



**Gap to gateway:  
diversity in tech as  
the key to the future**

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# Foreword

Women, particularly those from underrepresented and marginalised communities, often face significant exclusion from and within the tech ecosystem—as students, employees, entrepreneurs, and end users. Their absence not only stifles innovation, but also limits access to technological advancement, one of the cornerstones of our modern society.

This absence is everywhere we look. It's in the fact that less than a third of STEM students in the UK are women or nonbinary. That just 22 percent of the country's tech directors are women. And that everyday products, from the smartphones in our hands to the tools that track our health, have been designed for a man-shaped world. The gender tech gap is real, and it's only getting wider. In fact, the British Computer Society has warned that if the current trend continues, it will take **283 years before women make up an equal share** of the tech workforce.

Inclusion doesn't happen by accident. It must be intentionally and systematically designed and embedded into every single part of an ecosystem, at every touchpoint, to prevent bias—whether conscious or unconscious—from taking hold and keeping underserved individuals and communities out. It takes time, commitment, and collaborative effort across all corners of society. To date, that level of collaboration has been lacking.

That's why Kearney and UN Women UK have teamed up to kickstart a movement for change, bringing together our expertise in achieving lasting transformation with UN Women UK's strength in championing gender equity across the public sector, private sector, and civil society.

We're doing more than just starting a conversation. We're spearheading a call to action for tech companies, employers, governments, and all other players with a connection to the technology ecosystem to come together and tackle the gender gap where it hurts most: in our education systems; in our workplaces; in the way we design technology products and services; and in the communities to whom access is currently denied.

It's time to move beyond talk, and home in on the actions that will start to build true inclusivity. Let's work together to take the tokenism out of tech.

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# The gender gap in tech: lost voices, missed opportunities

On October 18, 2019, Jessica Meir and Christina Koch ventured outside the International Space Station to make the first-ever [all-women spacewalk](#), chalking up a historic achievement for NASA, the United States, and womankind. What a lot of people might not know is that the walk was originally planned to take place more than six months earlier—but had to be cancelled because there was [no spacesuit to fit](#) another astronaut, Anne McClain.

At first, this sounds so unlikely that it's almost impossible to believe. However, dig beneath the surface and it illustrates just how wide the gender gap in space travel—and technology in general—remains. Because it's not just spacesuits that don't fit women. It's fitness watches and smartphones. Car interiors and bicycle frames. Seat belts and stab vests. Surgical masks and stethoscopes. Tool handles, musical instruments, drug doses, medical diagnoses, even the temperature settings in most of our workplaces—you name it. All of it, for years, designed for a man-shaped world.

**Throughout history women have been an “absent presence” in many corners of society.**

These physical mismatches only tell one part of the story. Throughout history women have been an “absent presence” in many corners of society, from the telling of history itself to news, healthcare, literature, science, city planning, politics, economics, architecture, and just about anywhere else you care to look. These gaps have consequences, from the mildly inconvenient to the genuinely life-threatening, as revealed in Kearney's recent report, [Redesigning healthcare with women in mind](#), which confirms that women consistently experience significantly worse health outcomes than men.

Today's technology landscape presents both a challenge and a massive opportunity when it comes to gender inclusion. The challenge is that as advanced tools like AI take hold and set the pace of change in our societies, they are actually widening gaps that already exist in terms of who designs, develops, and uses the solutions at our disposal, what data is used to train them, which jobs they will displace, and who will be disproportionately affected as a result—namely, women.

However, on the other side of the coin, if tech can become a truly inclusive environment, this would unleash a new wave of economic potential as more women take their place as technology students, employees, consumers, and entrepreneurs, [investing back in their families and communities](#), and helping technology to reach its full potential as a universal force for good.

There's no time to waste: the gap needs to be closed, now, if we are to break the ongoing cycle of exclusion and bias that bars women and other underrepresented groups from participating fully in today's digital society. We see its effects in three predominant areas.

# 1. The gender-inclusive lens is missing in action

## An unequal workplace

It's well known that women are vastly underrepresented in the technology ecosystem. For one thing, despite accounting for half of the working population, they make up only a small minority of the tech workforce. Globally, the figure was edging toward [27 percent](#) in 2021, while in the UK it was slightly lower at [24 percent](#). Men also dominate when it comes to senior positions: according to [Women in Tech](#), just 22 percent of tech directors in the UK are women—and the gap at the C-suite only widens. The situation is even worse for women of colour: research by BCS, which is the Chartered Institute for IT, and Coding Black Females found that black women account for only [0.7 percent](#) of IT professionals.

But the disparities don't end there. Because even when women do take their seat at the tech table, they are still likely to be paid less than their colleagues who are men, while shouldering more of the burden of [unpaid home and family concerns](#). To put this in perspective, while the average gender pay gap in the UK stands at 11.6 percent, in the technology sector it is currently [16 percent](#). Quite simply, despite years of progress, occupational segregation is alive and kicking in the tech sector—and the glass ceiling is refusing to shatter.

## A skewed funding landscape

Additionally, women entrepreneurs face an uphill struggle when it comes to funding. For example, research from the [Alan Turing Institute](#) reveals that women-founded companies account for under 3 percent of venture capital (VC) funding deals involving AI start-ups, and that between 2012 and 2022, only 0.3 percent of the total capital invested in AI by VCs was raised by all-women teams. More broadly, in 2022 just [9 percent of start-up funding](#) went to companies with only women founders.



Workplace and investment representation also narrow as we apply an intersectional lens to women's place in the technology ecosystem. Women founders from underrepresented backgrounds also face significant hurdles in securing funding for their ventures. According to the [UK government](#), while businesses with all-women founders received just 2 percent of all venture capital funding in 2021, less than two percent went to black and ethnic minority-founded firms.

### A broken pipeline

But this isn't a problem that starts in the workplace. Rather, one of the main reasons that women are not present in the technology sector is that girls are not present in the STEM pipeline. An [OECD report](#) reveals that differences in the careers of men and women originate early. For example, at 15 years old, only 0.5 percent of girls on average across OECD countries aim to become ICT professionals, compared to 5 percent of boys. In the UK, just [31 percent](#) of STEM students in higher education in the UK are women or nonbinary, and fewer girls pick these subjects at school because there's still a perception that they are more suitable for boys.

On that note, sticky norms and biases are proving difficult to shift. A simple thought experiment is enough to reveal this conditioning in most of us. For example, if you close your eyes and think of a lawyer, a doctor, or a scientist, what do you see? As the author Caroline Criado Perez points out, [the average mind's eye defaults to male](#), even when we use gender-neutral terms.

This lack of women's representation is a pressing issue, which not only has an impact on the diversity of school and university cohorts, tech teams, and organisations, but also affects the products, technical services, and digital solutions that are tested and developed.

## Under the gender microscope: AI

### Displacing jobs

AI—artificial intelligence that performs cognitive functions such as reasoning, synthesis, and problem-solving—is fast becoming a crucial component in many organisations' operations, covering areas from customer services to sales, marketing, supply chain, manufacturing, finance, human resources, and beyond. In a recent study, the [International Monetary Fund \(IMF\)](#) examined the potential impact of the technology on the global labour market and found that almost 40 percent of employment worldwide could be affected, rising to 60 percent in advanced economies.

Women are already underrepresented in AI roles, which is a problem in itself. Then there's the effect of AI tools on other industries. These will typically automate tasks, rather than whole jobs, meaning many occupations will be affected unequally. While gender distribution at this level could shift over time, it's been estimated that more women than men will be affected by job changes between now and the end of the decade. For example, clerical work is ripe for disruption from AI, and in the US, 94 percent of secretaries and administrative assistants are women.

### Amplifying bias

Although proponents have heralded AI's ability to eradicate bias from workplace processes and procedures, in practice it has been found to parrot and amplify any biases present in the information it is fed (see examples from Amazon, LinkedIn, and Facebook below).

What's more, fewer women are using generative AI tools like ChatGPT. In Europe, [IBM research](#) has found that although 73 percent of business leaders believe that having more women leaders in their sector is important for mitigating gender bias in AI, only 33 percent currently have a woman in charge of making decisions on AI strategy.

With the technology continuing to develop at breakneck speed, time is of the essence if it is to be stopped from widening existing inequities between men and women.

## 2. One size fits... some

### The “default man”

Not many women will miss their chance to make history for lack of a spacesuit, but in all other walks of life, they continue to struggle with kit that doesn't meet their requirements or preferences, because it has been designed with men in mind.

The major problem here is that the data our society collects is typically and overwhelmingly about men's experience, not women's. Even when researchers do gather data from women as well as men in their studies, they often fail to disaggregate it by gender, meaning decisions about investment, research funding, testing, and development are flawed from the outset.

We don't need to look too far for examples. For instance, when Apple initially released its [Health app](#), which allows users to track a broad range of health metrics, it was widely criticised for omitting menstruation. Or how about the “shrink it and pink it” mentality, responsible for so many supposedly women-friendly products from [cars](#) to [mobile devices](#), not to mention [misguided marketing campaigns](#)—like Revolut's attempt to take a stance on period poverty?

People of colour—particularly women of colour—experience significantly inferior outcomes when it comes to some technology products. Take facial recognition, something that many of us now have built into the devices we use each day. Research by the [Gender Shades](#) project found that errors across systems from Microsoft, Face++, and IBM Watson® were consistently worse for people categorised as “darker female,” with success rates in the range of 65 to 80 percent, compared with 88 to 94 percent for the “darker male” category, 93 to 98 percent for the “lighter female” category, and 99 to 100 percent for those in the “lighter male” group.

### Inherited bias

Unsurprisingly, inbuilt human biases are making their way into the technologies that have been developed to mimic what we would do or say. One study published by Women's World Banking found that credit-scoring AI systems employed by global financial service providers were likely to [discriminate against women](#) and exclude them from loans and other financial services, just as one example.

Some large language models have also come up against the identity problem, giving supposedly neutral words like “nurse” and “doctor” gendered labels. Meanwhile, Amazon's short-lived [AI recruiting tool](#), developed to streamline hiring processes, was quickly withdrawn after it exhibited bias against women by systematically downgrading résumés containing gender-associated terms.

In fact, recruitment processes in general remain a thorny issue, having repeatedly been found to favour candidates who are men. For example, in 2018 LinkedIn discovered that its [job-matching algorithms](#) were biased, because candidates were partly ranked on how likely they were to apply for a position or respond to a recruiter. As men are often more likely to actively pursue new opportunities, the system referred more of them than women for open roles. Other platforms have also fallen foul of gender balance requirements. In 2021, one study revealed that Facebook was showing [different job ads](#) to women and men. These were skewed by gender beyond what could legally be justified by differences in qualifications for the job.

Compounding these issues, women face additional barriers to accessing and using technology products, due to social characteristics other than their gender.



### 3. The disconnect doesn't start—or end—with gender

Women are already at a disadvantage just by being on the wrong side of the gender divide, but if we overlay other factors such as age, class, social and economic status, race, sexuality, and disability, it quickly becomes clear that many women are further hampered from taking their place in today's connected society.

Looking at digital poverty, for example, defined as [“the inability to interact with the online world fully, when, where, and how an individual needs to”](#) because of a lack of access or skills, government statistics indicate that almost two-thirds (65 percent) of people aged 65 and over and 59 percent of households from the lowest socioeconomic backgrounds are either in this category or are classified as “narrow” users, while people with disabilities are [35 percent less likely](#) to have essential digital skills for life.

**It has been estimated that increasing the representation of women in the digital sector could boost the EU's GDP by €16 billion a year.**

### Approach

As organisations around the world race to capture the value of advanced technologies like AI and advanced analytics, together, these findings present a potential pot of gold for businesses and society. For example, it has been estimated that increasing the representation of women in the digital sector could boost the [EU's GDP by €16 billion a year](#).

To put this in context, as far back as 2014, Nominet, which runs the .uk Internet infrastructure, suggested that increasing the number of women working in IT could generate an extra [£2.6 billion a year for the UK economy](#). Add in the leaps and bounds that technology has taken in recent years, and the value at stake could easily surpass that.

With such a huge opportunity on the table, we wanted to find out what's preventing true inclusion from taking hold in the technology sector and start building a movement focused on the actions and solutions needed to make it a reality.

With this in mind, we took a two-pronged approach:

First, we mapped the **status quo** of the tech gender gap—conducting a literature review and 10+ industry expert interviews to not only gauge the sobering extent of the problem, but also begin to capture encouraging examples of **inclusion in action**.

Secondly, we started **problem-solving**—pooling the insights and energy of representatives spanning the tech ecosystem, uncovering where innovation currently exists, what more can be done, and how action can best be directed. We did this through a design thinking workshop, convening 60+ participants over the course of a day to share their knowledge and experience of inequities in the ecosystem, reflect on their organisation's progress toward closing the gap, and begin to sketch the contours of cross-sector solutions—**inspiring ideas**.

# Closing the gap: building bridges, breaking barriers

Closing the UK's tech gender gap represents the chance to boost equity and inclusion within the country's organisations and tech sector, build attractive workplaces for future talent, and draw on the creativity, experience, and energy of just over half of the population, rather than half that number. However, it's not something that any organisation, authority, or institution can do alone. There are many examples of good work from a policy standpoint in both the private sector and community organisations, for instance. But to create a lasting groundswell of change, what's needed is a concerted, collaborative approach that gathers input, feedback, and resources from all stakeholders across the ecosystem, including tech firms, other employers, government, academic institutions, investors, founders, and community organisations—to name a few. Reviewing the extensive outputs gathered so far, we have identified three core areas where this movement can make the biggest impact.

## 1. Filling the pipeline: getting women into tech

### Enhancing early education

The first area that needs targeted action is the STEM pipeline. As outlined, there simply aren't enough girls choosing STEM subjects while they are in the education system, which directly influences the number of women who go into technology careers. Filling the pipeline will mean removing institutional bias from the curriculum and making STEM a more attractive prospect for all students.

Given the clear evidence that career decisions are influenced, if not definitively taken, at a young age, one prime area for action is **enhancing early education** so children are exposed to relevant technology subjects and concepts from a young age, and strengthening curriculum standards so that this is a requirement rather than an option.



## Inclusion in action: holistic initiative to advance tech capability

### What is it?

In 2018, UN Women and the African Union Commission (AUC) together with the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) commissioned the “[African Girls Can Code Initiative \(AGCCI\)](#)” with the **aim to upskill more than 2,000 young girls (aged 17–25) across Africa** to become computer programmers, creators, and designers—encouraged and empowered to further their academic and professional trajectories in tech.

Key dimensions of the initiative include:

**Educate:** mainstreaming ICT, coding, and gender in national curricula

**Upskill:** setting up coding camps

**Aspire:** supporting implementation of national media campaigns for role modelling women in ICT

**Network:** deploying online platform to enhance networking among students, trainers, and mentors

### Impact

In the first phase of the program, **600 girls have been trained** through coding camps nationally and regionally. The program also produced a **guide on mainstreaming ICT, gender, and coding** in national curricula for key education stakeholders (including education ministries). Furthermore, an **AGCCI e-learning platform** was set up and run by the ITU, providing online courses, training tools, mentorship, and job opportunity postings developed by participants.

### Next steps

During the second phase, the programme provides training in 11 African countries. **AGCCI Learning Centers** are set up in conjunction with local learning institutes in participating countries. All learners are provided with **equipment and technology** (for example, laptops, iPads, smartphones, and modems) to ensure Internet access for uninterrupted learning. What’s more, educational stakeholders will be coached and supported on the adoption and **implementation of the guide on mainstreaming ICT, gender, and coding**.

### Training educators

In parallel, **training and resources for educators** need to be stepped up and consistently refreshed, so they have the knowledge and skills to teach tech-related subjects effectively and engage students in subjects that they might not initially think are relevant to them.

### Embedding tailored support mechanisms

For women in STEM education, it’s about creating **tailored support mechanisms** such as mentoring programs, along with access to diverse and relatable role models, networking opportunities, and customised tech career progression services to help them follow their ambitions. Encouragement and motivation will be key, whether by highlighting their own and other women’s achievements and contributions, providing opportunities to connect with peers and industry leaders to learn and share experiences, or ring-fencing funding mechanisms for women’s STEM initiatives.

### Providing upskilling interventions

It’s also crucial that training and upskilling interventions are designed in a way that enables more women to take advantage of them, especially given the impact of advanced technologies like AI on the future of work. Practically speaking, this means offering flexible learning options including online courses, part-time programs, or out-of-hours classes to help women balance their work and personal responsibilities more easily.

### Dismantling stereotypes

Finally, as we have learned there is a lot of work still to be done on **unpicking unhelpful gender stereotypes**, addressing lingering sources of bias—whether conscious or unconscious—and promoting a mindset that STEM subjects and the tech industry are genuinely open to all.

## 2. Fixing the workplace: supporting women in tech

Once more girls and women start to see technology as a positive, fulfilling, and feasible career choice, the workplace will also need to transform if employers want to attract and retain them. The harsh reality is that even when women do pursue their working ambitions, too many of them don't stick around. The root causes are multiple and varied, from unfair pay and benefits mechanisms to the “[motherhood penalty](#),” a disproportionate burden of care, and women-specific healthcare issues—including those related to menstruation, pregnancy, childbirth, and menopause. Designing systems that enable women to join, lead, and run businesses on their own terms will need thoughtful policy intervention, with corporates and governments working hand in hand to create solutions that function across all corners of society.

## Inclusion in action

Many initiatives to increase the number of women in tech already exist. These include [Code First Girls](#), a social enterprise that offers coding courses, networking events, and community support for women.

### Inspiring ideas, bridging the gap

During our design thinking workshop, participants came up with an idea to create impactful ed-tech interventions by capitalising on developments in AI. The idea was to build an adaptive learning platform tailored to unique learning styles, which would showcase real-world STEM applications to resonate with a diverse group of students in settings where traditional educational approaches are not working or not available. Virtual labs and simulations would help to demystify complex concepts, while forums and group projects would be designed to encourage collaboration, building a supportive community in the process. By adding in elements of gamification to reward progress, learning would be further embedded by progressive achievement and recognition, reinforcing technology's place at the heart of everyday life and promoting a culture in which girls see themselves as capable and successful in STEM.

### Inspiring ideas, collaborative action

Another concept based on platform technology was devised around creating a hub for women in STEM careers, aimed at promoting remote internships, mentoring programs, and collaborative projects. With the backing of government policies to encourage gender diversity in the workplace, tax incentives could also be offered to participating companies, while local communities could contribute by providing support groups and other resources. This global network would help to increase the visibility of women in STEM—providing powerful role modelling—and foster a culture of inclusion and diversity in the tech workforce.



## Tailoring recruitment

The first step toward giving women more of a voice within the tech community is encouraging them to join it in the first place. Given what we know about girls and women feeling that STEM and tech are areas dominated by men, **tailored recruitment strategies** that create inclusive pathways for women are a foundational requirement. These can include targeted outreach initiatives to attract women candidates, for example partnerships with women-focused tech organisations, women- and STEM-specific career fairs, and putting financial muscle behind ads on platforms where women are more likely to see them. In addition, recruitment panels should reflect a diverse environment, with all employees involved in the recruitment process trained to recognise and mitigate sources of bias that could affect the hiring decisions they make, and extra care should be taken to make sure adverts and job descriptions are written in unbiased, gender-neutral language.

## Democratising access to capital

In a similar vein, improved **access to funding and venture capital** for women will convince more women founders that they have a seat at the table.

Dedicated funds like the [Female Founders Fund](#) and the [Intel Capital Diversity Fund](#) are already supporting women and underrepresented minorities to get technology start-ups off the ground.

## Setting up smart retention strategies

Smart **retention strategies** are also a must-have to keep women in the tech sector. Entry-level requirements include equal pay for equal work, regular audits to uncover any pay gaps, and career paths with room for manoeuvre, such as those that include flexible working hours, breaks for caregiving, and opportunities for women to step out of the day job to develop their knowledge and skills. Supportive return programs and initiatives will also help women to transition back into the workplace after any time out.

## Developing women leaders

Another no-brainer is making sure that women have **equal access to leadership positions and decision-making processes** within the organisation and in public-facing roles, which will both give them more of a voice in the technology sector and create visible, audible role models for other women at the start of their own tech careers.

## Inspiring ideas, bridging the gap

Continuing on the hub for women in STEM theme, workshop participants also saw the potential for digital platforms to match women in tech with available opportunities across the STEM ecosystem. By acting as a focal point for job listings, career fairs, mentoring programs, education, and community resources, this would give women in technology and STEM careers tailored support to further their careers.

## Inspiring ideas, corporate innovation

One of our interviewees made the case for collaborative leadership approaches—such as shared equity leadership models—that allow individuals to share a senior role, with each person working on an agreed part-time basis. By enabling this flexibility, companies would help more women employees to enter senior industry positions and support one another to meet their own priorities, both professional and personal. On the other side of the equation, employers would benefit from additional intellectual capital and leadership resources. As the saying goes, two heads are better than one.



### 3. Making tech a universal force for good: getting tech to women

Taking in everything we have discussed so far, it is obvious that the technology sector is not currently a welcoming environment for women or other minority groups—there are too many examples to the contrary. That’s why our third focus for action is about making tech a universal force for good by ensuring that technology products and services are truly inclusive by design, and that there’s a place for all in the ecosystem, regardless of gender, race, age, ability, socioeconomic background, or any other social characteristic. Turning the dial on this will need significant and systemic investment from both the corporate sector and governing authorities.



Photo by <https://www.flickr.com/photos/unwomen/albums/>

### Inclusion in action

[TechUK](#) promotes gender inclusion in the industry through advocacy, research, and tailored events for women, aiming to empower and create opportunities for advancement. Its initiatives focus on skill development, networking, and mentorship to support women’s growth.

[WomeninAI \(WAI\)](#) is a global nonprofit focused specifically on boosting women’s participation in the emerging AI industry by becoming AI and data experts, innovators, and leaders. For entrepreneurs, [Founderland](#) supports women of colour founders in Europe and the UK to tackle the investment challenges they face by offering training on pitches and negotiation and connecting them with suitable investors.

### Inspiring ideas, corporate innovation

One proposal for reimagining product design is a “reverse accelerator” focused on the intersectional issues stopping women from getting access to the digital ecosystem. The idea is for tech companies and developers to tap into the communities they operate in by offering funding for product ideas. Selected ideas would be developed with community input to make sure they meet inclusive design principles and—most importantly—real-life needs. With continuous feedback throughout the development cycle, tech companies would then invest in outreach to show potential users how to use the new products available to them.



## Inclusion in action: holistic initiative to advance tech capability

Many organisations have made steps toward fulfilling these objectives. Internally, Lenovo's [Product Diversity Office](#) is committed to integrating diversity, equity, and inclusion principles into its product development and marketing processes, while the [GenderMag Project](#) is focused on integrating gender-inclusive design principles into software development processes. The insurance company [Emerald Life](#) has gone one step further with policies that are tailored specifically to women's needs, including health cover for maternity, gender-specific health risks, and travel and safety concerns.

## Inspiring ideas, collaborative action

Creating genuinely inclusive products relies on quality data that covers all the required bases. To make technology design more transparent, publicly available certification information, backed by regulation, could rank products on dimensions including ethnicity, gender, and global reach, to give consumers and end customers confidence that what they want to buy is the real deal when it comes to inclusive design.



## Reimagining E2E product design

As a starting point, to develop technology products and services that serve women's needs, it's necessary to **reimagine product design from end to end**, recognising that gender (and other) differences exist, and actively consulting with the people who will ultimately buy and use them. Encouragingly, there are several examples of progress in this respect.

## Defining gender-inclusivity standards

**Gender-inclusive, certified.** In much the same way as B-Corp certification has become a byword for standards in sustainability, we believe that gender-inclusive standards, covering areas like product design and development, gender representation, and consideration of diverse user perspectives, along with certification programs that award organisations for meeting them, could fulfil a similar role when it comes to closing the gender gap in tech.

## Boosting access to tech

Last but not least, making tech a universal force for good means **increasing access** to it so that all sections of society can benefit. We've seen the stats about which groups find it hardest to get a foothold in the ecosystem, whether as a student, an employee, a business owner, or a user. But what becomes possible when we remove the barriers that are in people's way?

**To develop technology products and services that serve women's needs, it's necessary to reimagine product design from end to end.**

Let's think about what happens when women are able to develop new, digital skills. The [OECD](#) suggests that the Internet, digital platforms, mobile devices, and digital financial services give them new opportunities to earn income, increase their employment prospects, and become better informed, which in turn breathes fresh life into their surrounding communities. Putting a figure on this, in 2021 the Alliance for Affordable Internet estimated that closing the digital gender gap would represent a [\\$524 billion opportunity](#) for policymakers over the following five years.

### Building digital learning communities

In this context, it's easy to see why investment in **digital learning communities** is a critical requirement if we are to encourage digitally disconnected individuals and groups to embrace the possibilities that technology and connectivity can offer.

## Inclusion in action

[D-seal](#) is a Danish labelling program that promotes IT security and the responsible use of data. Companies wishing to become "D-sealed" and show that they are digitally responsible register their interest and are then assessed against relevant criteria and requirements, covering IT security, data protection, and data ethics. One criterion related to trustworthy algorithms and AI states that companies are required to ensure that any errors, bias, and unlawful discrimination in their data sets and models are addressed in line with best practices.



## Inclusion in action

There are also several initiatives to tackle digital literacy and ecosystem access issues for women. The [Digital Poverty Alliance](#) is an advocacy organisation focused on urging government, industry, and other organisations to help end digital poverty, while [Catbytes Digital Community](#) works at a more local level to provide digital education, recycled computer equipment, and support.

Likewise, corporates are doing their bit to encourage inclusion. Telefónica UK and the Good Things Foundation launched the [National Databank](#), which gives free mobile data, texts, and calls to people in need. BT Group's [digital skills program](#) is also free and helps jobseekers, older people, and anyone else who is digitally excluded to understand and gain confidence with using digital tools.

Free tools like the [Your Juno app](#), which provides easily digestible courses on investing and personal finance, are also starting to become more widely available—a compelling example of tech being deployed to solve for other pressing socioeconomic issues.

## Inspiring ideas, collaborative action

To foster the mindset that technology is for everyone, establish a digital community that is specifically geared around providing multi-lingual support, which is still a huge barrier for some groups. Using local schools to deliver services staffed by volunteers would create accessible hubs for women to receive digital skills training, access drop-in support, and meet others in the same circumstances.



# Getting from aspiration to action

With so many inspiring ideas and examples of forward-thinking practice out there, it's key that we don't miss opportunities. While we know that only advanced collaboration will deliver that change, there are also actions that will enable individual stakeholders to play their part. Here are some must-get-rights.

## For educators

- **Remove institutional bias.** Revamp curricula to spot and take out gender bias, making STEM subjects more attractive to all students.
- **Enhance early education.** Introduce children to technology concepts early on, ensuring this exposure is part and parcel of all curriculum standards.
- **Support women in STEM.** Develop tailored support frameworks for women in STEM education, including mentoring programs, access to diverse role models, and career progression mechanisms.

## For tech companies and other employers

- **Transform recruitment.** Make sure recruitment strategies are inclusive, sweep ads and job descriptions for any hint of bias, and use diverse recruiting teams and assessors.
- **Mandate fair pay and benefits for all.** Ensure equal pay for equal work, conduct regular pay audits, and offer career paths that work around life stages and changes like pregnancy, parenthood, caregiving, and ill health—including embedding flexible working in the organisation.
- **Increase leadership opportunities.** Ensure women have equal access to and representation across leadership positions and decision-making processes.

## For governments

- **Design inclusive policies.** Design and enforce policies that have diversity at their core, and that encourage equal participation in tech roles and leadership positions.
- **Invest in tech education and training.** Develop, fund, and support initiatives aimed at increasing the uptake of STEM subjects by girls and young women.
- **Promote digital literacy.** Address digital poverty and ensure that digital skills training is widely accessible to women and other underrepresented groups.

## For community organisations

- **Build support networks.** Establish and champion networks for women in tech, which offer opportunities in mentoring, networking, and education.
- **Raise awareness.** Get out into local communities to raise awareness about the benefits of diversity in technology and the importance of making it a space where everyone is welcome.

## For investors and venture capitalists

- **Support women entrepreneurs.** Ring-fence funding and resources for start-ups founded by women and other minorities, providing a sandbox environment for start-ups to fail fast and flourish.
- **Encourage diversity.** Prioritise investments in companies that are making demonstrable progress—identified through certification, for example—toward gender diversity and inclusion.

## Activating change

Over and above these individual actions, all parties that touch the tech ecosystem can also play their part to intentionally build and sustain diversity and inclusion:

- **Embed women across the tech value chain.** Ensure equitable representation of women across data, design, and decision-making.
- **Collaborate through joint initiatives.** Encourage collaboration between tech companies, educational institutions, government bodies, and community organisations to develop comprehensive strategies for closing the gender gap, and take part in initiatives where you can make an impact.
- **Incentivise gender inclusivity.** Develop, implement, participate in, and abide by certification programs that recognise and keep organisations honest on meeting gender-inclusive standards.
- **Balance gender-neutral framing with inclusive design.** Ensure gender-neutral framing to avoid deepening prejudiced perceptions, while correcting for inequitable design with gender-specific interventions.



## Join us

Inspired by what you've seen so far? Diverse teams are the heartbeat of any successful transformation, driving innovation, profitability, and collaboration. But true inclusion goes beyond numbers—it's about recognising and valuing the unique contributions of every individual. We're only at the beginning of this journey, and we're looking for as many partners as possible to help us on our way. If you're passionate about women's place in tech and want to help build an inclusive sector that not only recognises but actively embodies gender equity, we'd love to hear from you.

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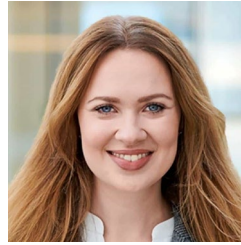
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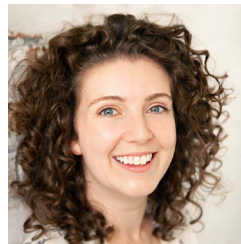
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### **About UN Women UK**

Created in 2010, UN Women is the United Nations organisation dedicated to gender equality and the empowerment of women. A global champion for women and girls, UN Women was established to accelerate progress on meeting their needs worldwide. UN Women supports UN Member States as they set global standards for achieving gender equality, and works with governments and civil society to design laws, policies, programmes and services needed to ensure that the standards are effectively implemented and truly benefit women and girls worldwide. Gender inequality affects all women and girls in all countries across the world.

**[unwomenuk.org](https://unwomenuk.org)**

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Kearney is a leading global management consulting firm. For nearly 100 years, we have been a trusted advisor to C-suites, government bodies, and nonprofit organizations. Our people make us who we are. Driven to be the difference between a big idea and making it happen, we work alongside our clients to regenerate their businesses to create a future that works for everyone.

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