



Is Cancel Culture Real? New Poll Says Americans Are Self-Censoring

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50% of strong liberals support firing Trump donors, 36% of strong conservatives support firing Biden donors; 32% are worried about missing out on job opportunities because of their political opinions

A [new Cato Institute/YouGov national survey](#) of 2,000 Americans finds that 62% of Americans say the political climate these days prevents them from saying things they believe because others might find them offensive. This is up from [2017](#) when 58% agreed with this statement. Majorities of Democrats (52%), independents (59%) and Republicans (77%) all agree they have political opinions they are afraid to share.

Strong liberals stand out, however, as the only political group who feel they can express themselves: 58% of staunch liberals feel they can say what they believe.

Centrist liberals feel differently, with 52% who feel they have to self-censor, as do 64% of moderates, and 77% of conservatives. This demonstrates that political expression is an issue that divides the Democratic coalition between centrist Democrats and their left flank.

What's changed? In 2017 most centrist liberals felt confident (54%) they could express their views. However today, slightly less than half (48%) feel the same. The share who feel they cannot be open increased 7 points from 45% in 2017 to 52% today. In fact, there have been shifts across the board, where more people among all political groups feel they are walking on eggshells.

Although strong liberals are the only group who feel they can say what they believe, the share who feel pressured to self-censor rose 12 points from 30% in 2017 to 42% in 2020. The share of moderates who self-censor increased 7 points from 57% to 64%, and the share of conservatives rose 7% to 77%, also a 7-point increase. Strong conservatives are the only group with little change. They are about as likely now (77%) to say they hold back their views as in 2017 (76%).

Self-censorship is widespread across demographic groups as well. Nearly two-thirds of Latino Americans (65%) and White Americans (64%) and nearly half of African Americans (49%) have political views they are afraid to share. Majorities of men (65%) and women (59%), people with incomes over \$100,000 (60%) and people with incomes less than \$20,000 (58%), people under 35 (55%) and over 65 (66%), religious (71%) and non-religious (56%) all agree that the political climate prevents them from expressing their true beliefs.

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50% of Staunch Liberals Support the Firing of Trump Donors

Nearly a third (31%) of Americans say they'd support firing a business executive who personally donated to Donald Trump's re-election campaign for president. This share rises to 50% among strong liberals who support firing business executives who personally donate to Trump.

36% of Staunch Conservatives Support Firing Biden Donors

The survey finds that "cancel culture" goes both ways. Nearly a quarter (22%) of Americans support firing a business executive who personally donates to Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden's campaign. This share rises to 36% among strong conservatives who support firing Biden donors. These results are particularly notable given that most personal campaign contributions to political candidates are public knowledge and can easily be found online.

32% Worry Their Political Views Could Harm Their Employment

Nearly a third (32%) of employed Americans say they are worried about missing out on career opportunities or losing their job if their political opinions became known. Americans across the political spectrum share these concerns: 31% of liberals, 30% of moderates, and 34% of conservatives are worried their political views could get them fired or harm their career trajectory. This suggests that it's not necessarily just one particular set of views that has moved outside of acceptable public discourse. Instead these results are more consistent with a "walking on eggshells" thesis that people increasingly fear a wide range of political views could offend others or negatively impact themselves.

These concerns cut across demographics and partisan lines: 28% of Democrats, 31% of independents, 38% of Republicans, 38% of Hispanic Americans, 22% of African Americans, 31% of White Americans, 35% of men, 27% of women, 36% of households earning less than \$20,000 a year, and 33% of households earning more than \$100,000 a year fear their political opinions could impact their career trajectories.

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