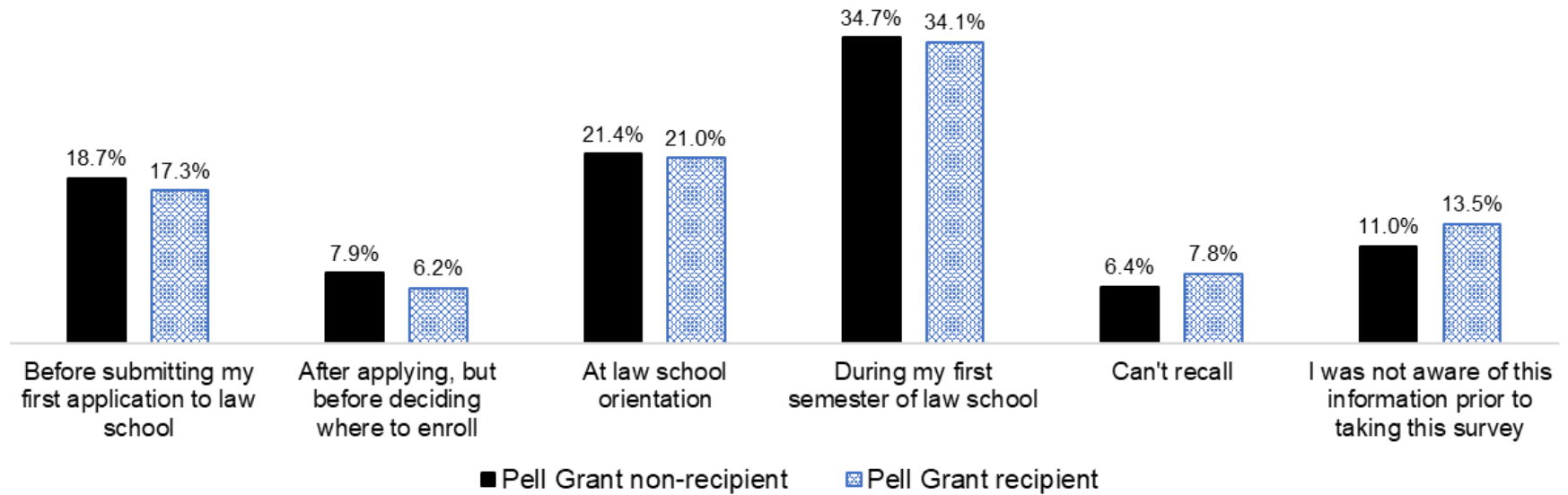
**Figure 22. Awareness of 2L Recruitment Timeline, by First-Generation College Graduate Status**



Source: 2025 LSAC Matriculant Survey.

Note: Only statistically significant differences are shown. An F test p value of 0.05 indicates strong evidence that group differences exist, with less than a 5% probability that the observed differences occurred by chance.

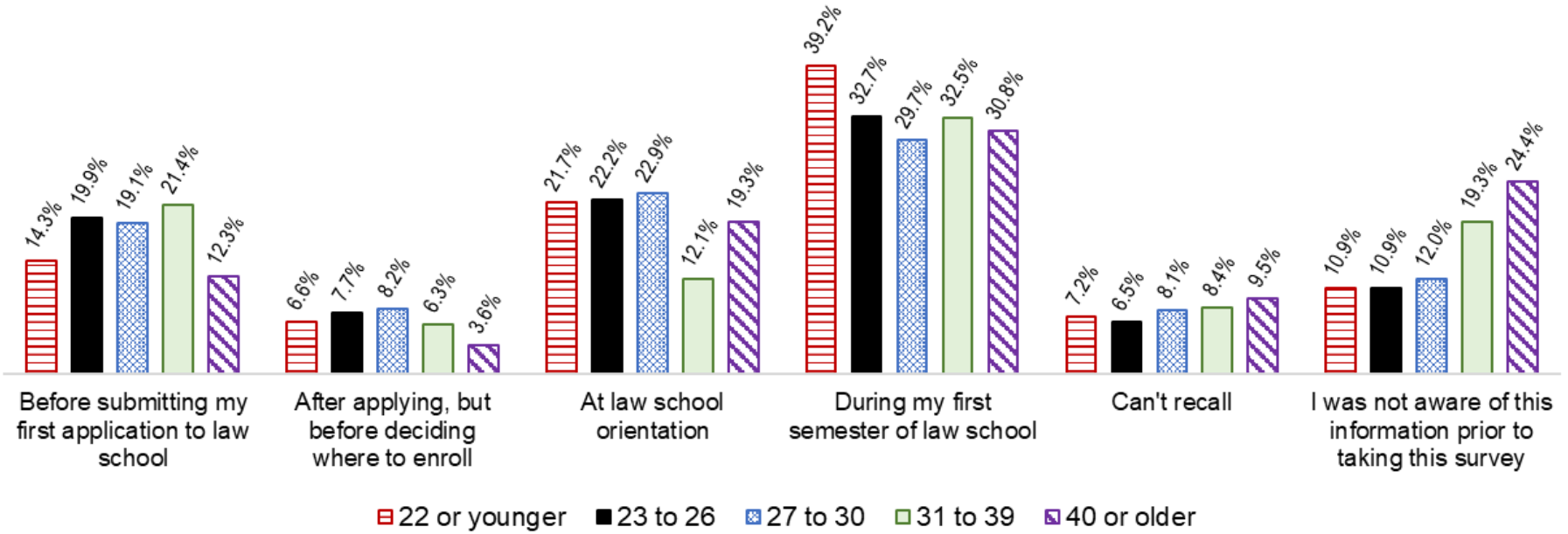
**Figure 23. Awareness of 2L Recruitment Timeline, by Pell Grant Recipient Status**



Source: 2025 LSAC Matriculant Survey.

Note: Only statistically significant differences are shown. An F test p value of 0.05 indicates strong evidence that group differences exist, with less than a 5% probability that the observed differences occurred by chance.

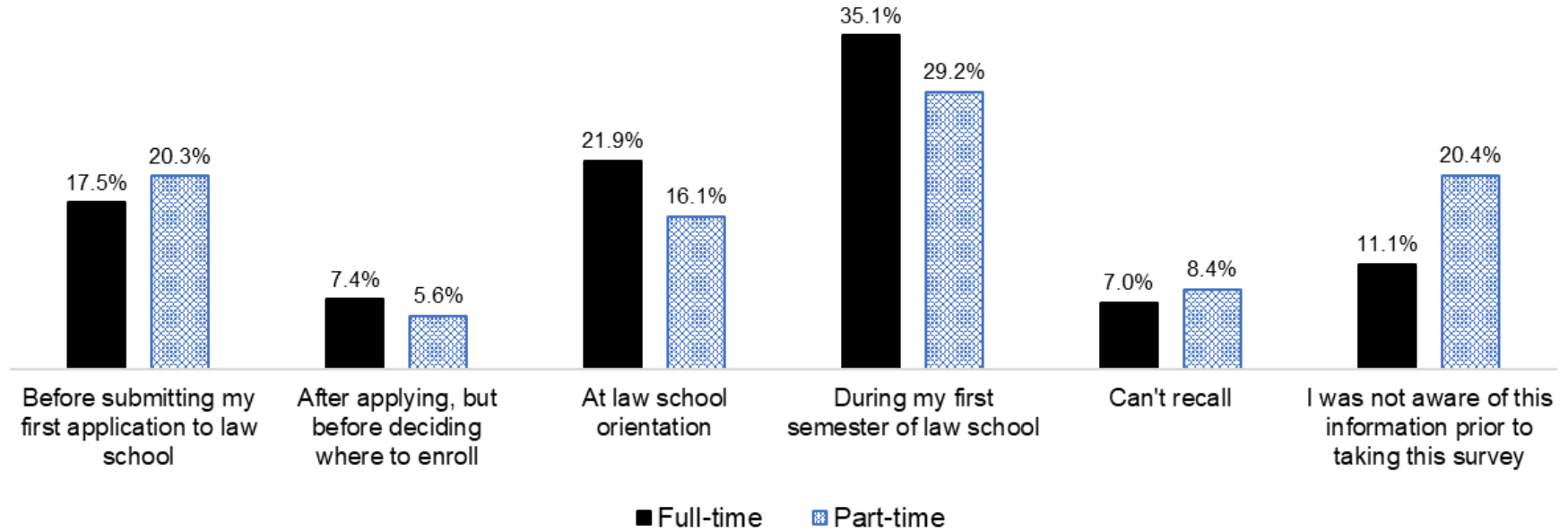
**Figure 24. Awareness of 2L Recruitment Timeline, by Age at Start of Academic Year**



Source: 2025 LSAC Matriculant Survey.

Note: Only statistically significant differences are shown. An F test p value of 0.05 indicates strong evidence that group differences exist, with less than a 5% probability that the observed differences occurred by chance.

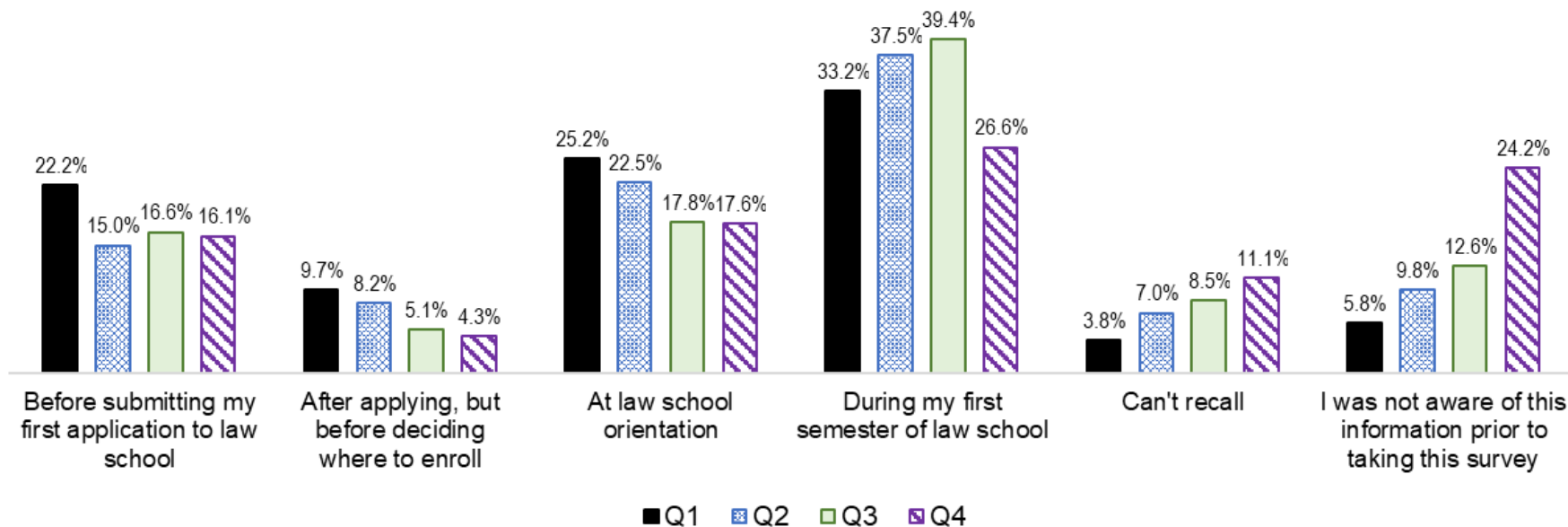
**Figure 25. Awareness of 2L Recruitment Timeline, by Program Intensity**



Source: 2025 LSAC Matriculant Survey.

Note: Only statistically significant differences are shown. An F test p value of 0.05 indicates strong evidence that group differences exist, with less than a 5% probability that the observed differences occurred by chance.

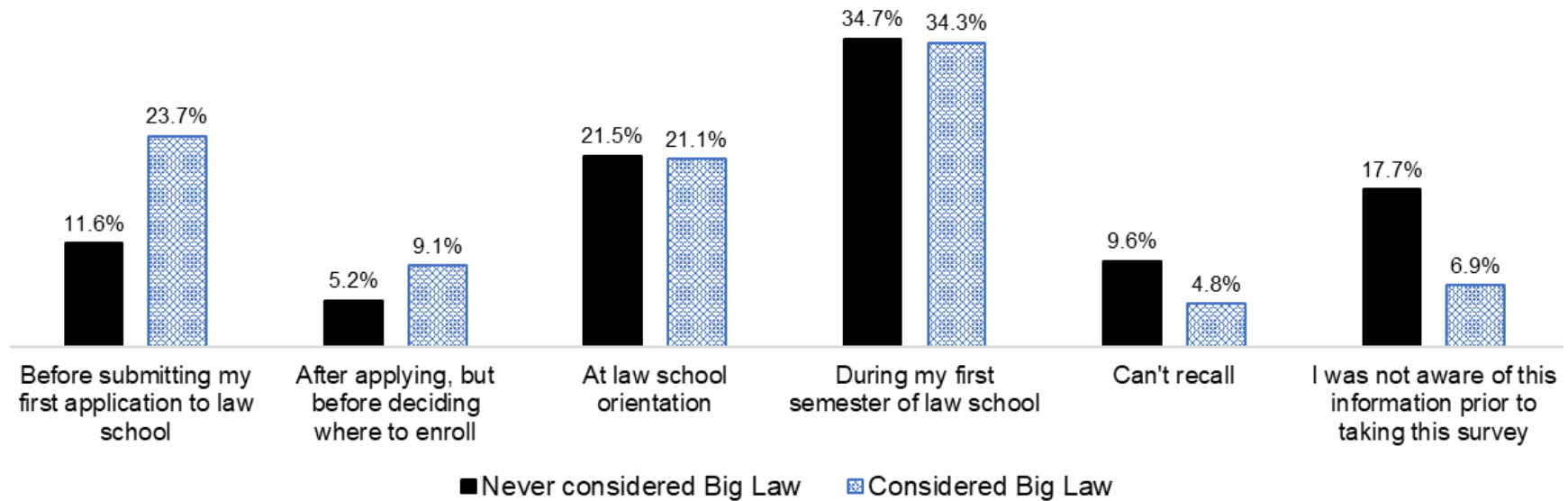
**Figure 26. Awareness of 2L Recruitment Timeline, by Law School Selectivity Quartile**



Source: 2025 LSAC Matriculant Survey.

Notes: Only statistically significant differences are shown. An F test p value of 0.05 indicates strong evidence that group differences exist, with less than a 5% probability that the observed differences occurred by chance. Each school is assigned a selectivity index score used to create quartiles of law school selectivity. Selectivity is based on the admission rate, median LSAT score of admitted students, and median UGPA of admitted students of a given year. The top 25% of law schools by selectivity, considered “highly selective,” are in the first quartile (Q1). Each quartile holds about 49 or 50 law schools.

**Figure 27. Awareness of 2L Recruitment Timeline, by Respondents' Indication of Having Ever Considered Big Law**



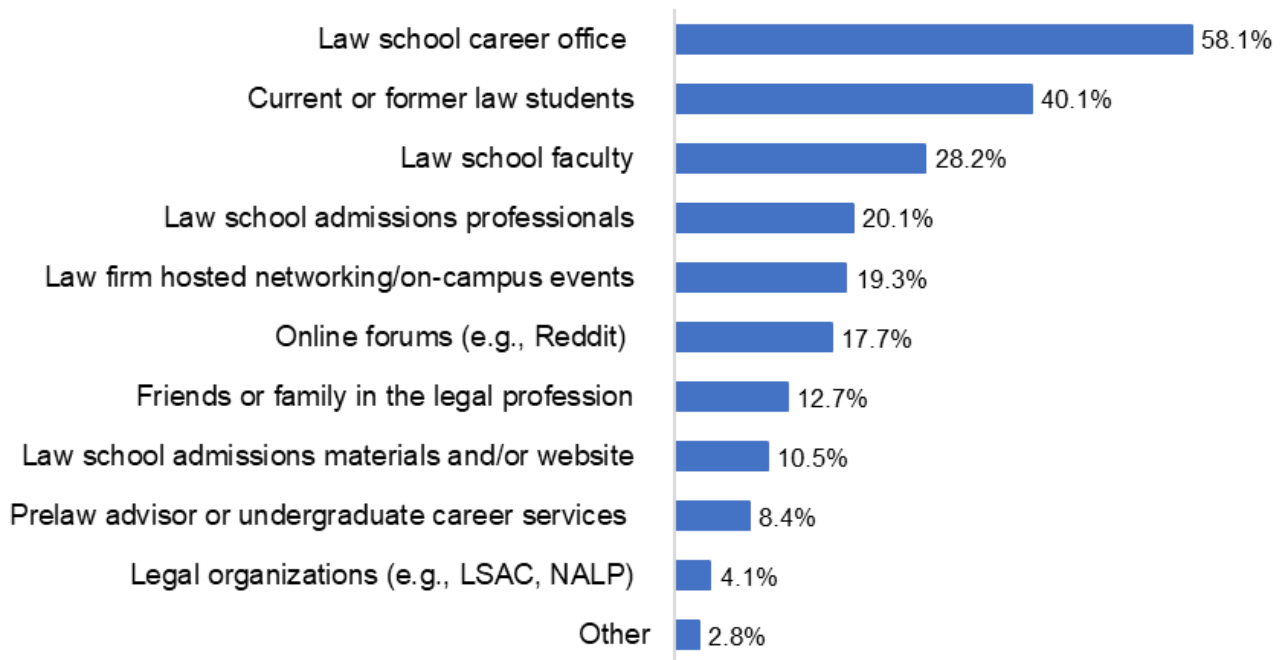
Source: 2025 LSAC Matriculant Survey.

Notes: Only statistically significant differences are shown. An F test p value of 0.05 indicates strong evidence that group differences exist, with less than a 5% probability that the observed differences occurred by chance. Respondents are categorized as “Considered Big Law” if they indicated considering large private firms (Big Law) before they started law school and/or since starting law school.

## How Did First-Year Law Students Become Aware?

Law school career services offices and peers play a critical role in informing 1L respondents about the accelerated Big Law recruitment timelines some large firms have implemented for 2L summer associate hiring. Specifically, 58.1% of respondents learned about Big Law recruitment timelines from their career services office, 40.1% from current or former law students, and 28.2% from law faculty (Figure 28). Law school admission offices and law firms play a role in educating students about recruitment timelines as well: About one in five respondents learned about accelerated Big Law recruitment timelines from law school admission offices, and a similar number learned from law-firm-hosted events (on or off campus). Additionally, online forums, such as Reddit, were sources of information for 17.7% of respondents. Students could indicate multiple sources of information within the survey.

**Figure 28. How Students Learned About Big Law Recruiting Timelines: Sources of Information**



Source: 2025 LSAC Matriculant Survey

Overall, the law school key actors — career services offices, peers, and faculty — are the main sources of information about Big Law recruitment timelines, highlighting the need for more coordinated efforts to inform aspiring students and law students sooner to ensure equity and access to the profession. This is underscored by group-based differences of how students learned about accelerated Big Law recruitment timelines, which significantly<sup>28</sup> varied based on first-generation college graduate status, first-generation law student status, Pell Grant status, age, law school attended, and when they reported they were aware of the Big Law recruitment timelines (Figures 29 to 35). Some of these significant differences include:

- Continuing-generation college graduates learned about Big Law recruitment timelines from their law school career services offices, their peers, family or friends in the legal profession, and prelaw advisors or career offices at their undergraduate institutions more than their first-generation college graduate peers (Figure 29). For example, 14% of continuing-generation college graduates learned about the timelines from family or friends in the legal profession, compared with 9.1% of first-generation college graduates. Similarly, 9.3% of continuing-generation college graduates learned about the timelines from their prelaw advisor or undergraduate career services, compared with 5.9% of first-generation college graduates. This knowledge source gap widened when comparing first-generation college students to continuing-generation law students.
- Continuing-generation law students were even more likely to have learned about Big Law recruitment timelines from their peers, family or friends in the legal profession, and prelaw advisors or career offices at their undergraduate institutions than their first-generation law student peers (Figure 30). For example, 21.2% of continuing-generation law students learned about the timelines from family or friends in the legal profession, compared with 10% of first-generation law students. On the other hand, first-generation law students learned about timelines from legal organizations (such as LSAC and NALP) at double the rate of their continuing-generation law student peers (4.6%, compared with 2.2%).
- Respondents who did not receive a Pell Grant reported at higher rates than Pell Grant recipients that they learned about Big Law recruitment timelines from former or current law students, online forums (such as Reddit), and family or friends in the legal profession (Figure 31).

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<sup>28</sup> In this report, “significantly” indicates that the mean values between two groups are significantly different from one another. Survey-weighted Wald F tests evaluate whether observed group differences are statistically significant while accounting for survey weights, so results reflect the population rather than just the sample. An F-test p-value of 0.05 indicates strong evidence that group differences exist, with less than a 5% probability that the observed differences occurred by chance. \*\*\*p<0.001, \*\*p<0.01, \*p<0.05.

- Students' reporting that they learned about Big Law recruitment timelines from former or current law students decreased with age (Figure 32). More older students learned about timelines from law-firm-hosted events than their younger peers. And fewer respondents 40 or older reported they learned about Big Law recruitment timelines from prelaw advisors or career offices at their undergraduate institutions than their younger peers.
- Fewer respondents in part-time programs reported learning about Big Law recruitment timelines from former or current law students and law-firm-hosted events than respondents in full-time programs (Figure 33). For example, 41.5% of respondents in full-time programs learned about Big Law recruitment timelines from former or current law students, compared with 26.3% of respondents in part-time programs.
- Learning about Big Law recruitment timelines from law school career services office, peers, online forums (such as Reddit) and law-firm-hosted events increased with law school selectivity (Figure 34).<sup>29</sup> For example, 25.4% of respondents at highly selective law schools (Q1) reported they learned about Big Law recruitment timelines from law-firm-hosted events, compared with 12% of respondents at law schools in the fourth selectivity quartile and 19.3% of all respondents.
- How people learned about Big Law recruitment timelines varied based on when they were aware of the timelines (Figure 35).
  - Former or current students, law school career services offices, and online forums (such as Reddit) were the top three sources from which respondents who were aware of the accelerated recruitment timelines before law school learned about them.
  - Respondents with access to friends or family in the legal profession had an advantage: Of those who were aware of the Big Law recruitment timelines prior to law school, 30% learned of these timelines from friends or family in the legal profession.

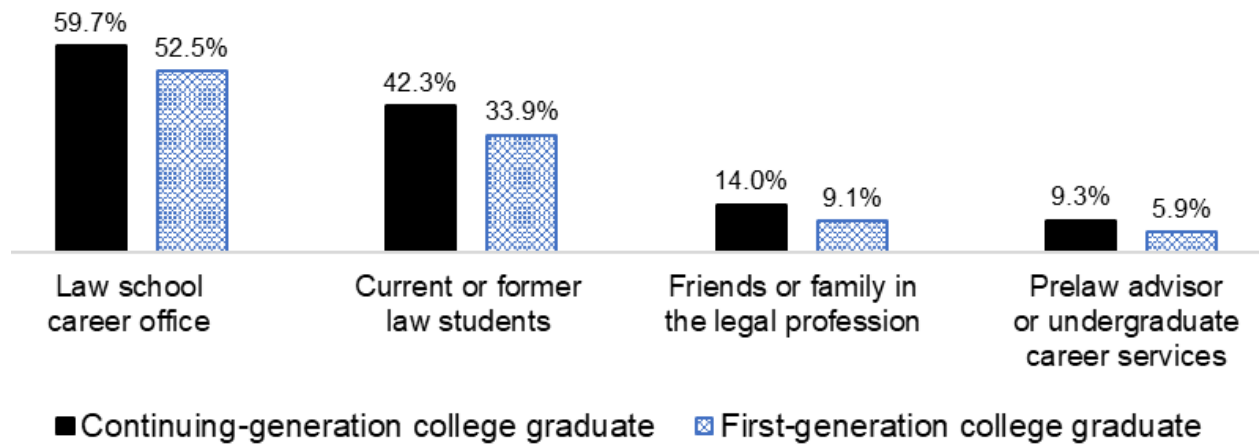
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<sup>29</sup> Recruitment by large law firms is highly competitive and often concentrated at the most selective law schools, carrying significant implications for which students secure these coveted positions. For example, highly selective (top 25% in terms of selectivity) law schools continue to be less diverse than other law schools, with less representation of first-generation college graduates and less representation of students from different racial and ethnic groups. Learn more about enrollment trends: [LSAC's Knowledge Report: The Composition of the First-Year Law School Class and Enrollment 2021-2025 Trends](#). In this report, each school is assigned a selectivity index score used to create quartiles of law school selectivity. Selectivity is based on the admission rate, median LSAT score of admitted students, and median UGPA of admitted students of a given year. The top 25% of law schools by selectivity, considered "highly selective," are in the first quartile (Q1). Each quartile holds about 49 or 50 law schools.

- Among respondents who were aware of Big Law recruitment timelines before law school, many learned about them through law school admission offices; notably, 27.3% of those who became aware after applying but before enrolling cited admission professionals as their source.
- Online forums such as Reddit were cited as a source of information more often by students who learned about Big Law recruiting timelines prior to law school than by those who became aware of these timelines during law school.
- More than two-thirds of students who learned about Big Law recruiting timelines during law school indicated that their career office was a source of this information.
- Law-firm-hosted events were a key source of information for respondents who learned about the Big Law recruitment timelines in their first semester. Specifically, 26.8% of these respondents learned about the accelerated recruitment timelines from law-firm-hosted events.

While most students reported learning about accelerated Big Law recruitment timelines after starting law school, prelaw school awareness was highest among men, continuing-generation college graduates, younger students, full-time students, students at highly selective law schools, and those who considered Big Law. These disparities — both in whether students were aware of Big Law recruiting timelines and in when that awareness occurred — underscore the need for law schools to better align academic transition efforts with early and equitable career preparation. Doing so can help support student well-being, promote access and fairness, and ensure that students are able to make informed decisions about their professional futures. At the same time, these findings highlight the importance of employers critically examining the benefits and effectiveness of increasingly accelerated recruiting timelines, including whether such practices may narrow their candidate pools and inadvertently exclude qualified applicants.

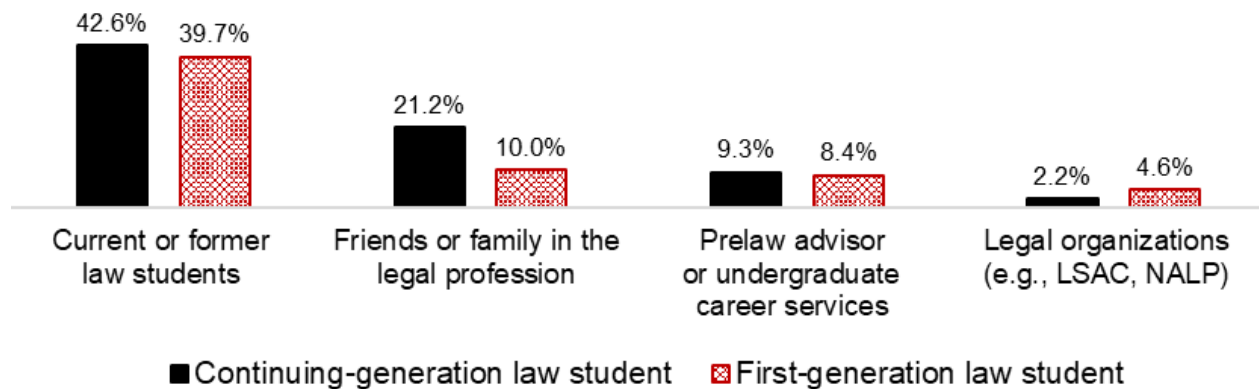
**Figure 29. How Students Learned About Big Law Recruiting Timelines, by First-Generation College Graduate Status**



Source: 2025 LSAC Matriculant Survey.

Note: Only statistically significant differences are shown. An F test p value of 0.05 indicates strong evidence that group differences exist, with less than a 5% probability that the observed differences occurred by chance.

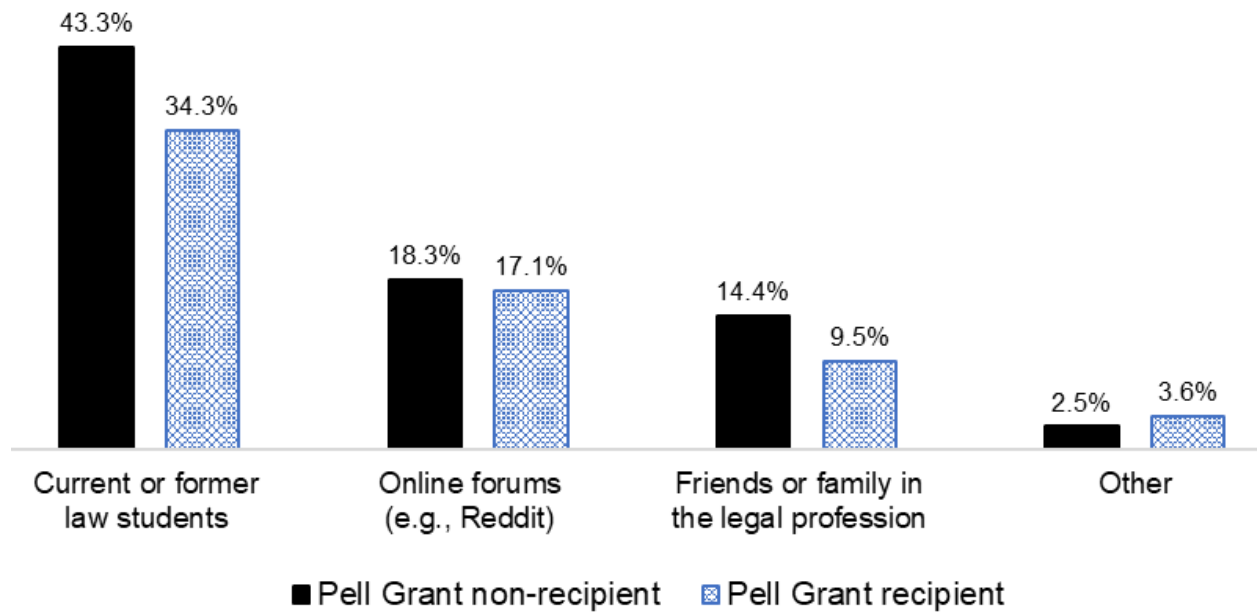
**Figure 30. How Students Learned About Big Law Recruiting Timelines, by First-Generation Law Student Status**



Source: 2025 LSAC Matriculant Survey.

Note: Only statistically significant differences are shown. An F test p value of 0.05 indicates strong evidence that group differences exist, with less than a 5% probability that the observed differences occurred by chance.

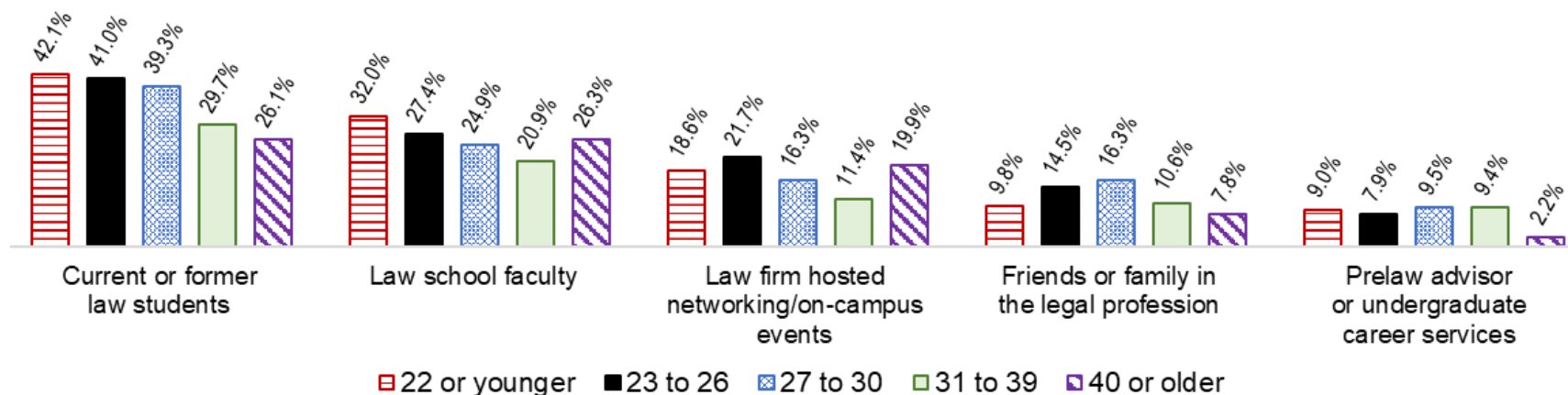
**Figure 31. How Students Learned About Big Law Recruiting Timelines, by Pell Grant Recipient Status**



Source: 2025 LSAC Matriculant Survey.

Note: Only statistically significant differences are shown. An F test p value of 0.05 indicates strong evidence that group differences exist, with less than a 5% probability that the observed differences occurred by chance.

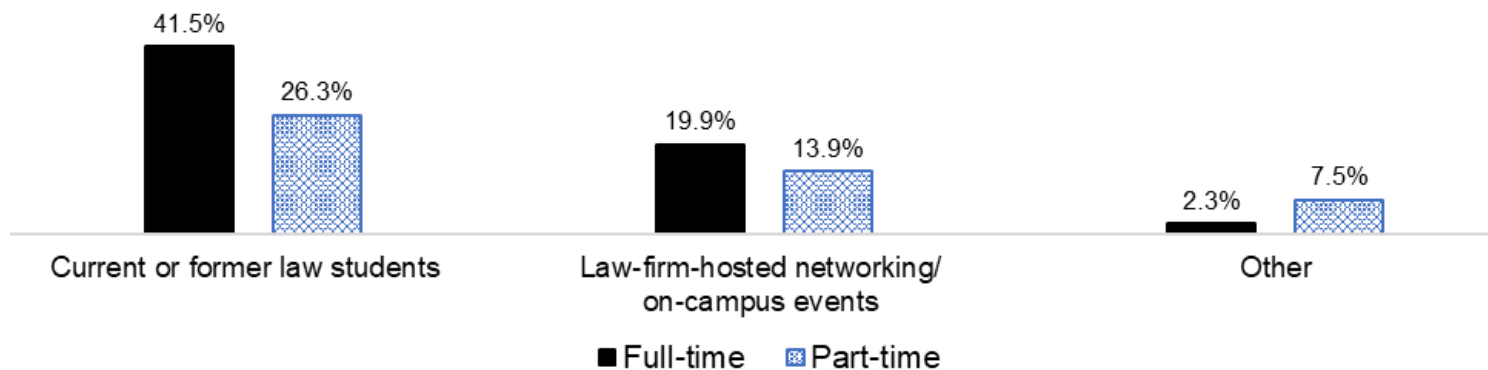
**Figure 32. How Students Learned About Big Law Recruiting Timelines, by Age at Start of Academic Year**



Source: 2025 LSAC Matriculant Survey.

Note: Only statistically significant differences are shown. An F test p value of 0.05 indicates strong evidence that group differences exist, with less than a 5% probability that the observed differences occurred by chance.

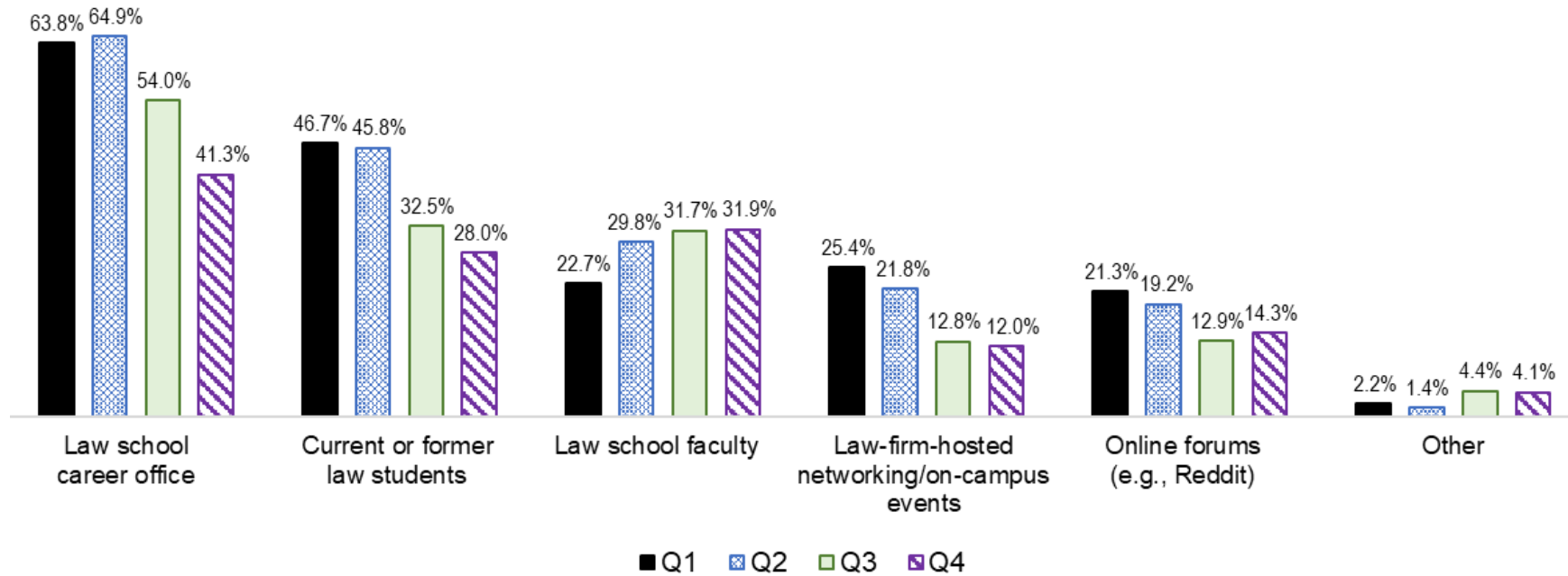
**Figure 33. How Students Learned About Big Law Recruiting Timelines, by Program Intensity**



Source: 2025 LSAC Matriculant Survey.

Note: Only statistically significant differences are shown. An F test p value of 0.05 indicates strong evidence that group differences exist, with less than a 5% probability that the observed differences occurred by chance.

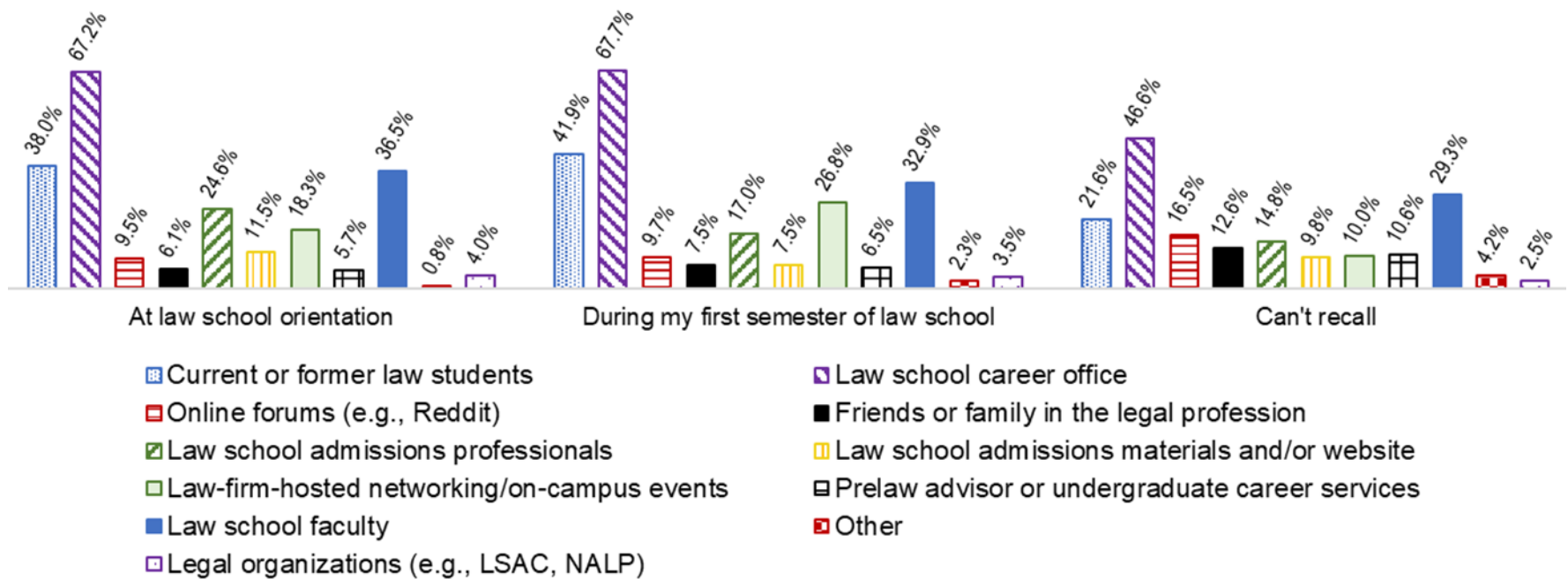
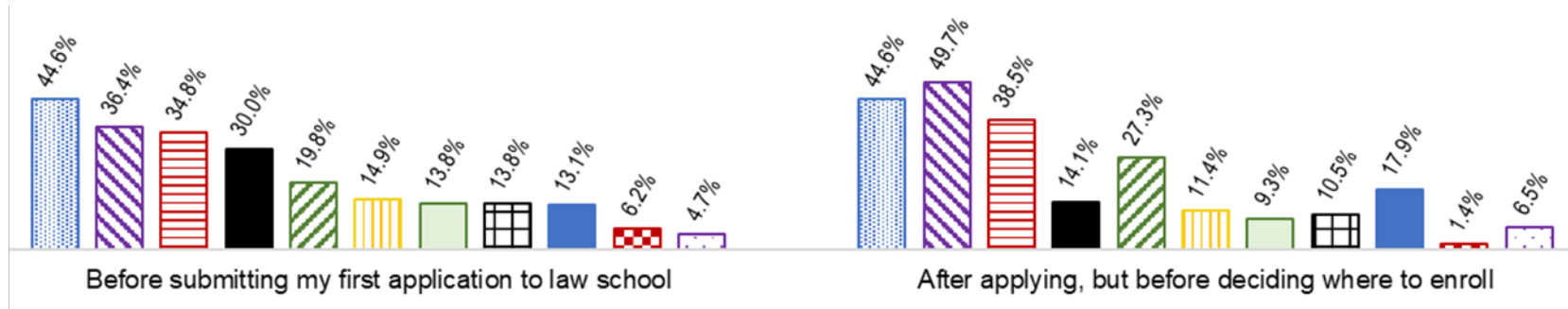
**Figure 34. Awareness of 2L Recruitment Timeline, by Law School Selectivity Quartile**



Source: 2025 LSAC Matriculant Survey.

Notes: Only statistically significant differences are shown. An F test p value of 0.05 indicates strong evidence that group differences exist, with less than a 5% probability that the observed differences occurred by chance. Each school is assigned a selectivity index score used to create quartiles of law school selectivity. Selectivity is based on the admission rate, median LSAT score of admitted students, and median UGPA of admitted students of a given year. The top 25% of law schools by selectivity, considered “highly selective,” are in the first quartile (Q1). Each quartile holds about 49 or 50 law schools.

**Figure 35. How Students Learned About Big Law Recruiting Timelines, by When They Were Aware of the Accelerated Recruitment Timelines**



Source: 2025 LSAC Matriculant Survey.

Notes: Only statistically significant differences are shown. An F test p value of 0.05 indicates strong evidence that group differences exist, with less than a 5% probability that the observed differences occurred by chance. Respondents can select multiple sources through which they learned about the accelerated recruitment timelines; therefore, totals are not 100%.

## How Did the Knowledge about Accelerated Recruitment Timelines Influence Law School Enrollment Decisions?

Overall, students were looking for schools that could offer support and guidance beyond the Big Law focus. For example, 29.1% of respondents said they chose a school with strong employment outcomes, which is consistent with other research on factors that influence enrollment decisions (Figure 36).<sup>30</sup> For 28.7% of respondents, choosing a school with strong Big Law placement outcomes influenced their enrollment decision, 18.1% were looking for a school that hosted networking events with large law firms, and 14.5% wanted a school with a strong relationship with large law firms. However, 30.6% of first-year respondents indicated that their awareness of Big Law recruitment timelines did not influence their law school enrollment decision (Figure 36).

**Figure 36. How Awareness Influenced Law School Enrollment Decisions (Chose a School With/Where)**



Source: 2025 LSAC Matriculant Survey.

Note: The total will not add up to 100% because this was a “select all that apply” question.

<sup>30</sup> [The 2024 1L Class: Persistence in the First Year of Law School | The Law School Admission Council](#)

What influenced students' enrollment decisions and the role of accelerated Big Law recruitment timelines significantly<sup>31</sup> varied based on first-generation college graduate status, first-generation law student status, Pell Grant status, age, law school attended, and whether they expressed Big Law interest before law school (Figures 37 to 43). Some of these significant differences include:

- More first-generation college graduates indicated that their awareness of Big Law recruitment timelines did not influence their law school enrollment decisions compared with their continuing-generation college graduate peers (Figure 37). In fact, first-generation college graduates said they chose a school with a career office that offered guidance at higher rates than their continuing-generation college graduate peers. However, continuing-generation college graduate respondents reported at higher rates than first-generation college graduates that they chose a school with strong Big Law placement outcomes, a school that hosted networking events with large law firms, and a school with strong relationships with large law firms. For example, 16.6% of continuing-generation college graduates reported that they chose a school with a strong relationship with large law firms, compared with 7.8% of first-generation college graduates — an absolute difference of 8.8%.
- Similarly, continuing-generation law student respondents reported at higher rates than first-generation law students that they chose a school with strong Big Law placement outcomes, a school that hosted networking events with large law firms, and a school with a strong relationship with large law firms (Figure 38).
- Along the same lines, respondents who were not Pell Grant recipients reported at higher rates than their peers who were Pell Grant recipients that they chose a school with strong Big Law placement outcomes, a school that hosted networking events with large law firms, and a school with a strong relationship with large law firms (Figure 39).
- Awareness of Big Law recruitment timelines did not influence respondents' law school enrollment decisions as age increased. In other words, accelerated Big Law recruitment timelines were not more of a factor in choosing a school for older students than for their younger peers (Figure 40), and the timelines had no influence on almost 60% of students 40 or older. Choosing a school with strong Big Law placement outcomes, a school that hosted networking events with large law firms, and a school with a strong relationship with large law firms were higher priorities for younger respondents than their older peers.

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<sup>31</sup> In this report, "significantly" indicates that the mean values between two groups are significantly different from one another. Survey-weighted Wald F tests evaluate whether observed group differences are statistically significant while accounting for survey weights, so results reflect the population rather than just the sample. An F-test p-value of 0.05 indicates strong evidence that group differences exist, with less than a 5% probability that the observed differences occurred by chance. \*\*\*p<0.001, \*\*p<0.01, \*p<0.05.

- For most respondents in part-time programs, their awareness of Big Law recruitment timelines did not influence their law school enrollment decisions compared with their peers in full-time programs (Figure 41). For example, 59.9% of part-time students reported it had no influence, while only 27.2% of full-time students reported no influence. Respondents in full-time programs reported at higher rates than their peers in part-time programs that they chose a school with strong Big Law placement outcomes, a school that hosted networking events with large law firms, and a school with a strong relationship with large law firms.
- Awareness of Big Law recruitment timelines did not influence respondents' law school enrollment decisions based on law school selectivity.<sup>32</sup> For example, as law school selectivity increased, fewer respondents said it did not influence respondents' law school enrollment decisions. While 50.6% of respondents at law schools in the fourth selectivity quartile (Q4) said it had no influence on their enrollment decisions, only 15.6% of respondents at highly selective law schools (Q1) reported it had no influence on their enrollment decisions. On the other hand, 4.1% of respondents at law schools in the fourth selectivity quartile (Q4) said they chose a school with strong Big Law placement outcomes, while a staggering 57.4% of respondents at highly selective law schools (Q1) reported they chose a school with strong Big Law placement outcomes.
- Awareness of Big Law recruitment timelines affected enrollment decisions significantly for respondents who had already expressed interest in Big Law before law school (Figure 43). Among these respondents, 40.8% reported choosing a law school based on strong Big Law placement outcomes, compared with just 3.9% of respondents who did not express interest in Big Law before law school. Conversely, more than half of respondents who did not express interest in Big Law before law school reported that awareness of Big Law recruitment timelines did not influence their enrollment decisions.

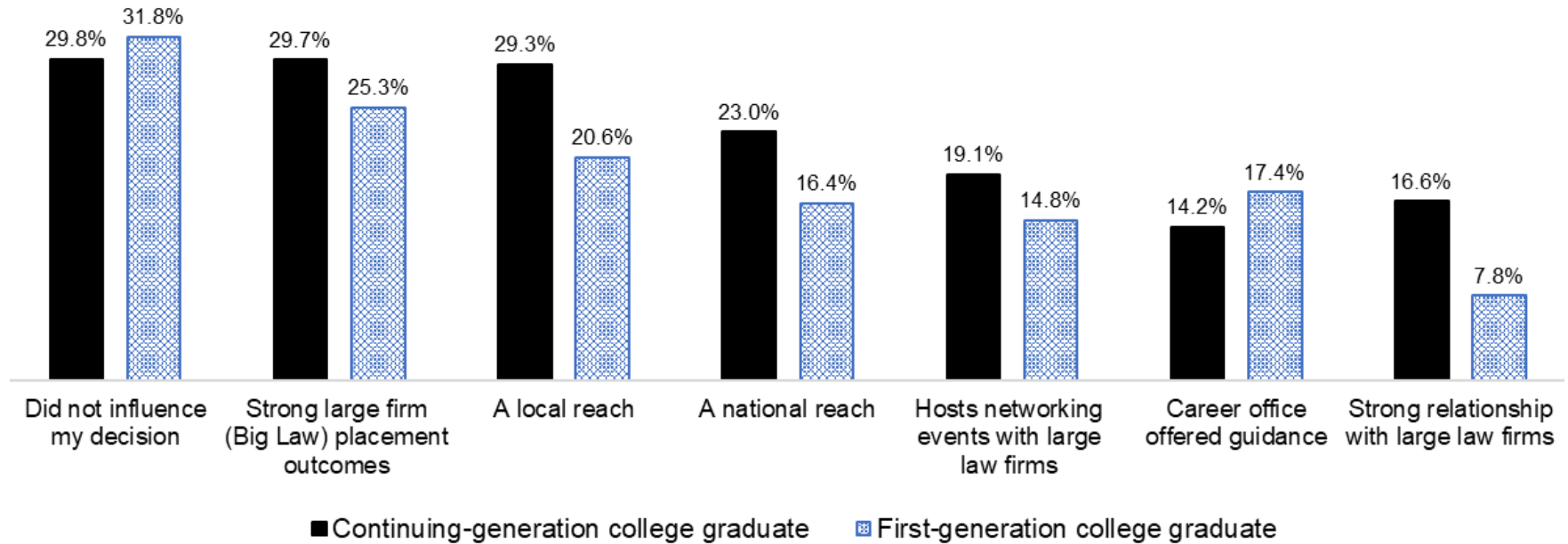
Taken together, these insights demonstrate that early interest in specific employment sectors significantly influence enrollment decisions, reinforcing concerns that accelerated timelines primarily advantage students who enter law school with prior exposure and guidance.

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<sup>32</sup> Each school is assigned a selectivity index score used to create quartiles of law school selectivity. Selectivity is based on the admission rate, median LSAT score of admitted students, and median UGPA of admitted students of a given year. The top 25% of law schools by selectivity, considered “highly selective,” are in the first quartile (Q1). Each quartile holds about 49 or 50 law schools.

How respondents chose their law schools — and whether awareness of accelerated Big Law recruiting timelines influenced their enrollment decisions — varied significantly based on students' interest in Big Law. Accordingly, continuing-generation college graduates, continuing-generation law students, Pell Grant non-recipients, younger students, full-time students, students at highly selective law schools, and students who expressed Big Law interest before law school reported at higher rates that they selected institutions with strong Big Law placement outcomes, robust networking opportunities with large law firms, and/or close institutional relationships with those firms. These disparities highlight how early awareness and exploration of Big Law functions as a form of advantage within increasingly accelerated recruitment timelines, while students who are still exploring career options are placed at a disadvantage. Students' responses again underscore the need for coordinated efforts: for law schools to support both academic development and professional preparation during the first semester of law school, and for employers to better align hiring practices with how legal talent, skills, and professional interests actually develop in law school.

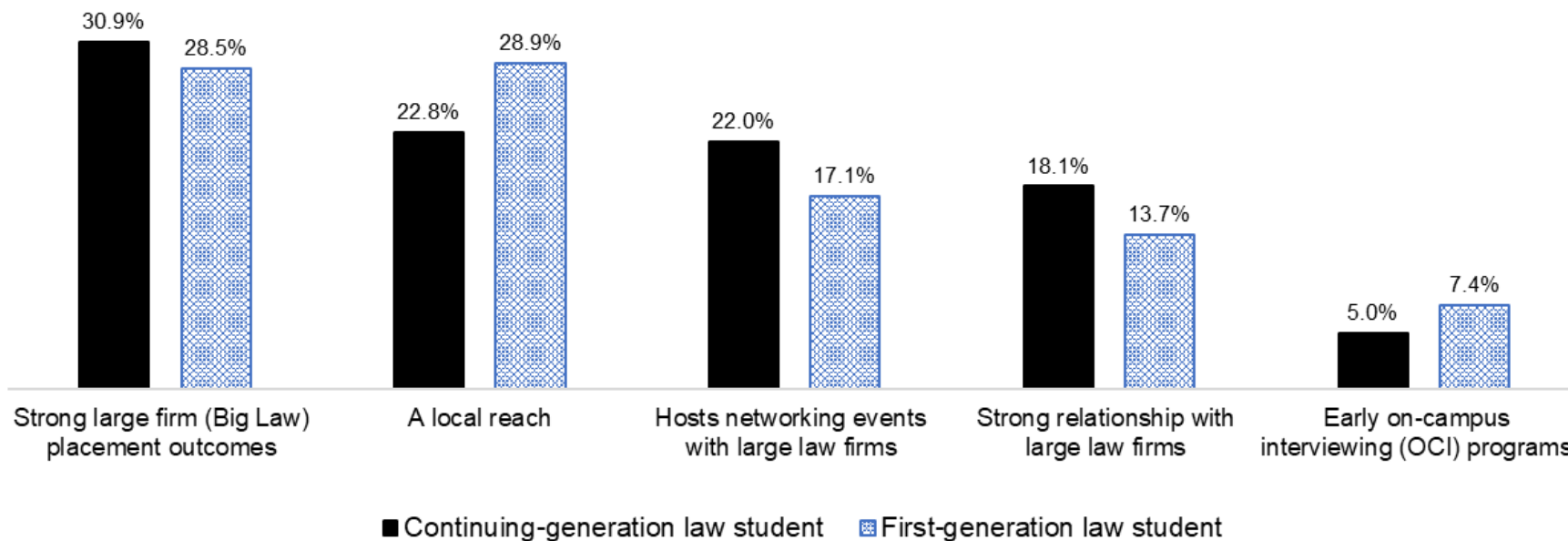
**Figure 37. How Awareness Influenced Law School Enrollment Decisions (Chose a School With/Where), by First-Generation College Graduate Status**



Source: 2025 LSAC Matriculant Survey.

Note: Only statistically significant differences are shown. An F test p value of 0.05 indicates strong evidence that group differences exist, with less than a 5% probability that the observed differences occurred by chance.

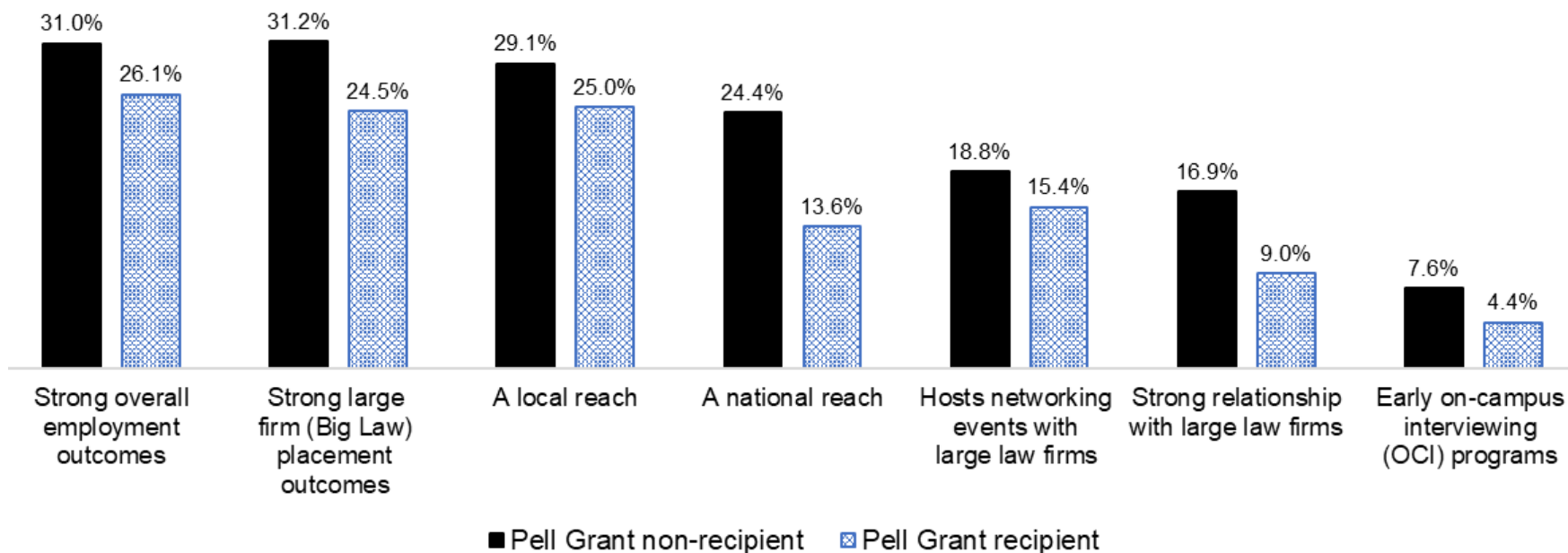
**Figure 38. How Awareness Influenced Law School Enrollment Decisions (Chose a School With/Where), by First-Generation Law Student Status**



Source: 2025 LSAC Matriculant Survey.

Note: Only statistically significant differences are shown. An F test p value of 0.05 indicates strong evidence that group differences exist, with less than a 5% probability that the observed differences occurred by chance.

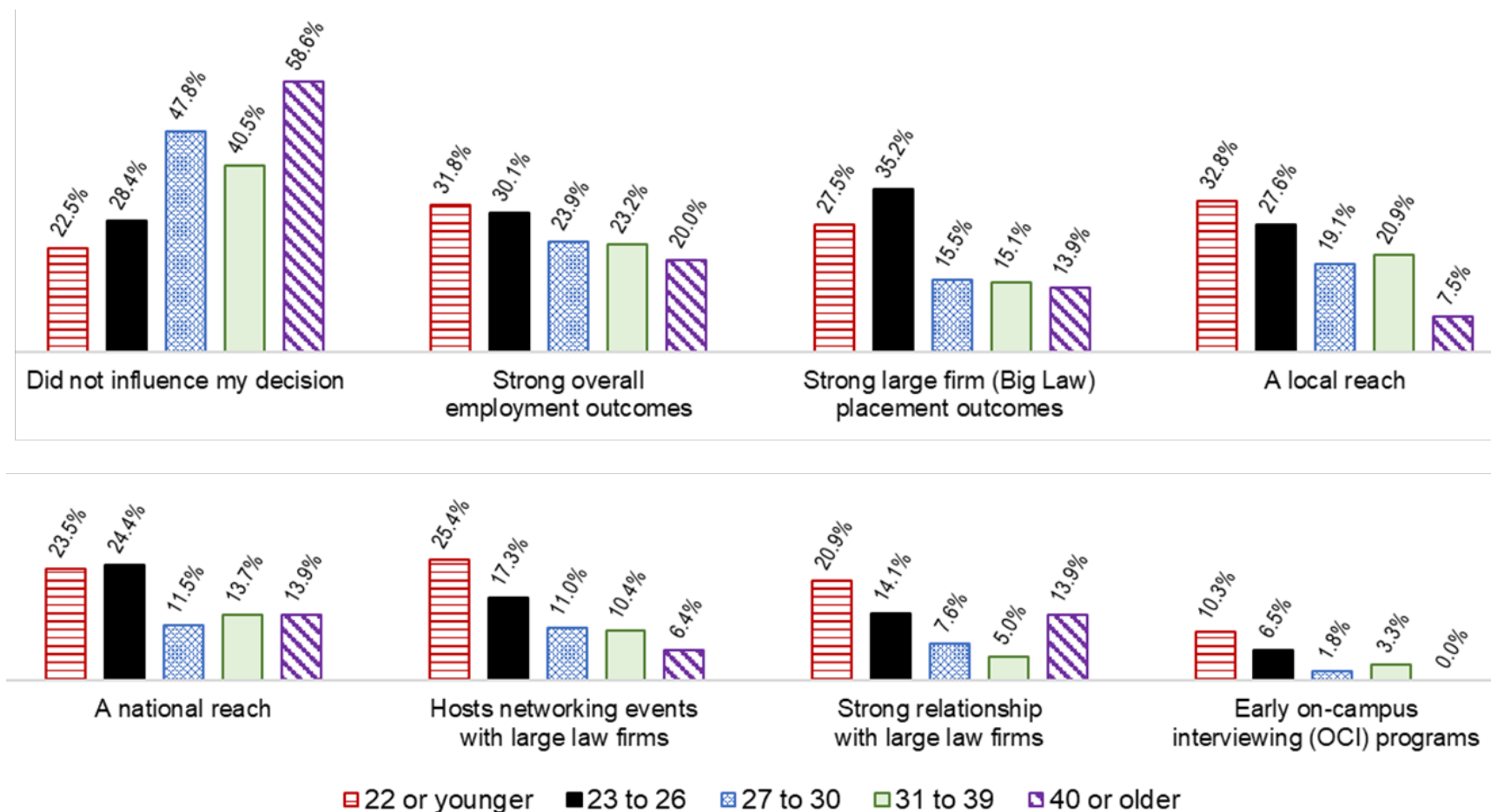
**Figure 39. How Awareness Influenced Law School Enrollment Decisions (Chose a School With/Where), by Pell Grant Recipient Status**



Source: 2025 LSAC Matriculant Survey.

Note: Only statistically significant differences are shown. An F test p value of 0.05 indicates strong evidence that group differences exist, with less than a 5% probability that the observed differences occurred by chance.

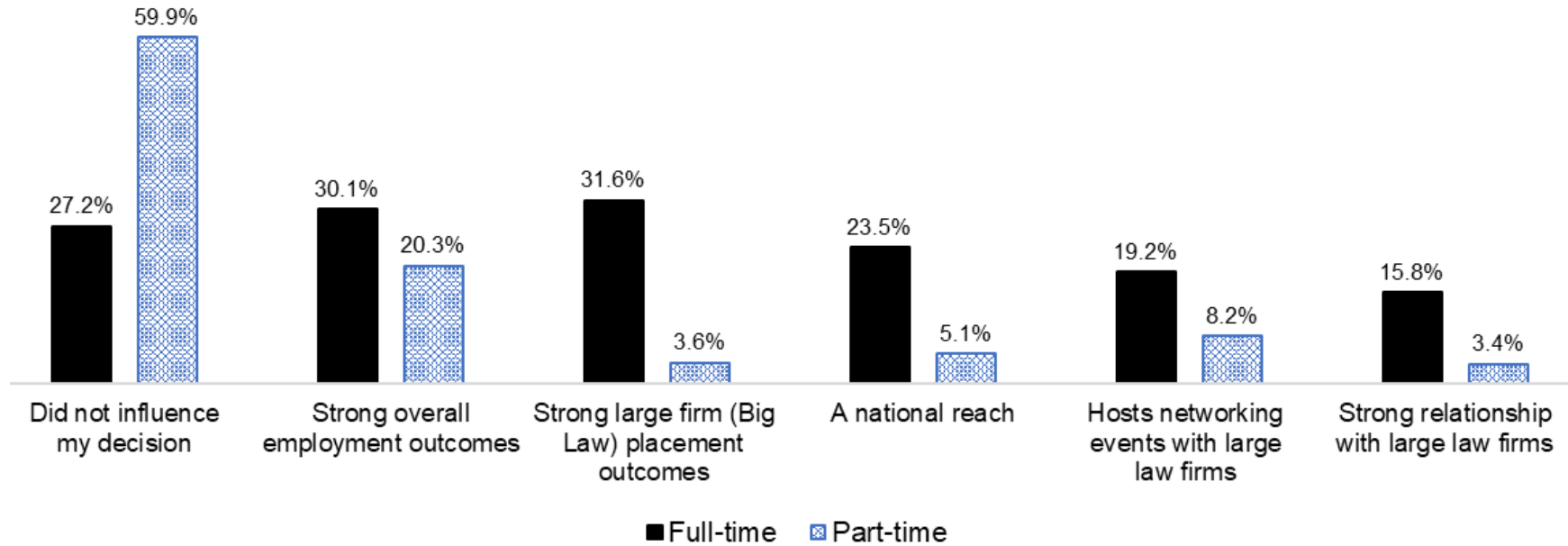
**Figure 40. How Awareness Influenced Law School Enrollment Decisions (Chose a School With/Where), by Age at Start of Academic Year**



Source: 2025 LSAC Matriculant Survey.

Note: Only statistically significant differences are shown. An F test p value of 0.05 indicates strong evidence that group differences exist, with less than a 5% probability that the observed differences occurred by chance.

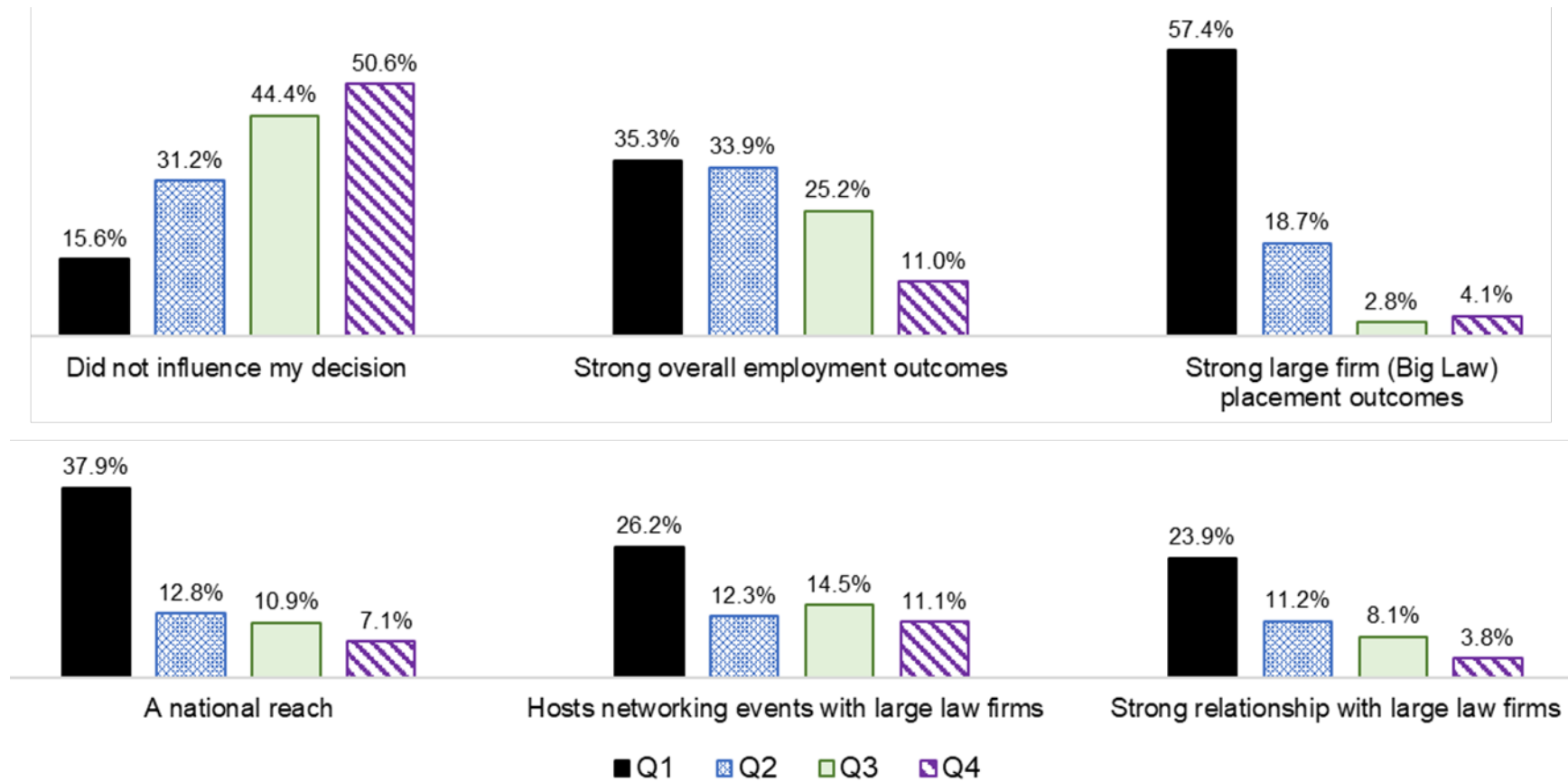
**Figure 41. How Awareness Influenced Law School Enrollment Decisions (Chose a School With/Where), by Program Intensity**



Source: 2025 LSAC Matriculant Survey.

Note: Only statistically significant differences are shown. An F test p value of 0.05 indicates strong evidence that group differences exist, with less than a 5% probability that the observed differences occurred by chance.

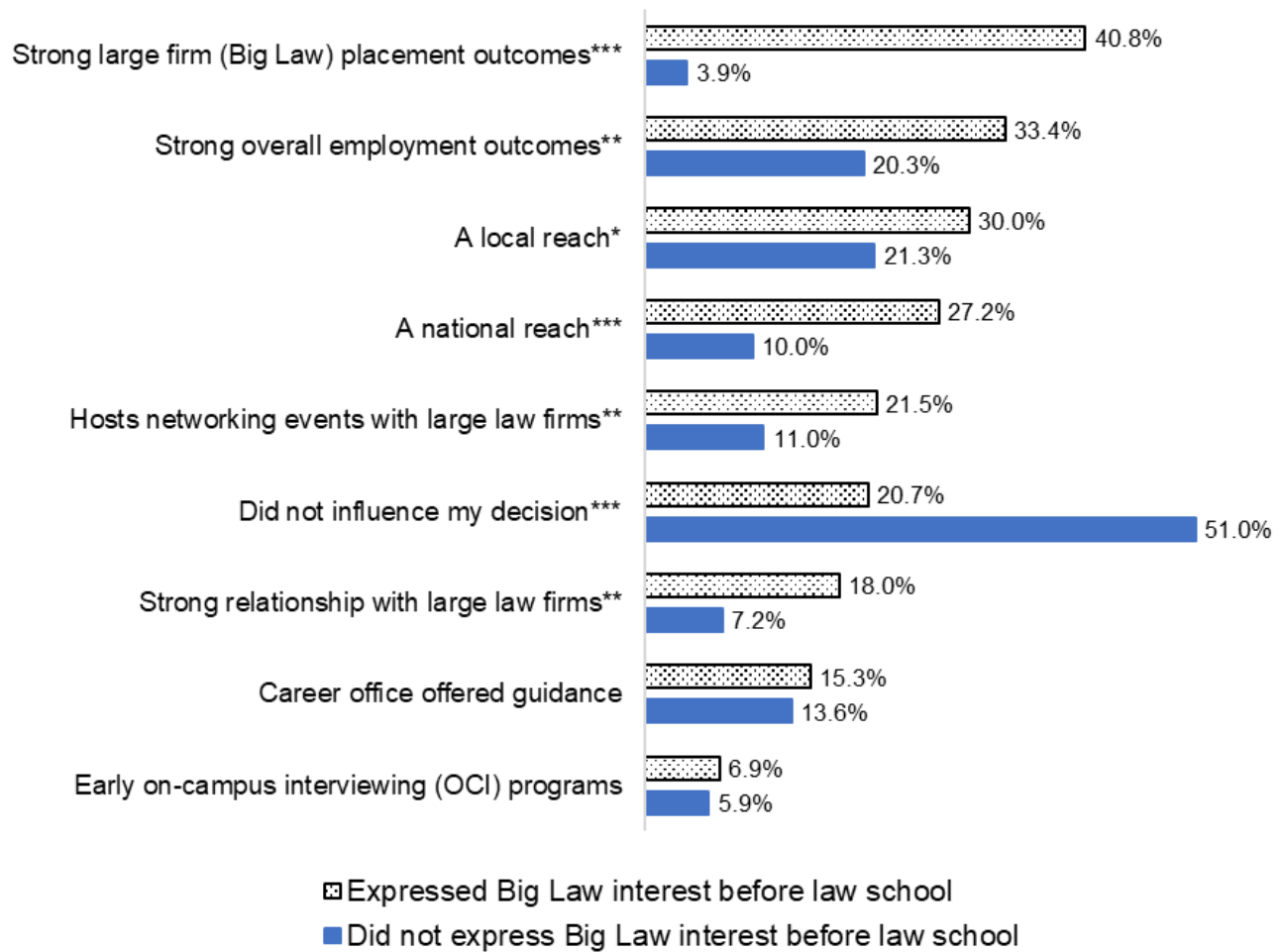
**Figure 42. How Awareness Influenced Law School Enrollment Decisions (Chose a School With/Where), by Law School Selectivity Quartile**



Source: 2025 LSAC Matriculant Survey.

Notes: Only statistically significant differences are shown. An F test p value of 0.05 indicates strong evidence that group differences exist, with less than a 5% probability that the observed differences occurred by chance. Each school is assigned a selectivity index score used to create quartiles of law school selectivity. Selectivity is based on the admission rate, median LSAT score of admitted students, and median UGPA of admitted students of a given year. The top 25% of law schools by selectivity, considered “highly selective,” are in the first quartile (Q1). Each quartile holds about 49 or 50 law schools.

**Figure 43. How Awareness Influenced Law School Enrollment Decisions (Chose a School With/Where), by Expressed Big Law Interest Before Law School**



Source: 2025 LSAC Matriculant Survey.

Notes: This figure is limited to respondents who indicated their employment sector interests before law school and who replied to this question. An F test p value of 0.05 indicates strong evidence that group differences exist, with less than a 5% probability that the observed differences occurred by chance. Significant differences between respondents who considered Big Law before law school and those who did not are designated with asterisk(s). \*\*\*p<0.001, \*\*p<0.01, \*p<0.05.

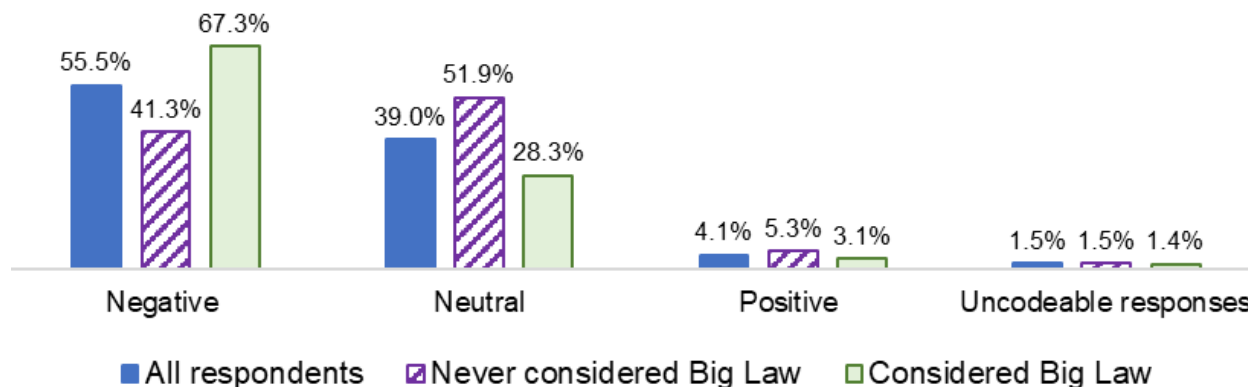
**Their Voices:  
How Did Big Law's Accelerated Recruitment  
Timelines Affect the First-Year Experience?**

## Sentiments and Impact on Their Experience

More than 2,000 1L students wrote open-ended responses to the question “In what ways, if any, has the early law firm recruiting timeline impacted your experience as a 1L law student so far?” Students, regardless of their expressed interest in Big Law, indicated that the timelines had a negative impact on their first-year experience. A qualitative analysis of these responses found that 55.5% said the timelines had a negative impact on their first year of law school. This negative sentiment expressed by respondents was higher for those who reported considering Big Law as a sector of interest, with 67.3% of these respondents reporting that the accelerated recruitment timelines had a negative impact on their first-year experience. Even for students who never considered Big Law, 41.3% still reported that the accelerated recruitment timelines had a negative impact on their first-year experience (Figure 44).

Student voices should not be ignored, as they clearly express what they need to thrive in law school — and these needs are largely not supported by accelerated Big Law recruiting timelines. Students need time to learn, transition into law school, and demonstrate their skills and performance before being recruited by potential employers. This is echoed not just by students considering Big Law, but also by students who never considered Big Law, because the first-year experience is about more than the “black letter law” being learned. It also is about the culture, the learning environments, and the well-being and mental health of one’s peers.

**Figure 44. Sentiments of How Accelerated Big Law Recruitment Timelines Impacted the First-Year Experience, by Expressed Big Law Interest**



Source: 2025 LSAC Matriculant Survey.

Notes: Only statistically significant differences are shown. An F test p value of 0.05 indicates strong evidence that group differences exist, with less than a 5% probability that the observed differences occurred by chance. Respondents are categorized as “Considered Big Law” if they indicated considering large private firms (Big Law) before they started law school and/or since starting law school. Quantitative results were produced by qualitatively analyzing respondents’ open-ended written responses.

Students' open-ended responses to how accelerated Big Law recruitment timelines have affected their first-year experience were categorized into eight general themes.

1. General dissatisfaction
2. No influence
3. Ability to prioritize academic work
4. Ability to prioritize career planning
5. Difficulty balancing priorities
6. Not interested in Big Law
7. Clarified priorities
8. Caused disinterest in Big Law

Overall, 72.6% of respondents said accelerated Big Law recruitment timelines affected their first-year experience. For 37.4% of respondents, accelerated recruiting led to general dissatisfaction in the first year, with this number being highest among respondents who considered Big Law, at 42.8% (Table 4). For about a quarter of respondents, the accelerated timelines had no influence; again, this number was highest among respondents who never considered Big Law, at 36.6%. For 16.2% of all respondents, these timelines affected their ability to prioritize academic work; this number was highest for respondents who considered Big Law, at 21.5%.

**Table 4. How Accelerated Big Law Recruitment Timelines Affected the First-Year Experience, by Big Law Expressed Interest**

The Impact on Their First-Year Experience	All Respondents	Never Considered Big Law	Considered Big Law
General dissatisfaction	37.4%	30.9%	42.8%
No influence	24.9%	36.6%	15.1%
Ability to prioritize academic work	16.2%	9.8%	21.5%
Ability to prioritize career planning	8.2%	8.4%	8.1%
Difficulty balancing priorities	5.8%	3.9%	7.3%
Not interested in Big Law	2.6%	5.0%	0.5%
Clarified priorities	2.0%	2.0%	2.0%
Caused disinterest in Big Law	0.5%	0.5%	0.5%
Uncodeable responses	2.5%	2.9%	2.1%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Source: 2025 LSAC Matriculant Survey.

Notes: Only statistically significant differences are shown. An F test p value of 0.05 indicates strong evidence that group differences exist, with less than a 5% probability that the observed differences occurred by chance. Respondents are categorized as "Considered Big Law" if they indicated considering large private firms (Big Law) before they started law school and/or since starting law school. Quantitative results were produced by qualitatively analyzing respondents' open-ended written responses.

How accelerated Big Law recruitment timelines affected students' first-year experience is nuanced (Tables 5 to 7). For example, in some cases, it affected students' ability to prioritize academic work in a positive way; for others, it did so in a negative way (Table 5). Overall, most *negative* sentiments about accelerated Big Law recruitment timelines resulted in general dissatisfaction (63.2%), and 20.9% said it negatively affected their ability to prioritize their academic work. For respondents who wrote about how the timelines *positively* affected their first-year experience, they said it did so by helping their ability to prioritize career planning (72%) and clarify priorities (26.8%) in the first year. Most people who felt neutral explained that the timelines did not affect their first-year experience (Table 5).

**Table 5. How Accelerated Big Law Recruitment Timelines Affected the First-Year Experience, All Respondents**

The Impact on Their First-Year Experience	Overall	Negative	Positive	Neutral
General dissatisfaction	37.4%	63.2%	0.0%	6.0%
No influence	24.9%	0.2%	1.2%	63.4%
Ability to prioritize academic work	16.2%	20.9%	0.0%	11.8%
Ability to prioritize career planning	8.2%	5.9%	72.0%	5.2%
Difficulty balancing priorities	5.8%	7.5%	0.0%	4.1%
Not interested in Big Law	2.6%	1.3%	0.0%	4.7%
Clarified priorities	2.0%	0.0%	26.8%	2.3%
Caused disinterest in Big Law	0.5%	0.9%	0.0%	0.0%
Uncodeable responses	2.5%	0.1%	0.0%	2.5%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

Source: 2025 LSAC Matriculant Survey.

Notes: Only statistically significant differences are shown. An F test p value of 0.05 indicates strong evidence that group differences exist, with less than a 5% probability that the observed differences occurred by chance. Respondents are categorized as "Considered Big Law" if they indicated considering large private firms (Big Law) before they started law school and/or since starting law school. Quantitative results were produced by qualitatively analyzing respondents' open-ended written responses.

Overall, 60.5% of respondents who never considered Big Law reported that recruitment timelines affected their first-year experience (Table 6). Among these students, negative perceptions of accelerated timelines most often manifested as general first-year dissatisfaction (68.9%), followed by difficulty prioritizing academic work (13.7%) or career planning (5.5%) and challenges balancing competing priorities (7.2%). This is echoed in stories describing that while the respondents themselves were not interested in Big Law, the timelines directly affected their peers and fueled stress in the first year. On the other hand, only 5.3% said the accelerated recruitment timelines positively affected their first-year experience. These students reported that the timelines positively affected their ability to prioritize career planning (72.5%) and helped clarify their priorities in the first year (27.5%). This was echoed in stories of how these students

were able to get career guidance sooner than expected to be prepared for their own internship search later.

**Table 6. How Accelerated Big Law Recruitment Timelines Affected the First-Year Experience, By Respondents Who Never Considered Big Law**

The Impact on Their First-Year Experience	Overall	Negative	Positive	Neutral
General dissatisfaction	30.9%	68.9%	0.0%	4.7%
No influence	36.6%	0.5%	0.0%	70.1%
Ability to prioritize academic work	9.8%	13.7%	0.0%	7.9%
Ability to prioritize career planning	8.4%	5.5%	72.5%	4.4%
Difficulty balancing priorities	3.9%	7.2%	0.0%	1.8%
Not interested in Big Law	5.0%	2.9%	0.0%	7.3%
Clarified priorities	2.0%	0.0%	27.5%	1.1%
Caused disinterest in Big Law	0.5%	1.2%	0.0%	0.0%
Uncodeable responses	2.9%	0.0%	0.0%	2.7%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

Source: 2025 LSAC Matriculant Survey.

Notes: Only statistically significant differences are shown. An F test p value of 0.05 indicates strong evidence that group differences exist, with less than a 5% probability that the observed differences occurred by chance. Respondents are categorized as “Considered Big Law” if they indicated considering large private firms (Big Law) before they started law school and/or since starting law school. Quantitative results were produced by qualitatively analyzing respondents’ open-ended written responses.

For respondents who considered Big Law, 82.8% said that the accelerated recruitment timelines affected their first-year experience (Table 7). Most students who considered Big Law (67.3%) said it had a negative impact; this was characterized as general dissatisfaction in the first year (60.3%), negatively affecting their ability to prioritize academic work (24.5%), career planning (6.1%), and making it difficult to balance priorities (7.7%). Respondents’ stories echoed how difficult it was trying to transition into law school while balancing all the academic and recruitment demands. On the other hand, only 3.1% said that the accelerated recruitment timelines positively affected their first-year experience. These students reported that the timelines positively affected their ability to prioritize career planning (71.3%) and helped clarify their priorities in the first year (25.7%). In particular, students expressed how the timelines helped them organize their first year.

**Table 7. How Accelerated Big Law Recruitment Timelines Impacted the First-Year Experience, By Respondents Who Considered Big Law**

The Impact on Their First-Year Experience	Overall	Negative	Positive	Neutral
General dissatisfaction	42.8%	60.3%	0.0%	8.0%
No influence	15.1%	0.0%	3.0%	53.2%
Ability to prioritize academic work	21.5%	24.5%	0.0%	17.8%
Ability to prioritize career planning	8.1%	6.1%	71.3%	6.4%
Difficulty balancing priorities	7.3%	7.7%	0.0%	7.6%
Not interested in Big Law	0.5%	0.6%	0.0%	0.6%
Clarified priorities	2.0%	0.0%	25.7%	4.2%
Caused disinterest in Big Law	0.5%	0.8%	0.0%	0.0%
Uncodeable responses	2.1%	0.1%	0.0%	2.3%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

Source: 2025 LSAC Matriculant Survey.

Notes: Only statistically significant differences are shown. An F test p value of 0.05 indicates strong evidence that group differences exist, with less than a 5% probability that the observed differences occurred by chance. Respondents are categorized as “Considered Big Law” if they indicated considering large private firms (Big Law) before they started law school and/or since starting law school. Quantitative results were produced by qualitatively analyzing respondents’ open-ended written responses.

For the majority of first year respondents, the accelerated Big Law recruitment timelines affected their first-year experience, regardless of their interest in Big Law. As the selected student quotes on the next few pages illustrate, there are two major takeaways for law schools, employers, and legal stakeholders across the journey.

1. Accelerated Big Law recruitment is detrimental to the law student experience in their first year. They are having to figure out law school — academically, emotionally, mentally, and financially — while also being asked to present their best selves for lucrative and competitive summer positions. This often takes place before students even have access to first-semester grades.
2. Career planning and guidance is an essential part of the first-year experience. Not only are new law students learning how to acclimate to law school, most are also new to the legal employment world. Law school career services offices provide the practical guidance all students need, regardless of where they are enrolled and their employment sector interests.

This report is the first of its kind in which thousands of 2025 1L students voiced their experiences for both legal education and the legal profession to learn from as we all work together to usher in the next generation of legal leaders. The following are a few quotes summarizing what thousands echoed in the survey.



## Impact Quotes: Negative

### Students Who Never Considered Big Law

#### Influenced Their General Dissatisfaction

“ For me, it hasn't impacted me, because I have a job for the summer/for after graduation. But it stresses me out to be around so many stressed-out students and it's **annoying to be hounded** by the career office about recruitment happening **RIGHT NOW**.

---

#### Influenced Ability to Prioritize Academic Work

“ It has definitely been **distracting and anxiety inducing**. I always feel behind.

---

#### Influenced Ability to Prioritize Career Planning

“ It is greatly **impacting my learning**. I am constantly encouraged to attend Big Law networking and recruitment events during the most important semester of school. We don't have grades yet and don't know whether we have the minimum grades that many of these firms require, so it requires a lot more work on students, compared to firms. Second semester is a better time to apply.

---

#### Made It Difficult to Balance Priorities

“ Struggling with balancing coursework/outlining and networking events. **Not sure what to prioritize and when**.

---

#### Not Interested in Big Law

“ As someone who is not participating in Big Law recruitment but is instead interested in public interest/government work, it has **made me feel like I am falling behind** in the timeline for my job search, though I am cognizant that this is not true.

---

## Caused Disinterest in Big Law

- “ I am not interested in firms that participate in that kind of recruiting, but I do think **it is evil**.
  - “ It makes me feel insane, and I frankly hate Big Law even more now than I did prior to starting law school. This is shocking because I had terrible experiences working in those environments as a non-lawyer. **It does a massive disservice to everyone** involved to pressure students who have no experience or knowledge [in] the field to spend time, money and energy thinking about what Big Law firm they want to work at during their first semester of school. In my opinion, the process was already absurdly high pressure, and ... the 1L application timeline has been borderline coercive. I know many students who have been advised that the only way to be successful and earn enough money to repay their loans is to get hired by a major firm. ... Starting the process before these students even understand what the functional difference between litigation and transactional practice is laughable.
  - “ It **made me not want to work** at any of those places. It made me feel guilty about not being able to dedicate more time to career work because course work is essential 1L year.
- 

## Students Who Considered Big Law

### Influenced Their General Dissatisfaction

- “ I'M STRESSED.
- 

### Influenced Ability to Prioritize Academic Work

- “ It's been extremely stressful knowing that we should start applying to Big Law jobs when we started law school just two months ago. I prioritize my schoolwork, but I'm afraid of passing on an opportunity. **It's been extremely overwhelming for my mental health, and I feel like I'm drowning most of the time.**
  - “ Balancing networking and applying to positions with 1L coursework is very difficult. **Someone stop them from doing this again because it sucks, and nobody can actually focus on learning.**
-

## Influenced Ability to Prioritize Career Planning

“ I think it has negatively impacted my 1L experience due to the pressure of networking, constant events, and thinking so far ahead into my career path when networking with Big Law firms. **It has detracted time from adjusting to law school.**

---

## Made It Difficult to Balance Priorities

“ It has had a huge impact on my experience in law school so far. It has been **hard to study and focus** on classes because we are expected to be doing our job search right now. I have to balance my classes with attending law firm events and writing cover letters on top of writing my law school memos.

---

## Caused Disinterest in Big Law

“ **It has been terrible.** Not only does it stifle any opportunity to sit back and understand our first exposure into the law, it puts massive additional stressors on 1L students for their grades. I was considering pursuing a career in Big Law, but I am so resentful of the way that recruitment has happened that **I refuse to participate.**

---



## Impact Quotes: Positive

### Students Who Never Considered Big Law

#### Influenced Ability to Prioritize Career Planning

“ It has been beneficial; I already **feel prepared** for my future career to find externships through my career counseling.

---

#### Clarified Priorities

“ I learned early on that **time management is very important**. There are so many hours in the day, and if you prioritize your tasks, you will feel so much better. It is important to be involved because you need a community. You are all going through the same thing, so it is important to have a community.

---

### Students Who Considered Big Law

#### Influenced Ability to Prioritize Career Planning

“ The early recruiting timeline has **forced me to balance my work in class and my networking**. I have to be a lot better with time management, and I often do not seek involvement in extracurriculars as much as I want to.

---

#### Clarified Priorities

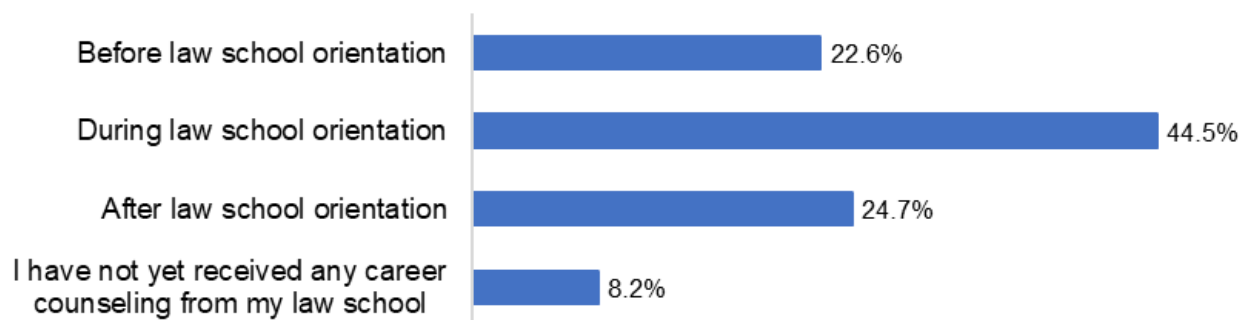
“ It has **influenced my thoughts on timeline and researching practice areas** that interest me. It has also changed my perception of working in a firm, vs. for a business.

**Knowledge and Views About Using  
Law School Career Counseling Support**

## First Interaction with Career Counseling in Law School

As accelerated Big Law recruitment timelines have moved even earlier in recent years, more schools have started to support students before day one of law school. More than one in five 1L respondents (22.6%) said they received their first career counseling or guidance support from their school before law school orientation (Figure 45). Most students received their first career counseling once they started law school, either during orientation or after orientation. Only 8.2% of respondents indicated they had not yet received any career counseling from their school.

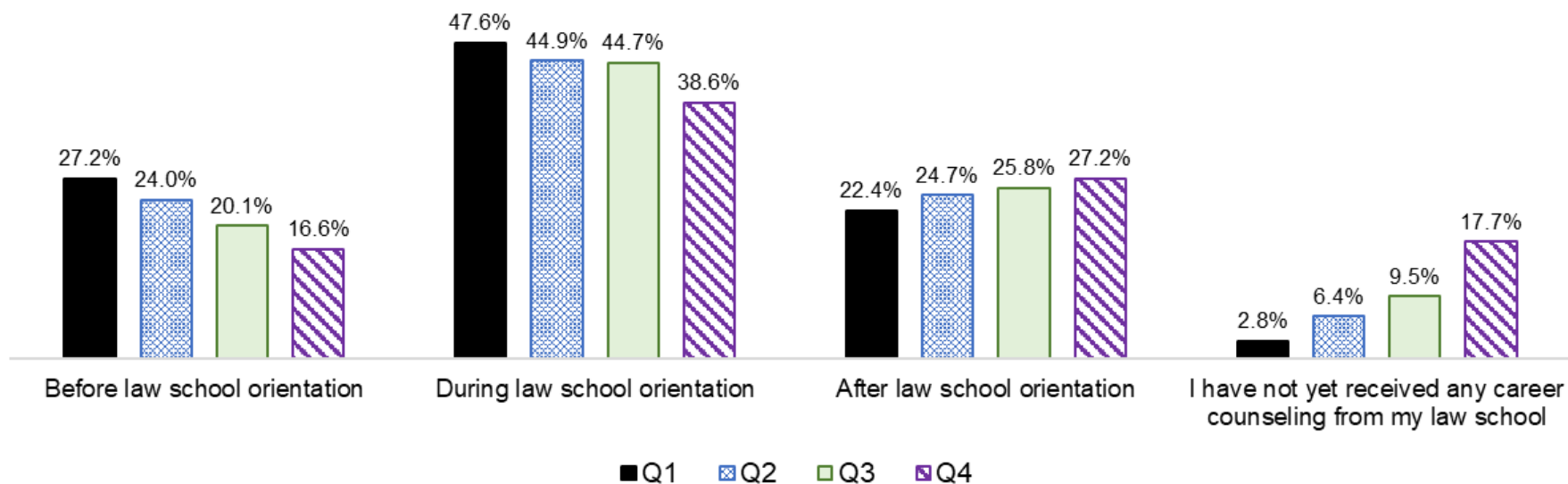
**Figure 45. When Students Received Their First Career Counseling or Guidance from Their School**



Source: 2025 LSAC Matriculant Survey

When respondents indicated they received their first career counseling from their school varied significantly based on where they were enrolled (Figure 46). For example, 27.2% of respondents at highly selective law schools (Q1) said they received their first career counseling before law school orientation, while 16.6% of respondents at law schools in the fourth selectivity quartile (Q4) said they did. Given Big Law interests among students who attend highly selective law schools (Q1) and where large law firms concentrate their recruitment efforts, it is not surprising that more of these schools support students before orientation. This is echoed by respondents who reported not having yet received any career counseling from their school: 17.7% of respondents at law schools in the fourth selectivity quartile (Q4) said they had not yet received career counseling, compared with only 2.8% of respondents at highly selective law schools (Q1). While student populations will vary from school to school based on employment interests, these trends highlight the need for exploring how schools can allocate resources to meet their students where they are and support their career planning. The differences in receiving career counseling spotlights the need for more resources across schools to ensure access to the profession, not just Big Law.

**Figure 46. When Students Received Their First Career Counseling or Guidance from Their School, by Law School Selectivity Quartile**



Source: 2025 LSAC Matriculant Survey.

Notes: Only statistically significant differences are shown. An F test p value of 0.05 indicates strong evidence that group differences exist, with less than a 5% probability that the observed differences occurred by chance. Each school is assigned a selectivity index score used to create quartiles of law school selectivity. Selectivity is based on the admission rate, median LSAT score of admitted students, and median UGPA of admitted students of a given year. The top 25% of law schools by selectivity, considered “highly selective,” are in the first quartile (Q1). Each quartile holds about 49 or 50 law schools.

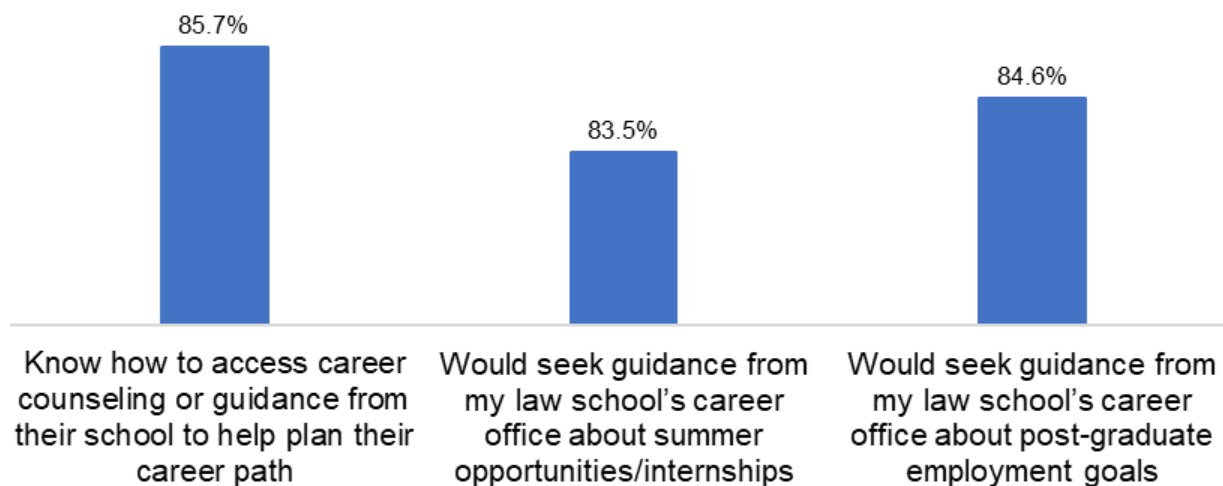
## Perception About Seeking Guidance from Law School Career Services Office

More than 80% of 1L respondents said they know how to access career counseling from their school to help plan their career path, and they agreed they would seek guidance from their law school’s career services office about summer opportunities and internships, as well as postgraduate employment goals (Figure 47).

The availability of law school career services offices is well known but not equally expressed by respondents based on where they are enrolled (Figure 48). For example, 90.6% of respondents at highly selective law schools (Q1) reported they know how to access career counseling from their school to help plan their career path, while 78.5% of respondents at law schools in the fourth selectivity quartile (Q4) did. Similarly, almost 90% of respondents at highly selective law schools (Q1) agreed that they would seek guidance from their law school’s career services office about summer opportunities, internships, and postgraduate employment goals, while less than 80% of respondents at law schools in the fourth selectivity quartile (Q4) did. These differences once again underscore the need for legal education to evaluate and invest in career resources across all schools to ensure equity and access to the profession.

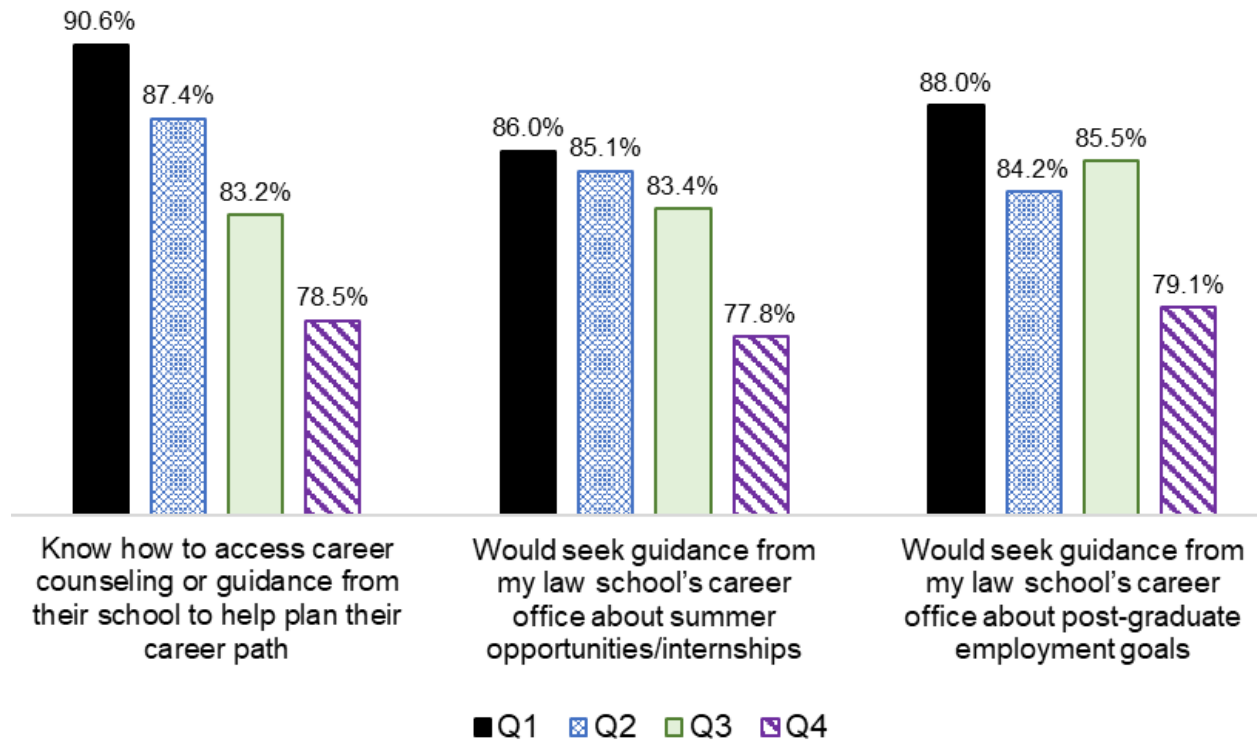
Legal education is about skills development that not only ensures practice readiness, but also opens access to entry in the legal profession. Law school career services offices play a critical role in the development of all law students, and as the legal job market becomes uncertain, schools must seriously consider the best way to support their students’ successful entrance into the profession.

**Figure 47. Strongly Agree or Agree: Students Know How to Access Career Counseling and Would Seek Help from Their School’s Career Services Office**



Source: 2025 LSAC Matriculant Survey.

**Figure 48. Strongly Agree or Agree: Students Know and Would Seek Help from Their School’s Career Services Office, by Law School Selectivity Quartile**



Source: 2025 LSAC Matriculant Survey.

Notes: Only statistically significant differences are shown. An F test p value of 0.05 indicates strong evidence that group differences exist, with less than a 5% probability that the observed differences occurred by chance. Each school is assigned a selectivity index score used to create quartiles of law school selectivity. Selectivity is based on the admission rate, median LSAT score of admitted students, and median UGPA of admitted students of a given year. The top 25% of law schools by selectivity, considered “highly selective,” are in the first quartile (Q1). Each quartile holds about 49 or 50 law schools.

# Methodology

This section summarizes the sources, weights, and reporting approach, along with data suppression techniques. Demographic data usage follows that of the 2026 [Composition Report](#), which summarizes the composition of the entering 1L class for academic years 2021 through 2025, using LSAC data.

## Data Sources

This report used data maintained by LSAC, including survey data from the LSAC 2025 Matriculant Survey and student demographic data, which are self-reported at the time of LSAC account creation. More than 3,000 1L students provided responses to the LSAC 2025 Matriculant Survey, and more than 2,000 responded to the accelerated recruitment timeline questions analyzed in this report.

## Weights

Post-stratification survey weights were constructed by combining a base weight (the inverse probability of selection into the survey sample) with a raking adjustment to align respondents with known population margins. This adjusts for a small portion of the 1L class not sampled due to administrative data timing ( $n = 425$ ). Then, raking was performed using iterative proportional fitting on key demographic characteristics that differed meaningfully between respondents and the population (a 5% difference or greater), including gender identity, sexual orientation, first-generation status, Pell Grant receipt, and age. The final weight combines the base and raking weights, and the final weight was trimmed to limit extreme values. This allows the 2025 LSAC Matriculant Survey to be representative of the 2025-26 1L class.

## Reporting and Analytic Procedures

Two forms of trend comparisons are reported throughout this report to describe changes across academic years in the composition or size of the 1L cohort.

**Absolute difference** measures the absolute difference of two values; for percent values, this is also sometimes referred to as “percentage point change.” Throughout this report, the phrase “absolute difference” is used to describe this comparison.

For example, if LSAC Fee Waiver recipients went from 5.49 percent in 2021 to 11.42 percent in 2025, that represents an absolute increase of 5.93 ( $11.42 - 5.49 = 5.93$ ). Absolute difference describes the numeric difference between values, without relation to magnitude of change.

**Percent change** measures the relative increase or decrease of a value, which describes how much a new value has changed in relation to the original value. This is used in this report to demonstrate magnitude of change, which provides more context than the numeric (absolute) difference.

For example, if LSAC Fee Waiver recipients went from 5.49 percent in 2021 to 11.42 percent in 2025, that represents a 108.09 percent increase ( $[11.42 - 5.49] / 5.49 = 108.09$ ). Percent change describes the percent difference between two values, in relation to the magnitude of change.

Results are described as either absolute difference or percent change, depending on the substantive interpretation desired. For example, if we need to know only about the numeric shift in LSAC Fee Waiver qualification, absolute difference (5.93 change) would be sufficient. However, this does not contextualize how large (magnitude) this change has been since 2021; therefore, percent change (108.09% change) is reported.

## Data Suppression

**Small Cell Sizes:** To ensure individual privacy, exact percentage is suppressed when cell sizes are smaller than 0.01. This is marked with a double dagger (‡) in tables. The group is still present in totals throughout the report.

**Missing Data:** To ensure full data representation, when missingness exceeds 0.5% for any analysis variable, it is reported as a valid row of data in the table with the label “{Missing}”. If the variable missingness does not exceed 0.5%, the missing data is suppressed.

**Non-Substantive Values:** “Did Not Indicate,” “Prefer Not to Disclose,” and “Don’t Know” are reported as valid rows of data in the tables, with the appropriate labels applied when they reflect the true response by the 1L student. This is to ensure full data representation and not artificially alter distributions. (For example, if the response of “Prefer Not to Disclose” were excluded from results, then it would shift the averages for all substantive categories, as the denominator would decrease.)