

# PLSC 476: Empirical Legal Studies

Christopher Zorn

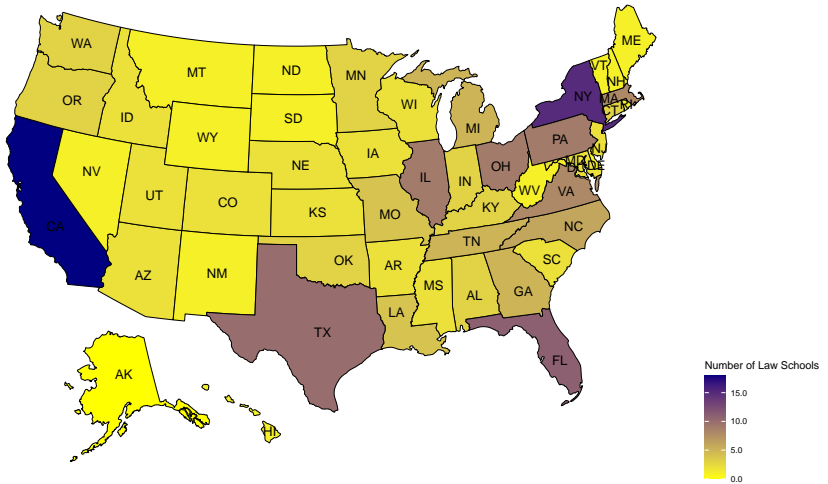
April 1, 2021

# Legal Education and Bar Passage

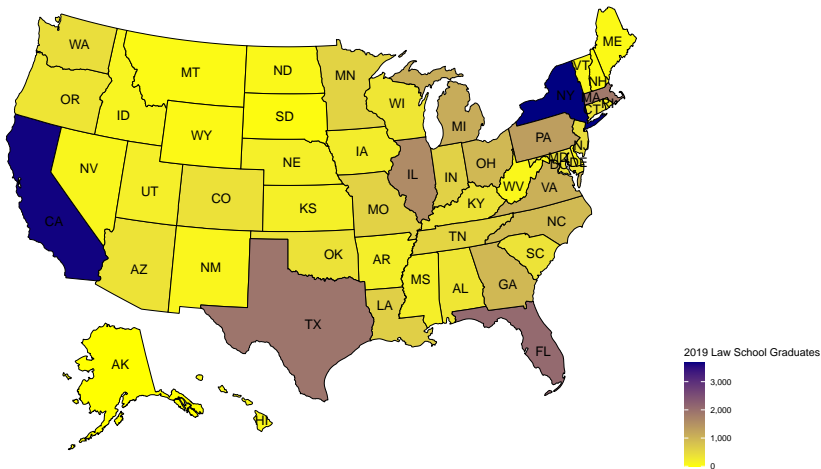
- Bar passage is required to receive a license to practice law in the U.S.
- Each state (and D.C.) is responsible for creating, administering, and evaluating its own bar exam
- 36 states / jurisdictions have adopted the Uniform Bar Exam, administered by the National Conference of Bar Examiners
- Following graduation, J.D. holders typically take the bar exam in July; if they do not pass, there is typically a second examination in February
- In most states, potential attorneys can take the bar exam as many times as they wish

- <https://analytix.accesslex.org/DataSet>
- Data on  $N = 198$  ABA-accredited law schools in the U.S. (from 2019)
- Things we're going to focus on today:
  - Law school characteristics +
  - Class / student characteristics =
  - Bar passage results
- Contains many, many other variables:
  - Institutional resources (libraries, etc.)
  - Students: full-time vs. part-time status
  - Scholarships, grants, etc.
  - Employment status (in very great detail; part- vs. full-time, temporary vs. permanent, etc.)
  - Most common state of employment

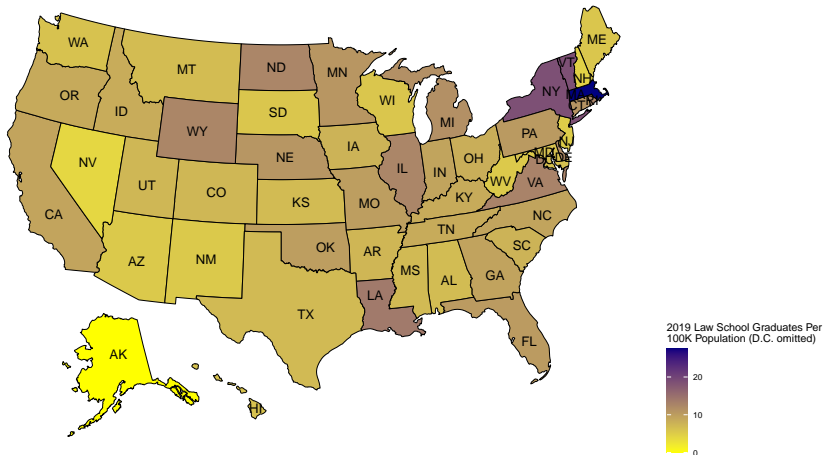
# Law Schools Per State (2019)



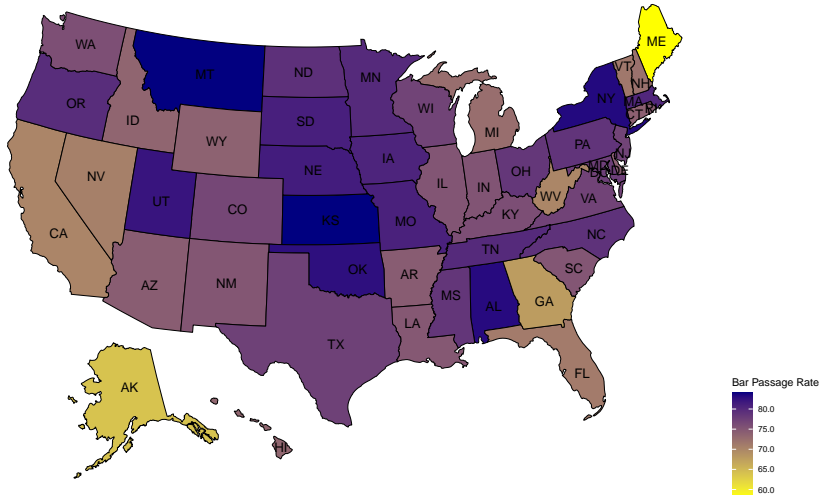
# Law Graduates, by State (2019)



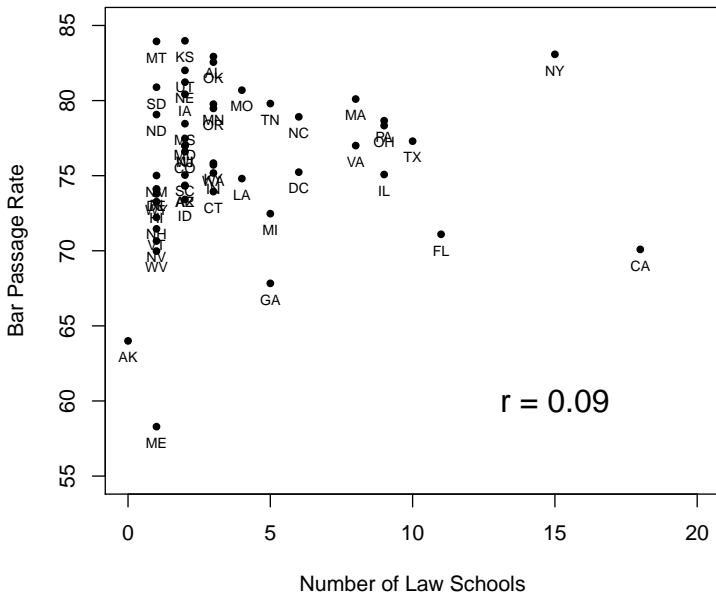
# Law Graduates Per 100,000 Population (2019)



# Bar Passage Rates, 2019

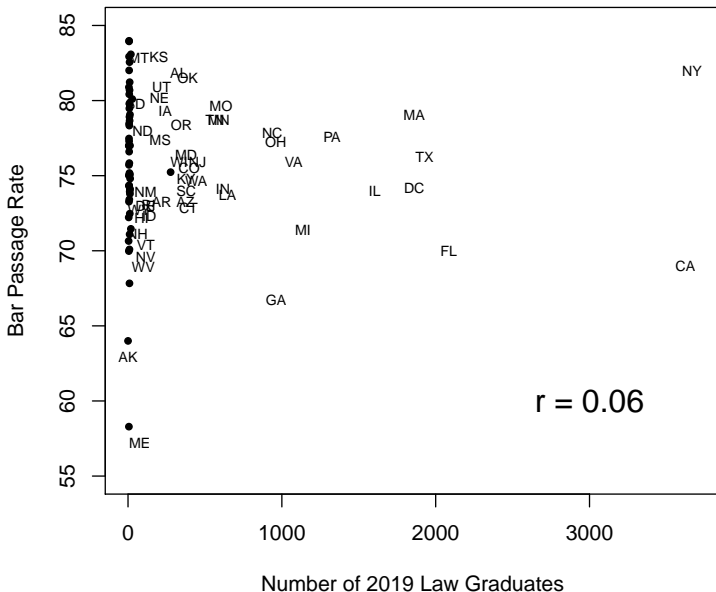


# Bar Passage Rates and $N_{\text{Law Schools}}$ (2019)

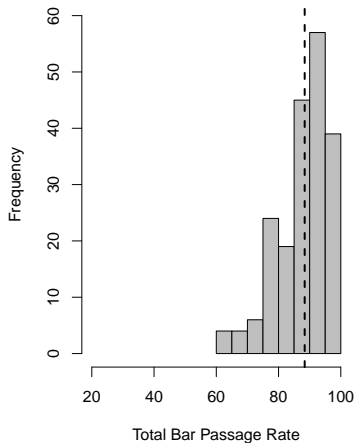
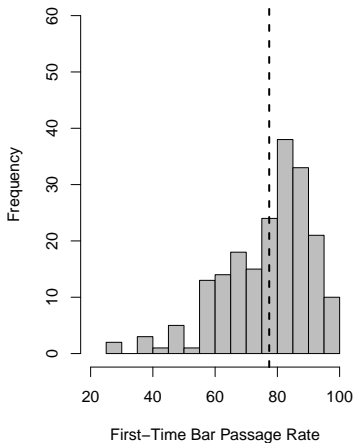




# Bar Passage Rates and $N_{\text{Law Graduates}}$ (2019)



# First-Time and Total Bar Passage Rates (2019)



# Best and Worst: First-Time Bar Passage

Top 10:

School	Pass Rate
University of Wisconsin	100
Harvard University	99
Marquette University	99
Duke University	98
University of Pennsylvania	97
Yale University	96
University of Chicago	96
University of Virginia	96
New York University	96
Belmont University	96

Bottom 10:

School	Pass Rate
California Western School of Law	49
University of Puerto Rico	49
Appalachian School of Law	48
Vermont Law School	46
Golden Gate University	44
University of San Francisco	39
District of Columbia	38
Western Michigan University	36
Pontifical Catholic University of P.R.	27
Inter American University of Puerto Rico	26

# Best and Worst: Total Bar Passage

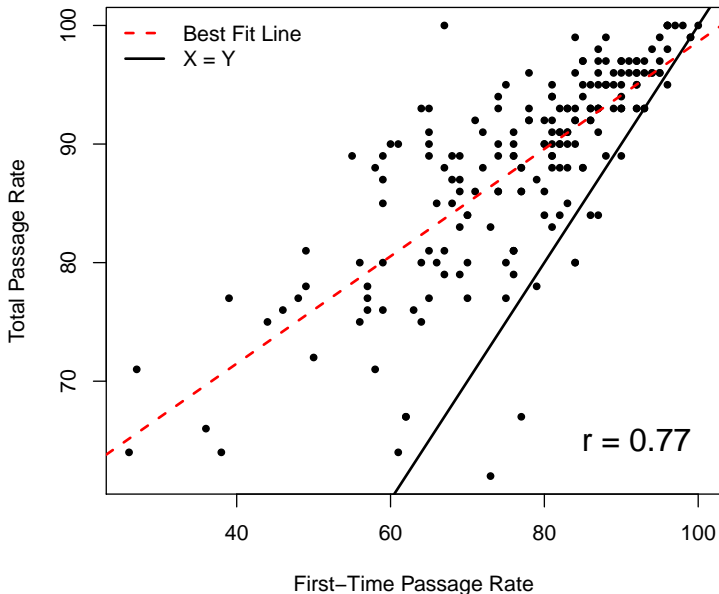
Top 10:

School	Pass Rate
University of Wisconsin	100
Duke University	100
University of Pennsylvania	100
Yale University	100
University of Chicago	100
University of Virginia	100
Concordia Law School	100
Harvard University	99
Marquette University	99
Stanford University	99

Bottom 10:

School	Pass Rate
Florida A&M University	71
Pontifical Catholic University of P.R.	71
University of South Dakota	67
Atlanta's John Marshall Law School	67
Florida Coastal School of Law	67
Western Michigan University	66
Mississippi College	64
District of Columbia	64
Inter American University of Puerto Rico	64
Faulkner University	62

# First-Time and Total Bar Passage Rates (2019)



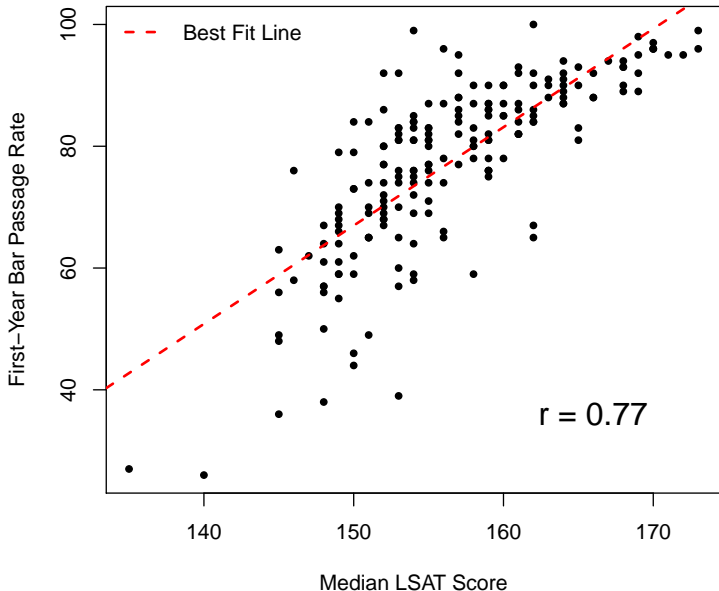
# Bar Passage Determinants

- “Inputs”: Student quality
  - LSAT
  - Undergraduate GPA
  - Selectivity
- School characteristics<sup>1</sup>
  - Public vs. Private
  - Size
  - Cost
- Context / location

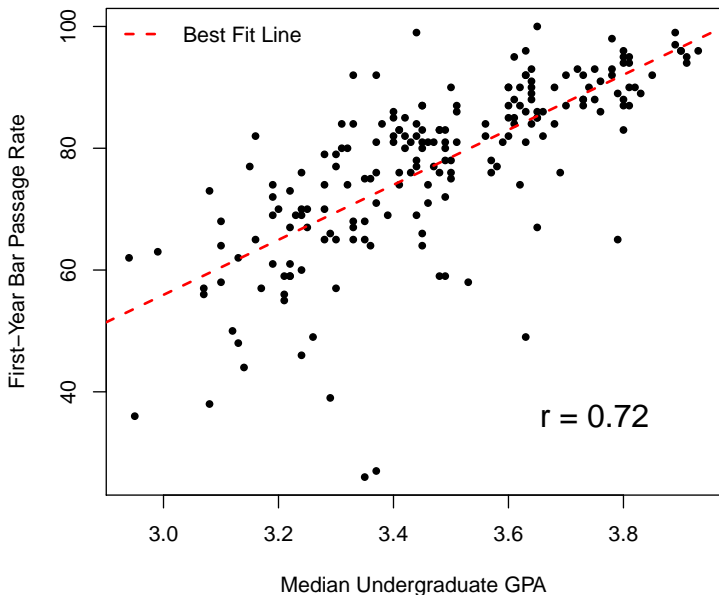
---

<sup>1</sup>We're not going to consider rankings, because [they](#) are a [mess](#).

# First-Time Bar Passage by Median LSAT (2019)

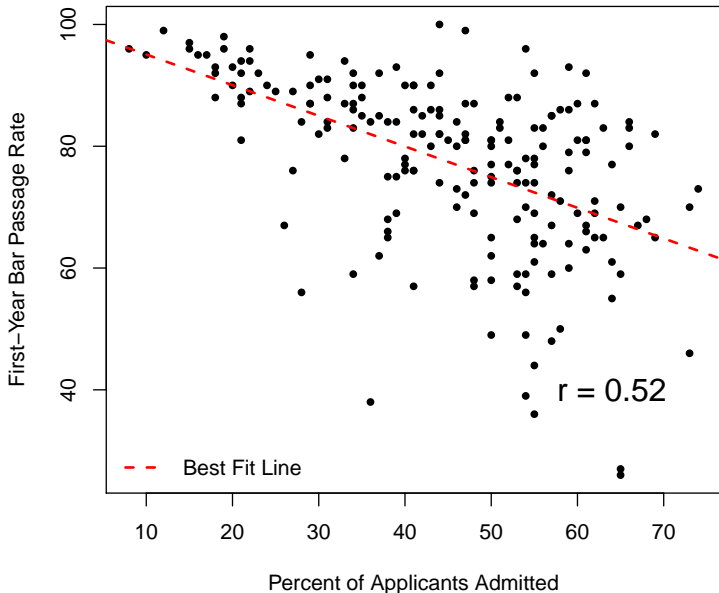


# First-Time Bar Passage by Median UGPA (2019)

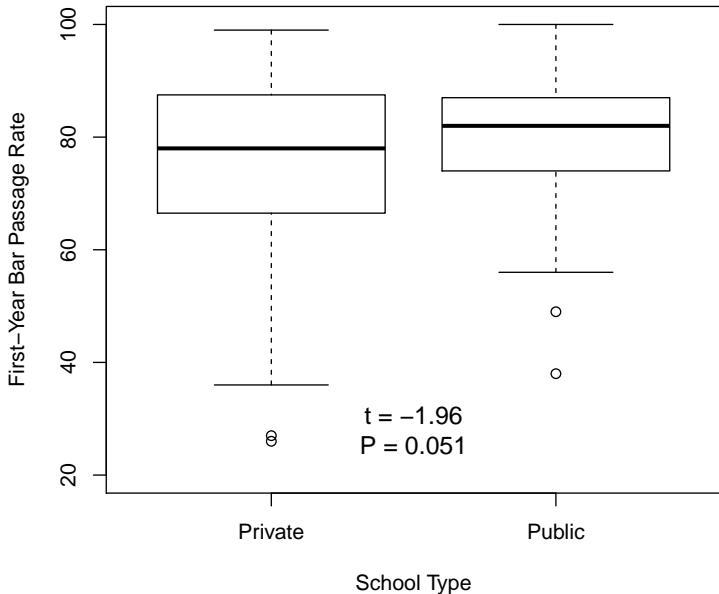




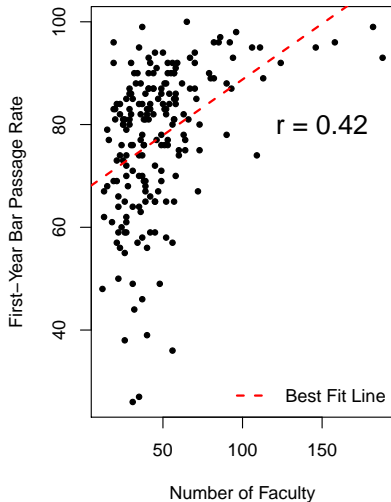
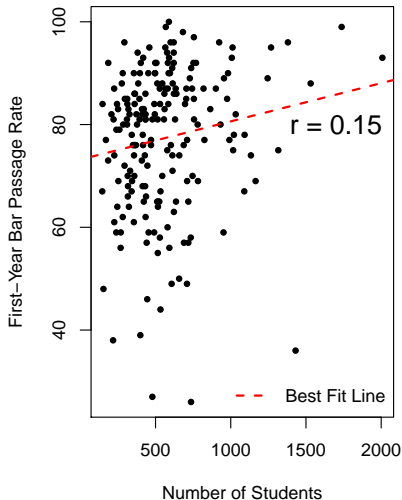
# First-Time Bar Passage by Admission Rates (2019)



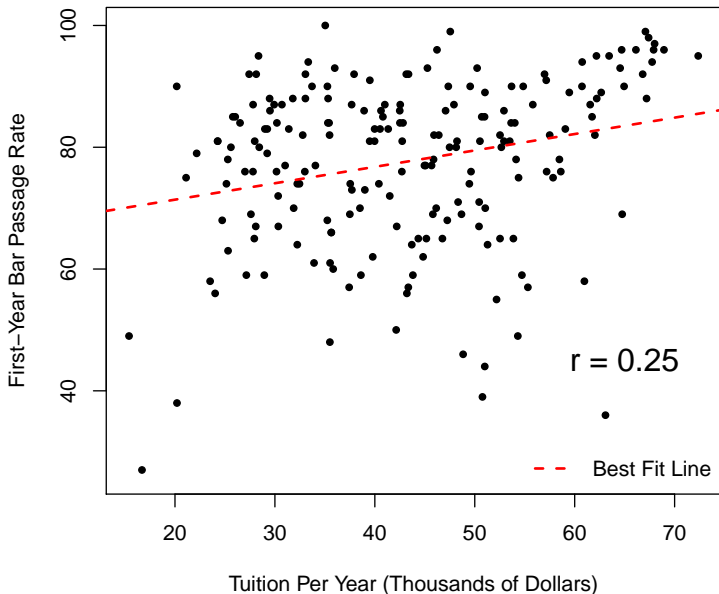
# First-Time Bar Passage by School Type (2019)



# First-Time Bar Passage and School Size (2019)



# First-Time Bar Passage and School Cost (2019)



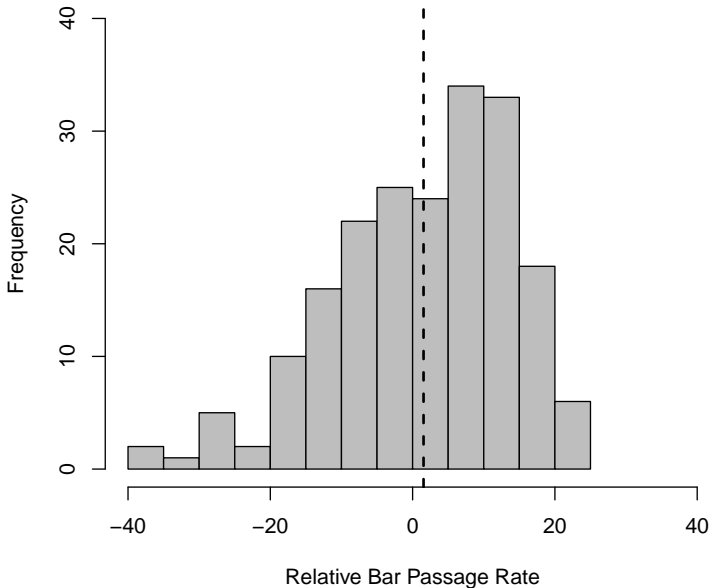
# First-Time Bar Passage: Multivariate Analysis

	Dependent Variable
	First-Time Bar Passage Rate
Median LSAT	2.166*** (0.283)
Median UGPA	5.572 (6.254)
Admitted Percentage	0.174*** (0.067)
Public School	-2.619 (1.704)
Number of Students	-0.002 (0.004)
Number of Faculty	-0.045 (0.051)
Annual Cost (\$1000s)	-0.277*** (0.086)
Constant	-272.260*** (30.349)
Observations	197
R <sup>2</sup>	0.652
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.639

Note:

\* p<0.1; \*\* p<0.05; \*\*\* p<0.01

# “Relative” Bar Passage Rates (2019)



# First-Time and Relative Bar Passage

	Dependent Variable	
	First-Time Bar Passage Rate	Relative Bar Passage Rate
Median LSAT	2.166*** (0.283)	0.922*** (0.257)
Median UGPA	5.572 (6.254)	24.833*** (5.689)
Admitted Percentage	0.174*** (0.067)	0.011 (0.061)
Public School	-2.619 (1.704)	-2.218 (1.550)
Number of Students	-0.002 (0.004)	-0.001 (0.004)
Number of Faculty	-0.045 (0.051)	-0.006 (0.047)
Annual Cost (\$1000s)	-0.277*** (0.086)	-0.238*** (0.078)
Constant	-272.260*** (30.349)	-217.640*** (27.608)
Observations	197	197
R <sup>2</sup>	0.652	0.642
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.639	0.629

Note:

\* p<0.1; \*\* p<0.05; \*\*\* p<0.01

# Predictions and Relative Performance

Our model *predicts*:

$$\hat{Y}_i = \hat{\beta}_0 + \hat{\beta}_1 X_{1i} + \hat{\beta}_2 X_{2i} + \dots + \hat{\beta}_k X_{ki}$$

The *residual* is:

$$\hat{u}_i = Y_i - \hat{Y}_i$$

Residuals indicate *relative performance*:

- $\hat{u}_i > 0 \leftrightarrow$  the school's bar passage rate is higher than the model predicts
- $\hat{u}_i < 0 \leftrightarrow$  the school's bar passage rate is lower than the model predicts



# Overperformers and Underperformers

Top 10:

School	Relative Performance
Marquette University	26.27
North Carolina Central University	20.05
Liberty University	18.40
Campbell University	18.01
University of Dayton	17.06
Duquesne University	15.17
Florida International University	14.97
Belmont University	14.96
Syracuse University	14.37
Ohio Northern University	13.74

Bottom 10:

School	Relative Performance
University of San Francisco	-31.23
District of Columbia	-23.92
University of Arizona	-23.32
Indiana University - Bloomington	-22.23
Vermont Law School	-21.34
Golden Gate University	-19.12
University of Maine	-19.00
Chapman University	-18.35
Pontifical Catholic University of P.R.	-16.11
California Western School of Law	-15.58