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# Finding a Balance

How to ensure Equality, Diversity  
and Inclusion is for everyone



Policy Lab



UNIVERSITY OF  
OXFORD



More in  
Common

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## Foreword

Many of the key institutions of our public lives have developed increasingly sophisticated Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) strategies over the last decade. Placing the spotlight on inequalities and injustices related to gender, race, disability, sexuality and age, these strategies have sought to reshape our workplaces, universities, schools, museums and other cultural centres. In some cases, they have led to changes in leadership culture, recruitment, training and communications. In others, they have led to wholesale reforms to brand and governing practices and to close and critical re-examination of institutional histories and traditions.

Much of this, of course, has clearly been for the good. EDI action has helped to tackle serious issues and opened institutions up to new insights and experiences.

Nonetheless, recent years have also witnessed the emergence of a potentially significant backlash, both inside and outside institutions themselves. Criticism of apparent excesses has also appeared in the media, where it has sometimes been joined by political challenge, with many high-profile cases becoming causes celebre. Whether it has been the representation of historical artefacts by the National Trust, the approach of universities to the inclusion of trans people, or NatWest/Coutts bank's decision to remove banking facilities for the former UKIP and Brexit Party leader Nigel Farage, the debates have been intense and disagreement obvious. Events in the United States – most notably the recent resignation of Harvard University president Claudine Gay – seem only to have added fuel to the fire. Supporters of EDI have even been depicted as a new class of moralistic bureaucratic commissars who are prepared to elevate particular group identities and to cancel those with whom they disagree.

Whatever the merits or demerits of particular cases, we feel that the many public versions of these arguments have been unhelpfully aggressive and polarising. They have created new frictions and tensions within institutions and greater distrust beyond them. Within many workplaces, both the advocates of more ambitious EDI endeavours and some of their critics report finding it difficult to express their perspectives straightforwardly and to advance their cause.

In an era of intense polarisation, progress on matters of EDI may only be possible if there are more sober and sensible conversations. But how must institutions go about building sustainable support for EDI? How can they achieve a more stable, less contested, future for EDI? Answering such questions, we believe, must begin with what the people of this country actually think. And so, it is there that this report begins.

## Commentary

We include below commentary on the report's findings from a selection of stakeholders who attended the expert EDI roundtable.

*What's too often lost in the polarised debates we sometimes see about equality issues – is that the public are fundamentally kind and decent. Most Britons want people to be able to live their lives freely and for everyone to have a chance to reach their potential. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion initiatives can contribute a lot to building that sort of fair society, as this important report shows, those initiatives are likely to be best received when they build on that basic sense of decency and fair play. By focusing on real world stories and approaches that are relevant to people's jobs and daily experiences EDI can have a far greater impact than simply engaging in more abstract rows that dominate column inches and social media but have very little relevance to people's everyday.*

**Rt Hon Baroness Morgan of Cotes**  
**(Minister for Women and Equalities during the Cameron Government)**

*This is encouraging research, which reinforces the view that there is more which unites us than divides us, and that most people want to live in a society where everyone is respected and has the capacity to live a life which is valuable and valued.*

**Helen Mountfield KC**  
**(Principal of Mansfield College, Oxford)**

*Research reveals that stark inequalities continue to persist in this country. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion initiatives (EDI) could play an important role in remedying them. But we currently do not know enough about what works and how EDI's contribution might best be made. By focusing on how the public understand EDI and when they think it goes well or badly, this report marks an important first step in discovering how EDI might help us achieve the change we need to see.*

**Imran Rasul**  
**(Professor of Economics and Research Director, Institute for Fiscal Studies)**

*This report importantly demonstrates people's willingness to tackle entrenched inequalities and exclusions in workplaces right across the country. It also reminds those of us responsible for developing the next generation of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion strategies of the importance of doing so in a way that resonates with the diversity of values and interests found across our communities.*

**Professor Alison Koslowski**  
**(UCL Pro-Provost - Equity & Inclusion)**

## Executive Summary

### The public support for EDI

Recent years have seen a number of high profile, polarised and occasionally acrimonious debates about Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI). These debates between activists, politicians, practitioners and columnists give the impression of deep, binary divides on the merits (or harms) of embracing EDI.

This binary does not however reflect public opinion. **The British public are five times more likely to say that EDI is a good, rather than a bad, thing** - and support for EDI extends across Britain. The public are also more likely than not to think that EDI leads to fairer outcomes and that they personally benefit from EDI practice - **most people do not see EDI in zero sum terms**. That sentiment is not limited to the most progressive segments of the UK but extends across more socially conservative groups too.

### Grounding EDI in the everyday

Where people do have concerns it tends to be on how individual EDI training, policies and practices are implemented rather than EDI per se. These concerns emerge when EDI is seen as a tick box exercise, where organisations get the balance of EDI activities wrong or if EDI activity isn't tailored to the job or institution in question. **A key theme that emerges from polling and conversations with the public is that EDI is best received when it is grounded in people's everyday work and a shared sense of decency**. EDI that is relevant and actionable, rather than at the level of abstract debates, is far more likely to land with the public. This is a key condition of building sustainable support for EDI.

### Building an inclusive approach

Creating a culture of curiosity and opportunity to learn is important. **Around half of Britons worry about saying the wrong thing on EDI and seven in ten say that people are made to feel stupid for not saying the right thing**. The public do not believe that a castigating approach to EDI works, and fewer than three in ten think it helpful to criticise people for making mistakes on diversity issues. Sometimes the passion of those most committed to EDI is received as intolerance by less engaged audiences.

**EDI frames should avoid reinforcing 'us vs them' dynamics**. While some - particularly the most progressive segment of the population - find frames such as 'white privilege' helpful, most do not. Framed differently however, every segment - including the most socially conservative - believe that there remain areas of British life where ethnic minorities suffer discrimination compared to white people. Explaining how EDI promotes merit, hard work and performance can help assuage the worries of those who think it is sometimes used as an excuse for poor performance. Similarly, **showing how EDI benefits a range of groups - including those who experience prejudice on the basis of class - is likely to build greater support**.

### Free speech and institutional advocacy

**While nearly nine in ten think that free speech is one of the most important rights in the UK, and six in ten think it is under threat, they do not think it is an unqualified right**. A clear majority believe it appropriate for someone to lose their job for making grossly offensive comments in the workplace, though they make a distinction between in and out of work. **Britons from more progressive and more socially conservative segments believe that it is important that young people are exposed to a range of views** - but also think there are circumstances where no-platforming is appropriate.

Institutions should be intentional in deciding when to take public stances on EDI issues. Sometimes it will fall within the remit of cultural institutions to lead the way in navigating these debates, but institutions risk losing public trust if they are perceived as deviating from the core mission. **The public overwhelmingly prefers a 'retain and explain' approach to historic artefacts or buildings.** Crucially, for institutions and workplaces alike, **the public expect EDI work to start with treating employees and customers well, before engaging in external advocacy on other issues of concern.**

## Recommendations for building and maintaining support for EDI 2.0:

1. **Tailor EDI activities to the employer or institution:** Linking EDI to people's day to day roles and how to do those roles well is the surest way to build support.
2. **Focus on people not contested concepts:** Utilise people's real world experience and stories and appeal to people's shared sense of decency and fairness.
3. **Build a culture of curiosity and generosity – not of criticism:** EDI should create spaces where people can ask questions and not worry about making mistakes.
4. **Distinguish between inside and outside the workplace/institution:** The public are more likely to believe that codes of conduct should be enforced in work.
5. **Embrace merit:** Practitioners should build on the public's conviction that EDI leads to fair outcomes by highlighting how it reduces barriers to opportunity.
6. **Use inclusive framings:** Avoiding 'us vs them' frames and showing how EDI activity benefits the whole of society, not just particular groups, is important.
7. **Think about messengers and coalitions:** Broadening EDI messengers to different parts of the ideological spectrum will expand support.
8. **EDI and free speech go hand in hand:** Britons want young people to be exposed to a range of voices, but also think extreme forms of speech can create dangers.
9. **Where possible, retain and explain:** Britons favour an approach that provides a 'warts and all' understanding of history.
10. **Know when to intervene:** Commentary and engagement on issues that are relevant to the institution will receive greater public support.

## About the British Seven segments

This report uses our [British Seven](#) segmentation to categorise participants. This is a psychographic, values-based segmentation of the British public which in many cases is more predictive of beliefs on certain issues than other demographics. The seven segments are:

**Progressive Activists:** A passionate and vocal group for whom politics is at the core of their identity, and who seek to correct the historic marginalisation of groups based on their race, gender, sexuality, wealth, and other forms of privilege. They are politically engaged, critical, opinionated, frustrated, cosmopolitan, and environmentally conscious.

**Civic Pragmatists:** A group that cares about others, at home or abroad, and who are turned off by the divisiveness of politics. They are charitable, concerned, exhausted, community-minded, open to compromise, and socially liberal.

**Disengaged Battlers:** A group that feels that they are just keeping their heads above water, and who blame the system for its unfairness. They are tolerant, insecure, disillusioned, disconnected, overlooked, and socially liberal.

**Established Liberals:** A group that has done well and means well towards others, but also sees a lot of good in the status quo. They are comfortable, privileged, cosmopolitan, trusting, confident, and pro-market.

**Loyal Nationals:** A group that is anxious about the threats facing Britain and facing themselves. They are proud, patriotic, tribal, protective, threatened, aggrieved, and frustrated about the gap between the haves and the have-nots.

**Disengaged Traditionalists:** A group that values a well-ordered society, takes pride in hard work, and wants strong leadership that keeps people in line. They are self-reliant, ordered, patriotic, tough-minded, suspicious, and disconnected.

**Backbone Conservatives:** A group who are proud of their country, optimistic about Britain's future and who follow the news, mostly via traditional media sources. They are nostalgic, patriotic, proud, secure, confident, and engaged with politics.

More information about the segments can be found in Annex A.

## Introduction: EDI in the spotlight

The landscape of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) has changed dramatically in recent years. The expectation that EDI is an integral part of business strategy is well ingrained and companies and other institutions invest heavily in trying to get these initiatives right. The murder of George Floyd and the growth of the Black Lives Matter campaign brought a new urgency to work in this area - not just in the United States but around the globe.

EDI practice has not been without controversy. Some have criticised the promotion of contested or highly political concepts such as Critical Race Theory in schools and universities. Others have gone further and suggested that EDI ends up creating special advantages for certain groups and harms the value of meritocracy.

There is no doubt that the explosion of EDI activity to meet growing demand has involved practice of variable quality. As a relatively new field, it can be hindered by a lack of established answers to 'what does good and bad look like' and 'what does the evidence say'. This has occasionally undermined confidence in EDI activity and provided fodder for its critics. Most recently, the resignation of Claudine Gay as Harvard President - following criticisms about a failure to tackle anti-semitic rhetoric on campus and allegations of plagiarism, was seen as a victory for those sceptical of the university's EDI policies and practice.

These debates about EDI are also often connected with wider debates about the role of companies and public institutions in promoting social responsibility and Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) goals. Some businesses have faced strong criticism for appearing to enter into one side of contested Equality, Diversity and Inclusion debates. Regardless of the merits of these criticisms, there is no doubt that companies' diversity initiatives and the ideas that inspire them are subject to far greater scrutiny than ever before.

The conversation about EDI in the UK has tended to be less sharply polarised than in the United States. But even here there have been flashpoints. The debate about how to balance gender identity and sex-based rights has proven, at times, acrimonious. Many column inches have been devoted to the import of symbols and gestures such as 'taking the knee' from the United States. Recently the public sector has seen its diversity and inclusion policies come under intense scrutiny, with government ministers announcing reviews aimed at curtailing more political EDI activities. The war in Gaza has also brought back into focus the institutional responsibilities of universities in balancing the protection of free speech and the promotion of student wellbeing.

Yet there is evidence to suggest that these increasingly heated political arguments, focusing on the most controversial flashpoints, obscure broader and potentially more consensual public attitudes to EDI. As such, More in Common, the University of Oxford and the UCL Policy Lab have spent the past few months speaking to and surveying Britons to better understand their attitudes to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion. Based on nationally representative polling of more than 6,000 people, focus groups across the UK, and an expert roundtable of those involved in EDI debates and practice, this report highlights the findings.

Crucially, public opinion on EDI is very different to how EDI is normally discussed in political debate and the media. The term EDI is well understood: 94 per cent of the public have heard of EDI and more than three in five people (62 per cent) believe that EDI is a good thing. That the number of people saying EDI is a good thing is over five times higher than those who say it's a bad thing, suggests the notion of a country split into equally sized binary camps 'for' and 'against' EDI activity is wide of the mark. Instead, the principle of EDI work and activity is something most Britons view positively, some view neutrally, and with only a much smaller minority believing it is a net negative.

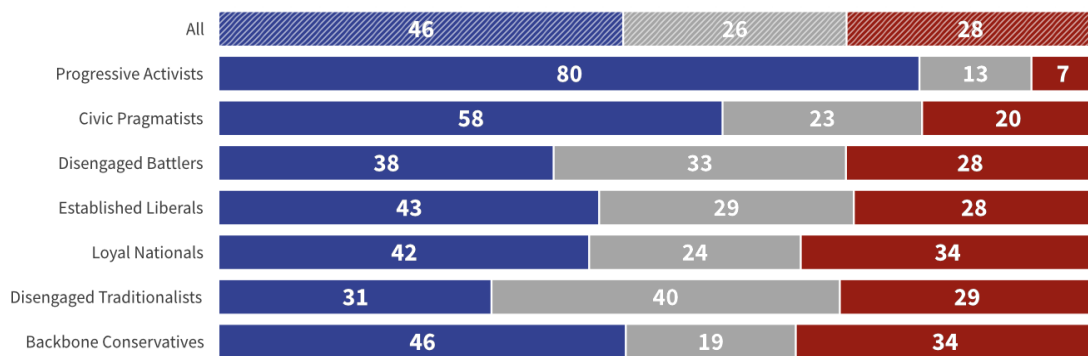


That does not mean that the public have no concerns about EDI activity - and some of those are explored throughout this report. However, the public are, overall, more likely to believe EDI creates fairer outcomes than that it rewards the undeserving. These views are not limited to one particular group but are shared across every one of the British Seven segments (though the more socially conservative segments do express higher levels of concerns about the link between EDI and fairness).

**Figure 1**

**Thinking about the work employers and other institutions such as universities do around equality, diversity and inclusion, which comes closest to your view?**

- Work around diversity equality and inclusion leads to fairer outcomes
- Don't know
- Work around diversity equality and inclusion leads to more unfair outcomes



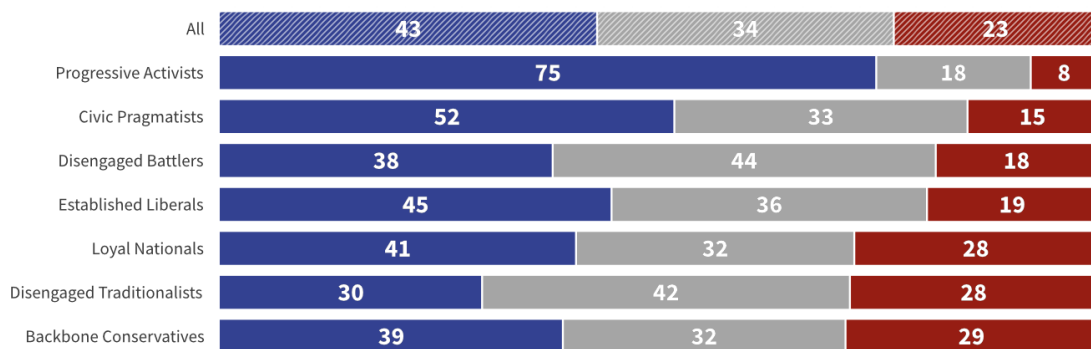
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Where concerns arise over EDI, it tends to be where EDI is invoked to chastise people, where the concerns of certain 'overlooked groups' are ignored or where initiatives aren't relevant to the institution in which they are taking place. But the public do not see diversity initiatives as a zero-sum game. Every one of the British Seven segments is more likely to agree than disagree that EDI initiatives are good for 'people like me.'

**Figure 2**

**Thinking about Equality, Diversity and Inclusion initiatives, which of the following comes closest to your view?**

- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion initiatives are good for people like me
- Don't know
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion initiatives are bad for people like me



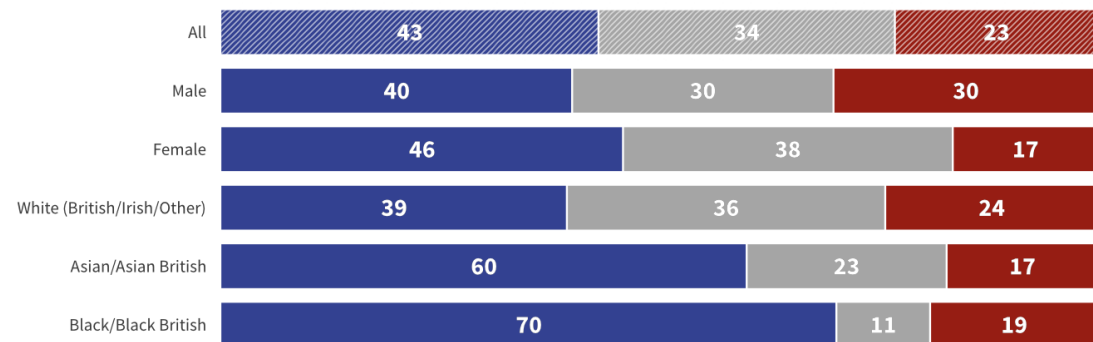
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This consensus also spans all key demographic groups. Across gender, ethnicity, religion, age and educational level people see EDI working in their favour. Those from minority/ underrepresented groups have a particularly positive view of EDI. Women along with Black, Asian and Muslim people are significantly more likely to say EDI initiatives are good for people like them.

**Figure 3**

**Thinking about Equality, Diversity and Inclusion initiatives, which of the following comes closest to your view?**

- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion initiatives are good for people like me
- Don't know
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion initiatives are bad for people like me



Crucially whether someone is supportive of EDI is strongly related to whether or not they have taken part in EDI training or other activities themselves. This speaks to one of our most significant findings from conversations with the public. People are inclined to support diversity and inclusion where it is relevant and actionable in their lives, rather than align themselves with more abstract debates that seek to litigate rights and wrongs at the level of general principle.

This report aims to shed a light on the conditions for sustainable EDI progress in an era of intense polarisation. It is clear, from our study, that there is appetite for a renewed approach to EDI – an ‘EDI 2.0’ - that resonates more with the public: one that strays away from politically-charged frames and which instead focuses on how to help people do their jobs better, enables others to do the same and tackles barriers to opportunity.

## Chapter 1: The public's starting points

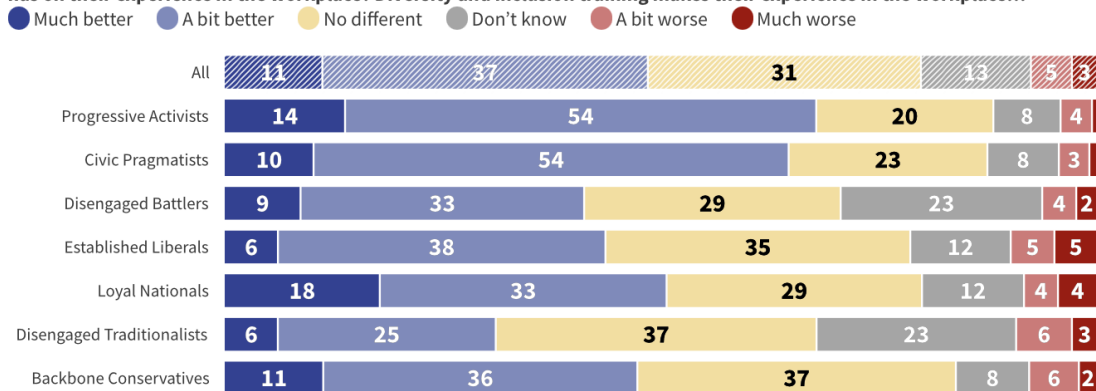
*I think it's a good idea... we're just struggling to find a balance at the minute.*

**Paul, Loyal National, Derby**

The public do not think that equality and diversity are 'solved issues'. Two in three Britons believe that women and those from ethnic minority backgrounds experience discrimination in the workplace sometimes or often. That belief, often informed by experience, is what drives the public's support for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, and their view that diversity training improves minority/underrepresented groups' experiences in the workplace.

**Figure 4**

Thinking about those groups who may experience discrimination, what effect do you think diversity and inclusion training has on their experience in the workplace? Diversity and inclusion training makes their experience in the workplace...



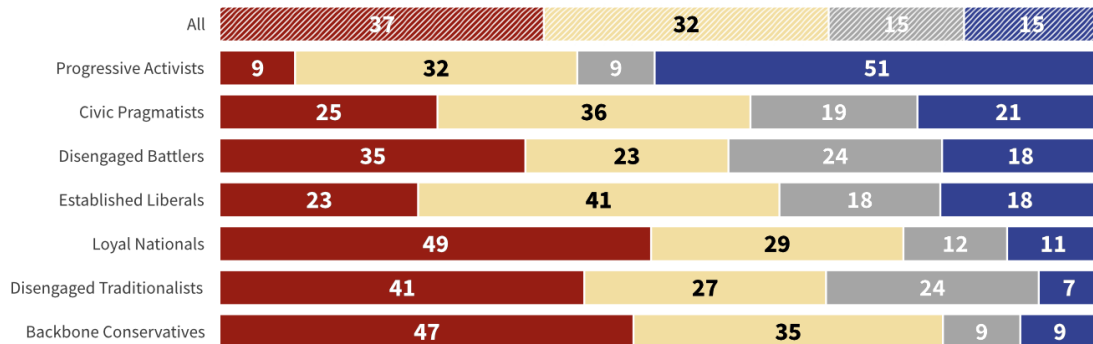
But the public does worry that EDI activities are not always directed towards the right problem. In conversation, Britons explain that some of the EDI activity they've experienced - whether training, policies or hiring practices - felt more worryingly like box-ticking or back-covering than a genuine attempt to tackle discrimination. In focus groups, there was a particular hostility to online or pre-programmed EDI training packages which people described clicking through and which rarely felt tailored to their specific workplaces or the challenges they face. People far prefer EDI activity that is in person and, crucially, feels part of a two-way discussion.

*It is a tick box situation now just to cover companies' backs.*

**Lauren, Loyal National, Newcastle**

**Figure 5**

**Which of the following comes close to your view?** ● Workplaces focus too much on diversity and inclusion  
 ● Workplaces have the right level of focus on diversity and inclusion ● Don't know  
 ● Workplaces do not focus enough on diversity and inclusion



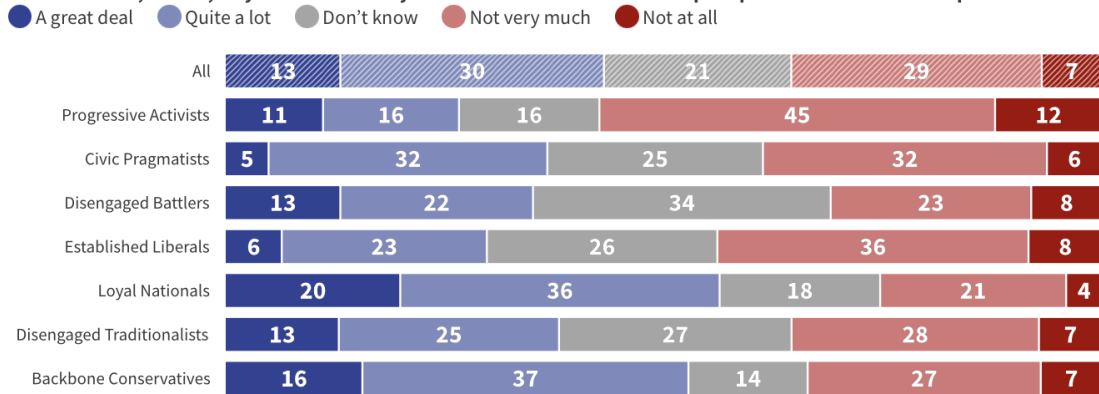
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While there is significant support for EDI across the population, some segments worry that workplaces aren't always getting the balance right. Loyal Nationals - a socially conservative group who best reflect the group of voters who switched from Labour to the Conservatives at the 2019 election - are particularly likely to say that workplaces spend too much, rather than too little, time on diversity and inclusion. Along with other socially conservative segments of the population, they do not object to EDI per se, but wish to see it balanced with other workplace priorities. For that reason, EDI work is likely to be better received when workplaces make the direct link between a fairer, more inclusive environment and the goals of the institution - whether that is attracting the best talent, appealing to a broader customer/visitor base or ensuring students can reach their potential.

For others, worries about the fairness of EDI activities manifest in concerns that EDI is being used to excuse poor performance. A majority of both Loyal Nationals and Backbone Conservatives believe that EDI gets used as an excuse for poor performance in the workplace. Without attempting to assess the validity of this concern, its existence suggests workplaces need to do more to explain and demonstrate how their approach to EDI is about improving performance and output rather than excusing underperformance.

**Figure 6**

To what extent, if at all, do you think diversity issues are used as an excuse for poor performance in the workplace?



*It's like a snowflake culture now where you can't say anything without people getting offended.*

**Lauren, Loyal National, Newcastle**

But the most prominent criticism of EDI activity among the public is that diversity policies and practice can be used to silence, or even to chastise people. Britons, from socially liberal and conservative segments alike, describe a sense that in EDI training sessions - and occasionally in the workplace more broadly - they have to bite their tongue, wanting to ask questions but worried about the consequences of doing so. This can lead to a feeling that some EDI activities undermine the opportunity for open and frank discussion or make people feel excessively uncertain, even anxious, in the workplace.

There are some stark findings in this regard. In our quantitative polling, seven in ten Britons reported that they believe people are made to feel stupid for not understanding the latest way to talk about diversity issues. This notion that people do not have the space to develop their knowledge may risk creating a backlash to EDI among the public. Where EDI activity is perceived as motivated to expose people for not being versed in the latest social codes, it will not have the intended effect on those it aims to persuade.

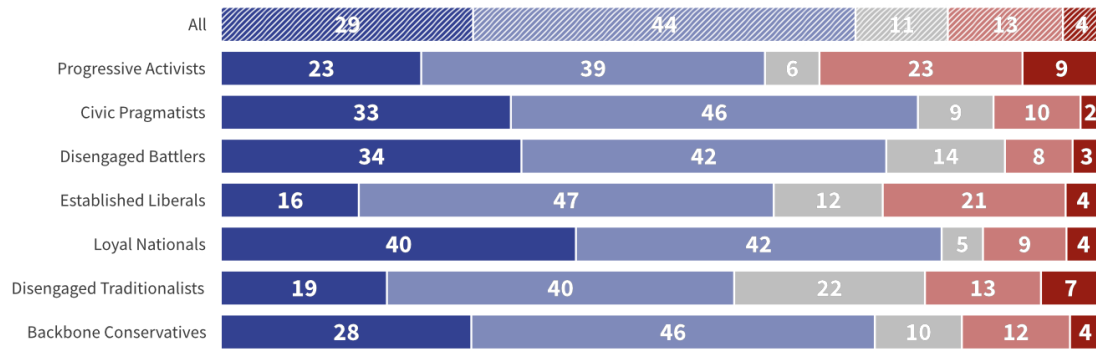
*Some people are just waiting for someone to make a mistake or say something that they disagree with to jump on it straight away.*

**Zach, Loyal National, Sunderland**

**Figure 7**

**For each of the following, please say how often you think they occur: [People are made to feel stupid for not understanding the latest way to talk about diversity issues]**

● Often ● Sometimes ● Don't know ● Rarely ● Never



Nonetheless people are largely positive about EDI in practice. Most who have participated in diversity and inclusion training in their workplace found it relevant and helpful, and they felt free to share their opinions. This extends to segments who are more sceptical about the idea of diversity and inclusion in general. Loyal Nationals and Backbone Conservatives are the segments most likely to say that society has gone too far on diversity and inclusion and that workplaces focus too much on this. However, even within these segments, those who have recently taken part in diversity training are less likely to hold this view. Loyal Nationals, in fact, are one of the segments more likely to consider the training they did relevant, and more likely than most other segments to say diversity and inclusion training made their workplace a better place to work. Indeed, within all the socially conservative segments, a majority of the people who had received diversity and inclusion training said they found it helpful.

This further highlights the difference in public reception between EDI in practice and theoretical debates about EDI. High profile stories of misjudged EDI initiatives undoubtedly undermine confidence. But when it comes to what most people actually experience in their own workplaces, the reality is very different.

**Figure 8**

Thinking about the training you took part in, which of the following best describes your experience?

- I found the training helpful, and my colleagues did too
- I found the training helpful, but my colleagues found it unhelpful
- Don't know
- I found the training unhelpful, but it was helpful for my colleagues
- I found the training unhelpful, and my colleagues did too



In conversation most Britons see ‘good’ EDI as concerned with general decency, treating people well, being polite, and having the opportunity to learn about people different to themselves.

The lesson for those with responsibility for EDI is to keep practice grounded in the day-to-day and tied to basic notions of decency, rather than reaching towards more contested or abstract debates.

*It's about respecting everyone that works around you and working together.*

**Paul, Loyal National, Derby**

## Chapter 2: An effective approach

### Context

A focus on the practical and everyday speaks to a wider point. People believe that their workplaces should be places where everyone is treated with dignity and respect. But they do not think that the workplace is generally the right environment to litigate contentious issues that are not directly related to their work. Instead, the median public view is that you go to work to do your job, not to express your political opinion or to pursue a broader cause. Indeed, almost a quarter of Britons would feel uncomfortable expressing political viewpoints at work at all (More in Common, 2021).

Many people in the workforce, therefore, see EDI as no different to the fact that they might wear a suit or a uniform or work the hours outlined in their contract. As long as the rules are clear and fair and directed to the proper functioning of the workplace, they have no difficulty with them. The public see no problem with the idea that there are things that you can do and say outside of work that wouldn't be acceptable inside the workplace.

This distinction between 'in work' and 'out of work' also resonates when people consider whether or not grossly offensive comments should cost someone their job. Nearly two thirds of Britons consider it acceptable for someone to lose their job for expressing grossly offensive views in the workplace, and only 17 per cent disagree. However, fewer than a third think that you should lose your job if those grossly offensive views are expressed outside the workplace.

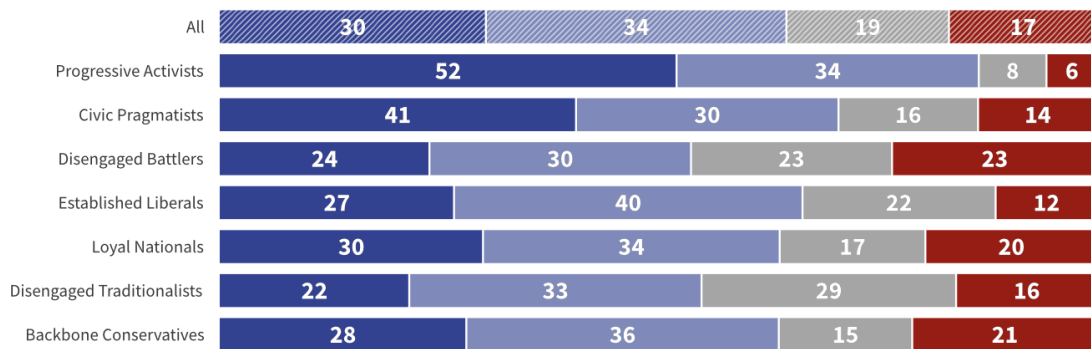
According to this way of thinking, workplaces, including institutions such as universities, should consider how they reflect the distinction between what happens 'in-situ' and 'out-of-situ'. Clearly some conduct will require action regardless of where it takes place. In other cases the universality of social media can make such distinctions more difficult to maintain. Even so, EDI activity will likely be better received if it reflects the public expectation that workplaces or places of study will have different rules of conduct to what takes place outside of them.



### Figure 9

Which of the following comes close to your view?

- It is acceptable for someone to lose their job for expressing grossly offensive views either in the workplace or outside of work
- It is acceptable for someone to lose their job for expressing grossly offensive views in the workplace, but not for expressing them outside of work
- Don't know
- It is not acceptable for someone to lose their job for expressing grossly offensive views whether in the workplace or outside of work



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The public also wants discussions about EDI to be tailored to the specific needs of their workplace. As already discussed, EDI training can be perceived as generic and removed from everyday situations. Suggestions for improving this which emerge from focus groups include covering real life examples and bringing in authentic stories. Emphasising human connections may help reframe discussions away from ideological or philosophical debates. In the eyes of the public, training should first and foremost be about enabling workers to get the job done well and to create a better environment for customers, visitors, or students. Again, it seems the lesson here is that the more grounded in people’s everyday work EDI training is, the better it will be received.

*We're just here to work, we can leave the politics out the window... It's a fine line between pushing the message that's positive and... individual agendas taking over what should just be a workplace setting.*

**Ray, Progressive Activist, Bristol**

Beyond training, EDI appears to be best received when it is embedded directly into the work of an organisation. EDI does not need to be constantly badged as a stand-alone activity to be effective. In fact, the public tend to think organisations best promote equality and inclusion when they listen to the experiences of employees and put policies in place to support them.

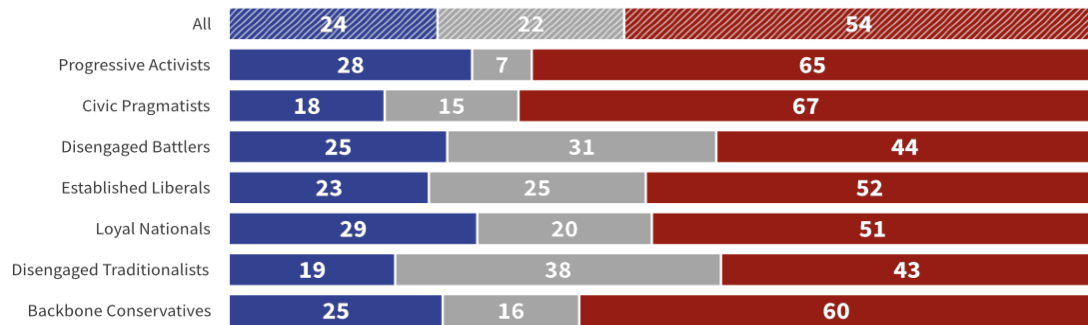
## Language

The language used to communicate EDI matters. Politically-charged terms like ‘woke’ are widely considered unhelpful in helping people understand or resolve issues of discrimination or disadvantage in society. While terms like ‘woke’ and ‘culture wars’ make for good copy in newspapers or rhetoric in political speeches, they have very little purchase among the public at large.

**Figure 10**

**Which comes closest to your view?**

- Terms like “woke” are helpful in understanding and resolving issues of discrimination and disadvantage in society
- Don’t know
- Terms like “woke” are unhelpful in understanding and resolving issues of discrimination and disadvantage in society



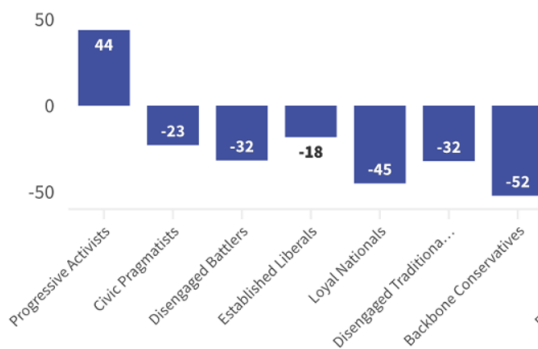
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Perhaps the most pronounced example of how poor framing undermines support for EDI is the term ‘white privilege’. Asked about whether the term ‘white privilege’ is helpful in understanding the advantages white people can sometimes have over those from ethnic minority communities, the public overwhelmingly disagree. That disagreement extends across six of the British Seven segments - including those who are more socially liberal, with the Progressive Activist segment the sole exception. Looking at different age groups shows a similar pattern with every age group more likely to say the framing is more unhelpful than helpful, except for 18–24-year-olds who are almost evenly divided.

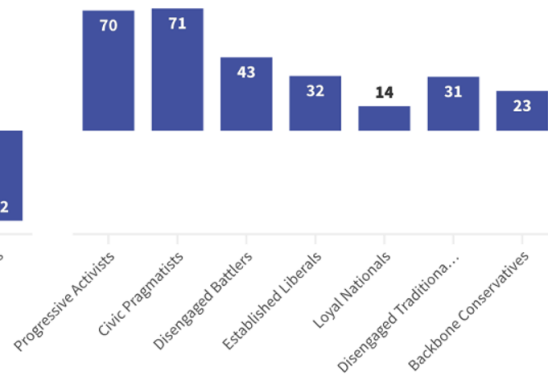
However, when Britons are asked if ‘there are still areas of British life where those from ethnic minority communities experience discrimination compared to those who are white’ there is far greater agreement and this spans every single segment, including the most socially conservative. These two different frames - that seek to express very similar notions of the challenges those from ethnic minority communities face - receive a very different reception from the public.

**Figure 11**

**The term 'white privilege' is useful because it helps to understand the advantages that white people can sometimes have over those from ethnic minority communities**



**There are still areas of British life where those from ethnic minority communities experience discrimination compared to those who are white**



**% who agree more with first than second statement**

1. The term 'white privilege' is useful because it helps to understand the advantages that white people can sometimes have over those from ethnic minority communities
2. The term 'white privilege' is not useful because it is divisive and doesn't account for the disadvantages that some white people face

**% who agree more with first than second statement**

1. There are still areas of British life where those from ethnic minority communities experience discrimination compared to those who are white
2. There are very few or no areas of British life where those from ethnic minority communities experience discrimination compared to those who are white.



November 2023

*I wouldn't think it's white privilege because this country is historically a white country. It's more the opposite - black inequality as opposed to white privilege... They say it's a lot harder for black people to get a job for example... which is completely wrong.*

**Dave, Bristol**

Focus group conversations with Britons cast light on why this framing matters. The term 'white privilege' is taken by many white respondents to imply that they have had lives free of hardship. In discussions with white people from working class communities, a common response to the term is to say 'I've never had privilege in my life'. In short, this framing is received as being dismissive of the struggles that many white people face. In contrast, most Britons are aware that racism still exists and often cite examples of seeing, hearing, or experiencing it in their communities. Moreover, they agree that tackling it is important.

*I feel like [racism] is quite a big thing and people dont really want to talk about it but, unless you look and feel like a certain kind of person, you tend to get excluded by society.*

**Rafia, Rochdale**

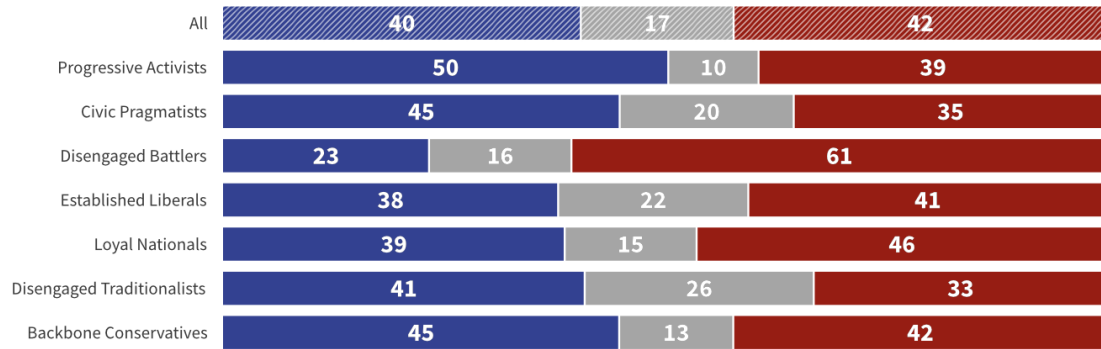
That importance of framing extends beyond the more controversial debates. For instance, when asking whether it is more important to protect free speech than to protect people from 'being offended', protection of free speech is seen as far more important. If the same question is asked but with 'being offended' replaced by 'hate speech' the public is more divided, albeit with a narrow plurality still concerned about the need to protect free speech.

In building effective approaches to EDI, practitioners and advocates would be best advised to consider whether the framings and approaches they use help to persuade, or risk unwittingly undermining support for inclusive approaches.

**Figure 12**

**Which of the following comes closest to your view?**

- It is more important to protect people from hate speech than it is to protect free speech
- It is more important to protect free speech than it is to protect people from hate speech
- Don't know



November 2023

## Merit

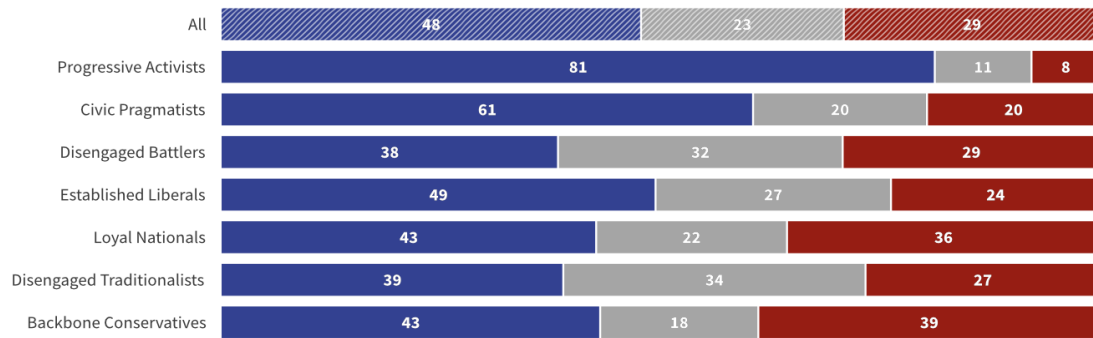
The public is much more likely to believe that attempts to promote EDI result in extending opportunities to those who deserve it, rather than to those who don't. However, while a plurality of each segment shares this view, there are significant differences in the strength of agreement. Eighty-one per cent of Progressive Activists believe that EDI extends opportunities to those that deserve it, but Loyal Nationals and Backbone Conservatives are only narrowly more likely to agree than disagree - by margins of 7 and 4 points respectively. At least one in five members of every segment, bar Progressive Activists, share a concern that diversity initiatives are not providing opportunity on merit.

Britons tend to agree that minorities have historically faced greater barriers to success in education, the workplace and in interactions with the state. However, a few perceive that some EDI activity is anti-meritocratic. Widely shared newspaper stories such as recent revelations that the [Royal Air Force](#) effectively discriminated against white men in recruitment have lent some credence to these views.

**Figure 13**

**Thinking about attempts to promote diversity, equality and inclusion, which comes closest to your view?**

- Attempts to promote diversity, equality and inclusion extend opportunities to those who deserve it
- Don't know
- Attempts to promote diversity, equality and inclusion give opportunities to those who don't deserve it



February 2024

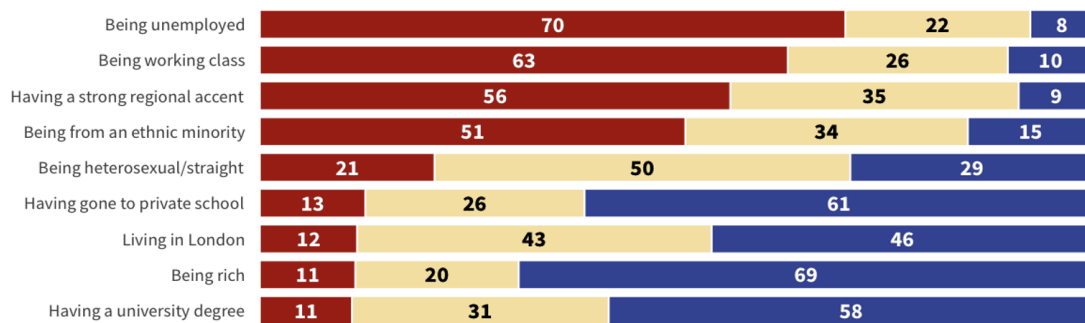
Tackling this perception requires advocates of EDI initiatives to explain the difference between outreach initiatives and so-called ‘positive discrimination’ or ‘positive action’. EDI advocates will need to go further to avoid the appearance (or indeed practice) of ‘positive discrimination’ in institutional EDI work.

At the same time, institutions would be more likely to convince the public if they demonstrated how EDI activities actively promote merit and remove barriers to realising talent across the population. That includes EDI activity aimed at addressing educational disadvantages faced by white working class boys or tackling discrimination against those with regional accents. Those from working class communities express frustration that while EDI activity may benefit those from racial, religious or sexual minorities, class disadvantage is often ignored. Previous research from More in Common and the UCL Policy Lab found that 63 per cent of people believed that those from working class backgrounds were treated less seriously by people in power, and 56 per cent said the same about those with a regional accent. Diversity activity that is seen to correct imbalances across lines of disadvantage is more likely to counter ‘anti-meritocratic’ narratives that surround EDI.

**Figure 14**

**For each of the following attributes please say whether you think it means it is likely that people in positions of power or authority take you more seriously, less seriously or makes no difference?**

- Less seriously
- Makes no difference
- More seriously



August 2023

## Enabling understanding

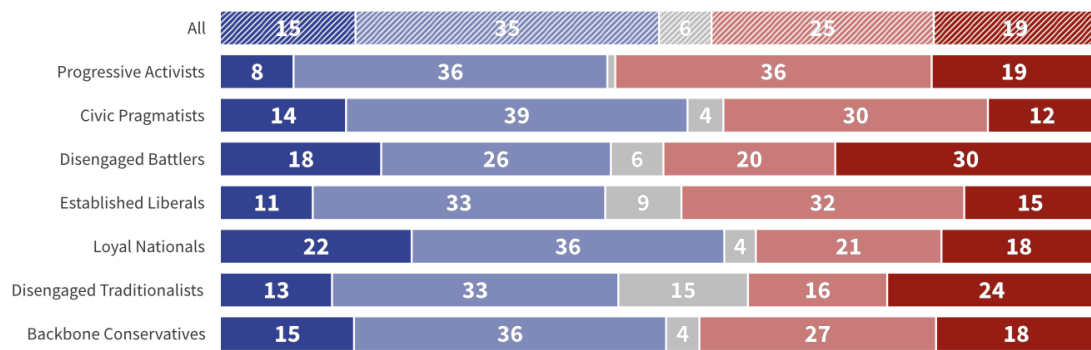
Many Britons find conversations around diversity and inclusion difficult. Half of the public (including over four in ten among every segment) personally worry about saying the wrong thing on diversity issues.

Against this backdrop, workers look to their employers for guidance. In focus groups, Britons express a desire for EDI activity which helps to build understanding. The public would also like to see more ways to resolve disagreements around EDI issues without having to resort to escalation through formal routes. In conversations, the public point to support from peers and colleagues in navigating concerns - including through employee networks that exist in their workplaces.

**Figure 15**

For each of the following, please say how often you think they occur: [I personally worry about saying the wrong thing on diversity issues]

● Often ● Sometimes ● Don't know ● Rarely ● Never



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What is clear from almost every conversation with the public is that most Britons actively try to avoid causing offence. However, the fear of saying the wrong thing can lead to people ‘opting out’ or shutting themselves off from discussions on EDI entirely. For some, anecdotally, it seems that a perceived inability to raise legitimate concerns leaves them resentful, defensive or, in some cases, hostile to EDI work.

In terms of building public support for EDI, this places a premium on initiatives that are perceived as seeking to foster understanding, curiosity and which build people’s confidence in engaging with these topics - rather than lecturing or, worse, catching people out.

## Effective messengers

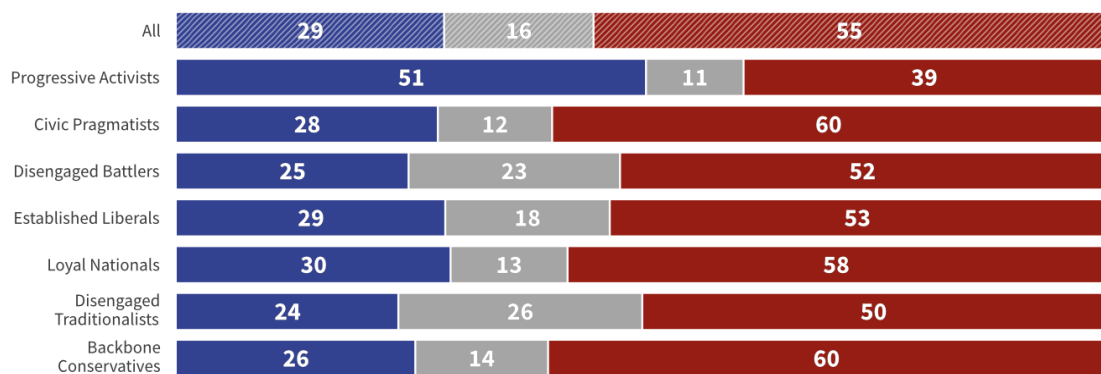
The strongest champions of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion - and those who are likely to dominate EDI roles - may not always be its most effective messengers. Progressive Activists are outliers in their attitudes to diversity and inclusion. Progressive Activists are the only group who say that they feel bad when they see the Union Jack flying or that ‘English pride’ represents racist beliefs, and the only group who believe the term ‘white privilege’ is useful. Across a range of issues, the starting point of the Progressive Activist segment is often very different to the people EDI activity is trying to reach.

The passionate commitment of Progressive Activists, although clearly welcome in some circles, can represent an obstacle to productive conversation. They are the segment most likely to think some issues are so contentious it is difficult to disagree politely, and the only segment who consider it helpful to criticise people for making mistakes on diversity issues. Given that most of the public think people are unfairly criticised for making mistakes on diversity issues, it is critical that EDI conversations are conducted with care and tact.

**Figure 16**

Which of the following comes closest to your view?

- It is helpful to criticise people for making mistakes on diversity issues so that they can learn from them
- Don't know
- It is unhelpful to criticise people for making mistakes on diversity issues as it is more likely to make them feel embarrassed or stupid



Indeed, EDI initiatives may be most impactful when they are not driven solely by the voices of Progressive Activists. Instead, those leading or overseeing EDI should seek to bring in a range of different perspectives - including the concerns of more socially conservative groups. A judicious balance should be struck between giving voice to people’s lived experiences, mobilising the enthusiasm of Progressive Activists and building coalitions with ‘not the usual suspects’ who can reach a different audience.

## Chapter 3: Role of institutions

### Taking a stance

Debates around EDI are not limited to employees, customers or service users - but also extend to what role companies and institutions should have in publicly championing issues which have a political or cultural dimension.

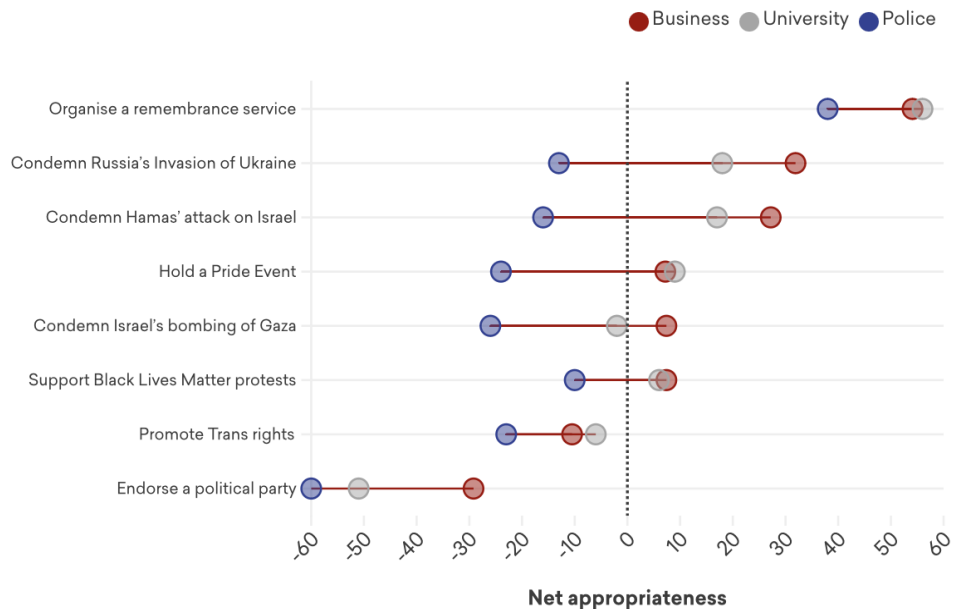
Such debates have included whether it is appropriate for police forces to attend pride marches, for Starbucks to continue operating in the Middle East and the extent to which heritage institutions should acknowledge the role of slavery in funding their establishment.

One school of thought suggests that companies and civic institutions have a responsibility to take a lead in actively advocating on issues of equality and diversity. Others argue that such a role inevitably compromises the neutrality of institutions and detracts from their missions.

Unsurprisingly, the public do not give a binary answer to whether organisations should engage in advocacy work. Instead, it depends on which organisation and which issue.

**Figure 17**

**For each of the following please say whether you think it is appropriate for a [business/university/police force] to:**



The public are less likely to support police engaging in cultural debates than other institutions. On almost all the issues tested, from holding a Pride Event to condemning Hamas' attack on Israel, the public do not believe the police should go near politics.



Previous More in Common research has confirmed this strong desire for the police to stay out of the political arena, and highlighted concerns that they occasionally engage in cultural issues at the expense of focusing on their core role of public safety. In that earlier research, four in ten (41 per cent) reported believing that the police are 'more interested in being woke than solving crimes' while only two in ten (23 per cent) disagreed. The numbers are even more pronounced among socially conservative segments.

None of that is to say the public do not want the police to have regard for EDI. In fact, most Britons will readily recognise that police failings in the investigation of the murder of Stephen Lawrence or the crimes of Stephen Port were caused by a failure of equality and inclusion. But the public tend to feel the police sometimes get the specific emphasis wrong. A large number report thinking EDI activity should be in aid of the police doing their core job - preventing and tackling crime - rather than in a more general cause.

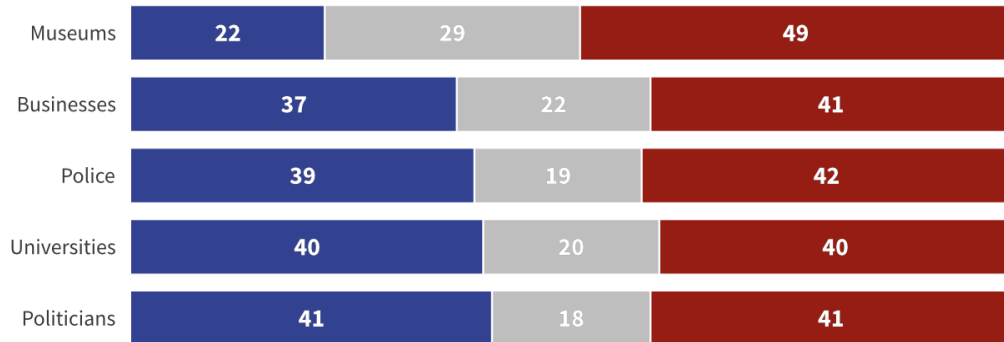
The public are far more permissive when it comes to what issue businesses and universities should feel able to speak out on. On balance, the public think it is appropriate for businesses and universities to make statements such as condemning the invasion of Ukraine or Hamas' attacks, to hold Pride events and to support Black Lives Matter protests. There are, however, some limits here. The public are less supportive, for example, of universities engaging in potentially controversial and polarised debates, such as condemning Israel's bombing in Gaza, or of businesses and universities actively promoting trans rights. The distinction here appears to be that the public are more comfortable with businesses and universities engaging in activities which, while sometimes political in nature, have a high degree of consensus - whether that is condemning terror or celebrating equality. But it is not seen as appropriate for public institutions to engage in activity that tips over into active promotion of one side or another of a more contentious debate. The public are particularly opposed to police, businesses or universities engaging in activity that may be seen to endorse a single political party.

Beyond these general principles the public do not believe that work on EDI should detract from institutions' core missions. While the public are somewhat split on whether universities and business are too 'woke' (about a third think they respectively are and are not), museums in particular are seen as spending too much time taking part in debates about equality and diversity issues. In polling and conversations with the public, many express concerns that EDI efforts distract museums from their core purpose of educating people about our history and culture and building understanding about the past. The public are sceptical that the purpose of museums is specifically to atone for historic wrongs or to apply the values of modern society to the past.

**Figure 18**

For each of the following, which statement comes closest to your view:

- They should spend more time taking part in debates about equality and diversity issues
- Don't know
- They should spend less time taking part in debates about equality and diversity issues



Instead, the public favour a more balanced approach that seeks to present a more honest and complete picture about the past. Few Britons favour ignoring historic injustices or overlooking the means by which historic monuments or stately homes were built, but they want these issues to be placed in their proper context. When asked about how we should treat historical monuments and artefacts associated with the slave trade, the majority support the ‘retain and explain approach’ being championed by organisations such as the National Trust. The public felt that not only was this more equitable, it was more honest too.

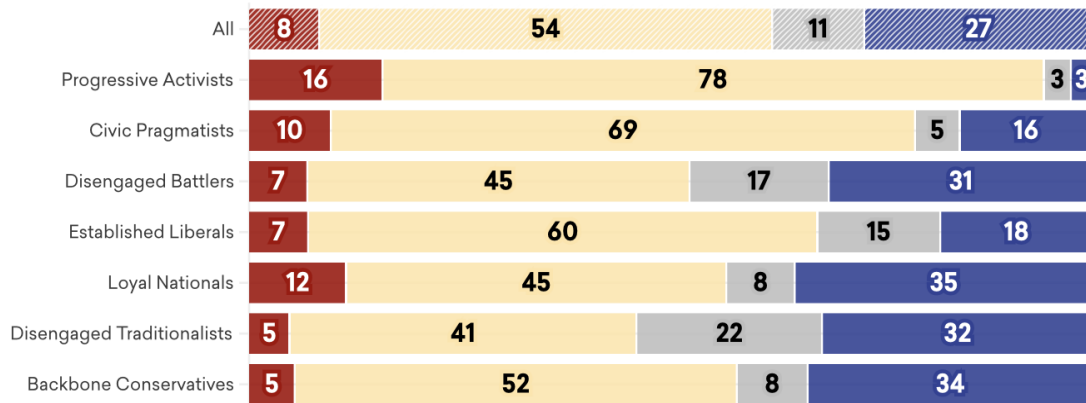
*I'm not sure you should tear it down, but it should be noted that it is a notable party of history and it is a negative... it is something that was wrong and it needs to be known.*

**Jamie, Loyal National, Sunderland**

**Figure 19**

In recent years there has been a debate about how we should treat historical artefacts, statues and landmarks (such as stately homes) that were either funded by the proceeds of slavery or which celebrate people who made their money from the slave trade. Thinking about those statues or landmarks, which statement comes closest to your view?

- We should pull them down
- We should keep them up but provide an explanation for visitors about how they were funded
- Don't know
- We should do nothing and leave them as they are



In contrast, when discussing recent attempts to revise Roald Dahl books by removing phrases deemed to be derogatory, both socially liberal and socially conservative segments were united in thinking the publisher had acted inappropriately and that it was wrong to alter classic works of fiction. Again the distinction in what is acceptable to the public is between providing context and information around historical norms and perceived attempts to expunge them.

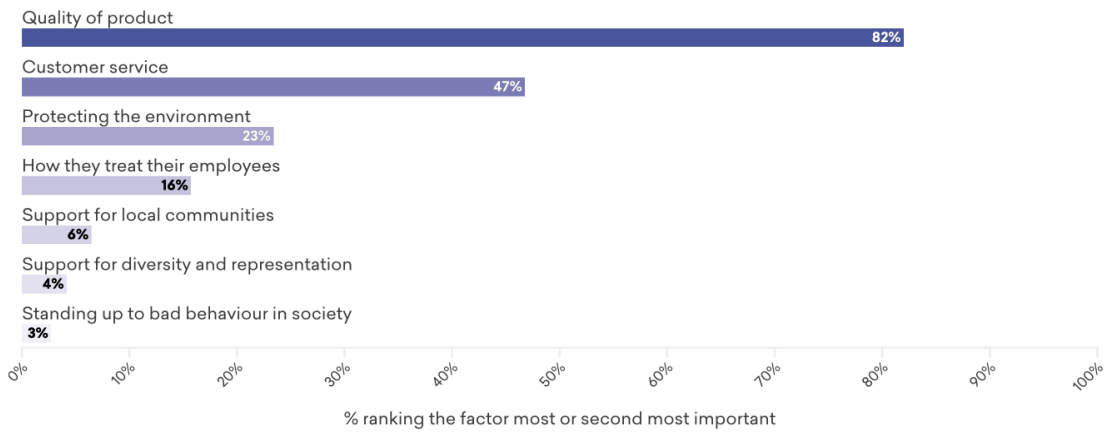
*You can't just completely remove it... and rewrite books that are loved by generations just because some people have gotten offended by it.*

**Hannah, Loyal National, Sunderland**

Beyond museums and cultural heritage, the public want organisations, and in particular businesses, to prioritise providing a good product and service (and to treat their employees well). The public are particularly cynical about those institutions which are seen to champion EDI objectives publicly but fail in their responsibilities to customers and staff. EDI work that starts first and foremost with the interests of those two groups in mind is likely to command far greater support.

## Figure 20

When buying a product from a company, which of the following are most important to you?



None of this means institutions must fall silent. In many cases, employees value employers having ‘purpose’. That means institutions should feel confident to forge a path on issues they judge important and relevant to their remit but should avoid being seen to take sides in more contested or divisive debates.

## Free speech

Free speech matters to Britons. Eighty-eight per cent regard the right to free speech as one of the most important rights in society and it is tied closely to people’s conceptions of democracy. The public also believe that free speech goes hand in hand with EDI, in that it allows people to express their point of view as well as understand the views of others.

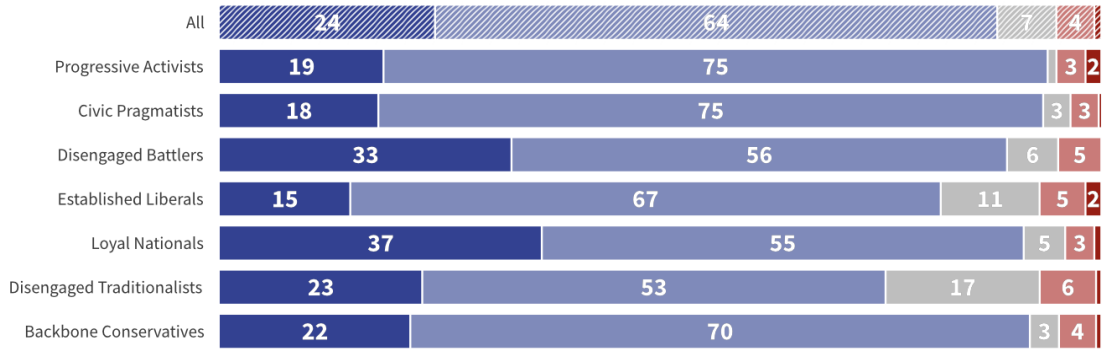
*It's good to see what works well for them and what may be more difficult. That stops you from being ignorant by providing you the opportunity to learn more about it.*

**Andy, Progressive Activist, Bristol**

**Figure 21**

Regarding the ‘right to free speech’, which statement comes closest to your view:

- The right to free speech is the most important right in society
- The right to free speech is one of the most important rights in society
- Don't know
- The right to free speech is not that important in society
- The right to free speech is not important at all in society



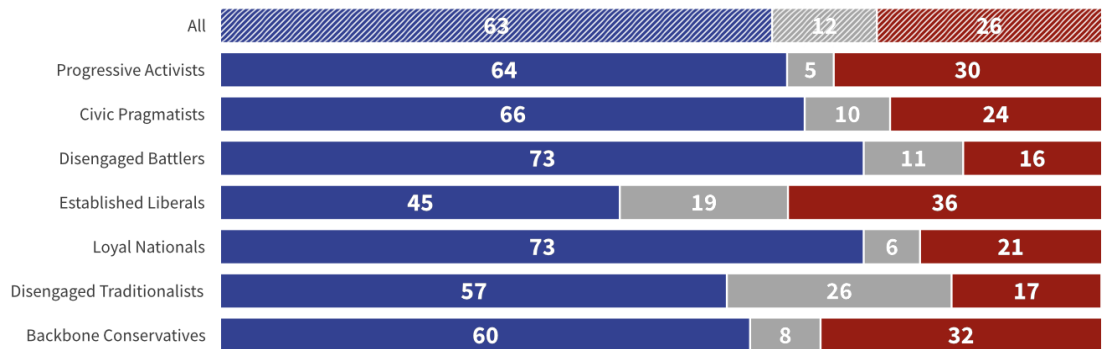
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However, six in ten Britons believe that free speech is under threat in the UK today. The feeling that free speech is under threat extends across all seven of the British Seven segments, though they view the threat somewhat differently. Progressive Activists are more likely to perceive threats coming from the government – for instance, restricting the right to protest. Loyal Nationals, on the other hand, are more likely to see the threat emerging from political correctness and attempts to limit what people can and can't say. Concerns that free speech is under threat represent a challenge to EDI activity.

**Figure 22**

Thinking about free speech in the UK, which of the following statements do you most agree with:

- Free speech is under threat in the UK today
- Don't know
- Free speech is not under threat in the UK today



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*It's not about limiting free speech, I think it's about making sure people are aware that freedom of speech doesn't mean freedom from consequences.*

**Flo, Progressive Activist, Bristol**

At the same time Britons don't view free speech through the lens of American First Amendment absolutism and instead see free speech as sitting alongside a series of other rights and responsibilities. People do not believe that free speech means freedom from consequences as highlighted by their willingness to see workplace norms on what is and isn't acceptable enforced. The public also does not believe that speech and words are always harmless. In fact 61 per cent say the statement 'sometimes words can be as dangerous as physical violence', reflects their view better than 'words can never be as dangerous as physical violence'. The tendency to agree that words can be as harmful as physical violence extends across all segments.

Nowhere has the debate about free speech received more attention than on university campuses. Issues such as trigger warnings, sensitivity checks and above all no-platforming have been the subject of significant scrutiny and debate. However, despite the positioning of no-platforming as a culture-war battleground, public attitudes around this issue are reasonably convergent. A majority of every segment think it is more important that university students are exposed to a range of different views than that they are protected from views they may find offensive. In fact, the groups most likely to think this are the most socially liberal (Progressive Activists and Civic Pragmatists).

*They should be able to open their minds and appreciate that everyone has a different opinion. You might not agree with it but it's good to hear that.*

**Paula, Loyal National, Sunderland**

That level of public support across ideological lines for exposing students to a differing range of views goes some way to explaining the outcry among the media when university authorities or students unions seek to prevent speaker events or debates. Yet it is also clear that far fewer of these episodes actually cut through to the public than might be assumed given the level of coverage. However, in principle at least, the recent Higher Education and Free Speech Act broadly seems to align with median public opinion.

### Figure 23

**Thinking about university students, which comes closest to your view:**

- It is more important that students are exposed to a range of different views , even if they may find them offensive
- Don't know
- It is more important that students are protected from views that they might find offensive , even if it means they don't get exposed to a range of different views

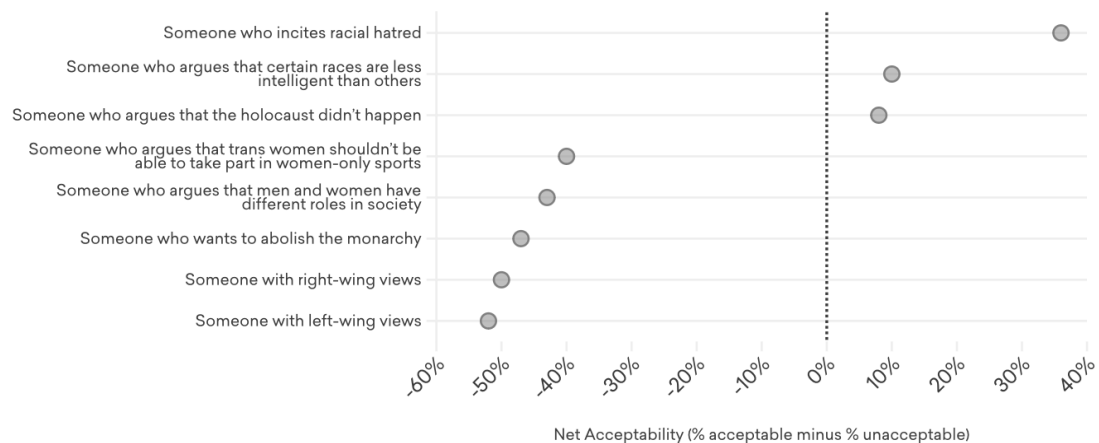


Once more, the public's views are not wholly clear cut. Whether no-platforming is acceptable to the public depends on exactly what the speaker is saying. All segments are more likely than not to think it would be acceptable to prevent someone from speaking in a public debate if they are inciting racial

hatred, and most segments extend this to Holocaust deniers. Yet if the divisive views expressed are instead that men and women have different roles in society or that the monarchy should be abolished, all segments are more likely to see no-platforming the speaker as unacceptable rather than acceptable. There is almost no support for the idea that it is acceptable to no-platform speakers on the basis they have left or right-wing views.

**Figure 24**

“No platforming” refers to preventing someone from taking part in a public debate or meeting, due to them holding views perceived as unacceptable or offensive. For each of the following speakers, please say whether you think it would be acceptable or unacceptable to prevent them from speaking in a public debate or meeting:



Source: November 2023 • Net responding acceptable minus unacceptable

The implications for organisational EDI policies are that institutions - particularly public institutions - should start from a position of creating opportunities to expose students or exhibition visitors to a range of different views, with people being allowed to speak their mind. But this doesn't mean that attitudes to free speech should be binary. There are clearly occasions when the public think it is appropriate to restrict free speech in the interests of safety or public protection.

The public also take a different view to free speech in most everyday workplaces than to free speech in institutions which they believe are designed to facilitate debate, such as universities or museums. The strongest approaches to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion will recognise this distinction and better command public confidence by enabling opportunities for discussion and fostering understanding, not closing down debate.

## Conclusion

It is hard to find any substantial evidence that there is a culture war over the concept or principle of EDI in the UK - other than at a hyper-elite level. Most of the public think that EDI is good and believe that, done well, it leads to fairer outcomes that benefit people like them. Where they have concerns it is about the 'how' of EDI and getting the balance right. In short, there is appetite across the spectrum for an effective, evidence-based and judicious approach to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion.

The public's attitudes toward EDI, like the range of views among practitioners, are nuanced. While there is broad recognition of the importance of the principles of equality, diversity and inclusion, Britons have concerns about the effectiveness of current approaches. There is a need to explain the relationship between EDI and foundational principles such as merit and free speech.

To command a breadth of public support, EDI strategies must be contextually grounded, refrain from engaging in contested or abstract debates, and activate coalitions in its messaging. Above all, EDI should focus on fostering understanding and curiosity, and avoid being seen to shut down debate or censor those who may not be as knowledgeable. The following principles provide some guidance for what an EDI 2.0, that does all that, could look like.

- 1. Tailor EDI activities to the employer or institution:** What might be appropriate for an international law firm is unlikely to be appropriate for a distribution warehouse or a university. EDI activities command greater public support when they are grounded in people's jobs and help people do those jobs well.
- 2. Focus on people not contested concepts:** The best training humanises EDI by utilising people's real-world experience and stories. Appealing to a shared sense of decency and fairness can reach a wide audience. In contrast, debates over highly contested political concepts are less likely to command support.
- 3. Build a culture of curiosity and generosity – not one of criticism:** Many Britons worry about saying the wrong thing on EDI and think that people are unfairly criticised for mistakes. While there are occasions where firmness will be needed, and intolerance called out, in many cases EDI initiatives will be better served by creating spaces where people are assured they won't be punished for making honest mistakes or asking questions.
- 4. Distinguish between inside and outside the workplace/ institution:** While social media has somewhat blurred the distinction between what happens within the workplace and outside of it, the public still makes the distinction - particularly around what it is and isn't appropriate to say. The public are much more likely to believe that codes of conduct should be enforced in work than elsewhere.
- 5. Embrace merit:** The public tends to believe that EDI activity leads to fairer and more deserving outcomes. EDI practitioners should build on that by highlighting the ways EDI reduces barriers to opportunity and ensures a more level playing field.
- 6. Use inclusive framings:** Ironically one of the greatest challenges to EDI emerges when exclusive frames and language are used - in turn creating 'us vs them' divides and minimising the challenges faced by particular groups. Avoiding these frames and showing how EDI activity benefits the whole of society, not just particular groups, is important.
- 7. Think about messengers and coalitions:** EDI progress cannot happen through one segment of society alone. While Progressive Activists are the most enthusiastic and committed to EDI,



broadening the cast of messengers to include people from different parts of the ideological spectrum will build broader support.

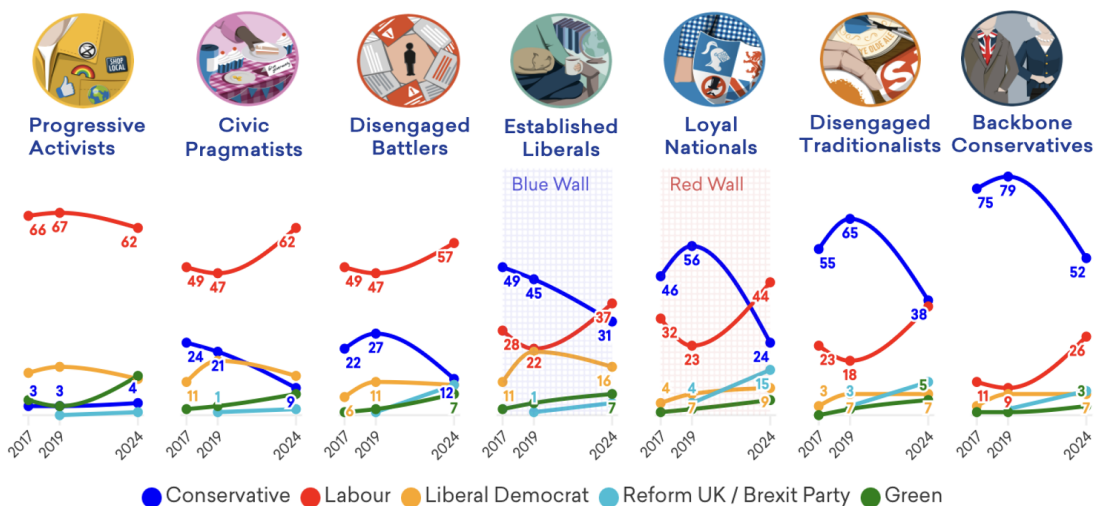
- 8. EDI and free speech go hand in hand:** The British public believe that free speech is an important right, but they do not think that right is absolute. The public has a more sophisticated understanding of the relationship between EDI and free speech than debates imply. While Britons want young people in particular to be exposed to a range of voices, they also appreciate that extreme forms of speech can create dangers.
- 9. Where possible, retain and explain:** Museums were the institutions that the public felt were most likely to have too great a focus on 'being woke'. While museums should rightly engage in EDI activity, Britons favour an approach that provides a 'warts and all' understanding of history, not removing controversial statues or artefacts, but providing a fuller explanation of their provenance.
- 10. Know when to intervene:** The public neither believe that institutions should be free to intervene and comment on every social issue, nor believe that they should never comment. What matters is the particular issue and the particular institution. Commentary and engagement on issues relevant to an institution will receive greater public support.

## Annex A: British Seven Segments

In pursuit of a more evidence-based understanding of how we find common ground on polarising issues, More in Common launched the Britain’s Choice project in 2020. This project centres its analysis of issues on the values, identity and worldview of Britons, captured in seven population segments through a methodology designed in partnership with data scientists, social psychologists and other experts. It integrates insights from six dimensions of social psychology that shape the way that people see the world and orient themselves towards society. This mapping has been carried out using multiple waves of quantitative and qualitative research, building on the approach used by More in Common in other major western democracies. The six areas of social psychology are:

- **Group identity and tribalism:** the extent to which people identify with different groups based on nationality, gender, political party, ethnicity, and other factors
- **Group favouritism:** views on who is favoured and who is mistreated in society
- **Threat perception:** the extent to which people see the world as a dangerous place
- **Parenting styles:** research suggests that basic philosophies regarding people’s approach to parenting can have predictive power in explaining their attitudes towards public policies and authority more generally
- **Moral Foundations:** the extent to which people endorse certain moral values or ‘foundations’, including fairness, care, purity, authority, and loyalty
- **Personal agency:** the extent to which people view personal success as the product of individual factors (i.e. hard work and discipline) versus societal factors (i.e. luck and circumstance)

The ‘British Seven’ segments are often more useful in understanding people’s views across a wide range of issues than standard ways of categorising people, such as their voting history, partisan identity or demographic characteristics such as age, income, social grade, race or gender. Understanding the specific ‘wiring’ of each of these groups ‘upstream’ allows us to better understand and predict how they will respond to different sets of issues ‘downstream’.



### **Progressive Activists**

A passionate and vocal group for whom politics is at the core of their identity, and who seek to correct the historic marginalisation of groups based on their race, gender, sexuality, wealth, and other forms of privilege. They are politically engaged, critical, opinionated, frustrated, cosmopolitan, and environmentally conscious.

Progressive Activists are often outliers on values – unlike other groups, they primarily see the world through the moral foundations of care and fairness and have much lower reliance on the moral foundations of purity, loyalty and authority. Compared to other groups, Progressive Activists feel less threatened in the world and in their community. They consider that outcomes in life to be more defined by social forces and less by personal responsibility. Although they are a higher-earning segment, many of them consider this to be down to good luck than individual effort. They have the lowest authoritarian tendencies of any group.

### **Civic Pragmatists**

A group that cares about others, at home or abroad, and who are turned off by the divisiveness of politics. They are charitable, concerned, community-minded, open to compromise and socially liberal. Civic Pragmatists have a similar values foundation to the Progressive Activist group in prioritising care and fairness, but they channel their energies into community and voluntary work, rather than political activism. They are also set apart from Progressive Activists (and some of the other segments) by their higher-than-average levels of threat perception.

### **Disengaged Battlers**

A group that feels that they are just about keeping their heads above water and who believe their struggles are the result of an unfair, rigged system. They are insecure, disillusioned, disconnected, overlooked but also tolerant and socially liberal. They are a low-trust group with a tendency to ignore civic messaging (they are joint most likely to have not been vaccinated for Covid-19). Their overarching sense that the system is broken drives their disengagement from their communities and the broader democratic system with which they see 'no point' in engaging.

### **Established Liberals**

A group that has done well with an optimistic outlook that sees a lot of good in the status quo. They are comfortable, among the more privileged, cosmopolitan, trusting, liberal, confident and pro-market. They have low authoritarian tendencies and the lowest threat perception of any segment – which is reflected in their broad support for diversity, multiculturalism, and sense that their local community is neither dangerous nor neglected.

### **Loyal Nationals**

A group that is anxious about the threats facing Britain and themselves. They are proud, patriotic, tribal, protective, threatened, aggrieved and frustrated about the gap between the haves and the have-nots. They feel the 'care' and 'fairness' moral foundations more strongly than other groups. Their key orientation is that of group identity – belonging to a group (and particularly their nation) is important to Loyal Nationals. This strong in-group identity shapes their equally strong feelings of threat from outsiders. This in turn can drive their support for more authoritarian, populist leadership.

### **Disengaged Traditionalists**

A group that values a well-ordered society, takes pride in hard work and wants strong leadership that keeps people in line. They are self-reliant, ordered, patriotic, tough-minded, suspicious, and disconnected. They place a strong emphasis on personal responsibility, are mindful of others' behaviour and rely much more on individual rather than systemic explanations for how people's lives turn out. When they think about social and political debates, they often consider issues through a lens of suspicion towards others. They value the observance of social rules, order, and a British way of doing things, but don't play an active role in their communities – they are the least likely to eat out, visit museums or go to local libraries. They often have views on issues but tend to pay limited attention to current debates. Disengaged Traditionalists are similar to Loyal Nationals in their more authoritarian predisposition.

### **Backbone Conservatives**

A group who are proud of their country, optimistic about Britain's future outside of Europe, and who keenly follow the news, mostly via traditional media sources. They are nostalgic, patriotic, stalwart, proud, secure, confident, and relatively engaged with politics. They want clear rules and strong leaders and rely heavily on individual explanations for how life turns out, with this shaping how they respond to questions about deprivation and discrimination in society.

# Methodology

## Quantitative Research

- Fieldwork dates and sample sizes:
  - 14-16 August 2023, n=2052
  - 15-17 November 2023, n=2031
  - 7-11 February 2024, n=2050
- Additional fieldwork conducted 21st December 2020 - 4th January 2021
- Population effectively sampled: Adults in Great Britain (excludes Northern Ireland)
- Interview method: Online
- Weighting method: The data is weighted on several measures – age and sex interlocked, education, ethnicity, and region - all to nationally representative proportions. In addition, it is also weighted by 2019 General Election vote (of registered voters).
- Full data tables can be found at: <https://www.moreincommon.org.uk/our-work/polling-tables/>

## Qualitative Research

- Focus groups were held online in the following locations:
  - Sunderland, November 2023
  - Bristol, November 2023
  - Derby, November 2022



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