
What issues to speak
out on, what to avoid,
and what consumers
expect from brands

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WHERE DOES YOUR BRAND STAND?

THE MORNING CONSULT BRAND TOOLBOX

This report is part of a series that seeks to give decision-makers
a better set of tools for dealing with essential brand decisions
- from managing a crisis to deepening consumer loyalty.

[To make sure you receive these reports, sign up here](https://mncnslt.com/sub) (mncnslt.com/sub).

INTRODUCTION

A BRIEF ROADMAP FOR MANAGING BRAND POLITICS IN THE TRUMP ERA

Here are four simple rules that can help your brand traverse difficult decisions regarding how and when to engage politically:

RULE #1: Have a firm grasp on which issues are winners and losers

Here are three issues that aren't very controversial: civil rights, criminal justice reform, and LGBTQ rights. Here are three issues that are: abortion, anthem protesting, and immigration. Gun control is somewhere in the middle. There are, of course, important moral factors that go into deciding what political issues to speak on, but it's always best to understand the stakes.

RULE #2: Don't overthink doing good

The best way to make consumers happy with your brand is pretty simple: Develop a reputation for treating and paying employees well, and create more American jobs when possible. There are plenty of other ways to boost your image, like partnering with charities and being transparent about labor practices, but nothing beats the basics.

RULE #3: Don't talk about Trump

One of the most striking findings in this survey is that speaking about Trump - either positively or negatively - is far more likely to generate backlash than win your brand any favor. For example, saying something negative about Trump leads 56% of Trump voters to have a **much less** favorable view of your brand, but just 32% of Clinton voters to have a **much more** favorable view. For every person you're making happy, there are almost twice as many who are unhappy. That trend holds if you issue a positive statement.

RULE #4: Most Americans would rather you butt out

Media scrutiny and social media frenzies can skew the conversation. Most people (60%) prefer corporations stick to what they do best, and not get involved in politics. Furthermore, Americans think corporations already have more influence in politics and cultural conversations than they should.

There's a lot more to dig into in this report. We hope you find value in the results. If you have any questions or comments, there's contact information on the last page.

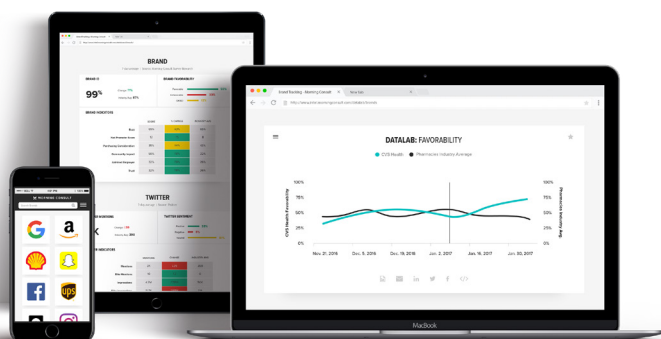
ABOUT MORNING CONSULT

INTELLIGENT DATA, INTELLIGENT DECISIONS

Morning Consult is a technology company revolutionizing ways to collect, organize, and share survey research data to transform how decisions are made. Our survey research technology produces results at **unprecedented scale, speed, and accuracy.**

OUR FLAGSHIP PRODUCT

Currently tracking over 1,800 brands and products, with 200 interviews per day per brand.



 **MORNING CONSULT** Intelligence



What Consumers **THINK**

*Collecting over 3 million
market research interviews*



What Consumers **SAY**

*Evaluating over 100 million
social media posts*



What Consumers **SEE**

*Analyzing over 85,000
news media outlets*

[REQUEST A DEMO HERE](#)

USE CASES



DAILY MONITORING

Track brand perception in real-time with the Brand Intelligence dashboard in your inbox.



STRATEGIC PLANNING

Identify demographic targets and geographic trends to customize communications & marketing campaigns.

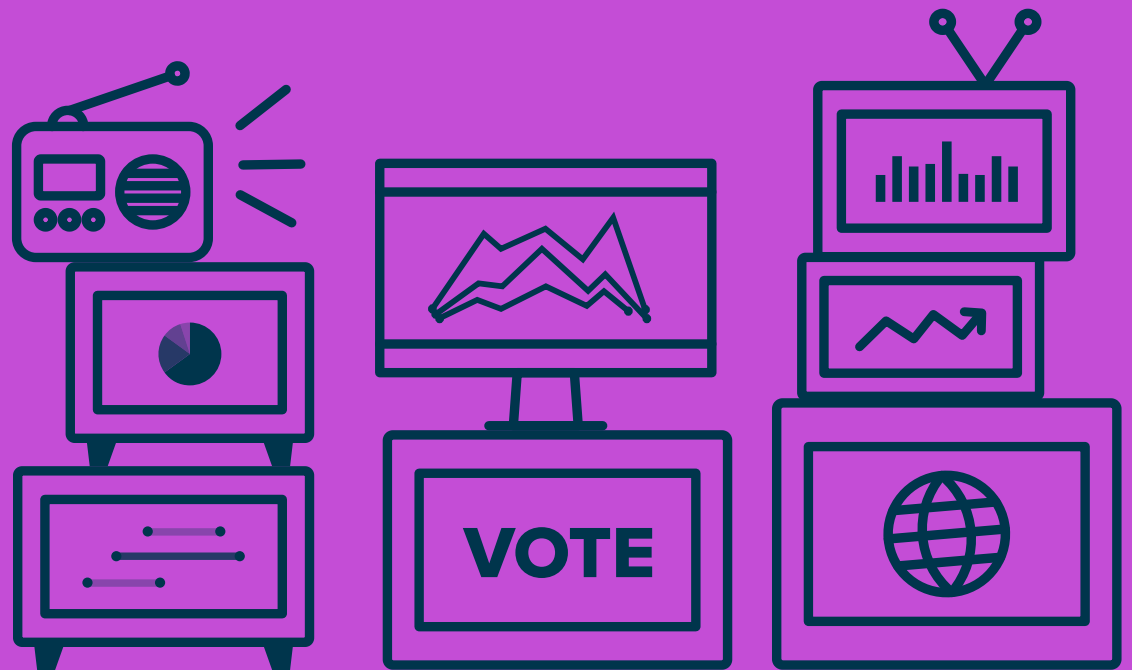


CRISIS RESPONSE

Evaluate the magnitude of a crisis and track the effectiveness of your response.

CSR & THE ROLE OF CORPORATIONS IN AMERICA

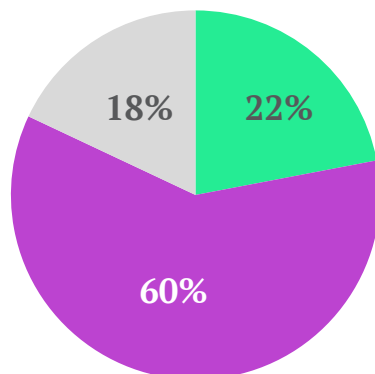
Where people want brands
involved and views on
corporate America



CORPORATE INVOLVEMENT

Corporations should stick to what they do and not get involved in cultural or political matters, says a majority (60%) of Americans.

Which of the following statements comes closest to your view, even if neither is exactly right?



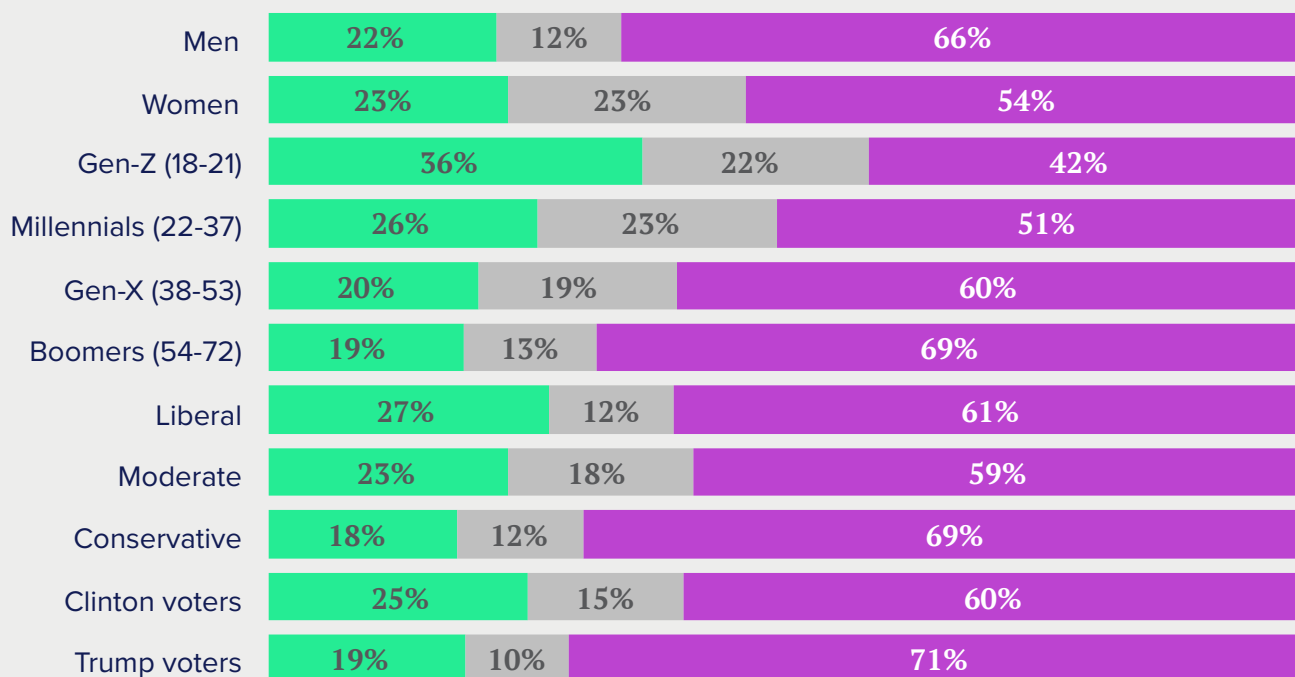
Corporations play an important role in this country, and they should use their influence to impact political and cultural issues.

Corporations should stick to what they do, and generally not get involved in political or cultural matters

Don't know / No opinion

TREND TO WATCH:

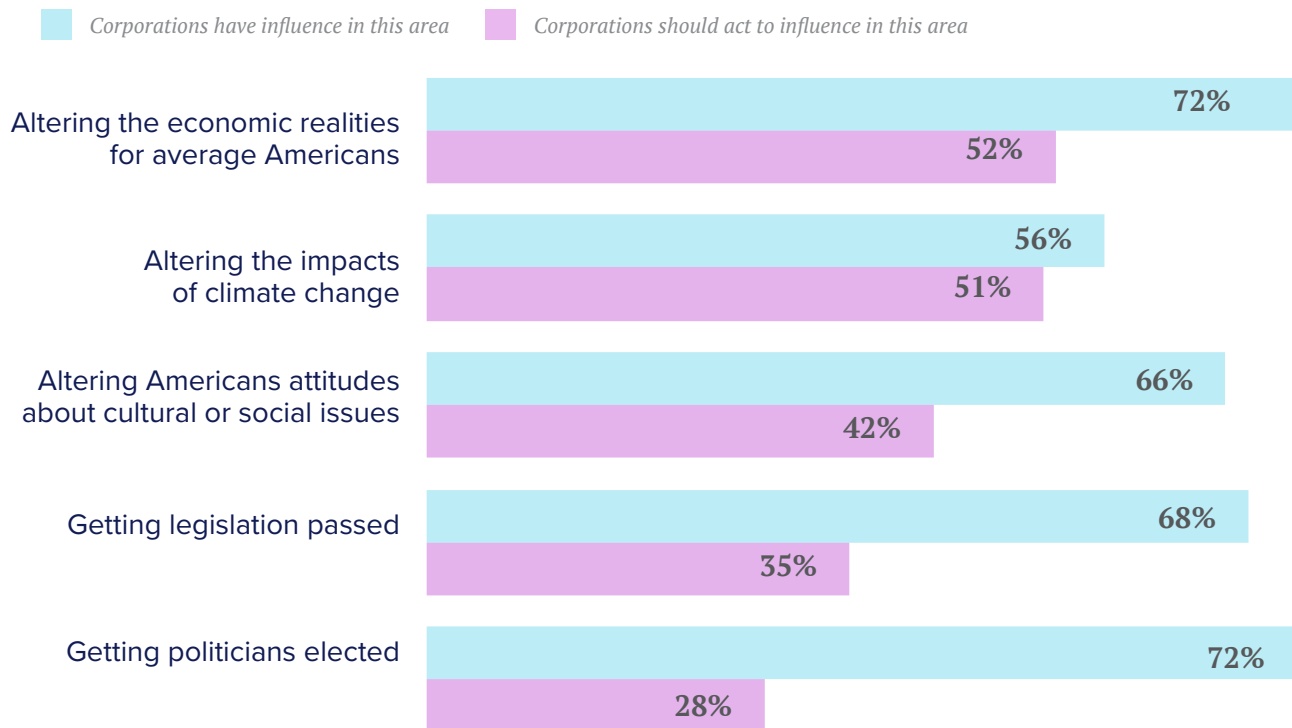
Liberal, younger Americans more likely to want corporations involved.



SPHERES OF INFLUENCE

Across the board, Americans think corporations have more influence than they should.

Below are the percentages of Americans who say corporations have influence or should act to influence in each area.



KEY NUMBERS:

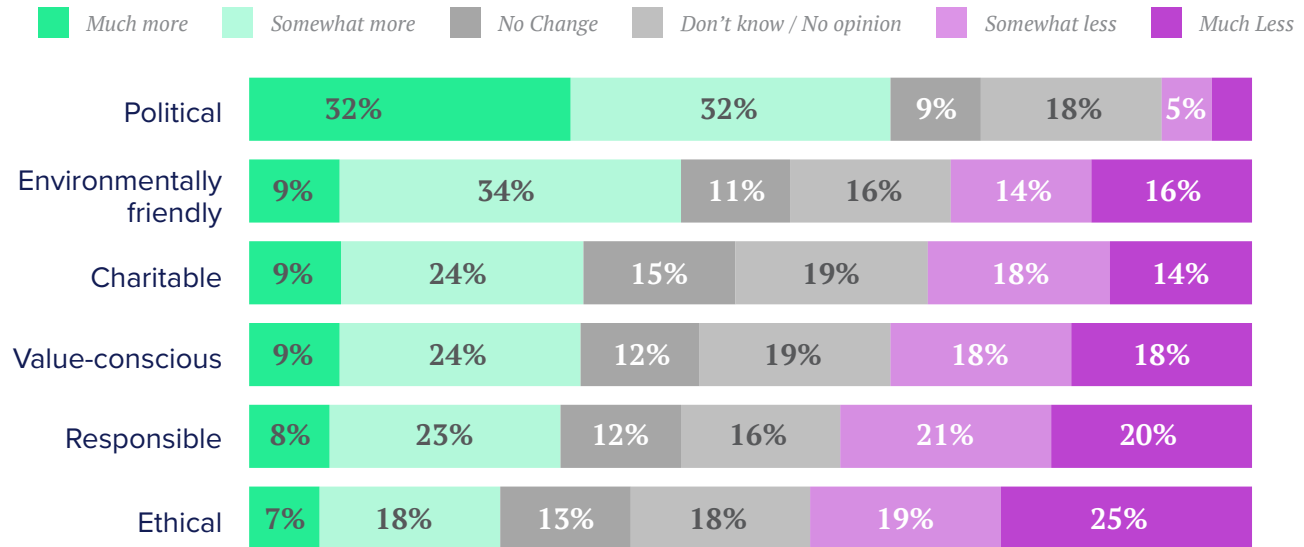
A **43%** plurality of Republicans believe corporations should act on climate change. Among Democrats, 59% believe corporations should act. Thus, while there's more support among Democrats, it's a **winning issue across the political spectrum**.

53% of liberals think corporations should act to alter American cultural and social attitudes - a higher rate than conservatives (36%). There's also a big age divide - 56% for Gen-Z, compared with 38% for Boomers.

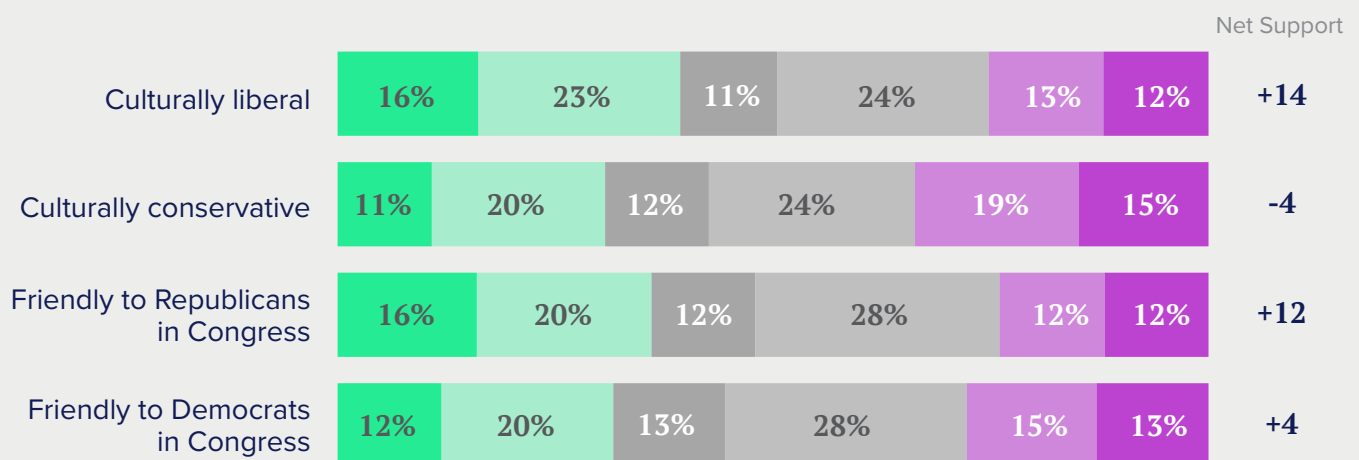
THE STATE OF CORPORATE AMERICA

Americans see corporations as **more political, less ethical** than they used to be.

In recent years, would you say corporations in America have become more or less:



Corporations seen as getting **more culturally liberal**, but also **more friendly to congressional Republicans** than Democrats.

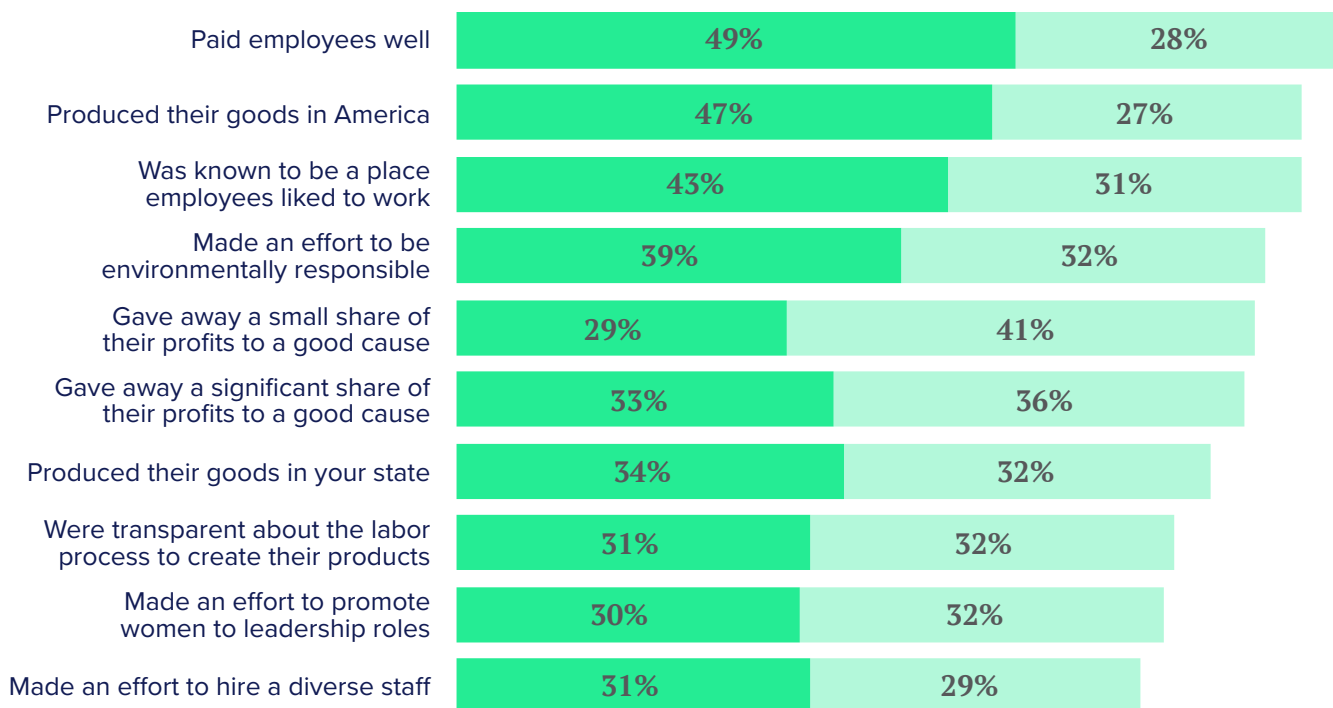


BUSINESS PRACTICES

Treating employees well and helping to boost American jobs are the best ways to make consumers happy.

Below are the percentages of people who say they would have a more favorable view of a company if they found out a company did each of the following

■ *Much more favorable* ■ *Somewhat more favorable*



TREND TO WATCH

Younger Americans far less concerned than older Americans about whether a company creates new jobs domestically or abroad:

When asked whether they would have a more favorable impression of a company if they built a new domestic office or plant that would create jobs:

83% of Americans 65+ say yes

61% of 18-29 year-olds say yes

When asked the same question, but about building an office or plant built abroad (that would NOT take away domestic jobs):

25% of Americans 65+ say yes

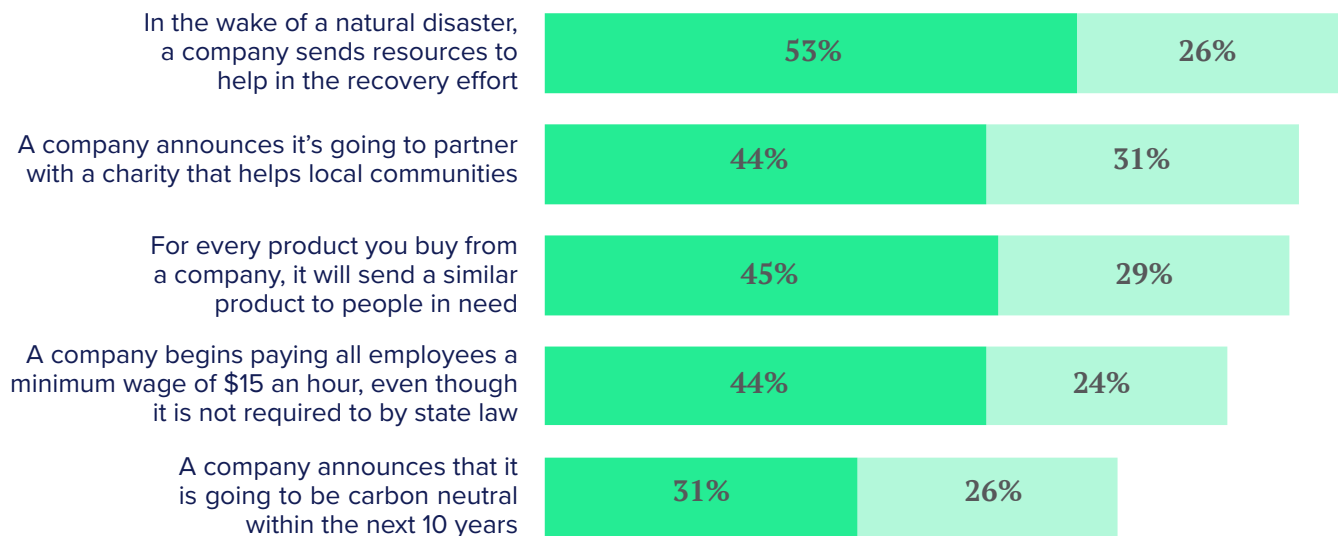
45% of 18-29 year-olds say yes

POSITIVE PUBLICITY OPPORTUNITIES

Disaster relief is a sure-fire way to help your company's image.

Would the following scenarios give you a more favorable view of a company, a less favorable view of a company, or would it make no difference?

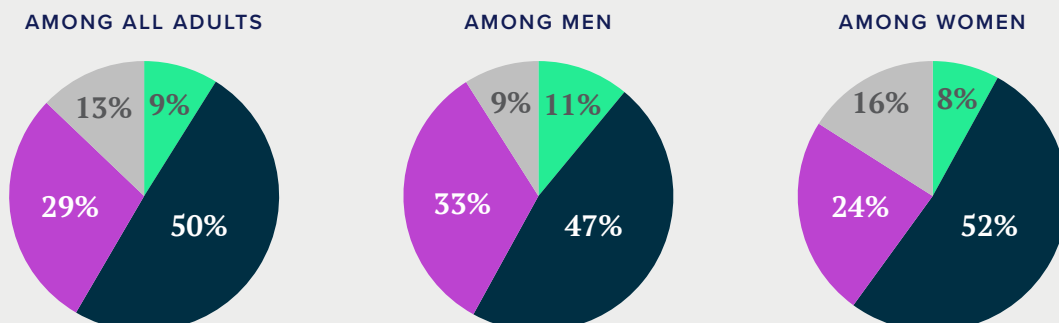
■ *Much more favorable* ■ *Somewhat more favorable*



Most Americans believe generous corporations genuinely want to do good but also get publicity. Men are more skeptical than women.

If you heard a large corporation was giving away a share of its profits to a good cause, would you assume they primarily want to do good or it is primarily a way to get good publicity?

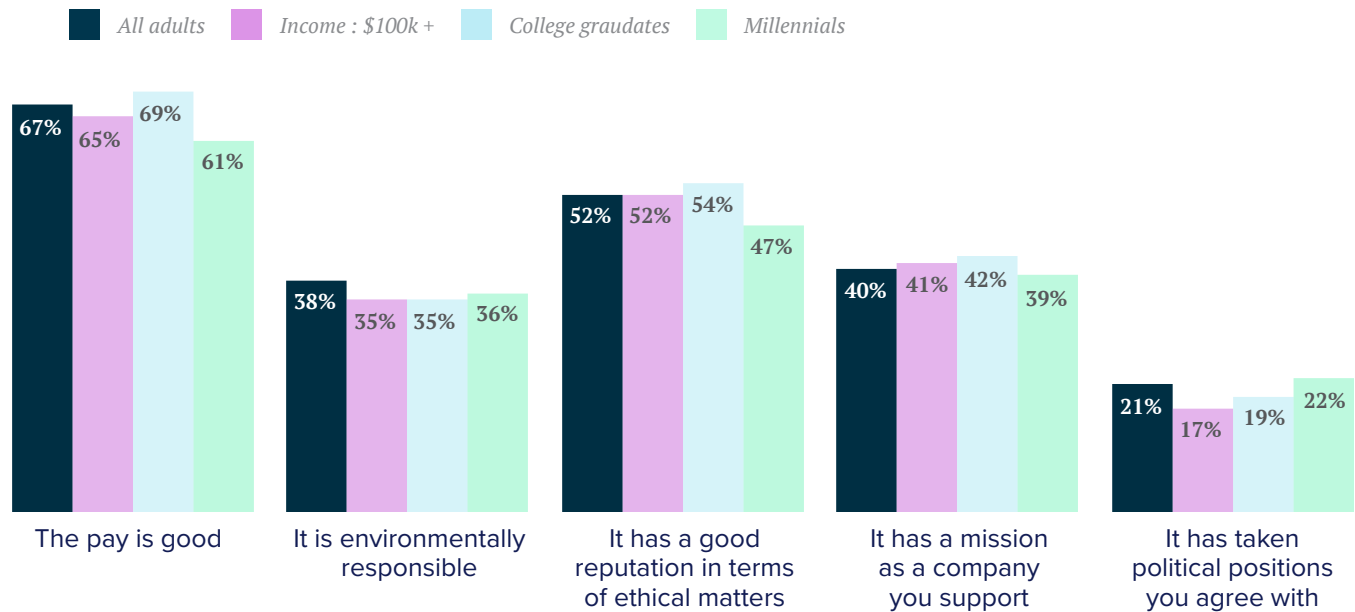
■ *They primarily want to do good* ■ *It is primarily a way to get good publicity* ■ *They want to do good, and also get publicity* ■ *Don't know / No opinion*



ATTRACTING TALENT

A majority of Americans say a company's ethics are very important when considering a job.

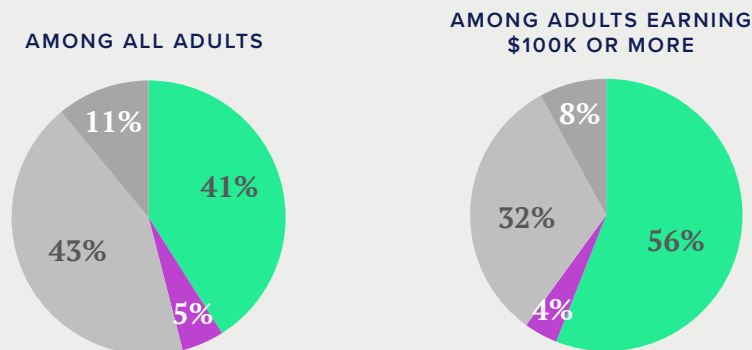
Below are the percentages who say each of the following are very important when considering working for a company:



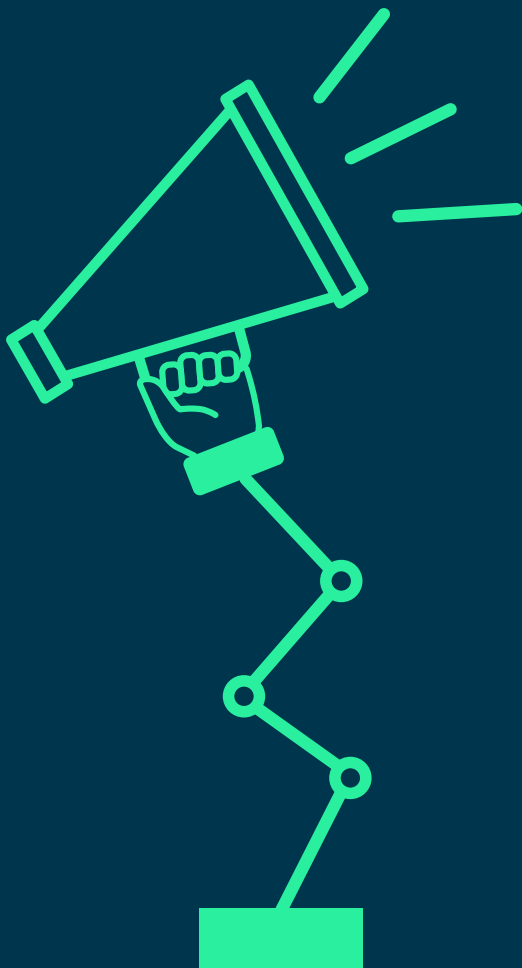
Few Americans think the company they work for does not have a positive mission.

Do you consider the company you work for to have a positive mission?

Legend: Yes (green), No (purple), I don't work for a company (dark grey), Don't know / No opinion (light grey)



THE MOST ETHICAL BRANDS ACCORDING TO CONSUMERS



BRAND TRACKING

WHAT COMPANIES DO AMERICANS VIEW AS ETHICAL?

6,600 Americans were asked to think of a company that they would consider to be ethically responsible, and name the first one that came to mind. Below are all of the companies that received at least 25 mentions, ordered by number of mentions.

 **WALMART - 699**

 **AMAZON - 450**

 **TARGET - 301**

 **CHICK-FIL-A - 239**

 **STARBUCKS - 165**

 **APPLE - 137**

 **COSTCO - 109**

 **GOOGLE - 83**

 **MICROSOFT - 82**

 **MCDONALD'S - 69**

 **KROGER - 62**

 **WHOLE FOODS - 60**

 **HOBBY LOBBY - 55**

 **HOME DEPOT - 54**

 **LOWE'S - 52**

 **TOMS SHOES - 48**

 **TRADER JOE'S - 47**

 **COCA-COLA - 44**

 **PUBLIX - 40**

 **KOHL'S - 37**

 **DISNEY - 36**

 **HONEST CO. - 36**

 **FORD - 34**

 **MACY'S - 34**

 **PANERA - 34**

 **NIKE - 33**

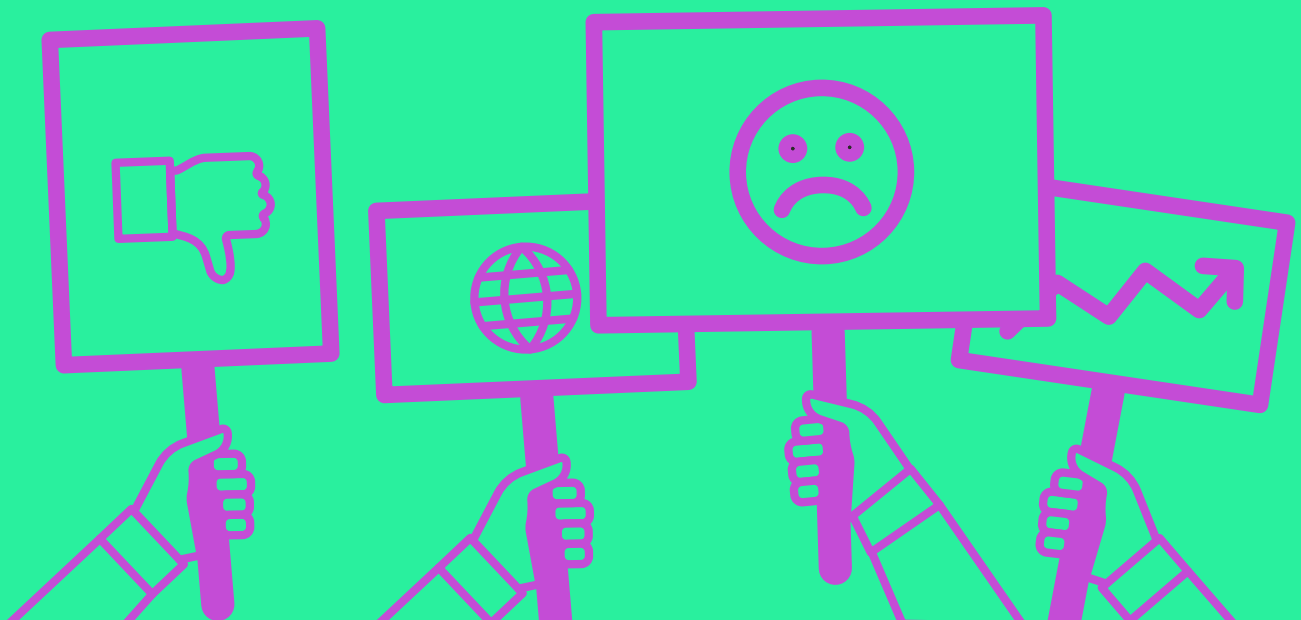
 **TESLA - 28**

 **LUSH - 26**

 **JOHNSON & JOHNSON - 26**

WHERE TO TAKE A STAND

Evaluating hot-button
issues, partisan passion,
boycotting and more

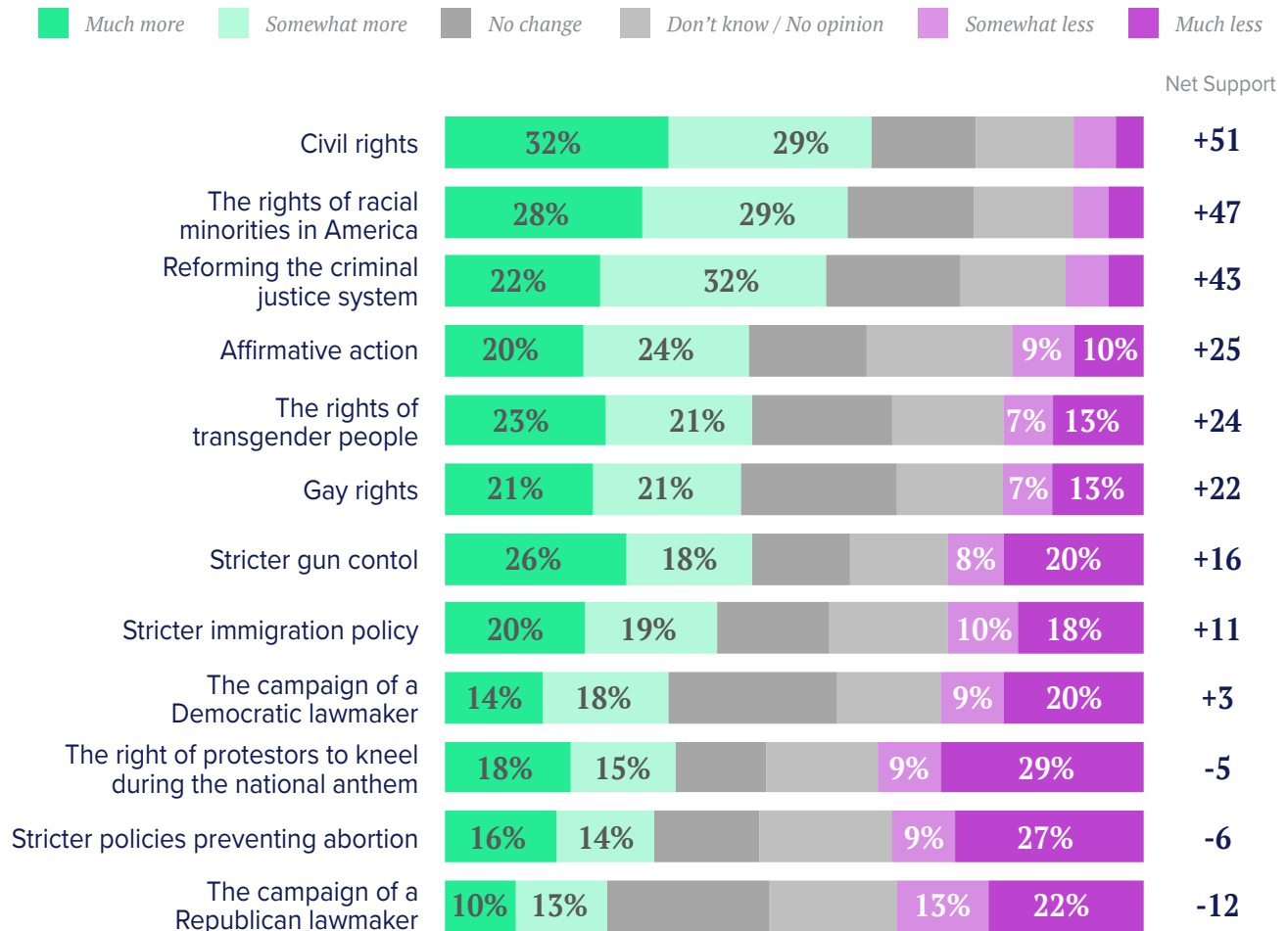


WHERE TO TAKE A STAND

HOT-BUTTON POLITICAL ISSUES

The most and least controversial political stances a brand can take:

Below are the percentages of people who say they would have a more favorable view of a company if they found out a company advocated for or supported:



What to do with Trump?

It's best not to mention him.

Just 30% of people will have a more favorable impression of your company if you issue a positive statement about Trump. Alternatively, just 32% will have a more favorable impression if you issue a negative statement. No matter what you say about Trump, roughly 70% of the country will be upset or won't care.

As we detail in the following pages, saying something nice about Trump is the easiest way to anger Clinton voters, while saying something negative is the second easiest way to anger Trump voters. Read on...

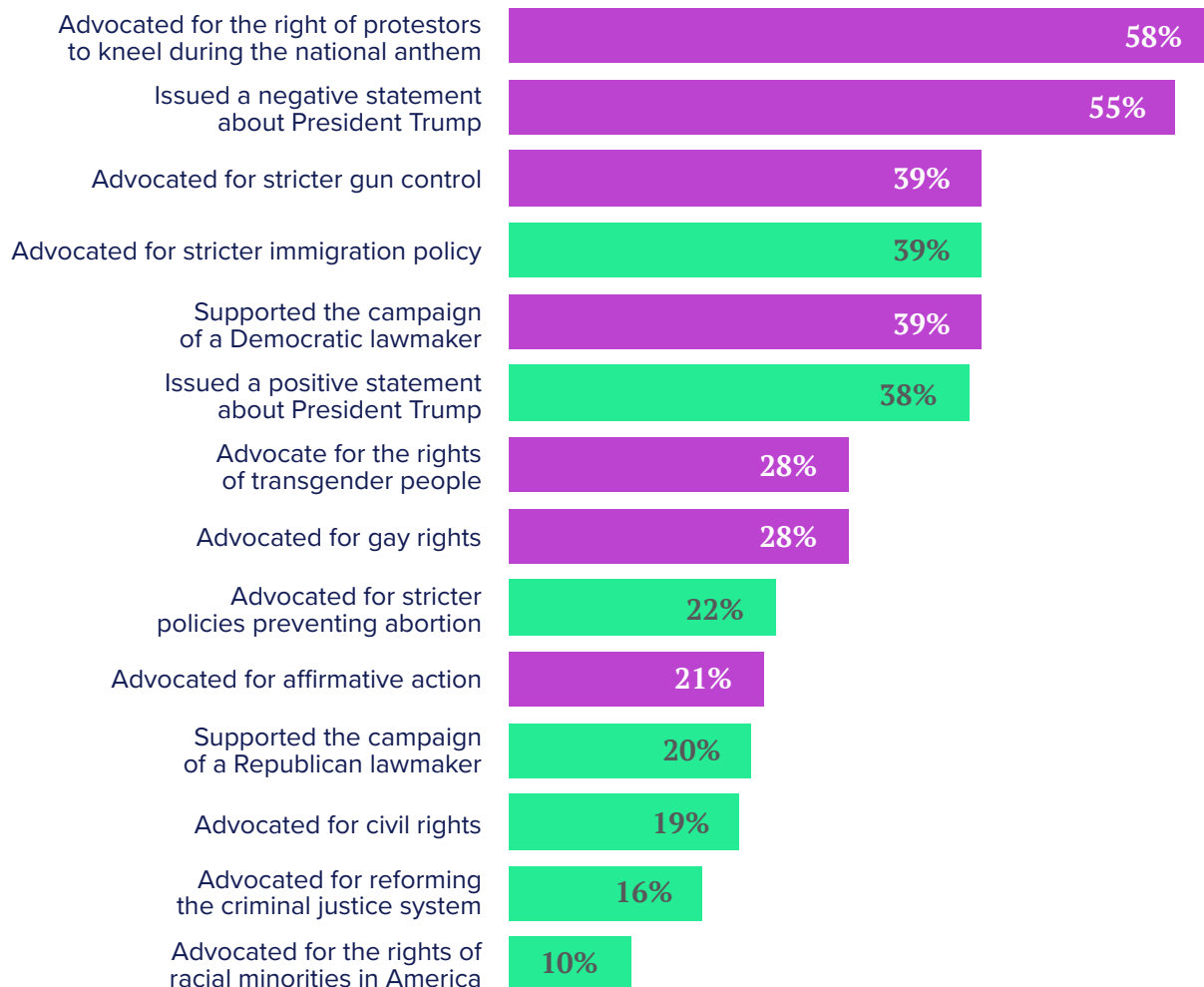
WHERE TO TAKE A STAND

EVALUATING REPUBLICAN PASSION

Supporting anthem-kneelers will draw the most passionate response from Trump voters.

The chart below gauges enthusiasm. Each data point represents the percentage of Trump voters who are “much” **more** or **less** likely to have a favorable opinion about a company if they did the following. If the much more likely number was higher than the much less likely one, then that data point is displayed, and vice versa. This means that anthem kneeling is the issue where Trump voters are most likely to have a strong opinion, and advocating for racial minorities is the least.

 Much more likely to have a favorable opinion  Much less likely to have a favorable opinion



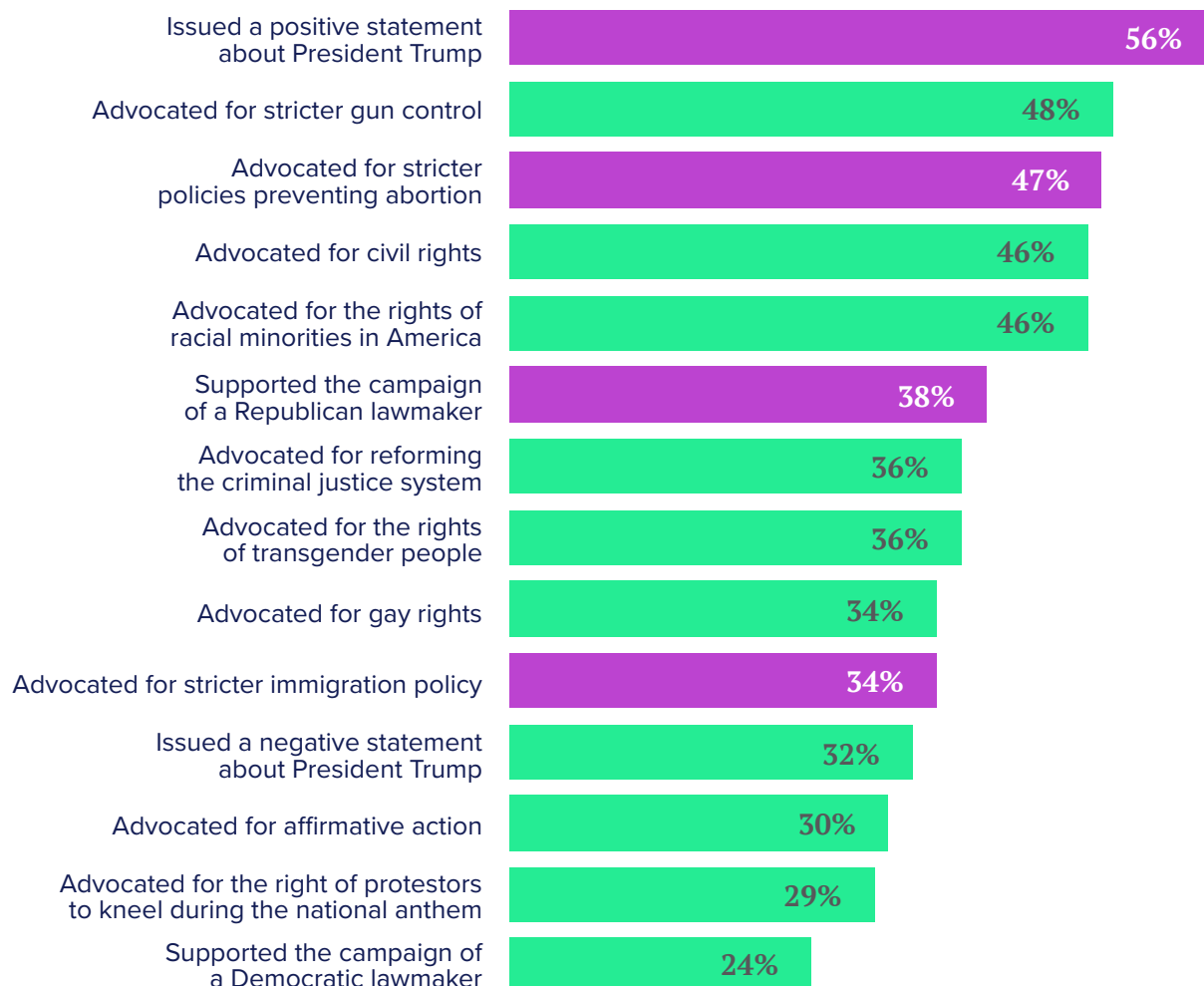
WHERE TO TAKE A STAND

EVALUATING DEMOCRATIC PASSION

Supporting Trump will draw the most passionate response from Clinton voters.

The chart below gauges enthusiasm. Each data point represents the percentage of Clinton voters who are “much” **more** or **less** likely to have a favorable opinion about a company if they did the following. If the much more likely number was higher than the much less likely one, then we selected that data point to display, and vice versa. This means that saying something positive about Trump is the issue where Clinton voters are most likely to have a strong opinion, and supporting a Democratic lawmaker is the least.

 Much more likely to have a favorable opinion  Much less likely to have a favorable opinion

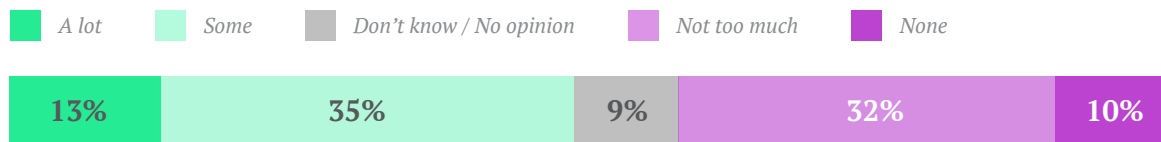


WHERE TO TAKE A STAND

HOLDING BRANDS ACCOUNTABLE

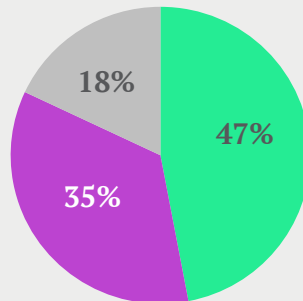
Just 13% of Americans say they pay a lot of attention to the ethical and political concerns relating to brands.

How much attention do you pay to ethical and political matters relating to companies you purchase goods and services from?



A plurality (47%) of Americans are willing to overlook corporations acting unethically.

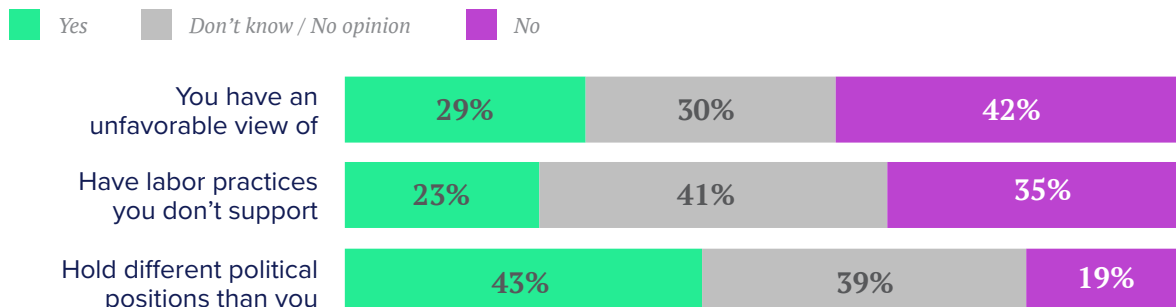
Which of the following statements comes closest to your view, even if neither is exactly right?



- I would prefer corporations acted responsibly and ethically, but ultimately if a company offers a product I like at the right price I am likely to overlook some issues*
- If I know a company acts irresponsibly or unethically, I rarely, if ever, overlook those issues and will stop buying from them*
- Don't know / No opinion*

Americans are more willing to overlook political issues than labor practice ones.

Have you purchased goods or services from companies that...



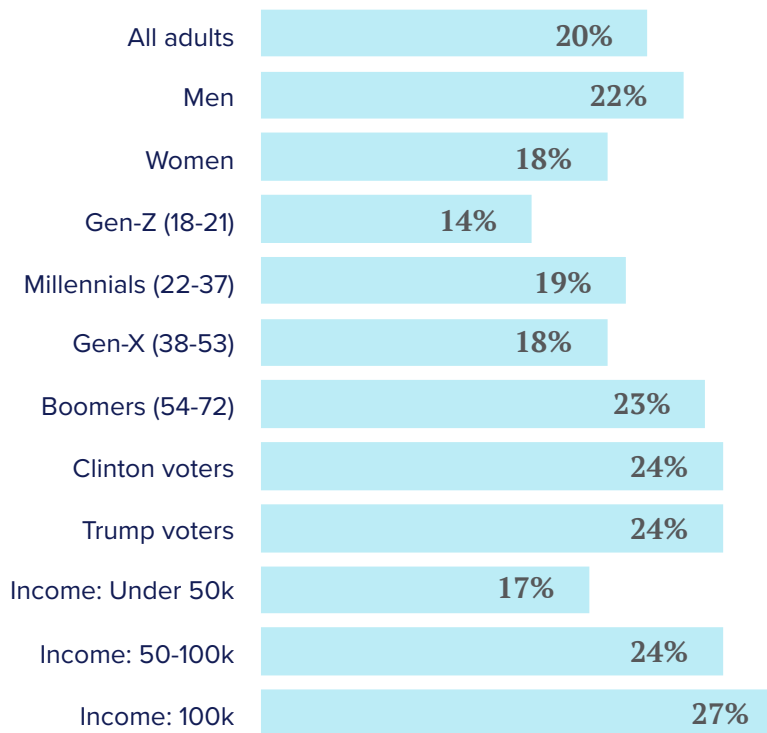
WHERE TO TAKE A STAND

BOYCOTTING AND BUYCOTTING

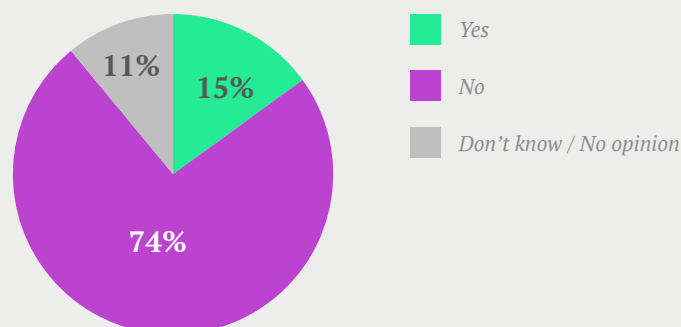
Who boycotts over politics?

Most people haven't in the past year. But some groups, including wealthier Americans, are more likely than others.

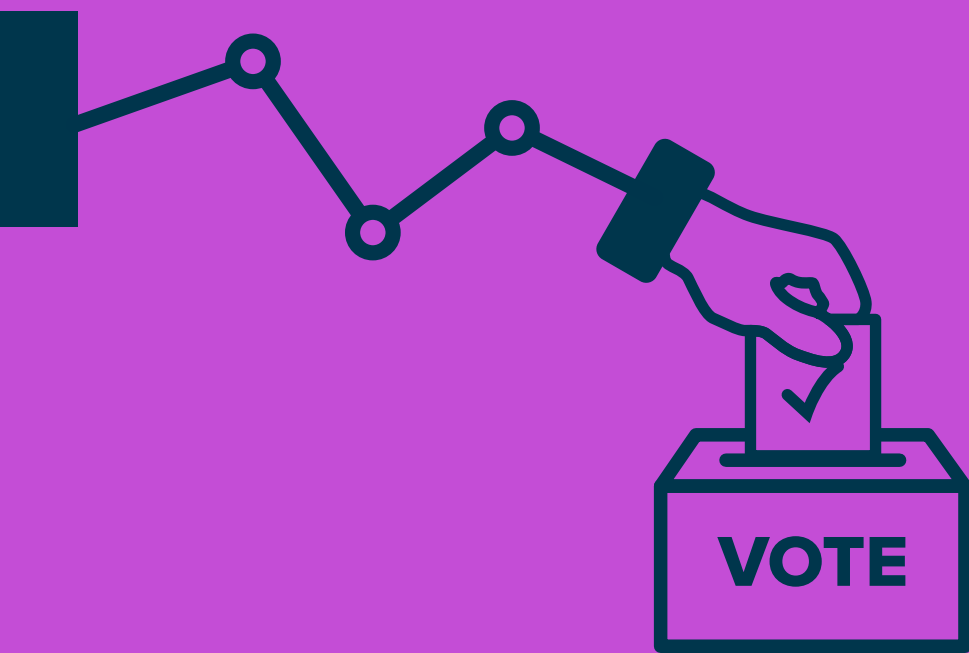
Below are the percentages of people who say they've boycotted a company for political reasons in the past year.



Have you spent money to support a company because of a political stance it has taken?



THE MOST POLARIZING BRANDS, ACCORDING TO CONSUMERS



BRAND TRACKING

THE 30 MOST POLARIZING BRANDS IN AMERICA

These are the brands with the greatest difference between Republicans and Democrats.



WHERE DOES YOUR BRAND STAND?

FIND OUT HERE



METHODOLOGY

All polling besides the Most Polarizing Brands section was conducted from July 13-14, 2018, among a national sample of 2,200 Adults. The interviews were conducted online and the data were weighted to approximate a target sample of adults based on age, race/ethnicity, gender, educational attainment, and region. Results from the full survey have a margin of error of plus or minus 2 percentage points.

Most Polarizing Brands

Morning Consult's Most Polarizing Brands is based on 336,370 surveys conducted online from Oct. 3, 2017 to Jan. 2, 2018 among a national sample of U.S. adults. The top 30 brands were drawn from a list of over 1,900. Between 1,000 and 30,000 adults who identified as Republican, Democrat or independent rated each brand, and the results have a margin of error between 0.5 and 3.1 percentage points.

CONTACT

QUESTIONS ABOUT THE REPORT?

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PRESS INQUIRIES?

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