

SPECIAL REPORT

# Ethical Leadership and Business

2,400+ consumers share insights on  
technology, equality, and ethics in the  
Fourth Industrial Revolution

salesforce research

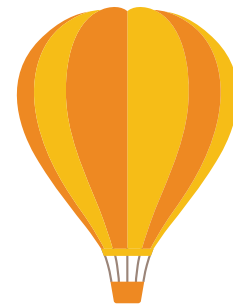
# About This Report

For this special report, “Ethical Leadership and Business,” Salesforce Research surveyed more than 2,400 consumers to determine:

- Attitudes toward emerging technology and its impacts on society
- The role of business in society as the Fourth Industrial Revolution progresses
- How business ethics impacts customer loyalty

Data in this report is from a double-blind survey conducted in October 2018 that generated 2,401 responses from consumers in the United States. All respondents are third-party panelists. For further survey demographics, see page 17.

Due to rounding, not all percentage totals in this report equal 100%. All comparison calculations are made from total numbers (not rounded numbers).



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# Introduction

## Societal Expectations of Companies Keep Growing

Society as we know it is at a critical inflection point. We are in the midst of the Fourth Industrial Revolution – a time of unprecedented innovation that is fundamentally changing the way we communicate, learn, work, and live.

Amid this change, consumer expectations of the societal responsibility of businesses keep growing. Today 93% of consumers say companies have a responsibility to look beyond profit and make a positive impact on the world – up from 80% in 2016.\* **Ninety percent of consumers say companies have a responsibility to improve the state of the world.** In other words, in the midst of technological transformation, companies are being held accountable for more than the bottom line – today more even than in years past.

\* In 2016, respondents were asked to what extent companies have this responsibility. In 2018, respondents were asked the degree to which companies have this responsibility.

### Consumers See a Higher Calling for Businesses



# 01 | Doing Good Is Good Business

Consumers continue to call for businesses to use their power and influence for good. In fact, **88% believe businesses are responsible for fostering positive social change.**

As technology continues to transform our world, a majority of consumers also believe companies should advocate for human rights – defined as the inherent right of all human beings to life, liberty, freedom, opinion and expression, and education and work. **Eighty-seven percent of consumers say companies are responsible for advocating for human rights.**

## Consumers Call for Businesses to Champion Social Good

Percentage of Consumers Who Say Companies Are Responsible for the Following

Foster positive social change



Advocate for human rights



Includes answers of “completely responsible” and “somewhat responsible.”

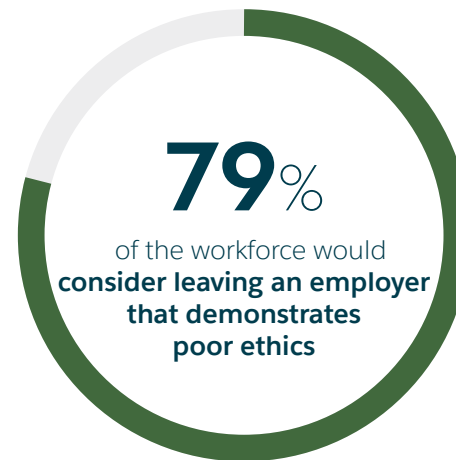
# 01 | Doing Good Is Good Business

Protecting and advocating for human rights isn't just viewed as the right thing to do – it also makes good business sense.

As the gap between the supply of and demand for skills widens in the Fourth Industrial Revolution, companies face heightened competition for talent. Businesses that value and prioritize ethics and human rights are better positioned as sought-after workplaces. In fact, more than seven in 10 workers want their employers to advocate for human rights.

An employer's ethics also has a tangible impact on employee retention. **Nearly eight in 10 employees would consider switching jobs if their current employer demonstrates poor ethics.**

## Employees Want Companies to Have a Moral Compass



# 01 | Doing Good Is Good Business

This dynamic extends beyond a company's workforce. Consumers are more likely to support brands that positively impact society. In fact, **more than two-thirds of consumers want the companies they buy from to advocate for human rights.**

The intersection of human rights and consumer behavior is of particular concern for historically disenfranchised groups. While 65% of men want the companies they work for to advocate for human rights, even more women – 78% – share this belief. Similarly, 79% of underrepresented minorities want their employers to advocate for human rights, compared to 69% of Caucasians.

## Consumers Are Drawn to Companies That Stand for Human Rights



# 01 | Doing Good Is Good Business

Ethics is core to customer loyalty. In fact, **86% of consumers say they would be more loyal to and 69% say they would spend more money with a company that demonstrates good ethics.**

There are noteworthy differences in how generations view this topic. For example, 87% of millennials would spend more money with companies that demonstrate good ethics, compared to 61% of baby boomers and traditionalists. As younger generations increase their buying power, it will become more important for companies to be values-driven.

If acting responsibly makes good business sense, acting irresponsibly has the opposite effect. **Seventy-five percent of consumers would consider *not* buying from a company that demonstrates poor ethics.**

## Good Ethics Leads to Brand Loyalty

Percentage of Consumers Who Agree with the Following

I would be more loyal to a company that demonstrates good ethics

86%

I would consider not buying from a company that demonstrates poor ethics

75%

I would spend more money with a company that demonstrates good ethics

69%





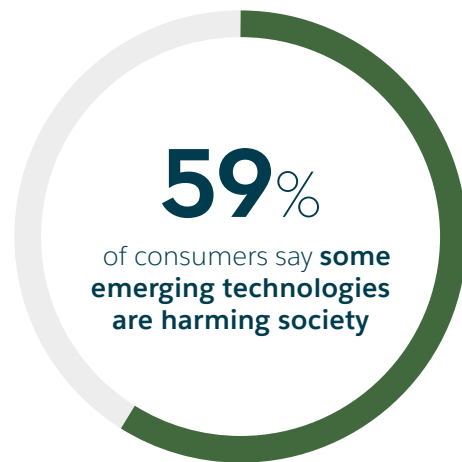
## 02 | Emerging Technology Pushes Ethics to the Forefront

Machine learning, AI, and autonomous vehicles – among other emerging technologies – are no longer futuristic concepts. Instead, most people are actively witnessing their impacts on the world around them. **Sixty-nine percent of consumers believe that emerging technologies are fundamentally changing how they live.**

But perceptions of these emerging technologies aren't universally positive – **nearly six in 10 say some emerging technologies are harming society.** More than 90% of consumers list privacy threats, data leaks, misinformation, and surveillance as top concerns.

**52%** of consumers say they're more worried about technology's ethical issues than they were a year ago.

### Consumers Express Anxiety About the Potential Impact of Emerging Technologies



Percentage of Consumers with Concerns That Emerging Technology Could Lead to the Following



Includes answers of "very concerned" and "somewhat concerned."

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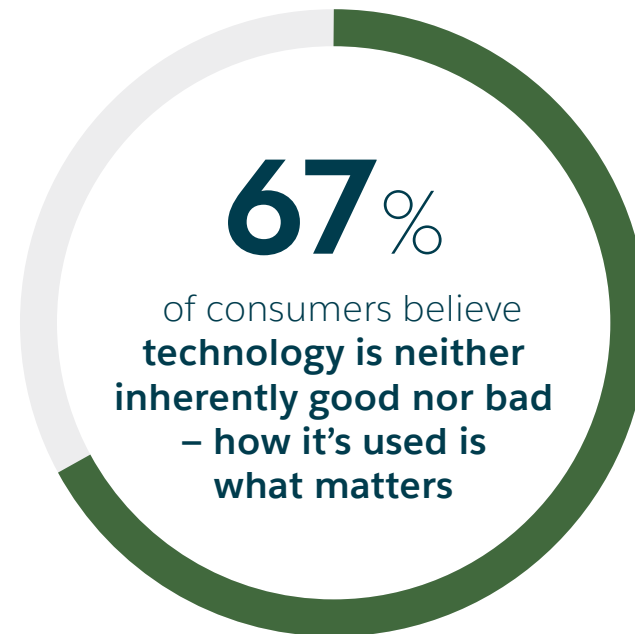
## 02 | Emerging Technology Pushes Ethics to the Forefront

While consumers are concerned about its potential pitfalls, they generally see emerging technology, itself, as neutral. **In fact, two-thirds of consumers believe that technology is neither inherently good nor bad – how it's used matters more.**

This leaves business at a crossroads. Tech companies are tasked with creating and deploying products and services that take into account their societal impact, and other companies are tasked with ensuring their use of those technologies is constructive, rather than destructive.

**70%** of consumers believe companies should have ethics advisory boards to help support the development of their tech products.

### Technology Is Largely Viewed as Neither Inherently Good Nor Bad



## 02 | Emerging Technology Pushes Ethics to the Forefront

Despite some reservations, the **overwhelming majority (81%) of consumers believe that emerging technologies can make the world a better place.**

Indeed, there are plenty of reasons for optimism when it comes to the impact of emerging technologies on big societal issues. AI, for example, is modernizing energy grids, and 3-D printing is lowering the cost of prosthetic limbs. It's not surprising that more than three-quarters of consumers think emerging technology can make *their own* lives better.

### Technology Can Improve Lives

Percentage of Consumers Who Agree with the Following

Emerging technologies have the potential to make the world a better place



Emerging technologies have the potential to make my life better



## 03 | New Opportunities Arise for Companies to Make a Difference

Having a diverse range of voices at the table is paramount as companies continue to consider their impact on society. For example, with the rising focus on ethics, **nearly half of consumers say they want advocacy and human rights groups engaged throughout the technology product lifecycle.**

People also want their own voices heard during technology development. An overwhelming **81% want everyday consumers to be engaged throughout the technology product lifecycle, but only one-third believe people like them are actively involved.**

This type of engagement has a business impact by helping companies better understand their customers. While only 45% of consumers believe technology products are developed with their needs in mind, **65% believe that including diverse perspectives in technology development yields better products.**

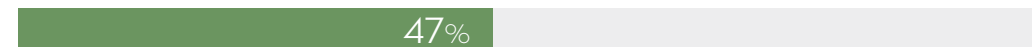
### Consumers Want a Say in Technology Development

Percentage of Consumers Who Say the Following Groups Should Be Engaged Throughout the Technology Product Lifecycle

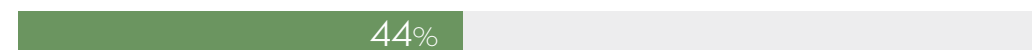
Everyday consumers



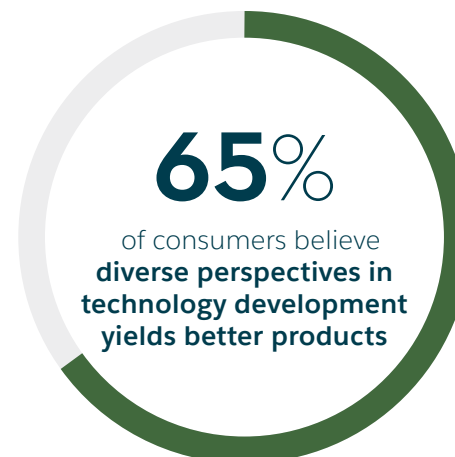
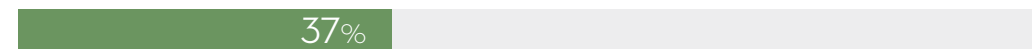
Advocacy and human rights groups



Academics



Lawmakers or government agencies



## 03 | New Opportunities Arise for Companies to Make a Difference

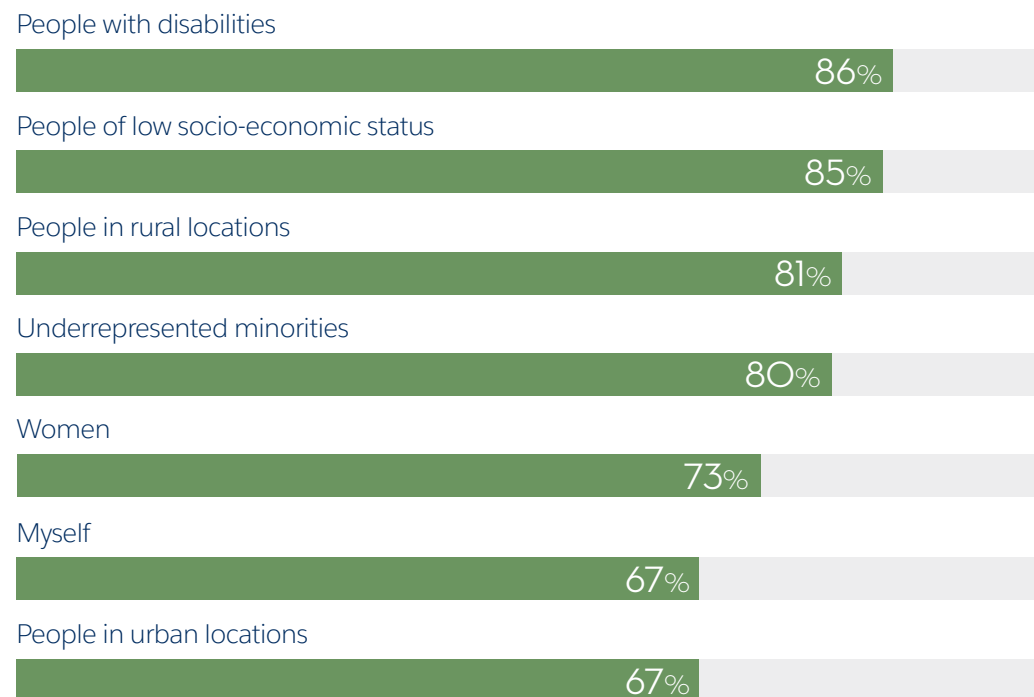
Many consumers are worried about unequal access to opportunity in the Fourth Industrial Revolution – particularly for those who traditionally have been marginalized or disenfranchised.

At least two-thirds of consumers indicate some level of concern about whether people with disabilities, of low socio-economic status, in rural locations, and underrepresented minorities – among other groups – are being afforded the same opportunities from emerging technologies as others.

As with human rights, these concerns are more common among historically disenfranchised groups. Seventy-three percent of women, for example, are concerned about their own access to emerging technology opportunities, compared to 60% of men. For underrepresented minorities, that figure jumps to 81%, compared to 60% of Caucasians.

### Consumers Worry About Unequal Access to Tech-Associated Opportunities

Percentage of Consumers Who Are Concerned About Access to Technology's Opportunities Among the Following Groups



Includes answers of "very concerned" and "somewhat concerned."

## 03 | New Opportunities Arise for Companies to Make a Difference

Businesses have an opportunity to ensure fair and equal access to the benefits of emerging technologies. While less than half of consumers believe that jobs in the tech industry are fairly accessible to all groups, they point to alternative pathways as a way to bridge the access gap.

**More than three-quarters of consumers think there should be more non-traditional paths to technology careers.**

These can include workforce development and apprenticeship programs that serve underrepresented communities with programs that develop the skills to succeed.

### Consumers Seek Nontraditional Pathways to Bridge Access Gap

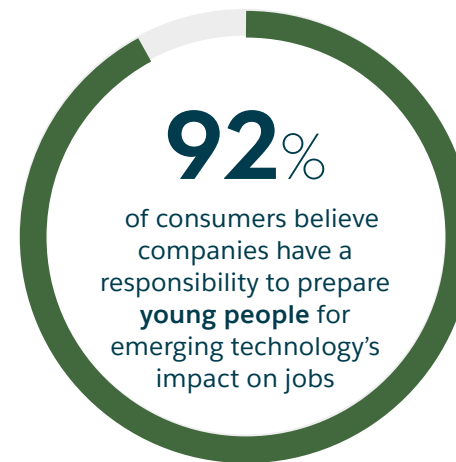


## 03 | New Opportunities Arise for Companies to Make a Difference

Today, 88% of consumers are concerned with job loss prompted by emerging technologies, and nearly all – **96%** – **believe companies have a responsibility to prepare their existing workforce for the impact of emerging technologies on jobs.**

Likewise, consumers look to companies to skill and train future generations. As the role of business expands, equal access to the opportunities afforded by current and future technologies is viewed as an important commitment to humanity.

### Consumers Look to Companies to Help Prepare Tomorrow's Workforce



## Last Look

# Four Ways Companies Can Lead and Impact Society

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As we enter a new era of technology, consumers see a mandate for ethical leadership and business. Here are steps that companies can take to adapt to their changing role in society, strengthen customer loyalty, attract and retain top talent, and empower the workforce of the future.

### 1. Put Purpose at the Center of Your Business

Increasingly, people expect companies to use their power for positive change – **93% of consumers say companies have a responsibility to look beyond profit and exert a positive impact on society.** Companies can start by asking how their actions impact *all* stakeholders.

### 2. Cultivate an Ethical Mindset

Companies that lead with ethics are more appealing to potential employees and customers. **Eighty-six percent of consumers say they would be more loyal to companies that demonstrate better ethics.** One way companies can show a commitment to ethics is by assembling a diverse advisory board for input and accountability. Seventy percent of consumers believe companies should have ethics advisory boards to help support the development of their tech products.

### 3. Diversify Technology Development

Consumers want to be part of the technology product lifecycle and have their voices heard. Diverse voices help create products and solutions that are ultimately better suited to the broader population needs. **Sixty-five percent of consumers believe that diverse perspectives in technology development result in better products.** Businesses can do this by creating diverse and inclusive workforces.

### 4. Empower the Future Workforce

As technology progresses, 92% of consumers believe that companies have a responsibility to prepare young people for the impact of emerging technologies on jobs – and 96% say the same for the existing workforce. Companies can empower *everyone* for careers in a technology-driven world through workforce development initiatives. **Seventy-six percent of consumers believe there should be more nontraditional paths to technology careers.**





# Survey Demographics

## U.S. REGION

South.....	38%
Northeast.....	23%
Midwest.....	21%
West.....	18%

## GENERATION

Baby boomers/Traditionalists (born 1964 or earlier).....	42%
Gen X (born 1965–1980).....	26%
Millennials (born 1981–1994).....	25%
Gen Z (born 1995 or later).....	7%

## ETHNICITY\*

White (not Latino or Hispanic).....	70%
Black.....	16%
Hispanic or Latino.....	9%
Asian or Indian.....	7%
Native American or Alaska Native.....	2%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander.....	<1%
Two or more ethnicities.....	4%
Undisclosed.....	<1%

\* Multiple responses allowed.

## GENDER

Male.....	50%
Female.....	50%
Other.....	<1%

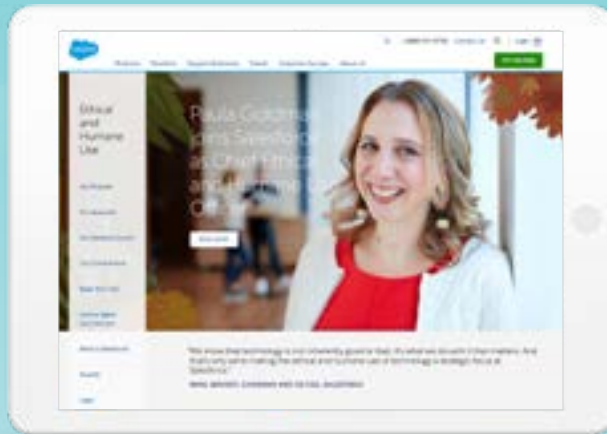
## EMPLOYMENT STATUS

Employed full-time (30+ hours per week).....	42%
Employed part-time (<30 hours per week).....	13%
Retired.....	25%
Unemployed.....	18%
Full-time student.....	4%

## HIGHEST EDUCATION COMPLETED

Less than high school.....	2%
High school diploma.....	39%
Associate's degree.....	19%
Bachelor's degree.....	27%
Masters, doctoral, or professional degree.....	13%

# Additional Resources



Learn how Salesforce is committed to the ethical and humane use of technology.

[LEARN MORE](#)



Get insights on how consumers view the intersection of business and equality.

[GET THE REPORT](#)

