D&I FOR TECH LEADERS

How to Hire, Retain and Progress Women in Tech

TECHTALENT CHARTER

CODE FIRST GIRLS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
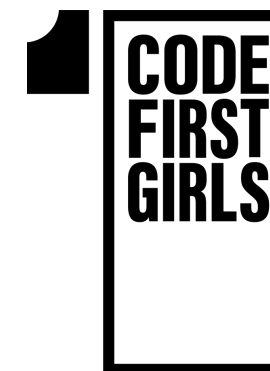
PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

This report has been created by the Tech Talent Charter (TTC) and Code First Girls (CFG) to provide recommendations for technology leaders looking to attract, retain and progress women in technology. This report is suitable for any employer looking to build a diverse talent pipeline and foster an inclusive culture in which women in technical roles can thrive.

HOW DID WE CONDUCT OUR RESEARCH?

This report draws on data from market-leading organisations and the largest community of coders, instructors, and tech mentors in the UK. In 2023, the Tech Talent Charter surveyed their Signatory base of 649 organisations, showing the business impact that actioning change in D&I can have on a company's culture, productive output and bottom line. In August 2022, Code First Girls surveyed more than 1,200 women in the Code First Girls community collecting data about their experiences entering and progressing in the tech workforce.

REPORT FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This report brings together these two data sources to provide a list of comprehensive recommendations for employers looking to increase the proportion of women working in technical roles. They support inclusion across many diversity lenses and can be enacted irrespective of team size or budget.
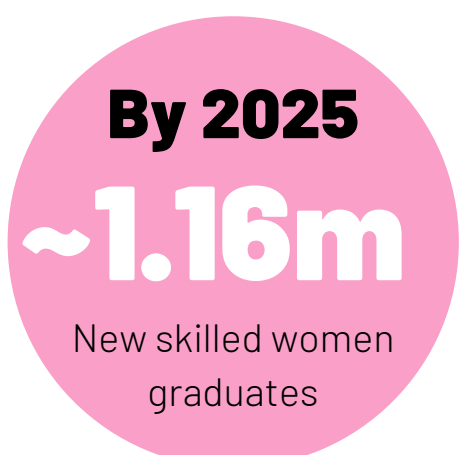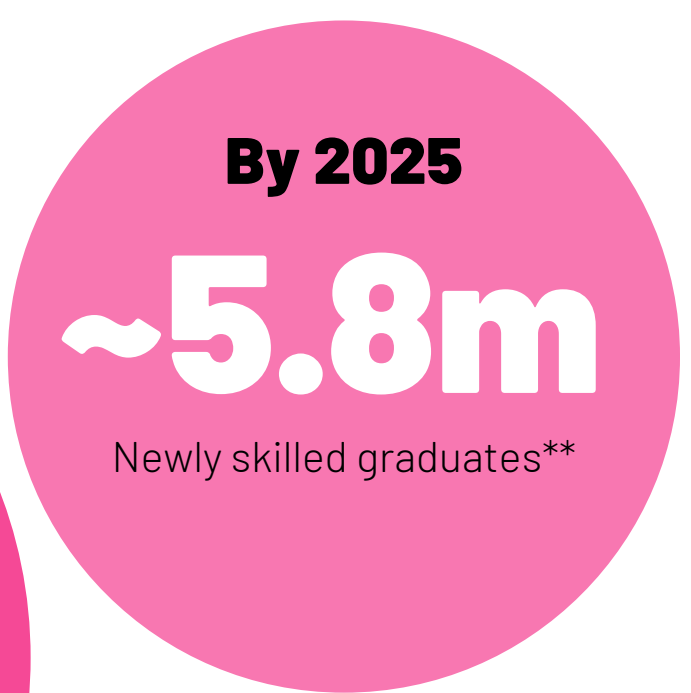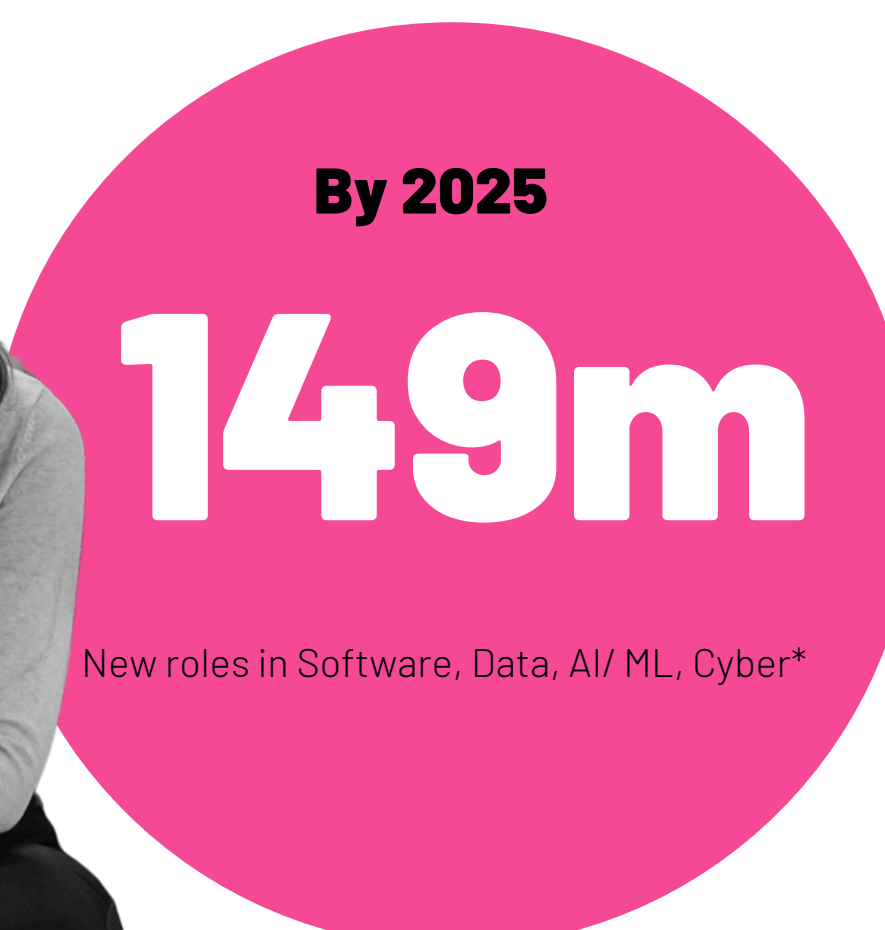
THE GLOBAL TECH TALENT SHORTAGE

Despite unstable market conditions, the technology sector continues to demand more skilled workers

Market data suggests that tech workers can continue to feel confident about their future employment prospects as talent acquisition remains key for businesses, with 21% of the IT sector planning to increase recruitment spend for specialist roles. According to Microsoft*, globally, there will be 149 million new jobs in software, data, AI, machine learning and cyber. UNESCO** tells us that by the same year, there will be 5.8 million newly skilled graduates qualified for these roles, 20% of which will be women. We, therefore, look to a near future where globally there will be one qualified woman for every 128 roles in technology.

ONLY 1 QUALIFIED WOMAN FOR EVERY 128 TECH ROLES GLOBALLY BY 2025

By 2025

~1.16m
New skilled women graduates

By 2025

~5.8m
Newly skilled graduates**

By 2025

149m
New roles in Software, Data, AI/ ML, Cyber*

In the UK, there will be 1 qualified woman for every 115 roles

**Source: Microsoft Data Science utilising LinkedIn Data
**Source: UNESCO Data on students enrolled in tertiary-level information and communication technology (ICT) programs worldwide
^ Approx. 20% of computer science graduates are women

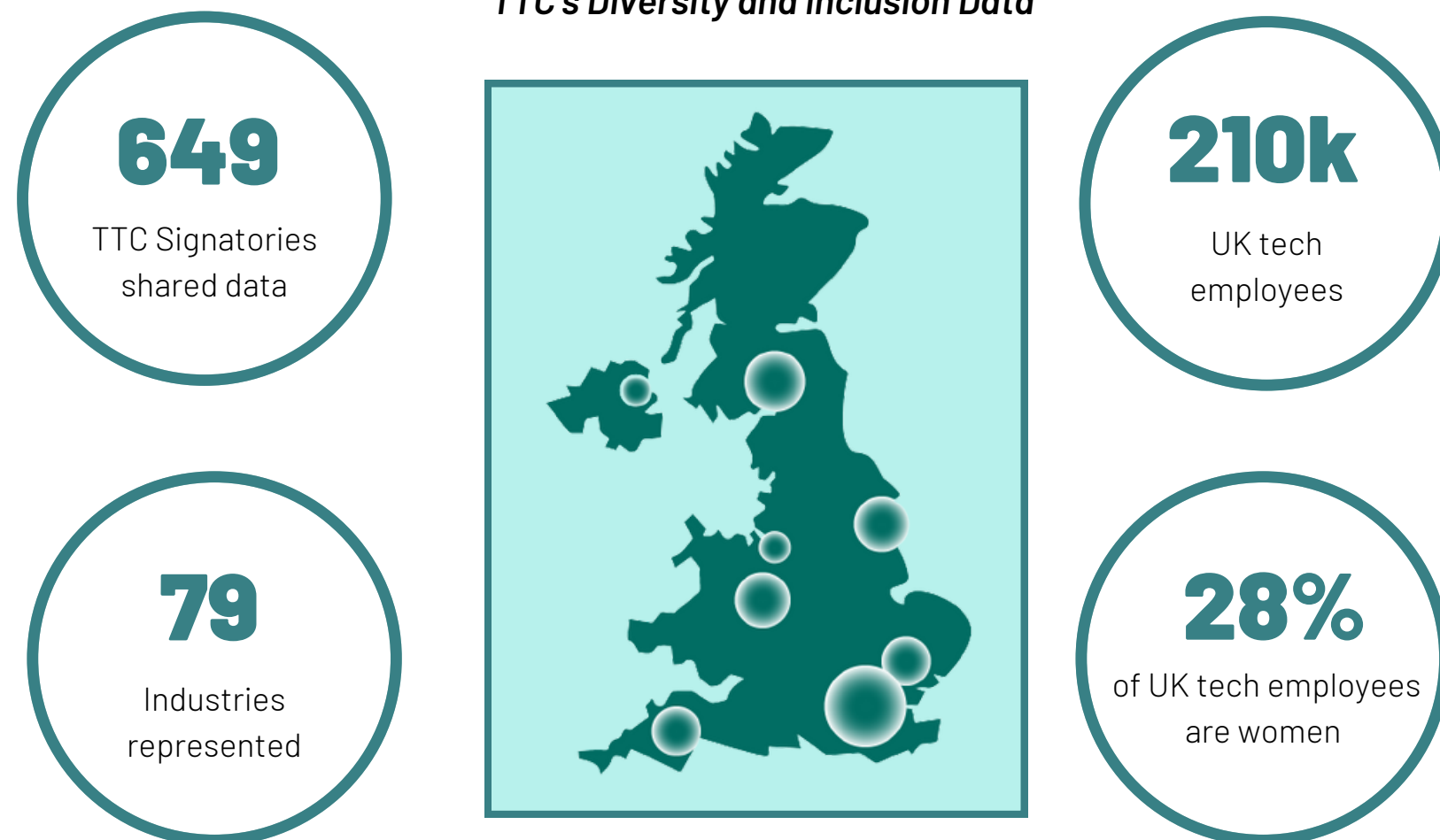# TECH TALENT CHARTER & CODE FIRST GIRLS DATA EXPLAINED

TECHTALENT CHARTER

This report draws on diversity and inclusion data from TTC's Signatory base of hundreds of companies, accounting for nearly a million UK employees.
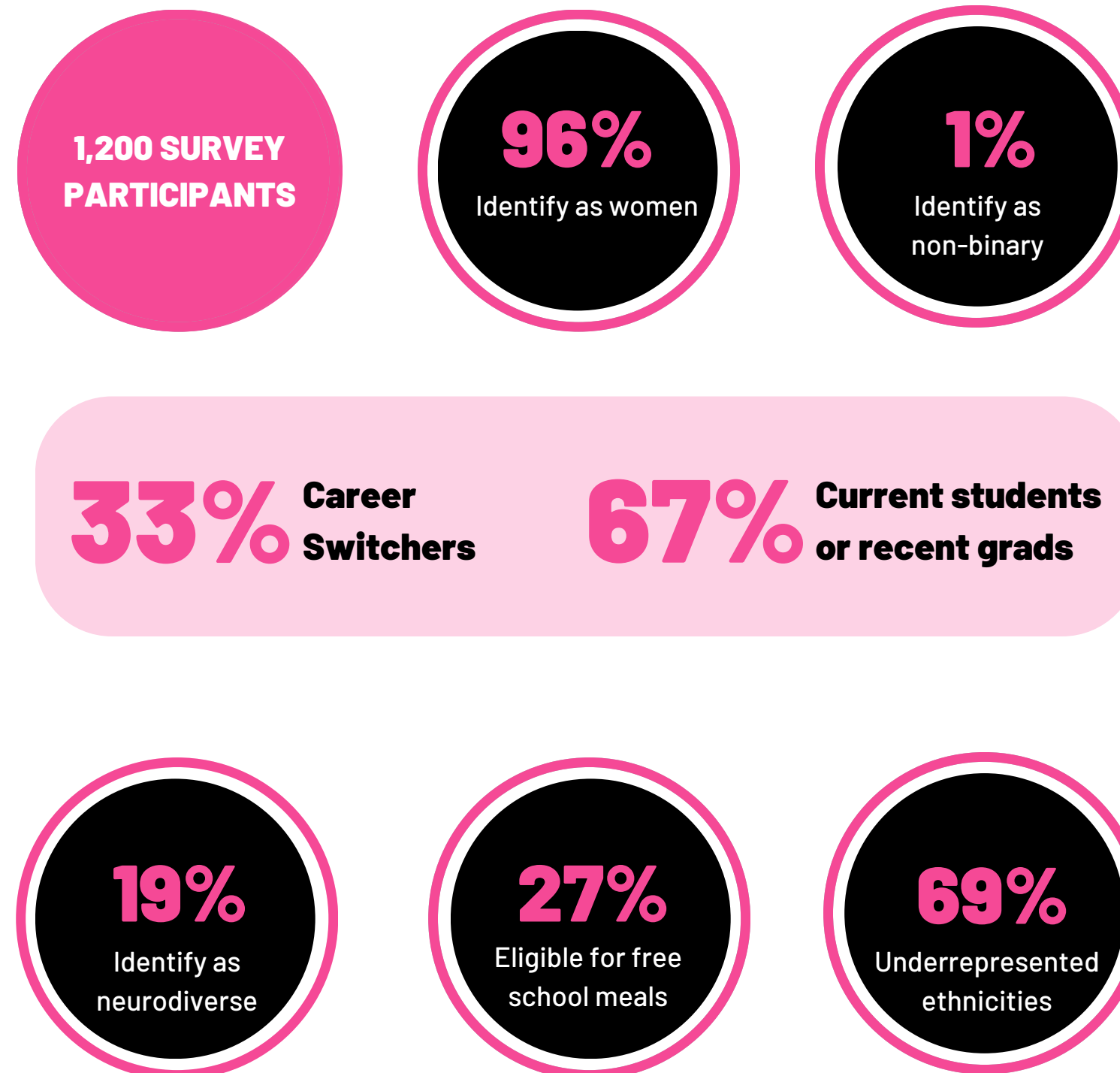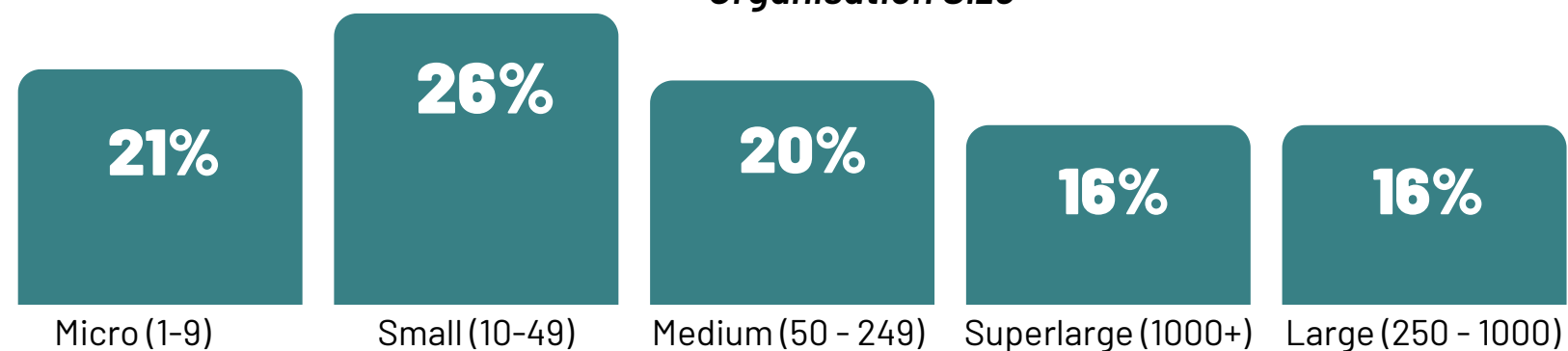
CODE FIRST GIRLS

While Code First Girls provides equal opportunities to women and non-binary people, based on their survey of 1,200 respondents, 96% identified as women and 2% identified as non-binary. In this report, we are therefore focusing on our findings from the experiences of our cohort who identify as women.

TTC's Diversity and Inclusion Data

649
TTC Signatories shared data

210k
UK tech employees

79
Industries represented

28%
of UK tech employees are women

Organisation Size

Micro (1-9)	Small (10-49)	Medium (50 - 249)	Superlarge (1000+)	Large (250 - 1000)
21%	26%	20%	16%	16%

1,200 SURVEY PARTICIPANTS

96% Identify as women

1% Identify as non-binary

33% Career Switchers

67% Current students or recent grads

19% Identify as neurodiverse

27% Eligible for free school meals
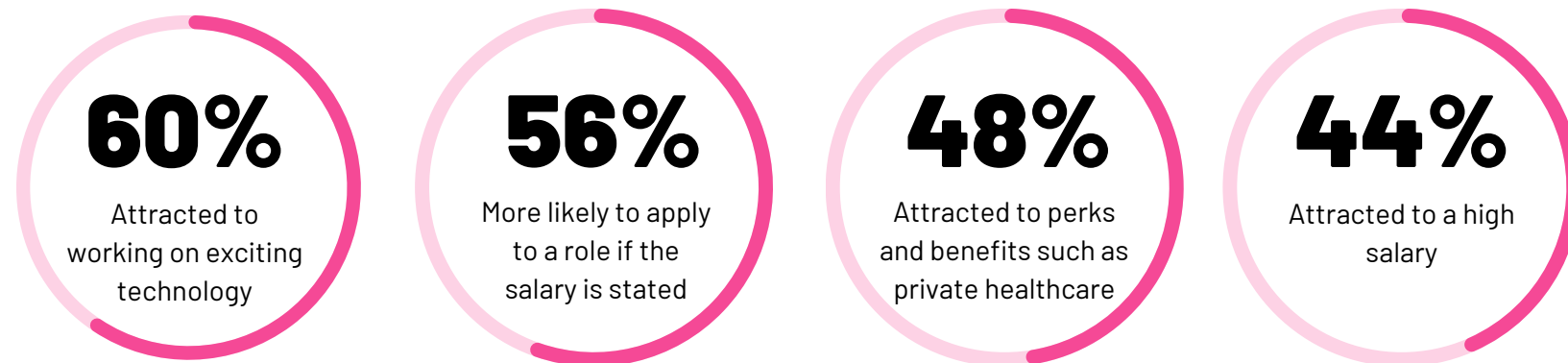
69% Underrepresented ethnicities
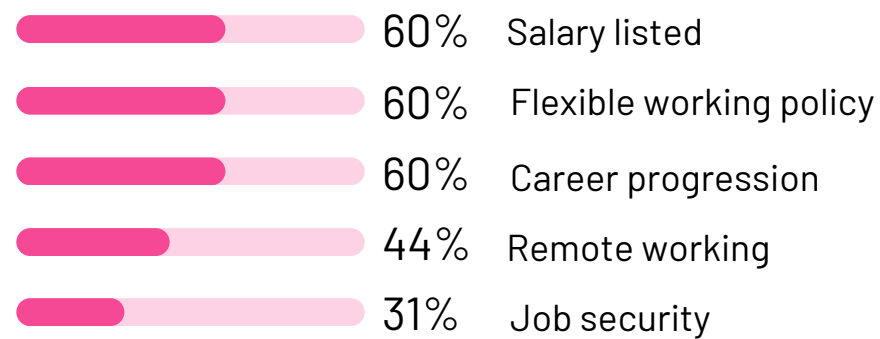
ATTRACTING AND HIRING WOMEN IN TECH

Why do some jobs attract more women than others?

Code First Girls asked their community of newly qualified software developers how organisations can better appeal to women:
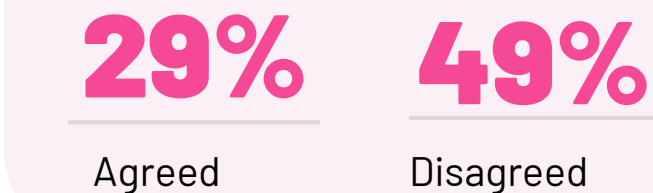
Why are women interested in working for specific companies?

60%
Attracted to working on exciting technology

56%
More likely to apply to a role if the salary is stated

48%
Attracted to perks and benefits such as private healthcare

44%
Attracted to a high salary

What do women look for when applying to a job advert?

- 60% Salary listed
- 60% Flexible working policy
- 60% Career progression
- 44% Remote working
- 31% Job security

Does the number of female role models at an organisation affect your willingness to apply?

29%
Agreed

49%
Disagreed

When I look for a job, I always seek out to work in industries that are developing cutting-edge technologies. I want a job that is challenging and slightly out of my comfort zone, which ultimately leads me to up-skill. It's also important to me that the company's values align with my own personal values. Things that put me off applying to a role include a lack of diversity on the interview panel, not stating salary and perks from the get-go, an outdated tech stack, and not offering flexible working as an option for all staff.
- Janine Luk, CFG Ambassador

What barriers do women face entering the tech workforce?

Whilst Code First Girls free coding courses are on average 600% oversubscribed, there still remain systemic barriers to women entering the tech workforce. Code First Girls asked their community what they felt were the biggest obstacles that they had faced:

- **73%** Lack of confidence
- **59%** Preconception that the industry is still for men
- **55%** Sexism in the workplace
- **53%** Lack of education and upskilling

As a woman in the tech industry, one of the biggest barriers I've experienced is a lack of representation and inclusivity in male-dominated environments. This can lead to feelings of exclusion and isolation, which can be especially challenging when it comes to public speaking and networking. To overcome these challenges, I've sought out opportunities to build my confidence and connect with other women in the industry through the CFG Ambassador programme, and through currently seeking for a mentor outside of my workplace.
- Imane Ziouche, CFG Ambassador

ATTRACTING AND HIRING WOMEN IN TECH

What are TTC Signatories doing to hire more women into tech jobs?
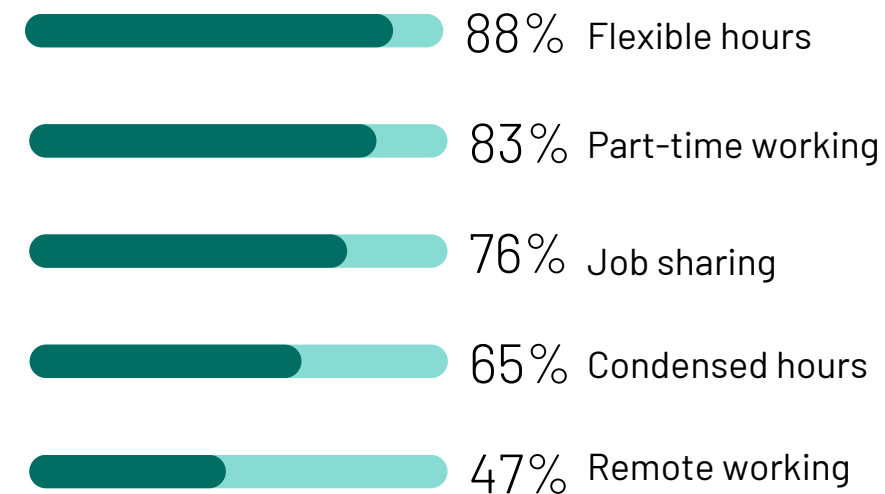
Last year TTC asked Signatories what their most pressing D&I problem was; the most frequently reported challenge was attracting diverse tech talent. Over half reported difficulties specifically with attracting and hiring more women. So this year, we asked Signatories what they were doing to improve the number of women in their tech teams. Here are the most common practices that are widely in use across organisations working to improve in this area:

1 Implementing flexible working and enhanced parental leave policies

2 Using standardised interview questions for a fairer hiring process

3 Anonymising applications and using independent scoring by multiple assessors

4 Running returners programs to help experienced professionals return to work

5 Using text decoders to neutralise biased language in job descriptions

6 Career progression programs that support internal talent to move into new roles

7 Working with skills providers to source tech talent from non-traditional pathways

Spotlight on: The impact of flexible working policies

Offering job flexibility upfront in job ads has been shown to increase the volume of applicants by up to 30%, as well as increasing the proportion of female applicants. Flexible working has remained a key issue for increasing the number of women (and other groups such as disabled people) in tech. TTC asked Signatories about their flexible working practices and found that the vast majority of organisations are providing a broad range of flexible working options to tech employees, with nearly 1 in 2 tech workers able to work remotely as much as they like. Other more unique practices included a 4.5 day week, a seasonal shorter week, where the work week is reduced to 4 days during school holiday periods, and uncapped holiday.

% of tech employees with access to flex work options

- 88% Flexible hours
- 83% Part-time working
- 76% Job sharing
- 65% Condensed hours
- 47% Remote working

Examples of flexible working policies offered by TTC Signatories

4 DAY WORK WEEK
During summer holidays

FLEX APPEAL
Employees can work wherever and whenever they choose

FLEX AWAY
Uncapped holiday policy

ATTRACTING AND HIRING WOMEN IN TECH

What Signatories are saying

We asked TTC Signatories with leading diversity and inclusion practices what they were doing to attract and hire more women into tech jobs. Here's what they said:

We continually review our UK recruitment practices - "attraction, assessment, and selection" - from a diversity perspective, including using gender-neutral language in job advertisements to minimise bias and ensuring our recruitment marketing reflects ethnic minority, disabled and LGBT+ groups.

We use Textio on all of our job posts to help avoid using gendered language. We also run unconscious bias and inclusivity training for all of our interviewers to help us identify our own biases and how we can overcome them. We've also previously supported early talent organisations to help those starting off in their career. We've also regularly sponsored and attended events like CodeFest and Women of Silicon Roundabout that are targeted at helping women enter the industry and feel supported whilst doing so.

From a recruitment standpoint, we have several approaches to improving diversity. We partner with Women in Tech communities such as Triangirls, girl code and rails girls. We include a DEIB statement at the top of every job advert, and use gender decoders on our technical job adverts to ensure we're not using gendered language that would put certain groups off applying. We have set a target of 50% women and non-binary people as new hires into our tech roles, and diversity sourcing is a key target for all in-house recruiters, especially for leadership roles.

We will be aiming to increase the diversity of talent we attract and hire by embedding diverse recruitment into core activities and specific projects. For example, by direct sourcing of diverse talent; creating advert templates and processes to ensure clear and consistent diversity content and establishing forums where we can learn from diverse candidates about their experience of recruitment. Engaging with and listening to the lived experience of underrepresented groups will be key to shaping our activities.

We work with different job boards and recruitment partners, which has led to several diverse software engineer hires. Furthermore, we created a video campaign about what it's like to work in tech at Gymshark, with diversity and inclusiveness highlighted as a theme. We remain committed to ensuring DE&I is at the heart of our search for the best tech and engineering talent

Trying to attract diverse talent without offering flexible working is like going fishing without a net. Whilst we have made huge strides in how work is done post-pandemic, and flexible working is far more acceptable, we can't assume its 'job done'. To ensure diverse and inclusive workplaces, employers need to offer flexible working from day one; consider all forms of flexible working not just hybrid; and to make sure that their approach is inclusive and fair to all workers. - Emma Stewart, CEO at Timewise and TTC Signatory
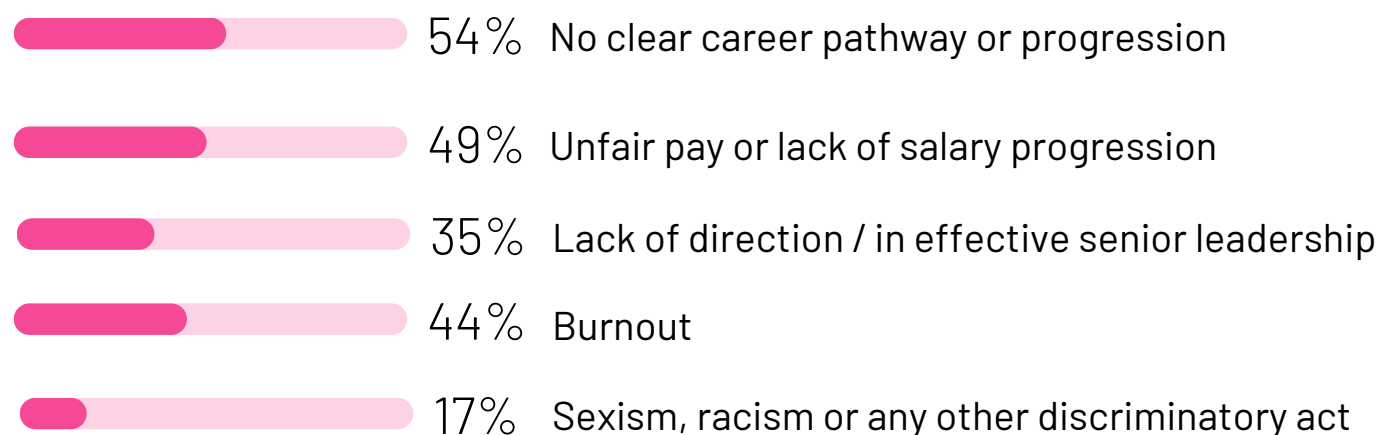
BUILDING AN INCLUSIVE CULTURE & AVOIDING ATTRITION

CODE FIRST GIRLS

Why are women leaving the workplace?

Since the global pandemic Code First Girls have seen the number of career switchers applying to their courses increase by 124%. But why are women leaving their previous employers?

What have been the main contributing factors to you leaving roles in the past?

54% No clear career pathway or progression

49% Unfair pay or lack of salary progression

35% Lack of direction / in effective senior leadership

44% Burnout

17% Sexism, racism or any other discriminatory act

80% Have experienced burnout

88% Of these respondents identified as neurodiverse

Building Inclusive Cultures

How can comapanies best ensure they foster a culture of inclusivity in their tech teams?

54% Educating senior leadership

73% Flexible working

53% Anonymous feedback programmes

58% Education programmes and upskilling

What are women experiencing in the workplace?

From mansplaining to receiving unwanted sexual advances, these worrying statistics prove that sexual discrimination is a very real problem that employers must take responsibility for eliminating if they are to foster cultures of true inclusivity.

54% Have experienced "mansplaining"

50% Had questions directed to someone else

41% Were assigned lower-level tasks

31% Received unwanted sexual advances

58% Have experienced discrimination in the workplace

44% Have been paid less despite having similar job titles

37% Have experienced a gender pay gap

My reasons for leaving the workplace have been due to being offered a more comprehensive package that suits the needs of myself and my family better. I've often found that in male-dominated companies, a lot of the benefits around parental leave are very sparse, and leave new parents at a disadvantage
- Margaret Black, CFG Ambassador

TECHTALENT CHARTER

D&I interventions targeted towards gender diversity

Research by TTC Signatory, Accenture found that half of women in tech drop out by age 35, and inclusive culture is a key factor in this trend. In order to improve retention, many businesses are focusing their attention on building inclusive company culture that encourages employees to feel safe, valued and satisfied in their role. Using an inclusion framework like this one by TTC Signatory, Diversio, organisations can ensure they are considering company culture holistically and are developing inclusive behaviour across a range of key employee experiences.

1

INCLUSIVE TEAMS

Focus on creating psychological safety for employees. Prioritise showing openness to a diverse range of opinions, outlooks, and perspectives throughout your organisation. Look at teamwork and collaboration behaviours and aim to codify and encourage good practices, like the use of "employee passports". Measure employee engagement and fair resource allocation. Model respectful communication, compassionate culture and leadership that sets a tone for these right at the top of the organisation.

2

FAIR MANAGEMENT

Make sure fair management is a top priority. Ensure your employee feedback and review system is fair, objective, and structured in a way that allows redress for unconscious bias. Look at what practises you have in place to guard against favouritism. Set standards for clear, transparent communication and expectations on progression and remuneration. Create multi-layered approaches on how to provide employee recognition. Track and measure pay equity and fair work allocation. Set expectations and provide support for tackling bias.

3

CAREER OPPORTUNITY AND DEVELOPMENT

Open your organisation's mentoring and sponsorship to all employees. Whether they occur formally or informally, check the accessibility and the diversity of uptake for mentorship, training, networking and career development opportunities in the organisation.

4

JOB FLEXIBILITY

Don't inadvertently exclude employees through overly rigid protocols. Offer a wide variety of agile work practices, for example: remote work, enhanced parental leave, flexible time off according to different needs, and mental health support.

5

WORKPLACE SAFETY

Make sure your workplace is free from any type of unacceptable interpersonal behavior, including mental, physical, and sexual harassment. Develop policies and safeguarding practices for tackling discrimination, toxic leadership, harassment, recourse, and retaliation.

Since last year, the number of organisations measuring neurodiversity in their workforce has doubled to 53%. A key tenet of neurodiversity practice is to offer individualised adjustments that enable employees to optimise their work environment for their unique needs. By enacting individualised neuroinclusive practices, employers can enhance employee well-being and professional performance not only for neurodivergent employees but also for their wider employee base.

Almost one in six of Code First Girls community identity as neurodiverse. Used in the context of autistic spectrum disorders, neurodiversity is becoming increasingly sought-after by technical teams, especially those requiring fast pattern recognition, sharper accuracy, and better attention to detail such as the cybersecurity industry. Much like gender, ethnicity or social mobility, companies need to review their policies, and procedures to be more inclusive of neurodiverse team members.

How TTC Signatories are supporting neurodiverse employees

- Take a neuro-inclusive approach to career development initiatives and training. For example, don't centre all performance measures on in-person interactions or have all training opportunities in group settings.
- Raise awareness and understanding of neurodiversity with your team.
- Provide sensory relaxation spaces for people to decompress.
- Work with occupational psychologists to increase manager confidence and understanding when supporting neurodiverse colleagues.
- Expand healthcare benefits to include private diagnosis and support for neurodivergent conditions.
- Design physical spaces thoughtfully: calm rooms, colour schemes comfortable for those with sensory overload, and high-activity function areas - such as lunch spaces - all on one floor.

41%
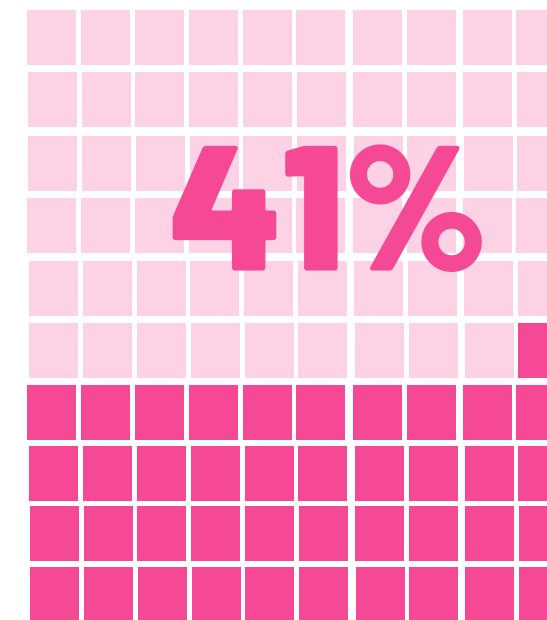
Have not chosen to inform their employer of their neurodiversity for fear of judgement

39%
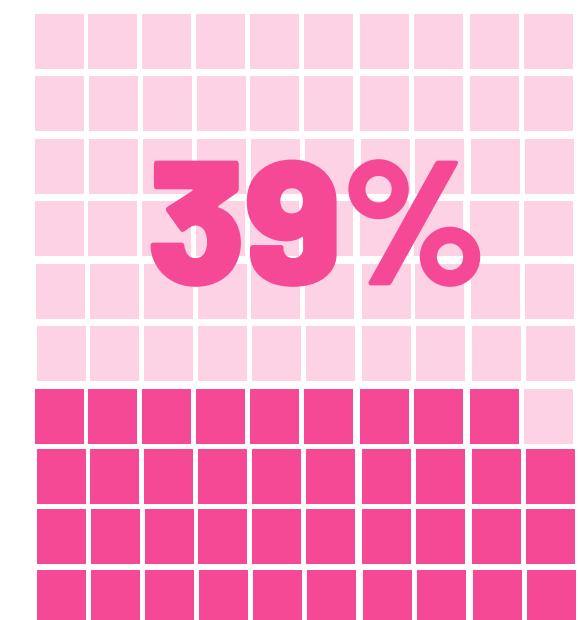
Of neurodiverse women do not feel supported in their role

Neurodiversity is key to keeping Britain safe. At GCHQ, some of our most talented and creative people have a neurodiverse profile – including dyslexia, autism, dyscalculia and dyspraxia. Having a diverse team and a mix of minds better equips us to carry out our mission and tackle new and emerging threats posed by terrorists, criminals and hostile states.
- Jo Cavan, Director of Strategy, Policy and Engagement at GCHQ

I was diagnosed with autism very late in life, shortly before I started with my current employer. To me this answered a lot of questions about difficulties I had experienced in previous jobs. For example I was once asked if I would like to clean the coffee machine, and I said no. I was later told off for not cleaning the coffee machine. And I was so angry that I was in trouble saying "But I wasn't told to do it!" The diagnosis means I have an answer for why misunderstandings like this might happen, and mean I now had a way to work around it.
- Claire Evans, CFG Community

One in four tech employees identifies as an ethnic minority amongst TTC Signatories. However, ethnic diversity drops by half in senior tech roles compared to the overall tech workforce. This alarming finding clearly demonstrates that employers must take a systemic look at their practices to support ethnic minority groups in senior roles.

The Code First Girls community is representative of over 119 nationalities, with nearly 60% of their community identifying as an ethnic minority. However, only 20% of Code First Girls community feel supported in their job, proving that organisations must go further than attracting ethnic diverse candidates to their technical roles.

How TTC Signatories are supporting ethnic diversity and inclusion

- An inclusive dress code policy that protects afro-textured hair and hairstyles linked to cultural, ethnic and racial identities.
- Emotional wellbeing support for colleagues affected by race-related events such as Covid-related racism, violence in the Middle East and the Ukraine war.
- Programmes to develop greater employee confidence and capability on how to speak about ethnicity and race.
- Collaborations between different diversity networks to focus on intersectional lenses, for example partnerships between ethnicity-focussed networks and LGBTQ+ or Disability/Health networks.
- Contextualised diversity targets for junior hires, and for promotion of ethnic minority employees, relative to their proportion in the workforce.

SPOTLIGHT ON: TFL

TfL has implemented a number of initiatives and actions to support our Equality objectives:
- Publicly reporting Ethnicity Pay Gaps and a four-year Pay Gap action plan which sets out how TfL will help further reduce its pay gaps for Black, Asian and minority ethnic colleagues.
- Implementing anonymised recruitment, and a requirement for all those interviewing to have completed unconscious bias training.
- Delivering an Anti-Racism Leadership Charter (ARLC) encouraging all senior leaders to sign and undertake a number of commitments.
- Supporting its Colleague Network Groups to engage its workforce on a range of issues. TfL's Raising Awareness of Culture and Ethnicity (RACE) Colleague Network Group deliver Lunch and Learns, masterclasses and events e.g. South Asian Heritage Month, Stephen Lawrence Memorial Day and Windrush Day.

57%
Agree that there is an imbalance of ethnic minorities in their workplace

20%
Of under-represented ethnicities feel unsupported in their role

Providing a space for people to authentically share their cultures and traditions has prompted genuine curiosity, mindfulness and collaboration amongst my peers. My favourite events have been celebrating Diwali, Lunar New Year, or even educating people on Ramadan. It's helped me connect to my colleagues, understand their cultural backgrounds and be mindful of occasions and celebrations they would focus on.
- Mariam Hussein, CFG Ambassador

DRIVING FAIR PROGRESSION AND REWARD

CODE FIRST GIRLS

Women's experiences of career progression

According to FTSE Women Leaders, 40% of board positions at FTSE 350s are now women. However, despite these strides forward, statistics around diversity in senior tech roles more widely remain concerning. Only 2% of the Code First Girls community have ever been given the opportunity to upskill whilst at work. When asked what employers can do to better empower women into leadership the most popular answers included career planning and progression - so before you launch a new recruitment campaign, ask yourself which women already exist within your workforce who could be trained into the job.

One of the main reasons for my career progression has been having a female manager who is aware of the challenges that women face in a male-dominated environment. Her support and mentorship have been instrumental in helping me navigate through the industry and overcome the barriers that often hinder women's progress. With her guidance and encouragement, I have been able to develop my skills and knowledge, take on new challenges and responsibilities, and make meaningful contributions to the team's success.
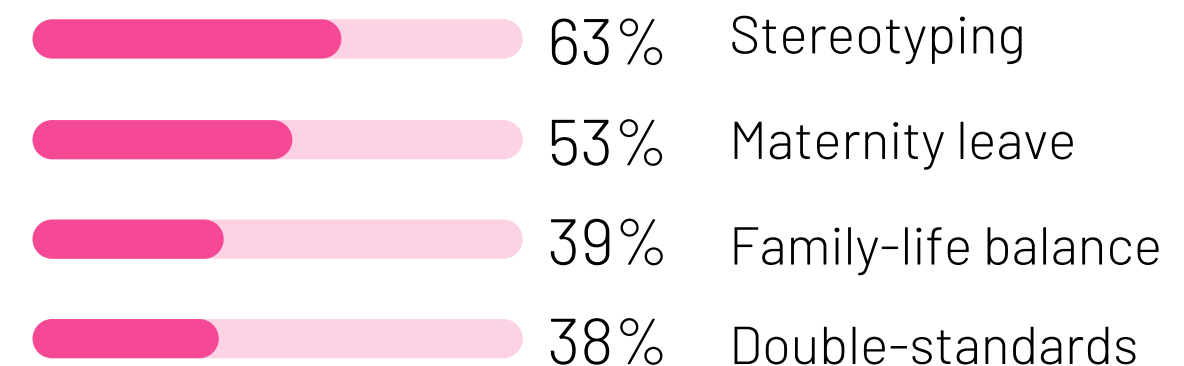- Amanda Mandiki, CFG Ambassador

It's important for companies to set guidelines to help employees understand expectations. It also is a great way for individuals to assess how they're doing and for them to seek feedback from their peers/managers. When it comes to career progression, I always believe that we'll never feel fully ready for a role - but that's the whole point of progression. If it's a role that doesn't push us to step out of our comfort zone, it's not a role that will encourage growth.
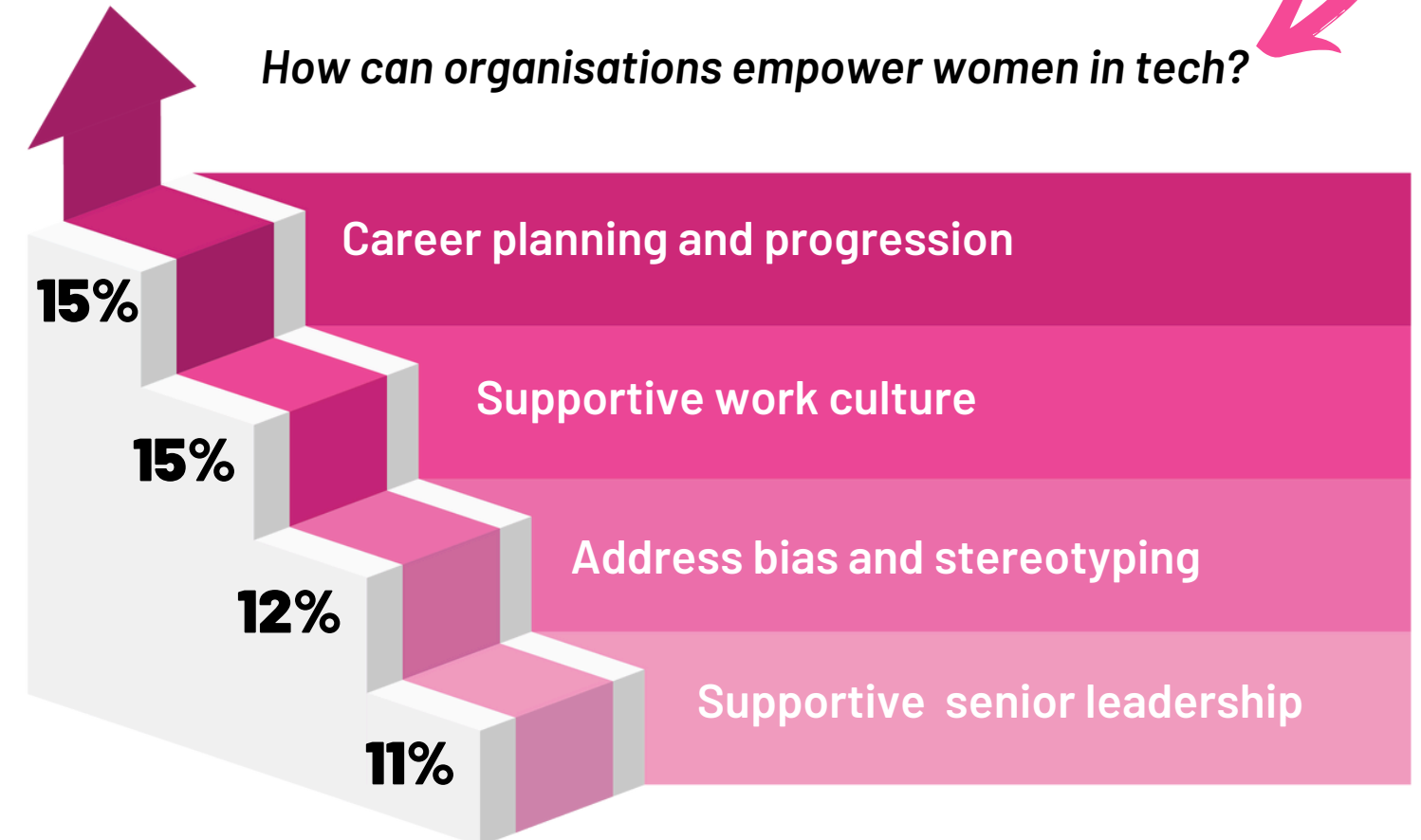- Janine Luk, CFG Ambassador

How can organisations provide fair progression pathways?

Why do women's careers progress slower than mens?

- 63% Stereotyping
- 53% Maternity leave
- 39% Family-life balance
- 38% Double-standards

ONLY 2% *of the CFG community have been given the opportunity to upskill at work*

How can organisations empower women in tech?

- 15% Career planning and progression
- 15% Supportive work culture
- 12% Address bias and stereotyping
- 11% Supportive senior leadership

Diversity in senior tech positions

TTC analysed diversity in senior tech roles and found that gender diversity in senior tech positions drops by 6 points to 22% compared to the overall tech workforce. If we are to change this picture, we need to ensure that women are not only getting into tech, but that they are also getting on.
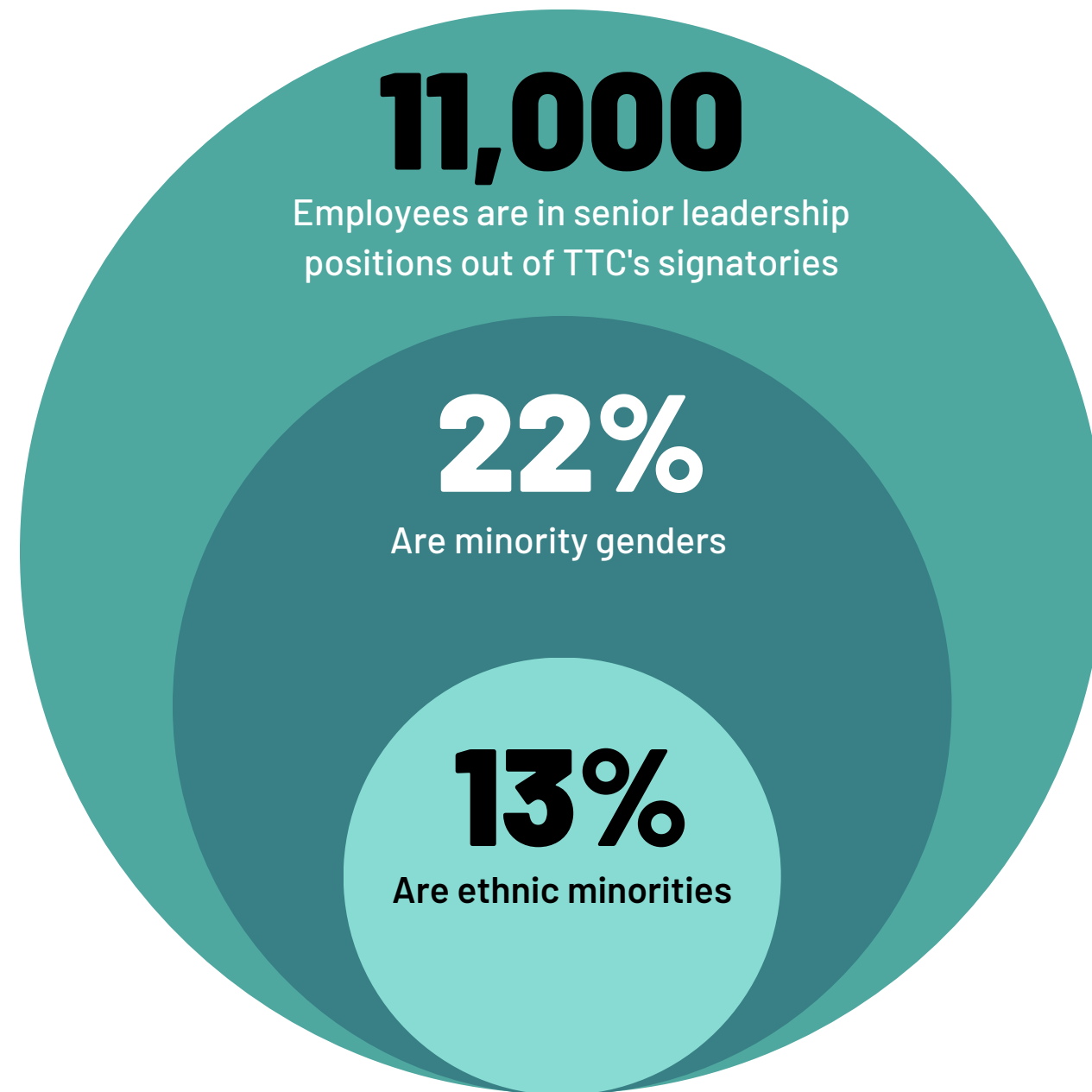
Amongst TTC Signatories women hold around 28% of tech positions. But even amongst the organisations who are achieving more balanced gender diversity in their tech teams, there is a particularly difficult battleground that continues to present ongoing challenges: diversity in mid-level, senior and leadership roles. With mandatory gender pay gap reporting, many organisations have been faced with the stark reality of numbers, that when it comes to positions of influence and high reward the picture is still very heavily skewed towards certain groups.

11,000
Employees are in senior leadership positions out of TTC's signatories

22%
Are minority genders

13%
Are ethnic minorities

Centrica provides support for female talent through targeted inventions such as talent programmes focusing on the pipeline of females in both middle management and senior management roles. We do this through our partnership with Everywoman. We are pleased to report that since 2021 the percentage of women in our leadership roles has increased to 31%, from 28%.
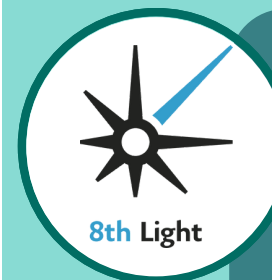
8th Light offers a women's leadership programme, in addition to several structural features we've adopted to improve gender representation in leadership. This includes joint reviews for candidate applications, company-wide unconscious bias training, and diversified representation of merit and promotion panels.

Now you know, so what?

Improving the supply of diverse tech talent in the UK can only be achieved if organisations commit to collaborating on shared challenges like the tech skills shortage and poor diversity in the tech talent pipeline. It's thanks to the organisations that already partner with the Tech Talent Charter and Code First Girls, that we have been able to bring this report and these insights to light. Through our work with companies who are leading the charge on these issues, we have identified a set of recommendations that we urge businesses to consider. We will continue to seek out opportunities to collaborate with other organisations who share our goals, and we hope that you will join us as we strive for a tech economy that benefits all of society by harnessing all of its talent.

Top 10 key recommendations

Based on our respective datasets and shared insights, CFG and TTC have identified the 10 key recommendations for improving the proportion of women in tech. They support inclusion across many diversity lenses and can be enacted irrespective of team size or budget.

*Recommendations on the following page*

EMPLOYER RECOMMENDATIONS

1 Flexible working

Offer a range of flexible work options with upfront discussion in the hiring process. Consider options that help with parental responsibilities, like greater flexibility for school holidays.

2 Audit systems for bias

Consider all processes in the career lifecycle, such as recruitment, promotion, and performance decisions.

3 Offer tech skills programmes

Demonstrate a commitment to career progression and enable employees to grow in their career within the company.

4 Engage with or run reskilling and returners programs

Facilitate career mobility and provide routes into tech careers for future talent and experienced professionals.

5 Enhanced family leave policies

Particularly for longer periods away from work; leading companies are offering full pay for 6 months for maternity leave and 4 months for paternity leave.

6 Fair remuneration

Demonstrate fairness in remuneration decisions through salary transparency in recruitment and pay parity measurement within the organisation.

7 Reproductive health care

Implement policies and cultural behaviour that support employees with reproductive health, such as benefits for infertility disease, menstrual health and menopause.

8 Conduct regular listening activities

Create safe environments where your employees can feedback. Conduct listening activities to understand how included, safe and valued they feel at work.

9 Support healthy work-life balance

Take individualised approaches to employee support in both well-being and professional development. Enact digital wellness practices that support healthy work-life balance.

10 Develop robust HR practices

Cultivate an inclusive and safe workplace culture where employees feel safe to share concerns and challenges and develop robust HR practices to deal with emerging issues.

JOIN A MOVEMENT FOR DIVERSITY IN TECH
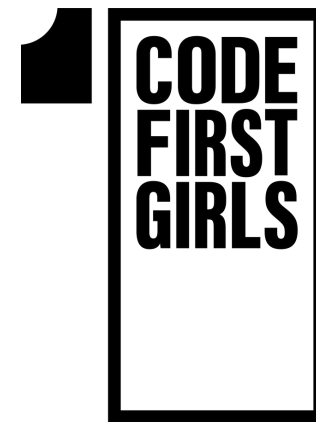
CODE FIRST GIRLS

Code First Girls is on a mission to close the gender gap in the tech industry by providing employment through free education. They work with companies globally to boost employability by training women in local communities.

programmes@codefirstgirls.com

codefirstgirls.com

TECHTALENT CHARTER

The Tech Talent Charter (TTC) is a government-supported, industry-led membership group that brings together Signatory organisations and equips them with the networks and resources to drive their tech talent and diversity and inclusion efforts. The TTC closed its doors in 2024.