



Social
Inclusion:
whose
responsibility?

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MYLIFEMYSPY

Foreword

Sadiq Khan, Mayor of London

As an immigrant son of a bus driver who grew up in council housing, I'm living proof that social mobility does happen and that where you start in life doesn't always pre-determine where you land. But in modern Britain, stories like mine don't happen nearly enough.

A socially inclusive society is one where everyone is able to participate in political, economic and social life – regardless of where they came from. However, some groups of people – whether they're an immigrant, come from a low-income household, are experiencing poor health or are living with a disability – have to work even harder to access the opportunities that many of us take for granted.

The truth is that too many people in Britain are being left out. The poverty rate among disabled adults is twice as high as for non-disabled adults. We also know that what social class you come from affects your life expectancy, and that this gap is widening. If we don't act, these differences in opportunity and access will breed division that eats away at our sense of community.

We need to expand our understanding of what inclusion looks like as well, because social exclusion often bites in ways many of us would never consider. Imagine getting an interview for a dream job, but not being able to afford to travel to it, or struggling to communicate with the interviewer because you're deaf and they failed to bring in a sign language interpreter.

These are not insurmountable challenges, but to start to turn the tide we have to recognise that progress requires a coalition of responsibility. We shouldn't be afraid in government to admit that we can – and should – share this task with industry. This report shows that people are optimistic about the positive role that businesses – and

the tech sector in particular – can play when it comes to improving the communities around them and boosting social mobility. 55% of respondents said tech companies have a more positive than negative impact on people's lives and 63% say they help people from different backgrounds to communicate with each other. But there's also a sense that the sector is not doing enough. Only 19% feel that tech companies pay an appropriate rate of tax and just 30% think they've been effective in supporting social inclusion. We must all do better.

Tech companies, because of their reach and how integral their products are to our lives, have a huge opportunity at their feet – and it's also in their own interests to act. They are creating the services and products that shape how we travel, eat, work or even find love. But if the coders and creators don't look like the rest of society, how useful will their products be? Good design is inclusive and accessible by nature, and having a diversity of experiences and perspectives only encourages innovation.

That's why I'm so excited about the work of the Social Inclusion Unit (SIU) and the inclusive accelerator it's launching, OpenDoor. The SIU's mission is to bring the voices of the people who are typically excluded to the forefront, to support innovations that allow them to participate more fully in society and to work with industry to enact measures that deliver tangible improvement to social inclusion.

This work is especially urgent as we face into Brexit: we cannot allow our exit, or the debates around the terms of our exit, to make social inclusion any worse. We cannot accept that inequality and alienation are the norm, or look to everyone else to pick up the slack. This is a challenge for us all to take up: government, industry and the individual people sitting in large organisations who are in a position to make things better.

Executive summary

The Social Inclusion Unit (SIU) was created in October 2018 in partnership between My Life My Say (MLMS) and Plexal. The purpose of the SIU is to address the barriers people face to taking a more active role in society, the economy, and political life. As part of this work, the SIU commissioned research company Opinium to conduct a study that would help us understand people's attitudes towards social inclusion, and explore how technology companies can be more socially inclusive as they grow.

THE MAIN AIMS OF THE STUDY WERE TO:

- explore the current status of people's views on technology companies and social inclusion in the UK
- investigate and categorise people's perspectives on the impact of technology companies have on their lives, the UK and society
- explore whether there's an economic case for technology companies to be more socially inclusive

In an online survey with a representative sample of 2,004 UK adults, people overwhelmingly shared their desire for technology companies to play a more active role in supporting social inclusion. Respondents felt that technology companies, alongside the UK government, should share the responsibility of building a more inclusive society. But they also told us tech companies aren't doing enough to support social inclusion at the moment and expressed concern that Britain will become a less tolerant society post-Brexit.

The study revealed that there's a sound business case for technology companies to support social inclusion, as people shop more consciously to satisfy their morals. The report also highlights the positive role that technology companies can play in supporting social inclusion by educating and teaching people new skills. The report therefore concludes that with Brexit looming and uncertainties arising about the potential loss of labour workforce from the EU, the need to train and develop potential employees is even more important.

Overall, the report concludes that people don't think technology companies are doing enough in supporting social inclusion – despite the potential for the sector to deliver a more equitable and inclusive society.

Key findings

1) Technology companies have a big role to play in society

Two in three people believe that technology companies can help educate and teach people new skills. People are generally quite positive about technology companies, with 55% saying they have a more positive than negative impact on people's lives, and two thirds (65%) noting the role that technology companies play in educating people and teaching them new skills. A further three in five (63%) say tech companies help people from different backgrounds communicate with each other.

Two in five people feel tech companies help excluded people and communities to participate in society. Looking at the more social role that technology companies play, 57% think they bring people together. But while half (50%) feel that tech companies improve the economic circumstances of the area they're based in, only a fifth (19%) feel that tech companies pay an appropriate rate of tax.

Three in five people believe that technology companies have diverse workforces. However, only 38% note that they fairly reward their employees and half (49%) think they offer flexible working.



2) Social inclusion is a shared responsibility

More than half (54%) believe the government has a responsibility to support social inclusion, while ordinary people (49%) and businesses (30%) also have a responsibility. Out of all types of businesses, more than half of respondents (54%) believe that technology companies have a responsibility to support social inclusion. Our study also shows that people expect businesses (brands) to act as agents for social change and use their purchasing power based on those shared values. This is particularly true for the younger generation, which now shops more consciously.

3) Tech companies can do more to improve social inclusion

Just under three in 10 people believe that technology companies effectively support social inclusion. Only 30% of people we polled think tech companies have been effective in supporting social inclusion. When looking at the ways in which technology companies should support social inclusion, supporting the local communities in which they are based came up top (47%), followed by offering flexible working (43%) and empowering employees (33%).

4) Brexit will create new challenges for social inclusion

A third of people think that social exclusion will get worse as a result of Brexit. Of those who think social exclusion will get worse, 72% feel the UK will become a less tolerant society, 54% predict the workforce will be less diverse and 63% say there will be more discrimination.

People also expect the pressures on people to worsen, with 59% predicting increased food prices and cuts to spending on social services. And only a tenth (10%) of women believe that social exclusion will get better post-Brexit.

Methodology

This report combines both primary and secondary research undertaken by Opinium, MLMS and Plexal on social inclusion and the role of technology companies in our society.

PRIMARY RESEARCH

Opinium conducted an online survey from 2-5 November 2018 among a nationally representative sample of 2,004 UK adults. This survey sought to understand the UK's attitudes towards social inclusion, including who they think is responsible for supporting social inclusion and the role technology companies should play.

SECONDARY RESEARCH

Opinium, MLMS and Plexal have conducted secondary research using a variety of sources, including publicly available academia, data and journalism. All sources have been credited throughout the report.

Opinium Changemaker report, 2019, <https://www.opinium.co.uk/changemaker-report-2019/>



Definition and background

An inclusive society is one that overrides differences of race, gender, class, generation and geography. It ensures that all members of society are capable of determining an agreed set of social institutions that govern social interaction, thereby ensuring inclusion and equality of opportunity - UN Expert Group Meeting on Promoting Social Integration

Social inclusion can be achieved by proactively seeking to create equal opportunities in society for everyone, regardless of background, so people can achieve their full potential. This is a multi-dimensional process that aims to enable every member of society to play a full and active role in all aspects of life, including civic, social, economic, and political life. It also refers to their ability to participate in the democratic decision-making process.

It's important to understand the processes through which communities or individuals are excluded, as inclusion can only be possible after the causes of the exclusion experienced by these groups have been understood and addressed.

Practically, social inclusion recognises the rights and responsibilities of all people and ensures that these are guaranteed by both legislation and ethical business practices. The process of becoming more socially inclusive needs to take place simultaneously and at multiple levels, from the individual, community and local levels to the regional and national levels.

Social inclusion must involve institutional level engagement, in both the governmental and corporate structures, to ensure that society reflects, upholds, respects, and activates inclusive processes. The perceptions and experiences of individuals also need to be taken into account.

Recent opinion polling in the UK shows that people believe the government and "ordinary people" are first and second in terms of who is responsible for supporting social inclusion (54% and 49% respectively). The role of business is also key to achieving a more inclusive society. They were placed in third place by our poll in terms of responsibility ahead of charities, NGOs, religious organisations and international organisations.

Perhaps this is unsurprising, given the increasing emphasis on business corporate and social responsibility. While the idea of being a conscious consumer is not a new phenomenon, recent years have seen the rise in importance of corporate social responsibility for consumers around the world. More and more of our life decisions are being guided by social, political or ethical motivations. For instance, CBI's business reputation tracker has found that nine in 10 (92%) people believe that businesses should take a stance on social issues and three in four (75%) believe businesses should work with ethical suppliers and partners. US-based reputation management consulting firm The Reputation Institute notes that "perceptions related to CSR build more than 40% of any company's reputation". Philanthropy has become an important part of the identity of 21st companies, with two in three of the largest multinational corporations publishing corporate social responsibility information as part of their annual reports.

4 Opinium proprietary research, 2018

5 Ibid.



The role of technology companies

More than half of respondents to our survey (54%) believe tech companies should be responsible for supporting social inclusion . Meanwhile, technology brands occupy seven of the top 10 spots in Opinium's Most Connected Brand Index, which seeks to understand how brands connect with consumers through five key metrics:

EMOTIONAL CONNECTION: the brand's ability to form emotional relationships

PROMINENCE: the brand's presence and scale

DISTINCTION: the brand's unique identity and ability to set trends

POPULARITY: the brand's dynamism and momentum

BUZZ: the brand's social traction

Amazon and Google take first and second place. Other tech brands (including Samsung and Microsoft) are in the top 10. All have played a significant role in the lives of consumers over the past decade.

Our study supported the view that tech companies have a significant societal role to play: more than half (57%) of UK adults believe tech companies bring people together . Nearly a third (30%) say tech companies have already been the most effective in supporting social inclusion in comparison with other sectors like manufacturing, clothing, food, drink and automobiles.

CBI, Everyone's Business Tracker (<http://www.cbi.org.uk/insight-and-analysis/everyone-s-business-tracker/>)

Reputation Institute, 2018 Global CSR RepTrak 100 Report (https://ri.reputationinstitute.com/hubfs/_PDF/RepTrak/2018_Global_CR_100.pdf)

Vidya Sawhny, Institute for Public Relations, 2008 (https://instituteforpr.org/wp-content/uploads/SawhnyKEPRRA_Award.pdf)

Opinium proprietary research, 2018

Opinium, Most Connected Brands Index, (<https://www.mostconnectedbrands.com/>)

Opinium proprietary research, 2018

Ibid.

The rapid growth of technology companies hasn't gone unnoticed by consumers, with many people looking to them to lead from the front when it comes to going good while they do well.

And while the hubs and headquarters of the world's 10 largest technology companies are dotted around just a few countries, their influence goes beyond this remit. For instance, Apple services such as the App and iTunes stores can be accessed in 154 countries working out to a coverage of almost 80% of the globe . The financial impact of this reach is highlighted when reviewing recent data from the World Bank, which estimates that Apple is worth over 1% of the world's GDP.

Large tech businesses have far greater geographical and social reach in the products and services they provide, as well as through their organisational footprint (including offices and supply chains).

Digital products and services

It's not only their global reach and connectedness that make technology companies well suited to help promote social inclusion. The products and services they offer have enormous potential to help prevent and reverse social exclusion.

Of all technology products that have aided social inclusion, the most significant are those that connect people to the internet (which is lauded as a tool to alleviate aspects of poverty). The importance of universal internet access is recognised as a basic human right by the United Nations , as it allows people living in poverty to make use of important information that directly impacts their livelihoods.

The internet has enabled instant communication between people in different continents. This facilitates a number of the key elements of social inclusion like social activity. The Economist has said that most tech companies are "platforms that connect different groups of people and allow them to engage in mutually beneficial exchanges".

Our own research found that 43% of people in the UK say technology has enabled them to learn new skills, and over a third (35%) believe it has broadened their life experience. This positive attitude towards technology is consistent across age ranges and genders, illustrating that its ability to help facilitate social inclusion is not restricted by demographics.

Without technology such as PCs, laptops, tablets and, perhaps most importantly, mobile phones, services that help people gather, understand and access information wouldn't be available.

Technology companies that create or use these products are uniquely placed to help reach previously excluded communities. UK adults tend to agree that technology can help support aspects of social exclusion such as tackling loneliness (26%), increasing confidence (20%), aiding financial independence (18%), and helping engage with their local community (17%). These figures signify the perceived opportunity for technology to help deliver social inclusion.

Apple (<https://support.apple.com/en-gb/HT204411>)

World Bank, GDP Ranking (<https://datacatalog.worldbank.org/dataset/gdp-ranking>)

United Nations General Assembly, (https://www.article19.org/data/files/Internet_Statement_Adopted.pdf)

The Economist, September 2016, (http://www.economist.com/sites/default/files/20160917_companies.pdf)

Opinium proprietary research, 2018

The case for social inclusion

Our study demonstrates both the popular desire and opportunity for technology companies to deliver greater social inclusion. In today's increasingly global, interconnected business world, diversity and inclusion are no longer just "the right thing to do" but a means to business success, accessing the best talent and creating solutions with a wider appeal.

However, if intolerance grows and social exclusion worsens after Brexit (as our survey found people expect will be the case), businesses will have to work even harder at delivering social inclusion.

Technology businesses can benefit from placing social inclusion at the heart of their agendas both from a financial and stakeholder engagement perspective. The dividend they can gain is reflected through several key measures:

- **Product or service entry to communities and groups across society who may have previously been inaccessible**
- **Access to a new sources of diverse talent who can help to build inclusive product or service lines**
- **Potential investment sources from communities or high net worth individuals who would previously have been inaccessible**
- **Greater public support for an inclusive approach**



What next?

We're acutely conscious that we all have a long way to go to make organisations – and society – truly inclusive, and that it will need to be a team effort.

Through the SIU's work, we can see that the way we shape technology directly influences people's access – or lack of access – to quality of life, work, and leisure opportunities. That's why we're launching OpenDoor: an accelerator programme that will scale the impact of accessible innovations that boost levels of social inclusion and address accessibility challenges.

The cohort members we welcome as part of the programme should be able to demonstrate that they've included the voices of people experiencing the accessibility challenge they're trying to solve, whether that's by including them in the founding team or working closely with them throughout. You can learn more at plexal.com/social-inclusion

Applications to the OpenDoor accelerator open on 3 June, 2019. Ahead of this, the SIU is welcoming interested organisations, or individuals facing inclusion challenges, to get in touch if they would like to support the accelerator or help define the challenges it will focus on.

Contact the SIU on:
connect@plexal.com

Conclusion

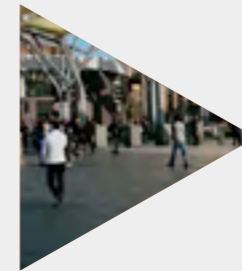
Our study illustrates that people believe social inclusion should be a shared responsibility between government, business and individuals. And among all sectors, people believe technology companies have an particularly big responsibility towards creating a more equitable and inclusive society. This is likely due to the fact that digital businesses tend to have a wider geographical and social reach through the products and services they provide. However, our research highlights that most people don't believe these companies are doing enough to support social inclusion.

Secondly, our study reveals there's a growing economic case for technology companies to support social inclusion. Historically, most companies have focused their social inclusion efforts around their corporate social responsibility programmes. There's now a potential for technology companies to accrue direct economic benefits by supporting social inclusion through other means. People use their purchasing power as a tool to put their ethical beliefs into practice, and it's becoming increasingly clear that businesses could lose out financially if they aren't doing enough to support social inclusion.

Thirdly, given the deep divisions in our society that were exposed by the EU referendum in 2016, many people believe Brexit will make social exclusion worse.

Finally, many people are positive about the role technology companies play in society, and feel they help educate and teach people new skills. With the nature of employment changing quickly, many people expect these companies to play a more active role in equipping the most disadvantaged people from the most deprived backgrounds with the skills they need to thrive in the workplace.

There is a huge opportunity here for us all to collectively grasp, and the SIU looks forward to acting as a convening force and accelerator of innovation.



A photograph of St Paul's Cathedral in London at dusk. The cathedral's large dome is the central focus, illuminated by warm lights. In the foreground, a modern pedestrian bridge with a curved metal railing is visible, with several people walking across it. The sky is a soft, hazy blue. The image is framed by a white border with colorful geometric shapes (red, orange, green, purple, blue) at the corners.

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