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NALP Marks 50 Years of Law School Employment Reporting as Class of 2023 Achieves Historic Milestones; Yet Equity Gaps Remain

WASHINGTON, D.C. — NALP today released the 50th consecutive edition of its *Jobs & JDs: Employment and Salaries of New Law Graduates — Class of 2023* report, available on NALP's bookstore. *Jobs & JDs* is NALP's hallmark annual research report that presents a comprehensive analysis on the types of employment and salaries obtained by recent graduates, with data on approximately 98% of the Class of 2023 graduates from ABA-accredited law schools. The commemorative 50th edition includes a [timeline of significant achievements in the legal profession](#) across NALP's five decades of employment reporting.

Although the Class of 2023 graduates entered a record-breaking job market, new NALP analyses show that disparities in employment outcomes by race/ethnicity persisted. Graduates of color had lower overall employment rates compared to White graduates, with the gap increasing this year for Asian, Black, Latinx, Native Hawaiian, and other Pacific Islander graduates. Disparities also persisted in the employment rates in bar admission required/anticipated positions (i.e., attorney positions), although the gap narrowed for every racial group this year except for Latinx graduates. Despite this tightening, the rate of employment of Black and Indigenous graduates in bar admission required/anticipated positions continues to be particularly low. Graduates of color were also less likely to be employed in judicial clerkships as compared to their White counterparts, and employment rates within private practice continue to be lower for Black, Native American, Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian, and other Pacific Islander grads.

“It is deeply troubling that we continue to see such large disparities in the rates of employment for Black and Indigenous graduates as attorneys and that the gap in overall employment figures widened for most graduates of color,” said Nikia Gray, NALP’s Executive Director. “The progress we have made over the past 50 years to disrupt discrimination in the hiring process is highly fragile and increasingly under attack. This year’s data highlights the need to continue working to dismantle the systemic inequities that prevent graduates of color from achieving equitable employment outcomes.”

Similar disparities were also seen in the employment outcomes of graduates by parental education level. Like graduates of color, first-generation college students had lower overall employment rates and employment rates in bar admission required/anticipated positions than graduates with a lawyer parent. First-gen graduates were also employed in judicial clerkships and private practice at lower levels than their continuing-generation college and JD student peers.

Highlights Based on Graduate Demographics

By Race/Ethnicity

- Racial disparities in employment outcomes remained significant this year. While the overall employment rate was 92.6%, rates were lower for graduates of color — ranging from 87.7% for Native American and Alaska Native graduates to 91.7% for Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander grads. In contrast, the employment rate for White graduates was higher than that of the class overall, at 94.0%. White graduates also had the highest level of employment in bar admission required/anticipated jobs (84.4%), while rates were substantially lower for Native American/Alaska Native (73.0%), Black (72.9%), and Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander graduates (66.7%).
- Consistent with long-term trends, employment rates within private practice were lower for Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander (40.9% of employed graduates), Black (52.0%), and Native American/Alaska Native (52.3%) graduates. Private practice employment was highest for Asian graduates (65.7%).
- Latinx graduates were among the most underrepresented racial groups within judicial clerkships — comprising 11.9% of the Class of 2023 but securing only 8.2% of all clerkships and 7.9% of federal clerkships. Overall, graduates of color represented nearly one-third of the class (33.1%) yet obtained just a quarter (24.8%) of all clerkships and an even smaller share of federal clerkships (23.6%).
- Median starting salaries for employed graduates by race/ethnicity ranged from \$75,000 for Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander graduates to \$170,000 for Asian graduates. The Class of 2023 national median was \$90,000. The higher median salary for Asian graduates can be at least partially attributed to greater levels of private practice employment, particularly within large firms.

Employment Status by Race/Ethnicity for the Class of 2023		
Race/Ethnicity	Employment Rate	% Employed in a Bar Admission Required/Anticipated Job
All Graduates	92.6%	82.1%
Asian	90.5%	80.8%
Black or African American	88.8%	72.9%
Latinx	91.3%	80.3%
Multiracial	91.1%	80.8%
Native American or Alaska Native	87.7%	73.0%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	91.7%	66.7%
White/Caucasian	94.0%	84.4%

By Highest Level of Parental/Guardian Education

NALP also measures employment by highest level of parental/guardian education. First-generation college students are defined as students who do not have at least one parent or guardian with a bachelor’s or higher degree. Continuing-generation JD students are students who have at least one lawyer parent or guardian.

- The overall employment rate was more than three percentage points higher (95.4% vs. 92.1%) and the rate of employment in bar admission required/anticipated jobs was more than nine points greater (89.0% vs. 79.8%) for continuing-generation JD students in comparison to first-generation college students.
- Employed continuing-generation JD students were more likely to secure jobs in private practice (62.7%) and judicial clerkships (13.3%) as compared to first-generation college students (57.1% and 9.1%, respectively).
- Nearly one-third (32.7%) of all first-gen college students employed in private practice worked for a small firm of 1-10 lawyers; that compares to just a quarter (24.9%) of continuing-gen JD students. Students with a lawyer parent were much more likely to work for a large firm of more than 500 lawyers (39.0%) than first-gen college students (28.2%).
- Continuing-generation JD students were particularly overrepresented within federal clerkships. They comprised 13.7% of the class overall but obtained 22.8% of federal clerkships. In contrast, first-generation college students represented 22.5% of the class but secured just 12.2% of all federal clerkships.
- The median salary for continuing-generation JD students was higher (\$100,000) in comparison to first-gen college students (\$85,000). Greater levels of BigLaw employment for continuing-gen JD students contribute to these salary differences.

Other Graduate Demographics

- Employed gender non-binary graduates were more than four times as likely to obtain a public interest position as compared to graduates overall (39.6% vs. 9.7%). LGBTQ+ graduates were more than twice as likely to be employed in public interest (20.7%).
- Graduates who identified as having a disability, gender non-binary, LGBTQ+, and/or a military veteran were less likely to be employed in private practice as compared to graduates overall.
- Graduates with disabilities had a lower overall employment rate (89.8%), as well as a lower rate of employment in bar admission required/anticipated jobs (77.4%).

How are law firm opportunities changing for new law graduates? Which geographic markets provide the most jobs? Where did the graduates who are not practicing law find jobs? How do employment findings vary by gender, race/ethnicity, level of parental education, and other graduate demographics? This year's *Jobs & JDs* report includes over 120 detailed tables and charts with employment and salary data by geography, graduate demographics, and law school characteristics. The 50th edition of the publication also includes a timeline marking historic milestones across five decades of NALP's employment reporting. *Jobs & JDs: Employment and Salaries of New Law Graduates — Class of 2023* is now available in NALP's [bookstore](#).

For more information on the overall employment outcomes for Class of 2023 law graduates, see NALP's July 25, 2024, press release on the Current Press Releases page at <https://www.nalp.org/current>. To request an interview, contact media@nalp.org.

About NALP

NALP is an association of more than 3,000 legal career professionals who advise law students, lawyers, law offices, and law schools in North America and beyond. What brings NALP members together is a common belief in three fundamental things. First, all law students and lawyers should benefit from a fair and ethical hiring process. Second, law students and lawyers are more successful when supported by professional development and legal career professionals. Third, a diverse and inclusive legal profession best serves clients and our communities. That's why NALP members work together every day to collect and publish accurate legal employment data and information, and champion education and ethical principles for recruiting, professional and career development, and diversity and inclusion. For more than 50 years, NALP has played an essential role in the success of our members and the lawyers and law students they serve. NALP maintains an online archive of press releases at www.nalp.org/pressreleases. For additional information, contact NALP at info@nalp.org or call (202) 835-1001.