



GAO Report – Diversity in the Technology Sector: Federal Agencies Could Improve Oversight of Equal Employment Opportunity Requirements

WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT DIVERSITY IN TECH

There remains a persistent lack of racial, ethnic, and gender diversity in the technology workforce. Particularly, the environment and access to these opportunities have not improved in more than a decade, for women, Black and Hispanic workers. The fact is, leading technology firms lag in drawing from the available talent pool of women, Black, and Hispanic people technology workers.

In 2015, [ranking member Bobby Scott asked the Government Accountability Office \(GAO\) to examine:](#)

1. The trends over the past ten years in racial, ethnic, and gender diversity of the workforces at the leading U.S. technology companies, including those that have contracts with the federal government; and
2. The effectiveness of key federal programs that aim to improve diversity in the science, technology, engineering or math (STEM) fields.

KEY FINDINGS

The glass ceiling for women and people of color has yet to be cracked within the leading technology companies.

- Women are significantly underrepresented in senior officer and manager (19 percent) positions, relative to their share of professional (30 percent) and mid-level management (29 percent) positions.
- This is also true for Asian, Hispanic, and Black workers, who hold low levels of representation at senior positions relative to roles serving as the pipeline for those positions.
- Over the past decade, within the technology sector, Black workers occupy fewer positions across the spectrum of jobs from senior management to mid-level management to professionals to technicians.

Technology firms have explained away their poor workforce diversity performance by claiming it is simply a pipeline problem however, the evidence does not support this claim.

- Hispanic workers earned ten percent, and Black workers seven percent, of Bachelors and Masters in technology degrees, yet they represent only five percent or less of the professionals and mid-level managers in the leading technology companies.
- The Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs (OFCCP) notes that the lack of diversity in the technology industry is not merely a pipeline problem, “Many technology jobs do not require a STEM degree. Only about a third of the technology workforce has a technology related degree; 36 percent of technology workers do not hold a degree at all.”
- The technology sector is doing a poor job of recruiting and retaining available talent. Women with technology degrees are far less likely to be employed as a technology worker than men with those degrees.

Employers themselves say that solving the problem requires commitment from top leadership.

- Representatives from one company stated that top management support for diversity efforts, such as setting hiring goals, can help move a company in the direction of achieving representation goals and that leadership is very important to this effort.

GAO'S RECOMMENDATIONS

- The OFCCP should require contractors to disaggregate the racial and ethnic data instead of setting placement goals for all minorities as a group to detect and address underrepresentation of particular minority groups.
- OFCCP should modernize how it selects the specific business/geographic segments of an enterprise to better capture the diversity data among subcontractors in the tech sector.
- Despite the priority laid out in its 2016-2019 Research and Data Plan, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission does not have a tool for collecting the discrimination data in the tech sector because the agency does *not* have an industry code to help identify the sector.