



A quantitative study on the persecution of educators in Brazil

Threats to Democratic Education

Vol. 1



observatório nacional da
violência contra educadoras/es



MINISTÉRIO DA
EDUCAÇÃO



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- Associação Brasileira de Ensino de Ciências Sociais (ABECS)
- Associação Brasileira de Ensino de História (ABEH)
- Associação dos Geógrafos Brasileiros (AGB)
- Associação Nacional pela Formação dos Profissionais da Educação (ANFOPE)
- Associação Nacional de História (ANPUH)
- Associação Nacional de Pesquisa em Educação (ANPEd)
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- Centro de Análise da Liberdade e do Autoritarismo (LAUT)
- Coalition for Academic Freedom in the Americas (CAFA)
- Confederação Nacional dos Trabalhadores da Educação (CNTE)
- Confederação Nacional dos Trabalhadores em Estabelecimentos de Ensino (CONTEE)
- Federação de Sindicatos de Trabalhadores Técnico-administrativos em Instituições de Ensino Superior Públicas do Brasil (FASUBRA)
- Fórum Nacional de Diretores de Faculdades/Centros/Departamentos de Educação ou Equivalentes das Universidades Públicas Brasileiras (FORUMDIR)
- Geledés - Instituto da Mulher Negra
- Human Rights Watch (HRW)
- Observatório da Laicidade na Educação (OLÉ)
- Sindicato Nacional dos Docentes das instituições de Ensino Superior (ANDES)
- Sindicato Nacional dos(as) Servidores(as) Federais da Educação Básica, Profissional e Tecnológica (SINASEFE)
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- The National Observatory on Violence against Educators (ONVE), an interinstitutional outreach project based at the Universidade Federal Fluminense (UFF) and funded by the Ministry of Education (MEC), conducted a nationwide study to assess the impact of censorship and persecution on teaching work in Brazil since 2010;
- Drawing on academic research on the rise of hate speech against educators in Brazil, as well as news reports published over the years, the study compiled numerous examples of censorship situations that became increasingly frequent throughout the 2010s. The analysis considered several key historical milestones, including the controversy over the Escola sem Homofobia (School without Homophobia) kit in 2011; conservative religious activism aimed at prohibiting discussions of gender and sexuality in debates over national, state, and municipal education plans beginning in 2014; the proliferation of Escola sem Partido (School Without Party) bills between 2014 and 2018; the election of Jair Bolsonaro (PL) in 2018, alongside hundreds of legislators across Brazil who adopted and promoted this agenda during their campaigns and throughout their mandates; and a more recent wave of proposed laws targeting sex education, unisex bathrooms, and gender-neutral language;
- The questionnaire for the study *Violence against Educators as a Threat to Democratic Education: A Study on the Persecution of Educators in Brazil* was disseminated online between May and September 2024 and received 3,012 valid responses;
- The study focused on classroom teachers, that is, educators responsible for planning and delivering lessons in accordance with curricular policies, categorizing them into three areas of classroom practice. These areas

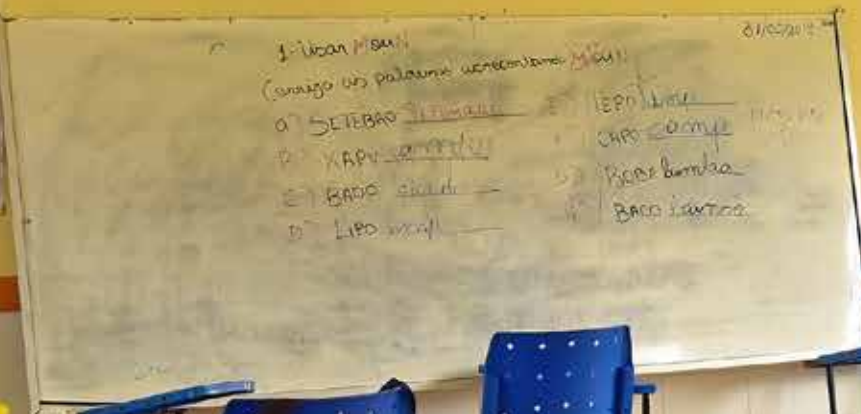
included basic education, technical and technological basic education (EBTT), and higher education. The questionnaire also featured sections targeting non-classroom educators, such as technical personnel and school meal cooks. Most respondents were classroom teachers in basic education. Across all areas, and even among those in non-classroom roles, direct exposure to censorship was the predominant experience;

- The study has national representativeness and shows that censorship is widespread throughout the country. In all regions, at least 90% of respondents reported direct or indirect experiences with such acts;
- The forms of censorship most frequently identified by respondents, along with the topics they target, illustrate how socially contested issues are actively avoided or prohibited within educational settings. In light of this, we characterize these acts as violence against educators: even when directed at a specific individual, they produce wider repercussions for the teaching profession as a whole;
- Censorship is a recurrent experience nationwide: 44% of respondents reported having experienced it four times or more. Across all regions, censorship incidents increase noticeably during electoral years;
- Among cases involving direct contact, 58% of educators reported attempts at intimidation, 41% experienced aggressive questioning of their teaching practices, and 35% faced explicit prohibitions regarding certain topics. Respondents also reported verbal abuse and insults (25%), forced relocation of their workplace (12%), removal from their position or role (11%), and physical assaults (10%);
- Among respondents who reported direct contact (76% of all respondents), 67% of them indicated impacts affected both their professional and personal lives, with these impacts often described as highly significant. Respondents reporting indirect contact exhibited a similar pattern, reflecting what researchers term self-censorship: educators preemptively omit curriculum topics from their work and limit their public activities to avoid direct censorship and its potential consequences;
- Among those who witnessed or heard about such situations, 52% reported being affected in both their professional and personal lives. The impact was predominantly high, with respondents indicating extreme, high, or moderate levels of impact in both professional and personal spheres. These findings show that such attacks, even when targeting a specific individual, have a collective impact on the teaching profession. Professionally, this translates into heightened self-monitoring, increased feelings of insecurity, and doubts about continuing in the teaching career. In terms of personal life, respondents reported feeling sadder and more stressed, facing financial difficulties, and experiencing anxiety and depressive disorders, among other consequences;
- Data on the multiplicity of agents involved in censorship, along with the various forms of constraint and coercion employed, indicate that this constitutes a form of violence against educators enacted directly as a consequence of their professional practice;
- This type of violence predominantly involves multiple agents. Among respondents who reported direct exposure, 69% identified more than one perpetrating agent. Of these, 23% reported five or more types of agents, 18% reported two types, and 16% reported three types.
- Among the agents involved, the primary ones

are internal to educational communities, including pedagogical professionals (57%), students' family members (44%), other teachers (27%), and students (34%). This highlights how such discourses successfully challenge educational institutions from within, contributing to the deterioration of the school climate;

- When asked about support, 59% of educators reported receiving assistance from professional peers, while 32% indicated that they received no support at all;
- Based on the study's findings, recommendations were made to education systems, trade unions, public and private educational institutions, scientific associations, public authorities, civil society, and the Psychosocial Care Network (RAPS).

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CANTINHO DE LEITURAS

Presentation

The research *Violence against educators as a threat to democratic education: a study on the persecution of educators in Brazil* is part of an extension initiative called National Observatory on Violence against Educators (ONVE), established in December 2023. Implemented through a Decentralized Execution Agreement between the Ministry of Education (MEC) and the Federal Fluminense University (UFF), ONVE is grounded in a context in which the freedoms to teach and to learn are increasingly under threat in Brazil. This situation is driven by the growth and intensification of movements that persecute educators, amplified by the internet through the dissemination of “complaints” targeting education professionals.

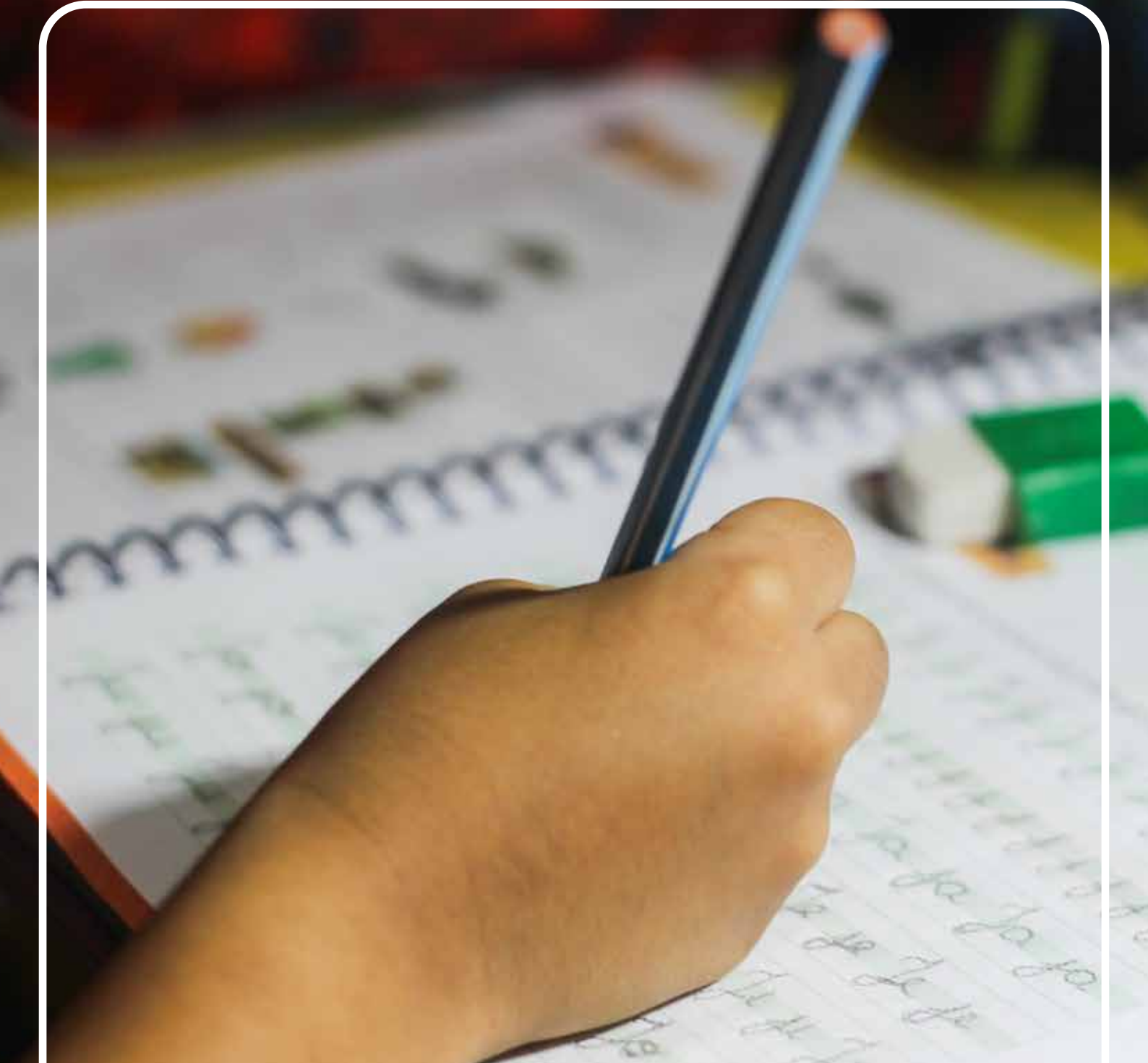
The phenomenon of persecution of educators¹ has become part of the daily reality in both public and private basic and higher education institutions, where educators are targeted for carrying out their work in accordance with their professional expertise and scientific knowledge.

It is important to emphasize that, beyond their activities within institutional settings, educators are also persecuted for positions expressed outside the “physical” workplace, such as on personal social media or through their involvement in social movements. Large-scale studies aimed at understanding the complexity of persecution against educators are lacking, and this fragmented perception of the issue contributes to holding educators responsible for the violence they experience. By analyzing such cases in isolation, existing connections between them are overlooked, weakening the understanding of persecution as a widespread phenomenon and, consequently, the development of effective responses. Some of the questions guiding our study were: What has been the impact on Brazilian schools of the hate speech targeting educators since the early 2010s? Is this impact limited to educators who are directly targeted? Are certain topics more likely to be censored than others? Can such acts be considered a form of violence? Who are the main agents involved in these processes?

This research has many origins. One stems from the collective *Professores contra o Escola sem Partido* - PCESP (Teachers against School Without Party) which sought to produce quantitative data on the changes we were observing in schools. The *Associação Brasileira de Ensino de História* - ABEH (Brazilian Association for History Teaching), within the scope of its discussions on the ethical dimension of history teaching (ABEH, 2022), in partnership with the *Núcleo de Estudos em Educação Democrática* – NEED (Center for Studies in Democratic Education), has been conceiving and developing this research since 2020. These collaborations illustrate how high-quality research can – and should – be conducted through rigorous engagement with democratic education and the right to education.

¹ Education is composed mostly of women workers, and this is the case at all stages of basic education, according to data from the 2024 School Census: early childhood education (96.1%), early years of elementary education (76.9%), later years of elementary education (65%), and secondary education (56.8%). Nevertheless, in order to avoid the constant use of both feminine and masculine forms and to facilitate reading, we use the term “educators,” while remaining aware of how outdated this language is.

* Translator’s note: In Brazilian Portuguese the word educator can be feminine, *educadora*, or masculine, *educador*.)



Methodology

This study aimed to investigate, measure, and describe the main characteristics of educator persecution in Brazil. It was conducted in two methodological stages: the application of an online survey to professionals from all regions of the country² and, subsequently, the conduction of oral history interviews with educators who responded to the survey. This report focused exclusively on the first stage of the research, which employed a quantitative approach.

The data collection instrument consisted of a questionnaire with approximately 50 questions, only one of which was open-ended, administered via the LimeSurvey platform between May and September 2024. The overall structure of the questionnaire was as follows:

Part 1 – Personal Identification

In this section, the questions were: 1) name; 2) state; 3) email; 4) sex; 5) gender; 6) sexuality; 7) color/race; 8) age group; 9) disabilities / high abilities / specific needs; 10) religion; 11) political orientation; 12) role in education.

Part 2 – Awareness of Cases

Depending on their role in education, respondents followed a differentiated path in the questionnaire. They were presented with a matrix listing exemplary situations and asked to indicate, for each item, their corresponding level of contact.

ROLES
Basic education teacher
Higher education teacher
EBTT system teacher*
Non-classroom educators

LEVELS OF CONTACT

I experienced this

It happened to someone in my institution

I heard about it

I have never heard of it

Part 3 – Case Details: Methods and Effects of Violence on Respondents

Based on respondents' level of contact with the situations listed in the case matrix, they were directed to a specific path in the questionnaire:

- Respondents who selected “**I experienced this**” at least once, were directed to Section 3A, which focused on the effects of *direct experience* with situations of violence;
- Respondents who did not select “**I experienced this**”, but selected “**I heard about it**” or “**It happened to someone in my current or former institution**” at least once, were directed to Section 3B, which focused on the effects of *indirect experience* with situations of violence;
- Respondents who selected “**Never heard of it**” for all situations in the matrix were directed straight to Part 4 of the questionnaire.

Part 4 – Identification of the Institution

This section included questions on: (1) state; (2) municipality; (3) type of school system; (4) whether the institution is faith-based; (5) whether it is militarized; (6) levels and stages of education the institution offers; (7) position or role; (8) years of service; (9) type of employment relationship; (10) workload; and (11) reason for leaving the institution, if the respondent was no

² The research project was submitted to the Research Ethics Committee for Social Sciences, Applied Social Sciences, Humanities, Letters, Arts, and Linguistics (CEP-Humanities) at the Universidade Federal Fluminense (UFF) and was approved in April 2024 under CAEE No. 77471324.7.0000.8160. An internal policy was designed and implemented by the research team to ensure compliance with Brazil's General Data Protection Law (LGPD – Law No. 13,709/2018).

* In Brazil, teachers in Basic, Technical, and Technological Education (EBTT) are part of a career path within the federal education system and may teach in both basic education (particularly in technical secondary education) and higher education. This is a career path specific to the Brazilian education system.

longer employed there.

Respondents could provide information about their current institution or a previous one, if the situation of persecution or violence occurred elsewhere.

Part 5 – Professional Profile

This section included questions on: (1) years of teaching experience; (2) highest level of education attained; (3) number of institutions in which the respondent works; (4) salary range; (5) engagement in another paid activities; and (6) participation in collective spaces such as scientific associations, research groups, or graduate programs.

Part 6 – Conclusion

This section included questions on: (1) willingness to participate in the second phase of the research (interviews); and (2) contact phone number.

A total of **3,012 valid responses** were obtained, with a **95%** confidence level and a sample margin of error of **1.8%**.

The sample was controlled according to Brazil's major regions, and the sample weighting factor, as well as field control, was established based on the proportions of education professionals reported in the Annual Social Information Report (RAIS - *Relação Anual de Informações Sociais*), which systematizes data on formally employed workers. Using this information, the number of educators per state was estimated, and the necessary sample control by major regions was defined.

To achieve the required sample size, a dissemination plan was implemented to circulate the questionnaire through the network of institutions participating in the Observatory's advisory

council³, which comprises national entities in the field of education and civil society organizations that advocate for the right to education. The partnership with these organizations was maintained through continuous engagement with their communications teams and governing bodies, which disseminated the link to participate in the study via institutional emails, social media, WhatsApp, and websites. This strategy also helped ensure that access to the questionnaire was restricted to the target audience: education professionals.

In addition to this strategy, we requested support in disseminating the questionnaire from scientific associations and unions representing basic and higher education professionals from public and private systems across each state of the federation, their capitals, and the three largest cities in each state, as well as the Federal District (DF). Public higher education institutions were also contacted through their rector's offices, undergraduate and graduate pro-rectorates, and departments and graduate programs related to teacher education degrees.

The research instrument was specifically designed for classroom teachers⁴ and focused on basic education, although it also included basic, technical, and technological education (EBTT), higher education, and non-classroom educators. Accordingly, the questionnaire categorized the respondent's field of activity into four options: basic education (EB), higher education (ES), basic, technical, and technological education (EBTT), and non-classroom educators (NCE). Using this categorization, four lists of exemplary situations representing restrictions on the freedom to teach were created (see appendix), each adapted to a specific field and role. For each situa-

³ The full list of organizations that make up the ONVE advisory council can be consulted at: <https://onveuff.com/conselho-consultivo/>.

⁴ Given the diverse configurations of functional career paths within Brazilian education systems, the ability to map the experiences of non-classroom educators was limited. Also, the National Curriculum Guidelines for the Undergraduate Degree in Pedagogy (CNE/CP Resolution No. 1/2006) state that teaching activities involve not only classroom instruction, but also participation in the organization and management of education systems and institutions. In other words, in Brazil the term "teaching" is used in a broader sense. For this reason, we chose to use the terms "classroom teachers", "classroom practice" and etc to highlight our use of "classroom" strictly as the act of teaching classes (school or college subjects), in order to distinguish between different groups of respondents. However, this study adopts a Freirian perspective according to which everyone who works in educational institutions is an educator, despite the different roles played in education.

tion, respondents were asked to indicate their level of contact with that type of case: I experienced this, it happened to someone in my institution, I heard about it, or I have never heard of it.

To avoid leading the respondents, the question statements were designed so that even individuals who would not characterize certain acts as censorship, **persecution**, or violence could still respond to them. Thus, educators who might agree with certain restrictions on the freedoms to teach and to learn were able to answer the questions objectively. Conversely, as the study was widely disseminated, the research title, the groups associated with it, and the channels through which it was shared (such as unions and other similar institutions) may have introduced a degree of bias. This constitutes an important limitation of the study that should be acknowledged.

For the purposes of this study, persecution was understood as acts that restrict teaching practice, particularly by undermining educators' autonomy in managing the knowledge involved in their work. To avoid trivializing the term or using it imprecisely, persecution was defined in contrast to the democratic practices we advocate. Accordingly, persecution was characterized as persistent acts that directly target teachers; employ aggressive or violent methods; establish inappropriate relations with institutional spaces; and pursue objectives that run counter to fundamental rights and freedoms (Penna; Aquino; Moura, 2024). Examples of acts that meet these criteria include complaints against teachers on social media (marked by improper exposure and disregard for appropriate spaces for questioning), physical assaults, assertion that teachers must always present "both sides," and restrictions on topics or teaching methodologies.



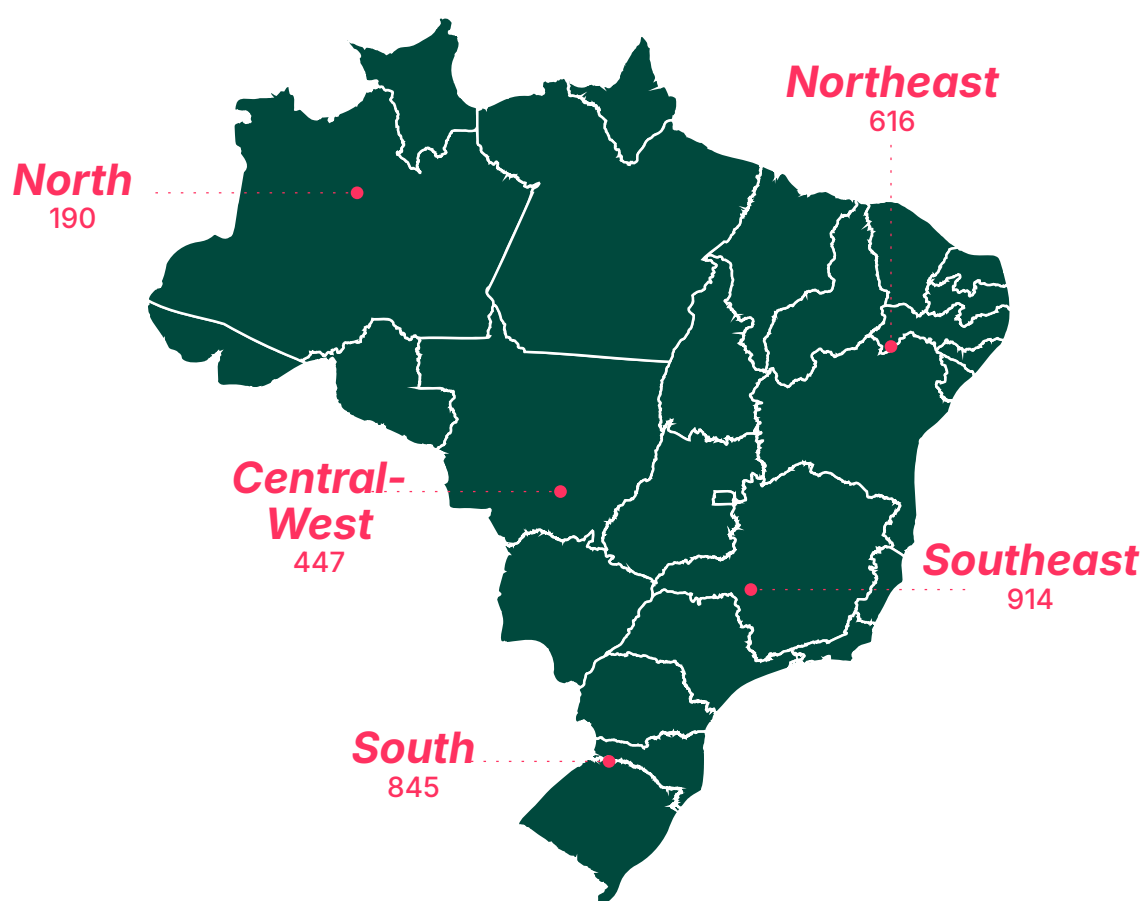
Results

1 Respondent Profile

Of the total number of respondents (3,012 responses)⁵, the majority identified as women (67%), heterosexual (83%), and cisgender (97%). Regarding race/ethnicity, 56% identified as white and 41% as negro*, including 10% Black and 31% brown/mixed-race (pardo); 7% of respondents reported having a disability. The average age of participants fell between 40 and 50 years.

The survey, completed primarily by professionals from the public education system (88%), targeted all education professionals across all segments and modalities. Approximately 70% of respondents worked in basic

education, encompassing early childhood, elementary, and secondary education. This distribution was consistent both overall and across the country's major regions.



⁵ Of the 3,012 respondents, only 27 did not complete any of the questionnaire matrices of situations, representing less than 1% of the total responses.

* In Brazil, the term Negro does not carry negative connotation per se. The Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE) uses Negro to refer to the combined population of African descent that constitutes over 55% of the national population: 10.2% are Pretos (black-skinned) and 45.3% are Pardos (brown/mixed-race). This classification fulfills a historical demand of the Brazilian Black movement.

Gender	Respondents	%	Color / Race	Respondents	%
Cisgender woman	1.996	66,3%	Black	312	10%
Transgender woman	19	0,6%	Brown	929	31%
Cisgender man	917	30,4%	White	1.700	56%
Transgender man	29	1,0%	Asian	21	1%
Non-binary	18	0,6%	Indigenous	18	1%
Prefer not to disclose	30	1,0%	Prefer not to disclose	32	1%
Other	3	0,1%			

RCDs / High Abilities and Giftedness in Education	Respondents	%	Sexuality	Respondents	%
No	2.797	93%	Heterosexual	2.510	83,3%
Yes	215	7%	Homosexual	244	8,1%
			Bisexual	184	6,1%
			Prefer not to disclose	62	2,1%
			Other	12	0,4%

Table 1 – Gender, race, sexuality, and disability/high abilities of respondents (N = 3,012).

Source: Authors' own elaboration, 2025.

Institutional sector of employment	Respondents	%
Public	2.617	88%
Private	307	10%
Other	59	2%

Table 2 – Affiliation of respondents by type of institutional sector of employment (N = 2,983).

Source: Authors' own elaboration, 2025.

Area of Practice

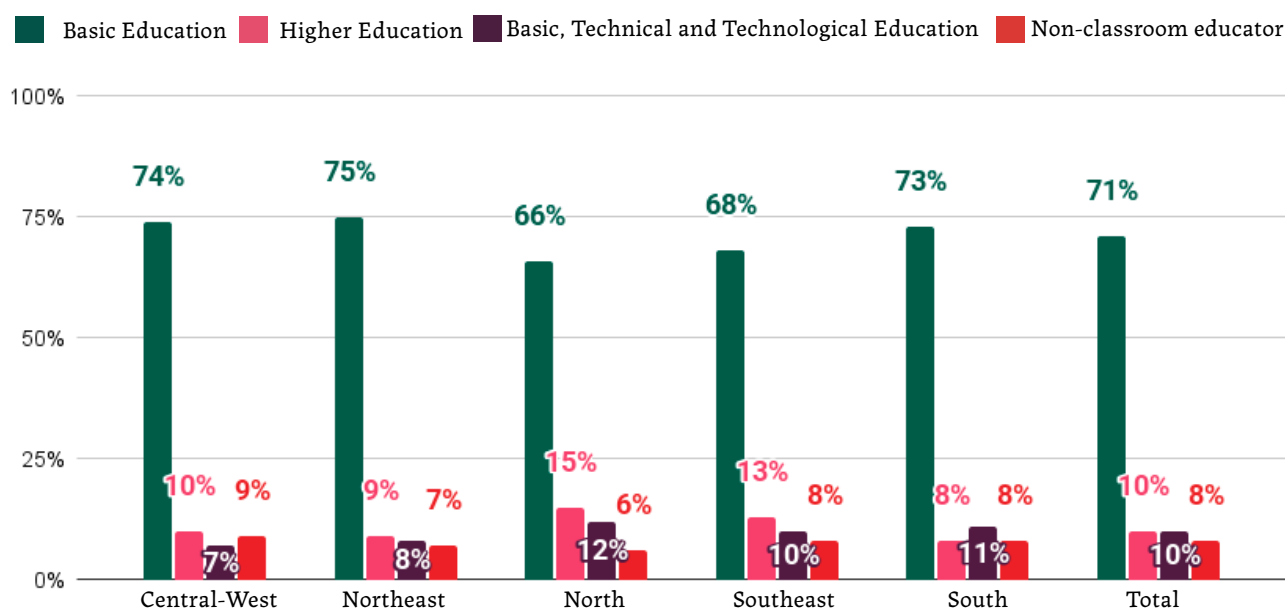


Figure 1. Profile of respondents regarding area of practice in education and distribution by region (N=3,012).

Source: Authors' own elaboration, 2025.

2 Research findings

Censorship has become a widespread phenomenon across the entire Brazilian territory and at all levels and stages of education

Area of practice and level of contact

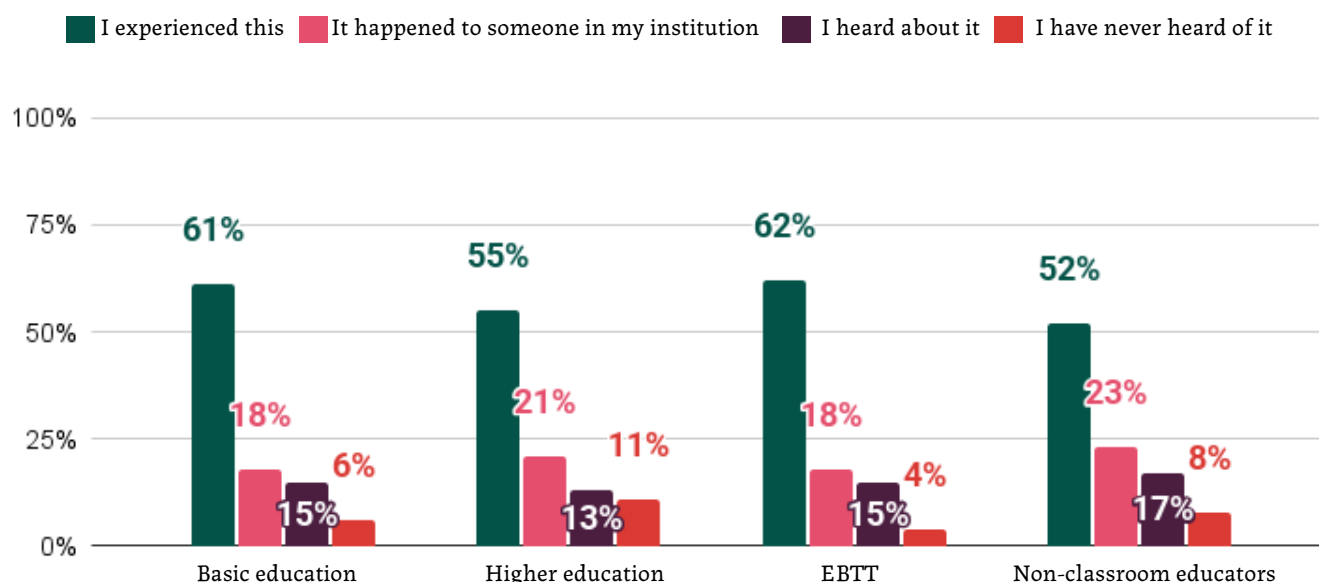


Figure 2. Area of practice of respondents and level of contact (N = 3,012).

Source: Authors' own elaboration, 2025.

For years, it has been recognized that groups such as *Escola sem Partido* (School Without Party) and similar movements have built political careers on hate speech directed at so-called “indoctrinating” educators. Numerous media reports⁶, as well as academic and civil society publications (Ação Educativa et al., 2022; Gava, 2023; Mendonça; Morgan; Passos, 2021; Moura, 2016; Paiva, 2021; Penna; Aquino; Moura, 2024; Pereira, 2023; Sartori, 2021; Silva, 2019), have contributed to understanding what occurs in classrooms when trust between educators and students is eroded by accusations that delegitimi-

ze educators’ professional knowledge (Penna, 2018; Penna; Salles, 2017). Although the *Programa Escola sem Partido* (School Without Party Program) bills were struck down by the Supreme Federal Court (STF), the program achieved broad penetration in the social fabric and has since unfolded into a myriad of ultra-conservative legislative proposals that persist to this day (Aquino; Moura, [2026?]).

Given that this study was designed with sampling procedures and controls to ensure that its database is representative of the country as a whole and of its regions, the findings indicate

⁶ See: DIP, Andrea. *Escola Sem Partido caça bruxas nas salas de aula*. Agência Pública, São Paulo, Aug. 30, 2016. Available at: <https://apublica.org/2016/08/escola-sem-partido-caca-bruxas-nas-salas-de-aula/>. Accessed on: Sept. 30, 2025; FAGUNDEZ, Ingrid. *Mesmo sem lei, Escola sem Partido se espalha pelo país e já afeta rotina nas salas de aula*. BBC News Brasil, São Paulo, Nov. 5, 2018. Available at: <https://www.bbc.com/portuguese/brasil-46006167>. Accessed on: Sept. 30, 2025; XIMENES, Salomão. *Escola sem Partido promove censura e controle social nas instituições de ensino*. [Interview given to] Brasil de Fato, São Paulo, Dec. 2, 2018 [updated on Feb. 1, 2020]. Available at: <https://www.brasildefato.com.br/2018/12/02/escola-sem-partido-promove-censura-e-controle-social-nas-instituicoes-de-ensino/>. Accessed on: Sept. 30, 2025; FREITAS, Jéssica. *Do medo à autocensura: sintomas evidenciam que Escola Sem Partido se fez 'lei'*. Último Segundo, São Paulo, June 1, 2019. Available at: <https://ultimosegundo.ig.com.br/educacao/2019-06-01/do-medo-a-autocensura-sintomas-evidenciam-que-escola-sem-partido-se-fez-lei.html>. Accessed on: Sept. 30, 2025.

that, nationwide, most educators have experienced direct interventions on their freedom to teach since the 2010s. This suggests that practices of censorship⁷ are widespread throughout the Brazilian territory and have become part of the everyday reality of education systems. Such a context underscores the need for territorially

grounded and qualitative research to better understand the different manifestations of the phenomenon. This pattern remains consistent when the data are aggregated by region: across all regions, the majority of participants reported direct contact with at least one instance of censorship.

Region and level of contact

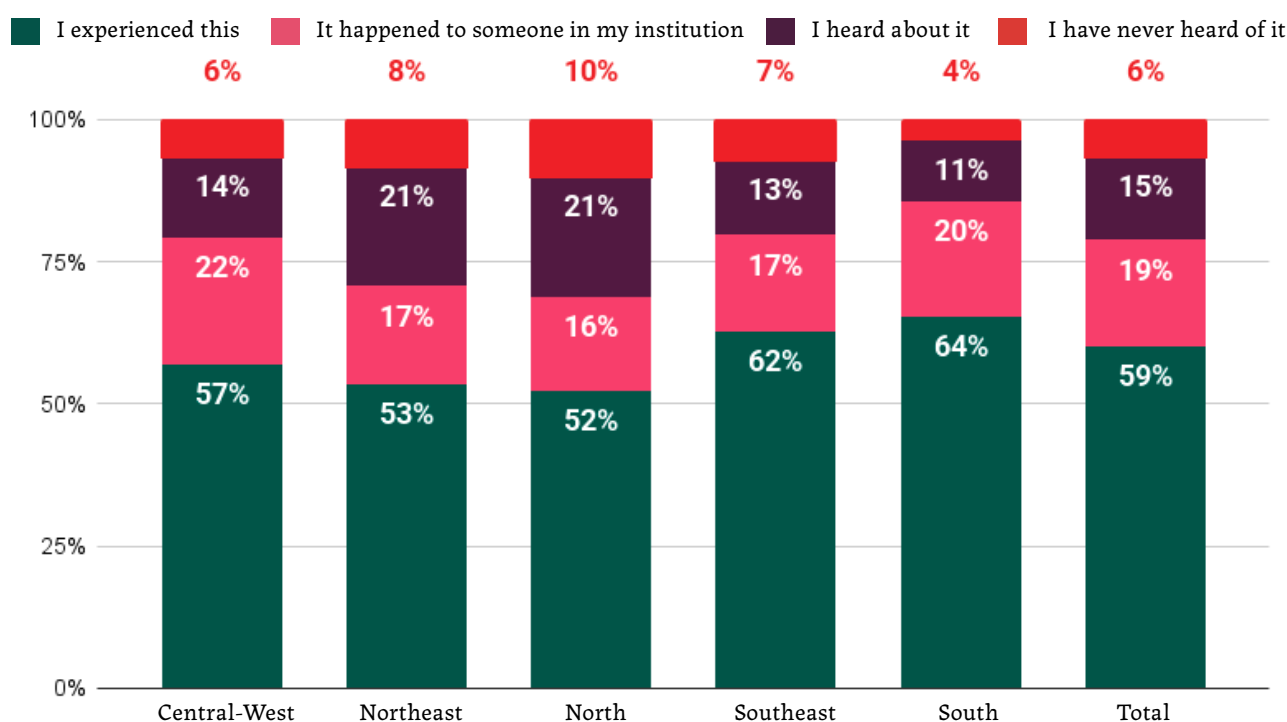


Figure 3 - Proportion of educators by region and level of contact with situations of censorship (N = 3,012).

Source: Authors' own elaboration, 2025.

As the study design and sampling controls were implemented by region, the cross-tabulations presented from this point onward should be interpreted in light of the specific features of the questionnaire and the manner in which it was disseminated. Regarding curricular components, teachers were allowed to select more than one subject. Consequently, the charts below present aggregated data by area of knowledge rather than by number of respondents, as it is common

for educators to teach in more than one subject area. Notably, the highest number of responses came from teachers in early childhood education and the early years of elementary education (571 responses), followed by history teachers (391 responses) and Portuguese/literature teachers (347 responses).⁸

Across all areas of knowledge, more than half of the respondents reported direct contact with situations of censorship, with educators in

⁷ We understand censorship in education as actions aimed at limiting the freedom to learn, teach, and disseminate knowledge, science, and art under the pretext of political, ideological, or religious disagreements. For this, we rely not only on Article 206 of the Federal Constitution, regarding education, but also on Article 5, Section IX, concerning fundamental rights and guarantees, which ensures that "the expression of intellectual, artistic, scientific, and communication activities is free, regardless of censorship or authorization." Naturally, as is the case with communication, the teaching process must be appropriate to the age group it targets.

⁸ During the first two months of the questionnaire's administration, this question did not include the options "Physical Education" and "Biology." Due to this gap, many respondents entered the information under the "Other" category.

the humanities experiencing the highest levels of direct exposure. Nevertheless, the proportion of teachers in the exact sciences who report restrictions on their teaching practices is noteworthy. When indirect experiences are

considered alongside direct ones the pervasiveness of the phenomenon become unmistakable: across areas of knowledge and regions of Brazil, 93% of educators reported some form of contact with situations of censorship.

Areas of knowledge (Basic Education)

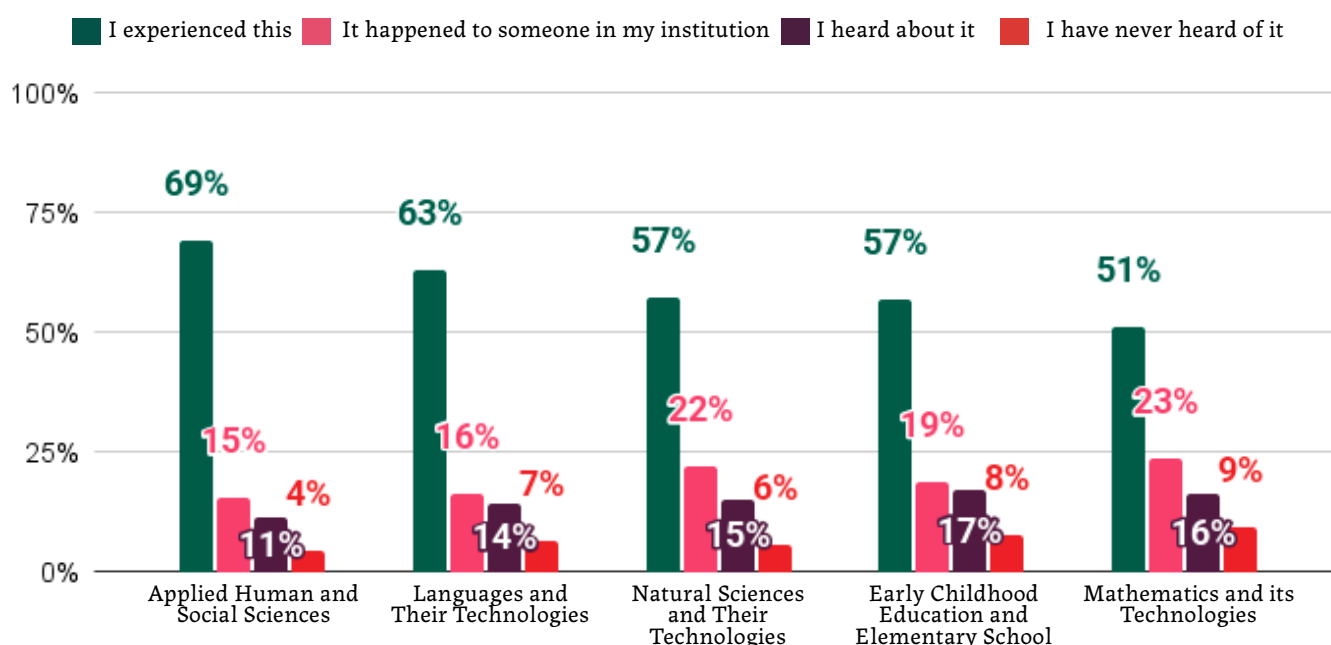


Figure 4 - Distribution by area of knowledge in basic education and level of contact, based on subject data (N = 3,012).
Source: Authors' own elaboration, 2025.

Educators' professional knowledge has become less important than avoiding controversial topics

Table 3 presents data from responses provided by basic education educators, with rows ordered from highest to lowest according to the option "I have experienced this". The percentages by level of contact for each illustrative situation indicate that the most frequently experienced situation was being advised to avoid, or being prohibited from discussing, topics considered controversial (38%). Restrictions related to "Politics" follows closely (36%). These findings also reveal how educators' professional knowledge is denied in their routine: 31% of participants reported being

advised to avoid certain topics or approaches, and 29% reported restrictions on defining strategies within their own subject or area of practice.

*"During the 2020–2023 period, I was 'advised' by the school management team not to discuss politics or gender-related issues."*⁹

⁹ These are accounts from educators who participated in the study. The questionnaire included an optional open-ended question in which respondents were invited to describe the case, should they wish to do so.

Illustrative situation	Level of contact							
	I experienced this		It happened to someone else		I heard about it		I have never heard of it	
Recommendation to avoid, or prohibition against discussing, topics considered controversial	809	38%	347	16%	684	32%	311	14%
Recommendation to avoid, or prohibition against discussing, politics	764	36%	383	18%	696	32%	308	14%
Recommendation to avoid certain topics or approaches	664	31%	276	13%	739	34%	472	22%
Recommendation to avoid, or prohibition against addressing, certain topics within one's own subject or area of practice	632	29%	382	18%	616	29%	521	24%
Recommendation to avoid, or prohibition against discussing, gender and sexuality	590	27%	394	18%	784	36%	383	18%
Difficulty or impediment in carrying out a pedagogical project within the institution due to its theme and/or approach	569	26%	332	15%	646	30%	604	28%
Recommendation to avoid, or prohibition against discussing, religion as a cultural expression	553	26%	373	17%	795	37%	430	20%
Recommendation to change behavior, appearance, and/or clothing in an arbitrary manner	532	25%	468	22%	604	28%	547	25%
Complaint of ideological indoctrination	474	22%	465	22%	790	37%	422	20%
Recommendation to avoid, or prohibition against using, a specific book, audiovisual resources, or other material	415	19%	272	13%	736	34%	728	34%
Complaint regarding the discussion of topics related to sex education	385	18%	407	19%	868	40%	491	23%
Introduction and/or approval of a bill to restrict certain topics and approaches in the education system where you work (or worked)	338	16%	170	8%	853	40%	790	37%
Recommendation to avoid, or prohibition against addressing, ethnic-racial issues	275	13%	264	12%	761	35%	851	40%
Total	7000		4533		9572		6858	

Table 3 – Respondents working in basic education (N = 2,151).¹⁰ Source: Authors' own elaboration, 2025.

The options “I experienced this” (N = 7.000) and “I heard about it” (N = 5.572) received the highest number of selections. Overall, respondents demonstrate familiarity with the situation, either through direct or indirect contact.

Therefore, it is essential to further examine how these different levels of contact shape individuals' experiences and perceptions. Respondents who indicated that they had experienced a situation answered the question presented in the **Figure 5**.

¹⁰ The percentage values are rounded. This will be the case in all tables to facilitate readability.

Topics that prompted questioning of the educator's practice

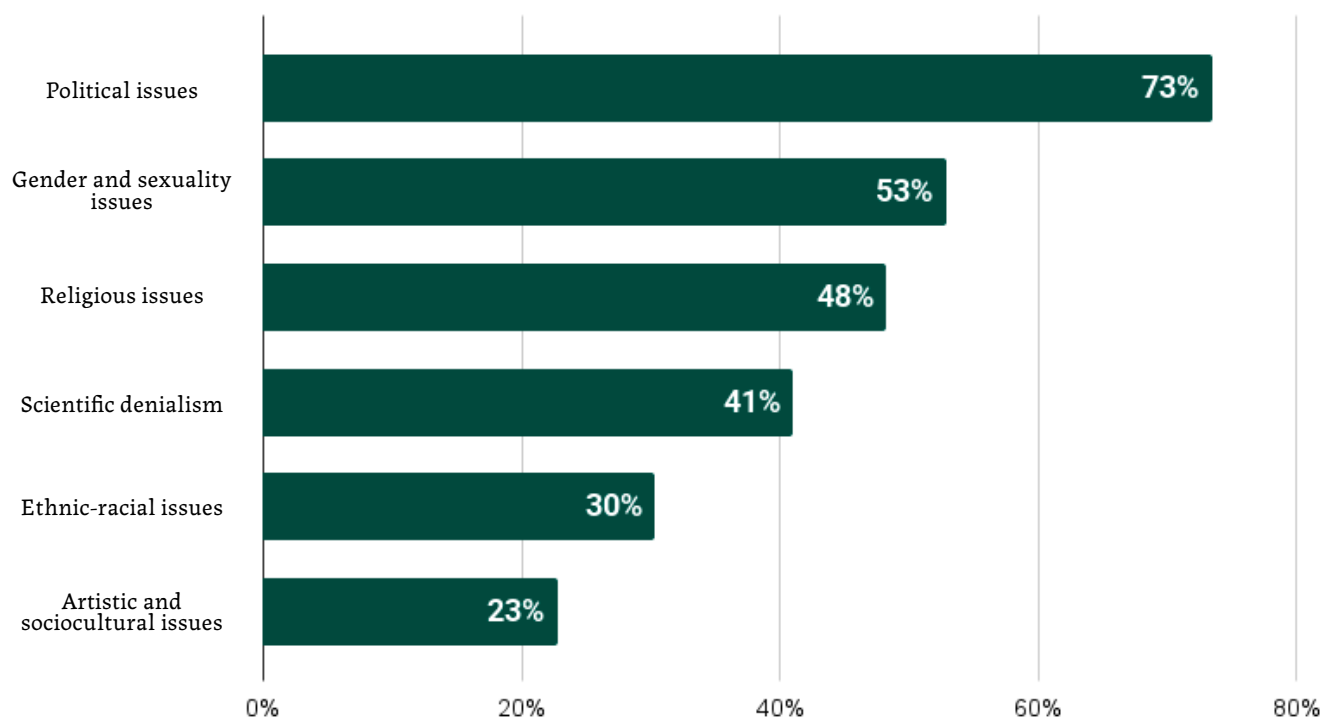


Figure 5 – Data from responses to the question “What types of issues prompted this?”, answered by educators who indicated “I experienced this”. (N = 1,792). Source: Authors’ own elaboration, 2025.

The prominence of the term “politics” as the most frequently questioned topic reflects the growing reframing of canonical school topics as “controversial.” The study *Education, Values, and Rights*¹¹ (Ação Educativa; Cenpec; Cesop/Unicamp, 2022) highlighted how families react differently to the expressions “discussing politics” in the classroom versus “discussing inequalities.”

Much of this process of curriculum deconstruction driven is done by **groups seeking to reframe topics that are central to a democratic culture and grounded in scientific knowledge as matters of private, family concern, thereby promoting the privatization of issues that are inherently public** (Penna, 2019).

In this context, it is crucial to underscore the role of basic education teachers in **introducing new generations to the knowledge produced by humanity**, especially amid technical transformations that increasingly alienate society from the material foundations of these infrastructures. Just

as disinformation had a direct impact on COVID-19 containment policies during the pandemic—when state actions failed to align with scientific evidence—we are now witnessing the impact of the discourse that labels education professionals, responsible for the formation Brazilian citizens, as “indoctrinators.”

These data illustrate the impact on basic education of what the literature has called a crisis of expert systems. According to Leticia Cesarino (2021, 2022), phenomena such as post-truth, disinformation, and fake news are symptoms of a broader reconfiguration of social systems traditionally guided by experts: democratic institutions, universities, environmental and health policies, and other spaces that produce reliable knowledge. The ways in which knowledge and public policy are produced are currently under significant strain; it is therefore unsurprising that the school, a foundational institution for integrating new generations into a public sphere oriented by these

¹¹ For further information, see: CENPEC. São Paulo, [199-]. Available at: <https://www.cenpec.org.br/>. Accessed on: September 30, 2024

expert systems, have become a central target amid ongoing disputes over what constitutes reliable knowledge and who is recognized as a legitimate expert. Framing teachers as “ideological indoctrinators” undermines these professionals and, by extension, weakens the education system as a whole, along with the knowledge upon which the freedoms to learn and to teach are based.

Censorship increased throughout the 2010s, intensified during election periods, became recurrent, and has remained at consistently high levels

Educators who reported having experienced direct instances of censorship were asked to indicate how many times they had faced such situations, in order to assess the recurrence of practices that restrict teaching freedom and constrain pedagogical activity. They were also asked to identify when the most serious incident occurred, with response options ranging from 2010 to 2024. Additionally, respondents could indicate whether any of these situations was ongoing at the time they completed the survey.

This temporal focus is grounded in the literature that links the emergence of hate speech against educators (Penna, 2016) to the reorganization of the right and far-right in Brazil and their direct actions within the educational field. These interventions have occurred primarily through the creation and dissemination of disinformation, such as claims of alleged “ideological indoctrination” by teachers and in textbooks, accusations regarding the supposed inclusion of “gender ideology” in the National Education Plan, debated in Congress from 2010 to 2014, and portrayal of the *Escola sem Homofobia* materials as a so-called “gay kit.” Another key factor shaping this context is the transformation in how individuals access information and relate to the world through digital technologies. Platform algorithms foster echo chambers that intensify radicalized¹² social interactions and operate in tension with principles that are central to science and democracy (Cesarino, 2022, 2024).

In **Figure 6**, we observe that most educators reported experiencing restrictions on their freedom to teach four times or more in all Brazilian regions with particularly high levels in the South (40%), where this share repre-

sents nearly half of respondents. Only a minority of participants reported having experienced such restrictions on a single occasion.

Figure 7 indicates a rising trend in the frequency of these occurrences throughout the 2010s across all regions of the country. In 2014, the Southeast registered an initial and significant peak, which subsequently became a baseline level for the number of reported cases in the following years, with the exception of the North region. The year is especially significant in the context of educational policy and the advance of extremist agendas within schools. It coincides with the approval of the National Education Plan (Law No. 13,005/2014), whose deliberation in Congress was strongly shaped by fundamentalist interventions—particularly around gender-related issues. This pattern was later replicated in debates over state and municipal education plans and marked one of the key moments when the expression “gender ideology” gained widespread prominence in Brazil’s public arena (Junqueira, 2022).

The recurrent peaks observed during election years, particularly in 2018 and 2022, which were dramatic moments in Brazilian politics, show that the intensification of these situations coincides with electoral cycles, indicating a potential correlation between heightened political-electoral tensions and their translation into episodes of censorship against educators. Such findings are consistent with academic research showing that the freedoms to learn and to teach have increasingly been mobilized as arenas for far-right political organization (Araújo, 2023; Cesarino, 2024; Rocha, 2018).

¹² The content that circulates rapidly in this way, in turn, stirs deep passions within social groups through oppositions such as pure/impure, friend/enemy, and “good citizen”/criminal. It is no coincidence that these inversions and mirrorings have become common repertoire for the far right (Cesarino, 2020).

Frequency of situations by major regions

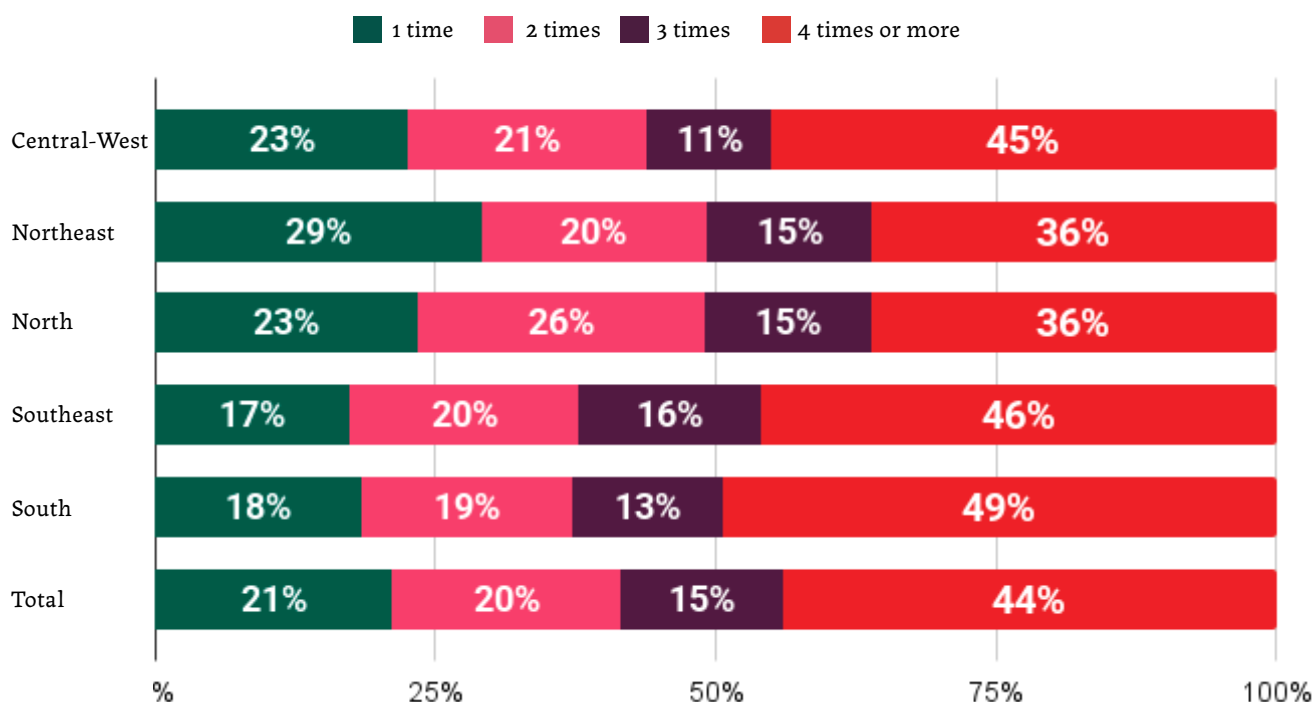


Figure 6 – Data from responses to the question “How many times have situations of this type happened to you since 2010?”, answered by educators who indicated “I experienced this” (N = 1,792). Source: Authors’ own elaboration, 2025.

Incidence of censorship situations against educators (2010 - 2024)

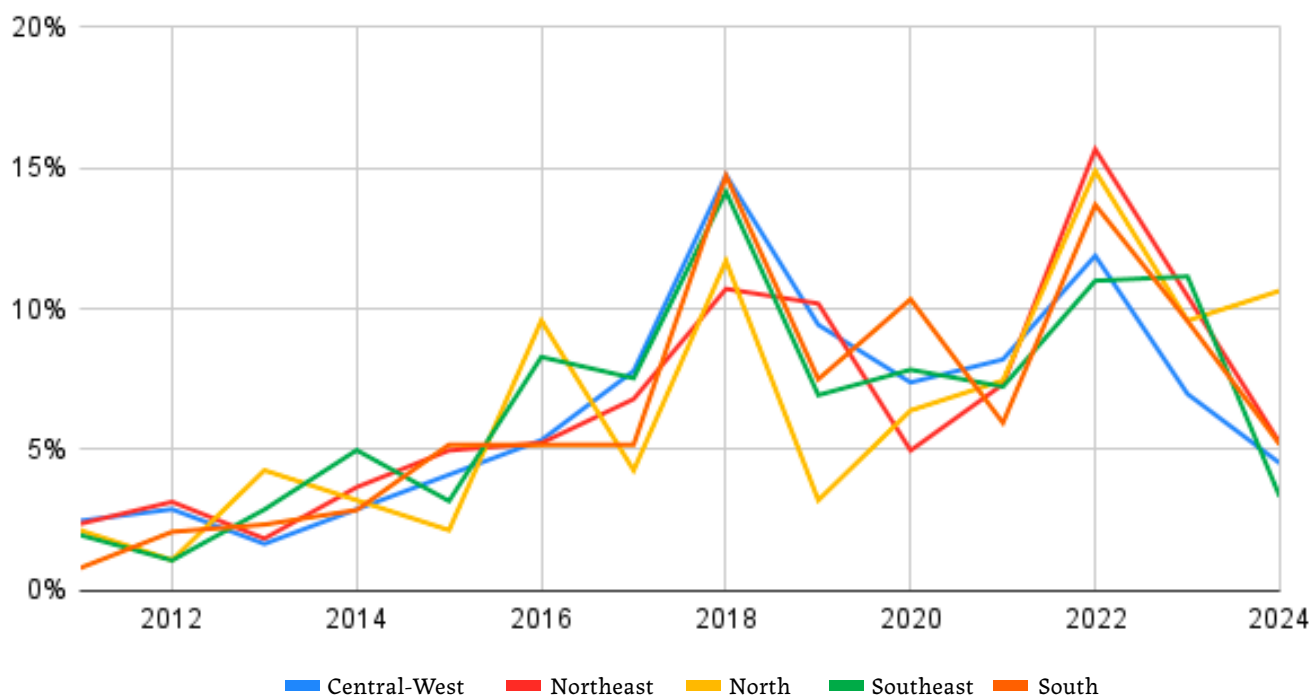


Figure 7 – Incidence of censorship processes from 2010 to 2024, as reported by educators who indicated “I experienced this” grouped by region (N = 1,792). Source: Authors’ own elaboration, 2025.

The impact of both direct and indirect censorship demonstrates that it constitutes a form of violence against educators, with the potential to affect the entire educational community

Respondents who reported having experienced direct censorship (by selecting “I experienced this”) were directed to a subsequent set of questions designed to capture details about the process and its impact. Those who reported only indirect contact (“It happened to someone at my institution” or “I heard about it”) completed a separate section aimed at assessing whether, despite not being directly targeted, they were nonetheless affected by these situations.

Responses to these sections make clear that the suffering and silencing produced by censorship constitute a form of violence that affects both targeted individuals and those around them, with profound consequences on educators’ health and professional practice, and therefore significant implications for the guarantee of the right to education. The findings also demonstrate the diffusion of self-censorship among educators, regardless of whether they experienced direct restrictions.

Table 4 presents the forms of attacks reported by respondents who indicated some level of direct experience with censorship. Attempts at intimidation emerged as the most frequently reported form (58%), followed by aggressive questioning of the legitimacy of the topic and/or work methods (41%). Notably, challenges to educators’ professional knowledge feature prominently¹³, occupying the second, third, and fourth highest positions in the table.

The responses indicate a combination of various forms of attacks, including being summoned to account for working methods (36%), forced relocation (12%), removal from a position or role as a form of retaliation (11%), legal harassment (9%), criminal

“There were several cases with different outcomes. There was embarrassment and pressure to change behavior at a private school; there was dismissal from the same private institution in the middle of the school year; there was constant monitoring by the administration at the public school where I still work; there was an attempt at coercion and threats at the public school where I still work; there was slander and defamation by students and families at the private school where I work; and there was psychological violence and threats of physical violence at the public school where I work.”

“The coordinator at my school was extremely arrogant, treated most teachers with insults, and intimidated us through disciplinary directives. I felt frustrated being in a place with no room for dialogue, until I decided to change schools, and everything improved.”

“I felt very intimidated and afraid of people; I even thought about never teaching again.”

proceedings (3%), and suspension (2%). It is important to highlight the use of administrative proceedings (9%) as a method of attack, as this entails the instrumentalization of routine public service procedures for purposes of persecution, either through disregard for public ethics or through the direct intervention of external actors seeking to silence educators¹⁴.

¹³ Here, we understand educators’ professional knowledge—adopting a Freirean perspective—in the same sense as the teaching knowledge conceptualized by Tardif (2010): pedagogical knowledge, disciplinary knowledge, curricular knowledge, and experiential knowledge.

¹⁴ This mechanism was examined in a report (SEPE/RJ & ONVE, 2024) focused on the public education system of the state of Rio de Janeiro, produced by the Working Group Against Political Persecution of the Rio de Janeiro State Union of Education Professionals (SEPE/RJ), in partnership with the Observatory. In the report, we analyze the illegal and excessive conduct of internal investigations and administrative proceedings that ultimately result in processes of violence against teachers. In other works (Aquino; Moura, [2026?]; Penna; Aquino; Moura, 2024), we have pointed out how mechanisms of administrative bureaucracy, due to the influence of public figures holding positions in the Legislative Branch, are in certain situations mobilized to punish public servants.

Elements of the situation experienced by the respondent	Respondents	%
Intimidation attempt	1.021	58%
Aggressive questioning regarding the legitimacy of the topic and/or work method	723	41%
Calls to account for working methods	636	36%
Bans on topics and/or methodologies in professional practice	624	35%
Verbal aggression and insults (in person and/or on social media)	439	25%
Forced workplace relocation	218	12%
Retaliatory removal from a position or role	196	11%
Physical assaults or threats to personal safety or life (in person and/or on social media)	181	10%
Public exposure of professional practices on platforms created specifically to report or denounce educators (websites, WhatsApp numbers, social media pages, or similar spaces)	176	10%
Administrative proceedings	166	9%
Anonymous threats received	159	9%
Legal harassment through recurrent complaints submitted to public prosecutors, attorney's offices, ombuds institutions, and similar authorities	152	9%
Social media exposure of audio or video excerpts from situations that occurred at the institution	139	8%
Denial of promotions, bonuses, or allowances due to political or ideological positions or religious beliefs	121	7%
Public exposure by a city councilor, deputy, or senator in a public statement or in posts on their official social media accounts	119	7%
Exposure on social media of pedagogical, evaluative, or similar materials produced by you	112	6%
Dismissal	99	6%
Extrajudicial notice	51	3%
Criminal proceedings	49	3%
Suspension	36	2%
Total	1.792	100%

Table 4 – Elements of violations present in the situations experienced by respondents who reported direct experiences of censorship. Responses could be multiple, with rotation of answer options during questionnaire administration (N = 1,792).
Source: Authors' own elaboration, 2025.

Both respondents with direct contact and those with indirect contact were asked about the impact of these situations on their professional and personal lives. Among those who reported *direct contact* (N = 1792), 1,371 participants (76%) indicated that these experiences had an impact on their daily work routines, and 1195 (67%) reported an impact on their personal lives. Among those who reported *indirect contact* (N = 999), 519 participants (52%) indicated an impact on their daily work routines, while 384 participants (38%) reported impacts on their personal lives. These situations affect both their direct targets and those who become aware of the events through information shared by colleagues within the institution.

This *inhibiting and fear-inducing effect* caused by restrictions on the freedoms to learn and to teach underscores the importance of understanding the role of *school climate*¹⁵ in shaping individuals' experiences within educational environments. They also illustrate what legal scholarship terms *chilling effect*: a phenomenon in which the mere threat of legal sanctions discourages or inhibits the legitimate exercise of rights, such as freedom of expression. This effect can arise even in the absence of explicit legal prohibitions, when norms or regulations are vague or overly broad, leading individuals to engage in self-censorship out of fear of retaliation, social disapproval, or legal action.

Respondents who reported direct contact with such situations and stated that they were affected were asked to assess the extent to which these acts impacted their professional lives (Figure 8). Most reported being *highly* (39%) or *extremely* (33%) affected. A similar pattern of responses emerged with respect to personal life: respondents likewise reported being *highly* (39%) or *extremely* (33%) affected (Figure 9).

Respondents who reported indirect contact with such situations and stated that they were affected reported that their professional lives were *moderately* (39%), *highly* (30%), and *extremely* (8%) affected (Figure 10). When these responses are combined, 77% of individuals with indirect contact with acts of censorship report being affected in their professional lives.

In other words, it is not necessary for a large number of professionals to be directly targeted for an entire educational community to be impacted.

The effects of censorship circulate through interpersonal relationships within the school community, such that the fear generated in one individual “spreads” to many others, altering the climate of the educational institution where the violation occurs. These findings also suggest that educators perceive these attacks, even when directed at a specific individual, as affecting the professional category as a whole.

In their personal lives, the impact is slightly greater: when the categories *moderately*, *highly*, and *extremely* are combined, a total of 83% of educators reported being affected in their personal lives (Figure 11).

¹⁵ We adopt the term *school climate* to refer to the conviviality of individuals within the educational space, understood both as a measure of how respected members feel and how well this space is able to apply and enforce rules that are collectively understood to be fair (Moro; Vinha; Morais, 2019). The key point here is to conceive interpersonal relations as a web of relationships that plays an important role in understanding educational phenomena.

Degree of impact on educators' professional lives

"I have experienced this"

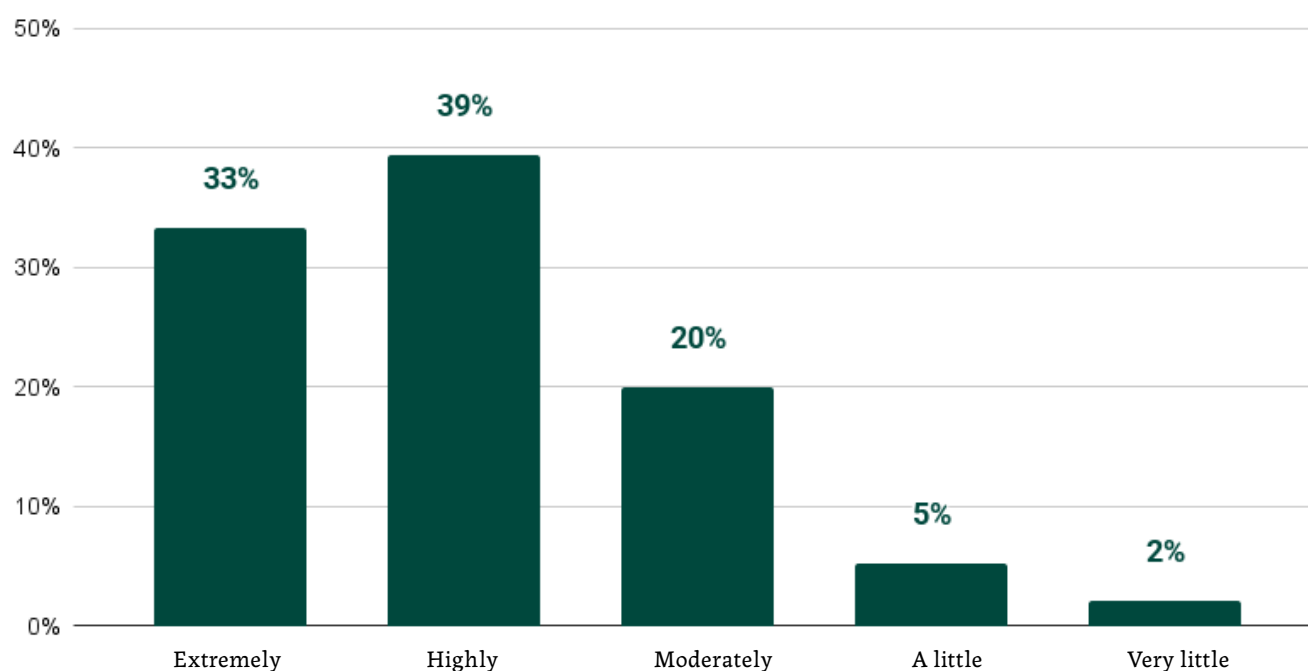


Figure 8 – Impact of direct experiences with censorship on educators' professional lives (N = 1,371).
Source: Authors' own elaboration, 2025.

Degree of impact on educators' personal lives

"I have experienced this"

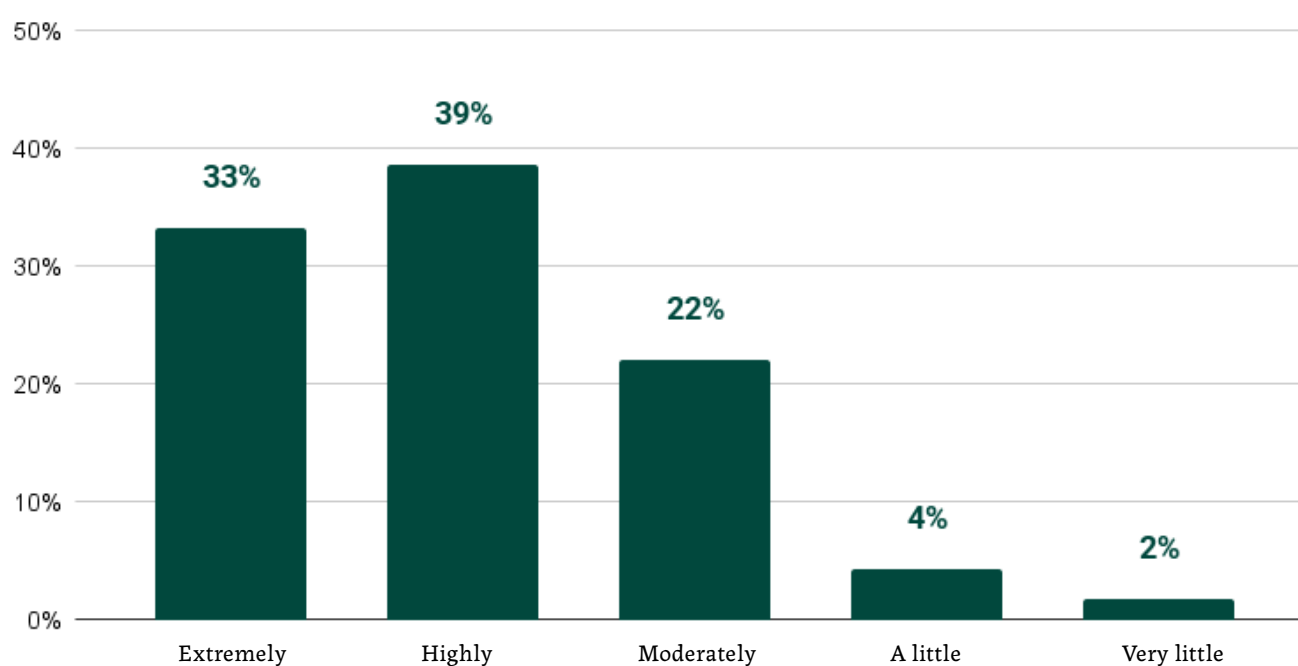


Figure 9 – Impact of direct experiences with censorship on educators' personal lives (N = 1,195).
Source: Authors' own elaboration, 2025.

Degree of impact on educators' **professional** lives

"It happened to someone..." and "I heard about it"

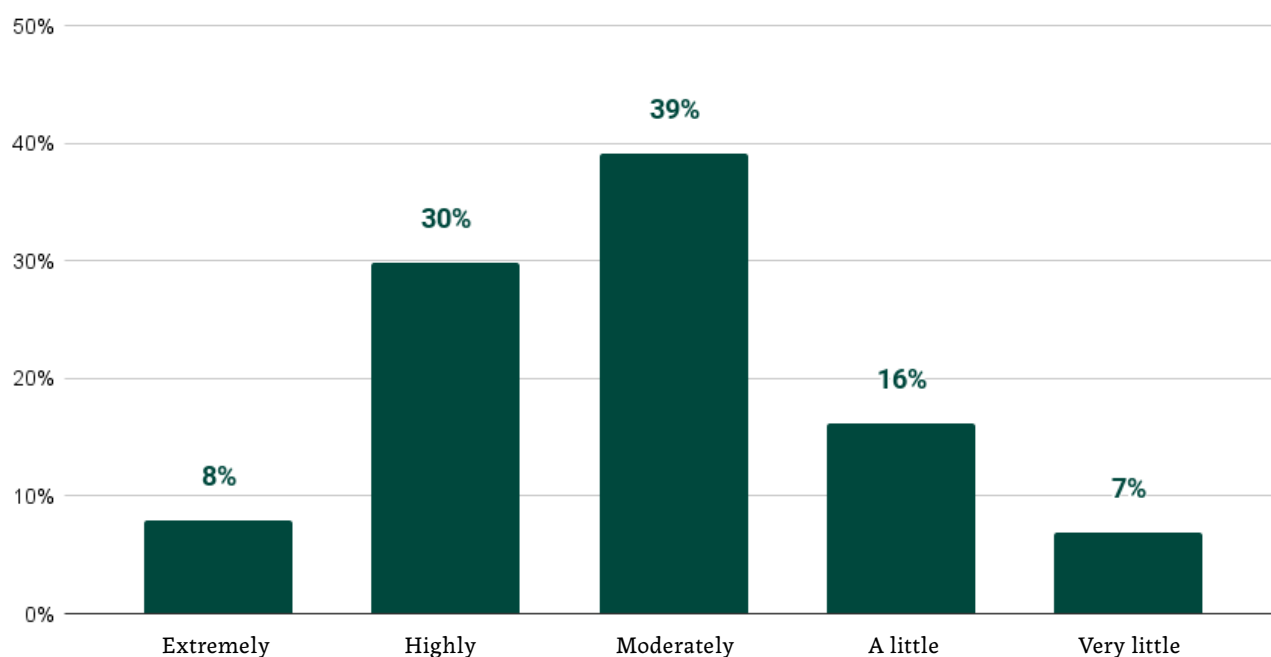


Figure 10 – Impact of indirect experiences with censorship on educators' professional lives (N = 519).

Source: Authors' own elaboration, 2025.

Degree of impact on educators' **personal** lives

"It happened to someone..." and "I heard about it"

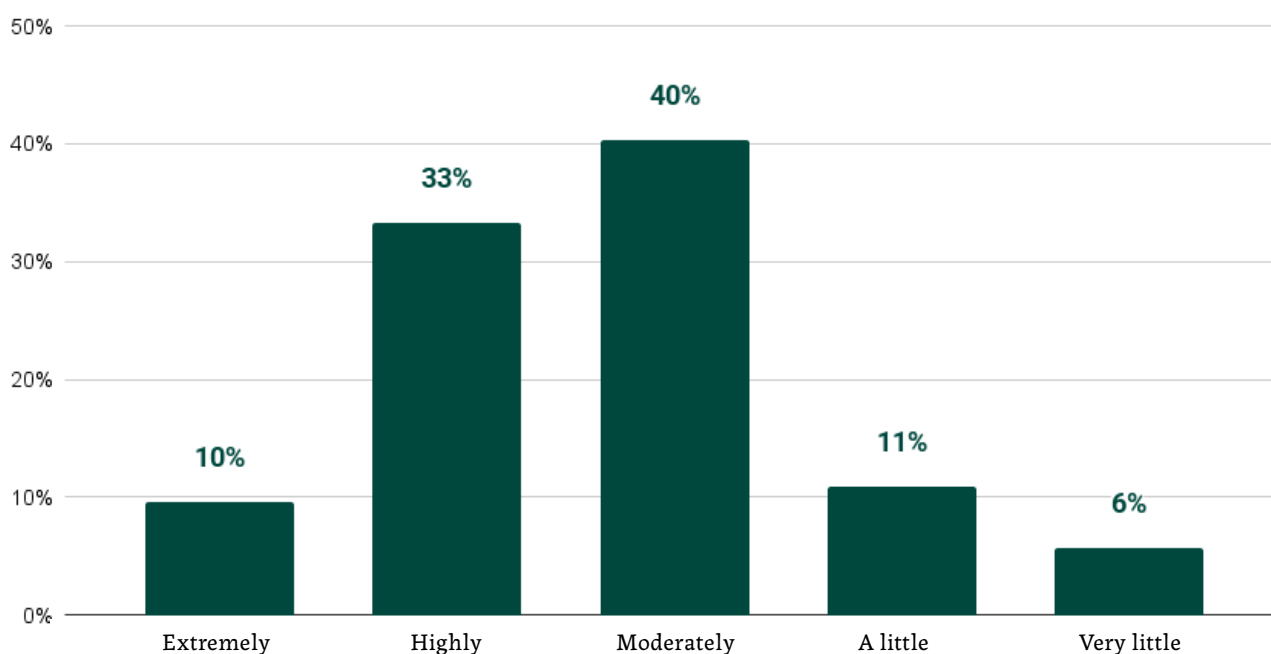


Figure 11 – Impact of indirect experiences with censorship on educators' personal lives (N = 384).

Source: Authors' own elaboration, 2025.

Among respondents with direct experiences of censorship who reported being affected (N = 1,371), **Table 7** shows the changes they made to their daily work routines as a result of these situations. The majority stated that they began to *consider more carefully what they said in their professional practice* (60%) and that they felt **constantly insecure or under surveillance** (59%). Discomfort with the workplace is the third most significant impact of censorship reported by respondents (53%), leading 20% of participants to change their workplace on their own initiative.

The impact of these situations on educators' professional self-perception is underscored by the high proportion of respondents who questioned their *continued professional involvement* in education (52%). Some, in fact, completely changed their professional field (2%).

Other responses in the questionnaire also reveal processes of self-censorship among educators: 38% reported *removing topics, materials, or methodologies from their practices*; 32% *abandoned a project*; 30% *reduced their activity on social media*; 28% *decreased their participation in public debates*; and 9% even *changed their research topics*.

Among respondents with indirect experience, self-censorship is similarly evident. Although these individuals did not report direct contact with restrictions on their professional practice, they nevertheless indicated that they monitored their own expression, reduced their engagement on social media and in public debates, and removed topics from their pedagogical practices (**Table 6**).

“I have experienced this”

Type of impact on professional life	Respondents	%
I began to think more carefully about what I said in my professional practice	822	60%
I feel constantly insecure and under surveillance	814	59%
I questioned whether I should remain in my workplace	722	53%
I questioned whether I should continue working in education	713	52%
I removed certain topics, materials, or methodologies from my practice	526	38%
I abandoned a project	444	32%
I reduced my activity on social media	416	30%
I reduced my participation in public debates (interviews, newspaper columns, lectures, and similar activities)	380	28%
I changed my workplace on my own initiative	269	20%
My career was adversely affected	250	18%
I changed my research topic	118	9%
I changed my career path	30	2%
Total	1.371	100%

Table 5 – Responses to the question “What changes did these events bring to your daily work routine?”, answered by educators who indicated “I experienced this.” Multiple responses were allowed, with rotation of answer options during questionnaire administration. Only respondents who stated that they were impacted in their professional lives answered this question (N = 1,371).

"It happened to someone..." or "I heard about it"

Type of impact on professional life	Respondents	%
I began to think more carefully about what I said in my professional practice	351	68%
I feel constantly insecure and under surveillance	205	39%
I reduced my activity on social media	177	34%
I questioned whether I should continue working in education	159	31%
I reduced my participation in public debates (interviews, newspaper columns, lectures, and similar activities)	128	25%
I removed certain topics, materials, or methodologies from my practice	117	23%
I questioned whether I should remain in my workplace	110	21%
I abandoned a project	54	10%
I changed my workplace on my own initiative	33	6%
I changed my research topic	18	3%
I changed my career path	5	1%
Total	519	100%

Table 6 – Responses to the question “What changes did these events bring to your daily work routine?” provided by educators who indicated “It happened to someone...” or “I heard about it.” Multiple responses were allowed, with rotation of answer options during questionnaire administration. Only respondents who reported being affected in their professional lives were asked to answer this question (N = 519). Source: Authors’ own elaboration, 2025.

"I have experienced this"

Type of impact on personal life	Respondents	%
I began to feel sadder and more stressed	944	79%
I developed anxiety and/or depressive disorder	717	60%
I became concerned for my personal safety	494	41%
I feared losing my job	468	39%
I began experiencing financial difficulties	261	22%
I changed my place of residence	81	7%
Total	1.195	100%

Table 7 – Impact on the personal lives of those with direct experience of censorship. Multiple responses were allowed, with rotation of answer options during questionnaire administration. Only respondents who reported being affected in their personal lives answered this question (N = 1,195). Source: Authors’ own elaboration, 2025.

"It happened to someone..." or "I heard about it"

Type of impact on personal life	Encuestados	%
I began to feel sadder and more stressed	250	65%
I developed anxiety and/or depressive disorder	148	39%
I became concerned for my personal safety	124	32%
I feared losing my job	73	19%
I began experiencing financial difficulties	30	8%
I changed my place of residence	12	3%
Total	384	100%

Table 8 – Impact on the personal lives of those with indirect experience of censorship. Multiple responses were allowed, with rotation of answer options during questionnaire administration. Only respondents who reported being affected in their personal lives answered this question (N = 384). Source: Authors' own elaboration, 2025.

When examining the impacts on the personal lives of educators with direct experience of censorship (Table 7) and that reported feeling affected by it (N = 1,195), the extent of suffering becomes clear. Effects range from physical and mental health challenges—77% reported feeling sadder and more stressed, and 60% developed anxiety and/or depressive disorders—to the persistent experience of fear (41% feared for their personal safety; 39% feared losing their jobs), as well as financial difficulties (22%). These findings demonstrate that censorship generates significant suffering, hardship, and illness among educators. Educators with indirect experiences similarly report negative impacts on their personal lives (Table 8).

The impact on educators revealed by these data underscore the **need to employ the concept of violence**: the effects of censorship on the school environment, with differences, are comparable to those of more widely recognized forms of violence, such as physical assault or moral harassment. The report *Attacks on Schools in Brazil: Analysis of the Phenomenon and Recommendations for Government Action* (Cara, 2023), which conducted an in-depth study to inform policies combating extreme violence, emphasizes the importance of understanding violence in both **historical** and broad terms, while taking into account the

specificities of the school institution. For this research, we see how an act becomes violence through the silences it engenders and the combination of different methods of attack. The widespread presence of self-censorship further illustrates how this violence produces an inhibiting and fear-inducing effect, creating unease that spreads throughout the educational community and shaping a school climate with little freedom and autonomy.

Unlike other groups that contest the school from the outside, such as business agents increasingly embedded in the state through various strategies of influence (Avelar; Ball, 2021; Cássio et al., 2020; Catini, 2020), far-right groups that have developed expertise in operating through cultural wars (Rocha, 2018) contest schools, their curricula, and pedagogy from within (Cássio, 2019).

Analyzing the school climate reveals important elements for identifying areas that require intervention to ensure the dignity of all individuals involved in upholding the right to education. As this research indicates, acts of censorship, coming from different agents within the school, are generally either *symptoms* or *initiators* of broader processes of violence in the educational environment.

Thus, the present study outlines the contours of a specific configuration of violence against educators,

perpetrated against them because of their profession, which is not isolated from other widely recognized forms of violence; on the contrary, it combines with them. These processes of violation manifest in the illness and silencing of educators, resulting from multiple forms of attack. Here, we see the suffering of individuals who have been targets of defamatory campaigns for over a decade simply for performing their work. **Teachers are attacked both collectively and individually for embodying, within schools, the**

knowledge and public policies that sustain, often at great effort, a democratic culture in our country (Penna; Aquino; Moura, 2024). In this regard, we also highlight how the indirect impact of censorship—manifesting as a form of violence that generates fear and silencing and can spread throughout the school environment—sheds light on how denialist views become entrenched in everyday educational practice.

Censorship comes from multiple agents

To the question “Who raised this challenge to your practice?”, participants predominantly identified individuals internal to the educational communities (**Table 7**): *pedagogical professionals* (57%), *students’ family members* (44%), *students* (34%), *other teachers* (27%), *administrative staff of the institution* (26%), *other institutional employees* (24%), *or representatives from the municipal or state education department or university administration* (21%). It is worth noting that all respondents—from basic education, EBTT, and higher education—answered from the same list of potential agents of violence. Consequently, the list uses broad terms to encompass professionals performing equivalent roles across different types of institutions.

Among respondents who identified pedagogical professionals as agents of censorship (N = 1,007), only 223 (22%) indicated **exclusively** these agents; that is, 78% of participants who indicated principals, coordinators, and/or advisors as agents also identified two or more types of agents as responsible for censorship. Overall, **69% of respondents with direct experience of violence indicated more than one censoring agent**. Of these, 23% marked five or more types of agents, 18% marked two types, and 16% marked three types. In other words, **in most cases, multiple agents are involved in acts of censorship**.

Two fundamental issues emerge from these findings. First, it is evident the **contagion effect of violence in these spaces**, since it originates from different members of the educational community.

Second, it becomes clear that **members of educational institutions have internalized the imperative of censorship and self-censorship**, perpetuating them from within these institutions. The systematic dimension of the phenomenon is also evident: it constitutes a social behavior enacted by diverse actors from different sectors of society, both inside and outside educational communities. Thus, the contestation of the school from within (Cássio, 2019) has largely achieved its objectives, even if not fully realized through formal public censorship policies, as intended by programs such as Escola sem Partido and similar initiatives.

Management based on democratic practices and cultures is still uncommon in the country. **Often, school management teams are heavily involved in patrimonialist and non-republican political scenarios**. According to the 2024 School Census (INEP, 2025), 58.5%—more than half of school principals, the majority of whom are women (80.6%)—still assume their positions through political appointment by the municipal or state executive. Although this proportion has decreased compared to 2023, when 63.9% were politically appointed, much remains to be done for the educational community to move toward mechanisms that foster truly democratic management, a fundamental issue for considering coexistence within schools.

However, it is also necessary to recognize that the election of school principals represents only one component of democratic management;

collegiality¹⁶ and meaningful participation are equally essential (Lima, 2014). **Democratic management should not be understood solely in terms of how a principal attains their position, but also in terms of how they carry out their role, which**

necessarily involves understanding the public purposes of education and a commitment to ensuring that schools function as **spaces of freedom, dissent, and commitment to the interruption of violence.**

Agents of violence	Respondents	%
Pedagogical professionals within the institution (principals, coordinators, advisors, and similar roles)	1.007	57%
Students' family members	772	44%
Students	598	34%
Teachers	484	27%
Administrative staff of the institution	455	26%
Other institutional employees	426	24%
Professionals from central education authorities (education departments, university administration and intermediary bodies, or similar)	375	21%
Political figures (members of the Legislative or Executive branches, candidates, and similar) or their advisors	325	18%
Members of the external community or surrounding environment	312	18%
Social media users	246	14%
Religious entities or figures	172	10%
Public figures (digital influencers, celebrities, and similar)	168	9%
Social/ideological movements	156	9%
Members of institutions with essential judicial functions (Public Prosecutor's Office, attorney offices, and similar)	55	3%
Others	52	3%
Total	1.792	100%

Table 9 – Agents responsible for violations experienced by respondents who reported direct experiences of censorship (N = 1,792). Multiple responses were allowed, with rotation of answer options during questionnaire administration. Source: Authors' own elaboration, 2025.

¹⁶ According to the 2024 School Census, out of a total of 215,545 schools in Brazil, 115,785 reported having an active School Council; 65,280 reported not having an active School Council; and 34,480 schools did not report the status of their School Council. However, once again, the issue is not merely ensuring the existence of a School Council, but that it functions as a space for democratic engagement, rather than merely serving as an administrative unit for receiving public funding.

Educational policies that are overly focused on metrics and outcomes lead to a narrowing of what is considered pedagogical work (Biesta, 2013; Freitas, 2014) and foster chains of harassment among educational managers. Several studies point to the negative effects on the right to education of policies centered on performance measurement and weakening of teacher autonomy, such as the platformization of education (Henriques et al., 2025). Conflicts between teachers and administrators, whether within the school's pedagogical team or at the broader education system level, should also be understood within the context of

excessive control over teaching practice.

Actors external to the educational community also emerge as agents of violence. **Beyond the immediate school environment, the most frequently cited are members of the Executive and Legislative branches and their advisors (18%).** This underscores the role of far-right movements and political entrepreneurs (Penna; Aquino; Moura, 2024) who build a trajectory of influence by framing school subjects and topics as indoctrination and presenting schools as sites of “danger,” drawing on conspiratorial narratives about what teachers are teaching.

Support also comes from within the educational community

Sources of support	Respondents	%
Professional colleagues	1037	59%
I was not supported by any group, organization, or institution	560	32%
Union	380	21%
Management of my institution	206	12%
Social movements/collectives	182	10%
Research or graduate groups	146	8%
Political figure or political party	92	5%
Scientific association	45	3%
Institutional centers	31	2%
Total	1.792	100%

Table 10 – Responses to the question about who provided support to educators who experienced a situation of direct violence (N = 1,792). Source: Authors' own elaboration, 2025.

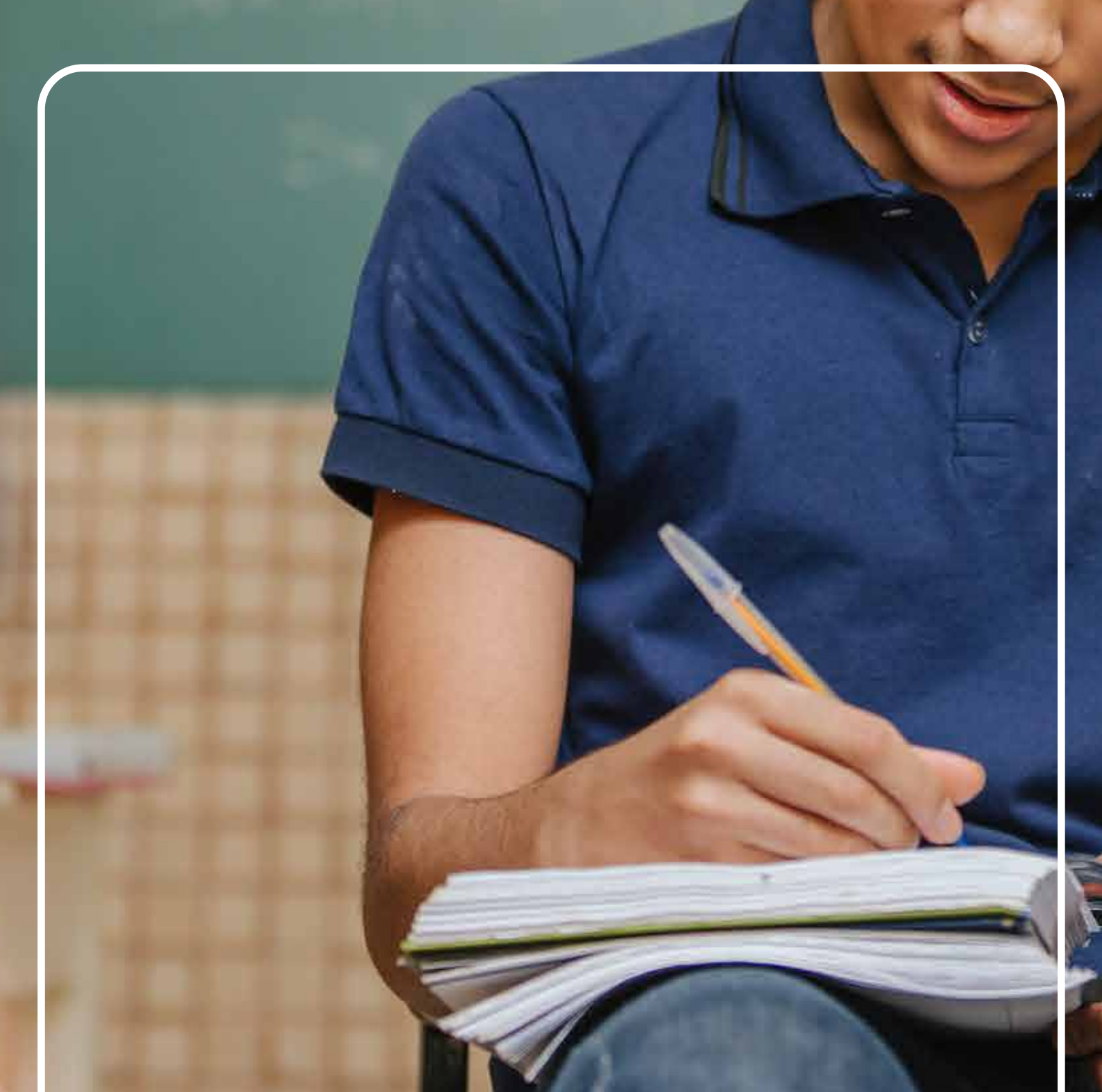
Most of the agents who perpetrate violence are part of the educational community itself; yet it is also within this space that most affected educators found support: *59% reported being supported by their professional colleagues; 32% stated that they were not supported by any group, organization, or institution, while 12% found support from the*

institution's management. These data help explain the feelings of isolation and anger reported by educators subjected to this type of violence, given the broader invisibility of their suffering in society. The lack of recognition of their experiences contributes to a process of constant revictimization.

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It is noteworthy that unions were mentioned 21% of responses, which may reflect both a distancing of educators from their unions labor movement and a possible lack of preparation of these entities to address situations not yet fully recognized as labor issues.

The scarcity of repertoire for dealing with these circumstances also affects other institutions, which are generally used to addressing matters related to censorship and persecution. This is evident in the low levels of support reported by *social movements/collectives (10%), research or graduate groups (8%), political parties (5%), scientific associations (3%), and institutional centers within schools (2%)*. The latter, created specifically to ensure the implementation of education addressing issues such as gender and sexuality (NUGEDS), Black and Indigenous history and culture (NEABI), environmental issues (NEA), among others, are, as illustrated in Figure 5, consistently targeted for censorship and persecution.



*Final considerations
& recommendations*

The data collected in this study indicate that censorship and restrictions on the freedoms to teach and to learn are widespread across the country and at all levels of education, and that such tendency began increasing around 2010 and intensified during election cycles since then. This reinforces, with evidence, the discussions about how attacking teachers and education has become a political platform in Brazil. In efforts to undermine their professional knowledge, topics such as “politics,” “gender and sexuality,” “religion,” and “scientific denialism” have been framed as controversial, resulting in frequent intimidation and challenges aimed at educators who address these subjects in line with professional standards of their field. Furthermore, it is also evident that restrictions on teaching operate as a form of violence within the school environment, targeting educators because of their professional work.

The increase in episodes of violence against educators has produced a chilling effect, promoting self-censorship, in which educators who “heard about” such cases stopped addressing certain topics in the classroom and began to feel constantly monitored. This dynamic profoundly alters the school climate, affecting the entire educational community. A contagion effect of violence can also be observed, as it originates from multiple agents, including educational staff and family members, as well as external actors such as members of the Executive and Legislative branches and parliamentary advisors. This underscores how violence against educators is both widespread and embedded in the social fabric, permeating the educational community itself.

It is important to emphasize the fact that

censorship arises from members of the educational community does not mean it originated there. Academic literature on the Brazilian educational and political context is unanimous in analyzing that extremist movements have used education as a platform to gain attention and political capital¹⁷. Unlike other attacks on the educational field, the censorship addressed here emerges from movements that seek to influence schools from within (Cássio, 2019), aiming to shape the daily school environment according to their conspiratorial worldview. This harms conviviality in educational communities and diminishes the democratic quality of these spaces. Consequently, these situations compromise not only the freedom to teach but also the freedom to learn, curtailing students’ right to education.

This scenario affects both the personal lives and daily professional activities of teachers, leading to health issues and potentially contributing to the so-called “teacher shortage”¹⁸. It makes teaching a less attractive career for young people in Brazil, not only due to material undervaluation but also because of the professional discredit to which teachers have been subjected.

To confront this climate of violence and oppression, it is essential to strengthen educational communities through democratic education, collective commitment to interrupting acts of violence, and management that is democratic by recognizing its central role in improving the school climate.

The research also revealed that support for educators who experienced violence, when it occurred, came primarily from fellow professionals. This finding underscores the isolation of the teaching profession within society.

¹⁷ See the history of bills prohibiting the discussion of gender and sexuality, as well as those of the Escola Sem Partido type (Aquino; Moura, 2022). A new legislative mapping completed last year (Aquino; Moura, [2026?]) also indicates the systematic involvement of right-wing and far-right politicians in proposing censorial measures: such proposals often serve as their calling card when taking office, as they typically emerge at the start of each legislative term in Brazil. The political group most prominently represented among the authors is the Liberal Party (PL), of former president Jair Bolsonaro, which has taken a leading role in this issue. The importance of education as a political platform is demonstrated by the variety of strategies employed to act through it within the legislature: the mapping systematized 17 types of bills that restrict the freedoms to teach and to learn.

¹⁸ For further exploration of this debate, we suggest reading several studies and reports on the subject: Rosimar Esquinsani and Sidinei Sobrinho (2024), Denise Costa (2024), as well as the text by Patricia Valim, Rosângela Hilário, Arthur Balbani, and Eduarda

Below, we present a set of political-pedagogical, legal, and public policy recommendations aimed at addressing violence against educators, as well as promoting the mental health of this professional group. These guidelines should be applied on a case-by-case basis by public and private education systems and institutions, trade unions, scientific associations, public authorities, civil society, among others. It is essential to foster strong mobilization toward both the symbolic and material valorization of educators in response to the defamatory campaigns targeting them since at least the 2010s.

1. Educators must be valued by Brazilian society, and this should be achieved through concrete educational infrastructure policies

Any effort to ensure the dignity of educators must necessarily begin with guaranteeing the conditions for decent work. Precarious educational infrastructure generates violence against all actors involved in educational activities. Educational institutions must be equipped to provide quality education, and all teachers must receive fair remuneration proportional to the complexity and social relevance of their work. Respect for teachers as essential professionals to the country is a fundamental requirement for strengthening education.

2. Democratic management must become a reality

Democratic management should be understood as a fundamental political-pedagogical premise of the right to education and respect for the human rights of all people. It should include the direct election of school leadership teams by school units, ensuring their legitimacy and the genuine participation of the entire school community in decision-making bodies and collegial structures. To this end, school councils, student unions, parent-teacher associations, and alumni associations should be strengthened

and granted deliberative authority. Effective implementation requires adequate material and human resources, as well as targeted training for all members of the educational community.

3. Educators should be recognized as human rights defenders

Both public school teachers and private school teachers, by virtue of the broad set of laws that mobilize education to achieve a democratic culture in the country, should be recognized as defenders of human rights (Mendonça; Morgan; Passos, 2021; Mendonça; Passos, 2025). The Federal Constitution (Brazil, 1988) and Brazilian educational legislation reaffirm this role by providing for education focused on the defense of democracy, human rights, and the promotion of values such as equality, diversity, and social justice.

4. Employers must ensure legal safeguards so that educators can perform their work

Educators must not be left vulnerable when performing their professional responsibilities in accordance with the law. If addressing topics established in laws and official curricula has become risky, employers, both public and private, must update their protocols to reflect this reality. This responsibility should be understood as part of the minimum infrastructure required for the provision of education.

5. Trade unions should serve as spaces for the support and protection of educators

Trade unions should actively support educators facing persecution and censorship, recognizing these situations as violations of professional practice and, therefore, as labor issues. Unions must defend their members, incorporating into their practices the reception, protection, and advocacy for educators affected by these attacks.

6. The Human Rights Hotline (Disque Direitos Humanos) should offer a dedicated pipeline for educators experiencing violence in the course of their professional duties

It is necessary to strengthen protections for educators who are victims of violence, threats, and persecution within official human rights reporting and assistance services and channels, particularly the Human Rights Hotline (*Disque 100 – Disque Direitos Humanos*), in coordination with the improvement of public protocols for reporting, responding to, and follow-up.

7. Inclusion of educators in human rights defenders protection programs

Educators should be explicitly included in the Program for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, Communicators, and Environmentalists (PPDDH) of the Ministry of Human Rights and Citizenship (MDHC), as well as in subnational programs. This inclusion ensures tailored protection measures developed in dialogue with victims and adapted to the political and educational context of the violence.

8. Public prosecutors' offices and legal departments should provide legal protection for education professionals

Explicitly regulate, within the scope of the responsibilities of the legal offices of the Union, States, Municipalities, and the Federal District, as well as similar public advocacy bodies, the duty to provide legal defense for public education professionals who are victims of violence, threats, or persecution due to the exercise of their professional freedoms, the plurality of pedagogical approaches, and the democratic management of education.

9. Establish preventive action protocols within Ombudsman offi-

ces and internal audit bodies

Establish an operational protocol within the Network of Internal Audit and Ombudsman Offices (or the National Network of Ombudsman Offices – Renouv), coordinated by the Office of the Comptroller General (CGU) and with the participation of Ombudsman offices from the Union, States, Municipalities, and the Federal District. These protocols aim to prevent the abusive use of complaint channels by groups that systematically target educators.

10. Implementation of institutional guidelines for reporting and investigating violence, tailored to different types of violations

Education systems should adopt protocols for investigating and monitoring reports of violence based on social markers as race, gender, sexuality, ability, and national origin. Protocols must be adapted to the type of violation and reflect human rights, the right to education, and the quality of interpersonal relations within schools, providing public authorities with ethical guidance to investigate incidents involving education professionals.

11. Education systems must strictly adhere to the law, avoiding the indiscriminate initiation of inquiries and administrative disciplinary proceedings (PADs)

The procedures of inquiries and Administrative Disciplinary Proceedings (PADs) have been subverted and transformed into instruments of persecution in several education systems. In this regard, education departments must operate strictly within legal frameworks when investigating staff. Excessive and/or unnecessary initiation of PADs violates the human rights of educators, creates functional obstacles, results in material losses, consumes time, and causes physical and mental health issues, even if the proceedings are ultimately dismissed.

12. Revision and updating of statutes for public sector employees and educators to strengthen the protection of educators

Promote, under the coordination of the Ministry of Management and Innovation in Public Services (MGI), studies and legislative initiatives to update the statutes for public servants and educators, as well as administrative procedure regulations in force at the federal, state, municipal, and Federal District levels. The aim is to align these norms with the democratic principles of the 1988 Federal Constitution. Preliminary studies indicate that outdated statutory and procedural norms, often enacted in authoritarian contexts, provide a formal basis for the persecution of educators, undermining the democratic environment and the exercise of the right to defense.

13. Establishment of institutional mechanisms allowing for the temporary removal of educators from their duties following incidents of violence

Legal provisions should be created to allow types of leave that facilitate recovery from violence experienced in the course of professional duties. Temporary leave may often be necessary for educators to restore their physical and emotional health. Specific protocols must ensure the immediate protection of the victim without compromising their labor rights. In the absence of such mechanisms, educators typically rely solely on medical leave, while public authorities continue to depend on standard procedures designed for staff conduct investigations.

14. Public authorities must take active measures to counter the silencing efforts promoted by extremist movements

Avoiding terms or topics recognized by scientific fields due to extremist political mobilization

places educators at risk. It is essential to implement a systemic public policy on education regarding gender and sexuality, guided by an intersectional human rights perspective. Recent Federal Supreme Court (STF) rulings, such as Direct Action of Unconstitutionality (ADI) 5668, which establishes that education must actively combat discrimination based on gender and sexuality, alongside the work of the Technical Working Group to Address Bullying, Prejudice, and Discrimination in Education (established by Ministry of Education Ordinance 614/2024), and the National Policy for Equity, Education for Ethnic-Racial Relations, and Quilombola School Education (PNEERQ), provide guidance on how such policies can be supported and implemented.

15. Private educational institutions must be monitored to ensure adherence to national education principles

The Law of Guidelines and Bases of National Education (Law No. 9,394/1996) guarantees freedom of private initiative in education, provided that institutions comply with the ‘general norms of national education and of the respective education system’ (Article 7, item I) and obtain ‘authorization to operate and quality evaluation by the Public Authorities’ (Article 7, item II). While respecting the particularities of each institution’s pedagogical project, these do not exempt them from adhering to national education principles. Therefore, the freedoms to learn and to teach must be guaranteed, as well as the curricular and social policies that structure education.

16. Implementation of Law No. 13,935/2019, ensuring the presence of psychology and social work professionals in schools

Under Law No. 13,935/2019, the public basic education system must possess psychology and social work professionals to address the needs and priorities defined by education policies. The

presence of these professionals within educational institutions contributes significantly to creating a fairer and more socially equitable environment. Their work should be grounded in principles including the elimination of all forms of oppression, discrimination, violence, exploitation, and cruelty.

17. Regulation of the Psychosocial Support Units (NAPS) within educational institutions

With the implementation of Law No. 13,935/2019, it is essential not only to ensure the permanent presence of psychologists within multiprofessional school teams but also to establish Psychosocial Support Units (NAPS) aligned with a political-pedagogical project dedicated to strengthen the relationship between schools and their communities, to expand dialogue on violence and various forms of discrimination, and to promote strategies for confronting and preventing them.

18. Creation of support and active listening spaces in educational institutions

In addition to multiprofessional teams composed of specialized professionals, schools must create spaces for welcoming and listening, both individual and collective, managed autonomously by the school community. While these spaces are not psychotherapy, they have a therapeutic dimension, contributing to the school community's capacity to respond to violence, addressing victims' experiences of isolation, fostering active engagement, and reinforcing the connection between educational institutions and their surrounding communities.

19. Strengthening of the Psychosocial Care Network (RAPS)

As this study demonstrates, violence against educators occurs across the national territory, with regional specificities, and generates

psychosocial harm both for the educators affected and for other members of the school community. It is therefore necessary for health care services, both Primary Health Care Units (UBS) and Psychosocial Care Centers (CAPS), to be actively engaged and adequately provided with material and human resources to receive and support educators.

20. Review of the characterization of violence in the field of public health

According to the latest conceptual frameworks from the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Brazilian Ministry of Health, violence experienced by service providers in the course of their professional duties is understood within the spectrum of interpersonal violence (WHO, 2002) or workplace violence (Brazil, 2005). This categorization can obscure the specific characteristics of violence against educators, potentially limiting the effectiveness of public health responses. Therefore, it is necessary to precisely identify the elements that characterize this type of violence and to clarify the care needs—both within and beyond the health sector—that arise from these specificities.

21. Mobilize the Public Prosecutor's Office in the defense of educators and the right to democratic education

A resolution should be approved within the National Council of the Public Prosecutor's Office (CNMP) providing guidance to Public Prosecutor's Office bodies to act systematically in prevention, repression and reparation in cases involving violence, threats, and persecution of educators resulting from violations of clearly recognized educational rights, namely: academic freedom, pluralism of pedagogical approaches, democratic governance, and the valorization of education professionals. Furthermore, through the National Council of Prosecutors General (CNPJ), a

protocol should be established for the action of Public Prosecutor's Office bodies in cases of violence, threats, and persecution of educators arising from these violations. Such guidelines would support the issuance of recommendations and the initiation of civil investigations in cases of omission by educational authorities or misuse of administrative proceedings against persecuted educators.

22. Construction of comprehensive, cross-sectoral networks for the care and protection of educators

It is imperative to establish partnerships with organizations and institutions that complement public policies for the care and protection of educators. Through broad collaboration among the Unified Health System (SUS), the Public Prosecutor's Office, civil society organizations, social support networks, educational institutions, trade unions, and the wider school community, care and protection services can be expanded and strengthened, ensuring coordination and effective, comprehensive action.

23. Establishment of a National Policy on Combating Violence against Educators

A National Policy or Program on Combating Violence against Educators should be implemented within the Ministry of Education (MEC) and coordinated with bodies such as the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Human Rights and Citizenship, the Office of the Attorney General of the Union, and the Offices of the Comptroller General of the Union at the federal, state, and municipal levels. Its purpose would be to develop strategies for the prevention of and response to systematic violence against educators.



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Appendix

APPENDIX I

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIVE SITUATIONS RESTRICTING THE FREEDOM TO TEACH

BASIC EDUCATION

1. Recommendation to avoid or prohibition against addressing topics within one's own subject area or field of expertise
2. Recommendation to avoid or prohibition from discussing politics
3. Recommendation to avoid or prohibition from discussing topics considered controversial
4. Recommendation to avoid or prohibition from discussing gender and sexuality
5. Recommendation to avoid or prohibition from discussing religion as a cultural manifestation
6. Recommendation to avoid or prohibition from addressing ethnic-racial issues
7. Recommendation to avoid or prohibition from using a specific book, audiovisual resource, or material
8. Recommendation to avoid certain topics or approaches
9. Recommendation to change behavior, appearance, and/or clothing arbitrarily
10. Difficulty or obstacle in implementing a pedagogical project at the institution due to the topic and/or approach
11. Complaint regarding discussion of topics related to sex education
12. Complaint regarding ideological indoctrination
13. Presentation and/or approval of a bill to restrict certain topics and approaches in the school system where you work(ed).

HIGHER EDUCATION

1. Recommendation from a member of the institution to avoid certain approaches, theoretical frameworks, or participation in academic events
2. Recommendation to avoid specific topics in the classroom
3. Funding denied due to approach, theoretical framework, vocabulary, or methodology being considered political, partisan, and/or ideological
4. Complaint or impediment to carrying out an activity due to ideological indoctrination or political-partisan bias in the classroom, research or extension project, or scientific publication
5. Recommendation to avoid using gender-neutral language in syllabi, teaching materials, and/or internal communications
6. Recommendation to avoid, or punishment for, expressing a position in extra-academic spaces (newspapers, podcasts, programs, social media, and similar venues)
7. Intimidation for participating in or organizing an event, or for publishing scientific/academic material
8. Penalization or intimidation for participating in a political act

9. Prohibition from holding an event because it was considered political, partisan, and/or ideological
10. Being monitored by public authorities due to a particular position
11. Surveillance of personal or professional social media by the employing institution, with or without work-related penalties for expressed opinions
12. Hacking or intrusion into virtual classes or online activities by anti-democratic actors
13. Presentation and/or approval of a bill to restrict certain topics and/or approaches in the education system where you work(ed)

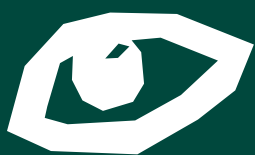
BASIC, TECHNICAL, AND TECHNOLOGICAL EDUCATION

1. Recommendation to avoid or prohibition from addressing topics within one's own subject or area of expertise
2. Recommendation to avoid or prohibition from discussing politics or topics considered controversial
3. Recommendation to avoid or prohibition from using a specific book, audiovisual resource, or material
4. Recommendation to avoid certain topics or approaches
5. Recommendation to change behavior, appearance, and/or clothing arbitrarily
6. Complaint regarding ideological indoctrination
7. Funding denied due to approach, theoretical framework, vocabulary, or methodology being considered political, partisan, and/or ideological
8. Recommendation to avoid using gender-neutral language in syllabi, teaching materials, and/or internal communications
9. Recommendation from a member of the employing institution to avoid expressing positions in extra-academic spaces (newspapers, podcasts, programs, or similar venues), with or without subsequent punishment
10. Intimidation for participating in or organizing a scientific/academic event, or for publishing scientific/academic material
11. Prohibition from holding an event because it was considered political, partisan, and/or ideological
12. Surveillance of personal or professional social media by the employing institution, with or without work-related penalties for expressed opinions
13. Presentation and/or approval of a bill to restrict certain topics and approaches in the network where you work(ed)

NON-CLASSROOM EDUCATORS

1. Recommendation to avoid or prohibition from addressing certain topics in daily activities
2. Recommendation to avoid or prohibition from discussing politics with students, other staff, and/or families
3. Recommendation to avoid or prohibition from discussing topics considered controversial
4. Recommendation to avoid or prohibition from discussing gender and sexuality
5. Recommendation to avoid or prohibition from discussing religion as a cultural manifestation

6. Recommendation to avoid or prohibition from addressing ethnic-racial issues
7. Recommendation to avoid or prohibition from using a specific book, audiovisual resource, or material
8. Recommendation from a supervisor to avoid certain topics or approaches
9. Recommendation to change behavior, appearance, and/or clothing arbitrarily
10. Recommendation or prohibition regarding elements of walls, classrooms, or other institutional spaces
11. Difficulty or impediment in carrying out a pedagogical project at the institution due to the topic and/or approach
12. Complaint regarding discussion of topics related to sex education
13. Complaint regarding ideological indoctrination
14. Presentation and/or approval of a bill to restrict certain topics and approaches in the education system where you work(ed)



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