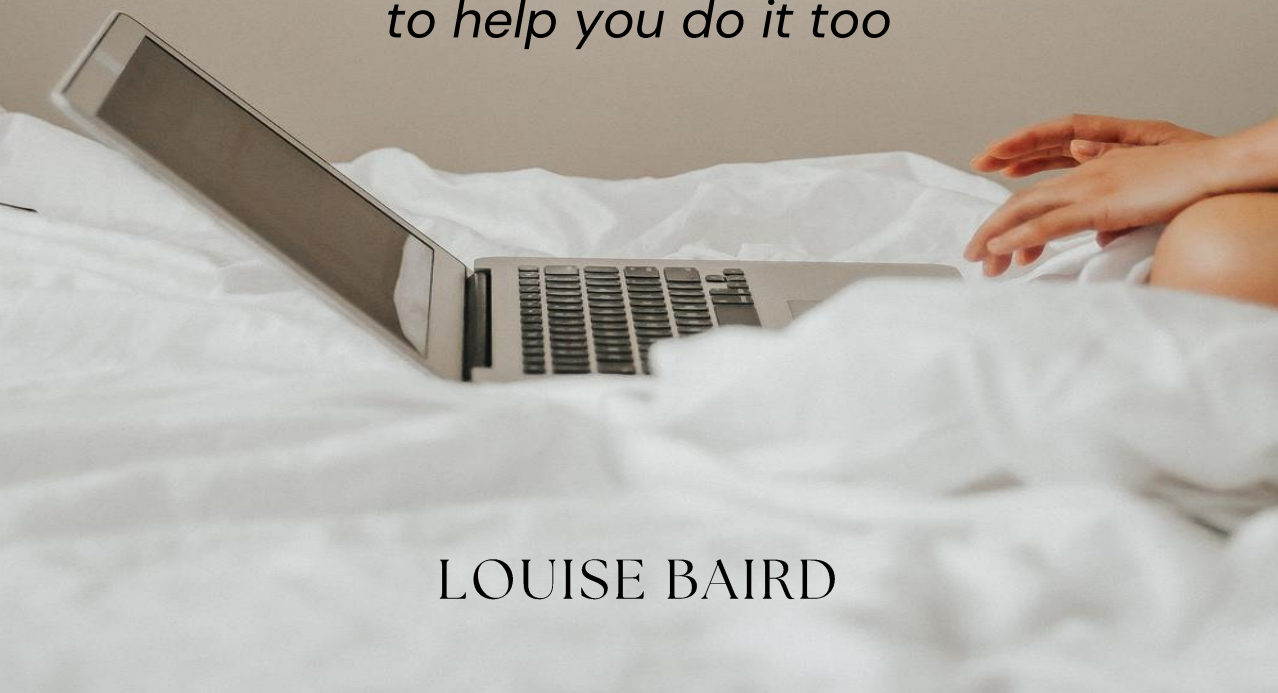


E-BOOK

A WOMAN'S UNCONVENTIONAL JOURNEY INTO THE WORLD OF DATA


*The story of how I did it, with tips
to help you do it too*



LOUISE BAIRD

A Woman's Unconventional Journey into the World of Data

The story of how I did it, with tips to help you do it too



Some names and identifying details have been changed to protect the privacy of individuals.

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First eBook edition April 2024

Edited by Louise Baird

Cover art by Katarzyna Tatara (©katarzyna-tatara via Canva.com)

Layout by Louise Baird

www.louisebaird.com

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DEDICATION

To my family, your unwavering love and support means more than you know, even when you're adamant I'm doing too much.

Michael, knowing you for almost two decades has shaped me into the woman I am. I can't thank you enough for your friendship, support and complete belief in my ambition and ability.

Shout out to Tom Palmer, you took a chance on me and for that I'm forever grateful.





Introduction

Do Women Work in Data?

Do Women Work in Data?

I found I was asking myself that question in 2019 when the concept of 'coding' was introduced to me. Yes, you read that right, 4 years ago I had NO IDEA what coding was, or that the world of data even existed. It wasn't something that featured in my world or that I'd ever been exposed to. I'm a working-class girl from a mining town in the North-East of England who'd spent her career so far working in fashion retail. Yes, I had a degree, but it was in English Literature with Film Studies....not exactly high-tech.



I recall when discussing coding and the data industry to establish whether it appealed to me...(actually "discussing" is a stretch. It was a friend of mine attempting to explain some basic data concepts to me using simplistic language a child could understand) but anyway, I remember my key concern was "do women work in data?" I wasn't thrilled with myself that I cared enough to ask the question, but even with my minimal awareness, this felt like an industry that would be highly dominated by men, and I wasn't wrong. But what did that mean for me?

Women working in the field of data face challenges, with statistics revealing a gender gap and underrepresentation in this domain. Male data scientists typically outnumber female ones 4 to 1, and despite an increasing emphasis on STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) degrees as typical entry points, women encounter barriers throughout their academic and professional journeys.

I personally don't think STEM degrees can be relied on as the traditional way for a woman to enter the data industry, because women are underrepresented within STEM degrees too! Factors like societal stereotypes and lack of encouragement contribute to this imbalance, as well as a lack of awareness similar to what I demonstrated.

This minority representation of women in education leads to a scarcity of female talent in data-centric fields. This phenomenon hinders diversity in perspectives and skill sets.

This underrepresentation also means that the data industry can often exhibit a male-dominated culture, creating an environment that may be less welcoming or inclusive for women. This can result in feelings of isolation and hinder career progression. Although it may be unconscious biases that prevail, gender stereotypes persist in recruitment and workplace dynamics, affecting opportunities for women in data-related roles.

The scarcity of female role models in senior data positions can limit an aspiring female's ability to envision a successful career trajectory, impacting their confidence and motivation.

This felt like it may be a challenge. Not only was I unsure if I had an aptitude for data (could I really code??) it felt like this path wouldn't necessarily be easily accessible to me. Fortunately, I've never backed away from challenge, any retail worker knows that you find a way to just make it happen, and that's exactly what I did.