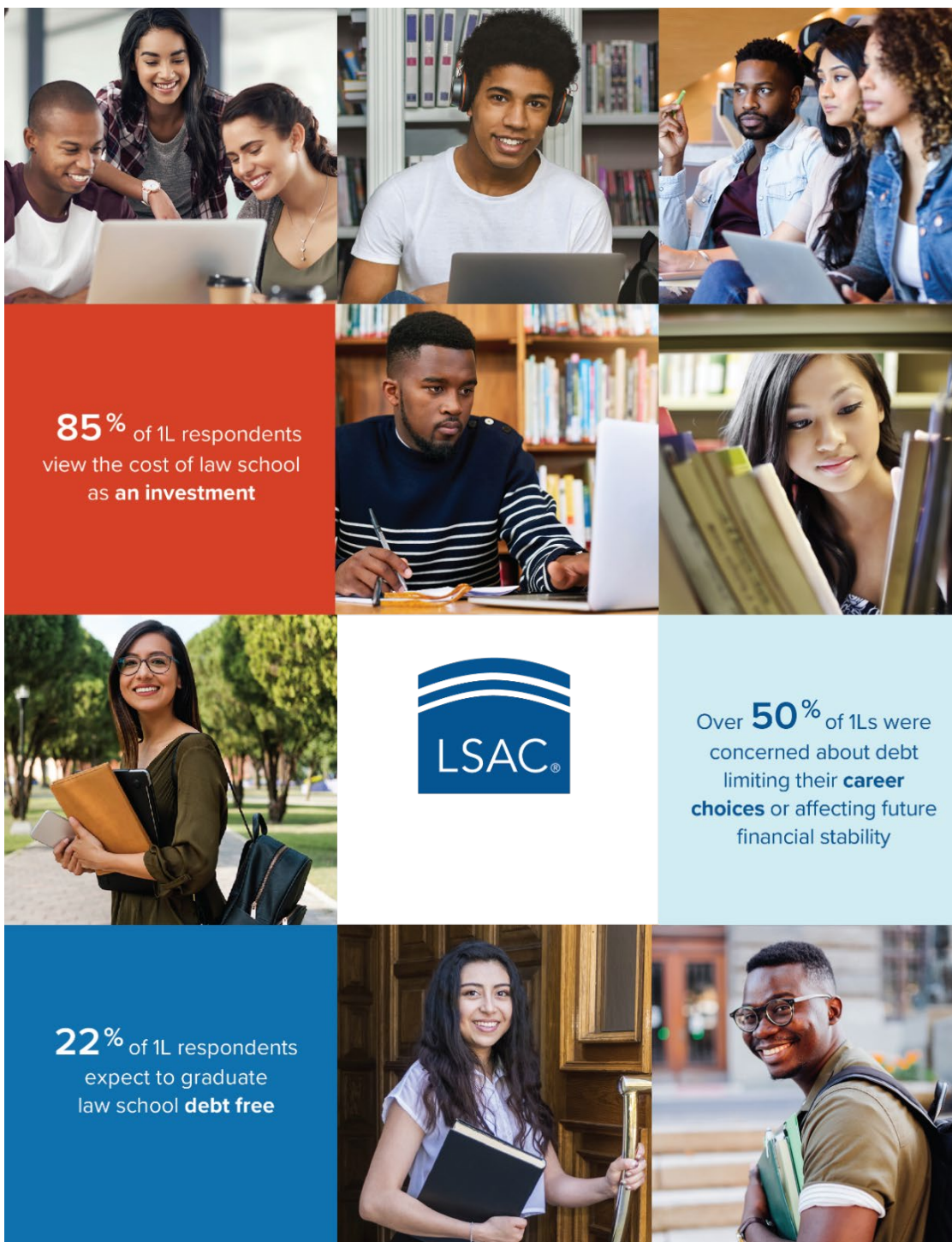


The 2025 1L Profile



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Building on prior LSAC 1L Profiles and another previous report — *The Composition of the First-Year Law School Class and Enrollment 2021-2025 Trends* — this report focuses on the 2025 first-year (1L) class; as such, it includes insights into the final enrolled class prior to the implementation of federal loan cap and repayment plan changes. This report provides the legal community with data-informed and contextualized insights into:

1. Who is enrolling in law school
2. Where they enrolled
3. How they made their enrollment decisions
4. How they view and plan to finance their legal education

Based on 2025 enrollment data and more than 3,000 1L respondents to LSAC's 2025 Matriculant Survey, the 2025 1L class provides a baseline and critical indications of how some of these students' future peers may be affected by the recent federal loan changes and ongoing uncertainty about how to pay for law school.

Key Insights About the 2025 1L Class

- **Composition**

- The total class size increased by 8% compared with the 2024 1L class.
- 41.4% of 2025 1Ls identified as students from racially and ethnically minoritized groups, a slight decrease from the 41.8% of 2024 1Ls who did so.¹
- 55% were women, 41% were men, and 1.1% were gender diverse.
- 14.5% were LGBTQ+.²
- 22% were first-generation college graduates, a decrease from the 2024 1L and 2023 1L classes.
- 72% were the first in their family to go to law school.
- 21% were 27 or older and 79% were 26 or younger when starting law school.

- **Enrollment by Law School Selectivity Varied by Student Background**

- While the class was almost equally distributed across all law schools based on law school selectivity, the top 25% most selective, or “highly selective,” law schools were less racially, ethnically, and socioeconomically diverse than other law schools.³

¹ The term “minoritized” refers to populations that have been treated as less important than dominant populations in terms of access, power, and other aspects of social processes. “Minoritized” incorporates an understanding of social structures, rather than being numerically or statistically smaller or fewer. It can be used to describe various populations and is not synonymous with or limited to racially or ethnically underrepresented populations. This term is used interchangeably with “marginalized” in this report.

² “LGBTQ+” refers to people who identify with any sexual orientation other than heterosexual and/or people with any gender identity other than cisgender man or cisgender woman.

³ First-year enrollments vary across schools, and one of many ways to examine this variation is by analyzing enrollment based on law school selectivity. Law schools are each assigned a selectivity index based on each school’s 2024-25 admission rate, median LSAT of admitted students, and median UGPA of admitted students. The top 25% (“highly selective”) law schools are in the first quartile (Q1) and are the 49 or 50 law schools with the highest index score.

Key Insights About Enrollment Decision-Making and Financing Law School

- **First Thought About Law School:** A majority (53%) of the 2025 1L respondents reported first thinking about law school before college, a rate similar to prior classes.⁴
- **Law Motivation:** The primary motivations for studying law continue to be financial security (52%), helping others (49%), and advocating for social justice (38%), similar to prior classes.⁵
- **Confidence in Their Enrollment Decision:** Among 1L respondents, 80% said they are attending the right law school for them.
- **Access to Effective Guidance:** Access to effective guidance varied, with 64% of continuing-generation college graduates indicating they had access to effective guidance, while 56% of first-generation college graduates did — an absolute difference of 8%.⁶
- **Views on the Cost of Law School:** Generally, 1L respondents viewed the financial cost of legal education as a worthwhile investment. However, concerns about the financial burden were more pronounced among students with fewer access to resources. For example, 64% of first-generation college graduates reported that they were concerned about their future ability to pay off the cost of attending law school, compared with 52% of continuing-generation college graduates — an absolute difference of 12%.
- **Understanding Law School Financing:** Students with more access to financial resources reported greater confidence in their ability to manage costs than their peers. For example, 77% of 1L respondents who did not receive a Pell Grant reported they know how to pay for law school, compared with 68% of 1L respondents who are Pell Grant recipients — an absolute difference of 9%.
- **Anticipated Law School Debt:** Among 1L respondents, 57% reported borrowing to pay their total cost of attendance, while 22% expect to graduate from law school debt free; only 12% of 1L respondents who are Pell Grant recipients reported the same.

⁴ Refer to [LSAC's Knowledge Report: The 2023 1L Profile](#) and [LSAC's Knowledge Report: The 2024 1L Profile](#).

⁵ Refer to [LSAC's Knowledge Report: The 2024 1L Profile](#).

⁶ 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. Learn more on the [Methodology](#) section of this report.

- **High Law School Debt for Some:** More than one in five 1Ls who received a Pell Grant anticipated owing \$150,000 or more at graduation.

First-year law students in the 2025 1L class come from diverse communities, backgrounds, and experiences. Consistent with this diversity, students' priorities and decision-making factors vary widely. Disparities in access to resources and effective guidance persist, especially for first-generation college graduates and Pell Grant recipients. Despite these disparities, most 1L respondents view the cost of legal education as a justified investment, even given their financial concerns. As the 2026 incoming class settles into its first year, this report provides insights to help the legal education community identify, monitor, and address barriers; implement effective strategies; and support student success along the journey.

INTRODUCTION

During a time of rapid political, economic, and social changes in the U.S. — including **major changes to federal Grad PLUS loans, which took effect July 1, 2026** — more than 76,000 aspiring law students submitted applications to law school in the 2024-25 admission cycle. That was the highest volume of applicants since 2011 and an 18% increase from the 2023-24 cycle. As a result of this highly competitive admission cycle, legal education welcomed its **largest first-year (1L) class since 2012**, an 8% increase over the 2024 incoming class.⁷

Who was in the 2025 1L class? Where did they enroll? And what were the 2025 1L students feeling, thinking, and doing when deciding where to enroll?

Supporting the legal community with reliable, data-informed insights about aspiring law students is a core part of LSAC's mission. This report continues that effort by examining the students who entered law school in 2025. Building on findings from LSAC's previous 1L Profiles and enrollment trend reports, it provides a closer look at the characteristics, experiences, and decision-making of the 2025 first-year class. **This class, in particular, is notable as the last class admitted before new federal student loan borrowing limits took effect.**

The report offers a detailed picture of who entered law school in 2025, where they enrolled, and how they navigated the enrollment process. It explores the resources, guidance, and support students used when choosing a law school, as well as the factors that shaped their plans for paying for their legal education. Understanding both who attends law school and how they finance their education can help the legal community, institutions, and a wide range of advisors and stakeholders better support future applicants throughout their journeys to and through law school.

Consistent with recent entering classes, members of the 2025 1L class are from various communities, backgrounds, and experiences.⁸ As a result, students brought a wide range of priorities, goals, and personal circumstances to the enrollment process. There was no single path to choosing a law school. Students had access to and relied on different sources of information, support systems, and financial planning strategies, depending on their individual needs, aspirations, and networks.

LSAC's 2025 Matriculant Survey shows that, like the 2023 and 2024 entering classes, many 2025 1L respondents reflected positively on the choices they made and the support they received. Nearly three-quarters agreed they had access to useful information and guidance when deciding where to enroll. However, these experiences were not shared equally across all groups. Students from under-resourced communities

⁷ Refer to the American Bar Association's [Statistics Archives](#).

⁸ Learn more about enrollment trends: [LSAC's Knowledge Report: The Composition of the First-Year Law School Class and Enrollment 2021-2025 Trends](#).

were less likely to report having access to the same level of support, highlighting the perpetual differences in how prospective students experience the path to law school.

Cost has always been on top of mind for those pursuing law school, but given the 2026 changes to federal loan caps and the elimination of Grad PLUS loans, uncertainty is rampant for aspiring law students and law schools alike.⁹ First-year law students who responded to the LSAC survey weighed the cost of law school in complex and often overlapping ways. While most viewed law school as an investment in their future careers and earning potential, concerns about affordability varied substantially across demographic and socioeconomic groups. Among respondents, 85% viewed the cost of law school as an investment in their future, and students with less access to resources were more likely to view cost as a challenge or source of uncertainty.

While most students (72%) reported they expect to graduate with legal education debt, anticipated debt levels are higher for students with fewer access to resources. For example, while 22% of the 1L respondents expect to graduate from law school debt free, only 12% of students who received a Pell Grant expect to graduate debt free. In fact, more than one in five 1Ls who received a Pell Grant anticipate owing \$150,000 or more in law school debt. This anticipation of debt can directly affect a student's experience, development, and career agency. Understanding the unique experiences of each class can help law schools develop support structures and respond to current student needs.

The findings in this report provide valuable insights for the many stakeholders involved in supporting future law students:

- **Law schools** can use these findings to better understand what prospective students value, strengthen recruitment efforts, and communicate the opportunities and resources they offer.
- **Prelaw advisors, pathway programs, and others** can use the report to better guide applicants as they evaluate their options and prepare for law school.
- **Prospective students** can learn from the experiences of recent first-year law students, gaining practical insight into the factors that shaped their enrollment decisions and financing plans.

Together, these insights paint a more holistic picture of today's law students, highlighting the factors that shape both their law school choices and their approaches to financing their education. They also offer a glimpse into how some aspiring law students' decision-making processes may be affected as they navigate a changing financial landscape in legal education.¹⁰

⁹ Learn more about the change: [Financial Aid FAQs](#).

¹⁰ To learn about other factors considered when deciding where to enroll, refer to [2025 1L Class: Student Awareness and Impact of Accelerated Big Law Recruitment](#).

WHO WAS IN THE 2025 1L CLASS?

Racial and Ethnic Composition

The 2025 1L class is composed of 42,722 students enrolled at 196 U.S. law schools.¹¹ As analyzed in detail in LSAC’s report *The Composition of the First-Year Law School Class and Enrollment 2021-2025 Trends*, the racial and ethnic diversity of first-year classes steadily increased between 2021 and 2023, leveled off in 2024, and saw a slight decline in 2025.¹² Overall, 41.4% of 2025 1Ls identify as students from racially and ethnically minoritized groups, compared with 41.8% of 2024 1Ls (Table 1).

Table 1. Racial and Ethnic Diversity of the 2025 1L Class

Race and Ethnicity	2024	2025
American Indian or Alaska Native ¹³	1.20%	1.26%
Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Australian ¹⁴	—	0.01%
Asian	9.51%	9.05%
Black or African American	7.56%	7.43%
Hispanic or Latina/é/o/x ¹⁵	9.68%	9.31%
Indigenous Person of Canada ¹⁶	0.05%	0.07%
Middle Eastern or North African/Arab	2.88%	2.66%
Multiracial or Ethnoracial (Two or More)	10.65%	11.32%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander ¹⁷	0.31%	0.28%
White	50.77%	51.06%
Did Not Indicate	7.40%	7.56%

Source: LSAC.

Notes: Includes all 1L students, non-deferrals, and deferrals. “—” denotes that no data is available.

¹¹ Academic year refers to students who enrolled in a U.S. law school anytime between August 1, 2025, and July 31, 2026.

¹² Refer to [LSAC’s Knowledge Report: The Composition of the First-Year Law School Class and Enrollment 2021-2025 Trends](#).

¹³ “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.

¹⁴ “Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Australian” includes 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.

¹⁵ “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.

¹⁶ “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 Person of Canada.

¹⁷ “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.

Consistent with previous 1L classes, 11% of the 2025 1L class identified as multiracial or ethnoracial (two or more). Distinct ethnic backgrounds often reflect unique experiences shaped in part by varying migration histories and the specific political and economic contexts each group has encountered. For this reason, it is essential to disaggregate this group.

The largest share of multiracial 1Ls continues to come from the same racial and ethnic groups as the 2024 1L class. Of the 11% of 1Ls who identify as multiracial or ethnoracial (two or more), about a third identified as white Hispanic or Latina/é/o/x (34.7%; Table 2), with the next largest group being Asian and white (18%). About 7% of multiracial or ethnoracial (two or more) 1Ls identified as Afro-Latina/é/o/x (Black or African American and Hispanic or Latina/é/o/x). When individuals are all categorized as Hispanic or Latino of any race, the diversity within the community and the variety of lived experiences and educational outcomes are lost.¹⁸ For example, it is established that there are intragroup differential outcomes observed between Afro-Latina/é/o/x (Black or African American and Hispanic or Latina/é/o/x) compared with their other Hispanic or Latina/é/o/x or Black or African American peers.¹⁹ Therefore, visibility of who is multiracial or ethnoracial (two or more), an underexamined population, is the first step to understanding who is on the journey to law school. LSAC will continue to explore this group in the future to understand their journeys.

Table 2. 2025 Multiracial or Ethnoracial (Two or More) Identifying 1Ls

Race and Ethnicity	Percent
Hispanic or Latina/é/o/x and White	34.7%
Asian and White	18.0%
Middle Eastern or North African/Arab and White	14.7%
Black or African American and White	7.6%
Black or African American and Hispanic or Latina/e/o/x	6.8%
Additional Multiracial and Ethnoracial Identities	18.3%

Source: LSAC.

¹⁸ Golash-Boza, T., & Darity, W. (2008). Latino racial choices: The effects of skin colour and discrimination on Latinos' and Latinas' racial self-identifications. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 31(5), 899-934.

¹⁹ Hernández, T. K. (2021). Latino antiblack bias and the census categorization of Latinos: Race, ethnicity, or other? In M.-K. Jung & J. H. Costa Vargas (Eds.), *Antiblackness* (pp. 283-296). Duke University Press; López, N., Vargas, E., Juarez, M., Cacari-Stone, L., & Bettez, S. (2018). What's your "street race"? Leveraging multidimensional measures of race and intersectionality for examining physical and mental health status among Latinxs. *Sociology of Race and Ethnicity*, 4(1), 49-66.

Gender and LGBTQ+ Communities

Overall, the majority of 1Ls consistently identify as cisgender, with 41% identifying as cisgender men and 55% as cisgender women (Table 3). By comparison, women represented less than 50% of the 1L class in 2015. Overall, 1.1% of 1Ls identify as gender diverse. Of note, any estimates about gender identity should be viewed carefully, given that a growing number of first-year students are choosing not to share this information; that percentage rose from 1.5% in 2021 to 3.3% in 2025 (Table 3).²⁰ This is important to keep in mind given the recent increase across the U.S. in laws and policies affecting transgender individuals.

Table 3. Gender Identities Reported by the 1L Class

Related References: Table 3 (1st mention, pg. 13) | Table 3 (2nd mention, pg. 13)

Gender Identity	Percent
Cisgender Man	41.0%
Cisgender Woman	54.6%
Gender Diverse ²¹	1.1%
Nonbinary	0.3%
Transgender	0.6%
Another Gender Diverse Identity	0.2%
Did Not Indicate	3.3%

Source: LSAC.

LSAC collects additional details about the LGBTQ+ community, including sexual orientation. Representation of diverse sexual orientation identities in the 2025 1L class increased from 2024 (13.7%) to 2025 (14.3%), with the largest proportion identifying as bisexual, followed by gay or lesbian (Table 4).

²⁰ [LSAC's Knowledge Report: The Composition of the First-Year Law School Class and Enrollment 2021-2025 Trends.](#)

²¹ "Gender Diverse" includes all students who identify as a gender other than cisgender woman or cisgender man. This includes transgender men and women, nonbinary individuals who may or may not identify as transgender, and any other gender identity aside from cisgender.

Table 4. Sexual Orientation Reported by the 1L Class

Sexual Orientation	Percent
Bisexual	7.7%
Gay or Lesbian	4.2%
Questioning or Unsure	0.8%
Sexual Orientation Not Listed	1.7%
Straight/Heterosexual	71.4%
Did Not Indicate	14.3%

Source: LSAC

In total, 14.47% of the 2025 1L class identified as being members of the LGBTQ+ community, up from 12.03% in the 2021 1L class.²² According to a [2022 Gallup report](#), LGBTQ+ populations in the U.S. have been increasing, with about one in five Gen Z adults identifying as LGBTQ+. This trend must be contextualized within the changes in policies, legislation, and executive orders that may affect the rate of non-disclosure in self-reported data collections.

²² “LGBTQ+” refers to people who identify with any sexual orientation other than heterosexual and/or people with any gender identity other than cisgender woman or cisgender man.

Socioeconomic Status: First-Generation College Graduate Status and Pell Grant Recipient Status

Access to opportunities in the United States is uneven, making it important to understand how individuals from different backgrounds experience varying pathways to legal education. Researchers measure socioeconomic status (SES) using factors beyond income, including upbringing, citizenship, type of schooling, cultural background, location, and parental education and resources. These elements shape both quality of life and access to opportunities. For this report, key SES indicators include parental education, first-generation college and law student status, and Pell Grant eligibility.

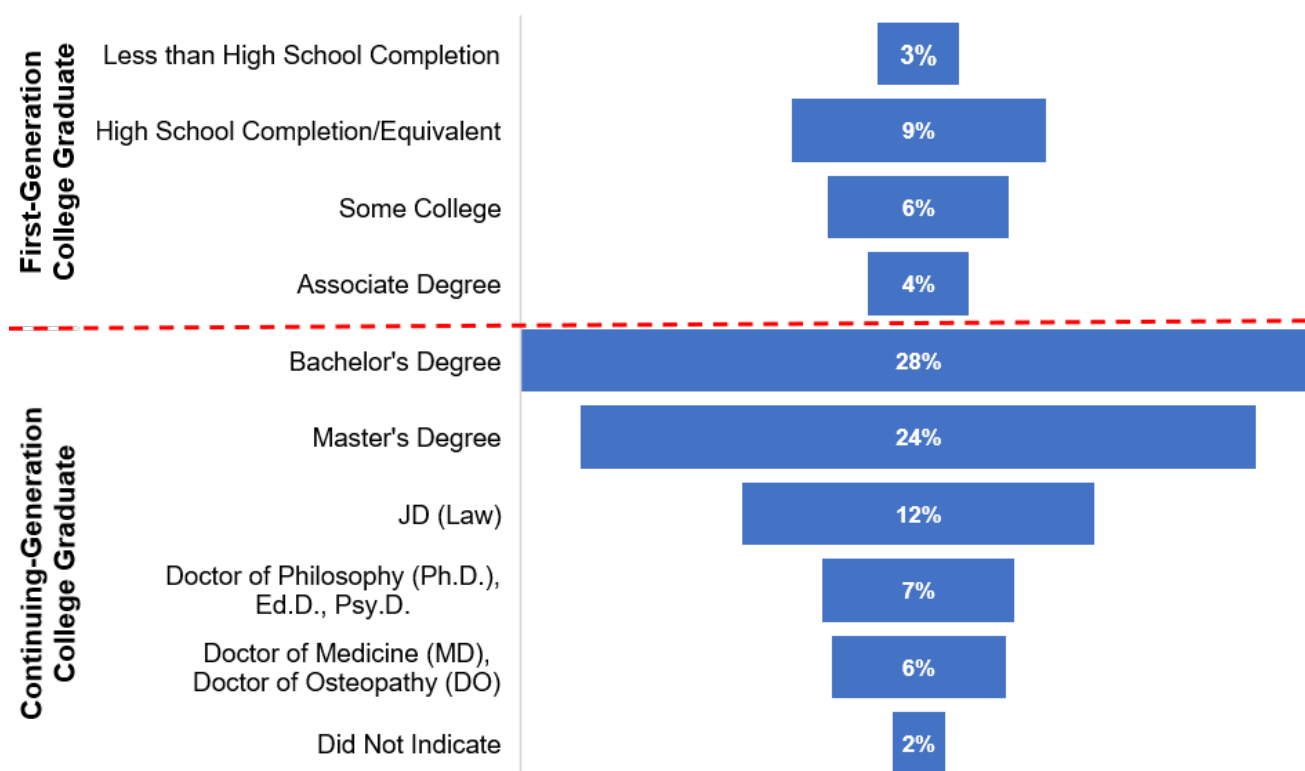
Most of the 2025 1L class are continuing-generation college graduates who are not Pell Grant recipients, and the majority are the first in their families to attend law school (Figures 1 and 2). While most of the first-year class are the first to go to law school (72%; Figure 2), far fewer are first-generation college graduates (22%). In fact, about 49% of first-year law students have at least one parent or guardian who earned a graduate degree (Figure 1).

It is important to spotlight that the representation of first-generation college graduates among each 1L class has steadily declined for the past two years, with 2025 being the lowest in the past five years. Compared with the 2021 1L class, the 2025 1L class saw an absolute reduction of 1.53% in first-generation college graduates, with only 21.7% of the class being first-generation college graduates (Figures 1 and 2).²³ This downward trend of first-generation college graduates should give the legal community pause as schools, candidates, students, and stakeholders contend with ongoing changes, including to federal loan caps — a source of funding that in the past has made legal education possible for many law students, especially those who are first-generation college graduates and Pell Grant recipients.

²³ Refer to [LSAC's Knowledge Report: The Composition of the First-Year Law School Class and Enrollment 2021-2025 Trends](#) to learn more details about the 2025 1Ls who are first-generation college graduates.

Figure 1. Highest Level of Education Attainment of Any Parent or Guardian

Related references: Figure 1 (1st mention, pg. 14) | Figure 1 (2nd mention, pg. 14) | Figure 1 (3rd mention, pg. 14) | Figure 1 (4th mention, pg. 15)



Source: LSAC.

Note: First-generation college graduates include students with parents or guardians with an associate degree, some college, high school completion, or less than high school completion.

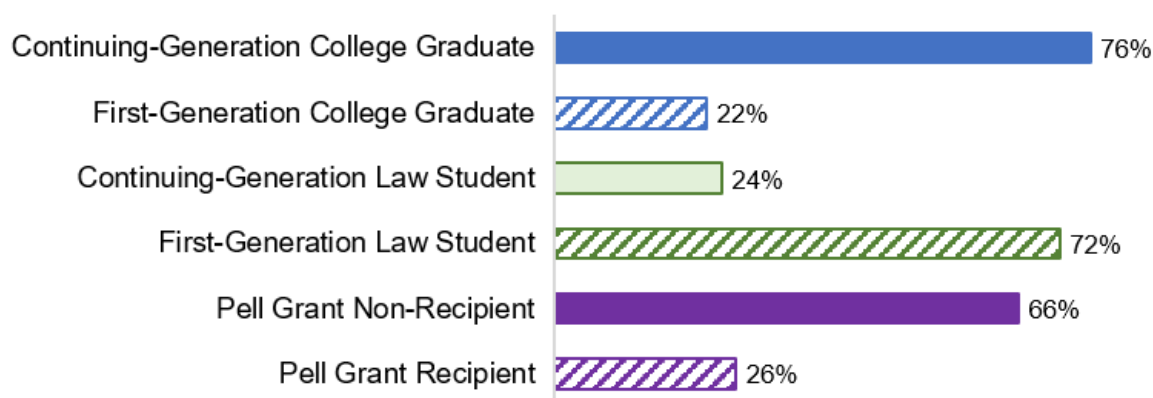
While 12% of 1Ls reported that at least one of their parents or guardians holds a JD (law degree) as their highest level of education attainment (Figure 1), 24% reported they have a close family member who holds a JD; these respondents thus defined as continuing-generation law students.²⁴ Similar to the 2024 1L class, 76% of the 2024 1L class are first-generation law students (Figure 2).

Pell Grants are provided to students with demonstrated financial needs. Akin to the 2024 1L class, a little more than a quarter of 1Ls in the 2025 class reported they received a Pell Grant (Figure 2).

²⁴ LSAC asks whether respondents have a close family member who holds a JD/law degree. This data point is based on this question.

Figure 2. First-Generation College Graduate, First-Generation Law Student, and Pell Grant Recipient Status

Related references: Figure 2 (1st mention, pg. 14) | Figure 2 (2nd mention, pg. 14) | Figure 2 (3rd mention, pg. 14) | Figure 2 (4th mention, pg. 15)



Source: LSAC.

Overall, the first-year class remains predominantly continuing-generation college graduates with access to financial support. The decline in first-generation college graduates is concerning, especially amid the new federal loan limits, which may limit the financial feasibility of legal education. These changes may have the largest impact on those who are first-generation college graduates and Pell Grant recipients.²⁵

Age at Enrollment

Like previous 1L classes, the majority of 2025 1Ls are 26 years old or younger (Table 5). While some may assume that most students come straight from undergraduate education, only a third of the 2025 1Ls are 22 or younger. The largest group of students (46%) are between the ages of 23 and 26, while about one in five 1Ls began their law school journey at 27 years old or older (Table 5).

Table 5. Age Ranges of the 1L Class

Age (years)	Percent
22 or younger	33.3%
23 to 26	45.6%
27 to 30	11.2%
31 to 39	7.0%
40 or older	2.9%

Source: LSAC.

Note: Age for all 1Ls is as of August 1, 2025.

²⁵ Refer to [LSAC's Knowledge Report: The Composition of the First-Year Law School Class and Enrollment 2021-2025 Trends](#) to learn more details about the 2025 1Ls who are first-generation college graduates.

**WHERE DID THE 2025 1L CLASS
ENROLL?**

Understanding who attends law school is only part of the picture. Where students enroll also matters, as it can affect career opportunities and whether the legal profession reflects the broader population. Law schools share a similar first-year curriculum, but each school offers a different experience shaped by its admission process, institutional structure, and available resources. As a result, first-year classes vary across schools, and one of many ways to examine this variation is by analyzing enrollment based on law school selectivity.²⁶ This section looks at where 2025 first-year students enrolled based on school selectivity, providing analysis that is useful for prospective employers and legal stakeholders committed to attracting future professionals from various backgrounds enrolled across all law schools.

Enrollment by Law School Selectivity

Overall Enrollment

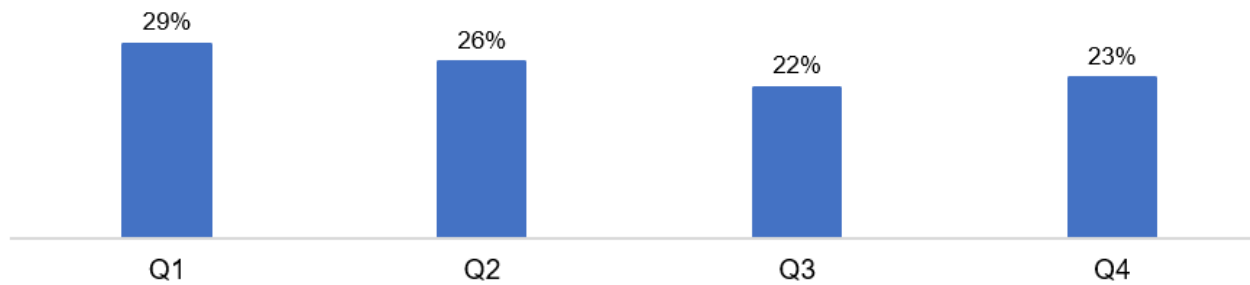
For the purposes of this analysis, we use each law school's 2025 admission rate, median LSAT of admitted students, and median UGPA of admitted students to create a selectivity index score. The top 25% of law schools by selectivity, or “highly selective” law schools, are in quartile 1 (Q1); the next 25% of schools by selectivity are in quartile 2 (Q2); and so on. Reflecting the variation in class sizes among the schools that make up each quartile, 29% of 1Ls enrolled in Q1 (top 25%, highly selective) law schools, 26% enrolled in Q2 schools, 22% enrolled in Q3 schools, and 22% enrolled in Q4 schools (Figure 3). This quartile analysis allows us to understand how enrollment varies by race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic status across law schools based on selectivity.²⁷

Because class sizes vary across schools, enrollment is not evenly distributed across selectivity quartiles. Each year, approximately 28% to 30% of first-year students enroll in Q1 (top 25%, highly selective) schools, 24% to 26% in Q2 schools, 21% to 23% in Q3 schools, and 20% to 23% in Q4 schools (Figure 3).

²⁶ First-year enrollments vary across schools, and one of many ways to examine this variation is by analyzing enrollment based on law school selectivity. Law schools are each assigned a selectivity index based on each school's 2024-25 admission rate, median LSAT of admitted students, and median UGPA of admitted students. The top 25% of schools by selectivity, or “highly selective” law schools, are in the first quartile (Q1) and are the 49 or 50 law schools with the highest index score.

²⁷ Refer to [LSAC's Knowledge Report: The Composition of the First-Year Law School Class and Enrollment 2021-2025 Trends](#) to learn more about enrollment by law school selectivity across the past five years.

Figure 3. Enrollment by Law School Selectivity Quartile



Source: LSAC.

Note: First-year enrollments vary across schools, and one of many ways to examine this variation is by analyzing enrollment based on law school selectivity. Law schools are each assigned a selectivity index based on each school's 2024-25 admission rate, median LSAT of admitted students, and median UGPA of admitted students. The top 25% of schools by selectivity, or "highly selective" law schools, are in the first quartile (Q1) and are the 49 or 50 law schools with the highest index score.

Racial and Ethnic Enrollment

Enrollment by race and ethnicity varies across law schools based on selectivity. Law schools in the fourth quartile (Q4) continue to be more racially and ethnically diverse than the highly selective law schools in the first quartile (Q1; Table 6). For example, racially and ethnically minoritized 1Ls made up 52.5% of the students enrolled at schools in the fourth selectivity quartile (Q4; Table 6). On the other hand, racially and ethnically minoritized 1Ls made up 38.9% of the students enrolled at schools in the highly selective law schools in the first quartile (Q1).

Table 6. Racial and Ethnic Diversity Within Each Law School Selectivity Quartile

Related references: Table 6 (1st mention, pg. 19) | Table 6 (2nd mention, pg. 19)

Law School Selectivity Quartile ²⁸	Race and Ethnicity	2025 1Ls
Q1	Racially and Ethnically Minoritized	38.9%
	White	53.0%
	Did Not Indicate	8.1%
Q2	Racially and Ethnically Minoritized	38.1%
	White	54.3%
	Did Not Indicate	7.6%
Q3	Racially and Ethnically Minoritized	36.6%
	White	55.5%
	Did Not Indicate	7.9%
Q4	Racially and Ethnically Minoritized	52.5%
	White	41.0%
	Did Not Indicate	6.5%

Source: LSAC.

Notes: “Racially and Ethnically Minoritized” is derived using the race and ethnicity information and includes anyone who identifies as American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, Black or African American, Hispanic or Latina/é/o/x, Indigenous Person of Canada, Middle Eastern or North African/Arab, multiracial or ethnoracial (two or more), or Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander.

²⁸ First-year enrollments vary across schools, and one of many ways to examine this variation is by analyzing enrollment based on law school selectivity. Law schools are each assigned a selectivity index based on each school’s 2024-25 admission rate, median LSAT of admitted students, and median UGPA of admitted students. The top 25% of schools by selectivity, or “highly selective” law schools, are in the first quartile (Q1) and are the 49 or 50 law schools with the highest index score.

While the 2025 1L class is relatively evenly distributed among the four law school selectivity quartiles, analysis examining each racial and ethnic group found that Asian 1Ls are overrepresented in highly selective law schools (Q1) and Hispanic or Latina/é/o/x and Black or African American 1Ls are overrepresented at law schools in the fourth quartile (Q4; Table 7 and Figure 4). For example, while 43.3% of all Asian 1Ls enrolled in a top 25%, highly selective law school (Q1), only 14.4% of all Hispanic or Latina/é/o/x 1Ls did, making this the least represented group at highly selective law schools compared with other groups (Table 7 and Figure 4).²⁹ Many racially and ethnically minoritized 1Ls are overrepresented in law schools in the fourth selectivity quartile (Q4). 27.4% of all American Indian or Alaska Native 1Ls, 49.5% of all Black or African American 1Ls, 43.5% of all Hispanic or Latina/é/o/x 1Ls, and 37.3% of all Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander 1Ls enrolled in law schools in the fourth selectivity quartile (Q4). For the past two academic years, enrollment of Black or African American and Hispanic or Latina/é/o/x 1Ls has decreased at highly selective law schools (Q1) and increased at law schools in the fourth selectivity quartile.³⁰

²⁹ Hispanic or Latina/é/o/x students counted here are those who identify as only Hispanic or Latina/é/o/x and/or Puerto Rican. This category is not Hispanic or Latina/é/o/x of any race. Ethnoracial Hispanic or Latina/é/o/x students are counted under “Multiracial or Ethnoracial (Two or More).” As the trends reveal, enrollment varies within the Hispanic or Latina/é/o/x community by the race they disclose. To learn more about the diversity of Hispanic or Latina/é/o/x communities and education outcomes, check out research such as: Golash-Boza, T., & Darity, W. (2008). Latino racial choices: The effects of skin colour and discrimination on Latinos’ and Latinas’ racial self-identifications. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 31(5), 899–934.

³⁰ Refer to [LSAC's Knowledge Report: The Composition of the First-Year Law School Class and Enrollment 2021-2025 Trends](#) to learn more about these trends.

Table 7. Racial and Ethnic Enrollment by Law School Selectivity³¹

Related references: Table 7 (1st mention, pg. 21) | Table 7 (2nd mention, pg. 21)

Race and Ethnicity	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total 2025 1L Class
American Indian or Alaska Native	19.4%	29.8%	23.5%	27.4%	1.3%
Asian	43.3%	27.1%	17.3%	12.2%	9.1%
Black or African American	20.7%	17.8%	15.6%	45.9%	7.4%
Hispanic or Latina/é/o/x	14.4%	19.6%	22.5%	43.5%	9.3%
Indigenous Person of Canada	15.6%	31.3%	43.8%	9.4%	0.1%
Middle Eastern or North African/Arab	26.3%	27.9%	21.9%	24.0%	2.7%
Multiracial or Ethnoracial (Two or More)	29.1%	26.9%	20.5%	23.6%	11.3%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	22.0%	22.0%	18.6%	37.3%	0.3%
White	29.7%	27.4%	24.1%	18.8%	51.1%
Did Not Indicate	30.6%	26.0%	23.2%	20.2%	7.6%

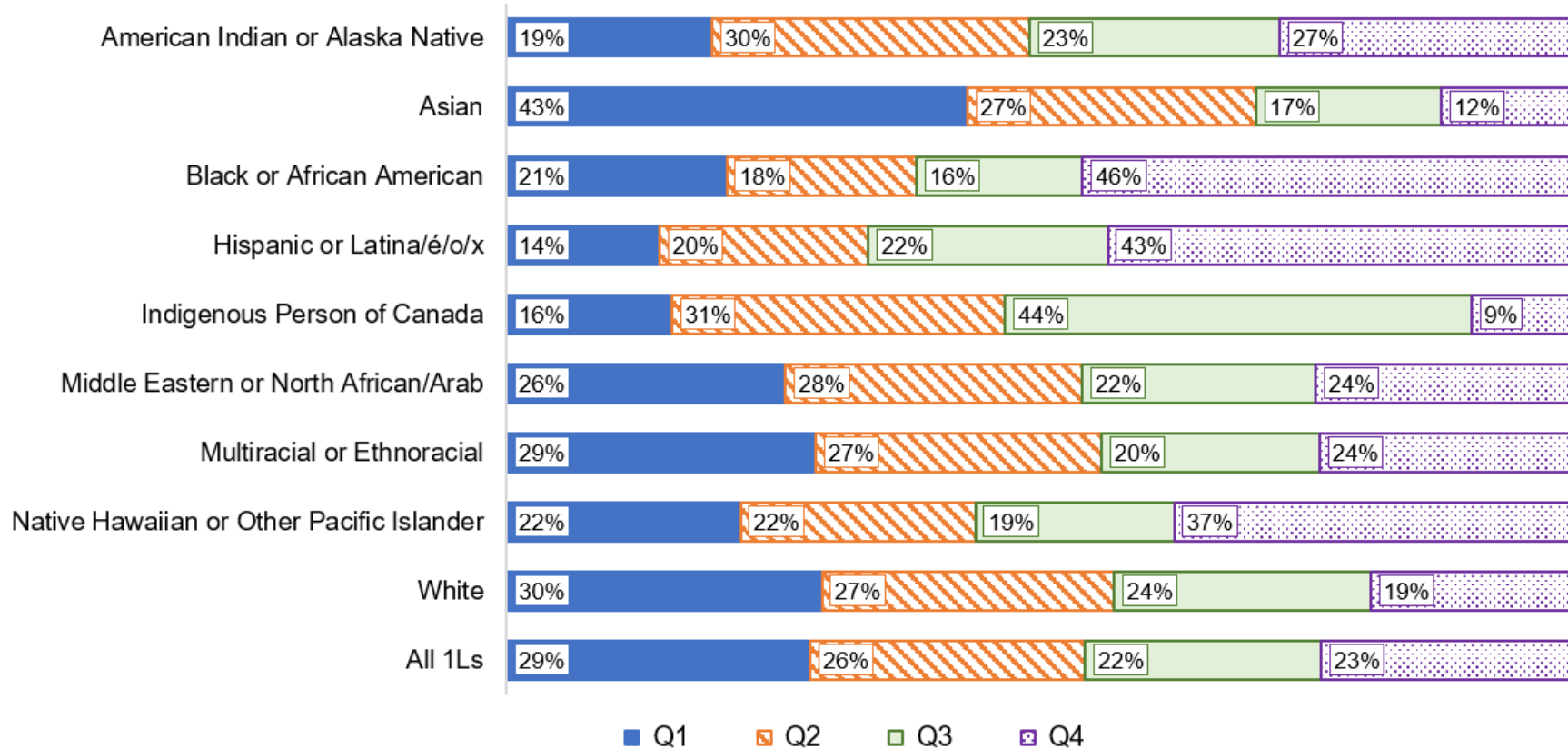
Source: LSAC.

Notes: For more details on [racial and ethnic categories refer to the section above](#). Note that the number of students who identify as Indigenous Person of Canada is small.

³¹ First-year enrollments vary across schools, and one of many ways to examine this variation is by analyzing enrollment based on law school selectivity. Law schools are each assigned a selectivity index based on each school's 2024-25 admission rate, median LSAT of admitted students, and median UGPA of admitted students. The top 25% of schools by selectivity, or "highly selective" law schools, are in the first quartile (Q1) and are the 49 or 50 law schools with the highest index score.

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

Related references: Figure 4 (1st mention, pg. 21) | Figure 4 (2nd mention, pg. 21)



Source: LSAC.

Note: First-year enrollments vary across schools, and one of many ways to examine this variation is by analyzing enrollment based on law school selectivity. Law schools are each assigned a selectivity index based on each school's 2024-25 admission rate, median LSAT of admitted students, and median UGPA of admitted students. The top 25% of schools by selectivity, or "highly selective" law schools, are in the first quartile (Q1) and are the 49 or 50 law schools with the highest index score.

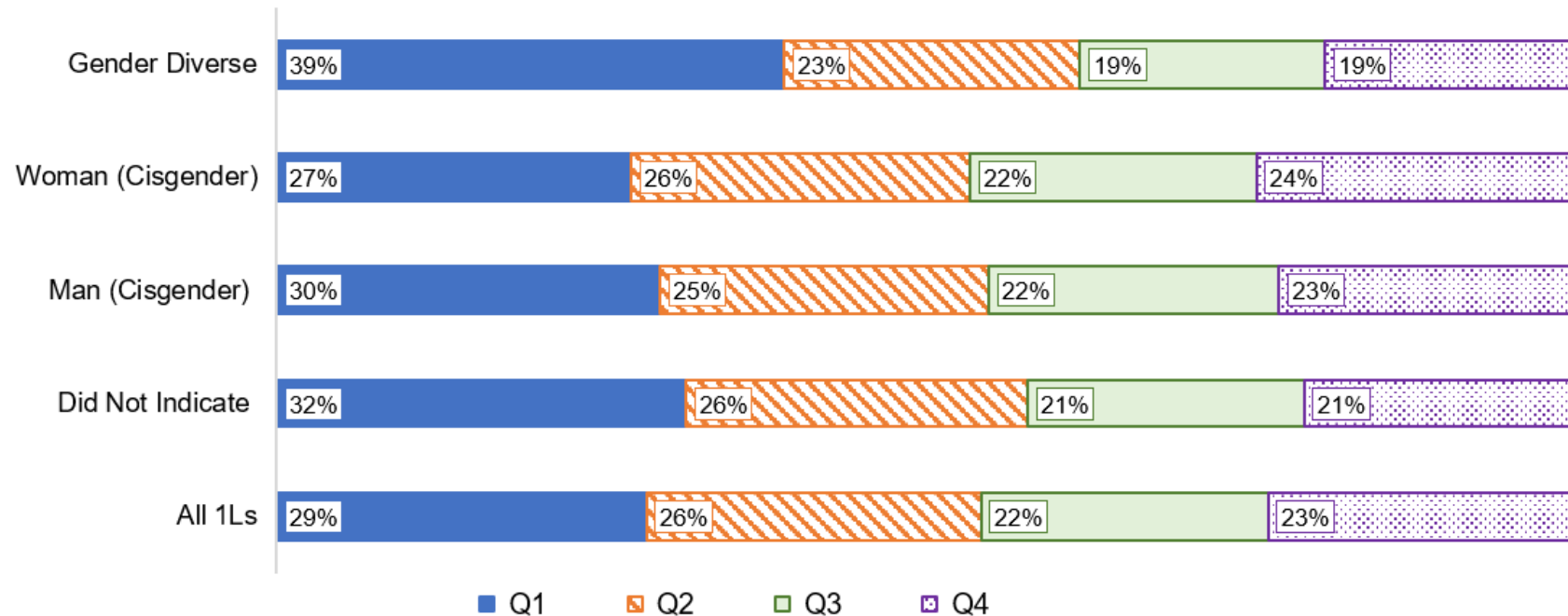
Gender and LGBTQ+ Communities Enrollment

Examining enrollment rates across the law school selectivity quartiles through the lenses of gender identity and sexual orientation, we find the following:

- Similar to the 2024 1L class, cisgender men continue to have greater representation than women in the top 25%, highly selective law schools (Q1), while cisgender women have slightly greater representation than cisgender men in law schools in the fourth selectivity quartile (Q4; Figure 5).
- Overall, LGBTQ+ 1Ls are enrolled in the top 25%, highly selective law schools (Q1) at higher rates than their peers (Figures 5 and 6).
 - The enrollment rate of gender-diverse 1Ls in the top 25%, highly selective law schools (Q1) is higher than their peers (Figure 5). Specifically, 39% of all gender-diverse 1Ls enrolled in the top 25%, highly selective law schools (Q1), compared with 29% of all 1Ls.
 - Similarly, 1Ls who identified as not straight enrolled in top 25%, highly selective law schools (Q1) at higher rates than their straight peers (Figure 6). For example, 38% of all bisexual 1Ls enrolled at a top 25%, highly selective law school (Q1), compared with 26% of their straight peers and 29% of all 1Ls.

Figure 5. Law School Selectivity Enrollment by Gender Identity

Related references: Figure 5 (1st mention, pg. 24) | Figure 5 (2nd mention, pg. 24) | Figure 5 (3rd mention, pg. 24)

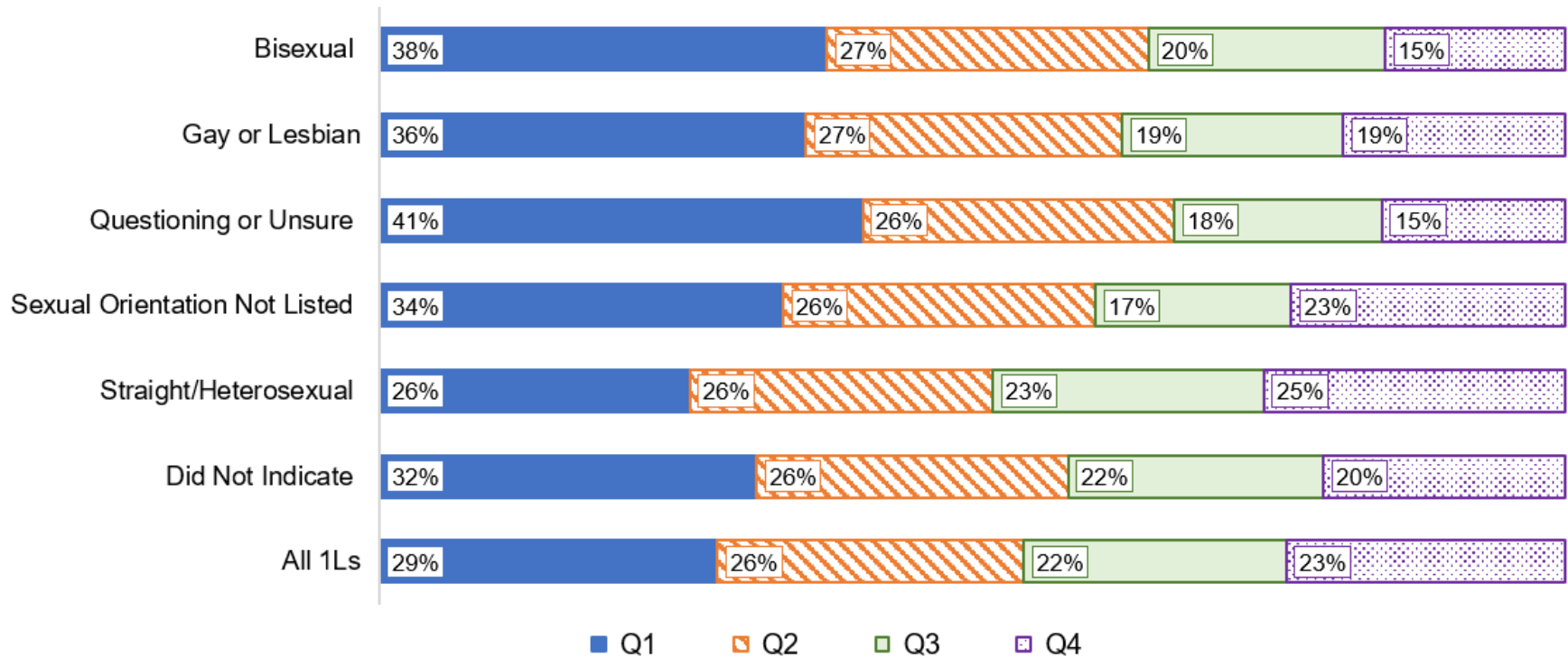


Source: LSAC.

Note: First-year enrollments vary across schools, and one of many ways to examine this variation is by analyzing enrollment based on law school selectivity. Law schools are each assigned a selectivity index based on each school's 2024-25 admission rate, median LSAT of admitted students, and median UGPA of admitted students. The top 25% of schools by selectivity, or "highly selective" law schools, are in the first quartile (Q1) and are the 49 or 50 law schools with the highest index score.

Figure 6. Law School Selectivity Enrollment by Sexual Orientation

Related references: Figure 6 (1st mention, pg. 24) | Figure 6 (2nd mention, pg. 24)



Source: LSAC.

Note: First-year enrollments vary across schools, and one of many ways to examine this variation is by analyzing enrollment based on law school selectivity. Law schools are each assigned a selectivity index based on each school's 2024-25 admission rate, median LSAT of admitted students, and median UGPA of admitted students. The top 25% of schools by selectivity, or "highly selective" law schools, are in the first quartile (Q1) and are the 49 or 50 law schools with the highest index score.

Socioeconomic Status: Pell Grant Recipient Status and First-Generation College Graduate Status Enrollment

2025 1Ls who are Pell Grant recipients and who are first-generation college graduates are underrepresented in the top 25%, highly selective law schools (Q1; Figures 7 and 8).

2025 1Ls who reported receiving a Pell Grant were:

- Less likely to attend the most selective law schools, with only 20% of Pell Grant recipients enrolling in a law school in a top 25%, highly selective law school (Q1), compared with 33% of 1Ls who had never received a Pell Grant (Figure 7)³²
- More likely to enroll in a law school in the fourth selectivity quartile (Q4), with 35% of Pell Grant recipients enrolling in law schools in the fourth selectivity quartile (Q4) — roughly twice the rate of their peers who did not receive a Pell Grant (Figure 7)

Similarly, 2025 1Ls who are first-generation college graduates were:

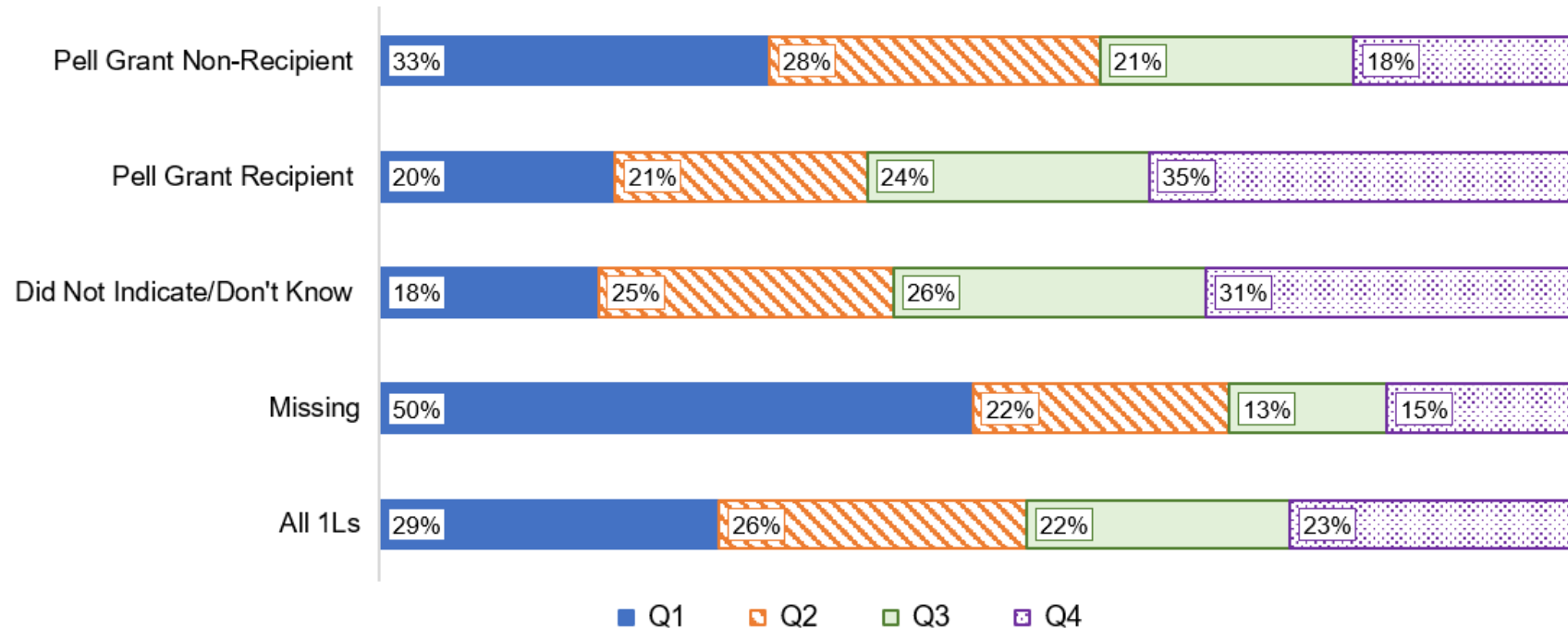
- Less likely to attend the most selective law schools, with only 17% of first-generation college graduates enrolling in a law school in a top 25%, highly selective law school (Q1), compared with 32% of continuing-generation college graduates (Figure 8)³³
- More likely to enroll in a law school in the fourth selectivity quartile (Q4), with 37% of first-generation college graduates enrolling in law school in the fourth selectivity quartile (Q4), compared with 20% of continuing-generation college graduates (Figure 8)

³² This trend has remained relatively consistent over the past five years. Refer to [LSAC's Knowledge Report: The Composition of the First-Year Law School Class and Enrollment 2021-2025 Trends](#) to learn more.

³³ This trend has remained relatively consistent over the past five years. Refer to [LSAC's Knowledge Report: The Composition of the First-Year Law School Class and Enrollment 2021-2025 Trends](#) to learn more.

Figure 7. Law School Selectivity Enrollment by Pell Grant Recipient Status

Related references: Figure 7 (1st mention, pg. 27) | Figure 7 (2nd mention, pg. 27) | Figure 7 (3rd mention, pg. 27)

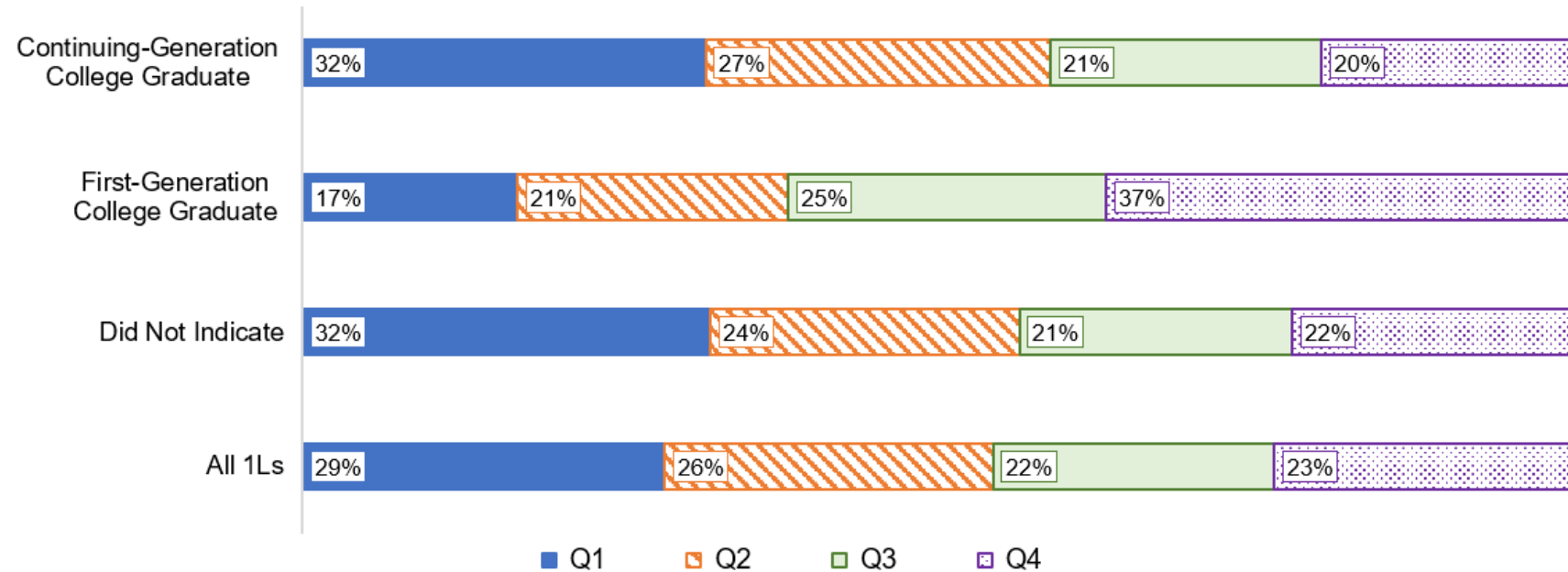


Source: LSAC.

Note: First-year enrollments vary across schools, and one of many ways to examine this variation is by analyzing enrollment based on law school selectivity. Law schools are each assigned a selectivity index based on each school's 2024-25 admission rate, median LSAT of admitted students, and median UGPA of admitted students. The top 25% of schools by selectivity, or "highly selective" law schools, are in the first quartile (Q1) and are the 49 or 50 law schools with the highest index score.

Figure 8. Law School Selectivity Enrollment by First-Generation College Graduate Status

Related references: Figure 8 (1st mention, pg. 27) | Figure 8 (2nd mention, pg. 27) | Figure 8 (3rd mention, pg. 27)



Source: LSAC.

Note: First-year enrollments vary across schools, and one of many ways to examine this variation is by analyzing enrollment based on law school selectivity. Law schools are each assigned a selectivity index based on each school's 2024-25 admission rate, median LSAT of admitted students, and median UGPA of admitted students. The top 25% of schools by selectivity, or "highly selective" law schools, are in the first quartile (Q1) and are the 49 or 50 law schools with the highest index score.

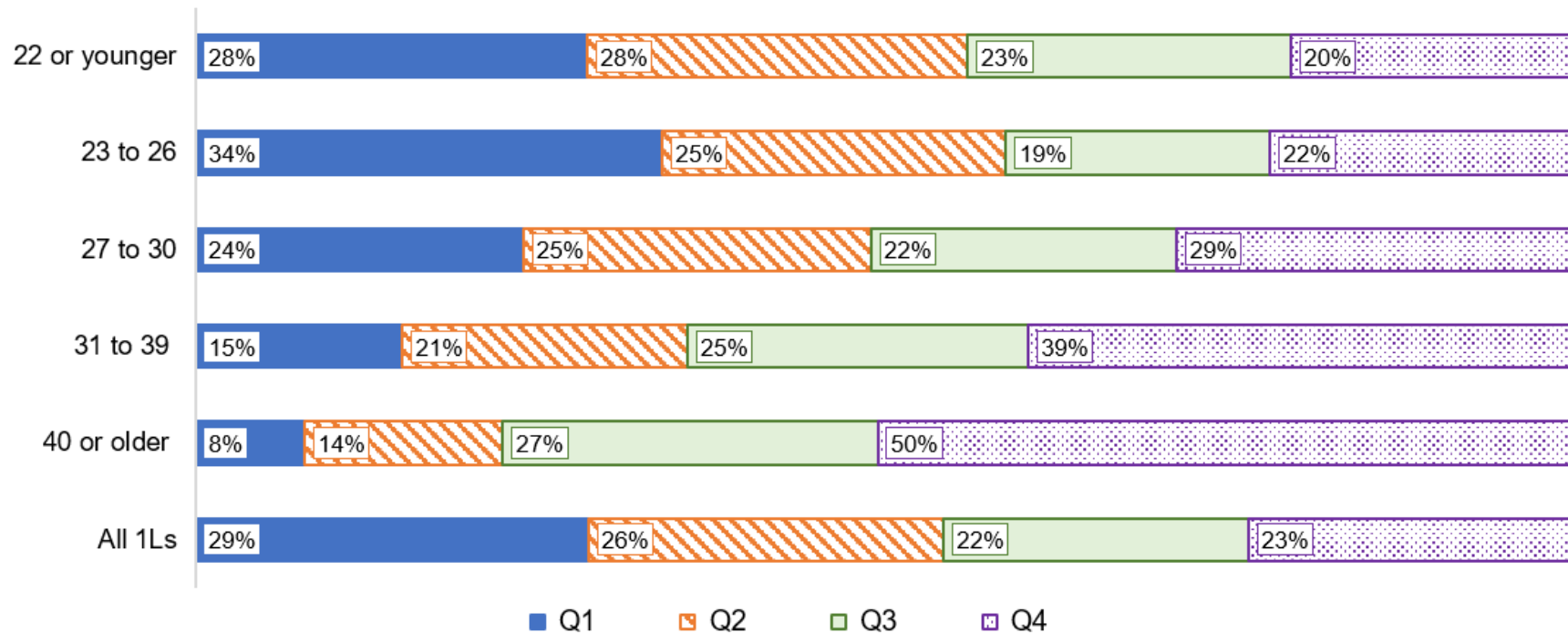
Age at Enrollment

Exploring enrollment across the law school selectivity quartiles by age at enrollment, we find younger 1Ls enrolled in top 25%, highly selective law schools (Q1) at higher rates than their older peers, while older 1Ls enrolled in law schools in the fourth selectivity quartile (Q4) at significantly higher rates than their younger peers (Figure 9).³⁴

- About a third of 1Ls age 30 or younger enrolled in the top 25%, highly selective law schools (Q1), while only 8% of 1Ls 40 years old or older and 16% of 1Ls between 31 and 39 years old did.
- Half of 1Ls age 40 or older and almost 40% of 1Ls between 31 and 39 enrolled in law schools in the fourth selectivity quartile (Q4), while less than a quarter of 1Ls age 26 or younger did.

³⁴ This trend has remained relatively consistent over the past five years. Refer to [LSAC's Knowledge Report: The Composition of the First-Year Law School Class and Enrollment 2021-2025 Trends](#) to learn more.

Figure 9. Age at Enrollment by Law School Selectivity Quartile



Source: LSAC.

Note: First-year enrollments vary across schools, and one of many ways to examine this variation is by analyzing enrollment based on law school selectivity. Law schools are each assigned a selectivity index based on each school's 2024-25 admission rate, median LSAT of admitted students, and median UGPA of admitted students. The top 25% of schools by selectivity, or "highly selective" law schools, are in the first quartile (Q1) and are the 49 or 50 law schools with the highest index score.

**CLASS VOICES: THEIR
ENROLLMENT JOURNEY AND
FINANCING LAW SCHOOL**

The 2025 1L Matriculant Survey

Respondents: Survey Sample

In October 2025, LSAC administered its Matriculant Survey to the current first-year class. The purpose of the survey was to understand who current law school 1Ls are and the factors that influenced their enrollment journeys, including when they first thought about law school; their motivation for pursuing law school; their access to guidance, support, and resources when deciding where to enroll; pathway and 0L/bridge program participation; their understanding of how to finance law school; and how they were currently paying for the total cost of attendance and their anticipated law school debt. More than 3,000 1Ls at 196 U.S. law schools responded to the survey.

Respondents to the 2025 survey were representative of the 2025 first-year law school class (Table 8). More than half of respondents were white (53%), and two-fifths (40%) were from racially and ethnically marginalized groups (Table 8).³⁵ More cisgender women than cisgender men answered the survey (55% and 41%, respectively), and only a small portion identified as gender diverse (1%). While the sexual orientation of the respondent population was largely straight/heterosexual (71%), a sizable proportion identified as not straight/not heterosexual (14%). A total of 15% of respondents identified as LGBTQ+.³⁶ Almost one-quarter (23%) of respondents were first-generation college graduates,³⁷ and 72% were first-generation law students, while 26% were Pell Grant recipients. About four in five (79%) respondents were 26 or younger when they began law school (Table 8).

The survey respondents come from an array of backgrounds and experiences that affect how they experience the journey to law school. Therefore, throughout this report, group-based differences are included only if they are statistically significant.³⁸ Refer to the [Methodology](#) section at the end of the report to learn more about this approach.

³⁵ The term “marginalized” refers to populations that historically have been excluded, disempowered, disenfranchised, or otherwise treated as being insignificant, unimportant, or peripheral. “Marginalized” can be used to describe various populations and is not synonymous with or limited to racially/ethnically underrepresented populations. This term is used interchangeably with “minoritized” in this report.

³⁶ The term “LGBTQ+” refers to anyone who identifies with a gender identity other than cisgender man or woman and/or anyone who identifies with a sexual orientation other than straight/heterosexual.

³⁷ First-generation college graduates include 1Ls with parents or guardians with an associate degree, some college, high school completion, or less than high school completion.

³⁸ In this report, “significantly” indicates that the mean values between two groups are significantly different from one another. 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<0.05.

Table 8. 2025 1L Matriculant Survey: Demographic Summary

Related references: Table 8 (1st mention, pg. 33) | Table 8 (2nd mention, pg.33) | Table 8 (3rd mention, pg.33)

Category	Group	2025 1L Class ³⁹ (N = 42,723)	2025 Matriculant Survey Respondents — Weighted ⁴⁰
Race and Ethnicity: Summary	White	51.1%	53.1%
	Racially and Ethnically Minoritized	41.4%	39.8%
	Did Not Indicate	7.6%	7.1%
Race and Ethnicity: Categorical	American Indian or Alaska Native	1.3%	1.0%
	Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Australian	—	—
	Asian	9.1%	9.5%
	Black or African American	7.4%	6.8%
	Hispanic or Latina/é/o/x	9.3%	8.7%
	Indigenous Person of Canada	0.1%	0.1%
	Middle Eastern or North African/Arab	2.7%	2.4%
	Multiracial or Ethnoracial	11.3%	10.9%
	Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	0.3%	0.4%
	White	51.1%	53.1%
	Did Not Indicate	7.6%	7.1%
Gender Identity	Gender Diverse	1.1%	1.1%
	Woman (Cisgender)	54.6%	54.6%
	Man (Cisgender)	41.0%	41.0%
	Did Not Indicate	3.3%	3.3%
Sexual Orientation	Straight/Heterosexual	71.3%	71.3%
	Not Straight/Not Heterosexual	14.3%	14.3%
	Did Not Indicate	14.4%	14.4%
LGBTQ+ Identity	Not LGBTQ+	71.1%	71.1%
	LGBTQ+	14.5%	14.5%
	Did Not Indicate	14.4%	14.4%

³⁹ Population estimates include the entire 2025 1L class. [Return to header, pg. 34](#) | [Return to header, pg. 35](#)

⁴⁰ 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 college graduate and law student status, Pell Grant recipient status, and age. Final weights were trimmed to limit extreme values. [Return to header, pg. 34](#) | [Return to header, pg. 35](#)

Category	Group	2025 1L Class ³⁹ (N = 42,723)	2025 Matriculant Survey Respondents — Weighted ⁴⁰
First- Generation College Graduate Status	Continuing-Generation College Graduate	76.4%	75.3%
	First-Generation College Graduate	21.7%	22.9%
	Did Not Indicate	2.0%	1.8%
First- Generation Law Student Status	Continuing-Generation Law Student	23.8%	23.8%
	First-Generation Law Student	72.1%	72.1%
	Did Not Indicate	1.9%	1.7%
	{Missing}	2.2%	2.4%
Pell Grant Recipient Status⁴¹	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%	0.7%
Age at Start of Academic Year	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%
Law School: Enrollment Intensity	Full Time	90.7%	89.8%
	Part Time	9.3%	10.2%
Law School: Selectivity Quartile⁴²	Q1	28.6%	31.5%
	Q2	25.8%	26.5%
	Q3	22.1%	22.2%
	Q4	23.5%	19.8%

Source: 2025 LSAC Matriculant Survey.

⁴¹ 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.”

⁴² First-year enrollments vary across schools, and one of many ways to examine this variation is by analyzing enrollment based on law school selectivity. Law schools are each assigned a selectivity index based on each school’s 2024-25 admission rate, median LSAT of admitted students, and median UGPA of admitted students. The top 25% of schools by selectivity, or “highly selective” law schools, are in the first quartile (Q1) and are the 49 or 50 law schools with the highest index score.

When Did They First Think About Law School?

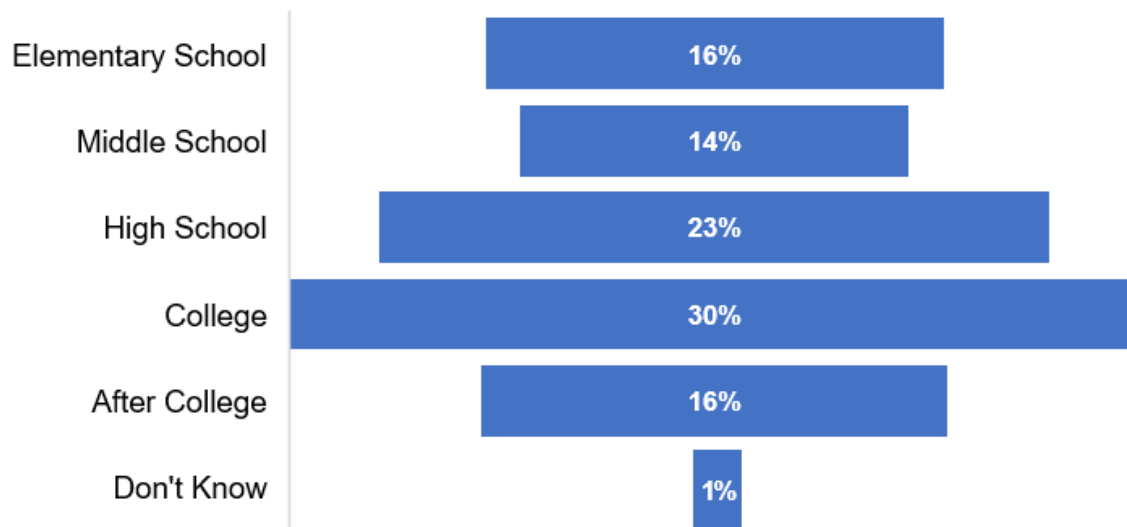
The path to law school often begins well before taking the LSAT or submitting applications. For many, it's a goal that develops over several years. Consistent with previous 1L profiles, more than half of the 2025 1L respondents first thought about law school before college (53%; Figure 10). Almost a third first thought about law school during college (30%), while only 16% first thought about law school after college.

In line with previous years:

- Native Pacific Islander, Hispanic or Latina/é/o/x, and Black or African American 1L respondents thought about law school in high school or earlier at higher rates than their peers (Figure 11). While less than half of 1L respondents first thought about law school during or after college, 58% of Middle Eastern or North African 1Ls and 55% of Asian 1Ls first thought about law school at these times.
- Cisgender women first thought about law school earlier than their peers. Most women first thought about law school before college, and a third first thought about it before high school (Figure 12).
- Overall, continuing-generation law students reported thinking about law school earlier than their peers. A quarter (25%) of first-generation law students first thought about law school in high school, compared with 20% of continuing-generation law students (Figure 13). However, 20% of continuing-generation law students first thought about law school in elementary school, while 15% of their first-generation law student peers did.⁴³
- Older 1L respondents were more likely than their younger peers to have first thought about law school after college (Figure 14). For example, about three in five 1Ls who were 27 or older first thought about law school after college, while more than two-thirds of 1Ls who were 26 or younger first thought about law school during college or earlier.

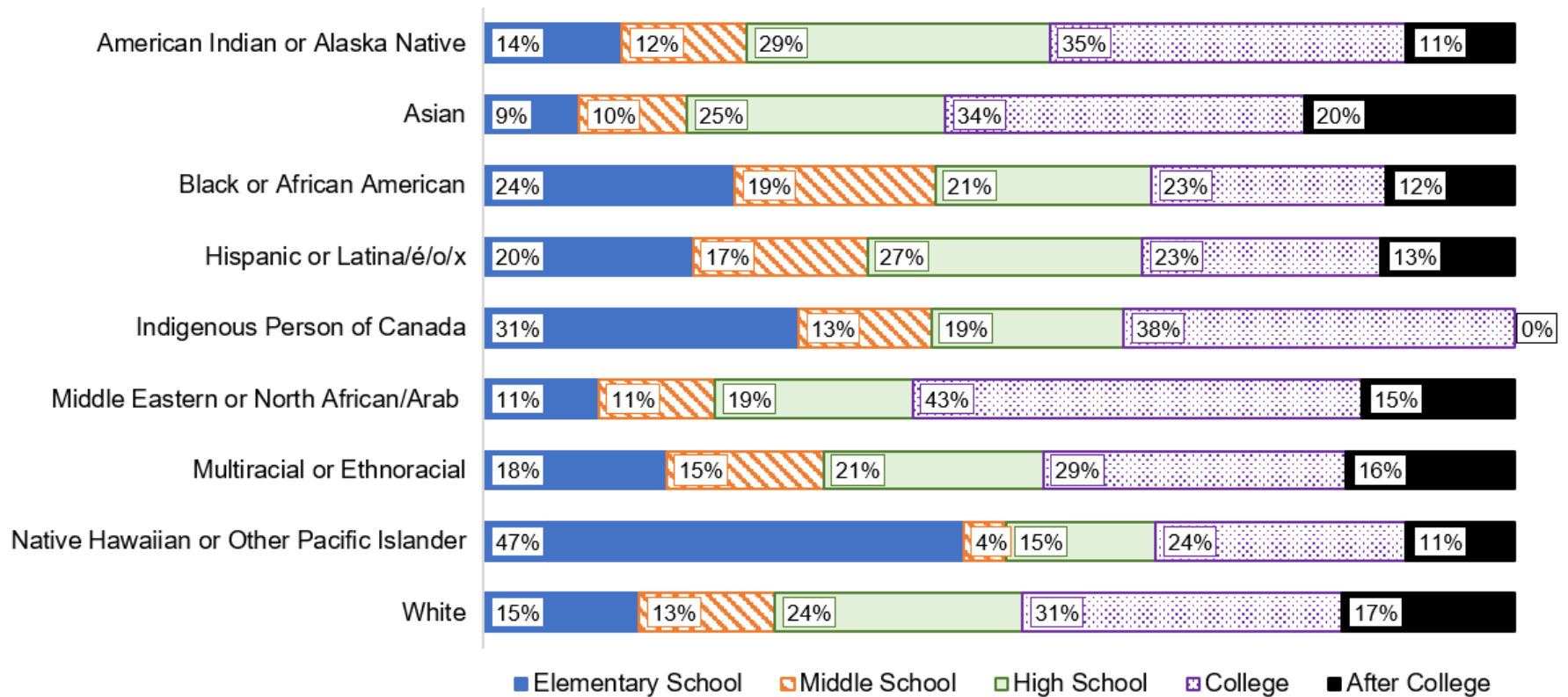
⁴³ Only statistically significant differences are shown. Responses did not differ significantly based on first-generation college graduate status.

Figure 10. When 1Ls First Thought About Law School



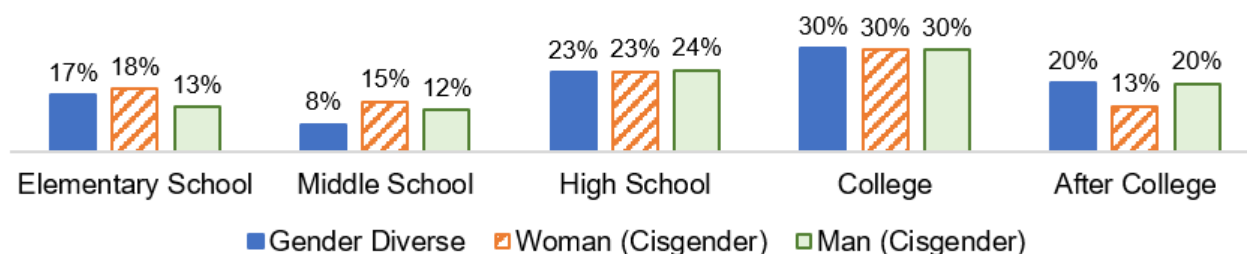
Source: 2025 LSAC Matriculant Survey.

Figure 11. When 1Ls First Thought About Law School by Race and Ethnicity



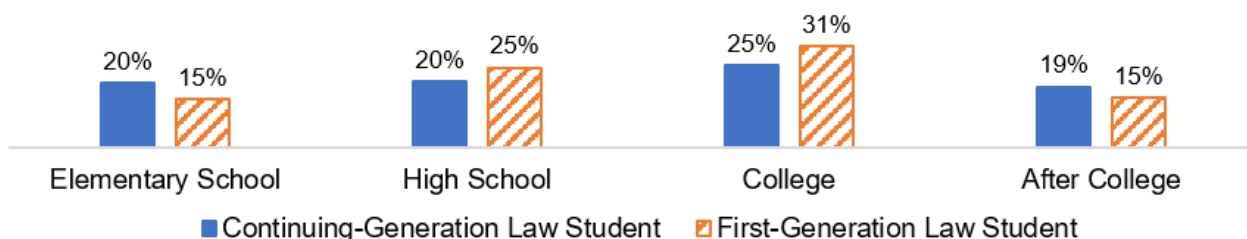
Source: 2025 LSAC Matriculant Survey.

Figure 12. When 1Ls First Thought About Law School by Gender Identity



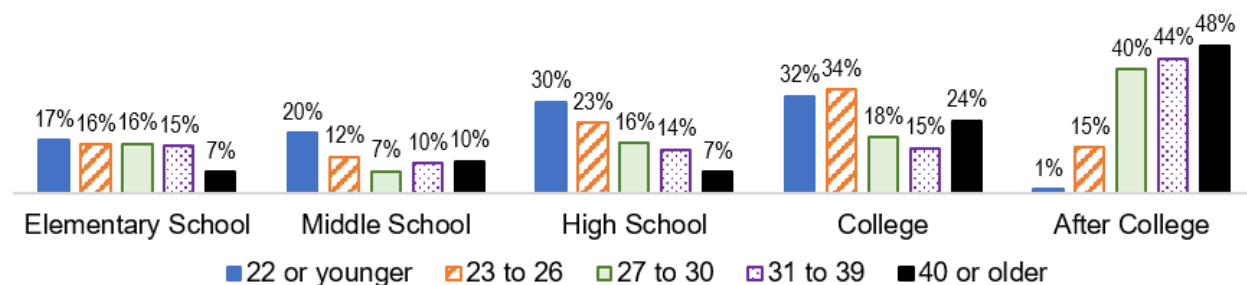
Source: 2025 LSAC Matriculant Survey.

Figure 13. When 1Ls First Thought About Law School by First-Generation Law Student Status



Source: 2025 LSAC Matriculant Survey.

Figure 14. When 1Ls First Thought About Law School by Age at Enrollment



Source: 2025 LSAC Matriculant Survey.

Law School Motivation

Overall, the 2025 1L respondents view law as a vehicle for financial security, good, and justice (Figures 15 through 22). The top three law school motivations include financial security (52%), being helpful to others (49%), and advocating for social justice (38%; Figure 15).⁴⁴

The “why” for 1Ls varied by their lived experiences and backgrounds:

- Racially and ethnically minoritized 1Ls said advocating for social justice and uplifting one’s community were top motivating factors at higher rates than their white peers (Figure 16). White 1Ls more frequently identified being helpful to others, intellectual curiosity, and defending constitutional principles as key motivations.
- Helping others, advocating for social justice, and uplifting one’s community were more important motivating factors for cisgender women and gender-diverse 1L respondents than for cisgender men (Figure 17), while developing valuable skills and prestige mattered more to cisgender men.
- Not straight/not heterosexual 1Ls respondents identified advocating for social justice and intellectual curiosity as top motivating factors at higher rates than their straight/heterosexual peers (Figure 18). In contrast, straight/heterosexual 1L respondents more frequently said financial security and developing valuable skills were top motivations.
- Pell Grant recipients and first-generation college graduates were more likely than their peers to say uplifting their community was a driving motivation for them (Figures 19 and 20). In contrast, Pell Grant non-recipients and continuing-generation college graduates more often cited intellectual curiosity and seeing law school as a good next career step as their top motivating factors than did their Pell Grant recipient and first-generation college graduate peers.
- Uplifting one’s community was a significantly more important motivating factor for first-generation law students than for continuing-generation law students (Figure 21).⁴⁵

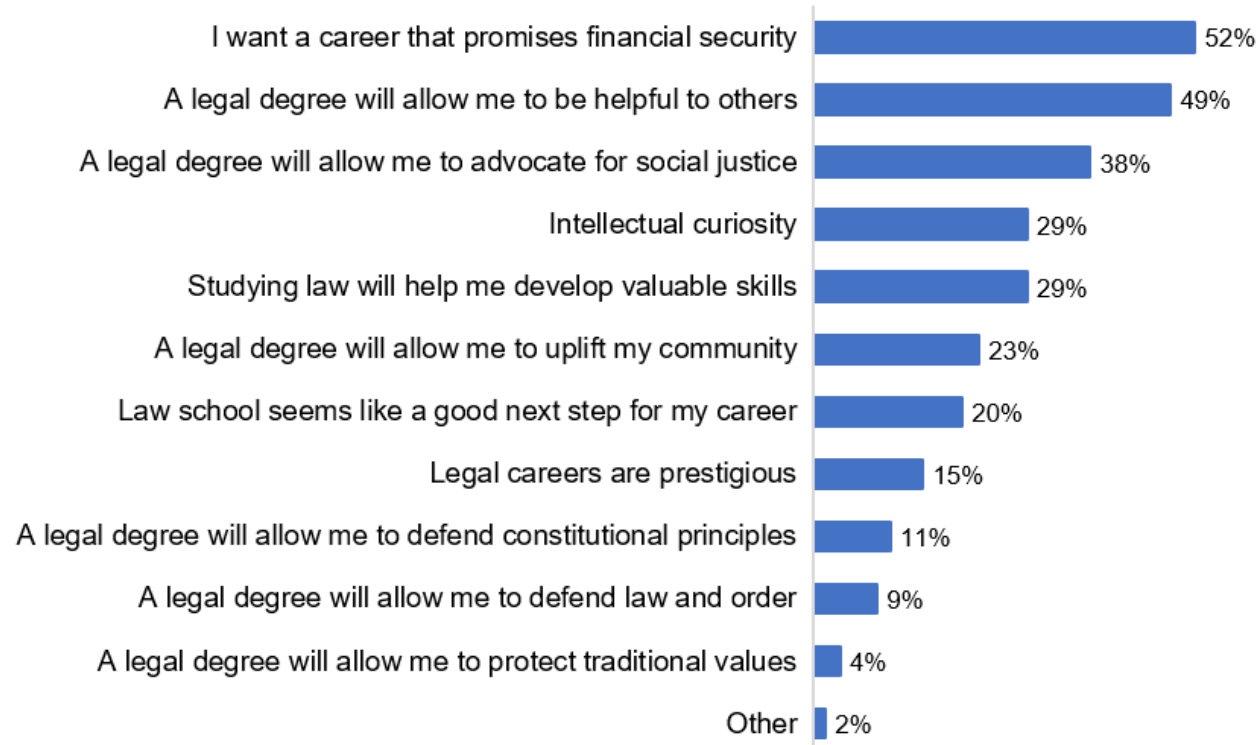
⁴⁴ Previous reports focused on respondents’ single top motivation for attending law school. The 2025 Matriculant Survey asked respondents to select up to three motivating factors. As a result, the percentages reported may sum to more than 100%. Refer to [LSAC’s Knowledge Report: The 2024 1L Profile](#) to learn more.

⁴⁵ First-generation law students are 1Ls who report having no close family members with a JD. Continuing-generation law students are 1Ls who report having at least one close family member with a JD.

- Lastly, intellectual curiosity as a top law school motivation increased as law school selectivity increased, and uplifting one's community was a key law school motivation for respondents enrolled in law schools in the fourth selectivity quartile (Figure 22).

Overall, the primary motivations for attending law school for the 2025 1L respondents were consistent with prior classes, with differences emerging across demographic groups.⁴⁶ Financial security, helping others, and advocating for social justice continue to anchor students' decisions, but the relative importance of these motivations varies by background, experiences, and institutional context. These patterns highlight how personal experiences and opportunities shape not only why students pursue legal education, but also how they envision using their degrees. The next section builds on these findings by examining how the enrollment process — including students' access to key resources, information, and financial sources — were experienced by 2025 1L respondents.

Figure 15. Top Motivations for Attending Law School



Source: 2025 LSAC Matriculant Survey.

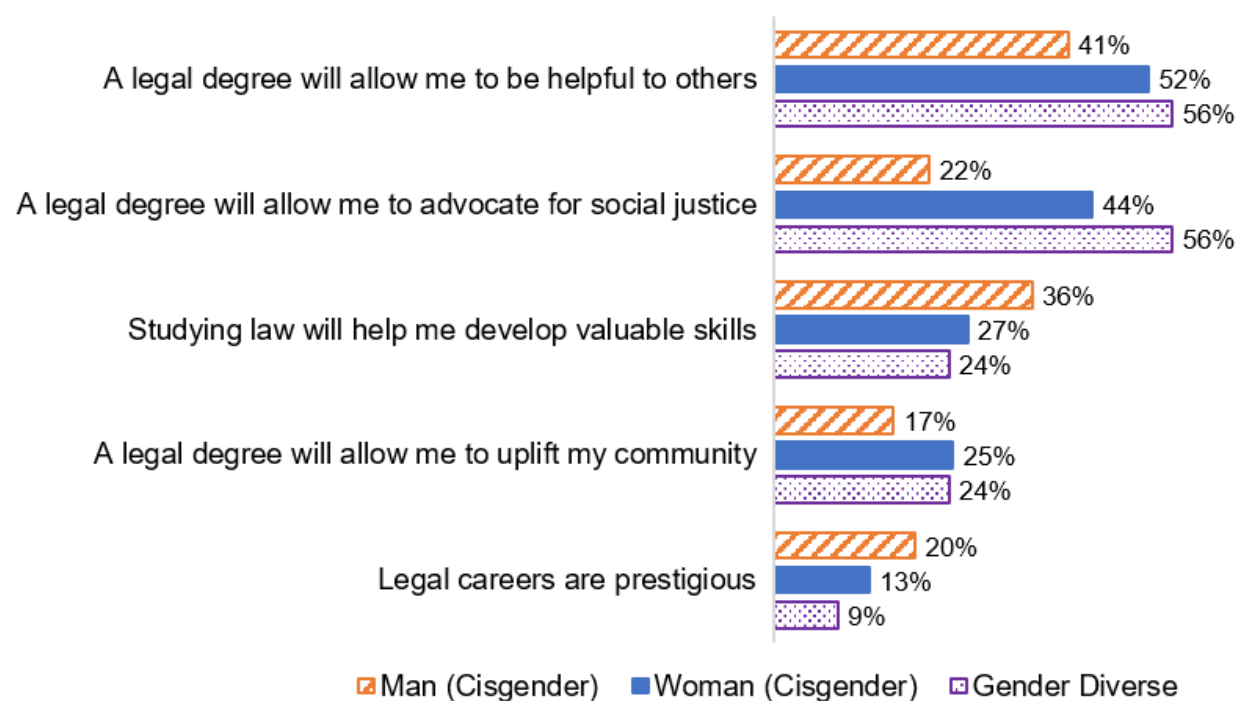
⁴⁶ Refer to [LSAC's Knowledge Report: The 2024 1L Profile](#) to learn more.

Figure 16. Top Motivations for Attending Law School by Race and Ethnicity



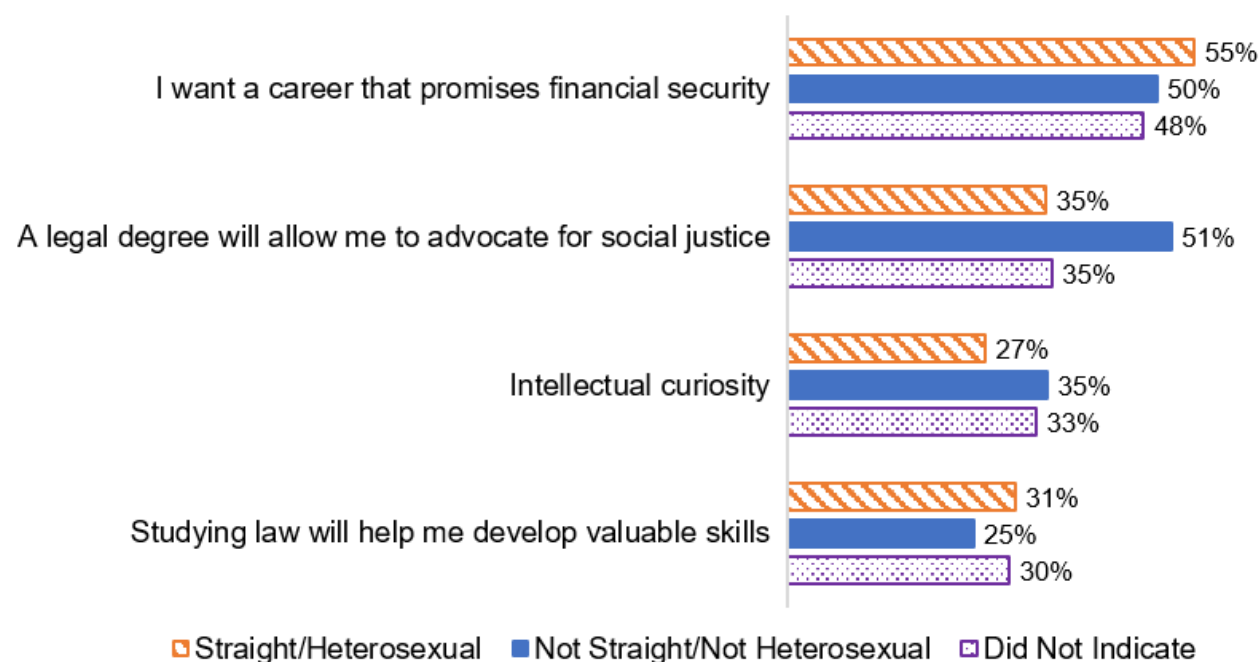
Source: 2025 LSAC Matriculant Survey.

Figure 17. Top Motivations for Attending Law School by Gender Identity



Source: 2025 LSAC Matriculant Survey.

Figure 18. Top Motivations for Attending Law School by Sexual Orientation



Source: 2025 LSAC Matriculant Survey.

Figure 19. Top Motivations for Attending Law School by First-Generation College Graduate Status



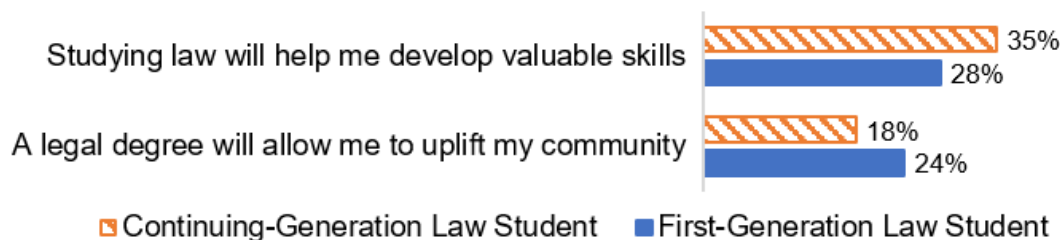
Source: 2025 LSAC Matriculant Survey.

Figure 20. Top Motivations for Attending Law School by Pell Grant Recipient Status



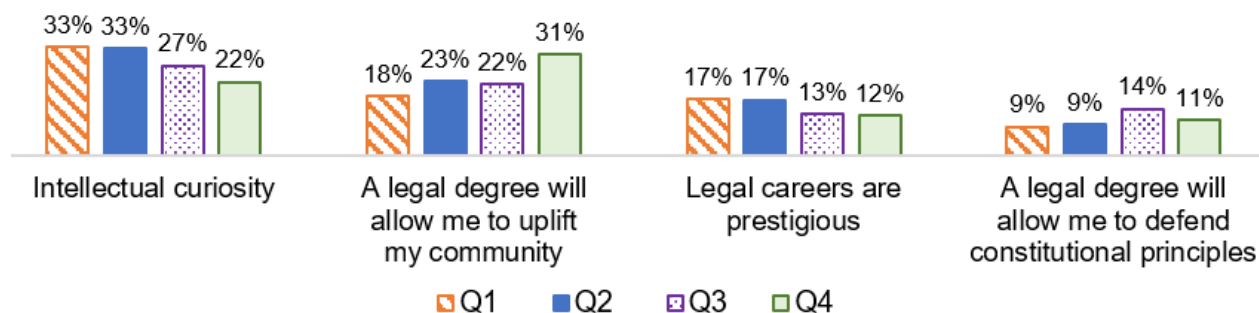
Source: 2025 LSAC Matriculant Survey.

Figure 21. Top Motivations for Attending Law School by First-Generation Law Student Status



Source: 2025 LSAC Matriculant Survey.

Figure 22. Top Motivations for Attending Law School by Law School Selectivity Quartile



Source: 2025 LSAC Matriculant Survey.

Note: First-year enrollments vary across schools, and one of many ways to examine this variation is by analyzing enrollment based on law school selectivity. Law schools are each assigned a selectivity index based on each school's 2024-25 admission rate, median LSAT of admitted students, and median UGPA of admitted students. The top 25% of schools by selectivity, or "highly selective" law schools, are in the first quartile (Q1) and are the 49 or 50 law schools with the highest index score.

Their Enrollment Journey: Guidance, Confidence, and Access to Resources and Support

Students enter law school with a range of motivations, and they draw on different sources of information and guidance as they navigate their choices. Navigating the admission process is a major undertaking, and access to a network of support and resources is critical during the decision-making process. Overall, the 2025 1L respondents reported having access to effective guidance and resources to help them decide where to enroll. As a result, most reported being highly confident that they were attending the right law school for them. However, confidence and access to effective guidance and resources were experienced differently in the enrollment process for students from marginalized groups. These insights are useful to inform how stakeholders along the journey can provide effective support and increase access to resources for anyone making the life-changing decision of where to go to law school.

Confidence and Access to Effective Guidance and Resources

Access to clear guidance, reliable resources, networks, and confidence is critical as candidates make their enrollment decisions. Similar to the 2024 1L class,⁴⁷ three in five 2025 1Ls agreed they had access to effective guidance, and three in four reported having the information and resources needed to choose where to attend law school (Figure 23). Almost half of all 1Ls agreed or strongly agreed they knew how to decide where to enroll. Interestingly, 80% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed they were confident they were currently attending the right law school for them; this rate is slightly lower than the 2024 1L respondents' rate of 84%, which may be due to the survey samples or the result of the 2025 1L class experiencing a more competitive admission process than what their 2024 peers experienced.⁴⁸

While most 1Ls reported similar overall access to guidance, resources, support, and confidence in deciding where to enroll, the rate of agreement varied across groups.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Refer to [LSAC's Knowledge Report: The 2024 1L Profile](#) to learn more.

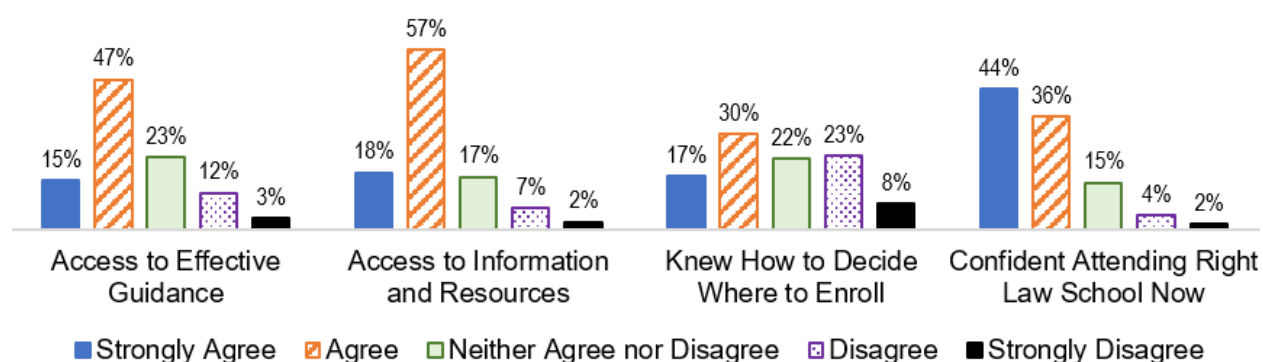
⁴⁸ Refer to [LSAC's Knowledge Report: The 2024 1L Profile](#) to learn more.

⁴⁹ Only statistically significant group-based differences are included. 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.

- Racially and ethnically minoritized 1Ls were less likely than white 1Ls to agree they had access to effective guidance (61%, compared with 65%), and fewer reported feeling confident that they chose the right law school (77%, compared with 83%; Figure 24).
- Compared to their continuing-generation college graduate peers, significantly fewer first-generation college graduates agreed they had sufficient guidance (56%, compared with 64%), access to information and resources (69%, compared with 76%), and confidence they chose the right law school (76%, compared with 81%; Figure 25).
- Significantly fewer Pell Grant recipients, compared with respondents who did not receive a Pell Grant, said they had sufficient guidance (59%, compared with 65%) or enough information and resources (73%, compared with 76%; Figure 26).
- Similarly, first-generation law students were less likely than their continuing-generation peers to report having access to effective guidance, information, and resources. While 59% of first-generation law student respondents said they had access to effective guidance, 75% of their continuing-generation law student peers did, an absolute difference of 16%. Similarly, 72% of law student respondents said they had access to information and resources, compared with 84% of their continuing-generation law student peers who said they did — an absolute difference of 12% (Figure 27).
- Men and gender-diverse 1Ls were more likely than women to say they knew how to decide where to enroll (51% and 50%, compared with 44%), as were straight/heterosexual 1Ls when compared with their not straight/not heterosexual peers (48%, compared with 43%; Figure 28).
- Older 1Ls were almost 40% more likely than younger 1Ls to say they knew how to decide where to enroll. Among 1Ls age 40 or older, 61% reported knowing how to make this decision, compared with 44% of those age 23 to 26 (Figure 29).
- 1L respondents at highly selective law schools (Q1) generally reported greater access to support and more confidence in their enrollment decision. For example, compared with those at law schools in the fourth selectivity quartile (Q4), 1Ls at the top 25%, highly selective law schools (Q1) were more likely to report access to effective guidance (69%, compared with 57%) and information and resources (79%, compared with 69%), and to feel confident they chose the right law school (84%, compared with 73%). In contrast, 1Ls at law schools in the fourth selectivity quartile (Q4) were more likely than those at highly selective law schools (Q1) to say they knew how to decide where to enroll (54%, compared with 43%; Figure 30).

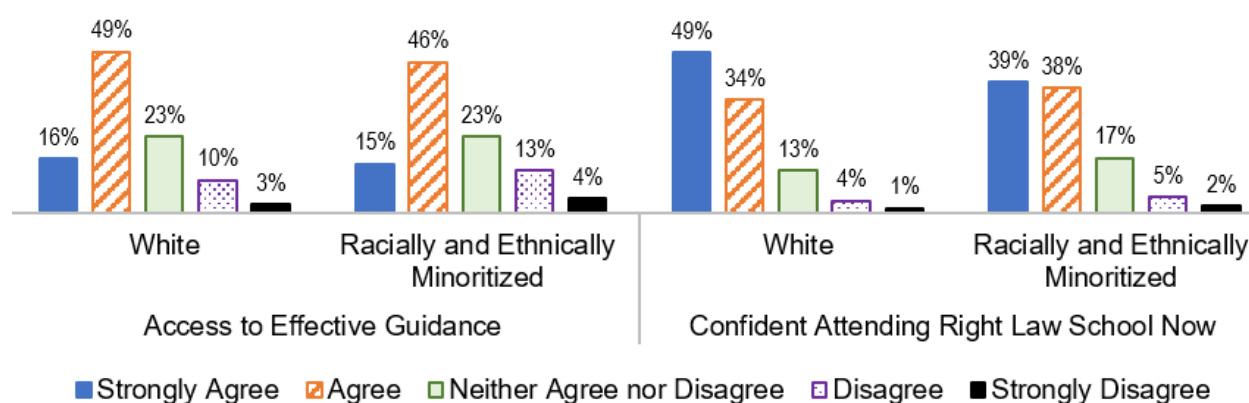
While most 1Ls felt they had the guidance and resources they needed to make a confident enrollment decision, access to support varied across student groups. Students with greater access to resources and social support were consistently more likely to say they received the help they needed during the enrollment process. These findings highlight the importance of providing clear and accessible information and support throughout the application and enrollment process. Next, we explore where 1L respondents turned for information and guidance during this process.

Figure 23. Guidance, Information, Resources, and Confidence in the Enrollment Decision-Making Process



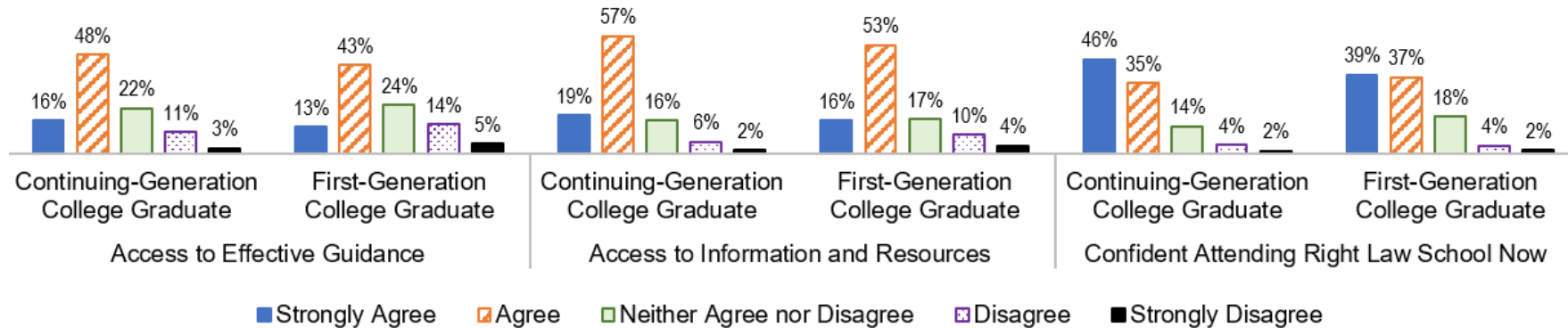
Source: 2025 LSAC Matriculant Survey.

Figure 24. Guidance and Confidence in the Enrollment Decision-Making Process by Race and Ethnicity



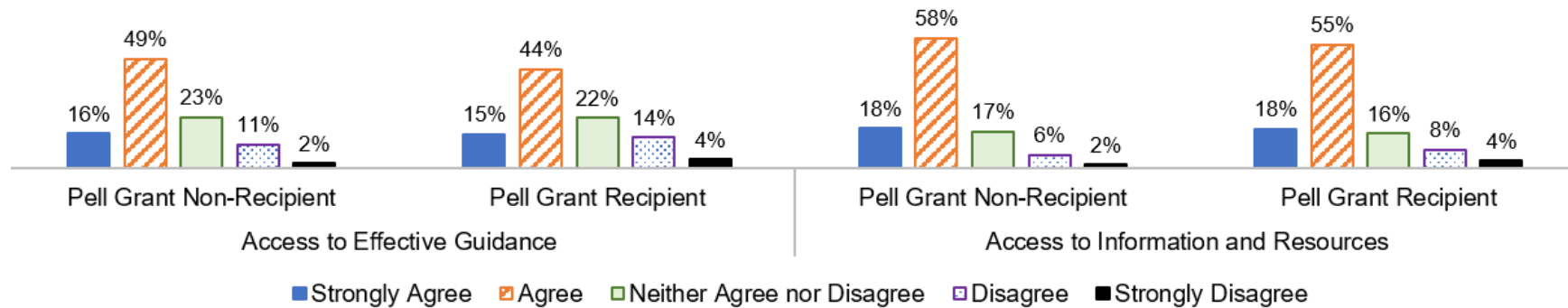
Source: 2025 LSAC Matriculant Survey.

Figure 25. Guidance, Information, Resources, and Confidence in the Enrollment Decision-Making Process by First-Generation College Graduate Status



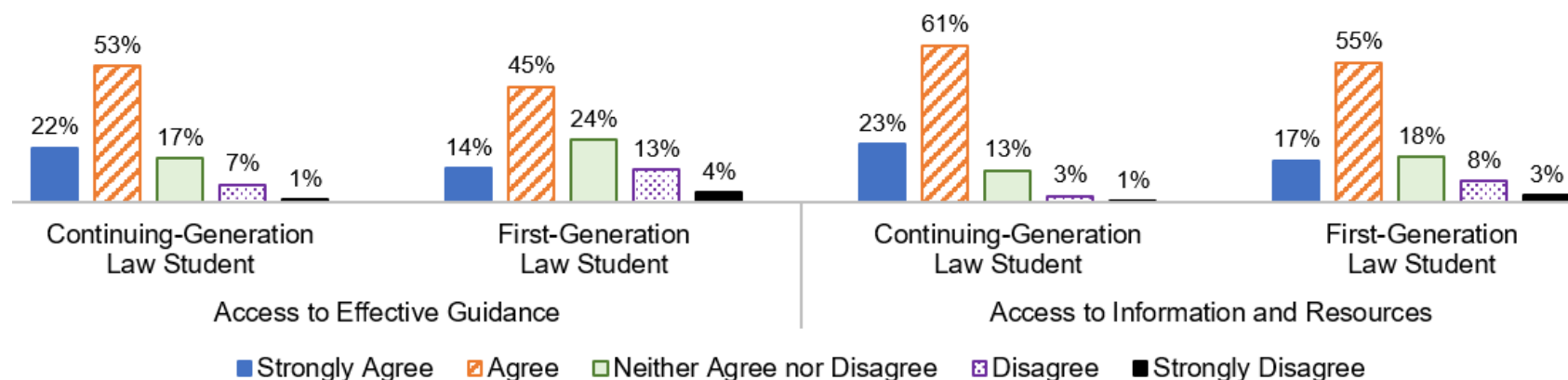
Source: 2025 LSAC Matriculant Survey.

Figure 26. Guidance, Information, and Resources in the Enrollment Decision-Making Process by Pell Grant Recipient Status



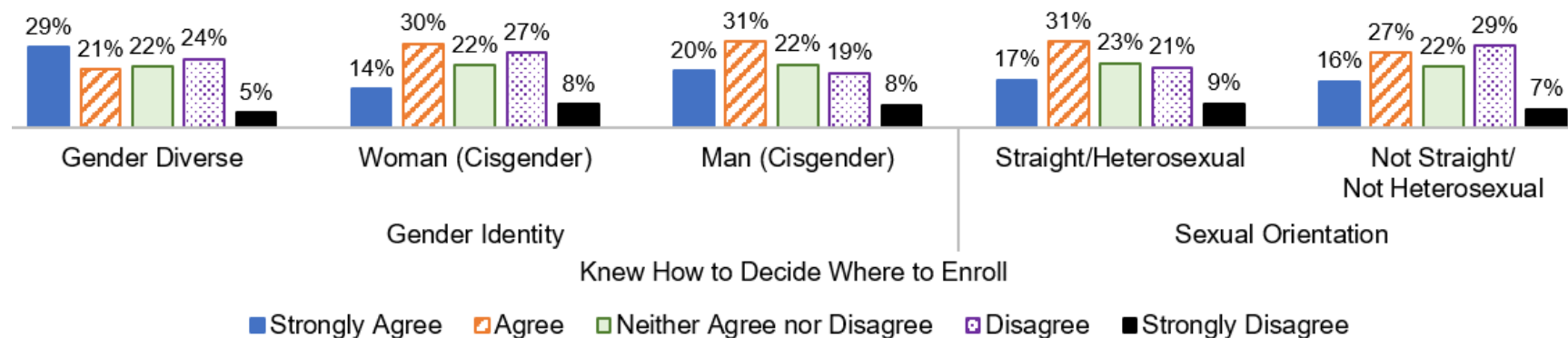
Source: 2025 LSAC Matriculant Survey.

Figure 27. Guidance, Information, and Resources in the Enrollment Decision-Making Process by First-Generation Law Student Status



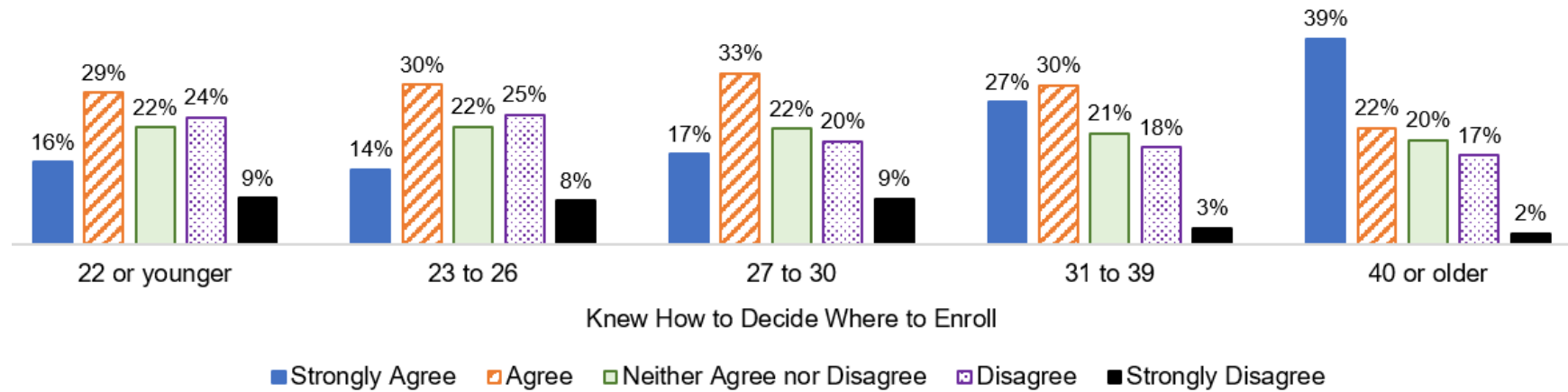
Source: 2025 LSAC Matriculant Survey.

Figure 28. Confidence in the Enrollment Decision-Making Process by Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation



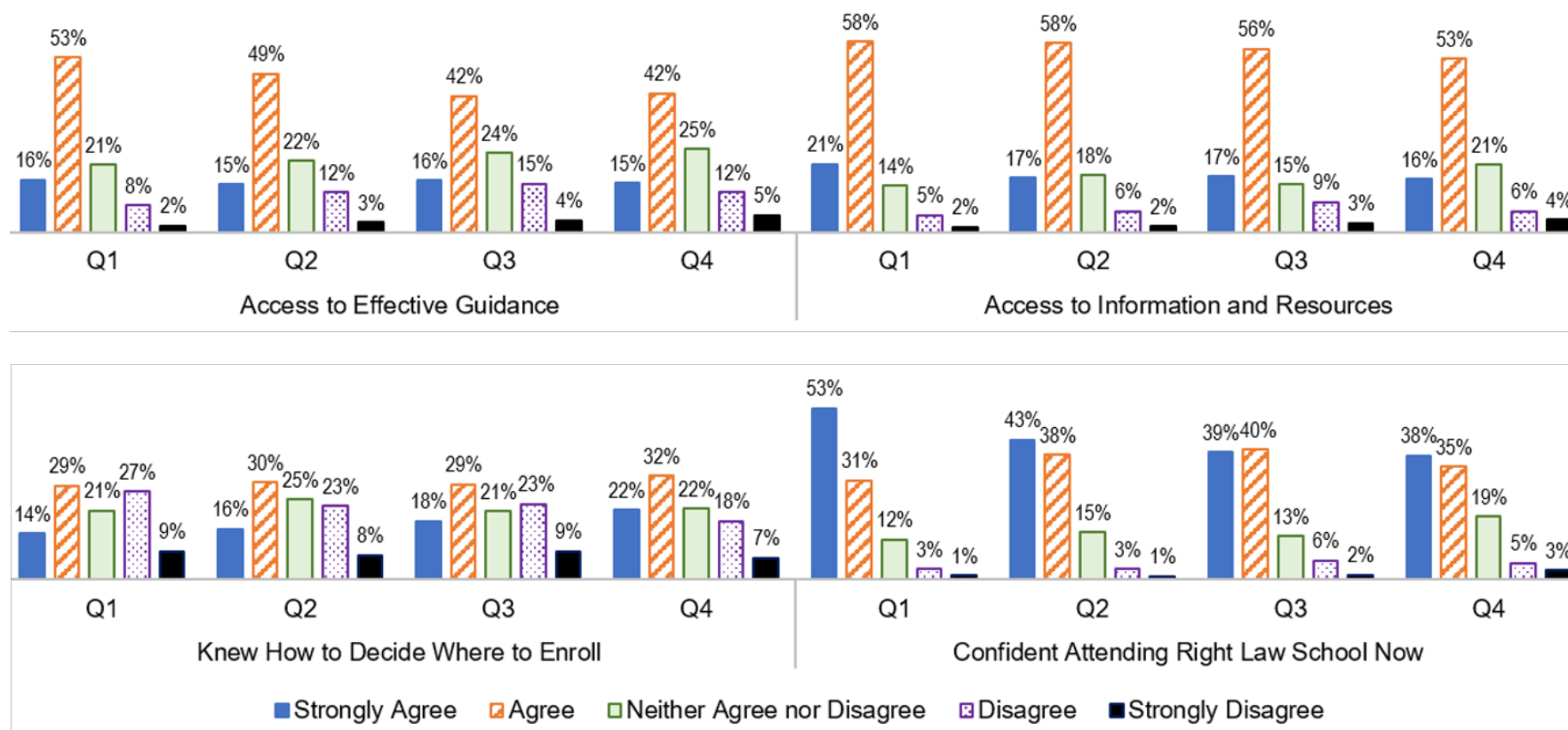
Source: 2025 LSAC Matriculant Survey.

Figure 29. Confidence in the Enrollment Decision-Making Process by Age



Source: 2025 LSAC Matriculant Survey.

Figure 30. Guidance, Information, and Resources in the Enrollment Decision-Making Process by Law School Selectivity Quartile



Source: 2025 LSAC Matriculant Survey.

Note: First-year enrollments vary across schools, and one of many ways to examine this variation is by analyzing enrollment based on law school selectivity. Law schools are each assigned a selectivity index based on each school's 2024-25 admission rate, median LSAT of admitted students, and median UGPA of admitted students. The top 25% of schools by selectivity, or "highly selective" law schools, are in the first quartile (Q1) and are the 49 or 50 law schools with the highest index score.

Who They Consulted for Information: The People and Online Resources

Consulting a range of sources can be helpful when exploring law school options, but the value of that advice often depends on the source's experience and perspective. Friends and family, for instance, may offer general support but might not be able to provide detailed or tailored guidance — especially if they have not attended law school themselves. Even individuals in the legal profession may base their advice on personal experiences that differ from today's application landscape or from a prospective student's specific goals. Nonetheless, who 1L respondents reported turning to for help in their enrollment decision-making underscores the importance of networks on the journey to law school, as these networks present opportunities for interventions.

Similar to previous classes, the three most selected sources consulted for advice by 2025 1Ls were family (36%), attorneys (28%), and friends (26%; Figure 31). Roughly one in five 1Ls consulted a college prelaw advisor (22%) or college faculty or staff who were not prelaw advisors (18%).⁵⁰

Who respondents consulted varied by age and the school in which they were enrolled:⁵¹

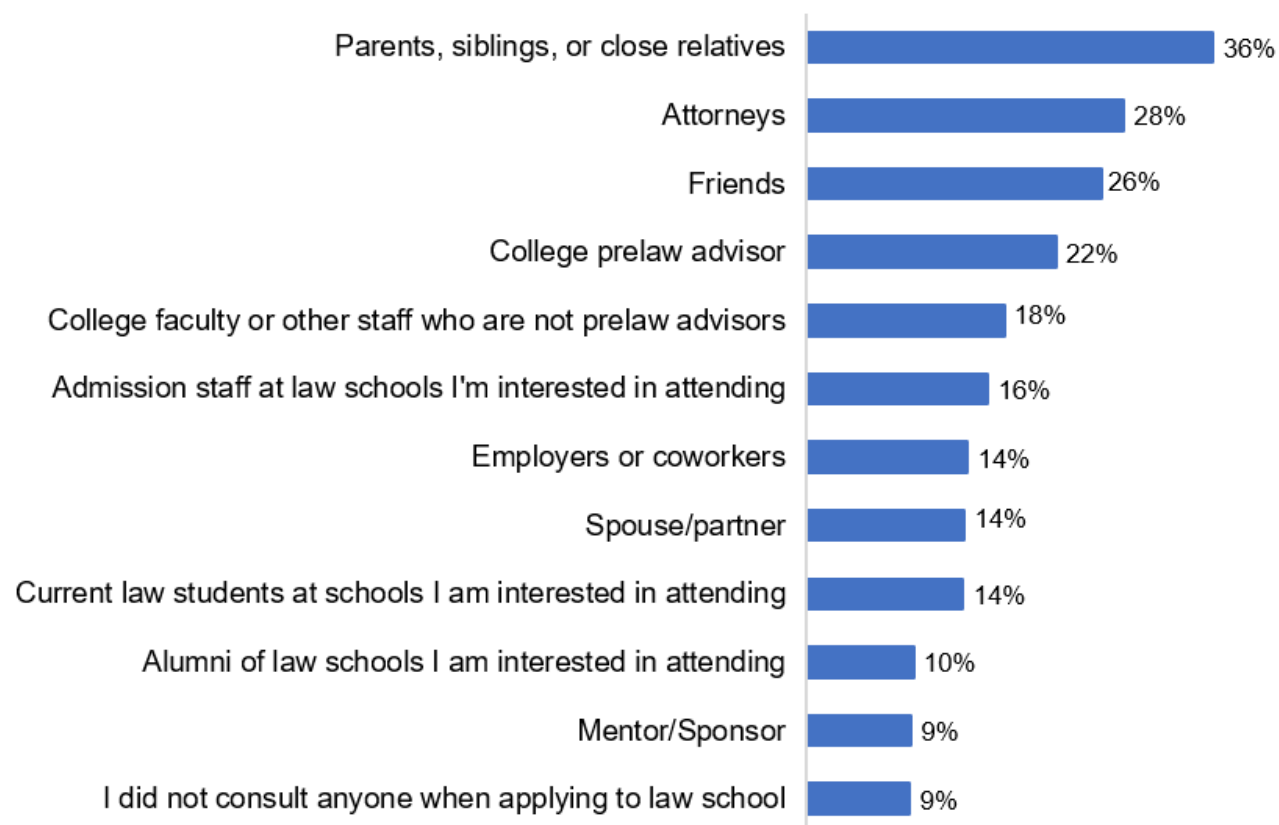
- Networks and people consulted on their enrollment varied significantly by age.⁵² Younger 1Ls consulted college prelaw advisors, faculty or staff, and family at much higher rates than older 1Ls. For example, 21% of 1Ls age 23 to 26 said they consulted a college prelaw advisor at more than double the rate of 1L respondents age 31 to 39 (8%; Figure 32). Generally, older 1Ls were more likely than their younger peers to consult a spouse or partner, employers or co-workers, and alumni of schools of interest.
- 1Ls enrolled in the most selective law schools (Q1) were more likely than their peers enrolled in other schools to have consulted a college prelaw advisor (27%), friends (32%), and current law students (19%). They were also the least likely to say they consulted no one (6%), by about 50% compared with respondents enrolled in other schools (Figure 33).

⁵⁰ The 2024 Matriculant Survey asked respondents to select all options they consulted for information or advice about deciding where to enroll in law school. The 2025 Matriculant Survey asked respondents to select up to three of the most important relationships they consulted with. As a result, the percentages reported may sum to more than 100%.

⁵¹ Only statistically significant differences are shown for all survey results. $p < 0.05$.

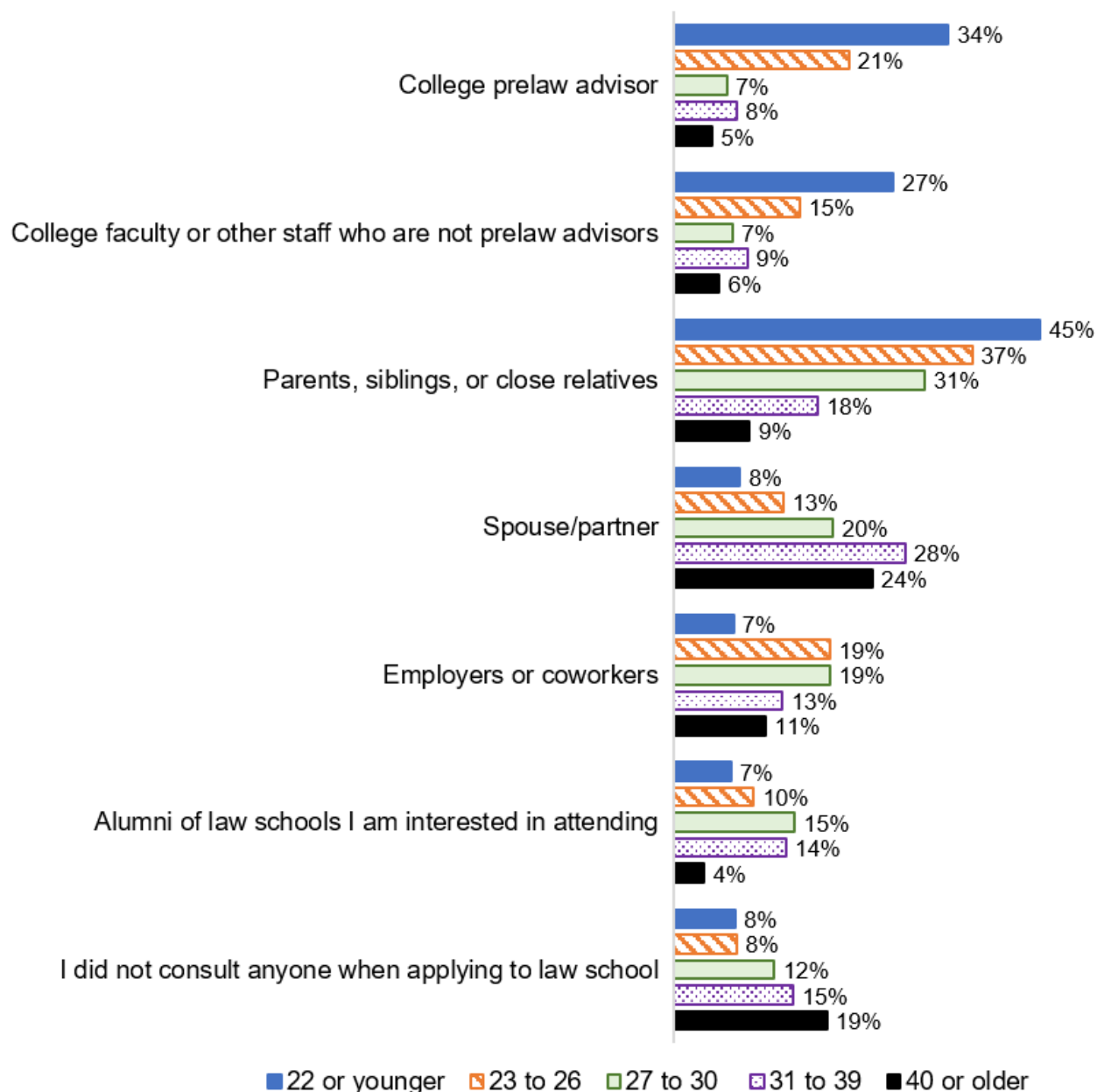
⁵² Refer to [LSAC's Knowledge Report: The 2024 1L Profile](#).

Figure 31. People Consulted for Advice When Deciding Where to Go to Law School



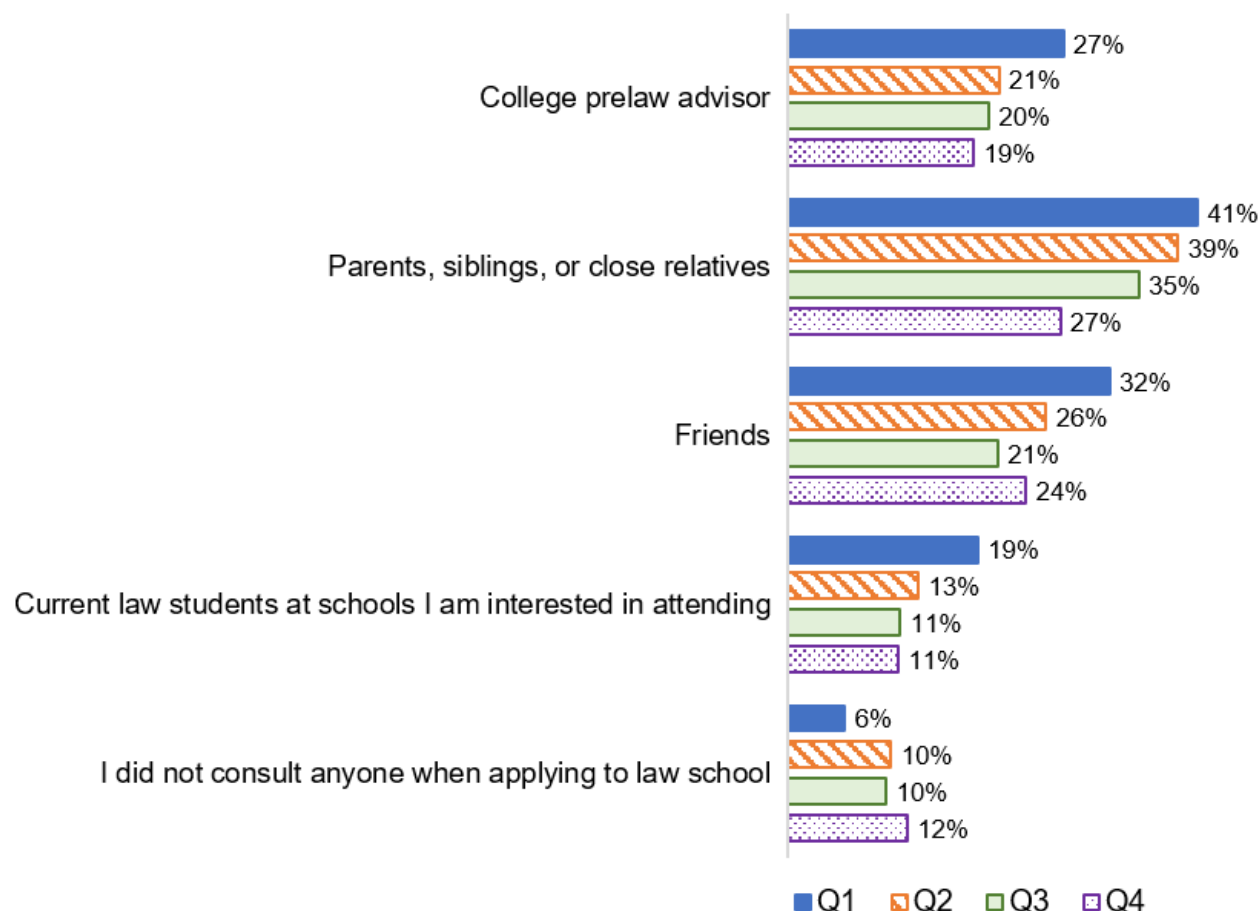
Source: 2025 LSAC Matriculant Survey.

Figure 32. People Consulted for Advice When Deciding Where to Go to Law School by Age



Source: 2025 LSAC Matriculant Survey.

Figure 33. People Consulted for Advice When Deciding Where to Go to Law School by Law School Selectivity Quartile



Source: 2025 LSAC Matriculant Survey.

Note: First-year enrollments vary across schools, and one of many ways to examine this variation is by analyzing enrollment based on law school selectivity. Law schools are each assigned a selectivity index based on each school’s 2024-25 admission rate, median LSAT of admitted students, and median UGPA of admitted students. The top 25% of schools by selectivity, or “highly selective” law schools, are in the first quartile (Q1) and are the 49 or 50 law schools with the highest index score.

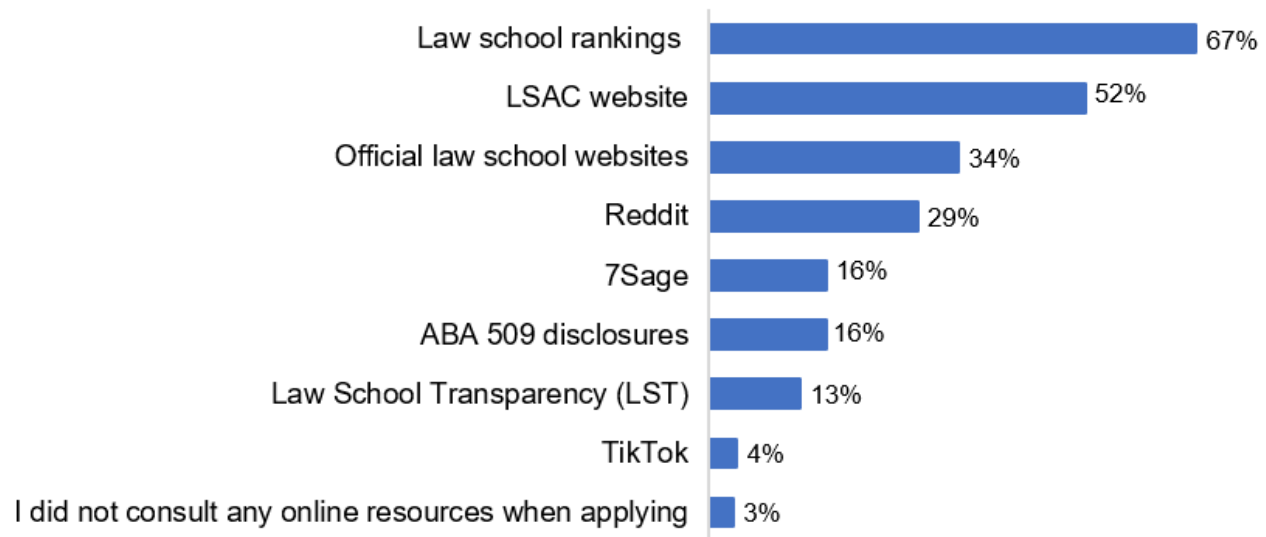
In addition to people, most 1Ls also relied on **online resources** when deciding where to enroll. Two in three 1L respondents (67%) used law school rankings; this was followed by LSAC’s website (52%) and official law school websites (34%). Almost one in three used Reddit (29%), while less than 20% consulted 7Sage, ABA 509 disclosures, or Law School Transparency. Just 4% used TikTok, and 3% consulted no online resources (Figure 34).

Use of these resources varies based on gender, first-generation college graduate status, age, and where respondents were enrolled:

- Gender-diverse 1Ls reported using ABA 509 disclosures (26%) and Law School Transparency (21%) at higher rates than their cisgender peers while using law school rankings at a lower rate — 45%, compared with 67% to 68% among cisgender peers (Figure 35). Women reported using LSAC’s website at higher rates and Reddit at lower rates than men and gender-diverse respondents.
- Continuing-generation college graduates reported using law school rankings and Reddit at higher rates than first-generation college graduates. First-generation college graduates, however, were about twice as likely to report using TikTok: 6%, compared with 3% of continuing-generation graduates (Figure 36).
- Use of law school rankings declined with age, from 71% among 1Ls age 22 or younger to 57% among those 40 or older. Younger 1Ls were also more likely than their older peers to report using no online resources (Figure 37).
- 1L respondents at highly selective schools (Q1) reported using law school rankings at higher rates (77%) than respondents at law schools in the fourth selective quartile (52%; Q4), an absolute difference of 25% (Figure 38). Students at highly selectivity law schools (Q1) also reported using Reddit, 7Sage, and ABA 509 disclosures at higher rates, while respondents enrolled at law schools in the fourth selective quartile (Q4) were more likely to use LSAC’s website or TikTok. Reports of not using online resources were higher for respondents enrolled at law schools in the fourth selective quartile (Q4), at 6%, compared with 2% of respondents at highly selective law schools (Q1).

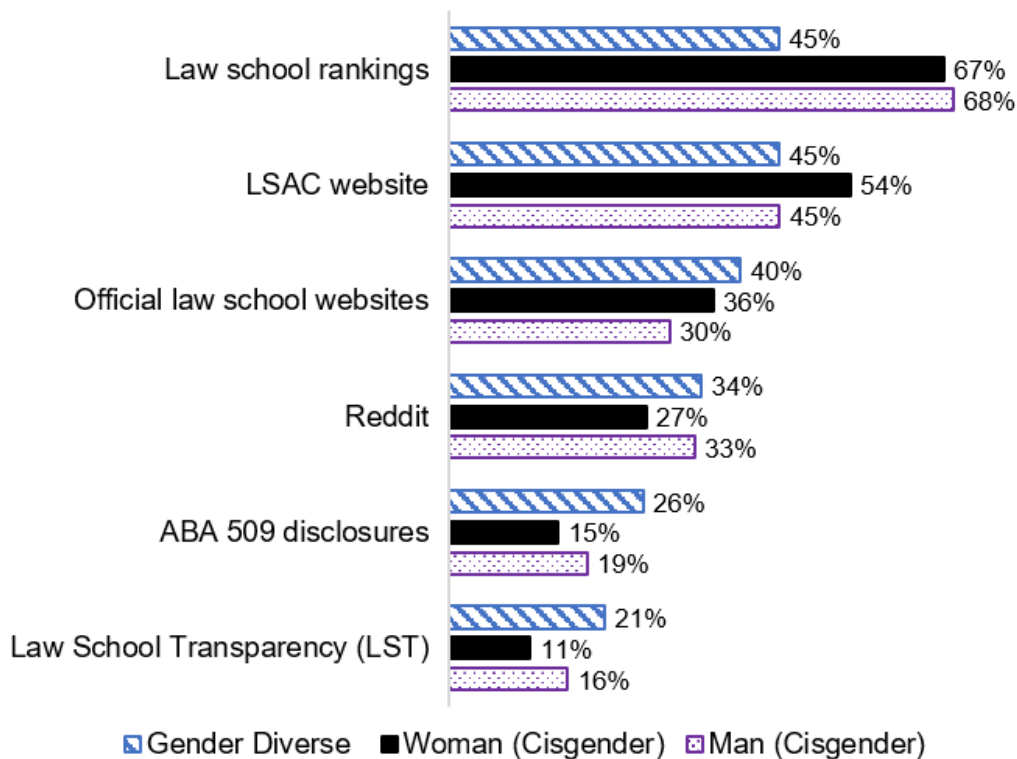
Overall, the sources people turn to for advice when choosing a law school often reflect their access to resources and professional networks. The patterns above suggest that many matriculants from marginalized backgrounds have fewer opportunities to rely on friends or family for guidance in this process. These insights point to an important role for prelaw advisors, pathway programs, and law schools in reaching out more intentionally to admitted students and helping them identify trustworthy, useful sources of information as they make enrollment decisions.

Figure 34. Top Online Sources Consulted for Advice When Deciding Where to Go to Law School



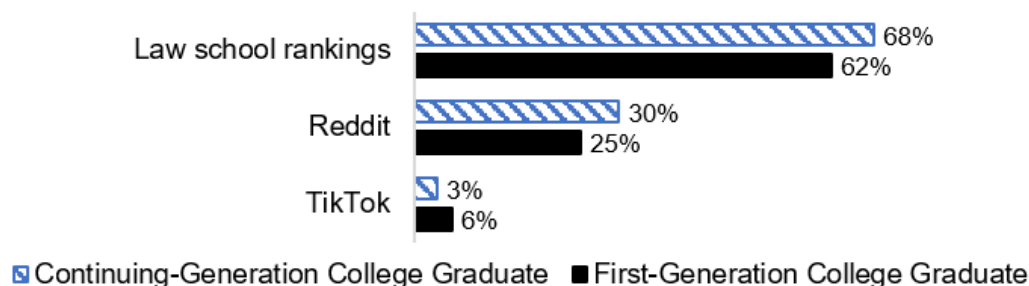
Source: 2025 LSAC Matriculant Survey.

Figure 35. Top Online Sources Consulted by Gender Identity



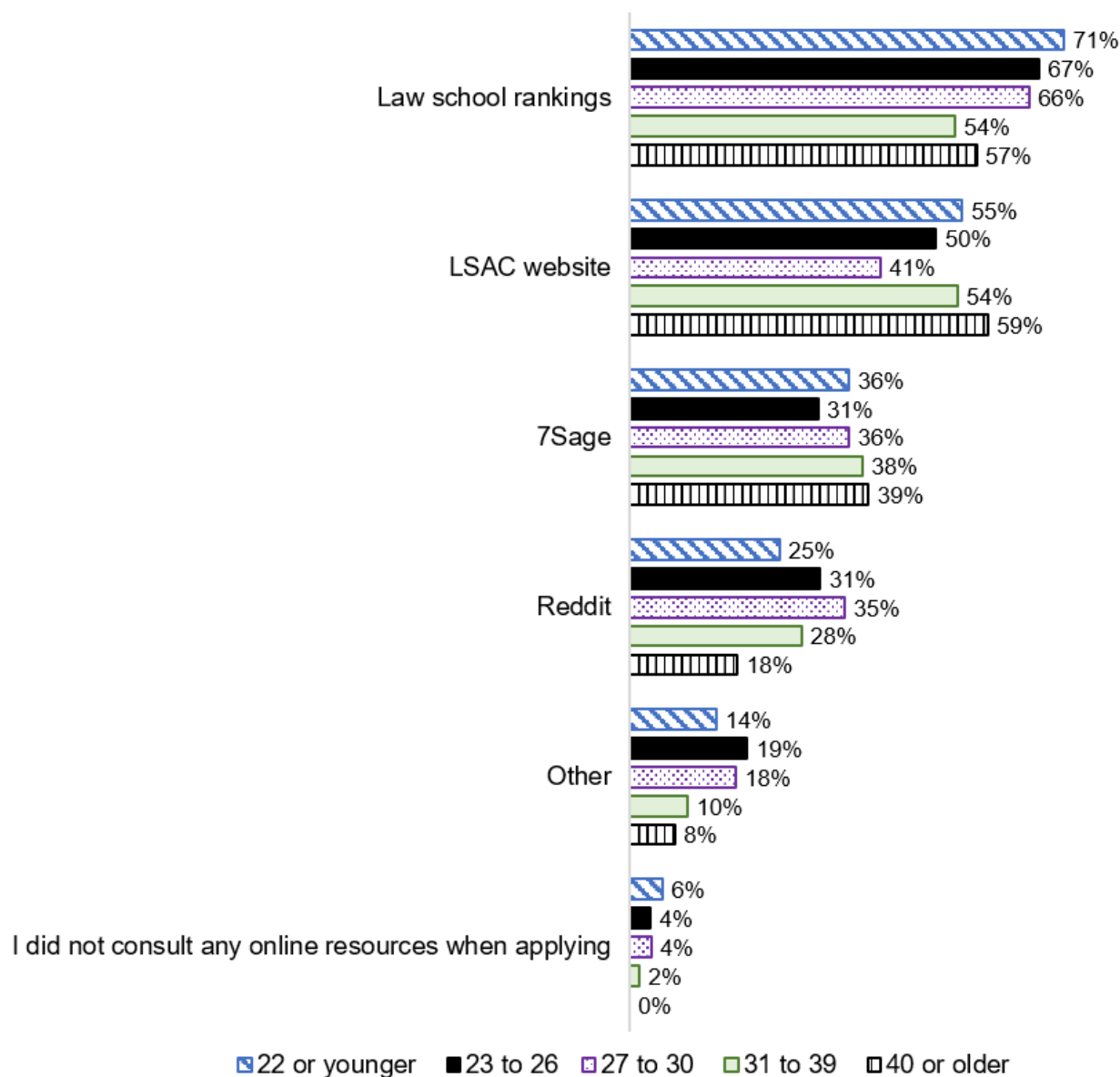
Source: 2025 LSAC Matriculant Survey.

Figure 36. Top Online Sources Consulted by First-Generation College Graduate Status



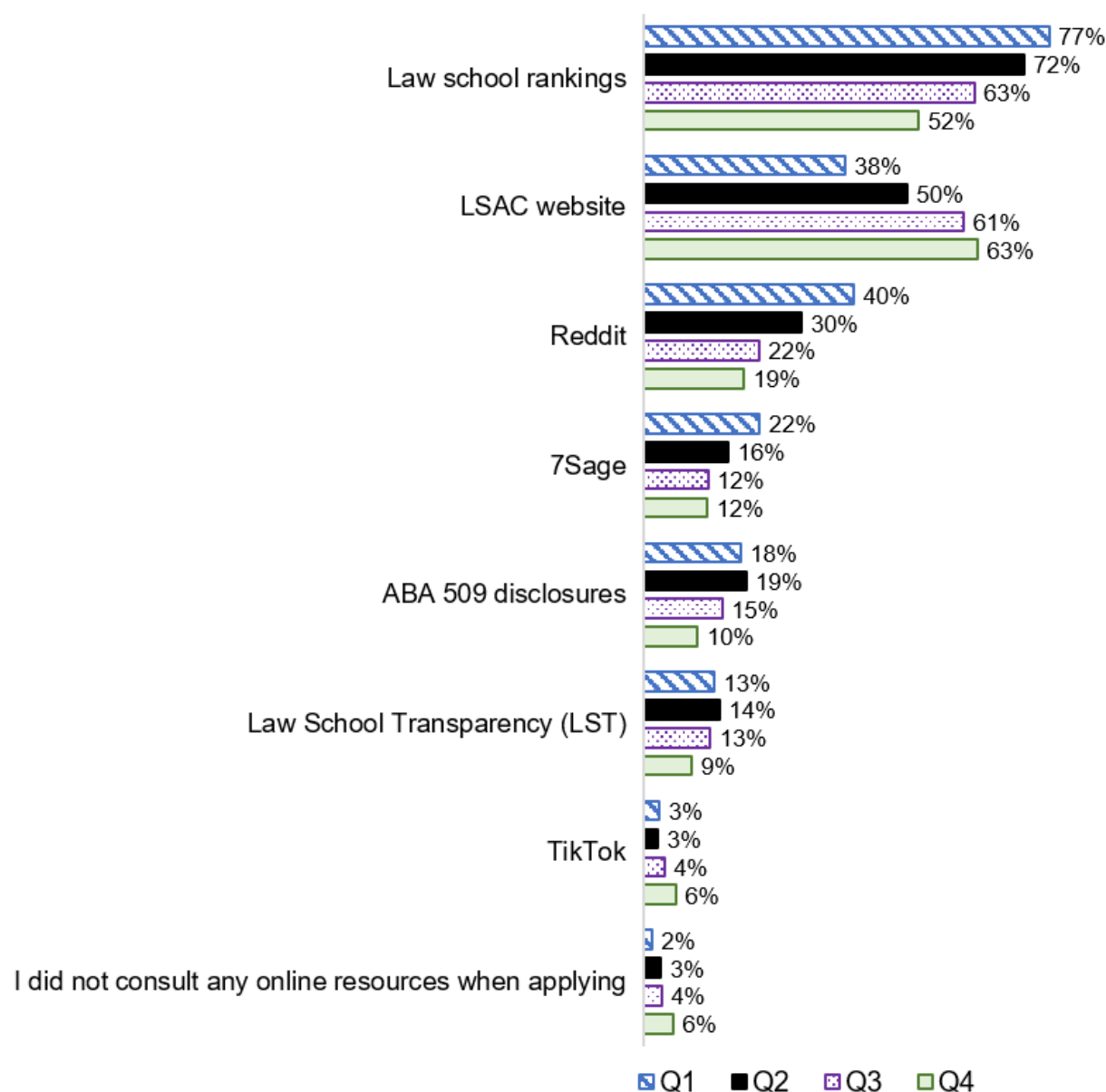
Source: 2025 LSAC Matriculant Survey.

Figure 37. Top Online Sources Consulted by Age



Source: 2025 LSAC Matriculant Survey.

Figure 38. Top Online Sources Consulted by Law School Selectivity Quartile



Source: 2025 LSAC Matriculant Survey.

Note: First-year enrollments vary across schools, and one of many ways to examine this variation is by analyzing enrollment based on law school selectivity. Law schools are each assigned a selectivity index based on each school's 2024-25 admission rate, median LSAT of admitted students, and median UGPA of admitted students. The top 25% of schools by selectivity, or "highly selective" law schools, are in the first quartile (Q1) and are the 49 or 50 law schools with the highest index score.

Pathway and 0L Participation

Pathway (or pipeline) programs play a key role in expanding access to legal education by supporting students at different stages of their journeys. Together, these programs provide early exposure, preparation, and guidance that can help address gaps in access to resources and experiences. These gaps are often faced by students who are financially under-resourced, come from under-resourced schools, or lack personal connections to the profession. Participation in these programs was not uniform across the 2025 1L class and varied by students' backgrounds, their LSAT performance, and the types of law schools they attended.⁵³

Only 5% of 1L respondents indicated they participated in a pathway program prior to enrolling in law school (Figure 39). Participation was concentrated among students who were the first in their families to graduate from college, and patterns varied across groups:

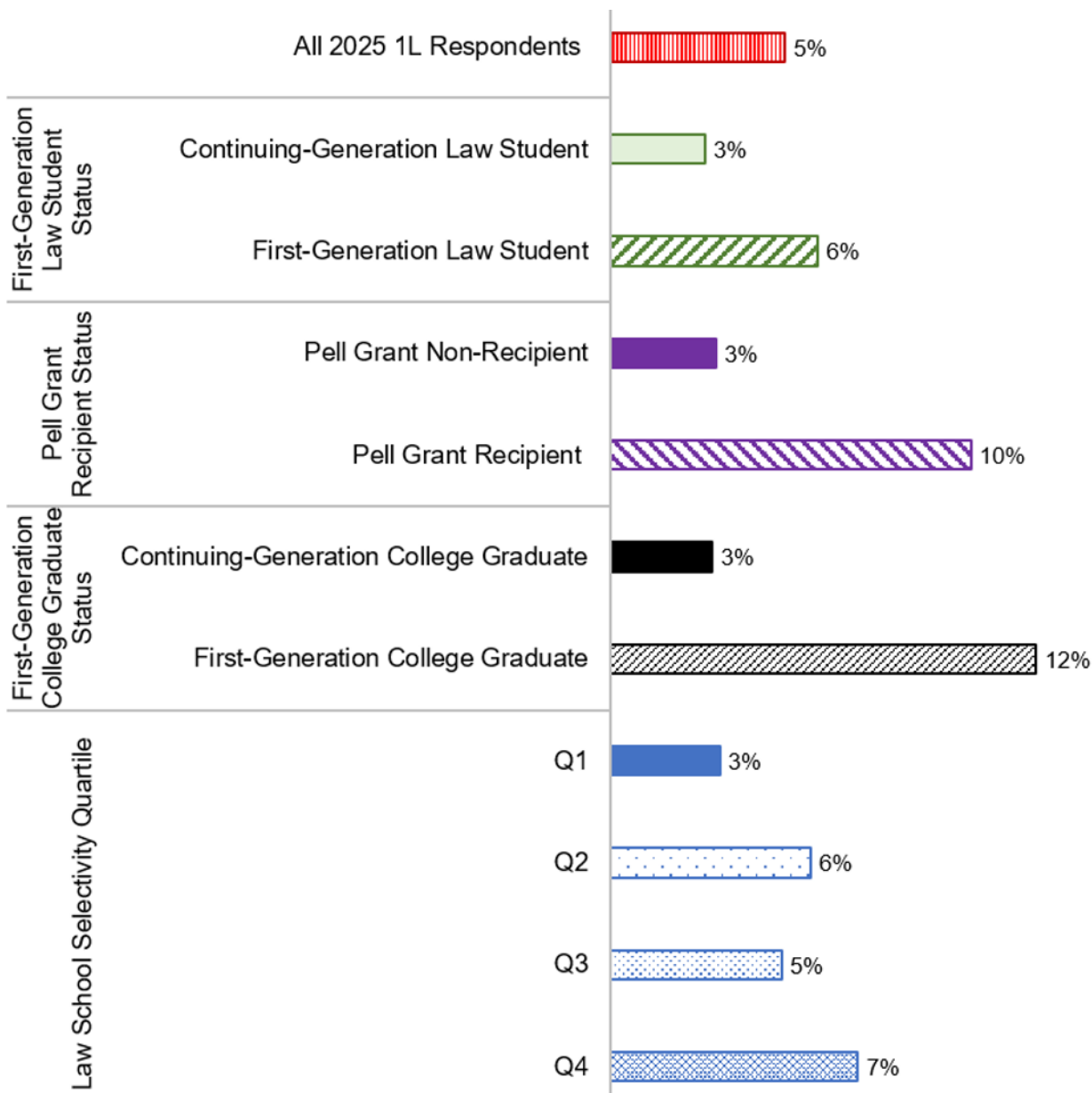
- More than half of pathway participants (57%) were first-generation college graduates. Among 1L respondents overall, first-generation college graduates were four times as likely as their continuing-generation peers (12%, compared with 3%) to participate in a pathway program (Figure 39).
- First-generation law students, Pell Grant recipients, and 1Ls at schools in the fourth selectivity quartile (Q4) were all more than twice as likely than their peers to have participated in these programs (Figure 39).

The 2025 1L class reveals that pathway programs play a key role not just in the journey to and through law school, but also in addressing various barriers for many individuals, especially those from communities that lack access to legal representation.

⁵³ There were no significant differences in rates of participation in 0L or bridge programs by gender identity or sexual orientation.

Figure 39. 1L Pathway Participation by Law School Selectivity Quartile, First-Generation College Graduate Status, Pell Grant Recipient Status, and First-Generation Law Student Status

Related references: Figure 39 (1st mention, pg. 60) | Figure 39 (2nd mention, pg. 60) | Figure 39 (3rd mention, pg. 60)



Source: 2025 LSAC Matriculant Survey.

Notes: First-year enrollments vary across schools, and one of many ways to examine this variation is by analyzing enrollment based on law school selectivity. Law schools are each assigned a selectivity index based on each school's 2024-25 admission rate, median LSAT of admitted students, and median UGPA of admitted students. The top 25% of schools by selectivity, or "highly selective" law schools, are in the first quartile (Q1) and are the 49 or 50 law schools with the highest index score. Only statistically significant differences are shown. $p < 0.05$.

Programs often known as 0L or bridge programs provide incoming law students an opportunity to learn about the law school experience, test-drive the skills they will be using in the first year, and preview doctrinal courses to ease the transition into law school. Participation in these programs is meaningful, but not universal, and varies by students' backgrounds, academic profiles, LSAT performance, and where they attend law school.⁵⁴

Akin to the 2024 1L class, 21% of 2025 1L respondents participated in some kind of 0L or bridge program prior to beginning their first semester of law school.

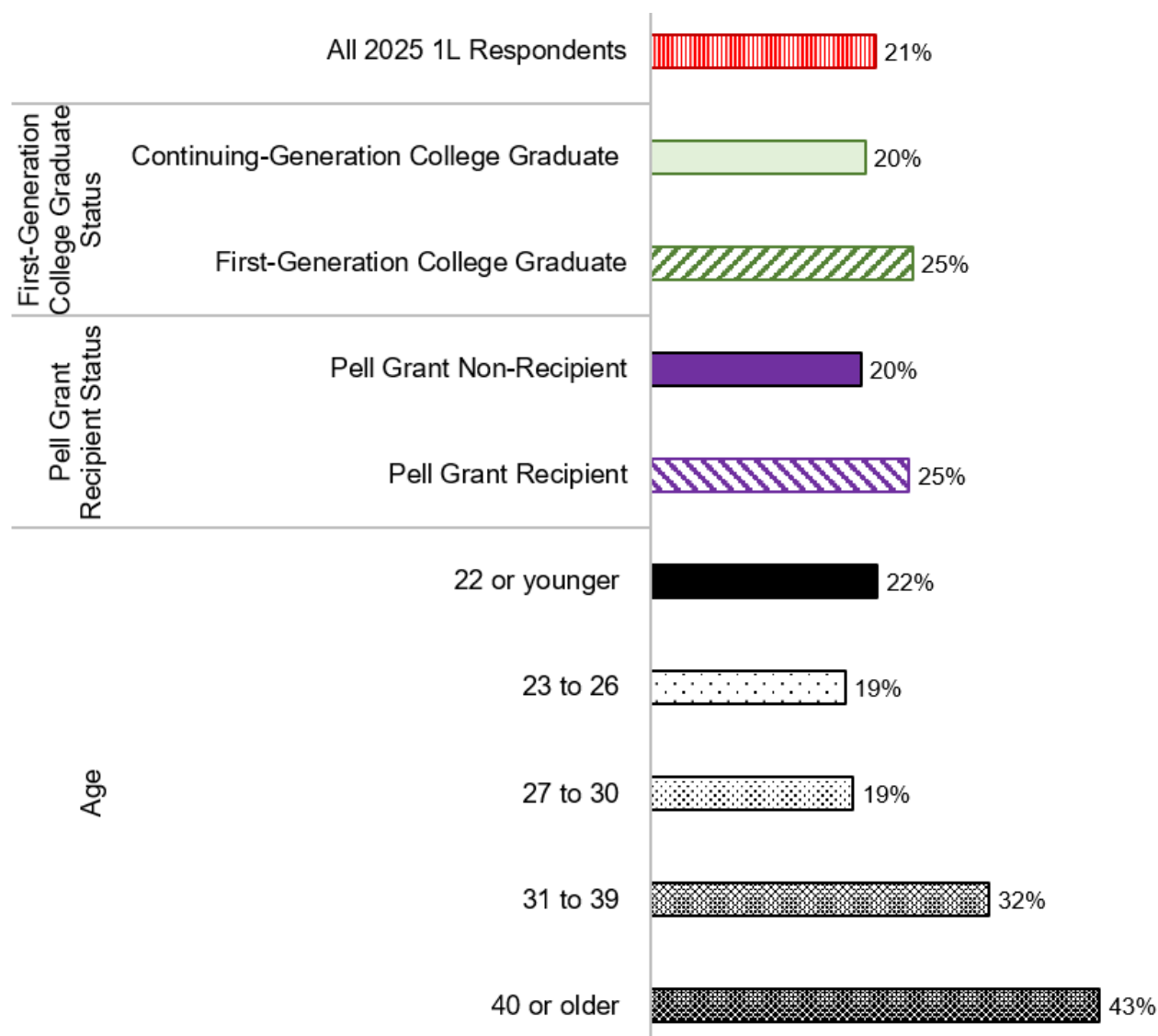
- First-generation college graduates and Pell Grant recipients each participated in 0L or bridge programs at a higher rate than their peers: 25%, compared with 20% among continuing-generation college graduates and Pell Grant non-recipients (Figure 40).
- Participation in 0L or bridge programs was highest among older 1Ls. Among those 40 or older, 43% participated, more than double the rate among 1Ls in their late 20s (Figure 40).
- 1L respondents reveal they are self-aware and help-seeking, using tools such as the LSAT to help them prepare for 1L success. As LSAT scores decreased, 0L or bridge program participation rates increased (Figure 41). More than 80% of 1Ls scoring 120 to 139 on the LSAT participated, compared with roughly one-third of those scoring in the 140s, about one-quarter of those scoring in the low to mid-150s, and one-fifth or fewer of those scoring 160 or higher.
- 1L respondents at the most selective (Q1) schools had the lowest participation in 0L or bridge programs, at 16%, while those enrolled at a law school in the fourth selectivity quartile (Q4) participated at nearly twice that rate (30%; Figure 42). Part-time students participated at nearly twice the rate of full-time students (34%, compared with 20%).

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

⁵⁴ There were no significant differences in rates of participation in 0L or bridge programs by gender identity or sexual orientation.

Figure 40. 0L or Bridge Program Participation by Age, Pell Grant Recipient Status, and First-Generation College Graduate Status

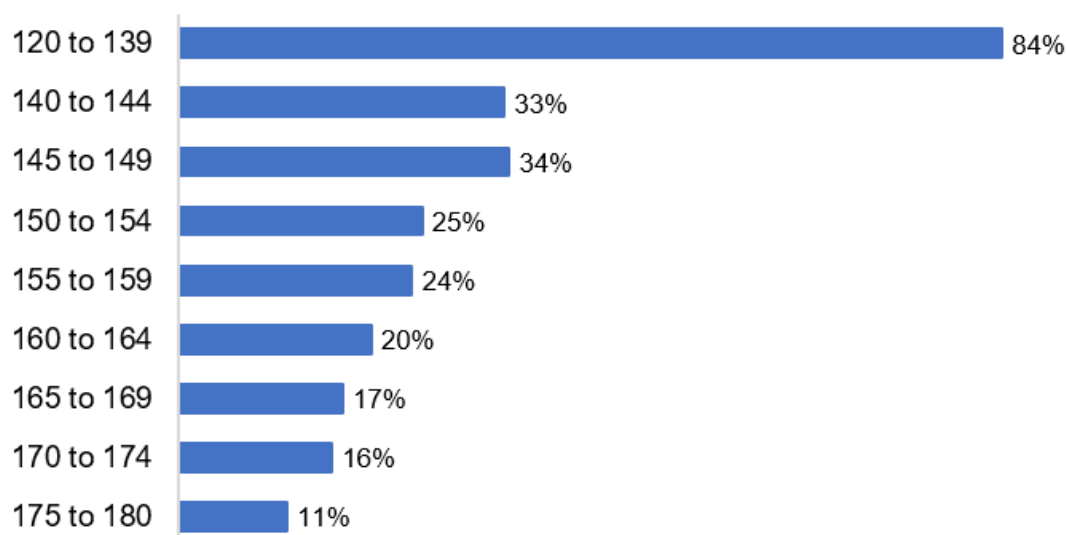
Related references: Figure 40 (1st mention, pg. 62) | Figure 40 (2nd mention, pg. 62)



Source: 2025 LSAC Matriculant Survey.

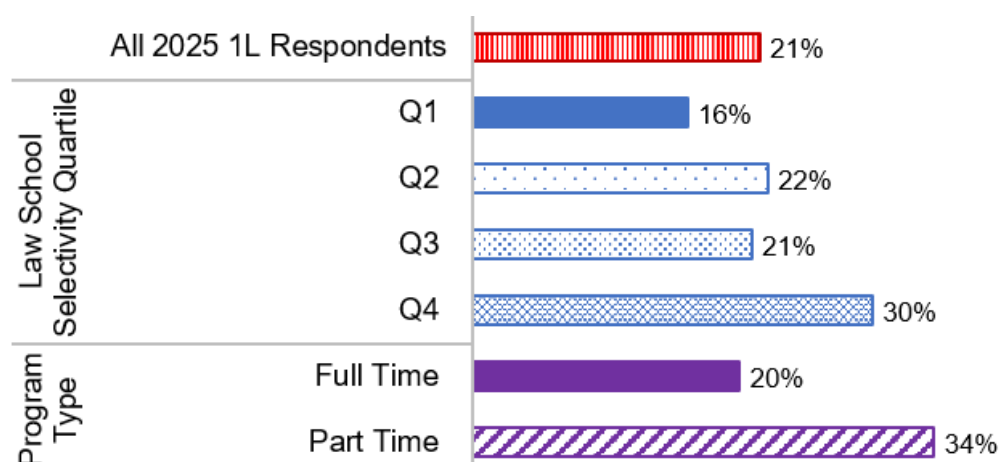
Note: First-year enrollments vary across schools, and one of many ways to examine this variation is by analyzing enrollment based on law school selectivity. Law schools are each assigned a selectivity index based on each school's 2024-25 admission rate, median LSAT of admitted students, and median UGPA of admitted students. The top 25% of schools by selectivity, or "highly selective" law schools, are in the first quartile (Q1) and are the 49 or 50 law schools with the highest index score. Only statistically significant differences are shown. $p < 0.05$.

Figure 41. 0L or Bridge Program Participation by LSAT Performance



Source: 2025 LSAC Matriculant Survey.

Figure 42. 0L or Bridge Program Participation by Law School Selectivity Quartile and Program Type



Source: 2025 LSAC Matriculant Survey.

Notes: Due to the low number of 1L respondents who scored below 145, this data should not be used to make strong generalizations about the entire population based on this small sample size. First-year enrollments vary across schools, and one of many ways to examine this variation is by analyzing enrollment based on law school selectivity. Law schools are each assigned a selectivity index based on each school's 2024-25 admission rate, median LSAT of admitted students, and median UGPA of admitted students. The top 25% of schools by selectivity, or "highly selective" law schools, are in the first quartile (Q1) and are the 49 or 50 law schools with the highest index score. Only statistically significant differences are shown. $p < 0.05$.

Financing Law School

Converting an admission offer into an enrollment decision often hinges on an aspiring law student's ability to pay for law school. Given the changes to federal student loans that took effect July 1, 2026, it is important to understand how members of the 2025 first-year law school class viewed and financed their legal education, as these patterns may provide insight into which future admitted applicants could be most affected by the policy changes.

This section examines key aspects of financing law school, including perceptions, understanding, awareness, borrowing, and anticipated debt. Specifically, the 2025 Matriculant Survey took a deep dive into:

- How 1L respondents perceived the cost of law school
- How they obtained and used financial information when making enrollment decisions
- Their awareness and understanding of available financing options
- Their understanding of financial planning and preparedness
- How they are borrowing, or expect to borrow, throughout law school
- The amount of undergraduate debt they carried into law school
- The amount of debt they expect to accumulate by graduation

At this stage, findings related to law school borrowing and anticipated debt reflect only the experiences of survey respondents. Although the National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS) currently provides law school borrowing data only through 2020, the results from this survey offer an important pulse check on the financial perceptions and self-reported realities shaping today's law student experience.⁵⁵ A more complete picture of current borrowing patterns will emerge in the coming years as updated data become available from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES).

Views on the Cost of Law School

The 2025 Matriculant Survey asked respondents how strongly they agreed or disagreed with a series of statements designed to capture different perspectives on the cost of law school. Rather than reflecting a single viewpoint, these responses illustrate the multiple dimensions students consider when evaluating cost and show that students may hold several views about the cost of law school simultaneously. These statements fall into three broad themes. The first theme considers cost as an investment, focusing on

⁵⁵ Learn more about the [National Postsecondary Student Aid Study](#) by the National Center for Education Statistics.

whether students view the price of a law degree as fair relative to its value and potential future earnings. The second places cost within a longer-term pathway, examining whether students see law school as a necessary step or stepping stone toward achieving their career. The third theme is about the concerns about the financial consequences of law school and whether debt could limit career choices or affect future financial stability. Together, these themes illustrate the range of considerations students weigh when thinking about the financial commitment of law school.

The majority of 2025 1L respondents viewed the cost of law school as an investment, and most also viewed it as a necessary pathway towards their career goals, but many reported concerns about how the cost may limit their career choices and affect their future financial stability.⁵⁶

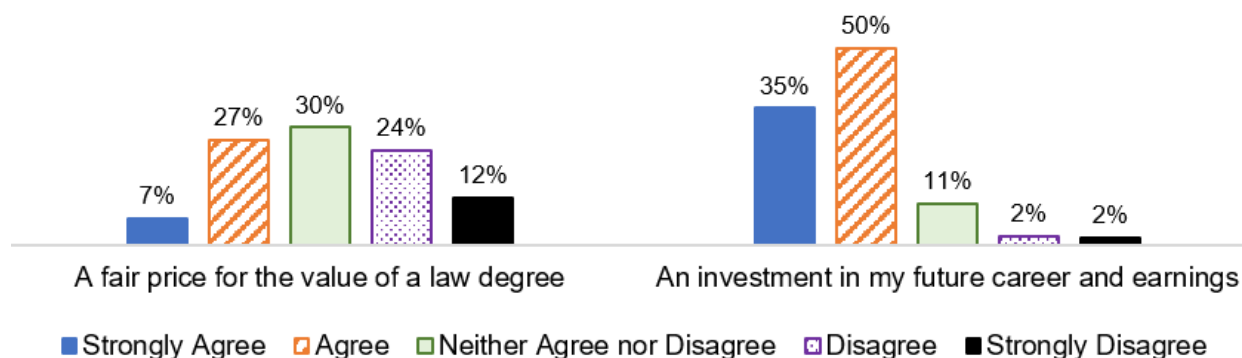
Law School as an Investment

While 35% of 1L respondents viewed the cost of law school as a fair price for its value, 85% still viewed law school as an investment in their future career and earnings (Figure 43). Perceptions of the cost and value of law school varied by 1L respondents' backgrounds and the law schools they attended:

- Gender-diverse 1Ls were more likely than their cisgender peers to view the cost of law school as a fair price for its value (43%, compared with 31% of women and 38% of men). On the other hand, 74% of gender-diverse 1Ls viewed law school as an investment in their future career and earnings, more than 10 percentage points lower than women (86%) and men (85%; Figure 44).
- Fewer 1Ls who identified as not straight/not heterosexual viewed the cost of law school as a fair price for its value than their straight/heterosexual peers, an absolute difference of 11% (25%, compared with 36%; Figure 45).
- Views on the fair value of law school increased with age. Among 1Ls age 40 or older, 48% viewed the cost of law school as a fair price for its value, compared with 29% of those age 23 to 26, an absolute difference of 19% (Figure 46).
- 1Ls at law schools in the third selectivity quartile (Q3) were significantly more likely (40%) than their peers in the other law schools to view the cost of a law degree as a fair price for its value (Figure 47).

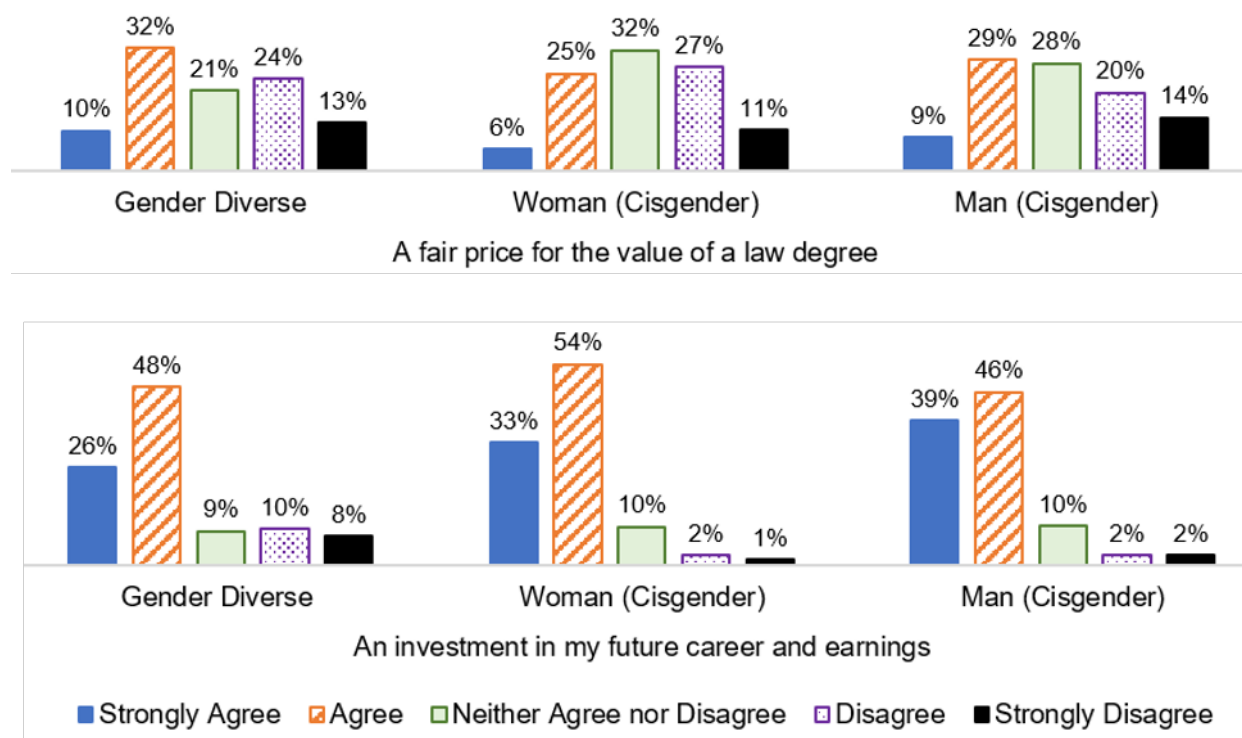
⁵⁶ Only statistically significant group-based differences are included. An F-test p-value of 0.05 indicates strong evidence that group differences exist, with less than a 5% probability that the observed differences occurred by chance.

Figure 43. 1L Views on the Investment and Value of a Law Degree



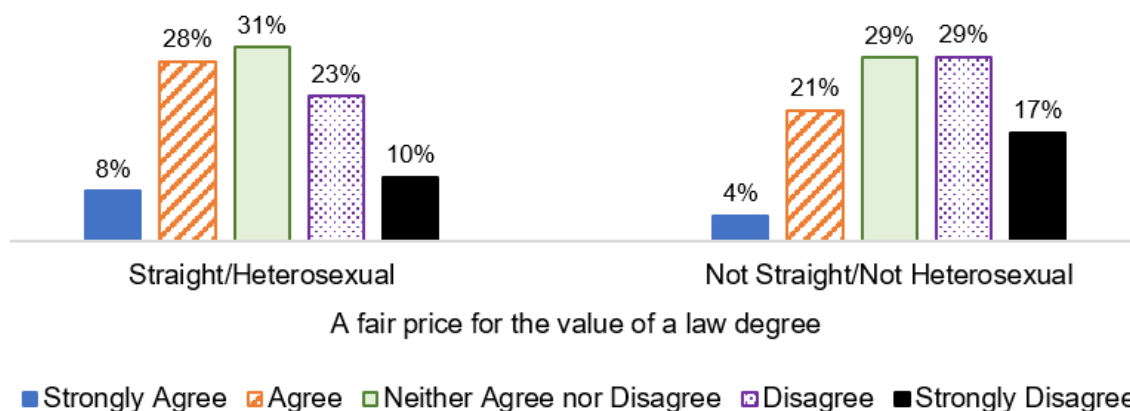
Source: 2025 LSAC Matriculant Survey.

Figure 44. 1L Views on the Investment and Value of a Law Degree by Gender Identity



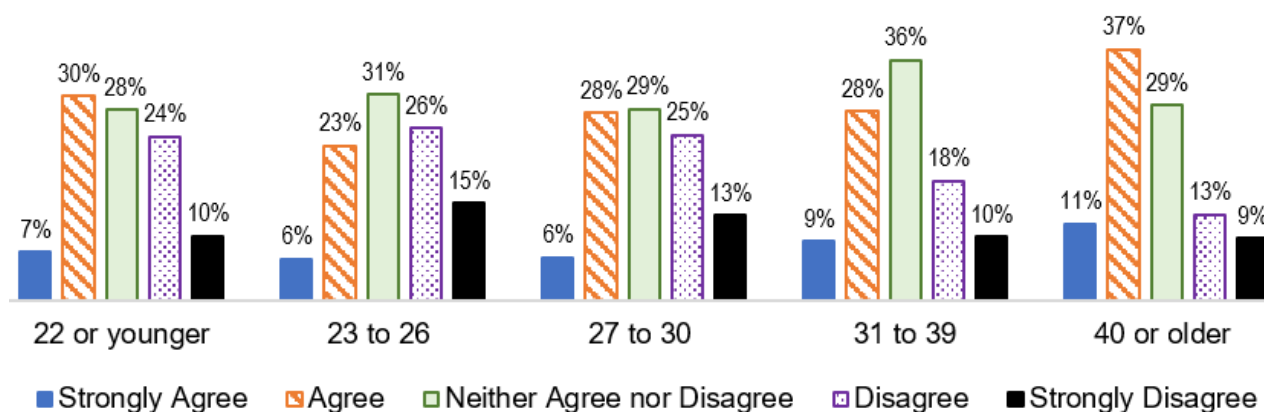
Source: 2025 LSAC Matriculant Survey.

Figure 45. 1L Views on the Investment and Value of a Law Degree by Sexual Orientation



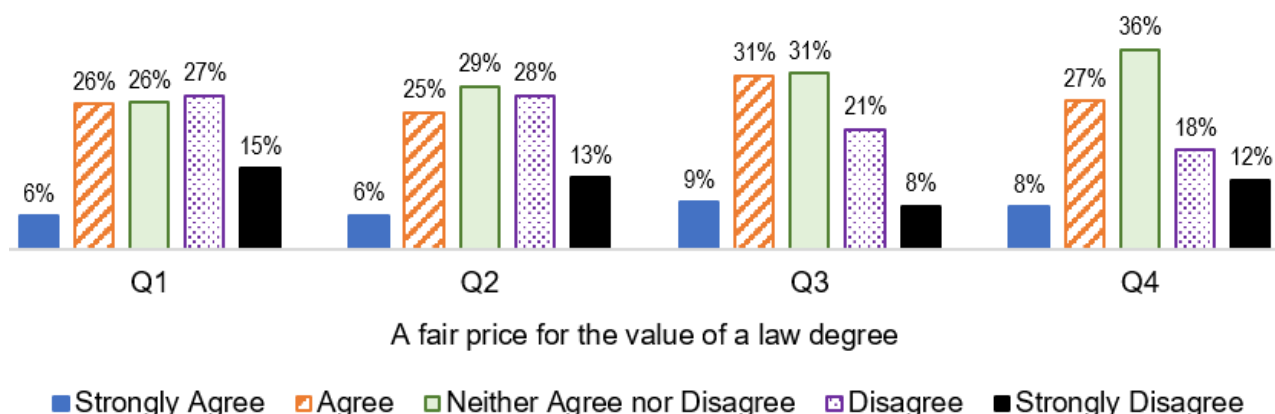
Source: 2025 LSAC Matriculant Survey.

Figure 46. Differences in 1L Views on the Investment and Value of Obtaining a Law Degree by Age



Source: 2025 LSAC Matriculant Survey.

Figure 47. Differences in 1L Views on the Investment and Value of Obtaining a Law Degree by Law School Selectivity Quartile



Source: 2025 LSAC Matriculant Survey.

Note: First-year enrollments vary across schools, and one of many ways to examine this variation is by analyzing enrollment based on law school selectivity. Law schools are each assigned a selectivity index based on each school's 2024-25 admission rate, median LSAT of admitted students, and median UGPA of admitted students. The top 25% of schools by selectivity, or "highly selective" law schools, are in the first quartile (Q1) and are the 49 or 50 law schools with the highest index score.

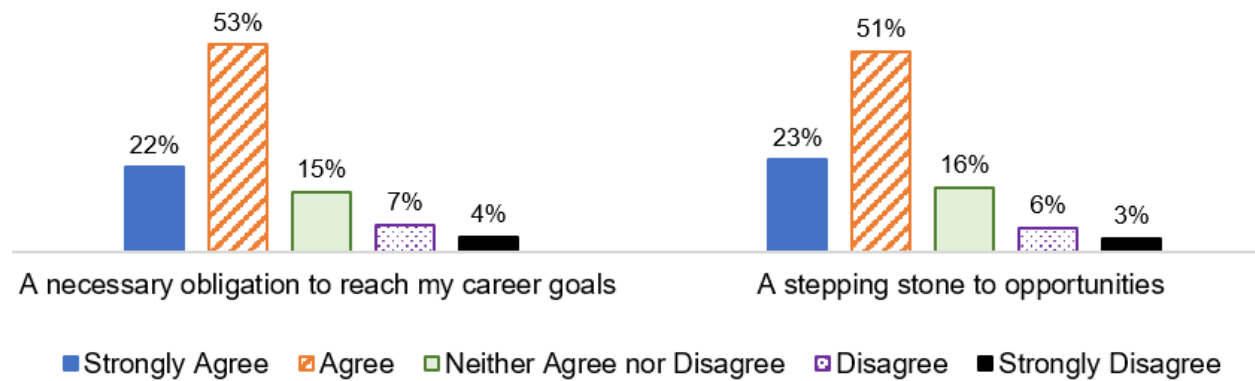
A Pathway to a Long-Term Goal

Most 1Ls saw the cost of law school as purposeful, with about three in four agreeing or strongly agreeing the cost was a necessary obligation (75%) and a stepping stone to opportunities (74%; Figure 48).

Respondents' views on law school as a pathway to their goals varied by group:

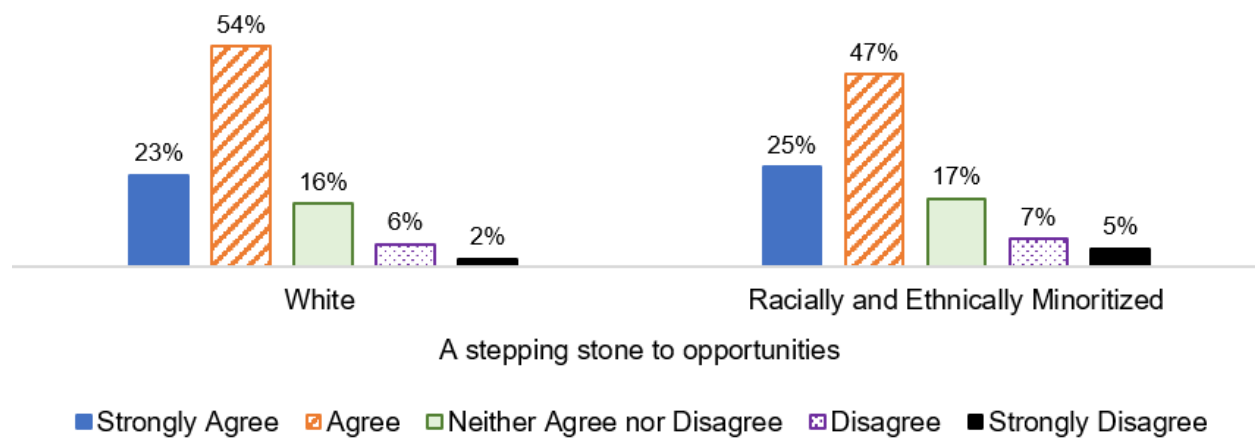
- More white 1Ls (77%) agreed or strongly agreed that the cost of law school was a stepping stone to opportunities than their racially and ethnically minoritized peers (72%; Figure 49).
- Views of law school as a necessary stepping stone to opportunities and obligation for career goals were more common among older and younger 1Ls than among those in the middle of the 1L age distribution. For example, 80% of 1Ls age 40 or older and 77% of those 22 or younger agreed or strongly agreed that the cost of law school was a necessary obligation to reach their career goals, compared with 71% of 1Ls aged 23 to 26 (Figure 50).

Figure 48. 1L Views on Law School as Pathway to Goals



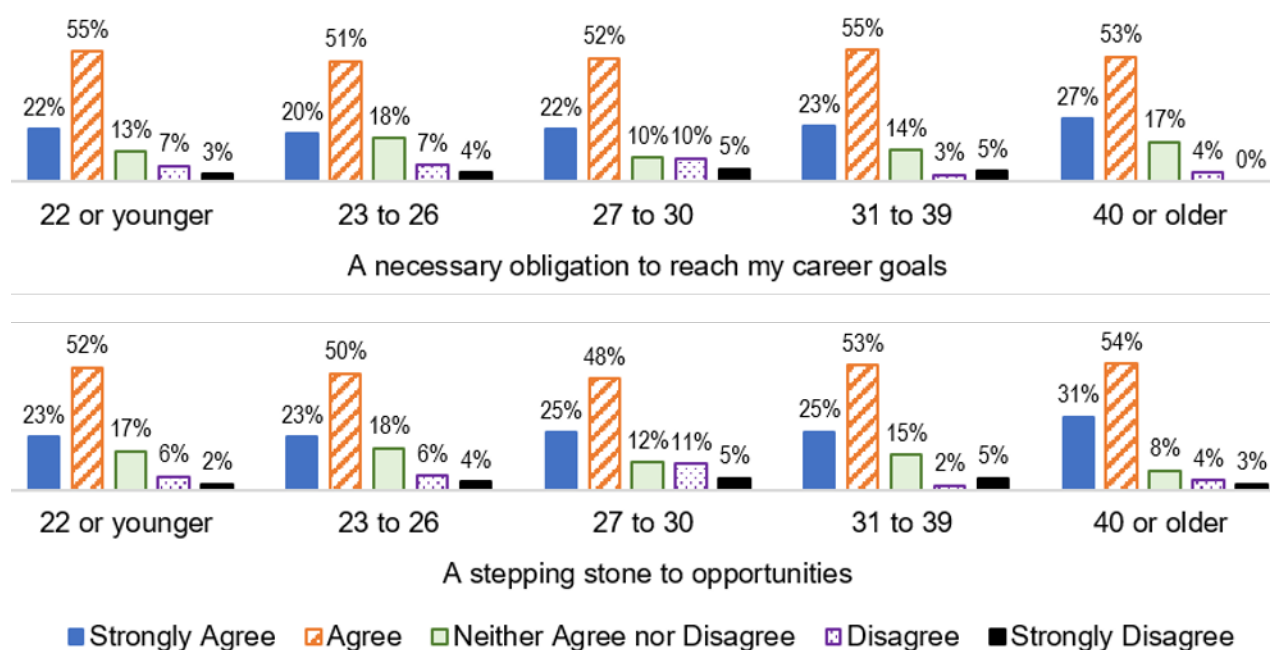
Source: 2025 LSAC Matriculant Survey.

Figure 49. Differences in 1L Views on Law School as Pathway to Goals by Race and Ethnicity



Source: 2025 LSAC Matriculant Survey.

Figure 50. Differences in 1L Views on Law School as Pathway to Goals by Age



Source: 2025 LSAC Matriculant Survey.

Concerns About the Cost of Law School

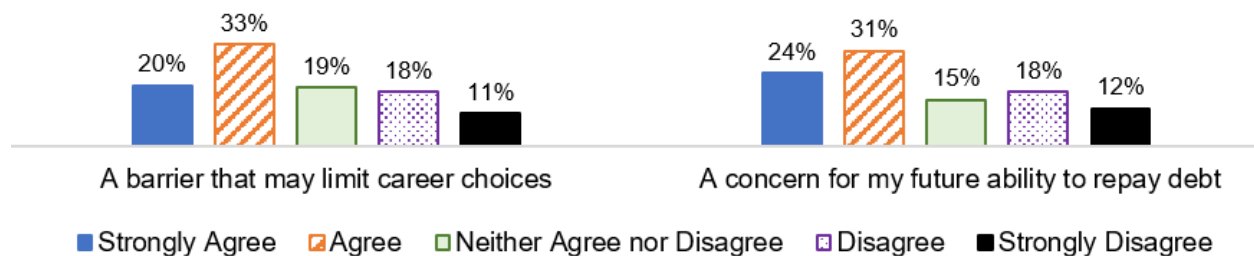
More than half of 1Ls agreed or strongly agreed that the cost of law school could limit their career choices (53%) or affect their future ability to repay debt (55%; Figure 51). However, concerns about the financial implications of law school varied across student groups and by law school selectivity:

- First-generation college graduates expressed greater concerns about the cost of law school than their continuing-generation peers. They were more likely to agree or strongly agree that cost could limit their career choices (62%, compared with 50%) or affect their future ability to repay debt (64%, compared with 52%; Figure 52).
- Pell Grant recipients, who qualify based on demonstrated financial need, also expressed greater concerns than non-recipients. They were more likely to agree or strongly agree that cost could limit their career choices (63%, compared with 49%) or affect their future ability to repay debt (65%, compared with 50%; Figure 53).
- First-generation law students expressed greater concerns about the cost of law school than their continuing-generation peers. They were significantly more likely to agree or strongly agree that cost could limit their career choices (55%, compared with 46%) or affect their future ability to repay debt (56%, compared with 50%; Figure 54).

- Concerns about the financial implications of law school varied by law school selectivity. Among 1Ls at law schools in the fourth selectivity quartile (Q4), 59% agreed or strongly agreed that cost could affect their future ability to repay debt, compared with 48% of 1Ls at law schools in the top 25%, highly selective law schools (Q1; Figure 55).

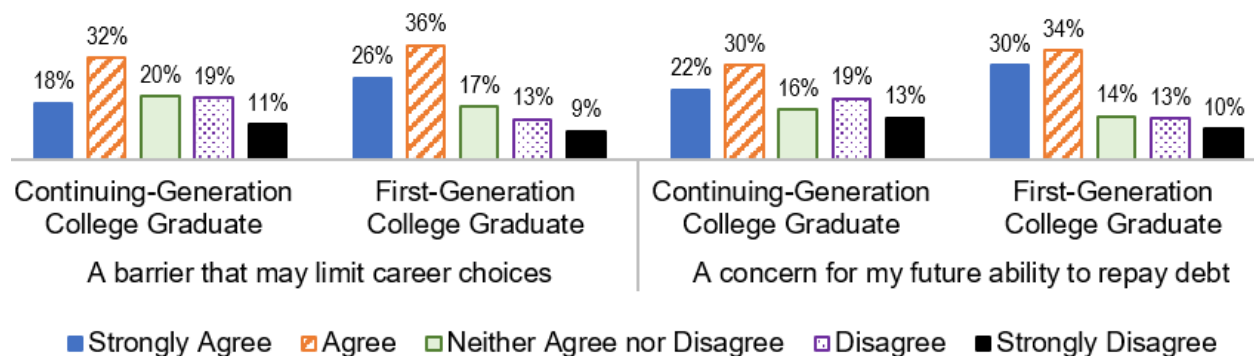
These findings suggest that 1Ls consider multiple and often overlapping dimensions of law school cost. While many expressed concerns about debt and its potential effects on career choices and future financial stability, most also viewed law school as an investment and an important step toward their longer-term career goals. These perspectives were not uniform, with concerns about cost varying across student groups and by law school selectivity. Even so, most 1Ls continued to view law school as purposeful and connected to future opportunities.

Figure 51. 1L Concerns About the Cost of Law School



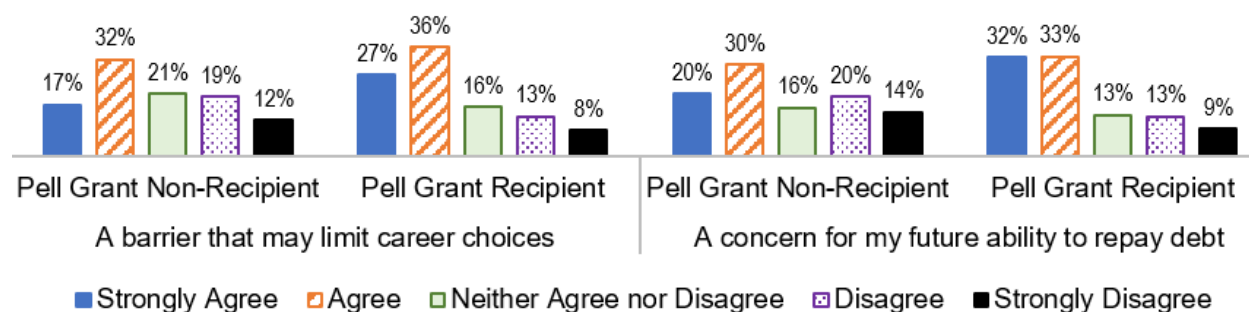
Source: 2025 LSAC Matriculant Survey.

Figure 52. 1L Concerns About the Cost of Law School by First-Generation College Graduate Status



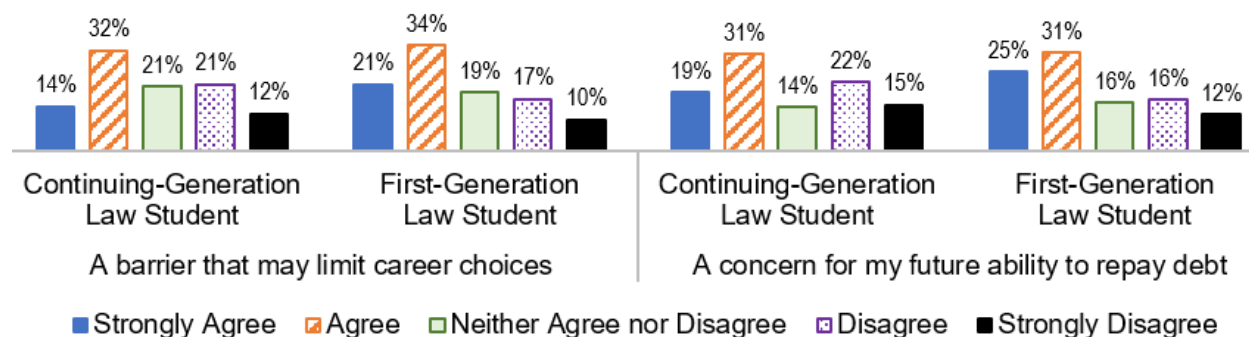
Source: 2025 LSAC Matriculant Survey.

Figure 53. 1L Concerns About the Cost of Law School by Pell Grant Recipient Status



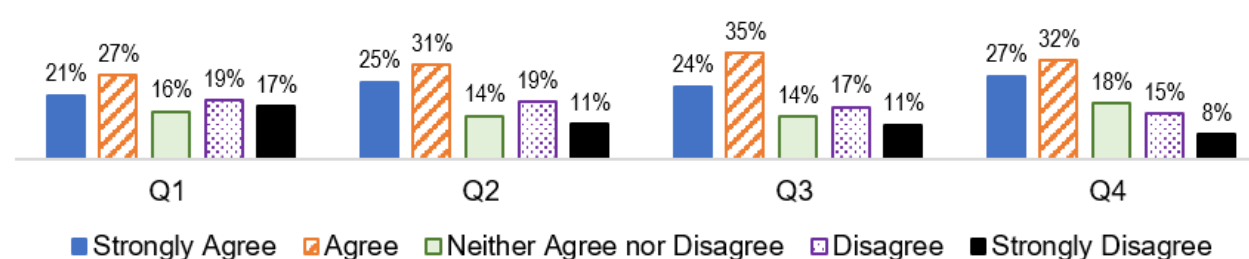
Source: 2025 LSAC Matriculant Survey.

Figure 54. 1L Concerns About the Cost of Law School by First-Generation Law Student Status



Source: 2025 LSAC Matriculant Survey.

Figure 55. 1L Concerns About How the Cost of Law School Could Affect Their Ability to Repay Debt by Law School Selectivity Quartile



Source: 2025 LSAC Matriculant Survey.

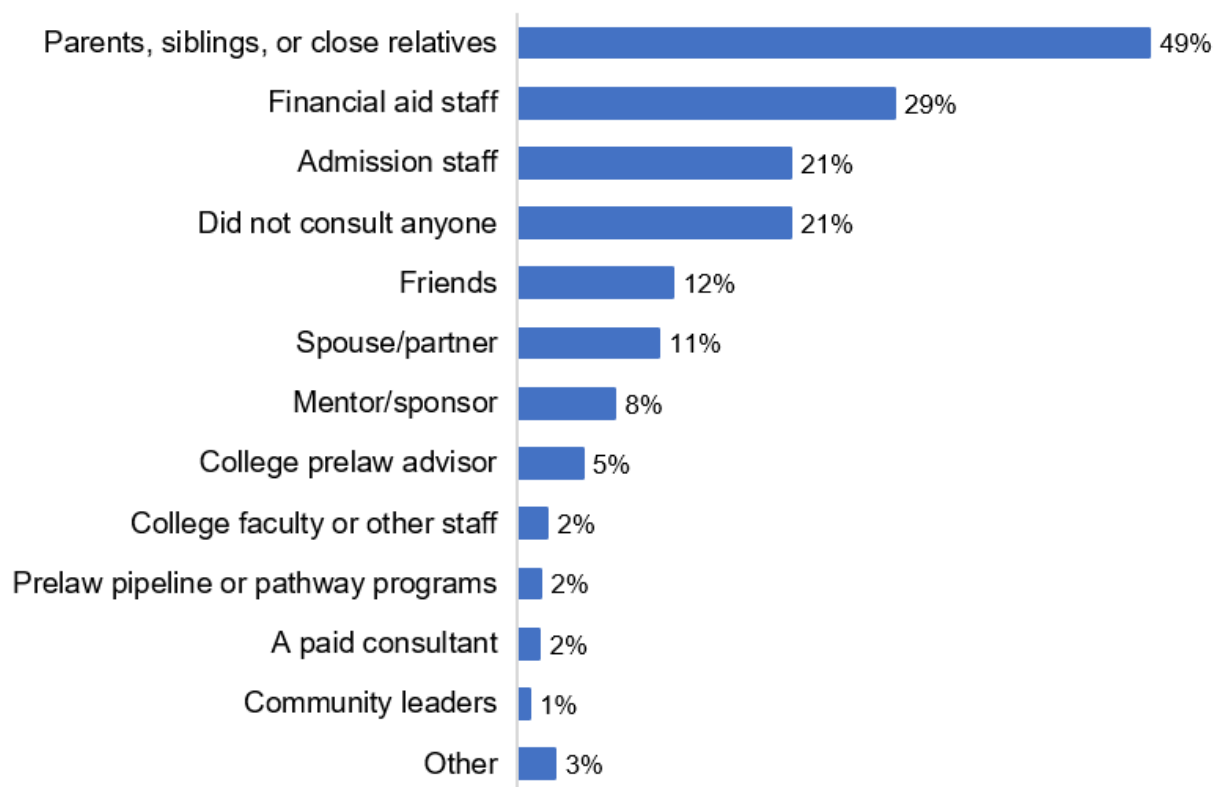
Note: First-year enrollments vary across schools, and one of many ways to examine this variation is by analyzing enrollment based on law school selectivity. Law schools are each assigned a selectivity index based on each school's 2024-25 admission rate, median LSAT of admitted students, and median UGPA of admitted students. The top 25% of schools by selectivity, or "highly selective" law schools, are in the first quartile (Q1) and are the 49 or 50 law schools with the highest index score.

People They Consulted for Financial Information

When deciding how to pay for law school, 1Ls sought advice from a range of sources. Nearly half (49%) consulted parents, siblings, or close relatives, while 29% consulted financial aid staff and 21% consulted admission staff. Another 21% did not consult anyone about financing law school (Figure 56).

Who 1Ls consulted about financing law school varied significantly by race and ethnicity (Figure 57). Racially and ethnically minoritized 1Ls were more likely than their white peers to seek advice from mentors or sponsors (9%, compared with 6%), prelaw pipeline or pathway programs (3%, compared with 1%), and paid consultants (3%, compared with 1%). In contrast, white 1Ls were more likely to turn to parents, siblings, or close relatives (55%, compared with 42%) or a spouse or partner (13%, compared with 9%). This highlights the importance of networks and who plays a critical role in providing guidance for aspiring law students.

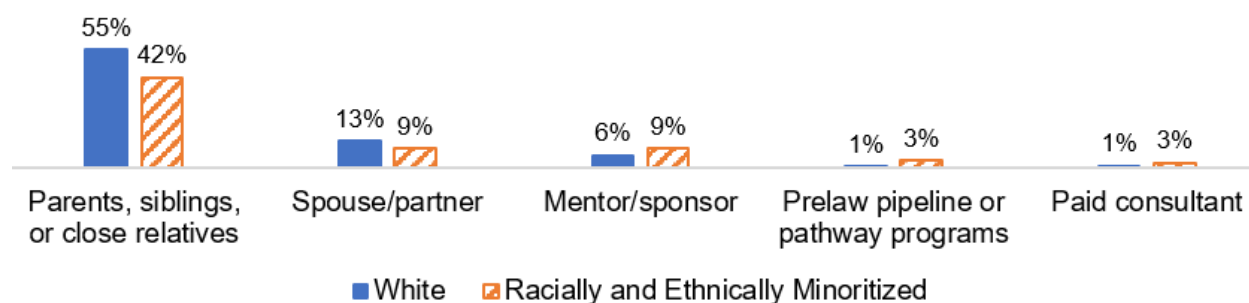
Figure 56. People Consulted for Advice on How to Pay for Law School



Source: 2025 LSAC Matriculant Survey.

Note: Respondents could select up to three people.

Figure 57. Differences in People Consulted for Advice on How to Pay for Law School by Race and Ethnicity



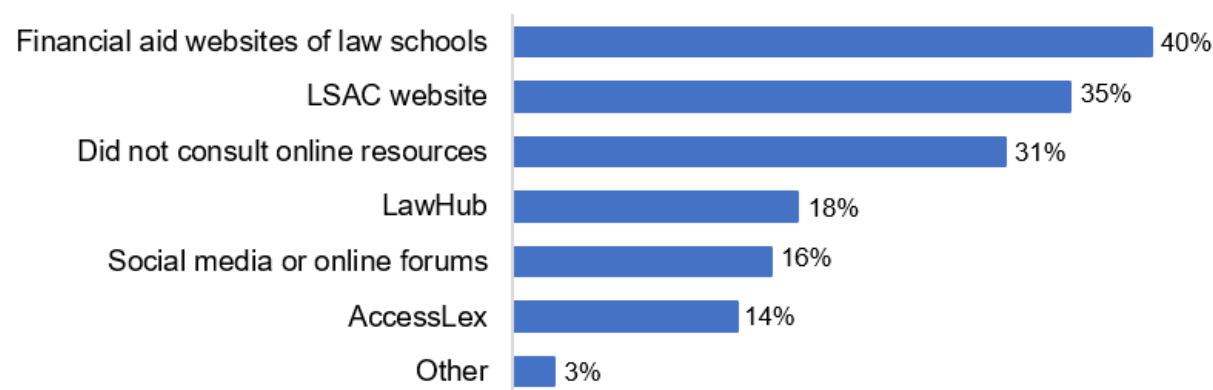
Source: 2025 LSAC Matriculant Survey.

Online Resources They Consulted for Financial Information

Two in five 1Ls (40%) consulted law schools' financial aid websites for guidance on paying for law school, while 35% used LSAC's website (Figure 58). Smaller shares turned to LawHub (18%), social media or online forums (16%), or AccessLex (14%). Nearly one-third (31%) did not consult any online resources.

Use of online resources varied significantly by Pell Grant status (Figure 59). Pell Grant recipients, who have demonstrated financial need, were more likely than non-recipients to use LSAC's website (39%, compared with 33%), LawHub (20%, compared with 17%), and AccessLex (16%, compared with 13%). In contrast, non-recipients were more likely to report not using any online resources (33%, compared with 27%). These insights are important for understanding how to ensure aspiring law students can access the information they need to make financial decisions.

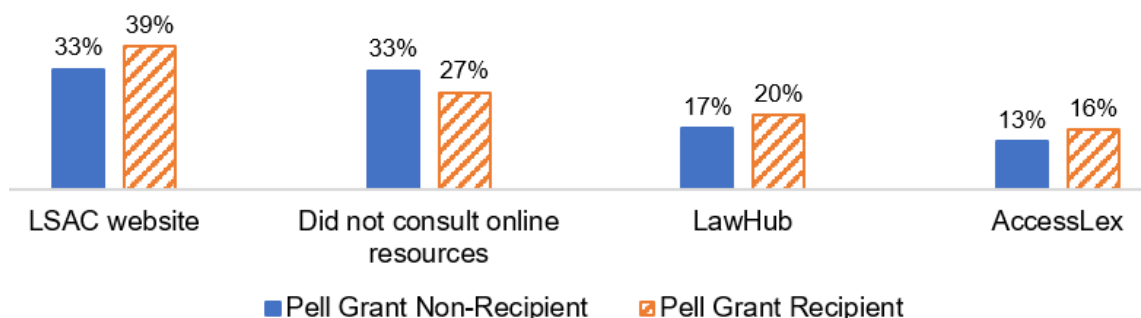
Figure 58. Online Resources Consulted for Advice on How to Pay for Law School



Source: 2025 LSAC Matriculant Survey.

Note: Respondents could select up to three resources.

Figure 59. Differences in Online Resources Consulted for Advice on How to Pay for Law School by Pell Grant Recipient Status



Source: 2025 LSAC Matriculant Survey.

Understanding the Financial Cost of Law School

Building on how students weigh the costs, value, and pathway of law school, and who and what they consulted to learn about financing their education, the following section examines how prepared students feel to manage those costs in practice. Specifically, it explores students' financial understanding of available financing options, their confidence in navigating available resources, and their preparedness to pay for law school from enrollment through graduation. It also considers students' longer-term financial outlook, including whether they have a general sense of how long it will take to repay their legal education. Together, these measures provide a more comprehensive picture of how well students feel equipped to plan for and manage the financial realities of law school, along with where additional guidance or support may be needed.⁵⁷

Self-Reported Understanding of Law School Financing

Most 2025 first-year law students (1Ls) reported a strong understanding of the funding options available to finance law school, including scholarships, grants, and loans. Four out of five indicated that they were familiar with the different financing options available to them. Roughly three out of four reported knowing how they would pay for law school, while 65% said they had a general understanding of how long it would take to repay the cost of their legal education (Figure 60).

However, respondents' understanding of financing law school varied across groups:

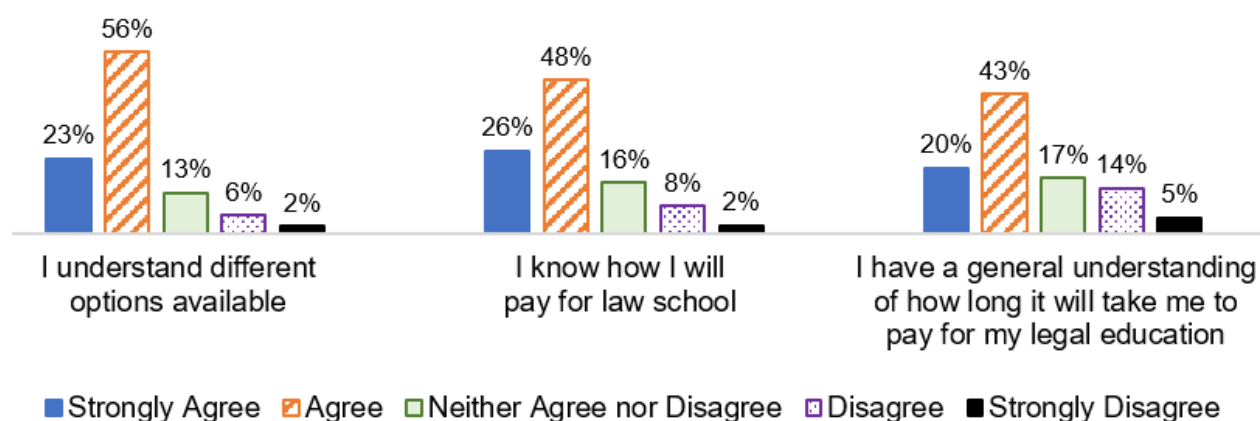
- White 1Ls were more likely than their racially and ethnically minoritized peers to agree they knew how they would pay for law school (77%, compared with 68%; Figure 61).

⁵⁷ Only statistically significant group-based differences are included. 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.

- Men were more likely than women and gender-diverse 1Ls to agree they knew how they would pay for law school (77%, compared with 72%) and that they had a general understanding of how long it would take (69%, compared with 61% of women and 59% of gender-diverse peers; Figure 62).
- Pell Grant recipients, students with demonstrated financial need, were more likely than non-recipients to agree they understood the different financing options (83%, compared with 79%). However, they were less likely to agree they knew how they would pay for law school (68%, compared with 77%) or had a general understanding of how long it would take (58%, compared with 67%; Figure 63).
- First-generation college graduates were less likely than their continuing-generation peers to agree they knew how they would pay for law school or had a general understanding of how long it would take (62%, compared with 69%; Figure 64).
- First-generation law students were less likely than continuing-generation law students to agree they knew how they would pay for law school (72%, compared with 77%) or had a general understanding of how long it would take (62%, compared with 69%; Figure 65).
- Older 1Ls were more likely than younger 1Ls to report a general understanding of how long it would take to pay. For example, 70% of 1Ls age 31 to 39 agreed, compared with 62% of 1Ls age 26 or younger (Figure 66).
- 1Ls at law schools at the top 25%, highly selective law schools (Q1) were more likely than respondents at other schools to agree they understood how long it would take to pay (69%, compared with 60% to 63% at other schools; Figure 67).

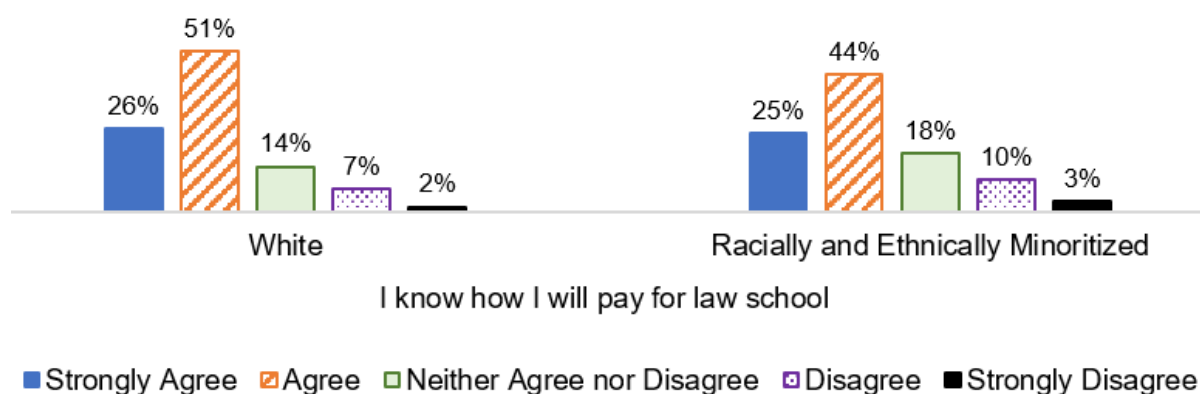
Overall, most 1Ls reported that they understood the financing options available to them. However, students' reported understanding varied when it came to knowing how they would pay for law school and how long it would take to pay for their legal education. These findings highlight where additional financial guidance and support may be needed as students plan for the financial realities of law school.

Figure 60. 1L Self-Reported Understanding of Law School Financing



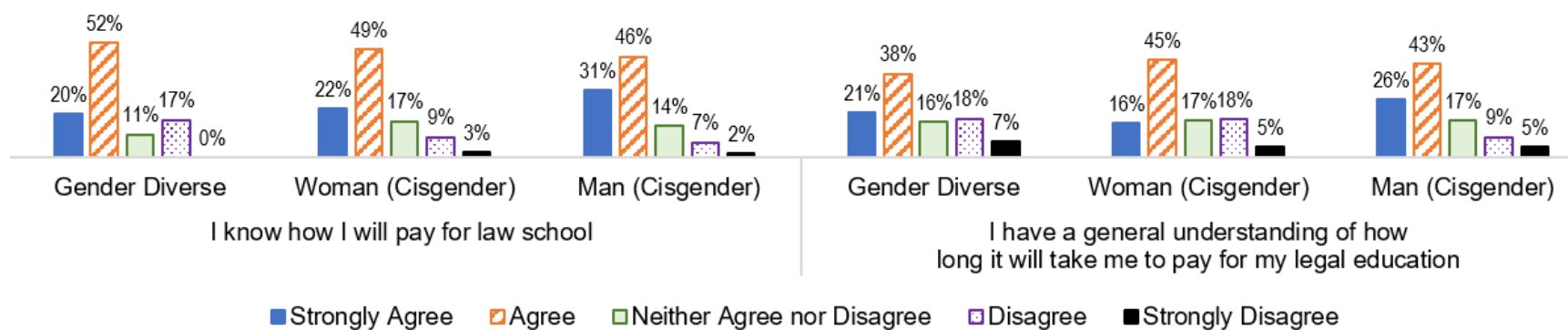
Source: 2025 LSAC Matriculant Survey.

Figure 61. Differences in 1L Self-Reported Understanding of Law School Financing by Race and Ethnicity



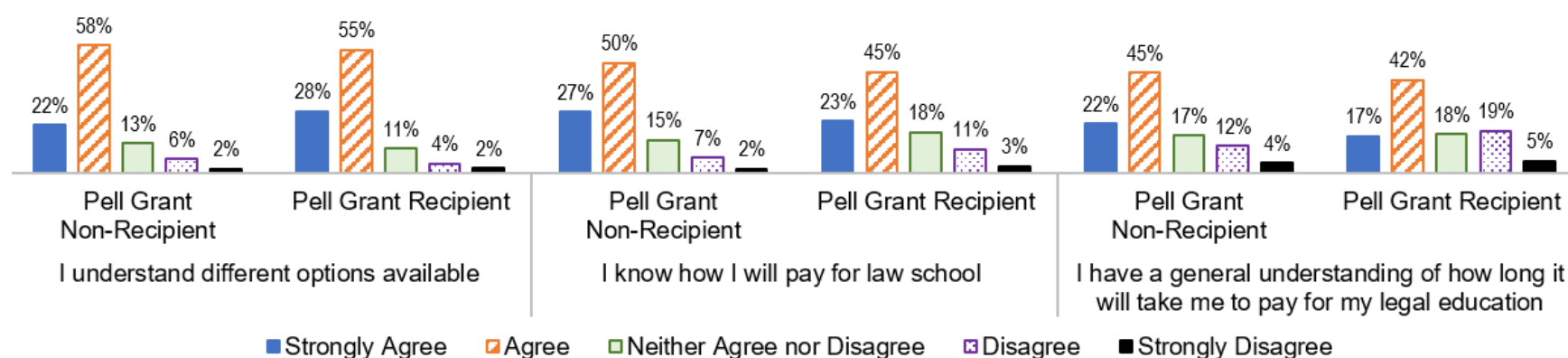
Source: 2025 LSAC Matriculant Survey.

Figure 62. Differences in 1L Self-Reported Understanding of Law School Financing by Gender Identity



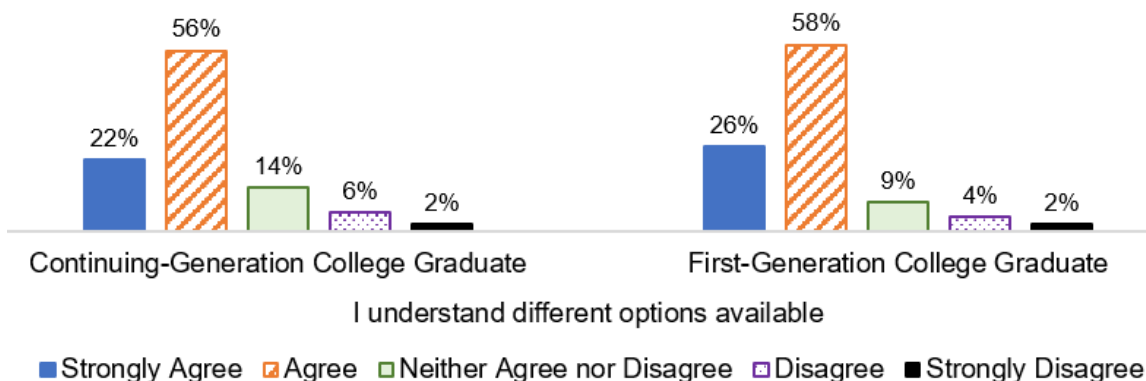
Source: 2025 LSAC Matriculant Survey.

Figure 63. Differences in 1L Self-Reported Understanding of Law School Financing by Pell Grant Recipient Status



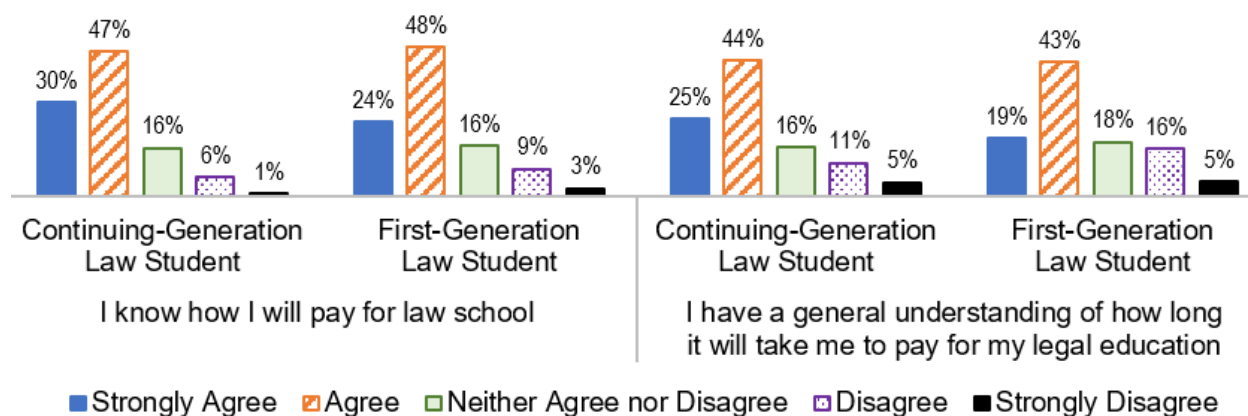
Source: 2025 LSAC Matriculant Survey.

Figure 64. Differences in 1L Self-Reported Understanding of Law School Financing by First-Generation College Graduate Status



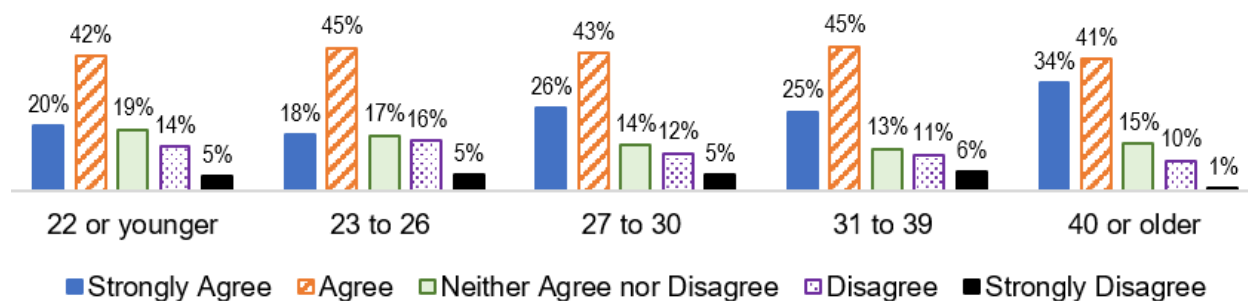
Source: 2025 LSAC Matriculant Survey.

Figure 65. Differences in 1L Self-Reported Understanding of Law School Financing by First-Generation Law Student Status



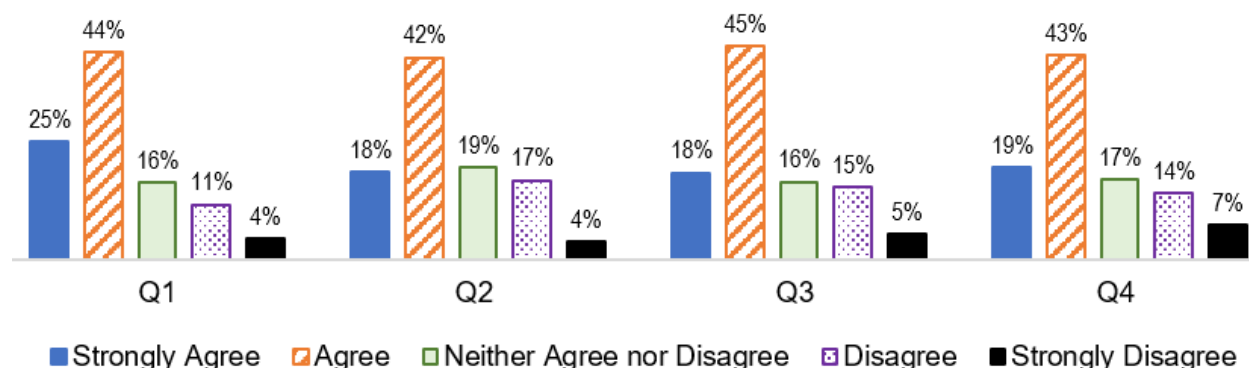
Source: 2025 LSAC Matriculant Survey.

Figure 66. Differences in 1L Self-Reported Understanding of How Long it Will Take to Pay for Legal Education by Age



Source: 2025 LSAC Matriculant Survey.

Figure 67. Differences in 1L Self-Reported Understanding of How Long it Will Take to Pay for Legal Education by Law School Selectivity Quartile



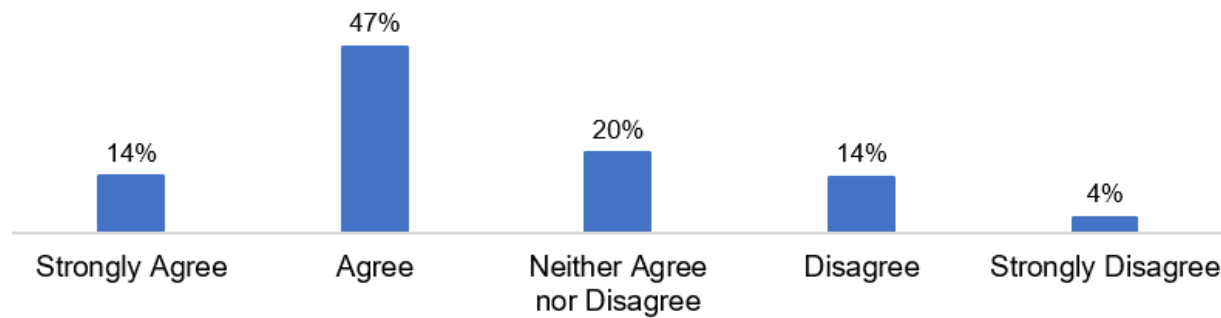
Source: 2025 LSAC Matriculant Survey.

Note: First-year enrollments vary across schools, and one of many ways to examine this variation is by analyzing enrollment based on law school selectivity. Law schools are each assigned a selectivity index based on each school's 2024-25 admission rate, median LSAT of admitted students, and median UGPA of admitted students. The top 25% of schools by selectivity, or "highly selective" law schools, are in the first quartile (Q1) and are the 49 or 50 law schools with the highest index score.

Self-Reported Awareness of Sources of Funding and Resources

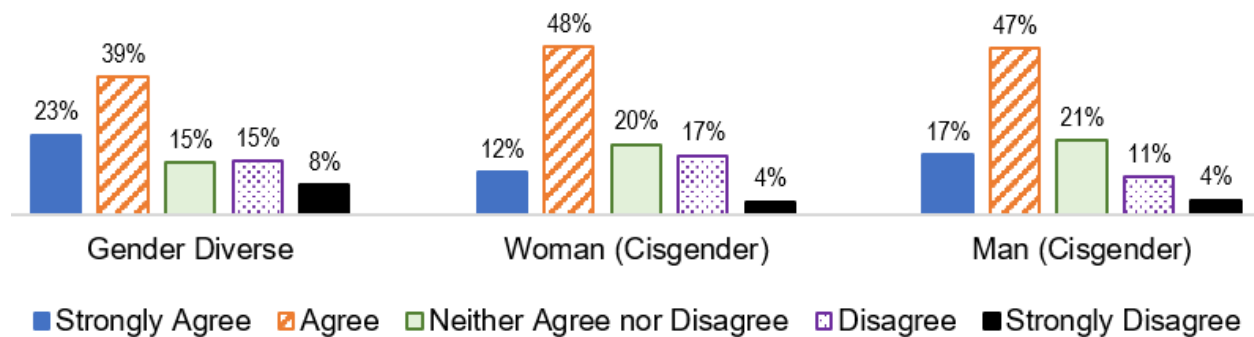
The majority of 1Ls reported knowing where to look for different sources of funding (61%; Figure 68). Awareness of available funding sources varied slightly across groups. For example, men were more likely than women and gender diverse 1Ls to report knowing where to look for funding (64%, compared with 60% and 62%; Figure 69). And Pell Grant recipients, who qualify based on demonstrated financial need, reported similar levels of awareness as non-recipients (60%, compared with 63%; Figure 70). Even with the majority reporting a general awareness of funding sources, this rate is surprisingly low, given that financing law school is a top concern expressed by aspiring law students as they attend LSAC events and turn to various resources for information. These insights underscore an opportunity to build access to resources and interventions that can help aspiring law students understand how they will finance law school.

Figure 68. 1L Funding Source Awareness



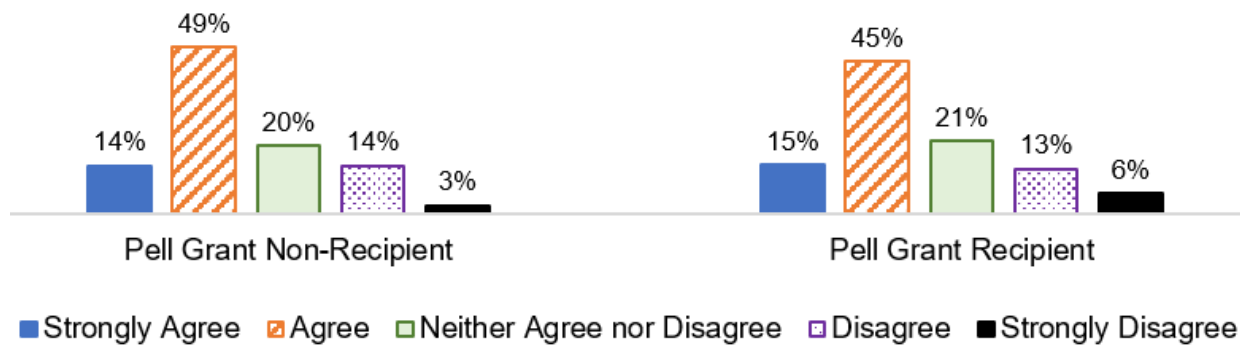
Source: 2025 LSAC Matriculant Survey.

Figure 69. 1L Funding Source Awareness by Gender Identity



Source: 2025 LSAC Matriculant Survey.

Figure 70. 1L Funding Source Awareness by Pell Grant Recipient Status



Source: 2025 LSAC Matriculant Survey.

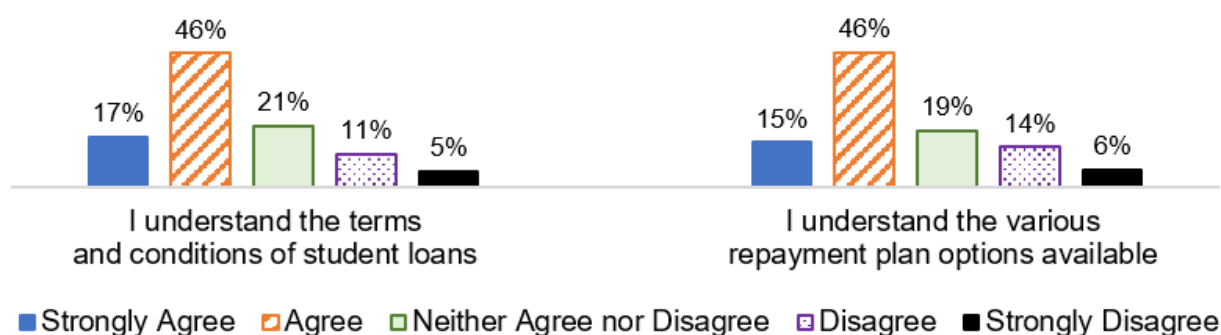
Self-Reported Understanding of Financial Planning and Preparedness

The majority of 1L respondents said they understand the terms and conditions of student loans (63%) and the repayment plan options available to them (61%; Figure 71). Understanding of these aspects of financial planning varied by gender, Pell Grant status, age, and law school selectivity:

- Women reported understanding the terms and conditions of student loans (61%) and available repayment plan options (59%) at lower rates than men (66% and 65%, respectively) and gender-diverse 1Ls (76% and 74%, respectively; Figure 72).
- Pell Grant recipients, who qualify based on demonstrated financial need, reported understanding the terms and conditions of student loans at a higher rate than non-recipients (67%, compared with 61%; Figure 73).
- Knowledge of student loan terms and repayment options increased with age. For example, 80% of 1Ls age 40 or older reported understanding the terms and conditions of student loans, compared with 62% of 1Ls age 27 to 30 (Figure 74).
- 1Ls at law schools in the fourth selectivity quartile (Q4) reported the highest rates of understanding of student loan terms and repayment options. Specifically, 71% reported understanding the terms and conditions of student loans, while 68% reported understanding the repayment options available. Across the other selectivity quartiles, these rates ranged from 57% to 63% (Figure 75).

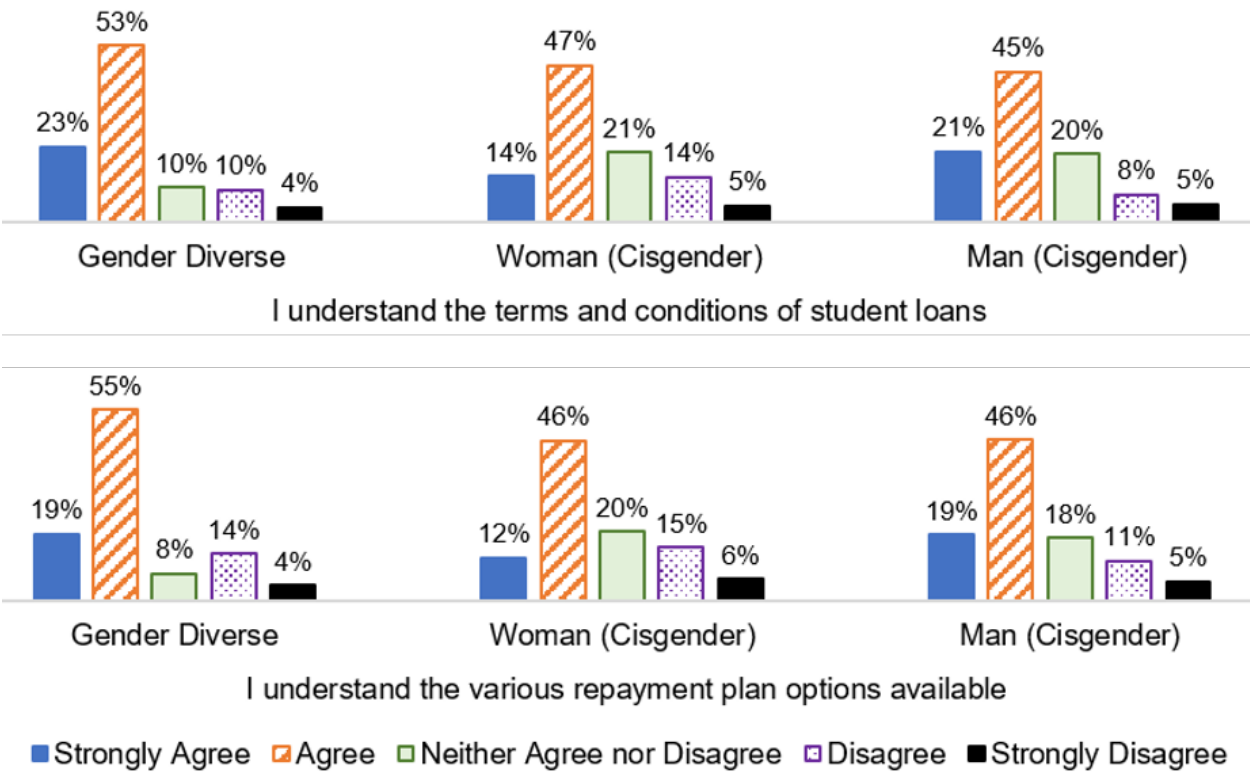
First-year respondents generally reported understanding student loan terms and repayment options, though levels of understanding varied by student background and law school selectivity. Pell Grant recipients, older students, and 1Ls at law schools in the fourth selectivity quartile (Q4) reported some of the highest levels of understanding and were also among those more likely to rely on borrowing. These patterns provide important context for how 1Ls planned to pay for law school, a topic examined in the next section.

Figure 71. 1L Understanding of Financial Planning and Awareness



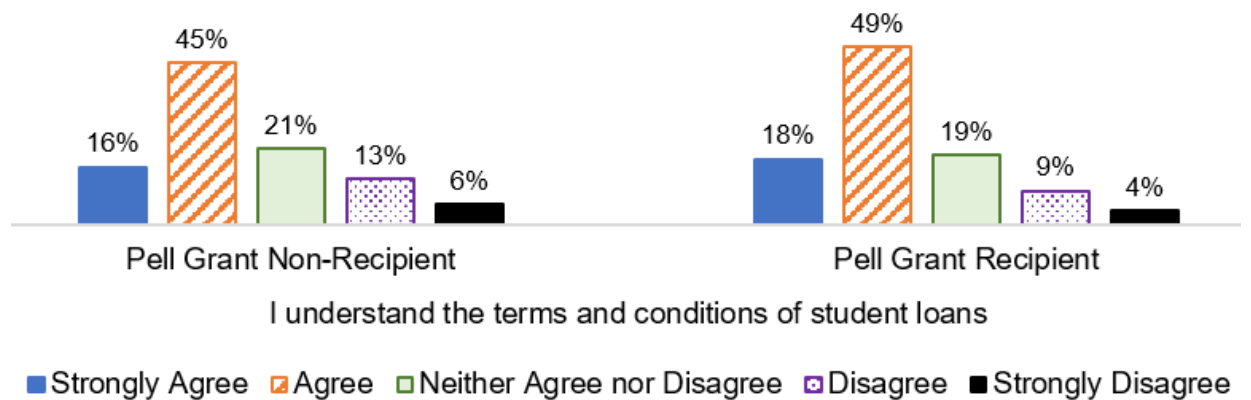
Source: 2025 LSAC Matriculant Survey.

Figure 72. Differences in 1L Understanding of Financial Planning and Awareness by Gender Identity



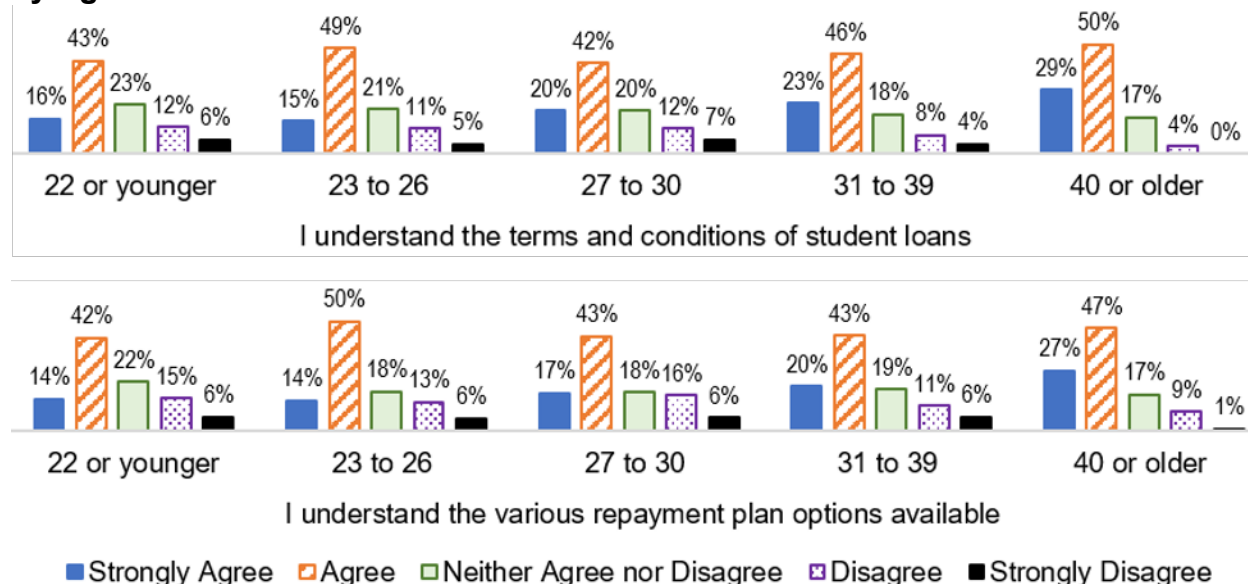
Source: 2025 LSAC Matriculant Survey.

Figure 73. Differences in 1L Understanding of Financial Planning and Awareness by Pell Grant Recipient Status



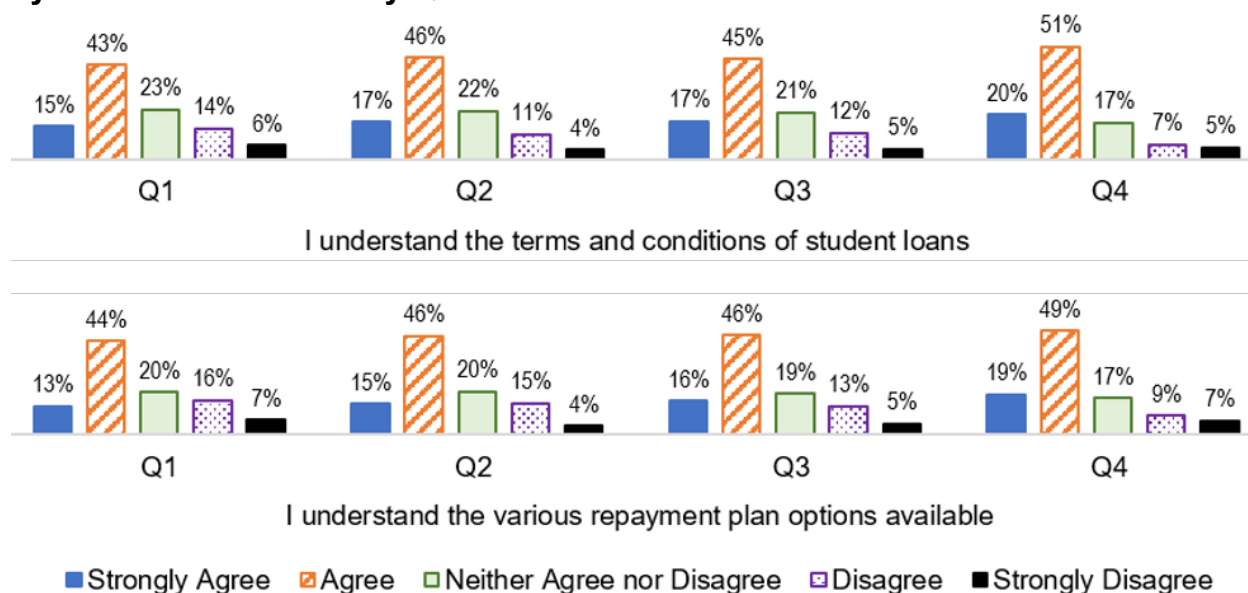
Source: 2025 LSAC Matriculant Survey

Figure 74. Differences in 1L Understanding of Financial Planning and Awareness by Age



Source: 2025 LSAC Matriculant Survey.

Figure 75. Differences in 1L Understanding of Financial Planning and Awareness by Law School Selectivity Quartile



Source: 2025 LSAC Matriculant Survey.

Note: First-year enrollments vary across schools, and one of many ways to examine this variation is by analyzing enrollment based on law school selectivity. Law schools are each assigned a selectivity index based on each school's 2024-25 admission rate, median LSAT of admitted students, and median UGPA of admitted students. The top 25% of schools by selectivity, or "highly selective" law schools, are in the first quartile (Q1) and are the 49 or 50 law schools with the highest index score.

Overall, most students feel confident in their understanding of law school finances and believe they can act on that knowledge. However, these are self-reported perceptions, and confidence does not always reflect actual financial knowledge or preparedness. Differences across groups may reflect varying levels of prior experience, access to information, and comfort with financial decision-making. Some students, such as Pell Grant recipients, may be more practiced in navigating financial aid systems. Others may feel more confident or less confident discussing or managing finances, or they may have social networks that can provide the mentorship necessary to aid in financial planning. Next, we examine their plans for borrowing and reported borrowing.

Paying for Law School

As reported earlier, 1L respondents generally recognize that law school represents a long-term investment of time, money, and personal resources. The costs associated with legal education are widely understood to be necessary steps toward achieving the broader goal of a legal career. In practice, many 1Ls borrow to finance their education. This section focuses specifically on educational debt by examining:

- When 1Ls anticipate incurring debt to support their studies
- Debt accumulated prior to entering law school
- Total debt 1L respondents foresee when they graduate from law school

At this stage, patterns related to law school borrowing and anticipated debt reflect only the experiences of survey respondents.⁵⁸ Although the National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS) currently provides law school borrowing data only through 2020, the results from this survey offer an important pulse check on the financial perceptions and self-reported realities shaping today's law student experience.⁵⁹ A more complete picture of current borrowing patterns will emerge in the coming years as updated data become available from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES).

Anticipated Borrowing During Law School

Who Anticipates Borrowing During Law School

Borrowing to pay for law school was common among 2025 1L respondents. About three in five 1Ls (57%) took out one or more loans for their 1L academic year, while two-thirds (66%) anticipated borrowing in the future (Figure 76). Only 6% said they did not intend to borrow, and about one in five (21%) were unsure. Borrowing patterns varied by first-generation college graduate status, Pell Grant status, age, and law school selectivity. Some of these differences include:

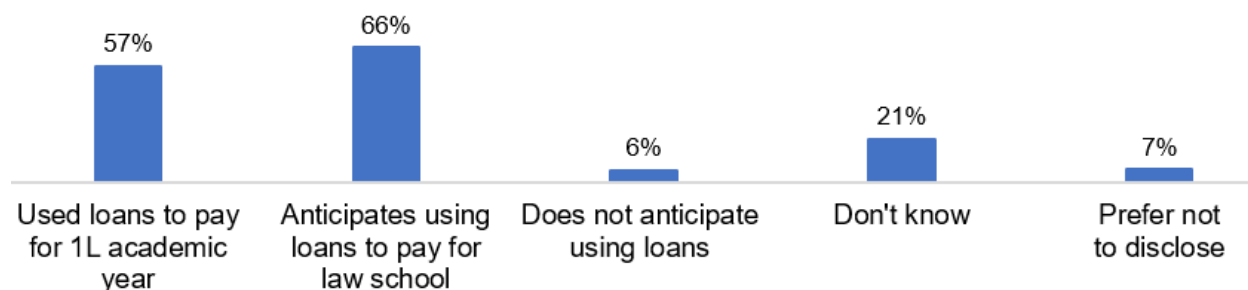
⁵⁸ Only statistically significant group-based differences are included. An F-test p-value of 0.05 indicates strong evidence that group differences exist, with less than a 5% probability that the observed differences occurred by chance.

⁵⁹ Learn more about the [National Postsecondary Student Aid Study](#) through the National Center for Education Statistics.

- First-generation college graduates reported borrowing at higher rates than their continuing-generation peers. Among this group, 69% used loans to pay for their 1L year, compared with 53% of continuing-generation college graduates (Figure 77). They also anticipated future borrowing at a higher rate: 73%, compared with 64% (Figure 78). At the same time, fewer first-generation college graduates were unsure about future borrowing: 17% compared with 23% of their continuing-generation peers (Figure 80).
- Pell Grant recipients, who qualify based on demonstrated financial need, also reported borrowing at higher rates than non-recipients. Among Pell Grant recipients, 71% used loans to pay for their 1L year, compared with 49% of non-recipients (Figure 77), and 76% anticipated future borrowing, compared with 60% of non-recipients (Figure 78). Fewer Pell Grant recipients were unsure about future borrowing: 15%, compared with 25% of non-recipients (Figure 80).
- More respondents age 40 or older said they did not intend to take out loans than their younger peers. Among 1Ls age 40 or older, 17% did not anticipate borrowing, compared with 4% to 12% of younger 1Ls (Figure 79).
- Borrowing also varies by law school selectivity. Among 1Ls at law schools in the fourth selectivity quartile (Q4), 69% used loans for their 1L year, compared with 51% to 57% of 1L respondents at other law schools (Figure 77). Similarly, 72% anticipated future borrowing, compared with 61% of 1Ls at law schools in the second selectivity quartile (Q2; Figure 78). Fewer 1Ls at law schools in the fourth selectivity quartile (Q4) were unsure about future borrowing: 17%, compared with 21% to 25% of 1Ls at law schools in the other selectivity quartiles (Figure 80).

Taken together, these patterns show that first-generation college graduates, Pell Grant recipients, and 1Ls at law schools in the fourth selectivity quartile (Q4) were more likely to rely on borrowing and less likely to report uncertainty about future borrowing. Building on these patterns, the next section examines when 1Ls expect to take out loans in the future.

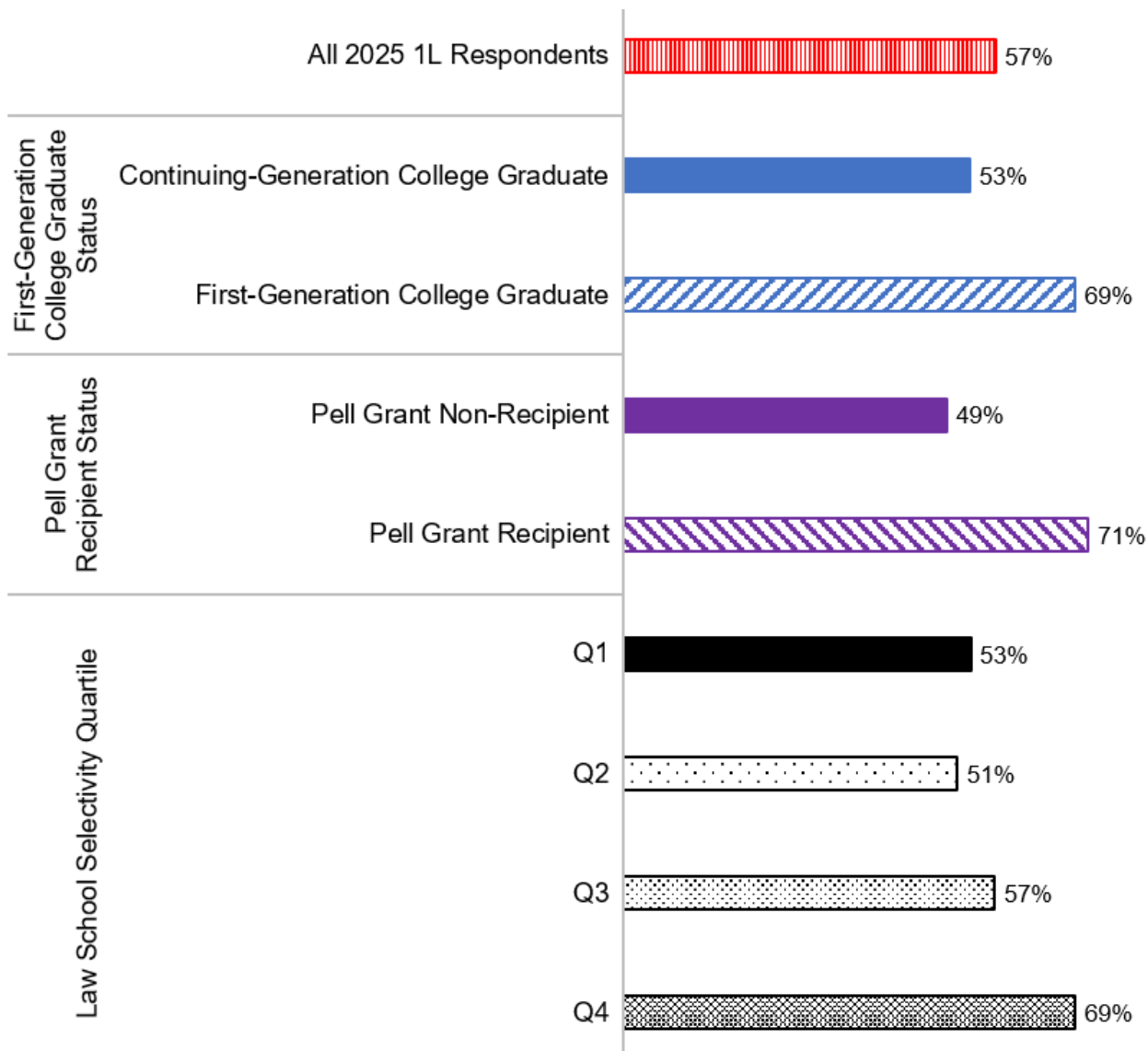
Figure 76. Use and Anticipated Use of Loans



Source: 2025 LSAC Matriculant Survey.

Figure 77. Percent of 1Ls Who Used Loans to Pay for 1L Academic Year

Related references: Figure 77 (1st mention, pg. 87) | Figure 77 (2nd mention, pg. 87) | Figure 77 (3rd mention, pg. 87)

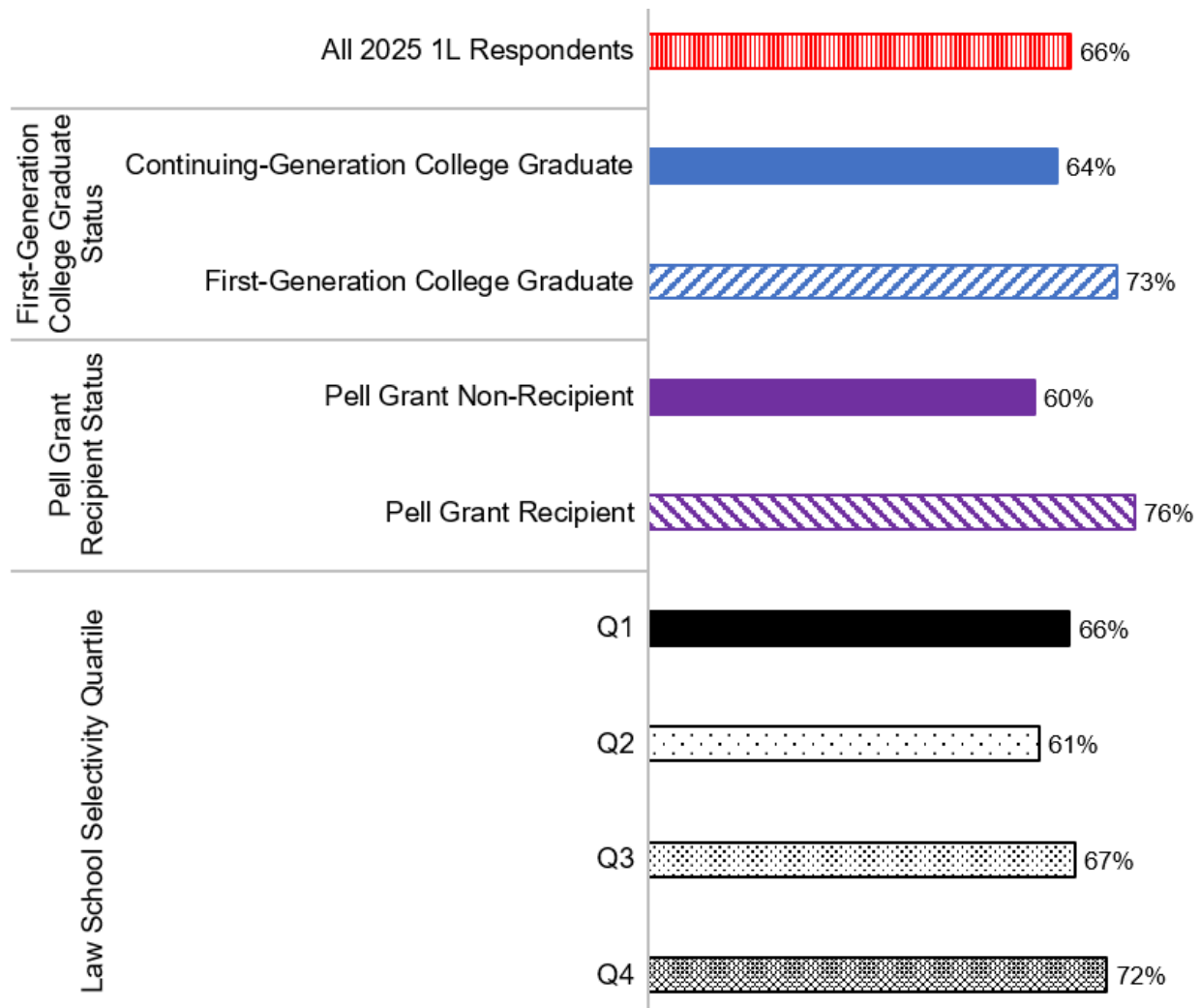


Source: 2025 LSAC Matriculant Survey.

Note: First-year enrollments vary across schools, and one of many ways to examine this variation is by analyzing enrollment based on law school selectivity. Law schools are each assigned a selectivity index based on each school's 2024-25 admission rate, median LSAT of admitted students, and median UGPA of admitted students. The top 25% of schools by selectivity, or "highly selective" law schools, are in the first quartile (Q1) and are the 49 or 50 law schools with the highest index score.

Figure 78. Percent of 1Ls Who Anticipate Taking Out Loans to Pay for Law School

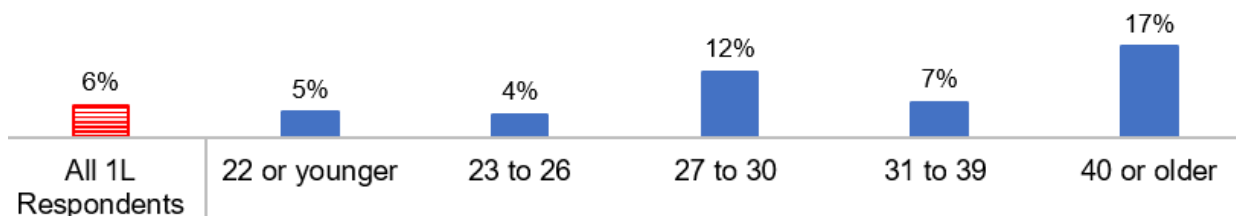
Related references: Figure 78 (1st mention, pg. 87) | Figure 78 (2nd mention, pg. 87) |
Figure 78 (3rd mention, pg. 87)



Source: 2025 LSAC Matriculant Survey.

Note: First-year enrollments vary across schools, and one of many ways to examine this variation is by analyzing enrollment based on law school selectivity. Law schools are each assigned a selectivity index based on each school's 2024-25 admission rate, median LSAT of admitted students, and median UGPA of admitted students. The top 25% of schools by selectivity, or "highly selective" law schools, are in the first quartile (Q1) and are the 49 or 50 law schools with the highest index score.

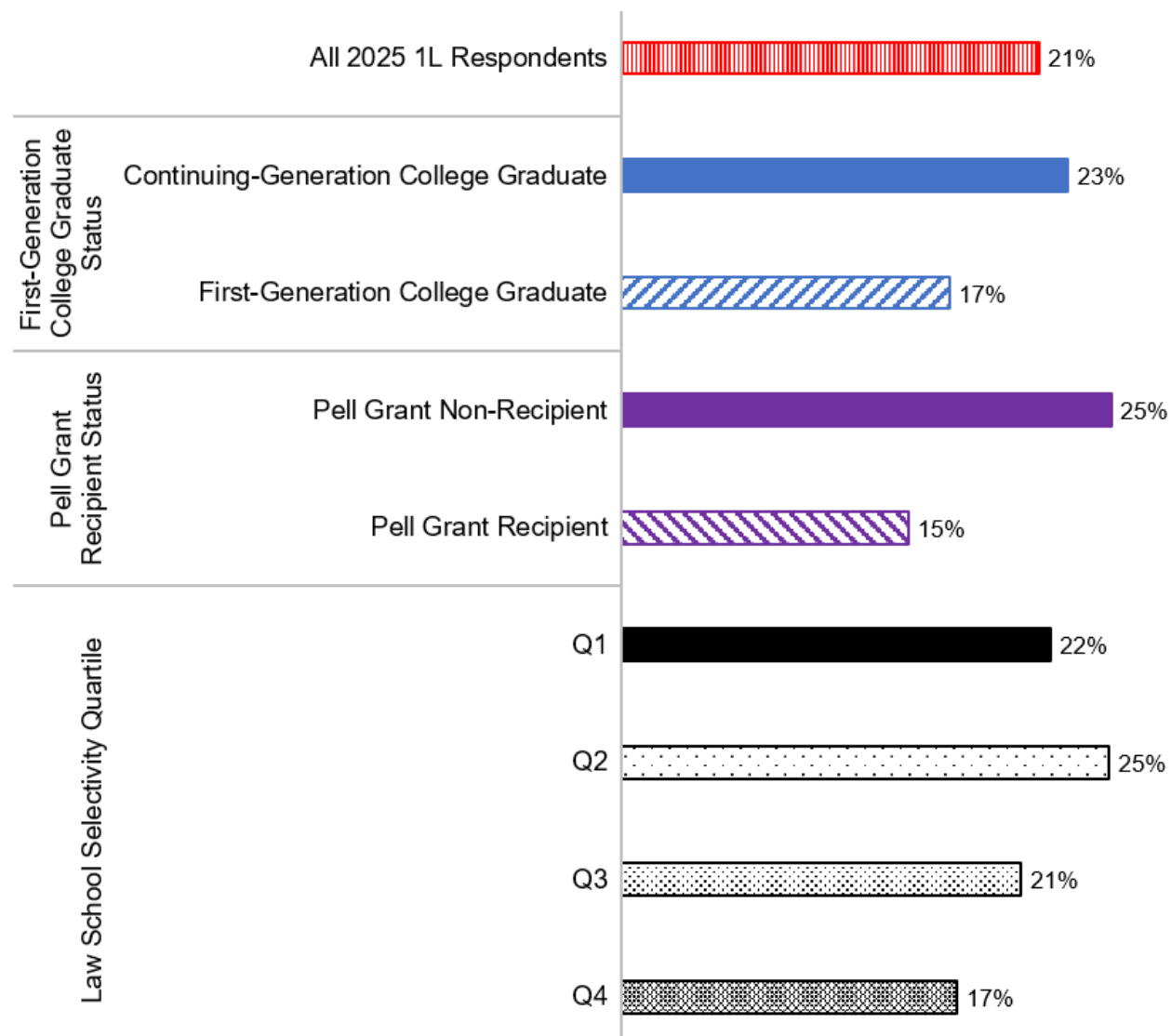
Figure 79. Percent of 1Ls Who Do Not Anticipate Taking Out Loans to Pay for Law School by Age



Source: 2025 LSAC Matriculant Survey.

Figure 80. Percent of 1Ls Who Don't Know If They Will Take Out Loans for Law School in the Future

Related references: Figure 80 (1st mention, pg. 87) | Figure 80 (2nd mention, pg. 87) | Figure 80 (3rd mention, pg. 87)



Source: 2025 LSAC Matriculant Survey.

Note: First-year enrollments vary across schools, and one of many ways to examine this variation is by analyzing enrollment based on law school selectivity. Law schools are each assigned a selectivity index based on each school's 2024-25 admission rate, median LSAT of admitted students, and median UGPA of admitted students. The top 25% of schools by selectivity, or "highly selective" law schools, are in the first quartile (Q1) and are the 49 or 50 law schools with the highest index score.

Anticipated Borrowing Timeline

Most 1L respondents anticipated taking out loans to pay for their 2L (58%) and 3L (57%) academic years. Roughly one in five expected to take out loans for their 1L summer (22%), 2L summer (18%), and bar prep (21%), while 12% intended to finance their 3L+ summer with loans and 7% intended to use loans for their 4L+ academic year, which is often for part-time students (Figure 81).

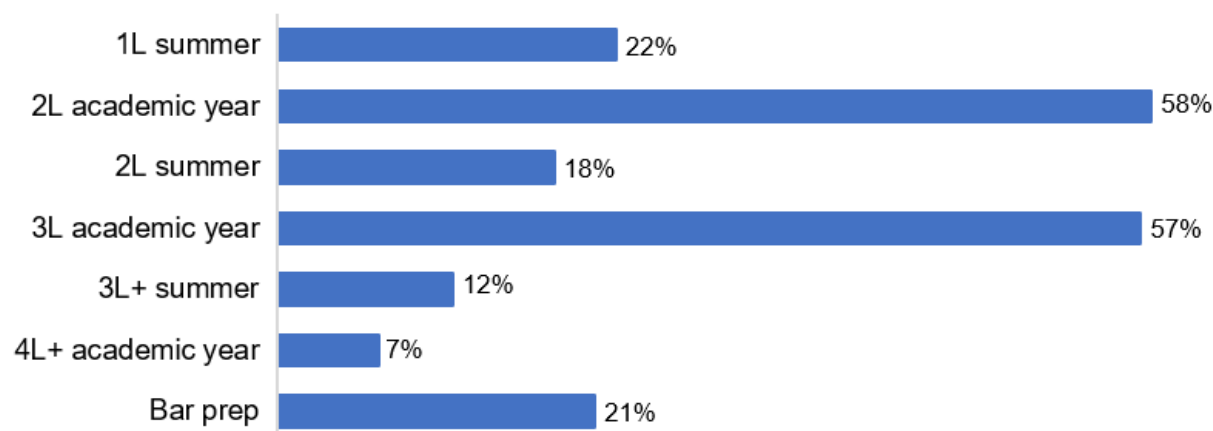
Borrowing patterns varied by first-generation college graduate status, Pell Grant status, age, and law school selectivity. Some of these differences include:

- First-generation college graduates were more likely than their continuing-generation peers to anticipate taking out loans to pay for law school, at a rate 14% higher (73%, compared with 64%; Figure 82).
- Pell Grant recipients were more likely than non-recipients to anticipate taking out loans to pay for law school, at a rate 27% higher (76%, compared with 60%; Figure 83).
- Older 1Ls were more likely than younger 1Ls to anticipate borrowing for summer expenses. For example, just under a quarter of 1Ls older than 30 said they would take out loans for their 3L+ summer, compared with 7% to 16% of 1Ls age 30 or younger (Figure 84).
- Similarly, anticipated borrowing for summer expenses varied by law school selectivity. Among 1Ls at law schools in the fourth selectivity quartile (Q4), 26% intended to use loans for their 2L summer, compared with 12% to 19% of 1Ls at other law schools (Figure 85).

These anticipated borrowing patterns should be understood in the context of where students enroll. For example, fewer first-generation college graduates are enrolled in top 25%, highly selective law schools (Q1).⁶⁰ As a result, law school financing is likely to vary not only among individual students, but also across institutions. Given the new federal loan changes, these differences could have important implications for enrollment trends among the 2026 entering class and future cohorts.

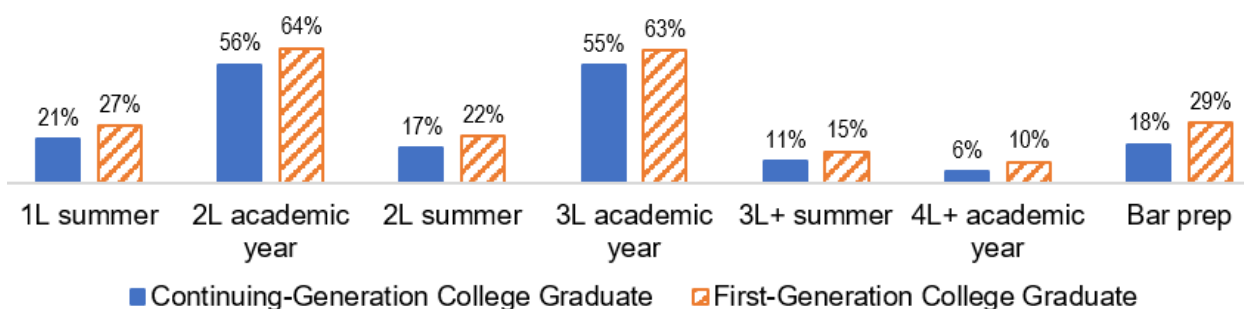
⁶⁰ Learn more about enrollment trends by referring to [LSAC's Knowledge Report: The Composition of the First-Year Law School Class and Enrollment 2021-2025 Trends](#).

Figure 81. 1L Anticipated Loan Borrowing Timeline



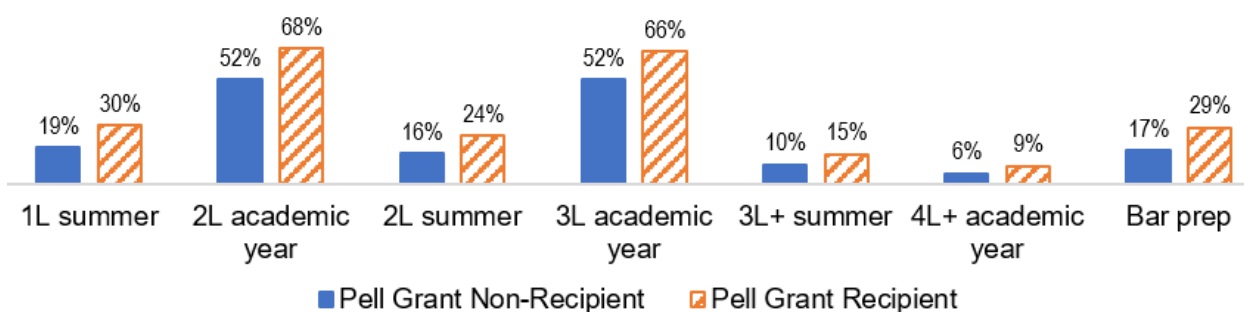
Source: 2025 LSAC Matriculant Survey.

Figure 82. Anticipated Loan Borrowing Timeline by First-Generation College Graduate Status



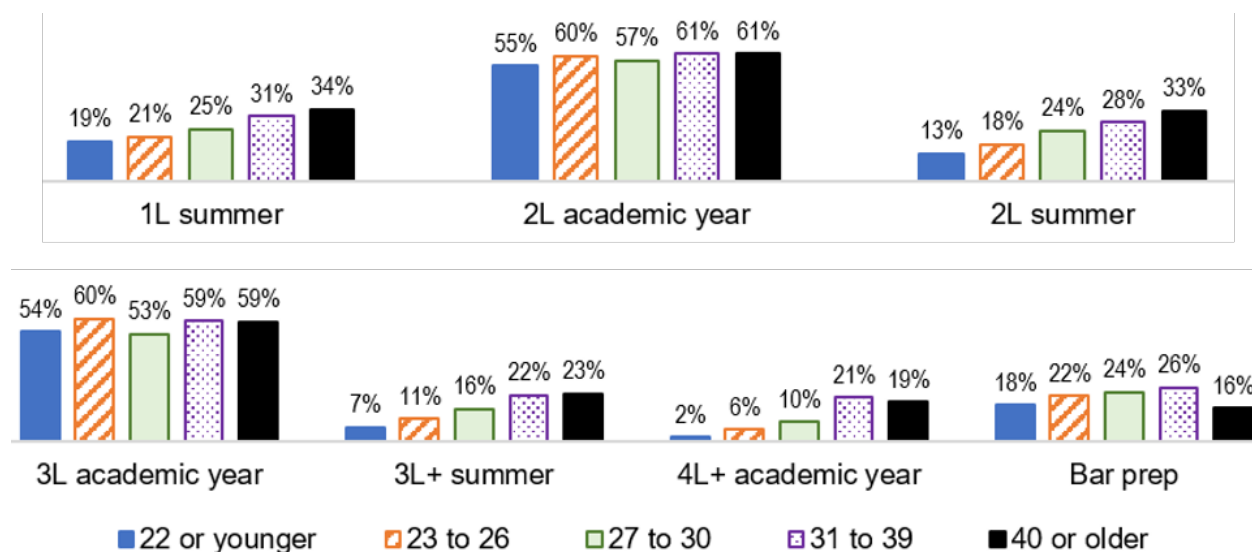
Source: 2025 LSAC Matriculant Survey.

Figure 83. Anticipated Loan Borrowing Timeline by Pell Grant Recipient Status



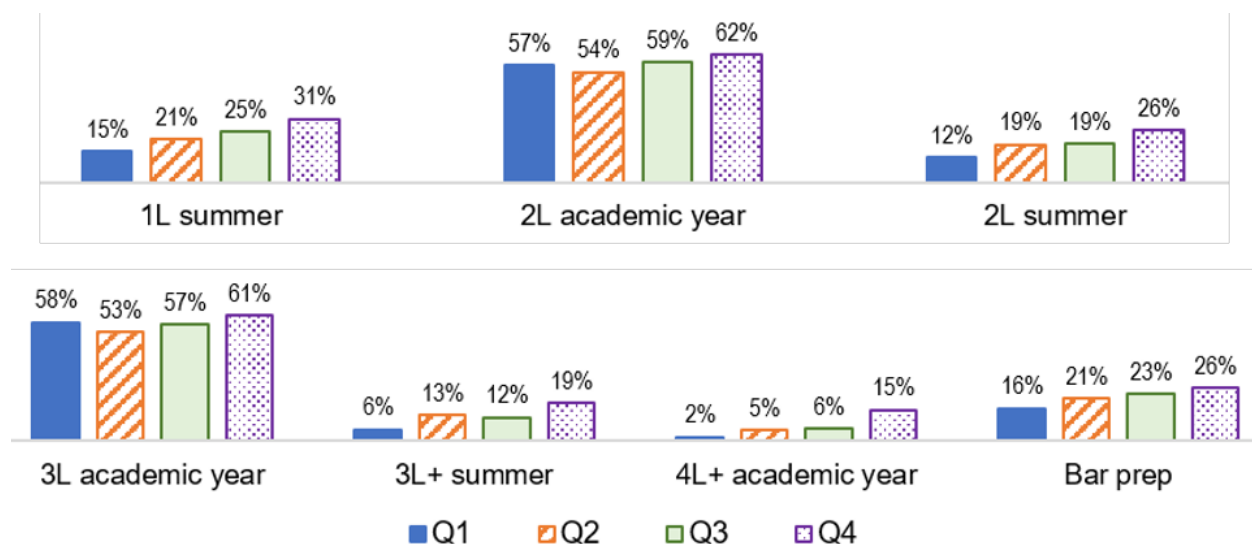
Source: 2025 LSAC Matriculant Survey.

Figure 84. Anticipated Loan Borrowing Timeline by Age



Source: 2025 LSAC Matriculant Survey.

Figure 85. Anticipated Loan Borrowing Timeline by Law School Selectivity Quartile



Source: 2025 LSAC Matriculant Survey.

Note: First-year enrollments vary across schools, and one of many ways to examine this variation is by analyzing enrollment based on law school selectivity. Law schools are each assigned a selectivity index based on each school's 2024-25 admission rate, median LSAT of admitted students, and median UGPA of admitted students. The top 25% of schools by selectivity, or "highly selective" law schools, are in the first quartile (Q1) and are the 49 or 50 law schools with the highest index score.

Education Debt

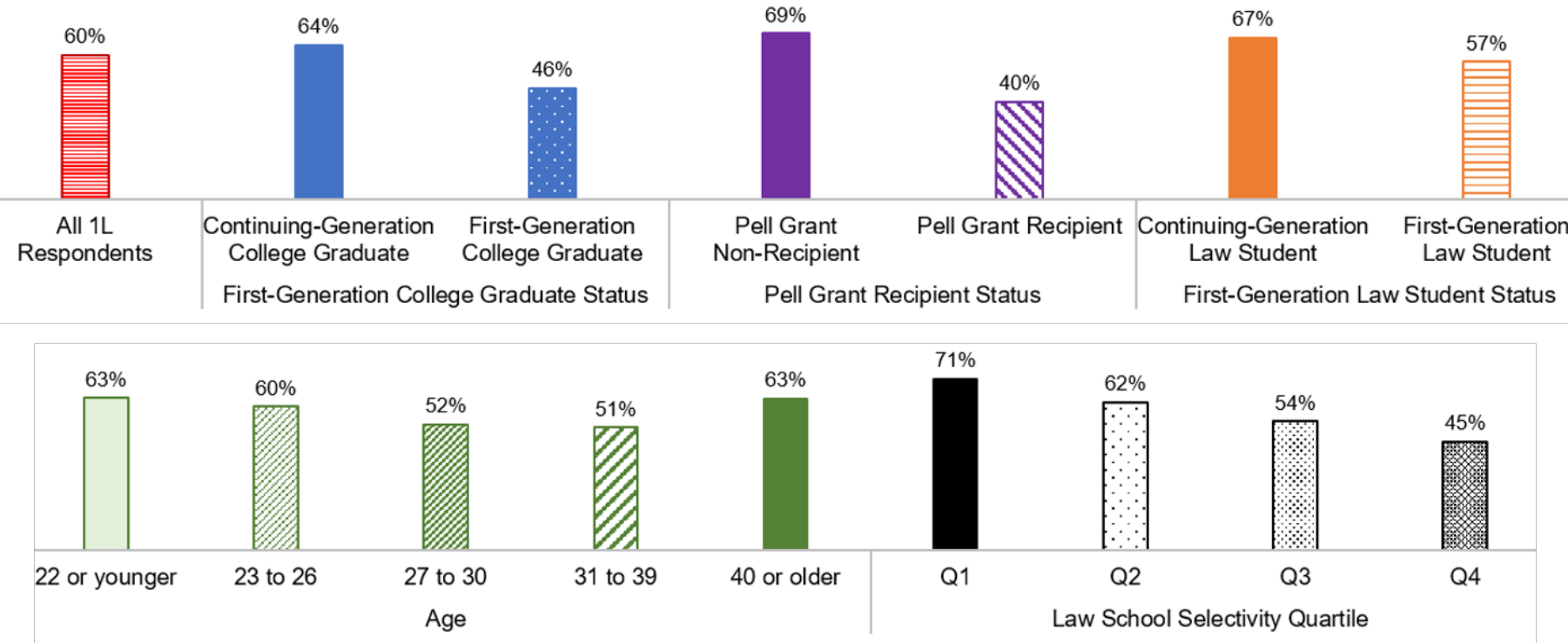
Education Debt Accumulated Before Law School

Most 1Ls (60%) entered law school with no undergraduate debt. However, the share reporting no undergraduate debt varied significantly by group:

- 40% of Pell Grant recipients, who qualify based on demonstrated financial need, started law school with no undergraduate debt, compared with 69% of non-recipients, an absolute difference of 29% (Figure 86).
- 46% of first-generation college graduates reported no undergraduate debt, compared with 64% of their continuing-generation peers, an absolute difference of 18% (Figure 86).
- 57% of first-generation law students reported no undergraduate debt, compared with 67% of continuing-generation law students, an absolute difference of 10% (Figure 86).
- Respondents age 27 to 39 reported no undergraduate debt at lower rates than their younger and older peers (51% to 52%, compared with 60% to 63%; Figure 86).
- 1L respondents in a top 25%, highly selective law school (Q1) were more likely to enter without undergraduate debt. For example, 71% of 1Ls at law schools in the first selectivity quartile (Q1) reported no undergraduate debt, compared with 45% at law schools in the fourth selectivity quartile (Q4; Figure 86).

Figure 86. Percentage of 1Ls with No Undergraduate Debt Owed at Start of 1L Year

Related references: Figure 86 (1st mention, pg. 94) | Figure 86 (2nd mention, pg. 94) | Figure 86 (3rd mention, pg. 94) | Figure 86 (4th mention, pg. 94)



Source: 2025 LSAC Matriculant Survey.

Note: First-year enrollments vary across schools, and one of many ways to examine this variation is by analyzing enrollment based on law school selectivity. Law schools are each assigned a selectivity index based on each school's 2024-25 admission rate, median LSAT of admitted students, and median UGPA of admitted students. The top 25% of schools by selectivity, or "highly selective" law schools, are in the first quartile (Q1) and are the 49 or 50 law schools with the highest index score.

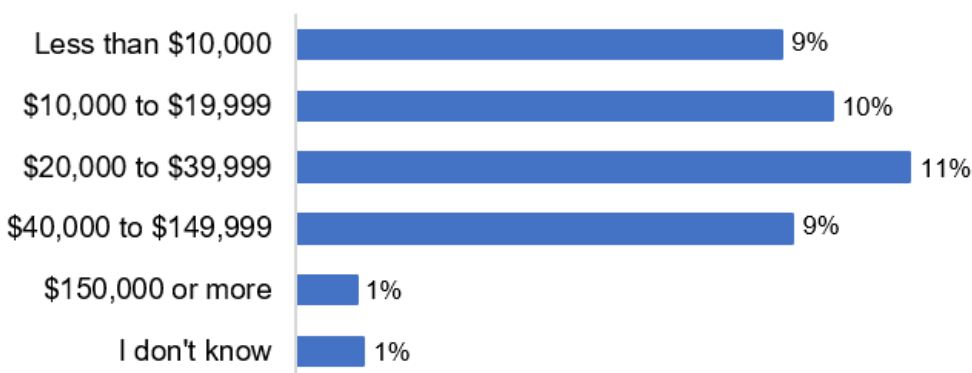
Of the 40% of 1L respondents with undergraduate debt, almost 10% entered law school owing less than \$10,000 in undergraduate debt, while another 10% had more than \$40,000 in undergraduate debt (Figure 87). Only 1% owed \$150,000 or more, and another 1% did not know how much undergraduate debt they had accumulated (Figure 87). The amount of undergraduate debt also varied by Pell Grant status, first-generation college graduate and law student status, age, and law school selectivity.

- Pell Grant recipients carried undergraduate debt at higher rates than non-recipients. For example, 16% owed \$10,000 to \$19,999, a rate more than double the 7% of non-recipients (Figure 88).
- First-generation college graduates carried undergraduate debt at higher rates than their continuing-generation peers. For example, 13% of first-generation college graduates owed less than \$10,000, compared with 7% of continuing-generation college graduates, while 14% owed \$40,000 to \$149,999, compared with only 8% of their continuing-generation peers (Figure 89).
- First-generation law students also carried higher amounts of undergraduate debt than their continuing-generation peers. Among first-generation law students, 12% owed \$20,000 to \$39,999, compared with 8% of continuing-generation law students, while 10% owed \$40,000 to \$149,999, compared with 7% of their continuing-generation peers (Figure 90).
- The amount of undergraduate debt varied by age, and younger 1Ls were more likely to carry smaller amounts of undergraduate debt, while older 1Ls were more likely to carry debt between \$40,000 and \$149,999. For example, 9% of 1Ls age 22 or younger owed less than \$10,000, compared with 4% of those 40 or older. In contrast, 19% of 1Ls age 40 or older owed \$40,000 to \$149,999, compared with 7% of 1Ls age 22 or younger (Figure 91).
- Undergraduate debt increased as law school selectivity decreased. For example, 32% of 1L respondents at law schools in the fourth selectivity quartile (Q4) owed between \$20,000 and \$149,999 in undergraduate debt at the start of their 1L year, compared with 11% of 1Ls at law schools in the first selectivity quartile (Q1; Figure 92).

Overall, while most 1L respondents reported no undergraduate debt upon entering law school, undergraduate debt was disproportionately borne by students from under-resourced communities and backgrounds. This pattern underscores persistent disparities in educational financing that exist before law school and may compound students' overall debt burden, with implications for affordability, financial well-being during law school, and career opportunities after graduation.

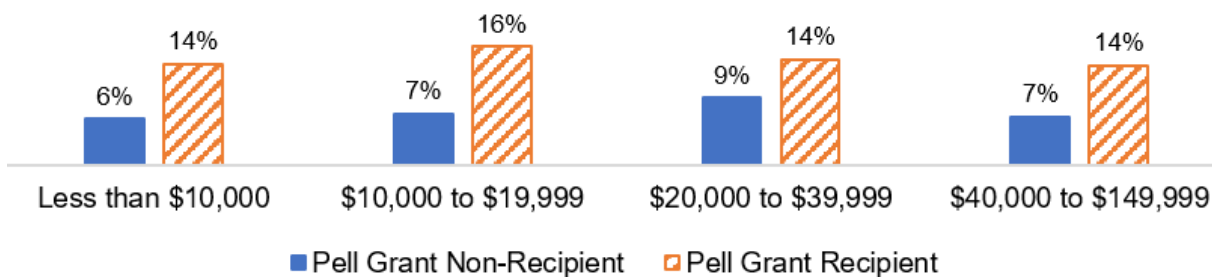
Figure 87. Undergraduate Debt Accumulated at Start of 1L Year

Related references: Figure 87 (1st mention, pg. 96) | Figure 87 (2nd mention, pg. 96)



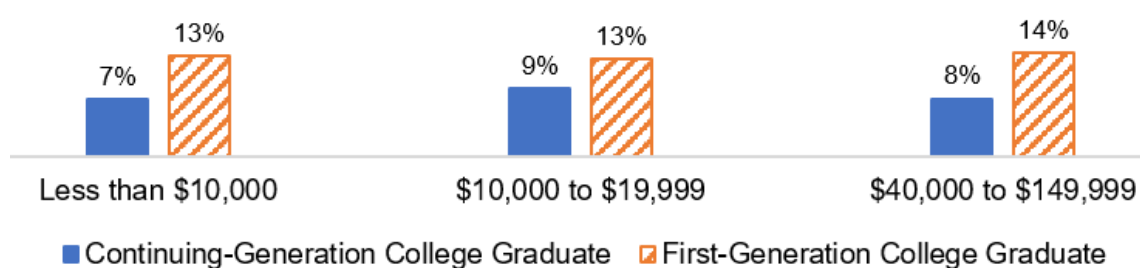
Source: 2025 LSAC Matriculant Survey.

Figure 88. Differences in Undergraduate Debt Accumulated at Start of 1L Year by Pell Grant Recipient Status



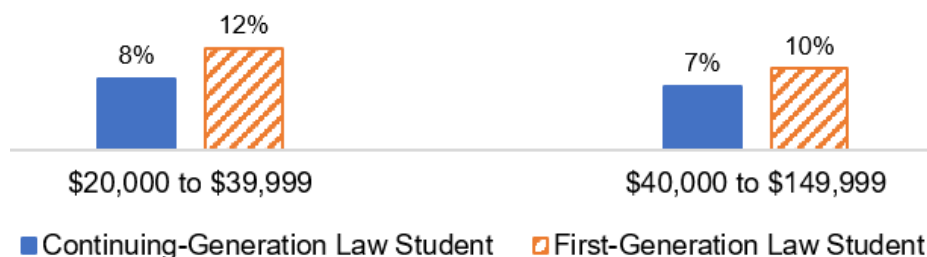
Source: 2025 LSAC Matriculant Survey.

Figure 89. Differences in Undergraduate Debt Accumulated at Start of 1L Year by First-Generation College Graduate Status



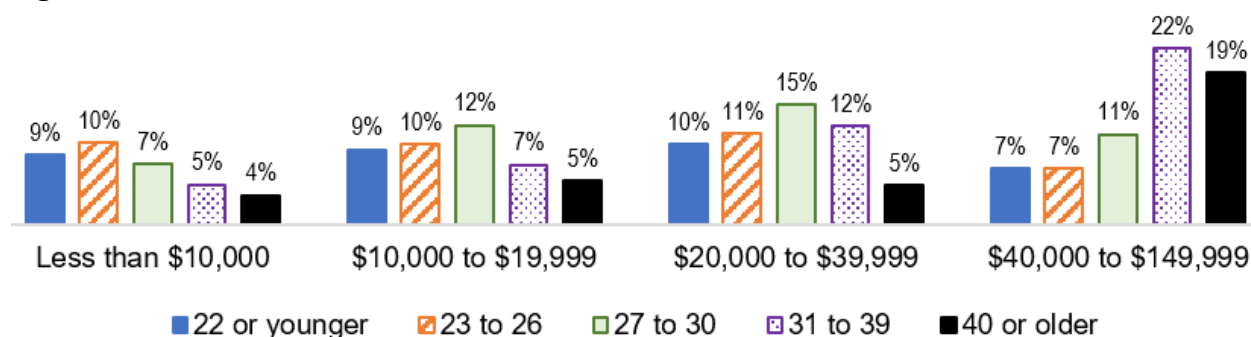
Source: 2025 LSAC Matriculant Survey.

Figure 90. Differences in Undergraduate Debt Accumulated at Start of 1L Year by First-Generation Law Student Status



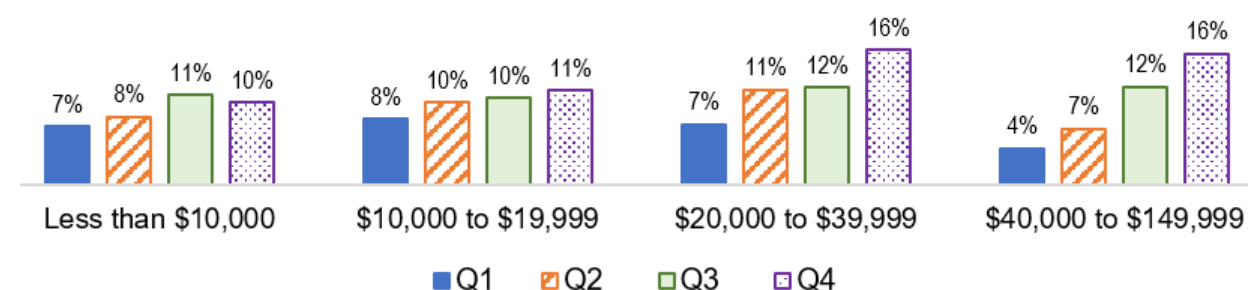
Source: 2025 LSAC Matriculant Survey.

Figure 91. Differences in Undergraduate Debt Accumulated at Start of 1L Year by Age at Enrollment



Source: 2025 LSAC Matriculant Survey.

Figure 92. Differences in Undergraduate Debt Accumulated at Start of 1L Year by Law School Selectivity Quartile



Source: 2025 LSAC Matriculant Survey.

Note: First-year enrollments vary across schools, and one of many ways to examine this variation is by analyzing enrollment based on law school selectivity. Law schools are each assigned a selectivity index based on each school's 2024-25 admission rate, median LSAT of admitted students, and median UGPA of admitted students. The top 25% of schools by selectivity, or "highly selective" law schools, are in the first quartile (Q1) and are the 49 or 50 law schools with the highest index score.

Projected Law School Debt

Understanding how 1Ls finance their legal education and the debt they expect to carry upon graduation is critical for assessing the broader implications for law school affordability and access. How law school is financed can have a significant impact on postgraduate opportunities and outcomes.⁶¹ Anticipated debt can affect long-term financial planning, career decisions, and economic mobility.

Compared with how many respondents had undergraduate debt, fewer 1L respondents expected to graduate from law school debt free: While 60% entered law school with no undergraduate debt, only 22% anticipated graduating with no law school debt. Another 15% expected to owe \$40,000 or less, while nearly one-third (32%) anticipated owing \$100,000 or more, including 9% who expected to owe more than \$200,000 (Figure 93).

Projected law school debt varies significantly across racial and ethnic groups, first-generation college graduate or Pell Grant recipient status, age, and law school attended (Tables 9 to 13).

- Expected debt varied significantly by race and ethnicity. Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander⁶² (52%), Middle Eastern or North African/Arab (33%), and Asian (30%) 1Ls were among the most likely to expect no debt, while only 8% of Black 1Ls and 12% of Hispanic or Latina/é/o/x 1L respondents expected to graduate with no debt. Nearly half of Black or African American 1Ls (49%) expected to owe \$100,000 or more, compared with 29% of white 1Ls (Table 9).
- First-generation college graduate respondents anticipated more debt than their continuing-generation peers. Only 14% expected to graduate debt free, while almost a quarter of their continuing-generation college graduate peers did (24%). More than a third (38%) of first-generation college graduate respondents expected to owe \$100,000 or more, compared with 30% of their continuing-generation peers (Table 10).⁶³
- Pell Grant recipients, who qualify based on demonstrated financial need, also anticipated more debt than non-recipients. Only 12% of Pell Grant recipients expected to graduate debt free, compared with 26% of their non-recipient peers, while 40% expected to owe \$100,000 or more, compared with 28% of non-recipients (Table 11).

⁶¹ Check out the [ABA's Law Student Loan Debt Surveys](#) to learn more about debt and lawyers. Additionally, learn more about how Big Law recruitment is also changing, with implications for who has access to lucrative careers in private practice, by checking out [2025 1L Class: Student Awareness and Impact of Accelerated Big Law Recruitment](#).

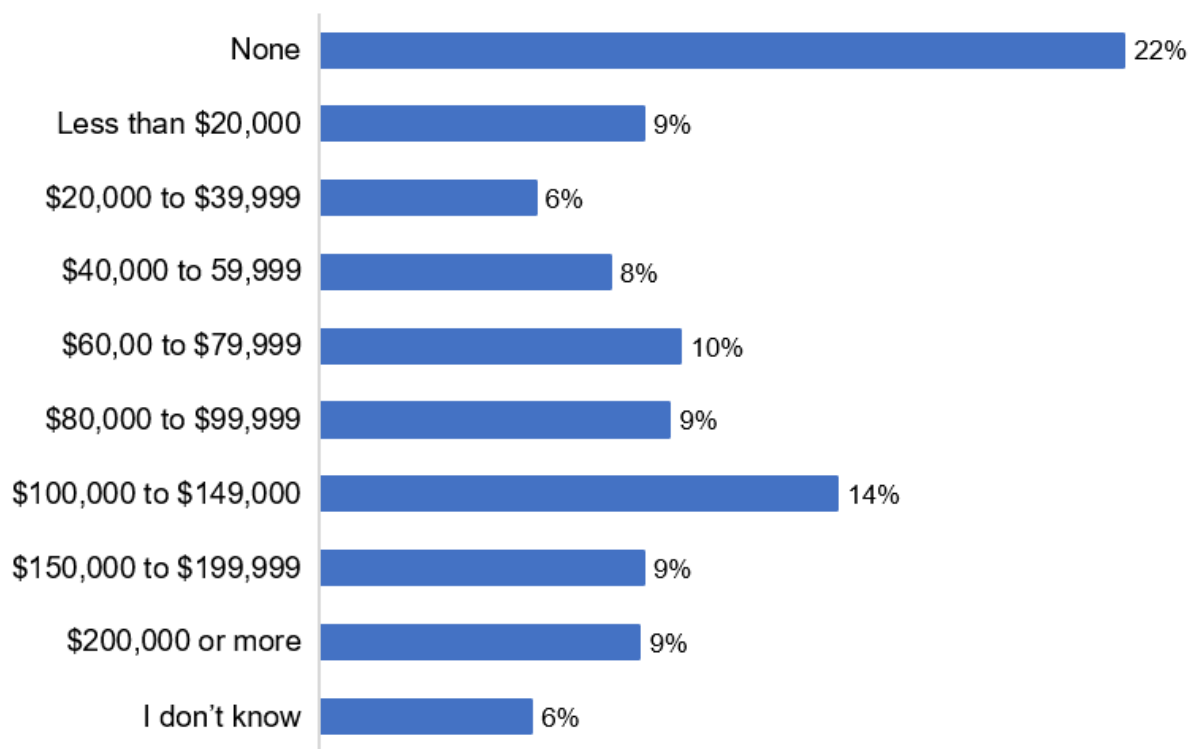
⁶² Data insights for this group should be interpreted with caution not to make strong generalizations about the entire population based on the sample size.

⁶³ Refer to [Funding the First Year: How 2024 1Ls Paid for Law School](#).

- Debt expectations were similar across age groups. One exception was 1L respondents age 27 to 30, who were more likely to anticipate either no debt (28%) or \$200,000 or more of debt (12%) compared with their peers (Table 12).
- Expectations of graduating debt free increased as law school selectivity increased. For example, 27% of 1Ls at law schools in the first selectivity quartile (Q1) expected to graduate debt free, compared with 12% of 1Ls at law schools in the fourth selectivity quartile (Q4; Table 13).

These trends and significant differences are consistent with past research, revealing a disproportionate debt burden for students and lawyers from marginalized or under-resourced communities.⁶⁴ As more data is compiled in the future, LSAC will continue to examine these trends, especially at the intersection of identities and experiences. The interrelation between debt, financial stability, and educational and career opportunities means increasing access and supporting the journey to and through law school requires multiple touchpoints and financial investment not just by the students, but also by the legal community.

Figure 93. Projected Law School Debt



Source: 2025 LSAC Matriculant Survey.

⁶⁴ Refer to [Funding the First Year: How 2024 1Ls Paid for Law School](#) and the [Law School Survey of Student Engagement annual reports](#) to learn more.

Table 9. Projected Law School Debt Ranges by Race and Ethnicity

Expected Debt	American Indian or Alaska Native	Asian	Black or African American	Hispanic or Latina/é/o/x	Middle Eastern or North African/Arab	Multiracial or Ethnoracial (Two or More)	Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	White	Did Not Indicate	All 1Ls
None	28%	30%	8%	12%	33%	21%	52%	22%	24%	22%
Less than \$20,000	11%	11%	4%	7%	13%	6%	7%	8%	17%	9%
\$20,000 to \$39,999	9%	2%	4%	5%	1%	7%	5%	7%	4%	6%
\$40,000 to 59,999	7%	4%	7%	10%	3%	7%	7%	9%	8%	8%
\$60,00 to \$79,999	11%	8%	16%	11%	6%	11%	5%	9%	7%	10%
\$80,000 to \$99,999	10%	7%	10%	15%	7%	7%	0%	10%	8%	9%
\$100,000 to \$149,000	15%	9%	21%	14%	19%	14%	0%	14%	11%	14%
\$150,000 to \$199,999	3%	7%	18%	9%	3%	10%	11%	8%	10%	9%
\$200,000 or more	6%	11%	10%	13%	13%	12%	9%	7%	5%	9%
I don't know	0%	11%	3%	4%	3%	5%	5%	6%	7%	6%

Source: 2025 LSAC Matriculant Survey.

Table 10. Projected Law School Debt Ranges by First-Generation College Graduate Status

Expected Debt	Continuing-Generation College Graduate	First-Generation College Graduate	All 1L Respondents
None	24%	14%	22%
Less than \$20,000	9%	7%	9%
\$20,000 to \$39,999	6%	5%	6%
\$40,000 to 59,999	8%	8%	8%
\$60,00 to \$79,999	9%	11%	10%
\$80,000 to \$99,999	8%	13%	9%
\$100,000 to \$149,000	13%	17%	14%
\$150,000 to \$199,999	9%	10%	9%
\$200,000 or more	8%	11%	9%
I don't know	6%	4%	6%

Source: 2025 LSAC Matriculant Survey.

Table 11. Projected Law School Debt Ranges by Pell Grant Recipient Status

Expected Debt	Pell Grant Non-Recipient	Pell Grant Recipient	All 1L Respondents
None	26%	12%	22%
Less than \$20,000	9%	7%	9%
\$20,000 to \$39,999	6%	6%	6%
\$40,000 to 59,999	8%	8%	8%
\$60,00 to \$79,999	9%	12%	10%
\$80,000 to \$99,999	8%	13%	9%
\$100,000 to \$149,000	12%	18%	14%
\$150,000 to \$199,999	8%	11%	8%
\$200,000 or more	8%	11%	9%
I don't know	6%	4%	6%

Source: 2025 LSAC Matriculant Survey.

Table 12. Projected Law School Debt Ranges by Age at Enrollment

Expected Debt	22 or younger	23 to 26	27 to 30	31 to 39	40 or older	All 1L Respondents
None	22%	20%	28%	22%	24%	22%
Less than \$20,000	10%	8%	9%	11%	4%	9%
\$20,000 to \$39,999	5%	7%	5%	7%	3%	6%
\$40,000 to 59,999	7%	8%	7%	8%	12%	8%
\$60,00 to \$79,999	12%	8%	6%	11%	10%	10%
\$80,000 to \$99,999	8%	10%	9%	11%	12%	9%
\$100,000 to \$149,000	13%	15%	14%	12%	11%	14%
\$150,000 to \$199,999	7%	10%	7%	9%	11%	9%
\$200,000 or more	7%	9%	12%	8%	6%	9%
I don't know	8%	5%	4%	3%	7%	6%

Source: 2025 LSAC Matriculant Survey.

Table 13. Projected Law School Debt Ranges by Law School Selectivity Quartile

Expected Debt	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	All 1L Respondents
None	27%	24%	20%	12%	22%
Less than \$20,000	8%	9%	11%	8%	9%
\$20,000 to \$39,999	5%	6%	8%	5%	6%
\$40,000 to 59,999	7%	6%	9%	10%	8%
\$60,00 to \$79,999	7%	10%	9%	13%	10%
\$80,000 to \$99,999	7%	11%	10%	12%	9%
\$100,000 to \$149,000	12%	14%	13%	18%	14%
\$150,000 to \$199,999	10%	8%	8%	9%	9%
\$200,000 or more	13%	6%	7%	8%	9%
I don't know	5%	6%	6%	6%	6%

Source: 2025 LSAC Matriculant Survey.

Note: First-year enrollments vary across schools, and one of many ways to examine this variation is by analyzing enrollment based on law school selectivity. Law schools are each assigned a selectivity index based on each school's 2024-25 admission rate, median LSAT of admitted students, and median UGPA of admitted students. The top 25% of schools by selectivity, or "highly selective" law schools, are in the first quartile (Q1) and are the 49 or 50 law schools with the highest index score.

CONCLUSION

The 2025 first-year law school class was the last admitted before new federal student loan borrowing limits took effect, meaning this 1L class will not be directly affected by those changes. Overall, the class remained as diverse as the 2023 and 2024 classes, but these patterns were not consistent across all law schools and programs, and levels of representation varied considerably by school.

The 2025 LSAC Matriculant Survey offers insight into the factors that shaped students' enrollment decisions and the paths they took to choosing a law school. These findings can help law schools, legal stakeholders, and the legal community better understand the needs and priorities of future applicants and strengthen recruitment and support efforts. A key insight from the members of the 2025 1L class who responded to the survey is the continuing disparity in access to information and guidance in the enrollment decision-making process, for example, among those who reported higher law school debt, such as first-generation college graduates and Pell Grant recipients. These student voices echo the need for the legal community to monitor and collaborate on how to support aspiring law students, especially given the current enrollment context: For the past two years, legal education has experienced a decline in first-generation college graduate representation in incoming classes.⁶⁵

Helping admitted students make informed enrollment decisions is a shared commitment across the legal education community. Prospective law students benefit when they have meaningful opportunities to learn about schools, evaluate their options, and reflect on the factors that matter most to them. Supporting these decisions requires looking beyond admissions alone and considering the full range of students' academic, professional, financial, and personal goals as they prepare for law school and their future careers.

LSAC remains committed to collecting and sharing data that promotes access, equity, and fairness in law school admission; to broadening the pathway into legal education; and to supporting law schools, law students, and the legal education community. By continuing to examine how students make these important decisions, and by exploring key milestones along the journey, we seek to provide the legal community with insights that inform decision-making, help support student success, and address barriers in accessing legal education.

⁶⁵ Refer to [LSAC's Knowledge Report: The Composition of the First-Year Law School Class and Enrollment 2021-2025 Trends](#).

METHODOLOGY

This section summarizes the sources, inclusion criteria, variable definitions, and reporting approach, along with data quality and suppression techniques, used for the 2025 1L Profile Report. Demographic data use follows that of [LSAC's Composition Report](#), which summarizes the composition of the entering 1L classes for academic years 2021 through 2025, using LSAC data.

Data Sources

This report used data maintained by LSAC, including survey data from the 2025 LSAC 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 2025 LSAC Matriculant Survey.

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 group-based differences.

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, 57% of racially and ethnically minoritized 1Ls said they agreed or strongly agreed the cost of law school was a barrier that may limit their career choices, compared with 49% of white 1Ls. This represents an absolute difference of 8 ($57-49=8$). 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, 57% of racially and ethnically minoritized 1Ls said they agreed or strongly agreed the cost of law school was a barrier that may limit their career choices, compared with 49% of white 1Ls. That represents a 16.3 percent difference ($[57 - 49] / 49 = 0.163$). 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 difference between ethnically minoritized 1Ls and their white peers, absolute difference (8 percentage point change) would be sufficient. However, this does not contextualize how large (magnitude) this difference is; therefore, percent change (16% change) is reported.

Additionally, throughout this report, group-based differences are included only if they are statistically significant. In this report, “significantly” indicates that the mean values between two groups are significantly different from one another. 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. *** $p < 0.05$.

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.)

Methodology section related references: Footnote 6 (pg. 5) | Matriculant Survey Sample section (pg. 33)