

2024 College Free Speech Rankings

What Is the State of Free Speech on America's College Campuses?





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Executive Summary

For the fourth year in a row, the Foundation for Individual Rights and Expression (FIRE), a non-profit organization committed to defending and sustaining the individual rights of all Americans to free speech and free thought, and College Pulse surveyed college undergraduates about their perceptions and experiences regarding free speech on their campuses.

This year's survey includes 55,102 student respondents from 254 colleges and universities.¹ Students who were enrolled in four-year degree programs were surveyed via the College Pulse mobile app and web portal from January 13 to June 30, 2023.

The College Free Speech Rankings are available online and are presented in an interactive dashboard (rankings.thefire.org) that allows for easy comparison between institutions.

¹ Colleges whose speech policies received a “Warning” rating from FIRE were given a rank of “Warning” (see Methodology). We do, however, present their overall scores in this report. These scores were standardized separately from non-“Warning” schools so that the overall scores of “Warning” schools were computed only in comparison to each other. As a result, 248 schools received a ranking this year.

Key findings:

1. Michigan Technological University is the top-ranked school in the 2024 College Free Speech Rankings. Auburn University, the University of New Hampshire, Oregon State University, and Florida State University round out the top five.
2. Harvard University obtained the lowest score possible, 0.00, and is the only school with an “Abysmal” speech climate rating. The University of Pennsylvania, the University of South Carolina, Georgetown University, and Fordham University also ranked in the bottom five.
3. The key factors differentiating high-performing schools (the top five) from poorly performing ones (the bottom five) are scores on the components of “Tolerance Difference” and “Disruptive Conduct.” Students from schools in the bottom five were more biased toward allowing controversial liberal speakers on campus over conservative ones and were more accepting of students using disruptive and violent forms of protest to stop a campus speech.
4. Deplatforming attempts that occurred at schools ranked in the bottom five had an alarming 81% success rate.
5. More than half of students (56%) expressed worry about damaging their reputation because of someone misunderstanding what they have said or done, and just over a quarter of students (26%) reported that they feel pressure to avoid discussing controversial topics in their classes. Twenty percent reported that they often self-censor.
6. When provided with a definition of self-censorship, at least a quarter of students said they self-censor “fairly often” or “very often” during conversations with other students, with professors, and during classroom discussions, respectively (25%, 27%, and 28%, respectively). A quarter of students also said that they are more likely to self-censor on campus now — at the time they were surveyed — than they were when they first started college.
7. Almost half of the students surveyed (49%) said that abortion is a difficult topic to have an open and honest conversation about on campus. A notable portion of students also identified gun control, racial inequality, and transgender rights, respectively, as topics difficult to discuss (43%, 42%, and 42%, respectively).
8. Student opposition to allowing controversial conservative speakers on campus ranged from 57% to 72%, depending on the speaker. In contrast, student opposition to controversial liberal speakers ranged from 29% to 43%, depending on the speaker.
9. More than 2 in 5 students (45%) said that students blocking other students from attending a speech is acceptable to some degree, up from 37% last year. And more than a quarter of students (27%) said that using violence to stop a campus speech is acceptable to some degree, up from 20% last year.
10. More than 1 in 5 students (21%) reported that their college administration’s stance on free speech on campus is not clear, and more than a quarter of students (27%) reported that it is unlikely their college administration would defend a speaker’s right to express his or her views if a controversy occurred on campus.

About Us

About College Pulse

College Pulse is a survey research and analytics company dedicated to understanding the attitudes, preferences, and behaviors of today's college students. College Pulse delivers custom data-driven marketing and research solutions, utilizing its unique American College Student Panel™ that includes over 750,000 college students and recent alumni from more than 1,500 two- and four-year colleges and universities in all 50 states.

For more information, visit collegepulse.com or [@CollegeInsights](https://twitter.com/CollegeInsights) on Twitter.

About FIRE

The Foundation for Individual Rights and Expression (FIRE) is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization dedicated to defending and sustaining the individual rights of all Americans to free speech and free thought. These rights include freedom of speech, freedom of association, due process, legal equality, religious liberty, and sanctity of conscience — the most essential qualities of liberty. FIRE also recognizes that colleges and universities play a vital role in preserving free thought within a free society. To this end, we place a special emphasis on defending these rights of students and faculty members on our nation's campuses.

For more information, visit thefire.org or [@thefireorg](https://twitter.com/thefireorg) on Twitter.

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Greg Lukianoff
President and CEO, FIRE

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Overview

In 2020, FIRE, in collaboration with College Pulse and RealClearEducation, launched a first-of-its-kind tool to help high school students and their parents identify which colleges promote and protect the free exchange of ideas: the College Free Speech Rankings. The response to the rankings report and corresponding online tool was overwhelmingly positive.

We heard from prospective students how helpful it is to see what a large number of current students reported about the campus climate for open discussion and inquiry, allowing for comparisons between colleges. We also heard from colleges and universities that the rankings helped them better understand their campus climate in order to improve it. Similarly, professors and staff became better able to understand which topics students on their campus find difficult to discuss.

Each year, we have increased the number of campuses surveyed — from 55 in 2020 to 254 this year. In these four years, we have obtained survey responses from more than 150,000 undergraduates, including 55,102 this year. As in previous years, the College Free Speech Rankings dashboard (rankings.thefire.org) is available on the College Pulse website and the FIRE website. The dashboard offers a unique tool to compare schools' free speech rankings and to explore a set of other factors that students find important in a college or university, such as cost and proximity to home.

The College Free Speech Rankings offers students, parents, professors, administrators, and any other interested constituency unrivaled insight into un-

dergraduate attitudes about and experiences with free expression on their college campuses. It also allows one to compare different colleges' cultures for free expression. Prospective students and their parents, as well as students considering transferring to another college, can use the rankings to assess and compare the speech climates at the different schools they are considering. Current college students, professors, and administrators can use the rankings to better understand their own campus climate and see how it compares to that of others across the country.

The data described in this report provide a wealth of information about current college students' attitudes about free speech and its current state on college campuses across America. Do students feel comfortable speaking out about topics they are passionate about, even when they have a minority viewpoint, in the classroom or in common campus areas? Are they open to hearing from different and sometimes controversial speakers? Are they at least open to a campus environment in which speakers are allowed to visit and speak without facing a heckler's veto — or worse?

The body of this report sheds light on these questions, among others.

It contains three sections. First, it presents the core findings of the 2024 College Free Speech Rankings. Next, it compares the top five and bottom five schools in the rankings in detail. Finally, it presents analyses of the free speech attitudes and experiences of the college students surveyed at the national level.

2024 College Free Speech Rankings

In its first year of inclusion in the College Free Speech Rankings, Michigan Technological University obtained the top spot with an overall score of 78.01. The full list of the top five schools and their scores is as follows:

- Michigan Technological University (78.01)
- Auburn University (72.53)
- University of New Hampshire (72.17)
- Oregon State University (71.56)
- Florida State University (69.64)

Each of the top four schools earned a “Good” speech climate rating, while Florida State earned an “Above Average” rating. Last year’s top-ranked school, the University of Chicago, received a score of 65.95. It received a ranking of 13 and also earned an “Above Average” speech climate rating.

At the other end of the rankings, Harvard University came in dead last with the lowest score possible, 0.00, more than four standard deviations below the mean. The full list of the bottom five schools and their scores is as follows:

- Harvard University (0.00)
- University of Pennsylvania (11.13)
- University of South Carolina (12.24)
- Georgetown University (17.45)
- Fordham University (21.72)

Fordham earned a “Poor” speech climate rating; Georgetown, University of Pennsylvania, and University of South Carolina each earned a “Very Poor” rating; and Harvard earned an “Abysmal” rating.

Further, Harvard’s overall score of 0.00 is generous — its actual score is -10.69, more than six standard deviations below the average and more than two standard deviations below the second-to-last school in the rankings and its Ivy League counterpart, the University of Pennsylvania. Last year’s lowest ranked school, Columbia University, also a member of the Ivy League, this year earned a score of 34.60, a ranking of 214, and a “Below Average” speech climate rating.

The rankings, overall score, and speech climate for the top 25 colleges are presented below. Scores are standardized and can range from 0 to 100. The top 25 include 20 schools that received FIRE’s “green light” rating (including the top 16) and five that received FIRE’s “yellow light” rating for their speech-related policies. The Illinois Institute of Technology (55.77) is the highest ranked “red light” school at 42.

The full rankings for all 248 schools and the methodology are available in the Appendix as well as on the College Free Speech Rankings dashboard on the College Pulse website and on the FIRE website.²

2 See previous footnote for a description of why only 248 of the 254 schools surveyed were ranked.

Table 1: Top 25 Colleges for Freedom of Speech

Rank	School	Overall Score	Speech Climate
1	Michigan Technological University	78.01	Good
2	Auburn University	72.53	Good
3	University of New Hampshire	72.17	Good
4	Oregon State University	71.56	Good
5	Florida State University	69.64	Above Average
6	University of Virginia	68.00	Above Average
7	Texas A&M University	67.92	Above Average
8	George Mason University	67.65	Above Average
9	University of North Carolina, Greensboro	67.53	Above Average
10	University of Colorado, Boulder	66.54	Above Average
11	North Carolina State University	66.19	Above Average
12	University of South Florida	66.08	Above Average
13	University of Chicago	65.95	Above Average
14	Mississippi State University	65.61	Above Average
15	Eastern Kentucky University	65.51	Above Average
16	Northern Arizona University	65.34	Above Average
17	University of Missouri, St. Louis	64.88	Above Average
18	Kansas State University	63.35	Above Average
19	University of Maryland	63.00	Above Average
20	Washington and Lee University	62.99	Above Average
21	University of North Carolina, Charlotte	62.54	Above Average
22	University at Buffalo	62.20	Above Average
23	Carnegie Mellon University	61.47	Above Average
24	East Carolina University	59.68	Slightly Above Average
25	New Jersey Institute of Technology	58.87	Slightly Above Average

Over the past four years, a handful of schools have consistently performed well in the College Free Speech Rankings. For instance, the University of Chicago claimed the top spot in the rankings twice (2020 and 2023) and earned a ranking of 2 in 2021 and a ranking of 13 this year. Kansas State University twice earned a ranking of 2 (2020 and 2023), earned a ranking of 14 in 2021, and earned a ranking of 18 this year. Indeed, with a few exceptions (this year, Purdue; last year, Texas A&M University and the University of Colorado, Boulder) every school listed in the table below finished in the top 25 of the College Free Speech Rankings every year that it was included, and those that did not did not finish in the top 25 did not land far outside of it.

The likelihood that Texas A&M will appear on this list next year, however, is slim. This is because of two recent incidents involving scholar sanctions that occurred in July of 2023 after the overall scores for the College Free Speech Rankings were calculated. Texas A&M therefore, was not penalized in this year's rankings for these sanctions. These penalties will be applied next year.³

³ This report includes only the main campus of Texas A&M University located in College Station, Texas. Other schools within the Texas A&M system are not part of this report.

Table 2: Schools With Consistently High Rankings Over Time

School	Years Ranked	Highest Ranking	Average Ranking
University of Chicago	2020, 2021, 2022, 2023	1 (2020, 2022)	4
University of New Hampshire	2021, 2022, 2023	3 (2021, 2023)	7
Florida State University	2021, 2022, 2023	5 (2021, 2023)	8
Kansas State University	2020, 2021, 2022, 2023	2 (2020, 2022)	9
Oregon State University	2021, 2022, 2023	4 (2023)	9
Mississippi State University	2021, 2022, 2023	4 (2022)	11
George Mason University	2021, 2022, 2023	8 (2023)	12
Purdue University	2021, 2022, 2023	3 (2022)	13
Auburn University	2021, 2022, 2023	2 (2023)	15
North Carolina State University	2021, 2022, 2023	9 (2022)	15
University of Virginia	2020, 2021, 2022, 2023	6 (2020, 2023)	15
Texas A&M University	2020, 2021, 2022, 2023	3 (2020)	19
University of Colorado, Boulder	2020, 2021, 2022, 2023	10 (2023)	19

Identifying schools that consistently perform poorly is trickier because the number of schools surveyed has increased each year. Thus, a school dropping in the rankings could result from the first-time inclusion in the rankings of schools with better speech climates and does not necessarily indicate that the speech climate at a previously surveyed school has gotten worse.

One way to account for this is to look at a school's percentile rank. Based on this factor, the schools that consistently perform poorly include Boston College, Fordham University, Georgetown University, Grinnell College, Harvard University, Marquette University, Middlebury College, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, and the University of Texas, Austin.

With two exceptions — Boston College in 2022 and the University of Texas, Austin, in 2021 — these schools consistently finish in the bottom quartile of the rankings, below at least 75% of the schools surveyed in a given year. Thus, while alarming, Harvard's dismal performance this year is not an aberration.

Warning Colleges

Hillsdale College, with an overall score of 46.87, outperformed all of the other “Warning” schools by at least 10 points. Overall scores at the five other “Warning” schools range from 18.74 (Saint Louis University) to 35.62 (Liberty University). The table below presents their overall scores.

Table 3: Warning Colleges

School	Overall Score	Speech Climate
Baylor University	23.80	Warning
Brigham Young University	25.80	Warning
Hillsdale College	46.87	Warning
Liberty University	35.62	Warning
Pepperdine University	29.17	Warning
Saint Louis University	18.74	Warning

The Best and Worst Colleges for Free Speech in 2024

The average overall score of the top five schools is 72.78. The average overall score of the bottom five schools, in contrast, is 12.51. Both of these averages are lower than those of last year, when the average for the top five was 75.80 and the average for the bottom five was 16.96.

The top five schools this year all received “green light” speech code ratings. In contrast, the bottom five

schools either received a “yellow light” rating (Harvard, the University of South Carolina, and the University of Pennsylvania) or a “red light” rating (Georgetown and Fordham).

The rest of this section groups together the top five schools and compares them to the bottom five schools.

Table 4: Best and Worst Colleges for Free Speech

Best Colleges for Free Speech	Speech Climate	Worst Colleges for Free Speech	Speech Climate
Michigan Technological University	Good	Harvard University	Abysmal
Auburn University	Good	University of South Carolina	Very Poor
University of New Hampshire	Good	University of Pennsylvania	Very Poor
Oregon State University	Good	Georgetown University	Very Poor
Florida State University	Above Average	Fordham University	Poor

Comfort Expressing Ideas

When it comes to students' comfort expressing their views, the differences between schools in the top five and schools in the bottom five are mostly negligible. The two exceptions are the percentage of students who reported feeling comfortable expressing their views on a controversial political topic in class (43% at the bottom five schools; 39% at the top five schools) and the percentage of students who reported feeling comfortable doing so in a common campus space (50% at the bottom five schools; 44% at the top five schools).

Differences in self-censorship between students at the top five schools and those at the bottom five schools are similarly negligible. Eighteen percent of students at the top five schools reported self-censoring often, compared to 20% at schools in the bottom five. Students at the top five schools were also slightly less worried about damaging their reputation because of someone misunderstanding what they have done or said than those at the bottom five schools: Fifty-four percent of students at the top five schools reported worrying about this, whereas 57% of students at the bottom five schools reported the same. Finally, 25% of students at schools in the top five said they feel a "good deal" or a "great deal" of pressure to avoid discussing controversial topics in their classes, while 27% of students at schools in the bottom five said the same.

The average score on "Comfort Expressing Ideas" at the top five schools (19.82) did not differ significantly from that of the bottom five schools (19.89).⁴ Broadly speaking, the average ranking for schools in the top five on "Comfort Expressing Ideas" is 127, with the University of New Hampshire ranking the highest (80) and Auburn University ranking the lowest (159). In contrast, the average ranking for schools in the bottom five on "Comfort

Expressing Ideas" is 121. On this measure, Fordham ranks highest (33), while Harvard ranks lowest (193).

Tolerance of Controversial Speakers

Students at schools ranked in the top five and students at schools ranked in the bottom five expressed more tolerance of controversial liberal speakers than of controversial conservative ones. These groups also did not significantly differ on "Mean Tolerance," meaning students at the top five schools and students at the bottom five schools reported a similar average tolerance for all six controversial speakers.⁵

A majority of students at the top five schools supported allowing four of the six controversial speakers on campus, including all three controversial liberal speakers. Students at the bottom five schools supported allowing all three controversial liberal speakers on campus but opposed allowing all three controversial conservative speakers. On this component, the top five schools and the bottom five schools, again, received similar average rankings (98 and 95, respectively).

Nevertheless, a bias toward allowing controversial liberal speakers on campus and not allowing conservative ones is evident at the bottom five schools. Schools ranked in the bottom five have a significantly higher tolerance difference than schools ranked in the top five (2.41 and 1.32, respectively).⁶ Furthermore, this favoritism toward allowing controversial liberal speakers on campus among students at schools in the bottom five is not due to their counterparts at schools in the top five being significantly more tolerant of controversial conservative speakers. Students at the top five schools and students at the bottom five schools also have similar levels of tolerance toward controversial liberal speakers (6.80 and 6.30, respectively).⁷

4 $t(8) = 0.30, p = 0.77.$

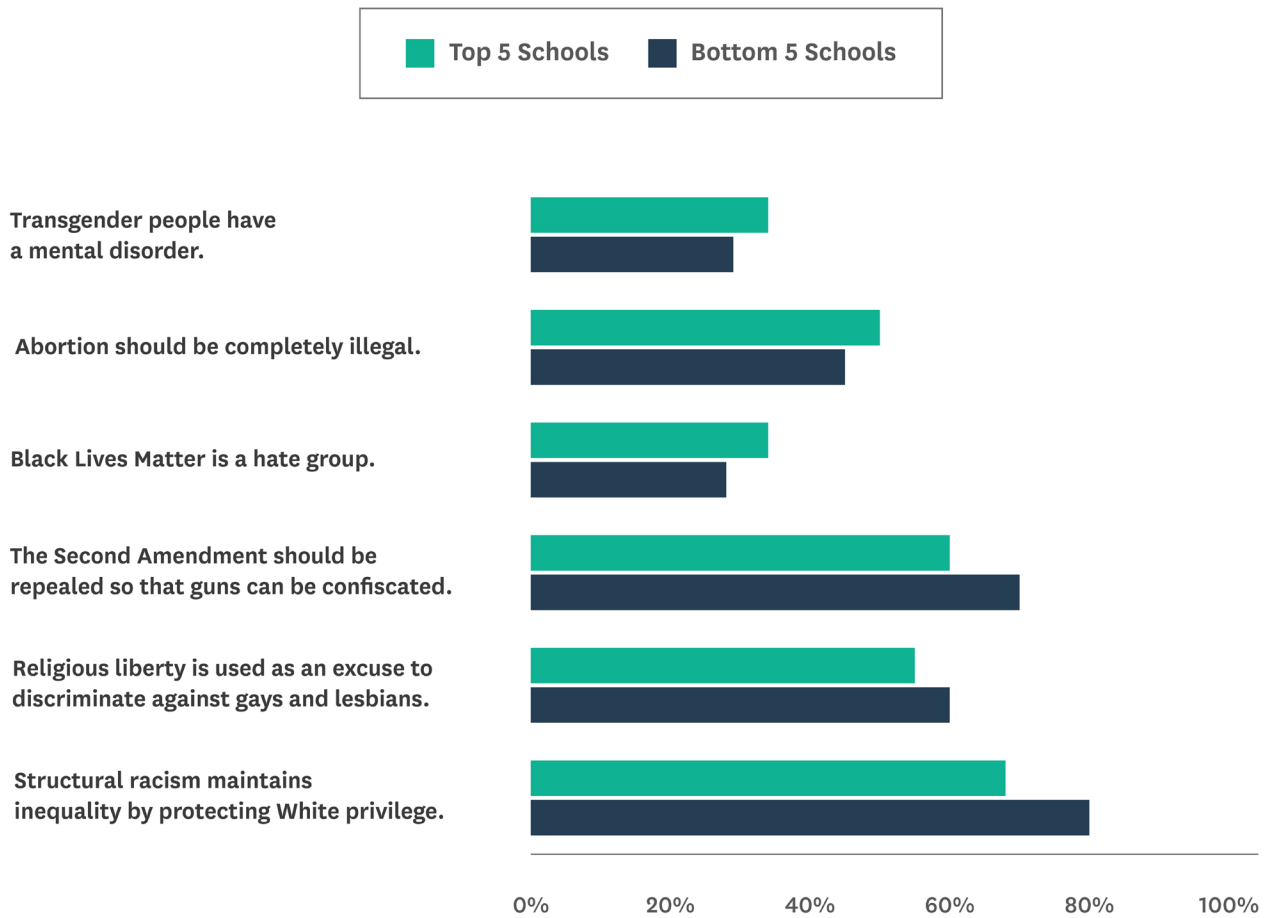
5 $t(8) = 0.18, p = 0.86.$

6 $t(8) = 3.11, p = 0.02.$

7 $t(8) = 1.40, p = 0.20$ for "Tolerance for Controversial Conservative Speakers;" $t(8) = 2.00, p = 0.08,$ for "Tolerance for Controversial Liberal Speakers."

Figure 1:

Percentage saying speaker should be allowed on campus.



Disruptive Conduct

The percentage of students at schools ranked in the top five who said it is never acceptable for students to shout down speakers, block entry to a campus speech, or use violence to stop a campus speech is at least eight percentage points greater than that of students at schools ranked in the bottom five. And average scores on the “Disruptive Conduct” component differed significantly between students at the top five schools (10.39) and those at the bottom five schools (9.54).⁸ Broadly speaking, the average “Disruptive Conduct” ranking for top five schools is 41, whereas the average ranking for bottom five schools is 195.

Table 5: Which Disruptive Conduct to Stop a Campus Speech Is “Never Acceptable”

Ranking	Shouting down a speaker	Blocking other students from attending	Using violence
Top Five Schools	45%	54%	79%
Bottom Five Schools	27%	46%	68%

⁸ $t(8) = 4.52, p = 0.002$.

Administrative Support

More than 8 in 10 students (83%) at schools ranked in the top five overall reported that it is at least “somewhat” clear that their administration protects free speech on campus, while almost three-quarters (73%) said it is at least “somewhat” likely their administration would defend a speaker’s rights during a controversy on campus. At schools ranked in the bottom five overall, 76% of students reported it is clear the administration would defend free speech on campus, while 71% reported that their administration would defend a speaker’s rights during a controversy. Schools in the top five and the bottom five did not differ significantly on their “Administrative Support” scores (6.18 and 6.06, respectively).⁹ Broadly speaking, schools in the top five have an average ranking of 125 on this component, ranging from 56 (Florida State) to 186 (Michigan Technological University). Schools in the bottom five have an average ranking of 157, ranging from 43 (Georgetown) to 235 (University of Pennsylvania).

⁹ $t(8) = 0.85, p = 0.42$.

Openness

Schools in the top five did not differ significantly from schools in the bottom five on their “Openness” score (14.23 and 14.38, respectively).¹⁰ The average ranking for both groups on this component is middling. The average ranking of the top five schools is 143, ranging from 82 (University of New Hampshire) to 180 (Michigan Technological University). The average ranking of the bottom five schools is 127, ranging from 18 (Fordham University) to 216 (University of South Carolina).

The topics of “abortion,” “gender inequality,” “gun control,” “police misconduct,” “racial inequality,” “religion,” “sexual assault,” and “transgender rights” were all identified by at least one-third of students at schools in the top five and at least one-third of students at schools in the bottom five as difficult to have an open and honest conversation about on campus.

The topics of “affirmative action” and “the Israeli-Palestinian conflict” were more often identified as difficult to discuss by students at the bottom five schools than by students at the top five schools:

- Affirmative action (31% of students at the bottom five schools vs. 18% of students at the top five schools)
- The Israeli-Palestinian conflict (33% of students at the bottom five schools vs. 18% of students at the top five schools)

On the other hand, the topics of “gay rights,” “gun control,” and “transgender rights” were more often identified as difficult to discuss by students at the top five schools than by students at the bottom five schools:

- Gay rights (39% of students at the top five schools vs. 30% of students at the bottom five schools)
- Gun control (45% of students at the top five schools vs. 38% of students at the bottom five schools)
- Transgender rights (46% of students at the top five schools vs. 39% of students at the bottom five schools)

¹⁰ $t(8) = 0.32, p = 0.75$.

Table 6: Topics Difficult to Discuss on Campus

Topic	Top Five Schools	Bottom Five Schools	Difference (Top Minus Bottom)
Abortion	54%	49%	5%
Affirmative action	18%	31%	-13%
China	13%	15%	-2%
Climate change	21%	15%	6%
Crime	15%	18%	-3%
Economic inequality	20%	25%	-5%
Freedom of speech	23%	23%	0%
Gay rights	39%	30%	9%
Gender inequality	38%	34%	4%
Gun control	45%	38%	7%
Immigration	28%	28%	0%
Inflation	13%	11%	2%
The Israeli/Palestinian conflict	18%	33%	-15%
Police misconduct	35%	36%	-1%
Racial inequality	44%	42%	2%
Religion	37%	34%	3%
Sexual assault	34%	35%	-1%
The Supreme Court	18%	17%	-1%
Transgender rights	46%	39%	7%
War in Ukraine	13%	12%	1%
None of the above	19%	15%	4%

Deplatforming Attempts

Calls to sanction students, student groups, and faculty, and campaigns to get colleges to disinvite speakers from speaking on campus all constitute attempts to deplatform someone, infringing on their right to free expression. Over the past few years, FIRE has documented a surge in attempts to sanction scholars on campuses across the country: Almost half of the entries in our Scholars Under Fire database (47%) have occurred since 2020.¹¹

The rate of campus disinvitations is higher now than it was in 2020 or 2021, when many students were not physically on campus due to the COVID-19 pandemic. From 2022-present, 86 disinvitation attempts occurred on campus (52 in 2022; 34 so far this year), whereas 61 disinvitation attempts occurred in 2020 and 2021 (25 in 2020; 36 in 2021).¹² The volume of these attempts and how a school handled each controversy factored significantly into a school's overall score.

Schools in the top five were not devoid of controversy: A total of nine deplatforming attempts occurred across the five campuses. However, in seven of these attempts, the school supported the student, scholar, or speaker facing a deplatforming campaign. For instance, at Michigan Tech, a petition was launched opposing Brandon Tatum's invitation to campus by Turning Point USA. In response, the student government denied funding for the event in order to "protect our students."

¹¹ The Scholars Under Fire Database is available on FIRE's website at <https://www.thefire.org/research/publications/miscellaneous-publications/scholars-under-fire/>.

¹² The Campus Disinvitation Database is available on FIRE's website at <https://www.thefire.org/research/disinvitation-database/>.

The school administration overruled this decision, specifically citing its obligation to the First Amendment.

The two sanctions at schools in the top five involved scholars at Auburn University and Florida State University. At Auburn, Jesse Goldberg’s faculty position was converted to research-only (no teaching) in response to backlash over his social media comments criticizing the police. At Florida State, Meghan Martinez’s “Weaponizing White Womanhood” class was removed from the course catalog because of backlash over a flier advertising the course.

Schools in the bottom five, on the other hand, averaged almost seven deplatforming attempts per school, and only one school experienced fewer than four (Fordham University, three attempts). Across all five campuses, 32 deplatforming attempts occurred, 26 of which resulted in some form of sanction. This represents a startling, and chilling, deplatforming success rate of 81% and includes three schools with a success rate of 100%. Just six of these deplatforming attempts resulted in the school defending the rights of the student, scholar, or speaker under fire.

Table 7: Deplatforming Attempts at the Bottom Five Schools

School	Deplatforming Attempts	Sanctions	Success Rate
Harvard University	9	7	78%
University of South Carolina	4	4	100%
University of Pennsylvania	6	6	100%
Georgetown University	10	6	60%
Fordham University	3	3	100%

What Are the Most Important Factors Differentiating the Best and Worst Schools?

The primary differences between the top five schools and the bottom five schools in student attitudes and perceptions are revealed by the “Tolerance Difference” and “Disruptive Conduct” components. These differences are reflected in student survey responses and in the higher number of deplatforming attempts and sanctions at the bottom five schools (32 and 26, respectively) than at the top five schools (9 and 2, respectively).

It is clear that some campuses attract more controversy than others. For instance, from 2019 to mid-2023, 10 attempts to deplatform scholars occurred at Georgetown and nine occurred at Harvard, while nine in total occurred at all of the schools ranked in the top five.

The sheer volume of these campaigns and their high success rate are the primary reasons Harvard finished dead last in this year’s rankings with the lowest score possible.

Seven of the nine deplatforming attempts at Harvard resulted in some form of sanction. Some of these sanctions include Harvard’s revocation of a speaking invitation to feminist philosopher Devin Buckley; its relocation of an event featuring former Harvard President Lawrence S. Bacow and Harvard Graduate School of Education Dean Bridget Terry Long after protestors occupied the stage and refused to leave; and its termination or separation of three scholars, Lorgia García Peña, David Kane, and Kenneth Roth.

It is also clear that some schools possess poor speech climates, as evidenced by their consistently

mediocre-to-poor performance in the College Free Speech Rankings. This list includes Harvard, which recorded the worst performance possible this year, continuing its pattern of poor performances in previous years. It also includes Georgetown University and the University of Pennsylvania, both of which finished in the bottom five last year and this year. Finally, it includes Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, Marquette University, Middlebury College, and Fordham University, all of which are never far from the bottom of the rankings.

On the other hand, a number of schools have fairly good speech climates — even if all of them still have room for improvement. This list includes Auburn University, the University of New Hampshire, and Florida State University, this year’s second-, third-, and fifth-ranked schools, respectively. It also includes the University of Chicago; the University of Virginia; the University of Colorado, Boulder; Kansas State University; and Purdue University.

These schools have not been free from controversy, nor have they always resolved controversies in ways that support freedom of expression. Nevertheless, one of the key differences between these schools and those that consistently perform poorly is how they respond to speech controversies on campus when they do occur: These schools do not tend to give in to deplatforming demands and are more likely to defend the free expression rights of students, scholars, and speakers invited on their campuses.

National Data

Since 2020, more than 150,000 undergraduates have been surveyed for the College Free Speech Rankings. This year's survey is the largest ever conducted on undergraduate attitudes about and experience with free expression on college campuses, with a sample size of 55,102. The remainder of this report summarizes the survey's findings at the national level.

Student Political Views

Regarding politics, the students surveyed identified predominantly as liberal, with 48% identifying this way compared to 19% identifying as conservative and 14% identifying as moderate.

Not surprisingly, 232 of the 254 schools surveyed had a predominantly liberal student body, while only 20 schools had a predominantly conservative one. This latter group includes four of the six "Warning" schools surveyed: Baylor University, Brigham Young University, Hillsdale College and Liberty University.

Two of the schools surveyed had an equal number of liberal and conservative students, the University of South Carolina and the University of Toledo.

The average liberal-to-conservative student ratio on the 232 liberal campuses is 5:1, with an extremely unbalanced maximum of 55:1 at Smith College. In contrast, the average conservative-to-liberal student ratio on the 20 conservative campuses is 3:1, with a maximum of 20:1 at Liberty University. With the exception of Hillsdale College (12:1), the conservative campuses have conservative-to-liberal student ratios of less than 2:1.



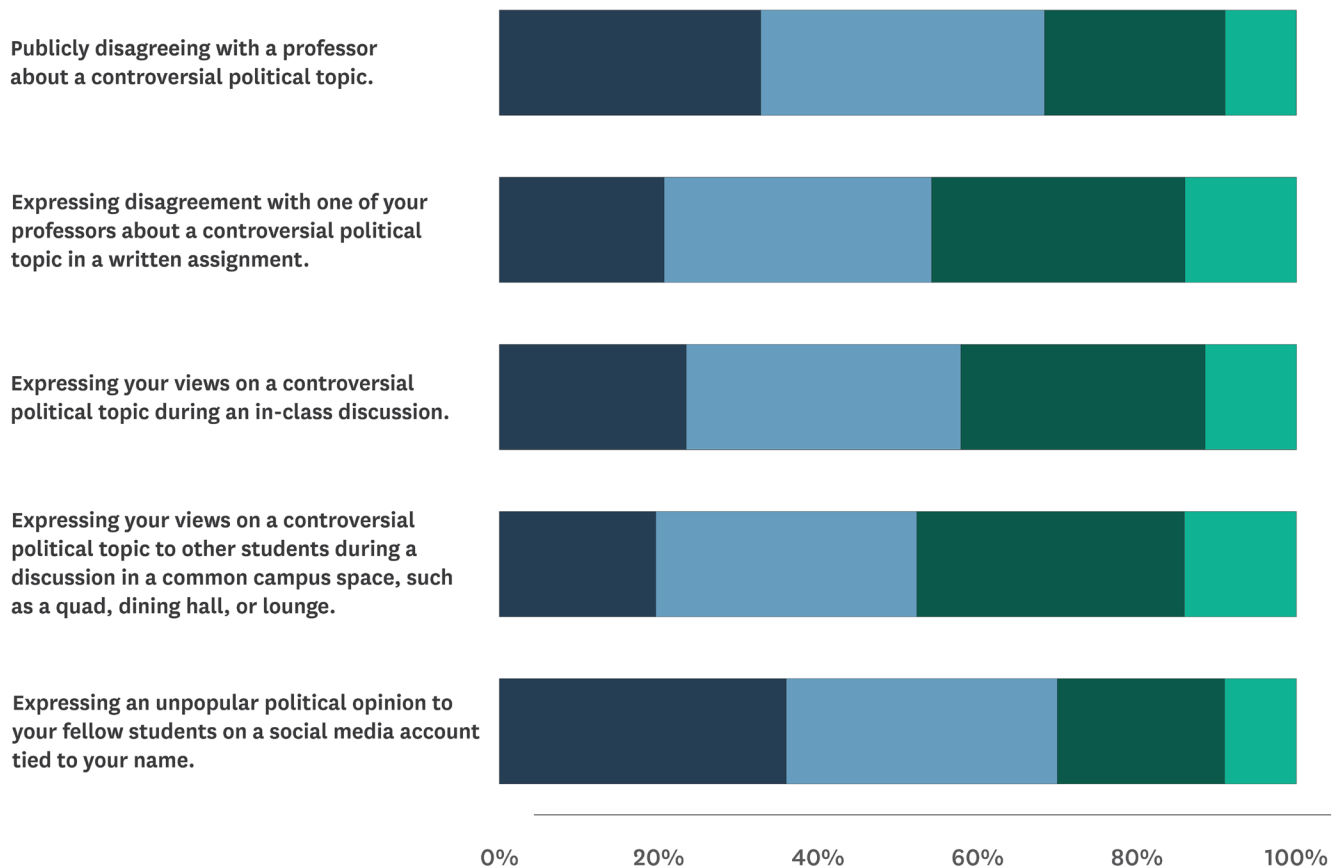
How Comfortable Are Students Expressing Political Views on Campus?

Overall, students reported low levels of comfort expressing their views on controversial political topics across five different contexts on campus.

The percentage of students who reported feeling comfortable ranged from a low of 30%, when expressing an unpopular political opinion to other students on a social media account tied to one’s name, to a high of 48%, when expressing views on a controversial political topic to other students during a discussion in a common campus space.

FIGURE 2:

How comfortable would you feel doing the following on your campus?



Student responses in some areas differed significantly by race, sex, and political orientation.¹³

Higher percentages of male students than female students, for example, reported feeling comfortable publicly disagreeing with a professor on a controversial political topic (36% of male students; 28% of female students). A higher percentage of male students than female students also reported feeling comfortable disagreeing with their professors on a controversial topic in a written assignment (49% of male students; 43% of female students) and expressing their views on a controversial political topic during in-class discussion (45% of male students; 40% of female students). The percentage of male students and that of female students who reported comfort expressing controversial political views in other contexts, such as in a common campus space or on social media, differed only slightly:

- In a common campus space (48% of male students vs. 47% of female students)
- On social media (30% of male students vs. 29% of female students)

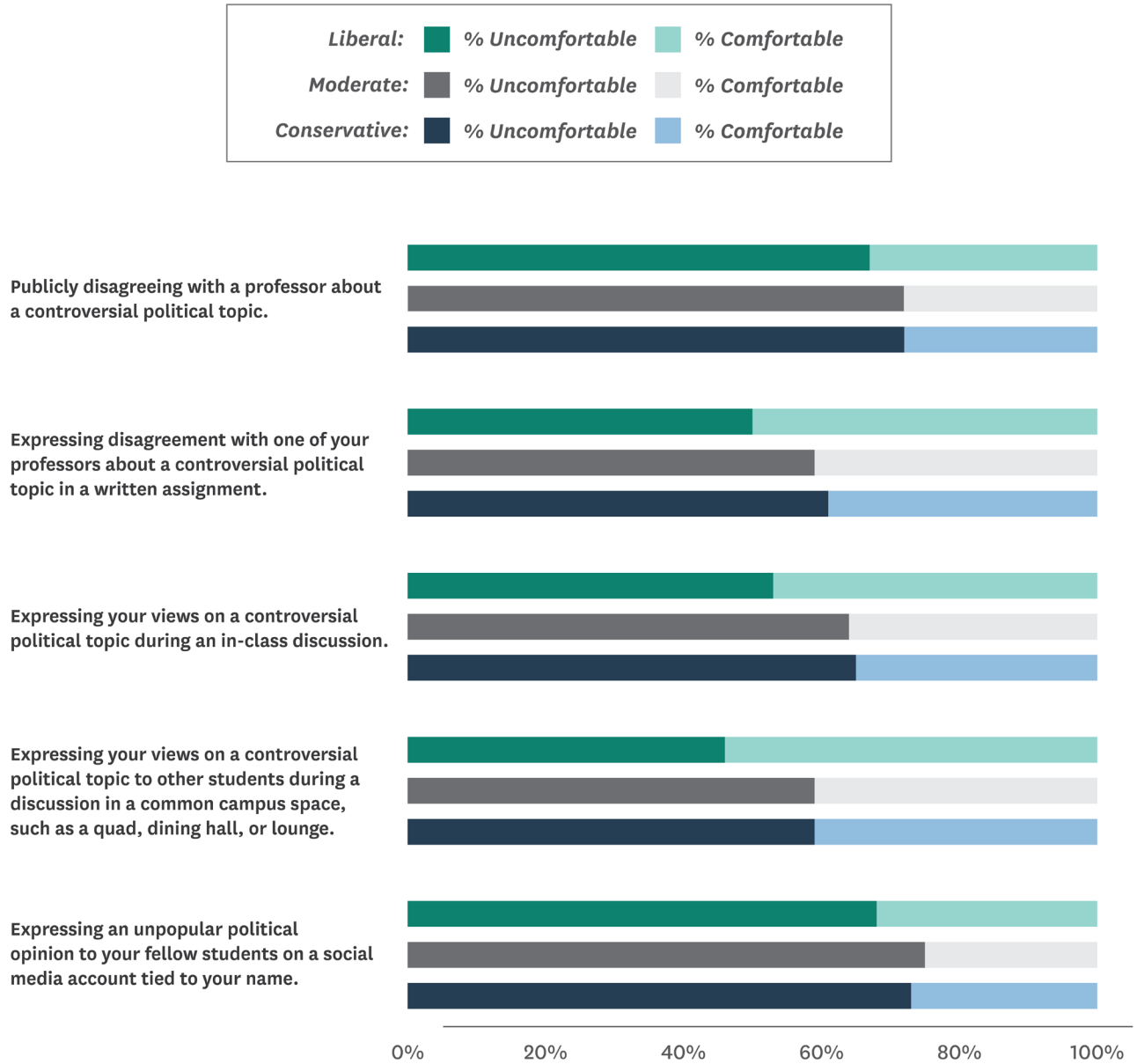
A higher percentage of Black students reported feeling comfortable expressing themselves than that of White, Hispanic, or Asian students. For instance, 51% of Black students reported feeling comfortable expressing their views on a controversial political topic during an in-class discussion, while 40% of White students, 42% of Hispanic students, and 37% of Asian students reported the same. This pattern held across all contexts included in the survey. For example, 39% of Black students reported feeling comfortable expressing an unpopular political opinion to one's peers on a social media account tied to one's name, whereas 27% of White students, 31% of Hispanic students, and 25% of Asian students reported the same.

Regarding political identity, Figure 3 demonstrates that liberal students more often reported feeling comfortable expressing themselves across all contexts than did moderate or conservative students. This finding could result from the fact that 48% of college students in the survey self-identified as politically left-of-center, while only 19% of students self-identified as politically right-of-center.

¹³ Differences are significant at the .05 level.

FIGURE 3:

Comfort expressing views by ideology



Self-Censorship

Between this year and last year, concern about self-censorship among college students remained largely static. This year, 1 in 5 students (20%) reported that they have either “fairly often” or “very often” felt that they could not express their opinion on a subject because of how students, a professor, or the administration would respond. Last year, this percentage was 22%.

A slightly higher percentage of male students than of female students reported having felt this way often (22% and 18%, respectively). Racial differences were negligible, with a slightly higher percentage of Black students (21%) than of White, Hispanic, or Asian students (19%, 19%, and 17%, respectively) reporting having often felt that they could not express themselves because of how others would respond. Differences between liberal, moderate, and conservative students are starker (14%, 21%, and 33%, respectively).

A considerable percentage of students (56%) expressed worrying “a little” or “a lot” about damaging their reputation because of someone misunderstanding something they have said or done, a decline from last year’s 63%. Roughly the same percentage of males and females reported this level of concern (56% and 55%, respectively). Black students were slightly less likely than White, Hispanic, or Asian students to report worrying about damaging their reputation: 50% of Black students reported worrying about this while 57% of White students, 54% of Hispanic students, and 63% of Asian students reported the same. Ideological differences were also not particularly stark,

as 56% of liberals, 57% of moderates, and 59% of conservatives reported worrying about this.

Students were also asked how much pressure they feel to avoid discussing controversial topics in class, and roughly one-quarter of them (26%) reported feeling a “good deal” or a “great deal” of pressure.

Male students were slightly more likely than female students to report feeling a “good deal” or a “great deal” of pressure to avoid discussing controversial topics in class. Racial and ethnic differences also emerged. Asian and Black students were slightly more likely to report feeling a “good deal” or a “great deal” of pressure than were Hispanic students or White students:

- Asian and Black students (27% and 26%, respectively)
- Hispanic and White students (25% and 24%, respectively)

As with the frequency of self-censorship, however, differences between liberal, moderate, and conservative students were starker than differences by sex or race. More than 1 in 3 conservative students (37%) reported feeling pressure to avoid discussing controversial topics, while 30% of moderate students and 19% of liberal students reported the same.

This year we also provided students with a definition of self-censorship and then asked four new questions about their experiences with it on campus.¹⁴ A quarter of students said they self-censor “fairly often” or “very often” during conversa-

14 Self-censorship was defined as the act of refraining from sharing certain views because you fear social (e.g., exclusion from social events), professional (e.g., losing a job or promotion), legal (e.g., prosecution or fine), or violent (e.g., assault) consequences, whether in-person or remotely (e.g., by phone or online), whether the feared consequences come from state or non-state sources.

tions with other students. Twenty-seven percent of students said they self-censor “fairly often” or “very often” during conversations with professors, and 28% said they do so “fairly often” or “very often” during classroom discussions. A quarter of students reported that they are more likely to self-censor on campus now — at the time they were surveyed — than they were when they started college.

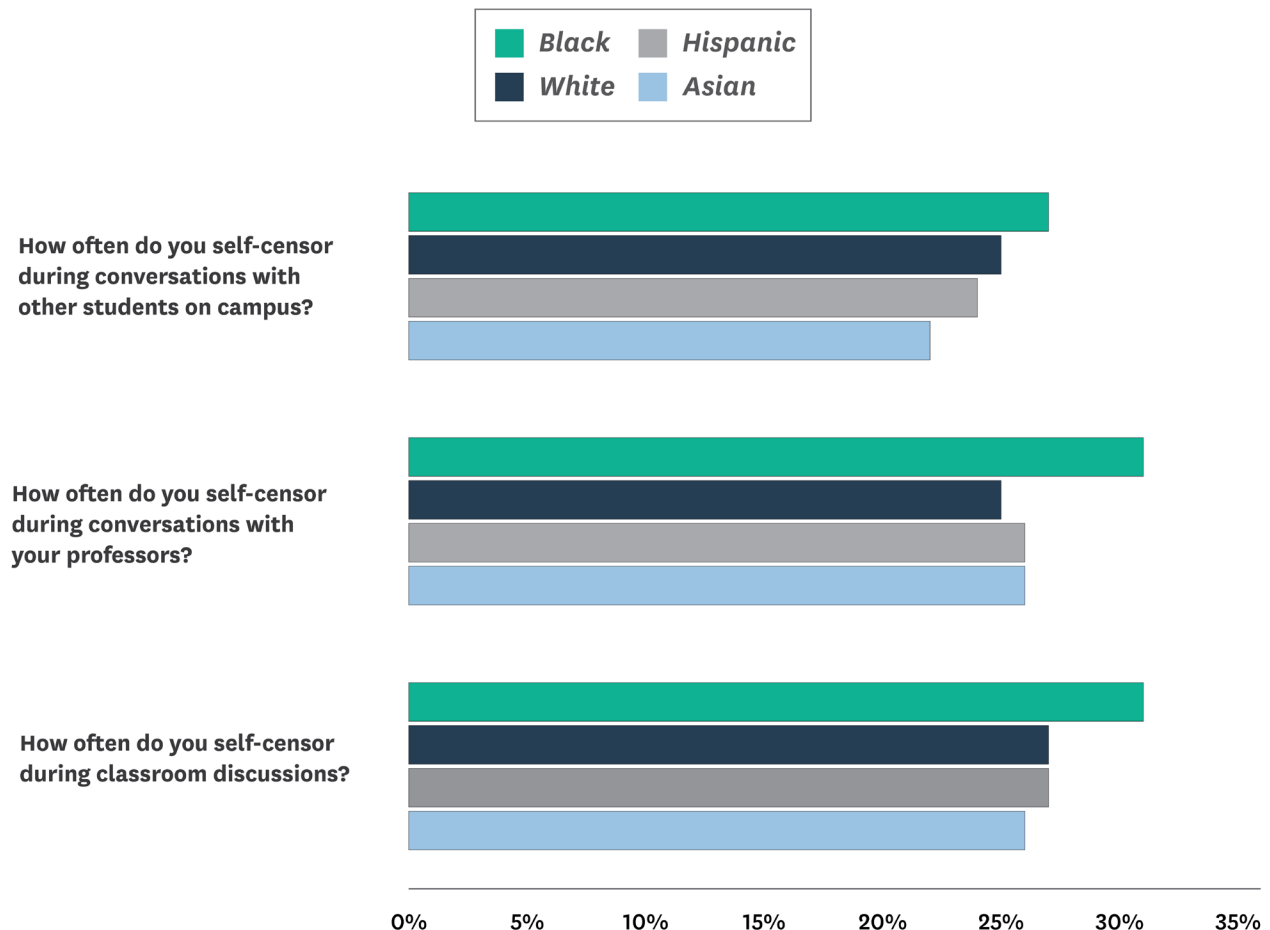
Some gender differences emerged. More than a quarter of males (27%) reported self-censoring in conversations with other students often, while 23% of females reported the same. And 29% of males reported that they are more likely to self-censor

on campus now — at the time they were surveyed — than they were when they started college, while 23% of females reported the same. Self-censorship during conversations with professors or during in-class discussions did not differ significantly by gender.

In terms of race, Figure 4 shows that Black students were slightly more likely than Hispanic students, Asian students, and White students to say they often self-censor in their conversations with other students, in their conversations with professors, and during in-class discussions.

FIGURE 4:

% of students who self-censor often in the following situations by race and ethnicity



Ideological differences in self-censorship are considerably larger. The percentages of conservatives who report self-censoring in their conversations with other students, in their conversations with professors, and during in-class discussions “fairly often” or “very often” are considerably higher than those of liberal students who self-censor in these contexts at the same rate. They are also higher than the percentages of moderate students who self-censor in these contexts at the same rate:

- In conversations with other students (38% of conservative students; 19% of liberal students; 28% of moderate students)
- In conversations with professors (36% of conservative students; 21% of liberal students; 30% of moderate students)
- During in-in class discussions (40% of conservative students; 21% of liberal students; 31% of moderate students)

More than one-third of conservative students (38%) also reported that they are more likely to self-censor on campus now — at the time they were surveyed — than they were when they started college, while 29% of moderate students and 20% of liberal students reported the same.

The self-censorship questions introduced this year were not included when computing the College Free Speech Rankings.

Which Topics Are Difficult to Discuss?

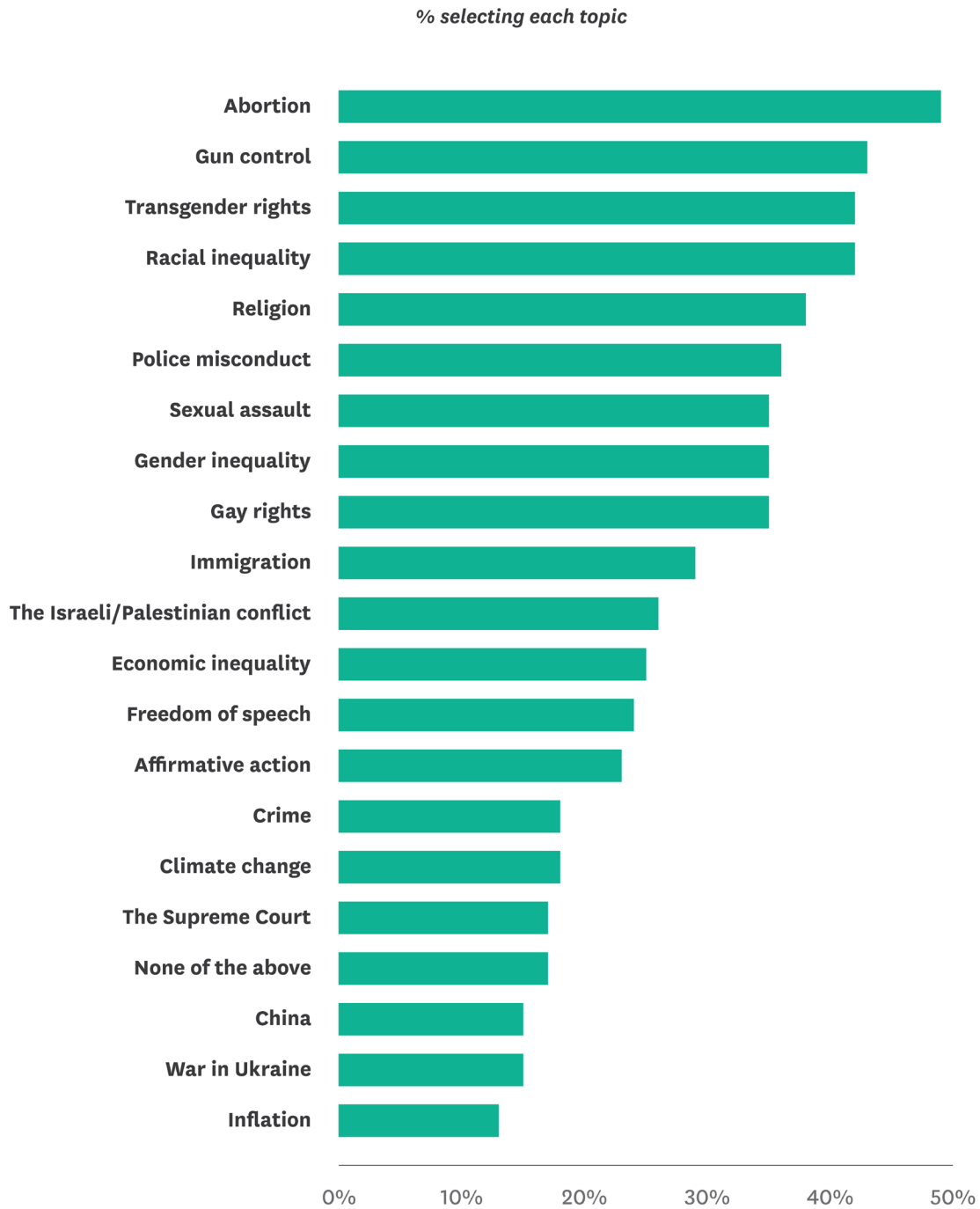
This year’s survey presented students with 20 hot-button political issues and asked them to identify which ones are difficult to have an open and honest conversation about on their campus. The average number of topics students identified as difficult to discuss on campus is 5.77 (S.D. = 5.30).¹⁵

Of the topics presented, almost half of the students surveyed (49%) identified “abortion” as difficult to discuss. Notable percentages of students also identified “gun control,” “racial inequality,” and “transgender rights” as difficult to discuss (43%, 42%, and 42%, respectively).

¹⁵ “None of the above” was also an option, and 17% of students selected this option.

FIGURE 5:

Some students say it can be difficult to have conversations about certain issues on campus. Which of the following issues, if any, would you say are difficult to have an open and honest conversation about on your campus?



Students' responses differ significantly by sex and race.¹⁶

Female students were more likely than male students to identify the topics of “abortion,” “sexual assault,” “gun control,” and “police misconduct” as difficult to discuss:

- Abortion (53% of female students vs. 45% of male students)
- Sexual assault (40% of female students vs. 29% of male students)
- Gun control (47% of female students vs. 39% of male students)
- Police misconduct (38% of female students vs. 32% of male students)

Differences between males and females on other topics were negligible.

Asian students were more likely than White, Hispanic, and Black students to report that they can have an open and honest conversation about most of the survey topics. For instance, only 30% of Asian students said it is difficult to discuss “transgender” rights, while 46% of White students, 41% of Hispanic students, and 40% of Black students said the same. Thirty-three percent of Asian students said it is difficult to discuss the topic of “racial inequality,” whereas 43% of White students, 41%

of Hispanic students, and 46% of Black students said the same. There are a few exceptions to this pattern. For instance, 21% of Asian students said it is difficult to discuss “China,” while 16% of White students, 14% of Hispanic students, and 11% of Black students said the same.

Responses also differ significantly by political identity. A greater percentage of conservative students than liberal students identified the following as topics difficult to have an open and honest conversation about:

- Abortion (59% of conservative students vs. 46% of liberal students)
- Freedom of speech (32% of conservative students vs. 22% of liberal students)
- Gay rights (44% of conservative students vs. 31% of liberal students)
- Gender inequality (41% of conservative students vs. 32% of liberal students)
- Gun control (48% of conservative students vs. 42% of liberal students)
- Racial inequality (46% of conservative students vs. 40% of liberal students)
- Religion (42% of conservative students vs. 36% of liberal students)
- Transgender rights (51% of conservative students vs. 38% of liberal students)

¹⁶ Differences are significant at the .05 level.

Moderate students were also more likely than liberal students to identify the following topics as difficult to discuss:

- Abortion (52% of moderate students vs. 46% of liberal students)
- Gay rights (36% of moderate students vs. 31% of liberal students)
- Transgender rights (44% of moderate students vs. 38% of liberal students)

Liberal students were more likely than moderate or conservative students to say that “the Israeli/Palestinian conflict” is difficult to discuss (30%, 22% and 21%, respectively). The same pattern held true for attitudes toward discussing the topic of “sexual assault,” which 38% of liberal students, 34% of moderate students, and 29% of conservative students said is difficult to discuss.¹⁷

We have asked this question every year since 2020, with some variation in the topics presented. Some topics, like “abortion” and “immigration,” were

asked about every year, while others, like “freedom of speech” and “police misconduct,” were asked about at least twice. The table below presents topics that we have asked about multiple times.

As you can see, the percentage of students identifying a topic as difficult to have an open and honest conversation about has, for the most part, remained fairly steady: For instance, in 2020, 41% of students identified “gun control” as difficult to discuss while, this year, 43% identified it that way.

The two topics that do not reflect this pattern are “abortion” and “racial inequality.” The percentage of students identifying the topic of “abortion” as difficult to discuss has increased by 4% since 2020, rising from 45% to 49%. In contrast, the percentage of students identifying “race” or “racial inequality”¹⁸ as difficult to discuss peaked at 51% in 2021, the first time students were asked this question after the murder of George Floyd in 2020. It dropped to a low of 42% this year.

¹⁷ Differences are significant at the .05 level.

¹⁸ In 2020 the topic asked about was “Race,” from 2021 to 2023 the topic asked about was “Racial inequality.”

Table 8. Difficult topics to discuss on campus, 2020-present

Topic	2020	2021	2022	2023
Abortion	45%	46%	49%	49%
Affirmative action	30%	29%	26%	23%
China	Not asked	22%	20%	15%
Climate change	Not asked	19%	18%	18%
Economic inequality	Not asked	33%	28%	25%
Freedom of speech	Not asked	Not asked	27%	24%
Gender inequality	Not asked	37%	35%	35%
Gun control	41%	44%	43%	43%
Immigration	36%	34%	33%	29%
Israeli-Palestinian conflict	30%	30%	31%	26%
Police misconduct	Not asked	Not asked	43%	36%
Race/Racial inequality	43%	51%	48%	42%
Religion	Not asked	Not asked	37%	38%
Sexual assault	Not asked	38%	37%	35%
Transgender issues/ Transgender rights ¹⁹	40%	42%	44%	42%

¹⁹ From 2020 to 2022 the topic asked about was “Transgender issues,” in 2023 the topic asked about was “Transgender rights.”

Tolerance of Controversial Speakers

Each year, thousands of lectures and invited talks are given on college campuses across the country without incident. Yet, some such events have produced controversy over the speakers' views and previous remarks, resulting in attempts to deplatform the speaker. These deplatforming attempts include demands to silence speakers and/or those who invited them, calls for college officials to disinvite invited guest speakers, disruption of events, and even the use of violence to prevent expression from occurring.

Political tolerance has long been assessed by asking people whether they would grant civil liberties — primarily freedom of speech — to nonconformists and controversial or offensive speakers.²⁰ Therefore, this survey asks students whether, regardless of their own views on the topic, their schools should allow a speaker on campus who has expressed one of the following six ideas:

- “Abortion should be completely illegal.”
- “Black Lives Matter is a hate group.”
- “Transgender people have a mental disorder.”
- “The Second Amendment should be repealed so that guns can be confiscated.”
- “Religious liberty is used as an excuse to discriminate against gays and lesbians.”
- “Structural racism maintains inequality by protecting White privilege.”

Overall, a majority of students responded that each liberal speaker should be allowed on campus, ranging from a low of 57% to a high of 72%. Students were consistently less supportive of allowing conservative speakers on campus: These percentages ranged from a high of 43% to a low of 29%. Supporters of free expression on campus should be concerned by these numbers. More than a quarter of students (28%) opposed allowing even the most popular speaker on the list — one who has expressed that “structural racism maintains inequality by protecting White privilege” — on campus, and the numbers were worse for the other speakers.

Responses also demonstrate consistent differences by sex, race, and political identification.²¹

A greater percentage of male students than female students would allow all six speakers on campus and, in most of the cases, these differences are stark.²² For instance, 57% of male students responded that a speaker promoting the idea that “abortion should be completely illegal” should be allowed on campus, while only 33% of female students said the same. And 69% of male students said they would permit a speaker on campus who promoted the idea that “the Second Amendment should be repealed so that guns can be confiscated,” while 61% of female students said the same.

20 Gibson, J. (2006). Enigmas of intolerance: Fifty years after Stouffer's *Communism, Conformity, and Civil Liberties*. *Perspectives on Politics*, 4, 21–34; Stouffer, S. A. (1955). *Communism, conformity, and civil liberties: A cross-section of the nation speaks its mind*. Transaction Publishers; Sullivan, J. L.; Piereson, J.; & Marcus, G. E. (1979). An alternative conceptualization of political tolerance: Illusory increases 1950s–1970s. *American Political Science Review*, 73, 781–794; Sullivan, J. L.; Piereson, J.; & Marcus, G. E. (1982). *Political Tolerance and American Democracy*. University of Chicago Press.

21 Differences are significant at the .05 level.

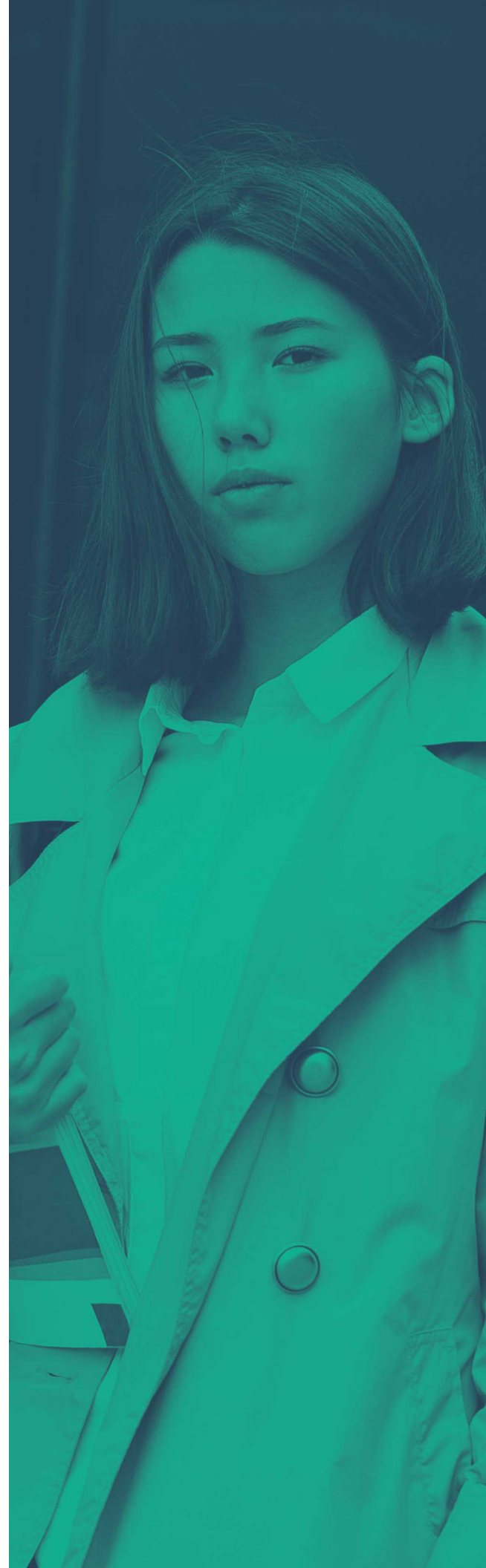
22 The differences for the remaining three speakers were not statistically significant.

White students in general were more likely than Black, Hispanic, and Asian students to respond that each of the conservative speakers should be allowed on campus. This pattern largely reversed for the liberal speakers, with the exception of a speaker who expressed that “religious liberty is used as an excuse to discriminate against gays and lesbians” — 59% of White students said this speaker should be allowed on campus, whereas 53% of Hispanic students, 54% of Black students, and 52% of Asian students said the same.

Liberal students were more likely to support allowing each liberal speaker on campus than they were to allow each conservative speaker. Their support for allowing such speakers on campus ranged from 61% (“Religious liberty is used as an excuse to discriminate against gays and lesbians”) to 81% (“Structural racism maintains inequality by protecting White privilege”).

Liberal students were not as welcoming to conservative speakers, however. Only 16% of liberal students supported allowing a speaker on campus who expressed the view, “Black Lives Matter is a hate group”; 17% supported allowing a speaker who expressed the view, “Transgender people have a mental disorder”; and 32% supported allowing a speaker who expressed the view, “Abortion should be completely illegal.”

A majority of conservative students, on the other hand, said that all six speakers should be allowed on campus: These percentages ranged from a low of 55% (“Religious liberty is used as an excuse to discriminate against gays and lesbians”) to a high of 69% (“Abortion should be completely illegal”).



How Acceptable Is Engaging in Disruptive Conduct to Protest a Campus Speech?

Although most students oppose the use of disruptive tactics to stop a campus speech, disappointing percentages find such tactics acceptable to some degree (answering “always,” “sometimes,” or “rarely”).

Indeed, 45% of students, up from 37% last year, reported that blocking other students from attending a campus speech is at least rarely

acceptable, while 27% of students, up from 20% last year, reported that using violence to stop a campus speech is at least rarely acceptable.

While shouting down a speaker is nonviolent, it is still disruptive and a threat to free expression. More than 3 in 5 students (63%) reported that this tactic is at least rarely acceptable, a percentage roughly the same as last year’s (62%).

Table 9: Acceptability of disruptive protest, 2021-present

How acceptable would you say it is for students to engage in the following action to protest a campus speaker?	2021	2022	2023
Shouting down a speaker to prevent them from speaking on campus.	66%	62%	63%
Blocking other students from attending a campus speech.	41%	37%	45%
Using violence to stop a campus speech.	24%	20%	27%

Differences in students' political identification correspond with the largest differences in their level of acceptance of disruptive conduct.²³ Almost 3 in 4 liberal students (74%) reported that shouting down a speaker is acceptable to some degree, whereas 58% of moderate students and 47% of conservative students said the same. Further, more than half of liberal students (52%) reported that blocking entry to a campus speech is acceptable to some degree. This represents an increase from 47% last year.

The percentages of moderate and conservative students reporting that blocking entry is acceptable to some degree also increased from those of last year. Last year, 31% of moderate students and 25% of conservative students reported that blocking entry is at least rarely acceptable: This year, 40% of moderate students and 33% of conservative students said the same.

This pattern also emerged when it comes to students' level of acceptance of using violence to stop a campus speech. This year, 29% of liberal students, 26% of moderate students, and 23% of conservative students reported that violence is acceptable to some degree. Last year, 25% of liberal students, 18% of moderate students, and 16% of conservative students said the same.

Differences by sex are not as stark. For instance, 65% of female students reported that shouting down a speaker is acceptable to some degree, and 60% of male students said the same. As for blocking entry to a campus speech, 46% of female students reported that this tactic is acceptable to some degree, and 42% of male students said the same. Lastly, 25% of female students reported that using violence is acceptable to some degree and 28% of male students said the same.

Racial and ethnic differences are significant in this area.²⁴ While 41% of White students reported that blocking entry to a campus speech is acceptable to some degree, even larger proportions of Asian, Black, and Hispanic students reported the same:

- Asian students (56%)
- Black students (49%)
- Hispanic students (47%)

A smaller percentage of White students (22%) than that of Asian students (36%), Black students (34%), and Hispanic students (29%) also reported that using violence to stop a campus speech is acceptable to some degree.

23 Differences are all significant at the .05 level.

24 Differences are all significant at the .05 level.

How Do Students Perceive the Administration's Support for Free Speech?

Students tended to report that their campus administration's stance on protecting free speech is unclear at best. More than 2 in 5 students (43%) reported that it is only "somewhat" clear that their administration protects free speech on campus, while another 21% reported that this is not clear.

Additionally, 47% reported that it is only "somewhat" likely that the administration would defend a speaker's right to express their views if a speech controversy occurred on campus. Another 27% reported that it is not likely that this would occur, and 26% said that it is likely.

Attempts to Sanction Scholars

FIRE's Scholars Under Fire database covers expression-related incidents from 2000 to the present. It documents how and why scholars have faced calls for sanction, how scholars and institutional administrators have responded, and what (if any) sanctions scholars have experienced.²⁵ Schools included in the rankings received bonuses or penalties based on their responses to these kinds of controversies from 2019 through mid-2023.

At the colleges surveyed, 35 scholars who faced a call for sanction were supported rather than sanctioned by their administration. The following schools all supported scholars on more than one occasion:

- Carnegie Mellon
- George Washington University
- Stanford University
- University of California, Berkeley
- University of Chicago

In contrast, 149 scholars at the surveyed colleges were sanctioned. Some schools were particularly egregious offenders, with the following schools sanctioning scholars on at least three occasions:

²⁵ The Scholars Under Fire Database is on FIRE's website at <https://www.thefire.org/research/scholars-under-fire-database/>.

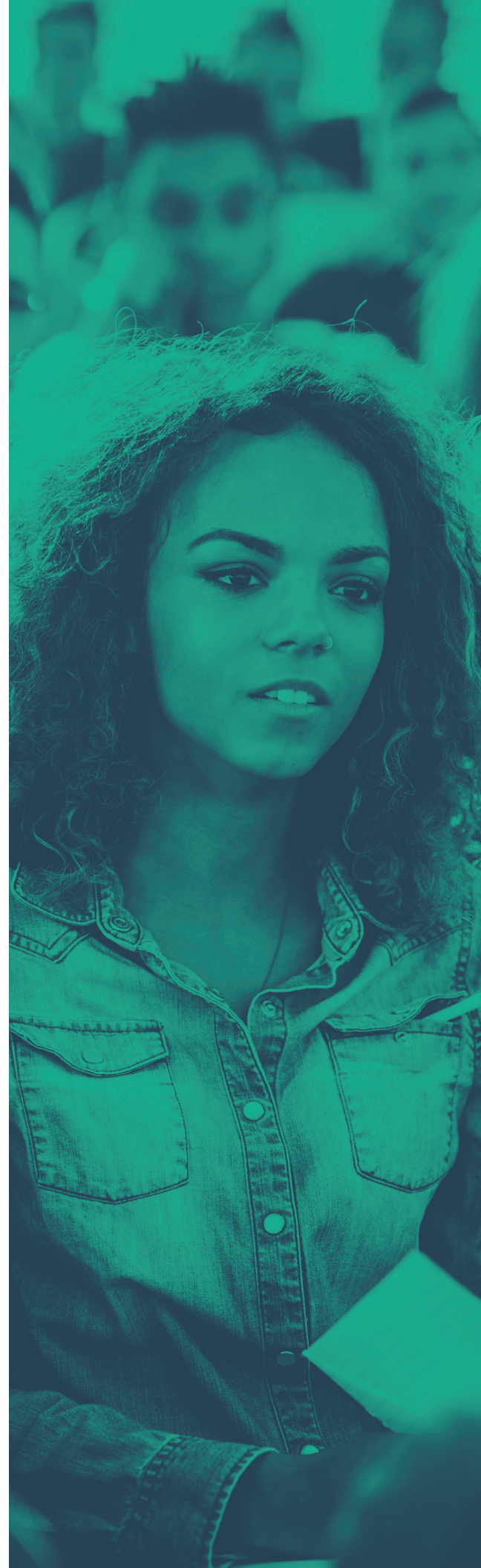


Table 10: Schools with 3 or more sanctioned scholars.

School	Sanctioned Scholars
University of Florida	8
Indiana University	7
University of Central Florida	5
George Washington University	4
Georgetown University	4
Harvard University	4
University of California, Los Angeles	4
University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill	4
University of Pennsylvania	4
Claremont McKenna College	3
Columbia University	3
San Diego State University	3
University of Arizona	3
University of Miami	3
University of Michigan	3
University of Texas, Austin	3
University of Wisconsin, Eau Claire	3
Yale University	3

Put another way, 71 of the 149 scholar sanctions (48%) came from just 18 of the 254 schools surveyed.

Additionally, a number of schools sanctioned scholars on two occasions:

- Arizona State University
- Bowling Green State University
- Brigham Young University
- Chapman University
- Emory University
- George Mason University
- New York University
- Portland State University
- University of Colorado, Boulder
- University of Missouri, Columbia
- University of North Texas
- University of Oklahoma
- University of Rhode Island
- University of Washington

So, in total, 99 of the 149 scholar sanctions (66%) came from 33 of the 254 schools surveyed.

Disinvitation Attempts

FIRE's Campus Disinvitation database documents efforts to disinvite speakers from public and private American institutions from 1998-present. Schools included in the rankings received bonuses for unequivocally defending a speaker's right to free expression and received penalties for disinviting speakers from 2019 through mid-2023.²⁶

Among the schools surveyed, 52 successful disinvitations were recorded: Among them were 26 substantial event disruptions, when one or more people substantially disrupt or entirely prevent a speaker from speaking or prevent an audience from hearing the speaker; 23 revocations, when a speaker's invitation is rescinded; and three withdrawals, which occurred when a speaker cancels the event themselves in response to the disinvitation campaign.

The following schools were each the site of more than one successful disinvitation and altogether accounted for 14 of the total successful disinvitations:

- Cornell University
- Dartmouth College
- Harvard University
- Saint Louis University
- University of California, Davis
- University of New Mexico
- University of South Carolina

In other words, more than a quarter of successful disinvitations (27%) came from just 7 of the 254 schools surveyed.

Among the schools surveyed, we recorded 29 instances of schools supporting speakers during a disinvitation campaign. The following schools all clearly defended a speaker's rights during more than one disinvitation campaign:

- Arizona State University
- Georgetown University
- University of Michigan
- University of Pittsburgh
- University of Virginia

26 The Campus Disinvitation Database is available on FIRE's website at <https://www.thefire.org/research/disinvitation-database/>.

Conclusions

This year's College Free Speech Rankings expanded to assess and rank the free expression environment at more than 250 colleges and universities in the United States — the most comprehensive such look to date. Through a multidimensional examination of students' perceptions and experiences, and an even more comprehensive evaluation of campus speech controversies than that of our previous rankings reports, the College Free Speech Rankings helps students, parents, professors, administrators, alumni, policymakers, and any interested party identify the best and worst campuses for free speech in the United States.

This report adds tens of thousands of student voices and experiences to the discussion of free expression on America's college campuses. The data and findings on how current students experience their campuses, what they say about their ability to express themselves in a variety of contexts, and how their school administrations handle speech controversies are publicly available at the College Free Speech Rankings dashboard, rankings.thefire.org, which offers the ability to make additional comparisons. The raw data file is also available by email request to data@thefire.org.

Although a handful of colleges stand out from the pack, the free speech climate at even these campuses has room to improve. For instance, Auburn University and Florida State University have consistently done well in the College Free Speech Rankings, and both are ranked in the top five this year. But both schools also sanctioned a professor in the past four years. All of the top five schools, with the exception of the University of New Hampshire, were middling at best on the components of "Comfort Expressing Ideas" and "Openness." And the University of New Hampshire's "Administrative Support" score is in the bottom half of schools surveyed.

Nationally, across all schools surveyed, less than half of students reported feeling comfortable expressing their views on controversial political issues on campus in a variety of contexts — such as in class, in common campus spaces, and on social media. One-fifth said they self-censor often and about a quarter said that they feel "a good deal" or "a great deal" of pressure to avoid discussing controversial topics in their classes.

At least 40% of students identified "abortion," "gun control," "racial inequality," and "transgender rights" as topics that are difficult to have an open and honest conversation about on campus. When asked if controversial speakers should be allowed on campus, student support ranged from 29% to 72%, with only half of the six listed speakers receiving majority support.

The percentage of students who consider violent forms of protest to stop a campus speech acceptable to some degree increased over the past year: Forty-five percent said blocking other students from attending a speech is at least rarely acceptable, up from 37% last year, and 27% said that the use of violence to stop a speech is at least rarely acceptable, up from 20% last year.

These findings about intolerant and disruptive conduct and self-censorship suggest a pervasive national climate of worry and discomfort on American college campuses. This should concern anyone who supports a vision of higher education as a free marketplace of ideas meant to produce graduates who are ready to join the vigorous debates within American society and beyond.

Too many colleges are acquiescing to demands to deplatform students, scholars, and speakers on campus, perpetuating a climate hostile to free expression.

Appendices

Methodology

The College Free Speech Survey was developed by FIRE and administered by College Pulse. No donors to the project took part in designing or conducting the survey. The survey was fielded from January 13, 2023, to June 30, 2023. These data come from a sample of 55,102 undergraduates who were then enrolled full-time in four-year degree programs at one of a list of 254 colleges and universities in the United States. The margin of error for the U.S. undergraduate population is +/- 1 percentage point, and the margin of error for college student sub-demographics ranges from 2-5 percentage points.

The initial sample was drawn from College Pulse's American College Student Panel™, which includes more than 750,000 verified undergraduate students and recent alumni from schools within a range of more than 1,500 two- and four-year colleges and universities in all 50 states. Panel members were recruited by a number of methods to help ensure student diversity in the panel population: These methods include web advertising, permission-based email campaigns, and partnerships with university-affiliated organizations. To ensure the panel reflects the diverse backgrounds and experiences of the American college population, College Pulse recruited panelists from a wide variety of institutions. The panel includes students attending large public universities, small private colleges, online universities, historically Black colleges such as Howard University, women's colleges such as Smith College, and religiously-affiliated colleges such as Brigham Young University.

College Pulse uses a two-stage validation process to ensure that all its surveys include only students

currently enrolled in two-year or four-year colleges or universities. Students are required to provide an ".edu" email address to join the panel and, for this survey, had to acknowledge that they are currently enrolled full-time in a four-year degree program. All invitations to complete surveys were sent using the student's ".edu" email address or through a notification in the College Pulse app, available on iOS and Android platforms.

College Pulse applies a post-stratification adjustment based on demographic distributions from multiple data sources, including the Current Population Survey (CPS), the National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS), and the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS). The post-stratification weight rebalances the sample based on a number of important benchmark attributes, such as race, gender, class year, voter registration status, and financial aid status. The sample weighting is accomplished using an iterative proportional fitting (IPF) process that simultaneously balances the distributions of all variables. Weights are trimmed to prevent individual interviews from having too much influence on the final results.

The use of these weights in statistical analysis ensures that the demographic characteristics of the sample closely approximate the demographic characteristics of the target populations. Even with these adjustments, surveys may be subject to error or bias due to question wording, context, and order effects.

For further information, please see: <https://collegepulse.com/methodology>.

Free Speech Rankings

The College Free Speech Rankings are based on a composite score of 13 components, six of which assess student perceptions of different aspects of the speech climate on their campus. The other seven assess behavior by administrators, faculty, and students regarding free expression on campus. Higher scores indicate a better campus climate for free speech and expression.

Student Perceptions

The student perception components include:

- **Comfort Expressing Ideas:** Students were asked how comfortable they feel expressing their views on controversial topics in five different campus settings (e.g., “in class,” or “in the dining hall”). Options ranged from “very uncomfortable” to “very comfortable.” They were also asked how often they felt that they could not express their opinion because of how other students, faculty, or the administration would respond (options ranged from “never” to “very often”); how worried they are about damaging their reputation because of someone misunderstanding something they have said or done (options ranged from “worried a lot” to “not at all worried”); and if they feel pressure to avoid discussing controversial topics in their classes (options ranged from “no pressure at all” to “a great deal of pressure,” with “a lot of pressure” referring to the sum of “a good deal of pressure” and “a great deal of pressure”). Responses were coded so that higher scores indicate greater comfort expressing ideas. The maximum number of points is 33.
- **Tolerance for Liberal Speakers:** Students were asked whether three speakers espousing views potentially offensive to conservatives (e.g., “The Second Amendment should be repealed so that guns can be confiscated”) should be allowed on campus, regardless of whether they personally agree with the speaker’s message. Options ranged from “definitely should not allow this speaker” to “definitely should allow this speaker” and were coded so that higher scores indicate more tolerance of the speaker (i.e., more support for allowing the speaker on campus). The maximum number of points is 12.
- **Tolerance for Conservative Speakers:** Students were also asked whether three speakers espousing views potentially offensive to liberals (e.g., “Black Lives Matter is a hate group”) should be allowed on campus, regardless of whether they personally agree with the speaker’s message. Scoring was performed in the same manner as it was for the “Tolerance for Liberal Speakers” subcomponent, and the maximum number of points is 12.
- **Disruptive Conduct:** Students were asked how acceptable it is to engage in different methods of protest against a campus speaker, including “shouting down a speaker or trying to prevent them from speaking on campus,” “blocking other students from attending a campus speech,” and “using violence to stop a campus speech.” Options ranged from “always acceptable” to “never acceptable” and were coded so that higher scores indicate less acceptance of disruptive conduct. The maximum number of points is 12.
- **Administrative Support:** Students were asked how clear their campus administration’s stance on free speech is and how likely the administration would be to defend a speaker’s right to express their views if a controversy over speech occurred on campus. For the administrative stance question, options range from “not at all clear” to “extremely clear,” and for the administrative controversy question, options range from “not at all likely” to “extremely likely.” Options were coded so that higher scores indicate greater clarity and a greater likelihood of defending a speaker’s rights. The maximum number of points is 10.
- **Openness:** Finally, students were asked which of 20 issues (e.g., “abortion,” “freedom of speech,” “gun control,” and “racial inequality”), if any, are difficult to have open conversations about on campus. Responses were coded so that higher scores indicate fewer issues being selected. The maximum number of points is 20.

Two additional constructs, “Mean Tolerance” and “Tolerance Difference,” were computed from the “Tolerance for Liberal/Conservative Speaker” components. “Tolerance Difference” was calculated by subtracting “Tolerance for Conservative Speakers” from “Tolerance for Liberal Speakers” and then taking the absolute value (so that a bias in favor of either side would be treated the same).

Campus Indicators

Schools received bonus points — described in more detail below — for taking the following actions indicative of a positive campus climate for free speech:

- Supporting scholars whose speech rights were threatened during a free expression controversy, as recorded in FIRE’s Scholars Under Fire database.²⁷ This support had to be unequivocal to be counted. That is, if an administration condemned the speech, apologized for the scholar’s expression, or sanctioned the scholar, despite issuing a statement of support, it was not included in the school’s total.
- Supporting students and student groups, as recorded in the “Supported Students and Student Groups” section of the appendix. As with supporting scholars, this support had to be unequivocal.
- Supporting speakers, as recorded in FIRE’s Campus Disinvitation database.²⁸ As with supporting scholars and students, this support had to be unequivocal.

Schools were penalized — described in more detail below — for taking the following actions indicative of poor campus climate for free speech:

- Sanctioning scholars (e.g., placing under investigation, suspending, or terminating scholars), as recorded in FIRE’s Scholars Under Fire database.
- Sanctioning students and student groups, as recorded in the “Sanctioned Students and Student Groups” section of the appendix.
- Successfully disinviting an invited speaker from speaking on campus, as recorded in FIRE’s Campus Disinvitation database.

To be included in this year’s rankings, an incident that would result in a bonus or penalty had to have occurred by July 12, 2023, and had to have been fully assessed by FIRE’s research staff, who determined whether the incident warranted inclusion. This means, for instance, that recent incidents at Texas A&M University — its recruitment and failed appointment of Kathleen McElroy as a tenured professor to run its journalism program, its placement of professor Joy Alonzo on paid administrative leave after her criticism of Lieutenant Governor Dan Patrick in a talk on political interference in higher education — are not included in this year’s rankings. Texas A&M University, therefore, was not penalized for either incident. However, the penalties will be applied in next year’s College Free Speech Rankings.

27 The Scholars Under Fire Database is on FIRE’s website at <https://www.thefire.org/research/publications/miscellaneous-publications/scholars-under-fire/>.

28 The Campus Disinvitation Database is on FIRE’s website at <https://www.thefire.org/research/disinvitation-database/>.

FIRE's Spotlight ratings — our ratings of the written policies governing student speech at more than 475 institutions of higher education in the United States — are also factored into each school's overall score. Three substantive ratings are possible: “red light,” “yellow light,” and “green light.” A “red light” rating indicates that the institution has at least one policy that both clearly and substantially restricts freedom of speech. A “yellow light” rating indicates that an institution maintains policies that restrict a more limited amount of protected expression or that, by virtue of their vague wording, they could too easily be used to restrict protected expression. A “green light” rating indicates that an institution maintains no policies that seriously threaten speech, although this rating does not indicate whether a college actively supports free expression.

Finally, a fourth rating, “Warning,” is assigned to a private college or university when its policies clearly and consistently state that it prioritizes other values over a commitment to freedom of speech. “Warning” schools, therefore, were not ranked, and their overall scores are presented separately in this report.²⁹

For this year's rankings, the cutoff date for assessing a school's speech code policies was July 12, 2023. Any changes to a school's Spotlight rating that have occurred since then will be reflected in the 2025 College Free Speech Rankings.

Overall Score

To create an overall score for each college, we first summed the following student subcomponents: “Comfort Expressing Ideas,” “Mean Tolerance,” “Disruptive Conduct,” “Administrative Support,” and “Openness.” Then, we subtracted the “Tolerance Difference.” By including the “Mean Tol-

erance” (as opposed to including “Tolerance for Liberal Speakers” and “Tolerance for Conservative Speakers” separately) and subtracting the “Tolerance Difference,” the score accounted for the possibility that ideologically homogeneous student bodies may result in a campus that appears to have a strong culture of free expression but is actually hostile to the views of an ideological minority — whose views students may almost never encounter on campus.

Then, to further account for the speech climate on an individual campus, we incorporated behavioral components. A school earned up to one bonus point each time it successfully supported (i.e., did not sanction or release a conflicting message about) a scholar, student, or student group during a free expression controversy. We decreased this bonus by one-quarter of a point each year, awarding a full point for support in 2023, three-quarters of a point for support in 2022, half a point for support in 2021, and one-quarter of a point for support in 2020.

We also applied penalties when an administration sanctioned a scholar, student, or student group, and when a speaker was disinvited from campus.

A school lost up to five points each time it sanctioned a scholar (e.g., investigated, suspended, or terminated a scholar). When the sanction did not result in termination the penalty was one point and was set to decrease by one-quarter of a point each year, penalizing schools a full point for sanctioning a scholar in 2023, three-quarters of a point for support in 2022, half a point for support in 2021, and one-quarter of a point for support in 2020. However, if the administration terminated the scholar, we subtracted three points, and if that scholar was tenured, we subtracted five points. These penalties are applied for four years before they begin to decrease, so schools that fired a tenured professor anytime between 2020 and 2023 lost five points.

29 The Spotlight Database is on FIRE's website at <https://www.thefire.org/resources/spotlight/>.

After a period of four years, these penalties begin to decrease by a quarter of a point each year. Therefore, schools that terminated scholars in 2019 are penalized in this year's rankings. As of this year, the penalties have begun to decrease.

Regarding disinvitations, a school was penalized one point when an invited speaker withdrew because of the controversy caused by their upcoming appearance on campus. Like the penalty for sanctioning scholars, this penalty was set to decrease by a quarter of a point each year. However, if a school revoked a speaker's invitation to visit campus or if a speaking event faced a substantial disruption, a school was penalized three points. As with scholar terminations, these penalties take effect for four years before they begin to decrease. Penalties related to revocations and substantial disruptions from 2019 are included in this year's rankings. As of this year, the penalties have begun to decrease.

After we applied bonuses and penalties, we standardized each school's score in each group — "Warning" schools and other schools — so that the average score in each group was 50.00 and the standard deviation was 10.00. Following standardization, we added one standard deviation to the final score of colleges whose speech codes received a "green light" rating. We also subtracted half a standard deviation from the final score of colleges that received a "yellow light" rating, one standard deviation from the final score of schools that received a "red light" rating, and two standard deviations from schools that received a "Warning" rating.

Overall Score = $(50 + (Z_{Raw} Overall Score)(10)) + FIRE Rating$

2024 College Free Speech Rankings

Rank	School	Overall Score	Speech Climate
1	Michigan Technological University	78.01	Good
2	Auburn University	72.53	Good
3	University of New Hampshire	72.17	Good
4	Oregon State University	71.56	Good
5	Florida State University	69.64	Above Average
6	University of Virginia	68.00	Above Average
7	Texas A&M University	67.92	Above Average
8	George Mason University	67.65	Above Average
9	University of North Carolina, Greensboro	67.53	Above Average
10	University of Colorado, Boulder	66.54	Above Average
11	North Carolina State University	66.19	Above Average
12	University of South Florida	66.08	Above Average
13	University of Chicago	65.95	Above Average
14	Mississippi State University	65.61	Above Average
15	Eastern Kentucky University	65.51	Above Average
16	Northern Arizona University	65.34	Above Average
17	University of Missouri, St. Louis	64.88	Above Average
18	Kansas State University	63.35	Above Average
19	University of Maryland	63.00	Above Average
20	Washington and Lee University	62.99	Above Average

21	University of North Carolina, Charlotte	62.54	Above Average
22	University at Buffalo	62.20	Above Average
23	Carnegie Mellon University	61.47	Above Average
24	East Carolina University	59.68	Slightly Above Average
25	New Jersey Institute of Technology	58.87	Slightly Above Average
26	James Madison University	58.83	Slightly Above Average
27	Georgia Institute of Technology	58.70	Slightly Above Average
28	Wright State University	58.30	Slightly Above Average
29	University of Illinois, Chicago	58.22	Slightly Above Average
30	Purdue University	58.11	Slightly Above Average
31	University of Toledo	58.05	Slightly Above Average
32	New Mexico State University	57.75	Slightly Above Average
33	California State University, Los Angeles	57.38	Slightly Above Average
34	College of Charleston	57.26	Slightly Above Average
35	Arkansas State University	57.19	Slightly Above Average
36	Appalachian State University	56.91	Slightly Above Average
37	University of Texas, El Paso	56.24	Slightly Above Average
38	University of Texas, Arlington	56.16	Slightly Above Average
39	University of Memphis	56.14	Slightly Above Average
40	Texas Tech University	55.96	Slightly Above Average
41	DePauw University	55.93	Slightly Above Average
42	Illinois Institute of Technology	55.77	Slightly Above Average
43	University of Alabama, Birmingham	55.67	Slightly Above Average

44	Colorado School of Mines	55.59	Slightly Above Average
45	Iowa State University	55.49	Slightly Above Average
46	Florida International University	55.48	Slightly Above Average
47	University of Michigan	55.46	Slightly Above Average
48	Oklahoma State University	54.93	Average
49	University of Texas, San Antonio	54.82	Average
50	Rowan University	54.81	Average
51	University of Colorado, Denver	54.75	Average
52	Ohio State University	54.54	Average
53	North Dakota State University	54.41	Average
54	Indiana University - Purdue University	54.40	Average
55	University of Iowa	54.28	Average
56	Ohio University	54.16	Average
57	University of Mississippi	54.13	Average
58	Johns Hopkins University	53.95	Average
59	The College of William & Mary	53.69	Average
60	University of Wisconsin, Madison	53.57	Average
61	University of California, Merced	53.51	Average
62	Clemson University	53.38	Average
63	University of Idaho	53.30	Average
64	Davidson College	53.29	Average
65	DePaul University	53.18	Average
66	University of Louisville	53.16	Average

67	Stony Brook University	53.00	Average
68	Boise State University	52.92	Average
69	Brown University	52.86	Average
70	Kenyon College	52.85	Average
71	Clarkson University	52.83	Average
72	University of Alabama, Huntsville	52.79	Average
73	Claremont McKenna College	52.77	Average
74	Colorado State University	52.77	Average
75	Oberlin College	52.77	Average
76	University of Tulsa	52.69	Average
77	Arizona State University	52.66	Average
78	Worcester Polytechnic Institute	52.42	Average
79	University of Kentucky	52.39	Average
80	Towson University	52.30	Average
81	Southern Illinois University, Carbondale	51.92	Average
82	University of Denver	51.59	Average
83	University of Kansas	51.44	Average
84	University of Arizona	51.27	Average
85	Howard University	51.11	Average
86	University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign	51.11	Average
87	University of Nevada, Reno	50.88	Average
88	Wake Forest University	50.80	Average
89	Vanderbilt University	50.78	Average

90	Montclair State University	50.52	Average
91	Drexel University	49.91	Average
92	California State University, Fresno	49.72	Average
93	Wayne State University	49.69	Average
94	University of Nevada, Las Vegas	49.66	Average
95	Eastern Michigan University	49.63	Average
96	Temple University	49.53	Average
97	University of Tennessee	49.49	Average
98	Southern Methodist University	49.23	Average
99	University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee	49.17	Average
100	Texas State University	49.15	Average
101	University of Arkansas	49.02	Average
102	Miami University	48.74	Average
103	University of Minnesota	48.70	Average
104	Bucknell University	48.59	Average
105	West Virginia University	48.58	Average
106	University of Hawaii	48.57	Average
107	Syracuse University	48.52	Average
108	Pitzer College	47.94	Average
109	University of Southern California	47.93	Average
110	Illinois State University	47.92	Average
111	University of Georgia	47.88	Average
112	Missouri State University	47.85	Average

113	Kent State University	47.63	Average
114	University of Texas, Dallas	47.46	Average
115	Wesleyan University	47.42	Average
116	Stevens Institute of Technology	47.35	Average
117	University of Wyoming	47.33	Average
118	Swarthmore College	47.21	Average
119	Georgia State University	47.16	Average
120	Rutgers University	47.11	Average
121	University of Rochester	46.96	Average
122	Bowdoin College	46.84	Average
123	Occidental College	46.65	Average
124	Duke University	46.58	Average
125	University of California, San Diego	46.53	Average
126	University of California, Riverside	46.48	Average
127	Scripps College	46.15	Average
128	Case Western Reserve University	46.13	Average
129	Utah State University	45.63	Average
130	University of Pittsburgh	45.62	Average
131	Hamilton College	45.61	Average
132	University of Massachusetts	45.57	Average
133	University of California, Santa Cruz	45.47	Average
134	University of Oklahoma	45.45	Average
135	Washington University in St Louis	45.26	Average

136	Massachusetts Institute of Technology	45.13	Average
137	Knox College	45.08	Average
138	Brandeis University	45.01	Average
139	Colby College	44.98	Slightly Below Average
140	Louisiana State University	44.53	Slightly Below Average
141	University of Maine	44.10	Slightly Below Average
142	Montana State University	44.07	Slightly Below Average
143	University of Oregon	44.01	Slightly Below Average
144	California Institute of Technology	43.85	Slightly Below Average
145	Williams College	43.80	Slightly Below Average
146	University of Missouri, Kansas City	43.75	Slightly Below Average
147	University of California, Berkeley	43.69	Slightly Below Average
148	Lehigh University	43.66	Slightly Below Average
149	Wheaton College	43.57	Slightly Below Average
150	University of California, Irvine	43.51	Slightly Below Average
151	Washington State University	43.45	Slightly Below Average
152	Boston University	43.44	Slightly Below Average
153	University of Delaware	43.19	Slightly Below Average
154	University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa	42.95	Slightly Below Average
155	Mount Holyoke College	42.94	Slightly Below Average
156	Carleton College	42.85	Slightly Below Average
157	University of Houston	42.44	Slightly Below Average
158	Rice University	42.37	Slightly Below Average

159	Michigan State University	42.27	Slightly Below Average
160	Virginia Tech University	42.17	Slightly Below Average
161	Berea College	42.15	Slightly Below Average
162	Southern Illinois University, Edwardsville	41.99	Slightly Below Average
163	Furman University	41.88	Slightly Below Average
164	Barnard College	41.83	Slightly Below Average
165	California Polytechnic State University	41.76	Slightly Below Average
166	Trinity College	41.71	Slightly Below Average
167	Wellesley College	41.62	Slightly Below Average
168	Smith College	41.61	Slightly Below Average
169	University of California, Los Angeles	41.51	Slightly Below Average
170	Denison University	41.12	Slightly Below Average
171	University of San Francisco	40.84	Slightly Below Average
172	University of Nebraska	40.62	Slightly Below Average
173	University of California, Santa Barbara	40.59	Slightly Below Average
174	University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill	40.21	Slightly Below Average
175	Colorado College	40.10	Slightly Below Average
176	University of Notre Dame	39.92	Below Average
177	Pomona College	39.78	Below Average
178	University of Washington	39.70	Below Average
179	Harvey Mudd College	39.66	Below Average
180	Connecticut College	39.59	Below Average
181	University of Utah	39.39	Below Average
182	University of Vermont	39.38	Below Average

183	Tufts University	39.27	Below Average
184	Virginia Commonwealth University	39.23	Below Average
185	George Washington University	39.21	Below Average
186	San Jose State University	39.18	Below Average
187	Princeton University	39.02	Below Average
188	Clark University	38.95	Below Average
189	Pennsylvania State University	38.93	Below Average
190	SUNY at Albany	38.66	Below Average
191	Creighton University	38.58	Below Average
192	Santa Clara University	38.47	Below Average
193	Loyola University, Chicago	38.09	Below Average
194	SUNY College at Geneseo	38.08	Below Average
195	Amherst College	37.85	Below Average
196	Vassar College	37.84	Below Average
197	University of Missouri, Columbia	37.83	Below Average
198	Northeastern University	37.82	Below Average
199	Chapman University	37.80	Below Average
200	Bard College	37.75	Below Average
201	University of Wisconsin, Eau Claire	37.62	Below Average
202	Emory University	37.49	Below Average
203	Bowling Green State University	37.45	Below Average
204	University of Rhode Island	37.28	Below Average
205	University of Miami	36.74	Below Average
206	San Diego State University	36.43	Below Average

207	Stanford University	36.32	Below Average
208	Haverford College	36.00	Below Average
209	Colgate University	35.83	Below Average
210	University of Alaska	35.82	Below Average
211	Macalester College	34.96	Below Average
212	Cornell University	34.94	Below Average
213	Bates College	34.87	Below Average
214	Columbia University	34.60	Below Average
215	Western Michigan University	34.44	Below Average
216	University of Dayton	33.83	Below Average
217	Gettysburg College	33.72	Below Average
218	Lafayette College	33.62	Below Average
219	Franklin and Marshall College	33.21	Below Average
220	University of Connecticut	33.20	Below Average
221	University of North Texas	32.96	Below Average
222	University of Cincinnati	32.90	Below Average
223	Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute	32.76	Below Average
224	New York University	32.26	Below Average
225	Indiana University	31.51	Below Average
226	Grinnell College	31.32	Below Average
227	University of New Mexico	31.22	Below Average
228	Binghamton University	30.92	Below Average
229	Boston College	29.94	Poor
230	Marquette University	29.60	Poor

231	University of Florida	29.37	Poor
232	Portland State University	27.88	Poor
233	Middlebury College	27.63	Poor
234	Yale University	26.73	Poor
235	University of Central Florida	26.64	Poor
236	Central Michigan University	26.61	Poor
237	University of California, Davis	26.42	Poor
238	Tulane University	26.40	Poor
239	University of Texas, Austin	26.38	Poor
240	Dartmouth College	25.76	Poor
241	Duquesne University	25.25	Poor
242	Northwestern University	23.95	Poor
243	Skidmore College	23.59	Poor
244	Fordham University	21.72	Poor
245	Georgetown University	17.45	Very Poor
246	University of South Carolina	12.24	Very Poor
247	University of Pennsylvania	11.13	Very Poor
248	Harvard University	0.00	Abysmal

Supported Students and Student Groups

Year	School	Supported Student(s)/ Student Group(s)	Controversy Explanation
2021	Arizona State University	Kyle Rittenhouse	Students started a petition to prevent the controversial acquitted shooter from attending the university.
2021	Arizona State University	Daniel Lopez, Konya Saidu, and Jaafar Al Shamari	Candidates for student government submitted a complaint against three students allegedly involved in an online smear campaign, accusing them of harassment and violating the student code of conduct.
2020	Louisiana State University	Drew Dollar	The student faced petitions and other calls for sanction after actress/activist Skai Jackson shared a video on Twitter of him using a racial slur.
2020	Missouri State University	Holland Easterla	The incoming student faced calls for sanction after a video was shared on social media.
2020	Pennsylvania State University	Sean Setnick	Students and alumni sought disciplinary action against the student, who was accused of shouting an ethnic slur while driving by a protest.

2020	Princeton University	Tyler Eddy	After using a racial slur in a social media post, the student faced a petition demanding he face a disciplinary hearing.
2020	Temple University	Peyton Mulder	After posting a political social media post, the student faced calls on social media for the administration to remove her from her sorority and to sanction her.
2020	Temple University	Drew Sella	The student faced calls for expulsion after a social media post.
2020	Temple University	Angelina Truong	The student faced calls for expulsion after a social media post.
2020	Temple University	Zoe Conte	The student faced calls for sanction after a social media post.
2020	Temple University	Gabe Escobar	The student faced calls for sanction after a social media post.
2022	University of Kansas	Niya D. McAdoo	A state representative called on the campus community to censor the student for her controversial speech.
2021	University of Minnesota	Lauren Meyers	The student urged fellow students to do illegal acts as a form of protest, then faced calls for the administration to investigate her and require her to apologize.

2022	University of North Texas	Kelly Neidert	After refusing to use other students' preferred pronouns and speaking out on a controversial topic, the student faced a petition calling for her expulsion.
2021	University of Southern California	Yasmeen Mashayekh	In response to the student's social media post, a letter signed by more than 60 USC faculty members was circulated. It urged the university's leadership to "publicly and explicitly rebuke" her.
2022	Arizona State University	College Republicans United	The student group wanted to bring Jared Taylor to campus, and it faced a social media campaign to have its event canceled.
2022	Arizona State University	Palestine Cultural Club, Students for Justice in Palestine	The student group wanted to co-host an event featuring Mohammed El-Kurd, and it faced attempts to prevent the school from funding the event, attempts to censor the content of the speaker's speech, and a letter-writing campaign aimed at convincing the university administration to intervene.
2022	Auburn University	Turning Point USA	After an unaffiliated individual held an event on campus under the student group's name without the permission of the national chapter, students called on the administration to condemn hate speech.

2022	California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo	College Republicans	A student group faced attempted censorship from fellow students for its pro-life display.
2020	Case Western Reserve University	Students for Life (Case for Life)	The student group was approved by the student government, then denied recognition through a student body referendum.
2021	Clemson University	Turning Point USA	The student group faced multiple attempts to censor its planned on-campus event featuring Tomi Lahren, Brandon Tatum, and Graham Allen. The attempts included a petition to prevent the speakers from coming to campus and efforts from faculty members to reserve tickets for the event in order to fill up available seats, preventing students who may have wanted to attend from doing so.
2022	Cornell University	Network of Enlightened Women	The student group faced multiple attempts to censor its planned on-campus event featuring Ann Coulter. The attempts included a petition to prevent Coulter from coming to campus and multiple disruptions during the event, which led to it ending early.

2020	Emory University	Emory Medical Students for Life	The student group faced attempts to censor its planned on-campus event featuring Toni McFadden. The attempts included an open letter with more than 40 signatures suggesting the event should be canceled.
2021	Florida State University	College Republicans at FSU	The student group faced opposition for its planned on-campus event featuring Ben Shapiro. The opposition included vandalism of its promotional materials, an organized effort to get Shapiro's invitation revoked, and a protest at the event. The event proceeded as planned.
2020	Georgetown University	Students for Justice in Palestine	The student group wanted to organize a virtual event featuring Miko Peled, and it faced an unsuccessful petition to cancel its event.
2022	Georgetown University	Georgetown Law Students for Justice in Palestine	The student group wanted to bring Mohammed El-Kurd to campus, and it faced opposition including an unsuccessful email campaign to get the event canceled.

2022	Gettysburg College	Young Americans for Freedom	The student group wanted to bring Ryan Anderson to campus, and it faced opposition from the student government, who denied the event funding. The group's promotional materials were also vandalized, and an unsuccessful petition to have the event canceled was circulated.
2022	Harvard University	Palestine Solidarity Committee	The student group co-sponsored an event that would bring Mohammed El-Kurd to campus. It faced opposition including some vocal attempts to get the administration to condemn and/or cancel the event and a non-disruptive protest.
2020	Iowa State University	Students for Trump	The student group faced calls for its removal due to claims of offensive and harassing speech.
2020	Iowa State University	College Republicans	The duly recognized student group faced calls for its dissolution because of the content of its speech.
2023	James Madison University	Young Americans for Freedom	The student group wanted to bring Liz Wheeler to campus, and it faced opposition including protests against the speaker coming to campus and a petition to cancel the event.

2023	Kent State University	College Republicans	After painting “What is a Woman?” on a rock to promote its event featuring a viewing of a documentary by the same name, the student group’s internal messages were leaked and it faced a petition calling on the administration to take action against it.
2023	Michigan Technological University	Turning Point USA	The student group wanted to bring Brandon Tatum to campus, and it faced opposition including a successful petition asking the student government not to fund the event.
2023	New York University	Jewish Law Students Association	The student group wanted to bring Michal Cotler-Wunsh to campus, and it faced opposition including calls to cancel the event and a disruption at the beginning of the event.
2023	Northwestern University	College Republicans and Young Americans for Freedom	Shortly after co-hosting an event featuring James Lindsay, the student group faced a funding freeze imposed by the student government.

2021	Pennsylvania State University	Uncensored America	The student group faced opposition for its planned on-campus event featuring Milo Yiannopoulos: A petition to prevent the event from occurring was circulated, bias complaints against the group were made, and a call was made to have the group's university recognition revoked.
2021	Stony Brook University	Turning Point USA	The student group faced a petition calling on the administration to deny its request for recognition.
2022	University at Buffalo	Young Americans for Freedom	The student club faced multiple obstacles concerning hosting its event featuring Allen West: Its promotional materials were destroyed and it faced calls to have the event canceled.
2023	University at Buffalo	Young Americans for Freedom	Three faculty members wrote an open letter requesting that the president of the university cancel the student group for its planned event featuring Michael Knowles.
2022	University of California, Berkeley	Anti-Zionism Law Student Groups	The cohort of student groups whose bylaws included strict associative restrictions of its members faced calls for the university to defund it.

2023	University of California, Davis	Turning Point USA	A professor called on the university to cancel the student group's event featuring Charlie Kirk.
2022	University of California - San Diego	Students for Justice in Palestine	After the student group invited Taher Herzallah to campus, calls came for the administration to cancel the event and condemn the speaker.
2023	University of Denver	Federalist Society	The student group faced calls to have its event featuring Ilya Shapiro canceled.
2022	University of Houston	Young Conservatives of Texas	The student group faced efforts to interfere with its event featuring Matt Walsh: Its promotional materials were destroyed and a petition asking the university to cancel the event was circulated.
2023	University of Illinois, Chicago	Turning Point USA	Students created a petition calling on administrators to cancel an event hosted by the student group featuring Charlie Kirk and Candace Owens.
2022	University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign	Young Americans for Freedom	Activist groups called on the university to cancel the student group's event featuring pro-Palestinian speakers.

2020	University of Michigan	Midwest Students for Justice in Palestine, Palestinian Youth Movement, and Students Allied for Freedom and Equality	An off-campus organization called on the administration to condemn the statements of pro-Palestinian protesters and to investigate and consider sanctioning the student groups that organized the protest.
2021	University of Nevada, Las Vegas	Turning Point USA	The student group faced calls for its removal because its parent organization, Turning Point Action, allegedly provided transportation and hotel rooms to people involved in the events of January 6.
2023	University of New Hampshire	Free Exercise Coalition	The student group faced calls for the withdrawal of its formal recognition after claims that its activities were making LGBTQ+ students unsafe.
2022	University of New Mexico	Turning Point USA	The student group's event featuring Tomi Lahren was disrupted and the group faced a petition calling on the administration to revoke its recognition.
2022	University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill	All Pro-Life Student Organizations	Student government leadership prohibited student groups from using their funds to support individuals, businesses, or organizations that advocate for restricting reproductive healthcare.

2022	University of North Carolina, Greensboro	Young Americans for Freedom	The student group faced a petition calling for its removal after it made a social media post featuring a quotation from Ben Shapiro about transgenderism.
2020	University of North Texas	The North Texas Daily	An off-campus organization officially requested that the university provide a student reporter's unpublished materials related to a story it considered objectionable and biased.
2022	University of North Texas	Young Conservatives of Texas	The student group's event featuring Jeffrey Younger was disrupted and the group faced calls for its removal.
2020	University of Oklahoma	Turning Point USA	The student group faced calls for the cancellation of its event featuring Ann Coulter. The student government allegedly attempted to remove the group's recognition.
2023	University of Pittsburgh	Turning Point USA & College Republicans	The student groups faced a petition calling for the cancellation of their events featuring Cabot Phillips, Riley Gaines, and Michael Knowles.
2022	University of Vermont	Revolutionary Socialist Union	The unofficial student group was reported to the administration over its bylaws, which required members to pledge "NO" to Zionism.

2020	University of Wisconsin, Madison	Panhellenic and Interfraternity Council Greek Life Organizations	Students called for the abolition of Panhellenic and Interfraternity Council Greek organizations on campus because of their history of exclusionary practices and controversial speech.
2022	University of Wisconsin, Madison	Young Americans for Freedom	Bias reports were filed against the student group for its planned event featuring Matt Walsh. The group's promotional materials were also vandalized, and it faced a call to have the event canceled.
2020	Vanderbilt University	All Greek Organizations at Vanderbilt	Students wrote a petition to ban all campus Greek organizations in the name of social justice.
2022	Virginia Tech	Virginia Tech Graduate and Professional Student Senate	Students petitioned the administration to condemn Steven Salaita ahead of his appearance at an event hosted by the student group.
2023	Washington and Lee University	W&L Spectator and College Republicans	Student groups faced opposition to their co-hosted event featuring Matt Walsh. Their promotional materials were vandalized and a petition to have the event canceled was circulated.

2021	Wellesley College	Wellesley for Life	<p>The student group faced opposition for hosting Kristan Hawkins. A publically available document providing a template for complaints to the administration calling for, among other things, cancellation of the event and revoking the event sponsor's official student group status was circulated.</p>
2022	Yale University	Federalist Society	<p>The student group's event featuring Monica Miller and Kristen Waggoner was disrupted by protesters who made it difficult for those in attendance to hear.</p>

Sanctioned Students and Student Groups

Year	School	Sanctioned Student(s)/ Student Group(s)	Controversy Explanation
2020	Fordham University	Austin Tong	The student, who made politically controversial social media posts, was investigated and put on disciplinary probation by the university. As part of the probation, the student was banned from extracurriculars, student office, student groups and sports in the upcoming school year.
2023	Georgetown University	William Spruance	The university retaliated against the student, who criticized its policies, by suspending him, ordering him to submit to psychiatric evaluation, and scheduling a conduct hearing.
2020	Harvard University	Kyle Kashuv	The university rescinded its admission of the prospective student after his social media posts from two years earlier surfaced.
2020	Marquette University	Leah Zenk	The prospective student had her admission and athletic scholarship rescinded following an offensive social media post.
2020	Portland State University	Lindy Treece	The student was censored during Zoom class and admonished by her professor for using a derogatory term.
2020	Purdue University	Maxwell Lawrence	The student was expelled for allegedly threatening social media posts.

2021	Stanford University	Chaze Vinci	Following racist and allegedly threatening social media posts, the student's peers petitioned to have him expelled, and the university banned the student from campus.
2021	SUNY College at Geneseo	Owen Stevens	The student was suspended from mandatory field experiences needed for his teaching degree after making allegedly threatening social media posts.
2022	Syracuse University	Eriendeep Uppal	The student was suspended and required to do community service and training after, in her capacity as orientation leader, she organized voluntary activities which some university administrators felt were dangerous or could make students uncomfortable.
2022	University of Florida	Marcus Stokes	The prospective student's athletic scholarship was revoked after he made a social media post.
2020	University of Louisville	Austin Clark	The student claimed that the university administration did nothing when he complained that he was being harassed for his political point of view. The student has sued the university for alleged discrimination against his pro-life views.
2020	University of Missouri	Annelise Ahrens	An incoming student was suspended during an administrative investigation of a video shared on social media.

2020	University of New Mexico	Joseph Caldwell	After facing an allegation of battery, the student was evicted from student housing, banned from his sports team, and prohibited from registering for classes, all without a hearing.
2023	University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill	Jamie Marsicano	After participating in an off-campus protest, the university used the student having been charged with vandalism as a pretext to ban him from campus for his controversial activism.
2020	University of Tennessee	Mimi Groves	The prospective student was removed from the university cheer team and withdrew from the team after a three-year-old video of her using a racial slur surfaced.
2021	Virginia Tech	Sean Lohr	An athletics director forced the student and whole athletic fan club, of which he was a part, to leave a game for being too boisterous. The student, who responded with an insult, was later officially disciplined for being disruptive.
2021	Washington State University	Kassidy Woods	The student athlete was told his participation in a particular political movement would make things hard for him. The student noticed that his ability to register for classes and resources were curtailed when he entered the transfer portal.

2020	Amherst College	Men's Lacrosse Team	Student athletes involved in multiple offensive speech incidents were punished by the administration. The administration put them on probation, prohibited them from attending formal group gatherings, and forced them to complete diversity training.
2020	Baylor University	Turning Point USA	The university rejected the student group's repeated attempts to obtain official registration based on the group's controversial views, giving the pretext that there were already three similar approved groups on campus.
2022	Berea College	The Berea Torch	The independent student newspaper faced university sanctions after publishing articles about the campus climate. The sanctions included being denied access to paid printing services available to all students and being prohibited from posting flyers publicizing the paper.
2021	Fordham University	Students for Justice in Palestine	The administration revoked the recognition of the pro-Palestinian student group over its political beliefs.
2021	Hamilton College	Rosary Club	The student club was asked to run all of its communications and events by a university administrator for content approval.

2022	Iowa State University	Men's Lacrosse Team	The student group had its vehicle use privileges suspended after a photo was published of the vehicle parked outside a marijuana dispensary.
2022	Lafayette College	Students for Justice in Palestine	The university denied the student group's application for official recognition after expressing concern about events by other chapters at different institutions, as well as about how the group's proposed activities might "target/disrupt other clubs or individuals on campus."
2021	Northwestern University	Greek Life at Northwestern	Students called for the abolition of all Greek student organizations after alleged sexual assaults occurred at a fraternity.
2023	Pennsylvania State University	The Daily Collegian	The administration cut the independent student newspaper's funding by more than 50%.
2022	Texas A&M University	The Battalion	The university put the independent student newspaper under the supervision of the journalism department and told it to move the paper online.
2022	Tulane University	Phi Gamma Delta	The student group was punished for engaging in offensive speech on an internal document which was leaked to the campus newspaper.

2023	University of Chicago	Turning Point USA	The student group was denied recognition for its views under the pretext that it hadn't shown enough interest and that another similar group had already been recognized.
2021	University of Florida	Turning Point USA, Young Americans for Freedom, & Network of Enlightened Women	Student groups were punished with suspensions for violating COVID-19 policies at a food function where masks had to be removed to eat.
2020	University of Pennsylvania	Hunting, Archery, and Shooting Club	The university delayed approving the student group, claiming that due to the "nature of the group's mission" it could not make an approval decision until campus returned to normal operations post-COVID-19. However, other groups intending to meet in person were approved during the pandemic.
2023	University of South Carolina	Uncensored America	The student group was denied recognition under the pretext of being similar to an already existing group when the university regularly approved groups with similar missions.
2023	University of Tennessee	Sigma Phi Epsilon	The university punished the student group for allegedly committing multiple student conduct violations. The punishment restricted the group's ability to recruit or gather as a group and the ability of its members to wear or display group symbols.
2022	University of Utah	Greek Life at University of Utah	All Greek groups were suspended after two were accused of crimes.

Survey Questions and Topline Results

Note: The survey asked additional questions that were not included in the calculation of the College Free Speech Rankings. The data for these questions will be released in a separate set of analyses.

How comfortable would you feel doing the following on your campus? [Presented in randomized order]

Publicly disagreeing with a professor about a controversial political topic.

- 33% Very uncomfortable
- 36% Somewhat uncomfortable
- 23% Somewhat comfortable
- 9% Very comfortable

Expressing disagreement with one of your professors about a controversial political topic in a written assignment.

- 21% Very uncomfortable
- 34% Somewhat uncomfortable
- 32% Somewhat comfortable
- 14% Very comfortable

Expressing your views on a controversial political topic during an in-class discussion.

- 23% Very uncomfortable
- 34% Somewhat uncomfortable
- 31% Somewhat comfortable
- 11% Very comfortable

Expressing your views on a controversial political topic to other students during a discussion in a common campus space such as a quad, dining hall, or lounge.

- 20% Very uncomfortable
- 33% Somewhat uncomfortable
- 34% Somewhat comfortable
- 14% Very comfortable

Expressing an unpopular political opinion to your fellow students on a social media account tied to your name.

- 36% Very uncomfortable
- 34% Somewhat uncomfortable
- 21% Somewhat comfortable
- 9% Very comfortable

On your campus, how often have you felt that you could not express your opinion on a subject because of how students, a professor, or the administration would respond?

- 14% Never
 - 36% Rarely
 - 30% Occasionally, once or twice a month
 - 14% Fairly often, a couple of times a week
 - 6% Very often, nearly every day
- Comment end

How worried are you about damaging your reputation because someone misunderstands something you have said or done?

- 14% Not at all worried
- 30% Not very worried
- 39% Worried a little
- 16% Worried a lot

How much pressure do you feel to avoid discussing controversial topics in your classes?

- 28% No pressure at all
- 46% Some pressure
- 18% A good deal of pressure
- 7% A great deal of pressure

How acceptable would you say it is for students to engage in the following action to protest a campus speaker? [Presented in randomized order]

Shouting down a speaker to prevent them from speaking on campus.

- 5% Always acceptable
- 26% Sometimes acceptable
- 32% Rarely acceptable
- 37% Never acceptable

Blocking other students from attending a campus speech.

- 3% Always acceptable
- 15% Sometimes acceptable
- 26% Rarely acceptable
- 55% Never acceptable

Using violence to stop a campus speech.

- 2% Always acceptable
- 9% Sometimes acceptable
- 16% Rarely acceptable
- 73% Never acceptable

How clear is it to you that your college administration protects free speech on campus?

- 5% Extremely clear
- 16% Very clear
- 43% Somewhat clear
- 26% Not very clear
- 10% Not at all clear

If a controversy over offensive speech were to occur on your campus, how likely is it that the administration would defend the speaker's right to express their views?

- 6% Not at all likely
- 21% Not very likely
- 47% Somewhat likely
- 19% Very likely
- 7% Extremely likely

Student groups often invite speakers to campus to express their views on a range of topics. Regardless of your own views on the topic, should your school ALLOW or NOT ALLOW a speaker on campus who promotes the following idea? [Presented in randomized order]

Transgender people have a mental disorder.

- 44% Definitely should not allow this speaker
- 27% Probably should not allow this this speaker
- 17% Probably should allow this speaker
- 12% Definitely should allow this speaker

Abortion should be completely illegal.

- 29% Definitely should not allow this speaker
- 28% Probably should not allow this this speaker
- 27% Probably should allow this speaker
- 16% Definitely should allow this speaker

Black Lives Matter is a hate group.

- 42% Definitely should not allow this speaker
- 29% Probably should not allow this this speaker
- 17% Probably should allow this speaker
- 12% Definitely should allow this speaker

The Second Amendment should be repealed so that guns can be confiscated.

- 9% Definitely should not allow this speaker
- 26% Probably should not allow this this speaker
- 43% Probably should allow this speaker
- 21% Definitely should allow this speaker

Religious liberty is used as an excuse to discriminate against gays and lesbians.

- 18% Definitely should not allow this speaker
- 25% Probably should not allow this this speaker
- 35% Probably should allow this speaker
- 22% Definitely should allow this speaker

Structural racism maintains inequality by protecting White privilege.

- 11% Definitely should not allow this speaker
- 17% Probably should not allow this this speaker
- 38% Probably should allow this speaker
- 34% Definitely should allow this speaker

This next series of questions asks you about self-censorship in different settings. For the purpose of these questions, self-censorship is defined as follows:

Refraining from sharing certain views because you fear social (e.g., exclusion from social events), professional (e.g., losing job or promotion), legal (e.g., prosecution or fine), or violent (e.g., assault) consequences, whether in person or remotely (e.g., by phone or online), and whether the consequences come from state or non-state sources.

How often do you self-censor during conversations with other students on campus?

- 10% Never
- 32% Rarely
- 33% Occasionally, once or twice a month
- 18% Fairly often, a couple of times a week
- 7% Very often, nearly every day

How often do you self-censor during conversations with your professors?

- 11% Never
- 31% Rarely
- 32% Occasionally, once or twice a month
- 18% Fairly often, a couple of times a week
- 9% Very often, nearly every day

How often do you self-censor during classroom discussions?

- 9% Never
- 30% Rarely
- 33% Occasionally, once or twice a month
- 19% Fairly often, a couple of times a week
- 9% Very often, nearly every day

Compared to when you started college, are you now more or less likely to self-censor on campus?

- 8% Much less likely
- 23% Less likely
- 44% About the same
- 17% More likely
- 8% Much more likely

Some students say it can be difficult to have conversations about certain issues on campus. Which of the following issues, if any, would you say are difficult to have an open and honest conversation about on your campus? [Percentage selecting each option]

- 49% Abortion
- 23% Affirmative action
- 15% China
- 18% Climate change
- 18% Crime
- 25% Economic inequality
- 24% Freedom of speech
- 35% Gay rights
- 35% Gender inequality
- 43% Gun control
- 29% Immigration
- 13% Inflation
- 26% The Israeli/Palestinian conflict
- 36% Police misconduct
- 42% Racial inequality
- 38% Religion
- 35% Sexual assault
- 17% The Supreme Court
- 42% Transgender rights
- 15% War in Ukraine
- 17% None of the above

In politics today, do you consider yourself a Republican, Democrat, or something else?

- 17% Strong Democrat
- 14% Weak Democrat
- 20% Independent, lean Democrat
- 18% Independent
- 10% Independent, lean Republican
- 6% Weak Republican
- 6% Strong Republican
- 9% Something else [write-in]

Using the following scale, how would you describe your political beliefs?

- 19% Very liberal
- 19% Somewhat liberal
- 10% Slightly liberal
- 14% Moderate, middle-of-the-road
- 6% Slightly conservative
- 8% Somewhat conservative
- 5% Very conservative
- 9% I do not identify as a liberal or a conservative
- 9% Haven't thought much about this

[If "I do not identify as a liberal or a conservative" is selected]:

Which of the following best describes your political beliefs?

- 3% Democratic Socialist
- 2% Libertarian
- 5% Something else [write-in]





College Pulse

169 Madison Ave,
Ste. 2257,
New York, NY 10016
p: (415) 547-0791



FIRE

510 Walnut Street
Suite 1250
Philadelphia, PA 19106
p: 215-717-FIRE