

2024 Dakota Conference on Rural and Public Health

Censorship and Its Impact on Public Health

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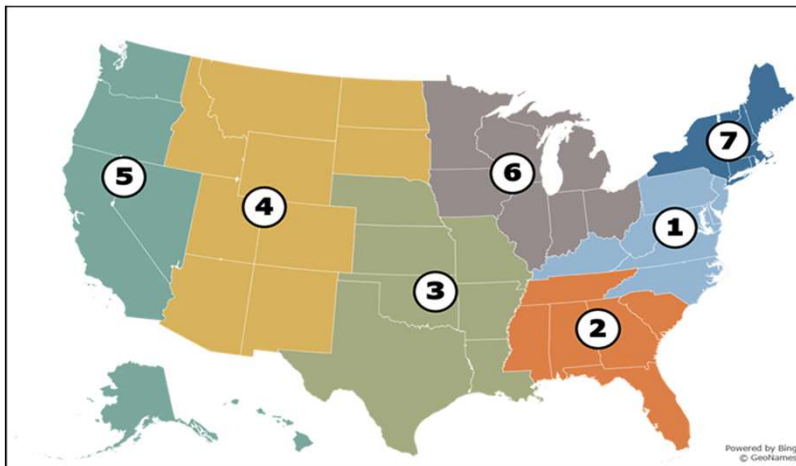
1

Network of the National Library of Medicine

[Training](#)

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2

Censorship Is

“The suppression of words, images, or ideas that are ‘offensive,’ happens whenever some people succeed in imposing their personal, political, or moral values on others. Censorship can be carried out by the government as well as private pressure groups.”

-American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU)



3

Impact of Censorship on Public Health

Negative Impact

- Censorship can suppress information about health risks and public health crises, which can have serious consequences for public health.
- Censorship can also be used to suppress dissenting voices, which can limit public debate and prevent important health issues from being addressed.

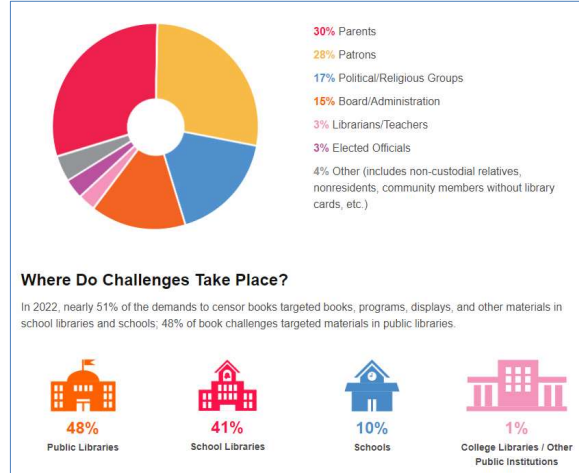
Positive Impact

- Censorship can also be used to prevent the spread of misinformation and fake news, which can have a positive impact on public health.
- Censorship can also be used to protect vulnerable populations from harmful content, such as graphic images or videos that could trigger trauma or promote self-harm.



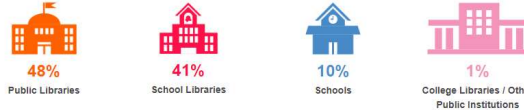
4

Where Are Challenges Occurring?



Where Do Challenges Take Place?

In 2022, nearly 51% of the demands to censor books targeted books, programs, displays, and other materials in school libraries and schools; 48% of book challenges targeted materials in public libraries.



Source: ALA Banned Books by the Numbers

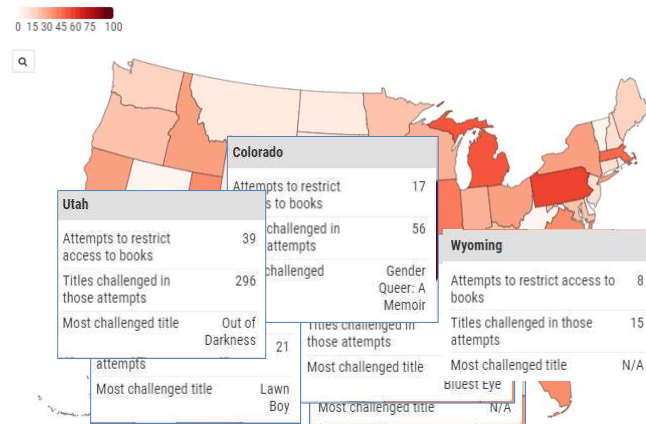


5

Libraries and Censorship

Attempts to Restrict Access to Books in 2022

An attempt may include challenges to multiple titles



Data compiled by American Library Association - Office for Intellectual Freedom



6

Subject Matter of Banned Books in Schools

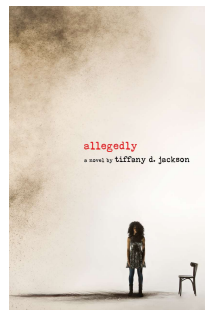
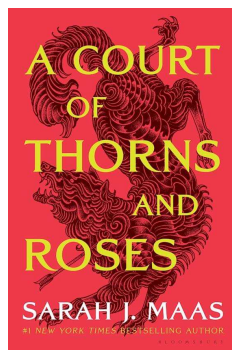
- 44% include themes or instances of violence & physical abuse. This includes titles that have episodes of violence and/or physical abuse as a component of plot or discussion.
- 38% cover topics on health and wellbeing for students. This includes content on mental health, bullying, suicide, substance abuse, as well as books that discuss sexual wellbeing and puberty.
- 30% are books that include instances or themes of grief and death.
- 30% include characters of color or discuss race and racism.
- 26% present LGBTQ+ characters or themes.
- 24% detail sexual experiences between characters.
- 17% of books mention teen pregnancy, abortion, or sexual assault.

Source: PEN America



7

North Dakota Book Challenges

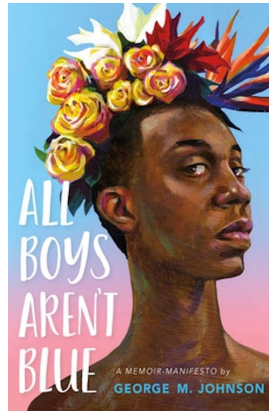
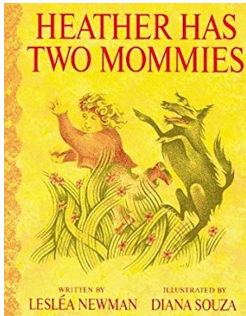


Images: Amazon



8

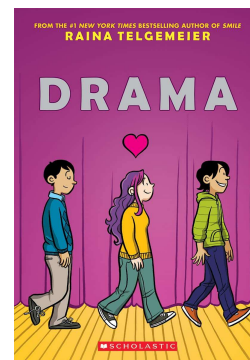
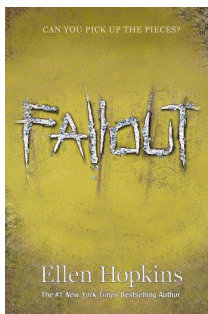
South Dakota Library Book Challenges



Images: Amazon



Wyoming Book Challenges



Images: Amazon



Response to Challenges and Bans

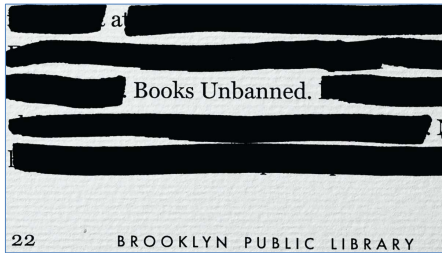


Image: Brooklyn Public Library

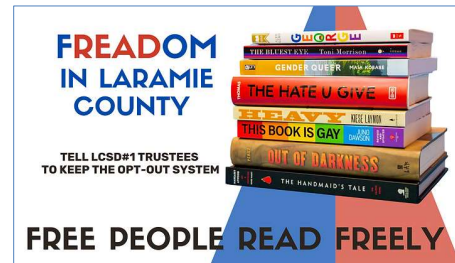


Image: Wyoming Families for Freedom



11

“Unite Against Book Bans” Campaign



“...Today, some of the books that shaped my life—and the lives of so many others—are being challenged by people who disagree with certain ideas or perspectives. And librarians are on the front lines, fighting every day to make the widest possible range of viewpoints, opinions, and ideas available to everyone.”

-Barack Obama

12

Impact of Book Bans on Public Health

- Books can provide an opportunity to engage in dialogue, rather than erase certain experiences to render those readers invisible.
- Despite efforts to diversity, U.S. publishing continues to be predominately white authors (76%) which leads to marginalization of experiences.

Librarians, teachers, and parents curate children's choices with the goals of inspiring rather than obscuring new ideas. Such an approach allows kids to learn how to navigate imaginary worlds filled with differences, with the faith that they will apply those lessons to their own lives.

- Paul Ringel author of *Commercializing Childhood*



13

Public Health and Censorship

| | FY 2015 | FY 2016 | FY 2017 | FY 2018 |
|----------------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Diverse, diversity* | 9 | 7 | 10 | 2 |
| Entitlement | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Evidence-based | 90 | 108 | 125 | 38 |
| Fetus | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Science-based | 3 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Transgender | 4 | 3 | 10 | 1 |
| Vulnerable | 19 | 17 | 24 | 9 |
| Pages in request | 461 | 524 | 675 | 333 |



14

Public Health and Censorship

The screenshot shows the EPA website's 'Climate and Energy Resources for State, Local, and Tribal Governments' page. A list of resources is displayed in a white box over the page content:

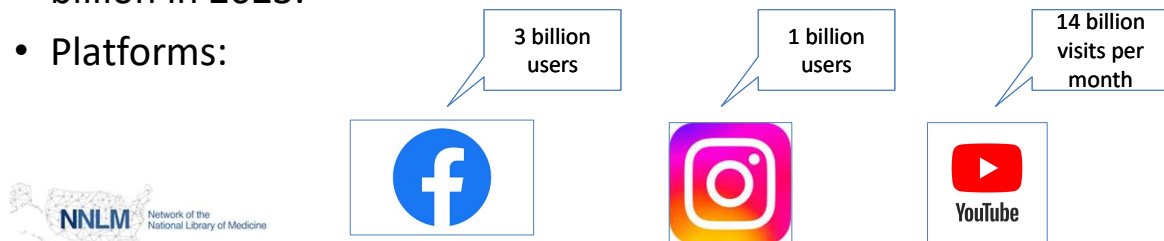
- [Climate Adaptation](#)
- [Climate Change](#)
- [Climate Change Adaptation Resource Center \(ARC-X\)](#)
- [Climate Change Impacts](#)
- [Climate Change Impacts and Risk Analysis \(CIRA\)](#)
- [Climate Change Indicators in the United States](#)
- [Climate Change Research](#)
- [Climate Change Science](#)
- [Climate Change: Resilience and Adaptation in New England \(RAINE\)](#)
- [Climate Ready Estuaries](#)

The background shows the EPA website header with 'Environmental Topics', 'Laws & Regulations', and 'About EPA' menus. A 'Local Climate Action Framework' section is also visible on the left.

15

Social Media and Censorship

- Globally, 4.74 billion use social media.
- In the U.S. people spend an average of 2 hours and 11 minutes per day on social media.
- Ad spending on social media is projected to reach over \$268 billion in 2023.
- Platforms:



16

Social Media Content Policies

- Facebook allows ads promoting sexual health, wellness and reproductive products and services to audiences 18 years and older.
- Instagram lets users determine what kind of content they want with its “Sensitive Content Control” feature.
- YouTube prohibits hate speech, predatory behavior, graphic violence, malicious attacks, and content that promotes harmful or dangerous behavior.



17

Artificial Intelligence and Censorship

- It provides predictive text learned from vast amounts of web data.
- It can't check if what it's saying is true.
- You can ask the system to provide citations, but it may not be able to:
 - “Can you provide citations for the last response?”
- Nearly 4,600 scientific papers on the COVID-19 pandemic were published using AI or machine learning.



18

Public Health and Artificial Intelligence



Social and environmental factors can have a significant impact on community health. These factors can influence a range of health outcomes, including the incidence and prevalence of chronic diseases, mental health disorders, and infectious diseases. Some examples of social and environmental factors that can affect community health include:



Certainly! Here are some citations to support the information I provided in my previous response:

50% of the citations didn't exist or the links were dead.

Sorry - the page you're looking for isn't available.



19

Public Health and Artificial Intelligence

On the other hand, some examples of social and environmental factors that can promote health are:

- supportive social networks and community engagement
- access to quality education and job opportunities
- clean and green spaces for recreation and leisure
- policies and programs that protect human rights and reduce inequalities

Public health professionals aim to address these social and environmental factors through various interventions, such as:

- implementing educational programs to raise awareness and change behaviors
- recommending policies to regulate or incentivize healthy practices
- administering services to provide or improve access to health care and resources
- conducting research to identify and monitor health problems and solutions

I hope this answers your question. If you want to learn more, you can click on the references or ask me follow-up questions. 😊

Learn more: [1. who.int](#) [2. health.gov](#) [3. atsdr.cdc.gov](#) [4. cdc.gov](#)

3 of 5 🌟



20

Parting Videos

- [1. Science and censorship](#)
- [2. Misinformation/Disinformation](#)
- [3. Book Bans](#)



21

The Power of Public Health

Public health saved your life today—you just don't know it.

— Leana S. Wen



22

Questions/Comments?



23

Thank you!

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24