



FOCUS GROUP SUMMARY

National “Woke” Branding

26 July 2022

TOP TAKEAWAYS

- The word “woke” is only vaguely familiar to voters but not top of mind for them. They refer to “woke” ideas as **“propaganda”** and proponents as “agents.”
- Environmental, social, and governance (ESG) criteria is not a topic with which participants are familiar, so they do not make a connection between this issue and the education topics of critical race theory (CRT) and sex/gender education.
- Voters are tolerant of opposing viewpoints, but strongly oppose topics like CRT and sex/gender issues being taught in K-12 education, especially to younger children. They believe **children are being targeted** with this propaganda.
- Participants strongly support ensuring Congress’s role of making laws is preserved and that they have the final say in rule changes from federal agencies, especially expensive rule changes.

THE BIGGEST ISSUES

“Propaganda”: Participants say that critical race theory and a sex/gender (especially transgender) agenda are permeating society—from the classroom to the boardroom. They view this agenda as “propaganda” and say that opponents are being bullied and silenced.

“Targeting Children”: While they say that “agents” of the “propaganda” are getting into corporate life, voters express the deepest concern about this “propaganda” in K-12 education. Voters say that children are being targeted with these radical views early in life so that they will further disseminate those views as they age and create radical cultural change.

Restoring Legislative Power: Participants agree that Congress’s job is to make laws and rules—and that they should keep that power. Delegating rulemaking to the bureaucracy is unacceptable to participants, who say that when federal agencies do make rules, Congress should have final approval.

WHAT DID PARTICIPANTS THINK?

Participants are mostly opposed to CRT (although they are unable to define it or identify any of its core tenets) and sex and gender issues permeating society.

- They view the teaching of these controversial topics as “indoctrination” and called the topics themselves “propaganda.” While most participants are familiar with the word “woke” and its meaning, the word is not top of mind for them, and they only recall it when prompted.
- Voters refer to proponents of CRT and sex/gender issues as “agents.”
- While they oppose the beliefs behind the topics, they are tolerant of people who hold those beliefs. One participant called them “just people who disagree with me.”
- None of the participants had ever heard of ESG criteria and do not immediately see the connection between ESG and controversial topics in education.

Participants are tolerant of people who support CRT and sex/gender issues, but they strongly oppose teaching these topics in schools.

- Participants overwhelmingly oppose teaching CRT and sex/gender (especially transgender) topics in schools, particularly in lower grades.
- Instead, they believe that it is more appropriate for topics about race, sex, gender, and sexuality to be taught at home. They see a very limited role for the teaching of these topics in schools.
- Most participants agree that if these topics are taught in schools, parents and students should be able to opt out. There is less support for allowing teachers to opt out, although a large number still believe teachers should be able to do so.
- Several participants express deep concern about “bullying” of students and teachers who hold views opposed to CRT and sex/gender education and the silencing of dissent. This came up in past focus groups on the topic of cancel culture.
- Participants did not make immediate connections between school board election reform and efforts to oppose the teaching of controversial topics.

Most participants support requiring congressional rulemaking and/or approval of bureaucratic rule changes.

- Participants are familiar with the concept of separation of powers and have a general sense that the legislative branch should be responsible for making laws while the executive branch enforces them.
- They believe that when it comes to rulemaking, Congress should not delegate that responsibility to the bureaucracy or should at least have the final say on most issues and believe this should especially apply to expensive regulations.
- One participant says the bureaucracy's "only agenda is to make sure that they have a job." He says, as an example, that Congress and the president clearly wanted work requirements for food stamps and the reason we don't have them today is that "the Department of Agriculture, because so many people got off food stamps, they had to fire people" from the agency.