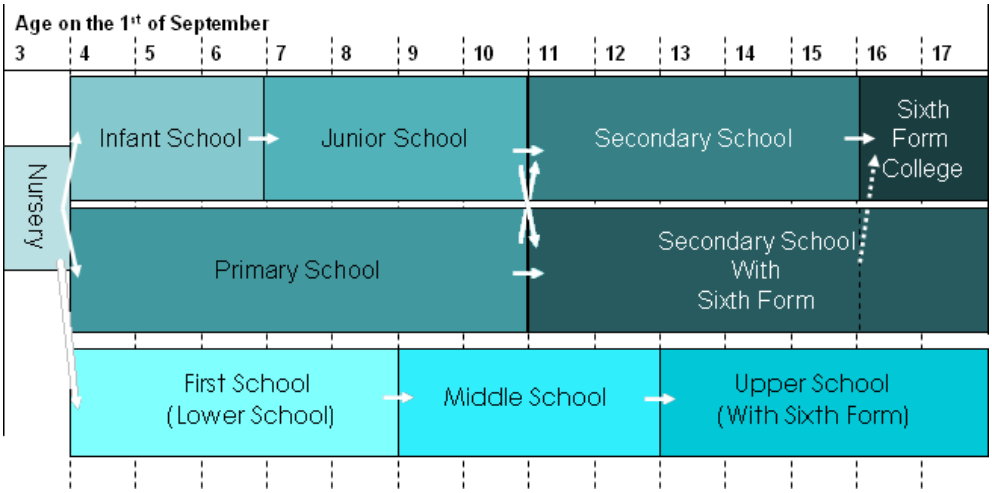
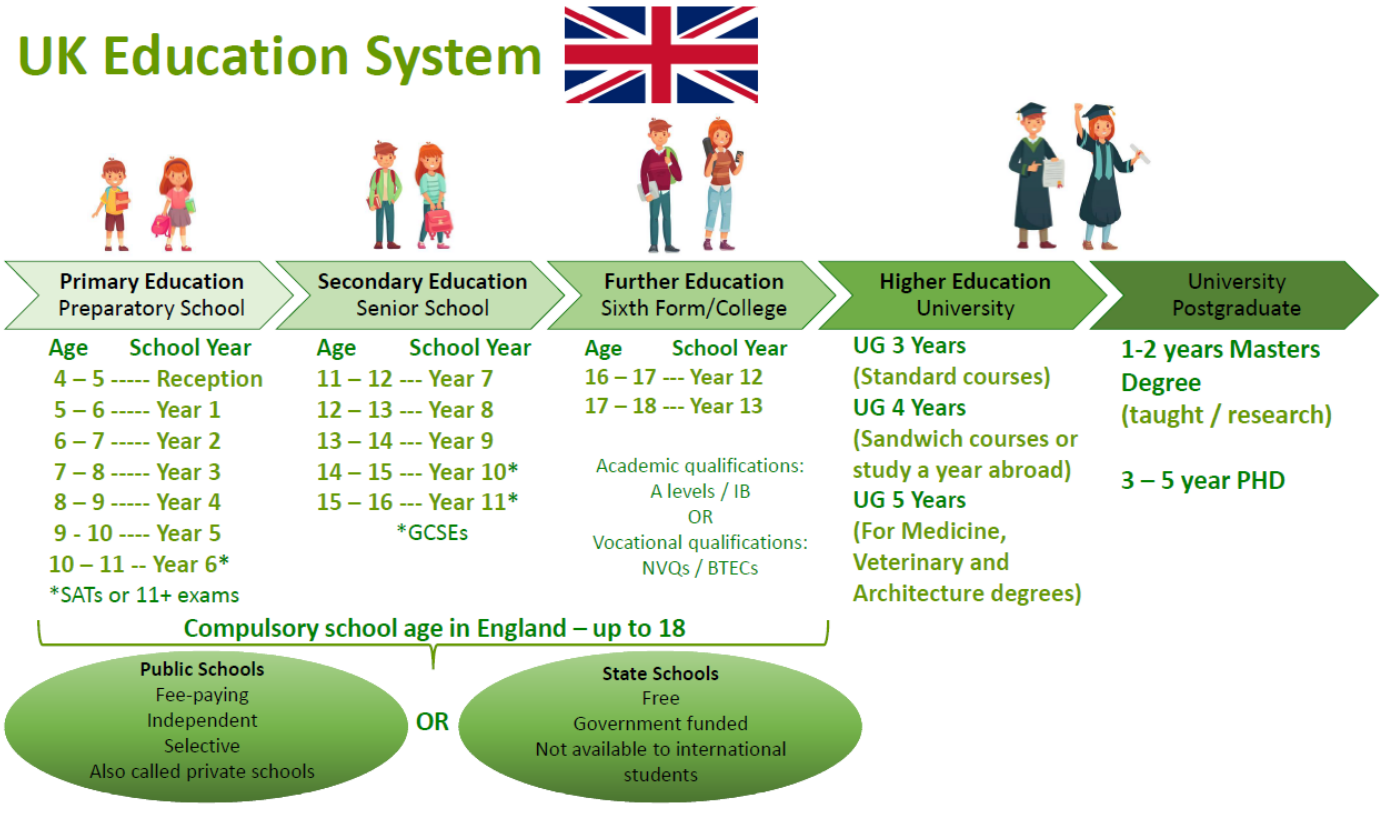
The Basics – U.K. – Check the following words

https://www.expatica.com/uk/education/children-education/the-uk-education-system-106601/

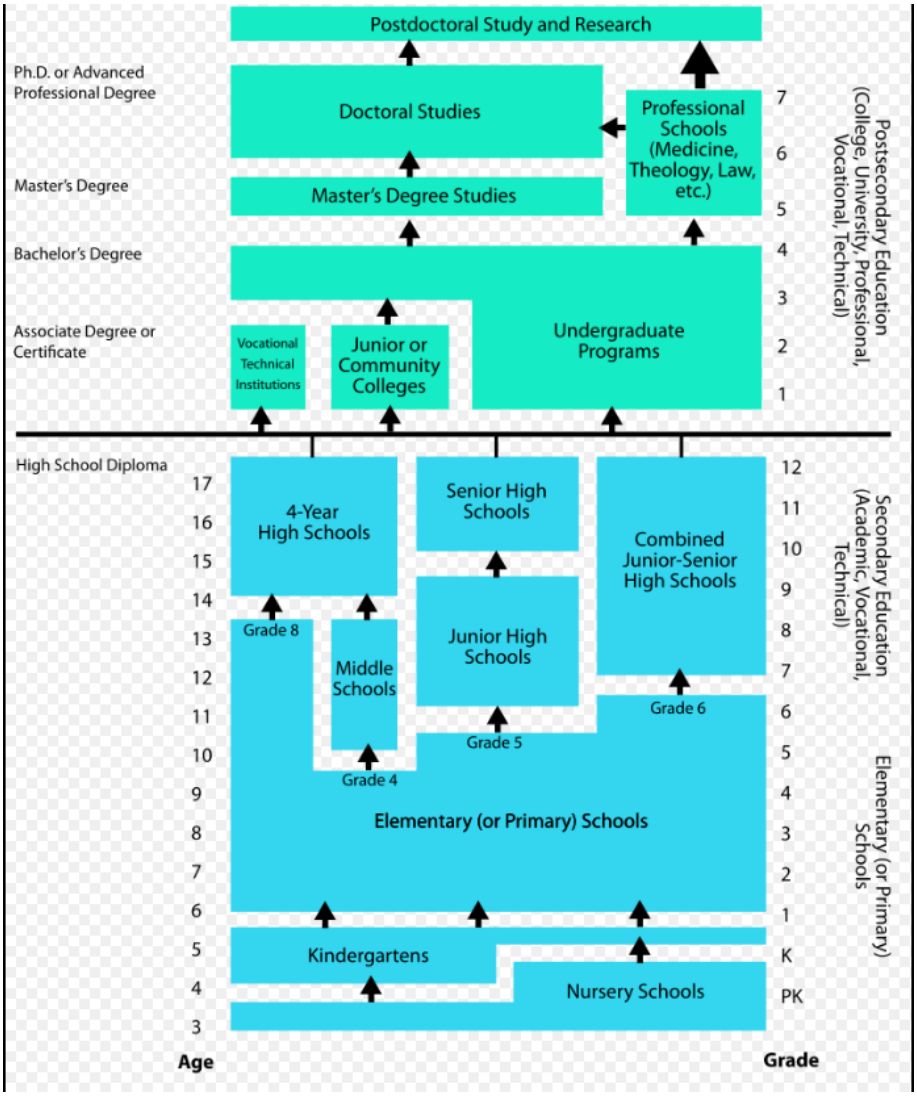
GCSE
A levels
LEAs = Local Education Authorities
State schools / free schools & academies
Grammar schools
Public schools = independent, fee-paying schools
The Russel Group
UCAS





The Basics – U.S. – Check the following words

Charter schools
Student loan forgiveness
Pell Grants
The admission process
SAT
The Ivy League
Community colleges
School boards
Affirmative action
DEI
Book bans



Learning loss – Improving schools

AUDIO – Document 1

K-12 students learned a lot last year, but they're still missing too much school

NPR, FEBRUARY 9, 2024 - HEARD ON ALL THINGS CONSIDERED

Audio document and more explanations here https://www.npr.org/2024/02/09/1228441120/covid-schools-students-learning

Document 2 – U.S. Covid Learning Losses

We explain the ways students haven't recovered.
The Morning Newsletter By David Leonhardt, ***The New York Times***, Feb. 11, 2025

Schoolchildren in Massachusetts, Ohio and Pennsylvania are still about half a year behind typical pre-Covid reading levels. In Florida and Michigan, the gap is about three-quarters of a year. In Maine, Oregon and Vermont, it is close to a full year.

This morning, a group of academic researchers released their latest report card on pandemic learning loss, and it shows a disappointingly slow recovery in almost every state. School closures during Covid set children back, and most districts have not been able to make up the lost ground.

One reason is a rise in school absences that has continued long after Covid stopped dominating daily life. "The pandemic may have been the earthquake, but heightened absenteeism is the tsunami and it's still rolling through schools," Thomas Kane, a Harvard economist and a member of the research team, told me.

In today's newsletter, I will walk through four points from the report, with charts created by my colleague Ashley Wu. I'll also tell you the researchers' recommendations for what schools should do now.

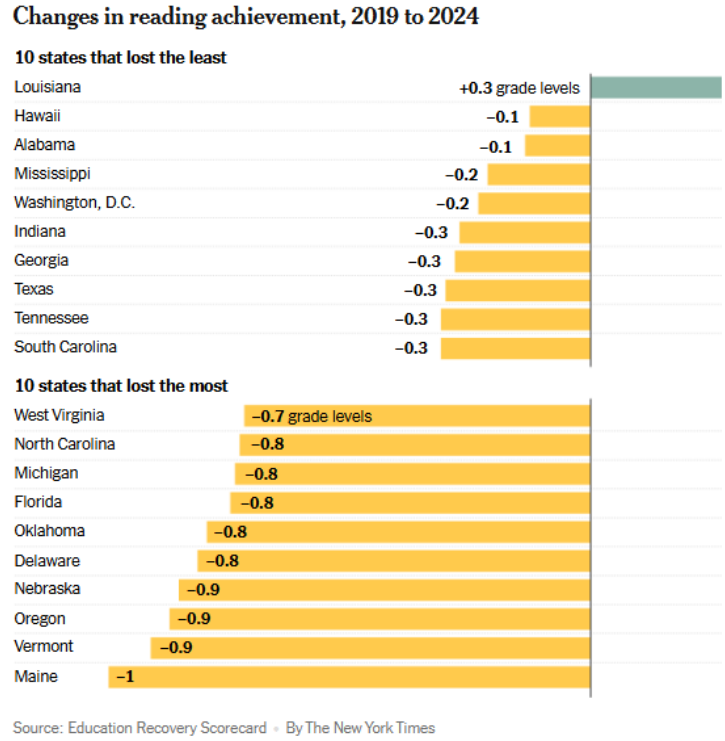
1. State variation

The new report — from scholars at Dartmouth, Harvard and Stanford — compares performance across states, based on math and reading tests that fourth and eighth graders take. (A separate report, on national trends, came out last month.)

Today's report shows a wide variety of outcomes. In the states that have made up the most ground, fourth and eighth graders were doing nearly as well last spring as their predecessors were doing five years earlier.

But the overall picture is not good. In a typical state, students last spring were still about half a year behind where their predecessors were in 2019. In a few states, the gap approaches a full year.

Here are the changes in reading performance:



Changes in reading achievement, 2019 to 2024

A chart shows the changes in reading performance between 2019 and 2024. Top 10 and bottom 10 states by performance are shown. In Louisiana, the state that had the lowest losses, students in 2024 outperformed their 2019 scores in reading. In Maine, the state that lost the most, reading scores in 2024 were about a whole grade level lower than they were in 2019.

2. A blue-red divide

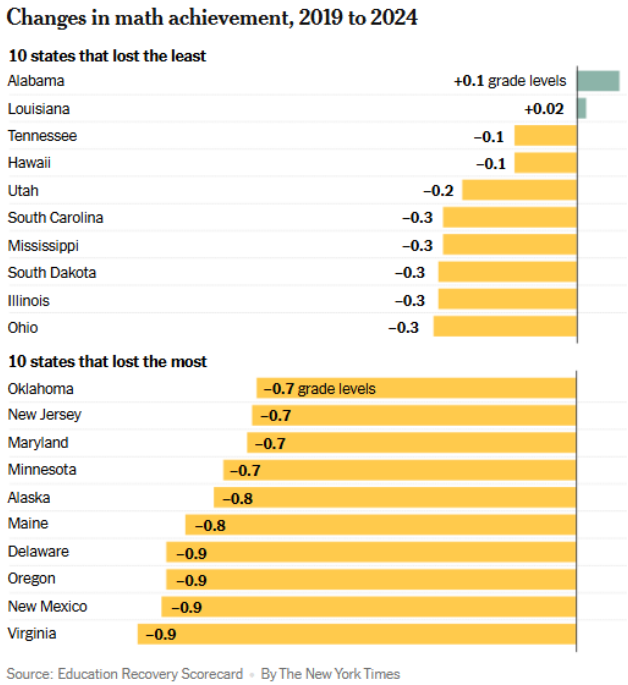
Political leaders in red and blue America made different decisions during the pandemic. Many public schools in heavily Democratic areas stayed closed for almost a year — from the spring of 2020 until the spring of 2021. In some Republican areas, by contrast, schools remained closed for only the spring of 2020.

This pattern helps explains a partisan gap in learning loss: Students in blue states have lost more ground since 2019. The differences are especially large in math. Eight of the 10 states that have lost the most ground since 2019 voted Democratic in recent presidential elections. And eight of the 10 states with the smallest math shortfalls voted Republican.

Changes in math achievement, 2019 to 2024

A chart shows the changes in math performance between 2019 and 2024. Top 10 and bottom 10 states by performance are shown. In Alabama and Louisiana, the states with the lowest losses, students in 2024

outperformed their 2019 scores in math. In Virginia, the state that lost the most, math scores in 2024 were about a whole grade level lower than they were in 2019.



I know some readers may wonder if blue states had bigger declines simply because they started from a higher point. After all, the states with the best reading and math scores have long been mostly blue. But that doesn't explain the post-pandemic patterns. For example, New Jersey (a blue state) and Utah (a red state) both had high math scores in 2019, but New Jersey has fared much worse since then.

3. More inequality

Pandemic learning loss has exacerbated class gaps and racial gaps. Lower-income students are even further behind upper-income students than they were five years ago, and Black students and Latino students are even further behind Asian and white students. "Children, especially poor children, are paying the price for the pandemic," Kane said.

Other research, by Rebecca Jack of the University of Nebraska and Emily Oster of Brown, points to two core reasons. First, schools with a large number of poor students and Black or Latino students were more likely to remain closed for long periods of time. Second, a day of missed school tends to have a larger effect on disadvantaged students than others.

In the years before Covid, the U.S. education system had impressive success in reducing learning inequality, as I explained in a 2022 newsletter. But Covid erased much of that progress. "Educational inequality grew during the pandemic and remains larger now than in 2019," Sean Reardon, a Stanford sociologist and co-author of the new report, said.

4. How to recover

The authors of the report note that some school districts, including in poorer areas, have largely recovered from Covid learning loss. Among the standouts are Compton, Calif.; Ector County, Texas, which includes Odessa; Union City, N.J.; and Rapides Parish, La. The authors urge more study of these districts to understand what they're doing right.

Early evidence suggests that after-school tutoring and summer school, subsidized by federal aid, made a difference. Intensive efforts to reduce absenteeism can also help.

One problem, the authors write, is that many schools have not been honest with parents about learning loss: "Since early in the recovery, the overwhelming majority of parents have been under the false impression that their children were unaffected."

You can watch this to complement the article:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7PmmiVlgcc4&t=11s&ab_channel=PBSNewsHour

Leaders | School scandal

Document 3 - Faddish thinking is hobbling education in the rich world

The Economist, Jul 11th 2024

That the pandemic messed up schooling is well known. Between 2018 and 2022 an average teenager in a rich country fell some six months behind their expected progress in reading and nine months behind in maths, according to the OECD. What is less widely understood is that the trouble began long before covid-19 struck. A typical pupil in an OECD country was no more literate or numerate when the coronavirus first ran amok than children tested 15 years earlier. As our special report argues, education in the rich world is stagnating. This should worry parents and policymakers alike.

In America long-running tests of maths and reading find that attainment peaked in the early 2010s. Since then, average performance there has gone sideways or backwards. In Finland, France, Germany and the Netherlands, among other places, scores in some international tests have been falling for years. What has gone wrong?

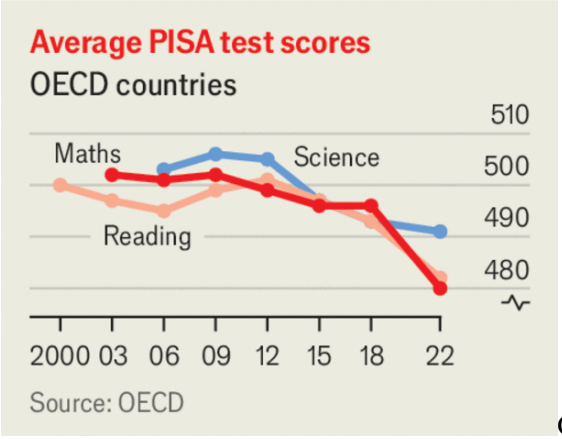


Chart: The Economist

External shocks have played a part. Migration has brought many newcomers who do not speak the language of instruction. Mobile phones distract pupils and keep their heads out of books at home. The pandemic was hugely disruptive. Many governments closed schools for too long, encouraged by teachers' unions, and children lost the habit of studying. Attendance in many places is lower than before covid. Classrooms have become rowdier.

Yet education policymakers also bear much of the blame for stagnant standards. In America, for example, fixing schools was once a bipartisan issue. Today the right obsesses over culture-war trivia, while many on the left practise what George W. Bush called "the soft bigotry of low expectations", and argue that classrooms are so biased against minorities that it is impossible and immoral to hold all pupils to high standards. Others want homework and exams to be lightened or scrapped for the sake of pupils' mental health.

Faddish thinking is the enemy of rigour. One theory holds that technology such as AI will make traditional learning less useful, so schools should nurture "problem-solvers", "critical thinkers" and students who work well in teams. Inspired by such talk, countries have adopted curriculums that focus on vaguely defined "skills" and play down the learning of facts as fuddy-duddy. Several, such as Scotland, have seen pupils grow less numerate and literate as a result. Those that have resisted, such as England, have done better.

Policymakers should focus on the fundamentals. They must defend rigorous testing, suppress grade inflation and make room for schools, such as charters, that offer parents choice. They should pay competitive wages to hire the best teachers and defy unions to sack underperformers. This need not bust budgets, since small classes matter less than parents imagine. Fewer, better teachers can produce stronger results than lots of mediocre ones. Japanese pupils thrash their American peers in tests, even though their average secondary classroom contains an extra ten desks.

Another task is to gather and share more information about what kinds of lessons work best—a task many governments neglect. Unions may prefer it when good teaching is seen as too mysterious to measure, but children suffer. World-class school systems, such as Singapore's, experiment endlessly, fail quickly and move on. Others keep on doing what does not work.

The stakes are high. In rich countries the workforce will shrink as the population ages. Productivity will have to rise to maintain living standards. Well-trained minds will be needed to tackle complex challenges, from inequality to climate change. H.G. Wells, a novelist and futurist, wrote that human history is a "race between education and catastrophe". It is a race societies cannot afford to lose. ■

Document 4 – U.K. The Starmer government looks a poor guardian of England's improving schools

The Economist, January 1, 2025

Many public services in Britain are in a wretched state. Yet England's schools are a clear exception. Pupils are increasingly numerate and literate, compared with peers abroad. In maths tests for the OECD, a club of rich countries, English teenagers bounded from 27th place in 2009 up to 11th by 2022. In reading, a recent test placed England's primary schools fourth in the world. Foreigners tour England's classrooms in search of tips. They include envious visitors from America, where trends in test scores are less encouraging.

In education as in so much else, the Labour government that took office in July talks a lot about the terrible problems the Conservatives left behind, such as decrepit classrooms and staff shortages. It is less willing to admit

how far standards have risen in recent years—and how unfashionable Tory policies, such as stiffer curriculums and exams, helped bring that about. Instead of a vision for improving English education further, Labour promises to tinker. At best that is a wasted opportunity; at worst, it will do serious damage.

Labour's approach to education typifies the government's broader failings. It has a juvenile fixation with social class. Thus far Labour's big boast in education has been levying value-added tax at 20% on private-school fees from January 1st. Few believe the main aim is to raise money. Rather, it is to squeeze institutions that the party deems shameless purveyors of privilege. This unhelpful policy has stoked a furious row about places that educate only 6% of Britain's children. It reflects a misplaced priority: these days plenty of state schools outperform private ones, despite having poorer pupils and less cash.

Another tendency in education (as elsewhere) is deference to public-sector unions, whose members make up much of Labour's rank and file. The party is right to fret that teachers are getting harder to recruit and retain. The long-term answer is higher pay. But the government seems keener to offer other concessions that put standards at risk. It has ordered schools inspectors to issue vaguer, gentler (and thus less informative) reports. It says it will reduce schools' freedom to set curriculums and pay star teachers better. Some school leaders have used their autonomy poorly. But others have bred excellence.

Bridget Phillipson, the education secretary, has identified some serious problems in state education. One is absenteeism: about a quarter of secondary-schoolers are missing at least 10% of the time, twice as many as before the pandemic. The share who miss half their lessons is going up. Another is the buckling system for the one-fifth of pupils with special educational needs, who are not doing any better than they were five years ago, even though spending on it has soared. Yet in both these areas Labour has little by way of convincing plans.

Indeed the prime minister, Sir Keir Starmer, has been no more able to articulate a grand vision for the future of education than he has for the rest of his government. Despite being out of office for 14 years, Labour took power with an undercooked agenda and fuzzy, contradictory ideas about what Britain needs. Compare that with Sir Tony Blair, who arrived in 1997 with a lucid view of education's central role in making Britain fit for globalisation.

Lacking a big idea, the government may keep meddling hamfistedly. In a few months Ms Phillipson will hear back from a panel reviewing what children are taught and how they are assessed. Some hope that the government will shift the emphasis away from exams and towards nice-sounding "life skills", such as creativity and teamwork. Yet worsening grades in places that have pursued such a trendy path—including Scotland, which like Northern Ireland and Wales controls its own schools—suggest this is a dismal dead end.

Rather than unpicking Tory reforms that improved literacy and numeracy, Ms Phillipson would do better to entrench them and focus on absenteeism and special needs. As things stand, the government risks harming one of the few public services its predecessor left in good shape.

Document 5 - U. S. - Understanding Charter Schools vs. Public Schools

Charter schools present choices, but there is much for parents to evaluate.

U.S. News and World Report, Nov. 14, 2023

Charter Schools vs. Public Schools

Parents using the public school system in the U.S. had little choice where to send their children to school as recently as a few decades ago. The rise of charter schools changed the education marketplace and provided new options, even for parents without the means or desire to send their students to private schools.

"Charters add more options and different models of schools to the system, which usually gives parents more choice," James Bacon, former staffing director at Boston Public Schools and current director of outreach and operations at education technology firm Edficiency, wrote in an email. "In many ways, the biggest pros and cons of charter schools stem from the same fact: That in most cases, charter schools are given more freedom than traditional public schools."

The District of Columbia and 45 states have laws that allow public charter schools. But in many places, there are no local charter school options – just traditional public and private schools.

The Difference Between Charter and Public Schools

Charter schools are publicly funded, tuition-free schools, but they differ from traditional public schools in key ways.

First, charters have more flexibility. Rather than being part of a public school district, which dictates curriculum and standards in all schools, charters operate autonomously through individual agreements, or charters, with state or local governments that set rules and student performance standards.

Individual charter schools can tailor their curriculum, academic focus, staffing ratios, discipline policies and other matters generally decided at the school district or state board level. In exchange for that flexibility, charter schools are supposed to be accountable to parents and the state or local governments that authorize them.

"The flexibility that charter schools are afforded in our system means that they try different things, with varying results," says Frank Adamson, an associate professor of education policy and leadership studies at California State University—Sacramento who has studied charter school performance.

Some schools may focus on arts or theater. Others may emphasize science, technology, engineering and mathematics, or STEM.

Charter Schools Are Growing

The charter school movement gained prominence in the late 1980s and early 1990s and has been gaining ground since. Charter schools operated in 35 states in the 2000-2001 school year, and that number has risen to 45.

Charter school school enrollment has grown nationally in recent years, particularly over the past decade. Nearly 3.7 million students were enrolled in charter schools during the 2021-2022 school year, or about 7% of all public school students, according to NCES. That's up from about 2 million students enrolled in charters in the 2011-2012 school year, or about 4% of public school students.

Charter Schools and Equity

Many charter schools were created as a way to close the achievement gap between white students and most students of color, experts say. Some still view that as a core mission.

The ones that have made that a priority are making good on that initiative", says Robin Lake, director of the Center on Reinventing Public Education, an education research organization inside Arizona State University's Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College. "The studies that have been done about charter schools in urban areas show pretty unequivocally that they have been doing their job in terms of narrowing the achievement gap," she says. "I would not say closing it, because that's a tall order, but we should still aim high."

Many of the same problems that plague traditional public schools, however, are found in charters. New Orleans, where nearly all public schools became charters after Hurricane Katrina in 2005, still deals with a racial achievement gap despite the increased funding and promises of improvement, says Adamson, who has studied the impact of charter schools in New Orleans. (…)

Getting Into a Charter School

Charter schools generally don't require entrance exams, interviews or auditions, which often come with private school admission. But that doesn't mean they're easy to get into.

Many high-performing charters draw large numbers of applications, and some use a lottery to determine which students can enroll. Even getting a place in such a lottery can require planning. Also, how these lotteries work can differ by locale, with some areas giving advantage to families who meet certain criteria.

"Most also have clauses in their charters to give preference for siblings and/or members of the charter board," Valant says, noting that such admissions practices may also present inequitable scenarios for families. "So they do not and cannot always take any child that wants to attend, whereas traditional public schools do have to take all students."

In the U.S., most K–12 public schools function as units of local school districts. **A school district**, also known as a local education agency (LEA), is a geographically defined jurisdiction that governs a specific area, typically consisting of multiple schools, including elementary, middle, and high schools, as well as specialized schools such as vocational centers, magnet schools, and special education schools.

The largest urban and suburban districts operate hundreds of schools. While practice varies significantly by state (and in some cases, within a state), most American school districts operate as independent local governmental units under a grant of authority and within geographic limits created by state law. The executive and legislative power over locally-controlled policies and operations of an independent school district are, in most cases, held by **a school district's board of education**. Depending on state law, members of a local board of education (often referred to informally as **a school board**) may be elected, appointed by a political office holder, serve ex officio, or a combination of any of these.

As of the 2020-2021 academic year, there are **12,936** school districts in the United States. This number has been steadily increasing over the years, with 327 new districts created between 2015-2020 alone.

School districts receive funding from a variety of sources, including:

- **Local property taxes**: The majority of school district funding comes from local property taxes.
- **State and federal government**: The state and federal governments provide additional funding through various programs, such as special education funding and Title I programs.
- **Private donations and grants**: Some school districts receive funding from private organizations, foundations, and individual donors.

From the California Learning Resource Network

Document 6 - Le ministère de l'Éducation, la nouvelle cible de Donald Trump

***SLATE*,** Robin Couturier – 4 février 2025

Le rapide effacement du service public étatsunien se poursuit. Après avoir mis au placard les responsables de son agence humanitaire (USAID) et infiltré son agence des ressources humaines (OPM), l'administration Trump s'attaque au ministère de l'Éducation.

C'est ce que laissent entendre plusieurs sources anonymes qui se sont confiées au ***Washington Post.*** Trois informateurs indiquent que le nouveau président américain compte, à l'aide d'un décret, faire fermer complètement l'administration. Cette démarche, pour être validée, doit obtenir l'aval du Congrès, créateur du ministère. En attendant, Donald Trump s'attelle à son démantèlement.

Le processus aurait déjà été amorcé. D'après le *Washington Post*, *«la nouvelle administration tente de réduire les effectifs en mettant de nombreux employés en congé administratif et en faisant pression sur le personnel pour qu'il démissionne volontairement»*. Le journal affirme, en s'appuyant sur les témoignages anonymes et des documents qu'il s'est procuré, qu'une vingtaine de membres du Département de l'efficacité gouvernementale (DOGE), dirigé par Elon Musk, seraient sur le coup.

Avec pour objectif de réduire les dépenses et les effectifs du ministère, l'équipe aurait mis la main sur plusieurs systèmes internes sensibles et sur des données concernant les aides boursières, contenant les informations personnelles de millions d'étudiants. Un responsable de la Maison-Blanche a par ailleurs confirmé au quotidien que des mesures concernant le ministère allaient être prises dans le mois à venir.

Aux États-Unis, les champs d'action du ministère de l'Éducation sont multiples. L'administration est entre autres chargée d'assurer l'absence de discrimination dans le système scolaire et administre des subventions pour accompagner les élèves et les établissements. Parmi ses aides, 18,4 milliards de dollars (environ 17,8 milliards d'euros) sont attribués aux écoles les plus pauvres, 15,5 milliards (14,9 milliards d'euros) sont destinés à la prise en charge des frais d'éducation des élèves handicapés, et 1.600 milliards (1.546 milliards d'euros) financent le programme fédéral de prêts aux étudiants. Aaron Ament, ancien responsable de l'administration Obama, l'assure: *«La fermeture du ministère de l'Éducation par décret ou par des licenciements massifs mettra le chaos et perturbera la vie des étudiants dans tout le pays»*.

L'aval du Congrès

Cependant, Donald Trump ne peut pas supprimer le ministère de l'Éducation en un claquement de doigts. Pour cela, son décret doit passer par le Congrès et en ressortir avec une *«supermajorité»* d'au moins soixante votes en sa faveur. Pour cela, au moins sept sénateurs démocrates doivent se ranger du côté du texte. Une situation que les observateurs politiques considèrent comme inconcevable.

«Je ne m'attends pas à ce que la fermeture du département de l'Éducation devienne une loi, a déclaré le mois dernier Tim Walberg, élu républicain du Michigan. *En attendant, mes efforts consisteront à trouver tous les moyens par lesquels nous pourrions priver le ministère de l'Éducation de ses pouvoirs.»*

Des personnes informées de la démarche et d'autres qui suivent de près les actions du ministère estiment que, pour ce faire, l'administration Trump pourrait transférer certaines fonctions de l'Éducation vers d'autres ministères fédéraux. D'après Aaron Ament, *«essayer de (faire fermer le ministère de l'Éducation) sans le Congrès est non seulement une vision à court terme, mais également illégal et inconstitutionnel»*.

Une analyse à laquelle souscrit Michael Petrilli, président du Thomas B. Fordham Institute, un groupe de réflexion spécialisé dans les politiques d'éducation. *«Il ne peut pas faire ça tout seul. Il ne peut pas démanteler le ministère de l'Éducation,* déclare-t-il, incrédule. *Mais bon sang, tout semble incertain en ce moment… Ces derniers jours ont été déroutants, alors qui sait?»*

Document 7 - What does the Department of Education do - and can Trump dismantle it?

BBC News, Washington, Feb 4, 2025

President Donald Trump is considering an executive order that would shut down the US Department of Education - a long-cherished goal of conservatives. The move would deliver on a promise he made on the campaign trail.

Trump plans to end some of the department's programmes, while others would be housed within different parts of the government, according to US media reports.

But abolishing the department entirely would take an act of Congress.

Established in 1979, the Department of Education oversees funding for public schools, administers student loans and runs programmes that help low-income students. Trump and his allies have accused the agency of "indoctrinating young people with inappropriate racial, sexual, and political material".

In December, he nominated former World Wrestling Entertainment (WWE) CEO and his transition co-chair, Linda McMahon, as his pick for education secretary. The Senate has yet to schedule confirmation proceedings for McMahon.

The latest news comes after Trump took steps toward dismantling the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the country's main overseas development agency.

What does the Department of Education do?

A common misconception is that the Department of Education operates US schools and sets curricula – that responsibility actually belongs to states and local districts.

The agency does oversee student loan programmes and administer Pell grants that help low-income students attend university.

It also helps fund programmes to support students with disabilities and for students living in poverty.

And the department enforces civil rights law designed to prevent race or sex-based discrimination in federally funded schools.

What is its budget and how many people work there?

The department's allocation was $238bn (£188bn) in fiscal year 2024 - less than 2% of the total federal budget.

The agency says it has about 4,400 employees, the smallest of any cabinet-level department.

Most public funding for US schools comes from state and local governments.

In 2024, the Education Data Initiative estimated that the US spends a total of just over $857bn on primary and secondary education - the equivalent of $17,280 per pupil.

Can Trump shut down the department?

On his own, no.

Not only would Trump need congressional approval to get rid of the department, but under the rules he would also probably need a supermajority - 60 out of 100 senators.

Republicans have a 53-47 majority in the Senate, so they would need at least seven Democrats to vote to abolish the agency. There's zero chance of that.

Even in the House of Representatives, Trump would struggle to gain necessary support. A vote last year to abolish the education department - which was attached as an amendment to another bill - failed to pass as 60 Republicans joined all Democrats in the House to vote no.

Trump has moved to shrink other government departments in recent days, despite questions about the legality of those moves.

A draft of Trump's order to dismantle the education department, obtained by the Washington Post, acknowledges that only Congress can get rid of the agency outright, but executive action could direct the agency to begin to wind itself down.

Why do Republicans want to abolish it?

The idea of eliminating the education department has been floated by Republicans for nearly as long as it has been in existence. During Ronald Reagan's 1980 presidential campaign, he pushed for it to be dismantled. Republicans have historically pushed against centralising education policy, believing that it is best left up to individual states and localities.

More recently they have accused the education department of pushing what they describe as "woke" political ideology on to children, including on gender and race.

Conservatives also argue that other education department functions, such as administering loans, should be handled instead by the US Department of Treasury, and that civil rights infractions are the Department of Justice's domain.

Trump's allies also want to expand school choice, which would allow students and families to use public money to select private or religious alternatives to public schools.

Document 8 - Why Republicans Want to Dismantle the Education Department

President Trump's fixation reinvigorated the debate over the role of the federal government in education, and created a powerful point of unity between the factions of his party.

By Michael C. Bender, ***The New York Times***, March 13, 2025

Two months after the Education Department officially opened its doors in 1980, Republicans approved a policy platform calling on Congress to shut it down.

Now, more than four decades later, President Trump may come closer than any other Republican president to making that dream a reality.

His administration has slashed the agency's work force, eliminating 47 percent of the department's 4,133 employees in the first 50 days of Mr. Trump's return to the website.

Though doing away with the agency would require an act of Congress, Mr. Trump has devoted himself to the goal, and is said to be preparing an executive order with the aim of dismantling it.

Mr. Trump's fixation has reinvigorated the debate over the role of the federal government in education, creating a powerful point of unity between the ideological factions of his party: traditional establishment Republicans and die-hard adherents of his Make America Great Again movement.

"This is a counterrevolution against a hostile and nihilistic bureaucracy," said Christopher F. Rufo, a senior fellow at the conservative Manhattan Institute think tank and a trustee of New College of Florida.

Here is how the party got to this moment.

Conservatives make their argument.

Right from the start, Republicans opposed President Jimmy Carter's signature on a 1979 law creating the department, citing beliefs in limited government control, fiscal responsibility and local autonomy.

They argued that education should be primarily managed at the state and local levels rather than through federal mandates.

A year later, Ronald Reagan won the White House, his third attempt at the presidency, thanks to a promise that he would rein in a federal government that he said had overstepped its bounds on myriad issues, including education. In 1982, Mr. Reagan used his State of the Union address to call on Congress to eliminate two agencies: the Energy Department and the Education Department.

"We must cut out more nonessential government spending and root out more waste, and we will continue our efforts to reduce the number of employees in the federal work force," Mr. Reagan said.

He was unable to persuade Democrats in control of the House to go along with his plan, and the issue started to fade as a top priority for Republicans — but never quite disappeared.

Newt Gingrich, then the speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives, called for the abolition of the agency in the mid-1990s. In the 2008 Republican presidential primary, both Representative Ron Paul and former Gov. Mitt Romney supported either terminating the Education Department or drastically reducing its size.

The Education Department's primary role has been sending federal money to public schools, administering college financial aid and managing federal student loans. The agency enforces civil rights laws in schools and supports programs for students with disabilities.

"The history of the Education Department is as a civil rights agency, the place that ensures that students with disabilities get the services they need, that English-learners get the help they need," John B. King Jr., who served as education secretary during the Obama administration and is now chancellor of the State University of New York, told reporters on Thursday. "Taking that away harms students and families."

Trump reinvigorates the debate.

Mr. Trump rarely mentioned education during his first presidential campaign in 2016, other than to criticize Common Core standards, which aimed to create some consistency across states. He did occasionally call for eliminating the Education Department, though his administration did not make it a focus.

But Mr. Trump is adept at seizing on issues that resonate with his conservative base. During his 2024 campaign, that meant adopting the concerns of the parents' rights movement that grew out of the backlash to school shutdowns and other restrictions during the coronavirus pandemic.

That movement gained steam by organizing around opposition to progressive agendas that promoted mandating certain education standards and inclusive policies for L.G.B.T.Q. students. Activists contended that these policies undermined parental rights and values.

In that way, Mr. Trump's desire to eliminate the Education Department became intertwined with his focus on eradicating diversity, equity and inclusion programs from the federal government, a dynamic that has played out vividly through his purge of personnel and policies at the agency in the weeks since his return to office.

In a draft of an executive order aimed at dismantling the department that circulated in Washington this week, Mr. Trump's only specific instructions for Education Secretary Linda McMahon were to terminate any remaining diversity, equity and inclusion programs.

On Mr. Trump's campaign website, he criticizes gender or transgender issues eight times in his list of 10 principles for "great schools."

"One reason this issue has so much momentum was definitely the pandemic and the populist frustration that Washington was not on the side of parents," said Frederick Hess, the director of education policy studies at the American Enterprise Institute. "The Department of Education really became emblematic of a lot of what was going on that was wrong."

Project 2025 called for dismantling the department, too.

A multitude of Mr. Trump's actions during his first six weeks in office were hinted at in Project 2025, the right-wing blueprint for overhauling the federal government. This includes an excoriation of the Education Department, which is pilloried in the foreword of the 992-page document for being staffed by workers who "inject racist, anti-American, ahistorical propaganda into America's classrooms."

The document maintains that schools should be responsive to parents rather than "leftist advocates intent on indoctrination," and that student test scores have not improved despite 45 years of federal spending. But it does not explain how that might change by giving more power to state and local school districts, which have spent exponentially more on education during that same time.

"This department is an example of federal intrusion into a traditionally state and local realm," the Project 2025 blueprint reads. "For the sake of American children, Congress should shutter it and return control of education to the states."

Michael C. Bender is a Times political correspondent covering Donald J. Trump, the Make America Great Again movement and other federal and state elections.

Document 9 – AUDIO- Why Book Bans are so hard to stop

All Things Considered, NPR, September 27, 2024

https://www.npr.org/2024/09/27/nx-s1-5114238/why-book-bans-have-been-so-hard-to-stop

Document 10 - 'The Librarians' Review: An Enlightening Doc Follows Nationwide Effort to Fight Against Book Bans

Director Kim A. Snyder's feature, debuting at Sundance, introduces the workers fighting against censorship and speaking for the leaves.

By Lisa Kennedy, Variety, January 31, 2025

"The Librarians" begins with a quote: "It was a pleasure to see things burn. It was a special pleasure to see things eaten, to see things blackened and changed."

Filmmaker Kim A. Snyder's illuminating documentary — premiering at the Sundance Film Festival — offers a rattling look at coordinated efforts to ban books. More importantly, it introduces viewers to the everyday and increasingly vital heroes pushing back: the librarians who sound the alarm to both legislative and grassroots attempts to pull books from school and public libraries.

The opening quote comes by way of "Fahrenheit 451," Ray Bradbury's dystopian classic about the ways that book burning and censorship are instruments of authoritarianism. The scene that follows that incendiary opener features a woman sitting in a chair, her back to a window, her face in the shadows. She's the spitting image of an endangered whistleblower or a witness against a cartel. Only, she's a librarian in a Texas school district targeted by Gov. Greg Abbott.

In 2021, Texas state representative Matt Krause sent a list of 850 titles that he wanted schools to confirm were on their shelves. The list appeared to target LGBTQ books and titles concerned with race and racism. But just in case, Krause added a blanket sentence that sounds mighty snowflake, advising schools to be on alert for books that "might make students feel discomfort, guilt, anguish, or any other form of psychological distress because of their race or sex."

A few weeks later, Gov. Abbott went further, sending a letter to the Texas Association of School Boards stating, "I'm calling for the immediate removal of this graphic, pornographic material."

The use of that anonymous speaker quickly comes to feel like an unnecessary device, though still an effective one. The librarians featured by Snyder have been subjected to verbal harassment and threats of physical harm. The documentary brims with women who are willing to put themselves on the line, facing legitimate fears for their security. The anonymous librarian at the start is not even the most compelling of these civic stewards of the stacks.

Instead, there's Army veteran Suzette Baker, who lost her job as head of the Llano County library system, when she refused to remove books from the shelves. Among them "How to be an Antiracist" and "Between the World and Me." ("I have to show you to the children's library, because that's where our porn is," she says with no small amount of snark.) Amanda Jones of Louisiana even wrote a book that winks at how she's been treated by adversaries. It's called "That Librarian: The Fight Against Book Banning in America." When she spoke up at a Livingston Parrish school board meeting, her photo was uploaded to conservative websites. (…)

Much of the film covers local fights in Texas and Florida. But the implications are nationwide, as New Jersey librarian Martha Hickson discovered — or rather uncovered. You've got to admire librarians who, among other humbling qualities, do their research. She gleaned a concerted strategy for parents to go after certain titles and followed its trail to **the conservative political organization Moms for Liberty**, whose mission on their

website is to fight "for the survival of America by unifying, educating and empowering parents to defend their parental rights at all levels of government."

In light of her work, Hickson has been slandered as a pedophile. Labeling queer content as obscene, and the librarians who advocate for those titles as pornographers, comes from the most dogeared pages in the censors' playbook.

"I couldn't remove a book because it has ideas we don't like," says Bette Davis's character in a "Storm Center," a 1956 drama about Communism and book banning. This little scene is among many gems of archival and film images interspersed throughout "The Librarians."

While the librarians are the leads in the documentary, students and other concerned citizens also speak out against the censorship. There are the high schoolers from the Texas' Granbury Banned Book Club. Rev. Jeffrey Dove, a pastor in Florida's Clay County who joined forces with librarian Julie Miller, says "to attempt to take Black history, to take a lot of our stories away from children is one of the most evil things I think a person can do."

And while the demographics of library science (and this documentary) aren't exactly diverse (more than 80 percent of librarians are women and approximately 89 percent are white), these librarians prove that you don't have to be part of marginalized groups to champion a diverse catalog.

"I do know that our story is still being written," says Texas librarian Audrey Wilson-Youngblood. "But now it's everyone's story." Wilson-Youngblood, her colleagues and filmmaker Snyder (whose doc short, "Death by Numbers," was nominated for an Oscar earlier this month) offers a gripping story of what is at stake when curiosity and thinking are endangered.

▪ **You can watch a very interesting though harrowing interview at the Sundance Festival of the director, producers of the documentary and two main librarians featured in it here**
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fTKBj9YemIg&ab_channel=IndieWire
▪ The Most active parents' group behind the bans is Moms for Liberty https://www.momsforliberty.org/
▪ See the **Pen America** Website on Book bans

- Book Bans - Should Parents or Other Adults Be Able to Ban Books from Schools and Libraries?

https://www.britannica.com/procon/book-bans-debate

Document 11 - Dans les écoles américaines, il n'y a jamais eu autant de livres bannis (et ce sont les minorités qui trinquent)

CENSURE - *La Servante écarlate* de Margaret Atwood, le best-seller pour ados *Nous, les filles de nulle part* d'Amy Reed ou encore le recueil *Lait et miel* de la poétesse canadienne Rupi Kaur : outre-Atlantique, il devient de plus en plus difficile de trouver ces livres dans les rayonnages des bibliothèques scolaires.

C'est le constat que fait PEN America dans une étude préliminaire publiée à l'occasion de la Semaine du livre interdit, qui se déroule du 22 au 28 septembre. Selon cette association à but non lucratif, qui lutte pour la défense de la liberté d'expression, plus de 10 000 cas d'interdiction de livres ont été recensés au cours de l'année scolaire 2023-2024. Soit plus du double de l'année scolaire précédente.

Si la censure de livres dans les écoles publiques ou les bibliothèques n'est pas nouvelle aux États-Unis, PEN America constate qu'elle s'est intensifiée depuis la pandémie de Covid-19. En cause : l'influence de plus en plus forte émanant d'organisations conservatrices comme Moms of Liberty. Très ancré dans les États gouvernés par les républicains, ce groupe politique rassemblant des parents d'élèves a fait de la critique des programmes scolaires mentionnant les droits LGBT, les discriminations liées au genre ou à la race son cheval de bataille. Le mouvement a même usé de son influence pour éditer un guide destiné aux écoles afin de mieux contrôler les lectures des jeunes Américains.

Comme le note PEN America, la censure émane aussi des États eux-mêmes, comme c'est le cas en Floride, où environ 8 000 interdictions de livres ont été enregistrées lors de la dernière année scolaire. L'Iowa, l'Idaho, le Nebraska, l'Arizona, le Tennessee, l'Utah et le Wisconsin ont aussi gravé dans la loi l'interdiction de certains livres.

Sous prétexte de vouloir *« protéger les enfants »*, les censures de livres bâillonnent un peu plus les voix d'autrices et d'auteurs racisés et/ou faisant partie des minorités sexuelles et de genre souligne PEN America. En première ligne de la

censure, les livres *« contenant des histoires d'amour, des livres sur les expériences sexuelles des femmes, et des livres sur le viol ou les abus sexuels, ainsi que des attaques continues contre des livres avec des personnages ou des thèmes LGBTQ+, ou des livres sur la race ou le racisme et mettant en scène des personnages de couleur »*. Sont ainsi proscrits des bibliothèques le *Va le dire sur la montagne* de James Baldwin, le classique *Un arbre pousse à Brooklyn* de Betty Smith, *Beloved* de Toni Morrison, mais aussi *Mort sur le Nil* d'Agatha Christie et *Blade Runner* de Philip K. Dick.

« Avec 10 000 interdictions de livres scolaires en 2023-2024, nous devons prendre la mesure des dommages causés par la censure à ceux qui sont les plus touchés, les étudiants », a déclaré à *USA Today* la chercheuse et militante au sein de l'équipe PEN America Sabrina Baeta. *« Cette semaine du livre interdit exige que nous nous unissions pour tourner la page des interdictions de livres en disant : "ça suffit". »*

www.huffingtonpost.fr, 25 septembre 2024

Document 12- What is DEI and why is it dividing America?

CNN, March 11, 2024 / Jan 31 2025

Diversity, equity and inclusion programs have come under attack in boardrooms, state legislatures and college campuses across the country.

Since 2023, 81 anti-DEI bills that target programs at colleges have been introduced in 28 states and in Congress, according to a tally by the Chronicle of Higher Education. Eight have been signed into law, in states like Texas and Florida.

A 2023 survey by the Pew Research Center found that 52% of employed U.S. adults say they have DEI trainings or meetings at work, and 33% say they have a designated staff member who promotes DEI.

But recently, some companies have slashed teams dedicated to DEI and wealthy corporate leaders such as Bill Ackman and Elon Musk have made posts on social media that decried diversity programs.

Critics say DEI programs are discriminatory and attempt to solve racial discrimination by disadvantaging other groups, particularly White Americans. But supporters and industry experts insist the decades-old practice has been politicized and is widely misunderstood.

What is DEI?

CNN interviewed seven DEI experts and industry leaders and asked each to define diversity, equity and inclusion. Although their responses varied slightly, most had a shared vision for what constitutes DEI:

Diversity is embracing the differences everyone brings to the table whether it's someone's race, age, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation, physical ability or other aspects of social identity.

Equity is treating everyone fairly and providing equal opportunities**.**

And **inclusion** is respecting everyone's voice and creating a culture where people from all backgrounds feel encouraged to express their ideas and perspectives.

Daniel Oppong, founder of The Courage Collective, a consultancy that advises companies on DEI, said DEI was created because marginalized communities have not always had equal opportunities for jobs, or felt a sense of belonging in majority-White corporate settings.

"That is the genesis of why some of these programs exist," he said. "It was an attempt to try to create workplaces where more or all people can thrive."

President Lyndon Baines Johnson signs the Civil Rights Act on July 2, 1964. The law made it illegal to discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, or national origin, and barred unequal application of voter registration requirements.

AP

When did workplaces start embracing DEI?

The backlash against DEI may feel like a pendulum swing from 2020, but the DEI practice has been around for decades.

Dominique Hollins, founder of the DEI consulting firm WĒ360, said the origins of DEI programs date back to the civil rights movement, which played a pivotal role in accelerating efforts to create more diverse and inclusive workplaces.

The Civil Rights Act of 1964 outlawed employment discrimination based on race, religion, sex, color and national origin. It also banned segregation in public places, like public schools and libraries.

Title VII of the Civil Rights Act established the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), which works to eliminate employment discrimination.

In the 1960s and '70s, employees began filing discrimination lawsuits with the EEOC and many companies began incorporating diversity into their business strategies by providing diversity training, according to a 2008 report published in the Academy of Management Learning & Education.

These diversity training efforts emerged around the time that affirmative action began by executive order from President John F. Kennedy. Although the two concepts may seem similar, affirmative action is different from DEI because it required federal contractors by executive order from the president to treat all applicants and employees equally based on race, color, religion and sex.

Colleges and universities also used affirmative action to boost enrollment of students of color at majority-White schools. But last year, the Supreme Court gutted affirmative action, ruling that race-conscious college admissions were unconstitutional.

After President Ronald Reagan backed corporate deregulation policies that said companies should be addressing discrimination internally in the 1980s, Hollins said some of the diversity efforts lost momentum.

In the decades to follow, Hollins said many companies continued to push for DEI-focused jobs and training in a "piecemeal" fashion, instead of creating ongoing programs and dedicated teams.

Hollins said many companies didn't have the staffing or resources to sustain DEI efforts.

But the murder of George Floyd by Minneapolis police in May 2020 sparked a racial reckoning and a renewed push for creating DEI leadership roles and initiatives at major corporations.

Between 2019 and 2022, according to a LinkedIn analysis, chief diversity and inclusion officer roles grew by 168.9%.

Today, some of those efforts have been rolled back and people have left DEI roles because they didn't feel fully supported, Hollins said. Companies "were giving the appearance of commitment without actually doing the right work for that commitment to be sustainable," Hollins said.

Despite the backlash against DEI programs and initiatives, many companies are standing firm in their support for DEI**.**

A survey published in January by the polling firm Ipsos, found 67% of people surveyed said their employers require or offer trainings, lectures, webinars, or resources on DEI. And 71% of people surveyed said they think DEI training is important to "creating a positive workplace culture."

What does DEI look like at work?

Today, studies show that many companies are prioritizing some form of DEI. According to a 2023 study by the Pew Research Center, 61% of U.S. adults say their workplace has policies that focus on fairness in hiring, promotions or pay. And 56% of U.S. adults say, "focusing on increasing diversity, equity and inclusion at work is mainly a good thing.**"**

Kelly Baker, executive vice president and chief human resources officer at Thrivent, an organization that provides financial advice, said DEI in the workplace can be a mix of employee training, resource networks and recruiting practices.

Her company, for example, has resource groups for women in leadership, young professionals, Black employees, Hispanic employees, and military veterans, among others. Their DEI training teaches employees how to understand and bridge cultural differences in the workplace, she said.

Thrivent also seeks job candidates with diversity in their race, geography, gender and industry background, Baker said.

Experts say many corporations tie DEI to their business strategies.

Diversity "is related to our business growth strategy," Baker said. "It's pragmatic and essential and critical for us to ensure that our client base reflects the world that we are in and the world that we are going to be in."

What does DEI look like in higher education?

College campuses have become ground zero for the DEI debate as state lawmakers across the country launch efforts to halt or limit DEI programs in public schools and universities. Last week, the University of Florida eliminated the office of its Chief Diversity Officer to comply with regulations from the Florida Board of Governors that prohibit spending state funds on DEI programs.

Ella Washington, professor of practice at Georgetown University's McDonough School of Business, said she is concerned that efforts to ban DEI on college campuses will prevent students from being prepared for the real world.

Washington said while DEI looks different on every college campus, many schools focus efforts on recruitment and admissions, curriculum and special programs for underrepresented students. Georgetown's Office of Student Equity & Inclusion oversees several DEI-centered programs including the Disability Cultural Center, Women's Center, LGBTQ Resource Center, and the Center for Multicultural Equity and Access, according to its website.

Prioritizing and embracing a diverse student body allows students to interact with peers from different walks of life and learn new perspectives even outside of the classroom, Washington said. "Colleges are certainly a microcosm of the world," Washington said. "So, having an

experience where equity is centered, equality is considered, inclusion is at the forefront of people's minds, those are things we are teaching the next generation about how they should be running the world."

What are critics saying?

In recent years, DEI has become a social and political lightning rod for lawmakers, corporate leaders and even conservative activists, who have sought to cast the initiatives as unfair and even racist.

Some were emboldened by the Supreme Court's decision to gut affirmative action last June.

Christopher Rufo, a senior fellow at the Manhattan Institute and an outspoken critic of DEI, wrote in a New York Times op-ed last year that "these are not neutral programs to increase demographic diversity; they are political programs that use taxpayer resources to advance a specific partisan orthodoxy."

The Claremont Institute, a conservative think tank, holds a similar position. Ryan P. Williams, president of the institute, previously told CNN he believes the ideology behind DEI is "fundamentally anti-American."

"The words that the acronym 'DEI' represent sound nice, but it is nothing more than affirmative action and racial preferences by a different name, a system that features racial headcounts and arbitrarily assigned roles of 'oppressor' and 'oppressed' groups in America," Williams said in an emailed statement. "If we continue to do democracy this way, it will only end in acrimony, strife, resentment, and American collapse."

Earlier this year, billionaire investor Bill Ackman posted a 4,000-word opus on X that criticized DEI as "inherently a racist and illegal movement in its implementation even if it purports to work on behalf of the so-called oppressed." Ackman's lengthy thesis was later reposted by billionaire Tesla and SpaceX CEO Elon Musk, who now owns the social media platform. "DEI is just another word for racism. Shame on anyone who uses it," Musk wrote in his post.

In a follow-up post, Musk doubled down, adding, "DEI, because it discriminates on the basis of race, gender and many other factors, is not merely immoral, it is also illegal."

Tesla, which is owned by Musk, has since omitted all language regarding minority workers and outreach to minority communities in its 10-K filing with the SEC made January 29, CNN previously reported.

But not every business leader agrees. Mark Cuban, billionaire businessman and minority owner of the Dallas Mavericks, pushed back on Musk's posts in a thread defending DEI as good for businesses and their workers. "The loss of DEI-Phobic companies is my gain," Cuban wrote. "Having a workforce that is diverse and representative of your stakeholders is good for business."

In April 2022, Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis signed HB 7, known as the "Stop WOKE' bill," in Hialeah Gardens. Miami Herald/Miami Herald/TNS/Getty Images/File

Jan 31 2025 update

How is Trump targeting DEI?

Trump directed that all federal DEI staff be placed on leave and that federal DEI programs should be shut down. It directs federal agencies to submit written plans for executing a "reduction-in force" by the end of the month.

But, this is not as simple or clear as it seems.

The Office of Personnel Management released a memo to all heads of departments and agencies on how to actually go about executing Trump's order. The memo does not exactly define what DEI offices are and states that they "are aware of efforts by some in government to disguise these programs by using coded or imprecise language." It asks for employees to report these "efforts… to obscure" connections to DEI or "similar ideologies" to the Office of Personnel Management. NBC reported this week that these orders on DEI have created a culture of fear among workers in the federal government—the largest employer in the nation.

What these "similar ideologies" are was not explicated in the memo, but government agencies have begun responding in kind. Documents on DEI have been removed from websites at agencies including the Office of Personnel Management, State Department, and Department of Homeland Security, now displaying "Page Not Found — 404" messages or notes above archived material explaining the change.

On Jan. 23, the Department of Education posted a statement announcing "the first step in reorienting the agency toward prioritizing meaningful learning ahead of divisive ideology in our schools."

Federal agencies have also begun removing website pages dedicated to providing resources for underrepresented Americans.

Trump has gone further against DEI, ordering a "freeze" on all new cases and investigations by the DOJ's Civil Rights Division. Meanwhile, the Executive Order he signed on Jan. 21 "encourages" the private sector to "end illegal discrimination and preferences, including DEI."

How have major companies responded?

The response to Trump's attitude and orders has not just been felt within the federal government, but within the private sector as well. Some CEOs have distanced themselves from DEI practices.

At the end of last year, several businesses, including Walmart, Boeing, Lowe's, and Ford Motor Co., began divesting from their diversity efforts, including commitments to stop participating in Pride parades and diversity surveys.

More recently the Washington *Post* reported that Amazon removed several mentions of DEI, Black people, and LGBTQ+ people from its "Policy Positions" page. Elsewhere, McDonald's announced that it would retire "Supply Chain's Mutual Commitment to DEI pledge in favor of a more integrated discussion with suppliers about inclusion as it relates to business performance."

Certain businesses have stayed true to their commitment to DEI initiatives, though, including Costco shareholders who voted down an anti-DEI measure, and the beauty brand E.l.f.

Several labor rights organizations and advocacy groups have spoken out against Trump's orders. Judy Conti, government affairs director at the National Employment Law Project, released a statement on Jan. 22, arguing that Trump "gutted key tools to prevent discrimination and root it out at its core" by revoking Equal Employment Opportunity."

"This is not a return to so-called 'meritocracy.' Rather, it's an attempted return to the days when people of color, women, and other marginalized people lacked the tools to ensure that they were evaluated on their merits," Conti wrote.

Fatima Goss Graves, CEO and president of the National Women's Law Center, has also spoken out.

"In less than 48 hours in office, President Donald Trump eviscerated his promise to be a champion of workers, gutting basic workplace equal opportunity protections that have been in place for 60 years," Graves said in a statement emailed to TIME. "These protections were enforced by the Department of Labor, and by removing this important watchdog, Trump has opened up workers to workplace discrimination."

Following Trump's DEI measures, the Air Force has taken down training courses that included videos of the Tuskegee Airmen—hailed Black Air Force members who fought in World War II—and the Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASPs).

Per the Associated Press, the Air Force said it will "fully execute and implement all directives outlined in the Executive Orders issued by the President, ensuring that they are carried out with utmost professionalism, efficiency and in alignment with national security objectives."

Alabama Representative Terri Sewell, a Democrat, released a statement following the removal of the curriculum, calling for the Air Force to "immediately" reverse its decision.

"The Tuskegee Airmen bravely fought and died for our freedoms before this nation even granted them the full benefits of citizenship," Sewell wrote on X. "To strip them from the Air Force curriculum is an outrageous betrayal of our values as Americans. Their heroism is not DEI."

Document 13 - Some Schools Act After Trump's D.E.I. Orders. Others Say They'll Resist.

Some universities are scrubbing websites and canceling events to comply with executive orders targeting diversity efforts. Other schools are promising to resist.

The New York Times, February 13, 2025 See full article HERE

See also Donald Trump's executive order "**Ending Radical Indoctrination in K-12 Schooling"**

https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/01/ending-radical-indoctrination-in-k-12-schooling/

Document 14 Video – Fareed Zakaria on CNN - Fareed's Take: Trump administration's 'war on colleges'

March 16, 2025 "The Professors are the enemy", JD Vance

Document 15 - Trump Wants to Destroy All Academia, Not Just the Woke Parts

The New York Times, Feb. 14, 2025, **By** Michelle Goldberg, Opinion Columnist

In 2021, JD Vance gave a speech to the National Conservatism Conference, a gathering of Trumpist thinkers and politicians, titled "The Universities Are the Enemy." It contained the usual complaints about critical race theory and gender ideology, but it went much further, arguing for a frontal attack on the power and prestige of higher education writ large. Comparing universities to the sci-fi totalitarianism of "The Matrix," in which parasitic machines have seized control of reality itself, he said, "So much of what drives truth and knowledge as we understand it in this country is fundamentally determined by, supported by and reinforced by the universities." Why, he asked, have conservatives consented to such intellectual tyranny?

Vance, then a Senate candidate, described being at a donor event and talking to a supporter about the absurdity of encouraging kids to take on debt to go to colleges that will brainwash them. The supporter asked, "What's the alternative? I don't want my kid to become an HVAC specialist," installing and repairing heating and air-conditioning systems. With that attitude, said Vance, "we're going to continue to empower the colleges and the universities that make it impossible for conservative ideas to ultimately carry the day."

Put aside, for a moment, the hypocrisy of this message coming from a man catapulted into the highest strata of American society by Yale Law School. The striking thing about Vance's speech was its deep hostility to the entire academic enterprise, not just the so-called woke parts. He wasn't talking about making more room for right-wing ideas in universities or even dreaming of taking them over. He wanted to destroy it all.

And now he's part of a government taking steps to do just that. I've written about Donald Trump's plan to crush the academic left, but it increasingly looks as though he and his allies are targeting academia more broadly, including the hard sciences that have long enjoyed bipartisan support. "I think the extremely strong desire is to just punish universities however possible," Kevin Carey, the director of the education policy program at New America, a public policy think tank, told me. "It's not based on any kind of coherent policy agenda. It's just a desire to inflict pain."

This is the context for the Trump administration's attempt, currently being challenged in court, to slash research funding from the National Institutes of Health. The details sound technical and very boring: The new policy would limit reimbursements for schools' overhead expenses to 15 percent of grants' value, instead of the 50 to 70 percent that universities often receive now. But if this goes into effect, the damage will be tremendous. As H. Holden Thorp, the editor of Science, wrote, for every dollar spent on academic research, roughly another dollar is needed for lab equipment, support staff and systems for managing grants. Right now, the government funds a big chunk of these indirect costs, with universities picking up the remainder. If the government reduces its contribution to 15 percent, universities could try to close the gap by raising tuition and eliminating departments, but it wouldn't be enough. Crucial research projects, including those investigating cures for devastating diseases, would have to be scaled back or jettisoned altogether.

These cuts could hit some Trump-voting states particularly hard. In Alabama, North Carolina and others, universities are among the biggest employers, which is why some Republican senators are at least gingerly objecting to the new reimbursement rules. But that's only one reason the administration's full-spectrum war on academia defies rational self-interest. The post-World War II system of government-funded research universities has fueled American scientific and technological dominance, but our continued pre-eminence is in no way assured.

China, after all, continues to invest strongly in its universities. "Part of our decline as a culture and economy would be our disinvestment in higher education," said Michael Roth, the president of Wesleyan University. "Maybe we'll just invest in World Wrestling, but I don't think that's going to mean that other countries and other cultures won't continue to invest in the capacity of their citizens to learn in such a way as to create new modes of living, new modes of fighting disease, new modes of creating companies." To torch America's advantage in these realms seems like madness. (…)

Ultimately, however much some in the Trump administration want to gut American universities, Carey doesn't think they'll fully succeed. These are deeply rooted institutions, some older than the Republic itself, many with powerful constituencies. After four years of Trump, he said, "they'll still be there, but they certainly could be weakened. The quality of their work could certainly be diminished in ways that will take time to recover from." Their weakness could be an opportunity for others. Eden suggested that Trump take steps to make it easier to start schools like the anti-woke University of Austin, "and even newer ones that no one has dreamed up yet. Musk University?" But why stop there? Trump University could be due for a comeback.

Document 16 -'The universities are the enemy': why the right detests the American campus

Lauren Lassabe Shepherd, ***The Guardian,*** Tue 6 May 2025

For centuries, the academy was exclusive to the Christian elite. When that began to change, an onslaught began

In 2021, JD Vance, then a candidate for Ohio senate, gave a provocative keynote address at the National Conservatism Conference. Vance's lecture was an indictment of American higher education: a "hostile institution" that "gives credibility to some of the most ridiculous ideas that exist in this country". The aspiring politician did not mince words before his receptive rightwing audience: "If any of us wants to do the things we want to do … We have to honestly and aggressively attack the universities." The title of Vance's keynote was inspired by a quote from Richard Nixon: "The universities are the enemy."

The Maga movement, of which Vance, the vice-president, is now at the forefront, has been unabashedly on the attack against campuses, professors and students. Donald Trump characterizes colleges as "dominated by Marxist maniacs and lunatics", and student protesters as "radicals", "savages" and "jihadists" who have been indoctrinated by faculty "communists and terrorists". He has already delivered swift vengeance against campus protesters and non-protesters alike with visa terminations and deportations. This administration has gleefully withheld hundreds of millions of dollars in federal funding to force colleges to crack down on student dissent.

While Vance paid homage to Nixon and other forebears on the right, he failed to acknowledge that his political lineage had been fighting the university as an enemy for more than 100 years. In fact, reactionary backlash is a feature of two main milestones in the academy's history: the democratization of admissions and the diversification of curriculum. Trump and Vance's attacks are part of a longer history of rightwing backlash that follows each time college becomes more democratic.

Before the universities were the enemy

For the first 300 years of US higher education, starting with the founding of Harvard College in the 1630s, the academy was a realm exclusive to the Christian elite. Only an extreme few attended the colonial and antebellum colleges, which were meant as sectarian educational clubs for the sons of the landed gentry. Boys of the Protestant ruling class attended college to socialize, form lifelong friendships and business partnerships, and even link their families legally through intermarriage of their sisters. Young men were exposed to the liberal arts and Christian theology, to be sure, but college was just as much a place to meet other boys like themselves and to be steeped in the cultural norms of their religious denomination and social class. This three-century tradition has been slow to change, and when it has, colleges have met fierce opposition from those who have benefited from the status quo.

Throughout this time, the only people of color or women who appeared on campus were the wives and daughters of the faculty, maids, cooks, laundry workers, servants and enslaved people. By the 1830s and through the end of the century, segregated colleges were established for white women, and free men of color (until the founding of Bennett College and Spelman College, women of color had to "pass" as white to attend women's colleges), but these institutions were not meant to rival or even resemble the standard colleges. The curriculums were vastly different from the liberal arts instruction of Harvard and Princeton – for girls, lessons were about homemaking and Christian motherhood; for children and adults of color, the practical vocations. Still, college-going by anyone was a privilege. Even at the turn of the 20th century, less than 5% of Americans went to college, and many fewer completed a degree.

Backlash against who gets in

The right's first rumblings about the college as enemy occurred during the 20th century, as the nature of the campus began to change for the modern era. The right's grievance at the time was focused on who was admitted. By the 1920s, European immigrant students were starting to matriculate in east coast campuses, particularly in New York and Pennsylvania. The oldest and most prestigious colleges, such as Harvard, Yale and Princeton, sought to severely limit enrollment of the "socially undesirable", especially Jews, to preserve the campus for old-stock

Protestants. A combination of antisemitism and reactionary backlash to the era's progressivism led rightwingers to cast a suspicious eye on the campus, where all of the decade's new social science seemed to be emanating. Christian fundamentalists, terrified by the science of evolution, also decried the sinister academic classroom.

By the 1930s, wealthy industrialists joined the chorus of college skeptics. The Franklin Roosevelt administration had assembled its famous "brain trust" of academics whose calculus was needed to pull the nation out of the Great Depression. But industry titans who refused to tolerate Roosevelt's planned economy responded by creating free-market thinktanks such as the American Enterprise Institute (AEI) that produced rival economic white papers in defense of capitalism. Academic departments, AEI's existence proved, were not the only place where experts could create knowledge. In fact, the right's thinktanks would become their signature tool for churning out partisan disinformation such as climate crisis denial and race pseudoscience throughout the 20th century.

By the time the second world war ended, Congress needed a way to ensure a smooth economic transition as a mass of veterans returned to the job market. The Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944, AKA the GI Bill, allowed more than 1 million returning soldiers to delay workforce re-entry by a few years as they entered the classroom. To the horror of many free-marketeers and social elites, the GI Bill in effect doubled the national population of college students, thus diversifying the campus by class, age and in the case of wounded veterans, physical ability (though not by race or gender).

Backlash against what gets taught

On the heels of the democratizing GI Bill, the McCarthyite purge of more than 100 academics for their prewar affiliations with the Communist party has become legend. At the same time, Joseph McCarthy's young admirer William F Buckley Jr produced his 1951 opus, God and Man at Yale: The Superstitions of Academic Freedom, arguing that socialist professors had run roughshod over the campus, indoctrinating students in Keynesian economics and atheism. The academy, to McCarthy, Buckley and their followers, had transformed into a hotbed of anti-Americanism. The right's understanding that higher education could not be trusted was now well developed: too many people were entering college and learning the wrong lessons.

Following the McCarthy attacks came the storied 1960s, when the campus continued democratizing its admissions and curriculum. Lyndon Johnson's Higher Education Act of 1965 allowed for greater access to student loans and work-study programs. This allowed additional generations of working-class students to matriculate, especially more people of color, who demanded to see themselves in their lessons. The creation of Black studies, women's studies, Chicano studies and similar disciplines throughout the 1970s followed militant strikes by student protesters. At the same time, anti-Vietnam war unrest challenged their institutions' commitments to cold war weapons development. For the right, this was but more evidence of the college as a radicalizing institution.

Increasingly, the liberal center began to agree with the notion that the campus had radicalizing potential. The 1980s and the 1990s marked the bipartisan obsession with culture wars, with the campus as its apparent locus. To the benefit of the right, popular debates about political correctness and identity politics in effect drew attention from austerity measures that had sucked resources away from higher education since the Reagan years. Through the 2000s and 2010, the right revved up its offensives against campus antiwar movements, attacking faculty and students who spoke out against the "war on terror" and protests to boycott, divest from and sanction Israel. By the 2010s, in the aftermath of the Great Recession's deep cuts to higher education, conservative attacks shifted back to campus social crusades as the right railed against the Occupy Wall Street, Black Lives Matter and #MeToo movements, and ginned up moral panics over safe spaces, trigger warnings and cancel culture.

Throughout the 20th century and into the 21st, conservative rhetoric cast colleges and universities as deeply politicized, inefficient and anti-American. From the 1920s to the 1980s, this generated popular notions that the college should be reformed back to its previous role as a selective space for class reproduction. Since the 1980s, the purpose has been to delegitimize the academy to get mass buy-in to defund, privatize and eventually abolish public higher education. The goal is to return colleges to a carefully constructed environment not to educate all, but to reproduce hierarchy (especially if it can be done for profit).

This has not been an exclusively American process. Autocrats around the world have cracked down on the academy, journalism and venues of arts and culture for the last 100 years. These are places where ideas are shared and traditional conventions are challenged. Crushing them is central to consolidating authoritarian power. Today's international rightwing leaders want to control higher education, just as they want dominion over all other social, cultural and political institutions. For the first time, a US president is finally willing to deliver the right's century-old goal.

- Lauren Lassabe Shepherd, PhD, is a historian of US colleges and universities. She is the author of Resistance from the Right: Conservatives and the Campus Wars in Modern America and host of the weekly American Campus Podcast

Document 17 - Opinion: Under Trump, America risks a brain-drain

Opinion by Erica Hartmann, opinion contributor ***The Hill***, April 30, 2025

My grandfather, Samuel Sharp, was a great if imperfect man. Born Jewish in Poland, he — by an enormous stroke of luck — happened to be in Geneva the day the Nazis invaded, narrowly escaping their grasp.

He arrived in America in 1941, one of some 200,000 European refugees seeking safety and opportunity. After serving in the U.S. Army, he joined the Office of Strategic Services, the precursor to the CIA, where he met my grandmother. Together, they dedicated themselves to the Allied victory in World War II.

After the war, his commitment to his adopted nation continued through decades of teaching international relations at American University, where he shaped generations. After his death, the university established the Samuel Sharp Memorial Prize for Creative Work in International Relations. Still awarded to this day, the prize is a testament to his enduring impact.

I never met my grandfather, since he died before I was born. But his legacy fueled my own aspirations to pursue a career in academia, which ultimately led me to Northwestern University, where I have been a professor of civil and environmental engineering since 2016.

I came of age during the race to sequence the human genome. Witnessing the transformative power of the Human Genome Project, I was drawn to molecular biology. My research now focuses on the intricate world of microbes, exploring both the threats posed by everyday chemicals and the potential for revolutionary new drugs and technologies. I traveled a path paved by the opportunities offered by America. I earned a bachelor's and a doctorate. In that time, I had incredible chances to explore the world — first as a National Science Foundation-funded intern in Japan and then as a Fulbright scholar in France. Yet, the U.S. always felt like the most natural home for my career. After all, America was the world leader in science and innovation.

But that leadership is now gravely threatened by political decisions made here at home.

This month, the federal government began withholding funds from Northwestern researchers. This attack is not an isolated incident, but the latest in a series of assaults that are forcing me to question my long-held belief in America's unwavering commitment to scientific progress and innovative leadership.

After joining the faculty at Northwestern, I was honored with an NSF CAREER award, a highly prestigious recognition of leadership potential in scientific research. But in February, the program officer who had guided my application, Karl Rockne, was fired from the NSF — along with thousands of other government employees. Shortly after his firing, Rockne offered this warning to Newsweek, "There is no guarantee that the U.S. will continue to lead in scientific innovation, and without innovation, talent and resources will naturally flow elsewhere." That statement now feels chillingly prescient.

The first Trump administration's China Initiative cast a pall over international scientific exchange, creating the perception that the U.S. was no longer a welcoming place for foreign researchers. This and other actions contributed to an outflow of researchers from the U.S., slamming the door to a crucial pipeline of much-needed talent.

Now, the second Trump administration's approach is akin to opening a firehose of policies detrimental to American science. The past three months have been marked by a crisis. Proposed budget cuts raise the specter of drastically reduced future funding, jeopardizing long-term research projects and the careers of countless scientists. Even before the freezing of existing grants and contracts at Columbia University on March 7, many institutions, including mine, began to curtail admissions. We have now been forced to rescind some of the limited offers we could extend to prospective students.

The impact on our campuses is profound. Graduating students are actively considering opportunities abroad — or even abandoning scientific careers altogether. Those still pursuing their degrees are hedging bets, scrambling to fulfill their remaining requirements in case their projects get abruptly canceled or, for international students, facing the ever-present threat of deportation.

The extremely aggressive actions against students, prestigious universities and the Americans who defend them are sounding alarm bells across the scientific community and to anyone who will pay attention. Indeed, those with means — and not just academics — are exploring citizenship elsewhere, a stark indicator of declining trust in America's stability and future.

My grandfather Sam understood the dangers of political upheaval. I'm told he had an eerie ability to recognize these kinds dark shifts in the world. After all, he was someone who was shaped by them.

Could he have imagined an America that undermines its own intellectual engine, alienating the very talent that has historically driven its success? Where would the Sams of today — those seeking refuge and the chance to contribute their intellect — find a foothold?

Without consistent funding and a welcoming environment full of potential collaborators, there is a dwindling space here for me and so many immigrants and descendants of immigrants who worked so hard to get to this country. We have all poured our energy and intellect into building this nation. If we are forced to leave, the loss will be immeasurable — diminishing the intellectual capital, scientific leadership and innovative spirit that has long defined America.

Erica Hartmann is an associate professor of civil and environmental engineering at Northwestern University, where she studies microbial communities within the built environment.

You can watch an interview of Erica Hartmann here:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zVxDrvXIdYI&ab_channel=TheHill

The Student Debt Crisis in the U.S.

Document 18 - Biden has approved $175 billion in student loan forgiveness for nearly 5 million

CNN, October 17 2024

With less than three weeks before the November election, the Biden-Harris administration is reminding voters how it has delivered a historic amount of student debt relief even as Republicans have challenged several of its efforts in court and balked at the costs.

Another round of forgiveness was announced Thursday, bringing the total amount of student loan cancellation to more than $175 billion for nearly 5 million people since President Joe Biden took office. That's roughly equal to 11% of all outstanding federal student loan debt.

More than 1 million of these student loan borrowers received debt relief through the Public Service Loan Forgiveness program, which promises loan forgiveness to public-sector workers – like teachers and nurses – after they've made 10 years of qualifying payments.

The PSLF program has been in place for more than 15 years but had been riddled with administrative problems.

"For too long, the government failed to live up to its commitments, and only 7,000 people had ever received forgiveness under Public Service Loan Forgiveness before Vice President (Kamala) Harris and I took office," Biden said in a statement.

"We vowed to fix that," he added.

Biden's Department of Education made it easier for borrowers to qualify for PSLF – a stark contrast to former President Donald Trump, who repeatedly proposed ending the program when he was in the White House.

Thursday's announcement impacts about 60,000 borrowers who are now approved for approximately $4.5 billion in student debt relief under PSLF.

Biden's signature, one-time student loan forgiveness program was struck down by the Supreme Court last year. It would have canceled up to $20,000 of student debt for many low- and middle-income borrowers. In 2022, 16 million borrowers got an email from the Biden administration that said they qualified for debt relief – but no loan forgiveness was ever granted by the program.

That debt-relief program was estimated to cost more than $400 billion.

Harris was recently asked during an interview on the "Call Her Daddy" podcast what she would say to borrowers who were told their student loans would be forgiven but haven't received relief. "We are fighting, and I'm going to continue to fight for student debt relief," Harris said. "It's a barrier to people being able to think, even think about starting a family, buying a home. We need to give people relief," she added.

More recent student loan relief efforts, including a new repayment plan known as Saving on a Valuable Education (SAVE) that the Biden administration launched last year, are also tied up in litigation.

The lawsuits were filed by groups of Republican-led states, which argue that the Department of Education does not have the legal authority to implement the costly debt-relief programs.

"And while Republican elected officials do everything in their power to block millions of their own constituents from receiving this much needed economic relief, I will continue our work to lower costs, make higher education more affordable, and relieve the burden of student debt," Harris said in a statement Thursday.

The student debt relief that Biden has been able to deliver – which is more than under any other president – has come through existing programs that affect specific categories of borrowers. In some instances, the administration has made it easier for borrowers to qualify for the program and streamlined application processing.

The Biden administration has made it easier for about 572,000 permanently disabled borrowers to receive the debt relief to which they are entitled. It also has granted student loan forgiveness to more than 1.6 million borrowers who were defrauded by their college. A backlog of these debt-relief claims built up during the Trump administration, which made efforts to limit the program. Those efforts were ultimately unsuccessful.

Document 19 - See the Average College Tuition in 2024-2025

The average sticker price for in-state public schools is about one-quarter what's charged by private colleges, U.S. News found.

www.usnews.com, September 26, 2024

The cost of earning a college degree remains a significant financial challenge for many families.

The average college sticker price increased in the 2024-2025 academic year over the prior year across both public and private schools, according to U.S. News data based on an annual survey.

A college's sticker price is the amount advertised as the full rate for tuition and fees before financial need, scholarships and other aid are factored in. Net price is the amount that a family pays after aid and scholarships are applied and offset the sticker price.

The average tuition and fees at private ranked colleges has climbed by about 5.5% over the last year, according to data for the 2024-2025 school year submitted to U.S. News in an annual survey. At ranked public schools, tuition and fees rose 2.2% for in-state students and about 2.4% for out-of-staters. Schools reported this data in spring and summer of 2024.

Considering inflation, however, the year-over-year numbers look a little different. For private ranked colleges, tuition and fees increased by 2.5%. But for public ranked schools, there was a decline: about 0.6% for in-state students and about 0.5% for out-of-state students.

Many families are unprepared to pay for college. According to a 2024 College Ave survey, fewer than half of parents with a child in college – 44% – felt ready to pay their child's first tuition bill.

The average in-state cost of tuition and fees to attend a ranked public college is nearly 75% less than the average sticker price at a private college, at $11,011 for the 2024-2025 year compared with $43,505, respectively, U.S. News data shows. The average cost for out-of-state students at public colleges comes to $24,513 for the same year.

In addition to tuition and fees, students must also pay other expenses, such as housing, food and textbooks, which can run thousands of dollars a year.

But sticker prices don't tell the whole story. Private schools can often make up the price gap through tuition discounts and institutional aid. According to a study from the National Association of College and University Business Officers, 325 private nonprofit colleges and universities reported an average estimated tuition discount rate of 56.1% for full-time, first-year, first-time students in 2023-2024 – the highest since the 2014-2015 academic year.

While Harvard University in Massachusetts, for instance, advertised a sticker price of $61,676 for tuition and fees in 2024-2025, the average cost to students after receiving need-based grants that year was about $14,634.

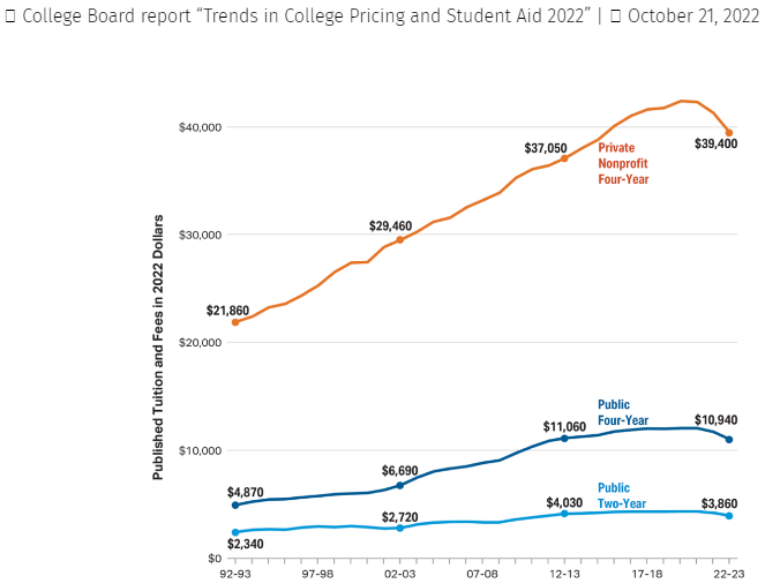
Since 1993, U.S. News has provided information on the Best Value Schools, looking at academic quality and price and factoring in the net cost of attendance for a student after receiving the average level of need-based financial aid.

Princeton University is the No. 1 Best Value School among National Universities, schools that are often research-oriented and offer bachelor's, master's and doctoral degrees.

The highly selective New Jersey school provided need-based grants to 64% of undergraduates and an average need-based scholarship or grant award of $71,864 to undergraduates in 2024-2025. That amount exceeded the school's tuition and fees that year of $62,400, with the average sometimes going toward other costs like food and housing.

Some regional schools, including those not as selective as Princeton, also provide significant need-based financial 35 aid.

For example, although Berry College charged $41,486 in tuition and fees last year, 70% of students received need-based grants. The Georgia institution's financial aid awards in 2024-2025 dropped the average net cost for students to $25,078



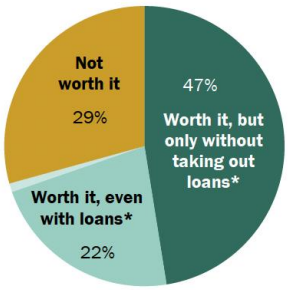
Average College Tuition and Fees

Document 19 - Is College Worth It?

As economic outcomes for young adults with and without degrees have improved, Americans hold mixed views on the value of college **The Pew Research Center**, May 23 2024

Only 22% of U.S. adults say the cost of college is worth it even if someone has to take out loans

% saying the cost of getting a four-year college degree today is ...

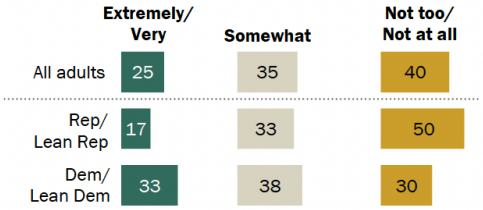


* Refer to topline for full question wording.
Note: Share of respondents who didn't offer an answer is shown but not labeled.
Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Nov. 27-Dec. 3, 2023
"Is College Worth It?"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

4 in 10 Americans say a college degree is not too or not at all important in order to get a well-paying job

% saying it's ____ important for someone to have a four-year college degree in order to get a well-paying job in today's economy

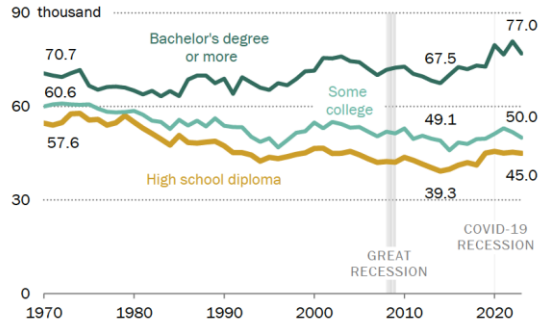


Note: Share of respondents who didn't offer an answer is not shown.
Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Nov. 27-Dec. 3, 2023
"Is College Worth It?"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Earnings of young men without a college degree have increased over the past 10 years

Median annual earnings of men ages 25 to 34 working full time, full year, in 2022 dollars

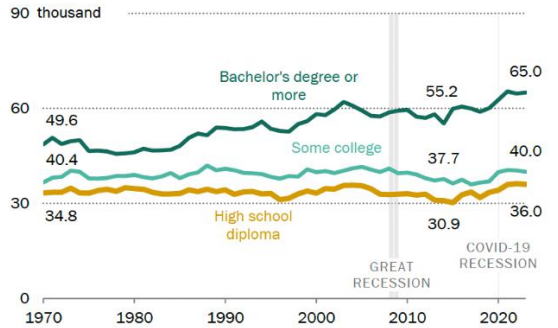


Note: Data is labeled for the years 1973, 2014 and 2023. Median annual earnings are based on earnings and work status during the previous calendar year and limited to 25-to-34-year-old civilians who worked full time, full year.
Source: Pew Research Center analysis of Current Population Survey Annual Social and Economic Supplement (IPUMS).
"Is College Worth It?"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Earnings of young women without a college degree have trended up in the past decade

Median annual earnings of women ages 25 to 34 working full time, full year, in 2022 dollars



Note: Data is labeled for the years 1973, 2014 and 2023. Median annual earnings are based on earnings and work status during the previous calendar year and limited to 25- to 34-year-old civilians who worked full time, full year.
Source: Pew Research Center analysis of Current Population Survey Annual Social and Economic Supplement (IPUMS).
"Is College Worth It?"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

● **VIDEO - Is Going to the University worth it? *The Economist*,** August 2023
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nnZN-FDKYwE&ab_channel=TheEconomist

Universities in the UK

Document 20 - VIDEO - University tuition fees in England are going up for the first time in eight years.

Channel 4 – November 4 2024 (jusqu'à 3 min 21)

Document 21 - Tuition fees: How much does university cost in the UK?

BBC, December 4, 2024

How much are tuition fees going up in England and Wales?

The annual cost of an undergraduate degree in England and Wales will go up from £9,250 to £9,535 in the 2025/26 academic year. The changes will apply from 1 August 2025.

Undergraduate students will also be able to borrow more for day-to-day living costs.

The maximum maintenance loan for students from England, who live away from their parents outside of London, for example, will increase from £10,227 to £10,544 a year.

The rise was first announced in England, where the government said the increases to tuition fees and maintenance loans were in line with inflation.

The Welsh government then said it would bring fees in line with England.

Why are tuition fees going up?

Warnings have been mounting about the state of university finances.

The regulator in England, the Office for Students, warned that 40% of universities have predicted a deficit in this academic year.

Inflation means tuition fees are worth less than they used to be, and there have been fewer international students to make up the financial shortfall.

Students have been warned they could see cuts to staffing and courses as a result.

Universities UK, which represents 141 universities, suggested in September that funding per student would have to be £12,500 to meet universities' tuition costs - although it stressed it would not call for the tuition fee cap to be set that high.

Announcing the tuition fee rise in England, Education Secretary Bridget Phillipson said there were "severe financial challenges" in higher education: "With tuition fees frozen, universities have suffered real terms-decline in income."

However, the government has also said universities should "manage their budgets".

What about Northern Ireland and Scotland?

UK nations set their own fees.

In Northern Ireland, the maximum annual cost of an undergraduate degree is £4,750 for Northern Irish students or £9,250 for other UK students.

In Scotland, undergraduate tuition is free for the majority of Scottish students and £9,250 for other UK students.

What does student accommodation cost?

Student rents have risen sharply in recent years, according to data from 10 university towns and cities.

Average annual rent rose from £6,520 in 2021-22 to £7,475 in 2023-24, according to research by the Higher Education Policy Institute (Hepi) and housing charity Unipol. The figures do not include London and Edinburgh.

Student rents were particularly high in some cities like Bristol and Nottingham, where the average cost was £9,200 and £8,427 respectively.

Hepi warned that maintenance loans in England only just cover average rent, and without family support or part-time work, students "will have no money to live off" after paying housing costs.

If you are leaving home to study, it is generally cheaper to live in university-owned accommodation.

In 2021-22 (the latest UK-wide figures available) average rent for university owned rooms ranged from £6,471 in England to £4,565 in Northern Ireland.

Students also need to budget for other big expenses, such as food, transport, course materials and going out.

Research by the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (Ucas), based on a survey of about 500 respondents, suggests that students spent £219 per week on average in late 2022.

In June 2023, Hepi said that more than half of students had a job.

How do student loans work?

Most UK students are eligible for a tuition fee loan. Maintenance loans are also available for living costs. These are means-tested, so the amount you get depends on your family's income.

The maximum maintenance loan if you live away from home and outside London ranges from £10,227 in England (before next year's increase) to £6,776 in Northern Ireland.

You are charged interest on your total loan from the day you take it out. Eligibility and repayment rules differ across the UK.

Loan repayment rules changed in England in 2023, meaning students are likely to pay back more, over a longer period of time, than those who went to university earlier.

The government says new students "will not repay more than they originally borrowed over the lifetime of their loans, when adjusted for inflation".

But MoneySavingExpert.com's Martin Lewis said extending the repayment period would increase "costs by thousands" for lower and mid-earners.

What extra financial help can students get?

Eligible students in Wales and Northern Ireland can claim maintenance grants which do not have to be repaid.

Full-time undergraduates normally resident in Wales are entitled to at least £1,000. Students from the poorest backgrounds who study in London can get up to £10,124.

In Northern Ireland the maximum grant is £3,475.

The Scottish government offers financial support to certain categories of students, such as those with dependants.

Across the UK, students in financial difficulty can apply for hardship funding and they may also be entitled to financial assistance from charities.

Will I earn more money with a degree?

Most students will leave university owing money.

The Student Loans Company says graduates in England leave university with average debts of £48,470.

In general, most graduates can expect to earn more than non-graduates, according to the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA).

However, it suggests the amount of extra money earned after a university education has declined.

According to HESA's survey of 2020-21 graduates, the average salary reported 15 months after gaining a degree was £29,699.

Earnings also depend on the subject studied and university attended.

Research by the IFS think tank in England suggests, on average, women who studied creative arts and languages degrees earned the same amount in their lifetime as if they had not gone to university.

Women who studied law, economics or medicine earned over £250,000 more during their career than if they had not got a degree.

Men who studied creative arts on average earned less across their lifetimes than if they had not attended university. Male medicine or economics graduates earned £500,000 more.

Attending university can help students from poorer backgrounds earn more than their parents might have done, according to research by education charity the Sutton Trust in England.

But only a fifth of graduates who were eligible for free school meals went on to be in the top 20% of earners - compared to almost half of graduates who attended private schools.

The Sutton Trust says attending a selective university, like a Russell Group one, gives young people the "best chance of being socially mobile".

Document 22 - The Explainer - The UK universities in financial crisis

Spiralling costs and fewer international students is leaving universities in serious financial trouble

By **The Week UK,** November 22, 2024

A combination of high inflation, frozen fees and falling student numbers has left many universities set to operate at a loss, and "few expect that the government would step in to bail out a university in serious financial difficulty", said Hannah Rose Woods in The New Statesman.

How bad is the problem?

There have been warnings for years of a looming crisis in university funding. Last week, the Office for Students (OfS), the regulator, forecast that up to 72% of England's universities could be running budget deficits by next year. In the last academic year, a third of the UK's 150 or so higher education institutions only had enough funds to last for 100 days; it has been reported that a handful are now on the point of going bust. It was against this backdrop that this month, Education Secretary Bridget Phillipson announced an increase in tuition fees in England for the

first time in eight years – from £9,250 per year, to £9,535 – in order to "bring stability to university finances".

How are universities funded?

The total income of UK higher education providers in 2022/23 was about £50bn. Of this, some 52% came from tuition fees (43% of which were paid by international students); 14% came from research grants (from government bodies and charities); and 12% came from direct government funding. Other sources of income include donations and endowments.

Since higher education is devolved, the UK's different administrations have different funding models. In Scotland, home students' tuition fees are paid directly by the government, meaning Scottish student numbers are capped, unlike in England; all Welsh undergraduates receive a minimum maintenance grant of £1,000 to help with living costs; and in Northern Ireland, fees are capped at £4,750.

Why are universities so cash-strapped?

Because tuition fees haven't kept up with inflation; raising them is politically unpopular, as the Liberal Democrats found out when the coalition government did so in 2012. Fees rose to £9,000 then and have been frozen at £9,250 since 2017; if they had risen in line with inflation since 2012, they'd have reached nearly £15,000 by now. This has caused a sharp real-terms drop in income; the last time universities' income was this low was when tuition fees were first introduced, in 1998.

At the same time, they have had to contend with inflation-driven rises in operational costs, staff salaries and pension payments. As a result, before the tuition fee hike was announced, they were making a loss of £2,500 on each domestic student, according to the Russell Group of universities – so the sector has become dependent on fees from international students.

What issues does that raise?

The number of international students enrolling at UK universities has, over the past 20 years, risen sharply: in 2003, there were about 300,000 students from outside the UK on their books; by 2022/23, there were 758,855 – 26% of the student body. They can be charged much higher fees than UK students – up to £26,000 a year in tuition fees for undergraduate courses – and contributed £11.8 billion in fees in 2022/23.

However, the issue is politically contentious. Universities argue that foreign students prop them up, and that it's good to attract talent from around the world. Critics complain that education is used as a back door to economic migration; at least a third of foreign students settle in Britain, notably those from India, China and Nigeria. Conservative rules designed to reduce this – banning most postgraduate students from bringing family members to live with them, for instance – have meant that student visa applications dropped by 16% this year. And this has greatly affected university finances.

What effect is all this having?

For years, universities have been asked to do more with less. And with foreign students no longer fully plugging the gap, more than 70 UK universities have announced staff redundancies, course closures and other forms of restructuring. Others may be forced into mergers, or axing some degrees. Some may go bankrupt, and either have to be bailed out financially by the Government, or close down.

Among academics, morale is reportedly at an all-time low. The prospect of further job losses follows on from years of falling pay, heavier workloads, often precarious working conditions, and pension reductions – which have led to waves of strikes. There is likely to be further industrial action as redundancies and restructurings are announced.

Won't the fee hike help?

Not really. The Institute for Fiscal Studies calculates that the hike will raise £390 million a year for universities; but changes to employers' national insurance announced in the Budget will likely cost them £372 million a year, leaving a net gain of just £18m. Besides, it will only start in the 2025/26 academic year. It will, though, add to the debt loaded onto students in England. The Government has stated that "longer-term funding plans for the higher education sector will be set out in due course", but that probably means waiting until public finances are stabilised.

What will the Government do?

It could increase tuition fees further, or link them to inflation. It could increase grants to universities through more taxation. It could allow in more overseas fee-paying students. Or it could do some mixture of the above. The alternative is allowing higher education – one of Britain's world-leading sectors – to get poorer and smaller. Some would argue that we have too many universities. In 2006, 24.7% of UK 18-year-olds went to university; by 2023, that figure had risen to 35.8%. David Behan, chairman of the OfS, recently suggested that the "golden age of higher education" is probably over, and that universities are likely to move towards far shorter courses that allow students to work and study simultaneously.

Some less illustrious universities could probably fail without serious repercussions. But many are anchor institutions in their towns and cities, often among the largest employers and contributors to the local economy. Any government, particularly a Labour one, would be keen to avoid such closures.

Document 23 - Au Royaume-Uni, la grande dépendance des universités à l'égard des étudiants étrangers

Le Monde, 18 janvier 2024

Le courriel envoyé courant décembre 2023 par l'un des dirigeants du département d'enseignement en informatique de l'université d'York, au Royaume-Uni, à ses collègues était direct : *« En réponse aux problèmes financiers actuels, l'université a décidé de réduire les notes demandées aux étudiants étrangers pour* [l'admission dans] *tous les cursus. »* **En clair, cette université, qui fait pourtant partie du prestigieux Russell Group, rassemblant les vingt-quatre meilleurs établissements de l'éducation supérieure du Royaume-Uni, a décidé d'accepter des étudiants étrangers de moins bon niveau.**

Comme l'indique le message interne, révélé par le *Financial Times*, l'explication est purement financière : un étudiant britannique paie des frais universitaires de 9 250 livres sterling (près de 10 800 euros) par an, un niveau qui est encadré par l'Etat et gelé depuis 2012 ; ceux qui viennent de l'international paient deux à trois fois plus cher, sans aucune limite imposée par les autorités. A l'université d'York, les frais en bachelor s'élèvent par exemple à 21 950 livres sterling par an.

Dans le même temps, l'Etat britannique a fortement réduit son budget consacré aux universités. Le financement public par étudiant est au plus bas depuis vingt-cinq ans. Les étudiants internationaux représentent donc la dernière manne disponible : ils apportent désormais 20 % des revenus des universités, un doublement en une décennie. *« Il y a un besoin urgent d'un débat national sur le financement des universités, notamment l'équilibre entre les frais payés par les étudiants britanniques, les fonds publics, et les étudiants internationaux »,* souligne Charley Robinson, chargé de l'international à Universities UK, qui représente les universités britanniques.

Dans ce contexte, le courriel interne de l'université d'York dit tout haut ce qui se murmure tout bas depuis quelques années : les universités britanniques, en grande difficulté financière, risquent de créer des diplômes à deux vitesses, avec des exigences plus élevées pour les Britanniques.

En deux décennies, le nombre d'étudiants internationaux a plus que doublé au Royaume-Uni, à presque 700 000 aujourd'hui, soit le quart de tous les étudiants. Dans certaines universités, le pourcentage dépasse allègrement la moitié : London School of Economics (66 % d'étudiants étrangers), University of the Arts London (54 %), Imperial College London (53 %), University College London (UCL, 52 %)… Au niveau des masters, les deux tiers des étudiants sont désormais internationaux. Le premier contingent vient de Chine, représentant environ le quart des étudiants étrangers. Les Indiens et les Nigérians sont aussi en forte hausse. **Seul le nombre d'Européens, qui doivent payer les frais internationaux depuis le Brexit (alors qu'ils étaient limités aux frais britanniques auparavant), est en forte baisse.**

Ce système tourné vers le recrutement international, qui est certes la preuve éclatante de l'attractivité des universités britanniques, n'est-il pas en train d'aller trop loin ?

Jo Johnson, ancien secrétaire d'Etat à l'éducation supérieure (et frère de Boris Johnson), a récemment tiré la sonnette d'alarme : *« la limite politique »* se rapproche. Le gouvernement du premier ministre, Rishi Sunak, s'agace de voir ces étudiants grossir les statistiques de l'immigration, un sujet explosif outre-Manche. Quant aux universités elles-mêmes, avec des classes parfois entièrement composées d'étudiants étrangers, ne risquent-elles pas d'atteindre un certain déséquilibre ?

Coventry est une ville britannique qui a été presque rasée pendant la seconde guerre mondiale, bombardée intensément par l'armée allemande à cause de ses usines d'aviation. Reconstruite à la va-vite dans les années 1950, dominée par la circulation automobile, elle porte encore les stigmates du conflit. Aujourd'hui, partout dans cette cité des Midlands, des bâtiments affichent en grandes lettres capitales : *« Logements étudiants »*. Des tours sont apparues, entièrement destinées aux étudiants étrangers. Le mal nommé « City Village » (une grande barre d'immeubles sans charme) en fait partie.

Sur le panneau d'affichage à l'entrée, des photos ont été collées, souvenirs de petits événements organisés pour Pâques, Noël ou le couronnement du roi Charles III. Toutes montrent exclusivement des étudiants asiatiques. Dans les couloirs, on parle mandarin, cantonais, indonésien… […]

L'université de Coventry […] fait partie de ces établissements moyens, au 571e rang mondial dans le classement QS, qui fait référence. Mais elle a poussé particulièrement loin la logique de l'internationalisation. En 2010, l'établissement a ouvert un campus de 4 500 étudiants… à Londres, à plus de

170 kilomètres de la ville des Midlands. *« Il a été créé dans le but explicite d'attirer les étudiants internationaux qui voulaient un diplôme de Coventry, mais souhaitaient vivre l'expérience londonienne »*, explique Ian Dunn, le recteur. L'université a désormais quatre campus à Londres.

Dans la même logique qu'une multinationale, elle a aussi ouvert des sites en Pologne, au Maroc, en Egypte… Chacun offre un « diplôme de l'université de Coventry », mais sans que les étudiants aient besoin de mettre les pieds au Royaume-Uni, et à des prix beaucoup plus raisonnables. Comme pour une franchise, l'université supervise et garantit la qualité de l'enseignement. *« Il s'agit d'apporter l'éducation là où elle est nécessaire »*, explique M. Dunn. Il assure qu'il n'est pas question de baisser la qualité de l'enseignement ni les critères d'admission.

Reste que la logique de ce développement est financière. *« Il est désormais douteux que la survie des universités britanniques soit possible sans les revenus des étudiants étrangers »*, estime Richard Wells, chargé de la stratégie internationale de l'université de Coventry. Dans son établissement, les étudiants étrangers rapportent 47 % des revenus.

Cette dépendance est la conséquence d'une décision politique prise en 2012. **La décennie précédente, le nombre d'étudiants avait fortement augmenté, tandis que les financements ne suivaient pas. Le gouvernement de David Cameron avait alors décidé de tripler les frais universitaires, alors limités à 3 000 livres sterling. La décision a provoqué une violente tempête politique et d'importantes manifestations.**

Depuis, aucun gouvernement n'ose toucher à la limite de 9 250 livres sterling par année universitaire pour les étudiants britanniques. En valeur réelle, ce gel depuis douze ans représente une baisse d'un tiers. *« Ce n'est pas un secret, les étudiants internationaux fournissent des revenus vitaux »*, souligne Ben Moore, de Russell Group. Selon lui, un étudiant international *« subventionne »* un Britannique à hauteur de 2 500 livres sterling par an.

Désormais, la pression financière s'immisce même dans les tout meilleurs établissements. A UCL (neuvième meilleur établissement mondial, selon le classement QS), un professeur, qui requiert l'anonymat, raconte les consignes venant de sa direction pour sélectionner les étudiants. *« Pour chaque classe, on me donne un quota d'étudiants étrangers. A moi, ensuite, de trouver les élèves qui ont le niveau. »* Il a de la chance : la réputation d'UCL la précède et il ne manque pas de candidats. *« Mais pour ceux qui sont limites, de très bons élèves mais qui pourraient ne pas être admis du côté britannique, on trouve souvent plus d'arguments favorables pour les internationaux. »*

A UCL, les frais pour les masters s'envolent jusqu'à 35 000 livres sterling l'année. […]

Cette vague d'internationalisation serait-elle cependant sur le point de refluer ? **Le gouvernement britannique, soucieux de réduire l'immigration, a augmenté le coût des visas en 2023 et vient d'imposer des restrictions pour limiter le regroupement familial des étudiants en master.** Selon le site Studyportals, qui aide les candidats aux études à l'étranger à s'y retrouver, les demandes de renseignements chutent : − 48 % en provenance du Nigeria, − 34 % du Sri Lanka (ces deux pays sont par ailleurs touchés par des crises économiques), − 22 % des Emirats arabes unis…

« Nous pensons que nous avons atteint un pic du nombre d'étudiants internationaux en 2023, et nous sommes de plus en plus inquiets pour le recrutement des étudiants en 2024 », explique M^me^ Robinson, d'Universities UK.

Pour le gouvernement, cela représente un dilemme difficile : soit mieux financer les universités, quitte à augmenter les frais universitaires pour les Britanniques, soit faciliter les visas. Un choix entre deux bombes politiques qu'aucun des deux grands partis n'ose discuter ouvertement, à moins d'un an des élections législatives.