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Survey Shows Majority Believe Colleges Aren't Properly Teaching 'Value of Free Speech'

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A report by the Cato Institute released late in October titled "The State of Free Speech and Tolerance in America" found that a majority of Americans believe there is room for improvement when it comes to how institutions of higher education teach and manage free speech issues.
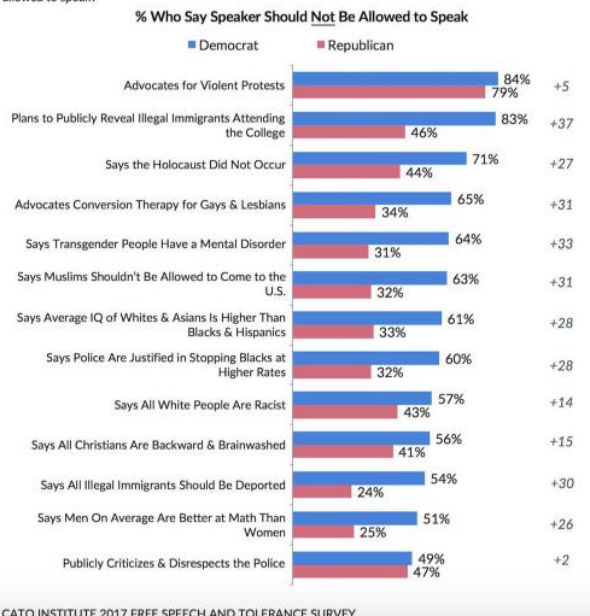
From the study:

Two-thirds (66%) of Americans say colleges and universities aren't doing enough to teach young Americans today about the value of free speech. When asked which is more important, 65% say colleges should "expose students to all types of viewpoints, even if they are offensive or biased against certain groups." About a third (34%) say colleges should "prohibit offensive speech that is biased against certain groups."

Additionally, more than three-fourths of respondents indicated recent campus protests — including the cancellations of certain speakers — represent a "broader pattern" of how students handle offensive ideas.

In general, those who identify as Democrats are more likely to believe those who hold certain views some might find as offensive should not be allowed to speak on campus:

Democrats More Likely to Say These Speakers Shouldn't Be Allowed to Speak at Their College or University

Suppose each of the following people were invited to give a speech at your college or university, should they be allowed to speak?

% Who Say Speaker Should <u>Not</u> Be Allowed to Speak

■ Democrat ■ Republican

Speaker	Democrat	Republican	Difference
Advocates for Violent Protests	84%	79%	+5
Plans to Publicly Reveal Illegal Immigrants Attending the College	83%	46%	+37
Says the Holocaust Did Not Occur	71%	44%	+27
Advocates Conversion Therapy for Gays & Lesbians	65%	34%	+31
Says Transgender People Have a Mental Disorder	64%	31%	+33
Says Muslims Shouldn't Be Allowed to Come to the U.S.	63%	32%	+31
Says Average IQ of Whites & Asians Is Higher Than Blacks & Hispanics	61%	33%	+28
Says Police Are Justified in Stopping Blacks at Higher Rates	60%	32%	+28
Says All White People Are Racist	57%	43%	+14
Says All Christians Are Backward & Brainwashed	56%	41%	+15
Says All Illegal Immigrants Should Be Deported	54%	24%	+30
Says Men On Average Are Better at Math Than Women	51%	25%	+26
Publicly Criticizes & Disrespects the Police	49%	47%	+2

CATO INSTITUTE 2017 FREE SPEECH AND TOLERANCE SURVEY

The wide-ranging report also gauged the public's reactions to new, socially conscious lingo such as "microaggressions" and "safe spaces." College students, it found, were generally more aware of those types of terms than Americans as a whole.

On the topic of viewpoint diversity on campus, 1 out of 5 college students polled said they "believe their college or university faculty has a balanced mix of political views." A plurality (39 percent) feel that most professors are liberal, whereas 12 percent said most are conservative. When it comes to political correctness, nearly 3 out of 4 believe it tends to stifle rather than facilitate conversations about important topics.