TECH
LONDON
ADVOCATES

GLOBAL
TECH
ADVOCATES

TECH LONDON ADVOCATES & GLOBAL TECH ADVOCATES

TECH FOR D&IVERSITY REPORT 2022

CONTENTS

THE STATE OF D&I IN TECH 2022

RUSS SHAW CBE,
FOUNDER OF TECH LONDON ADVOCATES AND GLOBAL TECH ADVOCATES

Despite the economic challenges of the global health pandemic, the UK's tech sector has continued to deliver record levels of growth. London has retained its position as the global capital of fintech, investment into British tech companies reached £26bn in 2021 and the UK now has 116 tech unicorns.

The UK now stands shoulder to shoulder with the US and China as the world's third tech ecosystem.

However, whilst economic turbulence hasn't impacted the short-term growth of British tech companies, it does threaten our long-term future.

This is because economic turbulence impacts people, and makes companies less inclined to invest in talent, diversity and inclusion.

As a result, whilst every metric shows that the British tech sector has matured, grown and scaled, there is one variable that remains stubbornly unchanged – the lack of diversity and inclusion in British tech companies.

With Brexit limiting access to European talent, vacancies remaining unfilled due to a lack of workers with digital skills and outdated recruitment strategies failing to engage with under-represented communities, good intentions to create more diverse and inclusive tech companies are not converting into real change and action.

Tech for D&Iversity 2022 is a campaign from Tech London Advocates that says enough is enough.

In 2016, Tech London Advocates released the Diversity in Tech Manifesto – a set of recommendations from tech leaders to ensure UK tech implemented effective diversity and inclusion strategies.

Over the last six years, I have seen first-hand the incredible work of grassroots campaigners, activists and industry leaders to make a more diverse and inclusive tech sector a reality.

Within the Tech London Advocates network itself, we have extraordinary Working Groups bringing together communities across the UK. TLA Women in Tech, TLA Black Women in Tech, TLA LGBTQ+, TLA Young Entrepreneurs, TLA Education, TLA Immigration, TLA Tech for disAbility and TLA Asians in Tech are all at the forefront of changing perceptions around D&I in UK tech.

Of course, these initiatives and programmes take time to scale and maximise their impact. But they are still not shifting the needle quickly enough, and more needs to be done to ensure that under-represented groups are working in, investing in, and running tech companies in the UK.

That is why our Tech for Diversity 2022 campaign is asking what progress we have really made to make London and the UK world-renowned for being a tech city and nation that truly embraces diversity.

Once again, we want to mobilise the private sector to demand change. We want to recognise best practice within the industry, but we also want to inspire action from more employers and business leaders.

We have divided this report into three chapters – exploring the success or failure of the last six years, understanding how tech can engage new communities and practical solutions to create a more diverse and inclusive future. We have also included the findings of a survey of Advocates and a D&I Directory of organisations offering support to under-represented groups.

In the pages of this report you will hear from our TLA Working Group leaders, as well as other voices from the tech sector leading world-class D&I-related initiatives and programmes.

You will also find details of the new TLA Mentoring Programme – a practical solution to offer young people and people looking to enter the tech sector for the first time connections with tech leaders who can share advice and guidance.

I would like to thank all the Advocates who have contributed to this report and shared their experience and guidance in shaping our campaign.

SUCCESS OR FAILURE

Has UK tech become more or less diverse and inclusive over the last five years? Has a combination of Brexit and the pandemic made D&I issues less of a business priority?

What does it mean to feel truly included? The answer depends on who you ask. In the UK tech industry - which is thriving and has high quality, well-paid employment to offer for people of all backgrounds - a lack of diversity has remained a constant issue. Our sector is pioneering global innovation but is failing to inspire significant change to alter the diversity gap that is holding us and the wider economy back.

As an industry, we're not being honest with ourselves if we say that we have made real progress in the last five years. Despite the exponential growth of the digital economy, the figures on diversity are inexcusably poor. Opportunities still seem to fall into the hands of the same people - especially those at the top.

Since our Diversity in Tech event in 2016, there's been something of a paradigm shift across the world in the way we work and what we value. The pandemic has drawn our priorities into sharp focus - people are demanding more out of their workplaces.

In many respects, this means that employers are engaging with issues of D&I more than ever in the race to attract diverse talent to their firms. Tech companies are trying to tap into the talent in minority groups who have historically overlooked a career in the industry. But the socio-economic barriers to opportunity and the stigma around the type of person who works in the tech industry persists.

The business case for diversity was been made six years ago - and has been made time and again since. Yet we appear to be stagnating on progress - tech is still predominantly a white man's world. You only need to look at the demography of the industry figureheads in popular culture to get a sense of this: Elon Musk, Jeff Bezos, Richard Branson.

There is not just a lack of gender diversity amongst the tech magnates. Looking at this from a grassroots level in the UK, the latest Tech Nation report found that just 19% of tech workers are women.

Beyond the gender imbalance, there is a crisis amongst access to funding and investment. The latest Atomico report in late 2021 found that a mere 1% of overall VC funding in Europe went to founding teams solely made up of ethnic minorities.

In the wake of George Floyd's murder in 2020, numerous tech companies made pledges to address their own commitments to diversity and inclusion. This attitudinal shift towards racial justice has inspired conversation about diversity from startups to large corporations - but the conversation is not enough. There's been plenty written about the lack of diversity in tech and frustratingly little has been done about it.

It's going to take a concerted effort from both the public and private sector to actively push for equal opportunity. This must become more than just an afterthought, or an overlooked item on board agendas.

There is strong sentiment amongst our community that Brexit and the pandemic have made issues of diversity and inclusion less of a priority – nearly 52% of respondents to our survey said they felt as such. There is a lurking feeling that Brexit was a vote towards

isolationism, and that the UK is no longer as welcoming and as accepting to non-domestic talent as it once was.

The irony is that our world class tech industry here in the UK is not homegrown - our thriving hubs and regions of technological excellence are powered by internationalism.

Post-Brexit, the government's introduction of the Global Talent Visa has been a welcome step to attract foreign tech talent and send a message that talented entrepreneurs from around the world are welcome in the UK.

However, the Home Office needs to remove the barriers that block access to skilled workers overseas. The UK now has nearly three million digital and tech workers in a sector that is growing every day and is hungry for skilled workers.

If the UK is to retain its place as the world's third tech ecosystem, diversity must become a business priority. Diversity must be seen as an operational imperative, and no longer an optional nice-to-have if we are to see more progress in the next six years than we have since 2016.

NADINE DORRIES

THE RT HON NADINE DORRIES MP, SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT OF THE UNITED KINGDOM

My mission as Digital Secretary is to open up the tech sector to new faces - to those that are currently excluded and under-represented. Improving diversity in tech is a long-standing challenge - but it's an incredibly important one if we are to ensure that everyone can reap the benefits of the booming tech economy.

While I believe that good progress has been made, for example through Tech London Advocates and Global Tech Advocates Working Groups - it's clear that we need to keep pushing. There's still a huge disparity in gender, ethnicity, socio-economic backgrounds, and other characteristics. Women, for example, still make up only 19% of the tech workforce compared to 49% of the wider economy.

Improving accessibility to jobs such as in the tech sector, is a key priority of the Government. Our Levelling Up White Paper set out our mission to create opportunity across the entirety of the UK. In addition, we must address the skills gap, so that everyone has equal opportunity to access the required skills, such as through our Local Digital Skills Partnerships. Finally, we're working to attract the best and brightest from outside of the UK through things like our Scale Up Visa - and we want to make this group as diverse as possible.

This should be an effort spanning the public and private sectors. That's why I am so pleased that Global Tech Advocates and Tech London Advocates are convening stakeholders to ensure that everyone can have a share in the golden age for tech in the UK.

JANET COYLE

MANAGING DIRECTOR, BUSINESS GROWTH, LONDON & PARTNERS

Last month's lifting of coronavirus restrictions led to a sense that we were drawing a line under one of the most challenging periods in our recent history.

In addition to the tragic human cost, the changes to our way of living were unprecedented. Whilst industries like hospitality suffered, other parts of the economy, like the tech sector, boomed. New digital habits formed and unsurprisingly there was a correlation in investment with data showing that 2021 was a record-breaking year for VC investment. However, we have a long way to go until the industry reflects the diversity of our city.

We know more inclusive businesses generate greater economic growth and benefit to society, that they foster creativity by encouraging new perspectives and challenging group-think. A McKinsey study revealed that diverse companies are more likely to outperform less diverse ones on profitability. That is why it is so important that we do more to embed an inclusive approach - from recruiting diverse teams, championing role models, greater diversity in the VC sector to supporting underrepresented entrepreneurs to access finance to scale their businesses.

At London & Partners we put inclusivity at the heart of our support for businesses. We have actively engaged new communities to ensure that our programmes have a greater number of entrepreneurs from diverse backgrounds. We also run dedicated Trade Missions for LGBTQ+ communities, Black and minority Founders and Female founders. The ideal outcome of course is that these initiatives will no longer be needed, that inclusion will be part and parcel of the tech sector mindset. We are not there yet but it is our collective responsibility as tech leaders to ensure we get there.

JOTS SEHMBI

TLA ASIANS IN TECH

London is a global city with a melting pot of cultures and a thriving tech scene. When I started my career in tech, there was little diversity in roles at all levels. In the last five years, I have seen this shift with companies focusing on ensuring they are recruiting a diverse workforce and increasing representation. However, there's still further work to do with increasing diversity particularly in top tech roles such as CIOs/CTOs. Presently, only 9% of IT Directors are BAME in the UK (British Computer Society).

During the course of my career, as I reached increasingly senior ranks, I was always "the first" BAME director or leader at that level, therefore being an advocate for diversity in tech, is paramount for all tech leaders. Representation and role models matter to support and mentor the next generation. This has sparked the creation of TLA Asians in Tech Working Group, with a mission to champion diversity in tech by connecting leaders of today with upcoming leaders of tomorrow. Ultimately a diverse workforce brings diversity of experience and thought, and research shows that diverse organisations outperform less diverse organisations by 29%. London is the most multicultural city in the world, and our workforces and board rooms need to reflect that.

PAT SAINI

HEAD OF IMMIGRATION AT PENNINGTONS MANCHES COOPER LLP AND CHAIR OF TLA'S IMMIGRATION & TALENT WORKING GROUP

London is one of the most diverse cities in the world and the tech sector strives to be inclusive. As the head of immigration at law firm Penningtons Manches Cooper my team are primarily engaged by companies who wish to hire non-UK nationals into roles based in the UK.

A deeper look at the figures however shows that more men are sponsored (with women as the trailing spouse) and with the majority of the sponsored roles being at non-director level. We also see a limited number of nationalities sponsored into Tech sector roles.

This is despite the UK immigration system being 'one system for all' and making provision not only for maternity/paternity/adoption leave but also allowing dependants of the main applicant to obtain a visa with work rights.

For once it is not the UK immigration system which is preventing the sector from being more diverse and inclusive, rather it is a tool which the sector could use to achieve this – it is for the sector itself to demonstrate that it is 'fit for purpose' and be open for all.

ENGAGING NEW COMMUNITIES

Is tech doing enough to reach new communities and create workforces that truly reflect the diversity of society? Who is still excluded from tech and what can be done about it?

The pandemic has presented an opportunity to rethink how we educate our society. We've comfortably settled the debate about the real need to fully integrate STEM and digital skills into our national curriculum - but how do we engage the communities that feel ostracised from the sector to build their skills into a career they want to carry forward?

There's a vicious cycle at play when it comes to answering this question. We're never going to be able to recruit talent from diverse backgrounds if we can't create significant cultural change within the industry. There's a definite uncomfortability in the industry when it comes to talking about the pertinent lack of diversity of gender, ethnicity and sexual orientation.

If you're part of a minority represented group considering a career in the tech industry, the lack of diversity and representation of those you can relate to would be a significant deterrent. After all - over 70% of our survey respondents said that a very small minority of their senior leadership team is BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour).

Leaders have a responsibility to start commanding an inclusive culture. Job descriptions should be carefully articulated - it is easy to include unintended prejudice and bias in phrasing.

We know what needs to be done, and we don't need to reinvent the wheel to achieve it. Many of the schemes are in place already, but they need support, financial investment and publicity to the communities that they seek to serve.

Over the past five years, there has been significant efforts made by both the public and private sector to engage younger generations into tech via schemes and talent pipelines that have diversity built into their structure - like 10,000 Black Interns and Google's Career Certificates. This gives us promise for the future that engaging with new communities will be possible.

The importance of role models is vastly underrated. In order to engage communities that are cut off from the opportunities that lie within this thriving sector, we have to completely dismantle the stigma around it. Young black females for example, can't relate to the white male figureheads that are the face of the industry.

Mentoring programmes and apprenticeships are fundamental. Apprenticeships have a dual purpose - they will benefit both tech companies recruiting talent and for tapping into communities that often feel left out in the cold. The case for training on the job is robust. It gives employers the opportunity to cultivate a team around their values, and it gives apprentices the opportunity to gain real-world experience whilst earning.

There are intrinsic links between Britain's top Universities and the tech industry. Many of our most successful tech businesses are spun out of Britain's top universities - and as there is a diversity issue at the core of many Russell Group universities, with less than 4% of students are Black compared with the UK average of 8%. It will be nigh on impossible for businesses to improve the diversity of their employee base if they predominantly recruit graduates from top tier higher education institutions.

GRACE OWOLADE-COOMBES

CO-FOUNDER, TLA YOUNG ENTREPRENEURS

The numbers speak for themselves – just 5% of leadership positions in UK tech are held by women, and only 4% of the tech workforce is black, Asian or minority ethnic (BAME). We have a collective responsibility to tackle these issues and inequalities by promoting initiatives that enable people of all characteristics and talent to achieve their full potential.

We need to start breaking down the barriers that are holding back people from diverse backgrounds to enter the sector, and cast the net of opportunity much more widely. One of the key barriers can often be personal aspirations and expectations, or lack thereof. Too many young people simply do not see themselves succeeding in the tech sector, and have no role models to follow. They also lack the foundational elements that many of us entering the sector benefit from – social capital and networks, financial capital, language skills and key technical skills.

Role models and mentors are key to driving engagement and making the tech sector accessible to those from underrepresented backgrounds. Our TLA Young Entrepreneurs group has been focused on ensuring that we lead by example, and that those involved are a direct representation of the communities and talent we are hoping to reach.

Companies and employers need to be present in the communities where you can uncover talent, engage with young people and help them see the potential of a career in tech. We know that the days of pure financial incentives are over, and the new generation is after businesses focused on ethics, sustainability and the value of a work-life balance. If the UK tech sector is to have a future, we need to unlock these new ways to reach underrepresented communities.
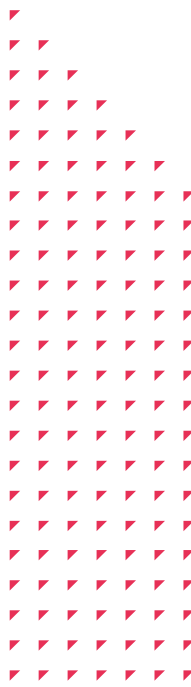
SUKI FULLER

CO-LEAD, TLA WOMEN IN TECH, TLA & GTA ADVISORY BOARD

In general, tech is engaging with new communities but not 100% in the correct manner.

For tech to engage in new communities, a different mindset, open to accepting diverse ideas, insights and processes must be implemented.

Now, I am being ambiguous regarding a definition of those "new communities" as this is a commentary based on complete inclusivity.

The best new approaches of research and development should participate in the societal areas encouraging engagement by integrating all unique perspectives.

This tactic grounded at ideation stage of anything being built or considered, will further technology for the future and betterment of all as opposed to the old habits being transferred to these new tech communities.

Learning from the siloed and biased past environment and moving beyond nullifies the "build back better" mantra adopted by many.

I prefer "build better", especially when the past systems were not built and did not work for all.

The metaverse, DAO, Web3, sustainability, upgraded regulatory compliance, government policies and basic fundamental safety that includes the voices of new communities are a few examples of where tech can improve engagement, it needs to do so more transparently, diligently, and purposefully.

FLAVILLA FONGANG

GTA BLACK WOMEN IN TECH

It's clear that the tech industry is struggling with the lack of diversity despite the number of initiatives and organisations, such as GTA Black Women In Tech, created to improve diversity in the technology sector. The statistics are undeniable, tech is not diverse or inclusive enough. Less than 15% of the tech workforce is from black backgrounds and women still only count for 17%.

With regard to tech and engagement with communities, the room is broad and some players are more active than others. Many individuals have realised the necessity to start their own initiatives instead of waiting for the government or companies to do the right thing. There is a lack of understanding, a disconnect and therefore an inability to understand how to engage with communities.

More must be done if we don't want to continuously increase the disparity. Having intention is great but having goals and plan are even better. Some of the most effective strategies are to work closely with different communities, such as GTA Black Women In Tech, who have the engagement with different specific community. Moreover, developing a framework which process and guidance gathered from the most successful diversity and inclusion initiatives is another way forward.

Can more be done to create a diverse and inclusive industry? Yes or no?

GAVIN POOLE

CEO, HERE EAST, TLA ADVISORY BOARD

Ten years ago, the vision for Here East was born and over the last decade it has grown and developed in ways I could never imagine - most notably within our wider community.

When we set out our original bid, we made one thing very clear - how important it was that Here East worked hard to engage the wider community by creating jobs and opportunities. Here East was built with inclusion at its heart - to provide a space for the creatives of the East London to innovate and collaborate at the epicenter of London's thriving digital economy.

Technology has certainly played a pivotal role in engaging new communities - it has made many things more accessible and has introduced a range of people to new opportunities that they otherwise may not be aware of. The emerging high growth tech verticals such as esports, gaming and creative tech are booming, and appeal to a new demographic. I'm seeing young, professional gamers who would never consider themselves as being a part of the tech industry, forging their own career path in the esports world. At the Staffordshire University campus onsite, they have cultivated one of the first ever esports degrees, geared towards providing opportunities for those from disadvantaged backgrounds to have a career in esports.

The foundations we have created are phenomenal, but our ambition is greater than the groundwork we have laid. We want to continue to evolve, grow and develop our innovation cluster into a place that everyone can feel is their 'second home'.

A MORE DIVERSE & INCLUSIVE FUTURE

What more can be done to create a diverse and inclusive tech industry? What examples of best practice can tech companies adopt? Do we need more extreme action from regulators and policymakers?

We know the challenge our industry faces - our task now is to take action to ensure that in six year's time, we are celebrating how far we have come - not lamenting the work yet to be done.

To move the needle further, diversity and inclusion must remain a top priority for those in positions of power - government leaders, CEOs, and boards. If those at the top do not believe and act on the basis that these issues are fundamental to our collective success, then sharing examples of best practice alone will have little impact.

Firstly, we must keep up the campaign for the removal of barriers to accessing skills across the tech industry. The introduction of the Global Talent Visa in early 2020 to attract skilled individuals from abroad was a welcome signal of intent to the rest of the world that talented entrepreneurs are welcome in the UK.

However, further steps are required - our industry is growing each day with demand for talent outpacing supply. In 2021, there were regularly 100,000 job vacancies each month in UK-based tech roles, the vast majority of which are well paid - the average advertised digital tech salary is £50,663, which is 44% higher than non-digital.

To fill these gaps, we must do more to tap into talent in communities underrepresented in our sector. This requires a dual approach, opening opportunities up both to those from abroad and in inner city, areas like Tower Hamlets, Hackney and Newham where London's tech industry has grown and flourished.

These boroughs are made up of significant numbers of people from black and minority ethnic heritage. Yet as long as only 2% of IT specialists in the UK continue to be from black backgrounds, for example, so too will our industry continue to miss out on swathes of potential talent to drive it forwards and continue innovating.

Among the black community, the demand to be involved in the tech industry is there - Global Tech Advocate's second largest working group is GTA Black Women in Tech, with more than 500 members. Their mission is to build bridges of opportunity in tech by enabling black female talent to excel and companies to access to black women of talent - but it cannot be the sole responsibility of our friends of colour to fight these battles and solve these issues.

As well as the opportunities on our doorstep, we can do more abroad too. Applications for the Global Talent Visa rocketed last year, demonstrating the strong appetite from talented overseas workers to contribute to our sector. While the application process for the visa has been made simpler - with candidates now able to apply themselves without needing a sponsor and to flexibly change roles after entering the UK without needing to inform the Home Office - fulfilling the criteria can still seem daunting for those lacking confidence in English. Administrative costs for visa applications are very high and the process can be lengthy - we must continue to look for ways to make the system more efficient.

Elsewhere, funding barriers remain an issue when starting a business. The Rose Review found that only 10% of female-founded businesses were able to scale to £1m turnover or more, less than half compared to their male counterparts (21%).

Government support schemes like the £500m Future Fund risk being restricted to the same small group of beneficiaries, as diverse founders tend to more often than not seek funding through alternative means, like angel investors and family offices. We need to invest in outreach programmes to alert diverse founders to the R&D funding opportunities which are available.

Our sector is booming and can truly define itself as thriving as we emerge from the pandemic - our next task is to ensure that opportunities in the industry are open to all so that we are truly representative of the communities we live and work in.

SHERIDAN ASH

CO-CEO, TECH SHE CAN

There's a real, pressing need and economic case for investing in technology skills in the UK. Unfortunately, many women and girls, who make up half our talent pool, don't think technology is for them. Challenging those perceptions is one of the reasons I founded Tech She Can. Our vision is for women to play an equal role in creating and developing the technology businesses, products, and services that will ultimately shape our world.

We work together with organisations, government, and schools to help inspire more young women and girls about the fantastic opportunities a career in technology can offer. We're also highlighting that a career in tech can be creative, exciting and a powerful way to make a difference to the world we live in.

We've developed interventions and pathways into technology that can be introduced throughout the key moments that matter in female lives. Our 'Tech We Can' educational resources, aimed at children aged 5 - 14, demonstrate the many different technology careers available and feature a range of young, relatable women working in tech roles. We also work with industry and schools to deliver Careers Insights programmes giving older pupils and teachers a taste of prospective roles in technology.

Change in the industry won't happen unless we all work together to make a continuing and sustainable impact - and we see collaboration as our super power at Tech She Can. By bringing together the collective experience and expertise of our 200-plus member organisations, we're developing and sharing best practices, programmes, and policies to increase the ratio of women working in tech and create a more diverse and inclusive, and hence creative and productive, industry.

GARRY BERNSTEIN

CHIEF EXECUTIVE, TECHNOLOGY LEADERS, TECH SCOTLAND ADVOCATES LEAD

Over the last few years, many tech companies have invested in specialist support and Diversity Equity and Inclusion (DEI) advisory services – and that's to be applauded. While tech has secured its reputation as one of the world's most progressive industries, the majority of DEI performance indicators for the sector point to painfully slow and frustrating progress, at best.

On the current trajectory, we are still decades away from closing the gender pay gap. London's female led businesses received less than 0.5% of the £5.3billion invested by VCs in the last four months of 2021. Black minority ethnic entrepreneurs fare even worse, with analysis showing they secured just 0.02% share of VC investment between 2009 and 2019.

With our mastery of diversity data, generous disclosures from protected groups and commitment to boosting DEI performance from tech firm boards, we have to ask why well intentioned Diversity and Inclusion initiatives are failing to deliver the breakthroughs we all want. It might be helpful to contrast what tech companies are doing to create sustainable / restorative operations as part of their Environmental, Social Governance (ESG) reporting activities and obligations.

The Environmental data and practices they are using have been standardised in cross sector frameworks like TCFD. The Social and Stakeholder Governance practices where DEI reside within a company have no agreed standards or consistent reporting practices. To enact real change and achieve progress, it's time to use the global pivot to ESG investment to professionalise DEI, and ensure these important initiatives get the focus, resources and backing needed from all stakeholders.

SARAH LUXFORD

CO-LEAD, TLA WOMEN IN TECH, TLA ADVISORY BOARD

I want to recognise that both building & developing diverse talent pipelines whilst also shaping a culture that supports inclusion and psychological safety is hard. We see this both in corporates that are trying to untangle and catch up on years of entrenched behaviours and processes that don't support inclusive environments, to startups that have an opportunity to put inclusion first and yet still struggle to find the support in baking positive action from the start.

It's important employers get clear on data to understand their current talent pool, review their recruitment attraction techniques and onboarding processes. We also need better visibility, helping to develop further platforms for talent to have a voice, the opportunity to develop talent via mentorship schemes or sponsorship and the need for clarity of messaging around inclusion from the top down. But for me, right now the message is crystal clear - we need to be

investing in the education of the future tech generation.

We are in crisis mode and more needs to be done to encourage the next wave of talent to understand there is a plethora of opportunities in digital and tech, it's not just about 'coding'. We need to find a creative way for recent graduates to share their learning to students. We need investment and training for our teachers to learn the latest digital techniques and bring them to life in the classroom.

There needs to be radical rethink around our education system otherwise we are in serious danger of losing our competitive edge here in the UK. And for those who are still pondering the day to day actions to move the dial on diversity and inclusion - joining TLA/GTA you are in a family made of incredibly diverse communities, you couldn't be in better company to ask those awkward questions or join us in driving collaborative solutions.

MARIE-CLARE FENECH

TLA TECH FOR DISABILITY & DIRECTOR, MY REC SPACE

Looking back over the last two decades of working in the Tech Talent and DE&I space, I know we have made progress. From initiatives aiming to improve the gender balance of technology teams, to employee resource groups focusing on underrepresented individuals, companies are recognising the need to hire and nurture diverse and inclusive cultures.

But more can, and needs to be done, with one group in particular standing out – the 14 plus million disabled people who make up 22% of the UK population.

Estimated to have a collective household spending power of some £274 billion per year, their user experience leads to over 70% clicking away from a website they find difficult to use. That's a loss of more than £11.75 billion in the UK alone.

But the greatest loss is to the tech industry itself. Seeing how those with differing abilities navigate a seemingly ordinary day in extraordinary ways, highlights just how much creativity and ingenuity the tech industry is missing out on.

At TLA Tech For disAbility, we look to raise awareness of tech startups working to benefit the disabled community, but it works both ways. Our Inclusive Conversation events have provided us with many intersectional opportunities for learning - we may think we have understood one aspect of a disability, only to be presented with completely new perspectives at the next conversation.

Whether supplying food, taxi services, or medicines, it is said that every company is now a tech company. If companies are to provide these goods and services to all, then tech needs to be accessible to all.
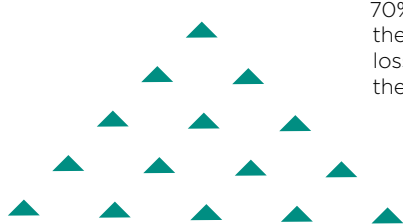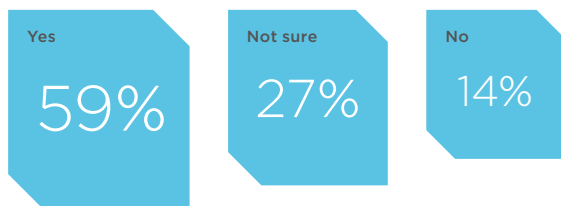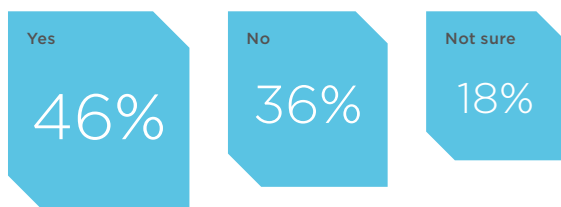
ADVOCATES SURVEY

Q1
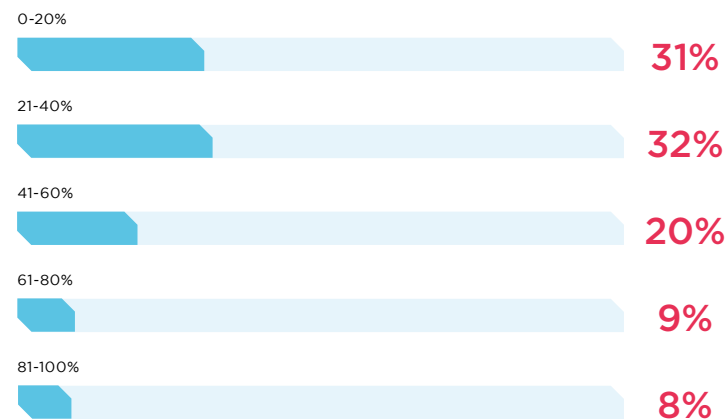**Do you think UK tech has become more diverse and inclusive over the last five years?**

Yes	Not sure	No
59%	27%	14%

Q2
Do you think the pandemic and Brexit has made D&I-related issues less of a priority?

Yes	No	Not sure
46%	36%	18%

Q3
What percentage of your senior leadership team is female?

0-20%	31%
21-40%	32%
41-60%	20%
61-80%	9%
81-100%	8%

Q4
What percentage of your senior leadership team identifies as BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour)?

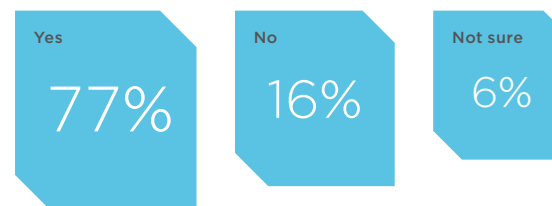| 0-20%	71%
21-40%	16%
41-60%	2%
61-80%	5%
81-100%	7%
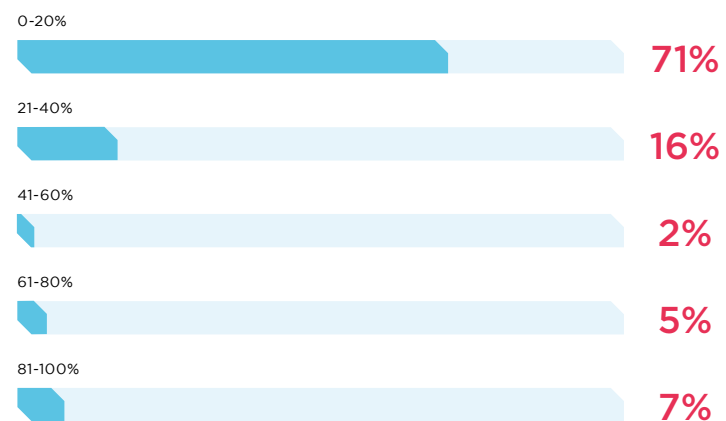
ADVOCATES SURVEY

Q5 Do you think we will see truly diverse and inclusive tech companies in the next ten years?

Yes	No	Not sure
42%	33%	25%

Q6 Do you think diversity issues could cost London and the UK its world-leading tech leadership position?

Yes	No	Not sure
51%	33%	16%

Q7 Do you feel included within your company? By included we mean able to disclose personal needs, able to define and ask for adaptations and are aware of policies to support needs in the workplace.

Yes	No	Not sure
77%	16%	6%
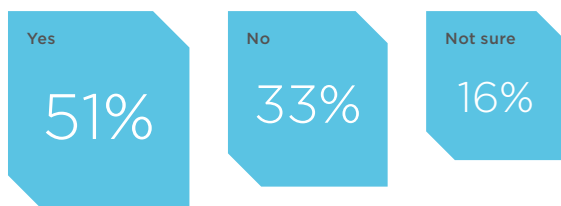
(data as of 25/03/2022)

CONCLUSION

Throughout this report you have heard from our TLA Working Group leaders, and voices from the UK tech sector leading world-class D&I-related initiatives and programmes.

All have shared their contributions and insights with the aim to inform the next steps of the Tech for D&Iversity campaign – and the overarching effort of the TLA network to continually drive change and improve levels of inclusion and diversity in the sector.

What's clear is that the tech community is full of the right type of ideas and initiatives that can help tackle the sector's diversity challenge once and for all.

The mentoring programme Tech London Advocates is introducing this year is hopefully another key initiative that will add to the collective effort to not only bring more diverse voices and perspectives into the sector – but also to help them thrive.

The attitude we're noticing in our community is the right one, and there's a clear passion and dedication to improving the current state of play.

It's encouraging to know that the sector is prepared to better itself, and those in leading industry positions – predominantly white men – will ultimately sit at the heart of the solution.

There's no two ways about it – diversity levels in tech are nowhere near good enough. However, as a grassroots community, all we can continue to do is support one another and drive home the messages that diversity and inclusion are not only morally imperative, but economically beneficial.

Collectively, we've made a great deal of progress in the past six years – since the last TLA Diversity event – but it's clear that we're not there yet, and there's no simple solution to getting us over the line.

Despite an increase in education on diversity and inclusion and the establishment of D&I committees in tech companies in recent years, we remain an industry of 80% white men.

Women and minority ethnic groups are underrepresented at all levels in the tech sector, but the problem is particularly acute in C-Suite positions and among investors. More needs to be done to start creating a truly inclusive culture – whether that's ensuring everyone feels fully valued and able to contribute to a business' strategy and direction, or just having the opportunity to start a new role in the sector at the ground floor.

We started off this report by stating that Tech for D&Iversity 2022 is a campaign that says enough is enough.

What that really speaks to is the wider tech ecosystem within which this debate is taking place. London, and the UK at large, is now a serious player in the global tech landscape, and our tech sector has come of age.

A true sign of maturity is indicated by the levels of funding that flow into the UK on an annual basis, the type of world-beating companies and tech pioneers we're consistently producing, and the increasing amount of British tech businesses that are now reaching the public markets.

These are all impressive metrics, and the UK is ahead of its peers on all of them. But real maturity does just lie in driving economic growth – it's about setting global standards and it's precisely why we need to improve our diversity record.

The tech sector is inherently a future facing industry, and in order to be sustainable and truly fit for the future, we need greater levels of equity, inclusion and diversity of talent coming into the sector.

That path starts with how tech companies recruit, where they hire from, and what type of initiatives they have in place to introduce new talent to the sector. The ball is squarely in the court of the private sector. There's no point in waiting for government intervention, apprenticeship opportunities, or recruitment incentives – the time to act is now, and only tech businesses themselves can enact real change.

Ultimately, the tech industry needs to set the standards it wants to see implemented across the board in the future – and the UK has a golden opportunity to lead the global technology field in this space.

Fundamentally, technology is inclusive and open to everyone. There's no reason for poor diversity levels to keep dragging on, and if we seize the opportunity now, we can set the foundations for a future-facing sector that can keep growing and maturing, all the while bringing along everyone to reap the benefits.

MENTORING PROGRAMME

In 2016, Tech London Advocates released a Diversity in Tech Manifesto. One of the key recommendations in that report was to 'Develop skills and mentor future talent.'

Six years later, to coincide with the Tech for D&Iversity 2022 hybrid event on the 31st March, Tech London Advocates is proudly launching its first mentoring programme.

Working with the community of 13,000 Advocates, the mentoring programme will connect established tech leaders with young people and those looking to enter the tech industry.

To establish the mentoring programme, Advocates willing to become mentors will be listed on the Tech London Advocates website.

To become a mentor, please go to the TLA website and register your interest. Advocates who commit to the programme will be working with a mentee over a three month period.

All mentors will be listed on the TLA website, along with the LinkedIn profile, and potential mentees will be invited to contact mentors via LinkedIn to connect.

Tech London Advocates will work closely with the TLA Young Entrepreneurs and TLA Education Working Groups to deliver the Programme.

www.techlondonadvocates.org.uk

D&I DIRECTORY

Many outstanding organisations and initiatives exist in the UK, working with individuals and companies to improve access and increase diversity in the sector. Here are key examples that every tech entrepreneur, founder and employer should be aware of.

SPONSORS

We would like to thank our sponsors and partners, whose support has made the production of this report possible:

GTA PARTNERS

future energy ventures

TLA PARTNERS

SHOOSMITHS

CREDIT SUISSE

interxion

KPMG

PENNINGTONS MANCHES COOPER

HereEast

GLOBALIZATION PARTNERS

HISCOX

LAKE STAR

D&LLTechnologies

ABOUT TLA & GTA

TECH LONDON ADVOCATES

Tech London Advocates is a private sector led coalition of over 13,000 expert individuals from the tech sector and broader community who have committed to championing London's potential as a world-class hub for tech and digital businesses.

It strives to support London's tech startups and high-growth businesses in finding new investment, new talent and continued success.

Tech London Advocates is an independent organization, that is supported by: Future Energy Ventures, Shoosmiths, Credit Suisse, Interxion, KPMG, Penningtons Manches Cooper, Here East, Globalization Partners, Hiscox, Lakestar and Dell Technologies.

www.techlondonadvocates.org.uk
🐦 @techlondonadv

GLOBAL TECH ADVOCATES

Global Tech Advocates is the only truly international grassroots tech community with more than 20,000 tech leaders, experts and investors connecting more than 20 of the world's fastest-growing tech hubs and regions.

Global Tech Advocates, founded by Russ Shaw, is the voice of tech worldwide, championing tech ecosystems and campaigning to address the challenges facing tech companies.

Through a collection of networks in multiple cities, each with their own working groups dedicated to specific initiatives and verticals, Global Tech Advocates inspires tech leaders to volunteer their time to support each other, make connections and campaign for change.

GTA is an independent organisation supported by Future Energy Ventures.

www.globaltechadvocates.org
🐦 @globaltechadv