

Eric Kaufmann

THE  
POLITICS  
OF THE

**culture**  
**WARS**

IN  
CONTEMPORARY  
CANADA

February 2024

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## Executive summary | *sommaire*

“Culture wars” refers to the contention between cultural socialism – prioritizing equal results and protection from emotional harm for minority groups – and both cultural liberalism and conservatism, which prioritize free speech, objective truth, due process, and national heritage. Media coverage of this phenomenon has exploded since 2015 across the West, including in Canada.

This report uses a national representative survey fielded by online market research firm Maru Voice Canada on September 18 to 20, 2023. It shows that Canadian attitudes to the kinds of contentious issues that feature in such stories lean about 2 to 1 against the cultural socialist position, and that Canadian opinion is astoundingly similar to that in the United States and Britain.

In addition, while many Canadians believe that French-Canadians have very different opinions on these issues, results show very little variation between Francophone and Anglophone respondents. Internationally, Canada is different in that its voters are more deferential towards elite political culture, with Canadians displaying somewhat higher trust in journalists, teachers, and academics than their counterparts in the Anglosphere.

This said, the structure of Canadian public opinion indicates that there is considerable potential for right-of-centre parties to increase the salience of culture wars issues, and a concomitant electoral risk that liberal and left-of-centre parties must manage.

### Highlights

- Canadian opinion on cancel culture, critical race/history, and transgender issues is almost identical to that in Britain and the United States;
- Canadians are less likely to call their country racist than are Americans or Britons;
- Canadians oppose the idea of separating students in schools by race into privileged and oppressed by 92 to 8;
- Respondents oppose teaching children that “There is no such thing as biological sex, only gender preference” by 85 to 15;

- By an 80 to 20 margin, people oppose attempts to cancel gender-critical feminists J.K. Rowling and Kathleen Stock;
- Canadians oppose gender reassignment surgery for under-16s by 4 to 1;
- By a 78 to 22 margin, Canadians agree that “political correctness has gone too far”;
- By a 70 to 30 margin, Canadians oppose the idea that Canada is a racist country and a similar share do not want this taught at school;
- By 70 to 30, people prefer a colour blind rather than colour-conscious approach to issues in society;
- Canadians oppose removing statues of Prime Minister John A. Macdonald by a 2 to 1 ratio;
- By a 2 to 1 margin, people said we talk too much about race in Canada;
- Respondents, by a 2 to 1 ratio, want parents informed when children under age 16 change pronouns at school;
- Respondents, by a 2 to 1 ratio, do not want transgender women to enter women’s sports competitions;
- More Canadians disapprove than approve of people displaying their preferred pronouns;
- Younger Canadians are considerably more “woke” than older Canadians (i.e., they treat as sacred marginalized race and sexual identity groups, as well as women), though the generation gap is not as large as in Britain or the US;
- Younger Canadians are substantially less likely than younger Britons or Americans to describe their country as racist;
- Those who have taken diversity training are significantly more fearful of losing their job or reputation for what they say than those who have not;
- Those who have taken diversity training are significantly more woke than those who have not;
- Heavier social media users are significantly more woke, even controlling for ideology, age, and numerous other factors;
- 60 percent of Canadians believe that “215 indigenous residential school children were buried in a mass grave on school grounds in Kamloops, BC,” with just 15 percent disagreeing;
- 39 percent of Canadians and 55 percent of Americans believe that “Native peoples lived in peace and harmony prior to European settlement” of their countries;
- Francophone attitudes are generally very similar to Anglophone attitudes on culture war questions;
- Francophones are less likely than Anglophones to defend Anglo-Canadian historical figures such as Macdonald or Egerton Ryerson and are less concerned about threats to free speech or about political correctness;
- Francophones are more skeptical than Anglophones of gender ideology and colour-conscious equity and diversity policies;

- Canadians are 3 times more trusting of journalists than are Britons and over 50 percent more trusting of them than are Americans;
- These results suggest that conservative parties can gain electoral support by defending historical figures and symbols and resisting trans activist policies. Parties on the left are advised to deflect or defuse such issues as they may prove electorally costly; and
- Results indicate that diversity training, as currently practiced, needs to be reformed or abolished in organizations as it heightens employee anxiety and advances contentious beliefs. [MLI](#)

*La « guerre culturelle » désigne le conflit entre d'une part, le socialisme culturel – qui privilégie l'égalité des résultats et la protection des groupes minoritaires contre les préjudices moraux – et, d'autre part, le libéralisme et le conservatisme culturels, qui privilégient la liberté d'expression, la vérité objective, la sécurité juridique et le patrimoine national. La couverture médiatique de ce phénomène a explosé depuis 2015 dans tout l'Occident, y compris au Canada.*

*Ce rapport présente un sondage national représentatif réalisé par la société d'études de marché en ligne Maru Voice Canada entre le 18 et le 20 septembre 2023. Il montre que, pour ce qui est des questions litigieuses abordées par les médias, les Canadiens sont à 2 contre 1 en défaveur du socialisme culturel, un point de vue étonnamment similaire à celui observé aux États-Unis et en Grande-Bretagne.*

*En outre, même si de nombreux Canadiens croient que leurs homologues d'expression française ont des opinions très différentes des leurs sur ces questions, les résultats montrent très peu de variation entre les francophones et les anglophones. En quoi le Canada anglais se distingue, c'est par le respect accru de ses électeurs à l'égard de la culture politique de l'élite; les Canadiens affichent une confiance plus grande à l'égard des journalistes, des enseignants et des universitaires qu'ailleurs dans l'anglosphère.*

*Cela dit, la structure de l'opinion publique canadienne permet de supposer que les partis de centre droit pourraient considérablement aviver l'intérêt pour les questions de guerre culturelle, ce qui entraînerait un risque électoral que les partis d'allégeance libérale ou de centre gauche devraient gérer.*

### **Faits saillants :**

- *L'opinion canadienne sur la culture de l'annulation, les races et l'histoire ainsi que les questions relatives aux transgenres est presque identique à celle de la Grande-Bretagne et des États-Unis.*

- *La population du Canada est moins encline à qualifier le pays de raciste que celle des États-Unis ou de la Grande-Bretagne.*
- *La population canadienne s'oppose à l'idée de faire des distinctions dans les écoles entre les élèves privilégiés et opprimés en fonction de la race, dans une proportion de 92 à 8.*
- *Les personnes interrogées sont opposées à l'idée d'enseigner aux enfants « que le sexe biologique n'existe pas, qu'il n'y a que des préférences de genre », dans une proportion de 85 à 15.*
- *Par une marge de 80 contre 20, les gens s'opposent aux tentatives de neutraliser les féministes opposées à l'identité de genre comme J.K. Rowling et Kathleen Stock.*
- *La population canadienne s'oppose, dans une proportion de 4 à 1, aux chirurgies pour changement de sexe des moins de 16 ans.*
- *Par une marge de 78 contre 22, la population canadienne convient que la rectitude politique est allée « trop loin ».*
- *Par une marge de 70 contre 30, la population canadienne s'oppose à l'idée que le Canada est un pays raciste; une proportion similaire refuse que cette idée soit enseignée à l'école.*
- *Dans une proportion de 70 à 30, les gens préfèrent que les problèmes sociétaux soient abordés en faisant abstraction du problème de couleur plutôt que l'inverse.*
- *La population canadienne s'oppose, par une marge de 2 contre 1, au retrait des statues de Sir John A. Macdonald.*
- *Par une marge de 2 contre 1, les gens estiment que nous parlons trop des questions raciales au Canada.*
- *Les personnes interrogées souhaitent, dans une proportion de 2 à 1, que les parents soient informés lorsque les enfants de moins de 16 ans changent de prénom à l'école.*
- *Les personnes interrogées, dans une proportion de 2 à 1, ne souhaitent pas que les femmes transgenres participent à des compétitions sportives féminines.*
- *Les jeunes canadiens sont beaucoup plus « woke » que les personnes plus âgées (c'est-à-dire qu'ils tiennent pour sacrés les groupes marginalisés en raison de la race et de l'identité de genre, ainsi que les femmes), bien que l'écart entre les générations ne soit pas aussi important qu'en Grande-Bretagne ou qu'aux États-Unis.*
- *Les jeunes Canadiens sont nettement moins susceptibles que les jeunes britanniques et les jeunes Américains à désigner leur pays comme raciste.*
- *Les personnes qui ont suivi une formation sur la diversité craignent beaucoup plus de perdre leur emploi ou leur réputation pour leurs propos que celles qui*

*n'en ont pas suivi.*

- *Les personnes qui ont suivi une formation sur la diversité sont nettement plus « woke » que celles qui n'en ont pas suivi.*
- *Les plus gros utilisateurs de médias sociaux sont nettement plus « woke », même après prise en compte de l'idéologie, de l'âge et de nombreux autres facteurs.*
- *Quelque 60 pour cent de la population pense que « 215 enfants des pensionnats autochtones ont été enterrés dans une fosse commune sur le site de l'école à Kamloops, en Colombie-Britannique », et seulement 15 pour cent ne le pense pas.*
- *Quelque 39 pour cent des Canadiens et 55 pour cent des Américains croient que « les peuples autochtones vivaient en paix et en harmonie avant l'arrivée des Européens » sur leurs territoires.*
- *Les attitudes des francophones sont généralement très proches de celles des anglophones sur les questions de guerre culturelle.*
- *Les francophones sont moins enclins que les anglophones à défendre certaines personnalités historiques anglo-canadiennes telles que Macdonald ou Ryerson et sont moins préoccupés par les menaces qui pèsent sur la liberté d'expression ou par la rectitude politique.*
- *Les francophones sont plus sceptiques que les anglophones en ce qui a trait à l'idéologie sexuelle et aux politiques d'équité et de diversité orientées sur le problème de couleur.*
- *Les Canadiens font trois fois plus confiance aux journalistes que les Britanniques, chiffre supérieur de plus de 50 pour cent aux résultats américains.*
- *Les résultats suggèrent que les partis d'allégeance conservatrice pourraient s'attirer des appuis sur le plan électoral en défendant les figures et symboles historiques et en s'opposant aux politiques transactivistes. On recommande aux partis de gauche de détourner l'attention de ces questions ou de les désamorcer, car elles peuvent s'avérer coûteuses sur le plan électoral.*
- *Les résultats indiquent que la formation à la diversité, telle qu'elle est pratiquée actuellement, doit être réformée ou supprimée dans les organisations, car elle accroît l'anxiété des employés et alimente les croyances litigieuses. [MLI](#)*

## Introduction

This report examines public opinion in Canada around the culture wars – namely, attitudes to a set of symbolic issues concerning historically disadvantaged groups.

Moral foundations theory argues that progressives value only two major ethical “taste buds,” namely, equality and care or harm protection, while both classical liberals and progressives also cherish freedom. In addition, conservatives value in-group loyalty, authority and respect (Haidt 2012).

I term those who believe in equal outcomes and vigilant psychological harm protection for historically marginalized groups “cultural socialists” (Kaufmann 2022). The term “woke,” as used here, refers to cultural socialists who specifically treat as sacred marginalized race and sexual identity groups, as well as women – whereas non-woke cultural socialists focus instead on other axes of disadvantage such as intelligence, physical attractiveness, or athletic ability. Woke cultural socialists tend to view society as structured by power hierarchies of white supremacy, patriarchy, and cis-heteronormativity. Their aim is, therefore, to overthrow systems of structural racism, sexism, homophobia, and transphobia.

The term “culture war” in this study pertains to tension between woke cultural socialists on the one hand, and cultural liberals and conservatives on the other. Earlier uses of the term culture war referred to the 1980s-’90s distinction between social-religious conservatives and “secular humanists,” or, more recently, to the divide between cosmopolitan “globalists” and national “populists” (Hunter 1991; Kaufmann 2022b). These have some overlap with the cultural socialist vs. cultural liberal/conservative divide, but are not my focus.

The divide between cultural socialism and cultural liberalism can be glimpsed through a series of classical liberal critiques of woke from, *inter alia*,

Yascha Mounk, Greg Lukianoff and Rikki Schlott, Jonathan Rauch, Jonathan Haidt, Kathleen Stock, Richard Hanania, Andrew Doyle, Helen Joyce, Frances Fukuyama, John McWhorter, Helen Pluckrose, and James Lindsay (see, for example, Mounk 2023; Rauch 2021; Fukuyama 2022; Lukianoff and Haidt 2018; Hanania 2023; and Joyce 2021).

The tension between cultural socialism and cultural conservatism is manifest in works by authors such as Douglas Murray, Christopher Rufo, Nigel Biggar, Larry Arnn, Arthur Milikh, Vivek Ramaswamy and Jeff Fynn-Paul (see, for example, Biggar 2023; Murray 2022; Fynn-Paul 2023; Rufo 2023; Arnn, Swain, and Spalding 2021; Deneen 2019; and Milikh 2023).

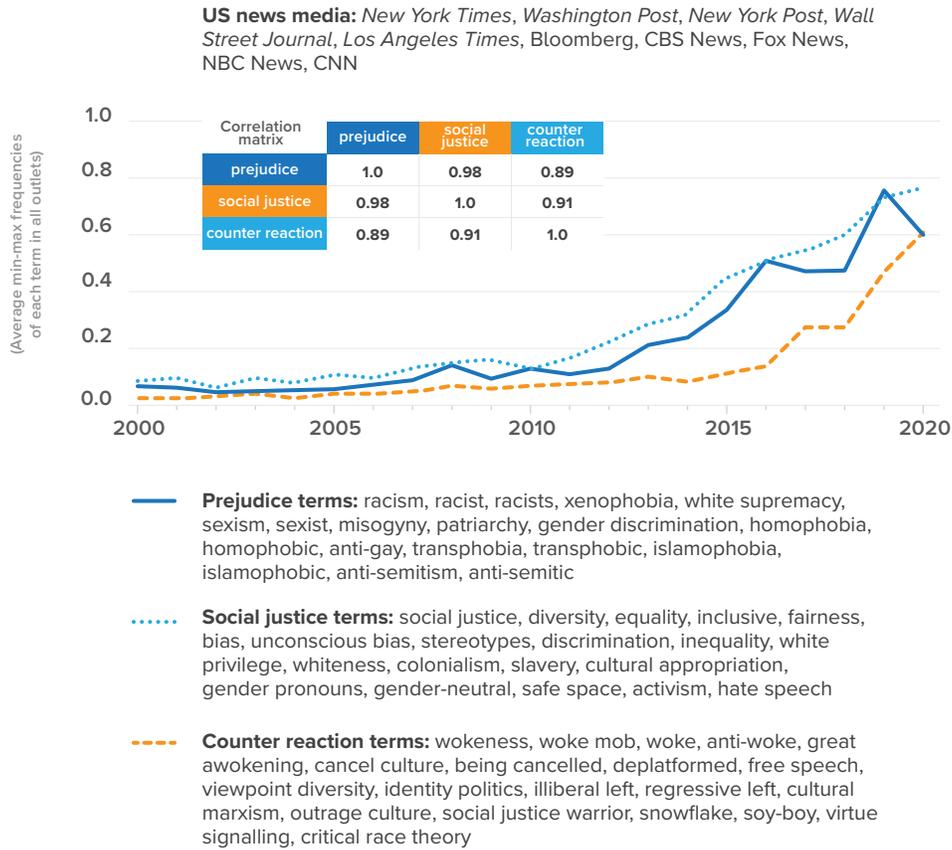
*Trends in Canada (...) are similar  
to those in Britain and the US.*

The culture war is measurable in big data analyses of media content from mainstream outlets. These show that in the US and UK there was a near-simultaneous jump in woke terminology such as “systemic racism” and “white supremacy” beginning the early 2010s. Figure 1 shows that cultural socialist terminology (blue and green lines) rose first, followed around four years later by a rise in backlash terms such as “social justice warrior” and “cancel culture” (dashed red line) (Rozado 2022). Trends in Canada (based on an analysis of articles from the *Toronto Star* and *Globe and Mail*) are similar to those in Britain and the US (Bleich and van der Veen 2022).

Culture war issues can be subdivided into views concerning:

- a) “cancel culture,” which relates to freedom of speech, equal treatment, and objective truth, and which pits cultural socialists against cultural liberals;
- b) “critical race theory,” which encompasses national history and society, and ethnic majority identity, and which pits cultural socialists against cultural conservatives; and
- c) transgender issues, which involve a blend of liberal and conservative concerns as applied to the question of gender boundaries.

**FIGURE 1:** Culture wars-related content in US media



Source: David Rozado, Associate Professor, Otago Polytechnic, private correspondence.

Beyond this, I:

- d) take the temperature of the speech climate in Canada by asking whether Canadians feel free to voice their opinions; and
- e) examine differences in policy preferences toward cancel culture, critical race theory, and transgenderism.

In turn, four explanatory variables bisect these five themes:

- ideology/vote;
- age;
- French/English language; and
- country.

Ideology and age are statistically the most important determinants of attitudes to the culture wars, in Canada as elsewhere. Language is of interest because Quebec's government has charted a different direction on some culture war questions and there is a perception that the province is less woke than English Canada.

Finally, this study presents a distinctive international perspective in contrast to other studies of culture war attitudes in Canada (Angus Reid Institute 2023). I have copied or adapted many questions from surveys I have previously conducted in Britain and the United States in 2021 and 2022 (Kaufmann 2022a; Kaufmann 2022c). There is a substantive reason for doing so: these countries are generally considered more culturally conservative than Canada as reflected in historic voting patterns. For instance, in the US the Republican Party has held office nearly 60 percent of the time since 1968 and in Britain the Conservatives have been in office around 66 percent of the time since 1970. By contrast, Canada's Conservatives have only held power for 38 percent of this period. In recent decades, the electorate has split relatively evenly between left and right parties in the US and Britain, but has historically broken 60-40 for left-of-centre parties in Canada.

## Previous research

Angus Reid has done important recent survey work on Canadian attitudes to the culture wars. The findings reveal that attitudes to questions on race, gender, Indigenous issues, and speech boundaries are nuanced, and rarely come in a single ideological package except among a minority of committed respondents. Some of this work suggests that the Canadian public leans in a culturally socialist direction:

- Half think whites have privilege, with 45 percent saying men are privileged;
- 55 to 59 percent favour women and minorities receiving priority in hiring;
- by 47 percent for to 35 percent against, people think that society becoming more careful with language is a good thing;

- 52 to 58 percent agree with safe spaces, trigger warnings and universities prohibiting speakers who “promote offensive views about race and gender”;
- 54 percent consider the legacy of colonialism to be a problem today;
- by 55 for to 45 percent against, people believe that Indigenous peoples should have a unique status as they arrived first;
- by 48 for to 41 against, most believe the harm from Indigenous residential schools will continue rather than having been resolved; and
- 19 percent of Canadians think children at residential schools were “purposefully killed” with another 39 percent saying that they died of neglect, with just 13 percent citing “uncontrollable factors.”

On the other hand, other questions reveal an anti-woke sensibility:

- 72 to 74 percent think that whites dressing up in saris or wearing cornrows is acceptable and more think dressing up as another ethnic group on Halloween is appropriate than inappropriate;
- three in four Canadians think the country has made progress against racism in recent generations rather than things getting worse;
- four to five times more people believe that the situation for Indigenous peoples has improved than worsened in their province in the past 10 to 15 years;
- by a slim 52 to 48 margin, a majority believes that public figures being “cancelled” suppresses speech rather than leads to more accountable behaviour; and
- 39 percent of Canadians do not want any names of streets or schools changed because they are linked with historical figures associated with the residential school system compared to 16 percent wanting them all changed and 45 percent saying some can be changed depending on how the local community feels (Angus Reid Institute 2023).

In contrast to findings from Britain and America, the opinion of younger Canadians replying to the Angus Reid surveys did not greatly differ from that of older Canadians on many questions, with gender and, on some items, university education, being a better predictor of attitudes. Political partisanship was by far the most powerful correlate of responses to questions.

## The survey

This report is based on a survey that gauges the attitudes of a representative sample of adult Canadians on culture war issues. The survey sampled 1,503 Canadian adults in English or French between September 18 and 20, 2023. They were surveyed online using a national representative panel provided by online market research firm Maru Voice Canada. The margin of error is +2.5 percent, 19 times out of 20. The results have been weighted for accuracy by age, gender, language, region, and past federal vote using the most recent census data and federal election results.

This study builds on the Angus Reid research in a number of ways. It features concrete cases as well as hypothetical scenarios, and asks more forced-choice questions in addition to unidimensional statements. This is done in the belief that people may have different perceptions of words such as “offensive” depending on their ideological prior views, and are often attached to competing values, such as endorsing free speech and providing protection from hate speech.

My survey is also more akin to those used by academics; it employs over 50 questions in addition to socio-demographics. This enables multivariate and cluster analysis to parse out differing attitude dimensions. I also ask a series of more policy-related questions to explore the connection between culture war attitudes and political culture, that is, the norms and values obtaining in political institutions and among political and media elites. Finally, the study draws many of its questions from similar surveys conducted in the US and Britain and thus it places Canadian attitudes in an international context.

### Attitudes about cancel culture in Canada

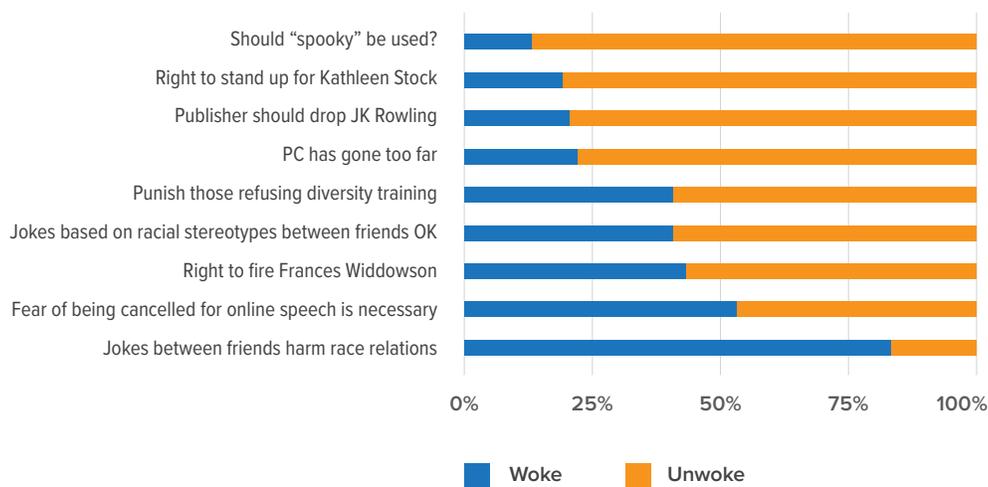
I begin by examining attitudes toward cancel culture – that is, situations where individuals are punished or have their speech restricted in the present in response to something they have said. Intermediate or “don’t know” responses have been removed to more easily assess the balance between woke and anti-woke attitudes.

As noted, research tends to find that people are more likely to agree to questions that have a single dimension (i.e., “Has political correctness gone too far?”) than when they are compelled to choose one from among competing

categories (i.e., “Which comes closer to your view: political correctness limits free speech/protects minority groups?”). In addition, questions designed to elicit agreement get higher scores than those where one must express disagreement. For instance, 8 in 10 Americans think political correctness is a problem while a similar share believe hate speech to be a problem (Hawkins, Yudkin, Juan-Torres, and Dixon 2018, 12). Scholarship also shows that people may be less likely to support free speech in concrete cases than in the abstract, and will agree with institutional decisions (“Should Damore have been fired?”) more than they will endorse cancelling where this has not yet occurred (“Should Rowling be dropped?”). One can readily design surveys to maximize pro-cancel or anti-cancel attitudes by cleaving to these rules. I have tried to use a range of questions across these types to render the most accurate picture I can. Even so, these methodological issues must be kept in mind when assessing any work measuring public opinion.

Figure 2 shows that on nine cancel culture questions, across various wordings, the Canadian public in this survey leans about 2 to 1 in the anti-woke direction overall. Thus, by an 87 to 13 margin, Canadians believe that “spooky” should continue to be used even though some feel it has racist connotations. When it comes to defending the speech rights of gender critical feminists Kathleen Stock and J.K. Rowling, the public breaks 80 to 20 against

**FIGURE 2:** Attitudes on selected cancel culture issues



**Note:** Data excludes neutral and “don’t know” responses.

cancelling these writers. When asked whether “political correctness has gone too far,” Canadians agree by a 78-22 margin. Majorities also oppose punishing those who refuse to take diversity training at work (59-41) or firing academic Frances Widdowson, the Mount Royal University professor who is skeptical of claims around residential schools (57-43). By a 59-41 slant, they believe that jokes between friends that involve racial stereotypes are okay.

On two items a majority agreed with the woke position. When asked whether stereotypical jokes between friends help or harm race relations, 41 percent said they harmed them, 8 percent said that they helped, and the rest were unsure, resulting in an 84-16 balance toward the woke side. When asked to choose between two options, “People being worried about the consequences of posting their opinions online is a price worth paying in order to prevent racism, sexism and homophobia online” or “Putting up with opinions online that some might see as racist, sexist or homophobic is a price worth paying in order to ensure people are free to express their views online,” the public opted 53-47 for the woke option.

But overall, on cancel culture, opinion across the nine items leaned approximately 2 to 1 against the woke position (63-37).

“

*But overall, on cancel culture, opinion across the nine items leaned approximately 2 to 1 against the woke position.*

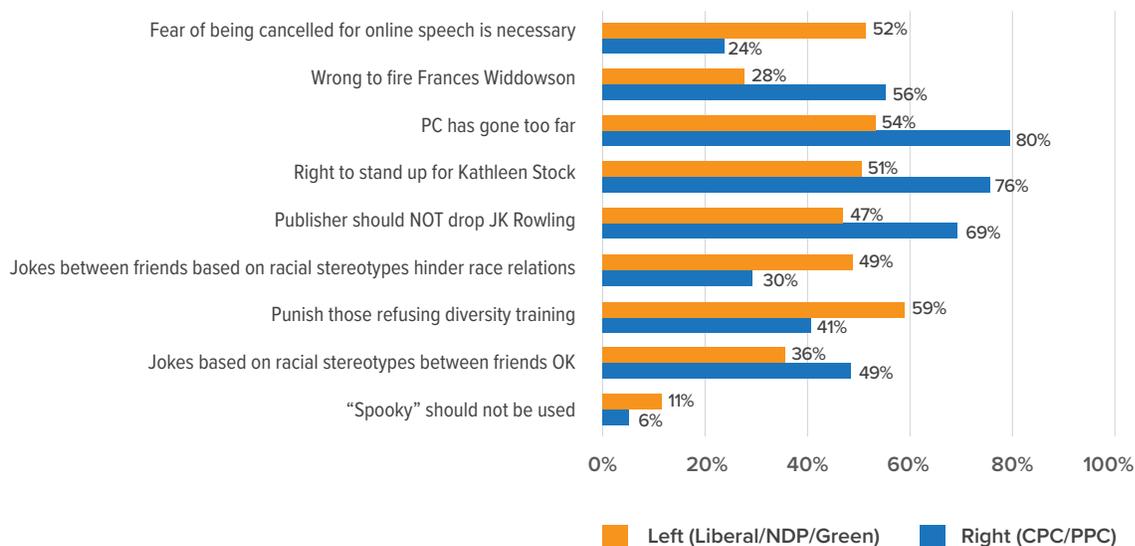
### **Political beliefs and culture war attitudes in Canada**

The most powerful correlate of culture war beliefs, as with the Angus Reid data, is voting and ideology. Those who voted Conservative or for the People’s Party of Canada (PPC) in the 2021 election, or who self-identify as conservative on a 5-point scale from “very liberal” to “very conservative,” are considerably more likely to take a different position than those who voted Liberal, NDP, or Green, or identify as “liberal” or “very liberal.” Twenty-eight percent of the sample said they voted for right-wing parties and 52 percent for liberal or left-wing parties. The Canadian sample thus undercounts right-wing voters compared to left-wing voters since the ratio of the popular vote for these parties in 2021 was 36 to 53 and current polls show it at 40 to 49. These results will thus slightly understate anti-woke attitudes, and, since many analyses here remove neutral

or uncertain responses, will tend to overstate woke attitudes by a concomitant amount.

Figure 3 gives the breakdown of results for cancel culture attitudes by party vote; it is sorted by the raw percentage point difference in attitudes. Note that these are the raw percentages and the denominator includes neutral or “don’t know” responses. In general, right-leaning voters are 50 to 150 percent less likely to give a woke response than voters for left-wing parties. For instance, just 28 percent of Liberal, NDP, and Green voters believe it was wrong to fire Frances Widdowson compared to 56 percent of CPC and PPC voters. Only 51 percent of left-leaning voters endorse Kathleen Stock’s university supporting her speech rights compared to 76 percent of right-wing voters, and a mere 47 percent of left-wing voters would oppose J.K. Rowling’s publisher dropping her for her views on gender compared to 69 percent of right-leaning voters. Eighty percent of right-oriented voters say political correctness (PC) has gone too far compared to 54 percent of left-leaning voters: though a majority even of those on the left agree with this statement, the gap is substantial. And while 52 percent of Tory and PPC voters say that putting up with racist, sexist, or homophobic speech online is a price worth paying for free expression, a mere 24 percent of left-wing voters agree.

**FIGURE 3:** Attitudes to cancel culture, by vote



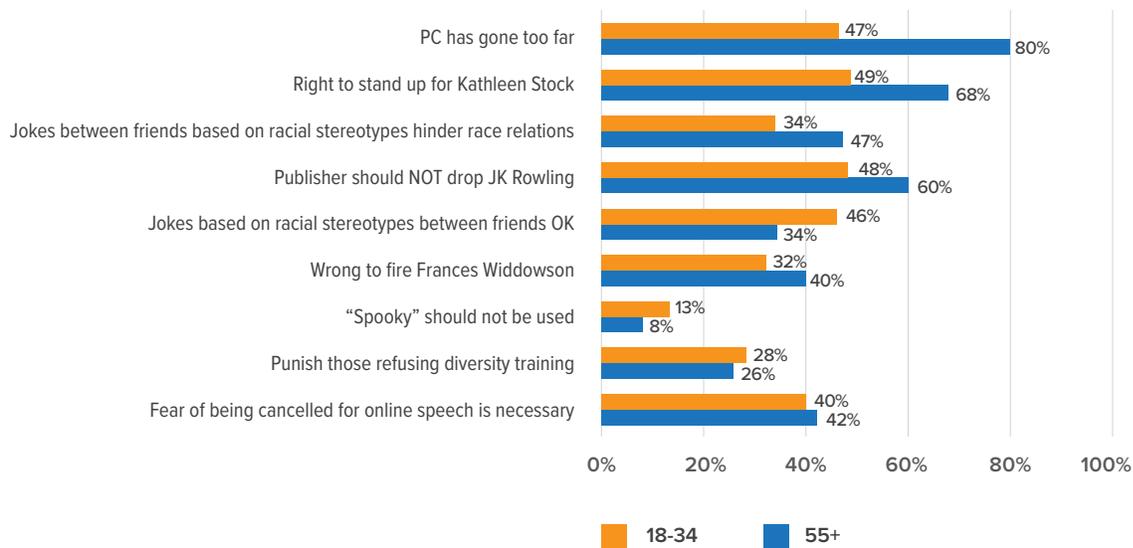
**Note:** Based on share agreeing. Remainder includes both disagree and “don’t know” or neutral responses.

## Age and culture war attitudes in Canada

After political beliefs, age is the most important predictor of views on cancel culture topics. Figure 4 reproduces the nine questions, comparing younger (under age 35) and older (over age 55) voters, with questions arrayed by the size of the age gap. The views where the age difference showed the greatest disparity concerns whether political correctness has gone too far, with 80 percent of over-55s agreeing compared to 47 percent of under-35s. Younger voters are less willing to protect the speech rights of Kathleen Stock (lower by 19 points), J.K. Rowling (-12 points) and Frances Widdowson (-8 points) than older voters. Importantly, the age gaps on the two gender-critical writers (Stock, Rowling) are greater than for Widdowson (who focuses more on Indigenous issues).

On the other hand, the young are less woke than the old when it comes to saying that racial-stereotypical jokes among friends hinder race relations (13 points less likely than over-55s to say “yes”) or that such jokes are acceptable (the under-35s are 12 points more likely to say so). This may reflect the more multi-racial peer environments of younger Canadians, in which banter based on racial stereotypes forms part of relaxed social interactions where whites are often not a majority. When it comes to views of online speech fears, young

**FIGURE 4:** Attitudes to cancel culture, by age



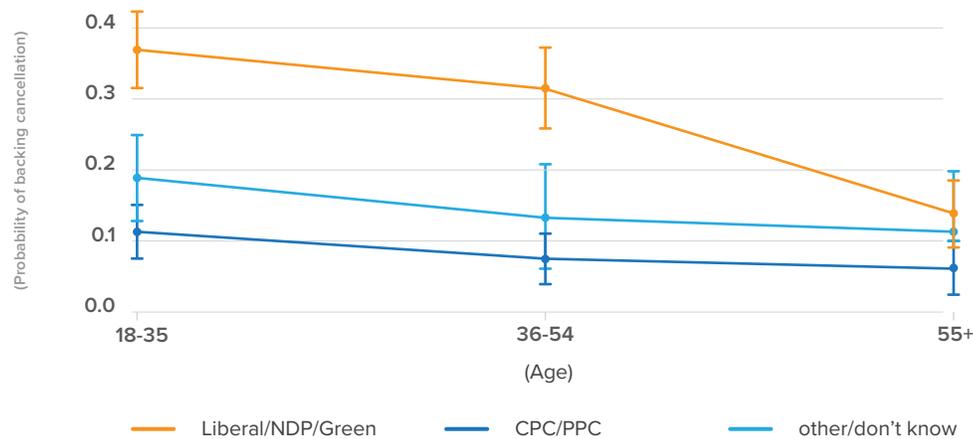
**Note:** Based on share agreeing. Remainder includes both disagree and “don’t know” or neutral responses.

people are no more censorious than their elders, confounding the “snowflake” stereotype.

Finally, it is notable that the standard deviation in response means is higher among young people than older people, which suggests that attitudes are more polarized toward extreme response categories among young people. This may portend more political division around these questions in the future as today’s Gen-Zs and millennials become the median voter.

Statistical tests show that these differences are not mainly an artifact of young people being more left-wing than the old. Figure 5 reveals that young left-leaning voters are 24 points more censorious than older left-wing voters (0.37 vs 0.13) when assessed on an index combining the questions over whether Rowling, Stock, and Widdowson should be cancelled. Older centrists and non-voters are also 8 points less censorious than their centrist/non-voting counterparts aged 18-35. Having said this, none of the age-vote interactions in this model are statistically significant. The distance between the red and blue lines is also greater than the distance between the left- and right-most points on any of the lines: this indicates that while age matters, it is less important than political belief when it comes to explaining cancel culture.

**FIGURE 5:** Favour cancelling (on index of Rowling, Stock, and Widdowson), by age and vote



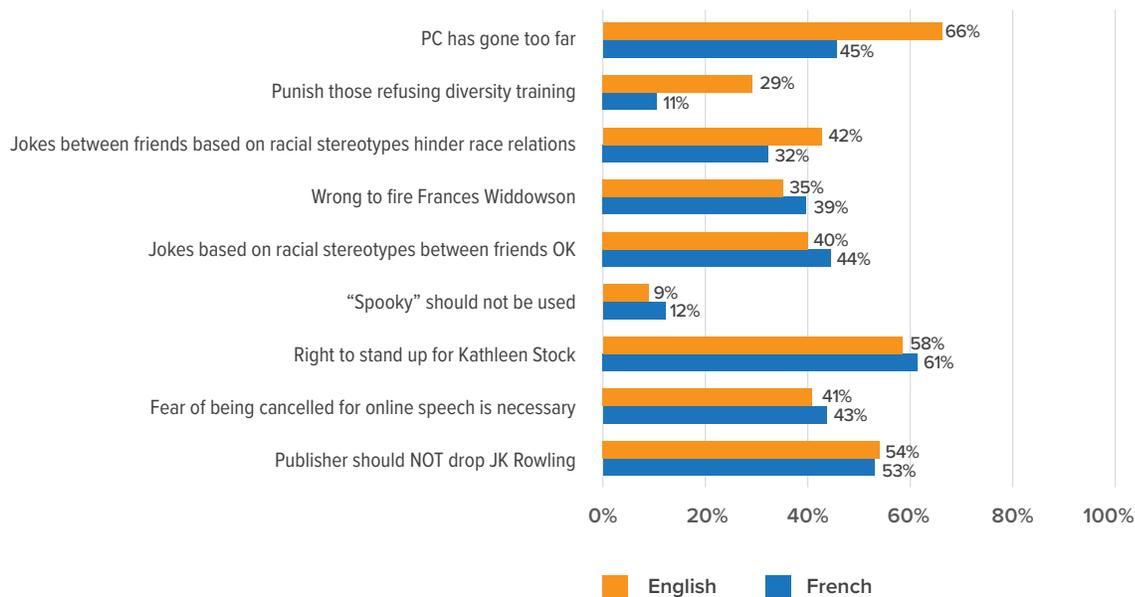
**Note:** Pseudo-R2= .116. No interactions significant at p<.05 level.

## Language and culture war attitudes in Canada

French Canadians are generally considered less woke than Anglo Canadians, which is reflected in Quebec’s politics. Thus when election debate moderator Shachi Kurl asked Bloc Québécois leader Yves Blanchet at a debate in 2021, “You denied that Quebec has problems with racism, yet you defend legislation such as Bills 96 and 21 [proscribing the wearing of religious symbols in public employment], which marginalize religious minorities,” the province’s Coalition Avenir Québec (CAQ) premier Francois Legault dismissed the question as ridiculous (Jonas 2021).

Yet, counterintuitively, survey results shown in Figure 6 indicate that attitudes to cancel culture differ only slightly between French and English Canadians. French Canada is less woke on five questions and more woke on four, but in most cases the differences are minimal and not statistically significant. English Canadians are 21 points more likely than French Canadians to say that political correctness has gone too far, the largest difference. This could reflect a genuinely more restrictive speech climate in the rest of Canada, but, as we will see, differences in speech climate are unlikely to explain the findings.

**FIGURE 6:** Attitudes to cancel culture, by language



**Note:** Based on share agreeing. Remainder includes both disagree and “don’t know” or neutral responses.

On the other hand, there is also a greater willingness among Anglo Canadians to punish those who refuse to take diversity training, though this was partly produced by a much higher “don’t know” response in the French-speaking sample. All told, there is no clear evidence that Anglophones are more woke than Francophones.

Finally, it is worth mentioning that social media use (measured as Twitter, Instagram, and TikTok use) was not significantly linked to an index of three cancel culture attitudes (Stock, Rowling, and Widdowson). However, it was significantly correlated ( $p < .001$ ) with a latent variable combining all nine cancel culture questions and reduced the effect of youth on cancellation somewhat. This suggests that one reason young people are more likely to favour the woke position on cancel culture issues is due to higher social media exposure.

## **Do invisible structures of racism produce racial inequality and harm?**

### **Critical race and history attitudes**

Having addressed cancel culture through the prism of ideology or vote, age, and language, I next move to issues around “critical race theory” broadly conceived, specifically, the idea that invisible “structures” of racism produce racial inequality and harm. Eduardo Bonilla-Silva’s argument that one can have “racism without racists” due to legacy structures – perhaps certain kinds of tests or institutional practices – continuing to reproduce disparate racial impacts is one prong of this argument (Bonilla-Silva 2006; Wilkerson 2020). Another is the “psychic wage” claim made by David Roediger (i.e., that certain amount of status and privilege is conferred by race), or the psychological claims of Isabel Wilkerson, which asserts that unconscious bias and beliefs in race superiority continue to operate beneath the surface.

Critics argue that such “structures” cannot be measured or tested independent of their supposed effects in the form of race disparities. They are thus unfalsifiable and circular meta-theories at best, and, at worst, conspiratorial

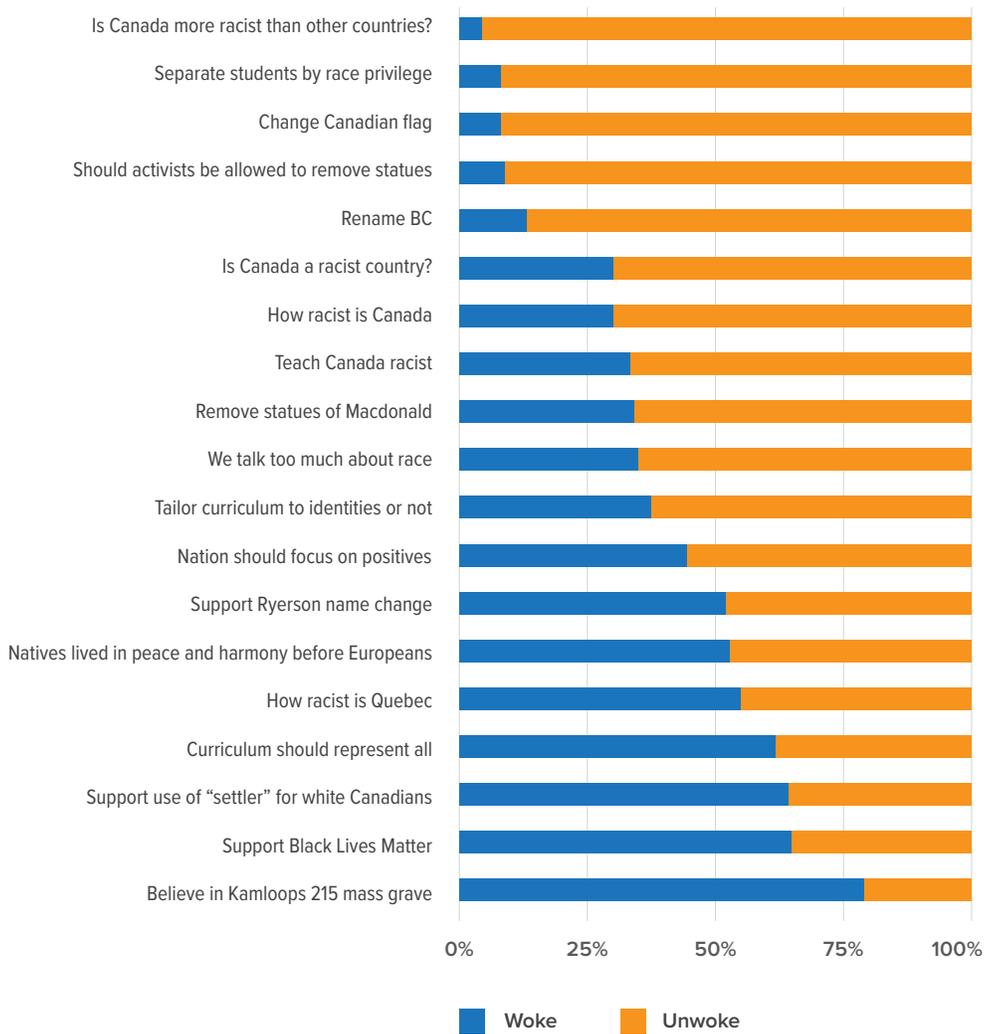
beliefs that shade into racial blood libels against white people (McWhorter 2021; Rufo 2023). Critical race proponent Ibram X. Kendi exemplified the problem with his circular definition of racism as “racist policies that lead to racial inequity that are substantiated by racist ideas.”<sup>1</sup>

A more modest claim is the idea that we must face the sins in our collective past rather than adopting an uncritically hortatory version of the national story. Critics however would aver that while nations should face up to their past, they – like individuals who have done wrong - must have an overall positive self-concept in order to win the loyalty of their population to, for instance, supporting a welfare state or trusting in the legitimacy of their democracy. An overly cynical view of the past, as in critical legal theorist Derrick Bell’s instrumentalist interpretation of the US constitution, foregrounding it as a front for slavery, are thus likely to reduce national flourishing. Moreover, excessive criticism of whites is often twinned with a romantic view of Indigenous or minority civilizations which violates the concept of equal treatment and dignity (Fynn-Paul 2023). Others argue for a balanced approach that recognizes that people lived in the horizons of their own time, should be recognized for their achievements as well as their flaws, and have bequeathed among the most successful societies in human history and which have made considerable progress toward liberal-egalitarian ideals (Biggar 2023).

Where do Canadians stand with regard to the competing claims of cultural socialists and cultural conservatives? Figure 7 examines the balance between woke and anti-woke opinion across 19 items related to race and history. As with cancel culture, the preponderance of answers falls into the anti-woke bracket, with 7 of 19 on the woke side, and only 4 clearly so. Across the full range of questions, answers tilt 59-36 in favour of cultural liberal-conservatism over cultural socialism.

When examining total responses, I again remove neutral or don’t know responses to focus on the balance of opinion. On five questions I find at least 85 percent opposing the woke position. Thus just 5 percent say Canada is more racist than other countries; only 8 percent approve of separating students by race in class to focus on white privilege; a mere 8 percent approve of a new flag to reflect the “new, diverse Canada”; only 9 percent approve of activists removing statues without government approval; and just 13 percent approve of changing British Columbia’s colonial-origin name.

**FIGURE 7: Balance between woke and unwoke opinion on critical race and history issues**



**Note:** Data excludes neutral and "don't know" responses.

The next tranche of questions reveals an important cultural socialist minority of 30 to 45 percent. A 30 to 33 percent minority say Canada is racist and that this should be taught in school. Despite the fact that 8 of 10 statues of Sir John A. Macdonald have been taken down and the remaining two are under police protection, a mere 34 percent of Canadians want them removed. Here, clearly, we find a disjuncture between Canadian elite mores and those of the general public (Dutil 2023). By a 2 to 1 margin most people say we talk too much about race. Sixty-two percent want a common curriculum rather than one

tailored to pupils' identities. By 55 to 45 the Canadians polled say the nation should emphasize its positives while admitting where it has come up short rather than focusing more on its failures to treat people equally in the past.

On seven questions a majority sided with the cultural socialist position. A slim majority, 52 to 48, approved of Ryerson University changing its name due to its namesake's "involvement in the design of the residential school system" (arguably a fabrication, even more contestable than that made about Macdonald). By a 53 to 47 margin, net of those who were neutral or unsure, people agreed that "Native Americans lived in peace and harmony prior to European settlement of Canada," a statement which is false according to the historical and paleontological record. By a 55 to 45 margin, more respondents described Quebec as a racist society than disagreed with this characterization. By 62 to 38, people said that the school curriculum should include all groups even if they had fewer notable individuals rather than focus on "the most important or influential people in Canadian history, regardless of background."

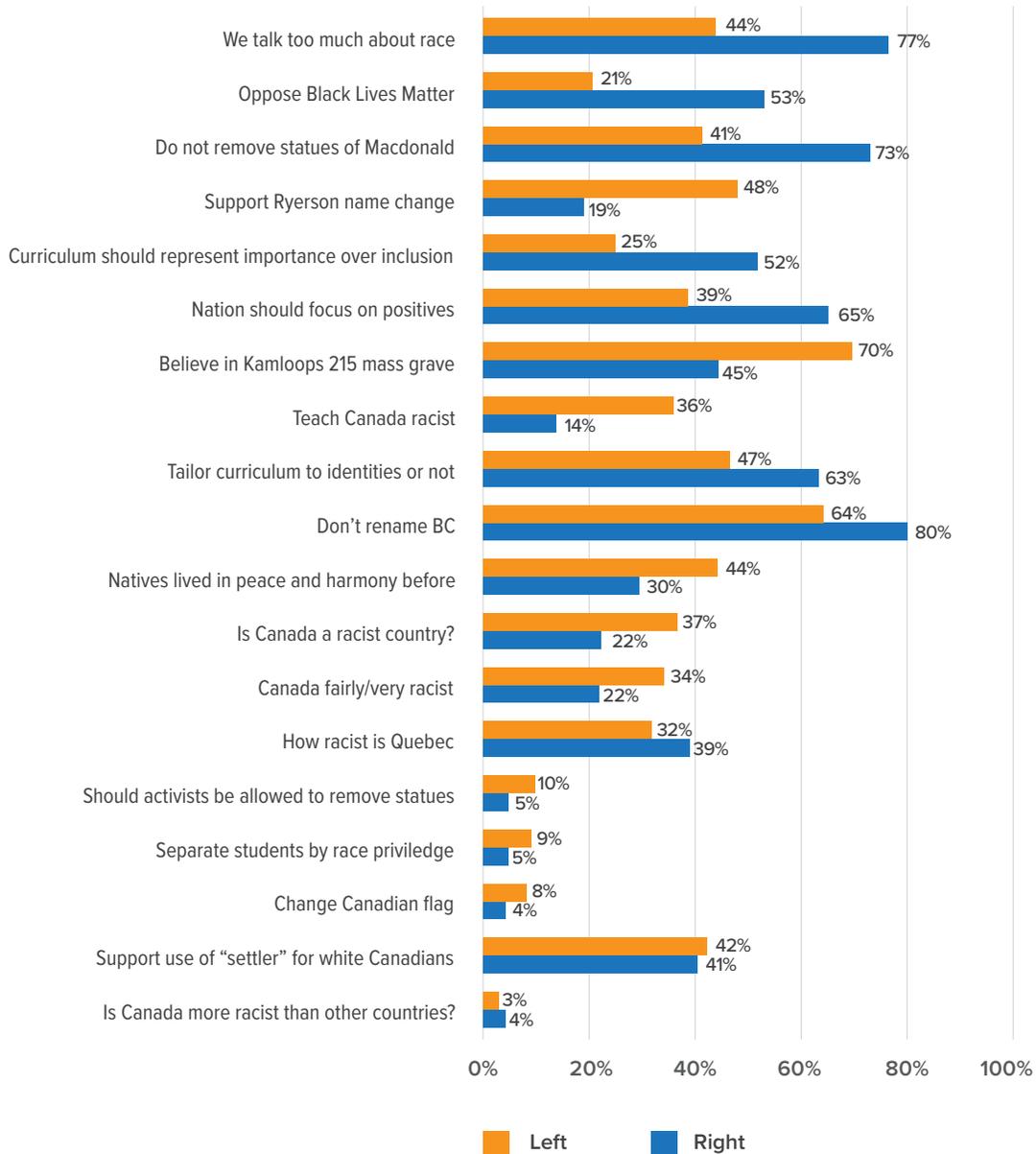
Around 65 percent agreed with the use of "settler" for white Canadians with just 35 percent against (though in the original data over a third had no opinion and only 9 percent strongly agreed) while a similar share held a positive view of the Black Lives Matter movement. Finally, by a 79 to 21 ratio, respondents believed that "215 Indigenous residential school children were buried in a mass grave on school grounds in Kamloops, BC," a story which has not survived scientific and historical scrutiny but which most media and virtually all politicians have been reluctant to contradict (Widdowson and Weiss 2023; Glavin 2022).

### **Political beliefs and attitudes about critical race and history**

In statistical models of responses to questions around race and history, as with attitudes to cancel culture, political beliefs are the most important variable in predicting the responses. In general, voters for left-of-centre parties were 50 to 100 percent more likely to side with the woke position than those who voted for parties on the right. Again, note that these are raw percentages based on a denominator that includes neutral or unsure responses.

Figure 8 reproduces Figure 7, but breaks it down by party vote (left-leaning vs. right-leaning). The responses to most questions show large political gaps. Thus 77 percent of right-wing voters say we talk too much about race

**FIGURE 8: Attitudes to critical history, by vote**



**Note:** Based on share agreeing. Remainder includes both disagree and "don't know" or neutral responses.

compared to 44 percent of left-leaning voters. A majority – 53 percent – of right-leaning voters have an unfavourable view of the Black Lives Matter movement compared to just 21 percent of left-wing voters. This difference may not be the partisan attitudinal chasm we find in the United States, but it is still substantial. Seventy-three percent of right-leaning party voters oppose the removal of the statues of John A. Macdonald, but a mere 41 percent of the left-

wing voters concur. On Ryerson's name change, 48 percent of right-wing voters are opposed against just 19 percent of left-wing voters (28 percent of right-leaning voters support this change, while 61 percent of left-leaning voters do).

Enormous proportional gaps appear over whether the educational curriculum should prioritize the most important people or focus on inclusive representation (52 to 25), whether schools should teach that Canada is racist (36 to 19) and whether the Kamloops mass graves story is true (70 to 45). Left-wing voters were nearly twice as likely to say that Canada is a racist country than are right-leaning voters on two different formulations of the question (37 to 22 and 34 to 22). Having said this, even left-leaning voters were evenly split on whether Canada is racist and whether this should be taught to children.

On the other hand, there was general agreement between right and left that Canada is not more racist than other countries, that activists should not be removing statues without official permission, and that the country's flag should not be altered. Curiously, right and left did not differ on the use of the term "settler" for white Canadians. Alongside the 1 in 3 who were unsure or neutral and the paucity of strong responses, this suggests that many respondents are unaware of the term's radical postcolonialist and critical race-based meaning.

Broadly speaking, the widest differences between left- and right-wing Canadians are around historical symbols and attachments like Macdonald or Ryerson and racializing terminology; the narrowest are around questions of civic stability like removing statues without consent or altering the flag, or an issue of equal treatment such as separating schoolchildren by race.

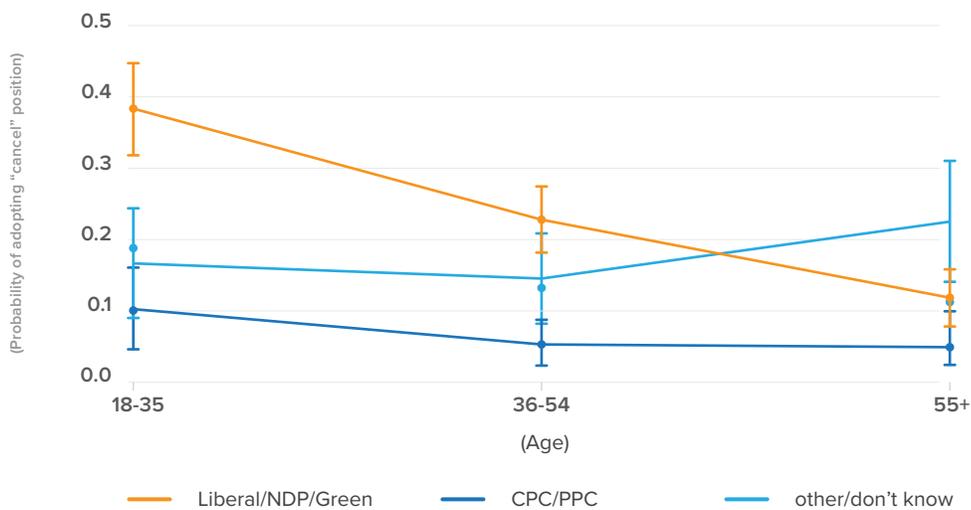
### **Age and attitudes about critical race and history**

Next to a person's voting preference or position on the left-right ideological spectrum, age was the most important parameter in determining attitudes about critical race and history. While the divide between the under-35s and over-55s is not as large as between left and right, it remains substantial, with young people more culturally socialist than their elders, a pattern similar to that found elsewhere in the Anglosphere. This finding departs to some degree from that in the Angus Reid results. Later I shall compare the size of the age gap in Canada on these questions with those in Britain and the US.

Note that statistical analysis shows that the effect of age cannot be simply reduced to the fact that young people are more left-wing than the old. Figure 9 shows how age and vote interact on these questions. Young people who vote for left-wing parties have nearly a 4 in 10 chance of supporting “cancellation” on an index composed of four questions: removing Macdonald’s statues, and changing the flag, the name of Ryerson, and British Columbia’s name. Among right-wing voters, age has very little effect, with young conservatives as opposed to change as older conservatives. In other words, young leftists are more radical than older leftists on these issues, and represent a distinctively woke segment of the electorate. Young leftists stand out more from other voters on attitudes about critical race and history questions pertaining to the past and national symbols than on their attitudes to the cancel culture items (Stock-Rowling-Widdowson) visited in Figure 5.

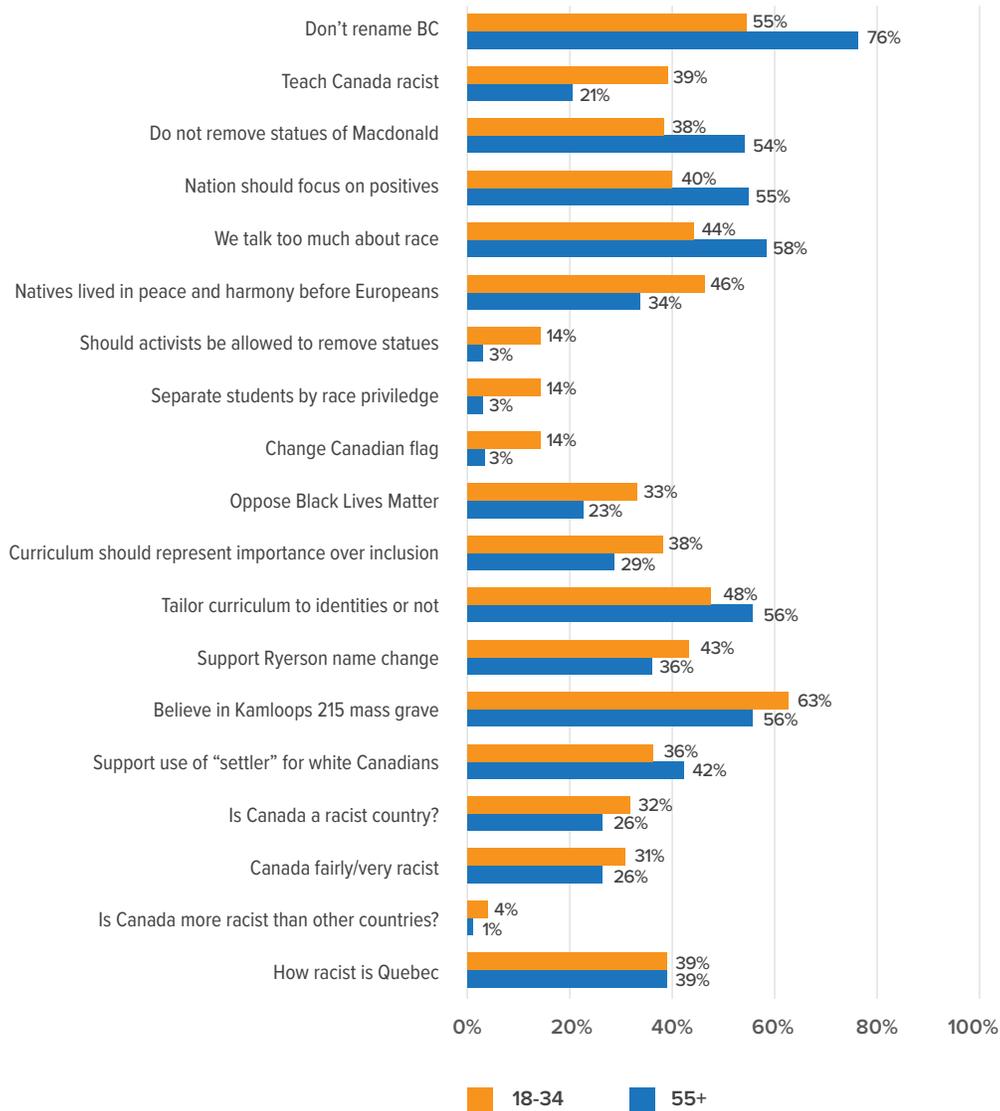
Figure 10 illustrates that the young differ from the old most on questions that arguably involve a major break from convention. Just 55 percent of the 18 to 35 group oppose renaming British Columbia compared to 76 percent of those over 55. Though just 16 percent of young people want BC renamed, they are over 20 points less likely to defend the name BC than their elders. Young people are 16 points less likely to oppose removing statues of Sir John

**FIGURE 9:** Age, vote, and views on an index of four historical or race issues



**Note:** Pseudo-R2=.126. Interactions significant at p<.05 level.

**FIGURE 10: Attitudes to critical history, by age**



**Note:** Based on share agreeing. Remainder includes both disagree and "don't know" or neutral responses.

A. Macdonald, leaning just 38 to 27 against compared to 54 to 25 for older Canadians. And while few want to change the country's flag, 14 percent of young people do as compared to a mere 3 percent of older Canadians. We observe a similar 14 to 3 ratio when it comes to activists being permitted to take vigilante action against statues, or teachers separating pupils by race into the privileged and underprivileged. Nevertheless, even 14 percent approval for these measures represents a small minority of young people. Most are not woke on these items, with few favouring radical proposals.

The young are less likely than their elders to agree that we talk too much about race, or that Canada should focus more on its positives than past failures to achieve equality. Gen-Z and millennials are also modestly (12 points) more likely than older Canadians to adopt a “noble savage” posture toward native people, endorsing the erroneous claim that Indigenous Canadians lived in peace and harmony before the arrival of European settlers. Finally, when it comes to perceptions of whether Canada or Quebec are racist societies, there were no important age differences.

### **Language and attitudes about critical race and history**

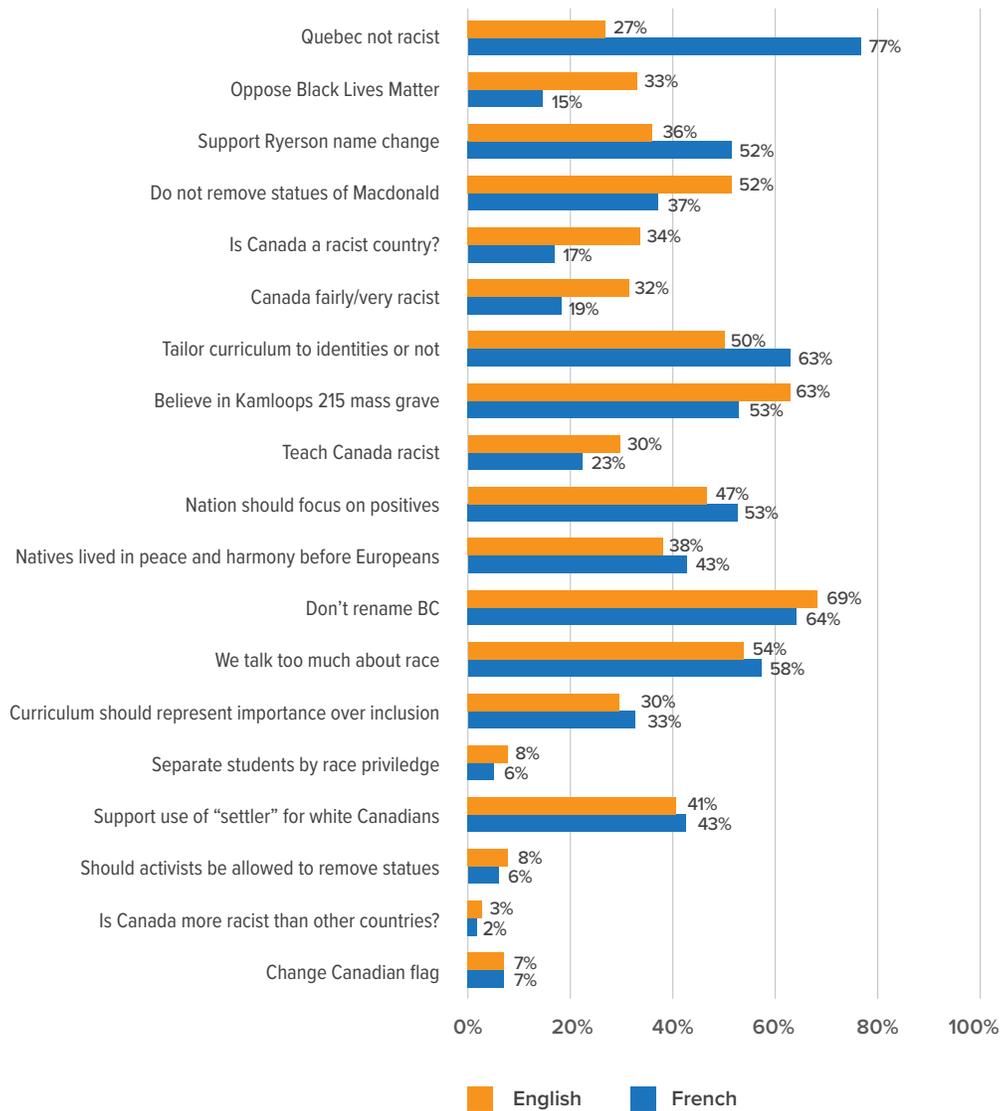
While French Canadians are sometimes perceived as being less woke than their English-speaking counterparts, this survey finds few important differences by language. Figure 11 plots the results. The most obvious contrast is that just 27 percent of Francophones view Quebec as a racist society compared to 77 percent of Anglophones.

Beyond this, the mainly Quebec-centred Francophone respondents tended to back the woke position on Macdonald and Ryerson more than those in the rest of Canada, perhaps reflecting their weaker attachment to these Anglo historical figures. They are 13 points more likely to endorse a modular school curriculum adapted to the identities of pupils and only half as likely as Anglos to disapprove of Black Lives Matter. These answers suggest that there is some influence on French Quebecers of their being conscious that they are a minority that has experienced discrimination in the past.

On the other hand, French speakers were 15 to 16 points less likely to see Canada as racist, more opposed to teaching this to children, and 10 points less likely to believe in the Kamloops mass graves account than their Anglophone counterparts.

Beyond these modest differences, it is the similar attitudes between the two language groups that really jumps out. Generally speaking, language is not a significant predictor of differences on culture war attitudes, mattering systematically only on the transgender issue, to which I turn next. The survey respondent's region in Canada (BC, Prairies, Ontario, Quebec, Atlantic) counts for even less. Policy differences on these issues between Quebec and the rest of Canada, or between provinces (i.e., Saskatchewan, Quebec, and New Brunswick versus the rest), is thus mainly a matter of elite norms (media and political culture) rather than public opinion.

**FIGURE 11: Attitudes to critical culture, by language**

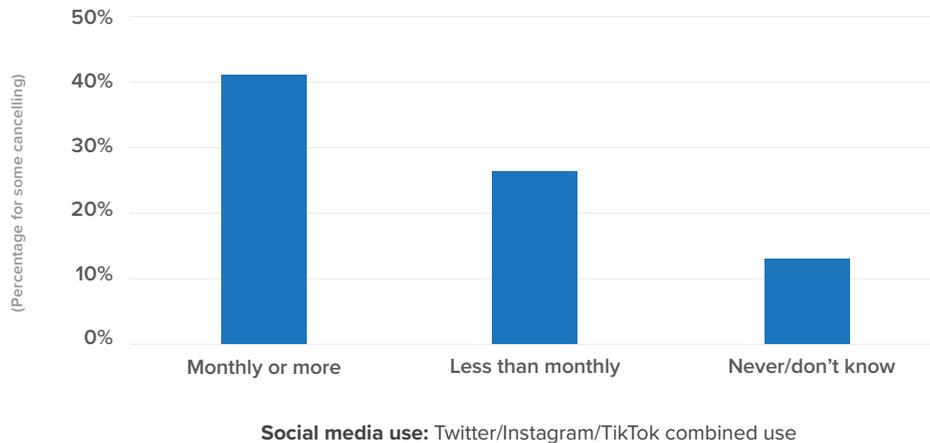


**Note:** Based on share agreeing. Remainder includes both disagree and "don't know" or neutral responses.

Finally, it is worth mentioning that social media use (Twitter, Instagram, TikTok) was significantly associated with a more woke stance on historical and race issues. When inserted into a statistical model based either on an index of four critical race and history issues or a latent variable of all such issues, this was highly significant ( $p < .001$ ) and reduced the effect of youth on cancellation by an important amount. This suggests that one reason young people are more likely to favour the woke position on critical race and history issues is due to their higher social media exposure. Figure 12 illustrates the effect on a 4-item

index consisting of removing Macdonald's statues, renaming Ryerson, renaming BC, and creating a new flag for Canada. Monthly users of Twitter, Instagram, and TikTok are nearly four times as likely as non-users to support cancelling historical figures or symbols.

**FIGURE 12:** Share approving of at least some cancellation of four historical figures or symbols, by social media use



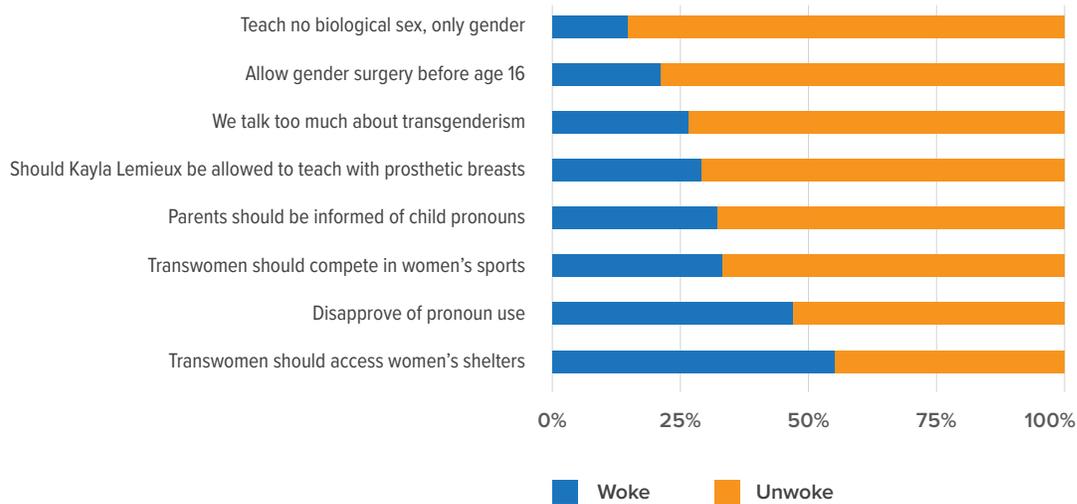
## Transgender issues

### Transgender questions

While cancel culture involves an illiberal firing, “deplatforming,” or shunning of individuals alive today, and critical race/history entails an anti-conservative toppling, erasing, denigrating, or renaming of symbols from the past, transgender issues pit cultural socialists against both cultural liberals and conservatives. They also concentrate specifically on gender rather than race, nation, history, or sexuality.

The survey results in Figure 13 illustrate that on seven of eight items a majority side with the anti-woke position on this subject. Were we to include the questions on the canceling of gender-critical feminists Kathleen Stock and J.K. Rowling, the ratio would rise to 9 in 10. Aggregating across the eight issues, I find the balance between woke and anti-woke responses to break decisively against the transactivist position, 67-33.

**FIGURE 13:** Views on transgender issues



**Note:** Data excludes neutral and “don’t know” responses.

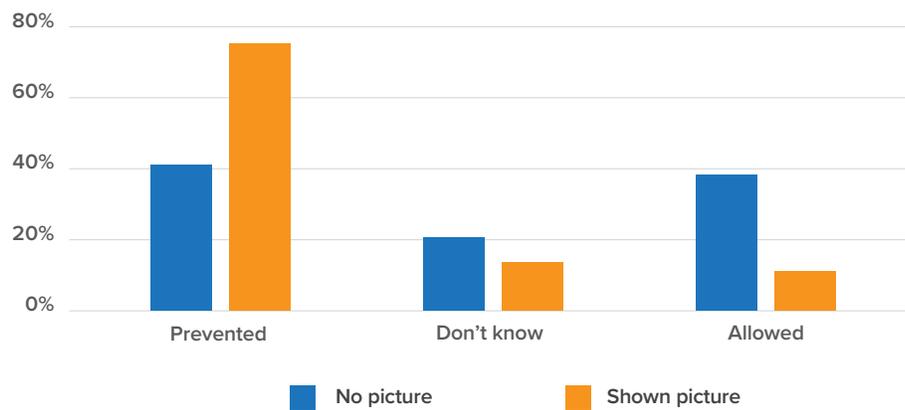
Looking at the results in more detail shows that of those who had a view, only 15 percent agreed that children should be taught that there is “no such thing as biological sex, only gender preference.” Barely 1 in 5, net of neutrals and don’t knows, believed that gender reassignment surgery should be available to children under 16. Nearly 3 in 4 of those with an opinion said we talk too much about transgenderism, and over two-thirds said that parents should be informed about a child’s change of pronoun, as is policy in New Brunswick and Saskatchewan. A similar share opposes Oakville, Ontario, teacher Kayla Lemieux teaching classes wearing oversized prosthetic breasts and transwomen competing in women’s sports. Even when it comes to “people displaying their pronouns (e.g. he/him or they/them),” typically on work emails or social media profiles, people opposed this more than supported it (53-47), an important divergence from approved institutional practice in Canada.

Only on the question of whether transwomen should be able to “use women’s refuges for victims of abuse (if they are a victim themselves)” was there a narrow 55 to 45 majority for the transactivist position.

Visual imagery can sway respondents against the transactivist position. In Scotland, for instance, a picture of tattooed rapist Isla Bryson/Adam Graham, slated to enter a women’s prison, decisively mobilized Scottish opinion against Nicola Sturgeon’s *Gender Recognition Act* and led to shift of attitudes against the transactivist position (Smith 2023).

A result from this survey, graphed in Figure 14, suggests something similar could happen in Canada. When half the sample were asked, “Ontario teacher Kayla Lemieux, who identifies as transgender, taught classes wearing size 7 prosthetic breasts. Should she have been prevented from teaching children at the school?” opinion broke 41 percent “no” to 38 percent “yes,” a fairly even split. But when the other half of the sample were asked the same question alongside a picture of Kayla wearing the breasts, respondents opposed Lemieux’s right to teach with them 75-11. The image had a larger impact on conservatives, older people, and women than left-leaning voters, young people, and men, but still shifted opinion across the board. The results also suggest that many people had not seen the images, despite these making the news all over the world. Those who follow culture wars issues often mistakenly believe that the wider public is as attuned to such questions as they are.

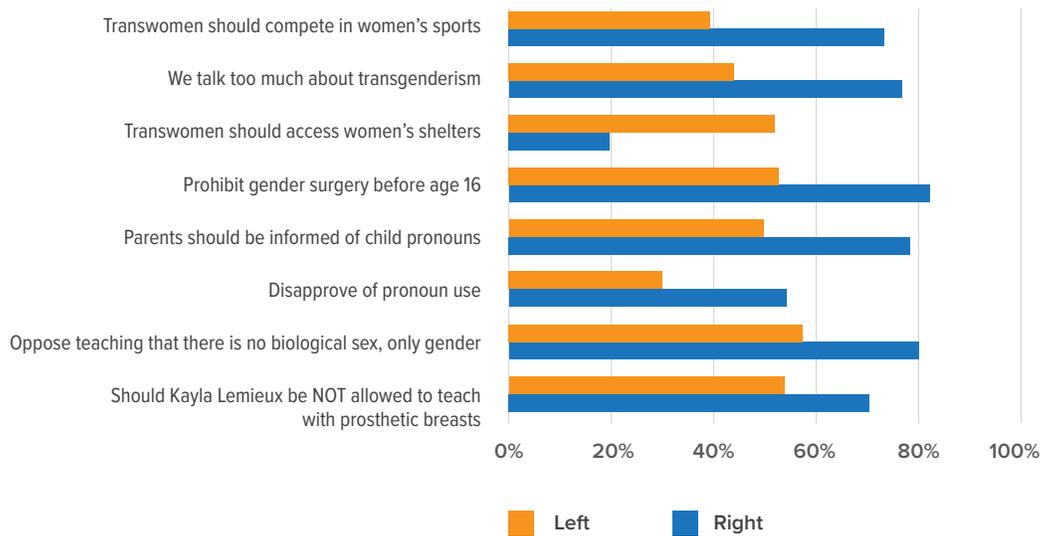
**FIGURE 14:** Should Kayla Lemieux have been allowed to teach with size 7 prosthetic breasts, by survey treatment



### Political belief and transgender questions

Unsurprisingly, personal ideology and voting are the most important parameters when predicting who will take the woke or anti-woke side on trans issues. Figure 15 presents the results sorted by partisan gaps. Right-wing voters are nearly twice as likely as left-wing voters (73-39) to say that transwomen should not compete in women’s sports. This dwarfs the difference between the sexes, where men are *less* likely than women (21 vs. 29 percent) to say transwomen should be permitted to compete in women’s sports. This finding comports with results in the US and UK.

**FIGURE 15:** Views toward trans issues, by vote



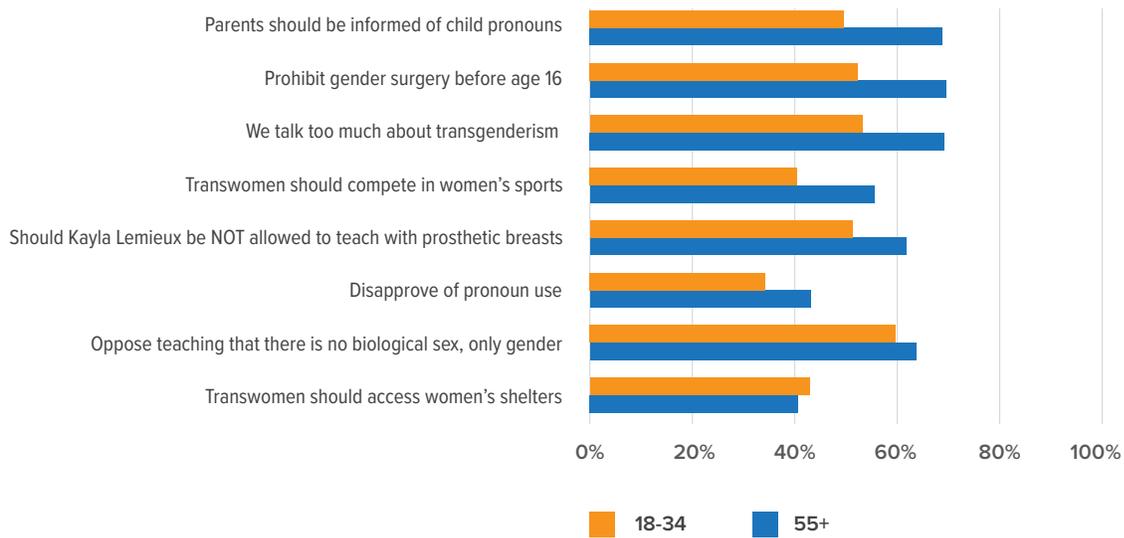
**Note:** Based on share agreeing. Remainder includes both disagree and “don’t know” or neutral responses.

Across the full range of questions there is an important 16 to 34 point distance between left-leaning and right-leaning voters. Having said this, on half the questions on transgender issues even left-wing voters oppose the cultural socialist position. This suggests that Alberta premier Danielle Smith very much has the backing of the Canadian public. The trans issue is distinctive from those visited earlier in that it pits the rights claims of one historically disadvantaged group, women, against that of another, transgender women. Cultural socialists will tend to view transwomen as more oppressed and thus deserving of consideration, but not all will agree. Moreover, the trans issue also entails a challenge to traditional gender norms, thus engendering conservative opposition.

### Age and transgender questions

As with cancel culture and questions of critical race and history, younger respondents are more culturally socialist than older people, even controlling for political beliefs. Figure 16 shows a 10- to 20-point gap across six of eight questions – not as wide as for political beliefs, but still important. Two questions that involve the liberties of young people – informing parents of children’s pronouns and the right to undergo gender reassignment surgery before age 16 – exhibit the largest age gaps. On the teaching of biological sex and transwomen’s

**FIGURE 16:** Views toward trans issues, by age



**Note:** Based on share agreeing. Remainder includes both disagree and “don’t know” or neutral responses.

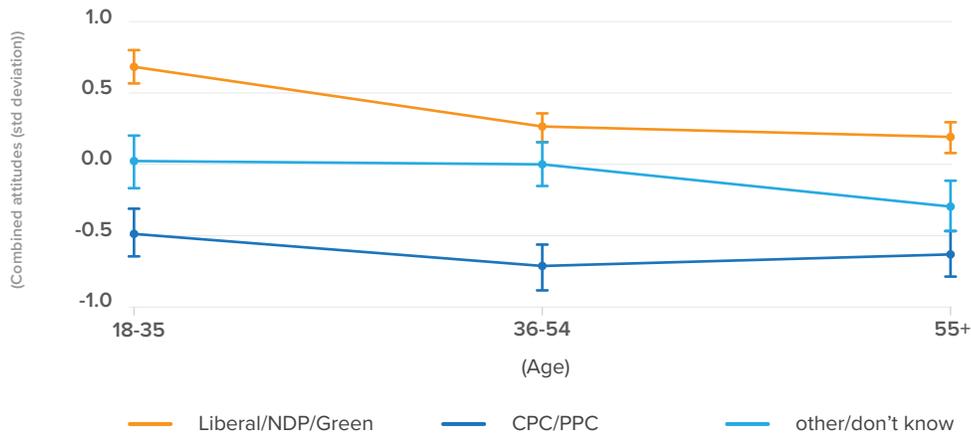
right to access shelters there were no age differences, indicating again that age is less important than political belief in shaping attitudes on the trans question.

Figure 17 shows what happens when I create a latent variable from all eight trans questions and run a statistical model of how age and political belief interact to predict attitudes on trans issues. The results show that the gaps between red and blue lines are substantially larger than those between the left and rightmost age points, indicating that vote matters more than age as a predictor of attitudes to trans issues. However, there is also a distinctive interaction between youth and left-wing voting such that young left-leaning voters are considerably more woke on these questions (by half a standard deviation) than older left-leaning voters. This pattern resembles that for critical race and history issues. Young leftists in Canada really do have a distinctive opinion on culture war issues, a pattern also found in Britain and the US.

### Language and transgender questions

In addition to political beliefs and age, being a sexual minority (gay, lesbian, bisexual, other) is a strong predictor of support for the transactivist position. In fact, it is marginally stronger than age, in part because trans individuals often declare a non-heterosexual identification and because of a shared perception of

**FIGURE 17:** Attitudes to (eight combined) trans issues, by age and vote



**Note:** R-squared = .234. Interaction between 18-35 and left voting significant at  $p < .01$  level.

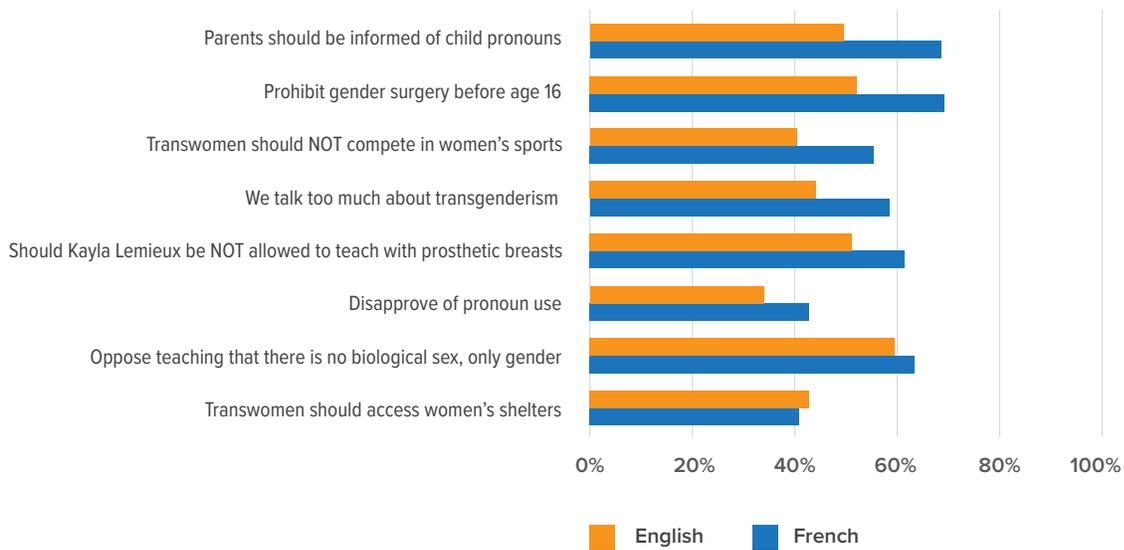
being a disadvantaged or non-conforming minority. For a similar reason, women are more supportive of the transactivist position than men. Gender-critical intellectuals who argue that gender ideology poses a challenge to women's rights or lesbian and gay identity, or to support for gay rights, have thus not been able to make much headway against more surface-level perceptions about siding with the oppressed. This is also a pattern evident in Britain and America.

When considered by language, French-speakers are, if anything, slightly less supportive than Anglophones of the woke position on trans questions, even if the effect falls just short of statistical significance in predicting the eight-item latent variable.

Figure 18 shows that on virtually all questions, Francophones are more opposed to the transactivist position than Anglophones. On six of eight questions the difference is approximately 10 to 20 points. This consistently higher opposition differs from the cancel culture and critical history batteries of questions, where there was no consistent gap between French and English speakers.

Finally, those who are heavier users of social media have more transactivist attitudes toward transgender issues. Social media use (measured as Twitter, Instagram, and TikTok use) was significantly associated ( $p < .001$ ) with a latent variable combining all eight transgender questions and substantially reduced the extent to which being young is associated with supporting the transactivist position. Figure 19 illustrates the response to two indicative trans-related

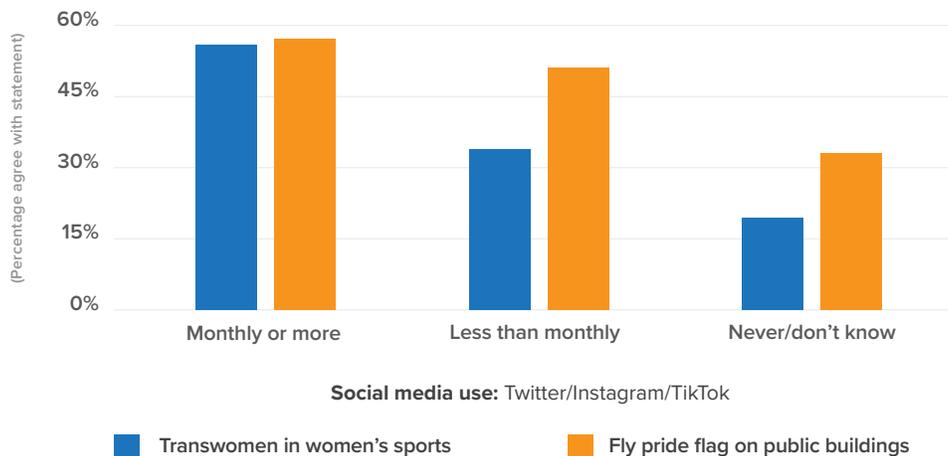
**FIGURE 18:** Views toward trans issues, by language



**Note:** Based on share agreeing. Remainder includes both disagree and “don't know” or neutral responses.

questions. A majority of monthly users of the social media platforms, for instance, believe that transwomen should compete in women's sports and that public buildings should fly the pride flag. Among those not on these platforms those numbers are 20 and 33 percent, respectively. This suggests that one reason young people are more likely to favour the woke position on trans issues is due to their higher social media exposure. Having said this, most of the reason young people are more woke than older people is not explained by their level of social media use.

**FIGURE 19:** Support for the transactivist position, by social media use



# Canada's general speech climate

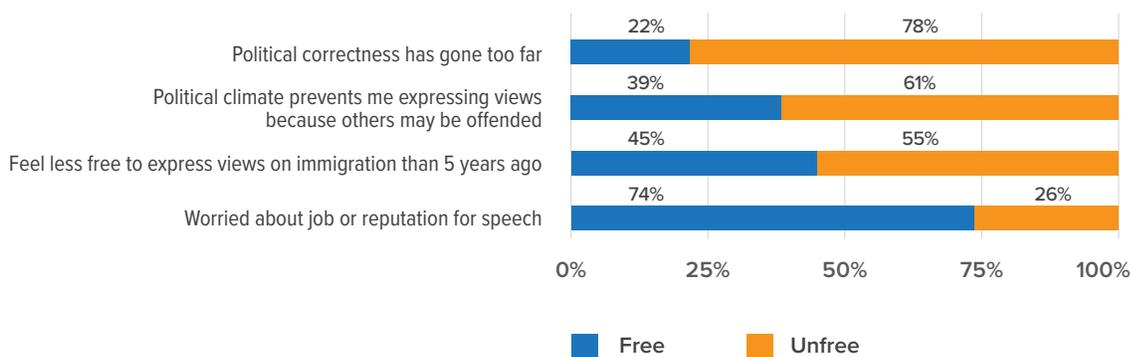
## Canada's speech climate

Thus far we have considered items covering cancel culture, critical race and history, and transgender attitudes. I next turn to public opinion on the speech climate in Canada.

The first point to note is that 26 percent of Canadians worry about losing their job or reputation because of something they said “being misunderstood or taken out of context” (23 percent) or something they posted from the past being revealed (14 percent).<sup>2</sup> This means that 1 in 4 Canadians are seriously concerned about their freedom of expression in today's opinion climate (note that the denominator includes those who said they didn't know). This is precisely the same level of expressive fear I have found in Britain, though somewhat less than in the United States (37 percent). If US trends are anything to go by, and as we shall see trends there are very similar to those in Canada, then restrictions on speech have likely increased substantially since the mid-twentieth century (Savat 2020).

The other questions concern the general speech climate short of job or reputational loss. Figure 20 shows that among those with an opinion (i.e., excluding neutrals or don't knows), 55 percent of Canadians say they feel less free than they did 5 years ago to express their views on immigration; 61 percent say that the political climate prevents them from expressing their views as it

**FIGURE 20:** The speech climate in Canada



**Note:** Data excludes neutral and “don't know” responses.

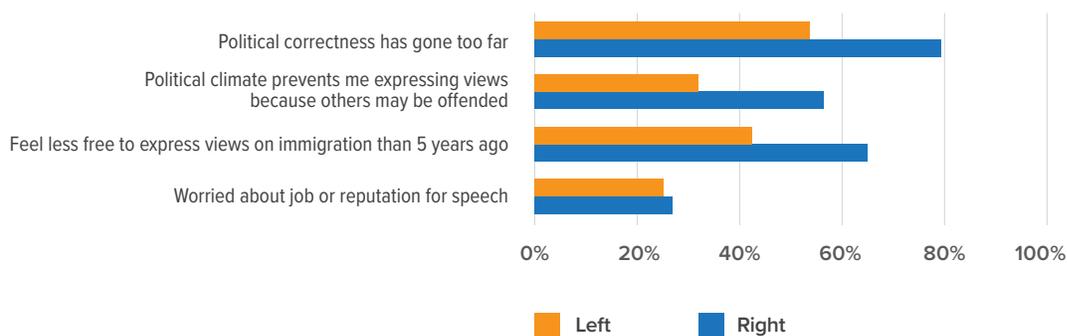
might offend others; and 78 percent say political correctness has gone too far (if we include those who are unsure or don't know in the denominator, these figures are, respectively, 40 percent, 49 percent, and 61 percent). This paints a portrait of a relatively restrictive speech climate, representing a counterpoint to Canada's self-image as a free society.

### Political beliefs and speech climate

Figure 21 examines the speech climate by vote. It reveals only a small difference between left- and right-leaning voters in their fear of losing their job or reputation for speech: 25 percent on the left and 27 percent on the right. This is a similar pattern to what I find in the US and Britain.

Large 20 to 25-point gaps appear on questions around views pertaining to expressing beliefs on immigration, expressing views others may find offensive, and political correctness going too far. Statistical tests show that being worried about losing one's job or reputation is a powerful predictor of answers to these three questions, but that ideology plays a greater role. It's fair to say that those with conservative views feel less free to express them in society than those with progressive views. It is also likely the case that conservatives are less willing to suppress their speech to pursue the goals of equity and harm protection that cultural socialists cherish, and thus view these restrictions as a loss of freedom. It's notable that the ideological difference is greatest on the "PC too far" item, somewhat lower on the immigration views and opinions that might offend questions, and lowest on the fear of job and reputation item.

**FIGURE 21:** Perception of speech climate, by vote



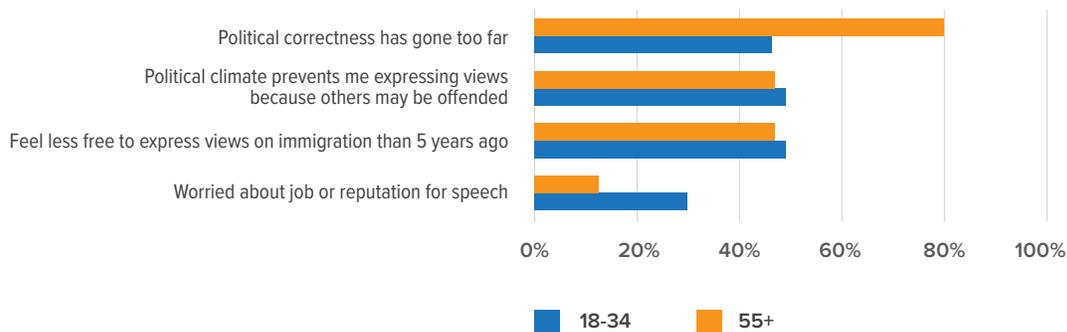
**Note:** Based on share agreeing. Remainder includes both disagree and "don't know" or neutral responses.

## Age and speech climate

The results assessed by age in Figure 22 show an interesting pattern, the obverse of what I find for political beliefs. On the one hand, younger Canadians are most worried about losing their jobs or reputations for speech: 30 percent of the 18 to 35 who are employed compared to just 13 percent of the over-55 who still work. However, on items to do with immigration views and controversial views offending people, the young report at least as much self-censorship as their elders.

Finally, on political correctness going too far, we find young people vastly less likely to believe this (47 percent) than those over 55 (80 percent). Young people's somewhat greater political commitment to woke beliefs likely underpins this finding. In other words, views on the speech climate are affected by a combination of actual chilling effects, the number of controversial views one holds, and one's political views about whether speech restrictions are justifiable in order to advance equal outcomes and protect minorities from psychological harm.

**FIGURE 22:** Perception of speech climate, by age



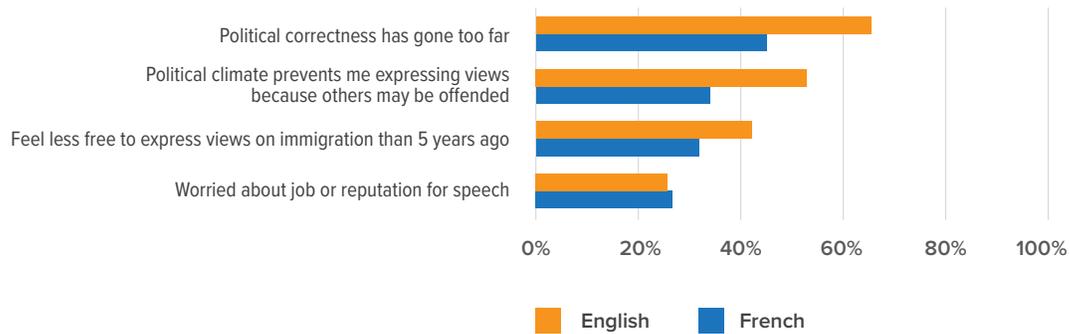
**Note:** Based on share agreeing. Remainder includes both disagree and “don’t know” or neutral responses.

## Language and speech climate

Comparing Anglophones and Francophones in Figure 23, I find no difference in concern for job and reputation between the two language communities. This may be surprising inasmuch as many believe fear to be lower in Quebec than the rest of Canada.

Having said this, there is a 10- to 20-point difference between language groups on questions surrounding the wider speech climate on controversial views and political correctness, with greater speech restrictions reported by English

**FIGURE 23:** Perception of speech climate, by language



**Note:** Based on share agreeing. Remainder includes both disagree and “don’t know” or neutral responses.

Canadian respondents. This likely reflects a combination of greater discursive limits on speech questioning immigration and other identity-linked issues in English Canada alongside a more developed anti-woke narrative in the rest of Canada as compared to Quebec. Here it is noteworthy that Quebec’s politicians openly discuss lowering immigration and restrictions on religious (i.e., Muslim) attire among public employees, topics that are essentially out of bounds among conservatives in English-speaking provinces or at the federal level (Plante 2022).

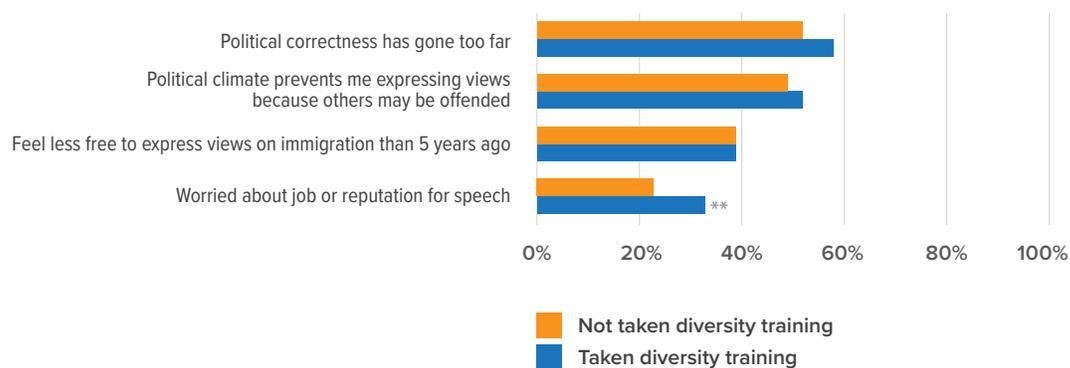
### Diversity training and speech climate

Research from the US and Britain suggests that diversity training is associated with heightened fear among employees who have undertaken it (Kaufmann 2022a; Al-Gharbi 2020; Singal 2023). This may be because people become more conscious of tripwires around race, gender, and sexuality, and thus worry more about what they say.

In this sample, among those working, 34 percent said diversity training at work was mandatory, a further 11 percent that it was optional, 37 percent said it was not offered, and 19 percent didn’t know. These figures approximate to those I find in the UK and US. Highly educated and higher income respondents were significantly more likely to have taken such training, which my UK work indicates is connected to working for an organization of over 250 people (Kaufmann 2022c, 43). Ideology, age, gender, and sexual orientation had no relationship with the likelihood of having attended such training.

In a multivariate statistical model predicting whether someone is worried about losing their job or reputation for speech, those who have attended diversity training are more likely to worry than those who have not (significant at  $p < .01$  level). In fact, diversity training was almost as important as being young in predicting fear of job and reputational loss for speech. Higher income levels were significantly associated with lower fear, at a predictive power similar to that of age. Ideology and sexual orientation had no effect, while being a woman (borderline effect) was associated with reduced fear of losing one's job and reputation. This is a somewhat distinct finding from Britain, where conservatives worried more than centrists, and from the US, where highly-educated and young Republicans worried more than high school-educated and older Republicans (Ekins 2020; Kaufmann 2022c). Figure 24 shows how those who have taken diversity training are more worried about losing their jobs and reputations for speech than workers who have not, a result that is statistically significant when controlling for age, education, ideology, voting, gender, income, and sexual orientation. Those who had taken diversity training were statistically no more likely than other workers to report a more restrictive speech climate on immigration opinion, controversial beliefs, or political correctness. This could be because these measures extend to conversations well beyond the workplace or are governed more by personal beliefs and ideology.

**FIGURE 24:** Perceptions of speech climate by diversity training



**Note:** N = 809, restricted to workers only.

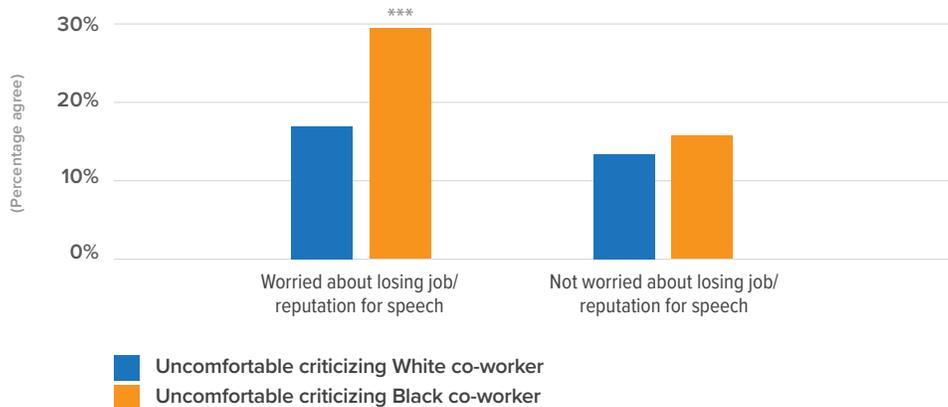
**Note:** Based on share agreeing. Remainder includes both disagree and "don't know" or neutral responses.

\*\*  $p < .01$  in multivariate model.

Some may aver that the point of diversity training is to engender fear for those committing microaggressions. However, quite apart from the negative impact on employee well-being occasioned by heightened fear, more self-conscious inter-group relations can damage the very groups that diversity trainers claim to be trying to advance. As mentioned earlier, those who have taken diversity training are significantly more worried about losing their job or reputation for speech than those who have not. And, as Figure 25 reveals, those who worry more about losing their job or reputation for speech are significantly less likely to be willing to criticize a black work colleague. This result is statistically significant when controlling for willingness to criticize a white colleague as well as ideology, vote, age, education, gender, income, and language. This means there is an indirect (2-stage) relationship between diversity training and willingness to criticize a black colleague.

While there is not a direct relationship between diversity training and discomfort criticizing a black colleague, as in Britain, I find the same powerful indirect relationship (Kaufmann 2022c, 47–48). These findings are also mirrored in the classroom – high school students exposed to critical race theory in the US and Britain are significantly less likely than those who have not been so exposed to be comfortable criticizing a black schoolmate (Kaufmann 2022d; Goldberg and Kaufmann 2023). To the extent that this reticence results in black employees missing out on valuable constructive criticism, it is likely to impair their progress and the goal of achieving racial equality.

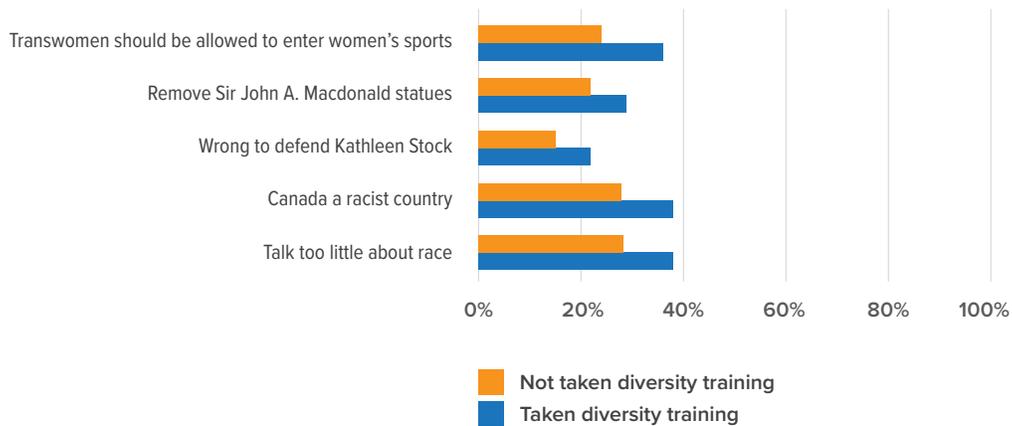
**FIGURE 25:** Comfortable criticizing a White and Black co-worker, by worry about being cancelled



**Note:** N = 809 workers. \*\*\* p<.001 in multivariate model.

As Figure 26 illustrates, diversity training is also associated with a more culturally socialist orientation among those who have taken it. In Canada, the effect is borderline significant among workers when controlling for a range of other factors – a finding similar to that in American and British data. This is unlikely to be due to woke people choosing to take the training since the impact of diversity training on attitudes is smaller among those for whom the training is optional than among those for whom it is mandatory.

**FIGURE 26:** The link between diversity training and culture war attitudes



**Note:** N = 809, restricted to workers only.

**Note:** Based on share agreeing. Remainder includes both disagree and “don’t know” or neutral responses.

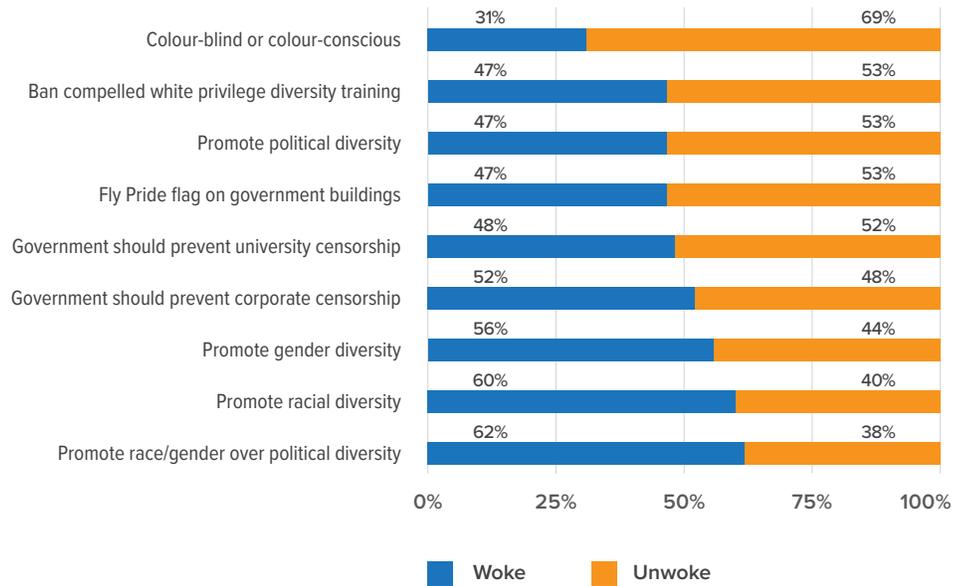
## Culture wars

### Policy attitudes on culture war issues

Having reviewed Canadians’ attitudes on culture war issues, I move next to consider their outlook on the governmental and organizational policies that affect the balance between cultural socialism and cultural liberalism and conservatism.

Figure 27 shows a fairly even balance of views between the two positions across eight policy proposals. Canadians prefer a colour-blind to a colour-conscious approach 69 to 31. By a margin of 53 to 47, they want the government

**FIGURE 27: Policy positions on culture war issues**



**Note:** Excludes “don’t know” or neutral responses.

to ban diversity training that “Tells employees that they are upholding white supremacy and structural racism if they refuse to acknowledge their white privilege.”

People were also asked about flying the pride flag on government buildings, a controversy that has emerged in both Canada and the United States in places where it was flown. Two versions of the question were used in the survey, each on half of the sample: “The Pride flag is a political symbol which [version 1) divides people / version 2) excludes non-Christian and Christian religious people] so should not be flown on government or school buildings” vs. “The Pride flag is a non-political symbol of inclusion which should be flown on government or school buildings.” Results broke 53 to 47 against flying the pride flag, with the results unaffected by which version was viewed. These results provide support for policies such as the ordinance adopted by the town of Norwich, Ontario, that limits flags on public property to municipal and national symbols (National Post staff 2023a).

Other survey questions probed organizational diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) policies, i.e., “Thinking about representation of academic staff at universities, do you think they should or should not be actively doing more

to improve diversity in each of the following areas? a) political views, b) gender, c) race.” Excluding those who didn’t know, 53 percent felt it was important to improve political diversity, 56 percent gender diversity, and 60 percent racial diversity.

Political diversity is generally associated with the anti-woke position (as conservatives and classical liberals are underrepresented among university staff thus would benefit from positive action) and race and gender with the woke position. When asked whether political or gender and race diversity was the more important to promote, 16 percent said political diversity, 26 percent race and gender diversity, and 42 percent said both equally. A preamble explaining the left-wing leanings of contemporary academic staff (viewed by half the sample) had no impact on the results. The net effect is thus a 62 to 38 advantage for the cultural socialist position of emphasizing race and gender over political diversity even as most people wanted a similar emphasis on both, or had no opinion.

Sticking with higher education policy, respondents were asked “Would you support or oppose the Government passing laws **preventing** universities from disciplining university professors for making comments around race, gender or sexuality that are legal, but which some may consider offensive or controversial?” Thirty-seven percent supported this, 34 percent were opposed, and 29 percent didn’t know, resulting in a 52 to 48 tilt toward endorsing legislation similar to the UK’s *Higher Education Freedom of Speech Bill (2023)* (see UK Parliament 2023 for details). When the question wording was changed to “private organizations from disciplining employees,” the split shifted somewhat against, by 52 to 48. Survey respondents have slightly more reticence about regulating private organizations than public universities.

Overall, these results produce an approximate tie between cultural socialist and cultural liberal or conservative positions on policy questions. This compares to a nearly 2:1 ratio against the woke position on cancel culture, critical race and history issues, and transgender questions. There is strong support for colour-blind policies over group-based ones, but a slight majority also favour assisting women and racial minorities in the workplace (a finding similar to the Angus Reid results). A direction for future research is to ask about positive discrimination in hiring, or race or gender quotas in employment, which may yield results less favourable to the cultural socialist position.

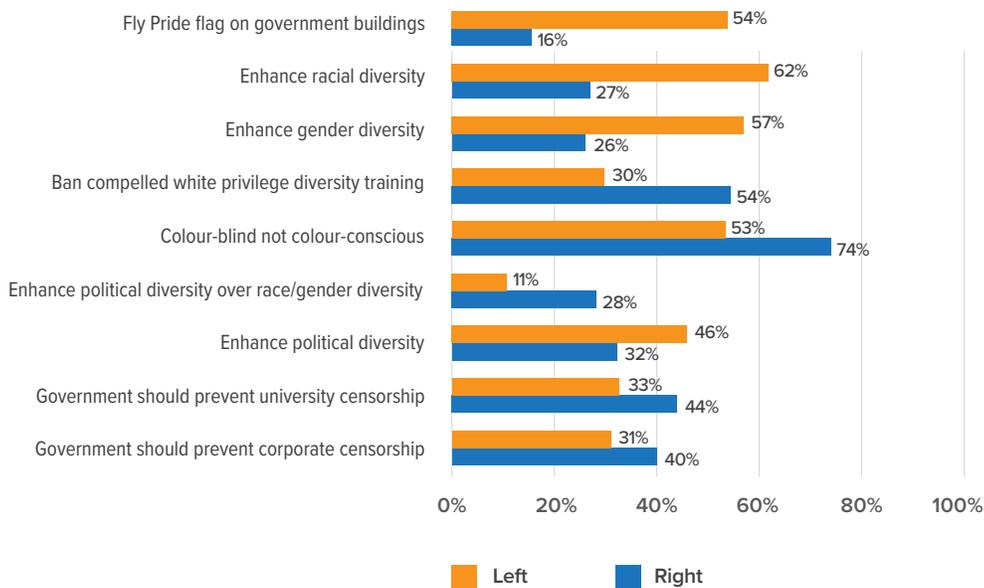
## Political beliefs and policy attitudes

Examining policy attitudes through the lens of left and right voting in Figure 28 demonstrates, unsurprisingly, wide partisan divisions on many of these questions. Note that these results include “don’t know” or neutral responses in the denominator.

Results are sorted for the size of the partisan gap, which averages 25 points across nine questions. The widest division is over flying the pride flag on government buildings. This is supported by 54 percent of Liberal, NDP, and Green voters compared to a mere 16 percent of CPC and PPC voters. There is also a vast gulf on questions pertaining to DEI/affirmative action policies. 30 to 35 points separate partisans on whether race and gender diversity should be “improved” by universities.

Incidentally, left-leaning voters were also more inclined to support the need to improve political diversity (which would benefit conservative academics), by a 46 to 32 ratio. This would suggest that compared to left-wing voters, right-wing voters tend to be averse to any form of identity-based equity policy, even if it benefits their side. Their outlook is colour-blind and merit-led, as opposed to being conscious of advancing particular social groups in hiring or promotion.

**FIGURE 28:** Attitudes about policy positions, by vote



**Note:** Based on share agreeing. Remainder includes both disagree and “don’t know” or neutral responses.

Unsurprisingly, 74 percent of right-leaning voters opt for a colour-blind rather than colour-conscious approach, with only 16 percent preferring the latter. This said, even among left-leaning voters, the colour-blind side wins 53 to 37. This consensus around colour-blind approaches suggests that politicians who can articulate this policy vision are likely to benefit at the ballot box.

When it comes to regulating the ability of organizations to censor or fire people for legal (if unpopular) speech, we saw that voters are evenly divided. However, these results show that right-wing voters lean about 10 points more than left-wing voters toward endorsing government regulation of both universities' and private organizations' right to punish speech – even as they are 4 points more likely to endorse it in the university case than the corporate case (44 percent vs. 40 percent). Specifically, right-leaning voters back regulating universities' ability to punish for legal speech by 44 to 31 and regulating private organizations on censorship by 40 to 35. Left-leaning voters take the opposing view: 33 to 39 for universities and 31 to 43 for private organizations.

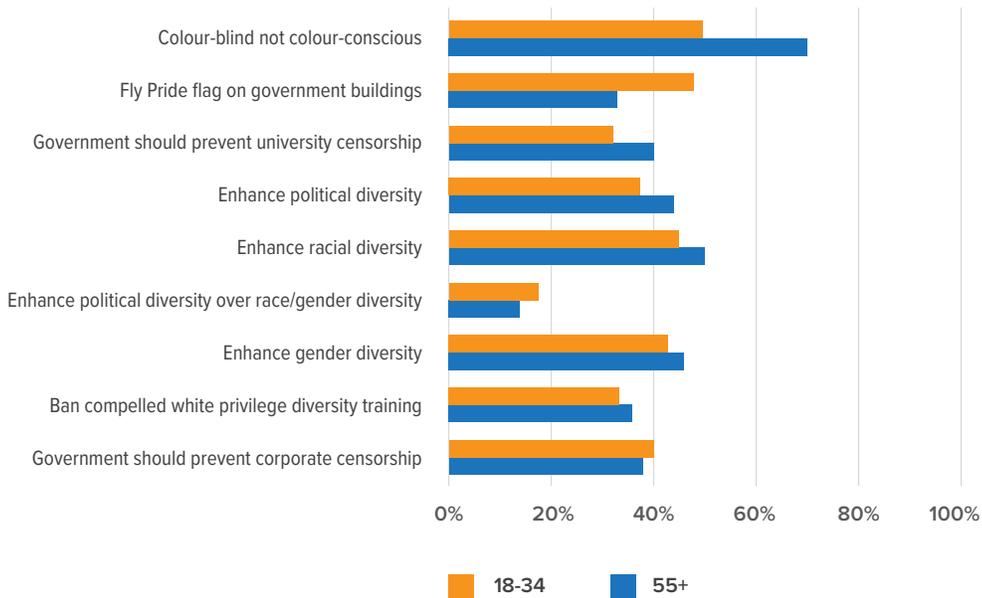
Thus all voters perceive speech regulation as somewhat more appropriate for public universities than private organizations – even as their views on whether government should regulate organizational censorship at all, as we saw in Figure 27, are finely balanced. This suggests that there is a mandate for a skilled politician who can argue the case against the threat of what law professor Jonathan Turley calls “private censorship” in organizations (Turley 2022).

### **Age and policy attitudes**

An examination of policy attitudes by age shows a familiar pattern in which younger people are more likely to take the cultural socialist view than their elders, but this effect is less pronounced than for left-right political beliefs, with an average age gap across nine items of only 7 points between the under-35s and over-55s.

Figure 29 shows an age gap of less than 10 points across seven of nine questions, with significant disagreement only over whether to adopt a colour-blind rather than colour-conscious approach (50 percent support among the under-35 vs. 70 percent for those over 55) or whether to fly the pride flag on public buildings (48 percent support among the under-35 versus 33 percent support for the over-55).

**FIGURE 29:** Attitudes about policy positions, by age



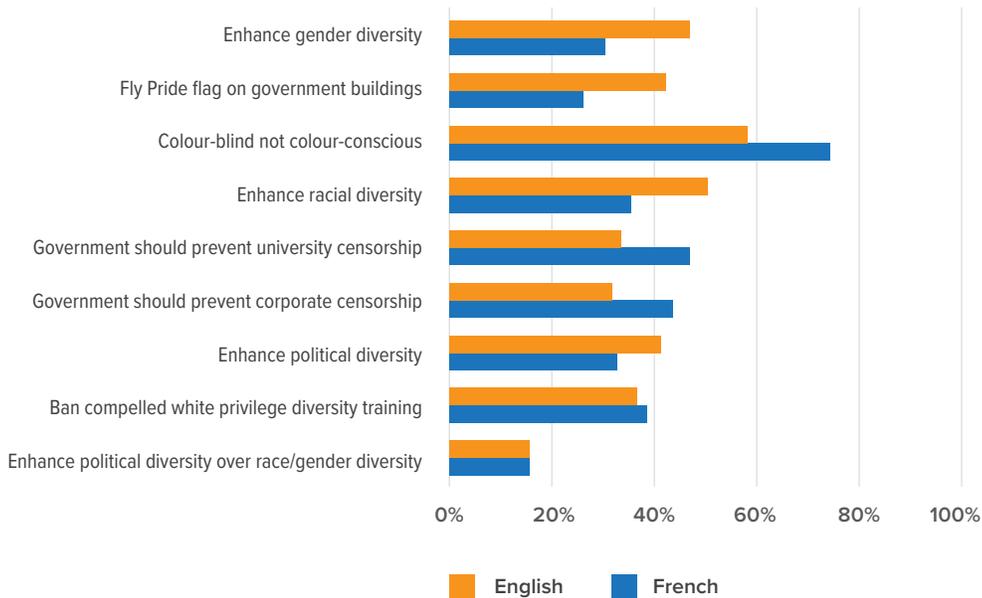
**Note:** Based on share agreeing. Remainder includes both disagree and “don’t know” or neutral responses.

In statistical modeling, age is strongly significant in the woke direction for the colour-blind and pride flag questions ( $p < .001$ ) even in the presence of controls for ideology. It is also significant, in the same direction, on questions about whether government should regulate institutional speech censorship, but at a weaker ( $p < .05$ ) level. Age is not a significant predictor of answers to questions around banning white privilege training or improving various forms of diversity among academic staff.

### Language and policy attitudes

Figure 30 shows that French Canada differs from English Canada on these nine policy items by 11 points, on average, a larger difference than between younger and older respondents, but less than the gap between left- and right-leaning voters. On policy, as distinct from culture war attitudes, French speakers are less culturally socialist than English Canadians. For example, Francophones are 16 points less likely to support universities trying to improve gender diversity, and 14 points less likely to support improving racial diversity. They are 16 points less supportive of flying the pride flag on public buildings. They are 12 to 13 points more in favour of using government to regulate universities and

**FIGURE 30:** Attitudes about policy positions, by language



**Note:** Based on share agreeing. Remainder includes both disagree and “don’t know” or neutral responses.

private corporations to prevent them firing people for legal speech. Only on the question of whether universities should advance political diversity (which helps conservatives and classical liberals) are they potentially on the woke side, opposing this 8 points more than do Anglophones.

These results can arguably be explained by the stronger republican predilections of Quebeckers, which emphasizes a neutral secular public space and colour-blind equal treatment. This is distinct from the group-conscious emphasis of English Canadian multiculturalism.

### Diversity training and policy attitudes

Rounding out this discussion of policy, diversity training appears to be linked with people shifting toward the woke position on questions of diversity in organizations. Those who have taken such training are considerably more favourable to universities seeking to improve race, gender, *and* political diversity. For instance, support among workers for improving racial diversity is 41 percent among those who have not taken diversity training, rising to 58 percent among those who have (it jumps 38 to 54 percent for support for improving gender diversity, and from 33 to 47 percent for political beliefs). Support for a

colour-conscious rather than colour-blind approach rises from 27 percent for those who haven't to 39 percent for those who have taken diversity training.

Though the statistical effect is weaker, those who have been through diversity training are also slightly more inclined to back the flying of Pride flags on public buildings than those who have not (51 vs. 36 percent). There were no significant differences by diversity training status on the question of government regulation of private censorship in universities or private firms.

While I cannot fully rule out the self-selection of cultural socialists into diversity training, the fact that these results hold more strongly for respondents in organizations where diversity training is mandatory than for where it is optional would suggest that the training does indeed shift attitudes in a woke direction, an effect I have also observed in American and British data.

## International comparisons

How does Canadian public opinion compare to that of two other closely-related countries, the US and Britain? Having conducted similar surveys in both the US (Qualtrics, April-June 2021) and Britain (YouGov, May 2022), I am in a position to offer an answer to this question.<sup>3</sup>

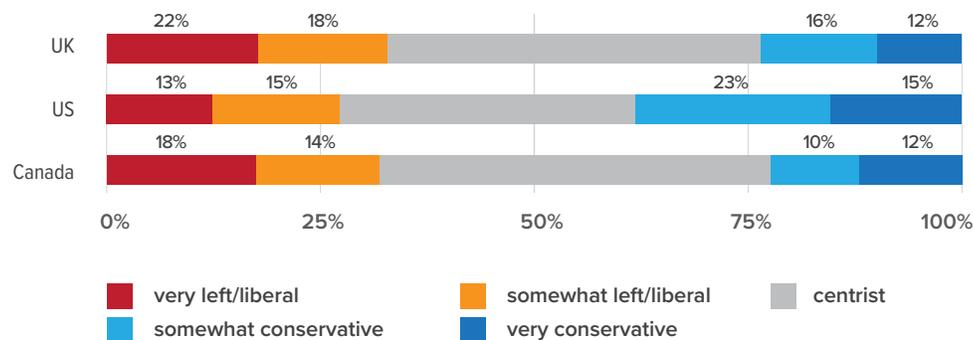
In terms of voting, Canada has placed to the left of both the US and Britain over several election cycles. In 2021, culturally left-of-centre parties (Liberals, NDP, Green) received 55 percent of the vote in Canada to 35 percent for the right-leaning Conservatives and People's Party. In 2019 the numbers were similar. This 55-35 ratio compares to a 51-47 advantage for Joe Biden over Donald Trump in the 2020 election and a slight 46-45 left-to-right tilt in Britain in the 2019 election. Admittedly much can change: current polling, as of mid-November 2023, has Trump and Biden in a dead heat, left-leaning parties ahead of right-leaning ones in Britain by 62 to 36, and progressive parties leading conservative ones in Canada by a slender 49 to 43 margin.

My UK comparator sample shows in 2019 that 47 percent voted Conservative or Brexit Party and 53 percent opted for left-wing parties (Labour, Liberal Democrat, Green, Plaid Cymru, and SNP), a fair representation of that

year's election results. The US sample tilts 48 percent for Biden vs. 42 percent for Trump, a slight pro-Biden bias compared to 2020 election results (51-47 for Biden). My survey indicates that Canadian voters lie well to the left of their surveyed UK and US counterparts, voting 65 percent for culturally left-leaning parties and just 35 percent for the CPC and PPC.

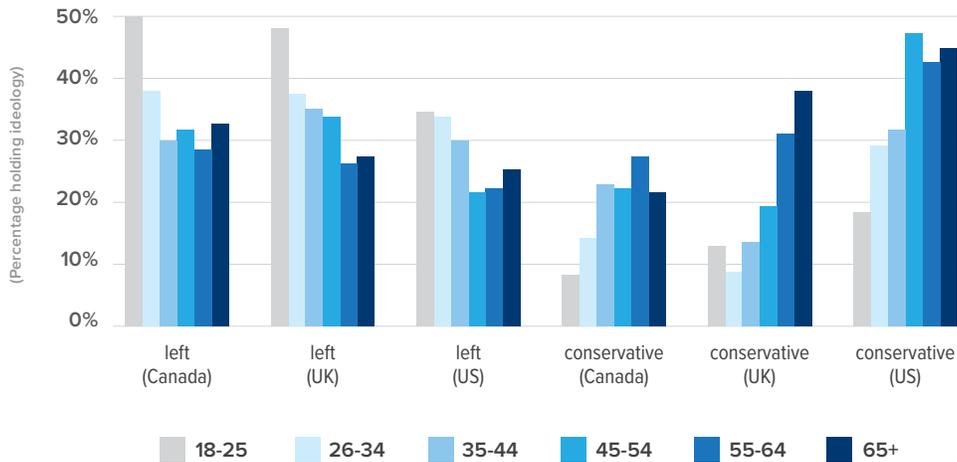
The data in Figure 31 on self-ascribed political ideology exhibits a less dramatic difference. Political scientists know well that ideology cannot be readily translated to partisanship except in highly polarized societies like the contemporary US (and even there, much more so for whites and the well-educated) (Mason 2018). The liberal-to-conservative ratio is similar in the British (40-28) and Canadian (32-22) samples, though the US survey skews more ideologically conservative (38 percent) than liberal (28 percent). Whether the British sample is tilted left to some extent by a reaction against a Tory government that has been in power for 13 years, or vice-versa in Canada where the Liberals have ruled for 8 years, is an open question.

**FIGURE 31:** Political ideology in Canada, the UK, and the US



Looking at the age breakdown in each country in Figure 32 shows a consistent pattern of younger respondents leaning considerably to the left of older voters. Thus around half of both British and Canadian young respondents identify as left-wing, with only 8 percent of this age bracket calling itself conservative in Canada and 13 percent in Britain. Around 30 percent of Canadians over age 35 consider themselves to be left of centre. In Britain, about a third of those aged 35 to 54 identify as left-wing, but this falls to closer to a quarter among those 55 and over.

**FIGURE 32:** Ideology by age in Canada, the UK, and the US



There are fewer young leftists in the United States – around 35 percent of the 18 to 34 age group as compared to 40 to 50 percent in Canada and Britain. Britain, meanwhile, contains the highest share of young far leftists – 31 percent of those under 35 – which exceeds their share of the same target population in Canada (21 percent) or the US (22 percent).

Many young people are politically independent or undecided and this, in combination with their cultural egalitarianism, produces a steep age gradient in all three countries for conservative share. In Canada, just over 20 percent of those over 45 consider their ideology to be conservative compared to around 10 percent for those under 35. In Britain, just over 10 percent of under-35s are conservative compared to 35 percent among the over-55s, arguably the steepest age gradient of the three societies. Finally, in the US, around 1 in 5 of the under-25s are conservative, rising to 30 percent for those age 26 to 44 and around 45 percent among those 45 and over. Canada stands out mainly for its relatively left-liberal older population.

“  
*Canada stands out mainly for its relatively left-liberal older population.*”

The net result of this exercise is that age appears to divide the UK electorate most and Canada least, with the US in between. British and American research suggests that the typical voter moves around 20 points

rightward over their lifetime (Tilley and Evans 2014). However, some aver that this pattern has broken down, with British and American millennials remaining as left at 40 as they were at 20 (Burn-Murdoch 2022). Regardless, it appears to be the case that younger British and Canadian voters look ideologically similar even as older Britons – the group that powered the Brexit vote and the Tories’ 2019 landslide win – are much more conservative than older Canadians. This suggests that the median British voter is likely to resemble the median Canadian voter in a few decades, with the US remaining more conservative.

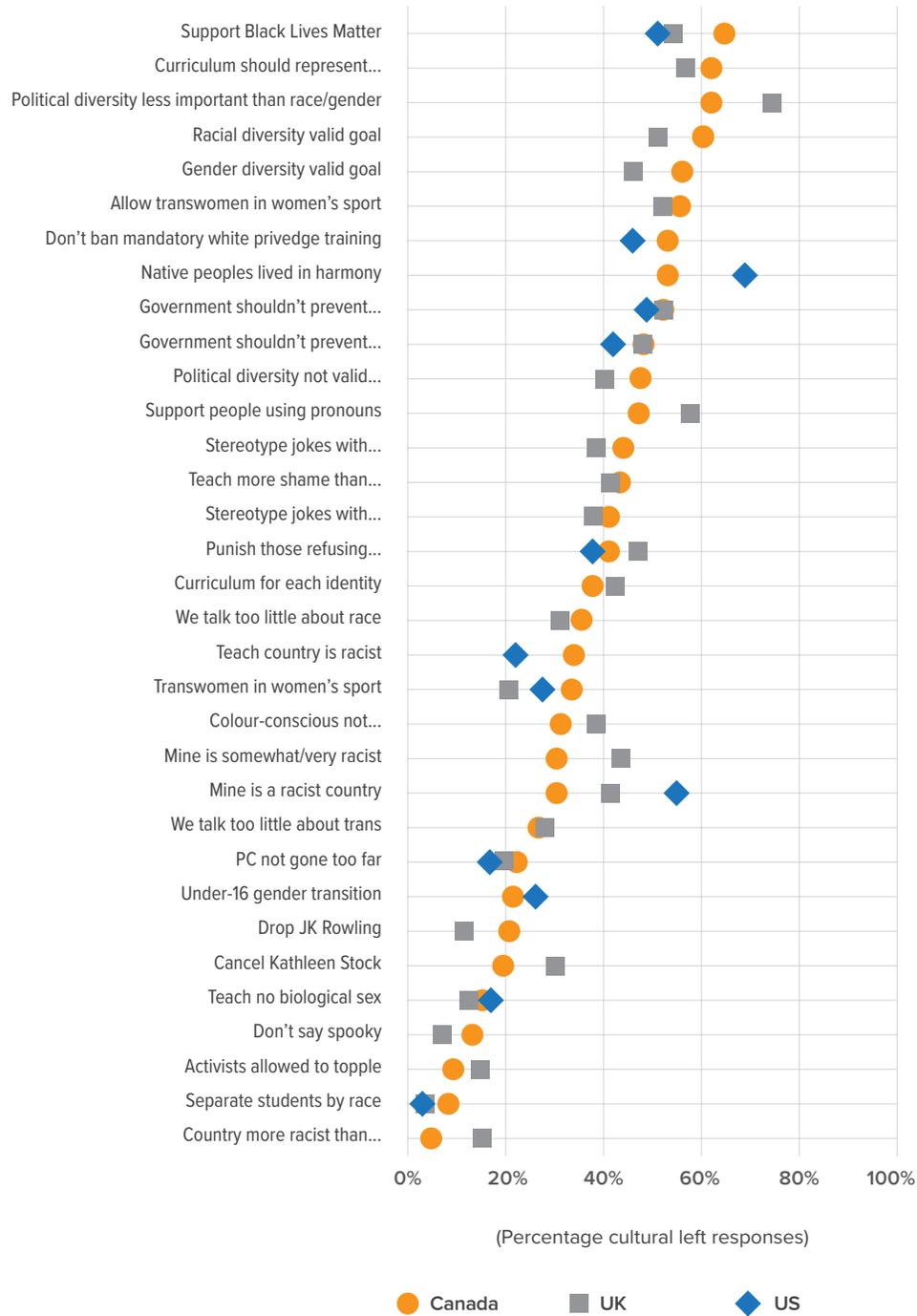
Moving to culture war attitudes, Figure 33 (page 33) presents a summary of the data for the three countries, sorted by Canadian data, with the least culturally socialist attitudes toward the left side of the chart and more woke attitudes toward the right. Orange dots represent the Canadian average view, greysquares the British mean, and blue diamonds the American data. Note that I exclude Canadian results on items for which there is no comparative data, and results are often only available from one of the US or UK. Thus if you glance at the leftmost part of the chart, you will find that just 5 percent of Canadians view their country as more racist than other countries, a highly un-woke result. At the other end of the chart, 65 percent of Canadians hold a favourable view of Black Lives Matter, a relatively woke stance.

The first observation that jumps out from the chart is how similar attitudes are across the three societies. Despite different dates, methodologies, and samples, there is a remarkable degree of concordance between Canada, Britain, and the US on culture wars questions. Across 30 items fielded in Britain in 2022 and Canada in 2023, there is just 0.3 of a percentage point difference in the average response! And for 13 questions fielded in the US in 2021 and Canada in 2023, there is an average difference of just one point. This is astounding.

Canadians were relatively left-wing culturally on BLM support in our survey, but generally had a scattered range of attitudes that are difficult to categorize. Figure 34 presents the five measures where Canada came out as having more woke attitudes than its comparators.

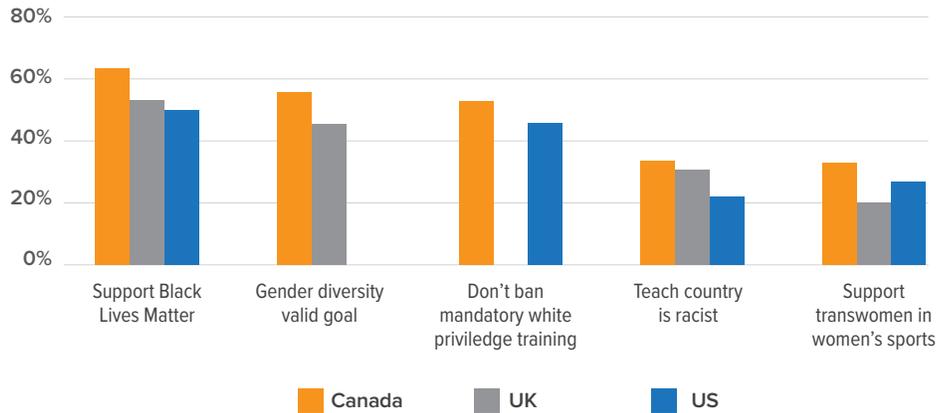
“  
*The first observation that jumps out from the chart is how similar attitudes are across the three societies.*

**FIGURE 33: Culture war attitudes in Canada, the UK, and the US**



**Note:** Data excludes neutral and “don't know” responses. 30 questions compare the UK and Canada, 13 questions compare the US and Canada. Sources: YouGov (UK), May 9-10, 2022, N=1,818; Prolific (UK), Jan 28, 2022, N=951; Qualtrics (US), Apr 19-June 7, 2021, N=959; Competitive Edge Research (US), Apr 9-19, 2021, N=808; Qualtrics (US), July 23-Oct 3, 2023, N=1,317; Smith 2022; Betz 2022.

**FIGURE 34:** Canada’s five most woke attitudes compared to the UK and the US

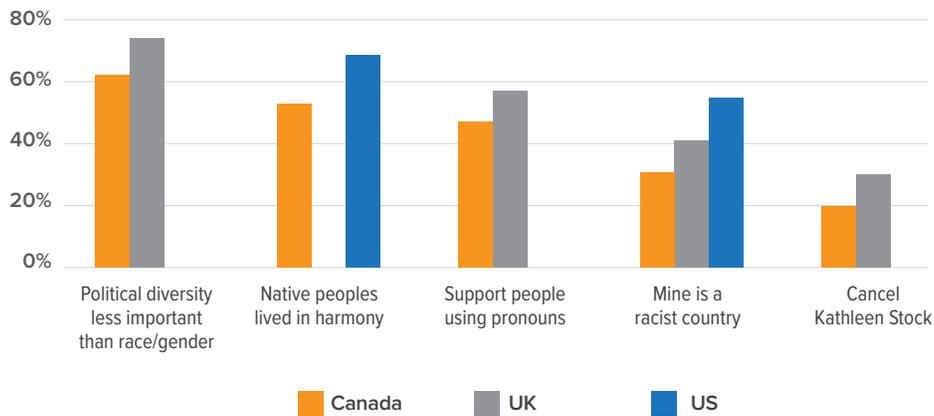


**Note:** Data excludes neutral and “don’t know” responses. Sources: YouGov (UK), May 9-10, 2022, N=1,818; Qualtrics (US), Apr 19-June 7, 2021, N=959; Competitive Edge Research (US), Apr 9-19, 2021, N=808; Smith 2022.

Canadians were least woke (Figure 35) on questions having to do with whether Canada is a racist country, or more racist than other countries. For instance, Canadians are 25 points less likely than Americans to say this, and 11 points less likely than Britons. This could of course reflect the history or present-day experience in the two countries alongside the share of people holding culturally socialist and culturally liberal or conservative beliefs.

In addition, Canadians were 16 points less likely than Americans (net of don’t know and neutral responses) to endorse the idea that native peoples lived

**FIGURE 35:** Canada’s five least woke attitudes compared to the UK and the US



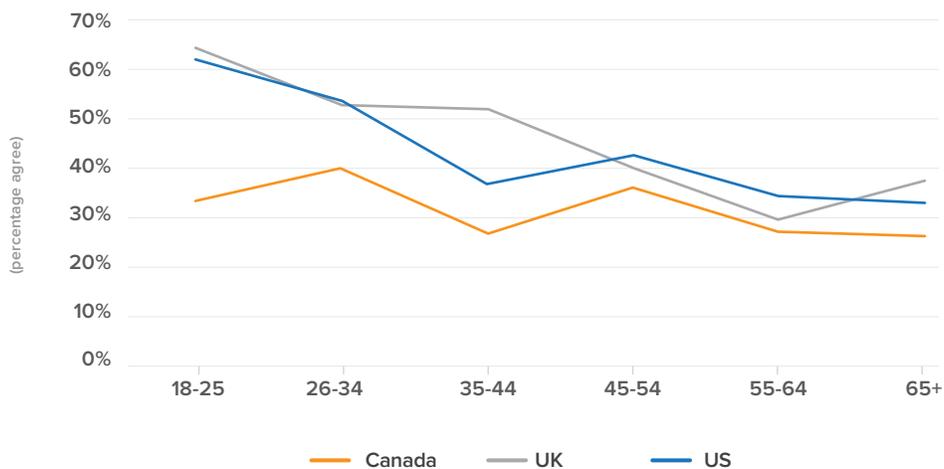
**Note:** Data excludes neutral and “don’t know” responses. Sources: YouGov (UK), May 9-10, 2022, N=1,818; Qualtrics (US), Apr 19-June 7, 2021, N=959; Qualtrics (US), July 23-Oct 3, 2023, N=1,317.

in peace and harmony before white settlers arrived. This may have to do with Canadians' greater familiarity with, or proximity to, First Nations people than is the case in the US, which has a proportionately smaller Indigenous population. Canadians were also less likely than British respondents to approve of people using gender pronouns and to say that her university vice-chancellor should not have defended gender-critical feminist academic Kathleen Stock. In addition to any attitudinal differences on the gender question, greater press coverage and politicization around the Stock case in Britain may explain the finding.

Finally, it is worth noting that the relative power of age and political belief in predicting culture war attitudes is similar across the three societies. One difference pertains to the way young people perceive their country, which appears to be less negative in Canada than in the US and Britain. Figure 36 plots the share who believe their country is racist, by age. While older Canadians, Americans, and Britons converge in viewing their countries as generally not racist, Britons and Americans under age 35 diverge from their young Canadian counterparts in tending to perceive their country as racist.

Regardless of how we might explain the modest international differences across the 10 items in Figures 34 and 35, the overwhelming pattern among these predominantly Anglophone western societies is that they share remarkably similar beliefs about culture war issues.

Figure 36: Is mine a racist country? (by age; Canada, the UK, and the US)



**Note:** Data excludes neutral and “don’t know” responses. Sources: YouGov (UK), May 9-10, 2022, N=1,818; Qualtrics (US), July 23-Oct 3, 2023, N=1,317.

## Political culture in Canada

The discussion of culture war attitudes and policy positions sketches out an opinion landscape that might be termed liberal-conservative. That is, Canadians, by approximately 2 to 1 and in line with their British and American counterparts, appear to oppose the cultural socialist position on a range of cancel culture, critical race or history, and transgender issues.

Given that this is the case, what explains the considerably more conservative drift of public policy on these questions in the United States and Britain? For instance, both President Donald Trump and, as of writing, 18 red states have enacted bans on critical race and gender theory in government and schools (Schwartz 2021). In the UK, the Conservative government has been less robust on culture war attitudes and policy positions in educational settings, but has instituted a “retain and explain” policy on statues, rejected gender recognition for minors including a proposed Scottish bill, and did not fly the Pride flag in Parliament or take the knee for Black Lives Matter (United Kingdom 2021). It has also enacted legislation that creates an office that can fine British universities for infringing on academic freedom and that opens them up to lawsuits from staff and students who believe a university has failed to uphold their speech rights.

In Canada there has been virtually no political activity on the culture wars until very recently, when conservative premiers Blaine Higgs of New Brunswick and Scott Moe of Saskatchewan tabled bills requiring that parents be informed by schools if their child changed pronouns. This move was also floated by Heather Stefanson in Manitoba, though she has since been voted out (CTV News 2023). On January 31, 2024, Alberta premier Danielle Smith, who had formerly touted her pro-LGBTQ credentials, went further than other provinces by banning gender reassignment surgery and hormone treatment for minors, as well as requiring third-party material on gender and sexuality to be approved by the Education Ministry. Transgender women have been banned from women’s sports (CBC News 2024). Doug Ford’s government in Ontario have paid lip service to this policy but have not enacted any legislation.

There thus appears to be greater distance between public opinion and policy in Canada than elsewhere. How might this be explained?

Much seems to come down to the culturally left-liberal political culture in Canada. That is, the elite norms that hold sway in the media and among mainstream politicians are predominantly culturally leftist. The absence of a powerful electronic medium such as Fox News in America, or of mass-circulation newspapers such as Britain's *Telegraph*, *Mail*, *Sun*, or even to some extent the *Times*, means that progressive channels and papers are able to set the tone for the country's culture and the agenda in its politics. The *National Post* is an increasingly important voice in Canada on these issues, but does not command as large a share of the market as its combined British equivalents. The absence of a primary system, as in the United States, or of important third-party challengers such as the UK Independence Party (UKIP) or the Brexit Party in Britain, give party establishments in Canada more leeway to tack left of their voters on culture. Until recently, Conservative leader Pierre Poilievre, for example, has refrained from advocating any culturally conservative policies on transgender issues, on race and history, or on immigration.

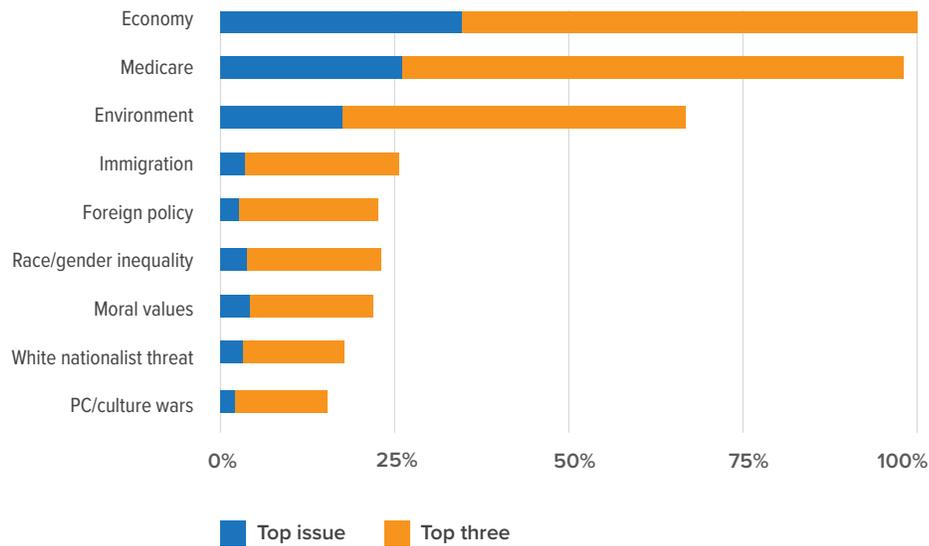
It is well established that the media and politicians can cue the issues they want voters to focus on, making decisions to elevate some questions and ignore others (Dunaway, Abrajano, and Branton 2010; Hooghe 2007). The environment, economy, and health care are the expected focus of democratic discussion with culture and immigration generally excluded from the Overton Window of acceptable debate.<sup>4</sup> In Canada, this means the Conservatives focus mainly on the economy while ceding immigration to various lobby interests and culture to the Liberals, NDP, and their allies in public institutions.

This atmosphere of political communication exerts an important effect on the Canadian public – not so much on its cultural attitudes, which differ little from other Anglo countries, but in focusing attention on some policy priorities while suppressing others. Party competition only takes place around certain issues, which allows voting patterns to detach from cultural attitudes. Figure 37 shows the answers Canadians give to the “most important issue facing the country” question, selecting amongst a basket of nine possible issues. The economy, Medicare, and the environment top the rankings, with other questions well down voters' priority lists. To take just one example,



*It is well established that the media and politicians can cue the issues they want voters to focus on.*

**FIGURE 37: Most important issue facing Canada**

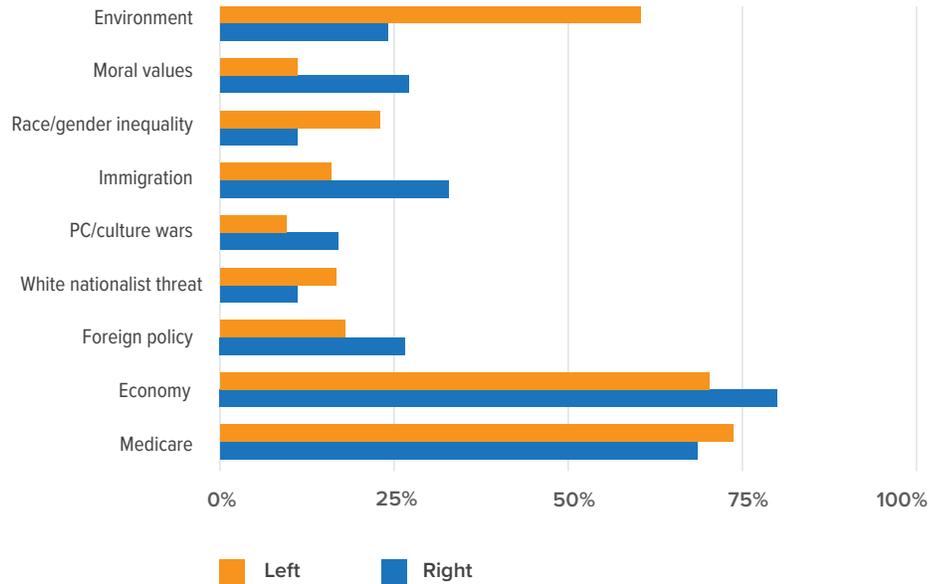


**Note:** Based on a question asking the individual to rank-order issues.

immigration is the top issue for just 4 percent of Canadians, with 22 percent placing it in their top 3.

Priorities on some issues vary by partisanship. The data in Figure 38 is sorted by the size of the priority gap between left and right voters, and shows large divides by party over the importance of the environment, moral values, race and gender inequality, and immigration, though bipartisan agreement is high over the importance of the economy, foreign policy, and medicare. Culture war issues rank low on voters' priority lists, with only 17 percent of Conservative and PPC voters placing this in their top 3 from a basket of nine (where the median top 3 score is 33 percent). These issues thus function somewhat like the European Union question in Britain, with salience rising when politicians cue it or connect it to more readily-grasped concerns (i.e., Brexit in Britain, Youngkin or DeSantis on critical race theory in America, or the Isla Bryson/Adam Graham question in Scotland). This means that speech restrictions in elite political and media settings can continue to function without populist challenge from voters. So long as the salience of culture war issues remains low, political correctness in institutions can continue to suppress debate in contentious policy areas such as crime, homelessness, immigration, family policy, China, and other questions.

**FIGURE 38:** Top three most important issues facing Canada, by vote



**Note:** Based on a question asking the individual to rank-order issues.

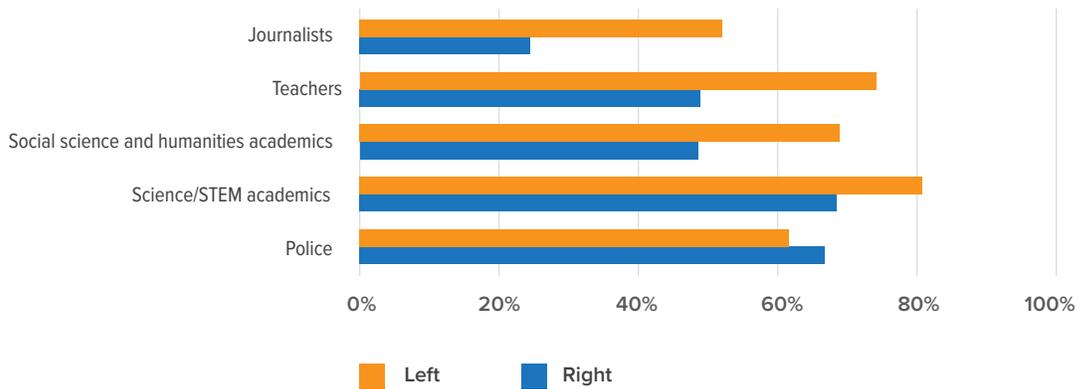
It is worth adding that there are only modest age and language differences in whether or not voters see an issue as salient. Young people are 6 points more concerned about culture wars issues, 9 points more worried about race or gender inequality, and 12 points less focused on health care. French-language speakers are more attuned to medical care by 12 points but otherwise have similar concerns as Anglophones.

Important partisan differences also surface in the area of trust in cultural institutions. Figure 39 shows that right-wing voters are 20 to 25 points less trusting of social science and humanities (SSH) academics, teachers, and journalists than left-leaning voters, but somewhat more trusting of the police.

Examining the issue of trust in cultural institutions internationally reveals important differences in political and organizational culture between the three societies. Figure 40 sorts questions based on the Canadian proportion agreeing with each statement. There is a somewhat greater difference between Canada and the other societies than is true on culture wars attitudes.

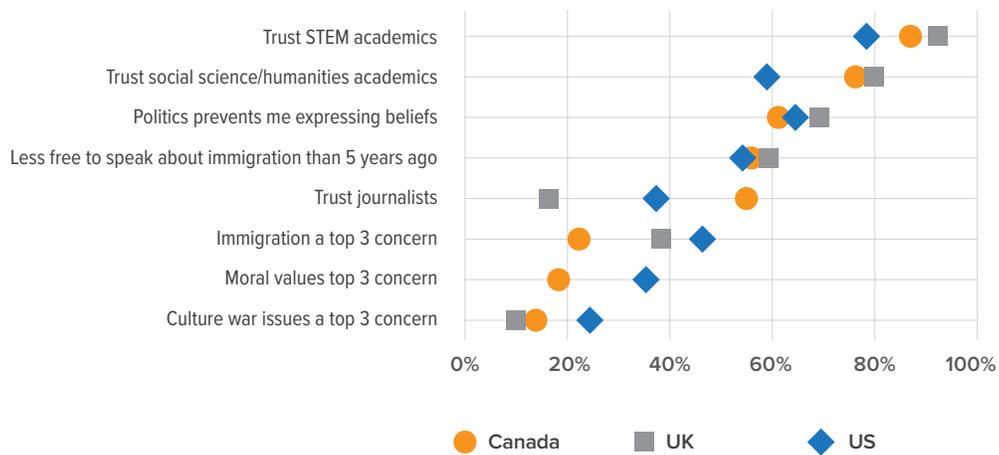
For instance, culture war issues are important for nearly twice as many American voters as Canadian or British voters. While the US data used here is from a 2023 survey where 26 percent of Republicans placed these issues

**FIGURE 39: Trust in selected professions, by vote**



**Note:** Data includes neutral and “don’t know” responses in the denominator.

**Figure 40: Political culture indicators in Canada, the UK and the US**



**Note:** Data excludes neutral and “don’t know” responses.

Sources: YouGov (UK), May 9-10, 2022, N=1,818; Prolific (UK), Jan 28, 2022, N=951; Qualtrics (US), Apr 19-June 7, 2021, N=959.

in their top 3, my 2021 US survey found that fully 48 percent of Republican voters ranked them in their top 3. Thus, these questions are not as salient for conservative British or Canadian voters as they are for conservative Americans.

Immigration, meanwhile, ranks nearly twice as high for British voters as it does for Canadians despite the fact that Canada’s per capita immigration levels are double Britain’s and reached inflows of around a million people in

2023. American voters place the issue even higher, though in the US case there is an important problem of illegal immigration (this is partly true of Britain too due to the increase in Channel crossings in the past few years, but the scale is two orders of magnitude smaller than in the US).

The trust indicators also tell us something important. Excluding uncertain answers, 55 percent of Canadian respondents say they trust journalists, compared to 37 percent of Americans and 16 percent of Britons. While nearly 30 percent of CPC and PPC voters trust journalists, just 11 percent of Tory and Brexit Party voters in Britain and 15 percent of Republican voters in the US do. The net result is that Canadians, even those on the right, trust their more progressive-dominated media more than their American or British equivalents do.

Trust in academics – who lean approximately 10:1 to the left – is very high in Canada, as in Britain: close to 80 percent for social science and humanities (SSH) professors and 90 percent for science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) professors. In the US, on the other hand, trust in SSH academics is 20 points lower than in Canada or Britain. While just 34 percent of 2020 Republican voters trust SSH academics, 50 percent of Canadian CPC and PPC voters and 60 percent of British Conservative and Brexit Party or Reform voters do. Like Britons, most Canadians trust professors, placing relatively high trust in these heavily progressive-dominated institutions.

Canadians' relatively high trust in institutions and cultural elites grants considerable latitude to them to frame the issues that people talk about while neglecting other questions. If elites would rather not discuss immigration levels, they are more able to suppress debate in Canada than in Britain or the US, where they lack the same moral authority. High Canadian trust in journalists thereby helps to reduce the priority of immigration among Canadian voters as compared with their British or American counterparts. Culture war questions, meanwhile, rank lower for Canadians and Britons than for Americans due to a cross-party elite consensus in both the UK and Canada that frames culture war issues as divisive and “ungentlemanly,” and thus something that should not be discussed. Such questions are therefore likely to remain latent among



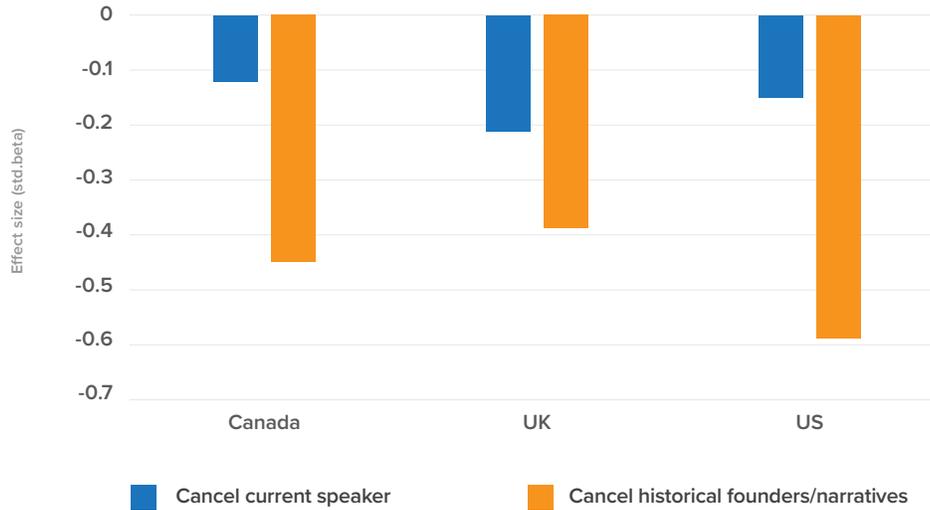
*Most Canadians trust professors, placing relatively high trust in these heavily progressive-dominated institutions.*

Canadians, with the media and politicians agreeing to abide by discursive rules that seek to insulate the progressive-institutional consensus from electoral and policy contestation. There is no better illustration of this than the Kamloops mass graves question, where the code of silence practiced by the media and mainstream political parties has resulted in a clear majority of the public believing this false account.

Party establishments in Canada and Britain are uncomfortable prosecuting the culture war the way Republicans such as Ron DeSantis in Florida, Glenn Youngkin in Virginia, or Donald Trump have. However, the fact that culture war attitudes tilt 2 to 1 against cultural socialism means they offer considerable political opportunity to politicians who are willing to talk about these questions and criticize progressive institutions. The electoral success of DeSantis in Florida and Youngkin in Virginia, as well as the Isla Bryson/*Gender Recognition Act* debacle that helped unseat Nicola Sturgeon in Scotland, suggest that such strategies are likely to prove attractive to populist challengers on the right (Hess 2021). As our Kayla Lemieux (the Ontario teacher who wore prosthetic breasts to shop class) experiment showed, vivid imagery or examples will be needed to break through to voters with limited attention spans and only a hazy understanding of culture war debates.

Elsewhere I have written that critical race and history issues tend to mobilize the conservative base more than cancel culture questions (Kaufmann 2022e). Figure 41 presents results from a statistical model that allows us to see which characteristics of an individual most strongly predict their attitudes (using composite latent variables which combine questions into a kind of index, for cancel culture and critical race and history questions). The vertical axis shows the standardized statistical effect of ideology on each culture war attitudes index. While the questions which underpin the index in each country are not precisely the same (they are more about cancelling historical figures in the UK and Canada, and more about teaching that the US is racist or stolen from Native Americans in the American case), the long bars for left-right ideology show, unsurprisingly, that conservatives are less likely than progressives to support cancelling current or historic individuals. More importantly, however, they reveal that being conservative or progressive matters more for opinion on critical race and history questions (orange bars) than it does for predicting attitudes on cancel culture (i.e., free speech) issues (blue bars). While policies defending free speech against cancel culture can split liberals from radical

**FIGURE 41:** Effect of ideology on various culture war issues



**Sources:** YouGov (UK), May 9-10, 2022, N=1,818; Qualtrics (US), Apr 19-June 7, 2021, N=959; Competitive Edge Research (US), Apr 9-19, 2021, N=808.

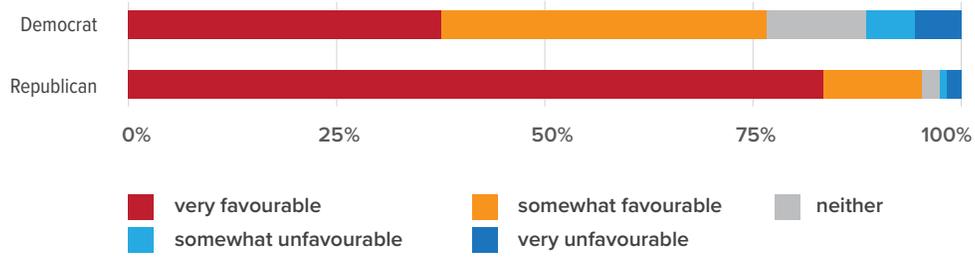
leftists, this may not be sufficient to flip the votes of left-leaning liberals toward right-wing parties.

By contrast, defence of national symbols and traditions – as with the debate over Critical Race Theory in schools – appears to have electoral potential. To see why, consider Figures 42 through 44. I use the same colour schemes, which show that these issues mobilize the right and fragment the left. For instance, over 80 percent of Republicans in the US hold a “very favourable” view of the Founding Fathers on a 5-point scale while barely 10 percent of Democrats hold a “very unfavourable” view of them. Note that there was no “don’t know” option offered in any of these questions.

The same is true of nearly 3 in 4 Conservative and Brexit Party voters in Britain with respect to Churchill, with only a miniscule fraction of Labour, Liberal Democrat, and Green voters having a “very unfavourable” view of him. Defense of Churchill’s statue and legacy, as with that of the Founding Founders in the US, is thus a powerful potential wedge issue for the British and American electorates.

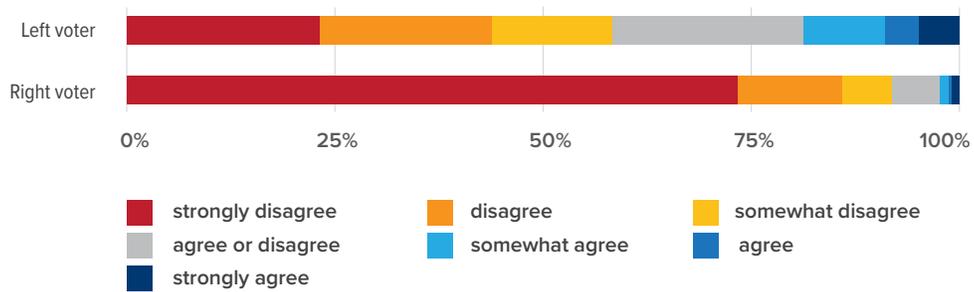
Does something similar operate in the Canadian case? Yes and no. Sir John A. Macdonald does not engender the same passionate loyalty as do the Founders in America or Churchill in Britain. Having said this, over 40 percent

**FIGURE 42: View of founding founders in the US, by partisanship**



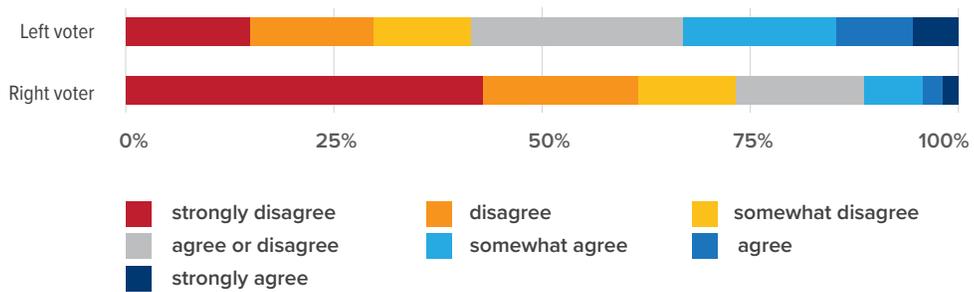
Source: Competitive Edge Research (US), Apr 9-19, 2021, N=808.

**FIGURE 43: Should Churchill's statue be removed? (by 2019 UK vote)**



Source: YouGov (UK), May 9-10, 2022, N=1,818.

**FIGURE 44: Should Sir John A. Macdonald's statues be removed? (by 2021 vote)**



of CPC and PPC voters have a “very favourable” view of Macdonald while only a tiny share of Liberal, NDP, and Green voters have a “very unfavourable” view of him. Over 60 percent of right-leaning voters view him favourably but fewer than 20 percent of left-leaning voters view him unfavourably. While the wedge potential is not as strong as in the American and British cases, a Conservative politician who defends Macdonald is likely to rally much of the party faithful while dividing the opposition. This indicates that culture war questions offer a reservoir of untapped potential for politicians willing to defy the progressive elite consensus by bringing these issues to the attention of voters.

## Discussion

The results of this survey show, as with previous research, that Canadian opinion on culture wars questions is nuanced and depends a great deal on how the questions are worded and the subcomponent under investigation.

However, while views on hypothetical or abstract scenarios – in which people may entertain different meanings of particular words such as “offensive speech” – often split evenly, as shown in the Angus Reid results, when it comes to questions that revolve around concrete examples of controversy over cultural socialist policies or phenomena, the Canadian public leans considerably against the woke position.

The Kayla Lemieux experiment visited earlier shows that vivid examples strongly shift public opinion, and other experimental work I have done in the US shows that using concrete examples of woke policies can swing even left-leaning centrists behind cultural policies like school Critical Race Theory bans (Kaufmann 2022a). Thus if Canadian politicians cue examples of woke policies in Canadian institutions, they are likely to mobilize public opinion, whether at election time or when it comes to particular policies.

Consider just a few examples of what is occurring in Canadian schools, and which could form the basis of political communications by right-of-centre politicians. The extremism of such policies also means it is urgent that political

leaders give a voice to the democratic majority in Canada. The Toronto District School Board (TDSB) sent a survey to students in grades 4 through 8 asking numerous questions about their race, gender, and sexual orientation. It asks, among other identity-related questions, whether students are bisexual, transgender, queer/gender expansive, intersex, asexual, or pansexual; and whether they have learned about “binding, packing, tucking, or padding options.”

In another important case, the Waterloo Region District School Board (WRDSB) fired teacher Carolyn Burjoski for raising questions about the age-appropriateness of sexualized content found in some elementary school library books. Former Ottawa high school teacher Chancel Pfahl, concerned about a curriculum which held that everything is racist, including math, was investigated by the Ontario College of Teachers, the body that grants teaching certificates, for voicing her concerns in a private Facebook group (Zwaagstra 2022; National Post staff 2023b). Pfahl now routinely exposes lesson content on social media. Here is just one example from an endless stream of such content, taught to kindergarten students at a Catholic school in Caledonia, Ontario, from a radical children’s book: “A long time ago, way before you were born, white people made up an idea called race. They sorted people by skin colour and said that white people were better, smarter, prettier, and that they deserve more than everybody else... Racism is also the things people do and the unfair rules they make about race so that white people get more power, and are treated better, than everybody else” (Pfahl (@ChanLPfa) 2023). Students are also regularly taught about concepts such as “my truth” and choosing their pronouns, with punitive sanctions for those dissenting from radical race and gender ideology.

The effects of woke ideology in schools can be tragic. TDSB’s diversity training, alongside ostracism from radical activists, contributed to the suicide of Toronto teacher Richard Bilkszto. A lifelong gay leftist and advocate for the marginalized, Bilkszto attended a diversity training seminar led by professional trainer Kike Ojo-Thompson. At the session, Ojo-Thompson declared that Canada was a more racist country than the United States: “Canada is a bastion of white supremacy and colonialism... The racism we experience is far worse here than



*The effects of woke ideology in schools can be tragic.*

there.” When Bilkszto challenged this account, Ojo-Thompson laughed, saying, “One of the ways that white supremacy is upheld, protected, reproduced, upkept, defended is through resistance. I’m so lucky that we got perfect evidence, a wonderful example of resistance that you all got to bear witness to, so we’re going to talk about it, because, I mean, it doesn’t get better than this.” No other teachers in the session intervened to defend Bilkszto against these Kafkaesque techniques and others took Ojo-Thompson’s side. Bilkszto subsequently committed suicide, with the stress of the incident and its aftermath a major contributing factor (Silva 2023).

My previous surveys of 18 to 20-year-olds in the US and Britain show that 93 percent of American 18 to 20-year-olds and 73 percent of their British equivalents have heard from an adult at school of at least one of five scientifically unverified concepts derived from critical race and gender theory: “white privilege,” “unconscious bias,” “systemic racism,” “patriarchy,” and the idea that there are many genders. In 7 of 10 instances these were taught as fact rather than as one of several respectable competing perspectives (Kaufmann 2022d; Goldberg and Kaufmann 2023). I expect that a similar mass penetration of critical race and gender ideas has taken place in Canadian schools, taught as indoctrination rather than critical discussion. Future research can help to confirm the extent to which this is the case.

Such ideas do not have the consent of the governed. For instance, this survey shows that public opinion is overwhelmingly against teaching children that there is no biological sex, only one’s chosen gender, or that Canada is a racist country. And parents of school-age children are more likely than others in the survey to hold these views. Canadians are heavily opposed to cancelling J.K. Rowling and Kathleen Stock, and a majority disagree with the firing of professor Frances Widdowson.

Moreover, the vast majority do not endorse activists toppling statues without permission, and considerably more oppose the removal of statues of John A. Macdonald than support it. Most do not think their country is racist and lean toward emphasizing the positive in our history over the shameful. When shown an image of Kayla Lemieux wearing large prosthetic breasts people incline heavily against allowing this teacher into the classroom. Most favour schools having to inform parents when their child changes their pronouns, and do not want transgender women in women’s sports. Most oppose flying the pride flag on public buildings.

In nearly all instances, the public finds itself opposed to the system of activists and administrators who set the tone in our cultural institutions. These officials are acting against the democratic will, insulated by a political culture that sidelines such questions as well as by euphemisms such as “anti-racist” or “gender-affirming” (read: anti-white, opposed to certain rights for women) and the associated threat of being accused of racism, transphobia, or other taboo violations.

The public are sympathetic to minorities, with a majority supporting Black Lives Matter and a school curriculum that includes various minority groups even if they were not particularly prominent in the country’s history. A slight majority are willing to support efforts to recruit more women and minorities. Still, by a considerable margin, they prefer a colour-blind over a colour-conscious approach. They want diversity training that shames white employees into confessing their privilege – such as Ojo-Thompson’s at TDSB – banned. They slightly favour government action to prevent universities from firing staff for legal – even if offensive – speech. Conservative voters are especially supportive of these policy measures.

In terms of socio-demographic breaks in the data, one of the most striking findings is that the Canadian public holds very similar culture war attitudes to the British and American public. Where Canada differs is in its connection between public and elite opinion, which is weaker than in the US and UK. This appears to be related to the relatively high trust that Canadians place in the country’s largely progressive media and institutions, which helps insulate elite culture from public disagreement. It also provides elite institutions with more leeway to set the agenda of issues that may be politically discussed, permitting cultural questions to be sidelined more than in the US and Britain. The notion that culture wars are divisive, for instance, helps to stanch discussion of such issues. Those who seek a cultural revolution in institutions (i.e., by teaching critical race or gender ideology) are not labelled divisive culture warriors – while those who seek to resist them are.

This study also reveals some interesting differences between right-wing and left-wing party voters, young and old, as well as French and English



*The Canadian public holds very similar culture war attitudes to the British and American public.*

Canadians. Comparing younger and older Canadians, I find a larger gap by age on woke-related issues than that reported by Angus Reid in its surveys, with young Canadians more woke than older Canadians even when accounting for self-ascribed ideology, education, and other factors. This is especially true within the left, where young leftists exhibit considerably greater progressive illiberalism and historical revisionism than older leftists. This could be down to sampling, so it would be useful in the future for Angus Reid to replicate at least some of the questions used here to compare age patterns. Having said this, generational differences on culture war issues are smaller in Canada than in Britain or the United States in both this study and (by implication) the Angus Reid data. The international difference between Canadian and American or British young people is especially noticeable on the question of whether the country is racist, with young Americans and Britons far more likely to say this than young Canadians.

French Canadians are surprisingly similar to Anglophones on many of the questions considered here. The primary differences between Francophones and Anglophones revolves around weaker support by the former for defending Anglo-Canadian historical figures such as Macdonald or Ryerson, less concern from them over the rise of speech restrictions and political correctness, and their greater skepticism toward gender ideology and colour-conscious equity and diversity. These differences arguably stem from the province's republican philosophy combined with its weak attachment to English-dominated historical figures and greater sympathy for the minority experience.



*French Canadians are surprisingly similar to Anglophones on many of the questions considered here.*

## Policy recommendations

These findings point toward a clear mandate for a party with the courage to make a policy stand in these areas. In general, the public leans 2 to 1 against the woke position. Such issues tend to split the left and unite conservative voters, offering an important wedge issue for conservative politicians. Liberal, NDP, and Green parties must guard against this threat and are advised to downplay or minimize such issues, perhaps by accusing those who seek to discuss such questions of stoking a divisive culture war. Should this fail, the left could move toward what centrist Democrats David Shor or Matthew Yglesias call “populism,” seeking to change the conversation toward leftist economic policies which tend to be more popular with voters than cultural socialism (Yglesias 2022).

Conservative politicians, by contrast, are advised to build on the initiatives of Danielle Smith in Alberta, Blaine Higgs in New Brunswick and Scott Moe in Saskatchewan. For instance, when polled by Angus Reid, 78 percent of respondents wanted parents informed by schools of a child’s change of pronoun (Huras 2023). These are popular issues and politicians on the right should skillfully and tactfully be seeking to raise their salience for voters.

Conservative measures should move beyond the Alberta, New Brunswick and Saskatchewan legislation, however, to create a non-political school system. For example, Britain’s 1996 *Education Act* sections 406 and 407 specifically forbids political indoctrination in class and stipulates that opposing views must be presented fairly (United Kingdom 1996). Children are minors who must attend class. This is a very different situation from university, where adults choose which courses to take; hence, school teachers do not have the same freedom to express their views in class as do university professors. Canada urgently needs similar legislation, with fine-grained guidance that defines critical race and gender ideology as political. Ideally this should be combined with Alberta-style measures to mandate curriculum transparency, with third-party providers being required to permit their materials to be viewed by both parents and the public before being allowed to tender. Moreover, public institutions must be made politically neutral, flying only municipal and national flags that include all citizens, as in Norwich, Ontario’s decision to prohibit pride flags on municipal property.

Premiers should use legislation to prevent highly contested critical race or gender concepts being taught in class. While ideally such concepts would be debated, with the views of critics given equal air time and validity, it is unlikely that such a fair debate can take place in the current teaching environment. Preventing the teaching of these concepts needs to be brought into the mainstream as part of the school inspection regime. Moreover, education faculties in universities often endorse the view that teachers should serve as progressive activists. Here governments should defund activist courses or programs (though not ban them, as this contravenes academic freedom), and open up non-traditional routes into the profession that bypass university education faculties. Britain's postgraduate teaching apprenticeship is an example of good practice (Swain 2023).

In addition, governments in Canada should move to abolish critical race and gender-based diversity training across the civil service and in fact the entire public sector. As my survey shows (as do those I have conducted in the US and Britain), such training increases chilling effects among employees while pushing them in an illiberal, cultural socialist direction.

This move limits the constructive feedback co-workers and managers might otherwise give to minorities, arguably hampering racial equality. Today's colour-conscious approach needs to be replaced with a colour-blind policy. Public institutions are funded from tax revenues and should not be used to advance cultural socialist values that are held by only a minority of the population.

When it comes to higher education, Canadian provinces should move beyond the purely symbolic requirement for universities to adopt a statement supporting academic freedom and provide them to report on their actions in that regard, as in Ontario, Quebec, and Alberta. Quebec's bill is more substantial, but devolves responsibility to universities, which is likely to render it toothless (*Bill 32, An Act respecting academic freedom in the university sector*). Such measures need to be augmented by a UK-style system in which an academic freedom directorate independent of the sector actively monitors compliance. This should entail, as in the UK, the capacity to issue fines to



*Governments in Canada should move to abolish critical race and gender-based diversity training across the civil service.*

universities that do not protect and promote academic freedom. Staff and students whose academic freedom is violated should have the right to appeal to an ombudsperson on the directorate, and have the right to sue universities that fail to uphold their academic freedom obligations.

The philosophical basis for these policies lies in the early liberal theory of Hobbes and Locke, which views government as having a key role in interdicting private illiberalism and violence to protect individual liberty. Society is comprised not of two, but three, levels: government, institutions, and citizens. When institutions become oppressive, elected and transparent government can advance liberalism by reforming them (Turley 2022). Historical examples include the American federal government forcibly de-segregating southern universities or the British government taking Islamist-controlled schools or corrupt police departments into “special measures” (i.e., earmarking them for more frequent checks and guidance or even replacing their leadership).

Surveys show that between 60 and 75 percent of conservative social sciences and humanities (SSH) academics in Canada self-censor in teaching, research, and discussion. Short of more proactive measures to monitor and enforce academic freedom in illiberal institutions, political minorities such as gender-critical feminists and conservatives will continue to experience a hostile speech climate. This situation is also exacerbated by political discrimination, with numerous studies showing that between 15 and 50 percent of academics would discriminate against a conservative in hiring, refereeing papers and grant applications, or promotion cases (Dummitt and Patterson 2022; Goodwin 2022, 11; Kaufmann 2021).

These findings indicate that more attention must be paid to political and philosophical discrimination. In Britain, two legal cases have upheld claimants’ right to criticize gender ideology and critical race theory without facing sanctions at work (Bryant 2023; Dathan 2023). Political and philosophical equity and diversity needs to be included within any DEI training and treated on an equal basis with race and gender. Most of those I surveyed believe that these categories should be treated similarly. Moreover, universities should adopt the University of Chicago’s 1967 *Kalven Report* principles which hold that universities, or anyone acting in an official capacity, should not take public positions on contested political matters (University of Chicago, Office of the Provost 1967). Recently, Laurentian University’s board approved a policy of institutional neutrality that “acknowledges the importance of impartiality

and does not take political or social stances, other than those consistent with the university's mandate or policies." This allows administrators to speak in a personal but not official capacity on such questions. This policy should be rolled out across the sector (Ulrichsen 2023). Examples of matters upon which universities and administrators should not be expressing an opinion include Black Lives Matter or the Israel-Palestine conflict. When a university takes an official political stance, those who disagree with it must self-censor or go against their employer, thereby violating their academic freedom.

Finally, conservative politicians should more forcefully defend Canadian history and symbols. Decisive and swift punishment for those who seek to topple statues should be combined with a vigorous defense of Sir John A. Macdonald and other historic Canadian figures. Their flaws should be acknowledged, but only in the context of a clear-eyed, unromantic view of non-western groups and civilizations. To wit, most Canadians continue to believe in a highly moralized and decontextualized rendering of the country's record on residential schools. The task of right-of-centre media and political innovators should be to try and use facts and evidence to deconstruct myths encoded in this progressive narrative, which underpins the woke cultural revolution which is setting the official elite institutional agenda on many issues. This can then empower centre-leftists to challenge the radical left in institutions, establishing new elite norms. The goal should be to return to what Jonathan Rauch terms a "truth-based order" in law, science, and journalism, allowing for maximal human flourishing and progress (Rauch 2021). [MLI](#)

## About the author



Eric Kaufmann is Professor of Politics at the University of Buckingham. He is the author of *Whiteshift: Immigration, Populism and the Future of White Majorities* (Penguin/Abrams, 2018/19). *Shall the Religious Inherit the Earth* (Profile Books 2010), *The Rise and Fall of Anglo-America* (Harvard 2004), *The Orange Order* (Oxford, 2007) and one other book.

He is co-editor, among others, of *Political Demography* (Oxford 2012) and editor of *Rethinking Ethnicity: Majority Groups and Dominant Minorities* (Routledge 2004). He has also written for the *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, *Times of London*, *Newsweek*, *National Review*, *New Statesman*, *Financial Times* and other outlets. [MLI](#)

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## Legislation

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## Endnotes

- 1 John McWhorter quoted Kendi at the Aspen Ideas Festival, Twitter, June 1, 2021 11:15 AM. [https://twitter.com/johnhmcwhorter/status/1399670923221946372?s=61&t=Tq\\_bMKZyZ199vCQLmKv7iQ](https://twitter.com/johnhmcwhorter/status/1399670923221946372?s=61&t=Tq_bMKZyZ199vCQLmKv7iQ)
- 2 Note that these responses largely overlap, hence a total of 26 percent.
- 3 For a full explanation of the usage of Qualtrics, YouGov and Competitive Edge data included in figures 33-45, see Kaufmann 2022a, 2022b and 2022c.
- 4 Refers to the issues and positions that may be respectably advanced in the mainstream media and political institutions.

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323 Chapel Street, Suite 300,  
Ottawa, Ontario K1N 7Z2  
613-482-8327 • [info@macdonaldlaurier.ca](mailto:info@macdonaldlaurier.ca)

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