

PUBLIC PERSPECTIVES



**SHOULD COMPANIES TAKE A PUBLIC
POSITION ON SENSITIVE SOCIAL ISSUES?**

October 2018



SHOULD COMPANIES TAKE A POSITION ON SOCIAL ISSUES?

- Early indications are that Nike’s gamble in taking a position on issues associated with ex-NFL quarterback Colin Kaepernick have paid off. The company’s valuation has increased and sales figures are positive.
- But long before Kaepernick took a knee in protest, younger Canadians were looking for a greater focus on social issues. They rank “social inequity” as a top concern; support fairness and equality regardless of sexual orientation, race or gender, and say there are other ways they can get involved in society beyond voting.
- Will other companies follow suit and take a public stance on key social issues?
- For some it might make good business sense. In an increasingly polarized political climate, more and more people are choosing sides, and with social media they can judge for themselves if a company holds the same values as they do.

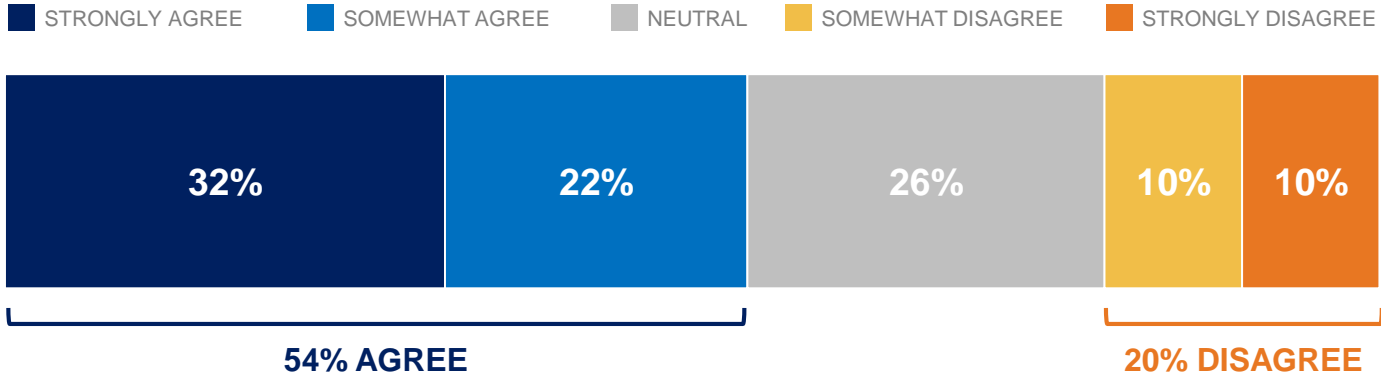
As part of our ongoing [Ipsos Context](#) study we asked if other companies should follow Nike’s lead. In the coming months we will see if they do, and measure the impact on their reputation and sales.

WHAT DO THE DATA SHOW?

- In principle, more than twice as many Canadians think that companies should take a public position on social issues such as racism, or sexism than don't.
- There has been some debate in the media about whether it is only Millennials who are supportive of more activist companies. This is not the case among Canadians. While Gen X, higher income and Albertans are somewhat less likely to believe that companies should take a public position on social issues, half or more of all subgroups do.
- Furthermore, half or more of the customers of various companies, from the financial sector and telecom to beer and airlines, believe that companies should take a public position on social issues such as racism, sexism.
- Despite the clear support we know that some social issues can also be divisive, so companies need to ensure that their public positions are in line with their core values and more importantly, are supported by their actions.
- These are selected findings from [Ipsos Context](#), a quarterly syndicated survey program tracking the context in which consumers makes decisions.
- An online survey was conducted Sept 23-27, 2018 among n=2,000 adult Canadians. Data are weighted to match the profile of the population. The credibility interval for a sample of this size is +/-2.5 , 95% of the time.

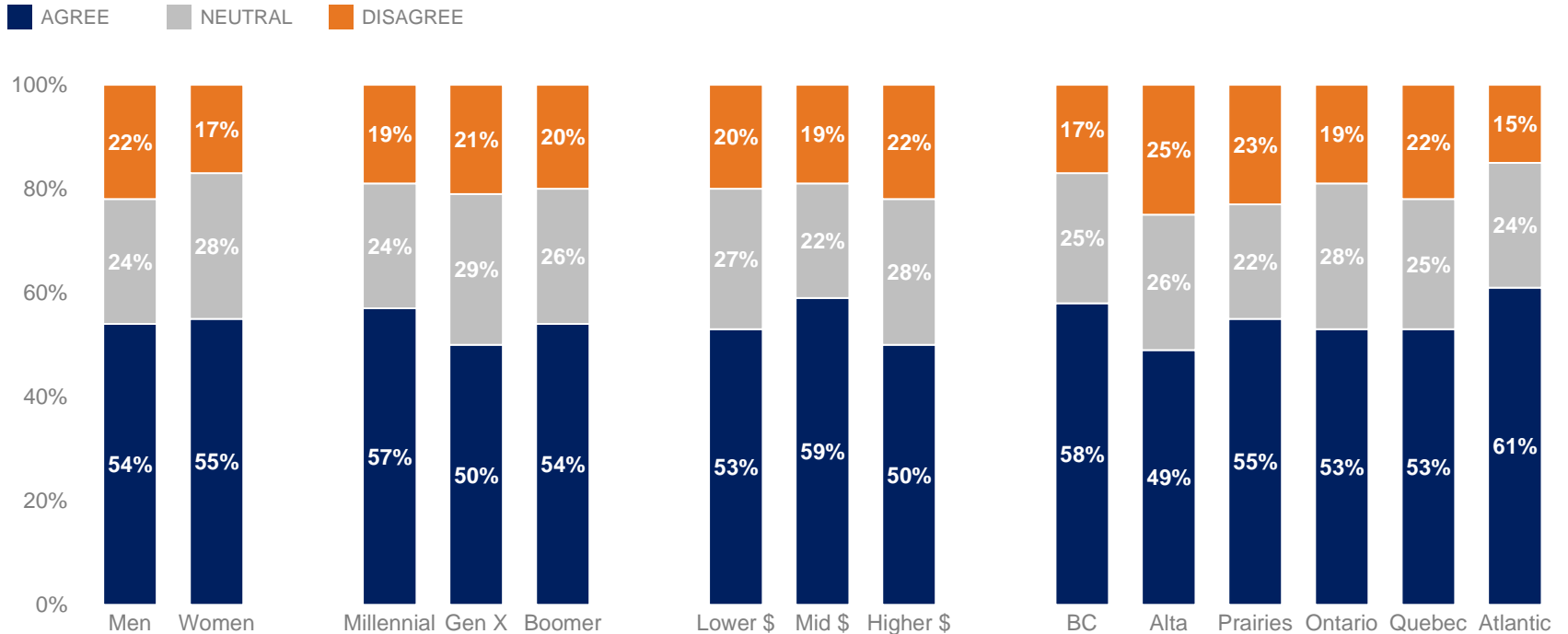
A MAJORITY OF CANADIANS THINK THAT COMPANIES SHOULD TAKE A PUBLIC POSITION ON SOCIAL ISSUES, MORE THAN DOUBLE THOSE THAT DON'T.

“Companies should take a public position on social issues like racism, sexism”



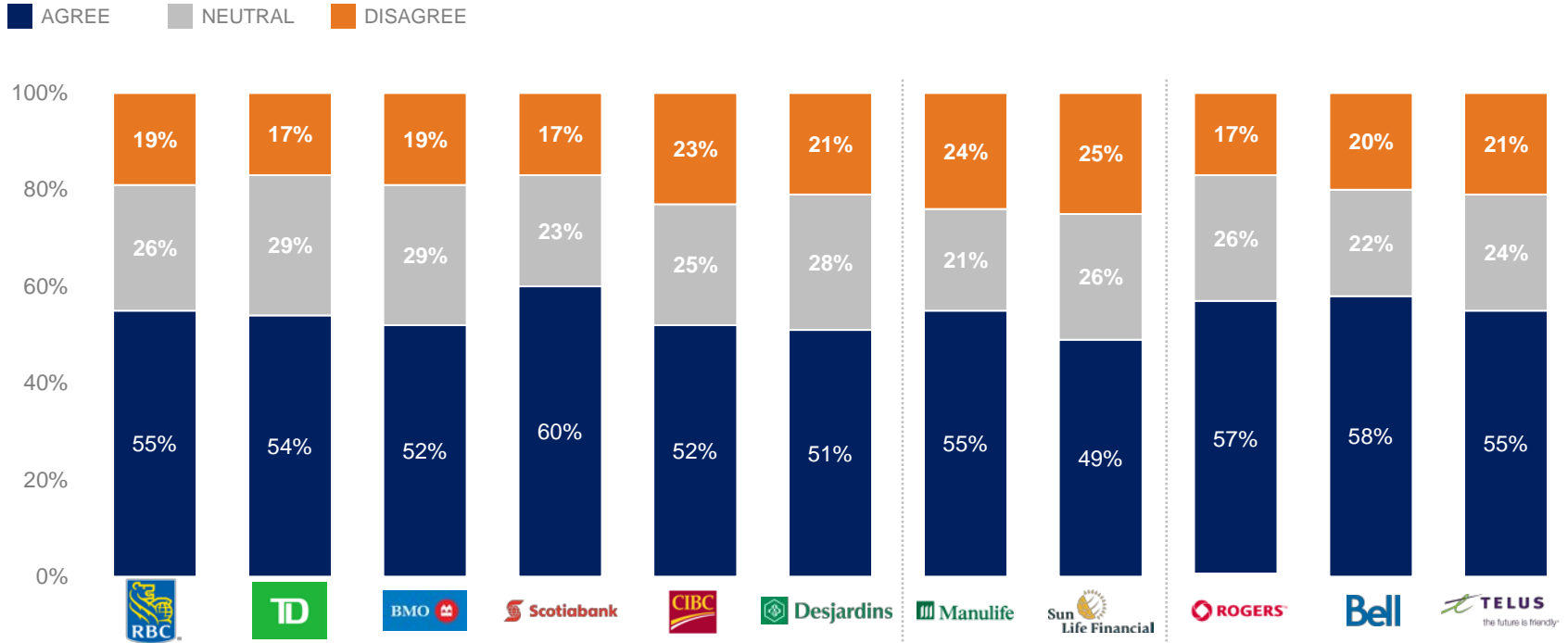
WHILE GEN X, HIGHER INCOME AND ALBERTANS ARE SOMEWHAT LESS LIKELY TO BELIEVE THAT COMPANIES SHOULD TAKE A PUBLIC POSITION ON SOCIAL ISSUES, HALF OR MORE OF ALL SUBGROUPS DO.

“Companies should take a public position on social issues like racism, sexism”



IN THE FINANCIAL AND TELECOM SECTORS, HALF OR MORE CUSTOMERS OF THE COMPANIES BELOW ARE FAVOURABLE TOWARD COMPANIES SPEAKING OUT.

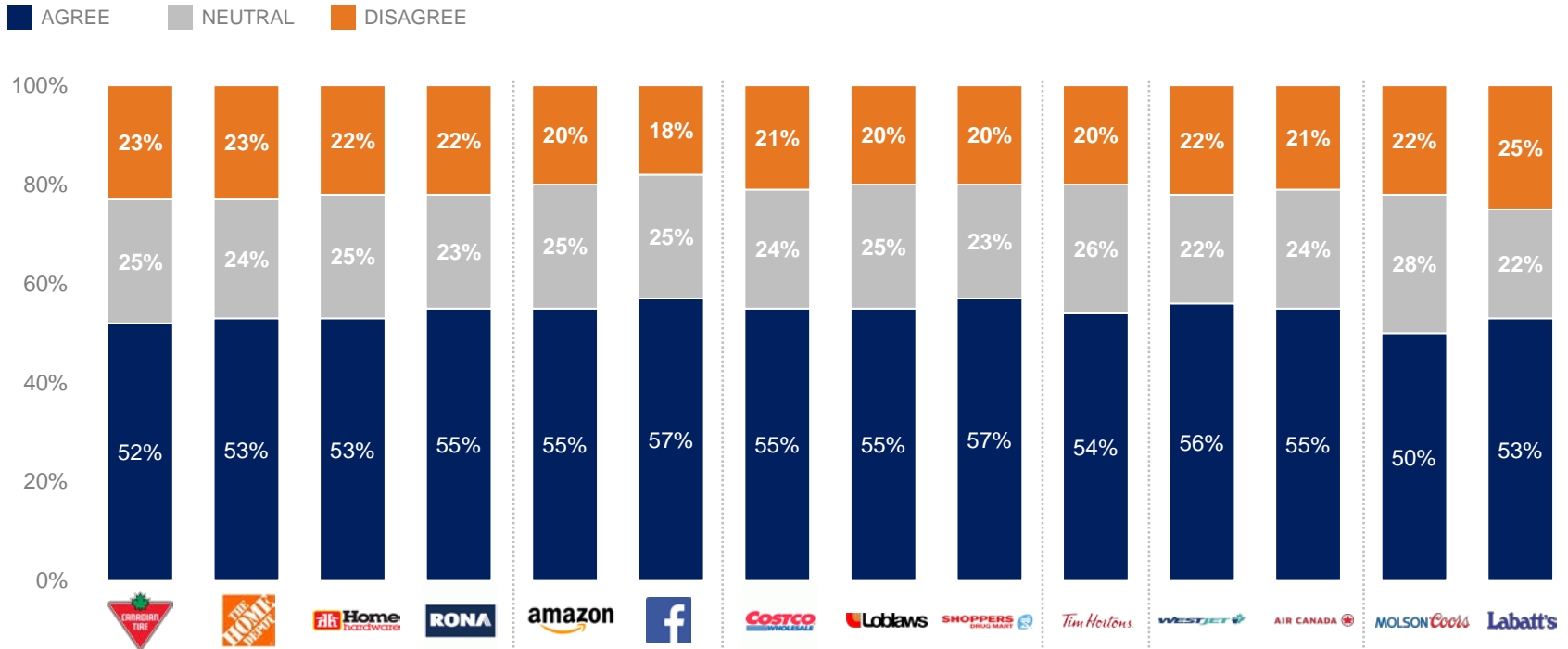
“Companies should take a public position on social issues like racism, sexism”



Bank customers self-identified as using bank as their main financial institution; other customers said they have used products/services of each in past year

OTHER SECTORS ARE SIMILAR, WITH A MAJORITY OF CUSTOMERS AGREEING THAT COMPANIES SHOULD SPEAK OUT.

“Companies should take a public position on social issues like racism, sexism”



Bank customers self-identified as using bank as their main financial institution; other customers said they have used products/services of each in past year

CONTACTS

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Mike Colledge

President, Canadian Public Affairs

✉ mike.colledge@ipsos.com



Chris Martyn

Chief Research Officer, Ipsos Public Affairs

✉ chris.martyn@ipsos.com



Sean Simpson

Vice President, Canadian Public Affairs

✉ sean.simpson@ipsos.com