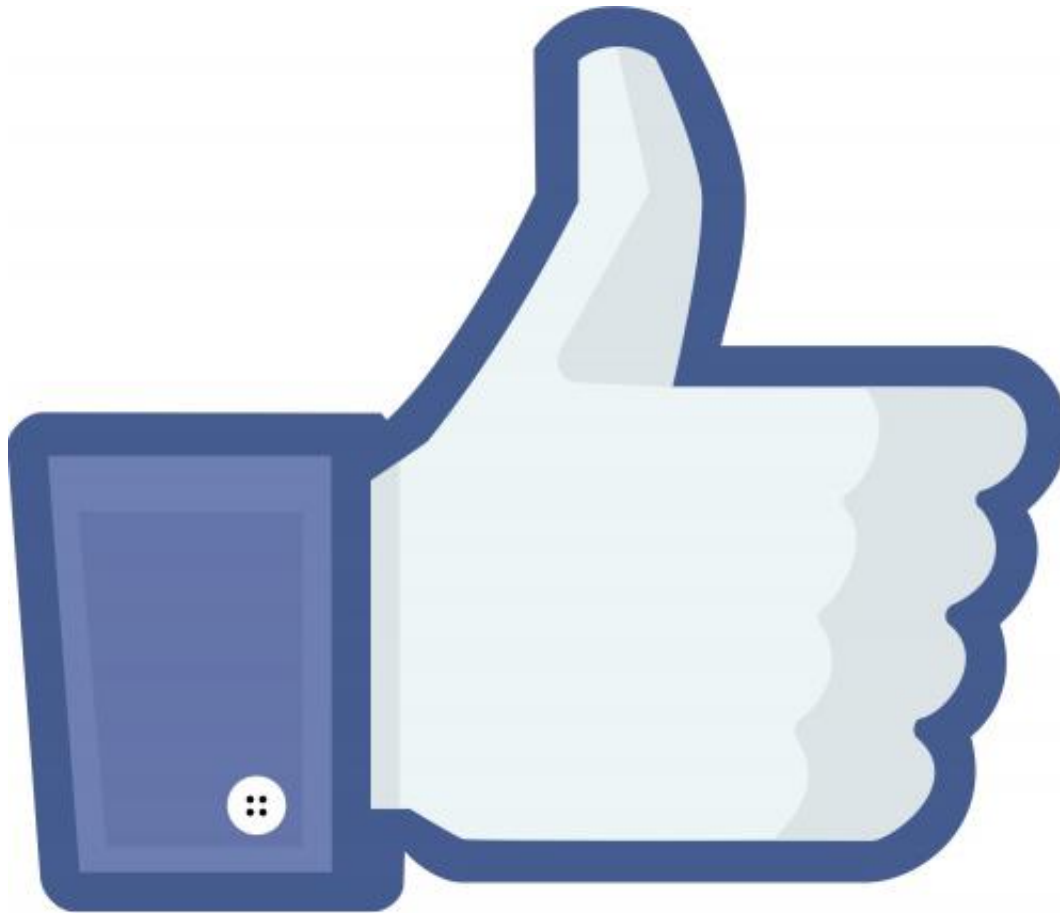


Facebook makes diversity gains but still struggles in key area

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Facebook made progress in improving the gender and racial balance of its workers, with women, African Americans and Hispanics all gaining

more representation in the Silicon Valley company's ranks over the last year.

Women now make up 35% of Facebook's global workforce, up from 33%, and hold 19% of technical roles, up from 17%, the company said Wednesday.

In the U.S., Facebook brought aboard more people of color. Three percent of Facebook workers are African American, up from 2%, and 5% of them are Hispanic, up from 4%. This marks the first time Facebook has increased the percentage of African Americans since it began publicly reporting its workforce demographics three years ago.

But the giant social network fell short where the lack of diversity is most acute, in the proportion of African-American and Hispanic workers in technical roles, which has stayed flat at 1% and 3% respectively since 2014.

The percentage of African Americans and Hispanics in senior leadership positions have also remained largely unchanged over that time period.

A big part of the problem, according to Facebook's global diversity chief Maxine Williams: Too few people of color have the specialized education and training for technical roles at Facebook and too few of them apply for jobs there.

African Americans now make up 6% of Facebook workers in non-technical roles, up from 2% in 2014, and Hispanics make up 8%, up from 6% in 2014, Williams noted.

"It's the same company. If there was this awful culture that was rejecting people, it would play out in that space as well," she said.

Last year Facebook came under fire for blaming the recruitment "pipeline" for the low numbers of African Americans and Hispanics in technical roles, prompting a protest with the hashtag #FBNoExcuses.

Diversity advocates say Silicon Valley is not tapping into available talent.

"Tech companies should be asking themselves: How do we close the gap between the approximately 18% of computer science and computer engineering graduates who are Black or Latinx, and our own technical workforce?" said Joelle Emerson, founder and CEO of Paradigm, a strategy firm that consults with [tech companies](#) on diversity and inclusion.

Pressure to employ a more diverse team is only intensifying as Facebook laps the globe. Having [women](#) and underrepresented minorities brainstorming and building, not just using, the products dreamed up by Facebook is quickly becoming a business necessity. The giant social network announced in June that it now reaches 2 billion users each month.

"If anything, it's a bigger priority," Williams said.

For a fast-growing Internet giant to swing percentage point gains in one year is no easy feat, especially when competing for top technical talent, the lifeblood of technology companies. Rivals such as Google have also struggled to increase the percentage of African Americans and Hispanics in technical roles.

According to a report earlier this year from Bloomberg, Facebook began giving incentives to recruiters in 2015 to find engineering candidates who were underrepresented at the company, namely women, African Americans and Hispanics workers. But during the final hiring stage, a small committee of high-ranking engineers vetoed promising candidates.

Williams denied the report.

Facebook has made the biggest strides in bringing more women into technical roles. According to Williams, women account for 27% of new graduate hires in engineering and 21% of new technical hires.

Tech companies have been pouring resources and money into diversity efforts since Google ushered in a new wave of disclosure about workforce diversity in 2014 when it reported its lopsided demographics for the first time.

Observers blame the paucity of women and people of color on the recruiting methods and insular corporate cultures of these companies, especially in Silicon Valley, which has historically been dominated by white and Asian men. At Facebook, 49% of employees are white and 40% are Asian.

Data show many more African-American and Hispanic students major in computer science and engineering than work in jobs in the tech industry. Nine percent of graduates from top engineering programs are black and Hispanic, according to a report from the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

Among the findings in the EEOC's Diversity in High Tech report: Tech companies had more white employees (69%) than the average hired by all firms (64%) and more Asian-Americans (14% vs. 5.8%). But high tech fell behind in hiring African Americans (7%, compared to 14% in all industries) and Hispanics (8% compared to. 13.9%).

USA TODAY analysis of the employment records of Facebook, Google and Yahoo in 2014 revealed that minorities are sharply underrepresented in non-technical jobs such as sales and administration, with African Americans faring noticeably worse than Hispanics.

The actual numbers of African Americans and Hispanics working at Facebook in the U.S. remain small.

In 2016, Facebook employed 152 black men and 107 black women, and 291 Hispanic men and 212 Hispanic women, out of a total of 11,241 employees, according to Facebook's EEO-1, the report on its workforce demographics it files each year with the federal government that the [company](#) released Wednesday. Facebook had refused USA TODAY's earlier requests for the report.

In 2015, Facebook employed 94 black men and 51 black women, and 219 Hispanic men and 144 Hispanic women, out of a total of 8,446 employees in the U.S.

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