Equal Pay Day 2024:
Time to close the gender pay gap

Lizzie Ville & Dr Giacomo Vagni

Executive summary

With a full-time gender pay gap of 11.3%, Equal Pay Day falls on 20th November[1] this year – this is the day in the year when, based on average pay, women overall stop being paid compared to men, and effectively work for free for the remainder of the year. What's more, women took home on average **£631** less per month than men in 2024.[2]

To mark Equal Pay Day 2024, the Fawcett Society have conducted a new piece of research to understand which factors explain the gender pay gap, and how much they affect it. This report outlines our findings (summarised in Box 1).

We are calling on the Government to commit to a 10-year strategy to reduce the gender pay gap. This strategy should tackle each of the key causes of the gap identified in our research, and include:

- **Equal pay law reform** including giving women the 'Right to Know' what their male counterparts earn, ban salary history questions during recruitment, and require salary bands in job adverts.

- **A duty for employers to advertise possible flexible working options in job adverts** so that workers know whether the job is right for them before applying and the onus is not on them to request flexible leave.

- **Transformation of the early education and care system** by following Fawcett's 10-point plan.[3]

- **Organisational equality action plans** including clear salary bands, policies on menopause support, parental leave, flexible working policies, and policies tackling sexual harassment.

- **Action to reduce industry segregation,** including increasing pay in undervalued sectors such as childcare and social care.

---

[1] ONS, Gender pay gap. 1997 - 2024. https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/earningsandworkinghours/datasets/annualsurveyofhoursandearningsashegenderpaygaptables

[2] Calculated from gross annual earnings, Table 1.7a, ONS annual release of Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE) data. https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/earningsandworkinghours/datasets/allemployeesashetable1 The online website The Salary Calculator was used to convert gross earnings to take-home pay, after National Insurance and tax. https://www.thesalarycalculator.co.uk/

[3] De-Freitas, A., Ville, L., & Azad, Z. Transforming Early Childhood and Care, Sharing International Learning: Part 2. The Fawcett Society. 2024. https://www.fawcettsociety.org.uk/transforming-early-childhood-education-and-care-part-2

Box 1. Key findings:

- **Even if women and men tended to work in the same occupations and industries, had the same working hours, type of work, age, and ethnicity - and were the same across many other variables (Box 2) - almost two thirds of the hourly gender pay gap would still exist.**
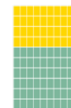
  This portion of the pay gap remains unexplained, but discrimination may be an important factor that cannot be captured by the 'explained' part of the model.

  2/3 of the gap remains unaccounted for

- **Industry segregation – men and women tending to work in different industries – accounts for a fifth of the gender pay gap.**

  Differences in occupation (including type of role and length of employment) account for a sixth of the gap.

- **Women working fewer paid hours accounts for 7% of the hourly pay gap.**

  This is likely to be because part-time jobs are lower paid than full-time jobs per hour, on average.

- **Mothers see a greater gender pay gap than women without children, with differences in occupation and industry accounting for 45% of this gap.**

  A lack of affordable childcare, a lack of well-paid flexible work, and discrimination at every stage means a narrower range of jobs available to mothers, regardless of their careers before they had children. However, the overall gender pay gap isn't purely down to the motherhood penalty.

Methodology: FAQs

How does the gender pay gap differ from unequal pay (also known as pay discrimination)?

Whilst the two are sometimes conflated, the gender pay gap is distinct from unequal pay, with the latter taking place when women are paid less than men for 'equal work'. This has been illegal since the 1970s although often still occurs. 'Equal work' is defined in the law as:

- 'Like work', where two people are doing the same job.
- 'Work rated as equivalent', where two people might be doing slightly different jobs but a job evaluation study has assessed them as equivalent.
- 'Work of equal value', where a Tribunal has assessed that two people's jobs are of equal value with reference to factors such as effort, skill, and decision-making.

Unequal pay is among several factors which contribute to the gender pay gap. Other factors include the motherhood penalty, the over-representation of women in part-time work (which is lower paid, pro-rata), and industry/occupational segregation by gender. These factors are described in more detail in this report.

When does Fawcett report the mean vs the median gender pay gaps?

The 'mean' is the average result when everyone's earnings are added up and divided by the total number of datapoints. The 'median' is the middle value for earnings when the entire dataset is placed in order from lowest to highest (or vice versa). The gender pay gap is the difference between men's and women's average earnings (mean or median), divided by men's average earnings.

Fawcett uses the mean hourly gender pay gap for full-time workers (11.3% in 2024) to calculate the date of Equal Pay Day because this figure captures the full impact of men being more likely to be very high earners.

Our new research takes the log function of the mean hourly gender pay gap, in order to model the causes of the gender pay gap. The log is a mathematical function which reduces the effect of 'skewness' (the fact that more people earn lower amounts and there are a small number of very high earners) on the analysis. We explore the gender pay gap for all workers (full and part-time) in order to assess the effect of working hours.

We use the median, after-tax figure to calculate the monthly difference in take-home pay between women and men (£631 in 2024), because this best reflects the tangible, average amount in the pockets of the typical woman or man.

Which data sources were used in this report?

Fawcett's headline figure used to calculate the date of Equal Pay Day - the mean hourly gender pay gap for full-time workers (11.3%) – is sourced from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) 2024 gender pay gap data release, which uses the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE):
https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/earningsandworkinghours/datasets/annualsurveyofhoursandearningsashegenderpaygaptables

Our analysis breaking down the causes of the gender pay gap uses data from the 2024 Labour Force Survey (LFS) – the largest household survey in the UK. This is because the LFS contains the range of variables needed to carry out this analysis.
https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/methodologies/labourforcesurveyuserguidance

This summary, produced by the ONS describes the advantages and disadvantages of different labour market data sources, including the LFS and ASHE.
https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/methodologies/comparisonoflabourmarketdatasources

Findings: Breaking down the hourly gender pay gap

To break down the gender pay gap into its key causes, we analysed data from the 2024 Labour Force Survey (LFS) – the largest household study in the UK.[4] Using this data, we modelled what would happen to the gender pay gap if women were the same as men across lots of different characteristics (listed in *Box 2* below), in what is known as a Kitagawa–Oaxaca–Blinder Decomposition. For more information about the data analysis, please see the *Appendix.*

This analysis answers the question: ***to what extent do individual characteristics, such as working hours, education level, industry, and the occupations in which women and men work contribute toward the gender pay gap?***

The "unexplained" portion of the gender pay gap

The 2024 LFS data showed a mean hourly gender pay gap of **13.7% for all workers**. This is very close to the mean hourly gender pay gap for all workers reported by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) in 2024, using the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE) dataset – at 13.8%.[5]

According to our model, if women and men had exactly the same working hours, types of work, age, ethnicity, etc., (across all of the variables listed in *Box 2*) and worked, on average, in the same industries, then **almost two thirds (63%)** of the gender pay gap would still exist – this is the "unexplained" part of the gender pay gap.

Figure 1. The explained and unexplained portions of the gender pay gap
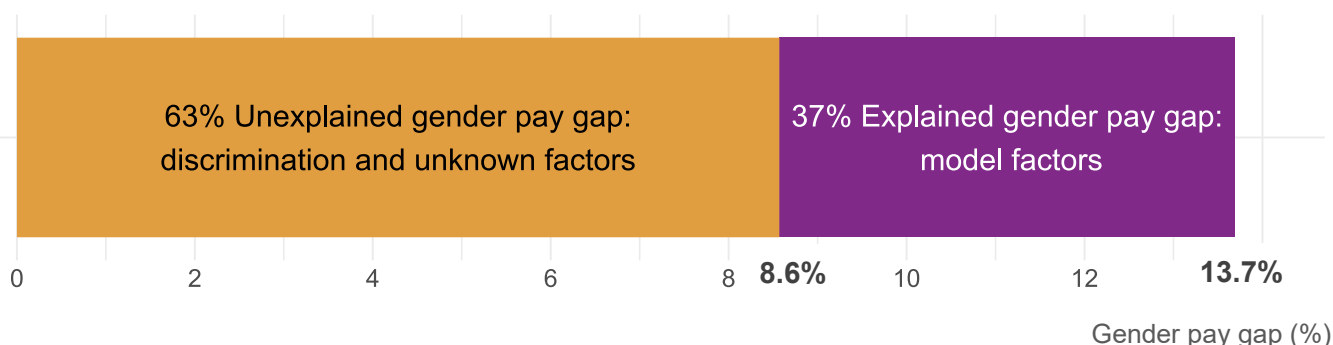
Put differently, the gender pay gap would only reduce from **13.7%** to **8.6%** if women and men were the same, on average, across all the factors listed in *Box 2* below. The "unexplained" (almost) two thirds of the gap is this 8.6% (since 8.6% ÷ 13.7% gives 63%).[6]

This evidence refutes the often-made claim that the gender pay gap disappears after controlling for characteristics such as working hours and type of job. It does not disappear – in fact most of it remains! We can attribute part of this unexplained portion of the gender pay gap to factors such as discrimination, since it is not explained by personal characteristics or behaviours.

---

[4] Office for National Statistics. Labour Force Survey – user guidance.
https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/methodologies/labourforcesurveyuserguidance
[5] ONS, Gender pay gap. 1997 - 2024.
[6] The "explained" portion of the gap is calculated as the reduction in the gap due to observed characteristics (13.7% - 8.6% = 5.1%) divided by the original gap (5.1%/13.7% = 37%).

What's more, the results show that men are seeing a greater economic *return* on things like education, social class, working hours, etc., that is, having a better education or a higher occupational social class increases a man's hourly wage more than it increases a woman's hourly wage. This means that a woman could have exactly the same characteristics as a man in terms of working hours, education, hours, occupation, industry, etc. and still be paid less.

> *FAQ: Why did we model the effects of women and men having the same characteristics?*
>
> Our model explored how much the *differences* between women and men (in terms of working hours, industry, occupation, etc.) drive the gender pay gap. We did this by modelling, statistically, what would happen if women and the men were the same across these characteristics. However, this does not mean that the solution to reducing the pay gap is women becoming more like men (e.g. by working more hours). Instead, we can reduce the *penalties* for these characteristics, e.g. by improving pay in female-dominated sectors like adult social care or childcare, or raising the average pay of part time work.

It is possible that there are also some factors missing from our model - with one potential candidate being partner's job[7] – however it is unlikely that other missing factors would fully explain away the remaining 63% of the gender pay gap. We ask the reader to consider: which factors do you think could explain the rest of the gender pay gap, beyond all the factors that we have already accounted for (*Box 2*)?

Box 2. Factors included in the Decomposition model:

- **Individual characteristics:** Age, residence, ethnicity.
- **Family characteristics:** Whether has dependent children, whether has a child below the age of 8, number of children in household, whether a single household.
- **Occupational characteristics:** Occupational social class (NSSEC),[8] whether work in private sector, length of continuous employment, length of current employment.
- **Hours:** Weekly working hours, whether work full-time or part-time.
- **Education**
- **Industry**

Whilst we cannot definitively say how much of the unexplained 63% of the gender pay gap is due to discrimination, our results indicate that discrimination continues to be an important contributing factor. Unequal pay – when women are paid less than men for equal work - could have a part to play.

---

[7] Averkamp, D., Bredemeier, C, & Juessen, F. Decomposing Gender Wage Gaps: A Family Economics Perspective. IZA Institute of Labor Economics. 2020.
[8] Office for National Statistics. The National Statistics Socio-economic classification (NS-SEC). 2021.
https://www.ons.gov.uk/methodology/classificationsandstandards/otherclassifications/thenationalstatisticssocioeconomicclassificationnssecrebasedonsoc2010

The Fawcett Society are calling for wholesale reform of equal pay legislation and gender pay gap reporting, to include:

- **A legally enforceable 'Right to Know'** what a male colleague is paid for equal work or work considered to be of equal value, for women who suspect they are experiencing unequal pay (pay discrimination). This could be done by reinstating the sex discrimination questionnaire originally included in the Equality Act but repealed in 2013 or introducing new pay transparency legislation. This would enable women to understand their circumstances and be equipped to challenge discrimination.

- **A ban on asking salary history questions to job applicants to End Salary History.** This practice can perpetuate pay gaps for group who earn less on average, meaning that they carry lower pay with them from job to job.

- **A requirement for equal pay audits to be conducted by firms if their gender pay gap is closing too slowly.** Equal pay audits allow employers to examine their pay systems and reduce the risk of unequal pay arising. The EHRC provides guidance on how to do these, but they are not mandatory.

- **An extension of mandatory gender pay gap reporting to smaller organisations,** and introducing mandatory ethnicity and disability pay gap reporting.

- **Gender pay gap action plans,** so that organisations have to state what they are doing to close their pay gaps and are held to account for delivering these.

Our analysis also told us which factors do affect the gender pay gap, and by how much, i.e. within the "explained" portion of the gender pay gap.

The explained part of the decomposition model is the portion of the gender pay gap that can be linked to measurable and observable factors, like differences in education, experience, and job characteristics between groups. Factors difficult to measure or observe, such as discrimination, are part of the "unexplained" portion of the model.

Breaking down the explained part of the model, we see that:

- **22%** of the hourly gender pay gap is explained by women and men tending to work in different industries,
- **17%** is explained by differences in occupational characteristics (e.g. type of work, length of employment, etc.; see Box 2 for list), and
- **7%** is explained by differences in working hours (*Figure 2*).

Individual and family characteristics (e.g. age, number of children; see Box 2 for full lists) have very small negative effects on the gender pay gap (i.e. they slightly reduce the gender pay gap) when other factors such as occupation, industry, and working hours have been accounted for. Education level is associated with a **6%** reduction in the pay gap.

Each of these factors is discussed in more depth in the sections below.

**Figure 2.** Break down of the of the gender pay gap
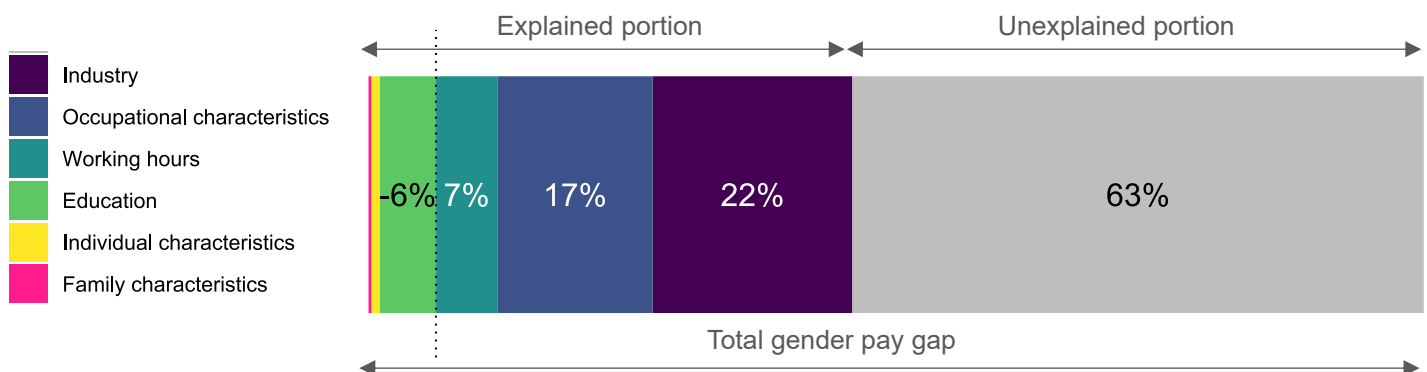
Percentages may not exactly sum to 100% due to rounding. Negative percentages also contribute toward the total (100%) of the gender pay gap, in the opposite direction (i.e. by reducing the gap).

Industry and occupational segregation

Our model showed that women and men tending to work in different industries is accounting for over a fifth - **22%** - of the hourly gender pay gap. That is, if industry segregation were remove and women and men worked (on average) across the same industries, or if the industries that women worked in were paid equally to those dominated by men, then, according to our model, the hourly gender pay gap would reduce from **13.7%** to **10.7%.** This is one of the most significant contributors to the explained part of the gender pay gap.

Figure 3. Model reduction of the gender pay gap, without industry segregation.
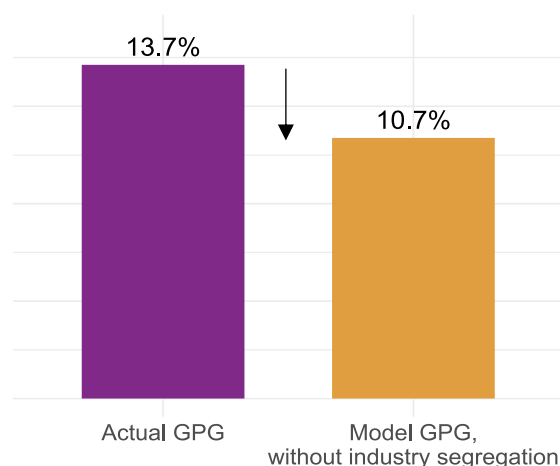
Similarly, we explored the effect of occupational characteristics on the gender pay gap, such as whether a person works in the private sector, how long they have been employed, and occupational social class – a socioeconomic measure of the type of work they do linked to how much long-term benefit they may receive from it (such as career opportunities, pension, and job security) and the hierarchical nature of their position (e.g. whether they are a manager).[9]

We saw that these job-related characteristics explain **17%** of the gender pay gap.

These findings suggest that a significant portion of the gender pay gap could be closed if more action was taken to address differences in the *types* of work that women and men do. We know that the industries and occupations that women work in are consistently undervalued, whilst women in higher-paying, male-dominated industries often experience exclusionary cultures or are locked out altogether. **We call for:**

- **Increased pay in undervalued and female-dominated sectors**, such as adult social care and early childhood education and care. Fawcett's recent report[10] contains clear recommendations for an early childhood education and care sector workforce plan.

---

[9] Office for National Statistics. The National Statistics Socio-economic classification (NS-SEC). 2021. https://www.ons.gov.uk/methodology/classificationsandstandards/otherclassifications/thenationalstatisticssocioeconomicclassificationnssecrebasedonsoc2010
[10] De-Freitas, A., Ville, L., & Azad, Z. Transforming Early Childhood Education and Care: Sharing International Learning: Part 2. The Fawcett Society. 2024. https://www.fawcettsociety.org.uk/transforming-early-childhood-education-and-care-part-2

- **Greater action from employers to recruit and retain women in highly paid and male-dominated sectors and occupations**, such as tech and finance, including:
    - Ensuring pay transparency, clarity in promotion criteria and equitable training opportunities
    - Advertising flexible work options in job adverts
    - Ensuring Equality Action Plans include steps to reduce racism and misogyny in the workplace[11]
    - Action to tackle sexual harassment and a ban on NDAs – which perpetuate the unequal culture in industries such as finance
    - Reducing bias at application, e.g. by using gender-neutral language
    - Providing funding for STEM returner programmes

- **Countering gender stereotypes, particularly around subject skills, in the core of the early years and primary school curricula.** Whilst this won't impact the gender pay gap in the next 10 years, it is critical to reducing industry segregation and the gender pay gap in the long-term.

Education, individual characteristics and family characteristics

Our model showed that education level accounts for **6%** of the gender pay gap, but in a negative direction, that is, women having higher education levels than men on average, is reducing the gap by around 6%. In 2021-22, 54% of women were in higher education by age 19, compared to 40% of men. Whilst this reduces the pay gap slightly, women still see a smaller return on their education than men do; men who complete their higher education qualifications earn more than their female counterparts, and are more likely to be in professional or managerial posts or further advanced study.[12]

Individual and family characteristics had very small effects on the hourly gender pay gap. This is likely because any effects of these factors are subsumed by the occupation, industry, and working hours factors already included in the model – and any discrimination element is held under the 'unexplained' portion of the model. That is, being a parent, or of a particular ethnicity, age group, or place of residence mostly impacts the gender pay gap via type of work: industry or occupation. This does not mean that discrimination is absent, but is simply not captured by the 'explained' part of our model.

---

[11] Our '*Broken Ladders'* report recommends what to include in an anti-racism and misogyny plan:
Gyimah, M. et al. Broken Ladders: The myth of meritocracy for women of colour in the workplace. The Fawcett Society & The Runnymede Trust. 2022. https://www.fawcettsociety.org.uk/broken-ladders
[12] House of Commons Library. Educational attainment of boys. 2024. https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cdp-2024-0043/#:~:text=Men%20are%20considerably%20less%20likely,previous%20year%2C%202020%2F21.

Working hours

The data showed that women work an average of **33.7** hours per week, compared to **39.7** hours per week for men.

Our model showed that women and men having different working hours is accounting for **7%, or about one fourteenth** of the hourly pay gap. That is, in our model, if women increased their hours and worked, on average, the same number of hours per week as men (but stayed in the same occupation/industry and all other characteristics remained the same) then the hourly gender pay gap would reduce from **13.7%** to **12.8%.** Note that this does not suggest that the solution to reducing the pay gap is women working more hours. Instead, we can reduce the penalties for these characteristics, e.g. by increasing the amount of well-paid part-time jobs, and valuing part-time jobs the same (per hour) as full-time jobs.

**Figure 4.** Model reduction of the gender pay gap, with equal working hours by gender.
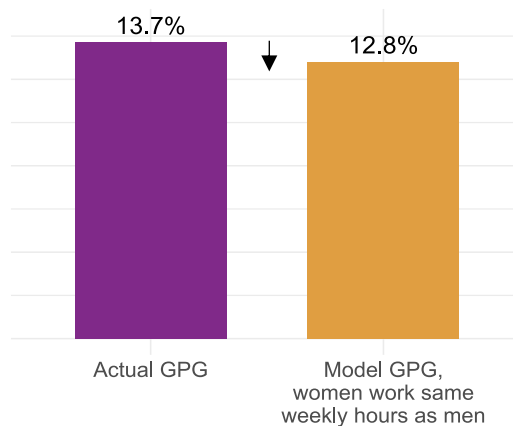
It is important to note that this estimate of the impact of working hours is very conservative, since we are modelling the *hourly* gender pay gap. A change in women's working hours would have a much larger effect on the weekly or yearly gender pay gap than it does on the hourly gap, since working more hours means more pay.

Motherhood

Our data showed a significant motherhood penalty, with the hourly gender pay gap between mothers and fathers - **17.8%** - much larger than that between women and men who do not have children - **11.1%**. Therefore, we broke down the gender pay gap separately for mothers.

For mothers, **23%** of the gap is accounted for by industry, whilst **22%** of the gap is accounted for by occupational characteristics, which includes type of work, whether they work in the private sector, and length of employment. This occupational component is larger for mothers than we saw for all women (**17%**). This is because the structures that often hold women back – such as unaffordable childcare, and a lack of flexible work or well-paid part-time working options – often mean a narrower range of jobs available to mothers, regardless of the success they saw in their careers before they had children. Together, occupational characteristics and industry account for **45%** of the pay gap for mothers.

Figure 5. Break down of the gender pay gap between mothers and fathers.
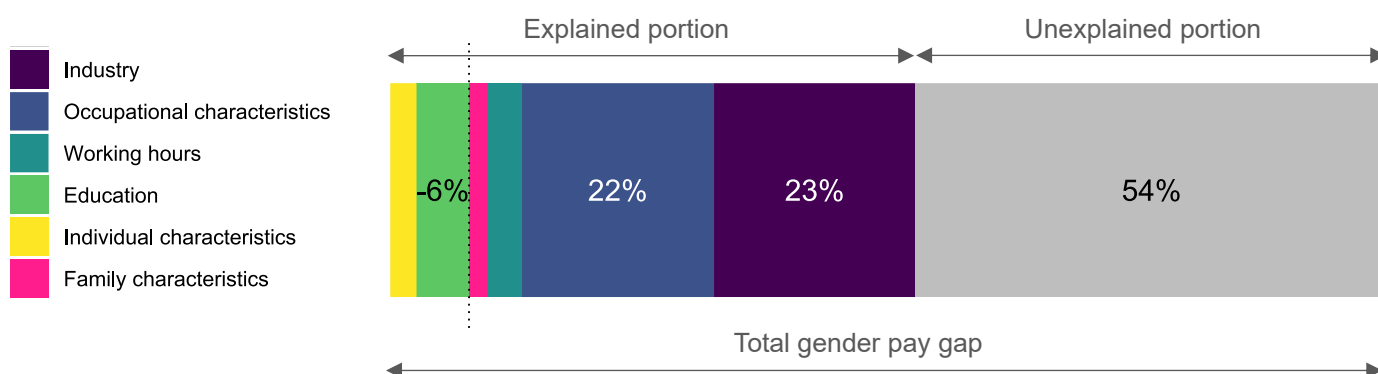
Percentages may not exactly sum to 100% due to rounding. Negative percentages also contribute toward the total (100%) of the gender pay gap, in the opposite direction (i.e. by reducing the gap).

Fawcett's 2023 report *The Ethnicity Motherhood Pay Penalty* analysed Labour Force Survey data over the last three decades. The results showed that gender, ethnicity, and parenthood intersect to produce even greater wage gaps for Black and minoritised mothers. This was particularly true for Pakistani and Bangladeshi mothers - who saw a 13% mean hourly pay gap compared to women of the same ethnicity without children and a 17-percentage point difference in employment rate.[13] This group are also least likely to receive supplementary maternity pay and paid leave, due to a greater chance of being in insecure work contracts.

[13] Rose, J., Li, Y., & Ville, L. The Fawcett Society. The Ethnicity Motherhood Pay Penalty. 2023. https://www.fawcettsociety.org.uk/news/ethnicity-motherhood-pay-penalty

Our results show that the gender pay gap could be significantly reduced if the working patterns of women and men, and particularly mothers and fathers, were more equitable. However, parents' choices about their working patterns and the division of caring responsibilities remain restricted by the policies and systems in place in the UK. **We call for:**

- **Wholesale reform of the early childhood education and care system**, so that parents (and particularly mothers, as more often the primary carers) are not locked out of working the hours they wish for, or forced into lower paid or insecure work due its flexibility and part-time options.

- **Expanding flexible work options and offering these as default across all types of work** – not just low paid or insecure work. Crucially, flexible work options must be advertised in job adverts, so that the responsibility is not with the employee to make a request after they have already accepted a job without certainty about its suitability for them.

- **Reforming parental leave,** including paying both parents enough to take parental leave, and a longer, non-consecutive period of leave, specifically ringfenced for fathers and co-parents, to encourage a more equal split of parenting duties.

# A 10-year strategy for tackling the gender pay gap

The results above show that the hourly gender pay gap is influenced by discrimination, industry and occupational segregation (women and men doing different types of work), and working hours, with the latter two factors also linked to motherhood and the additional caring responsibilities that women hold.

However, progress on these issues and on tackling the gender pay gap has stalled in recent years, with no improvement seen in 2024 (Table 1; Figure 6). We urge the Government to be pro-active in addressing the gap over the next 10 years. The gender pay gap will not reduce without decisive action.

Table 1. The hourly gender pay gap in 2024. Figures for 2023 are shown in brackets.

	Full-time workers	All workers
Mean gender pay gap	**11.3%** *(10.4%)*	13.8% *(13.2%)*
Median gender pay gap	7.0% *(7.5%)*	13.1% *(14.2%)*

Figure 6. The gender pay gap over time for full-time workers, 1997 – 2024.
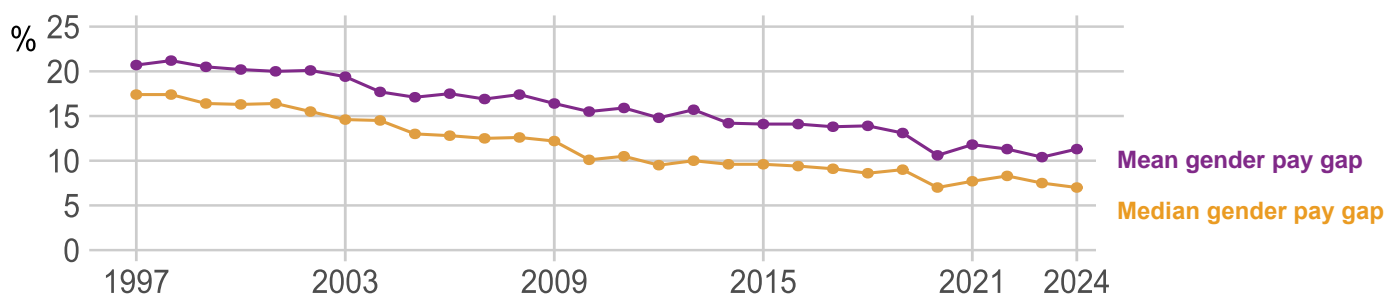
Source: ONS, ASHE data 1997-2024[14]

A strategy to address the gender pay gap must address the intersectional disparities and pay gaps experienced by different groups – particularly Black and minoritised women and disabled women.

We see a significant ethnicity pay gap in the UK. ONS data from 2022 (released in 2023) shows that the greatest ethnicity pay gaps were seen for people of Mixed White and Black Caribbean, Bangladeshi, and Pakistani heritage. These groups earned 18.5%, 17.5%, and 13.3% less than White British people, respectively. Whilst some ethnic groups earned more than White British people on average in 2022, the ONS highlights that after keeping personal and work characteristics constant, most ethnic minority employees earned less than UK-born white employees.[15]

---

[14] ONS, Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings time series of selected estimates. 1997 - 2024. https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/earningsandworkinghours/datasets/annualsurveyofhoursandearningsashegenderpaygaptables The figures given for 2023 are based on ONS revised figures and so may not match Fawcett's data release in 2023.

[15] ONS, Ethnicity Pay Gaps, UK: 2012 to 2022. https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/earningsandworkinghours/articles/ethnicitypaygapsingreatbritain/2012to2022#adjusted-ethnicity-pay-gaps
Figures are median pay gap values reported by the ONS.

Ethnicity pay gaps combine with and compound the gender pay gap for Black and minoritised women, who are at the sharpest end of financial disparity with men. Women of Bangladeshi, Pakistani, and Mixed White and Black Caribbean heritage see the largest median ethnicity pay gaps of 14.7%, 11.8% and 10.6% respectively, compared to White British women. However, our own analyses of ONS data highlight that compared to White British men, these pay gaps rise even further to 28.4%, 25.9%, and 25.0%, respectively. And overall, men earned more than women in most ethnicity groups in 2022, with the exception of Black Caribbean and 'Other' Black heritage groups. However, in these two groups, women only earned marginally more than men, and less than men in other ethnic groups.

The UK also sees a significant disability pay gap, which compounds with the gender pay gap for disabled women. Overall, the median pay gap between disabled and non-disabled people was 12.7% in 2023. Disabled women saw a gap of 23.2%, compared to non-disabled men. There is a larger pay gap between disabled and non-disabled men (15.5%) than there is between disabled and non-disabled women (9.6%). However, this is because men already earn much more than women overall. Disabled women - who are at the intersection of the disability and gender pay gaps - consistently earn less than non-disabled men, as well as disabled men and non-disabled women.[16]

Figure 7. Median hourly pay in 2023, by disability and gender.[15]

Disabled women	£13.11
Disabled men	£14.44
Non-disabled women	£14.50
Non-disabled men	£17.08
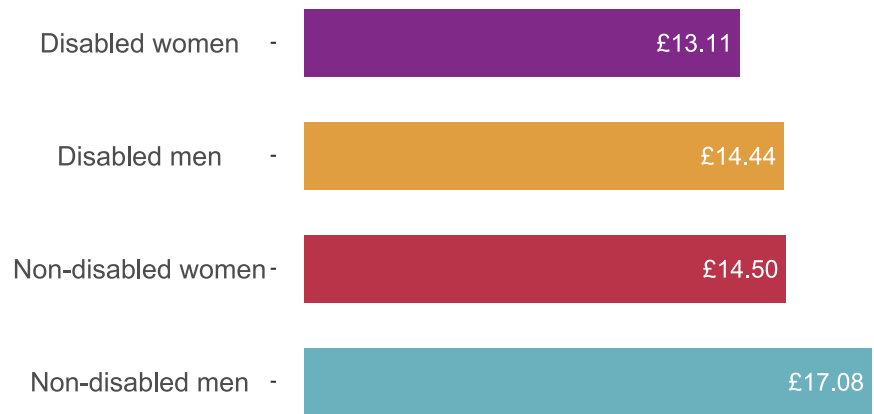
Reducing discrimination, addressing industry segregation by gender, and introducing policies which make working hours more equitable between women and men are all critical steps toward tackling the gender pay gap. Fawcett is calling for:

- **A legally enforceable 'Right to Know'** what a male colleague is paid for equal work or work considered to be of equal value, for women who suspect they are experiencing unequal pay (pay discrimination). This could be done by reinstating the sex discrimination questionnaire originally included in the Equality Act but repealed in 2013 or introducing new pay transparency legislation. This would enable women to understand their circumstances and be equipped to challenge discrimination.

---

[16] ONS, Disability pay gaps in the UK: 2014 to 2023.
https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/disability/articles/disabilitypaygapsintheuk/2014to2023

- **A ban on asking salary history questions to job applicants to End Salary History.** This practice can perpetuate pay gaps for group who earn less on average, meaning that they carry lower pay with them from job to job.

- **A requirement for equal pay audits to be conducted by firms if their gender pay gap is closing too slowly.** Equal pay audits allow employers to examine their pay systems and reduce the risk of unequal pay arising. The EHRC provides guidance on how to do these, but they are not mandatory.

- **An extension of mandatory gender pay gap reporting to smaller organisations,** and introducing mandatory ethnicity and disability pay gap reporting.

- **Mandatory gender pay gap action plans,** so that organisations must state what they are doing to close their pay gaps and are held to account for delivering these.

- **Greater action from employers to recruit and retain women in highly paid and male-dominated sectors and occupations**, such as tech and finance, including:

    o Ensuring pay transparency, clarity in promotion criteria and equitable training opportunities
    o Advertising flexible work options in job adverts
    o Ensuring Equality Action Plans include steps to reduce racism and misogyny in the workplace[17]
    o Action to tackle sexual harassment and a ban on NDAs – which perpetuate the unequal culture in industries such as finance
    o Reducing bias at application, e.g. by using gender-neutral language
    o Providing funding for STEM returner programmes

- **Increased pay in undervalued and female-dominated sectors**, such as adult social care and early childhood education and care. Fawcett's recent report[18] contains clear recommendations for an early childhood education and care sector workforce plan.

- **Wholesale reform of the early childhood education and care system**, so that parents (and particularly mothers, as more often the primary carers) are not locked out of working the hours they wish for, or forced into lower paid or insecure work due its flexibility and part-time options.[19]

- **Expanding flexible work options and a duty for employers to advertise possible flexible working options in job adverts.** Flexible work options must be available across all types of work – not just low paid or insecure work. Crucially, flexible work options must be advertised in job adverts, so that the responsibility is not with the employee to make a request after they have already accepted a job without certainty about its suitability for them.

- **Reforming parental leave,** including paying both parents enough to take parental leave, and a longer, non-consecutive period of leave, specifically ringfenced for fathers and co-parents, to encourage a more equal split of parenting duties.

---

[17] Our '*Broken Ladders*' report recommends what to include in an anti-racism and misogyny plan:
Gyimah, M. et al. Broken Ladders: The myth of meritocracy for women of colour in the workplace. The Fawcett Society & The Runnymede Trust. 2022. https://www.fawcettsociety.org.uk/broken-ladders
[18] De-Freitas, A., Ville, L., & Azad, Z. Transforming Early Childhood Education and Care: Sharing International Learning: Part 2. The Fawcett Society. 2024. https://www.fawcettsociety.org.uk/transforming-early-childhood-education-and-care-part-2
[19] De-Freitas, A., Ville, L., & Azad, Z. Transforming Early Childhood and Care, Sharing International Learning: Part 2. The Fawcett Society. 2024. https://www.fawcettsociety.org.uk/transforming-early-childhood-education-and-care-part-2