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155 OVERALL RANK

SLIGHTLY BELOW AVERAGE

SPEECH CLIMATE YELLOW SPOTLIGHT RATING



Executive Summary

organization committed to defending and sustaining the individual rights of all Americans to free speech and free thought, and College Pulse surveyed college undergraduates about their perceptions and experiences regarding free speech on their campuses.

This year's survey includes 58,807 student respondents from 257 colleges and universities. Students who were enrolled in four-year degree programs were surveyed via the College Pulse mobile app and web portal from January 25 through June 17, 2024.

The College Free Speech Rankings are available online and are presented in an interactive dashboard (rankings.thefire.org) that allows for easy comparison between institutions.

Yale University was one of the 257 schools surveyed. Key findings from this school include:



Full Report

2020, FIRE, in collaboration with College Pulse and RealClearEducation, launched a first-of-its-kind tool to help high school students and their parents identify which colleges promote and protect the free exchange of ideas: the College Free Speech Rankings. The response to the rankings report and corresponding online tool was overwhelmingly positive.

This year FIRE and College Pulse surveyed 257 schools, ranking 251 of them.¹ Yale University, with a score of 44.04, has a "Slightly Below Average" speech climate and ranks 155 overall in the 2025 College Free Speech Rankings.

This represents a significant improvement from last year's rankings, when Yale ranked 234.

Yale's scores on a number of the survey-based components improved, resulting in a corresponding improvement in rankings. Its "Openness" ranking (28) noticeably improved from last year (47 out of 248). Yale additionally improved in "Comfort Expressing Ideas" (95 compared to 147 last year), "Administrative Support" (156 compared to 185 last year), "Tolerance for Liberal Speakers" (17 compared to 29 last year), and "Tolerance for Conservative Speakers" (41 compared to 76 last year). Its ranking on "Disruptive Conduct" (208) dropped slightly from last year (200). Students' support for illiberal actions in response to controversial speech and middling administrative support remain serious issues.

As the only Ivy League school that ranks better than 200, Yale University out-performs its peers, coming in higher than Cornell University (215), Princeton University (223), Dartmouth College (224), Brown University (229), the University of Pennsylvania (248), Columbia University (250), and Harvard University (251).

HOW COMFORTABLE ARE YALE STUDENTS EXPRESSING THEIR VIEWS ON CONTROVERSIAL TOPICS?

Yale ranked 95 overall on the "Comfort Expressing Ideas" component. This rank reflects positive movement in the proportion of Yale students reporting comfort expressing themselves in the various campus settings asked about. Specifically, as can be seen in Figure 1, the percentage of Yale students who responded that they were "somewhat" or "very" comfortable expressing themselves in di erent campus settings increased from the drop last year. There was improvement across all five scenarios.



¹ Six of the schools surveyed received a "warning" rating from FIRE for their speech policies. An overall score was calculated separately for these schools, comparing them only to each other.

1, ..., (%)

Earlier in the survey, Yale students were provided with a general question of self-censorship without a definition and were asked: "On your campus, how often have you felt that you could not express your opinion on a subject because of how students, a professor, or the administration would respond?" Responses to this question do not factor into the rankings but provide a point of comparison. On this, 14% of Yale students reported they self-censor "a couple of times a week" or more because of how students, a professor, or the administration would respond compared to 17% of students nationally.

When considering the prevalence of self-censorship, it's worth considering the political composition of Yale students. Among those sampled, 66% identified as liberal, 11% moderate, 15% conservative, and 7% something else. Narrowing in, 23% of the sample identified as "very liberal," which outnumbers the total percentage of Yale students right of center, and nearly outnumbers the combined total of moderate and conservative Yale students. Across each of the four questions on self-censorship, substantially larger percentages of conservative students at Yale reported frequently self-censoring. For example, 49% of conservative Yale students reported self-censoring "a couple of times a week" or more during classroom discussions compared to 12% of liberal Yale students. Thus, while Yale does well on the "Self-Censorship" component, there appears to be substantial di erences along ideological lines.

WHAT TOPICS ARE DIFFICULT FOR YALE STUDENTS TO HAVE CONVERSATIONS ABOUT?

Yale's ranking on the "Openness" component continued to rise, landing at 28, up from 47 last year, and 85 the year prior. On almost every topic, fewer Yale students expressed disculty having an open and honest conversation about the topics assessed.

Similar to students nationwide, a large proportion of Yale students — 68% — identified the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as a topic dicult to have an open and honest conversation about. Last year, a large proportion of Yale students (41%) already identified this as a dicult topic, which at the time was unusual. Even though this year a majority of students (55%) nationwide also identified this as a dicult topic, Yale continues to stand out given the even larger percentage of its students who indicated this.

No other topic at Yale was identified by a majority of students as discult to have an open and honest conversation about. However, on three topics percentages did go up slightly. Specifically, last year 32% of Yale students expressed disculty having an open and honest conversation about a similar rmative action, 19% about freedom of speech, and 20% about economic inequality. These numbers rose to 33%, 21%, and 27% respectively this year.

Similarly, the small percentages of Yale students expressing disculty having an open and honest conversation about the assessed topics might be because a consensus already exists on campus about these topics, in large part due to the supermajority (66%) of Yale students identifying as liberal. Indeed, for every topic assessed, a larger percentage of conservative (compared to liberal) students expressed disculty discussing the topic. Specifically, large percentages of conservative students expressed disculty having an open and honest conversation about abortion (58%; 21% among liberals), racial inequality (55%; 23% among liberals), transgender rights (51%; 23% among liberals), a rmative action (42%; 32% among liberals), sexual assault (41%; 23% among liberals), gender inequality (38%; 14% among liberals), gun control (38%; 13% among liberals), and the presidential election (38%; 19% among liberals).



Overall, the findings on "Openness" are consistent with findings on the self-censorship questions: Yale students report generally being comfortable talking about most of the topics assessed. Only a minority report frequently self-censoring and not feeling comfortable expressing their views.

WHICH SPEAKERS DO YALE STUDENTS CONSIDER CONTROVERSIAL?

Yale students were fairly tolerant of allowing controversial speakers on campus, ranking 17 on "Tolerance for Liberal Speakers," 41 on "Tolerance for Conservative Speakers," and 11 on "Mean Tolerance." At the same time, they displayed a heavy bias toward allowing controversial liberal speakers on campus compared to conservative ones, as evidenced by their ranking of 187 on the "Tolerance Di erence" component.

Yale students were presented with eight dierent previously expressed ideas (three liberal, three conservative, and two related to Israel-Palestine which did not impact the rankings) in random order. The percentage of Yale students who said they would "probably" or "definitely" allow each of the three controversial liberal speakers ranged from 60% ("The police are just as racist as the Ku Klux Klan") to 74% ("Children should be able to transition without parental consent"). While majorities of students nationally supported allowing all three controversial liberal speakers on campus, they did not give the same level of support as Yale students — support by students nationally ranged from 47% ("The police are just as racist as the Ku Klux Klan") to 56% ("Children should be able to transition without parental consent").

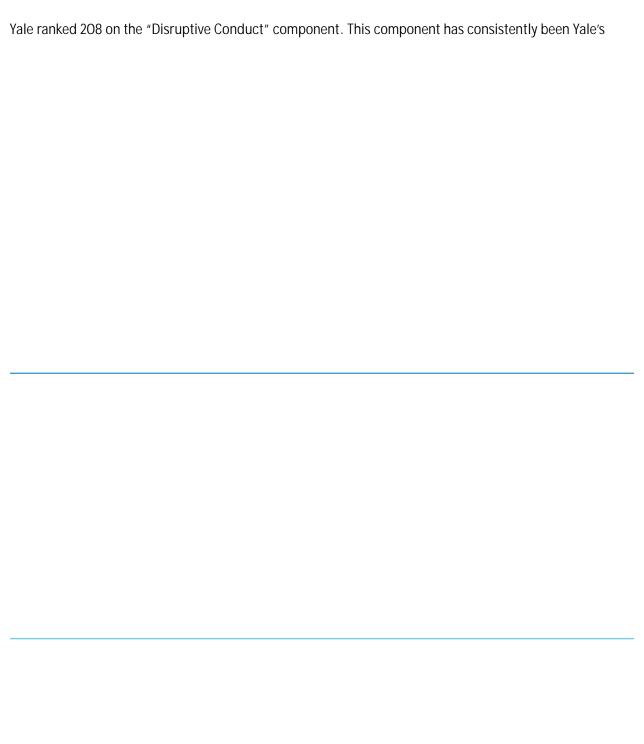
Similar to last year, Yale ranked relatively well on "Tolerance for Conservative Speakers," though conservative speakers were still met with more resistance. The percentage of Yale students who said they would "probably" or "definitely" allow each of the three controversial conservative speakers on campus ranged from 35% ("Transgender people have a mental disorder") to 57% ("Abortion should be completely illegal"). Despite the lower percentages compared to tolerance for controversial liberal speakers, the relatively high ranking for tolerance for controversial conservative speakers is somewhat evident when comparing Yale students to students nationally, as larger proportions of Yale students would allow each of the controversial speakers.

The strong preference toward controversial liberal speakers over controversial conservative speakers is reflected in Yale's poor ranking on the "Tolerance Di erence" component, 187. The strong favoritism toward allowing controversial liberal speakers on campus compared to conservative ones might again stem from the ideological makeup of the Yale student body.

Finally, this year we also asked about tolerance toward two controversial speakers on Israeli-Palestinian conflict-related topics. For a speaker expressing that "collateral damage in Gaza is justified for the sake of Israeli security," 54% of Yale students said they would "probably" or "definitely" allow this controversial speaker compared to 40% of students nationally. For a speaker expressing "from the river to the sea, Palestine will be free," 79% of Yale students said they would "probably" or "definitely" allow this speaker compared to 71% of students nationally.



WHAT KINDS OF DISRUPTIVE CONDUCT DO YALE STUDENTS CONSIDER ACCEPTABLE?





or "extremely" likely — an uptick from 20% last year — and another 44% say that it is "somewhat" likely. These low numbers reflect Yale students' low confidence in the administration on their campus to protect and defend free speech.

A 'YELLOW LIGHT' SCHOOL WITH A LOT OF CONTROVERSY

FIRE awards Yale's regulations on student expression a "yellow light" rating, flagging five policies that earn that rating for posing either impermissibly vague or clear but narrow restrictions on protected speech. These include four harassment policies that fail to su ciently track the legal standard for peer harassment in an educational setting. Perhaps of greatest concern, however, is a broad, catch-all prohibition on any actions that "may imperil the integrity and values of the Yale community." This manner of reserving authority for the university to discipline any behavior it wishes is ripe for administrative abuse and leaves students unsure what they can safely say without risking punishment. Yale must revise each of these policies to reduce the chilling e ect they impose on the campus speech climate.

Since 2021, Yale has been involved in eight dierent speech controversies, reacting in a speech-protective manner in only one. In 2022, law students protested a Federalist Society-organized panel discussion on civil liberties featuring progressive Monica Miller and conservative Kristen Waggoner because of Waggoner's stance on LGBTQ issues. Student protesters disrupted the event throughout — heckling inside the hall as well as stomping, shouting, clapping, singing, and pounding the walls outside the room. The associate dean of the law school was present during the entire event and did not confront any protesters. Nearly three weeks later, the law school dean issued a statement that the protesters' behavior was "unacceptable" but did not violate the school's free expression policy.

On top of that, in each year since 2021, there has been at least one controversy surrounding a university scholar. In 2021, Professor Amy Chua was demoted following allegations that she hosted parties for and engaged inappropriately with students during the COVID-19 pandemic. Professor Chua denied the allegations, but Yale maintained its punishment. Also in 2021, Beverly Gage, in response to donors' attempts to influence the course, resigned as director of Yale's Grand Strategy program, a year-long statecraft and politics course that accepts about 20 undergraduate and graduate students. The donors tried to institute an advisory board to oversee the program that would have included conservative figures such as former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger. The university did not publicly comment on the situation.

Then, in 2022, faculty signed a letter to the university defending School of Medicine Professor Haifan Lin, who was placed on involuntary administrative leave and abruptly cut o from his research group without legal charges or clear evidence of misconduct amid a Department of Justice investigation. The faculty claimed the investigation was likely because Lin is of Chinese dissent.

The next year, students circulated a petition calling for Professor Zareena Grewal to be terminated after she posted on X condoning violence against Israel. The university responded by defending Grewal's right to extramural speech, stating "Yale is committed to freedom of expression, and the comments posted on Professor Grewal's personal accounts represent her own views."

In 2024, Professor Timothy Snyder evacuated his "Hitler, Stalin, and Us" lecture after about 10 demonstrators with the Revolutionary Communist Party entered his classroom and refused to leave. The university announced an investigation after the fact.



Additionally, in 2021 there were two more incidents, involving students. First, law student Trent Colbert was investigated by the administration after sending an email inviting other students to a party at his

Methodology

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College Pulse also applies a post-stratification adjustment based on demographic distributions from



Supporting a scholar whose speech rights were threatened during a free speech controversy, as recorded in FIRE's Scholars Under Fire database.⁴

Supporting students and student groups, as recorded in the 2025 College Free Speech Rankings behavioral metrics documentation that is available online.⁵

Schools were penalized — described in more detail below — for taking the following actions indicative of poor campus climate for free speech:

Successfully deplatforming a speaker, as recorded in FIRE's Campus Deplatforming database.

Sanctioning a scholar (e.g., placing under investigation, suspending, or terminating a scholar), as recorded in FIRE's Scholars Under Fire database.

Sanctioning a student or student groups, as recorded in the 2025 College Free Speech Rankings behavioral metrics documentation that is available online.

To be included in this year's rankings, an incident that resulted in a bonus or penalty had to have been recorded by June 15, 2024, and had to have been fully assessed by FIRE's research sta , who determined whether the incident warranted inclusion.

In response to the encampment protests, FIRE and College Pulse reopened the 2025 College Free Speech Rankings survey on any campus with an encampment. This allowed us to collect survey data from students while the encampments were taking place.⁶ That means that this year's College Free Speech



Finally, a fourth rating, "Warning," is assigned to a private college or university when its policies clearly

The principles of free speech and inquiry are complemented by debate, challenge and protest . . . While dissent may be vigorous, it must not interfere with the speaker's ability to communicate — which is exactly why, should those interrupters not have left on their own accord, they would be subject to discipline.

We awarded one point for this response, which occurred in 2024, then we set this bonus to decrease by one-quarter of a point for each year that passes.

We also applied penalties when a school sanctioned a scholar, student, or student group, or deplatformed a speaker.

A school lost up to five points each time it sanctioned (e.g., investigated, suspended, or terminated) a scholar. When the sanction did not result in termination the school received a penalty of one point, which we set to decrease by one-quarter of a point each year: This meant penalizing a school a full point for sanctioning a scholar in 2024, three-quarters of a point for sanctioning a scholar in 2023, half a point for sanctioning a scholar in 2022, and one-quarter of a point for sanctioning a scholar in 2021. However, if the administration terminated the scholar, we subtracted three points, and if that scholar was tenured, we subtranctiio1 (o fiTcerminatto communicate — (er of a for e)-4.9 (ainatto commS7(ainatto co4.9 (aine — (er of3r)15.1 vfouri



How clear is it to you that your college administration protects free speech on campus?

Response	Frequency	Percent
Not at all clear	26	7
Not very clear	83	22
Somewhat clear	140	37
Very clear	110	29
Extremely clear	17	4

If a controversy over o ensive speech were to occur on your campus, how likely is it that the administration would defend the speaker's right to express their views?

Response	Frequency	Percent
Not at all likely	31	8
Not very likely	80	21
Somewhat likely	163	44
Very likely	79	21
Extremely likely	21	6

How comfortable would you feel doing the following on your campus? [Presented in randomized order] Publicly disagreeing with a professor about a controversial political topic.

Response	Frequency	Percent
Very uncomfortable	98	26
Somewhat uncomfortable	136	36
Somewhat comfortable	104	28
Very comfortable	36	10

Expressing disagreement with one of your professors about a controversial political topic in a written assignment.

Response	Frequency	Percent
Very uncomfortable	63	17
Somewhat uncomfortable	132	35
Somewhat comfortable	121	32
Very comfortable	58	15

Expressing your views on a controversial political topic during an in-class discussion.

Response	Frequency	Percent
Very uncomfortable	60	16
Somewhat uncomfortable	130	35
Somewhat comfortable	140	37
Very comfortable	45	12

Expressing your views on a controversial political topic to other students during a discussion in a common campus space such as a quad, dining hall, or lounge.

Frequency	Percent
37	10
111	30
151	40
76	20
	37 111 151

Expressing an unpopular political opinion to your fellow students on a social media account tied to your name.

Response	Frequency	Percent
Very uncomfortable	130	35
Somewhat uncomfortable	132	35
Somewhat comfortable	91	24
Very comfortable	21	6

On your campus, how often have you felt that you could not express your opinion on a subject because of how students, a professor, or the administration would respond?

Response	Frequency	Percent
Never	<u> </u>	12
Rarely	144	38
Occasionally, once or twice a month	134	36
Fairly often, a couple times a week	37	10
Very often, nearly every day	15	4

This next series of questions asks you about self-censorship in di erent settings.

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How often do you self-censor during conversations with your professors?

Response	Frequency	Percent
Never	45	12
Rarely	155	41
Occasionally, once or twice a month	103	27
Fairly often, a couple times a week	60	16
Very often, nearly every day	12	3

How often do you self-censor during classroom discussions?

Response	Frequency	Percent
Never	21	6
Rarely	166	44
Occasionally, once or twice a month	114	30
Fairly often, a couple times a week	61	16
Very often, nearly every day	13	3

How acceptable would you say it is for students to engage in the following action to protest a campus speaker? [Presented in randomized order]

Shouting down a speaker to prevent them from speaking on campus.

Response	Frequency	Percent
Always acceptable	40	11
Sometimes acceptable	130	35
Rarely acceptable	122	33
Never acceptable	83	22

Blocking other students from attending a campus speech.

Response	Frequency	Percent	
Always acceptable	21	6	
Sometimes acceptable			
Rarely acceptable	121	3Neve	er acceptable



Student groups often invite speakers to campus to express their views on a range of topics. Regardless of your own views on the topic, should your school **ALLOW** or **NOT ALLOW** a speaker on campus who promotes the following idea? [Presented in randomized order]

Transgender people have a mental disorder.

Response	Frequency	Percent
Definitely should not allow this speaker	136	36
Probably should not allow this speaker	106	28
Probably should allow this speaker	80	21
Definitely should allow this speaker	53	14

Abortion should be completely illegal.

Response	Frequency	Percent
Definitely should not allow this speaker	57	15
Probably should not allow this speaker	105	28
Probably should allow this speaker	137	36
Definitely should allow this speaker	77	20

Black Lives Matter is a hate group.

Response	Frequency	Percent
Definitely should not allow this speaker	109	29
Probably should not allow this speaker	117	31
Probably should allow this speaker	99	26
Definitely should allow this speaker	50	13

The Catholic church is a pedophilic institution.

Response	Frequency	Percent
Definitely should not allow this speaker	32	8
Probably should not allow this speaker	106	28
Probably should allow this speaker	158	42
Definitely should allow this speaker	79	21

The police are just as racist as the Klu Klux Klan.

Response	Frequency	Percent
Definitely should not allow this speaker	42	11
Probably should not allow this speaker	109	29
Probably should allow this speaker	149	40
Definitely should allow this speaker	75	20



Children should be able to transition without parental consent.

Response	Frequency	Percent
Definitely should not allow this speaker	14	4
Probably should not allow this speaker	84	22



Climate change

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	342	91
Yes	30	8

Crime

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	315	84
Yes	57	15

Economic inequality

Response	Frequency	Percent
No You	272	73
Yes	100	27

Freedom of speech

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	293	78
Yes	79	21

Gay rights

Response Frequency Perce	ent
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Hate speech

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	287	77
Yes	85	23

Immigration

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	303	81
Yes	69	18

The Israeli/Palestinian conflict

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	118	31
Yes	254	68

The Presidential Election

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	294	79
Yes	77	21

Police misconduct

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	287	76
Yes	85	23

Racial inequality

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	268	72
Yes	104	28

Religion

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	299	80
Yes	73	20

С

Sexual assault

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	280	75
Yes	92	25

The Supreme Court

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	334	89
Yes	38	10

Transgender rights

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	263	70
Yes	109	29

Sororities or fraternities

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	154	41
Yes	217	58

LGBTQ+ student groups

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	83	22
Yes	289	77

Christian student groups

Response	Frequency	Percent
No You	93	25
Yes	279	74

Jewish student groups

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	89	24
Yes	282	75

Muslim/Islamic student groups.

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	91	24
Yes	280	75

Hindu student groups.

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	89	24
Yes	282	75

Atheist/agnostic/secular student groups

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	107	29
Yes	264	70

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	114	30
Yes	258	69

Democratic student groups.

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	101	27
Yes	271	72

Politically conservative student groups

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	108	29
Yes	264	70

Politically liberal student groups

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	105	28
Yes	266	71

Black Lives Matter student groups

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	103	27
Yes	269	72

Pro-Israeli student groups

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	150	40
Yes	222	59

Pro-Palestinian student groups

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	121	32
Yes	251	67

Other student groups

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	163	43
Yes	209	56

None of the above

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	340	91
Yes	32	8

How often, if at all, do you hide your political beliefs from your professors in an attempt to get a better grade?

Response	Frequency	Percent
Never	135	36
Rarely	115	31
Occasionally	65	17
Fairly often, a couple times a week	43	12
Very often, nearly every day	13	4

Have you ever been involved in publicly calling out, punishing, or "canceling" someone or a group for inappropriate statements or actions?

Response	Frequency	Percent
Yes	52	14
No	319	85

Thinking of the last incident where someone was publicly called out, punished, or "canceled" for their statements or actions, would you say the consequence or impact on the person was...

Response	Frequency	Percent
Too lenient	44	12
About right	181	48
Too harsh	146	39

How often, if ever, have you personally been o ended by perspectives shared by peers or classmates when in the classroom?

Frequency	Percent
66	18
197	53
79	21
28	7
2	1
	66 197 79

From what you know about the situation in the Middle East, do your sympathies lie more with the Israelis or more with the Palestinians?

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Response	Frequency	Percent
Israelis	38	10
Palestinians	189	50
Both equally	72	19
Neither	13	3
Don't know	59	16

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Are you a veteran of the armed services?

Response	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Yes	4	1	1
No	366	98	99

How often would you say that you feel anxious?

Response	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Never	11	3	11
Less than half the time	32	9	34
About half the time	27	7	28
Most of the time, nearly every day	17	5	18
Always	8	2	9

How often would you say that you feel lonely or isolated?

Response	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Never	13	3	16
Less than half the time	44	12	56
About half the time	17	5	22
Most of the time, nearly every day	2	1	3
Always	2	1	3

How often would you say that you feel like you have no time for yourself?

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Response	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Never	9	2	14
Less than half the time	13	3	20
About half the time	26	7	41
Most of the time, nearly every day	14	4	22
Always	2	0	3

How often would you say that you feel depressed?

Response	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Never	21	6	32
Less than half the time	26	7	40
About half the time	10	3	15
Most of the time, nearly every day	7	2	11
Always	2	0	2

How often would you say that you feel stressed, frustrated, or overwhelmed?

Response	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Never	3	1	5
Less than half the time	18	5	26
About half the time	22	6	32
Most of the time, nearly every day	21	6	31
Always	5	1	7

