

Women coders respond to ex-Googler Damore: Nope.

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The ex-Google engineer fired for suggesting women are innately less apt at computing has doubled down on his criticism of diversity efforts, suggesting programs to bring women and girls into coding are "deceitful" and encourage a "victim mentality."

The response from [women](#) in the field to James Damore: Check your data.

There have been multiple essays, analyses, articles and first-person pieces responding to Damore's 3,500 word memo. Their overriding complaint is that Damore cherry-picks data to support his argument that biological differences between the genders explain why there are more men than women in technical and leadership positions at Google and thus, Google's efforts to increase the numbers of women are sexist and unfair.

The science doesn't draw the broad conclusions he says it does, his critics point out.

"As a woman who was trained as an engineer and worked at Fortune 500 companies, I think he couldn't be more wrong in terms of some of his comments," said Kimberly Bryant, CEO of Black Girls Code, a San Francisco-based non-profit that focuses on providing technology education for African-American girls.

The industry has evolved a set of gender dynamics that make it a less

welcoming place for women, and for underrepresented minorities, said Bryant. When the culture changes, so do the demographics.

For example, Harvey Mudd College, a southern California college that focuses on science, engineering, and mathematics, has been working to increase the number of women in its technical programs. Today, 55% of undergraduate computer science majors are now women, she points out. That contrasts with the 18% of computer science graduates overall who are female, according to the 2016 Taulbee survey.

Kelly Parisi of Girls Who Code suggested James Damore come to the organization's offices, visit its classrooms and see how the more than 40,000 girls who've learned coding through it are using technology to solve the problems in their community and their lives.

Far from being "male-bashing clubs that cry 'woe is me' at every meeting, we're made up of badass coders who know what they have to offer the tech field and have the robots, apps, websites to back it up," Parisi told USA TODAY.

Melissa Aquino, a female chemical engineer wrote a long post on Facebook describing her highly successful career in industry but also some of the roadblocks, including teachers that didn't think she could be good at math, getting pushback when she tried to take chemistry and physics because they were "boys courses" and when she began working in the field, having a technician ask her boss, in front of her, "Can she even do this job?" As for stress—a quality Damore states women are less equipped to handle—Aquino notes that alongside side-stepping literal rattlesnakes in her career in the field, she climbed the academic and corporate ropes while having five children.

Writing in Fortune, YouTube CEO Susan Wojcicki wrote that in her career she's had to deal with being "left out of key industry events and

social gatherings. I've had meetings with external leaders where they primarily addressed the more junior male colleagues. I've had my comments frequently interrupted and my ideas ignored until they were rephrased by men."

Damore has done a flurry of interviews, from far-right talk shows to business TV, becoming a cause celebre for far-right pundits and activists who accuse the liberal-leaning tech industry of squashing conservative voices, internally and on their widely used platforms.

In the multi-page memo, which he published to a company distribution list, Damore questioned Google's efforts to create a more welcoming environment for women, African-Americans and Latinos, as it tries to broaden its technical staff beyond the majority white and Asian men who now fill those roles. Damore's supporters call those efforts sexist and racist.

He was fired last week for what Google said was a violation of its code-of-conduct for creating a workplace hostile to women. Google CEO Sundar Pichai wrote in a memo to staff that "to suggest a group of our colleagues have traits that make them less biologically suited to that work is offensive and not OK."

In an interview with CNBC on Monday, Damore said that he wrote the memo after attending a diversity meeting at Google in which he individuals managers were being pressured to increase the diversity of their teams.

"We were really treating people differently based on their race or gender," he said.

That's necessary to overcome biases that have kept women out of technology, respond his critics.

While there are minor cognitive differences between men and women, they believe much of the differences between the rates at which men and women work in computer science can be attributed to upbringing, culture, individual differences—and discrimination.

"One of the reason that many reason women drop out of these programs is not because they don't enjoy the process of coding, but because they're going into very hostile environments that tell them they don't belong," said Bryant.

In an analysis of Damore's essay, evolutionary biologist Suzanne Sadedin pointed to a study published in May about submissions of computer code to an open-source project found that women's code was accepted at a higher rate than men's when genders were hidden, but men's was accepted at higher rates than women's when the gender of the programmer was included.

Damore gave an online interview Sunday on the site Reddit in which he said programs that teach girls coding make coding look more people oriented than it really is in order to attract more women, which is deceitful."

He also said that such groups continue what he termed the "women are victims" narrative, which "can be harmful for everyone."

That's not what happens in the workshops her group runs, said Bryant. Far from being victims, "girls who participate in Black Girls Code think of themselves as leaders."

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