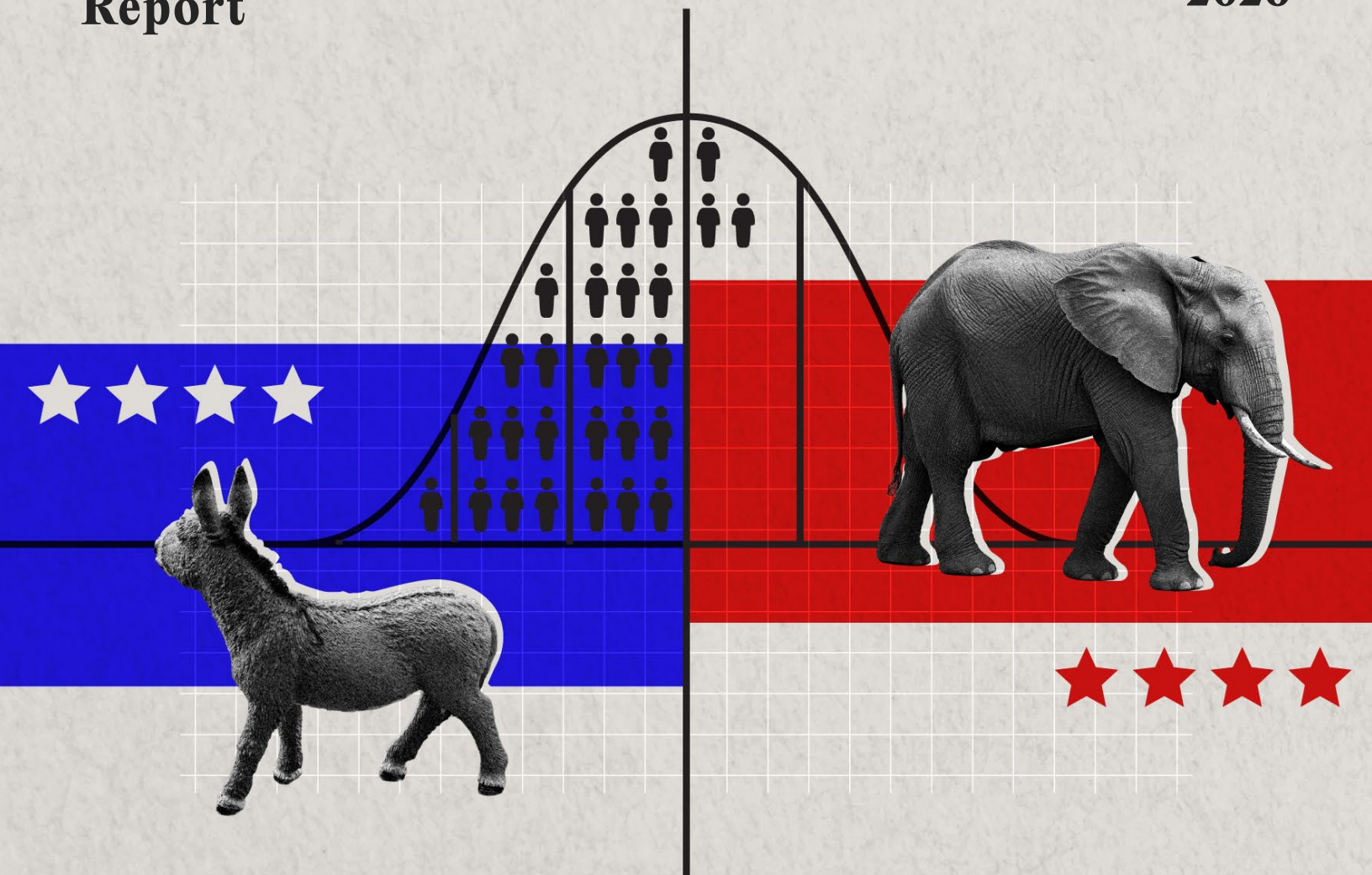




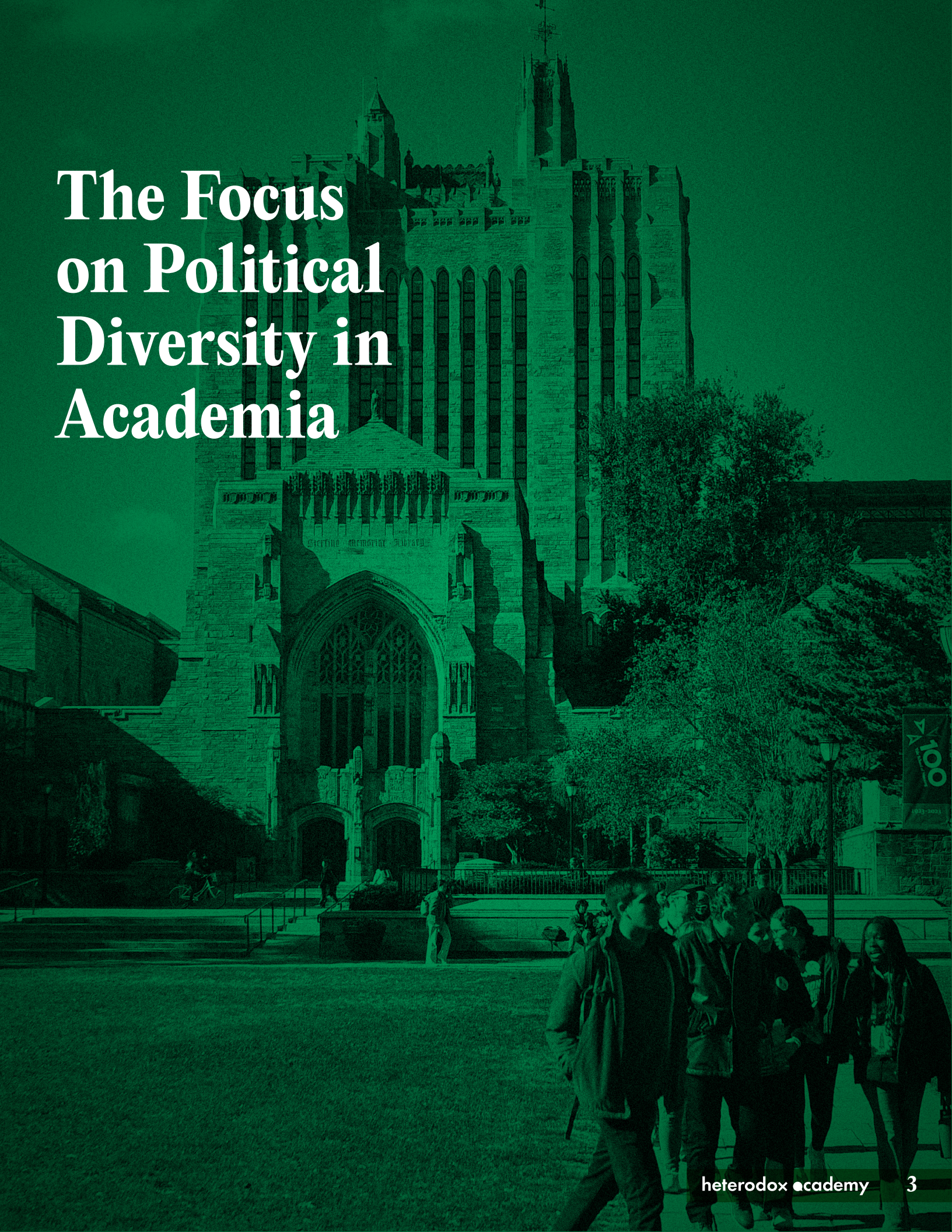
How Politically Diverse Are University Faculty?

A Review of Studies on the Diversity of Political Viewpoints Among University Faculty

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The Focus on Political Diversity in Academia



Viewpoint diversity is a critical component of an intellectually robust academic culture. Without an array of competing scholarly views and theories, scholars risk falling prey to confirmation bias, motivated reasoning, and conformity. Viewpoint homogeneity among faculty risks narrowing discourse to a few choice topics and approaches, and bucking conformity becomes more difficult the greater the imbalance. All of these tendencies work against the truth-seeking mission of the university.

Of many potential sources of viewpoint diversity among the professoriate, diversity of political and party affiliation has long attracted the attention of scholars and the general public. Because political leanings reflect underlying values and beliefs,

which can subsequently influence every stage of the scholarly truth-seeking process (Duarte et al., [2015](#); Borjas & Breznau, [2026](#)), the political leanings of professors may have important implications for the socio-political questions professors ask, the answers they explore, and the ways they teach and train students. As early as the mid-20th century, a notable leftward lean among faculty had been empirically documented (Lazarsfeld & Thielens, [1958](#); Ladd & Lipset, [1976](#)). This trend was quite stable throughout the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s (Magness & Waugh, [2022](#)).

However, in recent years, commentators from both within and outside of the academy have expressed growing concern that universities are now overwhelmingly dominated by left-leaning faculty (Jussim et al., [2023](#); Manhattan Institute, [2025](#)), particularly relative to the general American population (in which only 25% of people consider themselves “liberal”; Gallup, [2025](#)). Notably, political asymmetry within the academy is not by itself an indication of bias in the pipeline if, for instance, liberals are more drawn to academic careers than conservatives. However, if the asymmetry is wider now than in the past, it might be important to examine why that is the case, particularly given that academics rely on peer evaluation for selection and promotion. Moreover, critics allege that this imbalance of political diversity leads legitimate viewpoints and lines of inquiry to receive insufficient attention, not on the basis of merit but on palatability.

While critics of the academic status quo sometimes cite ratios of Democrats to Republicans as evidence that conservative faculty are an “endangered species” on university campuses (Kahn, [2021](#)), others see such allegations as methodologically unsound exaggerations that provoke unwarranted attacks on higher education (for example, Siraganian, [2025](#); Tyson & Oreskes, [2020](#)).

To make sense of these competing claims about faculty political diversity, we undertook a critical review of recent faculty surveys and other research that assessed the political ideologies and party affiliations of faculty in the United States.

We approached this work with two research questions in mind:

1. What does the literature tell us about the distribution of faculty political leanings?
2. What are the strengths and limitations of the research?

This work is descriptive in nature. For those concerned with viewpoint diversity in academia — whether for or against any particular conceptualization of viewpoint diversity — establishing a shared understanding of the current distribution of faculty political leanings is a key foundation for an informed discussion on the topic. We do not make normative claims here about what the exact distribution of faculty political leanings *should* be. Rather, we describe the information that is available, assess the strengths and weaknesses of the evidence, and summarize the larger picture of the political diversity of U.S. faculty to help readers draw informed conclusions about what this body of research shows.



1 Studies of faculty political diversity consistently find that **left-leaning faculty outnumber right-leaning faculty**.

2 Since 2012, studies have found widely varying ratios of liberal to conservative faculty, ranging **between 2:1 (Honeycutt, Stevens, & Kaufmann, 2023) and 82:1 (Xu, 2022)**. This shows substantial variability across studies in the magnitude of the political imbalance (likely influenced to some extent by methodological features of the studies). Still, **nearly all studies point in the same direction**: liberal faculty outnumber conservative faculty.

3 There is considerable variation **across academic disciplines**, with greater shares of left-leaning faculty found in the **humanities and some social sciences** compared to economics, business, political science, and STEM fields.

4 Across studies, **sizable minorities of faculty identified as moderate or were unaffiliated with a major political party**.

5 A narrow focus on **ratios of only Democrats to Republicans (or liberals to conservatives) obscures the true distribution of political viewpoints in academia** by overlooking faculty who are moderate or apolitical and may exacerbate perceptions of polarization within the academy.

6 There are **notable limitations to much of the extant research**: low response rates, unmeasured non-response bias, imperfect measures of political leaning, and the focus on only particular subsets of faculty (e.g., those within elite institutions or specific disciplinary areas), rather than the full population of faculty. **The most rigorous and comprehensive studies tend to produce the lowest estimates of political imbalance**.

Review Scope and Key Definitions

We limited our search for research on faculty political leanings to work dating back to 2012, a year that seems to be a meaningful inflection point in conversations around viewpoint diversity, and an early stage of the current cultural discourse (Rozado, [2022](#); al-Gharbi, [2023b](#)). It was around this time that HxA co-founders Jonathan Haidt, Chris Martin, and Nicholas Rosenkranz each published articles on the lack of viewpoint diversity within their respective fields, and other academics took an interest in politics within the academy (e.g., Inbar & Lammers, [2012](#)).

Although research on the political views of faculty began long before 2012 (Gross & Simmons, [2007](#) is still one of the most rigorous and widely cited; others include Shields & Dunn, [2016](#); Hamilton & Hargens, [1993](#); Lazarsfeld & Thielens, [1958](#); Ladd & Lipset, [1976](#); Gross & Simmons, [2014](#) for a summary), by the mid-2010s, the issue of viewpoint diversity within the academy seemed to have taken on a new cultural and political salience.

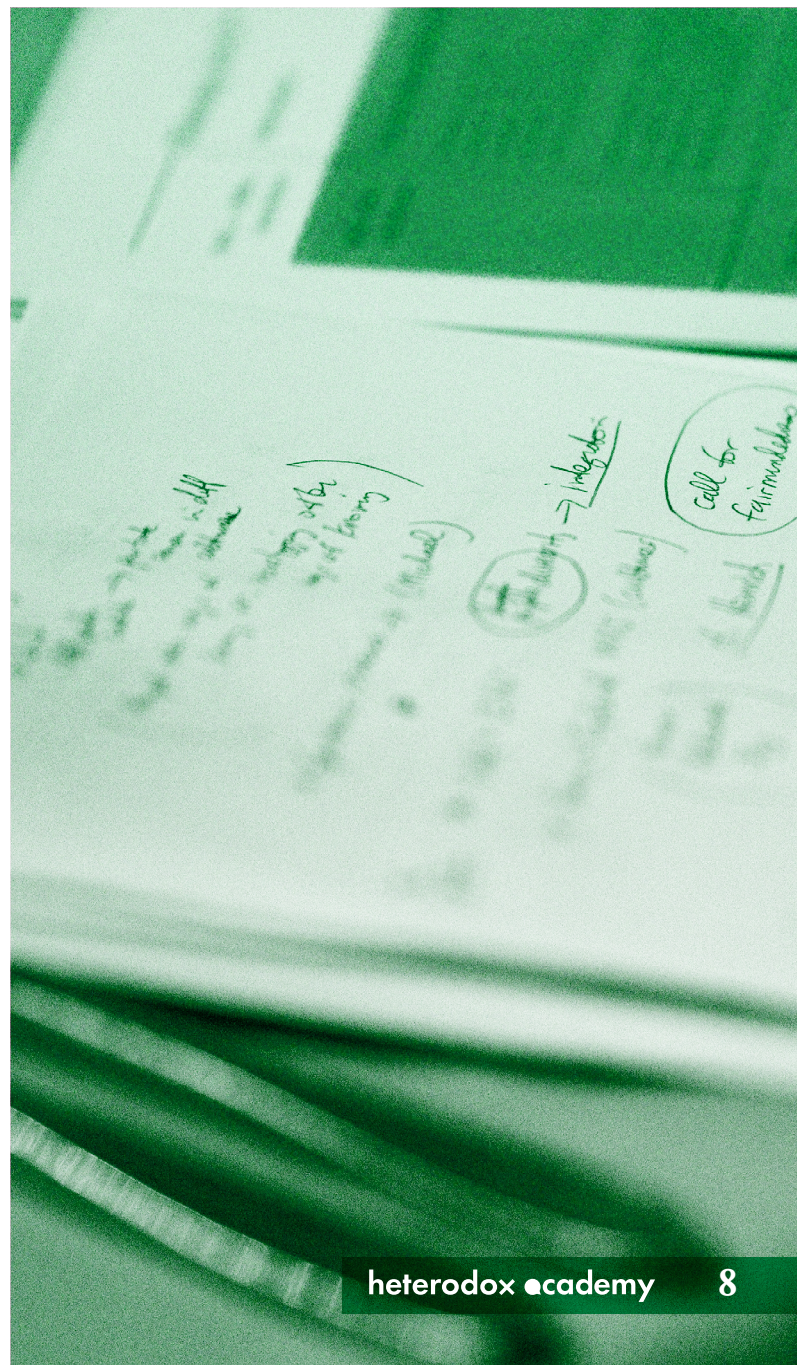
We focused on studies that assessed faculty political leanings using either self-reported measures of political views and party affiliations, or observed behavior such as voter registration, political donations, and social media activity.

There are over 4,000 institutions of higher education in the United States, according to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, [n.d.](#)), an estimated 1.5 million faculty (NCES, [2024](#)), and hundreds of academic disciplines. In keeping with this, our definition of the faculty population was broad, including tenure-line and non-tenure-line faculty at any two- or four-year degree-granting institution in the US, across any discipline.

Additionally, though party affiliation (such as Democrat or Republican) and political ideology may not always map cleanly onto one another, we

considered it reasonable for the purpose of this review to discuss Democratic faculty together with left- and liberal-identifying faculty, and Republican faculty with right- and conservative-identifying faculty. For ease, we use “political leanings” as a shorthand for both party affiliation and political ideology.

In this review, we describe the common methodological approaches, populations, and results across studies. Appendix 1 presents a summary table of each study included in our review, including detail on each of these dimensions.





How Faculty Political Diversity is Studied

Our review included 24 studies exploring faculty political leanings published between 2012 and Fall 2025. About half of the studies were published in 2023 or later, reflecting the increased attention to political diversity within the academy. While many of these studies examined faculty political leanings as an explicit research question, a handful gathered information on party affiliation or political ideology as part of a battery of demographic questions.

Self-report surveys were the most common method of gathering data on the political leanings of faculty, with 16 of the 24 studies gathering information on political leanings through surveys administered directly to faculty. The remaining studies assessed political leanings indirectly through voter registration data, federal election campaign donation data, or

social media activity as indicators of faculty political leanings (see *Figure 1* for a summary).

Of the 24 studies included in our review, 14 studies reported political ideology on a spectrum from liberal to conservative or left to right. Seven studies reported affiliation with a political party (e.g., Democrat, Republican, etc.) Three studies reported both political ideology and party affiliation. Studies assessing party affiliation often presented the ratio of registered Democrats to Republicans as a key finding, but these topline takeaways typically exclude substantial portions of the sample who were unregistered or whose party affiliation could not be determined. We discuss this in more detail in the [Contextual Limitations](#) section.

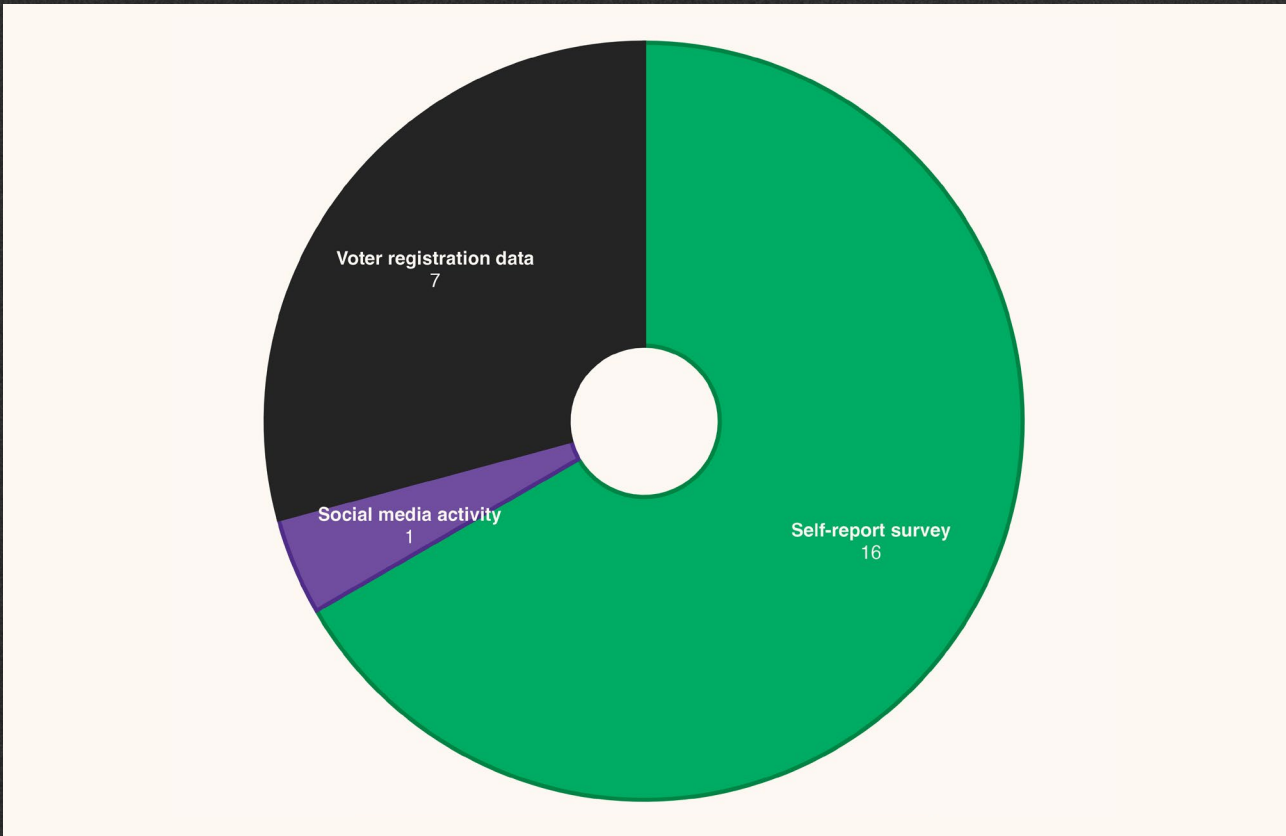


Figure 1. Studies of faculty political leanings by data source.



The Subset of Faculty Being Studied

We found that most studies of faculty political leanings focused on specific sub-groups of faculty based on one or more institutional and professional attributes, such as institution type and ranking, academic discipline, and tenure-line status. Moreover, studies tended to restrict their focus in predictable ways.

When studies restricted their population according to institutional prestige, it was in the direction of elite

institutions, with eight studies focusing on a single elite institution (conducted in each case by members of that institution), and another seven limited to “top-ranked,” “elite,” or research-intensive institutions. Of the six studies that restricted their population according to tenure-line status, all focused on full-time, tenure-line faculty (rather than non-tenure-line or adjunct faculty). When there was a departmental focus, it tended to be on undergraduate-facing departments (i.e., to the exclusion of professional schools), and all surveys had at least some representation from the social sciences or humanities (as opposed to fields in business or STEM, which were sometimes excluded).

Several studies restricted their population on multiple dimensions, such as Langbert and Stevens’ (2021) study of voter registration among tenure-line faculty in a selection of social science, humanities, and STEM fields at top-ranked universities, as well as Koss’s (2021) survey of tenure-line social science faculty primarily at Association of American University (AAU) institutions.

Even among the most comprehensive surveys, restrictions in the study population tended to follow these trends. For example, the Foundation for Individual Rights and Expression’s (FIRE) faculty survey (2024) targeted undergraduate-facing faculty at 55 elite private universities and public flagship institutions, and Wright et al.’s (2025) survey was administered to undergraduate-facing faculty at R1 institutions.

Surveys conducted by the Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) are notable in their efforts to obtain results broadly representative of the American professoriate. Results are weighted when possible to reflect the general faculty population. For this reason, HERI results may provide the most broadly informative insights on faculty political leanings.



Yes, Faculty Lean Left, But Unaffiliated and Moderate Faculty Change the Big Picture of Polarization in the Academy

The assertion that the academy leans left is overall supported by the data. Nearly all studies in our review reveal a pronounced leftward lean among faculty, regardless of the faculty population, institutional focus, metric of political leaning, or data source.

Figure 2 and *Figure 3* summarize the results of studies assessing political ideology and party affiliation, respectively. To allow for comparisons between studies that used slightly different measurements (e.g., a 3-point vs. a 5-point measure of political ideology), we recoded results on political ideology into four categories (Left, Moderate, Right, and Other) and results on party affiliation into four categories (Democrat, Independent/Third Party, Republican, and Unknown; “leaners” were grouped with the party toward which they leaned, following Pew Research Center, [2015](#)). Each figure includes additional detail on study design (e.g., sample size, use of weighting, features of the sample population) to give readers an impression of the extent to which findings can be generalized or compared across studies.

Surveys that undertook considerable effort to obtain results representative of the American professoriate all identified a considerable left-leaning slant among faculty. HERI’s 2016-2017 Faculty Survey results from over 20,000 faculty respondents were weighted to produce results representative of full-time faculty who taught undergraduates at four-year colleges and universities (Stolzenberg et al., [2019](#)). The survey found that about 60% of faculty identified as “liberal” or “far left”, 28% identified as “middle of the road”, and 12% identified as “conservative.” Results from the 2013-2014 administration of the HERI Faculty Survey found nearly identical results (Eagan et al., [2014](#)). Results from the most recent 2022-2023 administration of the HERI Faculty Survey also indicate a left-leaning professoriate; however, unlike prior HERI results, the most recent survey results are unweighted due to low institutional participation (HERI, [2024](#)).

FIRE’s large 2024 survey of undergraduate-facing faculty at 55 elite private colleges and flagship state universities found that about 62% of respondents identified as a Democrat, 13% identified as a Republican, and 24% said they were something else (Honeycutt, [2024](#)). In addition to being asked about party affiliation, respondents were asked about political ideology. Responses followed a similar distribution, with about 59% identifying as “far left,” “liberal,” or “slightly liberal,” about 18% identifying as “moderate,” and 16% identifying as “slightly conservative” or “conservative.”

Institution-specific surveys also point to a left-leaning professoriate. In 2024, 62% of respondents in a survey at Duke University identified themselves as either “somewhat liberal” or “very liberal,” 24% as “moderate/centrist,” and 14% as either “somewhat conservative” or “very conservative” (Duke Chronicle, [2024](#)). A recent study of Yale faculty found that of faculty who were registered to vote or had donated to political campaigns, 82.3% were affiliated with the Democratic party and 2.3% were affiliated with the Republican party (Buckley Institute, [2025](#)). Among all faculty, including those who were not registered to vote or had no political campaign donation activity, 66% all faculty were Democrats compared with 1.8% who were Republican.

Similarly, the student-run Harvard Crimson’s Annual Survey of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences has been administered every year since 2022, and has consistently found that left-leaning faculty are very well represented at Harvard (Mao & Paulus, [2025](#)). But notably, the share of Harvard faculty respondents identifying as liberal has declined considerably over the last few years, and the share of conservative faculty has increased modestly. In 2022, over 80% of Harvard’s Faculty of Arts and Sciences identified themselves as either “somewhat liberal” or “very liberal” while only 1% identified as “somewhat

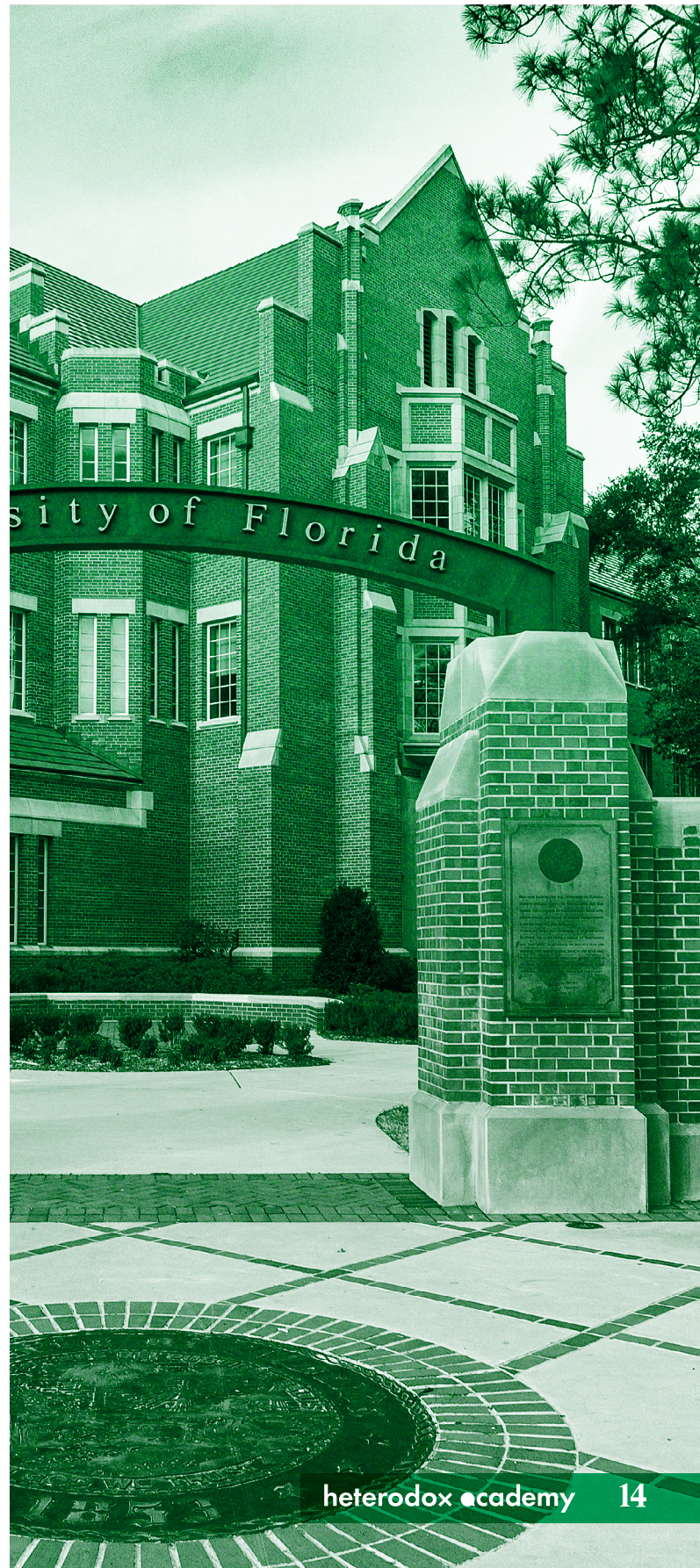
conservative.” Just a few years later, the 2025 survey found that 63% of faculty identified as “very liberal” or “somewhat liberal” while 10% identified as either “somewhat conservative” or “very conservative.”

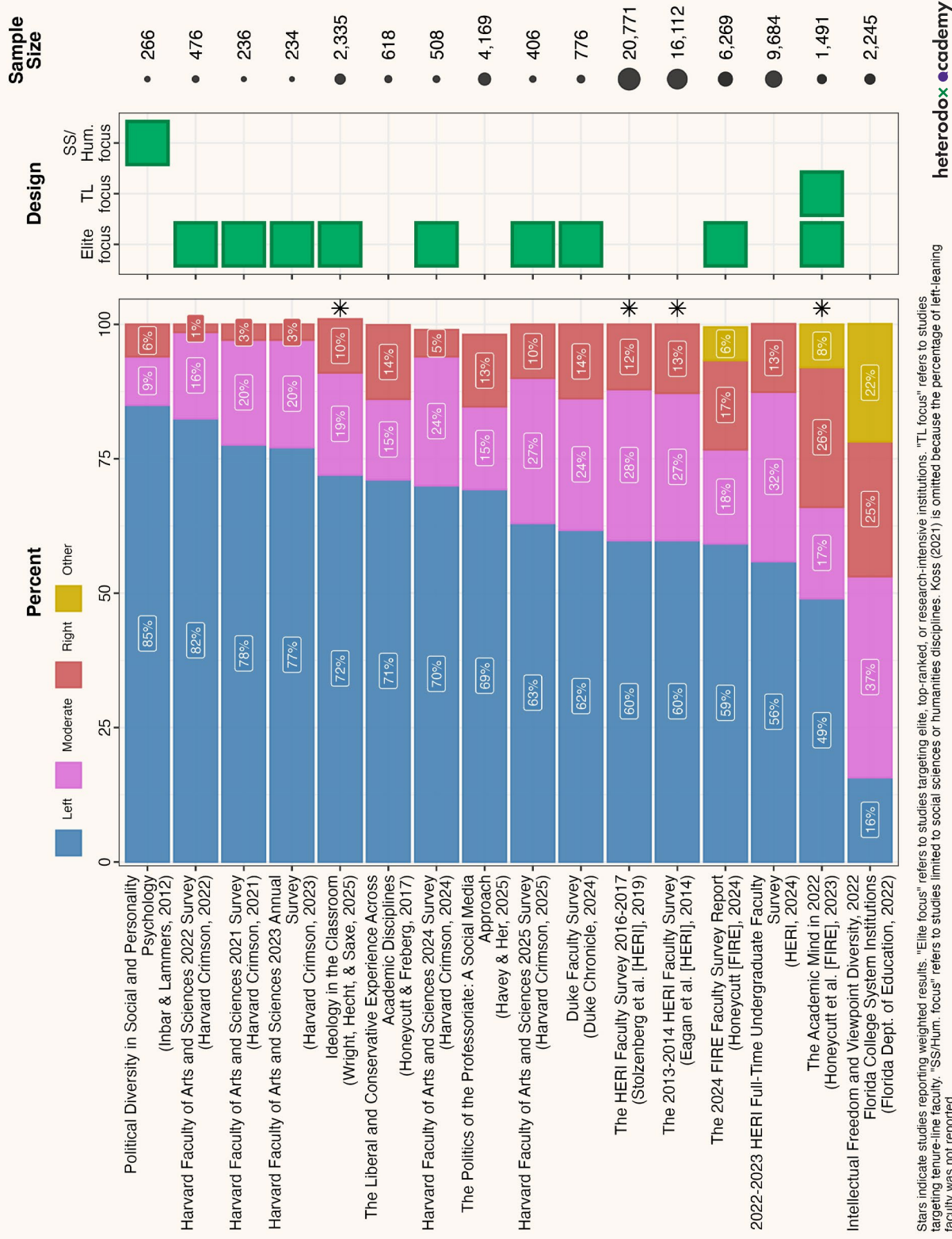
Chin et al. examined faculty political leanings within a public university system in a single unnamed state (2025) and found a broadly similar longitudinal trend using voter registration data from 2014-2024. While the largest share of faculty who were registered to vote in 2024 were registered Democrats (45%), this reflects a 7% decline since 2014. The share of Republicans had decreased by 4%, while the share of registered-but-unaffiliated voters grew by 11%.

One unique study explored faculty political leanings as indicated by Twitter activity (Havey & Her, 2025). This study was limited to faculty with clearly identifiable Twitter handles and recent social media activity during the data collection period (October 2020 to May 2021) and found that 69% of faculty could be categorized as “liberal” or “far left” based on their social media activity (e.g., the accounts they followed and engaged with).

We found only a single exception to the trend of disproportionately left-leaning faculty. The University of Florida’s 2022 Intellectual Freedom and Viewpoint Diversity survey was administered to all University of Florida System employees, in accordance with a state-level legislative mandate requiring such a survey. Of all the research in our review, this survey found the highest share of conservatives, with 25.1% of instructional employees identifying as conservative, whereas only 15.7% identified as liberal (Florida Department of Education, 2022). The survey had a response rate of 10.8%, exceeding that of many other surveys in this review. However, it is important to note that this survey was met with suspicion by many in the Florida higher education system, and in fact, the

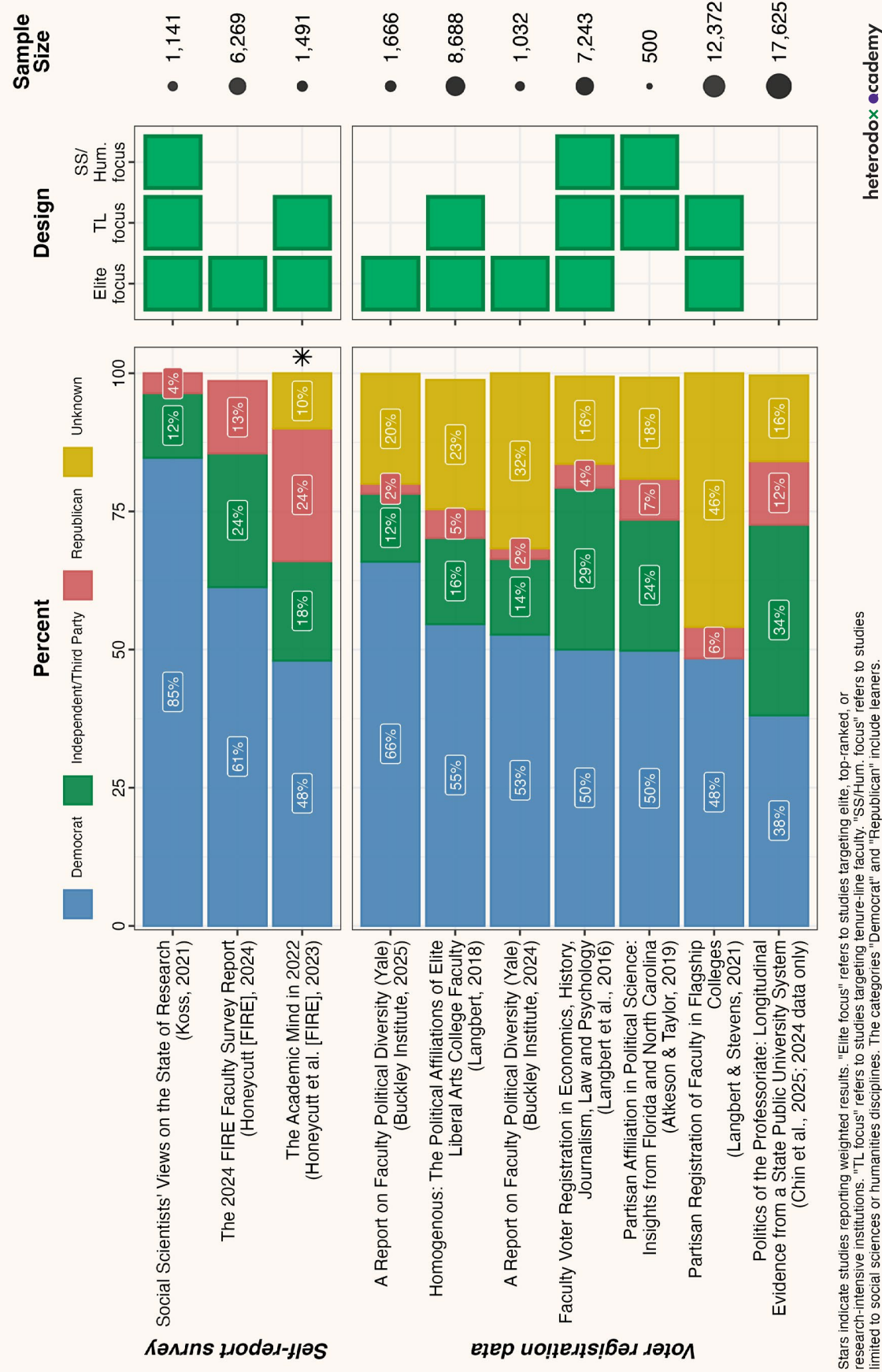
United Faculty of Florida advised its members to ignore the survey (United Faculty of Florida, 2022).¹ For this reason, we interpret the results of this survey with caution.





Source: Heterodox Academy

Figure 2. Results and methodological summaries of studies assessing faculty political ideology 2012 - 2025.



Source: Heterodox Academy

Figure 3. Results and methodological summaries of studies assessing faculty party affiliation 2012 - 2025.



Faculty Political Diversity Varies Across Disciplines

In general, studies found that the humanities were the most left-leaning, followed by the social sciences, and then STEM fields. In Wright and colleagues' 2025 survey of faculty at R1 institutions, the greatest share of left-leaning faculty was found within the humanities, at 83%. Sixty-eight percent of faculty within the social sciences identified themselves as left-leaning, as well as 63% of STEM faculty (Wright, Hecht, & Saxe, [2025](#)). This is consistent with Langbert and Stevens' study of faculty party affiliation, in which social science and humanities fields like anthropology, sociology,

and English had the highest Democrat-to-Republican ratios (42.2 to 1, 27 to 1, and 26.8 to 1, respectively; Langbert & Stevens, [2021](#)), while STEM fields like biology, mathematics, and chemistry had some of the lowest (9.4 to 1, 5.5 to 1, and 4.5 to 1, respectively). Havey and Her ([2025](#)) found that the humanities were significantly more left-leaning than the social sciences and STEM fields in their sample.

Drilling down into specific fields revealed further variation within the social sciences and humanities, with economics and political science showing relatively less leftward skew. In Langbert and Stevens ([2021](#)), the Democrat-to-Republican ratio in economics was 3 to 1, the lowest ratio across all disciplines they examined (lower even than the STEM fields; Langbert & Stevens, [2021](#)).

Consistent with this, Koss's ([2021](#)) study of social scientists at research-intensive institutions found anthropologists to be the most left-leaning of the surveyed disciplines, with 93.8% identifying as left-leaning, 5.3% in the middle, and less than 1% on the right. Economists were the least left-leaning, with 68.1% identifying as left-leaning, 19.02% in the middle, and 12.9% on right. Sociologists, psychologists, and political scientists were in-between in terms of their distributions. Economics similarly had the lowest ratio of Democrats to Republicans (4.5 to 1) in Langbert et al.'s ([2016](#)) study of social scientists and legal scholars.

Data from Havey and Her's ([2025](#)) study of faculty social media activity further corroborate the overall pattern: fields like sociology, communication studies, history, and fine arts were each more liberal than the average for their full sample, while public policy/political science and business/economics were relatively more conservative. Similarly, Chin et al.'s ([2025](#)) study of a public university system found that among faculty registered to vote, Democrats were

relatively well-represented within fields like social work (58.5%) and sociology and anthropology (57.9%), and less well-represented in computer science & technology (39%) and physics (41.5%).

A handful of discipline-specific studies appear consistent with most of the above conclusions. For instance, in Atkeson and Taylor's (2019) study of political science faculty at Florida and North Carolina institutions who were registered to vote, 62% were registered Democrats, 29% were not affiliated with a party, and 9% were registered Republicans. A 2012 study of social and personality psychologists (including faculty, postdocs, and graduate students) found that only 6% identified themselves as conservative (Inbar & Lammers, 2012).

Contextual Limitations in the Study of Faculty Political Diversity

There are a number of factors to consider when evaluating the findings of the studies we reviewed. As can be seen in the methodological summaries provided in Figure 2, Figure 3, and Table 1, most studies in our review focused on elite institutions (to the exclusion of lower-prestige schools), and several were limited either to tenure-line faculty, departments in the social sciences or humanities, or individual universities. Faith-based institutions and military colleges are particularly understudied, but where there are data available on them, they are among the least likely to show a leftward political lean (as was the case, for instance, in Langbert's 2018 study of 51 elite liberal arts colleges).

These are not inherent limitations of the studies themselves, given that most were designed to describe specific subpopulations of U.S. faculty. However, it does mean that their findings offer only limited information about U.S. faculty at large and may instead be more revealing of patterns within a

relatively elite, urban, and highly visible slice of the academy (as noted by Tyson and Oreskes, 2020).

Most studies also had relatively small samples, low response rates, and did not report taking measures to address non-response bias, raising questions about the generalizability of each study's results to the broader U.S. faculty population. In Gross and Simmons' highly regarded study (2007), follow-up interviews with nonrespondents revealed that they were slightly more conservative than the average respondent. If this is true of other studies, it suggests that self-report survey efforts may be undercounting conservatives on campus (although it is unclear by how much).

In line with this, the most comprehensive and methodologically rigorous surveys of faculty political ideology in our review (HERI's three surveys and FIRE's 2024 survey) found some of the least left-leaning distributions. We say "least left-leaning" because, while these gold-standard surveys reveal smaller political asymmetries than others, they still consistently find that conservatives are a minority on campus.

We also want to note the particular limitation of describing faculty political leanings in terms of a Democrat-to-Republican ratio, which is commonplace in the literature on faculty political diversity. While registration with a major party may be a strong signal of an individual's political leaning, the Democrat-to-Republican ratio may be a noisier indication of ideological balance within an institution. For one, professors with partisan leanings who are not eligible to vote in the U.S. (e.g., because of their citizenship status) cannot be counted with the party they otherwise support. Ratios of Democrats to Republicans necessarily exclude these faculty as well as those who are unaffiliated or registered with a third party. Our

review revealed substantial variation in the share of faculty who fell into these additional categories from study to study (although see Langbert, [2016](#) for a review of evidence suggesting that the ideological distribution within these categories is similar to that among professors registered with a major party). Moreover, some voter registration studies only draw data from the 30 states in which voter registration data is shared publicly, and exclude data from the remaining 20 states (Langbert & Stevens, [2021](#)). For these reasons, we interpret ratios of Democrats to Republicans with caution. That being said, self-report measures of political ideology are also not without their limitations, as responses are subject to participants' personal understandings of, and feelings about, political labels (Yeung & Quek, [2024](#)). In the following section, we discuss alternative ways of thinking about faculty viewpoint diversity beyond their partisan affiliation (and even their political identity).

Finally, we caution against drawing conclusions about trends in faculty political leanings over time from the studies reviewed here. Even though our review spans a period of thirteen years, the studies we reviewed varied widely in their designs and sampling strategies, meaning that differences in their results could be due to reasons other than changes in faculty composition over time. The repeated surveys in our review (e.g., those conducted annually with Harvard professors, those conducted every three years by HERI) and especially Chin et al.'s ([2025](#)) longitudinal study are the most applicable for understanding change over time, but even then the conclusions would need to be limited to the populations sampled by those studies.



A Clearer View of Faculty Political Diversity

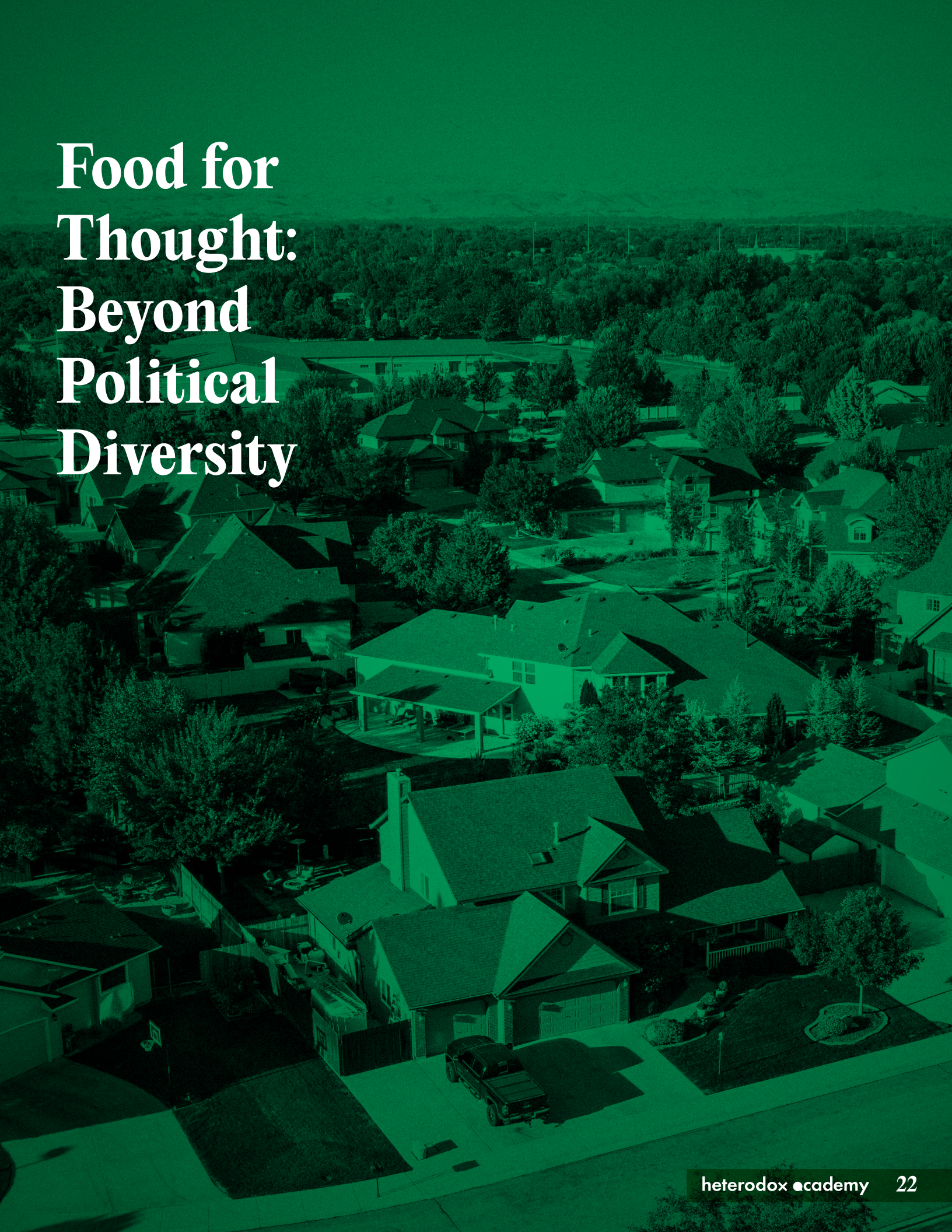


Studies exploring faculty political leanings offer a mosaic of evidence broadly supporting the assertion that U.S. faculty, as a whole, lean politically left. Although exact distributions of political and party affiliations of faculty vary between institutions and disciplines, the overall picture is clear: a much greater share of U.S. faculty lean left compared to the general U.S. population, and right-leaning faculty are relatively few in number. But a narrow focus on ratios of political tribes obscures the true distribution of political viewpoints in academia by overlooking faculty who are moderate or apolitical, potentially exacerbating perceptions of polarization within the academy.

Comparing the distribution of political leanings of faculty to that of the general population is helpful to get a sense of the degree to which the faculty population is similar, or dissimilar to, the political distribution of the general public (see, for example, al-Gharbi, 2023a). However, we do not suggest that the political distribution of faculty should necessarily be aligned with that of the greater population, or that proportional alignment between the faculty and the general public is in and of itself a worthwhile goal in the service of open inquiry. Rather, understanding the distributions of political and party affiliation in the academy is a descriptive practice meant to contextualize larger concerns about the politics of the professoriate.

A strong understanding of the current state of faculty political leanings is also necessary to inform predictions for the future as late-career faculty retire and early-career faculty progress in the academic pipeline. The ubiquity of diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts within the academy — including in admissions and faculty hiring — raises important questions about the extent to which the ideological pool of early-career faculty has shrunk. Explorations of the political leanings of graduate students, post-doctoral scholars, and early career faculty may shed light on the future of political diversity within the academy.



An aerial photograph of a suburban neighborhood, showing numerous houses with varying rooflines, surrounded by trees and greenery. The entire image is overlaid with a semi-transparent green filter. The text 'Food for Thought: Beyond Political Diversity' is positioned in the upper left corner in a white serif font.

Food for Thought: Beyond Political Diversity

While political diversity is an important source of viewpoint diversity, these two concepts are not interchangeable. Any number of beliefs, experiences, and perspectives can enrich the viewpoint diversity of faculty, and it would be a mistake to attend to faculty's political leanings at the expense of other important sources of viewpoint diversity.

For instance, one under-researched area is the socioeconomic roots of faculty. A recent study — one of only a few focused specifically on this dimension — found that faculty tended to live in wealthier zip codes as children and were between 12 and 25 times more likely than the general population to have a parent with a PhD (Morgan et al., 2022). The relative absence of the perspectives of rural and working-class people, who tend to be more culturally conservative than the average urban resident (Doherty et al., 2024), is not only likely to narrow the scope of scholarship, but also to exacerbate the political asymmetries among faculty. Some have argued for class-based affirmative action as a corrective measure, particularly at the most selective institutions, which produce the overwhelming majority of faculty at the PhD level (Kahlenberg, 2025; Wapman et al., 2022). Still, we know relatively little about faculty socioeconomic background compared to other dimensions of viewpoint diversity.

The past few years have also seen relatively little study of faculty religious identification, another important source of viewpoint diversity. While we found that a small number of studies within our timeframe gathered data on religious identification of faculty as a part of a demographic battery (e.g., Honeycutt et al., 2023; Honeycutt, 2024; Wright, Hecht, & Saxe, 2025), the only work specifically on faculty religious identification that we know of was published prior to 2012. More thorough research on the religious beliefs and identities of faculty is ongoing, with findings to be released in Fall 2026

(College Impact Laboratory, [n.d.](#)).

More broadly, while viewpoint diversity creates the conditions for open inquiry, it is not sufficient. A university, department, or discipline might be full of committed partisans of all stripes who nonetheless fail to engage meaningfully across their differences. Successfully leveraging the benefits of viewpoint diversity also requires tolerance for opposing views and engagement in practices such as constructive disagreement. For this reason, we believe that a targeted examination of faculty values and behaviors related to viewpoint diversity would supplement insights about the viewpoints themselves.



An aerial photograph of a city, likely New York City, featuring a large, ornate Gothic-style cathedral in the foreground. The cathedral has multiple towers and intricate stonework. Behind it, a dense urban landscape with various buildings and trees is visible. In the far background, a skyline of modern skyscrapers rises against a hazy sky. The entire image is overlaid with a semi-transparent green filter.

Conclusion



Internal and external forces have recently prompted universities toward self-reflection. The issue of political diversity among faculty has remained a particularly contentious topic over the last few years. More broadly, concerns about restricted viewpoint diversity continue to drive much of the debate about the past, present, and future of the university. The concerns are not without merit: homogeneity of perspectives — whether ideological, identity-based, or academic — increases the risks of groupthink and blind spots.

Proactive awareness of these risks is necessary to uphold the truth-seeking and knowledge-generating purposes of universities. While we do not advance a normative claim for an “ideal” distribution of political leanings among faculty, we describe the available evidence of political diversity so that risks to open inquiry and free expression can be identified. We also encourage an expansive conception of viewpoint diversity that looks beyond political leanings, encompassing dimensions of identity including socioeconomic background, religious identity, and scholarly values. To move forward as a scholarly community, a clear-eyed understanding of the current landscape is crucial.

Open inquiry flourishes when students and academics can meaningfully engage with a wide variety of perspectives, experiences, and viewpoints. Taking stock of the current state of affairs is necessary to identify the greatest threats — and opportunities — facing open inquiry, so that universities can continue to pursue their truth-seeking missions with vigor and integrity.

Appendix:

Table 1. Overview of Studies Assessing US Faculty Political Leanings 2012 - 2025.

Publication Year	Study	Institutional Focus	Departmental or Disciplinary Focus	Rank Focus	Response Rate, or n ^a	Methodology	Metric	Key finding ^b
2025	A Report on Faculty Political Diversity - Buckley Institute	Yale	Undergraduate-facing departments, the law school, and school of management	None	n = 1666	Voter registration data Campaign donation data	Party affiliation	Democrat: 66.0% Unaffiliated or third party: 12.3% Republican: 1.8% Unknown: 19.9%
2025	Harvard Faculty of Arts and Sciences 2025 Survey - Mao & Paulus (The Harvard Crimson)	Harvard University	Faculty of Arts and Sciences	Tenure-line and non-tenure- line	n = 406	Survey (self-report)	Political ideology	Very liberal: 29% Somewhat liberal: 34% Moderate: 27% Somewhat conservative: 9% Very conservative: 1%
2025	Ideology in the Classroom: How Faculty at US Universities Navigate Politics and Pedagogy Amid Federal Pressure Over Viewpoint Diversity and Antisemitism - Wright, Hecht, & Saxe	R1 institutions	None	Faculty who teach undergraduates	7% (2,335/33,429)	Survey (self-report) Weighted	Political ideology	Extremely liberal: 16% Liberal: 56%, Moderate: 19% Conservative: 10%
2025	Politics of the professoriate: Longitudinal evidence from a state public university system's universe of faculty [preprint] - Chin, Ortega, Shaw & Yoo ^c	All public institutions in a single unnamed state	None	None	n = 17,625	Voter registration data	Party affiliation	Democrat: 38.1% Unaffiliated: 34.5% Republican: 11.5% Unregistered: 15.5%
2025	The Politics of the Professoriate: A Social Media Approach - Havey & Her	Institutions with larger enrollments and selection of smaller institutions	None	None	n = 4,169	Social media data	Political ideology (estimated from social media activity)	Far Left: 35.9% Liberal: 33.4% Moderate: 15.4% Conservative: 13.2% Far Right: 0.2%
2024	2022-2023 HERI Full-Time Undergraduate Faculty Survey - The Higher Education Research Institute	Voluntarily participating 4-year colleges and universities	None	Tenure-line and non-tenure-line FTE faculty who teach undergraduates	n = 9,684	Survey (self-report)	Political ideology	Far left: 12.1% Liberal: 43.8% Middle of the road: 31.5% Conservative: 12.2% Far right: 0.5%
2024	Harvard Faculty of Arts and Sciences 2024 Survey - Mao & Paulus (The Harvard Crimson) ^d	Harvard University	Faculty of Arts and Sciences	Tenure-line and non-tenure-line	n = 508	Survey (self-report)	Political ideology	Very liberal: 22% Somewhat liberal: 48% Moderate: 24% Somewhat conservative: 5% Very conservative: 0%

2024	<u>Silence in the Classroom: The 2024 FIRE Faculty Survey Report - Honeycutt (FIRE)</u>	55 elite private institutions and flagship state universities	Undergraduate-facing departments; professional schools excluded	Faculty who teach undergraduates	5.6% (6,269/112,510)	Survey (self-report)	Party affiliation Political ideology	Strong Democrat: 31.8% Weak Democrat: 11.6% Independent, lean Democrat: 17.9% Independent: 12.6% Independent, lean Republican: 6.3% Weak Republican: 3.2% Strong Republican: 3.6% Libertarian: 2.9% Green Party: 0.8% Something else: 7.9% Far left: 8.1% Liberal: 35.0% Slightly liberal: 16.1% Moderate: 17.5% Slightly conservative: 7.8% Conservative: 8.3% Far right: 0.5% Something else: 6.2%
2024	<u>A Report on Faculty Political Diversity - Buckley Institute</u>	Yale University	Undergraduate-facing departments and the law school	None	n = 1511	Voter registration data Campaign donation data	Party affiliation	Democrat: 52.7% Unaffiliated or third party: 13.7% Republican: 1.9% Unknown: 31.7%
2024	<u>Duke Faculty Survey - Duke Chronicle</u>	Duke University	None	None	10.5% (776/7,412)	Survey (self-report)	Political ideology	Very liberal: 23.20% Somewhat liberal: 38.53% Moderate/centrist: 24.48% Somewhat conservative: 9.92% Very conservative: 3.87%
2023	<u>Harvard Faculty of Arts and Sciences 2023 Annual Survey - Hamid & Schisgall (The Harvard Crimson)</u>	Harvard University	Faculty of Arts and Sciences and the School of Engineering and Applied Sciences	None	n = 234	Survey (self-report)	Political ideology	Very liberal: 31.8% Liberal: 45.3% Moderate: 20% Conservative: 2.5% Very conservative: 0.4%
2023	<u>The Academic Mind in 2022: What Faculty Think About Free Expression and Academic Freedom on Campus - Honeycutt, Stevens, & Kaufmann (FIRE)</u>	2 samples Sample 1: None Sample 2: top-ranked four-year schools in each state	Sample 1: None Sample 2: Departments from Social Sciences, Science/STEM, Humanities, Business, Education	Tenure-line faculty	Sample 1: 1.6% (n = 788) Sample 2: 2.2% (n = 703)	Survey (self-report) Weighted	Party affiliation Political ideology	Strong Democrat: 22% Weak Democrat: 10% Independent, lean Democrat: 16% Independent: 15% Independent, lean Republican: 13% Weak Republican: 4% Strong Republican: 7% Something else: 3% Far left: 11% Liberal: 26% Slightly liberal: 12% Moderate, middle of the road: 17% Slightly conservative: 11% Conservative: 14% Far right: 1% Libertarian: 2% Haven't thought much/Not listed above/No answer: 6%

2022	Intellectual Freedom and Viewpoint Diversity: 2022 Florida College System Institutions - Florida Department of Education	Florida College System	None	All instructional employees	10.8% (2,245/20,817)	Survey (self-report)	Political ideology	Liberal: 15.7% Moderate: 37.4% Conservative: 25.1% None of the above: 21.9%
2022	Harvard Faculty of Arts and Sciences 2022 Survey - Xu (The Harvard Crimson)	Harvard University	Faculty of Arts and Sciences and the School of Engineering and Applied Sciences	None	n = 476	Survey (self-report)	Political ideology	Very liberal: 37.43% Liberal: 45.03% Moderate: 16.08% Conservative: 1.46% Very Conservative: 0%
2021	Partisan registration of faculty in flagship colleges - Langbert & Stevens	Top-ranked universities in each of 30 states that report voter registration data (116 universities total)	Anthropology-Sociology, Biology, Chemistry, Economics, English, Mathematics, Philosophy, Psychology	Tenure-line faculty	n = 12,372	Voter registration data	Party affiliation	Democrat: 48.4% Republican: 5.7% Unaffiliated: not reported Unregistered: not reported
2021	Harvard Faculty of Arts and Sciences 2021 Survey - Kahn (The Harvard Crimson)	Harvard University	Faculty of Arts and Sciences	None	n = 236	Survey (self-report)	Political ideology	Very liberal: 29.7% Liberal: 47.9% Moderate: 19.5% Conservative: 2.5% Very Conservative: 0.4%
2021	Social Scientists' Views on the State of Research - Koss	AAU institutions plus 5 additional institutions	Social Science (Anthropology, Economics, Political Science, Psychology, and Sociology)	Tenure-line faculty	13% (1,141/8,863)	Survey (self-report)	Party affiliation Political ideology	Democrat: 84.7% Independent: 11.7% Republican: 3.6% Left: not given Middle of the road: 10% Conservative/right-wing: 5%
2019	Undergraduate Teaching Faculty: The HERI Faculty Survey 2016-2017 - Stolzenberg, et al. (The Higher Education Research Institute)	Voluntarily participating 4-year colleges and universities	None	Full-time faculty who teach undergraduates	n = 20,771	Survey (self-report) Weighted	Political ideology	Far left: 11.5% Liberal: 48.3% Middle of the road: 28.1% Conservative: 11.7% Far right: 0.4%
2019	Partisan Affiliation in Political Science: Insights from Florida and North Carolina - Atkeson & Taylor	Universities in Florida and North Carolina	Political Science	Tenure-line faculty	n = 612	Voter registration data	Party affiliation	Democrat: 49.8% Did not state or unaffiliated: 23.7% Republican: 7.4% Unknown: 18.3%
2018	Homogenous: The Political Affiliations of Elite Liberal Arts College Faculty - Langbert	51 top-ranked liberal arts colleges in the US in states that report voter registration data	None	Tenure-line faculty (PhD-holding)	n = 8,688	Voter registration data	Party affiliation	Democrat: 54.6% Registered but no party: 15.6% Republican: 5.2% Unregistered: 23.4%

2017	<u>The Liberal and Conservative Experience Across Academic Disciplines: An Extension of Inbar and Lammers - Honeycutt & Freberg</u>	4 California State University campuses (Humboldt, Monterey Bay, San Luis Obispo, Stanislaus)	None	None	26.4% (618/2,339)	Survey (self-report)	Political ideology	Liberal: 71.1% Moderate: 15.0% Conservative: 13.8%
2016	<u>Faculty Voter Registration in Economics, History, Journalism, Law and Psychology - Langbert, Quain, & Klein</u>	40 top-ranked universities in the US in states that report voter registration data	Social Science (Economics, History, Journalism, Law, Psychology)	Tenure-line faculty	n = 7,243	Voter registration data	Party affiliation	Democrat: 50.0% Not affiliated: 15.8% Republican: 4.3% Unregistered: 29.3%
2014	<u>Undergraduate Teaching Faculty: The 2013-2014 HERI Faculty Survey - Eagan, et al. (The Higher Education Research Institute)</u>	Voluntarily participating 4-year colleges and universities	None	Tenure-line and non-tenure-line full-time faculty who teach undergraduates	n = 16,112	Survey (self-report) Weighted	Political ideology	Far left: 11.0% Liberal: 48.8% Middle of the road: 27.4% Conservative: 12.1% Far right: 0.7%
2012	<u>Political Diversity in Social and Personality Psychology - Inbar & Lammers</u>	None	Social and Personality Psychology	Tenure-line, non-tenure-line, postdocs, graduate students	n = 266	Survey (self-report)	Political ideology	Liberal: 85% Moderate: 9% Conservative: 6% (Figures reported in Honeycutt & Freberg, 2017)

^aWe report whatever figures are available. For surveys, this sometimes included the total number of participants invited to the survey, allowing us to calculate the response rate, but sometimes only the survey sample size was provided.

^bOccasionally the source text presents percentages of registered Democrats, Republicans, and unaffiliated voters as a share of the faculty in the sample who were registered to vote (omitting unregistered voters). In these cases, we computed the percentages of professors with each affiliation as a share of the entire sample to generate figures that could be compared across the voter registration studies. To do this, we multiplied the percentages of registered voters in each category (Democrat, Republican, or unaffiliated) reported in the text by the proportion of participants who were registered to vote.

^c2024 data presented here; see full text for 2014-2024 data.

^d2024 results reported in 2025 reporting.

ENDNOTES

¹A similar survey was conducted within the University of Florida System in 2024 (State University System of Florida, 2024), but the results combined "faculty" and "staff" together in a single category, making it impossible to draw any conclusions about the political distribution of faculty in particular. Therefore, while we agree that the distribution of political leanings among staff has relevant implications for viewpoint diversity, we excluded the 2024 survey from the current review focused on faculty political leanings.

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