



Americans increasingly hiding true beliefs on key political issues, study finds

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A significant number of Americans admit they tell people what they believe the other person wants to hear rather than what they really think about key political issues, according to a newly published Populace study.

Some researchers believe “self-silencing” is skewing the population's grasp of how people truly feel about key, hot-button political issues like abortion, COVID-19 policies and education.

It's a culture of walking on eggshells. People are just afraid to talk about politics,” said Emily Ekins, vice president and director of polling at the Cato Institute.

Ekins said the problem is getting worse.

“Because [people are] afraid of losing friends or of maybe getting fired from work or missing out on a job opportunity or promotion because people would seek to punish them because they wouldn't agree on some political idea,” Ekins explained.

For example, the Populace study revealed 59% of people will publically say they think **mask-wearing** effectively stops COVID-19, but privately, only 47% actually believe it.

When it comes to education, the study found parents are less concerned with teachers talking about **gender identity** and **race** than they say publicly.

Abortion gets tricky. People overall are more likely to publicly support abortion even if privately they disagree with it. But, when looking at just Republicans, the study found those on

the political right disagree with the Supreme Court overturning Roe v. Wade more than they're willing to say out loud.

“Overall, conservatives are self-censoring the most, but so are liberals and moderates,” explained Ekins. She said the only group who feels they can safely share their views are those on the far left.

This disparity comes at a price. Populace co-founder Todd Rose told Axios, "When we're misreading what we all think, it actually causes false polarization it actually destroys social trust. And it tends to historically make social progress all but impossible."

As another election season approaches, polling experts point out that private opinion provides the best predictor of how people will vote.