Where are all the women in IT?

Foreword

I have been involved in the cybersecurity community since I joined Kaspersky for the first time in 2010 and I truly believe we work in the most dynamic and fascinating area of technology, one that's only going to become more important as the world increasingly relies on IT to underpin all areas of life. I have worked hard to forge my way in what is still a male dominated world, and I'd love to see more women develop careers within such a fantastic industry – not least because the industry will benefit greatly from increased diversity, as well as IT being a rewarding career option.

Alongside our sponsorship initiatives and the work we already do to engage university students in cybersecurity, this report is another step towards forming an action plan to tackle the gender imbalance. This year, I will continue to take part in educating an increasingly diverse future workforce on how rewarding it is to be part of a community that's on a mission to save the world from cyber threats.

Ilijana Vavan,
Managing Director of Kaspersky Lab for Europe

Introduction

Take a look around the office at most technology firms and there's one thing that you can't avoid noticing - there's a gender imbalance. Calculations vary, but the latest research from the NCWIT, for example, suggests that women account for just 26% of the computing workforce, with women of colour accounting for just one-in-10 IT professionals.

In cybersecurity, where 90% of the workforce are men, the situation is looking even more bleak. According to the Global Information Security Workforce Study from Frost and Sullivan, (ISC)² and Centre for Cyber Safety and Education, this is a factor contributing to the predicted 1.8 million cybersecurity worker shortfall by 2022.

There have been multiple efforts to look into the root-causes of the imbalance. For some, the problem stems from a lack of investment into start-ups run by female founders (according to Atomico, an astounding 93% of investment currently goes to all-male propositions). Meanwhile for others, there's simply not enough being done at governmental level.

At Kaspersky Lab we believe that technology has no gender

As part of our mission to futureproof the industry, we have asked what it's really like to work in IT, and what can be done to encourage more women to consider a role in IT.

Methodology

Kaspersky Lab commissioned Arlington Research to conduct an online survey in December 2018. 5000 interviews were conducted across Europe with 500 female and 500 male respondents in each of the following countries: UK, Germany, France, Italy and Spain. All respondents worked in IT.
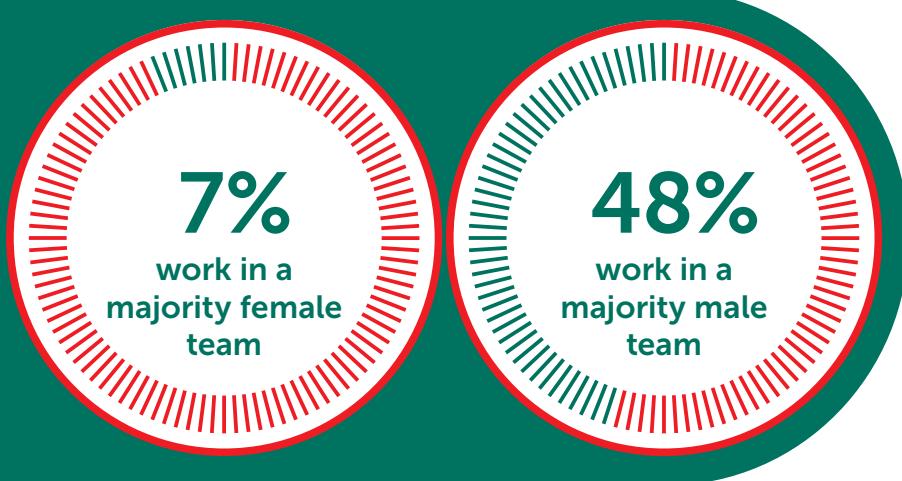
Key findings

- Working in IT comes with big advantages: workers say it is well-paid, allows them to use their problem-solving skills, and it is exciting

- Around three-quarters of those who work in IT – whether male or female – don't believe it matters what gender you are. If you are good at your job, you'll progress

- But despite this, half of IT teams are still majority male

- With over a third (37%) of female IT professionals agreeing that a lack of women in the industry made them wary of starting an IT career at all, this is an issue that is not going away

- More needs to be done. University initiatives (40%) and the need for more female ambassadors (29%) to encourage girls to study IT are two good places to start

Where are the women?

The research paints a detailed picture of the gender make-up of IT teams across Europe. It shows us that around half of people working in IT are in majority male teams

7%
work in a majority female team

48%
work in a majority male team

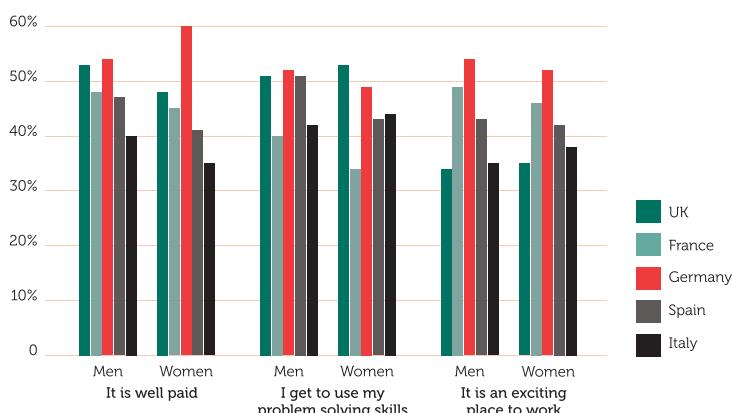The percentage of majority female and majority male IT teams in Europe

What is IT really like?

Overwhelmingly, we've found that IT is a positive and exciting environment to work in. The research shows us that the women and men working in IT, generally, are having the same experiences and are chasing the same goals.
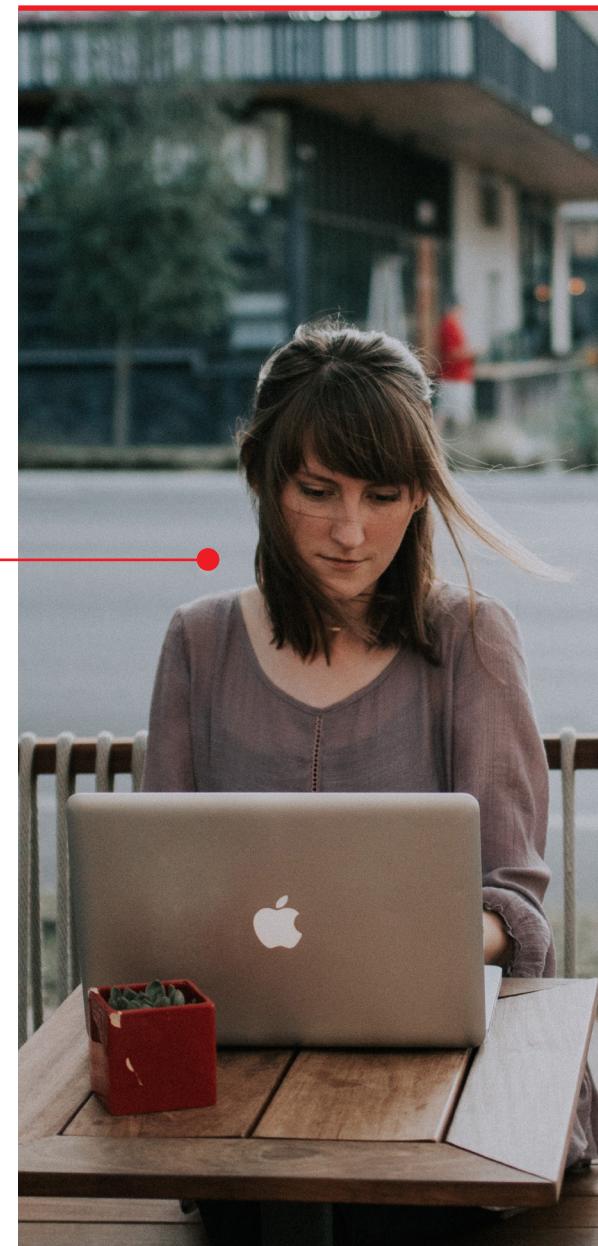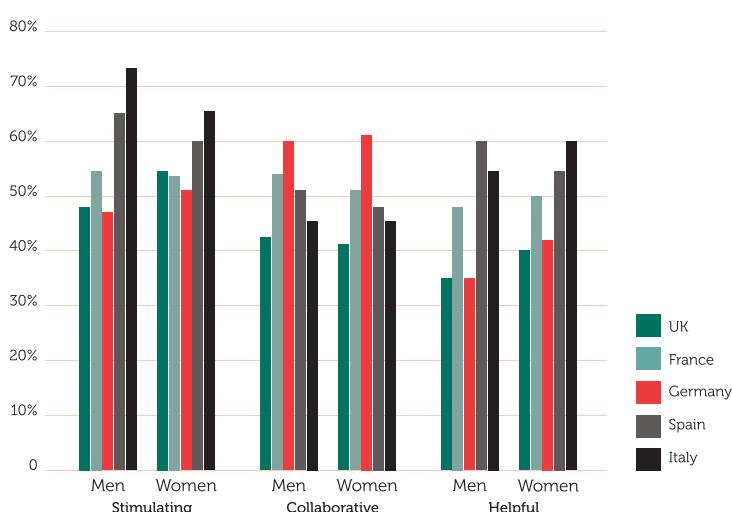
The majority of IT workers are positive about the tech industry – not just because it is highly paid, but also because it's a progressive and interesting environment to work in. And interestingly, despite the gender imbalance, men and women feel this way in almost equal measure.

Many, for example, agree that there's a genuine appreciation of skills and talent in IT. Around three-quarters of workers – whether male or female – don't believe it matters what gender you are in the industry. If you are good at your job, you'll progress quickly. Others believe that they are contributing something helpful to society through their role. Why then, are so few women entering the industry?

Top three advantages of a career in IT –
according to men and women across Europe (%)

Top three adjectives workers associate with a career in IT
– according to men and women across Europe (%)

Inspiring change

If IT is a stimulating, collaborative and engaging industry to work in, the research raises obvious questions about why so few women are entering the profession. With over a third (37%) of female IT professionals agreeing that a lack of women made them wary of starting a career in the industry in the first place, the current lack of women in IT is a factor that is putting more off joining in the future.
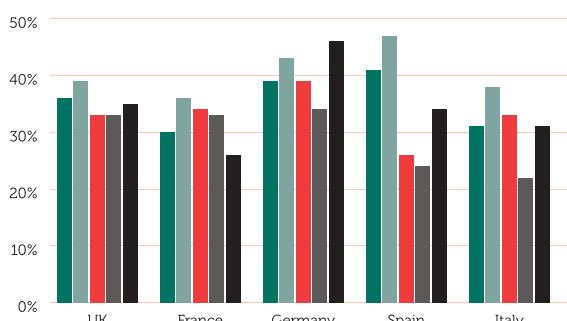
It's a vicious cycle that we need to break out of

The research indicates some ways we can start to solve the problem. It shows us that women want to see other people like them in the workplace – almost two-in-five (38%) female IT workers say they have felt intimidated by the unequal split between the gender of staff, and around a third say there's appetite for more visible female ambassadors.

The research also highlights some other factors which if fixed, will go a long way towards encouraging more women to enter IT. These include:

- **University initiatives to encourage girls to study IT**

- **Government initiatives to encourage girls to study STEM subjects at school**

- **Spreading the word about the positive role IT plays in society**

It's time to take action

At Kaspersky Lab we want to see change. This research tells us more about what women's career requirements and motivations are. It's now forming the basis of discussions with other companies and organisations, and these conversations are allowing us to take steps to bridge the gender divide.

> It's time to take action. Our CyberStarts programme, aligned with the Kaspersky Academy and its partnerships with global universities, aims to prove to young people everywhere the benefits of a career in cybersecurity and the realities of entering the industry. We're partnering with organisations, including PwC's Tech She Can charter and Girls in Tech to help open up opportunities to young women. Internally, we are also investing in women's networks to support and retain our diverse workforce, to support our mission to save the world from cyber threats.

We are putting a firm commitment in place to contribute towards tackling the gender imbalance, and this year we aim to take action.

We are also calling on the rest of our industry to take similar steps because with more diverse skills and outlooks, we can make the internet a safer space. Following discussions with other industry leaders and taking advice from people already working towards this goal, in the coming weeks we will be announcing what our commitment to action will be – watch this space!

What should be done to encourage women into IT?

- Government initiatives to encourage girls to study IT and STEM subjects
- University initiatives to encourage girls to study IT
- Individual businesses need to ensure they are encouraging women into IT
- Have female ambassadors for IT
- Marketing on the positive impact IT can have on society

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