



# Gender Pay Gap Report 2025



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 2025. For comparison, we have provided data from the same date in 2024.

The UK Government has announced that in the future it will require large employers to publish information on their ethnicity and disability pay gaps. We await guidance on when and how to report this.

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 have embedded 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 higher-paying senior officer roles. While it will take time for the new generation of operational women to progress through the ranks and for average female earnings to increase, closing this gap is a major priority for us. We are already seeing positive steps in the right direction, and we remain committed to accelerating progress by breaking down barriers to development and promotion.

## 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

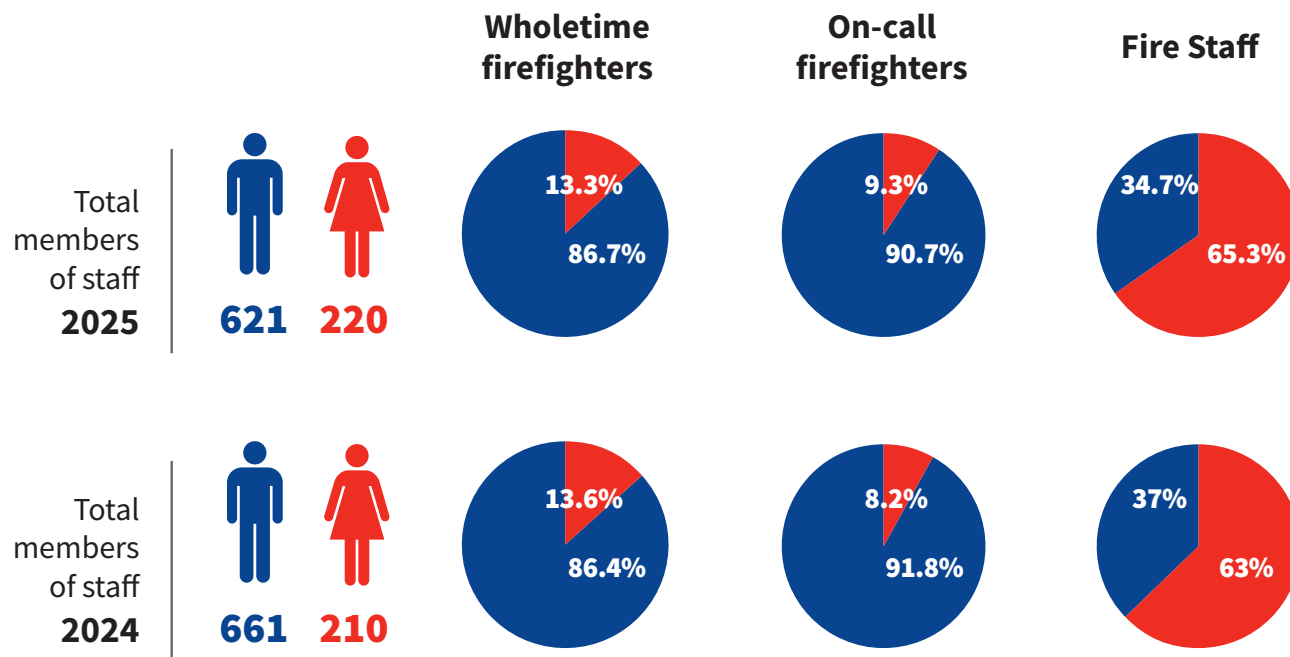
In any fire and rescue service, there are fewer non-operational roles – which traditionally attract more women – than firefighting or fire officer roles. In Cheshire, this was compounded by the transfer of many fire staff (many of whom were female, some in higher paying middle management roles) to a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



# This year's data

## Composition of our workforce

At 31 March 2025, we employed 841 staff, but in line with the UK Government's gender pay gap guidance, we have counted only 834 staff in sections 1, 2 and 6 of our analysis because seven members of staff did not receive a full wage in March 2025 due to being on unpaid leave or statutory-only sick pay. In accordance with the guidance, we have included all 841 staff in our analysis of bonus pay outlined in sections 3 to 5.











Although we still employ more men than women, we continue to see steady progress in increasing female representation. At 31 March 2025, our headcount stood at **841**, compared with **871** the previous year. While overall numbers have reduced, the number of women has risen to **220**, up by 10 compared with last year. This improvement reflects our ongoing efforts to recruit more women at a time when men are leaving or retiring. In 2024/25, **95 of our 122 leavers were male**, and only **27 were female**, showing that retention of women remains strong.

At 31 March 2025, women represented **65.3% of our non-operational workforce**, compared with **63%** last year. While progress is gradual, it demonstrates a positive trend. The proportion of fire staff who are women continues to rise. Female operational representation will keep improving thanks to recent recruitment activity and new cohorts.



## Analysis of earnings

Based on a snapshot of data available on 31 March 2025, showing earnings of all staff, our gender pay gap is calculated as follows.

					
1 	Mean Hourly Rate	2025	£17.46	£19.25	9.30%
		2024	£16.56	£18.32	9.61%
2 	Median Hourly Rate	2025	£17.20	£17.63	2.44%
		2024	£16.54	£16.95	2.42%
3 	Proportion of Staff in receipt of a bonus	2025	18.18%	57.8%	
		2024	20.5%	57.8%	
4 	Mean Bonus	2025	£882.51	£815.60	-7.58%
		2024	£531.61	£673.65	26.7%
5 	Median Bonus	2025	£921	£921	0%
		2024	£579.33	£883.26	47.87%

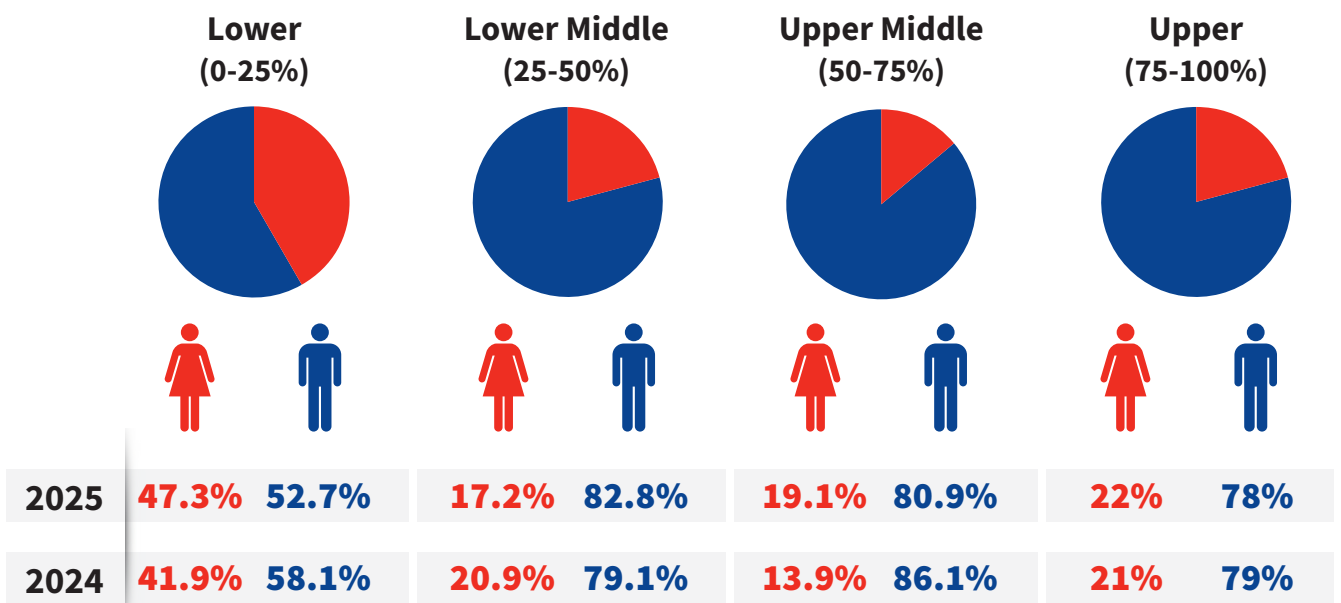
Between 2024 and 2025, our gender pay gap – measured as the difference in the mean hourly rate earned by men compared with women – improved slightly, reducing from **9.61% to 9.30%**. This progress builds on a significant reduction since reporting began in 2016/17, when the gap stood at **25.5%**. Over the last nine years, the gap has closed by more than **63%**, reflecting our sustained efforts to recruit, retain and develop women across all roles. While there is still work to do before achieving full pay equity, we are proud of the positive trend and remain committed to accelerating progress.

We expect to see a continued reduction in the gender pay gap in future reports, which will reflect the salaries of our new female firefighters and the impact of promotions into middle and senior leadership roles during 2025/26. These changes, combined with targeted development programmes and recruitment initiatives, are helping us move closer to pay equity and strengthen female representation across all levels of the Service.

Strictly speaking, we do not pay traditional bonuses to any of our staff. However, eligible operational colleagues continue to receive an annual payment for completing continuous professional development, and recognition payments may be made for outstanding performance or exceptional contribution under our Pay and Recognition Policy. For reporting purposes, both are counted as bonuses.

Caution should always be applied when interpreting bonus data, as figures can fluctuate due to the relatively small number of recipients and eligibility rules. Newer operational staff remain ineligible for continuous professional development payments until they have been competent in role for five years.

## 6 Quartile Pay Bands 2025



There has been continuing improvement since March 2024 in the number of women in higher-earning roles, with representation in the upper middle and upper pay quartiles increasing again. Of the **95 new starters in 2024/25, 40 were women**, and notably, **four moved straight into the middle-upper (SO1/SO2) and upper pay quartiles (PM1 and above).**

Other factors impacting changes across pay quartiles include the regrade of administration posts following a review of the Prevention department, changes in operational duty systems and a middle management restructure in Service Delivery.

# Closing the gender pay gap

Our People and EDI strategies, both relaunched in 2024/25, 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:

- expanded our **Elev8 personal development programme**, which is now supporting more firefighters from underrepresented groups to progress into leadership roles
- continued to use our **Wider Horizons** learning directory and **Step In / Step Up** courses to create secondment and development opportunities for women and colleagues from underrepresented groups
- set all fire stations the objective of hosting at least one event to **showcase careers in the fire and rescue service to women and diverse communities**, helping to attract new talent
- once again improved our position in the **Top 50 Inclusive Companies** ranking, which we use to benchmark and strengthen our recruitment and attraction strategies
- continued our involvement in the **White Ribbon scheme**, reinforcing our commitment to creating a safe and supportive environment for women and girls
- supported female colleagues to attend key sector events such as **Women in the Fire Service, Asian Fire Services Association, UK Firepride** and **Women Talking Fire** enabling networking and confidence building
- empowered our **Limitless women's network** to deliver a vibrant programme of social and development activities, review policies and maintain a strong voice at our quarterly EDI 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.

