Bridging the Gender Gap in Technology: Pathways for Innovation

Abdulla Al Ghurair Foundation

Women in Technology
and the Path to Growth

By removing obstacles, promoting fairness, and creating supportive environments, the technology industry can fully utilize women's talents, transform itself, and innovate through diverse perspectives. This paper discusses ways to increase women's involvement in tech, emphasizing the need for teamwork and providing action steps for different groups.

At the current pace of change it will take more than

169 Years

until the global economic gender gap is closed[1].

The technology and AI sectors are rapidly advancing, offering unprecedented growth opportunities while impacting the way people live, learn, and work. Despite this rapid growth, the industry continues to grapple with issues of inclusion. Women's participation still faces several challenges, especially in leadership and technical positions, where their representation remains far below that of men[2].
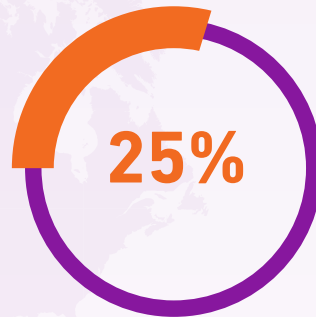
Alarmingly, 70% of women surveyed from the GCC highlighted that gender bias and stereotypes represent one of their biggest challenges to workplace advancement, along with inadequate mentorship, training, and support for work-life balance[3].
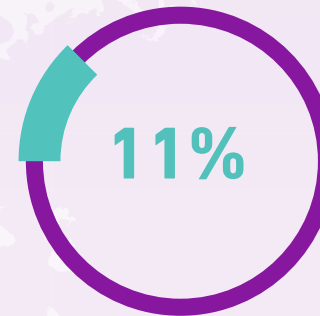
1 Global Gender Gap Report 2023   2 Grant Thornton. (2024).   3 Bain & Company. (2023).

Women in the Global Tech Workforce[4]

25%

portion of tech jobs held by women

11%

portion of executive roles in tech held by women

Fortunately, the landscape is evolving, driven by more inclusive initiatives encouraging women to pursue careers in STEM. For instance, 34%-57% of STEM graduates in Arab countries are women, exceeding OECD averages and showing improvement in enrollment rates[5].

As the demand for diverse talent increases, supporting women is crucial for driving innovation and addressing challenges. In the UAE, inclusivity is a core value, embedded in the nation's growth strategy and championed through the UAE National Vision 2031. As a regional leader in gender equality,

the UAE is fostering a knowledge-based economy where women are achieving significant milestones in sectors like technology, space exploration, medicine, and climate solutions.

4 Forbes. (2024).   5 OECD/ILO/CAWTAR. (2020).

50%

of the UAE's space program workforce is comprised of women, exemplifying the UAE's commitment to closing gender gaps in STEM fields[6].

The Abdulla Al Ghurair Foundation shares the UAE's vision, embedding gender equity into its mission to empower women in technology. Guided by Sustainable Development Goals 4, 5, 8, and 17, the Foundation's programs prioritize inclusivity, ensuring women have both access and support to excel in the tech sector. Notably, nearly 60% of the Foundation's program participants are women. Through strategic partnerships and tailored, future-facing programs, the Foundation equips women with the skills necessary for inclusive growth.

6 UAE Embassy in Washington D.C. (2023).

"The challenges of tomorrow demand the full spectrum of talent—especially in fields like AI and emerging technologies. Women in tech aren't just participants; they are the leaders, innovators, and creators of tomorrow's solutions. At the Abdulla Al Ghurair Foundation, empowering women isn't just part of what we do—it's at the heart of our mission. Our programs prioritize inclusivity, ensuring that women not only have equal access but also thrive in spaces where they've historically been underrepresented—like tech."

Mona Ghander
Vice President
Partnerships & Programs, Abdulla Al Ghurair Foundation

Approaches for Supporting **Women's Advancement** in the Tech Sector

Bridging the gender gap in technology requires a multi-faceted approach, beginning with targeted education and training to equip women with the skills and knowledge essential to succeed in tech roles. This requires specialized education that prepares women for tech careers and pathways for continuous learning through upskilling and reskilling. By reframing technology as an inclusive field and integrating creative approaches into STEM education, stakeholders can take crucial steps to attract more women to technology careers and ensure their continued success.
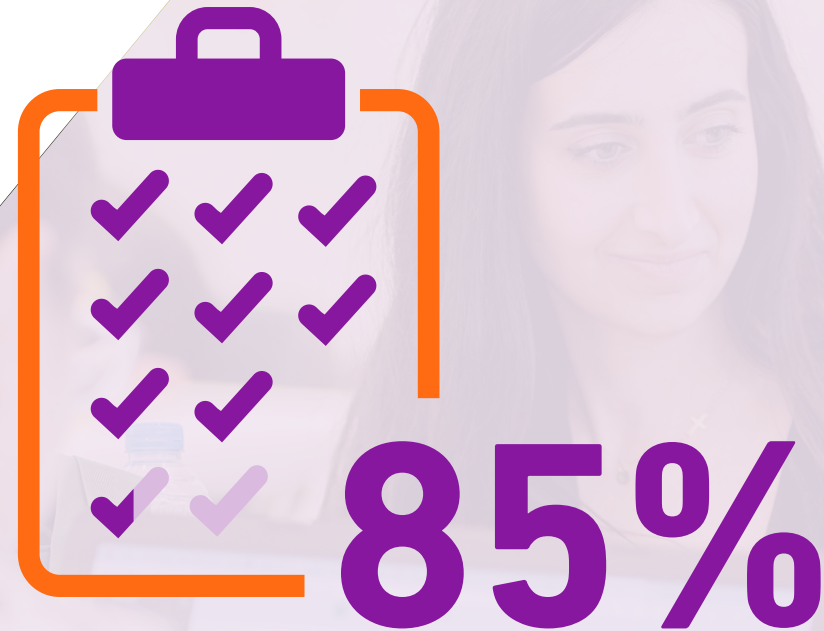
85%

of surveyed women working in technology consider mentorship programs as crucial for career advancement in the industry.[7]

"To women in tech: build your social capital with intention. It's not about having hundreds of connections but about finding those individuals who share your values, challenge you to grow, and advocate for your success. These meaningful bonds are your greatest asset in navigating and reshaping the industry. Surround yourself with people who lift you up, champion one another, and create spaces where you can thrive together."

Dr. Selina Neri
CEO, Dean & Co-Founder, Institute for Future Readiness

Achieving meaningful outcomes requires:

- **Providing structured mentorship** to guide and support career development through meaningful mentorship that support women and advocate for their success. Such programs can increase job satisfaction and career progression by providing valuable insights, connections, and networks.

- **Combining technical expertise with human-centric skills training** to build adaptable, future-ready talent for the demands of leadership roles. Training programs that emphasize skills like eloquence, strategic thinking, and adaptability can equip women with the tools they need to navigate professional environments confidently.

- **Establishing a lifelong learning mindset** as a cornerstone for continuous growth and resilience. This can be supported by providing flexible work options, including remote and hybrid models, to help women balance professional growth with personal commitments.

- **Restructuring early STEM education** to spark interest and foster foundational skills. It is key that educators and curriculum developers start to showcase diverse role models and offer curricula that blend creativity and innovation with technical skills.

- **Fostering a culture of innovation** to unlock opportunities, breakdown barriers, and create frameworks that support and advance women's role in the technology sector.

- **Building inclusive workplaces** by engaging male allies as partners in driving equality and raising awareness of the impact of inequality on organizational performance and productivity.

"Remember, success in bridging the gender gap requires the support of men as well. We need an environment where both men and women are actively cheering each other on. Only with shared efforts can we truly reach our goal of an inclusive tech industry."

Larissa Abi Nakhle
Co-Founder & Head of Partnerships at Zaka

Call to Action:
Bridging the Gender Gap in Tech

◆ Call to Action: Bridging the Gender Gap in Tech

Building an inclusive and diverse tech industry requires collaboration among women, educators, industry leaders, and policymakers.

Educators can:

- **Emphasize real-world, experiential learning:** Offer practical experiences through internships, project based learning, and industry collaborations.

- **Challenge stereotypes in STEM** by fostering an inclusive classroom environment and emphasizing the value of tech careers for all, regardless of gender.

- **Go beyond technical skills, by focusing on developing transferable skills** like communication, problem-solving, and leadership.

Industry Leaders can:

- **Establish a support system within organizations** by creating mentorship programs that connect women with mentors and enable leaders to advocate for women's career advancement.

- **Promote a culture of inclusivity** that values diverse perspectives and backgrounds. This includes fair hiring practices, addressing implicit biases, and creating an equitable environment for all.

- **Invest in flexible learning and career development** resources that allow women to continuously develop their skills while balancing professional growth with personal commitments.

"Success in the tech industry is not just about technical skills; it's equally about essential (human) skills like communication, problem-solving, and adaptability. To retain women in tech, we must create an environment that supports both their professional growth and their well-being, recognizing the balance they often maintain between work and personal responsibilities. When we prioritize employee experience and build a supportive workplace culture, we give women the tools to thrive and succeed."

Dida Atassi
Managing Director, Creative Lead for Design & Digital Products, Accenture Song

Policymakers can:

- **Promote gender equity in education and employment,** supporting initiatives that close the education-employment gap for women, implementing policies that encourage gender diversity in tech, and providing direct support and incentives for women pursuing tech careers.

- **Promote partnerships between tech companies and educational institutions** to align curricula with industry demands and create clear career pathways for women.

- **Encourage flexible work policies** that support work-life balance, like remote work, flexible hours, and parental leave to help retain women in tech roles.

Women in Tech can:

- **Actively seek mentorship and build networks** where they can find guidance, support, and encouragement.

- **Pursue lifelong learning and professional development** whether through certifications, online courses, or learning platforms to stay competitive in the fast-evolving tech landscape.

- **Foster resilience and adaptability,** embracing challenges as growth opportunities and leaning on the support of other women in tech to navigate challenges together.

"My advice is to be super resilient. Build a circle that lifts you up, because there will be days when you need someone to remind you to keep going, to show up again. And trust that it will pay off one day."

Shaima Al Qassab
Co-Founder & Innovation Speciaist, Sustynable

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