

**Academic Freedom Survey, 2023**  
**Political Studies Association of Ireland**

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## Summary

Based on this data, the state of academic freedom for students of politics appears to be generally positive. As the topline self-assessment figure below shows, almost 62% of colleagues believe their academic freedom to be protected between 8 and 10 on a 10-point scale.

Digging deeper, colleagues report very little direct pressure on their teaching or research, with over 93% of respondents reporting no direct pressure to alter their work in either sphere. Indirect pressure is reported at a higher level, particularly when it comes to research, with 22% of colleagues reporting some indirect pressure. Actors identified are varied, and free responses did not reveal particular patterns, although some colleagues identified pressure to respond to funding calls and meet priorities of funders. It is not clear that this is an infringement on academic freedom, but perhaps bears investigation by PSAI to explore ways to support members.

The classroom environment appears generally to protect discussion by the lecturer, with 85% of respondents reporting not recalling avoiding discussing particular issues in the classroom. One respondent reported this occurring “pretty regularly” so PSAI may consider offering support generally should this person wish to avail of it. The main concern arising from the classroom relates to emerging norms encouraging the recording of lectures. More than 50% of respondents find this “very” or “quite” worrying on a 4-point scale. Only about 18% find this “not at all worrying”. This is an area that PSAI may consider discussing and making recommendations on.

In the institutional realm, colleagues in general feel supported by their direct line manager, again with one colleague clearly facing challenges. Moving up the hierarchy, however, the results are more concerning. Fewer than 1 in 10 respondents are entirely confident that their institution’s senior management would support them should their academic freedom face a threat. The same proportion are “fairly” or “entirely” confident that their institution’s senior management would **not** support them. More than half of respondents are unsure if their institution’s senior management would support them.

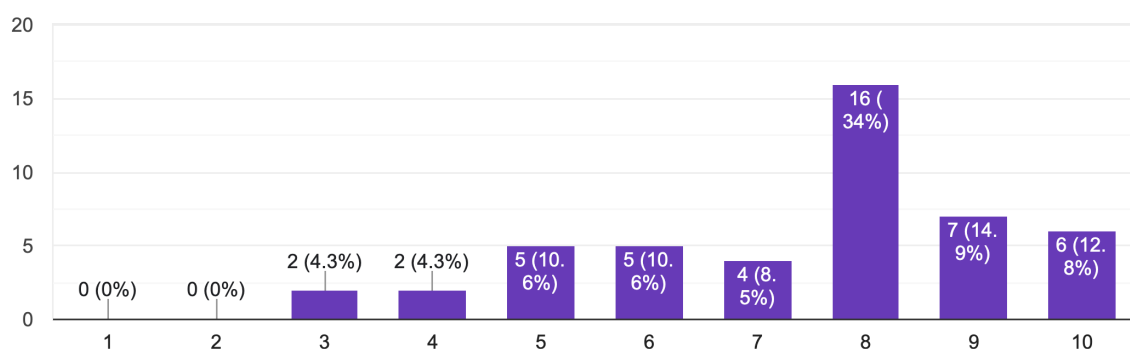
In sum:

- Colleagues in general feel very little direct pressure to alter their research or teaching.
- The classroom environment appears to be well-protected, **however** colleagues raised concerns about the increasingly common expectation that lecture materials should be recorded.
- Colleagues in general feel well-supported by their direct line manager (e.g. head of school), **however**, colleagues express much less trust in their institution's senior management.

After providing details about the respondent pool, the remainder of this report provides graphs of the raw data in areas of teaching, research, and institution & management. Questions about the survey can be directed to the current PSAI academic freedom officers at [alexander.dukalskis@ucd.ie](mailto:alexander.dukalskis@ucd.ie).

On a scale of 0 to 10, with 0 being not at all and 10 being completely, how well protected do you feel that your own academic freedom is protected?

47 responses

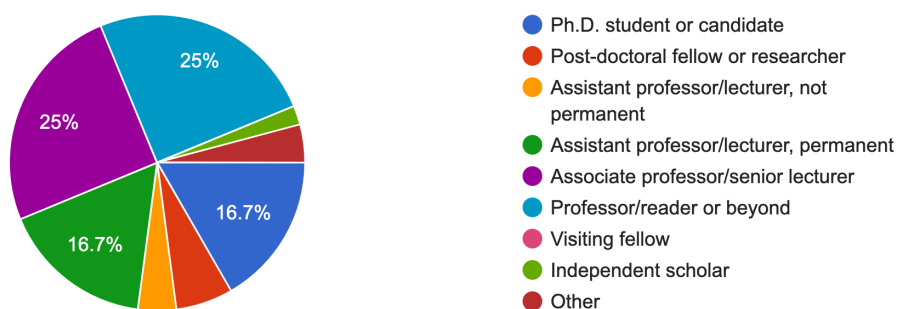


## Respondents

This survey was offered to members of the Political Studies Association of Ireland during the summer of 2023. Forty-eight members responded, 50% of whom were at the rank of associate professor and beyond, 50% from assistant professor to Ph.D. student. Approximately 160 members were contacted for a response.

Which best describes your professional position?

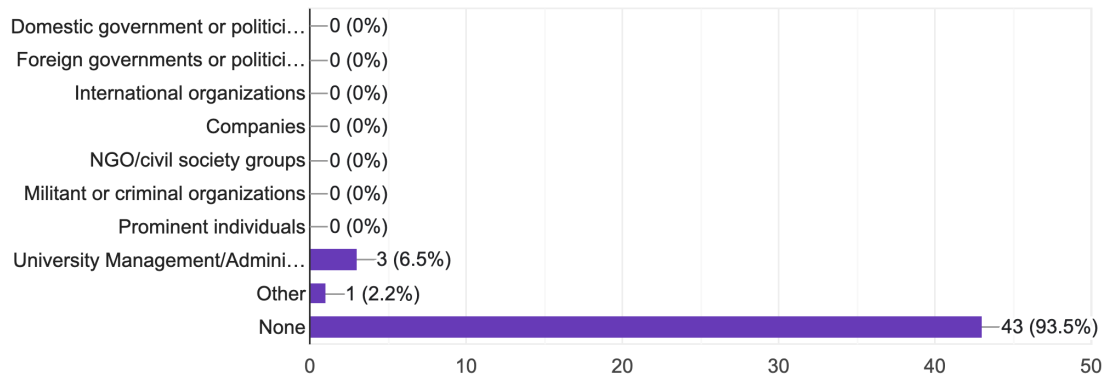
48 responses



## Teaching

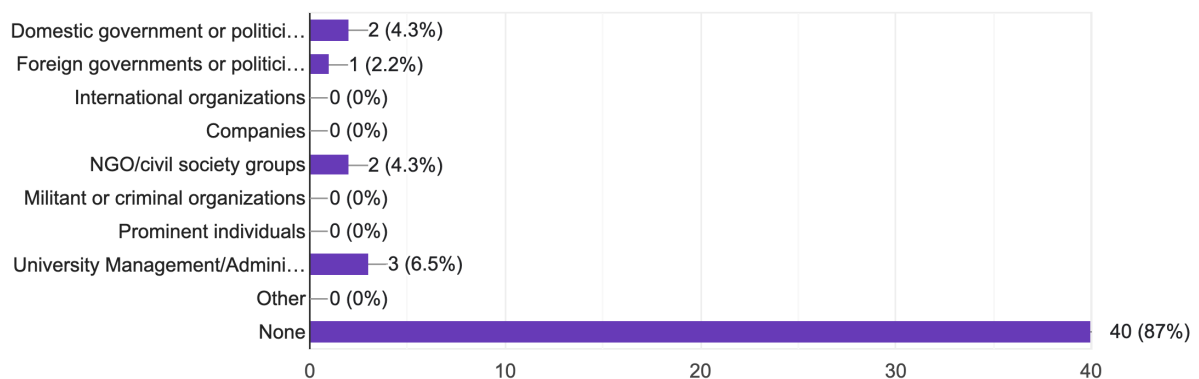
In the past 12 months, have you experienced direct pressure from any of the following to alter the content of your teaching? Click all that apply.

46 responses



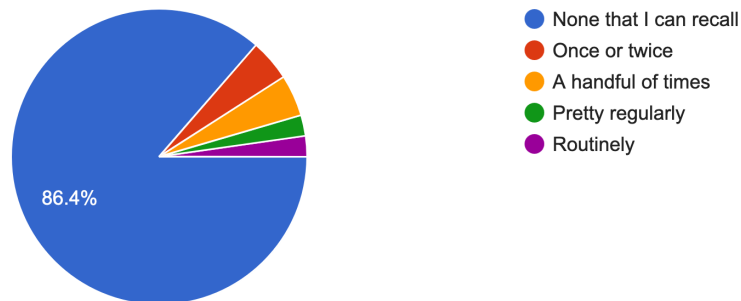
In the past 12 months, have you perceived indirect pressure from any of the following to alter the content of your teaching? Click all that apply.

46 responses



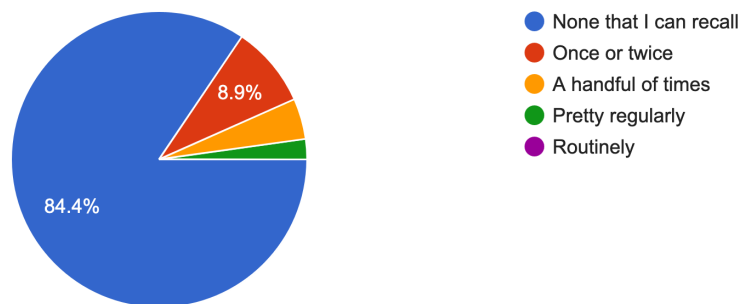
In the past 12 months, how often have you avoided discussing content in the classroom for fear of scrutiny by someone from within your school or department?

44 responses



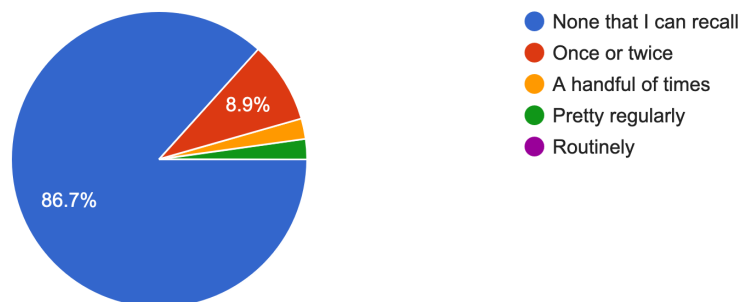
In the past 12 months, how often have you avoided discussing content in the classroom for fear of scrutiny by someone from outside your school or department but within your university/institution?

45 responses



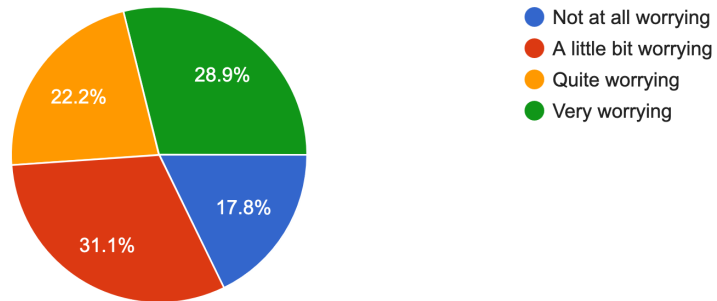
In the past 12 months, how often have you avoided discussing content in the classroom for fear of scrutiny by someone from completely outside your university/institution?

45 responses



For you personally, the increasingly common expectation that lecture material should be recorded is:

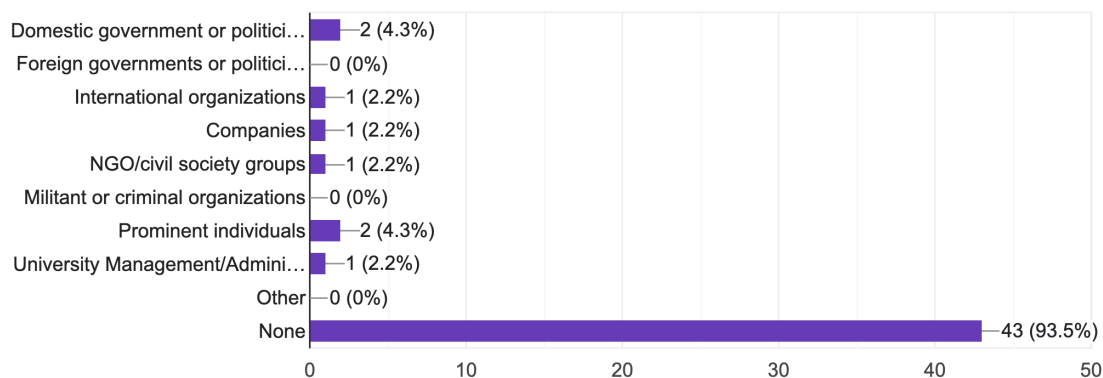
45 responses



## Research

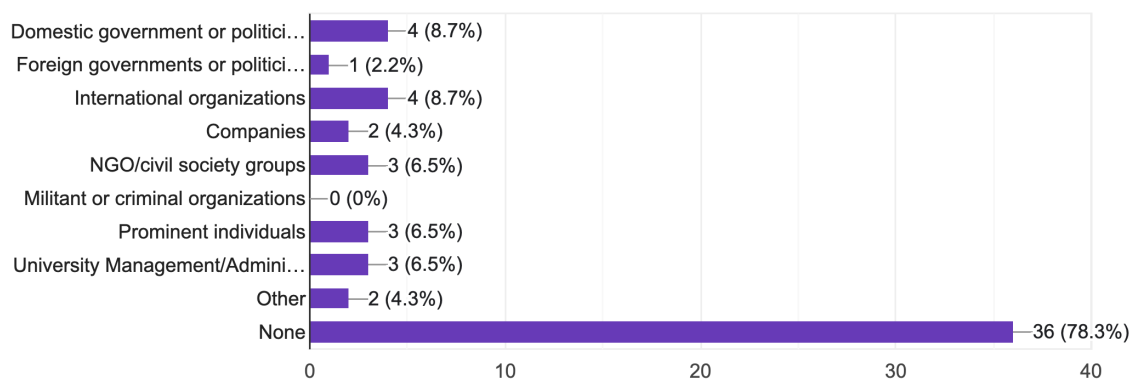
In the past 12 months, have you experienced direct pressure from any of the following to alter the content of your research? Click all that apply.

46 responses



In the past 12 months, have you perceived indirect pressure from any of the following to alter the content of your research? Click all that apply.

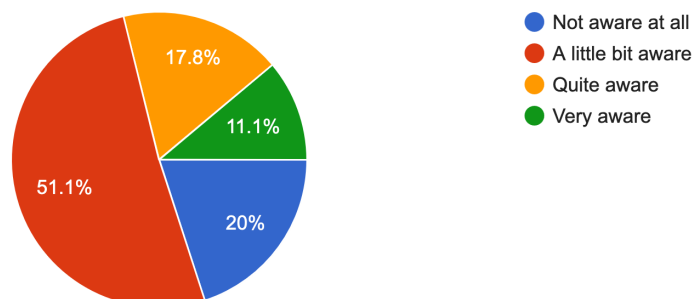
46 responses



## Institution & Management

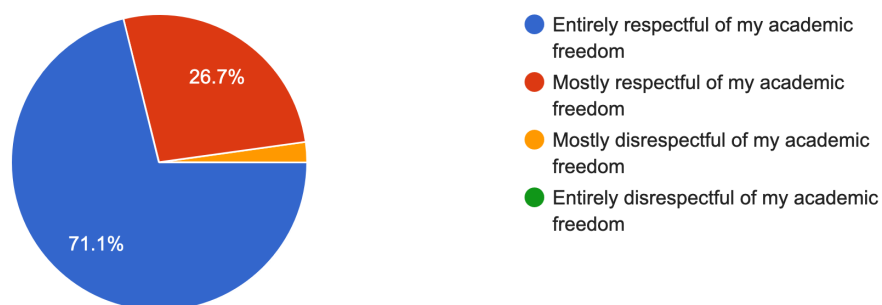
How aware are you of the regulations and procedures at your institution designed to protect academic freedom?

45 responses



My direct line manager (e.g. head of school for most faculty; supervisor for Ph.D. students and post-docs) is:

45 responses



If I perceived that my own academic freedom was under threat, I am:

46 responses

