



Hidden Value: The Business Case for Reproductive Health

June 2022



Rhia Ventures is a social enterprise transforming women's reproductive health. We make equity investments in promising companies that address gaps in the reproductive health market, and we partner with our investor network to ensure that corporations understand that reproductive health care is essential care. Learn more at rhiaventures.org.



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ALSO FROM RHIA VENTURES

From Here to Maternity: The Business Case for Strong Maternal Healthcare Coverage in the Private Sector

A large body of literature speaks to the causes of America's poor maternal health outcomes and how to improve them, but relatively few studies focus on the impact upon corporations, and the difference they can make in their role as providers of insurance and benefits. [From Here to Maternity](#) speaks to corporations and their investors, illuminating how strong maternal healthcare benefits can improve employee health and well-being; help create a healthier, more stable, and more diverse talent pool; contribute to greater retention, and reduce both absenteeism and presenteeism.



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About this Report

Women's ability to participate freely and fully in the workforce is critical to the growth, performance, and resilience of the U.S. economy – and women's participation in the workforce is contingent upon access to comprehensive reproductive health services.

This link has been poorly understood in the past, but it has never been more urgent today in the post-*Roe v. Wade* era. *Hidden Value: The Business Case for Reproductive Health* illuminates this connection, making the case that reproductive health should be a priority for every business in the United States. This report also identifies actions that companies can take to support employees, their families, and their communities, while delivering business value by improving access to reproductive health care.

Reproductive health includes a broad range of services including, but not limited to, contraception, abortion, fertility treatment, and perinatal and antenatal care. This report focuses on access to contraception and abortion, while recognizing that a broad range of services, policies, and benefits are necessary to support women in the workplace, whether their goal is to delay or avoid pregnancy, or to conceive. This focus is particularly timely and warranted due to the heightened challenges to contraception and abortion access faced by women in America today.

This report, originally published in 2020, was informed by research and literature examining how the availability of contraception, abortion, and other reproductive health services influence the labor market. To understand how U.S. businesses currently approach reproductive health, in a series of interviews conducted in 2019, we engaged over 50 experts in the human resources, reproductive health, and insurance fields. We spoke to human resource leaders and benefits managers at thirty-nine companies, including twenty-four Fortune 500 companies. Collectively, these companies employed **4.5 million U.S. workers** and operate across all **50 states**. The views expressed are still common, based on dialogue with numerous companies since that time.

Companies Represented in this Report

Industry	Companies (39)	Size (U.S. employees)	Companies (39)
Financial Services	10	50 -1,000	4
Retail	9	1,500 - 20,000	12
Technology	6	20,500 - 75,000	9
Food and Beverage	5	80,000 - 150,000	8
Pharmaceutical	3	160,000 - 250,000	2
Insurance	2	300,000 +	4
Manufacturing	2		
Logistics	1		
Communications	1		

For company executives and human resource leaders, this report can be a guide for immediate action. Others, including corporate board members and investors, have their own responsibilities – to regularly raise questions about reproductive health, to build awareness and understanding of the reproductive health challenge, and to catalyze action.

In this report we frequently default to the term “women” to describe all who can become pregnant, and always when data from sources cited does not capture data on gender identity. But not everyone who can become pregnant identifies as a woman. A 2017 study by the Guttmacher Institute estimated that between 450 and 550 transgender and nonbinary persons obtained an abortion that year. Some evidence suggests that the number of transgender and nonbinary persons seeking family planning, fertility and pregnancy services could be “quite large.”[†]

We urge employers to provide equal, accessible and affordable reproductive health care to all who can become pregnant. Employers should ensure that their health care providers networks are knowledgeable about and capable of meeting the reproductive health care needs of trans men and nonbinary persons, who are often subject to discrimination, disrespect, and lack of knowledge on the part of medical professionals.

[†] Juno Obedin-Maliver and Harvey J. Makadon, “[Transgender men and pregnancy](#),” *Obstetric Medicine*, 2016.

Foreword

Our nation is at the precipice of dismantling 50 years' worth of progress toward the full and equal participation of women in the workforce. By limiting the ability for Americans to safely access abortion healthcare in its *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* ruling, the Supreme Court has decimated the fundamental human rights of self-determination and bodily autonomy that have been enshrined in America for the past half century. *Hidden Value: The Business Case for Reproductive Health* presents the options ahead for employers to protect the health and wellbeing of their workers under these new circumstances, and the compelling necessity to do so.

Nearly two thirds of Americans are concerned that overturning *Roe v. Wade* is a danger to women, according to a recent NPR poll.¹ This fear is valid. Restrictive measures that impose barriers to reproductive health services disproportionately affect poor people and women of color, who already have less access to comprehensive healthcare. When compounded by proliferating bans that limit legal abortions, combined with medical racism, these restrictive laws will lead to higher rates of mortality. According to a study published by *Obstetrics & Gynecology*, an American woman is 14 times more likely to die by carrying a pregnancy to term than by having an abortion.² Pregnancy is even more dangerous for women of color, especially Black women, whose maternal mortality rates are three times higher than white women.

At Yelp, we believe that inclusion is about everyone having equitable opportunities for success. In the case of reproductive rights, we're talking about approximately 50% of the population facing

greater challenges to full participation in the workforce. Companies that profess to care about issues of equality, inclusion, and belonging must care about this issue, just like they should care about any barrier to success that disproportionately affects a particular community.

"Companies that profess to care about issues of equality, inclusion, and belonging must care about reproductive health equity."

As a fully distributed company with employees in all 50 states, it's important for us to offer access to reproductive healthcare, regardless of where our employees reside. In the absence of federal protections or universal healthcare, we've chosen to work with our insurance provider to give access to care. As an employer, we continue to advocate for lawmakers to put measures in place that would obviate the need for employer intervention to provide access to reproductive care, which we believe is a fundamental human right.

Beyond our role as an employer seeking to offer the best care for our employees, we also use the power of our platform to advocate on behalf of our user community by helping consumers tell the difference between “crisis pregnancy centers,” which withhold information from women exploring their options, and health centers that provide comprehensive reproductive health care services that include abortion. In 2018, Yelp took action to mitigate disinformation and accurately categorize reproductive health care providers, initially reviewing 8,000 businesses and updating 2,000 listings. We continue to review business categories to confirm they are accurately represented on our site.

Finally, companies that value equality, inclusion, and belonging need to speak up and stand with the communities most impacted by these legal hurdles. *Hidden Value: The Business Case for Reproductive Health* offers businesses, the executives that lead them, and the boards that guide them the simple and straightforward steps necessary to protect and support the talent that is both an organization’s most crucial asset and the engine of value creation.

I’ve heard the false rhetoric that speaking out on equal healthcare is a “no-win” but this is simply **misguided**. The more this is talked about, the more likely it is that other companies will take a look at their own stance on these issues. I hope that by continuing to engage in this conversation, we can inspire others to do more to care for *all* of their employees. The cost of staying silent – morally and fiscally – far outweighs the cost of supporting birthing parents, their partners, and the communities they belong to.

Hidden Value: The Business Case for Reproductive Health offers businesses, the executives that lead them, and the boards that guide them the simple and straightforward steps necessary to protect and support the talent that is both an organization’s most crucial asset and the engine of value creation.



Miriam Warren
*Chief Diversity Officer, Yelp and
Board Chair of the Yelp Foundation*



Executive Summary

In recent years, companies have increased investments in attracting, supporting, and retaining women, recognizing the potential for business value. Women comprise nearly half of the United States workforce and are increasingly represented at all levels of the corporation.³ Despite the progress achieved to date, however, **companies continue to overlook a critical factor that enables women's participation and advancement in the workforce: access to comprehensive reproductive health care.**

Hidden Value: The Business Case for Reproductive Health illuminates the link between access to reproductive health care and business performance, documenting for the first time and in a robust way why and how access to comprehensive reproductive health care is important to a company's bottom line. Originally released in 2020, it is informed by interviews conducted in 2019 with 39 companies, including 24 companies in the Fortune 500, and existing research on employee well-being and corporate benefits. The findings demonstrate that by addressing gaps in reproductive health care, companies stand to benefit in terms of talent attraction and retention at all skill levels, health care costs, and reputation.

The interviews revealed that most of the companies we spoke to were not considering the impact of restrictive reproductive health care policies in the design of their reproductive health insurance and benefits, nor were they considering the impact upon their employees of reproductive health care restrictions imposed by marketplace plans or government assistance programs.[‡] Following the implementation of Texas's extreme abortion ban in September 2021, this began to change as a number of companies began covering travel costs incurred to obtain abortion care out of state, and the trend accelerated following the May 2022 leak of the Supreme Court's decision on *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization*.

Reproductive health services are used by nearly all women—99% of women have used contraception, and 24% of women have had an abortion by age 45.^{4,5} Yet despite wide usage, this report finds that **companies are often unaware of the benefits they provide for reproductive health and, often unintentionally, limit contraceptive options and restrict coverage for abortion.**

Hidden Value: The Business Case for Reproductive Health argues that comprehensive reproductive health care should be a priority for American businesses for six major reasons.

[‡] While the original interviews were conducted in 2019, this finding has been affirmed repeatedly in numerous discussions between investors and corporations facilitated by Rhia Ventures in the period since.

1. Widening the Pipeline and Attracting Talent

Access to comprehensive reproductive health care, including contraception and abortion, is a major factor supporting women's participation in the workforce. **Women in states with better access to contraception have higher rates of labor force participation and more frequently pursue full-time employment.**⁶ 70% of women ages 18–44 would be discouraged from taking a job in a state that restricts access to abortion, as would 59% of men in the same age cohort.⁷ By supporting comprehensive reproductive health access, companies can improve their own competitiveness for talent, especially among younger workers.

2. Supporting and Retaining Existing Talent

To enter and advance in the workforce, women must have agency to choose if and when they want to have children. **86% of women state that controlling if and when to have children has been important to their careers.**⁸ Women who cannot access abortion when needed are three times more likely to be unemployed, and four times more likely to have a household income below the federal poverty level.⁹ Contraception and abortion access are also tied to women's ability to invest in education and training, ultimately affecting opportunities for advancement. As a result, lack of access to reproductive health care may heighten attrition and turnover costs.

3. Providing High-Impact Benefits with Low-Cost Investments

Reproductive health benefits, particularly contraception and abortion, are inexpensive relative to companies' overall health care costs. None of the 39 companies interviewed for this report mentioned cost as a limiting factor for coverage of reproductive health care. Conversely, costs for contraception and abortion can represent significant expenses for women and their partners who lack adequate insurance coverage.

4. Delivering on Diversity and Inclusion

80% of the world's largest public companies have made a public commitment to gender diversity.¹⁰ To achieve these commitments, companies must consider how their benefits, including coverage for reproductive health, support an equitable workplace.

5. Preparing for Greater Scrutiny

A growing number of stakeholders are increasingly calling on corporations to take stands on social issues—and reproductive health is no exception. While many companies may feel removed from the reproductive health conversation today, **expectations have changed.** Companies should be prepared for greater scrutiny.

6. Abortion Restrictions Cost the Economy

State-level abortion restrictions combine to hamper the nation's talent mobility, diminish workforce participation, depress earning potential and drive families into poverty. A recent study estimates that eliminating abortion restrictions nationwide would result in 1.15% growth in labor force participation and 9.12% growth in private sector earnings.¹¹

To close the gap in access to reproductive health care, and realize the value of these benefits, companies must act to:

- **Ensure benefits support the spectrum of employees' reproductive health needs**

Companies can audit their reproductive health coverage and then work with insurance providers to close gaps and create a supportive culture that enables benefit utilization. This includes making the details of reproductive health coverage clearer to employees, and easier to locate. **69% of women with health insurance currently do not know whether their coverage includes abortion.**¹²

- **Understand and engage in reproductive health policy**

Companies can track and engage in relevant public or private policy discussions, to ensure access to reproductive health care for their employees. They can sign on to amicus briefs, lobby policymakers to expand access to reproductive health care, and examine how corporate political spending may inadvertently promote restrictions on reproductive health care.

Hidden Value: The Business Case for Reproductive Health demonstrates that corporate support for reproductive health care has a positive impact on a range of corporate stakeholders from employees to investors, and that the negative consequences of inaction are far-reaching and impact the bottom line.

The Reproductive Health Gap Facing Workers in America

Women's ability to fully participate in the workforce is a critical issue for every business in the United States (U.S.). In the corporate sector, the growing representation of women in the workplace is good for business, with ample data linking gender diversity to greater profitability.¹³

Recognizing the contributions of women to the workplace and responding to societal demand, in recent years leading companies have invested significant resources to promote women's advancement. Attention has focused on the gender pay gap, sexual harassment, and benefits, especially improvements to paid family leave, childcare, and fertility treatments that enable women and their partners to balance professional, personal, and family goals.¹⁴

According to the National Women's Law Center (NWLC), the Covid-19 pandemic initially rolled back more than a decade of women's job market gains, with parents, Black and Latina women being hit the hardest. As of June 2022, women's labor force participation had rebounded to 58.3%, but was still one percent lower than pre-pandemic levels, meaning that the workforce is missing 656,000 women than were employed in February 2020.¹⁵

With the U.S. Supreme Court's decision in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization*, women's ability to participate in the labor market is being dealt another grievous blow. The ruling opens up the possibility that up to 26 states will ban abortion.¹⁶ In 2021, group private health insurance provided coverage for an estimated 177 million individuals (54.4% of the U.S. population).¹⁷ In this new era, millions of women are now more reliant than ever upon private employers' health packages to be able to access abortion. The corporate sector must rise to meet this need.

Contraception and abortion are critical components of a broader reproductive health package that ensures women and their partners can effectively plan for when and how to have children and fully participate in the workforce. These services are used by nearly all women: 99% of women have used contraception, 24% of women have had an abortion by age 45, and 74% of women can imagine a situation in which they or someone covered by their insurance would need an abortion.^{18,19}

On average, in the U.S., women have two children over the course of their lives. As a result, they spend three years pregnant, postpartum, or attempting to become pregnant and spend up to 30 years – or three quarters of their reproductive life – avoiding pregnancy.²⁰ Yet nearly 50% of women

AT A GLANCE

86%

of women state that controlling if and when to have children has been important to their careers.

The average woman in the U.S. spends

up to three quarters

of her reproductive years avoiding pregnancy

99%

of women use, or have used, contraception

Nearly half

of pregnancies in the U.S. are unplanned

24%

of women have had an abortion by the age of 45

74%

of women can imagine a situation in which they, or someone covered by their insurance, would need an abortion

40 million

women live in states that are “hostile” to essential reproductive health care.

1 in 10

employer-sponsored health plans publicly disclose coverage for abortion without restriction.

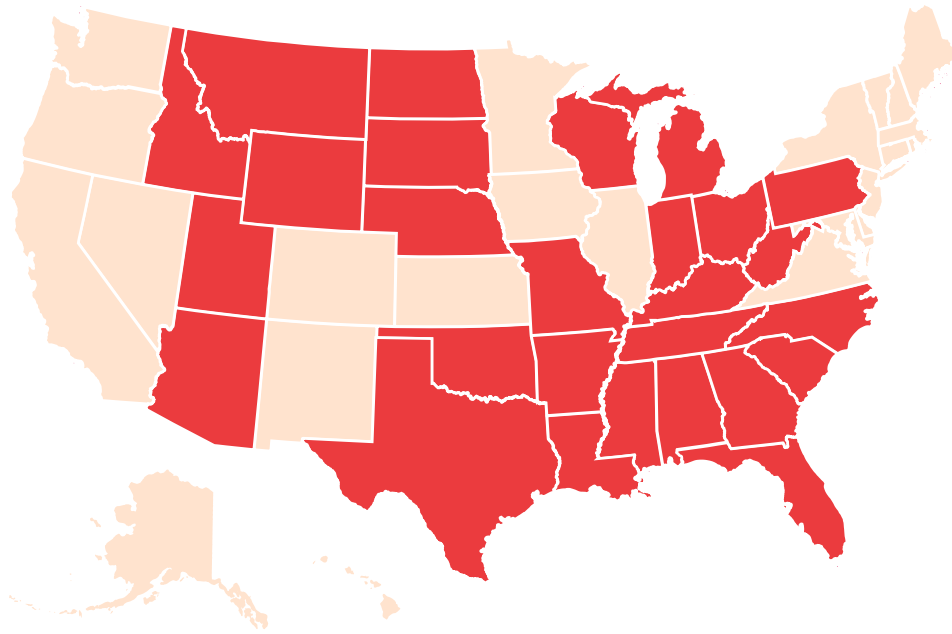
have had an unplanned pregnancy by age 45, a figure that is even higher for women of color and women with low incomes who face greater barriers to contraceptive access.²¹

When the costs of contraception are covered by health plans, as required by the 2010 Affordable Care Act (ACA), rates of unplanned pregnancy decline significantly because more women are able to consistently access contraception, especially highly effective long-acting reversible methods (such as implants and intrauterine devices) that involve higher upfront costs and medical appointments. As a result of improved health plan coverage for contraception in private and public health plans, rates of unintended pregnancy and abortion are at historic lows today.²²

Among women who have private insurance, 6 in 10 still pay for an abortion out of pocket.²³ Reasons for this may include inadequate benefits, confusion about benefits, or privacy concerns. Of the benefits managers and human resource leaders interviewed for this report, only 37% knew if their health plans covered abortion and only 47% knew the extent of coverage for contraception. Even fewer had taken steps to understand and address the reproductive health needs of their employees, or to identify the challenges that restrict them from accessing reproductive health services.

These challenges to basic reproductive health care directly affect women and other birthing people in their childbearing years, along with their partners, families, employers, and the communities in which they live and work. Accordingly, protecting access to comprehensive reproductive health care is a business imperative for all U.S. companies.

Figure 1. If the U.S. Supreme Court overturns or guts *Roe v. Wade*, the 26 states shown in red are certain or likely to ban abortion.



Laws in effect as of May 19, 2022
Source: Guttmacher Institute, 2022

Snapshots: How the Reproductive Health Gap Impacts Workers

Amanda, Missouri

Amanda, a 22-year-old mother of four in Missouri – a state with only one remaining health care center that provides abortion care – lost her job after taking three days off work to travel to a health care center to obtain an abortion. Amanda was working full time as a night closing manager for Dollar Tree when she unexpectedly became pregnant. She knew immediately that she could not support a fifth child.

She gave her employer two weeks' notice that she would need time-off, made sure her shifts were covered and provided a doctor's note that mentioned she needed time-off without giving details about the medical procedure. When she returned to work, she was met with news that she had been fired for missing work.

Out of work for five months and reeling financially, Amanda returned to a job as a server making \$3.75/hour.²⁴

J., Kansas

J. lived in Kansas with her partner and teenage son. She was 38, had been unemployed for a long time, and was struggling to support her child. She thought she was too old to become pregnant. When J. missed her period, she and her partner drove to a nearby reproductive health care center in Oklahoma, knowing that they couldn't afford another child. The clinic estimated that J. was five weeks pregnant.

Two weeks later, J. and her partner went to a more specialized clinic and were told that J. was actually 23 weeks pregnant, past the clinic's gestational limit. J. cried in the parking lot. She and her partner drove to Texas, where restrictive laws again prevented her from receiving care. Finally, in New Mexico, J. was able to obtain an abortion.

One month later, J. got a job operating heavy machinery at a manufacturing plant for \$15 an hour. She had been applying for the past six months. If she had another child, she said, she wouldn't have been able to take the job. "They wouldn't have even looked at me."²⁵

Eden, Iowa

Eden uses contraceptive pills to prevent painful cysts from forming and rupturing in her ovaries. Before the Affordable Care Act (ACA), which guaranteed women coverage for birth control with no co-pay, Eden worked for a religiously affiliated college that denied coverage for birth control for “religious reasons.”

Unable to afford the medication out of pocket, she stopped using the pill and consequently had to have invasive surgery to remove dangerous cysts that had formed. Since the passage of the ACA, her birth control has been covered by insurance and she hasn’t had any health problems. However, she worries that her coverage for contraception will be stripped away again in the event her employer is granted an exemption from the ACA contraceptive mandate. That change could put her health in danger.²⁶

In recent years, the number of hospitals and health care systems with religious affiliations have increased considerably. As of 2016, in five states, more than 40% of acute-care beds were Catholic-owned or affiliated.²⁷

Ali, Georgia

Ali, a 36-year-old finance executive and mother of two, credits much of her personal well-being and professional success to the reproductive health care she has received since her teens.

As a young professional straight out of college, Ali took a job making less than \$40,000 in one of the country’s most expensive cities. Ali had student loans, credit card debt, and did not have any savings or family members who could help her financially. Fortunately, her new employer covered comprehensive contraception options without requiring a co-pay. Ali was provided contraception without having to make a choice between birth control and other expenses in her life. She was able to control her fertility and her future.

Ali says that she has no doubt that without the reproductive care she received throughout her adult life, she would not be the woman, partner, mother, and worker that she is today.²⁸

The Reproductive Health Business Imperative

Comprehensive reproductive health care should be a priority for businesses in the U.S. for six major reasons.

1 Widening the Pipeline and Attracting Talent

Access to comprehensive reproductive health care enables more women and their partners to fully participate in the workforce and build careers, expanding the size and improving the quality of the talent pool for all types of roles. Companies with competitive reproductive health benefits and that operate in geographies that support reproductive health are also better positioned to attract applicants.

2 Supporting and Retaining Existing Talent

Companies today are likely missing important links between access to reproductive health care and employee retention. Poor access to contraception and abortion has a negative impact on women, their partners, and their families – all of which have ripple effects for their performance in the workplace. By examining this link, companies may stand to improve retention and reduce turnover costs.

3 Providing High-Impact Benefits with Low-Cost Investments

Coverage for contraception and abortion is inexpensive relative to companies' overall health care costs, and evidence demonstrates that contraception is cost saving. However, contraception and abortion can represent significant expenses for employees, especially low-wage or contract workers. Companies have an opportunity to invest in benefits that are inexpensive but meaningful for their employees.

4 Delivering on Diversity and Inclusion

Many companies have made public commitments to foster diverse and inclusive workplaces, but these commitments cannot be fulfilled if employees lack access to comprehensive reproductive health care. Companies that deliver on these commitments enhance their reputations and mitigate risk to their brands by ensuring that benefits and political activities are aligned to their commitments.

5 Preparing for Greater Scrutiny

Companies are experiencing greater scrutiny on a range of environmental, social, and governance (ESG) issues, and reproductive health is no exception. Stakeholders, from investors to employees to consumers, are recognizing the power of the private sector to effect social change, and they have already begun to raise the issue of reproductive health. Companies should be prepared to respond.

6 Abortion Restrictions Cost the Economy

State-level abortion restrictions combine to hamper the nation's talent mobility, diminish workforce participation, depress earning potential and drive families into poverty.

Business Driver 1

Widening the Pipeline and Attracting Talent

Women's ability to manage and plan for having children is directly linked to their ability to participate in the labor force.

Contraception has been, and continues to be, a significant enabler of women's participation in the labor force, accounting for 15% of total labor force growth and 30% of labor force growth in professional careers in the years immediately following legalization of the birth control pill in 1960.²⁹ Highlighting how important contraception has been for women's economic advancement, *Bloomberg Businessweek* listed contraception as the ninth "most disruptive innovation" in history, higher on the list than Amazon, McDonalds, email, and venture capital in terms of its impact on American businesses.³⁰

Today, women in states with better access to contraception have higher rates of labor force participation, more frequently pursue full-time positions, more frequently take roles in traditionally male-dominated industries, and have higher median wages.³¹ **In states with strong abortion protections and coverage, women have higher levels of education, lower levels of poverty, and experience a higher ratio of female-to-male earnings.**³² This link emerges early: teenagers who live near Planned Parenthood health care centers, and likely have better access to reproductive health care as a result, are more likely to graduate from high school.³³

What does this mean for companies? Surveys show that **talent is the number one internal concern for global CEOs**,³⁴ and companies are already investing to strengthen talent pipelines. Hundreds of large employers, including AT&T, United Technologies, and Walmart partner

"We believe in empowering our employees to make decisions based on their unique circumstances. Abortion is legal, and so it is not our place to restrict it."

It's also about competitiveness for talent. While people don't ask about our coverage for abortion in interviews, they know how to find information that matters to them through sites like Glassdoor or speaking with former employees. We need to remain market competitive, and coverage for reproductive health care is a part of that."

— Executive, Fortune 500 financial services company

with organizations like Girls Who Code to boost gender and racial diversity in STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) careers.³⁵ Barriers to reproductive health care, however, could undermine the success of these investments. At a time when companies are making significant investments in the talent pipeline, the link between better access to reproductive health care and the expansion of the talent pool demands further examination.

At the firm level, a company's benefits package plays an important role in its ability to attract employees. Evidence from PricewaterhouseCoopers demonstrates that women consider benefits as much as salary when comparing employers.³⁶ Recent polling reveals that **83% of women at reproductive age say they would want their employer's insurance to cover the full range of reproductive health care, including abortion.**³⁷

"We do not isolate different aspects of reproductive health, but they are all important [including contraception and abortion]. We look at the full spectrum – are we progressive enough to attract and retain key talent?"

— Benefits manager, pharmaceuticals company

63% of college-educated workers would not apply to a job in a state that has recently banned abortion.³⁸ These trends are even more powerful among younger generations – 90% of Millennials cite reproductive health as an important issue for them, and over two-thirds say that it is very, or extremely, important.³⁹ As Generation Z continues to enter the workforce, this trend will intensify.

As one benefits manager from a company whose health plan covers abortion without restrictions shared: "We do not isolate different aspects of reproductive health, but they are all important [including contraception and abortion]. We look at the full spectrum – are we progressive enough to attract and retain key talent?"

Over half...

...of employed adults say benefits offering full reproductive health care would be a deciding factor between two offers.

...of college-educated women would not apply to a job in a state that banned abortion.

Business Driver 2

Supporting and Retaining Existing Talent

Access to reproductive health care not only enables women to enter the labor force, it also supports their retention and advancement. **86% of women say that being able to control if and when to become a parent has been important to their career path.**⁴⁰

Access to contraception and abortion is correlated with numerous health benefits for women, including lower rates of pregnancy complications and lower rates of experience with interpersonal violence.⁴¹ This is especially critical today because the rate of maternal mortality in the U.S. has more than doubled over the past two decades, leaving the U.S. as the only economically developed country in the world where maternity outcomes are worsening rather than improving.⁴²

Maternal mortality is higher in states with restrictive abortion policies, and Black women are three to four times more likely to die during childbirth than white women, regardless of socioeconomic status or income.^{43,44} Given the clear clinical benefits, major public health groups, such as the American Medical Association, the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists and the American Public Health Association, have all taken positions in support of abortion access.^{45,46,47}

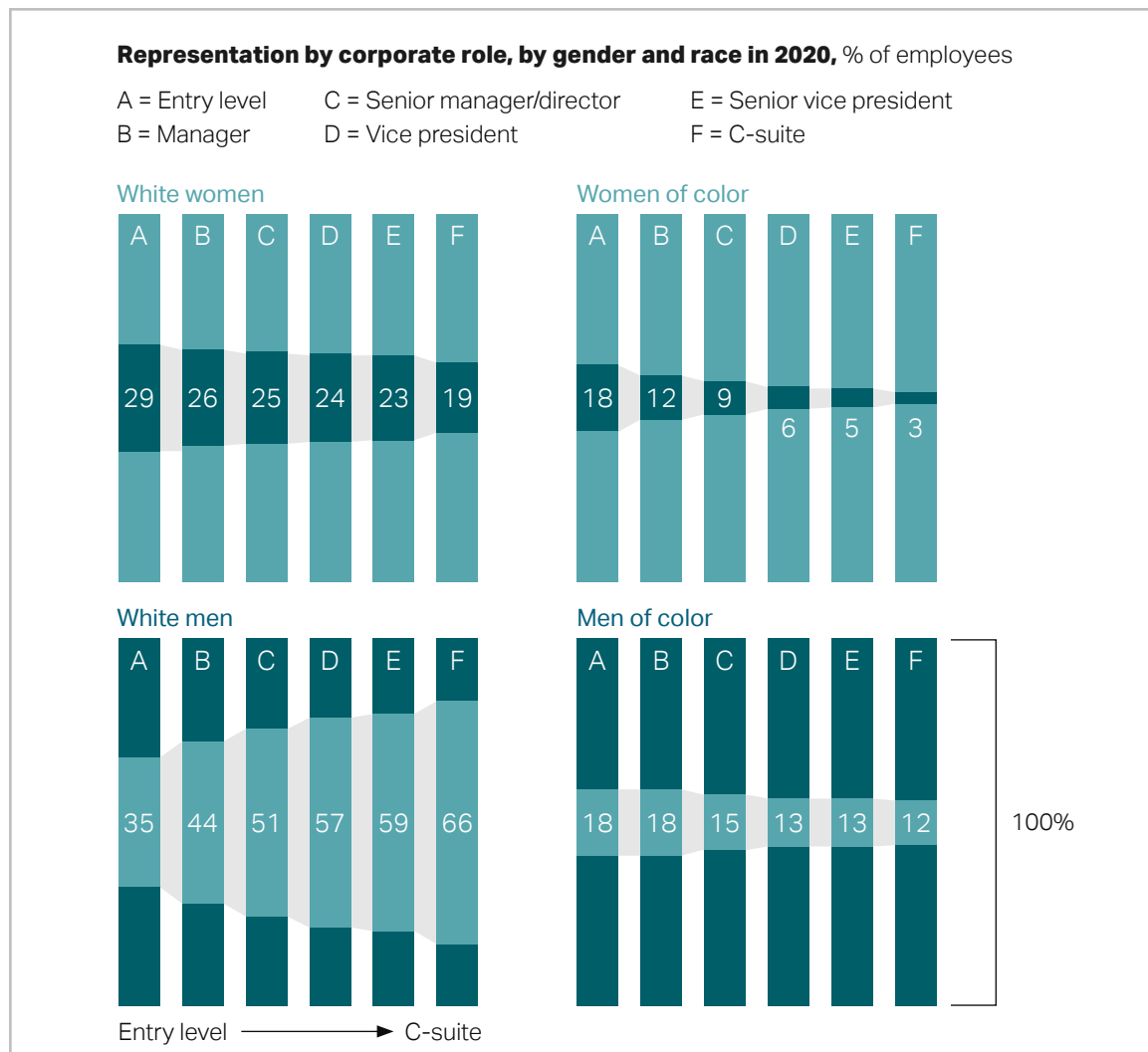
This has direct implications for employers because employee mental and physical health has been proven to improve firm performance.⁴⁸ Comprehensive care enables people to invest more in education, professional development, and their careers. For example, women who live in states with public funding for reproductive health services are more likely to have job mobility, and they are better prepared to transition from unemployment into employment.⁴⁹ **Meanwhile, women who lack access to abortion are three times more likely to be unemployed and four times more likely to have a household income below the federal poverty level than women who were able to access abortion when needed.**⁵⁰

These results hold for male partners as well. In a recent study of men who reported a partner's pregnancy before the age of 20, researchers found that men whose partners obtained an abortion were nearly four times as likely to have graduated from high school and nearly twice as likely to have graduated from college than men who became fathers in adolescence. As a result, the researchers concluded that "restricting access to abortion will not only negatively impact women, but it has long-term, damaging effects on partners and families."⁵¹

In their annual *Women in the Workplace* report, McKinsey & Company and LeanIn.org have analyzed promotion data and identified how corporate career paths for men and women differ. A well-documented “broken rung” in the career ladder prevents women – especially women of color – from advancing from frontline roles. In 2020, for every 100 men promoted from a frontline to a manager role, only 85 women received the same promotion. Numbers are even lower for women of color, with only 71 Latina women and 58 Black women being promoted (see *Figure 2*). One under-explored contributor is likely to be women’s access to reproductive health care services.

Turnover increases costs for businesses. Estimates from the Work Institute put the cost of replacing a departing employee at roughly 33% of that employee’s annual salary. For an employee earning the annual median salary in the U.S. of \$45,000, that would result in a \$15,000 replacement cost, including recruiting, training, and productivity loss.⁵²

Figure 2. Gender and racial disparities by corporate role



Source: 2021 *Women in the Workplace*, McKinsey & Company and LeanIn.Org⁵³

By the Numbers: Reproductive Health and Women's Economic Opportunity

Comprehensive reproductive health care, especially access to contraception and abortion, is the foundational element of women's ability to seek education, employment, professional development, and growth.

In an Urban Institute survey of nearly 2,000 adult women, over 60% of respondents expected an unplanned birth would have a negative effect on their educational attainment and ability to earn an income, and roughly half expected an unplanned birth would result in negative impacts on their physical or mental health (see *Figure 3*).

Data proves these perceptions are accurate:

High School Education

- Teenagers who live near a Planned Parenthood health care center more frequently graduate high school.⁵⁴
- Men who experienced a partner's unintended pregnancy before the age of 20 that resulted in an abortion graduate from high school at four times the rate of men who became fathers in adolescence.⁵⁵

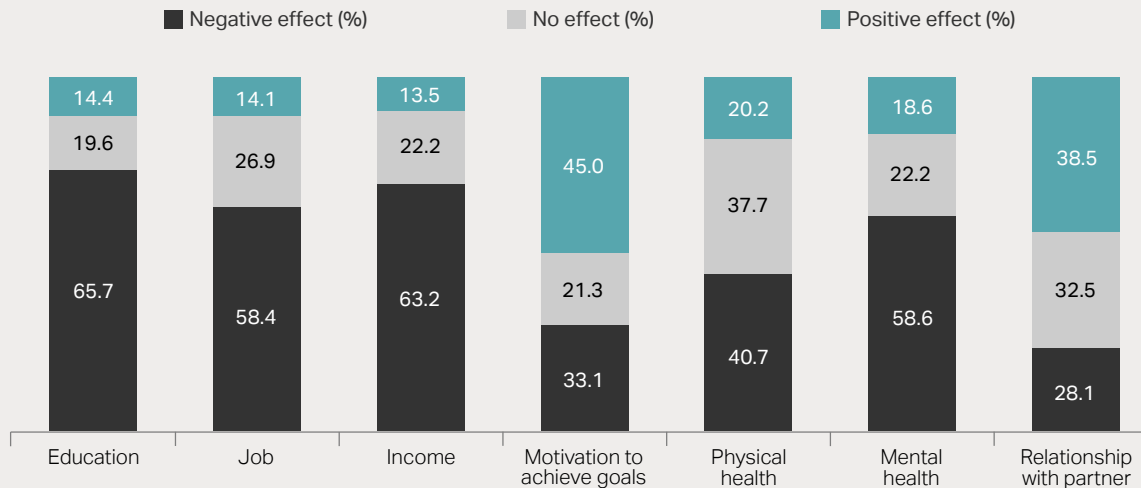
Workforce Participation

- Women who cannot access abortion are three times more likely to leave the workforce, and four times more likely to have a household income below the federal poverty level, than women who were able to access abortion when needed.⁵⁶
- Women in states with better access to contraception have higher rates of labor force participation, more frequently pursue full-time work, have higher median wages, and experience better job mobility relative to women in states with poor contraceptive access.⁵⁷

College Education

- College enrollment was 20% higher among women who could access the birth control pill legally by age 18 in 1970, compared with women who could not.⁵⁸
- Access to contraception before the age 21 is the most influential factor in enabling women in college to stay in college.⁵⁹ Between 1969 and 1980, the dropout rate among women with access to the birth control pill was 35% lower than women without access to contraception.⁶⁰

Figure 3. Women's perceptions of the effects of an unplanned birth



Source: Urban Institute, 2016

- Men who experienced a partner's unintended pregnancy before the age of 20 that resulted in an abortion are twice as likely to have graduated from college than those who became fathers in adolescence.⁶¹

Earnings

- One-third of women's wage gains since the 1960s are the result of access to contraception.⁶²
- In states with strong abortion protections and coverage, women have higher levels of education, lower levels of poverty, and experience a higher ratio of female-to-male earnings.⁶³
- Models suggest that the gender wage gap would have been 10% larger in the 1980s, and 30% larger in the 1990s, without widespread access to contraception.⁶⁴
- Research conducted to examine pay inequity indicates that it will take 100 years for women to reach wage parity with men at the current pace of change, and this is far worse for women of color.⁶⁵

Professional Advancement

- Access to contraception is estimated to account for more than 30% of the increase in the proportion of women in skilled careers from 1970 to 1990.⁶⁶

Business Driver 3

Providing High-Impact Benefits with Low-Cost Investments

Coverage of contraception and abortion requires minimal investment from companies.

An analysis commissioned by the National Business Group on Health (NBGH), an industry association representing large employers on health policy, **found that comprehensive coverage of contraception yielded 15 to 17% in cost savings for employers.**⁶⁷ The benefit to companies was so apparent that the mandate for private health plans to cover a range of contraceptive methods with no cost-sharing included in the Affordable Care Act (ACA) received minimal push back from employers.⁶⁸ Indeed, the NBGH went on to recommend that employers

proactively cover *all* contraceptive options with no cost-sharing for employees because the savings resulting from greater use of contraception would outweigh the costs.⁶⁹

"We spend almost \$1 billion on health care annually, which includes costs for comprehensive reproductive health care. Adding coverage for abortion into that package is a drop in the bucket."

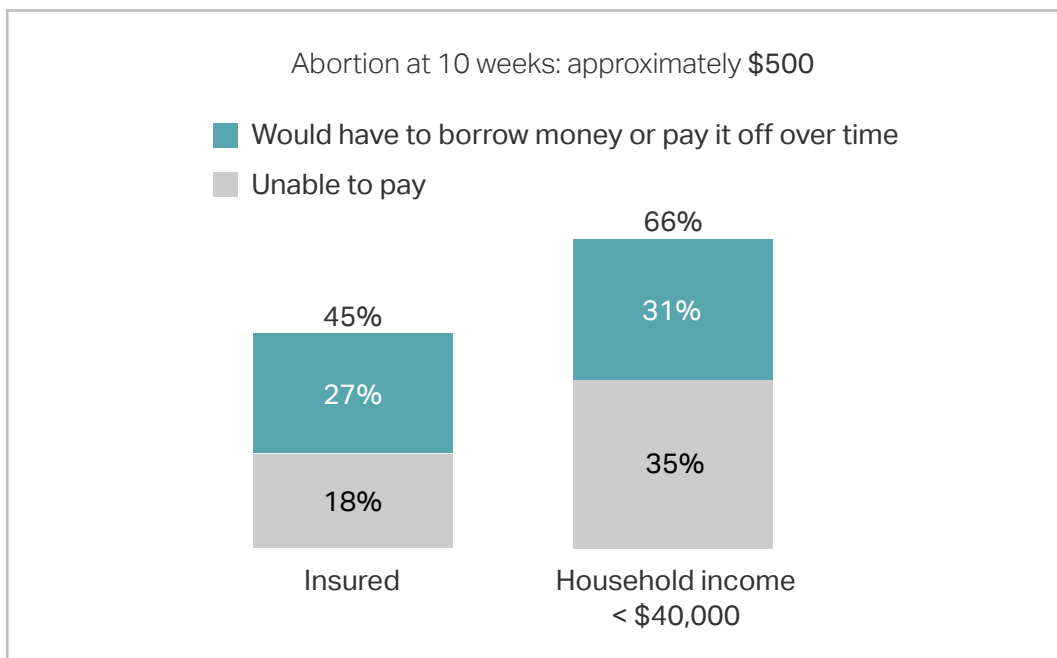
— Executive, Fortune 100
food and beverage company

According to research from GoodRx, the annual cost of birth control can vary from \$0 to over \$2,000 depending on the type of birth control used.⁷⁰ Analyses of the cost of adding contraception to health plans range from \$0.4 - \$0.66 in cost per health plan member per month – less than 1% of total health plan costs.⁷¹ According to the Kaiser Family

Foundation, the average cost for an abortion at 10 weeks is \$500 and increases to an average of \$1,195 at 20 weeks.⁷² The Kaiser Family Foundation estimates that addition of abortion to health plans operating on the ACA exchanges would be even less expensive, adding between \$0.11 and \$0.33 in cost per health plan member per month.⁷³

While these costs are negligible relative to a company's overall health care costs, they are cost-prohibitive for many women and their partners, especially those earning lower wages. Before the ACA-mandated provision of contraception without cost-share, contraception accounted for 30 to 44% of out-of-pocket health care spending for women, resulting in lower use, especially of more effective long-acting methods.⁷⁴ With no mandate for health plan coverage of abortion, 66% of women in low-income households and even 45% of women with insurance

Figure 4. Financial barriers to reproductive health care access



Source: Guttmacher Institute and Kaiser Family Foundation, 2018. Abortion costs have increased since 2018, with medication abortions now ranging between \$500 and \$750, according to Planned Parenthood. ([“How Much Does an Abortion Cost Without Health Insurance?” GoodRx, May 16, 2022.](#))

note that they would not be able to afford an abortion and would need to borrow money or use a longer-term payment plan to cover the costs, which often include child care, transportation, and lodging in addition to the cost of the medical procedure (see *Figure 4*). This aligns with data from the Federal Reserve revealing that four in ten Americans are not able to pay a \$400 expense without taking on debt.⁷⁵

Today, companies are making significant investments in other reproductive health benefits, including offering to cover fertility treatments for some employees. A recent report from Mercer observed that throughout the 2000s and early 2010s, the proportion of large employers (500 employees or more) that offered IVF benefits remained steady at about 25%. However:

[That] is changing. Over the past five years we’ve begun to see a new focus on fertility benefits of all kinds among the largest employers – driven by improvements in treatment protocols, shifts in workforce demographics, a sharper focus on inclusivity, and a broader definition of what constitutes health and well-being. Since the largest employers are often trendsetters, it seems likely they are the leading edge of a broader movement – especially since the vast majority of survey respondents – 97% – say that adding infertility coverage did not result in a significant increase in medical plan cost.⁷⁶

According to FertilityIQ, the number of large companies and employers that newly introduced or enhanced their family-building (fertility, adoption, or foster care) benefits grew 37% between 2019 and 2021, and is now approaching 800 large organizations globally.⁷⁷

While making these investments to help employees start families, employers must also ensure that basic and relatively inexpensive comprehensive reproductive health services, including contraception and abortion, are included in their benefits packages and accessible to all workers who need them.

Companies are increasingly offering to cover **abortion-related travel expenses** for employees who need to travel out of state to obtain care. In the wake of the *Dobbs* ruling, this is **one of the most important reproductive health care benefits businesses can offer**. The Guttmacher Institute provides [an interactive map](#) on its web site that estimates how far abortion-seekers will have to travel for care in a post-*Roe* environment. The findings are startling. For example, the average one-way driving distance for abortion-seekers in Texas has increased by over 500 miles, or 32 times the distance prior to the *Dobbs* ruling.

The quality and comprehensiveness of abortion and contraception benefits in this country has been impossible to measure accurately because it is the rare company that divulges detailed information on their coverage of either. A 2019 survey of 2,000 nonfederal public and private firms by the Kaiser Family Foundation did reveal that 10% of U.S. workers were employed at firms that asked their insurer or third party administrator to *exclude* abortion coverage from their health plan. For firms with 5,000 or more workers, the figure was 17%.⁷⁸

Business Driver 4

Delivering on Diversity and Inclusion

Diversity in the workforce has been proven to yield greater innovation and higher profitability for companies.^{79,80}

Recognizing this, most large companies have established commitments to advance diversity and inclusion in the workforce, including 80% of publicly traded companies who have articulated a commitment to gender diversity.⁸¹

Many of the companies interviewed for this report have updated their benefits packages with an eye to inclusivity. In a trend accelerated by the pandemic and the national racial reckoning that followed the murder of George Floyd, human resources leaders have recently been tasked with finding new opportunities to support their employees, including expansion of surrogacy and adoption benefits for LGBTQ employees, transgender-inclusive health care, and the expansion of paid family leave, including paternity leave. While these companies considered cost implications, they primarily cited “doing the right thing” for their employees and ensuring alignment with corporate commitments to diversity and inclusion as motivating factors for these changes.

Comprehensive reproductive health care can support employer strategies to attract, retain and support employees of color. **Fifty-five percent (55%) of Black women obtain their**

health insurance through their employers, but for Black women in their reproductive years, access to insurance has lagged that of white women. Black

women in lower-income households are also more likely to be uninsured compared to white women in low-income households. The uninsured rate for Black women is highest in the South, where most states have not expanded Medicaid coverage.⁸²

“My company has made many claims that we support diversity—and for women to actually be equal participants in our company, they need to be able to control their reproductive health.”

— Executive, Fortune 100 financial services company

According to the National Partnership for Women and Families and In Our Own Voice (National Black Women’s Reproductive Justice Agenda):

The intersection of abortion restrictions and maternal health outcomes is particularly harmful to Black women....[R]estrictions and bans on abortion care fall disproportionately on Black women and exacerbate existing health disparities, including in maternal health and maternal mortality. Black women also are more likely to face policy and structural barriers that inhibit their ability both to access abortion care and to have healthy pregnancies – policies like paid sick days, pay equity, affordable health insurance, access to contraception and freedom from pregnancy discrimination at work – that compound the impact of these intersecting issues in their lives.⁸³

For these reasons, a disproportionate number of abortions are obtained by Black women and other women of color⁸⁴, and abortion restrictions fall disproportionately hard on them, their families, communities and employers. Higher rates of maternal health and mortality elevates the risk that if denied abortion care, women of color may be forced to leave their jobs.

Preparing for Greater Scrutiny

Interest has intensified dramatically in how businesses are responding to the workforce and political implications of reduced abortion access in the U.S.

This is taking place in the context of rising expectations that companies will speak out of matters of social urgency, which has been both a cause and contributor toward corporate statements on such matters as voting rights, withholding political contributions from the members of Congress who encouraged the January 6, 2021 insurrection, transgender health care – and the [“Don’t Ban Equality Statement”](#) signed by hundreds of companies addressing the right to access abortion.

These actions followed the widely-noted 2019 statement from the Business Roundtable (BRT), signed by 181 CEOs, that redefined corporate purpose from delivering value exclusively to shareholders towards value for a broader set of stakeholders.⁸⁵ (A year prior to the BRT statement, Bank of America CEO Brian Moynihan had said, “Our jobs as CEOs now include driving what we think is right. It’s not exactly political activism, but it is action on issues beyond business.”⁸⁶)

Following the *Dobbs* ruling, businesses can expect to field many more questions about their reproductive health care insurance and related benefits from multiple stakeholders, employees first among them. As noted above, the vast majority of women in the U.S. say they would want their employer’s insurance to cover the full range of reproductive health care, including abortion. While Americans’ views on abortion are nuanced and there are regional variations in views, when considering changes to policies, companies – particularly those that operate in multiple states – would be wise to anticipate that overall employee opinion will skew toward the public’s support for the *Roe v. Wade* framework, which has grown stronger over time.⁸⁷

Another measure of employee sentiment is evident in employee charitable giving. The employee giving platform Benevity cites reproductive health care provider Planned Parenthood as consistently being one of the top beneficiaries of employee charitable giving.⁸⁸

Investor expectations. In 2019, in an initiative organized by Rhia Ventures, a cohort of 40 institutional investors, signed a letter to more than thirty major corporations to inquire about insurance policies and benefits related to reproductive health, as well as positions on public policy and political spending that impact reproductive rights. This began an ongoing program of corporate engagement between investors and numerous companies. In the 2020–2022 proxy seasons, investors filed 28 shareholder proposals, some of which were withdrawn following constructive dialogues with companies. Participants in dialogues and proposal filings include an array of pension funds, asset managers and owners, foundations, and religious investors. Interest

from investors in engaging with corporations has grown since the May 2022 Supreme Court draft leak, and **publicly traded companies can expect more demand for investor dialogue and more shareholder proposals.**

Others in the ESG (environmental, social, governance) investing community are taking notice of corporate policies. Coverage for reproductive health is now included as contributing metric to both the Bloomberg Gender Equality Index (GEI) and the Equileap Global Gender Equality Index (EQUAL).

ESG investors have long been frustrated by a lack of quality metrics regarding corporate practices on the “social” component of ESG. In 2019, the Human Capital Management Coalition, a group of pension funds and asset managers, released a statement that declared “Absent reasonably robust information about how a company manages its human capital, investors are unable to make fully informed decisions about a company’s business, risks and prospects, for investment, engagement or voting purposes.”⁸⁹ In 2021, responding to such pressures, Securities and Exchange Commission Chairman Gary Gensler directed his staff to propose recommendations for Commission’s consideration on human capital disclosure.

Siting pressures. In the wake of the *Dobbs* decision, companies may face pressure to relocate operations from states that ban abortion, refrain from expanding operations, boycott businesses from those states, and decline to hold gatherings in them. Media coverage of the disconnect

between corporate values and political spending has been widespread in 2022.

Groups such as Equity Forward and the Sustainable Investments Institute have produced reports on the topic.⁹⁰

Following the 2019 Georgia abortion ban,⁹¹ employers such as Sirius XM, which had recently opened a new headquarters in Atlanta, faced significant internal pressure from employees to leave the state. While the company ultimately decided to stay, executives were continuing to monitor the situation.⁹² Companies also reconsidered their presence in Alabama after a similar

restriction was passed.⁹³ San Francisco became the first major city to institute a procurement ban on companies headquartered in states with restrictive abortion policies.⁹⁴

Of course, companies will also face scrutiny and punitive measures from anti-choice organizations. Companies are understandably wary taking public on controversial issue, and there are attempts in some quarters to punish (or prevent) companies for insuring abortion and offering

“Between developers and major real estate brokers in Texas, nobody’s excited about abortion becoming illegal. There’s a concern from states in the Sun Belt that have been so successful that you can’t take the economic development success for granted. There’s legitimate concerns that this could eliminate a Texas city or put a rival location over the top.”

— John Boyd, principal of The Boyd Company, a national site-selection firm

abortion-related travel benefits. In our view, because most Americans consistently support abortion access, the long-term brand risk associated with upholding access to comprehensive reproductive and sexual health care may well be overestimated.

Recent history provides a lesson on how many companies took a stand on a once- “third rail” issue and continued to thrive while facing down pressures to relent. The past few decades have seen a dramatic improvement in the workplace policies and environment for LGBTQ employees. In 1993, only eight Fortune 500 companies provided domestic partner benefits. By 2001, the number had grown to more than 100. By the time marriage equality was before the Supreme Court in 2015, 379 companies had signed-on to an amicus brief testifying that “State laws that prohibit or decline to recognize marriages between same-sex couples hamper employer efforts to recruit and retain the most talented workforce possible in those states. Our successes depend upon the welfare and morale of all employees, without distinction.”⁹⁵ Corporations have rallied to successfully oppose other anti-gay measures.⁹⁶ Indeed, the Walt Disney Company faced significant employee backlash for failing to take an early public stand against Florida’s “Don’t Say Gay” law in 2022.

Research suggests that these actions do not negatively impact business value. In 2018, Harvard Business Review tested the impact of openly gay Apple CEO Tim Cook’s public activism on behalf of LGBTQ equality. Their nationally representative survey found that Cook’s stances had no impact on the purchasing plans of marriage equality opponents and actually bolstered intent to purchase Apple products amongst the majority of survey respondents.⁹⁷

Business Driver 6

Economic Impact

Companies need to be concerned about the local, regional and national economic impacts of abortion bans in addition to the potential impacts to their own bottom lines.

The Turnaway Study studied the impacts of being denied an abortion upon 1,000 women over a five-year period (2010-2015). Among its findings:

- Women who cannot access abortion when needed are three times more likely to be unemployed.
- Women who were turned away and went on to give birth experienced an increase in household poverty lasting at least four years relative to those who received an abortion.
- Years after an abortion denial, women were more likely to not have enough money to cover basic living expenses like food, housing and transportation.
- Being denied an abortion lowered a woman's credit score, increased a woman's amount of debt and increased the number of their negative public financial records, such as bankruptcies and evictions.

These women were also more likely to stay in contact with a violent partner while raising the child alone. Their children were more likely to live below the federal poverty level, and more likely to suffer from certain chronic conditions. These impacts are felt harder by Black women, Hispanic women, low-income women, rural women, queer birthing people individuals, and others who are socially or economically marginalized or reliant on Medicaid, which does not cover abortion except in rare circumstances.⁹⁸

Early research into the aggregate economic impact of abortion restrictions at the state and national level has produced sobering results. A 2021 study produced by the Institute for Women's Policy Research (IWPR) estimated the potential economic impacts of eliminating abortion restrictions at the state level, finding that such restrictions inhibit labor force participation for women in their reproductive years by 1.15%, and private sector earnings growth by 9.12% (see *Figure 5*). The study concludes that if all state-level abortion restrictions were eliminated:

- 505,000 more women ages 15 to 44 would be in the labor force and that they would earn over \$3.0 billion dollars annually
- Currently employed women ages 15 to 44 would gain \$101.8 billion in higher earnings annually, and
- State economies would benefit by \$105 billion per year.

Figure 5. Impact of Eliminating Abortion Restrictions on U.S. Labor Force Participation and Earnings Growth for Women Ages 15–44 by Race/Ethnicity

Group	Labor Force Growth (%)	Private Sector Earnings Growth (%)
White	1.09	9.46
Black	1.27	9.92
Hispanic	1.28	8.33
Asian Pacific Islander (API)	0.97	7.13
Other/Mixed	1.33	8.90
Overall	1.15	9.12

Source: [Institute for Women's Policy Research, 2021](#)

The states estimated to be losing the most include Texas (\$14.6 billion per year), Florida (\$6.6 billion), California (\$5.5 billion), Pennsylvania (\$5.4 billion), Missouri (\$5.3 billion) and Missouri (\$5.3 billion).⁹⁹

Another study from IWPR examined the relationship between contraceptive access in the U.S. and a number of economic outcomes, identifying causal impacts. Among their findings:

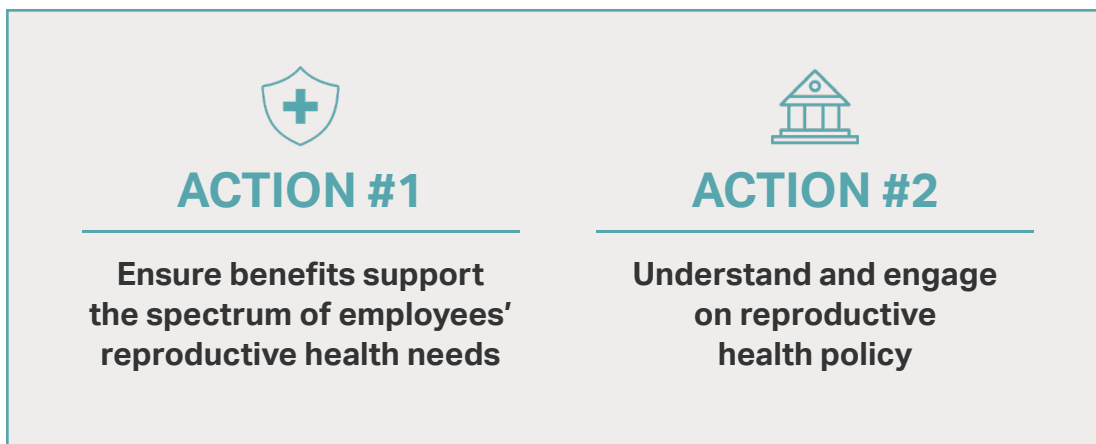
- Access to contraception is believed to be responsible for a 15% increase in women's labor force participation from 1970 to 1990.
- Contraceptive access is responsible for nearly one third of the increases in the proportion of women in professional fields in the same period.
- Contraceptive access in her early reproductive years increased a woman's annual earnings in her early 40's by 11 percent.¹⁰⁰

"Eliminating the right of women to make decisions about when and whether to have children would have very damaging effects on the economy and would set women back decades.... Research also shows that [Roe v. Wade] had a favorable impact on the well-being and earnings of children. There are many research studies that have been done over the years looking at the economic impacts of access or lack thereof to abortion, and it makes clear that denying women access to abortion increases their odds of living in poverty or need for public assistance."

— Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen, remarks before the Senate Banking Committee, May 10, 2022

A Call to Action

Corporate executives, human resource and benefits managers, health plan administrators, and investors must take action to improve access to reproductive health in two mutually reinforcing ways.



Action #1: Ensure Benefits Support the Spectrum of Employees' Reproductive Health Needs

Companies can start by ensuring that employees have access to comprehensive reproductive health care, including contraception and abortion.

Most medium and large employers maintain self-funded insurance plans, which allow companies to customize their coverage. Self-funded plans are governed by the Employee Retirement Income Security Act (ERISA) and while they must comply with all federal laws, including the ACA contraceptive mandate, they are not obligated to comply with state mandates or restrictions on health plan coverage for contraception or abortion.¹⁰¹

Smaller companies are often fully insured and required to abide by all state mandates and restrictions, including restrictions on abortion coverage in private health plans. They are also generally limited to the standard options offered by their insurance providers.

Interviews with employers for this report suggest that companies frequently fail to provide both unrestricted coverage for abortion (that is not limited to specific circumstances) and contraceptive care that exceeds the ACA mandate. This occurs for several reasons:

- Those designing health plans may overlook the realities of reproductive health care or underestimate its critical importance for women, especially with so few women in corporate executive roles that are responsible for plan design.

“One of the safest, least controversial moves a company can make without isolating employees or customers who don’t support abortion is tweaking their benefits policy, whether it’s offering a travel stipend or getting abortion to be categorized as an elective procedure.

— Johnny C. Taylor Jr., president and CEO,
Society for Human Resource Management

(Source: [CNBC Make It](#), June 13, 2022.)

- Stigma around reproductive health care, particularly abortion, limits open conversation about these benefits with human resource teams. Unlike other benefits, which are often raised by Employee Resource Groups or in employee surveys, few employees feel comfortable discussing abortion or contraception with colleagues or may fear for their privacy.
- In designing health plans, self-insured companies are not required to meet state mandates and they may overlook enhancements to abortion or comprehensive contraception if insurance brokers or advisors do not raise the issue.
- Fully insured companies rarely have the opportunity to negotiate for additional coverage if robust reproductive health care coverage is not included in the standard plans offered by their insurance providers. .

Many companies engaged for this research noted it was the first time they considered abortion coverage in their health plans.

Companies with self-funded health plans can take quick action to close gaps in coverage that may have emerged from an oversight in initial plan design. Companies that are fully insured will need to work closely with their insurance carriers to raise these issues and identify solutions that fit within their offerings. In both cases, we recommend the following:

- **Auditing coverage:** Conduct an audit to determine the extent to which coverage for contraception exceeds the ACA mandate, whether abortion is covered without restriction, and whether employees can access care in states with few comprehensive reproductive health providers (see *Figure 6*). As part of the audit, consider an anonymous employee survey to evaluate satisfaction with reproductive health benefits, given that many employees may not feel comfortable discussing contraception and abortion openly.
- **Closing gaps in coverage:** Following an audit, work to close identified gaps in reproductive health coverage. Self-insured companies can make a simple choice to add missing benefits.

Fully insured companies may need to negotiate with their insurance providers, use third party apps or administrators, or establish health reimbursement accounts (HRAs) to fund uncovered or under-covered services. Ten states currently restrict insurance companies from covering abortion fully-insured private plans; nine of them require employers to purchase abortion riders to do so.¹⁰²

- **Investing in benefits:** Supporting the reproductive wellbeing of employees also means providing supportive benefits to parents, so that they can continue to work while starting or growing a family. These include high-quality perinatal care, paid parental leave, affordable childcare, and accommodations for working parents such as lactation rooms, flexible work hours and permission to work remotely. For hourly workers, companies need to ensure that shift schedules support demands such as school, childcare, and health care needs. (See Rhia Ventures' report [*From Here to Maternity: The Business Case for Strong Maternal Healthcare Benefits in the Private Sector.*](#))
- **Creating a supportive culture:** Create a culture that encourages the use of reproductive health benefits by sharing clear information about coverage, finding ways to reduce stigma around comprehensive reproductive health in conversations about benefits, and providing flexibility to utilize services.

Figure 6:

COMPREHENSIVE REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH CARE BENEFITS CHECKLIST

Contraception: In addition to achieving full compliance with the ACA contraceptive mandate:

- ✓ Cover all FDA-approved birth control drugs, devices, products, and services, and vasectomies for men.
- ✓ Ensure all contraceptive options are covered without cost-sharing.
- ✓ Cover a 12-month supply of birth control dispensed at one time, without cost-sharing.
- ✓ Cover over-the-counter emergency contraception without requiring a prescription.

Abortion

- ✓ Cover abortion without restrictions relating to the health or life of the pregnant person, rape or incest, or fetal abnormality. Avoiding confusing language such as “medically necessary” or “therapeutic abortions.”
- ✓ Cover the cost of travel to access abortion care when it cannot be accessed within a reasonable distance of the employee's home.
- ✓ Allow adequate time off for travel and recovery (at least 3 days for a first trimester abortion, 5 days for second trimester, and 10 days for third trimester).

Location

- ✓ When evaluating site expansion opportunities (including convention and conference locations), consider the state's laws concerning reproductive health care and your company's ability to mitigate any negative impacts to employees. Identify opportunities to inform or influence such policies.

Leading companies are taking proactive steps to support reproductive health

After a wave of states passed sweeping abortion bans in the 2019 (which were subsequently enjoined by courts), some companies enacted a policy to cover travel costs for employees for who needed to travel out of state to access abortion care. More companies began offering this benefit following the implementation of a near-total abortion in Texas in September 2021, and still more stepped forward following the leaked Supreme Court draft decision for *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* in May 2022. The companies include Microsoft, Amazon, Apple, Citigroup, Alphabet, Hewlett Packard, Levi Strauss, Match, Netflix, Salesforce, Starbucks, Tesla, Yelp and more.

Rhia Ventures maintains a [public database](#) listing companies that have publicly pledged to cover abortion-related travel, affirmed their support for employee access to reproductive health care, set guidelines for abortion-related paid time off policy and/or are supporting reproductive health care, rights or justice organizations.

A recent survey found that 69% of employees in the U.S. did not know if their health plans covered abortion care, demonstrating an opportunity for employers to make these benefits more widely understood.¹⁰³

Rhia Ventures has observed that many companies do not communicate abortion coverage clearly. For example, some policies stipulate that “medically necessary” or “therapeutic” abortions are covered, without stipulating whether these definitions include abortions undertaken for nonmedical reasons (commonly referred to as “elective” abortions).

To establish a supportive culture, companies can look to the recent progress made in areas like HIV or mental health care. After decades of stigmatization, more open communication around mental health needs in the workplace has led to a dramatic increase in mental health offerings, with 68% of companies noting that they will increase mental health offerings in coming years.¹⁰⁴

Action #2: Understand and Engage on Reproductive Health Policy

To provide access to comprehensive reproductive health care, companies must understand and acknowledge the influence of the external environment in the communities where employees live and work. Policies impact employee access to reproductive health care in the differing ways:

- **Employees covered by employer-sponsored insurance:** Coverage of several foundational reproductive health care services, such as abortion and male contraception (e.g., vasectomies, condoms), are not mandated by the ACA. As a result, states can place restrictions on which services are offered through fully-funded insurance packages (but not self-funded ones). Currently, eleven (11) states prohibit coverage of abortions from being included in private insurance policies sold in the state to fully-funded employers (with certain exceptions).¹⁰⁵
- **Employees excluded from employer-sponsored insurance:** Employees who are not covered by employer-sponsored health insurance, including most contract and hourly workers, are affected by a greater number of restrictions imposed by the marketplace plans to whom they may turn for insurance. Twenty-six states prohibits plans sold on state Marketplaces from covering abortion (with certain exceptions).¹⁰⁶
- **All employees regardless of insurance coverage:** States have passed hundreds of laws that prevent women from easily accessing abortion services, regardless of insurance coverage. Twenty-five (25) states have imposed a waiting period (typically 24 hours) between an initial consultation and the completion of an abortion procedure, thus requiring two trips. This requirement is unique to abortion services and results in women enduring additional cost for travel and lodging, a potential increase in childcare expenses, and additional time off from work.¹⁰⁷ As noted above, experts estimate dramatic increases in the average distance women will need to travel to obtain abortion care in the post-*Dobbs* legal environment.
- **Prospective employees:** State policy also influences a company's ability to attract the next generation of employees. 70% of women ages 18-44 would be discouraged from taking a job in a state that restricts access to abortion, as would 59% of men in the same age cohort.¹⁰⁸ Recognition of this challenge spurred several cities, including Atlanta, Cleveland, Toledo, and Columbus to oppose state level restrictions on reproductive health, anticipating negative economic impacts.^{109,110,111,112}

State-level restrictions will be in flux for many months and even years to come. For the latest information on the implications for health insurance, see online resources provided by [Guttmacher Institute](#) and the [Kaiser Family Foundation](#).

Companies can take action to inform practical public policy in four ways:

- **Lobby elected officials:** Connect directly with lawmakers to help them understand the business and talent benefits of access to reproductive health, and the negative impacts of restricting access.
- **Assessing the impact of political spending and reconsidering contribution guidelines:** Conduct due diligence on direct and indirect political giving, including employee political action committees (PACs), to ensure that contributions do not undermine corporate values, commitments, culture, or brand.

- **Align corporate political spending with company values:** Assess whether corporate and employee PAC contributions are undermining organizational commitments to protect employees' access to reproductive health care, and adjust contributions accordingly.
- **Signal public support for reproductive health:** Public statements from companies supporting access to reproductive health care are powerful. Companies can endorse the "[Don't Ban Equality](#)" open letter, or make individual statements, as Netflix and Disney's did in response to the 2019 Georgia abortion ban.^{113,114}
- **Sign on to *amicus curiae* briefs:** Demonstrated support from the business community can be a compelling component of legal appeals challenging policy restrictions on reproductive health care. Companies and corporate executives have signed briefs on previous cases related to reproductive health (see [Whole Woman's Health v. Cole](#), [State of California v. Health and Human Services](#) and [Peggy Young v. UPS](#).)

Recommendations for Investors

Investors have a unique opportunity to influence the reproductive health coverage offered by their portfolio companies. We recommend the following actions.

1. Engage with portfolio companies about reproductive health. Seek to understand their approach as providers of insurance and benefits and discuss challenges and opportunities related to public policy and political spending. This report can serve as a conversation-starter.
2. Encourage companies to become more transparent about their reproductive health care benefits, to strengthen their policies, and adopt risk mitigation measures.
3. Encourage ESG research firms to track and benchmark corporate policies and behavior in this area.
4. Incorporate corporate performance in this area into ESG evaluation of companies.
5. Collaborate with other investors to promote greater corporate awareness and responsibility on reproductive health issues to company management and boards.
6. Vote proxies in support of shareholder proposals seeking greater transparency and responsibility in this area.

For more information, contact corporate.engagement@rhiaventures.org.

Conclusion

Companies have the power to provide medical coverage, define workplace culture, and influence public policy. As a result, they exercise enormous influence on reproductive health for their employees.

Access to reproductive health care is essential for the health and wellbeing of workers, their partners, and their families. The companies that support reproductive health will see strong and continuous dividends, through improved participation, productivity, and advancement for women and their partners in the workplace. Conversely, the consequences of inaction are far-reaching and hold significant risks, both for individual companies and for the American economy.

Companies can no longer afford to remain on the sidelines of this important issue. It is time for companies to leverage their power to support reproductive health.

Acknowledgements

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Contact

Shelley Alpern

shelley@reprohealthinvestors.org

Authors

Shelley Alpern, Rhia Ventures

Neeraja Bhavaraju, FSG

Alexandra Geertz, FSG

Nina Harstad, FSG

Camila Novo-Viaño, FSG

Jen Stark, Tara Health Foundation

Laura Watry, FSG

