

## Twitter Thread by Yascha Mounk



**Yascha Mounk**

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**In the common imagination, the deep cultural divide in the United States pits Team Woke (young, female, POC) against Team Resentful (old, male, white).**

**This is almost entirely**

As a great new study by More in Common shows, Americans actually divide into seven tribes:

- \* Progressive activists
- \* Traditional liberals
- \* Passive liberals
- \* Politically disengaged
- \* Moderates
- \* Traditional conservatives
- \* Devoted conservatives

<https://t.co/PDuSeVNTyu>

Traditional and devoted conservatives are far outside the American mainstream. The views of progressive activists are even further away from the views of average Americans.

The rest has a lot in common. They form an “exhausted majority.”

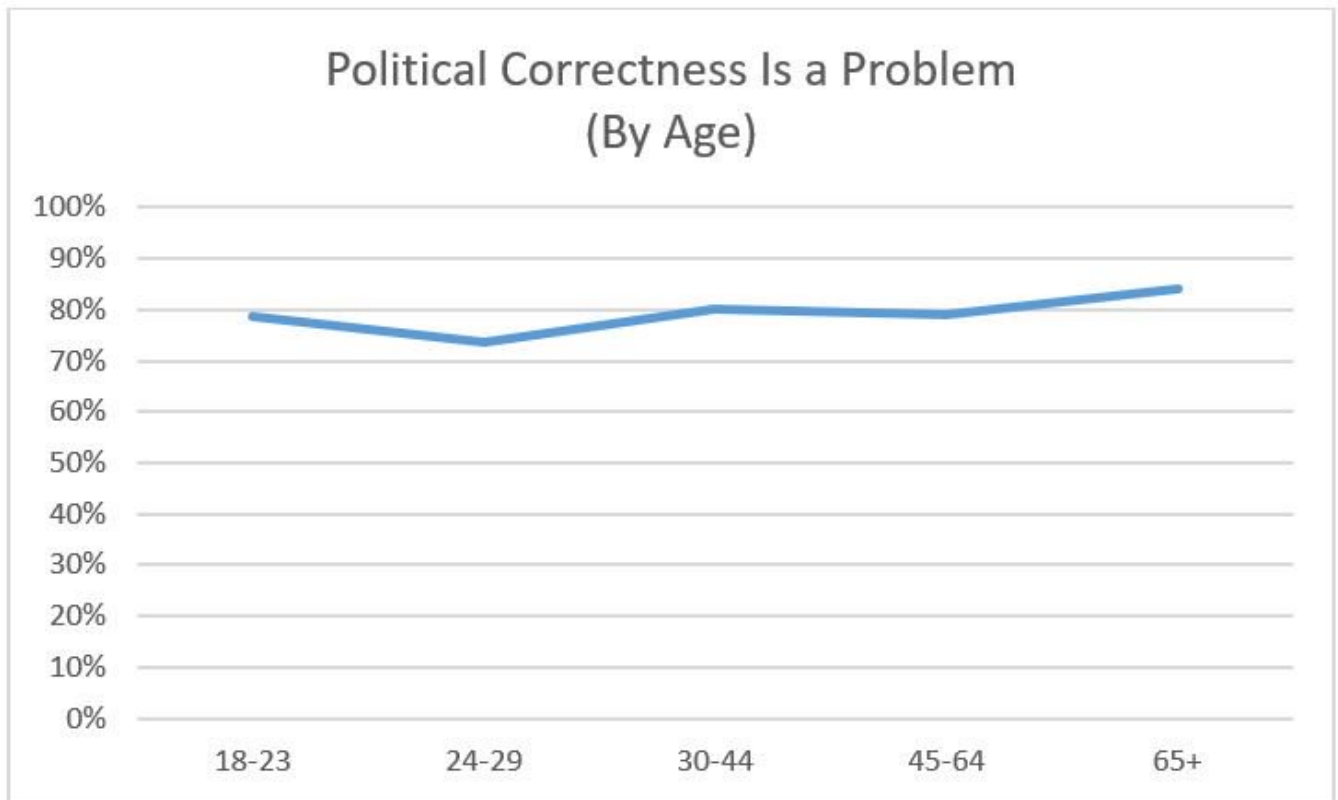
One of the most surprising areas on which Americans agree much more than might seem obvious on Twitter, Facebook, and cable news? Political correctness.

80% of Americans—four in five!—now believe that “political correctness is a problem in our country.”

Age barely predicts how Americans feel about political correctness.

Even among 24 - 29 year olds, the group most receptive to political correctness, 74% think it's a problem.

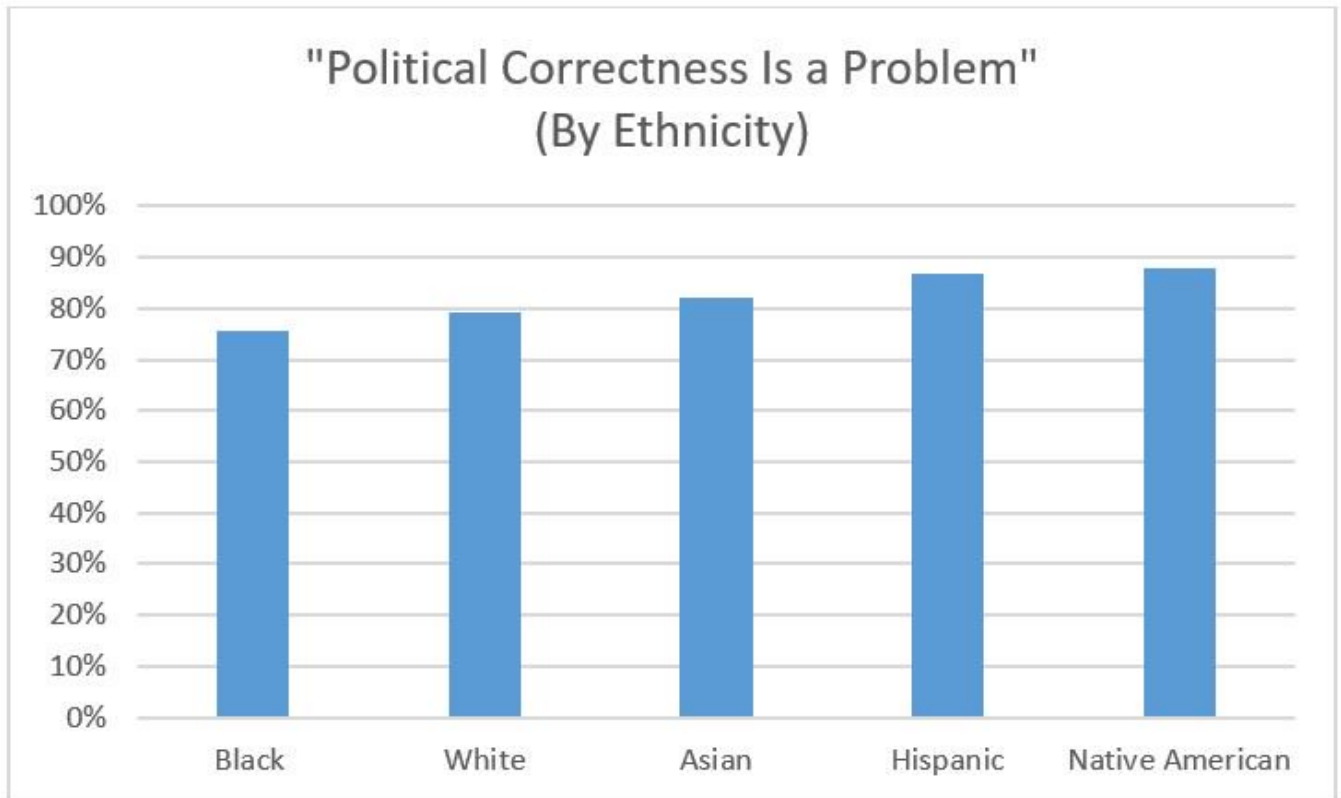
And among the youngest, those below 24, the number goes back up to 79%!



Race does an even worse job than age at predicting how Americans feel about political correctness:

\* Whites are more open to political correctness than average Americans

\* The groups most likely to say PC is a problem are Asians (82%), Hispanics (87%) and Native-Americans (88%)



The only small part of the standard race story that is confirmed is that African-Americans are least likely to dislike political correctness.

But three quarters of them—only 4% less than whites and 5% less than the American average—still say that PC is a problem.

The only group in which a majority supports PC, then, is not the young. It is not people of color. Rather, it's what the report calls "progressive activists."

What does this tribe look like?

Progressive activists:

- \* Make up 8% of the population
- \* Are twice as likely as average Americans to make >\$100k a year
- \* Are three times as likely to have a graduate degree
- \* Only 3% of them are black
- \* Except for devoted conservatives, this is least racially diverse group.

But what do people really mean when they talk about PC though? Isn't that awfully vague?

The poll didn't define PC. But the in-depth interviews and focus groups done by [@MiCGlobal](#) give us some idea. Here's a 40 year old Native-American man in OK describing his concerns:

"It seems like everyday you wake up something has changed. ... Do you say Jew? Or Jewish? Is it a black guy? African-American? ... You are on your toes because you never know what to say. So political correctness in that sense is scary."

The right, from @realDonaldTrump to @FoxNews, often tries to attack excesses of political correctness in order to gain cover for actual hate speech.

But this is even more fundamental a misunderstanding of Americans' attitudes towards PC than that which is prevalent on the left.

It's simply wrong to portray Americans who worry about PC as racists. In fact, 82% of Americans worry about the prevalence of hate speech!

Most Americans—and most people who dislike PC—abhor racial hatred; they just don't think current PC practices are the right way to fight it.

I draw two big lessons from this study:

First, it made me worry that speech norms serve as a marker of social distinction. What the vast majority of our fellow citizens see in PC is not genuine concern for social justice; it's the preening display of cultural superiority.

As one 57- year-old woman in Mississippi fretted:

The way you have to term everything just right. And if you don't term it right you discriminate them. It's like everybody is going to be in the know of what people call themselves now and some of us just don't know. But if you don't know then there is something seriously wrong with you.

Obviously, my Twitter followers are no representative sample. But they do approximate the politically engaged, highly educated, left-leaning people who have outsized influence on universities, publications and political campaigns.

(Oh, and they like PC.) <https://t.co/dkzlovf93u>

Final poll:

Do you personally agree with the following statement: "Political correctness is a problem in our country."

(Friendly reminder that Twitter polls are fully anonymous.)

— Yascha Mounk (@Yascha\_Mounk) October 9, 2018

So it's remarkable just how wrong my Twitter followers are in their estimate of how their fellow citizens feel about political correctness.

Over half of my followers thought that more than half of Americans like PC.

Only 6% got the right answer.

<https://t.co/GADwb5DAZC>

Writing about a fascinating new study and would love to see how the perceptions of my Twitter followers jive with it.

So, tweeps: In your best estimate, what percentage of Americans would agree with the following statement: "Political correctness is a problem in our country."

— Yascha Mounk (@Yascha\_Mounk) [October 7, 2018](#)

My Twitter followers did even worse in guessing the views that people of color have on political correctness.

Over half thought that less than 25% of PoCs dislike it.

Only 3% got the right answer.

<https://t.co/MQeUSilzpE>

Follow-up poll:

In your best estimate, what percentage of people of color in the United States would agree with the following statement: "Political correctness is a problem in our country."

— Yascha Mounk (@Yascha\_Mounk) [October 8, 2018](#)

So why does it matter if the elite gets popular views on PC so wrong?

It matters because a publication whose editors think they represent the views of the majority when they actually speak to a small minority may eventually see its influence wane and its readership decline.

Why does it matter if the elite gets popular views on PC so wrong?

It matters because a political candidate who believes she is speaking for half of the population when she's actually voicing the opinions of one fifth is likely to lose the next election.

Why does it matter if the elite gets popular views on PC so wrong?

It matters because it's difficult to win your fellow citizens over to your side—or remedy injustices that remain all too real—when you fundamentally misunderstand how your fellow citizens see the world.

OK, this was a looong thread. Please share my article on this in @theatlantic.

<https://t.co/JYrFqnLlly>

And please do read the great report, @HiddenTribesUS, which covers many fascinating issues I didn't touch on here.

It's one of the few things that's made me feel optimistic over the past month, so it's definitely worth your time.

<https://t.co/jE9p6clk89>

[The End.]