



# Gender Pay Gap Report 2024



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 2024. For comparison, we have provided data from the same date in 2023.

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

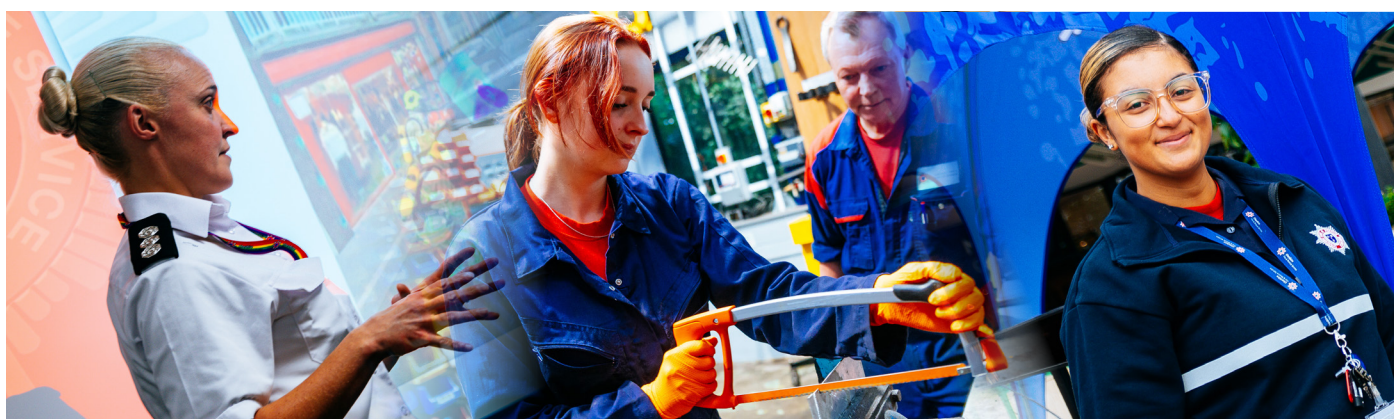
Although more women than ever before are becoming firefighters, they remain outnumbered by men at all levels – including at higher paying, senior officer level. It will take time for the new generation of operational women to progress through the ranks and for average female earnings to increase. This 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 (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. Changes to the joint arrangements involving the phased return of some of these departments and staff to our organisation’s payroll are now having a positive effect on our gender pay gap.

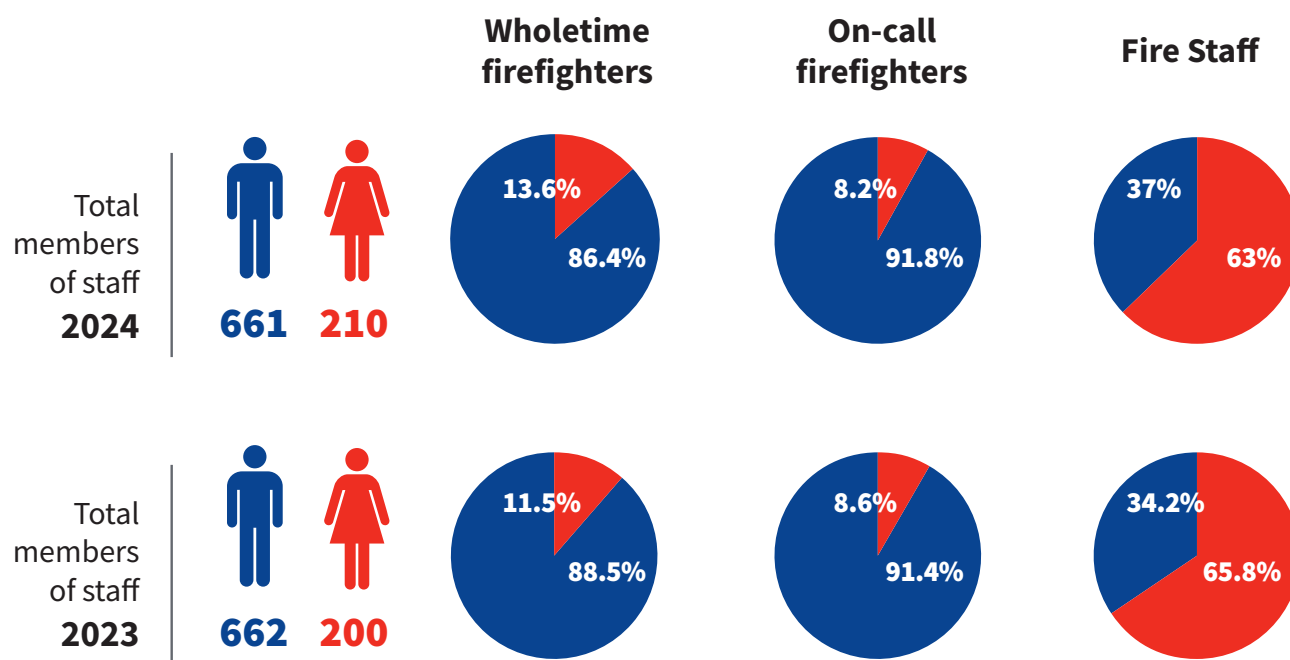


# This year's data

## Composition of our workforce

At 31 March 2024, we employed 871 staff, but in line with the government's gender pay gap guidance, we have counted only 860 staff in sections 1, 2 and 6 of our analysis because 11 members of staff did not receive a full wage in March 2024 due to being on unpaid leave, statutory-only pay or on zero hours contracts.

In accordance with the guidance, we have included all 871 staff in our analysis of bonus pay outlined in sections 3 to 5.











Although we still employ many more men than women, we are continuing to see a steady increase in the number of women who work for us. Our overall headcount increased by 9, from 862 on 31 March 2023 to 871 on 31 March 2024, and all of these were women. This is, in part, due to the transfer of the Service Improvement and Finance teams 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. In 2023/24, 72 of our 90 leavers were male and only 18 were female.

It is particularly encouraging to see the proportion of wholetime firefighters who are women increase from 11.5% to 13.6%. Female operational representation will continue to improve thanks to our April 2024 firefighter trainee cohort (not counted in this analysis) comprising more women than men.



## 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	2024	£16.56	£18.32	9.61%
		2023	£14.93	£16.33	8.57%
2 	Median Hourly Rate	2024	£16.54	£16.95	2.42%
		2023	£14.72	£15.11	2.58%
3 	Proportion of Staff in receipt of a bonus	2024	20.5%	57.8%	
		2023	17%	60%	
4 	Mean Bonus	2024	£531.61	£673.65	26.7%
		2023	£823.34	£682.82	-20.58%
5 	Median Bonus	2024	£579.33	£883.26	47.87%
		2023	£837.03	£837.03	0%

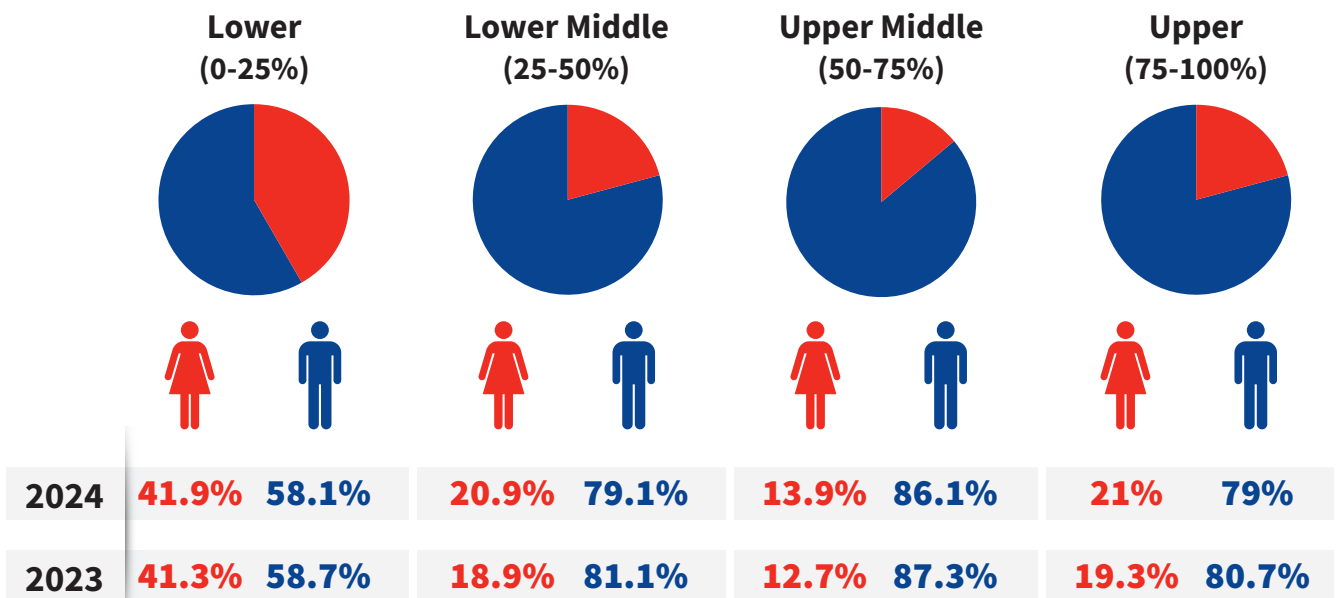
Between 2023 and 2024, our gender pay gap – measured as the difference in the mean hourly rate earned by men compared with women – increased slightly from 8.57% to 9.61%. However, this must be read in the context of a significant reduction in the gap since the requirement to publish pay data came into effect in 2016/17. That year, our gender pay gap stood at 25.5%. The gap has therefore closed by 62.3% over the last eight years. While there is clearly still some way to go before we achieve our goal of pay equity, we remain proud that our work to recruit and develop women is resulting in overall 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 reflect some promotions of women into middle and senior leadership roles during 2024/25.

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.

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 2024



There has been continuing improvement since March 2023 in the number of women in higher earning roles, with those in the upper middle and upper pay quartiles increasing. Of the 33 new starters in 2023/24 who were female, seven moved straight into the upper pay quartiles.

In addition, new senior roles were created including an in-house Information Manager, non-operational Head of Service Improvement, project managers and positions in the Cheshire Resilience Forum. These have been taken up by women and will be reflected in our 2024/25 report.

# Closing the gender pay gap

Our People and EDI strategies 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:

- launched our innovative new **Elev8** personal development programme, which aims to break down some of the barriers firefighters from underrepresented groups face when trying to progress to leadership positions
- used 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, to facilitate secondment opportunities for a number of women in the Service
- 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
- rose to 39th position in the **Top 50 Inclusive Companies** programme, which enables us to assess our performance against other organisations. We will use the achievement to strengthen our attraction and recruitment activities
- strengthened our involvement in 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 **Women in the Fire Service** development weekend, and the **Asian Fire Services Association**, **UK Firepride** and **Women in Fire Engineering** conferences, along with other external events to enable them to network and build confidence
- 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 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**

**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.



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



**NFCC**  
National Fire  
Chiefs Council