

Law Class of 2024 Breaks Employment Record—But There's a Catch, NALP Report Reveals



A new report from the **National Association for Law Placement (NALP)** highlights a historic high in job placement rates for the Class of 2024—but also uncovers underlying factors that warrant a more cautious interpretation.

According to NALP's findings, **92.1% of 2024 law school graduates** were employed ten months after graduation—the highest employment rate recorded since the organization began collecting data in 1985. This surpasses even the previous record set by the Class of 2021, which had an employment rate of 91.9%.

Behind the Numbers: What's Driving the Record?

At first glance, the statistics seem to suggest a booming legal job market. But the report notes an important caveat: **the total number of graduates in the Class of 2024 was significantly smaller**, largely due to pandemic-related admissions slowdowns. In fact, this was the **smallest graduating law school class since 2011**, which artificially inflated the employment rate.

James G. Leipold, Executive Director of NALP, emphasized that while the employment rate is historically high, it's not solely due to increased job availability. "The smaller graduating class meant less competition for positions, especially in BigLaw and other high-paying sectors," Leipold explained.

BigLaw and Private Practice Dominate Job Growth

The report also reveals that **law firm hiring—particularly among larger firms with 501+ attorneys—was a key contributor** to the strong employment figures. A record-setting **37.9% of all employed graduates** landed jobs in these large firms. Moreover, nearly 80% of all graduates who entered private practice secured associate roles.

The median salary for these new law grads also saw an increase, jumping from \$85,000 to **\$100,000**. This rise was mainly driven by a **greater concentration of high-paying BigLaw jobs**, even though salary structures across the broader legal industry remained relatively stable.

Public Sector and Clerkship Numbers Remain Steady

In contrast, the public sector and judicial clerkships saw relatively **modest changes**. The percentage of graduates entering government, public interest, and judicial clerkship roles held steady compared to previous years, suggesting that **growth remains concentrated in private practice**.

What It Means for Future Graduates

While the employment rate for the Class of 2024 is worth celebrating, **future graduating classes may not benefit from the same favorable conditions**. With law school enrollment rebounding in recent years, **larger graduating classes are expected by 2026 and beyond**, which could make the job market more competitive.

Leipold warned, "The favorable conditions that boosted this year's employment numbers may be temporary. It's crucial that students and schools prepare for a possible shift in the legal hiring landscape."

Bottom Line:

The Class of 2024's record-setting employment rate is a promising sign for legal education and hiring trends, but it's tempered by a declining graduate pool and concentrated hiring in BigLaw. Legal job seekers should remain informed and adaptable as the market evolves.

Looking for legal job opportunities? Explore the nation's top legal openings at [LawCrossing.com](https://www.lawcrossing.com/)—your trusted source for attorney and law student jobs.

<https://www.jdjournal.com/>