TECH, GENDER & SOCIAL MOBILITY

How to Empower Minority Groups with Economic Opportunities by Building Diverse Tech Teams

Sponsored by

NatWest Group

CODE FIRST GIRLS

NatWest are proud to sponsor the Tech, Gender and Social Mobility report with Code First Girls as it's an opportunity to solve the key barriers to social mobility and gender parity in the tech industry. It provides key insights that can help the industry close the gender and socioeconomic gap, so that everyone – no matter their background – can benefit from the opportunities that tech careers offer.

The UK's tech job market is projected to be worth £30 billion by 2025 – six times larger than it is now – and Code First Girls' analysis shows that there will only be one qualified woman for every 115 new roles by 2025. The UK already has a large tech skills gap with businesses struggling to recruit. This shows the importance of upskilling women and breaking down the barriers that stop their tech careers thriving.

This report explores the specific challenges faced by women, including those from ethnic minority and lower social-economic backgrounds. It aims to help the tech industry drive forward tangible changes that benefits individuals, society and businesses.

NatWest Group is a relationship bank for a digital world and we are building financial confidence for our 19 million customers across the UK. Technology and the people behind it are crucial to help us achieve this. Recruiting and retaining staff skilled in tech and data from a diverse talent pool is an important part of delivering the technology solutions and services our customers need. Code First Girls, which is working to get more women into the tech industry, is therefore a natural partner for us as we work to address these issues across the industry.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

WHAT TO EXPECT FROM THIS REPORT

Technology stands head and shoulders above every other sector in terms of impact on our everyday lives. It's the glue holding us together, boosting every industry, advancing innovation, and creating new employment opportunities. But while technology has shaped everything about our social and working lives, the people powering the sector are not as representative as they could be.

It's well established that diversity matters. Organisations with diverse teams not only perform better, they're more resilient, more innovative, more connected to their customers and clients and – yes – more profitable. Groupthink, where decisions are made because of the ease of conformity, is bad for business. So is having teams with people that look and sound the same.

As job vacancies in the UK are soaring and digital skills shortages dominate the headlines, business leaders are having to get creative about how and where they recruit staff. Once onboarded, nurturing diverse talent with upskilling opportunities, providing mentoring and career progression, and creating a place of work where everyone is supported to be themselves, is essential.

Despite diversity being high on the agenda for a number of years, progress in the UK technology industry has been very slow. The number of women employed in the sector has reached 26% but has only grown by around 5% in the past few years. And while the UK's tech job market is predicted to grow six times to be worth £30bn by 2025, there will only be one qualified woman for every 115 roles unless something significant changes. Action is urgently needed to develop the talent pipeline that is required.

Of course, diversity is not just about gender. One in four tech employees in the UK are women, but most are white. Research by Hired found only 3% of women working in technology are Black, compared to 29% who identify as Asian. Another 3% are Hispanic. One in 10 people consider themselves neurodiverse (versus around one in seven that live in the UK).

INTRODUCTION

WHAT TO EXPECT FROM THIS REPORT

In terms of socio-economic background, the Sutton Trust also found a significantly unrepresentative workforce employed in tech, particularly in more senior roles. More than two thirds of tech employees come from professional or managerial backgrounds and 21% attended independent or fee-paying schools.

There is much work to do. But the benefits of getting this right will spread far beyond one organisation and its profit line. Previous research found achieving gender parity in tech would add £2.6bn to GDP. And increasing social mobility across sectors, even modestly, could benefit the country's wider economy by up to £45bn.

So what will it take for technology leaders to attract more diverse talent to their teams, particularly when it comes to gender, race and socio-economic background? We spoke to more than 1,200 women in the Code First Girls community to discover what's holding them back in their profession, what they need from their employers to progress in tech and how others like them can be empowered to drive the sector – and themselves – forward.

Employer takeaway

Diversity in technology matters – for organisations themselves but also for the economic opportunities the sector is uniquely placed to provide. But there are still too many barriers for women from minority groups to overcome. This report identifies what those are and how employers can remove them to build truly representative tech teams.

CHAPTER ONE
THE CHALLENGE OF SOCIAL MOBILITY IN THE UK

WHAT IS SOCIAL MOBILITY?

What is social mobility? According to the Social Mobility Commission, it's the link between a person's occupation or income and the occupation or income of their parents. Where there is a strong link, there is a lower level of social mobility. Where there is a weak link, there's a higher level of social mobility. Put simply, it's the ability of a child to experience a better life than their parents. One indicator used by the Social Mobility Commission to judge socio-economic background is the occupation of the main household income earner when the person in question was 14 years old.

Countries with high levels of social mobility – such as Denmark, Finland and Norway – have conditions in which their citizens can thrive, driving economic growth. Factors such as fair wages, social protection, working conditions and lifelong learning all help those born into less affluent families to overcome systemic barriers to their success. In contrast, those countries with low social mobility – including Egypt, South Africa, and Senegal – have high inequality, poor educational opportunities and limited employment prospects.

"Only 35% of British adults believe everyone has a fair chance to go as far as hard work will take them"

The UK ranks 21st on the latest Global Social Mobility Index, far below European countries such as Belgium (8), Germany (11), France (12), and Ireland (18). Across the country, 33% of the pay gap is driven by family background, regardless of educational achievement. Only 35% of British adults believe everyone has a fair chance to go as far as hard work will take them and 46% believe where you end up in society is mainly determined by your background and who your parents are.

CHAPTER ONE
THE CHALLENGE OF SOCIAL MOBILITY IN THE UK

WHAT IMPACT DOES TECHNOLOGY HAVE ON SOCIAL MOBILITY?

Experts believe the pandemic has worsened social mobility after poorer families burned through savings during lockdown, were put on furlough, or resigned because of family commitments. Women have been particularly affected – one in three mothers, for example, lost their jobs or number of hours due to childcare responsibilities. And with the current cost of living crisis looming, rising interest rates and energy prices escalating, it's women who are more likely to feel the impact. According to the Women's Budget Group, women are the "shock absorbers of poverty". They're more likely to be poor, with lower levels of savings than men, caring responsibilities that prevent them from increasing their working hours, and tend to hold the main responsibility for budget management in poor households.

"It's estimated only 19% of technology workers are from a lower socio-economic background"

The technology sector is uniquely placed to make a real difference when it comes to social mobility. A study by the Institute of Fiscal Studies found computing and engineering were two of the university courses with the highest mobility rates. There are more routes into the profession and it costs less to qualify or upskill, compared to sectors such as medicine and law. It's also one of the better paying industries, with computer engineers earning an average of £50,000 per annum. According to the British Computer Society (BCS), three quarters of those in the tech profession are better off than their parents were at the same age.

Yet the proportion of employees from a working class background lags far behind the nationwide population. It's estimated only 19% of technology workers are from a lower socio-economic background (versus 33.3%). In contrast, those with parents from a professional managerial background make up 45% of workers (compared to 31.2% of the nationwide population). That's creating a class pay gap – those from lower socio-economic backgrounds can expect to earn £4,736 less per annum than their more privileged peers.

CHAPTER ONE
THE CHALLENGE OF SOCIAL MOBILITY IN THE UK

WHAT IS BEING DONE TO AFFECT CHANGE?

Code First Girls found a similar split after polling the women in our community. The majority of those surveyed (34.47%) had parents in modern professional and traditional professional qualifications. Among those that did identify themselves from a lower socio-economic group, 51.79% said their parents were in manual and service occupations, and 39.58% said their parents only finished high school.

Research has shown that recruiters across sectors are less likely to hire working-class candidates, even if they have the right skills and experience, because of 'cultural fit'. Those from lower socio-economic backgrounds have smaller social networks to tap into and are less likely to travel far for studies, work or leisure.

"Recruiters across sectors are less likely to hire working-class candidates, even if they have the right skills and experience"

Efforts to increase socio-economic diversity across technology are less advanced than those designed to target gender. Many businesses aren't even currently measuring their workforce 's socio-economic makeup or class pay gap. But if progress can be made here, technology companies could nurture and shape a new talent pool, develop new routes into the sector, and build more cognitive variance to develop better products and tools that serve everyone, regardless of background.

Employer takeaway

The UK is one of the lowest countries in the G7 for social mobility. But technology is uniquely placed to make a difference, thanks to its low barrier to entry, multiple avenues into the profession, and high pay. Efforts to increase diversity here will also help organisations find and nurture new talent pools and build better products and tools.

CHAPTER TWO
WOMEN'S BARRIERS TO TECH PRE-WORK

WHERE DOES THE PROBLEM BEGIN?

One lever often pulled in the fight to improve social mobility is education. But for women who will eventually work in technology, their experience at school often adds barriers they need to overcome, rather than removing them.

In 2021, the UK's Children's Commissioner launched the Big Ask survey to ask children about their hopes and worries for the future. More than half of the 550,000 responses were from girls, who named a range of professions they wanted to pursue – from surgeons and police officers, to mathematicians. But their responses also highlighted the pervasiveness of harmful gender-based stereotypes, particularly around STEM subjects.

"In 2021, 88% of girls who studied maths A level achieved an A* to C grade, compared to 84% of boys."

The notion that STEM is just for boys isn't backed by the evidence. In 2021, 88% of girls who studied maths A level achieved an A* to C grade, compared to 84% of boys. Almost one in four girls who took Physics received an A* compared to 20% of boys. Despite this, only 35% of STEM students in higher education are women. That number drops to 19% of those studying computer science.

CHAPTER TWO

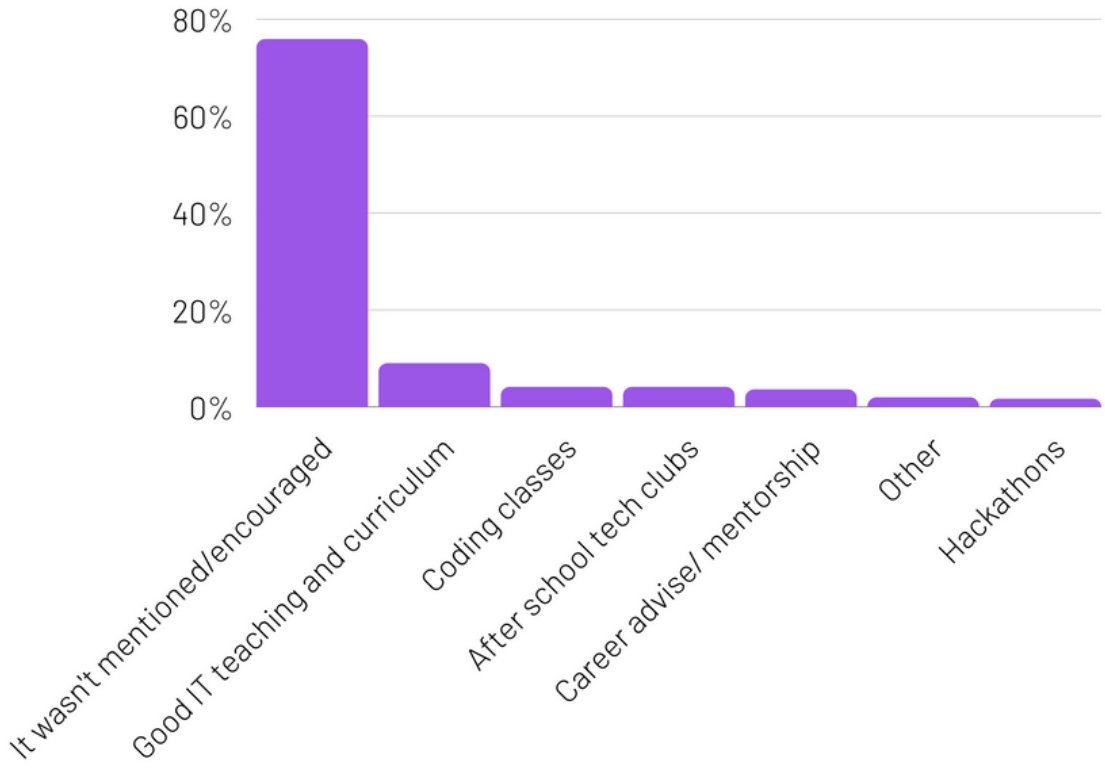
WOMEN'S BARRIERS TO TECH PRE-WORK

ARE GIRLS BEING ENCOURAGE INTO TECH AT SCHOOL?

When Code First Girls asked its community about their experience at school, more than four in 10 women said they didn't study STEM subjects because they weren't encouraged to (22.29% of all respondents and 27.27% of those from lower socio-economic groups agreed with this). More than 81% said they weren't taught coding at school, rising to 83% for those from working class backgrounds, and 87% for those that identify as neurodiverse. Interestingly, one in four POC respondents say they were taught coding while at school.

Overall, only 9% of respondents said they were encouraged to go into technology because of good IT teaching and curriculum. Three quarters of those polled weren't encouraged to pursue a career in technology at all. That figure was even higher (almost 76%) among those from lower socio-economic backgrounds, and 82% of those who identify as neurodiverse. Left to their own devices, those from working class backgrounds said a lack of female role models in the sector and seeing STEM as more suitable for boys were factors that put them off technology. But just as prevalent were internal pressures, such as not believing they had the right skills (14.85%), and not being confident enough in STEM subjects at school (15.15%).

FIGURE 1: IN WHAT WAYS WAS A CAREER IN TECH ENCOURAGED TO YOU AT SCHOOL?



CHAPTER TWO
WOMEN'S BARRIERS TO TECH PRE-WORK

WHY DOES EARLY INTERVENTION MATTER?

As Code First Girls research proves, early intervention matters. Something as simple as a throw-away remark, a curriculum that fails to champion female role models, or a lack of opportunity to see real STEM in action while at school, all have the potential to derail a promising tech career before it's even begun. Organisations such as Code First Girls and the Stemettes are having to step in to provide free training and early STEM experiences where the education system has failed.

Employer takeaway

The barriers women face in technology start at school. Despite efforts to encourage girls to study STEM subjects, they're still seen as subjects for boys. Code First Girls found many female students aren't encouraged by teachers to study STEM, or taught coding at school. Others lack confidence in themselves or don't believe they have the right skills for technology. Employers can look to support organisations such as Code First Girls and the Stemettes, for example, to provide inspirational opportunities in STEM, where the education system is falling behind.

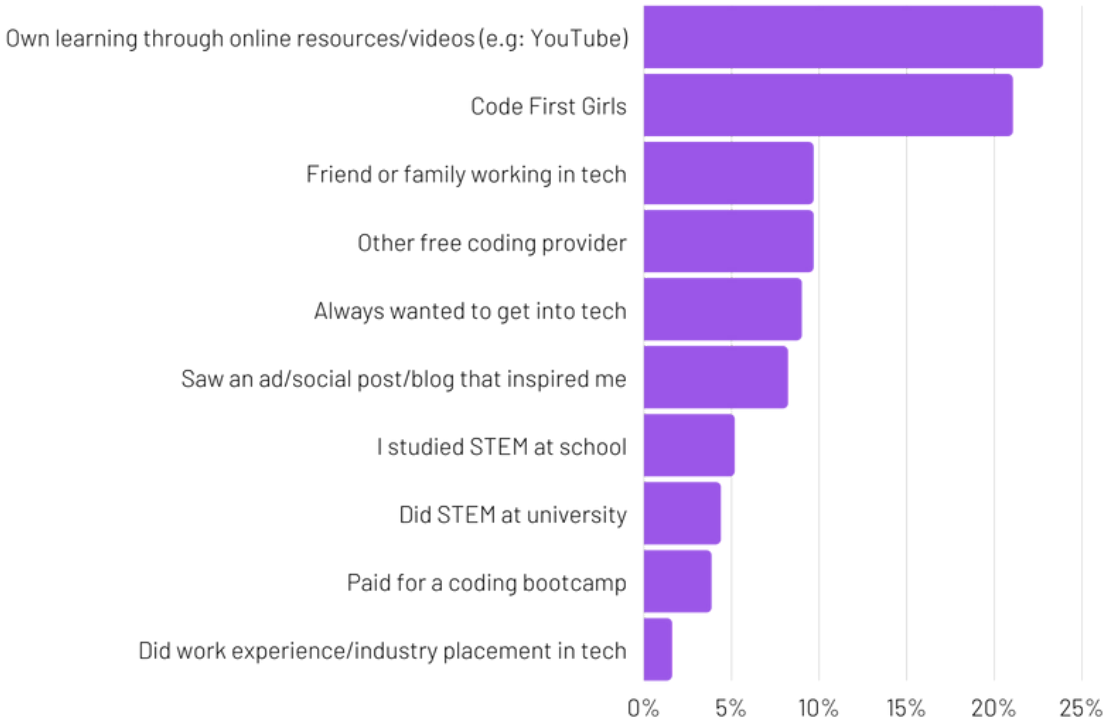
CHAPTER THREE
WHEN WOMEN SWITCH CAREERS

WHY ARE WOMEN CHOOSING STEM IN LATER LIFE?

Despite not being encouraged into tech while at school, many may find themselves considering it later in life. Code First Girls has taught more than 80,000 women to code, with 80% of our students coming from non-computer science, mathematics or engineering backgrounds. Almost half (49%) of our community are career switchers. That means that even if women have been discouraged to study STEM subjects at school, there's a career pathway available to them that's free of charge, and flexible around study, work or family commitments.

The most popular routes into technology for those from working class backgrounds in Code First Girls' community was a Code First Girls course (21.03%), self-directed online learning with resources such as YouTube (22.75%), and/or a friend of family member that worked in technology (9.66%). It's a similar picture for those who identify as neurodiverse or POC. A slightly higher proportion of those from ethnic minority backgrounds said they completed work experience or an industrial placement in technology, compared to the survey-wide average (2.15% vs 1.92%). Sadly it's expected a number of these initiatives will be deprioritised as organisations re-evaluate budgets in the face of tough economic conditions.

FIGURE 2: HOW DID YOUR PATHWAY INTO TECHNOLOGY BEGIN?



CHAPTER THREE
WHEN WOMEN SWITCH CAREERS

HOW TO ATTRACT CAREER SWITCHERS?

Once qualified, women considering a role in tech will prioritise different things than men. The language used in a job advert, the salary and benefits listed, and the number of candidate requirements can all discourage diverse talent from even applying.

Code First Girls' research revealed that the top things those from working class backgrounds look for are career progression and training opportunities, seeing the salary listed in a job ad, and flexible working. They were also more likely to want remote working, compared to the overall cohort (9.17% vs 8.72%) and an extended benefits package such as gym membership, health insurance and other discounts (4.82% vs 4.46%). Extended benefits were also popular with those that identify as neurodiverse and POC (5.04% and 4.88% respectively). Another factor POC respondents were more likely to look for is job security (7.14% said this was important vs 6.26% of all of those surveyed).

"Code First Girls' research revealed that the top things those from working class backgrounds look for are career progression and training opportunities"

On the other hand, those benefits that are not so appealing to those from a lower socio-economic background include international opportunities (2.14% vs 2.48% overall), and career coaching or counselling (2.62% vs 2.71%). Those who identify as neurodiverse are also less interested in international opportunities, compared to the overall cohort (1.57% vs 2.48%), although 3.11% of POC respondents agreed this was something they looked for.

CHAPTER THREE
WHEN WOMEN SWITCH CAREERS

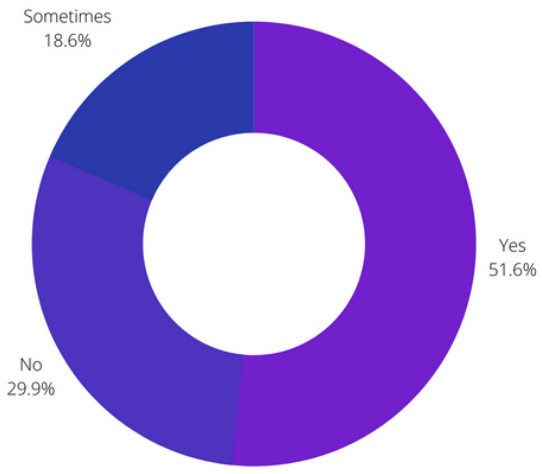
HOW DO JOB ADVERTS NEED TO CHANGE?

The words and layout used in a job advert can also have an impact – particularly those who are neurodiverse (1.57% vs 1.5% of all respondents said they look for this). One Canadian study found women are more likely to be put off by male-coded words (known as agentic language) such as "high-powered", "competitive" and "dominant", versus more communal terminology including "support", "interpersonal" and "understand". Researchers found women were more interested in applying for jobs ads that had more communal language and managed to increase the diversity of applicants with a few small tweaks.

"Almost one in three women say they won't apply for a role if they don't have all of the experience required"

The use of too many bullet points can also be off putting. Research by Tech Talent Charter discovered if more than half of a job description is in bullet points, there's a rapid decrease in women applying for a role. Women often feel like they have to meet all of the requirements of a job before they apply. According to the Code First Girls' cohort, almost one in three women say they won't apply for a role if they don't have all of the experience required. Somewhat positively, those women from minority groups agree they would apply – 55.65% of those from lower socio-economic backgrounds, 54.35% of neurodiverse respondents and 53.36% of POC, vs 51.58% of all those polled.

FIGURE 3: HAVE YOU APPLIED FOR ROLES WITHOUT ALL LEVELS OF EXPERIENCE?



CHAPTER THREE
WHEN WOMEN SWITCH CAREERS

HOW DO JOB INTERVIEWS NEED TO CHANGE?

Beyond the job advert stage, business leaders also need to consider their unconscious bias in the interview and assessment process. Hiring for 'culture fit' for example, in search of a positive workplace culture, often leads hiring managers to hire people they identify and 'click' with because they're from the same background, went to the same university, or are otherwise similar. Some technology organisations are experimenting with blind hiring, removing identifying details or characteristics from candidate CVs, such as name, gender, religion and socio-economic status.

"Code First Girls' members had experience of being asked inappropriate questions during interviews"

Research around the questions candidates are asked at interview has found women are judged on multiple criteria, such as competence, social behaviour and morality, whereas men are only evaluated on their skills. When asked, Code First Girls' members had experience of being asked inappropriate questions during interviews – indeed, more women from working class backgrounds (7.32%) and those who identify as neurodiverse (7.34%) said yes to this question, compared to all respondents (6.74%). Using a predetermined list to grade applicants against, asking candidates the same questions, and considering multi-person, diverse interview panels can all help alleviate one hiring manager's unconscious bias.

Employer takeaway

Even if girls don't consider a technology career from school, there are a high number of women getting into the sector later in life. Almost half of Code First Girl graduates are career switchers. We found that those from minority groups are particularly interested in career progression and training opportunities, seeing the salary listed in an ad, and flexible/remote working, plus extended benefits such as gym membership and health insurance. Hiring managers also need to consider whether the terms used in job ads are more tailored towards male candidates, and whether their unconscious bias, or search for 'culture fit' in the interview room is having a detrimental impact on workplace diversity.

CHAPTER FOUR
ADDRESSING CHALLENGES AT WORK

WHY ARE WOMEN LEAVING JOBS IN TECH?

Of course it's not just enough to recruit diverse talent. You need to nurture it too. Once through the door, Code First Girls' survey revealed women from minority groups face a significant number of obstacles to get ahead. Respondents identified a lack of upskilling opportunities, being assigned lower-level tasks, not being taken seriously enough or being judged by a different criteria to their male counterparts. Overall, 23% of those polled believe tech's leadership teams still favour men. A significant number of respondents believe their gender is negatively affecting their ability to receive promotional opportunities (14%) and 15.6% say it's negatively impacting their ability to receive fair pay. Only 54.59% of those we surveyed said they'd been given the opportunity to upskill or receive training at work.

When asked what bias or discrimination they've experienced in the workplace due to gender, 10.44% of women from a working class background say they've been assigned lower-level tasks and 11.57% say their work wasn't taken seriously. Almost one in six say questions or comments were addressed to others when they should have been addressed to them.

Among those who identify as POC, 12.73% say they're assigned lower-level tasks (vs the total average of 11.59%) and 8.04% say they've been overlooked for a promotion (vs 7.28% of all respondents). One in 10 have been paid less, despite having similar job responsibilities, and 5.85% have been excluded from networking opportunities.

CHAPTER FOUR
ADDRESSING CHALLENGES AT WORK

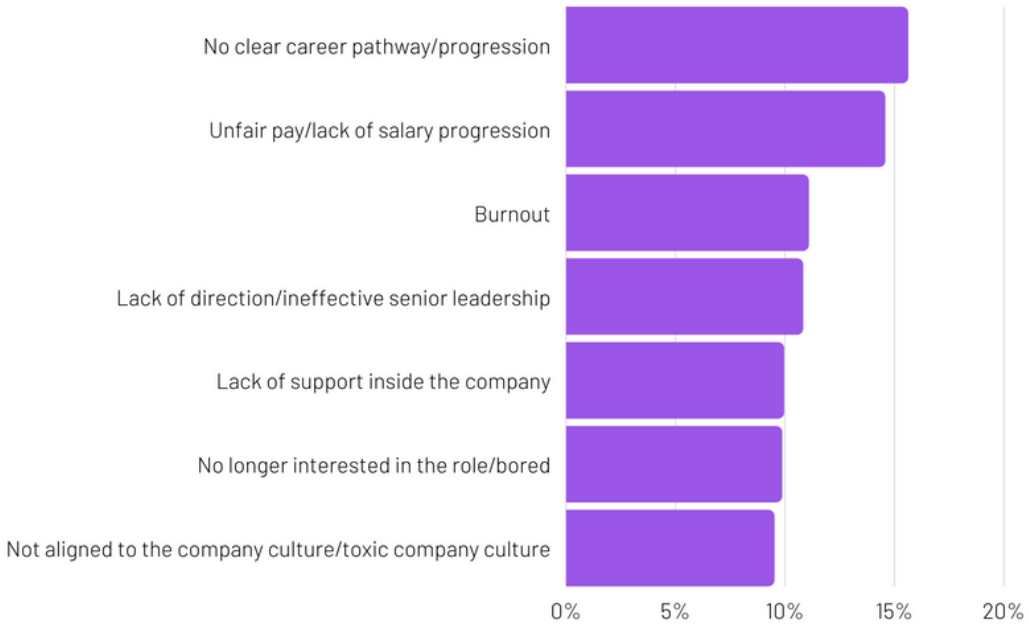
HOW DO WE NURTURE FEMALE TALENT?

Those who are neurodiverse over-indexed on being held to a different standard in terms of performance (7.83% vs 6.5%) and being subjected to unwanted sexual advances (10.54% vs 8.62% of all respondents). Almost one in six of those who identify as neurodiverse say their gender is negatively impacting their ability to be themselves at work.

Imposter syndrome is also common. It's typically defined as someone doubting their own abilities and feeling like a fraud (often at work). Somewhat ironically, it has been found to disproportionately affect high-achieving people who can't accept their accomplishments. Almost three quarters (72%) of all women who responded to Code First Girls' survey said this is something they'd experienced. It's even higher (83%) among neurodiverse respondents but only 64.8% among POC.

Burnout is another big challenge, brought on by lack of work-life balance, lack of communication and support from management, unmanageable workload and unreasonable time pressures. Four out of five women from lower socio-economic backgrounds say they've experienced burnout at work, as have 87.83% of those that identify as neurodiverse.

FIGURE 4: WHY HAVE YOU LEFT PREVIOUS JOB ROLES?



CHAPTER FOUR
ADDRESSING CHALLENGES AT WORK

HOW CAN ALLIES SUPPORT?

Faced with such obstacles, it's no wonder many women feel like they're left with little option but to leave the technology sector. When asked about the main contributing factors to leaving job roles, Code First Girls' survey found burnout, lack of direction or ineffective senior leadership, and unfair pay or lack of salary progression were among the top reasons. For those from minority groups such as class, neurodiversity and POC, sexism, racism and other discriminatory acts were also more significant factors. More than one in 10 (11%) of those from a neurodiverse background said they didn't feel aligned to the company culture (or found it toxic). And for POC women, 16% said they left because there was no clear pathway or progression.

Employer takeaway

Diverse talent needs to be nurtured once it's through the door. Challenges such as being assigned lower-level tasks, evaluated to different standards in terms of performance, and work not being taken seriously are all prolific for women from minority backgrounds. That leads to imposter syndrome, burnout and resignations. Allies need to step up to create a supportive and inclusive work culture – and we'll tell you how in the next chapter.

COMMUNITY STORIES

"The work that Code First Girls does is truly transformational, and it definitely has been for me. The practical support they offer in terms of an actual route into tech is incredible, and particularly for someone like me (coming into it as a career switcher) there was genuinely no other similar offer that I could find. Doing the CFGdegree, and the job with a CFG partner following this, is a truly accessible route into tech. Not a lot of these exist and more are sorely needed in order to try and address under-representation (in terms of gender, class, ethnicity, and many other categories) within the tech sector. "

CFG Member, Bedford

"The thought of entering the tech industry had felt impossible most of my life - I went to a girls' school and IT was never presented as an option to us at the time. Even after starting to learn how to code a couple years ago, getting a tech job still felt impossibly distant - it wasn't till I heard about Code First Girls' CFGdegree through a friend that it felt more in reach."

CFG Member, London

COMMUNITY STORIES

"Being a woman, I was hit by the after-effects of marriage as well. I had to leave everything I had done in India behind to relocate to the UK. It was the first time I ever travelled abroad. It was a struggle starting everything from scratch but Code First Girls offered fantastic opportunities to establish a new career in technology, by not just showing a path but making me a part of a highly motivated community of women with similar goals."

CFG Member, London

"As someone who had been learning web development for years and struggling to get past the interview stages, CFG was a great stepping stone to landing my first software engineer job. Instead of going for positions against more experienced junior devs and computer science graduates, I was able to be sponsored by a company that knew what they were getting into and was willing to be patient and continue to support my learning once on the job."

CFG Member, Manchester

CHAPTER FIVE
WHAT DO WOMEN WANT?

HOW DO WE CREATE INCLUSIVE WORK CULTURES?

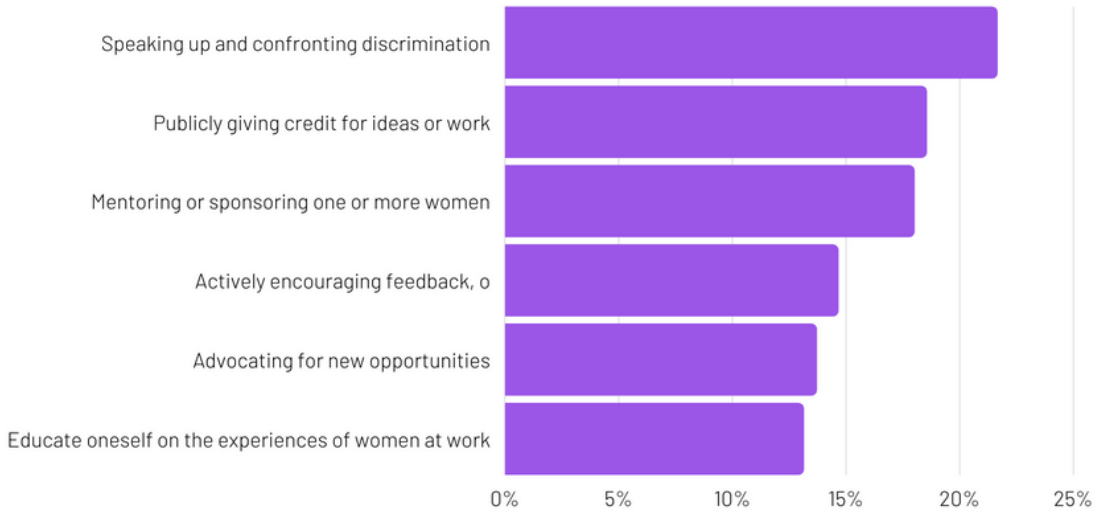
So what can employers do to address some of the challenges women from minority groups face at work, to recruit and retain a more diverse cohort of employees?

By far the most common reason that Code First Girls respondents believe women's careers often advance slower than male counterparts is because stereotypes in tech still exist and leadership favours men (23%). This came before career breaks or maternity leave (19%), the fact that it's difficult and expensive to organise family life while working (14.22%) and women not being confident enough to speak out about progress (11.68%).

"stereotypes in tech still exist and leadership favours men"

Creating a supportive and inclusive work culture is key to helping employees feel like they can bring their best selves to work, regardless of the background they come from. When asked what that would look like in practice, most of those polled by Code First Girls agreed access to educational programmes and upskilling and flexible working hours and methods were important.

FIGURE 5: HOW CAN OTHERS SHOW ALLYSHIP?



CHAPTER FIVE
WHAT DO WOMEN WANT?

WHAT DOES ALLYSHIP LOOK LIKE?

Those from lower socio-economic backgrounds also highlighted the need to educate senior leaders about inclusive work practices, while respondents who identified as POC said setting diversity and inclusion goals (and measuring progress) would be a good step forward. They also recommended establishing channels that enabled employees to provide anonymous feedback. The neurodiverse women we surveyed pointed to the need to provide assistive equipment such as standing desks and speech recognition software.

When asked how others could best show allyship in a work environment, more than one in five women from lower socio-economic backgrounds agreed speaking up and confronting discrimination was the most important factor (rising to one in four among those identifying as neurodiverse). Other popular suggestions included publicly giving women credit for ideas or work (17.94% from working class backgrounds agreed) and mentoring or sponsoring one or more women (18.75%). This rose to 19.20% among POC women, who also over-indexed on the suggestion that allies should help women advocate for new opportunities (14.56% vs 13.72% of all responses). One in seven of those who identified as working class believe allies should educate themselves about the experiences of women at work.

"Mentorship in particular has been found to have far-reaching benefits on a person's career"

Mentorship in particular has been found to have far-reaching benefits on a person's career, including more frequent promotions and salary-grade changes, developing greater confidence (thereby tackling imposter syndrome), and improving company retention rates. The difference can be profound when used as part of a wider diversity and inclusion initiative. One US study found mentoring programmes boosted minority representation at the management level from 9% to 24%, and improved promotion and retention rates from 15% to 38% for minorities and women.

CHAPTER FIVE
WHAT DO WOMEN WANT?

HOW CAN WE EMPOWER WOMEN AT WORK?

Other data suggests women tend to undersell their work, rating their performance 33% lower than their equally performing male colleagues. They're also more likely to volunteer for or be assigned to non-promotable tasks, meaning they're saddled with work that has less visibility or impact. The good news is managers can take steps to proactively distribute this work more equitably.

"Building a culture in which women from all backgrounds can thrive won't happen overnight"

When asked about the most important ways a company can empower women in technology, Code First Girls' respondents identified providing a supportive manager or supervisor (11.42%), creating a supportive work culture (15.43%), and offering career planning and progression opportunities (15.85%). Those from minority groups were more likely to suggest creating a bias and stereotype-free environment, and offering more critical job assignments. Neurodiverse women also feel it's important to have objective HR processes.

Building a culture in which women from all backgrounds can thrive won't happen overnight. But ingrained stereotypes and stigmas don't have to be a given. By measuring the current state of play, trialling targeted interventions, and – most importantly – including women in those conversations, technology companies can start to chip away at some of the obstacles women face at work.

Employer takeaway

Change has to be championed at a leadership level and Code First Girls' respondents identified supportive leadership and mentorship as key to a supportive work culture. Allies can also publicly give women credit for work and ideas, and speak up when they see discrimination. Women want opportunities to progress, job assignments that matter, and to work in a bias and stereotype-free environment.

CONCLUSION

A DIVERSE TECH SECTOR IS WITHIN REACH

How long will it take until the UK's technology sector achieves true gender parity? More than one in four of those from Code First Girls' community thinks it will take six to 10 years.

But there's a sea change of transformation starting to happen, driven in part by the flexible working accelerated by the pandemic. Now's the time to rethink and reimagine the status quo of tech, opening up opportunities that previously may have been out of reach.

The technology industry has the real potential to offer economic opportunities to women, empowering them to advance their personal circumstances and improve social mobility across the country.

Code First Girls is on a mission to close the gender gap in the tech industry by providing employment through free education. We've already helped more than 80,000 women learn to code and, working with companies globally, we're boosting employability, diversity and social mobility, transforming local economies and communities. But we want to go further – our aim is to offer £1bn in economic opportunities for women entering the tech industry in the next five years. And our hope is that this research will provide a springboard for technology organisations to think bigger and better about how they're building diverse teams.

Across the board, women believe their gender negatively affects their ability to receive promotional opportunities, fair pay, and to be themselves at work. They believe they're being assigned lower-level tasks and are judged against different criteria to their male counterparts. Burnout, ineffective senior leadership and a lack of salary progression are among the top reasons causing women to leave tech to seek out opportunities elsewhere.

For those from minority groups, we found those from lower socio-economic backgrounds said there's a need to educate senior leaders about inclusive work practices, and that standing up and confronting discrimination is the best way to show allyship at work. They're also interested in mentorship, flexible/remote working and extended benefits such as gym membership and health insurance.

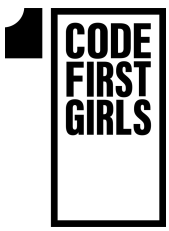
CONCLUSION

A DIVERSE TECH SECTOR IS WITHIN REACH

One in 10 of those who identify as neurodiverse said they had to leave a role because they didn't feel aligned to a company culture or felt it was toxic. They also want those around them to speak up and confront discimination, and for organisations to provide assistive equipment such as standing desks and speech recognition software. And our POC respondents want allies to help women advocate for new opportunities, for organisations to set diversity and inclusion goals (and measure feedback), and to provide channels for employees to give anonymous feedback.

Asked about the biggest challenges facing the technology industry in the future, Code First Girls' respondents pointed to talent shortages, sexism and increasing diversity, alongside data security, ethics and policy. Building diverse tech teams strikes at the heart of many of those issues, providing access to a new talent pipeline and creating the type of work environment women want to be part of.

All it takes is a real commitment to drive change.



EMAIL
info@codefirstgirls.com

WEB
www.codefirstgirls.com