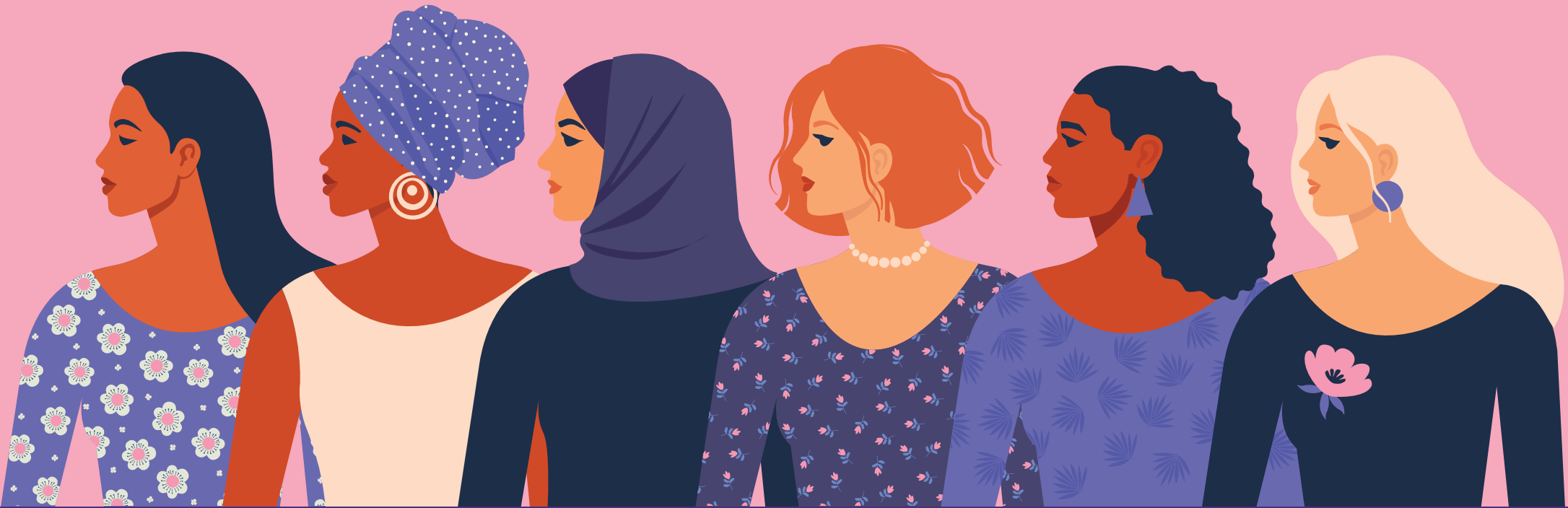# Celebrating and Championing Women in Cybersecurity

International Women's Day

GET SAFE ONLINE

www.getsafeonline.org

Introduction from Baroness Neville-Rolfe DBE CMG,

Minister of State at the UK Cabinet Office

Effective cybersecurity has never been more important to governments, businesses, communities and individuals. Cyber harms continue to diversify and proliferate, putting an open, peaceful and secure cyberspace at risk.

Cybersecurity experts play a vital role in the fight against traditional and emerging threats. However, currently, only 20% of the cyber workforce are women.

The UK is committed to promoting greater diversity in all areas of cyber, through our Women in Cyber Fellowships and our Cyber Values Campaign. For example, our co-sponsorship of the UN Women in Cyber Fellowship recently achieved a key milestone: at the December 2023 session more women than men spoke in every category.

Since 2018, thanks to CSSF (Conflict, Stability and Security Fund) funding, Get Safe Online has worked with the FCDO and partners across the globe to build cyber security awareness among vulnerable groups in 26 countries. This has helped millions to use the internet safely and securely.

These are powerful endorsements of our approach, but together we have an opportunity to do much more.

You can watch the global keynote webinar 'Celebrating and Championing Women in Cybersecurity' at **www.getsafeonline.org/iwd24**

Introduction from Tony Neate,

Chief Executive of Get Safe Online

As CEO of Get Safe Online, it gives me great pleasure to jointly introduce this white paper celebrating and championing women in cybersecurity.

The theme for this year's International Women's Day – with which this piece and our global keynote webinar coincide – is 'Invest in Women: Accelerate Progress'. I am certain that this applies to all women in whatever sector they have chosen to work, but it seems particularly fitting in our sector where employing women, supporting their career aspirations and promoting them to the roles they deserve is an obvious solution to the 3.4 million shortfall in personnel.

Of course, it should be that straightforward but in reality, it is not. A read through this white paper will highlight some of the challenges that women face in our traditionally male-dominated domain, despite having equal ability, drive and passion to their male counterparts, to say nothing of the unique perspective that many bring to the table.

As a husband and father of three daughters, I am immensely proud of the women in my family who have achieved seniority in their chosen professions. It would also make me very proud to think that our efforts towards gender equality this International Women's Day have made a difference. If you are a woman, never cease to strive to achieve your ambitions and encourage others to do the same. If you are a man, remember that just as everybody can be affected by cybercrime and other online harms, everybody also has a role to play in defeating its advance.

You can watch the global keynote webinar 'Celebrating and Championing Women in Cybersecurity' at **www.getsafeonline.org/iwd24**

Background

Because robust cybersecurity has never been more important to governments, businesses, communities and individuals, tech and, in particular, cybersecurity are among the most critical, in demand and profitable fields to work in. The cyber threat landscape has constantly evolved since the dawn of the internet itself, typically due to prevailing circumstances. Some of today's most prevalent threats have arisen from anything from vulnerabilities caused by the exponential growth in digital transformation during the COVID-19 pandemic, to widespread geopolitical instability. Add bad actors' adeptness in exploiting new technologies – not least Artificial Intelligence (AI) – in the creation and propagation of social engineering attacks, hacks, thought manipulation and other online harms, and we are experiencing a perfect storm for the most prolific rash of cybercrime in history. In the meantime, financially motivated advanced threat groups, state-sponsored attackers and saboteurs continue unabated to threaten economies, critical national infrastructure and political stability.

In parallel, we are facing a massive global shortage of knowledgeable and experienced cybersecurity talent capable of keeping abreast of this proliferation of digital risks. The World Economic Forum estimates that this shortfall equates to some 3.4 million experts.

Why, then, do women account for only two out of 10 cybersecurity professionals, despite representing almost half of the global workforce?

Surely, one straightforward solution to the shortfall would be to employ more women in cybersecurity roles. Redressing the gender balance would contribute massively to the protection of the governments, businesses, communities and individuals that Baroness Neville-Rolfe refers to in her introduction to this white paper.

It comes as something of an irony that scientific and technological skills are desperately needed, yet half of the world's talent – girls and women – is excluded. The dearth of women is not merely about headcount and role-filling ... it also means that the field is missing out on women's often unique perspectives on and approach to meeting challenges. Research has consistently shown that women and girls are disproportionally affected by cybercrime and online harm.

There are a number of long-standing obstacles which pervade in whatever region or country in the world women live and work in. These include the following, gleaned from both widely documented evidence and the experience of the case study subjects quoted in this white paper:

• Industry perception and preconceived notions that women are not suited to tech roles
• Constraints imposed by society and family, including actual or anticipated commitments to bearing and raising children
• A shortage of female role models
• Fewer opportunities to achieve the requisite digital and cyber literacy
• Lower acceptance in higher management and directorial roles
• Missed or delayed promotions

At a recent meeting of the UK's All-Party Parliamentary Group on Modernising Women's Employment, attended by Get Safe Online, one speaker quoted clear-cut misogyny as a common barrier to employment and advancement.

> *"Of course, it was never an easy journey as gender challenges have always been there. However, as you climb up the ladder, respect is gained over time."*
>
> Kalia Huggins, Digital Forensic Analyst, Saint Kitts and Nevis

At the same meeting, it was noted by another speaker[1] that in the UK:

• Women aged 18-30 have an average salary deficit of GBP£4,000 compared to male peers before they even begin to try to advance their careers.
• At the current pace of change it will take 153 years to level up the playing field for women. Our children will therefore not see true equality in our lifetime.
• It would take another 19 working years for the average woman to achieve the same pension as a male
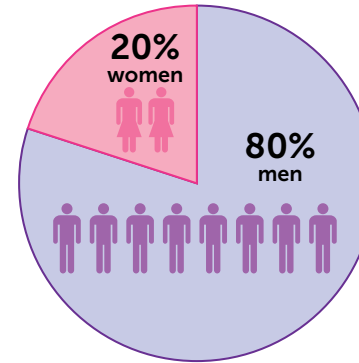
Most of these obstacles are far from exclusive to the cybersecurity field, but they do contribute to the massive under-representation in the sector. There is no shortage of either talent or appetite amongst women to succeed. Indeed, of all the participants in Get Safe Online's Ambassador Programme – which has been successfully engaging volunteers to cascade online safety education to communities since 2018 – some 50%, or sometimes a higher proportion, have been women.

"While progress has been made over the years, there remains a pressing need to further encourage women and girls in Guyana to pursue careers in technology, especially in the dynamic field of cybersecurity. This effort is crucial in narrowing the gender gap and fostering inclusivity within the tech sector."
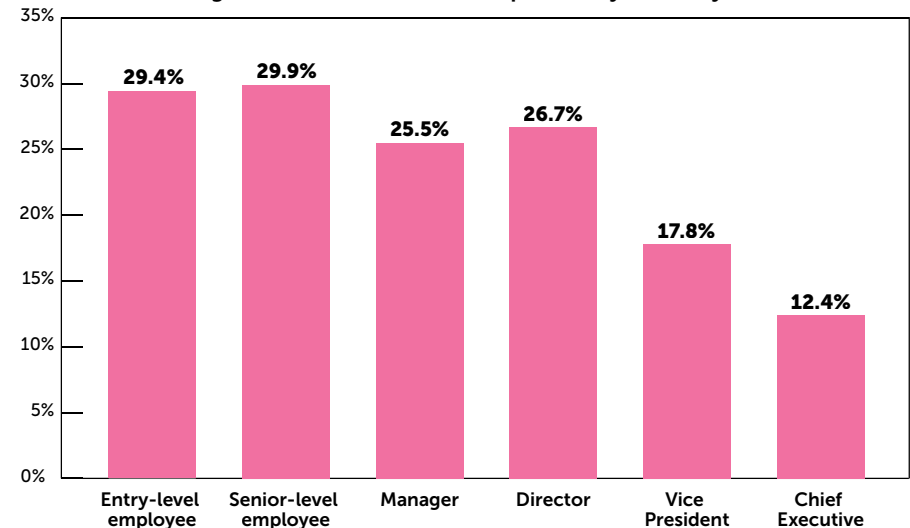
Muriana McPherson,
Director - Cybersecurity,
National Data Management Authority,
Guyana

At the launch of ISC2's inaugural Women Cyber Leaders Pre-Conference Workshop at its 2023 Security Congress, the cybersecurity membership organisation reported that 'Women are severely underrepresented in leadership positions, with women making up 10% of C-level executives who are 50 or older and accounting for 35% of all executives in their 30s.'

1 Professor Valerie Stead, Professor in Leadership and Management at Lancaster University Management School

Only 20% of the Global Cybersecurity Workforce are Women

20% women

80% men

Percentage of Women in STEM Occupations by Seniority Level, 2023

	%
Entry-level employee	29.4%
Senior-level employee	29.9%
Manager	25.5%
Director	26.7%
Vice President	17.8%
Chief Executive	12.4%

Source: World Economic Forum, Global Gender Gap Report 2023

The importance of education

In a survey of 2,000 female STEM undergraduate students in 26 countries across the world, 78% of respondents said they had first developed an interest in STEM in middle or high school[2]. Yet girls are consistently under-represented among top performers in STEM subjects.

Unless the tables are turned around the world, employment inequalities will be perpetuated, the industry will continue to be dominated by men and women's potential will continue to be untapped as they miss out on more highly remunerated jobs and the opportunity to acquire the diversified skills demanded by evolving technologies, markets, geopolitical scenarios and threat landscapes.

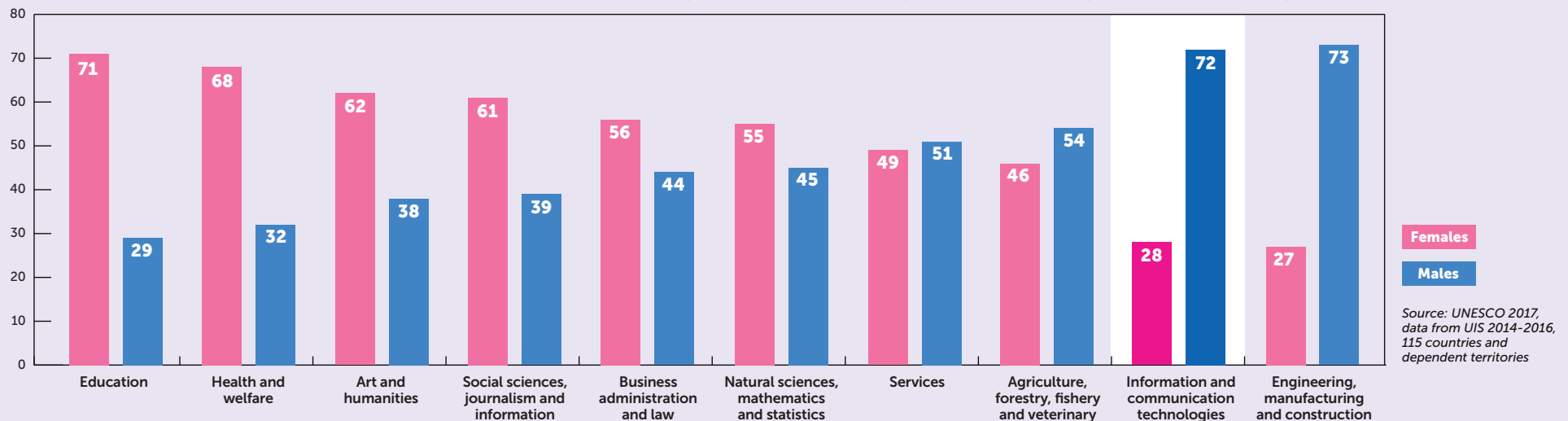Governments, employers, industry bodies and educational establishments must all collaborate to encourage girls and women into STEM education and subsequently, careers. Where the issues are cultural, this must be addressed, although this will be a slow evolution. It is essential that all efforts and initiatives are orchestrated, monitored and reported and the outcomes shared for the benefit of women and for the sector.

Males already working in the field can also play a massive role, valuing the contribution of women, providing encouragement and support to their female peers and creating safe and welcoming workspaces.

"My initial fascination in the world of IT started when I was in eighth grade. My Computer Science teacher said to us that computers are going to be the way of the future and from that day I aspired to pursue a career in IT."

Shakera Johnson,
Director of Information Security,
Cable Bahamas Group of Companies

Share of Female and Male Students Enrolled in Higher Education by Field of Study, Global Average

Field of Study	Females	Males
Education	71	29
Health and welfare	68	32
Art and humanities	62	38
Social sciences, journalism and information	61	39
Business administration and law	56	44
Natural sciences, mathematics and statistics	55	45
Services	49	51
Agriculture, forestry, fishery and veterinary	46	54
Information and communication technologies	28	72
Engineering, manufacturing and construction	27	73

Source: UNESCO 2017, data from UIS 2014–2016, 115 countries and dependent territories

2 Boston Consulting Group

The importance of role models

In a field which is still largely male dominated, the importance of role models cannot be understated.

Between 31 January and 8 February 2024, research company Censuswide, commissioned by Get Safe Online, polled a sample of 1,000 female university students aged 18+ who are looking to move into the technology or cybersecurity sector at some point.

68% said that role models are important for their career progression, yet of these, 66% believe that the sector is not currently providing them with enough role models to aspire to. The study also reveals that a lack of visible role models (21%) is one of the key barriers facing female students wanting to enter the space. 46% quoted a lack of opportunities as another obstacle, and 37% blamed male bias against women.

When asked what they consider are the main attributes of a role model, 37% quoted having an attainable career path, 36% quoted individuals that people can learn from and 43% said someone who has achieved something seemingly unachievable.

"I found myself in a position to inspire and mentor aspiring individuals, particularly women and children to embrace careers in cybersecurity. Breaking stereotypes and overcoming gender biases became inherent aspects of my role, reinforcing the notion that diversity is the backbone of resilience in the online world."

Tenanoia Simona,
Chief Executive Officer,
Tuvalu Telecommunications Corporation

68% say that role models are important for their career progression

45% believe the sector is not providing them with enough role models

46% say there is a lack of opportunities for females to enter the sector

37% name male bias against women as a barrier to entry

21% say there is a lack of visible role models

Censuswide survey for Get Safe Online of 1,000 females at university who are looking to move into the technology or cybersecurity sector at some point, aged 18+. The data was collected between 31.01.2024 - 08.02.2024.

Case studies

To coincide with International Women's Day 2024 and our global keynote webinar 'Celebrating and Championing Women in Cybersecurity', we spoke to six inspirational women who have achieved senior management roles in what is still a male-dominated field. Their inspirational stories recount how they have, in different ways, overcome the very challenges described above.

You can watch the global keynote webinar 'Celebrating and Championing Women in Cybersecurity' at www.getsafeonline.org/iwd24

Tajeshwari Devi
Acting Commissioner for the Online Safety Commission in Fiji

Having graduated with a commerce degree from the University of Fiji, Tajeshwari Devi held various roles in a mobile network, a supermarket chain and the University of Fiji before joining the Online Safety Commission in April 2019.

She recalls:

"It was during my time at the Online Safety Commission that I found my true passion. Starting as an Executive Officer with the Online Abuse Team, I gradually worked my way up to become the officer in charge of the commission. This position has allowed me to not only contribute significantly towards creating a safer online environment for individuals and businesses alike, but also to make a positive impact on society."

18 months after joining the Online Safety Commission, Tajeshwari became an Ambassador with Get Safe Online, a role she still enjoys.

"The role of my association with Get Safe Online in my career progression while working at the Online Safety Commission has been invaluable. Since becoming a Get Safe Online Ambassador, I have had the opportunity to work closely with this reputable organisation, distributing resources, carrying out workshops, and creating awareness among communities and law enforcement agencies."

"By being associated with them, I have gained credibility and expertise in the field of online safety. This has not only enhanced my professional profile but also opened doors for career advancement. Through my involvement with Get Safe Online, I have had the privilege of collaborating with experts in the industry, broadening my knowledge base and allowing me to stay updated on emerging trends and threats. By sharing this knowledge through workshops and community engagements, I have been able to make a tangible impact by empowering individuals to protect themselves online."

Passionate about creating a safer online space, Tajeshwari has organised awareness sessions in Suva and extended this safety message to other Fijian islands, contributing to her Gold Ambassador status. Tajeshwari claims that her work with Get Safe Online has also allowed her to champion women's roles in cybersecurity.

Throughout her career – and also when looking at other women's experience – one of the main challenges Tajeshwari has seen is scepticism in women's ability, leadership and skillset. As a result, she has frequently had to assert herself and her right to be there, which she says has begun to change mindsets and preconceptions of women and their role in the industry, encouraging other women in Fiji to step up and take on roles in their community, not least in places such as universities and education which can still be heavily skewed towards men in the tech and cybersecurity space.

Asked if she considers herself a role model in the industry, Tajeshwari says:

"For me, the idea of a being a role model puts a lot of pressure on, suggesting that role models have to be perfect all the time. But I think it's more about setting the bar – setting the example. But it's important to remember that with more power comes more responsibility. For myself, I just hope that people learn and innovate from me – that they do not try to be a copy of me – but instead, just be the best version of themselves.

More importantly, she considers, role models are beacons of hope for those who experience discrimination and prove that gender should never be a barrier.

Tajeshwari believes that in order to inspire, promote and retain a diverse pool of workers, the cybersecurity industry can bring women in, let them sit at the decision-making table and encourage them to bring their fresh ideas.

"Creativity and problem-solving skills are key to innovation in the tech industry, and women need support. Here, education from a young age is key – women need to be and feel encouraged to take up these positions."

She continues

"Women come from a different starting point to men. A lot of women face online abuse and have first-hand experience of these issues. They are resilient and, with this knowledge, they bring innovative ideas to problems like image-based abuse, domestic violence, and cyberbullying – and can express solutions based on lived experience. This perspective really helps us to make better decisions, so it's crucial women are involved in the process."

Roxanne Anderson-Linton
Communications and Public Education Officer at the Broadcasting Commission in Jamaica

Roxanne Anderson-Linton joined the Broadcasting Commission in 2006 as a Telephone Operator / Receptionist and has earned a series of promotions to the role she holds today. She has a Bachelor's Degree in General and Human Resources Management from the University of Technology, Jamaica.

In early 2020, as an Administrative Assistant and following her assistance with the Get Safe Online Caribbean Tour, she became a Get Safe Online Ambassador. This heavily influenced her to consider a career in communications. Now a Platinum Ambassador, she considers her involvement with Get Safe Online pivotal in her career progression.

"I truly believe in the shared message of the Broadcasting Commission and Get Safe Online and my vision is to be the vessel that carries that message of online safety and the importance of digital footprint far and wide; so that surfers and users of technology can be equipped with the tools needed to navigate their spaces safely and happily."

Roxanne admits that throughout her career – but particularly when starting with Get Safe Online – nerves were her biggest challenge. However, her belief in the importance of cybersecurity and the support from both Get Safe Online and the Broadcasting Commission have helped her to build her confidence.

"Overcoming these challenges involved continuous research, learning, and utilising the wealth of resources provided to me – this support was crucial in my development and to what I have achieved."

Asked whether she considers herself to be a role model, Roxanne comments:

"It's important that role models embody the idea of 'do what you say and say what you do.'"

Her approach to her work always involves hands-on sessions, practical demonstrations, sharing personal experiences and providing achievable and relatable information.

"Showing, not just telling helps people to see themselves in your position and emulate this."

Roxanne believes that education and training are crucial to women being inspired to successfully pursuing careers in cybersecurity, citing the high cost of training courses as a common barrier:

"Subsidised training, where training is available, is important for making it accessible for harder-to-reach people. Where training is not available, it should be made so, as people want to upgrade their lives but have other responsibilities, so making access to training and the industry easier is a great starting point."

She continues:

"Opening the doors for places with closed-door policies, particularly in male-dominated industries, also encourages women to step into the field. But this only works if you have public education to help change perspectives and show women that if one person is doing it, then they can feel confident in doing it too. It will also assist with changing the views of the gatekeepers of the industry who can remove ceilings and obstacles, thereby allowing women to enter and flourish in their respective spaces in the field."

Roxanne believes that women bring a unique perspective to the industry, enabling them to work and provide solutions in different ways, making the industry better as a whole.

She quotes an example:

"When I am conducting sessions I personalise them, particularly to students. I prefer to conduct my presentations like a rap session, where I use personal experiences as a mother and how my children and I navigate various challenges together. I also express the experiences of other persons and how they handle their digital selves so I can relate to the audience. This style of presenting helps participants see how the tools introduced could work in their lives. This creates a much more relatable workshop and benefits everyone, making for a much safer digital world."

For other women considering a career in cybersecurity, Roxanne advises:

"I would give the same advice I would give my children, which is that the only person that can stop you from getting your heart's desire is you. The ceiling is being broken and there are seats at the tables for women. If not, create a table and be sure to invite others to sit with you."

Charlotte Hooper
Head of Operations at The Cyber Helpline, UK and USA

The Cyber Helpline is a UK charity that supports thousands of victims and survivors of cybercrime and online harm every month. Charlotte Hooper's journey into cybersecurity began in 2018 while studying for her undergraduate in Policing and Criminal Justice, where one of the modules involved a placement with the Cyber Helpline. She had been home educated from age 13 and had no formal IT education.

Not long later, Charlotte found herself successfully investigating an incident of a covert online stalking campaign against herself, having been frustrated by lack of any positive outcomes by bodies she reported it to. The six-week volunteering opportunity with The Cyber Helpline became a six-year, full-time commitment.

Charlotte has a passion for tackling cyber threats against individuals and addressing cyberstalking and digital violence against women and girls.

Charlotte is justifiably proud of her achievements, which include:
- Gaining recognition as the media mouthpiece for The Cyber Helpline in the UK and USA
- Expanding The Cyber Helpline into the USA
- Gaining 'One to Watch' in the Most Inspiring Women in Cyber Awards, and the Diana Award
- Most recently, setting up the Global Online Harms Alliance with Foundation Ra, a survivor-led nonprofit organisation that supports children, women and men who are victims of online image-based sexual abuse

Charlotte says:

"I'm also immensely proud of being able to work with so many great people in The Cyber Helpline to provide much-needed advice and guidance to those who need it most."

We asked Charlotte about any challenges she had faced working in this traditionally male-dominated sector. She recalls:

"One of the main challenges is being spoken to in a different way from male colleagues because the other party assumed I wouldn't otherwise understand, particularly on technical subjects. As well as that, there are those in the industry who simply underestimate the power of women."

Asked to offer advice to women and girls thinking about a career in the field, Charlotte comments:

"Women and girls are disproportionately impacted by cybercrime and online harm – and therefore those who best understand the issue. We're in the prime position to bring the issue to light and understand what needs to be done, advocating for necessary actions and addressing and mitigating the challenges women and girls face online every day."

She concludes

"Never forget that you have the power not only to change the industry, but to change the life of every individual accessing technology around the world. That's a huge incentive."

Rosemary Butare
Cybersecurity Auditor at the Rwanda Utilities Regulatory Authority

Rosemary Butare has more than nine years' experience within the IT space and for the last six, has been focusing on cybersecurity regulation across different sectors.

Her work has largely involved interfacing with different sectors to protect their critical ICTs. This involves engaging with their technical personnel in order to understand their processes, and providing recommendations on how to protect themselves against cyber threats, contributing to a robust resilience of Rwanda's ICT Infrastructure against adversaries.

Rosemary regards some of her most noteworthy achievements as:

- Developing and enforcing cybersecurity regulations in multiple sectors including those with critical information infrastructure
- Contributing to various legislative tools through their drafting processes, including Rwanda's law governing population registration in the national single digital identity system and legal instruments for accession to the Budapest Convention on Cybercrime
- Representing Rwanda at the UN Open-Ended Working Group on security of and in the use of ICTs

Outside her daily work with the Rwanda Utilities Regulatory Authority, Rosemary is proud to have shared her knowledge and expertise in cybersecurity, including:

- Working with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) on training on protecting computer systems, chairing technical sessions at the computer security conference and updating the implementing guide on protecting sensitive information
- Speaking at the Council of Europe's conference on promoting the role of women in cyber, held in Costa Rica in 2022

Rosemary also creates online content on cybersecurity for use by the general population of Rwanda, explaining:

"If I can explain the basic principles at the core of cybersecurity as a field, in a language that can be easily understood by the general population, I'll be on my way to make it a somewhat interesting topic to those who have never considered it a concern."

As a woman in the traditionally male-dominated cybersecurity field, Rosemary has faced a number of challenges, including:

- Assumptions that as a woman, she would not be able to handle workloads that demand working late or any other physical inconvenience, and that women are more suited to administrative roles
- Her credibility in the field being questioned because she did not have an interest in gaming or hacking for fun, which are often associated with those who pursue careers in cybersecurity
- Poor coverage of women's achievements in the field when compared with men's, giving less value to their work
- A distinct lack of female role models owing to low numbers of women already working in cybersecurity

Rosemary readily offers advice to women and girls considering pursuing a career in cybersecurity:

"Cybersecurity may be male dominated but it isn't a male field, so don't accept intimidation because it's a large field with many subdomains that require diverse skillsets. Identify both general areas as well as niches that may be of interest to you, use available resources to build your skills and carve out the career path of your choice."

She continues:

"As well as your technical skills, use your personality and unique perspectives that you have as a woman."

In conclusion, Rosemary advises

"Avoid tunnel vision, stay wide open to opportunities that will expand your horizons and you'll discover a world of knowledge to build expertise that will remain relevant in the long run."

Pelenita Atoa
Senior Engagement Officer at CERT Tonga

Like many people in the cybersecurity field, Pelenita Atoa's role is vastly different from when she began her career 20 years ago, when she joined the Tongan civil service as an Assistant Secretary in the Ministry of Commerce, Consumer, Trade, Innovation and Labour. Now, dedicated to capacity building, she has led the CERT's engagement and administration function for the last five years, playing a crucial role in enhancing Tonga's cybersecurity and emergency response capabilities. The CERT operates under the country's Ministry of Meteorology, Energy, Information, Disaster Management, Environment, Climate Change and Communications. Her expertise contributes to safeguarding digital infrastructure and promoting cyber resilience in the whole region.

She also holds a Bachelor of Commerce degree in Economics and Information Systems from the University of the South Pacific, and is currently studying for her Master of Cyber Security Analysis at Macquarie University in Australia.

More recently, a consequence of global lockdowns imposed during the COVID-19 pandemic actually had a positive effect on Pelenita's journey in cybersecurity. In 2020, she was on a secondment programme to the Interim Pacific Fusion Centre in Canberra, which was intended to last for three months. Due to the pandemic, however, she was locked down there for 10 months before returning home. During this time, she volunteered to participate in the Get Safe Online Ambassador Scheme, completing it with Gold Ambassador status for achieving nine public outreach programmes.

Pelenita continues to serve the community with passion and dedication as a Get Safe Online Ambassador:

"I believe that the knowledge and skills earned from the Get Safe Online Ambassador Scheme are applicable not only for me as a mother, but they are vital when delivering outreach programmes to schools, communities, and other sectors."

She is also an Executive Member of Tonga Women in ICT, applying her extensive knowledge and skills to its outreach programmes.

She has also presented and participated at many cybersecurity events, including the recent Global Conference on Cyber Capacity Building in Accra, Ghana in November 2023.

Pelenita's work and dedication to promoting online safety highlights the importance of collaboration and knowledge-sharing in the global cybersecurity community:

"Prepare yourself and share that knowledge and skills with everyone. In that way we will make the world of technology a secure and safer place."

Esther Callender-George
Group IT Risk & Security Manager at Guardian Group, Trinidad & Tobago

Guardian Group

Recalling the beginning of her career, Esther Callender-George clearly recalls that due to family circumstances when leaving school in 1999, an advanced school qualification or university education were not options open to her. However, she grasped the opportunity to join a nine-month internship with Republic Bank (formerly Barclays). For the next eight years, she worked her way up through the ranks with dedication, hard work and by seizing every single opportunity she could find for self-improvement.

"I still could not afford to pay for university, but I made sure that for whatever task I was assigned I did my very best to exceed expectations. My work was my qualification. In between there, I did A+ to wet my feet into the world of IT."

Esther subsequently married and had three children, but the desire to pursue and achieve her career goals never went away.

"I also wanted to do more, and well as my family was expanding, I decided to go where the money was, and at the time it was in IT. So, I earned my BSc in Computer Science from the University of Hertfordshire, whilst aiming for jobs in IT."

She has subsequently attained the post graduate certificate in Business Administration and is still pursuing her master's degree in strategic planning ... all this alongside pursuing and attaining various industry certifications.

Esther admits that earning the degree – which took five years – was a difficult task to manage, given her work and family commitments.

"During that process I remember one male manager asking why I was rushing to get a degree, telling me that I was already in a good job. At the time I was a systems administrator."

What made this more difficult to accept was that Esther had decided to join the IT field at a time when women were not taken seriously unless they were in programming or a similar role.

After almost 20 years with Republic Bank, culminating in IT security roles, Esther held roles in both the telecoms and financial services sectors before joining financial planning and insurance provider Guardian Group in 2021. She says that in every technical position, she has had to prove herself repeatedly to her male counterparts until finally, she leveraged her life skills and let her work speak for itself, which is still the case.

She has plentiful advice for females considering a role in technology.

"Just do it ... it can be as simple as an entry level service desk job. I went through a catalogue of all the IT jobs in my company at the time and selected what I wanted and went in. It led me straight into information security/cybersecurity and risk. Chart your own course."

Esther says it is essential to know the business of one's IT field, stay relevant and never stop learning. She also advocates finding a mentor, who could be male or female.

"My mentor is male ... you don't have to act or think like a man, just learn from them."

She also recommends joining women's support groups such as Google Women Techmakers, Google Developer Groups and Women in Tech. She was unaware of them in the early stages of her career and has found them to be an excellent source of support.

Esther also offers advice on a personal level:

"If you are going into a relationship, choose your partner wisely – this field is not for the faint of heart. You need that support for your mental health and your current and future family."

She concludes:

"Difficult does not mean impossible. Challenge yourself, remembering that comfort is the enemy of success. And confidence is everything!"

Supported by the FCDO around the world

"The UK is committed to tackling gender inequality around the world and has placed empowering women and girls at centre of its international work. In March 2023 the UK launched the first FCDO International Women and Girls Strategy, which seeks to achieve our goal using all our diplomatic and development levers. I am delighted to be supporting International Women's Day and to be able to recognise today the valuable contributions made by women in the field of cybersecurity."

Her Excellency Judith Slater, British High Commissioner to Jamaica

"I've been lucky to have worked with some amazing women in tech in my career, from Emma Sinclair – the UK's youngest person to have floated a company in the UK – to Lindy Cameron, CEO of the UK's National Cyber Security Centre within GCHQ. They, and many others, have been an inspiration to me and it's absolutely right we are celebrating Women in Tech, including the incredible Sametria McKinney, Director of the National Computer Response Team right here in The Bahamas. The UK's new Women and Girls Strategy places women (and girls!) at the heart of our approach to international development – I'm pleased to be meeting so many more brilliant women in tech, today!"

His Excellency Tom Hartley, British High Commissioner to The Bahamas

"Delighted that Get Safe Online are spotlighting the valued contribution of talented women working in cyber today. Increasing women's participation is critical to meet the challenges of cybersecurity and build a safer cyberspace for all."

Her Excellency Harriet Cross, British High Commissioner to Trinidad and Tobago

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