DEI Didn’t Change the Workforce All That Much. A Look at 13 Million Jobs.

The Wall Street Journal, Inti Pacheco, Elizaveta Galkina and Theo Francis, Feb. 7, 2025

Corporate diversity pledges and DEI programs have generated a lot of controversy. They haven’t generated as much diversity.

Big companies are retreating from initiatives to diversify their workforces amid a legal and political backlash, and the Trump administration is rooting out such practices in the federal government. DEI opponents argue those initiatives and practices amount to reverse discrimination.

Yet such policies haven’t radically changed who advances up the corporate ladder in the short time they have been in place, a Wall Street Journal analysis of 13 million workers at S&P 500 companies found.

After George Floyd’s murder in 2020, businesses stepped up efforts to broaden the mix of workforces and leadership teams. These diversity, equity and inclusion—or DEI—practices can include various approaches, from ensuring candidates for jobs come from a variety of backgrounds to using executive pay incentives to increase representation of specific groups in specific roles.

In the four years since then, the workforces of the biggest public U.S. companies have become slightly less white, and Asian and Hispanic employees have made modest gains, according to 2023 data provided by research firm DiversIQ. The numbers are drawn from reports companies provide on their U.S. workers to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

The picture is more lopsided in the upper ranks of these companies. White men have lost a little ground but still occupy half of all senior manager roles. White women—a bigger focus of corporate diversity efforts before 2020—have experienced the least change since then. The share of senior managers who aren’t white, meanwhile, rose to 26% from 22%.

A closer look at specific job categories shows Black and Hispanic employees still make up a small fraction of executive and other higher-paid professional jobs. In 2023, one in 20 senior managers was Black—less than half the share of Black workers in the broader U.S. workforce. Hispanic managers make up a similar share, well below their numbers in the total labor force. [...]

Gender divide

The balance of men and women in senior ranks also hasn’t changed significantly at many companies. At Meta Platforms, about 36% of the company’s executives and senior managers were female in 2023, almost unchanged from 2020.

The company’s overall workforce reflects a similar gender balance. While women made up a greater share of sales roles in 2023 than they did in 2020, they lost ground in lower-level management positions.

At 51%, people of Asian descent made up the biggest share of Meta’s U.S. workforce in 2023, up from 45% in 2020.

Meta said in January that it would roll back some of its diversity programs and that it would no longer dedicate a team to DEI.