RESEARCH

Executive Summary: 2025 APSA Member Insights on the Current Policy Climate

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INTRODUCTION

Early in the current presidential administration, executive actions and federal policy changes targeted higher education institutions, federal funding for basic research, and the availability of federal data sets. These actions, including cuts and threats to federal funding, attacks on diversity, equity, and inclusion programs, and threats to international students and scholars, represent significant challenges to the discipline of political science and higher education in general.

As part of APSA's efforts to identify and better respond to the needs of its members during this time, APSA disseminated a survey to current and former members in the spring of 2025. This survey was part of a larger effort that included mission-relevant advocacy efforts, the creation of resources to support members of the profession, and highlighting research and teaching resources on democracy and democratic backsliding.

We wanted to understand the ways the current policy climate–including executive actions, federal policy, and state policy–have affected political scientists, political science departments, and institutions of higher education. Beyond specific impacts, the survey also asked respondents about their perceptions of the profession in the current policy environment. This post will share high-level summaries of the results along three different themes: impact of executive actions and federal policies, impact of state policies, and personal impacts upon individual scholars. A full survey report can be found here.

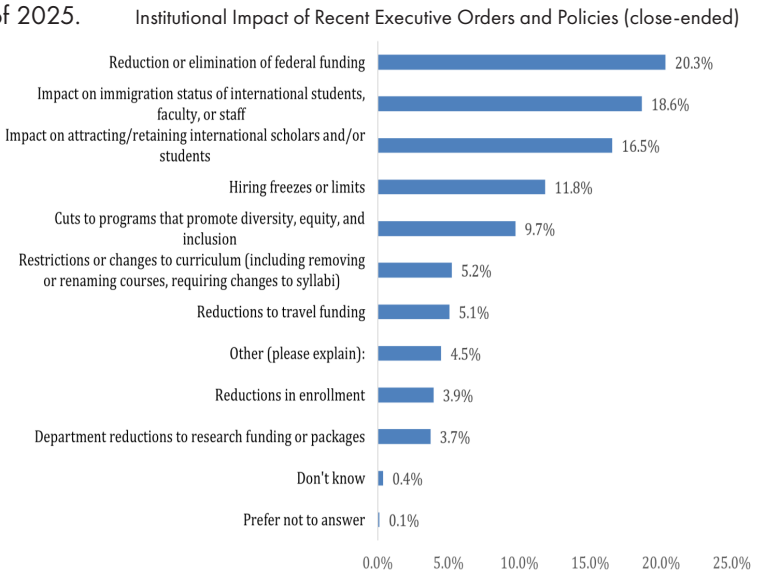
The main findings for the report can be summarized as follows:

- Nearly three-quarters of respondents (73.7%) indicate that **executive actions and federal policies have impacted their institutions**.
- 83.5% of respondents who said their work depends on federal funding reported being **concerned about losing their federal grant support**.
- 50.6% of respondents reported being **personally impacted by the executive orders or policies**.
- Over 40% of respondents indicated that their **attitudes towards research and teaching have become somewhat or much more negative** during this time, and 30% of respondents indicated that their attitudes towards service have become somewhat or much more negative.

INSTITUTIONAL IMPACT OF EXECUTIVE ACTIONS AND FEDERAL POLICIES

Out of 953 respondents, 702 (73.7%) indicated that their institution had been affected by recent policies and executive orders issued by the current administration. In contrast, 138 respondents (14.5%) indicated no impact, and 113 (11.8%) selected "Don't know/Prefer not to answer."

Respondents were asked to describe the impact of recent executive orders and policies on their institution. The below graph displays the breakdown of closed-ended (multiple-choice) responses.



Among those who reported institutional impacts, the most commonly cited areas of concern included reductions in federal funding (485 respondents, 20.3%), effects on immigration status (445 respondents, 18.6%) and challenges in attracting and retaining international scholars (395 respondents, 16.5%). A significant number of respondents also noted the implementation of hiring freezes and cuts to diversity, equity, and inclusion programs as major areas of impact.

FEDERAL FUNDING

Of 1012 respondents, 192 (19%) reported that their work relies on federal funding. Of the 127 who responded to a follow-up question asking for more information, 83.5% reported being concerned about losing their federal grant support.

In a follow-up open-ended question about the potential im-

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pact of losing federal funding, the most common bigrams (word pairings) included "federal funding," "federal grants," and "loss employment," indicating that federal resources are a key component of stability in these respondents' work.

PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL IMPACT OF FEDERAL ACTIONS

Half of respondents (50.6%) reported being personally impacted by executive orders or policies. Among these respondents, the plurality of respondents (21.5%) indicated that they felt less secure in their personal freedoms and liberties. The next most common responses were concerns about international travel and immigration/citizenship status, increased feelings of political pressure or restrictions on research topics, and increased feelings of restrictions on teaching topics. In follow-up open-ended responses inviting respondents to explain further, frequently referenced themes were "international students," "fear and anxiety," and "academic freedom."

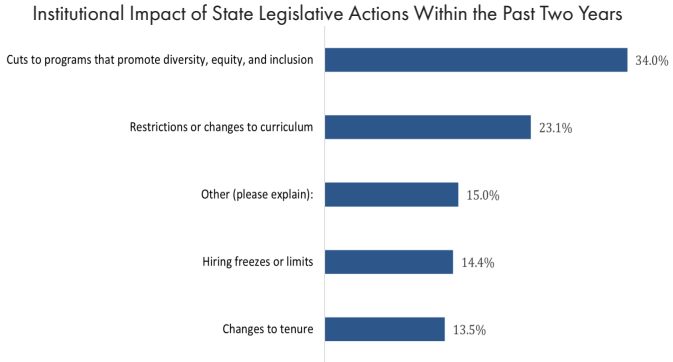
Personal Impact of Recent Executive Orders and Policies (close-ended)



INSTITUTIONAL AND PERSONAL IMPACT OF STATE LEGISLATION

When asked about the impact of state legislative actions, 298 out of 951 respondents (31.3%) indicated that their institution or department had been affected by state actions within the past two years. 213 of 1105 respondents (19.3%) reported experiencing a personal impact from state legislative actions during the same period. The most commonly reported institutional impacts were cuts to programs that promote diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) and restrictions or changes to curricula. Increased feelings of insecurity regarding personal freedoms and increased feelings of political pressure regarding teaching and curricula were the most commonly cited personal impacts.

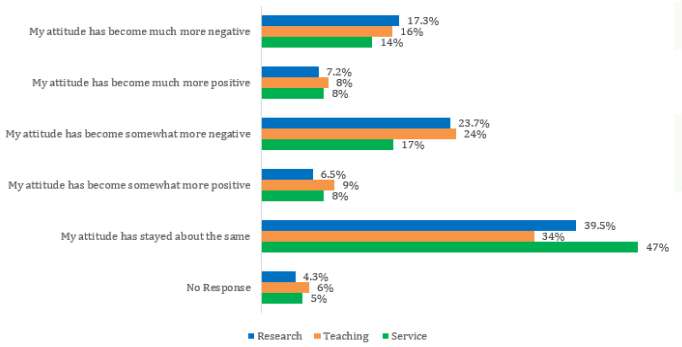
Institutional Impact of State Legislative Actions Within the Past Two Years



RESEARCH, TEACHING AND SERVICE IMPACT

We also wanted to understand how the changes in the policy environment affected attitudes towards three key components of scholars' work: research, teaching, and service. Slightly over 40% of respondents indicated that their attitudes towards research and teaching have become somewhat or much more negative as a result of recent policy changes, while about 30% responded that their attitude toward service has become somewhat or much more negative. In all three areas, less than 17% stated that their attitudes had become more positive as a result of the current policy environment.

Research, Teaching, and Service Attitudes

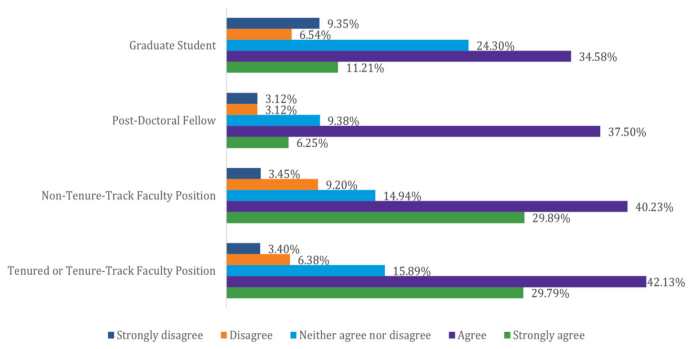


DIFFERENCES IN RESPONSES BY POSITION

While many respondents expressed feelings of concern and fear regarding the current policy climate, as well as increased negative sentiments toward teaching, a majority (across all position types) reported feeling that their teaching was supported by their institution.

Agreement was particularly strong among tenured and tenure-track faculty, who reported the highest levels of institutional support. More detailed information can be found in the *2025 Survey: APSA Member Insights on the Current Policy Environment Report.*

Institutional Support by Position Type



SURVEY OVERVIEW AND METHODOLOGY

This survey incorporated a variety of question formats, with a strong emphasis on multiple-choice evaluative questions. These items asked respondents to indicate whether they had experienced personal or professional impacts (including institutional or departmental effects) as a result of recent executive actions and, if so, to indicate what those impacts were.

ABOUT THE DATA

The 2025 APSA *Member Insight on the Current Policy Climate* survey collected responses from 1,111 APSA members. ■

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