

# ACROSS THE AISLE: UNLOCKING THE BIPARTISAN POWER OF ESG



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**1,240**

REGISTERED VOTERS



ACROSS THE U.S. WERE SURVEYED  
THE SUMMER OF 2021



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Environment, Social and Governance, or collectively ‘ESG,’ is the term coined for the criteria used to evaluate a firm’s corporate citizenship. Although it has many different uses - designing and executing corporate responsibility initiatives, impact investing, and more - at its core, ESG forms the foundation of a company’s social responsibility and can be used as a measure of their commitment to it. With the rising expectations for companies to create a positive impact on society and brands increasingly taking public stands on critical societal issues, understanding ESG is more crucial now than it has ever been.

Yet, there is very little understanding of how views of ESG correlate to political beliefs. This report seeks to clarify public opinion on ESG issues across party lines, the impact of these efforts on constituent behavior and how corporations can use ESG efforts to more effectively engage with stakeholders to advance public policy goals.

To investigate, we conducted a survey of 1,240 registered voters across the United States, regarding their views on ESG issues and political affiliation in the summer of 2021. Respondents were surveyed on: awareness of ESG issues, importance of specific ESG efforts, attitudes towards Corporate America’s role in addressing them, as well as corporate messaging in support of various ESG initiatives. Insights gained from this study provide surprising evidence of the bipartisan support for ESG efforts.

**HERE’S WHAT WE  
FOUND AND WHAT  
IT MEANS FOR  
COMPANIES**





# WHAT ESG ISSUES ARE IMPORTANT TO VOTERS

A majority of survey respondents (76%) feel that companies should be held accountable for making a positive impact on the communities in which they operate. But perhaps more importantly, public opinion on ESG is not nearly as polarized as popular narratives suggest - 79% of Democrats and 71% of Republicans feel that companies should be responsible for bettering society. In general, the majority of respondents tended to prioritize environmental (66%) issues such as climate change and social (67%) issues core to traditional American values. In addition to these issues, a majority of both Democrats (68%) and Republicans (52%) believe Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) should be a priority for companies, and consistently ( 71% of Republicans and 65% of Democrats ) believe that company hiring and promotion practices should be merit based.

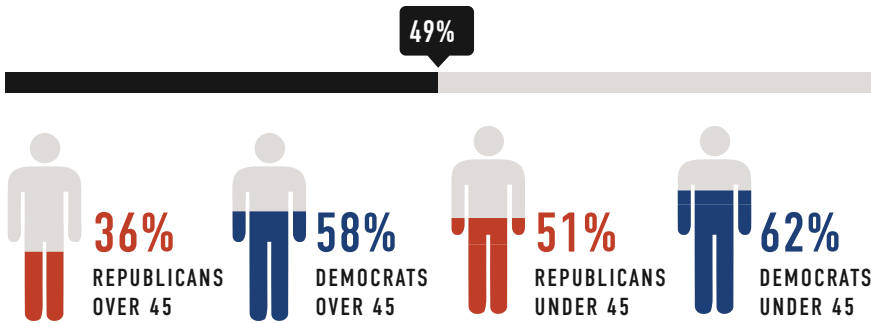
## RESPONDENTS WERE SURVEYED ON:

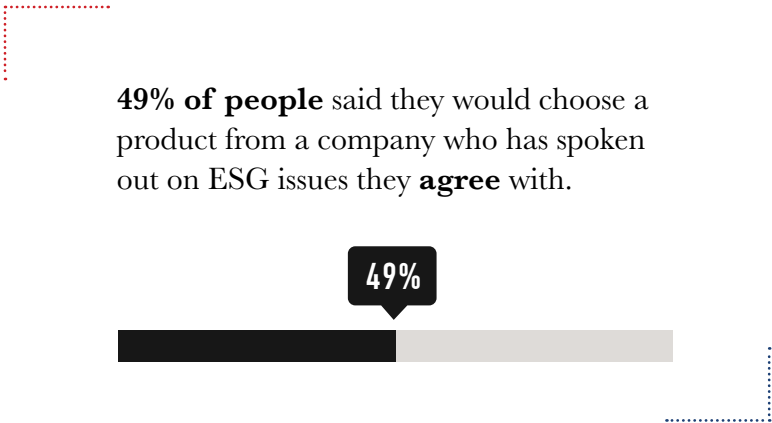


The consensus across party lines only gets stronger with younger respondents, suggesting that a growing majority of consumers, employees, and investors under the age of 45 want companies to take a public stance on ESG issues. This is true across the political spectrum and will have long term implications considering the 'Great Wealth Transfer' from baby boomers to millennials and Gen Z already underway.

## COMPANIES' ESG EFFORTS AND CONSUMER INFLUENCE

**Democrats were more likely to purchase from a company who spoke out on issues they agree with, compared to Republicans.**





**49% of people** said they would choose a product from a company who has spoken out on ESG issues they **agree** with.

49%

As such, it is important for companies to talk about their ESG initiatives and goals to provide their stakeholders with a clear connection between their brand, impact, and public policy goals. In our study, we found Democrats (58%) were much more likely to say they would purchase from a company who spoke out on issues they agreed with when compared to Republicans (36%), but again, looking at the under 45 cohorts of voters, we found a majority among both parties (Democrats 62% and Republicans 51%) were supportive of companies taking a public stance on ESG issues.

## HOW TO STAND OUT

So how do companies talk about and act on their ESG commitments in a way that resonates with the widest swath of stakeholders and helps advance their public policy goals? The below recommendations represent highlights of the practical application of our research.

- Republicans and Democrats both welcome corporate ESG efforts, and communicating these efforts to constituents and their elected officials will be beneficial to corporate reputation.
- This is especially true for voters under 45, which indicates companies should capitalize on generational trends in the workforce and financial markets as these constituents gain influence.
- Voters across the political spectrum support efforts related to D&I, but strongly support merit-based hiring and promotion within them. This is an important finding to consider when communicating about D&I with constituents and their elected officials.

- There is a growing need for companies to speak out about social issues, especially among Democrats and those under 45. What is key in any corporate response is a clear-headed approach that takes into consideration internal and external stakeholders, as well as what is materially important to their business lines.
- As the environment is a major concern for Democrats and Republicans alike, communicating about these issues should clearly connect corporate environmental goals with efforts in the communities where a company operates - to best reach local stakeholders and their elected officials.
- To effectively engage on ESG issues, it is important to build your CEO's social media presence on platforms where audience members, especially policy makers, are most active.

Overall, this report indicates that ESG issues are growing in importance to stakeholders, no matter their political beliefs and especially with younger populations who will increasingly dominate voter rolls and financial markets as they age. Therefore, companies should work to meet these increasing stakeholder expectations and communicate accordingly. As this study shows, a well-crafted and implemented ESG strategy will not only allow a company to be a good corporate citizen, but can be an effective way to connect with political constituents and their elected officials towards advancing public policy goals. Now more than ever, companies must take action on ESG issues or risk falling behind their competitors. At the same time, they must consider how they communicate with constituents to effectively engage with policymakers in Washington.





# INTRODUCTION

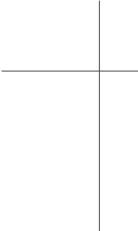
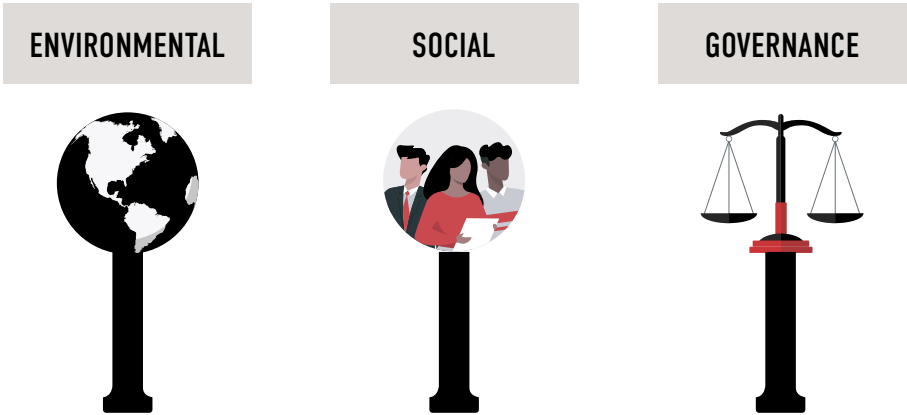


In recent decades, the movement to expand the goals of corporations beyond traditional capitalism has been gaining momentum. Perhaps the clearest illustration of this is the Business Roundtable’s 2019 Statement of Purpose, in which a coalition of Fortune 500 companies rejected the sole motive of shareholder value in favor of a new objective to serve all stakeholders—communities, customers, employees, partners, in addition to investors. While this statement of purpose issued by the most powerful companies in America represented a bold step towards stakeholder capitalism, there is still much uncertainty as to how to most effectively serve all stakeholders, particularly as society appears increasingly polarized along political lines.

No matter how a company chooses to serve stakeholders, we can categorize the issues forming the bedrock of corporate citizenship into three pillars: environmental, social and governance issues, which practitioners have colloquially coined “ESG.” The E in ESG refers to the environmental component, addressing a company’s performance as a steward of nature and includes issues such as climate change, water management, waste management, and energy management. The S in ESG refers to the social component, or how a company manages its relationships with customers, employees and other stakeholder groups such as the communities in which they operate (issues such as human rights violations, living wage and D&I efforts). Lastly, the G in ESG refers to governance, which involves how a company governs itself and its oversight practices (issues like C-suite pay, internal controls, shareholder rights, transparency of reporting practices and diversity of the company’s leadership).

**A COALITION OF FORTUNE 500 COMPANIES REJECTED THE SOLE MOTIVE OF SHAREHOLDER VALUE IN FAVOR OF A NEW OBJECTIVE TO SERVE ALL STAKEHOLDERS—COMMUNITIES, CUSTOMERS, EMPLOYEES, PARTNERS, IN ADDITION TO INVESTORS.**

## THE THREE PILLARS: COLLOQUIALLY COINED “ESG”



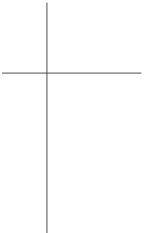


Today, many companies are fully leaning into their responsibility to contribute to bettering society by actively launching ESG initiatives and engaging their stakeholder groups. Although the goal of doing so may be virtuously motivated, being a good corporate citizen carries with it implications for company performance as well as potential for backlash from factions of stakeholders that may hold divergent opinions of ESG issues and their importance. This concern is highlighted by the narrative around the current American political environment, particularly amidst elections at all levels, which suggests increased polarization amongst Americans regarding ESG issues and the role companies should play in addressing such issues.

**ALTHOUGH THERE ARE DIFFERENCES IN TERMS OF POLITICAL AFFILIATION AND VIEWPOINTS ON ESG ISSUES, IT IS NOT NEARLY AS POLARIZED AS POPULAR NARRATIVE SUGGESTS.**

Because companies often serve multiple stakeholder groups which are unlikely to be composed of individuals who belong to a single political party, the reality is companies must learn how to navigate the political divide and identify what that means for a company's ESG activities in order to effectively serve all stakeholders. Specifically, companies are finding themselves serving society as a whole, which is composed of voters across the political spectrum, with a variety of views on topics related to ESG actions. Thus, companies must figure out how to effectively and efficiently position themselves with these different groups - and their elected officials. This includes answering key questions such as which ESG issues resonate the most and with whom? What role do these stakeholders think a company plays in addressing specific ESG issues? How do a company's ESG initiatives influence stakeholder perceptions and actions? Which ESG initiatives do stakeholders think are important for companies to launch? How does a company best communicate its ESG efforts? Which styles of messaging are most effective? How should a company follow-through on its ESG commitments? The purpose of this report is to begin to answer these types of questions and provide a compass to guide companies in navigating the seemingly polarized landscape of public opinion on ESG issues.

**COMPANIES ARE FINDING THEMSELVES SERVING SOCIETY AS A WHOLE, WHICH IS COMPOSED OF VOTERS ACROSS THE POLITICAL SPECTRUM, WITH A VARIETY OF VIEWS ON TOPICS RELATED TO ESG ACTIONS.**





## **DIFFERENCES BETWEEN VOTERS ON ESG ARE BASED ON DEEPER DIVISIONS ALONG GENERATIONAL LINES.**

In order to provide guidance to companies, we undertook a research project that surveyed 1,240 registered voters regarding their views on ESG issues and political affiliation in the summer of 2021. On the surface, one would expect the results of this survey to be consistent with the popular narrative of polarization on ESG issues drawn by political party lines. However, the insights gained from analysis of this survey indicate that, although there are differences in terms of political affiliation and viewpoints on ESG issues, it is not nearly as polarized as popular narrative suggests. Through our analysis, we refine this dichotomic Democrat-Republican explanation and find that differences between voters on ESG are based on deeper divisions along generational lines. The following report seeks to present a clearer view of the landscape of public opinion on ESG issues. This includes awareness of ESG issues, importance of specific ESG issues and attitudes towards the role of a company in addressing them, as well as corporate messaging in support of various ESG initiatives. For industry leaders, this report provides a modest rubric for understanding which ESG issues resonate the most and how to broadcast them.

## **COMPANIES MUST FIGURE OUT HOW TO EFFECTIVELY AND EFFICIENTLY POSITION THEMSELVES WITH THESE DIFFERENT GROUPS- AND THEIR ELECTED OFFICIALS.**

Insights gained from this study and communicated in this report affirm the important role companies play in creating a better society. Doing so starts with first prioritizing the “right” ESG issues such as those issues that the company has directly contributed to and those issues that resonate with the most stakeholders. Once issues have been prioritized, it’s important for the company to publicly make commitments, broadcast those commitments on relevant platforms and demonstrate progress toward those commitments. In the following pages, we delve deeper into the landscape of public opinion on ESG issues, identifying points of divergence and consensus. We then explore public perception of the role companies play in addressing ESG issues as well as the influence of company ESG initiatives on stakeholders. Throughout these sections, we share actionable recommendations to incorporate into government affairs and communications strategies in order to effectively reach constituents and their elected officials.

# THE LANDSCAPE OF PUBLIC OPINION ON ESG ISSUES: AWARENESS, IMPORTANCE, AND ATTITUDES

## *Which ESG issues do stakeholders know and care about?*

The media plays a pivotal role in raising public awareness and focusing public attention on specific issues. Research has shown that the media communicates cues about the importance of issues through both the amount of coverage of specific issues and the framing of those issues. The public then uses these cues to make sense of the issues, cultivate their own opinions, and decide the importance of particular issues. Through this cuing process, over time, the specific issues that garner the most media coverage are the issues the public is most aware of and deems most important.<sup>1</sup>

It is perhaps unsurprising then, given the rise in media coverage regarding issues such as social justice, income inequality and the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the workforce over the past few years, that social issues are at the forefront of many Americans' minds. Our findings are consistent with this intuition, as we find the majority of individuals in our survey are most aware of social issues as a broad ESG category (65%) and feel that social issues are important (67%). Within this category we find that the public is most aware of certain social issues that are particularly timely and have garnered recent media attention. Specifically, we find that the social issues people are most aware of relate to voting laws (73%) and increasing the living wage in the United States (70%). Both of these issues have garnered media attention in the past twelve months, with a spotlight placed on voting laws at both the state and federal level in the wake of the 2020 presidential election and the living wage increases being highlighted with the introduction of the "Raise the Wage Act of 2021" in early 2021.

## SOCIAL ISSUES

The social issues people feel are most important speak to core American values of human liberty and pursuit of the American dream.

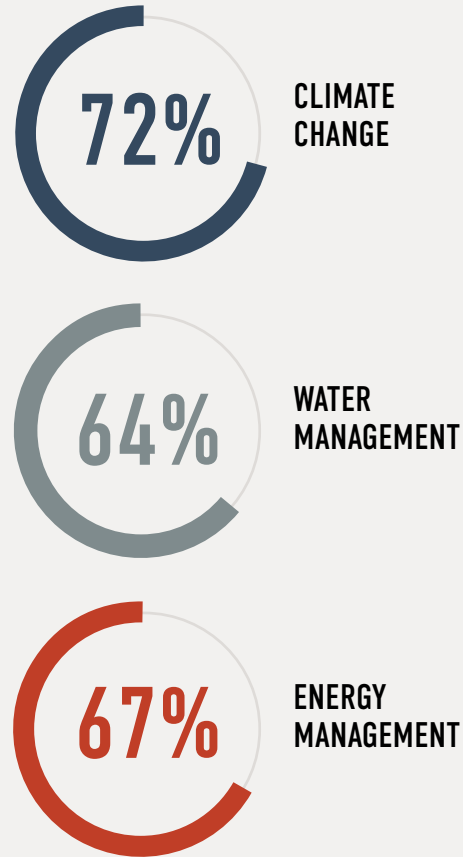


The specific social issues that people feel are the most important are issues related to fundamental aspects of humanity. Specifically, violations of human rights (74%), impact on the community (73%), and the ability for people to earn a living wage (72%) resonate the most with the majority of people. All three of these issues were viewed by the majority as highly relevant, which speaks to underlying core unifying American values of human liberty, the ability to earn a living, and pursue the American dream.

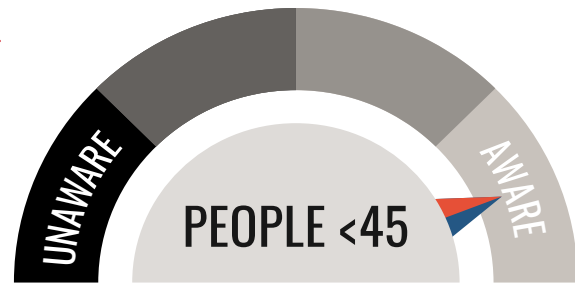
The next broad ESG category that the majority of the public is aware of (65%) and feel is important (64%) is issues related to the Environment. Again, this is perhaps unsurprising given the recent increase in media coverage of environmental issues, and in particular climate change, since 2019.<sup>2</sup> Consistent with this intuition, we find the majority of people are most aware of the specific environmental issues of climate change (71%), water management (64%) and energy management (67%). The reality is that many Americans are not only exposed to environmental related issues through the media, but also many Americans have first-hand experience dealing with downstream consequences of environmental issues, such as water restrictions, power outages and devastating forest fires. As such, these three issues also resonate with the public, as 70% of people agree that climate change is important, 69% of people feel water management is important and 68% of people feel energy management is important.

## TOP THREE ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

Climate change is one of the top issues the majority of people are most aware of.

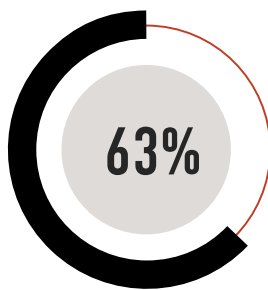


The singular ESG component that the majority of the public is generally lacking awareness of is Governance, which involves aspects of how a company governs itself and its oversight practices. We find that just 45% of people surveyed are aware of the broad category of governance issues like internal controls, shareholder rights, transparency of reporting practices and diversity of the company's leadership throughout all levels of the company. This is surprising given the important role that governance plays in monitoring corporate behavior and protecting all stakeholders. In terms of awareness, a majority of people are most aware of issues related to companies' involvement in political lobbying (59%) and diversity within company leadership throughout all levels of the corporate hierarchy (58%). Although the broad category of governance overall has a low degree of awareness in comparison to the other two ESG categories, the majority of people (54%) feel that these issues are important. Three specific governance issues the majority of people identified as important were the following: transparency of reporting (63%), managing environment and social impacts within the company's supplier base (60%), and issues related to diversity within company leadership (59%).

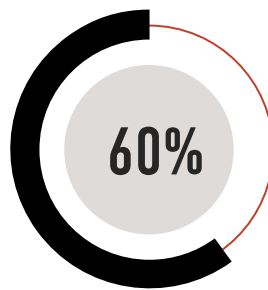


### AWARENESS ABOUT ESG ISSUES

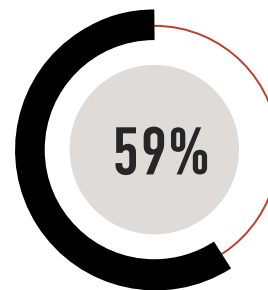
### THREE SPECIFIC GOVERNANCE ISSUES THE MAJORITY OF PEOPLE IDENTIFIED AS IMPORTANT



TRANSPARENCY OF REPORTING



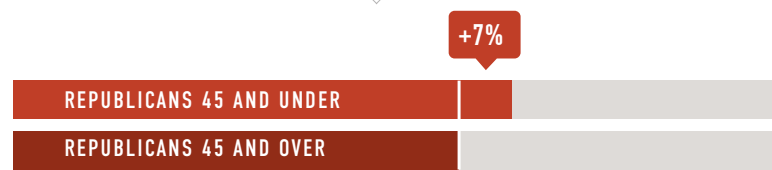
IMPACT OF COMPANY SUPPLIER BASE



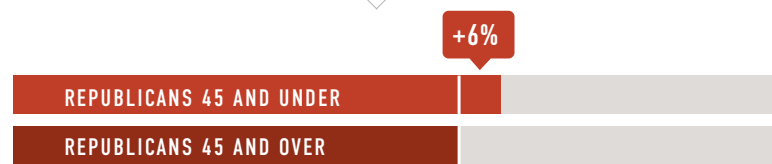
DIVERSITY ISSUES IN CORPORATE HIERARCHY

Considering the prevailing narrative of polarization along political lines regarding ESG issues, it is easy to conclude that Democrats and Republicans are differentially aware of ESG issues and also hold starkly different beliefs on their importance. In terms of awareness, we do find Democrats are on average slightly more aware than Republicans across all ESG categories (60% to 58% respectively). However, we find significant generational effects in terms of ESG awareness specifically among Republicans. In particular, we find that Republicans under the age of 45 are more aware of ESG issues in each broad category compared to Republicans 45 years and older. Specifically, Republicans under 45 are 7% more aware of social issues, 6% more aware of environmental issues, and 15% more aware of governance issues than Republicans 45 years old and older. While awareness is a good initial measure, a more useful piece of information to have is the importance of issues, which can provide a clearer picture of which issues resonate the most and with whom. In terms of importance, we find Democrats on average feel ESG issues are significantly more important than Republicans (67% and 45% respectively). However, there are some ESG issues for which we find more agreement across political parties lines than the prevailing narrative around ESG and political affiliation would lead one to conclude.

### AWARENESS OF SOCIAL ISSUES



### AWARENESS OF ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES



### AWARENESS OF GOVERNANCE ISSUES

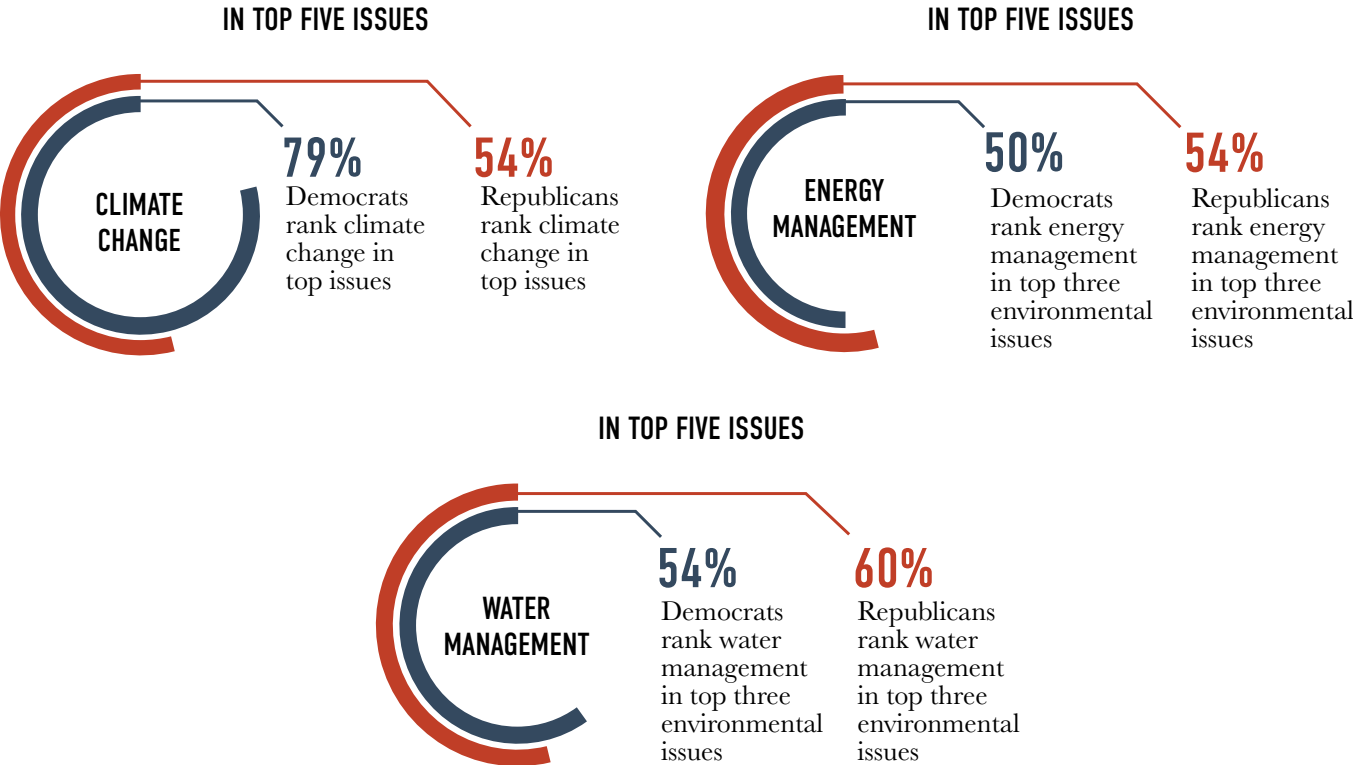




# CONSENSUS ISSUES: ESG ISSUES THAT RESONATE ACROSS PARTY LINES

Interestingly, we find consensus across party lines on environmental issues. When asked to indicate which ESG issues were most important by rank ordering the top five issues in order of importance, the majority of people in both parties ranked three environmental issues in their top five. Those three issues were climate change (79% of Democrats and 54% of Republicans ranking it in the top five), water management (54% of Democrats and 60% of Republicans ranking it in the top five), and energy management (50% of Democrats and 54% of Republicans ranking it in the top five). When delving further into this finding, we find a consistent pattern of results across generational cohorts and racial groups. This surprisingly consistent result speaks to the increased importance Americans as a whole are feeling about environmental issues. Perhaps it is the downstream consequences of environmental issues that are touching the lives of many Americans that are increasing their salience in the minds of many.

## PERCENTAGE OF PARTY RANKINGS FOR TOP FIVE ISSUES

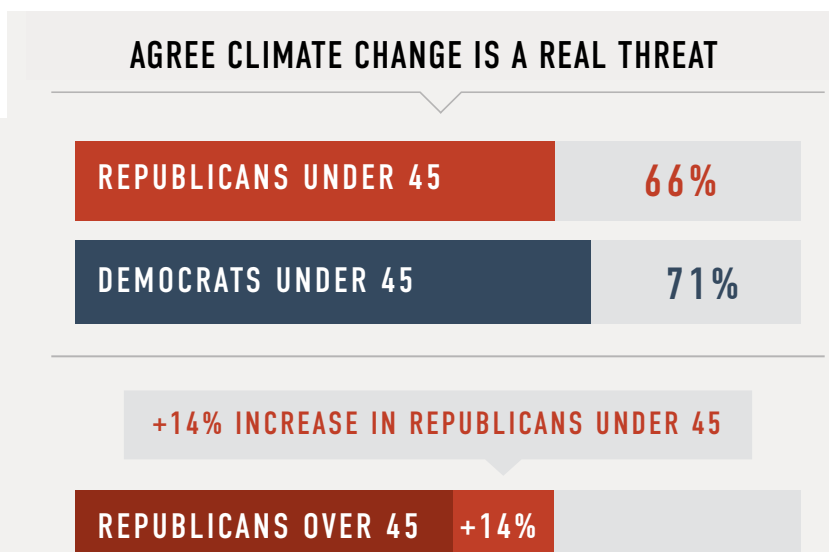


**REGARDLESS OF POLITICAL AFFILIATION, MOST PEOPLE AGREE THAT BUSINESSES SHOULD BE ACCOUNTABLE FOR THEIR EFFECTS ON CLIMATE CHANGE.**

## ATTITUDES TOWARD CLIMATE CHANGE

Even though there is consensus that climate change is an important issue, there is a difference across parties as to the severity of the issue and how best to address it. For instance, 75% of Democrats believe that climate change is at a crisis level compared to 52% of Republicans. Further probing of this result uncovers a generational difference on this point within Republicans. When broken down by age cohorts, we find Republicans under the age of 45 are far more similar to Democrats in the same age cohort in that they both agreed climate change is a severe threat (66% to 71%, respectively). This finding for Republicans under the age of 45 represents a 14% increase in the belief that climate change is a crisis compared to Republicans over the age of 45. This finding paired with our similarly patterned finding regarding ESG awareness indicates there are subtle generational differences in particular among Republicans regarding ESG issues. Agreement about the importance of an issue is only the first step in addressing the issue.

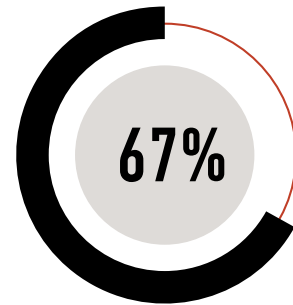
In recent years, there have been several suggested paths forward to address the issue of climate change such as mandatory requirements restricting carbon emissions and prioritizing alternative forms of energy sources. One particular point of differentiation between Democrats and Republicans is their attitudes towards mandatory corporate requirements to reduce effects of climate change. Regardless of age, Democrats were 28% more likely to be in favor of instituting mandatory requirements for companies to reduce their effects on environmental issues and more specifically, climate change.



As to what the foreseeable future of climate change is, regardless of political affiliation, most people agree that without strong policies to hold businesses accountable for their effects on climate change, such as fines levied against companies that do not engage in actions to reduce their environmental impact, there is no hope to stave off climate change effects.

In the past few years scientists have indicated that we are quickly approaching the point of no return regarding climate change.<sup>3</sup> Due to the urgency of the climate change issue, the majority of Americans (67%) feel that the heightened attention on climate change is not going away, and will stay the same if not increase in the next couple of years. Additionally, many people (48%) agree that the speed at which companies are working to tackle the issue of climate change should be faster.

### AMERICANS FEEL CLIMATE CHANGE URGENCY IS NOT GOING AWAY



## ATTITUDES TOWARD DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION ISSUES

Another ESG issue that has received heightened attention in the recent past is D&I. We find that the majority of people (62%) feel D&I is a priority for companies to address. Democrats (68%) tend to feel more strongly about this issue than Republicans (52%), yet the Republican majority here is significant. Again, we see major generational differences among Republicans in regards to this issue. Republicans under the age of 45 were 11% more likely to indicate that D&I is a priority than older Republicans. Within Democrats, there was little change in their feelings regarding the priority of D&I issues across different generational cohorts, which indicates these issues are a priority for Democrats regardless of age.

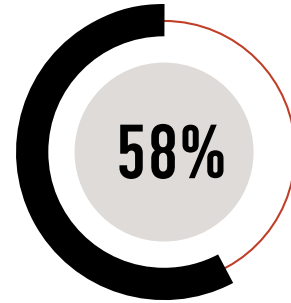
### DIVERSITY & INCLUSION PRIORITY CONSENSUS





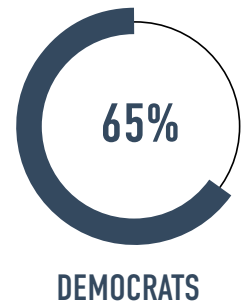
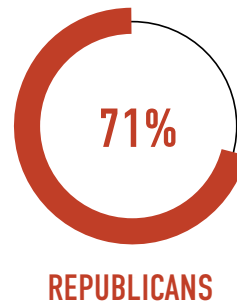
With increased attention on social justice issues in the past few years, many companies have begun to take action through D&I initiatives. The majority of people (58%) feel this heightened attention focused on D&I issues is not going away anytime soon and will increase or at least stay the same in the next couple of years. Many people (48%) also feel that the speed at which companies are working to address social inequalities is too slow and would like to see faster action on this issue.

### BELIEVE AMERICA WILL MAINTAIN FOCUS ON DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION



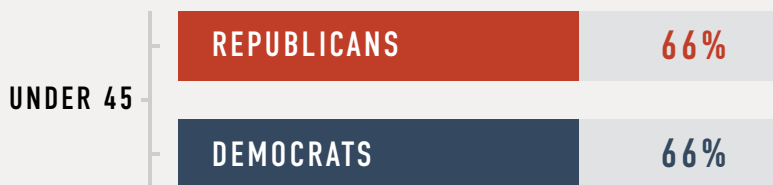
An important caveat to workplace D&I efforts is that the majority of people feel that company human relations practices such as hiring, promotion and appointments to companies' board of directors should be merit based and blind to a person's race or how they identify. This belief is consistently held across political party lines with 71% of Republicans and 65% of Democrats endorsing merit-based hiring and promotion. Interestingly, again we see a generational difference with the Republicans.

### ENDORISING MERIT-BASED HIRING



Republicans under the age of 45 (66%) were identical to Democrats under the age of 45 (66%) in terms of endorsing merit-based hiring, promotion and board appointments, meaning blind to one's race or how they identify themselves.

### ENDORISING MERIT-BASED HIRING, PROMOTION AND BOARD APPOINTMENTS

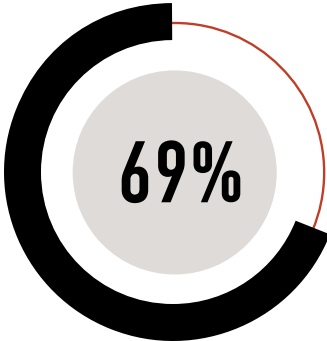




## ATTITUDES TOWARD HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES

The social issue of human rights resonates with people on both sides of the political aisle. However, there may be some divergent opinions regarding how companies should address protecting human rights. The majority of people (69%) agree that companies should adopt and enforce some sort of human rights policies in accordance with global standards. Although Democrats endorse this position (74%) more than Republicans (60%), the Republican support here is particularly notable considering general skepticism by members of the political class when it comes to global standards. Even though people feel that companies should adopt human rights policies consistent with global human rights standards, almost half of people (46%) think that U.S. laws already do a good enough job protecting human rights and so it is unnecessary for companies to have separate policies on this issue. However, there is still a strong minority of voters (30%) who do believe that corporate human rights policies are very necessary, indicating a strong divide among public opinion on this issue.

### THE MAJORITY AGREE COMPANIES SHOULD ADOPT HUMAN RIGHTS POLICIES



**WE FIND THAT PEOPLE UNDER THE AGE OF 45 TEND TO BE MORE AWARE AND FEEL MORE STRONGLY ABOUT ESG ISSUES THAN PEOPLE OVER THE AGE OF 45.**

Our findings indicate that the public is generally aware of and places importance on ESG issues. People are generally much more aware of issues that have received heightened media attention in recent years, such as social issues and environmental issues, and the majority feels these are important issues that need to be addressed. We find that people under the age of 45 tend to be more aware and feel more strongly about ESG issues than people over the age of 45. The finding hints that there may be a growing trend among public opinion on ESG issues: ESG issues may be at the forefront of many people’s minds for years to come and may even be increasingly important in the coming years.





## RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Based on the issues that both Democrats and Republicans care about, companies can safely highlight their commitment and work on issues related to human rights, particularly as they relate to the American values of human liberty, the ability to earn a living and pursue the American dream.
- Finding a surprising amount of consensus among voters on issues related to the environment, we strongly recommend companies proactively communicate their environmental work to local communities, especially for those under 45.
- Voters across the political spectrum support efforts related to D&I, but strongly support merit-based hiring and promotion within them. This is an important finding to consider when communicating about D&I with constituents and their elected officials.
- Companies should consider leading efforts to educate the public on governance issues, as it is the least understood of the three ESG pillars.
- It is critical that policymakers keep a pulse on the growing support for ESG issues in younger generations, and companies can help them do so by highlighting constituent engagement and community impact for DC audiences.

**WE STRONGLY RECOMMEND COMPANIES PROACTIVELY COMMUNICATE THEIR ENVIRONMENTAL WORK TO LOCAL COMMUNITIES, ESPECIALLY FOR THOSE**

**UNDER 45**





# THE CONSCIOUS STAKEHOLDER: THE INFLUENCE OF ESG ISSUES ON PERCEPTIONS OF COMPANIES & BEHAVIOR

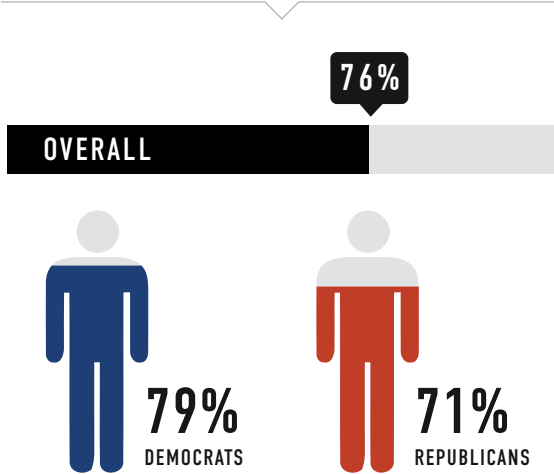


With the rise in public awareness and feelings of importance regarding ESG issues comes changes in expectations regarding the role companies should play in addressing these important issues. For instance, as the public becomes more aware of ESG issues and feels they are important, it may expect that companies actively engage in ESG initiatives to address these issues. We find several indications of this subtle shift in society’s expectations of companies.

First, the majority of people (76%) feel that companies should be held accountable for making a positive impact on the communities in which they operate. This is a feeling that resonates across party lines as 79% of Democrats and 71% of Republicans feel this way. Second, most people (65%) believe companies play a vital role in promoting a healthier society. Along political lines, Democrats agreed more (70%) with this idea while Republicans were slightly less convinced (57%). Third, the majority of people (72%) feel companies should work to address the ESG issues that their businesses contribute to. This perception was consistent across age cohorts and also resonated across party lines as the majority of both Democrats (76%) and Republicans (56%) agree with this view. These findings indicate there is a public perception that companies play an important role in addressing ESG issues that affect society and that they should be accountable for helping to address these issues.

## ACCOUNTABILITY

People feel that companies should be held accountable for making a positive impact on the communities in which they operate.



**MOST PEOPLE (65%) BELIEVE THAT COMPANIES PLAY A VITAL ROLE IN PROMOTING A HEALTHIER SOCIETY.**

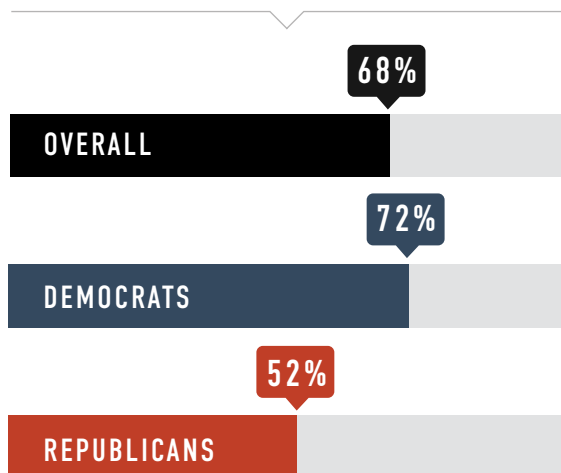


## What ESG issues should Companies be actively working on?

While many people believe that companies should be working on ESG issues, there are different opinions regarding the prioritization of ESG issues. In general, the majority of people tend to prioritize environmental (66%) and social (67%) issues significantly more than governance issues (57%). This belief follows a similar pattern revealed by our previous findings regarding awareness and importance of ESG issues. In general, governance issues tend to lag behind the social and environmental components in terms of awareness, importance and prioritization.

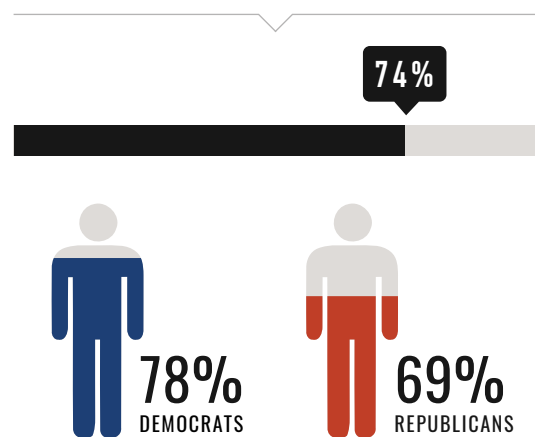
### ADDRESSING CLIMATE CHANGE

Climate change is one key issue people feel companies should be addressing.



### WASTE MANAGEMENT

74% of people feel that companies should be working on reducing waste



The broad category of environmental issues is one of the vital areas the public views should be a priority for companies to address. Within the category of environmental issues, three key issues stand out. Climate change is one, with 68% of people feeling that companies should be addressing climate change. Democrats (72%) tend to agree more than Republicans (52%) with this sentiment, but the Republican support here is significant. Another key issue was waste management, which involves companies taking measures to eliminate, reduce or recycle waste. The majority of people (74%) believed businesses should address waste management. We find more consensus across party lines on this issue than on the climate change issue, with 78% of Democrats and 69% of Republicans. A third key issue the public feels companies should be working on is water management (72%), which includes companies taking action to reduce water consumption or recycle water. There was also a good amount of consensus between Republicans and Democrats on this issue, with 75% of Democrats & 68% Republicans agreeing that companies should be actively working to address it.

Another vital area of ESG that the public feels should be a priority for companies to address is the broad category of social issues. Within this broad category, the majority of people have identified human rights issues (76%), community impact issues (74%) and issues regarding the ability to earn a living wage as priority issues that companies should address (73%). Human rights violations such as child or forced labor were the highest rated, with a high degree of agreement on this issue across political party lines with 79% of Democrats and 72% of Republicans.

After human rights issues, the next agreed upon social issue that companies should address are community impact issues like education or veterans' programs, with Democrats (76%) and Republicans (72%) sharing similar views. The third social issue the public expected companies to address was issues regarding the ability to make a living. For this issue, the divide between Democrats (78%) and Republicans (65%) was wider, but still indicated overall agreement that companies should be working to address this issue.

With the rise in D&I efforts in the workplace in the past few years, it is important for businesses to understand how stakeholders view the role of a company in addressing D&I issues. It turns out, the majority of people (65%) believe that companies should be actively working to increase representation along gender and racial lines within their business. Despite being viewed as an issue that companies should be tackling, we find the biggest difference along the political party lines with this issue. Democrats (65%) were much more likely to indicate they felt companies should be actively working to address this issue than Republicans (47%). However, when we explore potential generational differences influencing this finding we found a significant effect within the Republicans. Interestingly, Republicans under the age of 45 were 16% more likely than Republicans over the age of 45 to think companies should be addressing D&I initiatives. This finding is consistent with some of our previous findings suggesting that the beliefs of Republicans under the age of 45 may differ in significant ways from Republicans over the age of 45.

### SOCIAL ISSUES COMPANIES SHOULD BE ACTIVELY WORKING ON

#### HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES



#### COMMUNITY IMPACT



#### LIVING WAGE



### EDUCATION AND VETERANS PROGRAMS

76%

DEMOCRATS

72%

REPUBLICANS

Lastly, governance as a broad category is an important area for companies to actively work on as the majority of people (57%) agree that companies should be addressing governance related issues. Notably, two governance issues stuck out as public priorities for companies to address: companies' ability to work with their suppliers to manage environmental and social impacts (65%) and diversity within the top level of company leadership (61%). These two issues are related to other issues in both the environmental and social categories of ESG. The issue regarding a company's ability to work with its suppliers to manage environmental and social impacts throughout its entire supply chain is closely connected to both social and environmental issues, whereas diversity with company C-level leadership deeply connects to the social issues—especially the D&I social issues.

## D&I EFFORTS IN THE WORKPLACE

65%  
DEMOCRATS



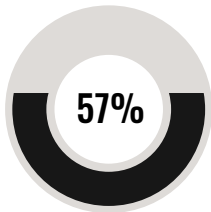
47%  
REPUBLICANS



16%  
MORE LIKELY

REPUBLICANS < 45  
REPUBLICANS > 45

Republicans < 45 were more likely to think companies should address diversity & inclusion



### GOVERNANCE

Majority of people agree that companies should be addressing governance related issues

Notably, **two governance issues stuck out as public priorities for companies to address.**

65%

### ENVIRONMENTAL & SOCIAL IMPACT MANAGEMENT

61%

### DIVERSITY IN TOP LEADERSHIP

The belief that companies should be working on these two governance issues resonated to different degrees across political party affiliation. For the issue regarding companies' efforts to manage environmental and social impacts throughout their entire supply chains, a strong majority of Democrats (74%) agreed that companies should be actively working on these efforts while only half of Republicans (50%) held this belief. For the issue of diversity in the top levels of company leadership, a majority of people feel that companies should be working to diversify their C-level & board positions, however, this issue is more dividing than other issues as Democrats (72%) feel much more strongly about this than Republicans (44%).



## How do companies' ESG efforts and stances influence customers?

With public attention on ESG issues increasing, there is an intuition that customers will want to see the companies they buy from and brands they use play an increasingly bigger role in accelerating progress on ESG issues. In general, we see some initial support for this intuition. Specifically, we find that the majority of people (61%) are aware of the social responsibility efforts of the brands they use, although Democrats (61%) are generally more aware of these efforts than Republicans (49%).

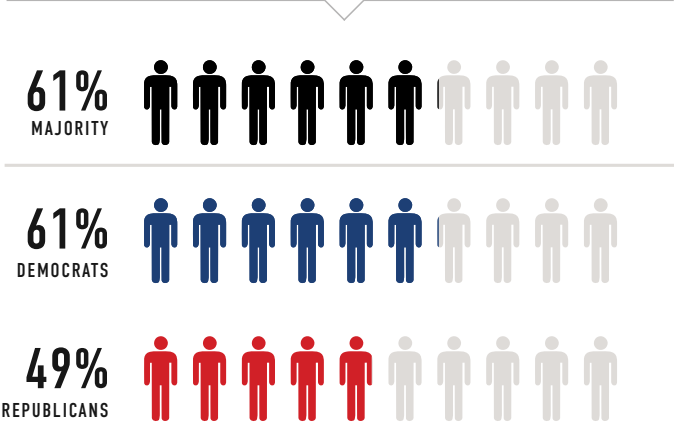
Aligned with the idea that customers want the brands they use to be good corporate citizens we find the majority of people (54%) feel it is important for the brands they use to be actively engaged in socially responsible practices.

Knowing the social responsibility and ESG initiatives of the brands they use tends to be more important for Democrats than for Republicans, with 61% percent of Democrats reporting that it is important compared to only 42% of Republicans.

In today's marketplace, more and more companies are taking a public stance on ESG issues that are unrelated to their core business. For example, in March 2021 several companies issued public statements opposing Georgia's new law regarding voting restriction. While many of these companies' statements garnered increased attention from the media and various stakeholders, the public response was mixed.<sup>4</sup> The incidents of companies speaking out regarding ESG issues has become commonplace over the last couple of years, however, there is not much known about the influence of such statements on different stakeholder groups. We explored the potential influence of companies taking public stances on ESG issues on three important stakeholder groups: customers, employees and investors.

### BRAND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

The majority of people (61%) are aware of the social responsibility efforts of the brands they use, although Democrats (61%) are generally more aware of these efforts than Republicans (49%).



**A MAJORITY OF BOTH REPUBLICANS AND DEMOCRATS UNDER THE AGE OF 45 WERE MUCH MORE LIKELY TO PURCHASE FROM ISSUE-ENDORSING BRANDS THEY AGREE WITH.**



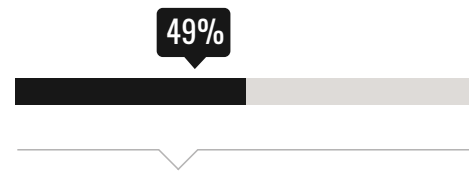


First, we explored the influence of company ESG stances on customers and found that almost half of those surveyed said they would be greatly influenced by a company's public stance on an ESG issue. Specifically, we found that 49% of people said they would choose a product from a company who has spoken out on ESG issues they agree with. We also found that Democrats (58%) were much more likely to say that they would purchase from a company who spoke out on issues they agree with when compared to Republicans (36%). Given that making a public stance on ESG issues is becoming more commonplace in the business world, this influence on customer behavior may only increase in the years to come. Consistent with this idea, we found that people under the age of 45 were much more likely to purchase from issue-endorsing brands overall (59%), with the majority of both Democrats (62%) and Republicans (51%) indicating that they would prefer issue-endorsing brands they agree with.

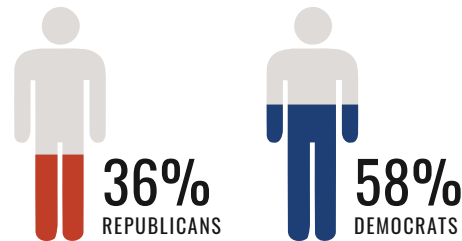
It is important to note that, whenever a company is taking a stand on an issue, there is a risk of alienating customers who disagree and thus, the effect of a company's public statement is not exclusively positive. For instance, when choosing between products, 45% of people indicated they would avoid a product from a company who has spoken out on issues they disagree with. We found that this mattered significantly more

## COMPANIES' ESG EFFORTS AND CONSUMER INFLUENCE

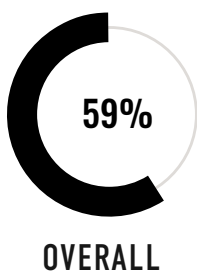
**49% of people** said they would choose a product from a company who has spoken out on ESG issues they **agree** with.



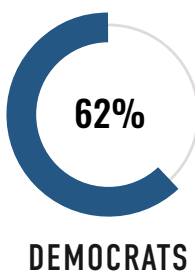
**Democrats were more likely** to purchase from a company who spoke out on issues they agree with, compared to Republicans.



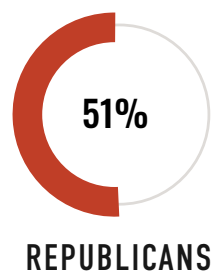
## PURCHASE FROM ISSUE-ENDORSING BRANDS



People under the age of 45 were more likely to purchase from issue-endorsing brands



Would prefer issue-endorsing brands they agree with

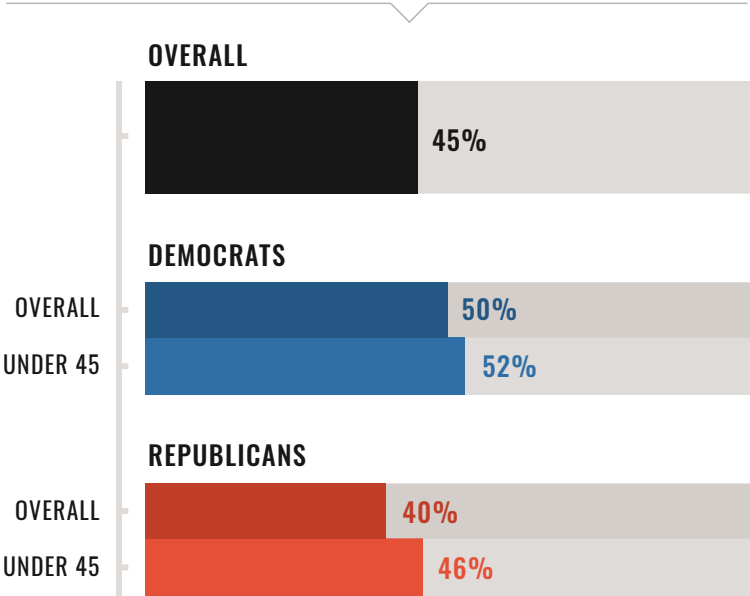


Would prefer issue-endorsing brands they agree with



for Democrats, with 50% of Democrats compared to 40% of Republicans indicating they would avoid buying a product from the company that has taken a stance they disagree with. Again, we explored a generational effect within this finding and found the negative effects on brand preferences slightly increased when looking at people under the age of 45 for both Democrat (52%) as well as Republicans (46%).

### CONSUMERS AVOIDANCE OF COMPANIES THEY DON'T AGREE WITH



**BY FOCUSING ON ESG ISSUES, COMPANIES CAN DO THEIR PART FOR SOCIETY AND ALSO GIVE THEIR EMPLOYEES A CLEAR CONNECTION TO DOING SOMETHING IMPORTANT TO BETTER SOCIETY.**

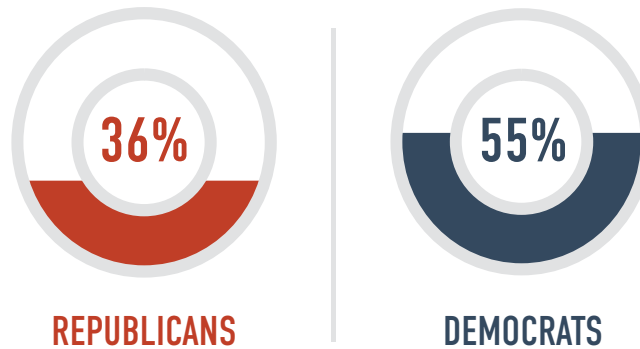


## How do companies' ESG stances influence employees?

Company stances on ESG issues not only influence customers, but also impact employees. By focusing on ESG issues, companies can do their part for society and also give their employees a clear connection to bettering society. This connection is important as a growing number of employees in today's business world are looking for more than just a job. One way that a company can help create this clear connection is through issuing public stances on ESG issues. While just under half of the people surveyed (48%) indicated they would want their employer to take a stand on ESG issues, even if those issues were unrelated to their employer's business, that number rises significantly for those under 45. Specifically, an employer speaking out about ESG issues matters much more for Democrats (55%) than for Republicans (36%) as a whole, but looking at both Democrats and Republicans under the age of 45, we found both were more likely to want their employer to publicly speak out on ESG issues (increases of 7% for Democrats and 18% for Republicans).

We similarly found that the majority of people under the age of 45 (58%) would choose to work for a company that took a stand on ESG issues they agreed with, with both the majority of Republicans (51%) and Democrats (61%) under the age of 45 indicating they would choose to work for a company based on its endorsement of ESG issues.

### EMPLOYEES WHO WANT EMPLOYERS TO TAKE A STANCE ON ESG



**BOTH DEMOCRATS AND REPUBLICANS UNDER THE AGE OF 45, WERE MORE LIKELY TO WANT THEIR EMPLOYER TO PUBLICLY SPEAK OUT ON ESG ISSUES**

**UNDER 45**



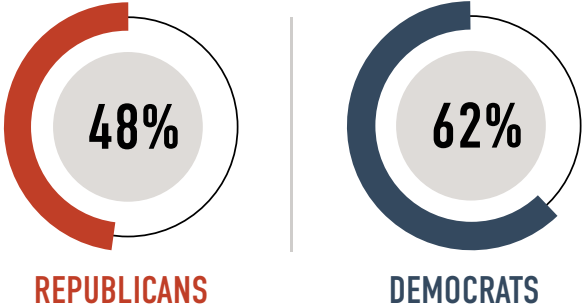
## *How do companies' ESG stances influence investors?*

The act of taking a public stance on ESG issues seems to resonate with both customers and employees, but we wanted to explore how taking a stance on an ESG issue would resonate with investors. This stakeholder group tends to bear the most risk when companies choose to speak, particularly if that issue is controversial, as their finances are directly impacted by the company's market value.<sup>5</sup> Although companies' ESG efforts and public stances may be viewed as putting investors at risk,<sup>6</sup> there is a growing number of investors specifically looking to invest in companies with strong ESG initiatives.<sup>7</sup> Thus, companies are faced with this dilemma of understanding what investors want from them in terms of publicly speaking on ESG. We found that just under half of people surveyed (48%) indicated they want the companies they invest in to take a public stand on ESG issues, even if they are unrelated to the company's core business.

**A GROWING NUMBER OF INVESTORS ARE LOOKING TO INVEST IN COMPANIES WITH STRONG ESG INITIATIVES.**

We see evidence of a divide along political party lines on this particular issue as Democrats were 23% more likely to feel this way than Republicans. In line with our other findings regarding generational differences in preferences for companies to publicly speak out on ESG issues, we found the majority of people under the age of 45 (58%) wanted the companies they invest in to take a stand on ESG issues. Democrats preferred this, with 62% of Democrats under the age of 45 indicating they want the companies they invest in to speak out compared to only 48% of Republicans in the same age cohort.

### **SUPPORT FOR COMPANIES WHO TAKE A PUBLIC STAND ON ESG**





**AS A WHOLE, STAKEHOLDERS 'EXPECTATIONS MAY CONTINUE TO GROW AS MILLENNIALS REPLACE OLDER GENERATIONS IN THE WORKFORCE AND ARE ON THE RECEIVING END OF THE GREAT WEALTH TRANSFER.**

Taken together, our findings reveal that stakeholders expect companies to play an active role in addressing ESG issues and that this expectation may only continue to grow in the coming years considering retirements among baby boomers and the great wealth transfer already underway from that generation to millennials. We also find a growing majority of people under the age of 45 who want companies to take a public stance on ESG issues. This result is relatively consistent across stakeholder groups as we find a similar pattern of results across three different stakeholder groups, customers, employees and investors. Thus, there is not just evidence that consumers are becoming more aware but also evidence that, as a whole, stakeholders are demanding more of companies on ESG. These results suggest that company ESG efforts are an influential force on stakeholder behavior that may only increase in the future as expectations rise.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- Our findings suggest that both Republicans and Democrats welcome corporate ESG efforts, and communicating these efforts to constituents and their elected officials will be beneficial to corporate reputation.
- This is especially true for voters under 45, which indicates companies should capitalize on generational trends in the workforce and financial markets as these constituents gain influence.
- We also see a growing need for companies to speak out about social issues, especially among Democrats. What is key in any corporate response is a clear-headed approach that takes into consideration internal and external stakeholders, as well as what is materially important to their business lines.
- Again, looking at voters across the political spectrum, corporate responses become even more important for those under 45, which makes these responses crucial for attracting both talent and investment in the long run.



# HOW CAN BUSINESSES INCORPORATE ESG INTO THEIR STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT?



The rise of the conscious stakeholder means that constituents want the companies they buy from, invest in, and work for to be committed to bettering the environment and society, which means companies' actions matter to policy makers, too. In order to meet expectations, companies must adapt and put their ESG initiatives in the forefront while also balancing a shifting political divide on specific ESG issues. So how do companies effectively and efficiently connect with voters and elected officials across the political spectrum through ESG efforts? Based on our findings, we recommend a tailored stakeholder approach that leverages proactive messaging on relevant platforms and senior messengers on the issues that closely align to a business' core operations.

**76% FEEL THAT COMPANIES SHOULD BE HELD ACCOUNTABLE FOR MAKING A POSITIVE IMPACT ON THE COMMUNITIES IN WHICH THEY OPERATE.**

## WHERE SHOULD COMPANIES ENGAGE

As we have established the majority of people (76%) feel that companies should be held accountable for making a positive impact on the communities in which they operate, it follows that communicating efforts to those communities is an important part of any messaging strategy around ESG. While the term community encompasses geographic location, it goes beyond geography to refer to stakeholders that are most directly influenced by the company and have the most power to directly influence the company.

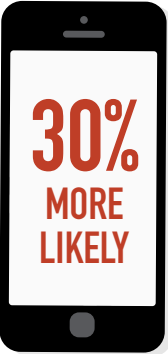
In order to effectively communicate the company's commitments to stakeholders, companies will need to choose to broadcast their commitments through media that will best reach stakeholders where they are and deliver the message in ways that make the most impact. Traditionally, the most popular way of staying up to date on information, including information on what businesses were doing and the types

**45+ YRS OF AGE  
1.5 TIMES  
LIKELY TO GET**

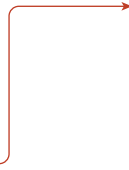




of ESG commitments they were making, was to tune into local television. Local television is still the most popular source of that information for people over the age of 45, as people in this age cohort are 1.5 times more likely to get information from the local television programming than from the second leading information source, national television programming. Although traditionally the leading source of business news has been local media, its importance has begun to diminish with the rise of the internet and advent of social media. For people under the age of 45, social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter are the leading source of business news information regarding ESG issues. We found that people under the age of 45 were 30% more likely to get information regarding a company’s ESG efforts from social media than from local news and 53% more likely to get that information from social media than directly from the company’s website. The effect of this finding increased when looking at people under the age of 35. People under the age of 35 were 60% more likely to get their information from social media than both local television news and company websites.



TO GET INFORMATION REGARDING A COMPANY’S ESG EFFORTS FROM SOCIAL MEDIA THAN FROM LOCAL NEWS AND



53% MORE LIKELY TO GET THAT INFORMATION FROM SOCIAL MEDIA THAN DIRECTLY FROM THE COMPANY’S WEBSITE

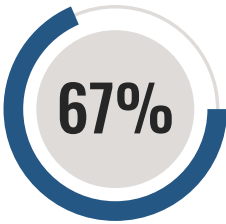


### WHAT SHOULD COMPANIES TALK ABOUT

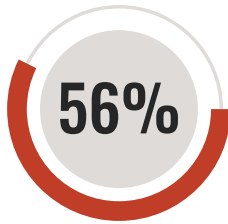
Because stakeholder groups are both directly impacted by the company and have the ability to impact the company, addressing the issues that resonate the strongest with these groups should be a priority. The majority of people surveyed (63%) expressed that they want companies to make commitments and show progress towards them, and this sentiment resonated across political parties lines (67% Democrat, 56% Republican). These commitments to combat ESG challenges were

63% OF PEOPLE\* ACROSS COMMITMENT LINES WANT COMPANIES TO MAKE COMMITMENT TO ESG GOALS

\*UNDER THE AGE OF 45



DEMOCRATS



REPUBLICANS

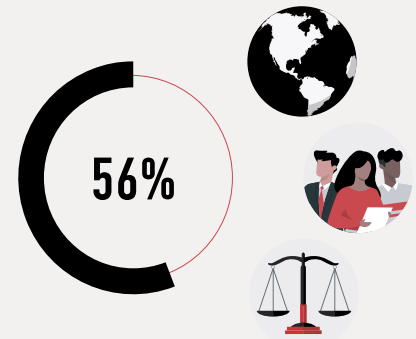


slightly more important to people under the age of 45 (64% support), with 67% of young Democrats and 58% of young Republicans agreeing they want companies to make these commitments and demonstrate progress, and 62% of people in this age cohort concerned when companies miss their ESG goals. When companies make public commitments in regards to their ESG efforts, they should consider not only the medium and the source of information but also what resonates the most with different stakeholders in order to maximize message effectiveness.

Companies' statements of support can play an important role in reinforcing a company's commitment to substantive action on ESG issues. Many stakeholders want companies to issue statements of support on ESG issues that are important to them (61% overall, 66% Democrat, 52% Republican). In order for these statements to carry the most weight, companies should ensure such statements connect with ESG efforts the company is already engaging in. This way, the statements of support will reinforce the companies' genuine commitment to addressing the specific ESG issues being publicly supported.

When broadcasting commitments and progress against those commitments, it is important for companies to determine the most impactful way to frame the message, as well as who will be the most powerful messenger. Regarding framing the narrative, we find the use of emotional language resonates more with Democrats while more concrete language, such as details and numbers regarding progress, resonates more with Republicans. We also found that visuals in the form of infographics and videos were considered persuasive by the majority of the people (61%). To demonstrate progress towards an ESG goal, a 56% majority of people would consider a detailed action plan as good evidence of commitment and progress. The impact of an action plan increases by 6% when looking at people under the age of 45. Additionally, the majority of people

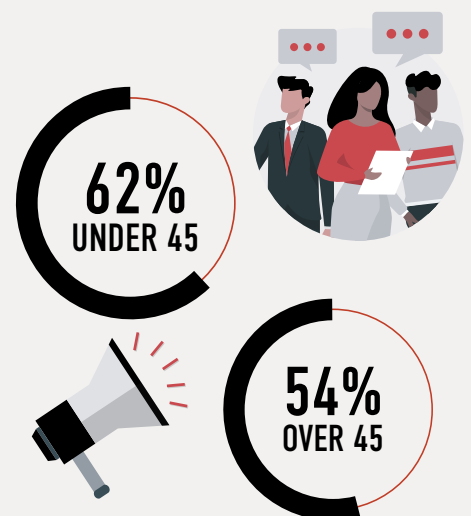
## PROGRESS TOWARDS AN ESG GOAL



People who considered a detailed action plan good evidence of commitment and progress



The impact of an action plan increases by 6% when looking at people under the age of 45



The majority of people (54% over, 62% of people under 45) find a hiring announcement an impactful way to demonstrate progress, specifically toward diversity





(54% over, 62% of people under 45) find a hiring announcement is a particularly impactful way to demonstrate progress specifically toward D&I goals. An important caveat: when framing the message regarding a hiring announcement as evidence of progress on D&I efforts, companies should highlight the qualifications and abilities of the individual hired as the majority of people indicated that hiring and promotion based on merit was important to them (67%).

**THE MAJORITY OF PEOPLE SUPPORT MERIT BASED HIRING AND PROMOTIONS**



No matter how businesses talk about their efforts, over-promising without delivering or making progress on their ESG commitments erodes the public’s trust in not only their own company but in all companies’ efforts to address ESG. Because these initiatives are relatively new and reporting metrics on ESG performance are not standardized, it is hard for stakeholders to distinguish substantive initiatives to address ESG issues from hollow promises, so we recommend layering data over stories of impact is a recommended way to communicate with stakeholders across the political spectrum.

**WHO SHOULD DO THE TALKING**

When companies commits to addressing an ESG issue, who delivers that message also matters. So, who is the company’s most powerful messenger? We found that the company’s leadership, in particular the CEO (in both the media as well as on personal social media), are the most persuasive and trustworthy sources (59% of people agree).

Not surprisingly, we find the CEO’s social media is just as meaningful to people under the age of 45 (61% ) as company statements (61%). We also find that for people in this age category, social media influencers are an equally significant messenger of ESG issues (61%). Social media influencers often place a spotlight on particular social or environmental matters and they can also highlight a company’s progress on ESG objectives or worse, lack of progress. A good example of this occurred in 2020 when British social media beauty influencer, Tess Daly, called out big beauty brands for lacking diverse representation in their influencer marketing strategies.<sup>8</sup>

**CEOS (IN BOTH THE MEDIA AS WELL AS ON PERSONAL SOCIAL MEDIA), ARE THE MOST PERSUASIVE AND TRUSTWORTHY SOURCES**

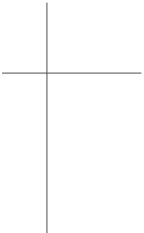




## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Companies should consider the generational audiences preferences for traditional local media sources v. social media and tailor messages—and mediums—accordingly.
- When making commitments and demonstrating progress, it is important for companies to control the social media narrative around their ESG efforts and communicate progress with a balanced mix of emotional and concrete language.
- Utilizing social media to engage locally and build the corporate brand in relevant stakeholder communities is a crucial step in building the brand recognition here in Washington, D.C. and amongst elected officials.
- Build and develop your CEO’s social media presence on platforms where audience members and key policymakers are most prominent. Update this content regularly to establish their respective voice and trust ensure a positive reception of ESG content. Also encourage senior employees to share and engage accordingly.
- Though social media resonates best with younger audiences who may be prevalent on newer social platforms like TikTok, companies should keep their focus on the prominent players such as Facebook and Twitter to reach older and policymaker audiences.
- Amplify ESG content with a variety of messengers to leverage the audiences of companies, CEOs and influencers and promote it with paid media tactics to increase reach.
- Create compelling visuals such as infographics when sharing on social and digital media to encourage higher engagement among desired audiences.

**IN GENERAL, OUR RESULTS SUGGEST THAT YOUNGER AMERICANS—NO MATTER THEIR POLITICAL LEANINGS—ARE SHOWING INTEREST IN PUTTING THEIR MONEY WHERE THEIR VALUES ARE.**





# CONCLUSION



With the American political climate marked by increasing polarization between Democrats and Republicans, many might draw quick conclusions about the “Left” and “Right” when it comes to support for ESG efforts, but this report suggests political stereotypes underestimate the consensus. For many issues, younger Americans appear to be divided from their older party affiliates. This effect is most strong for those under the age of 45, as both Democrats and Republicans in this age cohort show some degree of agreement on several issues. A larger divide emerges as the analysis focuses on generational differences. The pattern of results regarding the differences in age cohorts within the Republican party in particular indicate that Republicans under the age of 45 view ESG issues differently than those over the age of 45. Republicans under the age of 45 tend to have more favorable views on ESG efforts and companies’ roles in addressing ESG concerns than older Republicans. In general, our results suggest that younger Americans—no matter their political leanings- are showing interest in putting their money where their values are. Because of this emerging trend, it is important for companies to not only make substantive investments in ESG initiatives, but communicate them with constituents and their elected officials.

On a practical level, companies should be aware of which ESG issues are important for their stakeholders and be prepared to prioritize and communicate their commitment to addressing those issues. With the rise of social media as a popular source of news for many Americans, companies have an important opportunity to control the narrative around their ESG initiatives and help direct the public’s attention to their commitments to addressing such issues. To leverage this opportunity, they must understand which ESG issues resonate the most with their stakeholders, how they should frame their message, and, most importantly, how best to follow through.

Overall, this report indicates that ESG issues are growing in importance to stakeholders, no matter their political beliefs and especially with younger populations who will increasingly dominate voter rolls and financial markets as they age. Therefore, companies should work to meet these expectations and communicate accordingly. As this study shows, a well-crafted and implemented ESG strategy will not only allow a company to be a good corporate citizen, but can be an effective way to connect with political constituents and their elected officials towards advancing public policy goals. Now, more than ever, it is important for companies to take action on ESG issues or risk falling behind their competitors, and as is now clear, they must consider how they communicate with constituents to effectively engage with policymakers here in Washington.



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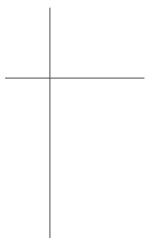
# APPENDIX

## METHODOLOGY AND SAMPLE

Our sample was composed of 1,240 registered voters who completed online surveys. This sample was evenly split between males and females (46% Male, 54% Female) and was mostly (40%) located in the southern United States. Respondents were likely living in an urban/city dwelling (38%) or a suburb (42%). The sample identified mostly as Caucasian (79%) and the majority were over the age of 35. The sample was also highly educated, with most respondents indicating they had a bachelors degree (25%) or some college, which is somewhat less than the national average (42%). Lastly, the sample was predominantly married (56.9%) and was mostly employed full time (42%) or retired (20%).

As for the statistical methodology employed in analyzing survey responses, analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to distinguish significant differences between voter groups. This required each category of voter (age, political party) to be coded for identification and then test statistics were calculated to compare one voting group to another, thereby uncovering trends in the responses. Particularly, significant differences and/or similarities both within as well as between groups were described in this report. To aid interpretation of the meaning of the results of our analysis, we reported frequency statistics in terms of the percentage of people who indicated a threshold degree of agreement with the questions asked in the survey.

As an example of the types of analysis completed, take the conclusion that Democrats prefer messaging which is more emotional in nature while Republicans indicated they liked messaging that was more quantitative in nature. How would we know such differences exist? To answer this question, we split up all the respondents into 2 groups: Group A and group B. We then showed a sample corporate ESG message to group A and showed a comparable but different message to group B. For the first group, these voters were shown a message which supported environmental initiatives and was written using an emotional tone. Group B was also shown a corporate environmental message, but this message was written in a factual and quantitative tone. By comparing across groups (group A vs. group B), we uncovered which message was most liked and believed by voters. Additionally, we compared Democrats to Republicans within each group in order to see if political affiliation as well as message tone made a difference in voters responses.



After showing the corporate messages to voters and then recording their responses, we then performed an analysis of variance to compare these two groups. The output of this test is included below:

This output indicates that political affiliation (Democrat or Republican) makes a difference in how much support someone has for the statement: “I feel that this message is authentic and believable.” The variable of interest in this test is labeled “Generally Speaking...:” and we see that political affiliation matters due to the number for this variable, located in the column labeled “Sig”. This result (.000) shows a test statistic below the threshold of .05, meaning that Democrat voters had significantly different reactions to the messages compared to Republicans. Additionally, The result in the “Sig.” column, row 5 (.085) indicates that the Democrats and Republicans responded differently not only due to their political affiliation, but also dependent upon which version of the message they saw (A or B).

### TEST OF BETWEEN - SUBJECTS EFFECTS

SOURCE	TYPE III SUM OF SQUARES	DF	MEAN SQUARE	F	SIG.	PARTIAL ETA SQUARED	NONCENT. PARAMETER	OBSERVED POWER B
Correct Model	484.073a	7	69.153	9.272	.000	.057	64.902	1.000
Intercept	7596.728	1	7596.728	1018.525	.000	.488	1018.525	1.000
Group2Code	2.086	1	2.086	.289	.597	.000	.280	.083
Generally Speaking Do You Usually Think of Yourself as a Democrat or Republican	425.551	3	141.850	19.018	.000	.051	57.055	1.000
Group2Code * Generally Speaking Do You Usually Think of Yourself as a Democrat or Republican	49.476	3	16.492	2.211	.085	.006	6.633	.562
Error	7965.738	1068	7.439					
Total	52160.000	1076						
Corrected Total	8449.810	1075						

a. R Squared = .057 (adjusted R Squared = .051)

b. Computed using alpha = .05



The pairwise comparison table below shows us just how these differences manifest. The “Mean difference” column shows us what the difference between Democrats and Republicans was, with Democrats rating certain messages more liked and more trusted than their Republican counterparts.

### PAIRWISE COMPARISONS

(I) Generally Speaking Do You Usually Think of Yourself as a Democrat a Republican, an Independent or something else?	(J) Generally Speaking Do You Usually Think of Yourself as a Democrat a Republican, an Independent or something else?	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig. b	95% Confidence Interval for Difference b	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
democrat	republican	1.126*	.197	.000	.740	1.511
	independent	1.402*	.212	.000	.985	1.819
	other	1.213	.730	.097	-.219	2.646
republican	democrat	-1.126	.197	.000	-1.511	-.740
	independent	.276	.232	.234	-.179	.731
	other	.087	.736	.906	-1.357	1.531
independent	democrat	-1.402*	.212	.000	-1.819	-.985
	republican	-.276	.232	.234	-.731	.179
	other	-.189	.740	.799	-1.641	1.264
other	democrat	-1.213	.730	.097	-2.646	.219
	republican	-.087	.736	.906	-1.531	1.357
	independent	.189	.740	.799	-1.264	1.641

Based on estimated marginal means

\*. The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

b. Adjustment for multiple comparisons: Least Significant Difference (equivalent to no adjustments).

Taken altogether, the statistical results of the data collected are both confirmatory as well as surprising. The sample size is large enough to have enough power to perform the shown statistical tests, and the results are compelling.





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First and foremost, we would like to thank the American citizens who participated in this research, who took time from their busy lives to share their understanding, ideas and perceptions with us candidly. Your thoughtfulness and honesty are key to understanding how we can all come together to make our world the best it can be, and we appreciate you.

Next, we would like to thank the team at Sports and Leisure Research Group, and particularly Jon Last, for their dedication in recruiting for and fielding this study. It is no small feat to engage voters in the midst of a global pandemic, but you made it look easy.

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