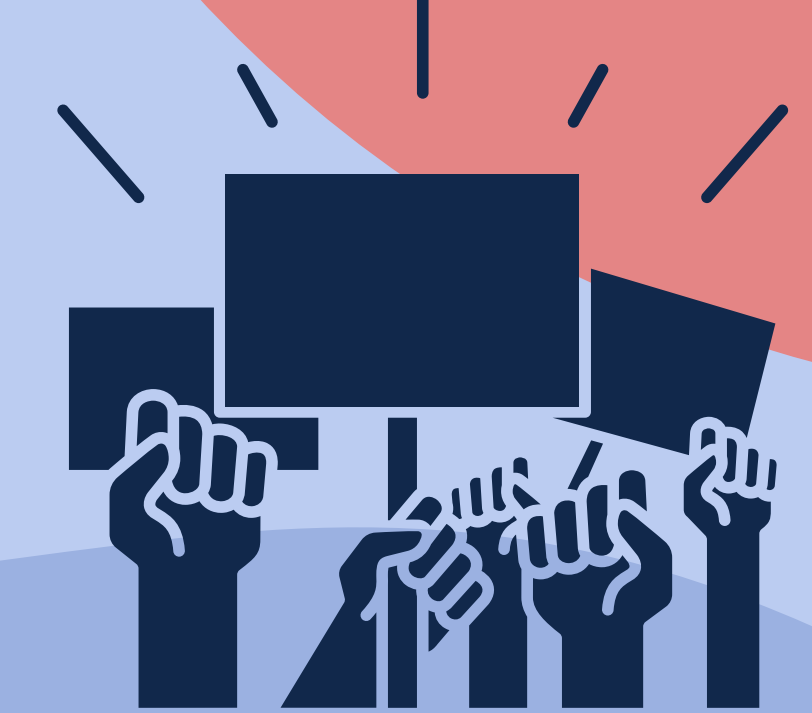




Panic at the Policy

Mariam Botross, Elana Friedlich, Nadia Lintag, Jaiden Saykham



OBJECTIVE

- To examine if exposure to the current political climate is associated with students' mental health, particularly symptoms of anxiety and depression.

BACKGROUND

- Over 60% of college students report experiencing stress or anxiety—a 50% increase over the past decade.¹

POLITICAL EXPOSURE & STRESS/ANXIETY

- Stress, anxiety, and depression worsen during major political events and terrorist attacks.²
- Politically engaged youth faced poorer mental and physical health during the 2020 election.³

- On January 16, Trump signed executive orders threatening LGBTQ+ rights and healthcare access.⁴ Following these orders, LGBTQ+ crisis hotlines have seen a sharp increase in calls.⁵

UCSD POPULATION RELEVANCY

- Despite growing concerns, limited research explores how political uncertainty affects college students. Understanding these effects can help universities provide better mental health support.

METHODS

- A cross-sectional study using an anonymous Qualtrics survey
- Participants:** Undergraduate and Graduate Students (N = 93)
- Exposure:** Exposure to political events
Outcome: Anxiety and Stress
- Analysis method:** Pearson correlation

RESULTS

DEMOGRAPHICS

Figure 1. Gender Demographics

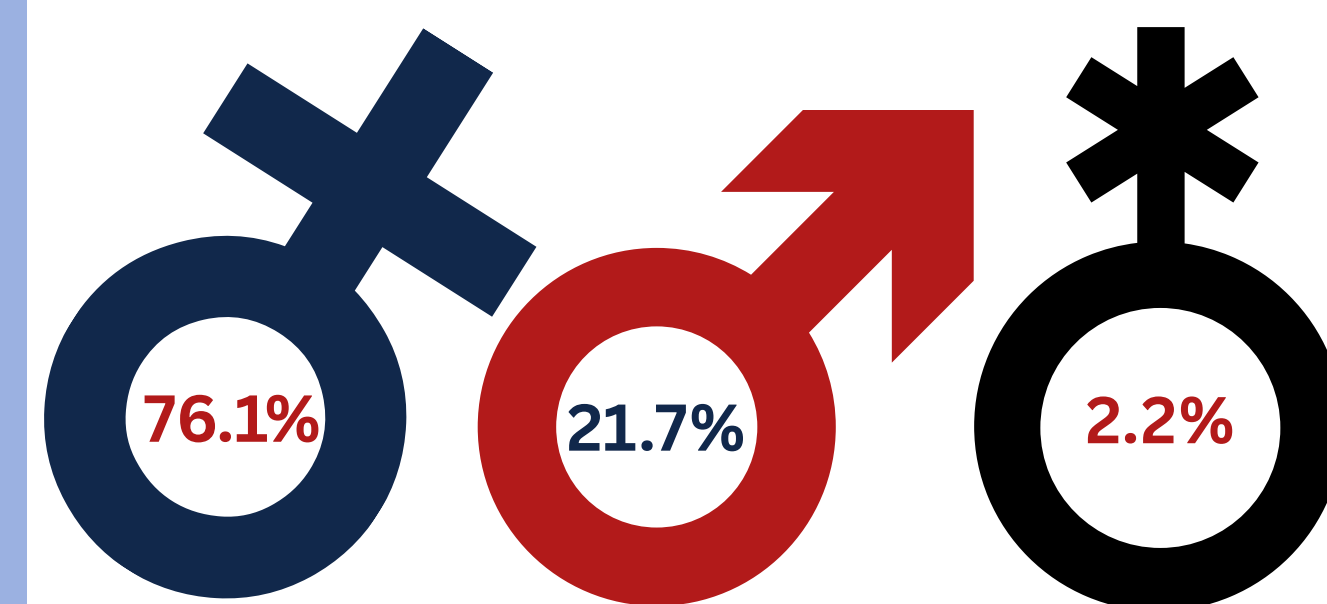


Figure 2. Major Demographics

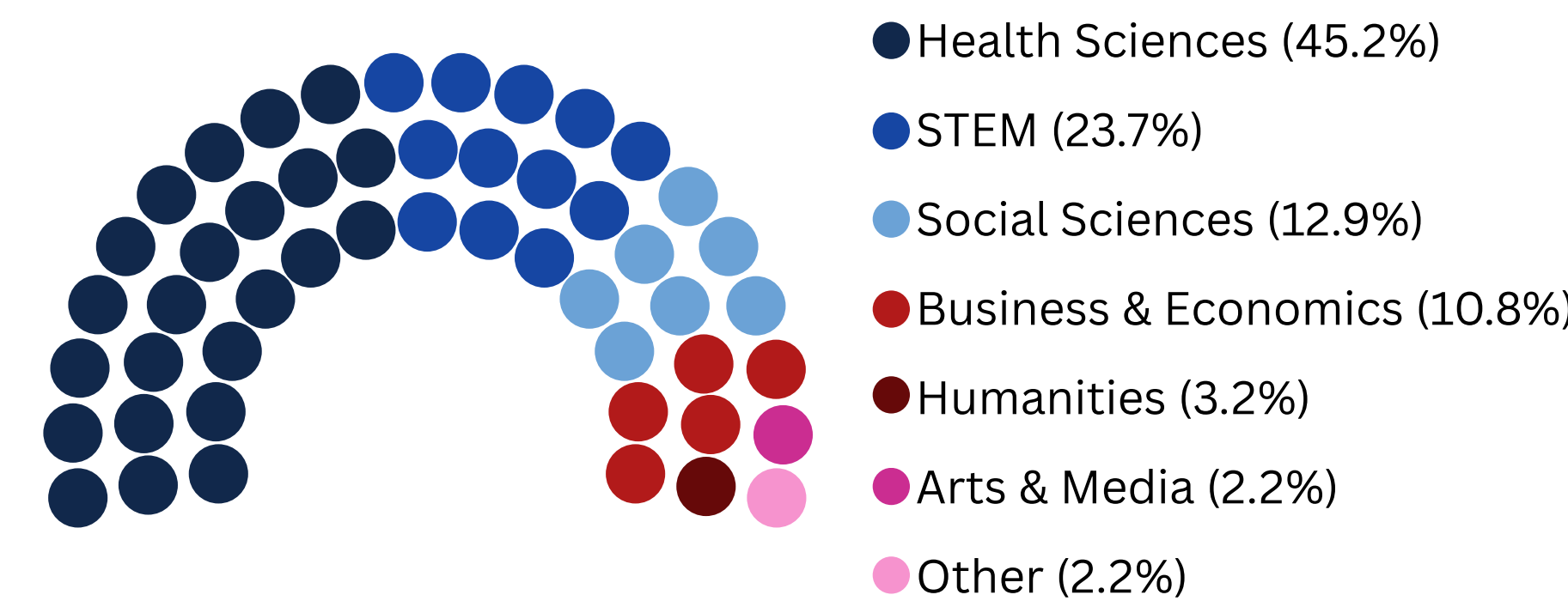


Table 1. Political Alignment

	Alignment	Percentage (%)
Republican*	Fully Aligned	3.6
	Moderately Aligned	14.3
	Not Aligned	82.1
Independent*	Fully Aligned	11.4
	Moderately Aligned	28.4
	Not Aligned	60.2
Democrat*	Fully aligned	34.1
	Moderately aligned	46.2
	Not Aligned	19.7

*Students ranked each category

POLITICAL UNCERTAINTY & STRESS

There is a significant correlation between how often people think about political changes and perceived effects of political changes on mental well-being ($p < 0.01$) (Figure 3)

Do you think political changes have affected your mental well-being in the past 6 months?

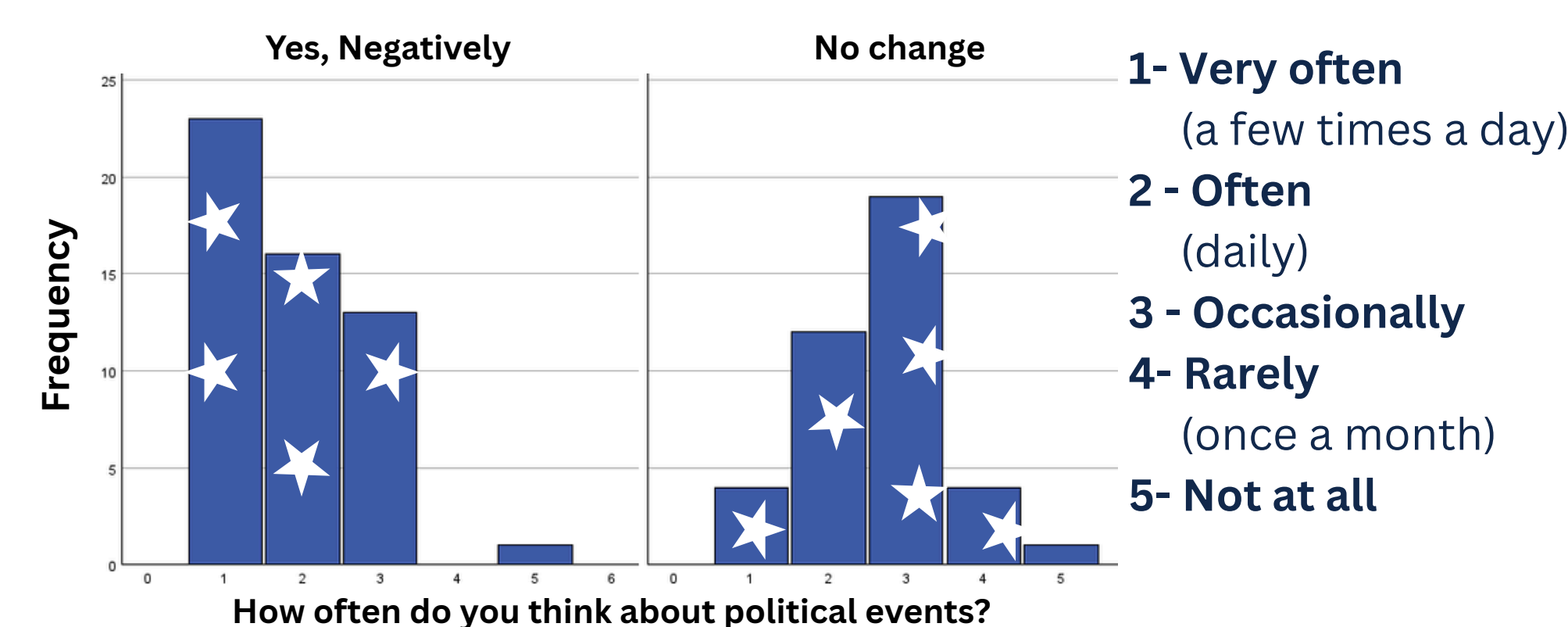


Figure 3. Correlation Between Frequency of Thoughts About Political Changes and Effect on Well-Being

Have you had access to resources and support to manage your stress/anxiety?

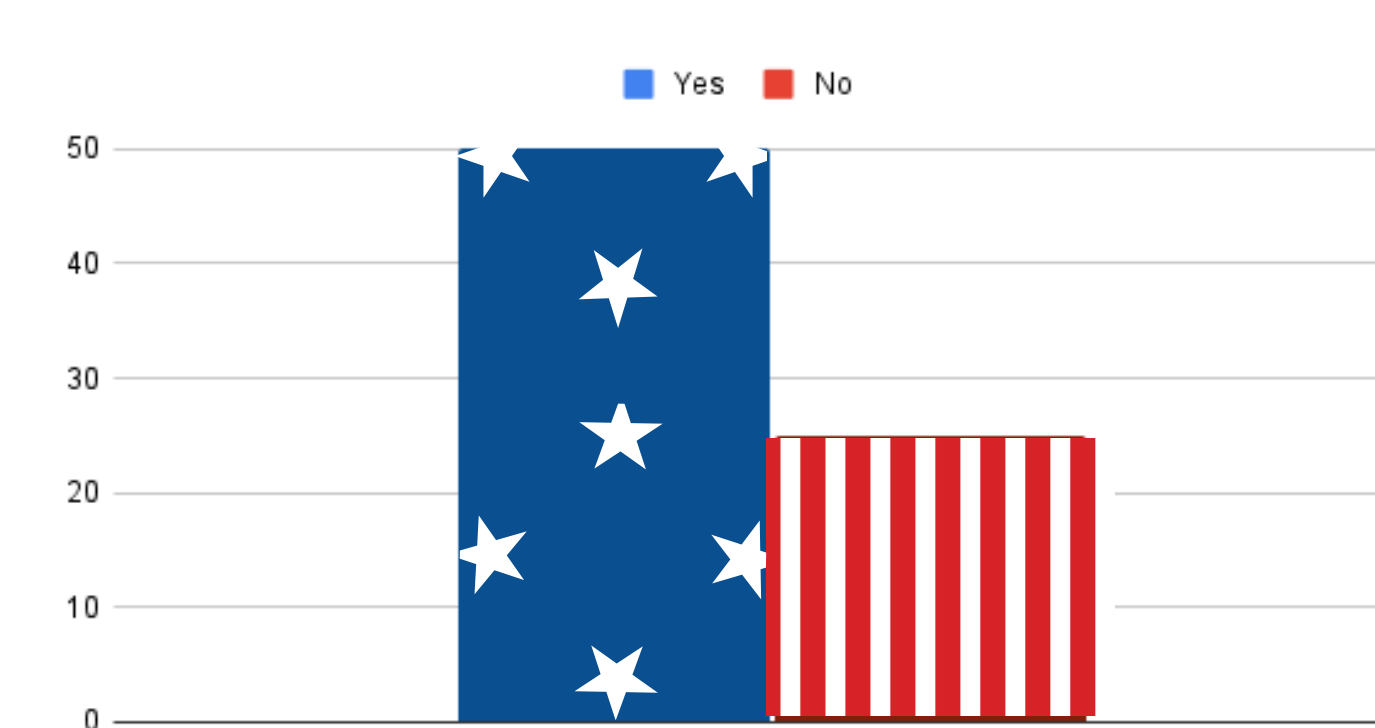


Figure 4. Student Perceived Access to Resources

33%

Did not have access to resources to manage their stress and anxiety

80%

Experienced at least one symptom of stress or anxiety in the past week (74 out of 93)

$p < 0.05$

Correlation between post-inauguration emotions and the impact of political changes on mental health

STUDENT SUGGESTIONS

In response to our final question, “Do you have any suggestions on how your University can support you more through political change?” students offered a wide range of insights. Below are five selected responses that highlight two key suggestions:

1. Media Literacy Support

- “Offer free workshops on media literacy... the political landscape is more polarizing than ever.”
- “Promote self-education on politics instead of social media echo chambers.”

2. Action-Oriented Community Spaces

- “Hold spaces to learn how to reach out to representatives and address issues properly.”
- “We learn how bad things are... I wish my classes would talk about how to change things.”
- “Foster engagement through social events and spaces for conversation.”

IMPLICATIONS & CONCLUSION

- UCSD currently offers mental health support to students through CAPS, community forums, Know Your Rights workshops, and targeted services for vulnerable populations.

VICE CHANCELLOR ALLYSON
SATTERLUND & DR. EDWARD JUNKINS
COMMENTARY

- Dr. Edward Junkins emphasized the importance of **health literacy** and UCSD's efforts to **empower students** to take charge of their well-being.

- Vice Chancellor Satterlund added that the university **considers student input and staff observations** to determine if social or political conditions warrant intervention.

OUR RECOMMENDATIONS

- With faculty and student input, we recommend expanding support to include **media literacy and civic engagement programs** to reduce anxiety and empower students during political uncertainty.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Professor Christine Zoumas and **Lucia Canul**
for their support throughout this project

UCSD's Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs,
Allyson Satterlund, and UCSD's Executive
Director of Student Health & Well-Being, **Dr.
Edward Junkins**, for their input and time

REFERENCES

