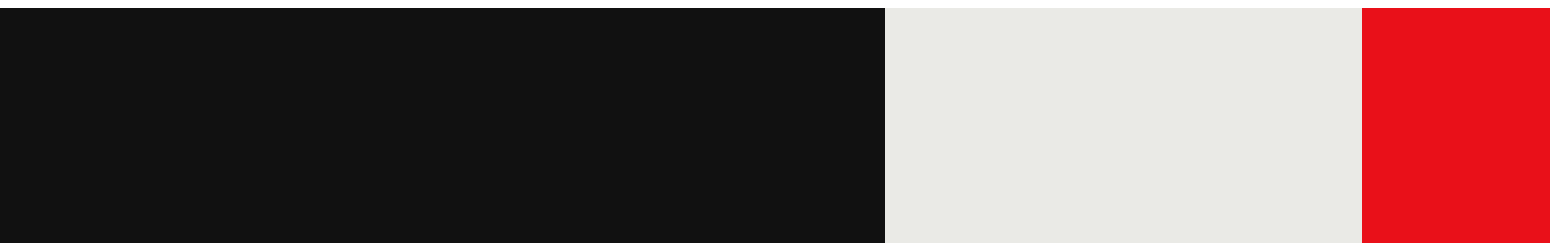



Brands scramble to respond to abortion debate

Article



The news: The recent news of a leaked Supreme Court draft opinion overturning *Roe v. Wade*, which would represent a significant rolling back of abortion rights for women, has put pressure on brands and companies across the country to take a stance on the issue and protect female employees—while some wonder if it's better to remain silent.

More on this: Several companies and brands across industries have already taken clear stances in favor of abortion rights. Some have done so through public statements, while others have announced changes to company health policies, a sign that internal policy has become a crucial part of branding:

- **Lyft** and **Uber** have said they will cover the legal expenses for drivers who are sued for transporting someone to get an abortion.
- **Citigroup, Apple, Amazon, Tesla,** and more have said they will cover the medical costs of employees who travel out of state for abortion services. **Levi Strauss & Co** said it will cover such costs for full- and part-time employees.
- **Bumble** and **Match** have created a fund for employees who require abortion services.
- **Salesforce** has offered to relocate employees who are worried about abortion access in their state.

Level of Importance of Current Issues to US Adults, Feb 2022

% of respondents

	Very important	Somewhat important	Not very important	Unimportant
Jobs and the economy	66%	27%	5%	2%
Healthcare	66%	23%	8%	3%
Crime	61%	28%	8%	3%
National security	61%	27%	7%	4%
Taxes and government spending	59%	32%	7%	3%
Education	59%	29%	7%	4%
Civil liberties	55%	29%	11%	5%
Civil rights	53%	26%	15%	5%
Guns	51%	25%	15%	9%
Criminal justice reform	50%	31%	13%	7%
Immigration	47%	33%	14%	5%
Abortion	45%	28%	17%	10%
Climate change and the environment	43%	24%	17%	16%
Foreign policy	36%	46%	12%	6%

Note: ages 18+; numbers may not add up to 100% due to rounding

Source: YouGov, "The Economist/YouGov Poll," Feb 11, 2022

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Consumer responses: Whether it's sustainability, human rights, or bodily autonomy, consumers expect companies and brands to take a stance on sociopolitical issues, especially when they partake in events like Pride Month for marketing purposes.

- **Sony** found itself under an unfortunate spotlight after an internal email from **PlayStation** president **Jim Ryan** asked employees to "respect differences of opinion" on abortion before

writing about his pets' birthday parties, [per](#) Bloomberg—a stark difference from its [newly acquired Bungie](#), which [called the ruling](#) an “attack on human rights.”

- Brand image fallout like that one have caused some companies to be cold-footed about taking action. **Disney's** recent [controversy](#) surrounding Florida's “Don't Say Gay” bill has also spooked companies about the potential consequences—internally and politically—of taking stances on hot-button issues.
- Public relations firm **Zeno**, whose clients include many large brands and companies such as **Starbucks, Coca-Cola, and Netflix**, has encouraged companies to avoid taking a stance, [per](#) newsletter Poplar Info. The story quickly went viral on social media, prompting Zeno to clarify that its recommendations were specific to breaking news only.

The big takeaway: It makes more sense for some brands to take a public stance on abortion rights than others. But even for those who don't, internal company policy on the issue will have a major impact on their brand and could affect their potential to hire competitively in the future.