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Report

Publics and Place: Leadership Development by State-Run and State-Based Universities

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Executive Summary and Key Findings

- Public and in-state colleges and graduate schools educated most of the public leaders studied.
- Public flagships educate significantly more public leaders than Ivy+ institutions.
- In most states, public, in-state, and flagship universities are the dominant education institutions for public leaders.
- In a few states (such as CA, CT, IL, MA, and NY), a disproportionate percentage of public leaders graduated from private, out-of-state, and Ivy+ schools.
- Each state's top attorneys show the same pattern: in most states, public, in-state, and flagship universities are the dominant education institutions; in a few states, private, out-of-state, and Ivy+ schools are more prominent.

Enormous attention is paid to the role that particular elite private—or "Ivy+"—schools play in educating American leaders. But when we study a wide array of prestigious institutions and employers, we find that their leaders are more likely to come from public colleges and universities rather than from private schools, from in-state schools rather than out-of-state, and from flagship publics rather than Ivy+ privates. The influence of public universities (especially flagships) and of schools geographically near key U.S. institutions has been greatly underappreciated.

Several factors explain the disproportionate attention paid to Ivy+ schools, many of which are a form of affinity bias, which is the proclivity of people to select, side with, and spotlight those like themselves. When scholars, journalists, and organizational leaders are disproportionately Ivy+ graduates and work in geographies and fields with an overrepresentation of Ivy+ graduates, their vision narrows and they develop blind spots. The conversation about higher education and public

leadership thus systematically neglects non-Ivy+ schools, institutions led by non-Ivy+ graduates, and individuals who would prefer to go to college and build careers in places that do not have Ivy+ schools or significant numbers of graduates of those schools.

To ensure that the country's leadership ranks are accessible to all, we should first stop fixating on Ivy+ schools and simply report fairly on the leadership-development contributions of other schools; second, we should underscore to employers and the leaders of scholarships and fellowships that high-potential future leaders are found at an array of public and close-to-home schools.

Introduction

Ivy+ Power

In conversations about the development of public leaders, "Ivy+" schools loom large. This category generally encompasses the eight Ivies and four other highly selective private institutions.[1] We are led to believe that because these schools accept so few students, are widely recognized as academically rigorous, and initiate graduates into powerful social networks, the path into American leadership runs directly through these campuses.

Familiar examples make that point. Eight of the nine sitting U.S. Supreme Court justices graduated from Harvard or Yale Law School. Before President Biden, each of the nation's five previous chief executives had at least one Ivy+ degree.[2] The top of the list of wealthiest Americans is full of degrees from Ivy+ schools: Elon Musk (Penn), Jeff Bezos (Princeton), Alphabet's Larry Page and Sergey Brin (Stanford graduate degrees), and Warren Buffett (Columbia graduate degree). Bill Gates and Mark Zuckerberg attended Harvard.

The "Varsity Blues" scandal—which involved bribery and other crimes—and other instances of unseemly family donations suggest that many people are convinced of the importance of such schools.[3] They are willing to pay enormous sums, legally or otherwise, to increase their children's odds of acceptance. Recent research by economists Raj Chetty, David Deming, and John Friedman seems to substantiate these parents' instincts.[4] As those scholars stated in their much-covered study, "leadership positions in the U.S. are disproportionately held by graduates of a few highly selective private colleges." Graduates of the Ivy+ make up "more than 10% of Fortune 500 CEOs, a quarter of U.S. senators, half of all Rhodes scholars, and three-fourths of Supreme Court justices appointed in the last half-century." Moreover, the authors find that, even when other variables are held constant, an Ivy+ degree significantly increases the chances of getting into an "elite" graduate school, working at a "prestigious" firm, and having earnings in the top 1%.

News coverage can make it seem as though Ivy+ schools are the only ones that really matter. Philip Bump of the *Washington Post* chronicled the media's obsession with these institutions in "Ivy League, Ivy League, Ivy League? Ivy League—Ivy League."[5] He explained: "There are few things in which the media and the sorts of people who spend a lot of time focused on the media show more attention than the machinations of Ivy League universities." An observer of the coverage of 2023 campus protests would have to agree. Columbia, Harvard, MIT, and Penn educate less than half of 1% of today's undergraduates, but they seemed to be on every front page and lead every newscast.

The Chetty, Deming, and Friedman study's primary findings (that these schools' admissions processes unfairly advantage the children of alumni and the affluent) are valuable to our understanding of higher education and social mobility. The research is novel and persuasive on that point, and the study's implied goal (making America's leadership ranks accessible to all) is laudable. But to explain why readers should care about the flaws in Ivy+ admissions, the study oversells the importance

of these schools at the expense of other types of schools. As a result, the study may inadvertently exacerbate the problem that it hopes to solve: it could drive more attention from students, donors, and employers toward Ivy+ schools—which, in turn, would perpetuate the view that Ivy+ schools are the pathway to American leadership.

Undoubtedly, Ivy+ schools play a key role in developing American leaders. But how important are they, really? This report attempts to answer that question by analyzing the educational backgrounds of leaders across a wide range of prestigious institutions and employers. The clear result is that other types of schools are educating far more of America's key leaders. The most striking category are flagships, generally each state's most prestigious public college, such as the Universities of Arkansas, Florida, Michigan, Mississippi, Texas, and Virginia. Similarly, many other non-flagship public universities—such as Arizona State, Purdue, Michigan State, Miami (OH), and UCLA—are very important, both inside and outside their state borders. Several non-Ivy+ private schools—including Boston College, Brigham Young University (BYU), Creighton University, University of Denver, Drake University, Marquette University, Seton Hall University, St. Olaf College, Vanderbilt University, and Willamette University—educate significant numbers of future leaders, especially in their regions.

The best way to ensure that leadership positions are accessible to all is not to devote great energy to changing Ivy+ admissions. Instead, we should fairly report on the invaluable role played by other types of schools and inform policymakers, employers, scholarships, fellowships, and graduate programs that far more future leaders come from non-Ivy+ schools.

Degree Inflation

This paper's primary purpose is to show that key groups of American leaders predominantly received their postsecondary educations from non-Ivy+ institutions. My aim, then, is not to refute the Chetty et al. research on the unfairness of Ivy+ admissions or to convince readers that Ivy+ schools don't matter. But we should appreciate how small choices can inflate our sense of the importance of Ivy+ institutions.

First, as Bump notes, even though these schools educate only about 1% of four-year undergraduate students, they receive enormous media attention, perhaps because of the overpopulation of Ivy+ graduates in key media positions. Major publications, for example, covered the Chetty et al. study without critically assessing its claims about the importance of Ivy+ schools. Two *New York Times* columnists wrote about the study; one graduated from Harvard, the other from Yale.[6] One of those columnists informed readers that he served on Harvard's Board of Overseers, that his wife has been on three Ivy+ boards, and that his three children attended Harvard. The *Times*' more news-oriented article had three authors; one was a Yale graduate, and another taught at Princeton.[7] The *Washington Post* article on the study was penned by a Columbia graduate,[8] and the paper hosted an event on the study moderated by an editor with a Penn degree.[9] *The Atlantic* covered the story in "You Have to Care About Harvard"—written by a Harvard graduate.[10]

More broadly, the publisher, executive editor, and deputy editor of the *New York Times* all have Ivy+ degrees;[11] 54% of the American degrees earned by members of the *New York Times* editorial board and 58% of the American degrees earned by members of the *Washington Post* editorial board are from Ivy+ schools;[12] the owner of the *Washington Post* is an Ivy+ graduate;[13] the owner, CEO, and editor-in-chief of *The Atlantic* are all Ivy+ grads.[14] The media's proclivity for Ivy+ boosterism is understandable, if regrettable.

Second, it is often argued that Ivy+ schools are elite because Ivy+ graduates end up working in prestigious institutions. But the extent to which this is true—and thus our assessment of the relative influence of educational institutions—depends strongly on the definition of "prestigious." For instance, Chetty et al. note that a quarter of U.S. senators have Ivy+ degrees.[15] But if the U.S. House of Representatives also counts as prestigious, we'd likely determine that in-state colleges are elite, since about two-thirds of House members received at least one degree from an in-state school.[16] What would we find if we defined state legislatures, not just Congress, as prestigious landing spots? Similarly, Chetty et al. note the prevalence of Ivy+ degrees among the last half-century of U.S. Supreme Court justices and presidents—but what would we find if we defined state supreme courts and governorships as prestigious? Read on.

In some cases, the view that Ivy+ schools are elite relies on a definition of "prestigious" that is not just arbitrary—i.e., including the Senate but not the House—but circular. For instance, the Chetty et al. study claims that Ivy+ graduates often go to "prestigious" firms—which it defines as "those that employ a particularly large fraction of graduates from Ivy-Plus colleges despite not paying exceptionally high wages."[17] Not only is this circular reasoning; it also risks false positives and false negatives. There are certainly employers with many Ivy+ grads that should *not* be held in esteem. FTX's leader, convicted felon Sam Bankman-Fried, and his top two lieutenants (who pleaded guilty to fraud) are Ivy+ grads.[18] Ivy+ grads fill the upper ranks of TikTok, which is among "America's Most Hated Companies," according to financial news source *24/7 Wall Street*.[19] Many similar examples exist.[20] And there are certainly employers with few or no Ivy+ grads that *should* be considered elite. For instance, the top private firm on the 2024 Forbes list of best midsize employers has an eight-member leadership team, who collectively hold 12 degrees—but none from an Ivy+ institution.[21] Of the 28 leaders on that list's top three private firms, only two have Ivy+ degrees.[22] We must be careful about how we define a prestigious landing spot.[23]

Third, we overstate the importance of Ivy+ schools because of geography. Too often, it is alleged that nearly all of America's truly elite employers are in a small section of the Northeast or Silicon Valley. One prominent ranking of top firms in several industries demonstrates this myopia:[24] of the 30 firms making up its top 10 in law, finance, and consulting, 25 are headquartered in New York City or Boston.[25] Most Americans—and most students—have probably never heard of Cravath, Swaine & Moore LLP, Centerview Partners, or Bain, even though these are considered elite in such rankings. It is difficult to aspire to work for a firm if you do not know it exists.[26]

Perhaps Ivy+ grads, most of whom attended college along the Acela corridor, are familiar with and taught to admire such organizations. But most other college graduates would probably instead see as "elite" the great private-sector employers and the great public-service opportunities that are based closer to home and that serve local, not global, communities. This geographic bias—associating prestige with a small corner of America—can be seen in the "public service" section of Chetty et al. There, only two private employers are listed: the *New York Times* and the *Wall Street Journal*. Both are Manhattan-based firms, headquartered seven blocks apart. We must be careful not to allow our sense of employer prestige to resemble the perspective famously parodied by Saul Steinberg's 1976 cartoon, "View of the World from 9th Avenue": that the only things and places that really matter are those proximate to the heart of New York City.

Fourth is affinity bias, the human proclivity to connect with and overvalue those like us. We must be aware of the possibility that those with Ivy+ degrees will consciously or unconsciously privilege the Ivy+ credential. The overrepresentation of Ivy+ graduates in the media, which leads these schools to receive an outsized volume of media coverage, is a form of affinity bias, but it extends beyond journalists. Affinity bias is also related to the circularity problem discussed above: one reason that a firm heavy with Ivy+ grads is likely to hire more Ivy+ grads is that those doing the hiring like Ivy+ grads. Similarly, the Chetty et al. study shows that Ivy+ grads get into elite graduate schools. But those elite graduate schools are primarily Ivy+ schools, which are heavy with Ivy+ graduates. The study also shows that those selected for MacArthur Fellowships and Rhodes Scholarships

are disproportionately Ivy+ graduates. But members of the anonymous selection committee for MacArthur Fellowships are authorized by the foundation's board of directors; that board's 12 members have 14 Ivy+ degrees.[27] Rhodes Scholars are selected by committees composed primarily of former Rhodes Scholars. Since these scholarships have been disproportionately awarded to Ivy+ graduates, Ivy+ graduates are disproportionately choosing future Rhodes Scholars.[28] When institutions (publications, grad schools, scholarships, etc.) with many Ivy+ graduates privilege Ivy+ schools, it might be proof of affinity bias, not the eliteness of these schools.[29] In other words, it is fair to wonder if some degree holders from Ivy+ institutions are guilty of a Saul Steinberg–style perspective: the things that really matter are those associated with Ivy+ institutions.

Again, the goal of this study is not to argue that Ivy+ schools don't produce public leaders. They certainly do. But the role of those schools might well be inflated through a combination of the media's bent, a tendentious understanding of what constitutes an "elite" or a "prestigious" employer, geographic myopia, and affinity bias.

Why This Matters

There are at least eight reasons we should be careful not to inflate the value of Ivy+ schools and deflate the value of other institutions. First, Ivy+ schools have not exactly wrapped themselves in glory of late: shouting down a federal appeals court judge at Stanford, Harvard's plagiarism scandal and barrel-bottom rating for free speech, Yale's Halloween-costume and "trap house" incidents, the disastrous congressional testimony by three Ivy+ presidents, and lawsuits over antisemitism at Columbia and Penn.[30] If Americans believe that all their leaders come from such schools, then our faith in our country's key institutions will suffer.

Second, overstating the role of elite schools can give the impression that there is a very narrow path to leadership positions. That casts our nation as elitist. It can also discourage and therefore dampen the prospects of those who don't graduate from such schools. And it can wrongly suggest that other highly successful but less celebrated institutions aren't viable paths to important public roles.

Third, it can give Ivy+ schools a better reputation than they deserve. If people believe that these institutions are more valuable than they are, those schools will find it easier to charge higher prices, students who should not feel compelled to apply to them will apply, employers will hire graduates whom they otherwise would not hire, donors who would not otherwise invest in them will invest. Overstating the value of the Ivy+ distorts our thinking and behavior.

Fourth, it robs other institutions of the reputations they deserve. If non-Ivy+ schools are preparing many future leaders without the appropriate recognition, we are undercapitalizing valuable assets and not making students fully aware of great educational options.

Fifth, overvaluing elite schools does a disservice to "Somewheres"—people for whom place matters.[31] Some individuals think of themselves as "Anywheres"—they aren't particularly tied to any geography. For them, relocating hundreds or thousands of miles for college or work is easy, even desirable. But many people—"Somewheres"—want to be rooted close to home. They deserve to know that outstanding educational institutions that will prepare them for public leadership are nearby. You don't need to leave home for an Ivy+ in order to thrive professionally. You don't need to be an Anywhere to succeed.

Sixth, public opinion surveys continue to show that, in this era of polarization and distrust, state and local institutions are viewed more favorably than those that are far away. Students shouldn't be led to believe that success means going far away to an ostensibly elite school so that they

can work for an ostensibly elite distant, multinational corporation. Students should know that respected, close-to-home educational institutions are successfully preparing people to lead in respected, close-to-home institutions.

Seventh, the best way to make American leadership more representative is *not* to expend enormous energy to adjust admissions criteria at 12 small private schools; rather, the goal should be to broadcast the excellence of hundreds of other great schools. If we perpetuate the mistaken view that Ivy+ schools have all the talent and that their graduates run the world, we aggravate our problem: employers, boards, grad schools, fellowships, and scholarships will unfairly, unnecessarily choose the grads of the Ivy+ over other talented, high-potential individuals. Fairly report the virtues of other schools, and America becomes fairer.

Eighth, a great deal of energy is behind higher-education reform right now. It is important to smartly direct research, advocacy, policy change, and financial investment surrounding these efforts. If reformers have a distorted sense of which schools matter most, their reforms will be distorted. As the evidence in this report demonstrates, less attention should be paid to the Ivy+, more to other particular privates, much more to publics, and much, much more to flagships.

Study Approach

This study looks at the educational backgrounds (undergraduate and graduate) of five types of state-level public leaders as well as the top lawyers from the top law firms in each state. I consider state supreme court justices, state legislative leaders, governors, state attorneys general, and state education chiefs, as well as attorneys in leadership positions in their states' most elite firms. Each educational institution is coded as public or private and as "in-state" or "out-of-state."[32] I also note if a school is the state's flagship public, an Ivy+ school, or neither.[33]

Courts

The U.S. Supreme Court is often cited as Exhibit A of Ivy+ dominance: Ivy+ and three other private schools provided all the postsecondary education for current members of the U.S. Supreme Court (**Figure 1**): 100% of sitting justices graduated from private undergraduate and law schools; only two of the nine did *not* go to an Ivy+ school for undergraduate, and only one of the nine did *not* go to an Ivy+ for law school.

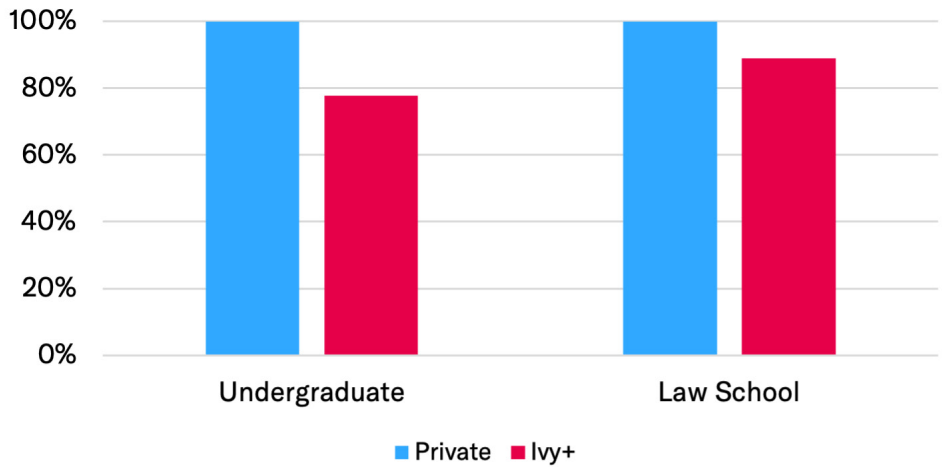
Figure 1a

Postsecondary Education of 2024 U.S. Supreme Court

Justice	College	Type	Law School	Type
John G. Roberts, Jr.	Harvard	Private, Ivy+	Harvard	Private, Ivy+
Clarence Thomas	Holy Cross	Private	Yale	Private, Ivy+
Samuel A. Alito	Princeton	Private, Ivy+	Yale	Private, Ivy+
Sonia Sotomayor	Princeton	Private, Ivy+	Yale	Private, Ivy+
Elena Kagan	Princeton	Private, Ivy+	Harvard	Private, Ivy+
Neil M. Gorsuch	Columbia	Private, Ivy+	Harvard	Private, Ivy+
Brett M. Kavanaugh	Yale	Private, Ivy+	Yale	Private, Ivy+
Amy Coney Barrett	Rhodes	Private	Notre Dame	Private
Ketanji Brown Jackson	Harvard	Private, Ivy+	Harvard	Private, Ivy+

Figure 1b

Postsecondary Education of 2024 U.S. Supreme Court

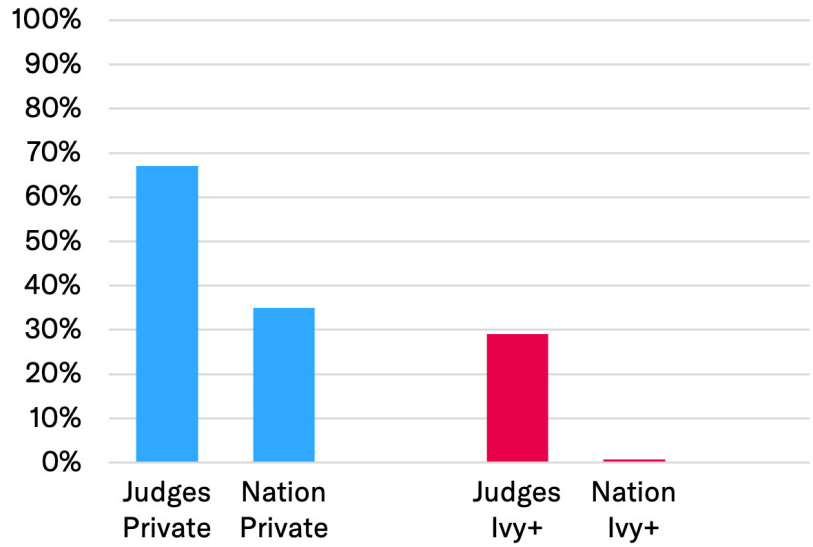


The federal appeals courts (the level of the federal judiciary just below the U.S. Supreme Court) are also overpopulated by private-school and Ivy+ graduates. I identified the undergraduate and law school degrees of 291 federal appeals court judges. This includes current and senior-status judges on the 11 circuits and the federal circuit.[34]

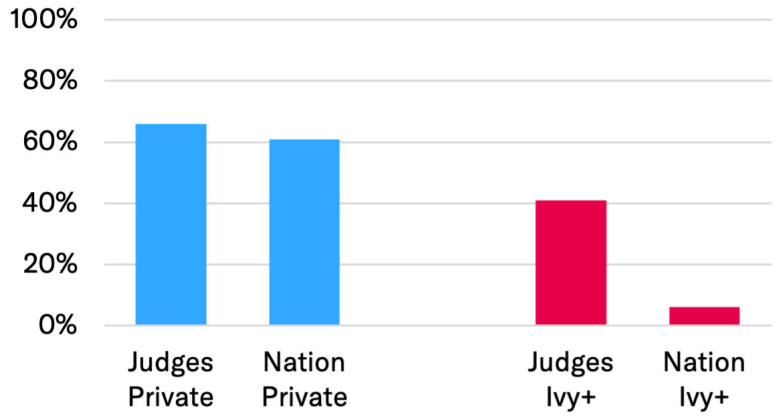
They are less likely than U.S. Supreme Court justices to have attended private and Ivy+ institutions, but they are more likely to have graduated from private and Ivy+ institutions than the national average for both undergraduate and law school (**Figure 2**).[35] For instance, 67% of federal appeals court judges attended a private college, and 35% of today's four-year college students attend a private institution; 41% of these judges have a law degree from an Ivy+ institution, and about 6% of today's law students attend an Ivy+ institution.[36] The upshot: the educational backgrounds of judges serving in the two top tiers of the federal judiciary seem to suggest that public service—or, at least, law-oriented public service—is dominated by those schooled in private and Ivy+ institutions.

Figure 2

Educational Background of Federal Appellate Court Judges
Undergraduate



Law School



State Supreme Courts

The picture changes when we look at state supreme courts. These are obviously elite institutions: they have the final word on matters of state statutory and constitutional law, and they sit at the pinnacle of states' legal communities.

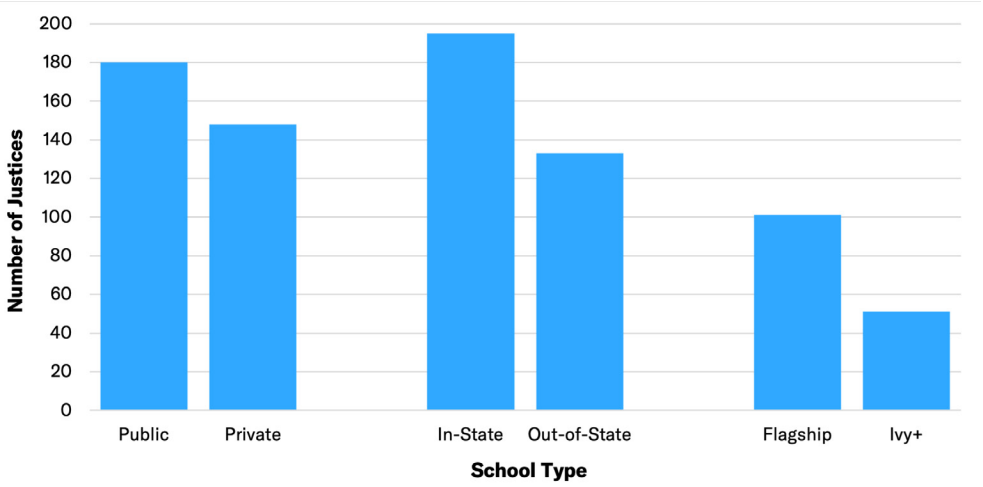
Undergraduate

There are 330 state supreme court justices.[37] Their educational backgrounds are *very* different from those of justices of the U.S. Supreme Court (**Figure 3**).[38] A majority (55%) of state justices have an undergraduate degree from a public university. In four states (IN, OK, TN, WY), all supreme court justices graduated from a public university, and in eight others (AR, HI, LA, MI, MO, MS, SD, UT), 80% or more graduated from a public university. In some states, there is a particular public

university that is evidently understood as the elite undergraduate institution. For instance, most justices in Mississippi, South Dakota, Tennessee, Utah, and Wyoming graduated from that state's flagship public university.

Figure 3

State Supreme Court Justices (Undergraduate Degrees)



Another important finding is that most justices on state supreme courts (59%) received an undergraduate degree in the state where they now serve. In 17 states, 80% or more of justices have an in-state undergraduate degree. In some of those states, all or almost all justices graduated from an in-state public school. For instance, in Tennessee, all justices graduated from the University of Tennessee, University of Memphis, or East Tennessee State; in Indiana, all graduated from Indiana University, Purdue, or Ball State. But in some states, one or more in-state *private* schools are also important. In Utah, all justices went to the public University of Utah or the private Brigham Young University (BYU). In Missouri, five of seven justices went to an in-state private undergraduate institution (William Jewell College, Drury University, William Woods University, or Stephens College).

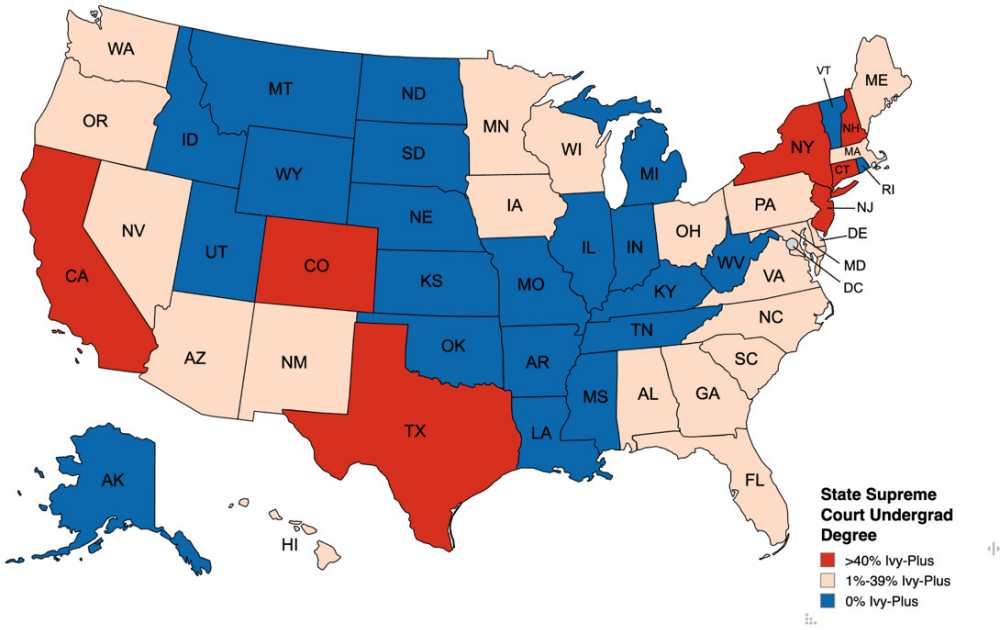
Although 78% of U.S. Supreme Court justices today and 75% over the last half-century are Ivy+ grads, that figure is only 15% among current state supreme court justices. State justices are twice as likely to have graduated from a public flagship university (31%). In fact, the 12 publics most attended by justices count nearly as many graduates as the 12 Ivy+ (49 vs. 51).[39] Other privates are often as well represented as Ivy+ institutions. For instance, BYU has four undergrad alumni across three different state supreme courts. That's more than Penn, Princeton, Brown, Columbia, Cornell, Chicago, or MIT.

Furthermore, the 15% of state justices who did graduate from Ivy+ colleges are concentrated in just a few states (**Figure 4**). In California, four of seven justices are Ivy+ graduates; in New Hampshire, three of five; in Colorado, Connecticut, and New Jersey, three of seven. But in 22 states, no justices graduated from an Ivy+. In 15 other states, only one did. If we remove from consideration just the seven states where Ivy+ grads make up 40% of justices, fewer than one in 10 justices across the nation graduated from an Ivy+ college.[40]

This is a manifestation of the geographic myopia of Ivy+ obsession. What happens in the Acela corridor does *not* reflect what happens everywhere else. Most of America understands "eliteness" differently from the way those in California and the Eastern Seaboard do.

Figure 4

Percentage of Ivy+ Undergraduate Degrees Among State Supreme Court Justices



It is worth noting the great diversity of undergraduate institutions producing future state justices. These 330 justices received degrees from 200 different undergraduate institutions—large, small, public, private, secular, faith-based, rural, urban, suburban, liberal-arts-focused, technology-focused, and more (see **Appendix A**). Many schools produce leaders.

Overall, at the undergraduate level, more state supreme court justices graduated from publics than privates, in-states than out-of-states, and flagships than Ivy+.

Law School

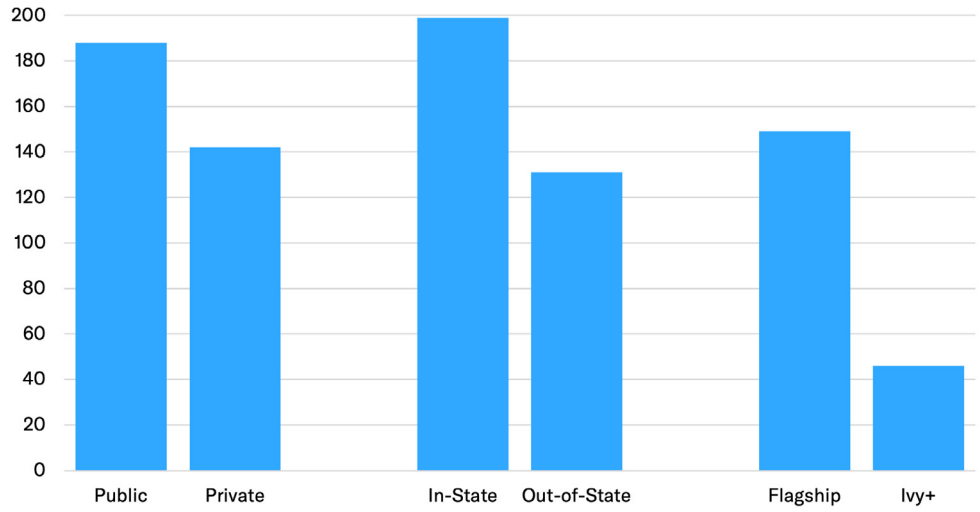
It might be misleading to look only at justices' undergraduate degrees. Perhaps most of these talented future state leaders graduate from their public and in-state colleges and then enroll in Ivy+ and other out-of-state private law schools to accelerate their careers. Recall the U.S. Supreme Court: seven of nine current justices went to an Ivy+ college, but eight of nine went to Ivy+ law schools.

Future state justices are even more likely to earn public and in-state law degrees than public and in-state undergraduate degrees: 57% graduated from a public law school and 60% from an in-state law school (**Figure 5**). The public figure is particularly noteworthy: 61% of law students today are in private law schools, but nearly 60% of state supreme court justices graduated from public law schools. In 11 states (AZ, AR, IN, KS, MS, MO, ND, SC, SD, WV, WY), all supreme court justices graduated from a public law school. Sometimes this is because the state's flagship is the dominant institution: all Indiana justices graduated from Indiana University's law school; all South Carolina justices from the University of South Carolina; all Wyoming justices from the University of Wyoming; and eight of nine Mississippi justices from the University of Mississippi.

In some states, several publics lead. In Arkansas, all justices attended law school at the University of Arkansas or Arkansas–Little Rock. In Kentucky, all graduated from the law schools at University of Kentucky, University of Louisville, or University of Northern Kentucky. In Missouri, all graduated from the law schools of the University of Missouri or Missouri–Kansas City. In Kansas, most justices graduated from the in-state public Washburn University; the others from University of Kansas or University of Missouri–Kansas City.

Figure 5

State Supreme Court Justices (Law School Degrees)



Many states have one or more private law schools that help prepare these future public leaders, meaning that the lion's share of future justices come from in-state schools, public and private. In Louisiana, justices went to the in-state public LSU or the in-state private Loyola–New Orleans. In Oklahoma, four justices went to the public University of Oklahoma while four went to in-state privates—Oklahoma City University or the University of Tulsa. In Alabama, four justices went to law school at in-state privates—Faulkner and Samford.

As with undergraduate institutions, Ivy+ law schools play a small role in the education of state supreme court justices: only 14% have an Ivy+ law degree (compared with 89% of current U.S. Supreme Court justices). In fact, half the states have no justices with an Ivy+ law degree. Another 12 states have only one justice with an Ivy+ law degree.

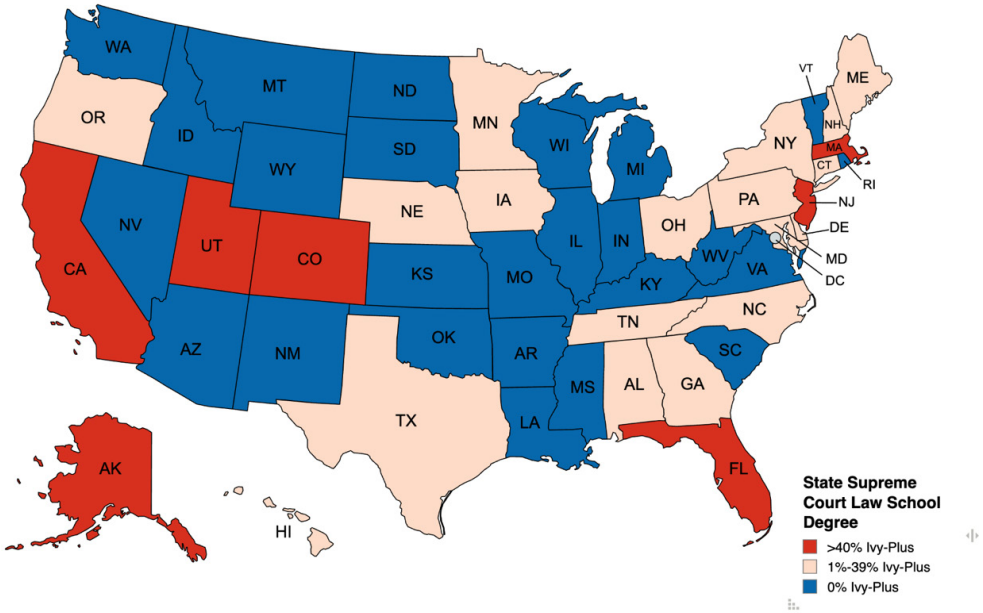
State justices are more than three times more likely to have graduated from a flagship public law school than an Ivy+ law school (45% vs. 14%). Several non-Ivy+ private law schools claim more graduates among state justices than Ivy+ law schools. For example, the law schools of the University of Denver, Suffolk University, Gonzaga University, and Georgetown University each have more graduates among justices than Ivy+ schools Stanford, Columbia, Duke, Penn, and Cornell. Denver and Suffolk, with five apiece, are eclipsed among private schools only by Harvard and Yale.

To an even greater extent than with undergraduate degrees, Ivy+ law school graduates are highly concentrated on the supreme courts of only a few states (**Figure 6**). In California and Massachusetts, four of seven justices are Ivy+ graduates; in Colorado and New Jersey, three of seven. Again, if we remove from consideration just the seven states where Ivy+ law grads make up 40% of justices, fewer than one in 11 justices across the nation graduated from an Ivy+ law school.[41]

As was the case at the undergraduate level, more state supreme court justices graduated from publics than privates, in-states than out-of-states, and flagships than Ivy+.

Figure 6

Percentage of Ivy+ Law School Degrees Among State Supreme Court Justices



State Legislative Leaders

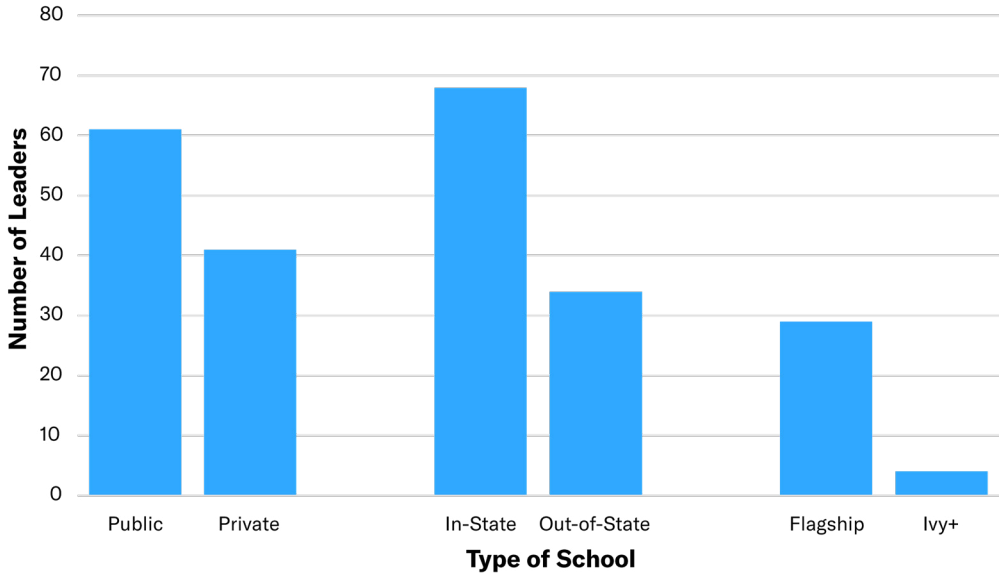
Undergraduate

State supreme court justices are very different from U.S. Supreme Court justices in educational background. But that might say more about the peculiarity of state courts than about the development of today's leaders. Perhaps state legal communities are unusually parochial, elevating those who go to school and build their careers close to home. Perhaps private, out-of-state, and Ivy+ degrees are far more common in a different type of leadership role—namely, those in state legislatures.

On the contrary. The backgrounds of state legislative leaders further demonstrate the importance of public, in-state, and flagship universities (**Figure 7**). There are 123 individuals in this category: generally, the speaker of the state house, the president of the state senate, and (in about half the states) the lieutenant governor (if that office has some authority over the state senate).[42] Among all state legislative leaders, 50% earned an undergraduate degree from a public school and 33% from a private. Remarkably, the most common undergraduate institution is "none": 21 of the 123 state legislative leaders (17%) lack a four-year degree.[43] For the following analysis, I remove those with no degree from the denominator; i.e., the following results can be read as "Among legislative leaders with a four-year degree…."

Figure 7

State Legislative Leaders (Undergraduate Degrees)



State legislative leaders are even more likely than state justices to have graduated from publics and in-state institutions: 60% graduated from a public and 67% from an in-state. Again, the educational pathway into leadership is wide: the 102 undergraduate degrees come from 87 institutions. Amazingly, no undergraduate school can claim more than two graduates; among the 15 schools with two graduates, 11 are public.[44]

Legislative leaders have 29 undergraduate degrees from flagship publics, about the same proportion as state justices (28% and 31%, respectively). Also similar is the percentage of degrees from all private universities (40% vs. 45% for justices) and in-state private universities (17% vs. 16% for justices). Examples of in-state privates among legislative leaders include Ouachita Baptist (AR), Fairfield (CT), Mercer (GA), Knox (IL), Northeastern (MA), Macalester (MN), and Wofford (SC).

Contrary to the current narrative about the importance of Ivy+ institutions, only four state legislative leaders have an undergraduate degree from one of those schools.[45] Further demonstrating that Ivy+ graduates are disproportionately located in certain states, three of these four legislative leaders are in states (CA, CT, MA) where Ivy+ justices are concentrated. Overall, legislative leaders are seven times more likely to have graduated from a public flagship than an Ivy+. Continuing the finding among justices, many more state legislative leaders graduated from publics than privates, in-states than out-of-states, and flagships than Ivy+.

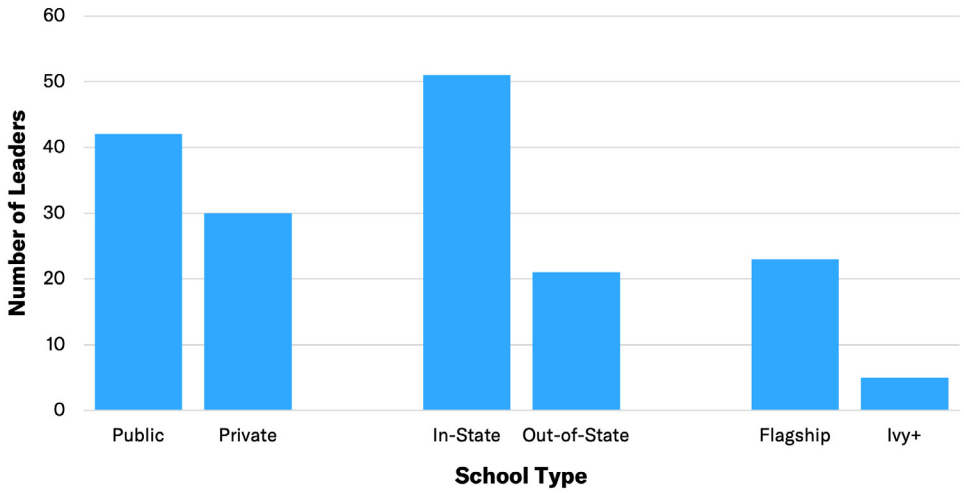
Graduate

Unlike judges, who are expected or required to have a law degree, state legislative leaders need not have even an undergraduate degree, much less a graduate degree. But graduate degrees are common: our 102 legislative leaders with an undergraduate degree earned 72 graduate degrees.[46] Those 72 degrees were granted by 66 different institutions—again, there are many educational paths to leadership. Of the six granting two graduate degrees, five are public (Arkansas, University of California–Berkeley, Connecticut, Oregon, and University of Nevada–Las Vegas).

Overall, the graduate results (**Figure 8**) are similar but more pronounced than those seen above: significantly more public (58%) than private (42%), in-state (71%) than out-of-state (29%), and flagship (28%) than Ivy+ (5%).

Figure 8

State Legislative Leaders (Graduate Degrees)



Governors

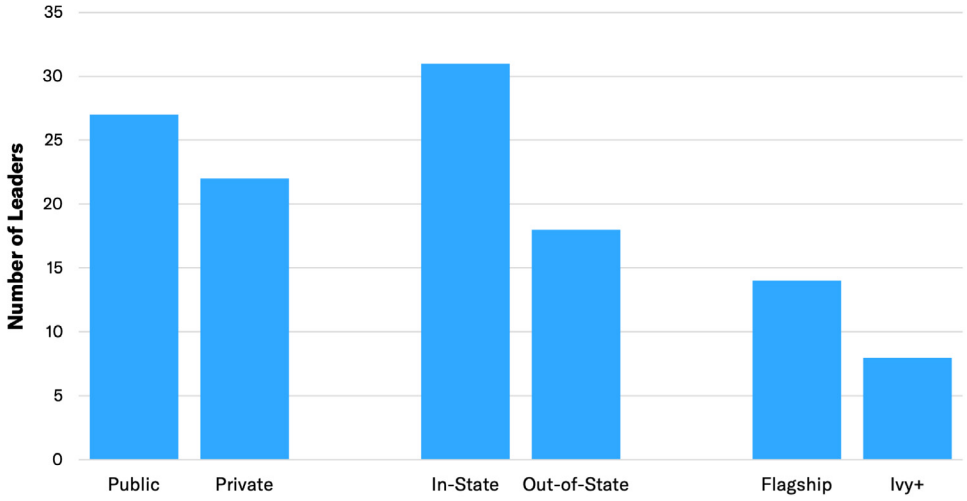
Undergraduate

Governors are the chief executives of their states, possessing enormous authority related to appointments, budgets, executive orders, and much more. They are, as a rule, the most powerful public officials in their states. Historically, the governor's office has also been a pipeline into other important posts—federal cabinet positions, ambassadorships, the vice presidency, and the presidency. If Ivy+ schools have an outsized role in educating future American leaders, their influence should be significant among governors.

But as was the case among state justices and legislative leaders, that is not so (**Figure 9**). Only eight governors have an undergraduate degree from an Ivy+. Remarkably, most of those eight are in the same states that have a concentration of the Ivy+ degrees among state justices and legislative leaders.[47] Once again, we see that Ivy+ schools have a disproportionate influence over a few states but cast a small shadow over most of the nation.

Figure 9

Governors (Undergraduate Degrees)



One of the 50 governors does not have a four-year undergraduate degree, so, as above, the denominator for the results below will be those with an undergraduate degree (49). As with the previous offices analyzed, public-school graduates predominate (55%). Nearly all governors who graduated from a public college attended a public college in their states (24 of 27). The only three who graduated from an out-of-state public went to a public college in a neighboring state (Maine's governor graduated from a Massachusetts public; Minnesota's, a Nebraska public; Tennessee's, an Alabama public). More than half the governors who graduated from a public went to a flagship—and all but one of those went to their state's flagship.[48] The other public graduates attended a variety of schools: Alabama's governor graduated from Auburn, Iowa's from Iowa State, Michigan's from Michigan State, Ohio's from Miami of Ohio, and West Virginia's from Marshall.

Nearly two-thirds of governors went to college in-state (63%). This includes the in-state publics listed above, as well as in-state privates. Four governors graduated from an in-state private affiliated with a faith tradition: Arkansas's governor graduated from Ouachita Baptist, California's from Santa Clara University (Catholic); Indiana's from Hanover College (Presbyterian); and Mississippi's from Millsaps College (Methodist). As with justices and legislative leaders, governors were more likely to graduate from a flagship than from an Ivy+. They also graduated from a wide diversity of colleges: the 49 governors graduated from 46 different schools (only Auburn and Harvard can count several governors as alumni).

In total, then, governors' undergraduate experience continues the now-familiar pattern of predominance of publics, in-states, and flagships.

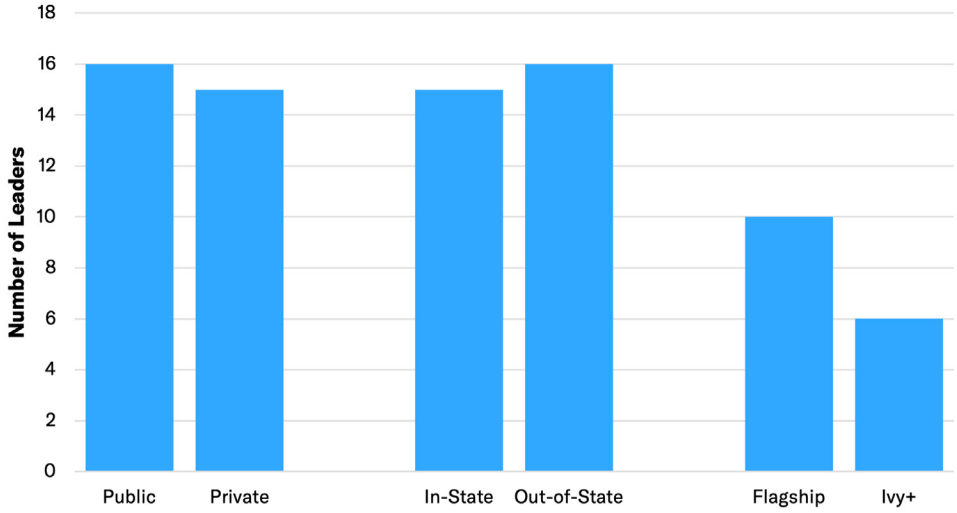
Graduate

Governors earned 31 graduate degrees.[49] These track the previous pattern, though the results are less pronounced. Most were awarded by public institutions. Most of those public graduate degrees came from flagships. The governors of Delaware, Maine, New Mexico, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Wisconsin earned a law or master's degree from their own state's flagship. And the governors of Arizona, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, and West Virginia have graduate degrees from, respectively, Arizona State, Michigan State, Minnesota State, Ohio Northern, and Marshall. Only six have Ivy+ graduate degrees, several of whom, perhaps unsurprisingly at this point, are in states noted earlier for concentrations of the limited number of Ivy+ grads (**Figure 10**).

Unlike state legislative leaders with degrees from private graduate schools, who primarily attended in-state privates, most future governors who went to a private graduate school went to an out-of-state institution. These include Catholic University, Georgetown, Vanderbilt, Washington & Lee, and Willamette.

Figure 10

Governors (Graduate Degrees)



State Education Chiefs

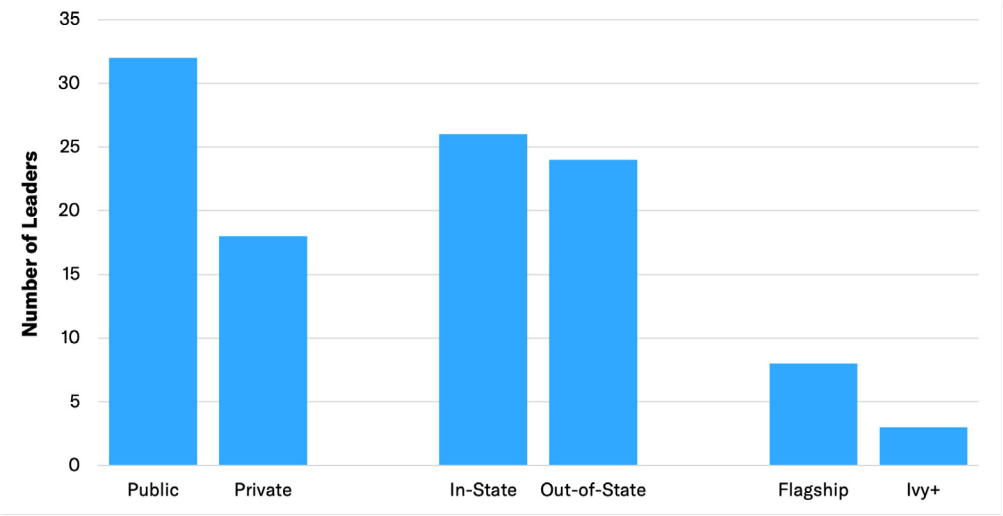
To ensure that this analysis included a sufficient array of state leaders, I included two additional types of executive-branch officials: the state education chief and the state attorney general. These positions help round out this study in at least two ways. First, they can be considered specialists rather than generalists (unlike justices, legislative leaders, and governors). They lead in a particular domain of governing (education and law enforcement). Such jobs may be more technical in nature and require content-area expertise, which might be a specialty of elite education institutions. Second, these officials reach their positions through a variety of means. Whereas governors and state legislators are elected, education chiefs (sometimes known as education secretaries, superintendents, or commissioners) can be elected, selected by the governor, or selected by an appointed or elected state board of education.[50] State attorneys general can be elected, appointed by the governor, appointed by the legislature, or appointed by the state supreme court.[51]

Undergraduate

All 50 state education chiefs have a four-year undergraduate degree. Of all the offices considered in this study, education chiefs are the most likely to have attended a public college: 64% (**Figure 11**). These 32 chiefs graduated from 30 different public institutions; only the University of Maryland and Kansas State can claim two alumni. However, education chiefs were less likely to have attended a flagship; among justices, legislative leaders, and governors, about half of public graduates attended a flagship, compared with only a quarter (eight of 32) of education chiefs. Instead, they attended a more diverse array of publics, such as Delta State, Jacksonville State, Kennesaw State, Missouri State, Texas State, and Wright State (see **Appendix B**). This might be because states typically have one or more non-flagship publics with a reputation for educating future educators.

Figure 11

Education Chiefs (Undergraduate Degrees)



Another difference is that, among education chiefs, a smaller percentage of private graduates attended an in-state private. In many states, one or two prominent private universities educate many of the state's future justices, legislative leaders, and governors (e.g., BYU, Johns Hopkins, Denver). But education leaders attended an array of privates that were not seen among the other officials (e.g., Flagler, Transylvania, Midland Lutheran, Harding). Like previous officials, however, most state chiefs graduated from an in-state college.

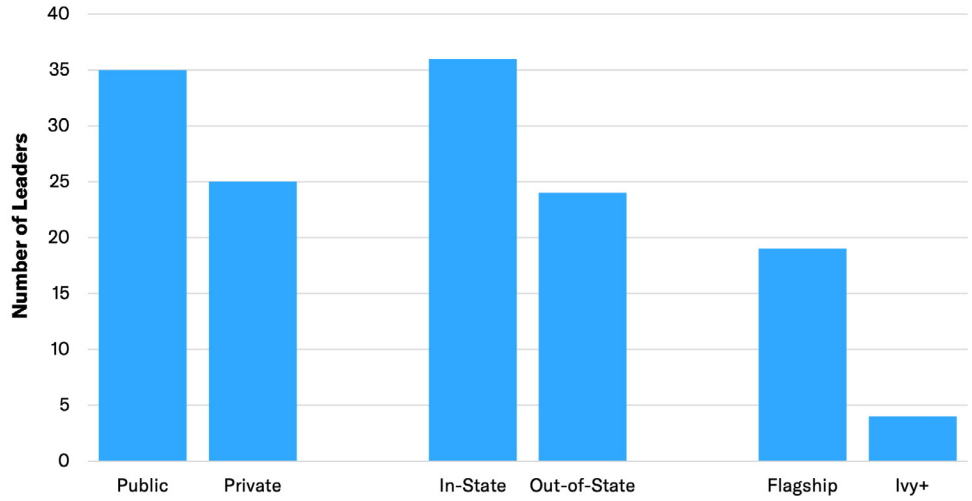
Education leaders were more likely than other officials to attend an out-of-state private, but that *did not* translate into more Ivy+ graduates. In fact, Ivy+ degrees were almost as rare among education chiefs (6%) as legislative leaders (4%). The previous pattern continues among state education leaders: more public than private, in-state than out-of-state, flagship than Ivy+ undergraduate.

Graduate

State chiefs earned 60 graduate degrees.[52] The ratios are similar to those for undergraduate degrees; but at the graduate level, flagships and in-state schools were even more common. Contrary to the view that top leaders must go elsewhere to get an elite education, these leaders doubled-down on close-to-home institutions. Many future chiefs went to a less prominent undergraduate institution and received a master's degree or doctorate from the state's flagship (e.g., from Jacksonville State to Alabama; from Delta State to Mississippi; from Midland Lutheran to Nebraska; from Shippensburg to Penn State). Overall, at the graduate level, 58% of degrees were earned at public institutions and 60% from in-state institutions (**Figure 12**). Only four state chiefs earned an Ivy+ graduate degree; nearly five times more earned a public-flagship graduate degree.

Figure 12

Education Chiefs (Graduate Degrees)



State Attorneys General

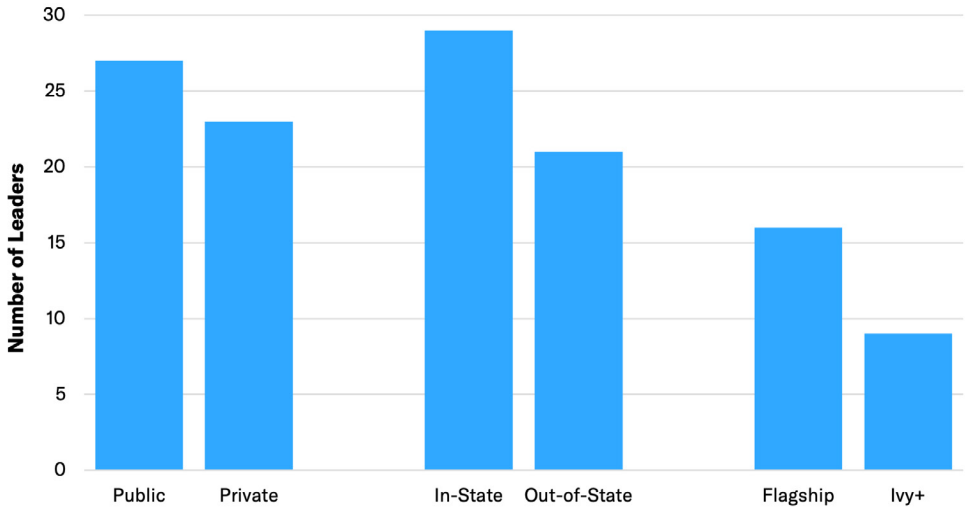
Undergraduate

All 50 attorneys general have undergraduate degrees, and, as with all other officials analyzed, most graduated from public schools, and most of those schools were in-state and/or flagships. In fact, 14 AGs graduated from their states' flagships (DE, FL, GA, KY, LA, MI, MS, MO, ND, OH, OR, VT, WA, WV, WY), the highest percentage of in-state flagships among all offices analyzed. Seven graduated from in-state privates (Allegheny, Baylor, BYU, DePaul, Drake, Hendrix, and Wabash).

AGs do have the highest percentage (18%) of Ivy+ graduates of all offices studied—but this is still considerably lower than the percentage of flagships (32%). Only four schools can claim more than one AG as alumni: two Ivy+ (Harvard and Yale) and two non-Ivy+ (BYU and Baylor). The pattern continues: predominance of publics, in-states, and flagships (**Figure 13**).

Figure 13

Attorneys General (Undergraduate Degrees)



Law School

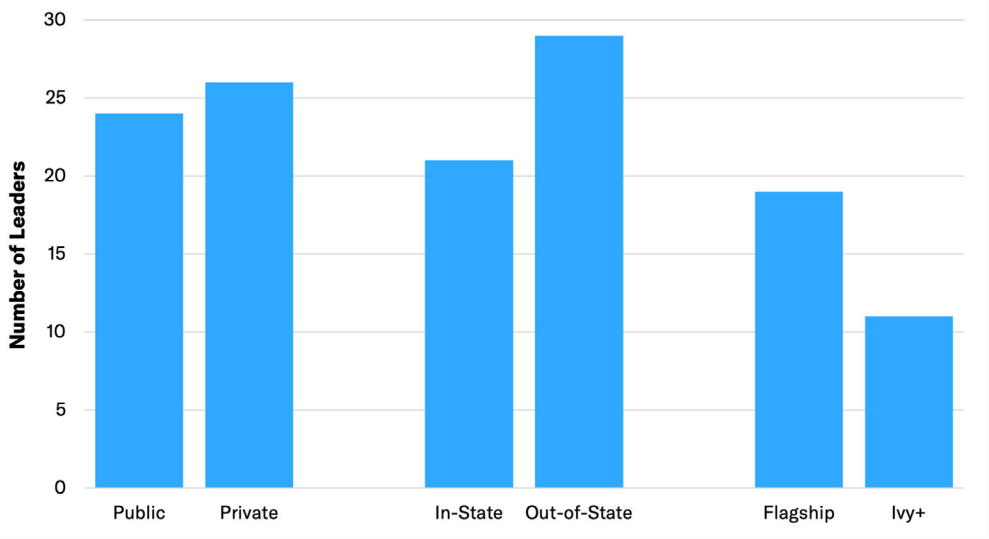
All 50 AGs have a law degree (**Figure 14**). Of all the public offices analyzed, this is the only category—law school degrees among attorneys general—with more private-school graduates (26) than public (24). But the portion of AGs who attended private law schools (52%) is still lower than the portion of all current law students attending private institutions (61%). In other words, state attorneys general are more likely to graduate from a public law school than today's average lawyer.

It is the only category with more out-of-state graduates (29) than in-state (21). It also has the highest percentage of Ivy+ graduates (11, or 22%). Three graduated from Chicago, Stanford, and Harvard, and two from Yale. However, it has the highest percentage of public flagship graduates (19, or 38%). The AGs of Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Kentucky, Louisiana, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, Oregon, South Carolina, South Dakota, and Wyoming all attended their states' flagship law school.

In total, AGs mostly go to public, in-state, and flagships at the undergraduate level; but for law school, more gravitate toward private and out-of-state institutions. Once again, significantly more attend flagships than Ivy+.

Figure 14

Attorneys General (Law School Degrees)



Top Law Firms

The preceding analysis demonstrates the central role played by public, in-state, and flagship universities in educating an important segment of America's leaders. To better understand whether the findings apply only to state-level public officials or might be seen more broadly, including in the private sector, I've included an additional category: top lawyers from each state's top law firms.

One reason for including top law firms from each state has to do with the importance of place, which we have already seen in the data. For many people, particular places are extremely important: they grew up in a place, went to school in that place, and then rose to a public leadership role there. We can lose track of that close-to-home sentiment when we focus on universities and employers located in a narrow slice of the Northeast. We should not tell young people that they must go to college far away from home to have a better chance of becoming a leader. And we should not tell them that elite employers are all but entirely headquartered near one of the 12 Ivy+ schools. That is a distinctively "Anywhere" understanding of leadership and service; it is not a "Somewhere" approach.

Indeed, Princeton's mission is to "serve the nation and the world"; Yale commits to "improving the world."[53] Employers often considered elite are much the same. McKinsey Consulting states its goal to "help create positive, enduring change in the world"; Google, likewise, aims to "organize the world's information and make it universally accessible and useful."[54] Such behemoth employers typically have offices scattered around the nation (and sometimes around the world). They aren't especially focused on a discrete location, its people, its institutions, and its history. Instead, they work just about everywhere and for just about everyone. That type of global perspective certainly appeals to some students and prospective employees. But it is quite different from statements such as, "Texas A&M University serves Texas." Or Louisiana State's aspiration "to build a more healthy, prosperous, and secure future for the state." Or the University of Georgia, whose "overall purpose is to raise attainment levels for communities across Georgia."[55] Those are the kinds of statements that resonate with the many people who believe that their place matters.

So for many Americans, the "elite" firm is not the one that's based thousands of miles away but the one committed to the place they care about. Similarly, the "elite" college is not the one that prepares students to work at an international consulting firm or a globally minded software company but rather the great school with pathways into great institutions serving *this place*. This counsels more consideration of place-based employers. We should ask whether those employers are often led by graduates of private, especially Ivy+, schools—or do their leaders come from public, including flagship, schools? Do their leaders come from across America, or do they primarily pull from in-state schools?

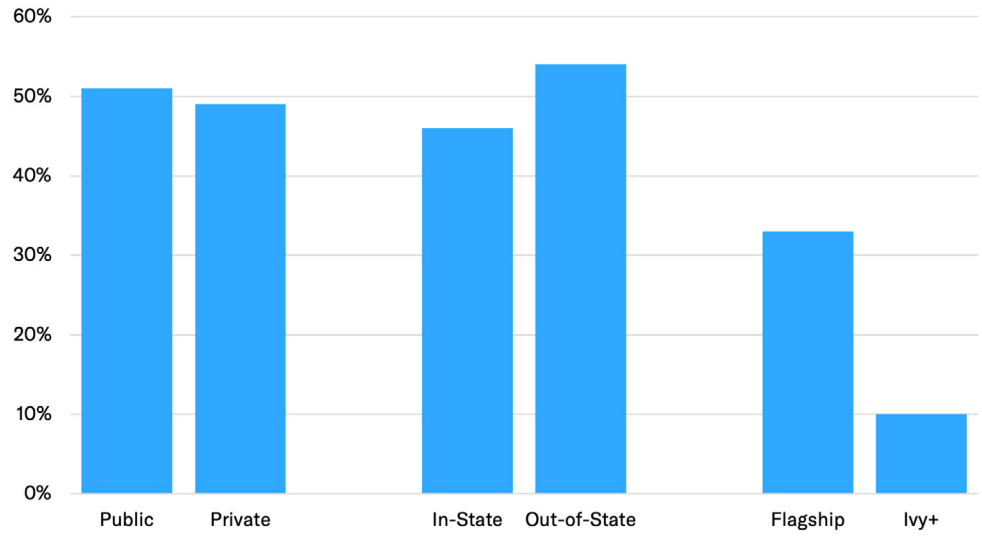
For this analysis, I used preexisting lists of the top law firms by state. I identified the leaders of those firms, including the managing partner, members of the executive committee, and practice or industry chairs. I then found where each of these leaders attended college and law school. I included at least two firms per state (161 in total). In total, this analysis includes more than 2,400 attorneys (about 50 per state).[56] A list of all firms by state can be found in **Appendix C**.

Undergraduate

On average, a majority (51%) of states' leading attorneys graduated from a public college. Similarly, on average, 47% graduated from an in-state institution. And, on average, a state's top lawyers are more than three times more likely to have an undergraduate degree from a public flagship than from an Ivy+ institution (33% to 10%) (**Figure 15**).

Figure 15

States' Leading Attorneys (Undergraduate Degrees)



Note: This chart shows that, in the average state, 51% of the leading attorneys have a public undergraduate degree.

As with public offices, averages across states hide astonishing variation among states (**Figure 16**). States have different cultures when it comes to the education of their top lawyers. In three states (WY, OK, and KS), over 75% of the attorneys identified earned undergraduate degrees from public institutions. But in three states (NJ, ME, and MA), less than 25% have a public undergraduate degree. In Mississippi, Wyoming, and Indiana, over 80% graduated from an in-state college, but in nine states, less than 25% were educated in-state. In six states, 50% or more of the top attorneys attended a flagship public for undergraduate, but in Massachusetts, less than 10% went to a flagship public.

In four states (MA, CA, VT, and NY), at least 25% of top attorneys went to an Ivy+. As we have already seen, Ivy+ graduates predominate in public offices in three of these states. But in eight states, not a single top attorney identified went to an Ivy+. In 18 states, less than 5% of top lawyers graduated from an Ivy+.

We can understand even more about the relative importance of different types of educational institutions by looking at which specific school has the most graduates among the state's leading attorneys (**Figure 17**). In 44 states, a public college is the outright leader or is tied. In only six states (MA, MN, NE, NY, OR, and UT) are the top schools private.[57]

In 48 states, an in-state college is the outright leader or is tied for the lead in the number of undergraduate degrees held by the state's top attorneys. In only two states (AK and MO) is the leading school located in another state.[58] Perhaps most remarkable is the prominence of flagship publics. In 43 states, a flagship is the most attended or tied for the most attended. In only one state (MA) is the outright leading college an Ivy+ (Harvard); in New York, three of the five schools tied for the lead are Ivy+ (Harvard, Cornell, and Princeton). In four states, the leading college is a well-regarded in-state, non-Ivy+ private school (MN/St. Olaf, NE/Creighton; OR/Willamette; UT/BYU). In two states, the leading school is a well-regarded, in-state, non-flagship public (ND/North Dakota State, OH/Miami University).

Figure 16

States' Leading Attorneys: Undergraduate Degrees by Type

State	Public	State	In-State	State	Flagship Public	State	Ivy+
Wyoming	83%	Mississippi	92%	Wyoming	71%	Massachusetts	45%
Oklahoma	78%	Wyoming	83%	Arizona	51%	California	41%
Kansas	77%	Indiana	83%	Oklahoma	51%	Vermont	30%
South Carolina	74%	South Carolina	77%	North Carolina	50%	New York	27%
Mississippi	73%	Kansas	77%	Kentucky	50%	North Carolina	22%
Arkansas	71%	Utah	76%	Mississippi	50%	Illinois	19%
Michigan	68%	Oklahoma	74%	Arkansas	49%	Idaho	18%
South Dakota	67%	Michigan	70%	West Virginia	46%	Georgia	17%
Iowa	64%	South Dakota	69%	South Carolina	46%	Colorado	17%
Kentucky	64%	Nebraska	68%	New Mexico	45%	Arizona	16%
New Mexico	62%	Iowa	64%	Wisconsin	41%	Minnesota	16%
Arizona	61%	Texas	60%	Tennessee	41%	New Hampshire	15%
West Virginia	61%	Virginia	60%	Iowa	40%	Washington	14%
Montana	61%	Arkansas	60%	Michigan	39%	Rhode Island	14%
Virginia	60%	Pennsylvania	59%	Kansas	38%	Nevada	13%
Tennessee	59%	Ohio	59%	Louisiana	36%	Hawaii	12%
North Dakota	57%	North Carolina	58%	Georgia	36%	Missouri	12%
Alabama	56%	West Virginia	57%	Montana	36%	Pennsylvania	11%
North Carolina	56%	Wisconsin	57%	Nebraska	36%	Connecticut	11%
Missouri	55%	Alabama	56%	Virginia	35%	Florida	10%
Wisconsin	54%	Kentucky	56%	Delaware	34%	Delaware	10%
Texas	54%	Montana	50%	Texas	34%	Utah	9%
Florida	54%	Tennessee	44%	Washington	34%	Wisconsin	9%
Georgia	53%	North Dakota	43%	Colorado	33%	Texas	9%
Utah	53%	California	39%	Hawaii	33%	Louisiana	9%
Ohio	53%	Florida	39%	Utah	32%	Oregon	8%
Delaware	52%	New York	38%	Missouri	31%	New Jersey	8%
Louisiana	51%	Louisiana	38%	Rhode Island	31%	Maine	8%
Washington	51%	Minnesota	37%	Illinois	31%	Maryland	7%
Colorado	50%	New Jersey	37%	South Dakota	31%	Alabama	6%
Hawaii	48%	Oregon	37%	Florida	31%	Oklahoma	6%
Nevada	48%	Rhode Island	34%	Maryland	30%	Kentucky	6%
Indiana	48%	Colorado	33%	Indiana	30%	North Dakota	5%
Nebraska	46%	Massachusetts	33%	Idaho	29%	New Mexico	5%
Alaska	43%	Maryland	33%	Vermont	27%	Virginia	5%
Idaho	43%	Washington	32%	Nevada	26%	Alaska	4%
Oregon	43%	Idaho	32%	Alabama	25%	Wyoming	4%
Maryland	41%	New Hampshire	30%	Oregon	24%	West Virginia	4%
Illinois	38%	Vermont	27%	Ohio	24%	Arkansas	3%
California	38%	Illinois	27%	New Hampshire	22%	Michigan	3%
Vermont	32%	New Mexico	25%	Alaska	22%	Iowa	2%
Pennsylvania	32%	Arizona	24%	North Dakota	22%	Tennessee	2%
Rhode Island	31%	Georgia	23%	Maine	21%	Indiana	0%
New Hampshire	30%	Missouri	23%	Minnesota	18%	Kansas	0%
Connecticut	29%	Maine	23%	Connecticut	16%	Mississippi	0%
New York	26%	Nevada	23%	Pennsylvania	16%	Montana	0%
Minnesota	25%	Hawaii	21%	New Jersey	16%	Nebraska	0%
New Jersey	24%	Connecticut	21%	California	16%	Ohio	0%
Maine	23%	Delaware	21%	New York	14%	South Carolina	0%
Massachusetts	11%	Alaska	0%	Massachusetts	9%	South Dakota	0%

Figure 17

Most Attended College Among States' Leading Attorneys

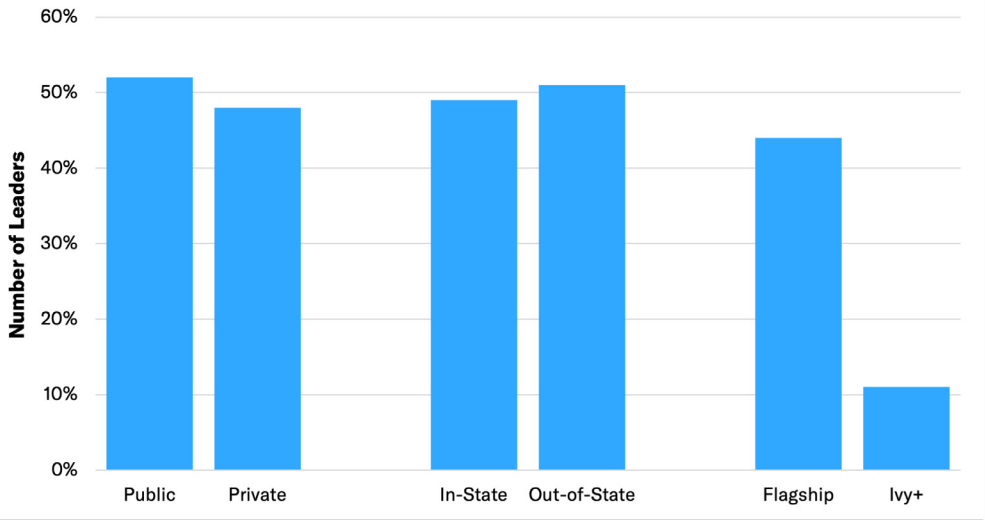
	Most Attended College	Type	Location	Subtype
Alabama	U. Alabama	Public	In-state	Flagship
Alaska	U. Washington	Public	Out-of-state	Flagship
Arizona	U. Arizona	Public	In-state	Flagship
Arkansas	U. Arkansas	Public	In-state	Flagship
California	Cal-Berkeley	Public	In-state	Flagship
Colorado	U. Colorado	Public	In-state	Flagship
Connecticut	UConn/Boston College (tie)	Public / Private	In-state / Out-of-state	Flagship /
Delaware	U. Delaware	Public	In-state	Flagship
Florida	U. Florida	Public	In-state	Flagship
Georgia	U. Georgia	Public	In-state	Flagship
Hawaii	U. Hawaii	Public	In-state	Flagship
Idaho	U. ID/College of Idaho (tie)	Public / Private	In-state / In-state	Flagship /
Illinois	U. Illinois	Public	In-state	Flagship
Indiana	Indiana U.	Public	In-state	Flagship
Iowa	U. Iowa	Public	In-state	Flagship
Kansas	U. Kansas	Public	In-state	Flagship
Kentucky	U. Kentucky	Public	In-state	Flagship
Louisiana	LSU	Public	In-state	Flagship
Maine	U. Maine	Public	In-state	Flagship
Maryland	U. MD/Johns Hopkins (tie)	Public / Private	In-state / In-state	Flagship /
Massachusetts	Harvard	Private	In-state	Ivy+
Michigan	U. Michigan	Public	In-state	Flagship
Minnesota	St. Olaf	Private	In-state	
Mississippi	U. Mississippi	Public	In-state	Flagship
Missouri	U. Kansas	Public	Out-of-state	Flagship
Montana	U. Montana	Public	In-state	Flagship
Nebraska	Creighton	Private	In-state	
Nevada	U. Nevada	Public	In-state	Flagship
New Hampshire	U. New Hampshire	Public	In-state	Flagship
New Jersey	Rutgers	Public	In-state	Flagship
New Mexico	U. New Mexico	Public	In-state	Flagship
New York	(5-way tie)			
North Carolina	U. North Carolina	Public	In-state	Flagship
North Dakota	North Dakota State	Public	In-state	
Ohio	Miami (OH)	Public	In-state	
Oklahoma	U. Oklahoma	Public	In-state	Flagship
Oregon	Willamette	Private	In-state	
Pennsylvania	Penn State/U. Pittsburgh	Public / Public	In-state / In-state	Flagship /
Rhode Island	U. Rhode Island	Public	In-state	Flagship
South Carolina	U. South Carolina	Public	In-state	Flagship
South Dakota	U. South Dakota	Public	In-state	Flagship
Tennessee	U. Tennessee	Public	In-state	Flagship
Texas	U. Texas	Public	In-state	Flagship
Utah	BYU	Private	In-state	
Vermont	U. Vermont	Public	In-state	Flagship
Virginia	U. Virginia	Public	In-state	Flagship
Washington	U. Washington	Public	In-state	Flagship
West Virginia	U. West Virginia	Public	In-state	Flagship
Wisconsin	U. Wisconsin	Public	In-state	Flagship
Wyoming	U. Wyoming	Public	In-state	Flagship

Law School

The results for law schools are like those for undergraduate schools. Across the nation, on average, a majority (52%) of a state's leading attorneys graduated from a public law school, and 49% graduated from an in-state law school. Given that 61% of today's law students are in private schools, these leading lawyers are more likely to be products of public institutions. Importantly, compared with the undergraduate results, they were *even more likely* to have a law degree from a flagship public. In the average state, the top attorneys are four times more likely to have graduated from a flagship law school than an Ivy+ law school (44% to 11%) (**Figure 18**).

Figure 18

States' Leading Attorneys: Law School



Here, too, is significant variation among the states (**Figure 19**). In Kansas, nearly all top attorneys attended a public law school; in nine states, more than three in four did. But in New Jersey, fewer than one in seven went to a public law school; in Massachusetts, it is fewer than one in 10. In four states, over 80% of top lawyers went to an in-state law school; in three states, 10% or less did so.

Figure 19

States' Leading Attorneys: Law School by Type

State	Public	State	In-State	State	Flagship	State	Ivy+
Kansas	96%	Arkansas	83%	South Carolina	89%	Illinois	50%
Arkansas	89%	Oklahoma	83%	Arkansas	83%	Massachusetts	42%
South Carolina	89%	Kansas	81%	Mississippi	81%	California	34%
Kentucky	86%	Mississippi	81%	South Dakota	79%	New York	34%
Mississippi	81%	Wyoming	79%	Montana	79%	Minnesota	22%
South Dakota	79%	South Carolina	77%	Wyoming	75%	Pennsylvania	18%
Montana	79%	Iowa	76%	Oklahoma	71%	Arizona	18%
West Virginia	75%	Kentucky	75%	North Dakota	66%	Washington	18%
Wyoming	75%	Nebraska	75%	West Virginia	64%	Vermont	18%
New Mexico	72%	Ohio	74%	New Mexico	62%	Florida	15%
Oklahoma	71%	Montana	72%	Kentucky	61%	New Hampshire	15%
Maryland	70%	Louisiana	70%	Indiana	60%	Georgia	14%
North Dakota	66%	Indiana	65%	Kansas	58%	Texas	14%
Indiana	65%	Pennsylvania	61%	Idaho	57%	Alaska	13%
Texas	63%	Maryland	61%	Texas	57%	Alabama	13%
Michigan	60%	West Virginia	61%	Louisiana	53%	North Carolina	12%
Ohio	59%	Oregon	59%	Alabama	50%	Utah	12%
Idaho	57%	Virginia	58%	Wisconsin	50%	Maine	12%
Missouri	57%	Texas	57%	Maine	48%	Colorado	11%
Arizona	56%	New York	57%	Alaska	48%	Connecticut	11%
Virginia	55%	Wisconsin	57%	Maryland	48%	Maryland	11%
Vermont	53%	Michigan	55%	Iowa	48%	Wisconsin	11%
Alabama	50%	Massachusetts	54%	Missouri	44%	Delaware	10%
Hawaii	50%	Alabama	53%	Minnesota	43%	New Mexico	10%
Wisconsin	50%	Florida	50%	Nebraska	43%	Virginia	10%
Tennessee	48%	Illinois	50%	Virginia	43%	Tennessee	9%
Maine	48%	New Jersey	50%	North Carolina	42%	Hawaii	9%
Alaska	48%	Utah	50%	Washington	42%	Michigan	9%
Iowa	48%	Tennessee	48%	Utah	41%	Wyoming	8%
Louisiana	47%	Missouri	48%	Tennessee	41%	New Jersey	8%
Nebraska	46%	South Dakota	46%	Arizona	40%	Rhode Island	7%
North Carolina	46%	California	42%	Georgia	40%	Nevada	6%
Georgia	46%	Idaho	39%	Vermont	38%	Louisiana	6%
Minnesota	45%	Minnesota	39%	Oregon	37%	Ohio	6%
Connecticut	44%	Colorado	39%	Colorado	36%	Oregon	4%
Utah	44%	North Dakota	37%	Ohio	35%	Missouri	4%
Washington	43%	North Carolina	36%	Connecticut	33%	Idaho	4%
Nevada	42%	Georgia	35%	Hawaii	32%	Arkansas	3%
Oregon	41%	New Mexico	33%	Florida	30%	Kentucky	3%
Colorado	39%	Maine	33%	Michigan	28%	South Dakota	3%
Florida	39%	Connecticut	32%	Delaware	24%	Indiana	3%
Delaware	34%	Arizona	30%	Illinois	19%	Oklahoma	1%
California	31%	Washington	21%	California	19%	Iowa	0%
Pennsylvania	30%	Hawaii	21%	Nevada	16%	Kansas	0%
New York	27%	Vermont	20%	New York	16%	Mississippi	0%
Illinois	19%	Rhode Island	14%	New Hampshire	15%	Montana	0%
New Hampshire	19%	Nevada	13%	New Jersey	13%	Nebraska	0%
Rhode Island	17%	Delaware	10%	Rhode Island	10%	North Dakota	0%
New Jersey	13%	New Hampshire	7%	Pennsylvania	9%	South Carolina	0%
Massachusetts	9%	Alaska	0%	Massachusetts	7%	West Virginia	0%

In some states, the top lawyers were disproportionately educated in the law schools of flagship publics. In six states, at least three-quarters attended a flagship. At the other end of the spectrum are three states where it is 10% or less. The Ivy+ are important in some places; in four states, at least a third of top lawyers have an Ivy+ law degree—the same states seen above. But in most of the nation, Ivy+ law schools educate few top lawyers: in eight states, no top lawyers have an Ivy+ law degree; in 16 states, it's 4% or less.

As with undergraduate institutions, we can further assess the relative importance of different types of law schools by looking at which specific school has the most graduates among the state's leading attorneys (**Figure 20**). In 38 states, a public is either the top or tied as the top law school among its top lawyers—remarkable, since most law students attend private law schools. In 12 states, the top law school among top lawyers is a private, and nine of those 12 are *non*-Ivy+ privates. They are mostly well regarded in-state private schools—for instance, the University of Denver in Colorado, St. Louis University in Missouri, Creighton University in Nebraska, BYU in Utah, Villanova in Pennsylvania, and Seton Hall in New Jersey. Indeed, in 44 states, an in-state school is the top or tied at the top. In 36 states, a flagship is at the top of law schools. In only three states is an Ivy+ at the top: Illinois/University of Chicago, Massachusetts/Harvard, New York/Harvard.

Figure 20

Most Attended Law School Among States' Leading Attorneys

	Most Attended Law School	Type	Location	Subtype
Alabama	U. Alabama	Public	In-state	Flagship
Alaska	U. Washington	Public	Out-of-state	Flagship
Arizona	U. Arizona	Public	In-state	Flagship
Arkansas	U. Arkansas	Public	In-state	Flagship
California	UCLA/Harvard (tie)	Public | Private	In-state | Out-of-state	| Ivy+
Colorado	U. Denver	Private	In-state	
Connecticut	U. Connecticut	Public	In-state	Flagship
Delaware	(3-way tie)	Public | Public | Public	Out | Out | Out	Flag | Flag
Florida	U. Florida	Public	In-state	Flagship
Georgia	U. Georgia	Public	In-state	Flagship
Hawaii	U. Hawaii	Public	In-state	Flagship
Idaho	U. Idaho	Public	In-state	Flagship
Illinois	U. Chicago	Private	In-state	Ivy+
Indiana	Indiana U.	Public	In-state	Flagship
Iowa	U. Iowa/Drake (tie)	Public | Private	In-state	Flagship |
Kansas	U. Kansas	Public	In-state	Flagship
Kentucky	U. Kentucky	Public	In-state	Flagship
Louisiana	LSU	Public	In-state	Flagship
Maine	U. Maine	Public	In-state	Flagship
Maryland	U. Maryland	Public	In-state	Flagship
Massachusetts	Harvard	Private	In-state	Ivy+
Michigan	U. Michigan	Public	In-state	Flagship
Minnesota	U. Minnesota	Public	In-state	Flagship
Mississippi	U. Mississippi	Public	In-state	Flagship
Missouri	St. Louis University	Private	In-state	
Montana	U. Montana	Public	In-state	Flagship
Nebraska	Creighton	Private	In-state	
Nevada	(3-way tie)	Public | Public | Private	In | Out | Out	| |
New Hampshire	Boston College	Private	Out-of-state	
New Jersey	Seton Hall	Private	In-state	
New Mexico	U. New Mexico	Public	In-state	Flagship
New York	Harvard	Private	Out-of-state	Ivy+
North Carolina	U. North Carolina	Public	In-state	Flagship
North Dakota	U. North Dakota	Public	In-state	Flagship
Ohio	Ohio State/Cincinnati (tie)	Public | Public	In-state | In-state	Flagship |
Oklahoma	U. Oklahoma	Public	In-state	Flagship
Oregon	U. Oregon	Public	In-state	Flagship
Pennsylvania	Villanova	Private	In-state	
Rhode Island	Boston College	Private	Out-of-state	
South Carolina	U. South Carolina	Public	In-state	Flagship
South Dakota	U. South Dakota	Public	In-state	Flagship
Tennessee	U. Tennessee	Public	In-state	Flagship

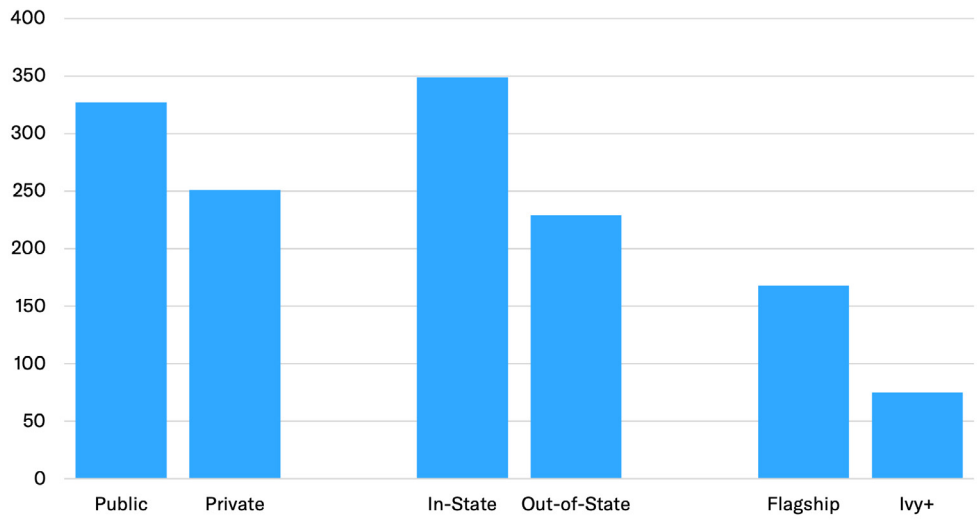
	Most Attended Law School	Type	Location	Subtype
Texas	U. Texas	Public	In-state	Flagship
Utah	BYU	Private	In-state	
Vermont	U. Vermont	Public	In-state	Flagship
Virginia	U. Virginia	Public	In-state	Flagship
Washington	Georgetown	Private	Out-of-state	
West Virginia	U. West Virginia	Public	In-state	Flagship
Wisconsin	U. Wisconsin	Public	In-state	Flagship
Wyoming	U. Wyoming	Public	In-state	Flagship

Summary

Across the five public offices analyzed (state supreme courts, state legislative leaders, governors, state education chiefs, and state attorneys general), there were 603 individuals.[59] At the undergraduate level, these individuals were more likely to have attended publics (57%) than privates (43%). They were also much more likely to attend an in-state school (60%) than out-of-state (40%). One of this study's most interesting findings is the overall modest influence of Ivy+ schools. At the undergraduate level, only 75 individuals (12% of these officials) graduated from an Ivy+ school (**Figure 21**). Public flagships are much more prominent (28%).

Figure 21

All Public Leaders (Undergraduate Degrees)



These results paint a different picture from the one that emerges from the Chetty et al. study (**Figure 22**), which pointed out that nearly three-quarters of recent U.S. Supreme Court justices, nearly half of Rhodes Scholars, and almost half of recent U.S. presidents were Ivy+ graduates. But if we expand our ken, it becomes clear that although Ivy+ schools aren't insignificant, they are far from dominant.

Figure 22

Percentage with Ivy+ Undergraduate Degrees

Reported in Chetty et al.;	
Supreme Court Justices (1967–Current)	71%
Rhodes Scholars	48%
U.S. Presidents (1961–Current)	42%
MacArthur Fellowship Recipient	29%
Attend Elite Graduate School	26%
Current U.S. Senators	25%
Reported here:	
Public Leader Average	12%

If there is a dominant school type, it is the flagship. In every public-office category, a higher percentage received an undergraduate degree from a flagship than from an Ivy+ (**Figure 23**). In fact, these leaders earned more undergraduate degrees from the 12 most attended publics (76) than the 12 Ivy+ (75) schools (**Figure 24**).

Figure 23

State Leaders: Percentage with Flagship or Ivy+ Undergraduate Degree

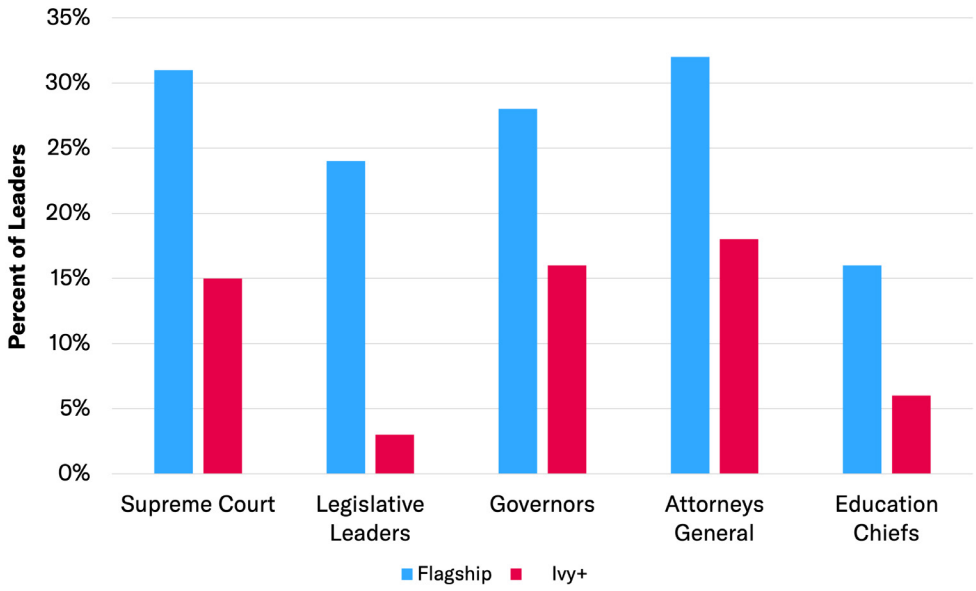


Figure 24

Number of Public Leaders with Undergraduate Degrees[60]

12 Ivy+		Top 12 Publics	
Harvard	19	U. Texas	8
Yale	12	U. Arkansas	7
Dartmouth	11	U. Georgia	7
Duke	11	U. Mississippi	7
Stanford	6	U. Wyoming	7
Princeton	5	Auburn	6
Brown	3	Indiana U.	6
Cornell	3	LSU	6
Penn	3	U. Michigan	6
Columbia	1	U. Virginia	6
MIT	1	ASU	5
Chicago	0	U. Kentucky	5
Total	**75**		**76**

These results also demonstrate how much is concealed by considering only national averages. There are enormous differences among the states (**Figure 25**). In eight states, three-quarters or more of the public officials analyzed went to public colleges. In Louisiana, 11 of 12 went to a public. But in six states, a quarter or less attended a public. In Connecticut, only two of 13 attended a public. Similarly, some states have a strong culture of public leaders attending in-state colleges. In 14 states, at least three-quarters of leaders went in-state (public or private). In Arkansas, Louisiana, Indiana, South Carolina, and Utah, all but one of their officials went in-state. But in nine states, one-third or less went in-state. In Alaska, it is one of 10; in Nevada, two of 13. In 19 states, more than a third of leaders graduated from a flagship; in Wyoming, it's two of three.

Figure 25

Public Leaders' Undergraduate Types by State

State	Public	State	In-State	State	Flagship	State	Ivy+
Louisiana	92%	Arkansas	92%	Wyoming	67%	Connecticut	46%
Oklahoma	87%	Louisiana	92%	Louisiana	50%	California	46%
Michigan	85%	Indiana	91%	Utah	50%	New Jersey	42%
Tennessee	82%	Utah	90%	Montana	50%	New Hampshire	40%
Nevada	77%	South Carolina	90%	Georgia	47%	Massachusetts	33%
Montana	75%	Oklahoma	87%	Washington	47%	Colorado	33%
Kentucky	75%	Michigan	85%	Mississippi	47%	New York	31%
Arizona	75%	Georgia	80%	Indiana	45%	Texas	27%
Georgia	73%	Mississippi	80%	Tennessee	45%	Vermont	18%
Washington	73%	Nebraska	79%	Kentucky	42%	Delaware	18%
Indiana	73%	New York	77%	Nebraska	41%	New Mexico	18%
Utah	70%	Pennsylvania	77%	Texas	40%	Florida	17%
Hawaii	70%	Kentucky	75%	Hawaii	40%	Wisconsin	17%
Virginia	69%	Ohio	75%	North Carolina	38%	Maryland	17%
Wyoming	67%	Tennessee	73%	Michigan	38%	Arizona	17%
Mississippi	67%	West Virginia	70%	Arkansas	38%	Iowa	17%
Alabama	67%	California	69%	Vermont	36%	Maine	17%
North Dakota	64%	Oregon	67%	Delaware	36%	Minnesota	17%
South Dakota	64%	Kansas	67%	Florida	33%	North Carolina	15%
North Carolina	62%	Montana	67%	Oregon	33%	Nevada	15%
Arkansas	62%	Illinois	67%	Nevada	31%	Georgia	13%
Nebraska	61%	Virginia	62%	New Hampshire	30%	Alabama	13%
West Virginia	60%	Missouri	62%	West Virginia	30%	Hawaii	10%
South Carolina	60%	Texas	60%	North Dakota	27%	South Carolina	10%
Oregon	58%	Wyoming	58%	Idaho	27%	Oregon	8%
Kansas	58%	New Mexico	55%	Oklahoma	27%	Kansas	8%
Ohio	58%	South Dakota	55%	Wisconsin	25%	Ohio	8%
Vermont	55%	Alabama	53%	Maryland	25%	Illinois	8%
Texas	53%	New Hampshire	50%	Virginia	23%	Michigan	8%
Florida	50%	Massachusetts	50%	Alabama	20%	Virginia	8%
Delaware	45%	Arizona	50%	South Carolina	20%	Pennsylvania	8%
New Mexico	45%	Minnesota	50%	Alaska	20%	Washington	7%
Wisconsin	42%	Washington	47%	New Mexico	18%	Wyoming	0%
Maryland	42%	North Carolina	46%	South Dakota	18%	Louisiana	0%
Iowa	42%	Connecticut	46%	New Jersey	17%	Utah	0%
Minnesota	42%	North Dakota	45%	Massachusetts	17%	Montana	0%
New Hampshire	40%	New Jersey	42%	Arizona	17%	Mississippi	0%
New York	38%	Iowa	42%	Iowa	17%	Indiana	0%
Pennsylvania	38%	Vermont	36%	Maine	17%	Tennessee	0%
Colorado	33%	Delaware	36%	Kansas	17%	Kentucky	0%
Missouri	31%	Idaho	36%	Connecticut	15%	Nebraska	0%
California	31%	Wisconsin	33%	Missouri	15%	Arkansas	0%
Alaska	30%	Maine	33%	Rhode Island	10%	West Virginia	0%
Idaho	27%	Colorado	33%	Colorado	8%	North Dakota	0%
New Jersey	25%	Rhode Island	30%	Minnesota	8%	Idaho	0%
Maine	25%	Hawaii	30%	Ohio	8%	Oklahoma	0%
Illinois	25%	Florida	25%	California	8%	Alaska	0%
Rhode Island	20%	Maryland	25%	New York	8%	South Dakota	0%
Massachusetts	17%	Nevada	15%	Illinois	0%	Missouri	0%
Connecticut	15%	Alaska	10%	Pennsylvania	0%	Rhode Island	0%

The starkest differences across the states are in the portion of Ivy+ graduates in leadership roles. In 18 states, no leader analyzed earned an Ivy+ undergraduate degree. In California and Connecticut, nearly half of all leaders analyzed had Ivy+ degrees. There were eight states with at least four Ivy+ leaders—and these eight states accounted for nearly half of all leaders with Ivy+ undergraduate degrees. That is, outside these states, only about one in 14 leaders has an Ivy+ undergraduate degree.

Two more facts about undergraduate education: first, the overestimation of Ivy+ importance also implies more broadly that there is a narrow channel into significant public careers. But the 580 public leaders with four-year degrees graduated from 299 different schools. The potential for public leadership is found everywhere. Second, our focus on a few ostensibly "elite" schools neglects the role played by many other schools. Flagship publics, like the Universities of Texas, Arkansas, Georgia, Mississippi, and Wyoming, educated more public officials than most Ivy+ schools. Similarly, public non-flagships like Arizona State and Auburn and non-Ivy+ privates like BYU and Northwestern are among the top producers of public leaders.

The results are similar at the graduate level. These leaders earned 583 graduate degrees.[61] Of these, 56% came from publics and 58% from in-state schools. The leaders earned three times as many graduate degrees from flagships (232) as Ivy+ (80) (**Figures 26** and **27**). They earned more graduate degrees from the 12 most attended publics (95) than from the 12 Ivy+ (80) institutions.

Figure 26

All Public Leaders (Graduate Degrees)

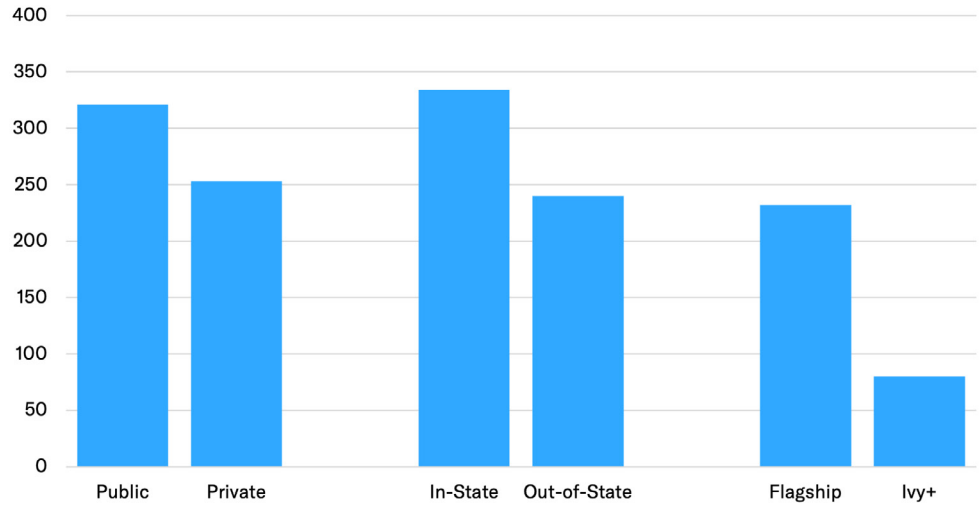


Figure 27

Number of Public Leaders with Graduate Degrees[62]

12 Ivy+		Top 12 Publics	
Harvard	29	Mississippi	12
Yale	16	Virginia	11
Chicago	8	LSU	8
Duke	8	Michigan	8
Stanford	7	South Carolina	8
Penn	4	ASU	7
Columbia	4	Cal-Berkeley	7
Cornell	3	Indiana	7
MIT	1	Missouri	7
Dartmouth	0	UNC	7
Princeton	0	Wisconsin	7
Brown	0	Arkansas	6
Total	**80**		**95**

Graduate-degree institutions also varied greatly by state (**Figure 28**). In five states, at least 90% of analyzed leaders with graduate degrees earned them at public institutions; at the other end of the spectrum are five states in which less than 30% of leaders with graduate degrees received them from publics. In 12 states, over 75% graduated from an in-state institution; in six states, 25% or less did. Remarkably, in Hawaii, South Carolina, and South Dakota, nearly all public leaders with a graduate degree earned it from a public flagship; but in New York and Massachusetts, none did. The same few states (like California, Massachusetts, and New Jersey) have a disproportionately high number of leaders with Ivy+ graduate degrees, while most states have few to none: in 15 states, no leaders have an Ivy+ graduate degree; less than 10% of leaders in 26 states earned an Ivy+ graduate degree.

Figure 28

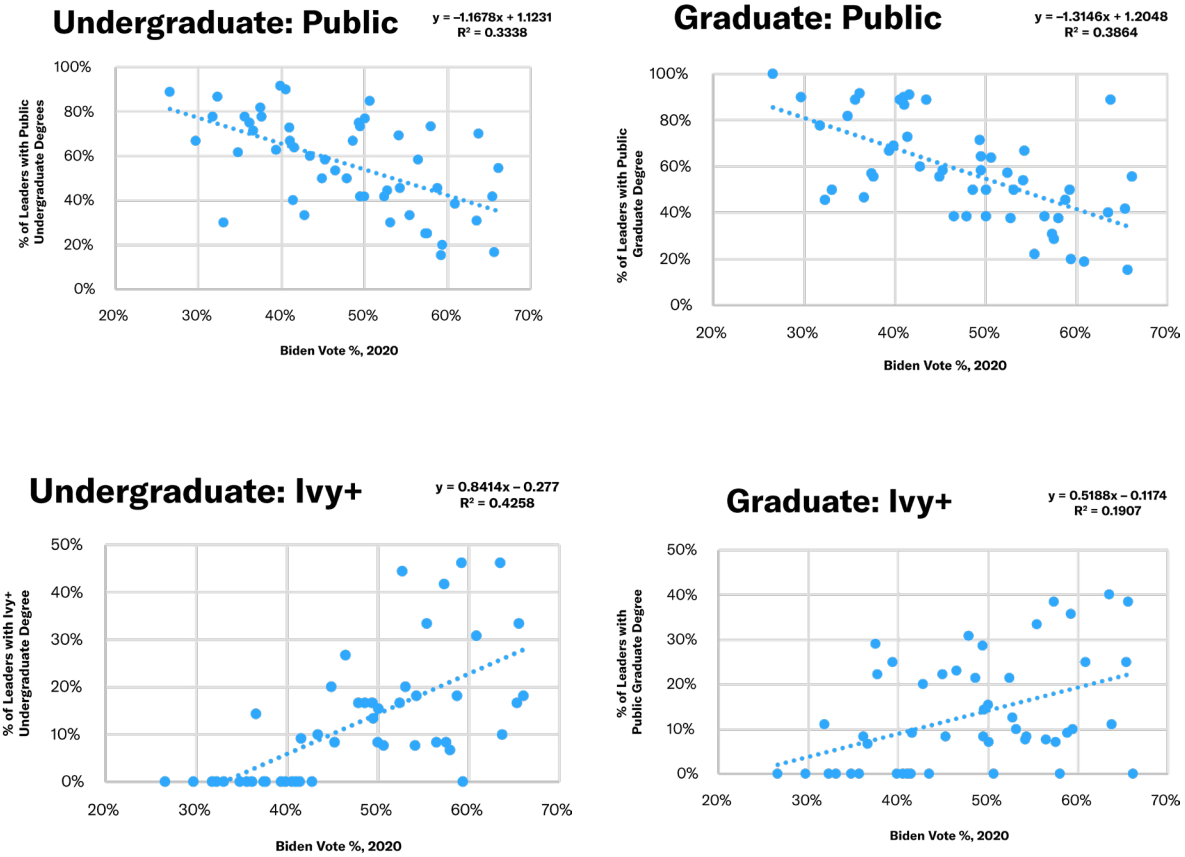
Differences in Leaders' Graduate Institutions by State

State	Public	State	In-State	State	Flagship	State	Ivy+
Wyoming	100%	South Carolina	100%	Hawaii	89%	California	40%
Kentucky	92%	Missouri	91%	South Carolina	89%	Massachusetts	38%
Kansas	91%	Indiana	90%	South Dakota	89%	New Jersey	38%
Indiana	90%	Mississippi	87%	Wyoming	86%	Connecticut	36%
West Virginia	90%	Wyoming	86%	Mississippi	73%	Colorado	33%
Hawaii	89%	Louisiana	85%	Indiana	70%	Florida	31%
South Carolina	89%	Kentucky	83%	West Virginia	70%	Tennessee	29%
Montana	89%	Ohio	83%	Montana	67%	Arizona	29%
South Dakota	89%	Arkansas	82%	Missouri	64%	Nebraska	25%
Mississippi	87%	Georgia	79%	Alaska	60%	New York	25%
Arkansas	82%	Montana	78%	Kentucky	58%	Maryland	25%
North Dakota	78%	New Mexico	75%	Iowa	56%	Texas	23%
Missouri	73%	Michigan	73%	Utah	56%	Iowa	22%
Arizona	71%	Oklahoma	73%	Louisiana	54%	Utah	22%
Louisiana	69%	Illinois	71%	Idaho	50%	North Carolina	21%
Nebraska	67%	Tennessee	71%	Nebraska	50%	Minnesota	21%
New Mexico	67%	West Virginia	70%	North Carolina	50%	Alaska	20%
Georgia	64%	Pennsylvania	69%	Wisconsin	50%	Pennsylvania	15%
Michigan	64%	Hawaii	67%	Arkansas	45%	Georgia	14%
Alaska	60%	Wisconsin	67%	Oklahoma	45%	New Hampshire	13%
Ohio	58%	Arizona	64%	North Dakota	44%	Hawaii	11%
Wisconsin	58%	Kansas	64%	Connecticut	43%	North Dakota	11%
Minnesota	57%	Florida	62%	Georgia	43%	Maine	10%
Tennessee	57%	Virginia	62%	Minnesota	43%	Rhode Island	10%
Iowa	56%	Nebraska	58%	New Mexico	42%	Kansas	9%
Utah	56%	Connecticut	57%	Alabama	40%	Delaware	9%
Vermont	56%	North Carolina	57%	Maine	40%	Kentucky	8%
Virginia	54%	New York	56%	Florida	38%	Ohio	8%
Connecticut	50%	South Dakota	56%	Oregon	38%	New Mexico	8%
North Carolina	50%	Massachusetts	54%	New Hampshire	38%	Wisconsin	8%
Maine	50%	Texas	54%	Washington	38%	Virginia	8%
Nevada	50%	Alabama	53%	Kansas	36%	Oregon	8%
Idaho	50%	California	50%	Nevada	36%	Illinois	7%
Alabama	47%	Minnesota	50%	Maryland	33%	Nevada	7%
Delaware	45%	Maine	50%	Vermont	33%	Alabama	7%
Oklahoma	45%	Colorado	44%	Texas	31%	South Carolina	0%
Maryland	42%	Iowa	44%	Tennessee	29%	Louisiana	0%
California	40%	North Dakota	44%	Delaware	27%	Missouri	0%
Florida	38%	Washington	44%	Michigan	27%	Indiana	0%
Texas	38%	New Jersey	38%	New Jersey	23%	Mississippi	0%
Pennsylvania	38%	Oregon	38%	Virginia	23%	Wyoming	0%
Oregon	38%	Delaware	36%	Arizona	21%	Arkansas	0%
New Hampshire	38%	Utah	33%	Illinois	21%	Montana	0%
Washington	38%	Vermont	33%	Pennsylvania	15%	Michigan	0%
New Jersey	31%	Maryland	25%	Colorado	11%	Oklahoma	0%
Illinois	29%	Nevada	21%	California	10%	West Virginia	0%
Colorado	22%	Idaho	17%	Rhode Island	10%	South Dakota	0%
Rhode Island	20%	New Hampshire	13%	Ohio	8%	Washington	0%
New York	19%	Alaska	10%	Massachusetts	0%	Vermont	0%
Massachusetts	15%	Rhode Island	10%	New York	0%	Idaho	0%

A key factor associated with states' varying percentages of leaders with public and Ivy+ degrees is political orientation. More conservative states are more likely to have leaders who graduated from public institutions, and progressive states are more likely to have leaders who graduated from Ivy+ institutions. For example, in 18 states, no leaders have Ivy+ undergraduate degrees, and 17 of those states are red. The scatterplots in **Figure 29** demonstrate these relationships.

Figure 29

Relationship Between State Politics and State Leaders' Education



The inclusion of top lawyers from top firms confirmed at least two of the most important findings from the public-officials section. First, in general, public, in-state, and flagship schools are developing most leaders. Second, Ivy+ graduates are prominent in a few states (e.g., CA, CT, IL, MA, and NY) but are few and far between in most of the nation.

Discussion

This report reveals at least four issues worth further study and conversation. First, these results suggest that the current narrative about the importance of Ivy+ institutions is, at minimum, incomplete. For the key leadership positions studied here, the influence of Ivy+ schools is relatively modest. Future research should investigate whether other types of employers (such as agriculture, manufacturing, service, locally focused, regionally focused) and institutions (school districts, community colleges, city and county governments, museums, social-services providers) mirror the results found here: more publics than privates, in-state than out-of-state, flagships than Ivy+.

Second, given these results, we must ask why so much attention is paid to Ivy+ schools. In much of the country, these schools cast a small shadow. Why do they loom so large in elite conversations? It is worth considering that many of those who are leading the public conversation on higher education are in a bubble. Perhaps they disproportionately attended Ivy+ schools and/or live and work in the few states where Ivy+ schools have outsized influence.

Third, more needs to be said about the important leadership-formation role played by public institutions (especially flagships) and several regionally focused non-Ivy privates. In most states, especially in the South and the Midwest, a significant portion of leaders attended the state's major university for undergraduate and/or graduate studies. Similarly, private schools like BYU, Creighton, Suffolk, and the University of Denver deserve more attention.

Fourth, given that so many public leaders come from public and in-state institutions, higher-education reformers would be wise to focus more on these schools. Those who believe that future public leaders should learn more about history and civics, who appreciate the importance of ideological diversity, and who want to develop skills related to character, persuasion, and civility should direct their energies to the places where future public leaders are educated.

Appendix A

Undergraduate Institutions with at Least One State Supreme Court Graduate

Abilene Christian	Chadron State	East Central	Howard
Amherst	Chatham	East Stroudsburg	Idaho
Arizona	Cincinnati	East Tennessee State	Illinois
Arkansas	Citadel	Eastern Kentucky	Indiana
Arkansas Tech	Claremont McKenna	Emory & Henry	Indiana State
ASU	Clark	Florida	Iowa
Auburn	Colby	Geneva	John Carroll
Ball State	Santa Fe	Georgetown	Judson
Barnard	Colorado-Denver	Georgia	Kansas
Baruch	Columbia	Georgia Southern	Kansas State
Bates	Connecticut	Gonzaga	Kennesaw State
Bethany	Cornell	Goucher	Kentucky
Bethel	Creighton	Grand Valley	Lafayette
Birmingham-Southern	Culver-Stockton	Grand View	Lewis
Boston College	CUNY	Gustavus Adolphus	Lipscomb
Brown	Dartmouth	GWU	Louisville
Bryn Mawr	Davis & Elkins	Hampden-Sydney	Louvain
Bucknell	Delaware	Harvard	Loyola-Chicago
BYU	Denver	Haverford	LSU
Cal-Berkeley	DePauw	Hawaii	Lycoming
Cal-Santa Barbara	Dominican	Hendrix	Maine
Carleton	Drew	Hillsdale	Marquette
Case Western	Drury	Holy Names	Marshall
Central Arkansas	Duke	Hope	Memphis

Miami (OH)
Michigan
Michigan State
Minnesota
Minnesota State
Mississippi
Missouri
Montana
Montana State
Muhlenberg
Nebraska
Nebraska-Omaha
Nevada-Reno
New Hampshire
New Mexico
New Mexico State
Nicholls State
North Dakota
Northeast Louisiana
Northeastern State
Northern Kentucky
Northwestern
Northwestern State
Northern Iowa
Notre Dame
NYU
Ohio State
Oklahoma
Oklahoma State
Old Dominion
Oregon State
Penn
Penn State
Pitzer
Princeton
Providence
Purdue
Radcliffe
Reed
Rollins
Rutgers
Salva Regina
San Diego State
Santa Clara
Seton Hall
Shippensburg
South Carolina
South Carolina State
South Dakota
South Dakota State
South Florida
Southern Mississippi
Southwestern Oklahoma State
St. Catherine
Stanford
Stephens
SUNY-Binghamton
SUNY-Buffalo
Susquehanna
Swarthmore
Sweet Briar
Syracuse
Temple
Tennessee
Texas
Texas A&M
Thomas Edison
Trinity International
Troy State
Truman State
West Indies
UMass
UNC
UNC-Pembroke
UNC-Wilmington
Charleston
USC
Utah
Vanderbilt
Vermont
Virginia
Washburn
Washington
Washington & Jefferson
Wayne State
Webster
Wellesley
Wesleyan
West Point
West Virginia
Western Illinois
Western Kentucky
Western Michigan
Westminster
Willamette
William & Mary
William Jewell
William Woods
Williams
Wisconsin
Wisconsin-Milwaukee
Wofford
Wyoming
Yale

Appendix B

Undergraduate Institutions with at Least One State Education Chief

Bob Jones	Illinois-Springfield	New Mexico State	St. Thomas
BYU	Indiana	North Carolina State	SUNY Buffalo
Cal State-Fresno	Jacksonville State	Northwestern State	Temple
Cornell	Kansas State	Ohio Northern	Texas State
CUNY	Kennesaw State	Pomona College	Transylvania
Delta State	Kentucky	Rhode Island	Utah State
Flagler College	Marshall	Shippensburg	Washington State
GWU	Maryland	South Dakota State	West Virginia Wesleyan
Harding	Midland Lutheran	Southern Maine	Wright State
Harvard	Minot State	Southwestern	Wyoming
Hawaii	Missouri State	St. John's	Yale
Illinois-Chicago	Montana	St. Joseph	

Appendix C

Top Law Firms by State

ALABAMA

Bradley Arant Boult Cummings LLP

Maynard Nexsen

ALASKA

Davis Wright Tremaine LLP

Stoel Rives LLP

Perkins Coie LLP

Lane Powell PC

Littler Mendelson, PC

Ashburn & Mason, PC

ARIZONA

Snell & Wilmer LLP

Osborn Maledon PA

DLA Piper

ARKANSAS

Friday, Eldredge & Clark, LLP

Wright, Lindsey & Jennings LLP

Quattlebaum, Grooms & Tull PLLC

CALIFORNIA

Gibson, Dunn & Crutcher LLP

Latham & Watkins LLP

COLORADO

Davis Graham & Stubbs LLP

Holland & Hart LLP

Cooley

CONNECTICUT

Robinson & Cole LLP

Shipman & Goodwin LLP

Wiggin and Dana LLP

DELAWARE

Morris, Nichols, Arsht & Tunnell LLP

Richards, Layton & Finger PA

Young Conaway Stargatt & Taylor LLP

FLORIDA

Greenberg Traurig, PA

Holland & Knight LLP

Jones Day

McDermott Will & Emery

Stearns Weaver Miller Weissler Alhadeff & Sitterson

White & Case LLP

GEORGIA

Alston & Bird LLP

King & Spalding LLP

Jones Day

Bondurant Mixson & Elmore LLP

HAWAII

Cades Schutte LLP

Carlsmith Ball LLP

Goodsill Anderson Quinn & Stifel LLP

IDAHO

Holland & Hart LLP

Givens Pursley LLP

Perkins Coie LLP

Stoel Rives LLP

Hawley Troxell Ennis & Hawley LLP

ILLINOIS

Kirkland & Ellis

Sidley Austin LLP

Latham & Watkins LLP

McDermott Will & Emery LLP

INDIANA

Barnes & Thornburg LLP

Ice Miller LLP

Faegre Drinker

IOWA

Dentons Davis Brown

Nyemaster Goode PC

Lane & Waterman LLP

KANSAS

Foulston Siefkin LLP

Adams Jones Law Firm, PA

Hinkle Law Firm LLC

KENTUCKY

Frost Brown Todd LLP

Stites & Harbison PLLC

LOUISIANA

Jones Walker LLP

Phelps Dunbar LLP

MAINE

Pierce Atwood LLP

Bernstein Shur

MARYLAND

Baker, Donelson, Bearman, Caldwell & Berkowitz

DLA Piper LLP (US)

Hogan Lovells US LLP

Kramon & Graham, PA

Venable LLP

Whiteford, Taylor & Preston LLP

MASSACHUSETTS

Ropes & Gray LLP

Goodwin

MICHIGAN

Dickinson Wright PLLC

Honigman LLP

MINNESOTA

Dorsey & Whitney LLP

Faegre Drinker Biddle & Reath, LLP

MISSISSIPPI

Butler snow LLP

Brunini, Grantham, Grower & Hewes, PLLC

JonesWalker

Phelps Dunbar LLP

Watkins & Eager PLLC

MISSOURI

Husch Blackwell LLP

Polsinelli PC

Armstrong Teasdale LLP

Bryan Cave Leighton Paisner LLP

MONTANA

Crowley Fleck PLLP

Browning, Kaleczyc, Berry & Hoven PC

Boone Karlberg PC

NEBRASKA

Baird Holm LLP

Koley Jessen P.C.

McGrath North Mullin & Kratz PC

NEVADA

McDonald Carano

Brownstein Hyatt Farber Schreck, LLP

Greenberg Traurig, LLP

Holland & Hart LLP

NEW HAMPSHIRE

Sheehan Phinney Bass & Green PA

McLane Middleton Professional Association

NEW JERSEY

McCarter & English, LLP

Lowenstein Sandler LLP

Gibbons

NEW MEXICO

Modrall Sperling

Peifer, Hanson, Mullins & Baker PA

Rodey, Dickason, Sloan, Akin & Robb, PA

NEW YORK

Davis Polk & Wardwell LLP

Kirkland & Ellis LLP

Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom LLP

Whiteman Osterman & Hanna LLP

Hodgson Russ LLP

NORTH CAROLINA

McGuireWoods LLP

Moore & Van Allen, PLLC

Robinson Bradshaw & Hinson PA

Cadwalader, Wickersham & Taft LLP.

NORTH DAKOTA

Vogel Law Firm

Fredrikson & Byron PA

OHIO

Jones Day

BakerHostetler LLP

Keating Muething & Klekamp PLL

OKLAHOMA

Crowe & Dunlevy, a Professional Corporation

McAfee & Taft

GableGotwals

OREGON

Stoel Rives LLP

Davis Wright Tremaine LLP

Dunn Carney LLP

Radler White Parks & Alexander

Tonkon Torp LLP

PENNSYLVANIA

Morgan, Lewis & Bockius LLP

Reed Smith LLP

RHODE ISLAND

Hinckley Allen

Adler Pollock & Sheehan PC

Partridge Snow & Hahn LLP

SOUTH CAROLINA

Maynard Nexsen

Nelson Mullins Riley & Scarborough LLP

Womble Bond Dickinson US LLP

SOUTH DAKOTA

Davenport, Evans, Hurwitz & Smith LLP

Boyce Law Firm, L.L.P.

Woods, Fuller, Shultz & Smith PC

TENNESSEE

Bass, Berry & Sims PLC

Holland & Knight LLP

Bradley Arant Boult Cummings LLP

Baker, Donelson, Bearman, Caldwell & Berkowitz

TEXAS

Vinson & Elkins LLP

Baker Botts L.L.P.

UTAH

Parsons Behle & Latimer PC

Holland & Hart LLP

Parr Brown Gee & Loveless

Dorsey & Whitney LLP

VERMONT

Dinse P.C.

Downs Rachlin Martin PLLC

VIRGINIA

Hunton Andrews Kurth LLP

McGuireWoods LLP

Cooley LLP

Troutman Pepper

WASHINGTON

Perkins Coie LLP

Davis Wright Tremaine LLP

WEST VIRGINIA

Steptoe & Johnson PLLC

Bowles Rice LLP

WISCONSIN

Foley & Lardner LLP

Quarles & Brady LLP

Michael Best & Friedrich LLP

WYOMING

Holland & Hart LLP

Hirst Applegate

Long Reimer Winegar Beppler LLP

Bailey Stock Harmon Cottam Lopez LLP

Endnotes

1 For the remainder of this report, Ivy+ includes the eight Ivies (Brown, Columbia, Cornell, Dartmouth, Harvard, Penn, Princeton, Yale) and four non-Ivies (Chicago, Duke, MIT, Stanford). These are the same schools studied by Raj Chetty, David Deming, and John Friedman, "Diversifying Society's Leaders? The Determinants and Causal Effects of Admission to Highly Selective Private Colleges," National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER), working paper no. 31492, July 2023.

2 Trump, Obama, George W. Bush, Clinton, and George H. W. Bush.

3 See Frederick M. Hess, "Payoff-Based College Admissions," *National Affairs* 54 (Winter 2023).

4 Chetty, Deming, and Friedman, "Diversifying Society's Leaders?"

5 Philip Bump, "Ivy League, Ivy League, Ivy League? Ivy League—Ivy League," *Washington Post*, Dec. 12, 2023.

6 See David Leonhardt, "Behind the Scenes of College Admissions," *New York Times*, July 24, 2023; *New York Times*, author biography, "David Leonhardt"; Nicholas Kristof, "The Real College Admissions Scandal," *New York Times*, July 26, 2023; *New York Times*, "Columnist Biography: Nicholas D. Kristof."

7 Aatish Bhatia, Claire Cain Miller, and Josh Katz, "Study of Elite College Admissions Data Suggests Being Very Rich Is Its Own Qualification," *New York Times*, July 24, 2023; *New York Times*, author biography, "Claire Cain Miller"; *New York Times*, author biography, Aatish Bhatia.

8 Niha Masih, "The Tradition of 'Legacy' College Admissions Is Under Fire. Here's Why," *Washington Post*, July 28, 2023; *Washington Post*, author biography, "Niha Masih."

9 "Explaining America with Raj Chetty," interview by Frances Stead Sellers, *Washington Post*, Aug. 16, 2023; https://www.washingtonpost.com/people/frances-stead-sellers.

10 Annie Lowrey, "You Have to Care About Harvard," *The Atlantic*, July 24, 2023; Wilson Center, "Annie Lowrey," speaker biography.

11 AG Sulzberger: Brown; Joseph Kahn: Harvard, Harvard; Pui-Wing Tam: Columbia.

12 *Washington Post*, 7/12 degrees (three Harvard, two Stanford, one Yale, one Brown); *New York Times*, 13/24 (seven Columbia, two Harvard, two Chicago, one Yale, one Penn).

13 Jeff Bezos: Princeton.

14 Laurene Powell Jobs: Penn, Penn, Stanford; Nicholas Thompson: Stanford; Jeffrey Goldberg: Penn.

15 Katharina Buchholz, "Congress's Alma Mater," Statista, Apr. 9, 2021. Only 12% of House members earned any degree from an Ivy.

16 Katherine Schaeffer, "Nearly All Members of the 118th Congress Have a Bachelor's Degree—and Most Have a Graduate Degree, Too," Pew Research Center, Feb. 2, 2023.

17 Chetty, Deming, and Friedman, "Diversifying Society's Leaders," n. 4.

18 The lieutenants are Caroline Ellison and Gary Wang.

19 TikTok's CEO and Global Head of Communications, Distribution Partnerships, Global Security, and Operations. For the list of the most hated companies, see Samuel Stebbins, "America's Most Hated Companies," *24/7 Wall Street*, Aug. 29, 2023.

20 Meta is also on the most hated list: its executives have 26 degrees from American institutions—20 of those are Ivy+; see Meta, Executives. See also *Time*, "25 People to Blame for the Financial Crisis," February 2009, which included 20 Americans who have 12 Ivy+ degrees.

21 The top firm is Edgewell Personal Care. See Rachel Rabkin Peachman, "America's Best Midsize Employers," *Forbes*, Feb. 13, 2024.

22 Ibid.: Edgewell Personal Care, Alzheimer's Association, and Businessolver.

23 The false-positive and false-negative issues can be seen in the Chetty et al. study. It cross-referenced its list of elite firms against an external list, and the overlap was not complete. "Among the 10 largest law firms that we identify as 'prestigious,' 5 are also ranked among the top 10 most prestigious law firms by an external (Vault.com) ranking. Similarly, 4 of the 5 largest consulting firms we identify as 'prestigious' are among the top 5 most prestigious as well according to the same (Vault.com) ranking. Of the 10 largest prestigious hospitals by our definition, 5 are ranked among the 10 top hospitals that treat patients (by the institutional research ranking site Scimagoir.com). 7 of the 10 largest prestigious universities we identify are Ivy-Plus institutions." The implication is that some otherwise elite employers are excluded because they don't have enough Ivy+ graduates, and some otherwise nonelite employers become elite because they do.

24 See Vault, "Vault Law 100"; "Most Prestigious Consulting Firms"; "Most Prestigious Banking Firms."

25 The others are based in Charlotte (Bank of America Corp.), Chicago (Kirkland & Ellis), Los Angeles (Gibson Dunn), San Francisco (Qatalyst Partners), and greater Washington, DC (Booz Allen Hamilton).

26 Though the Chetty et al. study doesn't provide its list of elite and prestigious firms, it says that its list has a high degree of overlap with such lists: "To validate our approach to identifying elite and prestigious employers, we compare the firms identified by our algorithm to publicly available rankings of firms in various industries. We find a high degree of overlap."

27 See MacArthur Foundation, "MacArthur Fellows: Frequently Asked Questions" and "Our Board of Directors."

28 Rhodes Trust, Rhodes Scholarship Brochure, 2020: "Most Committee members will themselves have been Rhodes Scholars with first-hand acquaintance with the demands of Oxford, but at least one, and always the Committee chair, will not be a Rhodes Scholar," https://www.rhodeshouse.ox.ac.uk/media/44927/2020-usa-rhodes-trust-brochure.pdf.

29 Notably, the three authors of the Chetty et al. study all teach at Ivy+ schools and have six Ivy+ degrees among them; the nine reviewers thanked by the authors have 13 Ivy+ degrees. Also notable is that the organization that published the study, Opportunity Insights, was the focus of a *Chronicle of Higher Education* investigation into claims that the organization itself was privileging the graduates of elite institutions: "But inside the lab, Chetty and his colleagues have not always practiced what their research preaches, several former employees say. When hiring for their prestigious 'pre-doctoral fellowship' program, for instance, the lab uses a rubric that explicitly favors students from the very colleges that its own research has called out for reinforcing elitist systems": see Nell Gluckman and Francie Diep, "Does Raj Chetty Practice What He Preaches?" *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, Dec. 20, 2023.

30 Aaron Terr, "How Yale Law School Pressured a Law Student to Apologize for a Constitution Day 'Trap House' Invitation," Foundation for Individual Rights and Expression (FIRE), Oct. 14, 2021; Rebecca Massel, "Columbia, Barnard Hit with Lawsuit Alleging 'Particularly Severe and Pervasive' Antisemitism," *Columbia Spectator*, Feb. 21, 2024; Vivi Sankar, "Two New Plaintiffs Join Amended Lawsuit Against Penn over Antisemitism on Campus," *Daily Pennsylvanian*, Mar. 12, 2024.

31 See David Goodhart, *The Road to Somewhere: The Populist Revolt and the Future of Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017).

32 "In-state" is a public or private university inside the state where the official serves. In Utah, that would include the University of Utah (public) and Brigham Young University (private). In Tennessee, it would include the University of Memphis (public) and Vanderbilt University (private).

33 For example, if Michigan's governor had graduated from the University of Michigan, that would be coded as public, in-state, and flagship; if she'd gone to Penn State, that would be coded as public, out-of-state, and flagship; if she'd gone to Hope College, that would be coded as private and in-state; if she'd gone to Brown University, it would be coded as private, out-of-state, and Ivy+. Each employer is associated with a state, so the same coding rules apply. I am then able to report for each office, each state, and the nation as a whole the percentage of these state leaders who attended publics, privates, in-states, out-of-states, flagships, and Ivy+.

34 The federal circuit hears different types of cases from the other 11, so its inclusion might be disputed. The results show that its judges have educational backgrounds very similar to judges on the other courts. So the findings are the same if this court is included or excluded. Similarly, the inclusion of senior judges could be disputed, since they are semiretired. Again, removing those judges (and one judge who has been suspended from service) yields the same results. That is, there is no meaningful difference in the educational backgrounds of senior judges, current judges, federal circuit judges, and judges from the 11 circuits.

35 Lyss Welding, "College Enrollment Statistics in the U.S.," BestColleges, Feb. 7, 2024.

36 There are 12 Ivy+ undergraduate institutions. Only eight of those institutions have a law school. However, the 12 Ivy+ colleges have about 1% of undergraduate enrollment, while the eight Ivy+ law schools have about 6% of law school enrollment.

37 Some states have five, some seven, some nine. Much of the following analysis uses a denominator of 328 because two justices have undergraduate degrees from universities outside the U.S. (University of the West Indies and UCLouvain in Belgium). Depending on the state, justices

are elected in partisan or nonpartisan elections, nominated by a commission, selected by the governor, or selected by the legislature; see Brennan Center for Justice at NYU Law, Judicial Selection: An Interactive Map, updated Aug. 20, 2024.

38 Washington, DC, is not included in this analysis. It has only one public university—University of the District of Columbia—which has only 3,000 undergraduates.

39 University of Mississippi (6), University of Virginia (5), University of Arkansas (5), University of Texas (5), University of Georgia (4), University of Utah (4), University of Wyoming (4), and numerous tied at (3).

40 The seven states are New Hampshire, California, New York, Texas, New Jersey, Connecticut, and Colorado.

41 The seven states are California, Massachusetts, New Jersey, Colorado, Florida, Utah, and Alaska.

42 Nebraska has a unicameral legislature. Excluding lieutenant governors does not meaningfully change the following results.

43 Some of these 21 have a two-year degree (i.e., from a technical school or community college). Those are excluded from this analysis. Were they to be included, they would elevate the "public" and "in-state" percentages and decrease the "private" and "Ivy+" percentages.

44 The only privates with two graduates are Boston University, Davidson College, La Salle University, and University of Notre Dame.

45 One each from Brown, Cornell, Dartmouth, and Yale.

46 The 72 degrees are held by 59 individuals who have one and 13 who have two.

47 The eight are Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Illinois, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and New Jersey.

48 The governors of Alaska, Georgia, Idaho, Nebraska, Nevada, New Mexico, North Carolina, Oregon, South Carolina, Texas, Vermont, Washington, and Wisconsin graduated from their own state's flagship public. Maine's governor graduated from Massachusetts's flagship.

49 Technically, 33 degrees were earned, but 31 are counted in this analysis. One governor earned a graduate degree from an institution in another country; as before, those degrees are excluded. One governor earned two graduate degrees (a master's on the way to a doctorate). However, those two degrees were awarded by the same university. Rather than double-counting that institution, which could have the effect of inflating its role, I count that as one degree. Importantly, it is a public university (Wisconsin), so were it included, it would add to, not detract from, the key finding of this report. In all future analyses, when an individual earns two graduate degrees from the same institution, it is counted as one.

50 See Vincent Scudella, "State Education Governance Models," Education Commission of the States, August 2013.

51 See National Association of Attorneys General, "Attorney General Office Characteristics."

52 As before, if an official earned more than one graduate degree from the same institution, that institution is counted only once.

53 See Princeton University, "Mission Statement"; Yale University, "Mission Statement."

54 McKinsey & Co., "Our Purpose, Mission, and Values."

55 Texas A&M University, "Compact with Texans"; Louisiana State University, "Vision and Mission"; University System of Georgia, "Strategic Plan 2024."

56 I used Chambers and Partners 2023 reports to identify which firms in each state were considered top tier ("Band 1") in the most industries/sectors. I then cross-referenced these firms with BCG Attorney Search lists of the best law firms by state (Tiers 1–3). I used each firm's website to identify its leaders. Most firms identify their managing partner (or similar executive role). Some identify office managing partners and/or members of the board, executive committee, or policy committee. Some identify the chair of practice areas or industries. Some smaller firms don't have such organizational structures; in those instances, I used all partners, shareholders, or members. In some cases, a firm was identified as among the best in a state, but that firm has offices in many states. That is, a top firm in Oklahoma might also have attorneys and firm leaders in Kansas and Nebraska. In those cases, I used only the firm's leaders who are based in Oklahoma for the analysis of Oklahoma. This is the most direct way of answering the question, "Who are the leading lawyers for the leading firms in Oklahoma?"

57 In New York, five schools are tied for first, and all are private.

58 In the case of Missouri, many leading lawyers based in Kansas City (which straddles the Kansas/Missouri border) graduated from the University of Kansas—another indicator of the importance of place. In New York, two of the five leading colleges are in-state (Cornell and Syracuse).

59 At the undergraduate level, 23 had no four-year degree, and two had degrees from schools in other nations.

60 Other publics with five are the universities of Montana, Tennessee, Utah, and Washington.

61 In the earlier analyses of justices and attorneys general, only law degrees were considered. Here, those individuals' non-law graduate degrees are also included. The AGs earned eight such degrees, and the justices earned 30. Among the 583 graduate degrees, nine came from outside the U.S., and those are removed from the denominator in later percentages. Also, as above, duplicate graduate degrees from one institution were considered one degree.

62 The universities of Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Minnesota, Montana, Nebraska, Rutgers, South Dakota, West Virginia, Wisconsin, and Wyoming also have six.