

## Press Release

### One-third of Germans want companies to take a political stance

- **More than 31% of Germans say companies should take a political stance in public**
- **Around 59% say companies should remain neutral, and can understand if they do this based on a fear of a boycott**
- **67% of Germans have boycotted a company and its products before for political reasons**
- **Around 40% of Germans would buy a company's products more frequently if it openly expressed a political opinion they share**
- **Results of a recent representative survey undertaken by the polling institute Civey on behalf of JP | KOM**

**Düsseldorf/Berlin, Germany, October 1, 2018** – Should companies take a public stance on political issues, like the CEOs of Siemens, Daimler, Telekom, Trumpf and Evonik have done lately? Or would Germans prefer them not to? One-third of Germans (31.4%) want companies to take a political stance in public. In particular, Germans aged 18 to 49 years old are in favor (34% on average), including more than half of students (53.2%). Individuals who identify as supporters of the Social Democratic Party (abbr. SPD, 48.3%), the Greens (51.1%) or the Left (42.6%) are also largely in favor of politically active companies.

#### **A divided country**

By contrast, 79.8% of those who said they would vote for the right-wing Alternative for Germany (abbr. AfD) are in favor of companies remaining politically neutral. This is also the case for 61.1% of voters leaning towards the conservative Christian Democratic Union and the Christian Social Union (abbr. CDU/CSU) and 65.3% of voters leaning towards the liberal Free Democratic Party (abbr. FDP). They make up the majority of Germans (58.6%) who are of the view that companies should remain politically impartial. One in ten is undecided on the issue. These are the results of a recent representative survey carried out by the polling institute Civey on behalf of the communications agency JP | KOM.

Public opinion changes significantly when consumer decisions are linked with political beliefs. In response to the question, “Would you buy a company’s products more frequently if it expressed a political belief that you share?”, Germany is divided: 39.4% responded “Yes” and 42.0% “No”. Almost one in five respondents (18.6%) could not decide.

### **High purchasing power, more likely to purchase products more frequently**

In particular, 30 to 39-year-old Germans say that their purchasing decisions are definitely influenced by their political beliefs. Almost half (49.3%) say they would purchase a product more frequently if a company publicly expressed a political belief that aligned with their own. In the 65+ age group, the opposite is true: here almost half (47.8%) say this is of no importance to them.

Furthermore, people with a very high purchasing power (42.7%) buy products from companies with similar political beliefs more frequently; by contrast, 43.5% of people with very low purchasing power say they are not influenced by this.

More than two-thirds of respondents (67.3%) admit to previously boycotting a company for political reasons by no longer buying their products. 28.5% say they have never done this. Deciding not to buy products for political reasons is especially prevalent among 30 to 49-year-olds: between 72.6% and 75.7% have already made this choice as a consumer.

### **Understanding companies’ fear of boycotts**

70.3% of survey respondents with an *Abitur*\* have boycotted a company before, while only 56.7% of those with a *Hauptschulabschluss*\* or without a school-leaving qualification have. A majority of Germans – 59.2% – understand why companies refrain from expressing a political opinion out of a fear of boycotts. Almost one-third (28.9%) say they do not understand this attitude.

“Almost one-third of Germans want companies to take a political stance. This is equivalent to more than 20 million customers,” explains Susanne Marell, Managing Director of the communications agency JP|KOM. “However, if companies meet this demand, they also face the risk that a significant number of people may boycott their products. The survey results highlight that the political stance of companies in the public arena is a challenging balancing act, both financially and in terms of communications. There is a fine line between success and failure. Ultimately, it comes down to whether a company makes a critical decision on a specific political issue and whether they want to represent this belief in public.”

Polling institute Civey surveyed 5,000 individuals per question, from September 18 to 21, 2018, to arrive at the representative results. The margin of error is 2.5%. Find out more about the methodology used [here](#).

*\* Types of German high-school diplomas. An Abitur is awarded to graduates of a Gymnasium (the highest ranked secondary school) and is the only diploma that allows entry to university or college. Meanwhile, a Hauptschulabschluss is awarded to students who graduate from Hauptschule – a school that any German student can attend, regardless of academic ability.*

Please, download all graphics here: <https://www.jp-kom.de/civey-survey-one-third-of-Germans-want-companies-to-take-political-stance>

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