

T H E
DAILY WIRE

Cato: ‘56% Of Americans Say Society Can Prohibit Hate Speech And Protect Free Speech’

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The Cato Institute’s 2017 **Free Speech and Tolerance Survey** is a treasure trove of data regarding the state of free speech in modern American society. Unfortunately, much of the data is incredibly disheartening, and even frightening.

According to Cato: "53% of Americans say hate speech is an act of violence."

While two-thirds (66%) of Democrats say hate speech is violence, 58% of Republicans say hate speech is not violence. Independents are split, with 51% who disagree hate speech is tantamount to violence. ...

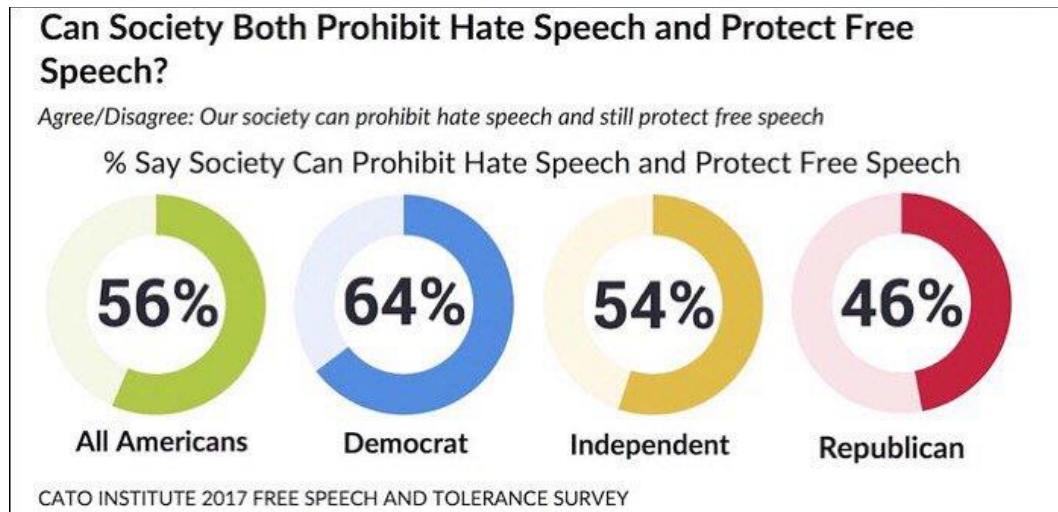
One reason why Americans may believe hate speech is violence is that a majority (70%) believe that “hate speech leads to violence against minority groups.” This is a view shared by a majority of partisans and racial/ethnic groups.

Is Hate Speech Violence? Democrats, African Americans, Latinos, Women, Millennials, and Seniors Say Yes			
<i>Is hate speech an act of violence?</i>			
	Hate Speech Is Violence	Hate Speech Is Not Violence	Diff
All	53%	46%	+7
Democrat	66%	34%	+32
Independent	48%	51%	-3
Republican	41%	58%	-17
White American	46%	53%	-7
African American	75%	25%	+50
Hispanic American	72%	27%	+45
Male	43%	56%	-13
Female	63%	37%	-26
18-29	60%	40%	+20
30-44	51%	49%	+2
45-64	48%	51%	-3
65+	57%	41%	+16

CATO INSTITUTE 2017 FREE SPEECH AND TOLERANCE SURVEY

Here’s another troubling number: "56% of Americans say society can prohibit hate speech and protect free speech."

The survey finds that a majority (56%) of Americans agree with the idea that “society can prohibit hate speech and still protect free speech.” Forty-three percent (43%) disagree that society can simultaneously prohibit hate speech and protect free speech.



Cato notes the issue with such a belief:

The idea of upholding free speech protections but also banning hate speech may work better in theory than in practice. As an earlier section detailed, an overwhelming majority (82%) of Americans believe it would be "hard" to ban hate speech precisely because "people can't agree on what speech is hateful." Indeed, the survey finds Americans sharply disagree about what opinions are hateful, offensive but not hateful, or simply a political opinion.

As mentioned by Cato, the issue here is that "hate speech" is an amorphous term. As such, a standard definition is impossible. There are numerous political and social beliefs that, for some, would fall under the banner of "hate speech."

A perfect example can be found in the transgender debate. Many conservatives openly state a belief that gender dysphoria is a mental illness that should be treated psychologically rather than physically. This belief has been called "hate speech" by progressives.

If such a stated belief is *indeed* "hate speech," then according to those surveyed, it should be restricted because it could lead to "violence against minority groups," which in this case would be the transgender community.

As previously noted, a standard definition of "hate speech" doesn't exist. The power to legally define what constitutes "hate speech" would eventually and necessarily rest in the hands of lawmakers. If a group of like-minded legislators were to gain a majority or supermajority, they could use hate speech laws as a weapon to effectively silence dissent over contentious socio-political issues.

We've seen the damage done by speech laws in places like the U.K. and Canada, where citizens don't enjoy First Amendment protections. It's unsettling to know that 56% of Americans apparently want to walk down the same road.