

# The Cost of Political Polarization: How Criticism of Wokeness is Hurting Military Recruitment and Retention

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- Key Terms
- Background
  - 2020 in Review
  - WEO Findings lead to change
  - January 6<sup>th</sup>
- Findings
  - Public interest over time
  - Words have an impact macro to micro
- Conclusions and Recommendations
  - Polarization impacts recruiting and retention
  - Uniformed service members must avoid polarized news media/journalists

# Key Terms

- **Woke:** aware of and actively attentive to important facts and issues, especially issues of racial and social justice. It is often used in contexts that suggest someone's expressed beliefs about such matters are not backed with genuine concern or action.
- **Penetration Rate:** The penetration rate is defined as the # of enlistments per 1,000 qualified military available youth population. It is the primary measure of effectiveness used for recruiters.
  - **Age:** Between 17-35 years old
  - **Medical, Moral, Physical:** Medically and physically fit, and in good moral standing
  - **Citizenship:** A U.S. citizen or permanent resident with a valid Green Card
  - **Education:** A high school graduate or equivalent

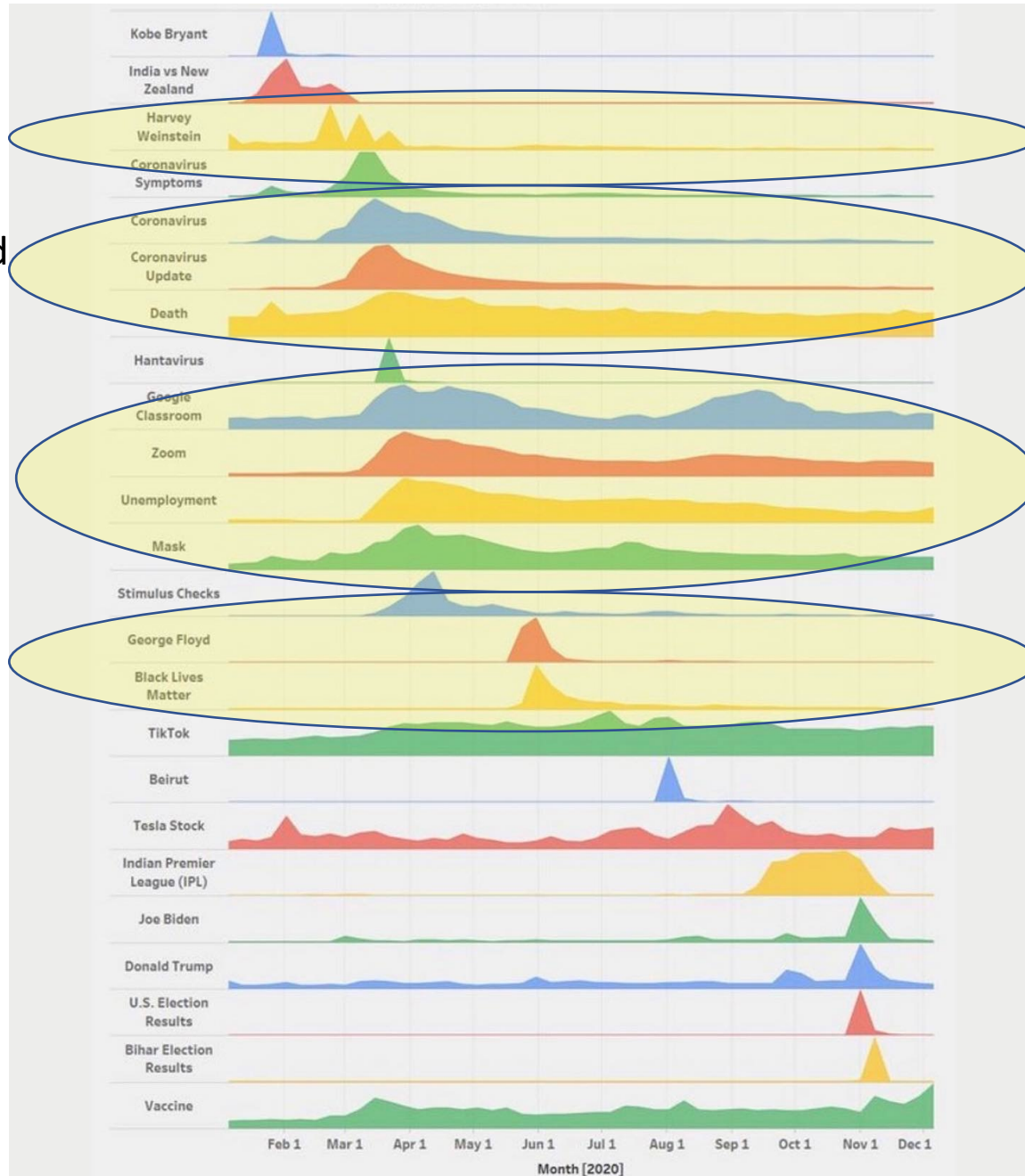
# Top Google Searches in 2020

Equity issues

Stress and Death

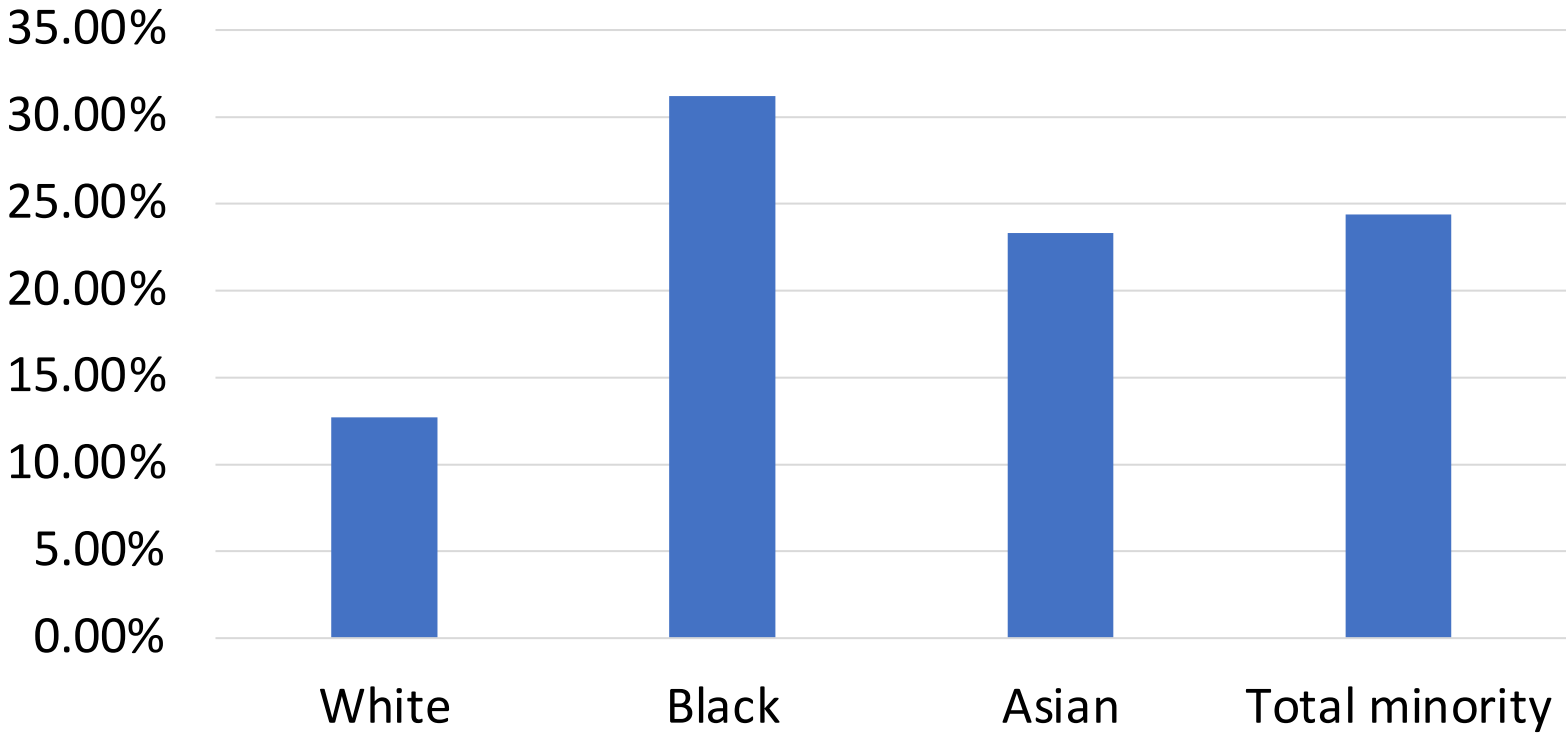
Chaos

Diversity/Inclusion issues



# WEO Study released

Service Members who experienced Racial/Ethnic Harassment in the last 12 Months (2016-17)



20% 34% **136,000**

# SECDEF Esper's DEI strategy

On July 14<sup>th</sup>, 2020, Secretary Esper directed nine immediate actions which included:

- **Removal of photographs from promotion and selection boards** to ensure equal opportunity for all service members
- **Updating** the department's military equal opportunity and diversity inclusion **policies**
- Increase the frequency of WEO surveys to **obtain and analyze additional data**
- Adding bias awareness and bystander intervention to the violence prevention framework
- **Educate** the force **on unconscious bias**
- Review hairstyle and grooming policies for racial bias
- **Develop a program to enable conversations** about discrimination, prejudice, and bias
- **Review the effectiveness** of military service equal opportunity offices
- **Support** military department **initiatives**.

# Backlash to DoD's DEI strategy

## Members of Congress

“the military should focus all energy on being the best fighting force on the planet... and **stop entertaining Left-wing social experiments.**”

a **woke, the emasculated military** is not the best idea.”

A senator and representative created a Whistleblower form for Soldiers to report complaints of “**progressive Pentagon staffers and spineless military commanders**” to congressmen so that the armed forces don't fall to “woke ideology”.

## Fox News Host Tucker Carlson

“So we've got new hairstyles and maternity flight suits. **Pregnant women are going to fight our wars. It's a mockery of the U.S. military.**”

# January 6<sup>th</sup> Insurrection

~2,586,825 military personnel

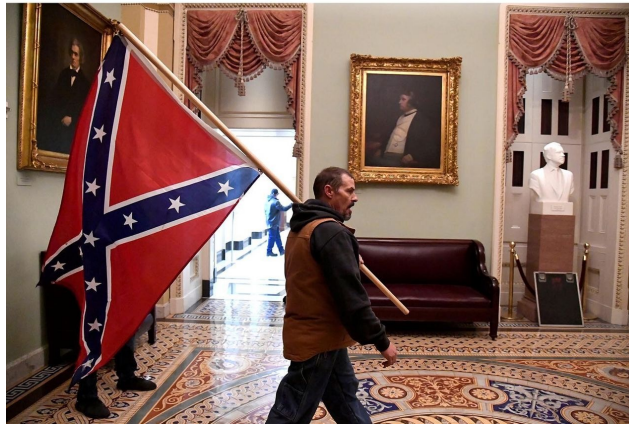
211

183

48+112

.008%

60-100 per year.

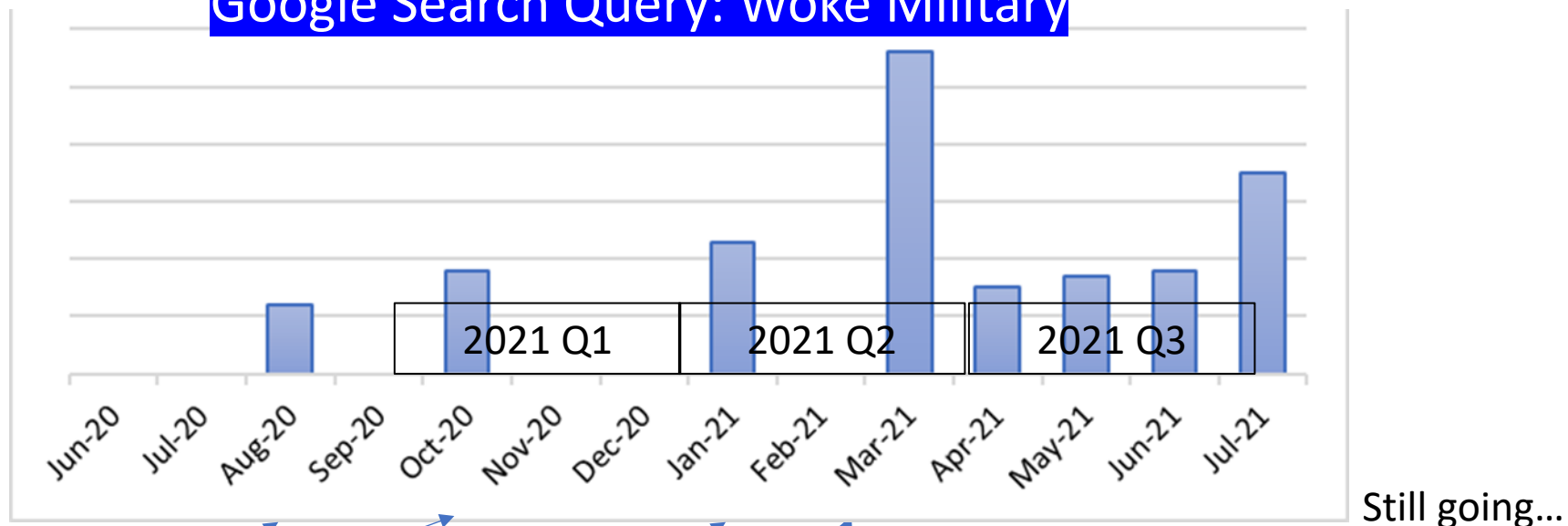




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# Public Interest over time

Google Search Query: Woke Military



Senior military leaders promote DEI initiatives

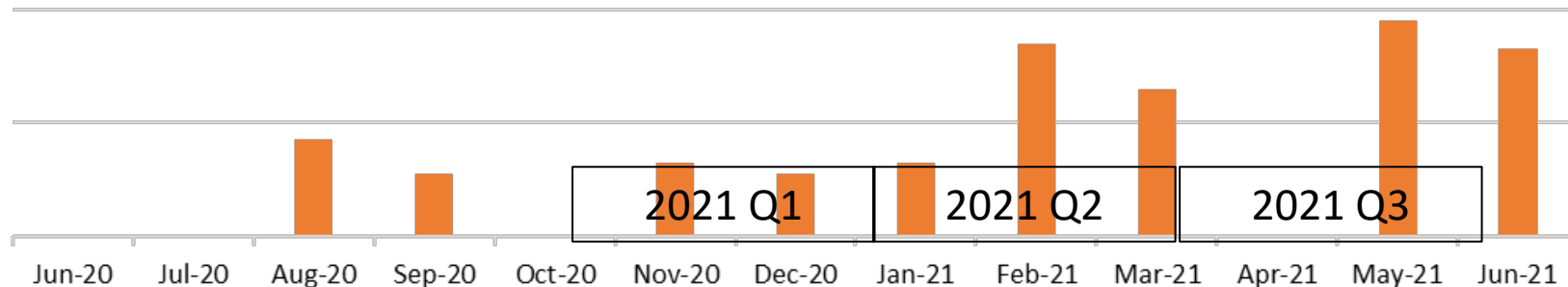
GEN(ret) Austin announced as next SECDEF

Significant Rep news/media attacks against US Military as too "woke"

- Regan Institute publishes study highlighting loss of public trust in Military
- Senior uniformed officers spar with Fox News' Tucker Carlson over women in military

# Public Interest over time

Google Search Query: Extremist Military



- Reports of US Military assisting the transition of power
- Former CMTD of USMC warns of white extremists infiltrating US Military

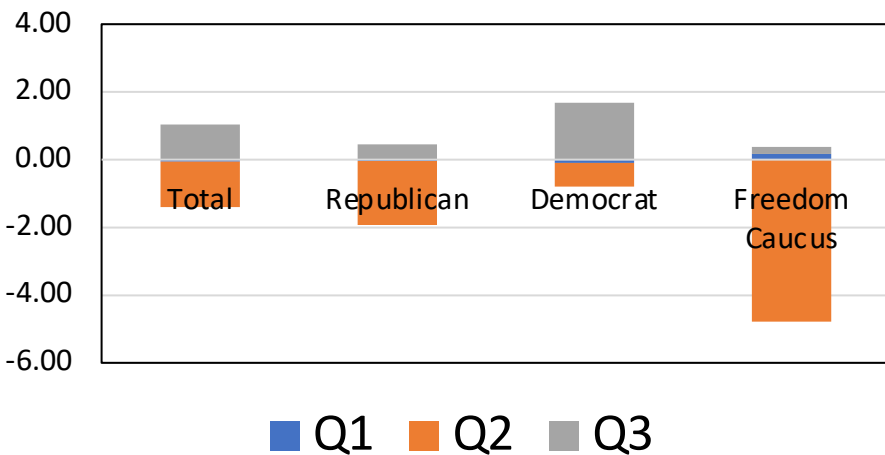
News reports that service members participated in January 6<sup>th</sup> insurrection

- Multiple initiatives by Pentagon to investigate and address reports of extremism
- Senator claims less than 10% of military extremists

# Public reception to the Military

District	Votes cast	Winner	Winner	% of Pop Voted	CBSA	2021Q2
Alabama's 2nd Congressional District	198,373	Barry Moore	137,193	69.16%	Dothan	-9.38
Alabama's 6th Congressional District	181,850	Gary Palmer	154,058	84.72%	No data	
Arizona's 8th Congressional District	204,713	Debbie Lesko	197,555	96.50%	no data	
Arizona's 9th Congressional District	197,185	Paul Gosar	192,796	97.77%	Lake Havasu C	-4.22
		Lauren Boebert	163,839	50.06%	Glenwood Spr	1.65
		Matt Gaetz	196,494	67.83%	Pensacola	0.32
		Byron Donalds	213,035	68.00%	Cape Coral	-2.13
		Marjorie Taylor Gre	169,987	65.89%	Dalton	-13.03
		Russ Fulcher	156,914	70.18%	Coeur d'Alene	-2.49
		Mary Miller	124,494	70.50%	Jacksonville	-10.19
		Eric Burlison	144,699	72.07%	Springfield	-3.56
		Dan Bishop	182,642	70.11%	Rockingham	11.21
		Jim Jordan	196,898	69.32%	Bellefontaine	-5.81
		Warren Davidson	150,944	66.71%	Greenville	-10.95
		Josh Brecheen	167,687	72.45%	Tahlequah	-11.21
		Jeff Duncan	138,656	97.68%	Seneca	-12.37
		Diana Harshbarger	147,153	78.32%	Newport	-13.95
		Scott DesJarlais	122,336	70.57%	Dayton	-16.43
		Ronny Jackson	161,299	75.38%	Wichita Falls	-3.46
Texas' 14th Congressional District	191,734	Randy Weber	131,895	68.79%	no data	
Texas' 15th Congressional District	151,590	Monica De La Cruz	80,869	53.35%	Alice	-3.13
Virginia's 9th Congressional District	244,893	Morgan Griffith	180,041	73.52%	Martinsville	-2.70
West Virginia's 2nd Congressional District	242,868	Alex Mooney	159,379	65.62%	Clarksburg	3.87
Wyoming's At-Large Congressional District	181,265	Harriet Hageman	126,487	69.78%	Evanston	-6.77

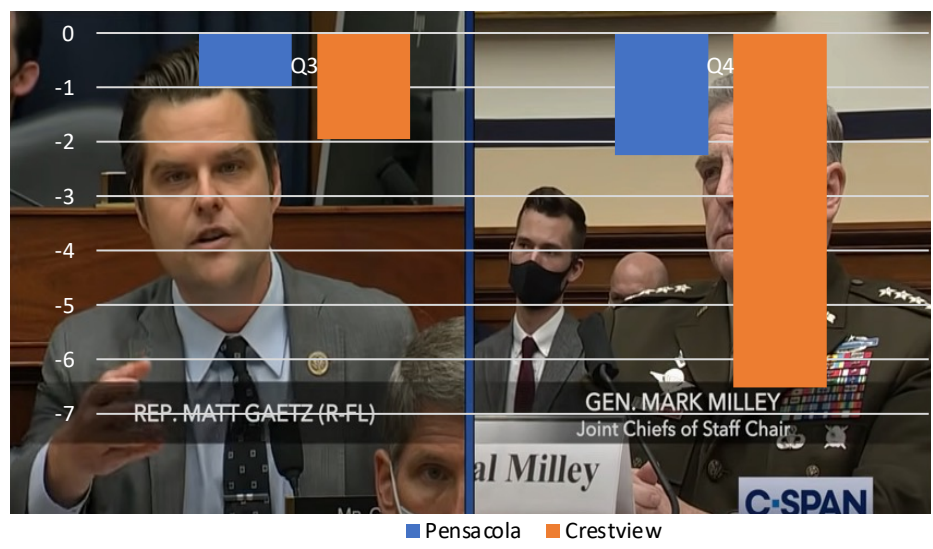
Mean Penetration Rates 2021 Q1-Q3



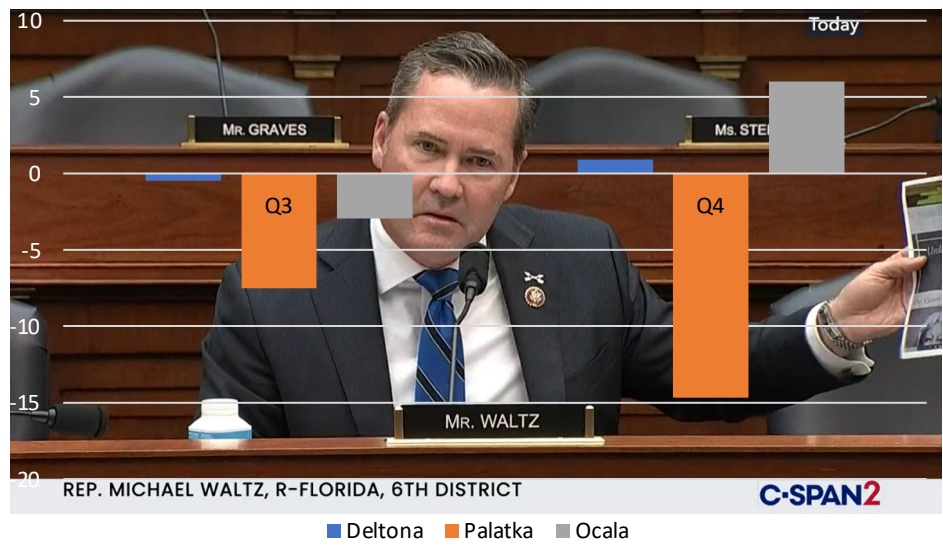
Penetration rate change by Core-Based Statistic Area (CBSA)

# Florida's 1<sup>st</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> District

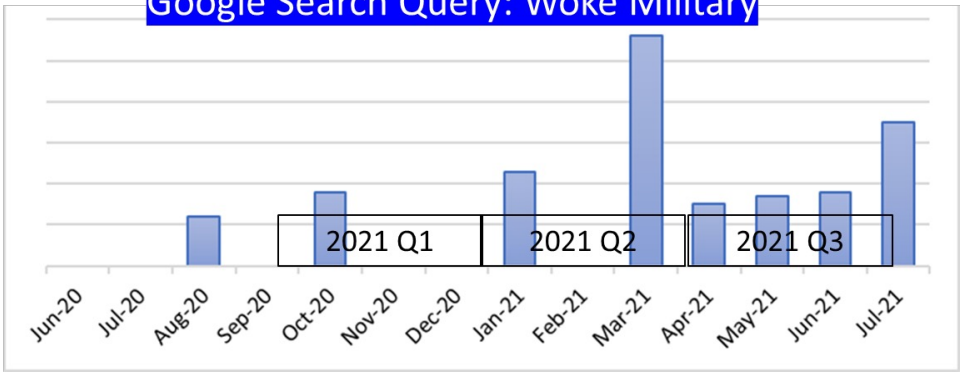
Florida District 1 Penetration Rates



Florida District 6 Penetration rates



Google Search Query: Woke Military



# Conclusions and Recommendations

- Politicizing the military impacts retention and recruitment
- In areas where republican politicization is highest, recruitment suffers the most
- For senior uniformed military officials:
  - Congressional hearings with polarized members of congress are critical and unavoidable, engaging polarized news anchors/media is not