



FSU
FREE SPEECH UNION

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Only Two Per Cent of Public Think Government Doing Good Job of Protecting Free Speech

The Free Speech Union commissioned some independent polling which shows that the public strongly supports our five-point manifesto (see below).

When asked whether they agree or disagree with the statement 'The Government is doing a good job of protecting free speech', only two per cent say they 'completely agree', with 12% saying they 'somewhat agree', 19% saying they 'somewhat disagree' and 16% saying they 'completely disagree'. Among 25-49 year-olds, the number who completely agree falls to just one per cent.

On the Online Safety Bill, which the FSU has been campaigning against, 45% of respondents think that social media companies should *not* remove or restrict lawful speech, while just 14% think they should. Among those aged 65 and older, the number agreeing with our position rises to 53% and the number disagreeing falls to 13%.

Fifty-six per cent of people agree with our proposal that free speech should be included among the British values taught in schools, with only seven per cent disagreeing. Among those aged 65 and older, the number of people agreeing rises to 71% and the number disagreeing falls to three per cent.

The public is broadly supportive of our proposal that there should be stronger legal protections for workers' rights so employees cannot be disciplined for refusing to take a diversity training course, with 34% agreeing and 26% disagreeing. Among those aged 65 and over, 45% agree and only 16% disagree.

On Non-Crime Hate Incidents, 33% agree that investigating people for 'non-crimes' takes the police away from more important work, and 29% disagree. Among those aged 65 and over, the number agreeing rises to 50%, with only 20% disagreeing.

Toby Young, the General Secretary of the Free Speech Union, said: "In light of these findings, I urge each of the contestants in the Conservative leadership election to pledge to do more to protect free speech if they become Prime Minister. The fact that only two per cent of the public strongly agree that the Government is doing a good job of protecting free speech should be a wake-up call."

The Free Speech Union's Manifesto

1. Create an enforcement mechanism to make sure children aren't being politically indoctrinated in schools, stop schools stonewalling when parents ask to see what their children are being taught in the classroom, and insist that free speech is included in the list of British values schools are expected to promote.
2. End the investigation and recording of Non-Crime Hate Incidents by the police and delete all those that are still sitting on people's records.
3. Take forward the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Bill, ditch those clauses in the Online Safety Bill that pose a threat to free speech and make sure freedom of expression is pre-eminent in the new Bill of Rights so artists, novelists, poets, playwrights and comedians can speak truth to power without being cancelled.
4. Introduce stronger legal protections for workers' rights so employees cannot be disciplined or sacked for refusing to take diversity training courses or declare their gender pronouns.
5. Amend the Equality Act 2010 so it cannot be used to no-platform those who challenge fashionable orthodoxies, e.g., defining a woman as an 'adult human female' should not count as 'harassment'.

Survey Summary: Matthew Goodwin Polling

Sample Group

- A nationally representative sample (N=1,175), representative on gender, age, region, social grade, 2019 General Election vote, and 2016 EU referendum vote. 14th July 2022.
- We were asked to explore public attitudes around issues of free speech, diversity training, non-crime hate incidents and the role of social media and misinformation.
- We drew our data from a respected online data collection agency which is registered with the British Polling Council and conducted our in-house analysis using standard quantitative research methods.
- We would be more than happy to answer any further queries regarding this polling.

Key findings

- A plurality of voters, 35%, do not think the government is doing a good job of protecting free speech which rises to 42% among men. Only 14% think the government is doing a good job of protecting freedom of speech.
- There is strong public support for the idea 'government should ensure free speech is included in the list of British values schools are expected to teach'. 56% of all voters agree, rising to 67% of men, 61% of 50–64 year-olds, and 71% of pensioners. However, only 42% of Zoomers from Generation Z (i.e., 18-24 year-olds) agree. The generational divide is stark. There is also a clear gender divide: 67% of men support teaching free speech, compared with just 45% of women. More women than men oppose the statement, though the differences are marginal.
- Within the national sample, a plurality, 45%, agreed with the idea social media companies should not restrict or remove lawful speech, with only 14% opposing. There is a clear gender gap: 56% of men think social media companies should not remove or restrict lawful speech, versus 35% of women.

- When it comes to protecting workers' rights so employees cannot be disciplined for refusing to take diversity training courses, we find that 34% agree with this and 26% oppose. Interestingly, men are more than twice as likely as women to completely agree, which 27% of them do. Men and pensioners were again amongst the most likely. It is worth pointing out that only 26% disagree with this.
- Regarding removing content from social media platforms on the grounds that it is misinformation, we find a highly divided public. While close to one third, 31%, support this view 27% oppose and 18% neither agree nor disagree. There are again significant differences among men and women: while 36% of men agree only 26% of women do. More younger voters aged 18-24 years old opposed the idea that 'misinformation' is an excuse to censor political opinions than supported it, 29% to 21%. However, this was not the case among the over 65s, with 37% support to 20% disagreement.
- Overall, the national sample suggests there is more support for the idea that non-hate crime incidents (prejudice based on someone's personal characteristics or demographics) take police away from other important work. 33% support this, to 29% who oppose it. The biggest divide is between pensioners and 18–24 year-olds: 50% of older voters agree that non-crime hate incidents take police away from more important work, but only 17% of young voters feel the same way. We would also urge caution when reporting these findings as even despite a clear description of the polling many voters will still be unsure as to what non-crime hate incidents are.

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