



**2019**

ALUMNI DATA  
REPORT

**APPLYING FOR INTERNSHIPS  
AS A WOMAN IN TECH**

FINDINGS FROM A SURVEY OF  
GWC-AFFILIATED WOMEN



There's a very uncomfortable feeling when a company tries to tell you about their commitment to diversity and you're sitting in a room with only white, male faces."

**— Girls Who Code alum, anonymous**

Since launching our programs in 2012, Girls Who Code has made a tremendous impact on the pipeline of girls and women entering computer science. We've reached 185,000 girls across the country, 30,000 of whom are now college-aged.

We remain committed to supporting this growing cohort of alumni as they begin to enter the workforce. It's a body of work we consider increasingly urgent, particularly given the well-documented, highly-

publicized history of bias, sexism, and discrimination within tech.

To that end, in December 2018, we administered a survey of college-aged women in our network to better understand and quantify their experiences applying for internships and jobs in computer science.

**Overall, around half of the 1,000+ women we surveyed—most of whom are under the age of 20—have either had a negative experience applying for a job in tech, or know a woman who has. Furthermore, the data indicate that tech's widespread problem with gender discrimination impacts women as young as 19—just as they are trying to break into the industry.**





The experiences of these young women ranged from bias to discrimination to outright harassment, and were representative of startups and Fortune 500 companies alike. They shared stories about implicit and explicit biases in interview processes—interviewers doubting their abilities, facing all-white-male interview panels, feeling an overwhelming pressure to consider their appearance, being passed over for less qualified

male candidates, even being the targets of unwanted advances by male recruiters.

At Girls Who Code, we believe it's likely there's a direct connection between the discrimination women face in recruiting and the harassment and retaliation that awaits them once they enter. We are committed to working with our corporate partners and our community to put in place equitable hiring practices so that every girl has the opportunity to thrive in tech.

“

We've brought our girls so far—through obstacles in elementary, middle, high school, and college—only to face this kind of behavior in the workforce. What's worse, though, is that it's happening in an industry that claims to be working toward gender parity.”

**— Reshma Saujani, founder and CEO of Girls Who Code**



# KEY FINDINGS



Overall, around half (528 or 52%) of women have either had a negative experience or know a woman who has.



Nearly 300 women, representing almost one-third of respondents (295 or 29%), have reported negative experiences during an internship application process themselves; over 400 women (401 or 40%) know other women who have had such experiences.



Of those who had negative experiences, the majority (158 or 54%) interviewed at a company with a noticeable lack of staff diversity.



One quarter of women surveyed have had an interviewer focus on their personal attributes rather than their skills (74 or 25%).



Nearly one quarter of women have encountered biased questions or inappropriate verbal remarks (61 or 21%).



Respondents reported that women they know have had similar experiences; notably, nearly two-thirds (252 or 63%) indicated that other women they know have encountered a lack of diversity at companies they have applied to intern at.



# TESTIMONIALS

The testimonies listed here are a sample of over 700 collected from the survey, representing four key categories of challenges faced by women going through the internship application process. These categories include: **1) Lack of diversity; 2) Dismissed and/or demeaned because of gender; 3) Biased and/or discriminatory comments or practices; 4) Harassing comments and/or behavior.**<sup>1</sup>

## LACK OF DIVERSITY

“ In the 5-10 interviews that I’ve done, I haven’t once had a female interviewer, which makes me more intimidated to work at the workplace.”

“ It’s so frustrating to only be interviewed by men for technical interviews. Companies tout diversity, but it never shows in their recruiting.”

“ When I went to the in-person interview I had six different interviews. Throughout the day, I only saw one female engineer. She interviewed me at the same time as two male engineers, and she barely spoke the entire time.”

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<sup>1</sup> \* Personally identifying information (including company names) have been removed.

## DISMISSED AND/OR DEMEANED BECAUSE OF GENDER

“ I heard comments like, ‘What makes you stand out as a girl? How would you deal with harassment in the workplace?’”

“ The interviewer mentioned that women were better at non-technical roles.”

“ I was asked why I want to go into the tech field if I’m a female.”

“ When I introduced myself, the interviewer looked surprised to see me since my name is unisex and then asked if I was in the right place. Overall, I just didn’t feel comfortable.”

“ The president of our Women in Computer Science chapter asked a recruiter what the company was doing to support women in tech. He started off his answer by saying ‘Well, we obviously can’t lower the hiring bar’ and it only got worse from there.”



## BIASED AND/OR DISCRIMINATORY COMMENTS OR PRACTICES

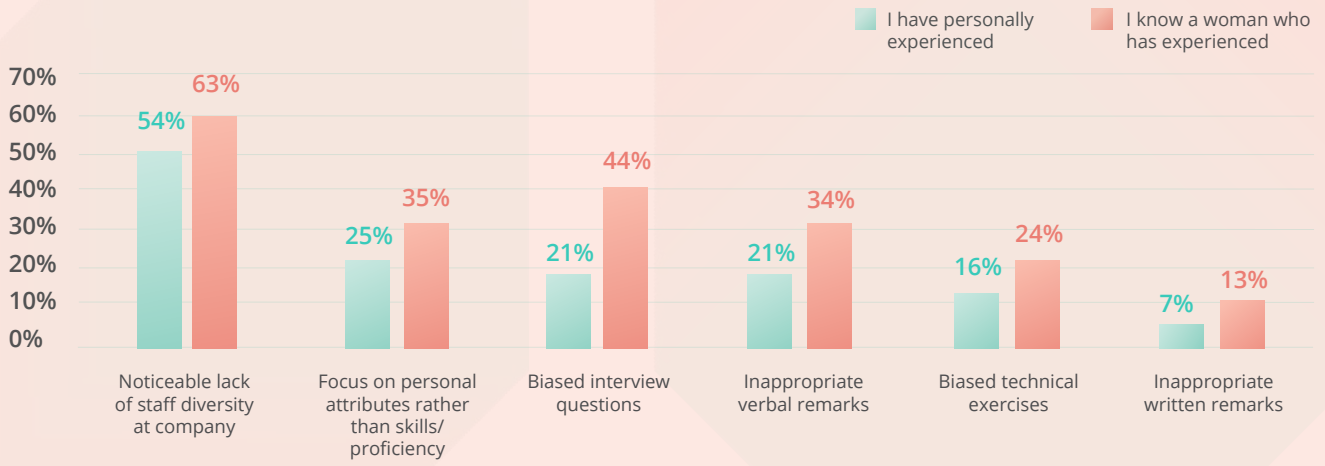
- “ I am obviously Muslim, so during an interview I was told that I “obviously needed Visa sponsorship” although I am a U.S. citizen.”
- “ A remark was made ‘how did you come to want to code, we don’t see many African Americans with these kind of interests and qualifications.’ Already, I felt judged and singled out as they were no African Americans to be seen anywhere in that company.”
- “ I was told that, since I was female, I wouldn’t be paid as much as a male would.”
- “ He went on to make a series of remarks about how big of a deal it is for me to be interviewing with him, since they had many potential male candidates, and how I was the only female one.”
- “ ‘Oh, you’re Asian, but you can’t do math?’ by my manager during a technical internship.”

## HARASSING COMMENTS AND/OR BEHAVIOR

- “ One of my interviewers at a very recognizable tech company was flirting with me during my interview; asked me personal questions and was telling me jokes.”
- “ Commented on how I don’t look like someone who studied electrical engineering and said ‘hopefully your [graphic] don’t get in the way of the equipment.’”
- “ Commenting on my appearance during an interview. Asking me if I have a significant other.”
- “ One man who was interviewing me randomly sent me a photo of himself.”
- “ My classmate once told me that she got hit on by a guy.”
- “ [I know a woman whose] interviewer asked her on a date after.”



# EXPERIENCES OF GWC-AFFILIATED WOMEN APPLYING FOR JOBS AND INTERNSHIPS IN TECH





# OUR WORK

Girls Who Code is committed to closing the gender gap in tech. We know that our programmatic work—from our elementary and middle school Clubs, to our Summer Immersion Program for high school girls, to our College Loops for university-aged women—is already making a significant impact.

Data show that our alumni are majoring in computer science-related fields at 15x the national average. Our Black, Latina, and low-income alumni in college are majoring in computer science-related fields at a rate 16 times the national average.

Our programs work in tandem to support women at all stages of the pipeline. In our experience, no single touch-point is enough on its own. Girls and women need a system of support, a feeling of belonging, in order to truly persist, thrive, and lead in this industry.

In the coming years, we look forward to making sure that's the case by expanding our programs, growing our sisterhood, and building our movement.





# METHODOLOGY

In September, 152 alumni who are third/ fourth year college students completed an anonymous survey sharing their internship application experiences. A sizable proportion (69 or 43%) of respondents reported that they have had negative experiences; half (77 or 50%) know other women who have had such experiences (full report).

Given these results, GWC sought to increase the respondent pool in an effort to obtain richer and more powerful data on women's experiences. In November, the Research team administered the same anonymous survey to ~6,000 additional women in our network, including younger college-aged alumni (CAA); post-college alumni (PCA); College Loop participants and women who completed the College Loop interest form; college-aged Summer Immersion Program (SIP) TAs and Clubs Facilitators; and, respondents to the August survey who had never been rejected from an internship. Women received a \$10 incentive for completing the survey.

The survey was completed by 1,189 additional women, bringing the total number of respondents to 1,341 (21% response rate). The majority of those women (N=1,015) self-identified as women in tech; key findings from these women's responses are presented in this report.

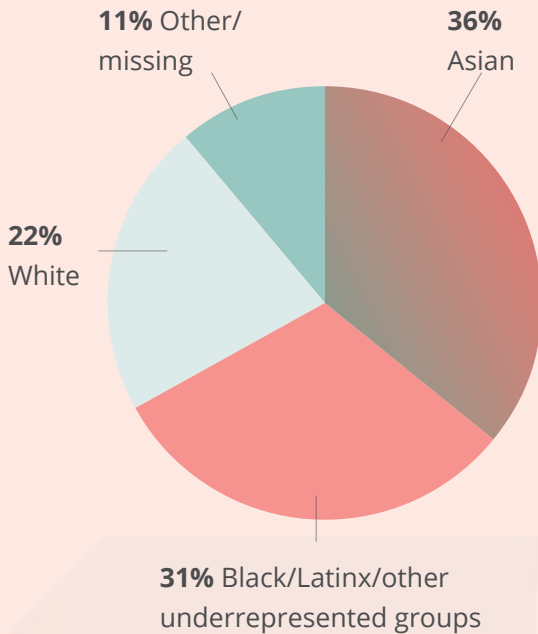
To determine the characteristics of the women who completed the survey, we matched the emails they provided (after submitting the survey, in order to receive the incentive) to our internal records. We located 778/1,341 (58%) respondents, most of whom (N=684) completed the survey in the second round; the remaining emails were not found.

In addition, we were not able to disaggregate the "non-tech" respondents from the women in tech as we did with the rest of the analysis, due to the anonymity of the data. These limitations should be considered when reviewing this data.

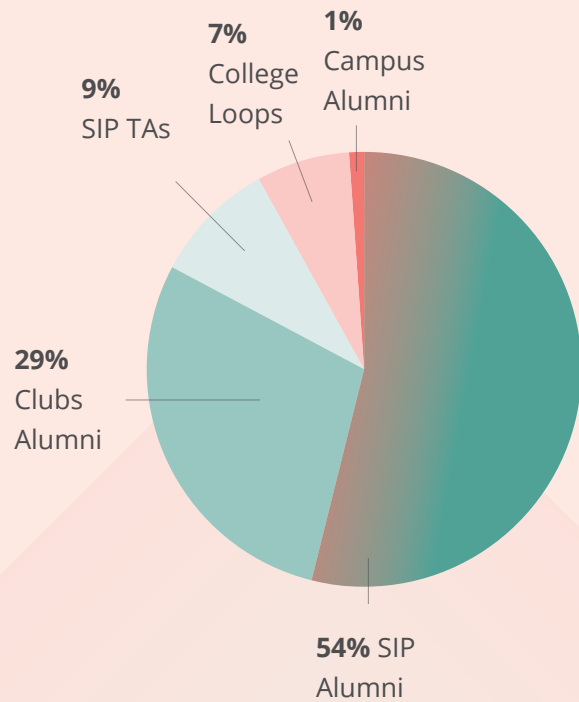


# RESPONDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

## RACE/ETHNICITY (AVERAGE AGE: 19.1)



## GWC INVOLVEMENT (AVERAGE AGE: 19.1)



## COLLEGE

The 653 women whose college we were able to identify represent 277 different schools. Colleges attended by >5 survey respondents are listed below:

- University of California-Berkeley
- University of Washington-Seattle Campus
- Cornell University
- New York University
- Northeastern University
- Stony Brook University
- University of California-Davis
- Harvard University
- San Jose State University
- University of California-Los Angeles

- University of Maryland-College Park
- Barnard College
- Columbia University
- CUNY Hunter College
- Massachusetts Institute of Technology
- Stanford University
- University of California-Irvine
- University of California-San Diego
- University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
- Carnegie Mellon University
- Georgia State University
- University of California-Santa Cruz
- University of Massachusetts at Amherst
- University of Pennsylvania
- University of Southern California



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## GET IN TOUCH

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