



BCS' Response to the Building a Future Tech Sector that Works for Everyone: Call for Evidence

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Executive Summary

BCS, The Chartered Institute for IT, responded to the UK Government’s call for evidence for the [Building a future tech sector that works for everyone consultation](#). **The Women In Tech Taskforce sought evidence on the interventions that are needed to help achieve this.** BCS convened a panel, led by BCS Women, which drew on expert input from that group and other diverse specialist-interest member groups across multiple industries, including software, academia and health. Representatives were also drawn from a wide section of society. The submission highlighted that emerging technologies, particularly artificial intelligence (AI), are fundamentally reshaping skills requirements, job roles, and career pathways, while also risking the entrenchment of existing inequalities unless targeted action is taken.

Technology-driven skills transformation

AI and related technologies are rapidly becoming a baseline capability across the workforce, and not just for specialists. The panel said there is a growing expectation of AI literacy,

including understanding the tools, their limitations, and the ethical, legal, and safety considerations. Alongside technical skills, demand is increasing for human capabilities such as critical thinking, judgement, adaptability, and the ability to interrogate AI outputs. However, the pace of change is placing pressure on workers to continuously upskill, with many struggling to keep up. This particularly affects under-represented people in tech.

Evolution of roles rather than wholesale job creation

While entirely new job titles remain limited, most existing roles, such as software developers, data analysts, and cybersecurity professionals, have expanded significantly in scope. These roles now require broader technical expertise, AI capabilities, and stronger integration with business functions. At the same time, entry-level roles are shrinking or becoming more demanding, raising barriers to entry and limiting opportunities to gain experience for early career professionals.

Changing career pathways and labour market pressures

Career progression in tech is becoming less linear and more constrained at the entry level, creating a “diamond-shaped” labour market with fewer junior roles and strong demand at mid-career. AI is contributing to the erosion of early-career opportunities, leaving some graduates without clear pathways into the sector. Continuous learning is essential for progression, but unequal access to training and resources risks widening disparities, particularly for under-represented groups.

Persistent inequality and under-representation

Progress on diversity remains slow. Women make up only around 22% of the tech workforce, and at current rates, it could take centuries to achieve parity. Structural and cultural barriers, including bias, non-inclusive recruitment practices, limited access to networks, and unequal caring responsibilities, continue to affect both entry and progression. Intersectional inequalities are particularly pronounced, with significant under-representation of groups such as Black women in tech roles.

Barriers in education and career transitions

Key attrition points occur throughout the pipeline: at school (where most girls drop computing by age 14), during early career progression, at the first promotion step, and during life transitions such as returning to work. There is also a growing mismatch between education and employer expectations, alongside insufficient recognition of transferable skills from other sectors.

What works, and what does not

Effective interventions combine technical training with financial and practical support, clear progression pathways, and inclusive environments. Examples include funded conversion courses, mentoring, returner programmes, and employer-led reskilling. In contrast, short-term or entry-only initiatives without links to employment are less effective, as are interventions that place the burden of change on individuals rather than systems.

Systemic challenges in funding, data, and policy

Funding for innovation remains highly unequal, with minimal venture capital reaching women and other under-represented founders. Data gaps and weak public data infrastructure limit the ability to measure progress and design effective interventions. Current policy approaches often fail to account for intersectionality or provide actionable guidance for organisations.

Key conclusion and recommendations

BCS calls for a coordinated, whole-career approach to inclusion in the tech sector. This should include:

- Stronger early education and career awareness interventions
- Accessible, funded pathways into, within, and back into tech careers
- Greater employer investment in training and realistic expectations for entry-level talent
- Improved data collection and use of equity-focused policy tools
- Targeted action to address structural inequalities, including funding disparities

Without comprehensive and sustained action, the report warns that emerging technologies—rather than broadening opportunity—risk reinforcing existing inequalities across the UK tech sector.

Inquiry Questions:

1 Q12 To what extent, if at all, are emerging technologies changing the skills required in your organisation or sector?

To a great extent

2 Q13 Please describe the specific changes you are seeing in the skills required in your organisation or sector as a result of emerging technologies.

It will take 283 years for women to reach an equal share of the tech workforce if the current trend continues, according to analysis by BCS, The Chartered Institute for IT. Members of BCS specialist groups, all IT practitioners, formed a focus group to respond to this call for evidence. They were drawn from BCSWomen, Software Testing, NeurodiverseIT, and Pride (which represents LGBTQ+ tech professionals), and the panel included disability rights and gender inclusion experts.

will take 283 years before women make up an equal share of the tech workforce if the current trend continues, according to analysis by BCS, The Chartered Institute for IT¹.

¹ <https://www.bcs.org/> <https://www.bcs.org/articles-opinion-and-research/nearly-300-years-to-close-the-gender-gap-in-tech-without-intervention-warns-bcs/#:~:text=BCS%20comment-,Nearly%20300%20years%20to%20close%20the%20gender%20gap%20in%20tech,rising%20from%200.3%25%20in%202019.>

Members of BCS specialists groups, all of whom are IT practitioners, formed a focus group to respond to this call for evidence. They were drawn from BCSWomen,² Software Testing,³ NeurodiverseIT⁴ and Pride⁵ (who represent the LGBTQ+ community tech professionals), and the panel included disability rights and gender inclusion experts.

13.1 They felt that across the sectors - from higher education, professional and business services, banking, insurance, publishing, health, the public sector, occupational education - emerging technologies, particularly artificial intelligence (AI), are driving significant changes in required skills.

13.2 In their experience, and BCS analysis⁶, there is now a growing baseline expectation of AI literacy, including understanding how AI tools work, their limitations, and the ethical, legal and safety risks associated with their use. This is especially critical in regulated environments such as healthcare, finance and banking, where validation, data protection, data security and patient safety are paramount.

13.3 These contributors' observations are supported by BCS evidence from the Tech Priorities Survey 2025.⁷ Further BCS data analysis indicates that AI capability is now a core skills requirement across the workforce, with a clear need for enhanced IT capability within existing teams and increased digital literacy across the wider workforce. This reflects the shift from AI as a specialist function to a general-purpose tool embedded in day-to-day work.⁸

13.4 Alongside technical competence, contributors observed a marked shift towards human and adaptive skills, including critical thinking, professional judgement, resilience, the ability to assess AI-generated outputs, and responsiveness to continuous technological change. These skills are increasingly valued alongside, or sometimes above, narrow technical tool proficiency.

13.5 One contributor, drawing on her experience in quality assurance and software testing, noted that emerging technologies are not replacing core skills but are increasing expectations. She described a stronger emphasis on technical depth, understanding data-driven systems, and assessing risk in less predictable AI-enabled environments. Roles have

² BCS Women <https://www.bcs.org/membership-and-registrations/member-communities/bcswomen-specialist-group/>

³ Software Test SG

<https://www.bcs.org/membership-and-registrations/member-communities/software-testing-specialist-group/>

⁴ NeurodiverseIT SG <https://www.bcs.org/membership-and-registrations/member-communities/neurodiverseit-specialist-group/>

⁵ Pride

<https://www.bcs.org/membership-and-registrations/member-communities/pride-specialist-group/>

⁶ Delivering on the AI Opportunities Action Plan: creating the UK's AI profession <https://www.bcs.org/articles-opinion-and-research/delivering-on-the-ai-opportunities-action-plan-creating-the-uk-s-ai-profession/>

⁷ Tech priorities, skills and the AI outlook for 2025

<https://www.bcs.org/policy-and-influence/tech-and-society/tech-priorities-skills-and-the-ai-outlook-for-2025/>

⁸ Submission to the Business and Trade Committee Call for Evidence: Artificial Intelligence, business and the future of the workforce - BCS Policy

<https://www.bcs.org/media/hkcdfrm3/bcs-submission-artificial-intelligence-business-and-the-future-of-the-workforce.pdf>

expanded, she said, rather than shifted entirely, and she observed that many people are struggling to keep up.

13.6 There is international research that shows lower rates of AI adoption among female and mature-age software engineers. This analysis said ‘a plausible explanation for the adoption gaps lies in the competence penalty on AI adopters, particularly when they are already subject to stereotypes, against their coding ability, such as female engineers.’⁹

13.7 In Higher Education, an academic on our panel described how assessment practices are changing as institutions grapple with how to design learning and evaluation that works with AI rather than attempting to prohibit its use.

13.8 Another contributor, an expert on inclusion, said her research for her upcoming book has shown that inconsistent policy about AI use is sending mixed messages and causing confusion for students.

13.9 This is backed up by the Student Generative Artificial Intelligence Survey 2026 from the Higher Education Policy Institute that says nearly two-thirds (65%) of students say assessment has changed significantly in response to AI.

In addition, some students articulate a sense of anxiety about false accusations of misconduct.’¹⁰

13.10 According to contributors from our academics, the debate centres on whether to redesign assessments to work with AI, or to come down hard on students who are using AI tools in their work. However, another academic said that, in her experience, most institutions were teaching students critical thinking, an understanding of the fundamentals of study without AI, and how to be AI-literate.

13.11 Contributors also highlighted sector-specific changes. In insurance, for example, there is a growing demand for data scientists, digital risk analysts, and staff with AI and/or Python specialisms. This aligns with evidence of a 70% increase in insurance job listings requiring artificial intelligence expertise over the past year.¹¹


13.12 Across all sectors, our contributors said there is market pressure for faster delivery driven by industry assumptions, sometimes driven by unrealistic hype about evidenced gains from AI-enabled productivity. This creates unseen pressure on workers to manage expectations as well as technical tools.

⁹ Competence Penalty Is a Barrier to the Adoption of New Technology
https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=5255039

¹⁰ The Student Generative Artificial Intelligence Survey 2026 from the Higher Education Policy Institute
<https://www.hepi.ac.uk/reports/student-generative-ai-survey-2026/>

¹¹ Insurance Business Magazine <https://www.insurancebusinessmag.com/uk/news/breaking-news/uk-insurance-jobs-demand-more-ai-skills-562771.aspx>

3 Q14 To what extent, if at all, are emerging technologies leading to new or significantly changed roles in your organisation or sector?

To a great extent 

4 Q15 Please describe any new or significantly changed roles emerging in your organisation or sector due to emerging technologies.

15.1 While entirely new job titles are still relatively limited, existing roles have changed substantially in task content and skill requirements.

15.2 Roles such as data analysts, software developers, UX designers and cybersecurity professionals often retain the same titles but now require broader technical stacks, AI-related competencies, ethical awareness, and closer integration with business or domain expertise.

15.3 In software, one contributor said there had been an almost total loss of traditional Head of Quality roles in favour of Software Engineering titles. This, she said, left people in these roles competing for fewer jobs and deciding to take lower level jobs or leave tech altogether.

15.4 Regarding the changing nature of job roles, an example from a contributor in publishing showed that roles are significantly expanded for individuals managing rights and permissions, particularly in relation to AI reuse. Additional roles have emerged focused on detecting fraudulent AI-generated research or AI-written content.

There are also AI lead roles to help organisations make better use of AI in publishing. These roles span both technical and business functions, alongside more specialised roles such as building small AI workflow tools to help teams use purchased AI systems effectively.

15.5 In insurance, AI is increasingly used for risk assessment and predictive fraud analysis. While currently operating in hybrid models alongside staff, one contributor felt this is already leading to a reduction in some entry-level roles that previously relied on manual processing.

15.6 In early-career and vocational pathways, roles are often unchanged in name but significantly more demanding at entry. One contributor noted that the bar for entry is higher than it used to be, with fewer opportunities to learn core skills on the job.

15.7 In some cases, according to our software engineer contributor, the level of technical ability expected for entry into roles is closer to what would previously have been considered mid-level. This trend has been present for several years and risks limiting access for those without clear pathways or support.

15.8 Another contributor added that her research has shown that the gap between higher education and entry-level roles is widening. This is putting additional pressure on higher education to prepare students for the workforce.

15.9 Mid-career roles showed the greatest evolution, with increased expectations around applied experience, AI integration, commercial delivery, and continuous professional development. In some sectors, this is accompanied by growing expectations of postgraduate qualifications or professional registration.

15.10 When it came to late-career roles, older staff (aged 50+) are less represented in tech. Figures from the BCS Diversity Report 2024 showed that they make up a fifth of IT specialist roles, are more likely to be unemployed than their younger counterparts, and have received less recent continuous professional development. One contributor said she felt many people, who could still be valuable to the sector, were taking early retirement/dropping out of the industry, and this could be due to a lack of focus on upskilling this cohort

5 Q16 To what extent, if at all, are emerging technologies reshaping traditional career pathways in your organisation or sector?

To a great extent

6 Q17 Please describe the changes you are observing in career pathways in your organisation or sector.

17.1 Pathways into tech are often described as becoming more “squiggly”, including potential entry from non-technical backgrounds. In practice, however, these routes are constrained by a lack of supported transition pathways.

17.2 Contributors described the emergence of a “diamond-shaped” labour market, characterised by limited entry points, strong mid-career demand, and narrower senior pipelines.

17.3 Career pathways in tech, meanwhile, are not necessarily more accessible. The panel concurred with broader reporting, including that of McKinsey & Company, that AI is disrupting entry-level jobs, especially in technology ¹².

17.4 Whether driven by genuine productivity gains or by organisations believing the “AI hype”, the impact is the same: many graduates are entering a job market where the first one or two rungs of the career ladder have been removed.

¹² McKinsey & Company – Not yet productive, already disruptive: AI’s uneven effects on UK jobs and talent <https://www.mckinsey.com/uk/our-insights/uk-blog>

17.5 This trend is particularly visible, said the contributors, in the tech sector, but appears to be a broader labour-market issue, also affecting industrial placements and sandwich years within degree programmes.

17.6 Continuous learning and the ability to adapt are increasingly critical for progression. However, not everyone has equal access to time, financial support, or opportunities to upskill, slowing the progression of under-represented groups.

17.7 Contributors also felt that the misalignment between employer expectations and realistic early-career readiness is widening, alongside concerns about the slow pace of computing syllabus updates.

17.8 The panel said that mid-career women in particular faced unclear, under-supported and risky transition pathways, despite being a significant untapped talent pool.

17.9 Research from the City of London’s Women Pivoting to Digital Taskforce suggests that failing to draw on this cohort could result in £3.3 billion in lost sector profits between 2024 and 2035.¹³

7 Q18 In your experience, to what extent are changes to skills, roles or career pathways due to emerging technologies affecting who applies for, or succeeds in, tech roles within your organisation or sector?

- To some extent

8 Q19 Please describe the changes you are noticing in who applies for, or succeeds in, different tech roles? What do you think may be driving these changes?

19.1 The BCS Gender Diversity in the Tech Sector Report 2025 shows that women made up 22% of the tech specialist workforce, up from 19% in 2020 and 16% in 2018¹⁴ respectively. There has been some progress since the Diversity Report first tracked these ONS figures - but it’s glacial.

¹³ City of London Corporation – Untapped Digital Talent

<https://www.theglobalcity.uk/PositiveWebsite/media/Research-reports/Untapped-Digital-Talent-the-3bn-Opportunity-Full.pdf>

¹⁴ BCS Diversity Report 2025

<https://www.bcs.org/policy-and-influence/equity-diversity-and-inclusion/bcs-gender-diversity-in-the-tech-sector-report-2025/>

19.2 Representation varies significantly by working hours¹⁵, sector¹⁶ and geographic location. Women in tech roles are more represented in the public sector¹⁷ health and insurance¹⁸, while manufacturing remains one of the most male-dominated sectors for IT specialists, with just 11% of female IT specialists, according to analysis in the last BCS Diversity Report 2025.¹⁹

19.3 Health was cited by one contributor as an area where women can thrive, working their way up from roles such as nursing into management or tech roles. However, the contributor also perceived that, when it comes to senior roles, there is still a gender gap. This is borne out by an Exeter Business School report cited by the BMJ, which shows that there are now more women on NHS boards, but that they still hold too few key roles²⁰.

19.4 One contributor said strides have been made in the insurance sector as well to be more inclusive. This was backed up by recent statistics from EY showing that the gender pay gap has narrowed from 28% in 2020 to 3% in 2024²¹.

19.5 Contributors highlighted persistent cultural and structural factors affecting who applies for and succeeds in tech roles, including conscious and unconscious bias, confidence gaps, non-inclusive language in job descriptions, and the continued presence of “tech bro” cultures. Code First Girls identified 10 reasons why women don’t apply for tech jobs, indicating that a cultural shift is needed.²²

19.6 The contributors said the pace of skill change disadvantages those without time or support to learn, particularly women with caring responsibilities. They said awareness of bias and fairness alone is insufficient to remove barriers; there has to be action too.

19.7 Contributors also highlighted poor understanding of intersectionality, particularly how gender, ethnicity, disability, neurodiversity and age interact.

¹⁵ BCS Diversity Report Working Hours and Benefits <https://www.bcs.org/policy-and-influence/equity-diversity-and-inclusion/bcs-gender-diversity-in-the-tech-sector-report-2025/working-hours-and-benefits/>

¹⁶ BCS Diversity Report Gender and IT employment <https://www.bcs.org/policy-and-influence/equity-diversity-and-inclusion/bcs-gender-diversity-in-the-tech-sector-report-2025/gender-and-it-employment/>

¹⁷ Statista public sector workforce data

<https://www.statista.com/statistics/1449466/uk-public-sector-workforce-by-gender/>

¹⁸ Insurance Times: UK Insurance Boards Slash Gender Pay Gap <https://www.insurancetimes.co.uk/news/uk-insurance-boards-slash-gender-pay-gap/1457592.article#:~:text=Explore%20more%20diversity%20and%20inclusion,of%20the%20challenge%20that%20remains>

¹⁹ BCS Diversity Report 2025 <https://www.bcs.org/policy-and-influence/equity-diversity-and-inclusion/bcs-gender-diversity-in-the-tech-sector-report-2025/gender-and-it-employment/>

²⁰ Five facts on women in NHS leadership roles

<https://www.bmj.com/content/357/bmj.j1701>

²¹ Insurance Today <https://www.insurancetoday.co.uk/i2026012702.php>

²² Coding First Girls: 10 Reasons Why Women Don’t Apply For Your Tech Roles.

<https://codefirstgirls.com/blog/10-reasons-why-women-dont-apply-for-your-tech-roles/#:~:text=There%20are%20many%20reasons%20why%20women%20may,more%20critical%20for%20women%20than%20for%20men>

19.8 Informal networks, visibility and personal branding increasingly influence progression, but the group said this could be disadvantageous to those with caring responsibilities, limited financial flexibility, and those who lacked the confidence of the more dominant groups in tech.

19.9 Lived experience by the BCS panel across multiple sectors strongly indicates that changes in skills expectations and career structures are influencing both who applies, and who progresses.

19.10 The panel said there is a need for transparency of aggregated or statistical data that shows the patterns, which would enable greater evidence-based interventions, both within organisations and at a sector level.

19.11 The contributors also felt that the UK, across all sectors, not only tech, is also feeling the impact of how, under the US President, Donald Trump, support for EDI has been eroded and replaced by a culture that isn't inclusive towards women.²³

9 Q20 To what extent, if at all, have each of the following helped women and people from under-represented groups to enter, stay in, and progress in the tech sector?

Training or upskilling opportunities:

To some extent

20.1 Overall, training and upskilling opportunities are helpful, particularly women-focused provision. The panel felt it was difficult to provide a comprehensive response without additional context, as the effectiveness of training and upskilling depends on design, delivery and accessibility.

20.2 Another contributor added that programmes that tend to work combine technical training with accessibility, financial support and progression pathways.

20.3 Contributors stressed the need for more targeted support for neurodivergent and disabled participants, noting that many mainstream programmes in, for instance, Higher Education, remain inaccessible.

20.4 Lived experience from one dyslexic contributor highlighted issues, including:

- learning platforms inaccessible to people with dyslexia (dense text, fixed formats)

²³ People Management website <https://www.peoplemanagement.co.uk/article/1938202/uk-companies-abandon-edi-initiatives-response-trumps-anti-diversity-rhetoric-survey-finds>

Response – final version

- fragmented delivery across multiple platforms
- abstract language and rigid form-based assessments
- last-minute schedule changes that disproportionately disadvantage neurodivergent learners.

She said her experience illustrates how availability alone is insufficient; accessibility, effectiveness and outcomes matter as much as provision.

Team or organisational culture:

Don't know

20.5 The panel felt it was difficult to answer this question as they needed further context/narrative for the response. Points raised: inclusive cultures tend to exist at the individual team level, driven by diversity-aware line managers, rather than consistently across organisations. Organisation-wide policies and interventions, such as Employee Resource Groups, often fail to translate into lived experience due to a disconnect between senior leadership, HR, and technical teams. This variability makes it difficult to assess the overall impact at the sector level.

Access to leadership roles or decision-making spaces:

Don't know

20.6 The panel felt the question was too ambiguous to answer as females, and other under-represented groups of IT specialists, vary widely by role and sector. While there are encouraging signs in some public and insurance sectors, senior leadership remains disproportionately male.²⁴

Funding or resources:

Not at all

20.7 Venture capital and innovation funding remains heavily skewed away from women and under-represented founders. A UK Parliament Women and Equalities Committee report includes the following statistics:²⁵

- In 2024, just 2% of equity investment went to a female founder, while all male teams received over 80% of the venture capital allocations.

²⁴ Women in Data

<https://womenindata.co.uk/stuck-on-the-bottom-rung-why-women-are-still-falling-behind-in-data-and-tech-leadership/>

²⁵ UK Parliament Women and Equalities Committee, Female Entrepreneurship Report

<https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm5901/cmselect/cmwomeq/711/report.html#:~:text=2.,7>

- 75% of university spinouts are all-male teams
- 86% of angel investors and 85% of senior investors in venture capital are male

20.8 The panel said there needs to be a systematic collation of data by the Taskforce around the uptake of innovations and ideas that come from underrepresented groups. Despite findings that diverse teams are more innovative, that fewer women are first authors on STEM papers, and it appears fewer innovations pioneered by women advance through the innovation pipeline. Our contributors believe the same is likely to be true of other under-represented minorities, too.

20.9 Women-targeted funds are frequently small-scale and symbolic compared to mainstream investment levels.

20.10 Without adequate scale or alignment to real opportunities, funding interventions risk entrenching rather than addressing inequality.

Policies or regulations:

Don't know

20.11 Reporting mechanisms, for instance, on the gender pay gap, are welcome but limited, with non-intersectional data, highly technical guidance, and little support on how organisations should act on findings.

20.12 The panel said analysing data around Black Women in tech, for instance, was particularly difficult due to low numbers. Research by BCS and Coding Black Females found that, whilst Black Women make up 1.8% of the UK workforce, they account for only 0.7% of IT professionals. That means for black women to be truly represented in IT there would need to be 20,000 more within the sector.²⁶

20.13 However, the panel said there are deeper issues with this data when it comes to analysing, for instance, gender and ethnicity pay because it is so small. It can lead to under-reporting of lower salaries when compared to their peers.

10 Q21 At which stages in education or work do you think support is most important for helping women and people from under-represented groups enter, stay in, and progress within the tech sector?

- At school
- Further education or training (college, apprenticeships, bootcamps)
- Entering the tech sector for the first time
- Early-career development

²⁶ Thousands of Black Women Missing from the IT Industry <https://www.bcs.org/articles-opinion-and-research/thousands-of-black-women-missing-from-the-it-industry-report-warns/>

- Moving into management for the first time
- Returning to work after time out (parental leave, caring responsibilities, illness)
- Experiencing major life or health transitions (e.g. menopause, disability-related changes)
- Don't know / None of these
- Other (please specify): Higher Education

11 Q22 Please tell us why you think these stages matter, and what contributes to women or people from under-represented groups facing barriers at these points.

22.1 School is critical: BCS analysis shows that by age 14, 94% of girls and 79% of boys drop computing ²⁷.

22.2 Despite the world essentially being built on technology, our panel said school -level IT education is still treated as a niche academic subject. The school period is crucial to career path choices. Peer pressure, stereotypes, parental expectations and teacher confidence strongly influence whether girls see tech as “for them”. The focus group said better career advice and diverse tech role models were essential. BCS has been appointed by the Department for Education to lead the reform of the National Curriculum for Computing and associated qualifications in England²⁸.

22.3 Early-career progression remains a key attrition point, with strong evidence of structural disadvantage at the first promotion step (“the broken rung”) ²⁹

22.4 Moving into more senior technical or management roles - the panel felt this is often where women stall or exit.

22.5 Return-to-work and major life transitions - parenting, caring, health, menopause, and disability all impact women, people with disabilities and other underrepresented groups in tech more deeply. post-COVID, it was felt the push to return to the physical office, which significantly disadvantaged women with caring responsibilities.³⁰

²⁷ 300 Years To Close The Gender Gap in Tech - additional notes section <https://www.bcs.org/articles-opinion-and-research/nearly-300-years-to-close-the-gender-gap-in-tech-without-intervention-warns-bcs/#:~:text=Additional%20notes,22%20=%2079%25%20drop%20it>.

²⁸ New Computing Curriculum will teach AI Awareness and Digital Literacy: <https://www.bcs.org/articles-opinion-and-research/new-computing-curriculum-will-teach-ai-awareness-and-digital-literacy/#:~:text=BCS%20is%20also%20developing%20the,AI%20qualification%20at%20Level%203>.

²⁹ Overcoming the ‘broken rung’. <https://www.mckinsey.com/quarterly/the-five-fifty/five-fifty-overcoming-the-broken-rung>

³⁰ Nearly 300 years to close the gender gap in tech without intervention, warns BCS <https://www.bcs.org/articles-opinion-and-research/nearly-300-years-to-close-the-gender-gap-in-tech-without-intervention-warns-bcs/>

22.6 Higher Education - the number of students starting dedicated degrees in AI at UK universities in 2025 is up, according to UCAS data analysed by BCS.³¹

- A record number took up studying AI - of the eight sub-disciplines of computing, artificial intelligence stands out as a subject that is growing. The intake for 2025/26 is 695 UK-domiciled 18-year-olds, up 39% from the previous cycle (42% for all ages).
- However, these students still make up only 4% of all full-time computing students.
- The gap between men and women taking computing degrees, of all kinds, is the smallest it has ever been this year, at 4:1. That gap was as big as five and a half men to every woman, back in 2019/20.
- Another positive is the increasing appeal to older students of computing degrees.

22.7 More generally, contributors emphasised the need to focus on confidence, sponsorship and retention, not entry alone for under-represented groups. Many have transferable skills but do not always see themselves reflected in roles.

22.8 Tech employers do not always recognise transferable skills from other industries, creating unnecessary barriers to entry for career-switchers. One contributor said that in general, people changing careers need to communicate more clearly how the skills they learned in their previous roles can translate into the tech workplace. A better understanding/taxonomy of skills would help both candidates and employers bridge this communication gap.

22.9 The panel said clearer pathways, visible role models, and environments where people can learn without judgment are needed, and this would make a difference.

22.10 But our panel stressed the pathways need to be built, and industry needed to be willing to support and nurture the talents of under-represented groups. In addition, retention needs as much attention as entry-level.

12 Q23 Which initiatives and interventions, if any, have helped women and people from under-represented groups develop and progress in their tech careers?

Interventions that consistently help include:

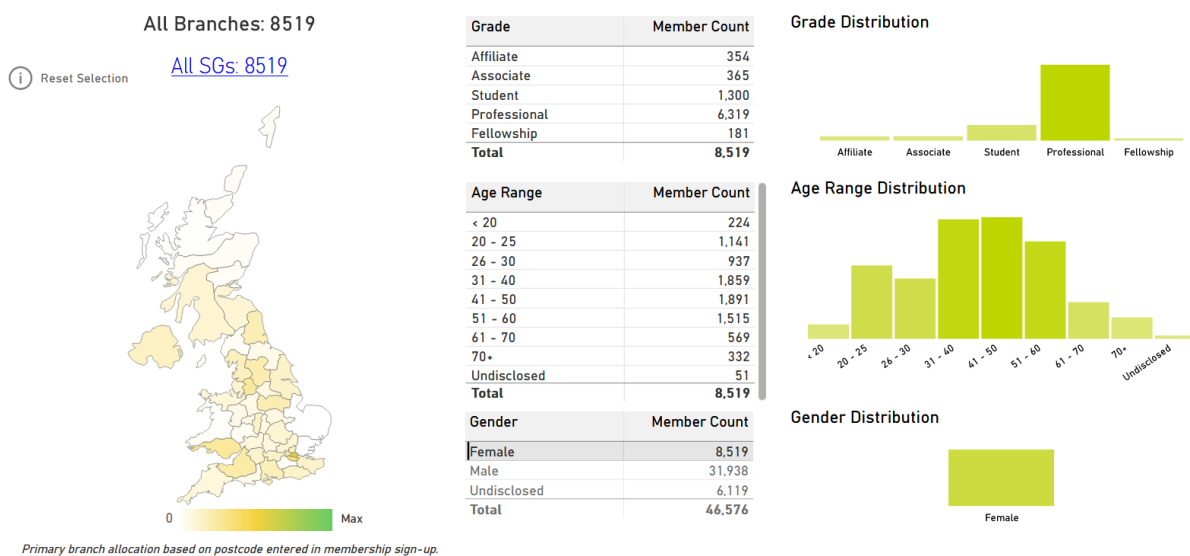
- Targeted, funded programmes that cover not only training costs but also childcare, travel, or income replacement.
- Scholarships and funded conversion courses, including for women pivoting into data and AI roles mid-career.
- Women-focused and identity-safe programmes (e.g. TechUP Women, Lovelace Colloquium), which increases confidence through representation and peer support.

³¹<https://www.bcs.org/articles-opinion-and-research/demand-for-uk-computing-degrees-in-2025/>

- Employee Resource Groups within businesses to gather individuals united by interests or identity. The BCS NeurodiverseIT SG did an event around these, which supported various groups.³²
- Mentoring, role modelling and visibility initiatives that show progression is possible.
- Returner programmes and taster weeks, allowing low-risk re-entry and confidence-building.
- Employer-led internal reskilling, enabling existing staff (often women clustered in non-technical roles) to transition into tech.
- Inclusive recruitment practices, such as balanced shortlists and diverse interview panels.

13 Q24 Which initiatives and interventions, if any, have helped women and people from under-represented groups influence decisions or shape emerging technology areas?

There are many women in tech groups. For this consultation, the examples encompass contributions from BCS Women and other BCS members. As of April 2026, BCS’ Women’s specialist group includes more than 8,500 women.



³² <https://www.bcs.org/events-calendar/2025/october/webinar-starting-an-neurodiversity-erg/>

Q24.1 BCSWomen^{33 34}

Founded 25 years ago with the main objective to provide support for women, non-binary, intersex people and trans women IT professionals. Its purpose is to attract, retain, and empower women to pursue careers in tech.

Q24.2 BCSWomen Lovelace Colloquium³⁵

The UK's leading conference for undergraduate and MSc women and non-binary students in computing:

- Running since 2008 (19 years)
- Provides a forum for undergraduate and masters students to share their ideas and network
- Holds a stimulating series of talks from women in computing, both from academia and industry
- Organises both formal (talks) and informal (networking) advice to undergraduates and masters students about careers in computing from women and non-binary people's perspectives
- Covers travel and accommodation to reduce financial barriers
- Alumni regularly report increased confidence, retention in computing, and progression into tech careers.

Q24.3 TechUp Women³⁶

Set up by Professor Sue Black OBE at Durham University, TechUp Women is a 12-week retraining programme designed for women from non-traditional and underserved backgrounds. To date, the programme has supported more than 600 women. Sue said: "More than half the women go on to work in tech careers, which is incredible because they weren't in tech previously. And I think the average salary uplift for women going through the programme is about £11,000 pounds a year."

Q24.4 The Women in Tech Power Network³⁷

Launched in the summer of 2025, this group supports women seeking promotion, leadership roles and visibility in the tech sector, which can help women fast-track their careers.

³³ BCS Women Specialist Group - about us <https://www.bcs.org/membership-and-registrations/member-communities/bcswomen-specialist-group>

³⁴ Celebrating 25 Years of BCS Women <https://www.bcs.org/articles-opinion-and-research/celebrating-25-years-of-bcswomen-a-conversation-with-founder-professor-sue-black-obe/>

³⁵ About the BCS Women Lovelace Colloquium: <https://bcswomenlovelace.bcs.org/>

³⁶ TechUpWomen - about: <https://www.techup.ac.uk/techupwomen/>

³⁷ Women in Tech Power Network - about: <https://www.skool.com/women-in-tech-power-network/about>

Q24.5 Coding Black Females³⁸

Over a hundred women from Coding Black Females have been given BCS membership under a bursary scheme.³⁹ The successful applicants benefit from the organisation’s mentoring network and have contributed recommendations to the BCS Diversity Report annually. 2022 analysis showed that 20,000 Black Women are ‘missing’ from tech sector.⁴⁰

Q24.6 Athena SWAN

More widely, BCS welcomes the use of academic frameworks, such as Advance HE’s Athena SWAN Charter⁴¹, which provides an evidence-based framework requiring universities and departments to diagnose inequalities and act on them. Many UK computing departments now hold Bronze or Silver awards, demonstrating progress in recruitment, promotion, and culture. However, the panel felt that influence is uneven and often concentrated in London, with regional voices under-represented.

24.7 Grassroots regional groups frequently shape technology adoption and responsible practice within organisations. They can influence practice locally but are rarely connected to national policymaking. Contributors suggested that greater intentional engagement by the Taskforce with these networks could improve representativeness and policy relevance.

24.8 The panel felt that unfunded or poorly linked interventions tend to benefit only those with existing privilege and capacity.

14 Q25. Which initiatives or interventions now feel less effective, and what alternatives would you suggest?

25.1 Less effective approaches include:

- Short, intensive bootcamps not linked to jobs or real experience
- Over-reliance on entry-only interventions that ignore the growing need for mid-career, career change and returner pathways.
- Deficit-based models that focus on “fixing” women rather than systems.

25.2 More effective alternatives include:

- Employer-backed, paid transition programmes
- Modular, flexible learning aligned to real roles
- Internal talent conversion schemes

³⁸Coding Black Females <https://codingblackfemales.com/>

³⁹ Coding Black Females Join The Professional Body for IT <https://www.bcs.org/articles-opinion-and-research/coding-black-females-join-the-professional-body-for-it/>

⁴⁰ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/technology-63402337>

⁴¹ <https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/equality-charters/athena-swan-charter>

- Funded, longer-term pathways that combine theory, practice and support

15 Q26. Is there anything else that you would like to share to inform the work of the Women in Tech Taskforce?

26.1 If the targets in the AI Opportunities Action Plan of thousands of better AI and digitally literate UK workers are to be reached, then the untapped talents of the currently under-represented groups in tech need to be nurtured

26.2 There needs to be better data collected around under-represented groups in tech and the impact of AI. In the January 26 Assessment of AI Capabilities and the Impact on the UK Labour Market analysis from the new, cross-government AI and the Future of Work Unit⁴², there was no mention of women in tech and the issue of gender and STEM inequities, despite the analysis mirroring many of our contributors' experiences identifying gaps, risks, opportunities and threats.

26.3 Intersectionality must be central to government policy design. Programmes and initiatives must account for variations in socio-economic background, race, sexuality, neurodiversity, age and caring responsibilities.

26.4 Government evidence assessments would benefit from using Equity Impact Assessments, Audits, Risk Registers centred on the structural and systemic barriers faced by women and other under-represented groups in tech.

26.5 In general, it was felt that a lack of public data infrastructure undermines evidence-based policy. The absence of comprehensive, open data and analytics on UK women in IT creates accountability gaps, making it impossible to accurately measure policy impact, verify theories of change, or distinguish between genuine causal factors and assumptions.

26.6 The BCS panel strongly advocated for a multi-pronged, whole-career approach for a tech future that works for everyone. It needs to cover coordinated entry, mid-career, progression and return-to-work support.

26.7 This must be backed by funded, accessible support and upskilling, along with realistic employer expectations.

26.8 Without this, emerging technologies risk entrenching inequality rather than widening opportunity.

26.9 Contributors also suggested that the Taskforce review its own representativeness, ensuring meaningful inclusion of a wider range of IT practitioners with technical, regional, academic, occupational and early and mid-career voices.

⁴² Assessment of AI capabilities and the impact on the UK labour market
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/assessment-of-ai-capabilities-and-the-impact-on-the-uk-labour-market/assessment-of-ai-capabilities-and-the-impact-on-the-uk-labour-market>

26.10 In addition, male advocacy should be incorporated into any approach to address the diversity gaps in the tech sector.

Who we are

BCS is the UK's Chartered Institute for Information Technology. The purpose of BCS as defined by its Royal Charter is to promote and advance the education and practice of computing for the benefit of the public.

We bring together industry, academics, practitioners, and government to share knowledge, promote new thinking, inform the design of new curricula, shape public policy and inform the public.

As the professional membership and accreditation body for Information Technology we serve over 70,000 members including practitioners, businesses, academics, and students, in the UK and internationally. We also have over fifty specialist groups

We also accredit the computing degree courses in over ninety universities around the UK. As a leading information technology qualification body, we offer a range of widely recognised professional and end-user qualifications.

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