



Law School Survey of Student Engagement

LSSSE 2008 Overview

The Law School Survey of Student Engagement (LSSSE) collects information annually from law students about the nature and quality of their law school experience. During its five year history, 148 different law schools have administered LSSSE to measure the extent to which their students engage in effective educational practices that are empirically linked to learning and other desirable outcomes. The results portray how students spend their time and the activities that are most beneficial to their legal training. Deans, administrators and faculty use the results for school improvement, strategic planning, accreditation and accountability, and other related efforts.



LSSSE 2008 Overview 1

Law Schools & Respondents

This spring more than 58,000 law students at 85 schools were invited to participate in LSSSE. All JD or LLB students who attended the law school for at least one semester were eligible to complete the web-based survey instrument. Of these, 27,459 students responded, an average response rate of 53%. A list of all the law schools participating in the 2008 survey is included under the *Additional Information* tab of this *Report*. To see all the schools that have participated in LSSSE over the years, visit the Web site at www.lssse.iub.edu.

LSSSE conducts census sampling, sometimes called full-population sampling, which usually produces more reliable results. Additional information about response rates, including the response rate at your law school, can be found under the *Respondent Characteristic* tab of this binder.

The 2008 participating law schools range in size from 175 students to 3,130. More than a third have fewer than 500 students. About 42% fall into the mid-sized category with student populations ranging from 500 to 900. A fifth of LSSSE schools have more than 900 law students (Figure 1). Two thirds of the LSSSE 2008 law schools are private, and half of this group are private law schools with a denominational affiliation (Figure 2).

Table 1 compares the characteristics of the LSSSE 2008 law schools with all ABA-approved law schools in the United States. The profile of the 2008 LSSSE cohort approximates that of the ABA-approved law schools in terms of size and affiliation.

Table 1
Profile of U.S. LSSSE 2008 Law Schools compared to all ABA-Approved Law Schools^a

	LSSSE 2008	National ^b
Size		
Fewer than 500 Students	38%	29%
Between 500-900 Students	42%	47%
More than 900 Students	20%	23%
Affiliation		
Public Law Schools	34%	41%
Private Law Schools	35%	31%
Private Law Schools with Religious Affiliation	31%	28%
Location		
New England	4%	7%
Northeast	14%	13%
Midsouth	11%	15%
Southeast	13%	13%
South Central	13%	9%
Mountain West	10%	5%
Far West	8%	11%
Northwest	5%	3%
Midwest	4%	6%
Great Lakes	18%	17%

a. Percentages based on U.S. law schools only. Totals may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

b. National percentages are based on data from the American Bar Association and the Law School Admissions Council.

Table 2 shows selected characteristics of the LSSSE 2008 U.S. respondents. The first column represents the law students who responded to the survey. The second column represents the student population at the law schools participating in the 2008 administration. The third column represents the profile of all JD students at law schools across the U.S. as indicated by data from the Law School Admissions Council (LSAC) and the American Bar Association (ABA).

Gender

Male and female students responded to the survey in equal proportions (Table 2). Four percent of students did not report gender.

In general, women are more likely than men to complete questionnaires. This could be true of your school. If so, it is possible to statistically adjust the findings to account for this.

Class

The 27,459 respondents were relatively evenly split between 1Ls (36%), 2Ls (32%), and 3Ls (30%). Only two percent of respondents were fourth year students.

Race and Ethnicity

The race and ethnicity of respondents were comparable to students attending ABA-approved law schools (Table 2).

Figure 1: Size of LSSSE 2008 Schools compared to National Profile^a

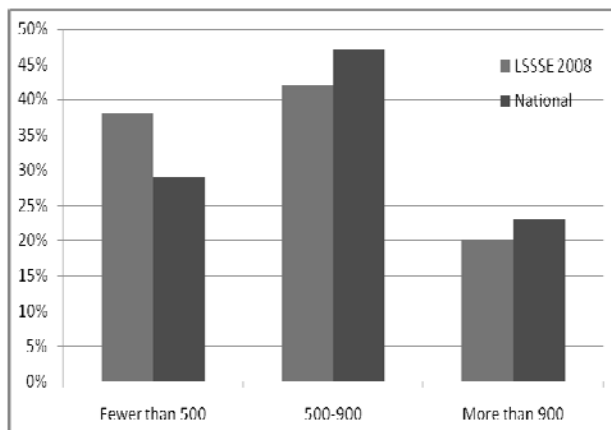
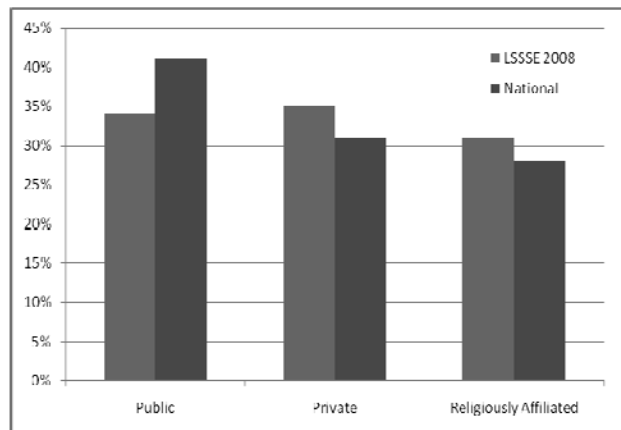


Figure 2: Affiliation of LSSSE 2008 Schools compared to National Profile^a



a. National percentages are based on data from the American Bar Association and the Law School Admissions Council.

**Table 2
Characteristics of LSSSE 2008 Respondents, Students at 2008 LSSSE Law Schools, and Students at ABA-Approved Law Schools^a**

	LSSSE 2008 Respondents	LSSSE 2008 Population ^b	National ^c
Gender			
Male	48%	47%	54%
Female	48%	42%	46%
Unknown	4%	10%	
Race/Ethnicity			
African American/Black	5%	6%	7%
Amer. Indian/Alaska Native	<1%	<1%	1%
Asian/Asian Amer./Pacific Islander	6%	6%	7%
Caucasian/White	71%	55%	69%
Latino	5%	6%	n/a ^d
Enrollment Status			
Full-time	82%	73%	87%
Part-time	18%	18%	13%

a. Totals may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

b. LSSSE 2008 population data are provided to LSSSE by participating law schools.

c. National data are from published American Bar Association's Section on Legal Education and Admission to the Bar and the Law School Admissions Council statistics.

d. The LSSSE categories for race/ethnicity differ from nationally reported statistics.

Enrollment

Eighteen percent of students responding to the survey were part-time students (Table 2). Three percent of respondents had transferred from another law school, and 4% of respondents were participating in a joint-degree program.

Grades

Approximately 20% of all students reported earning mostly A grades. The majority of students reported earning mainly B+ or B grades (52%).

Age

A majority of students were under 30. Thirty-eight percent of respondents were under 25, while 42% were between the

ages of 26 and 30. Fifteen percent of students were 31-40, and 5% were over 40 years of age.

Before Law School

More than a third of law students (35%) entered law school immediately following the baccalaureate. Another third (31%) enrolled within two years. Nineteen percent of students started law school three to five years after earning undergraduate degrees

Law School Debt

More than half of all students expect to owe more than \$60,000 in law school debt at graduation. One in five students expect to owe more than \$120,000. Of those with law school loans, only a quarter expect to owe less than \$60,000. Twelve percent of respondents incurred no debt related to their legal education.

Table 3
Select Employment Preferences of LSSSE 2008 Survey Respondents^a

	1L	2L	3L
Preferred Areas of Specialization			
Alternative Dispute Resolution	1%	1%	<1%
Corporate and Securities	11%	11%	11%
Criminal Law	9%	10%	11%
Litigation and Trial	8%	12%	16%
Patent & Intellectual Property	6%	6%	6%
Public Interest	5%	5%	4%
Real Estate	5%	5%	4%
Undecided	19%	13%	10%
Preferred Employment Settings			
Academic	2%	2%	2%
Business or Industry	11%	9%	7%
Government Agency	10%	9%	10%
Judicial Clerkship	5%	5%	6%
Private Law Firm	51%	53%	52%
Prosecutor	5%	6%	7%
Public Defender	2%	2%	3%
Public Interest	6%	5%	4%
Solo Practice	3%	3%	3%

a. Select preferences do not include all of the categories represented on the LSSSE survey instrument. Accordingly, percentages may not total to 100%.

Selected Results

This section presents a general summary of the nature of law student engagement and the frequency with which law students participate in educationally purposeful activities. A more complete picture of law student engagement will be presented in the 2008 Annual Report to be released in January of 2009.

Law School Activities

The LSSSE survey focuses on activities in which students participate—both inside and outside the classroom—that influence their learning and personal and professional development.

In this section, the most frequent activities are those in which at least half of all respondents reported that they participate “often” or “very often.” The least frequent activities are those in which the percentage of students who reported “never” exceeded 25%, meaning that more than a quarter of students never participated in that activity during the 2007-08 academic year (Table 4).

Law School Environment

The concept of student engagement is comprised of two components: 1) the time and energy students devote to educationally purposeful activities, and 2) the extent to which law schools emphasize the use of effective educational practices. The items in this section measure students’ perceptions of their law school’s support for their academic and social needs.

- About 90% of students thought that their law school places a substantial emphasis (combination of response options “very much” and “quite a bit”) on spending significant amounts of time studying and preparing for class.

- More than three fourths of students (77%) felt that their law school emphasized the ethical practice of law to a substantial degree.
- Two fifths of students (42%) felt that their law school did very little to provide the support they needed to succeed academically.

Law Student Satisfaction

The majority of students (82%) were satisfied with their legal education. More than three quarters (79%) reported that they would “probably” or “definitely” choose the same law school again.

Two thirds of students were satisfied with their school’s financial aid advising, while 94% and 83% were satisfied with library assistance and computing technology, respectively.

Satisfaction with career services and job search help was generally positive (59% of students reported being “satisfied” or “very satisfied”), but decreased as students progressed through law school. For example, 69% of 1Ls were satisfied or very satisfied with career services assistance and job search help, while only half of 3Ls said the same. Even so, satisfaction with the overall law school experience remained stable over the three years.

Time on Task

The time and effort students put into their education determines what they will get out of it. The typical law student spends about 8 hours per week engaged in social activities and almost 5 hours per week commuting to class. The vast majority of time is spent studying and preparing for class.

- The majority of law reported spending about 26-30 hours studying and preparing for class during a given week.

Table 4
Law School Activities

	% of Students <i>Frequently</i>^a Participating
Worked on a paper or project that required integrating ideas or information from various sources	72%
Used e-mail to communicate with a faculty member	69%
Had serious conversations with students who are very different from you in terms of their religious beliefs, political opinions or personal values	65%
Discussed ideas from your readings or classes with others outside of class	65%
Prepared two or more drafts of a paper before turning it in	61%
Had serious conversations with students who are of a different race or ethnicity than your own	59%
Worked harder than you thought you could to meet the expectations of faculty members	55%
Asked questions in class or contributed to class discussion	51%
	% of Students <i>Never</i> Participating
Participated in a clinical or pro bono project as part of a course or for academic credit	71%
Worked with faculty members on activities other than coursework (committees, orientation, student life activities, etc.)	53%
Came to class without completing readings or assignments	30%
Worked with other students on projects during class	29%
Discussed ideas from your readings or classes with faculty members outside of class	28%

a. Students who participate “frequently” are those who do so “often” or “very often.”

Time on Task (cont’d.)

- First-year students typically spent 21 hours reading assigned material, compared to the average third-year student who spent 13 hours per week.

- On average, part-time students spent about 23 hours per week working for pay while their full-time counterparts spent 5 hours per week working.
- A typical law student reported spending less than 5 hours per week caring for family or dependents.

Experimental Questions

This year LSSSE introduced several sets of experimental items to the survey. These questions investigated students' use of computers in their law school classes, legal writing, and professionalism. Select results from these questions are presented below. A more comprehensive analysis of these questions will be presented in the *2008 LSSSE Annual Survey Results*.

Computer Use in the Classroom

- While a quarter of students said they never e-mail during class, nearly the same number of students (20%) said they do so “very often.”
- Three in four students said they “very often” use their computers to take notes during class.
- More than half of students (59%) reported that they frequently use computers during class to refresh their memories using case briefs that they prepared themselves.

Writing in Legal Education

- Almost 40% of students reported that they wished there were more opportunities to practice legal writing during law school (6 or 7 on a 7 point scale).
- Nearly three in four 1Ls (74%) wrote an appellate brief during the 2007-08 school year, compared to 52% of 2Ls and 40% of 3Ls. About a third of 1Ls (37%) completed a research paper, while 41% of students wrote a motion during their first year of law school.
- Seventy-one percent of students said that their legal education was contributing substantially (“very much” or “quite a bit”) to the acquisition of legal writing skills that will be useful in the practice of law.

Professionalism in Law School

- According to students, the most effective settings for learning legal ethics were professional responsibility courses and clinics. Nearly two thirds of students reported that these settings were highly effective (“quite a bit” or “very much”).
- Forty-two percent of students frequently discussed the ethical issues embedded in cases during doctrinal courses. Slightly fewer students (35%) reported that doctrinal courses were effective settings for learning legal ethics (“very much” or “quite a bit”), while nearly double that number of students (62%) reported that professional responsibility courses were similarly effective.
- One in five students (19%) felt that their law school experience contributed “very little” to their commitment to serving the public good.

