

Climate Across Generations Toolkit



Running an Intergenerational
Conversation Café on
Climate Change and Ageism



Prairie
Climate Centre
From Risk to Resilience

Overview

Climate change affects everyone, but people experience it differently across generations. Older adults may face greater health risks during extreme weather, while younger people may live with the long-term impacts for many years [1]. Ageism, which refers to how we think, feel, or act toward people based on age can make it harder for younger and older people to talk or work together in climate action [1-4].

Intergenerational conversation cafés are a great way to bring people of different generations together to share experiences, learn from each other, and explore challenges and solutions around climate change. When people feel heard and respected, these conversations can help reduce misunderstandings, highlight each generation's strengths, and make working together feel more possible.

This document provides information on how to run your own intergenerational conversation café about climate change and ageism. It explains the role and responsibilities of the facilitator, offers tips for guiding discussions and taking notes, and includes sample agendas to help keep conversations engaging, safe, and productive.



The Facilitator's Role in Creating a Safe Space for Conversation

When younger and older people come together to talk about climate change, the main role of the facilitator is to create a space where everyone feels welcomed, respected, and able to share. To support this, a facilitator can focus on the following:

1 *Be Mindful of Harmful Language*

Conversations across ages can sometimes be influenced by stereotypes, or assumptions about what different age groups think or feel about climate change [1-3]. These assumptions can make people less comfortable to speak up and share their perspectives. If blaming or negative language comes up in the conversation, facilitators can name this gently and encourage listening and understanding to help set a more supportive tone.

2 *Understand Power & Diverse Experiences*

Younger and older people bring different life experiences into the conversation. Differences in age, income, culture, ability, and gender, and more can affect how people experience climate change and their ability to respond [5,6]. Facilitators can help by noticing who is speaking the most or least, and by making space for all perspectives without valuing one over another. As a facilitator, being aware of your own assumptions and staying open and neutral can help participants feel trusted and heard.

3 *Respond to Emotions & Sensitive Topics*

The topic of climate change can bring up strong emotions. Some people may have experienced disasters, displacement, or ongoing stress from climate-related news. Facilitators should let participants know that feeling a range of emotions is normal, avoid pressuring anyone to share personal stories if they're not comfortable, provide resources for support, and offer breaks if needed. It's also important to recognize that people may have different cultural views on climate and environmental responsibility. Facilitators should welcome these perspectives and look for areas of connection.



4

Hold the Space

Throughout the Café, the facilitator helps keep the space respectful and supportive. This includes encouraging empathy, addressing harm if it arises, and supporting shared learning across generations. Some things that a facilitator may want to consider to hold the space [7]:

- **Start with connection:** Welcome participants and invite brief introductions so people can get to know one another.
- **Set shared expectations:** Work with the group to create simple ground rules, such as listening with respect, welcoming diverse perspectives, and making space for everyone to speak. This helps everyone to do their part to maintain a safe and welcoming environment for each other.
- **Guide the conversation, don't control it:** Prompts are provided in this toolkit, but these do not have to be followed like a script. Instead, follow the group's interests. Ask open-ended questions, notice patterns or tensions, and help participants connect ideas across generations.
- **Use conversation tools:** Simple tools like a talking object (when one person holds this specific object, only they can speak) or time limits can help balance participation.



It's important to remind participants that there are **no right or wrong answers**. The goal of the conversation is not to debate, but to **create space for listening, learning, and understanding**.



Note-taking Strategies

Having at least one person to take notes during the café helps show that participants' ideas are valued. A notetaker can capture key ideas and experiences shared during the conversation, summarize the discussion at the end, share notes with participants afterwards, and help improve future sessions. Participants can also take their own notes if they wish.

The note-taker may consider the following when writing notes [8]:

Use participant's own words

Write down key points using participants' own words as much as possible. This is to avoid interpreting what people say.

Ask for clarification

If there is something you don't understand, ask the participant to repeat or clarify what they said so you can accurately record their perspectives.

Capture diverse perspectives

Ensure that you record ideas from a range of participants, but also find ways to connect these ideas across generations and experiences.

Record general observations

This can include things like the overall tone or "feel" of the group, level of participation, whether different generations were represented, or any challenges that arose during the conversation. These observations can help identify what worked well and what could be improved upon for future sessions.

Keep notes clear and simple

Do your best to make sure your notes are clear, easy to understand, and is a good representation of the conversation. If possible, share them with participants after the session (either printed or digital).

Agenda Templates

Below are two sample agendas for a 1-hour session and a 2-hour session. You may adapt the agendas to align with your timeframe, size of group, and topics that are of interest to your participants.

1-hour session

5 mins	Welcome & Introduction <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Welcome and participant introductions• Ground rules / shared expectations
5 mins	Icebreaker <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ask one question to set the stage for conversation• Sample prompt: <i>When you hear the term climate change, what does it mean to you?</i>
40 mins	Conversation Rounds (refer to <i>Conversation Prompts</i> document) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ensure diverse participation and record notes <p><i>Round 1: Understanding Generational Experiences with Climate Change</i> <i>Round 2: Shared Values, Learning, and Strengths</i> <i>Round 3: Working Together on Climate Action</i></p>
10 mins	Summary & Closing Reflection <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Recap the conversation and major themes• Ask participants their key takeaways from the conversation
Post Session	Evaluation <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Optional: Ask participants to complete a feedback form• Debrief with planning team, facilitators, and note-takers

2-hour session

10
mins

Welcome & Introduction

- Welcome and participant introductions
- Ground rules / shared expectations

10
mins

Icebreaker

- Ask one question to set the stage for conversation
- Sample prompt: *When you hear the term climate change, what does it mean to you?*

90
mins

Conversation Rounds *(refer to Conversation Prompts document)*

- Ensure diverse participation and record notes
- Divide participants into smaller groups (each with a facilitator), if needed.

Round 1: Addressing Climate Assumptions Across Generations

Round 2: Understanding Generational Experiences with Climate Change

Round 3: Shared Values, Learning, and Strengths

Round 4: Challenges and Possibilities on Taking Action on Climate Change

Round 5: Working Together on Climate Action

10
mins

Summary & Closing Reflection

- Recap the conversation and major themes
- Ask participants their key takeaways from the conversation

Post
Session

Evaluation

- **Optional:** Ask participants to complete a feedback form
- Debrief with planning team, facilitators, and note-takers

Conclusion

Running an intergenerational conversation café means creating a respectful space where people feel comfortable sharing and listening. This document provided guidance on facilitation, note-taking, and sample agendas to help keep the conversation focused while still allowing it to flow naturally.

Use what is helpful, leave out what isn't, and adapt the information to fit your setting, group size, and resources. What matters most is creating a space where people feel safe to share, listen, and learn from one another, while exploring how to move forward on climate action together.

References

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