



Research Brief

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The Impact of Equal Employment Opportunity

A pilot analysis of how EEO and DEI programs impact job satisfaction at a City agency

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In 2019, the New York City Council empowered the Equal Employment Practices Commission (EEPC) to analyze underutilization of people of color in the municipal workforce and provide policy recommendations to address it. To fulfill this mandate, the EEPC worked with an agency from 2023-2024 to analyze their workforce and talk to personnel about their experiences with the agency's EEO & DEI programs. The agency requested anonymity and thus is not identified by name in this brief or any other related reports. This agency's efforts to advance EEO & DEI initiatives for its personnel illuminate citywide issues with recruitment, retention, and ensuring a fair, equitable work environment.

Key Takeaways

- > The underutilization of women and people of color at the agency was similar to other City agencies
- > The agency retained women and people of color at higher rates than other agencies
- > Personnel had mixed feelings about the agency's EEO & DEI efforts
- > Many personnel did not believe employment decisions were made fairly

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EEO & DEI INITIATIVES

This agency has undertaken numerous initiatives to provide equal employment opportunities and promote diversity, equity, and inclusion

OUTREACH & RECRUITMENT

The agency implemented advertising and social media campaigns targeting neighborhoods with large Hispanic and Black communities.



We hold job fairs everywhere and are pretty successful...[W]e've done well to get people into an apprentice program...We're doing something right over the years but there is still so much more to do."

EMPLOYEE RESOURCE GROUPS

The agency encouraged the creation of Employee Resource Groups (ERGs). These groups connect personnel who share identities and experiences, provide support and resources to staff, and encourage networking. Staff liked these groups but also acknowledged their limitations in creating change.



The ERGs have definitely had an impact. There are always opportunities for growth and participation and making a greater impact...We share a lot of info, encouragement, info about hiring, [civil service], activities that encourage equity and inclusion, also making sure the divisions develop better relationships."

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT



I've received great professional training here. They'll send me for all types of trainings, professional development, training and so they have really, really been supportive in that role too."

The agency provided its personnel training opportunities, and has instituted programs that provide networking opportunities, rotations in other units, and skill building workshops.

STRUCTURED HIRING



Structured hiring has definitely helped create more diversity in [my team]."

The agency required structured hiring for some titles. For these openings, the agency conducted job analyses, created standardized interview questions, used diverse interview panels, and developed rating scales to evaluate candidates objectively.

EEO & DEI INITIATIVES

Personnel's opinions of the agency's EEO and DEI efforts were mixed, and the impact unclear

PERCEPTIONS OF EEO & DEI INITIATIVES

Personnel believed in the importance of diversity and providing equal employment opportunities.

“I think it's good to force people to be exposed to other ideas. If you have a unit that is made up of mostly one race or background, they should be looking for other people.”

Many staff expressed that the agency's initiatives have been successful and had a positive impact.

“[Certain] titles are very underrepresented by women across the board, but we're starting an apprenticeship program...and we think that might improve diversity in that title series across the board...If we can create more apprenticeship titles that don't require a lot of experience in those trades I think that will help a lot.”

Other staff questioned the effectiveness of these initiatives, and others questioned how committed agency leadership was.

“[T]here's a disconnect between the EEO office, agency leadership and then the employee body as a whole or a distrust rather between those populations.”

Highlight: Personnel believed in the civil service system's benefits but felt it complicates DEI goals in practice

Numerous participants – including many who spoke positively of New York City's civil service system overall – expressed concern and frustration with how it works in practice. They felt that those who make hiring decisions have often violated the spirit of the civil service system when hiring and promoting staff.

“I've seen people who've passed the test, but because they didn't get along with who they reported to, being passed over. It's too subjective.”

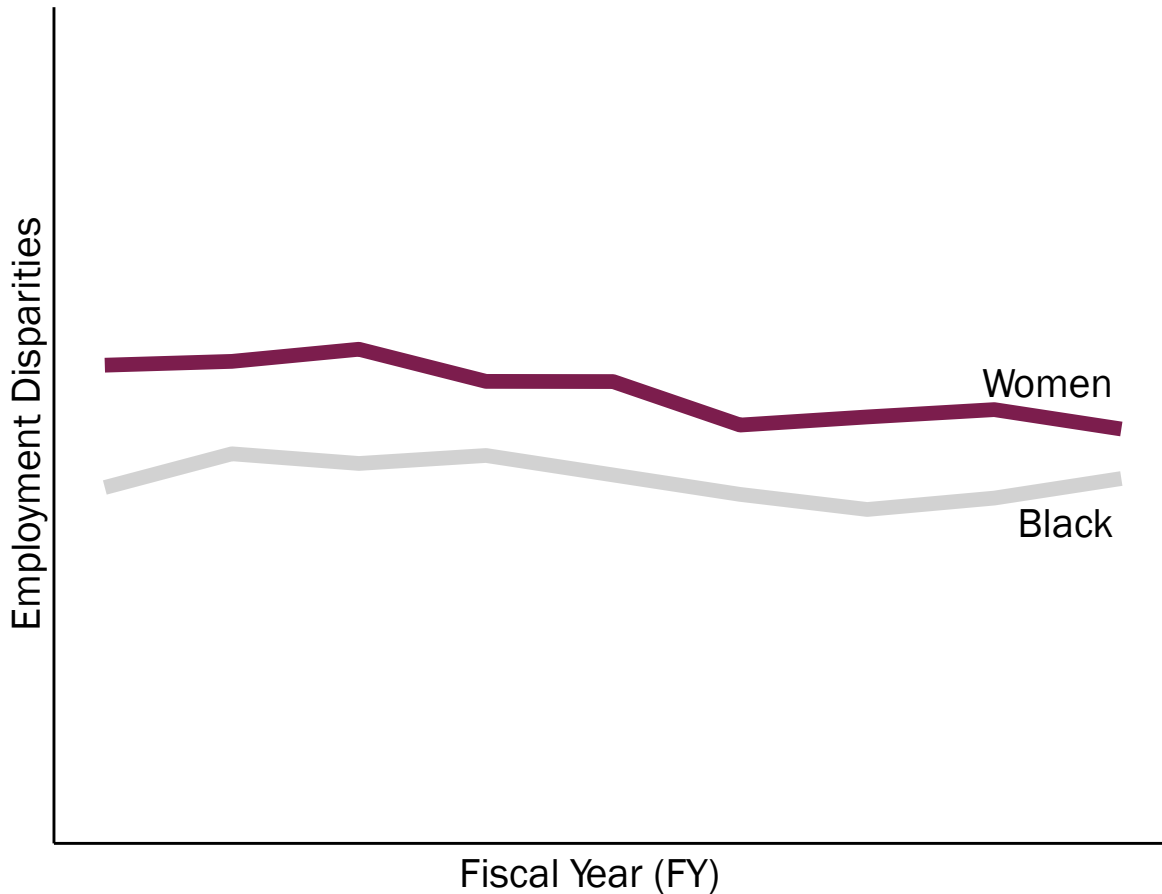
Another suggested the one-in-three rule was responsible for employees being mistrustful and skeptical of the selection process, and that the agency could usually “finagle” the system to get the candidate they want.

“[T]here's all shenanigans you can pull so people don't get called.”

UNDERUTILIZATION OVERVIEW

Women and Black personnel were the most severely under-represented in the agency's workforce

Figure 1. Total Employment Disparities in Job Groups with Underutilization



*We do not provide specific numbers because the agency has requested anonymity, and data on its workforce may allow readers to derive its identity.

Disparities for women and Black staff were considerably greater than they were for Asian or Hispanic personnel. As Figure 1 shows, the agency has seen some improvement in the underutilization of women. For Black workers, however, the disparities have remained similar.

What is underutilization?

Underutilization occurs when individuals in a demographic group are employed at a rate lower than their labor market availability (LMA). In this brief, we measure underutilization of individuals who identify as Asian, Black, or Hispanic, and women.

UNDERUTILIZATION KEY TAKEAWAYS

The agency had some improvement in the rate of titles with underutilization of Black workers.

The percentage of titles with underutilization of Black personnel decreased significantly.

Women and people of color stayed at higher rates than other City agencies.

Addressing underutilization requires, in part, retaining underutilized personnel at a rate that at least equals their presence at the agency. In 2024, the agency retained women and people of color at better rates than other City agencies. In the years before 2024, the agency's rate of retention of personnel from these groups was even higher.

Although the agency established a Structured Hiring initiative, there was not yet strong evidence it has had a significant impact.

For almost half of the titles in the initiative, the hiring of women and people of color did not improve in the years after the initiative was established.

Figure 2. Titles with Underutilization of Black personnel*



Figure 3. Workforce Representation vs. of Separation Rates*

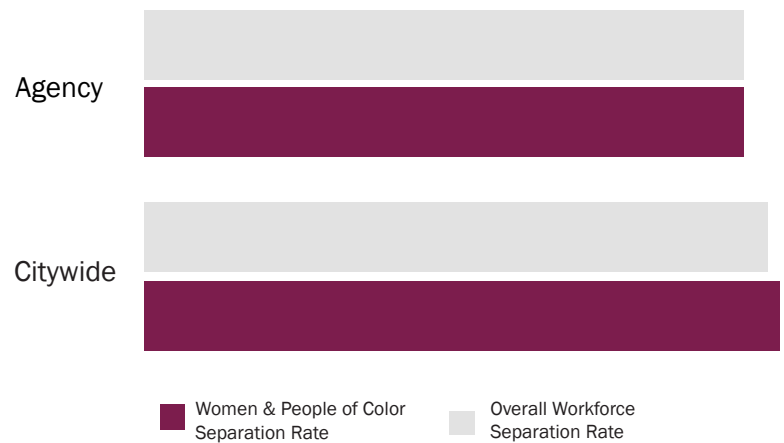
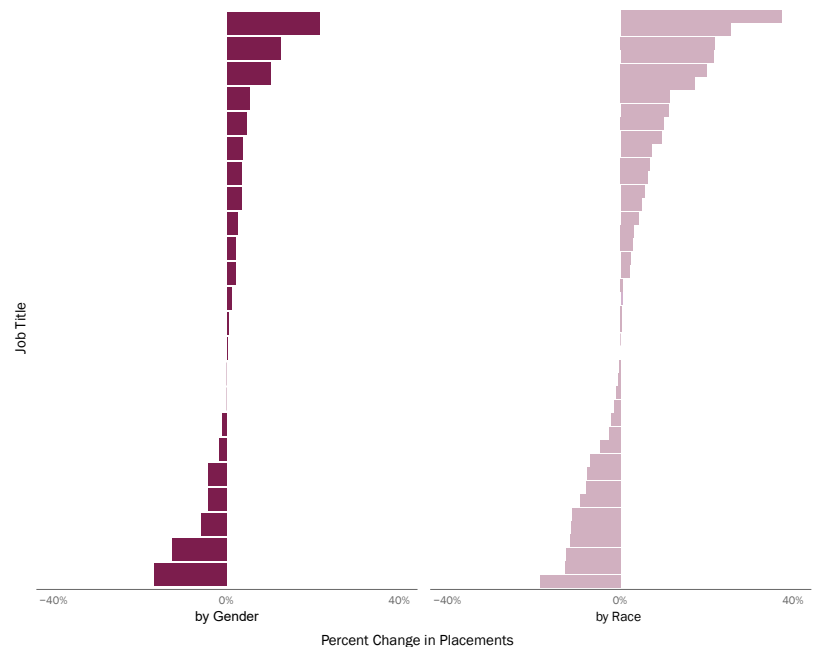


Figure 4. Structured Hiring - Changes in Placement Rates*



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FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

KEY FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS

1. There was a pervasive perception of favoritism. Some agency initiatives likely perpetuated that perception.

A large share of participants, even those who received promotions and expressed high job satisfaction, said that employment decisions across the agency were based on the personal preferences of those who make the decisions. Put more bluntly, a participant argued:

“[Y]ou can’t make it up unless you’re someone’s favorite, or their pet project.”

Recommendations:

- > Develop practices to make employment decisions fairer and more transparent.
- > Be mindful in the implementation of professional development initiatives that can help create a perception some staff move up the ladder unfairly.

2. Overall, employees liked—even loved—their jobs. Job satisfaction was strong across different demographic groups.

Job satisfaction at the agency was reasonably high. Many of the staff interviewed liked—and for many it would not be an exaggeration to say loved—their jobs.

“I’m born and raised in New York City, so what I love about my job is serving New Yorkers.”

The survey results were also positive, although not as favorable as what we heard in interviews. Most (86%) of the staff surveyed said their work was interesting and nearly all (90%) believed their work had a positive impact on the community.

3. Many personnel considered opportunities for advancement limited. Staff reported that opportunities varied widely depending on their unit or supervisor.

Some participants believed leaders and managers don’t see the potential of their staff. Many participants described experiences where they were denied training opportunities. Many participants expressed a desire to be exposed to other opportunities at the agency.

FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS



[W]e were disappointed because we felt the agency didn't give us enough material. We've gotten study materials from other people who are supervisors, who probably care and want you to progress, but the agency themselves didn't make any initiative to send out the information."

Recommendations:

- > Develop a policy for how personnel seek training and professional development opportunities.
- > Hold events where divisions make leaders and HR personnel available to answer questions from personnel about job opportunities.

4. The agency's rate of retention was better than the City's.

The agency retained women and people of color at a better rate than other city agencies in recent years. The agency should examine what has contributed to its better than average retention rates.

Recommendation:

- > The agency should make efforts to determine why they have had a better retention rate than other agencies, such as conducting surveys of personnel.

5. The longer one's tenure, the more dissatisfied they were with their job. Some staff believed DEI & EEO efforts have led to discrimination against older employees and those with longer tenure.

Several participants who had been at the agency for longer felt they were being taken for granted, denied opportunities to work on interesting projects, and did not receive necessary training to adjust to technological advancements in the workplace. The same participants suggested that younger staff were more valued and given preferential treatment.



[A]fter a certain point it's ageism. At a certain point you reach a plateau and they don't want to promote you; they just want you out the door because you don't fit the vision for what the agency ought to look like."

Recommendation:

- > Encourage the creation of an Employee Resource Group based on length of service at the agency.

THE RESEARCH

How did we assess the impact of EEO and DEI initiatives?

We interviewed 35 personnel

The interviews were semi-structured, meaning the facilitator had some flexibility when conducting the interview.

We conducted a climate survey of 660 personnel

We surveyed personnel. Participants were asked about their job satisfaction, performance evaluations, opportunities for professional development and career advancement, and their thoughts on the agency's EEO and DEI initiatives. The survey was open to all employees and was available for almost two months. Six hundred and sixty personnel participated.

We reviewed the agency's EEO policy and documentation

The Agency provided us with many internal documents related to EEO and DEI initiatives. We used these to assess the nature, purpose, and impact of these initiatives.

We analyzed the City's workforce data

We used the City's CEEDS database to analyze the Agency's workforce, including its rates of hiring, promotions, and separations, and its demographics.

THE AGENCY

The agency requested anonymity. This is why we often cannot provide specific data and statistics in this brief or other reports.

In the fourth quarter of Fiscal Year 2024, this agency had between 1,000 and 15,000 personnel. It had considerably more men than women. A majority of the agency's personnel were people of color.