IDIA DIVERSITY SURVEY REPORT, 2019 – 2020[1]

IDIA Charitable Trust

INCREASING DIVERSITY BY INCREASING ACCESS TO LEGAL EDUCATION

[1] This report was put together by Kirtikar Srivastava, Director, IDIA, and edited and supervised by Svetlana Correya, Executive Director, IDIA. A special note of thanks is extended to Atishya Kumar (IDIA), Paranjay Sharma and Taqdees Fatima for their research assistance and to Swati Agrawal (IDIA) for the design. Our appreciation also goes out to IDIA Directors and student volunteers for their help in administering the survey in law schools across the country.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	01
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	03
SUMMARY OF FINDINGS	05
PART I: REPRESENTATION AT NLUs	07
PART II: REPRESENTATION FROM MARGINALIZED COMMUNITIES	12
PART III: FAMILY BACKGROUND	19
PART IV: EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND	25
PART V: ECONOMIC BACKGROUND	29
PART VI: PRE-CLAT/ AILET EXPERIENCE	31
PART VII: EXPERIENCE AT NLUs	33
SUGGESTIONS FOR REFORM	39
CONCLUSION	44

INTRODUCTION

IDIA (Increasing Diversity by Increasing Access to legal education) is a pan India project that seeks to empower underprivileged and marginalized communities by creating lawyers and community leaders from within such communities. It does this by sensitizing underprivileged children to law as a viable career option, selecting those with an aptitude and interest for the study of law, rigorously training them to enter the best law schools in the country, and then mentoring and guiding them through law school with the objective of helping them become community leaders. Through this, IDIA promotes access to the leading law schools, which have over the years become bastions of elitism and homogeneity. Hence the name: "Increasing Diversity by Increasing Access".

IDIA conducts an annual diversity survey across the leading National Law Universities (NLUs) to capture the extent of diversity in Indian law schools, record the experiences of first year students and document the socio-economic profiles of students. Towards this end, the survey report also highlights potential areas for immediate attention and reform, and accordingly, offers some suggestions.

This year's survey (2019-20) witnessed a 95.87% participation rate with 395 (of 412) first-year students across the nation's top four NLUs undertaking the survey. These NLUs were selected on the basis of student preferences, i.e., college preferences listed out by students in their application forms for the Common Law Admission Test (CLAT), the annual entrance examination for admission to all NLUs in the country, with the exception of NLU Delhi that conducts its own entrance test, namely the All India Law Entrance Test (AILET). These preferences could be influenced by various factors such as job prospects (mainly corporate commercial law firms that are the largest hirers from NLUs), robust infrastructure, stimulating academic environment, strong alumni networks, etc.. Although not a part of CLAT, NLU Delhi was chosen as one of the top four NLUs surveyed as it is widely regarded as a leading law school.

Most of the 2019-20 diversity survey was administered just in time before nationwide lockdown and restrictions that were put in place to tackle the unprecedented health emergency brought about by Covid – 19 pandemic. Hence, while typically we administer the survey among the top 5 ranking NLUs, we were able to gather data only from four NLUs in our 2019-20 survey. All data comparisons with previous years' surveys are therefore made with the same set of NLUs that were surveyed in 2019-20.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The survey was conducted through a questionnaire administered to all first-year students at the various NLUs for the academic year 2019-20. The responses were recorded anonymously in order to encourage honest answers from students.

Note: *We have compared the survey data against the Diversity Survey Results from 2018-19.*[2] *Wherever appropriate, we have compared the survey data against the Diversity Survey results from 2016-17*[3] *as well. However, since the scope of the aforementioned surveys was different to the present survey in terms of the number and combinations of the NLUs where the surveys were conducted, all comparisons herein with the previous surveys have only been made in respect of the four NLUs wherein the present survey was conducted.*

Disclaimer: *The information provided by the students in the present survey has not been independently verified by us. When analyzing the survey data, one should assume a certain margin of error to account for misreporting (deliberate or unintentional) by the students.*

2 IDIA Diversity Survey Report 2018 – 2019, available at https://www.idialaw.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/diversity-survey-2018-19.pdf (Last Visited December 31, 2021).

3 IDIA Diversity Survey Report 2016 – 2017, available at https://www.idialaw.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/2016-17-diversity-survey-.pdf (Last Visited December 31, 2021).

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

As with previous years, the IDIA 2019-20 diversity survey demonstrates a significant diversity deficit, as summarized below:

1 Disproportionate Regional Representation:
Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Maharashtra are the states with the highest representation. On the other hand, the North East States have negligible representation with states such as Arunachal Pradesh, Tripura, Manipur, Mizoram, and Sikkim not being represented at all. Similarly, there was no representation from almost all of the Union Territories (UTs), barring Delhi,[4] Jammu and Kashmir & Ladakh, and Chandigarh**.**

2. Gross Under-representation of Minorities:
As with previous years, the survey highlights gross under-representation from the Muslim community. Illustratively, while Muslims constitute around 14% of India's population,[5] less than 3% of the students admitted to the leading NLUs were Muslim.

3. Skewing of Gender Ratio:
Compared to the near-equal distribution of seats between male and female students in the years 2013-14 and 2014-15, this year recorded a decline in the number of female students at the leading NLUs. The trend remains consistent with 2018-19 and 2016-17, which too saw a decline in the number of female students. The causative factors for this decline are not clear. This decline can no longer be brushed aside as a random occurrence and a detailed study is required to be carried out to determine whether there exist any systemic issues.

4. Economic/Urban Elitism:
Most surveyed students hail from urban, privileged backgrounds and studied at leading English medium schools. Not only were their families financially well off (51.39% students reported an annual income of INR 10 lakhs and above); but in most cases, both parents spoke good English (indicative of significant social capital and standing). On the other hand, the number of students from rural areas and those educated in vernacular medium schools was less than 5%.

5. CLAT Glass Ceiling:
More than 76% of the sampled students had enrolled themselves in expensive coaching classes/online courses to prepare for CLAT and other law entrance examinations. With the leading coaching classes charging more than Rs. 50,000, this is a significant access barrier for underprivileged students.

6. Discrimination and Social Isolation:
A significant number of students alleged discrimination and insulting/disparaging remarks against them on grounds of political/religious beliefs and/or socio-economic backgrounds, both by other students, members of the faculty and the staff. Students also reported "fitting in" problems and social stigma, inter alia because of their lack of fluency in English.

[4] Delhi's representation is as high as 6.84%.

[5] See, State Census 2011, available at http://www.census2011.co.in/religion.php (Last visited on December 29, 2021).

PART I: REPRESENTATION AT NLUS

The following are the four NLUs in which the survey was conducted:

Table 1 *Participating NLUs*

NAME OF THE NLUs	ADDRESS
National Law School of India University (NLSIU), Bengaluru	P.O. Bag 7201, Nagarbhavi, Bengaluru, Karnataka 560072.
National Academy of Legal Studies and Research (NALSAR) University of Law, Hyderabad	Post Box No. 1, Justice City, Shameerpet, Medchal District, Hyderabad, Telangana 500078.
West Bengal National University of Juridical Sciences (WBNUJS), Kolkata	Dr. Ambedkar Bhavan, 12, LB Block, Sector III, Salt Lake City, Kolkata, West Bengal 700098.
National Law University (NLU), Delhi	Sector 14, Dwarka, New Delhi110078.

1. COLLEGE REPRESENTATION

The number of students who participated in the survey is stated as under:

Table 2 *Participating NLUs and Surveyed Students*

PARTICIPATING NLUs	TOTAL BATCH STRENGTH	SURVEYED STUDENTS
NLSIU Bengaluru	81	74
NALSAR Hyderabad	122	117
WBNUJS Kolkata	127	127
NLU Delhi	82	77
TOTAL	**412**	**395**[6]

[6] For the purpose of this report, we only considered the responses of students who completed the survey. Out of all the students who took the survey, only 395 completed the survey. As such, we considered only these 395 students when drawing up this survey report.

2. CATEGORY OF SEATS

CLAT is the common entrance examination for all NLUs, with NLU Delhi being an outlier and conducting its own entrance examination (AILET). Below are the categories under which the surveyed students secured admission to the NLUs through the CLAT and the AILET:

Table 3 *Category of Seats*

CATEGORY	PERCENTAGE OF REPRESENTATION
All India General	62.78%
Scheduled Caste (SC)	13.16%
State Domicile	6.84%
Foreign National	6.84%
Scheduled Tribe (ST)	6.33%
Physically Handicapped/ Persons with Disabilities	4.81%
Non-Resident Indian (NRI) Sponsored	4.81%
Other Backward Class (OBC)	0.76%
NRI	0.76%
Kashmiri Migrant	0.51%
Son/Daughter of Defense Personnel	0.51%
Economically Backward Class	0.25%
Backward Class	0.25%
Others[7] (Resident of Jammu & Kashmir)	0.25%

(i) NRI Sponsored Seats:

A total of 4.81% of the surveyed students in the present survey secured admission under this category. This figure demonstrates a continuation of the trend observed in the 2018-19 and the 2016-17 survey data wherein the percentage of their representation was seen to be 4.95% and 4.04% respectively, indicating that a significant number of students continue to secure admission under the NRI sponsored category.

As previous IDIA surveys have highlighted, the current structure of "NRI sponsored" seats at the various NLUs violates the Supreme Court ruling in the *P.A. Inamdar* case,[8] wherein the Supreme Court clearly held that NRI quota must be utilized in a *bonafide* manner for admitting only the children/ward of NRIs. In blatant contravention of this norm, a number of NLUs have illegally admitted students who boast only a far-flung nexus to an NRI. Further, as pointed out before the Supreme Court in a petition filed by

[7] Students are free to describe the parameters they wish to include under the category 'Other'. In the present survey, the students who've filled up data under the category 'Others' have done so under the following sub-heads – (i) Resident of Jammu & Kashmir; (ii) SC; and (iii) both SC and State Domicile. Accordingly, (ii) and (iii) were not counted under the 'Others' category in order to avoid double counting.

[8] A 7-judge bench of the Supreme Court in P.A. Inamdar and Ors. v. State of Maharashtra and Ors., AIR 2005 SC 3226, held that: "By and large, we have noticed in cases after cases coming to this Court, neither the students who get admissions under this category nor their parents are NRIs. In effect and reality, under this category, less meritorious students, but who can afford to bring more money, get admission… A limited reservation of such seats, not exceeding 15%, in our opinion, may be made available to NRIs depending on the discretion of the management subject to two conditions. ***First, such seats should be utilized bona fide by the NRIs only and for their children or wards. Secondly, within this quota, the merit should not be given a complete go-by. The amount of money, in whatever form collected from such NRIs, should be utilized for benefiting students such as from economically weaker sections of the society, whom, on well-defined criteria, the educational institution may admit a subsidized payment of their fee."*** (Emphasis supplied)

IDIA's founder (hereafter referred to as "**CLAT PIL**"),[9] such admissions are illegal, blatantly discriminatory, and unfair to those who are forced to compete through the rigorous CLAT exam on merit.

The general argument for having reservation for NRIs - that emigrated NRIs are desirous of bringing their children back to their country, not just for education but also so that their children could familiarize themselves again with Indian culture, has been refuted in the context of reservation for NRI sponsored category because the latter actually results in admissions for those students who are neither NRIs themselves nor have NRI parents.[10]

(ii) State Domicile Seats

The number of state domicile seats continues to remain on the higher side. The 2019-20 survey revealed that among the top four NLUs surveyed the proportion of respondents securing admission through state domicile is 6.84%,[11] marginally up from 6.44% in 2018-19 and 6.28% in 2016-17. NALSAR[12] and WBNUJS[13] are amongst the NLUs which currently provide for domicile-based reservations (excluding seats reserved for Residents of J&K and Kashmiri Migrants).

3. GEOGRAPHICAL REPRESENTATION OF FIRST-YEAR STUDENTS

Table 4 *Geographical Representation*

STATE	PERCENTAGE OF POPULATION IN INDIA[14]	PERCENTAGE OF REPRESENTATION IN THE SURVEYED NLUs	NUMBER OF RESPONSES RECORDED
Uttar Pradesh	16.50%	16.46%	65
Rajasthan	5.66%	12.66%	50
Madhya Pradesh	6.00%	10.38%	41
Maharashtra	9.28%	7.34%	29
Telangana	N.A.[15]	7.34%	29
National Capital Territory (NCT) of Delhi (UT)	1.39%	6.84%	27
West Bengal	7.54%	6.84%	27
Karnataka	5.05%	4.30%	17
Haryana	2.09%	4.30%	17

[9] Shamnad Basheer v. Union of India & Ors., W.P. (C) No. 600 of 2015.

[10] The News Minute, Reservation for the Elite: Why don't we blame NRI quota for 'death of meritocracy'?, March 20, 2018, available at https://www.thenewsminute.com/article/reservation-elite-why-don-t-we-blame-nri-quota-death-meritocracy-78 240 (Last visited on December 21, 2021).

[11] The question allowed students to choose more than one option, however, it is likely that students did not choose all the options that applied to them which may have resulted in some underreporting. For example, where law schools have state domiciliary reservations (such as WBNUJS and NALSAR), students could fall under two categories of seats: SC/ST/OBC and State Domicile. In other words, students who gain admission under the SC quota at WBNUJS could fall under the SC quota as well as the State Domiciliary quota. However, some students are likely to have omitted choosing all the relevant options resulting in some underreporting of data under the other category

[12] See, *Provisional 3rd List – CLAT 2019 – UG,* available at https://static.careers360.mobi/media/uploads/froala_editor/files/UG-NALSARUniversityofLawNALSARHyderabad_APZGWS0.pdf (Last visited on December 29, 2021).

[13] See, *The NUJS Diversity Report*, available at http://sja.nujs.edu/storage/The%20NUJS%20Diversity%20Report%2C%202019.pdf (Last visited on December 31, 2021).

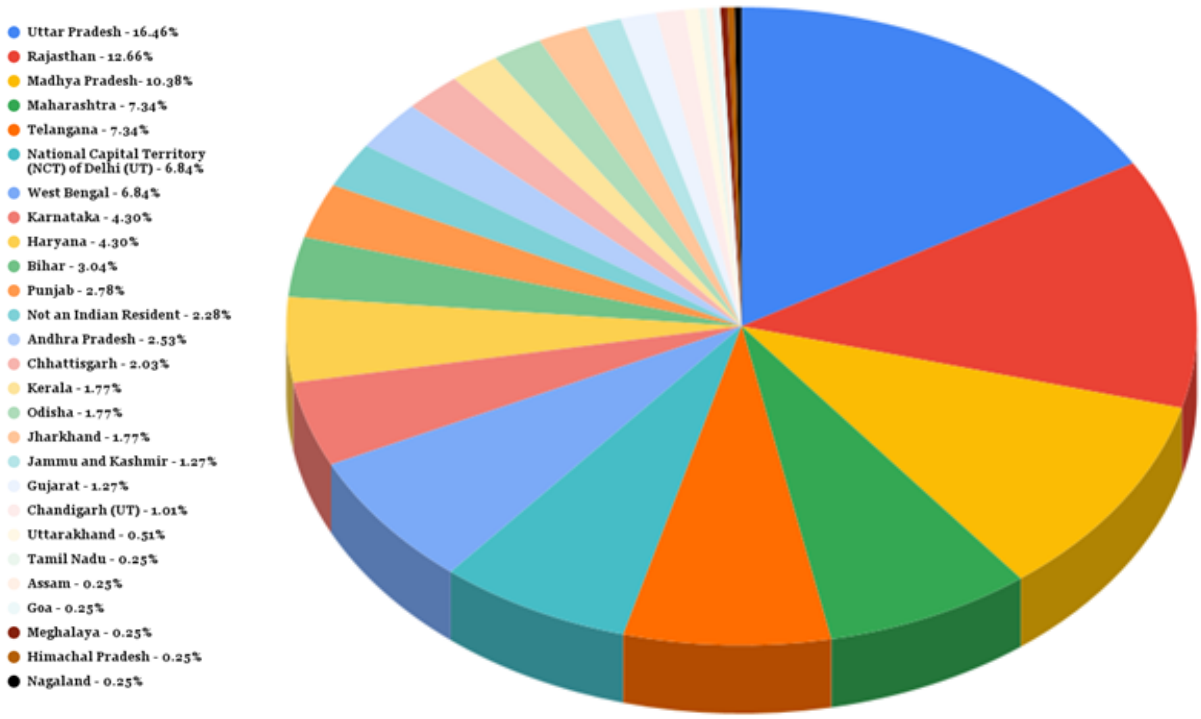
[14] As per the figures provided in the States Census 2011. See, Supra note 3. We are cognizant that Telangana was not a part of the Census of 2011 and thus the percentage of population of individual states are merely provided as indicative figures and adequate caution must be exercised in using conclusions drawn from such deductions based on these figures.

[15] Telangana was founded in 2014 which is after the Census 2011.

Bihar	8.60%	3.04%	12
Punjab	2.29%	2.78%	11
Not an Indian Resident	N.A	2.28%	9
Andhra Pradesh	6.99%[16]	2.53%	10
Chhattisgarh	2.11%	2.03%	8
Kerala	2.76%	1.77%	7
Odisha	3.47%	1.77%	7
Jharkhand	2.72%	1.77%	7
Jammu and Kashmir & Ladakh (UT)	1.04%	1.27%	5
Gujarat	4.99%	1.27%	5
Chandigarh (UT)	0.09%	1.01%	4
Uttarakhand	0.83%	0.51%	2
Tamil Nadu	5.96%	0.25%	1
Assam	2.58%	0.25%	1
Goa	0.12%	0.25%	1
Meghalaya	0.25%	0.25%	1
Himachal Pradesh	0.57%	0.25%	1
Nagaland	0.16%	0.25%	1
Manipur	0.24%	0.00%	0
Tripura	0.30%	0.00%	0
Arunachal Pradesh	0.11%	0.00%	0
Andaman and Nicobar Islands (UT)	0.03%	0.00%	0
Dadra and Nagar Haveli (UT)	0.03%	0.00%	0
Daman and Diu (UT)	0.02%	0.00%	0
Lakshadweep (UT)	0.01%	0.00%	0
Mizoram	0.09%	0.00%	0
Pondicherry (UT)	0.10%	0.00%	0
Sikkim	0.05%	0.00%	0

[16] Id.

Chart 1 *Geographical Representation*



As can be seen from Table 4 and Chart 1, the highest regional representation is from Uttar Pradesh, followed by Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, and Maharashtra. This could partly be explained by the relatively higher populations in states such as Uttar Pradesh compared to the rest of India (accounting for 16.50% of the country's total population). The relatively higher representation from Madhya Pradesh could be attributed to the high reservation for state-domiciled students in NLIU Bhopal, a fact that might have attracted more students from Madhya Pradesh to write the CLAT exam.

Students from Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, National Capital Territory (NCT) of Delhi (UT), Haryana, and Punjab have a greater share of representation at the top four NLUs when compared to their respective State's overall population in proportion to India. The aforementioned States along with Uttar Pradesh account for more than half (i.e., 53.42%) of all students admitted in the top four NLUs while only accounting for a little more than a third (i.e., 33.93%) of India's total population.

Other important points to note from the above figures:

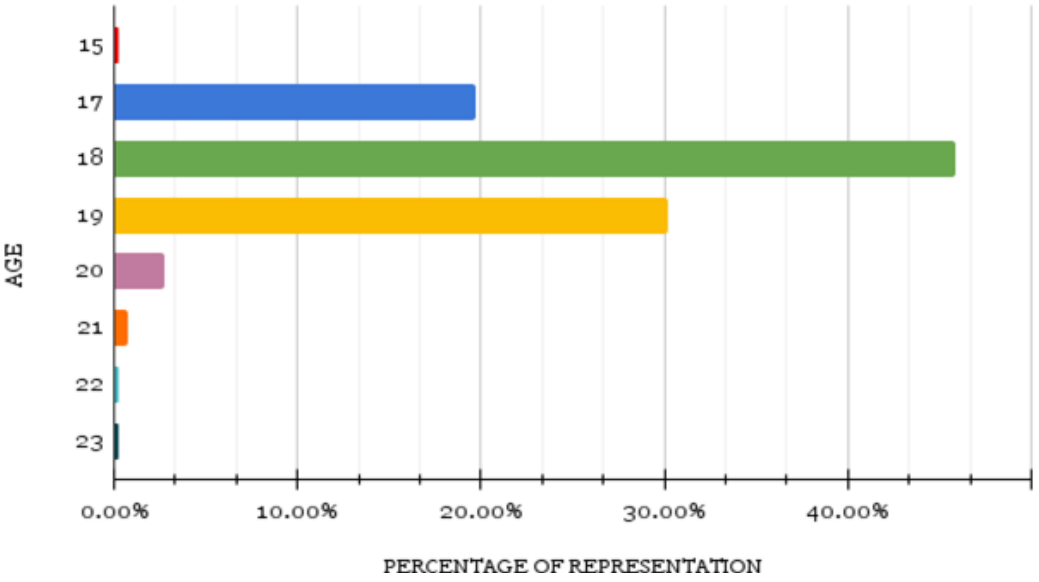
a. None of the UTs apart from the NCR of Delhi, Jammu and Kashmir & Ladakh Chandigarh are represented in the top four NLUs. The surveys of 2018-19 and 2016-17 have provided the same insight.
b. The North-Eastern states continue to be under-represented, with only three students (one each from Assam, Meghalaya, and Nagaland) which is down from five students in 2018-19. The number of students from Assam decreased from two to one and the representation of Manipur and Tripura decreased from one to nil. Meghalaya's representation remained static at 1 and the number of students from Nagaland increased from nil to 1. Sikkim, Mizoram, and Arunachal Pradesh continued to be unrepresented as with the 2018-19 survey.

4. AGE REPRESENTATION OF FIRST-YEAR STUDENTS

Table 5 *Age Representation of First-Year Students*

AGE	PERCENTAGE OF REPRESENTATION
15	0.25%
17	19.75%
18	45.82%
19	30.15%
20	2.78%
21	0.76%
22	0.25%
23	0.25%

Chart 2 *Age representation*



As with previous years, students between the age group of 17-19 are in a clear majority accounting for 95.72%. Interestingly, students aged 20 and above entering law school were all male.

Earlier in 2017, the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India stayed the Bar Council of India's attempt to introduce an upper age limit for LLB admissions (including admissions to NLUs through the CLAT).[17] And more recently in March 2019, the Supreme Court asked the Bar Council of India to reconsider the age limit in the interest of justice.[18]

[17] This was pursuant to a Writ Petition instituted by several students, including an intervention petition by Michael Sam, an IDIA scholar. See, Prabhati Nayak Mishra, *Age no bar for studying Law: SC stays BCI notification*, March 3, 2017, available at http://www.livelaw.in/age-no-bar-studying-law-sc-stays-bci-notification/ (Last visited on December 26, 2021).

[18] Supreme Court Order dated 12th March 2019 in *Rishabh Duggal v. Bar Council of India & Anr*.

PART II: REPRESENTATION FROM MARGINALIZED COMMUNITIES

5. GENDER DIVERSITY

Table 6 *Gender Representation*

CATEGORIES	RESPONSES RECORDED	PERCENTAGE OF REPRESENTATION
Male	242	61.27%
Female	151	38.23%
Other	2	0.51%
TOTAL	**395**	**100%**

The 2019-20 survey continued to witness the worrying trend of the consistent decrease in the number of female students in the top NLUs with only 38.23% of the surveyed students, down from 38.37% in 2018-19 and 42.38% in 2016-17. This highlights the alarming gender disparity in NLUs when taking into the account the percentage of female population in India, which is 48.46% (according to the 2011 census).[19] One estimate suggests that of the 2,391 candidates who were allotted a seat in the first allotment list for CLAT 2019 across 21 NLUs under CLAT, only 44.25% were females.[20] While the overall female representation has marginally increased from CLAT 2018 (from 43.34% to 44.25%), there has been a decline in female students holding top ranked positions with them securing the highest rank in only 9 of the 21 NLUs in CLAT 2019 when compared to CLAT 2018 wherein female students secured the highest rank in 10 of the 19 NLUs.[21]

More specifically, the percentage of female students that made it to individual NLUs out of the surveyed students is as under:

Table 7 *Representation of female students in individual NLUs*

NLUs	PERCENTAGE OF FEMALE REPRESENTATION IN 2019-20	PERCENTAGE OF FEMALE REPRESENTATION IN 2018-19	PERCENTAGE OF FEMALE REPRESENTATION IN 2016-17
NLSIU Bengaluru	33.78%	36.90%	39.51%
NALSAR Hyderabad	41.88%	34.15%	37.78%
WBNUJS, Kolkata	36.22%	38.84%	42.65%
NALSAR Hyderabad	40.26%	34.15%	51.06%

19 See, https://censusindia.gov.in/2011-prov-results/data_files/mp/06Gender%20Composition.pdf (Last visited on December 21, 2021).

20 Bar & Bench, *CLAT 2019: Gender Ratios, Rank Cut-Offs and more*, June 25, 2019, available at https://www.barandbench.com/columns/clat-2019-gender-ratios-rank-cut-offs-and-more (Last visited on December 21, 2021).

21 Bar & Bench, *CLAT 2018: Gender Ratios and Rank Cut-Offs at the 19 NLUs*, June 29, 2018, available at https://barandbench.com/clat-2018-gender-ratios-rank-cut-offs-19-nlus/ (Last visited on December 21, 2021). The estimate in this article was based on the third allotment list across the 19 NLUs at that time.

As can be seen from Table 7 above, the percentage of female students making it to the top NLUs has decreased in 2019-20, except for NALSAR, Hyderabad where the female population has witnessed a consistent increase. Further, even though the percentage of female students in NLU Delhi, increased to 40.26% from 2018-19 (34.15%), it is still significantly less than the 2016-17 figure of 51.06%.

It bears noting that even in the aftermath of a path breaking Supreme Court decision that explicitly recognized the marginalized transgender community as a third gender,[22] only two students have identified themselves as belonging to a 'Other' category without specifying whether they identified as the 'Third Gender' or otherwise. It is alarming that the representation of students who do not conform to the binary model of gender continues to be negligible in the leading law schools. This could be a result of both a lack of access to certain marginalized queer individuals and communities, such as the 'Hijra' community, which precludes students from these communities from making it to law schools in the first place, and the unhospitable and prejudiced nature of the law school campuses which might deter certain students from disclosing their actual gender.

Representation of gender from different States and UTs

Table 8 Representation of gender from different States and UTs

STATE	FEMALE	MALE	OTHERS
Telangana	58.62%	41.38%	0
Punjab	54.55%	45.45%	0
Karnataka	52.94%	47.06%	0
Chhattisgarh	50%	50%	0
West Bengal	44.44%	55.56%	0
Not an Indian Resident	44.44%	55.56%	0
Jharkhand	42.86%	57.14%	0
Odisha	42.86%	57.14%	0
Andhra Pradesh	40%	60%	0
Gujarat	40%	60%	0
Rajasthan	38%	62%	0
Madhya Pradesh	36.59%	63.41%	0
Maharashtra	34.48%	62.07%	3.44%
Uttar Pradesh	33.85%	66.15%	0
Bihar	33.33%	66.67%	0
National Capital Territory (NCT) of Delhi (UT)	29.63%	70.37%	0
Haryana	29.41%	70.59%	0

[22] See, *National Legal Services Authority v. Union of India*, *(2014) 5 SCC 438*, where the court issued directions to the government to treat the third gender as a socially and educationally backward class of citizens.

Kerala	28.57%	71.43%	0
Chandigarh (UT)	25%	75%	0
Jammu and Kashmir & Ladakh (UT)	20%	80%	0
Meghalaya	0	0	100%
Uttarakhand	0	100%	0
Tamil Nadu	0	100%	0
Assam	0	100%	0
Goa	0	100%	0
Himachal Pradesh	0	100%	0
Nagaland	0	100%	0

As observed in Table 6 of this survey report, the proportion of Male to Female at the top four NLUs is 61.27% : 38.23%. However, we also find a number of States bucking this trend. Among those going against the trend are Telangana (58.62%), followed by Punjab (54.55%), Karnataka (52.94%), Chhattisgarh (50%), among others. It is germane to note that the proportion of Female respondents from Telangana was 58.62% in the 2018-19 survey as well. Also, according to the 2018-19 survey data, half of the surveyed students from Chhattisgarh were female. On the other hand, Maharashtra and NCT of Delhi, which had a high percentage of female students in 2018-19 (63.33% and 52.38%, respectively), witnessed a significant reduction in the present survey (34.48% and 29.63%, respectively).

Incidentally, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra - the top four states that have the highest geographical representation of students in the law schools surveyed (*see Table 4*) have a skewed gender representation with only 33.85%, 38%, 36.59% and 34.48% female students from these states respectively making it to the top four law schools (*see Table 8*).

6. PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Table 9 *Persons with Disabilities*

TYPE OF DISABILITY	PERCENTAGE OF REPRESENTATION
Nil	89.37%
Hearing impairment	0.25%
Speech impairment	0.25%
Visual impairment	2.03%
Locomotor or orthopedic disability	1.52%
Learning disability (including ADHD, dyslexia, etc)	1.27%
Mental disability (including Major Depression, Anxiety, Bipolar, PTSD, etc.)	3.54%
Other disability	0.25%
Chose not to answer	1.77%

8.86% of the surveyed students identified themselves as Persons with Disabilities (PWD). According to Section 32 of the Right of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 ("2016 Act"), all government institutions of higher education as well as institutions receiving aid from the government must reserve not less than five per cent seats for persons with benchmark disabilities. A person with benchmark disabilities is defined by the same Act and refers to the persons suffering from 40% or more of any kind of disability, as per the Schedule provided at the end of the Act[23] and are the persons provided with a government issued Certificate of Disability.

The Supreme Court in the case of *Disability Rights Group & Anr. vs. Union of India*[24] exercised its powers of judicial discretion to increase the scope of the petition from law schools to all institutes of higher education and directed them to comply with Section 32 of the 2016 Act which provides for minimum 5% reservation as opposed to minimum 3% reservation as per the repealed Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunity Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act, 1995. It was also held that the institutes would submit a list of the number of disabled persons admitted each year to the Chief Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities or the State Commissioner to ensure that this compliance was not only on paper.[25]

Firstly, the law itself has created distinction between persons with disabilities and persons with benchmark disabilities, and ends up excluding people who are suffering from a disability but are unable to meet the threshold for certain benefits, including reservation in institutes of higher education. Furthermore, despite clear legislative provisions as well as Supreme Court judgments, in practice, not all NLUs (all of which have been created through state legislations and are eligible for Central assistance under Section 12(B) of the University Grants Commission Act, 1956)[26] comply with this requirement.[27]

a. As per the Bar and Bench article by Shashank Pandey, the four NLUs we have surveyed for the purpose of this report namely, NLSIU, NALSAR, NLUD and WBNUJS are mostly compliant with the 2016 Act as they provide for 5% horizontal reservation for specially abled persons/persons with disabilities.[28] However, as far as WBNUJS is concerned the NUJS Diversity Report 2019 sheds light on the fact that the number of seats every year is dynamic and in 2019, it was around 128 (including 5 Foreign Nationals as well as 18 NRI/NRI sponsored students) and hence, 6 seats horizontally reserved for specially abled persons/persons with disabilities only comes to around 4.68%.[29]
b. The same Bar and Bench article also clearly indicates that in 2019, RMNLU, CNLU and MNLU (Mumbai) were in clear violation of the law as they were following the old regime of 3% horizontal reservation for specially abled persons/persons with disabilities instead of the mandated 5% minimum reservation post the 2016 Act.

23 Section 2 (r), Right of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016.

24 (2018) 2 SCC 397.

25 Anusha Reddy and Namrata Dubey, 'Paving the Way to an Inclusive India, One Judgment at a Time', The Wire (January 8, 2018). Available at https://thewire.in/government/ro-postpones-scrutiny-of-nomination-after-congress-complains-aap-candidate-for-rs-polls-holds-office-of-profit (Last visited on December 31, 2021).

26 The full list of State Universities eligible for central assistance, see, List of State Universities which are included under Section 12 (B) of the UGC Act, 1956, and are eligible to receive Central assistance, available at https://www.ugc.ac.in/oldpdf/Consolidated%20list%20of%20All%20Universities.pdf (Last visited on December 31, 2021).

27 Shashank Pandey, 'Only 12 of 22 NLUs fulfil requirement of 5% reservation for Persons with Disabilities', Bar and Bench (September 3, 2019). Available at https://www.barandbench.com/apprentice-lawyer/only-12-of-the-22-nlus-fulfill-requirement-of-5-reservation-for-persons-with-disabilities (Last visited on December 31, 2021). Due to the unavailability of the original 2019 prospectus/brochures of most NLUs, the authors have relied on this article to draw inferences.

28 *Id.*

29 Pg. 89, The NUJS Diversity Report 2019, available at http://sja.nujs.edu/storage/The%20NUJS%20Diversity%20Report%2C%202019.pdf (Last visited on December 31, 2021).

c. It has also been noted by a few authors like Eshwar R. that despite many NLUs following the 5% reservation norm on paper, the reality is different as while calculating the total number of seats, seats reserved for Foreign Nationals or NRI/NRI sponsored students were often excluded, making the total number of seats reserved lower.[30] We believe that WBNUJS is an example of that as the actual number of seats projected earlier was just 116, as per the Bar and Bench article.[31]
d. While 8.86% of the surveyed students indicated that they had some form of disability, only 4.81% of the surveyed students secured a seat under the PWD category (see Table 3). This could be due to a number of applicants being unaware of the change in the position of law (shift from 1995 Act [32] to 2016 Act, which expanded the categories to include intellectual/ learning disabilities as well as mental illnesses)[33] and not knowing if their condition qualified as a disability for seeking admission under the PWD category.

While only 3.54% of the students in our survey reported some form of mental illness, including depression, anxiety, bipolar disorder and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in the context of "disability", however as many as 33.92% (134) students have reported to be facing some mental health issue in the context of a more generic question.[34] Such a high number of reported cases of mental health issues raises serious concerns regarding the environment in our top NLUs, and we fear that the number may still be underreported owing to the stigma attached to mental illnesses.[35] Out of the students who admitted to be facing mental health issues, 46.27% were female, which is higher than the overall percentage of female students (38.23%). Further, 7 out of the 11 students who claimed that they chose to study law owing to familial or parental pressure, reported facing mental health issues.

Whatever be the precise number of students suffering from mental health issues, there is no doubt about the fact that there is negligible institutional support for such students in the vast majority of NLUs. Only about 30% of the surveyed students answered in the affirmative when asked whether they have a mental health counselor or therapist affiliated to their universities in or near the campus.[36]

[30] Eshwar R, 'Non-Compliance with Statutory Quotas by National Law Universities' P-PIL: Promoting Public Interest Lawyering (June 15, 2018). Available at https://www.p-pil.com/non-compliance-with-statutory-quotas-by-national-law-universities/ (Last visited on December 31, 2021).

[31] *Supra, note 25.*

[32] The (erstwhile) Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act, 1995.

[33] The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016, recognizes, among others, (i) speech and language disability;(ii) intellectual disabilities that include (a) specific learning disabilities, including perceptual disabilities, dyslexia, dysgraphia, dyscalculia, dyspraxia, and developmental aphasia, and (b) autism spectrum disorder; (ii) disability caused due to chronic neurological conditions such as multiple sclerosis, Parkinson's disease.

[34] It bears noting that the survey did not create a distinction between self-diagnosis and clinical diagnosis of mental health issues. Nonetheless, the sheer percentage of persons surveyed reporting having experienced mental health issues is a red flag that requires immediate attention.

[35] See, https://www.ibanet.org/document?id=IBA-report-Mental-Wellbeing-in-the-Legal-Profession-A-Global-Study/ (Last visited on December 22, 2021).

[36] *A vast majority (65.57%) of the surveyed students skipped this question.*

7. RELIGION

Table 10 *Religious Representation*

RELIGION	PERCENTAGE OF REPRESENTATION (MOTHER)	PERCENTAGE OF REPRESENTATION (FATHER/GUARDIAN) **
Buddhism	2.28%	2.03%
Christianity	2.28%	2.53%
Hinduism	80.76%	83.78%
Islam	2.78%	2.53%
Jainism	6.58%	6.33%
Sikhism	2.78%	2.03%
Zoroastrianism	0.00%	0%
Atheism	0.25%	0.51%
My mother is my guardian and I have already provided these details in the previous question	1.27%	N.A.
Chose not to answer	0.51%	0
Others	0.51%[37]	0.25%[38]

**In the case of students whose mother was their guardian, the students provided the answer to the religion of their mother in response to the question on the religion of their father/guardian. The answer provided by these students is reflected accordingly under the heading of the religion of father/guardian and the percentage of such responses are indicated under the heading of 'My mother is my guardian and I have already provided these details in the previous question'. A total of 5 students (1.27%) selected this option.

[37] The survey provides the category 'Others', and students were free to describe the parameters they wish to include under this category. In the present survey, of the four students who had filled up data under the category 'Others', one student claimed the mother's religion to be 'Atheism'. One student claimed Hinduism as his mother's religion thus bringing the total number of students claiming their mother's religion as Hinduism to 319. Hence, we are only counting two students to be under the 'Others' category.

[38] The survey provides the category 'Others', and students were free to describe the parameters they wish to include under this category. In the present survey, of the four students who had filled up data under the category 'Others', two students claimed the father's religion to be 'Atheism'. One student claimed Hinduism as his father's religion thus bringing the total number of students claiming their father's religion as Hinduism to 331. Hence, we are only counting one student to be under the 'Others' category.

As can be seen from the above table, most students belong to a Hindu household. In the present survey, 80.76% and 83.78% of the surveyed students claimed that their mothers and fathers, respectively, are Hindus, which although is less than the 2018-19 survey (wherein 84.41% and 86.14% students claimed that their mothers and fathers, respectively, were Hindus), is still more than the overall percentage of the Hindus in the Indian population.[39]

On the other hand, the Muslim community is severely underrepresented, which is serious cause for concern. Illustratively, while Muslims constitute 14.23% of the national population,[40] only 2.53% and 2.78% of the surveyed students reported their father's and mother's religion, respectively as Islam, which is lesser than the 4.21% of the students who claimed that they were from a Muslim household in 2018-19. Similarly, 2.53% and 2.28% of the surveyed students reported their father's and mother's religion, respectively as Christianity, which is also a decrease from the 3.71% of the students who claimed that their parents were Christians in 2018-19.

8. CASTE BACKGROUND

As far as caste is concerned, a considerable number of Hindu students identified themselves as Brahmin, one of the most privileged castes in India.

Table 11 *First-Year Students from Brahmin Caste Background*

PARENT	PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS WHOSE PARENTS ARE BRAHMIN
Father	24.30%
Mother	24.81%

[39] Hindus make up 79.80% of the population of India. See Supra, Note 3.

[40] *Id.*

PART III: FAMILY BACKGROUND

9. FAMILY'S EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND

Table 12 *Parent's educational background*

GRADUATED FROM UNIVERSITY	PERCENTAGE OF REPRESENTATION
Both	75.44%
Only one	14.18%
Neither	9.11%
Chose not to answer	1.27%

An overwhelming majority of the students' parents (75.44%) were graduates. Only a tiny minority (9.11%) reported being first generation university learners which is a slight improvement from 2018-19 where this figure was 7.18%. Further, out of the students who reported being first generation learners, 27.78% and 11.11% were students who were admitted under the SC and ST categories, respectively, which is much higher than their overall representation (12.66% and 6.33%, respectively).

It is also noteworthy that in cases where 'only one' parent had graduated from university, 67.24% said their father was a graduate while only 32.76% said that their mothers are graduates.[41]

10. LANGUAGE

i. Family's Proficiency in English

Table 13 *Family's Proficiency in English*

ENGLISH PROFICIENCY OF PARENT	PERCENTAGE OF REPRESENTATION
Both of them are proficient	46.33%
Only one of them proficient	18.99%
Neither of them proficient	33.42%
Chose not to answer	1.27%

[41] There seems to be an error here. Only 56 students reported that only one parent has graduated from a university when asked the following question – "Have your parents graduated from a university?". However, for the subsequent question wherein the students who reported that only one parent had graduated from university were asked which parent graduated, 58 students answered this question.

Over 46% fifty percent of surveyed students hailed from families where both parents spoke fluent English, a decrease from 2018-19 where almost 53% of the students reported that both parents were fluent. On the other hand, the percentage of students who reported that neither of their parents are fluent in English increased from 26.73% in 2018-19 to 33.42% in the present survey. This is a welcome development since proficiency in English is a mark of privilege, and codes for a high degree of professional and social success.[42]

Out of the states and UTs with a minimum of 15 students, Karnataka (93.75%), NCT of Delhi (81.48%), West Bengal (69.23%), Maharashtra (68.97%), Haryana (64.71%) and Telangana (58.62%) had a high percentage of students who reported that both their parents speak fluent English. On the other hand, Madhya Pradesh (60.98%), Rajasthan (60%) and Uttar Pradesh (42.19%) had a high percentage of students from a non-English speaking background. This is akin to the pattern witnessed in the 2018-19 survey of more students from southern states and states with a metropolitan city coming from English speaking backgrounds as compared to the northern states with a primarily Hindi speaking population.

ii. Language of Communication with Family

Table 14 *Language of Communication with Family*

LANGUAGE	PERCENTAGE OF REPRESENTATION
Hindi	67.60%
English	19.75%
Other	30.13%[43]
Chose not to answer	1.27%

The fact that a large majority of students hail from Hindi speaking households (67.60%) speaks to the dominance of the students from the Hindi belt (mainly Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Madhya Pradesh) in the 2019 CLAT intake as well.[44]

The "Other" category, comprising almost a third of the surveyed students, includes various regional languages such as Telugu (6.33%) which is the third most spoken language of communication with family followed by Bengali (4.81%), Punjabi (2.78%), Marathi (2.78%), Malayalam (2.28%), etc. Here again, it bears noting that there is no representation from students speaking the language of marginalized states such as the North-Eastern States and very low representation of those speaking the language of Jammu and Kashmir & Ladakh, which was only spoken by 3 students, which corresponds to the almost negligible representation of students from those states and UTs.

[42] See, Tejaswini Niranjana 'Indian Languages in Higher Education', (March 23, 2013) available at https://www.epw.in/journal/2013/12/commentary/indian-languages-indian-higher-education.html/(Last visited on December 27, 2021); Also see, Meena Kandasamy, 'Dalits looks upon English as the language of emancipation' (March 8, 2010) available at https://www.livemint.com/Politics/ItCo2HSpKjf98VvW8X4yAO/Dalits-look-upon-English-as-the-language-of-emancipation.html/ (Last visited on December 27, 2021).

[43] Three responses from 'Others' had put Hindi as their language of communication with family. We shifted the same to the Hindi category which brought the total in Hindi to 267.

[44] As reflected in the analysis of geographical representation of States in Part I.

11. LINK WITH LAW

i. Parents' Occupation

Table 15 Parents' Occupation

TYPE OF OCCUPATION	MOTHER (PERCENTAGE OF REPRESENTATION)	FATHER/GUARDIAN (PERCENTAGE OF REPRESENTATION)**
Lawyer	1.77%	5.82%
Doctor	6.08%	5.32%
Engineer	1.01%	9.37%
Elite Government Service (Indian Administrative Service, Indian Police Service, etc.)	0.51%	6.33%
Other Government Service	5.82%	19.24%
Businessperson	3.80%	21.27%
Banking/Finance	1.52%	5.06%
Corporate Executive	1.27%	6.33%
Academic/Researcher/Policy	6.84%	2.28%
Consultant	1.52%	1.27%
Agriculturist	0.25%	1.52%
Scientist	1.01%	0.25%
Arts (Painter/Musician/Singer/Actor)	0.25%	0.00%
Homemaker	51.65%	0.76%
N.A.	4.56%	1.01%
My mother is my guardian and I have already provided these details in the previous question	1.27%	N.A.
Other (please specify)	9.62%	12.91%
Chose not to answer	1.27%	1.27%

**In the case of students whose mother was their guardian, the students provided the occupation to the religion of their mother in response to the question on the occupation of their father/guardian. The answer provided by these students is reflected accordingly under the heading of the occupation of father/guardian and the percentage of such responses are indicated under the heading of 'My mother is my guardian and I have already provided these details in the previous question'. A total of 5 students (1.27%) selected this option.

As can be seen from Table 15, over a quarter of the students' fathers are government employees. Furthermore, 21.27% of the students' fathers are businessmen. Again, a majority of the students' mothers (51.65%) are homemakers. This is consistent with the broad ground level reality that a large number of Indian mothers are homemakers.[45] Furthermore, only 6.33% of the respondents have mothers in government employment.

The 'Other' category for father's occupation includes a wide diversity of careers including journalist, chartered accountant, defense personnel, politician etc. It is also interesting to note that in the case of the 'Other' category for mother's occupation there are 16 students (i.e., 4.05%) whose mothers are teachers and constitute the largest contingent in said category. Furthermore, 5.82% of the students' fathers and 1.77% of the students' mothers are lawyers. It is worth noting that only 6 students reported that their father is an agriculturalist and only 1 student reported that their mother was one which is indicative of the fact that the vast majority of students are from urban centers.[46]

ii. Whether any member of the student's immediate or close family holds a degree in law

Table 16 *Students from Families of Lawyer(s)*

LINK WITH LAW	PERCENTAGE OF REPRESENTATION
Students whose near relatives are lawyers	32.41%
Students whose near relatives are not lawyers	66.58%
Chose not to answer	1.01%

The number of students who reported having no linkage with anyone in the legal profession increased from 63.61% in 2018-19 to 66.58% in the present survey. The fact that such a high number of students reported no such link is indicative of the fact that the NLUs now attract a significant number of students from non-legal backgrounds as well.

[45] See, The Times of India, 64% of Urban Indian Women busy with housework, study reveals, available at https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/64-of-urban-indian-women-busy-with-housework-study-reveals/articleshow/44796358.cms (Last visited on December 25, 2021). This article stated that according to a National Sample Survey Office Report, during 2011-12, about 60% of females in rural areas and 64% of females in urban areas were engaged in domestic duties.

[46] This becomes particularly striking when viewed against the fact that the agriculture sector contributes to over 42% of the workforce in India as of 2019. See, *Employment in agriculture*, available at https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.AGR.EMPL.ZS?end=2010&locations=IN&start=2005&view=chart (Last visited on December 24, 2021).

12. CHOOSING LAW AS A CAREER

i. Parental Support

Table 17 *Parental support in pursuing Legal Education*

NATURE OF SUPPORT	PERCENTAGE OF REPRESENTATION
Parents supported	89.62%
Parents did not support	4.56%
Parents were indifferent	4.81%
Chose not to answer	1.01%

An overwhelming majority of students (89.62%) reported being supported by their parents in their decision to pursue law, which although is a decrease from 2018-19 (93.81%), still indicates that NLUs with their strong placement numbers,[47] continue to be an attractive career option, particularly for students from urban areas.

ii. Reasons for choosing law

Table 18 *Reasons for Choosing Law*

NATURE OF CHOICE	PERCENTAGE OF REPRESENTATION[48]
I enjoy reading, reasoning, logic, and argument, so law would be a good match for my skill set	46.58%
Law helps with other fields such as politics, IAS, etc.	38.73%
For good job prospects	38.48%
To achieve a high standard of living, comfortable salary etc	37.47%
To fight for social justice	29.11%
I followed parental/family advice	20.25%
A real-life Role Model: I was influenced by someone in the legal profession	16.71%
Not sure / Haven't given it much thought	10.87%
Others	10.38%
A reel Life Role Model: I was influenced by movies/literature etc. that showcased great lawyers	9.11%
Parental/family compulsion	2.78%
Chose not to answer	1.01%

47 See, Careers 360, *NLU Placement 2020*, available at https://law.careers360.com/articles/nlu-placement-2020 (Last visited on December 27, 2021).

48 Please note that this question allowed the participant to choose multiple options for choosing to study law.

The survey results demonstrate that a majority of the respondents chose law as a career option out of self-motivation and only around 2.78% did so out of parental/family compulsion. However, it should be noted that out of the 11 students who admitted to having chosen law due to parental or familial compulsion, 7 (63.64%) also reported that they are facing mental health issues, which is a grave reminder of the unhealthy manifestations of lack of autonomy in career choices.

Nevertheless, the low number of such students out of surveyed students is a healthy trend and perhaps attributable to the growing popularity of the law[49] and the greater autonomy enjoyed by students in making career choices. One hopes that this level of awareness and autonomy also extends to marginalized and under-represented sections of India's population.

[49] See, Hon'ble Judge Dhananjaya Y. Chandrachud, 'The future of Indian legal profession', available at https://thepractice.law.harvard.edu/article/future-indian-legal-profession// (Last visited on December 28, 2021).

PART IV: EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND

For the purposes of analyzing the educational background of the students, a host of parameters were factored in such as: medium of instruction, location of school, score in Class XII board examinations, etc.

13. SCHOOLING BACKGROUND

i. Medium of Instruction at Schools of Surveyed Students:

Table 19 *Medium of Instruction at Schools* **10TH GRADE**

MEDIUM OF INSTRUCTION	PERCENTAGE
English	94.68%
Hindi	1.27%
Other vernacular language	3.04%
Chose not to answer	1.01%

Table 20 *Medium of Instruction at Schools* **12TH GRADE**

MEDIUM OF INSTRUCTION	PERCENTAGE
English	94.68%
Hindi	1.77%
Other vernacular language	2.53%
Chose not to answer	1.01%

As with previous years, an astonishingly large number of students (94.68% of all students) came from schools where the medium of instruction was English both at the secondary and higher secondary level, which is not surprising given that CLAT and AILET are entrance examinations that demand a high degree of proficiency in English, which is a mark of privilege, and thereby provides an inherent advantage to students with an English medium background. In a pan-India survey conducted by the National Statistical Office, Ministry of Statistics & Programme Implementation, they stated that only about 16.7% of students in India study in English Medium Schools.[50] The large percentage of students from English medium schools when contextualized by the figures released in the National Statistical Office Report

[50] See, Household Social Consumption on Education in India Government of India Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, (2020) Available at: https://www.thehinducentre.com/resources/article32919836.ece/binary/Report_585_75th_round_Education_f inal_1507_0_compressed.pdf (Last visited on December 26, 2021). The survey was conducted for 1.13 lakh households accounting for 1.52 lakh students.

illustrates the systemic deprivation of access to the premier law schools in the country faced by the majority of students in India owing to them not having had access to an English medium education at the qualifying level in the first place.

Further, students who did not attend English medium schools, in the event that they do manage to gain admission to these NLUs, still have to face another level of obstacle since most classes are conducted in fairly sophisticated English. Apart from academics these students also often face exclusion in various co-curricular and extra-curricular activities since activities such as moot courts and debating are mostly always conducted in English.

ii. Where First-Year Students went to School for 12th grade

Table 21 *Location of School from which First-Year Students Hail*

LOCATION OF THE SCHOOL	PERCENTAGE
City	80.25%
Town	13.92%
Rural Area	4.81%
Chose not to answer	1.01%

Out of the students surveyed, students from cities dominated (317), followed distantly by those from smaller towns (55). Not too surprisingly, only 19 students (4.81%) hailed from rural areas. Even though the percentage of students from the rural areas and towns has increased marginally from 2018-19 (2.48% and 13.86%, respectively), there still remains a severe lack of diversity and needs to be redressed urgently.

13. Score in Standard XII

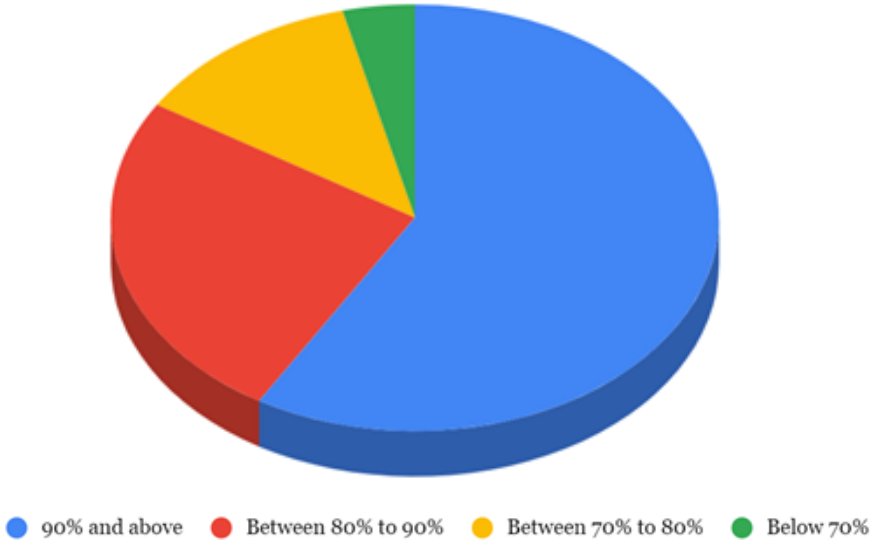
Out of the surveyed students, almost 58% of the students scored more than 90% in their 12th grade board examinations.

Table 22 *Class XII Academic Performance of First Year Students*

RANGE OF PERCENTAGE SCORE IN XII	PERCENTAGE
90% and above	57.97%
Between 80% to 90%	25.06%
Between 70% to 80%	12.41%
Below 70%	3.78%
Chose not to answer	1.01%

iii. Score in Standard XII

Chart 3 *Score in Standard XII*



In comparison, 52.23% of the surveyed students in 2018-19 and 57.01% in 2016-17 had scored over 90% in their Class XII board examinations. These figures indicate that high scorers in school tend to do well in the law entrance exam as well.

Interestingly, 70.86% of female students surveyed scored over 90% whereas only 50.42% of male students managed to do so, which illustrates how female students tend to do better in their examinations. Further, 66.8% of the students who were admitted under the general category scored above 90% compared to students who were admitted under the SC category (33.33%) and students who were admitted under the ST category (44%), which is an indication of the systemic disadvantages that may have precluded students from marginalized communities from being a part of the much hyped 90 percentage group. This also displays how students from marginalized communities start out with academic disadvantage and shows the role of privilege in academic performance.

iv. Academic Stream Opted

As with previous years, the highest number of students hail from the science stream, followed by commerce stream and then humanities. However, the number of students from humanities has been witnessing a gradual increase with every year – up to 22.28% in 2019-20 from 14.95% in 2016-17 and 19.31% in 2018-19.

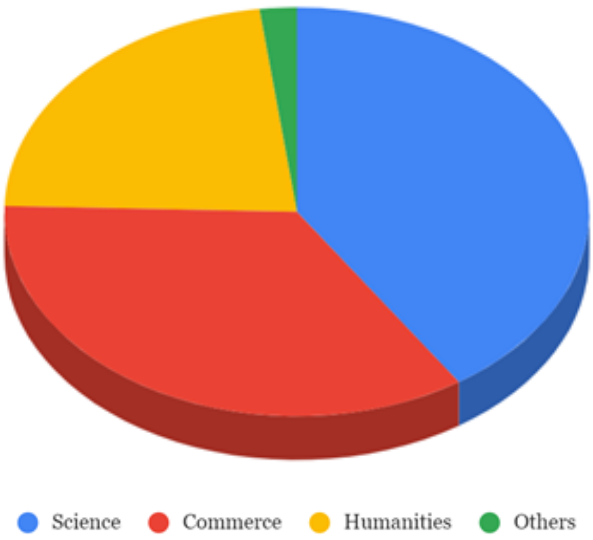
Only 31.54% of female students opted for science streams as compared to 48.06% of male students. On the other hand, 31.54% of female students opted for the humanities stream as compared to only 17.6% of male students. The pattern is akin to the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) gap seen in education systems across the globe, where men studying STEM subjects outnumber women in the field.[51] This disparity illustrates the unfortunate role of gender biases shaping the career choices of a student to be in conformity with normative gender roles.

[51] See, Chavatzia, Theophania, *Cracking the code: Girls' and women's education in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM)*, (2017), available at http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0025/002534/253479e.pdf (Last visited on December 27, 2021).

Table 23 *Academic Background of First Year Students*

ACADEMIC STREAM	PERCENTAGE
Science	40.25%
Commerce	34.69%
Humanities	22.28%
Others	2.03%
Chose not to answer	1.01%

Chart 4 *Academic Stream Opted*



PART V: ECONOMIC BACKGROUND

14. ANNUAL INCOME OF THE FAMILY

Table 24 *Annual Household Income of First Year Students*

ANNUAL INCOME (IN INR)	PERCENTAGE OF REPRESENTATION
Below 50,000	1.77%
From 50,000 to 1 lakh	3.04%
From 1 lakh to 3 lakhs	8.10%
From 3 lakhs to 7 lakhs	19.49%
From 7 lakhs to 10 lakhs	14.94%
From 10 lakhs to 15 lakhs	13.92%
Above 15 lakhs	37.47%
Chose not to answer	1.27%

As evident from the above, the largest proportion of students (37.47%) hail from households boasting an annual income of over INR 15 lakhs. If one were to consider INR 10 lakhs or higher as the relevant cut off, then the figure jumps to a significant 51.39% of the surveyed students. Hardly 4.81% of students belong to households earning an income of below INR 1 lakh.

The costs of legal education at the top law schools typically range between INR 13-18 lakhs for a 5-year education. Therefore, it is not surprising that low-income students find very little representation in these institutions.[52]

The representation of students from low-income households has in fact become worse when compared to 2018-19, when at least 5.45% of the students belonged to households earning an income of below INR 1 lakh. The decrease in 2019-20 of students from low-income households sheds light on the increasing inequality in student representation.

A note of caution: These income levels have not been independently verified and run the risk of under-reporting by students keen on applying for scholarships, fee waivers, etc. It bears noting that a large number of students (85.06%) indicated that they relied on financial support from their parents to pay the required fees. This clearly suggests that most such parents are in the high(er) income brackets. Consequently, there is a strong likelihood of a number of students falsely reporting low parental incomes.

[52] See, Prannv Dhawan and Devansh Kaushik, *A question of equitable access to legal education* (October 23 2020) Available at https://frontline.thehindu.com/social-issues/general-issues/a-question-of-equitable-access-to-legal-education/article32687819.ece (Last visited on December 27, 2021).

15. FUNDING OF LEGAL EDUCATION5[53]

Table 25 *How First Year Students Sponsor their Education*

FUNDING	PERCENTAGE OF REPRESENTATION
Parents	85.06%
Bank loan	8.35%
Scholarship	8.86%
Relatives/Family Friends	8.10%
Others	4.05%
Chose not to answer	1.27%

As noted earlier, a vast majority of students (85.06%) fund their education through parental support. This figure has witnessed a marginal decrease from 2018-19, when the corresponding percentage was 88.12%. Other data worth noting are as below:

a. Out of the students who were dependent on scholarships, 28.57% students were admitted under the SC category. Further, out of the students who were dependent on support from relatives and / or family friends, 25% students were admitted under the SC category. Similarly, out of the students who were dependent on bank loans, over 15% students were admitted under the ST category. This illustrates the significantly higher dependence of students from marginalized communities on external sources of funding compared to the overall pattern of funding seen in the general lot of students. This also indicates the disproportionate effect which the excessive fees charged by these NLUs has on students from marginalized communities since there is a significantly lower potential of these students being able to depend on their parents for funding their legal education.

b. While 9.16% of surveyed students were dependent on loans in 2018-19 that number is presently at 8.35%.

c. A large number of students indicated multiple sources of funding to support their education.

d. The number of students who benefitted from scholarships increased from 2.03% in 2013- 14, 6.37% in 2016-17 and 7.92% in 2018-19 to 8.86% this year, displaying a consistent increase. Notably, students indicated support through scholarships such as Central/State Government scholarships, Aditya Birla scholarships, ICCR scholarships, IDIA scholarships as well as internal college scholarships. While this increase in the availability of scholarships for law students is a welcome trend, one must not lose sight of the fact that there is still a huge gap and many students continue to face significant hardships in securing financial assistance.

[53] Please note that this question allowed the participant to choose multiple options.

PART VI: PRE-CLAT/ AILET EXPERIENCE

16. PREPARATION FOR CLAT/ AILET

Table 26 *Role of Coaching and Training in Preparation*

COACHING	PERCENTAGE
Yes, I went for coaching classes	76.71%
Yes, I took a correspondence/ online course	8.35%
No, I opted to prepare on my own	5.82%
I am a foreign national therefore I am not required to write the law entrance exam (CLAT/AILET)	6.08%
I wanted to, but could not find a center close to where I lived	1.01%
I wanted to, but could not afford it	1.01%
Chose not to answer	1.01%

The 2019-20 survey results closely resemble the 2018-19 figures and demonstrate that most students avail of coaching classes in one form or the other to prepare for CLAT/AILET. These figures demonstrate that coaching classes have now become an entrenched component of the exam preparatory process and have monopolized it. This again serves as a marker of privilege, given the high costs associated with coaching, which is evidenced in 69.64% of the students who attended coaching classes or correspondence / online courses stating that they paid more than INR 50,000 as fees and a further 25.74% paid between INR 25,000 to INR 50,000 as fees for these coaching classes. The high number of students who availed coaching classes (76.71%), even though the figure is marginally lower than it was in 2018-19 (78.96%), also displays the acute dependence of students on these coaching classes for cracking CLAT/AILET which places a heavy financial burden on the middle-class households seeing how 34.43% of students reported that the combined annual income of their families in between INR 3 lakhs to INR 10 lakhs.

Further, most of these coaching classes are only located in either Tier-1 cities or some Tier-2 cities. This, coupled with the unfortunate dependency on coaching classes, creates barriers for students from semi-urban or rural areas, where most of the country's population lives, from cracking law entrance examinations, due to the costs of living in a city away from home in addition to the already high costs of the coaching classes fees. This is clearly illustrated in over 80% of students who took this survey stating that they did their 12th grade in a city. Anecdotal evidence would suggest that even amongst the students who do not hail from urban areas, female students would be disproportionately disadvantaged as compared to their male counterparts as there would be a lesser probability of their families agreeing to send them to another city.

Further, popular coaching classes such as LST charge fees ranging between INR 85,000 and 1,85,000.[54] These fees, coupled with other CLAT costs, most notably the application form which costs INR 4000, make the prospect of law school entry prohibitively expensive for many bright and talented students. A 2018 report of a government appointed committee ("MHRD Committee") found that the costs of conducting CLAT was only 5-10% of the total income from sale of application forms, resulting in a whopping profit margin of 90-95%.[55] [56] The MHRD Committee took serious issue with this "egregious" profit margin and recommended that the fee be set at a more reasonable INR 1,500, which has still not been followed by the CLAT Consortium.

[54] See, https://www.careerlauncher.com/cl-online/product-category-law.jsp?prodCat=LST&rt=&rl=&source=default&method=default (Last visited on December 27, 2021). The fee charged depends on factors such as the duration of the course.

[55] See, Report of the Committee constituted to look into the matter of improper conduct of CLAT-2018 and to take remedial measures. This committee was set up by the Ministry of Human Resource Development under the direction of the Supreme Court to examine the various issues faced by students who wrote the exam in 2018.

[56] Id at P.16. The MHRD Committee noted that "the fee charged for the examination is not in concordance with expenditure and grossly high given the expenditure incurred."

PART VII: EXPERIENCE AT NLUS

17. DISCRIMINATION ON CAMPUS[57]

Discriminatory Behavior and/or Disparaging Remarks by Students

Table 27 *Types of offensive remarks and behavior by other student*

DISCRIMINATION/DISPARAGING REMARKS	PERCENTAGE
No, I have never been subjected to/ witnessed discrimination/disparaging remarks.	37.89%
Yes, because of political beliefs	38.66%
Yes, because of language	29.12%
Yes, because of physical appearance (eg. skin colour)	25.52%
Yes, because of caste	30.41%
Yes, because of gender	25.26%
Yes, because of religion and/ or religious belief	23.20%
Yes, because of educational background	12.37%
Yes, because of economic status	22.94%
Yes, because of race/ ethnicity	9.79%
Yes, because of rural background	18.56%
Yes, because of sexual orientation	15.72%
Yes, because of disability	11.60%
Others	3.61%

It is extremely troubling to note the extent of social prejudice/discrimination prevalent in these NLUs and its alarming continuous increase from the previous years - 62.11% of students who chose to answer this question reported that they were subjected to discrimination due to the various factors mentioned in the Table 27 above, marginally up from almost 60.64% in 2018-19 and almost double the figure of 31.44% in 2016-17. There has been a significant increase in discrimination arising out of all the factors above save for discrimination due to sexual orientation which has decreased marginally. This decrease

[57] Please note that this question allowed the participant to choose multiple options.

seems to be anomalous because one would fail to attribute it to any positive developments in respect of inclusivity on campus when discrimination has increased so overwhelmingly in all other aspects. Apart from the reasons captured in Table 27 above, some of the surveyed students also reported that such bigoted remarks stemmed from their geographical origin or the fact they gained admission through a reserved seat. Out of the students who admitted to be currently facing mental health issues almost 77% of them admitted to have faced some sort of discrimination on the hands of their peers. All of this highlights the urgency with which NLUs must mend their ecosystem to make it more diversity friendly and discrimination free.

ii) Discrimination/Disparaging Remarks by Faculty/Staff

Table 28 *Types of offensive remarks made by staff/faculty*

DISCRIMINATION/DISPARAGING REMARKS	PERCENTAGE
No, I have never been subjected to/ witnessed discrimination/disparaging remarks.	73.71%
Yes, because of political beliefs	9.28%
Yes, because of language	7.99%
Yes, because of physical appearance (eg. skin colour)	5.15%
Yes, because of caste	5.67%
Yes, because of gender	13.66%
Yes, because of religion and/ or religious belief	9.02%
Yes, because of educational background	4.38%
Yes, because of economic status	5.41%
Yes, because of race/ ethnicity	4.12%
Yes, because of rural background	5.41%
Yes, because of sexual orientation	4.12%
Yes, because of disability	3.61%
Others	2.32%

As seen from the above, 26.29% of the students who answered this question reported being at the receiving end of discriminatory remarks from even faculty members and administrative staff. Here too, the surge in the figure (a significant increase from 5.2% in 2016-17 and a marginal increase from 25.5% in 2018-19), poses a matter of grave concern.

18. CULTURE SHOCK

i. Students facing "culture shock"

Table 29 *Proportion of students facing culture shock*

WHETHER THEY FACED CULTURE SHOCK?	PERCENTAGE OF REPRESENTATION
Yes	52.15%
No	46.08%
Chose not to answer	1.77%

As can be seen, a sizeable number of students reported experiencing some form of "culture shock" when they joined their university. The number, however, has decreased from 56.93% in 2018-19.

ii. Factors that resulted in "culture shock"[58]

Table 30 *Factors attributed to culture shock*

TRIGGERS FOR "CULTURE SHOCK"	PERCENTAGE
The frequency with which people go out, party, etc.	60.39%
The way students converse in high level English	59.90%
The manner in which boys and girls interact	41.55%
The clothes/ dressing style of students	33.33%
The nature of student-teacher relationships	27.05%
Others	21.74%

More than half of the students from the income bracket of INR 3 lakh to the INR 7 lakh annual income bracket felt a "culture shock" due to the frequency with which people go out. A large number of students from vernacular medium backgrounds reported some form of "culture shock", mainly as a result of their inability to speak English proficiently and in an accent similar to those from more privileged backgrounds. Further, almost 97% of students who reported this indicated that they did not use English as a medium of communication at home. Similarly, students who were not from cities were slightly more susceptible to a "culture shock".

In the "others" category, several students attributed "culture shock" to the widespread use of alcohol, cigarettes, drugs, and other contraband substances at the various law schools. Some also mentioned the heterogeneity of the people around them as a reason.

[58] Please note that this question allowed the participant to choose multiple options.

In this regard, it bears noting that peer support programmes in law schools can be of great value in helping students adapt to the law school atmosphere. It is a welcome information that 94.07% of the students have stated that they have a peer support programme in the law school. But the reported dissatisfaction with these programmes is indicative of the fact that there is scope for improvement.

19. DIFFICULTY IN UNDERSTANDING ACADEMIC CURRICULUM

Table 31 *What First Year Students Report as Obstacles in Academic Performance*

DIFFICULTY IN UNDERSTANDING ACADEMIC CURRICULUM	PERCENTAGE
No, I did not find it hard	39.43%
Yes, due to the poor quality of teaching by the faculty	16.75%
Yes, due to my fear, inhibitions in seeking clarifications from faculty members	28.61%
Yes, due to the difficult reading material provided	24.74%
Yes, due to the high level of teaching by faculty and their inability to explain in simple languag	28.35%
Yes, due to difficulty in understanding English	13.14%
Chose not to answer	11.34%

Out of the students who chose to answer this question, over 60% reported difficulties in coping with/understanding the academic curriculum, which is up from 50.99% in 2018-19. In fact, a significant increase from the previous year was reported for all of the reasons listed in Table 31 due to which students face difficulty in understanding the academic curriculum.

The background of students who reported facing difficulties in understanding the curriculum owing to a lack of proficiency in English, reveals the systemic reasons behind such difficulties:

- 9.80% of such students are from rural areas and 31.37% are from towns. This clearly illustrates the tragic disparity in the quality of English education between schools in cities when compared with schools in towns and rural areas, due to which even the students who attended English medium schools in towns and rural areas are facing difficulty in coping with the advanced level of English used to teach in law schools. Additionally, almost 10% of students who hail from cities also face difficulties due to a lack of proficiency in English which, presumably, can be attributed to poor quality of English education in government schools in cities.
- 76.47% of such students have parents where neither of whom are fluent in English themselves. Similarly, 31.37% of such students have parents where neither of whom graduated from a university.
- 29.41% were students who were admitted under the SC category and 13.73% were students who were admitted under the ST category.

School and family are the foundation of the development of a student's proficiency in a language. The aforementioned findings, in the context of the advanced level of English as the medium of instruction in law schools, illustrate the institutional denial of a level academic playing field to students who come from schools with poor quality of English education and non-English speaking parentage, both of which are ubiquitous elements of socially and financially marginalized and underprivileged communities.

Further, of all the students who were facing difficulties due to their inhibitions with approaching faculty members, 18.02% were students who were admitted under the SC category and 15.32% were students who were admitted under the ST category. This again is an unfortunate indicator of the prevalent discrimination by faculty members hindering the academic assimilation of students from marginalized backgrounds.

20. PARTICIPATION IN CO-CURRICULAR AND EXTRA- CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Table 32 *Participation of First Year Students in co-curricular activities*

PARTICIPATION IN CO-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES (DEBATES, MOOTS ETC)	PERCENTAGE
Yes	54.64%
No, because studies take up most of my time	14.43%
No, because I lack the confidence	26.80%
No, because I am socially awkward and shy	20.88%
No, because I am not interested	8.51%
No, because my English is not good enough	16.24%
Other	5.15%

Table 33 *Participation of First Year Students in extra-curricular activities*

PARTICIPATION IN EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES	PERCENTAGE
Yes	60.82%
No, because studies take up most of my time	10.57%
No, because I lack the confidence	10.82%
No, because I am socially awkward and shy	12.63%
No, because I am not interested	18.04%
Other	3.09%

Other than academic exclusion, the lack of proficiency in English of such students also creates other obstacles for them in law school. Out of the ones who answered this question, the percentage of students who reported to not having participated in co-curricular activities due to a lack of proficiency in English increased from 12.38% in 2018-19 to 16.24% in 2019-20. This is a result of co-curricular activities in universities such as moot court competitions and debating almost always being conducted in English. It is important to note that out of such students, 47.62% also reported facing difficulty in understanding the academic curriculum due to the same reason.

Further, out of the students who reported to not having participated in co-curricular activities due to a lack of proficiency in English, 50.79% also reported that they find it difficult to communicate with their peers. Similarly, out of the students who reported facing difficulty in academics due to a lack of proficiency in English, 41.18% admitted difficulty in communicating with their peers. This indicates the social exclusion being faced by students who come from non-English speaking backgrounds owing to the class-based stratification of the campus populace of which language is a significant factor.

Another alarming manifestation of such academic and social exclusion faced by students from non-English backgrounds is the prevalence of mental health issues faced by such students. Over 47% of the students who reported facing academic exclusion and troubles in participating in the co-curricular activities due to a lack of proficiency in English, also reported that they are facing mental health issues. Further, out of the students who admitted to facing difficulties in communicating with their peers, 58.06% admitted to be facing mental health issues. One such student from a non-English speaking background stated that they feel that students from English speaking family backgrounds have a natural advantage in academics and co-curricular activities owing to their proficiency in English and that it is extremely difficult for students from non-English speaking backgrounds to compete.

The fact that a large number of students cited a lack of confidence and social awkwardness as reasons for not participating in these activities is also a cause for concern. Universities must do a better job by providing additional academic support, counseling, and mentorship to underprivileged students to help boost their confidence/self-esteem. More specifically, they need to be provided English language and soft skills training sessions so as to help them participate more effectively in law school. Universities also need to start conducting co-curricular activities such as mooting and debating in Hindi and other vernacular languages.

SUGGESTIONS FOR REFORM

As with previous years, this year's survey also reflects a stark diversity deficit at the leading NLUs. Listed below are some broad suggestions for reform:

1. Financial Inclusion (Fee Waivers, Scholarships etc.)

One of the most significant bottlenecks preventing talented underprivileged students from entering the hallowed halls of the leading law schools is the exorbitant cost associated with such an education. Very few law schools offer fee waivers and scholarships. As a first step, law schools must take their social commitment more seriously and pave the way for more inclusive financial policies that enable financially weak students to gain admission and study. More specifically, we recommend the following:

i. Reducing CLAT Fees

The CLAT application fee alone is INR 4000,[59] making it one of the highest entrance exam fees in India. A court ordered government committee took serious issue with these fees and found that it represents an 'egregious' profit margin of 90-95%.[60] The MHRD Committee found that Rs 1500 per candidate was a more reasonable fee and recommended that the same be charged.

Almost all other leading entrance examinations in India charge half or less than half of what CLAT charges, as evidenced from the table below: [61]

Table 34 *Application Fees for Various Entrance Tests*

NAME OF EXAMINATION	GENERAL/OBC CATEGORY FEE	SC/ST/PWD Fee
Joint Entrance Examination (JEE) (Main) Paper[62]	INR 650 (for unreserved / OBC male candidates who opt for computer-based exam) INR 325 (for unreserved /OBC female candidates who opt for computer-based exam)	INR 325 (for all SC/ST/PWD candidates)

[59] For BPL candidates in the SC/ST category, it is INR 3500.

[60] As per the contract between NUALS (the law school conducting CLAT) and Sify (the appointed service provider), the consideration to be paid to Sify was INR 210.04 per candidate. This effectively means that by charging INR 4,000 per candidate, the NLUs were marking up the cost by almost 1804.4 percent. See, https://barandbench.com/clat-2018-zoheb-hossain-everything-wrong/ (Last visited on January 2, 2022).

[61] The eligibility conditions for appearing in the JEE (Advanced) and the fee details are available at: *JEE (Advanced) 2020 Information Brochure,* available at https://beb.iitd.ac.in/JEE_ADV_2020_brochure.pdf (Last visited on January 2, 2022); the details of fee for JEE (Main) are available at: https://jeemain.nta.nic.in/WebInfo/Handler/FileHandler.ashx?i=File&ii=58&iii=Y (Last visited on January 2, 2022).

[62] Entrance examination to the National Institutes of Technology, Indian Institutes of Information Technology, other Centrally Funded Technical Institutions as well as the Indian Institutes of Technology, for which the candidates have to also clear the JEE (Advanced).

JEE (Advanced)[63]	INR 2,800 (for Unreserved / OBC male candidates) INR 1,400 (for unreserved / OBC female candidates)	INR 1,400
National Eligibility Cum Entrance Test (NEET)[64]	INR 1,400 (for General-EWS/ OBC-NCL) INR 1,500 (for General/Unreserved)	INR 800
National Institute of Fashion Technology (NIFT) Entrance Exam[65]	INR 2,000	INR 1,000
National Institute of Design (NID) Entrance Exam[66]	INR 2,000	INR 1,000
NCHM JEE[67]	INR 900	NR 450

Notes on Table: As can be seen from Table 34, even examinations with separate stages (preliminary and main) cost less than the CLAT fees. For instance, the collective costs for JEE add up to INR 3600, which is still less than the INR 4000 charged by CLAT.

As a first step therefore, the CLAT application fees need to be reduced with immediate effect. Other steps to make the exam more inclusive could be as below:

a. Establishing more exam writing centres throughout the country so that students from remote areas are also able to access CLAT;
b. Reducing or waiving CLAT deposit for low-income students: even after cracking CLAT, students have to pay INR 50,000 within less than a week from the publication of the first allotment list to block their seats at the various NLUs, even as they await being upgraded to higher NLUs in the second and third lists. This is a colossal amount for candidates from low-income backgrounds, and acts as a significant barrier to entry.

63 Admission test to only the Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) and Indian School of Mines.

64 See, https://nta.ac.in/Download/Notice/Notice_20191201165234.pdf (Last visited on January 2, 2022).

65 See; SarvGyan. (2020). NIFT 2020: Counselling (Started), Dates, Cut-off, Admission Procedure, available at: https://www.sarvgyan.com/articles/nift-2020 (Last visited 2 January, 2022).

66 See, SarvGyan. (2020). NID 2020 Application Form, Correction (Started), Dates - Apply Here. (online), available at: https://www.sarvgyan.com/articles/nid-2020-application-form (Last visited on 2 January 2022).

67 Entrance examination to Central Institutes of Hotel Management and a number of other hotel management institutes. See, https://nchmcounselling.nic.in/Archive/File/GetFile?FileId=18&LangId=P (Last visited on January 2, 2022).

ii. Law School Scholarships and Fee Waivers

As noted earlier, both the NLUs as well as other stakeholders in the ecosystem (including the legal profession and the government) must find ways to reduce the fees and/or institute appropriate scholarships for low-income students. Further, NLUs that provide for NRI seats must follow the norms in the *Inamdar* case and use the significant earnings from NRI seats to enhance the number of scholarships/need-based waivers granted to underprivileged students.

Unfortunately, as of today, out of the 19 NLUs only NLSIU Bengaluru, NLU Delhi, and WBNUJS Kolkata provide fee waivers and scholarships for IDIA scholars.

The central government has some scholarship schemes for students belonging to minority communities,[68] students with disabilities,[69] and students belonging to SC[70] and ST categories.[71] Additionally, state governments also provide for scholarships for students domiciled within the state.[72]

While the availability of such scholarships is an important step, the government's implementation of these schemes leaves a lot to be desired. The application process is rather cumbersome and requires navigating websites that constantly hang when submitting the application. Other bottlenecks include:

a. Following up repeatedly with the concerned authorities even after successfully submitting the application;
b. Waiting endlessly for the disbursal of funds even after the candidate has been found worthy of the scholarship. There have been instances when IDIA scholars have had to wait for four years before their scholarship amounts were finally released to them under such government scholarships.

The consequence of not releasing funds on time for a student relying on such scholarships could be as severe as the student having to drop out of university. It is important that the government redress this implementation woe at the earliest.

2. Academic Inclusion

i. Academic Support Programmes

Almost 60% of the students reported difficulties in understanding the academic curriculum and nearly 30% of the students stated not having/ not being aware of having an academic support programme in their institution. Law schools need to therefore institute robust academic support programmes. While

68 See https://scholarships.gov.in/public/schemeGuidelines/MoMA_MCM_2018-20.pdf (Last visited on January 2, 2022).
69 See, https://scholarships.gov.in/public/schemeGuidelines/DEPDGuidelines.pdf (Last visited on January 2, 2022).
70 See, https://scholarships.gov.in/public/schemeGuidelines/Top_Class_Education_Scheme_2018.pdf (Last visited on January 2, 2022).
71 See, https://scholarships.gov.in/public/schemeGuidelines/tribalfellowshipguideline.pdf (Last visited January 2, 2022).
72 See, http://scholarshipportal.mp.nic.in/MedhaviChhatra/Medhavi_New/About.aspx (Last visited on January 2, 2022).

some law schools have some support structures in place,[73] they should be strengthened and made more comprehensive and intensive.

It bears noting that the Supreme Court in *Avinash Singh Bagri and Ors. v. Registrar, IIT Delhi*,[74] ruled that reservations per se are not sufficient. Rather, institutions need to mandatorily provide academic and other support to students from socially/economically backward categories to help them cope better.

3. Socio-cultural Inclusion

i. Student-Run Social Support Initiatives

The survey reveals that students shy away from extracurricular and co-curricular activities due to their lack of proficiency in English, leading in turn to issues of low self- esteem and self-confidence. A peer group supported programme (similar to the student run academic or peer/buddy-support programmes already in place in some institutions)[75] to help students integrate better and find ways to talk about their problems may go a long way in addressing some part of this bottleneck. NLUs such as NLU Odisha and MNLU Mumbai have already taken positive steps in this direction.[76] While we are not in a position to comment on the impact of such initiatives at the said NLUs, it is heartening to observe that law schools have begun to pay attention to creating a more welcoming and supportive space for students to express themselves as freely as possible. One hopes that these programmes are further strengthened in the coming years and that the other NLUs follow suit.

ii. Institutional Policies

Law schools should try and foster a diversity friendly ecosystem as much as possible. In particular, they could do the following:

a. Recruit faculty and staff from diverse backgrounds, so as to create a more inclusive environment.
b. Strict action must be taken against those that discriminate on the basis of religion, regionality, socio-economic background, etc.
c. Sensitize all their staff, faculty and student population on diversity and inclusiveness, and help break down existing prejudices and stereotypes.

[73] Such law schools include: (i) NLSIU Bengaluru, which has an Academic Support Programme in place which is a peer support programme that seeks to acclimatize new students to the academic rigour and environment of the university (see, https://www.nls.ac.in/information/students/student-bar-association/academic-support-program/ (Last visited on January 2, 2022)); (ii) NLU Jodhpur, that has an Academic Support and Literary Committee comprising faculty and student members (see, http://www.nlujodhpur.ac.in/committee_detail.php?c=11&committee=Academic%20Support%20&%20Literary%20Committee (Last visited on January 2, 2022)); (iii) HNLU Raipur, that has an Academic Support Committee which is one of the constitutive committees of its Student Bar Association, and which is required to facilitate the maintenance and enhancement of the academic standards of the University. It acts as a bridge between the students and the faculty (see, https://www.hnlu.ac.in/index.php/students/student-bar-association (Last visited on January 2, 2022)); (iv) GNLU Gandhinagar, that has an Academic Support Programme that provides a platform to students to share their academic knowledge with other students and help each other out. As per the university website, this platform has been created keeping in mind the absence of a level-playing field among students owing to inequality in our society stemming from different socio-economic factors. The platform, among others also seeks to address issues relating to language barriers and communication skills (see, https://www.gnlu.ac.in/GNLU/Academic-Support-Program (Last visited on January 2, 2022)); (v) NLU Odisha, makes use of an online platform called 'Your DOST' for peer mentoring and mental health issues on campus. Additionally, the University has in place a mentorship programme with one faculty member assigned as a mentor to 20-25 students. Under the programme, the faculty mentor is supposed to ensure the academic progress and the well-being of the students (see, https://www.nluo.ac.in/students/mentorship/http://www.nluo.ac.in/mentorship/ (Last visited on January 2, 2022)); (vi) MNLU Mumbai provides for a mentorship programme under which, the mentors guide their students around issues ranging from academics to health, attendance, class participation, and home sickness. The stated aim behind the mentorship programme is to establish a healthy environment in the university where the students feel homely and comfortable in the presence of a guardian who guides them at every step in their academic career (see, http://mnlumumbai.edu.in/mentor.php (Last visited on January 2, 2022)).

[74] Writ Petition (C) No. 535 of 2008.

[75] See, Supra note 71.

[76] Id. Additionally, NLUs such as NALSAR Hyderabad, WBNUJS Kolkata, and NLU Jodhpur provide for counselling services for their students. See, https://www.nalsar.ac.in/counselling-centre (for NALSAR, last visited on January 2, 2022); http://www.nujs.edu/nujs-university-college-campus-facilities.html (for WBNUJS, last visited on January 2, 2022); and http://nlujodhpur.ac.in/cwc.php (for NLU Jodhpur, last visited on January 2, 2022).

4. Making the Overall Ecosystem more Diversity Friendly

Ensuring an inclusive admissions process is only the first step. Equal attention needs to be paid to creating a more diversity friendly ecosystem at the law school. In other words, NLUs need to create structures/programmes that help students from underprivileged and marginalized backgrounds to integrate better into the social and academic environment.

More specifically, NLUs need to foster a more open dialogue that helps students confront issues such as discrimination, casteism, classism, bigotry, and prejudice based on their backgrounds, identities, and opinions. As per the survey, a sizeable percentage of students have suffered discrimination or have been subjected to disparaging remarks by their classmates and/or faculty members. The onus is on the NLUs to first, acknowledge the existence of such problems and second, to channel conversation around them in a manner that helps students assimilate better into the law school environment. It would be especially beneficial if this dialogue happens within the classroom as well.

NLUs also ought to make their environment more inclusive for students with disabilities.[77] It is the responsibility of the NLUs to provide for the necessary infrastructure that would enable students with disabilities to participate as effectively in academic, extracurricular, and social activities at their universities, as their peers.

[77] Some NLUs have measures to make their campus more accessible to the specially-abled students and have provided facilities to extend them academic support. Illustratively, NLU Odisha, in collaboration with IDIA, launched an accessibility lab for its visually impaired students which includes a braille printer, a pearl camera among other equipment. See, *Inauguration of NLUO-IDIA Accessibility Lab: IDIA Odisha*, available at: https://www.idialaw.org/blog/inauguration-of-nluo-idia-accessibility-lab-idia-odisha/ (Last visited on January 2, 2022). Similarly, another accessibility lab named after IDIA Founder, Late Prof Shamnad Basheer was opened at WBNUJS Kolkata in collaboration with IDIA. See, *IDIA and NUJS collaborate to open the Prof. (Dr.) Shamnad Basheer Accessibility Lab, available at https://www.idialaw.org/uncategorized/idia-and-nujs-collaborate-to-open-the-prof-dr-shamnad-basheer-accessibility-lab/* (Last visited on January 3, 2022). The lab is equipped with devices like Pearl camera, Braille Printer and necessary software like Ducksberry, Openbook reader etc.

CONCLUSION

As with the earlier diversity survey reports undertaken by IDIA, this report also highlights a serious diversity deficit at the top four Indian NLUs.

The student composition continues to reflect a significant majority of financially well-off, English-speaking, urban city-dwellers who are able to afford the rather exorbitant law school expenses. Students with disabilities, students belonging to minority communities, rural backgrounds, those educated in the vernacular medium, and those generally belonging to underprivileged or marginalized communities are only a trickle at this time.

IDIA has been working towards creating a more inclusive classroom at the NLUs; but our efforts can convert to a larger and lasting change only if the NLUs themselves work towards bringing about systemic improvements in the eco-system. To this end, we note that some NLUs have institutionalized progressive scholarship policies for the underprivileged.[78] The efforts of some NLUs in providing academic and social support groups for students to help them integrate better into the law school environment are also praiseworthy. However, the NLUs still have a long way to go before they can be truly considered diverse and inclusive.

It has been established, through extensive research and scholarship, that institutes of higher education should be diverse and inclusive.[79] Increased diversity not only means empowerment of students who belong to underprivileged or marginalized backgrounds by providing them with greater access to education, but it also enhances the overall learning experience for students in a university.[80] This is especially true for law schools that espouse values of social justice and equality, and should be seen to be practicing the same. An equally important consideration is the fact that law schools serve as the gateway to the legal profession, and a lack of diversity and representation at law schools could only mean that the legal profession would also end up with an elitist and exclusive workforce. The NLUs must step up and lead by example to address these concerns.

78 See, National Law School of India University, *Financial Aid*, available at https://www.nls.ac.in/information/students/financial-aid-for-students/ (Last visited on January 3, 2022).

79 See, Basheer, Krishnaprasad, Mitra and Mohapatra, The Making of Legal Elites and the IDIA of Justice, HLS Programme on the Legal Profession Research Paper No. 2014-18, available at http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2433036 (Last visited on January 2, 2022).

80 Id.

©2022 IDIA Charitable Trust

No E – 1/9, Hanumanthappa Layout, Off Ulsoor road, Bengaluru, Karnataka 560042

info@idialaw.org | www.idialaw.org