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Jobs & JDs

Employment for the Class of 2025

SELECTED FINDINGS

Commentary and Analysis
The Intersection of Change

by Nikia L. Gray, Executive Director

The employment outcomes for the Class of 2025 tell the story of a graduating class caught at the intersection of economic change, political disruption, and a legal market increasingly dominated by the nation's largest law firms. It is, in many respects, a paradoxical class: one that weathered extraordinary upheaval yet emerged with remarkably strong employment outcomes.

The headline is clear: the Class of 2025 performed exceptionally well. Although the legal employment market contracted by more than 2,700 jobs compared to the previous year, the graduating class itself declined by slightly more, mitigating much of the impact on employment outcomes. Consequently, the overall employment rate decreased by only 0.6 percentage points. Indeed, the Class of 2025 recorded the second-highest employment rate ever measured by NALP, surpassed only by the historic performance of the Class of 2024. Nearly 85% of graduates secured positions requiring or anticipating bar admission, while the percentage of employed graduates continuing to seek other employment fell to the lowest level ever recorded by NALP – strong evidence that graduates were not simply finding jobs, but finding positions they wanted to keep.

Beneath these impressive headline numbers, however, the data reveals a legal employment market undergoing meaningful change.

Perhaps the most significant force shaping employment outcomes for the Class of 2025 was the extraordinary disruption that accompanied the beginning of the Trump administration. The federal hiring freeze implemented in January 2025 reverberated across the legal profession, as students who had accepted federal positions — including through highly competitive Honors Programs – saw those offers rescinded only months before graduation. Federal employment ultimately declined by 37% compared to the previous year, representing one of the sharpest single-year contractions in recent memory.

The shift in federal priorities also extended into the public interest sector. As funding priorities changed and DOGE terminated direct contracts with hundreds of nongovernmental organizations, many public interest employers reduced hiring or ceased operations altogether. Public interest employment consequently declined by 14 percent, the first decrease in the number of graduates entering the sector since 2016.

Yet one of the most encouraging stories in these data is the resilience of the graduating class itself. Despite unprecedented disruption occurring just months before commencement, the overwhelming majority of affected graduates appear to have successfully pivoted into other employment opportunities. The combination of historically high employment rates and a record-low percentage of employed graduates seeking other work suggests that many ultimately found positions that met their professional goals. That outcome is also a testament to the exceptional efforts of NALP members, whose advising, counseling, and advocacy helped students navigate one of the most turbulent hiring seasons in recent history.

The Class of 2025 also marks a turning point for private practice hiring. The extraordinary competition for entry-level talent that characterized the post-pandemic "talent wars" has subsided. Although private practice employed a larger share of graduates than it did one year earlier, the sector itself lost more than 940 entry-level positions.

Historically, declines of this magnitude have been rare and have typically coincided with periods of significant change in the entry-level job market. Similar contractions occurred following the Great Recession in 2010 and again in 2015, when law firms recalibrated their hiring models in response to technological advances and increasing competition from alternative legal service providers. Data from NALP's *Survey of Legal Employers on 2025 Recruiting* indicates that the private practice market remains fundamentally healthy. At the same time, however, the number of law students participating in summer associate programs has fallen sharply over the past two years, which is likely to impact employment outcomes for the Class of 2026.

The critical question now is whether this represents a temporary market correction following several extraordinary hiring years or the beginning of another structural shift in entry-level hiring driven, at least in part, by generative AI. The simultaneous decline in business-sector employment to its lowest level in 35 years suggests that broader structural forces may indeed be at work. Either way, this data should serve as a caution against continued expansion of law school class sizes until longer-term market trends become clearer.

Perhaps the most consequential development, however, is not the number of graduates entering private practice but where they are going.

For decades, the distribution of private practice employment has been distinctly bimodal, with graduates clustering at opposite ends of the law firm spectrum: the smallest firms of ten or fewer lawyers and the largest firms of more than 500 lawyers. Historically, however, small firms overwhelmingly represented the larger of those two peaks.

That balance has fundamentally changed.

As the legal market recovered from the Great Recession, employment at the largest law firms steadily gained ground relative to the smallest firms. In 2021, for the first time, firms with more than 500 lawyers employed more graduates than firms with ten or fewer lawyers. Since then, the gap has widened. Today, firms of more than 500 lawyers have firmly established themselves as the single largest employer of new law graduates, accounting for more than one in five employed graduates of the Class of 2025. When firms of between 251 and 500 lawyers are included, approximately one in every four employed graduates now begins practice in BigLaw.

That transformation has profound implications for legal education and recruiting. BigLaw recruiting is no longer simply influencing the subset of students pursuing large law firms, it is shaping the law school experience itself. As BigLaw has grown into a substantially larger share of the entry-level employment market, changes in recruiting timelines and practices now affect thousands of students, including many with no intention of pursuing BigLaw careers. As the recent joint LSAC-NALP study on first-year law students demonstrated, more than half of all respondents reported negative impacts from the accelerated BigLaw recruiting process, regardless of whether they planned to pursue employment at large law firms.

The Class of 2025 reminds us that strong employment outcomes tell only part of the story. Beneath near-record employment rates, the legal profession is adapting to changing economic conditions, shifting public policy, new technologies, and evolving employer demand. Whether this year's data represent a temporary recalibration or the beginning of a more lasting transformation is not yet known. What is clear is that the legal employment market is entering a new chapter, and NALP's employment data will continue to provide the profession with the clearest view of where that chapter is headed. ■

About NALP

NALP is an association of more than 3,000 legal career professionals who advise law students, lawyers, law offices, and law schools in North America and beyond. NALP believes in fairness, facts, and the power of a diverse community. We work every day to be the best career services, recruitment, and professional development organization in the world because we want the lawyers and law students we serve to have an ethical recruiting system, employment data they can trust, and expert advisers to guide and support them in every stage of their careers. Visit NALP online at www.nalp.org.

A Summary of the Findings

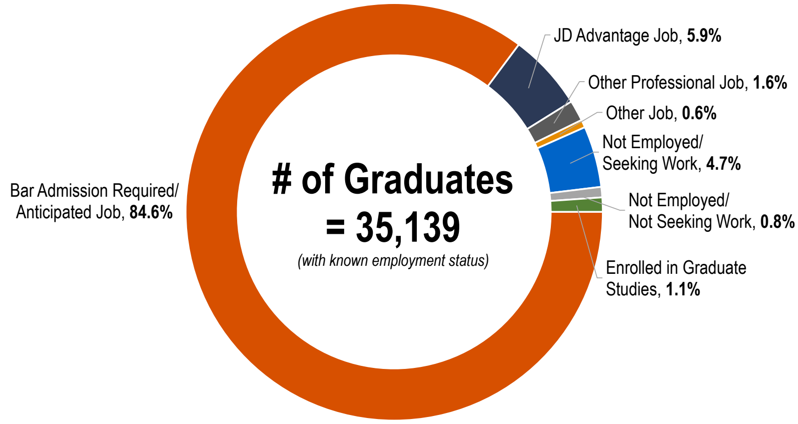
Class of 2025 Shows Resiliency with Strong Employment Outcomes in a Changing Legal Market

by Danielle A. Taylor, Director of Research & Chief Data Strategist

In last year's *Selected Findings* report, NALP warned about the impending contraction in federal government, public interest, and BigLaw hiring that loomed ahead for the Class of 2025. One year later, NALP's analyses on the Class of 2025 show that those predictions came to fruition. In fact, total job figures were down across almost every segment of the market; however, the Class of 2025 benefited from being smaller in size, with approximately 2,700 fewer graduates (-7.0%) than the Class of 2024. Their smaller numbers meant that they were better able to absorb this hiring downturn. Even with fewer graduates, the Class of 2025's overall employment rate (92.8%) ticked downward compared to the Class of 2024 (93.4%).

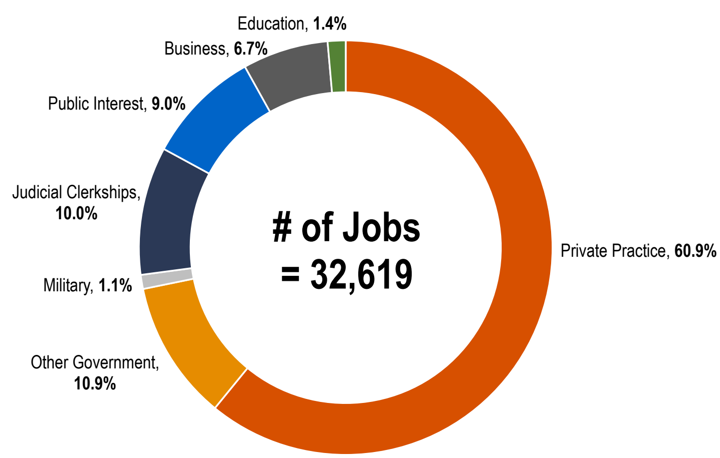
The overall story for the Class of 2025 is therefore mixed. Although the employment rate fell, it was still the second highest on record.[1] At the same time, employment in bar admission required/anticipated jobs reached a new all-time high, standing at 84.6%. Additionally, not only were most graduates employed,

Chart 1. **Class of 2025 Employment Status**



Note: The chart reflects graduate employment statuses as of March 16, 2026. Jobs for which an offer has been accepted but for which the start date is after March 16, 2026, and jobs for which type, e.g., bar admission required/anticipated, was not specified account for 0.52% and 0.04% of graduates, respectively, but are not shown in the chart.

Chart 2. **Class of 2025 Employer Types**



Note: Figures in this chart reflect all job types - both legal related and other as of March 16, 2026. For clarity, the category for unknown employer type, representing, 0.06% of jobs, is not shown. Overall, 98.0% of jobs were reported as full-time.

[1] NALP first began tracking employment rates based on all graduates with a known employment status with the Class of 1982. With the Class of 2014, NALP began measuring the employment rate of law graduates as of March 15, or ten months after a May graduation. From 1996-2013 employment status had been measured as of February 15 (nine months post-graduation), and prior to 1996 employment was measured as of six months post-graduation — an important distinction when making comparisons with employment rates prior to 2014.

but a record low 6.7% of those with jobs were seeking other opportunities — signaling that satisfaction with employment post-graduation remained high. Taken together, these findings show that the Class of 2025 marks the fifth consecutive year of exceptionally strong employment outcomes for law graduates, even as some segments of the market appear to be cooling.

The decline in the overall employment rate reflects the relationship between the number of graduates and the number of jobs reported. Last year for the Class of 2024, both the number of graduates (38,937) and the number of jobs obtained (35,335) increased, but job growth outpaced class size growth, which is why the employment rate improved. For the Class of 2025, that pattern reversed: the total number of jobs fell by 7.7% to 32,619, while class size declined by 7.0% to 36,206, resulting in a 0.6 percentage point decrease in the employment rate.

Even against this backdrop of a lower overall employment rate, employment in positions for which bar admission is required or anticipated, more commonly known as attorney positions, increased by 0.3 percentage point to 84.6%, following a 2.2 percentage point increase for the Class of 2024. These are typically the most sought-after positions for new law graduates, and this marks a new all-time high in bar admission employment since NALP introduced the current job classifications in 2001. Overall, the share of graduates in bar admission required/anticipated jobs has improved by more than 20 percentage points since the Great Recession low of 64.4% observed for the Classes of 2012 and 2013. A key driver of this increase has been growth in public defender and prosecutor roles, along with associate positions at large law firms with more than 500 lawyers — jobs that almost universally require bar admission.

Further, record bar admission employment rates persist even when full-time, long-term positions are considered separately from short-term or part-time positions. For the Class of 2025, 83.9% of graduates were employed in full-time, long-term bar admission required/anticipated jobs, a 0.5 percentage point increase over the Class of 2024. This figure has grown by 27 percentage points since the Class of 2011, when only 57% of graduates were employed in this type of position.

Typically, when the employment rate in bar admission required/anticipated jobs improves, the percentage of graduates working in other job types declines because most (but not all) graduates prefer to work as attorneys when they are able to obtain such positions. Consistent with that pattern, the share of graduates securing JD Advantage positions declined by 1.0 percentage point this year to 5.9%. Employment in JD Advantage careers is now at its lowest level since the Class of 2002, when it stood at 5.2%, although a larger share of graduates that year were working in professional and other positions unrelated to their JD degree.

> **“These findings show that the Class of 2025 marks the fifth consecutive year of exceptionally strong employment outcomes for law graduates, even as some segments of the market appear to be cooling.”**

The percentage of Class of 2025 graduates employed in other non-legal related positions, including both professional and other positions, was just 2.2%, unchanged from the Class of 2024. The unemployment rate, counting both graduates still seeking a job and those not seeking employment, edged upward increasing from the Class of 2024's record low of 5.1% to 5.5%. Of the remaining graduates for whom employment status was known, 0.5% had accepted a job as of March 16, 2026, but had not yet started that job, and 1.1% were enrolled in graduate studies.

Part-time employment held steady, accounting for 2.0% of all positions obtained by the Class of 2025. Just 0.6% of jobs were both temporary (defined as lasting less than one year) and part-time, a record low. By comparison, this figure ranged from 2.7% to 2.8% for the Classes of 2013 -2016, as the entry-level market was still recovering from the Great Recession.

Number of Private Practice Jobs Declines from Class of 2024's Record High

For the Class of 2025, 60.9% of employed graduates secured positions in private practice, an increase of 2.0 percentage points from the previous class and the highest share recorded since 1990, when 62.9% of all jobs were in law firms. Employment in private practice has been at or above 58% since the Class of 2022. Across the 52-year history of NALP's employment reporting, the only other periods in which law firm employment exceeded 58% were 1983-1992 and 2002.

However, the increase in the share of private practice jobs should not be read as evidence of continued growth in the number of law firm jobs. In raw numbers, this sector lost more than 940 jobs compared with the Class of 2024. The percentage of jobs in private practice rose only because the Class of 2025 was smaller in size overall. In total, 19,869 graduates obtained jobs in private practice, down from the record 20,810 jobs secured by the Class of 2024.

92.8%

Of law graduates* were employed as of March 16, 2026

**with known employment status*

83.9%

Of law graduates* were employed in a full-time, long-term bar admission required/anticipated job

**with known employment status*

98.0%

Of jobs were full-time

33.2%

Of private practice jobs were in firms of more than 500 lawyers

The largest firms experienced the most pronounced decline in both percentage terms and overall job counts. Firms of more than 500 lawyers hired approximately 540 fewer Class of 2025 graduates, a decline of 7.5%, bringing total employment in these firms down to 6,588 jobs. This marks the first decrease in the number of jobs in the largest firms since the Class of 2014, when just over 3,950 graduates were working in firms of this size. Even with this decline, firms of more than 500 lawyers continued to hire the largest number of graduates by firm size. In percentage terms, 33.2% of all Class of 2025 law firm jobs were found in firms of more than 500 lawyers, down from 34.2% for the Class of 2024 and representing the second consecutive decline in the share of law firm jobs found in this largest firm size category. Other NALP research from the *Perspectives on 2025 Law Student Recruiting Report* indicates that law firms hired smaller summer associate classes again for summer 2025, which will likely contribute to an additional decline in BigLaw jobs in next year's Class of 2026 results.

Job counts were also down across most other firm size categories for the Class of 2025. The exceptions were solo practitioners, which increased by 12 graduates to 186, and firms of 101-250 lawyers, which hired seven additional graduates this year, reaching 1,418 jobs, the largest number of graduates hired by firms in this category since the Class of 2008.

$100,000

National median salary for employed law graduates reporting salary information

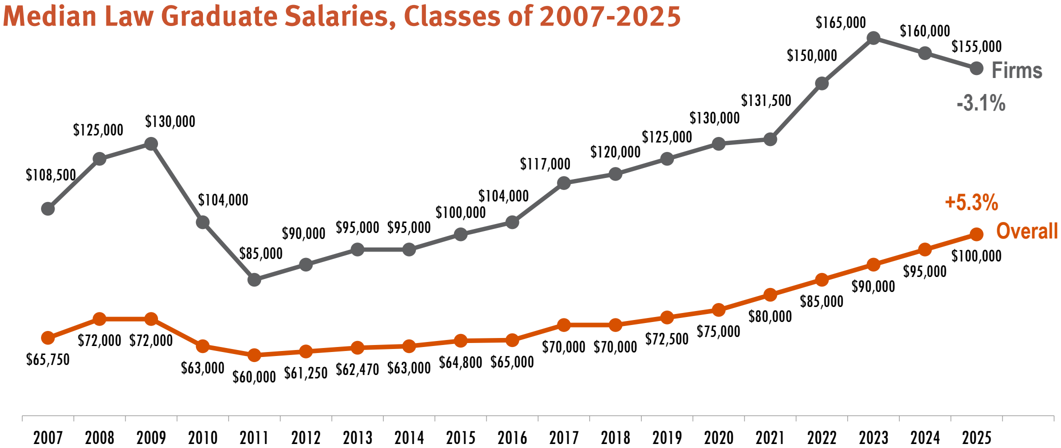
34.4%

of all law firm salaries were reported as $225,000

6.7%

Of employed law graduates continued to seek another job

Chart 3. **Median Law Graduate Salaries, Classes of 2007-2025**



Note: Figures are rounded to the nearest $10. The percentage reported is the percent change in the median salary as compared to the Class of 2024.

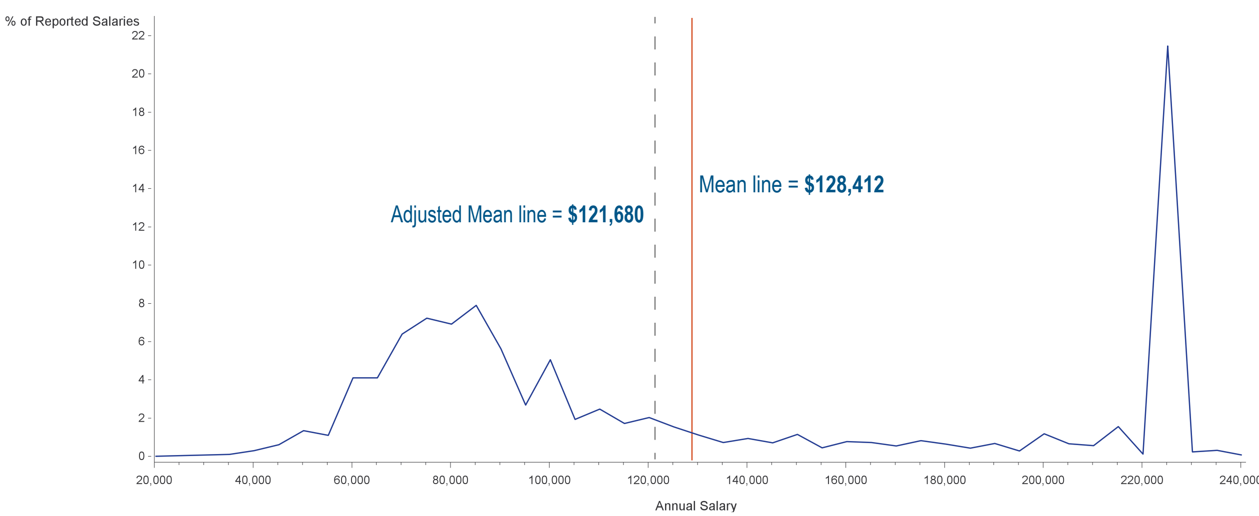
In percentage terms, the share of graduates working as solo practitioners, at 0.9% of all law firm jobs, and in small firms of 1-10 lawyers, at 26.4%, both ticked up this year. Last year for the Class of 2024, the percentage of solo practitioners reached a record low of 0.8%, while the share of graduates in firms of 1-10 lawyers was at a 35-year low of 25.6%. Overall, 27.3% of all Class of 2025 law firm jobs were in firms of 10 or fewer lawyers, including solo practitioners, compared with 26.4% last year. Class of 2025 graduates were also more concentrated in firms of 11-250 lawyers, which accounted for 33.0% of all law firm jobs, compared with 32.4% for the Class of 2024.

Despite the drop in large firm hiring, this is the fifth consecutive year in which the number of jobs obtained in firms of more than 500 lawyers exceeded the number of jobs in firms of 1-10 lawyers. This large-firm advantage had grown from about 200 jobs for the Class of 2021 to nearly an 1,800-job advantage for the Class of 2024, before narrowing to about an 1,300-job differential for the Class of 2025. By contrast, from 2011 to 2013, the number of jobs in firms of 1-10 lawyers was more than double the number of jobs in the largest firms.

Median Law Firm Salary Declines for Second Year in a Row, But Public Service Salaries Increase

Salary information was provided for 71.6% of the jobs reported as full-time and lasting at least one year. The national Class of 2025 median salary (the 50th percentile of salaries) increased to a new record high of $100,000, up 5.3% compared to the median of $95,000 for the 2024 class. This marks the seventh consecutive year of growth in the overall median salary. In the aftermath of the Great Recession, median salaries declined and did not fully recover until the Class of 2019, when the median finally surpassed the pre-recession peak of $72,000 reported for the Classes of 2008 and 2009. (See Chart 3.) The national mean, or average, salary for the Class of 2025 was $128,412, up 2.0% when compared to $125,926 for the Class of 2024.

Chart 4. **Distribution of Reported Full-time Salaries – Class of 2025**



Note: This graph is based on 22,715 reported salaries for full-time jobs lasting at least one year. For clarity, a small number of salaries above $240,000 are excluded from the graph, but they are still included in the percentage calculations. The peak on the left side reflects salaries from $60,000 to $100,000, which together made up 50.0% of reported salaries. The peak on the right shows that salaries of $225,000 accounted for 21.5% of reported salaries. However, more complete salary coverage for jobs at large firms heightens the right-side peak and diminishes the left-side peak. As a result, the unadjusted mean overstates the average starting salary by an estimated 5.5%. Still, both the unadjusted arithmetic mean and the adjusted mean indicate that relatively few salaries fall near either mean. For purposes of this graph, all reported salaries were rounded to the nearest $5,000. The mean, however, is based on salaries as reported, and the adjusted mean reflects a weighting of those salaries.

However, NALP's salary curve illustrates the well-established bimodal distribution of law graduate salaries. Half of all graduate salaries (50.0%) are concentrated on the left-side of the curve between $60,000-$100,000, while a second large peak on the right-side of the curve appears at the prevailing BigLaw salary. As a result, relatively few salaries are found near the average figure for the class. For the Class of 2025, the right-side peak occurred at $225,000, accounting for 21.5% of all reported salaries. Salary information for the Class of 2025 was collected before some large firms increased starting salaries to $235,000 in June 2026.

A different narrative emerges though when examining median salaries in private practice specifically. Amid a highly competitive market for entry-level talent, median private practice salaries skyrocketed between the Classes of 2021 and 2023, growing from $131,500 to $165,000 (+25.5%) over this two-year period. This growth reflected not only rising salaries, but also the increasing concentration of law firm jobs in firms of more than 500 lawyers, which typically offer the highest levels of compensation. As the share of jobs in these largest firms began to level off for the Class of 2024, the median law firm salary declined by 3.0% to $160,000. For the Class of 2025, the median fell an additional 3.1% to $155,000 as the proportion of private practice jobs in firms of this size declined further. Importantly, this trend does not suggest that law firms have broadly reduced starting salaries. Rather, the lower median reflects several factors, including the aforementioned changes in the distribution of jobs across firm sizes and elevated merger and acquisition activity, which can affect firm size classifications from year to year.

Disaggregating salary data by law firm size reveals a more nuanced picture. Despite the overall decline in the median law firm salary, salaries for the Class of 2025 were either flat or increased across most firm size categories. The lone exception was among firms of 101-250 lawyers, where the median salary decreased by 3.6% to $135,000. Small law firms of 1-10 lawyers continued to offer the lowest median entry-level salary at $84,000, but they also recorded the largest percentage increase, rising by 5.0%.

Looking at the distribution of law firm salaries for the Class of 2025, salaries of $225,000 accounted for 34.4% of all law firm salaries reported. Salaries of this amount are paid predominantly to associates working in large law firms, although some boutique firms also match or even exceed this compensation level.

Outside of private practice, salaries increased across all three public service sectors, with median salaries growing to $81,000 in government (+1.4%), $75,000 in public interest (+4.2%), and $72,533 in judicial clerkships (+3.6%). By contrast, the median salary held steady at $100,000 in business and fell to $63,000 (-1.6%) in education, which remains the lowest paying employment sector. (See Table 1.)

Table 1. **Class of 2025 Median Salaries by Employer Type**

Employer Type	Median Salary	% Change from Class of 2024
Private Practice	$155,000	-3.1%
Business	$100,000	No change
Government	$81,000	+1.4%
Public Interest	$75,000	+4.2%
Judicial Clerkships	$72,533	+3.6%
Education	$63,000	-1.6%

Public Service Hiring Declines, Driven by Reduction in Federal Government and Public Interest Hiring

In last year's analysis, NALP anticipated a reversal in the growth of government employment following a federal hiring freeze and workforce reductions that were implemented in 2025. That prediction proved accurate. Overall, the number of government jobs obtained by the Class of 2025 declined by 14.6%, representing nearly 670 fewer positions than were reported by the 2024 class. As a share of all employed graduates, government employment fell from 12.9% for the Class of 2024 to 12.0% for the Class of 2025.

The bulk of this decline can be attributed to reduced federal hiring. The number of graduates employed by the federal government (excluding judicial clerkships) fell by 37.0% year-over-year, from nearly 1,100 Class of 2024 graduates to approximately 690 Class of 2025 graduates. In recent years, federal government employment outside of clerkships has typically accounted for about 3% of all entry-level jobs obtained by new law graduates; for the Class of 2025, that figure fell to 2.1%. Federal Honors Program hiring experienced an especially sharp decline. Positions in these programs — offers for which were almost universally revoked in January 2025 — fell from 317 jobs for the Class of 2024 to just 50 jobs for the Class of 2025. (See Table 2.)

Table 2. **Number and Percentage of All Jobs Obtained in the Federal Government (excluding Clerkships), Classes of 2018-2025**

Class Year	Total # of Federal Government Jobs (excludes Clerkships)	Total # of Federal Agency Honors Program Positions	% Of All Entry-Level Jobs in the Federal Government
2025	692	50	2.1%
2024	1,099	317	3.1%
2023	954	252	3.0%
2022	914	192	2.8%
2021	980	165	3.1%
2020	958	212	3.3%
2019	1,030	183	3.5%
2018	946	133	3.2%

Public interest employment, which includes jobs in civil legal services, public defender offices, and a wide range of non-profit organizations, also contracted. The sector accounted for 9.0% of all jobs obtained by the Class of 2025, down from 9.7% from last year's class. In raw numbers, public interest employers hired more than 475 fewer graduates, a decline of 13.9%. As a result, the number of graduates employed in public interest positions fell to 2,945, the lowest figure since the Class of 2021. This drop was also anticipated in NALP's previous report, given the funding reductions and grant cuts affecting many public interest organizations. Like the decline in federal hiring, this contraction in public interest employment is unlikely to be limited to the Class of 2025 and may continue to impact employment outcomes for future graduating classes.

In contrast to other areas of public service employment, judicial clerkship hiring experienced a more moderate decline. The number of clerkships obtained by the Class of 2025 fell by 8.3% to 3,253 positions. Unlike other federal government and public interest employment, judicial clerkship hiring tends to remain relatively stable over time, generally ranging from 3,200 to 3,500 positions annually. Additionally, clerkship hiring was not subject to the federal hiring freeze. As a result, despite the decline in the total number of clerkships, the smaller graduating class meant that the percentage of employed graduates obtaining a clerkship remained flat at 10.0%.

In the aggregate, the three public service employer types — government, public interest, and judicial clerkships — accounted for 31.0% of all Class of 2025 jobs, down from 32.7% for the Class of 2024. Even with this year's decline, public service employment has now exceeded 30% of all jobs obtained by law graduates for eight consecutive classes. Prior to 2018, public service employment generally accounted for between 26% and 30% of all jobs.

Washington, DC Market Hit Hard by Drop in Federal, BigLaw Hiring

Washington, DC saw a steeper decline in hiring (-13.2%) compared to the national market for the Class of 2025 (-7.7%). Overall, the city accounted for 1,747 Class of 2025 hires, representing a loss of 265 jobs compared to the Class of 2024.

The decrease was driven primarily by reduced hiring in two sectors that have historically played an outsized role in the Washington, DC legal market.

Federal government employment fell by 157 jobs year-over-year, while hiring by law firms of more than 500 lawyers declined by 77 jobs. Together, these two sectors accounted for the majority of the city's overall job losses. As hiring contracted in these traditionally dominant segments of the market, the composition of employment in Washington, DC, also shifted. For example, unlike the national trend, business employment in DC expanded, increasing from 3.4% of all jobs in the city for the Class of 2024 to 6.0% for the Class of 2025.

At the same time, employment outcomes for graduates of DC law schools reflect the highly mobile nature of the DC legal market. Only 40% of employed graduates from DC law schools remained in the District for their first job, indicating that a majority found employment opportunities elsewhere. Similarly, Washington, DC employers continued to draw heavily from a national talent pool, with nearly 58% of jobs in the city being filled by graduates of law schools located outside DC.

Business Employment Continues to Plummet

Jobs in business accounted for just 6.7% of all Class of 2025 positions, the lowest share recorded since the Class of 1989. In raw numbers, the total number of graduates employed in business fell by 11.9%, dropping to 2,180. Historically, business has typically been the second most popular employment sector for new law graduates, but for the Classes of 2019-2022 it ranked either third or fourth in overall employment. For each of the last three classes — 2023, 2024, and 2025 — business has fallen to fifth place among employer types, trailing public interest and ahead of only education.

The composition of business employment also illustrates the wide variety of roles graduates obtain within this sector. Just over one-third (34.4%) of business jobs were reported as bar admission required/anticipated, while 41.6% were classified as JD Advantage positions. Additionally, slightly less than one-quarter (23.9%) of all jobs in business were reported as non-legal related in nature. Among business employers, accounting firms were the most frequently reported, representing 10.0% of all business jobs, followed closely by investment banking/financial institutions (9.9%). In terms of job function, in-house lawyers were the most widely reported job type, representing 23.7% of all positions in this sector.

Other Key Findings from *Jobs & JDs: Employment and Salaries of New Law School Graduates — Class of 2025*

- Overall, 2.0% of jobs were part-time. Part-time employment was present across every employment sector, but was especially prevalent in education where 16.0% of all jobs were part-time, followed by business at 10.8%. By comparison, just 0.1% of judicial clerkships were part-time.

- The number of jobs funded by graduates' law schools increased modestly for the Class of 2025, rising from 453 positions in 2024 (1.3% of all jobs) to 486 in 2025 (1.5% of all jobs). Even with this year's growth, school funded positions remain far less common than they were during the immediate post-recession period. For the Classes of 2011 and 2013, the number of these positions was nearly four times higher than it is today.

- Since NALP began tracking these positions in 2011, law school funded jobs have increasingly taken the form of full-time, long-term positions requiring bar admission. For 2025, a record 67.3% of funded jobs met all three of these criteria, an indication that most were high-quality jobs. By comparison, fewer than 8% of law school-funded positions fell into this category in 2011. As is typical, most funded jobs (84.0%) were concentrated in the public interest and education sectors.

- The total number of jobs in education decreased by 8.1% to 445 jobs, compared to 484 in 2024. However, because of the smaller class size this year, education's share of all jobs remained unchanged at 1.4%. The sector continues to be substantially smaller than it was during the peak years of 2009 and 2010, when a surge in law school funded positions drove employment levels to roughly three times their current size. For the Class of 2025, law school funded positions accounted for 36.4% of all education jobs, and more than two-thirds of those funded positions were reported as research assistant or fellowship roles.

- Just 6.7% of employed Class of 2025 graduates reported seeking a different job — an all-time low — and an indication that most employed graduates were satisfied with the job they obtained. Except for the Class of 2020, this percentage has declined every year since reaching a record high of 24.6% for the Class of 2011. The extent to which employed graduates are seeking a different job varies by the kind of job held. For example, 33.2% of graduates in a JD Advantage position were seeking a different job, compared to just 4.1% of those in a bar admission required/anticipated position.

- Most employed graduates (65.6%) found employment in the same state in which they attended law school. The South-Atlantic region, which includes DE, DC, FL, GA, MD, NC, SC, VA, and WV, accounted for the largest share of jobs (22.0%), followed closely by the Mid-Atlantic region, which includes NJ, NY, and PA (21.9%).

The Current Market Landscape

Future law graduates should be prepared for an entry-level market that is likely to be more competitive than the exceptionally strong hiring environment experienced by the Class of 2024, and to a lesser extent the Class of 2025. NALP's *Perspectives on 2025 Law Student Recruiting* report indicates that large law firms have already reduced the size of their summer associate classes for 2025, a trend that will likely be reflected in employment outcomes for the Class of 2026. Looking further ahead, ongoing economic uncertainty and the growing adoption of generative AI may lead employers to remain cautious about expanding entry-level hiring, which could be problematic in particular for the classes of 2027 and 2028, which are larger in size. At the same time, the federal hiring landscape remains unsettled following the lifting of the hiring freeze, while broader federal spending cuts will likely continue to constrain public interest hiring. Although strong candidates will continue to find opportunities across the legal market, graduates should expect a more selective hiring environment. ■

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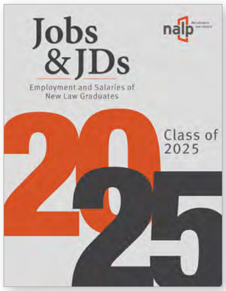

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