

The lingering odour of sexism: 72% of women in tech have experienced sexism

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Temps de lecture : minute

14 November 2023

"Feminism isn't about making women stronger. Women are already strong, it's about changing the way the world perceives that strength." - G.D Anderson

When will we learn?

We see the pictures of Suffragettes, in black and white, with a grain so coarse it'd seem as they were chiselled into stone. We'd think that such old photos would testify of ancient times, of an era that's far behind us.

The great historical accomplishments of women through History, the rights women have fought for over centuries, those things were taught in school and made us think, gullible children that we were, that equality had been achieved, that disparities between men and women were nothing but a distant memory.

Then, like driving 100 miles per hour into an oak, reality hit us.

Sexism, gender pay gap, micro aggression, sexist "banter"; In today's society, these lingering acts prevail and are rule in many companies, in many households, in many countries.

At the dawn of the 21st century, one would think that the putrid ideas of the past would be ancient history. But these concepts unfortunately persist, stemming in non established, rotten and outdated theories.

The hideous ghost of obscurantism obstructs the path of human's evolution. Dusty clichés are the fabric of our chains. The chains keeping us on the ground, keeping social, economical, environmental and technological progress out of our reach. If nothing is done, contempt will condemn us all.

Appalling percentages

Research has revealed that 72% of women in tech roles agree that they have experienced some form of sexism when working in the industry highlighting a widespread toxic culture, unveiled in *Fawcett Society's report*, in partnership with *Virgin Media O2*.

It was revealed that 20% of men working in the technology sector believe that women do not have a natural fit with the industry and women agreed that sexism they have experienced includes being paid less than male colleagues, sexist 'banter' and questioning of their abilities or skills.

The report highlighted that 32% of women working in tech roles hold the belief that there is gender bias during recruitment while 14% said they felt uncomfortable because of their gender during the recruitment process.

"The technology industry is facing a very serious skills shortage, so it is disappointing to see that sexist stereotypes are still lingering within the

sector. Women play a key role in solving the skills crisis, so we need an increased focus on breaking down barriers that discourage them from entering tech." says Sheila Flavell CBE, Chief Operating Officer of FDM Group.

Tech bros' totalitarianism

Women with STEM qualifications are highly suited to a career in technology, and indeed more than a third of them who aren't currently working in the sector are interested.

However, many are put off by their perceptions of the industry and who it's for.

More than a quarter of women outside of tech believe that the industry involves more sexist behaviour than other industries and the report also revealed that the issue of sexism is particularly acute for Black women, with one in three having been assumed not to hold a technical role.

"Women have so much to offer, and organisations within the technology sector must continue to invest in female talent to see the benefits. It is important that businesses are proactive when it comes to putting the right policies and initiatives in place, with a focus on fostering an inclusive environment that provides the support that is needed." said Joanna Kori, Head of People at Encompass Corporation

"If we are to see tangible progress, women themselves must also be confident in their skills, place in the industry, and seek out opportunities. This will go a long way towards helping to break down preconceptions, and it is with a collective

push that we will see businesses and employees alike reaping the rewards of a truly diverse workforce."

Fawcett Society is calling for businesses, government and schools to work together to achieve change, including reducing bias at application, promoting an inclusive social culture, and providing equitable training, pay and progression.

In response to the report, Virgin Media O2 has committed to reviewing every recommendation in detail to accelerate change across its business.

Article by Paul Ferretti