

# Voter Perceptions of Book Bans and Censorship

EMBOLD RESEARCH

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## ABSTRACT

This report publishes the results of a public opinion poll of American voters undertaken to understand political support and opposition to book banning. Commissioned by EveryLibrary Institute the poll surveyed registered voters from August 31 to September 3, 2022. Results show that most voters oppose banning books based on race, sexuality, and other concerns. They also oppose legislation that bans books.

## Methodology

EveryLibrary Institute commissioned Embold Research to survey 1223 registered voters nationally from Aug 31-Sep 3, 2022. Respondents were recruited via dynamic online sampling to obtain a sample reflective of the population. Post-stratification weighting was performed on age, gender, race/ethnicity, education, and 2020 presidential vote. The modeled margin of error is 3.4%.

## Key Findings

- Nearly all American voters (92%) have heard at least something about book banning.
- Half of voters believe there is "absolutely no time when a book should be banned," and 41% think "there are rare times when it's appropriate to ban books," and just 8% think "there are many books that are inappropriate and should be banned."
- At the outset, this issue transcends partisanship - 31% of Republicans think there is absolutely no time when a book should be banned.
- Voters are most offended by the idea that children and classic books are being banned.
- Only 34% of voters support banning books about sexuality.
- At least 75% of voters will consider book banning when voting in November.

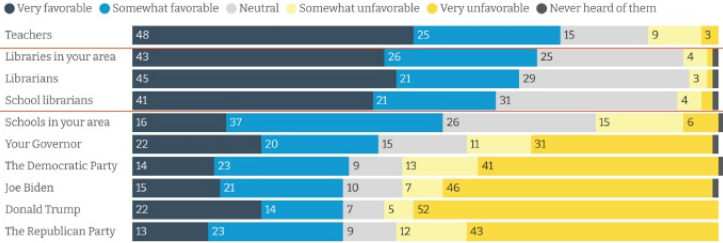
Originally published September 2022 at EveryLibrary Institute: <https://www.everylibraryinstitute.org/bookbanpoll>

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## Libraries and librarians are broadly favorably viewed

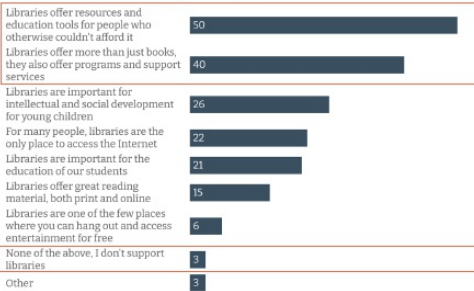
- Impressions are comparable to teachers, better than for local schools, and vastly superior to any of the politicians or political parties tested.

### How favorable are your feelings about each of the following? EMBOLD RESEARCH



## Provision of free education resources and programs/support services are top “brand” attributes

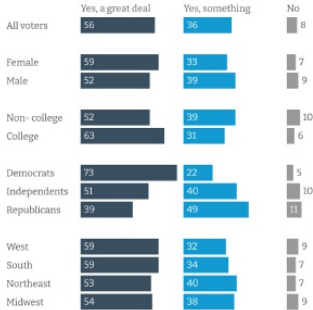
### What do you think are the most important reasons to support libraries in your area? Select your top 2. EMBOLD RESEARCH



- Just 3% of voters say they can't find a reason to support libraries.

## Nearly all voters have heard about efforts to ban certain books in school and public libraries

**Have you heard about efforts to ban certain books in school and public libraries?** **EMPHASIS**



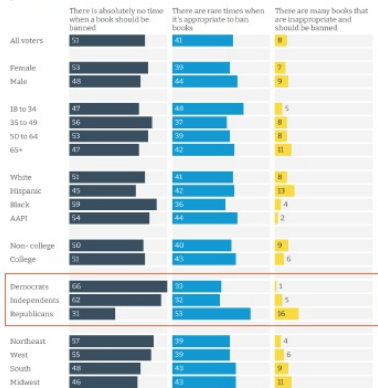
- More than half (56%) have “heard a great deal” about this issue.
- Women, college-educated voters, and Democrats are most likely to have heard a great deal about this.
- Any regional differences are slight.



## Voters are divided on the appropriateness of banning books

- Half of voters believe there is “absolutely no time when a book should be banned”.
  - This includes a sizeable portion (31%) of Republicans. This has great potential as a wedge issue.
- 41% choose a middle position - “there are rare times when it’s appropriate to ban books”.
- Just 8% of voters think there are many books that are inappropriate and should be banned.

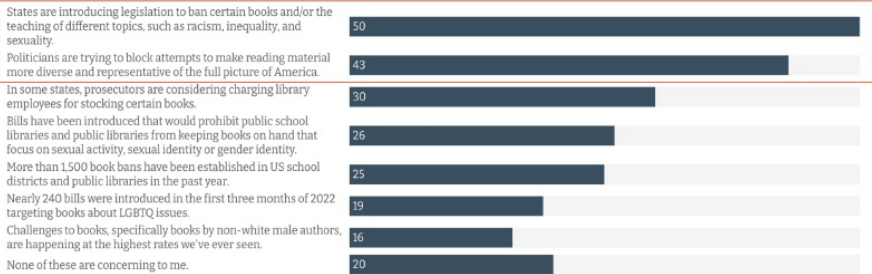
**Which statement best describes your opinion about banning books in school and public libraries?** **EMPHASIS**



## Evidence related to state bans of certain books and blocking attempts at diversity are most worrying

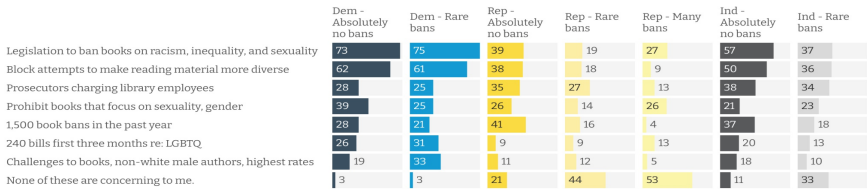
Below is some information about the increase in book banning across the United States. Which are most concerning to you? Select your top 3.

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## Type of book influences how book bans are received

- Banning classic novels and children’s books are nearly universally opposed.
- Only 18% of voters support book banning on issues of race/CRT and only one third of voters support bans for books that discuss sexuality.

**Classic novels**, such as “The Handmaid’s Tale,” “Of Mice and Men” and “To Kill a Mockingbird,” have been banned because of their depiction of violence and/or race.

**Support: 3%  
Oppose: 93%**

**Children’s Books** have been banned for random reasons. For example, The Lorax was banned because a school board member was a logger, and Walter the Farting Dog was banned because it has the word “farting” in it.

**Support: 4%  
Oppose: 91%**

There have been many efforts to ban books that focus on race and slavery, such as “The 1619 Project,” because some people feel they are “racially divisive”.

**Support: 18%  
Oppose: 72%**

Many politicians and activists are trying to ban books that focus on **sexuality**, such as Maia Kobabe’s “Gender Queer” and Toni Morrison’s “The Bluest Eye,” because some people feel it’s too explicit.

**Support: 34%  
Oppose: 59%**

## Below are some examples of the types of books that have been banned and the reasons why. Do you support or oppose banning each type of book?

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Total Support

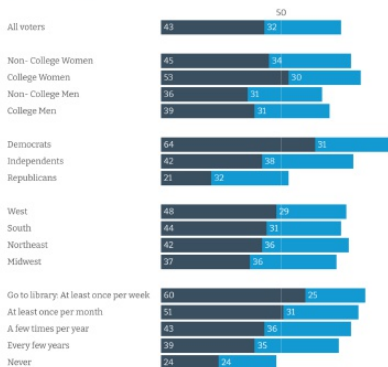
|                          | Children's books | Classics | Race | Sexuality |
|--------------------------|------------------|----------|------|-----------|
| Dem - Absolutely no bans | 1                | 2        | 1    | 1         |
| Dem - Rare bans          | 3                | 2        | 2    | 12        |
| Rep - Absolutely no bans | 2                | 2        | 13   | 31        |
| Rep - Rare bans          | 9                | 2        | 41   | 77        |
| Rep - Many bans          | 24               | 18       | 65   | 97        |
| Ind - Absolutely no bans | 0                | 1        | 4    | 13        |
| Ind - Rare bans          | 5                | 2        | 30   | 55        |

## This is an important voting issue for 3 in 4 voters

How important is preventing book banning to how you decide to vote?

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● Very important ● Somewhat important



- It is especially mobilizing for college-educated women, Democrats, and those who frequently go to a library.
- Preventing book banning is also “very important” to 1 in 5 Republicans, and 42% of Independents.

## Which statement best describes your opinion about banning books in school and public libraries?

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