



Social Impact Report

Tech at the core of society

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Letter from our CEO



Guo Xiao
CEO,
Thoughtworks

This past year has forced all of us, companies and individuals, to reckon with the challenges we face as a society and the urgent need for change. Whether it's the health and financial burden caused by the ongoing pandemic – a burden which has not been equally shared – or the groundswell of protests against racial injustice in the United States and globally, inequalities are being exposed and demanding our attention in a way not seen in decades.

The conversations that these challenges have prompted are difficult, and often uncomfortable. But in them I see many reasons for encouragement, and hope. The causes at hand – social, economic and racial justice, and diversity across all dimensions – are causes we have been working on, and outspoken about, for over a decade. Having an inclusive culture has been a priority since our founding. We've built a diverse community of passionate technologists that is global in presence and outlook, and fiercely committed to applying their skills to make positive change in the world.

As this report shows, around the world, every day, many Thoughtworkers are using technology to directly confront and resolve deep-rooted problems and inequalities. But we also recognize that technology can create or exacerbate these problems as it becomes more pervasive. We constantly reflect on our own practice and privilege, and ensure that when we seek to create social impact, it is always in the service of local communities and partners.

Until 2020, much of our diversity, social change, and sustainability work was developed and led within our regions – an approach that we felt was critically important because of the cultural context required to do this work right. But we also realized that our growth necessitated more focused coordination, to ensure we were looking at our global business strategy through these lenses as well. To that end, in October 2020, we launched the new global office of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Sustainability and Social Change (DEISSC). The office acts as a center of excellence supporting and uplifting the many projects our people are executing throughout the 17 countries in which we operate, while driving global strategy for our goals in diversity, equity, inclusion, sustainability and social change.

We believe that issues like gender inequality and climate change can only be resolved through global solidarity. So, while the majority of our project work is managed regionally, everything we do is connected to both local needs and the broader global effort.

All of this demonstrates our determination to put these issues at the heart of our organization. Our culture, values and focus on social change are not slogans tacked on a wall. They define us, make us different, enable us to attract and retain exceptional people, and are integral to our success as a business. They give me, and the rest of the team, confidence that as we grow, despite the magnitude of the challenges we face as an organization and as a society, we will continue to create positive impact for our stakeholders, the countries where we live and work, and the world.

Introduction

Building on a legacy of impact: tech at the core of society

In 2019 and 2020, issues and inequalities that remained overlooked for too long were thrust into the spotlight in a way that was impossible to ignore. The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the fragility of health systems, and the dangers facing frontline workers who prop up many economies unnoticed. The impacts of climate change were evident in a record number of weather-related disasters.¹ Protests in the United States triggered by police killings of people of color quickly morphed into a global movement that gave voice to grievances amassed over centuries of racial injustice. Within countries and globally, wealth and political polarization hit new extremes.

As technology becomes more ubiquitous, it both contributes to these challenges and offers powerful potential solutions. As technologists, we believe we have a responsibility to constantly and critically assess technology's impact on society, particularly on the marginalized and underserved, and to ensure that it is ultimately contributing to a more equitable future.

Working at the forefront of technology and social change requires grappling with complex questions, and a tolerance for failure. This report will outline the principles and tools that anchor us in this effort, explore examples from over the last two years of how we've translated them into action, and outline how we intend to build on this legacy going forward.

Focus areas and approach

Across the globe, our social impact work spans several focus areas, many of them interconnected:

+ Responsible tech and innovation

Ensuring the risks and social implications of technology are adequately evaluated, and embedding the values of privacy, empathy, equity, and inclusion in technology solutions

+ Beyond diversity: striving for equity in tech

Extending opportunities to all: providing career pathways that increase the representation, and importantly, advancement of women and underrepresented groups in the technology sector

+ Inclusivity and social justice

Using data to shine a light on injustice and using technology to help provide disenfranchised communities platforms for empowerment

+ Sustainability and climate action

Working to reduce our own carbon footprint, leveraging technology to identify and mitigate the negative impacts of climate change

+ Healthcare as a human right

Developing technology-based approaches to extend health information and care to communities grappling with health service shortages

¹<https://www.cnbc.com/2021/01/07/climate-change-disasters-cause-210-billion-in-damage-in-2020.html>



“As technology moves more into the core of society, we believe the tech sector has an extremely important role to play in shaping the future, not least by challenging some of the ways in which tech has been developed to date. It’s vital we consider the impacts of the work we do as technologists, through a lens of ethics, equity and inclusion – and continually ask how we want the world to be.”

Elise Zelechowski, Head of the Office of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Sustainability and Social Change, Thoughtworks

We work tirelessly, at times invisibly, on behalf of those on the front lines of the fight against climate change, health or social inequities. They understand these struggles and complex issues better than us, and our role is to provide the technology infrastructure and skills that enable them to succeed, rather than imposing ready-made solutions from the sidelines.

Our core purpose — to create an extraordinary impact on the world through our culture and technology — has as much to do with listening and learning as action. We believe this makes us better advocates, and also a better business. We benefit from a diversity of perspectives, employee commitment, a passion for problem-solving and a global mindset. These capabilities help us thrive in a volatile world, and help us steer our clients and social change partners through their toughest challenges.



Our purpose (at the center), the lenses (perspectives for how we can achieve our purpose), and our values

Culture and values

The scale and multi-dimensional nature of social issues like climate change and inequality means they require multiple perspectives and an unwavering commitment to resolve.

In our pursuit of social change, we draw on a culture that encourages us to imagine and implement inventive solutions for seemingly intractable problems. We have cultivated an enterprise that is defined not only by empathy and diversity, but also by radical inclusivity, where people understand they are free to bring and be their authentic selves, advocate fearlessly for causes they believe in, and hold senior leaders accountable.

At Thoughtworks, open dialogue and challenging the status quo are actively encouraged. We use feedback rigorously to improve our own processes, as well as the products we develop. Because our people believe in the potential of our collective impact, they become fierce stewards of this culture and powerful agents of positive transformation.



“Previously people would have separated their own personal values and the impact they wanted to have or see on the world from their employer, but now those things are merging. We are able to say, with authenticity and with a track record, that this is something we care about, we have cared about for a long time and invested time and energy in. It’s a genuine differentiator.”

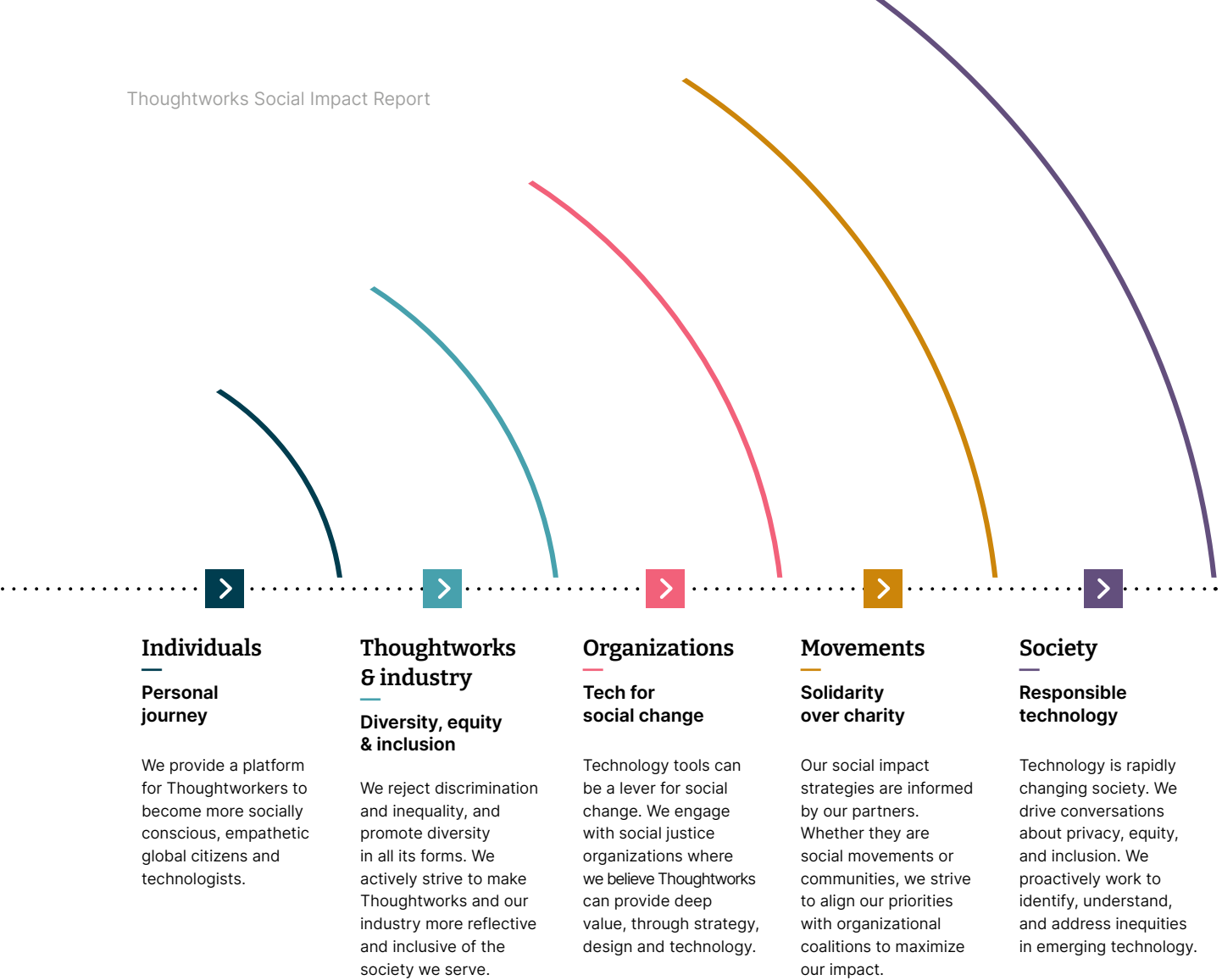
Joanna Parke, Chief Talent Officer, Thoughtworks

The way forward: building capabilities and international collaboration

Social change is a process that plays out over years, if not decades. It should be seen as a journey, in which progress is defined by constant efforts to learn and improve.

The Office of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Sustainability and Social Change ensures best practices and successes in one region are replicated in others, contributing to our knowledge as an organization and our ability to best serve the causes we focus on. It assesses all the major initiatives we pursue, whether impact, business or strategy-related, through the lenses of diversity, equity, inclusion, sustainability and social change.

The Social Impact Framework outlines the levers we have to make systemic social impact. It starts with the individual journey of Thoughtworkers and culminates in our vision to practice responsible technology, striving for social impact that serves the world’s most vulnerable. For a detailed exploration of the Framework, see our **[Social impact report, volume 1](#)**.



Our social impact framework

The Office also examines our alignment with frameworks and compacts around these issues globally, such as **SASB (Sustainability Accounting Standards Board) Standards** and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

While we believe in the importance of global ESG frameworks and compacts, our commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion, sustainability and social change is first and foremost driven by our employees and partners. We see global compacts as one lever to organize people globally around common goals, but believe that real social change must be driven by social movements rooted in local communities.

We have been working towards the SDGs with UN partners in multiple ways, on initiatives such as the SustainChain™ platform, to advance sustainability and with UN Women China, to achieve gender equality. The SDGs are an ambitious global blueprint for a better future for all, and a promising framework to organize collective action for meaningful progress.



“We’ve done meaningful work both in DEI, and in sustainability and social change at the regional level, for a long time. Now, as we build out a global strategy for how we advance our priorities as a company, we’re working to integrate sustainability, social change and DEI into new initiatives, services and norms right from the outset.”

Chad Wathington, Chief Strategy Officer, Thoughtworks

Beyond CSR

Social change and sustainability work remains an integral part of what we do and who we are, rather than an add-on or box-ticking exercise; not just because it is right, but because organizations must center a commitment to social impact in their overall understanding of the impact they have on society. Across our endeavors with other organizations and global coalitions, we use data and best practices drawn from work with clients and our efforts to enhance our own impact.

We believe, however, that impact goes beyond what you can measure. The qualitative and systemic impacts that make a difference are often hard to assign numeric value to — but they are the foundations of lasting change that move us all forward.

Our resolve to pursue growth in a way that considers a wide range of stakeholders, and our ability to provide an environment in which passionate, conscientious and determined people of all kinds can flourish, give us every reason to be optimistic about the future — and our ability to contribute to a better one for the long term.



THE GLOBAL GOALS

For Sustainable Development



Thoughtworks supports realization of the SDGs



Healthcare as a human right



Inclusivity and social justice



Beyond diversity: striving for equity in tech

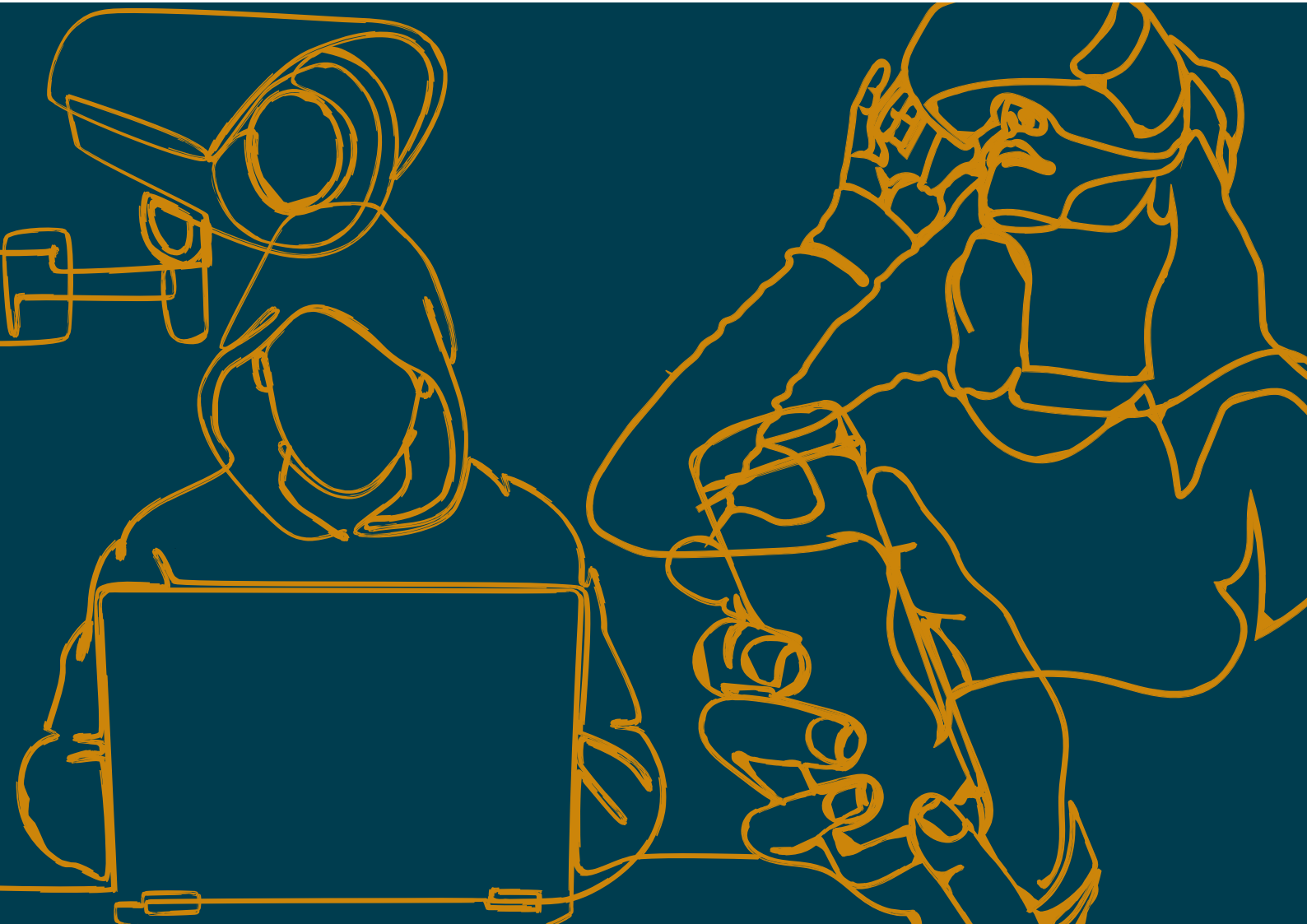


Climate action and sustainability



Responsible tech and innovation

Responsible tech and innovation



Principles: a conscious approach to tech-driven change

Responsible technology begins with acknowledging that technology is not inherently neutral. Tech solutions do not stand apart from society, and are not created in a vacuum. They are a result of, and often serve, the same power dynamics and priorities that are responsible for many of the inequalities and tensions that we grapple with today.

We've reached a point where, intentionally or not, digital technologies have grown increasingly politicized. There is rising and justifiable pressure for technologists and tech companies to be held accountable for the impacts of what they create. In our view, it means building in a deliberate way that allows for due consideration of a solution's effects, direct and indirect, and for dialogue with a broader range of stakeholders than just technologists.



“We are focused on building an equitable tech future, which means that the social system behind the construction of digital technologies needs to include voices that have historically been excluded, and to internalize the social effects of these innovations instead of seeing them as an externality.”

Eduardo Meneses, Global Head, Social Impact Group, Thoughtworks

Building inclusive teams allows us to bring different perspectives to everything we create, and to think critically about the economic and social implications. This diversity of viewpoints is core to the ability to innovate, and create technology that underpins, rather than undermines, positive societal transformation.

Responsible technology is not only about the products and solutions companies create. It extends to how they manage and protect data and technology assets — their own, and those of their customers. We work closely with clients and partner organizations to enhance the resilience of their infrastructure against privacy and security breaches, as well as newer threats and negative implications emerging from the expanding frontiers of **hostile technology**. The aim is to make both security and ethics not just a response, but a discipline, evident in everything the enterprise does.

Security and ethics are embedded in the **SASB materiality matrix** for software and IT services, which provides us with recommendations for industry-specific standards and sustainability targets. Thoughtworks has long been focused on embedding many of these in our operations and client work, and is working towards measuring and reporting on them. Where appropriate our progress is noted in the **appendix**.



“Technology is impacting us in ways that have the ability to transform our lives, both positively and negatively. As technologists, we have a responsibility to take all stakeholders, even the invisible ones, into account as we deliver technology solutions.”

Rebecca Parsons, Chief Technology Officer, Thoughtworks

The commitment to technology that is responsible and equitable informs our conversations with clients, our overarching strategy and the projects we’re participating in around the world. It also ensures that with our partners we’re contributing to the UN Sustainable Development Goal (9) of creating infrastructure and innovations that are not just functional and effective, but inclusive and sustainable.

In practice

We are engaged in responsible technology projects touching on everything from data privacy to exploring tech’s shared boundaries with art, and from AI bias to examining the rising influence of hostile technology. The following examples have been selected to showcase some of that breadth.

Raising awareness of, and reinforcing, digital rights

Efforts to target or manipulate individuals based on their personal data are growing more pervasive. It is imperative to boost public access to the tools, skills and resources that ensure this data is not accessed or used without knowledge or consent. Australia is a market where we have been particularly active on this front because the privacy regime is undergoing significant changes that could have negative security and social consequences.

We’re in dialogue with policymakers to push for improvements to privacy and data protection legislation and call out possible steps backwards. We also work with civil society organizations like Digital Rights Watch to build awareness and capabilities at the grassroots level.



Queensland University of Technology project

For example, Thoughtworkers have staged workshops showing journalists how to enhance the security of their digital devices. This is all undertaken with the view that rights can only be protected when they are actively fought for based on shared understanding and solidarity. As using data in a safe and respectful manner is seen as an increasingly essential part of any enterprise's social contract, digital rights have also become a priority in our work with clients. At Queensland University of Technology, we worked with researchers on defining how smart cities can use citizens' data in a rights-led manner.



“Too often technology doesn’t serve people. That’s not right for industry and humanity — but it could be. We’re trying to capture imaginations with ideas on how to use less data, by promoting the concept of data austerity, of collecting only what you need, not whatever you can.”

Felicity Ruby, Research & Policy Advisor, Office of the CTO, Thoughtworks Australia

Thoughtworks Arts: researching far-reaching impacts of technology

Technology impacts society in myriad complex ways, though its direction is often set by a small subset of that society in the tech sector. It is therefore essential to facilitate far-reaching and provocative dialog across society's sectors, and to enable provocative, far-reaching exploratory research into emerging technologies.

Thoughtworks Arts is a global research lab incubating collaborations between artists, technologists and issue and domain experts. These projects are multifaceted and investigate varied technologies, and they are directed by artists investigating across traditional boundaries, forming new connections, and creating artworks which point to alternative visions of the future. From these projects new light is shone onto impacts of emerging technologies on industry, culture and society, supported with hands-on experience with industry tech experts.

A number of recent projects illustrate the results of these interactions. Dancer and choreographer Catie Cuan danced with a 16-foot industrial robot as part of an investigation into human and mechanical movement and perceptions of automation and robotics, a project featured in the *New York Times*². In “Dancedemic,” a remote collaboration during the initial summer of the COVID-19 pandemic used biometric devices to help immigrants express their experiences of conflict and isolation. In the Baltan Labs masterclass, participants researched the practical application of ‘deepfakes’ in creative contexts as part of algorithmic storytelling and an analysis of trust in digital media. In “A Father’s Lullaby”, artist Rashin Fahandej used volumetric filmmaking techniques to help formerly incarcerated people share stories of separation from their families in new and engaging ways.



A still from Rashin Fahandej's project "A Father's Lullaby"



A still from a 1080p online performance of "**Dancedemic**"

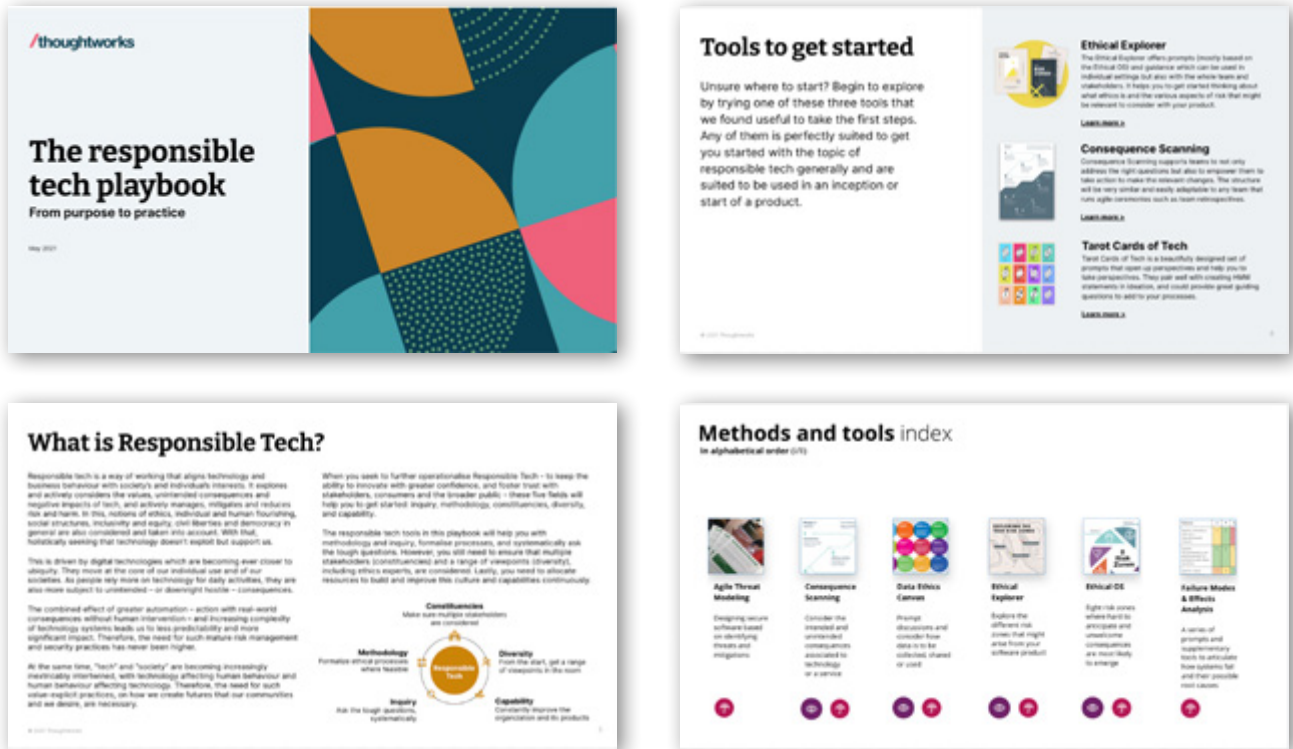
A best practice toolkit: The responsible tech playbook

Technology is becoming more ingrained in social structures, and penetrating more complex and consequential areas of society, such as healthcare and the judicial system. This has prompted many organizations to consider the ethical implications of their tech practices.

But as responsible tech is a relatively new field, many enterprises may not be clear on where they can start, or what principles to follow.

² <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/11/05/arts/dance/dance-and-artificial-intelligence.html>

A number of promising frameworks, methodologies and toolkits have been developed with the common aim of helping organizations evaluate, model and mitigate the impacts and risks of their products and solutions. We have captured some of the best examples in the responsible tech playbook, which presents and explains these concepts to help organizations choose the right options for their situation and get started.



Excerpts from The responsible tech playbook

The playbook provides a foundation for a considered approach to development that mitigates the risks and negative societal effects of technology, and builds enterprise value for the long term. It will continue to evolve as a reference for the technology community for years to come as we continue to advocate for more ethical standards for our industry. Our goal is to implement these practices in a more structured way into every engagement we're involved in. We see this as an area to push ourselves to grow, and ask harder and harder questions, as technology becomes more prevalent.

Innovation in service: DEPP Labs

Innovation is often seen as the exclusive domain of technologists and designed to serve commercial outcomes. Yet in societies confronting disproportionate climate and health-related risks, the most pressing need for innovation is in building capacity to cope with disasters, and it is local communities that are best equipped to spearhead meaningful change.

The **Disasters and Emergencies Preparedness Programme (DEPP) Innovation Labs**, managed by the Start Network and CDAC Network, are designed to bring together people of different backgrounds — from community representatives to NGOs, doctors, designers and engineers — to create new resources for disaster-prone countries. They adopt a similar approach to venture incubators by zeroing in on the most severe challenges and collaborating to pilot solutions, with only the most viable selected for funding.



Disasters and Emergencies Preparedness Programme Innovation Labs website



DEPP Labs: impacting lives



Supported over
100 individual innovators
in **4** countries.

During our work on DEPP we adapted a number of key tools for the use of Labs in Bangladesh, the Philippines, Kenya and Jordan that helped participants to measure progress versus objectives and put the best innovations on the path to scale and sustainability. The way in which these tools have been modified and successfully localized to develop outcomes such as low-cost medicine banks and drought-resistant food sources underlines how solutions emerging within communities themselves do the most to enhance societal resilience.

Beyond diversity: striving for equity in tech



Principles: rethinking diversity, fostering radical inclusivity

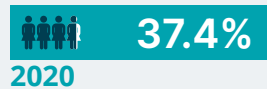
Striving to create an organization, and by extension an industry, that truly reflects the diverse societies we work in is a long-term priority of ours. This endeavor has increased in urgency amid signs the pandemic is unwinding some hard-fought gains. One recent survey³ of female technologists found well over half felt COVID-19 had set gender roles back by decades.

Setting goals is an important way to remain on track, and to hold ourselves accountable. But genuine progress comes from weaving diversity, equity and inclusion into our everyday actions, business priorities and culture. We want everything we do to reinforce that this is a place where people are not just free but encouraged to be who they really are — and to bring their unique perspectives and curiosity to all the problems we’re trying to solve as an organization. This comes to life in everything from the way we approach interviews, to mentorship programs and pioneering initiatives led by our local offices that provide opportunity and advancement for underrepresented groups.

Women and Underrepresented Gender Minorities (UGM) at Thoughtworks

Global figures EOY 2020

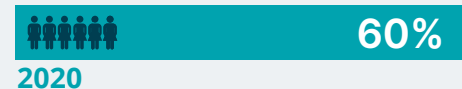
Women and UGM in tech positions



Women and UGM across the organization



Women and UGM who are executive officers



Part of being diverse and inclusive is constantly challenging your own conceptions. We’ve taken this to heart by trying to expand our definition of what diversity can and should be. We want to create an enterprise that is diverse not just in terms of gender and ethnicity, but also in terms of skill sets, ways of learning and problem solving. By providing career pathways to people with non-traditional professional or educational backgrounds we open up paths to innovative approaches and balanced team dynamics. We are also taking steps to ensure the work environment welcomes those with disabilities, and is supportive of those grappling with mental health, wellness and personal challenges, especially amid the pandemic.

Outreach and partnerships are an essential part of these efforts, since genuine progress toward diversity requires any organization to step outside its own bubble, and consider its societal role more broadly.

³ <https://www.wnie.online/a-third-of-uk-women-in-tech-say-gender-roles-have-regressed-10-20-years-in-new-industry-survey/>



“Throughout the pandemic we have had a heightened emphasis on mental health and wellness, work from home policies, flexible work options and ways to engage virtually. We are acutely aware of the growing concerns around mental health globally and Thoughtworks has launched several initiatives specifically designed for employees to be more open and safely address issues like anxiety, depression, stress, grief and work-life integration.”

Tina Vinod, Global Head, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, Thoughtworks

In practice

Diversity, equity and inclusion have always been fundamental to our values, culture and community. Over the years, our focus has expanded to encompass various under-represented groups in tech, including underrepresented gender minorities, LGBTQ+, people with disabilities, and Black, Indigenous and other people of color. Our hope is for Thoughtworks and the broader industry to reflect the diversity in the world around us, and the following projects are just a few examples of our work to make this a reality:

Vapasi: welcoming women back into tech

Traditional gender dynamics in India mean that many talented women developers and analysts come under disproportionate pressure to leave the workforce to care for children or other family members. Given the rapid pace of change in the tech sector, many are convinced they can never return.

Vapasi 2019-2020: lives impacted



150 participants

50 interns

34 full time hires



The **Vapasi** initiative was created to encourage experienced women technologists to return to the fold and thrive. It is a comprehensive, Thoughtworks-certified free training program that helps participants rediscover, update and hone their technical skills. We have been running Vapasi annually since 2014, taking the program remote to allow it to continue during the pandemic.

Thoughtworks also supports community training organizations around the world providing opportunities to women and underrepresented groups in tech to help move the industry towards a better representation of society. Our contributions take the shape of providing mentors, teachers, space and sponsorship. In Brazil we have devised a 16-week course, **Aceleradora**, in which young people experience temporary immersion in agile programming. Another example is our partnership with Factoría F5 in Spain, in which we deliver a series of masterclasses for their coding program.



Our Aceleradora Inklusiva participants

One giant leap in workplace inclusivity

The Workplace Equality Index developed by lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBTQ+) rights organization Stonewall is widely regarded as a benchmark for corporate performance related to providing an open and inclusive environment for LGBTQ+ workers.

Thoughtworks has always been committed to creating such an environment and has been ranked on its achievements both in the UK and in India. When our UK business first entered the Workplace Equality Index at 314, we were determined to do more.



Concerted efforts across recruitment, community, learning and development, as well as partnerships with LGBTQ+ organizations, have propelled us up the rankings to 53 in 2020. We're proud to be one of the few medium-sized companies, and even fewer tech companies, in the top 100.

Our ranking reflects the progress we have made in updating our policies and creating gender-neutral workspaces, but it is important to note this achievement was not ours alone. In addition to the tireless efforts of individual Thoughtworkers, it is the result of close and active alliances with organizations such as the LGBT Foundation, international events such as the Trans Day of Visibility, the many external speakers who have enhanced our teams' understanding of the issues faced by LGBTQ+ individuals, and the clients and collaborators who have shared best practices. The journey is a long way from over, and it's one that we'll travel in lockstep with like-minded organizations.

Limitless: women in leadership

By some estimates, less than a quarter⁴ of the top positions in tech are held by women. Righting the leadership imbalance requires strong support networks for women, and forums in which they can learn from, exchange ideas with and be encouraged by peers who have faced similar challenges and gone on to thrive.

In 2019, we launched **Limitless**, a community and series of special events that provides a valuable opportunity for women to engage in frank, open and meaningful dialogue with inspirational leaders who have shattered the glass ceiling in a variety of fields. Luminaries such as former Lloyd's of London CEO Dame Inga Beale and award-winning computer scientist Dr. Sue Black have shared their insights on topics like advancing cultural change and striking the work-family balance, helping build the pipeline of powerful women leaders of the future.



⁴<https://www.cio.com/article/3516012/women-in-tech-statistics-the-hard-truths-of-an-uphill-battle.html>

UN Women: progress in China serves a global cause

China's tech sector has created remarkable opportunities in the last decade, but as in other countries, women aiming to participate must battle longstanding gender perceptions and inequality in the workplace.

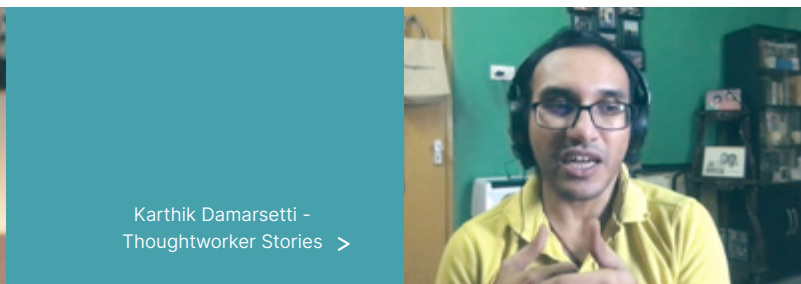


Since we opened offices in China in 2004, our presence has grown to over 2,000 employees across seven major cities. The local team shares Thoughtworks' global focus on increasing the representation of women in the tech industry, and our leadership in China has worked actively to create a platform for female technologists to develop and lead by example. Our focus has been consistently on gender equality and empowerment, from hiring, selection and training, to parental and caregivers policies and retention. In one recent promotion exercise women made up almost half (45%) of our new advancements.

This work was recently recognized at the International Conference on Gender Equality and Corporate Social Responsibility & Women's Empowerment Principles (WEPs), staged by UN Women China and the Delegation of the European Union to China. The organizers awarded Thoughtworks for our Leadership Commitment in China. The award was one of ten designed to recognize enterprises with model business practices that mark progress toward commitments on gender equality set out in the UN Sustainable Development Goals, demonstrating how the right steps at the local level can echo internationally.

Committed to inclusion for people with disabilities

Globally, almost one in five people live with a disability. However, the rights of people with disabilities are often overlooked in the focus on other forms of discrimination. The Valuable 500 is a global, grassroots-led initiative that aims to propel inclusivity for people living with disabilities to a more prominent place on the agenda of businesses worldwide, through a combination of networking, advocacy and support.



First Call with My Son - Matthew's True Pixel Story

Our longstanding commitment to workplace inclusion required extending our efforts to specifically include people living with disabilities, which encouraged us to join a community of like-minded organizations and pledge our commitment to the **Valuable 500** in 2020. We plan to learn, invest in and build on our pledge, working closely with our peers to provide disabled technologists a level and supportive playing field on which to develop their skills and achieve their professional goals.



“Diversity and inclusion for us has never been about becoming the tech company with the best numbers. It’s about how we can uplift and have an impact beyond our own people. We’ve always tried to pursue the idea of a personal journey. Everyone’s journey is different, but we encourage everyone to go on their own, to be curious about the world, ask questions, challenge ideas, meet people from different cultures, get exposure to different perspectives and try and see the world through the eyes of those who have less privilege than them.”

Carol Cintra, Regional Managing Director, Thoughtworks Latin America

Inclusivity and social justice



Principles: a time for reflection and action

Social and racial injustice has for centuries been deeply entrenched in the mechanisms that govern political and economic activity. But recent events, such as the disproportionate impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on low-income and marginalized communities globally, and the killings of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor in the United States, have thrust longstanding inequalities into the international spotlight in an unprecedented way. This has forced us, as a society, as a company, and as individuals, to ask — what role are we playing in perpetuating inequality, and what steps can we take to address it?

Our response to these questions begins with our foundation: building and strengthening a culture of awareness and empathy that acknowledges these dynamics. Internally, we make it clear that racial equity is an organizational and cultural requirement, not a pipeline problem; and that equality must be manifested in advancement opportunities as well as representation.

Externally, we deepen connections with our partners in social movements, emphasizing that we stand with them in solidarity and service, to learn where we, as technologists, can create the most impact. Our partnerships have enabled programs to address police misconduct and protect the rights of female domestic workers, as well as supporting education for all — to give just a few examples. Above all, we recognize that there will always be more we can do to contribute to change — and more voices that deserve to be heard.

“With social change, it’s never been about us. We don’t set specific targets then look for partners to come in and help us meet them. We operate in the service of our partners and their movements. We try to understand from a systems perspective where Thoughtworks can really make the most impact, and have very open and honest conversations with our partners about that. Inclusive processes take much more time. But they bring more people along, and are stronger for it.”

Elise Zelechowski, Head of the Office of DEISSC, Thoughtworks

In practice

The following examples of our racial and social justice work reflect our global focus and our belief that the struggle must be led by the people and communities affected. We view our role as providing these communities with technology tools that help them inform and build their networks, and to amplify calls for change.

Confronting racial injustice in the United States

The resurgence of Black Lives Matter (BLM) and other civil rights protests across the United States, ignited by recent acts of police violence but rooted in a long history of oppression, prompted a deep reckoning within Thoughtworks North America. Many voices rightly demanded we do more to support our own people and the wider Black and brown communities.

Racial justice work is not new to us. Since 2011 we have built networks internally and with outside organizations such as Black Girls Code and Hands Up United to develop tech skills and clear career pathways for Black youth. However, in 2020 we redoubled efforts to listen and to act, bringing together hundreds of our people across North America to have open conversations on ways to address systemic injustices.



“Our focus is on how we can support our people, and make a positive impact on the wider Black and brown communities. All Thoughtworkers should feel a sense of belonging. Our environment is inclusive, respectful and preserves dignity. We also emphasize equity of representation and opportunities. Diverse organizations are great, but ensuring all people have access to advancement is another level. It’s our duty to dismantle barriers and provide the tools and resources to everyone to ensure they have the skills and experience necessary to achieve their goals.”

James Grate, Head of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion,
Thoughtworks North America

Many of the ideas from these sessions are now being put in practice, including improving our own Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) infrastructure to remove unintentional barriers to advancement; establishing a racial justice employee resource group that provides guidance on supporting local anti-racism movements; and strengthening our partnerships with organizations working for racial equality. We will continue and build on these efforts in the months ahead, regardless of how the media spotlight shifts.

Pathways to tech for Australia's First Nations

The massive disparities in living conditions, economic opportunities, and the administration of justice between white and Indigenous Australians are also glaringly evident in the technology sector. By most estimates there are fewer than 100 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the tech industry in Australia, despite these groups comprising three percent of the population.

In late 2019, inspired by discussions with Indigenous organizations and advocates, as well as initiatives successfully launched by colleagues in India and Brazil, we stepped up our efforts to right this imbalance. We established our First Nations delivery center – dedicated to building software for our clients – staffed by at least 50% Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander technologists.

The center operates on two main principles. The first is that ‘the problem isn’t them, it’s us’ - meaning our organization has to learn how to better support the culture, aspirations, and distinct ways of learning and communicating of Indigenous technologists, not the other way around. An example is our aim to keep the center distributed, which allows us to provide career options to the many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders who prefer to live on or near Country – their often rural ancestral homelands. We strive to offer Indigenous technologists a complete career development trajectory, in some cases beginning with internships through the national CareerTrackers program for Indigenous youth.



“I was able to use the internship to reinforce my love of technology, knowing without a shadow of doubt that I was passionate to build software for a living, and that passion of technology could be combined with social and economic justice. Since officially starting at Thoughtworks in January 2017, I’ve worked on a number of projects across many industries, strengthening my core skills as an engineer and consultant, to build better and socially-just software.”

Jacob Olsen, former CareerTrackers Intern and current Software Developer, Thoughtworks Australia

The second principle is that the center is not considered a charity or corporate social responsibility project. It is an integral part of our local business, working with the same focus on constant improvement, consistent delivery of quality software to customers, and profitability as the rest of the organization. The center has already produced a highly-integrated and responsive customer profile portal for one of Australia's leading retailers and will be a core part of our offering to other major clients in Australia in future.

Harnessing data to increase police accountability

While the killing of George Floyd called national, and global attention to the issue of police violence, there is a legacy of police misconduct in the United States that stretches back decades, the victims of which often go unnoticed.

Based on our experience that data can shed light on previously overlooked problems, we have collaborated closely for years with the Chicago-based Invisible Institute to support its Citizens Police Data Project (CPDP). This work of making misconduct easier to report, visualize and action now continues with Public Data Works, an organization bringing data-centric accountability tools to other cities.

Starting with the Independent Police Monitor of the City of New Orleans, we worked with Public Data Works to evaluate the needs of the agency to better collect, monitor and report on police misconduct. Early work with the Independent Police Monitor of New Orleans made it clear a robust police misconduct data intake tool should be a priority. We learned that the Monitor lacked the capacity to handle complaints and people were often reluctant to bring grievances to the police themselves, so a way to help citizens file complaints to an independent body was essential.

The project resulted in a case management system that streamlines the reporting process and also provides for analyses and assessments that accurately present patterns of officer behavior to police and regulators. This means communities affected by negative police behavior giving oversight agency, citizens and regulatory agencies the information they need to hold police departments accountable and advocate for change.



Thoughtworks and Invisible Institute [client story](#)

Empowering South American domestic workers to assert their rights

Like their counterparts elsewhere in the world, domestic workers in South America grapple with challenging, at times dangerous, working environments. In Ecuador, an estimated 80% of female houseworkers have faced violence or harassment at work⁵. In Brazil, where the vast majority of domestic workers are women of color, only around a third work under a formal contract. Often these issues are connected to a lack of understanding of the legal rights that workers are entitled to, and the avenues of recourse available when these are violated.

⁵ <https://www.care.org.ec/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/RESUMEN-TRH.pdf>

Coordinating directly with workers' associations and unions, our teams devised solutions designed to bridge these gaps. In Quito, Ecuador, our Social Transformation Lab helped create an app that provides legal advice and aid to houseworkers. We collaborated closely with the National Union of Professional Houseworkers to ensure the product⁶ reflected the concerns of the user base it was designed for, and was accessible to those with limited technical skills. Uptake of the initial version of the app has been strong and we are convinced it has the potential to help tens of thousands of women nationwide.



A similarly collaborative approach was adopted in Brazil, where we engaged in a pro bono effort to upgrade the technology infrastructure and website of the National Federation of Domestic Workers (Fenatrad). The project's main aim was to reimagine the website to be as intuitive and informative as possible for the workers who depend on it as a resource. Based on conversations with these workers, changes were made that enhanced the visibility and accessibility of training and educational resources, and highlight the historical struggle of domestic workers in the country.

Education for all

In SouthEast Asia we have been partnering on the ideation and development of a reading app. The focus is to encourage out of school and underprivileged young people to develop a lifelong love of learning, while building literacy in this community.



⁶ The app is called TR UNIDAS and is available [here](#).

Sustainability and climate action



Principles: addressing a systemic and shared global crisis

Though it has recently been overshadowed by the COVID-19 pandemic⁷, climate change is by far the biggest and most pressing challenge faced by humanity. The negative impacts of global warming are already evident and accelerating. Urgent and concrete action is needed to avoid worst-case scenarios, which include the total destruction of the only ecosystem humankind can inhabit.

Mitigating climate change-related risks requires businesses, governments and individuals alike to transform the way they work and behave. A viable transition must be built on collective action, and the recognition that not all of us are equally responsible for, or affected by, climate change impacts. Much of the pollution and resource extraction behind rising temperatures is attributable to industrialized nations. Reparation of this damage, by those nations must be part of any transition strategy, alongside plans and resources that enable more sustainable forms of economic and technological development.



“Thoughtworks is on a journey to carefully address our climate impact over the next few years. While this may be a small contribution to the broader climate problem we hope that we can connect with our clients, partners and the broader industry to amplify that impact. We’ll be enabling our people and business to keep sustainability top of mind in how we work and live, as well as discovering new, creative ways to diminish our carbon footprint.”

Amanda Ting, DEISSC Sustainability Global Programme Lead,
Thoughtworks

These considerations are an important part of our climate change roadmap, which we are developing to ensure our ambitions translate into action. We are working towards a more accurate picture of our carbon footprint, and identifying ways to reduce it. We are also factoring climate change considerations into the technology we build, launching solutions like our **green cloud** offering that have the potential to contribute directly to emissions reduction.

Over the next five years, we aim to ramp up sustainable technology alternatives for clients and partners; contribute to global and local-level networks working to mitigate climate change, and bring underrepresented voices to this vital conversation.

⁷ [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanplh/article/PIIS2542-5196\(21\)00111-X/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanplh/article/PIIS2542-5196(21)00111-X/fulltext)

In practice

Climate change is a multifaceted issue. We are working along several tracks in parallel both to reduce our environmental impact and, with partners, to accelerate the shift to more balanced forms of growth.

Committing to decarbonization in 2019

Private sector action is critical to averting climate catastrophe. In 2019 we joined other leading enterprises in the Science Based Targets initiative (SBTi), a joint partnership of the Carbon Disclosure Project (CDP), the United Nations Global Compact, the World Resources Institute and the Worldwide Fund for Nature. The SBTi is designed to help companies pinpoint the scale and speed of emission reductions they need to make to prevent the most severe climate change impacts.

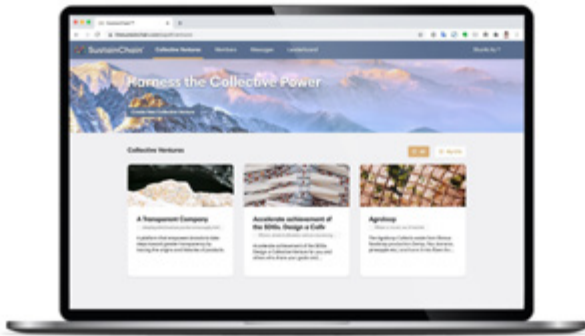


In line with the SBTi we are examining a broad range of data categories, from travel and electricity consumption to areas like refrigerant use in our offices worldwide. This data will help us identify the best places to set ambitious emission reduction targets, and guide our roadmap from there. It is inherent in our culture to fully understand the whole picture, rather than jump ahead to make unrealistic, or potentially low-impact promises. The care and thought applied in setting up the program thoughtfully will ensure that our priorities are the right ones, and that we deliver on or exceed any commitments we make.

A tech platform to advance the UN SDGs

The UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are an important blueprint for a more equitable, ecologically sound and peaceful world, and we support realization of the SDGs in much of our sustainability and social change work.

This connection was evident in a recent partnership with the US Coalition on Sustainability (USCS), an innovative non-profit that seeks to leverage technology to help businesses, investors and other stakeholders working toward the SDGs collaborate and learn from each other.



SustainChain™

Working with USCS, we launched a beta version of SustainChain™, a groundbreaking peer-to-peer platform that brings together brands, innovators and impact investors to share challenges and best practices, and find opportunities to work together. **SustainChain™** allows members to track progress toward specific SDGs and even find solutions to fund, pilot and scale. It was launched publicly at the UN General Assembly in late 2020 and continues to gain significant industry traction.

Bringing sustainability to the cloud

Cloud architecture has enabled massive flexibility and scalability gains, but these come at a significant environmental cost if not properly optimized. Data centers are responsible for around 1% of global electricity and greenhouse gas emissions,⁸ and this is only likely to grow as data volumes continue to soar.

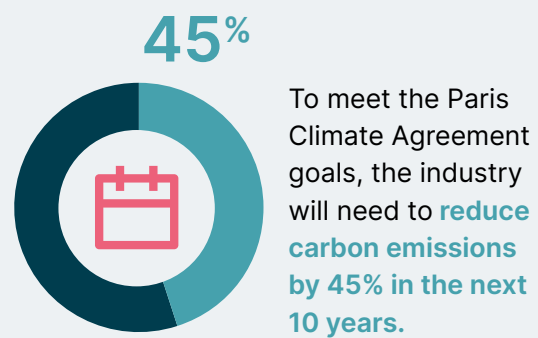
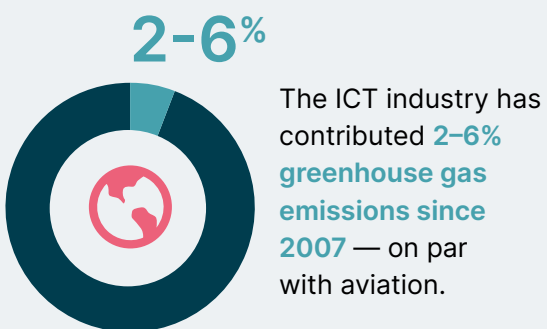
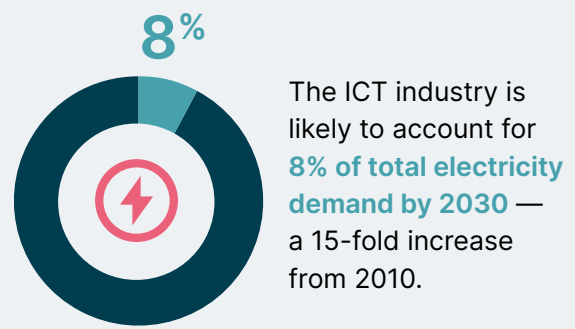
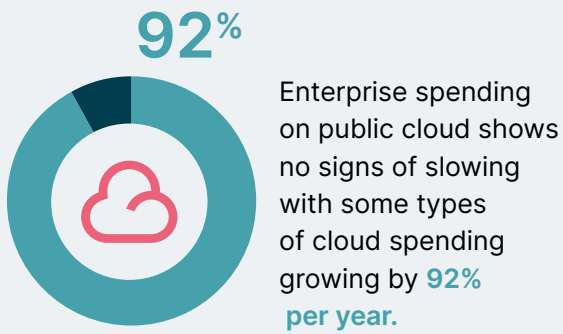


Cloud Carbon Footprint open source tool

Building sustainability requirements into cloud strategy can generate sizable environmental dividends as well as cost savings. Internally and in our work with clients we are implementing green cloud optimization to reduce carbon emissions and cloud spend.

Our new open source solution, **Cloud Carbon Footprint**, provides the visibility and tooling to measure and monitor cloud usage data, helping teams produce sustainability metrics that can be shared with stakeholders. Our team identifies areas to focus on that will provide the highest returns in environmental and investment terms, looking for ways to reconfigure, optimize or re-architect use of the cloud, as well as auditing SaaS use to suggest greener alternatives or greener ways of using providers.

⁸ <https://www.iea.org/reports/data-centres-and-data-transmission-networks>



Enabling development teams to build and run new best practices in green cloud optimization is also important in this endeavor, so that organizations can continue to progress along the sustainable cloud path.

Healthcare as a human right



Principles: contributing to accessible, effective and equitable care

The pandemic has highlighted the fragility and inadequacy of healthcare systems around the globe, but particularly in remote, resource constrained and marginalized communities where health resources and infrastructure are lacking. COVID-19 showed it is those most vulnerable to health crises — frontline workers, communities of color, the incarcerated and the elderly — who often have the least in the way of protection and support.

The absence of accessible, affordable and adequate care for all is impossible to justify in a world of excessive wealth. This is especially true now, with technology providing ways to ease or overcome many common healthcare challenges, such as delivering services to remote areas or monitoring the condition of patients outside traditional healthcare settings.

It is clearer than ever that there's a critical need to invest in and support healthcare in low-resource areas, and to deliver digital tools that allow information and infrastructure shortfalls to be addressed at scale. We are building on our long-standing partnerships with organizations and communities devoted to this need, amplifying their impact with our skills.

In practice

Technology has significant potential to promote healthcare equality, but only if it takes into account the needs of underserved communities, and conditions on the ground. Our projects in the field are defined by close collaboration with local organizations who deeply understand regional context as well as healthcare needs.

Bahmni: driving global health outcomes

Stemming from a single conversation with a non-profit hospital in rural India, Bahmni has blossomed into a powerful and versatile electronic medical record system (EMR) and hospital information system that is free, open source and built specifically for use in under-resourced environments. It is highly adaptable and intuitive, requiring minimal training, but still capable of performing and integrating sophisticated functions like generating overviews of patient data, capturing diagnoses, and managing laboratory and clinical workflows — on a variety of devices, and even without a reliable Internet connection.



Bahmni in action

Having steered Bahmni through the early stages of development, we remain active in its evolution as a member of the Bahmni Coalition, and continue to contribute to its strategy, governance and development. Thoughtworks quickly established a global team to bolster Bahmni’s capabilities in response to the COVID-19 crisis. This involved adding features that would allow healthcare providers to track testing and treatment, and eventually to enable doctors to provide remote consultations. In April 2021, Bahmni was one of only a handful of projects recognized as a Digital Public Good by the **Digital Public Goods Alliance**. This UNICEF-endorsed initiative aims to accelerate progress toward the UN Sustainable Development Goals by highlighting open source tools that can be easily adopted by low and middle-income countries.⁹

Bahmni: impact on lives



Implemented in
50 countries



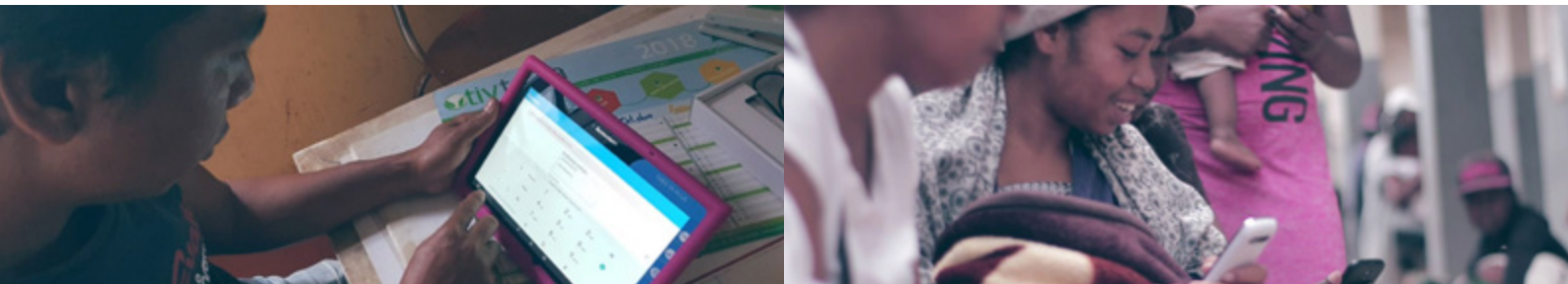
Over **500**
sites



Over **2m**
patient records

Providing critical infrastructure for payments and diagnoses

Around half the global population still lacks access to essential health services, and some 100 million people worldwide are at risk of falling into poverty due to health-related expenses.¹⁰ These problems are particularly acute in sub-Saharan Africa, where resources are strained and healthcare coverage sporadic.



The **mTOMADY** initiative led by the NGO Doctors for Madagascar explores the potential of digitalization to bridge access and financing gaps. Working with an international team of doctors, experts and volunteers, we helped develop the infrastructure backbone for a new healthcare-related payment system. mTOMADY provides patients a dedicated mobile wallet that, when topped up, is reserved exclusively for medical expenses, and that is accessible even in the most remote communities. The system also facilitates remuneration for healthcare workers. Since going live it has expanded to hundreds of health facilities and hospitals, and there are plans to bring it to more countries facing similar challenges, to reach a total of over 15 million people by 2025.

⁹ <https://in.news.yahoo.com/bahmni-openemr-recognized-digital-public-073436414.html>

¹⁰ <https://www.who.int/news/item/13-12-2017-world-bank-and-who-half-the-world-lacks-access-to-essential-health-services-100-million-still-pushed-into-extreme-poverty-because-of-health-expenses>

AiScope

Members of our team are also actively involved in AiScope, a collective effort including thousands of scientists and technologists. AiScope is an open source diagnostic tool and data set to aid the diagnoses of infectious diseases like malaria that disproportionately affect the Global South.

Enhancing care for children

In China we continue to partner with REAP and in 2020 our focus was on child nutrition. We created a tablet app for community health workers to deliver courses with, and an admin portal to manage it.

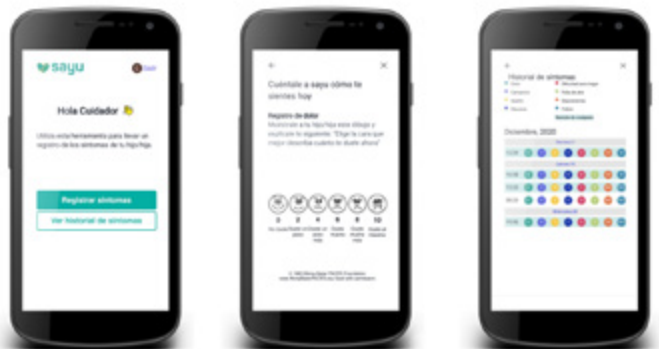
Sayu: connecting palliative caregivers

The palliative care unit at the Luis Calvo Mackenna Children's Hospital in Chile faces the difficult task of making the final stage of life for terminally ill children as comfortable as possible. Communication between caregivers and healthcare practitioners is an essential part of improving the patient experience, and our social change lab teamed up with medical professionals at the hospital to create an app that would make this dialogue constant and seamless.

Sayu: lives impacted



Children are now able to take an active role in their own condition, taking some control over what is happening to them.

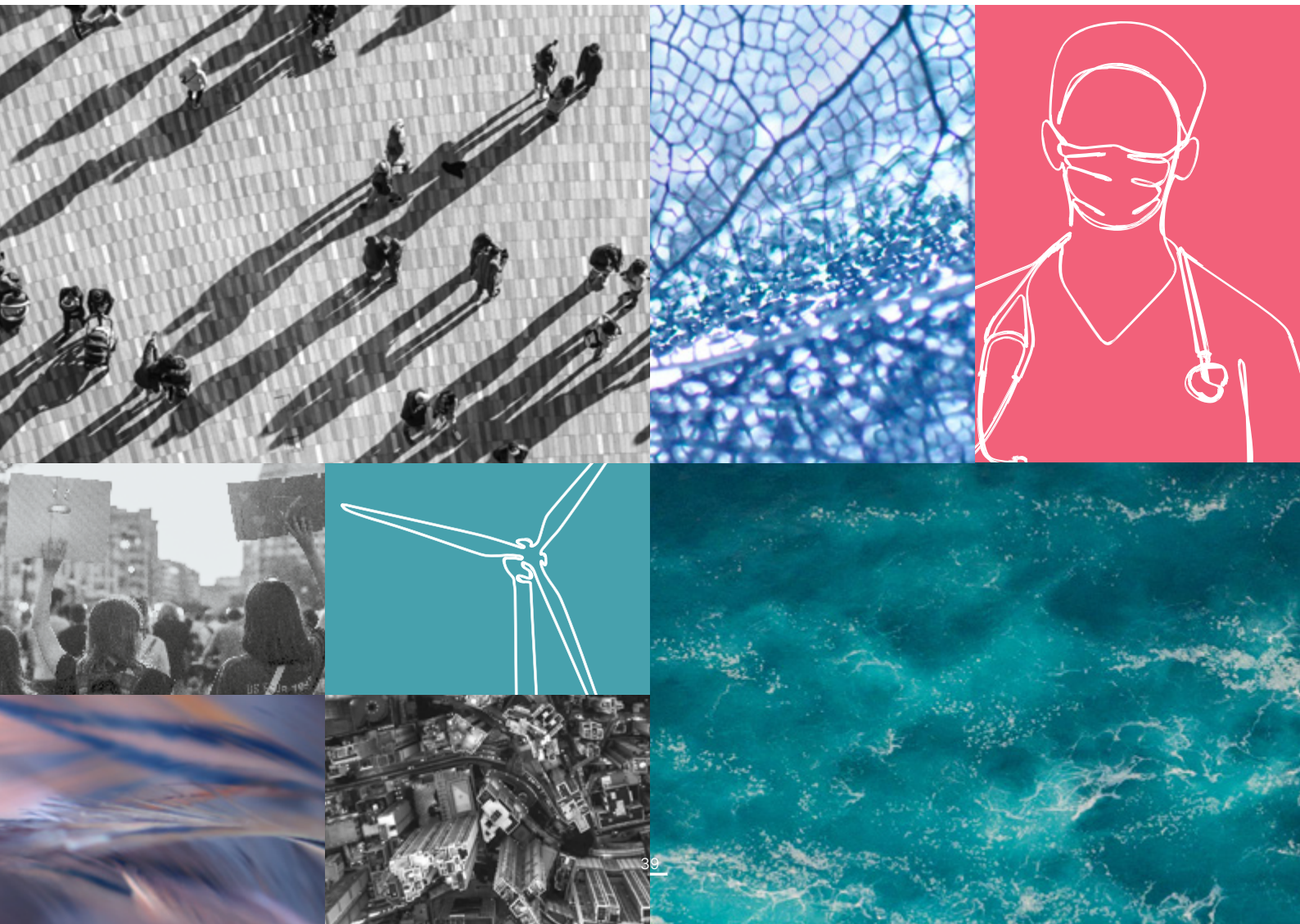


Screenshots of the Sayu app

The Sayu app allows children's caregivers to register pain and other symptoms while at home, and connect quickly and easily with hospital staff. It enables staff to access the medical records of children in real time, so they can adjust medication immediately. In addition to helping the hospital maintain and improve the app, we are working to make the code available to other institutions where it may be useful.

The road ahead

Across the focus areas and markets where we're active, the journey out of the pandemic will create new challenges and imbalances that only collective efforts can address. We will continue to play an active role where we are most needed, and where we are best able to apply our expertise to create measurable outcomes, while remaining mindful that as technology assumes a greater role in society, it carries threats along with transformative potential. Our work will remain based on the principle of solidarity over charity — that true progress is made by listening to, and forging close-knit partnerships with the communities and people impacted by injustice and inequity, and empowering them to lead any response.



Rewards/recognition



Appendix: SASB materiality matrix

SASB reporting dimensions for Thoughtworks Technology & Communications

Dimension	General issue category	Software & IT services
Environment	Energy management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Currently baselining to a set goal as part of SBTi initiative
Social capital	Customer privacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data protection leads in each region and privacy by design across our processes In draft: data protection policy and Retention schedule for data minimization Client data is only collected and used per contractual agreements. Website users data is collected and used per the website privacy notice
	Data security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data breaches in last 12 months: 0 Number of users affected: 0 Data storage is currently being baselined Data security assessment: we use NISF CSF framework and risk management techniques Identifying data security risks: we use threat modeling, interviews and other security assessment methods Policies, standards and technical controls in place to safeguard against data security risks
Human capital	Employee engagement, diversity & inclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employee engagement score is 8.4 (against benchmark of 7.8¹¹) Diversity satisfaction score is 8.5 (against benchmark of 8.1¹²) Women and UGM in tech: 2020 37.4%, with goal 40% by EOY 2022 Women and UGM in senior exec leadership team (GCG): 50%
Leadership & governance	Systemic risk management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Administrative and technical controls are in place to ensure the disruption of operations caused due to core systems availability is minimized In most cases Thoughtworks use SaaS/cloud based products and services (with built in high availability controls) to provide us reliable uptime
	Competitive behavior	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Legal actions pending or completed regarding anti-competitive behavior and violations of anti-trust and monopoly legislation: 0

¹¹ Peakon DEI global survey, 2020, 4828 employees responded to this segment

¹² Peakon DEI global survey, 2020, 4700 employees responded to this segment

About Thoughtworks

Thoughtworks is a global software and technology consultancy that integrates strategy, design and engineering. We are 9,000+ people strong across 48 offices in 17 countries. Over the last 25+ years, we've delivered extraordinary impact together with our clients by helping them solve complex business problems with technology as the differentiator.

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