

RECRUITMENT & RETENTION FROM OUR RESEARCH CENTER

Educators Less Likely to Seek Jobs in States That Limit Classroom Talk, Survey Finds

By [Ileana Najarro](#) — February 09, 2023 ⌚ 3 min read

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At least 18 states have enacted a ban—through legislation or other means—restricting how topics of race and gender can be discussed in K-12 schools, according to an Education Week analysis.

The impact this has on how teachers do their job is already noticeable. In a new RAND Corp. survey, about one-quarter of teachers said that state-level limitations on classroom discussions have influenced their choice of curriculum materials or instructional practices. Some educators

are also pointing to a chilling effect on districtwide professional development centered around anti-racism.

Yet as school districts across the country come up with creative ways to recruit and retain educators, are these laws having an impact on the job search process?

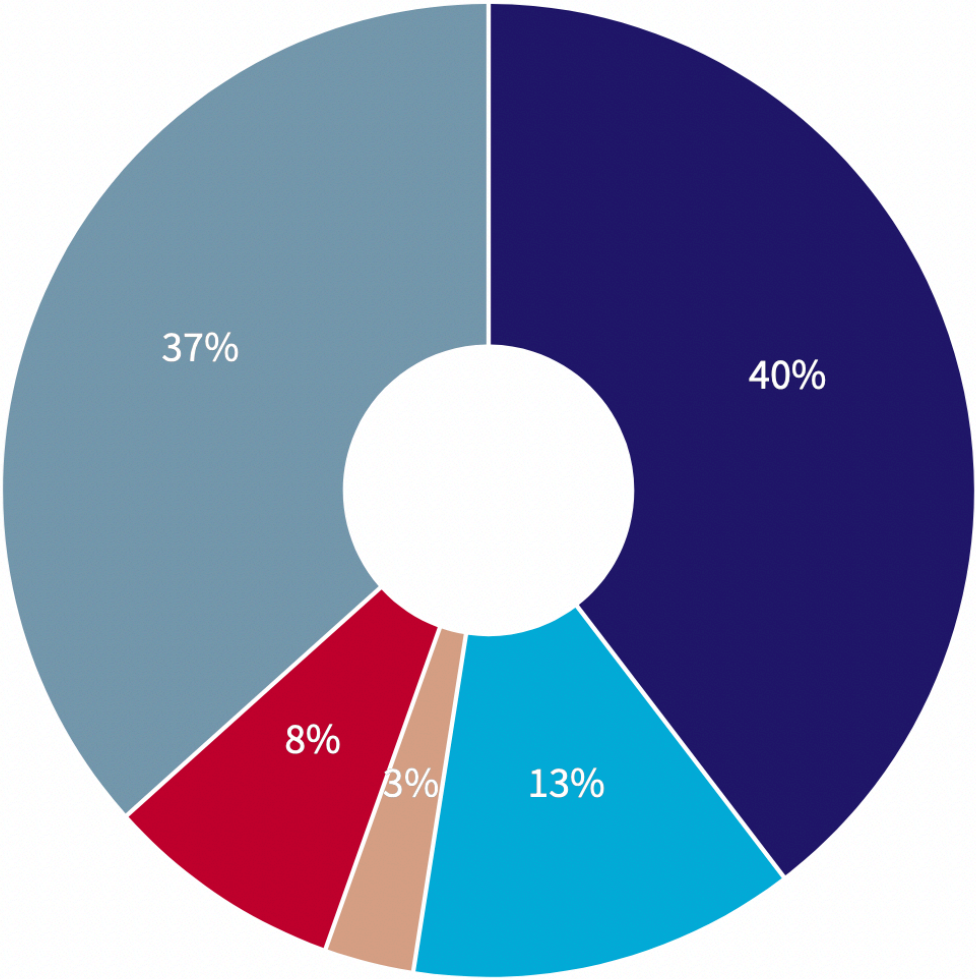
Yes, say job seekers. No, say recruiters.

In a national EdRecruiter survey—conducted by the EdWeeK Research Center in November 2022 with 1,203 educators or other job seekers for K-12 school positions—participants were asked what impact, if any, there would be on their decision to stay in or take a job in a state with a law that limits how educators can discuss race and/or gender in schools.

Many respondents, 53 percent, said they would be much less or somewhat less likely to stay in or take a job in such a state. About 37 percent said there would be no impact on their decision. (There was no significant difference between those who do and do not live in states with such laws.)

If a state has a law that limits how educators can discuss race and/or gender in schools, what impact, if any, would it have on your decision about whether to stay in or take a job in that state?

- Much less likely to stay in or take a job in that state
- Somewhat less likely to stay in or take a job in that state
- Somewhat more likely to stay in or take a job in that state
- Much more likely to stay in or take a job in that state
- It wouldn't have any impact on my decision



SOURCE: EdWeek Research Center survey, November 2022



A Flourish chart

To educators like Sabeena Shah, an ethnic studies teacher in San Francisco, who participated in the survey, the results aren't surprising.

She considers herself privileged to work in a district with a commitment to ethnic studies curriculum and a commitment to being inclusive of all students.

“I actually have had students who have moved to San Francisco or their families have relocated in the past year, due to anti-trans legislation being passed in their communities, and feeling that their children were under attack,” Shah said.

Her district, San Francisco Unified, offers a degree of openness and acceptance these families lost when discriminatory policies took hold in other states.

“Even though economically, it’s very difficult to stay in San Francisco as an educator, it is hard for me to consider going to districts that are more conservative,” she added, citing her efforts to ensure schools are safe spaces for trans and nonbinary people.

But while Shah speaks to a perception from educators on the broader impact of restrictive policies, school district recruiters seem to have another take.

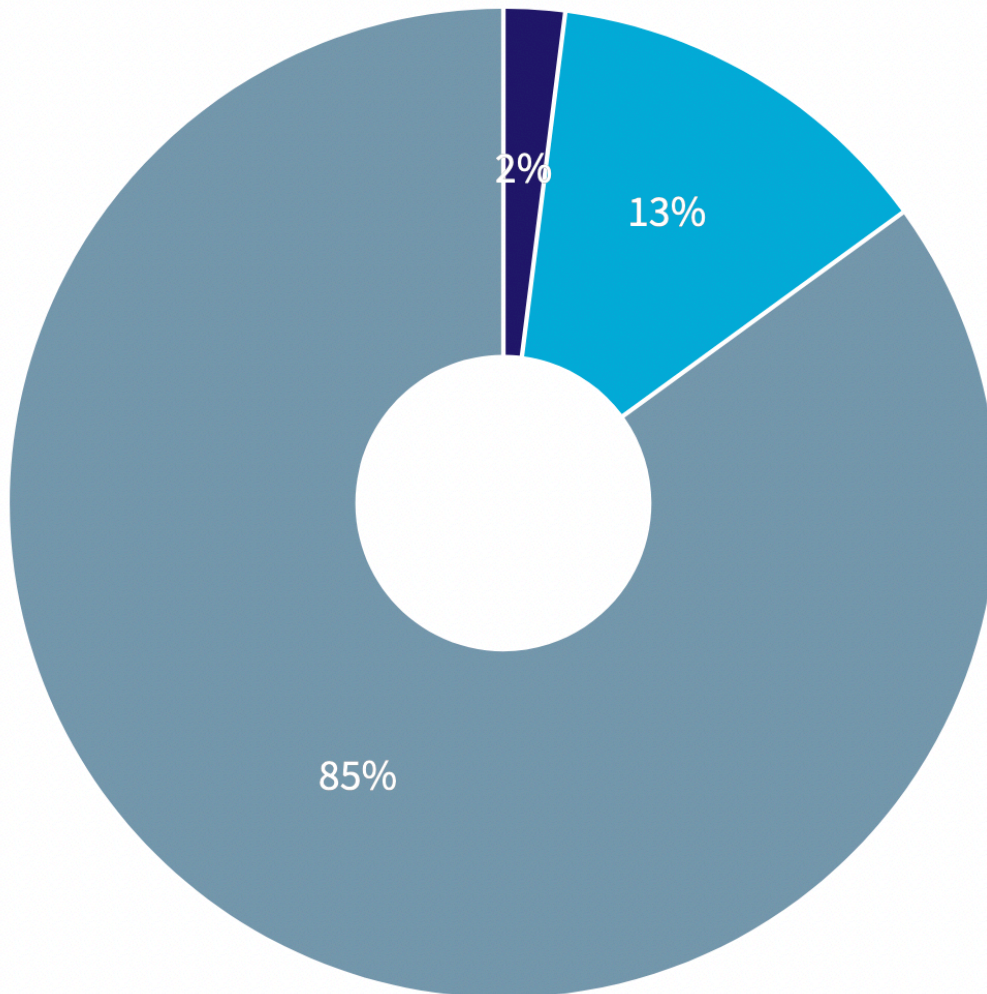
In a January EdRecruiter survey conducted by the EdWeek Research Center of 403 recruiters—294 participants from public schools or districts, 38 from charter schools or networks, and 71 from private/parochial schools or networks—participants were asked about how state laws limiting educators’ discussions of race and/or gender impacted their recruitment pools.

A majority, 85 percent, said they found no impact on applicant numbers, with only 13 percent saying they saw fewer applicants in response to these laws.

Results were similar from survey respondents based in any of the 18 states with restrictions in place: 81 percent said they saw no impact while 17 percent said they saw fewer applicants.

How are state laws limiting how educators can discuss topics of race and/or gender in schools impacting your recruitment pools?

- We've seen a greater number of applicants in response to these laws
- We've seen fewer applicants in response to these laws
- These laws have no impact on applicant numbers



SOURCE: EdWeek Research Center survey, January 2023



 A Flourish chart

A possible reason for the discrepancy between what job seekers and recruiters reported could be that states with restrictive laws in place have historically faced broader challenges to recruiting applicants so new laws restricting how some topics are taught wouldn't immediately impact applicant numbers, said Robert Phillips, director of school-based staffing, recruiting, and substitutes in Loudoun County school district in Ashburn, Va.

In four years of his recruitment role, Phillips has had only one interviewee ask about the district's diversity, equity, and inclusion policies, he said.

In a high profile case in 2021, the Virginia Supreme Court backed a Loudoun County district teacher who spoke out at a school board meeting against a policy requiring school staff members to use the chosen names and pronouns of transgender students.

Instead, the questions his applicants tend to ask—and the main challenge the district faces in its applicant numbers—focus on the cost of living. The district is located in the outer suburbs of Washington, D.C.

Both high rent prices in the area and increased competition in roughly the last two years from states where the district has normally done outreach for applicants, are the real challenges to recruitment for his district, Phillips said, not conversations around restrictions on instruction.

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Ileana Najarro is a reporter for Education Week covering race and opportunity in schools across the country.

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