



# The State Bar of California

---

**Title of Report:** The State Bar of California’s Biennial Report to the Legislature on Policies and Activities to Enhance Access, Fairness, and Diversity in the Legal Profession and the Elimination of Bias in the Practice of Law: 2024-2025

**Statutory Citation:** Business and Professions Code section 6001.3

**Date of Report:** March 30, 2025

The State Bar of California submits this report to the Legislature pursuant to Business and Professions Code section 6001.3, which directs that the State Bar develop and implement a plan demonstrating its ongoing “commitment to and support of effective policies and activities to enhance access, fairness, and diversity in the legal profession and the elimination of bias in the practice of law.” This fourth report summarizes the activities undertaken over the last two years to promote access, fairness, and diversity in the legal profession, as prioritized by the State Bar’s 2022–2027 Strategic Plan and described in the prior biennial reports. The report addresses the State Bar’s efforts in the core pillars of this work: statewide leadership, building a culture of diversity, pipeline to the profession, and retention and advancement in the profession.

As a part of its public protection mission, the State Bar remains committed to a data-driven approach to advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion, including the publication of the [Profile of California Law Schools Report](#), annual *Report Cards on the Diversity of California’s Legal Profession*, and the [Profile of California’s Inactive Attorneys](#). The State Bar continues to make significant progress in studying processes and procedures related to law schools, licensure, and attorney discipline to identify areas for increased transparency, equity, and fairness. This work includes a follow-up study of disparities in the attorney discipline system and important programs to support attorneys in practice, including diversion programs to help members of the public resolve issues with their attorneys. With feedback from key stakeholders, the State Bar developed future plans in this space that leverage the agency’s unique position as a regulator to share data, make systematic changes, and incubate innovative, scalable programs to enhance access, fairness, diversity, equity, and the elimination of bias in the practice of law.

This summary and the report are submitted in compliance with Government Code section 9795.

The full report is available for download on the State Bar website at <http://www.calbar.ca.gov/About-Us/Our-Mission/Protecting-the-Public/Reports>.

A printed copy may be obtained by calling 415-538-2252.



# The State Bar of California

## **The State Bar of California's Biennial Report to the Legislature on Policies and Activities to Enhance Access, Fairness, and Diversity in the Legal Profession and the Elimination of Bias in the Practice of Law: 2024-2025**

**Pursuant to Business and Professions Code Section 6001.3**

**March 30, 2025**

# Table of Contents

- EXECUTIVE SUMMARY ..... 1
- KEY ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2023-2024 ..... 1
  - Data-Driven Innovation ..... 1
  - Statewide Leadership ..... 2
  - Proactive Attorney Support Programs..... 2
- CRITICAL DEMOGRAPHIC INSIGHTS ..... 2
  - Current State of Diversity in the Profession ..... 2
  - Law School to the Profession Pipeline Challenges ..... 3
- 2025-2026 STRATEGIC PRIORITIES ..... 3
  - Transformative Initiatives ..... 3
- CRITICAL FUNDING NEEDS ..... 3
- LOOKING FORWARD ..... 3
- INTRODUCTION..... 4
- DEMOGRAPHIC OVERVIEW ..... 5
  - Figure 1. Percent of Attorneys Admitted to the State Bar who Identified as a Woman or Person of Color by Year of Admission: 1990-2023..... 6
  - Figure 2. Intersectional Racial/Ethnic and Gender Identity of Attorneys Admitted to the State Bar of California by Year: 1990-2023 ..... 7
  - Table 1. Five-Year Trends and California’s 2023 Attorney Population Compared with California’s Adult Population by Demographic Characteristics..... 9
- STATEWIDE LEADERSHIP ..... 9
- ATTORNEY CENSUS..... 10
- DIVERSITY REPORT CARD ..... 10
- REPORT ON INACTIVE ATTORNEYS..... 10
  - Figure 3. State Bar Active and Inactive Population Snapshots, 2013-2023 ..... 11
  - Figure 4. Average Age of Active Attorneys and 2023 Transfers to Inactive Status by Intersection of Detailed Race/Ethnicity and Gender Identity..... 13
  - Figure 5. Retirement Among 2023 Transfers to Inactive Status by Intersection of Detailed Race/Ethnicity and Gender Identity..... 14
- DEI LEADERSHIP SEAL ..... 15
- DIVERSITY SUMMITS ..... 16

CREATING A CULTURE OF INCLUSIVITY .....	17
ORGANIZATIONAL AUDIT FOCUSED ON DEI.....	17
State Bar’s DEI Leadership Seal Application .....	17
Procurement Disparities Assessment.....	18
State Bar Investment Policy.....	18
INTERNAL IMPLICIT BIAS TRAININGS AND DEI DISCUSSIONS.....	19
SUBENTITY APPOINTMENT OPPORTUNITIES OUTREACH .....	19
ELIMINATION OF BIAS IMPLICIT BIAS TRAINING MODULE FOR ATTORNEYS.....	20
PIPELINE TO THE PROFESSION .....	21
DIVERSITY PIPELINE PROGRAMS .....	21
MINDSETS IN LEGAL EDUCATION .....	22
EXPERIMENTAL BAR EXAM AND UNDERSTANDING DISPARITIES IN EXAM PERFORMANCE.....	22
Pilot Phase: October 2023.....	22
Phase One: November 2024.....	23
Phase Two.....	23
OUTREACH AND IMPLICIT BIAS TRAINING FOR BAR EXAM GRADERS AND PROCTORS AND LAW SCHOOL INSPECTORS .....	23
BLUE RIBBON COMMISSION ON THE FUTURE OF THE BAR EXAM .....	23
Court Order.....	24
Future of the Bar Exam.....	24
LAW SCHOOL PERFORMANCE AND STUDENT OUTCOME DATA .....	25
Profile of California Law Schools Report .....	25
Figure 6. 2022 Data Highlights from the Profile of California Law Schools .....	26
Figure 7. Racial/Ethnic and Gender Composition of 2022 California JD Enrollment by Type of Law School Compared with California’s Adult Population .....	27
Figure 8. 1L Nontransfer Attrition Rates by Reason for Attrition by Race/Ethnicity and Gender Identity .....	28
Law School Enrollment.....	29
Figure 9. 2022 California Law Schools and JD Enrollment.....	29
Figure 10. California Law School JD Enrollment and Number of Schools: 2009-2022 .....	30
Figure 11. 2022 JD Enrollment in California Law Schools by Race/Ethnicity and Gender Identity.....	31

Table 2. Composition of 2022 California JD Enrollment by Type of Law School Compared to California’s Adult Population .....	32
Table 3. Detailed Racial/Ethnic Composition of 2022 JD Enrollment By Type of Law School Compared with California Adult Population .....	33
Law School Attrition .....	33
Figure 12. 1L Nontransfer Attrition Rates by Reason for Attrition by Race/Ethnicity and Gender Identity .....	34
Figure 13. 12 Nontransfer Attrition Rates by Reason for Attrition by Detailed Race/Ethnicity .....	36
Figure 14. 2022 California JD Enrollment Compared with JDs Awarded by Type of Law School.....	37
Bar Exam Pass Rates .....	37
Figure 15. July 2022 California General Bar Exam Pass Rates by Test Taker Status and Type of California Law School.....	38
Figure 16. July California General Bar Exam Pass Rates for First-Time Applicants for Years 2012–2022 by Type of California Law School .....	39
Law School Performance Report .....	39
Assessing New Performance Metrics .....	39
RETENTION AND ADVANCEMENT IN THE PROFESSION.....	40
REFORMS TO THE ATTORNEY DISCIPLINE SYSTEM.....	40
Implementation of Reforms and Recommendations to Reduce Inequities in the Attorney Discipline System .....	40
Additional Initiatives Addressing Disparities in Attorney Discipline.....	41
2025 Study of Disparities in the Attorney Discipline System .....	42
Figure 17. Differences in Probation Rates of Black and White Attorneys.....	43
Figure 18. Differences in Probation Rates of Hispanic/Latino and White Attorneys .....	44
Figure 19. Differences in Disbarment Rates of Black and White Attorneys.....	44
Figure 20. Differences in Disbarment Rates of Hispanic/Latino and White Attorneys .....	45
<i>Counsel Representation Policy Analysis</i> .....	45
<i>Archiving Policy Analysis</i> .....	45
Figure 21. Percentage of Attorneys with 10+ Visible Prior Complaints .....	46
Figure 22. Percentage of Cases Forwarded to Investigation.....	47
PREVENTION AND PROACTIVE RISK-MANAGEMENT FOR ATTORNEYS.....	47

Assessing the Impact of the State Bar’s Prevention and Proactive Risk-Based Management Work .....	48
Support for Attorneys from Disenfranchised and Underserved Communities who may Experience Unique Practice Management and Other Challenges .....	48
Licensee Resource Page and Other Resources for Law Students and Licensees on the State Bar website .....	49
Competency-related factors that drive disparate voluntary departures from the legal profession by race and gender .....	49
PROMOTING RETENTION AND ADVANCEMENT .....	49
Toolkits and Resources .....	49
Innovative DEI Practices .....	50
Law Student Loan Forgiveness .....	50
FUTURE PLANS .....	52
STATEWIDE LEADERSHIP .....	52
CREATING A CULTURE OF INCLUSIVITY.....	52
PIPELINE TO THE PROFESSION .....	52
RETENTION AND ADVANCEMENT IN THE PROFESSION .....	533
Reforms to the Attorney Discipline System .....	53
Prevention and Proactive Risk Management for Attorneys .....	53
Promoting Retention and Advancement in the Profession.....	54
FUNDING HISTORY AND NEEDS .....	54
Table 4. Elimination of Bias Fund History, 2017–2024.....	55

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The State Bar of California proudly presents its fourth biennial report documenting transformative progress in enhancing access, fairness, and diversity within California's legal profession. The timing of this report falls amid a challenging political climate in which a national reckoning on systemic racism in America is juxtaposed against an increasingly critical national discourse around diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). And while the State Bar is not expressly subject to President Trump's January 20, 2025, executive order calling for an end to diversity programming, we are sensitive to its message. Nevertheless, the State Bar is confident that its work does not constitute illegal discrimination or preferences, is thoroughly committed to its role and obligation to advance diversity, equity, and inclusion—and justice—for all Californians, and takes seriously the California Legislature's statutory directive that the State Bar carry out this work. The State Bar will continue a strategic and data-driven approach to advancing DEI—one that engages both staff and stakeholders in deep thinking about the most effective means to address access, fairness, diversity, and elimination of bias in the practice of law.

As this report reflects, over the last two years, the State Bar has continued a wide array of initiatives impacting its internal culture, prospective and current licensees, and its many partners and stakeholders. The State Bar has engaged in meaningful, substantive, and effective work with the goal of effectuating meaningful change for the attorney population and the public that it serves. Similar to prior reports to the legislature, this report includes updates and highlights planned activities.

### KEY ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2023-2024

#### Data-Driven Innovation

- Published first of its kind *Profile of California Law Schools*, which provided comprehensive analysis of enrollment, attrition, and bar passage rates across all three categories of California law schools and revealed critical insights showing California-accredited and unaccredited schools enroll more diverse student populations but face higher attrition rates and lower bar passage rates when compared to ABA-approved law schools.
- Released the pioneering *Profile of California's Inactive Attorneys*, illuminating trends and demographics of attorneys transitioning to inactive status, with particular focus on disparities affecting women and attorneys of color.
- Completed the *2024 Attorney Discipline Disparities Study*, a five-year update of the original 2019 study examining disparities in attorney discipline outcomes, and two accompanying evaluation studies that explore the implementation of policies introduced in response to the 2019 study focused on counsel representation rates and the impact of archiving attorney complaints.

## Statewide Leadership

- Successfully launched the DEI Leadership Seal program with remarkable engagement: 99 participating employers, including 72 seal recipients and 27 committed employers across law firms, nonprofits, government agencies, and corporate legal departments.
- Achieved gold-tier DEI Leadership Seal status as an employer, demonstrating the State Bar's commitment to leading by example.
- Hosted multiple diversity summits engaging over 300 stakeholders in crucial discussions about advancing DEI in the legal profession.

## Proactive Attorney Support Programs

- Implemented the innovative Attorney–Client Bridge Program, offering nonconfrontational alternatives for resolving low-level issues between clients and attorneys.
- Launched evidence-based specialized support initiatives and interventions including the following:
  - Reset: Bar Retaker Support Program (97 percent satisfaction rate for participants).
  - Refocus: ADHD Strategies for Success in Law (more than 85 percent extremely/very satisfied participant ratings).
- Piloted the Attorney Supervision and Assistance Redesign program, using evidence-informed practices to provide the appropriate level of supervision and support to all disciplined attorneys, including those with substance use and behavioral health issues, and to provide them with tools to successfully comply with their disciplinary conditions.

## CRITICAL DEMOGRAPHIC INSIGHTS

### Current State of Diversity in the Profession

- While recent bar admittance rates show promising trends (56 percent women, 55 percent people of color), significant disparities persist in the overall attorney population.
- Stark representation gaps remain:
  - Latino attorneys: 6 percent of licensed attorneys vs. 37 percent of California's population.
  - Black attorneys: 3 percent of licensed attorneys vs. 6 percent of state population.
  - Women: 44 percent of licensed attorneys vs. 50 percent of state population.
- Notable progress in LGBTQIA+ representation, increasing from 7.3 percent in 2019 to 9.1 percent in 2023.



## Law School to the Profession Pipeline Challenges

- Higher attrition rates disproportionately affect students of color:
  - Nearly 70 percent for Black students in unaccredited schools.
  - Significantly higher rates for Native American students across all school types.
- Bar exam pass rates show persistent disparities between ABA-approved schools and other institutions.

## 2025–2026 STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

### Transformative Initiatives

- Convene and support a steering committee to guide the development of a new California Bar Examination following Supreme Court directives to emphasize practical skills and reduce memorization requirements.
- Implement data-driven strategies to address disparities in the attorney discipline system.
- Explore additional areas of diversity like neurodiversity, generational differences, and geographic diversity to identify support and resources for attorneys to encourage retention and advancement.
- Enhance the DEI Leadership Seal program with additional resources and participant support.
- Launch interactive data dashboards for improved transparency and accessibility of diversity metrics with the 2025 Diversity Report Card.

### CRITICAL FUNDING NEEDS

Current funding through the elimination of bias (EOB) opt-out fee on the attorney licensee fee statement (approximately \$300,000 annually) significantly constrains program expansion.

Additional funding would enable the following improvements:

- Enhanced outreach and communications (\$25,000 annually).
- Robust retention and advancement programming (\$50,000 annually).
- A pilot program for appointed counsel for qualifying respondent attorneys in attorney discipline matters (\$250,000 for pilot).
- Regular updates to the free online training module on elimination of bias and implicit bias, available to all attorneys (\$100,000 every three years).

### LOOKING FORWARD

The State Bar of California remains steadfast in its commitment to advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion through evidence-based initiatives while maintaining its core focus on public

protection. As demographic data shows both progress and persistent challenges, the State Bar continues to innovate and adapt its approaches to create lasting change. Through strategic partnerships, data-driven decision-making, and unwavering commitment to its mission, the State Bar works to build a legal profession that truly reflects and serves California's diverse population.

The initiatives and achievements outlined in this report represent significant steps toward a more equitable legal system, while acknowledging the substantial work that remains to be done. With adequate support and resources, the State Bar is positioned to accelerate this crucial transformation of California's legal profession.

## INTRODUCTION

Diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) positively impacts the administration of justice, ensures fairness, and promotes the rule of law. As detailed in the State Bar's previous reports<sup>1</sup> to the Legislature, beginning in 2019, the State Bar's organizational and statutory mission has prioritized DEI. The State Bar has approached this work with a "built in, not bolted on" approach. In 2019, the Board demonstrated its commitment to this work in the State Bar's strategic plan by including nine concrete objectives aimed to enhance access, fairness, and diversity in the profession. The Board took its commitment to these goals a step further when adopting the [2022–2027 Strategic Plan](#),<sup>2</sup> which states the following:

The State Bar's mission is rooted in protecting the public. The strategic goals reflect the organization's vision for realizing that mission over the next five years. As a foundational principle, the State Bar is committed to advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion with respect to both its own operations and the legal profession itself.

While the State Bar remains steadfast in its commitment to this important work, it recognizes the challenging political climate that exists in California and around the nation. While a global pandemic and a national reckoning with system racism marked the first half of the current decade, there is now an increasingly critical national discourse around DEI. Though the State Bar is not expressly subject to President Trump's January 20, 2025, executive order calling for

---

<sup>1</sup> The State Bar submitted the [first biennial DEI report](#) to the Legislature in 2019, the [second biennial DEI report](#) in 2021, and the [third DEI report](#) in 2023.

<sup>2</sup> The 2022–2027 Strategic Plan includes four goals:

- Protect the public by strengthening the attorney discipline system.
- Protect the public by enhancing access to and inclusion in the legal system.
- Protect the public by regulating the legal profession.
- Protect the public by engaging partners.

To meet these ambitious goals, the strategic plan focuses implementation strategies in the following areas: effectiveness; consumer focus; diversity, equity, and inclusion; and policy and systems change.

an end to diversity programming, the State Bar is sensitive to its messaging and aware of how it may impact constituents, including staff, California attorneys, and members of the public that interact with the legal system. The State Bar is committed to its legislative mandate to address access, fairness, diversity, and elimination of bias in the practice of law within the context of this new and evolving climate.

The State Bar is proud to submit this report, which documents continued significant and meaningful progress in the last two years in the effort to identify and reduce implicit bias in the practice of law and to enhance access, fairness, and diversity in California’s legal profession. By collecting and analyzing data and improving upon processes and practices, from law school to licensure to retention and advancement across sectors, the State Bar’s goal is to support an increasingly diverse attorney population which, in turn, will be able to provide meaningful access to justice to all Californians. The State Bar, with support from its Council on Access and Fairness (COAF),<sup>3</sup> hopes these efforts will contribute to the larger national conversation on diversity and access to justice issues.

This report begins with a brief overview of the demographics of the California attorney population, then highlights the State Bar’s progress and plans in the following areas: Statewide Leadership, Creating a Culture of Inclusivity, Pipeline to the Profession, and Retention and Advancement in the Profession.

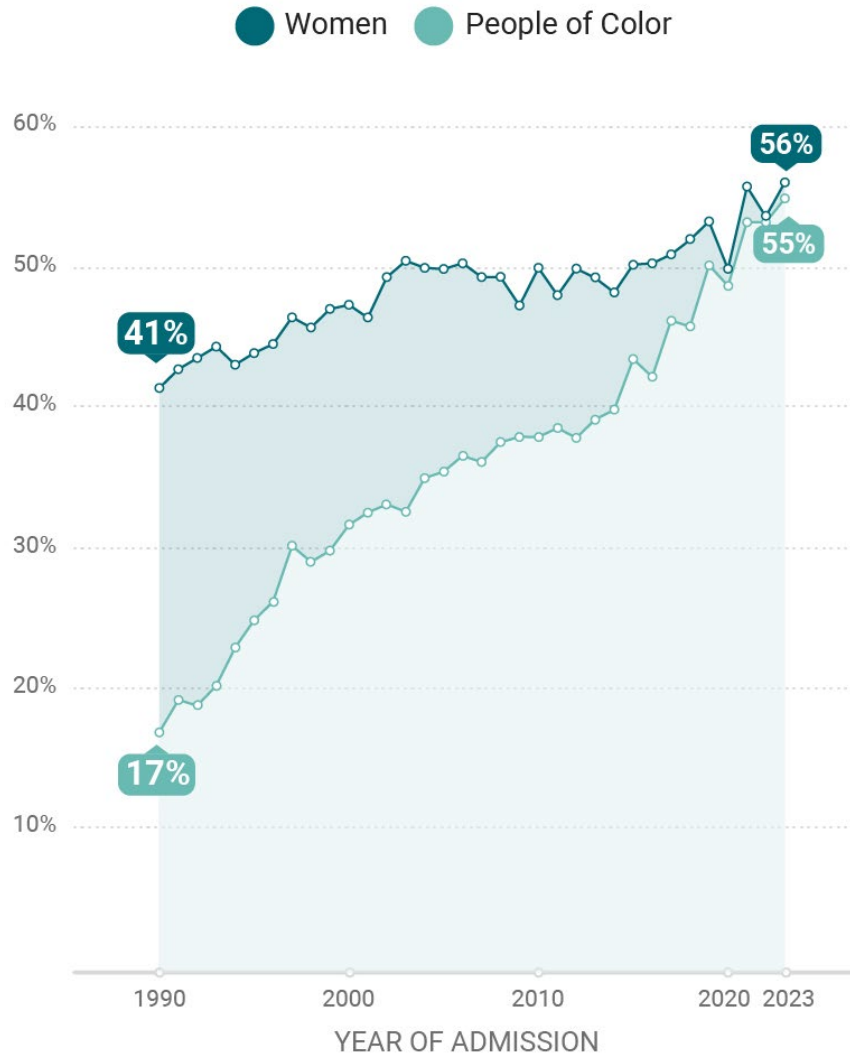
## **DEMOGRAPHIC OVERVIEW**

As reported in prior reports, while the California attorney population has become more diverse over time, it does not reflect the state’s rich and varied diversity. Additionally, though incoming cohorts of attorneys are far more diverse than those who have entered the profession in previous decades, year-over-year shifts in demographics are small. In 2023, women accounted for 56 percent of newly admitted attorneys to the State Bar, while people of color represented 55 percent—a record high for this population’s representation (see figure 1).

---

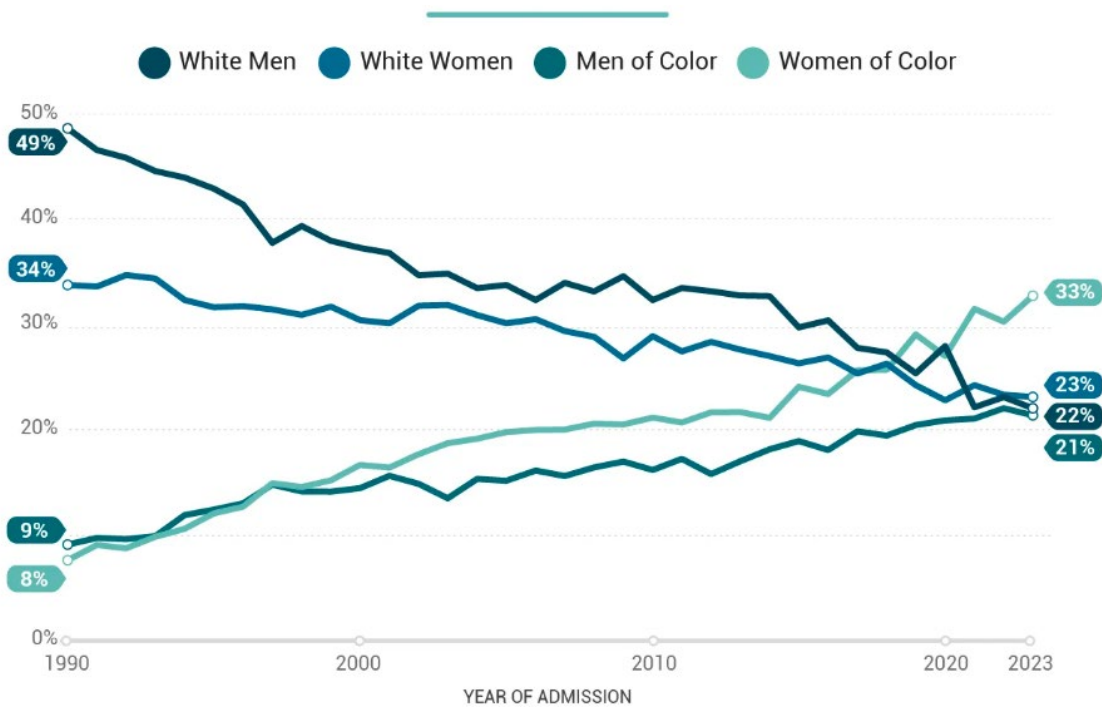
<sup>3</sup> The Council on Access and Fairness is the State Bar subentity that supports the Board of Trustees in effectuating the State Bar’s DEI goals and objectives.

**Figure 1. Percent of Attorneys Admitted to the State Bar Who Identified as a Woman or Person of Color by Year of Admission: 1990-2023**



The recent uptick in racial/ethnic diversity among attorneys admitted since 2019 is predominantly led by women, although the extent of this shift varies across different racial and ethnic groups (see figure 2). Notably, the representation of Asian and multiracial women has steadily increased, while Black women have seen a slight decline, although Black women’s representation remains higher than it was in 2019. Conversely, several groups of men of color—including Asian men, Black men, and multiracial men—experienced a slight decrease in representation in 2023 compared with the prior year, 2022.

**Figure 2. Intersectional Racial/Ethnic and Gender Identity of Attorneys Admitted to the State Bar of California by Year: 1990-2023**



While recent cohorts are more diverse by race/ethnicity and gender, the overall attorney population remains predominantly white and male (see table 1). White people make up 38 percent of California’s adult population yet are 65 percent of the state’s active licensed attorneys. In contrast, Latinos make up 37 percent of the state’s population but only 6 percent of all California’s licensed attorneys. Asian attorneys constitute 16 percent of the state’s population and 14 percent of all attorneys. Attorneys who identify as multiracial represent 8 percent of all attorneys; this is four times the share of adults statewide who identify as multiracial. Black attorneys are 6 percent of the adult population in California and 3 percent of all attorneys. Middle Eastern/North African attorneys account for 3 percent of all attorneys, and Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islanders represent 0.3 percent, comparable to their representation among the state’s adult population.

**Table 1. Five-Year Trends and California’s 2023 Attorney Population Compared with California’s Adult Population by Demographic Characteristics**

	California Adult Population	2023 California Attorneys	California Attorneys				
			2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>							
American Indian/Alaska Native	0.4%	0.2%	0.2%	0.2%	0.2%	0.2%	0.2%
Asian	16%	14%	12.0%	12.5%	13.4%	13.5%	13.9%
Black/African American	6%	3%	3.6%	3.6%	3.5%	3.4%	3.5%
Hispanic/Latino	37%	6%	6.7%	6.6%	6.2%	6.0%	6.1%
Middle Eastern/North African	...	3%	2.0%	2.2%	2.4%	2.5%	2.7%
Multiracial	2%	8%	6.9%	6.9%	6.9%	7.6%	7.9%
Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	0.4%	0.3%	0.4%	0.5%	0.4%	0.3%	0.3%
White	38%	65%	68.2%	67.4%	67.1%	66.4%	65.3%
<b>Gender Identity</b>							
Men	50%	55%	55.6%	55.2%	55.1%	55.4%	54.9%
Women	50%	44%	43.5%	44.0%	44.0%	43.5%	44.0%
Nonbinary	...	1%	0.9%	0.8%	0.9%	1.1%	1.1%
<b>Transgender</b>	0.49%	0.27%	...	0.16%	0.34%	0.26%	0.27%
<b>LGBTQIA+</b>	9%	9%	7.3%	7.4%	7.6%	8.9%	9.1%
<b>Reports Disability</b>	25%	6%	4.8%	5.1%	5.4%	5.7%	5.7%
<b>Veterans</b>	4%	5%	...	3.2%	5.5%	5.3%	5.1%

Source: 2023 Diversity Report Card

Note: Data points reported in column “2023 California Attorneys” are rounded to facilitate comparison with California’s adult population. Blank cells indicate unavailable data. Cisgender/transgender identity and veteran status were collected beginning in 2020.

Additional highlights of five-year trends across all demographic categories for California's attorney population include the following:

- Women make up half of the California adult population, but just 44 percent of California attorneys. One percent of the attorney population identifies as nonbinary; comparable data for the California adult population is not available.
- Less than 1 percent of the attorney population identifies as transgender, which is similar to recent estimates of the transgender adult population in California. The share of attorneys who identify as transgender has remained the same since 2020, the first year the State Bar began collecting data on cisgender and transgender identity.
- The share of attorneys identifying as LGBTQIA+ is the same as California's statewide LGBTQIA+ adult population. The share of attorneys identifying as LGBTQIA+ has grown from 7.3 percent in 2019 to 9.1 percent in 2023.
- One in four Californians report having at least one form of a disability that limits activities and self-care. These include mobility issues, cognitive impairments, and vision and hearing impairments. In contrast, only 6 percent of California attorneys reported living with a disability in 2023. The share of attorneys with disabilities has grown from 4.8 percent in 2019 to 5.7 percent in 2023.
- Five percent of the attorney population reports being a veteran, which is comparable to recent estimates of the veteran population in California. Veterans' representation among California attorneys has grown from 3.2 percent to 5.1 percent since 2020, when the State Bar began collecting data on attorneys' veteran status.

## **STATEWIDE LEADERSHIP**

The State Bar recognizes its role in promoting and advancing access, fairness, and diversity in the legal profession, and as outlined in the 2023 DEI report to the legislature (2023 report) noted the following key statewide leadership activities:

- Administer the attorney census annually.
- Publish the annual Diversity Report Card.
- Implement, monitor, and improve DEI Leadership Seal program.

Additionally, the State Bar administered and published findings from the Inactive Attorney Survey and continued to hold Diversity Summits to share information and engage attorneys and other stakeholders in this important work.

## ATTORNEY CENSUS

The Attorney Census is a voluntary demographic survey administered annually by the State Bar of California since its launch in 2019. The survey collects information on various demographic characteristics, including race/ethnicity, gender identity, transgender identity, disability status, and military/veteran status. Data from the survey forms the basis of the State Bar’s annual Diversity Report Card (see section below) and allows the State Bar to monitor progress toward enhancing diversity within the legal profession and to conduct research on a variety of topics including racial disparities in the discipline system.

To align with best practices for collecting demographic data and to further the State Bar’s commitment to inclusivity, the demographic questions and response options were recently updated and are included in the 2025 Attorney Census. The updates include a broader range of response options, opportunities for respondents to self-identify through write-in answers, and explicit "prefer not to respond" options for each question. These revisions were informed by extensive research, including a review of current recommendations and practices from governmental organizations (e.g., Office of Management and Budget, U.S. Census Bureau) and nongovernmental organizations (e.g., Human Rights Campaign). Additionally, staff engaged a panel comprising COAF members and Board of Trustee Access to Justice/DEI Liaisons to provide insights and feedback.

## DIVERSITY REPORT CARD

Utilizing data from the annual Attorney Census, the State Bar continues to publish annual Report Cards on the Diversity of California’s Legal Profession (Diversity Report Card). Each Diversity Report Card provides a snapshot of the demographics of California’s attorney population. The [2023 Report Card on the Diversity of California’s Legal Profession](#) describes the demographic composition of California’s 2023 attorney population and analyzes changes in demographic representation since 2019, the first year the State Bar began collecting and reporting comprehensive attorney demographic data. The report also explores racial/ethnic and gender patterns in recent cohorts of attorneys admitted to the State Bar and includes analyses on Latino and Asian subgroups among active attorneys and detailed reporting on the intersection of race/ethnicity and gender identity. For the first time, the report also includes a summary of trends in the transition from active to inactive status. (See section below for more information.)

## REPORT ON INACTIVE ATTORNEYS

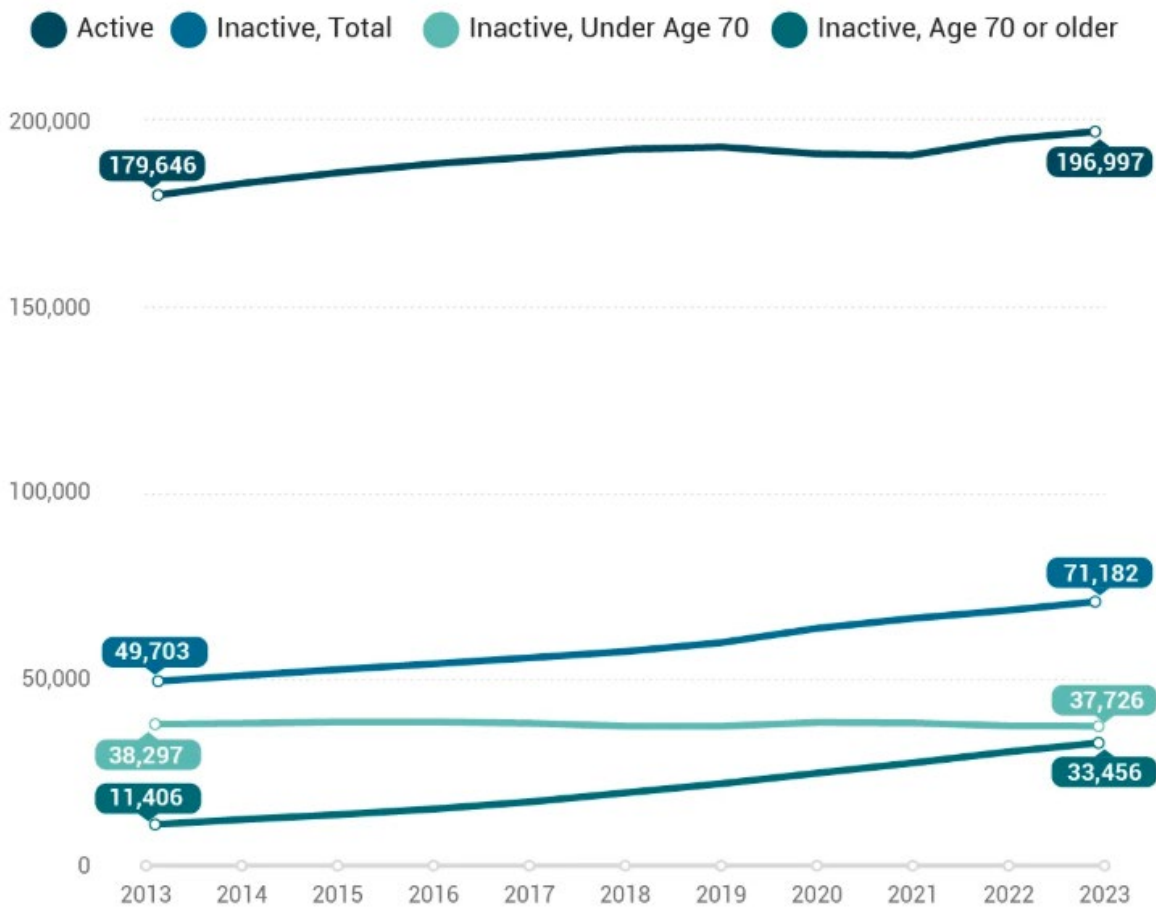
In California, only attorneys with “active” status can practice law, and attorneys can voluntarily transfer to “inactive” status at any time and as often as they wish throughout their career. Approximately 4,600 attorneys on average transition to inactive status each year in California, relinquishing their ability to practice law. In 2024, the State Bar published the first ever [Profile of California’s Inactive Attorneys](#), which was based on administrative data as well as a voluntary



survey administered to licensees who transfer to inactive status. The purpose of the report was to understand how California’s inactive attorney population has changed over the last 10 years, to learn which groups of attorneys were overrepresented among attorneys who transfer to inactive status, and to explore the reasons for those transfers.

The report found that the number of inactive California attorneys has increased by 38 percent over the last 10 years, reaching over 71,000 in 2023 (see figure 3). This increase was primarily driven by attorneys aged 70 and older, who represented nearly one-quarter of inactive licensees in 2013 and almost half in 2023.

**Figure 3. State Bar Active and Inactive Population Snapshots, 2013-2023**

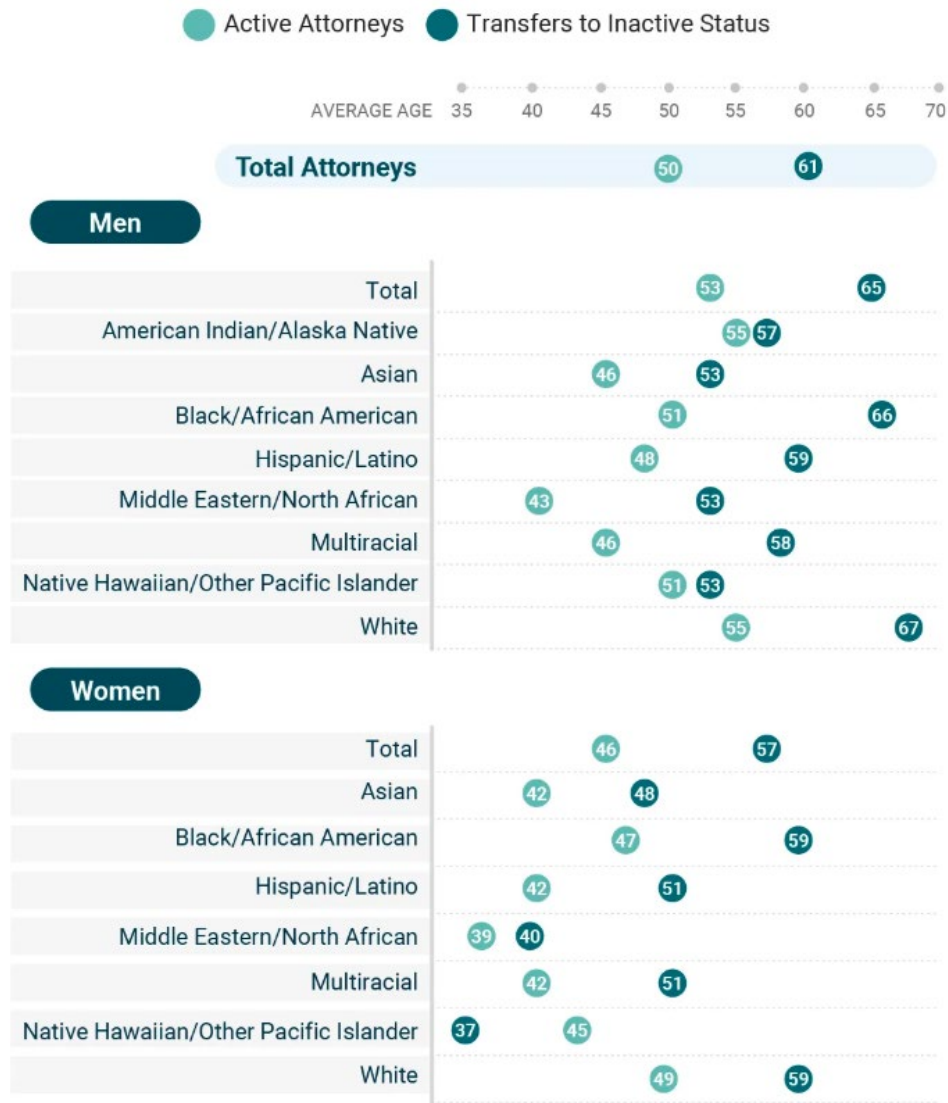


The report also found that white men and women were overrepresented among attorneys who transferred to inactive status compared to their representation among active attorneys. This finding might appear contrary to expectations, given the extensive literature and reporting on the challenges faced by women and attorneys of color in the legal profession, particularly women of color, that often lead them to exit legal practice. Age and retirement intention findings provide suggestive evidence for why white men are overrepresented among transfers

to inactive status. However, these two factors are less suggestive in understanding the overrepresentation of white women.

With the exception of Black men and women, attorneys of color tend to be younger than their white counterparts when they transfer to inactive status. Notably, Asian, Eastern/North African, and Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander women are among the youngest in this group. Attorneys who transferred to inactive status in 2023 were older than active attorneys, with an average age of 61 years compared with active attorneys' average age of 50 (see figure 4). White men who transferred to inactive status were, on average, 67 years old and Black men were 66. In contrast, all other men of color were, on average, in their fifties when they transferred to inactive status. The average age of white and Black women who transferred to inactive status was 59, while Latino and multiracial women were in their early fifties, Asian and Middle Eastern/North African women were in their forties, and Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander women were the youngest, with an average age of 37 years.

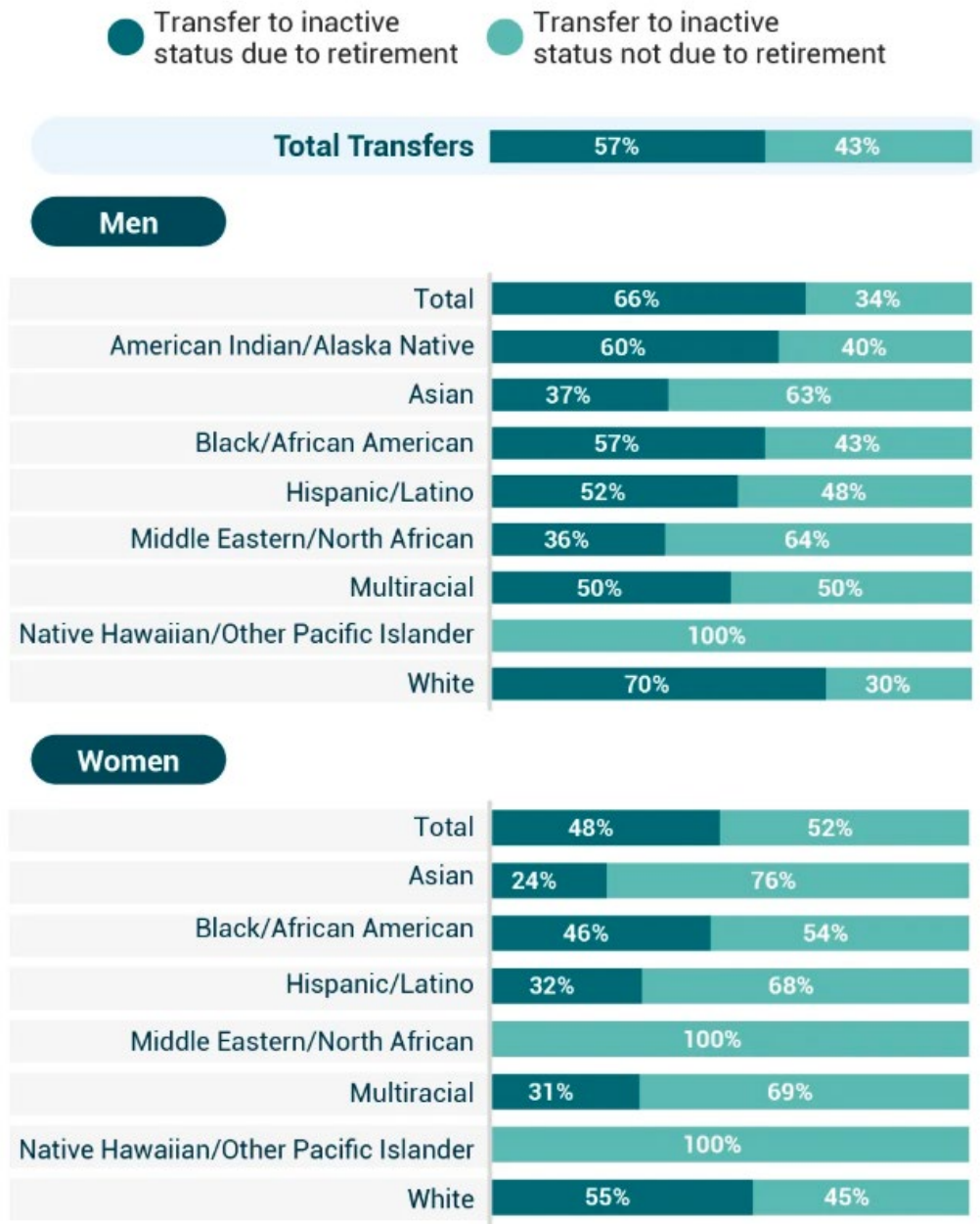
**Figure 4. Average Age of Active Attorneys and 2023 Transfers to Inactive Status by Intersection of Detailed Race/Ethnicity and Gender Identity**



The Inactive Attorney Survey revealed that retirement is a significant reason for transitioning to inactive status, cited by over half of those making the switch (see figure 5). However, nearly 43 percent of respondents indicated that retirement is not their motive, particularly among women and attorneys of color, signaling a deliberate departure from active law practice.

In 2023, both white men and white women were overrepresented among those transitioning to inactive status. The analyses suggest that age and retirement plans are contributing factors, particularly for white men.

**Figure 5. Retirement Among 2023 Transfers to Inactive Status by Intersection of Detailed Race/Ethnicity and Gender Identity**



The most frequently cited factor influencing the decision to transition to inactive status in 2023 was “alternative work schedules/flexible hours,” chosen by attorneys across gender and racial lines. However, “diverse colleagues/networks” was the most cited factor for Black attorneys. Other reasons described by all attorneys include practicing law in different states, leaving the legal profession altogether, seeking a career change, and personal reasons related to family and health.

The State Bar recently revised the Inactive Attorney Survey with the goal of gathering additional information to better understand attorneys’ reasons for voluntarily transferring to inactive status. The State Bar will analyze these findings to develop initiatives to address issues that drive attorneys to become inactive for reasons other than retirement.

## **DEI LEADERSHIP SEAL**

Complementing the annual Diversity Report Card and [Calls to Action](#), the goal of the DEI Leadership Seal program—launched in January 2023—is to encourage legal employers to publicly commit to and implement measurable diversity, equity, and inclusion best practices. The DEI Leadership Seal is available to all employers with California-licensed attorneys, including law firms of all sizes, in-house legal departments, legal academia, nonprofit organizations, and government agencies with attorney staff. Employers that commit to pursuing at least 5 out of 10 Action Items will be recognized as participating employers and listed on the State Bar website. The DEI Leadership Seal Action Items were informed by best practices, research on existing DEI programs for legal and nonlegal employers, and information gathered from focus groups and interviews with DEI leaders in the profession.

Participating employers that have already implemented at least 5 of the 10 Action Items are eligible to receive the State Bar DEI Leadership Seal, which they can use on their own print and online materials to signal their participation. Seal recipients will be recognized as bronze-, silver-, or gold-tier recipients based on the number of Action Items they implement. Participating employers that have not yet implemented the Action Items have one year to implement them before the employer can receive the DEI Leadership Seal.

As of January 2025, 99 employers participate in the DEI Leadership Seal: 72 as seal recipients and 27 as committed employers. Participating employers represent law firms, nonprofits, government agencies, law schools, and in-house legal departments. The State Bar, as an employer of California attorneys itself, received a gold-tier DEI Leadership Seal in January 2024.<sup>4</sup>

The State Bar has compiled the [DEI Leadership Seal Program Resource Guide](#), which includes best practices and samples, as a tool to help employers develop and achieve their DEI goals. The State Bar also conducted a survey and a series of focus groups to gather participating employers’ feedback about the program and ideas about how, if at all, to strengthen the DEI Leadership Seal Action Items. Employers expressed a desire for more opportunities to share best practices among each other.

Before accepting applications for the Leadership Seal in 2025, the State Bar plans to assess the program, seek feedback from stakeholders and program participants, and make additional

---

<sup>4</sup> As described below, in an effort to promote fairness and transparency, the State Bar’s DEI Leadership Seal application was independently reviewed by a group of DEI stakeholders.

improvements including developing additional programming for participants and exploring ways to expand the prominence and reach of the program.

## DIVERSITY SUMMITS

The State Bar continues to engage with DEI leaders in the profession by hosting diversity summits annually. These convenings are an opportunity to share the latest California attorney data, discuss common challenges, uplift best practices, and make connections to further advance this work.

On December 7, 2023, the State Bar hosted a Diversity Summit via Zoom, with 85 attendees. The summit featured a presentation on the impact of the Supreme Court decision in *Students for Fair Admissions v. Harvard* and a panel discussion that shared strategies and ideas to increase support for advancing DEI among organizational leadership and employees. Through a post-event survey, participants reported finding the content informative, useful, and relevant to their work; attendees requested more interactive components and suggested topics for future summits including recruitment and retention strategies.

With that feedback in mind, on June 27, 2024, the State Bar convened over 75 stakeholders for its first in-person diversity summit since 2019. The summit included a presentation on generational differences in the workplace, followed by a panel discussion on what California employers are doing to attract and retain a multigenerational workforce; a report by State Bar staff on the [2023 Diversity Report Card](#) and [Profile of Inactive Attorneys](#); and a panel discussion from DEI Leadership Seal recipient organizations on supporting attorney career growth through mentorship and sponsorship. The event also included breakout sessions for attendees to further discuss the data and topics presented. After the event, attendees expressed appreciation for the in-person gathering and desire meet again and requested future discussion on LGBTQIA+ attorneys and attorneys with a disability.

On December 4, 2024, the State Bar hosted a virtual summit attended by more than 140 stakeholders. The summit included a presentation on several State Bar reports that together provide a holistic view of diversity in the legal profession: the [Profile of California Law Schools](#), the [2023 Diversity Report Card](#), and the [Profile of Inactive Attorneys](#). It also included two panel discussions—one of law school deans sharing how their schools support and retain underrepresented students and one of legal employers sharing how their organizations support and retain underrepresented attorneys.

With stakeholder feedback in mind, the State Bar plans future convenings to include interactive components and discussion among attendees and opportunities to revisit discussions or topics addressed at prior events.

## CREATING A CULTURE OF INCLUSIVITY

The 2023 report outlined key activities to create a culture of inclusivity :

- Conduct an internal DEI Audit, including a procurement disparities study and revisions to the State Bar investment policy.
- Apply for the DEI Leadership Seal as an employer and share progress with stakeholders.
- Hold annual implicit bias training for decision makers in the Office of Chief Trial Counsel and State Bar Court.
- Expand current DEI and implicit bias training offerings and discussions for all staff.
- Expand outreach on subentity appointment opportunities to support the long-range goal of diversifying subentity membership.
- Continue to review metrics for the implicit bias module and explore development of additional trainings addressing EOB, with the goal of updating the course content regularly to ensure that it remains relevant.

## ORGANIZATIONAL AUDIT FOCUSED ON DEI

The State Bar engaged in an organizational audit focused on DEI, which included applying for the State Bar’s DEI Leadership Seal, conducting a procurement disparities study, and reviewing and making plans to amend the State Bar’s investment policy.

### State Bar’s DEI Leadership Seal Application

As a part of the State Bar’s ongoing commitment to DEI and to set an example for other employers, the State Bar applied for the DEI Leadership Seal.<sup>5</sup> The State Bar submitted its application in March 2023 to indicate its commitment to implement 9 of 10 action items, and submitted its materials to demonstrate implementation of action items in November 2023. To ensure a fair and transparent review process, external stakeholders were engaged to review the State Bar’s application. In December 2024, the external review team determined that the State Bar had implemented 9 of the 10 action items, which qualified it for the gold DEI Leadership Seal. The State Bar is particularly proud of its [DEI statement](#) for prospective employees as well as the development of its first [internal DEI Strategic Plan](#).

---

<sup>5</sup> At its January 19, 2023, meeting, the Board of Trustees’ Audit Committee unanimously passed the following resolution: “RESOLVED, that the Audit Committee directs staff to pursue the gold-tier DEI Leadership Seal to set an example for other legal organizations and to affirm the State Bar’s commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion.”

## Procurement Disparities Assessment

In 2023 and 2024, the State Bar engaged outside counsel to conduct an [assessment](#) of the State Bar's policies and practices related to procurement activities. The assessment included review of various policies, manuals, and documents related to procurement activities; interviews of staff; and a survey of current vendors.

Key findings included the following:

- The State Bar lacks a centralized procurement system, which hinders its ability to implement race- and gender-neutral yet expansive and inclusive procurement measures.
- The State Bar does not currently advertise its procurements widely and does not conduct extensive or robust outreach specifically to small businesses, including businesses owned by people of color and women.
- The State Bar's current pool of vendors includes small businesses. Three-quarters of the vendors who responded to the survey have only one owner and two-thirds qualify as California Department of General Services (CADGS) microbusinesses.
- The State Bar lacks a mechanism or system to collect demographic data regarding its vendors, which significantly impacts its ability to determine the diversity of its vendor pool. Without robust data collection, it will be difficult for the Bar to evaluate the effectiveness of any adopted race-and gender-neutral measures targeted at small businesses.
  - The demographic representation of the survey respondents is 76 percent white, 9 percent Black, 6 percent Hispanic/Latino, 6 percent multiracial, and 3 percent Asian.

After review of applicable laws, outside counsel recommended development of a race- and gender-neutral procurement policy which focuses on encouraging and incentivizing the equitable participation of California small businesses, including those that are owned by women and other underrepresented groups, in the State Bar's procurement opportunities. The State Bar has already taken steps to address the assessment findings, including adding a general statement in the State Bar Procurement Manual highlighting the State Bar's commitment to DEI, adopting a race- and gender-neutral Small Business Enterprise policy, and developing a robust vendor outreach plan.

## State Bar Investment Policy

The State Bar investment policy was reviewed by the Board of Trustees in March 2024. The main focus of the review was to align the policy with the State of California's current investment



policy. The Board reviews the State Bar investment policy annually. The Legal Services Trust Fund Commission<sup>6</sup> plans to revise and align its investment policies with the State Bar, as appropriate.

### **INTERNAL IMPLICIT BIAS TRAININGS AND DEI DISCUSSIONS**

The State Bar continues to provide a variety of opportunities for all staff to engage in implicit bias trainings and discussions on relevant DEI topics. In June 2023, the State Bar held a dedicated elimination of implicit bias training for decision makers in the Office of Chief Trial Counsel and State Bar Court. There were 283 attendees, and following the training, a representative working group was identified to continue to study how implicit bias could be impacting current systems and workflows, what teams are already doing to identify and combat bias, and future opportunities to mitigate bias. Based on feedback from attendees, the State Bar integrated this training into the offerings for all staff for 2024 and beyond.

Additionally, the State Bar continued to offer presentations, trainings, and discussion sessions for staff on various topics, including working in a multigenerational workforce; fostering inclusion and belonging in a remote work environment; cultivating allyship; mitigating bias, studying inclusive design and its impact on people with disabilities and others; and furthering LGBTQIA+ inclusion. In 2023, there were six live sessions were offered, and seven live sessions in 2024. In 2025, five live sessions are planned.

### **SUBENTITY APPOINTMENT OPPORTUNITIES OUTREACH**

In support of the long-range goal of diversifying subentity membership to engage diverse voices in the development and evaluation of State Bar policy, the State Bar continues to engage in extensive outreach efforts to ensure diverse candidates for State Bar subentities with respect to race and ethnicity, gender, profession, and geographic diversity.

In 2023, the State Bar targeted nonprofit and community-based organizations, organizations whose members filled a specialized niche sought by a committee, and local and affinity bar associations, among others. Current and alumni committee members were encouraged to share and individually recruit members they felt were good fits. Multimodal outreach efforts were employed, including direct email, paid social media campaigns, and individual outreach. This comprehensive recruitment strategy resulted in 186 applications for appointment, including 100

---

<sup>6</sup> The State Bar, through the Legal Services Trust Fund Commission (LSTFC), administers a variety of grants to legal aid organizations to help meet the need for legal services for low-income and other vulnerable Californians. A significant amount of the grant funds is derived from Interest on Lawyer Trust Accounts (IOLTA). Interest revenue from these accounts is remitted by banks to the State Bar for distribution to legal aid grantees across the state. Additional sources of funding for grants comes from appropriations through the state budget. Money collected is not distributed immediately. The LSTFC relies on its investment policy to maximize revenue and funds available to support legal aid.

attorney applicants, 79 public member applicants, and 7 judicial applicants. Despite these intensive efforts, the State Bar found that geographic diversity remained insufficient, highlighting the need for continued and focused outreach. The vast majority of appointments (88 percent) were for people located in urban areas, 9 percent for those located in suburban areas, and only 3 percent of appointments for people in rural areas.

In 2024, the State Bar again conducted broad general outreach as well as targeted outreach for subentity appointments, including specific focus on the needs of particular subentities. For example, to support the charge of the Legal Services Trust Fund Commission, which is charged with administering legal aid grants through California, the California Society of Public Accountants was included in outreach with the goal of recruiting a member with experience in public accounting who might provide expertise in grantmaking. Staff conducted “warm” outreach which involved reengaging with previous applicants as well as encouraging current committee members and alumni to share appointments opportunities with their networks. These outreach efforts generated a diverse pool of candidates and as a whole garnered 177 applications for 28 vacancies. The 177 applications included 141 attorneys, 26 public members, 4 current judicial officers, and 6 former judicial officers.

The State Bar remains committed to ensuring that a broad range of backgrounds, experiences, and geographic areas are represented on State Bar subentities and will continue to engage in broad outreach, especially in underrepresented geographic areas, as well as evaluation of outreach efforts to ensure a diversity of voices are included in the development and evaluation of State Bar policies.

### **ELIMINATION OF BIAS IMPLICIT BIAS TRAINING MODULE FOR ATTORNEYS**

California attorneys (except for those statutorily exempted) are required to complete 25 hours of minimum continuing legal education (MCLE) every three years, including two hours of credit related to “the recognition and elimination of bias in the legal profession and society.” Since 2022, at least one of those two hours must focus on strategies to reduce implicit bias. In support of that requirement, the State Bar, in partnership with COAF, developed a free online program, *Disrupting Implicit Bias*, which was made available beginning in 2021 to all California attorneys through the State Bar’s e-learning platform. In the past two years, 16,050 attorneys completed the course (9,135 in 2023 and 6,915 in 2024).

Attorneys who completed the course had the opportunity to provide feedback regarding their experience. The past two years’ comments echo those from prior years. Specifically, learners appreciated the course content and the fact that the State Bar offered an opportunity to earn specialized MCLE credit without charge. Other comments included thoughts on the pace of the course (some thought it appropriate, others too slow); concerns about technology (issues with buffering, freezing, or glitches); requests for more detail or clarification of certain concepts and observations that perhaps some of the scenarios were too stereotypical or overgeneralized; and

helpful suggestions regarding more varied scenarios to encompass different workplaces (e.g., small firms/offices).

In 2024, working closely with COAF and a subject matter expert, the State Bar reviewed the course evaluations and recently updated the course materials in response to attorney learners' feedback. The new course will be available in the spring of 2025.

## **PIPELINE TO THE PROFESSION**

The 2023 report outlined key activities to further develop and support a diverse pipeline into the profession:

- Increase the numbers of diverse attorneys in the legal profession through studying and highlighting diversity pipeline programs that support aspiring attorneys in graduating from law school and passing the bar exam.
- Continue the Mindsets in Legal Education Initiative and evaluate the merits of expanding the program to first-year law student examinees.
- Conduct an equity- and cost-focused analysis of the impact of various options for administration of the bar exam on pass rates, including remote and open-book formats.
- Continue to provide implicit bias trainings for bar exam proctors and graders to reduce bias.
- Continue to diversify the exam development and grading pool.
- Issue the Blue Ribbon Commission on the Future of the Bar Exam final report and implement recommendations.
- Publish the Law School Retention Study, including attrition data from all California law schools.
- Survey law students on their experiences with law school retention programs.
- Identify recommended metrics for law school retention programs and share results with stakeholders.

## **DIVERSITY PIPELINE PROGRAMS**

While the State Bar did not study and highlight diversity pipeline programs that support aspiring attorneys in graduating from law school and passing the bar exam during this reporting period, the State Bar anticipates that findings from the *Profile of California Law Schools* (see section below) as well as future plans to survey law students (see section below) will illuminate current successful programs and areas for additional study to support the law school-to-profession pipeline.

## MINDSETS IN LEGAL EDUCATION

With the success of the [California Strategies and Stories](#) program (also known as Mindsets in Education), particularly for first generation bar takers and those in underrepresented groups, the State Bar discussed expanding the positive mindset intervention to the First-Year Law Student Exam (FYLSX) multiple times with its research partners. While there was initial interest in expansion, because the FYLSX assesses whether a law student will be sufficiently successful to practice law and whether they should continue with their law studies, the researchers determined that the positive mindset intervention would have to be redesigned to apply to FYLSX test takers. Due to the resources required to redesign the study and because the population of students sitting for the FYLSX has decreased in seven of the last eight exam administrations,<sup>7</sup> the State Bar decided not to pursue the initiative for the FYLSX at this time. The State Bar remains committed to continuing to administer the intervention for California Bar Exam takers.

## EXPERIMENTAL BAR EXAM AND UNDERSTANDING DISPARITIES IN EXAM PERFORMANCE

The State Bar is exploring potential format changes to the bar exam, including remote testing, open-book access, and varying time allocations, to evaluate their impact on test-taker performance. A primary focus when evaluating potential change is to address potential disparities among diverse populations.

The California Bar Exam Experiment aims to assess performance differences through experimental exams that introduce these possible changes in near-real-world environments. The experiment is part of a broader effort to reduce reliance on memorization and shift toward a practical skills-based bar exam while ensuring the exam remains a valid measure of minimum competency, is culturally fair, mitigates inequities in performance, and advances the State Bar's mission to expand access to the legal profession.

### Pilot Phase: October 2023

In October 2023, the State Bar conducted a pilot experimental exam with recruitment support from 26 law schools. Although the small sample of 171 participants did not yield statistically

---

<sup>7</sup> The number of applicants sitting for the FYLSX has decreased in seven of the last eight administrations. There were 243 applicants in June 2024, 179 applicants in October 2023, 190 applicants in June 2023, 238 applicants in October 2022, 260 applicants in June 2022, 272 applicants in October 2021, 275 applicants in June 2021, and 305 applicants in November 2020.

significant findings, the pilot validated the operational framework and informed refinements for future phases.

### **Phase One: November 2024**

In November 2024, the State Bar launched Phase One of the experiment with over 3,800 participants. This phase, requiring less than two hours to complete, offered critical operational insights into the use of remote exam and proctoring software at scale. It also allowed staff to field-test multiple-choice questions developed by a new vendor that will develop questions for bar exams starting in February 2025. To incentivize participation in Phase One, the Supreme Court of California [approved](#) providing participants who reach a minimum threshold performance score to be eligible to receive a score adjustment on a bar exam in 2025. The successful implementation of remote testing technology and the new questions provided a strong foundation for the next phase of the experiment.

### **Phase Two**

Phase Two of the experiment was originally scheduled to take place in July 2025 but has been postponed in light of the transition to a remote and test-center administered bar examination. When the experiment takes place, it is anticipated that it will test the impact of three elements: time allocations (standard time vs. extended time), modality (remote vs. in person), and access to resources (closed book vs. notes provided by the State Bar vs. online legal research database).

### **OUTREACH AND IMPLICIT BIAS TRAINING FOR BAR EXAM GRADERS AND PROCTORS AND LAW SCHOOL INSPECTORS**

The State Bar continues to cast a wide net to recruit a diverse grader application pool, including sharing information about the grader program with a wide array of California affinity bar associations, advertising the program online, and inviting committee members to disburse grader applications to their networks. The State Bar collects demographic data from graders and plans to analyze this data to assess whether outreach efforts have yielded a more diverse grader pool. Additionally, graders participate in unconscious bias/implicit bias training; the training requirement has also been expanded to include law school inspectors.

### **BLUE RIBBON COMMISSION ON THE FUTURE OF THE BAR EXAM**

The Blue Ribbon Commission on the Future of the Bar Exam (BRC) was established by the Supreme Court of California and the State Bar with the goal of developing recommendations for changes to the California Bar Exam and exploring alternative or additional testing or tools to ensure minimum competence to practice law. The BRC's [mission statement](#) reflects fairness and equity in the examination process as a key priority as well as minimizing disparate performance

impacts based on race, gender, ethnicity, or other immutable characteristics. The BRC conducted a landscape analysis and examined various studies on the bar exam, including national and State Bar studies, and bar exam models in different jurisdictions. The BRC considered a broad range of topics, including substantive areas of law, knowledge, and skillsets to be tested; reciprocity, portability, and comity for attorneys licensed in other jurisdictions; and various testing modalities, including exam and non-exam pathways. The commission issued its final [report and recommendations](#) in June 2023. Subsequently, in October 2024, the Supreme Court issued an [order](#) adopting the BRC’s recommendations with modifications to develop a California-specific bar exam.

### **Court Order**

Pursuant to the order, the new exam must test 12 topics and seven skills for entry-level practice,<sup>8</sup> with an increased focus on assessing skills and applying knowledge while de-emphasizing the need for memorization of doctrinal law. Like the BRC’s mission statement, the order also emphasizes fairness, equity, and minimizing disparate performance impacts based on race, gender, ethnicity, disability, and other immutable characteristics as priorities for the new exam. In a further effort to minimize disparities, the Court directs the Bar to consider whether the various sections of the exam should be bifurcated such that unsuccessful applicants should be permitted to retake only those components that they failed, without having to retake the entire examination. Transparency on tested topics and rules is required, including the expected level of recall and familiarity with them. The court order also directs the Bar to consider new technologies, including artificial intelligence, for skills assessment when developing the new exam. The State Bar Committee of Bar Examiners (CBE) will serve as a steward and advisor in the exam's development.

### **Future of the Bar Exam**

State Bar staff and the CBE are working to establish a structured approach, steering committee, and charter to guide the development of the new bar exam. The proposed plan contemplates a steering committee recommended by the CBE and Board of Trustees and formally appointed by the Supreme Court to drive and oversee the implementation, informed by subject matter experts in a variety of fields, including law school representatives; practicing and recently admitted attorneys; current law students; experts in disability, diversity, equity, and inclusion; and legal nonprofit organizations.

---

<sup>8</sup> The new exam must test 12 topics, including administrative law and procedure, civil procedure, contracts, criminal law and procedure, evidence, professional responsibility, real property, torts, employment law, family law, estate planning, trusts, and probate; and seven skills, including drafting and writing, research and investigation, issue-spotting and fact-gathering, counsel/advice, litigation, communication and client relationship, and negotiation and dispute resolution.

The State Bar expects that it will be several years before the new exam will be offered. California Business and Professions Code 6046.6 requires the State Bar to provide two years' notice before making substantive changes that would modify training and preparation for the exam.

## **LAW SCHOOL PERFORMANCE AND STUDENT OUTCOME DATA**

The State Bar has developed new reports to enhance understanding of student demographics, retention, outcomes, and other key performance metrics across California's law schools. These reports aim to support data-driven decision-making and inform policies that promote equity and improve legal education outcomes.

### **Profile of California Law Schools Report**

The [Profile of California Law Schools](#) is the first comprehensive report to analyze the demographic composition and performance metrics across three categories of law schools, two of which are unique to California: ABA-approved law schools, California-accredited law schools (CALs), and registered, unaccredited law schools.<sup>9</sup>

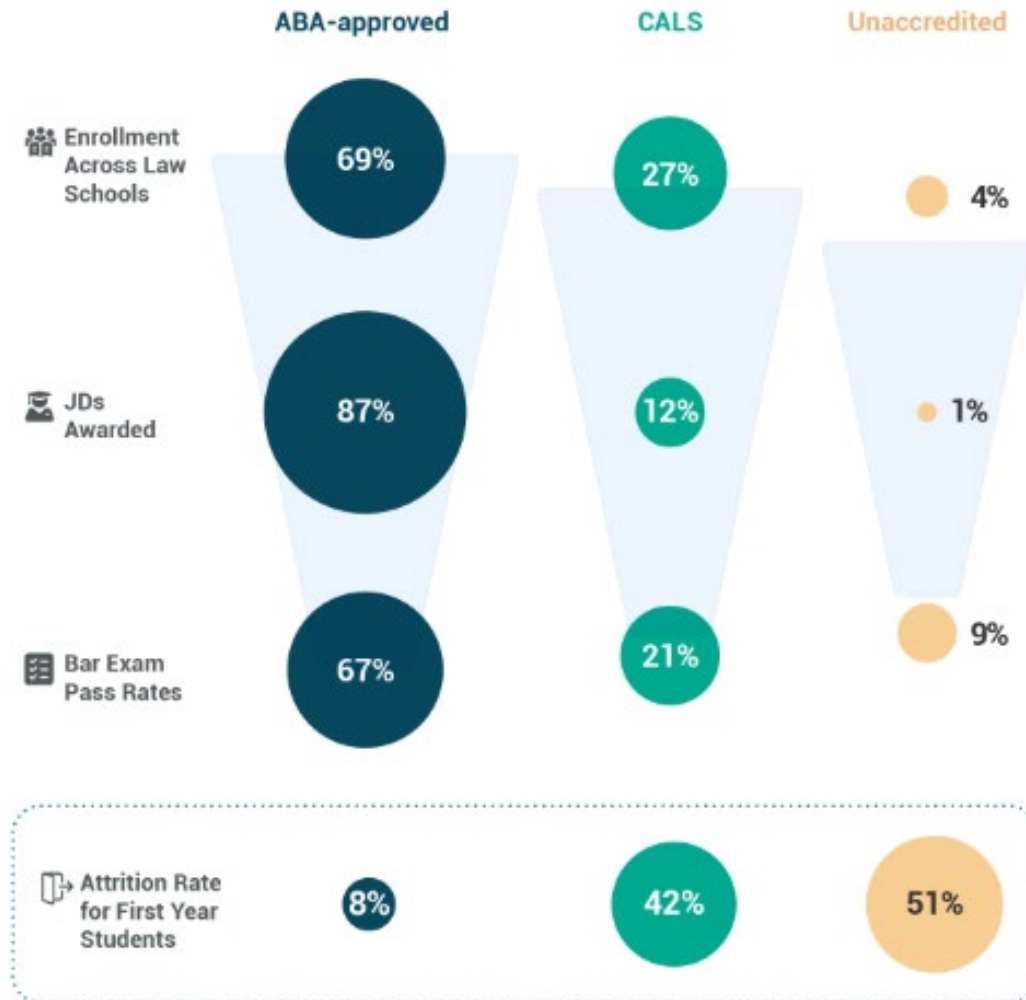
The 2022 data snapshot highlighted the following key findings:

- Both California-accredited and unaccredited law schools enroll more diverse student populations than ABA-approved law schools. However, unaccredited law schools produce few JD graduates and have the lowest bar exam pass rates, offering limited potential for licensure (see figure 6).

---

<sup>9</sup> ABA-approved law schools are approved by the American Bar Association (ABA); CALs are law schools that derive their degree-granting authority from the Committee of Bar Examiners of the State Bar of California; and unaccredited law schools have not been approved by the ABA or accredited by the State Bar of California, but have registered with the Committee of Bar Examiners, which provides oversight. These schools specify their teaching modality as correspondence, distance learning, or fixed-facility law schools.

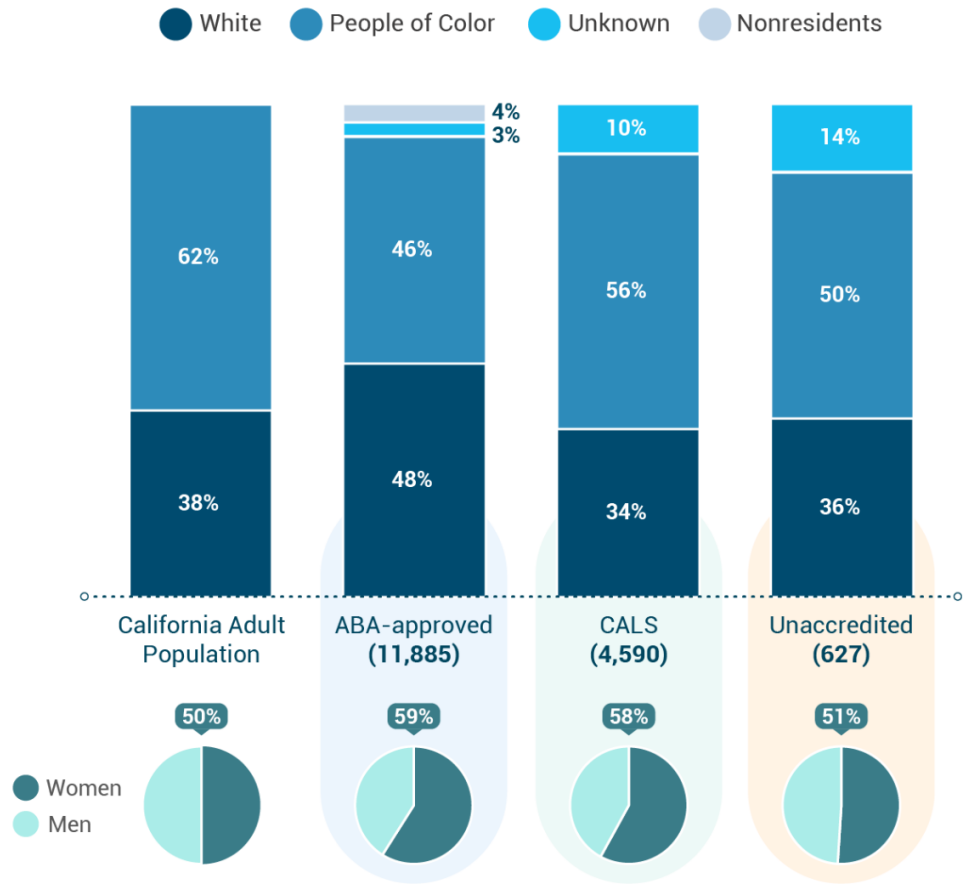
Figure 6. 2022 Data Highlights from the Profile of California Law Schools



- Students of color make up 56 percent of enrollment at CALS and 50 percent at unaccredited schools, compared to 46 percent at ABA-approved schools. However, racial and ethnic distributions differ significantly by school type (see figure 7). For instance, Asian and multiracial students are most represented at ABA-approved schools, while the majority of American Indian and Black law students are enrolled at CALS.
- Unaccredited law schools experience the highest attrition rates, with over half of 1L students leaving their law school after the first year. Attrition disproportionately affects people of color and male students across all school types (see figure 8).

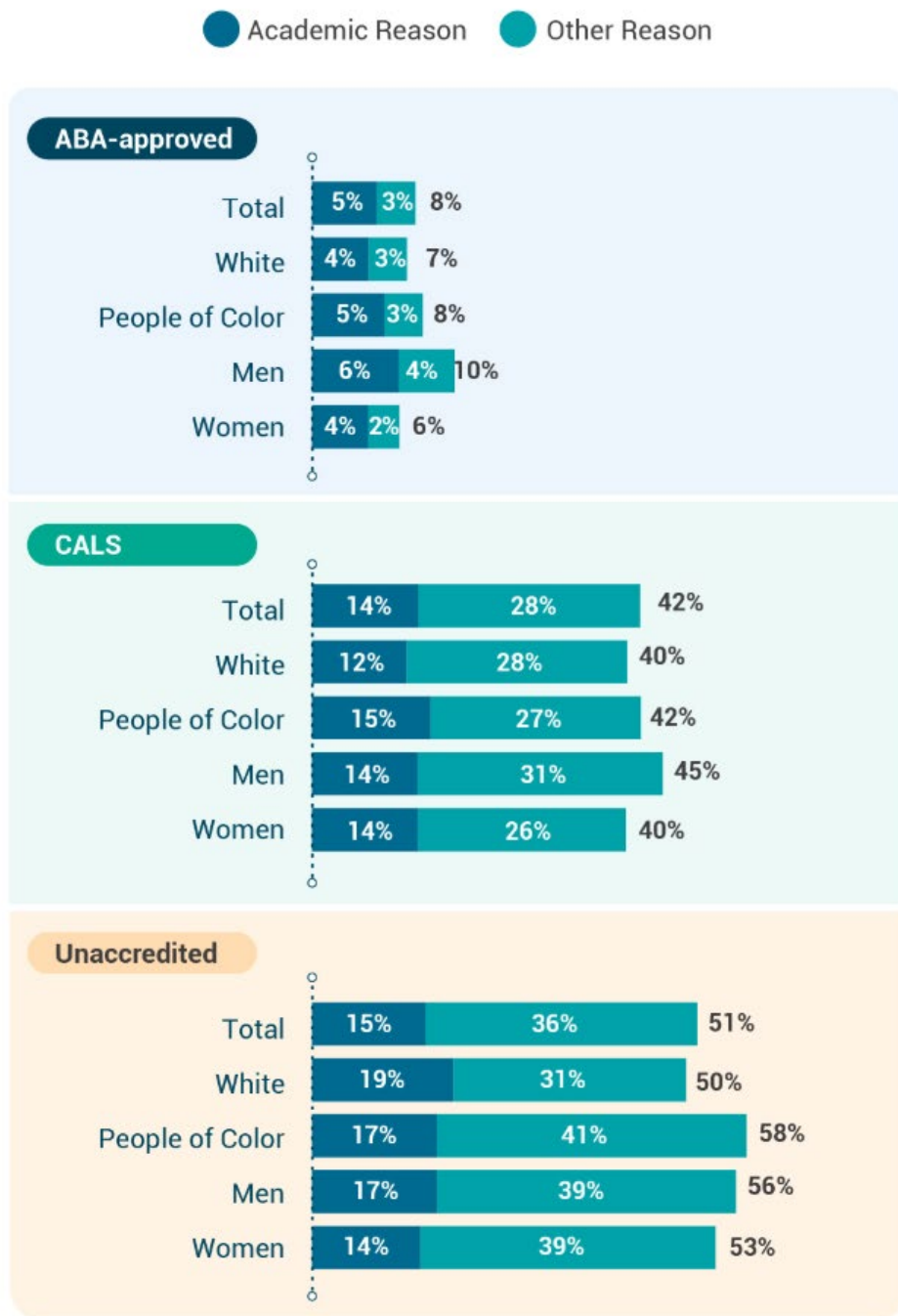


**Figure 7. Racial/Ethnic and Gender Composition of 2022 California JD Enrollment by Type of Law School Compared with California’s Adult Population**



Note: Data on California’s adult population in this figure and in tables 2 and 3 represents the year 2022 and was drawn from the Annie E. Casey Foundation’s Kids Count Data Center.

**Figure 8. 1L Nontransfer Attrition Rates by Reason for Attrition by Race/Ethnicity and Gender Identity**



Note: Due to rounding, numbers presented for type of attrition may not add up precisely to total attrition. Neither the CALS nor unaccredited schools reported nonbinary identified students in their 2021 first-year cohorts.

## Law School Enrollment

Nationally, there has been a decline in law student enrollment since 2009. And, while ABA-approved law schools have seen a decline in enrollment, two-thirds of California's law students are enrolled at ABA-approved law schools, which are generally larger than CALS and unaccredited law schools (see figure 9). Enrollment at unaccredited law schools saw a steep decline, plummeting by over 80 percent since 2009. This drop coincides with a 50 percent decrease in the number of unaccredited schools during this period, with three schools securing accreditation and 19 schools permanently closing. In contrast, CALS enrollment has experienced significant growth coinciding with an expansion of schools accredited by the State Bar (see figure 10). In general, the student populations at CALS and unaccredited schools reflect the state's racial/ethnic diversity more so than ABA-approved schools.

**Figure 9. 2022 California Law Schools and JD Enrollment**

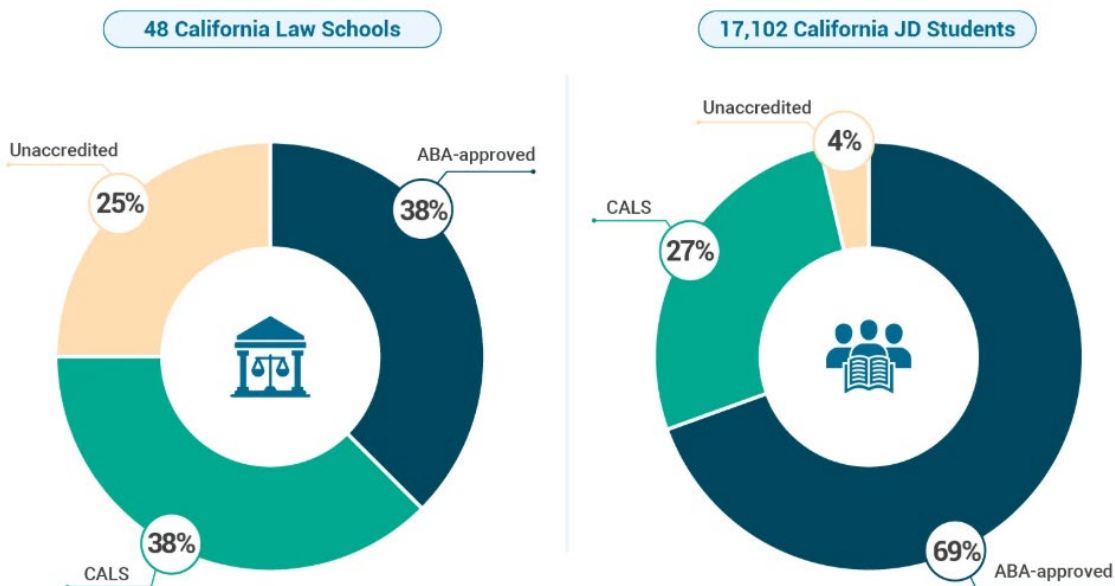
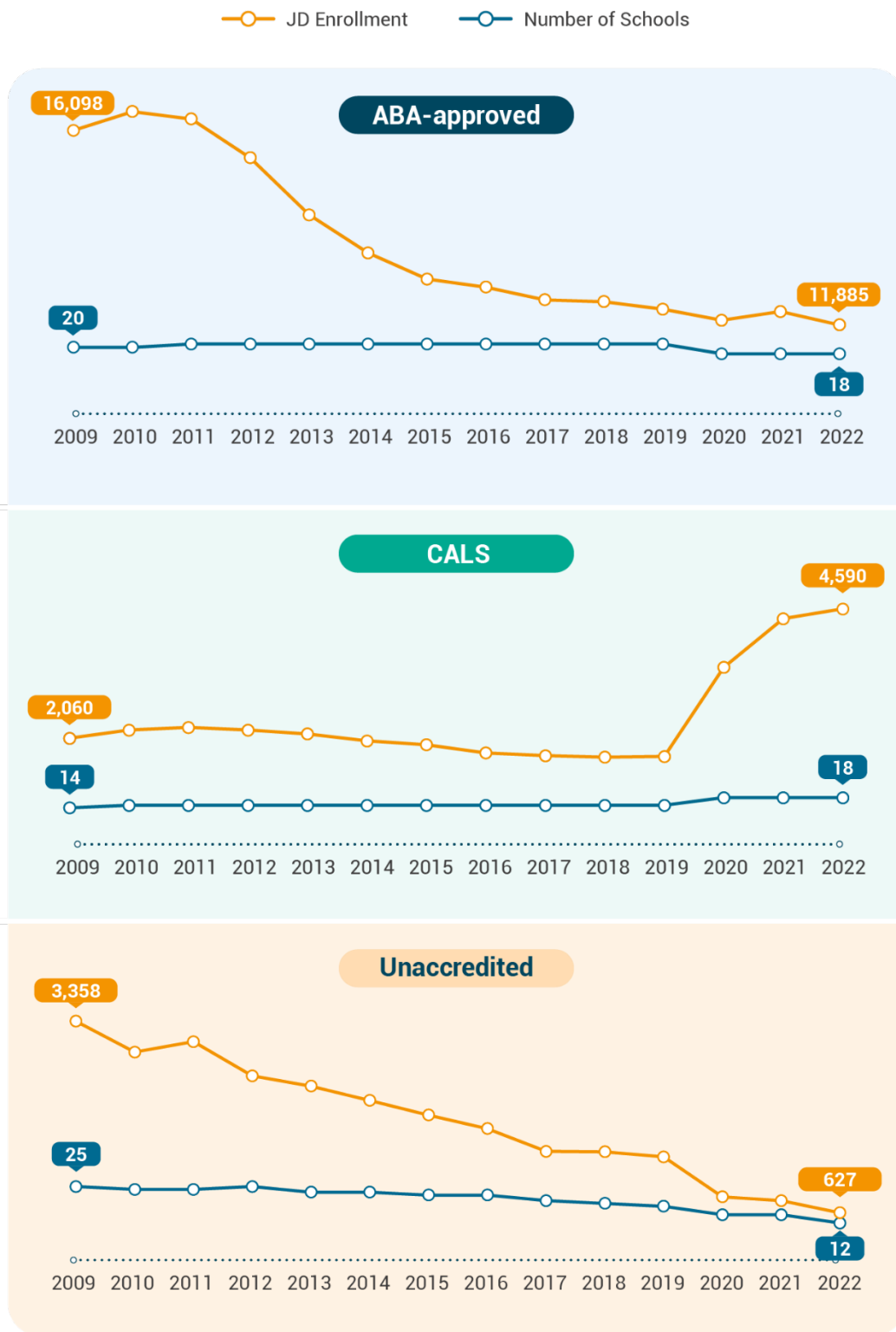
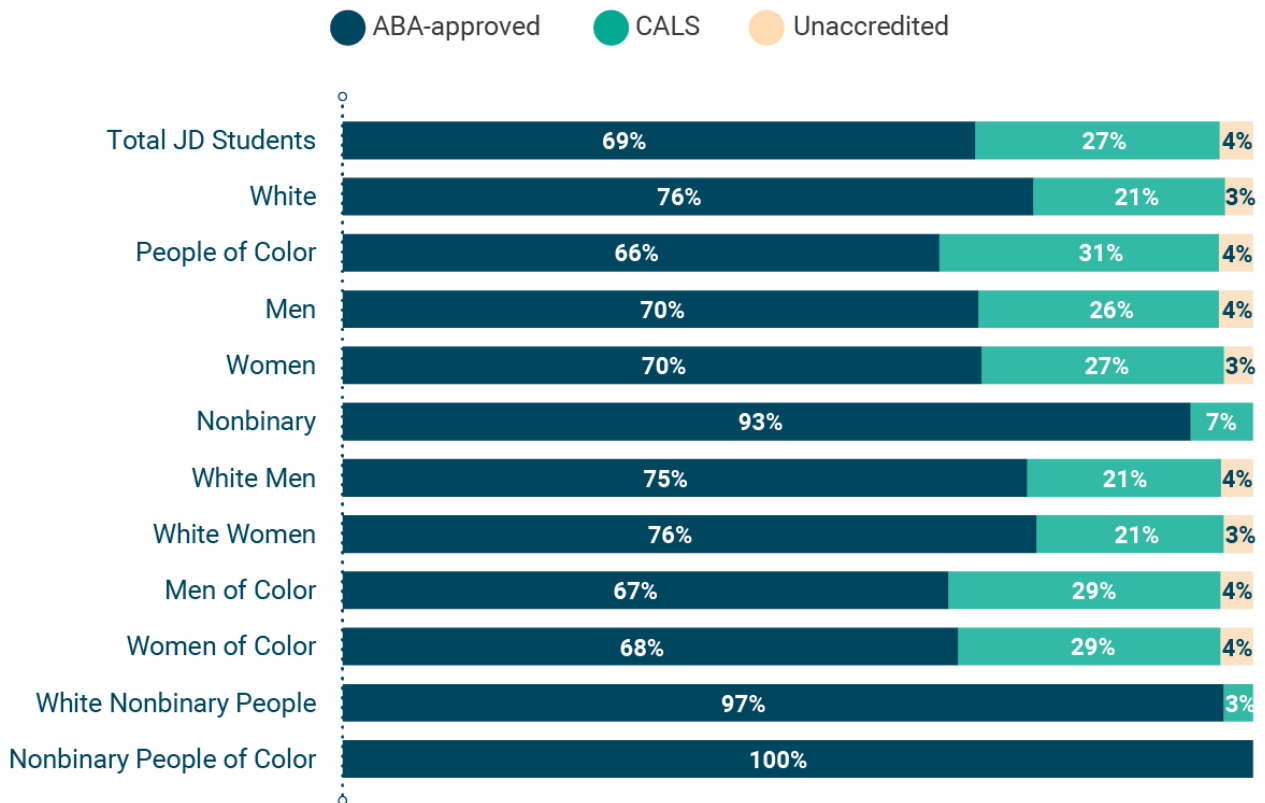


Figure 10. California Law School JD Enrollment and Number of Schools: 2009-2022



A higher percentage of white law students (76 percent) were enrolled in ABA-approved law schools, while only 66 percent of law students of color enrolled in those schools (see figure 11). There is no notable difference in the law school destinations of men of color and women of color. Both groups exhibited similar enrollment rates, with 67 percent of men of color and 68 percent of women of color enrolled in ABA-approved schools. The results also show that men and women were equally likely to enroll in an ABA-approved school (70 percent). However, a significant majority of nonbinary law students (93 percent) enrolled in an ABA-approved school.

**Figure 11. 2022 JD Enrollment in California Law Schools by Race/Ethnicity and Gender Identity**



Women of color are the largest group of students across all three types of law schools when examining enrollment along the intersection of race/ethnicity and gender identity (see table 2). Women of color make up 29 percent of students at ABA-approved schools and unaccredited schools. However, women of color account for nearly one-third of CALS students. In contrast, men of color constitute just 17 percent of students at the ABA-approved schools and less than 25 percent of students at the state’s unaccredited schools.

**Table 2. Composition of 2022 California JD Enrollment by Type of Law School Compared to California’s Adult Population**

	California Adult Population (%)	ABA-approved (%)	CALS (%)	Unaccredited (%)
<b>White Men</b>	19	21	15	19
<b>White Women</b>	19	26	19	18
<b>Men of Color</b>	31	17	19	21
<b>Women of Color</b>	32	29	32	29
<b>White Nonbinary People</b>	...	0.3	0	0
<b>Nonbinary People of Color</b>	...	0.3	0	0
<b>Unknown</b>	...	3	15	14
<b>Nonresidents</b>	...	4	...	...
<b>Total (%)</b>	100	100	100	100

At the state's ABA-approved schools, Latino law students are significantly underrepresented compared to their representation among the state’s adult population, while white students are significantly overrepresented (see table 3). At the unaccredited schools, Black law students are overrepresented, as they constitute nearly one in five students.

Although only 38 percent of the state’s adult population identify as white, nearly half of all students enrolled in ABA-approved schools are white. This overrepresentation contrasts with the underrepresentation of Latinos, who constitute 37 percent of the state’s adult population and only 20 percent of the population at the state’s ABA-approved schools.

Asian and Black law student representation among ABA-approved school students aligns with their respective proportions in the state’s adult population. However, Black law students are significantly overrepresented among students enrolled in the state’s unaccredited law schools, where they constitute nearly one in five students enrolled. Students who identify as multiracial are seven percent of ABA students— more than three times the share of adults statewide who identify as multiracial.

Additionally, women, who account for 50 percent of the adult population, make up nearly 60 percent of students enrolled at both ABA-approved law schools and CALS.

**Table 3. Detailed Racial/Ethnic Composition of 2022 JD Enrollment by Type of Law School Compared with California Adult Population**

Race/Ethnicity	California Adult Population (%)	ABA-approved (%)	CALS (%)	Unaccredited (%)
American Indian or Alaska Native	0.4	0.3	1	0.8
Asian	16	14	11	9
Black of African American	6	5	15	19
Latino	37	20	25	18
Multiracial	2	7	4	2
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	0.4	0.6	0.5	1
White	38	48	34	36
Unknown	...	3	10	14
Nonresidents	...	4	...	...
<b>Total (%)</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

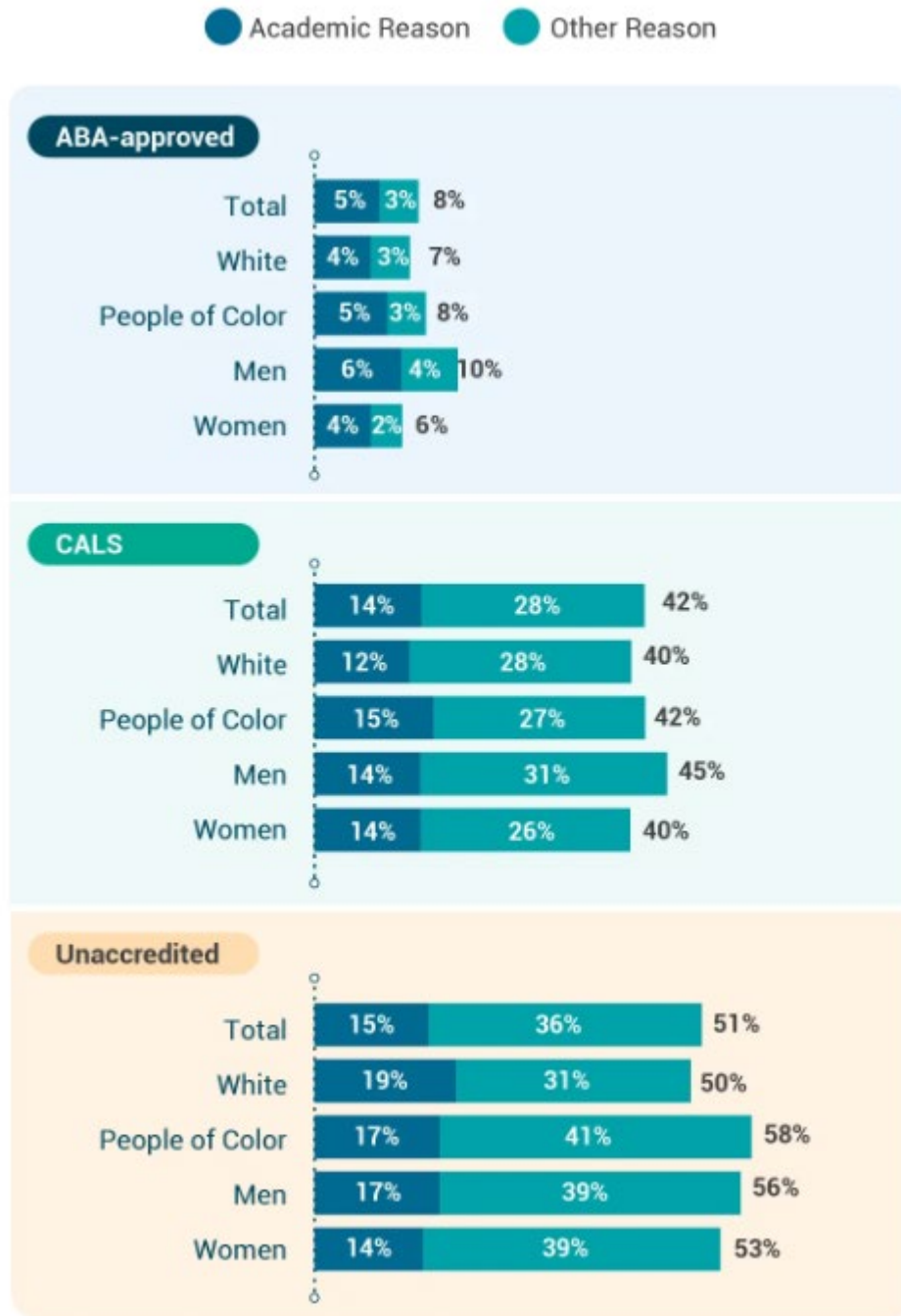
### Law School Attrition

Analyses of student outcomes show that students who pursue JDs at the state’s unaccredited law schools face significant challenges in their aspirations to become licensed attorneys, with over half experiencing attrition<sup>10</sup> after their first year of school (see figure 12), and extremely low bar exam pass rates among those who do graduate. Students attending schools accredited by the State Bar also experience difficulties, including a 42 percent attrition rate and substantially lower bar exam pass rates compared to ABA-approved schools.

---

<sup>10</sup> Attrition in higher education refers to students who leave their institutions without completing their intended degrees.

Figure 12. 1L Nontransfer Attrition Rates by Reason for Attrition by Race/Ethnicity and Gender Identity

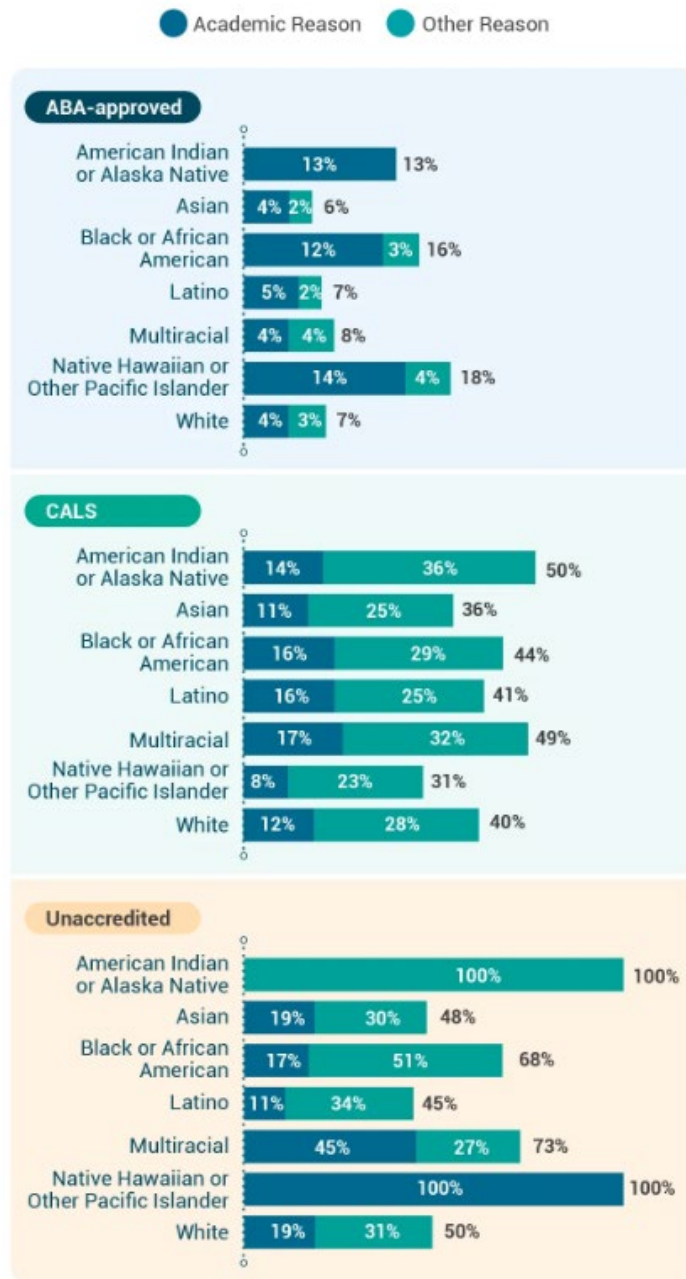


Although in general law students attending ABA-approved law schools have better outcomes, the Law School Profile illuminates the difficulties faced by some racial/ethnic groups attending



these schools (see figure 13). For all racial/ethnic groups at ABA schools, academic attrition predominates as the reason for students leaving law school studies. In contrast, most attrition at CALS and unaccredited schools is for nonacademic reasons. At ABA-approved schools, Black and Native American 1L students have the highest attrition rates, while multiracial students have the highest attrition rates at CALS. Nearly 70 percent of 1L Black students experience attrition at unaccredited law schools. Multiracial students at the unaccredited schools also had a high attrition rate of 73 percent.

Figure 13. 1L Nontransfer Attrition Rates by Reason for Attrition by Detailed Race/Ethnicity

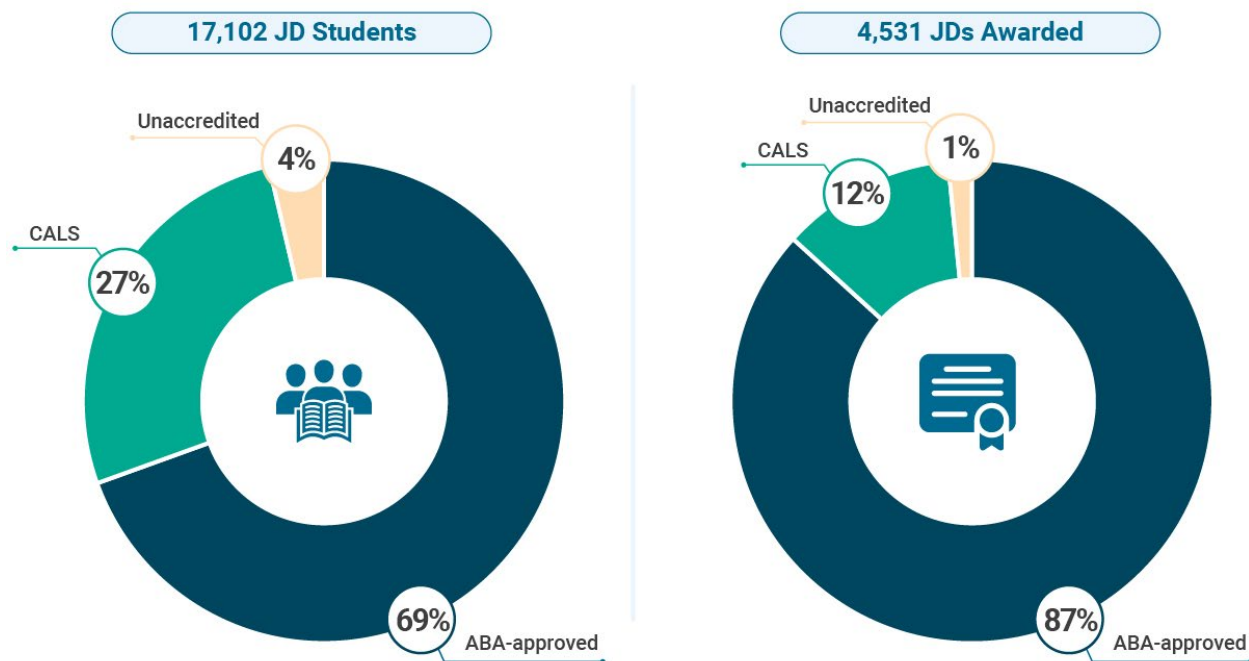


Note: Due to rounding, numbers presented for type of attrition may not add up precisely to total attrition.

ABA-approved schools play a significant role in shaping the present and future diversity of California’s attorney population despite their student enrollment not fully representing the state’s diverse racial/ethnic population. They enroll more students, have lower attrition rates, and conferred 87 percent of the over 4,500 law degrees awarded in 2022 across all three types of schools.

In 2022, 4,531 JD degrees were granted by law schools in California. The vast majority (87 percent) were awarded by ABA-approved schools, while slightly more than 10 percent were awarded by CALS. In contrast, unaccredited law schools accounted for only 1 percent of the total JD degrees conferred that year (see figure 14). Further, over 1,650 JD degrees from ABA-approved law schools were conferred upon law students of color, in sharp contrast to the 280 and 37 degrees awarded to students of color by CALS and unaccredited schools, respectively.

**Figure 14. 2022 California JD Enrollment Compared with JDs Awarded by Type of Law School**



### Bar Exam Pass Rates

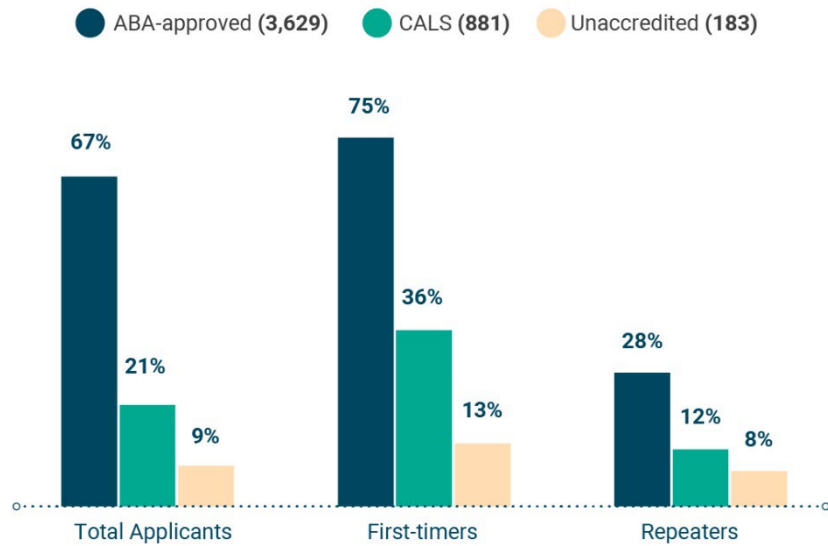
Students who successfully earn their JDs and want to practice law typically must take and pass a bar examination. The State Bar administers the General Bar Examination twice each year (in February and July) to individuals seeking licensure in California (applicants).

In July 2022, a total of 7,164 applicants sat for the bar exam, with approximately 66 percent having earned a JD from a California law school. Among this group of applicants, the majority were from ABA-approved schools (3,629), while 881 graduated from a CALS and 183 graduated from an unaccredited school.

In general, applicants who earned their JDs from ABA-approved schools had higher bar exam pass rates than applicants from CALS and unaccredited schools (see figure 15).

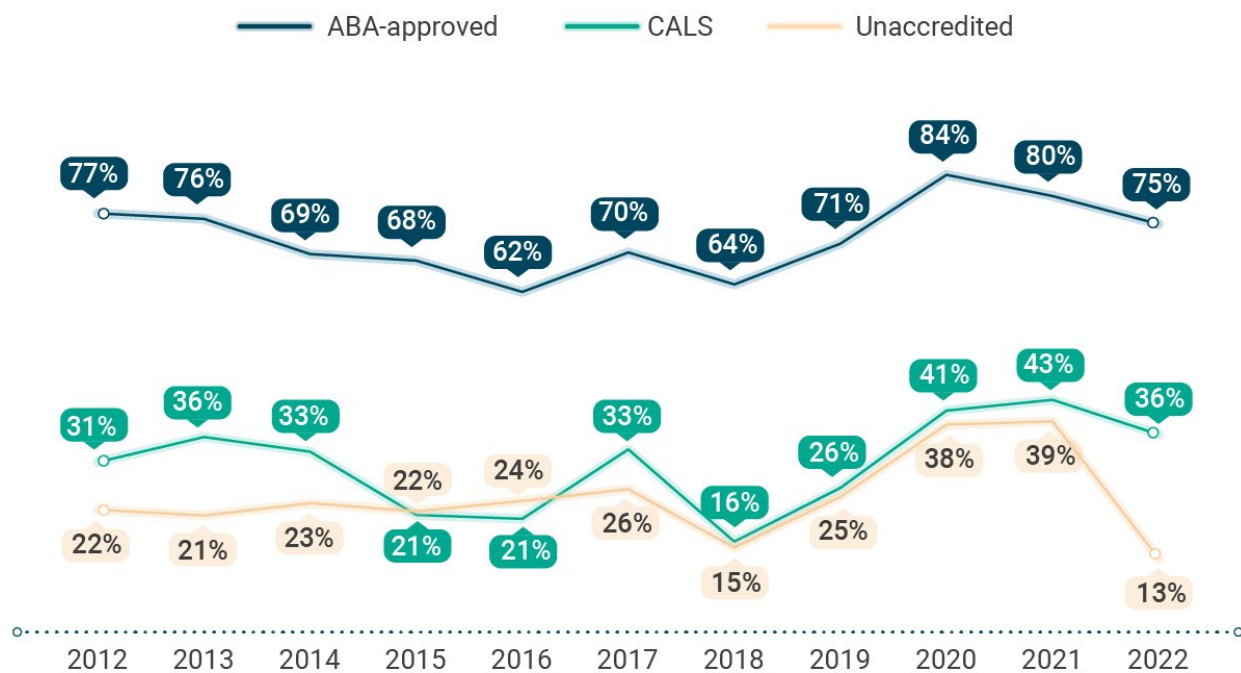
This pattern was true for both first-time takers and repeaters. Furthermore, among all three types of California law schools, first-time test takers had higher pass rates than repeat test takers.

**Figure 15. July 2022 California General Bar Exam Pass Rates by Test Taker Status and Type of California Law School**



Over the past decade, first-time applicants who earned their JDs from ABA-approved schools consistently had higher bar exam pass rates than applicants from CALS and unaccredited schools (see figure 16). In the majority of years analyzed, graduates from CALS had higher exam passage rates than graduates from unaccredited schools. However, there were instances when the pass rates between these two schools were similar. Notably, the most substantial disparity occurred in July 2022, with 36 percent of CALS graduates successfully passing the bar exam as first-time applicants, while only 13 percent of graduates from unaccredited schools achieved the same outcome.

**Figure 16. July California General Bar Exam Pass Rates for First-Time Applicants for Years 2012–2022 by Type of California Law School**



### Law School Performance Report

In 2024, the State Bar published for the first time the [Law School Performance Report](#), which is a planned annual publication providing up-to-date data and long-term trend analyses at both CALS and unaccredited law schools. The report introduced intersectional analyses, which examined performance at the intersection of race/ethnicity and gender and expanded attrition insights, offering a deeper understanding of the causes of student attrition and which students are most impacted.

### Assessing New Performance Metrics

Alongside the development of the law school reports, staff assessed over 130 data points on law school financials, governance, student aid, admissions, enrollment, and academics used by the American Bar Association and institutional accreditors such as the WASC Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC).<sup>11</sup> The goal was to determine whether additional performance

<sup>11</sup> WASC Senior College & University Commission (WSCUC) was formally created in 2012–13 when three

metrics were needed. This effort included discussions with impacted stakeholders at the [October 2023](#) meeting of the Committee of State Bar Accredited and Registered Schools.

The review revealed that many performance metrics were already being tracked, while others were either outside the State Bar’s jurisdiction or were not otherwise closely related to the State Bar’s purposes for accreditation and registration. Although no new metrics were introduced at that time, the State Bar had recently expanded its performance metrics to include second-year attrition data, graduate employment outcomes, and information on grants and scholarships offered by law schools.

## RETENTION AND ADVANCEMENT IN THE PROFESSION

The 2023 report outlined several activities to support attorney retention and advancement in the profession, divided into three categories: reforms to the attorney discipline system, prevention and proactive risk management for attorneys, and promoting retention and advancement.

### REFORMS TO THE ATTORNEY DISCIPLINE SYSTEM

The following activities were identified to address the shortcomings and criticism of the State Bar’s attorney discipline system:

- Implement reforms and recommendations to reduce inequities identified in the 2019 report *Discrepancies by Race and Gender in Attorney Discipline by the State Bar of California: An Empirical Analysis*.
- Conduct a follow-up study of racial disparities in attorney discipline, identify areas for improvement, and implement recommendations.
- Identify and implement strategies to address other disparities in discipline rates and outcomes, including those related to solo and small-firm practitioners.

### Implementation of Reforms and Recommendations to Reduce Inequities in the Attorney Discipline System

The State Bar has made significant progress in implementing reforms and recommendations to improve fairness and eliminate bias from the attorney discipline system, including the following:

---

education commissions under the umbrella of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC)—Accrediting Commission for Senior Colleges and Universities (ACSCU), Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC), and the Accrediting Commission for Schools (ACS)—reincorporated as separate entities. They now use the same "WASC" acronym but are three separate organizations. <https://www.csusm.edu/wasc/index.html#:~:text=WASC%20Senior%20College%20%26%20University%20Commission,Commission%20for%20Community%20and%20Junior>, accessed January 24, 2025.

- Adopting a [new attorney discipline cost model](#) methodology that significantly reduces the costs associated with proceeding to trial or seeking review and increases the ability of the State Bar Court to exercise its discretion to waive trial and/or review costs.
- Submitting to the California Supreme Court [proposed amendments](#) to State Bar Rules of Procedure, Rule 5.137 related to significantly reducing the recommended sanctions in cases of disbarment and setting the recommended sanctions at \$0 for suspension and resignations with charges pending.
- Adopting [amendments to State Bar Rule 5.30](#) to rename Early Neutral Evaluation Conferences as Prefiling Settlement Conferences and modifying the procedures to promote the use of Prefiling Settlement Conferences as a mechanism for arriving at settlements of State Bar disciplinary proceedings . The Board also adopted [amendments to State Bar Rule 5.341](#) to provide, at OCTC’s request and based on its determination that a Prefiling Settlement Conference might affect its determination whether to transmit a misdemeanor conviction, for Prefiling Settlement Conferences in misdemeanor conviction matters. The amended rules took effect July 1, 2024.
- Requesting public comment on [Proposed New State Bar Policy Regarding the Removal of Criminal Conviction Transmittal Notation from the Attorney Profile Page](#). Public comment closed on February 10, 2025. The Board will review and consider public comment at a future meeting.
- Continuing work with stakeholders, including the Bench/Bar Committee of the State Bar Court, to study and clarify all applicable rules involving referrals to the Alternative Discipline Program. The State Bar anticipates presenting additional proposed amendments to the Board for its consideration in May 2025.

The 2023 report included plans to develop an appointed counsel program in attorney discipline matters. Unfortunately, due to budget constraints, this program was not completed; however, the State Bar plans to explore this program in the future.

### **Additional Initiatives Addressing Disparities in Attorney Discipline**

In addition to the initiatives described in the 2023 report, the State Bar has also developed additional programming to provide diversion for attorneys who may otherwise have entered the attorney discipline system, as well as to address recidivism in the attorney discipline system.

The Attorney–Client Bridge Program (Bridge Program) offers a nonconfrontational alternative for clients and attorneys to address low-level issues outside the formal complaint process. It is designed to resolve concerns, such as communication breakdowns or the return of client files, without involving the Office of Chief Trial Counsel (OCTC). The Bridge Program specifically targets issues related to “lack of communication” and “return of files.” Participation is entirely voluntary, meaning that a California attorney must actively agree to take part. Submissions must

come from the client, and there must be no pending or prior complaints with the OCTC between the client and attorney in order to be eligible.

The pilot phase of the Bridge Program began in March 2024, and has already garnered successful resolutions for a majority of client participants. For those whose issues were not resolved through this program, the State Bar provided support to make attorney discipline complaints. Effective January 1, 2025, Business and Professions Code section 6140.14 authorizes the State Bar to collect revenue through attorney licensing fees that will support the transition of the Bridge Program from a pilot to permanent status. A report on the Bridge Program will be presented to the State Bar's Board Audit Committee in May 2025.

The Attorney Supervision and Assistance Redesign project (ASAR) launched in 2019 after data available at the time revealed a high rate of recidivism among respondent attorneys in the discipline system. Specifically, the data revealed racial disparities in the recidivism rates, with Black and Hispanic/Latino respondents experiencing a higher likelihood of recidivating than white or Asian respondents. The redesign is intended to use evidence-informed practices to provide the appropriate level of supervision and support to all disciplined attorneys, including those with substance use and behavioral health issues. With a better understanding of each individual respondent's needs, the Office of Case Management and Supervision is better able to provide them with tools to successfully comply with their disciplinary conditions, reduce recidivism, and thereby enhance public protection.

In early January 2024, key components of the project rolled out in a phased-in approach where all attorneys new to supervision were assessed for risk and needs, with individualized case plans developed accordingly. Data collection related to this population is ongoing. Given that the goal is to reduce future recidivism, the impact of the new model will not be known for several years.

### **2025 Study of Disparities in the Attorney Discipline System**

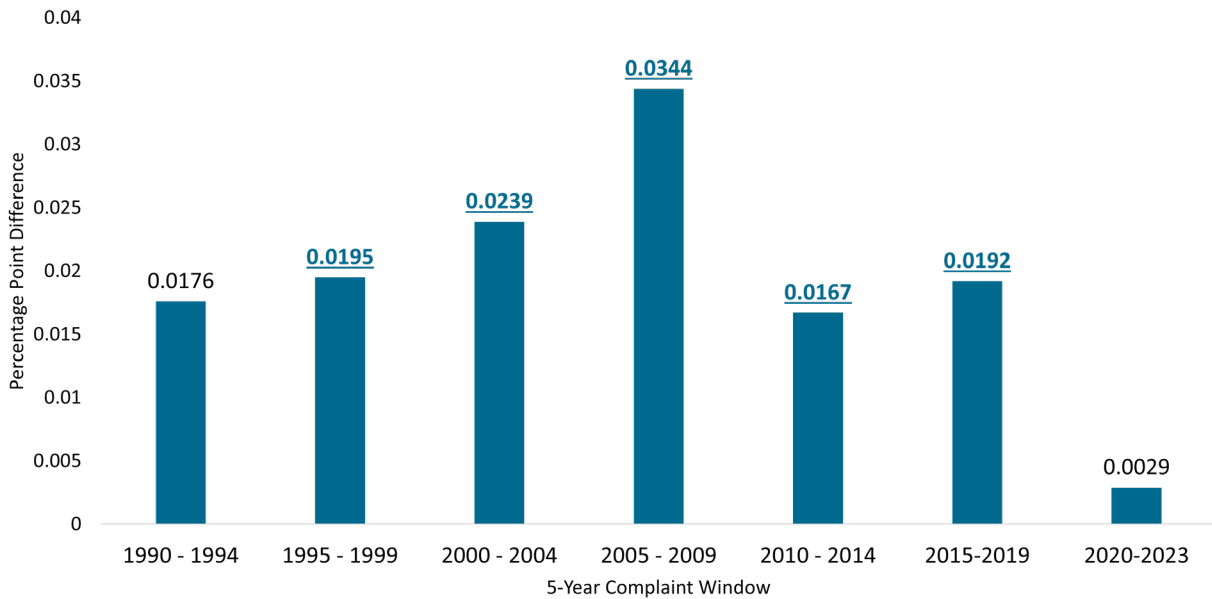
As a follow-up to the [2019 State Bar study on disparities in the discipline](#), the State Bar conducted an empirical analysis of attorney discipline data to assess whether the State Bar has made progress in addressing the ethnic and racial disparities in the discipline system identified in the 2019 study. The State Bar also examined the effects of two policies introduced in 2020 to address the 2019 findings—one aimed at increasing counsel representation for respondents, and another intended to reduce disparities in prior complaint volume through archiving older complaints.

The 2024 update of the 2019 study showed that racial disparities in discipline with respect to probation and disbarment persisted between Black and white male attorneys. However, these disparities are narrowing and were further reduced after accounting for several factors including the number of years since being admitted to the State Bar and the types of offenses associated with complaints. The 2024 study shifted the original study's 30-year window forward by five

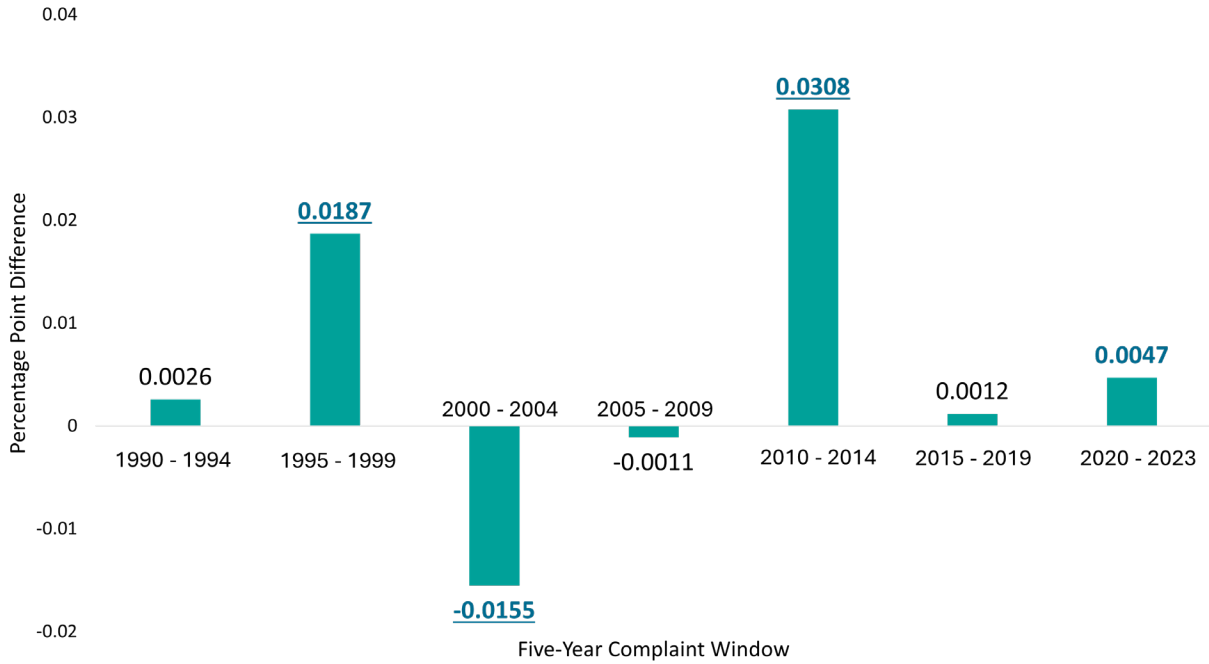


years but retained nearly 60 percent of the same attorneys from the original study, which may have interfered with the ability to fully detect recent trends in discipline. To address this issue, a more refined analysis focusing solely on changes over the last five years was performed and found that probation and disbarment gaps between Black and white attorneys significantly declined, reaching near parity in recent years. In addition, Hispanic/Latino attorneys showed lower disbarment rates than white attorneys, but disparities remain in probation outcomes. Figures 17–20 show the recent trends in the probation and disbarment rate differences between Black and white attorneys and Hispanic/Latino attorneys. For example, if the rate for Black attorneys was 5 percent for the five-year period listed on the horizontal axis, and the rate for white attorneys during that same period was 2 percent, the difference would be 3 percent, so 3 percent would be shown on the figure for the time period. A value of zero means there was no difference in the rate between the two groups, and a negative value means that the group of attorneys had a lower rate than white attorneys.

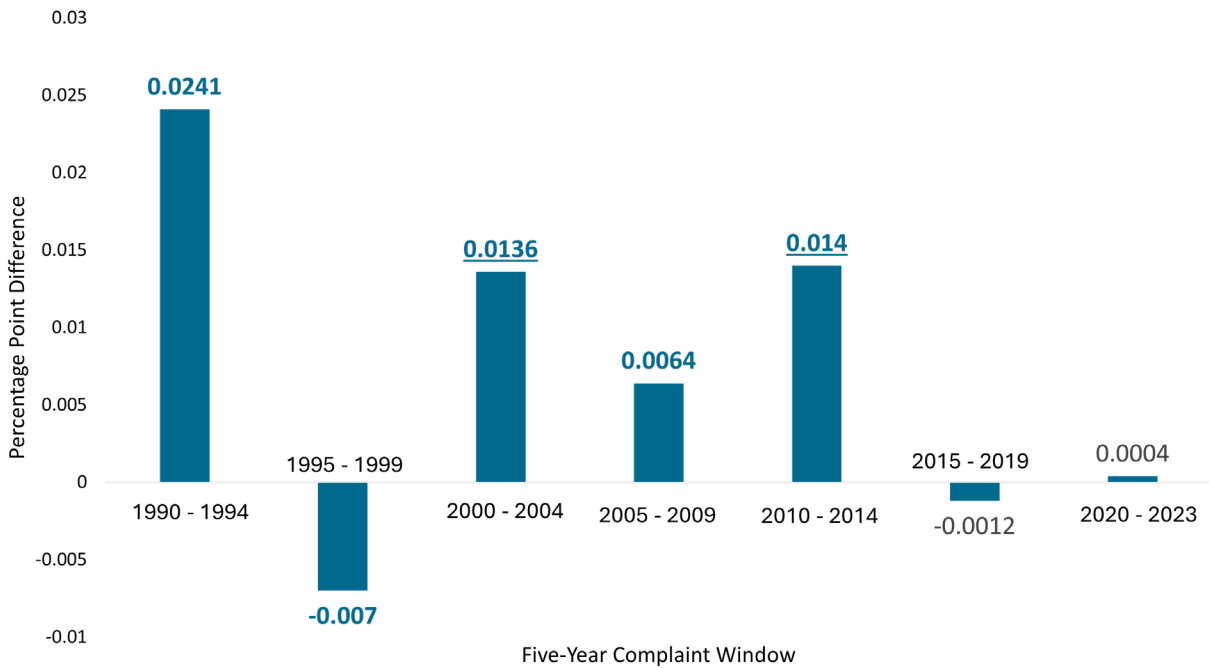
**Figure 17. Differences in Probation Rates of Black and White Attorneys**



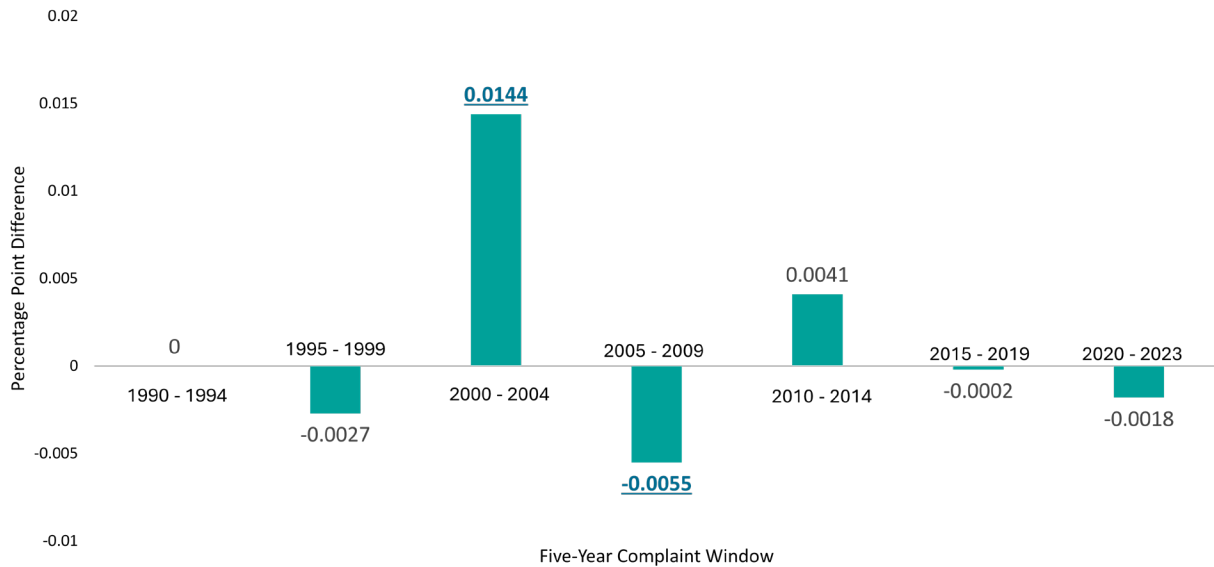
**Figure 18. Differences in Probation Rates of Hispanic/Latino and White Attorneys**



**Figure 19. Differences in Disbarment Rates of Black and White Attorneys**



**Figure 20. Differences in Disbarment Rates of Hispanic/Latino and White Attorneys**



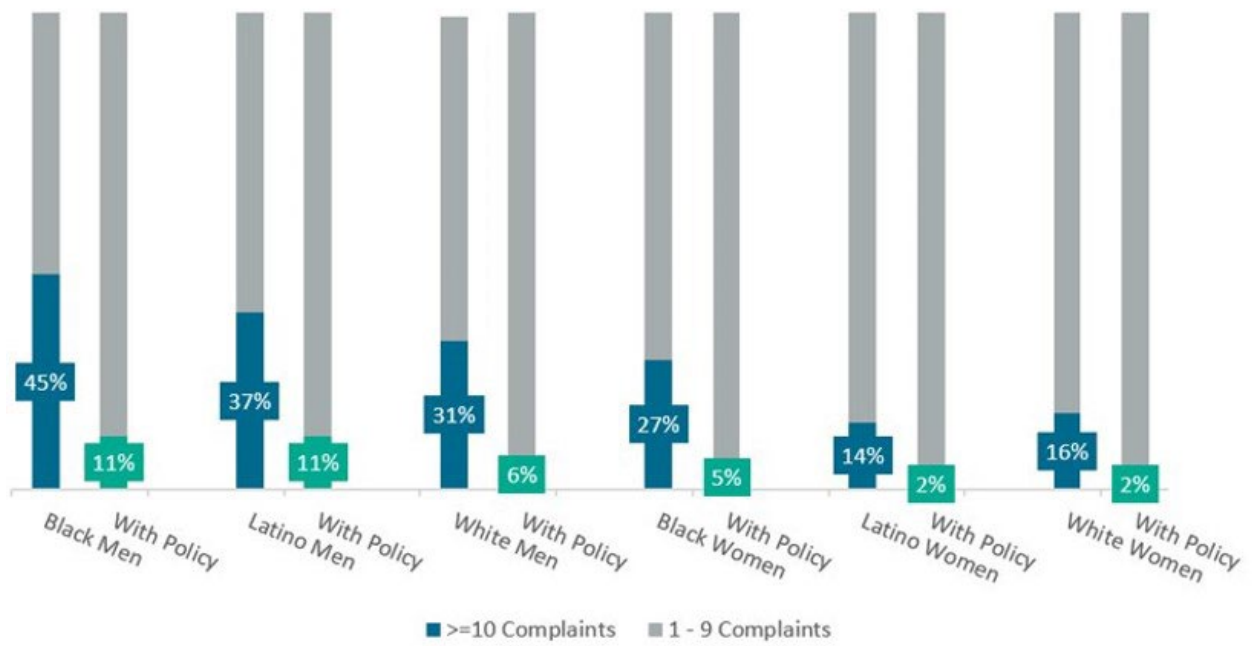
### ***Counsel Representation Policy Analysis***

In 2020, the State Bar began sending notices on the importance of having counsel and provided guidance for finding representation to attorneys subject to attorney discipline. The analysis found that overall representation rates went up, but less so for Black and Hispanic/Latino attorneys. The notice policy itself did not substantially affect representation rates. However, having counsel is still tied to lower discipline risks and milder sanctions.

### ***Archiving Policy Analysis***

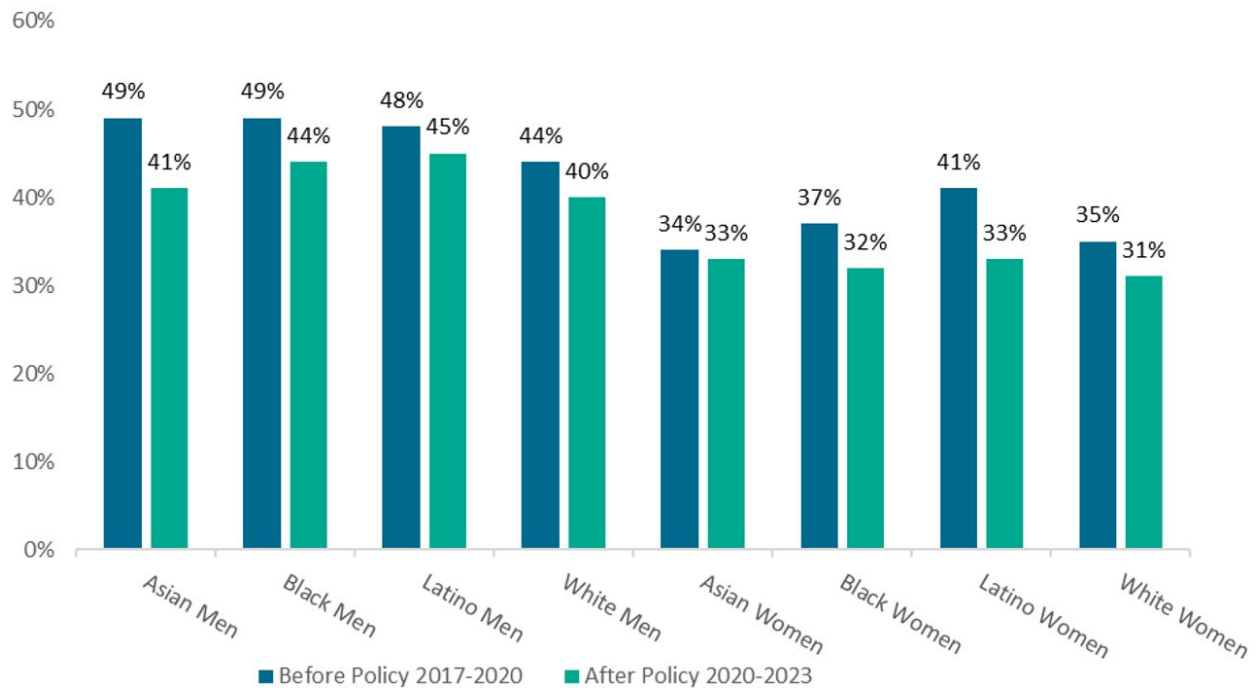
Also in 2020, the State Bar started archiving older complaints so they are not visible when reviewing new complaints. This analysis examined how effective this policy was at reducing the disparities in visible prior complaint volume for attorneys and the effects of these intended changes on discipline. Results showed that despite reducing disparities in the number of visible prior complaints, a greater percentage of Black and Hispanic/Latino men still had 10 or more visible prior complaints than white men (see figure 21). Furthermore, even after the policy's implementation, Black male attorneys, are still investigated more often than white male attorneys, even when controlling for the number of visible prior complaints (see figure 22).

**Figure 21. Percentage of Attorneys with 10+ Visible Prior Complaints**



*Note:* Figure 21 shows the percentage of attorneys by race/ethnicity and gender that had 10 or more complaints before and after the archiving policy was implemented.

**Figure 22. Percentage of Cases Forwarded to Investigation**



*Note:* Figure 22 shows the percentage of cases forwarded to investigation by race/ethnicity and gender before and after the archiving policy was implemented.

### **PREVENTION AND PROACTIVE RISK-MANAGEMENT FOR ATTORNEYS**

The 2023 report identified the following activities intended to protect the public by providing support and resources to attorneys, particularly underrepresented attorneys, so that they do not enter the attorney discipline system:

- Develop metrics for assessing the impact of the State Bar’s prevention and proactive risk-based management work.
- Support attorneys from disenfranchised and underserved communities who may experience unique practice management and other challenges.
- Create a licensee resource page on the State Bar website to provide information and tools on emerging topics and issues including identifying and addressing mental health issues, developing financial literacy, and navigating imposter syndrome in the workplace.
- Identify competency-related factors that drive disparate voluntary departures from the legal profession by race and gender.

## **Assessing the Impact of the State Bar’s Prevention and Proactive Risk-Based Management Work**

Through its Lawyer Assistance Program (LAP), the State Bar regularly gathers input on preventative and proactive programming needs from a diverse range of stakeholders, including local and affinity bar associations, the California Lawyers Association, current and former LAP participants, and other members of the California legal community. Internally, staff collaborate regularly to identify programming opportunities during licensee interactions with other areas of the State Bar. Additionally, the State Bar periodically reviews licensee discipline data to identify trends and emerging needs to inform future programming.

One example of recent programming is the *Reset: Bar Retaker Support Program*, which exemplifies the State Bar’s efforts to develop methodologies for measuring the impact of proactive programming. This initiative provides mental health and exam study strategies to California General Bar Examination retakers, a group disproportionately composed of individuals from historically marginalized communities. Addressing the critical support gap for retakers as an overlooked cohort, the five-week program features 1.5-hour sessions that integrate evidence-based wellness strategies with proven review techniques. Recent pilot program evaluations indicate a 97 percent satisfaction rate among participants, with 96 percent reporting improved bar exam preparedness. The State Bar is still exploring effective methods to track bar exam pass rates among *Reset* program alumni and continues to refine this assessment process.

## **Support for Attorneys from Disenfranchised and Underserved Communities Who May Experience Unique Practice Management and Other Challenges**

As a result of the input received as described above, the State Bar fielded numerous requests for programming to support attorneys with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). After consulting with several adult ADHD experts and the New York, Minnesota, and District of Columbia bar ADHD program leaders, the State Bar successfully piloted a psychoeducation support group, *Refocus: Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) Strategies for Success in Law*. The six-week virtual series targeted core areas of executive functioning impacted by ADHD that limit the ability to practice law competently. The program was led by one seasoned staff member along with a mental health practitioner with over 20 years of experience. Overall, more than 85 percent of attendees were “extremely” or “very” satisfied with the program and 95 percent would recommend the series to others. Notably, the largest group of attendees (26 percent) have been practicing for more than 20 years, followed closely by those practicing 1–5 years (22 percent).

The State Bar will continue to develop law practice management resources and explore collaborations to deliver practice management support for attorneys from underserved communities who may experience unique law practice management issues.

## **Licensee Resource Page and Other Resources for Law Students and Licensees on the State Bar Website**

To improve resources, information, and tools available to law students and attorneys, the State Bar reviewed and updated outdated resources and links on its website, including resources on [Opening and Managing a Law Office](#), [Succession Planning](#), LAP resources for [Students](#), and LAP resources for [Attorneys](#). The State Bar with support from COAF, developed a toolkit for law students and attorneys to address [Overcoming Imposter Syndrome](#). The State Bar is currently undergoing a comprehensive revision of the website, and updated resources will be consolidated into a licensee resources page.

## **Competency-Related Factors that Drive Disparate Voluntary Departures from the Legal Profession by Race and Gender**

In reviewing data from the Inactive Attorney Survey (see section above), the State Bar could not identify clear commonalities that would support the development of an actionable and targeted program. However, addressing potential systemic barriers that may contribute to these disparities is a priority. To that end, in addition to analyzing data from an updated Inactive Attorney Survey deployed in early 2025, the State Bar is committed to further exploration and analyses, including seeking additional data sources, collaborating with stakeholders, and engaging with underrepresented groups to better understand the factors influencing these decisions. The State Bar's goal is to develop meaningful and evidence-based strategies to promote retention and equity within the legal profession.

## **PROMOTING RETENTION AND ADVANCEMENT**

The 2023 report outlined the following activities to study trends and engage with leaders in the legal profession to explore barriers and solutions to retention and advancement in the profession:

- Identify data-supported practices that promote retention and advancement of a diverse and inclusive legal profession and share those practices through toolkits and other resources.
- Review innovative DEI practices from other industries that may be adaptable to the legal profession.
- Collaborate with legislative and other stakeholders to establish a law school student loan forgiveness program to make legal aid an attractive and sustainable career goal.

## **Toolkits and Resources**

The State Bar conducted research to explore data-supported best practices for retention and advancement in the legal profession. While there were abundant programs addressing areas like pipeline to the profession, mentorship, and sponsorship, it did not appear that programs

collected data on program participants or measured impact. In engaging with stakeholders through surveys, focus groups, convenings, and outreach, the State Bar identified best practices for its DEI Leadership Seal Action Items, and learned anecdotally about the unique challenges faced by employers of attorneys and attorneys themselves in advancing DEI. In response, the State Bar, with support from COAF, plans to provide additional opportunities for stakeholders to convene, including facilitating specific topics for DEI Leadership Seal participants in 2024. Based on ongoing feedback, and if appropriate, the State Bar will compile and develop resource documents-based best practices.

### **Innovative DEI Practices**

In support of exploring barriers and solutions to retention and advancement in the profession, COAF researched innovative DEI practices across multiple sectors, including legal, medical, technology, and higher education, to identify trends, successful strategies, and potential opportunities for implementation within the legal profession. As a result of COAF's research and discussions, two main priorities were identified for further study: mitigating bias in the use of artificial intelligence (AI) and enhancing support for attorneys and organizations serving underserved rural communities.

COAF recognized the growing role of AI in the law and particularly with employment screening processes and plans to explore strategies and develop guidance to identify and mitigate AI-driven inequities in the recruitment, retention, and advancement processes for legal professionals. COAF also prioritized strengthening resources for legal practitioners in rural areas that face unique service delivery and DEI challenges. This work will include leveraging available rural-focused data, engaging with organizations serving these communities, and developing innovative strategies tailored to address the needs of rural attorneys.

COAF identified other potential areas of interest and plans to continue research on less explored aspects of diversity, such as neurodivergence, generational differences, and disability inclusion.

### **Law Student Loan Forgiveness**

As reported in the last report to the Legislature, the State Bar has actively pursued multiple avenues for funding loan repayment assistance programs (LRAPs) for attorneys in the nonprofit sector throughout the state. This work has proven an essential response to the recruitment and retention crisis in legal aid, spurred in part by low salaries in nonprofit settings and high educational debt.<sup>12</sup> Though advocacy for a state-funded LRAP spearheaded by the State Bar and

---

<sup>12</sup> American Bar Association Young Lawyers Division, *2024 Law School Student Loan Survey: Student Debt*,



stakeholders (LSTFC, COAF, and California Access to Justice Commission) was unsuccessful, other initiatives since have shown promise.

For example, significant increases to Interest on Lawyers' Trust Account (IOLTA) grants starting in 2024 prompted State Bar staff to encourage legal aid grant recipients to devote some of their increased funding to loan repayment assistance. Staff held webinars and, in partnership with the LSTFC, developed guidelines for the appropriate use of IOLTA and Equal Access Funds, based on the type of LRAP to be funded (e.g., an employer-based or third party-administered LRAP). A statutory change in 2023, supported by the State Bar, also established a new LRAP administered by the [California Access to Justice Commission](#), providing an option for legal aid employers to direct loan repayment assistance to their attorney employees and have it excluded from the attorneys' taxable income.<sup>13</sup> In 2024, 16 State Bar-funded grantees budgeted over \$315,000 of IOLTA and Equal Access Fund funds for LRAPs, benefitting almost 80 staff.

Further, a statutory LRAP for public interest attorneys (legal aid, district attorney, public defender, or child support services attorneys) to be administered by the California Student Aid Commission has been authorized since 2002 but never funded.<sup>14</sup> Thanks in part to inquiries from the State Bar and its LRAP working group starting in 2021, the State Controller initiated the transfer of escheated IOLTA funds held by the agency to the State Treasury, the first step in establishing the program. In 2024, the Student Aid Commission opened its first round of applications for a cohort of 41 attorneys to each receive up to \$11,000 in loan repayment assistance over four years.<sup>15</sup>

The need for assistance is great; the State Bar is pleased with these inroads and intends to advocate for the development or expansion of more LRAPs. The State Bar will continue to analyze grantee data regarding the use of funds for LRAPs and related outcomes. It will also seek to identify and collect any additional information needed to encourage and assist grantees with incorporating LRAPs into their recruitment and retention efforts.

---

*COVID-19 Relief and Loan Forgiveness: Perspectives from Today's Young Lawyers* (2024), pp. 7-8, 12-13. The survey shows respondents in public interest or nonprofit settings in one of the lowest salary ranges reported across the legal field. It explores the extent to which high student debt impacts career choice and trajectory, with many respondents reporting moving away from public interest for this reason. Further, the survey results indicate that respondents of color typically report higher loan amounts and rates of borrowing to finance their educations, meaning these disparities in income and loan debt could have a more pronounced effect on recruitment and retention of attorneys of color in nonprofit settings.

<sup>13</sup> Bus. & Prof. Code § 6219(b).

<sup>14</sup> Ed. Code §§ 69740-69741.

<sup>15</sup> California Student Aid Commission, [Public Interest Attorney Loan Repayment \(PIALR\) Program Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQs\)](#), p. 2.

## **FUTURE PLANS**

For 2025–2026, while seeking continuous feedback from stakeholders, the State Bar plans the following activities to advance DEI and promote the elimination of bias in the legal profession.

### **STATEWIDE LEADERSHIP**

- Administer the attorney census annually.
- Beginning in 2025, administer an attorney survey every five years to better understand attorney employment sectors, leadership roles, and recruitment, advancement, and retention challenges.
- Publish annual Report Card on the Diversity of California’s Legal Profession (Diversity Report Card). The 2024 Diversity Report Card will be published in spring 2025. Beginning with the 2025 Diversity Report Card publication in spring 2026, the Diversity Report Card will be published in an interactive dashboard format to allow users to engage directly with the data, enabling users to filter, visualize, and analyze data in ways that are most relevant to their unique interests and needs.
- Administer the Inactive Attorney Survey annually.
- Implement, monitor, and improve the DEI Leadership Seal program.
- Engage stakeholders through regular convenings to share data and to discuss best practices and challenges.

### **CREATING A CULTURE OF INCLUSIVITY**

- As an employer, maintain gold DEI Leadership Seal status.
- Hold annual implicit bias training for decision makers at the State Bar. Continue to offer DEI and implicit bias training offerings and discussions for all staff.
- Continue expanded outreach on subentity appointment opportunities to support the long-range goal of diversifying subentity membership.
- Continue to review metrics for the implicit bias module and explore development of additional trainings addressing EOB with the goal of updating the course content regularly to ensure that it remains relevant.

### **PIPELINE TO THE PROFESSION**

- Continue outreach to recruit a diverse group of bar exam proctors and graders and law school inspectors and analyze demographic data to evaluate success of outreach efforts.
- Continue to ensure that bar exam proctors and graders and law school inspectors receive implicit bias trainings.
- Continue to diversify the exam grading pool.
- Convene and support a steering committee to guide the development of a new California Bar Examination pursuant to the Supreme Court’s October 10, 2024, order.

- Continue California Strategies and Stories Program (also known as Mindsets in Legal Education) for California Bar Exam takers.
- Publish Law School Performance Report annually and develop an interactive dashboard to enable stakeholders to analyze trends over multiple years, compare data across different types of law schools, and examine outcomes for specific student populations.
- Assess impact of the DEI requirements for California-accredited law schools, including evaluating the metrics each school has adopted and reviewing the actions schools have taken to advance diversity and inclusion goals based on their data-driven insights.<sup>16</sup>
- Survey current and former law students on their experiences with the goal of better understanding the availability and quality of student support and retention programs, the characteristics of programs designed for diverse populations, and law school performance from the student perspective.

## **RETENTION AND ADVANCEMENT IN THE PROFESSION**

Future plans related to retention and advancement in the profession are in three categories: reforms to the attorney discipline system, prevention and proactive risk management for attorneys, and promoting retention and advancement in the profession.

### **Reforms to the Attorney Discipline System**

- Collect more detailed information from complainants to better understand the sources of complaints against attorneys and examine the complaint submission process for potential sources of bias.
- Develop and implement more targeted and effective outreach related to counsel representation during the discipline process for Black and Hispanic/Latino attorneys.
- Assess complaint archiving policy for possible refinement.

### **Prevention and Proactive Risk Management for Attorneys**

- Finalize format and content of newly developed programming to support attorneys with the goal of measuring and evaluating outcomes.

---

<sup>16</sup> In 2022, new Accredited Law School Rules went into effect that mandate the following: "A law school must put in place effective policies and practices, and engage in ongoing, systematic, and focused recruitment and retention activities, in an effort to achieve mission-appropriate access, diversity, equity, inclusion, and cultural competency outcomes for its students, faculty, senior administrative staff, and members of its academic community, and to work to eliminate bias, both implicit and explicit." The rule further requires law schools to develop "well-articulated metrics," including the examination of disaggregated retention and graduation outcomes, and to adjust programs and policies as needed to improve diversity and inclusion outcomes.

- Continue to develop law practice management resources and explore collaborations to deliver practice management support for attorneys from underserved communities who may experience unique law practice management issues.
- Complete revisions and updates to Licensee Resource page on the State Bar’s website.
- Analyze data from the updated Inactive Attorney Survey as well as other data sources, collaborate with stakeholders, and engage with underrepresented groups to better understand the factors influencing attorney decisions to go to inactive status and to develop meaningful and evidence-based strategies to promote retention and equity within the legal profession.
- Transition the Attorney–Client Bridge Program to permanent status and continue to monitor its impact on addressing low-level issues outside the formal attorney complaint process.
- Continue to implement and refine the Attorney Supervision and Assistance Redesign program and monitor recidivism rates.

### **Promoting Retention and Advancement in the Profession**

- Study additional less explored aspects of diversity, like neurodiversity, generational differences, and geographic diversity, with the goal of identifying additional support and resources for attorneys to encourage retention and advancement in the profession.
- Compile and develop resources and best practices related to DEI in the legal profession, as appropriate.
- Continue to monitor impact of loan repayment assistance programs on attorney recruitment and retention, including collecting and analyzing appropriate data.

### **FUNDING HISTORY AND NEEDS**

The primary funding source for the State Bar’s DEI work has been the EOB opt-out fee that is part of the annual attorney licensing fee (see table 4). This fee generates approximately \$300,000 in annual revenue, which is used primarily to fund staff in the State Bar’s Office of Access & Inclusion responsible for supporting COAF activities and implementing the work outlined in this report.

**Table 4. Elimination of Bias Fund History, 2017–2024**

	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024*
<b>Total Revenue</b>	\$327,640	\$314,893	\$325,438	\$367,766	\$343,999
<b>Total Expenses</b>	\$284,388	\$338,221	\$691,744	\$324,706	\$331,199
<b>Surplus (Deficit)</b>	\$43,252	(\$23,328)	(\$366,306)	\$43,060	\$12,800
*From unaudited Monthly Financial Results through December 2024					

As reflected in the table above, the State Bar’s funding for EOB remains modest. With additional funds, the State Bar would be able to develop and implement the following unfunded activities:

- Target outreach and communications support to better publicize Report Cards and the DEI Leadership Seal initiative, increasing opportunities for the data and reporting to be used to support local and affinity bar efforts, and to hold the State Bar and legal employers accountable for results: \$25,000 (annually).
- Based on data analysis, develop and pilot robust programming to implement strategies to promote retention and advancement in the profession: \$50,000 (annually).
- Develop and implement a State Bar-appointed counsel program for income-qualifying respondent attorneys: \$250,000 estimated for a pilot program recommended by the Ad Hoc Committee on the Discipline System.
- Update online elimination of bias implicit training module available for all California attorneys: \$100,000 (every three years).