



# Awareness and Accessibility on the Licensure Path

DECEMBER 2023

# Building on Belonging: Awareness and Accessibility on the Licensure Path

## Overview

In September 2023, NCARB and NOMA released an action plan to address disparities on the path to licensure, following several years of research through our joint [Baseline on Belonging](#) study. The action plan includes efforts to improve early awareness of the licensure process and increase accessibility on the path to licensure.

To better inform our work, NCARB conducted a brief survey exploring how candidates' knowledge of the licensure process impacted their career choices and where more flexibility in licensure requirements might improve accessibility.

The survey findings demonstrate two related issues that impact a majority of licensure candidates:

1. **Most licensure candidates are not sufficiently aware of the licensure process** at an early career stage, which would benefit them in making informed choices about factors like what degree to pursue or where to pursue licensure.
2. Additionally, **most licensure candidates had to change their licensure path at some point** and felt like the licensure process was not flexible enough to accommodate their shifting personal or professional circumstances.

NCARB is in the middle of a multi-year effort to re-envision the process of becoming an architect. Over the next several years, our expert volunteers will explore how best to measure and assess competency on the path to licensure—including opportunities to make the current core licensure requirements more flexible. The findings from this survey will help inform their work.

## Survey Findings: Awareness

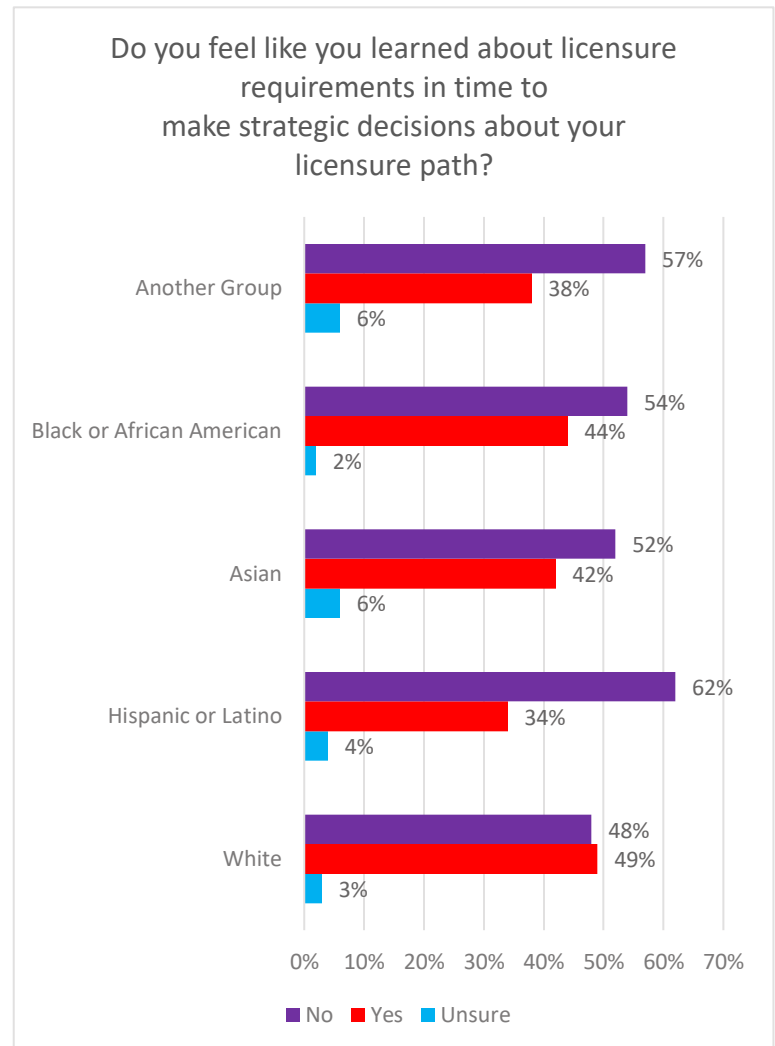
When asked to indicate when they learned about the steps required to become an architect, 51% of all respondents indicated prior to graduating from college—whether prior to or during their education. Individuals who were licensed at the time of the survey and white respondents were more likely to report having learned about the licensure process prior to starting college. There was little difference between male and female respondents.

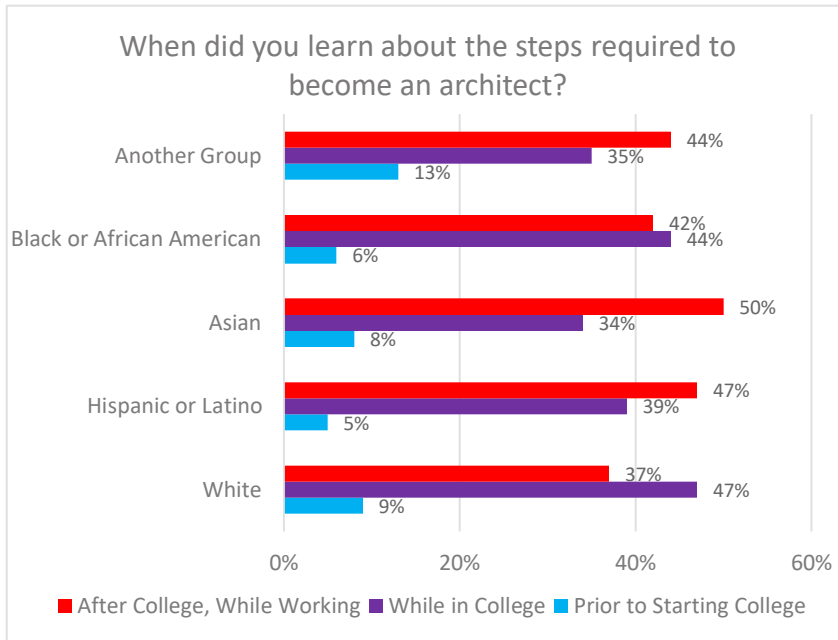
Just over a third (38%) of all respondents indicated they chose to attend a program accredited by the National Architectural Accrediting Board (NAAB) based on their understanding of licensure requirements. Asian and white respondents were 5-6 percentage points more likely to choose a NAAB-accredited program for licensure reasons than their Black or Latino peers. Again, male and female respondents had nearly equal responses.

Next, respondents were asked if they learned about licensure requirements in time to make strategic career choices. Over half (51%) of all respondents and 54% of licensure candidates said they did not learn about the licensure path in time to make informed career choices. When viewed by race and ethnicity, Hispanic or Latino respondents were significantly more likely than their peers to indicate they did not learn about the licensure process early enough.

However, individuals who were licensed at the time of the survey were much more likely to select the opposite, with 63% of licensed architects indicating they learned about licensure early enough to make informed career choices. **This difference suggests that individuals who gain early awareness of the licensure process are more likely to become licensed compared to their peers.**

While most U.S. jurisdictions require that candidates earn a degree from a NAAB-accredited program in order to become licensed, 17 U.S. jurisdictions currently offer additional initial licensure paths that combine additional experience with varying levels of education in lieu of a degree from





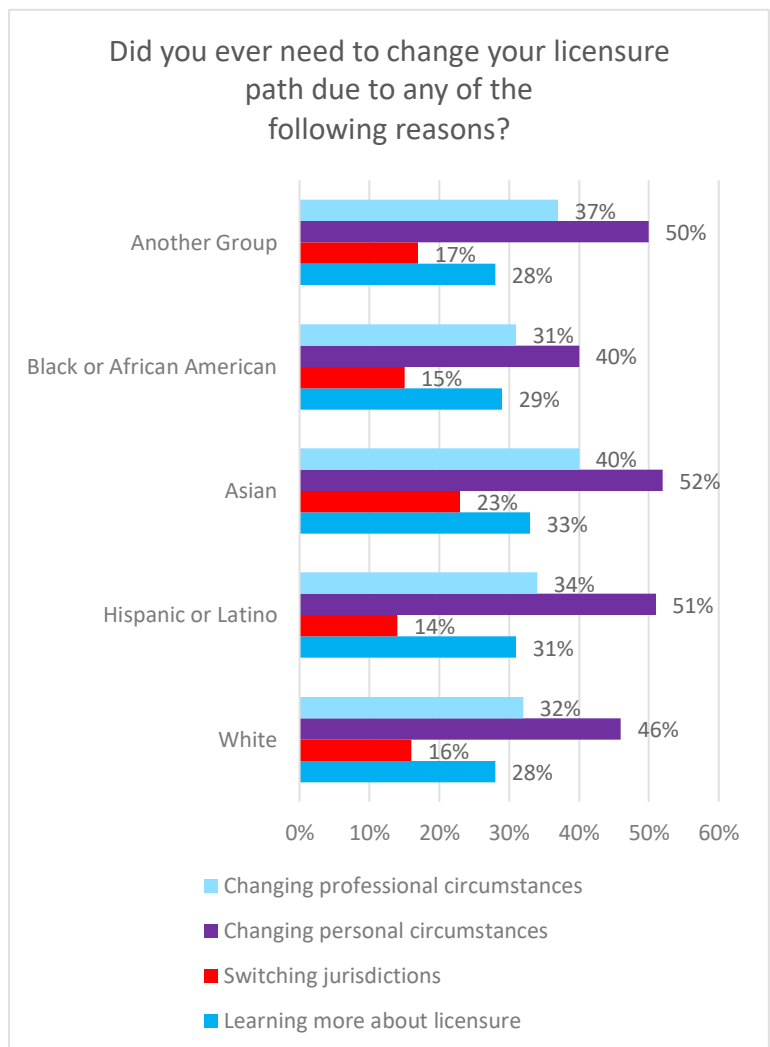
an accredited program. When asked if they were aware of these options, 42% of respondents indicated they were not.

Of those who weren't aware, more than 1 in 4 (27%) indicated they would have pursued a different degree type if they had known about the other options.

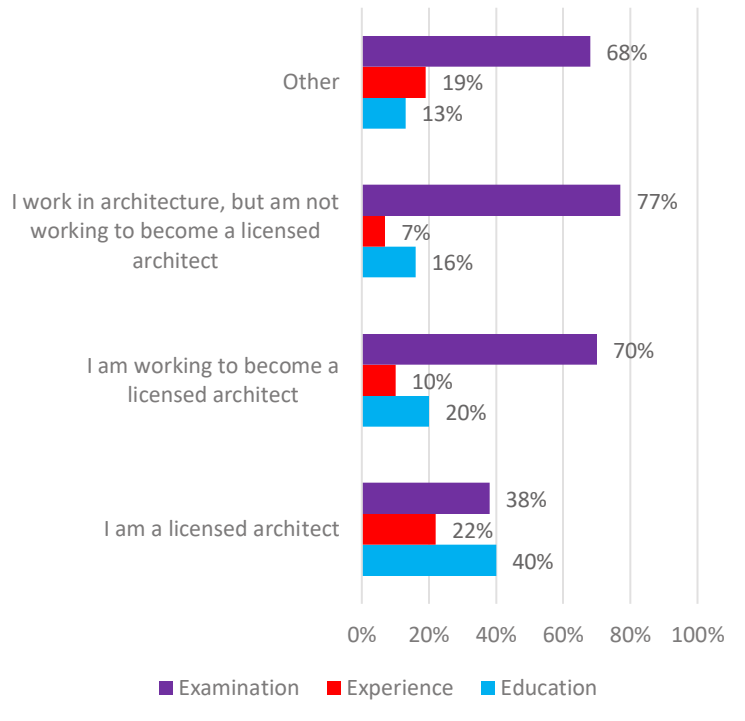
### Survey Findings: Accessibility

Over two-thirds (68%) of respondents indicated they needed to change their licensure path at least once due to personal, professional, or other reasons. Women, Asian, and Latino respondents were more likely than their peers to indicate they had to change their licensure path due to changing personal circumstances. Black or African American respondents were the most likely of all racial and ethnic groups to indicate they did not have to change their licensure path at any point (38%). Individuals who were architects at the time of the survey were more likely to indicate they did not have to change their licensure path (51%).

When asked if the licensure process provided enough flexibility to change their licensure path, 59% said no, 21% were unsure, and 20% said yes. Responses to this question were relatively similar across racial, ethnic, and gender groups.



If you could use/could have used a pathway that eliminated one component of the licensure process— assuming the health, safety, and welfare of the public was still guaranteed— which component would you choose to avoid?



Finally, respondents were asked to indicate which of the core licensure components (education, experience, or examination) they would consider eliminating if given the opportunity, provided that the public’s health, safety, and welfare were still protected.

Across racial, ethnic, and gender groups, respondents overwhelmingly selected the exam component. Women and people of color were slightly more likely to select the exam component compared to men and white respondents. This aligns with NCARB data showing that women and people of color typically have lower exam pass rates compared to white men.

Notably, licensed architects were the only group more likely to indicate they would prefer to eliminate the education component than the experience or examination components at nearly 40%, double the

proportion of licensure candidates who selected the education component (20%).

When indicating the reason for their selection, respondents were slightly more likely to indicate cost as a concern related to the exam than education. Additionally, three out of every four respondents who chose to substitute the exam component indicated they would do so because life frequently gets in the way of completing the exam.

In general, respondents indicated that both education and examination requirements could be substituted with supplemental education or additional professional experience.