



Making it personal

Reframing conversations
about DEI and climate change

By: Gaby Polanco Sorto

INVESTING IN DEI AND CLIMATE CHANGE MAKES GOOD BUSINESS SENSE

In October 2024, Gore Mutual Insurance and RK Insights surveyed over 1,000 Canadians to assess attitudes and perceptions about diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) and climate change. The research demonstrates that investing in inclusion, equity, and climate is beneficial for businesses and communities, positioning companies to thrive in the future.

Many consumers say they are growing weary and skeptical of costly government mandates and corporate proclamations about the importance of embracing DEI and reducing environmental impacts. Despite this, they remain deeply concerned about how these issues are personally affecting their lives.

The current polarized political landscape has created a misleading narrative suggesting that your political affiliation dictates your stance on DEI or climate change. Based on our research, this is not the case. **Surprisingly, political affiliation does not necessarily have an impact on support for and concern about DEI and climate change.**



Over 90% of all respondents with both left and right political affiliations approve of or are neutral about DEI initiatives, and 90% say the same about climate policies in their workplaces and communities.

The support and objections to DEI and climate change cross the political spectrum because they impact the individual—this is personal.

Reframing the conversation to focus on the direct impact on employees, clients, and communities, particularly those who are most vulnerable—older and lower-income Canadians—presents an opportunity to shift attitudes and perceptions surrounding DEI and climate change.



ENGAGE IN PERSONAL CONVERSATIONS ABOUT DEI

Consumers are approaching these issues through a personal lens—and there are many factors affecting their outlook. They are primarily concerned about their welfare. Nearly all (90%) say their own physical and mental health is a high priority.

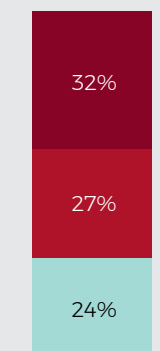
They also express concern about the unintended consequences of implementing DEI and climate change initiatives. Most consumers (80%) say DEI initiatives negatively impact relationships due to certain groups being favoured over others, leading to resentment/exclusion among individuals that don't fit into specific DEI categories (42%); the reinforcement of particular groups leads to an “us versus them” mentality rather than fostering unity (37%).

Nearly half of all respondents say they have witnessed resistance to DEI initiatives, with lack of understanding (38%), perceived unfairness (34%), and fear of change (32%) cited as the primary causes for resistance.

Despite these barriers, there is still resounding support for DEI. Overall, most consumers (81%) believe DEI initiatives strengthen relationships between ages, genders, races, and other diversity categories. This includes breaking down stereotypes and biases (46%), encouraging empathy and respect (46%), and increasing collaboration and teamwork (39%).

Nearly all respondents, including 69% of those opposed to DEI, identified actions to address resistance to DEI, including listening respectfully (45%), promoting inclusivity of all groups (39%), implementing initiatives with fairness and transparency (39%), and engaging in dialogue (38%).

Over 80% of respondents indicated they feel certain populations are “left out” of formal DEI initiatives:

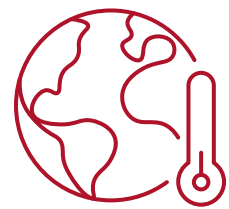
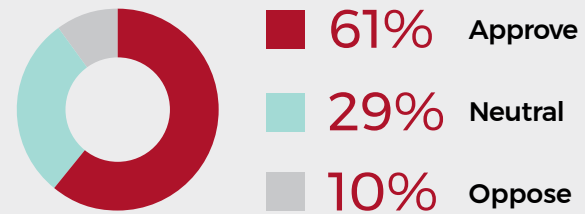


- Older adults (32%)
- Those who have less money now or grew up in families that struggled financially (27%)
- Small or less visible minorities, such as tiny ethnic minorities or those with rare disabilities (24%)



RECOGNIZE AND ADDRESS POTENTIAL BARRIERS TO SUPPORT

There is a similar story for climate change. Overall, most consumers either approve of (61%) or are neutral about (29%) climate change policies in their community or workplace; only 10% oppose climate change policies outright.



Once again, we see support across the political spectrum: 50% of respondents

who say they are to the right of the political spectrum approve of climate change policies, and 74% of left-leaning respondents share the same sentiment.

This has likely been influenced by the ever-increasing impact of climate change across Canada over the last few years, such as record-breaking wildfires and flooding. Overall, one-third (35%) of consumers say their opinion on climate change initiatives has changed in the past year, including 21% who say they have become more positive on climate change action.

However, challenges remain. Most consumers (82%) identified aspects of climate initiatives that they find most problematic, with nearly half identifying the most problematic issue being the economic costs to them (45%).

The majority of those who approve of climate change policies (40%) also feel these policies should balance environmental and economic goals.

“ In Canada, climate change is imposing an increasingly disproportionate impact on vulnerable groups, and factors such as poverty significantly impact the likelihood of recovering from extreme weather events. Working together, we can bridge this gap to create healthier, safer, and more resilient workplaces and communities. ”



Gaby Polanco Sorto
VP, Purpose & Sustainability

SEIZE THE OPPORTUNITY TO SHIFT ATTITUDES AND PERCEPTIONS

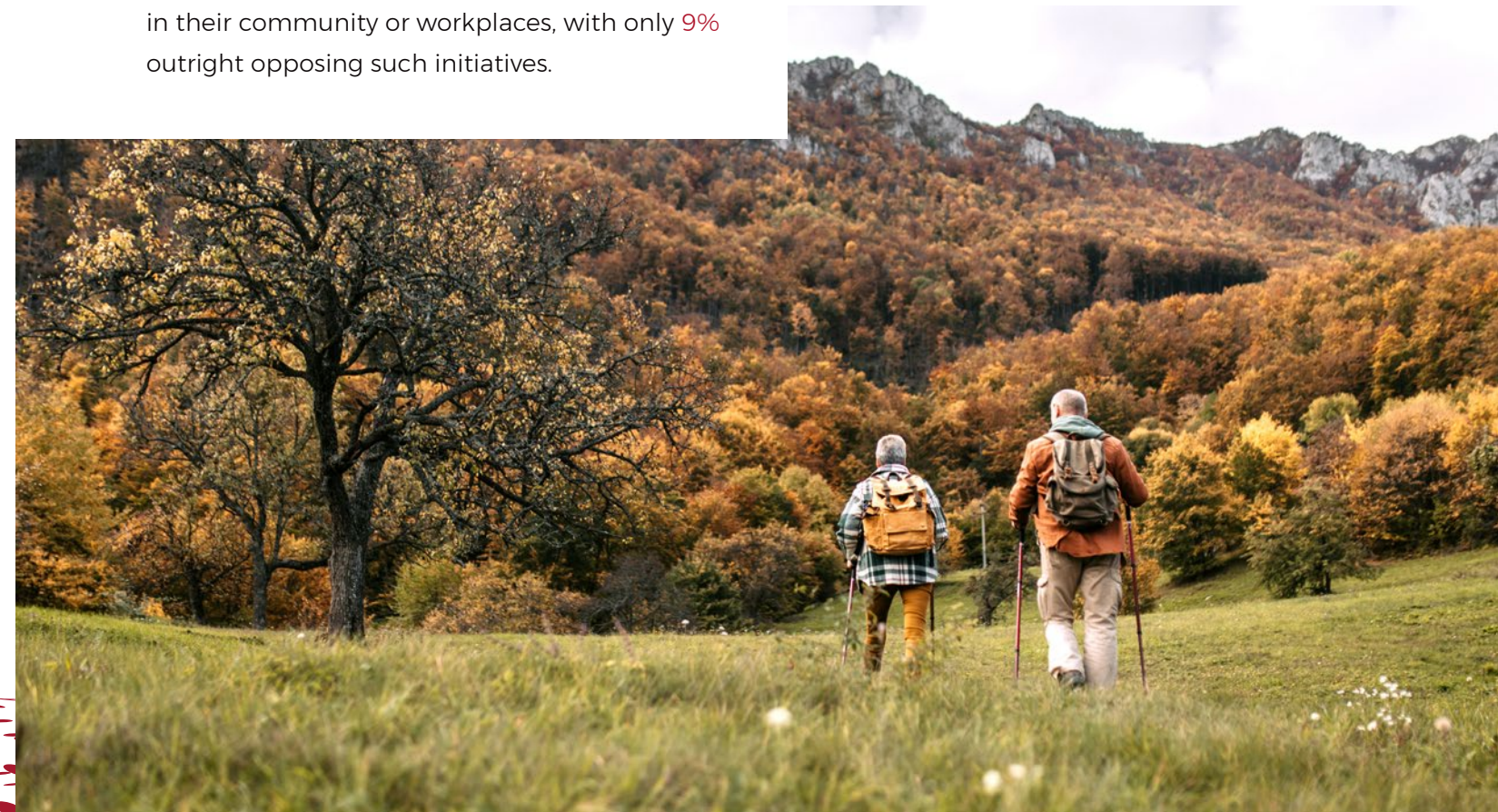
In the past, many have used broad narratives—the big goals and commitments—when speaking about DEI and climate change. It is time we make this personal.

Understanding individual viewpoints and addressing personal barriers are important steps towards shifting attitudes and perceptions among those who are neutral and opposed.

Fortunately, the research reveals that there is a strong base of consumers who are already fully supportive of these causes or close to it. Half of the consumers polled say they have always been supportive of climate policies. Those who are neutral are skeptical (20%) and weary (9%), but they do not oppose or reject them outright. Most consumers either approve of (42%) or are neutral about (50%) DEI initiatives in their community or workplaces, with only 9% outright opposing such initiatives.

By engaging in more meaningful, relevant, and personal discussions, companies can deepen an understanding and commitment among those who already approve of DEI and climate initiatives, positively influence individuals who are on the fence, and possibly even sway those who may be opposed. Central to this is understanding how DEI and climate change impact individuals differently and engaging them on what these commitments, policies, and initiatives could mean to them personally.

The work is not done. Both DEI and climate change are key issues that continue to affect how our communities thrive. We need to change the discourse, tailoring the conversations to more effectively communicate our goals and what this means for the individual.





LET'S LEAD CHANGE TOGETHER

Gore Mutual is committed to sharing research and knowledge with the entire industry to spur the change we feel needs to happen.

More than 1,000 GenZs, Millennials, GenXs, and Boomers from across Canada participated in this wave of research.

We hope you find this as compelling as we do and can use this information to support the business case for building resilient communities in your organization. To learn more, visit goremutual.ca/purpose. For information about this research, please contact us at purpose@goremutual.ca.



Built on a foundation of financial strength for more than 185 years, Gore Mutual Insurance Company is one of Canada's first property and casualty insurers. With offices in Cambridge, Toronto and Vancouver—a Canadian mutual company, offering competitive insurance products through trusted broker partners. Every decision and investment made is anchored in the long-term benefits to customers, members and communities.

Insurance that does good—this is our purpose. Grounded in our purpose and guided by our core values, at Gore Mutual, we believe that being good and doing good by our employees, customers and broker partners will benefit not only them, but also us—which in turn allows us to spread good in our communities and reward the good we see in others. This is what is driving our work to become a purpose-driven, digitally led national insurer.