



Bloomberg Law Analysis



A student takes a drink from a bottle during a commencement ceremony.
Photographer: Mario Tama/Getty Images

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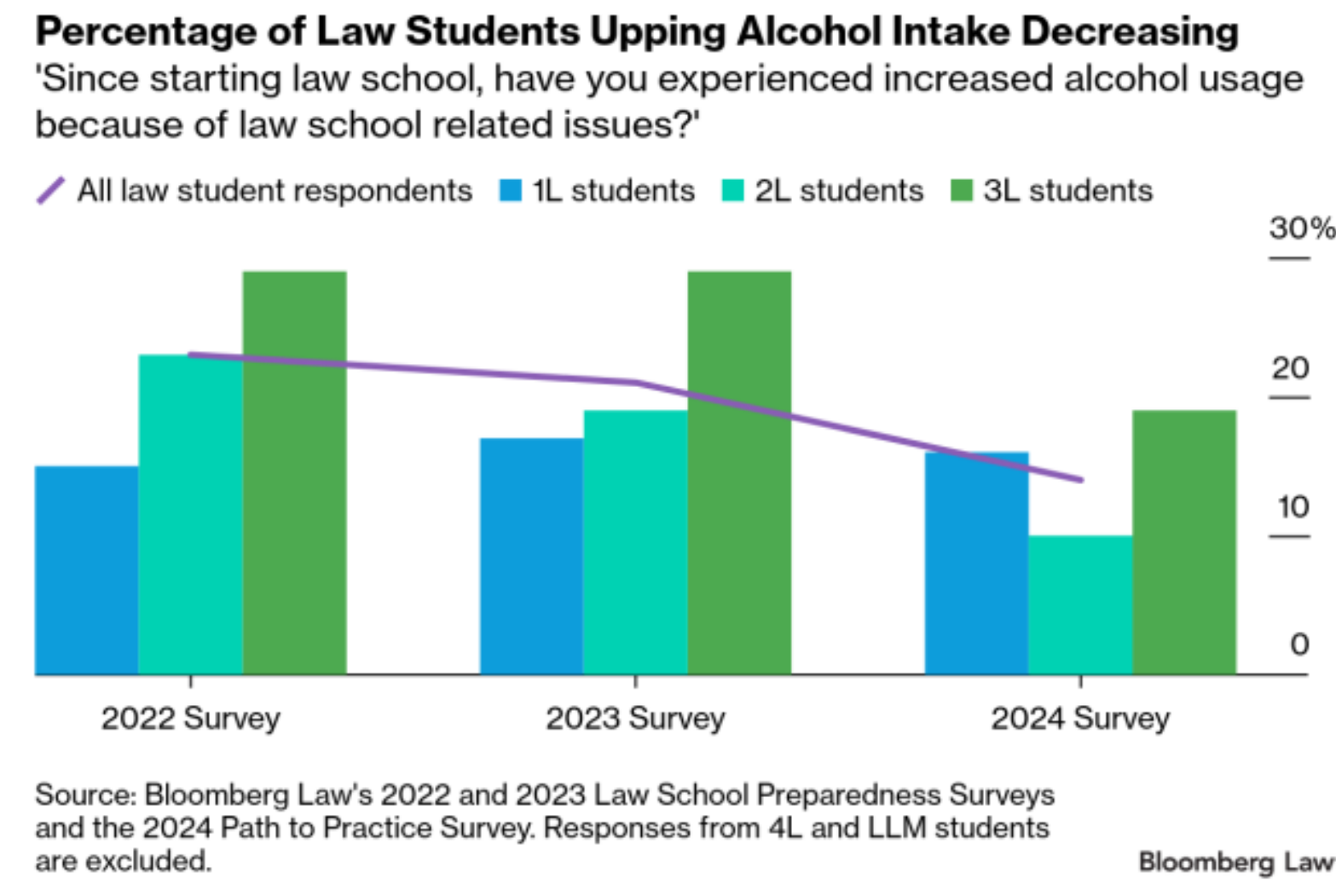
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ANALYSIS: Drying Out? A Look at Law Student Drinking Data

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Data from Bloomberg Law's recent [Path to Practice survey](#) suggests an encouraging change in law student drinking behavior: The percentage of law students who reported that their alcohol intake had increased during law school is going down. As alcohol use negatively impacts both [physical](#) and [mental](#) health, less drinking may mean improved overall well-being for law students.

The survey asked 546 law students about their drinking since starting law school. Fourteen percent of law students said that they're drinking more—an almost 10 percentage point drop from 2022, when 23% reported drinking more.



When broken down by law school year, the data from a three-year period shows some differences in drinking habits. The percentage of 1Ls reporting increased alcohol consumption was consistent (between 15-17%). What seems to be changing are the drinking patterns of 2Ls and 3Ls: As law students spend more time in school, they aren't drinking as much as they did in the [past](#).

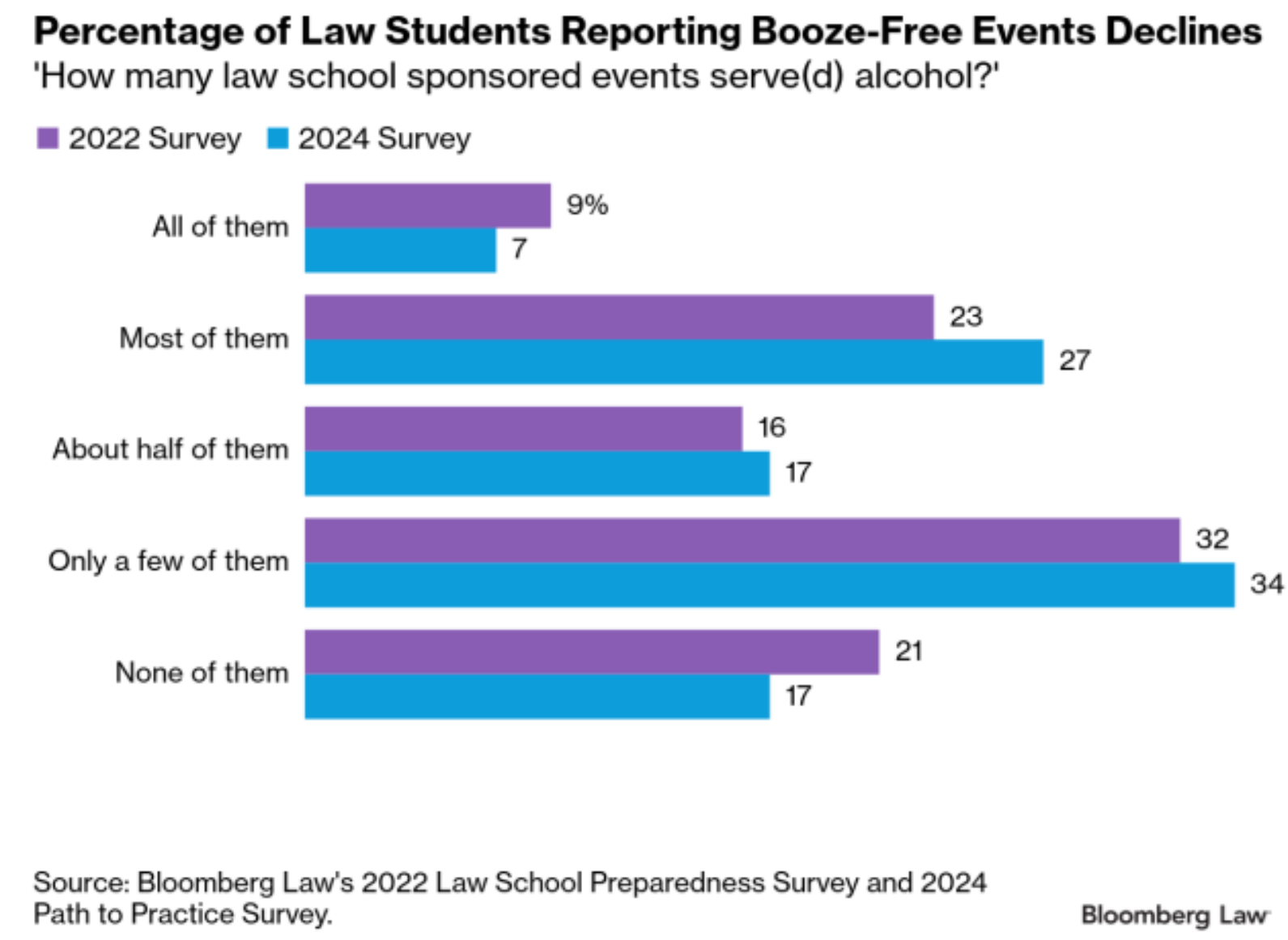
This decrease may be fueled by some [law schools](#) incorporating well-being into their curricula. In 2022, the [American Bar Association](#) changed its curriculum and student support services standards to encourage law schools to address [well-being](#). These [standards](#) require law schools to offer courses that give law students the opportunity to develop "a professional identity"—which is defined to include well-being practices—and also provide students with information on mental health and substance abuse.

Although only 7% of law students responding to the 2024 Path to Practice survey reported taking well-being related courses, there's more [dialogue](#) now on drinking in the legal profession than there was 10 or 20 years ago. Resources provided by the [Institute for Well-Being in Law](#) and state [lawyer assistance programs](#), for example, may be having a positive impact on the drinking behavior of law students.

Is Alcohol Still Flowing on Campus?

Although the percentage of law students who said that they're drinking more is going down, the survey responses also indicate that the availability of alcohol at law school events hasn't significantly decreased in the last few years.

In 2022, (Bloomberg Law didn't collect this data in 2023), Bloomberg Law [reported](#) that it had become less common to find law school sponsored social or networking events serving alcohol. While the new survey data shows a continued decrease in the percentage of law students who said that all events serve alcohol, the percentage of law students this year who said that no events served alcohol was lower than it was two years ago.



Even though not all events have alcohol, the percentage of students who reported at least a few of the events serve alcohol has increased overall, from 80% in 2022, to 85% in 2024.

This is troubling, as prior [research](#) by attorney well-being experts Patrick Krill and Justin Anker found workplace permissiveness towards alcohol to be a primary predictor of risky drinking among attorneys. In the [Bloomberg Law 2024 Well-Being Survey](#), almost 30% of the lawyers who said that they drink admitted that drinking at professional events was a top reason for consuming alcohol.

Based on this research, it's safe to say that law school permissiveness may also predict problematic drinking in law students. In the Path to Practice Survey, almost a third of the 7% of respondents who said that all law school events served alcohol also said that their alcohol use increased during law school. This is close to 20 percentage points more than the survey average of 14%. Within this pool of law students, this number amounts to 10 participants, and although low, it may shine a light on the benefit of having more dry events at law schools.

Given the [toxic cycle of stress and alcohol in law](#), any assistance that law schools can give to students to set healthy habits before they enter into legal practice would be beneficial for the legal industry as a whole.

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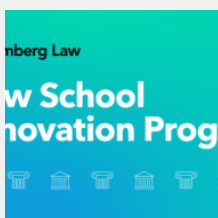
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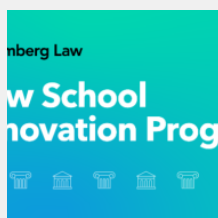


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