

What Matters Most: Attracting, Engaging, and Retaining Women in Tech



About Us

Werklabs surfaces the deeper human truth to give you prescriptive insights for purpose-driven action. We provide predictive people intelligence solutions and advisory services so you can understand and improve your employees' work experience and business performance. Our integrated research methodologies yield insights from employee perspectives that map directly to key business outcomes like performance, productivity, customer experience, reduced risk, and revenue growth.

Werklabs, the research division of The Mom Project, also publishes timely and in-depth research on diversity and inclusion at work, the flexible future of work, parental leave, organizational change, and corporate social responsibility.

Learn more about how Werklabs might help you surface the deeper human truth for your organization at www.werklabs.com.



Welcome

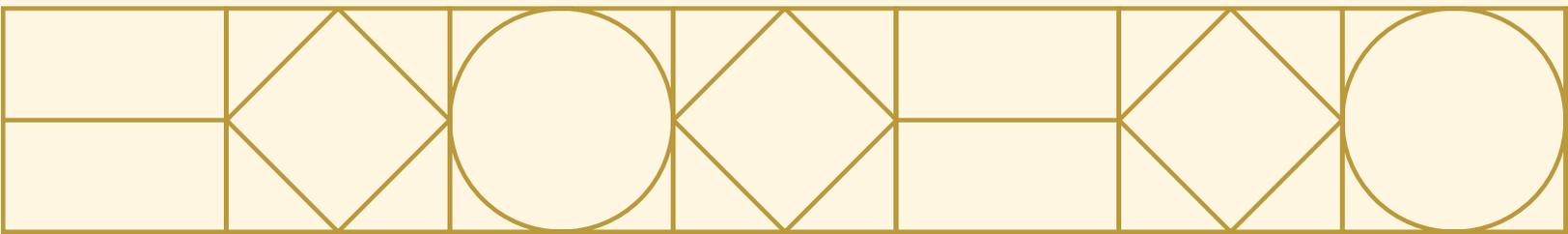
We are pleased to share the results of our research on Women in Tech. This research focuses on what matters most to female tech talent in their work, their workplaces, and in seeking new opportunities.

At Werklabs & The Mom Project, we believe in equal access to economic opportunity for all. We know that women are not only underrepresented in tech, they are also underpaid. Advancing a career is challenging for all women and moms, but particularly challenging in the tech segment. The gap in representation of women also impacts workplace and business outcomes. Diversity of thought fuels problem solving and product creation.

As employers, it's critical to understand the issues and needs of female tech talent and to work together to close the gap in representation. Our goal is to give employers the information they need to achieve successful outcomes in attracting, engaging, and retaining top female tech talent.

Sincerely,

Pam Cohen, PhD
Chief Research & Analytics Officer
WerkLabs & The Mom Project

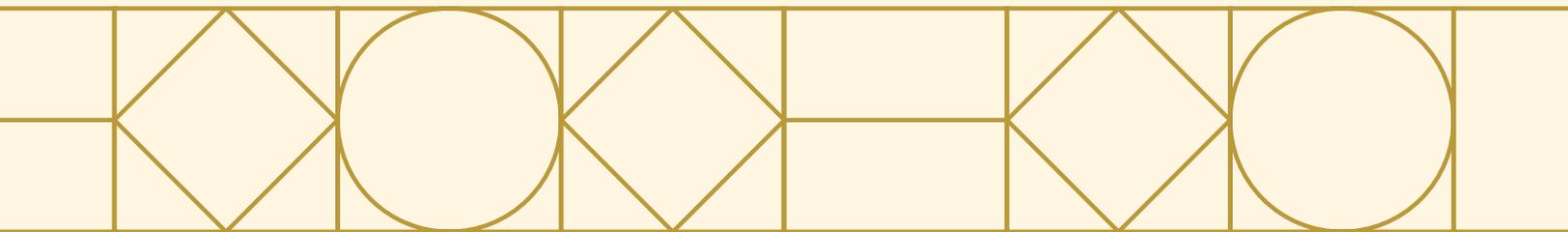
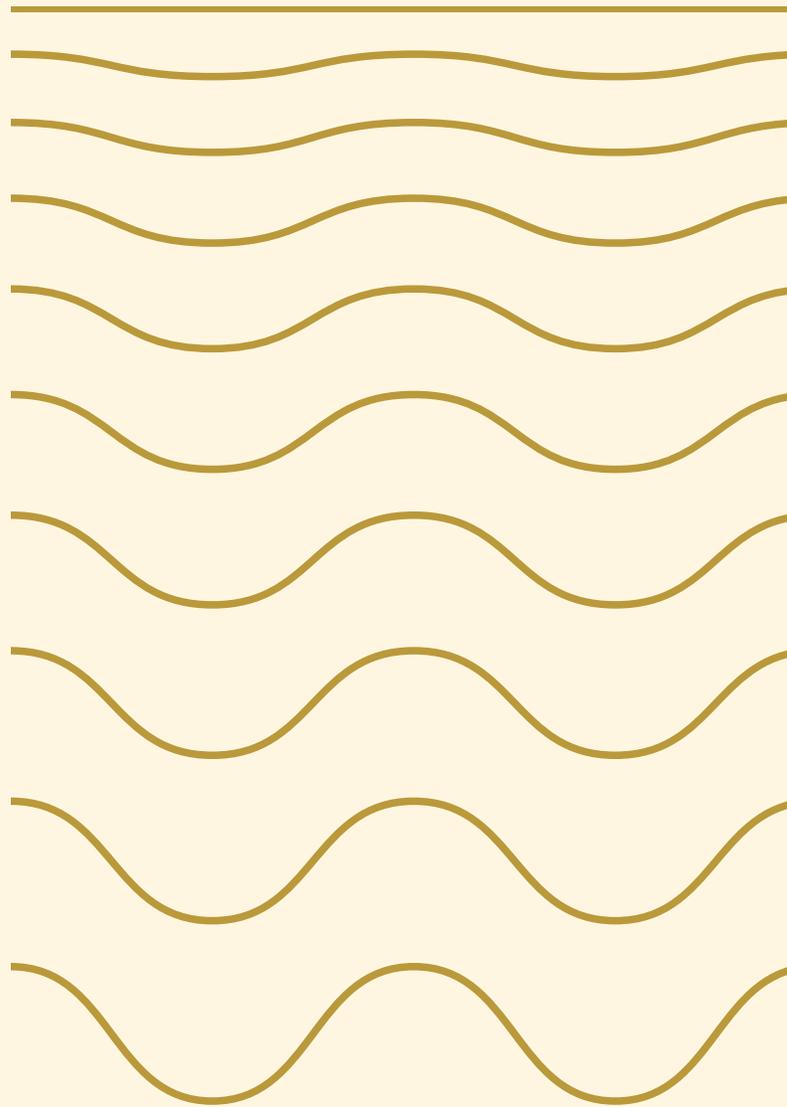


Methodology

The findings that follow draw from female tech talent responses to a quantitative research study fielded in August, 2021 and build on themes from seventeen (17) 1:1 in-depth interviews with women in technology fields and/or roles.

One-on-one interviews with women in a variety of technical fields and roles used a semi-structured approach, asking broad open-ended questions regarding experiences in careers and job searching.

An analysis based on Grounded Theory was performed to evaluate and to define key themes from the interviews. There were no preconceived notions of what experiences and opinions were likely to emerge given the topic. Instead, the data came together to clearly tell a story of what matters most to female talent pursuing careers in tech and the challenges they face.



Demographics

Interview Participants

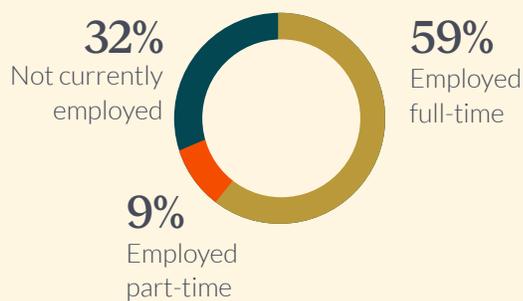
Interview participants are highly qualified women in tech - nearly all bring decades of experience - and have reached mid-to-senior levels in their careers. They not only speak to a range of experiences working in tech roles and fields, but also offer perspective on job searching and re-entry.

The women interviewed represent a mix of tech talent that share perspectives from a variety of roles and experiences across engineering, web design and programming, research and UX, product and project management, IT, and consulting.

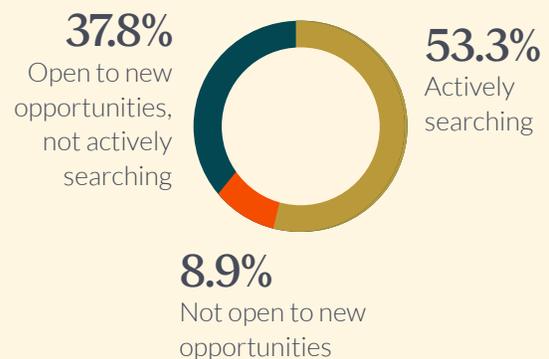
Survey Respondents

Of the 1,787 total respondents to our quantitative study, 154 self-identified as females in tech.

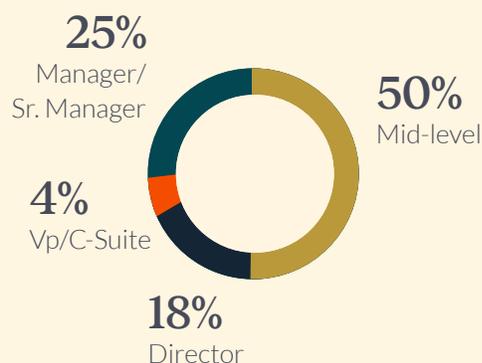
Respondent Work Status



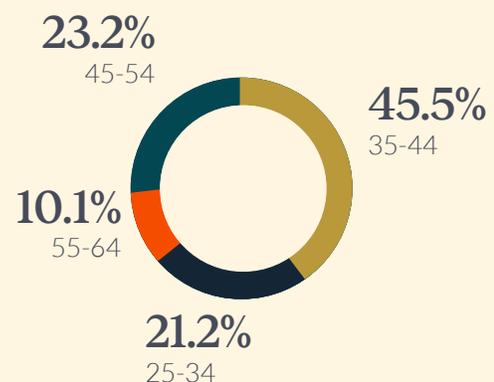
Respondent Job Search Status



Career Level

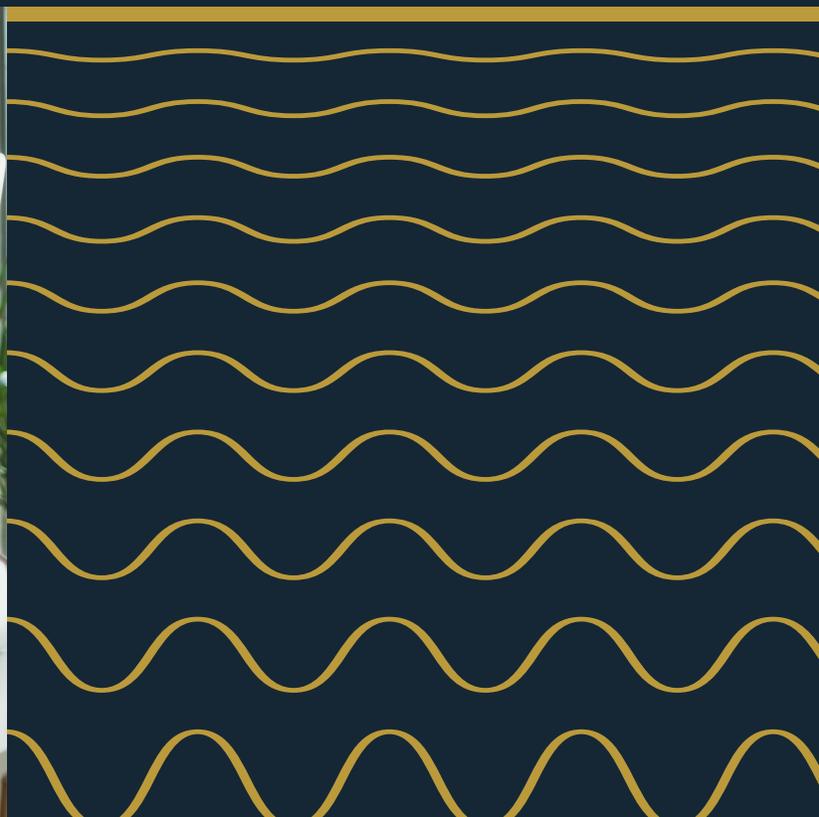


Age Ranges

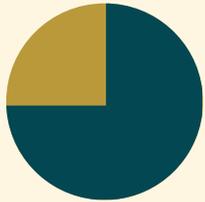


Key insights to attract, engage, and retain female tech talent

1. Enable Impact
2. Prioritize and Compensate Growth
3. Build in Support



Female tech talent want to have an impact

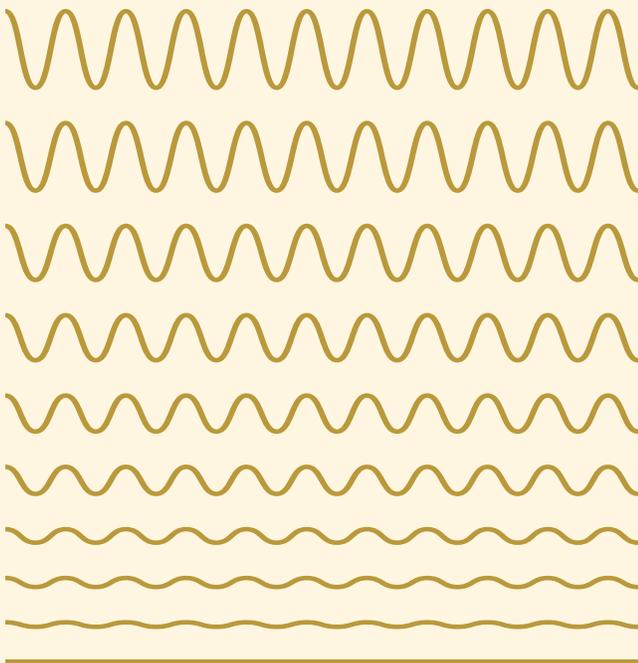


75%

A full three-quarters of female tech respondents rated the opportunity to make a meaningful impact within an organization as highly important.

Tech fuels a desire to help solve problems, fulfilling a need for purpose.

This search for meaning in work is a top motivating factor among women in tech. It's a drive to do work that improves the world around them and to contribute to a team by making a difference for their organization that lead women to pursue and stay in technical roles and industries.



“I have an entrepreneurial spirit. So, I get very motivated when I am building something, taking something from scratch and building it with a group of people who’s building it. If you’re defining a new problem, or you want to build something, that really motivates me, above and beyond.”

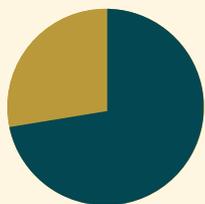
-Data Scientist

“I want to be working on a product or service or a team that’s doing good for the world, and generally helping people. And then the second part is like, I want to personally feel that I’m contributing something to the team and adding value.”

-UX Researcher



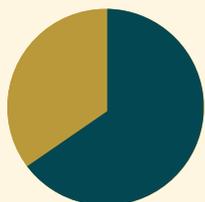
Make growth a priority



73%

In a job search, nearly three-quarters of female tech talent rate to grow and develop career skills as highly important.

It's equally important for female tech talent to enjoy what they do day-to-day. They want to be engaged in their work, applying the skills they have, and challenged in new ways that fuel their growth.



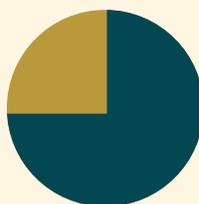
63%

The majority also rate to be challenged as highly important when thinking about specific opportunities when looking for a new job.

Female tech talent note and appreciate that the field offers a plentitude of options for growth. The range of possibilities, in terms of roles and applications, speak to a variety of motivators on a personal interest and preference level.

There is an opportunity for organizations to meet the need for growth and development with intentional programming to support internal career moves.

“If I want to actually advance or do something different. I usually have to change jobs...I’ve never gotten a promotion. So I usually just kind of leave.”



75%

For career advancement, programs to support internal career moves receives the highest importance ratings from women in tech.



Compensate Growth

Compensation is discussed along with career growth ambitions and it is among the most important factors for women in tech.

When job seeking, if compensation isn't meeting at least a minimum level expectation, it's a non-starter for female tech talent.

Interestingly, our survey data gives insight into compensation expectations for women in tech when job seeking.

35%

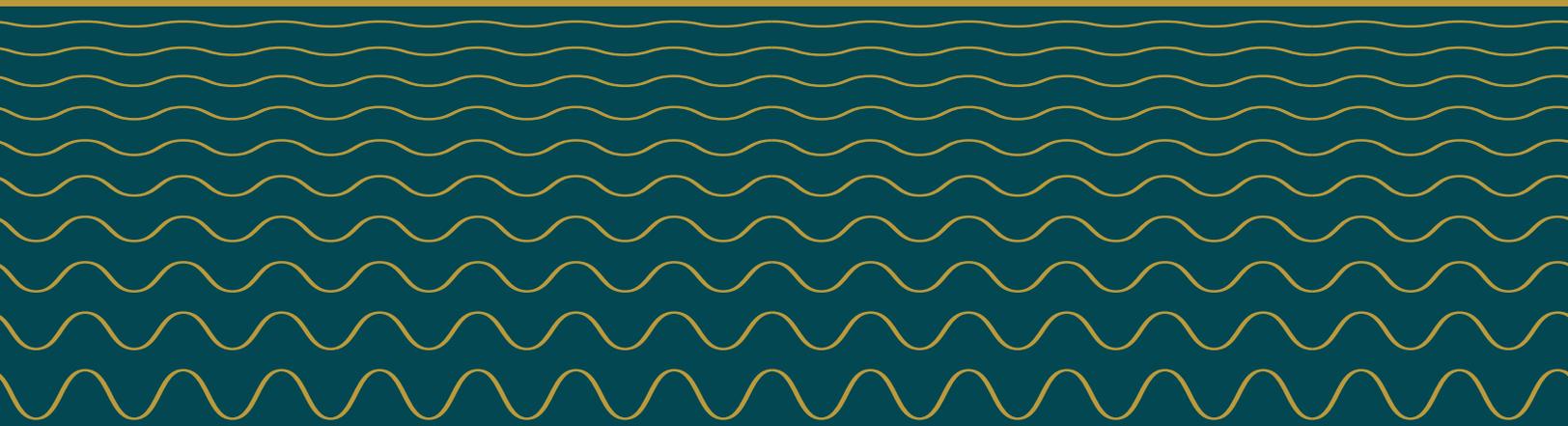


say it would take an 11-20% compensation increase to change jobs.

“I’m a mercenary when it comes to money, I am very much straight up like, what are the comps to this role? Cool, that fits? No, it doesn’t fit. Let’s move on.”

-Software engineer and UX

At a minimum, candidates are looking for a small increase in salary, with most seeking a 1-20% bump in compensation when switching roles.



Build in support

Support in a workplace is important, amplified for women in tech as it's notably absent or inconsistent in their experiences. The impacts of predominantly male workplaces and leadership in tech prevail, described in the words of highly experienced female tech talent as insensitivities to female needs, absence of support, and outright discrimination or harassment.

“All of my upper management...all the way up the chain...they did not understand...what it was like to be a pregnant woman...And also, what was the most appropriate and kind of welcoming way to come back after my...maternity leave.”

“My direct manager said in front of the entire engineering staff, ‘Oh, I didn’t expect you to come back. I thought you’d want to be at home with your baby.’”

All this to say, understanding and meeting the needs of female tech talent remains a huge opportunity area that has the potential to impact outcomes for women in the field and organizations.

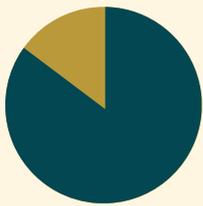
In an ideal workplace, women in tech want support on multiple levels. They are proactively identifying and seeking out workplaces and teams that meet their needs, offering holistic support in their roles and beyond.



Support in role

For female tech talent, successful in role support is defined by open communication, and regular feedback. Managers are in unique positions to most significantly impact their experiences and, in combination, these things set the foundation for them in their pursuit to contribute and grow.

Manager Support

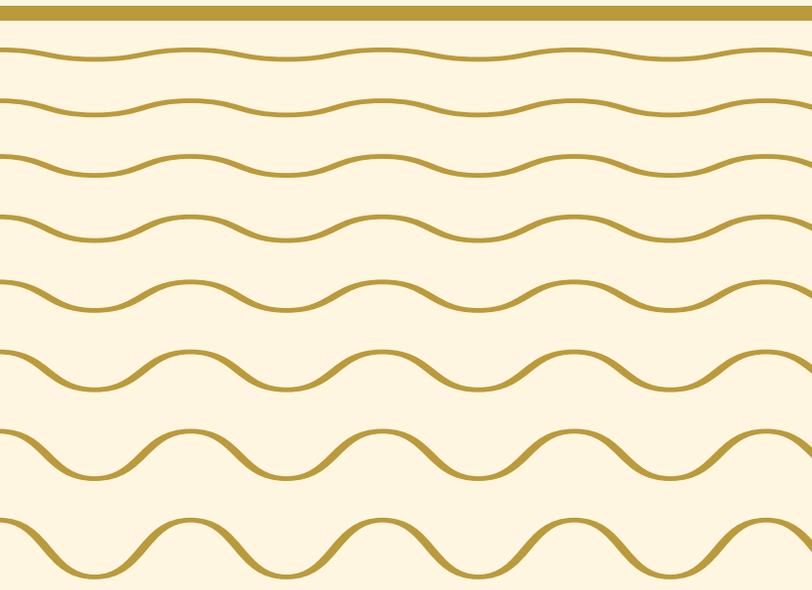


88%

Acceptance and support from managers for unique flexibility needs is also rated as highly important for the majority of female tech respondents

“Overall, I mean, I think that I’ve made a good impact in each role that I’ve held, and I get a lot of good feedback from our senior managers on my performance. And, so that’s kind of enabled me to keep growing and move outside of where I was, to a different role.”

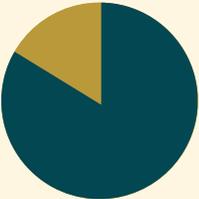
“I felt like I had grown, and I wanted a growth opportunity. That was something I could talk about. And I was appreciated for the work I did. That was one of the reasons why I stayed there.”



Support with Flexibility

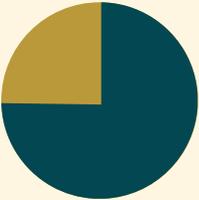
Remote work options and programs are among the single-most important factors to female tech talent. They frequently prioritize roles and organizations that allow flexibility in physical work location and daily schedule.

Remote Work



86%

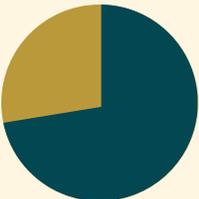
Nearly all female tech respondents place a high level of importance on the ability to choose physical work location.



75%

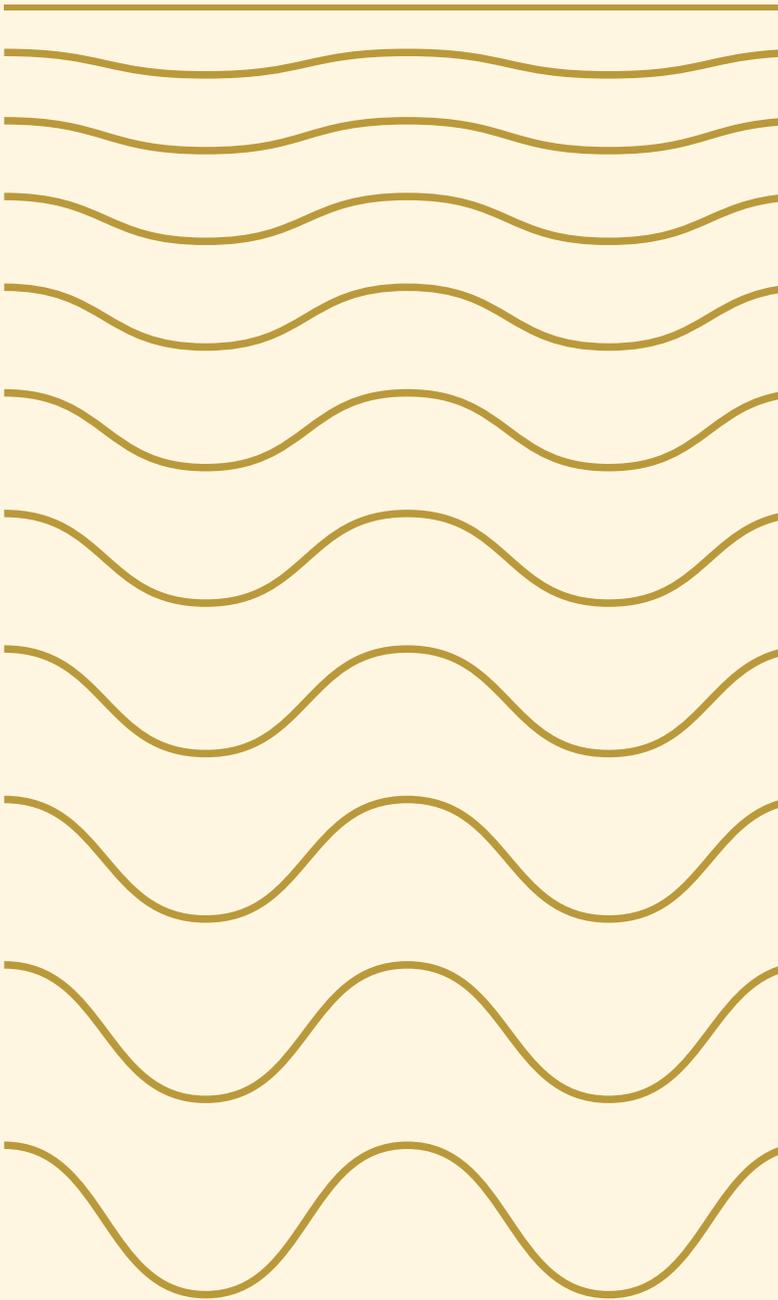
The number that rate fully remote work as highly important.

Flexible Work Hours



68%

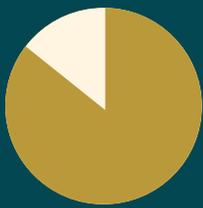
In looking for a new job, more than two-thirds of female tech talent indicate working flexible hours throughout the day as very important.



Cultural Fabric

Female tech talent place a high importance on workplace culture and they want the culture to reflect the sense of purpose. They also want to see actions and investments that align with and reinforce values in key areas.

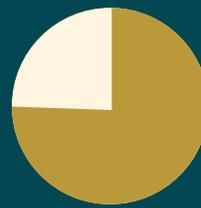
Employee Wellbeing



86%

A culture that promotes employee wellbeing is most sought after with nearly all women in tech respondents rating as extremely important.

Inclusion & Diversity



76%

Three-quarters, a large majority, of female tech talent also rate Inclusion & Diversity as very important when looking at new opportunities.

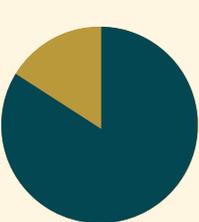
“[What’s important is] a culture that is open to change, and always in proving that it’s interested in investing in their employees. A culture where you have a lot of A-players who are very passionate about their jobs, who aren’t just showing up and trying to get by.”



Organization Level Support

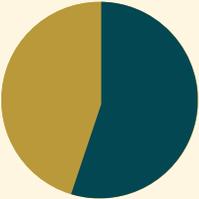
In an ideal workplace, female tech talent want support from organizations in the areas of Healthcare, 401K match, and PTO/leave. To attract and retain top female tech talent it's important that these benefits and policies are competitive.

Healthcare



83%

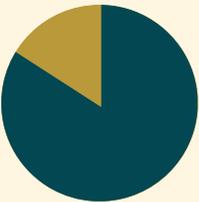
The large majority of women in tech place high importance on robust and affordable healthcare.



58%

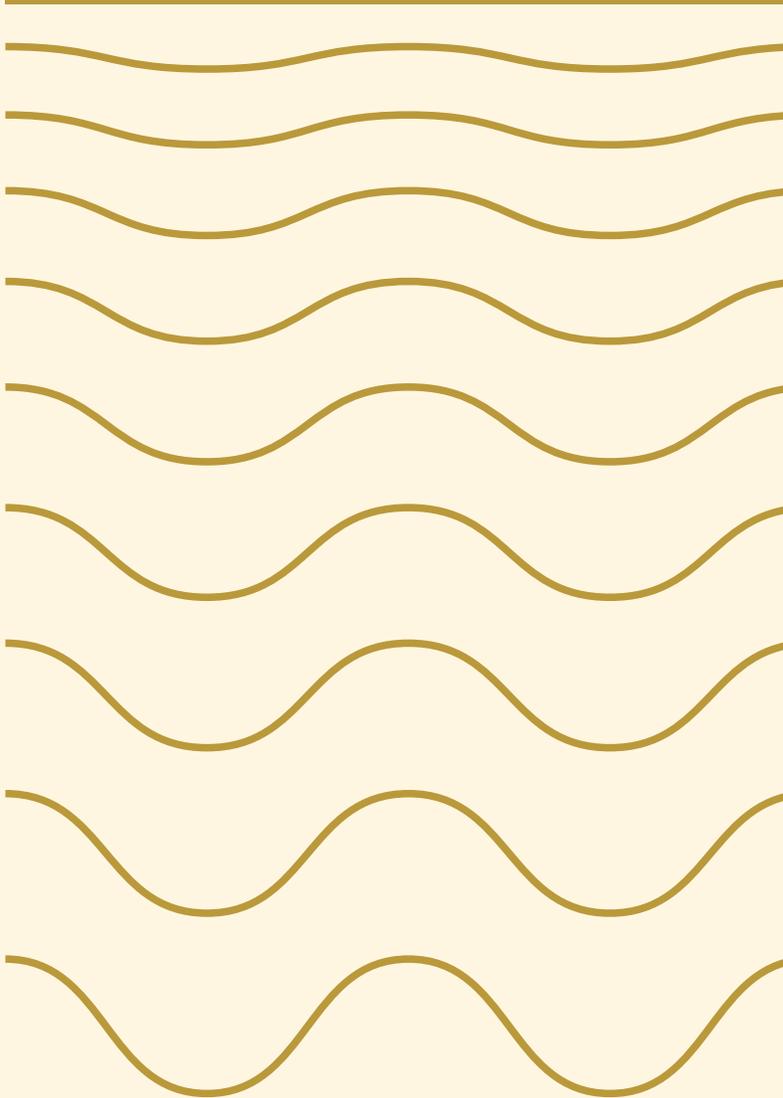
Comprehensive mental health and wellbeing programs are also very important to the majority.

Retirement



76%

Three-quarters of female tech talent rate 401K match as very important as an employer offered benefit.



In comparison, unlimited paid time off (PTO) and parental leave policies are rated as very important to about half of female tech talent respondents.



Call to Action

When it comes to equitable economic opportunity and creating inclusive, diverse workplaces, addressing the underrepresentation of female talent in technical fields and roles needs to be a priority.

The tech sector lags behind the rest of the job market when it comes to hiring women. Organizations and teams that understand and meet the needs of female tech talent will benefit from higher quality workplaces and products.

The good news: the female tech talent pool is plentiful and ready to build, solve, and excel in organizations that take steps to create safe, welcoming workplaces and cultures.



- From the onset, being clear and transparent about job requirements and compensation demonstrates transparency and builds trust.
- Ensure regular, open and constructive discussion with employees on performance and goals.
- Update policies and practices to require diverse candidate pools for hiring, promotions and board seats.
- Hire and promote based on traits and potential. Hiring trends that evaluate based on current competencies and prior experiences put women at a disadvantage in the process.
- Increase flexible work options.
- Cultivate a culture that demonstrates support of individual needs.
- Develop and prioritize programs for internal career progression.
- Develop and train managers.
- Include unconscious bias training.





Driving Performance with Prescriptive Insights

Led by Dr. Pam Cohen, WerkLabs is comprised of a team of experienced researchers with backgrounds in social psychology, behavioral economics, and human behavior. Together, the WerkLabs team uncovers prescriptive and predictive insights using rigorous qualitative and quantitative methodologies.

Pam Cohen, PhD
Chief Research & Analytics Officer
pam.cohen@werklabs.com

Erica Beer, MBA
Sr. Researcher
erica.beer@werklabs.com