

# Study: Top tech firms bypassing Asian workers for exec jobs

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In this June 5, 2014 file photo, a worker rides a bike on Google's campus in Mountain View, Calif. Google, Yahoo and other major technology companies are far more inclined to hire Asians as computer programmers than to promote them to become managers or executives, according to a study released Wednesday, May 6, 2015. (AP Photo/Marcio Jose Sanchez, File)

Google, Yahoo and other major technology companies are far more inclined to hire Asians as computer programmers than to promote them to become managers or executives, according to a study released Wednesday.

The analysis uncovered a glaring imbalance between the number of Asian technology workers in non-management jobs and the number in leadership positions in Silicon Valley.

Ascend, a group focused on Asian business issues, based its conclusions on 2013 data filed with U.S. employment regulators by five Silicon Valley companies—Google Inc., Yahoo Inc. Intel Corp., Hewlett-Packard Co. and LinkedIn Corp.

"If you step in the cafeteria of any of these five companies, you will see plenty of Asian talent around," said Denise Peck, a co-author of the Ascend study and former vice president at computer networking equipment maker Cisco Systems. "It's only when you walk into the executive suites at these companies that you might see a problem."

Google declined to comment on Ascend's report. Intel and Yahoo reiterated earlier commitments to diversify their workforces. LinkedIn and HP didn't immediately respond to inquiries.

Ascend's findings may raise more questions about ethnic and gender biases in Silicon Valley at a time when the technology industry is already under attack for its hiring practices. The study is coming out on the same day that civil rights leader Jesse Jackson and his Rainbow Push organization are holding a summit in San Francisco as part of a year-old campaign to pressure tech companies into hiring and promoting more minorities and women.



In this Jan. 14, 2015 photo, a visitor poses for photos in front of the Yahoo sign at the company's headquarters in Sunnyvale, Calif. Google, Yahoo and other major technology companies are far more inclined to hire Asians as computer programmers than to promote them to become managers or executives, according to a study released Wednesday, May 6, 2015. (AP Photo/Marcio Jose Sanchez)

Most of the criticism has been spurred by the release of employment data showing an abnormally low percentage of women, blacks and Hispanics who have programming and engineering jobs.

There's no shortage of Asians in those technology jobs, according to those numbers and Ascend's new report.

Asians, though, are having trouble climbing up the chain of command, based on Ascend's analysis of the "professional" jobs at the five studied companies. The classification refers to white-collar positions that

typically require technical skills or college degrees.

The report found that Asians held 27 percent of the professional jobs yet only 14 percent were executives. By comparison, whites held 62 percent of the professional jobs at the studied companies, but filled 80 percent of the executive jobs.

Asian women faced a "double whammy" of racial and sexual discrimination, according to the report. The study found there is only one Asian female executive for every 287 Asian women professional jobs at the five companies. By comparison, there was one white female executive for every 123 white women in professional jobs, Ascend said. The ratio for white men was one executive for every 87 professional jobs.

The technology industry's shortage of Asian executives stems in part from a cultural divide, the report concedes.

Corporate America often embraces confident, outspoken individuals with unconventional ideas. In contrast, many Asians are taught to be deferential and cling to a belief that doing a good job will automatically be rewarded, said Peck, a Chinese-American.

"There are cultural norms and attitudes that help get Asians to a certain level of success, but then work against them and hold them back from reaching a higher rank," Peck said.

The challenges aren't insurmountable. Microsoft Corp. is led by an Asian CEO, Indian-American Satya Nadella, who has received high marks since taking the job 15 months ago. Another Asian leader, Sundar Pichai, has worked his way up to become one of Google's top executives since joining the company 11 years ago.

In a Tuesday blog post that didn't directly address Ascend's report, Google said about half of its 55,000 employees have completed "unconscious bias" workshops as part of its diversity commitment.

"With an organization of our size, meaningful change will take time," wrote Nancy Lee, Google's vice president of people operations. "From one year to the next, bit by bit, our progress will inch forward."

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