

# Barriers to Digital Tech Employment and Skills

## Summary Report

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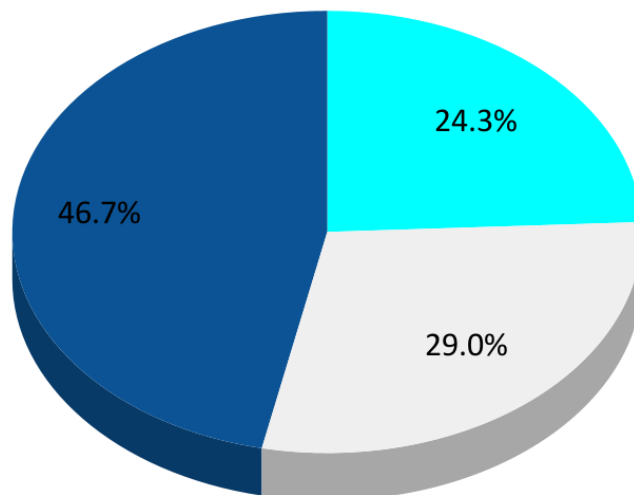
Hackney has become a prime location for companies involved in digital technology, with fast-growing employment opportunities.

As a Council, we want to create a fairer, more inclusive local economy, whereby everyone in Hackney - irrespective of background - has the opportunity to thrive and prosper in a borough that local people feel is theirs to shape.

The aim of the project was to understand the intersecting barriers facing residents from diverse backgrounds who are looking to launch their careers in Hackney's renowned digital tech industry and how we can work with local employers to overcome these challenges.

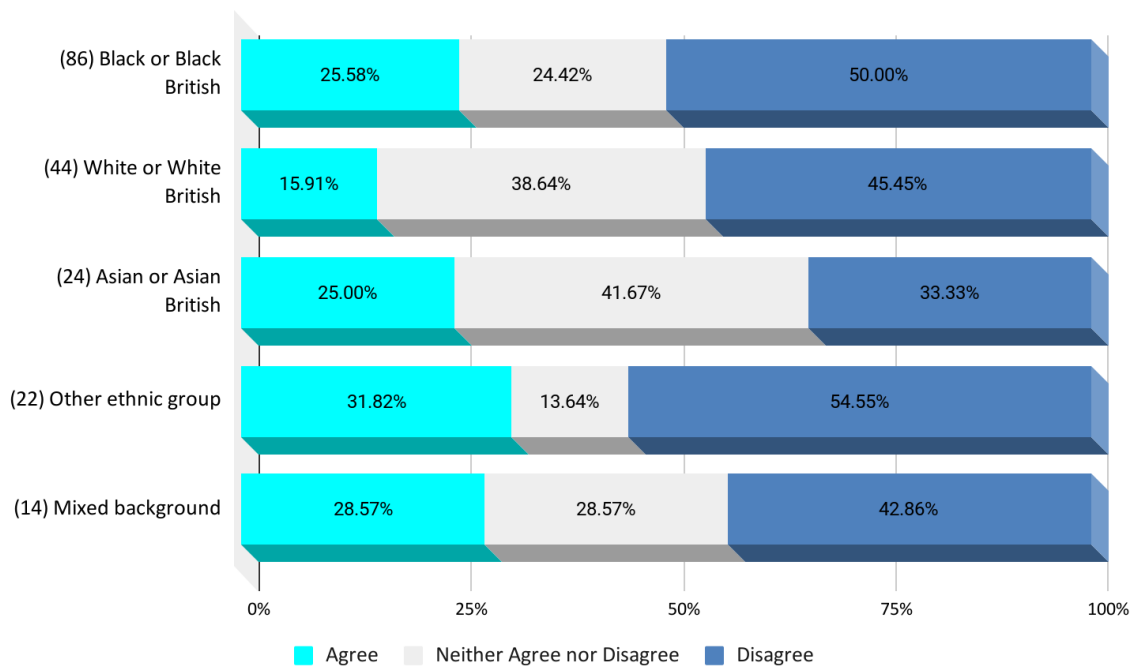
**To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?**

***In Hackney, most people have opportunities to find good jobs in digital tech***  
***(Base 210)***

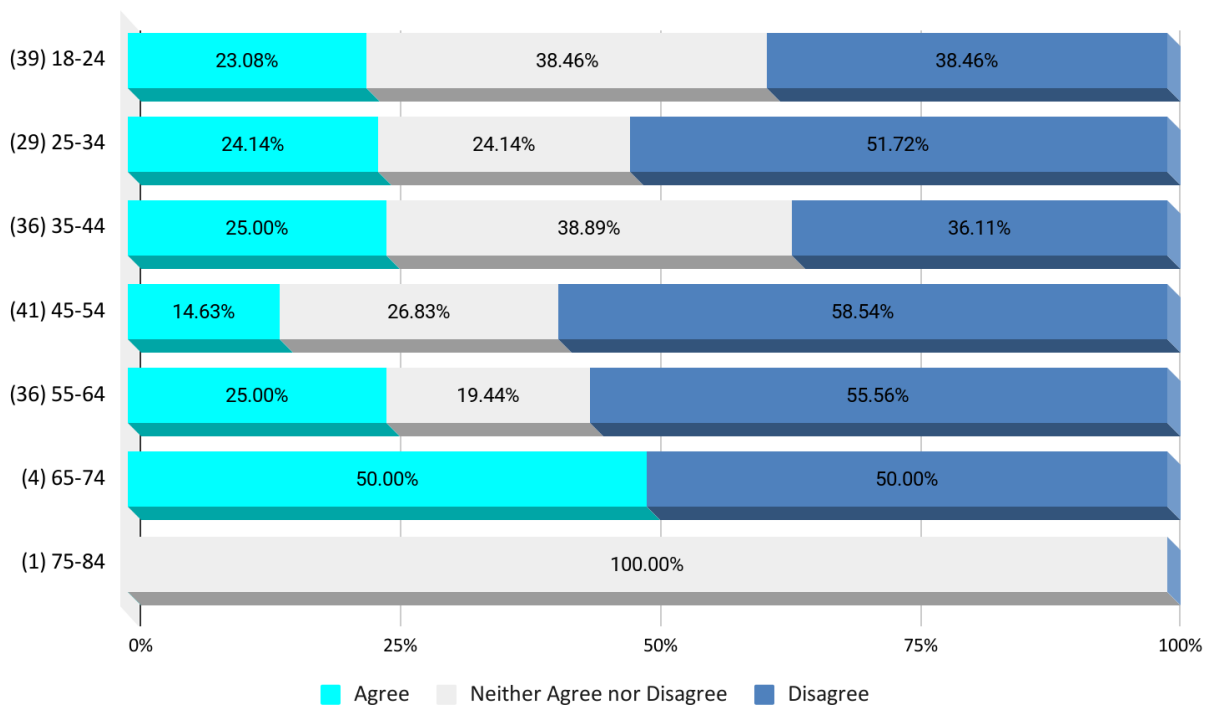


● Agree   ● Neither agree nor disagree   ● Disagree

**Cross-tab analysis - “In Hackney, most people have opportunities to find good jobs in digital tech” by Ethnicity and Age**

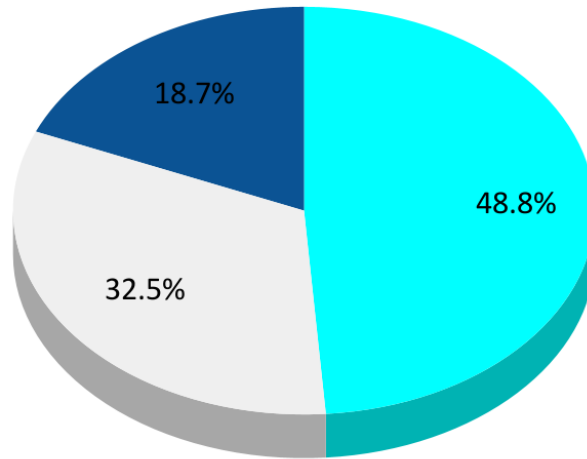


(Base 190)



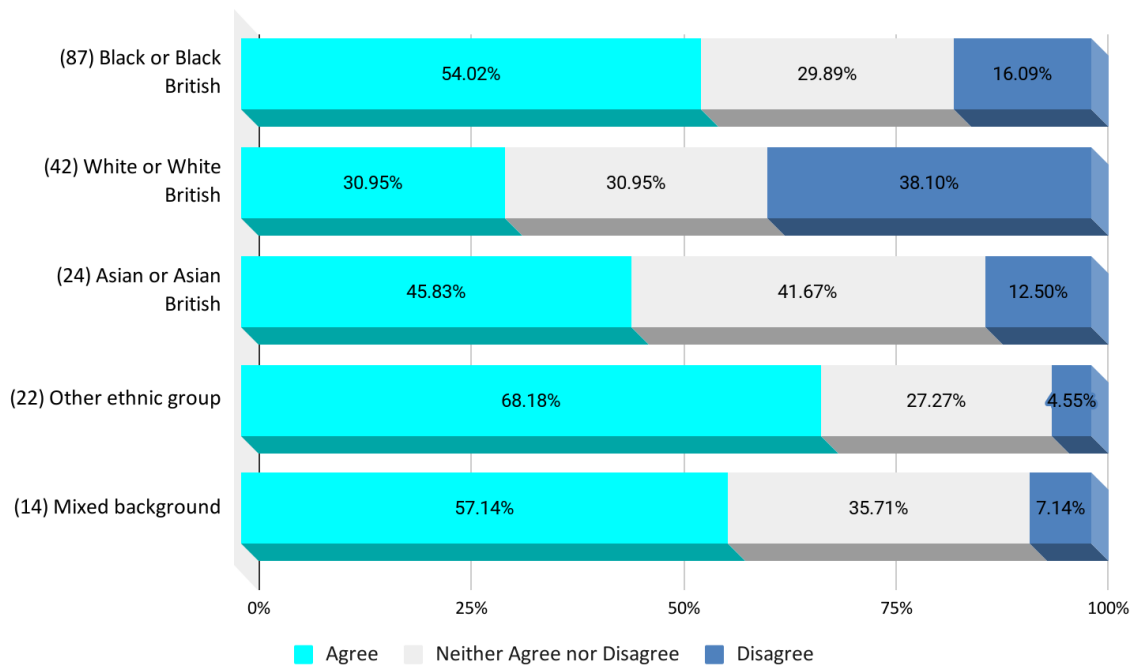
(Base 185)

**My unique identity or background is a barrier to job opportunities in digital tech**  
**(Base 209)**

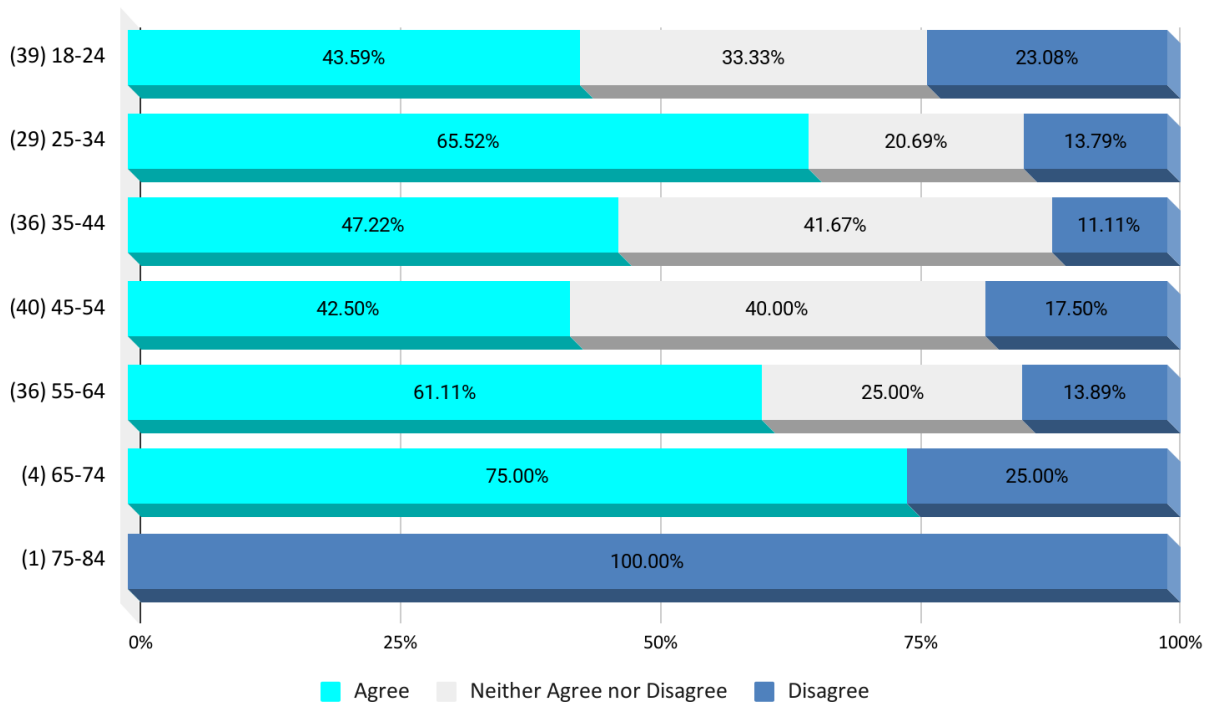


● Agree ● Neither agree nor disagree ● Disagree

**Cross-tab analysis - “My unique identity or background is a barrier to job opportunities in digital tech” by Ethnicity and Age**

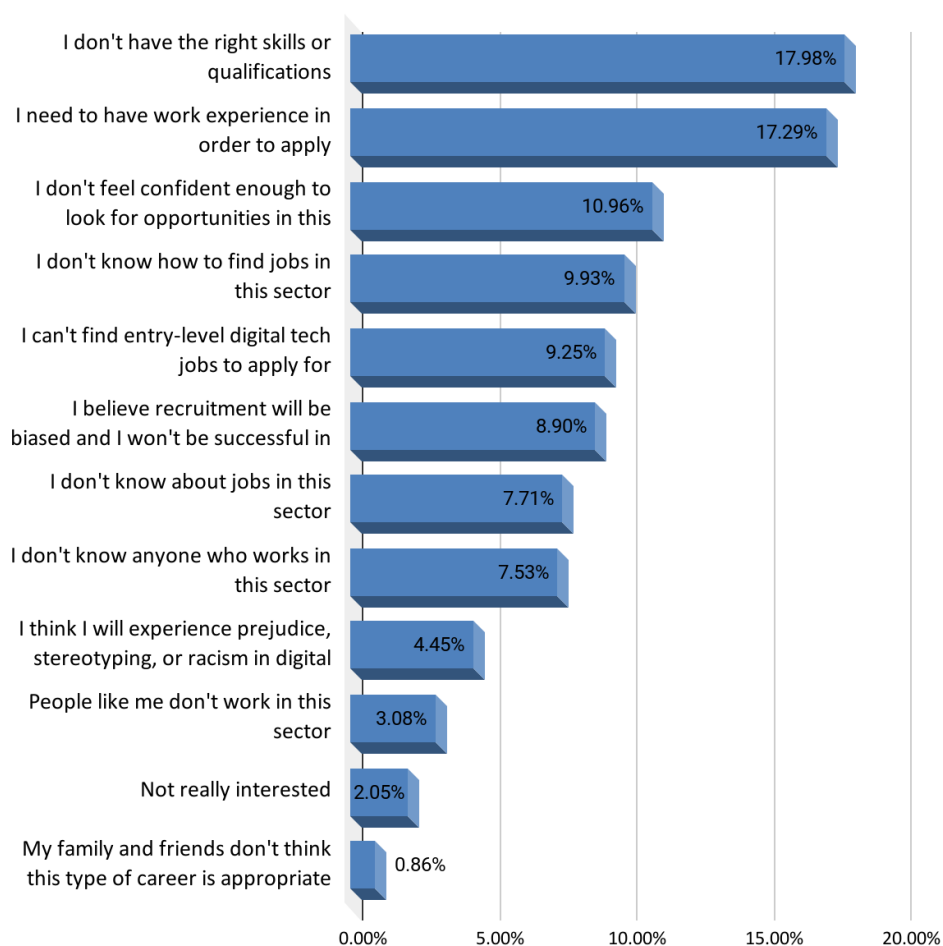


(Base 189)



(Base 185)

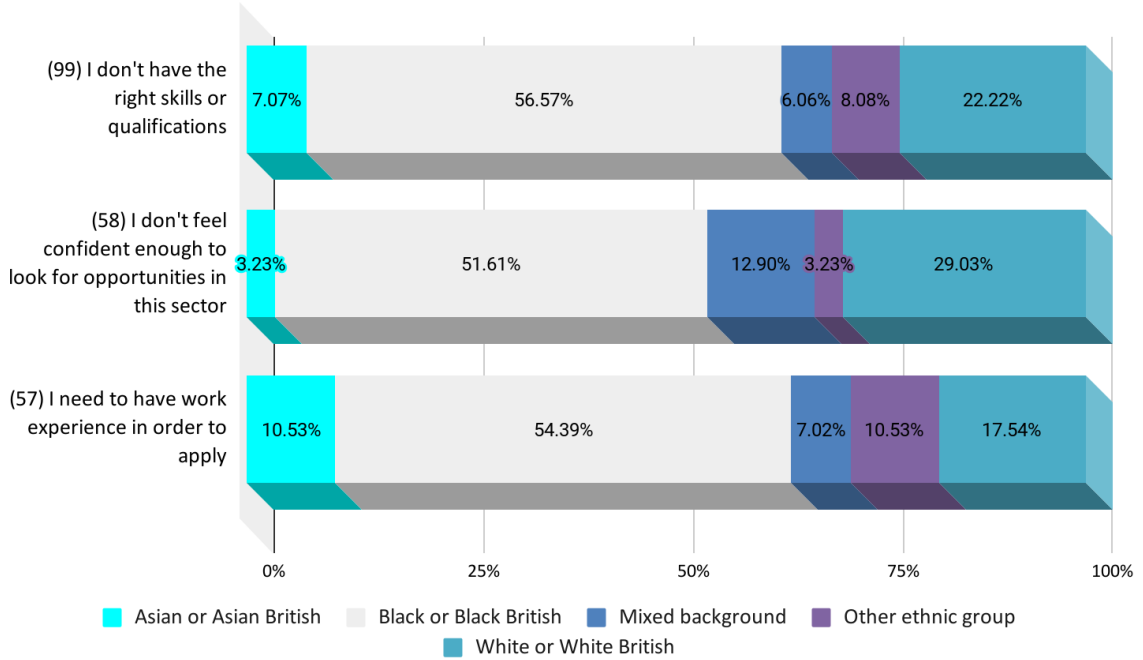
**We are interested in hearing what people think are the biggest barriers to finding a good job in digital tech. What would you say are your top three barriers? (Choose 3 ONLY) (Base 584 responses)**

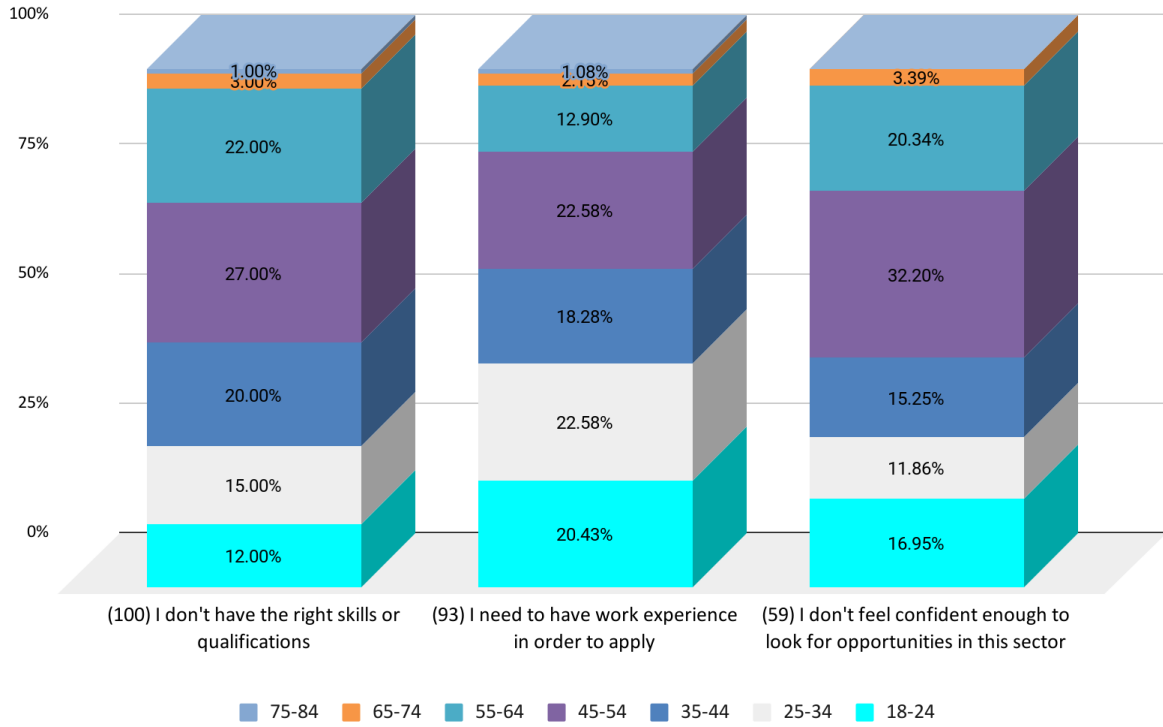


If Other, please specify:

<b>Key theme</b>	<b>Count</b>
Age/Over-experienced	10
Lack of skills/qualifications/knowledge	10
Miscellaneous	7
Discrimination - disability/ethnicity/religion	5
Lack of opportunities/flexible working	4
Personal issues/Mental health/Disability/Living status	4
Jargon	1
Personality	1
Low salaries	1
Interested in learning	1

**Cross-tab analysis - “We are interested in hearing what people think are the biggest barriers to finding a good job in digital tech. What would you say are your top three barriers? (Top 3 ONLY)” by Ethnicity and Age**







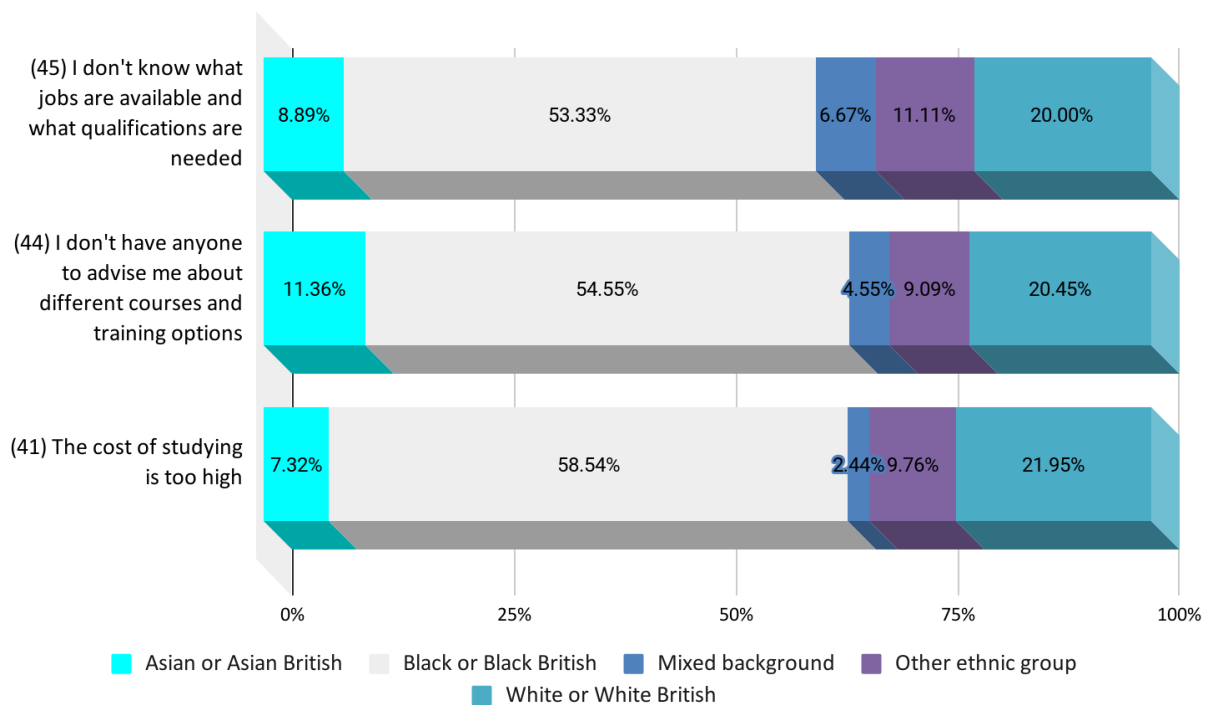
**What do you think are your top three barriers to getting the skills and qualifications for a good job in digital tech? (Choose 3 ONLY) (Base 602 responses)**

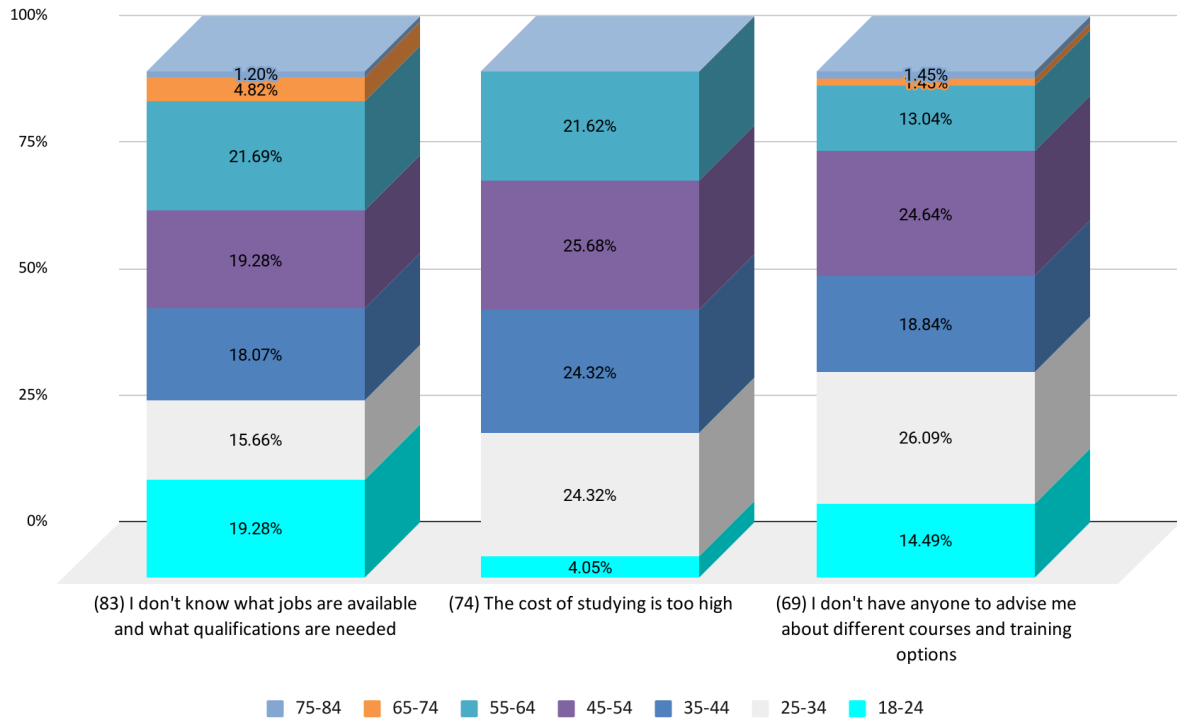


If Other, please specify:

Key Theme	Count
Lack of support/required skills for sector	7
Interested in learning/self-development/finding a job	4
Discrimination - disability/ethnicity	2
Age/over-experienced	1
No clear pathways	1
Personal issues/Mental health/Disability	1
Required qualifications	1
Lack of time	1

**Cross-tab analysis - “What do you think are your top three barriers to getting the skills and qualifications for a good job in digital tech? (Top 3 ONLY)” by Ethnicity and Age**



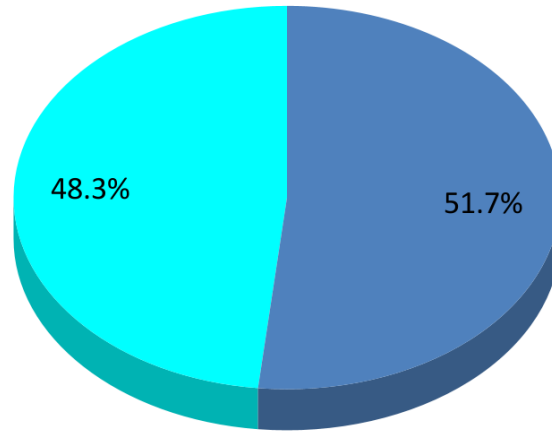


**What changes would make it easier for you to get new skills, retrain and progress into a good job in digital tech?**  
**(Based on analysis of 55 comments from 109)**

<b><u>Key Theme</u></b>	<b><u>Count</u></b>
Information	16
Free/low cost training/ financial assistance	11
Mentoring/1:1 advising	8
Age	7
Training with guaranteed interviews/jobs/in-job training	5
Publish curated/clear pathways	4
Learning opportunities	4
Opportunities for disabled people and people with health problems	3
Online/weekend/early morning/evening classes	3
Other	3
Industry recognised qualification	2
Black, female instructors	1
Local training	1
Opportunities for women	1
Access to digital tech companies	1
Group study	1
Support for unemployed/change to credit score system	1
Support for people on long-term work break	1
Mid-level career opportunities	1
School-based skills for younger people	1
Volunteer work	1
Employer-based actions	1

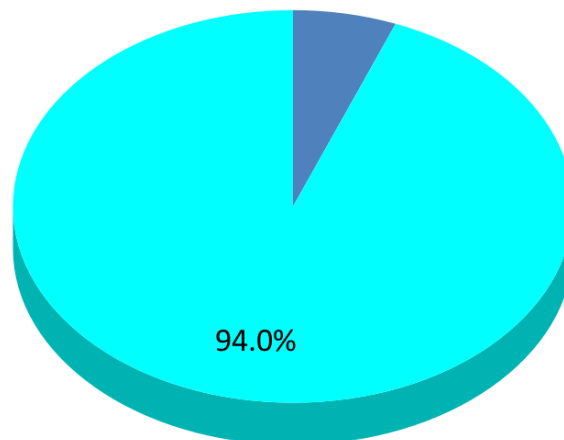
# About You

Gender: Are you... (Base 207)



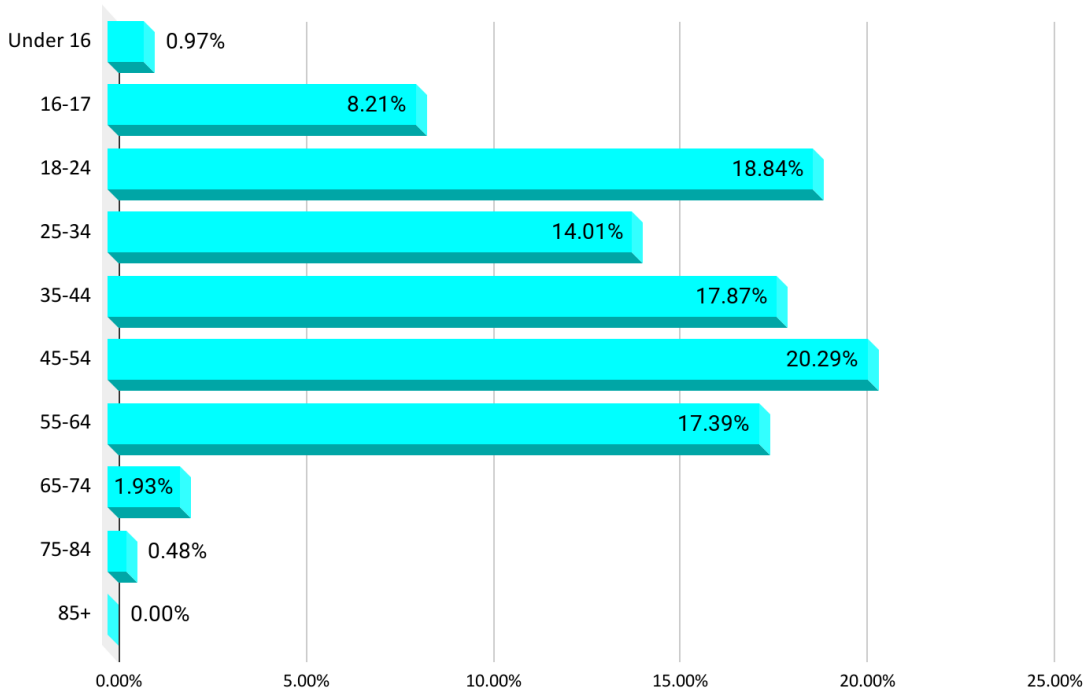
● Male ● Female

Gender: Is your gender identity different to the sex you were assumed to be at birth? (Base 201)

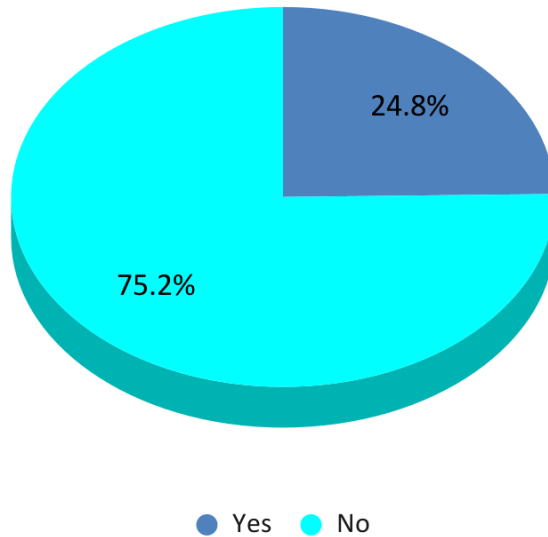


● Yes it's different ● No it's the same

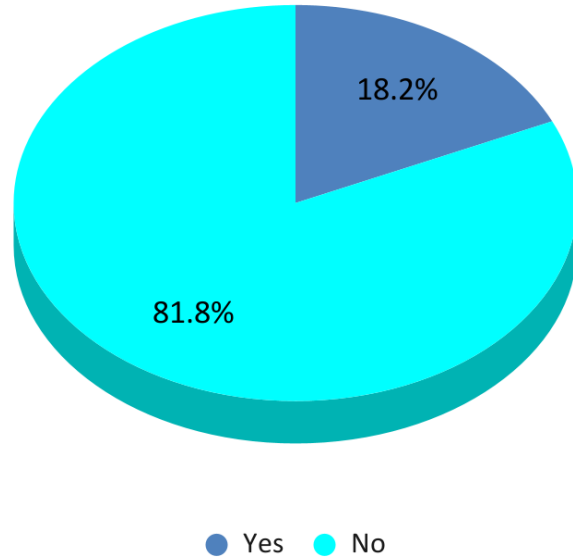
**Age: what is your age group? (Base 207)**



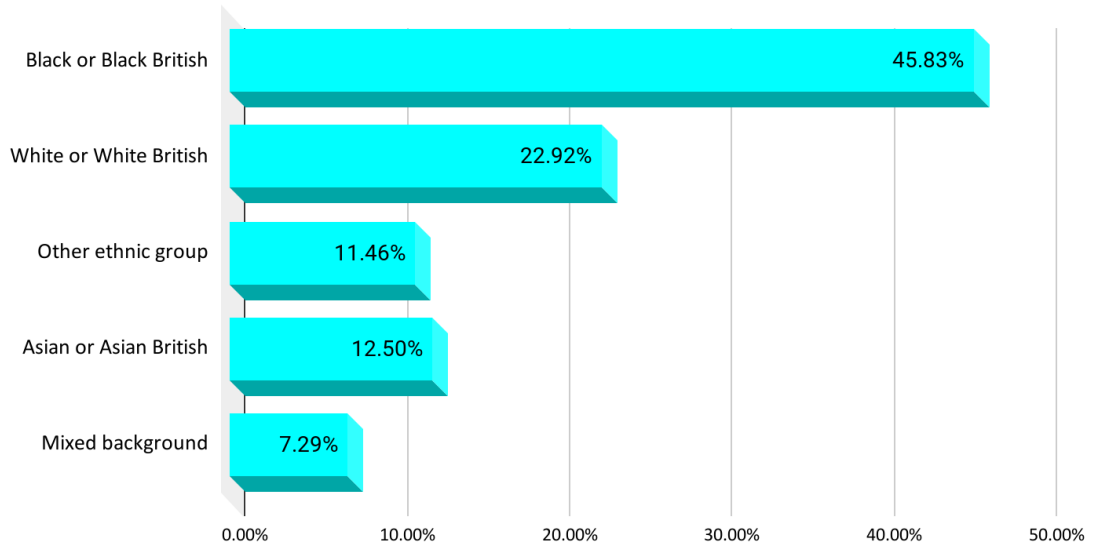
**Disability: Do you consider yourself to be disabled? (Base 203)**



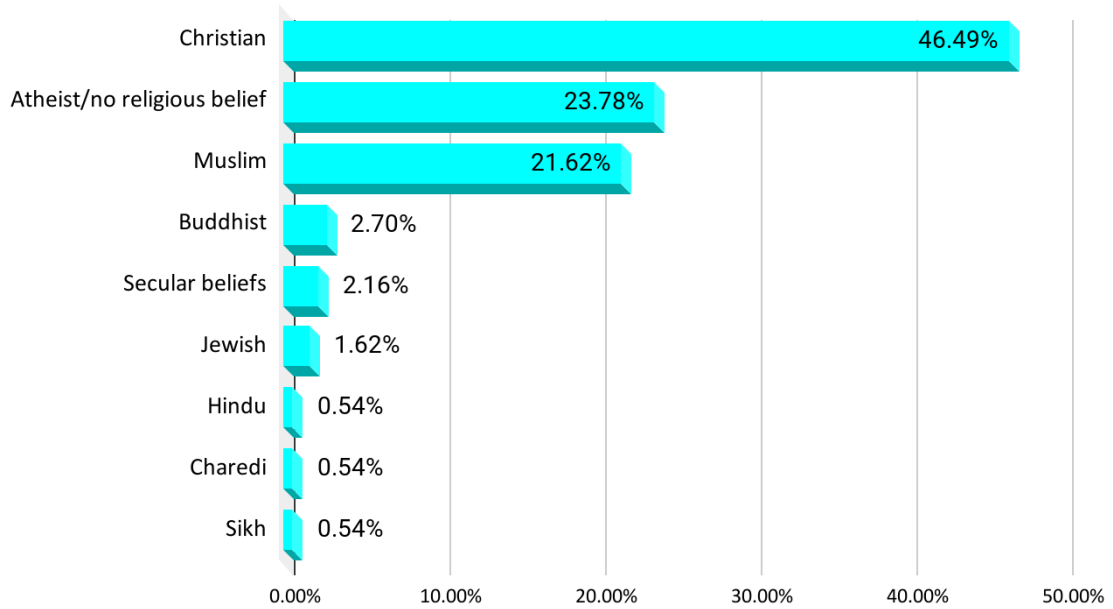
**Caring responsibilities: Do you regularly provide unpaid support caring for someone? (Base 202)**



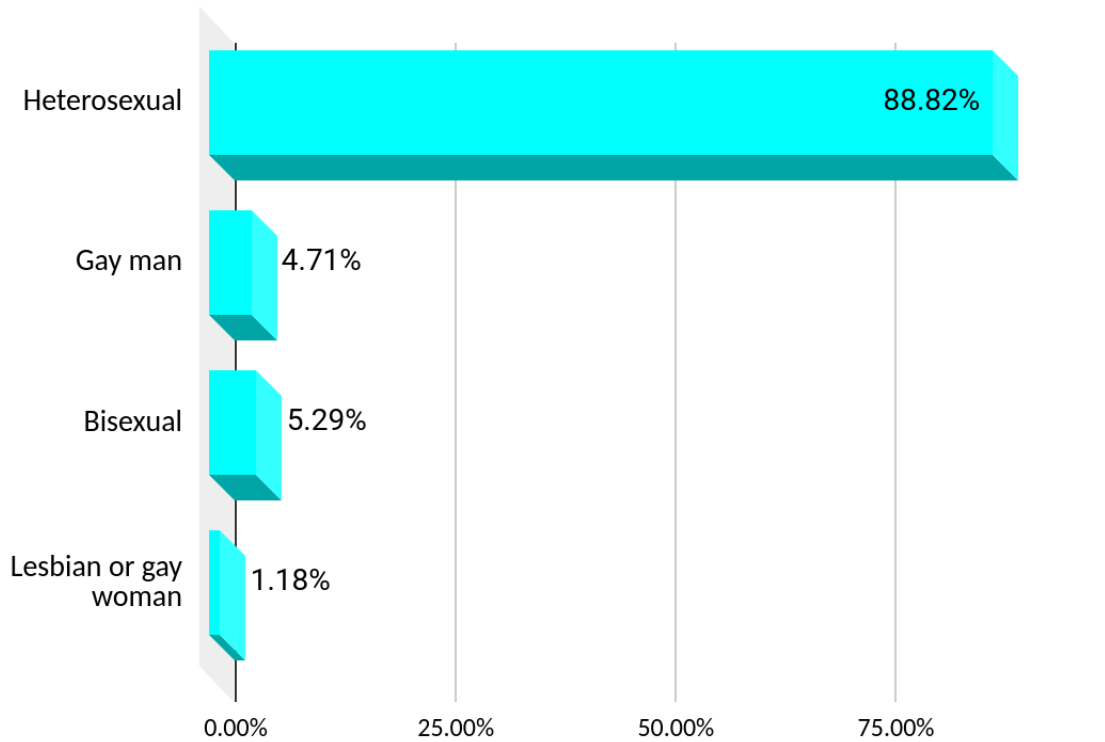
**Ethnicity: Are you...(Base 192)**



**Religion or belief: Are you or do you have...(Base 185)**

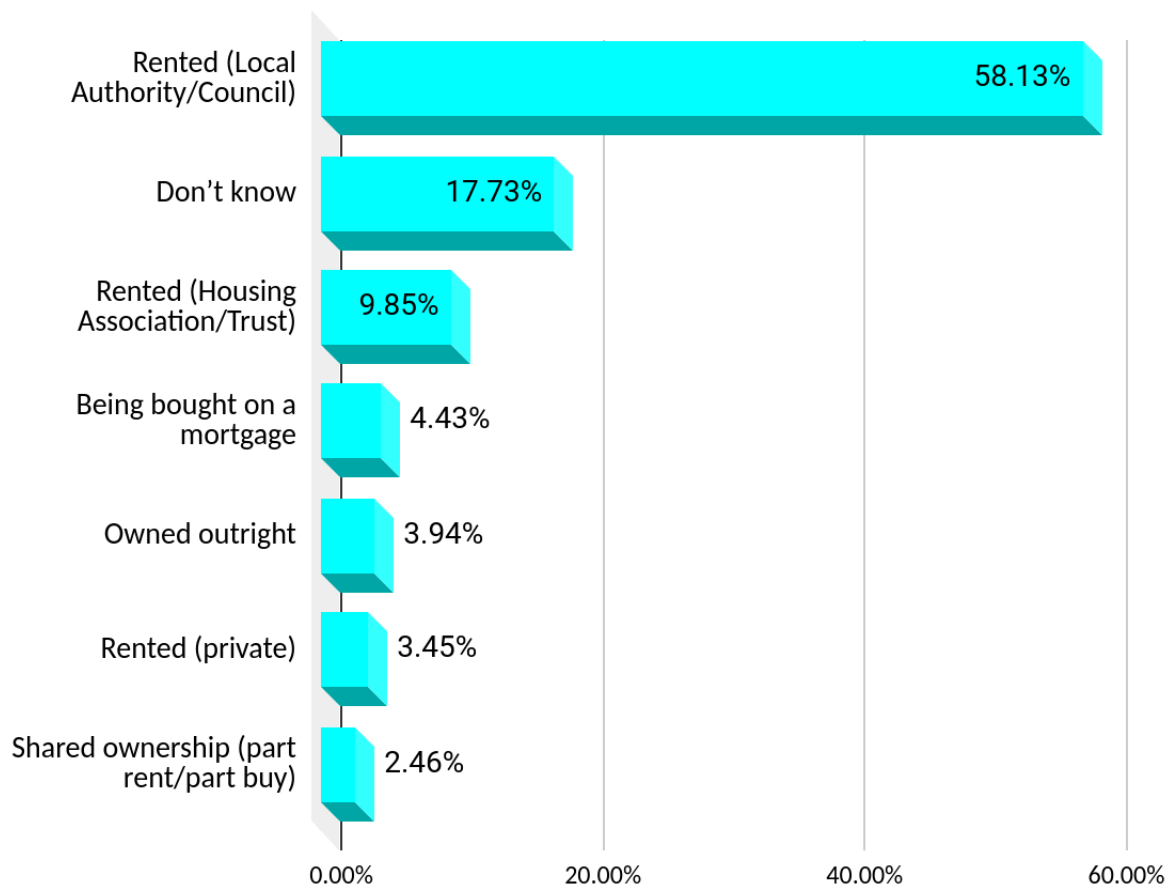


**Sexual orientation: Are you...(Base 170)**





**Housing Tenure: Which of the following best describes the ownership of your home? (Base 203)**



# Focus Group Insight

Five focus groups were organised with Hackney residents and students.

A broad focus group script was developed and refined for each focus group.

Questions included:

- What examples come to mind when you think about digital technology?
- What types of jobs come to mind when you think of digital technology and all the activities we just discussed?
- Do you think there are plenty of job opportunities in digital tech?
- Do you personally think there are digital tech jobs for you?
- What do you think are the biggest barriers to find a good job in digital tech?
- What do you think are the biggest barriers for you to get the skills and qualifications for a good job in digital tech?
- After everything you've just heard, what are your top three things that should change to make it easier for you to get the skills and qualifications to get a good job in digital tech?

For each session, one member of the Consultation & Engagement team facilitated the session with note-taking provided by another team member.

A total of 33 participants took part in focus group discussions.

## Family & friends focus group

- 4 participants
- 3 school students aged 13-18 accompanied by an adult family friend.
- 21st December 2021

### Availability of jobs & opportunities

The participants thought there were opportunities in the sector, but that these opportunities were less available for women.

- **Aware of roles & industry** - The participants thought that there were a lot of digital technology opportunities and that digital technology is a growing sector.
- **Unaware of roles & industry** - The younger participants weren't aware of jobs or opportunities.
- **Diversity** - One of the students had completed work experience in digital art where she learned about the industry. She said that there were a lot of men and there needed to be more women in digital technology. The adult

participant didn't think opportunities were open to everyone. She commented that there needed to be more women, more diversity and grassroots level opportunities for girls to make contacts in the sector.

- **Desire for more information** - One student said that there are workshops on digital technology jobs at her college but she wanted more of an understanding of what different jobs entail.

### Identity & background

The groups stated that identity and background could make it harder to access digital tech jobs.

- **Race & ethnicity** - The participants thought it would be harder to find digital technology jobs for lower income and Black and Global majority candidates. They thought these groups may face discrimination and lower pay.
- **Sexism & gender** - The group also discussed sexism. One participant said when they think of digital technology, they think white and male. One participant's female relation worked in digital technology, but said she was one of the only women in her field. The participants thought that there were more opportunities for women and more diversity in creative art industries compared to IT.

### Barriers to digital technology jobs

- **Employers** - the participants thought that employers and hiring managers were a barrier to getting jobs and talked about the need to diversify hiring.
- **Schools** - the participants thought there were more opportunities for students who do well at school. They also talked about the role of schools in sharing information about pathways and helping students to develop skills.
- **Qualifications** - the participants thought not having good qualifications was a potential barrier. Lack of skills was another barrier mentioned. One participant emphasised the need for grassroot support to make pathways clear and support people to get the right qualifications.
- **Confidence & personal barriers** - The group thought that people with lower socioeconomic background may not apply for digital technology jobs because they may feel like they are the right fit or skilled enough.
- **Advertising** - the participants talked about how jobs are advertised and that even people with qualifications may not know how to get jobs.
- **Apprenticeships** - the participants said access to apprenticeships was a barrier.

### Barriers to digital technology skills & qualifications

- **Qualifications** - Not having computer skills or qualifications in the appropriate subjects such as maths, media, computer science, art and design were potential barriers.

- **Skills** - The participants were not confident about the skills someone might need to get digital tech jobs.
- **Cost and caring responsibilities** - The participants talked about barriers of needing to provide for a family.
- **Social barriers** - The participants said that people of some backgrounds may not support digital technology as a career and may prefer their children to become a doctor or lawyer. Participants said that working in art or fashion may not be as supported, but thought that the jobs would allow them to earn enough money and get far in life.

#### Easier access to jobs and skills

- **Promote gender diversity** - For digital technology employers to promote more gender diversity and provide more opportunities for women.
- **Schools** - Workshops at schools to share information about opportunities; including underprivileged schools. The participants said that schools could offer more guidance and focus on digital technology skills and personal interests that could lead to digital technology jobs such as digital art tutorials.

## **Hackney Matters focus group 1**

- 5 participants
- All five participants were born outside of the UK.
- 14th January 2022

#### Availability of jobs & opportunities

- **Unaware of roles & industry** - Participants did not think there were digital technology jobs available in Hackney.
- **Race & ethnicity** - One Participant explained that people of Global majority ethnicity and people whose families are not in digital technology jobs find it harder to break into the industry and acquire digital skills.
- **Advertising & opportunities** - One participant commented that they never see graphic design training roles advertised.
- **Age** - The participants discussed age as a barrier. One participant explained that his age was now a barrier as he moved to the UK as an adult. Another participant shared his struggle finding jobs and apprenticeships. All participants discussed the challenges of looking for apprenticeships and training over the age of 25.

#### Identity & background

- **Social barriers & diversity** - One participant discussed the lack of diversity at his current company, stating that most of his colleagues got their jobs because they knew someone in the company.
- **Race & discrimination** - One participant talked about employer biases and discrimination and explained that employers hire people similar to them and judge candidates based on race, appearance and other biases. Another participant agreed and talked about the “unintentional unequal opportunities” of candidates getting jobs through word of mouth among people of the same race or ethnicity. The participants thought that there was less diversity in digital technology.
- **Status of digital tech jobs**- The participants had differing opinions about the status of digital technology jobs compared to law or medicine. Some participants thought that digital technology jobs had a higher professional status today, because of the impact technology has on people’s lives. One participant commented that there is a perception that you have to be highly educated to work in digital technology and that the pay has to be high too.

#### Barriers to digital technology jobs

- **Education** - Participants talked about the need to have a degree and specific skills and the cost of studying and courses. Other participants talked about the lack of understanding of what skills or qualifications you might need for a digital technology job.
- **Confidence** - One participant said that lack of confidence had affected interviews for them before. Another participant said that many people lack confidence to try to break into the industry. Two participants talked about their issues with confidence in the UK job market, having grown up in Ghana and Nigeria. The Nigerian participant talked about the value of different skills working in IT in Nigeria versus the UK and how self-confidence and self-expression are highly valued traits in UK employment..
- **Socio-cultural barriers** - The participants also discussed social-cultural and language barriers. The participants from Nigeria and Columbia talked about the barriers for women, explaining that some people and cultures don’t view digital technology jobs as suitable for women.

#### Barriers to digital technology skills & qualifications

- **Lack of community & racial barriers** - One participant talked about the barriers to networking and how race is a barrier in certain spaces in the UK.
- **Access to education & experience** - One participant talked about her friend’s barriers to studying in the UK during the pandemic and the barriers of not having a network here.

#### Easier access to jobs and skills

- **Age** - The participants thought age barriers for apprenticeships should be removed, kickstart programmes should have a broader age intake, and positions should not be offered solely for final year candidates.
- **Transparency** - Participants thought that everyone who applies should be considered for roles.
- **Education & training** - More training opportunities, more affordable or free educational opportunities and qualifications and more financial support for training and education.

## Hackney Matters focus group 2

- 4 participants
- 17th January 2022

### Availability of jobs & opportunities

- **Unaware of roles & industry** - One participant stated that the digital technology jobs have titles he doesn't recognise, making the roles inaccessible. One participant stated that while he lives near Old Street, he doesn't know of any digital technology companies in the area. The participant suggested that programmes and opportunities could be shared more widely, for example accessible careers fairs.
- **Age** - The participants thought that there probably were jobs available, but not for older people.
- **Lack of training** - one participant thought there was no training available.

### Identity & background

- **Status of digital tech jobs** - One participant thought digital technology jobs had a slightly lower status than doctors or lawyers. One participant thought that they don't have the same status, but should. Two participants saw the roles as having the same status.
- **Social-cultural barriers** - One participant from an African background said that while she thinks digital technology jobs have the same status as doctors and lawyers, other people of the same background might think a doctor or engineer has a higher status.
- **Diversity** - one participant said it was important that Hackney companies reflect the borough's diversity. Another participant stated that his perception of digital technology was that it was made up of young, white people.

### Barriers to digital technology jobs

- **Age** - Participants discussed age as the biggest barrier to accessing jobs and the perception that older people aren't tech savvy. The participants thought that companies were more interested in recruiting younger people and hiring discrimination against older people. Participants stated that it can be intimidating to apply for roles. One participant said that knowing few older people work in some companies would put him off applying: "if you don't see people like yourself, you think why apply?"
- **Social** - One participant found the social stereotype of digital companies off putting, explaining that he values separation between his work and social life. Another participant said that he felt he hadn't been given jobs because he didn't fit in socially with employers or workplaces.
- **Unaware of roles & industry** - Participants said they didn't know what work was available in the sector.
- **Gender diversity** - One participant said that there needs to be more opportunities for women and said the perception that digital technology requires intensive, on call work excludes many women.
- **Accessibility** - One participant said jobs should be advertising in plain English and basic terminology to make the roles more accessible.
- **Socio-cultural** - One participant talked about the pressure to apply for traditional jobs in some families and said there was less encouragement to pursue digital technology careers. Another participant said that lack of understanding about the amount you can earn in digital technology was a barrier to family support.
- **Training** - The participants stated that access to training is a barrier and that there is hesitancy to train someone who may only be in the workforce another 5 or 6 years. Apprenticeship opportunities was another barrier with participants explaining that apprenticeships are only open to younger people and school leavers.

#### Barriers to digital technology skills & qualifications

- **Cost** - One participant explained that cost was the biggest barrier to him finding work currently. To retrain would cost him £500. Another participant thought there were more cost related challenges for older people with more financial responsibilities
- **Training and upskilling** - one participant stated that knowing how to gain new skills is a barrier. The participant shared her experience of having to upskill her technology skills after university.
- **Family & time constraints** - One participant explained that people with families or health issues may not be able to work late.
- **Flexible working opportunities** - One participant said it would be easier if there were opportunities for flexible working.
- **Age** - again, participants discussed age discrimination.

### Easier access to jobs and skills

- **Training** - Access to training and upskilling, flexible entry to courses, and certified qualifications.
- **Clear information** - information about jobs and opportunities. Also knowing how training courses can lead to roles.
- **Cost** - more affordable training.
- **Greater diversity** - more opportunities for a range of people.

## **ELATT focus group 1**

- 9 students, two teachers
- ELATT college. The students have learning needs or have been excluded from mainstream school.
- 22nd March 2022

### Student's interests & ambitions

- The students wanted to be computer game developers, video editors, graphic designers, videographers, camera operators, programmers, vfx artists, sound engineers.

### Finding jobs & opportunities

- The students were not actively thinking about finding a job after college yet.
- **Lack of knowledge** - When asked how they would go about finding a job, the students talked about CVs, cover letters and job sites like Indeed and Monster. Students said they hoped information about jobs would be on job sites and did not know of any alternative ways to find jobs. Other students said they would find information from influencers and on YouTube. Students also talked about using their own YouTube channels to show their skills and interests.
- **Lack of support** - One student said he does not feel like there is enough support. He said there is some support in looking for a job at his college, but there could be more.
- **Work experience** - some of the students had done work experience, others were currently doing work experience at a solicitors and in graphic design. One student said he would like the opportunity to test out games.
- **Social media** - The students used TikTok and Discord (described as a platform for community interests. Large communities and smaller friend groups. Where you can engage with friends and interest groups.)



### Identity & background

- **Support** - students said that having support and someone to help them gives them confidence. Students largely felt supported by their families. One student said his older brother helps him “because he knows I’m passionate about film.” Other students said that they get support from their friends and families.
- **Status of digital tech jobs** - One student said that he wants to be a professional film reviewer, but his mum doesn’t think it’s a proper job. Another student said that his family think of doctors, lawyers and teachers as proper jobs.

### Barriers to digital technology jobs

- **Requirements** - Students talked about the need to have work experience to find a job. They said that work experience makes your CV look better.
- **Knowledge of opportunities** - Students said that there are probably opportunities they don’t know about. One of the teachers said that companies need to outreach to schools and colleges more: “they need to come to us.” Students said that that companies should advertise work experience so that they can see what’s available.
- **Confidence & competition** - One student said it can be a challenge when so many people want to get into digital technology: “I don’t know if I can get in.”
- **Academic skills** - The teacher prompted the students to think about academic challenges: “ Is a person who struggles to write and express themselves or someone who is skilled at selling themselves going to get the role?”

### Barriers to digital technology skills & qualifications

- **Skills** - When asked how she practices her graphic design skills, one student said that she looks for graphic design software to practice with.

### Easier access to jobs and skills

- **Work experience** - students said that they would love to do work experience with gaming companies.
- **Alternative access routes** - instead of relying on academic standards and traditional CVs, the students would benefit from task based assessments where they could demonstrate their skills. Trial periods and open days were other suggestions.
- **School support** - teachers said they needed more support from industries and clear information about pathways. One student said he wants to go to BCE (Big Creative Education) next year where they have more technology connections.

- **Jobs fairs** - students said that most jobs fairs don't have information on gaming or creative digital technology jobs. They loved the idea of a gaming or film jobs fair.
- **Apprenticeships** - Some students plan to do apprenticeships next year through Ellenham and BCE. The teacher said more can be done to support schools and teachers to help students access apprenticeships and access digital technology companies.

## ELATT focus group 2

- 8 students, one teacher
- ELATT college. The students have learning needs or have been excluded from mainstream school.
- 23rd March 2022

### Student's interests & ambitions

- Students were aware of a wide range of digital technology careers and wanted to work in music making, 3D design, animation, games, content arc design, mechanical roles, and computer game development.
- However, students were unaware of digital technology companies in Hackney.
- **Reason for interest** - Students said they wanted to pursue these jobs because it is their favourite subject or is connected to their interests. Three students explained that they got into graphics, animation and music by playing video games. Another student said he became interested in digital media after watching his favourite YouTubers who do 2D and 3D graphic design and drama.

### Finding jobs & opportunities

- **Websites** - students said they could use websites to find jobs but couldn't specify any sites. The students said that they would look online for a job or go to the job centre.
- **Qualifications** - One student explained that qualifications are needed to find a job. "You might get a job in media if you get level 2 qualifications, basic maths and English, experience with media, editing 3d shapes, sound effects." Some students were currently working towards qualifications at ELATT. Another student explained that you qualifications don't guarantee a job: "you could have mad qualifications and not get accepted."
- **Work experience** - Students said that work experience can help you to get a job. Students had completed work experience at a bar, helping out an IT group at lunch, and helping at a school playground. However, the students all said they wanted their work experience to last longer.

### Identity & background

- **Support** - Students said that they were supported by their family, friends, ELATT and social media friends. The students said that they support each other online where they share their skills.
- **Networks** - Only one student knew someone who works in digital technology and did not know how his relation got into the field.

### Barriers to digital technology skills & qualifications

- **Skills** - The students studied 3D shape design, photo production, effects, digital media and music at ELATT. When probed, the students thought that they had the skills needed to get jobs in these areas.
- **Criminal record** - One student was asked whether it is possible to get a digital technology job if you have a record and talked about the importance of having a good criminal record.

### Easier access to jobs and skills

- **Advertising & information** - The students were unsure what would help them to find jobs. One student said advertising for roles online would be helpful. Students were not aware that there are digital advertising jobs in Hackney and thought these jobs were only in central London. Students also had a limited understanding of work from home opportunities, but stated that they would prefer to travel to work.
- **Work experience** - students stated that work experience would help them to find jobs in the future.