



## **Cato Study: “The State of Free Speech and Tolerance in America”**

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**Americans Say Political Correctness Has Silenced Discussions Society Needs to Have; Most Have Views They’re Afraid to Share**

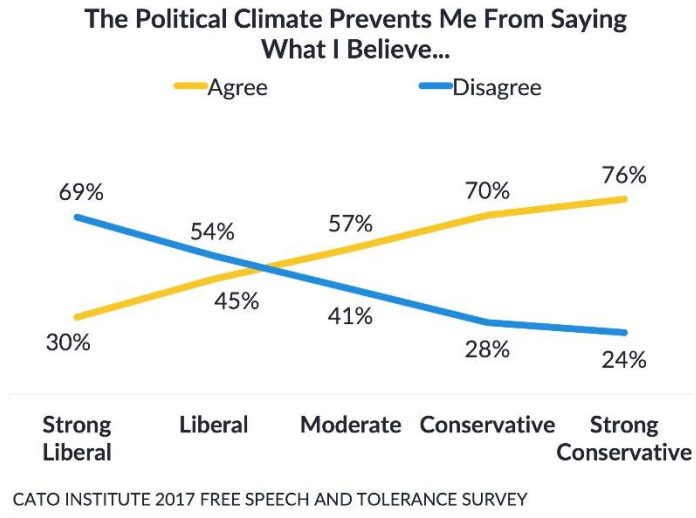
Nearly three-fourths (71%) of Americans believe that political correctness has done more to silence important discussions our society needs to have. A little more than a quarter (28%) instead believe that political correctness has done more to help people avoid offending others.

The consequences are personal-58% of Americans believe the political climate today prevents them from saying things they believe. Democrats are unique, however, in that a slim majority (53%) do not feel the need to self-censor. Conversely, strong majorities of Republicans (73%) and independents (58%) say they keep some political beliefs to themselves.

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### Liberals Most Likely To Feel Comfortable Sharing Political Beliefs; Conservatives Most Likely to Self-Censor

Agree/Disagree: The political climate these days prevents me from saying things I believe because others might find them offensive.

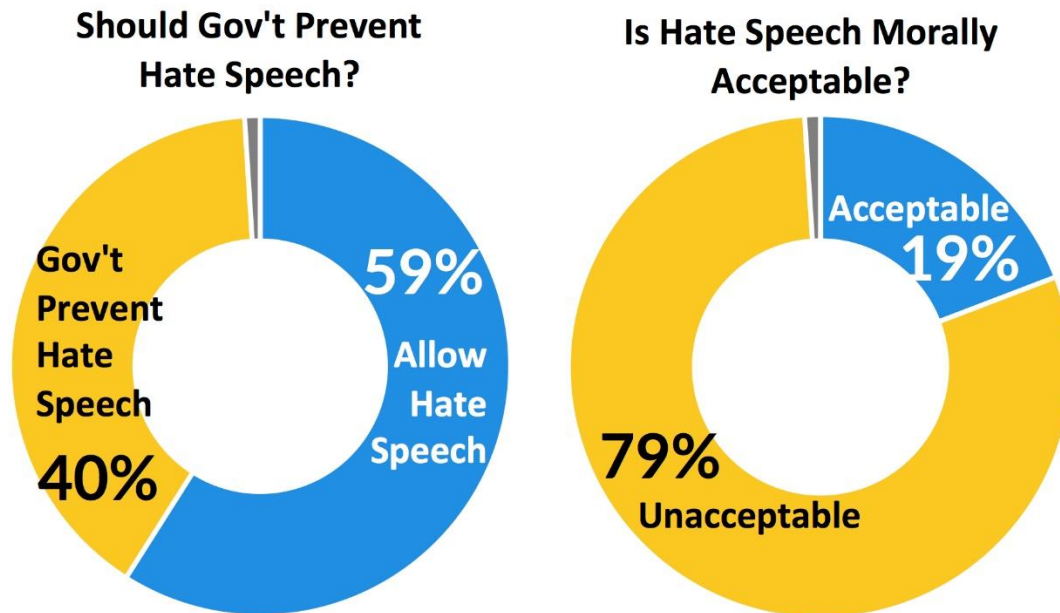


### Americans Oppose Hate Speech Bans but Say Hate Speech Is Morally Unacceptable

Most Americans (59%) think people should be allowed to express unpopular opinions in public, even those deeply offensive to other people. Forty percent (40%) think government should prevent hate speech in public. Nonetheless, an overwhelming majority (79%) agree that it is “morally unacceptable” to engage in hate speech against racial or religious groups. Thus, the public appears to distinguish between *allowing* offensive speech and *endorsing* it.

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## Americans Oppose Hate Speech Laws, But Say Hate Speech is Morally Unacceptable



CATO INSTITUTE 2017 FREE SPEECH & TOLERANCE SURVEY

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Despite this, the survey also found Americans willing to censor, regulate, or punish a wide variety of speech and expression they personally find offensive:

- 51% of strong liberals say it's "morally acceptable" to punch Nazis.
- 53% of Republicans favor stripping U.S. citizenship from people who burn the American flag.
- 51% of Democrats support a law that requires Americans use transgender people's preferred gender pronouns.
- 47% of Republicans favor bans on building new mosques.
- 58% of Democrats say employers should punish employees for offensive Facebook posts.
- 65% of Republicans say NFL players should be fired if they refuse to stand for the national anthem.

82% Say It's Hard to Ban Hate Speech Because People Can't Agree On What Speech Is Hateful or Offensive

An overwhelming majority (82%) of Americans agree that it would be difficult to ban hate speech because people can't agree what speech is hateful and offensive. Indeed, when presented with specific statements and ideas, Americans can't agree on what speech is hateful, offensive, or simply a political opinion:

- 59% of liberals say it's hate speech to say transgender people have a mental disorder, only 17% of conservatives agree.
- 39% of conservatives believe it's hate speech to say the police are racist, only 17% of liberals agree.
- 80% of liberals say it's hateful or offensive to say illegal immigrants should be deported, only 36% of conservatives agree.
- 87% of liberals say it's hateful or offensive to say women shouldn't fight in military combat roles; 47% of conservatives agree.
- 90% of liberals say it's hateful or offensive to say homosexuality is a sin; 47% of conservatives agree.

→ Plus much more: Check out Cato Study [here](#).

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