2025 College Free Speech Rankings
Emory University

154

OVERALL RANK

SLIGHTLY BELOW AVERAGE

SPEECH CLIMATE

GREEN

SPOTLIGHT RATING

FIRE
Foundation for Individual Rights and Expression

2025 College Free Speech Rankings
Emory University

Executive Summary

FOR THE FIFTH YEAR IN A ROW, the Foundation for Individual Rights and Expression (FIRE), a nonprofit organization committed to defending and sustaining the individual rights of all Americans to free speech and free thought, and College Pulse surveyed college undergraduates about their perceptions and experiences regarding free speech on their campuses.

This year's survey includes 58,807 student respondents from 257 colleges and universities. Students who were enrolled in four-year degree programs were surveyed via the College Pulse mobile app and web portal from January 25 through June 17, 2024.

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

Emory University was one of the 257 schools surveyed. Key findings from this school include:

- A ranking of 154, with an overall score of 44.07 and a "Slightly Below Average" speech climate.

- Emory's scores on the speaker-based components dropped slightly, with both "Tolerance for Liberal Speakers" (116 compared to 73 last year) and "Tolerance for Conservative Speakers" (208 compared to 198 last year) falling.

- An abysmal performance on "Comfort Expressing Ideas" (230) and "Administrative Support" (243).

- Emory's ranking is average among its peer private universities.

- Emory was penalized for its response to six different speech controversies since 2020, having not responded in a speech-protective manner in any of the controversies.

- Maintaining speech policies that earn it a "green light" rating from FIRE.

Full Report

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

This past year FIRE and College Pulse surveyed 257 schools, ranking 251 of them.[1] Emory University, with a score of 44.07, has a "Slightly Below Average" speech climate and ranks 154 overall in the 2025 College Free Speech Rankings after finishing 202 last year.

Emory's scores on the speaker-based components dropped slightly, with both "Tolerance for Liberal Speakers" (116 compared to 73 last year) and "Tolerance for Conservative Speakers" (208 compared to 198 last year) falling. Additionally, Emory's "Comfort Expressing Ideas" (230 compared to 197 last year) and "Administrative Support" (243 compared to 172 last year) rankings dropped considerably. On the other hand, Emory's "Openness" ranking (85 compared to 174 last year) increased substantially, and its "Disruptive Conduct" ranking (166 compared to 167 last year) remained steady.

Compared to its peer universities, Emory ranks toward the middle. It comes in before Washington University in St. Louis (187), Northwestern University (238), and University of Pennsylvania (248). However, it ranks below Duke University (27), Johns Hopkins University (119), and Vanderbilt University (140).

HOW COMFORTABLE ARE EMORY STUDENTS EXPRESSING THEIR VIEWS ON CONTROVERSIAL TOPICS?

Emory University ranks 230 on the "Comfort Expressing Ideas" component.

Students at Emory feel the greatest levels of comfort expressing disagreement with their professors about a controversial political topic in a written assignment (40%), expressing their views on a controversial political topic during an in-class discussion (41%), and expressing their views on a controversial political topic to other students during a discussion in a common campus space such as a quad, dining hall, or lounge (41%). In 2021, these percentages were 59%, 55%, and 60% respectively.

However, students feel less comfortable when publicly disagreeing with a professor about a controversial political topic (33%) and expressing an unpopular political opinion to their fellow students on a social media account tied to their name (29%). In 2021, these percentages were 36% and 28% respectively.

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1   Six of the schools surveyed received a "Warning" rating from FIRE for their speech policies. An overall score was calculated separately for these schools, comparing them only to each other.

FIGURE 1 Students Who Feel Somewhat Comfortable by Context (%)
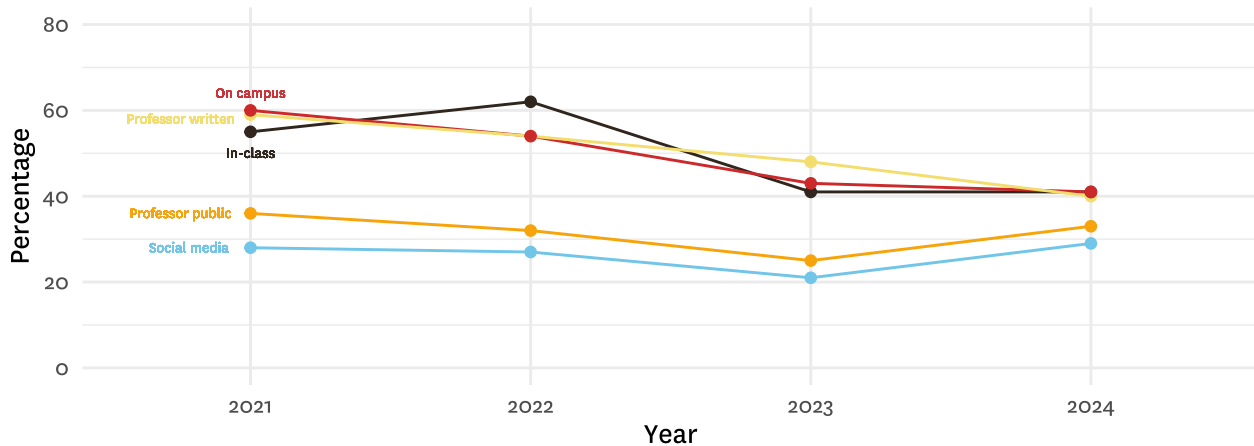
With the exception of expressing an unpopular opinion to their fellow students on a social media account tied to their name, Emory students feel less comfortable expressing themselves with their professors and peers than they did four years ago. The explanation for these concerning decreases in comfort is unclear.

HOW OFTEN ARE EMORY STUDENTS SELF-CENSORING ON CAMPUS?

Emory University ranks 196 on the "Self-Censorship" component.

Emory students report self-censoring in conversations with professors and peers similarly to students nationally.

- 25% report self-censoring "fairly" or "very often" during conversations with other students on campus compared to 24% of students nationally.

- 25% report self-censoring either "fairly" or "very" often during conversations with professors as did 25% of students nationally.

- 28% of students report self-censoring during classroom discussions compared to 26% of students nationally.

Self-censorship by Emory students remains consistent since 2021, with a slight uptick this year. Three years ago, when asked how often they could not express their opinion on a subject because of how students, a professor, or the administration would respond, 16% of Emory students felt that way "very" or "fairly" often. This percentage decreased to 15% the following year and 14% last year before going back up to 18% this year.

FIGURE 2   Students Who Self-Censor Fairly or Very Often (%)
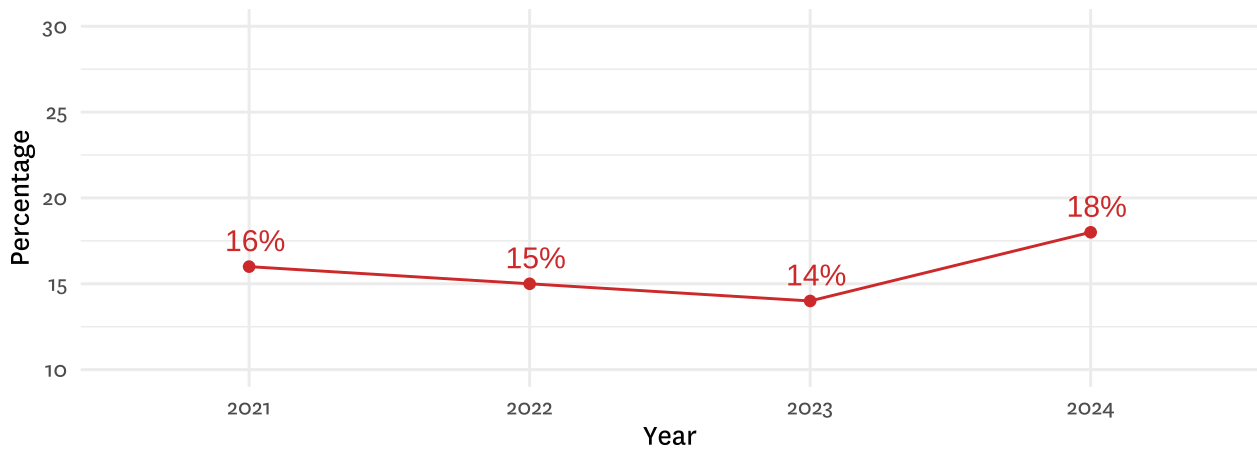
WHAT TOPICS ARE DIFFICULT FOR EMORY STUDENTS TO HAVE CONVERSATIONS ABOUT?

Emory University ranks 85 on the "Openness" component.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is identified most frequently as a topic that is difficult for students to have an open and honest conversation about on Emory's campus (69%). In 2021, 44% of Emory students reported having difficulty having an open and honest conversation about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict on their campus. This percentage increased to 53% in 2022 before decreasing to 46% in 2023.

Emory students report less difficulty discussing other topics compared to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, with the lowest percentage (8%) reporting none of the listed topics being difficult to discuss.

FIGURE 3   Students Who Have Difficulty Talking About Each Topic (%)
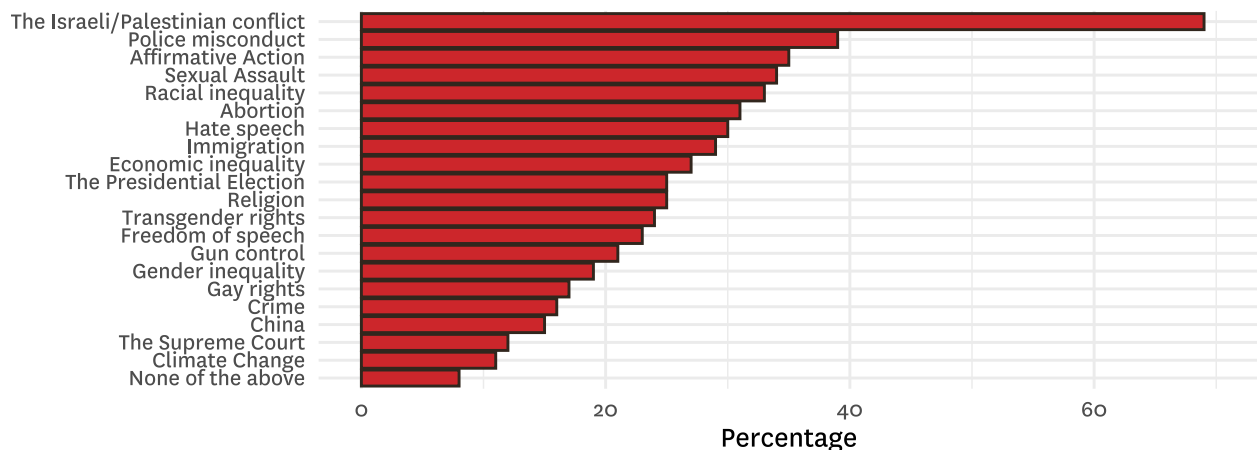
WHICH SPEAKERS DO EMORY STUDENTS CONSIDER CONTROVERSIAL?

Emory University ranks 116 on "Tolerance for Liberal Speakers," 190 on "Mean Tolerance," 204 on the "Tolerance Difference" component, and 208 on "Tolerance for Conservative Speakers."

When it comes to allowing controversial liberal speakers on campus, Emory students are tolerant. Approximately half (47%) would allow a speaker on campus who said that "The police are just as racist as the Ku Klux Klan" and half (50%) would allow a speaker on campus who said that "The Catholic church is a pedophilic institution." A speaker on campus who said that "Children should be able to transition without parental consent" received the most support (61%).

Conservative speakers, on the other hand, are not as tolerated by Emory students. Twenty-two percent of students would allow a speaker on campus who said that "Transgender people have a mental disorder"; 27% would allow someone who said that "Black Lives Matter is a hate group"; and 37% would allow someone on campus who said that "Abortion should be completely illegal." Additionally, this year's survey asked about two speakers relevant to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, though responses did not affect rankings. Forty-two percent of Emory students report that a speaker who said that "Collateral damage in Gaza is justified for the sake of Israeli security" should be allowed on campus while 64% report that a speaker who said that "From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free" should be allowed on campus.

FIGURE 4 Students Who Would Allow Each Conservative Speaker on Campus (%)
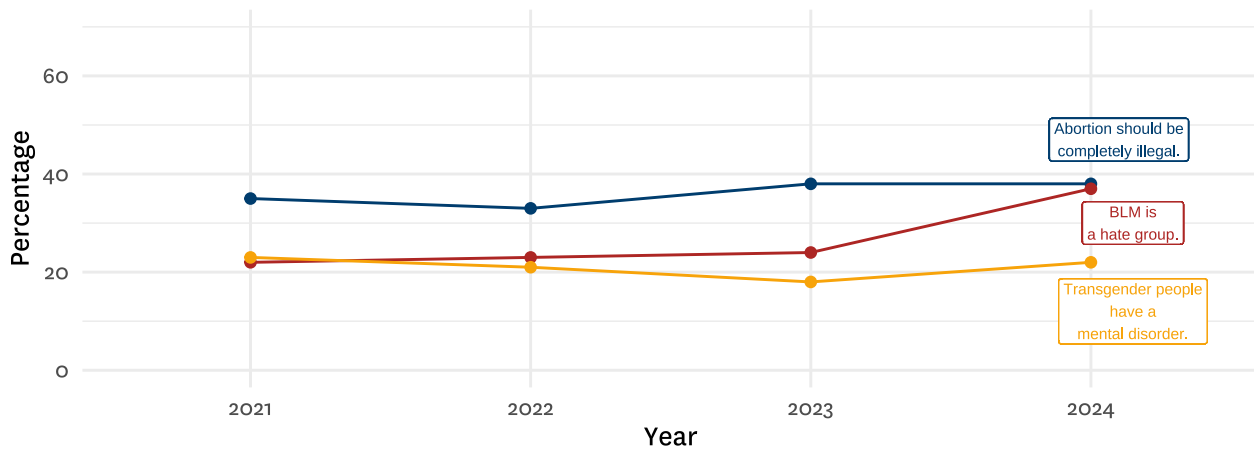
WHAT KINDS OF DISRUPTIVE CONDUCT DO EMORY STUDENTS CONSIDER ACCEPTABLE?

Emory University ranks 166 on the "Disruptive Conduct" component.

When compared to students nationally, Emory students are more likely to say that students using disruptive conduct to stop a campus speech is at least "rarely" acceptable. Specifically, 75% of Emory students find shouting down a speaker acceptable compared to 69% nationally; 59% deem blocking other students from attending a campus speech to be acceptable compared to 51% of students nationally; and 38% view violence to stop a speech as acceptable compared to 32% of students nationally.

HOW IS EMORY'S ADMINISTRATIVE STANCE ON FREEDOM OF SPEECH PERCEIVED?

Emory University ranks 243 on the "Administrative Support" component.

Twenty-two percent of Emory students find the administration either "very" or "extremely" clear in protecting freedom of speech, with an additional 40% considering it "somewhat" clear. In terms of the administration's willingness to defend a speaker's rights during controversies, 15% of Emory students believe this is either "very" or "extremely" likely, while 43% see it as "somewhat" likely. These percentages are the lowest since 2021.

FIGURE 5 Student Perceptions of the Administration

Legend:
— Extremely or very clear that the administration protects free speech on campus.
— Extremely or very likely that the administration would defend the speakers right to express their views.
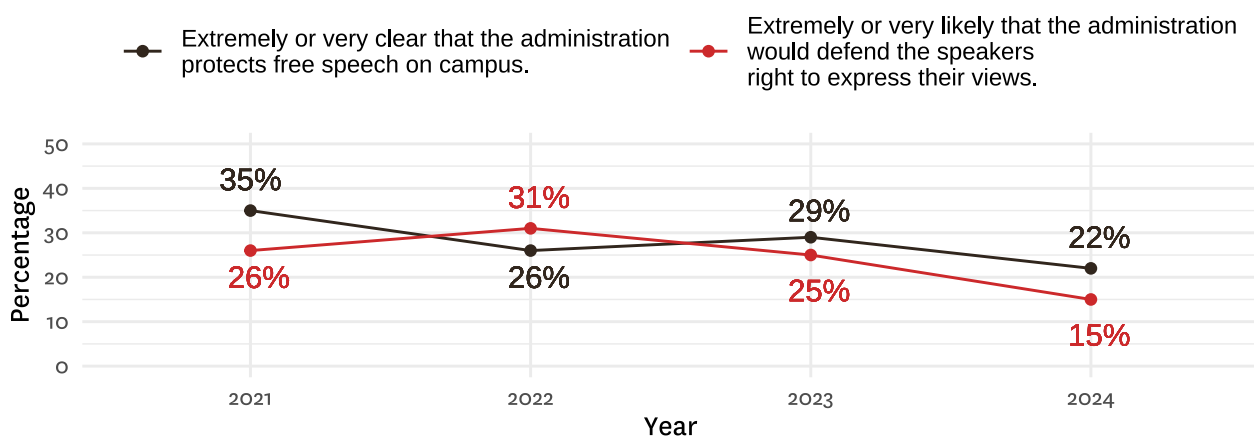
A 'GREEN LIGHT' SCHOOL WITH A LOT OF CONTROVERSY

FIRE awards Emory University our highest, "green light" rating, for maintaining no regulations on student expression that seriously imperil speech. As Emory explains in its Equal Opportunity and Discriminatory Harassment Policy:

> *Emory University is an inquiry-driven, ethically engaged, and diverse community dedicated to the ideals of free academic discourse in teaching, scholarship, and community service. Emory University abides by the values of academic freedom and is built on the assumption that contention among different views is positive and necessary for the expansion of knowledge, both for the University itself and as a training ground for society at large. Emory is committed to the widest possible scope for the free circulation of ideas.*

While we would encourage Emory to follow the lead of other green light institutions like the University of Virginia by adopting a free speech policy statement modeled after the University of Chicago's "Report of the Committee on Freedom of Expression," better known as the "Chicago Statement," to further affirm their commitment to free expression, we commend Emory for its green light rating.

However, the Emory administration frequently fails to live up to these values. Over the last five years, Emory has been involved in six speech controversies. In 2020, a group of Black female students sent an email with more than 40 co-signatories critical of an event featuring Black pro-life advocate Toni McFadden entitled, "Is Abortion a Black Issue?" organized by Emory Medical Students for Life. The email said the event would spread "misogyny, sexism, and racism" and "malevolent falsehoods" about reproductive health. The medical school administration released a statement largely in support of the ideas expressed in the email and asked the student group to postpone the event. The student group postponed the event but never rescheduled it.

In 2021, the university was involved in three separate speech controversies. First, the university administration publicly condemned law school professor Tim Terrell for using a racial slur in a class lecture when discussing a 2019 incident in which Paul Zwier was suspended for saying the slur when discussing civil rights protests during the 1960s in the South. Emory Law's dean released a statement saying he spoke with Terrell, who "acknowledged his error" and apologized to students, claiming that "words such as these hurt our community and cause frustration, pain, doubt, and exhaustion among its members, eroding the pursuit of knowledge to which our school aspires."

In October, the Student Bar Association (SBA) — the law school student government — denied recognition to the Emory Free Speech Forum, a student group in support of free expression, on the grounds that its presence on campus "will likely give rise to a precarious environment — one where the conversation might very easily devolve." Five months later, the SBA finally recognized the group after pressure from FIRE and other free speech advocates. And to round out the year, Emory administrators charged the Alpha Tau Omega fraternity with violating the school's housing policy for hanging a wreath and garlands on its front door and railings to celebrate the holidays. The university charged the fraternity with violating a policy that banned fraternities and sororities from hanging their own holiday decorations and required the groups to request that administrators do it for them.

In 2023, Emory placed Abeer AbouYabis, an assistant professor and hematologist, on administrative leave after she posted on X praising Hamas as "resistance fighters." The university also condemned her speech and later announced that she no longer worked at Emory.

This past spring, Emory Philosophy Department Chair Noelle McAfee and Economics Professor Caroline Fohlin were arrested and detained by Emory's police department for allegedly trespassing by participating in a pro-Palestinian encampment. Video shows McAfee and Fohlin being thrown to the ground by police. The two were charged with disorderly conduct, and Fohlin was also charged with simple battery against a police officer.

The university was penalized for its responses to each of the six speech controversies because it failed to adequately defend student and faculty expressive rights in each situation.

HOW CAN EMORY UNIVERSITY IMPROVE?

Although Emory has strong policies supporting free expression, it has not responded to free speech controversies in a speech-protective manner. One thing that Emory could do to improve its ranking and speech climate is defend free expression when speech controversies occur on campus. Properly defending free expression in the midst of controversy would improve Emory's ranking rather than penalize it.

Emory is among the ten worst schools for "Administrative Support" demonstrating that students know the administration's willingness to throw out its own policies. However, its strong policies suggest that the university aims to support free expression. If the university were to publicize its strong policies and respond to speech controversies in a speech-protective manner, it could build trust among students that the university supports free expression and, in turn, improve its "Administrative Support" ranking.

Similarly, the university could improve its "Comfort Expressing Ideas" ranking by displaying its support for free expression on campus and teaching students *why* free expression is important and valuable on campus. On that note, Emory could improve its "Disruptive Conduct" ranking, which is currently average, by teaching students which activities and behaviors are acceptable and unacceptable forms of protest, which may change the culture of the university toward less acceptance of violence and shutdowns. By creating a stronger culture of free expression and thereby improving its survey-based components, Emory could improve both its ranking and its campus culture.

Methodology

THE COLLEGE FREE SPEECH RANKINGS SURVEY was developed by FIRE and administered by College Pulse. No donors to the project took part in designing or conducting the survey. The survey was fielded from January 25 through June 17, 2024. These data come from a sample of 58,807 undergraduates who were then enrolled full-time in four-year degree programs at one of a list of 258 colleges and universities in the United States. The margin of error for the U.S. undergraduate population is +/- 0.4 of a percentage point, and the margin of error for college student sub-demographics ranges from 2-5 percentage points.

The initial sample was drawn from College Pulse's American College Student Panel™, which includes more than 850,000 verified undergraduate students and recent alumni from schools within a range of more than 1,500 two- and four-year colleges and universities in all 50 states. Panel members were recruited by a number of methods to help ensure student diversity in the panel population. These methods include web advertising, permission-based email campaigns, and partnerships with university-affiliated organizations. To ensure the panel reflects the diverse backgrounds and experiences of the American college population, College Pulse recruited panelists from a wide variety of institutions. The panel includes students attending large public universities, small private colleges, online universities, historically Black colleges such as Howard University, women's colleges such as Smith College, and religiously-affiliated colleges such as Brigham Young University.

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

College Pulse applies a post-stratification adjustment based on demographic distributions from multiple data sources, including the Current Population Survey (CPS), the National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS), and the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS). The "weight" rebalances the sample based on a number of important benchmark attributes, such as race, gender, class year, voter registration status, and financial aid status. The sample weighting is accomplished using an iterative proportional fitting (IFP) process that simultaneously balances the distributions of all variables to produce a representative sample of four year undergraduate students in the United States.

This year College Pulse introduced a similar post-stratification adjustment based on demographic distributions from multiple data sources, including the Current Population Survey (CPS), the National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS), and the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS). The "school universe weight" rebalances the sample based on a number of important benchmark attributes, such as race, gender, class year, voter registration status, and financial aid status. The sample weighting is accomplished using an iterative proportional fitting (IFP) process that simultaneously balances the distributions of all variables to produce a representative sample of four year undergraduate students from the 257 colleges and universities surveyed.

College Pulse also applies a post-stratification adjustment based on demographic distributions from the Current Population Survey (CPS), the National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS), and the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS). This "school weight" rebalances the sample from each individual school surveyed based on a number of important benchmark attributes, such as race, gender, class year, voter registration status, and financial aid status. The sample weighting is accomplished using an iterative proportional fitting (IFP) process that simultaneously balances the distributions of all variables to produce a representative sample of students at each individual school.

All weights are trimmed to prevent individual interviews from having too much influence on the final results and to ensure over-sampled population groups do not completely lose their voice.

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

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

FREE SPEECH RANKINGS

The College Free Speech Rankings are based on a composite score of 14 components, seven of which assess student perceptions of different aspects of the speech climate on their campus. The other seven assess behavior by administrators, faculty, and students regarding free expression on campus. Higher scores indicate a better campus climate for free speech and expression.

Student Perceptions

The student perception components include:

- **Comfort Expressing Ideas:** Students were asked how comfortable they feel expressing their views on controversial topics in five different campus settings (e.g., "in class," or "in the dining hall"). Options ranged from "very uncomfortable" to "very comfortable." Responses were coded so that higher scores indicate greater comfort expressing ideas. The maximum number of points is 20.

- **Self-Censorship:** Students were provided with a definition of self-censorship and then asked how often they self-censored in three different settings on campus (e.g., "in a classroom discussion"). Responses were coded so that higher scores indicate self-censoring less often. The maximum number of points is 15.[2]

- **Tolerance for Liberal Speakers:** Students were asked whether three speakers espousing views potentially offensive to conservatives (e.g., "The police are just as racist as the Klu[*sic*] Klux Klan.") should be allowed on campus, regardless of whether they personally agree with the

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2   The self-censorship component was introduced this year and is a composite score of responses to the three questions that are presented after self-censorship is defined. In previous years other questions were used to measure self-censorship and they were factored into the "Comfort Expressing Ideas" component.

speaker's message. Options ranged from "definitely should not allow this speaker" to "definitely should allow this speaker" and were coded so that higher scores indicate more tolerance of the speaker (i.e., more support for allowing the speaker on campus). The maximum number of points is 12.

- **Tolerance for Conservative Speakers:** Students were also asked whether three speakers espousing views potentially offensive to liberals (e.g., "Black Lives Matter is a hate group") should be allowed on campus, regardless of whether they personally agree with the speaker's message. Scoring was performed in the same manner as it was for the "Tolerance for Liberal Speakers" subcomponent, and the maximum number of points is 12.

- **Disruptive Conduct:** Students were asked how acceptable it is to engage in different methods of protest against a campus speaker, including "shouting down a speaker or trying to prevent them from speaking on campus," "blocking other students from attending a campus speech," and "using violence to stop a campus speech." Options ranged from "always acceptable" to "never acceptable" and were coded so that higher scores indicate less acceptance of disruptive conduct. The maximum number of points is 12.

- **Administrative Support:** Students were asked how clear it is their administration protects free speech on campus and how likely the administration would be to defend a speaker's right to express their views if a controversy over speech occurred on campus. For the administrative clarity question, options range from "not at all clear" to "extremely clear," and for the administrative controversy question, options range from "not at all likely" to "extremely likely." Options were coded so that higher scores indicate greater clarity and a greater likelihood of defending a speaker's rights. The maximum number of points is 10.

- **Openness:** Finally, students were asked which of 20 issues (e.g., "abortion," "freedom of speech," "gun control," and "racial inequality"), if any, are difficult to have open conversations about on campus. Responses were coded so that higher scores indicate fewer issues being selected. The maximum number of points is 20.

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

Campus Behavioral Metrics

Schools received bonus points — described in more detail below — for unequivocally supporting free expression in response to speech controversies by taking the following actions indicative of a positive campus climate for free speech:

- Supporting free expression during a deplatforming campaign, as recorded in FIRE's Campus Deplatforming database.[3]

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3   A full list of all the deplatforming incidents that impacted the 2025 College Free Speech Rankings is available here: https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1i5h8y1M4GFv5FQzyx6lLZqHj1oOa1YQJOYvozCqAzE8/edit?gid=1964386004#gid=1964386004. The full Campus Deplatforming database is available on FIRE's website at https://www.thefire.org/research-learn/campus-deplatforming-database.

- Supporting a scholar whose speech rights were threatened during a free speech controversy, as recorded in FIRE's Scholars Under Fire database.[4]

- Supporting students and student groups, as recorded in the 2025 College Free Speech Rankings behavioral metrics documentation that is available online.[5]

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

- Successfully deplatforming a speaker, as recorded in FIRE's Campus Deplatforming database.

- Sanctioning a scholar (e.g., placing under investigation, suspending, or terminating a scholar), as recorded in FIRE's Scholars Under Fire database.

- Sanctioning a student or student groups, as recorded in the 2025 College Free Speech Rankings behavioral metrics documentation that is available online.

To be included in this year's rankings, an incident that resulted in a bonus or penalty had to have been recorded by June 15, 2024, and had to have been fully assessed by FIRE's research staff, who determined whether the incident warranted inclusion.

In response to the encampment protests, FIRE and College Pulse reopened the 2025 College Free Speech Rankings survey on any campus with an encampment. This allowed us to collect survey data from students while the encampments were taking place.[6] That means that this year's College Free Speech Rankings provide a treasure trove of data on the evolving state of free expression at American colleges and universities.

FIRE's Spotlight ratings — our ratings of the written policies governing student speech at nearly 500 institutions of higher education in the United States — also factored into each school's overall score. Three substantive ratings are possible: "red light," "yellow light," and "green light." A "red light" rating indicates that the institution has at least one policy that both clearly and substantially restricts freedom of speech. A "yellow light" rating indicates that an institution maintains at least one policy that places a clear restriction on a more limited amount of protected expression, or one that, by virtue of vague wording, could too easily be used to restrict protected expression. A "green light" rating indicates that an institution maintains no policies that seriously threaten speech, although this rating does not indicate whether a college actively supports free expression.[7]

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4   A full list of all the scholar sanction attempts that impacted the 2025 College Free Speech Rankings is available here: https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1i5h8y1M4GFv5FQzyx6lLZqHj1oOa1YQJOYvozCqAzE8/edit?gid=1204583933#gid=1204583933. The full Scholars Under Fire database is available on FIRE's website at https://www.thefire.org/research-learn/scholars-under-fire.

5   All data reported in this section reflect the Students Under Fire database as of June 15, 2024. A full list of all the student sanction attempts that impacted the 2025 College Free Speech Rankings is available here: https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1i5h8y1M4GFv5FQzyx6lLZqHj1oOa1YQJOYvozCqAzE8/edit?gid=472255842#gid=472255842. The full Students Under Fire database is currently internal to FIRE but will be released in full in early 2025.

6   Schools were not penalized for how they handled the encampment protests. As this report demonstrates, the impact of the encampment protests on the campus speech climate is captured by responses to survey questions that ask students about their confidence in that their college administration protects speech rights on campus; their comfort expressing controversial political views; and, their frequency of self-censorship. Deplatformings that occurred during the encampment protests were also still included in the calculation of the 2025 College Free Speech Rankings.

7   See: Using FIRE's Spotlight Database. Available online: https://www.thefire.org/research-learn/using-fires-spotlight-database.

Finally, a fourth rating, "Warning," is assigned to a private college or university when its policies clearly and consistently state that it prioritizes other values over a commitment to free speech. "Warning" schools, therefore, were not ranked, and their overall scores are presented separately in this report.[8]

For this year's rankings, the cutoff date for assessing a school's speech code policies was June 15, 2024. Any changes to a school's Spotlight rating that occurred since then will be reflected in the 2026 College Free Speech Rankings.

Overall Score

To create an overall score for each college, we first summed the following student subcomponents: "Comfort Expressing Ideas," "Self-Censorship," "Mean Tolerance," "Disruptive Conduct," "Administrative Support," and "Openness." Then, we subtracted the "Tolerance Difference." By including the "Mean Tolerance" (as opposed to including "Tolerance for Liberal Speakers" and "Tolerance for Conservative Speakers" separately) and subtracting the "Tolerance Difference," the score accounted for the possibility that ideologically homogeneous student bodies may result in a campus that *appears* to have a strong culture of free expression but is actually hostile to the views of an ideological minority — whose views students may almost never encounter on campus.

Then, to further account for the speech climate on an individual campus, we incorporated behavioral components. A school earned two bonus points each time it unequivocally defended free expression during a campus speech controversy — a rating of "High Honors" for its public response to a speech controversy. For instance, when the student government at Arizona State University opposed a registered student group's invitation to Mohammed el-Kurd to speak on campus, and other members of the campus community petitioned the university to disinvite el-Kurd, a university spokesperson responded:

> *The university is committed to a safe environment where the free exchange of ideas can take place . . . As a public university, ASU adheres to the First Amendment and strives to ensure the fullest degree of intellectual freedom and free expression. All individuals and groups on campus have the right to express their opinions, whatever those opinions may be, as long as they do not violate the student code of conduct, student organization policies, and do not infringe on another student's individual rights.*

el-Kurd spoke successfully on campus, and we awarded ASU two bonus points.

A school earned one bonus point for responding to a speech controversy by making a public statement that strongly defends the First Amendment but is not as full-throated a defense as a "High Honors" statement. These statements received the rating of "Honors." For instance, at New York University, NYU Law Students for Palestine and Jewish Law Students for a Free Palestine called for the cancellation of an event featuring Robert Howse and Michal Cotler-Wunsh, because Cotler-Wunsh supports the occupation of Palestine. The event was co-sponsored by a student group, NYU's Jewish Law Students Association, as well as the president's office and the Bronfman Center for Jewish Life. NYU did not cancel the event, and protesters interrupted Cotler-Wunsh several times during his remarks before voluntarily leaving, allowing the event to resume and conclude successfully. The dean of the law school said the following in response:

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8   The Spotlight Database is available on FIRE's website: **https://www.thefire.org/resources/spotlight/**.

> *The principles of free speech and inquiry are complemented by debate, challenge and protest . . . While dissent may be vigorous, it must not interfere with the speaker's ability to communicate — which is exactly why, should those interrupters not have left on their own accord, they would be subject to discipline.*

We awarded one point for this response, which occurred in 2024, then we set this bonus to decrease by one-quarter of a point for each year that passes.

We also applied penalties when a school sanctioned a scholar, student, or student group, or deplatformed a speaker.

A school lost up to five points each time it sanctioned (e.g., investigated, suspended, or terminated) a scholar. When the sanction did not result in termination the school received a penalty of one point, which we set to decrease by one-quarter of a point each year: This meant penalizing a school a full point for sanctioning a scholar in 2024, three-quarters of a point for sanctioning a scholar in 2023, half a point for sanctioning a scholar in 2022, and one-quarter of a point for sanctioning a scholar in 2021. However, if the administration terminated the scholar, we subtracted three points, and if that scholar was tenured, we subtracted five points. We applied full penalties for termination for four years, then set them to decline by one-quarter of a point each year. So, a penalty for termination that occurred in 2020 has just now started to decay.

A school lost up to three points for sanctioning students or student groups. When the sanction did not result in expulsion, the revocation of acceptance, the denial or revoking of recognition, suspension, or termination of a student's campus employment (e.g, as a resident assistant) the school received a penalty of one point. Like with scholar sanctions that did not result in termination, we set these penalties to decrease by one-quarter of a point each year. If a school suspended a student or terminated their campus employment, we penalized it two points. We also set these penalties to decrease by one-quarter of a point each year. However, if a school denied or revoked a student group's recognition, expelled a student, or revoked their acceptance, it was penalized three points. We applied these penalties in full for four years, and then set them to decline by one-quarter of a point each year.

Regarding deplatforming attempts, a school was penalized one point if an invited speaker withdrew because of the controversy caused by their upcoming appearance on campus or if an event was postponed in response to a controversy. We set this penalty to decrease by a quarter of a point each year. Schools where an attempted disruption occurred received a penalty of two points. We applied this penalty for four years, then set it to decrease by one-quarter of a point each year. Schools with deplatforming attempts that resulted in event cancellations, preemptive rejections of speakers, removal of artwork on display, the revocation of a speaker's invitation, or a substantial event disruption were penalized three points. We applied these penalties in full for four years, then set them to decline by one-quarter of a point each year.

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

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

Topline Results

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

Response	Frequency	Percent
Not at all clear	45	16
Not very clear	67	23
Somewhat clear	116	40
Very clear	49	17
Extremely clear	14	5

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

Response	Frequency	Percent
Not at all likely	36	12
Not very likely	86	30
Somewhat likely	126	43
Very likely	34	12
Extremely likely	7	3

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

Publicly disagreeing with a professor about a controversial political topic.

Response	Frequency	Percent
Very uncomfortable	95	33
Somewhat uncomfortable	99	34
Somewhat comfortable	79	27
Very comfortable	18	6

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

Response	Frequency	Percent
Very uncomfortable	65	22
Somewhat uncomfortable	111	38
Somewhat comfortable	93	32
Very comfortable	22	8

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

Response	Frequency	Percent
Very uncomfortable	67	23
Somewhat uncomfortable	104	36
Somewhat comfortable	100	34
Very comfortable	20	7

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

Response	Frequency	Percent
Very uncomfortable	50	17
Somewhat uncomfortable	122	42
Somewhat comfortable	101	35
Very comfortable	18	6

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

Response	Frequency	Percent
Very uncomfortable	111	38
Somewhat uncomfortable	94	32
Somewhat comfortable	73	25
Very comfortable	13	4

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

Response	Frequency	Percent
Never	35	12
Rarely	115	39
Occasionally, once or twice a month	92	32
Fairly often, a couple times a week	31	11
Very often, nearly every day	19	7

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

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

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

Response	Frequency	Percent
Never	15	5
Rarely	92	32
Occasionally, once or twice a month	112	38
Fairly often, a couple times a week	52	18
Very often, nearly every day	20	7

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

Response	Frequency	Percent
Never	33	11
Rarely	90	31
Occasionally, once or twice a month	96	33
Fairly often, a couple times a week	48	17
Very often, nearly every day	24	8

How often do you self-censor during classroom discussions?

Response	Frequency	Percent
Never	22	7
Rarely	85	29
Occasionally, once or twice a month	105	36
Fairly often, a couple times a week	57	20
Very often, nearly every day	22	8

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

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

Response	Frequency	Percent
Always acceptable	15	5
Sometimes acceptable	90	31
Rarely acceptable	114	39
Never acceptable	72	25

Blocking other students from attending a campus speech.

Response	Frequency	Percent
Always acceptable	9	3
Sometimes acceptable	53	18
Rarely acceptable	110	38
Never acceptable	119	41

Using violence to stop a campus speech.

Response	Frequency	Percent
Always acceptable	7	2
Sometimes acceptable	37	13
Rarely acceptable	66	23
Never acceptable	182	62

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

Transgender people have a mental disorder.

Response	Frequency	Percent
Definitely should not allow this speaker	133	46
Probably should not allow this speaker	93	32
Probably should allow this speaker	45	15
Definitely should allow this speaker	20	7

Abortion should be completely illegal.

Response	Frequency	Percent
Definitely should not allow this speaker	100	34
Probably should not allow this speaker	82	28
Probably should allow this speaker	85	29
Definitely should allow this speaker	24	8

Black Lives Matter is a hate group.

Response	Frequency	Percent
Definitely should not allow this speaker	127	44
Probably should not allow this speaker	85	29
Probably should allow this speaker	56	19
Definitely should allow this speaker	23	8

The Catholic church is a pedophilic institution.

Response	Frequency	Percent
Definitely should not allow this speaker	50	17
Probably should not allow this speaker	96	33
Probably should allow this speaker	119	41
Definitely should allow this speaker	26	9

The police are just as racist as the Ku Klux Klan.

Response	Frequency	Percent
Definitely should not allow this speaker	50	17
Probably should not allow this speaker	103	35
Probably should allow this speaker	93	32
Definitely should allow this speaker	45	15

Children should be able to transition without parental consent.

Response	Frequency	Percent
Definitely should not allow this speaker	27	9
Probably should not allow this speaker	86	29
Probably should allow this speaker	132	45
Definitely should allow this speaker	46	16

Collateral damage in Gaza is justified for the sake of Israeli security.

Response	Frequency	Percent
Definitely should not allow this speaker	80	28
Probably should not allow this speaker	87	30
Probably should allow this speaker	97	33
Definitely should allow this speaker	26	9

From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free.

Response	Frequency	Percent
Definitely should not allow this speaker	34	12
Probably should not allow this speaker	68	23
Probably should allow this speaker	117	40
Definitely should allow this speaker	71	24

Some students say it can be difficult to have conversations about certain issues on campus. Which of the following issues, if any, would you say are difficult to have an open and honest conversation about on your campus? [Presented in randomized order with none of the above always listed last]

Abortion

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	200	69
Yes	91	31

Affirmative action

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	190	65
Yes	101	35

China

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	246	85
Yes	44	15

Climate change

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	260	89
Yes	31	11

Crime

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	243	83
Yes	48	16

Economic inequality

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	211	73
Yes	79	27

Freedom of speech

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	225	77
Yes	66	23

Gay rights

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	241	83
Yes	49	17

Gender inequality

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	237	81
Yes	54	19

Gun control

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	230	79
Yes	61	21

Hate speech

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	203	70
Yes	88	30

Immigration

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	206	71
Yes	85	29

The Israeli/Palestinian conflict

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	91	31
Yes	200	69

The Presidential Election

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	219	75
Yes	72	25

Police misconduct

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	178	61
Yes	112	39

Racial inequality

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	195	67
Yes	95	33

Religion

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	218	75
Yes	72	25

Sexual assault

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	191	66
Yes	100	34

The Supreme Court

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	255	88
Yes	35	12

Transgender rights

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	221	76
Yes	70	24

None of the above

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	269	92
Yes	22	8

Which of the following groups on your campus should be able to register as student organizations and receive student activity fees? [Presented in randomized order with none of the above always listed last]

Asian student groups

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	67	23
Yes	222	76

Black or African American student groups

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	72	25
Yes	217	75

Hispanic/Latino student groups

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	70	24
Yes	219	75

Sororities or fraternities

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	106	36
Yes	183	63

LGBTQ+ student groups

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	72	25
Yes	217	75

Christian student groups

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	77	26
Yes	212	73

Jewish student groups

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	72	25
Yes	217	75

Muslim/Islamic student groups.

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	73	25
Yes	216	74

Hindu student groups.

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	76	26
Yes	213	73

Atheist/agnostic/secular student groups

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	84	29
Yes	204	70

Republican student groups

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	98	34
Yes	191	66

Democratic student groups.

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	88	30
Yes	201	69

Politically conservative student groups

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	101	35
Yes	188	65

Politically liberal student groups

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	91	31
Yes	198	68

Black Lives Matter student groups

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	81	28
Yes	208	72

Pro-Israeli student groups

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	130	45
Yes	159	54

Pro-Palestinian student groups

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	101	35
Yes	188	65

Other student groups

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	125	43
Yes	164	56

None of the above

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	273	94
Yes	16	6

How often, if at all, do you hide your political beliefs from your professors in an attempt to get a better grade?

Response	Frequency	Percent
Never	83	28
Rarely	98	34
Occasionally	58	20
Fairly often, a couple times a week	25	8
Very often, nearly every day	24	8

Have you ever been involved in publicly calling out, punishing, or "canceling" someone or a group for inappropriate statements or actions?

Response	Frequency	Percent
Yes	35	12
No	253	87

Thinking of the last incident where someone was publicly called out, punished, or "canceled" for their statements or actions, would you say the consequence or impact on the person was...

Response	Frequency	Percent
Too lenient	41	14
About right	149	51
Too harsh	98	34

How often, if ever, have you personally been offended by perspectives shared by peers or classmates when in the classroom?

Response	Frequency	Percent
Never	36	12
Rarely	157	54
Occasionally	70	24
Fairly often, a couple times a week	20	7
Very often, nearly every day	5	2

From what you know about the situation in the Middle East, do your sympathies lie more with the Israelis or more with the Palestinians?

Response	Frequency	Percent
Israelis	33	11
Palestinians	127	44
Both equally	65	22
Neither	11	4
Don't know	51	17

Regardless of your overall feelings toward the Israelis and the Palestinians, who do you think is more responsible for the 2023 outbreak of violence in the Middle East: Israel or Hamas?

Response	Frequency	Percent
Israel	66	23
Hamas	87	30
Both equally	54	18
Don't know	82	28

How often do you attend church or religious services?

Response	Frequency	Percent
Never	87	30
Less than once a year	38	13
Once or twice a year	49	17
Several times a year	49	17
Once a month	23	8
2-3 times a month	7	2
About weekly	12	4
Weekly	16	5
Several times a week	6	2

Are you currently a member of the armed services?

Response	Frequency	Percent
Yes	3	1
No	282	97

Are you a veteran of the armed services?

Response	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Yes	2	1	1
No	283	97	99

How often would you say that you feel anxious?

Response	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Never	3	1	6
Less than half the time	22	8	47
About half the time	13	5	28
Most of the time, nearly every day	9	3	18
Always	1	0	2

How often would you say that you feel lonely or isolated?

Response	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Never	11	4	16
Less than half the time	29	10	44
About half the time	15	5	22
Most of the time, nearly every day	10	3	15
Always	2	1	3

How often would you say that you feel like you have no time for yourself?

Response	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Never	5	2	10
Less than half the time	14	5	28
About half the time	22	8	43
Most of the time, nearly every day	8	3	16
Always	1	1	3

How often would you say that you feel depressed?

Response	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Never	17	6	25
Less than half the time	22	7	33
About half the time	20	7	29
Most of the time, nearly every day	3	1	4
Always	6	2	9

How often would you say that you feel stressed, frustrated, or overwhelmed?

Response	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Never	1	0	3
Less than half the time	13	5	24
About half the time	20	7	36
Most of the time, nearly every day	10	3	18
Always	11	4	20

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