



# Gender Pay Gap Report 2023



Being Inclusive

# About this report

In the UK all employers are legally obliged to pay men and women equally for work of equal value. However, for lots of reasons, in many organisations there is a difference between the average earnings of male and female employees. This is known as the gender pay gap.

This gap does not mean employers have breached equal pay provisions or that women are paid less to do the same job as men. It normally indicates that men are occupying higher-paying positions in the workplace than women.

All public, private and voluntary sector organisations with 250 or more employees must report annually on their gender pay gap. They must do so against six different measures, based on a snapshot of pay data on a set date identified within Schedule 1 of the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties and Public Authorities) Regulations 2017.

1

## Mean Gender Pay Gap

The difference between the mean hourly rate of pay of male full-pay relevant employees and that of female full-pay relevant employees.

2

## Median Gender Pay Gap

The difference between the median hourly rate of pay of male full-pay relevant employees and that of female full-pay relevant employees.

3

## Median Bonus Gap

The difference between the median bonus pay paid to male relevant employees and that paid to female relevant employees.

4

## Mean Bonus Gap

The difference between the mean bonus pay paid to male relevant employees and that paid to female relevant employees.

5

## Bonus Proportions

The proportions of male and female relevant employees who were paid bonus pay during the relevant period.

6

## Quartile Pay Bands

The proportions of male and female full-pay relevant employees in the lower, lower-middle, upper-middle and upper quartile pay bands.

In accordance with the legislation, we have produced and published this report to show Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service's gender pay gap as it stood on 31 March 2023. For comparison, we have provided data from the same date in 2022.

Reporting the pay gaps that may impact people from minority ethnic backgrounds, with disabilities or who identify as lesbian, gay or bisexual is not yet a legal requirement in the UK. We are committed to exploring ways in which we can start reviewing and ultimately publishing this data voluntarily during 2024/25.

If you have any questions or comments relating to this report and its contents, please email [equalities@cheshirefire.gov.uk](mailto:equalities@cheshirefire.gov.uk)

# Our gender pay gap explained

Equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) is an important business imperative for any employer, not least a humanitarian organisation like the fire and rescue service.

In 2020 we enshrined this commitment as one of our core values – to “be inclusive” – and are embedding the Core Code of Ethics for the Fire and Rescue Services in England in all that we do.

We know that embracing diversity of thought, of background and of life experience makes us a better employer and a better provider of public services. We work hard to create a culture where anyone, regardless of their gender, age, sexual orientation, ethnicity, ability or faith, can thrive and reach their full potential. In turn, this enables us to better understand and respond to the diverse needs of the communities we serve.

Like other fire and rescue services, we have a fair and gender-neutral approach to pay across all levels of our organisation. However, in common with the rest of our sector a gender pay gap persists. We believe there are three principal reasons:

## 1. More men than women across the operational workforce

Although more women than ever before are becoming firefighters, they remain outnumbered by men at all levels – including at higher paying, senior officer level. It will take time for the new generation of operational women to progress through the ranks and for average female earnings to increase. This is something we are working hard to address by breaking down barriers to development and progression.

## 2. Differences in operational and non-operational pay arrangements

It is difficult to make direct comparisons between nationally negotiated firefighter and local government rates of pay, but there are non-operational pay grades that pay less than that of a trainee firefighter’s. These grades apply to office-based and community safety posts, which do not pay the same level of overtime nor are they eligible for other allowances. Many of these roles are undertaken by women and therefore bring down average female pay.

## 3. A smaller non-operational workforce

In any fire and rescue service, there are fewer non-operational roles – which traditionally attract more women – than firefighting or fire officer roles. In Cheshire, this was compounded by the transfer of many fire staff (a large number of whom were female, some in higher paying middle management roles) to a joint corporate services arrangement with Cheshire Police between 2016 and 2018. Changes to the joint arrangements involving the phased return of some of these departments and staff to our organisation’s payroll is beginning to have a very positive impact on our gender pay gap.

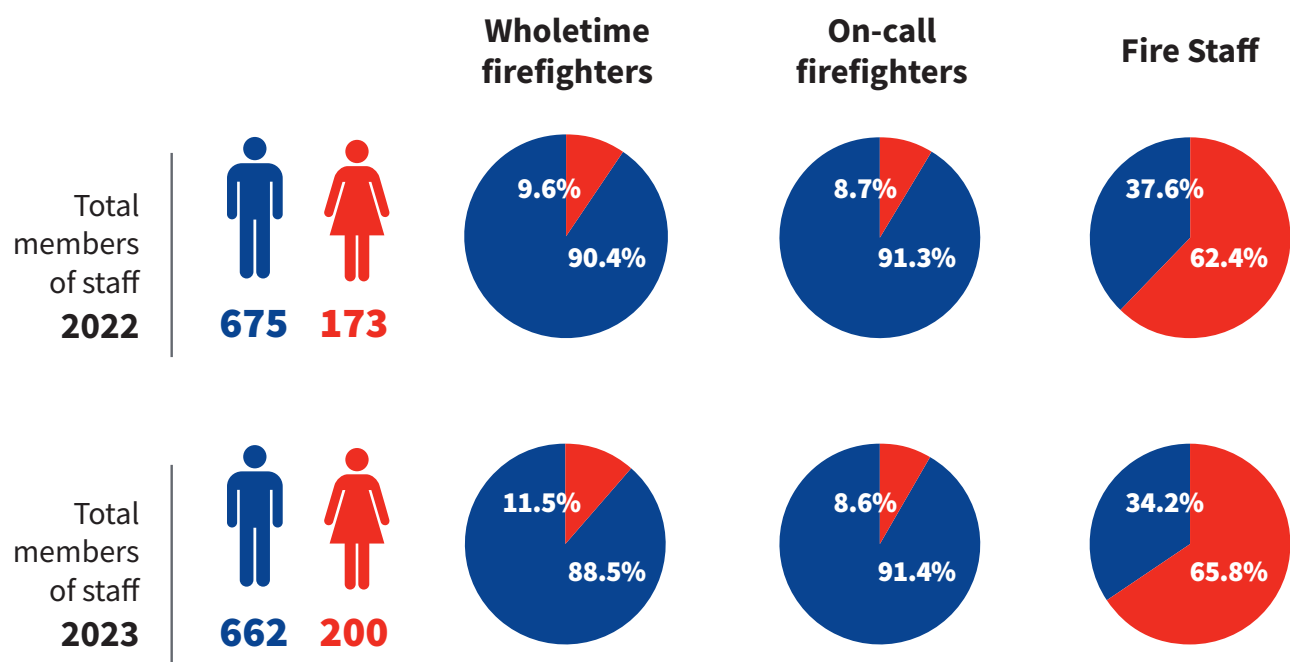


# This year's data

## Composition of our workforce

At 31 March 2023, we employed 862 staff, but in line with the government's gender pay gap guidance, we have counted only 849 staff in sections 1, 2 and 6 of our analysis because 13 members of staff did not receive their usual monthly pay or were a new starter during March and had not received a full months pay by that date.

In accordance with the guidance, we have included all 862 staff in our analysis of bonus pay outlined in sections 3 to 5.











Although we continue to employ many more men than women, we are seeing a steady increase in the number of women who work for us. While our overall headcount increased by 14, from 848 on 31 March 2022 to 862 on 31 March 2023, the number of women increased by 27. This is, in part, due to the transfer of the People and Organisational Development Department back to the organisation from joint corporate services, but also because we are recruiting more women at a time when men are leaving or retiring.

It is particularly encouraging to see the proportion of wholetime firefighters who are women increase from 9.6% to 11.5%. Female operational representation will continue to improve owing to our September 2023 and April 2024 firefighter trainee cohorts comprising more women than men, for the first time ever.



## Analysis of earnings

Based on a snapshot of data available on 31 March 2023, showing earnings of all staff, our gender pay gap is calculated as follows.

					
1 	Mean Hourly Rate	2022	£13.72	£16.91	18.9%
		2023	£14.93	£16.33	8.57%
2 	Median Hourly Rate	2022	£13.70	£15.09	9.14%
		2023	£14.72	£15.11	2.58%
3 	Proportion of Staff in receipt of a bonus	2022	24%	68%	
		2023	17%	60%	
4 	Mean Bonus*	2022	£621.49	£648.98	-4.24%
		2023	£823.34	£682.82	20.58%
5 	Median Bonus*	2022	£417.48	£792	47.25%
		2023	£837.03	£837.03	0%

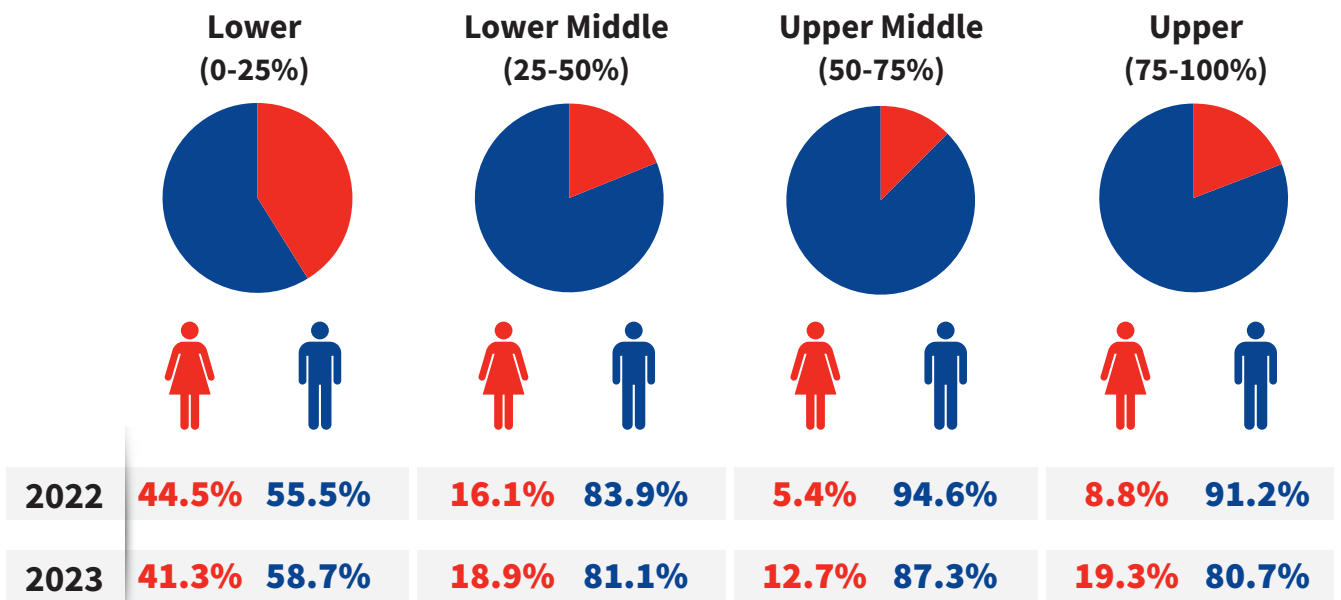
Between 2022 and 2023, our gender pay gap – measured as the difference in the mean hourly rate earned by men compared with women – more than halved, from 18.9% to 8.57%. In 2019, the gap stood at 24.6%, so over the past five years it has closed by 65% in percentage terms. While there is clearly still some way to go before we achieve our goal of pay equity, we are proud that our work to recruit and develop women is resulting in sustained progress towards eliminating our gender pay gap.

We expect to see a further reduction of the gap in our next report, which will include the salaries of our new female firefighters and women in our Finance and Service Improvement departments, who transferred from Cheshire Police back to our Service in autumn 2023.

\* Strictly speaking, we do not pay bonuses to any of our staff. However, eligible operational colleagues are entitled to receive an annual payment for completing continuous professional development. In accordance with our Pay and Recognition Policy, recognition payments may also be made to individuals for outstanding performance or exceptional contribution to the life of the Service. For the purposes of this report, both must be counted as bonuses.

For the first time since gender pay gap reporting was introduced, the mean value of bonuses paid to women was higher than those paid to men. The median value of those bonuses was the same for both genders. However, caution should always be applied to the reporting of average bonuses, which can easily fluctuate owing to the relatively small number of staff receiving them in any given year. In addition, newer operational staff are not eligible for their continuous professional development payments until they are competent in role for five years.

## 6 Quartile Pay Bands 2023



There has been a significant improvement since March 2022 in the number of women in higher earning roles, with those in the upper middle and upper pay quartiles more than doubling. This is likely due to the return of People and Organisational Development colleagues to the organisation, many of whom are middle managers.

We expect to see further improvements in the proportion of women in the lower middle pay quartile in our next report, when the salaries of our new female firefighters will be eligible to be included.

# Closing the gender pay gap

Our People Strategy (2022-25) and EDI Strategy (2021-2024) set out ambitious objectives that aim to make our Service an even fairer and more inclusive place to work. Attracting, retaining, developing and rewarding female talent is fundamental to achieving this aim.

In the last year we have:

- set all our fire stations the objective of running at least one event to showcase the role of the fire and rescue service to women and other groups underrepresented in our workforce
- entered the Top 50 Inclusive Companies programme, so that we can assess our performance against other organisations. We were proud to make it to the Top 50 on our first attempt and we will use the achievement to strengthen our attraction and recruitment activities
- signed up to the White Ribbon scheme, to demonstrate our commitment to creating a female-friendly organisation which will not tolerate violence towards women and girls
- once again supported female colleagues to attend the Asian Fire Services Association and Women in Fire Engineering conferences, along with other external events to enable them to network and build confidence
- continued to promote our Wider Horizons directory of in-Service learning, development and career opportunities for non-operational staff, together with our Step In and Step Up courses and degree sponsorship programmes
- invested time and resources in the development of an innovative new programme called 'Elev8', designed to encourage and support firefighters from under-represented backgrounds to apply for promotion to fire officer roles
- supported our Limitless women's network to undertake a vibrant programme of social and development activities, help keep our policies under review and continue to have a voice at our quarterly Equality Steering Group.





**Our Vision** is a Cheshire where there are no deaths, injuries or damage from fires and other emergencies.

**Our Mission** is to help create safer communities, to rescue people and protect economic, environmental and community interests.

We will deliver this through our  
**Core Values**

Recognising the Fire and  
Rescue Service's  
**Code of Ethics**

**Being Inclusive**

By acting fairly, with integrity, respect and without prejudice.

**Doing the Right Thing**

By holding each other to account for ensuring high standards of professionalism in everything we do.

**Acting with Compassion**

By being understanding and offering help to each other and to our communities with warmth, patience and kindness.

**Making a Difference**

By making an impact in our organisation and in our communities in whatever ways we can, for as many people as we can.



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