



Highlights from the
**American Law School
Faculty Study**



Association of American
Law Schools

 **NORC** at the
University of
Chicago

Understanding law school faculty is more important than ever

Law faculty are on the frontlines of legal education, facing some of the greatest economic, political, ideological, and technological challenges of our time. In recent years, they navigated a rapid transition to online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic, continuing concerns about diversity and equity, and so much more. Despite how critical law faculty are to student outcomes and the future of legal education, there is relatively little comprehensive research about this group. The *American Law School Faculty Study* was designed to expand this limited body of research, providing a snapshot of law teaching and law faculty today.

About the *American Law School Faculty Study*

The *American Law School Faculty Study* is based on two surveys, both fielded in fall 2023 – one administered at the school level and the other conducted with individual law school faculty. On the school-level survey, deans (or their representatives) were asked to report numbers of faculty members hired to different position types over the last four years; tenure eligibility and expectations; and requirements for tenure. In total, 117 law schools participated for a final response rate of 61 percent. On the individual faculty survey, law faculty were asked about their career pathways; their pathway and experiences with tenure; and their work experiences including teaching courseload, importance of and time spent on job responsibilities, and job satisfaction. In total 1,890 faculty completed the survey, for a 23 percent response rate.



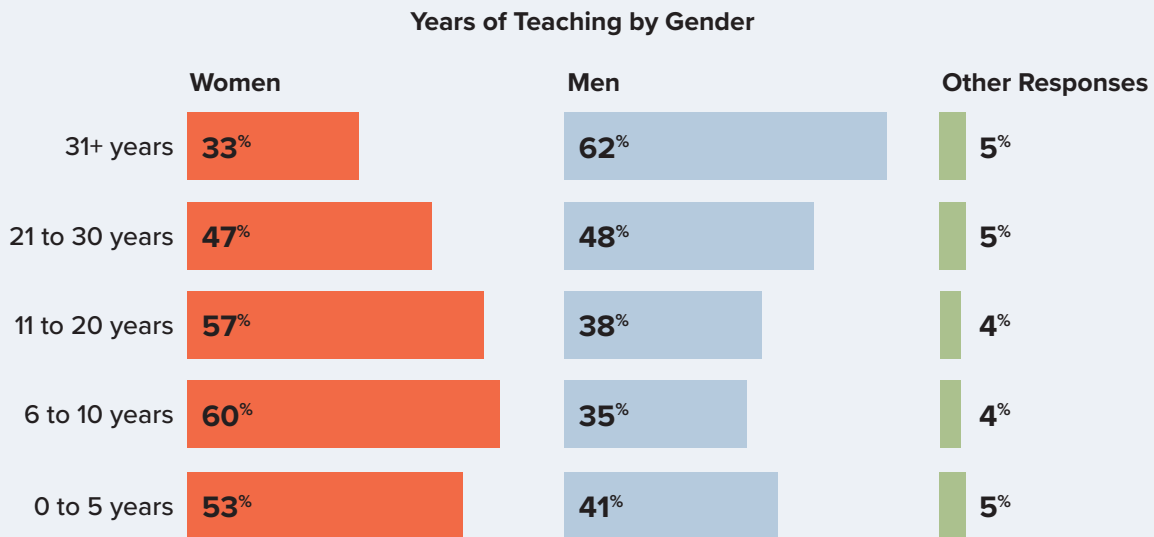
Key Findings

Women comprise the majority of law faculty entering the profession in the last 20 years.

- While women comprise 53% of new law faculty who have been teaching for five years or less, they comprise only 42% of tenured classroom faculty or deans.
- Women comprise a greater proportion of clinical and legal writing faculty (59-73% depending on the position).

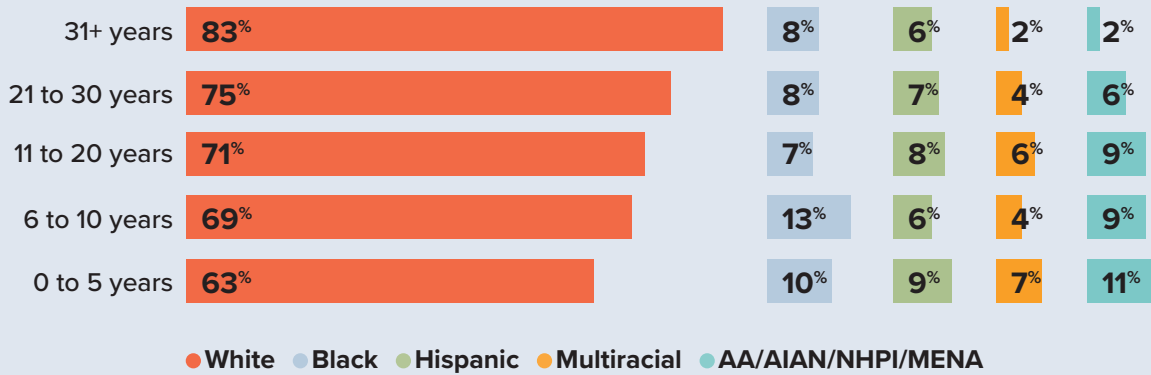
Law faculty are becoming more diverse in terms of race and ethnicity with each new cohort of teachers.

- Hispanic faculty and faculty of color comprise 37% of faculty who started teaching in the last five years, compared to smaller proportions of more experienced faculty.
- Hispanic faculty and faculty of color comprise a higher percentage of tenure-track faculty (42%) compared with tenured faculty (25%).



NOTE. Other Responses in this study includes transgender, gender non-conforming, genderqueer, and non-binary faculty, faculty who indicated they identify with another identity not listed, and faculty who selected 'prefer not to answer.'

Years of Teaching by Faculty Race and Ethnicity



NOTE. AA/AIAN/NHPI/MENA includes Asian and Asian American, American Indian or Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander, and Middle Eastern and North African faculty.

First-generation college students are in the minority among law faculty.

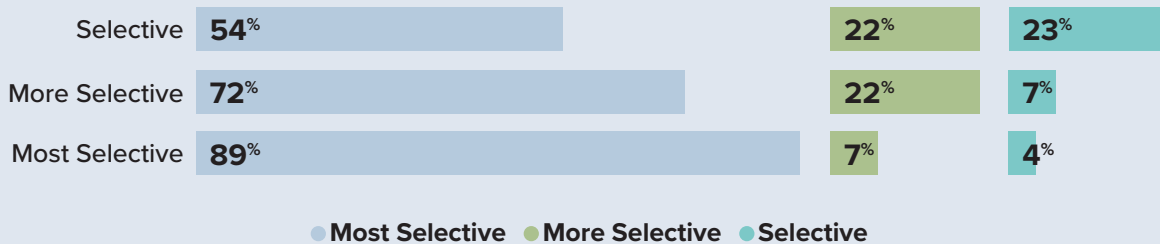
- About a fifth (22%) of current law faculty have parents with less than a bachelor’s degree. A total of 56% of current law faculty have a parent with a law degree (12%) or other advanced degree (44%).

Most law faculty (68%) made the decision to pursue law teaching after they completed law school, and most law faculty earned their JDs from a most selective law school.

- Faculty who earned their JD more recently, between 2010 and 2023, made the decision to teach law earlier in their careers.
- 71% of law faculty overall earned their JDs from a most selective law school (based on 2023 median LSAT scores for the entering first-year class). An even higher proportion of law faculty (89%) at the most selective schools also earned their JDs at one of these schools. At selective law schools, still over half (54%) of law faculty earned their JDs from one of the most selective schools.

JD Institution Selectivity

Employed at:



NOTE. Institutional selectivity refers to the 2023 median LSAT score of the incoming first-year class at law schools: most selective (LSAT 165 or more), more selective (LSAT 157 to 164), and selective (LSAT less than 157).

Most law faculty hold multiple other positions before beginning their teaching career, and it is becoming more common for law faculty to have earned other advanced degrees in addition to their JD.

- A large majority (70%) of law faculty hold more than one position before teaching law, with 33% holding two positions and 37% holding three or more positions.
- 75% of faculty who earned their JD between 2010 and 2023 started teaching within nine years of earning their degree. This is compared to only 36% of those who earned their JD before 2010.
- 57% of faculty who earned their JD between 2010 and 2023 earned an additional advanced degree (vs. 43% who earned their JD before 2010).

Most tenured faculty earned tenure within five to seven years after they began teaching.

- 62% of tenured faculty earned tenure within five to seven years after they began teaching. 18% earned tenure within four years and another 20% earned tenure after seven years.
- A greater proportion of men (21%) than women (13%) earned tenure within four years, and a smaller proportion of men (16%) than women (26%) earned tenure after seven years.
- Hispanic (22%) and White faculty (18%) were the most likely to earn tenure within four years (vs. 8-14% for other faculty). Multiracial (30%) and Asian or Asian American, AIAN, NHPI, and MENA faculty (27%) were more likely than other faculty (16-23%) to earn tenure after more than seven years.
- 65% of faculty overall said the tenure system was very valuable.

Most faculty see teaching as their most important job responsibility.

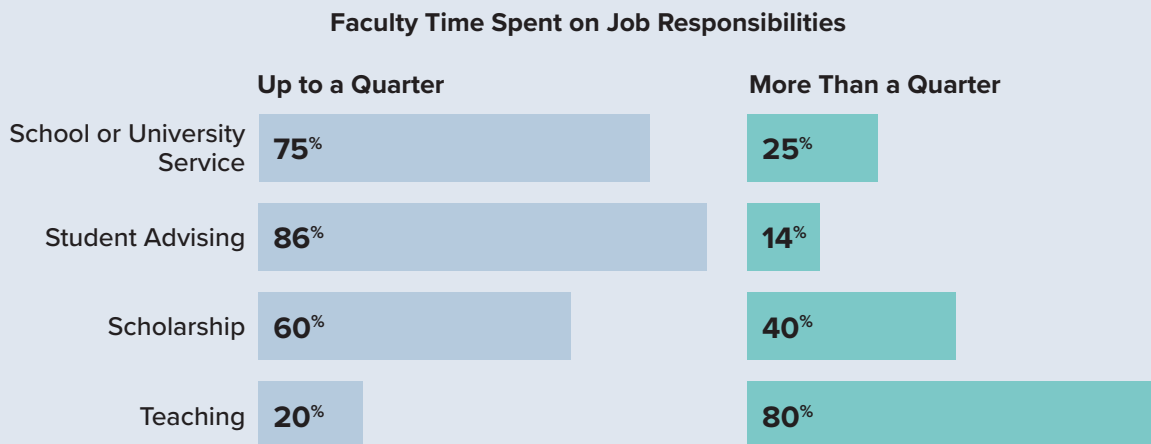
- 69% of faculty ranked teaching as their most important job responsibility, with 21% indicating scholarship is their most important job responsibility.
- Scholarship and student advising were most often ranked a faculty member's second most important job responsibility, and service to the law school or university most often ranked third.
- Faculty who have been teaching five years or less are more likely (28%) to say scholarship is their most important job responsibility, compared to faculty who have been teaching longer (18%; 31+ years).
- Tenured (27%) and tenure-track classroom faculty (33%) are the most likely to say scholarship is their most important job responsibility, compared to faculty in other position types.

Ranking of Faculty Job Responsibilities by Importance

Most Important	Second Most Important	Third Most Important
Teaching (69%)	Scholarship (32%)	Service (38%)
Scholarship (21%)	Advising (31%)	Advising (23%)
Service (6%)	Teaching (25%)	Scholarship (18%)

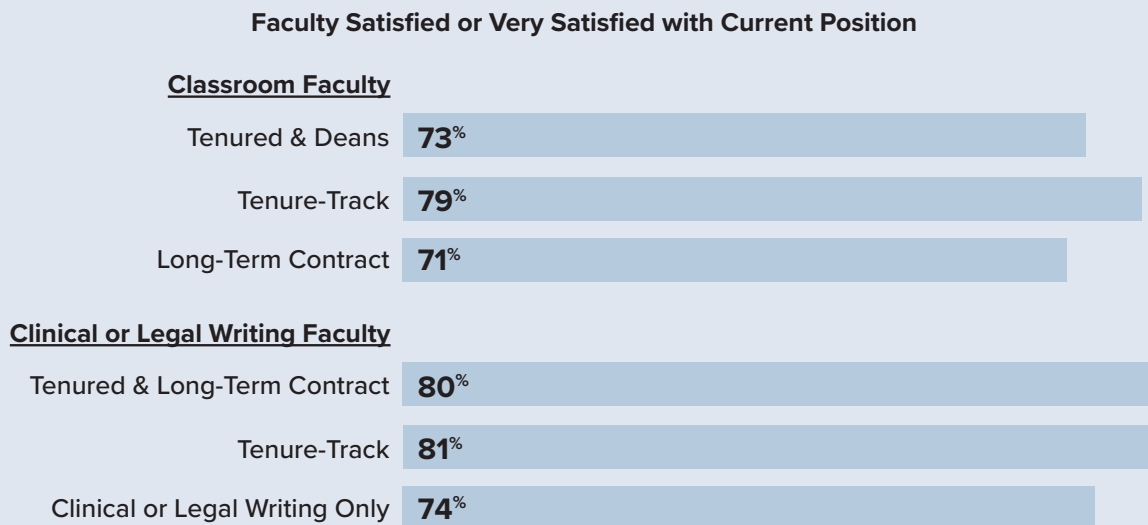
Eighty percent of faculty report spending more than a quarter of their time on teaching.

- Most faculty spend up to a quarter of their time on scholarship (60%), student advising (86%), and/or service to the law school or university (75%).
- Newer faculty who have been teaching for 5 years or less report spending more time teaching. 46% report spending more than half their time teaching, compared to 32% of those who have been teaching for 31+ years.



Overall job satisfaction among law faculty is high.

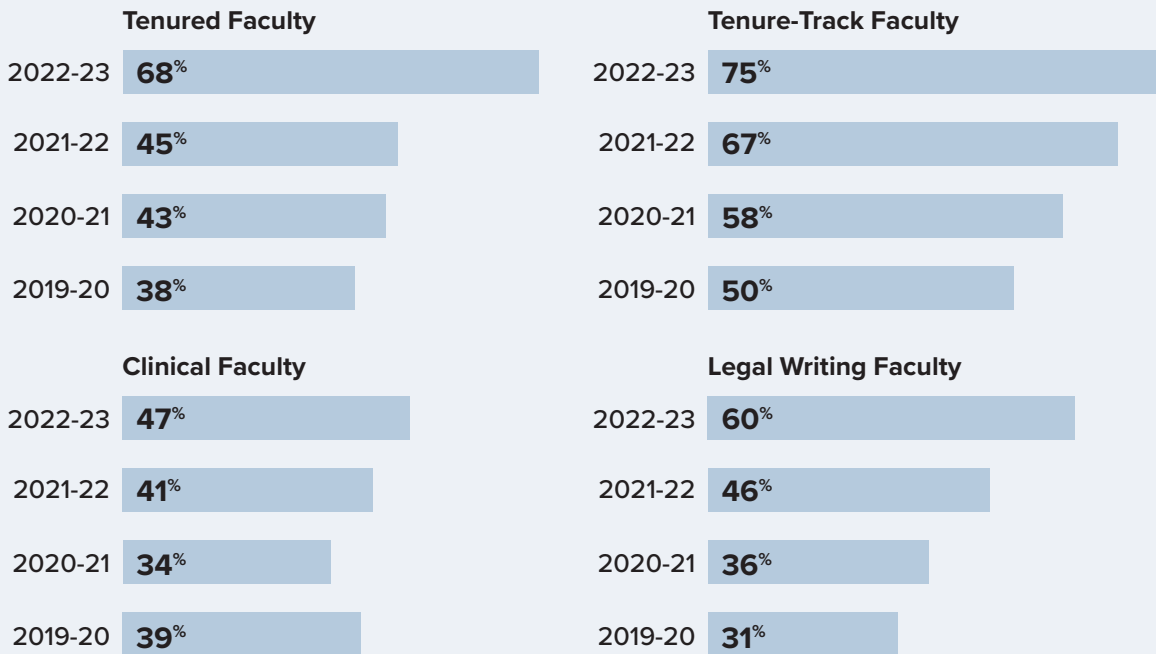
- 74% of law faculty are satisfied or very satisfied with their current positions
- A smaller proportion of faculty who selected other responses (63%) report being satisfied or very satisfied with their jobs, than women (75%) and men (77%).
- Faculty at the most (82%) and more selective (75%) institutions report greater satisfaction (satisfied or very satisfied) than faculty at selective institutions (65%).



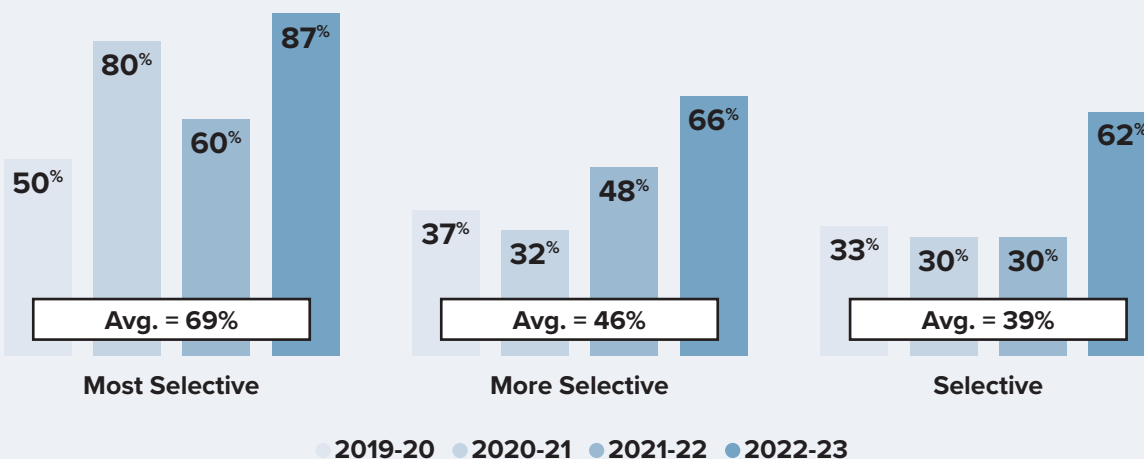
Over the past four academic years, there has been a consistent increase in the proportion of law schools hiring faculty, across all faculty positions.

- From the 2019-20 academic year to the 2022-23 academic year, there was a 30% increase in the proportion of law schools hiring at least one tenured faculty member, and a 25% increase in the proportion hiring tenure-track faculty.
- On average, 69% of the most selective law schools hired at least one tenured faculty member over the past four academic years, compared to 46% of more selective and 39% of selective institutions

Proportion of Law Schools Hiring Faculty by Faculty Position & Year



Proportion of Law Schools Hiring Tenured Faculty by Institutional Selectivity and Academic Year



NOTE. Institutional selectivity refers to the 2023 median LSAT score of the incoming first-year class at law schools: most selective (LSAT 165 or more), more selective (LSAT 157 to 164), and selective (LSAT less than 157).

About AALS

The Association of American Law Schools (AALS), founded in 1900, is a nonprofit association of 175 member and 19 fee-paid law schools. Its members enroll most of the nation's law students and produce the majority of the country's lawyers and judges, as well as many of its lawmakers. The mission of AALS is to uphold and advance excellence in legal education. In support of this mission, AALS promotes the core values of excellence in teaching and scholarship, academic freedom, and diversity, including diversity of backgrounds and viewpoints, while seeking to improve the legal profession, to foster justice, and to serve its many communities—local, national and international.



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About NORC

NORC at the University of Chicago conducts research and analysis that decision-makers trust. As a nonpartisan research organization and a pioneer in measuring and understanding the world, we have studied almost every aspect of the human experience and every major news event for more than eight decades. Today, we partner with government, corporate, and nonprofit clients around the world to provide the objectivity and expertise necessary to inform the critical decisions facing society.



Order your copy of the *American Law School Faculty Study* today.

Copies of the full report can be ordered at aals.org/research/faculty-study.