**New York Times Union Finds Racial Disparities in Performance Reviews; Employees of color received significantly lower ratings than white employees, the union found, citing an analysis of company data**

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**Full text:**

An analysis by unionized New York Times journalists found that employees of color at the news outlet for years have received lower ratings in performance reviews, on average, than white employees.

Black staffers were 39% less likely than white employees to get one of the top two ratings on the Times' six-level scale, and 60% more likely to get one of the bottom two ratings, the union found. Hispanic workers were 44% less likely to get a top rating and 74% more likely to get a low one. Asian workers were 26% less likely to get a top rating and 37% more likely to get one of the bottom ones.

The report comes as the union, which represents more than 1,300 Times staffers, negotiates with Times management to renew a five-year contract that expired in March 2021. The union intends to discuss the report and continue its push for higher wages in an upcoming bargaining session, said Stacy Cowley, a New York Times reporter and officer for the Times union.

The report is an updated version of a 2020 analysis by the Times union that found racial disparities in performance reviews. Ms. Cowley said union members found the 2020 findings disturbing, and were motivated to dig deeper.

"We spent literally hundreds of hours working on it this year," she said, adding that the union "wanted to make absolutely certain our statistical approach was sound and this is really a problem, and we're convinced it is."

A New York Times spokeswoman said in a statement, "Having an equitable performance evaluation system is one of the most important levers we have to ensure we are developing and supporting the growth of our people in a fair manner." She added, "We're committed to a performance evaluation system that is fair and equitable, and we have been working to continuously improve it." The spokeswoman said the Times was reviewing the union's findings.

After the union's 2020 report, the Times hired a consultant to conduct a separate analysis and told the union that it found minimal and inconsistent disparities in performance ratings, but no evidence of a systemic problem, according to the report.

The union sent Times management the updated findings on August 17. The company responded two days later, saying it was committed to "a performance evaluation system that is fair and equitable," while criticizing the Guild for not giving it more time to review the findings, according to the report.

The union said performance reviews affect staff compensation because they are used to determine bonuses. Most staffers who received the top rating got a 1.9% bonus, and those with a rating of "meets all expectations''—equivalent to a three on a six-tier scale—got a 1.5% bonus, according to the report. Employees who got the two lowest ratings received no bonus at all, according to the report.

Black employees, who made up 10% of the union's total membership in 2021, accounted for nearly 18% of the second-lowest ratings that year, according to the report, while they received 6% of the top ratings. By comparison, white staffers who made up 68% of the union accounted for 71% of the second-lowest ratings, while they received 81% of the top ratings.

The more than 80-year-old Times union, which is part of the NewsGuild, said it is pushing for changes to the performance-review process. The Times agreed to create a committee with three Guild members and three management representatives to discuss ways to improve the system, according to the union report. The union also wants the Times to analyze its performance system using multiple methods, instead of what it views as the company's flawed approach.

Both sides have indicated support for a performance-review appeals process, the union report said.

"It is not clear whether the racial imbalance is a result of problems in the performance review system itself or whether that system is simply revealing barriers to success for employees of color at the company," the union wrote in the report.

Unions at media outlets in recent years have taken up issues such as improving their companies' diversity, equity and inclusion efforts.

The Times was involved in another labor skirmish earlier this year when it resisted the efforts by hundreds of its tech workers to organize. The group voted to unionize in March .

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Credit: By Alexandra Bruell

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