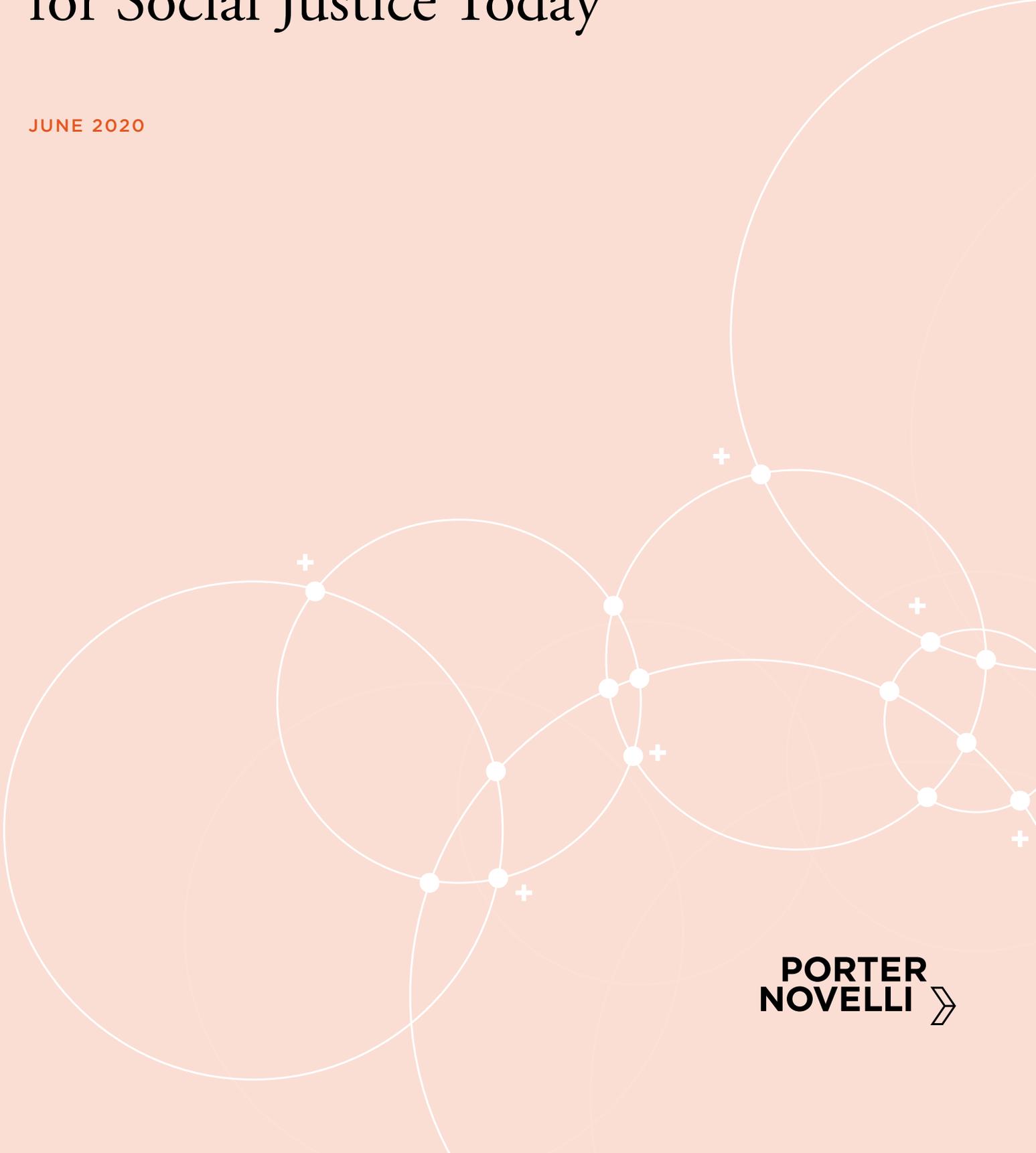


PORTER NOVELLI PURPOSE TRACKER

# The Business Imperative for Social Justice Today

JUNE 2020



**PORTER  
NOVELLI** 

Purpose-driven business has been on an upward trajectory for years. And in 2019, a number of landmark announcements, including the Business Roundtable Statement on the Purpose of a Corporation, ushered in what many pundits confirm as the solidifying of Purpose as the way to do business.

**Then 2020 happened.**

Enter the social justice zeitgeist. Purpose is not simply a substantive commitment to a cause, but a call to action to answer for ongoing years of entrenched biases and systemic racism (or injustice). In this moment, the question of “if” we stand up is irrelevant. The American public has spoken: silence is complicity. Today, the remaining question companies must answer is “how” we stand up. And for those who want to claim they are Purpose-driven, diversity, equity and inclusion should be at the center of who you are and how you do business.

The events of this year have not only reinforced just how critical it is to act with Purpose – it has revealed that unless Purpose is infused into the bedrock of an organization, it is window dressing. This research proves that brands that are unprepared to engage with stakeholders on operationalizing responsible action will not only be laggards, they will be seen as irrelevant in the eyes of Americans.

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*While companies remain reluctant to wade into controversy, the scale of the demonstrations, which started in Minneapolis on May 26 and have since spread internationally, has made speaking up a business imperative.”*

Dwayna Haley, SVP, Innovation & Impact to BBC News

# The social justice imperative

## HOW COMPANIES ARE EXPECTED TO ENGAGE

Racial injustice. Gun violence. Police brutality. Transgender rights. White supremacy.

These are not just the issues prominent in the news or around the dinner table, but also in the board room. At another time, companies would have done their best to steer clear of these topics; but today that is, quite simply, no longer an option. Speaking out and addressing these historic injustices is not only a moral imperative, it is a public mandate.



# The social justice imperative

## HOW COMPANIES ARE EXPECTED TO ENGAGE

“Stay out of it and avoid the controversy.” What was once sound business advice, is now a sure-fire recipe for consumer backlash. In fact, seven-in-10 (71%) Americans believe companies have more responsibility than ever before to address social justice issues. And if a company purports to be Purpose-driven, it cannot shy away from this conversation. Nearly three-quarters of Americans (73%) say for a company to be truly Purpose-driven, it must be willing to take risks to address social justice issues.

With the coronavirus pandemic as a backdrop, the importance of companies to act not just as money-making entities, but sentient, community-oriented organizations has never been more apparent. Americans are increasingly looking to companies to engage in these issues - and work both internally and externally to drive the change the world is seeking.



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Believe companies have more responsibility than ever before to address social justice issues



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Say for a company to be truly be a Purpose-driven, it must be willing to take risks to address social justice issues

# The social justice imperative

## HOW COMPANIES ARE EXPECTED TO ENGAGE

And no company gets a pass when it comes to creating positive change around social justice issues – even the most Purpose-oriented organizations. While having a signature cause can help a company align and operationalize around a certain issue, it still needs to do the work to tackle other critical topics important to Americans today. Nearly three-quarters of Americans are in agreement on this fact.



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While a company can have one issue it stands for (e.g., childhood hunger, advancing equality in tech), that doesn't mean that company can ignore other important issues (e.g., addressing diversity, equity and inclusion, human rights)

# II



*Silence is not an option. You think you're being silent, but you're speaking loudly. You may actually be making the opposite statement of what you want to say."*

Ayanna Robinson  
EVP, Reputation

## Engaging in the social justice conversation

### HOW AMERICANS EXPECT COMPANIES TO SPEAK UP

The sentiment has graced headlines and social media feeds: to be silent on social justice issues is to be complicit. And now its clear that Americans expect companies to stand up – and speak up. Nearly two-thirds of Americans say it is no longer acceptable for companies to be silent on social justice issues. And more than half (56%) believe that companies that do not talk about social justice issues in their marketing and communications are out of touch.



It's no longer acceptable for companies to be silent on social justice issues



Companies that do not talk about social justice issues in their marketing or communications are out of touch



## II

# Engaging in the social justice conversation

### HOW AMERICANS EXPECT COMPANIES TO SPEAK UP

Companies should stand ready to share their values through the issues they engage with – and Americans will respond positively to companies that are ready to have these conversations. In fact, seven-in-10 (70%) Americans want the companies they support to be actively engaged in conversations about social justice issues.

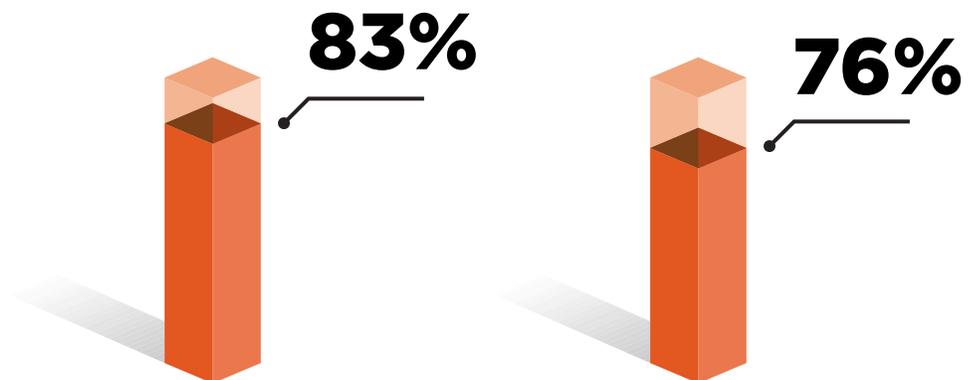
Although most social justice issues are immensely complex and emotional, companies shouldn't prioritize flawless execution over the urgency to engage. In fact, more than eight-in-10 (83%) Americans say a company doesn't have to be perfect when talking about social justice issues, but it should be open and honest. Here we see Americans are simply looking for transparency – and a willingness to acknowledge the journey, missteps and all, toward addressing these issues – both internally and externally.

## II

# Engaging in the social justice conversation

### HOW AMERICANS EXPECT COMPANIES TO SPEAK UP

All companies are invited to join the conversation if they come to the table with a level of humble sincerity, but a legacy of speaking out will lend greater authenticity to the message. Three-quarters (76%) of Americans are more likely to believe a company is being genuine when talking about social justice issues if they have heard that companies speak on similar topics in the past.



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A company doesn't have to be perfect when talking about social justice issues, but it should be open and honest

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More likely to believe a company is being authentic when talking about social justice issues if they have heard the company speak on similar topics in the past

## II

# Engaging in the social justice conversation

### HOW AMERICANS EXPECT COMPANIES TO SPEAK UP

2020 has proved to be unrelenting in its path to uncover the myriad injustices that for some may have seemed hidden in plain sight. Worker's' rights, access to healthcare and racial inequality are just a few of the issues that have gained increased visibility due to the intersection of a global health and economic crisis with that of a public reckoning of the continued systemic racial inequalities that face this nation.

Yet, this moment of awakening has extended beyond issues of race and equality. Americans care deeply about many issues - and expect companies to do the same. Across the board, we've seen nearly every single issue a company could address increase in importance over the past two years. This proves that not only do companies have their work cut out for them, but also that this is not a fad or a phase, but a growing momentum over a sustained period of time.

# II

## Engaging in the social justice conversation

### HOW AMERICANS EXPECT COMPANIES TO SPEAK UP

Americans believe it is important for companies to address the following issues active in the news today:

	WAVE I	COVID-19 WAVE V	2018
EMPLOYEE HEALTH AND SAFETY	94%	92%	/
PRIVACY AND INTERNET SECURITY	91%	89%	86%
ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE	91%	92%	85%
SEXUAL HARASSMENT	90%	87%	83%
RACIAL EQUALITY	88%	85%	81%
DOMESTIC JOB GROWTH	88%	86%	86%
WOMEN'S RIGHTS	87%	83%	80%
COST OF HIGHER EDUCATION	77%	74%	76%
IMMIGRATION	74%	72%	74%
CLIMATE CHANGE	73%	73%	73%
LGBTQ RIGHTS (E.G., LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, TRANSGENDER AND QUEER RIGHTS)	70%	65%	63%
GUN CONTROL	67%	71%	69%
FAKE NEWS	63%	62%	56%

## II

# Engaging in the social justice conversation

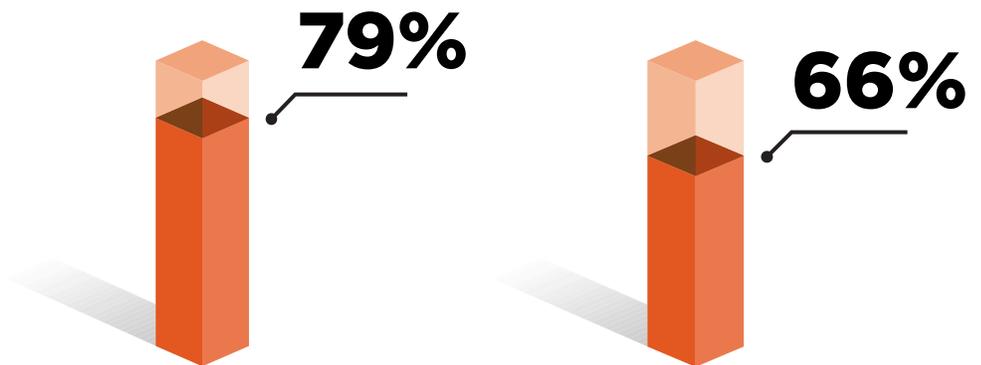
### HOW AMERICANS EXPECT COMPANIES TO SPEAK UP

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*While the national discourse has addressed them [COVID-19 pandemic, economic instability and systemic racism] as disparate issues, they are connected. Corporations must embrace the dual responsibility of achieving business goals and making a positive impact on society.”*

Ayanna Robinson  
EVP, Reputation

So how can companies approach addressing the numerous topics vital to Americans today? Its important to look within to operationalize the changes Americans expect to see today before companies can seek to engage in broader reform. Indeed, nearly eight-in-10 (79%) Americans believe companies must address social justice issues by making internal changes, while two-thirds (66%) believe companies can push for change through engaging in reform through government policy.



Companies must address social justice issues by making changes internally

Companies must address social justice issues by pushing for federal, state or local policy changes



*Purpose without diversity, equity and inclusion isn't purposeful at all. Was the civil rights movement not purposeful? We must remember that purpose without justice is whitewashing."*

Soon Mee Kim  
EVP, Diversity & Inclusion Lead

## Social Justice Through DE&I

### AMERICAN EXPECTATIONS OF EMPLOYERS TO EMBRACE DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION IN THE WORKPLACE

The mandate from Americans to look within as a first-step to addressing social justice issues is clear. And to start, companies should examine their own approaches to diversity, equity and inclusion (DE&I) - and in the eyes of Americans, there is work to be done. More than three-quarters (76%) of Americans think companies need to make more progress on advancing DE&I in the workplace. And even for those companies that do have DE&I programs, there is still a lingering level of skepticism at the root of these efforts - as 72 percent of Americans question the sincerity of some DE&I efforts.

Still, companies should be prepared to speak to not only their current programs and policies, but also future aspirations. Nearly seven-in-10 (69%) Americans want more companies to talk about their DE&I policies and initiatives externally - and 67 percent of Americans say companies with strong DE&I values are more relevant to them personally.



A company cannot be truly Purpose-driven without having strong DE&I values



Think companies with strong DE&I values are more relevant

# III

## Social Justice Through DE&I

### AMERICAN EXPECTATIONS OF EMPLOYERS TO EMBRACE DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION IN THE WORKPLACE

Further, companies that truly embed DE&I values into the bedrock of their organizations will benefit from heightened levels of goodwill, trust and propensity to purchase, among other actions. Eight-in-10 (80%) Americans will have a better opinion of that company and another 77 percent are more likely to trust and purchase from that organization. Further, nearly three-quarters (73%) say they would be proud to be associated with a company that embraces DE&I within the organization.

When a company has strong DE&I values, Americans will reward in the following ways:

	WAVE 1
HAVE A MORE POSITIVE IMAGE OF THAT COMPANY	80%
BE MORE LIKELY TO TRUST THE COMPANY	77%
PURCHASE PRODUCTS OR SERVICES FROM THAT COMPANY	77%
WANT TO WORK FOR THAT COMPANY	76%
BE MORE LOYAL TO THE COMPANY (I.E., CONTINUE BUYING THE COMPANY'S PRODUCTS/SERVICES)	75%
BE PROUD TO BE ASSOCIATED WITH THAT COMPANY (E.G., WEAR THAT COMPANY'S LOGO)	73%
DEFEND THAT COMPANY IF PEOPLE SPOKE BADLY OF IT	69%
FORGIVE THAT COMPANY IF IT MAKES A MISSTEP	69%
SHARE INFORMATION ABOUT THAT COMPANY ON MY SOCIAL NETWORK	57%

# Social Justice Through DE&I

## AMERICAN EXPECTATIONS OF EMPLOYERS TO EMBRACE DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION IN THE WORKPLACE

Having a robust approach to DE&I is so important to prospective and current employees it can even be a deciding factor in where to work – or when to leave a job. More than half of Americans (58%) say they will do research on a company’s DE&I policies when deciding where to work, and more than a third (37%) of current employees today are reconsidering their current job because they believe their company is not doing enough to address DE&I internally.

In fact, seven-in-10 (71%) current employees want to know what their employer is doing to make their workplace more inclusive. And this means sharing both the improvements and room to improve – as 63 percent of current employees say they wish their company would be more open about its DE&I journey – and where it needs more work.



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Want to know what their employer is doing to make their workplace more inclusive



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Wish their company would be more open about its DE&I journey – and where it needs to improve

# Social Justice Through DE&I

## AMERICAN EXPECTATIONS OF EMPLOYERS TO EMBRACE DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION IN THE WORKPLACE

Companies with strong DE&I values also stand to benefit from one further element: permission to speak up. More than three-quarters (77%) of Americans think companies that have strong DE&I policies have more credibility to engage in social justice conversations.

Here we see how internal company policies and programs are inextricably linked to external communications. Americans expect companies to engage in the social justice conversations of today, but in order to do so in an authentic and credible way, companies must live and breathe those values internally.



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Think companies that have strong DE&I policies have more credibility to engage in social justice conversations

# IV



*It's time to get uncomfortable in order to make a difference. As communicators, we have a powerful opportunity (and the accountability) to positively influence behavior change. Through messaging with strategic calls-to-action, brilliant creative and multichannel outreach, we can impact widespread sea change in any environment."*

Dwayna Haley  
SVP, Innovation & Impact

## Addressing racial equality head-on

### HOW COMPANIES CAN STAND UP AND STEP UP

In this social revolution, there is one issue that rises above the rest in today's national dialogue: racial inequality. This is driven by a confluence of current events including the killing of George Floyd, ongoing race-fueled police brutality, disproportional impacts of COVID-19 on minority communities and the outrage, pain and protests that have stemmed from a deeply embedded history of racism.

And perhaps a first step in the process to a robust and honest conversation around racial inequalities is to admit complicity - then agree to change. In fact, eight-in-10 (80%) Americans believe companies need to recognize their role in systemic racial inequality. And the same amount (80%) wish more companies would be honest about their past mistakes or biases in addressing or talking about race. Indeed, acknowledging past missteps can help foster a more candid dialogue that can create a more receptive audience moving forward. Eighty percent of Americans say they are more willing to listen to a company that acknowledges past mistakes or biases, than a company that shares a standard message of support without acknowledging past transgressions.



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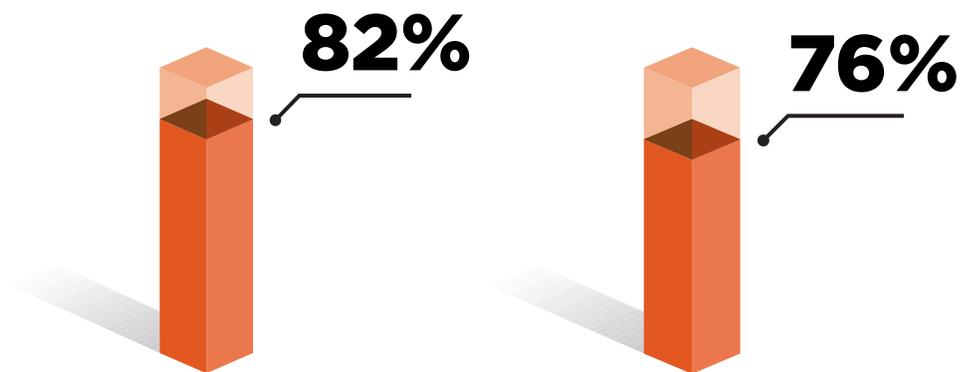
More willing to listen to a company that acknowledges past mistakes or biases, than a company that shares a standard message of support without acknowledging the past

# IV

## Addressing racial equality head-on

### HOW COMPANIES CAN STAND UP AND STEP UP

But this is certainly not a time for silence – Americans expect companies to not only listen – but speak up. But when sharing a message of support or solidarity, it's important to also acknowledge the work ahead. More than eight-in-10 (82%) Americans believe it is okay if a company makes a statement of support to communities of color, but they need to follow it up with action. And, three-quarters (76%) of Americans want to hear about how companies are changing their internal policies to address racial inequalities.



Say it's okay if a company makes a statement of support to communities of color, but they need to follow it up with action

Want to hear about how companies are changing their internal policies to address racial inequalities

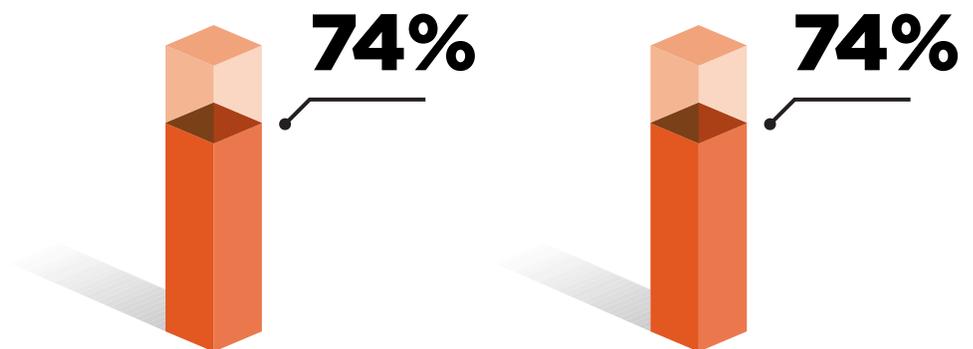
# IV

## Addressing racial equality head-on

### HOW COMPANIES CAN STAND UP AND STEP UP

Still, internal action is only one part of a much greater puzzle. Three-quarters (74%) of Americans believe companies must not only address internal inequalities, but also engage in and act in the broader societal movement. And this participation must be real, it must be candid and it must, above all, be sustained. Indeed, the majority (74%) of citizens today are concerned companies will move on to the next issue without making the changes they promised to address racial inequalities.

For so many Americans, addressing racial equality is more than one issue on a list of important topics to address - it is a matter of life or death. And for companies, it is not a “nice to have,” it is a business and societal imperative.



Companies must not only address internal inequalities, but also engage in and act in the broader societal movement

Concerned companies will move on to the next issue without making the changes they promised to address racial inequalities

# Methodology

Porter Novelli fielded a PN View: 360 survey to gather people's insights regarding Purpose-driven companies and social justice. The survey was fielded online using Engine's online CARAVAN® Omnibus survey between June 10-12, 2020 and a total sample of 1,004 U.S. general market adults was collected. The data were weighted to U.S. Census population estimates and the margin of error is +/- 3.1% at a 95% confidence level.

# About Porter Novelli

Porter Novelli is a global purpose communications consultancy born from the idea that the art of communication can advance society. More than 45 years ago, we opened our doors - and people's eyes and minds - for brands driven to make a positive impact. Today, we believe that organizations must find, live and tell their purpose in order to thrive. Those companies will motivate action, secure loyalty and encourage advocacy — all in service to a healthier bottom line. Porter Novelli is a part of the Omnicom Public Relations Group.

For more information about this research or for a custom presentation, please contact your account team or [marketing@porternovelli.com](mailto:marketing@porternovelli.com).

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