



DIVERSITY WITHIN DIVERSITY:

The Varied Experiences Of Asian
And Asian American Law Students



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The Law School Survey of Student Engagement is part of Indiana University's Center for Postsecondary Research, a research center in the School of Education devoted to studying the student experience. In addition to LSSSE, CPR houses the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) and the NSSE Institute, the Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (FSSE), the Strategic National Arts Alumni Project (SNAAP), and the Beginning College Survey of Student Engagement (BCSSE).



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Quick Facts

OBJECTIVES

To provide data to law schools to improve legal education and inform decision-making and compliance efforts, enhance student success, facilitate internal assessment and analysis, and support research on legal education.

SURVEY

Administered to all students at participating law schools via the Internet. Survey completion time is approximately 15-20 minutes.

SUPPORT

LSSSE is housed at Indiana University's Center for Postsecondary Research, and is supported by law school participation fees. Since its inception, LSSSE has benefited from close working relationships with the Association of American Law Schools and The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.

PARTICIPATING LAW SCHOOLS

One hundred and ninety six different law schools in the United States, Canada, and Australia have participated in LSSSE since 2004.

RESPONDENTS AND RESPONSE RATES

In 2016, 17,820 students at 72 law schools [in the U.S. and Canada] responded to the LSSSE survey. The average institutional response rate was 53%.

AUDIENCES

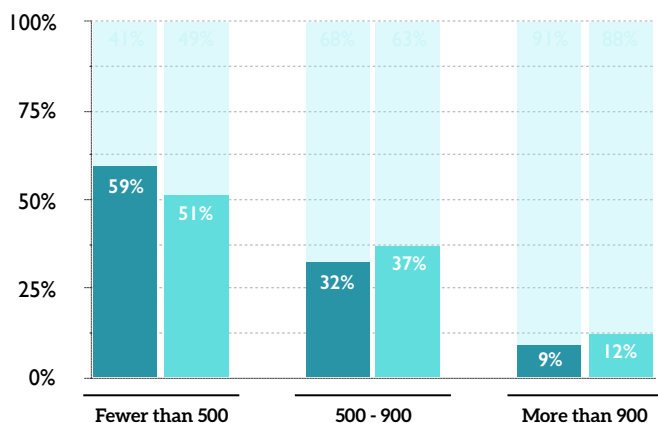
Law school administrators and faculty, current and prospective law students, alumni, advisory boards, trustees, institutional researchers, accrediting organizations, and researchers studying legal education.

DATA SOURCES

Survey responses and comments from JD/LLB students enrolled at participating law schools. Supplemental information used in analysis and reporting is obtained from the American Bar Association and the Law School Admission Council.

SIZE OF LSSSE 2016 SCHOOLS

Compared to National Profile of ABA Approved Law Schools^a

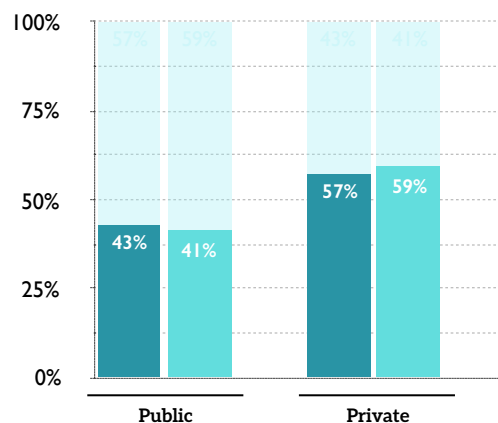


LSSSE 2016 National

a. National percentages are based on data from the ABA and the LSAC.

AFFILIATION OF LSSSE 2016 SCHOOLS

Compared to National Profile of ABA Approved Law Schools^a



LSSSE 2016 National

a. National percentages are based on data from the ABA and the LSAC.



Foreword

VINAY HARPALANI

Asians and Asian Americans are often forgotten in conversations about diversity. The “model minority” stereotype – the idea that people of Asian descent are successful because of their cultural emphasis on achievement, discipline, and conformity – pervades the limited discourse, ignoring the vast diversity among Asian and Asian American communities. Scholars such as Frank Wu, Robert Teranishi, and Vijay Prashad have broadly critiqued this monolithic approach, but there are still large gaps in the research. Virtually no research has focused on law students of Asian descent.

This report begins to fill these gaps. By finely disaggregating its racial and ethnic data, LSSSE takes on a daunting challenge. Racial classifications as a whole are ambiguous and imprecise. For people of Asian descent, these dilemmas are compounded by issues of nationality, diversity, and identity. Many people emphasize their own national origins (e.g., Chinese American). Some have more complex regional identities: for example, students from the Indian subcontinent often identify themselves as “South Asian” to distinguish themselves from East Asians (Chinese, Japanese, Korean), Southeast Asians (Vietnamese, Laotian), and Filipinos. Others prefer terms like “Asian Pacific American” or “Asian Pacific Islander” and adopt a Pan-Asian identity, focusing on their common experiences. There are lots of debates about identity and terminology here, highlighting the need for, and the difficulty of, taking a granular approach to racial and ethnic trends.

Asian and Asian American identities intersect with other nuanced distinctions: socioeconomic divides; citizenship status; skin color; and experiences of growing up within ethnic enclaves vs. in predominantly White settings. Researchers should recognize the limitations of any study with racial and ethnic variables; and their analyses should balance the significance of within-group diversity with the practical necessity of broad labels for efficient tracking of trends.

LSSSE takes an important step in this regard. This report is the first and most comprehensive attempt to illustrate the disaggregated experiences of Asian and Asian American law students. It is an admirable effort to capture the experiences of various subgroups, in a manner that is feasible and makes sense. The report will be a useful starting point for thinking about issues which impact law students, and it will also serve as a valuable tool for law schools committed to serving the needs of *all* their students.



I understand that this is the first of a series of “Diversity Within Diversity” reports by LSSSE, each of which will examine the experiences of smaller subgroups of law students. As one who has written extensively about within-group diversity, I commend LSSSE for its recognition of the challenges faced by law students of all backgrounds, and for its desire to understand their specific experiences. I look forward to its future research on these important issues.

VINAY HARPALANI
ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF LAW
SAVANNAH LAW SCHOOL



Introduction

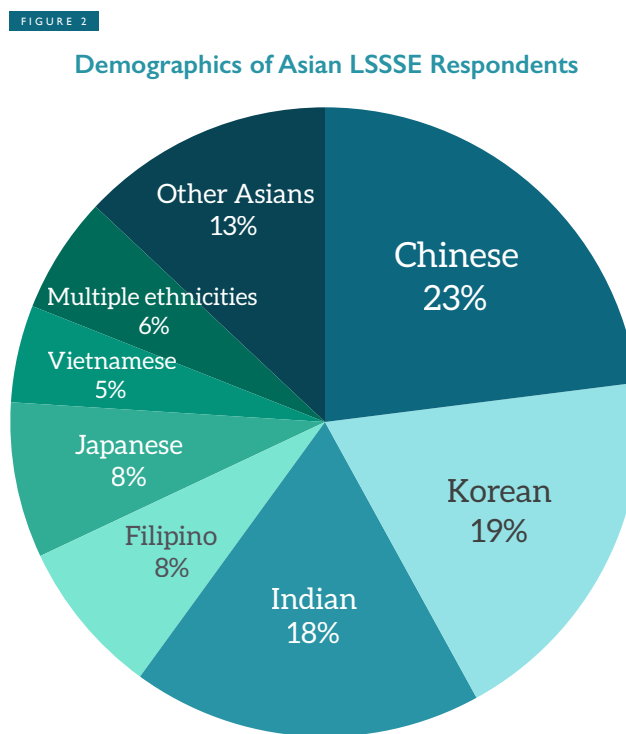
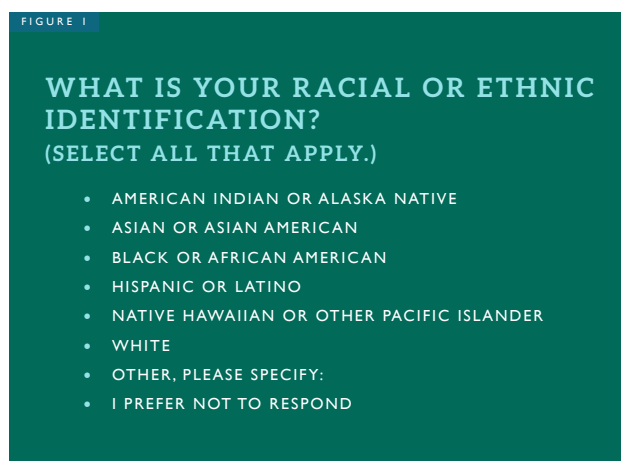
The use of blunt racial and ethnic labels is common in the study of higher education trends and patterns. The LSSSE Survey asks respondents to identify their race and/or ethnicity. The survey provides six specific racial/ethnic labels as well as an open-ended option and a no-response option. **FIGURE 1**

Results from the LSSSE Survey often illustrate compelling differences among respondents of different races and ethnicities. But while our means of classifying respondents and disaggregating data is useful and efficient, its blunt nature sometimes overlooks the diversity that exists within each group. This is especially true for respondents identifying as Asian.

The conventional conception of “Asian” is expansive. The federal government dictates that an Asian is “a person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian subcontinent.”¹ This definition lumps a vastly diverse group of people, spanning some 40 countries, into one blunt category. Even respondents who do not identify as Asian are counted as such if they claim origins fitting the definition.

In 2016, LSSSE, for the first time, asked respondents identifying as Asian or Hispanic/Latino to also identify an ethnic subgroup. This report, the first in a series titled “Diversity Within Diversity”, presents various disaggregated data for the Asian subgroups. A total of 1,147 LSSSE respondents identified as Asian, comprising 7% of the LSSSE pool – and about 1-in-7 of all Asian law students in the United States. Chinese respondents were the largest Asian subgroup (23%), followed by Koreans (19%) and Indians (18%). There were six subgroups that comprised at least 5% of the pool of Asian respondents. **FIGURE 2**

Comprising 81% of all Asian respondents, this report will center on these six groups. About 6% of respondents identified with multiple Asian subgroups or with an Asian subgroup and another race; their data is excluded from the subgroup analyses, as are data for respondents who identified with groups comprising less than 5% of the pool. The data presented in this report provide a glimpse into the experiences of these law students over the course of one school year.



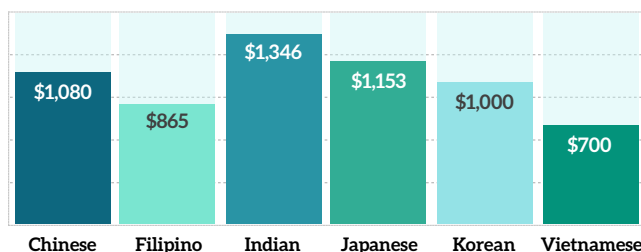
¹ <https://www.census.gov/topics/population/race/about.html>

Socioeconomic background

Disparities in socioeconomic and educational attainment among Asian subgroups are vast. According to the U.S. Department of Labor,² median weekly earnings among Vietnamese (\$700) is barely more than half the earnings among Indians (\$1,346).

FIGURE 3

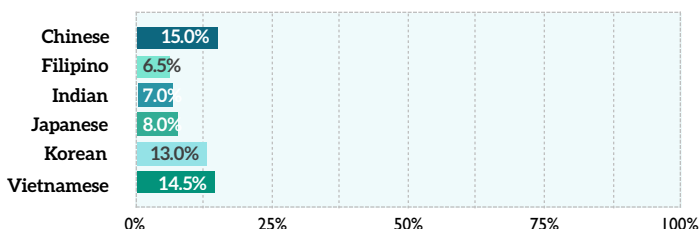
Median Weekly Earnings



Poverty rates among Chinese (15%) and Vietnamese (14.5%) are more than double rates among Indians (7%) and Filipinos (6.5%).

FIGURE 4

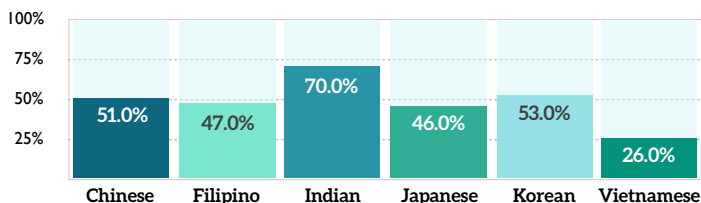
Poverty Rates (2014)



Similar disparities are observed when educational attainment is considered. The Center for American Progress reports that only about a quarter of Vietnamese have bachelor's degrees, compared to 70% of Indians.³

FIGURE 5

Bachelor's degree or higher (2010)



Immigration status adds another wrinkle to the trends. For example, poverty rates are much higher among Asians who are non-citizens than among those who are native-born or naturalized citizens. So even within subgroups, there is subgroup

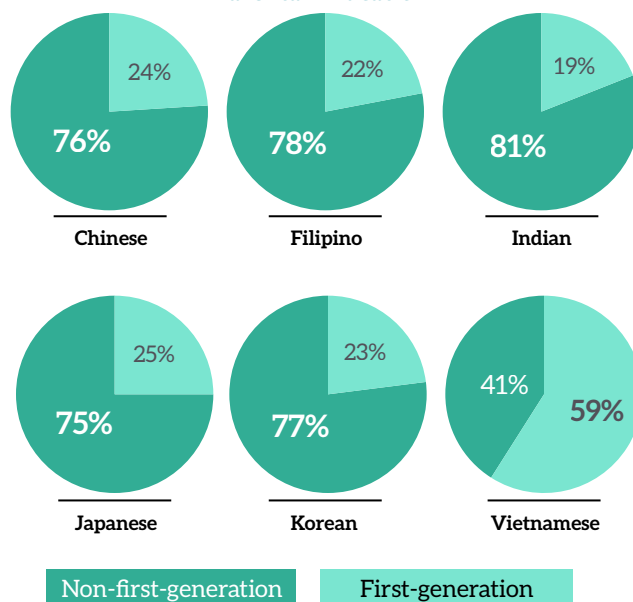
variation.

Socioeconomics loom large in the ascent to law school, and law students tend to be a relatively affluent group. The LSSE Survey attempts to get a sense of the socioeconomic backgrounds of respondents by asking about the education levels of their parents. Researchers often use parental education as a proxy for socioeconomic status. The linkages between higher education and income dictate that students with college-educated parents tend to come from more affluent backgrounds.

Respondents with at least one parent possessing a BA/BS or higher comprised more than 75% of each subgroup, with one glaring exception: Vietnamese respondents.

FIGURE 6

Parental Education



Only 41% of Vietnamese respondents had at least one parent with a BA/BS or higher. Put the other way, about 6-in-10 Vietnamese respondents were among the first-generation in their family to graduate from college. These trends align with the overall educational attainment figures cited earlier, and can be explained in large part by different immigration histories and patterns among groups.

² <https://www.dol.gov/sec/media/reports/AsianLaborForce/2016AsianLaborForce.pdf>

³ <https://cdn.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/AAPL-report.pdf>

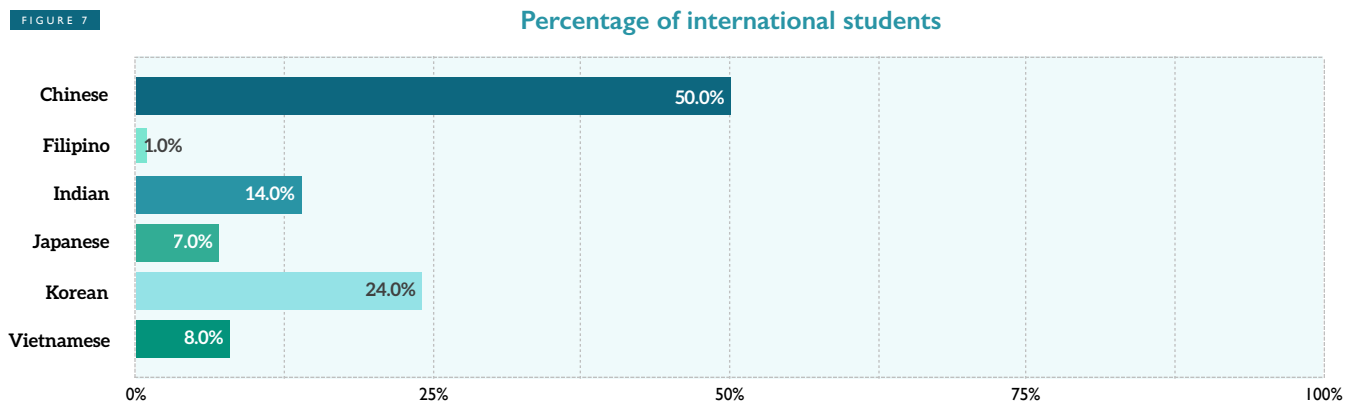


Immigrant Status

According to the Migration Policy Institute (MPI), most early Vietnamese immigrants came to the U.S. as refugees after the end of the Vietnam War.⁴ Some possessed advanced levels of education; many more did not. Contrastingly, Indian migration has been fueled in large part by high-skilled worker visa programs, with the primary recipients tending to be “young, educated urban dwellers, with strong English language skills.”⁵ Chinese immigration also tends to be driven by high-skilled worker visas as well as desire to study at U.S. colleges and universities.⁶ Korean immigrants tend to be of “high socioeconomic standing,”⁷ while

“higher educated professionals” has comprised a considerable portion of Filipino immigration to the U.S. over the last 50 years.⁸

The flow of Chinese immigrants pursuing higher education in the U.S. was apparent in the LSSSE pool. Half of Chinese respondents reported being international students. This was the highest proportion by far; the second-highest being among Indian respondents (24%). The lowest proportion (1%) was among Filipino respondents. **FIGURE 7**



⁴ <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/vietnamese-immigrants-united-states-2>

⁵ <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/indian-immigrants-united-states>

⁶ <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/chinese-immigrants-united-states>

⁷ <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/korean-immigrants-united-states>

⁸ <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/filipino-immigrants-united-states>



LSAT Scores

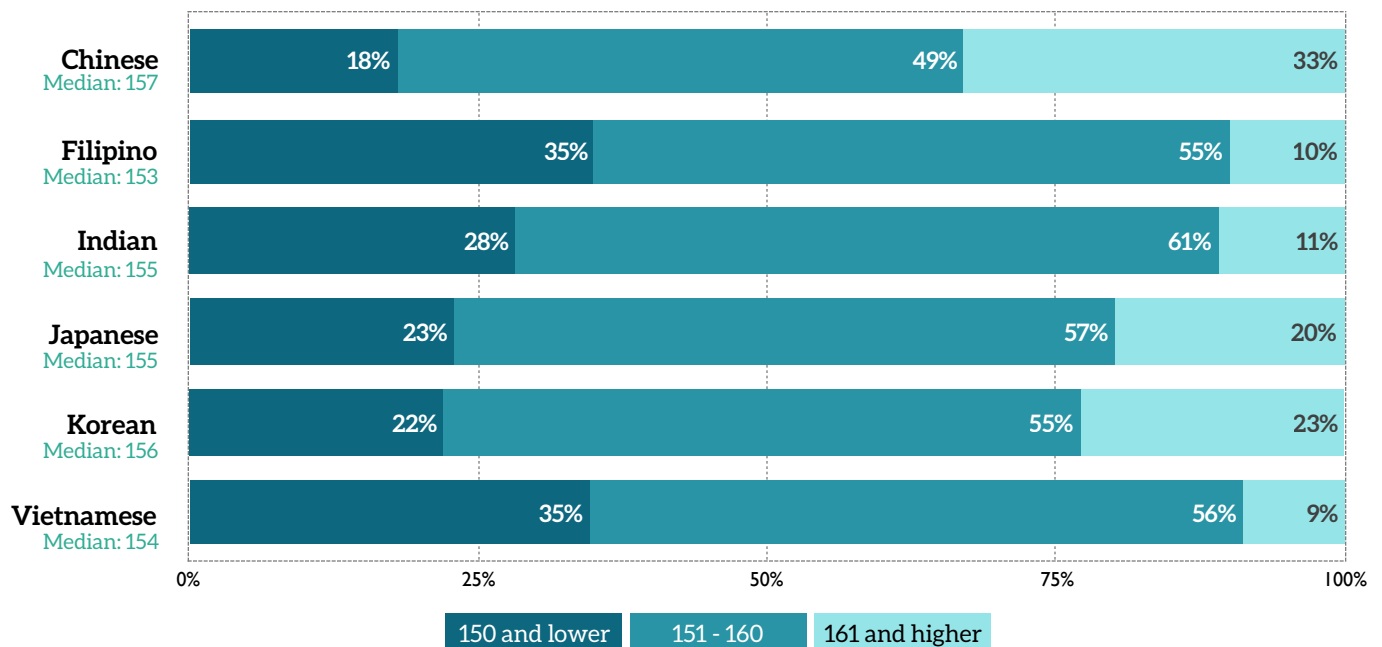
There was noticeable variation in LSAT scores among the subgroups. The median score ranged from 153 among Filipino respondents to 157 among Chinese respondents. The score distributions tell an even starker story. About 1-in-3, Chinese respondents had LSAT scores above 160 (roughly an 83rd percentile score or higher), the highest proportion among the six subgroups. Fewer than one-in-11 Vietnamese respondents had scores at this level. At the other end of the spectrum, about 1-in-3 Filipino and Vietnamese respondents had scores of 150 or lower, almost double the proportion of Chinese respondents.



Photo Courtesy of the Charlotte School of Law

FIGURE 8

LSAT Distribution

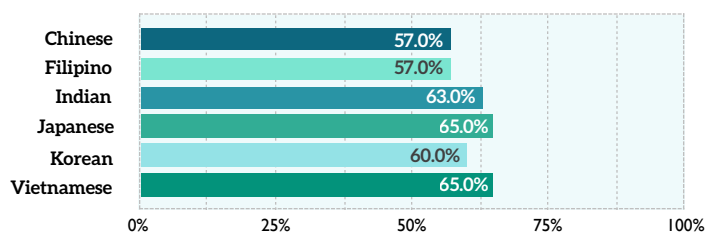


Scholarships

Given the outsized role that the LSAT plays in determining who goes to law school, where they go, and how much they pay, the trends suggest that Filipino and Vietnamese applicants are much less likely to gain admission and less likely to receive lucrative scholarships, even if they receive an admission offer. As explained in the LSSSE report, *Law School Scholarship Policies: Engines of Inequity*, the overall trends routinely highlight a strong link between LSAT score and receipt of so-called merit scholarships.

But those linkages were not observed as strongly among the Asian subgroups. Sixty-five percent (65%) of Vietnamese respondents reported receiving merit scholarships, the highest proportion, along with Japanese respondents. LSAT score differences suggest that Chinese respondents would have received these scholarships in the highest proportions; but their rate of 57% was tied with Filipino respondents.

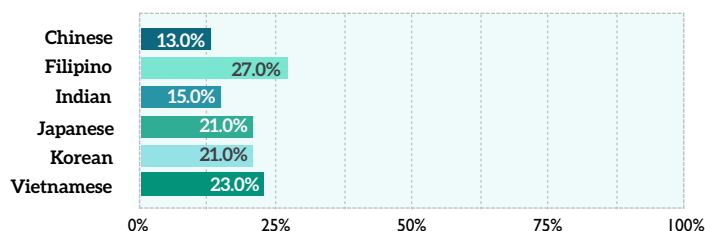
FIGURE 9 Percentage receiving merit scholarship



International students are sometimes ineligible to receive merit scholarships awarded by law schools. But immigrant status does not explain why receipt of merit scholarships (from all sources) among Chinese respondents seemed depressed. Chinese immigrants were only slightly less likely to report having received a merit scholarship of some type than Chinese Americans – 55% vs. 56%. For many reasons, the LSAT score should not be the primary determinant of who gets a merit scholarship; but it commonly is. Therefore, the trends among Asian respondents are somewhat of a riddle.

The need-based scholarship awarding trends took a more predictable track, with Filipino respondents (27%) mostly likely to have received this aid, followed by Vietnamese respondents (23%). Chinese respondents (13%) were least likely to report receiving this aid, a possible artifact of the high proportion of international students.

FIGURE 10 Percentage receiving need-based scholarship



Student Loan Debt

The LSSSE Survey asks respondents to estimate the amount of debt they expect to incur from law school. Half of Chinese respondents expected no law school debt – the highest proportion. **FIGURE 11** Once again, this trend can be explained by the high proportion of international students among the Chinese subgroup. International students do not qualify for U.S. government student loans and, therefore, are much less likely to report expecting student loan debt. Among Chinese and Indian respondents, international students were more than twice as likely to expect no student loan debt than domestic students. **FIGURE 12**

Less than 10% of Filipino and Vietnamese respondents expected to leave law school debt-free. Half of Filipinos expected to owe more than \$120,000, compared to 15% of Chinese respondents. And at the highest end of the spectrum, Filipinos were about seven times as likely to expect more than \$200,000 in law school debt than Chinese respondents, 14% to 2%.

FIGURE 11

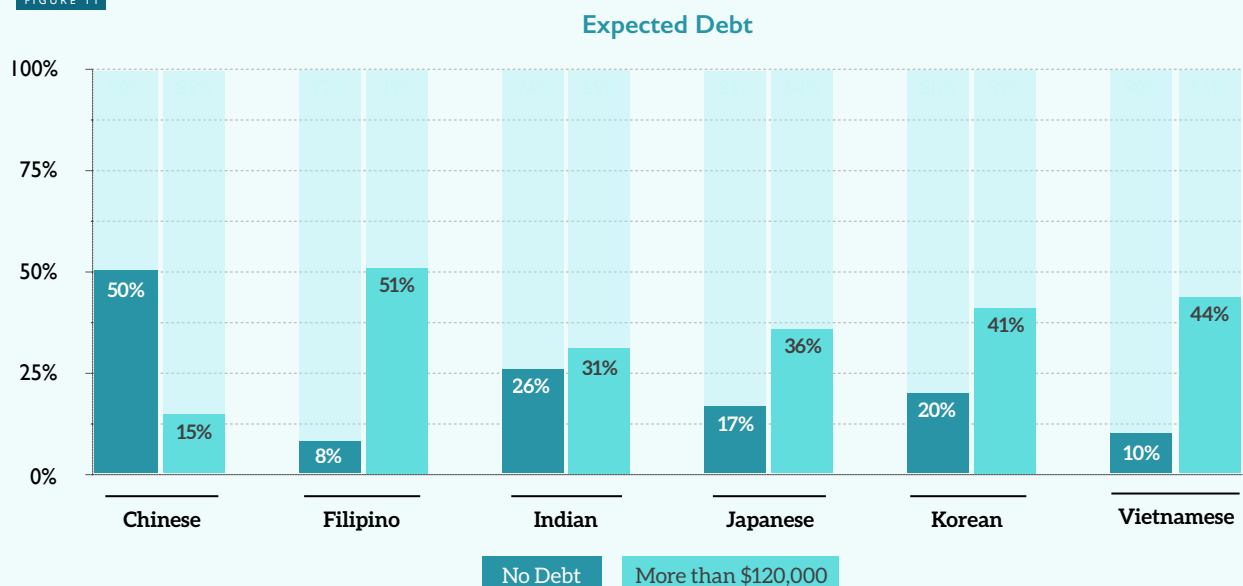
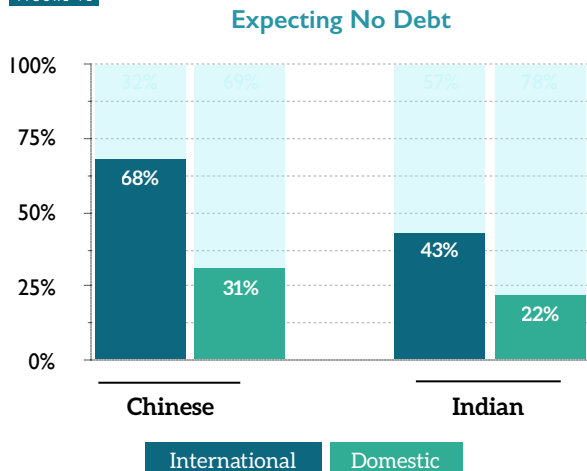


FIGURE 12



The Student Experience

LSSSE asks respondents about how they spend their time, in the context of their studies and beyond. Employment can be a very useful part of the law school experience if it has relevance to the practice or study of law. Some employment, however, is motivated by necessity, and not necessarily a desire to foster one's professional development. LSSSE respondents are asked to stipulate whether employment is law-related or non-law-related.

Among the six subgroups, Vietnamese respondents were most likely to report being employed, with the disproportions being particularly apparent in non-law-related jobs. [FIGURE 13](#) They were also most likely to report working eight or more hours per week in either setting. [FIGURE 14](#) The relatively high proportions of employment, particularly in non-law-related jobs, raises questions about the role of financial pressures among Vietnamese law students.

Vietnamese respondents were also most likely to report spending time providing care to dependents residing in the same household, [FIGURE 15](#) with Vietnamese and Japanese respondents reporting the largest time commitment. [FIGURE 16](#) Vietnamese respondents were least likely to report feeling as if their law school helped them cope with their non-academic responsibilities. [FIGURE 17](#)

Asian respondents overwhelmingly reported favorable relationships within their law school, but Vietnamese respondents were noticeably more likely to state that other students were “unfriendly and unsupportive.” [FIGURE 18](#) Korean respondents had the least favorable perceptions of their professors, with less than half harboring the most intensely positive feelings. [FIGURE 19](#)

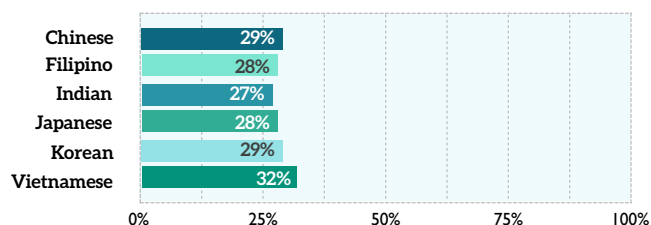
Vietnamese respondents were least likely to report feeling as if they were acquiring a broad legal education, with one-in-5 expressing an unfavorable perception. [FIGURE 20](#) In that vein, almost one-quarter rated their law school experiences fair or poor, again the highest proportion. [FIGURE 21](#) Interestingly, given these perceptions, 86% of Vietnamese respondents stated that they would probably or definitely attend the same law school again, if given the benefit of hindsight. Only Japanese respondents had a higher proportion expressing this ostensibly favorable assessment. On the other hand, Korean respondents were least likely to state that they would attend the same law school again, with 1-in-4 stating expressing regret. [FIGURE 22](#)

Conclusion

The experiences of Asian subgroups within the LSSSE pool varied, belying the prevailing assumptions about the Asian monolith. Their backgrounds, informed in large part by immigration patterns, differed markedly. There were vast disparities in expected law school debt. There were differences in how they spent their time, and how they perceived the law school experience. In the end, the distinctive aspects of each group manifested. As law schools work to ensure that their programs benefit all students, the experiences of subgroups within our broad classifications (racial/ethnic and others) should also be considered.

FIGURE 13

Percentage employed in law-related jobs



Percentage employed in non-law-related jobs

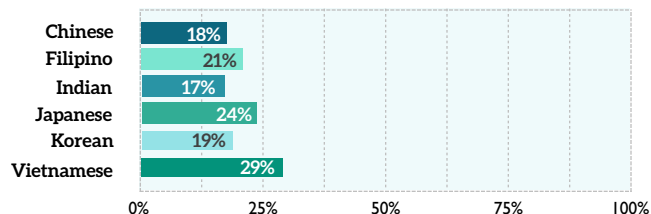
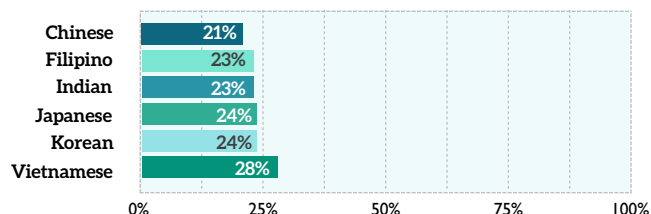


FIGURE 14

Percentage working 8 or more hours per week in law-related jobs



Percentage working 8 or more hours per week in non-law-related jobs

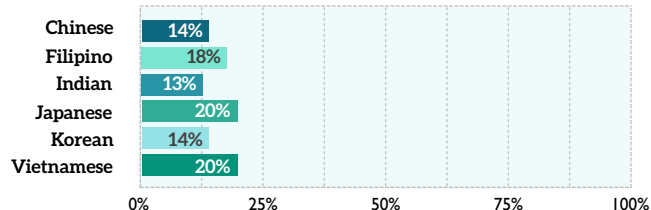


FIGURE 15

Percentage providing care to dependents

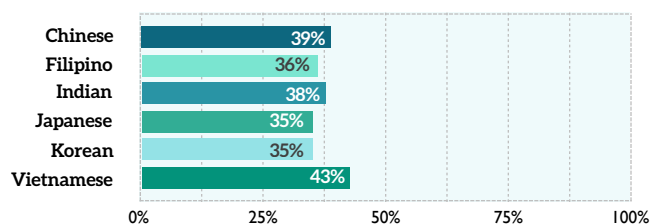


FIGURE 16

Percentage providing 8 or more hours of care to dependents per week

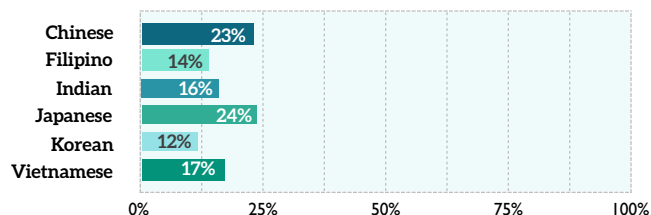




FIGURE 17

Law school provides support to help cope with non-academic responsibilities

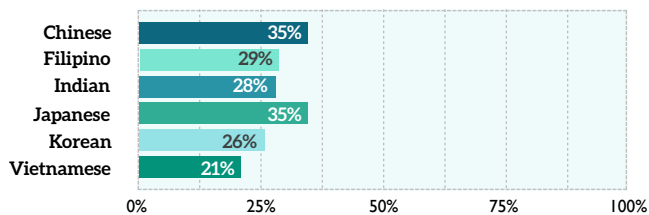


FIGURE 20

Unfavorable perceptions of breadth of their legal education

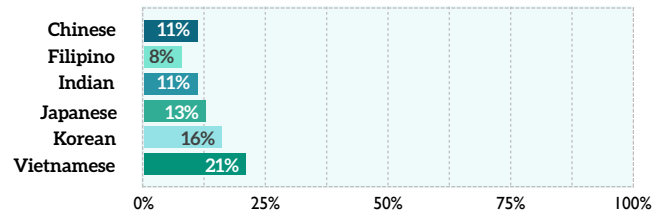


FIGURE 18

Negative perceptions of relationships with other students

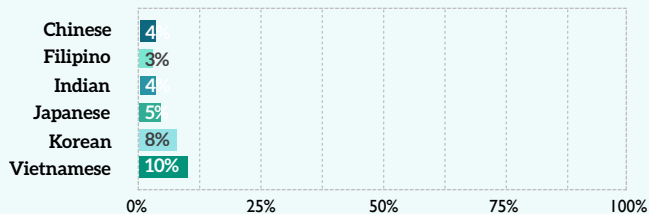


FIGURE 21

Negative perceptions of entire law school experience

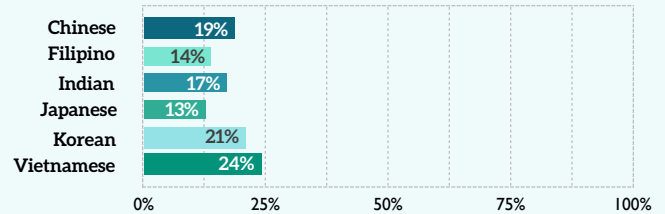


FIGURE 19

Positive perceptions of relationships with faculty members

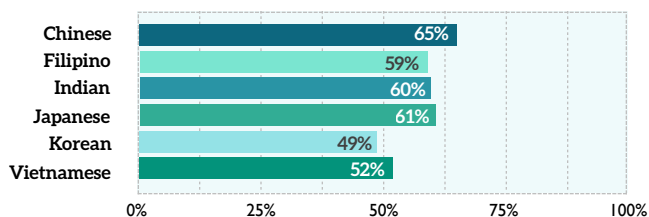
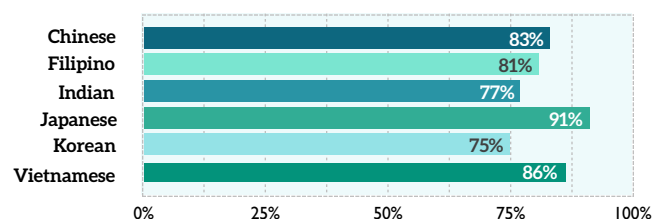


FIGURE 22

Percentage that would attend the same law school again, with hindsight



Participating Schools: 2004-2016

Alabama

Faulkner University
Thomas Goode Jones School of Law
Montgomery
Samford University
Cumberland School of Law
Birmingham
The University of Alabama
School of Law
Tuscaloosa

Arizona

Arizona State University
Sandra Day O'Connor College of Law
Tempe
Arizona Summit Law School
Phoenix

Arkansas

University of Arkansas at Little Rock
William H. Bowen School of Law
Little Rock
University of Arkansas
School of Law
Fayetteville

California

California Western School of Law
San Diego
Chapman University School of Law
Orange
Concord Law School
Los Angeles
Golden Gate University
School of Law
San Francisco
Humphreys College
Laurence Drivon School of Law
Stockton
Loyola Law School
Los Angeles
Pepperdine University
School of Law
Malibu
Santa Clara University
School of Law
Santa Clara
St. Francis School of Law
Irvine
Southwestern Law School
Los Angeles
Thomas Jefferson School of Law
San Diego
University of California, Berkeley
School of Law
Berkeley
University of California, Davis
School of Law
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College of the Law
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Columbus School of Law
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Law School
Georgetown University Law Center
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David A. Clarke School of Law

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Naples
Florida Coastal School of Law
Jacksonville
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Atlanta
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Chicago
The John Marshall Law School
Chicago

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School of Law
Chicago

Southern Illinois University
School of Law
Carbondale

University of Illinois College of Law
Champaign

Indiana

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Lawrence
Washburn University School of Law
Topeka

Kentucky

Northern Kentucky University
Salmon P. Chase College of Law
Highland Heights
University of Kentucky
College of Law
Lexington
University of Louisville
Louis D. Brandeis School of Law
Louisville

Louisiana

Louisiana State University
Paul M. Hebert Law Center
Baton Rouge
Loyola University
New Orleans College of Law
New Orleans
Southern University Law Center
Baton Rouge
Tulane University Law School
New Orleans

Maine

University of Maine School of Law
Portland

Maryland

University of Baltimore
School of Law
Baltimore
University of Maryland
Francis King Carey School of Law
Baltimore

Massachusetts

Boston College Law School
Newton
Harvard University Law School
Cambridge
Northeastern University
School of Law
Boston
Suffolk University Law School
Boston
University of Massachusetts
School of Law
Dartmouth
Western New England College
School of Law
Springfield

Michigan

Michigan State University
College of Law
East Lansing
Thomas M. Cooley Law School
Lansing
University of Detroit Mercy
School of Law
Detroit
Wayne State University Law School
Detroit

Minnesota

Hamline University School of Law
Saint Paul
University of Minnesota Law School
Minneapolis
University of St. Thomas
School of Law
Minneapolis
William Mitchell College of Law
St. Paul

Mississippi

Mississippi College School of Law
Jackson
The University of Mississippi
School of Law
Oxford

Missouri

Saint Louis University School of Law
St. Louis

University of Missouri
School of Law
Columbia

University of Missouri Kansas
City
School of Law
Kansas City

Washington University
School of Law
St. Louis

Montana

The University of Montana
School of Law
Missoula

Nebraska

Creighton University School
of Law
Omaha

University of Nebraska
College of Law
Lincoln

Nevada

University of Nevada, Las
Vegas
William S. Boyd School of Law
Las Vegas

New Hampshire

University of New Hampshire
School of Law
Concord

New Jersey

Rutgers University-Newark
School of Law
Newark

Seton Hall University School
of Law
Newark

New Mexico

The University of New
Mexico
School of Law
Albuquerque

New York

Albany Law School
Albany

Brooklyn Law School
Brooklyn

City University of New York
School of Law at Queens
College
Flushing

Cornell Law School
Ithaca

Fordham University School of
Law
New York

Hofstra University
Maurice A. Deane School of
Law
Hempstead

New York Law School
New York

Pace University School of Law
White Plains

St. John's University School of
Law
Queens

Syracuse University College of
Law
Syracuse

Touro College
Jacob D. Fuchsberg Law
Center
Central Islip

University at Buffalo Law
School
Buffalo

Yeshiva University
Benjamin N. Cardozo School
of Law
New York

North Carolina

Campbell University
Norman Adrian Wiggins
School of Law
Raleigh

Charlotte School of Law
Charlotte

Duke University School of Law
Durham

Elon University School of Law
Greensboro

North Carolina Central
University
School of Law
Durham

University of North Carolina
School of Law
Chapel Hill

Wake Forest University
School of Law
Winston-Salem

Ohio

Capital University Law School
Columbus

Case Western Reserve
University
School of Law
Cleveland

Cleveland State University
Cleveland-Marshall College of
Law
Cleveland

Ohio Northern University
Claude W. Pettit College of
Law
Ada

The Ohio State University
Michael E. Moritz College of
Law
Columbus

The University of Akron
School of Law
Akron

University of Cincinnati
College of Law
Cincinnati

University of Dayton School of
Law
Dayton

Oklahoma

Oklahoma City University
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Oklahoma City

The University of Oklahoma
College of Law
Norman

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College of Law
Tulsa

Oregon

Lewis & Clark Law School
Portland

University of Oregon School
of Law
Eugene

Willamette University College
of Law
Salem

Pennsylvania

Earl Mack School of Law
Drexel University
Philadelphia

Temple University
James E. Beasley School of Law
Philadelphia

University of Pittsburgh
School of Law
Pittsburgh

Rhode Island

Roger Williams University
School of Law
Bristol

South Carolina

Charleston School of Law
Charleston

University of South Carolina
School of Law
Columbia

South Dakota

University of South Dakota
School of Law
Vermillion

Tennessee

Lincoln Memorial University
Duncan School of Law
Knoxville

The University of Tennessee
College of Law
Knoxville

Vanderbilt University School
of Law
Nashville

Texas

Baylor University School of
Law
Waco

St. Mary's University of San
Antonio
School of Law
San Antonio

South Texas College of Law
Houston

Southern Methodist University
Dedman School of Law
Dallas

Texas Southern University
Thurgood Marshall School of
Law
Houston

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of Law
Lubbock

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Fort Worth

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Center
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J. Reuben Clark Law School
Provo

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S.J. Quinney College of Law
Salt Lake City

Vermont

Vermont Law School
South Royalton

Virginia

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Lynchburg

Regent University School of
Law
Virginia Beach

University of Richmond
School of Law
Richmond

Washington and Lee
University
School of Law
Lexington

William & Mary Law School
Williamsburg

Washington

Gonzaga University School of
Law
Spokane

Seattle University School of
Law
Seattle

University of Washington
School of Law
Seattle

West Virginia

West Virginia University
College of Law
Morgantown

Wisconsin

Marquette University Law
School
Milwaukee

University of Wisconsin Law
School
Madison

Wyoming

University of Wyoming
College of Law
Laramie

Australia

University of New South
Wales
Faculty of Law
Sydney, NSW

University of Tasmania
Faculty of Law
Hobart, TAS

Canada

University of Alberta
Faculty of Law
Edmonton, AB

University of Calgary
Faculty of Law
Calgary, AB

University of British Columbia
Faculty of Law
Vancouver, BC

University of Victoria
Faculty of Law
Victoria, BC

University of Manitoba
Faculty of Law
Winnipeg, MB

University of New Brunswick
Faculty of Law
Fredericton, NB

Dalhousie University
Schulich School of Law
Halifax, NS

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Law
Montreal, ON

Osgoode Hall Law School of
York University
Toronto, ON

Queen's University Faculty of
Law
Kingston, ON

Université d'Ottawa
Faculté de droit, Section de
droit civil
Ottawa, ON

University of Ottawa
Faculty of Law, Common Law
Section
Ottawa, ON

University of Toronto Faculty
of Law
Toronto, ON

University of Western Ontario
Faculty of Law
London, ON

University of Windsor Faculty
of Law
Windsor, ON

Université de Montréal
Faculté de droit
Montréal, QC

University of Saskatchewan
College of Law
Saskatoon, SK



INDIANA UNIVERSITY CENTER FOR POSTSECONDARY RESEARCH

1900 E. TENTH STREET, SUITE 419

BLOOMINGTON, IN 47406-7512

PHONE: 812-856-5823

E-MAIL: LSSE@INDIANA.EDU

WEB: LSSE.INDIANA.EDU