



International Association of
LAW SCHOOLS

2022-2023

EDUCATIONAL CHANGE

LESSONS LEARNED

**THE
STUDENT
VOICE**

JUNE 2023

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THE REPORT & SURVEY

The student's expectations and experiences are essential in constructing new models for effective legal education. This report entitled, *EDUCATIONAL CHANGE – The Student Voice*, will add to our preliminary studies to help set a baseline for evaluating and assessing the transformative changes we have experienced growing out of three years of the Pandemic from our students' perspectives. The 2022-2023 report will be compared to our 2020 report: *Transitioning to an Online Legal Education – The Student Voice*, and our 2021 report: *Global Legal Education Responding to COVID-19 – The Student Voice*. The 2022-2023 survey included new questions based on the ongoing changes and developments due to the Pandemic.

THE RESULTS

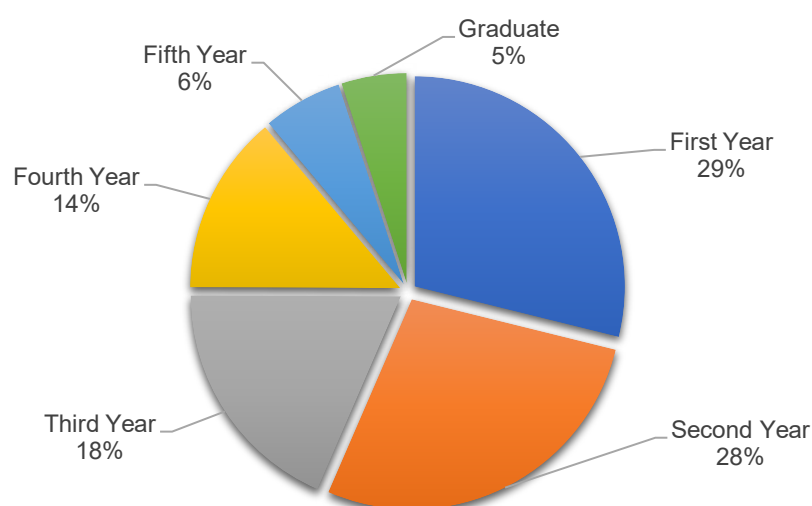
The most important takeaway from our studies demonstrates the strong preference of law students across the globe for personal interaction with their teachers in the learning process. Our studies also show that virtual learning has gained a strong foothold in the learning experience as it complements the in-person experience. Virtual alone is the least preferred form. Overwhelmingly, students believe in-person teaching significantly impacted their academic needs and learning.

STUDENT REPRESENTATION

Almost 700 law students worldwide expressed their opinions and suggestions in the 2022 and 2023 IALS – Student Voice Survey. We appreciate the students who took the time to participate in this international survey! These were law students from 34 different jurisdictions.

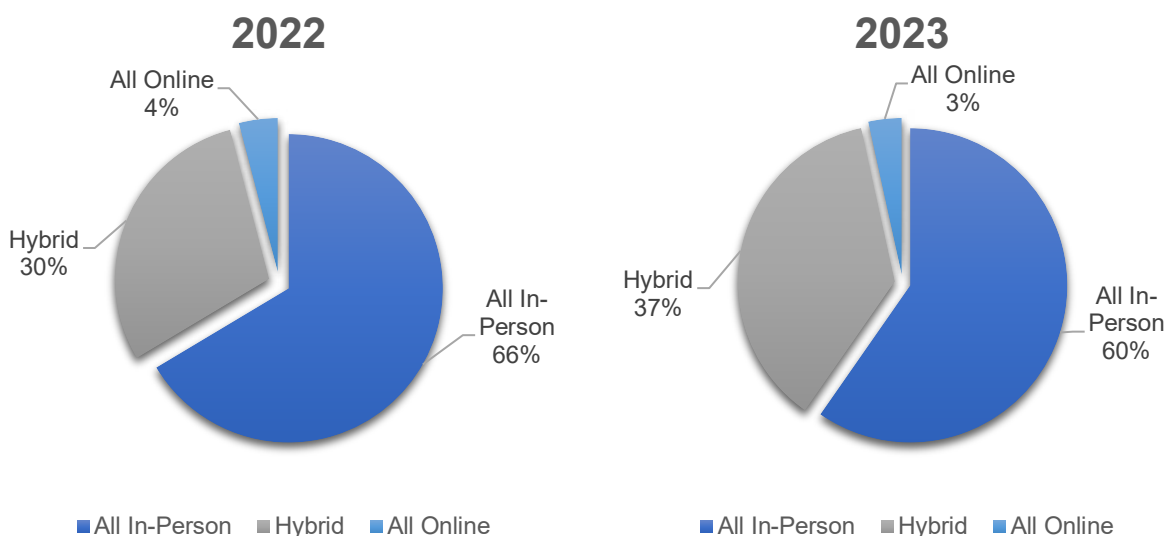
More than half of our student respondents were in their First and Second years of law school. This cohort would have experienced the most challenging aspect of their educational experience confronting head-on the disruption of the COVID-19 Pandemic.

YEAR IN LAW SCHOOL



ARE YOUR CLASSES IN-PERSON, HYBRID, OR ONLINE?

Over three years into the Pandemic, COVID-19 restrictions have significantly eased worldwide. Campuses have implemented COVID-19 plans to maintain safe and healthy environments (enhanced cleaning/disinfecting, better ventilation, etc.) for students, faculty, and administrators. As of 2023, over 60% of students stated they are back full-time In-Person, while only less than 4% are still exclusively online. Significantly, over 30% of respondents have seen their educational learning experience morph into a hybrid mode, evidencing the powerful introduction of virtual learning dictated by the response to the crisis. There is a slight increase in Hybrid in 2023, which shifted from In-Person of 66% in 2022 to 60% full-time in 2023. Educators have become more comfortable incorporating virtual online components into their teaching approach.



SELECTED STUDENT QUOTES

“Education has remained as good as it was and had been. The problem, for me, with online classes is that I can lose focus easily, whereas, in person, I have no distractions, so I manage to pay attention and learn more.” – Graduate Student, Ecuador

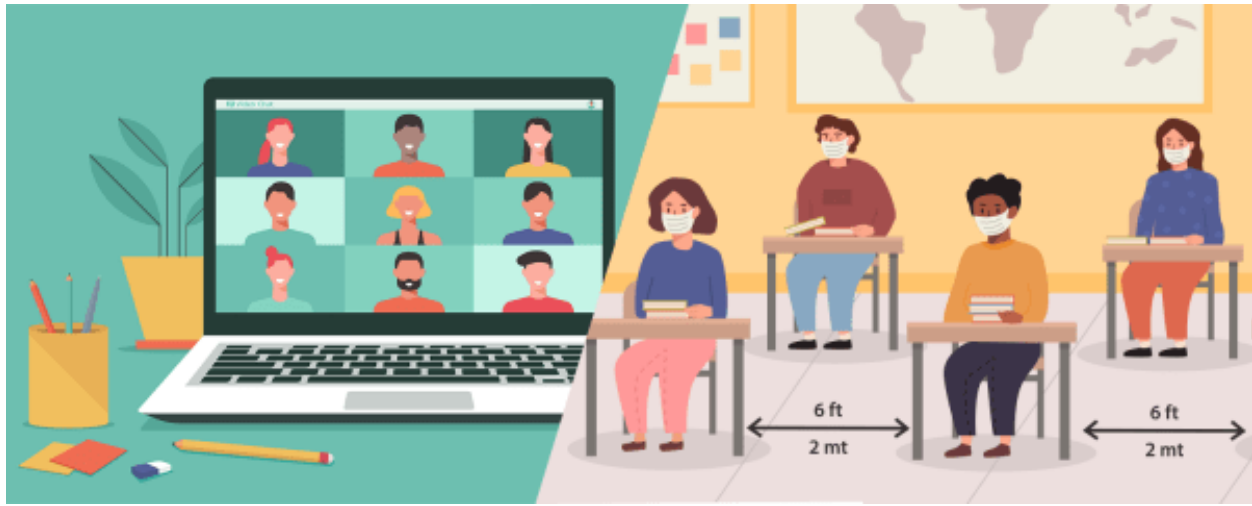
“I appreciate the human interaction of in-person learning much more than before.” – Fourth Year Student, South Africa

“We are able to see our professor’s face-to-face lessons and in-class performance. In-person learning is more interactive than the online classes.” – Second Year Student, Turkey

“Online learning makes me lazier and I cannot absorb the same knowledge as when I study in person.” – Second Year Student, Vietnam

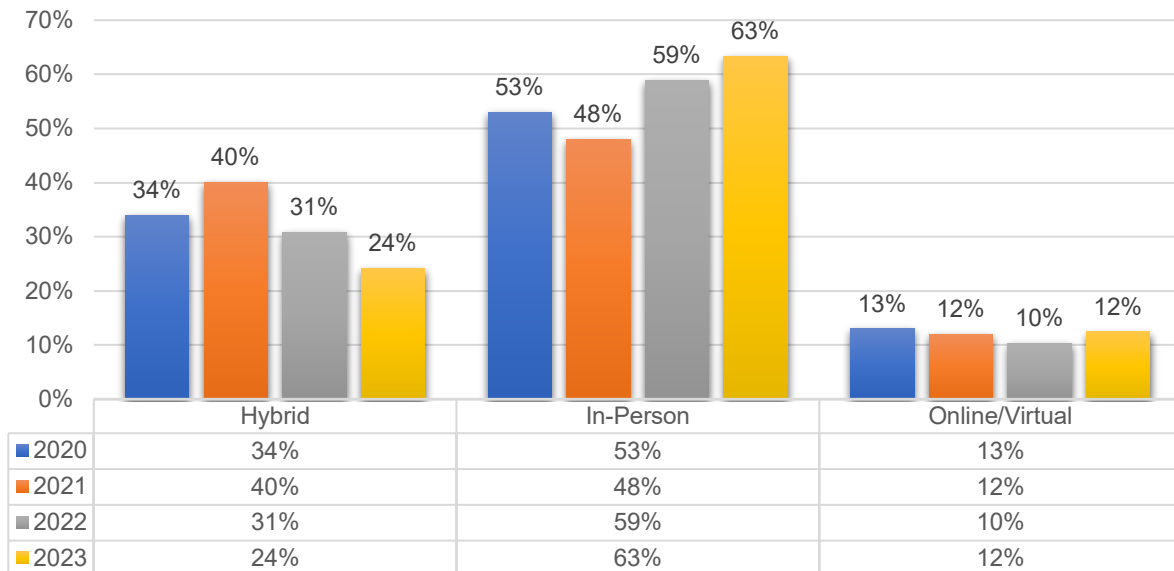


WHAT TYPE OF CLASSES DO YOU PREFER THE MOST?



Students preferred In-Person classes by 61%. The preference for online courses remained low. The preference for the Hybrid method of instruction shows an increase of 6% from 2020 to 2021—a 2% drop from 2021 to 2022-23. It is important to note that the benefits of in-person classes can vary based on individual preferences, learning styles, and the specific circumstances of the campus and location. Some students may thrive in remote or hybrid learning environments, while others may find in-person interactions more conducive to their educational experience. By 2023, students preferred at least a mixed (Hybrid) (24%) or full-time in-person (63%) educational experience over a Virtual (12%) format.

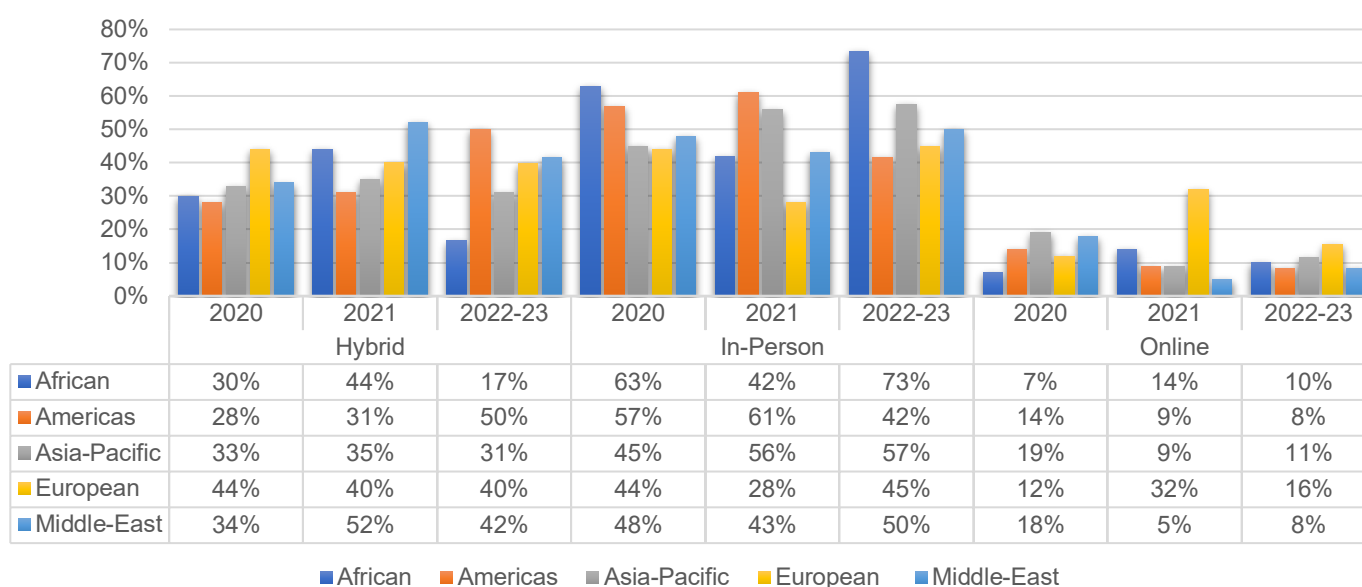
CLASS PREFERENCE



REGIONAL BREAKDOWN

Notably, half of the sample size in the Americas prefers Hybrid in the 2022-23 academic year. This contrasts with the stronger preference for In-Person in 2021. This could be due to various factors, including the latent effects of significant strides made in previous years to improve and facilitate greater accessibility in that region. In comparison, the preference for Hybrid in the Africa/Asia Pacific/Middle East region In-Person preference increased in 2021 but decreased in 2022 and 2023. The increase in preference for online learning versus In-Person in 2021 could be attributable to a possible reaction to a relatively new and exciting online learning experience, with now a desire to return to the normal (traditional methods). Another contributing factor was the slow uptake and student investment in the necessary infrastructure and skills for online learning.

CLASS PREFERENCE



SELECTED STUDENT QUOTES

“Now, students and teachers are fully conscious of how useful it is to have in-person classes, but some of them prefer not to implement technology solutions/tools to make classes better or at least more interesting for all. We are in a moment where everyone is trying to be accustomed to a hybrid education system, and sometimes it causes difficulties in keeping a continuous educational model.” – Fourth Year Student, Chile

“Larger acceptance of hybrid education - recorded lectures, provided materials, the possibility of online classes, use of technology in learning and more specialized classes.” – Third Year Student, Czech Republic

“I prefer in-person classes as it makes it easier to speak up and clarify doubts.” – Fifth Year Student, Singapore

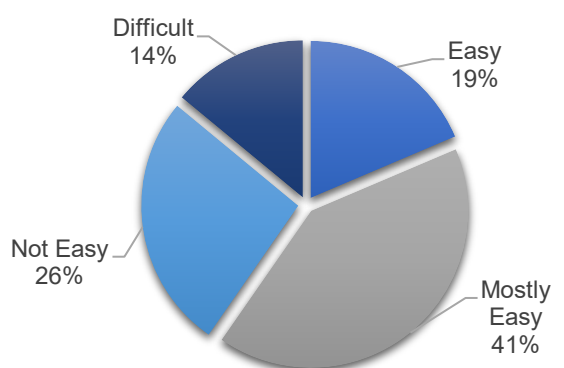
“I prefer online learning over in-person. I tend to focus more and get better marks through online learning. In-person learning, there are distractions, cannot redo/rewatch the lecture, it is more pressure, it is hard to attend every lecture and also keep up with work.” – Third Year Student, South Africa

IF YOU ARE BACK IN PERSON OR DOING HYBRID CLASSES, HOW EASY OR DIFFICULT WAS IT FOR YOU TO TRANSITION FROM ONLINE CLASSES TO PHYSICAL OR HYBRID CLASSES?



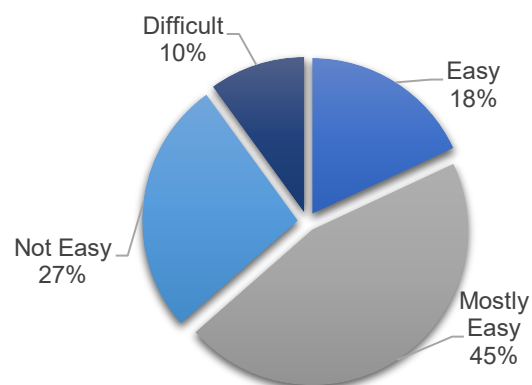
We asked students to select one of the following responses: Easy; Mostly easy, but I had a few challenges; Not easy, I experienced some challenges; and Difficult.

THE TRANSITION 2022



■ Easy ■ Mostly Easy ■ Not Easy ■ Difficult

THE TRANSITION 2023



■ Easy ■ Mostly Easy ■ Not Easy ■ Difficult

IF YOU ARE BACK IN PERSON, HOW HAS THE COVID-19 SHUTDOWN, THE MOVEMENT TO ONLINE, AND NOW BACK TO IN-PERSON EDUCATION AFFECTED YOUR LEARNING EXPERIENCE?

When learning occurs in person, there are more opportunities to participate, conduct more tasks, and develop an enabling academic environment through which the student can gain a qualitatively better educational experience.

Overall, students generally value the flexibility that online learning provides.

SELECTED STUDENT QUOTES



“It’s good to be back in person - I notice increased participation, a better relationship with my lecturer, and a better grade at the end of the semester. For me, the key is the longer 2/3-hour tutorial and online lecture.” – Fifth Year Student, Australia

“Basically, it was very convenient to learn online, but then in-person learning proves to be a significant platform to learn fast with classmates and professors.” – Fifth Year Student, Bhutan

“At the beginning, it was difficult to concentrate on in-person classes, and at the same time, it was tough to socialize with the rest of the educational community. Personally, it took me long to recover my social skills and use them in my classes.” – Fourth Year Student, Chile

“I experienced a lack of motivation. I hated school and professors because I felt like they didn’t care about us (they were tougher on us, and requirements were higher than offline) and they didn’t trust us (tests were harder because they expected us to cheat in the first place.” – Fifth Year Student, Czech Republic

“It was difficult to change from a self-pacing environment to a rigid schedule.” – Second Year Student, India

“During the initial stages of the shutdown, general confusion and educational Anxiety made students lose focus on their academic achievements. It can most dominantly be noted for the students in the years providing for foundational learning of legal skills and knowledge (i.e., 3rd and 4th Year of Law school). The movement back to physical classroom education had not been swift. During online teaching, there was no compulsion for attendance or virtual presence by having cameras on during lectures, which defeated the purpose of a worthwhile impartment of education amongst the students.” – Fifth Year Student, India



“Meeting my professors and classmates again during in-person classes helped me regain my motivation. The use of school facilities, especially the library, helped me become more focused.” – Fifth Year Student, Philippines

“It taught me that in most cases, with enough motivation, I can learn everything on my own. So, I now have more expectations toward my professors and allow myself to evaluate their performance during classes critically. I don’t let them decrease my self-worth as well.” – Fourth Year Student, Poland

“Positively. During online learning, my performance has improved. And now that we are back online-learning techniques are still being used. Some professors still record lectures. Some switch to online learning whenever they’re unable to give in-person lectures. This way, we’re always on track and always have solutions for obstacles.” – Four Year Student, Qatar

“I wish we didn’t need to have online. Online was painful, and there was so much insecurity about whether students were engaged or not instead of focusing on the class itself. Further, breakout rooms are so different from discussions in the classroom.” – First-Year Student, Singapore

“The movement to online introduced me to a whole new world of learning, and it was hard to concentrate because I was too comfortable to learn at home. There were also a lot of internet-related issues at the time, such as purchasing enough data to attend online lessons. Now that face-to-face lectures have returned, I can now start to be productive like I was before COVID-19 occurred.” – First Year Student, South Africa

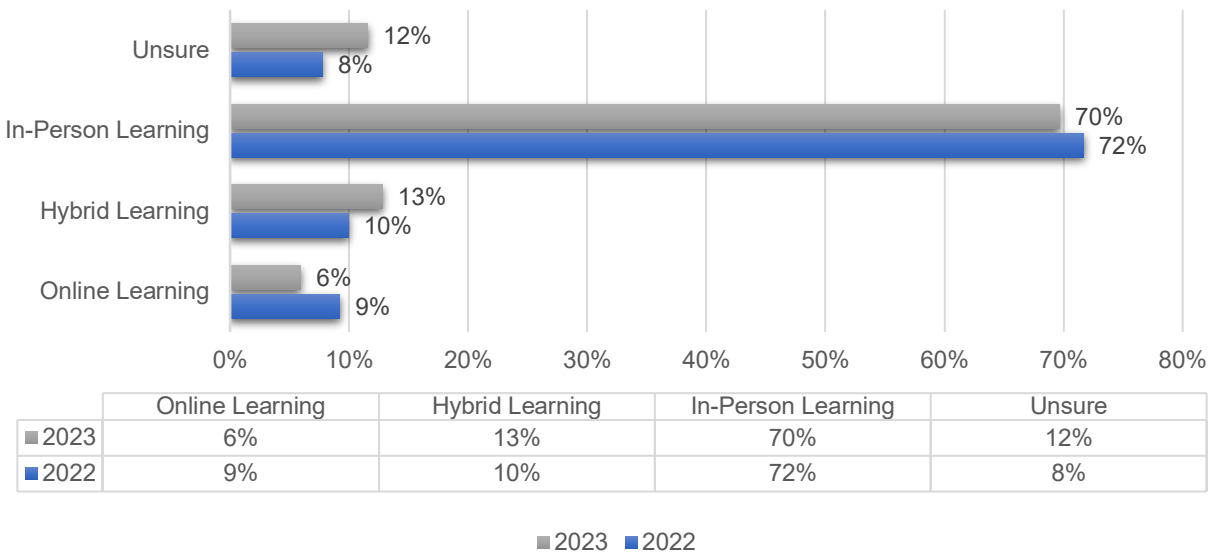
“Lack of proper communication from the facilitators. Sometimes you’re waiting for an online lecture, and a message comes through that it’s rescheduled for in-person. Being an evening student, the trauma of curfew and other lockdown-related policies has not gone away. Traveling back home in the evening quite often is associated with unnecessary risks. Colleagues are losing bags, phones, and other personal effects on their way back home at night.” – Third Year Student, Uganda

ACADEMIC NEEDS AND PERFORMANCE

Would you say professors respond better to your academic needs during In-Person Learning, Hybrid Learning, Online Learning, or Unsure?

By 2023 the survey results suggest that students feel professors respond better to their academic needs in full In-Person learning experiences as opposed to the other forms. This outlook is supported not only by the overwhelming 70% preference for In-Person interactions but also the further disparity between the preferences for Hybrid, which involves some form of in-person interaction on the one hand and online interactions on the other.

ACADEMIC NEEDS



SELECTED STUDENT QUOTES

“Teachers have become more understanding of our needs and provide more holistic resources for study materials.” – First Year Student, India

“Although the performance of most professors is better in in-person learning, however, it lacks the advantages of online classes such as recorded lectures which helped in improving the quality of education.” – Fourth Year Student, Qatar

“It’s better in-person as we have better concentration, and the professors can attend to our academic needs better.” – Second Year Student, South Africa

“I get the opportunity to have a one-on-one with the professors, thus airing my views articulately.” – Third Year Student, United States of America



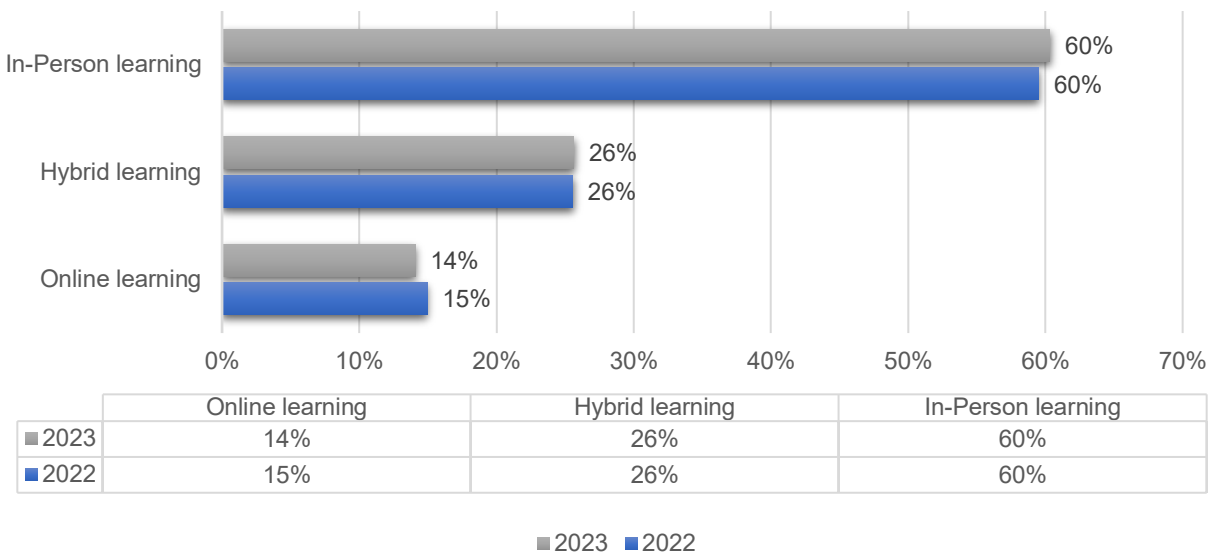
We also asked students if their academic performance improves with Online Learning, Hybrid Learning, or In-Person Learning. 60% of the respondents noted that in-person learning improves academic performance, while another 26% prefer a mixed-method approach, and 15% prefer online learning.

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Students want to see a more dynamic legal education curriculum that speaks to their desire for hands-on experience and a curriculum that is ever more alive to the dynamic character of students in their various locations.

The notable apathy towards online learning represents a missed opportunity, not because students were unwilling to take on the challenge but because of the lack of adequate infrastructure and technical expertise; online learning has left people behind and has not been able to cater to all.

ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE



SELECTED STUDENT QUOTES



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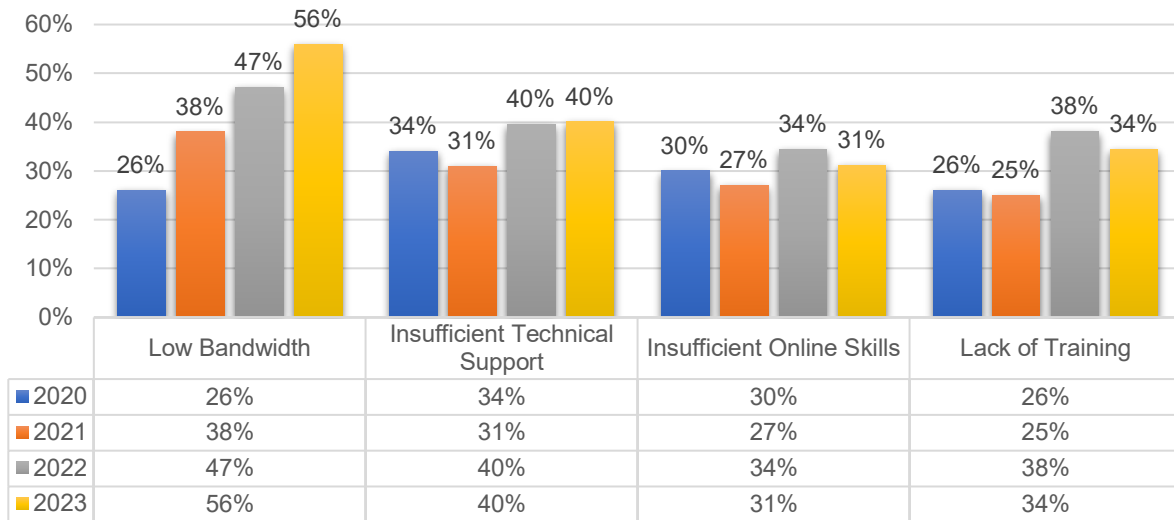
WHAT TECHNICAL DIFFICULTIES HAVE YOU ENCOUNTERED WITH ONLINE LEARNING?

Low Bandwidth: Recorded challenges with low bandwidth continue to increase.

Insufficient Tech support/Skills and Training: Upward turn of 9% from the previous year that had seen a 3% decrease from 34% in 2020 to 31% in 2021. This upward turn should be viewed alongside other upward turns experienced challenges with technical skills support and training.

This may be due to the increased rigor and complexity of programs being introduced to streamline access and improve quality without a correlated investment in technical support. This outlook is evidenced by the more pronounced year-on-year increases of noted challenges with technical support and training when compared to the stagnating results of infrastructure-related challenges like low bandwidth in developing regions/economies.

TECHNICAL DIFFICULTIES

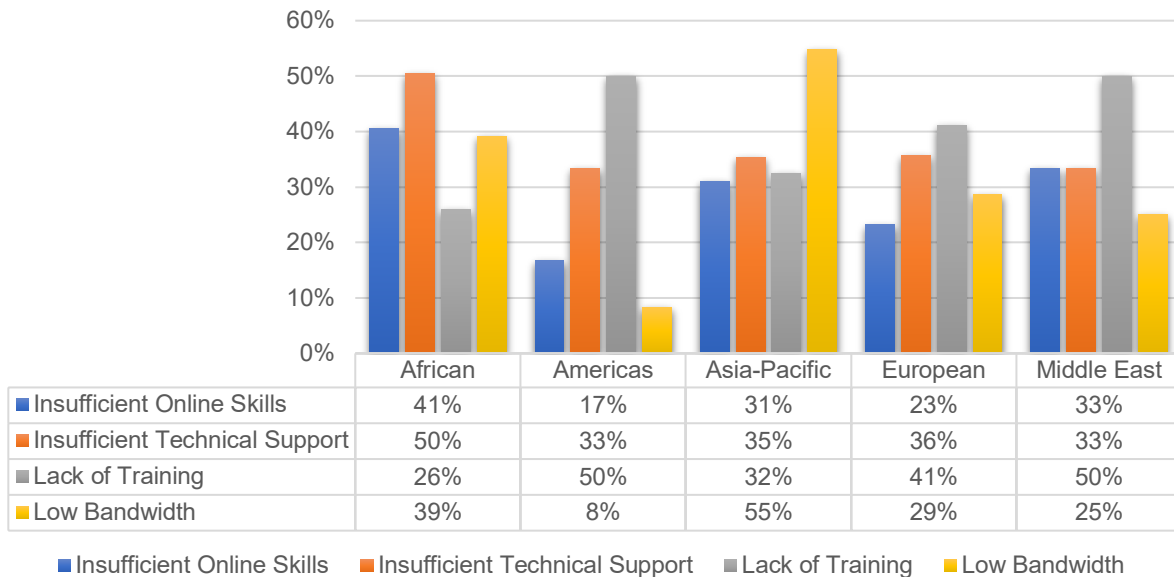


■ 2020 ■ 2021 ■ 2022 ■ 2023

REGIONAL BREAKDOWN

The most common technical difficulty across regions was Low Bandwidth (connectivity issues). The bandwidth is stretched to its limit and needs to be increased. Students from the African region stated they had Insufficient Technical Support, whereas, in the Americas, Lack of Training was an issue.

REGIONAL: TECHNICAL DIFFCULTIES



SELECTED STUDENT QUOTES



“I’d like to see more technological classes. In other words, I’d like to receive in-person classes with the support of useful technological resources.” – Fourth Year Student, Chile

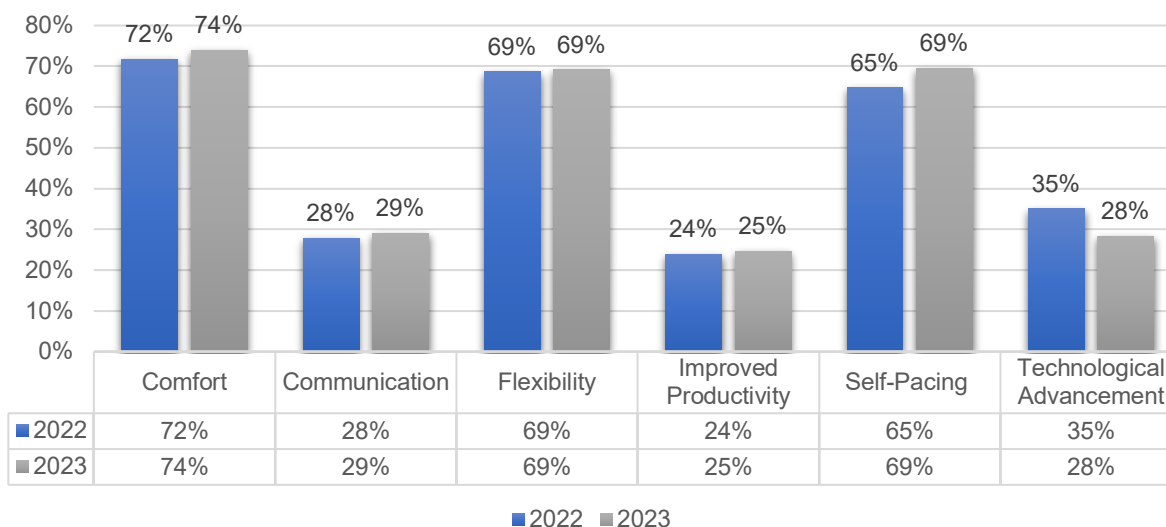
“The quality of education in most institutions deteriorated due to lack of technical support, technical knowledge, and lack of will and enthusiasm towards learning. Even the best institutions suffered while trying to keep their students and staff as thrilled about classes and its activities as it was in offline mode.” – First Year Student, India

“Now that we have in-person classes, I no longer worry that connectivity between me and the lecturer may be problematic. Online learning needs certain skills. Sometimes lecturers don’t understand the settings of the online apps, so it becomes a problem for some of us, especially when a person might be having a question at that point.” – Fifth Year Student, South Africa

WHAT HAS BEEN THE BEST PART OF ONLINE LEARNING?

Our students were asked to select all that apply to this question. The best parts of online learning were the Comfort of learning in their own space and flexibility. Flexibility allows students to balance school, family, work, life, etc., more efficiently. Every student has a different learning style, and attending class online will enable students to pace themselves. Self-Pacing (65-69%) came in third, as students could rewatch lectures, recordings, or review notes independently.

BEST PART OF ONLINE LEARNING



SELECTED STUDENT QUOTES

“During the lockdown due to covid 19, I relied on learning with the help of online resources. I still rely on online resources to study rather than teachers, peers, and the library. I find it more convenient to look online than to go to teachers. However, the effectiveness is more when I ask teachers and peers for doubts.” – Second Year Student, Bhutan

“During online learning, I gained my confidence back, and due to that, I had better school results when we were back in person. But after a year of learning back in person, my bad habits and low self-confidence in learning entailed that I have worse school results than ever.” – Fifth Year Student, Czech Republic

“With online classes, students are less stressed and can manage their time well in terms of studies, activities, assignments.” – First Year Student, Philippines

“I did better notes during online classes. What is more, it was much easier to focus on boring topics while sitting on the sofa with a cup of tea than spending similar time at university.” – Fourth Year Student, Poland

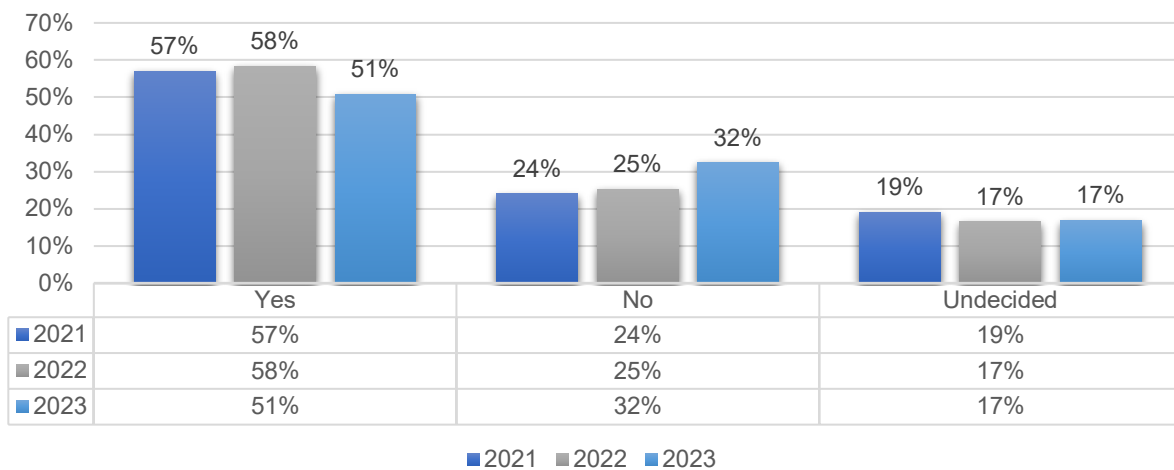
“Although the performance of most professors is better in in-person learning, however, it lacks the advantages of online classes such as recorded lectures which helped in improving the quality of education.” – Fourth Year Student, Qatar

“It has evolved for the better as a number of online teaching and learning platforms have been developed. Students can get their lectures from any convenient place.” – First Year Student, South Africa

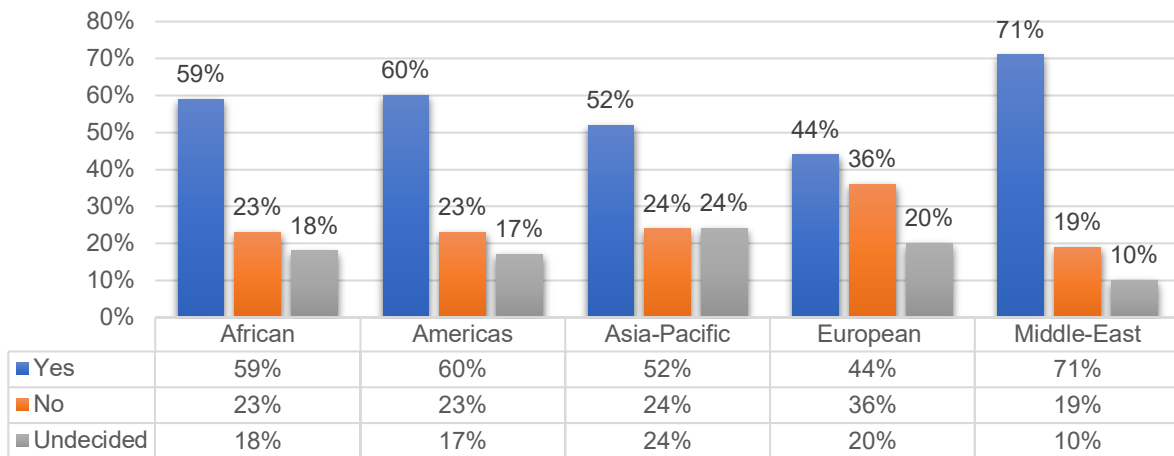
DO YOU THINK YOUR SCHOOL SHOULD SUPPLEMENT IN-PERSON LEARNING WITH ONLINE CLASSES?

As the dust settles on a turbulent couple of years due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, students increasingly prefer traditional In-Person instruction, as evidenced below in their preference for supplementing In-Person learning. Interestingly, this decline is not owing to a turning tide towards the disapproval of supplementing In-Person learning, as evidenced by the regional response breakdown, but rather to implementation challenges, which have been widely discussed in student-written responses. Despite the students' increased preference for In-Person instruction, most think their schools should supplement In-Person learning with online classes.

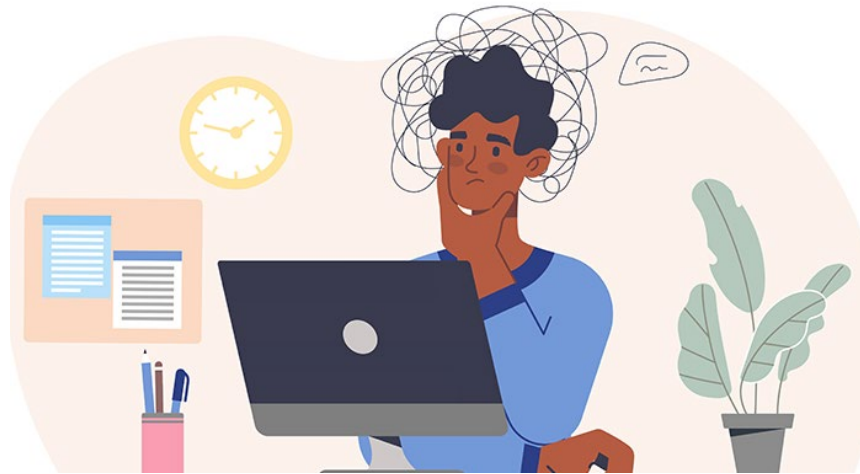
SUPPLEMENT IN-PERSON WITH ONLINE



Notably, the European region polled below 50% in this category, which can be attributed to the fact that In-Person learning is already supplemented in regions such as Europe and has been for a comparably more extended period than in other regions.

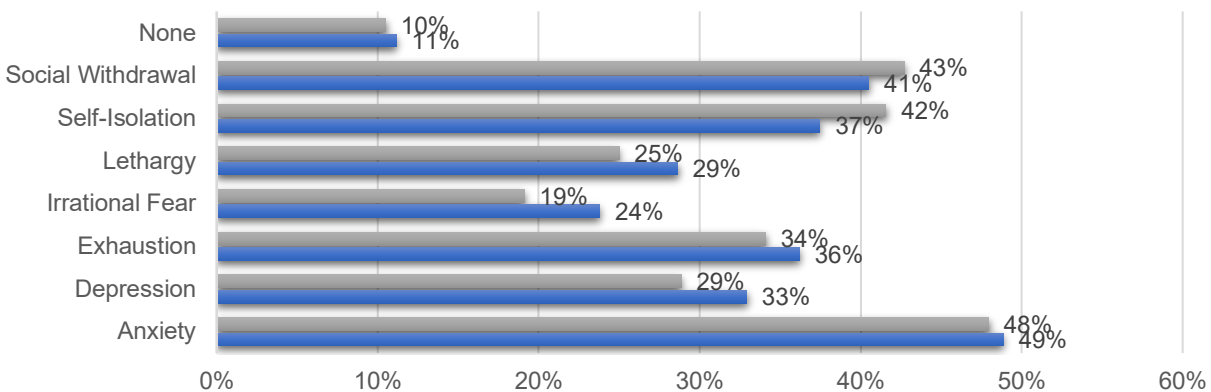


DO YOU SUFFER FROM ANY OR ALL OF THESE CONDITIONS AND BEHAVIORS DUE TO THE PANDEMIC?



The COVID-19 pandemic has had an impact on every aspect of our lives. Numerous studies have stated that many students suffer from various psychological conditions and behaviors due to the COVID-19 pandemic. We asked students to select from the following list: Anxiety, Depression, Exhaustion, Irrational Fear, Lethargy, Self Isolation, and Social withdrawal. Almost 50% of our Students stated they suffer from Anxiety due to the Pandemic. Students lost their college experience and had limited interactions with fellow students, friends, and family. Social withdrawal and loneliness have increased dramatically during the Pandemic, problems that persist. Many of our member schools have shared with IALS that they have increased their Mental Health resources and made their services accessible to their students.

CONDITIONS & BEHAVIORS



	Anxiety	Depression	Exhaustion	Irrational Fear	Lethargy	Self-Isolation	Social Withdrawal	None
■ 2023	48%	29%	34%	19%	25%	42%	43%	10%
■ 2022	49%	33%	36%	24%	29%	37%	41%	11%

■ 2023 ■ 2022

CONCLUSIONS – WHAT’S NEXT?

Educational Change, Lessons Learned – The Student Voice

Our students have voiced their opinions. After the COVID-19 Pandemic, law students will likely experience several changes and adaptations in their educational journey. They prefer In-Person learning strongly and appreciate the benefits of face-to-face interaction with peers and professors. However, the students also agree that Hybrid should be supplemented. Hybrid learning allows for a flexible approach to education, providing the convenience of online learning while still incorporating valuable In-Person interactions. Students appreciate the ability to access course materials and lectures remotely. Institutions and professors should offer a blended learning experience accommodating different learning styles and preferences.

While students acknowledge the advantages (comfort and flexibility), returning to online learning is not what students want. They believe that certain aspects of In-Person education, such as immediate instructor feedback, real-time discussions, and hands-on experiences, are difficult to replicate online.

The Pandemic highlighted the importance of mental health and well-being. Colleges and universities should increase their support services, counseling resources, and wellness programs to help students cope with the aftermath of the Pandemic and any ongoing challenges they may face.

During these times of innovation and disruption, the IALS' role is to be a resource for our community. Our obligation as law school leaders, law teachers, and students is to help improve legal education by learning from each other.