



Unilever

Locations: United Kingdom (HQ)

Industries: Household and Personal Products

RISK LEVEL:



High Risk

DESCRIPTION:

Note: Unilever is the parent company of over 400 brands. This rating refers to Unilever's policies, practices, and funding. When one of its brands drastically differs from the company in any of these areas, particularly if the brand has a distinct corporate governance policy, we give that brand a separate rating.

Unilever 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. Unilever 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

A former Unilever employee is suing the company for a firing that took place after he took time off for Rosh Hashanah (1). Although Ben & Jerry's (separately rated Unilever brand) consistently acts distinctly from its parent company, it is notable that Unilever is named alongside the brand as a co-defendant in a lawsuit from the manufacturer of Ben & Jerry's Ice Cream in Israel due to its regional distribution ban, which is illegal under Israeli law (2). Because of Ben & Jerry's boycott of Israel, Unilever was found guilty of violating the anti-BDS laws of several U.S. states (3). Unilever was a member of the Global Alliance for Responsible Media, which aims to demonetize advertisements and suppress content that "vilifies" individuals based on sexual orientation and gender identity, discusses "debated social issues in a negative or partisan context" or spreads "hate speech" (4)(5)(6). Unilever 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 (7)(8). The company integrates ESG into its business practices. From its Responsible Sourcing Policy: "Sustainability practices are embedded across the supplier's operations and activities which aim to (i) reduce the generation of waste and achieve zero landfill; (ii) reduce greenhouse gas emissions and achieve carbon neutral solutions; (iii) reduce the consumption of water; (v) protect and enhance nature and biodiversity; and (vi) halt deforestation" (9). The company promotes divisive sex and gender policies. Its Responsible Sourcing Policy requires international vendors to include sexual orientation and gender identity in their nondiscrimination policy (10).

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

Unilever's HRC 2025 CEI rating indicates the company will not donate to non-religious charities unless they embrace controversial sexual identity policies (1)(2). However, the company does not appear to discriminate against charitable organizations based on views or beliefs (3)(4).

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

High Risk

Unilever's 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 (1)(2).

Unilever's former CEO, Alan Jope, signed Catalyst's Champions for Change pledge, indicating its support of DEI in its leadership composition through the establishment of gender and racial targets (3)(4). In May 2023 America First Legal filed a letter with the EEOC requesting a civil rights investigation into Unilever over discriminatory practices in hiring (5)(6). However, the company protects its employees against viewpoint discrimination (7).

Corporate Governance and Public Policy

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

High Risk

Unilever's 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 (1)(2). Unilever 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 (3). Unilever signed an open letter denouncing legislation deemed "Anti-LGBTQ" by the HRC, such as laws that protect girls' sports and ban discussions on gender identity in public elementary schools (4). The company has also taken public stances on legislation impacting voting methods, denouncing specific bills state-by-state and advocating for expanding mail-in voting (5)(6)(7)(8). Unilever also publicly opposed Georgia's Religious Freedom Restoration Act (religious freedom) in 2016 (9). Unilever CEO Alan Jope committed to its agenda, saying "anti-woke backlash is incredibly dangerous for the world" and vowed that Unilever "will not back down on this agenda" (10). The company opposed various state and local legislation intended to protect parental rights, girls' sports, bathroom facilities, and gendered spaces (11). Unilever opposed legislation in Iowa intended to protect parental rights, girls' sports, bathroom facilities, and gendered spaces (12). The company opposed the Florida Parental Rights in Education Act, which would prohibit teaching gender identity and sexual orientation to kids in K-3rd grade (13). Unilever is a member of the "Don't Ban Equality" business coalition, which advocates against any abortion restrictions because they are "bad for business" (14). The company's President, Fabian Garcia, denounced various states' legislative efforts to protect election integrity and security (15). Dollar Shave Club General Counsel, Allison Buchner, co-signed a letter to law firms demanding an improvement in diversity in order to retain business with the company (16). Despite growing backlash over ESG, Unilever set new Scope 3 climate goals, alleging they are "in line with the company's financial objectives" (17). Unilever's CEO signed the CEO Action for Diversity & Inclusion pledge, which includes a commitment to promote DEI through bias education training in the workplace (18)(19). Unilever was a contributing member of GARM's Action Guide to Reduce Media Greenhouse Gas Emissions and The Global Media Sustainability Framework which provides an action plan for media companies to transition to net zero greenhouse gas emissions (20)(21). The company scored a 100 out of 100 on the 2023-2024 Corporate Equality Index (CEI) from the Human Rights Campaign (HRC), a political stakeholder group (22)(23).

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

High Risk

Unilever 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). Unilever's 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 (4)(5). Unilever has donated to Planned Parenthood (6). The company was a member of the Global Alliance for Responsible Media (7)(8)(9). Unilever is corporate partner of the National LGBT Chamber of Commerce (10). In response to the death of George Floyd, Unilever and its brands pledged \$7 million to "organizations and activists working for social justice and racial equality." It is unclear which organizations received support from Unilever (11). Otherwise, there are no publicly known cases of the company using corporate funds to advance ideological causes, organizations, or policies (12).

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

High Risk

Unilever's 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 (3)(4). In 2020, the company lobbied for George Floyd Justice in Policing Act of 2020 (5). In 2021, the company lobbied for George Floyd Justice in Policing Act of 2021 (6). In 2021, 2022, the company lobbied for Equality Act (7)(8).

The contents of this website and related resources (collectively, the "materials") are general in nature and intended for educational use only. Nothing in the materials or any other 1792 Exchange content constitutes legal or professional advice for any specific matter. Anyone seeking legal or professional advice should obtain such advice from competent counsel. Since individual circumstances vary, anyone reviewing the materials and/or any other 1792 Exchange content is strongly urged to obtain specific legal and/or other professional advice before acting or refraining from acting based on such materials or other 1792 Exchange content. 1792 Exchange accepts no responsibility for any loss or damage, howsoever incurred, which may result from accessing or relying on the materials or any other 1792 Exchange content. Further, 1792 Exchange disclaims, to the fullest extent permitted by law, all liability for any acts or omissions based on the materials or any other 1792 Exchange content.

USER AGREEMENT: Company reports and other resources are intended only for the private educational use of the registered user. Republishing and distributing reports and resources is strictly prohibited. By downloading reports and resources, the user accepts these conditions.

© 1792 Exchange 2023