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RESEARCH THAT MATTERS

THE IMPACT OF ANTI-DEI LEGISLATION ON LGBTQ+ FACULTY in Higher Education

May 2024

Abbie E. Goldberg

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Teaching and research on LGBTQ+ and diversity-related issues has become increasingly challenging amidst the anti-diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) legislation that is advancing across the U.S. As of spring 2024, nine states have passed anti-DEI legislation related to higher education. Currently, at least 20 other states are considering such legislation. Many of the same states are seeing a rapid expansion of anti-LGBTQ+ legislation as well, including legislation restricting gender-affirming care for youth, prohibiting discussion of LGBTQ+ topics in secondary education, and allowing health care providers to discriminate based on moral or religious convictions.

The current mixed-method survey of 84 LGBTQ+ faculty, most of whom work at public universities, explores how they are navigating this increasingly anti-DEI and anti-LGBTQ+ climate. It examines (a) changes in their teaching and research, (b) impacts beyond the classroom, (c) their emotional health, physical health, and coping, and (d) their desire and intention to move.

Overall, these faculty members report that the anti-DEI environment has rapidly impacted their teaching, research, and health. Many faculty report this environment has negatively impacted what they teach, how they interact with students, their research on LGBTQ+-related issues, and how out they are on campus and in their communities. Over one in ten have already faced requests for their DEI-related activities from campus administrators, declines in course enrollment, and threats from students to report them for violating anti-DEI laws. Some faculty members have already experienced harassment on campus because of their LGBTQ+ status and views on social issues, and one in five are scared they will be subject to this type of harassment. They report similar or even greater levels of harassment from their neighbors and of their children at school.

Almost three-fourths of these faculty members feel that the current environment is negatively impacting their mental health, and over one-fourth feel that it is impacting their physical health. Half are exploring moving to another state, and 20% have actively taken steps to do so. A third are considering leaving academia altogether. Even among those in states without any specific anti-DEI legislation, many of the LGBTQ+ faculty described how the national climate has emotionally impacted them and expressed concerns about a backlash to their teaching and research. Yet, despite these challenges, many LGBTQ+ faculty are finding support in their families and communities, and over a third have become inspired to be more active in advocacy on campus.

While these anti-DEI laws are still relatively new, these findings from the initial days of their implementation suggest that the laws will result in significantly fewer out LGBTQ+ faculty members, less course coverage of LGBTQ+ topics, and a reduction in academic research on LGBTQ+ issues. Unchecked, ultimately, this could mean that in states with some of the most difficult environments for LGBTQ+ people, there could be less research to address LGBTQ+ health and income disparities and inform public policies and a generation of students with less exposure to LGBTQ+ issues and faculty mentorship and support.

KEY FINDINGS

Teaching and Research

- All participants (100%) reported that LGBTQ+ issues/topics were a component of their research and/or teaching. In addition, most participants' research and/or teaching involved additional topics and issues that were impacted by DEI-related legislation, including race and racism (95%), sexuality studies (90%), gender studies (89%), and transgender issues (87%).
- Faculty had made various changes to their teaching in response to legislative threats or realities. Those with lower faculty rank (i.e., lack of tenure) were more likely to make such changes. Faculty sometimes reduced or omitted content or activities (e.g., 7% omitted topics previously covered, 7% decreased the amount of discussion, and 6% omitted readings previously assigned). They also noted greater wariness and caution in how they covered various topics.
- Faculty also reported negative impacts on their research, including a decreased willingness of participants and organizations to participate in their research (16%) and students leaving their research labs (5%). They also described other research-related challenges, such as those related to visibility (e.g., they were afraid of drawing attention to their LGBTQ+-related research and risking sanction or censure).
- Some faculty had sought to manage the pressures created by passed or proposed legislation by adding—as opposed to subtracting—content to their courses. For example, 32% had added readings, 23% had added new topics (e.g., current events/legislation or context/history needed to understand current events/legislation), and 14% had increased the amount of class discussion in their courses. Some had changed how they taught certain topics, such as providing greater context for what they were teaching and why they were teaching it.
- Whereas 17% had become less active in advocacy and activism on campus (e.g., because of burnout, vulnerability, and fear of retaliation), 33% had become more active in advocacy and activism on campus, and 10% had joined their faculty union.
- Beyond faculty-initiated changes in response to legislative changes or threats, some participants reported other direct impacts, such as institutional requests for their DEI-related activities, such as emails and minutes (14%), declines in course enrollment (12%), increases in negative teaching evaluations (12%), and student threats to report them (10%).
- Participants' narrative data underscored the varied direct impacts of legislative changes and threats. In particular, many participants emphasized the stress of teaching and doing research in a “chilly” campus climate where they did not necessarily feel supported or “backed” by their institution or even their department. Participants described fear and vigilance surrounding their identities and teaching/research, which were often intermingled. In turn, those who were more vulnerable (e.g., untenured faculty members) described especially heightened fears.
- Participants sought to manage worries about visibility, backlash, and censure in a variety of ways, such as by being less “out” in the classroom, decreasing the amount of personal information they shared with students, and not allowing students to record lectures, for example.

- Even among those in states without any specific anti-DEI legislation related to higher education, many described how the national climate had shaped their personal and work lives, such that they were “emotionally impacted” and worried about their research or teaching landing them on conservative lists of “radical faculty.”
- Participants described efforts to mitigate the effects of legislation, such as altering the language they use to describe programming and courses or providing greater context and justification for sexuality, gender, and race-related topics in their courses and trainings. Some emphasized their resistance to legislation, noting that they did not intend to change their research or teaching. Notably, faculty who engaged in these types of strategic resistance sometimes noted that they had a lot of privilege (e.g., they were tenured).

Family and Community

- Over 60% of respondents who were parents reported at least one negative event or change impacting their children in the past six months. This includes 26% who reported that their children had been bullied, teased, or harassed at school for being LGBTQ+, for having LGBTQ+ parents, or for their own racial, ethnic, or cultural identities; 18% who reported that books (e.g., on LGBTQ+- or race/ethnicity-related topics) had been removed from their children's school or classroom; and 35% who reported curricular changes, including limiting LGBTQ+ content and discussion at school and promoting abstinence-only messages. In addition, 18% of parent respondents reported that other parents at school were cool or hostile to them.
- Almost 40% of participants described their home communities as conservative or very conservative on LGBTQ+ issues. Reporting on the past six months, 5% said that they had experienced harassment or been bothered by neighbors for their sexual orientation/gender identity or expression (SOGIE), political affiliation, or perceived “wokeness,” and 37% said that they were scared of this type of harassment. Some participants described being less “out” in their home communities, noting increased hypervigilance, including scanning behaviors and identity concealment.
- About 30% of participants said that their college/university communities were conservative or very conservative on LGBTQ+ issues. Reporting on the past six months, 6% said that they had experienced harassment or being bothered by supervisors or colleagues because of their SOGIE, political affiliation, or perceived “wokeness,” and 20% said that they were scared of this type of harassment.

Well-Being and Coping

- Almost three-quarters (74%) of participants said that the recent legislation and shifting climate had impacted their mental health. Such mental health impacts were more likely to be endorsed by those in anti-DEI states and those in states with a poor anti-LGBTQ+ climate. Further, 27% said that legislative shifts had impacted their physical health. Participants detailed the mental toll of constant hypervigilance related to the potential scrutiny of their identities, research, and teaching. They also described how the stress associated with legislative attacks had contributed to health issues, such as poor sleep, high blood pressure, and autoimmune issues.

- Participants endorsed a range of ways that they had sought to cope with the stress associated with legislation, including connecting with friends and family (61%), exercising (54%), engaging in advocacy in person (48%), donating to causes or people fighting the legislation (29%), being less “out” (26%), using alcohol or drugs (25%), or participating in a protest against the legislation (21%), among other strategies. They also connected with colleagues within their institution (58%) or outside their institution (52%) for support/strategic help.

Plans to Move or Leave Higher Education

- Some participants considered moving out of state (48%) or considered and/or searched for a new job in academia (43%) or outside of academia (36%). A total of 23% of participants had planned or actively took steps to move out of state, 20% had applied for a new job out of state, and 19% had searched for housing in other states.
- Over half (52%) said that they would like to move out of their state, with 38% saying that they would “very much” like to move and 14% indicating that they would “somewhat” like to move. Those living in anti-DEI states were more likely to want to move. Fourteen percent said that it was very likely that they would move out of their state in the next two years, while 10% said it was somewhat likely.
- Barriers to moving included the challenges associated with getting another academic job (86%), the hassle of moving (44%), the cost of living in their current state (39%), love for their home (38%) and community (33%), family caregiving responsibilities (27%), family living nearby (26%), the weather (25%), and inability to afford moving (18%).

BACKGROUND

It is an increasingly difficult time to be LGBTQ+, especially in certain areas of the United States. It is, in turn, a challenging time to be LGBTQ+ in higher education, particularly in states and regions with more anti-LGBTQ+ legislative climates. Prior work has shown that LGBTQ+ faculty may struggle with whether and how to be out with students and colleagues, particularly in more hostile contexts (Bilimoria & Stewart, 2009; Prock et al., 2019). Further, the academic and social climates of certain programs and departments may be more welcoming to LGBTQ+ faculty (e.g., humanities, social sciences) than others (e.g., sciences, engineering; Bilimoria & Stewart, 2009; Boustani & Taylor, 2020; Patridge et al., 2014; Reggiani et al., 2024). LGBTQ+ faculty may experience minority stress in the form of anticipating and managing discriminatory events and rejection by students, faculty, and staff, requiring ongoing monitoring of—and adaptation to—their environments and interpersonal interactions (Dozier, 2015). In turn, LGBTQ+ faculty often balance their desires for openness, authenticity, and connectedness with the real fears associated with institutional censure, resistance, and long-term career consequences (e.g., failure to get tenure; Nielsen & Alderson, 2014). LGBTQ+ faculty may experience hypervigilance, isolation, invisibility, hypervisibility, dismissal, tokenism, and lack of institutional support, all of which are taxing (Beagan et al., 2021; Misawa, 2015; Veldhuis, 2022).

It is also an increasingly difficult time to teach LGBTQ+ and other diversity-related issues in higher education. Teaching about LGBTQ+ issues is challenging inasmuch as such topics are often politicized, heightening student—and possibly institutional and administrator—pushback and resistance (Wimberly, 2015). Doing research on LGBTQ+ topics is also difficult, given the politicized nature of

such issues, the associated challenges with funding such research, and the difficulty of recruiting individuals who feel safe participating in such research (Veldhuis, 2022; Wimberly, 2015).

Teaching and research on LGBTQ+ and diversity-related issues has become increasingly challenging amidst the anti-diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) legislation that is advancing across the U.S. In 2023-2024, many states have introduced and/or passed bills restricting or banning DEI initiatives and/or teaching in public colleges. As of February 2024, nine states—Florida, Mississippi, Oklahoma, North Carolina, North Dakota, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, and Utah—have passed anti-DEI legislation related to higher education. This legislation varies in scope: Some prohibit public universities from requiring employees to participate in DEI or bias programming or training. Others ban spending on programs for DEI, impose limits on allowed courses and majors, and/or prohibit teaching and training on “divisive concepts.” Still, other legislation disallows the creation of DEI offices or DEI-related hiring. In other states (20+ as of March 2024), such legislation has been proposed but has not yet been passed (Best Colleges, 2024; National Education Association, 2024). Furthermore, in June 2023, the U.S. Supreme Court eliminated race-based affirmative action in higher education. In some states (e.g., Georgia), public colleges and universities have put an end to required statements in hiring and prohibit requiring such statements as part of employee training (Spitalniak, 2023). Thus, an anti-DEI climate is increasingly pervasive in higher education. The impending threat of anti-DEI legislation and the challenging climate that often surrounds it inevitably impacts faculty—and students—in higher education, particularly those who are marginalized based on racial/ethnic or SOGIE status (National Education Association, 2024).

Some states have introduced and/or passed not just one but multiple bills targeting DEI in higher education. In Florida, for example, under House Bill 999 and Senate Bill 266, public institutions are now prohibited from funding the promotion, support, or maintenance of DEI programs and from offering any general education course that “teaches identity politics, or is based on theories that systemic racism, sexism, oppression, and privilege are inherent in the institutions of the United States.” And, under House Bill 931 and its companion Senate Bill 958, Florida’s public institutions are prohibited from giving preferential consideration for employment, admission, or promotion to people who show support for “any ideology or movement that promotes the differential treatment of a person or a group of persons based on race or ethnicity, including an initiative or a formulation of diversity, equity, and inclusion” (Best Colleges, 2024). These bills give a sense of the “flavor” of these types of anti-DEI initiatives.

Many states, including the majority of states that have introduced or passed anti-DEI legislation, are seeing a rapid expansion of anti-LGBTQ+ legislation as well. Many of these states, for example, have passed legislation restricting gender-affirming care for youth, prohibiting discussion of LGBTQ+ topics in secondary education, and allowing health care providers to discriminate based on moral or religious convictions (Movement Advancement Project, 2024). Thus, an increasing number of states are characterized by anti-LGBTQ+ and anti-DEI climate more generally. At a national level, the overturning of *Roe v. Wade* in June of 2022, alongside the ban on affirmative action in June of 2023, has had ripple effects on national, state, and community climate.

LGBTQ+ faculty—as well as faculty of color—face unique challenges teaching in higher education amidst current legislative threats to DEI efforts within academia. They are not simply a part of the culture war, but they are directly impacted by it, both personally as human beings and professionally as educators and researchers (Lange & Lee, 2024). As DEI units are being dissolved, strategically incorporated into other programs or units, or renamed (Abrica & Oliver Andrew, 2024), faculty too are strategizing how to continue to teach courses and conduct research related to DEI issues—including LGBTQ+ issues—a challenge that may be especially heightened in some programs and departments such as those that center issues of identity, marginality, and oppression and/or view such issues as integral (e.g., the helping professions; Murray et al., 2023).

METHODOLOGY

The data presented in this report come from a larger project on the experiences of faculty in higher education in 2023-2024 amidst record legislation pertaining to DEI in higher education and LGBTQ+ rights. Specifically, this report focuses on the 84 participants in this larger study who are LGBTQ+. All 84 faculty teach about and/or do research on LGBTQ+-related topics, and most also teach about/research other topics currently subject to increasing scrutiny and regulation (e.g., race/racism; sexuality). Two-thirds live in states that have introduced and/or passed legislation regulating DEI activities and teaching in higher education. Of interest were their experiences living, teaching, and doing research in the current climate, as well as the specific impacts of national and state legislation and climate.

During a four-month period (late October 2023 – late February 2024), individuals teaching in higher education—especially those in states that had proposed or passed legislation impacting DEI-related activities (teaching, research) in higher education—were invited to complete an anonymous survey hosted by the online platform Qualtrics. Four faculty members—two in sociology, two in psychology, three in Florida, and one in Massachusetts—disseminated information about the survey to colleagues, acquaintances, and specialized DEI-related listservs. The researchers provided context for the study, suggested caution in how/to whom the survey was disseminated, and invited individuals to complete the survey, with the option of winning one of 5 \$50 gift certificates. They were also asked to help spread the word to other faculty. The Clark University Human Subjects Internal Review Board (IRB) approved the study.

The current study used mixed methods to analyze the data. Basic descriptive statistics and a series of logistic regressions were used to analyze the quantitative data, and thematic analysis was applied to the qualitative data. With regard to logistic regressions, we assessed whether legislative context (introduced or passed anti-DEI legislation; presence of anti-LGBTQ+ climate as indexed by poor or very poor state climate (as measured by the Movement Advancement Project's LGBTQ+ policy tally), institutional context (public university), and individual indices of vulnerability (untenured/low rank; trans or nonbinary identity) impacted a variety of dichotomous outcomes: namely, any changes made to teaching overall (including, separately, teaching practices removed, and teaching practices added); presence of mental health challenges due to legislation; and desire to move (very or somewhat). Regression models were run with anti-DEI legislation and anti-LGBTQ+ climate in the model and each one alone since these two dimensions are overlapping but distinct.

FINDINGS

DEMOGRAPHICS

The subsample of 84 LGBTQ+ participants were largely cis women ($n = 50, 59.5\%$), with smaller numbers of cis men ($n = 13, 15.5\%$) and nonbinary/genderqueer participants ($n = 12, 14.3\%$); there were also five trans men (6.0%), one trans woman (1.2%), and three (3.6%) who indicated “something else” (i.e., gender nonconforming, gender-free, and nonbinary trans man). Among cis women, most identified as bisexual ($n = 20$) or queer ($n = 14$); smaller numbers identified as lesbian ($n = 9$), pansexual ($n = 4$), or something else ($n = 3$): namely, skoliosexual; bisexual/queer; and gray asexual/bisexual. Among cis men, most ($n = 9$) identified as gay; smaller numbers identified as bisexual ($n = 3$) or pansexual ($n = 1$). Among nonbinary participants, more than half identified as queer ($n = 7$); smaller numbers identified as bisexual ($n = 2$), lesbian ($n = 1$), heterosexual ($n = 1$), or demisexual ($n = 1$). Most trans men identified as queer ($n = 3$); one each identified as bisexual and pansexual. The single trans woman identified as asexual. Participants ranged in age from 25-73 ($Mn = 42.24, Mdn = 41.5; SD = 10.20$).

Most ($n = 71, 84.5\%$) participants self-identified as White only; 15.5% identified as of color, including biracial/multiracial individuals. Specifically, five identified as Hispanic, four as Latino/a/x, four as Black, one as American Indian/Alaska Native, and one as Middle Eastern/Northern African.

Almost all participants had a PhD/JD/MD ($n = 80, 95.2\%$); 4 had master’s degrees. With regard to income, just 2 (2.4%) reported a household income (H.I.) of less than \$50K/year; 29 (34.5%) reported an H.I. of \$50-100K, 25 (29.8%) reported an H.I. of \$101-150K, 14 (16.7%) reported an H.I. of \$151-\$200K, 6 (7.1%) reported an H.I. of \$201-\$250K, and 7 (8.3%) reported an H.I. of over \$250K, with one missing. More than three-quarters ($n = 66, 78.6\%$) of the sample were married or partnered.

Sixty-six (78.6%) described their political affiliation as Democrat. Six (7.1%) identified their political affiliation as Independent; 1 (1.3%) identified as Libertarian, and 11 (12.1%) identified their political affiliation as “something else” (e.g., Leftist, Socialist, Green Party).

LOCAL COMMUNITY, CAMPUS, AND STATE CONTEXT

Local Community Context

Most of the sample indicated that their homes were located in cities ($n = 38, 45.2\%$) or suburban areas ($n = 26, 31.0\%$), with 14 (16.7%) indicating “small town” and 6 (7.1%) indicating rural areas. Most participants had lived in their state for more than five years ($n = 59, 70.2\%$); more than 40% had lived in their state for over 10 years ($n = 37, 42.5\%$). Almost 40% described their home communities as conservative or very conservative on LGBTQ+ issues. Specifically, 5 (6.0%) described their home communities as very progressive on LGBTQ+ issues, 28 (33.3%) said it was progressive on LGBTQ+ issues, 18 (21.4%) endorsed neutral, 18 (21.4%) said it was conservative, and 15 (17.9%) said it was very conservative.

Campus Context

More than three-quarters of participants ($n = 66, 78.6\%$) were employed by public four-year universities. Eight (9.5%) were employed at private secular four-year universities, 8 (9.5%) were

employed at private religiously affiliated four-year universities, and two indicated something else (public two-year university; private graduate school). Seventy-six (90.5%) were full-time faculty, 4 (5.3%) were part-time faculty, and 4 said something else (e.g., contract-based lecturer). In terms of rank, 23 (27.4%) were professors, 24 (28.6%) were associate professors, 27 (32.1%) were assistant professors, 8 (9.5%) were instructors/lecturers, one (1.2%) was an associate provost, and one (1.2%) was an Associate Director of a program. Almost 60% had been at their institutions for five years or more ($n = 48, 57.1%$), and over 30% had been at their institutions for over 10 years ($n = 26, 31.0%$).

Participants were faculty in various departments or programs, with many in the social sciences and interdisciplinary programs. Specifically, participants were faculty in Women's & Gender Studies ($n = 25, 29.8%$), Psychology ($n = 24, 28.6%$), Sociology ($n = 14, 16.7%$), Criminology/Criminal Justice ($n = 11, 13.1%$), Education ($n = 11, 13.1%$), Family Sciences ($n = 8, 9.5%$), Social Work ($n = 5, 6.0%$), Public Health ($n = 6, 7.1%$), African American Studies ($n = 3, 3.6%$), Political Science ($n = 3, 3.6%$), Legal Studies ($n = 2, 2.4%$), Communications ($n = 2, 2.4%$), and one each in 14 different areas, including religion, nursing, and math. Most ($n = 50, 59.5%$) worked with both undergraduate and graduate students at their institution; 18 (21.4%) worked solely with undergraduates, and 15 (17.9%) worked solely with graduate students (1 missing).

Most participants' institutions were in cities ($n = 50, 59.5%$), with smaller numbers in suburban areas ($n = 16, 19.0%$) or small towns ($n = 15, 17.9%$). Just three were in rural areas (3.6%). Regarding LGBTQ+ issues, 8 (9.5%) said that their campus was very progressive; 35 (41.7%) said it was progressive, 16 (19.0%) said neutral, 19 (22.6%) said conservative, and 6 (7.1%) said very conservative.

State Legislative Context

Participants lived in a variety of states. Thirty-nine (46.4%) lived in a state that had passed anti-DEI legislation or policies related to higher education; see Table 1. This legislation varied in scope; some states had passed multiple pieces of legislation (e.g., TX: HB1; SB17). For example, some legislation prohibited public universities from requiring employees to participate in DEI or bias programming or training. Others banned spending on programs for DEI and imposed limits on allowed courses and majors, and/or prohibited teaching and training on "divisive concepts" (e.g., for the purpose of combating "woke indoctrination")—for example, teaching "critical race theory" in public colleges was prohibited. Still, other legislation disallowed the creation of DEI offices, DEI-related hiring, and/or DEI-related requirements for employee job applications. Another 25 (29.8%) lived in a state (e.g., AL, OH) that had introduced or proposed anti-DEI legislation related to higher education. Thus, 64 (76.2%), or more than three-quarters of the sample, lived in a state that had proposed and/or passed anti-DEI legislation.

Also relevant is the fact that three-quarters of the sample ($n = 65, 77.4%$) lived in a state that can be characterized as having a poor or very poor climate for LGBTQ+ people, as indexed by the Movement Advancement Project's LGBTQ+ policy tally for each state (see <https://www.lgbtmap.org/equality-maps>). According to this index, 19 (22.6%) lived in states with fair, moderate, or very favorable climates (Movement Advancement Project, 2024).

Figure 1. Anti-DEI and anti-LGBTQ+ laws and policies among US states where respondents reside

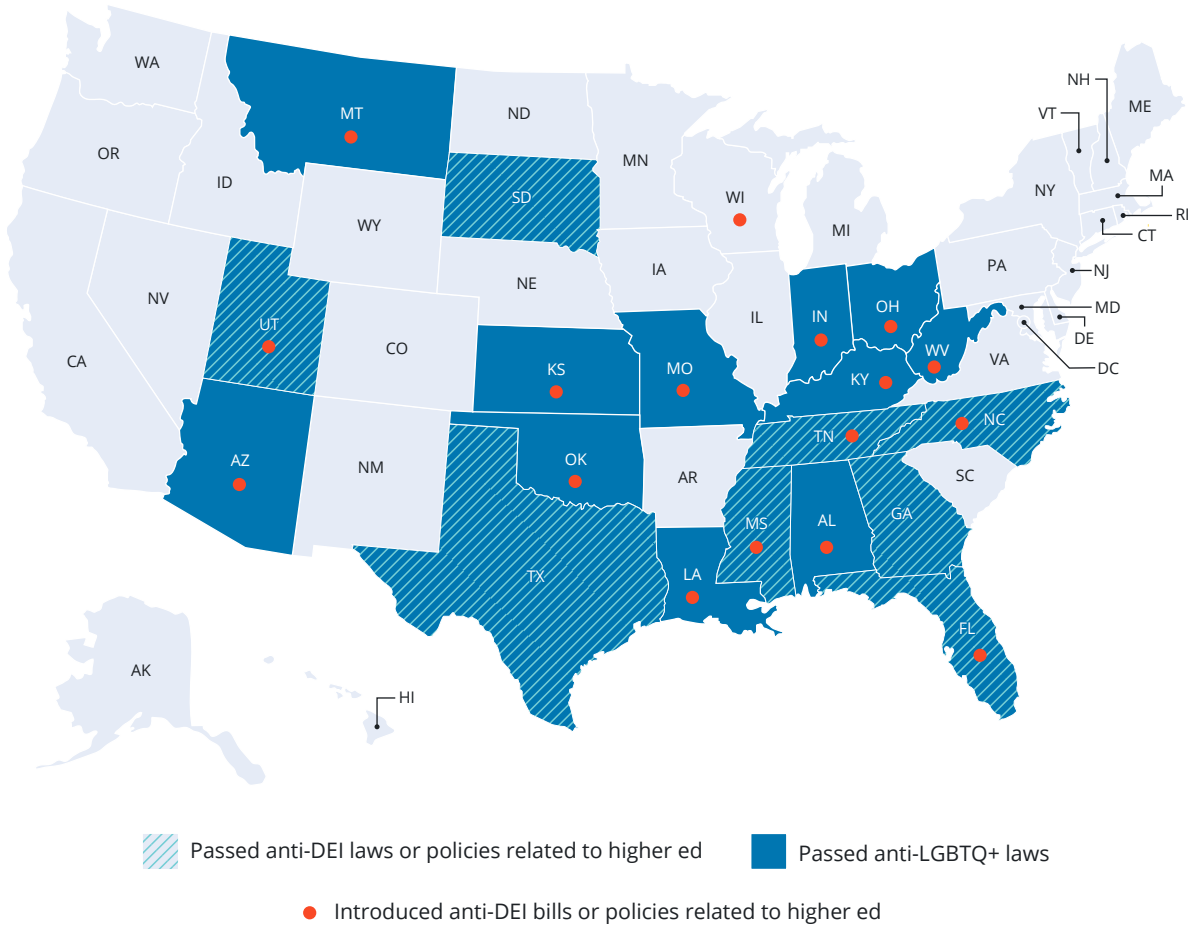


Table 1. Residence of respondents and the status of anti-DEI and anti-LGBTQ+ laws in their state

STATE	N (%)	PASSED ANTI-DEI LAWS OR POLICIES IN HIGHER ED	INTRODUCED ANTI-DEI BILLS OR POLICIES IN HIGHER ED	PASSED ANTI-LGBTQ+ LAWS (SCHOOLS, HEALTH CARE, SPORTS, ETC)
Alabama	2 (2.4%)	-	Yes (e.g., HB9)	Yes (e.g., HB391, SB184, HB322)
Arizona	3 (3.6%)	-	Yes (e.g., HB2483, SB1005, SB1472)	Yes (e.g., SB1138, SB1165, SB43, HB1156; SB199)
Colorado	1 (1.2%)	-	-	-
Connecticut	1 (1.2%)	-	-	-
Florida	11 (13.1%)	Yes (e.g., SB266, HB931/ SB958)	Yes (e.g., HB599/SB1382)	Yes (e.g., SB1028, HB1557, HB7, SB300, SB1438, HB1521, SB254, HB1069)
Georgia	4 (4.8%)	2023: Public colleges in GA put an end to required DEI statements in hiring; also prohibits them from requiring diversity statements as part of employee training.	-	Yes (e.g., SB140, HB1084)
Illinois	1 (1.1%)	-	-	-

STATE	N (%)	PASSED ANTI-DEI LAWS OR POLICIES IN HIGHER ED	INTRODUCED ANTI-DEI BILLS OR POLICIES IN HIGHER ED	PASSED ANTI-LGBTQ+ LAWS (SCHOOLS, HEALTH CARE, SPORTS, ETC)
Indiana	1 (1.2%)		Yes (e.g., SB202)	Yes (e.g., SB480, HB1569, HB1608)
Kansas	1 (1.2%)		Yes (e.g., HB2460)	Yes (e.g., SB180; HB2238, SB228)
Kentucky	3 (3.6%)		Yes (e.g., SB6, HB9)	Yes (e.g., SB83, SB150)
Louisiana	1 (1.2%)		Yes (e.g., SB128)	Yes (e.g., SB44, SB648)
Maryland	1 (1.2%)	-	-	-
Massachusetts	1 (1.2%)	-	-	-
Michigan	4 (4.8%)	-	-	-
Minnesota	1 (1.2%)	-	-	-
Mississippi	1 (1.2%)	Yes (e.g., SB2113)	Yes (e.g., HB127)	Yes (e.g., SB2536, HB1125)
Missouri	4 (4.8%)		Yes (e.g., HB2448/ HB2569/HB2365/ HB2619/HB2365/ HB1314; HB1737/SB2198, SB1125, HB2619)	Yes (e.g., SB49, SB39)
Montana	1 (1.2%)		Yes (e.g., SB222)	Yes (e.g., HB112, SB99)
Nevada	3 (3.6%)	-	-	-
New York	2 (2.4%)	-	-	-
North Carolina	7 (8.3%)	Yes (e.g., SB364)	Yes (e.g., HB607)	Yes (e.g., HB574/SB631; HB808, SB49)
Ohio	3 (3.6%)		Yes (e.g., SB83/HB151; HB394)	Yes (e.g., HB110, HB68)
Oklahoma	3 (3.6%)		Yes (e.g., SB1303; SB1678)	Yes (e.g., HB1775; SB615, SB2, SB613, SB26, SB404)
Pennsylvania	2 (2.4%)	-	-	-
Rhode Island	1 (1.2%)	-	-	-
South Dakota	1 (1.2%)	Yes (e.g., HB102)		Yes (e.g., SB46; HB1080)
Tennessee	7 (8.3%)	Yes (e.g., HB2248, SB2290, SB817/HB1376, SB102/HB158, HB1/ SB17, HB2784/SB201)	Yes (e.g., HB571/SB603, HB1948/SB2350)	Yes (e.g., HB3, SB1367, HB1895, HB1/SB1, SB003, HB306/SB1237, HB306/ SB1237, HB1269/SB466, SB1440/HB239, HB1269/ SB466, SB1440/HB239, SB2153, HB878)
Texas	7 (8.3%)	Yes (e.g., HB1, HB5127/ SB17)		Yes (e.g., HB25, SB12, SB14/HB1686/SB625, SB15)
Utah	1 (1.2%)	Yes (e.g., HB261)	Yes (e.g., HB111)	Yes (e.g., SB16, SB100, HB209, SB93)
Virginia	1 (1.2%)	-	-	-
West Virginia	1 (1.2%)	-	Yes (e.g., HB4387)	Yes (e.g., HB3293, HB342, HB2007)
Wisconsin	2 (2.4%)	-	Yes (e.g., Assembly Bill 554/SB596; Assembly Joint Resolution 109; Assembly Bill 1065/SB988)	-

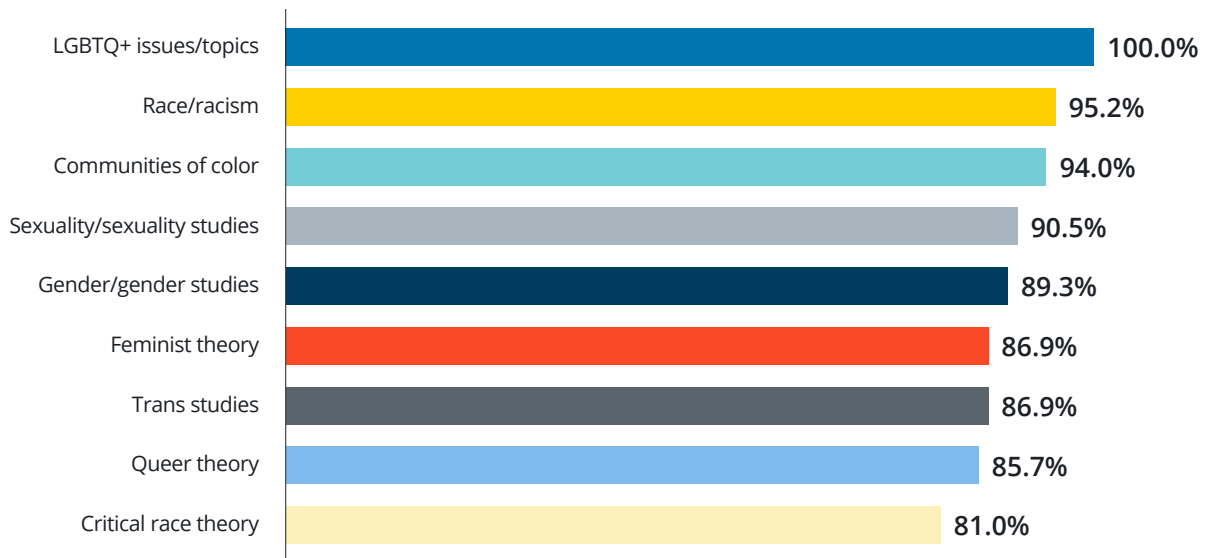
IMPACT OF ANTI-DEI LEGISLATION ON TEACHING AND RESEARCH

Impact on Teaching and Research

Many participants indicated that the anti-DEI environment had a negative impact on their teaching and research.

All participants ($n = 84$, 100%) indicated that their teaching and/or research involved LGBTQ+ topics. Most indicated that their teaching and/or research involved sexuality/sexuality studies ($n = 76$, 90.5%) and gender/gender studies ($n = 75$, 89.3%). Most also indicated that feminist theory ($n = 73$, 86.9%) and queer theory ($n = 72$, 85.7%) were components of their teaching and/or research. Further, most ($n = 73$, 86.9%) said their teaching and/or research covered trans studies and trans-specific care. The majority of participants also incorporated race into their teaching and research: 80 (95.2%) said that race/racism was a component of their teaching and/or research, and 79 (94.0%) said that communities of color were a component of their teaching and/or research. Most ($n = 68$, 81.0%) indicated that critical race theory was a component of their teaching and/or research. Thus, most participants' research and/or teaching involved topics impacted by DEI-related legislation.

Figure 2. Teaching and/or research topics among LGBTQ+ educators surveyed



We asked participants about changes they had made in their teaching and/or research due to recent legislative changes in their state. We asked about negative changes or impacts (i.e., activities, readings, or topics they removed or decreased) and positive or neutral changes or impacts (i.e., activities, readings, or topics they added or increased). Many endorsed both types of changes. Table 2 details negative impacts or changes to teaching; Table 3 details negative impacts or changes to research; and Table 4 details positive or neutral changes to teaching.

Table 2. Negative impacts or changes to teaching

NEGATIVE CHANGES TO TEACHING	N	%
I have omitted readings I previously assigned	5	5.9%
I have omitted topics I previously covered in my courses	6	7.1%
<i>I used to integrate LGBTQIA+ affirming care [and] info re: working with BIPOC communities into [course], and I no longer do this.</i>		
I have decreased the amount of class discussions in my courses	6	7.1%
<i>I am certainly more guarded around class discussion.</i>		
<i>I am not avoiding controversial issues, but I am making sure that the content stays within the confines of the class, not allowing recordings by students or making recordings available on the web for students joining from a distance.</i>		
I have stopped inviting guest speakers to my courses	3	3.6%
I have stopped teaching certain courses	1	1.3%
I have stopped asking students for their pronouns	3	3.6%
<i>When asking for student pronouns, I no longer ask them to do so verbally; now I have them turn them in to me in written form and say they may share their pronouns verbally if they wish.</i>		
CHANGES TO HOW I TEACH CERTAIN TOPICS		
<i>I am very careful about how I introduce topics in my courses ... the topics of "gender" and "sexuality" appear relatively early in the textbook ... [but] I wait until the last third of the semester to cover these topics until I have established a level of trust with my students [which] ... has helped reduce the number of complaints parents have filed with my department chair about my teaching.</i>		
<i>[University] is a mixed bag when it comes to students and their political, racial, gendered identities. I still talk about this in my class, but I am cautious as to how I frame it, given the rise in students complaining directly to the department chair, dean, and even president in some cases. There have even been incidents of students going to Campus Watch to share their displeasure about conversations regarding DEI.</i>		
<i>I know I have to be careful with how I word certain topics in class.</i>		
<i>Legislation ... has made me more wary. I am taking care to provide ample ... context for remarks, assigned readings, and class discussions.</i>		
<i>I have changed how I talk about intersectionality to omit the term "critical race theory" from my coverage completely to avoid knee-jerk reactions to the topic, hoping students will be more likely to be open-minded about the concepts without immediately shutting down when they hear that term.</i>		
CHANGES TO SYLLABUS		
<i>Our syllabus statements related to divisive concepts and diversity more broadly have changed in our university, so I had to change what was in my syllabus.</i>		
<i>Our ... program had to remove explicit mention of DEI from our handbook and include a 'divisive concepts' statement to our syllabi.</i>		
<i>[I am] more cautious about what [I] put in official course descriptions because there is a recent history of [state] legislators asking for a list of all courses dealing with certain topics, and that's most often tallied by course name and description rather than syllabi.</i>		

Table 3. Negative impacts or changes to research

NEGATIVE CHANGES TO RESEARCH	N	%
Individuals/organizations are less willing to participate in my research	13	15.5%
<i>It is increasingly more difficult to get MOUs [memorandum of understanding] with local school districts because DEI is part of a grant proposal or presentation.</i>		
<i>It is more difficult to find [research participants]; there is a lot of fear of identification, even when anonymity is promised.</i>		
<i>Potential participants are burnt out and/or afraid of the consequences of participating in my [trans-related] research.</i>		
<i>Trans and nonbinary youth are less willing to participate; [they are] tired of attacks and concerned about exposure.</i>		
<i>My research is ... on LGBTQ+ mental health with a focus on youth and families ... It has been incredibly difficult to recruit youth and families into research in my state since the passage of restrictive legislation. There has been a huge chilling effect.</i>		
Students have stopped working with me on my research	4	4.8%
<i>I had a grad student leave the program because of the challenges of living in this state/region related to his gender identity.</i>		
<i>I had a student refuse to use my pronouns or work collaboratively with me.</i>		
I have changed the focus or direction of my research to avoid some topics	3	3.6%
<i>I have needed to change my research to account for anti-drag legislation moving forward in my state and others.</i>		
COMPLIANCE-RELATED CHANGES		
<i>I had to change the name of my lab to bring it into compliance with upcoming laws.</i>		
CHANGES RELATED TO VISIBILITY		
<i>I am afraid if I'm too public about [my research], I'll bring attention to what my lab and I are doing and be sanctioned.</i>		
<i>I am cautious about how I present my research at presentations in [state] for fear of someone taking a screengrab and sending it to a politician that could use it against me.</i>		

Table 4. Neutral/positive changes or impacts on teaching

NEUTRAL OR POSITIVE CHANGES TO TEACHING & RESEARCH	N	%
I have added new readings	27	32.1%
<i>I specifically added readings on critical race theory and what it is.</i>		
<i>I have added readings on adultism in order to allow students the chance to discuss how anti-trans legislation is strongly influenced by rhetoric that seeks to rob children and youth of political, social, and bodily autonomy.</i>		
<i>I have intentionally used banned books in my teaching so adults are exposed to books that have made national news. [We] discuss why and how these books have gotten so much attention and why we should care.</i>		
I have increased the amount of class discussions in my courses	12	14.3%
<i>We spend time discussing what it means to have difficult conversations and to lean into it. We spend time getting to know one another in order to do this.</i>		
I have added new topics to my courses	19	22.6%

NEUTRAL OR POSITIVE CHANGES TO TEACHING & RESEARCH	N	%
I have started asking students for their pronouns	7	8.3%
<p><i>I have made it a point to ask about pronouns in faculty meetings, other campus meetings, and with my classes. I have modeled being open about my gender identity and discussed my privilege as a white person.</i></p>		
CURRENT EVENTS AND RECENT LEGISLATION		
<p><i>I have added conversation about these proposed laws in my classes so students are aware of what is going on in the state and how it can/could affect what they learn.</i></p>		
<p><i>Increased discussion on proposed/in progress bills on anti-union, anti-DEI, and abortion rights, as well as in-progress bills outlawing gender-affirming medical care for youth.</i></p>		
<p><i>I have chosen to address current events, particularly in courses where we discuss gender, sexuality, race, etc.</i></p>		
<p><i>I have made my lesson plans more flexible to allow students to discuss relevant and immediate policy changes that may not relate to the topic of the day but are necessary to discuss.</i></p>		
<p><i>I constantly update my readings and stats to keep students up to date on current anti-LGBTQ legislation (and anti-abortion legislation) happening in our state and others.</i></p>		
INTEGRATION OF TOPICS AND MATERIAL TO BETTER UNDERSTAND CURRENT EVENTS/LEGISLATION		
<p><i>I am much more mindful to highlight the history of pathologization and legislation of LGBTQ lives and how current sociopolitical forces fit in that broader history.</i></p>		
<p><i>I added additional information about transgender people ... so that students would know about trans psychology as well as how things like gender transitive surgeries impact sexual functioning. I also added additional info about intersex conditions ... these changes were less due to my specific state and more due to changes across the nation.</i></p>		
<p><i>Anti-trans and anti-drag laws being added across the country made me add info about trans psychology and drag as a form of gender expression to my courses ... I feel this is necessary since many people ... are unfamiliar with what it means to be trans.</i></p>		
<p><i>[I have] provided students with more information about proposed program changes and eliminations at the university that I previously may have left for officials to communicate.</i></p>		
CHANGES TO HOW I TEACH CERTAIN TOPICS		
<p><i>I make it more clear that I am teaching best practices and science-based content, especially when I address race, gender, and sexual orientation.</i></p>		
<p><i>I have altered the language in the proposal for an LGBTQI+ ... studies course to make it more 'academically rigorous' (e.g., providing more numeric data about the ... industry so as to position the course as a professionalization option rather than focusing on sexuality and gender identification.</i></p>		
<p><i>I added in prefaces explaining what gender-affirming care is and is not and added reminders for group discussion that this topic is not a theoretical debate for many class members.</i></p>		
<p><i>Our campus counsel interpreted the anti-CRT law as saying that as long as we do not require students to claim CRT as their perspective we can teach it. So I do. Her interpretation gave me the freedom to do so, I thought. I teach family theories and it is one of 12 theories we cover over the semester. I point out regularly that we all use different perspectives, and it is just one of the options. So far, two years into the new law, it has gone well. Students are curious.</i></p>		

NEUTRAL OR POSITIVE CHANGES TO TEACHING & RESEARCH	N	%
CHANGES TO SYLLABUS		
<i>In terms of ... my syllabi, I have felt the need to re-emphasize the fact that these topics all impact people in the classroom because I have noticed an increase in insensitive or unfounded opinions stated as facts, especially in my online courses.</i>		
<i>I have a clause in my syllabi that all beliefs are welcome, but disruption and antagonistic language is not tolerated.</i>		

In our logistic regressions (see Table 5), we found that low faculty rank (where rank is coded as instructor/lecturer, assistant professor, associate professor, full professor) was significantly associated with making any changes to one’s teaching practices in all three models. For every one unit drop in rank (from full professor to associate to assistant to instructor/lecturer), the odds of changing one’s teaching increased by 2.0 times: that is, compared to full professors, associate professors were 2.0 times more likely than full professors to report changes, assistant professors were 4.0 times more likely, and instructors were 8.0 times more likely. Negative changes in teaching practices (i.e., removal of topics or readings; see Table 2) were also predicted by low rank in all three models. Again, participants were 2.0 times more likely to report negative changes to their teaching for each lower level of rank than full professors. Positive/neutral changes in teaching practices (i.e., adding content or context, such as readings or topics; see Table 4) were only marginally predicted by faculty rank when anti-LGBTQ+ climate alone was included in the model. Participants were 1.6 times more likely to report positive/neutral changes for each lower level of rank than full professors.

Table 5. Results of logistic regressions: teaching

		OUTCOMES		
		ANY CHANGES TO TEACHING	ADDITIONS TO TEACHING (POSITIVE)	REMOVALS FROM TEACHING (NEGATIVE)
ANTI-DEI LEGISLATION (INTRODUCED/PASSED) ONLY IN MODEL	Anti-DEI legislation	.48	.17	.52
	Public University	-.78	-.94	.26
	Low rank	-.70*	.46	.71*
	Trans	-.73	.82	-.54
ANTI-LGBTQ+ CLIMATE ONLY IN MODEL	Anti-LGBTQ+ climate	-.06	.64	1.04
	Public University	-.60	-.99	.37
	Low rank	.63*	.50 ^t	.70*
	Trans	-.77	-.85	-.64
BOTH DEI AND CLIMATE IN MODEL	Anti-DEI legislation	.73	-.36	.25
	Anti-LGBTQ+ climate	-.47	.91	1.02
	Public University	-.80	-.90	.37
	Low rank	.70*	.47	.70*
	Trans	-.70	-.88	-.63

Note: * = significant at $p < .05$; t = a trend, significant at $p < .10$

Fear of Student Retaliation

A key part of effective teaching is the relationship that faculty members have with their students to create a collaborative and open learning environment. Notably, the fear and mistrust of students that the anti-DEI environment is creating was prominent for some faculty, leading them to avoid certain teaching practices and/or allowances they previously engaged in (e.g., recording lectures). They made these changes out of fear for their safety and a desire to keep their jobs. Some, too, noted that their personal identities, in interaction with their teaching, research, and activism, left them feeling especially fearful and isolated. In turn, several participants shared they were not “out” to their students for fear that this might invite additional pushback and/or negative student evaluations, a possibility at least one said they could not afford, as they were non-tenure-track.

I fear retaliation by students and losing my job because I'm pre-tenure.

I am more careful in how I discuss LGBTQ issues in the classroom, and I feel more fear that I am being filmed or something I say will be used against me.

This legislation makes me less confident as a professor. Scared all the time. Distrusting of students whom I code as threats of reporting me and my lessons to university administration. [This legislation and accompanying fear] interferes with the safe environment I try to create in my classes.

I have reduced the amount of personal information I offer to my students, including anecdotes in teaching, due to fear of them using it for blackmail.

This was a nice part of my job, feeling that I was able to make that personal connection, but I feel that can now be weaponized against me if overheard by the wrong people/students. I hate having to be on guard all the time.

As Table 6 indicates, some of these faculty members’ fears have already come to fruition as measured by drops in course enrollment, more negative course evaluations from students, and students already reporting some faculty for violating anti-DEI laws or policies.

Table 6. Impact of anti-DEI legislation on relationships with students

	N	%
Decline in enrollments in my courses	10	11.9%
<i>I'm seeing less enrollment in my ... gender-related courses; they are consistently down about 25% across the board.</i>		
<i>When I offer graduate seminars, some of our conservative students avoid me. Indeed, one of my very religious anti-LGBTQ colleagues told graduate students in her seminar to avoid me at all costs. As a result, I have had courses canceled due to low enrollment.</i>		
A higher proportion of negative ratings or comments on teaching evaluations from students	10	11.9%
<i>I consistently have my course on sexuality be called “too political” because the topics I cover interact with legal issues, such as anti-trans bathroom laws.</i>		
<i>When I teach a required graduate seminar, I get negative comments about “indoctrinating” students to be “woke.”</i>		

	N	%
<i>My quantitative scores have not changed much, but the qualitative comments have become more direct. I have had students say that I am “racist against white people” or “just spend the whole class pointing out that white men have done wrong.” One student just left a comment stating “Make America Great Again” with no connection to the class or my teaching.</i>		
<i>I receive feedback on my course evaluations that it is clear that I am only supporting one side of society and that all viewpoints are not respected.</i>		
Students have threatened to report me to an authority at my institution	8	9.5%
<i>I have had students report me to my department chair and threaten to go to the Dean or Provost because my teaching is “one-sided” or has a “progressive spin.”</i>		

Resistance to Having Teaching and Research Impacted

In their survey responses, some participants emphasized their resistance to complying with pressures to adapt their teaching and research. The ability to engage in these types of actions appeared to be facilitated by privilege, which they acknowledged—for example, they mentioned being tenured, unionized, or well-respected on campus.

My school director has vaguely suggested I limit the directness of my family diversity course “for my own protection.” I have not altered the class in this way. In fact, I made it more blatant that we will discuss the impacts of systemic discrimination.

The legislation is meant to impact my teaching and research, but I have made the choice to change absolutely nothing. I am watching the anticipatory obedience, the self-silencing, and the overinterpretation of risk on my campus. While some of my colleagues are rather vulnerable, and I both understand and support their choice to protect themselves and their families. As someone with fewer vulnerabilities and more positionality, I have continued my work as I would in any other state. I have continued my advocacy and participated in legal challenges to the violations of our rights, academic freedom, and the constitution.

The strong anti-trans pressure of the legislation has only made me double down on pursuing my research on gender identity—a totally new direction for me, as heretofore I’ve done research only in pure mathematics.

I am aware of the policies, but I continue on. I know I have some element of privilege in that I am confident in my place in higher education as a whole, where I can see ways to navigate the challenges. I can find the loopholes, and I am well-known and (somehow) well-respected on campus. I do have some concerns about my tenure case since it goes through the Board of Regents, but I am well above the Standards, so I know it would only be political.

Concerns About the Future

Although many faculty had not yet changed their teaching and research, some were concerned that their classes might be canceled and/or were uncertain about the legality of talking about certain topics. Such concerns and general ambiguity surrounding the future were especially intense among faculty in states where anti-DEI legislation had been proposed but not yet passed, as well as among those in states where the legislation had recently passed but the implications for their careers were not yet clear.

I am really hoping that transphobic legislation will be vetoed, and I haven't experienced much backlash for what I teach and research at this point, but I worry about the future of my career as an LGBTQ health disparities researcher and Queer Studies professor. I haven't planned to curtail my efforts, but I do recognize I may face consequences for what I teach and research; I don't have a backup plan except to face those consequences when they come. I am leaning heavily on my union for support and consultation.

[Legislation in my state] is still under debate, but even this has increased my fear and worry ... it has increased my concern about being a target of violence on a college campus. If passed, I essentially would be banned from teaching our "family diversity" class, which would then call into question our program's accreditation.

We all fear ... [the] canceling of courses in WGSS, African American Studies, and culture-focused courses.

In 2022, Missouri passed Senate Bill 2113, which forbids public schools in the state from forcing students to agree "that any sex, race, ethnicity, religion or national origin is inherently superior or inferior." The bill does not mention or define critical race theory, nor does it appear to prohibit my teaching CRT. I still do teach it, but I am worried about potential blowback.

I just started my faculty position and have not taught yet, but I'm nervous about teaching DEI topics in Florida because of the harmful legislation and the control my state has over my employer, an R1 public university.

Conflicting or Ambivalent Institutional Support

Some participants' fears about current and future impacts on their teaching and research were heightened by the lack of clear and consistent support from their university. For example, some noted that their department was supportive of them, their research, and/or their teaching, but their university was "ambiguous." A queer cis woman faculty member said, "I have supportive faculty and immediate supervisors [but] a scary president and upper administrative team that has done lots through their silence and some anti-trans initiatives." Others noted conditional or unclear support from their department or university, such that they felt supported presently but uneasy when thinking about the future. A bisexual cis woman faculty member said, "My department and institution have been supportive thus far, but I know their support is tenuous."

Similarly, some noted vague, inconsistent, or confusing guidance and messaging surrounding DEI, leaving them wondering about whether they and/or their work was or would be supported. A cis lesbian woman faculty member said:

The institution has provided guidance that our courses are protected under the academic freedom clause of the legislation. However, other areas, such as trainings and websites, have been required to change to not make things mandatory and to reduce the perceived amount of DEI we are doing. The struggle is that the department (most of the faculty) believes we need to continue doing this work ... There is a disconnect or at least a challenge in navigating both of those realities.

A cis gay man faculty member recounted:

Our legal counsel has advised us that I can keep teaching the way I always have and that I cannot be fired if I show up on Fox News, but the university president is not supportive and is likely to throw me under the bus. Legal counsel indicated that although I may not be fired by the university, I may have to weather intense scrutiny for a period of time if my work gets picked up by conservative media. I regularly check in with the dean of my college to make sure I am still protected, and I have to work extra hard to defend/get some of my research approved ... The threat of ending up on the news is always looming over me. My work and teaching are unapologetically queer and identity-affirming, and that puts me at risk.

Likewise, some faculty noted a lack of transparency, such that their efforts to clarify or understand the implications of legislative threats or shifts were waved off or ignored. “When we have brought forward concerns about the current sociopolitical landscape, we’re met with leadership saying ‘we’re fine, nothing’s happening’ when things are, in fact, happening,” said a queer cis woman faculty member.

BROADER IMPACTS ON DEI INITIATIVES AND PROGRAMS

When asked to elaborate in an open-ended manner on how recent anti-DEI legislative threats and shifts had impacted their life as faculty members, participants described a range of other impacts besides their teaching and research, including changes to faculty hiring and graduate student admissions, changes to or the closure of DEI initiatives and programs, and requests for faculty emails and records related to DEI.

Changes in Faculty Hiring and Retention

Several participants described how hiring a diverse faculty pool was complicated by the passage of legislation related to hiring and diversity.

We used to have a faculty hiring initiative to bring in more minority faculty members that recently was canceled, and that is upsetting since we had been thinking about scouting a few people in particular for these positions.

[A colleague who is a person of color] was hired through one of our diversity hiring initiatives, and I know that records related to her hiring have been requested.

Within our larger institution, there has been notable difficulty retaining and recruiting diverse faculty, administration, and students.

Changes in Graduate Student Programs

Implications for graduate student recruitment, admissions, and retention were also noted. The national ban on affirmative action was highlighted, as well as state-level legislation related to DEI and higher education, LGBTQ+ rights, and trans rights specifically.

I have not experienced a direct impact yet, though there are some threats. We are coming up on new grad school admissions, and we will need to think about how to incorporate DEI without specifically factoring in race.

We have had to remove questions on applications. Can't ask them to speak to DEI topics.

We have found it very difficult to recruit LGBTQ+ (especially trans) grad students and postdocs.

I believe that the anti-transgender legislation and growing negative attitudes towards LGBTQIA+ individuals are limiting the pool of graduate students we have applying. One prospective LGBTQIA student told me that she was scared to move to the area.

DEI Trainings, Research, and Offices

Many participants commented on changes to, or the closure of, DEI-related trainings, research, programs, and offices on campus. In some cases, DEI programs and activities were not removed, but their names and/or the language surrounding them was altered. A few participants described how they were asked to remove words such as “inclusivity” and “intersectionality” from trainings related to diversity and/or LGBTQ+ issues. Other examples include the following:

In 2023, the University System of Georgia Board of Regents passed a revised “Statement on Academic Freedom” and made changes to the Human Resources policy. As a result, diversity, equity, and inclusion trainings for faculty and staff have been eliminated. The same policy changes have impacted a grant on which I serve as a co-PI. We have been forced to change planned activities in the grant due to these changes.

House Bill 7 stopped our anti-racism, equity, and inclusion committee dead in our tracks ... we have learned to use creative titles and other strategies for getting these kinds of talks covered financially, but it all feels sneaky and wrong. It’s upsetting.

I had a grant to increase the number of women and URMs [underrepresented minorities] as part of institutional transformation. The grant just ended, and the admin will soon disband my office and our work and default on its commitment to NSF to sustain these successful projects. SB266 does not allow federal or private funding to pay for any DEI activities.

S.B. 17 disappeared the LGBTQ center on campus, the effects of which I am researching.

There has been ... condensing and reduction in staffing in DEI-related admin offices.

We have had our DEI office on campus closed, and some affinity groups have felt under pressure to change or soften their language/purpose of the advocacy.

DEI-Related Records Request

Finally, some faculty ($n = 12$, 14.2%) were asked by their department or institution to turn over records related to DEI activities.

My emails were audited for gender-affirming care in the clinical realm as I am also a clinician on campus.

I had no say in my emails being given to the state.

IMPACT ON CAMPUS AND COMMUNITY CLIMATE

Participants shared how the anti-DEI and anti-LGBTQ legislative environment was more generally creating a more hostile environment both on and off campus.

A More Hostile Campus Climate

Reflecting on the last six months, one-fifth of the LGBTQ+ survey participants ($n = 17$, 20.2%) agreed that they were “scared of being harassed or bothered by coworkers or supervisors because of my sexual orientation or gender identity or expression, my political affiliation, or being perceived as ‘woke.’” Five participants (6.0%), two of whom were trans, said that they had experienced harassment or being bothered by coworkers or supervisors because of their sexual orientation/gender identity or expression, political affiliation, or perceived “wokeness.”

In response to open-ended questions on the survey, many participants commented on the chilling effect that legislation had had on the overall climate across campus, resulting in increased hostility towards faculty who were sexual, gender, and/or racial minorities and/or who taught on such issues, from students as well as the general campus community. They described “bullying behavior” and “microaggressions” by people on campus, including students and administration, including those “at the highest levels, the board of the university, and others in the state who interact with the university.”

Anti LGBTQ+ and anti-CRT legislation ... invokes and normalizes hostility against students and faculty who are LGBTQ+, people of color, and/or allies. Those of us teaching ... in the WGSS and [other programs] targeted for cuts tend to be racial, sexual, and/or gender minorities with strong pro-LGBTQ+ and anti-racist views, so there is a strong feeling among university community members that we are being implicitly targeted for removal from the campus community.

I have had to more comprehensively debunk incorrect data and rhetoric about CRT and gender-affirming care, and have encountered an increase in statements that are incorrect, insensitive, or misrepresent opinion or personal anecdote as fact, which is clearly related to this legislation across the country. For example, one student ... stated that white privilege wasn't real because her white father lost his job and the new hire ... was Black.

There are a lot of microaggressions without a lot of support. It feels like the administration just rolls over to the state government rather than supporting people on campus.

[Anonymous members of the campus community] systematically tore down posters for a course of mine that engaged race, gender, sexuality, and other topics perceived as “woke.”

Notably, the “chilly” climate extended to participants even in states without specific anti-DEI legislation related to higher education. They commented on the national climate and its impact on their campus and teaching/research specifically.

There has been no state-specific legislation that would impact my teaching or research, but the climate has cooled, and I do have concerns I didn't have before [like] being on the list of radical faculty by that conservative org.

I do believe the national issues are leaving emotional impacts on faculty and students.

A More Hostile Environment Off Campus

LGBTQ+ survey participants were not only concerned about the hostile climate on campus but in their neighborhoods and communities as well. Reflecting on the last six months, over one-third ($n = 31$, 36.9%) endorsed being “scared of being harassed or bothered by neighbors because of my sexual orientation or gender identity or expression, my political affiliation, or being perceived as ‘woke.’” One bisexual/queer cis woman faculty member said, “I worry about my physical safety if my neighbors know about my research and my identities, which are very public online.” Four participants (4.8%), two of whom were trans, said that they had experienced harassment or being bothered by neighbors for their sexual orientation/gender identity or expression, political affiliation, or perceived “wokeness.” A bisexual trans man faculty member said, “I get yelled at a couple of times a month, and actual violence on me every 2-3 months (cars revving engines and charging me in crosswalks or jumping curbs if I’m on the sidewalk) ... it is clear trans is under attack.”

Parenting and Children

The impacts of the anti-DEI and anti-LGBTQ legislative environment were felt particularly by survey respondents who were parents. Approximately 40% of the sample ($n = 34$, 40.5%) were parents, all to one or two children. Seven had at least one child less than school-aged (0-5 years old), 19 had school-aged children (6-17 years old), and six had at least one child 18+ years old. Seventeen participants had at least one boy child, 15 had at least one girl child, and five had at least one trans/nonbinary child. Many said they were not sure of their children’s sexual orientation ($n = 21$). Eleven parents had at least one sexual minority child (lesbian, gay, bisexual, pansexual).

Many parents ($n = 19$) said they had at least one child in public school. Seven said that they had at least one child in daycare. Three said at least one of their children was in charter school. Two said at least one of their children was being homeschooled, and two said that at least one of their children was not in school. In addition, one parent each said that they had a child in private religious school, private secular school, special education school, and college.

Over 60% of parent respondents ($n = 21$, 61.8%) endorsed at least one negative event or change that had happened to their child/ren in the past six months. Over one in four parent respondents ($n = 9$, 26.4%) said their children had been bullied, teased, or harassed at school because of their personal or family identities: namely, for having LGBTQ+ parents (four), their own LGBTQ+ identities (three); and their racial, ethnic, or cultural identities (two). One in four ($n = 9$) also said that things were removed from school: namely, books (e.g., on LGBTQ+ topics, race/ethnicity) (six), courses (two), and signifiers of inclusion or diversity (one). Ten parent respondents endorsed other changes in curriculum, climate, or teacher/staff behavior in the past six months (e.g., teachers being afraid to discuss LGBTQ+ issues; changes to sexual education to include abstinence-only education). Six parents said that other parents at school were cool or hostile to them.

IMPACT ON OUTNESS AND VISIBILITY

For some LGBTQ+ faculty members, the challenges they faced both on and off campus were leading them to live their lives less openly as LGBTQ people. Even beyond the examples provided earlier of some faculty being less out in the classroom, faculty were driven to engage in activities aimed to protect themselves and “stay under the radar,” including setting their social media to private, not

posting divisive things on social media, using personal as opposed to institutional email addresses for anything related to advocacy/activism, and investing in liability insurance.

In some cases, such actions were taken after being harassed by students and others online because of their sexual orientation. In the case of one cis lesbian faculty member, such harassment “included threats on my life [and] reached the point of criminal charges after the university had exhausted all internal responses.” A queer trans man faculty member shared, “My spouse and I had a member of a far-right student organization post a picture of us on the organization’s [social media] account ridiculing us for being pro-trans, and the university refused to take action against the organization for targeted harassment of a university employee.” In addition to these protective actions, several noted that they had eliminated descriptions of their LGBTQ+-related research from their university bios online. A few noted that they no longer were willing to do public or non-academic writing on topics related to their research for fear of drawing attention to themselves and/or “jeopardizing my faculty position or the status of my program.”

When asked, “If you have found yourself being less ‘out’ or thinking about whether and how much to share about your family: Can you say more about these choices, how they feel for you, and what you have done, specifically, and in what situations?”, two thirds ($n = 56, 66.7\%$) of respondents provided responses to this question. A number of themes emerged, which are captured in Table 7. Most of these themes intersect with and represent forms of hypervigilance, which encompasses both scanning behaviors and identity concealment (Riggle et al., 2023).

Table 7. Navigating outness and visibility

THEME	EXAMPLE
HYPERVIGILANCE: ACTIONS AIMED TO INCREASE SAFETY	
Scanning Behaviors	
Constant surveillance of surroundings for safety	<i>I will now often ask my spouse to drive me to and/or from work so I don't have to walk as far between the building I work in and the nearest available parking or be alone in a parking deck.</i>
	<i>My partner and I started getting our food to go if we think we will experience homophobia.</i>
	<i>Increased anxiety in public spaces, including supermarkets, restaurants, for example, wondering about the politics of the people around me.</i>
Identity Concealment	
Taking my pronouns off of my email signature	<i>I removed my pronouns and office location after getting hate mail.</i>
Identifying with pronouns that don't match one's gender identity; not correcting misgendering of self and/or partner	<i>Lying to a health professional about the gender of my partner ... feels isolating and shameful.</i>

THEME	EXAMPLE
Dressing less “flamboyantly” to “blend in” more	<i>I find myself less likely to wear identifiable queer items.</i> <i>I have changed my gender presentation in many situations ... After being called a “faggot” while walking down my institution’s “main drag” on my way to teach, I often “tone down” my look so that being harassed doesn’t negatively impact my teaching for the day.</i>
Removal of flags from house, car, office for fear of being broken into and/or targeted	
Lack of physical affection in public with partner	
Omitting or concealing LGBTQ+ status or relationship to same-gender partner with students, colleagues, and neighbors	<i>I would never talk about my sexual orientation to my students in class. I don’t want them to have any “ammunition” to use to hurt me personally and professionally. This is in direct contrast to positions I held at previous institutions where I was completely out to everyone.</i> <i>I live in a community with an HOA, so I worry if my neighbors do not like me because of my queerness, they can jeopardize my housing security.</i>
RESISTANT ACTIONS AIMED TO INCREASE VISIBILITY	
Continuing to be out, in support of the more vulnerable on my campus/in my community (as a privileged professor with tenure; as a white woman married to a man)	<i>I feel like my life and sense of safety and health is not at risk as it is for other folks (POC, trans), so I need to leverage the privilege that I have while also standing strong as a member of a minority community.</i>
Adding my pronouns to my email signature	
Continuing to keep my office “very gay”	

Impact on Advocacy and Activism

For some, part of downplaying their identity and politics meant engaging less in activism on and off campus. For others, the increasingly challenging environment inspired them to become more involved. We asked participants about the impact of the anti-DEI environment on their advocacy and activism, both on and off campus. Table 8 details decreases in advocacy and activism, and Table 9 details increases in advocacy and activism.

Table 8. Negative impacts on advocacy and activism

DECREASE IN ADVOCACY AND ACTIVISM	N	%
I have become less active in advocacy and activism on campus	14	16.7%
<i>I feel so burnt out on politics and the constant threats to DEI, LGBTQ, and minority communities. I feel like a terrible activist because I’m not doing more, but I find myself getting so depressed when more of the same news rolls in.</i>		

DECREASE IN ADVOCACY AND ACTIVISM	N	%
<i>I feel especially vulnerable as a woman pre-tenure in a department of predominantly older white men. This has informed my approach to advocacy and activism.</i>		
I have become less active in advocacy and activism off-campus	10	11.9%
<i>I have reduced my activism and advocacy activities on and off campus for fear of retaliation.</i>		
I left my faculty union	0	0%

Table 9. Positive changes in advocacy and activism

INCREASE IN ADVOCACY AND ACTIVISM	N	%
I have become more active in advocacy and activism on campus	28	33.3%
<i>I am ... active in organizing events and panels on campus, where I specifically focus on vital issues relating to diversity, identity, etc. However, I have taken care not to record virtual events where we did so in the past to make sure the event's content does not get distributed out of context to those outside of the university community.</i>		
<i>I have advocated against the university's Academic Program Review, which is clearly intended to cut corners by eliminating "unproductive" programs, most of which (supposedly coincidentally) happen to be Humanities programs and/or closely aligned with DEI initiatives.</i>		
<i>We are not allowed to compel anyone to engage with DEI topics/trainings ... A few of us on my campus have been able to find workarounds to still provide these topics and advocacy work. We still provide SafeZone trainings ... but now we call them ally trainings, and they are part of our community events.</i>		
<i>I have tried to use my position to elevate the research in public discourse about these issues.</i>		
<i>I just joined [the university committee on compensation and benefits], where I will advocate for trans health [and] have initiated a research project exploring ... nonbinary gender identity.</i>		
<i>I've initiated a faculty/staff LGBTQ group.</i>		
<i>I keep Plan B morning-after pills in my office.</i>		
I have become more active in advocacy and activism off-campus	22	26.2%
<i>I have become more active in activism both on and off campus and have used my platform to speak on anti-LGBTQ bills.</i>		
<i>I testified at the capital this year and became an active part of our state organization lobbying for LGBTQ rights.</i>		
<i>I have joined divisions of my professional association related to queer people.</i>		
I joined my faculty union	8	9.5%
<i>I made a point to join the union knowing that this is a form of strength against GOP and other conservative initiatives related to higher education.</i>		
<i>I was motivated to join earlier than I otherwise would have due to fear of being investigated.</i>		

IMPACTS ON WELL-BEING AND FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

Health and Relationships

Participants were also asked how recent legislation and shifting climate had impacted their well-being, including mental health, physical health, intimate relationship quality, and parenting. Many participants described navigating a near-constant feeling of worry and uncertainty. Notably, feelings of vulnerability and heightened vigilance were especially amplified among those who lacked privilege (e.g., tenure) as well as those whose identities and research/teaching foci were visibly queer. Participants frequently highlighted the exhaustion associated with such fear and vigilance, noting that “students and faculty are on edge.”

[Recent legislative threats] affect my energy. They exhaust me. They distract all of us to [pay attention to the] noise, polarization, and reactionary responses rather than the work of teaching and learning lots of ways of being in the world. I would say I'm hesitant to write particular critiques of the state because we have an attack culture, and I feel conscious that at any time, my field, my positionality ... can be attacked.

While students and faculty have not hidden their identities (and some can't), it is a scary and paranoid time. At this point, erasure and silencing seem almost benign when compared to losing a job and being harassed in public.

In describing impacts on their mental health, participants detailed the toll of constant hypervigilance surrounding their identities and visibility and potential scrutiny surrounding their research and teaching. They also detailed the toll of state and national legislative attacks on LGBTQ+ people. Some, too, noted how the stress associated with legislative and national changes had created or contributed to health issues, such as poor sleep, high blood pressure, and autoimmune issues. Finally, smaller numbers detailed how the stress had spilled into their parenting and/or relationship functioning or worries.

Table 10. Psychosocial and health impacts of legislation

	N	%
My mental health has been negatively impacted (e.g., increased anxiety, depression, decreased sense of safety)	62	73.8%
<i>I am anxious before certain classes because I know I will be facing higher than usual levels of scrutiny.</i>		
<i>I experience a decreased sense of safety related to bodily autonomy ... and low-level persistent fear about [my job].</i>		
<i>I am constantly anxious. My research focuses on queer and trans students, and it seems more important than ever.</i>		
<i>It feels like everyone I know is overburdened and burnt out and has no energy to fight as much as we would like to.</i>		
<i>I am definitely feeling more hypervigilant, and I worry for my son and my very visible nonbinary partner. I am constantly reminded by friends and colleagues about how hostile the state is at large toward people like me ... It sometimes bothers me how they can move in and out of these conversations without experiencing the risk to their jobs and lives. It can sometimes feel more like political hobbyism on their part than true empathy and support.</i>		

	N	%
IMPACT OF NATIONAL CLIMATE		
<i>I haven't felt impacted by the legislation specific to my state but have felt extremely fatigued and stressed by the amount of anti-queer and anti-trans legislation being introduced throughout the U.S.</i>		
<i>I know this is state-focused, but nationally, the rise in anti-LGBTQ+ legislation has concerned me.</i>		
My physical health has been negatively impacted (e.g., weight gain, substance use)	23	27.4%
<i>I am overly anxious about how I teach controversial topics. Recent legislation has me ruminating a great deal ... this is not good for my mental health. I also find myself indulging in substances more often due to the anxiety I experience.</i>		
<i>I am very stressed and concerned about high blood pressure due to these forces.</i>		
<i>I had a minor stroke in 2017. I have trouble focusing and being present in my personal life because of anxiety and looming stress waiting for the "other shoe to drop."</i>		
<i>I have continual headaches and am constantly fatigued.</i>		
<i>I have an autoimmune disease, which I believe is being exacerbated by the stress.</i>		
<i>My physical health issues are definitely tied to the mental health concerns. Increased stress and depression related to my new job's potential instability, my partner's career providing gender-affirming care, and the potential of my transition and reproductive healthcare to be eliminated have led to increased inattentive[ness] and difficulty focusing, poor sleep, and reduced capacity for completing things in a timely manner.</i>		
<i>The anxiety has sometimes made me physically sick and unable to sleep. This ebbs and flows with current events.</i>		
My parenting concerns and/or abilities have been impacted (e.g., declining patience, increased worries)	16	47% of parents
<i>I worry about my son and his experience. I would leave the state if it weren't for him, but my co-parent seems to like it here.</i>		
My relationship with my partner/s has been negatively impacted (e.g., increased stress or conflict)	10	15% of married/partnered
<i>I have experienced an increase in fears about being out. My partner has experienced homophobia more since this has occurred, which has impacted our relationship and changed where we even feel safe to eat.</i>		

We conducted a series of logistic regressions using the same predictors as in the analyses on changes in teaching. Namely, we used variables capturing state context, university context, and indices of vulnerability to predict mental health changes. As Table 11 indicates, living in an anti-DEI state was strongly associated with reporting negative mental health changes, as was living in a state with an anti-LGBTQ+ climate. Looking at the models in which these predictors were in separately, participants in anti-DEI states were 12.5 times more likely, and participants in states with anti-LGBTQ+ climates were 6.8 times more likely than those who were not to report negative mental health changes. (The effect was 9.6 times for those living in anti-DEI states when both predictors were in the model.)

Table 11. Results of logistic regressions: impact on mental health

		OUTCOME
		MENTAL HEALTH IMPACTS
ANTI-DEI LEGISLATION (INTRODUCED/PASSED) ONLY IN MODEL	Anti-DEI legislation	2.53***
	Public University	-.64
	Low rank	.39
	Trans	-.35
ANTI-LGBTQ+ CLIMATE ONLY IN MODEL	Anti-LGBTQ+ climate	1.92**
	Public University	.09
	Low rank	.11
	Trans	-.62
BOTH DEI AND CLIMATE IN MODEL	Anti-DEI legislation	2.26**
	Anti-LGBTQ+ climate	.47
	Public University	-.61
	Low rank	.38
	Trans	-.40

Note: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

Coping Strategies

Participants were also asked about strategies they had used to cope with recent legislative changes. Some of these strategies are summarized in Table 12.

Table 12. Coping strategies impacting health and family

ACTION	N	%
BEHAVIOR AIMED AT MOOD ALTERATION OR SELF-PROTECTION		
Sought out or used mental health supports (e.g., therapy, medication)	35	41.7%
Exercised	45	53.6%
Used alcohol or drugs	21	25.0%
Was less “out” in my neighborhood, workplace, or community (e.g., less quick to share details of my personal life, don’t hold my partner’s hand in public, took rainbow bumper stickers off my car)	22	26.2%
SUPPORT		
Reached out to or connected with friends and family	51	60.7%
Connected with colleagues at my institution for support/strategic help	49	58.3%
Connected with colleagues outside of my institution for support/strategic help	44	52.4%
CHILD		
Took steps to move/am moving my child to new school or homeschooling	5	6.0%
ACTIVISM AND ADVOCACY		
Engaged in in-person advocacy or activism	40	47.6%
Participated in a protest or demonstration against state legislation	18	21.4%

ACTION	N	%
Participated in a rally or demonstration in favor of state legislation	3	3.6%
Donated to causes or people fighting state legislation	24	28.6%
Donated to causes or people supporting state legislation	5	6.0%
SOMETHING ELSE		
i.e., yoga, meditation, considered new job, running for office, creating community	11	11.8%

IMPACT ON WANTING TO MOVE OR LEAVE HIGHER EDUCATION

When participants were asked about ways they had coped with recent legislative changes, some also indicated they were interested in moving to another state (almost half) or leaving higher education altogether (over a third); see Table 13.

Figure 3. Coping with recent legislative changes by considering moving or leaving higher education

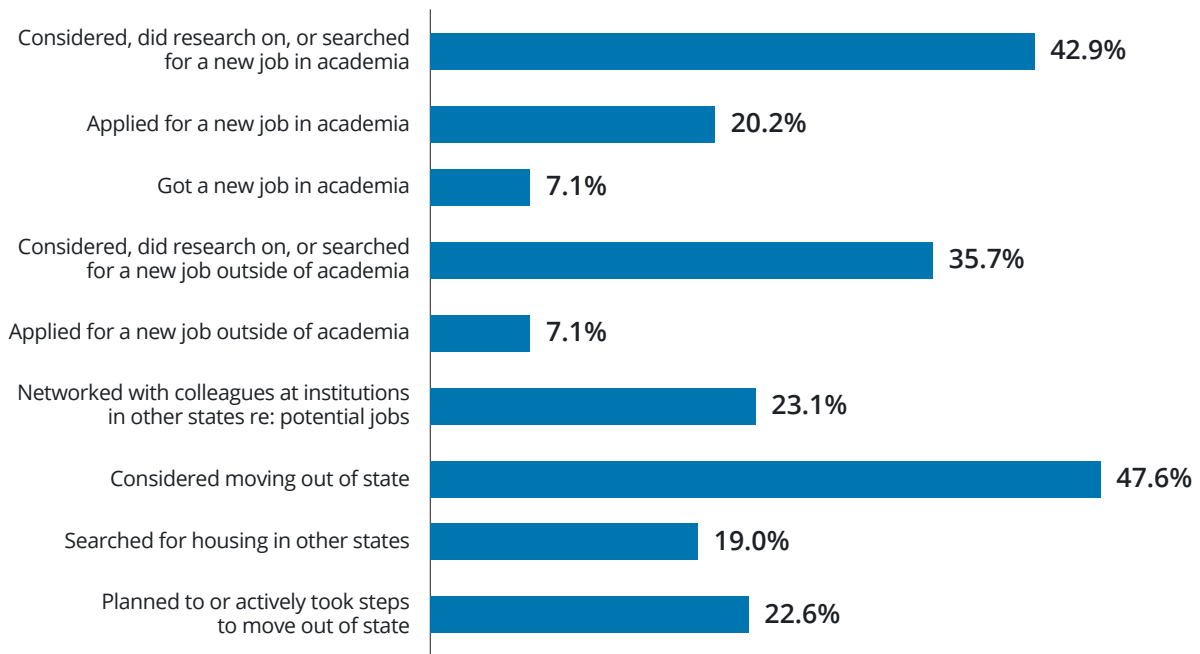


Table 13. Coping with recent legislative changes by considering moving or leaving higher education

ACTION	N	%
NEW JOBS, MOVING		
Considered, did research on, or searched for a new job in academia	36	42.9%
Applied for a new job in academia	17	20.2%
Got a new job in academia	6	7.1%
Considered, did research on, or searched for a new job outside of academia	30	35.7%
Applied for a new job outside of academia	6	7.1%
Networked with colleagues at institutions in other states re: potential jobs	20	23.1%
Considered moving out of state	40	47.6%
Searched for housing in other states	16	19.0%
Planned to or actively took steps to move out of state	19	22.6%

Some participants shared that they were contemplating moving specifically so they would not have to change their teaching or research as a result of anti-DEI legislation and policies.

I am applying for jobs out-of-state. I'm a full professor, and I'm not going to change how I teach. If anything, I'm leaning more into teaching these issues—I just prepped a new course on [sexuality] this year (after becoming a full professor and feeling more protected) and added more critical race theory to my courses. I'm also more out in the classroom.

They do not want the words diversity, equity, or inclusion or racism or sexism or anything like that in any public-facing document or website. But they do not say this officially, so everyone is self-censoring ... I have decided to quit soon and leave Florida. We already have lost a good number of faculty.

I recently earned tenure (which is also being attacked). But the way the legislation is written, the graduate education that I teach should not be impacted, and if I am asked to change any of my DEI curriculum, then I know this is not the place for me.

When asked about the intensity of their desire to move out of state, 32 (38.1%) said they would “very much” want to move; 12 (14.3%) said somewhat, 13 (15.5%) endorsed a neutral or mixed response, 14 (14.3%) said not really, and 14 (16.7%) said not at all (1 missing).

When asked about the likelihood that they would move out of their state in the next two years, 12 (14.3%) said they were very likely to move. Said one queer cis woman faculty member: “We will absolutely be moving out of state in the next two years. Staying in this hostile environment is not an option.” Eight (9.5%) said that they were somewhat likely to move. Nine (10.7%) said unsure/neutral (“We are currently in a safe state but only one election away from that changing”). A total of 29 (34.5%) said that they were not very likely to move. Said a bisexual cis woman faculty member: “I bought a home, so the cost of selling after only a year or two would be worrisome. Most importantly, I am hugely concerned about the ability to land another tenure-track position ... I also love my department/colleagues.” Finally, 25 (29.8%) said that they were not at all likely to move.

Table 14 presents a series of logistic regressions using state context, university context, and indices of vulnerability to predict desire to move (i.e., wanting to move “somewhat” or “very much”). As Table 14 indicates, those living in a state where anti-DEI legislation was introduced or passed were 4.2 times

more likely to report a desire to move. When anti-LGBTQ+ climate was added to the model, the odds of wanting to move for those in states with anti-DEI legislation increased to 4.8 times compared to those living in states that had not introduced or passed anti-DEI legislation.

Table 14. Results of logistic regressions: impact on desire to move

		OUTCOME
		DESIRE TO MOVE
ANTI-DEI LEGISLATION (INTRODUCED/PASSED) ONLY IN MODEL	Anti-DEI legislation	1.43*
	Public University	.23
	Low rank	-.07
	Trans	.01
ANTI-LGBTQ+ CLIMATE ONLY IN MODEL	Anti-LGBTQ+ climate	.93
	Public University	.60
	Low rank	-1.8
	Trans	-1.6
BOTH DEI AND CLIMATE IN MODEL	Anti-DEI legislation	1.58*
	Anti-LGBTQ+ climate	-.27
	Public University	.21
	Low rank	-.07
	Trans	.03

Note: * $p < .05$

Participants were also asked about barriers to moving (Table 15). As the findings illustrate, the challenge of getting another academic job and the difficulty of uprooting themselves and their families were seen as the primary barriers to relocating.

Table 15. Barriers to moving

BARRIER	N	%
Job/employment	72	85.7%
<i>I don't want to give up an academic job.</i>		
Hassle of Moving	37	44.0%
Cost of living/low taxes	33	39.3%
We love our home	32	38.1%
We love our neighborhood/ community	25	32.9%
<i>I hate the state climate. But, the political climate of the metropolitan area is diametrically opposite and quite excellent. I am more invested in creating change here than I am in running away from the problems here.</i>		
Our friends live here	25	29.8%
Family caregiving responsibilities	23	27.4%
Own/partner's extended family lives here	22	26.2%
<i>Our roots are here. It feels scary to think about going somewhere else.</i>		

BARRIER	N	%
We like the weather	21	25.0%
<i>I refuse to go North due to the cold.</i>		
We can't afford to move	15	17.9%
We love our state	14	16.7%
We don't want to uproot our child/ren		
<i>I don't want to uproot my child. When she graduates from high school, we are seriously considering moving out of the state to a more progressive, and therefore safe, state.</i>		
Tourism	13	15.5%
<i>North Carolina has all four seasons, good cost of living, beach, mountains, and lots of big cities with lots to do.</i>		
Other reasons (e.g., disability, joint custody, racial composition of area, want sense of permanence, want to stay to improve life for other LGBTQ+ people)	14	
<i>I want to stay in a community where a Black person can simply be human in their day-to-day lives.</i>		
<i>I'm so sick of not feeling like a place is home and not feeling like I can settle.</i>		

CONCLUSIONS

LGBTQ+ faculty in higher education who teach about and research LGBTQ+ and related issues are uniquely impacted by the current surge in anti-DEI legislation. Both their personal identities and presentation, as well as their scholarship, are being questioned, undermined, and attacked. The sample in this study is mostly White and thereby limited by a lack of racial diversity. In turn, it is important to recognize that although not captured in this study, LGBTQ+ faculty who possess other marginalized identities likely experience additional stressors related to their intersecting identities.

Many participants in this study described making changes to their teaching, including integrating additional content to proactively justify or provide context for the inclusion of LGBTQ+ and other topics and/or their integration of queer or trans-inclusive approaches. Some, however, described eliminating topics or readings, seemingly because they felt they had to. Many described a chilly climate on their campus and detailed a heightened sense of vigilance and mistrust of students, which impeded their ability to teach freely and be their full selves. Many described mental health impacts, and many were considering leaving their state, academia, or their institutions specifically.

Our findings highlight too how aspects of privilege—including professional rank and tenure status, as well as other dimensions like race and gender identity and presentation—may impact feelings of safety vs. vulnerability vis a vis the current legislative context. As one participant, a White gay cis man said: “As a tenured full professor who enjoyed privilege as a white cis male, I have it easy. My junior colleagues of color, especially those at the intersections of race and LGBTQ+ statuses, have it much harder.” Likewise, those in private institutions sometimes acknowledged that they were far more immune to the impact of legislation—although the overall climate of their state (and the nation) did indeed have some impact on their teaching, research, and overall sense of comfort at their institutions and in their home communities. Even those in states that had not passed or introduced anti-DEI or LGBTQ+-related legislation, many commented that the national climate did impact them, such as via the politicization of their teaching and research activities and associated wariness of students, as well as their sense of safety and comfort (and associated visibility) related to their own identities.

These findings reflect faculty members’ experiences in the initial days of the implementation of anti-DEI and anti-LGBTQ+ laws. While still early, these findings suggest that their impacts may include significantly fewer out LGBTQ+ faculty members, less course coverage of LGBTQ+ topics, and a reduction in academic research on LGBTQ+ issues. Unchecked, ultimately, this could mean that in the states with some of the most difficult environments for LGBTQ+ people, there will be less research to address LGBTQ+ health and income disparities and inform public policies, and a generation of students with less exposure to LGBTQ+ issues and faculty mentorship and support. Furthermore, if fewer LGBTQ+ faculty are willing to move to states with anti-DEI and anti-LGBTQ+ laws, and more and more LGBTQ+ faculty leave these states or quit academia altogether—which our findings point to as a very real possibility—the impacts on higher education may be significant and hard to reverse. Indeed, the erasure of LGBTQ+ topics and people from higher education in certain regions of the country will not only impact the lives and families of LGBTQ+ faculty themselves, but it will also seriously impact students in these regions—including their well-being and identity and their ability to receive a well-rounded and comprehensive education. Further, such erasure has consequences for public health more generally, such as through the interruption, censure, or elimination of LGBTQ+-inclusive science and, relatedly, the passage of laws and policies that fail to consider—or actively seek to harm—LGBTQ+ people.

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