Keeping Up To Data – February 2019

Welcome to February and to LSAC's latest "Keeping Up to Data" podcast. I'm Josiah Evans, director of assessment sciences at the Law School Admission Council.

We are now past the halfway point in the admission cycle. At this time last year, we had received over 60 percent of the final application count. As of today, year-over-year US application volumes are down by about 4 percent, with US applicants about even with last year. Law schools in the South Central region are seeing small increases in applications, but all other regions are slightly down.

Shifting to our applicant population, applicants from the Mountain West and South Central regions are up slightly, but applicants from all other regions are slightly down. Male applicants are down more than female applicants, and as we mentioned last month, applicants in the "not indicated" category are up significantly—more than five times the numbers last year. This outcome is likely because we are now mapping our newly expanded gender categories onto the old definitions. We will begin reporting the fully expanded gender categories this summer, after we've collected one full year of data.

Continuing the pattern from the past few weeks, women outnumber men. Applicants identifying as female currently account for 53 percent of applicants. Racial and ethnic groups are showing a mixed pattern, with some up and some down. The takeaway is that the numbers are still volatile, so it will be interesting to see how things look at this time next month. In Canada, applications are down 4 percent, and the number of applicants is nearly flat compared to last year.

If you've listened to previous podcasts, you're probably tired of hearing me say that we can't compare this year's test-taker volumes to last year's until after we have final test-taker counts sometime in May.   We have now completed five LSAT administrations during this cycle—June, July, September, November, and January—and registration for the sixth and final March administration ends on February 20.

Looking just at registrants so far, we are now seeing an increase in total registrants for the six tests in 2018–19, as compared to the four tests in 2017–18. The increase is small, about 3 percent, but we still have some time before the test registration deadline, so that number is likely to change.

We don't have final test-taker numbers for the January test yet but will of course report those counts when we do. I can tell you that for the first four tests of this testing year, first-time test takers accounted for 60 percent of all test takers.

As you know, beginning with the June 2019 LSAT administration, the writing portion of the test—to be known henceforth as LSAT Writing—will be separated from the main multiple-choice test. You can learn more about the details by reading the FAQs on our website, but I thought I'd take this opportunity to clarify that if a test taker has provided a writing sample on the March 2019 or earlier LSAT, there is no need to take LSAT Writing again. Candidates who prefer to provide a new writing response may do so by paying a $15 fee.

Test takers registering for the June 2019 or July 2019 test will pay the $190 test fee, and that fee will include the separate LSAT Writing. Fees for the September 2019 and subsequent tests in the 2019–20 testing year have not yet been set, but they will be

announced as soon as our 2019–2020 budget has been reviewed and approved through our governance process.

In closing, remember that we update the current volume data for both JD and LLM programs on our website every night. Go to LSAC.org and look for Data & Research and then Data Library. The Current Volume Interactive Summary will show you numerous data visualizations and drill-downs.

If you're an LSAC member and you log in, remember we have many additional data and research reports available to you. Let us know if you find these podcasts useful. We'd love to hear your questions or suggestions. Just write to us at podcast@LSAC.org. Thanks for listening. Until next time, this is Josiah Evans at LSAC.