



# Starbucks

Subsidiaries: Teavana  
Locations: Washington (HQ)  
Industries: Food Beverage and Tobacco

RISK LEVEL:



High Risk

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## DESCRIPTION:

Starbucks is High Risk. The company yields to political activism in shaping corporate governance, potentially alienating consumers, dividing employees, and harming shareholders. The company implements race and identity-based policies that replace merit, excellence, and integrity with preferential treatment and outcomes. Starbucks embraces corporate initiatives that redirect its central focus from business goals to partisan policies and divisive issues. This approach fails to safeguard free exercise, free speech, and free enterprise.

## Corporate Weaponization

**Has canceled customers, suppliers, or vendors due to their political views or religious beliefs OR corporately boycotts, divests, or sanctions regions, people groups, or industries. High Risk**

Starbucks fired an employee in 2020 for refusing to wear a Pride t-shirt because it went against her religious beliefs (1). In June 2023, a jury found Starbucks guilty of violating anti-discrimination laws after firing a manager following the arrest of two Black men at a Philadelphia store. Phillips claimed she was terminated to show Starbucks was addressing racial bias. Starbucks argued her firing was for "poor performance" and that Phillips "lacked awareness of how critical the situation was for Starbucks and its partners" (2). Starbucks received a score of 100 on the 2026 Corporate Equality Index (CEI) from the Human Rights Campaign (HRC), a political stakeholder group. The company recruitsemployees based on sexual identity issues. The company discriminates against vendors that do not promote divisive sex and gender policies, indicating it prioritizes sexual issues over merit (3)(4)(5). Starbucks received a score of 100 on the 2025 Corporate Equality Index (CEI) from the Human Rights Campaign (HRC), a political stakeholder group. The company recruits employees based on sexual identity issues. The company discriminates against vendors that do not promote divisive sex and gender policies, indicating it prioritizes sexual issues over merit (6)(7).

**Charitable giving (including employee matching programs) policies or practices discriminate against charitable organizations based on views or religious beliefs. High Risk**

Starbucks' HRC 2026 CEI rating indicates the company will not donate to non-religious charities unless they embrace controversial sexual identity policies (1)(2)(3). Starbucks' HRC 2025 CEI rating indicates the company will not donate to non-religious charities unless they embrace controversial sexual identity policies (4)(5). Starbucks discriminates against charitable organizations based on views or beliefs in its Giving Match program by using the discredited Southern Poverty Law Center Hate List (6). The company likely uses Benevity as its charitable giving platform. Benevity vets charities according to the Southern Poverty Law Center's Hate List, which includes mainstream libertarian, conservative, family, and religious advocacy organizations (7)(8)(9).

**Employment policies fail to protect against viewpoint or other discrimination and/or are ideological in nature.**

**High Risk**

Starbucks' HRC 2026 CEI rating indicates the company forces employees to attend at least one, controversial training on gender identity, sexual orientation, transgender issues, and divisive racial ideology. The company provides gender transition guidelines for its employees and a specific benefits guide with a comprehensive explanation of transgender services funded by the company (1)(2)(3). Starbucks' HRC 2025 CEI rating indicates the company forces employees to attend multiple, controversial trainings on gender identity, sexual orientation, transgender issues, and divisive racial ideology. The company provides gender transition guidelines for its employees and a specific benefits guide with a comprehensive explanation of transgender services funded by the company (4)(5). In October 2022 America First Legal filed a letter with the EEOC requesting a civil rights investigation into Starbucks over discriminatory practices in hiring (6)(7). The company does not provide viewpoint protections for its employees (8).

## Corporate Governance and Public Policy

**Uses corporate reputation to support causes, organizations, or policies hostile to freedom of expression.**

**High Risk**

Starbucks' HRC 2026 CEI rating indicates the company potentially agrees to allow a controversial stakeholder group focused on sexual identity issues to dictate marketing or advertising strategy. By doing so, the company risks dividing employees, alienating customers and harming shareholders (1)(2)(3). Starbucks' HRC 2025 CEI rating indicates the company agrees to allow a controversial stakeholder group focused on sexual identity issues to dictate marketing or advertising strategy. By doing so, the company risks dividing employees, alienating customers and harming shareholders (4)(5). The company reversed its company policy allowing employees to wear Black Lives Matter t-shirts and pins on their uniforms after initially not allowing employees to do so (6). The company signed an open letter endorsing the Equality Act, a contentious proposal to amend the 1964 Civil Rights Act by adding sexual orientation and so-called gender identity as protected categories. The legislation would, among other implications, grant biological men access to women-only spaces such as sports teams and public restrooms, and compel healthcare providers to deliver sex-denying healthcare and supported revisions to the Voting Rights Act of 1965 in the wake of state election security laws (7)(8)(9). In 2015, the company encouraged its 12,000 baristas to strike up conversations with customers about racism (10). The company's former CEO denounced the 2015 NC bathroom bill requiring citizens to use the restroom of their biological gender and pushed for bathrooms to correspond with gender identity (11)(12). In 2018, Starbucks closed over 8,000 locations to give over 175,000 employees implicit bias training regarding race and gender (13). Starbucks CEO is a member of the Business Roundtable, which supports stakeholder capitalism over traditional shareholder obligations (14). The company is a Ceres Network Member, committed to carbon neutrality by 2040 (15)(16)(17). The company opposed various state and local legislation intended to protect parental rights, girls' sports, bathroom facilities, and gendered spaces (18).

**Uses corporate funds to advance ideological causes, organizations, or policies hostile to freedom of expression.**

**High Risk**

Starbucks provides a benefits package for employees that covers travel/lodging costs for an abortion and transgender medical procedures for covered employees and dependents, including children (1)(2)(3)(4)(5)(6)(7). Starbucks' HRC 2026 CEI rating indicates the company covers transgender related costs for its employees and their children, including paid short-term leave, puberty blockers, cross-sex hormones, chest surgeries, genital surgeries, medical visits, lab monitoring, and mental health benefits. The company also covers at least five of the following services: reconstructive hair removal, cosmetic hair removal, tracheal shave or reduction, facial surgeries, voice modification surgery, voice modification therapy, lipoplasty or filling for body masculinization or feminization, and travel and lodging expenses. Additionally, the company has potentially pledged philanthropic support of at least one organization or event that promotes sex and gender ideology. By allowing a political stakeholder group to dictate operations, the company increases health care costs and risks dividing employees, alienating customers and harming shareholders (8)(9)(10)(11). Starbucks' HRC 2025 CEI rating indicates the company covers transgender related costs for its employees and their children, including paid short-term

leave, puberty blockers, cross-sex hormones, chest surgeries, genital surgeries, medical visits and lab monitoring, travel and lodging. Additionally, the company has pledged philanthropic support of at least one organization or event that promotes sex and gender ideology. By allowing a political stakeholder group to dictate operations, the company increases health care costs and risks dividing employees, alienating customers and harming shareholders (12)(13). Starbucks is a Champion Tier corporate sponsor of the Trevor Project, an organization that advocates for controversial sex and gender ideology, including "gender transition" drugs and surgeries for minors, through legislation, litigation, advertising, and PR campaigns. The organization also hosts online chatrooms that allow adults to communicate with minors as young as 13 about sexually explicit topics. Adults in these chatrooms have encouraged minors to adopt transgender identities and withhold this information from their parents (14)(15)(16)(17)(18). The company is a Silver sponsor of the HRC and has pledged over \$1 million to BLM-adjacent organizations (19)(20). Starbucks is a bronze sponsor of Out & Equal (21)(22). In 2024, Starbucks Investors approved an executive compensation pay package proposed by management that decreases the DEI component of executive bonuses from 25% to 20% while increasing the portion of the bonus paid for hitting financial targets to 75% (23). In 2024, the company started offering "Name and gender marker change support extended to partners, through the National Center for Transgender Equality, providing access to advisory services and reimbursement up to \$500 for eligible costs associated with changes to state and U.S. federal identification" as a benefit to employees (24)(25). Starbucks contributed to the Trans Health Project (26). Starbucks is a Gold Sponsor of NYC Pride (27). Starbucks is a partner of the HRC's Foundation (28)(29). Starbucks sponsored the following 3x events in 2025: WorldPride 2025, Ferndale Pride, Dallas Pride (30)(31)(32). Otherwise, there are no publicly known cases of the company using corporate funds to advance ideological causes, organizations, or policies (33).

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**Uses corporate political actions and/or financial contributions for ideological, non-business purposes.**

**High Risk**

Starbucks' HRC 2025 CEI rating indicates the company publicly advocated for controversial sex and gender ideology through local, state or federal legislation or initiatives. By allowing a political stakeholder group to dictate operations, the company risks dividing employees, alienating customers and harming shareholders (1)(2). The company does not operate a PAC at this time and has not lobbied for ideological purposes (3)(4)(5).

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