**America’s ‘culture wars’ are at a stalemate**

*NBC News*, April 27, 2023

America’s “culture wars” are at a stalemate.

That’s the main takeaway from our [new *NBC News* poll results](https://www.nbcnews.com/meet-the-press/first-read/-country-fire-new-poll-finds-america-polarized-culture-race-woke-rcna81592) on race, values vs. tolerance, and acceptance of transgender people.

The overall numbers suggest nuance, but the findings by political party and race are anything but.

Let’s start with the issue of race, where the poll finds 47% of Americans agreeing with Martin Luther King Jr.’s “dream” — that America is a nation where people are judged by their character, not by their race — versus 52% who disagree.

It’s the first time since 2008 in our poll when a majority disagreed that America is a place where people are judged by their character.

And look at the divisions by political party: 70% of Republicans believe America is a place where people are judged by their character over race, while 72% of Democrats disagree.

Also look at this division: 53% of whites agree that Americans are judged by their character not by their race, versus 61% of Latinos and 80% of Blacks who disagree.

Next is our question on what is a more important goal for society — promoting greater respect for traditional values or encouraging greater tolerance?

Overall, 50% of Americans pick traditional values, versus 42% who side with tolerance — essentially unchanged when we last asked this question in 2013.

But once again, note the divisions by party: 74% of Republicans choose traditional values, while 67% of Democrats pick tolerance.

And finally, our NBC News poll finds 48% of all Americans who believe that society has gone too far in accepting transgender people, compared with 43% who say it hasn’t gone far enough.

By party, 79% of Republicans say it’s gone too far, versus 76% of Democrats who say it hasn’t gone far enough.

Yet it’s also striking to us that these numbers on transgender acceptance might not be the overall wedge issue that Republicans are hoping for — which ends up dividing the political opposition.

After all, a 48% vs. 43% split isn’t the 60% vs. 40% disapproval on gay marriage that we saw in the early 2000s, or the current 60% vs. 40% belief that abortion should be legal.

And our poll finds that a majority of respondents ages 18-34 (by a 54% to 36% margin) believing that society should go farther in accepting transgender people, as do a majority of Americans who know someone who is trans (by a 67% to 25% margin).

* **Read this article. Using the first lines, explain in what context it was published.**

Results of a poll by NBC News about social and racial issues. The question is to what extent are Americans tolerant of minorities.

* **Pick out the numbers (statistics). Try to draw conclusions and interpret what they show about the American society.**

The first figure shows that a majority of Americans now consider that people in America are judged by their race first and foremost, in other words a majority of Americans consider their country as racist.

This is a new datum. However, what is striking is that this opinion is shared mostly by Democrats, while Republicans still think people are judged by their character. The same division can be found along racial lines. Whites don’t seem to believe in this, whereas ethnic minorities do.

Another figure concerns the values advocated by Americans. A majority of them favor tradition over tolerance. This is especially true of Republicans.

The last statistic concerns transgender people. Likewise, Republicans think too much has been done, which is also the overall opinion of the general population.

* **The article ends on a slightly optimistic note. Can you explain why?**

The article compares the wedge concerning transgender acceptance with the one about gay marriage 20 years ago. This wedge is not as big as it used to be, which might suggest some slightly positive evolution. Besides, figures show that youngsters, who are the future of a country, are also more tolerant than their older fellow Americans.

The same goes with abortion, as a majority of Americans think it should be legal.

* **Personal opinion: without crossing the line, do YOU think too much or not enough has been done in accepting transgender people?**
* **Conclusion: based on what we have said, try to explain the meaning of the title. Give a definition of culture wars + explain “at a stalemate”. Individual preparation time.**

A culture war is a cultural conflict between social groups and the struggle for [dominance](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dominant_culture) of their [values](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Value_(ethics)), beliefs, and practices. [polarization](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Political_polarization) in societal values.

Issues based on [values](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Value_(ethics_and_social_sciences)), [morality](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Morality), and [lifestyle](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lifestyle_(sociology)) which often lead to [political cleavage](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Political_cleavage).

Conflict between those values considered [traditionalist](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Traditionalist_conservatism) or [conservative](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conservativism_in_the_United_States) and those considered [progressive](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Progressivism_in_the_United_States) or [liberal](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Modern_liberalism_in_the_United_States).

[James Davison Hunter](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_Davison_Hunter), a [sociologist](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sociologist) at the [University of Virginia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/University_of_Virginia), introduced the expression again in his 1991 publication, [*Culture Wars: The Struggle to Define America*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Culture_Wars:_The_Struggle_to_Define_America). On an increasing number of "[hot-button](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hot-button_issue)" defining issues—[abortion](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abortion), [gun politics](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gun_politics), [separation of church and state](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Separation_of_church_and_state), [privacy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Privacy), [recreational drug use](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Recreational_drug_use), [homosexuality](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Homosexuality), [censorship](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Censorship)—there existed two definable polarities.

While traditional culture war issues, like abortion, continue to be a focal point, the issues identified with the culture war broadened and intensified in the mid-late 2010s.

At a stalemate: things are not evolving or moving forward (*dans une impasse*).

* **Final task: culture wars are not limited to book bans. Watch this video from PBS** (January 2023, 2’37). “DeSantis defends blocking African American studies course in Florida”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yCVmM5-tHag>

* **Then read the letter by Barack Obama.**
* **Watch this TikTok from the Kankakee Public Library** (Reading Can Transport You To New Worlds), defending books and the impact they can have on people.
* **Then in groups of 4, prepare a short video defending books or history. You can use specific books and their impacts on you. Your video has to include a voiceover (live or pre-recorded).**