



# FACULTY RACIAL AND GENDER DIVERSITY IN A TURBULENT ERA

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THE ROLE OF STATE PARTISAN CONTROL AND HIGHER EDUCATION FUNDING

A Dissertation by Trinity Lakin

Submitted to the Department of Sociology  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for  
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

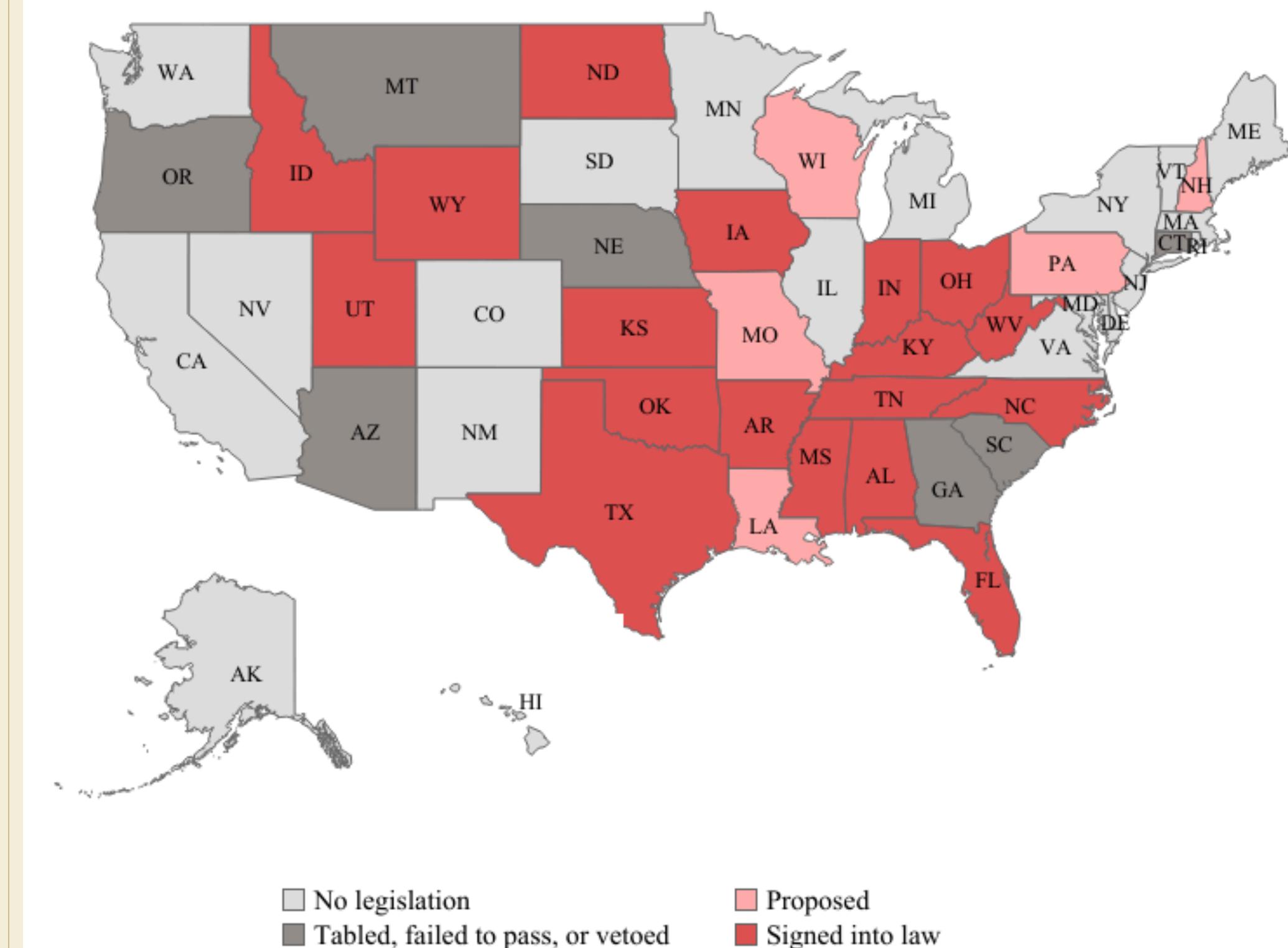
# Anti-DEI Movements in Higher Education

Since January 2023, The Chronicle has tracked over **136** anti-DEI bills introduced across **29** states and the U.S. Congress, with **28** of them becoming law.

## These bills prohibit...

- Diversity offices and staff
- Mandatory diversity trainings
- Diversity statements in hiring and promotion
- Considering race, ethnicity, or national origin in admissions and employment

**Figure 1: Prevalence of Anti-Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Legislation in the United States since January 2023**



# Literature Review

## What do we know about diversity in faculty?

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- Not much!
- Existing quantitative assessments of faculty diversity are field-specific (*Ali et al. 2023; Kamran et al. 2022; Xierali et al. 2017*) or use diversity as a predictor rather than an outcome (*Stout 2018*)
- **Kim and colleagues (2021)** used data from the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) to evaluate the diversity of newly hired faculty between **1999 and 2015**
  - During and after Great Recession, nonwhite men and women saw largest proportional declines
  - Largest declines at R1 and R2 institutions, net of all other factors
  - Concluded economic constraints lead institutions to use cost-cutting measures in hiring
- Beyond Kim (2021), there are no other comprehensive quantitative analyses of the impact of macro-level political and economic conditions on faculty diversity
  - This dissertation will fill this gap by including **state partisan control** and **state appropriations to higher education** in its analyses of faculty diversity between 2015 and 2023

# Theoretical Frameworks

## CRITICAL RACE THEORY (CRT)

- **Interest convergence** (Bell 1980)

Contends that progress toward racial justice occurs only when White and Black interests converge

- **Intersectionality** (Crenshaw 1989)

Argues that individuals experience multiple layers of privilege and oppression simultaneously

## SUPPLEMENTARY CONCEPTS

- **Inequality regimes** (Acker 2006)

- **Balance wheel hypothesis** (Hovey 1999; Delaney and Doyle 2007, 2011)

- **Democratic backsliding** (Taylor, Kunkle, and Watts 2022)

# Research Questions

- 01 How did the **racial and gender diversity of public post-secondary faculty** in the United States change between 2015 and 2023?
- 02 To what extent did **state-level political and fiscal contexts** influence faculty diversity over time?
- 03 Are the effects of partisan governance on faculty diversity over time **indirect through funding**, or **direct via policy** and institutional climate?

# Data and Methods

## DATA SOURCES

- **Integrated Post-Secondary Education Data System (IPEDS)**  
*National Center for Education Statistics (NCES)*
- **State Higher Education Finance (SHEF) Report**  
*State Higher Education Executive Officers Association (SHEEO)*
- **State Partisan Composition reports**  
*National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL)*

## MEASURES

### Independent Variable: Year

### Dependent Variable: Faculty diversity

- Proportion of faculty by race and gender
- Diversity index

### Covariates

- State partisan control - gubernatorial and legislative

### Controls

- Institution size, Carnegie classification, HBCU status

## SAMPLE

All **public four-year post-secondary institutions** in the United States between the years of 2015 and 2023

Between **780** and **784** institutions per year totaling  
**7,007** Observations

## ANALYTIC STRATEGY

- **Descriptive analyses (RQ1)**
  - Faculty diversity, partisan control, higher education funding over time
- **Mixed-effects modeling (RQ1 and RQ2)**
  - Year on diversity
- **Structural equation modeling (RQ3)**

# Diversity Index

Adapted from Peter Blau's (1977) Index of Heterogeneity

Particularly suited to studies focusing on discrete group differences

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$$i\_diversity = 1 - (p\_asian\_m^2 + p\_asian\_w^2 + p\_black\_m^2 + p\_black\_w^2 + p\_hisp\_m^2 + p\_hisp\_w^2 + p\_white\_m^2 + p\_white\_w^2 + p\_other\_m^2 + p\_other\_w^2)$$

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Values range between 0 and 1,

with a score of 0 representing no diversity and a score of 1 representing maximum diversity

# Findings

## Faculty Diversity

### Diversity Index Over Time

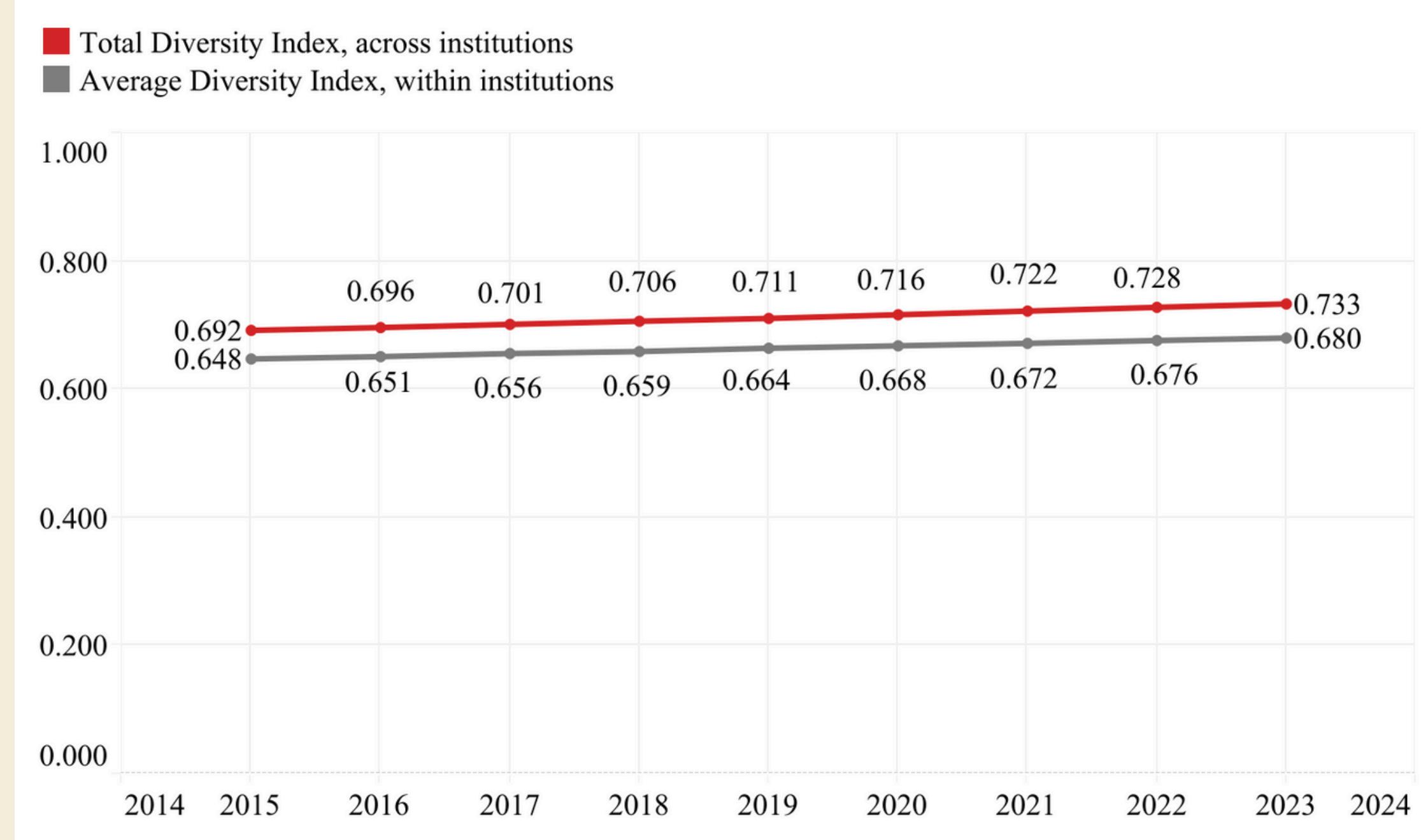
Total professoriate is slightly more diverse than faculty within institutions

Between 2015 and 2023, the diversity index value grew...

From **.692** to **.733** within institutions

From **.648** to **.680** across all institutions

Figure 4: Faculty Diversity Index Values, Total and Average by Institution (2015-2023)



# Findings

## Faculty Diversity

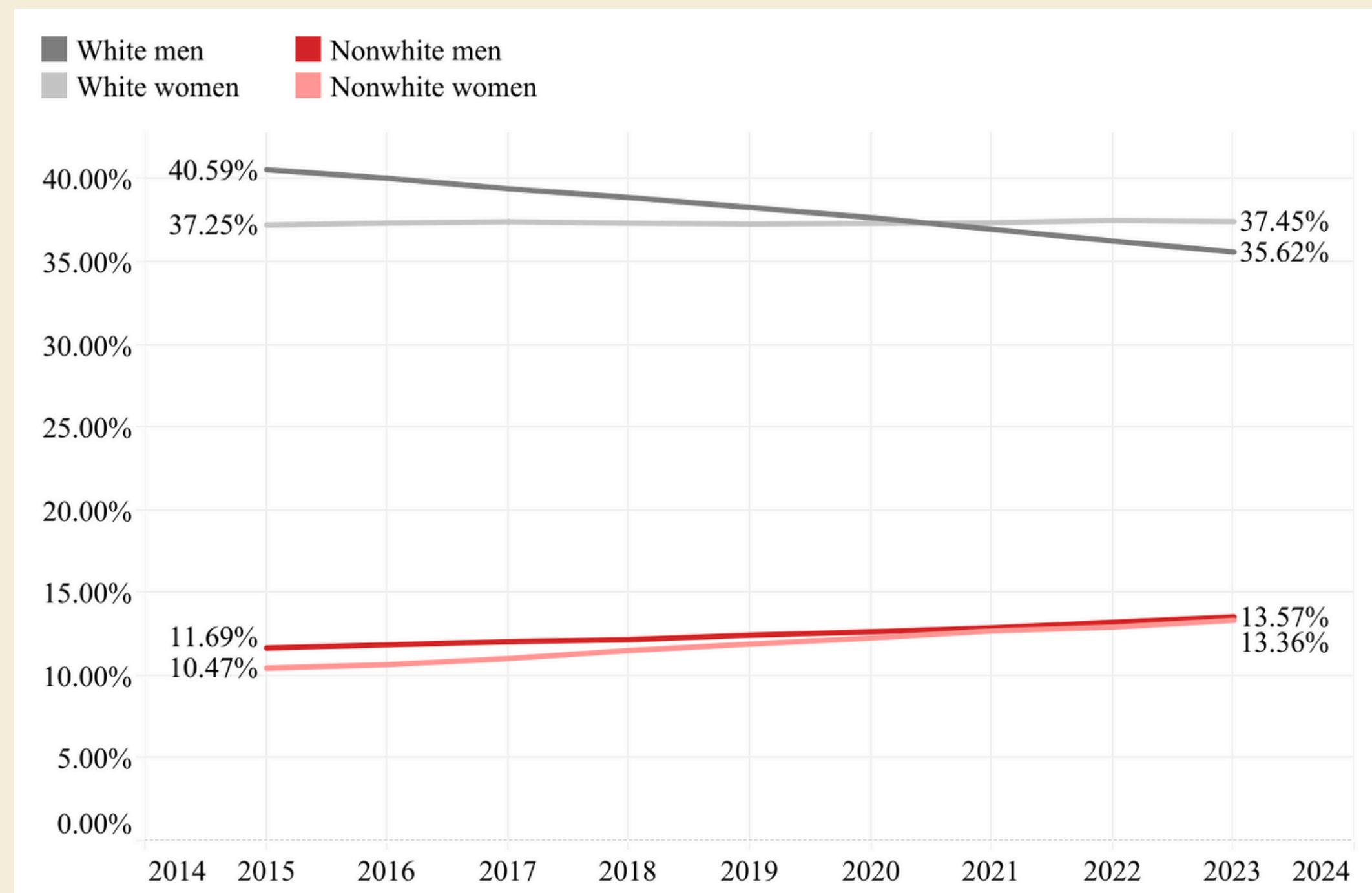
### White and Nonwhite Men and Women Over Time

Representation of Nonwhite men and women **slowly increased** across time

White men's representation **declined nearly 5 percentage points**

White women **remained stable** between 2015 and 2023

Figure 7: Proportion of White and Nonwhite Men and Women in Faculty (2015-2023)



# Findings

## Faculty Diversity

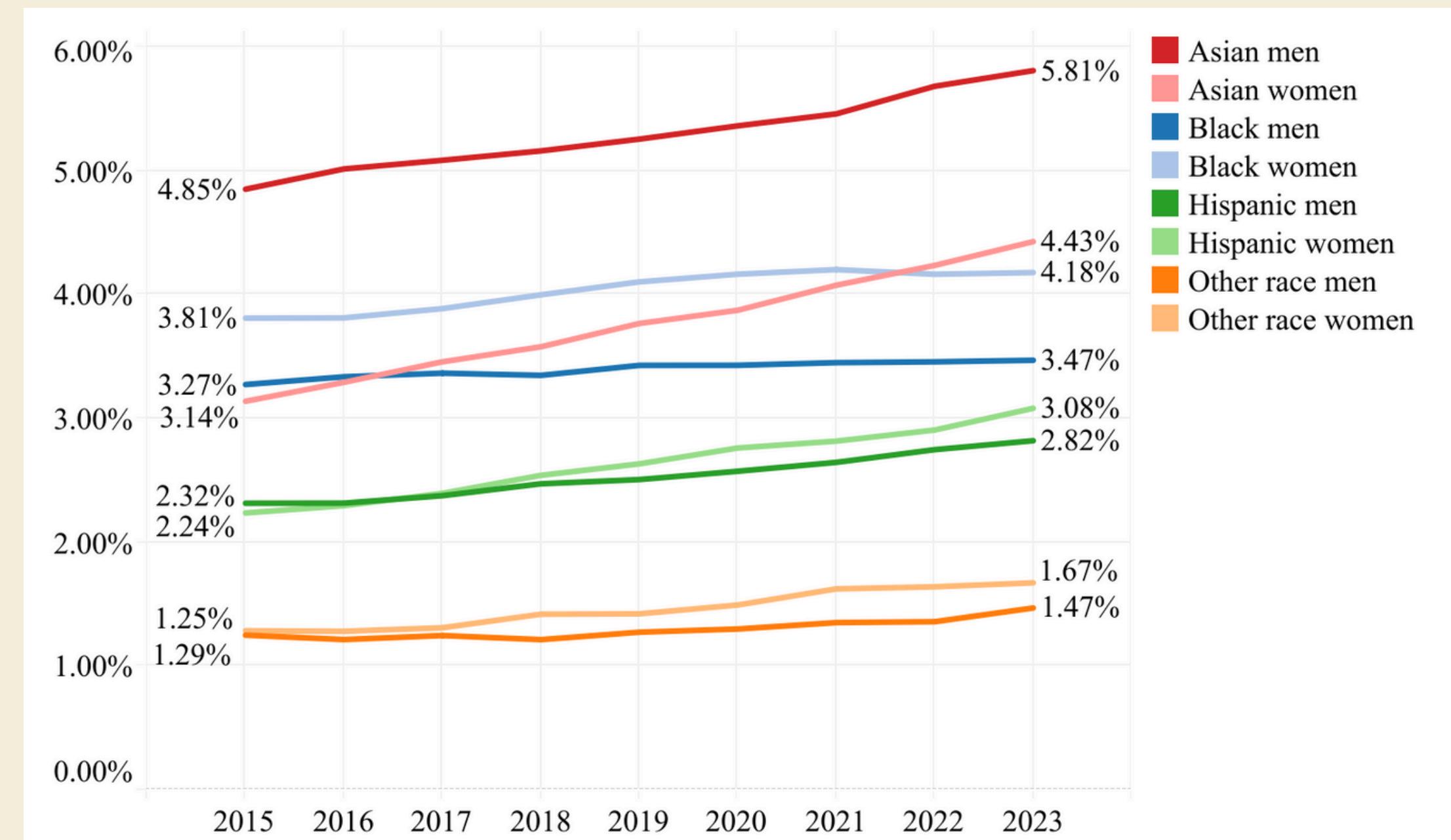
### Nonwhite Race and Gender Groups Over Time

**Asian men** had greatest representation across entire period

Asian women rose from **fourth to second greatest** representation, but still trail behind male counterparts

All other racial groups **gained or maintained** advantage for women

Figure 8: Nonwhite Race and Gender Groups in Faculty (2015-2023)



# Findings

## State-Level Contexts

### State Partisan Control

Majority of states under **consistent Republican governorship** (21 states)

Consistently Democratic: **11**

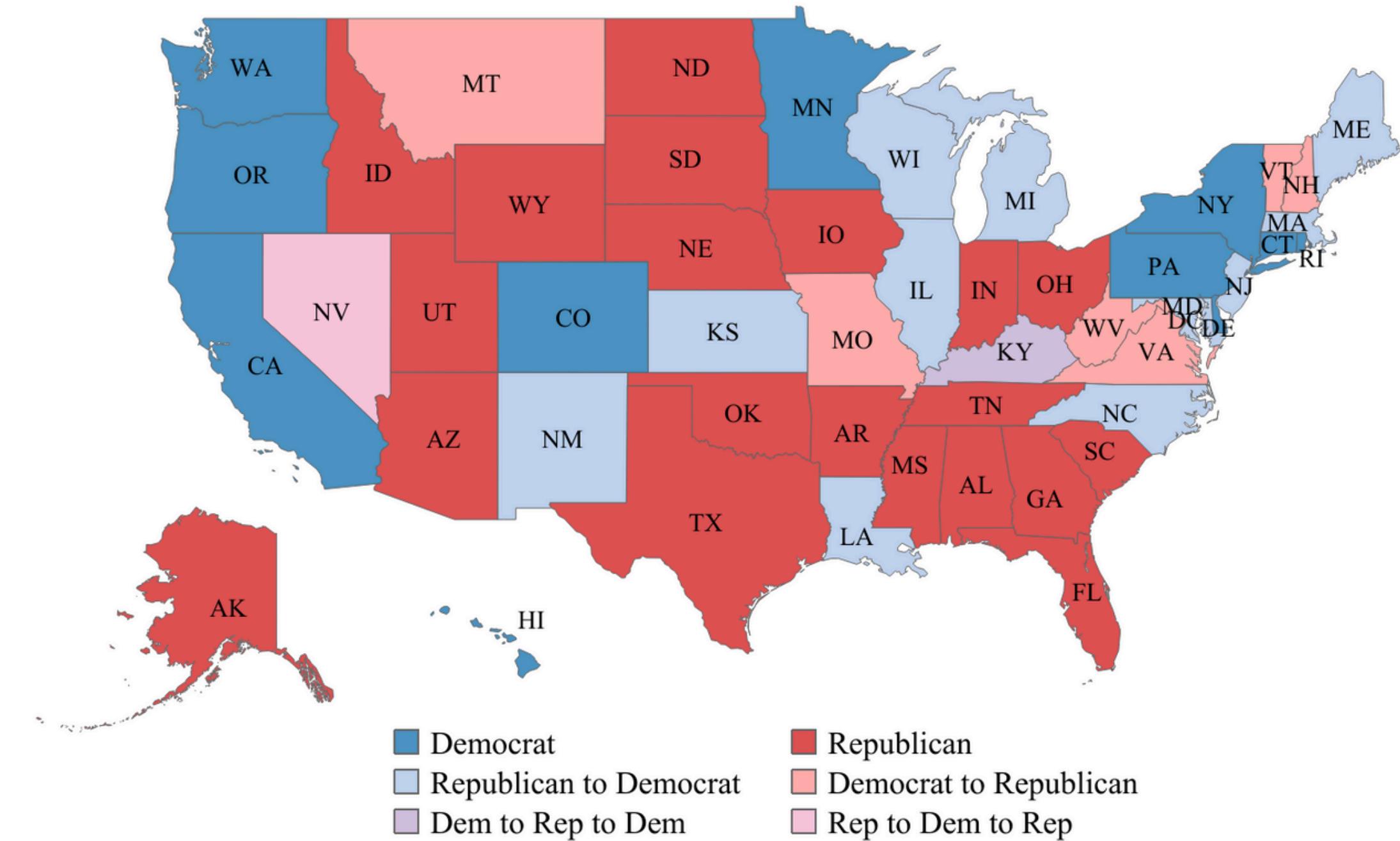
Swing states: **19**

Two states **swung twice** within period:

Kentucky (D → R → D)

Nevada (R → D → R)

Figure 9: State Gubernatorial Partisan Control and Variability (2015-2023)



# Findings

## State-Level Contexts

### Diversity Index by Partisanship

Slight variations in faculty diversity at both levels

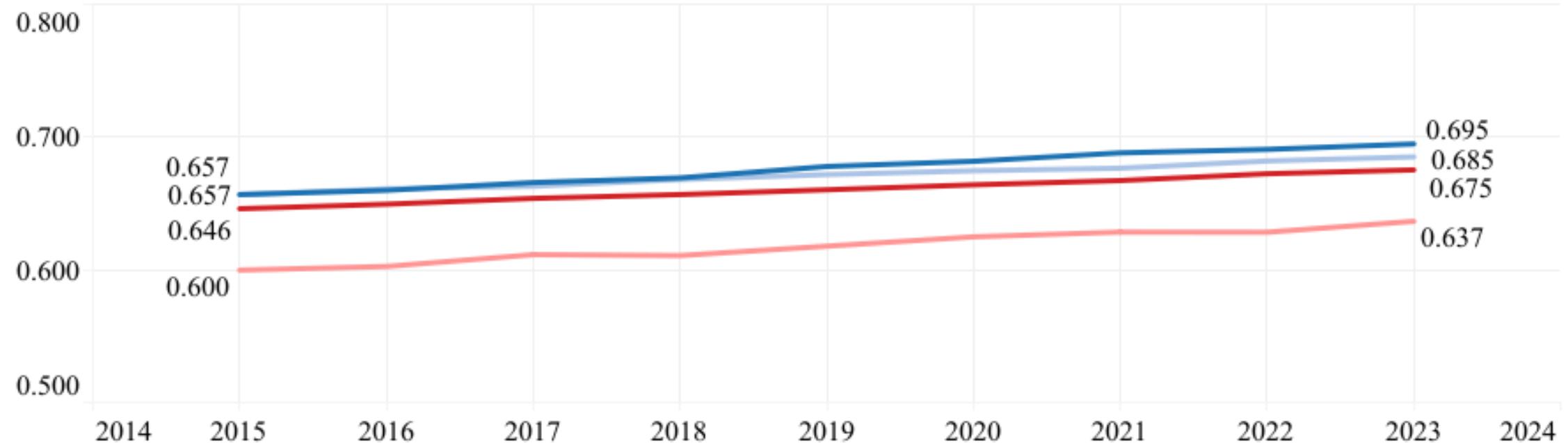
**Legislative partisan control** generates more variance than gubernatorial partisanship

**Growing polarization** within state legislature between 2022 and 2023

Figure 12: Average Diversity Index Values by Partisan Control (2015-2023)

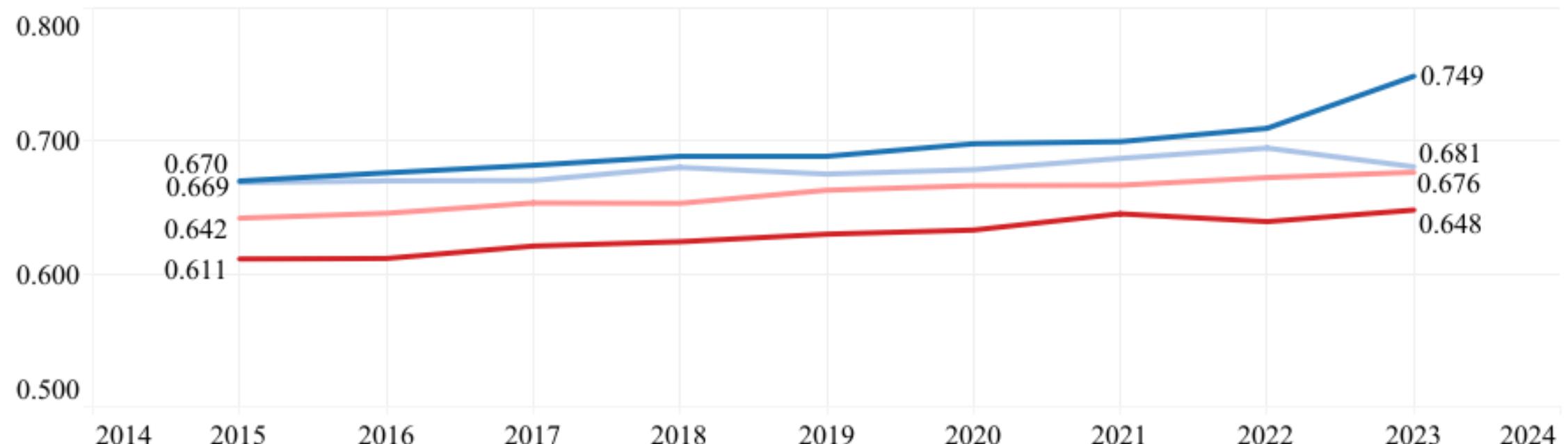
(a) by gubernatorial control

■ Democrat  
■ Republican  
■ Republican to Democrat  
■ Democrat to Republican



(b) by legislative control

■ Strong Majority Democrat  
■ Strong Majority Republican  
■ Majority Democrat  
■ Majority Republican



# Findings

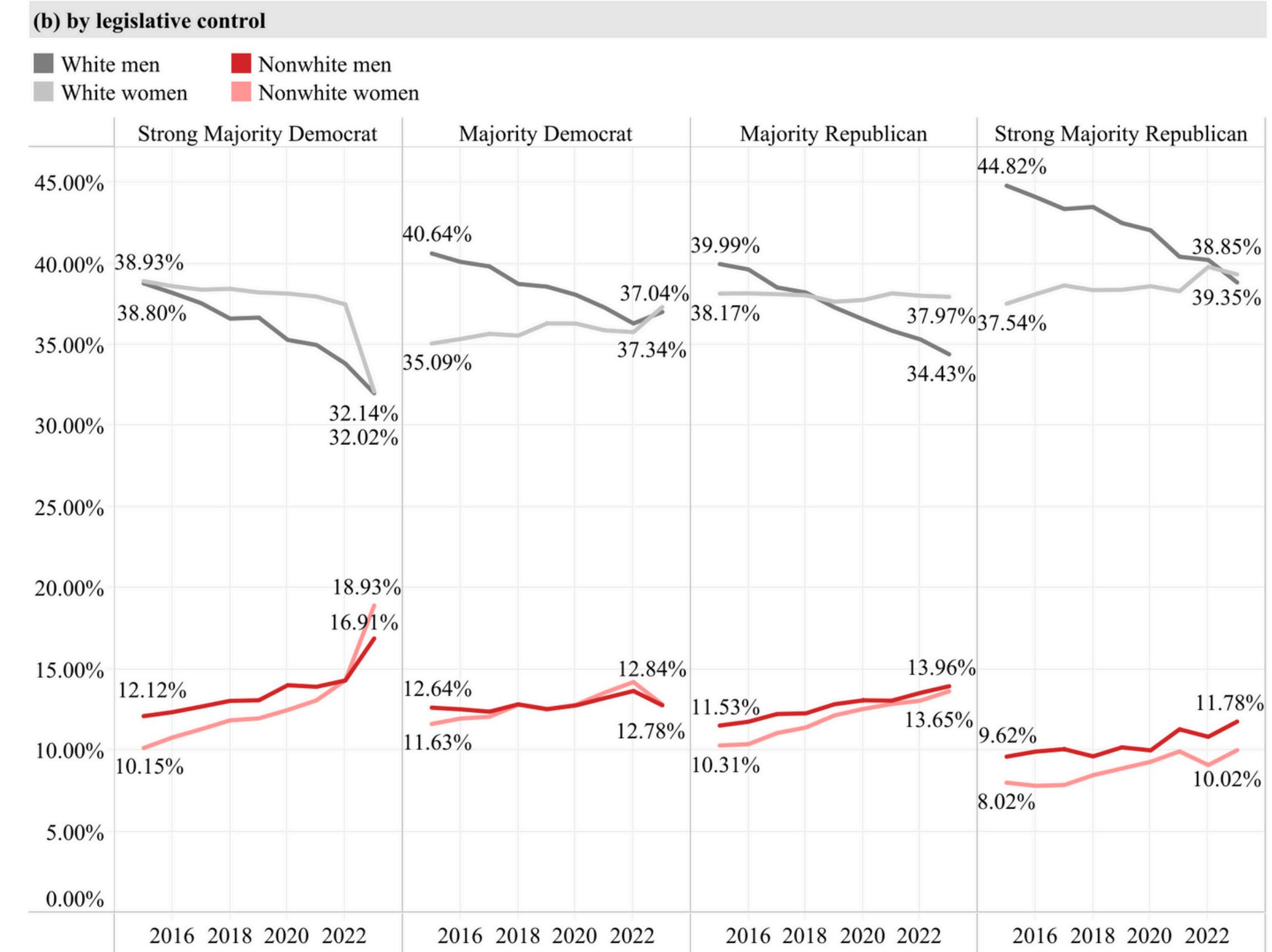
## State-Level Contexts

### White and Nonwhite Men and Women by Partisanship

Legislative control generates **greater variation** compared to gubernatorial control

**Strong majority Democrat** states exhibit drastic changes between 2022 and 2023

Figure 13b: Proportion of White and Nonwhite Men and Women in Faculty by Partisan Control (2015-2023)



# Findings

## State-Level Contexts

### Higher Education Funding

Average appropriations per student **increased 54.42%** between 2015 and 2023

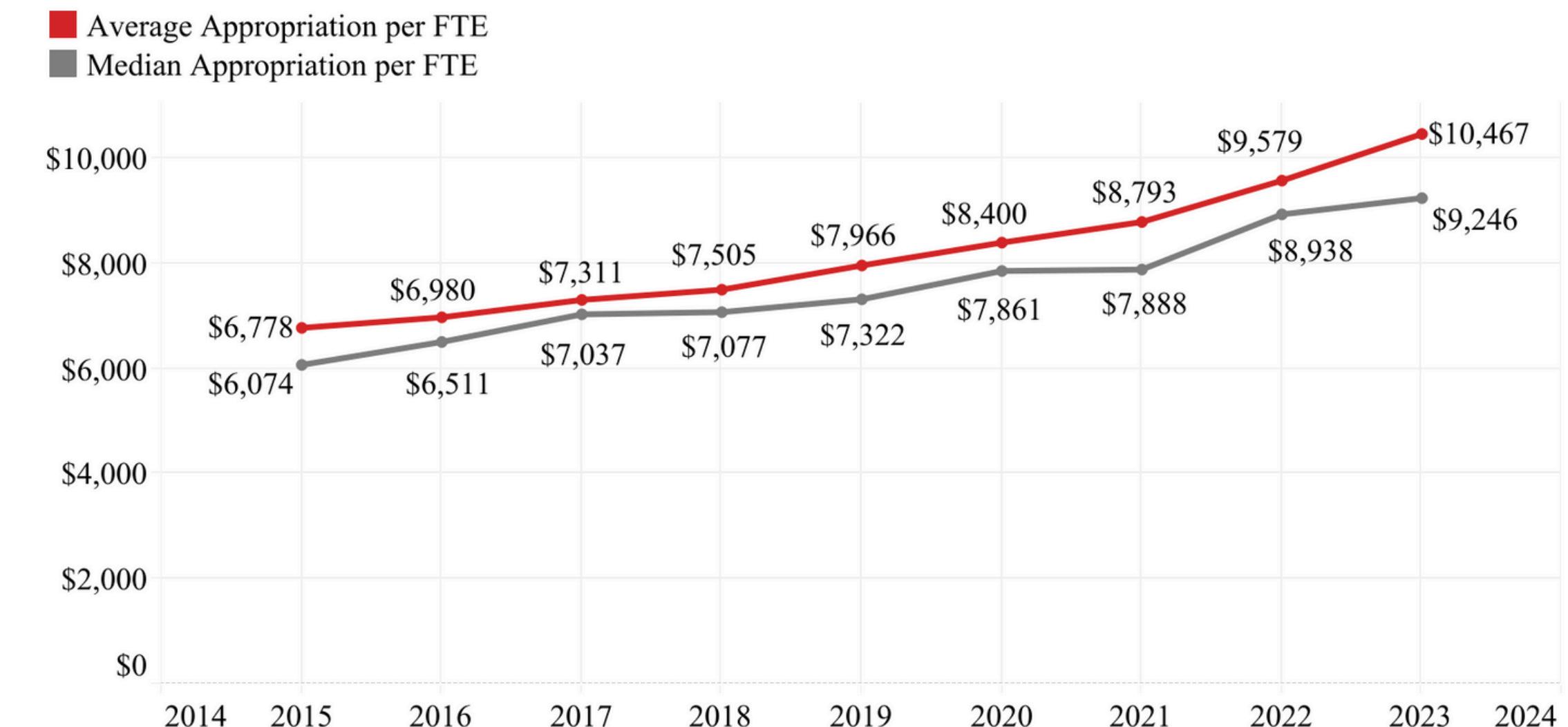
#### Greatest gains:

Alabama (142% increase)  
Oregon (117%)

#### Least gains:

North Dakota (5%)  
Iowa (9%)

Figure 14: Average and Median State Appropriations to Higher Education (2015-2023)



# Findings

## State-Level Contexts

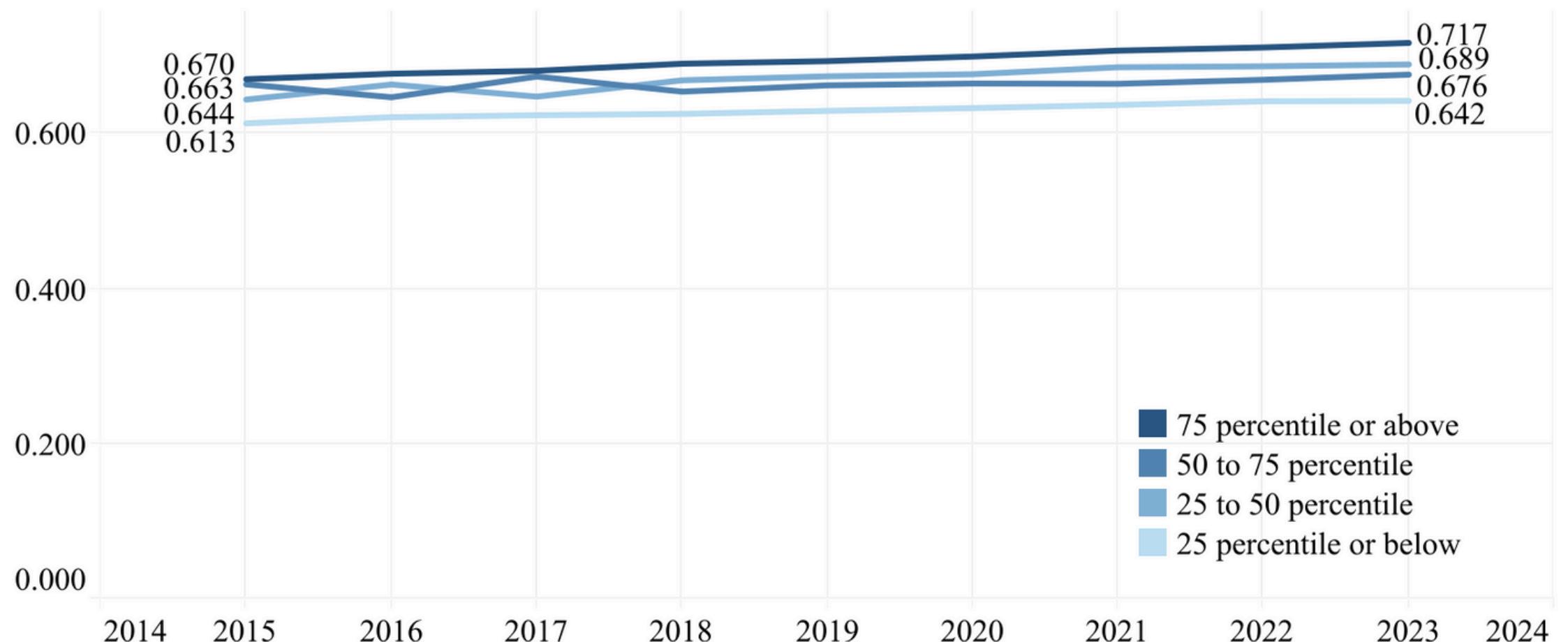
### Diversity Index by Appropriations

Slight variation in faculty diversity

Institutions with the greatest funding had highest diversity

Those with the least funding had the lowest diversity

Figure 17: Average Diversity Index Value by Higher Education Appropriations (2015-2023)



# Findings

## State-Level Contexts

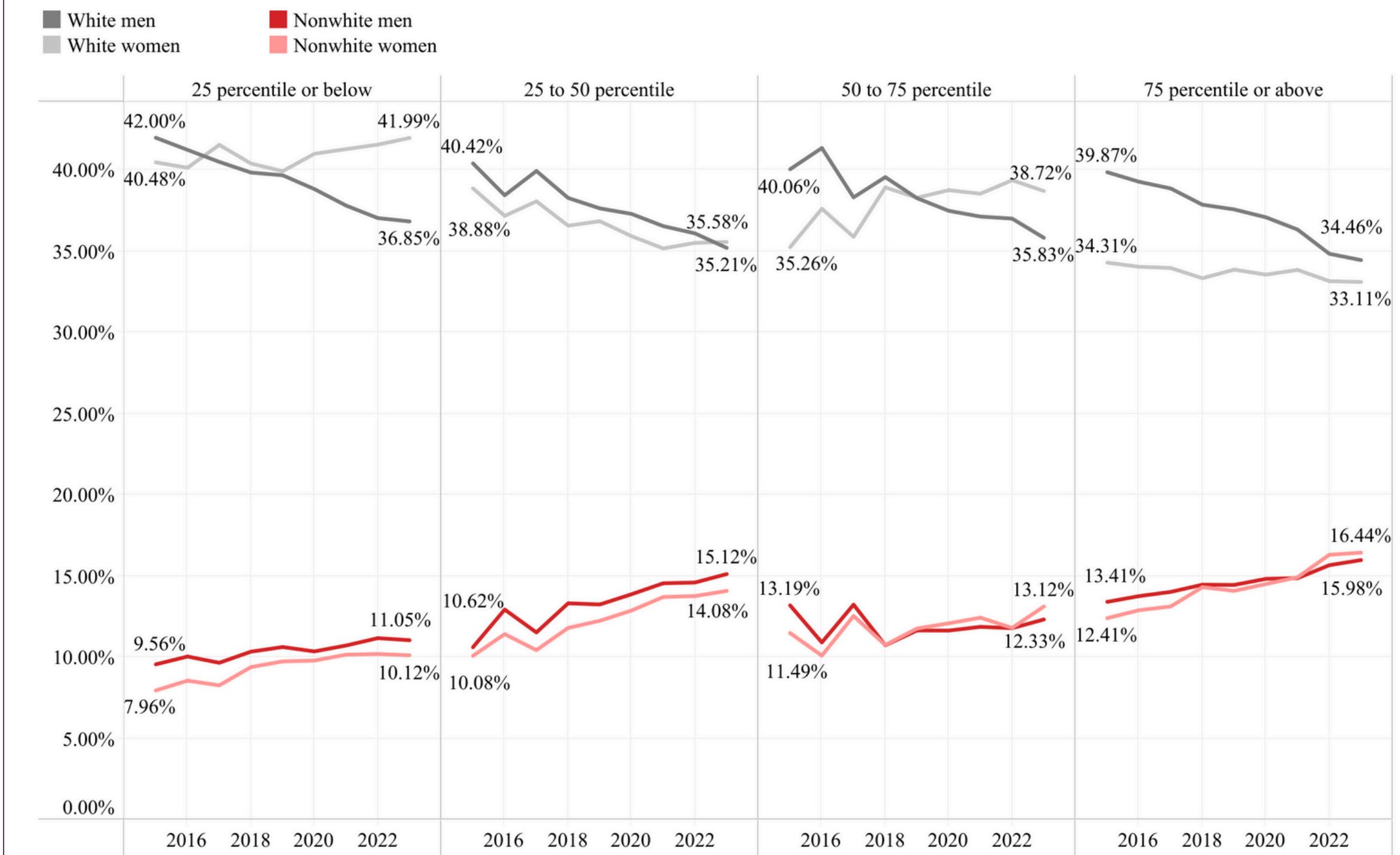
### White and Nonwhite Men and Women by Appropriations

Disparity in representation is **smallest** when state funding is **higher**

Most well-funded institutions had:

- Lowest representation of White men and women
- Greatest for Nonwhite men and women
- Maintained **White men's advantage** over women counterparts

Figure 18: Proportion of White and Nonwhite Men and Women Faculty by Higher Education Appropriations (2015-2023)



# Findings

## State-Level Contexts

### Mixed-Effects Modeling

Year significant across all four models

**Consistent and significant growth** of faculty diversity across time

State political and economic contexts account for **a portion, but not all**, of upward trend in diversity

Table 5: Mixed-Effects Maximum Likelihood Regression Model Results

<i>Variable</i>	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
<i>Year</i>	.004***	.004***	.004***	.003***
<i>Democratic governor</i>		-.004***	-.005***	-.005***
<i>Proportion of Dems in state legislature</i>			.047***	.041***
<i>Higher education funding</i>				.002***
<i>HBCU</i>	.079***	.079***	.081***	.082***
<i>R1 institution</i>	.033***	.033***	.033***	.033***
<i>R2 institution</i>	.029***	.030***	.029***	.029***
<i>Midsize institution</i>	.005**	.006**	.006***	-.007***
<i>Large institution</i>	.013***	.013***	.013***	.013***
Constant	-7.64	-7.77	-7.35	-5.75
Observations	6,981	6,981	6,981	6,981
Wald Chi-Square	2110.46***	2128.36***	2199.92***	2256.43***
LR test Chi-square	14509.33***	14471.42***	14019.15***	13828.49***

\*  $p < 0.05$  \*\*  $p < 0.01$  \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

# Findings

## Mediation Analysis

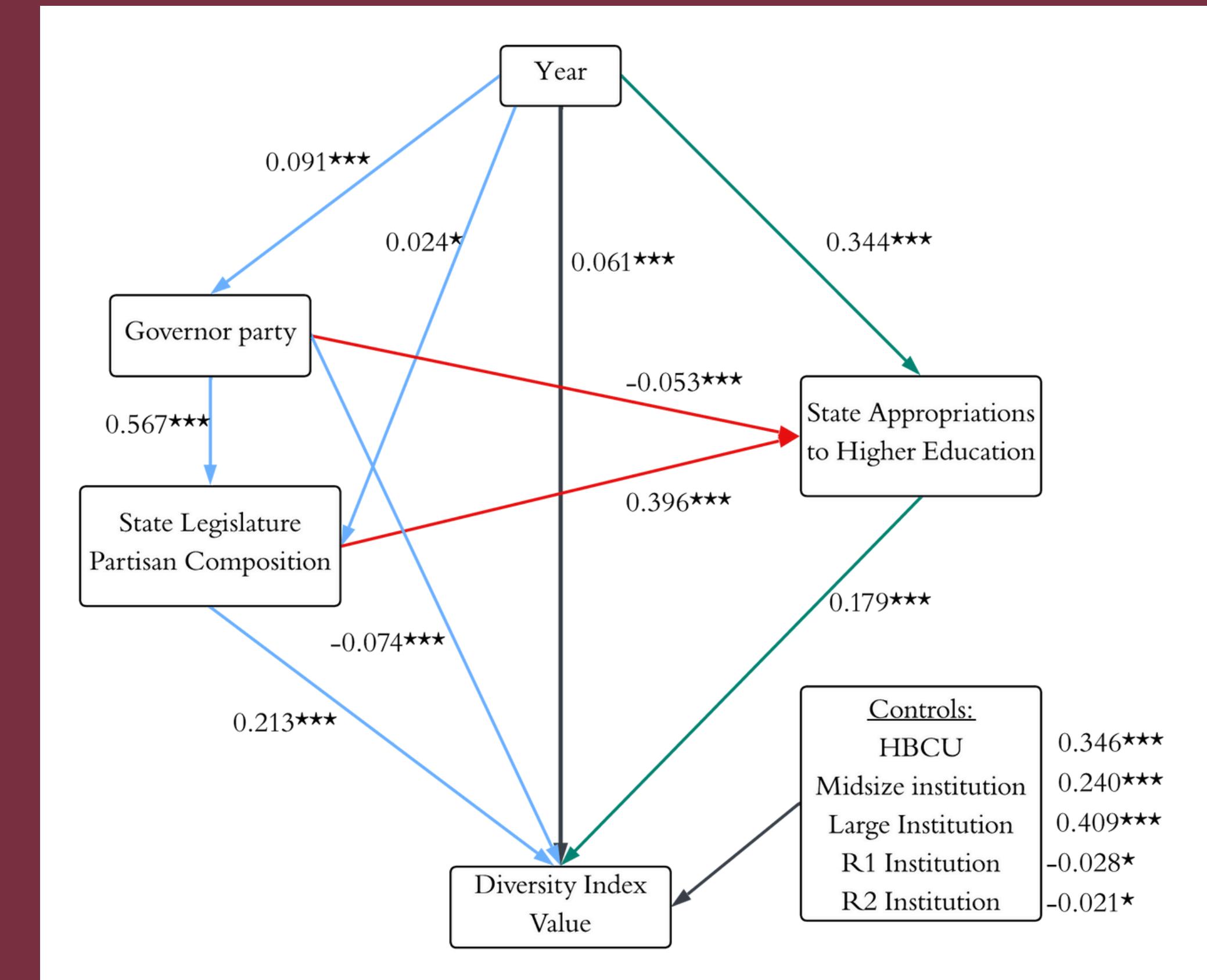
### Structural Equation Modeling (SEM)

All pathways in the model are significant

Democratic **governors** associated with **decreased** higher education appropriations and faculty diversity

Democratic **legislatures** associated with **increased** funding and diversity

Figure 20: Structural Equation Model Standardized Results



# Findings

## Mediation Analysis

### Direct and Indirect Effects

All direct and indirect pathways significant

Exactly **50%** of observed rise in faculty diversity over time **due to indirect pathways** through gubernatorial partisanship, legislative composition, and appropriations

Most impactful pathway is through higher education funding

Table 8: Direct and Indirect Effects of Year on Diversity

	<i>Direct</i>	<i>Indirect</i>	<i>Indirect:Total</i>
<b><i>Democratic governor</i></b>			
<i>Year</i>	.017***		
<b><i>Proportion of Dems in state legislature</i></b>			
<i>Democratic governor</i>	.198***		
<i>Year</i>	.002*	.003***	0.60
<b><i>Higher education funding</i></b>			
<i>Democratic governor</i>	-.332***	1.400***	1.31
<i>Proportion of Dems in state legislature</i>	7.064***		
<i>Year</i>	.411***	.030***	0.07
<b><i>Faculty diversity</i></b>			
<i>Democratic governor</i>	-.012***	.025***	1.92
<i>Proportion of Dems in state legislature</i>	.101***	.033***	0.24
<i>Higher education funding</i>	.005***		
<i>Year</i>	.002***	.002***	0.50
<i>HBCU</i>	.130***		
<i>Midsize institution</i>	.040***		
<i>Large institution</i>	.086***		
<i>R1 institution</i>	-.008*		
<i>R2 institution</i>	-.006*		

\*  $p < .05$    \*\*  $p < .01$    \*\*\*  $p < .001$

# Implications and Contributions

## EMPIRICAL

Extends work of Kim (2021) to provide the first nationwide quantitative study linking state politics & funding to the racial and gender diversity of post-secondary faculty in the United States

## THEORETICAL

Advances CRT literature by using interest convergence and intersectionality tenets in tandem to guide my assessment of faculty diversity on a macro-level

Raises questions about the efficacy of applying CRT tenets empirically and highlights importance of contextualizing findings with literature from other disciplines

Questions ability to operationalize group interests and identify convergence or divergence

# Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

- 01 Analysis constrained to race and gender due to data availability, excluding other salient identities such as disability, nativity or immigration status, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic background
- 02 Mixed-effects models used here do not accommodate mediation pathways, while the structural equation model is not nested within state and institution
- 03 Future studies could account for other faculty diversity outcomes such as hiring, resignation, or promotion rather than simple headcount of total faculty race and gender groups
- 04 Other scholars could replicate analyses using other indices, such as the Sampson index (1948)

# Concluding Remarks

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- **Faculty racial and gender diversity is increasing**, but vulnerable to political and economic shifts
  - Trump's punitive threats to revoke funding
  - Increasing Republican resistance to H-1B and other visas
- Imperative for educational sociologists to continue **monitoring faculty composition** and **investigating the structural and political determinants** of faculty diversity
- The American academy must remain committed to **elevating the voices and contributions** of scholars from minoritized communities



Thank you!  
Questions / Comments