

A Short History

I studied Computer Science in Ireland in Trinity College Dublin. I was one of 13 women in a class of 30 students. I was unaware that this choice would mean that I would spend the rest of my career in a male dominated environment. Over the years the number of women taking computer science has dropped to about 15%.

I chose Computer Science despite my parents having no idea what the subject was about and still don't. By the time my class graduated, we all had been recruited by industry.

I worked in Ireland for 2 years before moving to Switzerland. I answered a job advertisement in the Irish papers. There was a shortage of qualified computer science people in Switzerland at the time. For two years I worked in an English speaking international environment and was mainly oblivious to prejudices regarding women.

However, when I moved to a company where the workforce was predominately Swiss I became aware that I was an exception. There were very few women working, and of those none of them were Swiss.

Computer Science - Career for Professional Women with Family

Definitely once you had a family the force of social pressure was that you interrupted your career. Despite this, I chose to continue working. Personally I think that software development has suited me as I have been able to do a lot of work at home. Flexibility is important regarding working hours. Tolerance is also needed.

Social Acceptance

I have not experienced prejudice on a professional level. I have always found that the quality of my work is not questioned because I am a woman. There is of course the element of surprise when colleagues realize that they will be working with a woman.

One of the main stumbling blocks is social acceptability. There are constant questions as to why I am where I am.

A general problem, which is not a gender issue, is the question of definition. It is not clear what my professional title is. There is no distinguishing title. This means it can be difficult to associate prestige with the career.

The Last word...

In general I think that to change the situation and to encourage women to opt for computer science as a possible career path, we need to encourage women. We need to identify role models. Most of all men have to encourage women. In the end men dominate the field so men have the power to open the doors for women, recognize the issues and effect the changes.

I believe men have a lot to gain from working with women.