

■ McLaughlin & Associates

National Undergraduate Study

Sponsored By:

The William F. Buckley, Jr. Program at Yale



September 28th, 2017

Presented by:

Jim McLaughlin and Rob Schmidt

On the web

www.mclaughlinonline.com

Methodology

McLaughlin & Associates conducted a national survey of 800 undergraduate students from September 16th to 24th, 2017. All student participants were under the age of 25 and attend either a four-year private or public college or university on a full-time basis. All interviews were conducted online and respondents were carefully selected and screened from a nationwide representative platform of individuals who elect to participate in online surveys.

Data for this survey have been stratified by age, race/ethnicity, gender and geography using the National Center for Education Statistics Report to reflect the actual demographic composition of undergraduate students in the United States.

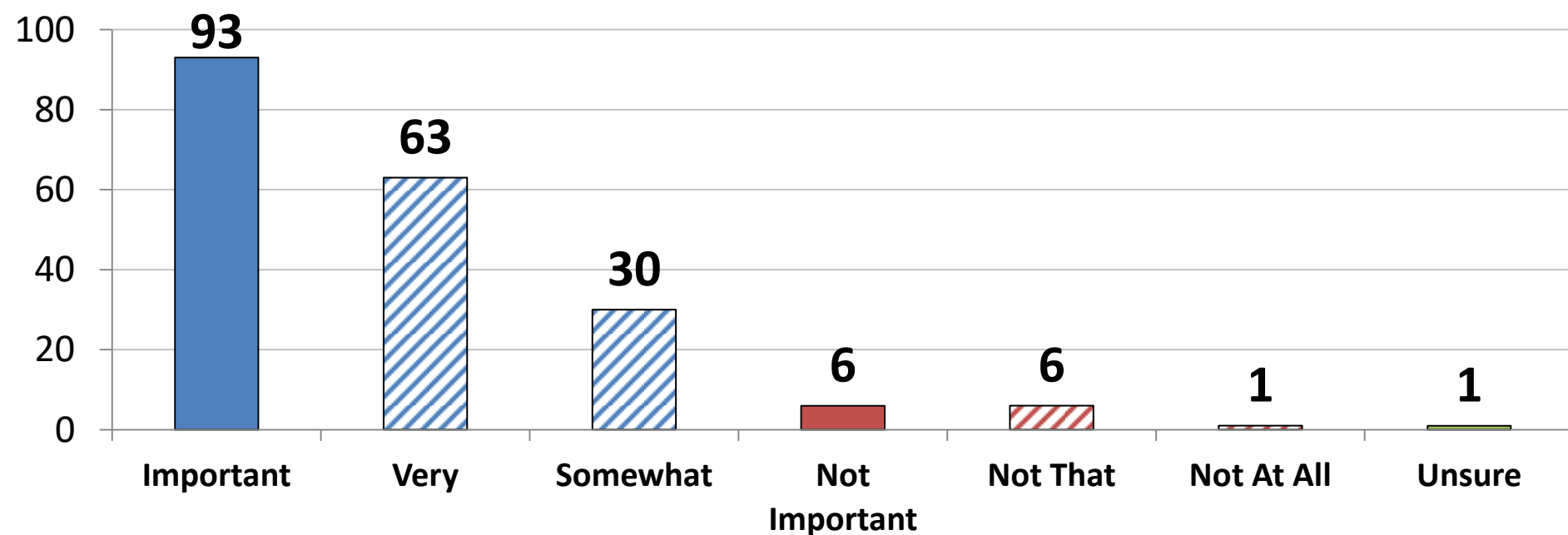
Because the sample is based on those who initially self-selected for participation rather than a probability sample, no estimates of sampling error can be calculated. All surveys may be subject to multiple sources of error, including, but not limited to sampling error, coverage error and measurement error.

Part One – Opinions on the First Amendment

By a near unanimous margin, undergraduates continue to believe that the issue of free speech is important on campus.

How important to you personally is the issue of free speech at your college or university?

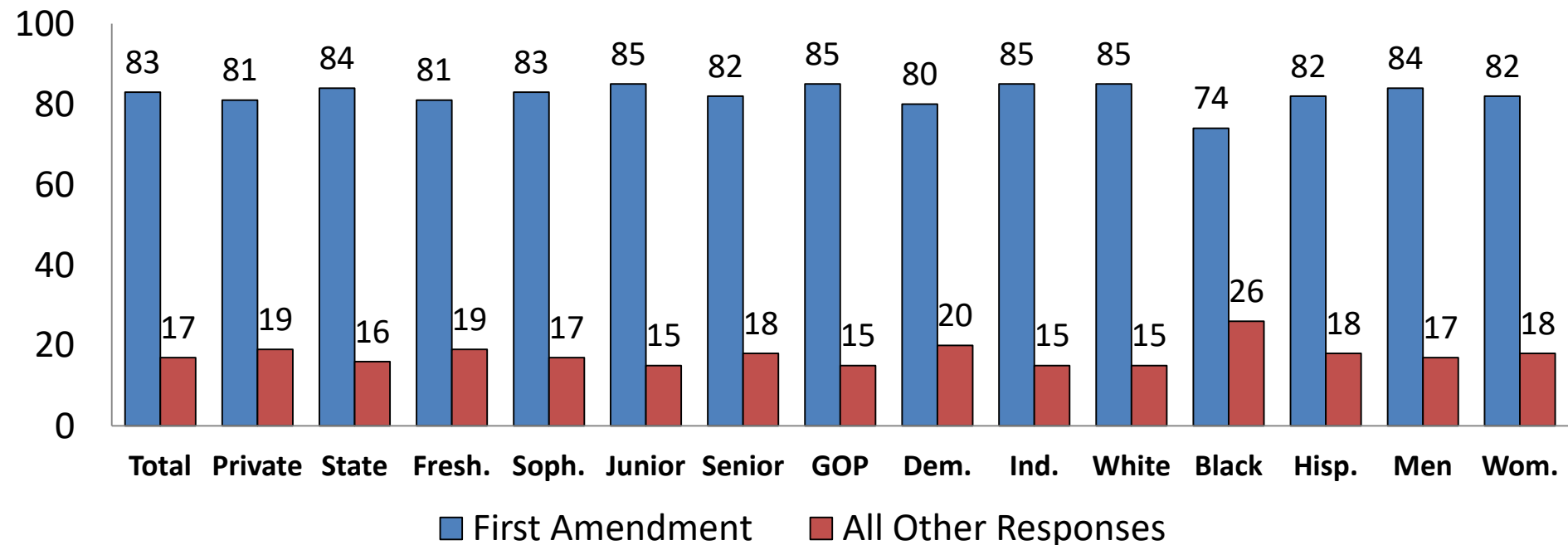
	9/15	9/16	9/17
Important	94%	96%	93%
Not Important	6%	4%	6%



Eight in ten students were able to correctly identify that freedom of speech is associated with the First Amendment. This is generally unchanged from last year.

Of the 27 Amendments to the U.S. Constitution, do you know which Amendment deals specifically with freedom of speech?

	9/15	9/16	9/17
First Amendment	76%	82%	83%
All Other Responses	24%	18%	17%



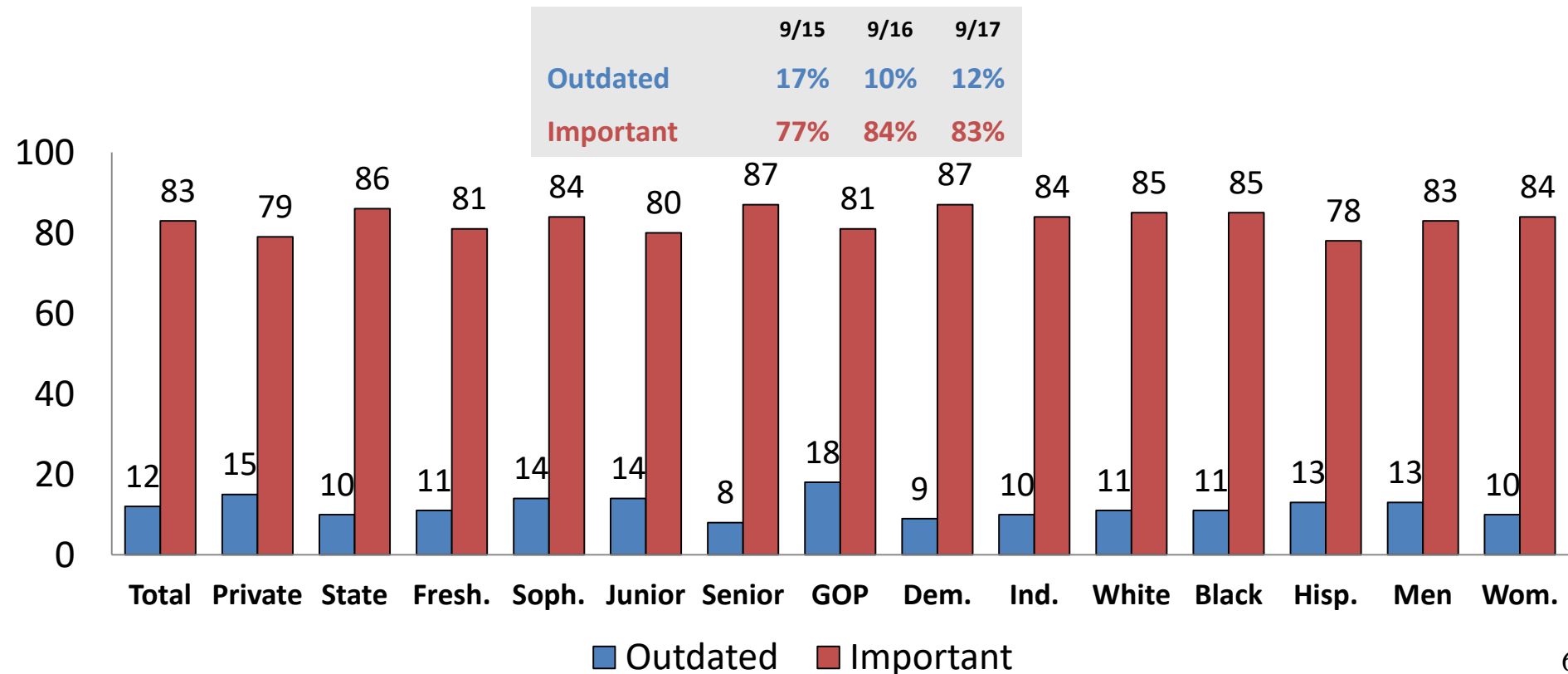
Greater than eight in ten say the First Amendment is an important amendment that still needs to be followed and respected in society. This is also very similar to perceptions from last year.

Generally speaking, do you think the First Amendment, which deals with freedom of speech, is...?

An outdated amendment that can no longer be applied in today's society and should be changed

OR

An important amendment that still needs to be followed and respected in today's society



Part Two –

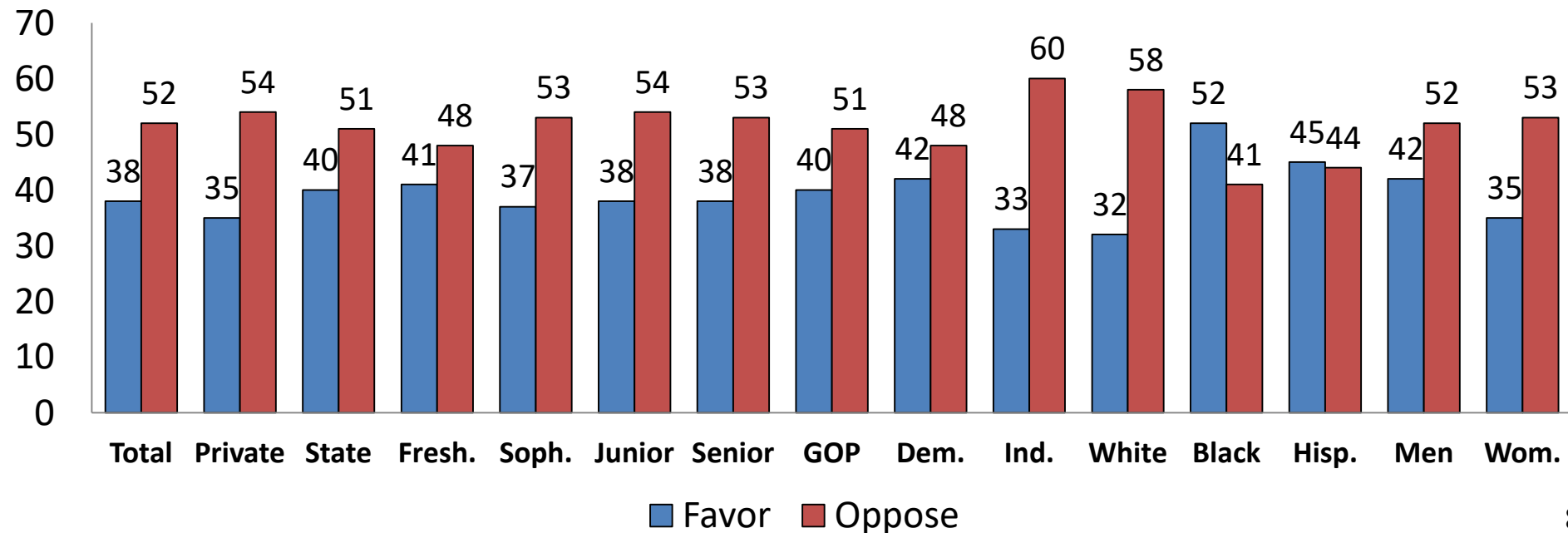
Opinions on Free Speech & Intellectual Diversity

A slight majority of students, 52%, now oppose having speech codes at their school, while 38% would favor them. This has changed from September 2015, when the plurality favored speech codes, 48% to 40%.

By ethnicity, white students are most likely to oppose speech codes, at 58%. Conversely, African American students favor speech codes, 52% to 41%, while Hispanic students divide, 45% to 44%.

Would you favor or oppose your college or university having speech codes to regulate speech for students and faculty?

	9/15	9/17
Favor	48%	38%
Oppose	40%	52%



Half, 51%, believe students should be allowed to express their views anywhere on campus, even if they are offensive, while 40% prefer students expressing their views in designated free speech areas.

Compared to last year, this is much more divided, as 74% favored expression anywhere on campus and 22% preferred designated free speech areas. Some of the variance could be attributed to the question wording modification, as the 2016 survey excluded the phrase “even if they are offensive,” from the first statement. Women, who are now split on this issue, had the biggest shift in opinions from last year, when they supported speech anywhere on campus, 72% to 23%.

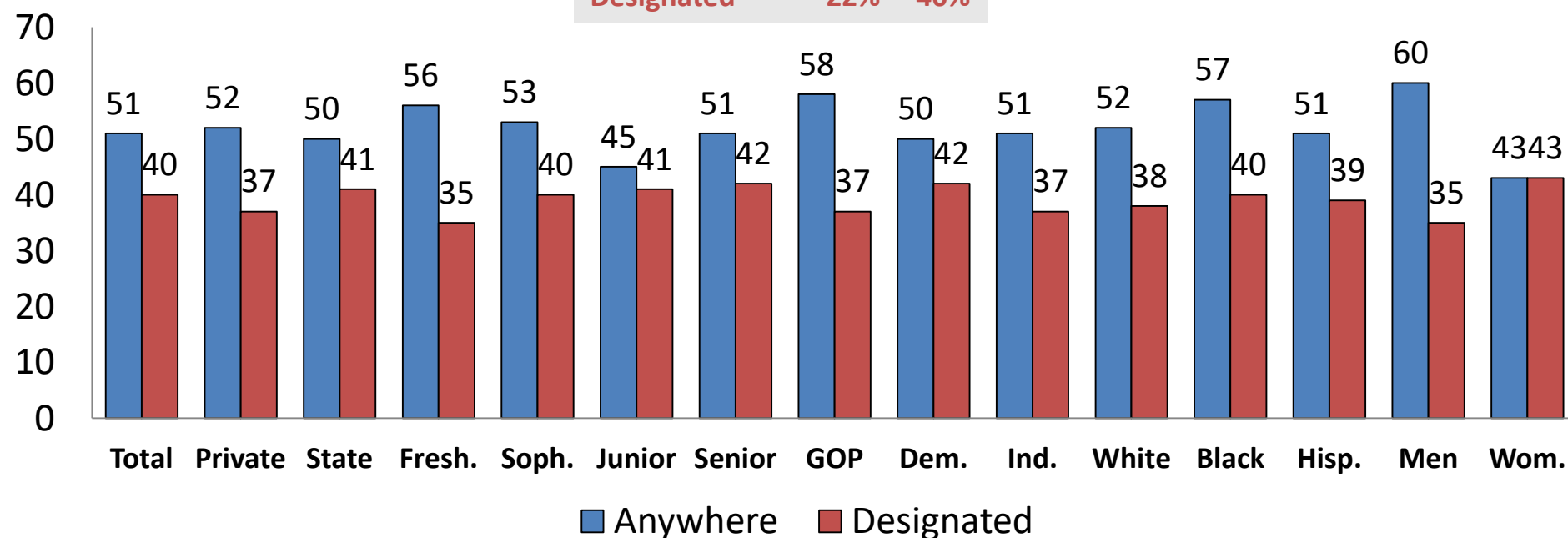
Generally speaking, do you think that students like yourself...?

Should be allowed to express their views anywhere on campus, even if they are offensive

OR

Should only be allowed to express their views in areas that are approved by the college, sometimes known as designated free speech areas

	9/16	9/17
Anywhere	74%	51%
Designated	22%	40%



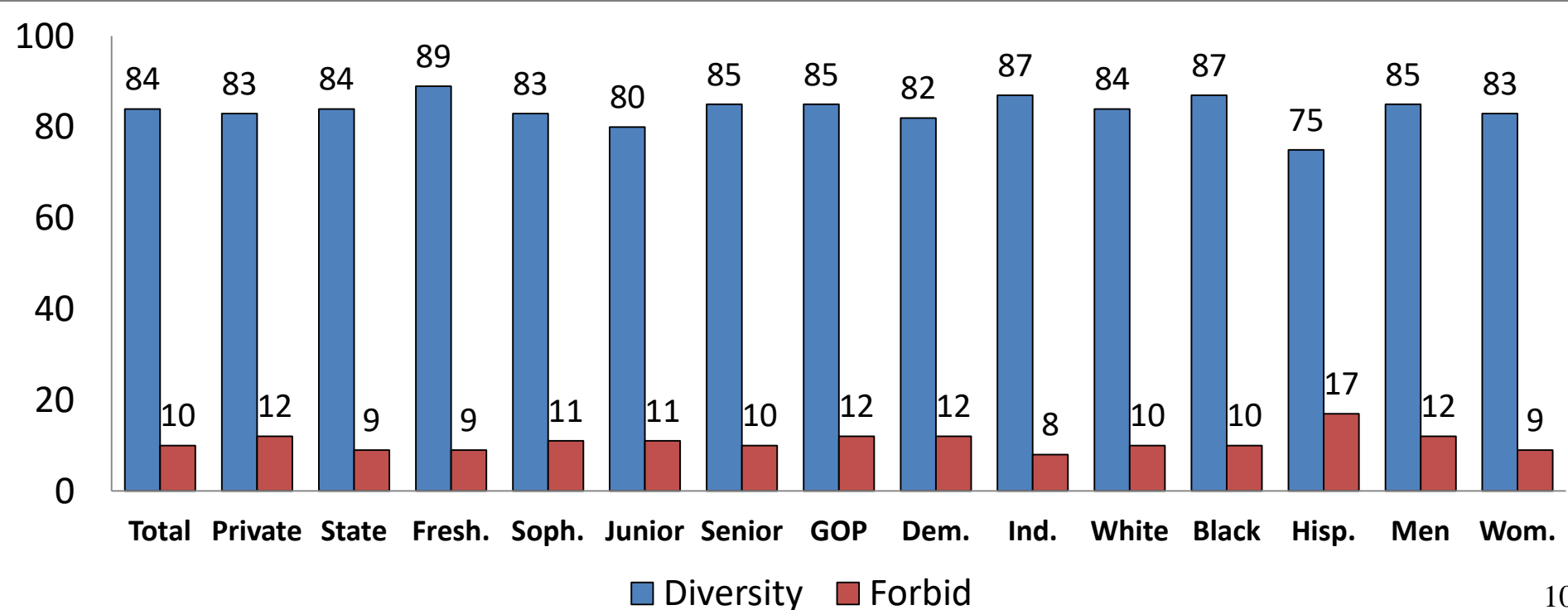
There is widespread agreement that schools should always work to promote intellectual diversity and free speech on campus.

Which of the following statements comes closer to your own personal opinion?

My school should always do its best to promote intellectual diversity and free speech by allowing a wide range of people with differing views and opinions to speak on campus, even if they are controversial

OR

My school should forbid people from speaking on campus who have controversial views and opinions on issues like politics, race, religion or gender

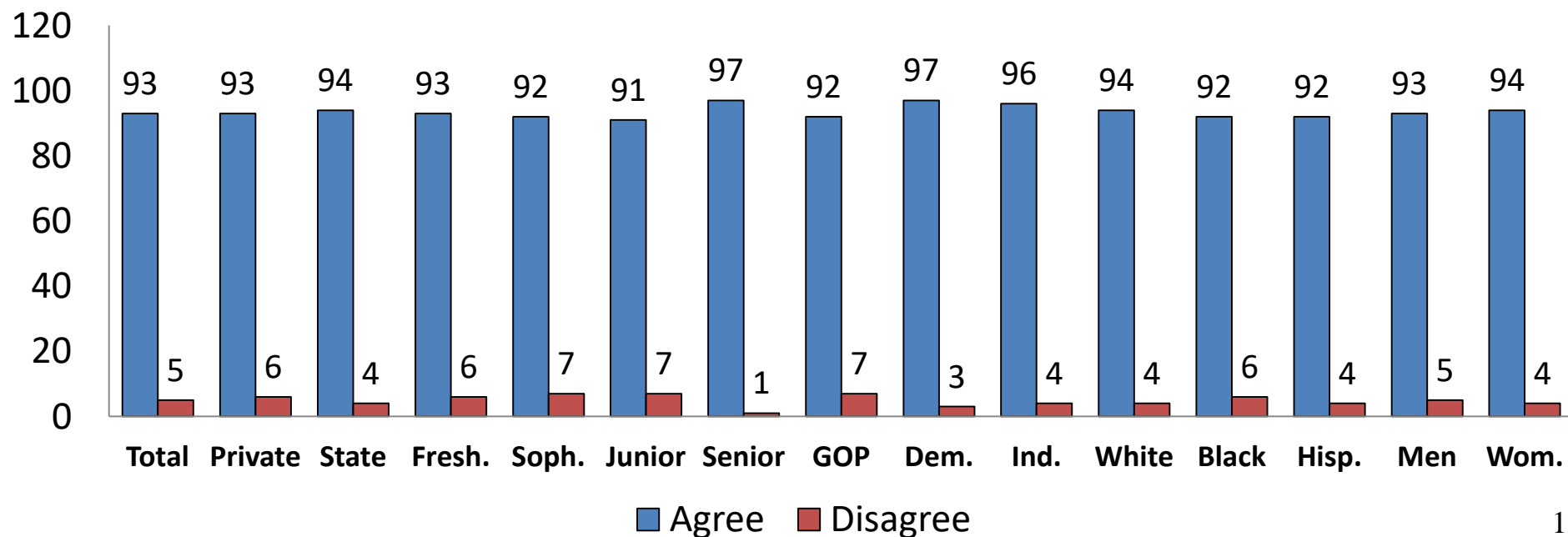


Furthermore, there is a widespread belief in the value of listening to and understanding differing views and opinions, as 93% of students agree with this statement. This is slightly improved from two years ago.

Agree/Disagree:

“There is educational value in listening to and understanding views and opinions that I may disagree with and are different from my own.”

	9/15	9/17
Agree	87%	93%
Disagree	10%	5%



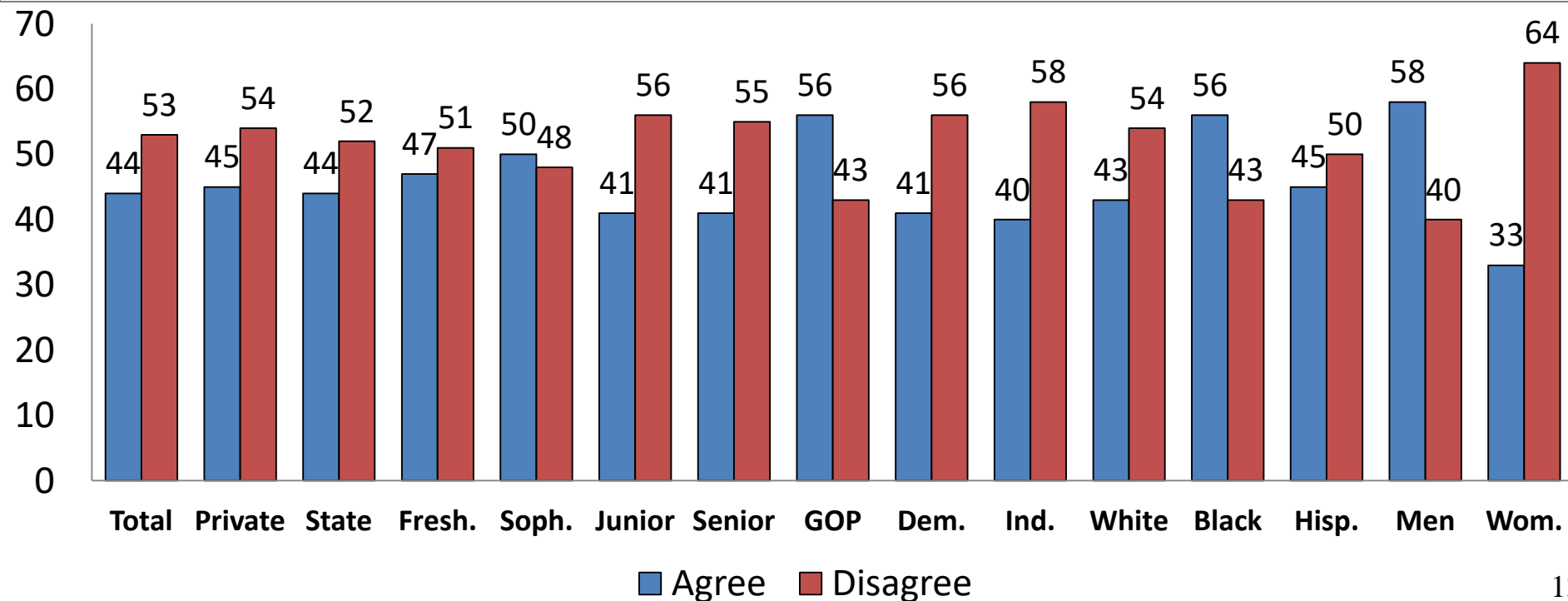
Part Three – Hate Speech

By a 53% to 44% margin, students disagree with the proverbial phrase “stick and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me.”

Republicans agree, 56% to 43%, while Democrats disagree by a similar margin, 56% to 41%.

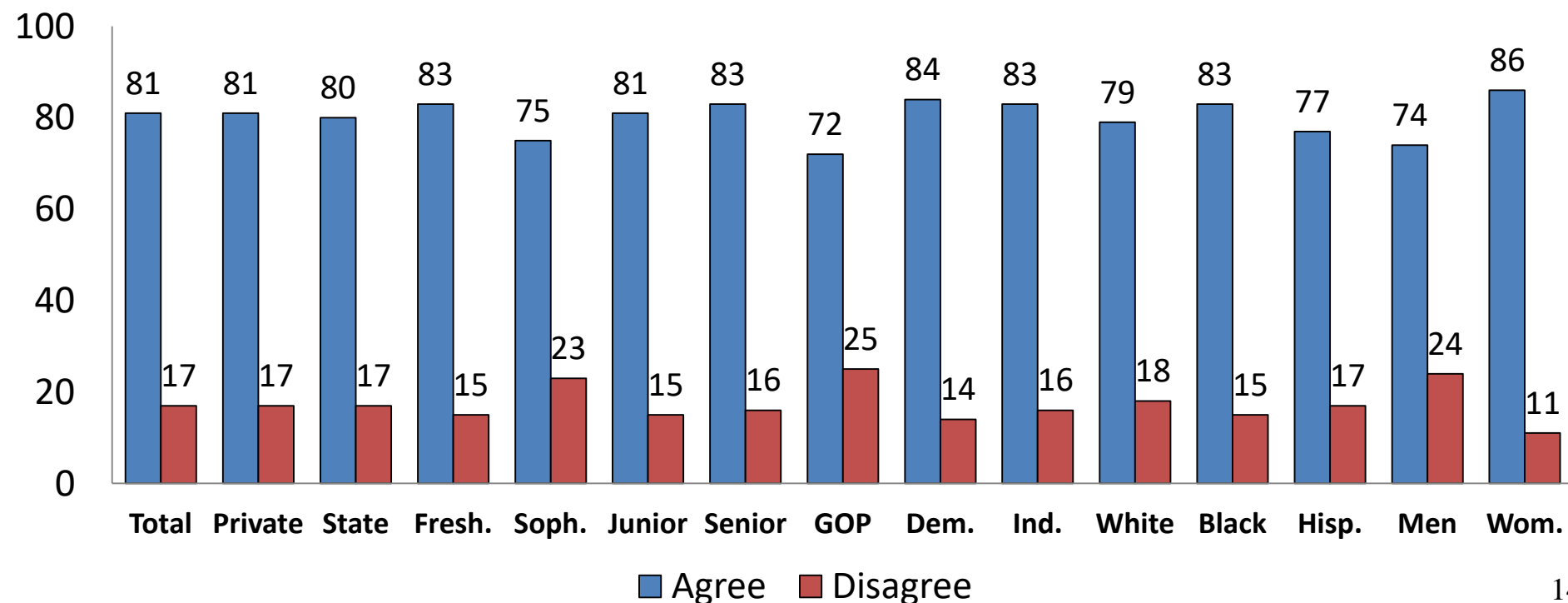
There is also a significant gender divide, with men agreeing 58% to 40%, while women disagree, 64% to 33%.

Agree/Disagree: “Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me.”



*While students were more split on the proverbial take,
greater than eight in ten see words as violence.*

Agree/Disagree:
“Words can be a form of violence.”



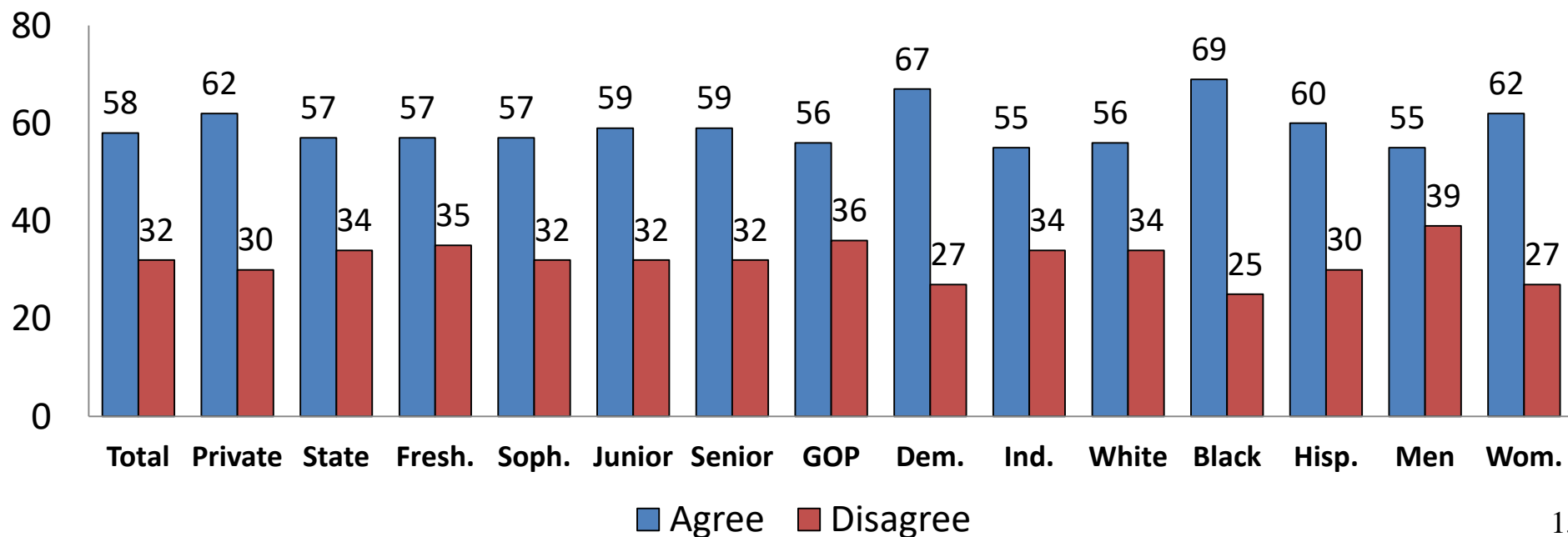
Nearly six in ten, 58%, believe that their school should forbid people from speaking on campus who have used hate speech. Compared to September 2015, students are now more in favor of this.

Majorities of all key sub-groups agree with this statement.

Agree/Disagree:

“My college or university should forbid people from speaking on campus who have a history of engaging in hate speech.”

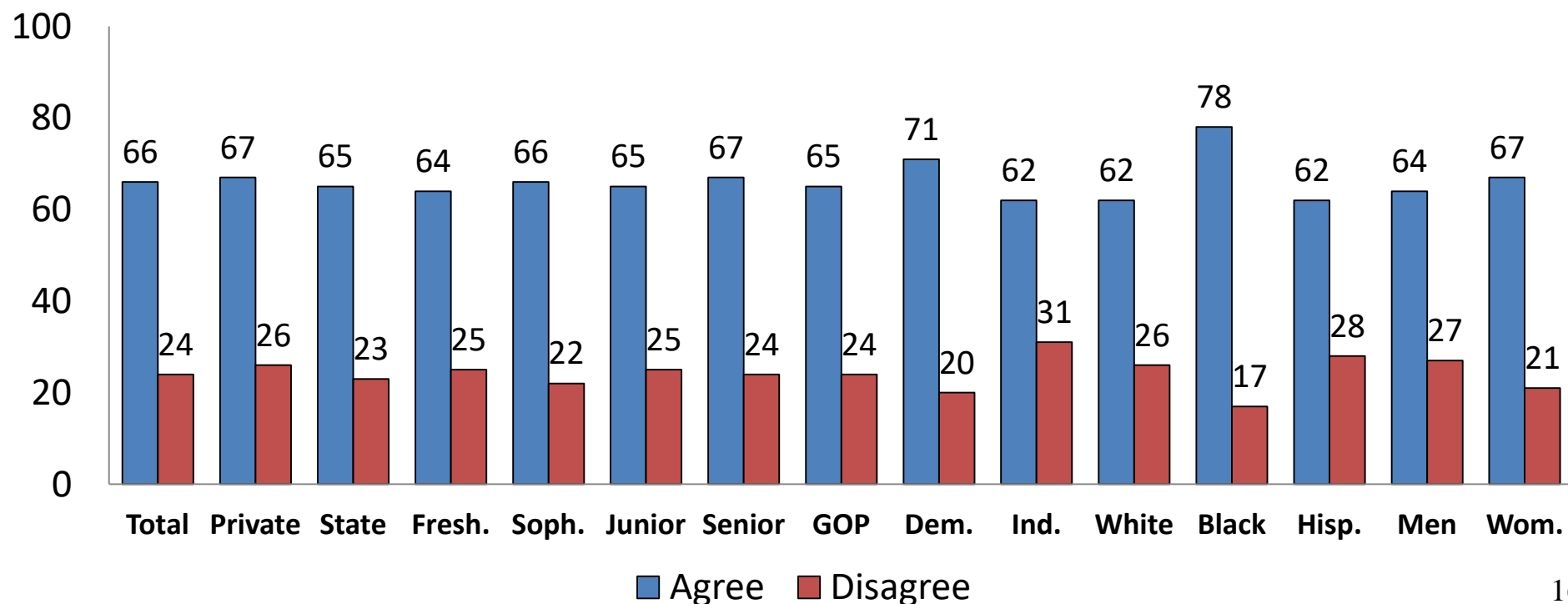
	9/15	9/17
Agree	49%	58%
Disagree	46%	32%



Two in three, 66%, define hate speech in broad terms, saying that it can be anything one particular person believes is harmful and that hate speech means something different to everyone.

Agree/Disagree:

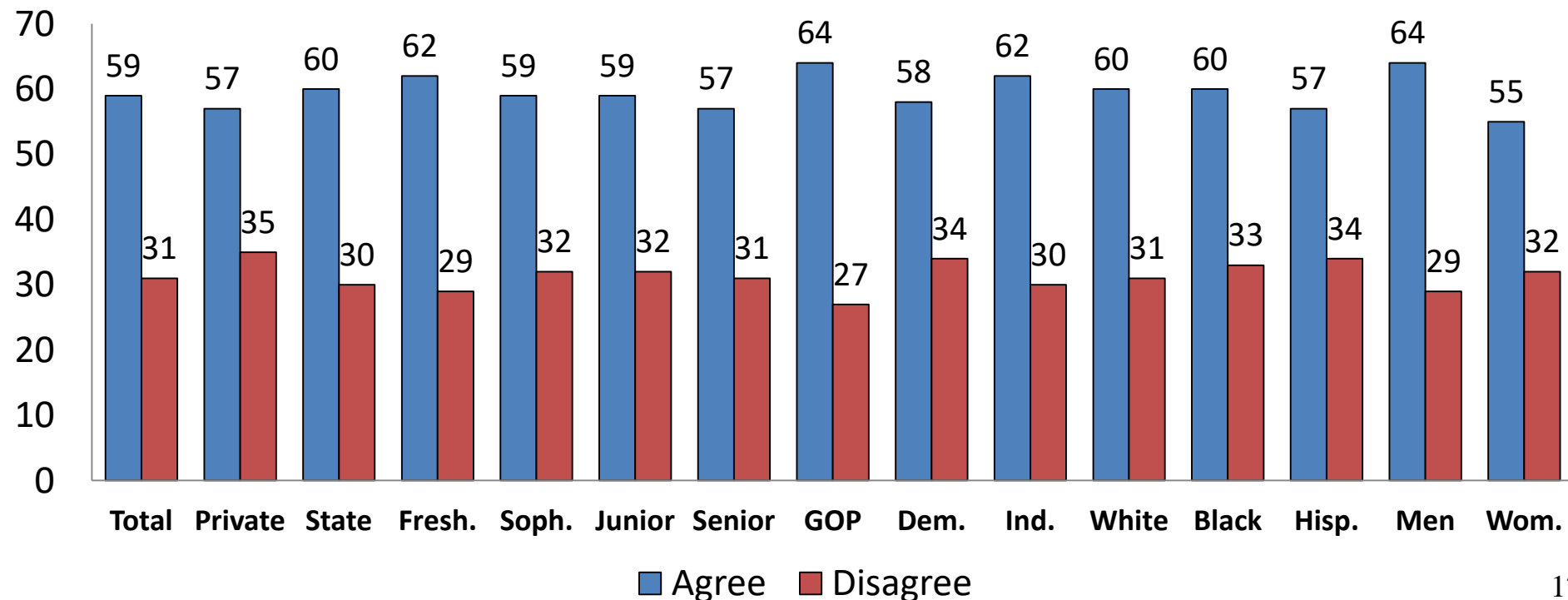
“Hate speech is anything that one particular person believes is harmful, racist or bigoted. Hate speech means something different to everyone and you just know it when you see or hear it.”



While students give a broad definition to hate speech and the majority believes that their school should forbid visits from people who espouse hate speech, most believe it is still technically protected under the First Amendment as free speech.

Agree/Disagree:

“Hate speech, no matter how racist or bigoted it is, is still technically protected under the First Amendment as free speech.”

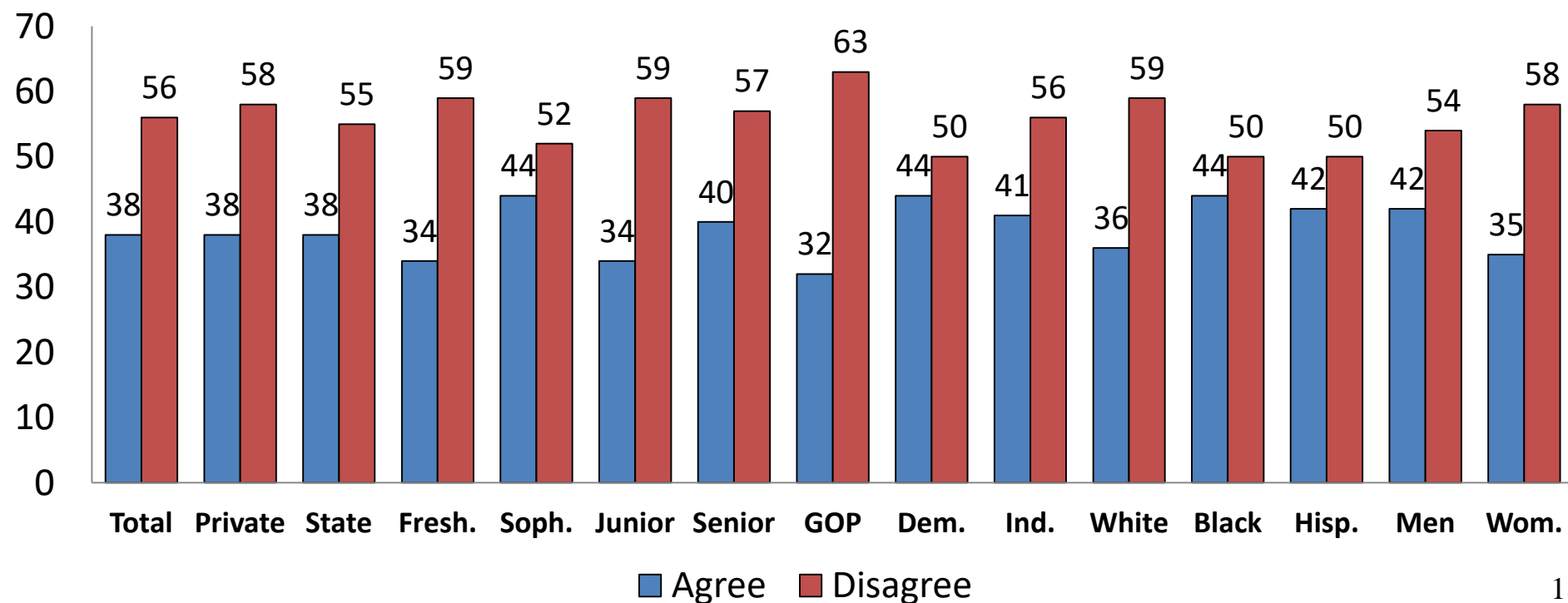


Greater than half, 56%, disagree that it is appropriate to shout down or disrupt a speaker on campus. Still, 38% agree that this is appropriate.

By party, Democrats are more likely to agree than Republicans, 44% to 32%, respectively.

Agree/Disagree:

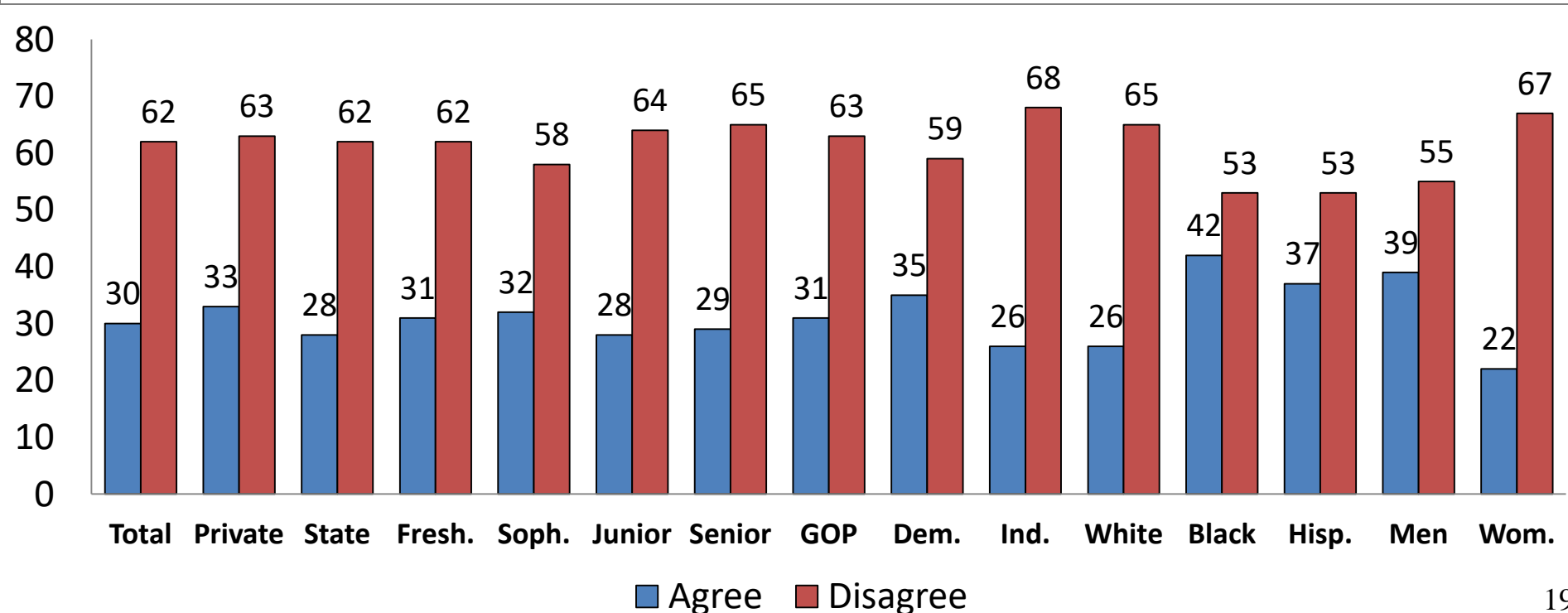
“It is sometimes appropriate to shout down or disrupt a speaker on my campus.”



By a two to one margin, students do not believe that physical violence can be justified to prevent a person from using hate speech. However, 30% of students believe that violence can be justified.

Agree/Disagree:

“If someone is using hate speech or making racially charged comments, physical violence can be justified to prevent this person from espousing their hateful views.”



By a two to one margin, students say conservatives and people on the far right are more likely to use hate speech than liberals and people on the far left. However, the plurality, 47%, says that all sides are guilty of using hate speech.

Unsurprisingly, Republicans are more likely to believe that liberals use hate speech and Democrats are more likely to say that conservatives do so.

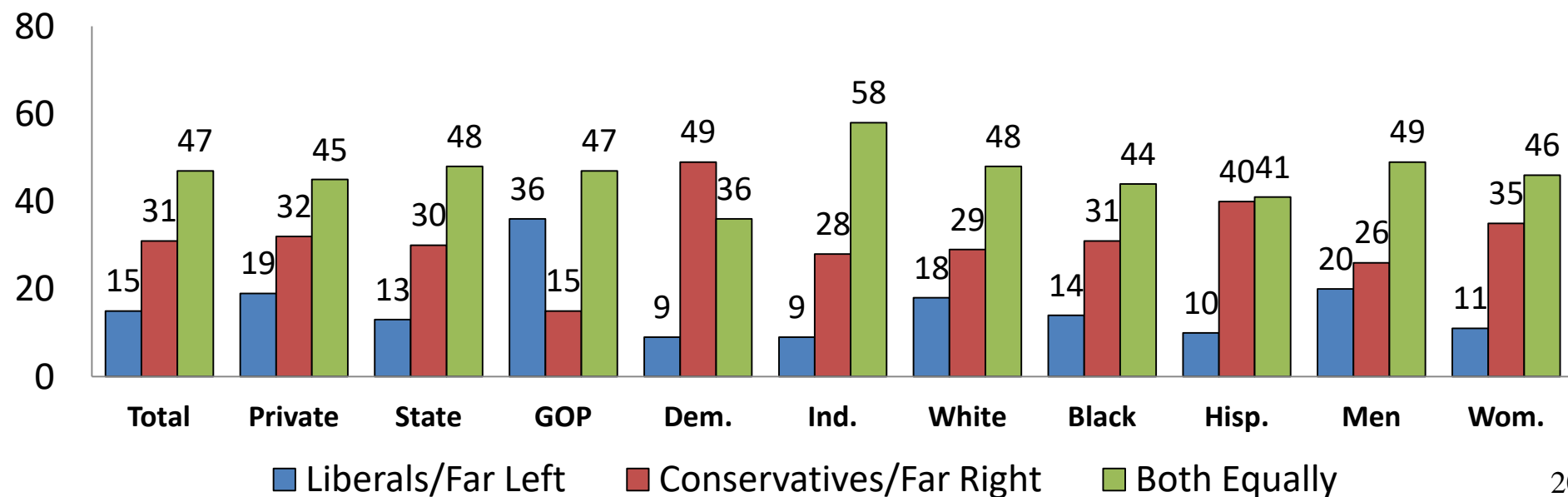
Generally speaking, who do you think are more likely to use hate speech?

Liberals and people on the far left

Conservatives and people on the far right

OR

Both equally/all sides guilty of using hate speech



Part Four —

Classroom & Faculty Issues Related To Free Speech

Like last year, students say their school is generally more tolerant of liberal ideas and beliefs than conservative ideas and beliefs by a two to one margin.

Democrats are most likely to say their school is more tolerant of liberal ideas and Republicans are most likely to say their school is more tolerant of conservative ideas. However, the plurality of Republicans still say their school is more tolerant of liberal ideas.

Would you say your college or university in general is...?

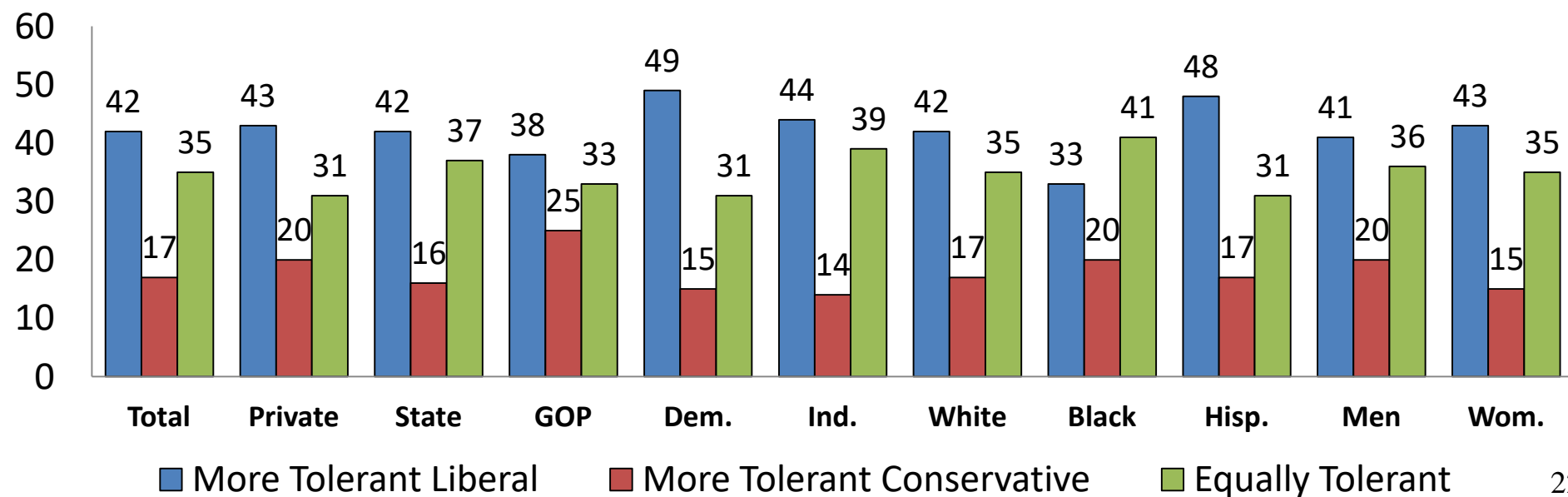
More tolerant of liberal ideas and beliefs

More tolerant of conservative ideas and beliefs

OR

Equally tolerant of both liberal and conservative ideas and beliefs

	9/15	9/16	9/17
Liberal	41%	39%	42%
Conservative	23%	18%	17%
Equal	30%	38%	35%

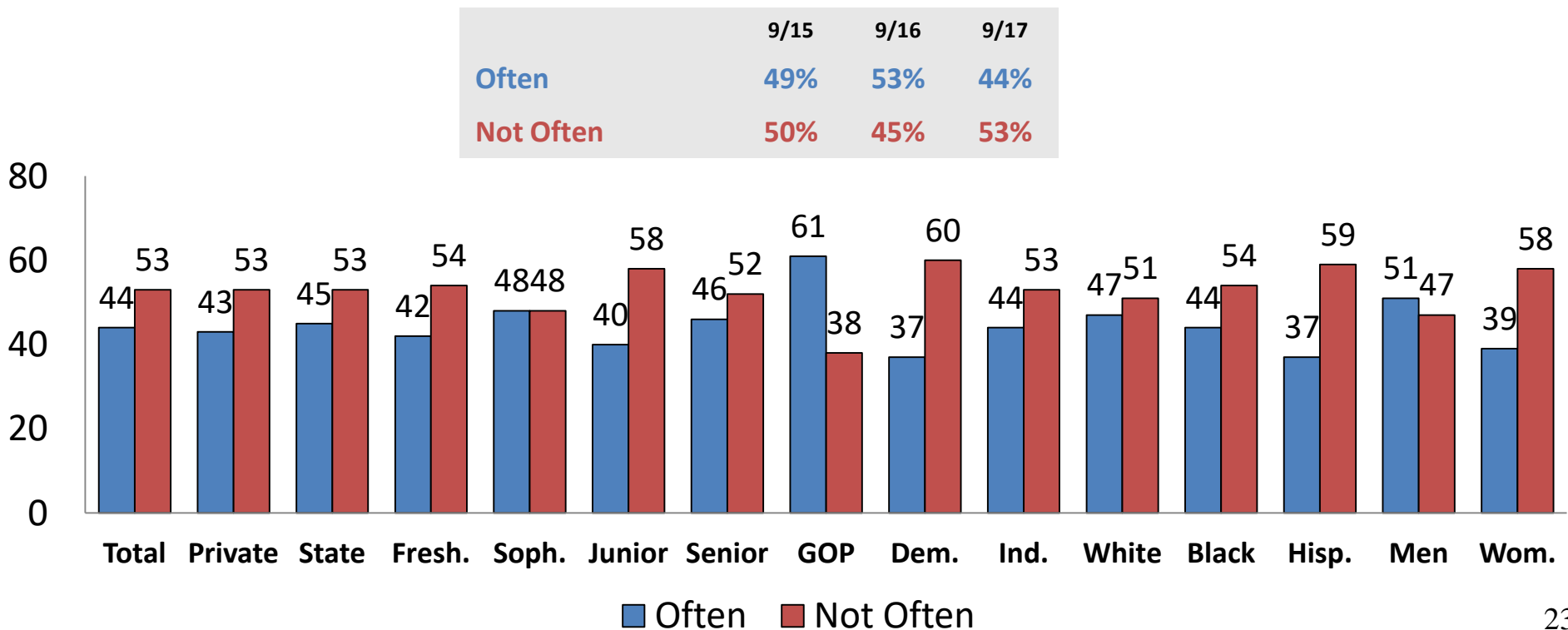


While students remain divided, the majority, 53%, now says they have not often felt intimidated in sharing beliefs that differ than their professors, while 44% say they have often felt intimidated. This is essentially the inverse from last year, when 53% felt intimidated.

By party, Republican students continue to be more likely to feel intimidated to express their opinions than Democrats and Independents.

Men are more likely than women to feel intimidated to express their opinions in class.

Have you felt intimidated in sharing your ideas, opinions or beliefs in class because they were different than your professors?

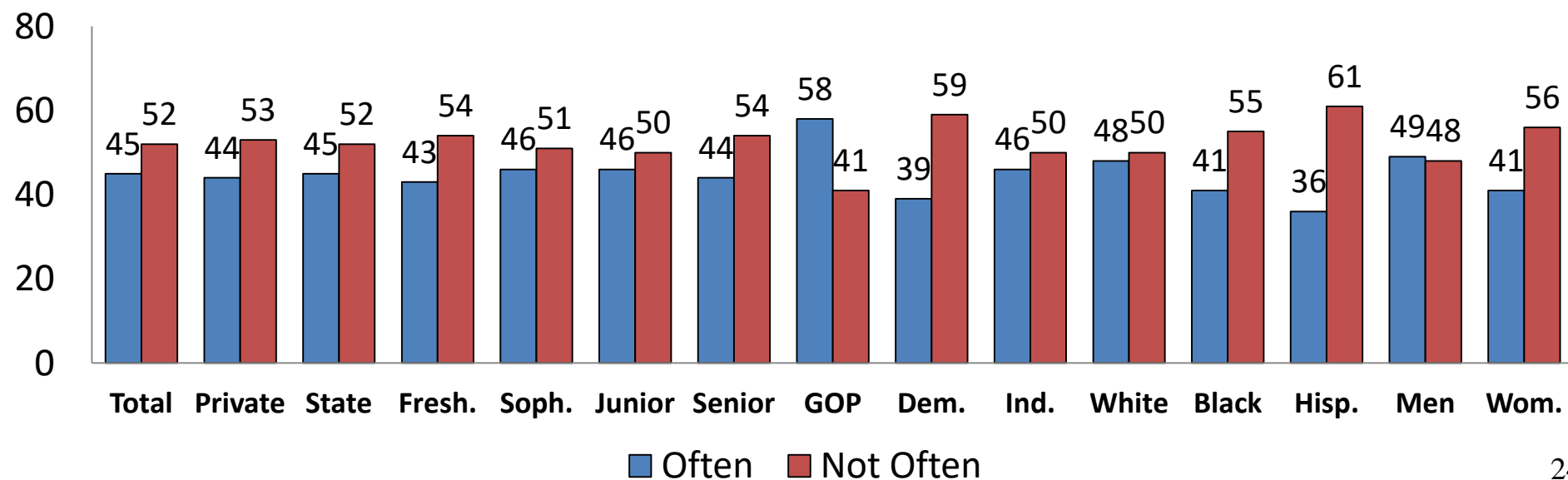


Students also remain divided when it comes to sharing ideas, opinions and beliefs that are different than their classmates, with a slight majority saying that they do not often feel intimidated, 52% to 45%.

The same partisan and gender differences exist, with Republicans and men more likely than Democrats and females to feel intimidated often.

And have you felt intimidated in sharing your ideas, opinions or beliefs in class because they were different than your classmates or peers?

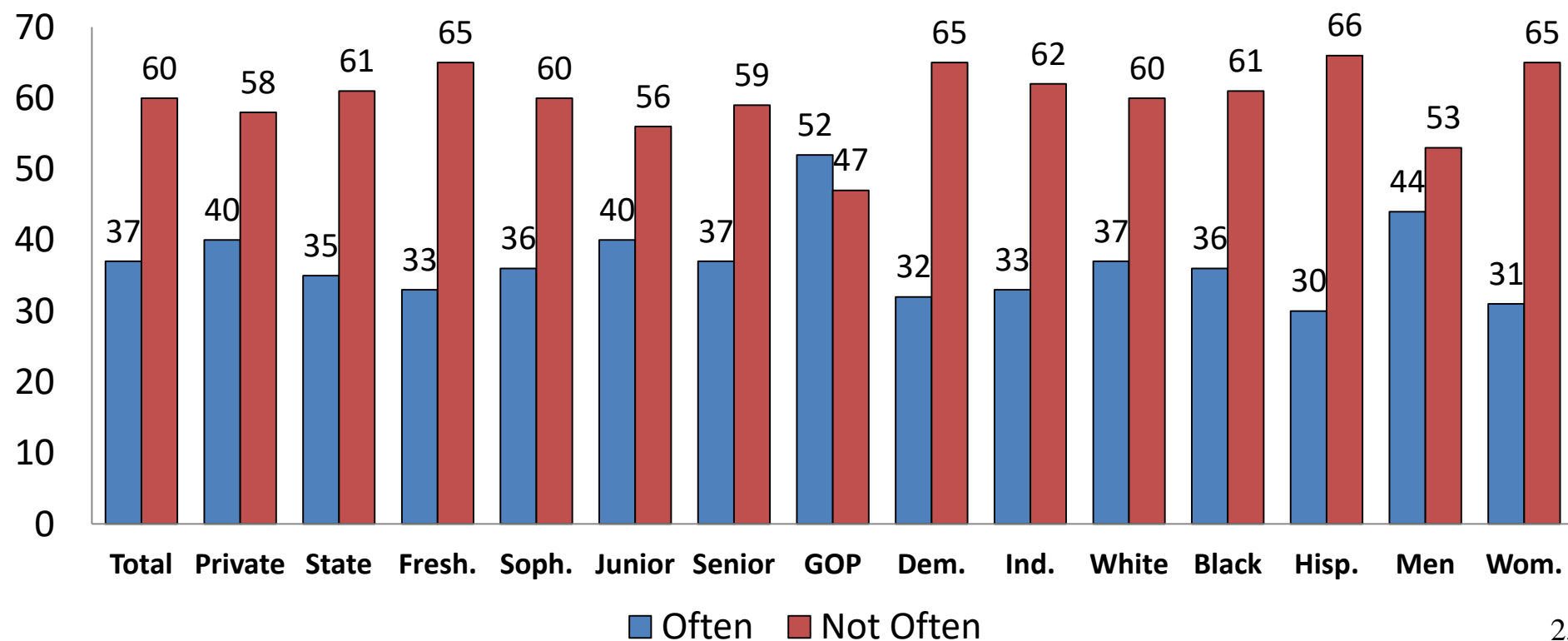
	9/15	9/16	9/17
Often	55%	51%	45%
Not Often	43%	47%	52%



Six in ten have not often felt the need to keep a belief or opinion to themselves out of concern that it would negatively impact a grade. Almost four in ten, 37%, say they have often kept a belief to themselves.

The majority of Republicans, 52%, have often had to keep a belief or opinion to themselves.

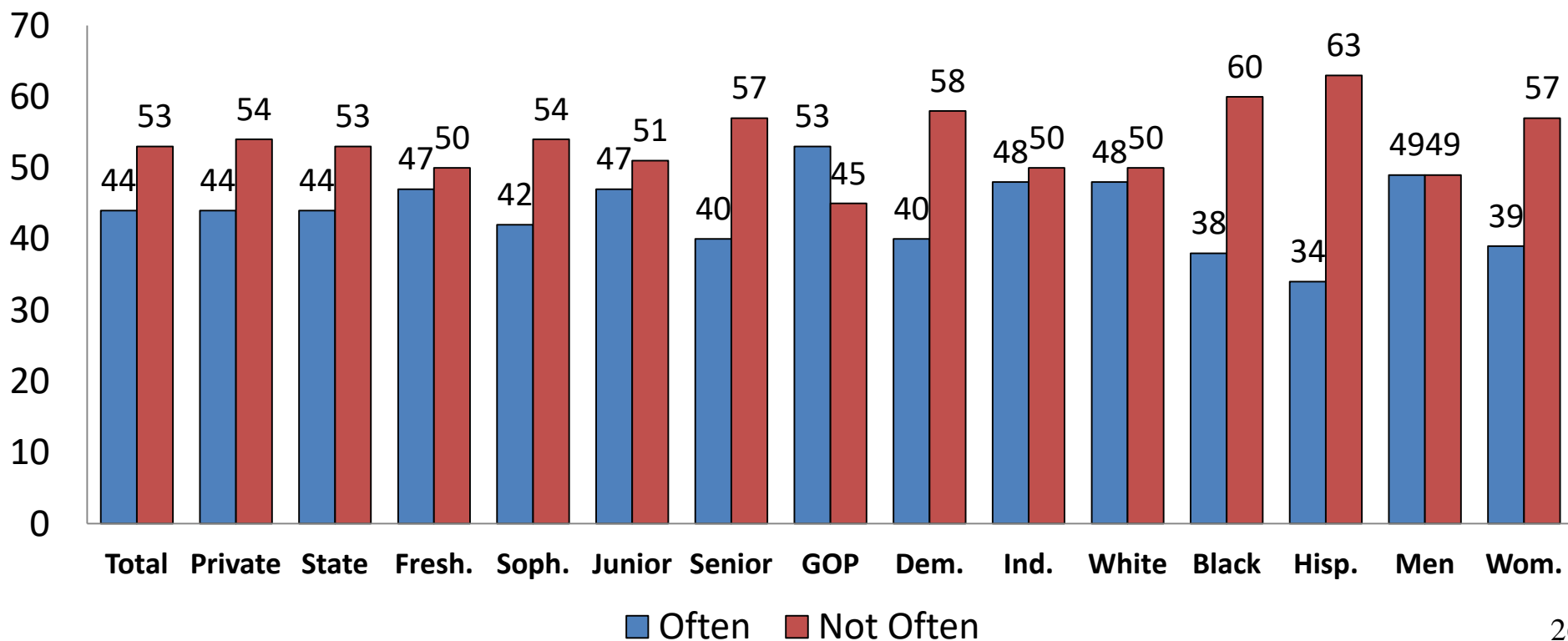
Have you felt the need to keep a belief or opinion to yourself because you were concerned it would negatively impact your grade from a professor?



Students are more concerned about being viewed negatively by their peers than by their professors. In this case, 44% have often kept a belief to themselves compared to 53% who have not often done so.

Once again, Republicans are most likely to keep their views to themselves out of concern of it impacting how they are viewed by friends and fellow classmates.

And have you felt the need to keep a belief or opinion to yourself because you were concerned it would negatively impact how you were viewed by your friends or classmates?



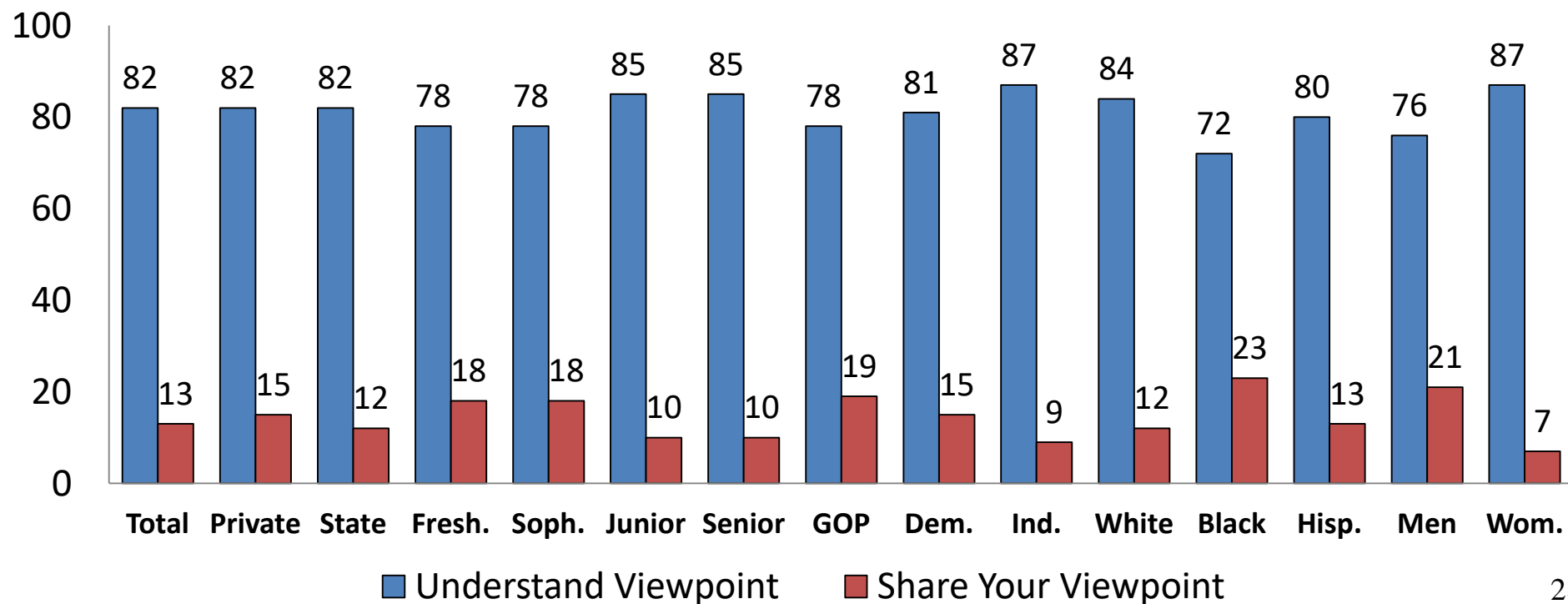
Part Five – Other Issues

When speaking with someone on an issue in which they disagree, greater than eight in ten believe it is more important to have that person understand their viewpoint. Just 13% want to convince the other person to share their viewpoint.

What is more important to you when having a discussion with someone on an issue in which you both disagree?

Having the other person understand your viewpoint, even if you still disagree with one another
OR

Convincing the other person to share your viewpoint



The plurality of students, 45%, share the same opinions and political beliefs as their friends, while only 12% have different opinions and political beliefs as their friends. Almost four in ten have an equal amount of friends with the same beliefs and different beliefs.

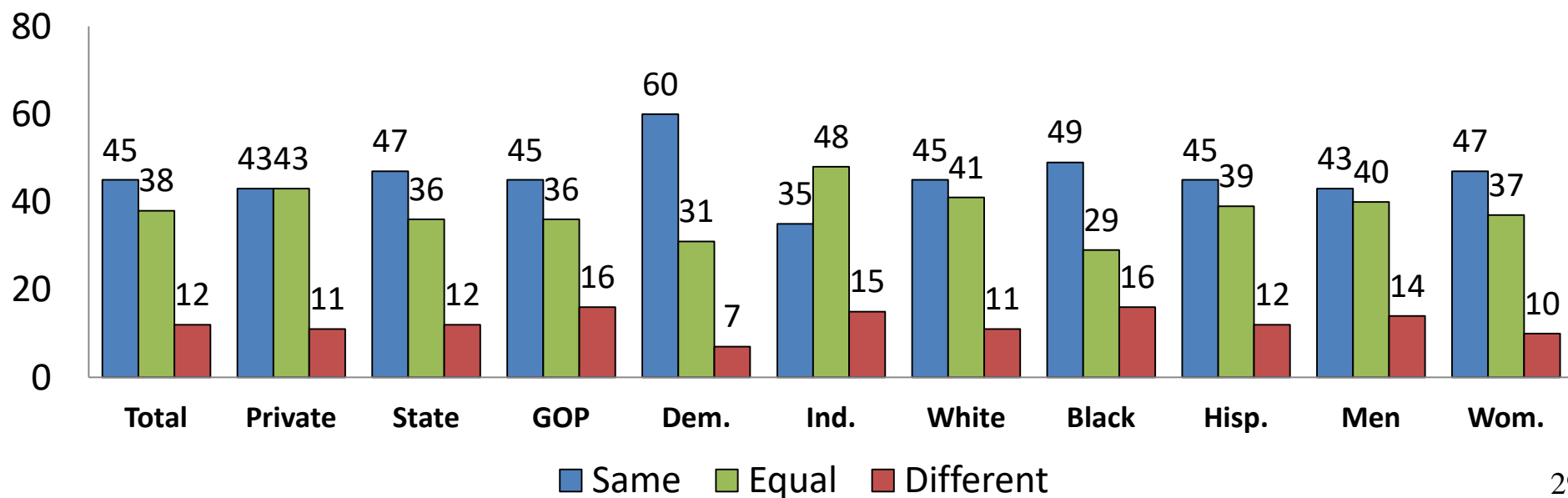
Democratic students are most likely to have friends with the same opinions and beliefs.

Generally speaking, do you share the same opinions and political beliefs as your friends or are your opinions and political beliefs different than your friends?

I share the same opinions and political beliefs as ALL OF my friends
I share the same opinions and political beliefs as MOST OF my friends

I have an EQUAL AMOUNT of friends with the same opinions and political beliefs and different opinions and political beliefs as me

I have different opinions and political beliefs than MOST OF my friends
I have different opinions and political beliefs than ALL OF my friends

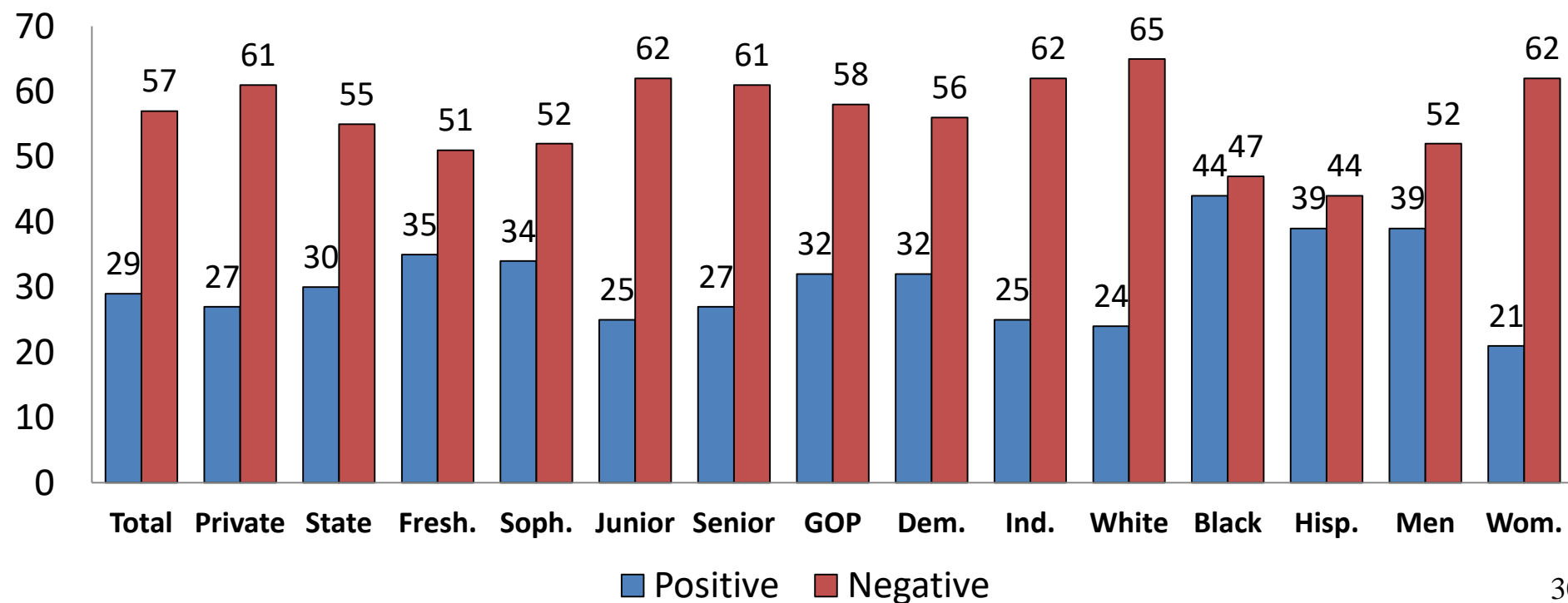


Greater than half, 57%, say Facebook has had a negative impact on political discourse in America, while 29% say it has had a positive impact.

Democrats and Republicans share similar views on this, however women are more likely than men to believe that Facebook has had a negative impact.

Upperclassmen also hold more negative opinions towards Facebook than lowerclassmen.

Generally speaking, do you think Facebook has a positive impact or a negative impact on political discourse in America?



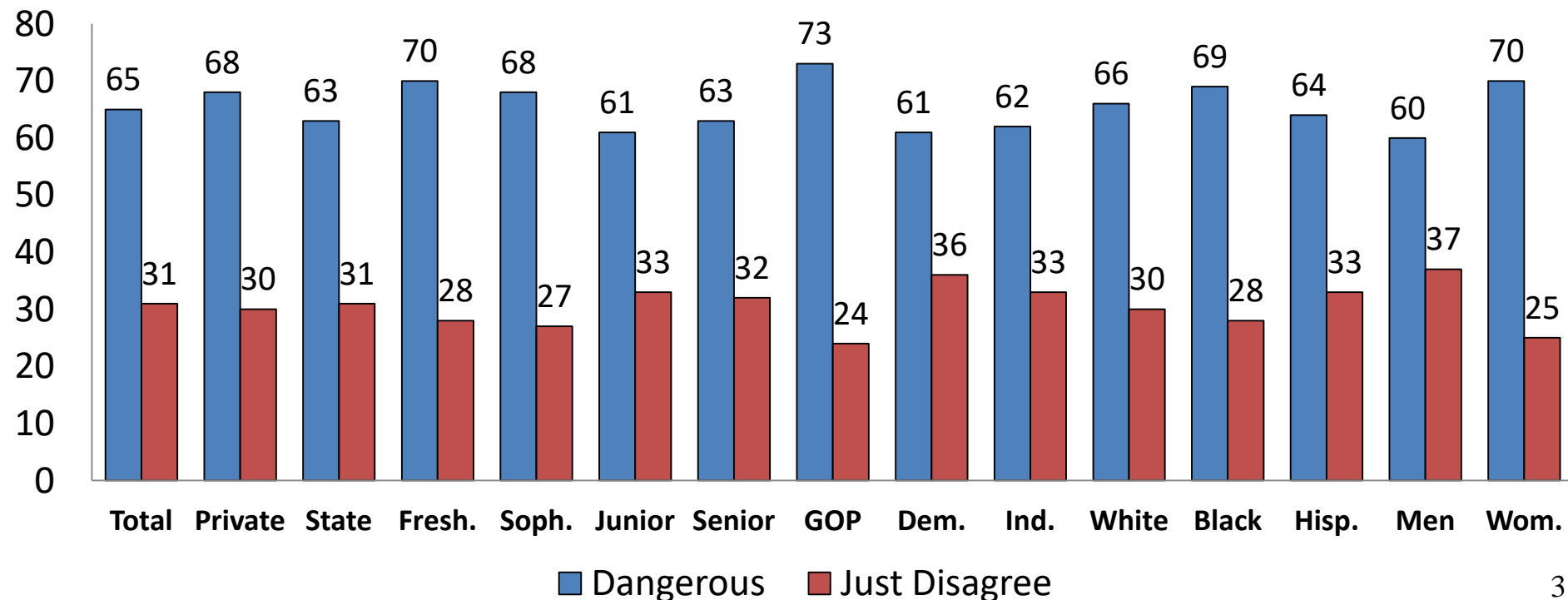
By a two to one margin, students say that “fake news” is dangerous because it spreads lies and misinforms people rather than believing that too many people accuse others of spreading “fake news” when instead they really just disagree with their opinions.

Generally speaking, which of the following comes closer to your own opinion on “fake news”?

Fake news is dangerous because it spreads lies, misinforms people and makes them form opinions that are not fact-based

OR

While fake news is bad, too many people accuse others of spreading fake news, when instead they really just disagree with their opinions



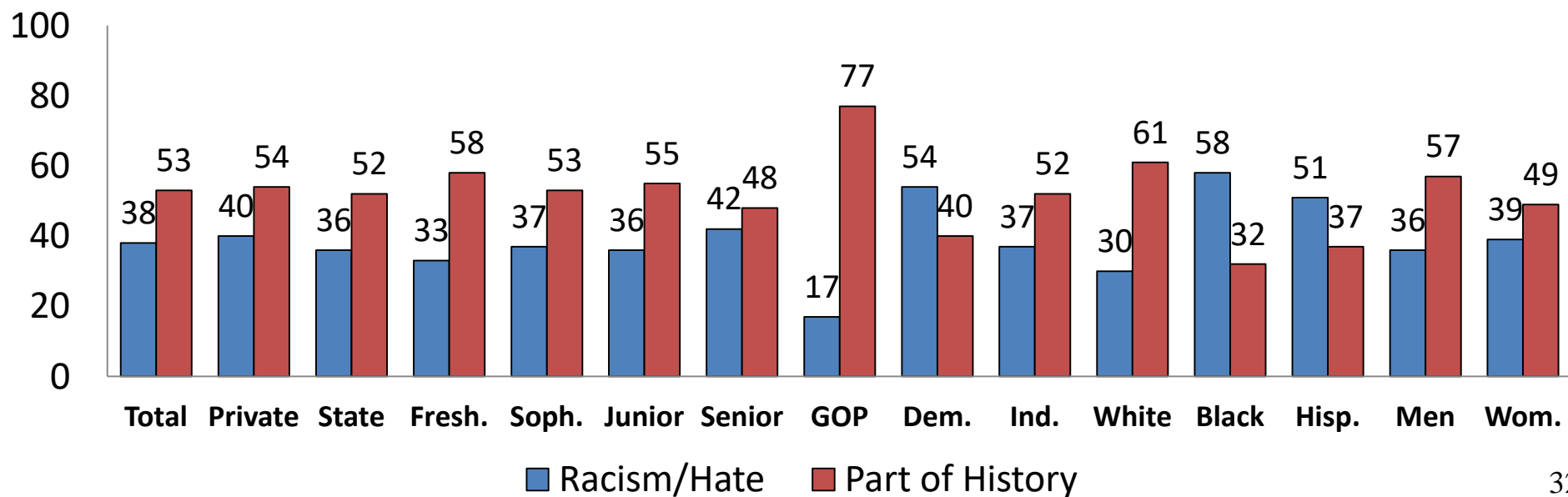
Regarding Confederate monuments and statues, the majority, 53%, says they are a part of our history and we should make real efforts to improve race relations in this country. Almost four in ten say they are symbols of racism and hate and should be removed.

Which of the following comes closer to your own personal opinion about removing Confederate monuments and statues from public places?

These Confederate monuments and statues are symbols of racism and hate and have no place in our society anymore. They should be removed because they are too often used as weapons by white supremacists, Neo-Nazis and the KKK to divide people.

OR

While these monuments and statues are offensive to some people, they are a part of our history, no matter how painful and disgraceful it might be. Instead of focusing on removing these statues, we should instead make real efforts to improve race relations in this country by having honest discussions about this issue.



Demographic Summary

Age	Tot.
18	10%
19	20%
20	16%
21	21%
22	15%
Over 22	18%
Class	Tot.
Freshman	19%
Sophomore	24%
Junior	27%
Senior	31%

Major(s)*	Tot.
Business	18%
Healthcare	11%
Engineering	11%
Biological Sci.	10%
Comp./Info Sci.	9%
Psychology	9%
Party Affiliation	Tot.
Republican	23%
Democrat	37%
Ind./Unaffiliated	28%
Other Party	1%
Not Registered	6%

Ideology	Tot.
Liberal	39%
Moderate	33%
Conservative	23%
Race/Ethnicity*	Tot.
White	65%
Hispanic	15%
Black	15%
Asian	10%
Other	2%
Gender Identity	Tot.
Male	45%
Female	54%
Other	1%

Key Takeaways

- In a general sense, it is clear that students still strongly value the concept of free speech on campus and value the First Amendment.
- Most students can be considered as advocates for free speech. The majority opposes speech codes and believes that students should be allowed to express their views anywhere on campus. Furthermore, students largely support intellectual diversity and see the educational value in understanding opinions and beliefs that are different than their own.
- Students tolerate, and even appreciate, controversial and offensive views for the sake of free speech and the First Amendment. However, they draw a stark line in the sand and react very differently when asked about “hate speech.”
- Most believe that words can be a form of violence and compared to two years ago, more students now believe their school should ban speakers who have used hate speech. Interestingly, students now oppose speech codes for themselves and faculty but are more likely to support a ban for speakers who use hate speech. The challenge with advocating for “free speech” is that “hate speech” is a colloquial and subjective term defined very broadly by students. Even as students acknowledge that hate speech is still technically free speech, it is the “exception to the rule” for many.
- Furthermore, there are noteworthy minorities of students who believe that action should be taken to combat hateful, racist and bigoted speech. There are sizeable portions who believe it is appropriate to shout down speakers on campus and that physical violence can be justified to prevent hate speech.