

KY GOVERNOR'S RACE

GENDER NARRATIVES

ONLINE & SOCIAL MEDIA ANALYSIS

Aug 01 – Oct 31, 2023



Methodology:

Impact Social analyzed the online and social media discussion around gender narratives and related issues throughout Kentucky in the build-up to the 2023 Governor's race. The objective was to understand what lessons could be learned in terms of the political messaging surrounding the race and how this might be applied to a wider map in 2024. All conversations were read (by humans, not algorithms) to understand the topics and sentiment driving discussion and narrative.

Analysis date range: August 01 to October 31, 2023

Search terms: LGBTQ and gender terms – available on request to Impact Social

BACKGROUND

During the Virginia gubernatorial election of 2021 culture issues dominated. Traditional kitchen table issues – on which both candidates based their campaign - such as crime and economy were shelved as discussions regarding the teaching of sex, sexuality, race and gender gripped the electorate. No matter that there was little to zero evidence that this was actually happening, the die was cast, the voting public decided the most important issue of the day was parental power in the classroom.

Since this time passionate discussions have fleshed out positions of both left and right on issues which have been defined collectively as ‘the culture wars’. Each side know what they believe and why they feel the other side is wrong. Consequently, the culture wars have exacerbated the polarization of American politics. Chief among these is gender ideology where accusations and mistruths are exchanged, particularly regarding the impact on children.

The existence of gender ideology tempts politicians to seek advantage by adopting positions deemed favorable to voters they wish to attract. Gov. Glenn Youngkin’s victory is a clear example of how such issues can be manipulated to gain additional support at the ballot box. Similar tactics were adopted by candidates during the ‘22 midterms and more recently as part of Gov DeSantis’ campaign to win the GOP presidential primaries.

As we head into the 2024 elections it is therefore important to understand how gender politics is being discussed and politized and what impact this might have on elections and the behaviour of the electorate. As part of this process this analysis focuses on the 2023 Gubernatorial election in Kentucky.

KEY FINDINGS

General discussion about gender issues are alive and kicking throughout Kentucky. Compared to other contentious issues such as abortion, war etc the discussion volume is at the lower end of the scale. However, the conversation content is broad and covers all the subtopics one would normally expect in relation to this issue. It is passionate on all sides, usually ill-informed with a tendency to take a position based on tribalism as opposed to fact. Regardless, a full and frank argument is taking place and in this respect KY is no different from any other state in America.

What is surprising however is to what extent this issue is being discussed in relation to the KY election. GOP candidate, Daniel Cameron, made gender ideology – particularly gender re-alignment surgery – a key component of his candidacy. Judging by the general conversation content and tone this makes sense. And yet only 17% (av.) of all gender related conversation in the three months heading into the election is related to the candidates or the election – with virtually no discussion regarding its influence over voting behaviour. Moreover, unlike the general conversation, even when the issue is spoken in relation to the election specifics are omitted. Gender ideology is instead used to reinforce party stereotypes and behavior with direct policy discussion deliberately avoided.

Conclusion

While voters still feel strongly about gender ideology, its importance as an electoral issue appears diminished. In fact, it may even be a vote loser if adopted by the right as it can be used by the left as further evidence Trumpian/GOP bigotry and hatred.

Recommendations for the year ahead

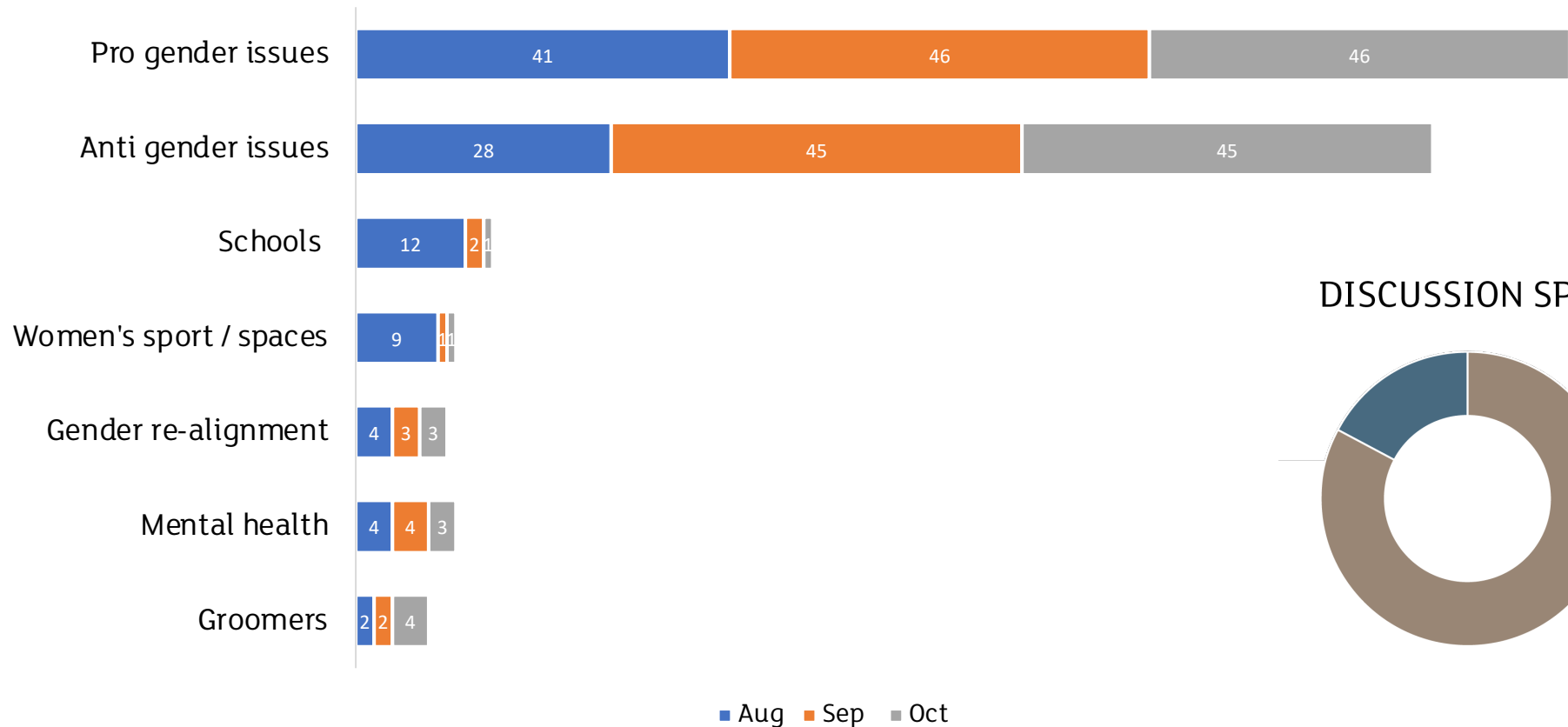
Due to the detail and passion seen in the general KY conversation it is important to be aware of how this might change over time and how it is being interpreted by all sides. It is also essential to maintain an understanding of how this issue is being discussed in relation to the '24 elections and if it's being reignited for electoral gain.

CITIZEN DISCUSSIONS

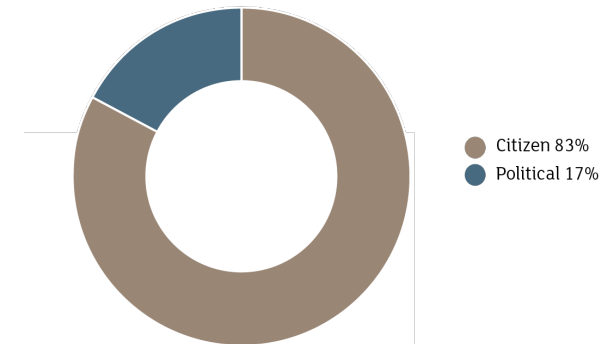




GENDER NARRATIVES SHARE OF VOICE (%)



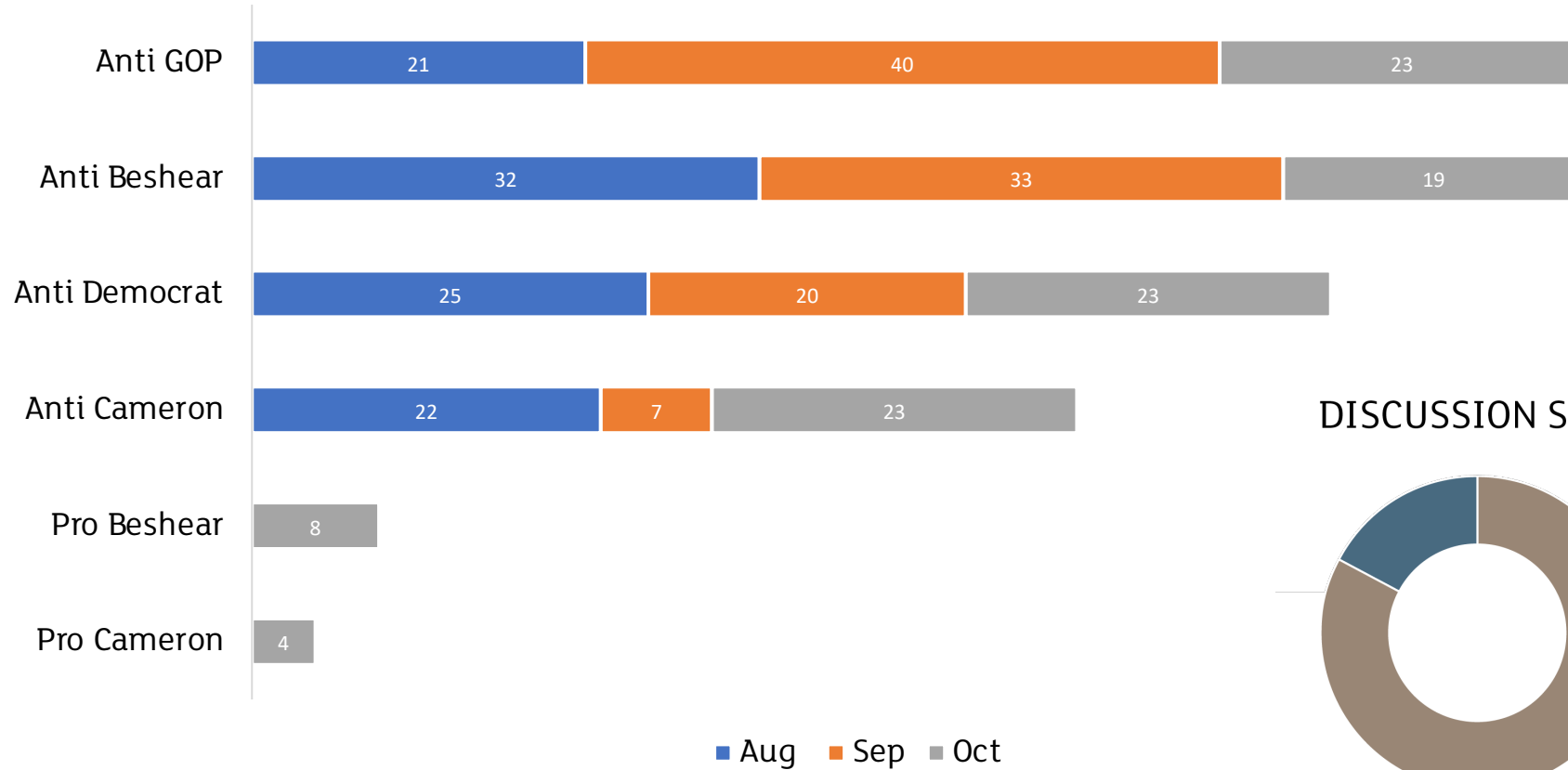
DISCUSSION SPLIT



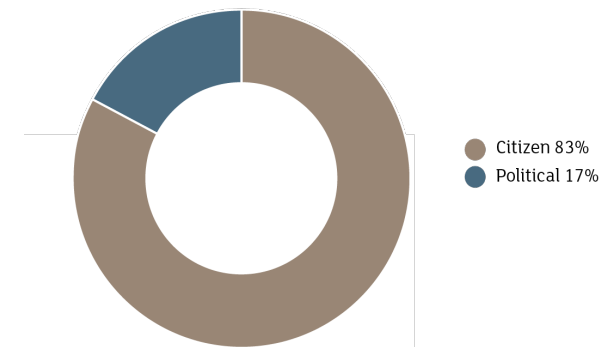
POLITICAL DISCUSSIONS



GENDER NARRATIVES SHARE OF VOICE (%)



DISCUSSION SPLIT



Impact Social is a specialist social media, online monitoring and analysis company. Using big data software Impact Social tracks over 60 million online sites including Twitter, Facebook, all blogs, forums and news websites. Whatever is said publicly, in the media or online we can follow live, 24/7 in 44 different languages.

This is where our reliance on algorithms ends. **Once the data has been received our in-house experts read and analyze the content - often amounting to 1,000's of individual posts. Our unique methodology ensures unrivalled accuracy to show what has been said, by whom and its impact. We are the only company in the world providing this level of analysis.**

What does the analysis show?

Our expertise is in accurately assessing all media, stakeholder and public conversations which have an impact - positively or negatively - on any given subject, organisation or individual. This can be provided as a general overview or in greater detail reflecting:

- The overall conversation
- The level of influence
- The topics under discussion and the share of voice
- The share of the discussion positive to negative and what is driving it
- Which stakeholder group is having the most impact

These questions and many more are what Impact Social was established to answer. **In essence we create live rolling focus groups of thousands, hundreds of thousands, sometimes millions of people.**

We work with international organizations, government departments, global brands, the world's largest trade associations, national governments and on Presidential, Prime Ministerial and local elections.

Areas of expertise: geo-politics, political campaigns, issues management, brand reputation, crisis communications, financial services and litigation. Impact Social is based in London and Washington D.C. www.impactsocial.com